

# NORWICH ROAD CHARACTER AREA

IPSWICH URBAN CHARACTERISATION STUDY



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## INTRODUCTION

The Norwich Road character area is a cluster of 19th century residential suburbs to the north west of Ipswich town centre, grouped around the roads leading westwards out of the town. It occupies low lying land to the north of the river, sloping upwards on its north east side towards Broom Hill and the town centre. The area divides into 2 character sub areas:

- **Bramford Road/Norwich Road**
- **London Road/Norwich Road**

The area developed rapidly in the 19th century along the roads leading from Barrack Corner, starting with a mix of house types along London Road. The mix of terraces and larger dwellings, many faced in Suffolk white brick, is a feature of the area.

Further west, red brick predominates and there is a clear hierarchy of terraced house types laid out along regular streets. The areas character is well preserved with few sites cleared for modern redevelopment.

This is one of the most accessible areas of Ipswich, served by major routes which support a mix of transport types. Away from the busy main roads the residential streets are quiet and provide a permeable layout of cross routes.

Streetscapes are often softened by front gardens, many of which retain their original brick walls and gatepiers. Within the rectangular blocks of housing the long narrow rear gardens have matured into attractive private spaces.



Picture: Typical late 19th century red brick terraced housing (Kitchener Road)



The Norwich Road area in 1926 (Ordnance Survey map)

**History**

In common with most of Ipswich's suburbs the area was agricultural until well into the 19th century, crossed by routes such as London Road, Bramford Lane and Norwich Road. The rural roads and lanes were scattered with farms and some larger houses such as Brooks Hall. The arable fields were interspersed with orchards and the clay pit excavations and kilns of brick works. Suffolk White bricks for much of the later housing construction may well have been fired locally.

The railway line, built by the Eastern Union Railway on an embankment, was opened in 1859. Its original bridges are intact – box girder constructions over Bramford and Norwich Roads (the latter with the 'Ferodo' advertising logo) and an arched brick structure over Bramford Lane.

The arrival of the railway provided the impetus for the town's expansion in the second half of the 19th century, and the Norwich Road area is a particularly well preserved example of suburban housing constructed during this period.



Picture: Brooks Hall, c.1910. This historic house survived until after the first world war, when the site was cleared to make way for Valley Road. Ipswich Town FC played in open fields near the house until 1878/88 when the club moved to the Portman Road site. The Inkerman pub provided changing facilities for the players. The firemen in the image may be part of a fund raising parade.

AA Gibbons flour mills on Benezet Street, c.1920. These mill buildings remain intact; important local landmarks and rare surviving examples of 19th century agricultural enterprise. The tall structure in the background is a concrete silo, since demolished.



The earliest building took place on the higher ground near Barrack Corner, at the edge of the historic town centre. Property developers started with prestigious house types; at the top of London Road, for instance, the Crescent and Wellington Terrace are in the grand style more typical of the earlier 19th century.

Nearby, Clarkson Street is on a more modest scale but the ornamental treatment of doorways and window openings show that this was also intended as middle class housing.



Cavalry Barracks. This imposing building stood at the top of a rectangular parade ground, approximately where Geneva Road and Cecil Road are now located.

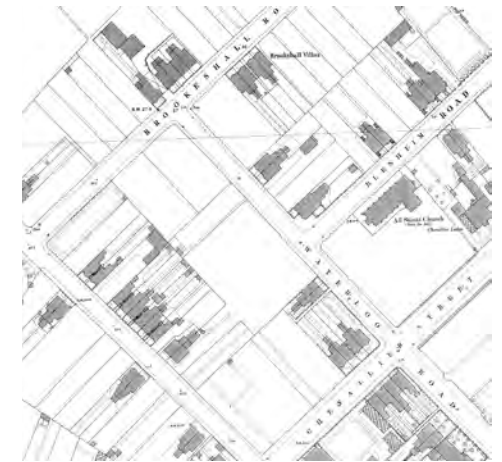


Houses at the junction of Norwich Road and All Saints Road, c.1912 and present day. Now converted into shops, these substantial late 19th century houses are a good example of the local pattern of residential development. They also demonstrate how adaptable the area's urban form can be, without the need for comprehensive redevelopment.

