



BLYTHBURGH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

July 2012



On 1 April 2019, East Suffolk Council was created by parliamentary order, covering the former districts of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council. [The Local Government \(Boundary Changes\) Regulations 2018](#) (part 7) state that any plans, schemes, statements or strategies prepared by the predecessor council should be treated as if it had been prepared and, if so required, published by the successor council - therefore this document continues to apply to East Suffolk Council until such time that a new document is published.

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Public consultation: this took place between 16/1/12 and 13/4/12 and included writing to all residents of the village to request views; writing to the Parish Council and providing printed copies; placing the draft on the Council's website; including a request for views via the Council's public magazine 'Coastline'; issuing a press release; making available printed copies at SCDC's planning reception; providing posters for display around the village; and inviting responses from Suffolk County Archaeology, Suffolk Preservation Society and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit. A total of 7 responses were received which led to 8 additions, amendments and alterations to the draft appraisal, summary map and management plan prior to adoption in July 2012.

INTRODUCTION

The conservation area in Blythburgh was originally designated by East Suffolk County Council in 1973 and confirmed by redesignation by Suffolk Coastal District Council in 1991.

The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Blythburgh under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2011).

As such this is a straightforward appraisal of Blythburgh's built environment in conservation terms and is followed by a gazetteer describing the village in more detail.

The intent of this document is as a demonstration of 'quality of place', sufficient to inform those considering changes in the area. The photographs and maps are thus intended to contribute as much as the text itself.

As the English Heritage guidelines point out, the appraisal is to be read as a general overview, rather than as a comprehensive listing, and the omission of any particular building, feature or space does not imply that it is of no interest in conservation terms.



View across Angel Marshes



Village Sign

1 CONSERVATION AREAS: Planning Policy Context

There are currently thirty four Conservation Areas in the Suffolk Coastal District.

The identification and protection of the historic environment is an important function of the planning system and is done through the designation of Conservation Areas in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. These areas make an important contribution to the quality of life of local communities and visitors by safeguarding their physical historical features which sustain the sense of local distinctiveness and which are an important aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside.

As part of this commitment there is a need to ensure there are the means available to identify what is special in the historic environment and to define through the development plan system their capacity for change. Such changes can act to help to address environmental quality in addition to achieving the aims of planning for sustainable development.

National planning advice on the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other heritage assets is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). At the District and local level, the Local Development Framework (LDF) recognises that development within conservation areas will need to accord with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Core Strategy of the LDF contains an objective 'to maintain and enhance the quality of the distinctive natural and built environment'. The Core Strategy also provides general advice supporting the retention and enhancement of Conservation Areas whilst minimising any significant adverse impact upon them. Conservation areas are also included under general development control policies, particularly those in relation to design where one of the key criteria requires that all new development must have regard to the character of the area and its setting.

The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in which Blythburgh is situated, includes an aim in its 2008-2013 Management Plan that the AONB will have a built environment that reflects local character and is a of a scale and form appropriate to the AONB.

This Conservation Area Appraisal provides details and identifies particular features which contribute to and justify its status. The purpose of this conservation area appraisal includes:

- a definition of the special character of the conservation area through its special qualities: layout, uses, architecture, setting, open spaces, topography and archaeology
- an analysis of the area's history, development and current status
- a guide to managing future change.

2 GENERAL CHARACTER SUMMARY

Blythburgh is a pleasant, small village which contains many attractive cottages grouped amongst trees and hedgerows along a network of narrow lanes. The village however is more widely noted for its magnificent church and beautiful marshland setting which combine to give dramatic views on the approaches to the village.

Formerly a much larger settlement based around busy quays located along the River Blyth, Blythburgh was once a centre of commerce and prosperity. In medieval times there was a large Market Place and the Town had two chapels, two bridges, a friary and a salt-workings.

Although the port and wharves have long since silted up, evidence of Blythburgh's past wealth and importance can still be seen in the remaining buildings from this era, including the magnificent parish church.

Holy Trinity Church is one of the grandest of Suffolk's churches made even more imposing by its dramatic location dominating the flat surrounding marshland and mudflats (see photo, Introduction) on the edge of the village. The church building also dominates the village, its scale and magnificent proportions catch the eye immediately.

Blythburgh's location, at the lowest road crossing of the River Blyth, proves both beneficial and detrimental to the village. The surrounding landscape, including the mudflats and salt marshes of the Blyth Estuary, is of a very high quality both environmentally and ecologically. However the A12 main road crossing the river here bisects the village and constitutes a somewhat divisive feature. Not only is it visually intrusive but it also carries a considerable volume of traffic through the village, substantially adversely affecting environmental quality.

The Conservation Area, principally a designation which recognises the architectural and historic qualities of an area, has a boundary which to the north, east and west runs along the edge of the marshes and along the river bank. The southern boundary links across and excludes the more modern development which now forms the southern part of the village.

Although much of the surrounding marshland and mud flats, as well as the river itself, are not included within the Conservation Area, this does not mean that the landscape setting of the village is any less important than the area that has been included. The value and importance of the landscape setting is recognised by its designation as part of the Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.





