SEWELL
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL
NUMBER 6
JANUARY 2010
CONSERVATION AREAS IN NORWICH:

1. CITY CENTRE
2. BRACONDALE
3. NEWMARKET ROAD
4. HEIGHAM GROVE
5. THORPE
6. SEWELL
7. EATON
8. TROWSE MILLGATE
9. EARLHAM
10. OLD LAKENHAM
11. BOWTHORPE
12. MILE CROSS
13. THORPE HAMLET
14. THORPE RIDGE
15. UNTHANK & CHRISTCHURCH
16. HELLESDON VILLAGE
17. ST MATTHEW’S
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The Sewell conservation area (formerly known as the Ash Grove conservation area) was designated on 2 January 1979. The boundary was extended and the name changed on 5 May 1992, but the area was subsequently reduced in size on 18 September 2003 following the de-designation of Ash Grove and an area to the north of the school. The conservation area lies to the north of the city and covers an area of 8.8ha (32.4 acres).

The appraisal provides an assessment of the character and appearance of Sewell conservation area, and includes proposals for management and enhancement. This fulfils section 69 and 71 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The appraisal was subject to public consultation in September 2009 and was adopted by the city council’s executive on 27 January 2010. It should be read in conjunction with the City of Norwich local plan 2004 (in particular Chapter 3, Heritage and the built environment), detailed guidance and site specific development briefs.

The conservation area lies to the north of the city with the land sloping gently southwards towards the mediaeval city walls and the River Wensum beyond. The area is dominated by the large mature trees and open grassed space of Sewell Park, which forms the centrepiece around which houses were developed during the 19th and early 20th centuries, lining the two historically important routes into the city.

The conservation area can be divided into five sub areas, as indicated on the adjacent map. The character of each area is described in more detail in the following sections, followed by a programme of management and enhancement proposals on page 25.

The appraisal will be used by the city council to help determine planning applications affecting the conservation area, and will be taken into account by the Planning Inspectorate when considering planning appeals.
The present day character of the area was established during the residential development of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Before this the area was dominated by the Sewell Estate and Sprowston Lodge amid country lanes and a windmill.

Constitution Hill, which forms the backbone of the area, is the continuation of Magdalen Road, the main street northward out of the city. The Magdalen Gates, which form part of the city wall some distance to the south of the conservation area, were first mentioned in 1272, testifying to the ancient nature of the thoroughfare. This gate was the last to be demolished in 1808 and at this time the land to the north of the city was largely undeveloped and very rural in character.

At the beginning of the c19th the Sewell Estate was established between St Clements Hill and Constitution Hill. This included a landscaped garden known as Wren Park. In 1908 the estate was divided up and the park was dedicated to the city and called ‘Sewell Park’, following the wishes of Philip Sewell.

The Sewell family lived in Clare House, which was described in the Norfolk Chronicle on 10th July 1841 as being “A substantial mansion built in a simple and unostentatious style of architecture having a neaty front of white brick, handsome portico and the entire exterior to correspond, standing in a pleasure ground and lawn, tastefully laid out and planted with choice shrubs and ornamental trees, having a handsome iron Palisade fence on the north and east sides. In front of the house is an Enclosure of Fine Land, part pasture and part arable, containing 7a 2r 24p commanding a fine panoramic view of the city.”

Philip Sewell’s sister Anna Sewell (1820-78) was the author of the international best seller, Black Beauty. She was born in Great Yarmouth and died and was buried at Lamas. Her novel, which highlights cruelty to horses in mid-Victorian England, was reputedly based on a horse in her brother’s stable.
which must have been close to the present location of, or actually the present day, Sewell Barn Theatre.

In many ways the overall character of the area we see today owes a great deal to the shaping force of the Sewell family. The fountain and horse trough at the south entrance to the park and a commemorative window in the north transept of the church are eloquent testimony to their philanthropy.

Philip Sewell was born in 1822. He became an engineer and was of some note both for his work and as a local benefactor. It was his wish that the southern part of his estate, formally opened by his family for treats on Thursday afternoons, should become a park for the citizens of Norwich. Following his death in February 1906 his sisters and the then Mayor, E.G. Buxton, worked to bring this into being.

