

Starston

Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines

December 2019









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Introduction



Bridge crossing in the centre of the village

Starston is a small ancient settlement situated at a crossroads and bridge over a stream within a wooded landscape with surrounding valley slopes. Trees and hedgerows form an important part of its character as do listed buildings, Starston having a high number in relation to its size. The history of the village as the centre of an estate is perhaps its most important characteristic, despite the former Starston Hall building, which formed its focus, no longer existing.

Under the terms of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Local Planning Authority is required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as a Conservation Area. The 1990 Act also requires local authorities to prepare management guidance and proposals for Conservation Areas. Starston conservation area was originally designated in 1975. This document should be read in conjunction with the adopted Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

Key Characteristics

- Rural settlement originally central to large estate
- Road bridge and river meadows form the centre of the conservation area
- Strong natural character throughout
- Shallow valley, river running west to east with wooded landscape

Historical Development (also see historic map in Appendix 4 p20)

Starston is referred to in The Domesday Book as Sterestuna, which may be a reference to the rearing of steers or cattle. The parish had three manors, all evident today: Starston Hall, Bressingham's Manor (later known as Starston Place Manor) and Beck Hall. Houses on the sites of the latter two are recorded from the 13th century.

The church is dedicated to St Margaret and has evidence of Norman work in its south aisle. Its extensive enlargement and re-modelling in the 19th century testifies to the importance of the village at the time.

Starston formed its own guild of tradesmen and craftsmen in the 16th century, the date from which the earliest domestic structures in the village survive. It was not until the 19th century, as elsewhere in Norfolk, that the village grew to outnumber in population its mediaeval size. The village school built in 1839 had to be extended in 1877 to accommodate over 100 children. This was the same decade in which the church was enlarged.

In 1856 the Waveney Railway Line was built with a station just south of the village giving access to Norwich. This helped transform Starston's commerce and demographic. An 1881 census showed the population to be 510.

The social history of the village during the first sixty years of the twentieth century is well recorded in the booklet, "My Village of Starston" written and published in 1969 by Roy Riches, a native and lifelong resident. The changes he describes are those of the final transformation of a rural way of life based in the village to one of dependence on the towns and distant employment.

The railway finally closed 1966, although Starston station closed as early as 1866. The Gate Inn with its famous walnut tree and sign closed in the 1950s and the village school in the 1960s. During this period the parish was combined with other parishes and no longer had its own rector. Most significantly, the population declined so that by 1983, when the first conservation area character appraisal was published, it stood at 324 but recovering to 332 in 1991. The last record taken in 2011 of the population was 331.

The most notable change since that time has been the conversion of former village buildings into individual houses, a process which can be traced back to the nineteenth century with the conversion of the village poor house to cottage dwellings in 1836.

Character Assessment

(Also see Streetscape and Natural Character Maps in Appendices 5 and 6 pages 21 and 22)

Starston and its Setting

Part of the landscape has been modelled by the owners of three larger properties in the village; Starston Place, with its dominant position, Grove Hill House and, in the valley bottom, The Old Rectory, each having their own considerable landscaped gardens. With their lawns, shrubs and specimen trees giving way to open pasture with parkland planting, they constitute an important element of the village landscape.



View looking south up Railway Hill



The Beck from the bridge crossing in the centre of the village

The village is situated within a shallow valley setting with shelved sides orientated west to east and situated in the otherwise open clay plateau. The valley sides at Starston are well wooded and planting schemes, mostly from the nineteenth century, have helped to enhance the natural beauty of the location. The Beck too has been managed and treated as an important landscape feature with sluices controlling its level as it passes under the bridge and through the water meadows at the heart of the village.

Part of the character of the village is defined by its trees and hedgerows which line the narrow roads and lanes. This helps to contain and enclose views, but occasional gaps allow for views into pasture land or water meadows.

Conservation Area Boundary

Since the last character appraisal, the main part of the settlement has been relatively unaffected by modern development.

