

PART 1

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1. SUMMARY

1.1 Key Characteristics

The key characteristics of the West Runton Conservation Area are:

- Attractive countryside, including golf course, on all sides
- Set back from the cliffs, so that sea is not visible from the village
- Mediaeval church set alongside the coast road
- Largely inter-war housing with “Arts & Crafts” character
- Small commercial centre at the junction of the A149 and Station road
- Railway station to south of coast road
- West Runton Common as an attractive open space to the south of the village.
- Large Links Hotel as focal point on the Common

Key issues

- Need to review the Conservation Area boundary
- Pressures of modern development eg. traffic, housing around the margins of the settlement.
- Permitted development resulting in the loss of architectural detail.
- Permitted but detrimental alterations and extensions.
- Need to improve the quality of design for new developments.
- Need to adopt a list of Buildings of Local Interest.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The West Runton Conservation Area

The centre of East Runton was designated a Conservation Area on . It includes the oldest houses in the village and some of the primarily inter-war houses along Station Road, Water Lane, the Hurn and the west part of Cromer Road. Most of the distinctive larger inter-war villas are in the Conservation Area; these are at the south end of Station road and Balfour Road, and around the village church. It also includes a significant area of open space, West Runton Common, together with the houses which border it. The roads and small estates developed on the east and west sides of the village in the inter-war period are excluded.

As part of a national government-led reappraisal of Conservation Areas, the following report was commissioned. The survey was carried out during June-July 2010.

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 or historic interest of the Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. The appraisals conform to English Heritage guidance as set out in *Guidance on conservation area appraisals* (February 2006) and *Guidance on the management of 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* (PPG 15). 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 its special qualities of (part 1: Character Appraisal).
- 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 East Runton Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by North Norfolk District Council. The framework is set out in a number of documents:

- North Norfolk Local Development Framework
- North Norfolk Design Guide, 1998 (currently under revision)
- Emerging LDF policies: Site Specific Proposals Preferred Options Report, September 2006
- Draft North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment, 2005
- PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment
- PPG 16: Archaeology and Planning
- Heritage White Paper, March 2007. 'Heritage Protection for the 21st Century'.

3. LOCATION AND SETTING

3.1 *Location and context*



Fig !: West Runton seen from Ingleborough Hill

West Runton is a small village set either side of the A149 Cromer Road, on the north side of a glacial formation, the Cromer Ridge. The nearest town is Sheringham, one and a half miles to the east; Cromer is two and a half miles to the west. There is a regular train service which stops at West Runton, connecting it to Cromer, Sheringham and Norwich. Buses run along the coast road, including a regular Coasthopper service during the summer months, which is well used by tourists. The village is a popular tourist destination, and there is a caravan site inland by Ingleborough Hill and another nearer the coast on Water Lane. There are a small number of houses offering holiday accommodation, together with the large Links Hotel facing West Runton Common.

The shops are concentrated on the coast road and at the north end of Station Road; there is a butcher, a newsagents and general store, a garage, a village pub, a restaurant and a café. Specialist shops include a furniture upholsterer, caravan supply store and fancy dress shop. The village church is to the east of the shops, on the coast road.

Access to the beach is by Water Lane to the north. There is a cliff top car park, toilets and a cafe.

West Runton Common is an attractive open space at the south side of the village; it supports an important range of wildlife.

Visitor attractions include the golf links, Kingswood Activity Centre and the Hillside Shire Horse Sanctuary.

3.2 General character and plan form

The first Ordnance Survey map from the late 19th century shows a small village with a scattering of houses and a church adjoining what is now the A149 coast road. There are a few groups of farm buildings further inland bordering West Runton Common, and one along the coast road. For much of their history, East and West Runton were grouped together as “Runton”, and West Runton seems at this time merely an adjunct of the larger settlement at East Runton. However, 19th century West Runton may have been considerably smaller than it had been in the Mediaeval period when the church was built. There is little evidence to make any observations on the plan of any early settlement; it may have been centred around the crossroads of what is now Water Lane/Station Road and the Cromer Road

At the beginning of the 20th century, a small number of new houses are built to the south of the coast road, but it is not until the 1920s that there is substantial development in West Runton. Some new housing followed the existing roads, particularly Cromer Road and Water Lane, but most houses were along new roads adjoining the coast road, such as Boulevard Road and Roseberry Road. By the time of the Second World War, the village had substantial new estates of houses on the east and west sides, and a small commercial centre at the junction of the coast road and Station Road.

