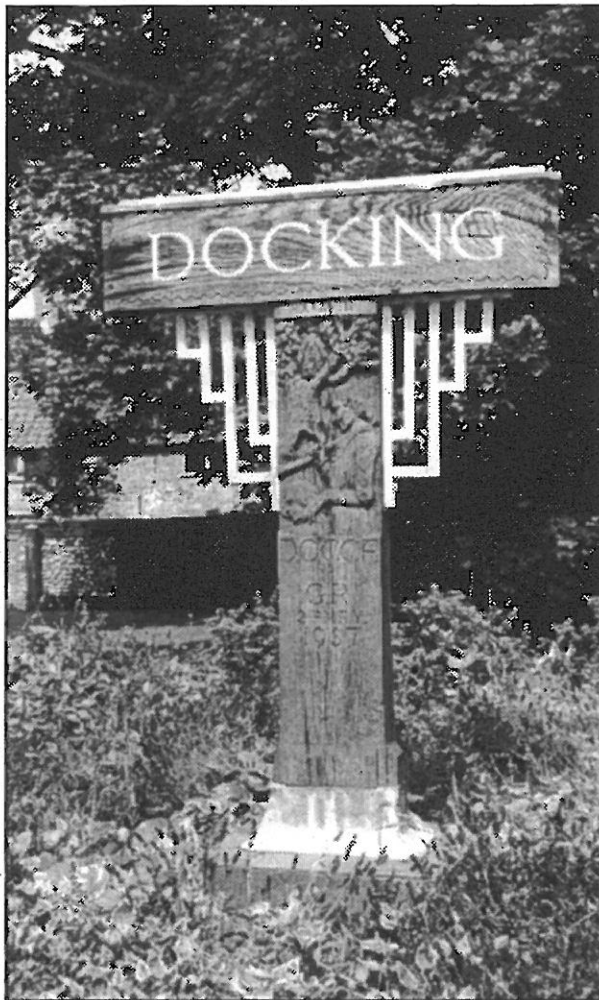


DOCKING

CONSERVATION AREA

DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



DOCKING is a large village pleasantly situated 6 miles S.W. of Burnham, and 17 miles N.E. of Lynn. Its parish comprises about 7,000 acres of land; but only 5,896 acres are assessable. The public well here is 66 yards deep, and a man is constantly employed in drawing water.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: October 1978
REVISED: February 1992

**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.

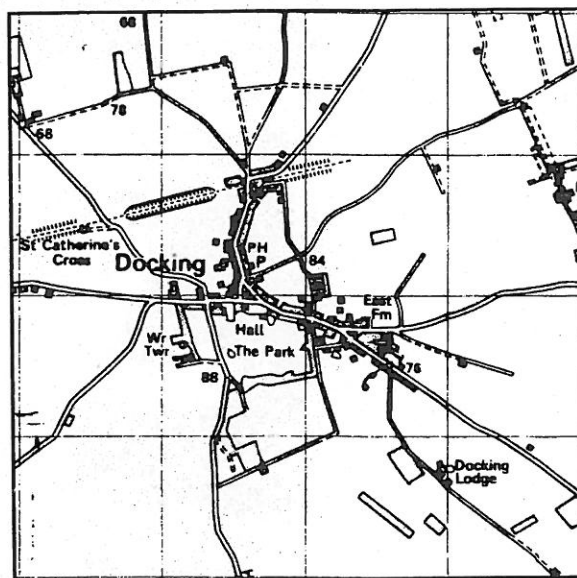
The Docking Conservation Area was first designated in October 1978. This document highlights the special qualities which underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation. It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to the environment occur, 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

Docking is located to the north-east of the Borough at a point which is one of the highest in Norfolk, at around 84metres (275 feet) above sea level. The setting is agricultural and consists of a gently rolling landscape and field pattern generated during the several hundred years of its historical human settlement.



The soil is of a light sandy type officially designated as containing 87% sand, very short of hummus and with a very high proportion of flint stones. The main crops are sugar beet, wheat and barley. Dairy and sheep farming has to a lesser extent always been carried on in the area.



