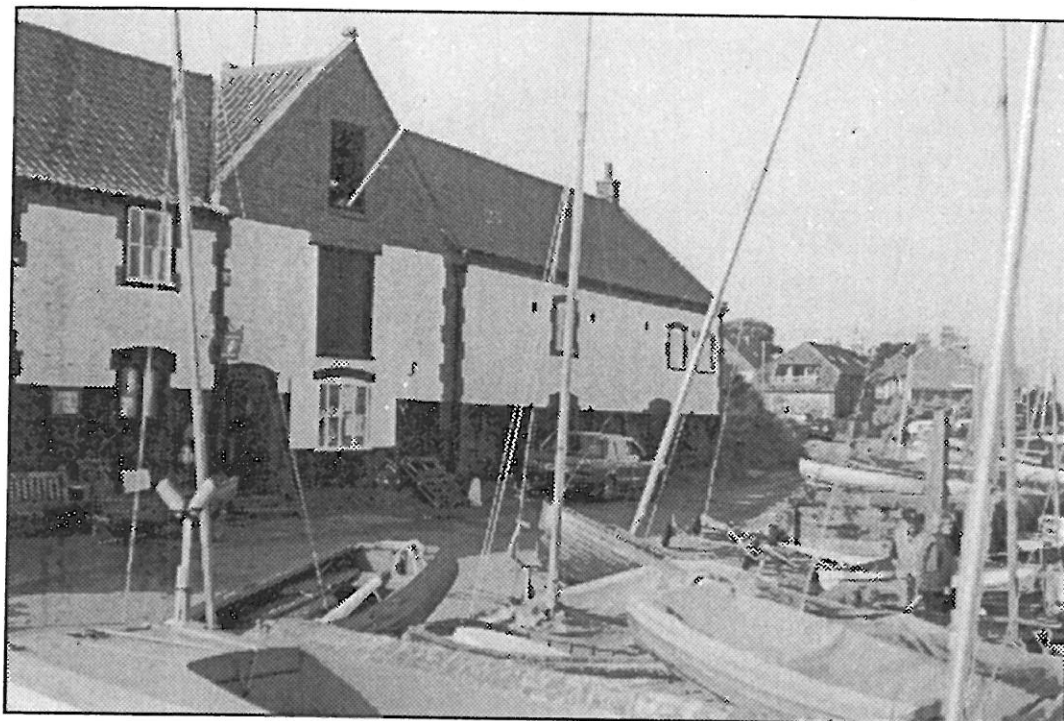


BURNHAM OVERY STAITHE

CONSERVATION AREA DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



BURNHAM OVERY STAITHE. Burnham Overy parish includes the large village of Burnham Overy Staith, situated nearly 2 miles N.N.E. of Burnham Market, on a rivulet or creek, which crosses the salt marshes by two channels to the ocean, and is navigable for vessels of 60 or 80 tons up to the staith, where the spring tides rise 9 or 10 feet.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: March 1977
REVISED: February 1992



POLICY &
ENVIRONMENT

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.

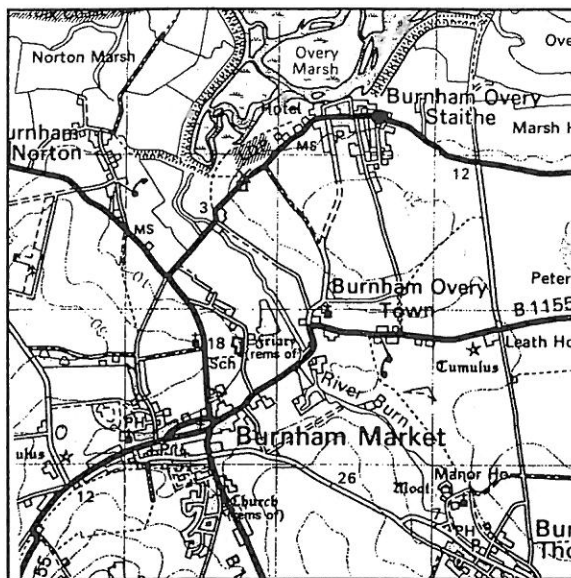
The Burnham Overy Staithe Conservation Area was first designated in 1977. This document highlights the special qualities that underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation. It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to the environment occur, 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

Burnham Overy Staithe is situated on the A149 coast road within the North Norfolk Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 8 kilometres (5 miles) west of Wells-next-the-Sea, 20 kilometres (12½ miles) east of Hunstanton and 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of Fakenham. The settlement is linear, having expanded between the main road and the

harbour. In more recent years residential development has spread south onto gently rising farm land.

