



# St Margaret's Area Conservation Area Character Statement



*During the seige, on Sunday September 3rd, when the minister and congregation were assembled for Divine worship, a 16 pound shot was fired from West Lynn into St. Margaret's church, where it did no further harm than shatter a pillar into a thousand pieces, and frighten the people away, with the loss of many of their hats, hoods, books etc.*

**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.

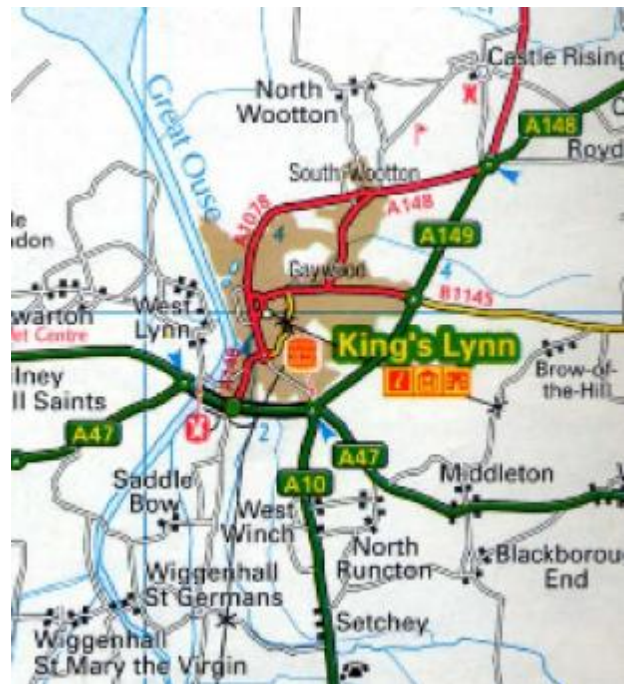
**The King's Lynn Conservation Area was first designated in 1969 and extended in 1979 and 1991. This document highlights the special qualities which underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation.** It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes 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 to 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 the 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.

## St Margarets - Origins and Historical Development

In the late Saxon period it is likely that there would at least have been scattered fishing huts but nothing more, in the area between

Millfleet and Purfleet. So when Herbert de Losinga, Bishop of East Anglia, founded his new town he was able to start the construction of the Benedictine Priory on a virgin site. The site was unusual because it stood right at the edge of the salt-water lagoon, very soon to become consolidated as the east bank of the River Great Ouse which ran along the west sides of Nelson Street, St Margaret's Place and Queen Street, explaining the irregular course of these streets today. Originally there was one ford across the Millfleet, at the junction with the modern Tower Street, but by the early 13th Century another had been created at the site of the present Millfleet Bridge (or Ladybridge), much more convenient for the priory and the market rapidly being developed at Saturday Market Place. The exact extent of the priory precinct at its height is not precisely known, but it probably extended south from the church to occupy the irregular area between Priory Lane and Church Street, though much of this was given up for civil development long before the Reformation.

Tower Street in c. 1240 marked the eastern boundary of the built-up area, running north to Belvacos Bridge over the Purfleet, both the Millfleet and Purfleet being navigable for a considerable distance inland. St James' Street linked the market and Tower Street (then called Finnes Lane), and High Street (Briggate) ran north from the market to Stone Bridge, where there may have been a ford. Church Street was in place, and Baker Lane (Wingate), and the three riverside roads. This was the extent of the town when Bishop Turbe decided to expand King's Lynn with the 'newe lands' north of the Purfleet around 1150, but it was a prosperous place already developing Continental trading interests and English coastal trade. These few streets

were probably heavily built up, with long narrow plots, and shopping centres along the roads leading out of the Saturday Market to the north and east, but little evidence of their physical appearance has survived. The oldest secular building is the 13th Century undercroft at Clifton House on Queen Street, which must have been one of the first to have been constructed along the west side of the road, made possible by the migration of the river west, releasing land for reclamation and development. Clifton House was probably a hall house, as was the 14th Century south range of Hampton Court, also taking advantage of the new plots available on the west side of that street. By the 15th Century the river movement had become more pronounced, so warehouses of that date survive in considerable numbers on bigger, squarer plots available to the west of the three streets.

By circa. 1230 the Greyfriars (Franciscans) established their church and precinct on a field east of Tower Place, and by the middle of the 16th Century the riverside area was becoming so congested that five new lanes had been established. All lead west from the three main streets to public wharves on the

river bank: south to north, they are Devil's Alley, St Margaret's Lane, Leadinghall Lane, College Lane and King's Staithe Lane.



Leadinghall Lane, which cut through from Saturday Market Place where the Vicarage stands, was encroached by the early 18th Century, but the others remain, lined with warehouses ranging from quite modest brick buildings (modest by King's Lynn standards) to the spectacular Hanseatic courtyard arrangement of the 1470s at St Margaret's Place. This warehouse heritage is quite apparent today. On the west sides of Nelson Street, St Margaret's Place and Queen Street grew up not warehouses, but the prestige houses of the wealthy merchants who controlled the warehouses behind them and the ships that brought the trade to the town, and of these enough survives to reconstruct a good picture of their plan, status and building materials. Courtyards or L-shaped plans dominate, and the material is generally brick, an early instance of large-scale use in England.

The Reformation caused the suppression of the monastic parts of the priory, but the former great hall remains in Priory Lane, and round the corner in Church Street are further details of houses from the 14th Century

associated with the prior. Their roofs employ arched braces from the crown posts to tie beams that are characteristic of Lynn carpenters from the 14th Century. The Greyfriars church was also demolished, leaving the later 15th Century tower as one of only three survivors in England. On these new sites more building plots could have been established, but there was still plenty of land in the new town to the north or in the fields to the east, and the Greyfriars site was never developed, apart from a theatre and a school in the 19th Century. The fords over the Millfleet had become permanent bridges, and in the 19th Century there were three crossings of the Purfleet to the north, while the road pattern developed to the modern extent, including Sedgeford Lane and Union Lane, both important east-west routes.

Henry Bell's plat of c.1670 (Appendix 2 Map 1) indicates that the whole area was fully built-up, although there were allotment-style plots between St James' Street and Sedgeford Lane, more to the south of St James' Street and even muck hills behind (north of) the Guildhall. The picture is similar in 1830, and John Wood's (Appendix 2 Map 4) plan is instructive in indicating the nature of the quayside. Warehouses were built up to the water's edge, and the four lanes actually appear to run right into the water, so there was no north-south communication between the two fleets along the river front. This was inconvenient, as traffic had to pass along the narrow lanes, up or down the main streets, and back again to the river-front warehouses. King's Staithe Square had always remained an open area, and there was another north of Devil's Alley, but nothing else, and the river frontages were in the main in private ownership.

