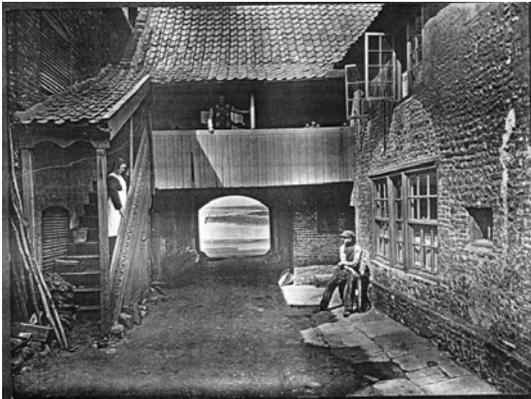


**Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area
Conservation Area Appraisal
DRAFT 08/07
NCC logo/NNDC logo/April 2007**



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Part 1 Character appraisal

1 Summary

Key characteristics

This character appraisal of the Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area concludes that the following are the key characteristics of the conservation area:

- The setting of the conservation area bordering the outstanding natural landscape of the creek and marshes
- The Quay and Yards as a key feature of the conservation area in terms of plan form and activity, contrasting with the quiet rural market town behind
- The unusually high retention of historic shop fronts along Staithe Street and the High Street
- The separate character area of the Buttlands in terms of form and architectural style
- Great diversity of building types, dates and architectural styles throughout the residential areas
- Extensive network of alleyways and yards, and high boundary walls formed from flint and brick, creating confined, enclosed spaces
- The Old Staithe as a remnant of the original centre of the settlement
- The predominance of Holm Oaks.

Key issues

Based on the prevalent characteristics identified in the following document, a number of issues have been identified and are listed below. These form the basis for the management proposals in the second part of this document.

- Permitted development resulting in loss of architectural details, boundary treatment and detrimental alterations and extensions: Need to protect identified areas through Article 4(2) directions
- Need to adopt a list of Buildings of Local Interest
- Need for a survey to update the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest
- Unsympathetic alterations to listed buildings
- Need for improved coordination and maintenance of the 'public realm'
- Poor ground surface treatment in the public realm
- Lack of traffic management and car parking
- Siting and design of new development
- Inappropriate 20th century infill
- Deterioration of upper floors above shops on Staithe Street
- Need to review the conservation area boundary

2 Introduction

Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area

Wells-next-the-Sea has developed around its harbour, and the beauty of this natural setting, with wide views of the marshes, sandbanks and creeks, strongly influences how the town is experienced by the visitor and resident alike. Its history as an important port has left an industrial flavour to some of its buildings around the Quay which is unusual in the county. The movements of the tides, boats, skies, and wildlife, as well as the throngs of visitors in the summer, create a lively dynamic in this part of the Town. In contrast, behind the Quay, a quieter country town has developed, characterised by enclosed spaces, and narrow alleyways.

The conservation area was designated by North Norfolk District Council on 6th June 1974. The town has 186 listed building entries (several of these individual entries include a number of buildings, so that the total number is significantly more) and a number of other buildings of local architectural or historical significance.

2.2 The purpose of a conservation area appraisal

Conservation areas are designated under the provision of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this appraisal document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the conservation area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. The appraisal conforms to English Heritage guidance as set out in Guidance on Conservation Areas (February 2006). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within Planning Policy Guidance note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15). Government advice on archaeology is set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 16: Archaeology (PPG16).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the conservation area and identify the issues which threaten the special qualities of the conservation area (Part 1: Character appraisal¹).
- Provide guidelines to prevent erosion of character, and achieve enhancement (Part 2: Management proposals).

2.3 The planning policy context

This appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Wells-next-the-Sea conservation area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by North Norfolk District Council. That framework is set out in a number of documents:

- North Norfolk Local Plan, adopted 1998 policies 35-45
- North Norfolk Design Guide 1998 (under review)
- Emerging LDF policies: Core strategy Submission document, June 2007, Policies EN2, EN4, EN5, EN6, EN8
- Emerging LDF policies: Site specific proposals preferred options report September 2006
- Draft North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, 2005
- PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- PPG16: Archaeology and Planning

¹ No character appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

- Heritage White Paper, March 2007: 'Heritage Protection for the 21st century'.

3 Location and setting

3.1 Location and context

Wells-next-the-Sea is a small town located on the north Norfolk coast set behind marshes and sand banks, linked to the sea by a wide creek. The town is surrounded by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

During most of its history the town has been a busy port thriving on maritime industries. The rural hinterland of the Town provided the barley for malting and grain export upon which the town thrived in the 19th century – but also hindered further economic development, because of the lack of good road networks or large markets. This limited the potential for import trade later on.

The town's proximity to Holkham estates has influenced its development – the estate was instrumental in draining the marshes around the town, and works to the main creek to make it more navigable. The estate provided a school in the 19th century, and much of the barley malted and exported through the town came from Holkham estate lands. In return the town was the provider of services and produce to the Estate. In modern times, the proximity of the Estate to the town brings mutual benefits, providing a wide range of activities and services for holiday makers.

3.2 General character and plan form

The general character of the conservation area at Wells can be divided between the Quay area with its large scale industrial buildings and harbour area, and the quieter rural market town area which forms its hinterland.

The basic footprint of the Town has changed little since the earliest map of the 17th century. This plan seems to have developed to accommodate the two historic centres of the Town – one around the old haven and the church, and the other around the present Quay site.



Fig 1:Gerken map late 17th century

The street plan running off the main Quay and East Quay is distinctive, formed from narrow, winding lanes called Yards. These built up areas grew in an organic, unplanned way with cottages, maltings, and merchant houses all crammed together. Many of the Town's older buildings, some with 16th and 17th century cores, are to be found in these areas.

The former commercial area along the High Street, and the other residential areas south of the Yards are set along quiet streets in a loose grid system. These areas are distinctive in that they remain predominantly 18th and early 19th century in character, lacking a strong late Victorian influence.

3.3 Landscape setting

The main link to the Town’s landscape setting is on the Quay, where the built-up area ends abruptly on the banks of the creek. Throughout the town there are views out to the sea and the marshes, facilitated by the rise of the land to the south of the Quay which raises the viewer above the quayside buildings, and by the north-south orientation of many of the main thoroughfares which direct the viewers’ gaze out to sea.

The Conservation Area also encompasses a large area of old marsh, where the early haven was sited, bordering Polka Road, one of the main roads into the Town. The view across this marsh from the north, with the church and mature trees beyond, emphasises the rural market town character of that part of the Conservation Area.

The Town is largely hidden from its hinterland as the main approach roads skirt around its east and west boundaries. However, travelling along the embankment from the beach, the context of the town can be clearly seen – a jumbled collection of buildings on the hill, rising up from the flat marsh.

[Photo1: View over the marshes]



4 Historic development and archaeology

4.1 The origins and historic development of the area

The history and development of Wells-next-the-Sea has been determined by its relation to the sea. The earliest haven was near the church on the eastern border of the town, the present harbour being developed as the creek became less navigable to the west. The town grew around these two centres in an I shape, the linear development to the northern industrial area and the southern residential area linked by the commercial spine of Staithe Street and the High Street.

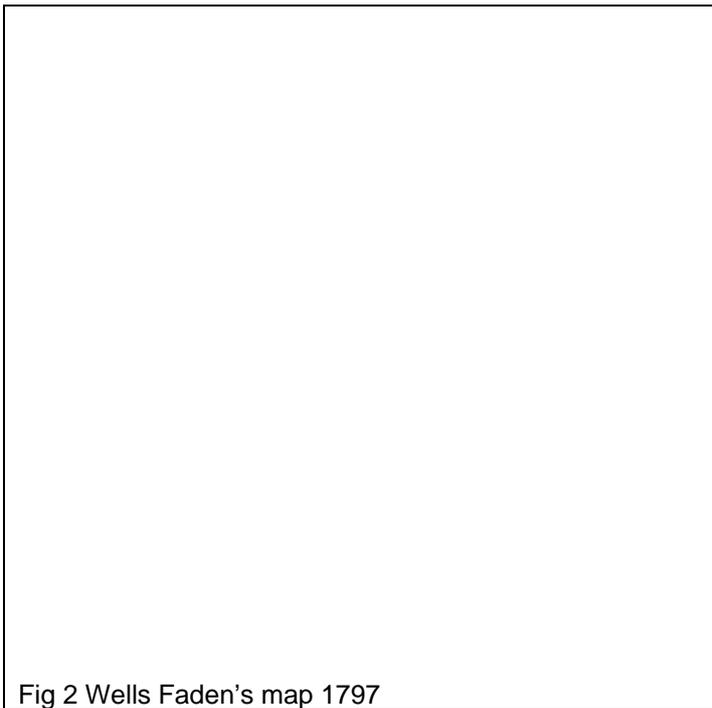


Fig 2 Wells Faden's map 1797

The name Wells probably derives from the numerous fresh water springs that can be found within the parish, bubbling up from the chalk on which the town is built. It was formerly thought that the foundation of the town with its grid system of streets was established by the Abbot of Ramsay as a result of a charter in 1202. However, it is now known that this charter referred to either Outwell or Upwell. The adjunct of 'next-the-Sea' was added during the Middle Ages to differentiate it from these other villages. The grid system seems to have developed during the late medieval period in response to the harbour relocation from the site near the church, and the related economic growth of the town.