Following public consultation on the draft porposed changes to the conservation area the boundary has been extended to include the immediate setting of the windmill which is listed and a scheduled ancinent monument, as well as a pond to the south east. Stone Cottage remains outside the conservation area.

Street Patterns and Historic Grain

The form of the conservation area is that of a crossing type of settlement, with the four roads converging at the bridge, forming the nexus of the village. From the bridge location, with the exception of Low Road, the roads can be viewed almost right up to the edge of the settlement, giving the village a compact sense of visual coherence thus allowing groups of buildings and the spaces between them together with many of the trees and hedgerows to be seen in one single view. The distinct valley with The Beck at its foot is visible approaching from the roads and winds gently to reveal more of the scene as the village is entered.



Building fronting the road at the bottom of Railway Hill



Former School now house

Starston is a typical example of a Victorian estate village. It was originally centreed around Starston Place, which was demolished after the war and its replacement is no substitute for what must have been the focus of the settlement, both socially and architecturally. Evidence of this vanished coherent community is the homogenized group of houses where once there was school, public house and model farm.

Perambulation

Station Road

The visible townscape of the conservation area is that of an ancient settlement with a majority of older traditional buildings set within an enclosed, un-spoilt, wooded and undulating landscape.

Railway Hill and The Street

Starting from the small triangular green at the junction of the The Street with Railway Hill, the village can be seen to the north at the foot of the valley. Looking to the south up Railway Hill, the top of the former station building Crossing Gates can just be seen in the distance. The building is an isolated red brick Victorian building and its style could be described as "railway Italianate". Its more formal classical style with round headed window arches and bracketed dormers are a characteristic of all the station buildings along this stretch of the former railway line. From the road there is a long view past the white paling fence of the former railway line, which is now straight footpath/track between the avenue trees. From here the road winds attractively downhill towards the village.



View from Railway Hill towards the junction with The Street



Beck Hall

As one approaches the centre of the village down Railway Hill, the woodland belt gives way to a frontage of historic buildings and boundary walls at the east side constructed in flint and hard to the road verge. This contrasts with the west side of the road, where trees and hedgerows on the bank screen views of houses, which are set back with front gardens. Large trees are a key feature at the frontage of Beck Hall and its adjacent cottages and outbuildings south of the Hall all help to define the historic character at the west side of the road.

Beck Hall is a listed 17th century timber framed house with steeply pitched black glazed pantile roofs, rendered walls and a gabled cross wing to the south. Its setting is particularly attractive, its large front garden and drive separating it from the road. To its north side a meadow extends west beside The Beck and away from the village. The Hall is a key architectural element in the composition of the townscape at this nexus of the village.

Village centre

At Beck Hall, the centre of the village comes into view with the roads to Harleston at the east side and the Pulhams to the west joining at the bridge. Just north of the bridge is a more minor road leading to Alburgh to the northeast. Church Hill to Hardwick and Railway Hill to Needham form the north south crossing. To the east, the Harleston Road curves away past The Old Rectory, which stands on the south side of the road behind a red brick garden wall of medium height, a large section of which is currently in the process of being rebuilt.

The Old Rectory is a 19th century re-modelling of a 17th century two-storey timber framed house and has rendered walls below steeply pitched roofs of black pantiles with shaped and pierced bargeboards. The front elevation was extensively remodelled in 1871. The house has lower additions which form an attractive overall composition. Standing alone on this side of the road, The Old Rectory is a key building in the core of the village. The trees towards the front of its grounds are very important elements in the conservation area. Beyond the garden to the east side is dense woodland and beyond the rear boundary there is open parkland.

The Jubilee Hall, a former cowshed for The Old Rectory, stands at the foot of Railway Hill, forming an end stop to the row of historic buildings built hard to the road. This is a modest single storey brick building with plain black glazed pantile roof and decorative barge boards. It has a good traditional painted sign at its centre and is bordered by a metal railing. Directly opposite and marking the junction is the triangular green with single lime tree. Going north from the green the boundary hedgerow to the road marks the boundary with the river meadow, as does the hedgerow and a small section of Victorian railing on the opposite side. These terminate where they meet the bridge.



