

Heritage Assessment and Listed Building Appraisal

Golden Lion Hotel - The Green – Hunstanton

1. Introduction

In the mid 19th century, Henry le Strange had the vision of a new seaside resort on the coastline of West Norfolk.

In her memoirs, Henry le Strange's eldest daughter Ina wrote that during her childhood the family enjoyed using a small fishing lodge on the marshes to the north of Heacham, a favourite location for them during the summer.

"There was not a building of any sort between Hunstanton lighthouse and Heacham village," she wrote. "So empty was that long stretch of shore that father and Mr Charles Bagot, who often stayed with the family at Hunstanton Hall, used to walk over the new Park and fields in a beeline down to the shore and bathe before breakfast in the summer and not see a soul."

In 1840 le Strange could see the potential of this charming corner of his Estate. It has a picturesque coastline with a favourable aspect facing towards the Wash, bracing sea-air and a plentiful supply of fresh fish and shellfish.

In addition, there were colourful cliffs at the northern end graduating to sand dunes in the south, fringed by a sandy beach dotted with rocks.

He considered such a location could well be as attractive to visitors as the increasingly fashionable seaside watering-places found elsewhere on the British coastline. But he also realised such visitors coming to Hunstanton would need accommodation. His search ended in a sloping grassy meadow running down to the sea where the cliffs met the dunes, and he decided the site would be the centre of the new seaside town; which was originally called St Edmunds in honour of the saint whose chapel stood nearby.

Henry began his great venture by engaging one of the leading architects of the day, and on March 24th 1840 paid £21 for the plan of a proposed hotel from Decimus Burton. He was a leading and prolific architect of the Regency era, responsible for several London parks and surrounding buildings, the enclosure of Buckingham Palace, the plans for Fleetwood, Folkstone, St Leonards and Tunbridge Wells. One of the founding Fellows of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Burton's works include Hyde Park, London Zoo and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew – and his proposed hotel was to be the first building in le Strange's new town.

The New Inn (Golden Lion) was the only building between the Lighthouse and Heacham for some 16 years, becoming known as Le Strange's Folly.

Added to the Historic England page is additional detail submitted by a member of the public, August 2022:

"The 29 room hotel was built from 1846 and is now part of the Coast and Country Hotels Group. The first building in the 'New' Hunstanton, early directories list it as Hunstanton-St Edmund's the brain child of Henry Le Strange. The hotel, possibly by William Butterfield, opened as the New Inn in 1847. Hunstanton is not in my 1850 directory but by 1854 it was known as the Royal Hotel. By my 1877 directory it has changed to the Golden Lion Hotel.

As part of the Specialist Leisure Group, in May 2020 the hotel closed when the group went into administration "due to the impact of COVID-19". It opened 4 months later on 2nd October taken on by the Warrington-based company, Bespoke Hotels. Closed again due to the COVID lockdown it partially re-opened in May 2021 as part of newly-formed collection of former Shearings Hotels, Coast & Country Hotel Collection. Licensees or managers include; 1854-1856 Mary Savory; 1864-1869 Henry Whiting; 1870-1872 Thomas Mahon; 1877 Mrs Elizabeth Mahon; 1879-1896 William W Nourse and Benjamin F Rowell; 1901-1912 Miss Kate Rennison; 1916 Miss R S Dangerfield, manageress; 1933-1937 Charles Ernest Grey."

The hotel has once again changed ownership and the new owners are a locally well established family business who own The Lodge Hotel at Old Hunstanton and Briarfields Hotel at Titchwell as well as other accommodation offers including The Lighthouse and local tourism related retail businesses.

The ambition is to give the hotel a sustainable future, much more so than the last 50 years of several varied ownerships each with approaches that have seen changes that have altered the quality and indeed perception of what the hotel has to offer.

2. Location

Refer to submitted drawings and the mapping extracts below.

3. List Entry Description No: 1342241 Grade II

Hotel, formerly the Royal Hotel. C.1850, preceding the development of New Hunstanton by the Le Stranges of Hunstanton Hall. Probably by William Butterfield, the friend of Henry Le Strange and architect for New Hunstanton from 1862. Squared carstone laid in random courses, stone dressings tiled roof. "L" plan, 2 storeys with attics. High Victorian Tudor Gothic. To Green a 2 gable facade with cross wing, details and forms picturesquely varied. East gable with projecting stone roofed ground floor bow with stone mullioned and transomed cross window. First floor one 4-light cross window with Gothic arched heads, attic with one 2-light casement. 2 storey wing to east is a C20 addition. Cross wing with off axis gabled porch with pointed arch entrance. Ground floor to east has one arched single light mullioned casement and one triple light arched headed cross window, first floor has one single light and 2 3-light straight headed cross windows, attic has 2 gabled dormers. West gable blank except for single ground floor casement, and externally expressed chimney breast and stack. Long returned north wing 2 storeys with attics with attached C20 flat roofed ground floor extension.

4. Area Appraisal

The property, as identified in the List Entry, is listed for its special architectural or historic interest.

The 1988 aerial photograph shows the buildings very much as today showing the modern apartment blocks to the north west, associated parking to the north and the shopping precinct on Northgate to the east – all formerly open land much of which the original hotel benefitted from.