The land was presented by Mr Edward Sewell and the Misses Sewell who gave 260 towards the laying out of the grounds. There was good weather for the opening ceremony on 6 July 1908 and it was reported that hundreds of people attended, amongst whom were the Mayor Walter Rye, The Sheriff and local dignitaries. The park was declared open by Miss Margaret Sewell.

Until the 1880s the rest of the area was largely undeveloped with only a few large detached houses, quiet lanes, trees and meadows.

Denmark Road, then known as Church Lane, was only partly built up, with its northern side bounded by the large grounds of Sprowston Lodge. The grounds of the Lodge continued as far north as Ash Grove.

St Clements Hill was only partially developed with substantial houses opposite the grounds of Clare House, the family home of the Sewell Estate.

Nearby small terraced houses surrounded a corn grinding windmill. This area has now all been redeveloped, but the mill is recalled by the place name of the roads: Millcroft, Millers Lane and the area known as Mill Hill.

Little seems to have been recorded of Sprowston Lodge except that it was described as a “large white brick building”. Its grounds were entirely developed with the present houses before WWI, but the name of the former gardener, Thomas Tillett lives on in the road name Tillett Road.
O.S. MAP 1884 SEWELL HISTORIC MAP

©Crown Copyright 2007
O.S. MAP 1907-14 SEWELL HISTORIC MAP
In 1929 the Blyth School (now Sewell Park College) was built, redeveloping the remainder of the Sewell Estate. Clare House, the family home, remained as a part of the school but was demolished in the 1970s to allow for further development when the school became comprehensive.

Also demolished was a large thatched pavilion serving tennis courts to the north of the school. The only remaining building from the time of the Sewell Estate is the barn which has become the Sewell Barn Theatre. The base of the barn is likely to be the oldest construction in the conservation area, with the possible exception of some flint boundary walls.

The houses lining the east side of Sewell Park along Constitution Hill were built in the late 1890s and the map of 1906 shows us that the area was by then established as we see it today.

It is remarkable that having been developed almost exclusively within the 19th century the area has been so little altered in the last 100 years, with the exception of the multi-phased development of the school.

During WWII parts of the school were damaged by bombs and blasts. Pelham Road and Roseberry Road also suffered considerable damage, however in general the area remained remarkably unscathed so that it retains a high degree of completeness and does not now exhibit the effects of later infill which characterise many other areas of the city.

The group comprising the church, Sunday school, Whalebone public house and its malthouse, remains little changed. This has long been a busy junction; only the nature and quantity of the traffic and the equipment used to manage it, will have changed throughout the 20th century. From the Depot on Sprowston Road a tram line, which was constructed in 1898-9 and opened on 30 July 1900, passed along Denmark Street on its way to the city.
URBAN DESIGN AND STREETSCAPE

Sewell is characterised by two main phases of early and late 19th century suburban development of housing lining two routes into the city centre. These converge at the southern end of the area forming a triangular space occupied by the park. Large mature trees, both within the park, the school grounds and in the surrounding private gardens, give a predominantly green and established appearance to the area. This is in marked contrast to both the tightly grained urban environment to the south of the area and the open, less densely developed area to the north.

Although the tram has long since gone, the area is still busy with traffic and pedestrians passing through the area along Constitution Hill.

Thomas Fuller said that “Norwich is either a city in an orchard or an orchard in a city, so equally are the houses and trees blended in it; so that the pleasure of the country and the populousness of the city meet here together. Yet in this mixture, the inhabitants participate nothing of the rusticalness of the one but altogether of the urbanity and civility of the other.” Although written in the 19th century the townscape quality of the Sewell area reflects his comments even today as the spaces between the buildings and the trees continue to lend the area an air of dignity.

The busy road junction at the southern end of the park is the active hub of the conservation area and forms sub area A. It contains the church, former Sunday school, now church hall and the public house with its associated historic malthouse.

These represent the built amenities and social focus of the area and have been included because, although the streetscape is not currently of the highest quality, the key buildings remain little altered and are good, typical examples of their age, type, design and materials.

The church and school are set back from the road so that they do not dominate the street scene.

