

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a statutory duty under s69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act, 1990 to determine areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate those areas as conservation areas.

Following designation, the LPA has duties under s69 & s71 of the same Act to review, from “time to time”, conservation areas and to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement.

The purpose of this statement is therefore: 1) to define the form and character of the conservation area, 2) to review the conservation area boundary, and 3) to identify proposals for enhancing the conservation area.

The village of Weybourne is located some 14 kilometres west of Cromer and is set in attractive undulating countryside behind the coastal strip about three quarters of a mile from the sea. The village is included in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is a national landscape designation that covers most of the North Norfolk coast.

With its Priory dating from 1200-1216, the village has been in existence for many centuries. The Priory, which itself superseded an earlier Anglo Saxon building, was founded by the Augustian Canons as a dependency of West Acre Priory. Although disagreements with West Acre during the 14th century allowed the Weybourne Canons a degree of autonomy, the Order never stood on its own feet and in 1530 sold up and left the buildings empty. The Priory and Church then fell into decay until restoration of the Church began in the mid 19th century. The Priory was left in a ruined state and has remained as such up to the present time.

From its historic centre near the Church, the village nestles within a small valley associated with the Spring Beck stream. This stream winds its way through the village, skirting to the east of the Priory on its journey to the sea. Over time, the built form has spread southward along the stream’s small valley, as well as extending east and west onto the rising ground which not only constrains the village topographically but also restricts views into and out of the conservation area. This expansion has been most evident in the latter half of this century with large areas of new development taking place at the southern and eastern margins of the village.

In terms of overall settlement pattern, the village straddles the coast road and is therefore for the most part linear in form. However, Church Street which joins the main street just south of the Church quickly divides into two further roads, Holt Road and Station Road, and can be seen as the focal point of a radial format.

Weybourne Conservation Area was designated in January 1975 and amended in 1990 to incorporate additional land of Abbey Farm. The designated area of special architectural and historic interest embraces all of the old part of the village and excludes the extensive modern development to the south and east of the village core. Walking the conservation area by street, the form, character and special interest of the area can be described as follows:-

When approaching the village from the east, along the A149, the most striking feature is a fine 19th century mill, much altered in the 1930s by the Arts and Crafts architect, Brocklesby. The road then descends into the village past mainly post-war development before the traditional character of the village and conservation area emerges. On the south side of the road good cobbled walls and buildings are set hard up to the edge of the highway, while on the north side tall mature trees and a low cobbled wall define the frontage to the superb historic centrepiece of the village, the Church of All Saints and the adjoining ruins of the Augustian Priory. The Priory ruin is Listed Grade I and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, whilst the Church is Listed Grade II*. Abbey Farmhouse and a barn to the north are Grade II Listed buildings. Without doubt the Church and Priory form the focal point and core of the village.

Continuing west, the view is blocked by colourwashed cottages with black glazed pantiles as the road swings sharply right and quickly back left. Here in the village centre, a handsome Edwardian pub stands on the south side of the road, whilst on the opposite side, a barn with attached bus shelter is found close to the village store and post office. Between the barn and the store is a row of new, traditional style cottages which sit comfortably within the streetscene following the reinstatement of the boundary walls.

To the west of the store, Beach Road heads off towards the sea but is built up for only a short distance. Before emerging from the built form it gives access on the west side to Home Farm Rise. This leads to a distinctive group of barns which have been converted to residential use. Some have interesting external timber staircases and landings but most notable are the tiles; these are brown glazed pantiles, quite rare in the District, with the glaze giving the whole group a distinctive sparkle.

Moving back to the main street and proceeding westward it is immediately evident that the older buildings and boundary walls are built up to the edge of the road with no intervening footpaths. This gives the street a feeling of enclosure which would have been much greater were it not for newer buildings being set back and frontage walls being realigned and removed for the sake of improved access and visibility. This is particularly noticeable at and opposite the Maltings Hotel where the gaps and set backs almost divide the street into two halves. However, by the time the western extremity of the street is reached, strong enclosure has been re-established with Harbour House stretching its façade along the edge of the road and confronting high dense hedgerows opposite. These provide a sudden and dramatic entrance to the village when approached from the west.

Returning to the village centre and to Church Street, the road is wider here and footpaths have been introduced on either side. However, there are buildings and walls behind the footpaths which maintain a strong sense of enclosure. They include the colourwashed houses next to the junction and a fine barn recently converted to domestic use. Facing these is a high wall which surrounds the former Church Farm. The farmyard now contains a modern residential development which has been sympathetically designed to reflect the character of the village centre with some peripheral houses built into the old wall to give a continuous cobbled frontage. This frontage wall continues as the road turns eastward where, having given access to Church Farm Close, it becomes Station Road.

