

MORSTON CONSERVATION AREA:
FORM AND CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

(Designated 28/2/75)

- 1.0** The village of Morston is situated some 10 kilometres east of Wells and lies immediately behind the salt marshes that edge this stretch of the north coast. The village is built on an almost flat strip of land with undulating countryside to the south and to the east. The coast road runs in a serpentine manner through the village with sharp bends preventing any overall view of the main street but the settlement is nevertheless linear in form. Morston lies in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which takes in much of the north coast and its immediate hinterland.
- 1.1** The Morston Conservation Area embraces all of the built up village with the exception of a single large property south of the coast road on its western edge. The boundary rarely follows small property boundaries but takes in quite large areas of open land particularly to the west and to the south where it protects the setting of Morston Hall and Morston Hall Farm.
- 1.2** The first sight of the village when approached from the east is most striking. The superbly sited church and the adjoining farm appear quite suddenly as the coast road descends into the village. The well maintained churchyard wall, built entirely of beach cobbles, leads round a double bend into the main street. Here on the north side three large houses make an auspicious start to the village. Two of these houses are historic buildings, one, Morston Manor being listed, but the central house has been built within the last few years. However, its scale, detailing and materials enable it to sit quite comfortably between its distinguished neighbours. Next to Morston Manor a long drive and yard gives access to a house of incongruous design. Care seems to have been taken in detailing the facade in red brick and cobbles but this attempt to be sympathetic to its historic neighbours is nullified by the extensive flat roof. Opposite this is the Anchor Public House, formerly a pair of cottages, it is listed Grade II and is in colourwashed brick and cobble with vertical sash windows. However, the historic effect is considerably undermined by a prominent flat roofed extension and an adjacent flat roofed garage. From this point onwards the street takes on some feeling of enclosure with houses set almost up to the edge of the road with very narrow footways. These houses have retained much of their original character and play an important part in establishing the historic character of the village. The road then sweeps north before turning almost immediately into its original westerly direction. Here at this double bend is the focal point of the village with Quay Lane converging on the main road from the north and Binham Lane making a further intersection to the south. On the west side of the bends is an extensive group of barns originally ancillary to Morston Hall but these have now been quite successfully converted to residential units. An imposing brick and cobble wall on the edge of the highway encloses the group until it gives way to two barns sited hard up to the edge of the road. Opposite these is an historic cottage colourwashed in white providing an excellent example of a typical North Norfolk one and a half storey dwelling. Its immediate neighbour could not be in sharper contrast; a listed building built early in the 19th century it stands end on to the road and is distinguished by its western facade which is heavily fenestrated with Gothic style windows but somewhat marred by an over-large 20th century flat roofed dormer.
- 1.3** On the eastern side of the bends a low wall built with brick coping and coursed cobbles was probably reduced in height for visibility purposes and now encloses a garden mainly grassed but with a scattering of small trees. Although the property served by this garden is

undistinguished, this open space in the heart of the village has become an intrinsic part of its character.

- 1.4** Where Quay Lane joins the second of the two bends is the village green. This triangular grassed area has as its centrepiece a young tree surrounded by an hexagonal wooden seat. This has a pleasant feeling of repose and although somewhat understated at the moment will no doubt improve as the tree grows. Opposite the north side of the green, set well back behind a low frontage wall of brick and beach cobbles is an elegant Georgian house, listed Grade II it is built in buff bricks with black glazed pantiles.
- 1.5** Quay Lane itself is an unsurfaced track leading to Morston Creek and the sea beyond. As the track leaves the village centre it has on its eastern side some pleasant vernacular cottages in one and a half storey form set gable onto the lane, the easternmost of which is Listed Grade II. On the western side of the track is a stretch of untidy rough grass backed by the outhouses at the rear of Coastguard Cottages, a short terrace of four cottages probably built at the turn of the century in red brick with slated roofs and vertical sash windows.
- 1.6** On the southern side of the green bend, Binham Lane, another unmade track, leads quite quickly into open countryside, but not before it has passed Morston Hall to the north, in red brick and cobbles with a two storey porch and dormers. Further down the track, also on the north side, is a recently built pair of farm workers' houses. These have been carefully designed with vernacular detailing, a cobbled front and red clay pantiles. On the east side of the lane is Joshua Cottage and a group of barns that are fast becoming derelict. The Conservation Area continues to the south to take in groups of farm buildings including a listed barn and their surrounding land once part of Morston Hall Farm. However the introduction of a large asbestos clad barn into the group is intrusive, particularly when viewed from the eastern approaches to the village.
- 1.7** Trees are not one of the Conservation Area's most significant features, however they play their part particularly those on and around the green.
- 1.8** Materials used in the village are typical of the North Norfolk coast with beach cobbles predominating. Mainly red bricks, some colourwashed, are used with red and black pantiles. Exceptions to these are the Holkham buff bricks used for the house by the green and the slate tiles used on Coastguard Cottages.

(Approved by Development and Conservation Committee 22/5/97)