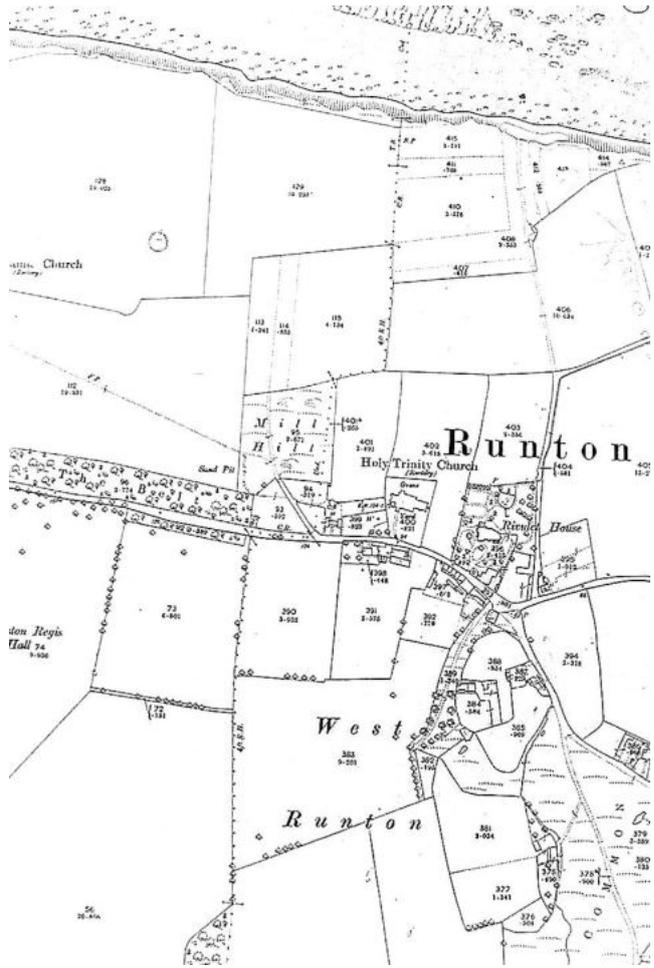


Fig 2: Part of the 1887 Ordnance Survey map.

Most of the houses in West Runton are inter-war, reflecting the last phase of the “garden suburb” concept, and adapting Arts and Crafts features, so that so rendered walls, tiled roofs, casement windows and pantiles are common, with thatch on a few of the larger houses. This is an architecture of individualism; apart from the small houses with shops along Cromer Road/Station Road, there are few houses which are identical in design, and no terraces.

Smaller houses are separated from the road by front gardens, villas tend to be within larger grounds, screened from the road by hedges and trees. The emphasis is on creating a green, rural environment, so that trees and hedges are an integral part of the village character.

Even in the new estates developed on the east and west sides of the village, a pattern of vernacular-influenced houses set in well-sized gardens persists. While the houses along the new roads are generally evenly spaced, and of similar scale, there is still a variety of designs and materials used.

This inter-war housing gives West Runton its distinctive character. While there are pockets of more closely-built Victorian housing, such as on The Hum and on Home Close, these do not have prominent sites, so they do not have a strong impact on the character of the village.

Post war houses within the Conservation Area have generally been infill developments. In some cases these mimic the Arts & Crafts features of earlier houses. It is only when modern houses are built in significant numbers, such as at Charlotte’s Close and Links Way, that they interrupt the inter-war ambience of the village.

3.3 Landscape setting

West Runton is on the north side of the Cromer Ridge, part of a terminal moraine from the last ice age. Glacial deposition has resulted in a mix of till (silty clays), sands and gravels, supporting a variety of plant life. The prominent areas of the ridge on the east side of West Runton, Town Hill and Inceborough Hill, are partly covered by bracken and saplings, which have grown up following the cessation of grazing. On the east side of the Inceborough Hill, largely hidden from view, is a caravan club site. The open land of the golf links extends along the side of Inceborough Hill towards East Runton.

West Runton Common was originally to the south of the village, and used for grazing. Today, houses have encroached upon it on the east and west sides, but it remains a pleasant area where rough grass and wild plants mix, with a scatter of trees and bushes. The Common is crossed by drainage ditches and there are two small ponds.

The village is surrounded by farmland on the north, east and west sides. To the south, Renwick Park, a recent estate of houses, is enclosed by plantations and the woodlands of the Roman Camp and Beeston Regis Heath.

The seafront is a Site of Special Scientific Importance, due to the geology of the area. The sandy cliffs are prone to erosion and subsidence. The beach is mainly of rocks, with timber breakwaters and revetments concentrated on the west side.



Fig 3: The beach at West Runton, looking towards Cromer.

4. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT & ARCHAEOLOGY

4.1 *The origins and historic development of the area.*

Two Neolithic skeletons and a Bronze Age cremation urn excavated at Woman Hythe (next to West Runton Gap) provide evidence of early settlement.

The name Runton derives from the Old English “Runi’s (or Runa’s) Enclosure”. The villages were referred to as Rugutune and Runetune in Domesday survey, and there are variant spellings up to the nineteenth century. For much of their history, the two villages were seen as interconnected, and trade directories and 19th century census returns list both villages under the heading “Runton”. The village also had links with the parish of Beeston, to the west, and in the Domesday Book, Runton church was included as a part of Beeston; during the 17th century, there was a single rector for both Runton and Beeston.

A close relationship between the two villages would explain why the Mediaeval church is in West Runton, yet until the early 20th century, the only inns or public houses were in East Runton. 19th century maps show few houses in West Runton; this may be due to the village declining after the Mediaeval period; perhaps part of its population relocated to East Runton.

While East Runton had a significant fishing community, in 19th century trade directories the main occupation listed in West Runton is that of farmer. There was no enclosure act for the Runtons, and the first Ordnance Survey maps show an open-field parish, with narrow strips of land, particularly on the east side, which have now been replaced by larger fields.

With the establishment of the Midland and Great Northern Railway station in September 1887, it was easy for holidaymakers to reach the village. The village would also have benefited from the growing popularity of Sheringham as a resort at the end of the 19th century. The establishment of a golf course, together with the Links Hotel in 1899, added to the popularity of the village as a place to visit or to stay.



Fig 4: The Links Hotel. This has been much enlarged since 1899.

