Belaugh Conservation Area Appraisal



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Broads Authority
Yare House
62-64 Thorpe Road
Norwich NR1 1RY

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Introduction

What are Conservation Areas?

Definition:

- A conservation area is defined as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest the character of which is it desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69 (1), Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

As described by Historic England:

- *'Historic places convey a sense of uniqueness and awe and are strong emotional pillars for common values, connecting communities across England. Cultural heritage as a physical resource can play a critical role for community cohesion, collective action and in shaping human health and societal wellbeing. Heritage can also improve personal wellbeing, by helping us understand our past, our individual and communal identity and help us connect with the places where we live'* Historic England1 (2020). There are therefore clear community benefits for the protection and preservation of high-quality historic environments such as conservation areas.

Designation of a conservation area recognises the unique quality of an area. It is the contribution of individual buildings and monuments as well as other features including (but not limited to) topography, materials, spatial relationships, thoroughfares, street furniture, open spaces and landscaping. Many elements contribute to the character and appearance of an area, resulting in a distinctive local identity.

The extent to which a building or group of buildings/ structures, positively shape the character of a conservation area comes from their street-facing elevations, the integrity of their historic fabric, overall scale and massing, detailing and materials. Rear and side elevations can also be important, particularly in the Broads where building elevations often face and address the river or Broads, side views from alleys and yards or views down onto buildings in valleys or low-lying topographies. If the special qualities of a conservation area are retained and inappropriate alterations prevented, the benefits will be enjoyed by owners, occupiers and visitors to the place, including the ability to experience interesting and important heritage structures and places. It is therefore in the public interest to preserve the area for cultural appreciation.

It should also be acknowledged that change is inevitable, and often beneficial, and the purpose of a Conservation Area status is a means of managing change in a way that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of historic areas.

Legislative and policy background

The concept of conservation areas was first introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967, in which local planning authorities were encouraged to determine which parts of their area could be defined as "Areas of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

The importance of the 1967 Act was for the first time recognition was given to the architectural or historic interest, not only of individual buildings but also to groups of buildings: the relationship of one building to another and the quality and the character of the spaces between them.

The duty of local planning authorities to designate conservation areas was embodied in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, Section 277. Since then further legislation has sought to strengthen and protect these areas by reinforcing already established measures of planning control which is now consolidated in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out the overarching requirement for local planning authorities to identify and protect areas of special interest.

Land and buildings in the Belaugh Conservation Area lie within both the Broads Authority executive area and Broadland District Council area. The Broads Local Plan (2019) sets out the Authority's policies for guiding development within the Broads Executive Area and The Development Management DPD (2015) sets out the council's policy for guiding development within Broadland District Council's area (see more information at Appendix 3 planning policy and guidance).

Aims and objectives

The conservation area at Belaugh was originally designated in 1973 and was last re-apprised in 2011. This re-appraisal (2021) aims to examine the historic settlement and special character of Belaugh, review the boundaries of the conservation area and suggests areas where enhancements could be made.

The appraisal provides a sound basis for development management and encourages development opportunities which endeavour to improve and protect the conservation area as well as stimulating local interest and awareness of both problems and opportunities.

What does designation mean for me?

To protect and enhance the conservation area, any changes that take place should positively conserve the character and special interest that make it significant. Statutory control measures are intended to prevent development that may have a negative or cumulative effect on this significance. The additional controls in conservation areas include:

- The Extent of Permitted Development Rights - Permitted Development Rights (i.e. changes that are allowed without requiring planning permission from the local authority) may be restricted; for example, replacement windows, alterations to cladding, the installation of satellite dishes, removing chimneys, adding conservatories or other extensions, laying paving or building walls. Changing the use of a building (e.g. from residential to commercial) will require planning permission. The types of alterations/development that need permission can be altered by the local authority by the making of Article 4 Directions. It is therefore advisable to check with the local planning authority before making arrangements to start any work.

- Demolition - Demolition or substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will usually require planning permission from the local authority.

- Trees - If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work to a tree within a conservation area you must notify the local authority 6 weeks in advance. This is to give the local authority time to assess the contribution that the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and decide whether to make a Tree Preservation Order.



View up The Street from Commissioner's Staithe

Summary of special interest

Belaugh village is grouped on and around a geological feature unique to the northern Broads. A large meander in the River Bure, a scarp slope on the outer bank of the bend and an outcrop of chalk combine to give the village its dramatic setting. The church tower rises magnificently above the trees on the hill and the wooded slopes fall steeply down to the river. The village shelters beneath the west facing scarp slope overlooking marshland and alder carr on the opposite bank. Whilst the buildings are not necessarily all of individual merit, collectively with their walls, hedges and trees, they give a sense of enclosure that enhances the drama of this splendid settlement.

Location and context

Belaugh is a compact village 10 miles north east of Norwich, located on the outer bank of a large meander in the upper river valley area of the River Bure, mid-way between the busy yachting centre of Wroxham and the large village of Coltishall. It is also roughly mid-way between the source of the river at Melton Constable Park (26 miles away), and the sea at Great Yarmouth, some 32 miles away. The village is on a no-through road, and around 130 people live within the parish.



The River Bure from the village

General character and plan form

Belaugh is a very distinctive riverside village. Its physical character is dictated by the layout of the land and its position on the river. The approach to Belaugh is through gently rolling countryside, and the village itself nestles around a scarp slope facing the river. The built form is grouped around two narrow lanes running roughly parallel to the river, where the buildings are concentrated around access to the river via the staithes and a footpath. This linear form of development is contained between the river and Top Road running along the upper part of the scarp slope, and there are few buildings outside the village envelope, apart from outlying farms.

Landscape setting

Arable farmland surrounds the village, with medium sized fields defined by neatly cut hedges, which are a very distinctive feature. The land drops steeply to the river and the majority of the village development is on this slope, with the church positioned on an outcrop at the highest point in the village. To the east, farmland leads to a large wooded area surrounding the river at the opposite neck of the meander towards Wroxham. To the west, the marshy flood plain on the opposite side of the river gives way to fields on higher ground and to a wooded ridge towards the village of Horstead. Long views of the village are restricted, especially from the river. However, because of its tight plan form and size, the relationship between the village and the surrounding landscape is a close one.

Geological background

The chalk which underlies the whole of Norfolk is at an accessible depth in this area. Cretaceous Chalk is the oldest rock type to be found in East Anglia, with an approximate age of 100 million years, and because it was subjected to smoothing glacial action, it provides a much more subdued topography than in other areas of Britain. The chalk deposits were subsequently overlain in Pleistocene times by a series of sand, muds and gravels, and these shelly sand deposits are known as 'Crags'. They bore the first brunt of the Ice Age as large glaciers moved into East Anglia from the north; the action of the ice moving over the loose deposits contorted the underlying material into complex thrust-type folds, known as 'contorted drift'.

In the area around Belaugh, the chalk drifts in a west-east direction and chalk outcrops are evident at about 20 ft above sea level, on the west side of the meander, where the river has cut into the land below the church. Woodland growth marks the only other chalk outcrop in the area, on the steep slope between the church and Juby's Farm to the south. The distinctive main ridge of Belaugh, rising to approximately 50 ft above sea level, was formed by the beds of sand and gravels of the Norwich Crags.

On the river valley floor, the chalk and Norwich Crags are overlain by alluvium. The flood plain, at about 15 ft above sea level, is wide above the village, narrows through the village and then widens out again towards Wroxham. Swampy marsh surrounds the river, resulting in a series of small waterways, although upstream of the village, there are luxurious water meadows, through which the footpath to Coltishall can be found.

Outside the conservation area, Belaugh Broad is downstream, on the opposite side of the meander, and in common with other 'Broads' in the county, was formed through peat digging between the 10th and late 13th centuries. The decline in peat burning, the rise in coal imports and the change in climate which affected NW Europe after 1250, brought higher sea levels and the end of the pits. Belaugh Broad is now silted up and un-navigable.

