



# The Walks

## Conservation Area

### Character Statement

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*The Walks, for which the inhabitants are indebted to the liberality of the corporation, comprise about seven acres. The New Walk, which extends in a direct line to a loft modern arch near the Red Mount, and is about 350 yards long, and eleven broad; having on each side a range of lofty Lime and Chestnut trees, forming a fine shady avenue, with recessed seats at convenient distances, and one of them canopied by a group of trees called the Seven Sisters.*

**William White 1845**

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## Introduction

***A Conservation Area - “An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or 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 King's Lynn Conservation Area was first designated in 1969 and extended in 1979 and 1991. 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

King's Lynn stands at the south-east corner of The Wash, but several kilometres from open water, at the outflow of the River Great Ouse, 170 kilometres (106 miles) from London, 69 kilometres (43 miles) west-north-west of Norwich, 74 kilometres (46 miles) north of Cambridge and 56 kilometres (35 miles) north-east of Peterborough.



Its location at the mouth of the Ouse, and the inland waterways that it serves, brought the port its early success. The basins of the

Gaywood River and the River Nar enter the town from the north-west and the south so the land is flat, and indeed much of it is reclaimed from the sea. But 11 kilometres (7 miles) to the east, the ridge of the western chalk escarpment rises to over 90 metres along the roughly north-south line of the Peddar's Way. King's Lynn is a low-lying conurbation, with salt marshes to the north and the dyke-lined Fens stretching away to south and west, often below sea-level. Huge skies dominate the nearly featureless, tree-swept landscape. Beyond Lynn to the north-west is the Wash. From King's Lynn itself views are limited, for nowhere in the conservation area does the land dip below three metres or rise to six metres above sea-level. There are good views within the town, but to architecture not landscape, with the exception of The Walks. One of the best views is from West Lynn over the River Great Ouse to the long and varied quays of the town.

The whole area is agricultural, with the soil of the Fens being among the most productive in Europe. Vegetables for freezing and processing are grown locally and this determines the nature of the bulk of Lynn's indigenous industry, with the product going by road and from the port of Lynn. The town is in the centre of a local agricultural catchment area, with small- or medium-sized market towns, and the nearest population centre which exceeds Lynn's 35,000 is the city of Peterborough.

## King's Lynn - Origins and Historical Development

King's Lynn has its origins in the Saxon period, but the first settlement was small, based round a series of salt-water lagoons defined by the Millfleet to the north and the

River Nar to the south. On the west side were marshes and the open sea, but this has disappeared with the silting of The Wash and the deviation in the course of the River Ouse. The economy was based on fishing, some coastal trade and the production of salt, but it was not a major settlement until Bishop Herbert de Losinga founded the new town in 1100 and began construction of the priory church of St Margaret. Losinga's town was established to the north of the existing settlement, roughly between the Millfleet and the Purfleet with the market at Saturday Market Place.

Benefiting from the patronage of successive bishops of East Anglia, Losinga's new town became a significant regional trading centre and expanded so rapidly that by the middle of the twelfth Century the 'newe lande' to the north, between the Purfleet and the Fisherfleet, was developed by Bishop Turbe. A second market in Tuesday Market Place was established, and St Nicholas's chapel constructed as a chapel-of-ease to St Margaret. The number of religious houses built by the mendicant friars is, as always, a sign of the importance of a town, and in Lynn they arrived early and in numbers: the Greyfriars in about 1230, the Blackfriars in 1272, the Austin friars in 1293 and the Whitefriars in about 1260. To protect these and the expanding European trade the original defence earthworks were replaced to the north and north-east by flint and brick walls begun in the 1290s and running as far south as the Purfleet. South of that, as far as the South Gates, was a system of ditches and earthworks fed by the two rivers, the two fleets and by a canal dug to link the Nar and the southeast quadrant of the defences. Lynn

relied on water for landward defences as it relied on the River Great Ouse and The Wash for its prosperity.



Most trade went by sea and river, and there is evidence that ocean-going ships unloaded at quays into river craft for distribution inland. Merchants from the Low Countries had by the 12th Century established the Continental trade in wool: in the 1260s 1200 bales were exported, rising to 2000 by the early 14th Century. In the other direction came Gascon wine, coal, Baltic timber and luxury goods, especially after the Hanseatic League established a trading centre in Lynn. After that only London and Southampton (also with Hansa offices) beat Lynn in export volume and value. In less than 200 years Lynn grew from an obscure Saxon settlement crouching by a salt-water lagoon into the third greatest port of England.

From the 16th Century cereal export dominated, with coal, wine and timber constituting the principal return loads, and by the 18th Century Lynn and Yarmouth were the principal grain handling ports in England. In 1800 these two centres handled more grain traffic than all other ports in England put together. No wonder Defoe

attributed 'more gentry and gaiety' to Lynn than to Norwich: the merchants could afford it.