By the time of Burnet's 1846 plan the situation had been rectified by the expedient of selective demolition, and of further land reclamation, so that in 1855 the quayside was made permanent with brick and stone walls and mooring bollards, and the South Quay took on its present form, the last of the major thoroughfares to be created in this part of King's Lynn. A swing bridge was built at the south end to link up with Boal Quay and Boal Street, and railway tracks were installed right up to King's Staithe Square. Once the railways arrived there was little need for the two fleets. They were basically open drains and were progressively reduced in width and length, before being culverted before the 19th Century closed.

Further large-scale development in the area was restricted to the open land north of St James' Street, beginning in the late 1830s, taking in Clough Lane and reaching as far as Blackfriars Street. Several very narrow new roads were built lined with small terraces which by the 1950s were targets for slum clearances, and in the 1960s central to the new overspill developments which turned the area into Clough Lane car park. An entirely new road, Regent Way, was pushed through from St James' Road to Tower Street and into another pair of car parks, St James' Court and Baxter's Court. The former had been the garden to St James' House, also demolished. The latter provided service access to the High Street and involved the demolition of the houses in the Union Lane and Sedgeford Lane area, and the reduction of those streets to rumps at their east and west ends.

The story since the early 1970s has been of regeneration and new uses, usually domestic, for the redundant warehouses in which the area is rich. Even earlier schemes had been completed in the early 1960s by

the King's Lynn Preservation Trust, and one result of the 1960s redevelopment was some of the earliest serious urban archaeology to be carried out in England. The 1980s and 90s has brought new housing schemes, particularly at the north end of South Quay, and the promotion of that thoroughfare, and King's Staithe Square, into promenades.



## Character Overview

The sequence of Nelson Street, St Margaret's Place and Queen Street have become known as the 'Historic Core' of King's Lynn, and these together with Saturday Market Place are not only crammed with major medieval and later buildings, but survive unaltered, to the extent that a 15th Century merchant would be surprised only at the number of quality Georgian brick fronts added to them. The degree of appreciation by owners of the heritage individual houses possess is extremely high, and this is the major factor in their preservation, not local authority control, tight though that is. None of these streets suffer from inappropriate 20th Century alterations and there are no inappropriate replacement windows or doors. The same may be said of the whole of King

Street to the north, and together the group may be classed among the most unspoilt urban areas in England.

These streets are largely residential, but behind them is the legacy of warehouses belonging to the large merchant concerns. When they were operational, these streets would have been full of people, traders, carts and carriages bustling up the narrow alleys and lanes between the quayside and the north-south streets, which link the two major market places, but their character today is very quiet, assisted by the diversion of through-traffic away from them. The trading and domestic mix is however one of prime importance- in many cases the two uses were combined in the one building - and the maintenance of former warehouses is essential to retain the outstanding character.

Just to the west is the quayside itself, a completely different environment, especially at the south end of South Quay. Only here remains 20th Century grain-handling machinery, while the long stretch of the river front to the north is rapidly taking on residential and leisure status. This is assisted by the waterfront environmental improvements associated with the

Millennium 'North Sea Haven' project, including the conversion of buildings such as Marriott's warehouse to other uses.



At the north end is King's Staithe Square, also given a face-lift in 1999-2000, which consolidates its character as a definable space with four sides, not the two sides it previously presented. Saturday Market Place is so irregular, and the church so large, that the impression is of a widening of the streets, not of an actual open square. But it has views into streets (especially north-west into Queen Street) and is lined with facades (especially the Guildhall and Gaolhouse complex) that manage to convey civic display with the intimate scale of what is after all a completely medieval composition.

The market place offers the first opportunity to shop, there being not a single retail outlet in any of the streets or squares just mentioned (with the recent minor exception of King Staithe Lane and Marriott's Warehouse, now 'Green Quay'). Two streets that open off the Market Place are today, and always have been, shopping streets, St James' Street to the east and High Street to the north. St James' Street has a row of 15th Century shops on the south side, with the usual collection of mainly 19th Century frontages successively altered as the design

of display windows and internal retail areas changed from the 1840s to the end of the 20th Century. It is easy to dismiss some of these later alterations as valueless, but they are part of the evolution of the street, and it is only the worst excesses of the 1970s and 1980s that detract not only from the buildings they disfigure, but the surrounding ones also. The High Street is the worse of the two in this respect, partly because of major fires on both sides of the High Street in the 1880-90s and, with one or two exceptions, because it is becoming yet another High Street in any town, exploited as a means of projecting identical corporate images. The contrast between this street and Queen Street only 100 metres (110 yards) to the west is acute, and the space between them has been developed from the 1960s as a bland area of service roads and car parks. In the area east of High Street, Baxter's Court and St James' Court, no attempt has been made to integrate modern commercial needs with the demands of a medieval environment.

Tower Street has become an island, sandwiched between car parks and broken up at the north end, where only the Majestic Cinema provides a buffer between the street and the car parks to the west and the New Conduit Street developments to the north. Even so, Tower Street has two listed buildings and the majority of the rest are of local interest. The final area is different again, the Tower Gardens in the south-east corner of this section of the King's Lynn conservation area. It was always an open space associated with the Greyfriars precinct, converted to a small formal park in 1911, and containing the celebrated friary tower, and the equally valuable (in its own way) Carnegie Library of 1904-5. Apart from

the churchyard of St Margaret, this is the only area with any concentration of trees and other greenery.



## Spaces and Buildings

**Nelson Street** is one of the most unspoilt streets of any English town, and one of the most architecturally significant. On the west side are the houses of some of the important medieval and later merchants, all built on generous plots made available by the retreat of the River Ouse, many of them on a reduced courtyard plan. The facades generally reflect Georgian prosperity and fashion, but behind them are houses and warehouses dating from the 14th Century onwards. Hampton Court at the north end is a celebrated example of a slowly-developed courtyard formed from c. 1320 to c. 1600, and this, at least in its east front to the street, has not been recased in later brick. The other side of the street is in the main of Georgian houses, much smaller, but with an

engaging character that only a string of unaltered and coherent buildings can give to an urban townscape.



The street is pleasantly erratic in its course, especially at the south end, where it turns sharply east to meet Church Street, following the line of the 12th Century Millfleet and the sea-bank, which until the late 15th Century defined the western extent of the plots on the west side of the street. The same pattern is evident in Queen Street to the north, so the stamp of ancient history is evident here in tangible form. The narrow eastern arm at the south end of Nelson Street at once tells its story: industrial maltings of the mid 19th Century on the south, and two early 19th Century brown-brick houses on the north, followed by the fine garden wall of No. 30 dated 1818 negotiating the curve. Of the 26 separate buildings lining Nelson Street, only No. 34 is not listed. On the east side they are all grade II until the former Valiant Sailor is reached at the north end, II\*. On the other side is an impressive sequence of four II\* houses in a row, ending with the grade I Hampton Court, all with facades of equal height. The character of the street does not rest with these alone, and the smaller houses opposite repeat the rhythm of facades

funnelling down to the south with an excellent group at Nos. 22-30. All the buildings retain their sashes or casements, doors and doorcases and are variously left as brick, or plastered and colourwashed so that variation within a theme is the impression. Street signage and lighting is unobtrusive.