13th century – 15th centuries

The first reference to Wells as a harbour dates from the 13th century when the haven was positioned in the creek running through Church Marsh, now reclaimed land. Henry III (1216 – 1272) granted a weekly market on Mondays. The advowson of an earlier church is also recorded in 1251. The present church, built in the 15th century, is the earliest surviving building in the town, although badly damaged in the fire of 1879.

Photo 2: Church from Church Plain



16th century

At some unknown point the position of the haven was developed away from the early centre near the church to its present position. By the 16th century the fishing village had grown into a thriving port; in 1580 nineteen ships of over sixteen tons were registered here - similar in number to those at Blakeney; and significantly more than other ports along this stretch of coast. The parish registers of 1548-1671 record many deaths of men lost in Icelandic waters on fishing trips for cod, herring and haddock. The harbour was the hub of activity, creating an industrial town of maltings, shipyards and rope yards.

17th century

Before 1660, when a programme of embankment was instigated, high tides would bring the sea up over the marshes to Freeman Street, and over Church Marsh almost up to the feet of the church. The importance of sheep farming to the economy stimulated reclamation of marshes to the east and west for grazing. Sheep were brought from the heath along two great Drove roads, until the heath was enclosed in 1811.

The Customs House records of the 17th century show the harbour to have been moderately busy, importing coal and exporting grain, malt and some salt fish. Trade was limited by the hinterland of the town which has always been agricultural and sparsely populated. Despite this, in 1663, a Harbour Act permitted the harbour authorities to enforce a tax on ship owners to pay for the building of a new stone harbour. The area immediately south of the quay developed as a series of narrow lanes or 'yards' with a mixture of commercial and residential buildings.

18th century

By the 18th century the principal trades in the town were fishing, malt production and export. The agricultural writer, Arthur Young, noticed how the previous wild sheep walks had been turned into high yielding arable land by the landowner, Sir John Turner. In the first half of the 18th century malt production from locally grown barley increased dramatically, with the town becoming second only to Great Yarmouth as a malt exporter.

The Holkham Estate map of 1714 shows the patterns of roads in the core of the town already established as they exist today, with Staithe Street and the High Street forming the main north-south axis from the quay to the residential area around the church.

From 1776 the Cokes became Lords of the Manor, and the Holkham Estate has influenced development and land use in and around the town ever since. By the late 18th century malt export had died away but barley export, much of it produced on the local estate, increased.

19th century

During the first half of the 19th century the harbour was busy with commercial traffic and fishing launches. There was also a weekly market on Saturdays on the heath at the southern tip of the parish until 1854. Communications through the hinterland were improved by the construction of the turnpike to Fakenham in the 1820s.

In 1844 an Act of Parliament authorised Town Commissioners to levy a local tax to fund improvements to the town's streets, sewers and lighting, perhaps prompted by the pressures of an increasing population. In 1854 the town registered its highest ever population - 3, 675, at a time when the average population of market towns in the county was 1,000. The Harbour Commissioners built the present quay as part of the improvements.

In the late 1850s Lord Leicester created the embankment to the west of the main creek (which now shelters the Beach Road), reclaiming more marsh, (where Pinewoods campsite is positioned) and straightening one side of the shipping channel. At this time the town supported eight master mariners and six pilots, four 'rope walks' and two ship building yards – testimony to the importance of commercial shipping to the prosperity of the town: Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn were the only other ports in Norfolk with such yards. There were also 27 inns to serve the large work force.

During the second half of the 19th century there was a sudden dip in fortunes. This was related to the main creek's tendency to silt up, creating navigational problems for large ships, combined with the arrival of the railway in 1857 which brought an end to the coal import trade. In addition, the agricultural depression from the 1870s onwards reduced the trade in grain export. Fishing almost ceased, with only two local boats registered in 1875. By 1880 the Customs House was abandoned due to lack of

trade. Malting continued in the town, the remaining large brick buildings at either end helping to create the distinctive industrial feel of the harbour area. The main employer was F&G Smith - their landmark granary building on the quay was built in 1904 – but this company also closed in 1929.

Photo 3: F&G Smith maltings in 2007



Tourist trade began in a small way once the railway reached Wells in the mid 19th century, but did not have a significant impact. The town did not develop as a resort, remaining essentially industrial until the mid- 20th century. Only one hotel was built, the Railway Hotel (now the Lifeboat), to accommodate new travellers.

20th century

During the first half of the 20th century the harbour remained viable for smaller ships and was used for sugar beet export, signalling a revival of trade. However the Second World War ended this. Tourism remained limited - during the 1940s the main trading areas along Freeman Street, Staithe Street and the High Street supported only one or two tea shops amongst the bakers, butchers, greengrocers and shoe makers which served the town population.

A further revival of the harbour's fortunes occurred in the 1970s when import trade in animal foodstuffs and fertilisers grew, only to be curtailed in 1988 when the soya bean market collapsed in South America. Commercial shipping has now entirely ceased at the harbour. Around a dozen local boats continue to fish for crabs and whelks - although these days the catch is processed at Cromer. Wells remains the only harbour with port facilities between Kings Lynn and Great Yarmouth.

21st century

Tourism is now the mainstay of the Wells economy. The combination of beach facilities and boating, together with the continuing working character of the quay has produced a unique flavour to the town's tourist trade. It attracts a wide cross-section of users with its low cost 'bucket and spade' holidays, fish and chips shops and amusement arcades, through to higher cost yachting activities, water sports, and opportunities for country house visiting, bird watching and walking.

Since the mid 18th century the population level has stayed remarkably similar, at around 2,500 – apart from the peak in the mid 19th century (see Appendix 1 on population figures). This helps to explain the continuity of the town's street pattern and shape with only one major housing development outside the historic 'footprint', built in the late 20th century.

Archaeological significance and potential of the area

Little formal archaeological investigation has been carried out in the parish of Wells and there are no scheduled ancient monuments within the parish. However, finds recorded from the 19th century onwards show evidence of occupation over a wide time span, including Neolithic (late Stone Age) flint axe heads; Iron Age pottery and salt-making briquetage; Bronze Age pottery; Roman coins and

pottery; and Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery (A complete list of HERS entries for Wells forms Appendix 2). The Iron Age finds during an excavation at Corner House, Staithe Street in 2005 are significant as only limited evidence of coastal settlement has been previously found for this period.

Of particular interest in the context of the development of the town is the Black Ware strap handle dug up in a garden south of Burnt Street which appears to be a Middle Saxon import. This implies that despite being a small rural site, Wells was already part of an 'interrelated net of commercial communities scattered around the Northern seaboard' between 650- 850 (see HERS report 18176).

Late Saxon and medieval pottery has been found just north-east of the church, supporting the theory that this area, described as Church Haven on early maps, was the site of the first harbour or landing area, and the earliest settlement site in the parish, clustered around the church. This area is still shown as a secondary harbour on late 17th century maps but was soon after made inoperable by the embankment and draining of the marshes.

The village appears to have shifted north during the late medieval period around the present site of the harbour, probably due to silting problems in the creek across the Church Marshes. The remains of several post-medieval timber jetties and harbour structures were found in the present harbour during a survey in 2004.

