

Land Behind 8A Station Road
Coltishall
Norfolk



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Summary

S1 The only listed building which might be affected by development of the land behind 8A Station Road is the limekiln. Various maps and other documents show that the arable nineteen-acre field listed in 1841 dramatically changed as soon as the railway - with its goods siding - opened 300 metres to the north in 1879. In 1881 not only was the limekiln built but a small brickworks had been set up to the west as well as a commercial saw-pit. Extractions of chalk for lime burning took place immediately and the 'marl pit' indicated on the 1882 O.S. map suddenly became a landscape feature, becoming progressively deeper and more extensive over the next twenty years. But by 1906 all these operations had ceased and the site was left to decay, although at least the Railway Hotel carried on, and since 1938 the extent of the marl pit has been steadily eroded.

S2 The Coltishall limekiln is a very typical Norfolk draw kiln, at least typical in form and function, but it is much larger than most of the 250 or so in the county, but it is also very late in date. Its construction in 1880-81 was in the face of big commercial kilns elsewhere in the Midlands and it could never last. A description of the operation is given in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3.

S3 There are three aspects concerning the impact that the proposed development may have on the limekiln but only one really counts. There is a question mark over the whether the building should have been listed in the first place (in 1991) given that the listing inspector got the all-important date so spectacularly wrong. The bulk of the building and the good part - the interior - is only listed by virtue of being attached to a listed building and that is the entrance arch. This is because that is the only part which is not subterranean: subterranean buildings cannot be listed in their own right, though they can be scheduled. Curtilage does not apply in this case but the issue of the setting of a listed building does but this is where another problem arises in that the only action which can affect the setting of a subterranean building is intrusive excavation into it. Consideration of the effect of the proposals on the setting of the heritage asset are necessarily restricted to the rather decayed and very ordinary brick entrance arch.

S4 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 makes it clear that the more important is the asset then the more weight should be given to preserving its setting. In this case it can only be the poor decayed outer arch, and the weight given to it can hardly rise above the very minimal. There is no question of any physical harm being done to the arch. Moreover, since developments which are not actually visible from the heritage asset in question cannot by definition affect its setting the application cannot fail on the grounds that the setting of any part of the limekiln would be compromised. Not only is it obvious that the setting (which is the marl pit, not the surrounding land) would not be impaired but there is also an argument that the proposed development would actually have a beneficial effect.

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Part One - Understanding the Asset

[Note: All comments in square brackets embedded in quotations are the author's]

The field behind the row of houses on Station Road is more or less featureless though at the east end is a store of the late twentieth century constructed of composition blocks and is without any historic interest and would, in fact, improve the area if it were to be removed. The field is flat though set on two levels and comprises some 19 acres, which is a lot, and is surrounded by trees and hedges. Surrounding buildings can be glimpsed through these trees but there is no particular association. As we shall notice in the next section there has not been a history of building on the site but there is no particular reason why not.

None of the row of houses on Station Road are listed and the Conservation Area for Coltishall terminates far to the south.

There is already adequate access to the site to the south of the row of houses and no particular disturbance would be afforded to them and the only heritage asset which might be affected is the grade II listed limekiln which is set in a deep gully to the north but this is out of sight of any proposed new house and about 50 metres from it. In this instance the effect of a new house on the field would have on the only heritage asset is close to zero, if not actually zero. Since it is only the limekiln which could be affected this report will concentrate on that building.