Victorian railings at the bridge



View down Low Road from the village centre







Views across the meadow opposite
The Lodge

The village sign at the centre of the stands in front of a wooden paling fence, which helps to emphasizes its importance. From here the village centre is largely hidden among the trees. The sign, which is dated 1980, is painted wood carved in low relief and has a simple post standing on a circular brick base.

The bridge itself is a focal point for the village and conservation area. It consists of four curved gault brick abutments that act as anchors for a modern white painted metal railing each side of the bridge. On the western side of the bridge where the roadway narrows the footpath is marked out on it by the use of brick-weave paviours. Low Road curves away to the northeast from the bridge. Further along Low Road is the lower of the two sluices which control the water levels of the Beck.

Low Road

Along Low Road an attractive grade II listed early 19th century single storey house, The Lodge, stands alone at the end of the lane leading to buildings at Home Farm. The building dates from around 1840 and has rendered walls and thatched roof. It is situated within mature woodland setting. From The Lodge there are attractive open views across the water meadow towards Brook Cottage. A traditional timber stile and fingerpost mark the entrance of the footpath across the meadow.

Hardwick Road and Church Hill

The northern boundary of the conservation area is entered from Hardwick Road which then runs into Church Hill. Close to the north boundary stands Hillcrest, a two storey house of three bays with low pitched black pantile roof and rendered walls. The building marks the 'gateway' to the village at the north end and its twin tall redbrick chimney stacks make it a landmark as you leave the village. At the front of the site is an evergreen hedge which partly screens the house from the turn in the road. A single large tree stands alone directly behind the hedge at its south-east end.

Moving into Church Hill, to the east of the road are a large early 19th century group of former model farm buildings, which form Home Farm and are part listed. From the road the finely coursed flint and brick walls of the group are the dominant feature with the walls of the former stock sheds having a weatherboard finish. All the roofs have a slate finish.

Opposite the Home Farm buildings is a grade II listed single storey house, Home Farm Lodge constructed in finely coursed flint with gault brick dressings and black glazed pantile roof. It is cruciform in plan with low-pitched black glazed pantile roof and has a deep eaves with oversailing gable shaped bargeboards. A pair of clasped twin chimneys complete its symmetrical composition. The cottage retains the structure of its early 19th century garden with a mature yew, holly and other trees. A simple white painted paling fence and low hedgerow separate it from the highway.



Weatherboard building fronting Church Hill



Home Farm Lodge at Church Hill

The lane running between the Home farm buildings and the site of the former Starston Place former workshops is of interest. The listed implement shed, now Cart Lodge Barn, and its adjacent cottage, are both grade II listed and form part of the Home Farm buildings. Pheasantry Cottage further along to the east is also listed grade II and was originally a garden room/reading room for Starston Place. The lane passes open parkland with oaks and specimen trees, formerly associated with the original Starston Place, and terminates at The Lodge on Low Road.



Buildings and wall at Home Farm



Former coach house to Starston Place

Further downhill towards the Church of St Margaret the grounds of the former Starston Place are screened by dense mature planting, the survivors of the Victorian landscape gardens around the house.

Moving further down the hill, the church tower comes into view, its entrance from the footpath also accessed from stone steps in the grass bank, which slopes down to the road below the churchyard wall. Also, on the left and set close to the churchyard gate, is the entrance to Starston Place. The gate and adjacent rails are fine examples of early Victorian oak work, very well preserved with Tudor detail to the gateposts and rail tops.

At the entrance to the churchyard a similar oak gate is set between stone gateposts. Above the grass bank is an attractive flint boundary wall with ogee coping which continues down the hill past both the church and its lychgate, terminating at the bottom of the hill. The church itself dates from the Gothic Decorated period but was much restored during the 19th century.







