



Ellingham Mill
Conservation Area
Adopted
March 2013

Ellingham Mill conservation area

1. Introduction

Why have Conservation Areas?

A review of policies relating to the historic environment carried out by English heritage on behalf of the Secretary of States for Culture Media and Sport and the Environment Transport and the Regions was published in December 2000 under the heading 'Power of Place'.

The Report which reflected views now held generally by the population at large, confirmed 5 main messages

- i Most people place a high value on the historic environment and think it right there should be public funding to preserve it.
- ii Because people care about their environment they want to be involved in decisions affecting it.
- iii The historic environment is seen by most people as a totality. They care about the whole of their environment.
- iv Everyone has a part to play caring for the historic environment. More will be achieved if we work together.
- v Everything rests in sound knowledge and understanding and takes account of the values people place on their surroundings.

In summary we must balance the need to care for the historic environment with the need for change. We need to understand the character of places and the significance people ascribe to them.

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.

Unlike listed buildings, which are selected on national standards, the designation of Conservation Areas in the main is carried out at District level based upon criteria of local distinctiveness and the historic interest of an area as a whole. However, in the past, the criteria adopted by different local authorities in determining what constitutes a special area have tended to vary widely. For example, although public opinion seems to be

overwhelmingly in favour of conserving and enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene, what is familiar to many, may only be cherished by some.

Over the last 30 years this approach has changed significantly. Much greater emphasis is now placed on involving the local community in evaluating 'what makes an area special', whether it should be designated and where boundaries should be drawn.

It is now recognised that the historical combination of local architectural style and the use of indigenous materials within the wider local landscape creates what has been termed 'local distinctiveness'. Distinctiveness varies within the relatively restricted confines of individual counties, which in turn are distinct in terms of the country as a whole.

Conservation Area designation for settlements and wider areas which embody this local distinctiveness may afford them protection against development which bears no relation to the locality either in terms of the buildings within it or landscape surrounding it.

The historical development of such settlements and their surrounding landscape are the 'journals' through which the social and economic development of the locality can be traced. The pattern of agricultural and industrial progress of settlements (their social history) is by definition expressed in the architecture and landscape of any area.

It is not intended (nor would it be desirable) to use Conservation Area designation as a way of preventing or restricting development, the expansion of a settlement or preventing contemporary innovative design. Logically in the future new development should add to, rather than detract from the character of an area and will in turn help to chart historical development. However, all development should seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

2. Aims and objectives

The Ellingham conservation area was originally designated in 1976 and was last reviewed in 2002. This re-appraisal examines the historic settlement and special character of Ellingham, reviews the boundaries of the conservation area and suggests areas for change.

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

3. Planning Policy Context

Responsibility for Planning matters at Ellingham is shared between the Broads Authority and South Norfolk Council, as the proposed conservation area boundaries include land and properties in both planning authority areas, as defined on the map in this appraisal.

There are a range of policies which affect Conservation Areas within the Broads Authority and South Norfolk areas, originating from both national and local sources. The latest national documents in respect of historic buildings and conservation areas are The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010, The National Planning Policy Framework adopted in March 2012, Planning for the Historic

Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide March 2010. The Broads Authority endorses the contents of these documents and decisions made will reflect the various provisions contained in them.

In line with government policy, the Broads Authority and South Norfolk Council are currently reviewing and revising local policies which will be published in a new Local Development Framework (LDF). The Authority has recently adopted its Local Development Plan Document (DPD). In the meantime the more specific local policies included in the Broads Local Plan (1997) are still relevant.

To support these policies, the Broads Authority and South Norfolk Council provide further advice and details in a series of leaflets, which are currently being reviewed and expanded as part of the LDF process. A list of those currently available is attached in Appendix 2.

4. Summary of Special Interest

Ellingham Mill conservation area is a quiet enclave within the River Waveney valley. There is a pleasant contrast between the more tightly knit development around the mill and the looser pattern around the church. The character of the area is enhanced by the landscape of the river valley, its water meadows, trees and extensive views. The curves of the roads, the changing gradients, the presence of trees and hedges all add to the quality of the area.