Further west, on more level ground, larger areas of land were sold off by owners such as the Sherrington family for development into streets of red brick terraced housing. The precedent for the more organised parcelling of land for residential use had been established some years earlier by the Freehold Land Society, in their highly successful venture in the California area.

Development of the Norwich road area was assisted by proximity of the town centre, and the existence of public transport connections – from 1898, for instance, the Ipswich Omnibus Service offered a 'Penny Omnibus' service from Bramford Road to Wherstead.

Construction took place before the existence of modern planning controls, so there was no masterplan to guide development. Instead, speculative builders tried to anticipate market demand and it is this which dictated the character of residential street layouts. Variety in the streetscape was created by churches, chapels, school buildings and corner shops.



OS map (1883) showing the piecemeal nature of speculative development in the grid of new streets between Chevallier Street and Brookeshall Road. Note the position of the original All Saints church – now the church hall.



**Transport and access**

Good road connections are a feature of the area. Important roads leading westwards out of the town centre are connected by straight streets and the inner ring road intersects with the major routes. On-street carparking is an effective informal traffic calming feature, although it has been necessary in some places to block through access, for instance in the Rendlesham Road area.

The pedestrian and cycle environment is less successful, partly because of the busy traffic environment and the lack of width on primary routes. The riverside cycle path provides an alternative route westwards from the town centre, but on-road facilities (particularly along Norwich Road) require further improvement.



Broom Hill Road. Well proportioned streets and clear sightlines are a feature of the area.



Prospect Street. Selective road closures can create pedestrian friendly areas, though they also tend to reduce legibility and permeability.



The dense residential layout and busy road network excludes areas of public green space. Rear garden plots, however, are generous and these have developed into mature green areas with some tree planting. A number of rear garden areas have been redeveloped for additional housing or industrial uses. The loss of green space in this area is significant and should be resisted where possible.

Front gardens provide an attractive green edge to some streetscapes, though in others the only visible greenery is a distant glimpse at either end of the street. Where modern development takes place, shallow front gardens should be provided so that the strong street line is maintained whilst providing space for planting.

The planting of street trees can be problematic because of lack of space both above and below ground. Where traffic control or other measures create paved pedestrian spaces and opportunities, new tree and landscaping planting must be considered.

**Biodiversity**

Norwich Road character area contains little green space, but there are important biodiversity resources at its edges: Bramford Lane allotments, Sherrington Road Park and Broomhill Park to the north and Alderman Park and Local Nature Reserve and the River Gipping to the south. Two key wildlife corridors also link into the area: the Alderman Canal and the Felixstowe/Lowestoft railway line.

The largest biodiversity resource within the area itself is concentrated within the significant areas of private gardens. The value of gardens to wildlife has been identified on the ecological network for Ipswich as they provide both habitat and transport links for wildlife to live in and move within the network.

Any future reduction in the size or number of gardens would result in a net loss of biodiversity and reduced effectiveness of the ecological network. Any new development planning should take this into account.

In addition, opportunities for enhancing the biodiversity value of homes and gardens should be promoted, e.g. Swift and Bat features, wildlife-friendly planting, fencing with gaps for hedgehogs and so on.



Dillwyn Street West.



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**Landform and views**

Although the underlying landform rises towards the north eastern edge of the character area, there are few views within its boundary. The dense pattern of development and relatively narrow streets constrain viewlines.

The regular street layouts frame long perspectives, but only two structures (the tower of All Saints, Chevallier Street and the spire of the Ipswich International Church) rise above the rooflines of surrounding buildings. The opportunity exists for development within the area or in adjacent streets to form new landmarks, but these should be carefully scaled and detailed so as to complement the domestic scale of the area.

**Views**

- a Valley Road – view of All Saints tower
- b Gatacre Road – view of All Saints tower
- c Surrey Road – view of All Saints tower
- d London Road – view of Ipswich International Church spire
- e Geneva Road – view of Ipswich International Church spire

**Landmark buildings**

- 1 Ipswich International Church
- 2 Burlington Road Baptist Church
- 3 38-44 London Road
- 4 71-76 London Road
- 5 Former flour mill, Benezet Street
- 6 Rose and Crown (former)
- 7 Cumberland Tower
- 8 County Record Office (former Gatacre Road school) (Listed Grade II)
- 9 All Saints church (Listed Grade II)
- 10 Springfield Junior School
- 11 Bramford Road Methodist church

London Road. The International Church (1870, Grade II listed, Architect Frederick Barnes) is a local landmark. In the foreground, Burlington Road Baptist Church, 1875, locally listed. Architect Brightwen Binyon.