Holy Trinity Church



Blythburgh: Aerial View 2001

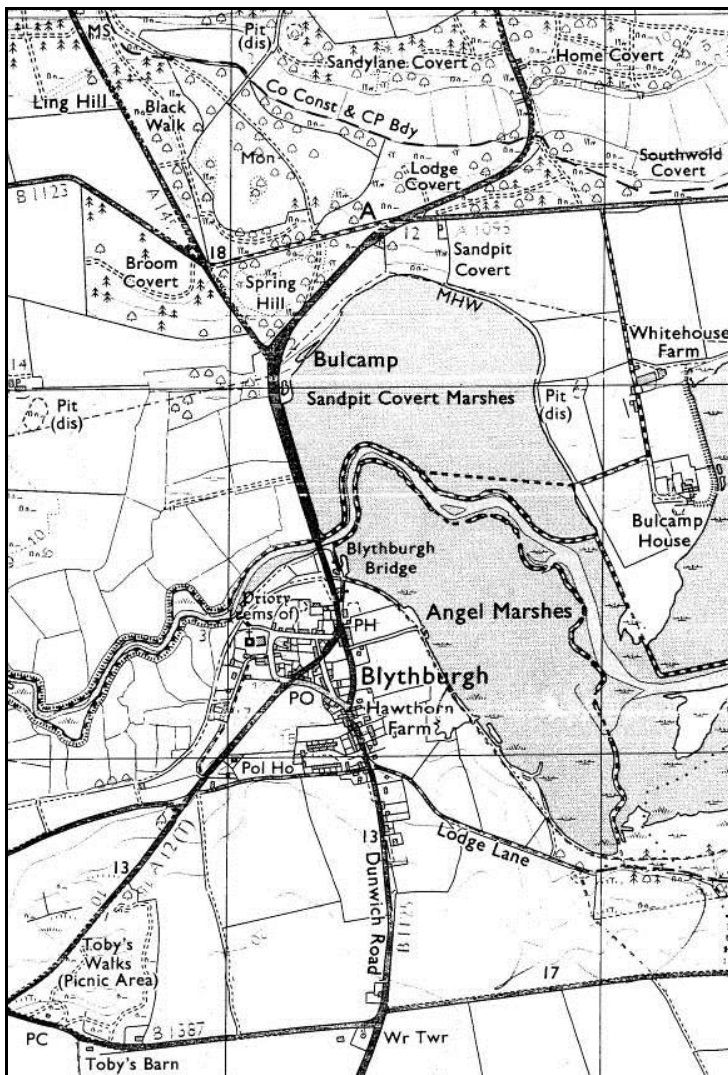
3 TOPOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Blythburgh is a small riverside village in east Suffolk about four miles east of the market town of Halesworth. The village lies on the south bank of the River Blyth adjoining the lowest bridging point, about three miles upstream from the mouth of the river between Southwold and the coastal village of Walberswick.

The River Blyth was at one time navigable up to Halesworth as the Blyth Navigation (1761), but nowadays one can only reach as far as Blythburgh, and that depends on a good tide.

The village sits astride the modern A12 road. In the 18th Century this was a turnpike road in the control of the Ipswich to South Town (Great Yarmouth) Trust, for which a former toll-house can be found just north of the White Hart Inn on the approach to the bridge. From 1859 passengers could join the railway network further inland at Halesworth on the East Suffolk line running between Ipswich and Lowestoft.

The village is on the coastal 'Sandlings' strip, where the sandy soils were best suited historically to sheep farming and rabbit warrens. The underlying geology is essentially crag deposits, sands and gravels laid down during the late Pliocene period over the chalk, which underlies all of Suffolk at depth.



Blythburgh: Extract from Ordnance Survey Map

4 ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Archaeology: The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists nearly over seventy sites of archaeological interest for the parish of Blythburgh. The earliest of these are two Neolithic flint axes and two slightly later Bronze Age axeheads.

There are also a number of cropmarks, indicating variously shaped enclosures, a round barrow and a ring ditch, all of unknown but probably similar date.

The Roman period has left us some finds scatters plus a salt-working site, whilst some of the Saxons are still there buried in their cemetery. More recent entries include the Medieval Church, remains of an Augustinian Priory (a Scheduled Monument) and a number of finds indicative of the former town.

There are significant finds, including a whalebone writing tablet and three styli, suggesting an important and high status settlement in Blythburgh from at least Middle Saxon times. By Domesday there were a market and probably a minster church highlighting the importance of the (small) town. Medieval records show a Blackfriars medieval hospital/friary, two former chapels, two former bridges over the Blyth, a cross site, and two 'ancient' woodlands. Lastly of Post medieval date there are two bridges, a lime kiln, a windmill, some remnants of the former navigation and the Blything Hundred workhouse.

The parish was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as 'Blideburc', a manor held by the King, formerly held by King Edward (the Confessor). It had one main church and other churches without land along with parcels of land that produced variously a day's supply of honey or landed 10,000 herrings.

Suffolk Historic Environment Record is now available online at www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR

History (with thanks to Dr A Mackley): Blythburgh is an Anglo-Saxon foundation and was an important religious centre from the seventh century. It had an administrative role at the centre of a Hundred, a minster, an early market, and at the time of the Norman Conquest was part of the royal estate with one of the richest churches in the county, with two daughter churches. The rich church was granted to Augustinian canons in the twelfth century at the foundation of Blythburgh priory. Blythburgh's parish church is the successor of one of the daughter churches. The continuity of activity at the priory church site, from Saxon times, suspected for some years, has now been confirmed by archaeology.