Historic development

Archaeology

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service compiles records of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, defensive structures and historic buildings in the county. These records are known as the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER). The NHER contains 35 records for the parish of Belaugh, although most of these are outside the conservation area boundary.

The earliest evidence of occupation on the peninsular is from the Neolithic period, including the site of a possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure to the north of the parish, on higher ground overlooking the river, which is visible on aerial photographs. Sites of possible Bronze

Age round barrows, now visible as ring ditches close to the site of the enclosure, suggesting that the site continued to be associated with the dead throughout the prehistoric period. Roman pottery and coins have been found in a series of enclosures, ditches and trackways, but there is little other evidence from that period, and some late Saxon work in St Peter's Church, is the only evidence for Saxon settlement in the parish.

No medieval buildings survive in Belaugh, apart from the church, which has an unusual Norman font from the 12th century, and a medieval painted rood screen. Metal-detecting undertaken in the parish in 2013 recovered medieval coins and metal objects. The metal finds include a medieval rotary key, a medieval/post-medieval buckle and weight. Belaugh Broad, the flooded remains of medieval peat workings, is the only other legacy from this period, but this is not within the conservation area boundary.

There are no scheduled monuments within the parish.

Early development

Belaugh was recorded as a small settlement in the Domesday book as Belaga, but in other documents is referred to as Bellhagh, Belaw, Bilhagh or Bilough. The village may have taken its name from Norse, Danish and Anglo-Saxon sources, meaning 'a sheltered dwelling place by the water'. (For example, the Norse word "liggia" meaning a sheltered place and the Anglo-Saxon "hloew" – a hill, "by" – a dwelling and "eau", water.) The name may also have been from the Old English, meaning 'an enclosure where dead are cremated', which would accord with evidence of its earliest occupation.

The village was part of the Hundred of South Erpingham. A 'Hundred' was a division of a shire and is a term dating from the C10. It was, as the name suggests, an area of land which was capable of supporting approximately 100 families, or 10 tithings. There were 33 Norfolk Hundreds listed in the Domesday Book in 1086, and they remained the accepted units of administration and taxation until 1834.

In Francis Bloomfield's essay on the County of Norfolk (1808) it is recorded that in the time of Edward the Confessor, the parish was held by Ralph Stalra, who then gave it to the Abbot of St Bennet's at Holm, where it remained until the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry VIII's reign. Uniquely St Bennet's was never actually dissolved.

In 1600 the population of the village was recorded as 80. It rose to 150 in 1680 and it remained at about this figure until 1851, when it reached a maximum of 172 people, distributed among some 38 houses.

Records in 1881 show that the parish contained 139 inhabitants, that Edward William Trafford was Lord of the Manor and that Sir Jacob Henry Preston Bart also held estates in the area.

Nowadays, the Traffords and the Prestons are still significant landowners of the 850 acres in the parish, although the population has dropped to 134 people (2011 census), distributed among some 55 houses and farms.

The Grade I listed church is the earliest surviving building and the only structure in the village to be included in the Secretary of State's List of Buildings of Special Architectural or



The Church of St Peter

Historic Interest. Constructed of flint with limestone dressings, it dates from the 12th century and early 14th century with the west tower built in the 15th century. Internally, a painted rood screen dating from the 15th century is of fine quality for such a small parish. The screen shows the Apostles and was defaced in the 17th century by a 'godly trooper', as a zealous Puritan wrote to the Sheriff of Norwich. There is also an unusual 12th century tub-front font in blue stone. Originally thatched, the church was re-roofed and the roof re-modelled in 1861 and the pews, pulpit and lectern were replaced in 1875.

The Rectory, according to Francis Blomefield in 1808, "stands between the river and the churchyard, directly under it, the bottom of the steeple being higher than the top of the house". The building dates from the 18th century and the grounds include an ice house cut into the side of the hill on which the church stands. (Historic Environment Record, SMR number 19207). The church must have retained some significance into the 19th century as in 1845 White's Gazetteer recorded that there was both a Rector and a Curate. Records also show that the Rectory was repaired and enlarged in 1883 and again in 1910 (Kelly's

Directory 1933). It was sold as a private house in 1977, when the parish joined with Wroxham and Hoveton. In association with the church, a small school was built in the late 19th century (now the Church Rooms). This was extended in 1913 to provide accommodation for infants, and closed in 1936, when the children were transferred to the school at Coltishall.

Maps show that the road pattern has not changed substantially over the last 200 hundred years. Access from the Coltishall Road was still via Back Lane and Top Road. Early development in the village was along the line of Church Lane and The Street and this appears to be the 'main' street, with only sporadic development along Top Road. Top Road was formerly known as Butt Lane; it is thought that this was because a field opposite the entrance to Church Lane was used by villagers for Sunday archery practice.

The river has always played a large part in village life. Belaugh is unusual in having two Staithes (Commissioner's Staithe and Church Staithe), the oldest of which is Commissioner's Staithe on The Street. The land was registered in the Act of Enclosure of 1828, and Commissioner's Staithe has been in continuous use ever since.



Commissioner's Staithe

Commissioner's Staithe would have been the commercial centre of village activity, where both goods and people arrived by water. Bulk items such as hay and coal, delivered by wherry, were stacked on the Staithe for collection or distribution around the village and

wider rural area. Following the decline in the transportation of goods by river, the Staithe became popular for the holiday boating trade.

Commissioner's Staithe was the social centre of the village; its position adjacent to the well made it an informal meeting place for adults collecting water several times a day as well as a playground for the children. Fishing was always a popular pastime and this is an activity which continues today, along with picnicking or just sitting observing the river.

Church Staithe, located below the church tower is the newest Staithe. It was created in 1977 on the sale of the Rectory to ensure that the church had its own direct access from the river via Pilgrim's Path, an unusual feature in the Broads.

Farming has always played an important part in the life of Belaugh and until the mid-1980s there were four working farms within the parish, these being Grange Farm, Church Farm, Juby's Farm and Old Hall Farm. Traditionally a large proportion of the working population of the village would have been employed on these farms; on a regular basis as tenant farmers or farm labourers, or on a casual basis, at busy times, such as harvest. Grange Farm is the only one within the conservation area. Grain crops predominated, especially barley, taking advantage of the productive loamy soil, and this may explain the extensive range of farm buildings at Grange Farm including an unusually large brick barn, possibly reflecting the size of the farm, (some 300 acres) and used to store and thresh the corn. The proximity to the river to transport the grain to market may also be a significant factor. Animals were a secondary crop, and largely kept to manure the land and serve the domestic purposes of the family.

The farmhouse at Grange Farm is built of flint and brick, both materials available locally, but not necessarily within the parish. The flint is knapped and squared and laid in courses, a particularly expensive way of building indicating that it must have been a building of some standing. It appears to have undergone modification in the 18th and19th centuries, when a slate roof was also added.

Later Developments

As can be seen from the population figures and from early maps, there was little expansion of the village until the 19th century, and even then, it was on a modest scale. Apart from the school and a small number of cottages, buildings of note are Belaugh House, built in the late 19th century on Top Road and Piper's Haigh (previously Sunny Haigh), constructed shortly afterwards and the only house to the east of Top Road.

Apart from agriculture, the main activities in the village were connected to its position on the river, which was important for both communication and trade. Employment was found in the marshes, maintaining drainage channels, cutting marsh hay and litter to be sent by train from Wroxham to London, as well as eel catching, fishing and wildfowling. Activities on the water were also important, with the Staithe providing access to the river for the movement of goods to and from other villages and the coast, as has been mentioned

earlier. Nearby Coltishall, with its thriving malting and brewing trade in the 18th and 19th centuries must have provided employment as well as entertainment, and the chalk workings in the area contributed to the activity on the river. In the early 20th century, there were boatsheds on the eastern boundary of the parish, on the opposite side of the peninsular from the village. By 1916 the boat building trade was established in roughly its current position on The Street adjacent to Commissioner's Staithe. A family concern, two boathouses were building and hiring out wherries, racing yachts and boats, as well as storing and repairing private yachts. The boatyard is still in use today for the repair and hiring of boats.