[Fig 3: Tithe map of 1844]

5 Spatial analysis

5.1 *The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area*

The main public open space within the conservation is the Quay. This area acts as a gathering point for visitors, particularly in the summer months, when it becomes the main hub of activity, taking on the character of a town square, where people can promenade, enjoy the view, eat fish and chips and fish for crabs. The experience of the Quay as an open space is dramatically emphasised by its conjunction with the wide expanse of natural landscape at its northern edge contrasted with the continuous solid boundary of buildings at the back of the Quay, north facing and therefore often in shade. This conjunction of dark, tall buildings, and light open space draws the eye to the distant sand banks and woods, and creates a sense of openness which is belied by the actual physical size of the quayside.

Photo 4: The Quay



The Buttlands, set around an uneven square of grass, lined with mature trees, has the atmosphere of a sedate square. At each corner narrow lanes and alleyways wind off at angles which screen outward views. This, in combination with the orientation of buildings around the edge makes the Buttlands a quiet, inward looking space.

Photo 5: The Buttlands



Different again, the large green space formed by the churchyard, cemetery and Old Staithe Marsh is much more rural in nature, with no buildings (apart from the church), many mature trees, and areas of unmanaged grassland. The unmanaged marsh provides a rural setting for Marsh House on its north side, but lack of enclosure along Polka Road, diminishes the impact of the space as it leaks into the industrial buildings and busy road just outside the boundary of the conservation area.

Photo 6: Old Staithe Marsh



Spaces between buildings vary in the different character areas. Particularly characteristic of the Old Town are the numerous alleyways running between high garden walls (e.g. Whalebone Alley, School Alley, Green Dragon Alley, Chancery Lane, part of Shop Lane, Anchor Lane, East End) and the narrow, informal yards which run off the Quay (e.g. Blackhorse Yard, Mindham's Yard, Red Lion Yard, Jickling's Yard, Jolly Sailor Yard) or are hidden behind main street frontages, particularly off Staithe Street. This informal plan of enclosed spaces, combined with the jumble of building types crammed into them, usually with no front gardens, creates a rich layering effect which is visually very busy and stimulating. This plan form also creates a sense of the 'hidden', as many buildings can only be glimpsed over high walls, through narrow openings, down unmade tracks, or obscured behind other buildings.

Photo 7: One of the narrow Yards



Moving away from this busy hub, in the residential areas along the east-west roads of the grid plan - Church Road, Burnt Street, Theatre Road, Bases Lane, Northfield Road and the west end of Freeman Street - the roads tend to be wider, and often edged with pavements, creating a more formal public realm than elsewhere in the town. These roads are lined with larger houses set back from the road

behind front gardens and mature trees, or bounded by high flint and brick walls, creating quiet, private spaces.

5.2 Key views and vistas

The most significant views are undoubtedly the wide vistas looking out of the conservation area across the harbour and out to sea. This view can be experienced in its full potential from the quay, but is also glimpsed at the end of the numerous streets and yards which run north-south up the gentle slope from the Quay.

Photo 8: view of the marshes from Dogger Lane

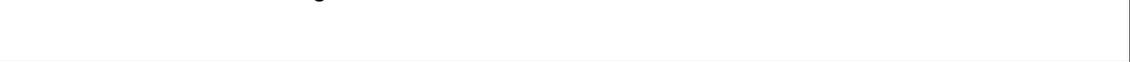


Travelling south along Polka Road there is an important view cross the open ground of the Old Staithe marsh towards the church – particularly noticeable as the church is unusually insignificant in the general townscape, set as it is, in the hinterland of the main focus of the Town around the Quay. Another important view of the church can be gained from Burnt Street, looking east, and from Church Plain.

Travelling along the coast road from the west the traveller catches glimpses of the Yards rising up behind the Quay, with their jumble of building types and materials.

Looking south down the High Street from Station Street another important view is created, with the unfolding rhythm of the high quality shop fronts and houses of the street backed by a distant view of the rural landscape rising up behind the town.

Photo 9: view down the High Street





Within the Conservation Area there are important views across the open green of The Buttlands, encompassing the high architectural quality of the buildings immediately around the green, as well as intriguing closed views, glimpsed along the streets and alleyways which lead off at each corner.

From outside the conservation area an important view of the town, settled on the hill gently rising up from the marsh, can be experienced from the embankment above Beach Road.

6 Character analysis

6.1 Activity, prevailing or former uses within the area

Activity, prevailing or former uses within the conservation area

Old Port

The Quay is the historic centre of industrial activity in the old port, which also includes the immediate hinterland of the Yards, with Standard Road at the eastern end and Glebe Road marking the western end. This area contains the remnants of the Town's industrial past, including the prominent former maltings at the east end of the Quay (now converted into apartments), and the former granary and maltings on the corner of Red Lion Yard (now a café and amusement arcade). This area remains the centre of activity in the town, but this is now focused on the tourist industry, with the buildings formerly associated with maltings and shipping commerce converted into apartments, souvenir shops and amusements, and many of the residential properties let for holidays. A number of old maltings have been demolished and replaced with modern housing or parking – for example, between Tunns Yard and Glebe Road, Croft Yard and behind the theatre (also a converted maltings) in Staithe Street.

The East Quay area contains some of the earliest surviving buildings in Wells, several dating from the 17th century, including the Old Custom House. Although most of the buildings were always residential, they were positioned between the Quay and the ship building yards, where ship owners and mariners could keep an eye on their businesses. It is now almost exclusively residential, apart from the Chandlery operating from Standard House, which helps to retain the historic maritime character of this corner of the quay.

Commercial centre

This includes Staithe Street, the High Street and Station Road. These three roads historically formed the main shopping area in the town. Staithe Street and the High Street are both lined with 18th and 19th century shop fronts though several of the buildings may have earlier cores. The High Street is now almost completely residential, while Staithe Street still thrives as a shopping centre. Station Road developed its commercial base later, and its shops and services are housed in groups of buildings in a variety of styles and materials.

Tourism

During the second half of the 20th century the growing recognition of the environmental significance of the north Norfolk coast and its beauty, and the increased public interest in bird watching and other outdoor leisure pursuits has increased the numbers of visitors to the town. Around 10,000 people visit

in the summer - the Pinewoods campsite (owned by the Holkham Estate) can accommodate 4,000 people. The harbour is used for leisure boats and dinghies, and the main income of the Harbour Commissioners comes from car park charges on the Quay. In the summer the Quay is permanently lined with children fishing for crabs. In winter birdwatchers come to see up to 100,000 pinkfoot geese roost on the sands of the harbour, bringing visitor activity throughout the year.

Photo 10: Shop on Staithe Street



Remarkably, there is not one national chain store in the town. However, just over a quarter of the houses in the town are said to be second homes which means that during the winter months the residential population and economic activity in the town is much reduced.

Future plans include a major harbour project being promoted by the Commissioners. This proposes a three phase programme including the building of a Maritime Heritage Centre; restoration of the Old Lifeboat House; new facilities for harbour uses; and improved recreation facilities.

6.2 Character zones, the qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the area.

Broadly there are distinctions between the Old Port area, the commercial centre, the residential areas and a smaller area of green space.

The Old Port

This area includes the Quayside; the Yards immediately south of the Quay based around a number of narrow yards running north-south; and the East Quay, similar in its spatial development to The Quay and Yards, but separated from it by Standard Road.

Quayside and Yards

The Quayside is an open space, its north side bordered by the creek, and wide views across the sand banks and marshes, its southern side by large scale buildings of three storeys and more, some related to the working port, such as former maltings and inns. In contrast, the Yards are irregular, narrow and enclosed spaces formed by a mix of former maltings, small vernacular cottages and a number of surprisingly large prestigious buildings dating from the late 17th/early 18th century. The sense of a jumble of buildings is accentuated by the position of the area on the slight rise up from the quay, which intensifies the differences in height and scale. Although (or perhaps because) the quay and yards formed the historic centre of the town's maritime industries, much of the original fabric has been lost. The plan of the Yards recalls the footprint of old maltings but most of them have been adapted or replaced with modern residential development. One former maltings building is listed, at the north end of Staithe Street, now converted into a theatre. The stark brick façade of this mainly flint building with red brick banding, dominates the entrance to Staithe Street.

Photo 11: Old maltings, converted into a theatre



Along the Quayside there are a number of late 20th century buildings of no architectural interest. The remaining listed buildings on the Quayside have also been much altered. The 18th century Golden Fleece pub has survived the best, retaining its curved gables, rusticated quoins and sash windows at first floor level. The large unlisted maltings at the east end of the Quay, with its *lucam* bridging the road, is a landmark building in the townscape and retains its historic character despite conversion.