Tax records, priory accounts and the accounts of the fifteenth century lord of the manor, John Hopton, show that Blythburgh's economy in the fifteenth century was in trouble. The market was moribund. That the parish church was rebuilt then is a reflection of prevailing religious belief and not population or wealth. Clearly money was available but was in the hands of individuals concerned for the fate of their souls. They indulged in conspicuous expenditure to demonstrate their piety. As in the cases of Covehithe and Walberswick, Blythburgh Church was a burden the community found difficult to carry. To the extent that John Hopton put money into the church it would have been from Yorkshire and not Suffolk. Although resident in Blythburgh, his income from his northern estate was eight times that of Suffolk.

It is reasonable to conclude that Blythburgh was declining from as far back as the time of the mid-fourteenth century Black Death. There is no currently known evidence for port activity after that and documentary evidence is lacking for activity before then. Blythburgh did have a quay, goods would have been moved by water, and Blythburgh would have had fishing boats. But wider trade from the river was controlled by the port of Dunwich. Blythburgh could not have played an independent role. It is also possible that maritime activity at Walberswick, part of the same manor as

Blythburgh, has incorrectly been ascribed to Blythburgh.

At the time of the Dissolution Blythburgh priory was very poor. Dissolution of the monasteries and rising population generally led to an inflationary boom and Blythburgh may have benefited to some extent. The apparent rebuilding of the White Hart in the 1500s may be evidence of this. The centre of the village, however, was destroyed by fire in 1676. The impact is described in histories by Thomas Gardner (1754) and Alfred Suckling (1847). There was no recovery. The church, the priory ruins, the White Hart, Hawthorn Farmhouse and the medieval road pattern seem to be the sole survivors of pre-fire Blythburgh.

The near absence of later development along the 1785 turnpike shows that there was little economic activity in the nineteenth century. Compare Blythburgh with the different character of the other thoroughfare communities such as Saxmundham, Yoxford, Wangford and Wrentham. Blythburgh population peaked in the 1850s but it was a community of poor farm labourers, a few tenant farmers and small tradesmen serving local needs. The major landowner lives in Yoxford from the seventeenth century, the vicar was also non-resident and Blythburgh lacked leadership and entrepreneurship. The Halesworth-Southwold railway arrived in 1879 and included a stop in Blythburgh. However, it is the post-1676 Blythburgh that is represented by today's building and which forms the basis for the conservation area.



Ruins of Blythburgh Priory

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BLYTHING Hundred

King Edward held BLYTHBURGH as a manor; 5 carucates of land and 15 acres.

Always 8 villagers; 39 smallholders; 1 slave.

Then 1 plough in lordship. Land for 5 ploughs in lordship, but

Roger acquired 3 oxen, and now they are likewise there.

Always 21 men's ploughs.

Woodland, 40 pigs; meadow, 6 acres.

7 Freemen [with] every customary due; 3 carucates of land and 84 acres.

Always 16 smallholders; 9 ploughs; 1 market.

Woodland, 30 pigs; meadow, 2 acres.

The fourth penny from the dues of the enclosure of *Risebure* belong to this manor, between the King and the Earl.

All this paid, before 1066, £30 at face value and one day's supply of honey, with the whole of the customary due; when Roger (Bigot) acquired (it), £50 by weight; now £23 by weight.

A church, 2 carucates of land. Always 9 villagers; 4 smallholders.

Then 1 plough in lordship, now ½; then 4 men's ploughs, now 1.

Woodland, 20 pigs; meadow, ½ acre.

Then it paid 10,000 herrings; now 50s and 3,000 herrings.

Osbern Male holds this in the King's alms. To this church belong other (churches) without land.

Extract from Domesday Survey

5 QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The jewel in the crown of Blythburgh's buildings is undoubtedly its Holy Trinity Church, listed grade I. Mostly 15th Century with an earlier west tower, according to Pevsner it is 'one of the half dozen grandest Suffolk churches'. Known locally as the 'cathedral of the marshes' it is generally in flint with stone dressings and has a lead roof.

Of slightly later date, the 16th Century White Hart Inn is grade II* listed, with some fine heavily roll-moulded beams and joists to the ground floor rooms. It was originally a coaching inn of timber-framed construction with plastered walls; re-fronted in red brick, now painted, it has a Dutch gable at its southern end.

Along with the remains of the Augustinian Priory, the remaining listed buildings within the village of Blythburgh are all grade II, comprising mainly farmhouses and cottages.

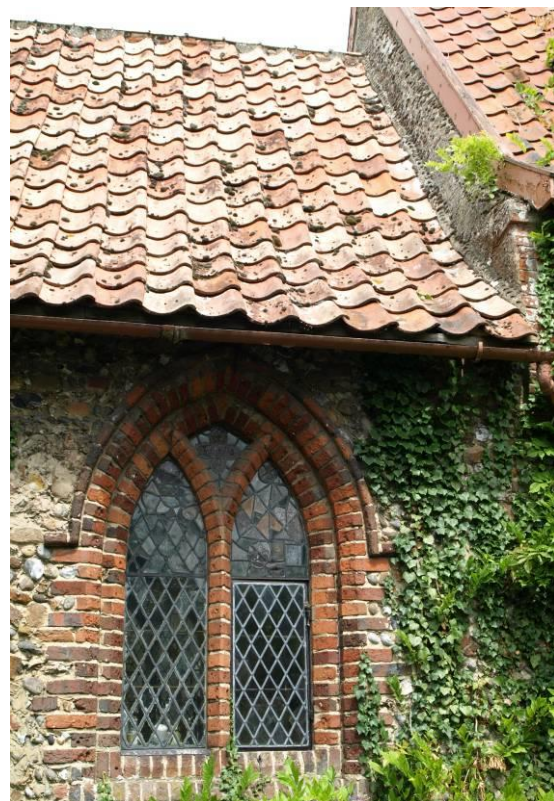
These are generally timber-framed and plastered, some re-faced in brick, and a couple of examples of load-bearing brick construction, now painted.