Timber gates to Churchyard

From the south porch of the church a gravel path leads to the listed Victorian lychgate set diagonally in the churchyard wall above the crossroads. The lychgate is an excellent example of Victorian oak framed ecclesiastical craftsmanship with encaustic chequerboard tiled pavement and wrought iron details and has a base of ashlar and flint. Standing at the bottom of the hill at the bridge and looking back uphill to the church, another oak gate is visible at the foot of the hill by the churchyard wall.

The Church is grade I listed. It is largely 14th and 15th century fabric and was heavily restored in the late 19th century. Inside the building there is some evidence of an earlier building.

The Street

Just before entering the village at the west side, looking below the road across the field in a south westerly direction there is a wind pump dating from the 1860's, which is a scheduled monument and grade II listed. No longer in use, it was used to pump the water supply for Starston Place. It is a small circular red brick structure with conical roof supporting an iron post, which is surmounted by four single shutter spring sails with leading boards, and twin rudder, all driving a reciprocating pump through a crank on the windshaft. The wind pump is the feature chosen for the village sign at the entrance to the village from the Pulhams' direction.

Almost opposite the pump to the north side of The Street is a pair of red brick Victorian cottages, 1 & 2 The Beeches, with fretted barge boards, slate roof and central stack. A large beech tree stands in the front garden of No.1 above the road bank. From here the road gently curves towards the village centre with buildings well-spaced out on the northern, left hand side of the road overlooking the meadows to the south side.

Next, a single Victorian House, Beck View with black pantiled roof and fretted barge boards stands at the apex of the curve in the road. There is a central red brick chimney stack and attractive blue brick diaper pattern in the brickwork. A good mature horse chestnut stands in the garden next to the five-bar gate. Below the thorn hedge at the top of the bank which fronts Beck View is a row of modern red and black highway posts with reflectors. The road at this point is enclosed as a corridor between this bank and the hedge to the south. A line of nicely cut oak posts with slightly decorative finials line the grass verge at the south side of the road.







Fourways, north side of The Street

The crowstepped gables of the former village school on the north side are a noticeable feature as is the large modern dormer on its roof which provides this attractive flint building with a rather unfortunate appearance. The building next to the former school is the former village pub, which was known as 'The Gate'. This is now a dwelling but retains its characteristic trim from its former use. It has a low-pitched clay pantile roof, both sash and casement windows, gable end stacks and a projecting front porch. Opposite the building is a red cast iron post box standing on its own black iron pedestal, a very traditional feature in the street scene. This area has a badly worn pavement, much used for parking, the footpath continuing behind and below the road hedge-line towards the crossroads.

The north side of The Street has attractive small front garden areas, large chimney stacks, traditional/historic windows and doors, gravel drives, varied planting and use of traditional materials including the front boundary flint walls, all provide for particularly attractive historic views in this part of the street. These views contrast with the rural open character of the meadows and wider countryside beyond, on the opposite side of the road.

The village red telephone kiosk, which stands to the east side of The Cottage, is partly concealed from view and is the K6 type that is grade II listed. It dates from 1935 and is a design by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and therefore an important feature of the townscape.

Next door to the east side is Fourways, an early 19th century listed house which is attached to Blacksmiths Cottage at its east side. Running along the front boundary to these properties is a low late 19th/early 20th century railing, which adds to the historic character of the street and also helps to hold back the mature hedgerow at the front boundary close to the pavement.

Opposite Blacksmith's Cottage at the edge of the beech wood at the crossroads stands a timber boarded traditional workshop building with clay pantile roof, close to The Beck. The workshop building contributes to the traditional/historic character of the village.

The Street continues east of the bridge past the Old Rectory, the conservation area boundary terminating just beyond Brook Cottage. The original house dates from the 1820s and was formerly two farm labourers cottages associated with the Starston Place estate. It was converted to a single dwelling in the 20th century and is a rare example of a house constructed in rat trap brick bond, which creates a form of cavity wall. The 20th century extension to its west side repeats this detail.

