



DUNWICH

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

December 2013



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 28th June and 27th September 2013 and included:

All building owners/occupiers were written to advising them of the consultation and providing a weblink to the appraisals and offering to send printed copies on request; the Ward Member was invited to comment; The Parish Meeting was written to with several printed copies of the draft appraisal provided and a weblink to the Council's website for downloading; The draft appraisal was placed on the Council's website for downloading; A press release was issued; Posters were supplied to the Parish Meeting for display on noticeboards; Printed copies were available for inspection during office opening hours at the Council's planning helpdesk and printed copies were furnished to the public on request; Monthly adverts were placed in the East Anglian Daily Times promoting the consultation and providing contact details; attendance at a Parish Meeting meeting was made; And invitations for responses were sent, alongside printed copies, to the following bodies: Suffolk Preservation Society, Suffolk Preservation Society: Suffolk Coastal Branch, Suffolk County Archaeology Unit, Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB Unit.

A total of 7 responses were received which led to 10 additions, amendments and alterations to the draft appraisal, and summary map prior to adoption in December 2013.

INTRODUCTION

The conservation area in Dunwich was originally designated by East Suffolk County Council in 1971, extended by Suffolk Coastal District Council in 1989 and confirmed by redesignation in 1991.

The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Dunwich under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's guidance document 'Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2011, rev. June 2012).

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

This document is neither prescriptive nor overly descriptive, but more 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.



Village Sign



St James Street

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 assets of the historic environment is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (Chapter 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of March 2012.

At the District and local level, the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan 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 Local Plan 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 Dunwich is situated, includes as one of its aims in the 2013-2018 Management Plan, to “conserve the historic resources of the area including landscapes, archaeology and the built environment”.

The Suffolk coast is dynamic and has always evolved. The Shoreline Management Plan identifies the adopted intent of management for the Suffolk coast and coastal settlements over the next three epochs (to 2025, 2055 and 2105). The Plan aims to reduce the threat of flooding and coastal erosion to people and their property and also aims to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits.

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: small scale affecting households and larger scale affecting new development.

2 GENERAL CHARACTER SUMMARY

Dunwich was once one of the largest ports on the east coast of England, a gated town with no less than nine churches, several monastic houses and market places. This thriving early medieval town gained its prosperity from its port, fishing industry and local sheep farming. However following the silting up of the port in the 14th Century it suffered a continuous decline in its importance.

Coastal erosion, recorded in the Domesday Book, continued with disastrous effects and by the 16th Century at least half of the medieval town had been lost to the sea. Even today the sea is still eating away steadily at the cliffs and little remains of the original settlement, which was located some way to the east of what remains as a village today. During the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries Dunwich was only a shadow of its former self but still appears to have been a busy little town maintaining a fleet of fishing boats and acting as a market for the export of local agricultural produce.

By the early 19th Century the town was no more than a village. It became part of the estate of the Barne family who constructed a number of estate buildings, the architecture of which, with its tall chimneys, decorative bargeboards and latticed windows, makes a major contribution to the highly distinctive character of the Conservation Area. Today the village is in a fairly isolated position and comprises two small clusters along what were approach roads to the original town. The built pattern of the village, therefore, is fragmentary and contains large open spaces comprising woodland, low-lying fields and open spaces which include a number of ruins of monastic establishments outside the original town walls. The effect is picturesque and romantic, in a nostalgic sense, for the lost Dunwich; but still a village lived in and one that is enlivened by a significant number of seasonal visitors.



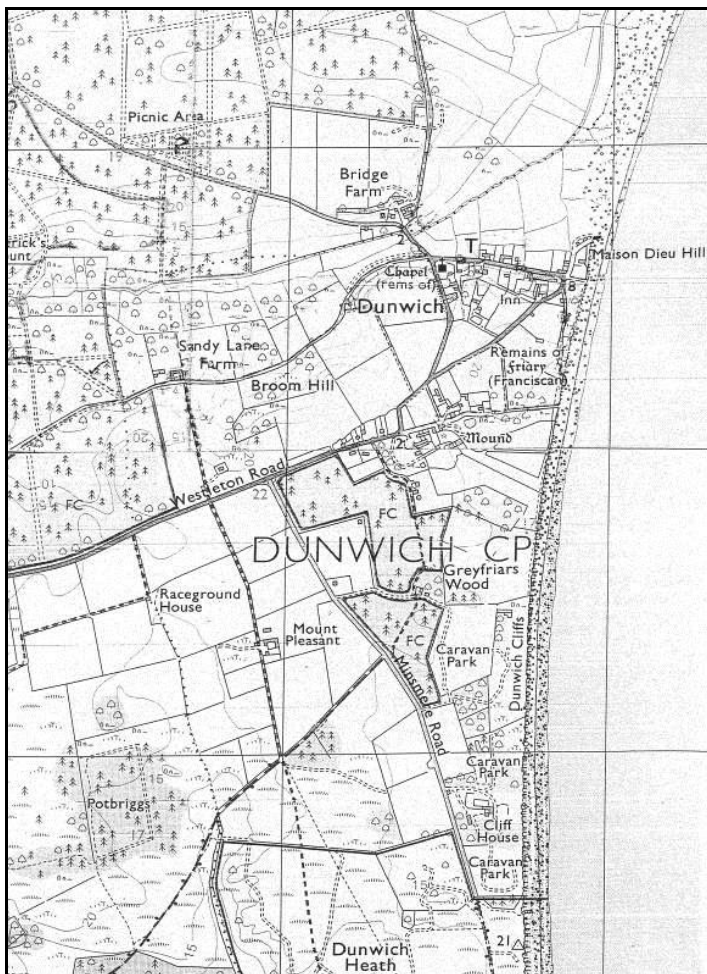
Dunwich: Aerial View 2007

3 TOPOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Dunwich is a small coastal village in east Suffolk about six miles south-east of the market town of Halesworth. The village lies mostly on a peninsula of slightly higher ground between the coast to the south-east and Dunwich River to the north. This river approaches from the west and then runs north through the marshes behind the beach for several miles to join the sea at Walberswick. In historic times the peninsula was much larger accommodating an entire medieval town with its own harbour where the river originally met the sea. Coastal erosion has now largely removed that peninsula, along with the town sited on it, depositing material across the harbour mouth and thus diverting the river northwards.