There are a number of alleys and openings into the rear yards of the houses, of which the first, **Devil's Alley** is one of the more interesting. On the north of the flat chamfered lintel to the opening is the remains of a 16th Century arch, and further evidence survives at the back. Late 19th Century setts to the road surface, continuing some way west, and the looming bulk of No. 15 on the south, giving way to lower, two-storey former warehouses, and beyond to the ten grain silos and other warehouses serving the port of Lynn.



These buildings are no longer in active use, but represent 19th & 20th Century replacements of exactly the same type of structure used for the same purpose in the late medieval period. The only break in continuity is that the warehouses are not owned by those occupying the Nelson Street houses. At the north end the central

carriageway at Hampton Court leads to a very picturesque, irregular rectangular courtyard and, on the riverside elevation, there is a row of seven arches serving a warehouse which, in the fifteenth century, was lapped by the river



The opposite side of the street has a flat carriageway between the early 18th Century fronts of Nos. 8 & 10, leading to an irregular yard, which has post-war garages and outbuildings, but also is closed by the backs of other historic buildings. South of No. 12 is a narrow early 19th Century arched passage leading to a group of three houses of the 1830s, **May Cottages**, with hanging baskets. South of No. 20 is another carriageway through houses built in 1819, under a basket arch, leading to a larger irregular yard, with similar aspects of post-war and late medieval properties on all sides. On the south is one of the few examples of early 19th Century Westmoreland slate to be found in Norfolk.

**Church Street** is more of a thoroughfare than Nelson Street, wider and, since 1990, given a much more open aspect than before with the demolition of the huge garage premises on the east side in favour of a temporary car park. Street light standards

are more evident here, and like so much of Lynn, no greenery. The view north from Ladybridge (over the Millfleet) is nicely terminated by the chancel of St Margaret's church and by the White Hart public house and framed at the start by Nos. 9 & 10 Stonegate Street. On the west side No. 36 Nelson Street wraps its way round the corner to meet a modern reconstruction at No. 29, followed at once by Friarscot, set back and presenting a modest Queen Anne façade, complete with cross casement windows in both storeys, and an interior from the mid 16th Century.



Post-war buildings of the same height and scale as their predecessors continue to Priory Lane. Between here and the church is a mixed row, only compromised by the windows and door of the corner house, No. 19, which by virtue of its site is of local importance. Following it are Nos. 17 & 18, mainly 15th Century but with 14th Century remains of monastic buildings serving the dissolved priory, and good and important crown post roofs (grade II\*). The last two buildings before the churchyard, Nos. 15 & 16, are solid mid 19th Century shops with early 20th Century shopfronts.



Monastic remains remind one that this was the domain of the Benedictine prior, and it is the imposing fabric of the Church of St Margaret which dominates the north end of the street and all of Saturday Market Place. The churchyard to its south is closed by excellent mid 18th Century railings and brick piers, and the dignified return of No. 15 Church Street, with its three uniform chimneystacks. Trees, grass and shrubs fill the churchyard, and headstones lined up as if to be admonished, all framed by the rear of the monastic buildings on Priory Lane, and other houses of at least grade II\* quality.



To the north of the church is **Saturday Market Place**, older than the Tuesday Market Place. The church makes it irregular, but this space was probably established in this way by 1150. The quality of the buildings is indicated by the fact that the view west from the top of Church Street takes in no unlisted buildings except lamp standards and street signs, and all along the north side are

a series of shops with accommodation above dating from the 17th Century (Nos. 10 & 11) to the mid 19th Century (No. 5).



Nos. 1 & 8 were fashionable townhouses, but commerce has taken them over, and the result of commercial activity is more varied plot widths, heights and elevational treatment, but nothing which one might wish away. Again, there are no trees, although there are some along the west boundary of the churchyard facing St Margaret's Place. The north-west corner of the market place is graced by one of the best sequences of three municipal buildings in Europe: the Gaolhouse of 1784, the Holy Trinity Guildhall of 1422-8, and its staircase extension of 1624. The same corner boasts the impressive entry to Queen Street and visually one of the finest series of domestic buildings beginning with Thoresby College on Queen Street and continuing with those lining the west side of St Margaret's Place.

The whole group to the north of **St Margaret's Place** consisting of Nos. 1 & 2, with wide 18th Century frontages concealing much older interiors, rear warehouse ranges and important early urban plan-forms is the epitome of merchant-elegance, given a burst of humour and humanity by the capsizing window over the carriage arch to No. 2, so

feliculously positioned that it almost seems to have been deliberate. The arch is four-centred and leads to an alley laid with setts put down in 1803.



On the south is the entry to the house, with a Doric doorcase, then a former 16th Century warehouse, and on the other side the high wall of the 1979 Magistrates' Court. The door elevation of the 1830 vicarage follows, and then St Margaret's House, the tremendous grade I courtyard complex of 1475 built for the Baltic Hanseatic League, including the only remaining Hanseatic steelyard left in England. The wide, nine-bay, stuccoed house of 1751 was added for the merchant, brewer and shipbuilder Edward Everard in the fashionable classical Georgian style and faces the similarly fashionable gatepiers and gates to the churchyard. Good c. 1740 railings continue around this quadrant of the church precinct.

**Priory Lane** runs east from the very important and satisfying junction at the south end of St Margaret's Place. The whole north side is taken by Nos. 12-20, essentially an early large-scale use of brick of the 1440s but with 14th Century origins as a monastic hall of the Benedictines, with a four-centred carriage arch to the west conceived in the same way as the remaining gatehouses to

the mendicant precincts elsewhere in Lynn. Facing it are Nos. 5-7, a good row of three 17th Century houses, and to the east **Priory Mews**, a restored and converted set of 19th Century buildings creating their own little courtyard. Further west stands Priory Hall, late 18th Century, with its sash windows and a tall doorcase. Then three small gault brick houses of c. 1860, picked out with red brick banding. All of these contribute to the character of the short street.



Monastic buildings, domestic houses, shops and warehouse premises of merchants are the dominating building types of this area, and, apart from the shops, have substantial parts illustrating their respective histories from the Norman to Victorian eras. This is all in an area 162 metres (178 yards) west to east and 212 metres (193 yards) north to south, and the buildings are not just passable – the important ones rank among the best in the country, and they group themselves to provide some of the finest street scenes in England. The reason they are here is the trade the river brought, and this is appreciated at **South Quay**, a wide straight highway which until the 1960s was a cluttered dockyard. At the south end are the now disused brick warehouses and silos

already noted at the west end of Devil's Alley. The south end has a caisson bridge of 1990 over the Millfleet taking Boal Street to the quayside, but to the north the quay has the air of a promenade, largely due to street works and paving of 2000. The mooring bollards now rarely used.