Traditional Materials & Architectural Details

Roofs and chimneys: While many of the buildings may have been originally thatched, only one survives in the conservation area, the 19th century lodge on Low Road. There are examples in the conservation area of traditional red pantiles and a high proportion of black glazed clay pantiles. Perhaps more surprising is the high number of slate roofs, which include Station House, the Home Farm buildings, part of the Old Rectory and the chancel of the Church. Lead covers the nave roof of the Church and there are red tiles on the lychgate. Chimneys, which form an important part of the historic character, are relatively plain, mostly in red brick, with the taller double shafts to Home Farm Lodge and The Lodge being an exception.

Walls are generally red brick, flint or have a rendered finish. A more unusual finish can be seen at Hillside where the render has been impregnated by colored glass to give an elegant effect. The church and Home Farm buildings are in flint with some weather-boarding introduced on the latter. Decorative barge boards are a particular feature of some buildings, for example Beck Hall, The Old Rectory and Home Farm Lodge. Brick parapets can be seen on several cottages along The Street and there is patterned brickwork at Streamlet Cottage.

There are several good examples of flint and brick boundary walls especially along The Street, many retaining traditional copings. Rendered buildings conceal either timber frames, such as at The Old Rectory, or clay lump, as can be seen at Pheasantry Cottage.

Other than the church, buildings are relatively plain in their architectural detailing. There are a few exceptions such as the two-storey height Dutch gable end porch at The Old Rectory and the decorative barge boards, again at the Old Rectory, Beck Hall and the village hall adjacent to it.



Red brick house, The Cottage, north side of The Street



Hillside, north side of The Street



Flint wall, Railway Hill

Natural Character

The open space at the river meadows together with lines of mature trees and boundary hedgerows define much of the character of the conservation area. Going east or west from the centre of the village, the strong natural character is evident and provides an attractive wider setting for historic buildings. The large open views looking southeast across the meadows from The Lodge are particularly attractive and contrast with the more closed views of the meadows from around the centre of the village, which are often interrupted by lines of trees.

Moving south from the centre of the village along Railway Hill there is a dense woodland belt of trees along the east side of the road, GroveHill House being screened from view. At the west side the less dense woodland and hedgerows allows for views across the fields.

Large prominent mature trees in the centre of the village and up Church Hill give an impression of great age and continuity of settlement to the village.

As well as front boundary flint walls, mature hedgerows are a key feature of the conservation area at road boundaries.

Starston Place Lane leads to The Lodge on Low Road. It passes through the open parkland with its oaks and specimen trees associated with the former Starston Place.

A line of mature trees, including a large Beech Tree mark the curve in the road opposite Blacksmiths Cottage, screening views towards The Beck.



The Beck in the centre of the village



Meadows south of The Beck from village centre



Trees at the bend in the road opposite Hillside.

Street Furniture, Walls and Railings



Oak bollards and other street furniture at the bottom of Church Hill

Road signage is generally modern, although at the centre of the village there are two fine traditional cast iron standards with corona top carrying modern low maintenance finger posts with black lettering.

Traditionally designed oak bollards prevent vehicle parking at the grass verges at the bottom of Church Hill and at the village sign by the bridge. Their design and material finish are very much in keeping with both the natural and traditional character of the village. The traditional wooden bench close to the bollards sits comfortably for the same reason

Opposite the former pub is the red cast iron postbox standing on its own black iron pedestal. This is an attractive traditional feature.

Below the thorn hedge at the top of the bank which fronts Beck View is a row of modern red and black highway posts with reflectors.

Conservation Management Guidelines

Upgrading windows and doors



The Cottage in The Street with recently installed traditional windows.

The majority of windows are traditional casements. Exceptions are the Old Rectory and former public house at the north side of the street which have both traditional casements and sashes. A number of buildings have relatively new replacement casement windows and on the whole, this has been done sympathetically

If door or window frames need to be replaced they should ideally be replaced with the original materials. However, if different materials are chosen then the window style should still remain the same (if original). The opportunity should be taken to reinstate traditional style windows where they have been unsympathetically replaced in the past.