Roofs on the listed buildings are equally varied with one surviving thatch, and examples of plaintile, pantile (both natural and the black glazed variety) and slate to be found.

The majority of buildings within the conservation area are unlisted. This status does not diminish their value nor their important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, and their character-defining features should be retained. Those that make a positive contribution to the conservation area are identified on the Summary of Character Features Map on page 28. Loss of a building that makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area will be treated as substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.



White Hart Inn



The Priory



Flint and Pantile



Painted Brick and Plintile



Red Brick and Pantile



Red Brick and Black Pantile

6 TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS

The local soft Suffolk Red brick is extensively used as a dressing on flint buildings and can be seen in its own right on many houses or cottages.

The harder Suffolk White brick from the claylands is less common, appearing as a dressing to the flintwork of the old Custom House, and also opposite on a pair of houses and on a few chimneys.

Flintwork is a walling material found on the church, to boundary walls and some dwellings where it is undressed and where the flints are small. This material may be an influence of the near-coastal location and proximity to Norfolk, where it is more characteristic.

There are some rendered buildings, one with some pargetting, but elsewhere the other main finish is paint, either on brick or render.

Black weather-boarding can also be found on a number of outbuildings and, unusually, painted white, to a dwelling.

Roofs are mostly red pantile, but there are examples of the black glazed variety and some roofs in clay plaintile. Slate is also to be found more generally on Victorian cottages, in one instance with a decorative fish-scale pattern.



Pargetted Render and Pantile



Painted Weatherboarding



Flint and Decorative Slate

7 CHARACTER OF SPACES

Key spaces in the conservation area include the churchyard; the green triangle of land at the junction of London Road with Priory Road; and the open fields to the east of Angel Lane, south of Chapel Road and north of the Priory. Also of importance is the marshland setting to the church to its north, which is important for preserving key long views to it. These large green, open spaces are important for preserving the setting of the evolved village alongside its church. Domestic gardens also contribute to valuable green space and reflect the low density typical of the village.

The main A12 road through Blythburgh both dominates and subdivides the village passing through in a south-west to north-east direction. Two subsidiary loop roads come off the main road to the north-west and south-east forming the main part of the village. The road network has a significant impact on the character of the village and can be regarded as important spaces in their own right.

Approaching Blythburgh from the south-west, Church Road and Chapel Road come off the main road to the north and east respectively. These lead to the Church and Chapel in turn, the latter just outside the conservation area.

Past the Church, Church Road turns back eastwards as Priory Road which rejoins the main road at the northern edge of the village. Similarly, just before the Chapel, Chapel Road joins Angel Lane, which leads back northwards to the main road. Across the middle of the ring formed by these roads, The Street runs diagonally from Priory Road to Chapel Road, crossing the main road in the process.

Onto this basic core structure there is further development. South of the Church along Church Lane, overlooking the river marshes an historic extension to the village lies within the conservation area, whilst the other extension, Dunwich Road to the south beyond the junction of Chapel

Road and Angel Lane, is more recent and remains outside.



Main Road to South



Priory Road

8 TREES AND GREEN SPACES

One of the key elements of the Conservation area is its trees and green spaces. Treed and planted spaces usually enhance the buildings and spaces around the village and provide an appropriate setting for the conservation area.

Within a conservation area all trees over a certain size are afforded some protection. Notice to fell or prune trees has to be submitted to the local planning authority for consideration. Specific trees, groups or woodlands throughout the conservation areas may sometimes be protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) by virtue of the fact that there has been a previous request or proposal to remove the tree or develop a site. Protected trees may have particular amenity, historic and ecological value.

Surrounded by river, marshes and estuary to the west, north and east, Blythburgh enjoys an open landscape character that forms the setting to the village. There are however some mature oaks either side of the main road as it goes over the hill approaching the village from the south.

There are also some smaller trees adjoining the river to the rear of Church Lane in the west, trees along the north boundary of the churchyard, and various groupings more centrally in the village, most notably around the site of the former Priory, where there are some good Corsican Pines and other conifers.

South-east of here the triangle of land between the A12, Priory Road and The Street contains a single large Poplar, which is protected by TPO 186, the only such designation in the parish currently.



Trees to Churchyard



Protected Poplar

9 COUNTRYSIDE SETTING

Sitting on a promontory with the River Blyth wrapping around from the west and north, with its estuary to the east, the countryside setting to the village of Blythburgh is outstanding. The whole area falls within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

The countryside setting to the north of the village has a wilder, more open, aspect than the more farmed countryside bordering the village to the south. Access through this wilder countryside is easy with definitive footpaths running more or less continuously on both banks of the river and estuary.

