



Boughton

Conservation Area

Character Statement



BOUGHTON, a small scattered village, 1½ miles N. of Stoke Ferry, and 6 miles E. by S. of Downham Market, has in it's parish 209 souls, and 1,322A 2R 17P of land. At the enclosure, land was allotted to the poor for fuel.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

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Introduction

A Conservation Area – “An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

The conservation of the historic environment is part of our quality of life, helping to foster economic prosperity and providing an attractive environment in which to live or work. The Borough Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of West Norfolk's historic built environment and significant parts of it are designated as conservation areas.

Conservation areas were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local Authorities were required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as conservation areas. This duty is now part of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act which also requires the review of existing conservation areas and, where appropriate, the designation of new ones. The quality and interest of a conservation area depends upon a combination of factors including the relationship and architectural quality of buildings, materials, spaces, trees and other landscape features, together with views into and out of the area.

The Boughton Conservation Area was first designated in March 1977 and revised in 1992. This document highlights the special qualities which underpin the character of the Conservation Area, justifying its designation. It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to the environment occur, they do

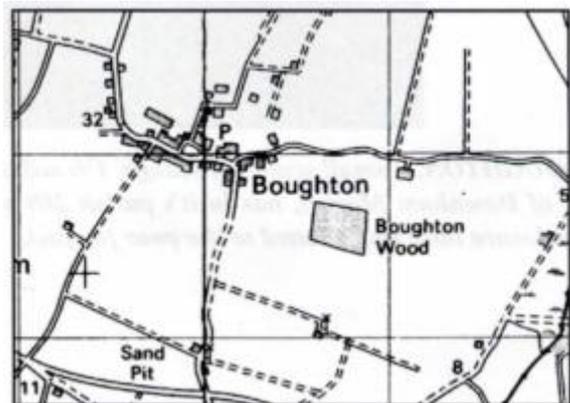
so in a sympathetic way without harm to the essential character of the area. This type of assessment has been encouraged by Government Advice (PPG15) and it has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

This character statement does not address enhancement proposals. Community led enhancement schemes will be considered as part of a separate process.

Setting and Location

Boughton is a village of approximately 38 acres with a population of around 200.

The village is located approximately 1.25 kilometres ($\frac{3}{4}$ mile) north of the main A134(T) road connecting Kings Lynn 27 kilometres (17 miles to the north) and Thetford, the same distance to the south-east. The larger village of Stoke Ferry lies 2.5 kilometres ($1\frac{1}{2}$ miles) to the south and the smaller villages of Wereham, 3 kilometres (2 miles) to the west: Oxburgh 7 kilometres ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles) to the east and Barton Bendish 4 kilometres ($2\frac{1}{2}$ miles) to the north are located along minor roads leading from the settlement. The town of Downham Market lies approximately 13 kilometres (8 miles) to the west.



The village is surrounded by agricultural land in all directions and this was one of the main generators of the village form. The land gently falls from north to south towards the valley formed by the River Wissey and its cut off channel. The presence of water and land drainage is a vitally important factor in determining settlement pattern in this area, which is effectively Fenland “Edge”.

The main east/west road (Chapel Lane, The Green, Mill Hill Road) acts as the central village spine and contains the focal point of the pond. At the same location, the important track of Church Lane leads off to the north. Roads from the south create smaller ‘nodes’ at their junction with this east /west road.



The setting is therefore one of linear settlement along these roads interspersed with pockets of mature landscape located between and beyond the buildings, containing trees, grass verges and

hedgerows. Attractive views of the open countryside beyond are afforded between these components.



Views in to the village from the south, along Stoke Road afford a rare glimpse of the village centre, largely unaltered by new development.

Origins and Historical Development

Boughton, or “Buchetuna”, meaning “Buccas” Enclosure (bucca + tun – enclosure or settlement, farm) was originally a settlement based on a water feature, the pond, which acted as a natural drainage “vessel” for surrounding agricultural land.