5. Location and context

Ellingham is a parish on the north banks of the River Waveney, which forms the border between Norfolk and Suffolk. It is located between Broome and Geldeston two miles north east of Bungay and four miles south of Loddon. The conservation area lies to the south of the main village of Ellingham, and the majority of it is within the Broads Authority area, apart from a small area to the north which is within South Norfolk District Council.

General character and plan form

The area extends from the old railway line in the north to the River Waveney in the south including the mill and its associated buildings, and the church and former rectory in the east.

The conservation area lies within the River Waveney valley and the development it contains divides into two parts – the mill and its surroundings and the area around the church.

At the lower level, the river and particularly the sluices are a noisy reminder of the former watermill. The roadway takes a tortuous route around the sluices before it straightens out in front of the mill and its adjoining buildings.

A gently curving road rising up to connect the lower level to higher level where the area around the church is quieter with more sporadic development.

Geological background

The geological formation of the Waveney river valley has given it a very distinctive form within the wider landscape. The cretaceous chalk deposits below the whole of East Anglia were subject to a smoothing glacial action resulting in a more subdued topography than in other parts of Britain, and these were subsequently overlain with a series of sands, muds and gravels known as 'Craggs'. These processes have created valleys with a distinctive u-shaped profile; in the Waveney valley, large scale open valley landscapes with broad flat flood plains north and south of the river, beyond which rise the tree covered escarpments of the Norfolk and Suffolk boulder clay plateaus.

Landscape setting

The geological formation has resulted in views within the valley landscape generally to be long range and open, but these become more intimate close to river crossings such as at Ellingham. Views out of the valley are restricted although the valley landscape can be viewed from the surrounding higher areas and landmarks such as church towers are features of the Waveney valley.

From the south Ellingham conservation area is approached across Ellingham Marshes in the wide valley floodplain of the River Waveney, which extends north westwards towards the main village of Ellingham on higher ground. The sluices and river crossing are almost entirely surrounded by this low lying marshy land, allowing long views over the river valley. To the north however, long views of the Mill and associated buildings on slightly higher ground beyond are masked by extensive tree cover. Approaching from the north views of the conservation area are hidden until the brow of the bridge over the former railway line is reached, where St Mary's church and the former rectory are the prominent features. The church tower is similarly visible from the west along Geldeston Road. The landscape is relatively open here and becomes more enclosed as the gradient drops gently towards the river. The surrounding landscape is distinctly green with cattle grazing predominating.

6. Historical development

Archaeology and early development

The Norfolk Historic Environment 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 70 records for the parish of Ellingham, of which 6 are within the conservation area boundary.

The name of the village is Old English and means 'homestead of Ella or Eli'. A brief mention in the Domesday Book of 1086, suggests that the settlement may have Saxon origins, and the NHER records indicate human activity here from the prehistoric period onwards. The earliest finds are worked flints, but their locations make it difficult to identify any possible areas of settlement. The excavation of a possible prehistoric enclosure and ring ditch in the grounds of Ellingham Hall suggests that occupation was concentrated on river terraces by the Waveney. Other finds indicate human activity during the Iron and Bronze Ages. Roman pottery kilns outside the conservation area at Diary Farm indicate that at least five potters worked here, but are unusual as the

relatively few objects found from this period indicate that this was not an area of dense occupation or activity except for the kilns.

Earthworks on the Geldeston marshes to the east of the conservation area are indications that there was once a medieval settlement here. St Mary's Church was built during the medieval period in the 13th century and extensively remodelled in the 15th century when all the windows were replaced.

Later developments

Outside the conservation area, Ellingham Hall and its unusual icehouse, was built around 1802, but not all post medieval buildings survive; two brick kilns have been demolished as was the windmill which was built on a small mound.

The waterside location of Ellingham was fundamental to its later development. The River Waveney was improved for navigation under an Act of Parliament obtained in 1670, and included the construction of three locks, at Geldeston, Ellingham and Wainford, to extend navigation as far as Bungay Staithe. A special version of the traditional Wherry was in use on the Waveney, with boats measuring no more than 70 by 16 feet. However, with the decline in the use of wherries for commercial trade on the rivers prior to the Second World War, navigation ceased on several stretches of the Broads, including the 4.2 mile section of the river from Geldeston to Bungay, where navigation rights were removed in 1934, and the current limit of navigation remains is at Geldeston, with Ellingham positioned between the two. Wainford and Ellingham locks have since been converted into sluices but canoes and unpowered craft can still use this section of the waterway.