Photo 12: Buildings along the Quay



Photo 13: Much altered listed buildings on the Quay



Within the network of Yards and openings behind the Quay a number of good quality buildings can be found – notably the 16th century St Michael's Cottage in Jicklings Yard, and the adjacent St Michael's House, an impressive early 18th century mansion; Sea View, another 18th century three storey house of brick with its gable on the Quay; the late 17th century mansion in the courtyard off Staithe Street; Windy Nook, a 17th century two-and-a-half storey flint house, with brick lozenge pattern in the gable, and No. 1 Gambles Square, an early 18th century flint and brick house behind Staithe Street. All of these are hidden amongst the narrow confines of the Yards, and are easily missed.

East Quay

The East Quay developed around Yards in a similar way to the main Quay, but without any of the larger industrial buildings related to malting. Perhaps because of this, the area has been less developed in recent times, and has retained more of its historic fabric, forming a distinctive area of high quality.

The East Quay area contains a number of high quality 17th century buildings, including the Old Custom House, built in response to the rising commercial fortunes of the port during that period, and mentioned in Samuel Pepys' diary of 1666. In the same group are Corwell House, dated 1678; East House, slightly further east and set back from the road; the more humble Corton and Red Cottages along Jolly Sailors Yard; and Tudor Cottage at the south end of Jolly Sailors Yard – all are largely constructed from flint, but most have been either rendered, stuccoed or colourwashed in later centuries. The 18th century is represented by two cottages along the Eastswin Lane/East End – Eastswin Cottage, with its steep pitched roof and flint gables, much extended in the 20th century, and Staithe Cottage – only one and a half storeys, but ornamented with a fine reeded timber doorcase with roundels.

Photo 14: The Customs House



Photo 15: Eastswin



The Commercial Centre

This area includes the existing shopping area along Staithe Street and Station Road, as well as the former commercial area of the High Street. Staithe Street and the High Street form the north-south 'spine' of the Old Town, both narrow streets lined with shop-fronted two- and three-storey buildings.

Staithe Street

The small number of gaps between the tall buildings and the gradient of the street towards the north and the brightness of the harbour make Staithe Street a shaded area, which accentuates its

narrowness, particularly in the summer when it becomes crowded with visitors, combined with the display of goods on the street outside the shops. There is restricted traffic access, and the street functions as a pedestrian area. The narrow lane is lined almost continuously with listed buildings, with a mixture of 17th and 18th century buildings, many retaining good historic shop fronts from that period, such as at numbers 5, 31, 42, 46, 52, Leftley's and the Corner House at the top of the hill. The majority are rendered and colourwashed although towards the top of the hill red brick facades can be found.



Photo 16: Staithe Street

Some of the architectural quality of the buildings in Staithe Street has been eroded by the replacement of original windows, particularly at first floor level, insertion of modern shop fronts, inappropriate repair and lack of maintenance.



Photo 17: Example of modern replacement windows in Staithe Street

High Street

Staithe Street continues to be the main shopping area, whereas the High Street has become residential - though a large number of its buildings retain historic shop-fronts. Without the shop signs and displayed goods found in Staithe Street, the High Street has developed a more homogenous character. The street slopes towards the south and this, combined with the reflective qualities of the cream and white colour-washed facades, creates a lighter, but much more subdued atmosphere.

Almost all the buildings here are rendered and colourwashed, with external window frames often painted with two contrasting colours. A high proportion of the buildings are listed, and though none particularly stand out, together they form a streetscape of very high architectural and aesthetic quality. This is enhanced by the gentle curve of the road down hill, away from the quay, allowing a long view of the streetscape, with its picturesque blend of pink, cream, blue and green rendered facades, and

the rhythmic banding of shop fronts and timber door cases at ground level, bi-colour painted sash windows at first floor and the roofscape of red pantiles, chimney stacks and dormers above.

Photo 18: Shop front in the High Street



Station Road

The commercial area along Station Road is more loosely formed, especially where it widens at the north end of The Buttlands, with a number of later buildings from the late 19th and 20th centuries and a greater variety of scale and materials.

The buildings styles in Station Road are also less unified than in Staithe Street and the High Street, reflecting later more piecemeal development along this thoroughfare. The early 19th century Lifeboat Inn (formerly the Railway Arms) on the corner is a significant landmark building at one of the main approaches to the town centre. The post office is a good example of a small number of carstone buildings in the town. At the western end the sober red brick of the early 19th century Congregational Church is set back from the road behind trees.

Residential areas

Old Town

This area originally developed around the church and the early haven, although the church is the only building to survive from the medieval period. The area retains its predominantly residential character. Church Plain at the southern end of the High Street, Church Street and Burnt Street, forming the southern boundary of the Conservation Area, encompass a residential area with the feel of a rural village or smaller market town. Church Plain is an opening-out of the High Street, and its terraced buildings built straight onto the street are of a similar date, but lacking the shop fronts. Church Street and Burnt Street, running to the south of the church, and once the main coast road, have the character of a linear rural village, with a mixture of smaller 19th century terraced cottages directly onto the road, opening out along Burnt Street into a wider road with pavements, and larger detached residences set back in mature grounds, all served by the church, two or three chapels and a public house.

Photo 19: view along Burnt Street



Photo 20: view along Church Street



The buildings in Church Plain are similar in character to the High Street, though only one has a shop front. Most are 18th century, colourwashed brick, and retain original features, such as sash windows and timber door cases. The church of St Nicholas forms the backdrop for the street – indeed this is one of the few vistas in the town, where the church dominates. It is also the most significant building in Church Street. The church has 15th century origins but was largely destroyed by fire in 1879. It was restored to its medieval appearance soon after. Due to the way in which the town developed away from its original site towards the present quay, the church is unusually insignificant in the general townscape, not performing the role of focal point in the way that so many churches do in other small towns.

Photo 21: Terrace of brick cottages in Church Street



The other buildings along Church Street are of varied materials and quality, ranging from simple brick 19th century terrace cottages, to the grander scale of the early 19th century white brick Rectory and its imposing porch of Doric columns glimpsed along the curving drive. A small group of 18th century buildings are clustered in the central section of the street, including Wisteria Cottage, Number 33 and The Wain, a former inn. Further along to the east is The Friends Meeting House, also 18th century, but with a later carstone extension to the front, unfortunately marred by clumsy repointing of its facade. The variety of materials, scale and plan of the buildings along this street reflect its organic development over time.

Photo 22: Quaker meeting house



There are a number of large detached historic residences along Burnt Street, set back from the road in their own grounds, glimpsed over garden walls, and through mature trees. The most architecturally important is Ostrich House, at the east end, possibly late 17th century with its steep pitched roof and flint gables. Another substantial building, The White House is a double-pile 18th century flint house, faced with brick in the 19th century

Photo 23: The White House



The Buttlands

A separate character area which, in contrast to the plan of the rest of the Town, is centred around an open green space, lined with mature trees. The name of this space suggests it may have been an area for practising archery in former times, but 'butt land' could also simply mean an open area on the edge of the village. On 17th century maps this area is almost entirely undeveloped. Set around this area now are large detached and attached houses, many with 19th century colourwashed facades. A number have timber porches supported on Doric columns, plain and fluted. The west side of the Green is dominated by an architecturally unified group of early 19th century houses, with red and gault brick facades articulated by pilasters and recessed brickwork forming shallow round-headed arches, and door cases with timber pilasters. There is very little late Victorian or 20th century encroachment around the green.

Photo 24: 19th century development in The Buttlands



The Crown Hotel, standing prominently at the south-east corner, is one of the earlier buildings, with a 17th century core, and a symmetrical 18th century façade, formed from a central bay flanked by two smaller wings. A later building, related to the seafaring past of the town, is the Arts and Crafts Church of our Lady Star of the Sea, built in 1928 on the northern boundary of the Buttlands.

The grouping of these large and relatively formal houses around the green, together with the tree planting, creates the atmosphere of a square more often found in residential areas of larger cities, although the lack of paving and the informal edging of the green softens this impression.

Western area

The area between and including Freeman Street and Base's Lane and the linked area around Clubbs Lane and Newgate Lane form another residential area to the west of the town. The block between Freeman Street and Bases Lane appears to have been largely undeveloped in the 17th century. It developed loosely around yards in the same way as the main Quay area, but lacking the industrial architecture of the maltings. Buildings range from large detached 17th and 18th century houses such as Laylands and West House at the western end of Freeman Street, set in imposing grounds on the incline above the road; to the small-scale 19th century cottages along Chapel Yard which presumably housed sailors, fisherman, and workers at the maltings. The north side of Freeman Street was not developed until the first half of the 19th century, probably due to building land only becoming available after the draining of the marshes.