Evidence from Maps, Plans and other Documents

1.1 The first map of relevance is the 1841 Tithe Map and apportionment, which is doubly useful in that there was an amendment in 1881 to take account of the arrival of the railway to the north. On both maps the area of land first designated as plot 138 and later as plot 138a is entirely devoid of buildings, not even including the Railway Tavern, which had first been called the New Inn. This however is misleading as the later map is concerned only with the railway line and the branch station and does not show buildings which in fact were present by that date. The large field was owned by one Robert Hawes in 1841 and known as 'The 19 Acres', and was laid to arable having an area of 19 acres 0 roods and 31 perches. By 1881 a new road (the present Westbourne Road) had been constructed to the north from School House Road (now Rectory Road) in the east to Station Road in the west and this resulted in a reduction

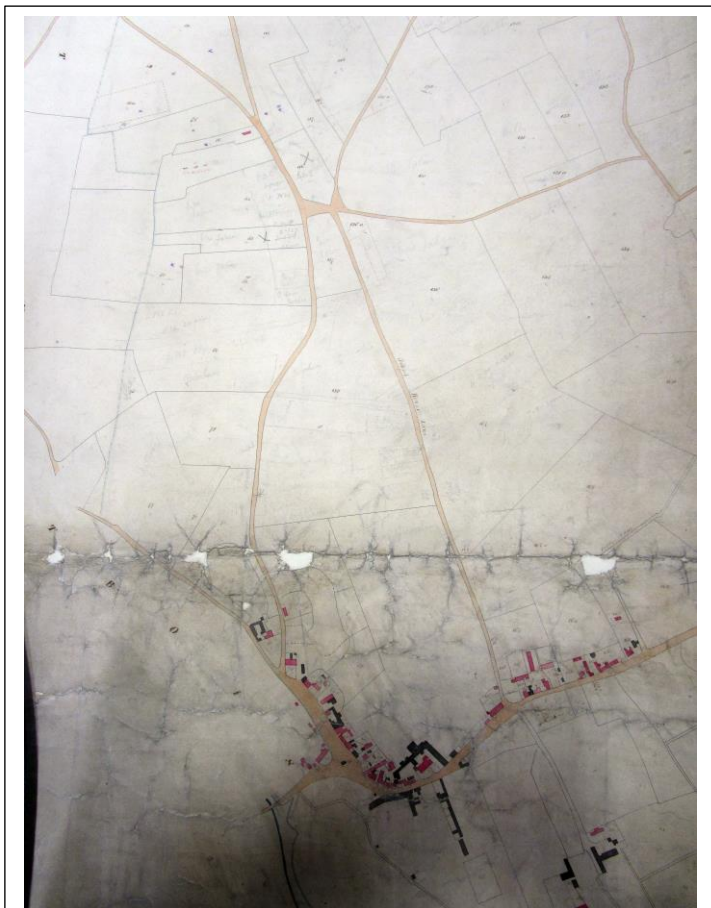


Fig. 1: Tithe map 1841, detail

in size of 'The Nineteen Acres' to 12 acres 3 roods and 18 perches, and it was then owned by Mary Barber, a widow, and let to the farmer William Baldwin for arable use.

1.2 There is no suggestion here of any chalk workings and this story tends to be confirmed by the various trade directories: there were no local lime burners or bricklayers listed in White's Directory of Norfolk of 1845 but nine years later there is Charles Barber who was listed as a farmer and brickmaker at a time when the principal activities of the parish were centred around malt, ale, corn and shoemaking. In 1863 (White's Directory) Charles Barber was still a farmer and a brick and lime merchant, and Mary Smith was the landlady of the newly-built New Inn. It is probably quite likely that Barber was a lime burner as well as a merchant and operated from the site which had dramatically changed since the 1841 Tithe Map. The first edition of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, sheet XL.13 was issued in 1882 and this shows that an industrial landscape had grown up. To the west was the New Inn and along the line of the hedge marking the south edge of the field were brickfields, a brick kiln, clay pits and then the limekiln set into the side of the chalk pit. This is actually marked as a marl pit, but it was probably both. To the north, at the top of the north slope of the meandering valley created by the excavations was a long narrow saw pit.

1.3 The industrialization of the field is confirmed by White's 1883 edition of the Directory:

'Large lime works have been opened recently near the railway station, from which lime of a very superior quality is obtained.'