Within the conservation area boundary, little is known about the history of Ellingham Mill. Dating from the 18th century, it was a flour mill and one of only two Norfolk watermills on the Waveney. From references in early documents, it may have been constructed on the same site as much earlier mills. The mill was built on an artificial semicircular cut made to the north west of the river Waveney, which allowed the mill to retain its head of water while the nearby lock on the main river controlled the levels for the Bungay Navigation. The Waveney was fully navigable for many years using a series of locks, one of which was next to Ellingham mill, and thus grain and flour were both transported to and from the mill via Wherry as well as road. It appears to have been in active use until about 1933 when the River Waveney above Geldeston Lock was closed to navigation. It was then taken over by Vitovis Limited who developed it as a factory for animal feed and built a warehouse adjoining that was used in various guises until it was demolished in the 1980s. The mill came onto the market in the early 1960s and was restored and converted to residential use with part used as an art gallery by the Ellingham Mill Art Society. The bridge outside the mill dates from 1910.

The most modern archaeological site is a World War Two pillbox on the boundary of the conservation area that protected the former railway bridge close to the church.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the old warehouse south of the mill was demolished and replaced with a house. A temporary measure has been introduced to ease the traffic problem of the mill which effectively prohibits the passage of large vehicles.

In 1854, the population of the parish was recorded as '426 souls' occupying 92 houses. By 1881, the population had reduced to 340. The latest census figures of 2001 record 532 residents in the parish, most of these outside the conservation area.

7. Spatial analysis

Two contrasting forms of development are found in the conservation area. At the lower level long views across the marshes contrast with the mature trees and the network of sluices which give way to a group of buildings with the mill as its focus. On slightly higher ground, the church and the former rectory are set in a more open landscape. Between these two areas, modest houses and cottages are found on the gently curving roads, where the marshes to the west are still visible, and to the north and east the church and former rectory can be seen.

8. Character analysis

Use and activity

Historically activities centred on the river, the sluices and the Mill; the uses in the area now are almost entirely residential.

Overview of streets, buildings and architecture

The Conservation Area can be divided into two parts.

- the mill and its immediate surroundings
- the area around the Church.

The Mill

The random arrangement of the buildings and the dominance of the mill are important to the charm of this area. The informal nature of the ground surface also contributes to its character.

The concrete bridge over the river has a hard appearance that does not blend into the landscape. The views from the bridge are quite extensive both east and west.

The mill is a traditional timber frame and weatherboarded structure built on a stone base. The rear of the mill has been extended and altered while the south gable has been rebuilt in brick. It has a lopsided central gable to reflect the difference in eaves level.

The attractive Mill House adjoining has fine Gothic windows. It is a timber frame building probably dating from the late mediaeval period although re-fronted in the early 19th Century.

The new house to the south of the mill has fits in well with materials which echo those of its traditional neighbours.

Opposite the Mill House, Mill Pool Cottage has been converted from a group of single storey buildings. Their modest scale serves to further emphasise the dominance of the

mill. From the bridge there are extensive views, framed by trees, across the river to the meadows beyond. The outlook is however spoilt by the traffic regulation measures.

The barn to the north of the cottages has been sensitively converted although its contribution to the group is minimised by the hedges and trees which screen it. The choice of bricks for Mill Orchard opposite is somewhat in contrast and it occupies an important position. It has been extended to form a sizeable dwelling but its impact is partly softened by the hedge to the east.

The conversion of the granary has successfully retained its character. Its attractively landscaped gardens are typical of this area.

As the ground rises up towards the former railway line a pair of traditional cottages, their brickwork now colour washed, is set below Old Station Lane. Another pair of cottages, one of which has been recently extended, flanks the road as it forks to the right to lead to the church and Old Rectory.

The Church and Old Rectory

This area is dominated by the landscape, and although some of the buildings are significant, they are very much secondary elements. Trees and hedges serve to define and enclose spaces and views as well as providing a natural background to the buildings.