Trade declined in the 19th Century. First were the Napoleonic Wars, a disaster for a town which specialised in European trade, not with the expanding world empire. In 1844 came the railway, with more convenient and reliable access to the eastern counties, causing a slump in coastal trade. By the last quarter of the Century rail communications from Lynn were some of the best in England, including easy access to London and Hull, stifling the interests of owners of small ships. To compensate, the Alexandra Dock was opened in 1869. Located north of the Fisher Fleet it was capable of taking larger deep-draught vessels and eliminating the big problem in Lynn - the tidal nature of the River Great Ouse which meant that loading and unloading had to be done at the turn of each high tide. The Bentinck Dock followed in 1883, but the great trading days of the port were over.

There was always industry in Lynn: shipbuilding from medieval times, and heavy engineering following the construction of the docks and the arrival of the railway. Traction engines, farm machinery and fairground rides were made at the Savage works, and Dodman's Highgate Ironworks of 1875 made boilers, locomotives and ships. Cooper Roller

Bearings, founded in 1894, is the only surviving engineering works of the 19th Century period.



The period between the wars saw factories serving the new food processing industry, and in 1958 the most famous, Campbells, set up its factory in South Lynn. The post-war industrial boom experienced by King's Lynn prompted the London overspill scheme of 1962, which envisaged a population increase from 25,000 to 50,000 in twenty years. Encouraged by the local authority, fifty new companies came to the industrial estate at Hardwick, south-east of the town, requiring 5,000 extra employees. More houses were provided on the three existing satellite estates to accommodate the surge in population to 38,000 in 1975, and, infamously, the redevelopment of the town centre. Between 1962 and 1971 one fifth of historic King's Lynn disappeared in the area between London Road and the High Street in favour of new shopping malls and pedestrianised streets.

How is this history reflected in the built environment of the town? Power began to pass early from the bishops, but was encouraged by them. Bishop John Grey (1200-22) petitioned King John to grant Lynn a charter to be a free borough, but it was Henry VIII who granted the governing charter

setting up the municipal system of mayor, aldermen and councillors. Almost all of them were successful merchants who before the Reformation conducted town business in the Trinity Guildhall, Saturday Market Place.

Until the Reformation Lynn was concentrated in the strip of land near the river front, with large areas of open ground to the east stretching up to the town walls and ditches. Only the two main highways to the permanent gates of East Gate and South Gates were built up with houses and shops. East of a line roughly following the present Friars Street, All Saints Street, Tower Street and Chapel Street were the fields and the precincts of the friars. An exception was the Whitefriars, whose house to the west of Friars Street to the south-west of the centre survives only as a gatehouse. South-east of All Saints church were open fields and rope-walks.

This pattern of land use remained essentially the same until the first years of the 19th Century. John Wood's 1830 plan (Appendix 2 Map 4) indicates that the two central fleets were still open waterways, much reduced in width, and the southern spur of the Fisherfleet was still identifiable. The first systematic encroachments of the open lands were the development of the Valingers Road area in 1807, the new London Road of 1803-06 and the railway quarter built over the Blackfriars' land north of the Purfleet in the late 1840s and 1850s. These new streets were lined with terraces, and it is terraces that are the most important 19th Century contribution to the town's character.

The remainder of the open land was also being encroached. East of London Road came Windsor Place and Guanock Terrace, and the roads opening north of them, and in the same area south of the Millfleet was the

hospital. The most remarkable and important survivor of the old fields however is The Walks, one of the earliest municipal parks in the country intended for public recreation. The New Walk (the present Broad Walk) was well established by 1753, and planted with trees and hedges, with seats added, by 1762. The Town Wall Walk was laid out in 1800-27, covering an area from Guanock Terrace in the south to Kettle Mills in the north, but was bisected in 1844 by the railway, and the northern section closed in 1870. Further expansions in the 19th & 20th Centuries enlarged and consolidated The Walks (St James' Park 1903, St John's Walk 1906, the Recreation ground east of the walls on land bought between the Wars), so that today a realistic impression can be appreciated of the openness of the land in this part of Lynn through a millennium.

Domestic buildings and those with dual domestic and commercial function survive early in Lynn, the earliest being the stone-built Norman hall at 28-30 King Street, which, when new, looked straight out over the lagoon on the other (west) side of the street. Courtyard houses were confined to the first medieval town, on the west side of Nelson Street and Queen Street where the sea-bank allowed larger plots and where land was available up to the beginning of the 16th Century. Hampton Court and Clifton House were both begun in the 14th Century and Thoresby College in about 1500. More common are houses of an L-shaped plan, with a street front often used for shops, and a range running back at the rear, which contained the Hall. Nearly all the houses on the west sides of Queen and King Streets are of this type, the latter more altered than the former. This plan predominated from the 14th Century. Houses with shops began to disappear after 1560.