Historically the concentration of buildings in this area was less intense than the main Quay area, with open spaces and orchards, for example, along Clubbs Lane, and Dogger Lane. However, these have been eroded by 20th century residential infill. Building types are very varied, having developed piecemeal over several centuries, and reflecting the mixed social status of the population living in this area. They range from the two rows of simple 19th century terraced cottages in Chapel Yard - with colourwashed brick facades and porch hoods on shaped brackets - and the pair of eccentric little brick buildings associated with The Cottage on what was once Stearmans Yard; to much more substantial detached residences, such as Laylands and West House at the west end of Freeman Street, Ilex House on Bases Lane, Glebe House on Glebe Road, and Blenheim House set back from Theatre Road.

Nearer the Quay, Freeman Street is lined with groups of terraced housing with no front gardens, rendered and colourwashed, mostly 19th century but much altered. A number of these now house shops and businesses.

Photo 25: The Cottage and associated buildings in the car park



Photo 26: Much altered houses on Freeman Street



Dates range from a small number of 17th century buildings (23, Blackhorse Yard; part of the very fine group in Brigg Square; and Laylands); a few 18th century cottages, often partially built of flint, such as a group along the west side of Dogger Lane's north end, though much altered, and the two houses running east-west half way down Chapel Yard; many 19th houses, mostly much altered (an exception to this is the early 19th century terrace of flint cottages, 66 – 74 Freeman Street, set back slightly from the road); and a number of 20th century housing developments.

Photo 27: 66-74 Freeman Street



Thus there is no predominant style or period. However, this loosely formed area is partially knitted together by the number of high flint and/or brick garden walls which form boundaries along some of the roads, notably along the west side of Clubbs Lane; Bases Lane on both sides; the west side of Dogger's Lane; and the western end of Freeman Street.

Photo 28: Boundary walls



Eastern area

A further residential area included in the conservation area can be defined along Northfield Road, Standard Road, and part of Polka Road, up to and including Marsh Lane. Historically, this area consisted of large private gardens to 18th century mansions, and orchards. Some of this open space has been eroded by recent residential development, for example in the garden of The Normans, and on the former orchard on the corner of Shop Lane and Standard Road.

The area is much less densely populated than the rest of the town, dominated by two large buildings set within mature grounds: The Normans on Standard Road, and Marsh House on Marsh Lane.

Photo 29: The Normans



These two substantial 18th century houses are both architecturally self-conscious, with projecting central bays, pediments and uncommon window styles - a round window in the central pediment at Marsh House, a substantial Venetian window over the entrance of The Normans. Marsh House is particularly exquisite, with perfectly balanced proportions. Within this area is the former Primary School (now a Field Study Centre) on Polka Road, also architecturally innovative for the town, with its archaic use of flint, and Gothick windows.

Photo 30: Marsh House



Green Space

The marsh area bounded by Polka Road to the east is the site of the original Church Haven where the first settlement at Wells is thought to have originated. The creek, which used to run parallel to Marsh Lane, silted up as a result of marsh reclamation in the 18th and 19th centuries. However, this open

marsh remains as a reminder of the town's origins. During floods this ancient water route can become temporarily re-instated. The green area is further extended through the churchyard and large cemetery. These two green areas are managed grassland with mature trees and shrubs. The only building within the area is the church.

6.3 Key unlisted buildings

Wells contains a large number of historic buildings which are unlisted. Unfortunately the historic character of many of them has been eroded by modern alterations, such as replacement windows and doors of different materials and shape, inappropriate surface treatments, changes in roofline and unsympathetic extensions. However, there are a number of buildings which have retained original features and continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, either because of their architectural merit or because they reflect aspects of the town's history.

Old Port

Former maltings on the Quay/Croft Yard: F&G Smith granary building built in 1904 – a landmark building on the Quay with its loading bay or extended *lucam* supported on tall brackets, bridging the road. Also important as one of the few surviving buildings from the town's industrial past. Banded red and yellow brick, partially surviving row of arches at ground level, iron casements, and stone sills, three round headed opening running through four storeys.

Former maltings on the Quay (now People Tree shop and apartments over): another prominent reminder of Wells' industrial past, with a row of arches at ground floor, red brick façade articulated with shallow pilaster of yellow brick, and timber *lucam*.

Quayside Cottage: mid-19th century narrow red brick façade with flint rear. Good oriel window at ground floor, sash at first. Moulded corner to allow traffic through. A relatively unaltered building which contributes to the historic character of the quayside.

Row of cottages off East Quay, East End: a good example of a 19th century row of sailors or fisherman's cottages, relatively unaltered, flint with brick quoins. Solid panel doors and timber casements.

Photo 31: Row of cottages off East Quay



Smugglers Cottage, Jolly Sailor's Yard: house of first half of the 19th century, stucco façade with scored imitation ashlar, original sashes, timber doorcase, and bracketed flat porch hoods. Relates well to other listed buildings in the yard.

Cottages at rear of East House: a 19th century row of cottages, unaltered, with flint pebble façade, with brick quoins. Solid panel doors and timber casements, and one inserted sash. Relate well to the listed building adjacent.

Photo 32: Cottages at rear of East House



Commercial areas

Post office, Station Road: 19th century building of carstone with brick dressings and decorative ridge tiles. Relates well to the other historic buildings in the street, and is an unusual material for Wells.

Photo 33: Post office



Ashley's Studios and Nelson's Tea Room, Staithe Street: Turn of 19th/20th century red brick building with very good shop front, retaining art nouveau decorative rail. Semi circular headed windows to first floor. This building should be assessed for statutory listing.

Photo 34: Ashley's Studios and Nelson's Tea Room



Unlisted buildings in High Street: A number of buildings along the High Street are not listed but contribute greatly to the high architectural homogeneity of the streetscape. Included on the local list should be the block between Angus House and No 43 on the east side, and between No. 20 and No 46 on the west side (No. 34 in the middle of this block is listed), and between No 56 and No 4 Church Plain, including the buildings on the north side of Whalebone Yard.

Residential areas

10-14, Bases Lane: Coastguard cottages. A group of plain red brick Edwardian cottages with original timber casements of small panes, and slate roofs – these form an architecturally unified group and are of historic interest because of their use, related to Wells' maritime past and present: one of the buildings is still used as the coastguard station.

Coastguard Cottages Freeman Street: A terrace of four plain red brick Edwardian cottages with small-paned sashes and keystones over windows, largely unaltered. They form a group with the other cottages on Bases Lane, and have local historic interest.

5-6 Clubb's Lane: Although much altered to the main street facade, the rear of this 19th century building retains interesting archaic architectural detail, including raised shaped brick work, a semicircular brick hoodmould over the door, and decorative brickwork to the chimneystack.

Meeting Room at south end of Clubb's Lane: turn of the 19th/20th century chapel of red brick with decorative yellow brick pilasters and cornice and window dressings. Locally significant historic building with good architectural detail. Relates well to listed Quaker Meeting house next door.

Chapel on Theatre Street: Gothic revival chapel built in 1890s. Unusual architectural detailing, and helps retain historic character of the streetscape.

Luggers Cottage, Theatre Street: late 18th century house (possibly with an earlier core), rendered and colourwashed, which has largely escaped modern alteration: steep pitched roof, four Victorian timber sashes with single glazing bars and timber doorcase with bracketed flat hood. Outshut to west with single sash. The building helps to retain the historic character of the streetscape along this part of Theatre Street.

25, Blackhorse Yard: mid-19th century cottage of yellow brick with decorative red brick banding and quoins. Original sashes with small panes. Good architectural quality, and relates well to other listed buildings in the yard.

9-17 Mindham's Yard: recently renovated row of flint cottages with red brick dressings around window. A good example of more humble local cottages.

3, 5, and 7 Glebe Road: No. 3 is 18th century, with steep pitched roof, decorative red and black glazed pantiles, stucco façade with scored imitation ashlar, four sash windows with small panes, and a simple timber doorcase with flat hood on timber brackets. Attached to this and of a similar date is a pair of smaller brick, colourwashed cottages, No. 5 having two blocked openings, suggesting its original use required a good light source (this building should be considered for statutory listing).