The tidal estuary and its changing character of mudflats, low-lying marshes and reedbed and wide expanse provide a distinct setting to the village and its key landmark, Holy Trinity.

To the south of the village is the higher-lying farmed landscape. Footpath no.2 runs onwards from Church Lane to the A12. From here footpath no.1 runs from west to east along Blind Lane across to Dunwich Road, before continuing as footpath no.9 down Lodge Lane to the estuary. Note that some footpaths are currently closed.

Also of importance are views from the village directly across the Blyth to the former workhouse building at Bulcamp, now converted into dwellings. Forming part of the parish of Blythburgh this intervisibility from within the conservation area is a key historic view and is integral to the village's setting.



View North from Churchyard



Church Lane

10 FORMER USES

Blythburgh's former importance as a market town, port and fishery is today less than obvious, except by reference to the size of Holy Trinity. The great 15th century church did not reflect either a large or especially rich community and the wealth behind its creation was not associated with the wool trade, as elsewhere in Suffolk. Fishing, butter and cheese were more typical of east Suffolk's products. With the suppression of the Priory and the town's several guilds by Henry VIII and the later silting up of the river's port and wharves, the town suffered a slow decline.

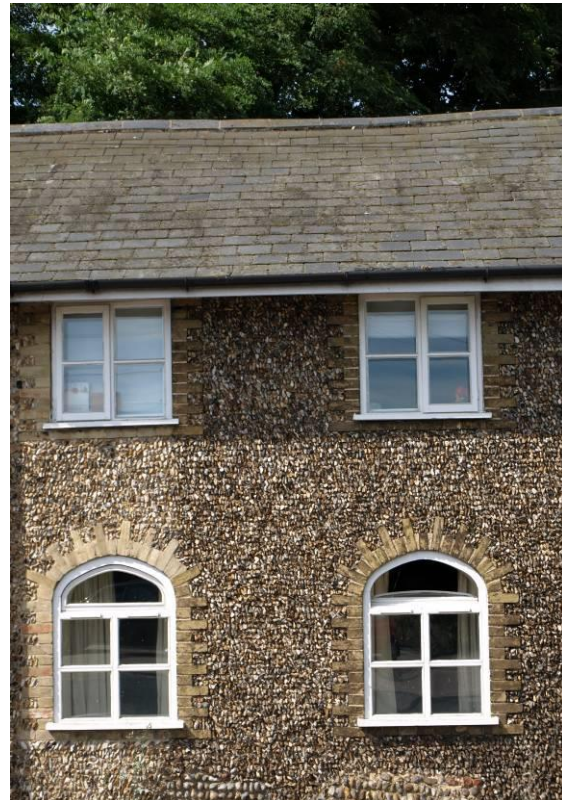
By the 17th Century Blythburgh was little more than a large village with the usual agricultural and associated trades. Records from that time show 10 yeomen, 4 husbandmen and 2 blacksmiths along with a mercer, a thatcher, a shoemaker, a carpenter and a chapman resident there.

Directories from 1844 give a similar picture of an agricultural economy with 12 farmers, a wheelwright, a corn merchant, a miller and a millwright and some shopkeepers amongst those present.

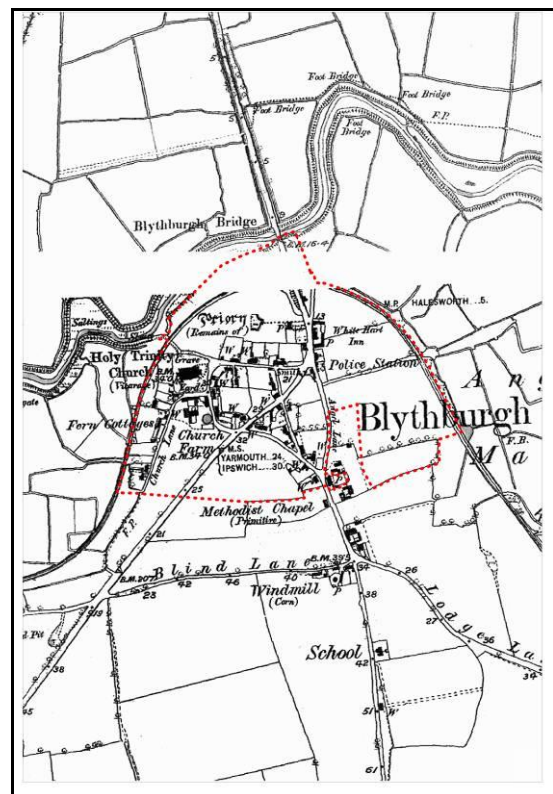
Two windmills are known to have existed in the parish, one a twelve-sided smock mill just south of the village near Blind Lane, demolished in 1937, the other a post mill further south off the Dunwich road, near the present day water tower.

Old field names recorded in the tithe apportionment of 1841 give confirmation of the basic activities in the village: 'Mill Field' and 'Mill Mount' are self explanatory whilst 'Gravel Pit Field' and 'Kiln Yards' indicate elements of various local extractive industries. Less obvious are names such as 'Lump Shed Pieces' and simply 'Elbow'.

Today the village houses a public house (White Hart), post office and village shop.