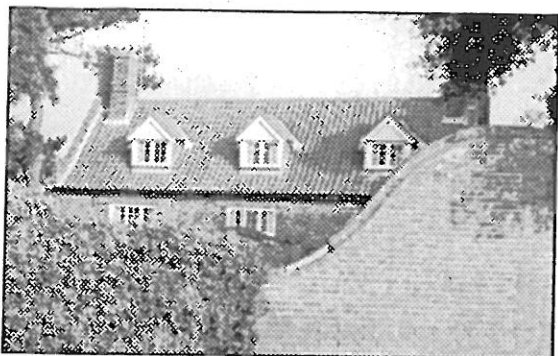


The two main approaches east and west along the A149 are between open cornfields with extensive views north across sloping fields to the edge of the marshes and beyond over the mudflats to the dunes on Scolt Head Island. The edges of the village are well defined by thick hedges and boundary walls that run down to the grazing marshes.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Although there is some suggestion from aerial photos of rectangular enclosures resembling house sites to the east of Burnham Overy Staithe, there is no clear evidence of early settlement here. Until the late middle ages the river Burn was navigable as far inland as Burnham Thorpe and the first Saxon settlers established a small community inland at a crossing point of the river. It became known as Burnham Overy ('Overy' meant 'over the water') where substantial remains of the original Norman cruciform structure are still clearly visible in St Clement's church. Small craft continued to reach the village until the 15th Century, by which time silting up of the river had become so serious that trade began to move downstream to the mouth of the Burn.

A similar process was taking place on the opposite side of the valley where the medieval village of Burnham Norton on higher ground near the church was gradually abandoned in favour of a new settlement with its own staithe on the edge of the marshes. This shift of emphasis was a gradual process, but by the 17th Century the nucleus of the present settlement at Burnham Overy Staithe had become established and the earliest surviving houses date from this period, notably Staithe House in Tower Road with 17th Century brick window surrounds and Marsh Farmhouse just east of the village (c 1680) but with stone quoins that suggest



an earlier post Dissolution building. The attraction of this otherwise bleak location beside Overy Creek was twofold. Firstly larger ships could dock here and off-load their cargo of coal in exchange for grain, and secondly the salt marshes were being drained to create a large expanse of fertile grazing marsh.

North West Norfolk had become a rich and progressive agricultural area due largely to the experiments in crop rotation and sheep rearing conducted by several large landowners including the Earl of Leicester at nearby Holkham, 'Turnip' Townsend at Raynham and Lord Walpole at Houghton. As a result the light, chalky soils began producing a sizeable agricultural surplus, notably good quality barley that was either ground into flour at one of several wind or water-powered corn mills in the Burn valley, or malted and shipped to the London breweries.

The period of greatest prosperity at the Staithe began in the mid to late 18th Century and continued through until well into the 20th Century. During this time the harbour became a thriving centre for trade in agricultural products and associated trades. The settlement grew along the water's edge between the high water mark and the coast road, a mixture of roadside labourers' cottages, riverside warehouses and the larger, late Georgian residences set back from the road in their own grounds, in which the most important members of the local community lived.

Central to the trade and fishing activities conducted from the Staithe was the harbourmaster-cum-coastguard officer who collected the tolls and was responsible for ensuring safe passage along Overy Creek and out into Holkham Bay between Gun Hill and Scolt Head Island. He lived at what is now The Garth in Wells Road, with the row of coastguard cottages to one side of about the same date, c 1830.



