

Appendix 2

NS43: Landscape: Treatment of Green Separation at Conservation Area, St Michael's Mount, Longstanton – Preferred Approach

Village Framework

The Preferred Options report proposes a minimum of 200m green separation between Northstowe and the villages of Longstanton and Oakington. This is to be measured from the village framework as an existing and clear planning policy boundary.

Representations question whether is appropriate to measure green separation between Northstowe and the villages of Longstanton and Oakington from village framework. This is addressed at NS40, which concludes that this is an appropriate basis for measuring green separation, subject to the additional consideration of any additional separation of special landscape treatment for those parts of the Conservation Area that lie outside the village framework.

Village frameworks are drawn around the consolidated part of a village. Outside frameworks, development generally tends to be sporadic development in the countryside or substantial individual properties in large grounds. St Michael's Mount is an example of the latter, where infill development would not be appropriate in its grounds. The property therefore appropriately lies outside the framework.

Areas outside the village framework

The report acknowledges that there are a number of individual and groups of properties that lie outside the village framework of Longstanton and either within the green separation or on the edge of, or within, Northstowe. It considers the role and function of each of these separately in order to assess whether they require any additional physical separation or any specific form of landscape treatment.

The Structure Plan states that green separation is required in order to “maintain the village character of Longstanton and Oakington” (Policy P9/3).

St Michael's Mount was considered specifically. The Preferred Approach recommended that the minimum 200m separation to be measured from the village framework should not be altered and therefore that St Michael's Mount would lie within the 200m separation. The effect of this was that St Michael's Mount received 100m separation between the curtilage of the property and the edge of Northstowe. It also recommended that “considerable additional tree planting would be provided within the green separation at this point

adjoining the property to protect its character and this southern end of the village of St Michael's”.

Longstanton Conservation Area

In parallel with the early stages of work on the LDF, the Conservation Officer commissioned consultants to review the current Conservation Area boundaries for the villages surrounding Northstowe. This will enable planning policy decisions in the LDF to be based upon up to date Conservation Area boundaries. Consultants have now made recommendations on the extent of the Longstanton Conservation Area. A report was considered by a Working Group of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee on 12 January 2005 and revisions to the Conservation Area in the vicinity of St Michael's Mount are to be put to the Advisory Group in March with a recommendation to carry out public consultation. The draft proposals in this location, as shown on Map A attached, are to:

- a. include Long Lane within the Conservation Area
- b. include the paddock to the south east of St Michael's Lane and north of St Michael's Mount within the Conservation Area.
- c. It is also proposed to include a small group of mature trees adjacent to the boundary of the property and mature woodland to the south of the property and alongside the approach road to the village, which are considered to contribute to the character of the Conservation Area and the setting of St Michael's Mount
- d. minor changes to remove modern houses on the edge of the Conservation Area, but on the side away from Northstowe.

The approach to the Conservation Area at Long Lane is addressed in NS42. The inclusion of Long Lane in the Conservation Area does not require any changes to the approach which already proposes a 50m area beyond Long Lane to allow for a substantial area of supplemental planning.

Subject to the proposed addition to the Conservation Area at (b) above being confirmed following public consultation, approach in the Preferred Options report should now be applied to the proposed extensions to the Conservation Area. As such, the whole Conservation Area should be included in the green separation as a matter of principle, and the paddock to the south east of St Michael's Lane and north of St Michael's Mount which adjoins the area out to Long Lane, should now be included within the green separation. This requires an extension to the minimum 200m in this area, as shown on Map B attached.

As a supplementary piece of work, the consultants were asked to offer independent advice on their “*preferred boundary treatment / treatments for the revisions to the Conservation Area where it falls within, or is abutted by, the*

green separation. This could include for example, additional buffer areas adjoining the Conservation Area or suitable landscape treatment within it.” With regard to St Michael’s Mount they advise that *“given that the proposed changes to the Conservation Area boundary are intended to protect the trees which are important to the setting of the village and St Michael’s Mount, what is proposed in the Preferred Options Report seems to have the same aim.”* They advise that the treatment of the separation area will need care and that the tree belts at the end of the airfield will need to be consolidated to maintain the character of the village. Also that future planting should seek to follow natural or field boundaries, or create sensible new boundaries rather than producing artificial curves or arcs of trees that have little to do with the local landscape character. The advice received does not recommend any changes to the Preferred Approach in order to protect the character of the Conservation Area. 6 representations object to the Preferred Approach on the basis of impact on the Conservation Area. The independent expert advice suggests that there is no justification to change the Preferred Approach on these grounds.