Almost every house in Queen Street and King Street has a Georgian front added to an earlier building, for example the early 19th Century front at No.14 King Street conceals a late 17th Century double-pile plan. None of the 18th Century houses had warehouses incorporated within them, and of grander 19th Century houses there is nothing remarkable in King's Lynn. The story is rather of terraced houses, all typical and beginning late, but of generally high quality, especially those in the developments round London Road. In the thirty years from 1821 1,384 houses were built in Lynn. King's Lynn also had its slums, situated in about 160 alleys or yards off the main thoroughfares, in which lived nearly a third of the town's population. Some of these survive and have been restored, but most succumbed to slum clearances in the 1920s and 30s. The gradual expansion of the town outside the walls continued throughout the 19th Century, but major planned developments came with the 20th Century, with council houses going up at Gaywood and North Lynn to the east and north, and at South Lynn.

Warehouses are more remarkable. The river front moved west releasing land and from the 13th Century it became possible to build on narrow plots along the west side of King Street. These plots were elongated in stages until river movement ceased in this area in the 17th Century. The movement of the river in the first town was rather slower, but began earlier when there was less pressure for land by the river. This resulted in more generous sized plots, reflected today in the surviving buildings dating from the 14th - 17th Century around open courtyards. Warehouse design changed from the later 15th Century from ranges parallel to the river, as at Hampton Court, to blocks set gable-end to the river, such as the Hanseatic Warehouse of about



1477 on St Margaret's Lane, the latter configuration capable of extension as necessary. St George's Guildhall on King Street of 1410-30 has behind it a whole series of added warehouses extending to the watergate at the river.

## King's Lynn Conservation Area 1969 - 2001

The original King's Lynn Conservation Area was designated in 1969, following the introduction of the concept of conservation areas in the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. At that time the conservation area was confined to the streets surrounding St Nicholas Chapel/Tuesday Market Place, and St Margaret's Church/Saturday Market Place, linked by King Street and Queen Street. (Appendix 1 Map 1).

In 1978 a re-appraisal of the historic character of King's Lynn within the old town walls was undertaken. The study area was divided into 18 zones with 10 of these zones forming the basis for a new, enlarged conservation area, adopted by the Borough Council in March 1979. (Appendix 1 Map 2).

In 1991 a minor extension to the conservation area was made in Stonegate Street to protect the remains of an historic house and shop contained within a printing works. Further minor adjustments were made in 1992 to accord with new base maps. There have been no additional changes since that time.

In the early 1980's the Borough Council became increasingly concerned about the alterations to the exterior of unlisted historic buildings which owners were making under normal 'permitted development' rights. The effect was to dilute the special character of

the conservation area by changes such as slate/clay roofs to concrete tiled roofs, and plastic windows replacing traditional timber frames. In 1983, at the Council's request, the Secretary of State for the Environment approved an 'Article 4 Direction' for King's Lynn Conservation Area under the Town and Country Planning General Development Orders 1977-81. The effect was to remove 'permitted development' rights for certain types of development, requiring formal planning permission to be sought.

## Changes to the Designation of King's Lynn Conservation Area 2003

Through many centuries of development King's Lynn exhibits a complex traditional character. As a result of the review in 2003 it was felt that the existing single, large conservation area did not adequately reflect the clear pattern of growth which can be seen in the physical make-up of the town centre.

So the existing conservation area has been sub-divided into five new conservation areas with boundaries which define the main historic periods of development (Appendix 1 Map 3 shows the extent of these areas). Character Statements for each area have been written to highlight their special features and were approved by the Borough Council in 2003 and the text has been fully revised in November 2008.

## The Walks - Origins and Historical Development

The Walks is an important area in the national context, rather than merely a local one, and in 1998 was designated by English

Heritage as a grade II historic park. Parks laid out as formal pleasure and recreation grounds only became common in the middle of the 19th Century and generally these are well-defined areas surrounded by residential streets. St James' Park in King's Lynn is very much in this context, laid out in 1902-03, and lying to the west of The Walks in the junction formed by St James' Road and Blackfriars Road.



However, the greater area covered by The Walks as a whole had a different and earlier origin, in that it was at first conceived not as a municipal park as one understands the term today, but as a single promenade for the citizens away from the smell, grime and bustle of the town centre. The model, if there was one, came from the parks surrounding 18th Century country houses. The Walks evolved into the present extensive open space through the course of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. In 1840 it was even larger than now.