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.

The main A12 trunk road passes by parallel to the coast some four miles inland. In the 18th Century this was operated by the Ipswich to South Town (Great Yarmouth) Turnpike Trust via Woodbridge, Saxmundham and Blythburgh. From 1859 passengers could join the railway network at Darsham on the East Suffolk line from Ipswich to Lowestoft, at a point where it crosses the A12.



Extract from Ordnance Survey Map

4 ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

The Suffolk Historic Environment Record lists over a hundred sites of archaeological interest for the parish of Dunwich.

The earliest of these is a Palaeolithic implement, indicative of a long but not necessarily continuous occupation in the area. The town and port are thought to date back to at least the Roman occupation era and there has been a find of a Late Saxon buckle plate locally.

The site of the Medieval town itself is now mainly under the North Sea, but the western edge of its palisaded boundary, known as Palesdyke, has formed the lines of Beach Road and the cliff-top trackway to the south (definitive footpath 10), a thin sliver remaining of the original town plan. Recent Lidar survey of the adjacent seabed is slowly revealing the extent of the lost medieval town.

Historic and ongoing coastal erosion has literally swept away Dunwich's foundations from below (as attested to by tales of bells ringing under the sea). The cliffs continue to crumble and every now and then fresh evidence comes to light, be it in the form of ancient brick well shafts looking like fallen chimneys on the beach or skulls with crossbones from a fallen graveyard peeking out of the cliff-side slope.

Even the Domesday survey of 1086 lists some land as carried off by the sea. At that time the manor was held by Robert Malet, included three churches and had 236 burgesses. There is also mention of a gift of 60,000 herrings.

There was considerable WWII activity in Dunwich including the placement of extensive minefields and barbed wire. Some of these obstacles remain, for example the pill boxes and ant-tank cubes, now forming part of the village's military heritage.

Suffolk Historic Environment Record:
www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/chr



St James Church Tower

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Edric of Laxfield held DUNWICH before 1066 as one manor; now Robert Malet holds it; then 2 carucates of land, now 1, the sea carried off the other (carucate). Always 1 plough in lordship.
Then 12 smallholders, now 2.
24 Frenchmen with 40 acres of land. They pay every customary due to this manor.
Then 120 burgesses, now 236; poor men, 180 less 2.
Then 1 church, now 3; they pay £4 10s.
In total, value £50 and 60,000 herrings as a gift; before 1066 it paid £10.
Also Robert of Vaux holds 1 acre of land.
Value 8d.
Norman holds 1 acre.
Value 2s. 8d.
Godric (holds) 1 acre.
Value 8d.
He holds this from Robert Malet.
Gilbert Blunt holds 80 men.
He pays £4 and 8,000 herrings.
[He holds them] from the same Robert.

Extract from Domesday Survey

5 QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The oldest are the grade II* remains of the Greyfriars Monastery adjoining Monastery Hill, which are mainly 14th Century and built of flint and rubble with stone dressings. Mainly walling with a couple of gateways, this is also a Scheduled Monument, as are the remains of the Chapel of St James' Hospital (in St James' churchyard) and the site of the Hospital of the Holy Trinity (Maison Dieu) near the beach.

Pevsner speaks of the last remaining medieval church of All Saints which 'began to disappear down the cliff in 1904', its tower going over in 1919. The present parish church of St James had been built further inland in 1830. Originally designed in classical style by Robert Appleton, it has a later chancel and extensive gothic revival alterations of 1881. This is grade II listed of flint on a brick core and has a similarly listed buttress from the old All Saints Church rebuilt in the graveyard in 1923.

The remaining seven listed buildings are all grade II, and more domestic in nature. The oldest is Whitefriars, a 17th Century timber-framed house with a black glazed pantile roof, refronted in stone, flint and brick during the 19th Century.

Several properties comprising two terraces towards the beach on St James Street account for five further grade II listings. These include the Ship Inn nearest the sea, the Museum furthest away and several houses inbetween, all of 18th or 19th Century origin and mostly in red brick with plaintile and pantile roofs.

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 35. Loss of a building that makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area will be treated as substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.



Monastery Ruins



The Ship Inn



Red Brick, Black Tile and crested ridge
Characteristic lattice windows and neo-Tudor chimneys



Red Brick, Pantile and Thatch



Stone, Flint, Red Brick and Black Pantile
Characteristic lattice windows, neo-Tudor chimney and elaborate bargeboards



Red Brick and decorative Black Tile
Characteristic lattice windows and elaborate bargeboards

6 TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS

Dunwich's present day appearance is largely Georgian and Victorian, its medieval character (and buildings) mostly lost. Existing buildings appear to be a mix of the vernacular and self-consciously picturesque, architecture which, nonetheless, appears remarkably coherent.

