

NORTH CREAKE

CONSERVATION AREA

DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



NORTH CREAKE, a parish and large village on the Fakenham road, 3 miles S. by E of Burnham Market has 3,528 acres of land of which Earl Spencer and the Fellows of Christ Collage, Cambridge, are the principal owners and lords of the manors, the latter being proprietors of the abbey estate.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: FEBRUARY 1990

**PLANNING
POLICY**

INTRODUCTION

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

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

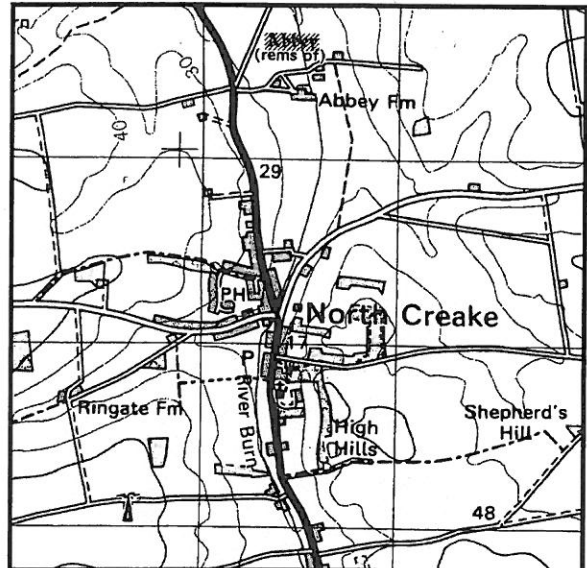
Conservation areas were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local Authorities were required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as conservation areas. This duty is now part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

North Creake Conservation Area was designated in February 1990 by the Borough Council. 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 recent Government Advice (PPG15) and it will eventually form supplementary planning guidance to those policies in the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas. In particular, the guidance will supplement the Local Plan policies which deal with demolition and new development within the conservation area and new development on land adjoining the

conservation area which might affect its setting or the views in or out of the area.

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

SETTING AND LOCATION



North Creake is a linear settlement strung out along the B1355 between Fakenham 12km (7½ miles) to the south east and Burnham Market 5km (3 miles) to the north. The village is 7km (4⅓ miles) inland from the north Norfolk coast and is situated 24km (15 miles) east of Hunstanton and 10km (6¼ miles) south west of Wells-next-the-Sea.

In landscape terms the southern end of the village has grown along the valley bottom of the river Burn, a clear chalk stream that flows north to the sea at Burnham Overy Staithe through the open, rolling countryside of North West Norfolk. At a point where the road crosses the river in the centre of North Creake, the village begins to climb diagonally uphill along the road to Burnham



Market with a more gradual ascent at right angles along West Street.

This section of the Burn valley is quite steeply inclined, especially its eastern flank when the opportunities for landscaping have been fully utilised, especially behind the rectory. Here the broad tree belts running along the contours, notably The Terrace and Cherry Ground, together with those running downhill (again The Terrace, The Walks and High Hill wood) form a geometric network of planting that takes full advantage of this prominent westerly aspect. The opposite slope is less steep and broken by a dry chalk valley that runs up to the old top road to Burnham. Here the fields are large and arable, the horizon wide and broken only by the occasional belt - Chatham Plantation and Long Plantation running uphill behind the Council houses.

These densely wooded slopes terminate the main view into the village from the Burnham Market approach. With Abbey Farm and its monastic remains tucked away down in the valley bottom the road crosses a slight ridge before running downhill passed Council houses. Ahead the wooded slopes rise up beyond the orange pantile roofs of terraced cottages lower down the Burnham Road. The most dramatic approach however is down West Hill with the east side of the valley appearing as a continuous backcloth of deciduous woodland with St Mary's



Church tucked in at the bottom of the slope. By contrast the road from South Creake runs parallel with the river along its eastern bank past a sequence of attractive and quite separate groups of farm buildings before plunging into the formal avenue of lime trees that marks the southern entrance to the village.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

North Creake is a large parish straddling the Burn valley but long before the Saxons first marked out its boundaries the archaeological evidence for prehistoric activity is impressive. Bronze Age man kept to the higher ground and here on the dry slopes of Shepherd's Hill to the east of the valley and on the boundary with South Creake parish, crop marks suggest a group of ploughed out round barrows. On the lower slopes known as High Hill's another group may have been destroyed by gravel workings.