In topographical terms Docking lies at the centre of a radiating system of roads and tracks. The main road running through the settlement is the B1454 which links Docking with the larger urban centres of Fakenham 17³/₄ kilometres (11 miles) to the south-east, Hunstanton 14¹/₂ kilometres (9 miles) and Heacham to the north-west. The road runs east/west through the village.

To the north of the settlement, Station Road splits into two arms. The B1153 connects Docking with Brancaster 6½ kilometres (4 miles) to the north east, while the other road leads to Choseley 3¼ kilometres (2 miles), and Thornham 6½ kilometres (4 miles) to the north west.

To the west of the village core two further roads connect with the B1454. The northern road leads to Ringstead 7¼ kilometres (4½ miles), whilst the southern one leads ultimately to Kings Lynn 10½ kilometres (16½ miles) and Bircham 4¾ kilometres (3 miles). To the east at the village core the B1155 splits from B1454 and leads to Stanhoe 3¼ kilometres (2 miles) and Burnham Market 9½ kilometres (6 miles) to the north-east.

Minor tracks, Bradmere Lane, Pound Lane, Mill Lane, Little Lane, and the tight matrix of streets around the eastern core all give access to outlying farms and hamlets.



The location of the major architecturally significant sites, Docking Hall, The Church, Hall Farm, Manor Farm, and North End Farm and their associated landscape all provide important elements of the village setting. Topographically, the elevated location provides good views out of the settlement, particularly to the north towards the coast and to the west towards Sedgeford and Heacham. The southern edge of the settlement is dominated by the Hall and its historic park, and the east by the ribbon-like development which has extended along Fakenham Road in modern times.

In terms of the soil types, Docking is located in the north-west corner of the 'good sands' area, on the boundary with the chalk scarp. The 'good sands' are characterised by 'coversand' over a red, strongly weathered clayey subsoil, over chalky soil. The versatile soils are used for arable fruit, and vegetable farming, and for grasslands.

All these factors have contributed to the unique character of the Docking Conservation

area.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Whilst clear evidence exists for Roman settlement at places such as Brancaster, one of the 'Saxon shore forts', it is generally agreed that formal settlement at Docking began during the Dark Ages (AD 400-600 approximately).

The Wash and its associated river system was clearly a relatively easy way of incursion by the early Saxon raiders. The land which became Docking was some 85-90 metres (275-300 feet) above sea level and had a commanding view of the countryside all around. It would have been an attractive place for an early settlement. Fresh water was not available from springs but collected in pits for the inhabitants, and nearness to the sea gave access to an easy line of retreat.

The early settlers were thought to be from the Frisian Islands. The name 'Docking' has two possible derivations:-

1. From DOCCINGAS – Anglo Saxon, meaning a place or settlement of the tribe of DOCCA.
2. From DOCCE, Old English, meaning the dock plant or water lily, i.e. the place where docks grew, perhaps in this instance related to the rainwater pits mentioned above, which would have encouraged the growth of docks / water lilies. 'Ing' is generally known as 'homestead of the people'. The spelling of 'Docking' has changed over the centuries. It is referred to in the Domesday Book (1086) as 'Dochinga' and in 1334 it is written 'Dockyng'.

The early settlement was based on the feudal agriculture system centred around the manor house. Docking was located in 'hundred' of Smithdon, the early administrative institution and was generally referred to as 'Dry Docking' owing to the scarcity of water.

There were four manors in the area which were associated with tenanted farmsteads and the more densely populated settlement of Docking itself. The important family names who controlled the area were the Lovells, de la Zouche, L'Estrange, Hovell, Ffolkes, and most interestingly the Hare family who acquired Southmere Manor in 1597 (Master of the Rolls

to Henry VIIIth). This family has perhaps been the most influential in the development of the settlement to this day. Their family seat, Docking Hall, is a major generator of the form of the settlement which is evident on the map.

Subsequent historical development is typical of such a settlement based on agriculture. The dominance of certain families who, through marriage, controlled the all important purchase, sale, disposing of land, building plots and tenancies for profit is an important aspect in Docking. The key buildings result from this social arrangement, i.e. the Church, the Hall, the working farms and the 'servant' industries which supported this structure, not least the housing of the labour force which fuelled it.