Photo 35: 3,5 & 7 Glebe Road



Church Plain:

No.s 9, 15 -17 - Row of 19th century brick and colourwashed cottages with red pantile roof, all with original six-paned sash windows. Good example of traditional cottages which relate well to the listed buildings adjacent.

Police Station Houses - Central plaque dates the building to 1891. Solid Victorian pair of brick houses, one red brick, the other colourwashed, both retaining original sashes. Relate well to other listed buildings adjacent, and have local historic interest.

Youth Hostel (former church room), Church Plain: Dated 1914, this building is architecturally innovative with highly decorative parapets to each of three stages. The central bay has an elaborate shaped gable with ball finials (one missing), bold fenestration of segmental arches with deep rubbed brick voussoirs, raised stone keystones, and moulded timber mullion and transom windows. Simple raised brick rustication to quoins and door reveal.

6.4 Local details and public realm

Boundary walls

High flint, brick, and flint and brick walls defining boundaries along back streets and alleyways are a characteristic of the town, creating narrow enclosed thoroughfares and, where they run north-south, directing the travellers view towards the sea. These walls knit together parts of the conservation area such as Theatre Street, Bases Lane and Standard Road where modern development might otherwise have seriously eroded their historic character.

Photos 36 : Historic walls in conjunction with modern development



Photos 37: Historic walls in conjunction with modern development

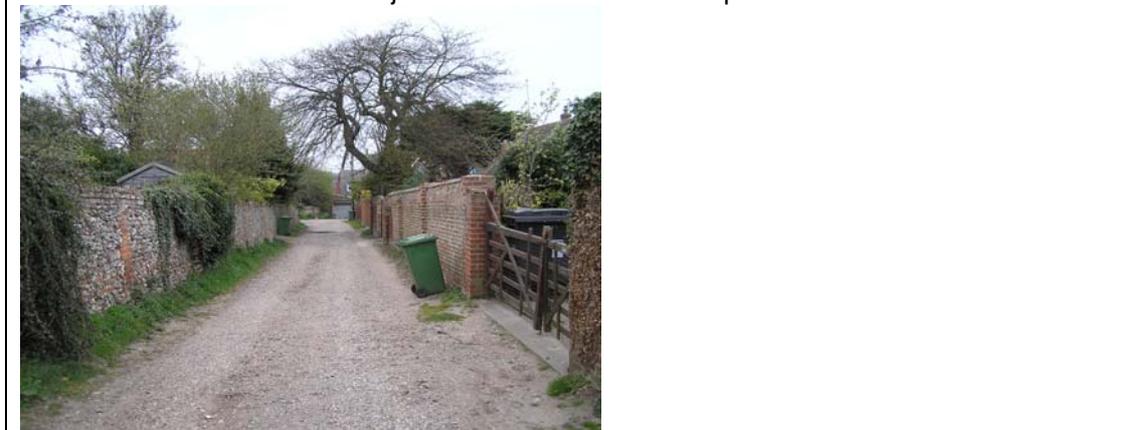


Photo 38: Example of a narrow alleyway: Whalebone Yard



Surface treatments

A characteristic of the town is the widespread practise of rendering and colourwashing facades. Included in this are a number of stucco facades scored to imitate ashlar. Most are white, although creams, yellows and other colours also appear. Historically, this practise helped to create more 'polite' facades on older cottages, but it also brings more light into the narrow streets. These colourwashed facades are often complemented by the use of two colours on window frames – often white and another colour. This use of colour helps to create a jaunty seaside air.

Photos 39, 40 and 41 Examples of render and colourwash





A number of buildings throughout the town have modified corners, curved and corbelled out, to accommodate carts and other traffic as they turned into the narrow yards.

Photos 42,43 & 44: Examples of adapted brick work at corners



Windows

The majority of buildings historically had timber sash windows, followed by timber casements. A small number of cottages retain unusual decorative glazing bars to their sash windows.

Photos 45 46, 47: Glazing bar detail



6.5 Prevalent local and traditional building materials

Construction materials

17th century buildings in Wells are almost universally constructed from flint with red brick dressings and are covered with pantile roofs. The form of the buildings tends to be two and a half storeys with pitched dormer windows set into steeply pitched roofs.

During the late 17th and the 18th century flint and brick construction was still common although flint as a visible building material was gradually giving way to brick, particularly on facades – such as at Ostrich House, on Burnt Street. Red brick with pantiles became the more common combination. Black

glazed pantiles were used on some of the more prominent or prestigious buildings in the town, such as Marsh House and The Normans.

In the nineteenth century, materials became more varied, but the use of flint became mainly confined to the humbler cottages – such as the row at East End and in Mindham’s Yard. Bricks were used in different colours - white, red, yellow and brown, and are often used in combination for decorative affect – for example, on the chapel in Clubb’s Lane, on the two prominent maltings on the quayside, and at No 25 Blackhorse Yard. A small number of carstone buildings date from the latter part of this period, the best example being the purpose built post office, although a later carstone façade was also added to the Quaker Chapel on Church Street.

Photo 48: Use of decorative brickwork at 25 Blackhorse Yard



Roofing

Slate as a roofing material is found on a few buildings, although not as commonly as pantiles. The cheaper alternative to black glazed pantiles, grey smuts, were also fashionable throughout this period on some of the more prominent buildings – for example on a number of residences in The Buttlands.

Ground surface materials

There is very little evidence of ground surfaces of historic character within the conservation area. Surfacing in the Yards is almost all tarmac. It seems likely that the historic surface was informal, consisting of unmade tracks – such as at East End – or perhaps covered in gravel, modern versions of which can be found in Mindham’s Yard, and Jolly Sailors Yard. The recently refurbished Crofts Yard has a successful scheme of gravel rolled into tarmac which provides a suitable setting for the converted Maltings.

Photo 49: track at East End



Photo 50: surfacing at Croft's Yard



Elsewhere there is little variety of material, tarmac being dominant in all areas. Double yellow lines are intrusive in a number of areas, but particularly in the High Street where they detract significantly from the historic character of the streetscape. The Quayside consists of a large area of concrete and tarmac, enclosed on the south side by a modern low brick wall with flat concrete copings which also serve as informal seating.

The large car park on Stearmans Yard is surfaced with tarmac, and fenced with tubular steel key clamp. The car park off Staithe Street is also tarmac but with rolled gravel, and is softened with black, thin section railings and some planting.

Photo 51 & 52: car park at Stearman's Yard



These modern surface treatments, particularly on the Quay and in Stearman's Yard car park are detrimental to the appearance of the conservation area.

Street furniture

Historic street furniture is difficult to find. Benches on The Buttlands and on the small green at East Quay are modern standard timber. Railings along the Quay, and at the base of Standard Road are

unpainted steel, street lighting is standard. Although the litter bins along the Quay are of a 'heritage' design their number makes them intrusive. Directional and information signs are standard, unplanned, and create clutter.

Photo 53: Railings on the Quay



Photo 54: Cluttered signs on the Quay



6.6 Contribution made by greenery and green spaces, and ecology and biodiversity value

The Buttlands

The most accessible public green space is The Buttlands, a grassy area, lined with mature trees which contrasts strongly with the enclosed and narrow spaces of the Quay area. The open space forms the setting for the historic buildings gathered around its edge, allowing long vistas and perspectives of this part of the town. It is also an important recreational space.



Old Staithe marsh and cemetery

Another large area within the conservation area, less visited, is the marsh where the old haven was positioned, and the cemetery. This marsh is an important element of the conservation area, as it was the original centre of settlement. The conservation needs and the biodiversity value of this unmanaged marsh should be considered in an independent appraisal in order to ensure the conservation of its visual and ecological merits. The haven area combined with the churchyard and cemetery create a large 'green lung' and a green space for quiet contemplation and wildlife watching.

One further small green space can be found on the East Quay – a small square of grass with two benches with magnificent views across the creek and marshes. This small area provides a quiet place to contemplate the view over the marshes away from the hubbub of the main quay.

Important groups of trees

Particularly characteristic of Wells are the plantings of Holm Oaks throughout the town, a legacy of the proximity of the Holkham Estate where they were first introduced. They can be found all around the town, with a prominent pair near the top of Staithe Street, a group next to The Normans on Standard Road, a row lining the boundary wall of Marsh House, a group in the grounds of the Field Study Centre on Polka Road and a single tree at the entrance to the conservation area on Mill Road.