Barrack Lane. Gatepost with inscription and ball finial, 19th century. This is a surviving part of the wall enclosing the former cavalry barracks. The site is now occupied by housing.





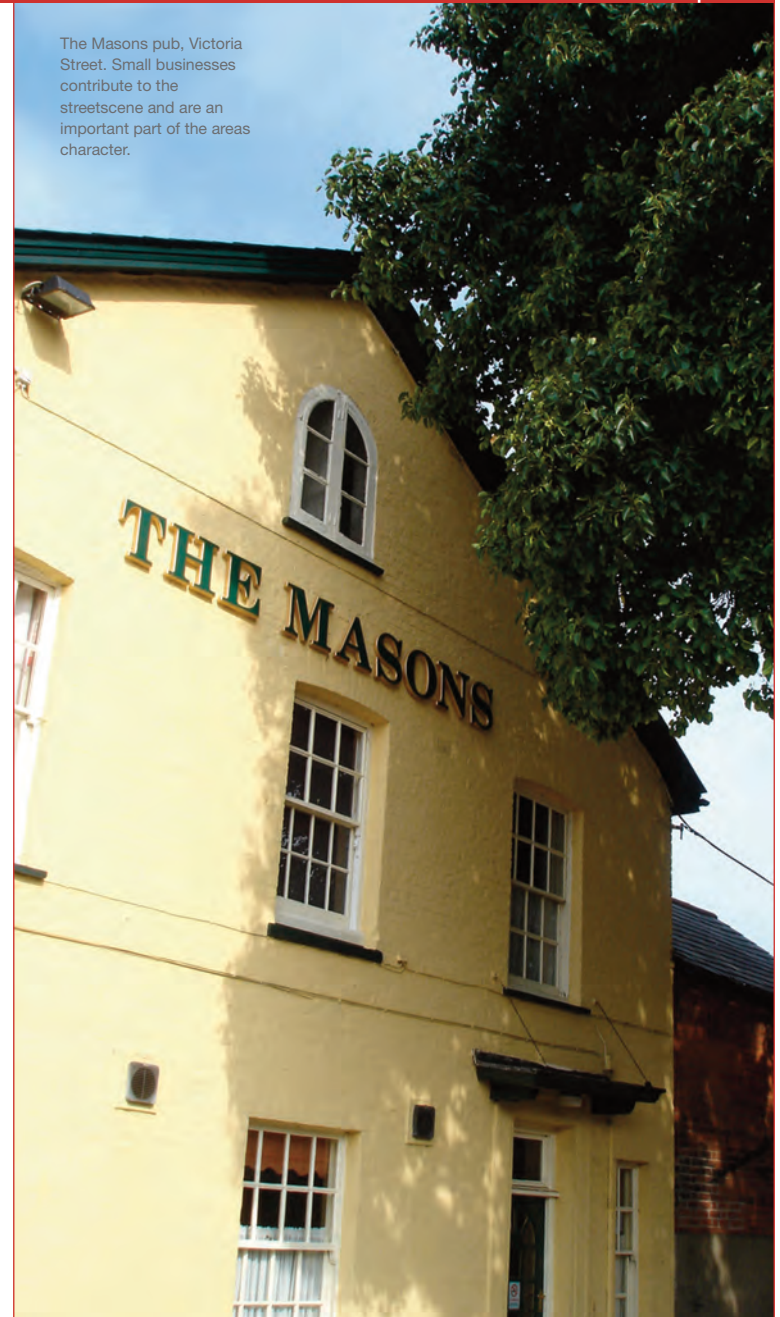


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The urban streetscape is defined by active frontages and a permeable network of routes. Legibility, however, is undermined by a lack of landmarks - it is easy to get lost in a grid of streets with few distinctive features.

Modern infill development has often ignored the traditional pattern of development in the area. There are, however, examples of new build terraced housing and this pattern of development, maintaining active frontages to the street, should be continued.

The Masons pub, Victoria Street. Small businesses contribute to the streetscene and are an important part of the areas character.