The importance of Docking as a nucleus settlement is also evidenced from the small scale Ordnance Survey Map which shows it as a centre for many converging roads and tracks, linking it to outlying villages and larger urban areas. This matrix of roads and tracks visually akin to the spokes of a wheel, has always been a major element in the historical development of the form of the settlement which, over time, spread out from the centre near the Church along the important lines of communication.

The present form of the settlement has resulted from response over the years to the gradual changes in our society and in particular, those associated with agriculture. Docking has been a centre for the development of crop/seed investigation and the presence of the railway (1866) in the north of the village generated the growth of settlement along Station Road and the important granary site adjacent to it. It also encouraged even greater prosperity to the settlement through commerce and improved communication.

The 20th Century has seen an accelerating pace of change and even more dramatic alterations to the pattern of agriculture. All this has been reflected in changes to the built fabric of the settlement, now no longer centred around the pursuit and support of an agricultural based economy.

CHARACTER OVERVIEW

Docking Conservation Area is essentially 'L' shaped and follows the linear settlement

along the east/west Fakenham/Hunstanton Road and Station Road to the north. The 'knuckle' of the two arms is formed by Docking Hall and its associated historic park. In essence these elements, historic buildings and mature landscape, formed over the centuries and responding to different trends and fashion have contributed to the unique character of Docking.

The conservation area is quite large and contains more than just linear settlement. There are several 'node' points where roads meet and several distinct areas with their own particular character ranging from the area around the Church to the dense urban fabric of the eastern edge of the area.

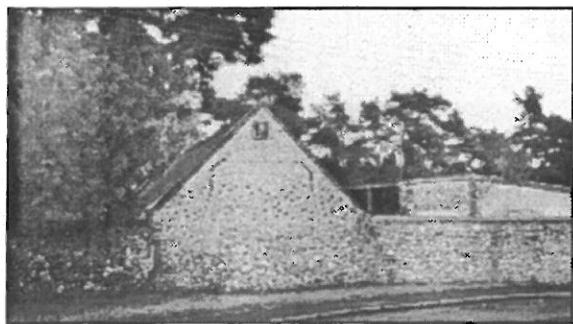
There is also a range of historic buildings, some listed, often set behind, or linked by walls. All are built in a relatively limited palette of local vernacular materials generated by the geology and topography of the area, hence the unique unity of architectural character of the Conservation Area.



Transport and communication routes have provided another major generating factor of village form, and it is the way that these are juxtaposed which gives another essential ingredient of the Conservation Area's character. Their subtle twists and turns, junctions and changes of direction give a range of interesting views and vistas in the classic townscape tradition, very often enhanced by the mature landscape of trees, hedges and grass verges, and the ponds which are so characteristic of Docking. There are important views both into and out of the Conservation Area.

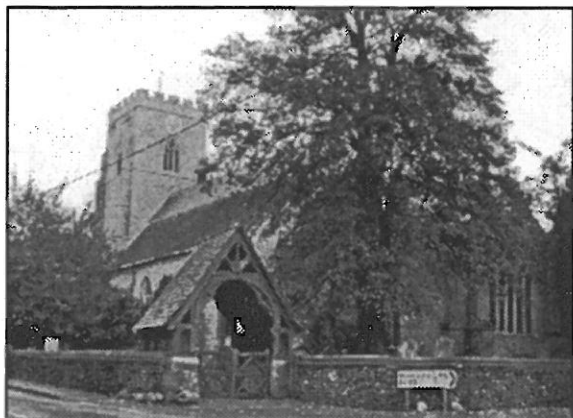
SPACES AND BUILDINGS

The varied range of buildings, and spaces created by them are the essential ingredients of the particular character of the Conservation Area.



The 'core' of the village, encompassing the Church, Vicarage, the School, Docking Hall, Manor Farm, several important listed and unlisted buildings, and the spaces and landscape in between, shows that the character of the conservation area is formed by many components.

St Mary's Church is a dominating feature and its pivotal location at the junction of lines of communication was clearly no accident. Its tower is a landmark for miles around and was once a locating point for sailors. It is enclosed on all sides by important landscape features. To the west, south and east, the churchyard is enclosed by screen walls, such an prominent feature in this Conservation Area. To the north, the churchyard extends towards the rear of properties on Station Road. Glimpses of the vicarage which lies to the north-west are seen through the trees, which form a delightful backdrop to the whole scene on all sides. There are two entrances to the churchyard. The main entrance is from the south-east where the listed Lych Gate punctuates the transition between public and religious space. The other entrance is located to the north-east, just south of the important range of historic buildings which includes the listed Manor Cottage.