The Roman road from Holkham to Toftrees ran along the higher ground to the east of the Burn valley and was later used as the boundary between South Creake and Holkham parishes. Surprisingly little has been found along this section, but running parallel to it on the upland to the west of the valley is an ancient track known as Burnham Green Lane. Here in the vicinity of Shammer there is evidence of Iron Age and Roman activity including stone querns and a pestle. Metal objects suggest some form of settlement that continued through until the Middle Ages beside what was an important trade route from the coast.

The main thrust of early Saxon settlement would have been up the Burn valley and there is considerable evidence of occupation along the lower valley slopes south of the present village as far as Hall Farm. At this point the river is crossed by an important overland route known as Holgate Road that runs west-east to Little Walsingham. It was probably used by medieval pilgrims and may help explain the continuity of settlement near the ford throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

There is every reason to suppose that this linear pattern of Saxon Settlement was continued northwards along that part of the valley that is now occupied by the present village. Creake may well take its name from the stream (Anglo-Saxon 'Crik') that flows through the village, or alternatively from 'Crayke' meaning 'ridge'. No church is mentioned in the Domesday Book and St Mary's is no earlier than the 12th Century but just to the north on an elevated site occupied by the School House are fragments of an earlier church known as 'St Michael in the

Mount'. Although the building was not abandoned until the early 16th Century, St Mary's, in a more convenient position beside the road along the valley bottom, soon became the main parish church.

The first major enlargement took place c1300 when the chancel was built by William Carelton. The south porch is contemporary, but the church only acquired its grand angel roof and perpendicular clerestory in the late 15th Century. The memorial brass in the chancel of a figure holding the model of a church is reputedly that of Sir William Calthorpe (d.1494) who is accredited with the great rebuilding both here and at Burnham Thorpe church.

Much of the land in North Creake in the Middle Ages was owned by the church and took the form of large sheep tracts that financed its great medieval wool church. Creake Abbey, founded in 1206 by Sir Robert de Narford on the northern edge of the parish for Augustinian Canons, maintained a Chantry Chapel in St Mary's until its dissolution in 1507 following an outbreak of plague that killed the few remaining members. The Manor of Creake, one of 3 Norman manors in the parish, had been owned by Walsingham Priory since the 14th Century and at the dissolution the last priory, Richard Vowel, became rector of St Mary's. The exact location of the various manor houses is not known but on a map of 1600 the meadow opposite the church is marked as the site of the Manor of Priors.

The road running along the valley parallel with the Burn was the main route to the coast in the early Middle Ages before Burnham Road provided a more direct route to the local market town. This older riverside route followed what is now Church Street and Wells Road to its junction with Norman's Lane where the base of a medieval wayside cross was visible on the green until recently. From here the route continues northwards as a bridleway to Abbey Farm and beyond to Burnham Thorpe and Burnham Overy. The 1600 map also shows the Old Parsonage in Wells Road, possibly the site of the priest's house attached to St Michael's and now occupied by Rectory Barn. The name Glebe Farm, a 18th Century building, a little further north in Wells Road, would seem to confirm the former status of this old medieval route.



After the Dissolution large areas of monastic land were acquired either by Christchurch College, Cambridge that purchased the Creake Abbey estate, or by one of several important landowners. Creake Manor was acquired in 1740 by Sarah Churchill of Althorpe in Northamptonshire. Cross House Farm in Norman's Lane became the centre of Earl Spencer's North Creake estate when the 3rd Earl decided to modernise and enlarge the existing 18th Century farm unit of which the cobble barn in Burnham Road is the best surviving example. The 3rd Earl was, like his friend Thomas Coke of Holkham, a great moderniser. He founded the Royal Agricultural Society and set about remodelling Cross House Farm with new stables and engine house c.1840 followed by additional stables, cartsheds and coachhouse in the 1870's. Coke's direct influence is less marked although he too owned land in the parish south and east of the village where Hall Farm Cottages (c.1800) are in the style of his estate architect Samuel Wyatt.