Fig 2: View of the field from the driveway

It was of course the opening of the railway in such close proximity (300 metres to the north) in 1879 that prompted the construction of these works. There was still no construction to the east of the limekiln and the situation had not changed on the 1885 O.S. Map, and then came one of those sudden events - the industrial complex disappeared as fast as it arrived, so Kelly's Directory of Norfolk for the year 1900 makes no mention of lime burning in the parish and there were no tradesmen listed who were connected with the

industry. Edward Mason was then the landlord of the New Inn. The 1906 edition of the O.S. Map shows this loss of industrial buildings, with neither the lime kiln nor the brick kiln further west being shown at all. Instead the lime works relocated to Great Hautbois.



Fig 3: View of the field from the east

1.4 Subsequent maps and Directories just confirm the story. In 1906 there was considerable new domestic building along Station Road (now, confusingly, Rectory Road) and there were extensive glasshouses to the north of the now redundant marl pit by Westbourne Road. The pub had changed its name to the Railway Hotel when Charles Eglinton was listed

by Kelly as the publican in 1933 and the 1938 O.S. Map has Rectory Road named as such and also Station Road by the hotel, and the sports ground on an empty field to the south has been created. By the time of the 1977 O.S. Map the playing field is more established, a vehicle scrap yard has arrived in the field to the west, which is still there, and a new building has appeared in the bottom of the chalk pit. This is immediately outside the limekiln entrance and was, apparently, associated with a rifle range which used the pit. The actual extent of the chalk pit has been greatly reduced compared to that shown on the 1938 map and there has been building within the north part of it as well as a run of houses along the south side of Westbourne Road in place of the glasshouses.

1.5 According to Tom Williamson in *The Norfolk Broads: A Landscape History*, (Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 146) the 'one [limekiln] at Coltishall, located behind the Railway Public House, has been restored and can be visited with the permission of the landlord'. This is borne out by the adverts which the pub took out in *The Marlpit* (the Coltishall and district magazine) in which customers in the middle of the 1990s were invited to visit the kiln.

1.6 All this demonstrates that the limekiln was constructed in 1881 (possibly in 1880) and was in operation for only about twenty years, and this has an implication for its listing because that assumes that the date is 'early to mid C19' which is before the cut-off point for inclusion which is set at 1840. This will be discussed under paragraph M1.

Part Two - Limekilns in General

2.1 Most limekilns in England are free-standing square-shaped structures in the countryside or on quaysides of provincial harbours all around the coast to take advantage of the ease of sea transport for the incoming blocks of lime (or chalk) and for export of the finished product, but a substantial number take the



Fig 4: The neighbouring limekiln

form of annular structures set into the sides of hills or excavations. Most of these are positioned in the sides of the chalk workings which provide the fuel and apart from the obvious reason of ease of supply they were so positioned to maximize the speed that the required 900°C could be reached and maintained and for the ease by which new material could be introduced into the top of the pot. There are two main types of annular kilns, such as the Coltishall one, but they

follow the same principals. There is a wide circular brick chamber, usually but not always subterranean, reached by an arched entrance and the header-bond brick of the interior outer walls curves inwards as it rises to meet the corresponding brick vault of the central cone. This cone, or pot, is the combustion chamber and it splays out as it rises in a dramatic and not displeasing manner so that the top is far larger in diameter than the bottom. At the base are usually four draw holes, basically sloping shutters for extraction of the combusted material and above them are a variable number of stoking holes through which metal rods were inserted to stir the fire from time to time like a poker is used in a domestic hearth. Other ventilation



Fig 5: The back of the Station Road houses

shafts might rise vertically from the roof and there may be one or more side shafts out to the exterior which together maintain a draft of air in the interior.