Early 20th century development centred on vacant land between Top Road and Church Lane and included three pairs of thatched and rendered 'estate-style cottages' and a pair of brick-built cottages (that were dated 1939) at 10-12 The Street (nos. 10-12 The Street have recently been demolished and permission has been granted for a new dwelling).



One of the pairs of 'estate-style' cottages

In the second half of the 20th century, some half dozen houses and bungalows have been added, but these, in the main, replaced earlier buildings, for example Kareela, on the site of the shop, and Duck Cottage. An early photograph shows a late 18th or early 19th century cottage which contained the only village shop, on The Street with an area of open land to the river behind. A footpath beside it linked the river to The Street and this right of way exists today. The building was demolished and replaced by the current two storey house in 1963 and the shop closed ten years later.

The most recent buildings at Hill Piece Loke were built on former allotments.



The former school, now Church Rooms

It would seem that the village had few facilities apart from the Church, the school and the shop, but there were close associations with Coltishall, and the foot path through the water meadows connecting the two villages was regularly used well into the 20th century for access to work in the malting and brewing industry that thrived there in the 18th and 19 centuries, other shops and trades.

Although the village must have been relatively isolated on a cul-de-sac on the peninsular, the proximity of two larger villages brought mains gas in 1925, although mains electricity did not reach the village until 1956 and it was not connected to the main water supply until the mid1960's. Prior to that the villagers drew their water from 17 wells, mostly serving individual houses, but 12 cottages shared a larger, roofed well head which stood on the Street opposite Commissioner's Staithe until it was irreparably damaged by an accident in 1971 and the site redeveloped for Staithe House. The village was connected to mains drainage in the 1960s when the sewage treatment works was built on the edge of the village.

Late 20th century changes include the sale of The Rectory as a private house and the formation of the Pilgrims Path to the Church Staithe in 1977, when the parish joined with Wroxham and Hoveton, and the cessation of active farming at Grange Farm in the mid 1980s, when the farm house and associated buildings were converted for residential use.

Spatial analysis

Much of the character of the village is derived from the topography and the relationship of the built form to the river and the wider landscape. The sheltered position of the early development on the scarp slope means that long views of the village do not prevail. Access to the opposite bank is not easy, but the view from the river is particularly significant, with St Peter's Church sitting high above the River Bure and the village nestling in the slope below, contained by the river bank.

The scale, form and layout of the village are largely due to its relationship with the river and in particular, the points of access to the River from the Street. The lanes, lokes and paths from the higher ground at The Street developed to provide convenient access for the inhabitants, and this in turn has led to the distinctive form of the village.

Top Road provides the other boundary to development in the village, defining the transition between the open landscape and the built form of the village. There is little awareness of the river from this upper part of the village, but the church tower is a prominent landmark and almost constantly in view. There are long views from Top Road to woods across fields to the west towards Wroxham, and to the east, where the wooded ridge towards Horstead



View up the Loke from The Street

can be seen from Hill Piece and from the access to Church Lane. The significant open spaces here are mainly within private gardens, such as Sunny Haigh and Belaugh House, but undeveloped areas between the houses are just as important to the rural feel. Hill Piece serves as a turning and parking area to the 20th century houses and bungalows, and is a

hard-landscaped public open space which is unlike the soft landscaped areas found elsewhere in the village. This, including the area of grass containing the parish notice board is underexploited. The area would benefit from a sensitively designed formal parking area, landscaping and a bench for quiet contemplation at the hill top.

Leading off Top Road, Church Lane presents an enticing prospect as it drops down towards the river valley and makes a sharp turn to the right to run along the rear of the cottages on the upper road. Church Lane is a very intimate space; more of a loke than a road, enclosed by walls and hedges, the scene unfolding as it gently curves, rises to the Church and drops down again to join The Street at another right-angled bend. The churchyard is a major open space here, emphasised by its position at the summit of the hill and containing many mature trees. At the base of the tower a splendid view opens up over the village and along the river, while below, in contrast, the Pilgrims Path leads down steep steps through mature trees to open up views across and along the river at the Church Staithe.



View up Church Lane from The Street

At the junction of Church Lane and The Street, the Rectory gardens allow the first glimpse of the river from the road. A similar view of the river is afforded besides the former shop, although masked by a pair of metal gates. The Street is a narrow space, emphasised by the informal nature of the road itself, with no footpaths or hard edges. It is more densely developed with the boatyard occupying a prominent position and with the buildings, hedges and fences, enclosing the street itself. Distinctive features of The Street are the private gardens going down to the river, where neatly cut grass reaches the water's edge, (for example the Rectory, those attached to River Cottage and Staithe Cottage and further on,

Duck Cottage). Commissioner's Staithe is a small, but prominent public open space in this part of the village; again, grass to the river edge, with the wild marsh and alder carr woodland on the opposite bank of the river providing a dramatic contrast to the neat character of the village. It is also here that the edge of the village, defined by the river can be observed, with views upstream of gardens and private moorings. The view downstream is more restricted by the boatyard buildings. Looking back up The Street the view of the church tower is a prominent feature, although marred by the confusion of overhead wires and associated poles.



View up The Street, Belaugh with church tower and overhead wires

At the end of The Street, the public footpath across the private grounds to Grange Farm allows long views towards the river. Beyond Grange Farm the countryside becomes apparent once more, with the footpath to Coltishall winding through lush water meadows. The topography is particularly prominent here, where to the east there is a dramatic change in level to the upper part of the scarp slope, at the top of which a narrow winding lane leads to the Wroxham/Coltishall Road which forms part of the conservation area boundary.

Character analysis

Use and activity

Before the middle of the 20th century, a large proportion of the population found employment within the parish or close by, predominately in occupations relating to agriculture or the river. The majority of buildings in the village were, and still are, in residential use. Small to medium sized cottages prevail, most of them set in gardens large enough to grow vegetables for the family, which is demonstrated by the pattern of development in, for example, Top Road. Traditionally, these smaller dwellings were tied cottages in the ownership of the employing farmers; the larger buildings in the village were associated with the farms, which, apart from Grange Farm, were located outside the village envelope. Nowadays, changes in agricultural practices and improved transport have meant that less of the residents work in the parish, and the riverside setting has made this a popular location for retirement and for holiday accommodation, although unlike some other settlements in the Broads area, the proportion of buildings in seasonal use appears to be relatively low.

Overview of streets, buildings and architecture

Top Road



Top Road is characterised by:

- Road with grass verges but no kerbs or footpaths.

- Fields to the east contained by well-kept hedges.
- A mix of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows.
- Single storey and two storey development.
- The buildings generally set back from the road.
- Front gardens behind hedges.
- Many mature trees.

The entrance to the village on Top Road is marked by houses either side, with gardens enclosed by hedges and containing mature trees. Piper's Haigh penetrates the farmland to the east, and to the west, two pairs of 20th century houses mark the beginning of the village envelope. This sense of enclosure and maturity is interrupted by an access and parking / garaging for the 20th century houses and bungalows at Hill Piece which is of an uncharacteristic scale and design. A small area of grass containing the parish notice board appears to be unused and is also a suitable case for improvement, where some additional landscaping would be of benefit. Almost hidden from view, a narrow loke runs steeply down from Hill Piece to emerge between two cottage gables onto The Street in the lower part of the village. Until the early 20th century, this footpath was an important link between The Street and Hill Piece, providing access for the delivery of coal and other goods from Commissioner's Staithe and for water from the public well on The Street. Nowadays, the loke still forms a charming and useful pedestrian link between the two parts of the village and its informal character should be retained.