Indeed the church has a working clock, but few would see it to consult the time. In contrast to the busy streets the churchyard provides a calm green oasis. The area has two memorials:

Glimpsed views of Christ Church
URBAN DESIGN AND STREETSCAPE

The area adjacent to the malthouse, which was formerly a row of small terraced houses, is now a gap site currently used for informal parking. Residential development is planned.

Development which reflects the massing and design of adjacent 19th century building will be a suitable addition to the area and the opportunity should be taken to improve the poor quality paving and removing the unsightly advertising hoardings.

Sewell Park and the houses which face the park on Constitution Hill and St Clements Hill form sub area B. Sewell Park is a green open public space and forms the centrepiece of the conservation area.

Mature trees, coniferous and deciduous, stand mainly near the perimeter which is bounded by a low flint retaining wall to the west and concrete blockwork to the east. The wall is topped by modern standard galvanised steel fence which has replaced wire fencing since 1992.

A modern set of iron gates of some quality marks the southern and main entrance whilst original decorative iron bollards and plain iron railings and gates define the two northern entrances. The original park boundary is likely to have been iron railings, such as these. The marble water trough which stands outside the south entrance is not given the townscape recognition it deserves, surrounded as it is by street clutter, materials and definition of space of indifferent quality.

The park and surrounding houses are on elevated ground. This may be evidence that these routes are very ancient, worn down over the centuries to leave higher ground on each side. Alternatively the steep gradient of St Clements Hill and Constitution Hill may have been reduced in the 19th century when the area was developed to assist horse drawn traffic to manage the steep hills. This has resulted in the need for retaining walls. These are constructed in brick, flint (sometimes bitumen covered) and blockwork and are an important feature of the area.

There are attractive views into the park from all sides and from within the park there are commanding views over the city, including the cathedral spire, the castle, particularly from the north end and the towers of City Hall, Peter Mancroft and nearby St Giles Church.
The houses which overlook the park were all developed over the 20 years from 1890. All are characteristically set far back from the road with a very broad, graciously proportioned pavement edged by granite kerb stones. Brick retaining walls with a coffer detail form property boundaries and the building line is close to the boundary giving only shallow front gardens with steps up to the front doors.

There are views into and out of the conservation area along streets of terraced houses, which are contemporary with those within the area.

Sub area C comprises the school and its grounds. The school buildings of 1929 dominate the brow of the hill and form a focal point.

The relationship between the school and its generous green open spaces and mature trees is an important part of the townscape character and good views of the school façade can be gained from the north park.

Sub area D is the top part of St Clements Hill which comprises the west entrance to the school and the early 19th century houses on the west side of the road.

The area adjacent to the west entrance to the school and the north west entrance to the park is of poor streetscape value, marred by a poorly detailed traffic management scheme. This intervention is at odds with the setting. In contrast with the houses lower down St Clements Hill, those above the Millcroft turning are characterised as being set well back from the footway with generous front gardens, many containing mature trees. A Cedar of Lebanon and a large Beech are notable examples in the street scene.

In common with other houses in the road the houses share a common building line, although they vary more in their design. The footway is considerably narrower and shaded by trees on both sides of the road. Front gardens are bounded by walls and hedges contributing to an enclosed tunnel like atmosphere. There are glimpses of the cathedral spire in views to the south. The school grounds adjoin the east boundary to the road and are bounded by a long flint retaining wall, which gives a sense of tidy uniformity to the view along the road. Its texture contrasts pleasingly with the brick of the houses opposite.
URBAN DESIGN AND STREETSCAPE

The side elevation of the school is glimpsed through mature trees.

Sub area E is formed by the top part of Constitution Hill. Although the buildings from Tillett Road northward are roughly contemporary with the top part of St Clements Hill, they are more varied in architecture, considerably busier in character and more open in their aspect.

The houses which line the east side of the road are mainly semi-detached with a regular building line set back from the footway to give small front gardens generally set behind brick boundary walls and hedges. Plot widths are similar to those on the upper part of St Clements Hill but are wider than those of the houses facing the park. Trees on the east side of the school grounds include beech, but are mainly pines and cast little shade. It is not clear why the wall on this side of the park is not flint like the other side, but it is possible that the road was widened and the earlier flint wall replaced in utilitarian blockwork.