Old Custom House (modern name)



19th Century Map

11 PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS

One of the most noticeable non-traditional aspects of Blythburgh is the prevalence of uPVC windows on unlisted buildings. These are rarely successful in aesthetic terms as they invariably fail to reproduce the proportions of the traditional glazing they have replaced. It is possible to introduce additional planning controls to prevent the proliferation of harmful alterations within the conservation area.

Solar water heaters and satellite dishes can similarly intrude on the otherwise traditional scene unless their position is very carefully considered. The cumulative impact on the visual character of the village of multiple photovoltaic panels will be carefully considered when proposals are submitted.

Overhead wiring strung along some of the roads can detract from the village scene and could benefit from undergrounding. The main road cutting through the village detracts from the conservation area, not only because of the volume of traffic, but the signs and painted lines needed to control it. Ideally measures should be taken to mitigate the impacts of this busy road on the village.

The darkness character of the village is essential to preserve and the introduction of street lighting should be avoided. The contrast of the dark village at night with the illuminated church is very striking.

In terms of traffic management the A12 is likely to retain its current position for the foreseeable future. The road from Blythburgh to Leiston, however, could be altered to make it accessible to the village but no longer a through road.

Suffolk Coastal District Council's Parish Tree Scheme is available to Parish Councils who wish to carry out sensitive planting schemes to enhance spaces within the Conservation Area.



Overhead Wiring



Main Road to North

**12 STREET – BY - STREET
APPRAISAL**



12.1 The A12 (London Road)

Although there are magnificent views of Blythburgh Church from the A12 south of the village, the Church is actually screened from view by tall trees and hedgerows as the road twists through the village. In fact the same is true for many of the other buildings in the village.



At the Chapel Road junction a small cluster of traditional buildings are located around the crossroads forming the important built introduction to the village.



Further north where The Street crosses the main road, the **Lion House** is built fairly close to the road frontage. Its simple traditional form, symmetrical facade with fine sash windows, mellow red brickwork and clay pantiles, has been little altered. Although not overly grand the building is, however, an important feature in the street scene.



On the east side of the A12 at the Angel Lane turning another group of traditional buildings create a focal point with the White Hart Inn the most prominent, closing the vista at this point.



The White Hart is a former coaching inn which dates from the 16th Century. It was at one time used as an ecclesiastical court house. The building has a long 19th Century brick facade, which has been painted, with twelve small paned sash windows. The southern end has a 17th Century red brick Dutch gable. These features along with the massive red chimney stacks and the simple flint-faced lean-to on the north gable give the building a strong presence in the street scene. It is a key local landmark building.



To the south is a pair of semi-detached houses (**No.1; Riverview**) built of Suffolk White brick under a hipped shallow pitched slate roof.

This building, which occupies a prominent position on the main road through the village, was originally designed and built as a unified composition. Subsequent alterations and large extensions have undermined its original character and appearance.

The bridge over the Blyth is a modern structure with metal crash barriers instead of traditional parapets. Although affording views along the river valley to passing motorists the appearance of the bridge in such an important location is disappointing.



To the east and west of the river crossing the land is part of the low lying flood plain of the river. Footpaths run along the flood defence walls and provide expansive views back towards the village and the Church. In many cases the backs of buildings and the boundary treatments of their curtilage turn out to be very prominent features in the landscape.



Key views out across the estuary and into the Walberswick National Nature Reserve are available from the entrance to Blythburgh here.



12.2 Angel Lane

Angel Lane has a narrow entrance off the A12 to the south of the White Hart. The change from the busy trunk road to a quiet narrow village lane is abrupt and pleasant with traditional buildings, trees and hedgerows predominating and these features contribute significantly to the character of the conservation area here. The group of buildings at the top of Angel Lane are highly prominent from London Road and together form a picturesque and attractive group (**Riverview, Red House Cottage, Farthings**). This effect, however, does not last long as the layout of the modern houses on the eastern side of the road with their open frontage lay-by and setback footpath bear little resemblance to the traditional pattern of development in the village, Chapel Road and The Street.



12.3 Chapel Road

At the junction with Chapel Road, **Hawthorn Farmhouse** forms an important traditional feature, with its narrow span steeply pitched roof in black glazed pantiles and imposing street presence derived from its impressive scale.



Along Chapel Road an attractive coursed flint wall (worthy of retention) leads up to a pleasant terrace of traditional buildings on the north side of the road. The flint-faced **Post Office** and stores terminates the group in an attractively picturesque way.



Chapel Road climbs back up towards the A12, as does The Street. Traditional cottages intermingle with more modern buildings. In some instances the lack of traditional fenestration, detailing and finishes on the newer properties tend to undermine the overall character and appearance of this part of the village. The loose mix of houses, setbacks, front and rear gardens and trees establishes a pleasant low-density rural character that should be respected and maintained.

Of note also is the curving form of Chapel Road, which pleasantly leads the eye along towards London Road.



12.4 The Street

Running off Chapel Road across to the A12 a little further north, The Street starts off with two picturesque traditional small flint faced cottages on the western side and a short terrace on the eastern. This last is tight against the roadway, unusually, but unfortunately has lost its original windows to uPVC and has been cement rendered, obscuring whatever the traditional finish was underneath. **Brabbins** enjoys a diluted Arts and Crafts character and makes a pleasant contribution, as does **Hogsnooting Villa**. Hedges and green boundaries here form an important contribution to the streetscene.