The existence of a large cultivated area to the east of the growing town (but within the town defences), as late as the 18th Century, is an unusual circumstance, and the topography that allowed it is itself unusual. Like many of the characteristics of King's Lynn, it seems to have depended on the course of the River Great Ouse. The river running through the flat and marshy land of the Fens to The Wash had no defined course, and in the early Middle Ages probably linked lagoons such as the one which supported the first Late Saxon settlement, a considerable distance from the

shores of The Wash itself. It tended to migrate westwards, assisted by drainage and improvement schemes from the 17th to the 20th Centuries. In 1100 for example, the east bank of the river was some 80 metres (87 yards) further east than it was in 1855 when the stone quays were built, finally arresting movement. Several centuries before that it either ran along the line of the town defences, or the line of the defences represents the east bank of a large shallow salt-water lagoon.

When Bishop's Lynn was founded in c. 1100 and was obviously going to prosper some form of defences were needed, but the flat expanse of marshy land immediately east of the settlements was not the best site for a ditch and earthwork stockade. Much further out, at least 400 metres (437 yards) away from All Saints Church at its closest point, there existed the older sea bank, very slightly elevated above the plain and running roughly north-south, and this was the site chosen. It left a huge area technically within the town limits, but with the advantage of offering building land if it should be needed, space for the generous precincts of the mendicant friars' houses, and an area which could be cultivated in comparative safety. It was not in fact encroached for building until the first decade of the 19th Century. The ditch was easily fed by the rivers Nar and Gaywood and by the two fleets running west-east from the Ouse.

In the 13th Century there were four timber towers (bretasks) at the points of entry, but between 1294 & 1339 successive murage grants were made to allow the defences to be modernised, with flint and brick walls, and gates at the important points of entry into the town. The masonry walls only ran along the north boundary of the town, cutting south at East Gate (Littleport Street) as far as the

Purfleet, about 30 metres (32 yards) south of the meeting of St John's Walk and Town Wall Walk). From there swinging round to meet South Gate was a deeper ditch and higher bank, with two postern gates (including the surviving Guanock Gate) marking an entry point. Immediately within the defences was a well-defined track for access.



In 1643 the town fell to the Parliamentarians who set about making the defences more secure than before. In all, ten triangular ravelins were constructed, the most prominent of which is the site at Red Mount chapel. The 17th Century defences were never used in action, and the King's Lynn Paving Acts of 1803 and 1806 authorised their removal leaving only fragments in the north of the town, parts of St Ann's Gate, and the untouched South Gate.

Henry Bell's groundplat of c.1670 (Appendix 2 Map 1) indicates the area of The Walks as essentially open fields divided into three areas by the built-up Norfolk Street (then Damgate) to the north and the Purfleet and Millfleet in the centre and south. There are only a few buildings: St James' church (workhouse) to the west, two corn mills and Red Mount Chapel. Cultivation of the open land was sporadic – Lynn was concerned with imports and exports, not local agriculture. The originator of the idea of providing a single promenade, New Walk or Mall, from the precinct of the Greyfriars in the west to Guanock Gate is not known, but the Mayoral Chronicles of 1714 record that the walk was a 'handsome lime-planted walk put in the year before'. By 1753, if not before, the walk was raised up for drainage and gravelled, and bounded on both sides by a hawthorn hedge with trees at intervals. A description of 1773 tells us that 'The new walk or mall, from the bars of the workhouse to Guanock-gates, is about 340 yards long and 11 yards wide between quick hedges; at convenient distances on each side of the walk a recess is left in the hedge in a semicircular form, where benches are fixed, on which twenty people may fit together. Upon a gentle ascent on the right is a plantation and a shrubbery'. The plantation on the right was Seven Sisters, seven trees planted in a circle in 1760, 130 metres (142 yards) south of Guanock Gate. In the same year the area round Red Mount was planted 'in pleasing taste'.

The picture in the middle of the 18th Century is of a tree-lined walk with semicircular seating areas leading over undeveloped land to the Guanock Gate, and extending, though not yet formally, to Red Mount chapel a short way to the north. Its purpose was purely recreational, and seems to have been funded

by private citizens. The Guanock Gate (later partially rebuilt), terminated the promenade as a powerful visual stop. Daniel Defoe, in his *Tour Through the Eastern Counties*, 1722 (edition of 1888), records that the walls 'appear very fair to this day, nor would it be a hard matter to restore the bastions with the ravelins and the counterscarp upon any sudden emergency to a good state of defence, and that in a little time'. East of Guanock Gate ran a track across even more marshy ground in Gaywood parish, destined to become the Extension Walk, and it must have been with the passing of the Paving Acts that the resolution to continue development of The Walks as a civic-controlled and planned exercise was formalised. By 1805 gates were erected at the east and west ends of the track east of Guanock Gate. These gates were only removed in the Second World War.