The Maltsters house, now The Moorings, is the largest of these late Georgian houses, situated at the water's edge with a long range of maltings running alongside. Dairy Farmhouse in Tower Road falls into the same category of plain early 19th Century house, a reminder that farming was an equally important part of the local economy. The social importance of these buildings is defined by the use of more distinctive and more expensive materials - gault brick from the Holkham estate brickworks at the eastern end of the parish and Welsh slate brought in by boat long before the railway reached Burnham Market.

As the mixture of granaries and maltings spread out along Harbour Road, so the settlement expanded with the construction of terraced cottages to house the new workforce. One notable range survives in New Road where the neat rows of cottages and small houses were occupied by a mixture of fishermen, farm workers and men employed in agricultural trades - Post Mill cottages is a reminder that a corn mill operated nearby off New Road or Mill Road as it is also known, until 1888. By this time a new Board School had been built (1875) in the road, there were two pubs in the main street, The Ship and The Jolly Sailors, a smithy in East Harbour Way and a Methodist Chapel (1860) by the sea bank.

The arrival of the railway at Burnham Market enabled grain and cattle from the area to be transported to London much more quickly. This and the difficulty of keeping Overy Creek open to sea-going vessels led to a rapid decline in trade at the Staithe. The fishing trade and agriculture continued to provide a livelihood until the north Norfolk coast became a popular holiday destination for those interested in sailing and bird watching. Today many of the 19th Century warehouse buildings and labourers' cottages have been converted into weekend retreats that now provide work for local builders, fishermen, boat repairers and the holiday industry in general.

CHARACTER OVERVIEW

The form and character of Burnham Overy Staithe is essentially linear with small groups of traditional buildings strung out along the main coast road at intervals and along short sections of the few secondary lanes that meet it at right angles. Here at the junctions with the A149 the spaces are rather more closely defined but there is no focal point or central space to give the Conservation Area a more coherent shape. The main road is busy with holiday traffic during the summer, but the centre of activity remains that section of Harbour Road that runs beside Overy Creek. Here the sailing fraternity and walkers mingle throughout the year.

SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Tower Road

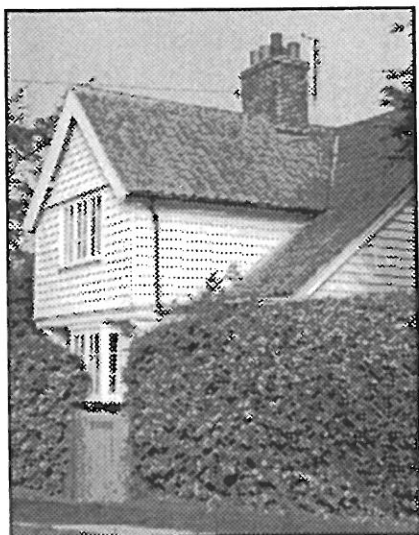
The most attractive approach is from the south west

along the main road as it climbs uphill past the windmill. Ahead the edge of the village is marked by a thick hedge running down to the marshes with two houses set back in their own well landscaped gardens and hardly visible from the road. The first stretch of Tower Road is a loose mixture of traditional clunch and pantile buildings including the converted outbuildings to Dairy Farm, separated by two recent infill houses in familiar neo-vernacular style. The absence of boundary walls, the preference for ornamental hedgerows and the unattractive visibility splay have created a poorly defined frontage but the interest remains on this north side with a long thorn hedge to the field opposite.

A little further along the road curves gently to the right before straightening through the centre of the village. The view in both directions is contained by the bend, a mixture of brick boundary walls overhung by mature trees in the grounds of several larger, distinctive late Georgian houses. Dairy



Farmhouse marks the beginning of this attractive group, an imposing double-pile house with regular small pane sashes. Seen first against a backcloth of tall horse chestnuts and sycamores it stands empty and a little neglected. Beyond and most clearly visible when travelling in the opposite direction is a good 1930's weatherboarded house. Painted white with jettied gable end it peers out over its own tall



hedge. Staithe House in knapped flint with dormers and small pane casements is set further back and only briefly visible, framed by huge beech trees overhanging a tall, swept brick wall. The Moorings is almost completely lost to view behind more trees including one massive copper beech beside the road; its long slate roof punctuated by rows of dormer windows. At this point the outbuildings that flank the entrance and the red brick Victorian terrace opposite mark a short narrowly defined section of road before the staggered junction of West Harbour Road and New Road.