The church is set back from the road and surrounded by trees. It is basically of 13th century date although refashioned in the 14th and 15th centuries. Its informal character is echoed by the unregimented churchyard and the weathered brick wall which partly surrounds it. The open meadowland to the west is a valuable amenity in this area.

The large former Georgian Rectory lies in extensive grounds which slope down to the river. The site retains some good individual trees and a single storey outbuilding which is of some interest although in need of some repair.

The former railway bridge is of interest, so too is the concrete bunker. The position on the crest of the hill affords commanding views towards the village.

Architectural styles and materials

Except for thatch, most of the materials traditional to South Norfolk and the Broads area are found in the Conservation Area. There is flint, brick and render to the church which also has a mixture of pantiled, plain tiled and lead roofs. There is a predominance of red pantile and black/white weatherboarding as seen on the mill, but also reflected on many of the adjoining buildings. Slate survives as Millfield and on the outbuilding to the west. Apart from the mill, the buildings are domestic in scale, generally two storey with pitched roofs.

Ground surface materials and street furniture

Most of the surface materials are either tarmac or grass. Gravel is used for the path to the church and to several private driveways. Modern concrete pavements have been used on one or two vehicle accesses.

Given the character of the area, the presence of modern “street furniture” stands out. The concrete bollards near the church, and the seemingly, permanently temporary traffic arrangement next to the mill are particular examples.

Trees and hedges

The character of the area relies heavily on trees, hedges and the extensive views that can be enjoyed in all directions. Trees in the churchyard include fine old yews and a Scots Pine. The group of trees south of the old railway line and west of Mill Cottages are the most significant. Elsewhere, the trees are clustered in small groups or individually along the river. There are also good trees around Millfield. There are also a number of hedges delineating field boundaries which help retain the intimate and modest character north of the river.

Boundary treatments

The churchyard is bounded by an old red brick and brick and flint wall with a bold half round coping. The entrance to the churchyard has at some time been narrowed with brick piers. There are timber gates here and to the extension to the burial ground.

Elsewhere in the conservation area, boundaries are formed with hedges, and in some cases timber paling fences, such as that in Old Station Lane

A low chain link fence opposite Old Station Lane protects a newly planted hedge; unfortunately this appears to be *leylandii* rather than more indigenous species which would be more sympathetic to the character of the conservation area.

Just outside the conservation area, land on Geldeston Road used for industrial storage purposes detracts from the setting of the Church and the conservation area. A landscaping scheme would soften the appearance of this site. The conservation area boundary currently includes part of Geldeston Road adjacent to this site.

9. Issues, pressures, threats and opportunities for improvement

Buildings

Buildings in the conservation area are 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. Several cottages in Ellingham have had replacement windows.

Streetscape issues

The solution to the traffic problem around the Mill may have been successful but visually it is unattractive, and a more sympathetic treatment of the centre of this Conservation Area should be promoted.

There are opportunities for additional hedge and tree planting. The choice of new planting or fencing should be carefully considered to retain the character of the area. "Suburban" choices such as leylandii hedging or chain link fencing are not sympathetic to the character of the conservation area and their replacement with indigenous species should be encouraged.

The replacement of the concrete bollards outside the church with ones of a more suitable design and material would be a great visual improvement to the area. The removal of the telegraph poles outside church would also be of benefit to the character of the conservation area.

Although just outside the conservation area boundary, the storage site on Geldeston Road is unsightly and its appearance would be improved with a suitable landscaping scheme.

10. Recommendations for suggested improvements

- Consider sympathetic landscaping/traffic calming measures to the area around the Mill
- Consider the replacement of the concrete bollards outside the church with ones of a more sympathetic material and design
- Encourage additional hedge and tree planting using indigenous species
- Encourage a sympathetic landscaping scheme to improve the appearance of the industrial storage site on Geldeston Road (outside the conservation)
- Request utility companies consider the undergrounding of over-head cables in the village
- Work with local land owners to identify opportunities for improved access to the river, particularly for canoe portage

11. The Conservation Area Boundary

The southern bank of the River Waveney forms the boundary to the south. To the west the boundary crosses the mill cut, following its northern boundary for a short distance until it meets a field drain. It runs along the eastern edge of this drain then turns in a north easterly direction to follow the northern bank of a further field drain and a garden boundary until it reaches Old Station Lane. It then follows a farm track north westerly to the boundary of Station House, then turns to the east back to Old Station Lane and along the western edge of this road to Station Road which forms the northern boundary. Then it turns southwards across the old railway bridge and along the northern side of Geldeston Road, past the church to extend eastwards in a finger beside the industrial storage site. Finally the eastern boundary encloses part of the playing field, follows the eastern boundary of the former rectory and a field drain to meet the River Waveney.