On the site of the defensive bank, already conveniently elevated, Town Wall Walk was pushed north, reaching the walls at Wyatt Street by 1827. The section between St John's Walk and Broad Walk was planted in 1805 with elm (died of Dutch elm disease in 1973), and the section south to Windsor Terrace (which was not yet built) was laid

out in 1804 and planted in the 1820s. By 1830 a continuous tree-lined avenue extended from Thomas Street in the south to Wyatt Street in the north, a distance of 1,060 metres (1,159 yards). In 1803 incursion was taking place to the west, with the allotments on the site of St James' Park developed as a new burial ground. In 1813 the Corporation bought the common land east of the defences. By the 1820s the U-shaped residential development at St James' End was begun, and the banks round Red Mount were redesigned as an ornamental feature, and given pleasure-ground status.

By 1830 the new burial ground on the east side of St James' Road had a circular chapel, and just over half of St James' End had been built up. Progress with promenades continued. The Broad Walk Extension running east from Guanock Gate to Tennyson Road was proposed in the late 1790s, and again in the 1830s, but not finally made until 1843, when Charles Goodwin, who was developing the area of south-east Lynn, contributed funds. Raised and gravelled like the other Walks, it was planted on both sides with alternating lime and horse chestnut trees. 1841 saw yet another re-planting of the important Red Mount area,

'in a very ornamental manner'. In 1844-6 St John's Church was built, and later the railway station to its north-east.



The railway was particularly intrusive, for the tracks bisected the Walks, isolating the northern half, which was at first maintained, with a bridge over the tracks. These developments must have spurred the creation of St John's Walk, just south of an existing track, in 1851, but it had to wait for its trees.

The West Norfolk and Lynn Hospital of 1834 was enlarged in 1847-52, Framingham's Almshouses built in 1849, and a large part of the Purfleet culverted in the 1830s and 40s. A depression south of St John's church indicates its course. In 1849 the land south of Broad Walk Extension was opened to the public, and in 1864 the land north of it. Meanwhile, in 1857, following the collapse of its central tower in 1854, the workhouse at St James' was closed in favour of the purpose-built establishment to the east of the town, and the new burial ground re-planted and again improved, incorporating the burial ground of the workhouse, whose ruins mark the south end of the site. During the 1850s and 60s the hedges lining Broad Walk were removed and some benches were

provided, but St John's Walk was completed and planted in 1868. In 1871 the railway bought land for expansion (the new station is of 1871-2), removed the bridge connecting the north and south areas of The Walks, and left the northern half to fairly speedy encroachment and obliteration. The original iron fence running parallel to the north of St John's Walk was erected.

1871 saw the allocation of land for the football ground south-east of Guanock Gate, but a pitch was not formally laid until the 1920s, and the stadium not even then. In 1875 a new path was cut south from Blackfriars Road, passing the west front of St John's church to St James' End. About 1885 came the final expansion to The Walks, partly as a compensation for the loss of the northern section, and the, by then, obvious impossibility of incorporating Hospital Walk to the south in the scheme. The Corporation bought all the land between the defences and Tennyson Road north of Broad Walk and south of St John's Walk. It was intended specifically for sport and other physical recreation, rather than more passive promenading, a concern affecting most local authorities towards the end of the 19th Century. In 1887 Tennyson Road received a line of trees on its west side and between 1887 and 1929 St John's Walk was extended to Tennyson Road, planted in 1906 with lime trees, later lime and plane trees.

Finally, in 1902-3 St James' Park was laid out, on land occupied by the churchyard and the new burial ground. In the same years there was continual intermittent new building, such as the completion of the St James' End circuit of two roads, and the construction of a new hospital block to the south. In 1906 a

proposal to create a new ornamental garden, Vancouver Island, to replace that at the Red Mount was mooted.



The proposal was undertaken in the 1920s, complete with an octagonal bandstand, but not yet with a spur of water taken from the rivulet to turn it into an island. The Red Mount area reverted to a Walk only. In the same years the garden to the east of Framingham's Almshouses was requisitioned for incorporation into The Walks. Apart from minor works since, The Walks reached their mature and final state in about 1930.

The one Walk which never really developed was Hospital Walk, a footpath beginning about 50 metres (56 yards) south of Seven Sisters (at the junction with the present Exton's Road) running west to London Road. It may well have been brought into the overall scheme in the course of the 19th Century but for the opening of the West Norfolk and Lynn hospital in 1835, and the construction of the new streets north of Windsor Road in the early 1840s. In the 1990s extensive development of the hospital quarter for flats north of Hospital Walk detached the street from its early association. Similarly, having been well established by 1830, the southern end of the

Town Wall Walk was encroached on the west side by housing developments in South Lynn over the next two decades, and survived in 1930 only as the belt of trees on the east side of Windsor Terrace, south of Exton's Road. Many of them remain, but their origins are not at all obvious.

Exton's Road was a track running east from the north end of Terrace Walk, outside the town walls in the early 19th Century, but by 1830 was the site of a brick and tile works situated at the junction with Town Wall Walk, where the pub now is. In the early 1850s Charles Goodwin began residential development so that by 1857 Nos. 1-31 on the north side had been built and Nos. 2-26 on the south side. In addition Russell Street, Graham Street and Aberdeen Street had been established, lined with good-quality terraced housing.