New Road

The main approach from the south is via Mill Road. As the road rises out of Burnham Overy Town the straggle of pantiled cottages and clumps of trees along Tower Road are clearly visible with the creek and salt marshes spilling out beyond to the horizon. On its way downhill Mill Road becomes New Road, straight and well defined on its west side by a good sequence of closely spaced Victorian ribbon development. The first terrace in square chalk blocks is slightly earlier and more cottage-like in



scale with a simple bracketed canopy to each plank door. Lower down, the second terrace is in yellow brick with its own regular pattern of sash windows. Between the rows are two red brick detached houses with smut pantiles, simple and symmetrical facades and then the former school building slate roofed and gable end to the road, interrupts the domestic rhythm of openings but respects the same building line set slightly back behind low flint and brick garden walls. Unfortunately this tight, orderly definition is not repeated on the opposite side where replacement houses are set well back behind a wide grass verge, gravel drives and ornamental trees.

West Harbour Road

The view, framed on the corner by the wide cobbles gable end of the old Ship P.H., is terminated by a black tarred granary building at the far end of a small meadow, the most central open space in the village. At the road junction the view opens out to take in the whole group of larger warehouse buildings in the angle formed by West Harbour Road. The scale here is more imposing, often three storey, notably the long slate-roofed range of maltings. The roof lights, and pretty belvedere astride the ridge are part of the residential conversion which has transformed the whole group.

Simple new openings punched through the brickwork together with tarred or sparkling white render retain the industrial flavour of this strongly defined corner of the Conservation Area.



A few yards further on where Harbour Road runs alongside the creek, is the real heart of Burnham Overy Staithe. Long, low brick and clunch granary buildings hard up against the road and all now converted into holiday homes, define the south side. The grass verges are lined with sailing dinghies and the views out, constantly changing with the tide, are across a vast expanse of water, mudflats and salt marshes. Throughout the year but especially during the summer months the creek is alive with boats, walkers and birdwatchers. From the raised sea bank the view back along the waterfront takes in the full range of houses and converted granaries, a series of solid red brick and pantile structures against a dark backdrop of mature trees, the whole picture untainted by poorly designed new development or commercial activity.

Wells Road

Running parallel to Harbour Road is the main A149 which, between New Road and Gong Lane is a curious lop-sided arrangement of distinguished late Georgian buildings on the north side and a mixture of indifferent post-war buildings and ugly gaps on the south side.

The view along the main street is framed on both sides by trees - mature beech in front of the former coastguard officers house at the far end of a low red brick garden wall and weeping willow opposite at the back edge of a wide grass verge. Beyond The



Garth are the Coastguard cottages, set back on the same building line behind low boundary walls, an attractive domestic row in red and yellow brick, pantiles and slate with regularly spaced sash windows. Any spatial definition here is cancelled out by the pub car park and mobile homes opposite.

East Harbour Road

There is greater definition on the corner where The Hero P.H. juts out at right angles to the main road opposite a pair of plain, colourwashed cottages in Gong Lane. The view down East Harbour Road to the creek is framed on both corners by brick garden walls and a dense mass of trees that obscure two attractive buildings - The Anchorage and Staithe Lodge. This short straight length of road is lined by colourwashed cottages - hard up to the road with plain sentry box porches on the east side and at the back of a grass verge on the west.