Beyond Hill Piece, Belaugh House is a substantial 19th century house, set back from the road in a generous plot containing a large number of mature trees, including beech, chestnut and Corsican pines.

Previous to 2020, at the junction of Top Road with The Street, a traditional red 'K6' public telephone box was a prominent landmark. Unfortunately BT removed it as a part of a project consolidating their assets. Given the positive contribution that the K6 public telephone box made to the conservation area, it would benefit from the re-installation of a telephone box, which could be re-used as some form of village facility. This could possibly be undertaken as a joint project in association with the Parish Community Forum.

The pattern of development on the remainder of Top Road is of dwellings, detached or semi-detached on rectangular plots running towards the river valley. The road is flanked by gardens enclosed by hedges, apart from where accesses have been formed for car parking in the gardens. The sense of enclosure to this edge of the village could be improved with additional planting to these driveways or parking areas. Development here is mainly 20th century, including 3 pairs of 'estate style' cottages, thatched with rendered walls. These seem to turn their backs to Top Road, with their main elevation to Church Lane, facing the

river valley. Flint Cottage, formerly a terrace of cottages and now extended to form one house, is set in a large plot running down to the river and marks the end of the village development on Top Road.

Beyond Flint Cottage and the conservation area boundary, the views open over the landscape with sporadic development until the tracks to Old Hall Farm and Juby's Farm are reached.

Church Lane



Church Lane is characterised by:

- A narrow winding loke following the topography.
- No formal road surface.
- Grass verges with no kerbs or footpaths.
- Enclosed by red brick and flint walls and hedges.
- A mix of plot sizes.
- A mix of building styles and ages.

Leading off Top Road, almost at the end of the built up area, Church Lane drops down quite steeply towards the river, to make a sharp turn to the right behind the 'estate style'

cottages to run parallel with the river. The lane then gently curves as the ground rises up to the highest point in the village at the Church. Lower down, it joins The Street on a sharp bend. Church Lane is a very intimate longitudinal space, tightly enclosed by walls and hedges. It is essentially an informal loke, unsurfaced with grass at the verges and in the centre. This informality in materials and construction is essential to its character, and every effort should be made to preserve it.

To the west a good example of 1950s architecture (High Meadow), designed by architect Lionel Smith, recently re-ordered, and a bungalow overlook the river, the latter having been built in the grounds of the former school. The former school (now Church Meeting Rooms) is set down below the level of the churchyard in a grassy plot almost hidden by mixed evergreen and deciduous hedges. Part of the plot adjacent to the churchyard, has been set aside as a small informal parking area between school and church. It is currently unsurfaced and any intensification of use of this area may necessitate some sort of low maintenance surfacing. The choice of materials and layout will need to be carefully handled to preserve the character of the area.

The Church of St Peter occupies a commanding position above a steep bank dropping down to the river. It is the only statutory listed building in the village, grade I. A wooded hoggin path and steps (The Pilgrims Path) leads from the base of the tower down to the river edge at the Church Staithe. This allows mooring for boats to enable visitors to access the church directly, and is one of only a few churches in the Broads to have this facility. The trees in this area and on the churchyard should be maintained carefully, to preserve the character of the area. Built of stone, flint and brick, the churchyard wall is a particularly important feature on Church Lane.

Opposite the church, Hillcrest is a two-storey red brick house. There is evidence of an earlier building on the west gable, where it can be seen that the building was extended, heightened and refaced late in the late 19th century or early 20th century. It has recently been extended. It is possible that the use of the original building was connected to Church.

The Street

The Street is characterised by:

- Road with grass verges but no kerbs or footpaths.
- Road enclosed by buildings, walls, hedges or fences.
- A tight knit form of development.
- A mix of architectural styles - small scale cottages and larger scale 20th century houses, mainly two storey.
- Distinctive riverside boatyard development.
- Open green spaces adjacent to the river.

- The centre of the village is in marked contrast to the open countryside surrounding the developed area.



At the junction between Church Lane and The Street, The Old Rectory is built hard up against the road with a large garden adjoining the river behind. Glimpses of the river through the garden are partly masked by a 20th century carport. A red post box in the wall of the Rectory is a prominent feature.

As can be seen from the historical background to this appraisal, boats and boat building has been a traditional occupation in Belaugh for at least a century. This industry has produced a particular type of development in the village centre; a series of characteristic long thin sheds built at right angles to the river, traditionally clad and roofed with corrugated iron painted mostly in shades of dark green. More recently erected temporary shelters for boat repair may need to be formalised to reflect this character in some way. The boatyard buildings restrict views of the river.

Beyond the boatyard, there are two gardens adjacent to the river, but separated from the houses by the road. This traditional configuration protects the buildings from flooding whilst exploiting the river frontage. River Cottage retains its traditional boatshed at the water's edge.

The grass verges and informal design of the road on The Street should be retained.

Whereas the church tower is visible from many places in the village, the visitor is hardly aware of the proximity of the river until Commissioner's Staithe is reached. Apart from Church Staithe, this is currently the only public open space adjacent to the river, although a third access - Footpath No 4, leads from the Street to the water.

A small area of carparking is separated from Commissioner's Staithe by timber posts. It is a popular area for residents and visitors by road and by river, for picnics, fishing or quiet contemplation. The landscaping is natural and this informal feel should be retained. Recent improvements have been made to the village sign and interpretation board. The slipway into the water has been restored and gives access for canoes and small craft. The marsh and alder carr on the opposite bank would benefit from careful management, but the wild character should be retained and any permanent mooring discouraged.

The sewage pumping station adjacent to Commissioner's Staithe is partially hidden by planting, although a small gap in the screening still exists. A more permanent screen of say, Norfolk reed panels, to supplement the planting, would be beneficial.

There are several mid 20th century buildings in the village centre. Whilst not traditional in style, they generally use materials from the same palette and fit into the character of the area, by virtue of their boundary treatments which continue the enclosure of the street e.g. Duck Cottage by planting; Staithe House by brick walls. However, opposite Commissioner's Staithe, the sense of enclosure has been lost with the open vehicle access to The Knoll on higher ground. Improvements could be made to enclose the boundary here and link it visually to the rest of The Street.

At the end of The Street, Grange Farm is an interesting group of buildings of high architectural character, both individually and as a group. The farm house (which is of significant architectural and historic merit,) is built of flint with brick dressings in an elegant country style. On the opposite side of the loke, the barn is particularly imposing, not only because of its size in plan form but also because of the sweeping pantile roof and its relationship to the dramatic change in ground level behind it. This and the associated farm buildings have been converted to residential use, but it is still possible to understand how this group of buildings worked as a farm.

Architectural styles and materials

There is no prevalent architectural style as would be found, for example, in planned suburban areas. The village has grown up slowly and this is reflected in the variety of building designs, closely related to use (for example, the farm buildings at Grange Farm, the boatsheds and the domestic dwellings). A unifying factor is the scale of development, generally small scale, of no more than two storeys. Buildings constructed in the late 20th century, however are of a slightly larger scale than the earlier buildings. Generally, the roofs of the smaller buildings are gabled, with the ridges parallel to the street. Larger houses, such as The Old Rectory, have hipped roofs. The boatsheds are distinctive in their form, at right angles to the street and the river.



The boat yard on The Street

A variety of materials has also been used; the earlier buildings employing those found locally (although not necessarily within the parish) such as flint, brick and pantile. 19th century and early 20th century buildings introduced render, slates and thatch. Those most recently constructed are of brick and pantile, although the character of the brick used does not always harmonisewith the earlier material. The issue with brick choice was mainly as a result of limited post war and late 20th century choice of brick, caused by the closure of local brickworks and consolidation in national brickworks. However, there is now more choice in brick types which allows for matching vernacular brick.