It was also clearly a junction, located where tracks or ancient roads converged in an east/west and also north/south direction. The earliest known settlement was in the Anglo Saxon period and the settlement pattern since then has followed a fairly typical form, always based on agriculture. In its earliest years the settlement was probably

centred on a farm or a few farmsteads grouped around the pond with a church site located to the north.



Buildings in the form of cottages and “servant” industrial uses such as blacksmith or baker were gradually built and spread outwards from the original village core, in all directions. The pattern of development was and still is, dependant upon the relative buoyancy of the economy, the ownership, purchasing and selling of parcels of land, and changing patterns of living and need for communication between adjacent settlements.

Most periods of architecture are represented in the village although the earliest styles are less evident than the later ones of Georgian and Victorian buildings; e.g. The Poplars, an early Victorian house on Chapel Lane. More historic fabric could be contained behind later facades, but over time, buildings have been adapted, extended and given a change of use, all in response to the influences mentioned earlier. “Infill” plots over time, and parcels of land have been sold, and built upon, and new housing continues to be built in the village to this day as the dramatic changes in agriculture impact on the built environment of such a settlement.

The converted Methodist Chapel, school, bakery and farm buildings all reflect the changes and difficulties such villages face in the 21st Century. The lack of infrastructure to maintain a truly rich and vital community, such as school, shop, post office or pub is sadly all too obvious. Yet the settlement is still an extremely attractive place to live, and is clearly deeply cherished by its residents.



Character Overview

The Boughton Conservation Area has a unity of character and architectural interest, a setting in the landscape, and in terms of village form, has the central feature of the pond. Another important feature is the degree of linear settlement along the roads and tracks which enter and leave the village at certain key points.



The range of building types is extensive and typical of such a mature village community. It varies from small workers cottages, farmhouses, the Church, the “grand” houses of The Poplars and Rectory House, the converted school and Methodist Chapel. Modern construction has been and is still being inserted into this fabric, largely in the form of housing.



It is encouraging to see farming still in existence in the village although little other industry is now carried on.



An essential component in the character of the conservation area is, as always, the spaces created between and beyond the buildings themselves, containing a mature landscape of grass verges, open fields, paddocks, trees, hedgerows and the attractive reed fringe to the pond.

All these components contribute to the overall quality of the conservation area and, in combination, form an attractive and varied series of spaces and vistas. The subtle twists and changes of direction of the roads and tracks all generate a range of these vistas which are interspersed with the main features of the pond, church and churchyard. Good, long distance views of the settlement are afforded from the north (from Barton Bendish Road) and from the south (Stoke Road).



There are several sites which will be under pressure for future development, especially after the demise of the piggeries and the changes in agricultural practice creating pockets of land and derelict buildings. Great care will be needed to develop them with respect to 'context' and the existing unity of character.

In summary, the essential conservation area character is an historic linear settlement based in agriculture, formed around a central node and by the matrix of roads, paths and tracks which converge on the settlement from all directions. The buildings in the conservation area are of all ages and are constructed in the range of local vernacular materials common to this part of the county to give a unique quality of architectural interest and unity.

Spaces and Buildings

Boughton Conservation Area has a predominantly elongated east/west orientated form but with a significant extension to the north around Church Lane. The array of buildings and spaces between them formed by a matrix of building plots of different size and orientation along the major

communicating arteries of the village. They provide the essential character of the conservation area.

Starting at the **Village Green** around the pond, this space in itself is worthy of conservation area status. It provides a quintessential English village scene containing water feature, village green, access track and buildings on four sides to give a sense of enclosure. The space is not particularly intimate, the dimensions being over 160 metres (175 feet) in an east/west direction and over 100 metres (109 feet) in a north/south direction. There is a distinct feeling of openness to this space which also contains important historic buildings in all directions, but particularly to the north and south.



The road to the south is the 'through route' and whilst Church Lane enters the space from the north the traffic generated is small and the east/north and west 'edges' to the pond are almost like cul de sacs thus adding to the feeling of serenity. The "through route" is however heavily used by lorries serving the adjacent haulage companies associated with agriculture.