While there was some 19th century development, West Runton remained small until the inter-war period. At this time a considerable number of houses were built, particularly on new roads adjoining the coast road. This included some shops on the south side of the coast road, constructed in the 1920s, the Village Inn built in 1927 and some fine Arts & Crafts-influenced villas.

In the post-war period West Runton has maintained its popularity for seaside holidays, and there are two caravan sites on the outskirts of the village.

4.2 The archaeological significance and potential of the area.

The main evidence for early human occupation, apart from two Neolithic burials found on the cliff top, is primarily artefacts. Stone tools have been found from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods, and a copper alloy axe head from the Bronze Age. Iron Age material, particularly coins, has also been found in the area. There is limited material from the Saxon Period, and only a few coins from Roman times.

The village church is a reminder of the significant Mediaeval settlement in the area, and there are also finds from this time.

There are few early houses in the village. Old Farm, on Balfour Lane stands out. It has been enlarged and altered over time, but parts are undoubtedly pre-18th century. The house would benefit from a thorough survey to establish its original date and record its many interesting features.

Later archaeology includes the remains of a nineteenth century brick kiln and brick pit to the north of the coast road, and the remains of defences established during the last war, although little of this is now visible.

4.3 The Conservation Area and the relationship with its setting

The Conservation Area covers the older part of the village and the more significant inter-war houses. To the east and west, there are inter-war and post war estates of houses, and in general the houses within the Conservation Area merge seamlessly with those just outside it. This is particularly true for the row of shops on the south side of the Cromer Road, where for some inexplicable reason, only half of the row falls within the Conservation Area.

To the north of the village, the Conservation Area and its housing stops abruptly half way along Water Lane. To the east, there is a clear division between built and natural environment, and the surrounding fields are a picturesque setting for the village, allowing some fine views. The beach and cliff top are an attractive environment, and one which attracts holidaymakers to the village. One or two crab boats launch from West Runton, but it is considered easier to launch from Cromer, where the majority of crab boats working along this part of the coast are located.



Fig 5: Beach Road running through fields to the cliff top. In the foreground can be seen houses at the east end of Cromer Road.

Historically, agriculture was important for the village, but as farms have increased in size and mechanised, the number of local people employed in this field has diminished. Today the countryside around the settlement is important to the village as a recreational resource, where local people and visitors can enjoy the landscape. The woods of the Roman Camp and Beeston Common to the south are a noted beauty spot. Over the years, some agricultural land has found other uses connected with tourism; there are two caravan sites, a shire horse centre and the golf links.

5. SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 Character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

There are a number of open spaces within the Conservation Area. Each has a different character, but little or no relationship to one another. The only spaces which have a definite relationship are the gardens of the houses. These are often quite large, and adjacent to one another. Usually well maintained, with mature trees and bushes, together with their inter-war houses, they help reinforce a tranquil suburban character.



Fig 6: West Runton Common, viewed from the south. Links Hotel on right of picture.

The main open space within the Conservation Area is West Runton common. Divided into four parts by the railway line and a road to the south, it nevertheless has a homogenous character. This is a self-contained area, bordered on all sides by housing. Most of the area is given over to grass, interspersed with wild plants, so that its character is that of a traditional meadow, supporting a variety of plants. Drainage ditches cross the meadow, and there are two small ponds; around these some wetland plants flourish. While this area doubtless has a recreational aspect for local people and visitors, it is carefully managed for the benefit of wildlife.

Where Cromer Road, Station Road and Water Lane meet, there is a wide area of tarmac. To the north is the large garden of the Village Inn, while to the south there is a triangular area of grass as part of The Hurn. This space serves to emphasise the open, rural nature of the village. The grass area of The Hurn serves as a focal point for the village, with the parish notice board, a village sign and benches.

The churchyard is a significant open space, and has been expanded over the years, with new areas to the north and east. This is a place for religious ceremonies to mark major events in the life of individuals and the community, births, marriages and deaths. While it is close to the main road, it is also a place where one can sit undisturbed amongst the weathered gravestones. Most of the graveyard is well-mown grass, but an unused area to the north was, at the time of the visit, of long grass.

Part of Town Hill is included within the Conservation Area. Together with Inceborough Hill, this is a part of the Cromer Ridge. Trees and dense undergrowth covert the slopes, helping screen the caravan park to the south from view.

5.2 Key views and vistas

The railway bridge on Station Road is a good vantage point from which to look across West Runton Common, but the common is best appreciated from a point near to Home Close. Looking south across an expanse of grass, there are a few historic buildings in the distance, with trees and vegetation to the south closing the view.

The entrances to a settlement are always significant, creating a first and important impression upon the visitor. Entering the village by Cromer Road on the east side, after the initial fields the view is unremarkable. Groups of inter-war houses give way to a large garage on the north side. There is a better introduction from the west, where attractive inter-war villas flank the road, in mature gardens. During the summer months, trees create a green canopy over the road.

Those entering the village from the south, along Sandy Lane and Station Road, have a better introduction. Having passed cobbled cottages on both sides, the view opens out on the west side with West Runton Common. But it is visitors arriving by train gain the best impression of the village. From the excellently-maintained station, the fine villas along Balfour Road can be seen, with glimpses of West Runton Common beyond the well-kept station gardens.



Fig 7: West Runton seen from the north, on Water Lane.

Incleborough Hill gives a panoramic view of West Runton, and from here the whole village, and its relationship to the coast and surrounding countryside can be seen. An even better view is from the north part of Water Lane. Looking back across the fields, the ornate rooflines of villas mix with trees within and around the village, while above it all rises the church tower, an archetypal view of an English village.

6. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

6.1 Activity, prevailing or former uses within the area

Nineteenth century records of the village suggest that most of its population worked in agriculture. Today, the farms and agricultural buildings have become private houses, and the few brick and cobble houses from the early village offer no clue how former occupants earned their living. Apart from the houses, the only older buildings which retain their intended uses are the church, the chapel and the parish hall. They continue as meeting places for religious, and occasionally secular, events.

The most striking reminder of how villagers once earned their living is West Runton Common. As the village lands were never enclosed, the common remained an area where villagers could graze their animals. It has also been suggested that the pond on the east side was a 16th century retting pond, where flax and hemp stalks were soaked to release the fibres for the manufacture of cloth.

The original plan of the village has been overlaid, first by a scatter of late 19th-early 20th century hotels and houses, then by intensive development during the inter-war period. This is the main legacy of the holiday trade which the railways helped to create. The large Links hotel, Village Inn and the attendant golf links was built largely for visitors, and some of the smaller houses were either built as guest houses, or found a new use offering accommodation. The larger villas of the inter-war period suggest that just as Overstrand found favour with wealthy visitors at the end of the nineteenth century, West Runton attracted the prosperous in the inter-war years. Villas could have been built as homes, or as holiday residences. Such houses still attract those wishing to move, or retire, to the Norfolk coast.

The development of the village during the inter-war years created a market for new shops, and most commercial buildings date from this time; a few may be converted houses. Several well-detailed shop fronts survive from this time; the best is the "Pedlar's Barrow" in Station Road.

Today, the main industry is tourism, and most of the village businesses cater for, or are partly dependent upon, the influx of summer visitors.

6.3 Key unlisted buildings

The following buildings are considered of local architectural and/or historical interest and are recommended for inclusion on a Local List. While this does not provide the same protection from unsympathetic alteration or demolition as national listing, it is still a material consideration in the planning process.

In most cases, dates given are only intended as a general guide.

Buildings marked with an asterisk may be nationally listable.

Cromer Road

Spar shop & Post Office: (Outside Conservation Area) Inter war house with good original shop front. Double fronted shop with recessed lobby.

Nos 3, 5 & 7: Terrace of brick and cobble houses. Buildings date from late 18th-late 19th century. All have modern windows and doors, most of which are probably in new openings; there are blocked older openings. The later house at the west end has been included for group value. Walls are a mix of coursed flint cobbles, flint galleting and pebble facings.

Whispering Willows: "Arts & Crafts" inter-war villa with rendered walls and thatched roof. Projecting wing at east end with asymmetrical arrangement of windows and door. Replacement windows.

The Old Post Office: Well-designed inter war red brick house in "neo-vernacular" style with shaped gables. Bay windows on front. Replacement windows.

Runton House: Large detached red brick house with good "neo-Georgian" character. Symmetrical front with stone/moulded stone doorcase. Four large chimney stacks without pots. Mullion and transom timber windows. Dormers with segmental pediments.

The Rectory: Inter-war "Arts & Crafts" villa with unpainted rendered walls, red brick decoration. Plain tiled roof with tall chimney stacks. Replacement windows.

Church Cottages: Pair of semidetached houses, probably mid-Victorian, faced with flint galleting and red brick dressings. Later porches, modern windows.

Water Lane

Bryntirion: Large inter-war "Arts & Crafts" villa with distinctive shaped gables. Forms a good pair with "The Stance". Rendered walls with original casement windows grouped on two floors.

The Stance: Large inter-war "Arts & Crafts" villa with crowstepped end gables. Rendered walls. Original casement windows with lattice pattern leadwork. There is a single storey extension on the north side.

Station road

9 Station Road: "Pedlar's Barrow" . Inter-war house with good original shop front. Double-fronted shop with curved glass, tiled lobby floor.

St. Margarets: Late Victorian house in red brick with ornamental brick/terracotta decoration. Shallow wings at each end of front, one with shaped gable, other with triangular pediment. Replacement windows.

Balfour Road

***Old Farm:** Long brick and cobble house, probably 17th-19th centuries, with off-centre front porch. Evidence of considerable alteration and extension. Cobbles coursed, uncoursed, and with galleting. Present window large window openings, traces of smaller openings within brickwork. Replacement windows.

West Runton Common/Sandy Lane

Links Hotel: Built 1899. Large hotel with half-timberwork and corner turrets. Red brick entrance with stonework. Extended several times, to the south and to the east, later work generally in character.

***Wood Rising:** Arts & Crafts house of 1911. Rendered unpainted walls with brick. Brick dressings around windows. Smaller rear wing in same design as main house. Red brick entrance porch. Tall chimneys without pots. Replacement windows.

***Wood End:** Brick and cobble house, dated 1817 within gable. Older part has coursed cobbles with galleting in mortar between, and red brick dressings. Later extension on east side, also Victorian bay windows on ground floor.

Hillside: Brick and cobble house, probably early-mid 19th century. Coursed cobble front with galleting in mortar. Modern replacement timber windows. Black glazed pantiled roof. Rendered extension at south end with round-headed opening.

6.4 Public Realm

All the main roads in the village are of tarmac. Side roads such as The Hurn, Calves' Well Lane, Home Close and Balfour Lane have gravel. Newell Crescent is a less attractive mixture of stones, rubble and gravel.