The Street crosses London Road (A12) and joins with Priory Road, creating a triangle of green open space in the heart of the village. Currently unmanaged the space is lined with hedgerows which contribute to the enclosed character of adjoining lanes that is characteristic of Blythburgh. The space also forms an important setting to **White Cottage**, a key building that contributes to the prevailing traditional scene through its attractive vernacular appearance.



12.5 Church Road

Across the A12, Church Road, again appearing as a narrow leafy lane, curves round bringing an imposing view of the Church into perspective. The absence of footpaths and street lighting are important in establishing the rural character of the village here, and lend to the impression of narrow, enclosed lanes that contributes importantly to the rural character of the village. A **K6 phone box**, although neglected in appearance, is a fine local feature.



In the foreground is **Church Farm**, a building which is extremely prominent in relation to close-up views of the Church and its churchyard. Fortunately the building retains its simple rectangular narrow form with steeply pitched roof, traditional fenestration and chimney stacks, all of which are key features that should be preserved.

Other traditional buildings form an appropriately low key foil to the Church. The contrast emphasises the scale of the Church and heightens the impact of its splendid detailing and intrinsic beauty. Its churchyard and surrounding boundary wall contribute importantly to its setting.



12.6 Church Lane

Church Lane is an unmade track with banks and hedges on both sides. So close to such an impressive landmark, this rural enclave is delightful, the low-key and quiet charm of which makes an important contribution. The traditional appearance of this cluster of buildings strongly reinforces the essential character of the Conservation Area and the

surrounding area as a whole, and their retention is important.



which is further emphasised by restricted views at each end.



The Green is a large two storey house with a steep reed thatched roof. It probably dates from the 17th Century but was considerably restored and extended early in the 20th Century in the "picturesque" style by the artist Ernest Crofts. The walls are a mixture of render, half timbering, weatherboarding, brick and flint.

12.7 Priory Road

The form of Priory Road is straight and narrow where the ground banks up steeply on one side with mature trees and hedgerows, which make good contributions. Opposite are substantial buildings located close to the edge of the road that impart a strong character, quite distinct within the village.



The Priory is likely to have a 17th Century nucleus, but was considerably altered and extended during the late 19th and early 20th centuries by John Seymour Lucas. Timber-framed with brick extensions to the east, it is plastered with a pantiled roof. Large gabled bays project towards the road and there are massive chimney stacks above the steeply pitched roof. Attached to the west is an annexe which is largely a reconstruction of a medieval chapel although parts of the walling appear to be original. It has random flint and stone walls with brick dressings and a pantiled roof.

The narrowness of the carriageway and the location and height of the buildings together with nearby trees and tall hedges, create a strong sense of enclosure along Priory Road



The chapel once formed part of an Augustinian Priory, the remains of which lie to the north. Both the Priory and The Green have extensive mature landscaped gardens which are an important feature in the Conservation Area. The Priory, itself, forms a significant local landmark in terms of its historical importance, scale, street presence and evolved character.



Further east in Priory Road, **Forge Cottage** and especially **Priory Lodge** are of a smaller scale although both are still located close to the road. Along the road frontage there are attractive wrought iron railings and an adjoining section of flint and stone walling with brick copings.

13 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Blythburgh has a unique overall character which is different to other villages in the area. Its form and appearance is derived from its landscape setting and its church but just as importantly it is also derived from a very informal layout of narrow green lanes with groups of traditional buildings scattered throughout in a rather ad-hoc fashion. Mature trees, hedgerows, grass verges and banks and large and small spaces which exist between and around buildings make a major contribution.

Despite some intrusive 20th Century development and small-scale incremental change having taken place, the village continues to retain many of the special characteristics which justify its Conservation Area designation.

These special characteristics include, amongst other things, the number and quality of its traditional buildings, the relatively unique shape, form and layout of the settlement itself and the attractive relationship which exists between the older buildings, the spaces between and around them, and the wider landscape. Important natural features such as trees and hedgerows also make a major contribution. It is vitally important therefore, that these special characteristics are retained and reinforced.

There are however other characteristics which only serve to undermine the traditional qualities of the Conservation Area. These can include intrusive overhead wires and their supporting poles, standard concrete kerbs and large prominently sited highway signs. Heavy traffic can also have a major impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as can inappropriate car parking, causing the erosion of grass verges. Physical measures to control parking including signage, lining and bollards must be very carefully considered to minimise their impact on the quality and importance of open spaces and streetscenes within the conservation area and alternatives should always be considered preferable.

Inappropriate new developments and the cumulative effect of incremental change are a constant threat to the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area. Detrimental change can take many forms, from infill with poorly designed new houses to modern replacement windows and doors in older buildings.

Other undesirable changes can include inappropriate alterations and extensions which do not respect the scale, form and detailing of existing buildings, the use of modern materials and details in the area, insensitive highway works and signage, unsympathetic advertising and the construction of intrusive walls, balustrades, fences, driveways, garages and other structures.

The use of concrete tiles, artificial slates, plastic and aluminium windows and doors, cement render and modern bricks should all be avoided. So too should the use of brown stain on timber joinery, windows and doors as it invariably appears as a discordant feature, particularly where the traditional use of white paint provides a unifying element in the street scene.