The scene is of gables in pale red brick on the landward side, with continual recessing of the building line, especially to the south, elegant modern lamp standards, steel arch-roofed shelters and 1990s setts to the ground, with the broad river opposite them.

Moving north, the first building is inevitably a warehouse, Sommerfeld & Thomas, of the mid 18th Century, under a hipped roof, followed by a tall townish row of three houses inspired by the London Road terraces of the early 19th Century, but with a hexagonal look-out on the roof. At the corner with St Margaret's Lane is the gable-end of another 18th Century warehouse used by the Sea Scouts. Then the rear of St Margaret's House with the transit warehouse of the Hanseatic League, and Marriott's Warehouse, begun with stone in the 15th Century, but given its present appearance after the Reformation. From this point appear steel cone traffic bollards

leaving pedestrians with more road than cars, and the 1979 Magistrates' Court (designed by Leonard Manasseh), one of a handful of buildings in Lynn both of post-war date and of local importance. College Lane opens on the west, and opposite is the Half-fathom Column, a sculpture of 2000 by Andrew Schumann.

North of College Lane is the long west elevation to Thoresby College, which began in the first decade of the 16th Century as the refectory range with a hall under a hammerbeam roof, converted to a warehouse after the Reformation, and to housing in 1963-4. The remainder of the buildings are domestic, and apart from Nos. 3-5 Riverside Court are entirely of the 1990s, making up Three Crowns House. They are well designed and deliberately varied in height matching that of the warehouse which occupies the corner with King's Staithe Lane, and which is retained inside the complex. On the other side of King's Staithe Lane stands the long and varied elevation of the grade II\* 18th Century Bank House after the narrow opening into the lane. The north end of South Quay opens into King's Staithe Square, more formally in 2000 than in 1995, with the low walls topped with railings defining the new promenade air of the square.

Of the four lanes which link the quay with the older river-front streets Devil's Alley has already been considered. Next north is **St Margaret's Lane**, paved with early 19th Century granite setts and flanked first on the south (from the South Quay end) by a warehouse, and then by the return of the grade I Hampton Court. On the north-east corner is St Margaret's House and the north side of the lane has the Hanseatic warehouse, with a jettied, timber-framed first floor over a later brick ground floor which

was also originally timber framed. **College Lane** has all of its north side flanked by the grade I Thoresby College, and the south side by the Magistrate's Court, with a view of the Town Hall at the end. The granite setts are of 1803-4. **King's Staithe Lane** is more varied. The setts are late 19th Century. On the south is the 16th Century warehouse at the back of Clifton House on Queen Street, with a wide carriageway to the yard at the rear, from where a splendid view of the late 16th Century Clifton House look-out tower (five storeys high and six in the stair turret) may be obtained. Returning east to west, the north side begins with No. 1, an early 18th Century warehouse gable-end to the river, converted to a shop and flat.



The single-storey and attic range which follows is picturesque but is mostly a post-war rebuild, and then comes the return of the grade II King's Staithe Mill with its bowed cant to the corner. The south flank of Bank House returns us to South Quay.

**King's Staithe Square** is a wide spacious area, devoid of foliage, and given a major face-lift in 1999-2000, with low brick walls topped with iron railings, new paving slabs

and a raised area at the north-west corner in place of a battery of grain silos, all lit from good, contributing, lamp standards.



The Purfleet, also cleaned up, runs to the north past the Custom House, the River Ouse to the west, and the other two sides have houses of quality. The south side has the Bank House façade with its resited c. 1630 statue of Charles I in an elaborate niche, good forecourt railings and the bank's counting house to the west, of 1789. On the west is a row of houses, the first two (Nos. 1 & 2) 19th Century, the remainder of the 18th Century, with more closely spaced windows. Then the converted front of the three-storey mustard mill of 1752, converted to housing in the 1980s. This mostly faces a tiny lane, too short to have a name, joining the square with King's Staithe Lane, and it is in this area that most mid 19th Century setts remain.

**Purfleet Place** goes east from the north-east corner, also with modern paving to link up with the paving around Purfleet Bridge, and with Nos. 1-3, a very good polite terrace of c. 1825. Beyond No. 1 is a passage leading to the rear of the modern development of flats fronting Queen Street, and with a gable-end looking north towards King Street.

**Queen Street** is not only another of those with Georgian fronts hiding medieval or 17th Century buildings, but also one in which the central developments of King's Lynn of the 1960s begin to become apparent, to the east at Baker Lane. The northern section has a 1970s development of flats on the west side and the 1980s Granary Court complex of flats on the east side, the latter looking barren in the absence of trees. However, opposite the entrance to the Baker Lane car park stands No. 15 Queen Street, a handsome five-bay early 19th Century front to a century-older house. King's Staithe Lane runs west, and Baker Lane goes east, past the tremendous 8-9 storey former brick granary, to the service road behind the High Street. Queen Street continues south with a series on the west of outstanding quality, starting with the 1708 façade to Clifton House with its barleytwist columns (and with 13th and 14th Century halls within). All of the Georgian fronts which follow repay attention, all listed and two of them II\* (Nos. 25 & 29), all nicely negotiating one of the most effective turns in a road known to English domestic architecture. Like Nelson Street this bend is a result of plot boundaries becoming established early as the river shore migrated west.



The east side south of Baker Lane has a solid trio of late 19th Century townhouses (Nos. 22-26), with three gables and pediments to the lower sashes, then Jubilee Court, a self-effacing modern block of flats fitting in well with its surroundings. They hide Burkitt Homes from view, a surprising essay in the neo-Tudor, of 1909, with a good set of railings out front and a courtyard in the middle. Next to this a good c. 1840 brown brick front (No. 46), and then the splendid Town Hall extension of 1895. Opposite is the grade I Thoresby College, begun in 1500 on the courtyard plan and restored in 1963. Its façade is early 18th Century, nine bays wide and with five Dutch gables. Two of the three Gothic doorways are so restored as to be called 19th Century, but the centre one is original. Between Nos. 21 & 23, on the west side, is Three Crowns Yard, cutting through the houses to a series of small gardens heavily planted, almost wooded, and with good views of the Clifton House Tower. Apart from those in the churchyard this is the first time a tree has been seen in this part of the conservation area.

Queen Street returns to Saturday Market Place, and in the opposite north corner of the square is one of the long-established shopping streets of King's Lynn, differing from the rich domestic, municipal and trading quarter just described. The first section of **St James' Street**, up to Tower Place, is narrow, and has buildings in a variety of styles and age. On the north side is the mid 19th Century No. 1 (White Hart Public House) followed by the late 18th Century Nos. 3 & 5, converted to retail uses. No. 7 on the east side of a yard entry is the former Lynn Savings Bank of 1858 in the Tudor-Gothic style, and then a pair of late 18th Century shops with accommodation above, but with the ground floor now in a derelict state. Nos.