2.2 Flare kilns work by first loading coal or coke into the top of the pot and then topping it

up with chalk or limestone. The kiln is then fired and burns for several days before the fire is extinguished and the resultant material, hopefully without too much carbon content, is raked out of the draw holes and the process is started again. This raking out of the corrosive lime must have been an unpleasant job. Flare kilns usually have chimneys emerging from the top of the mound in which the kiln is set with access holes in it for introducing the coal and chalk.

2.3 Draw kilns are simpler and more efficient and are generally later in date; most of the 250 or so identified kilns in Norfolk are draw kilns of which five are listed buildings and date from the early nineteenth century at the latest, not the end of the century. They work as a continuous operation and at the top of the mound the wide opening of the pot is just that - like a hole in the ground into which is shovelled about 10 cm of fuel and then 30 cm of chalk. The kiln is fired, the draw holes closed by their metal doors and further layers of fuel and chalk added until the entire pot is full, so that when it is running the white mass of the chalk at the top of the mound flush with the top of the pot exhausts continuous wisps of smoke for ten months at a time. Every day or so the draw holes are opened and lime extracted, left to cool and bagged and a corresponding amount of fuel and chalk added to the top again to keep the process going. In spring the kiln would be finally allowed to go out and the opportunity taken to replace those bricks in the interior of the pot which required replacement, and then the whole cycle recommenced. This is the Coltishall type .

Part Three - Description of the Exterior

3.1 The exterior is easy to describe. The arched entrance is very slightly pointed and has two courses of gault brick leading to a pointed barrel-vaulted tunnel to the interior, and the outer face of the kiln, where it has been exposed, is of random flint and brick. It was originally all brick-faced but the brick has been robbed leaving just a small patch high up to the right of the entrance. The entrance faces north and is embedded into the banks of the chalk pit, scarcely projects from it and makes such a slight impact on the surroundings that it would be possible to miss it. The proposed new build is not visible from the entrance and the arch is of such a modest character that without the interior subterranean element the question of listing would not have arisen.

Part Four - Description of the Interior

4.1 The vaulted passage has a nice pattern of bricks in the vault and it drops down 1.7 metres to the earth floor of the big circular space of the interior dominated as usual by the great splayed cone of the pot arcing up to the roof. All is of red brick laid in header bond apart from the lower metre or so which is of random brick and rubble rendered over. Since the description of annular limekilns given in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 applies well-enough to Coltishall only the deviations from the norm, or features not mentioned above will be given here. The entrance tunnel slopes down to an arched door rebate which retains one of the two iron pin hinges on the inside. The door has completely disappeared but would have been closed for most of the time leaving the interior to be ventilated from the single horizontal vent to the south and the two vertical vents in the centre of the vault, which allowed air to be sucked into the kiln through the six stoke holes. These stoke holes are set at quite a height, about 2.6 metres above the floor, and are far above the six draw holes which are placed at regular intervals round the base of the pot. They have shallow brick arches, sloping brick sills and the remains of the hinge points and mountings of the cast-iron doors which

once closed them. The soil and debris with which the pot has been filled still spills out onto the floor, which is also littered with empty bottles, brick and flint rubble and hearths of fires lit by those using the kiln for unauthorised purposes.

4.2 The Coltishall kiln has an unusual feature which can be explained by its late date, and that is its very large size which in turn means that it has six draw holes rather than the usual four, and this was probably in a futile attempt to compete with the big industrial complexes constructed in Bedfordshire and the Midlands. There is of course the comment in 1883 that the kiln produced lime 'of a very superior quality' and this perhaps was its *raison d'être*, but it didn't last.