The character of the road is strongly dictated by the large number of vehicles passing through. But nevertheless there is a marked change on entering the conservation area from the north imparted by the architecture, trees and green spaces with glimpses of the City Hall tower in the distance.
URBAN DESIGN AND STREETSCAPE MAP

Key

- Historic walls and railings
- Important boundary walls and railings
- Detrimental buildings (see text)
- Landmark
- Views
- Glimpsed views

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ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Residential development dates from the 19th and early 20th centuries which gives the conservation area a harmonious character and appearance. The most notable exception is Sewell Park College which is a very prominent building within the area.

The oldest surviving historic building is the charming Star Cottage on Constitution Hill, which dates from 1800. The church dates from 1841-2 and the former Sunday School dates from 1850. The largest and most dominant building in the area is Sewell Park College, constructed in 1929.

The architectural character of the area is dictated by rows of Victorian villas which are representative of the period in terms of architectural design and appearance.

The character of the earlier houses to the north of St Clements Hill and Constitution Hill is a little different from that of the later houses to the south, which overlook the park.

The later houses are terraced, with the exception of the fine 34 St Clements Hill and the houses at 20 and 22 Constitution Hill which were built as a pair of detached houses and later joined with infill buildings which are easy to see. The earlier houses are more varied in design and material, more usually semi-detached; tending to be squarer in proportion; often with a shallower pitched roof and frequently having small pane windows.
ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The later houses are taller in relation to their width; typically terraced and have large pane windows. Most houses are brick built, mainly red brick but occasionally with white gault clay. Many have ornamentation in special bricks to form decorative eaves, sills and window and door surrounds.

Some show fine craftsmanship in the fineness of the jointing and the precision of the gauged brickwork over the doors and windows. Of particular note are the good number of original front doorways which have survived and the number of original windows.

A few earlier houses are finished in render but the majority are of two storey red brick under slate roofs of 35° slopes. Some houses have traditional clay pantiles, some glazed. Unfortunately a number of traditional, natural roof coverings have been replaced with large heavy concrete tiles. Almost all houses have however retained their chimney stacks and pots so that these form a characteristic and regular punctuation to the skyline.

There are exceptions to the general age and style of housing of the area which together make a very positive contribution to the architectural character.

The house at 82/84 Constitution Hill dates from c1800 and is listed grade II. It is also known as Chaumiere de L’Etolie, which translates as Star Cottage (1). It is designed as an ornamental cottage or cottage orne in the French fashion and modelled in knapped flint with brick and stone dressings. The word chaumiere actually translates as thatched cottage, however the shallow roof pitch and detailing make it very unlikely that this building was ever thatched. Although it uses local materials, in design it is unique in the conservation area. One theory is that it may have been built by or for émigrés fleeing the turmoil of the French Revolution.
As has been noted, the history of the area is very much bound up with the Sewell family estate. The only substantial surviving element of the estate is the building now known as the Sewell Barn Theatre (2). This is still recognisable of agricultural origin with its use as a barn visible by size, proportions and windowless walls. It is brick built with the lower courses clearly of some antiquity. The Sewell Barn Theatre Trust, set up for performing arts, was opened in October 1979, transforming the building, according to a report in the EDP from a “leaky, dust filled old barn”. The building dominates the entrance to the area on entering Constitution Hill. The scale and massing of the new buildings do not adversely affect the setting of Sewell Barn, and can be considered to be neutral.

The parish church of Christ Church (3), listed Grade II, dates from 1840 and was designed by John Brown (1805-76). With expanding populations and newly developed areas the 1830s saw the beginning of a great period of restoration of old churches and building of new ones in the city and county. John Brown made a major contribution to this expansion of church provision as he was both County and Diocesan Surveyor and in his county capacity was involved in the majority of official buildings from 1840-1860; there are several other listed buildings in the city designed by the architect in a similar style.

The church is constructed in flint with white gault brick dressings in what has been called the Lancet style, loosely based on the style of early English church architecture. Pevsner describes the church as “having a heavy bellcote and heavy pinnacles”.