13 & 13A are post-war. The road leading north to St James' Court has a length of early 17th Century brick wall on the east side. The block comprising Nos. 15-31 is very varied, alternating between two-storey late 18th Century houses and shops, and three-storey 19th Century ones, retaining sash windows and generally with respectable if altered shopfronts of the very late 19th Century, especially to No. 21. Arched recessed doorways between Nos. 21 & 23 and Nos. 25 & 27 lead to the shopkeepers' accommodation. At the corner with Tower Street is a curved early 1950s showroom.

The south side of the street is initially affected at the rear by modern one- and two-storey extensions reaching towards the large car park, and the west gable wall of No. 2 has been rebuilt where a house has been demolished. Otherwise Nos. 2-4 are a single build of the early 20th Century with its wide display window.



Then follows the earliest physical evidence of shopping in this street, the mid 15th Century row of shops with a continuous jettied upper floor (and a continuous crown-post roof inside), but with late 20th Century shopfronts and a top-hung casement to the first-floor of No. 6. The others, of which

No. 14 is the best, have sashes. No. 18 is late 18th Century and was once a public house. It retains its carriageway to the rear yard, which has a new building on the east side. The remainder of the buildings up to No. 30 are again varied in height and treatment of the elevation, and date from the mid 18th Century to the mid 19th, all listed grade II and all contributing. Nos. 32-38 are post-war.

The north side has a second early 1950s shop and office building curving round the Tower Street junction, with window details of 1930s vintage, then a very altered pair no older than c. 1850. Nos. 37-39 is a remarkable, and large, building three storeys high and a distinguished example of early 20th Century reinforced concrete construction, built in 1908. The block beyond (Nos. 41-55) begins with a regular late 19th Century range (Nos. 41-47) with modern shopfronts and two with uPVC windows to the first floor. The remainder are of different design, again with modern, altered shopfronts. East of Regent Place is the splendid Police Station of 1953-5 giving the wide junction with St James' Road a monumental appearance.

The south side has only the former Theatre Royal, of the 1950s, then the railings and trees of **Tower Gardens**. On the site of the precinct of the Greyfriars, the land was an undeveloped and informal public park from 1845, but it was taken in hand in 1910 and opened as the Tower Gardens in November 1911. The railings to St James' Street and St James' Road are good specimens of that date, but the senior building is the tower of the Greyfriars church, one of three Franciscan mendicant church towers in England, of the late 14th Century. It survived

the Dissolution because it was needed as a sea-mark, and acquired by the Corporation in 1545.



As a curiosity, the row of flint, stone and brick arches were taken from 14th Century warehouse on Ferry Street demolished in 1910. The war memorial of 1921 forms a centrepiece to the park, and on its south-east side is the Carnegie Library of 1904-5, and on the west the disused and converted St Margaret's National School, erected in 1849 and the largest of the 19th Century public schools in Lynn.

**Stonegate Street** is wide, providing a sharp contrast to the narrow and twisting Nelson Street to its west. Looking west there are trees in the car park to the north, and a screen of trees round Framingham Almshouses in the distance beyond Millfleet. On the south are the Hillington Square flats, and on the north the big gap of the car park, leaving Nos. 9 & 10 almost on an island site. The late 18th Century brick skins conceal the 17th & 16th Century origins respectively. Immediately east of No. 9 is the arched entrance to a passageway between two houses known as Crisp's Yard, which existed until the 1970s. Following the car park is Allinson Court, two storeys with attics, which is newly built in brick with stone window

dressings and sashes, and fluted columns to the main entrance. Then comes a good set of early-mid 19th Century buildings including the four-bay Nos. 4 & 6, and the workshop on the corner with Tower Place. The north side of **Millfleet**, which continues up to London Road, begins with No. 2, a replica late 20th Century façade of a mid 19th Century house and shop. The frontage of St Margaret's School of 1849 has five gablets and the typical transomed windows of the time. A 1980s brick wall is in front of it, giving way to a wooden fence which encloses a small car park in front of a modern, single-storey temporary building which acts as a library extension. These in turn are succeeded by the iron railings of 1904-5 surrounding the Carnegie Library.



**Tower Place** links Millfleet with St James' Street, and on the east side has disappointing 1960s architecture, but the west side has more to offer. The return to the workshop on the corner with Stonegate Street has a remarkably intact four-bay façade of three-light casements. A post-war

reconstruction follows, then Greyfriars House (No. 4) set on a little island between two alleys.



Of about 1830 it has scrolled consoles to the doorcase and one sash to each floor. The alleys are without particular interest. The motor workshop beyond originally had three decorated gables to the street, but the north one has been demolished and the centre one rebuilt, and in Tower Court are the external walls of the rest of the very large late 19th Century workshops. Tower Court is unusual in being at first sight a space of antiquity, but in fact was only created by demolition in the mid 1970s.

**Tower Street** as far north as Regent Way is post-war in appearance even though Nos. 32 & 33 were originally built c. 1880. Regent Way is a creation of the 1960s, sweeping away older houses to link St James' Road with St James' Court at its west end. This was the grassed and tree-lined garden to St James' House (demolished) converted to a car park. The view east is bleak: the wide new road, the 1908 reinforced concrete building on the south side already noticed in St James' Street and view west is enlivened only by the undisciplined backs of St James'

Street houses. The centre piece is now the new terracotta-faced multi-storey car park with its metal fins.

The northern section of Tower Street is more rewarding, and is part of the pedestrianised shopping centre of Lynn. The west side starts with No. 28, a three-storey mid 19th Century house and shop, followed by a series of decent early-mid 19th Century shops, No. 26 still with its c. 1880 shopfront and most with their first-floor sashes in place. An alley runs between Nos. 22 & 24. Nos. 16, 18 and 20 are early 19th Century, all with 20th Century shopfronts, and between Nos. 18 & 20 is a narrow passageway leading past a long low workshop of the early 19th Century (No. 18A). To the south of the alley is a late 18th Century mansard-roofed pair of houses. On the south side of Union Lane, which runs between Nos. 14 & 16 is a brick house (, no.1 Union Lane) with restored sashes and door.. The remainder of Tower Street has a good row of two-storey 19th Century shops, that at No. 14 with uPVC windows, and No. 4A with a rebuilt ground floor. Behind No. 10 is a 17th Century house parallel to the street and at the top of the street stands the 1928 Majestic Cinema. **Union Lane** has 18th Century brickwork on the north, dating No. 14 Tower Street.