There are few mature trees on the pond fringe itself and it is the tree belts/clumps between and beyond the surrounding building which provide an important visual backdrop to the scene. In townscape terms the components such as bench seating, waste paper bins and chain link fencing/posts are reasonably discreet.



A small playground is located to the north west and contains post box and village notice board. The playground is set behind a well-maintained, green painted row of hooped railings.

In summary, this area with its wildlife and reed fringe is the 'gem' of the village. Special mention should be made of the oak village sign which is a tour de force of energetic design.



In terms of enclosure there are important screen walls located to the Old Bakery, "Winward" and Hall Farm House. The fence to Manor Farm is a little 'strident' but is not a major detractor. Finally, no attempt should be made to introduce kerbing to the area; the spillage of grass verges over the access road should be retained at all costs and is generally an attractive feature of the whole area.

Mention has been made of **Church Lane**. This attractive access road leaves the village green to the north and leads to the important space formed by All Saints Church and its churchyard. This space and that further north is much more rural in character.



The eastern side of this track has been subject to most built development although several modern dwellings have been inserted to the north west as the track takes a dramatic turn eastwards towards adjacent agricultural land. The spaces created along this track by the assembly of buildings and landscape are interesting and views back towards the Church and pond from the north are particularly attractive. The latter view is made more dramatic by the enclosure provided by “Winward” and the particularly fine Old Bakery range of building which step down in size along Church Lane. The northern periphery of the conservation area is formed by the “Rose Cottage” range of four cottages.



The modern housing is rather bland in contrast, as is the enclosure formed by strident timber fencing and too formal hedging with evergreen species predominating. The plastic chain fencing is particularly inappropriate and traditional indigenous hedgerow planting should be encouraged wherever possible. The Churchyard is, as always, a vitally important space together with its mature trees, hedgerow and attractive screen walling to the west.

Mill Hill Road is the built area to the west of the pond. It is essentially linear development, again with a mixture of old and new buildings, and is all contained within the conservation area boundary. The character of the conservation area is somewhat diluted in this part. Modern infill housing to the north of the road is all undistinguished and adds little to intrinsic local character, but the design of recent housing development, inserted south of the former piggeries, is a considerable improvement on the earlier modern development and augers well for the future.

To the south, **Wretton Road** leads outwards towards open countryside and contains some plain housing inserted onto infill plots. The

outbuildings to Hall Farm lying to the east of Wretton Road are mostly converted to residential use.

Further east Hall House, and Hall Farm House are both important historic buildings together with their remaining outbuildings and mature landscape of trees, hedges and screen walls, with attractive views out to the adjacent countryside beyond.



The western edge of the conservation area is dominated by open agricultural land sweeping up to the village. To the south are some important and attractive ranges of cottages and associated outbuildings.

The road to the east of the pond, **Chapel Road**, contains an even more extensive array of historic buildings on both north and south sides, culminating in the complex of “The Poplars” a ‘listed building’ dating from the 1830s. It is here that the most intense building took place in Victorian times. A parallel line of buildings, Poplar Cottages, is located to the north. The spaces and vistas created are all interesting as is the example of different architectural styles from the “grand” house, converted cottage, semidetached Victorian villa, the converted Methodist Church, modern housing and health centre. The character is still rural with

frontages directly onto the road together with mature landscaping of verges, trees and hedges.



Another minor ‘node’ is formed to the east as Chapel Road splits into **Oxburgh Road** and **Stoke Road**. Both roads contain modern infill housing, which despite design, are of reasonable scale. This area contains a derelict barn, surrounded by metal fencing – part of a redevelopment scheme yet to be completed in this visually sensitive spot.



The eastern conservation area boundary is formed by the garden to Rectory House on the north of Oxburgh Road. This part of the conservation area is governed by its attractive rural landscape of mature trees, grass verges, hedgerows and views through to open countryside to the north.

Finally, returning to the pond, mention should be made of the fine assembly of buildings on the north-east side of Church Lane, formed by the The Old Bakery and Hall Farm, together with the backdrop of trees between and behind. The barn, east of Manor Farm is, at present, being converted.

