

**MELTON CONSTABLE VILLAGE CONSERVATION AREA: (Designated 13/12/90)**  
**FORM AND CHARACTER DESCRIPTION**

- 1.0** Melton Constable is located virtually in the centre of North Norfolk and is set in undulating countryside between the decayed hamlet of Burgh Parva and Briston. To the south is the historic Melton Constable Hall and its parkland estate which dates back over seven centuries. The village is basically linear in form with its main street running from east to west and climbing a gentle hillside. Running off the main street - or Briston Road as it is called - and strictly at right angles to it are five streets of terraced houses.
- 1.1** The village has little of the traditional rural charm of a North Norfolk village and its character is quite alien to the rural heart of the District. The reason for its designation as a Conservation Area is its historic significance as a railway village. Established in the late nineteenth century as a key junction in the North Norfolk railway system it is unique to the District. Approximately one hundred years old it stands as an almost unspoilt example of its genre and of the Victorian art of terrace building.
- 1.2** The village was built in two phases following closely upon each other. The first phase was constructed by the railway company and involved the south side of the Briston Road, Melton Street and Colville Road and, of course, the station and its ancillary buildings. The second phase saw the construction of the north side of Briston Road, together with Kitchener Road, Gordon Road and Burgh Beck Road. Also constructed at that time on the north side of Briston Road was the Hastings Arms, the school, and over on the south side of the road, the Working Men's Club.
- 1.3** Approaching the village from the west a tiny 'bus shelter which has used decorative ironwork salvaged from the old station in its construction gives the first clue as to the origins of the village. Over to the south is the old station site itself; now an industrial estate, the many recent buildings clad in sheet material largely conceal signs of its former identity. However two engine sheds remain which have been modified and adapted for modern use and serve only as a rather sad reminder of what must have been a splendid group of buildings. Immediately alongside the old station yard and screened from it by a beech hedge is Astley Terrace, a row of small scale houses which have all had enclosed lean-to porches added to their fronts. Although matching pantiles have been used the horizontal weatherboarding used for their sides looks rather incongruous in this context.
- 1.4** Opposite the old station yard on the north side of the road is the Hastings Arms, a robust Victorian pub with plain tile roof and bargeboards, alongside which an old coachhouse and stable block has recently been demolished. The demolition site now (1996) awaits appropriate redevelopment. Next to the demolition site is a little workshop, which despite its charmingly decorated gable, its signal box proportions and frontage fencing seems rather incongruous and isolated in this setting. To the east is the village school, an excellent and charming example of Victorian village architecture. However the war memorial has been positioned directly in front of the school and this has recently been badly served by the erection of a chain link enclosing fence which is in sharp and unfortunate contrast to the original school railings and gates which have survived.
- 1.5** Further down the hill on the south side are the two original terraced streets, Melton Street and Colville Road. These retain a strong feeling of enclosure and seclusion and have suffered few harmful changes over the past century. The two streets have their own

distinctive styles, each having more in common with the Midlands than North Norfolk. Melton Street is in red brickwork but with decorative bands, arches and quoins in buff, perhaps Holkham, bricks. Roofs are in slate. The facades are without modelling having vertical sash windows with a single vertical glazing bar to each sash on the ground floor. Front doors have fanlights and virtually all appear to have been converted to flush doors by the addition of a sheet material. One would assume that these were originally three panelled doors as found in the neighbouring streets. In a few other instances modern front doors and plastic windows have been introduced. Front and dividing fences are now post with two boarded timber rails, however these are stained and at low level and consequently are not too intrusive. Photographic records show that there were originally medium height brick walls or boarded fences with occasional hedges between properties. Several properties now have creepers growing on the facades which although interrupting the visual rhythm of the frontage add a feeling of maturity and repose.

- 1.6** Moving down the hill of the main street, Colville Road runs parallel to Melton Street and the houses here are of a quite different design. Eaves are lower and decorative half-timbered gablets have been introduced to span pairs of first floor windows. Brickwork is almost entirely red but some decorative blue brick quoins appear around front doors; tiles are corrugated red clay pantiles. Many of the original front doors and windows remain. Front doors are a three panelled kind with two upper and one lower panel. Windows are almost square with vertical sliding sashes; these have glazing bars at the sides which give an overall vertical feel to the facade. Records show that this street originally had typical railway crisscross timber fencing to the frontages with trees planted on the edge of the footpath. Some loss of character has therefore been suffered by the removal of these and their replacement by low post and rail fences and occasional brick and block low walls.
- 1.7** At the southern end of Colville Road an east west road links up with the end of Melton Street. Here is a short terrace of some six houses which although of a similar character to Colville Road is of a rather more elaborate design. Half timbered gables with bargeboards and ground floor splayed bays with porch canopies are the dominant features. Doors and windows it seems originally matched those in Colville Road but only a few of the windows and none of the doors survive. Frontage enclosure is varied and rather weak with post and rail fencing competing with one medium height brick wall. This short terrace has been repeated at the other end of the block on the Briston Road frontage though here the bay windows and canopies have been omitted.
- 1.8** Turning to the terrace on the south side of Briston Road, the style established in Colville Road is continued with the half-timbered gables over first floor windows maintaining a distinctive rhythm along the street. Here however the hill has necessitated quite high retaining walls with steps to each entrance. These are in blue brickwork and have fortunately all survived complete with original railings and handrails. Flanking the entrance to Colville Road are two surviving shops whose fronts have been modified and adapted over the years. Between the terraced housing and the Working Men's Club on the Briston Road, the frontage is not built up and a rather forbidding concrete retaining wall has been raised up at the back of the footpath. Above the wall is a ranch style post and board rail fence and although the effect of this is softened by a hedge it remains perhaps the least attractive feature in the street. This style of fencing has also been widely used to screen the back gardens to the Melton Street and it may well be that it has replaced original crisscross railway fencing.

- 1.9** Over on the north side of Briston Road including Gordon Road, Kitchener Road and Burgh Beck Road is development carried out immediately after the railway buildings by other builders. There is a marked difference in style, this having much more in common with terrace building found elsewhere in North Norfolk. These are all in red brick and clay pantiles with vertical sash windows - sometimes matching the railway properties - but with exposed and painted lintols and often with ground floor splayed and square bays. Frontages are mainly defined with brick walls of varying heights. On the whole, doors and windows seem to have been subjected to more alterations and modernisation than their railway counterparts and generally speaking these streets lack the style and dignity of the earlier work.
- 1.10** At the east end of the main street Burgh Beck presumably passes under the road and makes no visual impact. Here on the south side is an area of waste ground with attractive trees that has been earmarked for an enhancement scheme.
- 1.11** To the west of the village, the Conservation Area boundary has been extended to take in Burgh Parva church and Burgh Parva Hall with what were originally its barns and farm buildings. The church is in a ruinous state but the tower is intact and is currently being restored. The Hall is a fine Georgian building to which a rather gloomy Victorian wing has been added. It is listed Grade II. The attendant group of agricultural buildings includes a particularly fine barn with crow-stepped gables and decorative corbelled eaves. The Conservation Area also takes in a sizeable area of countryside to protect the setting of these buildings including that of the church.

(Approved by Development and Conservation Committee 1/3/96)