Many of the Victorian cottages are built of 'Suffolk Red' brick, sometimes as a detail to flint walling; and with black glazed pantile roofs, or a particular local variety of black glazed flat tiles, laid with scalloped edges to alternate courses. Other key architectural features include the use of lattice glazing to windows that appear in a variety of shapes; crested ridges and hips; elaborate bargeboards and verges; and elaborate neo-Tudor chimneys. The effect is one of contrast and high variety within a common language of materials and features, which reflects the close chronological origins of most of these buildings.

In addition to the flint and stone of the remaining ruins, houses such as Whitefriars were probably refronted with the same materials redeployed from older lost buildings. Bridge House uses cobbles probably sourced from the beach in a similar fashion.

The far eastern end of the area, adjoining the sea, is more informal with a chip shop in the car park and nearby huts clad in black weather-boarding. These last appear to have old WWII coastal defence concrete cubes as their foundations.

A small minority of buildings have a render finish and a number of brick ones have been painted over, to the detriment of their character and function.

Furthest from the sea the buildings that formerly comprised Bridge Farm remain typical of Suffolk with their red brick walls, black weather-boarding and red clay pantile and thatched roofs.



Render and Black Pantile



Flint, Red Brick and Black Tile

7 CHARACTER OF SPACES

The village of Dunwich, as it now remains comprises two small clusters of buildings, each on an original approach to the medieval town.

The northern cluster along St James Street backs onto the marshes that lie along the southern bank of the Dunwich river, running from where the road towards Blythburgh and Halesworth crosses the river, and then towards the beach. This low-lying, open landscape provides important long distance views across from the village to the church towers at Walberswick and Southwold, and Southwold itself. It also provides the setting to Dunwich which occupies land that rises southwards from this space.

The southern cluster of dwellings is on the higher ground of what was the peninsula with the town at its tip. The road to Westleton and Yoxford approaches from the south-west and continued at one time down High Street to Middle Gate and thence into the town. This route is now terminated by the cliffs south of the beach area, but remains as a footpath. This area is characterised largely by woodland and forms an important backdrop, on higher ground, to the village streetscene along St James Street. Former small paddocks around the southern cluster have a non-domestic rural character.

The open area to the south of Monastery Hill includes the remains of the Greyfriars Monastery, beyond which are the cliffs adjacent the beach. This space is very important in forming the setting to the ruins and the remains of the boundary wall to the northwest.

Other key spaces include the beach car park, which is a strictly functional space that has a rough-and-ready character; the beach itself, which provides a valuable appreciation of the geology of the adjacent cliffs and the forces of coastal erosion; the garden to Lapwings, the undeveloped extensive area of which is a significant backdrop to St James Street; and the Churchyard to St James Church.



Beach and cliffs



St James' Churchyard

8 TREES AND GREEN SPACES

Along the roads that form the spines of the two clusters of development, Dunwich has an attractive rural village character, with gardens, hedges, shrubs and trees lining much of the way. Extensive areas of tree cover are evident around and amongst the southern built cluster; and along Sandy Lane.

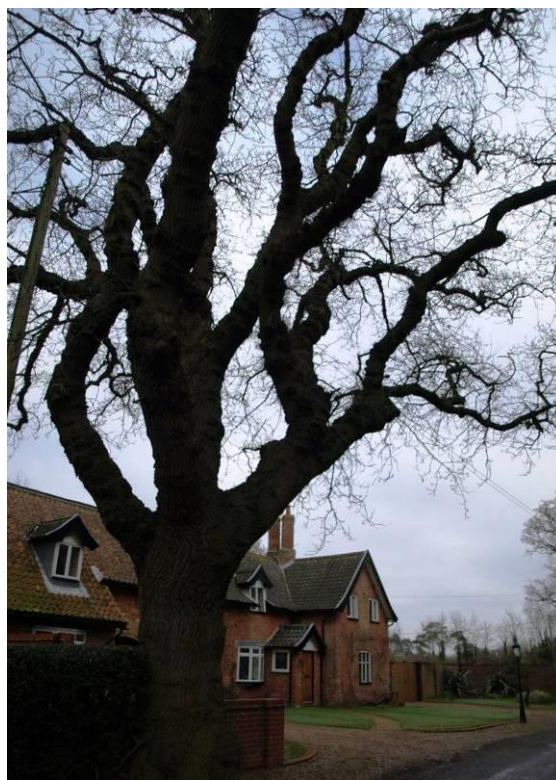
Inside the conservation area at the western end of the northern cluster there is a group of trees in behind the development south-east of the church and another area further west parallel to and south of Sandy Lane, wrapped around the higher ground above the flood plain of the river.

Two large areas of trees around the southern cluster have been given the protection of Tree Preservation Orders. No. 24 made by the former East Suffolk County Council in 1953 covers Greyfriars Wood, a large area of mainly Oak trees and also Ash, Sweet Chestnut, Yew, Sycamore, Holly, Holm Oak atop the cliffs south of the village. Further inland from here no. 16 made by Suffolk Coastal District Council in 1984 covers an area of Sycamore, Oak, Beech, Sweet Chestnut, Holm Oak and some conifers around Friars Lodge, south of the High Street / Westleton Road junction.

Further afield Dunwich Forest north-west of the village is mainly coniferous plantation owned by the Forestry Commission, whilst to the south-west the National Trust's Dunwich Heath has large areas of regenerating Birch and Oak. The whole area here is part of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Elm hedges are a distinctive feature, as is the case along Monastery Hill. These hedges often suffer die back due to Dutch Elm disease but are regenerated by new sucker re-growth.