At the east end of St Mary's Church there is an island of buildings and spaces bounded by Well Street, Chequers Street and Church Place. This area is characterised by a mix of

important listed and unlisted buildings, most notably Holland House, the First School, School House and ranges of cottages to the east. There are open spaces to the north (a paddock), around the school, and to the east, the latter being effectively a mini Village Green containing seats, village sign and the old village stocks (Listed). The area is punctuated by a mature treed landscape with several substantial screen walls.

The southern edge of this area is defined by the imposing and rather formidable estate wall to Docking Hall and the beautiful treed landscape behind it, a barrier which marks a very clear boundary between village and Hall.

The wall runs virtually unbroken from the western edge of the village settlement to Mill Lane in the east. It is however punctuated by a good classical (listed) access door opposite the church, the stable block, the main entrance to the east of the Hall itself, a farm access gate even further to the east, and then a small cottage building hugging the wall itself (which gives a pleasant view southwards). The wall is a most important feature of the Conservation Area through its sheer physical presence, although it denies any public view of the Hall and its grounds.

Finally the north-eastern boundary of the core area is formed by the dominant presence of Manor Farm, its outbuildings, walled garden and its mature treed landscape, both in the garden itself and along the eastern boundary. The latter tree belt provides an important visual backdrop and sense of enclosure to this part of the Conservation Area. Modern infill buildings have been inserted to the north-east of Well Street and, whilst architecturally undistinguished, they are of reasonable scale and well hidden behind hedges. The southern edge of Well Street is punctuated by another fine listed building, The Lodge, and is stopped visually by the estate wall and trees beyond.



Moving westwards, the Conservation Area

boundary lies at the important road junction of Sedgford Road, with Ringstead Road to the north and Bircham Road to the south. The principal historic buildings in this area are the listed 'Cage', the cottage range to the north, and the Hall Farm buildings to the south. These, along with the mature hedgerow and grass verge all contribute to this attractive western approach to the village. The juxtaposition of church tower, pond, mature treed landscape, walls, hedges and grass verge provide a delightful assembly of components. Several post war houses have been inserted, particularly along the Ringstead and Sedgford Roads, but they are generally contained within important landscape buffers which reduce their impact.



To the east of the Chequers Street/Well Street junction is the High Street where spaces and building of a different character emerge. The southern boundary up to Mill Lane is again formed by the estate wall to Docking Hall. To the north, the settlement is essentially linear and at its western end, relatively modern. Chalet bungalows have been inserted to the east of The Lodge and are grouped around another attractive pond with substantial screen walls to the road and treed landscape further to the north. To the east of these bungalows is the Village Hall, a 1930s building donated by an prominent local family, the Rippers. The building is in itself quite attractive and has an important space behind it, now a popular bowling green.

Further along there is more modern infill housing, well screened from the road, and a commercial garage which is not. It is difficult to be too critical of the latter, as such businesses add to the sorely needed commercial infrastructure of villages such as Docking.

At the junction of High Street with Bradmere Lane to the north and Mill Lane to the south, is

another cluster of historic buildings important to the locality. To the north-west are ranges of charming terraced cottages, some set away from the road (Chapel Yard and Carr Terrace), some at right angles and others directly on the road. The buildings to the east of Mill Lane are generally larger and include the listed Marsh House/Bank House, recently renovated and now the home of a local business. Opposite, and to the east of Bradmere Lane, are the equally important (though not listed) ranges of The Lodge, Arden Cottage and Arden House and yet another attractive pond. The complex array of built fabric generates some interesting spaces and views via the access drives and passages off the main road, together with the occasional more distant view of countryside beyond.

Moving further eastward, the High Street divides into the Fakenham Road to the south-east, and the Stanhoe Road which travels off in a north-easterly direction. This is an extremely interesting area of the village.