The east side builds up with three good frontages, including the listed No. 29 with its fine Georgian façade. Nos. 23-27 has been pebbledashed but the date likely to be mid 19th Century. The late 15th Century No. 21 follows, with a first-floor jetty. Nos. 15-19 is mid 1960s, but No. 13 has a timber frame visible from Clough Lane, over the former arched carriageway which has been taken into the shop. The actual façade is mid 18th Century. A stuccoed pair follow, then a two-storey group built as three, Nos. 5 & 7, No. 5 rather altered. **South Clough Lane** runs to the east, emerging at a white-painted building, No. 52A, with 17th Century brickwork in the east gable, and beyond it the St James's car park.

The conservation area takes in part of the south side of **Blackfriars Street**, but the dominating building is the fine head post office building of 1938 on the opposite side. Nos. 2-4 are late 19th Century, with terracotta detailing to the parapet, with obelisk finials, and parts of the contemporary shopfronts. Up to No. 12 the date of the shops is also later 19th Century, and then follows an infill of the 1970s, and more post-war buildings further east, outside the conservation area.

**The High Street** opens from Saturday Market Place with curved buildings on both corners, Nos. 1 & 2 on the east side, of 1816.



Nos. 3 & 4 are later 19th Century, and then post-war developments to No. 9, followed by the 1950s painted façade of Debenhams up to the western rump of Union Lane. The corner building, No. 17 has a detailed and elaborate red brick façade of c. 1880 with rendered details and red brick banding to the elevation facing Union Lane. Then follow four tall narrow shops three storeys high from the same period, and the brown brick bulk of Nos. 21-22, also late 19th Century. No. 23 is a listed early 19th Century composition five bays wide with cast-iron railings to the miniature first-floor balconies. Nos. 24-25 are of the 1920s. No. 26 is another listed early 19th Century three-storey shop with accommodation, and this section of the street ends with the 1970s development associated with New Conduit Street.

The west side of High Street commences with Nos. 121-122, a late 19th Century three-storey block spoilt by the 20th Century shop display windows. No. 120, north of an infilled passageway, was rebuilt in the 1960s, but No. 119 is a century older, with a 20-paned first-floor window and an awful

20th Century shopfront. A jazzy 1960s block follows, and then a surprisingly varied and self-confident 19th Century group. No. 115 has a pilastered façade and pedimented windows, No. 114 has deep arched first-floor windows and an oriel between and above them, while No. 113 has a red brick façade decorated with punched terracotta motifs. A narrow alley runs west to the north of No. 113, and then the tremendous façade of 1898 to No. 108-111, with five big arched windows to the first floor, two smaller ones in the north bay, an open parapet with a central datestone, and the glazed cornice frieze inscribed: 'King's Lynn Drapery Emporium'. The ground-floor shopfront will once have been excellent, but all is now late 20th Century.

The block as far north as Baker Lane (Nos. 104-107) begins with half a voluted shaped gable projecting the building line forward at No. 107, a projection only created in the 1890s. With tripartite sash windows to the street frontage, the remainder of the block are late 20th Century. North of Baker Lane is Nos. 102-103B, one of the best buildings on the High Street, with a water hopper dated 1756. Different treatments to individual properties disguises the fact that this is a balanced composition eleven bays wide with a projecting centrepiece, representing an 18th Century move to make the street fashionable as well as prosperous; unfortunately most owners contented themselves with the latter. Post-war shops reach from here to Purfleet Street, though the tall curved corner building of the 1950s, Nos. 98-99, makes a positive statement.

None of the lanes off High Street offer any more than a token of their original form, because to the west are car parks and service roads of the 1960s and to the east the southern spur of the central development

area of King's Lynn. **Sedgeford Lane** in particular has a bleak and barren aspect. Baker Lane has been cut in two, the two parts separated by Granary Court, which has a highlight with the tall converted granary building towards the north-west, and views of the backs of the High Street premises and of those lining Queen Street and Saturday Market Place. The whole area was until the 1960s a warren of alleys and particularly of small enclosed courtyards, but this heritage is replaced with a car park, mitigated by some trees.



## Listed Buildings

There are 96 listed buildings in this section of the conservation area. The Statutory List was revised in 1989-90 and issued on 26 July 1993, and there has been one addition (Majestic Cinema and Nos. 1-2 Sedgeford Lane, listed on 12 March 1999). There are seven buildings listed Grade I, 16 listed grade II\* and 73 listed grade II.

### Listed Grade I

- **Nos. 1-5 (odds) Nelson Street (Hampton Court).** A splendid courtyard house built in four stages from the early 14th Century hall in the south range to the c. 1600 north range, and

incorporating a series of seven four-centred brick arches to the mid 15th Century warehouse range in the west wing. The 1962 conversion to flats was a model of how this should be done.

- **No. 17 Queen Street (Clifton House).** Fine brick façade to the street of 1708, with a renowned barley-twist doorcase. Mid 14th Century undercroft next to a 13th Century tiled floor of an earlier hall house, all taken in together in the early 17th Century with a warehouse wing extending down King's Staithe Lane. Magnificent late 16th Century brick look-out tower at the back, of five storeys.



- **Nos. 31 & 33 Queen Street (Thoresby College).** Built 1500- 1510 for 13 priests, but sold and converted to domestic and trading premises at the

Reformation. Early 18th Century façade with five Dutch gables and a fine Perpendicular door. Courtyard plan.

- **Church of St Margaret, Saturday Market Place.** Ambitious mid 12th Century twin-towered west façade, suitable for the Benedictine priory which occupied it. The remainder rebuilt in the 13th Century, and many other works of the Perpendicular decades. Nave rebuilt in 1742-6 following the collapse of the south-west spire in the storm of 1741.
- **Guildhall, Saturday Market Place.** Built for the Holy Trinity guild in 1422-8, with a picturesque façade of chequered flint and stone. Staircase bay of 1624 leads up to the stone hall occupying the whole first floor under its timber roof, revealed in 1992.
- **Greyfriar's Tower, Tower Gardens (St James' Street).** The late 14th Century brick and stone tower is one of only three surviving Franciscan mendicant church towers in England, added to the church founded in 1230. The rest demolished at the Reformation.
- **St Margaret's House, St Margaret's Place.** The nine-bay façade dates from 1751, but conceals a timber-framed and brick courtyard building erected as a consequence of the Treaty of Utrecht of 1475 allowing permanent buildings belonging to the Hanseatic Steelyard, a powerful European trading group. There were four in England; this alone remains.

## Grade II\* Buildings

- **Nos. 17 & 18 Church Street.** One of the monastic buildings associated with the Benedictine Priory, with 14th Century masonry in the back wall,

otherwise rebuilt c. 1470. Excellent crown-post roof of King's Lynn type.

- **Bank House, King's Staithe Square.** A very early 18th Century house, now a guest house and restaurant, with a niche of c 1670 containing a re-sited statue of Charles I dating from c. 1630. Good internal details and extensive cellars reaching under the square.