# NORWICH ROAD CHARACTER AREA

## CHARACTER SUB AREA - LONDON ROAD/NORWICH ROAD

The development of the Norwich Road suburb began with speculative housing on the edge of the historic town centre. The focus of early construction - around the middle of the 19th century - was Barrack Corner, an important meeting point of routes leading westwards out of Ipswich. At the time, this junction was dominated by the Horse Barracks, built in 1795 as a permanent base for the cavalry. The classical influence of the Barracks can be seen in the design of The Crescent and Wellington Terrace at the top of London Road, and in the Suffolk white brick detailing of the terraced housing on Clarkson Street.



Imagery copyright Getmapping PLC



**1** The Crescent, London Road. This imposing terrace is in a transitional style between the classicism of the earlier 19th century and the more picturesque style of the Victorian period.

**2** London Road. Middle class housing, second half of the 19th century. The Victorian detailing – bays, dormers, decorative roof tiling – is used with confidence, though the use of brick for the architectural detail over doors and windows is unusual.

**3** Victoria Street. Although some original details have been lost such as the sash windows, the painted render finish and shaped gables at either end of this terrace create a distinctive street frontage.

**4** London Road/Victoria Street. Fine detailing is often preserved in perimeter walling and gatepiers.

**5** Waterloo Road. The tower of All Saints church on Chevallier Street is a local landmark. The houses are good examples of later 19th / early 20th century design, with distinctive 'Arts and Crafts' details such as decorative tiling and terracotta plaques.



The transition to the decorative Victorian style of building can be traced in the building materials, from Suffolk White brick in Clarkson Street to the ornamental use of 'rustic' materials such as flint cobbles. This eclectic mix can be reflected in the design of modern development, though deliberate contrast has to be balanced by careful scaling and detail.

The transition to the style of the later Victorian period is visible in the housing further down London Road. Still targeting an upper middle class market, these houses make use of bay windows, decorative gables and dormers and mixed construction materials; red brick with stone dressings, red brick and terracotta, red brick and flint. It is important that these early suburbs are conserved and protected as far as possible from demolition and unsympathetic alteration.

More typical of the Norwich Road character area are the connecting streets between the main roads, lined with smaller red brick terraced houses. Decorative detailing is limited to brick

colour contrasts and carving on stone window and door lintels. A stone plaque often shows the date of construction. Many of the houses have narrow front gardens enclosed by brick walls with piers.

The combination of active frontage overlooking the street and garden planting is an attractive one, and new development should reflect the existing layout as far as possible. Modern and contrasting designs can of course be made to work in this setting, but street frontages should continue to be the focus of building frontages; avoid unnecessary setbacks from the streetline, or building layouts which turn inwards.



1 County Records Office, Gatacre Road. Formerly Bramford Road Board School, built in 1888, this landmark building has been adapted to house the County Records Office and Sir John Mills theatre. The modern buildings are large but sensitively integrated into the site.

2 Cumberland Tower, Norwich Road. The scale and detailing of much postwar housing in the area is less successfully integrated. Although some grassed areas and tree planting have been created, the lower density layouts, blocked roads and set backs from historic streetlines tend to undermine legibility and permeability.

3 Norwich Road shopping area. The design of Coes store shows how modern design which respects the scale and streetline can be successfully incorporated into the streetscape.

4 Benezet Street. Modern housing successfully integrated with the existing streetscape.

On the lower ground north of the river the principle roads spread out in a trident pattern. Within this triangular space - formerly fields and orchards - terraced streets laid out in the later 19th century connect the main roads and form an irregular grid of large rectangular plots. Spur roads run out at right angles, to the south towards the river, to the north up the slope of Broom Hill.



Land for development was sold in larger plots than had been available nearer the town centre. This made the laying out of long, straight streets easier, and the reproduction of standard house unit designs. Maps from the 1880s show, however, that the pattern of development was piecemeal; individual or semi detached plots were developed alongside terraces, and many plots remained empty. The result is a distinctive mix of types; villas, for instance, alongside housing with names such as 'Persevering Terrace'.

Imagery copyright Getmapping PLC



Substantial redevelopment is unlikely in this dense suburban neighbourhood. However, individual plots or smaller sites may become available and in these cases proposals should respect the scale and urban grain of the area, in particular ensuring active street frontage and continuity of the existing building line. The mixed architectural character is robust enough to absorb a variety of architectural styles, including modern design.