## Character Overview

The Walks conservation area has a distinct, immediate and obvious character as a large open recreational space. In terms of parks and deliberately landscaped areas for public, rather than private, use it has great antiquity, being started as early as 1713. This is one of the earliest such projects in England, and one which has retained its identity despite

false starts in the south, loss of the northern third, and some encroachment by built developments.



The area is naturally flat (around the 4 metre contour, very slightly dropping from west to east), so the undulations are man-made, mostly dating to the 12th Century and associated with the town defences. The most is made of these low rises and dips, and the character of the area, unlike that of any other part of central King's Lynn, depends on the deliberate planting of trees and their continued maintenance. Another asset is the pattern of waterways, especially in the area of the Town Wall Walk and Guanock Gate. Reference to the town defences underlines another aspect of historic significance, both from the late Middle Ages and from the English Civil War, and a third important feature is that the presence of The Walks allows an overview of the plan of Lynn as a whole. It permits an immediate appreciation of the pattern of medieval land use within the defences. The Walks contain 800 mature trees.

The parts of The Walks to the north-east, east and south of Guanock Gate comprise the section added to the conservation area. A large part of The Walks consists of the

beautiful green space with tree-lined edges to the east of Red Mount Chapel, including Vancouver Island and its system of enclosing waterways. This is an integral part of The Walks, as well as providing views from the existing conservation area. In particular, the view through Guanock Gate along the Broad Walk extension is vital to aesthetic success of the area. The section added to the conservation area that runs south of Guanock Gate is historically as well as visually important as it points out the original extent of The Walks, even though the area to the west has been built up in recent decades. The gentle rise up to the site of the Seven Sisters is bounded at the northern end by a small park, just south of the bridge, with railings, and the path is tree lined. The site of the Seven Sisters has been preserved as a circular area with seating, and the trees continue south to the end of the proposed extension, a reminder of an earlier section of The Walks. Exton's Road and its side streets offer a good townscape with the terraced houses of the mid 19th century.

## Spaces and Buildings

The entrance to **Broad Walk** from St James' Road is good, with important trees and excellent cast-iron railings replicating those

of 1850 arranged as a splayed opening to the Walk, matched by those to Framingham's Almshouse to the south.



The Almshouse is a picturesque U-shaped building of 1849 in the Tudor style, with a long grassed forecourt providing an important open space dotted with trees. Broad Walk itself is lined with simple iron railings on the south side only, terminating at the end of the almshouse. The railings on the opposite side have been removed. The Walk continues east lined by important mature trees, with a view to the north and north-east which continually expands in breadth as the Guanock Gate is approached. **Guanock Gate** is a deliberately picturesque ruin set against a wall of foliage, its central section was partly rebuilt around 1800.. Of early 14th Century origins, it is now more

13th Century in spirit, with arched openings flanking the central passage, crenellations and unequal lengths of wall north and south.



The Walk continues right through the centre, over a bridge with simple early 19th Century railings, with rebuilt brick piers with stone caps, and on into the distance along the south edge of the recreation ground.

This area is the focal point of The Walks. A second brick bridge south of the gate carries the path over the river Gaywood. The bridge is of mid 18th Century date, with a single arch and a curved brick cornice. The river turns sharply north on the east side of it, then under the bridge on the east side of the gate, like a bridge over a castle moat, and north to a detour round the 17th Century ravelin. A spur leads off to the east, turning the landscaped **Vancouver Garden** into an island, a purposeful and carefully planned exercise opened in 1989. All of the area



benefits from the contribution of trees, with a glimpse north-east to the bandstand and to the north stand of the football stadium.



As the **Broad Walk Extension** leads the visitor away from the gate there is a sudden visual contrast between the tight, controlled, stage-set round the gate and the very wide expanse of open park of the east recreation ground. In the distance are the trees lining St John's Walk Extension and Tennyson Road, with glimpses of houses beyond them.

Guanock Gate stands at the junction of Broad Walk and **Town Wall Walk**. The walk to the south is now compromised by 1990s housing on the west side, and the flank of the football stadium on the east, but still retains the accent of the Seven Sisters, reduced to a tarmaced circle with an inner circle picked out in an outline of setts. Further south, is a satisfying view of the trees lining the east side of Windsor Terrace. **Exton's Road, Russell Street and Graham Street** comprise a small unified development outside the town walls, begun later than the William Street development to the south, but completed more quickly, by 1857. There has been some attrition of sash windows and doors, especially on Exton's Road, but the area retains its village atmosphere curiously

cut off from the later developments to the east and from the older settlements to the west.