In order to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, wherever possible the District Council will seek to prevent such inappropriate developments from taking place. To this end the Council is publishing design guidance and other advisory material and, as opportunities arise, will assist with implementing specific projects aimed at positively enhancing the area.

13.1 Alterations to existing buildings

The particular character of Blythburgh, with its strong prevailing historic appearance, renders it particularly sensitive to the cumulative loss or alteration of key features that contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Such features include windows, doors, front boundaries, chimneys, and roof coverings. Whereas some conservation areas can benefit from the enhancement of their mixed character, others will be slowly degraded over time through the exercise of permitted development rights.

It is proposed, therefore, that a survey be undertaken to identify the extent of existing harmful change and that an Article 4(2) Direction be considered for making in the conservation area which will require householders to seek planning permission when changing any of the following features:

- Front windows
- Front doors
- Chimneys
- Roof coverings
- Removal of front boundary walls and railings

An Article 4(2) Direction removes the permitted development rights of householders within a conservation area to undertake works to their houses without planning permission. Such a Direction is only justifiable where erosion of the conservation area's character through the cumulative effect of unsympathetic works is happening and may not be relevant in every conservation area. The purpose of a Direction would be to encourage retention and repair of original features or their sympathetic replacement or reinstatement, where necessary.

An application for such a planning permission is currently free. The purpose of this proposal would be to encourage retention and repair of original such features or their sympathetic replacement or reinstatement, where necessary. Residents of the conservation area will be sought their views on the proposal for an Article 4(2) Direction before proceeding with it.

13.2 Design of new development

In a conservation area such as Blythburgh the prevailing historic character can make it a challenge to consider what is appropriate for the design of new development and can include high quality modern design. Pastiche or historicist re-creation can be acceptable but is not always achieved well, particularly where existing buildings abound in decorative features. Certain characteristics can be used as inspiration without resorting to copying – perhaps a high degree of modelling (three-dimensional effect), the use of projecting bays, or a bold scale or character. Such an interpretation can ensure that new design is both creative and contextual. New development should always respect the grain of the conservation area, including preservation of building lines, relationship to gardens, streets, parking and farmland, scale, density and uses.

Proper account should also always be taken of the impact that new development adjacent a conservation area can have on its setting. Although a conservation area boundary represents a demarcation enclosing a special area of historic interest, changes immediately outside of it can still have a significant impact on character and appearance. The setting of the conservation area, therefore, has an intrinsic value that must be acknowledged in any proposals for change to it.

13.3 Conservation area boundary

On completion in 2012/2013 of appraisals for all 34 of the District's conservation area a review will be commenced of their boundaries as a separate exercise. There is no timetable as yet proposed. Full public consultation will be undertaken on any suggested revisions to the position of the boundary that may be proposed as part of the future review.

13.4 Demolition

Blythburgh has a finite quantity of historic buildings which are integral to the character of the conservation area. Their loss, through unwarranted demolition or neglect, would erode the special status and distinctive character of Blythburgh and undermine the conservation area. English Heritage in its draft guidance on 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (March 2011), which takes full account of PPS5, provides a checklist to determine if a particular element within a conservation area makes a positive contribution, provided that its historic form and values have not been eroded (p15). Planning Policy Statement 5 describes at Policy HE9 the tests that are applied to the loss of a heritage asset that makes a positive contribution to a conservation area. .

13.5 Enhancement opportunities

Opportunities to enhance the conservation area have been identified by the appraisal including signage and overhead wires. Where possible the Council will work, through its enforcement role and in conjunction with utilities framework providers to promote the visual improvement of the conservation area. The Council will also work to ensure that in terms of the highway, footpaths and open spaces, the distinctive character of Blythburgh is maintained and protected.

13.6 Landscape and Trees

The positive management and design of the landscape of the conservation area is a key consideration in planning related work. Inappropriate planting (design and species) can detract from the character of the settlement. Using plants which are found naturally within the locality and taking guidance available from the Suffolk landscape character assessment website (www.suffolklandscape.gov.uk) and Suffolk Coastal District Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance can be useful tools.

The key consideration regarding trees is to ensure that the spaces they need to grow and thrive are preserved and enhanced.

Suitable replacement planting to ensure longevity and succession in the treescape of the settlement will be encouraged in addition to the positive management of existing trees. Where space for larger trees is not available character can be achieved through other species, climbers and distinctive shrubs.

New boundary treatments to property can also provide enhancement to the conservation area and here the use of materials which in character with the settlement should be considered. Walls, fences, railings and hedges (whether native or ornamental) can be carefully chosen to reflect local styles and respond/create a sense of local distinctiveness.

13.7 Contacts

Further advice, information and support can be provided by officers of Suffolk Coastal District Council:

Conservation and Design Service

Tel. 01394 444616 conservation@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Landscape Officer

Tel. 01394 444420 communityandeconomicservices@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Arboricultural Officer

Tel. 01394 444241 communityandeconomicservices@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

For information specifically in connection with the Suffolk Coast and Heaths and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations, please contact:

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

Tel 01394 384948 www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org.uk

14 REFERENCES & FURTHER INFORMATION

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For further information regarding Conservation Areas and Listed buildings please visit the Councils web site www.suffolkcoastal.co.uk or contact the Design + Conservation Team, Planning Services, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, WOODBRIDGE, Suffolk, IP12 1AU Tel: (01394) 383789 or email: conservation@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk.