The Cromer Road has a continuous pavement on the south side; on the north side the pavement ends just to the west of the churchyard. With the exception of the area in front of the Cromer Road shops, (where there is a concrete kerb), these pavements have good quality narrow granite kerbs; the pavements themselves are of tarmac. Elsewhere in the village, along Station Road and part of Sandy Lane, the pavements are of tarmac with concrete kerbs.

Street lights are limited to the Cromer Road, the main coast road. They are of unpainted metal, a standard "highways" design. While they may be necessary as this is a main road, they are too tall for their setting. There are also a small number of telegraph poles with the accompanying "spider's webs" of cables.

Signage has accumulated around the junction of Cromer Road with Water Lane and Station Road, where one old lamp post has been retained to give signage extra support. The Hurn has become a point where street furniture collects. The parish noticeboard is an acceptable scale, but the blue-framed Bittern Line railway notice board is larger and more obtrusive than it needs to be. There are good features here, such as the telephone box and the village sign, but the railings surrounding the grass have seen better days.

Fig 41: Collection of street furniture on the Hurn

There are a variety of benches in the village, and most are well-placed to enjoy views of the Common or the grassy space of The Hurn. They are generally good designs in timber, while at the south end of the Common is a particularly fine traditional wrought iron design.

With the exception of the benches, recent street furniture is at best unremarkable. There are a few older pieces which add character. A good letter box is in the side wall of Wood End at the south of the Common, and a George VI pillar box by the Cromer Road shops. Almost hidden by a small pond at the south end of the Common is an old pump.



6.5 Local details, styles and building materials

West Runton's oldest building is its parish church, with walls of flint cobbles, combined with stone dressings. The flints are knapped, with some flint galleting between, and there are also small areas of flushwork, where the flints have been struck to create a square outline. The walls of the Old Farm, probably the village's oldest house also make use of flint cobbles, but in this case they are combined with locally-made red brick.

It is difficult to date older brick and cobble vernacular buildings. Much depends on the practices of local builders. In villages, they may cling to traditions lost in larger settlements, or be influenced by practices introduced in fashionable country houses. There seems to be a general agreement that cobbles were not coursed earlier than the 18th century, and flint was generally uncoursed at the end of the 19th century. The quality and dimensions of the brick may also give a clue. Early brick, such as found on the Old Farm can be lower in height than most 19th century and later brick. In addition, improvements in production during the 19th century, including the use of coal to produce higher kiln temperatures, resulted in a better and more consistently shaped product.



Fig 42: Detail of flintwork on Old Farm.

The walls of the Old Farm are a palimpsest of different building methods. The earliest flintwork is uncoursed, perhaps 17th century in date, and above this are coursed cobbles (18th or 19th century). Flakes of flint, or galleting, is used in the mortar between the flints.

The group of houses at 3-7 High Street also shows a variety of techniques. Cobbles are both uncoursed and coursed, and here the coursed cobbles are probably the oldest work. Two different facings are used to cover the basic flint and cobble construction on no 3. One half is faced with flint pebbles, a technique known in other North Norfolk towns and villages from the beginning of the 18th to the mid 19th century, while the other half is entirely faced with galleting.

It is only on two brick and cobble houses along Calves Well Lane that we know the exact dates of construction, due to inscriptions within the gables. Wood End, dated 1817, has well coursed cobble walls with galleting between, and bricks that are of the same dimensions as late Victorian examples. By contrast, the later Victorian front of The Ferns has well set but uncoursed cobbles, a pattern that continues on some inter-war houses, where the cobbles are probably just a facing.

Wood End has cut and rubbed gauged brick arches above the windows, used on higher-status houses from this time; the simpler houses from the same period may have just rough brick arches. The arches with a chevron pattern of brick above the windows and doors of 2-3 Ivy Cottages may imitate cut and rubbed work, and be of similar date. Similar “chevron” shaped arches are known from other settlements along the coast.



Fig 43: outlines of older windows, Old Farm

The brick outlines of old window openings can be seen within the walls of the Old Farm on Balfour Road. They are longer than they are high, and may well originally have had timber mullions; perhaps some windows were side opening casements. Sash windows as fitted in most of Runton’s cottages were probably introduced around the close of the 18th century, and their symmetrical arrangement reflects the influence of more formal, “polite” architecture. The earliest sashes would have had small panes of glass, without “thumbs” at the bases of the upper sashes, a feature which does not appear until the later Victorian era. On smaller houses, where sashes were fitted, they tend to have a more squat outline.

Few early doors survive. The batten construction doors on Ivy Cottages are probably a late Victorian “archaising” feature, designed to enhance the “rustic” appearance of the cottages. The six-panelled door in the end gable of The Ferns is typical from the later Georgian period onwards.

The oldest houses at 3-7 Church St have raised eaves, perhaps showing that they were originally thatched. Thatch requires a steeper pitch than pantiles, so that when the roofs were tiled, the pitch might have been altered. Red clay pantiles, originally an

introduction from the Low Countries, were common in Norfolk by the 18th century. If a more sophisticated effect was required, they might have a black glaze, as on Hillside, to the south of West Runton Common.

Fig 44: 3-7 Cromer Road. New courses of brickwork have raised the level of the eaves.

The coming of the railways in 1887 would have brought both visitors and probably new architectural fashions. Now, terraces would tend to be in red brick, rather than brick and cobbles, such as along Home Close, although the general design of the house might remain much the same.