A density of urban form has been generated on the land formed between the two main roads with a complex matrix of lanes and buildings in between. It clearly indicated a high level of commercial activity centred around the meeting of communication routes and the important farmsteads of 'The Grove' and 'East Farm House'.



Middle Road, East Lane and Mission Lane are packed with ranges of buildings seemingly scattered at random, whilst along the main roads spaces between buildings interspersed with hedges, walls and gardens provide a further array of picturesque views, vistas.

On Stanhoe Road, East Farm House with its adjacent pond and the mature landscape to the east, acts as a good visual stop to the Conservation Area and indeed the village. To the south the Conservation Area boundary contains ranges of historic buildings fronting

directly on to Fakenham Road and their associated landscape features, in this case generally hedges and grass verges.

Another area worthy of mention lies to the south of the High Street and is defined by High Street itself, Mill Lane to the west, and Little Lane to the south and east. The Grove, originally a tenanted farmhouse, is an important architectural element at the centre of the parcel of land containing further mature landscape, especially to the south. Its outbuildings to the north have all been converted to residential units and here new infill housing fits into the existing fabric reasonably well, especially as it is knitted into and around the existing mature landscape. Little Lane contains some interesting ranges of historic cottage buildings which sit well against the backdrop provided by The Grove and its grounds.

Modern housing has been inserted to the south of Little Lane, which also contains another delightful pond surrounded by mature trees. Previously a clay pit, it is now used for angling and provides a good recreational facility although the clutter of notices and poor enclosure could be improved. The western view along Little Lane is stopped by the dominant treed landscape of Docking Hall Park but a yet further range of cottages has been inserted to the south-east of Mill Lane creating an informal square.



The northern part of the Conservation Area essentially repeats the pattern of linear development found elsewhere in Docking. The Station Road area contains many ranges of historic buildings set at different angles which, with the subtle twists and turns of the road itself combines to provide a delightful range of views and vistas. In places, particularly around Burgess Cottages and Mill House, the density of the fabric increases beyond 'linear' and there are some notable architectural elements such as the former Hare PH, (listed) and North Farm. To the south is perhaps the

most attractive of the Docking ponds located at the junction of Station Road and Pound Lane. Views both north and south are delightful in this area but there are also attractive views outwards to the east and west.



Modern buildings have been inserted and are generally nondescript, but the old local government offices, now a residential home, and the presence of buildings such as 'Swiss Villa' add variety and interest. The Conservation Area contains the built fabric on both east and western sides of the road, although it excludes The Old Bakery site now 'Advanta Seeds'.

Another 'node' point is reached further north, centred around the site of the old railway station. The road splits around the site of the old station, the road to Brancaster travelling off in a north-east direction and that to Choseley and Thornham in a northerly direction. The triangle of land in between is another small village green and marks the point at which the already falling land dips down dramatically to the north.

This locality has its own quite complex character. To the south-east is the site of North End Farm now successfully converted and extended to form a range of light industrial commercial units. To the west is a range of cottage buildings and further north the Railway Inn with its popular bowling green to the west, and derelict commercial building just beyond. To the north-east is The Grange, originally built as a railway hotel, but now converted to another old persons' residence. In the centre is the village 'sub-green', more ranges of cottages, infill housing, the converted Station House and finally a large development of modern housing on the old railway site. Views northwards out of the Conservation Area at this point are particularly dramatic as are those from north to south along Station Road towards the village core.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 13 listed buildings within the Docking Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and there have been no further additions.

Listed Grade II*

Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Church Place/Sedgeford Road. Parish Church. 14th Century. Additions 1875. Flint with stone dressings, green slate roofs. West Tower, nave and south porch.