North of Guanock Gate is at once another famous landmark, **Red Mount Chapel**, set among some of the oldest trees in the area, which provide a continuous screen dividing the east and west recreation grounds. The initial view is just right, not too distant but not too close, inviting a perambulation. This is probably not planned but an accident of history, although most is made of it. The same may be said of the curve of the walk at the point where the chapel is met. The chapel was constructed in 1483-5 by Robert Curraunt, is grade I listed and one of the most remarkable polygonal late medieval

brick chapels in England, inside and out. When built it stood just outside the bank but within the ditch defences.



The walk continues north-west, with the twin channels of the river Gaywood and the Walks Rivulet converging in trees from the east, to meet St John's Walk. On the way are open vistas to the west and north-west, broken up by the modern housing of St James' End, but here the houses do not intrude but serve to split the view into a north and south tongue, with St John's Church in the distance to the north-west. **St John's Walk**, although later than the others, presents a similar tree-lined aspect. The view from the intersection to the west takes in the former tennis courts on the left, and a hint of the church through the trees, and the brickwork of St John's Terrace in the distance. The railings to the bowling green are disappointing, but to the east are railings put in to separate The Walks from railway territory.

**St John's Church**, Anthony Salvin's Early English essay (and intended for poorer parishioners inhabiting the proposed urban expansion in the railway quarter) is itself surrounded by railings some of which have been recently restored. The original cast-iron rails remain on the north and west sides, but

the remainder, including the east end of the north side, have either 1870s circular verticals or are modern replacements. A more elaborate set of railings lines the south side of Blackfriars Road, effectively extending St John's Walk up to the north-west entrance to **St James' Park**. The north-east entrance has lost its railings and gate, but the opposite entrance retains them: flattened spear-headed circular verticals and plain circular dog rails and heavier stiles with fleur-de-lys finials, all of 1902. These continue along the long St James' Road frontage, where there is another trap-gate, and between this and the bulk of the Methodist Chapel a short length of railings of 1803 with carriage and pedestrian gates serving the burial ground of St James' workhouse.

The park has two principal pathways, running diagonally between the four corners and meeting north of the centre at a fountain presented in 1903 by the mayor.



The whole park is studded with trees, particularly important in an otherwise tree-starved area of urban King's Lynn. Within the park are the early 19th Century St James' House (doctors' surgery), built of the same brown brick from Wisbech as the

contemporary houses at the south end of London Road, and a surprising prefabricated **nursery school** built in 1941 under the Emergency Powers Act (overriding the provisions of the 1887 and 1906 Open Spaces Acts). Closing the park to the south are the remains of St James' Chapel, left as a feature adjacent to the disappointing bulk of the post-war Vancouver House, and the better north return of the 1858 **Methodist Chapel**.

The west front of the chapel and the former **county court** building (1861) present a much grander display towards the important thoroughfare of St James' Road, both listed buildings. The latter has a particularly fine set of cast-iron railings. From here **St James' End** is reached via **County Court Road**, with more patchy and bulky views of Vancouver House to the north. The fine trees of Broad Walk to the south qualify the vista.

Photograph – Vancouver House (It is not clear where this photograph was taken – I have been unable to take a replacement)

The housing of St James' End is essentially modern, having been redeveloped on exactly the same plan as existed in the 19th Century, but the scale is small and the detailing good. Viewed from Guanock Gate the houses are well-designed and screened by excellent trees whose great size dwarfs the buildings. The view from the houses towards Red Mount Chapel is exactly in imitation of the view over an 18th Century park of a country house and this was conceived earlier than, for example, the equivalent view at Regent's Park in London.

**County Court Road** curves north, to fade out into the grass of The Walks and a view of St John's church. On the west are ranks of headstones transplanted from the burial ground on which St James' Park stands.

## Listed Buildings

There are eight listed buildings within The Walks area. The statutory list was revised in 1989-90 and issued on 26 July 1993, and there have been no additions or deletions since then. One building is grade I, one grade II\* and six are grade II.

### Listed Grade I

- **Red Mount Chapel.** One of the most extraordinary late medieval brick chapels in England, octagonal on plan and constructed in the form of two concentric drums. Built by Robert Curraunt in 1483-85, with an ashlar cruciform chapel added to the top in 1505-06, and attributed to John Wastell. The core is a drum with two staircases winding round it, opening from three doorways. The upper chapel has an elaborate stone fan vault. The original ground floor entry way has been partially reinstated.

### Listed Grade II\*

- **Guanock Gate, Broad Walk.** Early 14th century postern gate guarding a subsidiary entrance to the town from the east. Central part demolished c 1800 and rebuilt to provide a visual termination to the then end of the Broad Walk.