- **No. 2 Nelson Street.** A famous former pub, the Valiant Sailor, put up in the 1540s from materials salvaged from priory buildings demolished at the Reformation. A deep coved jetty supported on a carved corner post. Evidence of a shopfront inside.
- **No. 9 Nelson Street.** A late 15th Century courtyard house, much rebuilt in the 19th Century but retaining one of

the best domestic doors in England, and a classical frieze above it of 1703.



- **Nos. 11 & 13 Nelson Street.** Another late 15th Century courtyard house, reworked c. 1700 to present a set of rare early 18th Century sash windows. Excellent early 18th Century interiors.
- **Nos. 15 & 17 Nelson Street.** The big brick façade six bays wide added c. 1740 to a 17th Century building. Good internal detailing and wrought-iron staircase.
- **No. 19 Nelson Street.** Fine façade to an early 18th Century house on the site of a 17th Century one. Doric order doorcase, rusticated quoins, sashes and a platband. Combined entrance and staircase hall. Good detailing throughout the interior.
- **Nos. 12-20 Priory Lane** (consecutive). Basically a 14th Century monastic range of the Benedictines remodelled in the 1440s, to convert the original open hall to a first-floor hall, then in fashion. Fine

stone arched carriageway and remains of a crown-post roof.

- **Nos. 1-3 Purfleet Place** (consecutive). Good run of three brown brick townhouses of c. 1825, with acanthus and palmette decoration to the platband.
- **No. 25 Queen Street.** Epitome of the mid 18th Century L-plan townhouse, with the panelled door opening to a passage to the rear and the actual entry to the interior. Excellent doorcase and staircase, the latter with carved tread-ends.
- **Nos. 29 A & B Queen Street.** Similar L-plan, but of the early 17th Century, the whole refronted in fashionable style in c. 1750. Hall with dais window, and solar above. 17th Century rear warehouse.



- **Gaolhouse, Saturday Market Place.** Celebrated courthouse and prison of 1784 by William Tuck, decorated with rustication and sinister shackles and chains. Four grim cells remain with their

fittings and part of the rear exercise yard.

- **Marriott's Warehouse, South Quay.** The building stands with its side wall facing the river and occupies the width of two tenements laid out during the 13th Century. The building was probably constructed on reclaimed land known as Pygot's stand, a wharf area developed by John and Simon Pygot during the second half of the 15th Century. The original building may have been an open pound constructed in part from friary stone. It was increased to its present size probably in the early 17th Century.
- **No. 1 St Margaret's Place.** Late 15th Century brick house now part of the Magistrate's Court complex. 15th Century rear courtyard. 17th Century panelling inside.
- **No. 2 St Margaret's Place.** A 17th Century house remodelled in the early 18th Century. Archway leads to the Doric doorway into interior. Good early 18th Century sashes to the façade.

## Listed Grade II

There are too many grade II listed buildings in the conservation area to describe individually, but they embrace a great range of dates from the late 13th Century to the early 20th Century, reflecting house types and materials appropriate to their period. Houses, warehouses, offices, almshouses, civic buildings and halls, banks, early shopfronts, later shops, railings, bollards, quaysides, inns and bridges and the Majestic Cinema are all building types represented. As in the St Nicholas area, few towns can boast a similar combination in such a small area, testifying to the diverse economy and trading patterns of a major medieval port.

## Important Unlisted Buildings

The St Margaret's conservation area is, like the St Nicholas area, unusual in that its character is not primarily vested in the nature of its unlisted buildings, because of the very high proportion of listed ones. There are 96 listed buildings, 72 unlisted buildings of positive and definable character, 44 dating wholly to the post-war period (single developments such as The Granaries are counted as one) and only about 40 other buildings.



The magistrates' court, the police station and Nos. 98-99 High Street are all post-war, but are so well composed or prominent that they themselves may also be classed as important unlisted buildings. As a proportion of the whole, the percentage of buildings which are simply neutral in character is very small compared with other towns.

## Post-War Development

The boundaries of the conservation area attempt to exclude the post-war car parks that are such a feature of those streets closest to the 1960s central redevelopment, but all of them are visible from within the conservation area, and the Granary Court car park is wholly within it. None of the car

parks have any architectural merit or contribute to the townscape, even as open spaces. On the contrary all of them required the demolition of existing buildings, sometimes of real quality such as St James' House which was set back from St James' Street and had a tree-lined garden where St James' Court now is. The Granary Court car park and service road is built over a particularly interesting sequence of alleys and small yards, and Regent Way is an entirely new street, cut directly through existing houses and lanes from St James' Road to St James' Court. It has nothing to offer the town.

New buildings have been constructed as infill rather than large designed blocks, of which the most concentrated are at the south end of High Street, where the tendency was to amalgamate existing plots for large stores, often national chains. Tower Place suffers particularly from new buildings, and it is immediately apparent that the further west one moves then the more care has been

taken to ensure that new work, if not enhancing the conservation area, does not detract from it.



Queen Street is a good example. The Granary Court flats face another new block at the north end so the street begins with the character of the 20th Century, but in an area already predominately 19th Century. Jubilee Court, occupying a prime site, is barely noticed, so well does it blend in. These three are the only post-war buildings in the entire length of Queen Street, St Margaret's Place and Nelson Street, but on South Quay there are more. The grain silos at the south end had an obvious and practical use, and their own functional architectural character. They are a reminder, in an area where reminders are disappearing, of the maritime history of the town. Another set stood on King's Staithe Square until 1992. Three Crowns House is

another early 1990s development of flats, tall and designed to appear irregular in composition, which makes them much more varied in appearance than a block of the 1970s would be.



The block at the corner with King's Staithe Lane incorporates the warehouse which occupied the site. The other building is the Magistrates' Court, a very superior design of 1979 (by Leonard Manasseh Partnership), of brick and conceived as a series of three receding planes, and a polygonal look-out tower.

## Traditional Materials

In common with the rest of King's Lynn the materials used are as eclectic as might be expected in a sea-port with extensive European trading interests. In a low-lying treeless area of the country almost all timber was imported either up-river from the inland counties or from the Baltic. English oak is confined to the structure of timber-framed hall houses of the 16th Century and earlier, and by the 17th Century, when timber framing ceased to be used on any scale, brick was the substitute. The local brick is red, but there is a great deal of brown brick

from the yards around Wisbech, which became very fashionable between c. 1780 and c. 1840. For these houses the roof structure was of Baltic fir, enormous quantities of which were imported to the timber wharves around Common Staithe Quay, as it is today.