Photo 55, 56: Holm oaks at the top of Staithe Road; and Marsh Lane



Mature trees contribute much to the rural feel of some of the residential areas, where they can be seen over high garden walls, or forming boundaries. For example, this is a feature along the west side of Clubb's Lane; the garden of Ilex House on Bases Lane; Dogger Lane; the west end of Freeman Street; and at the White House in Burnt Street.

Photo 57: Prominent pine tree on the corner of Station Road



The marshes

Though not included in the conservation area, the landscape of the creek and marshes to the north of the Quay cannot be omitted from any analysis of green space in the Town. This vast open landscape has a major impact on the conservation area, viewed in glimpses at the end of the roads and yards which run down to the Quay, or from the Quay itself, providing a dramatic rural contrast to the urban core of the Town, with its narrow lanes and closely packed buildings.

6.7 The extent of loss, intrusion or damage, negative factors

Erosion of character

Listed building legislation has protected many of the most historically or architecturally significant buildings, although there are some exceptions, notably along Freeman Street and The Quay. However, it became clear during this survey that the current list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest is too brief and lacking in detail to be fit for purpose in the current planning context. This means that a number of potentially listable buildings remain unprotected, and many of the listed buildings are not understood well enough to prevent unintended erosion of their special character.

The majority of unlisted historic buildings in the town have suffered progressive erosion of character through permitted development, most commonly resulting in replacement windows and doors of inappropriate design and materials

Along the Quay the drastic alterations to facades (some since being listed), modern shop fronts and multiple signage of buildings have eroded the historic character of this part of the conservation area to a very great extent. The Golden Fleece Public House is the only building that retains its essential historic character within the stretch of buildings between the two large maltings at either end of the water frontage. In addition the eastern end of Freeman Street has a number of much altered buildings which detract from the historic quality of this important entrance into the central part of the conservation area. At the time of the survey the large Grays building on the Quay was roofless following fire damage. The yard behind this building contains a fine listed building surrounded by concrete surfacing and modern garages. There is great potential to enhance the historic character of the Quay here with sensitive re-development.

Photo 58: Grays building on the Quay



Photo 59: View of The Quay



Modern infill

The character of historic residential areas between and including Freeman Street and Base's Lane, and Clubbs Lane/Newgate Lane has been eroded through the loss of gardens and other open spaces to new development, for example along Clubb's Lane, at the far end of Base's Lane, and the east side of Dogger Lane. This is also the case at the southern end of Jolly Sailor's Yard.

The character of the Yards has also been diluted by a number of modern infill sites where design has not taken into account prevalent materials or plan form. There are also a number of neglected areas of waste land created by demolition, and much alteration to unlisted buildings. Sensitive development to re-instate the former 'footprint' of demolished maltings; and well-designed surfacing would much improve the character of these unique features of Wells.

Traffic management

Another pressure on the area is providing parking space for the high number of visitors and residents. Some buildings in the High Street have been damaged by vehicle impact due to constricted space for two way traffic to pass. The architectural and historic qualities of The Buttlands are detrimentally affected by the number of cars parked all around the Green on both sides, during peak times. Similarly, the Quayside is covered in cars during the holiday season.

The pressure for parking also brought the demolition of a section of the Yards in the 1960s in order to create the Stearman's Yard car park. This now forms what is essentially a hole in the historic fabric of the conservation area. Created in the 1960s the car park was made from clearing former yards, and laying down a large undistinguished area of tarmac. The car park is usually full to capacity during the holiday season, illustrating the high demand for parking facilities in the town. A high quality enhancement scheme introducing soft landscaping, better quality surfacing, appropriate street furniture, and increased enclosure and division, would have a major positive effect on this central and highly visible part of the conservation area, as would removal of parking on the Quayside. Proposals for new parking areas must fully take into account their affect on the character of the conservation area, and its setting. A review of traffic management in the High Street, and The Buttlands would also be beneficial.

Repeated resurfacing with tarmac and little consideration of drainage and how the water run-off is going to affect the historic buildings on either side has resulted in damage of some of the listed and historic buildings in the High Street.

Photo 60: Car parking in The Buttlands



Public realm

The conservation area at Wells has not benefited from any significant enhancement schemes or area initiatives in the recent past. There is great potential to make improvements to the 'public realm' within the conservation area. No significant work has been implemented in recent years and many of the public spaces in the town need reassessing as part of enhancement schemes, or as repairs and maintenance cycles become due, particularly in view of the pressures brought by the increasing numbers of visitors to the Town. The quay area and Stearman's Yard car park should be prioritised in any future programmes of enhancement.

6.8 General condition of the conservation area

The general physical condition of buildings in the conservation area is quite high, with the exception of Clarence House on The Buttlands and 26 Chapel Yard, which are both listed Grade II; the unlisted Gray's building on the Quay, damaged by fire; and the run of cottages to the rear of East House, recommended for the local list. A number of building along Staithe Street also show signs of lack of maintenance at first floor level, over shops.

The main threat to the area's character has come from inappropriate alterations to the unlisted buildings within the area.

6.9 Problems and pressures and the capacity for change

New development

The NN LDF for Wells-next-the-Sea proposes two areas for new housing, both of which are outside the conservation area. However, proposals for small scale in-fill development within the conservation area are likely to occur from time to time.

Existing in-fill development has not always been successful within the conservation area, through lack of attention to the existing plan form, materials and scale. An exception to this is the conversion and new build centred around Croft Yard, and also the development in Newgate's Lane. Future development should be directed towards reinstatement of the historic footprint, for example, in the Yards, where maltings have been demolished. Design briefs will have to consider the prevalent diversity of materials, scale and orientation. See 5.1 for character and interrelationships of spaces and 6.2 for building types in the conservation area.

Car parking

The LDF also identifies the problem of car parking, particularly in the summer months. A site for a new car park is identified to the north of Freeman Street, adjacent to the conservation area. Very careful detailing and landscaping will be necessary to create a car park at this site without a detrimental impact on views in and out of the conservation area, and its setting in the AONB.

7 Community involvement

Involving the community is an important part of the appraisal process. Community involvement and public consultation will be carried out as such:

- Delivering leaflets to all households and businesses

- Making contact with key community groups and providing briefing sessions
- Holding a public exhibition and public meeting
- Publishing the draft appraisal on the council's website, accompanied by an electronic comments/feedback form
- Use of media and press releases
- Evaluation

8 Recommendations/Conclusion

See also Part 2 Management proposals

8.1 Suggested boundary changes

A number of small changes to boundary edges are proposed.

- Modern development along the east side of Clubb's Lane does not enhance the area and should be omitted, the boundary to be re-aligned along the road boundary, including the trees along its edge, before following the southern boundary of Bishop Ingle's House.
- On the corner of Mill Road, and The Buttlands are a group of listed buildings and gardens which should logically be included within the conservation area.
- At the east end of Base's Lane a modern residential development detracts from the character of this edge of the conservation area, and should be omitted. The group of former local authority houses, though of neutral impact, do not contribute to the character of the conservation area, and should be omitted at the same time.

8.2 Summary of issues SWOT analysis

The following provides a summary of the SWOT analysis (Strengths/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats) identified during the appraisal process.

Strengths

- Public space on Quay adjacent to the creek and marshes of outstanding natural beauty
- Unusual survival of Yards plan form
- Quiet country town atmosphere behind the Quay
- Large number of well preserved historic buildings particularly in Staithe Street, the High Street, East Quay and The Buttlands
- Great diversity in building styles, types and materials
- Relatively large areas of open green space and numbers of trees

Weaknesses

- Erosion of historic building character through permitted development
- Unsympathetic alterations to a number of listed buildings
- Some inappropriate 20th century infill development throughout the area
- Loss of historic fabric in some areas, for example at Stearman's Yard, and sites of former maltings
- Poor ground surface treatment, particularly in the public realm
- Car parking problems and traffic management issues, for example around The Buttlands and in the High Street

Opportunities

- Enhancement of the public realm, particularly in Stearman's Yard car park, and the Quay
- Traffic management co-ordination, particularly for controlling on-street parking in The Buttlands and the Quayside, and traffic movement through the High Street
- New small scale residential development which positively contributes to the character of the area and local distinctiveness
- Production of public information to inform proposed alterations and repairs to historic buildings

Threats

- Continuing loss of original architectural details and use of inappropriate modern materials
- Further deterioration of upper floors above shops on Staithe Street
- Poor quality of new development
- Continuing lack of co-ordination of public realm works
- Creation of car parking at the expense of historic character and natural beauty of the area

Part 2: Management Proposals

1 Introduction

Part 1 of this document, the Character Appraisal, has identified the special positive qualities of Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area which makes the conservation area special and distinctive and which should be conserved and enhanced.