Alexanders is an abundant feature of the wayside verges. Originally from the Mediterranean it is often found close to monastic sites, where once cultivated.



Westleton Road



Greyfriars Wood

9 COUNTRYSIDE SETTING

Away to the south-east of the village Dunwich Heath, a large area of coastal heathland, can be accessed from Westleton Road via definitive footpaths 13 and then 1. The alignment of the latter suggests it is probably the remains of one historic radial approach to the former town, which has not been upgraded to a road.

A little to the north of Westleton Road and south of the river's flood plain Sandy Lane, footpath 4, runs roughly parallel to both heading further inland as Westleton footpath 16 leading on to Darsham. This route may well represent a continuation to Dunwich of the Roman road that crossed southern Suffolk from Coddensham to Peasenhall.

The countryside around Dunwich traversed by these paths includes coastal heathland, Oak woodland, agricultural fields and forestry areas. Further variety of habitat occurs north of the village. Immediately behind the beach there are areas of sand dunes on the seaward side of the Dunwich River. This is essentially a tidal creek off the River Blyth, an area of salt marsh giving way to fields on the higher ground further west.



Sandy Lane



Reedland Marshes viewed from Beach car park



Footbridge over Footpath 12

10 FORMER USES

Although the exact extent of the former settlement area of Dunwich is unknown, the curvature of Beach Road and footpath 10 accords with evidence from old maps that medieval Dunwich was formerly a sizeable town and one of the most important ports in East Anglia.

Old accounts of the town mention such institutions as markets, a mint, guildhalls, courts, hospitals and numerous churches. Losses to the sea are recorded at intervals from Domesday onwards, particularly during the 14th Century, and the sea reached the market place in 1677.

Early 17th Century records show 10 yeomen and 5 husbandmen plus shepherd, thatcher, butcher and beer brewer all loosely connected with the land. The 'town' also had a cloth industry with two spinsters plus weaver, tailor and cordwainer along with marine associations in the form of 6 sailors, 15 fishermen, 7 merchants and a rope maker.

By 1844, directories indicate a smaller and more land based economy with just 6 farmers plus victualler, shopkeeper and schoolmaster present.

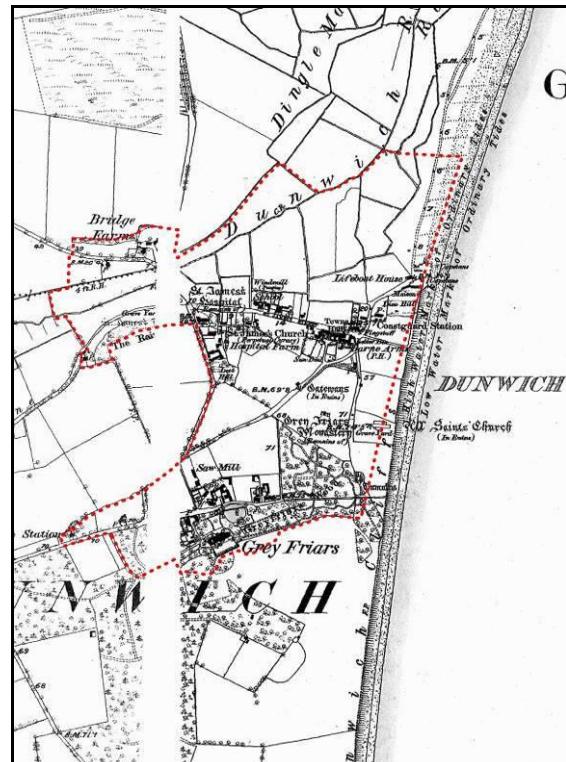
Old field names recorded in the tithe apportionment of 1838 also give a clue to former activities in the village. 'Clay Pit Piece' was probably a source of local bricks, whilst 'Fish Houses' and 'Canal Piece' relate to the more marine activities.

What remained of the port obviously still posed something of a threat from smugglers as there was a 'Preventive House' owned by the 'Corporation of Dunwich' and occupied by a 'Collector of Customs'. The Borough was disenfranchised in 1832 and the Corporation dissolved in 1883.

Today the village enjoys a public house, café, Museum, a retreat centre and tea room, and a local economy that benefits from substantial seasonal visitor numbers.



Dunwich Museum



19th Century Map

11 PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS

Dunwich does suffer from some intrusive modern features, such as uPVC windows set in otherwise traditionally constructed buildings. Other modern changes to traditional properties also make their mark; several properties that might best have been left with the traditional local brick exposed, in either red or white, have unfortunately been overpainted. This can be particularly intrusive when it destroys the unity of a terrace, but is reversible.

The visitor season brings the pressures of vehicle traffic and parking. The large beach car park can present a bleak aspect when out of season due to its large, open extent. However, its informal, unmade character is a benefit in a sensitive location for such an essential feature.

Despite the currently relatively stable coastline, the biggest threat to Dunwich remains the sea, both from flooding and erosion of the cliffs. Ongoing erosion has placed at risk, for example, the remains of Greyfriars Monastery and surviving churchyard burials, and their preservation will need to be considered carefully in future strategies.

Interpretation boards designed to inform visitors about the history of the village, showing the dramatic effect of coastal erosion through its history, would be a positive addition.



Coastal erosion: cliff-top grave



Beach car park



Overpainting of brickwork

**12 STREET BY STREET
APPRAISAL**

12.1 Westleton Road

Approaching Dunwich from the south-east along Westleton Road, the conservation area incorporates most of the southern built cluster. The mix here is of historic and modern dwellings in a low density pattern, set back from Westleton Road with generous gardens to front and rear. This cluster is entirely residential in use and its rural village character is emphasised by a lack of footpaths, kerbing, signage and street lighting. Mature trees intersperse the buildings and woodland forms a dense backdrop such that this part of the village has a countryside rather than coastal character.