Part Five - The Impact of the Proposed Works on the Heritage Asset

M1 The essential element of the assessment of the impact of any development on a Heritage Asset, in this case the Grade II listed limekiln, is the quality of the Asset in question. A development cannot adversely affect the architectural or historic interest and importance of an Asset if the Asset does not possess any such significance or what significance it can muster is very low. The limekiln was listed on 20 August 1991, certainly without the benefit of the research which has been possible for this report, and this is one reason for the error in dating, the other reason being a lack of knowledge of rural limekilns at the time. The English Heritage paper *Introduction to Heritage Assets: Pre-Industrial Lime Kilns* was not issued until 2011. The date is important because the general rule, indeed the second rule of selection of listed buildings is the date of construction and the rule in 1991 ran as follows:

- A All buildings earlier than 1700 are listed provided they survive in anything like their original condition
- B Most buildings built between 1700 and 1840 are selected but a selection is necessary
- C Buildings built after 1840 are selected only if there are significant innovatory features, are a new building type, are by an important architect or have a very significant historical association

The rules have been relaxed since 1991 but remain basically the same, and it is clear that by these criteria the limekiln was listed in error because of a mistake with the date as it cannot meet any of the other conditions given under C. There is a big difference between 'Early to mid C19' and 1881.

M2 The first rule for selection concerns the scope of listing and the definition of what constitutes a building. Listing inspectors use the following criteria, and this has not changed in the last twenty-five years. A building for the purpose of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act is taken to be:

Any man-made structure permanently fixed to the ground and more than ten centimetres high.

This effectively excludes subterranean structures such as railway tunnels or indeed limekilns until the rules were modified in the 1980s to propose that any structure physically attached to a listed building is itself deemed to be listed by virtue of that association. The intention before that had been to include underground structures under the provisions for scheduling. The opening of a tunnel or a buried kiln to the outside is clearly more than ten centimetres high and therefore it is the opening to the kiln and not the interior which is the principal element from the point of view of the listing.

M3 However, it is a listed building, and in this case there are two paragraphs of particular relevance in the latest advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012:

132 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.'

133 Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent.

M4 In the context of paragraph 132 the asset in question that exists above the ground has only a slight significance, so only a slight weight should be applied to it and not only will its significance not be 'harmed or lost through alteration or destruction', no alterations are proposed to the heritage asset at all.

The Question of Curtilage

M5 The law concerning the inclusion of curtilage buildings under the provisions applying to listed buildings is contained in Sections 1(3)(b) and 1(5)(b) of the 1990 Act, as amended by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment No. 2) (England) Regulations, 2009 and the general provisions were earlier clarified by the Court of Appeal in the case of Secretary of State vs. ex parte Bellamy. This established that not all the land in the same ownership as the principal building will necessarily be included, and the rule was established on 1 April 1987 that any building erected within the curtilage of a listed building after 1 July 1948 will not be included under the provisions of the 1990 Act (in other circumstances after 1 July 1969). This rule has now been in operation for nearly thirty years and it means that neither the development already undertaken nor the proposed development are subject to the curtilage regulations.

The Setting

M6 The setting of the limekiln has been the focus of the objections by the Heritage Officer and it is the most important. Whatever the niceties of the listing procedure or questions of curtilage may be the architectural and historical interest of the limekiln is all to do with the engineering of the interior and just about nothing to do with the bedraggled and decaying entrance arch, or what is left of it. This is of primary importance because it is simply not possible to affect the setting of a subterranean building. Even another subterranean building could not do it, and the question of the setting does not arise in respect of the greater part of the heritage asset; it arises solely in relation to the entrance arch and in this context paragraph 132 of NPPF 2012 must prevail. That part of the asset which qualifies is of such low architectural or historical significance that hardly any weight should be given to its setting, if any weight at all.

Appendix One

Statutory List Description

TG 22 SE

COLTISHALL

STATION ROAD

(east side)

2/88

Limekiln about 140 m E.N.E. of the
Railway Public House

20.8.91

II

Limekiln. Circa early to mid C19. Random flint rubble exterior and brick lined inside. Circular on plan with 2-centred annular barrel vault in brick around central brick stack with 4 segmentally arched shutes. 2-centred barrel-vaulted entrance also in brick. The limekiln is disused and situated in the south side of a quarry at grid ref TG269202.