Wells Road

East of Harbour Road the last section of Wells Road is distinguished by a familiar pattern of dense trees on the north side and cottages opposite - short terraces flanking the road or at right angles, in clunch, cobble and red brick, notably Red Row, where 18th Century cottages have been remodelled in the 19th Century

Slotted quite successfully into this roadside group are two new brick houses with steeply pitched pantile roofs and rear wings with strongly defined parapet gables. Beyond The Homestead, a good double pile 17th Century brick building refronted in the early 19th Century, and lost down a narrow footpath that runs through to the Old Chapel, the informal grouping of cottages reverts to the north side with gable ends more prominent as Wells Road curves slightly before leaving the village.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 4 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and there have been no other additions.

Buildings Listed Grade II

- **Staithe Lodge, East Harbour Road:** Late Georgian colourwashed squared stucco, smut pantiles. Service wing - sashes with keystone heads.
- **The Garth, Wells Road:** c1830, Gault brick with red brick gables, slate roof. Sashes. 6 panel door with arched fanlight. Originally a Coastguard Officer's house.
- **The Moorings, Tower Road:** Former maltsters house with maltings attached. Early 19th Century. Gault brick, slate roof Sashes. Stucco porch with Doric columns. Steep hipped roof.
- **Scotts of Burnham Overy Staithe:** House 17th Century, restored early 20th Century.

Knapped flint, red pantile front roof Coursed pebble flint gables and rear. Casements in rusticated brick surrounds. Some brick lozenge patterning.

IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Most of the remaining buildings in the Conservation Area are unlisted cottages, outbuildings and Victorian industrial buildings along the quay. Collectively they make a major contribution to the form and character of the area and have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their substantially unspoilt character, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by.

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Burnham Overy Staithe Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historic buildings. Although red brick and orange pantiles predominate the area is notable for the wide range of wall and roof materials in evidence.

They include:-

- Red brick
- Gault brick
- Knapped flint
- Cobble (coursed and random)
- Chalk (square block and random)
- Colourwash
- Tar
- Orange pantiles
- Smut (black unglazed) pantiles
- Black glazed pantiles
- Slate

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Burnham Overy Staithe Conservation Area, but there is one site recorded on the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record, namely the defensible granary by the quay.

POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

Burnham Overy Staithe has continued to grow since the war in response to demand for weekend and retirement homes. New residential development has taken place largely to the south of the A149 along Gong Lane and Glebe Lane outside the Conservation Area. There are, in addition, two small holiday caravan parks and a row of Council houses further south along Gong Lane. Apart from the occasional infill plot, new development within the Conservation Area is restricted to the group of larger detached houses between New Road and Wells Road. Most of the former maltings and granary buildings along Harbour Road have been converted into holiday flats.

DETRACTORS

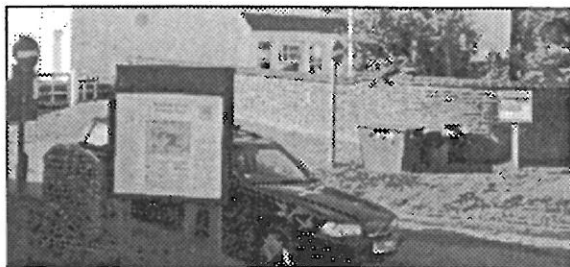
The special quality of Conservation Areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials or unsuitable paintwork, removal of walls, railings, trees and hedges. The special quality of Burnham Overy Staithe remains distinctive but localised changes have eroded the visual quality of some parts of the Conservation Area. They include:-

- Large modern windows, UPVC and "neo-Georgian" replacements, notably on some properties in East Harbour Way and Wells Road.
- The long visibility splay in Tower Road. The surface is poorly maintained, the two new houses are set too far back and there is a loss of definition on this important approach.
- The detached houses between Wells Road and New Road, set well back behind wide grass verges, are poorly related to each other and, together with the exposed pub car park



and caravan site, have created a weak roadside frontage in the centre of the Conservation Area.

- Roadside and grass verge parking in Harbour Road (East and West).
- The clutter of signs and other street furniture beginning to accumulate at the northern end of East Harbour Road.



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 or demolition should seek advice from the Planning Department 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 the Planning Department.



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BURNHAM OVERY STAITHE CONSERVATION AREA

NOTATION



CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



LISTED BUILDINGS



IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

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