Larger houses might have areas of decorative half timberwork, a common late Victorian practice, largely derived from a style known as “Old English”. At West Runton, and also at Sheringham, there is a tendency for the timberwork to be rather thin and insubstantial-looking, such as on the Links Hotel and Corner House. This may well be the work of a Sheringham-based architect or builder. The terrace to the west of the Corner House is of particular interest, as it is built in “Stretcher Bond” brickwork, rather than the usual “Flemish Bond”. Stretcher Bond, where the bricks are placed end-to-end does not become common until the inter-war period, and the introduction of cavity walls. It is known from houses with cavity walls from the end of the Victorian era, such as at Cromer, but it is surprising to find it in a small village. On these houses, plain tiles can be used for roofs, rather than the traditional pantiles.



“Wood Rising” from 1911 represents a complete departure from brick and cobble houses and the Victorian styles. This remarkably sophisticated design reflects the “Arts & Crafts” movement’s interest in vernacular and cottage architecture (although often not the vernacular architecture of Norfolk). Arts and Crafts houses gained in appeal when they were used for the first garden city, Letchworth, and Hampstead Garden Suburb. Such houses, typically with plain rendered walls and casement windows, were to be set in a semi-rural environment, a green antidote to crowded city life. It was a fashion which persisted into the inter-war period, as many of West Runton’s houses from this time show.

Fig 45: Wood Rising, 1911



The larger inter-war villas of West Runton, such as The Rectory and Whispering Willows on Cromer Road can trace their ancestry to Edwardian houses designed by architects such as Voysey, Baillie-Scott and Luytens. They tend to be deliberately asymmetrical for picturesque effect, and any detailing is kept to a minimum, such as the tile and brick surrounds around the window and door openings of “The Stance” on Water Lane. Windows tend to be side opening casements. A few larger houses make use of traditional brick and cobbles, as on the semidetached “Little Orchard” and “St Sava” on Balfour Road. Despite the traditional materials, they remain a recognisably compact inter-war design. Pantiles and even thatch reappear, part of the vernacular “vocabulary” of the inter-war house.

Smaller houses absorbed Arts and Crafts details. The most successful in West Runton are at the north end of Water Lane. Such houses have often been dismissed by architectural critics as conservative, and backward looking. They are, however, beginning to be appreciated as interesting period designs. Many were designed by builders, rather than architects. The typical inter-war house has a more compact shape than its Victorian/Edwardian predecessor. Facilities such as the kitchen and toilet were now generally integrated into the house, rather than being put in a narrow wing at the rear.

Where something simpler was required in the inter-war years, the house might be in red brick, sometimes with a small area of render or half timberwork, such as the shops along the south side of Cromer Road and Station Road. These are worthy of note

due to their good inter-war shop fronts. Generally double-fronted, the shops continue the pattern of the later Victorian period, with a recessed central lobby. The shop windows have ornate transom lights, although the detailing of the front tends to be heavier than that on 19th century examples. Two of the shops have green glazed surrounds, a detail which may no longer be to modern taste, as the glaze has been painted over. In a survey of the architecture of shops, English Heritage pointed out that inter-war and later shop fronts are generally rarer than those from the Victorian era, so these fronts are an important, as well as an interesting survival.

The best brick buildings of the inter-war years are Runton House and the Old Post Office. Both look back to earlier brick houses, probably as part of the “neo-Georgian” fashion which sought to calm the decorative excesses of some inter-war houses. The style was often used for public buildings, such as the small Post Office at Holt, and the Telephone Exchange of 1938 at Cromer.

Fig 46: The Old Post Office. Red brick with shaped gables.



While Stretcher Bond became common in the inter-war period, the brickwork on inter-war houses in West Runton also includes Flemish Bond, where brick headers and stretchers alternate in each row. Together with the use of Stretcher Bond in the late Victorian/Edwardian era, this adds to the difficulty of dating some of the more modest houses.

With the exception of Slade Court and Travis Court, built in the grounds of Runton House, post war houses in West Runton have generally been unremarkable. They sometimes copy older features such as areas of render or half timberwork, but to little effect. Most houses are “stock” designs, of a type which might be found anywhere in England.

6.6 The contribution made by greenery and green spaces and ecology and biodiversity value.

The largest open space in the village is West Runton Common. This historic space is set to the south of the village, so that it has limited impact on the centre, although it creates an immediate good impression on visitors arriving by road from the south, or by train. There are other small areas of green space which punctuate the built environment. The grass area of the Hurn serves as an informal village green, sited near to the centre of the village at a crossroads of the main thoroughfares. It is too small to have any recreational value, but is well provided with benches to watch the world go by.

Along Church Road to the west is the churchyard, a formal space around the church, still in use as a burial ground. It also offers places to sit away from the main road running alongside it.

The most significant open spaces within the centre are the house gardens. Much of the West Runton reflects the “Garden Suburb” ideals of the early 20th century, with an emphasis on open green space and a high quality of life. The garden was seen as a bridge between the house and the surrounding rural environment –it is unfortunate that a number have been converted into off-road parking areas, or have wide gravel drives. Nevertheless, the large gardens create a pleasant and distinctive character.

Any discussion of the ecological importance of West Runton’s green spaces has to start with the Common. This very important space is managed for the benefit of wildlife, and there are a good many plant species. Wild orchids were to be seen during the survey in the north-west part. There are also two ponds and narrow drainage ditches, surrounded by wetland plants. A variety of creatures benefit from this well-managed habitat. A sign by the railway bridge warns car users to watch out for toads. Local people report having seen foxes and at least one barn owl in the area. A notice board by the former retting pond informs visitors of the wildlife which may be seen.