On the north side of Westleton Road the first of many estate cottages are included; **Nos.1 & 2 Town House Cottages** are in red brick with a black tiled roof. Plain in character they form an attractive cottage pair at the village entrance. An adjacent infill plot is a successful example of a new dwelling that adds to local variety while drawing on some vernacular elements.



Nos.1 & 2 Maison Dieu (above) are of similar materials to the Townhouse Cottages, but single storey and more like almshouses with their tall chimneys and red brick parapet gables facing the road. The chimneys form prominent neo-Tudor features which, with the black pantiles, introduce key features of the Dunwich vernacular.



Further east a small site has been infilled with further modern houses set back behind the trees fronting the road (**The Spinney, Heathfield, Oakfield House**). For their era these are good examples of modern dwellings, which, whilst not copying traditional buildings, are individual to their plots and add, modestly, to local distinctiveness.



Next to the modern infill, two further traditional estate buildings, **Woodberry and Beehive Cottages**, again in red brick, but this time with first floor dormers punctuating the roofline and, again, prominent chimneys. These are the last of

this small group before the main road heads off northwards, dropping down into the valley to the rest of Dunwich. This part of the Conservation Area is visually separated from what is now the centre of the village along St James Street and has a pleasant country village character with some built characteristics that it shares with the northern built cluster.



However the old road continues eastwards as High Street which contains a right-of-way footpath. Set in large grounds adjoining the junction to the south **Friars Lodge**, an older estate type house with tall chimneys and black glazed tile roofs, fronted by modern additions is reasonably prominent. The scale of the dwelling matches well the size of its grounds and these should be retained in their current format for their good contribution to the conservation area.

12.2 High Street



Continuing on the south side of High Street is **Long Row**, a terrace of six red brick cottages, again in the 'estate' style

with three gables facing the road, the first unfortunately painted over white, destroying the unity of the terrace. Typical features include lattice windows, elaborate bargeboards and decorative chimneys. These are all features that are important to be retained unaltered as each dwelling makes an important individual contribution to the overall group value of the terrace. Hedges here form important garden boundaries.



The **Old Stables** and **Old Coach House** adjoining are also partly painted white, hiding the original local materials and traditional construction, including flint walling. These form an attractive group that are pleasingly unblemished in avoiding fencing, hard surfaced roads, additions and alterations.



Adjoining these is a modern extension called **Friars Gate** next to the driveway into East Friars, which is low key and modest in appearance and scale.



Greyfriars is a large Victorian house much altered by Ipswich architect E F Bisshopp in Tudor Baronial style. It is set deep within a large wooded site on the south side of High Street, such that only glimpses through the trees are gained of tall red brick chimneys and half-timbered gables. Next to it are Little Greyfriars and East Friars which, together with Greyfriars, form a good group of strongly characterised architectural interest.



Opposite East Friars on the northern side is **Whitefriars**, a grade II listed 17th Century house, originally timber-framed, but now refaced in stone with red brick dressings, likely salvaged from local ruined medieval buildings. It has a black pantile roof with four gabled dormers at second floor. It appears to have been 'improved' to share the Dunwich vernacular of lattice windows, elaborate bargeboards, black pantiles and contrasting materials. It makes an outstanding contribution to the quality of the conservation area.



A few more recent buildings are scattered around behind Whitefriars and then further east on High Street. **Pathways**, a modern bungalow, seems a little out of character with its suburban picture windows, tile-hanging and low pitched concrete tile roof.



Next to Pathways, **The Cottage**, another but older bungalow continues the estate style with its tall brick chimneys, lattice windows and decorative barge-boards. Although the brickwork has been painted over in cream The Cottage stands in semi-isolation and the effect, therefore, is merely picturesque. All the buildings in this area enjoy a wooded sylvan setting that is important to preserve.

Beyond The Cottage, High Street continues eastwards into Greyfriars Wood as definitive footpath 12, under a small footbridge and onwards to an abrupt ending at the cliff edge (see opposite). Near here at one time would have been Middle Gate giving access to the medieval town beyond. The mystery of the wood and the drama of sudden arrival at the cliff top adjacent the beach are compelling.



Greyfriars Wood



Arrival at the cliff top

12.3 Monastery Hill

Beyond the bend on Westleton Road the main road into Dunwich runs from High Street north-eastwards into the valley. After a short distance it forks and the right hand road leads down Monastery Hill to the eastern end of St James Street behind the beach.



On the eastern side of the hill, the grade II* listed remains of the **Greyfriars Monastery** are prominent. Two gothic arched gateways off the hill lead into a large grassed area surrounded by walls containing the ruins of one of the monastic buildings.

The ruins, their boundary wall and their open setting are key features of the conservation area and are worthy of preservation. They are one of the few visible reminders of Dunwich's origins and important status. Formerly in the ownership of Suffolk County Council the ruins are now vested in a local Trust.



The ruins are classified as a Scheduled Monument. Beyond the eastern wall definitive footpath 10 follows a route a short distance from the cliff edge.

Further down Monastery Hill is the entrance to Lapwing, a large modern dwelling set in very extensive grounds that form a very important otherwise undeveloped well treed open space in the heart of the conservation area. Lapwings can be seen on long views back into Dunwich from the low-lying areas adjacent the Beach car park.