Listed Grade II

- **Cage, Sedgeford Road.** Early 19th Century. Flint with brick dressings, red pantiled roof. Single storey.
- **Manor Cottage, Church Place.** House. Date stone 1742. Knapped and galletted flint laid in courses, brick dressings, black glazed pantiled roof.
- **Manor Farmhouse, Station Road.** Farmhouse. Early 17th Century with 19th Century additions. Red brick, black glazed pantiled roofs.
- **The Hare Public House, Station Road.** Mid 17th Century. Stucco rendered face brick and clunch rear, pantiled roof.
- **Stocks (East End of Chequers Street).** 17th or 18th Century. Wood.
- **H. E. Marsh Hardware, High Street.** Shop 1840. Painted squared stucco on brick, red pantiled roofs. 2 bay shop to east, 3 bay shop to west.
- **Docking Hall, High Street.** Early 17th Century. Red brick north front, flint with brick dressings, slate roofs.
- **The Lodge and The Coracle (East of The Lodge), High Street.** Late 18th Century. Red brick. 20th Century concrete smut pantiles.
- **Holland House, Chequers Street.** Mid 18th Century. Red brick, black glazed pantiled roof.
- **Horseshoe Cottage, Chequers Street.** Late 18th Century. Former pub. Whitewashed Flemish bond brick, yellow washed brick dressings.
- **Lych Gate (SE of Church).** 1875. Stone, wood and slate.
- **Former Gateway to Docking Hall, Chequers Street.** Mid 18th Century. Stone ashlar. Palladian style.

IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

These have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional and often local materials, their character is substantially intact, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by.



Walls and railings, together with outbuildings associated with the historic buildings themselves, make a great contribution to the unique character of the conservation area.

POST WAR DEVELOPMENT

Nationally, the decline of farming, on the basis which generated the settlements, has sadly gone and the late 20th Century has seen the continued adaptation of farm buildings to other uses. Docking is no exception, and yet the community continues to change and adapt to these trends and changing patterns of life and several diverse businesses appear to flourish. The most dramatic result has been for villages such as Docking to lose many of the varied commercial and craft trades which could once be sustained together with the other village infrastructure which went with it.

Docking has remained an attractive place to live and has developed through the insertion of infill housing into the existing built fabric either singly or in small clusters. Early examples are simply bland 'anywhere' housing, typical of this era. Later schemes are much more site specific in their design and choice of materials and, as such, are more successfully integrated with the historic buildings.

The 20th Century has also seen the emergence of the car borne society and the need to accommodate vehicles, both moving

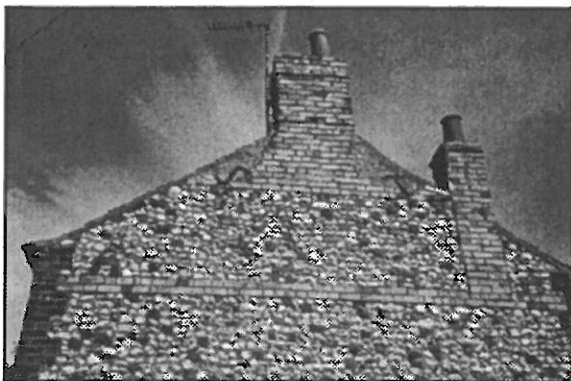
and stationary. Docking has done this fairly successfully although the speed of traffic along the main roads could usefully be calmed in future years. The insertion of modern services infrastructure has also created wirescape problems, endemic to many similar rural communities but which, in Docking, is sometimes overly intrusive into the village scene.

It is encouraging to see commercial enterprise still carried on within the village and this adds considerably to its vital character.

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Docking Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historical buildings, they include:

- Carstone, laid in all its various ways from coursed ashlar work to random rubble, sometimes with other materials, sometimes galletted.
- Yellow, buff and red local Norfolk brickwork.
- Clunch (chalk).
- Flint – again in various guises. From random rubble to knapped, sometimes galletted.
- Norfolk orange/red pantiles and blue/black glazed pantiles.
- Clay peg tiles.
- Welsh slate.
- Ashlar limestone (church and access gate).
- Colourwashed masonry and stucco (render).



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Docking.

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. Docking, as a fairly important nucleus centre, exhibits some environmental problems which impact on the conservation area. Heavy lorries still move right through the heart of the centre and there is sometimes heavy parking near the shop and school.

Docking has examples of all the former detractors and other important items are mentioned as follows:

- Poor enclosure using modern, unsympathetic materials for walls and fences or non-indigenous species for planting.
- Obtrusive wirescape.
- Poor open space, especially to the public houses and old Council offices.
- Cluttered signage and other townscape components, especially at the east of the conservation area and around Little Lane pond.
- Buildings in need of substantial repair or renovation.