Painting/colour washing buildings



Fourways, The Street

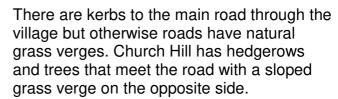
There are a number of painted properties in the village. Presently the colours are light shades or off white and work well together with brick finish to give a pleasing contrast and sense of visual harmony in the village. Most painted buildings have a brick finish, exceptions being parts of The Old Rectory, The Lodge at Low Road and Beck Hall.

Careful consideration needs to be given to painting buildings to ensure the visual harmony of buildings in the village is retained.

Highways



Road verge at the bottom of Church Hill



Natural verges should be retained, otherwise roads/streets have an uncharacteristic urban feel not in keeping with the character of the village.



Signage at the junction of Church Hill and Low Road

Highways signs are generally kept to a minimum throughout the conservation area although there is a concentration of signs at the bottom of Church Hill where it meets Low Road. This together with street furniture does to some degree detract from the rural character in this part of the village.

Whilst it has to be acknowledged that the highways signs in this area are necessary, signage should always be kept to a minimum to avoid detracting from the rural character.

Trees/open spaces



Glebe meadow looking east from the bridge crossing

The trees/woodland and open spaces of the meadows are a particularly important part of the character of the conservation area, being at its heart.

It is important that the woodland areas of The meadows are retained and carefully managed to retain this strong natural character. This also applies to the area around the churchyard where woodland forms a back drop to key views. For the future the natural character needs to be carefully managed so that it continues to enhance the conservation area area.

Appendix 1 (i)

Listed Buildings in Starston Conservation Area

Church Hill Church of St. Margaret (grade I)

Lychgate to Church

Pheasantry Cottage at Starston Place

Implement shed at Starston Place with adjoining

granary loft and cottage

Wind pump

The Street Hillside

Telephone Kiosk
The Old Rectory
Red Cottage
The Cottage

Fourways

Low Road

The Lodge, Redenhall Road

Railway Hill

Beck Hall

Appendix 1 (ii)

Unlisted Buildings of townscape significance

Railway Hill Grove Hill Cottages

Grove Hill House Crossing Gates

Oakdene

Range of buildings and wall

east side at the bottom of Railway Hill Outbuildings to Beck Hall, Railway Hill

and flint boundary wall

The Street Jubilee Hall

North wall to The Rectory Bridge over the river Blacksmith Cottage

The Gate

Old School House The Beeches Beck View

Church Hill Churchyard wall to St. Margarets, Church Hill

Memorial Cross

Entrance gates to Starston Place Surviving walls to Starston Place Outbuildings to Starston Place

Water pump

Hardwick Road Hillcrest

Policy background

In recent years, the approach to conservation area designation has changed considerably. It is now recognised that development plan policies, development control decisions, and proposals for the preservation or enhancement and the management of conservation areas, can best be achieved when there is a sound understanding of the special interest of the conservation area.

This position is reinforced as follows: The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in section 66(1) makes it a duty of local authorities when considering applications to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. Under section 72 of the same Act, it is a duty with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Department for Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 Paragraphs 184 to 202 cover "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment". Joint Core Strategy- Policy 2: Promoting Good design South Norfolk Local Plan The South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document was adopted in 2015 and policy 4.10 covers Heritage Assets.