Trees and significant open spaces

Trees and hedges contribute greatly to the beauty and attractiveness of the village. The approaches to the village are lined with mixed hedges and there are many groups of mature trees within the village envelope, in particular around the church and the Church Meeting Room, and in the grounds of the Old Rectory and Belaugh House. There are no Tree Preservation Orders in the village, as consent is required from the Broads Authority for any work to trees within the conservation area. Many of these trees are reaching or have reached their maturity and thoughtful management of them is required to maintain their important contribution to the character of the area. It is an objective to both maintain existing trees and promote new planting where appropriate to secure the ongoing tree cover and associated character of the conservation area.

Commissioner's Staithe is a significant open space within the village street scene, particularly as it opens up views along the river. The area beside Hill Piece is also an

important focal point, although it could be made more attractive with sensitive landscaping. Other noteworthy open spaces are in the main, within private gardens, but undeveloped areas throughout the village (for example between Top Road and Church Lane) are just as important to the rural character of the village.



Fields between The Street and Top Road

However, the setting of the village depends heavily on the wider landscape. There is extensive tree cover following the meander in the river, giving the village an almost circular green backdrop, and protection of this wider area is important factor in the preservation of its character.

Boundaries

Traditional walls, fences and gates exist throughout the conservation area and make an important contribution to its character. Historic walls survive around the churchyard and along Church Lane, and in The Street flint and brick retaining walls, timber picket fences and railings provide traditional means of enclosure. Hedges are the more usual boundary treatment on Top Road, although they are also found throughout the conservation area. Standard, close boarded fences are not vernacular, do not contribute to the character of the area and can close off important glimpses and views.

Issues, pressures and threats

Buildings

Generally, the buildings and gardens are very well maintained. However, the special character of conservation areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor, and well intentioned, home improvements such as the insertion of replacement windows and doors with ones of an inappropriate design or material, (for example hinged opening lights in lieu of sash windows and UPVC instead of painted timber). This is a particular issue with unlisted buildings that have been identified as contributing to the character of the conservation area. In line with current legislation, all complete window replacements are required to achieve minimum insulation values, but recognising the affect that inappropriate replacements can have, Local Authorities are empowered to relax that requirement when considering the restoration or conversion of certain buildings within conservation areas, and advice should be sought from the local Planning Department at an early stage.

Streetscape issues

An essential part of the character of the village is the scale and informality of its streets and lokes, for example The Street and Church Lane. Any proposals to diminish this character by introducing kerbs, footpaths and modern materials should be resisted. At Hill Piece the width of the road, the introduction of footpaths and the use of materials are in stark contrast to the earlier thoroughfares, and these factors should be taken into account when any new development or vehicle accesses are being considered. Access to the river and the lower part of the village is difficult in any vehicle larger than a car, due to the narrow width of the roads, the incline and the tight corners at either end of The Street. This is not normally an issue for residents, but deliveries by large vehicles to the boatyard have in the past, caused damage to verges and occasionally buildings. The boatyard is an essential part of the character of the village, and it is not suggested that this activity should cease, but consideration could be given to restricting the size of vehicles allowed access to The Street. Public parking in Belaugh is restricted with only a handful of spaces available at Commissioner's Staithe, which are often in high demand.

The important contribution made by mature trees, both within the village and in the wider area has already been highlighted, but the removal of smaller trees, hedges and other traditional boundary treatments, particularly in order to provide parking in gardens, can have an adverse impact on the character of the buildings and the overall street scene. This is particularly noticeable on Top Road, where appropriate replanting could soften the effect of these alterations to the original boundary treatments.

There is little room for new development within the conservation area and proposals for extending or altering existing properties should be carried out with due regard to the effect on the character of the area. The approaches to the village are so important to the character that development outside the village envelope should be resisted.

Recommendations

This appraisal has identified the distinctive qualities that make the Belaugh Conservation Area special which should be preserved and enhanced, and has also identified the following areas that would benefit from improvements:

- Additional planting to boundaries on Top Road around vehicle accesses.
- Reinstatement of boundary enclosure to the vehicle access to The Knoll.
- Environmental enhancement and a review of the signage, heritage interpretation and benches at Commissioners' Staithe and Church Staithe and replacement with more traditional materials where appropriate.
- Environmental enhancements to Church Staithe. This might include works to the riverbank, new seating and heritage interpretation and screening to the sewage pumping equipment adjacent to Commissioners' Staithe.
- Environmental enhancements to the parking and turning area at Hill Piece. This might include resurfacing of the road and parking area, timber bollards to prevent parking on the grass, tree or other planting, a bench.
- The removal or tidying up of the overhead wires in The Street.



Hill Piece

- Improved parking area to the church room.
- Maintain existing trees and promote new planting where appropriate to secure the ongoing tree cover and associated character of the conservation area.

Boundary change

The original conservation area was declared in 1973 and reviewed in 2011. As part of the 2011 appraisal, it was proposed that Piper's Haigh on Top Road should be included within the conservation area. Unfortunately, due to an oversight, that alteration to the boundary was never formally adopted by Broadland District Council. We still consider the building and its grounds to be worthy of inclusion within the conservation area, and as such this is once again proposed as an extension.

The following change to the conservation area boundary is therefore suggested:

- Extend boundary to include the following property and its curtilage:
    - Piper's Haigh on Top Road. Note this extension is within Broadland District Council's administrative area (see **Map 1** below).



Piper's Haigh, Top Road

Article 4 Directions

Given the importance of the views from the river and the topography of the valley side there would be concerns about the impact of the installation of solar panels which can be currently undertaken without planning consent in some instances. An Article 4 direction will be served here to ensure solar panels require planning consent. This would not be intended to stop the use of solar panels but to ensure that consent is required so they can be positioned sympathetically and protect views from the river.

There are three semi-detached properties in Belaugh which have thatched roofs and these thatched roofs are considered to contribute significantly to the character of the properties and wider conservation area. Thatched roofs can be changed under the current permitted development rights and given the properties are semi-detached could result in one side being changed from thatch which would be considered particularly detrimental to the character.

The imposition of two Article 4 Directions has therefore been approved as follows:

- Categories of permitted development which are restricted under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 upon confirmation of this Direction:

    - The installation, alteration or replacement of solar photovoltaic (solar panels) or solar thermal equipment on the front, side or waterway facing roof slopes of a dwellinghouse, being development comprised within Class A of Part 14 of Schedule 2 to the Order.

    Properties comprised in the land affected by this Direction:

    The Street, Belaugh:

    1, 3, 5 Staithe Cottage,

    6, 7, 11, 10-12,

    11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 The Old Rectory.

- Altering the existing roof covering of the front or side of a roof of a dwellinghouse where the roof covering forms part of the principal elevation or is visible from a highway, being development comprised in Class C of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Order.

    Properties comprised in the land affected by this Direction:

    Top Road, Belaugh:

    4-5, 8-9, 10-11.

See **Map 2 and 3** below.

Inclusions on the Local List

Top Road:

- 2 Piper's Haigh (Broadland District Council).
- 7 and 8 Hill Piece.
- Belaugh House.
- 7, Holly Wood.
- 4 and 5, 8 and 9, 10 and 11.
- 12 Flint Cottage.

Church Lane:

- The Old School (Church Meeting Rooms) and outbuilding.
- Hillcrest, outbuilding and walls to Church Lane, Church Lane.
- High Meadow, 3 Church Lane.

The Street:

- The Cottage.
- Church Cottage and flint boundary wall.
- The Old Rectory.
- Bure House.
- River Cottage and boundary wall.
- Staithe Cottage.
- Boatsheds.
- Grange Farmhouse.
- 2, 6 and 8 Bure Bank, (Cartshed and farm buildings EXCLUDING no. 4 Sevenstead).