But it was a third aristocratic family that indirectly had the greatest impact on the character of the village. In 1844 Rev. Thomas Keppel was presented to the living by Earl Spencer. Keppel was the youngest son of the 4th Earl of Albermarle and the wealth of the incumbent added to the richest living in the Norwich Diocese produced a new rectory just uphill from the church breathtaking in its scale and opulence. Keppel soon acquired the services of the young Victorian architect S.S. Teulon who, in the absence of a great house in the village, designed a grand brick and slate residence in "Picturesque domestic Gothic with Tudor details", that in plan form was as large as St Mary's. Keppell appears to have left the burden of church restoration to his late Victorian successors and spent most of his twenty year incumbency landscaping the grounds on an ambitious scale. A large swathe of sloping ground above Church

Street was laid out as a series of woodland walks and perimeter belts enclosing blocks of meadowland. This grand design was continued in the form of an avenue of lime trees planted along the main approach to the village from South Creake.



By the mid 19th Century the present shape and extent of the village was already fully developed with the main south-north axis along Church Street and Burnham Road and at the junction a secondary axis along West Street. The streets were lined with a mixture of 18th Century and 19th Century labourers' cottages, village shops and local trades punctuated by institutional buildings such as the Primary School in Church Street and the Methodist Chapel in West Street. The workforce was employed largely at Cross House Farm but the smaller holdings in West Street together with the corn mill were an equally important part of the local economy.



Apart from the rows of Council houses arranged around the playing field off Dunn's Lane and along West Hill, there has been no substantial residential growth in the village since the war. Recent infill houses and barn conversions together with the closure of the primary school have brought about a more gradual change to the physical and social character of the village.

CHARACTER OVERVIEW

North Creake Conservation Area sites in the valley of the River Burn, extending in a linear fashion along the B1355 south of Burnham Market and north of South Creake. The river course has a significant presence in the middle of the village. The settlement is effectively contained by the valley, particularly with the strong landscape feature of the eastern wooded escarpment. However it does break away from the valley westwards along West Street.

The buildings in the village have a character dominated by traditional and locally sources materials. The influence of the Earls of Spencer and Rev'd Keppel in the development of the village, church and rectory (designed by SS Teulon) is significant.

Today village life has changed from an agricultural base to one of second homes; commuters; a peaceful place to retire; and the conversion of redundant farm buildings into desirable residences. New, infill development is beginning to change the physical appearance of the village.

SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Church Street (South)

North of Kate's Lane the main B1355 from South Creake is lined on one side by a double row of lime trees and on the other by a high flint wall with blocked openings overhung by tall beech and sycamore. This long, formal approach is interrupted briefly by a small group of traditional flint outbuildings opposite an attractive pair of brick faced cottages beside the road. Further north Church Street is lined on both sides by rows of lime trees behind thick bushy hedges, but the view ahead terminated by orange pantile cottages, gives no suggestion of St Mary's Church. Screened by more lime trees along the southern boundary of the churchyard this impressive perpendicular building remains hidden until the west tower suddenly rears up beside the road. At this point the view opens out across a narrow strip of rough grazing meadow to the village hall (c.1934) in warm orange brick and pantiles, an enlarged version of the Old Reading Room.

At no stage is Teulon's rectory visible from the road. Set well back, its great legacy is its landscaped setting, now reaching maturity, that forms a dense backcloth to the small group of flint and pantile cottages immediately north of the church, including the Almshouses founded in 1613 and rebuilt in 1954. The street is lined opposite by single storey flint outbuildings, including the forge, hard up against the footway, followed



by simple early 19th Century cottages with small pane casements. As the road curves slightly the scale increases, the houses are taller and 18th Century; the most distinctive being Red House with a late shaped gable (1778) to the road. The sequence is continued by colour washed brick houses that terminate the view down the lane opposite overhung by a mass of trees and tall hedgerows.



Church Street (North)

North of this road junction Church Street dips down slightly into the main body of the village, leaving behind the wooded grounds of the rectory. The west side of the street is an unremarkable mixture of 19th Century cottages and several infill houses set back behind low flint garden walls, but the east side is more interesting. A short terrace of chalk and brick cottages stepping down with gable dormers and hard up against the road, gives way to a longer terrace of neo-vernacular houses. The development in this sensitive position is well designed in terms of its scale, materials and details but, set back



at the edge of a wide lay-by, the scheme loses some of its impact. Beyond, the former school in gault brick is solid Victorian, the playground still defined by the original iron railings, and then a pair of new houses effectively grouped together behind a cobble boundary wall that continues for some distance into Wells Road. This strong linear feature skirts an orchard and the parkland setting of Rectory Barn but otherwise contributes little to any sense of place in the centre of the village. The space here, where the main road curves over the river before climbing uphill, never really develops despite the wedge-shaped verge with its sign that passes for the village green. The new development on the corner with West Street is another weak element.