The 1946 aerial photograph shows the hotel and the Town Hall (1896) – Grade II, List Entry Number: 1171478 – on their own "island" of land with the new town growing around them. The pier is present, esplanade gardens and The Green are well established and to the South the Sandringham Hotel can be seen sitting north of the then present railway terminus.

1st Edition OS map shows the Hotel and Town Hall much the same as the 1946 aerial map and the first terraces of residential buildings to the north and the east.

The Town is known as Hunstanton St Edmunds and the "old" village to the north is Hunstanton.

The Tithe map shows the site as a field – 177 – with no evidence of the new town at all – with the Hotel to be the first building to be built. The extended extract shows a very sparsely populated / built form village, Hunstanton, with Hunstanton Hall dominating the area. There is an indication of the Lighthouse on the map.

One road is shown heading west off the main road into what would be Hunstanton St Edmunds - this is what is now known as Westgate which no longer travels uninterrupted to the beach and coastline.

5. Proposed Works

The proposal allows for a new conservatory lounge to be of painted timber and a glass lantern style roof.

Consideration has been given to the original building as well as the later extensions – both single storey - the one to the North being more in keeping with the original architecture and detail especially as seen in the stone windows being arched to match. The extension to the south was an early 1900s addition. Whilst it respected the stone work mid rail datum of the original building, just as the earlier extension had, it lost some of the finer details and the stone windows, some replaced in formed concrete, are square with no arch detailing.



Photo showing the first extension only.

It is the stone datum that we have also acknowledged in this proposal allowing the new roof profile to sit just below.

Equally, the new roof profile will sit above the original windows on this elevation, preserving the windows and allowing them to be viewed as original details from within the proposed room.

Essentially the proposal will softly plug into the existing fabric without physical harm.

One of the later extension windows is proposed to be removed to allow free flow between the original lounge and the new conservatory.

The area that the conservatory is proposed is currently a hard surfaced terrace served by one small door which will be retained but not used.

The conservatory will make better use of the remaining west facing garden, a space that has been underutilised and is largely unknown or appreciated by passers by. The conservatory will

also provide a new space, part of the garden that can be used all year round – an important detail when considering the economic prosperity of the town and the viability and sustainability of the future of the hotel itself.

The timber frame will sit on a brick plinth where the fall in the topography will need to be addressed in landscaping detail.

The fenestration has been designed to reflect the proportions of the existing with long vertical proportions and a cross rail.

The proposal adds 115m² to the internal floor area.



Photo of the Snadringham Hotel - built in 1870 by the Great Eastern Railway – with a timber frame conservatory of a grand scale facing The Green. The hotel was demolished in 1967.



Picture 1868 – note that there are no extensions on the north west elevation. This is very much the original hotel building.



The south west corner extension.





North West corner extension





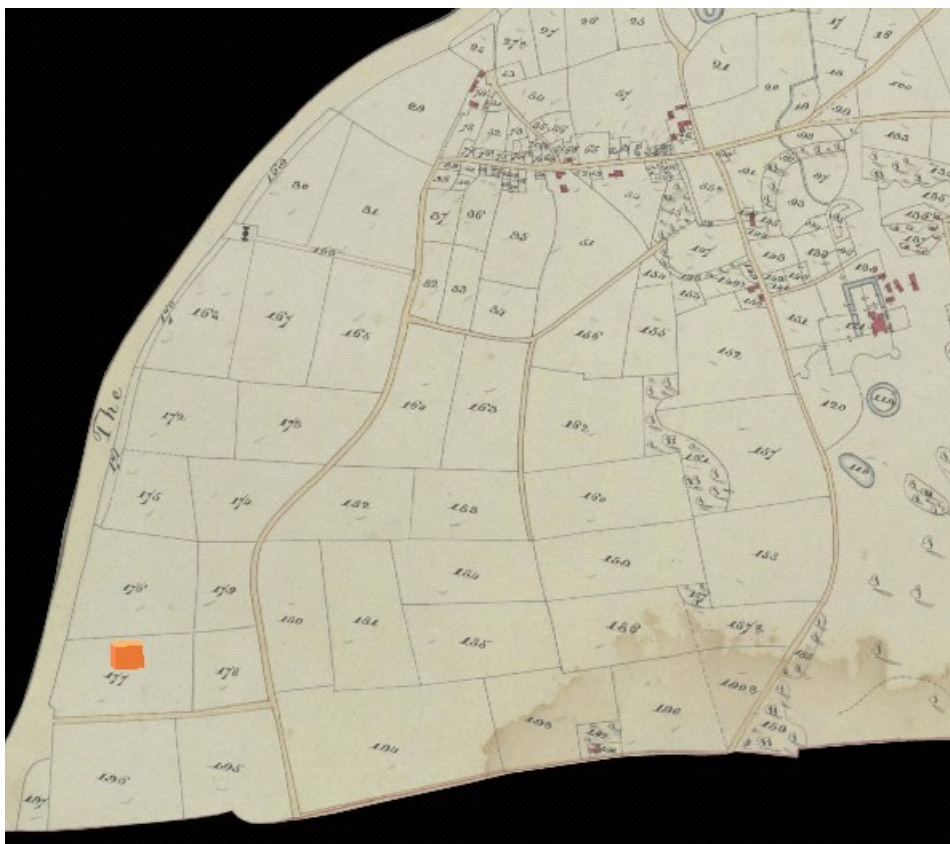
NCC 1988



RAF 1946 / 1960



OS 1st Edition



NCC Tithe