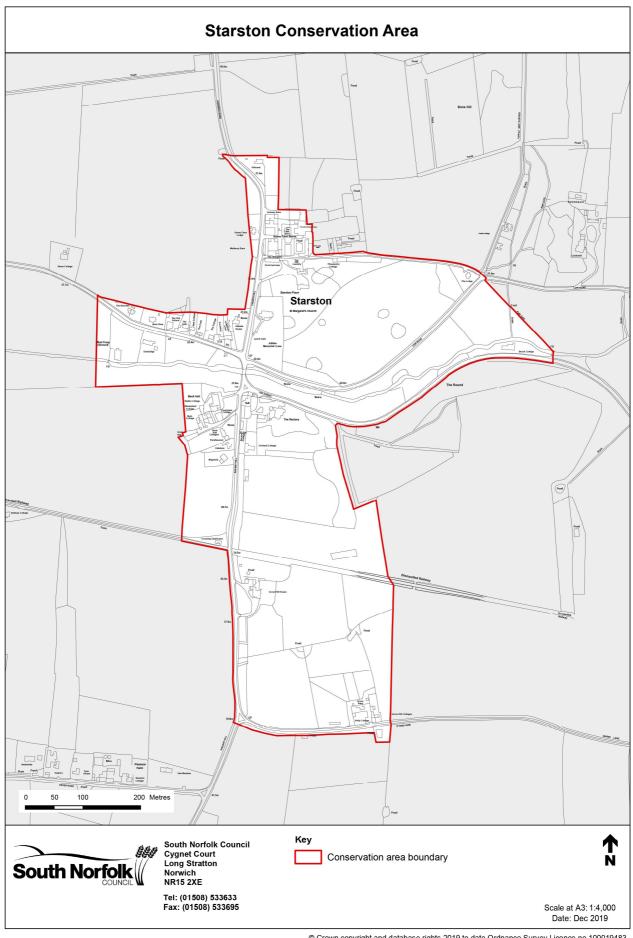
Public Consultation

An informal 'walkabout' of the area was organised with the Parish Council on 10th December 2018. This informed the proposed boundary changes and the conservation management guidelines within the draft appraisal. The public consultation on the draft appraisal took place from 1st to 28th July.

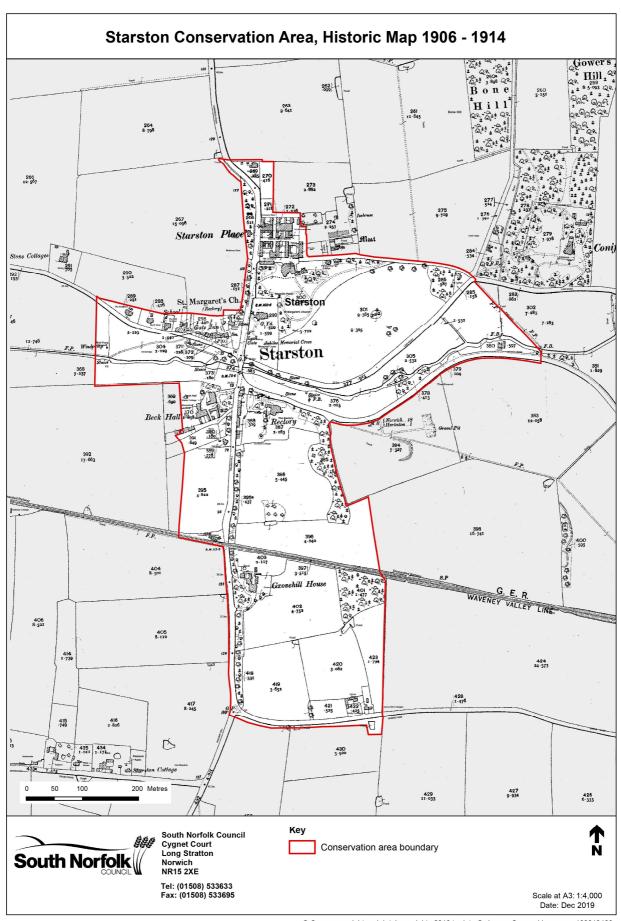
This included:

- A public exhibition held in the village hall on the 23rd July for one hour with an officer in attendance to answer any queries.
- An advert in village notice board and local publicity by the parish council
- The draft appraisal being available to view on the council's website and at the reception desk
- Emailing Ward Councillors, County Councillors, the Parish Council and Historic England.
- A presentation made to the Parish Council on 15th July.
- Contacting residents directly affected by the proposed boundary changes by letter informing them of the proposed changes