Internally the church is painted and quite plain, but relieved by a memorial south window dedicated to Philip Sewell, who apart from being the local benefactor, was also a church warden for 28 years.

The adjacent former church school (4) was designed by J S Benest and A Newsom in 1850 in a whimsical gothic style in materials to match the church. These buildings, together with the war memorial (5) and boundary walls form a group, which lend a particular sense of stylistic gravitas and permanence to this corner of the conservation area.
ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The school, now Sewell Park College (6) was built in 1929 as the Blyth School for Girls. The original school building is a stately, symmetrical neo-classical brick building with stone details and a plain tile steeply pitched roof and a long façade dominating the crest of the hill overlooking the park. It is built on a figure of eight plan enclosing two courtyards and has great presence within the conservation area. Yet, despite being of a marked change in scale, it compliments its setting by being of similar materials and storey heights with the rhythm of bays recalling those of the surrounding terraced houses.

The Whalebone public house (7) is in many ways the archetypical Victorian corner pub, two storey with a corner entrance, now blocked. The adjacent Malthouse (8) is the only industrial building in the conservation area and dates from between 1840 and 1880. The malting process involves wetting barley grains and keeping them warm and ventilated on an open floor until they start to sprout. They are then roasted ready to be used in beer making. It is not known if any of the malting floor survives but small industrial buildings of this kind are thought to be uncommon in Norfolk.

Given the close proximity of this building to the public house we may surmise that The Whalebone brewed its own beer on the premises in the 19th century.

The corner building at 103, Roseberry Road is a former post office, marked on the 1906 map. It is now and possibly always was the only shop building in the conservation area.
**NATURAL CHARACTER**

The trees and green open spaces of Sewell Park make a significant contribution to the character of the conservation area. Together with the many mature trees and private gardens nearby, the park also provides an important habitat for wildlife. It is possible that some of the mature trees are older than the oldest buildings within the conservation area and so act as an important reminder of its more rural past, and also provides hints of the designed landscape of the former Sewell Estate.

Sewell Park is owned and managed by the city council and forms the heart of the conservation area. It is visible from both Constitution Hill and St Clements Hill and makes an important contribution to the views approaching from the south, particularly the entrance which is framed by six flowering cherry trees. The park has provided an important recreational resource since 1908 and continues to be a well used and well maintained public space.

The park is characterised by large mature trees, both deciduous and coniferous, set in open areas of close cut grass, including good examples of mature London Planes. The area to the north of the park, which once contained a serpentine path and bedding plants, is now much simplified and contains largely non native ornamental shrubs and a series of mature Scotts Pines. These form an attractive foreground feature with the façade of the school as a backdrop.

Private gardens and the grounds of the school and Christ Church graveyard also contain large mature trees which make very positive contributions to the character of the area. Of particular note is the magnificent Cedar of Lebanon at 76, St Clements Hill, the Beech tree at 96a, and the row of Oak trees in the school grounds opposite.
A high proportion of houses within the area have gardens both back and front. The modern house at 36 St Clements Hill, South View, has an exceptionally large mature garden. Frontages are typically bounded by hedges. These make an important contribution to the character of the area and provide varied wildlife habitats. Together with the many mature trees and shrubs, they give the street a cooler, shadier microclimate which contrasts with the more urban character of Magdalen Road to the south.

The churchyard of Christ Church at the junction of Denmark Road and Magdalen Road is an area with several mature silver birch trees where shade loving species may thrive. The grave stones also provide a suitable habitat for mosses and lichens to become established.

To the north of the area the school grounds provide open areas of grass and trees for amenity space for the children to enjoy.

There has been some planting of young trees in the park but there is an opportunity to ensure that the policy of providing a good range of ages and species is followed here with more systematic successional planting so that as the existing trees go past their maturity others are well established to take their place.

There is also an opportunity to manage some of the park in such a way as to increase biodiversity and nurture plants which support bees, moths and butterflies, for example by altering the moving regimes and introducing pollen rich meadow species, perhaps in the wide margins around the park.
NATURAL CHARACTER MAP

Sewell
NATURAL
CHARACTER

Key

Trees
Open space/park
TPO sites
Important individual trees

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The city council has a duty to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area where possible. The following table highlights opportunities to improve the management of the conservation area and to carry out enhancement. Inclusion on the list is not a commitment by the council to undertake the work and further work will be required to establish the feasibility of these proposals. Each opportunity has been identified as a short, medium or long term goal reflecting its cost and complexity.