Fig 47: Wild orchid on the Common



There are species which thrive in gardens, such as the bumble bee, and birds which have recently moved into Nortolk's gardens, such as the goldfinch. For such creatures, private gardens are a habitat largely free from the insecticides and chemicals used on arable land.

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

The main factor which has weakened the village's character is a product of the increased use of the motor car. While the wealthier inter-war inhabitants of the village may well have had cars (there is at least one good example of a garage from this time), the 1920s-30s village will have suffered less from the noise and movement of traffic along the coast road. The car has also changed the appearance of the village in other ways. Smaller houses may lose their front gardens, replaced by an area of hard standing for parking. Larger gardens may have areas of gravel for the car, or introduce a wide gravel drive. As pointed out in Section 6.6 above, the village has a largely inter-war "garden suburb" character, and the loss of the gardens is also a significant loss of the underlying character.

While it has not happened to any great extent within the Conservation Area, some of the larger gardens have been subdivided and new houses built. The green spaces around the villas were a conscious part of the design, and this does devalue their appearance.

Many of the houses of the village have replacement windows. While it is known that the wood used for inter-war windows is not of the same quality as found before the First World War, it is disappointing that so few people have chosen to replace their windows with timber, and chosen instead uPVC. The sharp machine-made edges of this material, and its over-smooth surfaces form a poor contrast with the time-softened walls of older houses, and the detailing is generally crude when compared to the timber originals. There are other changes which have weakened the character of village houses, such as the introduction of poorly-designed porches, the occasional satellite dish and new doors, but the loss of original windows is by far the most significant.

As West Runton is largely an inter-war village, it has a distinctive and unusual character which should be respected. With the exception of the new terraces erected in the grounds of Runton House, most new houses and extensions are unremarkable designs and devalue the overall character. The large and empty forecourt of the garage at the east end of the village is a good example. The large flat-roofed canopy and almost featureless forecourt detract from the pleasant small-scale terrace of shops opposite.

6.8 General condition

With the exception of replacement features on houses, as outlined in section 6.7, the condition of the houses and much of the built environment is good. There are a few areas within the Conservation Area which stand out.

First, there are two areas where the road surfaces are in poor condition, the area of tarmac at the entrance to Balfour Road from Station Road, and most of Newell Crescent, which is a mixture of gravel, dirt and rubble.

The railings by the grass area of The Hurn are in poor condition.

6.9 Problems and pressures and capacity for change

As a part of the attractive North Norfolk coast, West Runton attracts new people to live in the village, sometimes to retire. This creates a demand for new and affordable houses if local people are to stay in the area. The development of new houses in the village must be sensitively handled, balancing the costs of intruding into the surrounding countryside with the possible weakening of the generally open character of the village.

If West Runton is to maintain its unusual and attractive inter-war character, more care should be taken with the design of new housing, which has generally failed to reflect the positive character of the village.

8. Recommendations/Conclusion

8.1 Suggested boundary changes.

A number of recent houses and developments do not reflect the character of the Conservation Area. These areas are recommended for removal:

- Post-war houses at the north end of Water Lane, on the west side.
- Post-war houses to the south of Home Close, on the west side of the Common.
- Small group of houses behind Church Farm, Cromer Road.
- Charlotte's Close.

Areas of housing where there is no strong overall character, or the area has been weakened by successive developments.

- Housing on the south side of the Hurn.
- West side of Newell Crescent.
- Gardens of Wicklow Cottage & Garden Cottage on the east side of Sandy Lane (the cottages are excluded from the Conservation Area).

Three extensions to the Conservation Area are proposed:

- Extend south side of Coomer Road to include good inter-war villa "Long planting".
- Include all of the shops on the south side of Cromer Road, and the two well-designed inter-war houses Homefield Guest House and Breezeway.
- The Links Hotel.

8.2 Summary of issues/SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Large and attractive area of Common, well maintained
- Attractive surrounding countryside and beach
- Good range of houses; those of the inter-war period giving most character
- Green "garden suburb" environment, with well-placed trees, shrubs etc.
- Good amenities including Links, Shire Horse Centre and Links Hotel
- Easy access to village by bus, train or car

Weaknesses

- Traffic runs through centre along coast road
- Modern developments weakening strong and positive garden suburb character
- Alterations to historic buildings weakening their character
- Loss of gardens through development or off-road parking
- Poor entrance to village on east side, eg. garage, poorly landscaped parking area set just outside Conservation Area.

Opportunities

- Marketing the attractive "garden suburb" character of the village, including leaflets about the buildings and the importance of their traditional features
- Better publicity for the natural environment around the village, including West Runton Common and the cliffs, which are an important geological site and an important habitat
- Create Local List of important buildings
- Improvement of entrance to village on east side, particularly the garage forecourt area and informal car park, as a long term aim
- Improvement of public realm, particularly better street furniture and notice boards on the Hurn

Threats

- Need for new houses resulting in inappropriate "infill" development in centre or encroaching into countryside
- Increased traffic reducing the quality of the village centre
- Further inappropriate alteration to buildings or gardens in village resulting in further erosion of character
- Loss of traditional shops and shop fronts through redevelopment

PART 2 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

1. Introduction

The first part of this document identified the qualities of the West Runton Conservation Area that make it special and distinctive. The following Management Proposals include recommendations for improvement and change.