Suggested amendments to the conservation area boundary

- Exclude the finger of Geldeston Road on the north east corner of the conservation area; this appears to be superfluous to the conservation area
- Extend the northern boundary to Station Road to include Station House and adjoining land to the north - west; the former railway and station is part of the history of the area and the line of the platform is visible in the garden of Station House.

12. Public consultation

Consultation with interested parties and organisations was undertaken in accordance with the Broads Authority 'Statement of Community Involvement'. A joint consultation exercise was undertaken with South Norfolk Council as the proposed conservation area boundaries include land in both planning authority areas as defined on the maps included in the character appraisals. A letter and leaflet were delivered to all residents living within the conservation area boundary, and copies of the appraisal documents were made available both online and in hard copy format in the Broads Authority offices and through the Parish Council. The leaflet included a comments section and consultees were also able to comment on line.

A public exhibition was held on Saturday 11 August 2012, which was attended by officers from the Planning Team of the Broads Authority and by 16 members of the public to ask questions, propose or suggest minor amendments to the re-appraisal or boundary and raise issues of concern. The vast majority of people attending were supportive of designation, considering that it would benefit the village and the local community. In addition, the Authority received 5 written responses seeking more specific advice as to the effects of being in a conservation area or to seek clarification as to proposed changes to the boundary.

Several items of additional information resulting from the consultation have been included in the re-appraisal. One request was to consider extending the conservation area boundary to the north-west to include a farmstead and school with agricultural land in between. As this area is outside the Broads Authority boundary, it was discussed with officers from South Norfolk Council, who considered that including such a large area of agricultural land would not be appropriate, so it is not intended to further extend the conservation boundary at this stage.

Appendix 1

Policies

Please note: The Broads Authority and South Norfolk Council are currently reviewing and revising local policies, which will be published in a new Local Development Framework (LDF). The Broads Authority and South Norfolk District Council have already adopted Core Strategies containing general policies. The Authority has recently adopted its Local Development Plan Document (DPD). Some of the specific saved local policies included in the Broads Authority Local Plan (1997) and in the South Norfolk Local Plan (1998) are still relevant.

Appendix 2

Broads Authority Guidance Leaflets

- Keeping the Broads Special
- Do I need Planning Permission?
- How do I apply for Planning Permission?
- Building at the Waterside – A guide to design of waterside buildings in the Broads Authority area
- Environment and Landscape – How do I plan and manage trees and scrub alongside rivers?
- Development and Flood Risk in the Broads
- Riverbank Protection Works – A guide for riparian landowners
- Sustainability Guide – Sustainable development in the Broads

South Norfolk Council Guidance leaflet

- South Norfolk Place- Making Guide

Appendix 3

Listed buildings within the conservation area (All grade II except where noted)

Church of St Mary Grade I
Ellingham Mill
Mill House

Appendix 4

Buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area

Whilst the following buildings, boundary walls and railings within the conservation area and 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.

Millfield, outbuildings to the west
Churchyard walls
Mill Barn
Mill Pool Cottage
Former railway bridge
Station House

Appendix 5

References and sources of information

A Popular Guide to Norfolk Place names, James Rye, The Larks Press, 1991

The Buildings of England, Norfolk 2: North-west and South, Nicholas Pevsner and Bill Wilson, 1999
English Heritage: Guidance on conservation area appraisals, 2006
English Heritage: Guidance on the management of conservation areas, 2006
Broads Landscape Character Assessment – draft local character area 2 Waveney Valley, 2006
Faden's Map of Norfolk 1797
OS 1st edition maps
Heritage Environment Record, Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, Gressenhall
White's Gazetteer and Directory 1845
Kellys Directory 1883

Appendix 6

Contact details and further information.

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