Carrying on down Monastery Hill, on the north side opposite the ruins, a small red brick bungalow called **Bay View** looks out over St James Street below. Its contribution to the appearance of the conservation area is minimal.



Another bungalow adjacent with black weather-boarding and a pantile roof, **Black Pig Cottage** is more visible on a bend in the road. Its appearance is largely unrelated to the prevailing character of the village but as it stands somewhat apart this does not harm the conservation area.

Highly visible opposite is the individually listed boundary wall to Greyfriars forming an impressive enclosure to the road.



Tucked into a little hollow at the northern end of the monastery site is **Priory Cottage**, a brick built house now painted, with a hipped slate roof. Despite its name it is 19th century in origin with a slate roof and sliding sash windows. It forms a pleasing eyecatcher on the bend while travelling up Monastery Hill and makes a good contribution to the appearance of the conservation area.

12.4 Leet Hill



The conservation area boundary follows the left hand fork off Westleton Road leading down to the western inland end of St James Street. Here on the right can be found a traditional group of barns and farm outbuildings, mostly in brick with slate roofs, one barn with a replacement roof in corrugated iron. This group of curtilage listed buildings, in their unconverted state, makes a very good contribution to the conservation area as a former farm complex within the village itself.

The farmyard here is contained by an attractive flint and brick wall with decorative coping atop a grassy tree lined bank next to the road.



Adjoining the farmyard is grade II listed **Church Farmhouse**, providing a fine example of the local estate architecture. It has tall decorative red brick chimneys, a black glazed pantile roof, decorative glazing, very elaborate gable bargeboards and two date stones indicating 1882.

12.5 Sandy Lane

Sandy lane is a public footpath in the form of an unmade track, off the junction of St James Street and Leet Hill. Possibly once the western continuation of St James Street, it is probably the route of the medieval main road into Dunwich. The present road from Westleton to Dunwich is comparatively recent and noticeably veers southwards off the Sandy Lane route about a mile out of Westleton.

The lane passes along the side of the separate cemetery, which is accessed via a Lych Gate off Leet Hill and contains the War Memorial. At the end of the cemetery is the attractive small **old village mortuary**, surrounded by trees.



The lane continues on a gentle curve, with the raised land to the south referred to as The Rainbow. At the edge of the Conservation Area boundary sit **Apple Tree and Walnut Tree Cottages**. Built of soft Suffolk red bricks with orange clay pantiled roof, the pair of cottages displays decorative bargeboards and an unusual arrangement of central chimney stacks accommodating six flues.



12.6 St James Street

Although lying on the north side of the Dunwich River and, therefore, physically disassociated from the village core Bridge Farm with its associated farm buildings and related dwellings form a very attractive group.



On the south side of the road from Blythburgh **Bridge Farm Cottage** and **Bridge Cottage** form a semi-detached pair, with simple red brick walls and elaborate chimneys with the unusual black glazed tiles much used around this estate and which, where they survive, should be retained as much as possible.



The former farmhouse, now known as **Bridge House**, has cobbled facings with red brick dressings to its walls and the similar black glazed tiles.



The buildings at **Bridge Farm** are mostly brick with pantile roofs, with one former barn thatched. They have now mostly been converted to successful new commercial uses which draw visitors whilst complementing the agricultural character of the former farm buildings.

These stand at the north-west entry into the Conservation Area and help set the pattern for the rest of the village.



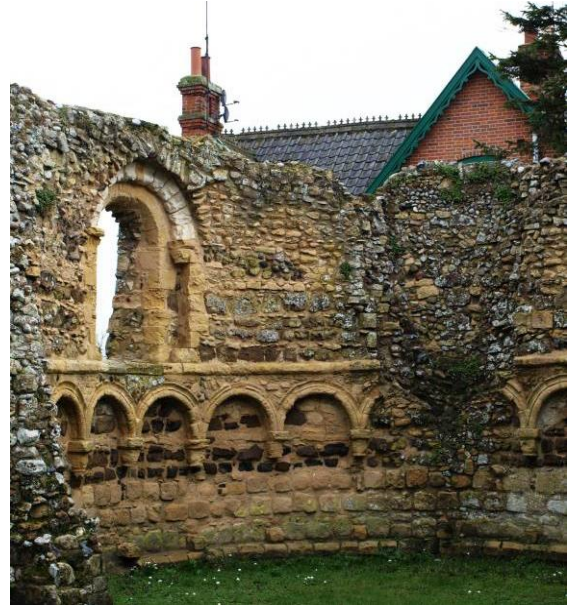
The open nature of the setting of these buildings and the lack of 20th Century development gives this area a particularly traditional charm. The area around Bridge Farm significantly complements the character of the western part of the village.

The landscape setting with its water meadows, stream, shelter belt of trees and valley sides also forms an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The road then crosses the river via Deering Bridge.



St James Church was originally built in the classical style c.1840, but extensively reworked in gothic revival style in 1881, it is listed grade II. It is situated on the corner of St James Street and Leet Hill and marks the western extremity of the old town's suburbs.

In the churchyard on the north side is a **buttress** from the 15th Century All Saints Church, re-erected here in 1923, just after the rest of the church went over the cliffs further east and is listed grade II.



Also in the churchyard are the remains of the **Chapel to St James**, part of the town's leper hospital, suitably sited well outside the town walls and thus not yet lost. Not listed, these remains are however a Scheduled Monument.

The church is a local landmark which, with its ruined leper hospital and reconstructed remains, provides poignant testimony to the loss and then revival of Dunwich as a town and then village.