See **Map 4** below.

Public consultation

This appraisal was subject to public consultation during May – September 2021. It should be read in conjunction with the adopted Policy and Guidance (see Appendix 3).

Appendix 1: Listed building within the conservation area

The following building is included in the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest complied by the Secretary of State:

- Church of St Peter, Belaugh, Grade I.

Appendix 2: List of buildings considered to positively contribute to the character of the Conservation Area

Whilst the following buildings, boundary walls and railings within the present conservation area and the proposed extensions to it do not merit full statutory protection, they are considered to be of local architectural or historic interest, and every effort should be made to maintain their contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Top Road

- 2 Piper's Haigh.
- 7 and 8 Hill Piece.
- Belaugh House.
- 7, Holly Wood.
- 4 and 5, 8 and 9, 10 and 11.
- 12 Flint Cottage.

Church Lane

- The Old School (Church Meeting Rooms) and outbuilding.
- Hillcrest, outbuilding and walls to Church Lane.
- High Meadow, 3 Church Lane.

The Street

- The Cottage.
- Church Cottage and flint boundary wall.
- The Old Rectory.
- Bure House.
- River Cottage and boundary wall.

- Staithe Cottage.
- Boatsheds.
- Grange Farmhouse.
- 2, 6 and 8 Bure Bank, (Cartshed and farm buildings EXCLUDING no. 4 Sevenstead).

Appendix 3: Planning documents, policies and associated guidance

Please note: Local planning policies, supporting documents and guidance are updated periodically, whilst this policy and document list was relevant at the time of the writing of the report please check with the relevant Authority for update.

Broads Authority

Local Plan for the Broads (Adopted 2019):

- Policy SP5: Historic Environment
- Policy DM11: Heritage Assets
- Policy DM12: Re-use of Historic Buildings
- Policy DM43: Design
- Policy DM48: Conversion of Buildings
- Policy SSMills: Drainage Mills

Broads Authority Supporting Documents:

- The Landscape Character Assessment
- (Updated 2016)
- The Landscape Sensitivity Study for renewables and infrastructure (adopted 2012)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessments
- Broads Authority Flood Risk SPD
- Biodiversity Enhancements Guide
- Landscape Strategy Guide
- Mooring Design Guide

- Riverbank Stabilisation Guide
- Waterside Bungalows and Chalets Guide
- Sustainability Guide
- Planning Agents information booklet
- Keeping the Broads Special
- Building at the Waterside

Broadland District Council

Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (Adopted January 2014):

- Policy 1: Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets

Development Management DPD (Adopted 2015):

- Policy GC4: Design
- Policy EN2: Landscape

Broadland District Council Supporting Documents:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Design Guide (1997)
- Place Shaping (a guide to undertaking development in Broadland)

Appendix 4: Sources of information

Belaugh! A Millennium review

Blomefield – Volume VI – 1808

Draft Local Character Area Appraisal 22, Bure Valley – Upstream Wroxham to Horstead

English Heritage: Guidance on conservation area appraisals, 2006

English Heritage: Guidance on the management of conservation areas, 2006

English Heritage and CABE: Building in Context: New development in historic areas

East Anglia, A Geographia Guide

Historic England1 (2020) – Heritage and Society

Historic England (2019) Advice Note 1 Conservation area appraisal, designation and management

Historic Environment Record, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology

Kelly's Directory of Norfolk – 1933

Norwich and its Region, British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1961

St Peter's Church leaflet

The Buildings of England, Norfolk 1: Norwich and North-East, Nicholas Pevsner and Bill Wilson

William White – History etc – 1845

Whites Gazetteer of Norfolk 1883

Appendix 5: Contact details and further information

Broads Authority

Address: The Broads Authority, Yare House, 62 – 64 Thorpe Road, Norwich NR1 1RY

Telephone: 01603 610734

Website: www.broads-authority.gov.uk

Broadland District Council

Address: Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0DU

Telephone: 01603 431133

Website: www.broadland.gov.uk

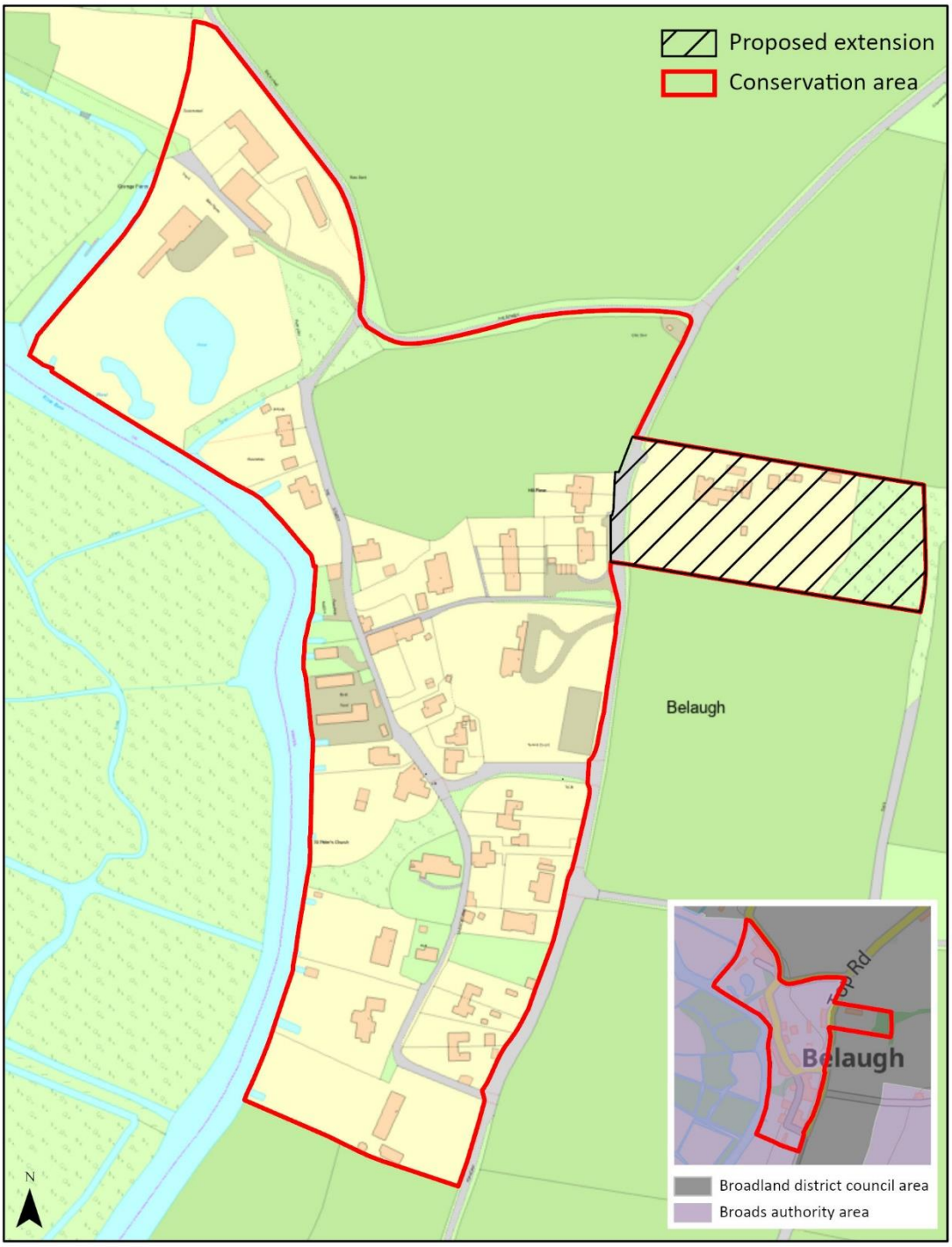
Norfolk Historic Environment Service

Address: Union House, Gressenhall, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4DR