On the north side of Station Road the conservation area ends just beyond the entrance to the Close but continues on the south side to take in the former Jericho Old Farmhouse and cottages which are set well back behind a cobbled wall and trees. The house dates possibly from the 17th century and shows evidence of earlier thatching, whilst part of the row of cottages is Listed Grade II. Past these buildings, and just before Station Road turns due south, there is a pleasant terrace of unspoilt late Victorian houses with vertical sash windows and fine cobbled fronts. The conservation area boundary terminates having taken in the single storey outhouses behind this terrace.

Turning back to the junction with Church Street, on the opposite side of the junction is Holt Road, which having negotiated a sharp bend out of the village, proceeds southward over Kelling Heath. Virtually on the junction is an eye-catching single storey cottage, probably Victorian which has decorative plain tiles and a cobbled gable with shaped bargeboards. Though somewhat out of place in a rural setting it has undoubted charm and character. On the inside of the bend is Rosedale Farm and its attendant barns and outbuildings, some of which line the frontage. The farmhouse itself is reached down a gravel drive, whilst the outbuildings, which include a well detailed stable block, have been successfully converted to residential use. New built housing has also been integrated into the scheme.

On the whole, trees make only a modest contribution to the conservation area. However, the trees fronting the Churchyard are notable exceptions and are vitally important to the setting of the Church. They also serve to “soften” the village centre. Elsewhere there are isolated copses of trees adjacent to the Maltings overflow car park. In front of Jericho Old Farm Cottages and behind the high roadside wall to Fayre Lodge. All of these contribute important greenery to the conservation area.

By virtue of the conservation area being tightly-knit and densely built up, there are few open spaces which make a significant contribution to the designated area. The one exception is the area of land currently used as a grassed paddock behind the flint boundary wall off Holt Road which contributes towards the setting of the southern side of The Street and the western side of Holt Road.

Characteristic walling materials in Weybourne are red brick and beach cobbles, often laid in rough courses; colourwashing plays a more minor part. Roofing materials are principally red pantiles although black glazed pantiles are prominent at the Maltings and opposite the Church. Other coverings of note include the brown glazed pantiles at Home Farm, the pantiles of the Ship Inn, and the decorative plain tiles on the cottage at the junction of Holt Road and Church Street.

English Heritage advise that “conservation areas designated many years ago should be carefully considered to see if they are still of special interest, or whether the original interest may have been eroded by subsequent changes or redevelopment that it is no longer special”. In producing this document the entire conservation area has been reviewed to assess whether all of the designated area justifies inclusion as land of “special interest”. This review has produced three amendments which are depicted on the conservation area map.

In the vicinity of Home Farm, the conservation area has been extended to include a small group of new houses. Previously the boundary cut through the middle of this site. These dwellings fit comfortably alongside the other buildings in the old farm complex and have been designed in a neo-vernacular style using appropriate materials.

This revision stems from new development which has directly diminished the relevancy of the conservation area boundary.

The boundary has been extended to the east of the Priory to include the Old Priory pond and some of the adjacent mature trees.

This revision is logical given the historic link between the pond and Priory, the pond providing its water supply and turning its mill. The trees immediately adjacent have also been included as they contribute important greenery to the centre of the village, and consequently make a positive contribution to the setting of the Priory and the conservation area. The majority of these trees are also covered by a long-standing Tree Preservation Order which surrounds Weybourne Hall.

The boundary has been tightened to the south west of the village to exclude an agricultural field behind the properties fronting The Street. Although this land contributes to the setting of the village, it is not an integral part of the village and has no inherent architectural or historic interest to justify inclusion within the conservation area boundary.

This revision reflects changes which have occurred in designation practice and advice since the conservation area was originally designated. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) states that “designation is not likely to be appropriate as a means of protecting landscape features, except where they form an integral part of the historic built environment”. In this case, the land in question is on the periphery of the built environment and not integrated within it. Therefore it is considered that including this land actually devalues the concept and special interest of the conservation area, such that the strength of the designation is weakened.

In terms of de-designating areas of land previously included within the conservation area, the adoption of the North Norfolk Local Plan for development control purposes now enables the Local Planning Authority to consider proposals which affect the setting of the conservation area on the same basis as proposals within the designated area. This importance of setting is reflected in Policy 42 of the plan which requires all development proposals, either within or just outside the conservation area, to preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the conservation area.

Weybourne Conservation Area is, in general terms, in good healthy, with little in the way of incongruous development to scar the character and appearance of the area. Following the boundary review, it is considered that the designated area is now well defined through appropriate and logical boundaries. This notwithstanding, there are opportunities within the village to enhance areas and encourage building improvements.