West Street

The street aligned east/west on a gentle curve, is a quiet semi-rural side road lined by a mixture of traditional flint and orange pantile cottages, farmhouses and some well intentioned new infill housing. The more interesting buildings include Mill House, made over between the wars with small pane bay windows and a coat of pebble dash

render. Half hidden behind a thick privet hedge and flint garden wall, it still manages to present a dignified face to the street. A little further along on the other side Jubilee House faces south with its back to the street but the rear wings in brick and flint rubble create an attractive courtyard space. The tall flint wall running towards Olive Cottage helps define the street scene with the view ahead to West End Farm caught by the bend in the road.



On the inside a roadside pond has been landscaped and now forms an attractive centrepiece to a group of plain brick houses and a converted chapel behind its tall leylandi hedge. Despite this diversion the main interest is always on the southside, more tightly defined by flint walls, gable end cottages and groups of outbuildings broken occasionally by large yew trees overhanging the road. Before the view opens out across gently rising fields to Low Wood, West End Farm stands at the far end of the street, an attractive group of 18th Century buildings now empty and neglected.

Burnham Road

The lower half has a strong linear definition lined on both sides by closely spaced terraces of predominately flint and brick cottages. All face the road and follow the same building line hard up against the footway. Slight variations in this regular rhythm are achieved by the precise choice of materials - colourwashed brick and flint with black glazed or smut pantiles and, most noticeably Suffolk Place (1849); a longer row of pebble and slate cottages, giving way to 18th Century clunch and orange pantiles. At this point on the opposite (west) side, the regular sequence is broken by an earlier house gable end to the road and its tall flint boundary wall - the coursed cobble work is distinctively late 17th Century.



From here northwards the road is less well defined with Council houses set back, notable for their flint boundary walls. Opposite although there are larger gaps the buildings remain attractive, notably a row of good 18th Century brick-faced cottages with gable dormers and small pane casements, before giving way to flint farm buildings including one impressive threshing barn lining the road - coursed cobble again and now discreetly converted. Looking back the view downhill is caught by cottages lining the road as it curves gently. Above and beyond the Old School House sits comfortably among the trees.



Norman's Lane/Wells Road

Although Cross House was demolished some years ago, a substantial group of late 19th Century farm buildings remain from Earl Spencer's modernisation. The barns and ancillary buildings are most clearly visible from Burnham Road - a complex arrangement of orange pantile roofs tucked away downhill against a dense backdrop of trees. On closer inspection, approached along Norman's Lane, the whole group has been the subject of a carefully detailed scheme of residential conversion screened from the lane by flint boundary walls and with its main entrance opposite a small, rather isolated triangular green at the junction with Wells Road. From here the views are across open fields to clumps of deciduous planting,

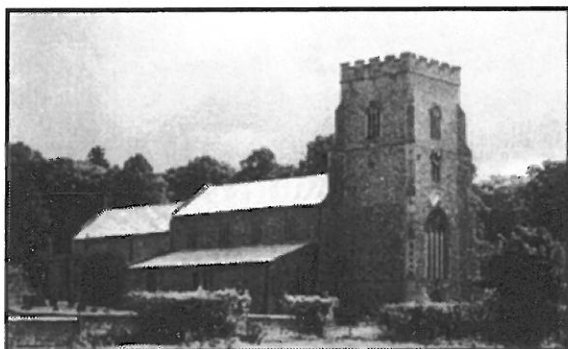
the roadside defined by the occasional flint cottage and the outbuildings to Glebe Farm, an attractive group with 18th Century brick fronted farmhouse. This quiet backwater of the Conservation Area continues south as Wells Road plunges through a tunnel of overhanging trees to run alongside the long cobble wall to the mature, landscaped grounds of Rectory Barn before emerging in the centre of the village and the busy main road.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 8 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and there has been one later addition, the K6 telephone kiosk in Church Street listed in 1994.

Listed Grade I

● **Church of St Mary:** c1300 chancel and south porch. 15th Century nave, north aisle and west tower. Restored 1897 by Preedy. Knapped and rubble flint with stone dressings, lead roofs, mainly perpendicular windows including clerestorey. Single hammer beam nave roof with angels. Restored Easter sepulchre c1300. 15th Century north aisle screen, 14th Century sedelia and piscina. Brass of civilian holding a church as doner, possibly Sir Will Calthorpe (c1495).