In summary, the conservation area is a complex assembly of many components. It is a historic settlement with pressure for future development on certain key sites. Such development has its positive and negative sides. In a sense development activity can help to sustain a vibrant community life, but usually it is accompanied by increased motor traffic and rarely means enrichment provided by a recreation of the old village infrastructure based, perhaps, on a shop or post office.

Listed Buildings

There are three Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and there have been no further additions.

Grade I Buildings

None

Grade II* Buildings

- **Church of All Saints, Church Lane.** Early 14th Century west tower; nave and chancel 1872. Flint with ashlar dressings and plain tiled roofs.



Grade 2 Buildings

- **The Poplars, Chapel Road.** Built around 1830. Gault brick with slate roof. 'T' plan; 2 storeys in 5 bays of balanced symmetry. Façade articulated into 8 bays with sunk pilasters. Hipped roof in Welsh slates. Good Victorian railings and dwarf wall to south curtilage – all intact.
- **Granary and stables east of the Poplars, Chapel Lane.** Built around 1870. Gault brick with slate roof in 3 recessed bays hipped roof in Welsh slate.



Important Unlisted Buildings

The character of Boughton Conservation Area benefits from the above Listed Buildings but, more importantly, relies on the vernacular styles of its unlisted buildings and these have been identified on the map.



Post War Development



Modern post war development in Boughton Conservation Area comprises much infill housing with, generally, one house per plot, either bungalow or 2 storey dwelling. Most early post war housing up to the 1980s has been non-descript and, apart from scale, contributes little to the essential character of the conservation area – unfortunately a country wide phenomenon. The last

decades have seen a reassessment of the need to respond to “place” and “context” and the design of later buildings has attempted to reflect character. The housing south of the piggeries is a good example.

The most serious post war development for the conservation area has been the rapidity of decline in local industry - not only agriculture – which has torn the heart out of village infrastructure throughout the country. The reliance on the motor car, the demise of agriculture and its associated local industries, and consequently village infrastructure such as school, pub, post office has resulted in what can be described as “housing villages”. Boughton Conservation Area shows the results of all these changes. In this sense it is gratifying to learn of a still vibrant and caring community with working farms still in situ.

Traditional Materials

The character of Boughton Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction its historic buildings.

These materials include:-

- Chalk
- Random and coursed field stones of flint nodules
- Knapped flints
- Dressed limestone
- Norfolk red brick.
- Local pinkey/buff brickwork.
- Gault brickwork
- Clay pantiles – both natural red and black glazed
- Colourwashed brick, flint and render

- Welsh slate
- Carstone – random rubble; galletted carstone



Archaeological Interest

There are no known sites of archaeological interest in the area.

Detractors

The special quality of conservation areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials or unsympathetic paintwork, removal of walls, railings, trees and hedges.

Unfortunately examples of all these detractors are present in Boughton, particularly the insertion of inappropriate windows and doors and poor enclosure through ‘urban’ planting schemes, poor paving materials and construction of “anywhere” housing, walls and fences. Opportunities to redress the situation in future years should be taken whenever the opportunity arises. The presence of “wirescape” is not serious, certainly when compared to other local villages. However, this should be removed whenever possible.

Mention has been made of through traffic, particularly heavy good vehicles. The danger and impact to the residents and the historic fabric is obvious.

Conservation Objectives

Statement 1

The overall conservation objective is to protect and reinforce the established special character of Conservation Areas and their setting.

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging the retention and maintenance of buildings which contribute to the overall character of each conservation area
- Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the special qualities and character of each conservation area
- Protecting the setting of the conservation area from development which adversely affects views into or out of the area
- The retention, maintenance and locally appropriate new planting of trees
- Maintaining and enhancing local features and details which contribute towards an area's local distinctiveness
- Working with the community to prepare schemes of enhancement
- Encouraging the removal of detractors to the special character of each conservation area

Contacts and advice

Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alteration, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from Development Services at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may be subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Anyone wishing to carry out work to trees within a Conservation Area should therefore seek advice from Development Services.

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