Tel: 01362 869280

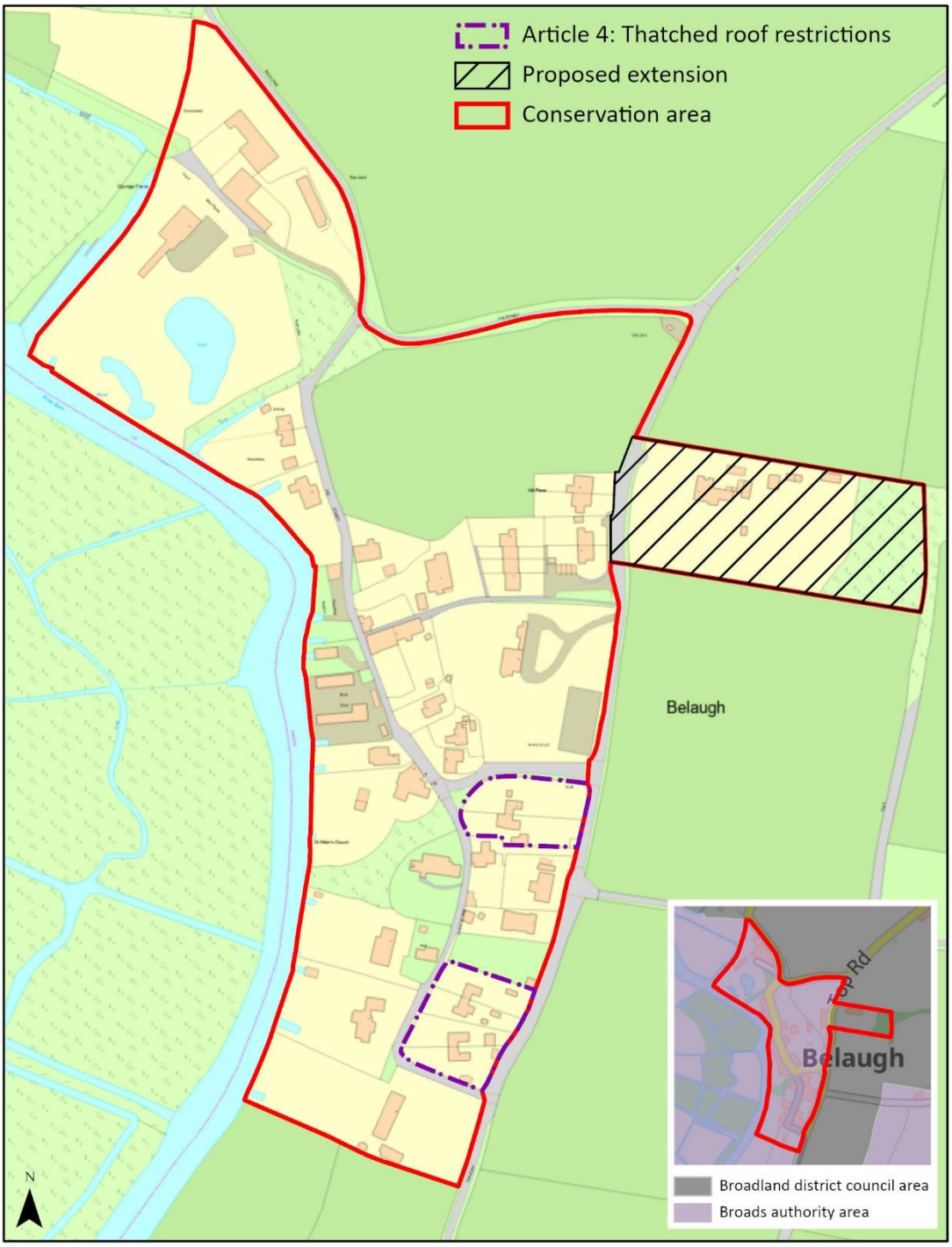
Website: www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

Map 1: Conservation area boundary and extension



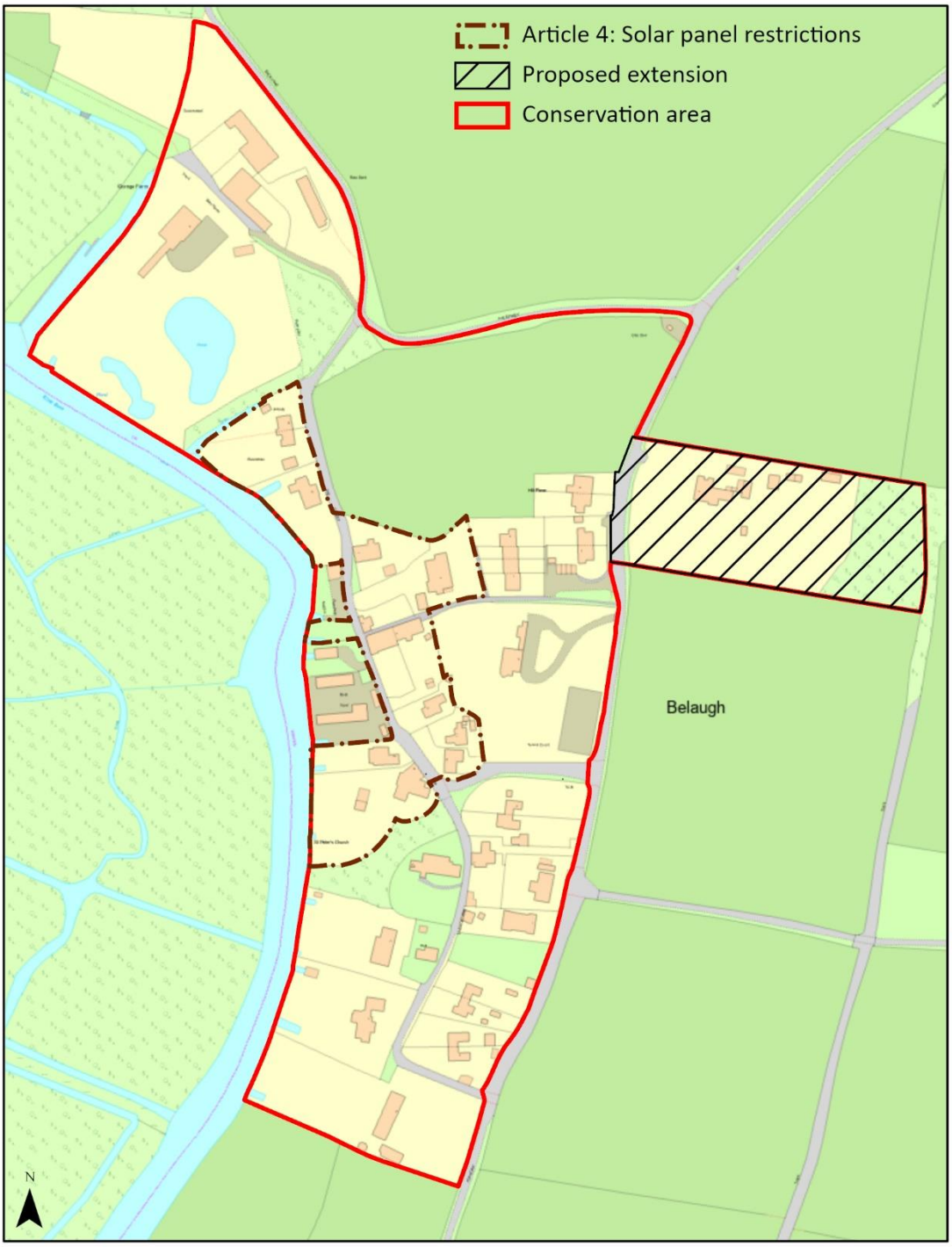
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Map 2: Article 4 Direction - thatch