Listed Grade II

● **Old Rectory,** Church Street: 1845 by S S Teulon for the Rev T R Keppel. Red brick with gault brick dressings, slate roof. Picturesque domestic Gothic with Tudor details. Lavish design due to wealth of the incumbent, youngest son of 4th Earl of Albemarle.

● **24/26/28 Church Street:** No. 28 (Red House) 1778. Red brick, red pantiles, sashes, elaborate shaped gable, wooden porch with Doric columns, arched fanlight.

Nos. 24 and 26 (Red House Cottage) included for group value.

● **K6 Telephone Kiosk:** Church Street. 1935 design by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Cast iron, margin glazing bars. Painted red.

● **Windmill,** West Street: Red brick tower mill, early 19th Century, 3 storeys, roofless.

● **Glebe Farmhouse,** Wells Road: With cottage attached. Mid 18th Century. Red brick, red pantiles. Casements and dormers. Coped parapets. Cottage of clunch and flint, red pantiles.

● **Cross House Farm,** Norman's Lane: Stables with loft and horse engine house. c1840 remodelling of 18th Century building by Earl Spencer. Red brick and pantiles. Also various implement sheds, stables, coach house and barn 1873 by Spencer. Mainly red bricks or flint and orange pantiles.

IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

In addition to the few Listed Buildings scattered throughout the Conservation Area there is a much larger number of unlisted traditional buildings - cottages, farm buildings and small houses - that together make a significant contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The most important have been identified because of their prominent position, use of local materials, their substantially intact character, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by. Among the most distinctive are the village hall, the Old Forge, the former Primary School, the Methodist Chapel in West Street and the converted barn on Burnham Road.



TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of North Creake Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its

historic buildings. Not surprisingly in this chalk valley, the predominant building materials are clunch and flint with red brick and orange pantiles from local brickworks. The ingenuity of local builders has resulted in some interesting combinations of wall materials, not just on the main facade but between front and side elevations. The effects are however sometimes the result of refronting or partial rebuilding at a later date. The full range of materials includes:



- Clunch (squared blocks and random)
- Flint nodules
- Cobbles (coursed and random)
- Pebbles
- Red brick
- Yellow or gault brick
- Colourwash
- Orange clay pantiles
- Black glazed pantiles
- Smut pantiles
- Slate

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

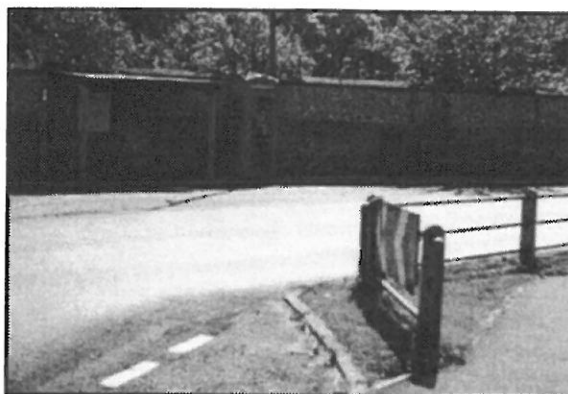
There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in North Creake Conservation Area. However there are 9 sites of archaeological interest recorded on the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record including the Church, Old Rectory, Windmill and Red House, all of which are Listed Buildings.

DETRACTORS

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

Within North Creake Conservation Area there are a few features which detract significantly from its intrinsic character. These include:

- The use of UPVC and other non-traditional new windows and doors in cottages has led to a regrettable loss of character in some parts of the Conservation Area.
- A few empty and neglected properties have a detrimental effect on the character of some corners of the Conservation Area.
- There is an accumulation of poorly designed and uncoordinated street furniture in the centre of the village. The bus shelter, railings, poles and overhead wires would benefit from a scheme of environmental improvement.



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, whether listed or not
- 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, alterations, extensions, installations, demolition or work to trees should seek advice from Planning Policy at an early stage. A leaflet summarising these issues and including general information on conservation areas can be obtained from Planning Policy free of charge.



PLANNING POLICY

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NORTH CREEKE CONSERVATION AREA



NOTATION



EXISTING CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



LISTED BUILDINGS



IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