On the south side of St James Street next to the church there is first of all **Nos.1 & 2 Church Cottages**. These again are in estate style, red brick and pantile, No.1 with the black glazed variety on a gable facing the road to the north, No.2 with natural red tiles on a long low wing with flat roofed dormers parallel to the road.

These prevailing architectural features are essential to retain in all buildings where they appear, as they contribute significantly together as a group to the highly distinctive appearance of the village.

All the buildings on this stretch of St James Street are relatively elevated on the hillside, looking out north across the river valley, any sense of enclosure here being provided by the high banks above which they are sited.

Next along to the east of Church Cottages is another pair of cottages, now a single house called **Leet Hill**, named after an ancient mound sited further up the hill south of Church Farm.



Again in estate style, red brick with red clay pantiled roofs, this block also has a gable at the western end, but paired gabled dormers punctuating the roofline of the wing to the east.



The eastern end of Leet Hill is approached by a concreted driveway between Leet Hill

and Church Cottages. The adjoining property, **The Old Forge** was originally red brick and pantile too; this is now painted over in white.



Next to The Old Forge, **Gainsborough House** presents a good example of modern infill, respecting Dunwich's local vernacular with its red brick walls, black glazed pantile roof and decorative bargeboards and glazing. The illustration above shows the streetscene importance of a lengthy brick screen wall to The Old Forge and Gainsborough House.



Gainsborough House was built on a plot in between The Old Forge and the last of buildings on the hillside, **Tudor House**. Although this too is in red brick with a black pantile roof and has a gabled wing facing north and a wing with dormers adjoining, its modern proportions with lower pitched roof, picture window and twin integral garage doors are somewhat suburban.

Working eastwards down St James Street, development now continues on the northern side with a highly attractive group of buildings set a little closer together and at street level. These dwellings all share the Dunwich vernacular language of lattice windows, impressive chimneys, elaborate bargeboards and black plain tiles. These are all features that should be preserved where they survive as their individual loss would adversely affect the group as a whole.



The first of this group is **The Old School**, in full blown estate style like Church Farm, with red brick walls, black glazed tiles and highly decorative barge-boards and windows. Its language of gables and dormer roofs is also reflected within the group.



School House and Jasmine Cottage form an asymmetrical semi-detached pair adjoining The Old School. In red brick with red clay pantile roof some parts retain their decorative windows, whilst others are modern extensions.



Next to Jasmine Cottage a long low single storey red brick and pantile outbuilding sits well forward punctuating the street frontage. A red K6 telephone box and post box adjoins a notice board forming an attractive little set of communal uses in the centre of the street.



Continuing eastwards **Rose Cottage and Ship Cottage** form another asymmetrical semi-detached pair on the north side of St James Street. Again in red brick with black glazed tile roofs, these have also had some extensions, presenting a mix of both original and modern elements. The additions have diluted the strong character of the original dwellings and these should have taken greater care in respecting and reflecting the Dunwich vernacular.

Hedges form a very important and attractive front garden enclosure to this group of dwellings.



Set back on an infill plot adjoining Ship Cottage is **Pilgrim Cottage**, which like Tudor House opposite, uses the correct red bricks and black pantiles, but does not quite capture the local vernacular with its odd proportions and modern fenestration.



Next to this is another bungalow, **Seadrift** (above), again in red brick with a black pantile roof. Of suburban character it contributes little to the conservation area.



The last building in this group is another very good estate style building, **The Bungalow**. This attractive building forms a

good template for new development of the same type within the conservation area.



On the south side of St James Street is a pair of infill houses, **Mill Cottage and Bell Cottage**, which reflect well the existing nearby cottages with black tiles and red brick.



Adjacent is **Sea View**. This has the typical estate cottage mix of red brick, black tiles, decorative chimneys, windows and barge-boards. Its simple, paired form shows how much variety has been achieved within the village using a common language of domestic architecture.

After Sea View, heading eastwards along St James Street, the development pattern gets much denser, with two short terraces comprising a number of grade II listed properties built close to the street with small front gardens and providing a continuous built frontage.



The first of these is the 19th Century **Dunwich Museum and Reading Room** (to the rear), listed grade II, of two storeys in red brick with a black tiled roof and typical decorative barge-boards and windows. The Reading Room is only partly visible from the street but a footpath runs along its frontage and it forms a well used local community resource. The Museum itself contains an outstanding recreation of what Dunwich may have looked like in its prime.



Next to this are three houses, **Ivy Cottage, Old Post Office and Tinker's Cottage**, all listed grade II, they are in the same materials but 18th Century and of two and a half storeys, the second floor rooms punctuating the steeply pitched roof with their modest dormers. Decorative picket fences define the boundaries here in an attractive way.



A two storey white painted brick link with black pantiled roof joins Tinker's Cottage to the **Old Town Hall**. Listed grade II, this is the end of the first terrace and punctuates the whole group by being white painted render on brickwork, re-fronting a timber-framed building with a steep black pantiled roof.

The Old Town Hall was the home of the former Dunwich Corporation and dates from the early 18th Century. It has attractive pointed Gothic windows with diamond lattice lights that are typical features of the village throughout.



Next to the Old Town Hall is **Red House**, listed grade II. It is an early 19th Century two storey addition in red brick with a pantile roof to an earlier 18th Century block adjacent. This of two storeys with attics, now **Ship House** and was formerly the western end of the original Ship Inn. Its dormers are a little overbearing when viewed as part of the streetscene.