Within the historic centre of the village, the space around the bus shelter, has over time, become cluttered with two recycling storage bins, a cream coloured rubbish bin, a telephone box and a village notice board. To enhance this area, it is suggested that; a) the recycling bins be relocated to a less sensitive site, eg the Village Hall, which does not lie within the conservation area but would still be accessible to members of the public and b) the rubbish bin be replaced with a more appropriate design or repainted in a darker, more recessive colour, to reduce its visual impact. In addition, the Local Planning Authority would support any other proposals which would reduce the clutter of this particularly important and readily visible space within the conservation area.

Within the conservation area generally there are a number of traditional properties which have had their original sash and casement windows replaced by modern equivalents, particularly PVCu, which fail to respect the original proportions, materials and form. These replacements not only have a detrimental impact on individual properties but also contribute to the slow erosion of the conservation area's intrinsic character. Unless this process is checked, it is considered that the special interest of the conservation area will gradually be lost over time.

The North Norfolk Local Plan Design Guide offers advice on the replacement of windows. In brief, however, the use of materials for windows other than timber is not normally encouraged. PVCu can sometimes appear acceptable, but only when it successfully simulates traditional timber sections, window divisions and opening lights. Repair of original frames should always be attempted, where possible, but if beyond repair it is hoped that property owners will respect original features. Where inappropriate modern windows have already been installed, it is hoped that owners will take the opportunity to either reinstate a traditional style of window, when existing windows are next due for replacement, or simply revise the present window form with, for example, the introduction of glazing bars to break up large areas of glass.

The concept of the retention and reinstatement of traditional architectural features does not only apply to windows, all other original architectural features such as doors, chimneys and walls being of equal importance.

The need for adequate signage is accepted if businesses are to successfully compete. Indeed the retention of local businesses has a direct bearing upon the viability of the conservation area. This said, each advertisement should be carefully designed to respect the particular building on which it is positioned or the character and appearance of the area as a whole. Therefore size, design and colour are all vital ingredients in successful advertisements. Usually hand-painted timber board signs, with a framed surround, work best. Strident colours, reflective finishes and internal illumination are to be avoided, given they nearly always appear intrusive.

In addition to private advertisements, the nature and extent of County Council highway signage can also have a major impact upon the appearance and character of the conservation area. To this end, opportunities to rationalise such signage should be investigated whenever possible.

Elsewhere in the conservation area, the Local Planning Authority will encourage any proposals which reinstate lost enclosure or architectural features; eg the reconstruction of boundary walls or the rebuilding of chimneys. It will also support proposals which lead to the undergrounding of overhead cables and to the improvement of carriageway signage and treatment. Conversely

proposals which lead to the loss of enclosure, or to the removal of features which make an important contribution to the conservation area, will be resisted.

The designation of a conservation area ensures that due consideration has to be given to the qualities of the area when new development proposals are determined. It should therefore not be seen as a means of preventing new development, and indeed being responsive to change enables the conservation area to retain its vitality and appeal. However, only those schemes which either preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the area will be permitted, in accordance with Policies 42 and 43 of the Local Plan.

With designated areas, different planning controls apply. In summary the main effects of designation are as follows:-

- a) With certain exceptions, no building or structure in a conservation area may be demolished without conservation area consent having first been sought from the Local Planning Authority.
- b) Conservation area designation results in additional controls in respect of extensions, alterations, buildings within the curtilage, satellite dishes and advertisements. This has the effect of requiring formal applications where ordinarily they would not be necessary.
- c) It is an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot or wilfully damage trees with trunks over 75mm in diameter (at a height of 1.5m above ground level) without first giving six weeks notice in writing to the Local Planning Authority.

For those contemplating change it is suggested that the advice of the Local Planning Authority first be sought in order to establish whether formal planning permission or conservation area consent is required, and whether any such application would be viewed favourably. Those proposals which require formal planning permission or conservation area consent will be judged against Policies 42 and 43 of the North Norfolk Local Plan. Developments which do not comply with these policies will not normally be permitted. The relevant policies in the plan can be viewed at the Council Offices or in local libraries.

Whilst wishing to preserve, enhance and promote the special interest of the conservation area, this document is also intended to hopefully stimulate debate on what it means to live within a conservation area, and why that area has been so designated. Whilst direct action is not beyond the remit of this statement, its main aim is to change attitudes over time so that everyone works together to secure the future of the conservation area through preservation and incremental improvements.

In terms of securing change through financial aid, the Local Planning Authority does have limited resources available for conservation area enhancement schemes, but this funding is only available for projects which are in the public interest (undergrounding of overhead cables etc). A separate budget is also accessible for essential repairs to listed buildings or for the reinstatement of their traditional features.

This statement is now in its adopted form having been through a draft consultation stage and approved by the Council's Executive Committee on 30 July 1999. For the purposes of all management and control functions, the conservation area for Weybourne will now be that labelled as "New Conservation Area Boundary" on the map. The boundary revisions will be advertised in the local and national press in accordance with the provisions of the 1990 Act.

All queries should be addressed to:-