A shortcoming in the area is the lack of landmark buildings. This significantly reduces the legibility of the gridlike street layout. Development proposals which can add landmarks visible over rooftops and along streets could make a contribution to the area, though the design brief for such features should emphasise design quality and distinctiveness rather than bulk or height.

**1** Norwich Road. The largest houses in the area are built in the most visible locations, facing the main roads. This group of terraced properties is 'bookended' by octagonal corner bay windows with conical roofs, overlooking adjoining road junctions.

**2** Broom Hill Road. Many of the typical features of the area are visible in this street; bay windows, decorative stone lintels over windows and paired front doors, enclosed front gardens. Because of the rising ground level, the original slate roofs, leadwork and chimney stacks are conspicuous.

**3** Kitchener Road. Many of the features of the larger houses are repeated in the nearby streets. Here, decorative stonework and bay windows are a feature, as well as ornamental brick garden walls. Conservation of these details is an important aspect of protecting the areas special character.

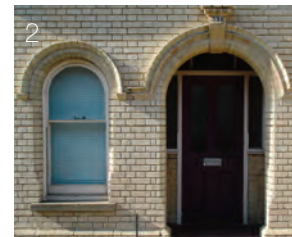
**4** Bramford Road / Richmond Road. Former off licence, now a corner shop. The area has well established local centres and services and the terraced layout has proved adaptable to changing retail conditions.



The materials palette is based on combinations of red brick with a range of other materials, for instance stone, tile and terracotta. Modern development should follow this pattern, or provide a clear justification if contrasting materials are proposed.



Paired doorways are a characteristic feature, leading to hallways. They allowed for architectural expression, for instance carved lintels or decorative canopies.



1 Norwich Road. The changes in architectural fashion at the end of the Victorian era encouraged fresh thinking about housing design and layout. These unusual Suffolk white brick villas are located at the corner of Norwich Road and Kitchener Road.

2 Entrance detail

3 Arts and Crafts detailing on a house (now an opticians) facing Norwich Road

4 Norwich Road. Speculative builders were always looking for cost saving innovations. These dormer windows facing Norwich road are made of cast iron, though it is unclear if they were made locally.

5 Protection of the area's distinctive character depends to a large extent on investment by private owners. Public and private sector development proposals need to take into account the fine grain of detail and design that has been preserved.

# SUMMARY

- Make use of existing street frontages and corners, adapting where possible rather than replacing.
- New development should reflect the predominant domestic scale. Contrasting scale should be justified in terms of its impact on its streetscape surroundings.
- Retain where possible the detail of existing frontages, including window and door lintels, garden railings and decorative footpath tiling. The distinctive appearance of individual streets should be taken into account when planning new development.
- Where new development makes use of historic forms, the detail should reflect local materials and features such as the proportion of window openings, the depth of reveals and eaves, roofing styles and design of chimneys.
- Avoid the paving of front gardens for vehicle hardstanding or the creation of street edge carparking or other hard surfaced areas to the back of pavements.
- Enhance the biodiversity of the area through the protection of front and rear gardens and street trees, and the creation of new features and habitat where possible.
- Loss of green space, including front and rear gardens, should be resisted if possible.
- The biodiversity value of homes and gardens should be encouraged.
- Backland plots should be redeveloped imaginatively rather than for conventional culs de sac. Contrasting forms and materials are possible in these enclosed sites.

## **London Rd/Norwich Rd sub area**

- Protect where possible the distinctive mix of styles and building materials which characterise the area. This includes architectural details.
- The historic mix of styles creates more opportunity for imaginative modern design, but proposals should be sensitive to the contrast between classical and more eclectic styles between the east and west parts of the area.
- New development should reflect the prevailing scale which varies in this area between 3 – 4 storey blocks and 2 storey terraced streets.

## **Bramford road/Norwich road sub area**

- Protect distinctive architectural details where possible.
- New development should reflect the contrast in scale between main road and side road frontages.
- New landmark buildings could work in this location provided their scale and design is justified in terms of local sightlines and the character of the immediate context.
- Materials choice should either reflect the prevailing combination of brick and slate, or provide contrast which can be justified in terms of the setting.