2. Issues and recommendations

2.1 Review of the Conservation Area boundary

The proposed changes have been described in Section 8.1 of the Appraisal and shown on an accompanying map. There are two areas of countryside where it is not clear whether they should actually be in the Conservation Area. These are the field which forms part of the Shire Horse Centre on the west side of West Runton Common, and the portion of Town Hill on the east side of Sandy Lane.

2.2 Alterations to unlisted buildings and Article 4(2) directions

Alterations to unlisted buildings have been outlined in Sections 6.7 and 6.8 of the character appraisal. These fall into two main areas. .

1. Removal of features, and inappropriate replacement of features, particularly uPVC windows and doors on older properties. To a lesser extent, this includes chimney stacks, satellite dishes and new porches/conservatories.
2. Loss of front gardens for off-road parking or infill housing

Where houses are not in multiple occupation or commercial use, such alterations can usually be carried out without planning permission. Development of this kind is called "permitted development" and falls into various classes, 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 rights in the interest of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Article 4(2) Directions are recommended to cover the protection of boundary walls, the retention of chimney stacks and chimney pots and to ensure the discreet installation of satellite dishes on side or rear elevations.

A high proportion of houses in the village have replacement windows and doors, so that it is late in the day to try and tackle this issue. However, if it is thought appropriate, Article 4 Directions could be applied to individual houses and groups of properties, such as Ivy Cottages, in order to protect their appearance.

In general, uPVC windows have a short lifespan, so it may be worth promoting the advantages of timber frames for the time when owners have to replace their existing windows. This should also stress the environmental problems with uPVC, in particular the toxic chemicals released into the environment during production and disposal, the high energy costs of manufacture and the likelihood that they will be come a landfill problem, as uPVC windows are a difficult product to recycle.

2.3 Buildings of local interest

A list of locally important buildings has been given in the first part of this document, section 6.3, and they are shown on an accompanying map. It is recommended that this list forms the basis of a Local List for West Runton. While this would not provide the level of protection that national listing gives, it would be a consideration when these buildings are involved in planning issues.

In section 6.3 buildings and structures marked with an asterisk are considered likely candidates for listing. Information on how to list a building can be obtained from the Conservation & Design Dept, NNDC.

2.4 Development pressures and quality of new developments

The District council's Local Development Framework classifies West Runton as part of the countryside, where the main developments that are permitted will be either affordable housing, development to support the rural economy or which will provide renewable energy. As a consequence, it is unlikely that in the short term there will be any large scale development of housing in the surrounding countryside.

The new housing built in the grounds of Runton House reflects the village's character well. However, most of the new houses are "stock" designs which fail to reflect either the older vernacular character of the inter-war garden suburb environment. Greater care should be taken with the design of new houses, relating them better to their surrounding environment, both in terms of their physical appearance and their spacing.

The recently revised Design Guide produced by the District Council contains information and advice on these issues.

2.5 Buildings at risk

There are no buildings considered to be at risk within the Conservation Area.

2.6 Tree Management

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).

2.7 Public Realm and green spaces

The District Council will work with other agencies, residents and land owners to ensure public open spaces continue to be maintained and enhanced. It is proposed that a regime be established to make sure that street surfaces are properly cleaned, and the street furniture is kept in good order.

The public realm is described in more detail in Section 6.4 in the first part of this report.

In general, the area of the public realm needs little change in West Runton.

While the management of the Common seems excellent, one village felt that the grass was being cut at the wrong time, and perhaps as a result, there were less orchids growing in the area.

In the south-east part of the Common, a number of cultivated plants have been introduced beside the former retting pond. It is questionable whether this is good practice; cultivated plants have already made incursions into the Common on the north-east side, where there are flowering shrubs along the side of the railway track.

The area of green space at the north side of the Hurn has accumulated a collection of signs, notice boards and a dilapidated fence. This area needs a more coherent redesign –for example, does the village really need a large notice board about the railway here?

Some road surfaces need maintenance, particularly the poor tarmac surface at the entrance to Balfour Road, and the rubble-patched surface of Newell Crescent.

3 Monitoring and review

As recommended by English Heritage, this document should be reviewed every five years from the date of 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 other 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 can be 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 & contact details

Leake, G.F. East and West Runton: two villages, one parish. (Poppyland Publishing, Cromer, 2006)

Morrison, K.A. English Shops & Shopping: an architectural history. (Yale/English Heritage, 2003)

Pevsner, N & B. Wilson. The Buildings of Norfolk 1: Norwich & North East 2nd edition. (Yale 1997)

Sunley, T. Runton (Notes on Runton parish for Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, 2007)

Trade Directories, including White's & Kelly's, 1830-1890

English Heritage: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, 2006

English Heritage: Guidance on the management of Conservation Areas, 2006

English Heritage/CABE: Buildings in Context, New development in Historic Areas, 2001

English Heritage/Department of the Environment: List of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, various dates.

North Norfolk District Council: Local Development Framework (Core Strategy)

North Norfolk District Council: Design Guide, supplementary planning document, 2009

Websites:

Helm.org.uk

Naturalengland.gov.uk

Norfolkbiodiversity.org

Norfolkcoast.co.uk

Norfolk museums.norfolk.gov.uk

Northnorfolk.org.uk

Norfolkwildlifetrust.co.uk

Appendix 1: Listed buildings

There is only one nationally listed building in West Runton Conservation Area at present. The parish church is listed as Grade II*.