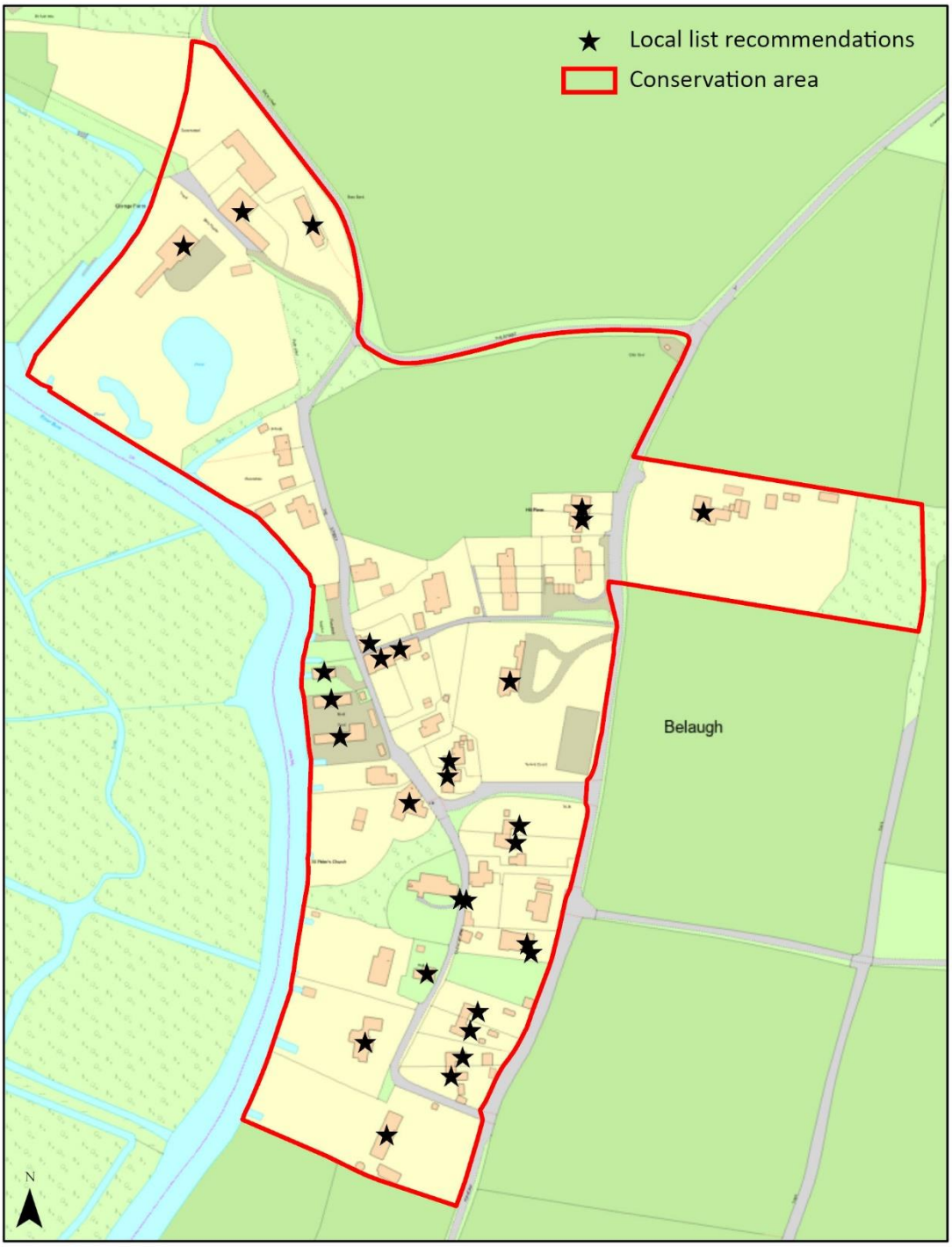
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Map 3: Article 4 Direction – solar panels



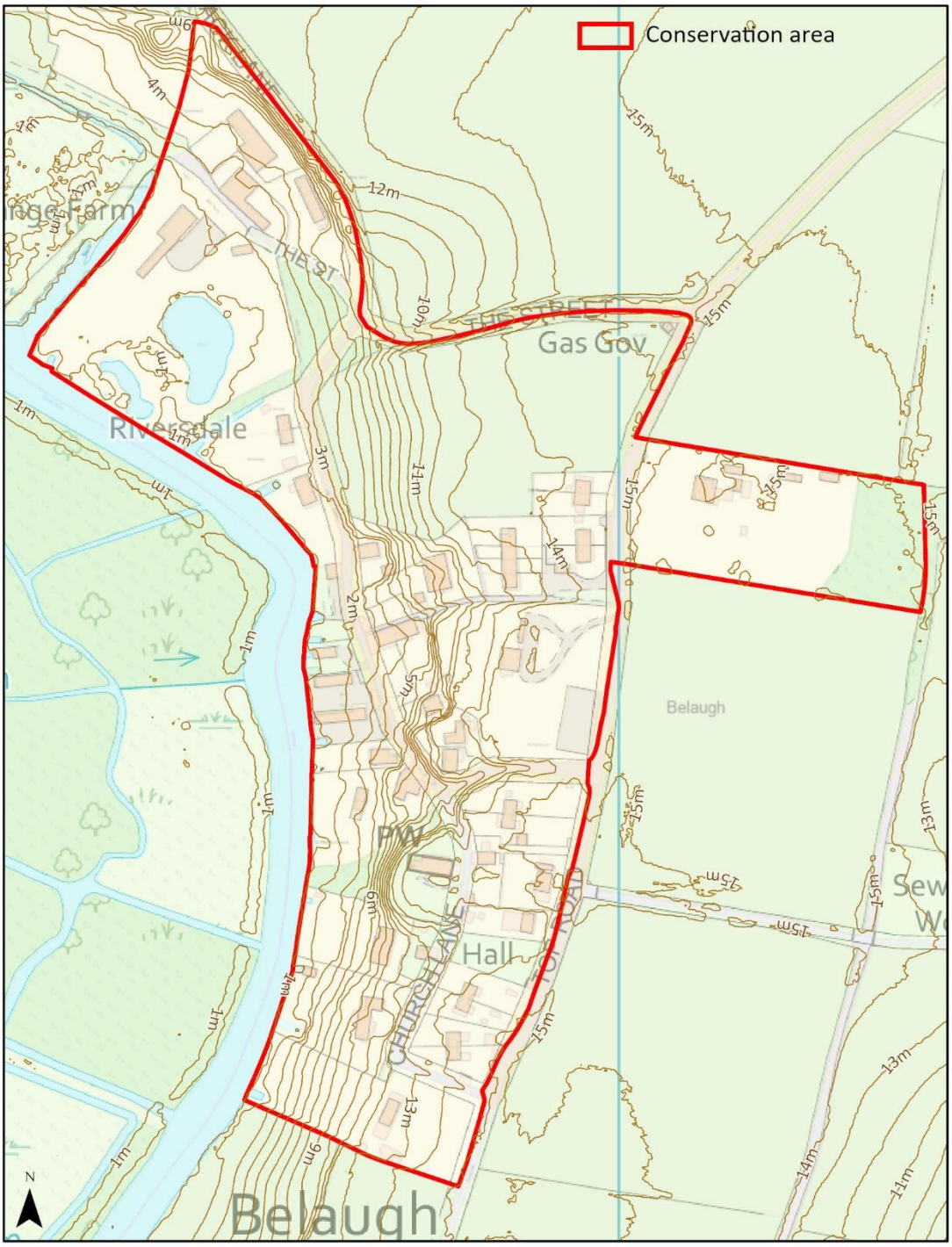
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Map 4: Local Listings



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Map 5: Topography



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