Part 2 of this document, the Management Proposals, builds upon the negative features which have also been identified, to provide a series of issues and recommendations for improvement and change.

2 Issues and recommendations

Review of Conservation Area boundary

It is recommended that a number of changes are made to the existing conservation area boundary as follows:

- Modern development along the east side of Clubb's Lane does not enhance the area and should be omitted, the boundary to be re-aligned along the road boundary, including the trees along its edge, before following the southern boundary of Bishop Ingle's House.
- On the corner of Mill Road, and The Buttlands are a group of listed buildings and gardens which should logically be included within the conservation area.
- At the east end of Base's Lane a modern residential development detracts from the character of this edge of the conservation area, and should be omitted. The group of former local authority houses, though of neutral impact, do not contribute to the character of the conservation area, and should be omitted at the same time.

Alterations to unlisted buildings and Article 4(2) directions

Many of the unlisted buildings in the conservation area have been adversely affected by the loss of original architectural details – most frequently the replacement of original timber sashes or casement windows and the inappropriate treatment of historic elevations.

Where single family dwellings are concerned, such alterations can normally be carried out without planning permission from the council. Development of this kind is called 'permitted development' and falls into the various classes which are listed in the Town and Country Planning (GPO) Order 1995. Powers exist for the Council, known as Article 4 (2) Directions to withdraw some of these permitted development rights in the interest of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. This might be considered in order to prevent the further erosion of historic character of the area.

- The council will consider Article 4(2) Directions to protect buildings that retain original features from inappropriate alteration. The primary focus should be the High Street/Church Plain, Staithe Street, Freeman Street and the East Quay area where a number of unlisted buildings make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- The Council will encourage property owners to reverse unsympathetic alterations and to reinstate architectural features, such as windows, and doors and boundary walls with modern replacements in the style and materials of the original.

Guidance leaflets on conservation, design and sustainability

Another important means of preventing the continuing loss of character through permitted development rights could be explored through the production of guidance leaflets on conservation and design issues specific to Wells-next-the-Sea.

Buildings of Local Interest

Wells-next-the-Sea contains a number of historic buildings which are unlisted but make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. This is either due to their age, materials, relation to the surrounding historic buildings, architectural detailing, townscape value, or a combination of

these factors. PPG15 (paragraph 6.16) gives provision for local authorities to draw up lists of locally important buildings which make a valuable contribution to the local scene or local history, but which do not merit national listing. These will be given additional protection, but they will not enjoy the full protection of statutory listing.

The following buildings are proposed for entry on the local list (see paragraph 1.1 for further detail on each building):

- Former F&G Smith maltings on the Quay/Croft Yard
- Former maltings on the Quay (now People Tree shop and apartments over)
- Quayside Cottage
- Row of cottages off East Quay, East End
- Smugglers Cottage, Jolly Sailor's Yard
- Cottages at rear of East House
- Post office, Station Road
- Ashley's Studios and Nelson's Tea Room, Staithe Street (*NB This building should be assessed for statutory listing*)
- Unlisted buildings in High Street
- 10-14, Bases Lane
- Coastguard Cottages Freeman Street
- 5-6 Clubb's Lane
- Meeting Room at south end of Clubb's Lane
- Chapel on Theatre Street
- Luggers Cottage, Theatre Street
- 25, Blackhorse Yard
- 9-17 Mindham's Yard
- 3, 5, and 7 Glebe Road (*NB No. 5 should be assessed for statutory listing*)
- 9 & 15 -17 Church Plain
- Police Station Houses Church Plain
- Youth Hostel (former church room), Church Plain

Development pressures and quality of new developments/ negative areas

Some developments within the conservation area, for example at the end of Butts Lane, and along Glebe Road, do not preserve or enhance the character of the area, due to inappropriate design, siting, scale, materials, and landscaping.

The siting of new dwellings needs to be considered carefully and should take into account the diversity of materials surrounding the proposed site, as well as the historic footprint of the town. For example, opportunities to reinstate the plan of the yards should be explored, with buildings designed to reflect the characteristics of the former warehouses and maltings in this area.

The North Norfolk Design Guide provides guidance that is specific to North Norfolk. General guidance for good design in historic areas can be found in *Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas* published by English Heritage; and the joint English heritage/RIBA publication *Capital Solutions*.

There is additional pressure for extended car parking for visitors to the town, particularly in the summer months. The character of the conservation area has already been detrimentally affected by the creation of inappropriate provision for parking in Stearman's Yard, and other parts of the conservation area are detrimentally affected by street side parking. Proposals for the creation of a new car park for the town must fully take into account its impact on the character of the conservation area, and its setting in an area of outstanding natural beauty – which to a large extent are the assets drawing visitors to the town in the first place.

2.5 Listed Buildings, Buildings at Risk and neglected buildings

Listed Buildings

It has been noted during the survey that some listed buildings have been affected by unsympathetic alterations. This needs to be addressed by stricter application of Listed Building Control.

It has also become apparent that a comprehensive resurvey to update the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest is required.

Buildings at Risk

There are two listed buildings at risk within the area:

- Clarence House, The Buttlands
- 26 Chapel Yard

A number of listed buildings along Staithe Street are showing signs of lack of maintenance, particularly at first floor level, over the shops. These may become at risk if action is not taken to address issues of neglect.

Issues of Neglect

The deterioration of upper floors above shops on Staithe Street has been identified as a threat, and it will be important to encourage their reuse.

2.6 Tree and management of green space

There are currently 3 Tree Preservation Orders within Wells-next-the-Sea conservation area. Anyone proposing to cut down, top or lop a tree in a conservation area is required to give six weeks notice to the local planning authority (subject to a range of exceptions including small trees or dead, dying or dangerous trees).

The conservation needs and the biodiversity value of Old Staithe marsh and the cemetery could be considered in an independent appraisal in order to ensure the conservation of their visual and ecological merits.

2.7 Public realm

The council will work with other agencies, residents and land owners to ensure the public realm continues to be maintained and enhanced.

The council will encourage informed enhancement schemes to address the negative impact on the conservation area of the Stearman's Yard car park; and to create a more cohesive streetscape on the Quay, and elsewhere in the town. In addition, it will work with other agencies to ensure co-ordination of public realm works such as signage, road surfacing and repairs, double yellow lines, lighting, bins and barriers.

The LDF identifies the problem of car parking; a site for a new car park is identified to the north of Freeman Street, adjacent to the conservation area. Very careful detailing and landscaping will be necessary to create a car park at this site without a detrimental impact on views in and out of the conservation area, and its setting in the AONB.

General principles of the management of the public realm and green spaces in the historic environment can be referred to in the English Heritage guidance *Streets for All*.

3 Monitoring and Review

As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of its formal adoption. It will need to be assessed in the light of the emerging Local Development Framework and changing national government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area including a full photographic survey to aid possible enforcement action
- An assessment of the recommendations of this document and whether they have been acted upon, and how successful this has been
- The identification of any new issues which need to be addressed, requiring further actions or enhancements
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and itemising necessary action
- Publicity and advertising

It is possible that this review could be carried out by the local community under the guidance of a heritage consultant or NNDC. This would enable the local community to become more involved with the process and raise awareness of the issues in particular the problems associated with enforcement.

The success of this document will be dependent on its adoption by local residents, regular monitoring and an effective enforcement strategy to ensure that recommendations are achieved.

4 HELM as a resource

Further extensive guidance on the local management of the historic environment can be found on the online resource *Historic Environment Local Management* at www.helm.org.uk

5 Useful Information, appendices and contact details

All historic photographs are taken with kind permission from the Wells Local History Group collection on www.members.aol.com/Wellsnextthesea/History/BW/BW.html.

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Contact details and further information

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Appendix 1: Maps

Appendix 2: Historic population figures

These figures are quoted in Purchas (1965) and are taken from the Parish records and Whites' Directories. Figures are approximate.

1757:	2, 400
1793:	2, 300
1801:	2, 316
1836:	3, 624
1854:	3, 675
1881:	2, 645
1891:	2, 549
1931:	2, 505