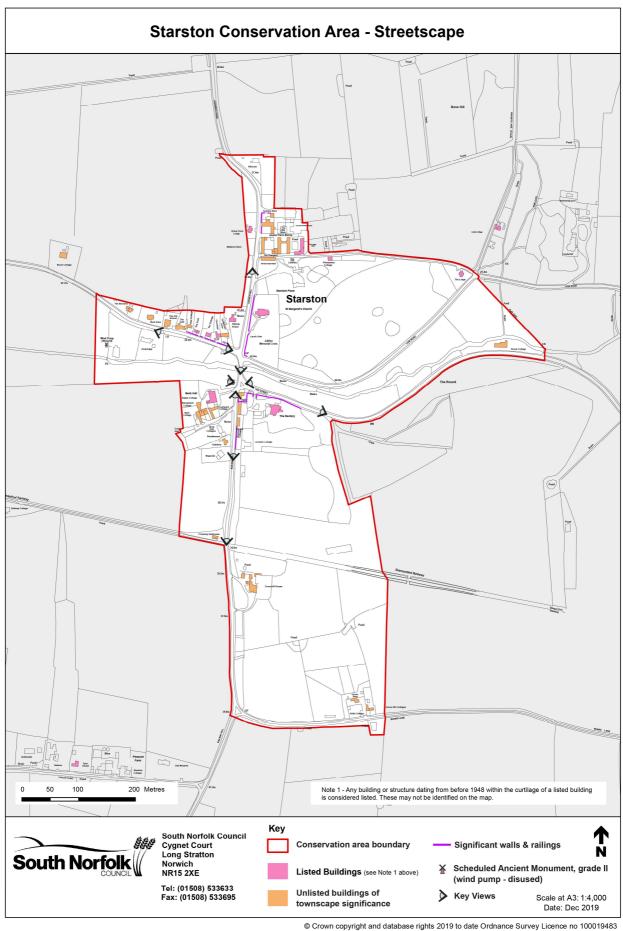
As a result of the consultation the conservation area has been extended slightly to the west to include the windmill and its immediate setting. Stone Cottage which was proposed for inclusion to the north was not. A small area was included to the north of Hillside House. The boundary to the rear of The Old School and Gate remained as existing. To the north east the boundary has been taken back to the footpath and the south boundary has been extended to include the pond.

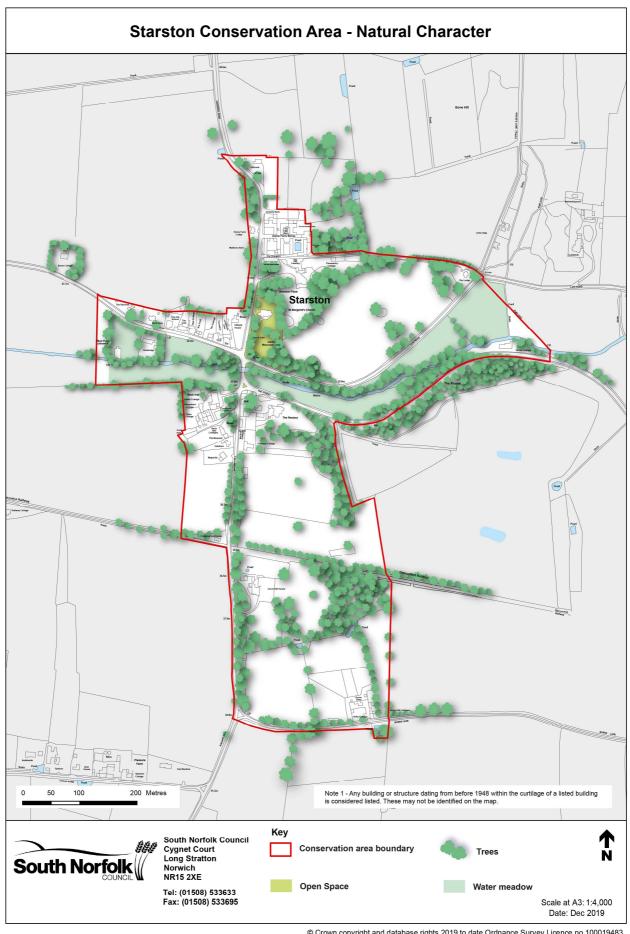


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