Finally at the eastern end of the south side of St James Street also listed grade II is the **Ship Inn** itself. Another 19th Century estate building in red brick, with ornate chimneys, black tiled roof and decorative windows, it bears the date 1868 and appears to have lost the original bargeboards. It is an attractive building the use of which makes an important contribution to the life of the village and is a draw for surrounding visitors to Dunwich. On these bases, therefore, the Ship Inn makes a very important contribution to the conservation area.



Two conjoined cottages, **Marshside** and **The Ferns**, lie opposite the Ship Inn, and appear to have originated with the estate too. They have typical decorative black tiles and barge-boards, but no longer look the part having been rendered over their brick facades and with uPVC windows and missing pots and ridge crests. The buildings lie in a prominent position and could benefit from sympathetic restoration of these important features.

Overall St James Street reads now as a fairly long main village street with small

groups of picturesque buildings interspersed among various open spaces, gardens, shrubs, trees etc. The wider landscape and thereby the setting of the village is very apparent with tree belts, fields, heathland, marshes and the coastline all highly visible through gaps between the buildings. There are panoramic views of the countryside and the coast, including glimpses of Southwold in the distance. These views all make an extremely important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area and gaps between the buildings are also important allowing a significant element of the countryside to reach into the village.

The buildings themselves along St James Street appear highly unified, a unity derived from the impact of the Dunwich Estate architectural style. Brick buildings with decorative bargeboards, latticed windows and tall decorative chimneys predominate. The unity is further enhanced by the black glazed roof tiles and decorative ridges which were specially produced for the Estate. These features are essential to the architectural character of the Conservation Area and it is vital that they are retained.

12.7 Beach Road



At the east end of St James Street, the road turns north into Beach Road continuing gently downhill. Around the corner behind The Ferns is another estate type building, **The Coach House**. In red brick with parapeted gables and a black pantile roof, this has now been sympathetically converted to residential use.



Opposite The Coach House on a higher site between the road and the beach further east are **Nos.1 & 2 Coastguard Cottages**. The architectural value of these buildings has been diminished by unsympathetic changes and additions but they clearly possess local historical value and are in a highly prominent position when viewed from the Beach car park. For these reasons, therefore, they make a positive contribution to the conservation area.



Beyond these two buildings to the north the vista opens out across the car park to the marshes beyond. The car park presents a rather bleak picture out of season full of potholes. Two sets of signs between it and the marshes beyond do rather spoil the view northwards from here.



Tucked in against the beginnings of the cliff on the south side of the car park is the fish café, **the Flora Tearoom**. Clad in black weather-boarding with pantile roofs, the building is broken down into a series of conjoined elements to complement the several black weather-boarded huts down the west side of the car park, built on what appear to be WWII concrete block defences. The utilitarian appearance of the café buildings matches that of the car park itself, but the functions that they both provide are all important to the visitor economy that helps sustain Dunwich.

12.8 Beach and Cliffs



Finally, the beach and cliffs, the battleground between sea and land. All that is left of the great Medieval town of Dunwich are the two main approach roads (Westleton Road/High Street and St James Street) containing a few buildings which comprised the Medieval suburbs of the town beyond its gates, Greyfriars Monastery and the site of St James Leper Hospital.

The shingle beach is characteristic of this part of the Suffolk Heritage Coast and its ever-changing properties form part of the character of the conservation area. The beach is unmanaged except for trial soft defences made up of geo-textile bags filled with shingle, and chestnut paling fencing designed to stabilise this part of the beach. The distinctive setting here is formed by the backdrop of cliffs, the eroding geology of which vividly highlights the ongoing forces of nature that have so transformed Dunwich over the ages. These natural features are integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area and, like the village itself, are protected by lying within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.



13 CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Dunwich has a unique overall character which is different to other villages in the area. Its form and appearance are derived from its landscape setting and its unique history as the now remnants of a much larger medieval settlement. Its appearance is largely derived from the Dunwich Estate's nineteenth century architectural tastes resulting in a vernacular that is entirely distinctive to Dunwich and which forms a special feature of the conservation area. Its character is also derived from a very informal layout of narrow green lanes with two main groups of traditional buildings spread along former access roads that led to the town. Mature trees, hedgerows, grass verges and banks and the often large spaces which exist between and around buildings make a major contribution.

Despite some minor 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 a 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 street scenes within the conservation area, and less intrusive 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. There are some encouraging examples of more recent infill, however, which show that good new design can complement and reinforce the special character of the village.

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 Dunwich, 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 asked 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 Dunwich the strong prevailing historic character can make it a challenge to consider what is appropriate for the design of new development. Pastiche or historicist re-creation can be acceptable and in some places is entirely appropriate but is not always achieved well, particularly where existing buildings abound in decorative features. Certain characteristics can be used, however, as inspiration without resorting to copying – perhaps contrasting materials and gabled forms, for example. 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 to 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 2013 of appraisals for all 34 of the District's conservation areas 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

Dunwich 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 Dunwich and undermine the conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework at paragraph 138 states that *"loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area....should be treated as substantial harm under paragraph 133 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 134, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole"*. A brief checklist of characteristics which make a positive contribution can be found in English Heritage's *Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011, rev.2012).

13.5 Enhancement opportunities

Opportunities to enhance the conservation area have been identified by the appraisal including signage and interpretation. 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 Dunwich 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 are 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 maintain a sense of local distinctiveness.

13.7 Contacts

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

Design & Conservation Service

Tel. 01394 444616 conservation@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

Arboricultural & Landscape Manager

Tel. 01394 444421 Nicholas.Newton@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk

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

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

Tel 01394 384948 www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org/about-us/meet-the-aonb-team/

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.