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

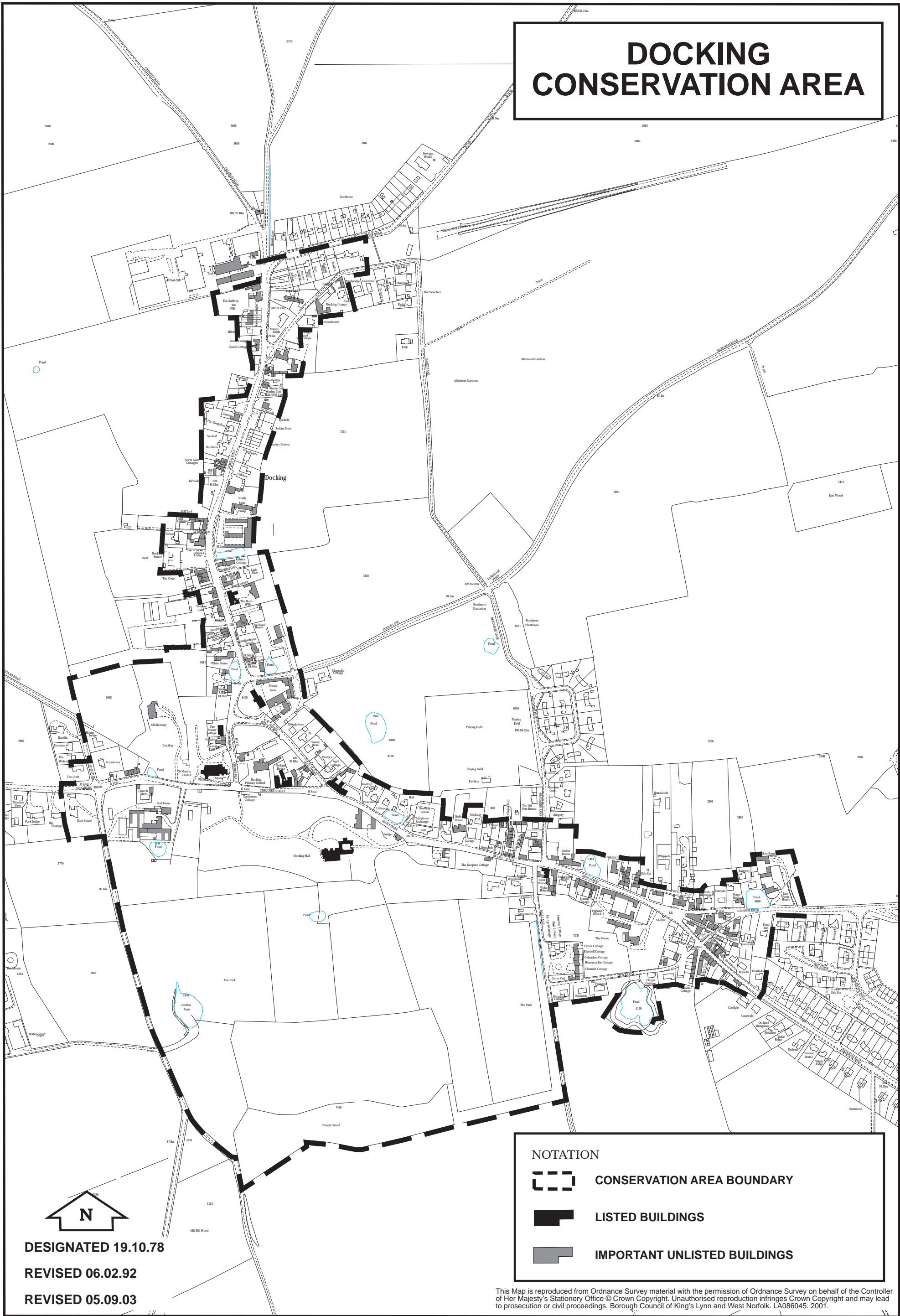
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alterations, extensions, installations, demolition or work to trees should seek advice from the Planning Policy at an early stage. A leaflet summarising these issues and including general information on conservation areas can be obtained from the Planning Policy free of charge.



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DOCKING CONSERVATION AREA



NOTATION



CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



LISTED BUILDINGS



IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

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