Enhancement of the conservation area also depends on the care that individual owners take with the maintenance and repair of their properties and due consideration to preserving and enhancing the conservation area when carrying out alterations to their properties. The list therefore also identifies opportunities for private owners.

After five years the appraisal will be reviewed to see whether the character and appearance of the conservation area has been successfully enhanced and to assess whether new opportunities are available.

(S) Short term
Straightforward enhancement proposals, which should be relatively easy to achieve or are included in existing work programmes

(M) Medium term
Involves some expenditure and/or complexity

(L) Long term
Complex proposals involving larger financial commitments

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<th>Action</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main Sewell Park entrance</td>
<td>Utilitarian park railings and footway surfacing around the commemorative horse/cattle trough. Poor planting and maintenance of trough and clutter of signs</td>
<td>Renew railings and surfacing with more appropriate materials and designs. Consider options for the trough including re-introducing water. Rationalise traffic signs</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Highways</td>
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## MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

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<td>2</td>
<td>Site of former St Clements Garage</td>
<td>Open, informal parking and large advertising hoardings and concrete slab surfacing adjacent to footway</td>
<td>Bring forward suitable development of the site for residential or commercial use. Include suitable landscaping and surfacing</td>
<td>S-M</td>
<td>Owner and Norwich City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parking area for church hall</td>
<td>The former Sunday/infant school playground, now a car park, has weak townscape value and fails to compliment the adjacent Victorian Gothic architecture of Christ Church and church hall</td>
<td>Consider ways of improving boundary appearance to enclose car park and provide a more positive street frontage</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Owner/Church of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>St Clements Hill</td>
<td>Broad footway and low curb height encouraging parking on the pavement. Visually intrusive in front of generously proportioned Victorian terraces and semi detached houses</td>
<td>Re-design to discourage pavement parking</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Highways/residents</td>
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## MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

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<td>5</td>
<td>Traffic management scheme, top park and school entrance on St Clements Hill</td>
<td>Poor quality design and damaged railings along road side</td>
<td>Redesign and re-new with suitable materials</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Highways</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ManagemenT and enhancement map

Key:
1 to 5 Management and Enhancement sites (see text)
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The following buildings have been listed Grade II either because of their architectural interest, their historic interest, their close historical association or because they form part of an important group.

Constitution Hill
82-84, Chaumiere de L’Etoile

Magdalen Road
Christ Church (includes war memorial)

APPENDIX B

The following buildings within the conservation area are included on the local list for their architectural and/or historical importance. These buildings are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for local historical associations, but do not merit full statutory protection. The local list is due to be updated.

Constitution Hill
2-52, 68-74, 88-96, 104-110 (even)

Church Hall (former School)
1850. Former Church School now Church Hall by Benest. 19th Gothic revival with flint walls, white brick and stone detailing to windows. Slate ‘fishtail’ roof.

St Clements Hill
Maltings (former St Clements Garage)

A full list with descriptions can be viewed at www.norwich.gov.uk

Constitution Hill
Sewell Barn Theatre
C19th (possibly some C18th?)
Red brick. Pantile roof.

Importance: Former agricultural building associated with historic use of site with connections to Anna Sewell.

Magdalen Road
Church Hall (former School)
1850. Former Church School now Church Hall by Benest. 19th Gothic revival with flint walls, white brick and stone detailing to windows. Slate ‘fishtail’ roof.

Importance: Forms part of a group with Christ Church.

Horse/Cattle Trough and fountain (south entrance to Sewell Park)
1917. Commemorative street furniture erected by Ada Sewell for her aunts Anna and Edith Sewell ‘lovers of animals’. Triangular design constructed of granite.

Importance: Historic street furniture commemorating the Sewell sisters (one of whom was the author of the novel ‘Black Beauty’).

St Clements Hill
Maltings (former St Clements Garage)

Importance: Of historical industrial significance and group value with adjacent Whalebone PH.