Colourwashing of facades, or the application of stucco in the 18th and 19th Centuries is favoured in some of the more prestigious buildings, especially in the High Street, Saturday Market Place, at No. 19 Nelson Street, and St Margaret's House, St Margaret's Place, and there are some pleasing sequences of houses (for example, on the west side of Church Street or the north end of Nelson Street) with gently varying coloured schemes. Slate for roofs is certainly common, arriving in bulk from Wales after the railway opened in 1844, and its presence on roofs of older buildings generally indicates repair or rebuilding. Otherwise pantiles on buildings later than c. 1720 (imported from Holland, but then made locally) and plaintiles on earlier structures are the rule.

Much earlier buildings used stone as building material, imported from Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire, such as in the Nos. 12-20 Priory Lane, or Marriott's warehouse on South Quay, but always combined with brick as brick is the material of the town. This area has an example of large-scale use of brick as early as the 13th Century, at Clifton House in Queen Street.

## Archaeological Interest

The only Scheduled Ancient Monument in this area is the Greyfriar's Tower (monument No. 172). Other finds have proven to be of interest, although there has been no large-scale discovery. In Stonegate Street

are the remains of the Millfleet quayside, and similarly in Sedgeford Lane the Purfleet quay, in use from the 15th to the 18th Century. Under the Hanseatic Warehouse on St Margaret's Place was found evidence of older buildings of the 13th and 14th Centuries, and in the cellar of No. 1 Saturday Market Place an early medieval undercroft has been recorded, and undercrofts generally must have been common in the middle ages.

## Detractors

The special character of conservation areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials, unsympathetic paintwork and the removal of walls, railings and trees. In the streets forming the Historic Core, this is almost unknown.



The greatest detractor is street signage. A pair of 'no entry' signs at the start of Queen Street from Saturday Market Place could hardly be more unsympathetically placed. Another pair faces St Margaret's Place. South Quay has particularly prominent 'restricted zone' signs at the southern end.



In other areas signage is more profuse: the view north into Tower Street from Regent Way is nearly blocked by them.

In the shopping streets alteration of the ground-floor facades is a perpetual problem for it seems virtually impossible to design a modern display window in keeping with an 18th or 19th Century façade, so detraction of the building and street is almost inevitable. There are only three late 19th Century shopfronts remaining in the St Margaret's area. Top-hung 1960s and early 1970s casements have been substituted for sashes in the upper floors of many High Street and St James' Street fronts, and uPVC is beginning to appear in Tower Street and the High Street, as these cheap casements fail. Elsewhere poor chain-link fencing or block walling detracts, usually in alleys rather than main thoroughfares, in Devil's Alley is a good example.

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

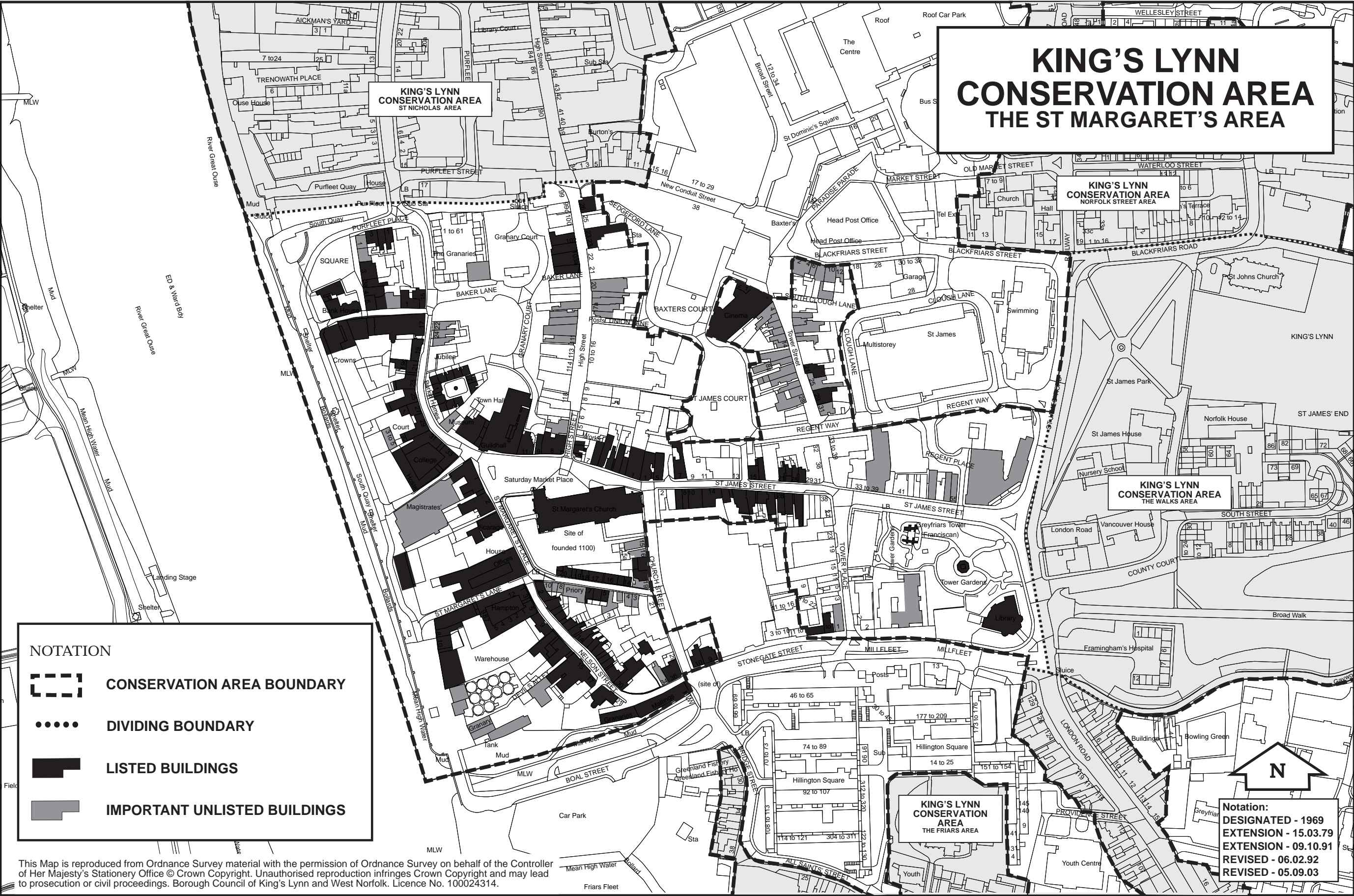
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alteration, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from Development Services at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may 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 ST MARGARET'S AREA







**KING'S LYNN  
CONSERVATION AREA  
NORFOLK STREET AREA**

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

**KING'S LYNN  
CONSERVATION AREA  
THE FRIARS AREA**

**NOTATION**

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

Notation:  
**DESIGNATED - 1969**  
**EXTENSION - 15.03.79**  
**EXTENSION - 09.10.91**  
**REVISED - 06.02.92**  
**REVISED - 05.09.03**

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