St Michael’s Mount

Key to a decision on the extent of separation at this location is whether St Michael’s Mount reads visually as part of the village, or as a dwelling in the countryside adjoining the village, and therefore whether it requires the minimum 200m separation in order to maintain village character as required by the Structure Plan. This is a matter of judgement and the Preferred Approach was based on a fine balance in this case.

A significant number of representations have been received which show a very high level of public perception that St Michael’s Mount forms part of the village of Longstanton. 18 representations specifically make this point. A further 21 representations object to the Preferred Approach for St Michael’s Mount and argue that the property should receive 200m separation as do other properties in the area. It is appropriate to revisit the Council’s assessment of the role of St Michael’s Mount in respect of village character of Longstanton.

St Michael’s Mount is different from all the other areas lying outside the village framework as it is the only property which adjoins the village framework and is not separated from the village by countryside. This small country house is a substantial property which is set well back from the road and does not read visually as part of a continuous building frontage when viewed from the road. However, the gateway and front boundary of the property act as a visual end stop on the outside of the tight bend in the road both when approaching from St Michael’s or from Oakington. Also, the house itself can be glimpsed when passing along the road offering a perception of an historic and attractive property of some substance. It could be argued that one leaves the village when it is passed from St Michael’s, and equally that the village is that entered when reaching the property and its landscaped grounds from the Oakington direction.

Also, because the house is situated towards the back of its landscaped grounds, it can be seen through gaps in the planting from the Oakington Barracks site. The landscaped grounds with views of the property read contiguously with the adjoining properties and it could be argued that the property reads visually as part of the village. This situation is distinct from sporadic low density inter and post-war development which is suburban in character and tends to be seen dotted along the main roads leading into a village, such as along the B1050 north of Longstanton, which may be regarded locally as part of the village community of Longstanton, but does not read visually as part of the village in terms of its built village character, which is the key Structure Plan test.

It could therefore be argued that it is reasonable to regard St Michael's Mount as part of the village of Longstanton specifically for the purposes of maintaining village character. Again this is a matter of fine balance.

Officers remain of the view that the Preferred Approach would provide an acceptable treatment for St Michael's Mount. However, if the green separation is to be successful in performing its function of protecting village character, it is reasonable to have regard to the way that village character is perceived locally. With the benefit of public participation, and taking account of the clear public perception of the property as part of the village as demonstrated in the representations received, it is recommended on balance that the approach to green separation at St Michael's Mount be amended.

If the extent of separation required to protect village character in Preferred Approach NS40 is now applied regarding St Michael's Mount as part of the village of Longstanton, this would mean that the minimum 200m green separation would be measured from the curtilage of St Michael's Mount and not from the village framework.

Providing an extra 100m for this property does require an additional 4.14ha of land. This would result in a smaller site area for Northstowe and if there are any implications for achieving 8,000 dwellings on Site A, could be offset by a marginal overall increase in density.

If St Michael's Mount had a minimum of 200m green separation, it would be possible to revisit the landscape treatment proposed for the area of green separation adjoining it. A different landscape approach was proposed specifically to address the narrower area of green separation and proposed considerable additional tree planting to maintain village character. With 200m separation, it would be more appropriate for the landscape treatment proposed in NS 41 for Longstanton generally of a series of paddocks and small copses, to be used in this location adjoining St Michael's Mount. NS43 should therefore be amended accordingly.

20 representations have also been made suggesting "unfair" and "discriminatory" treatment of St Michael's Mount. Some of these suggest this is because of the current ownership of the property, a District Councillor.

Officers were aware of the ownership of the property in preparing the Preferred Options Report and were, at all times, scrupulous in taking a professional approach in preparing the options recommended to Council for the property. The recommendations took no account of property ownership. This approach has been applied even-handedly in preparing all the Preferred Options report: ownership of land or property is not a planning consideration. The Council considered the approach to St Michael's Mount thoroughly in deciding the Preferred Options Report which was published for public participation.

Approach to Draft Area Action Plan:

NS42 Subject to the proposed addition to the Conservation Area being confirmed following public consultation, extend green separation at the paddock to the south east of St Michael's Lane and north of St Michael's Mount to include the whole Conservation Area within the green separation.

NS43 Amend the green separation at St Michael's Mount as follows:

- (i) To measure the minimum 200m green separation from the curtilage of the property and not from the village framework,
- (ii) The landscape treatment proposed in NS 41 for Longstanton generally of a series of paddocks and small copses, be used in the green separation adjoining St Michael's Mount