### Listed Grade II

- **Church of St John the Evangelist Church.** 1844-6. by Anthony Salvin for David Gurney of North Runcton Hall. Built of tooled ashlar with stone dressings and with slate roofs in alternating bands of fishscale and plain slates. Stone-coped gables with finials and buttresses, including flying buttresses with a massive free-standing buttresses added in 1889-90 to strengthen the west wall. This building was listed in 2004.
- **Framingham's Almshouses, St James' Road.** The original almshouse established in 1704 by Henry Framingham was on Broad Street, but they were rebuilt here in 1846-8 by Sharman of Spalding, in the prevailing Tudor style. Single-storied and on a conventional U-shaped plan, with arched windows and decorated chimneyshafts.
- **Former County Court, St James' Road.** Italianate palazzo-type building of 1861 by Huddleston, converted to commercial use in the 1990s, with a wide five-bay façade and a heavy cornice. Achievement with the Royal Arms, and a fine set of railings facing the street.
- **London Road Methodist Chapel, St James' Road.** 1858 by J.A. Hillam. Fine gault brick façade to the street in three bays with rusticated elements, elongated upper windows and a shaped gable with a clock face. Good cast-iron

Corinthian columns support the internal gallery.



- **Ruins of St James' Chapel, County Court Road.** Visually part of St James' Park. The remains are part of the 15th Century north transept of a chapel, above which rose the crossing tower (collapsed in 1854). The remainder had been converted in 1681 for use as a poor institution, with a four-light mullioned window of that date.



- **Ruins of an ancillary building to St James' Chapel, County Court Road.** Remains of a late 15th Century

domestic range built into the west end of Vancouver House, of brick and stone.

## Important Unlisted Buildings

Almost all of the buildings within The Walks are of importance (except those specified as detractors) primarily for their landscape value, and specifically in providing focal points for the many fine views. The most important are the bandstand, the railings at the west end of Broad Walk and to Framingham's Almshouses, and, in St James' Park, the north and west boundary railings, the fountain and the nursery school.



Of specific social and historic interest are the ranks of relocated headstones in County Court Road.

## Post-War Development

The only post-war development to have taken place involves the rebuilding of structures already in situ, principally the two streets of houses at St James' End, and Norfolk House at the north-west corner of the complex. The reconstruction does not go beyond the boundaries existing in the late 19th Century and does not increase their

impact on The Walks as a whole. Vancouver House, the worst post-war building, occupies the site of a former cinema. The nursery school occupies the site of a building with exactly the same footprint. There has been some demolition of unattractive buildings in this immediate area, to be replaced with landscaping.

## Traditional Materials

The dominating material throughout is brick, ranging from re-used 14th Century material at Guanock Gate, through the splendid late 15th Century red brickwork of Red Mount Chapel, to the soft red brick and contrasting gault brick of the Victorian buildings fronting St James' Road. The surgery, St James' House, employs brown Wisbech brick in the early 19th Century, a period when a great deal of the material was brought to King's Lynn by boat. The older buildings employ carstone and ashlar also, the latter as dressings. Welsh slate is the principal roofing material, cases such as at Framingham's Almshouses being among the earliest in Lynn. There are so many railings that cast and wrought iron may be included.



## Archaeological Interest

There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments in this part of the King's Lynn conservation area, the Red Mount Chapel, The Walks (monument No: 173) and the Medieval town walls (monument No: 306), but little in the way of remains of organised settlements, as may be expected. Numerous minor finds of coins, pottery shards and broken implements have been recovered.

## Detractors

The principal detractors are three buildings: Vancouver House on County Court Road and the football stadium south-east of Guanock Gate.

Many railings have been restored in recent years and the situation is much improved, but there are still a few deficiencies: the galvanised steel railings to the bowling green fronting St John's Walk and the lack of railings and gates to the north-east entrance to St James' Park.

Poor views out of The Walks include those towards Vancouver House, to the new housing and car park south of Broad Walk,

and towards the football stadium from Broad Walk, especially towards the car park at the east end.



The traffic direction indicator board on Blackfriars Road at the north-east entrance to St James' Park mars the view into the park, and the telephone cable distribution pylon east of the nursery school is poorly sited and of an inappropriate design. Roadside galvanised railings also detract and mar the view of the park's boundary railings which are of good quality.

## Appendix 1

**Appendix 2**



## Conservation Objectives

**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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# KING'S LYNN CONSERVATION AREA THE WALKS AREA

KING'S LYNN  
CONSERVATION AREA  
NORFOLK STREET AREA

KING'S LYNN  
CONSERVATION AREA  
ST MARGARET'S AREA

KING'S LYNN  
CONSERVATION AREA  
THE FRIARS AREA

## NOTATION

-  CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
-  DIVIDING BOUNDARY
-  LISTED BUILDINGS
-  IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Notation:  
DESIGNATED - 1969  
EXTENSION - 15.05.79  
EXTENSION - 09.10.91  
REVISED - 06.02.92  
REVISED - 05.09.03

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