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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** Conservation Areas are designated by Local Planning Authorities under the Planning Acts. Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a Conservation Area as :

‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

**1.2** North Devon Council, as the local planning authority, has a duty to designate parts of the District it sees appropriate as Conservation Areas. There are currently 40 Conservation Areas in this District (excluding those within Exmoor National Park ).

**1.3** Carrying out a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is an important method for identifying the qualities and characteristics that such an area possesses and to provide a basic summary of the elements, which collectively contribute towards the special character and appearance of the conservation area. A clear and comprehensive appraisal of the Fremington Quay Conservation Area provides a sound basis for development control decision-making, and assists the Council in defending such decisions that are subject to appeal. Generally the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be preserved or enhanced through:

- Providing controls and regulating development through the planning system.
- Applying the extra controls that designation provides over demolition, minor development and the protection of trees.
- Environmental enhancement schemes and possibly providing financial assistance for the repair and restoration of specific buildings.

**1.4** Encouraging public bodies such as the local highways authority or utility companies to take opportunities to improve the street scene through the appropriate design and sensitive siting of street furniture (and retention of historic features of interest), or the removal of eyesores and street features that have a negative impact such as overhead wires.

**1.5** The purpose of this character appraisal is to:

- Analyse the character of the designated area and identify the components and features of its special interest.
- Outline the planning policies and controls that apply to the Conservation Area.
- Identify opportunities for the future enhancement of the Conservation Area.

**1.6** It should be noted that the omission of any particular building, structure, tree, wall or any other feature from being highlighted within this character appraisal does not imply that it is not of special interest, nor is there an implication in such an omission that it does not make a positive contribution, or conversely a negative contribution, to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Also the map is unable to identify accurately every tree of significance and value to the Conservation Area.

## 2 Background

- This appraisal for the Fremington Quay Conservation Area was initiated in November 2009.
- The first designation of land found within the present conservation area boundary was by North Devon Council in November 1996.
- This appraisal will replace an earlier appraisal for the Fremington Quay Conservation Area completed in August 1997.
- The completed appraisal, along with the suggested boundary changes, was adopted and became effective in December 2010.

### 3 Facts and Figures

**3.1** The Fremington Quay Conservation Area covers an area of 10.4 hectares (25.6 acres), an increase from 7.5 hectares (18.4 acres) prior to the boundary changes in 2010. Of the buildings and structures within it the lime kiln 10 metres north of the former railway line is the only listed building (Grade II).

**3.2** Following the boundary review the conservation area now has two separate parts, a northern section which remains unchanged in its extent from the 1997 designation, and a new southern area covering the remains of Fishley Wharf and Muddlebridge Cottages on the opposite bank of Fremington Pill with an area of 2.9 hectares (7.2 acres).

The listed building description for the Lime Kiln is given in Appendix 1

**3.3** There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the boundary of the conservation area or within its immediate vicinity.

## 4 Historic Development

**4.1** Fremington Quay and Pill have no doubt been used as landing and docking points both formally and informally for centuries, however it was not until the mid 19th century that the Quayside began to take on its present form and appearance.

**4.2** Prior to 1848 goods arriving by sea destined for Barnstaple had been transferred into barges at Appledore for the final stage of the journey up the River Taw. In that year the 'Taw Vale Railway and Dock Company' opened a new horse-drawn railway from the quay that they had constructed at Fremington to the centre of Barnstaple. The line carried passengers as well as goods and was soon upgraded to steam power, and was later joined to the wider rail network with links to Exeter in 1851 and Bideford in 1855.

**4.3** The railway arrived and departed the conservation area along the route of what is now the Tarka Trail, however along the quayside the line would have split and branched to provide sidings and loading platforms along the edge of the quayside, before recombining to cross the narrow iron girder bridge.

**4.4** The railway changed ownership several times and was eventually nationalised in 1948, becoming a part of the Southern Region of British Railways. Traffic gradually declined and the last passenger train ran along the line in 1965, although it remained open as a goods line until 1982. The land comprising the trackbed passed to Devon County Council and was eventually made into the footpath and cycleway forming part of the Tarka Trail.

**The view out to the listed limekilns from the western end of the quayside. Safety fencing can be seen at the high points of the site as well as blocking the kiln mouths.**



**4.5** The conservation area also contains the remains of three limekilns built into a bank on the west bank of the Pill. Although these limekilns date to the Victorian period the practise of importing limestone by sea and burning it to produce quicklime for use in agriculture or as a building material is centuries old. It is likely that these Victorian

kilns represent the latest phase of an industry that had existed on the site for long before the construction of the railway, with the river used to transport goods further inland.

**4.6** Since the area was designated as a Conservation Area in 1997, Fremington Quay has undergone a significant degree of change. The large slabs of broken and decayed concrete which covered large areas of the ground have been removed and replaced with areas of grass and tarmac paths which mark both the route of the Tarka Trail and the former Railway Line it follows.

**4.7** Access into the area has also been improved with the creation of a concrete track from the B3233 along the east bank of Fremington Pill. This is by way of an upgrade to what was previously little more than a track rendering access by car difficult.

**4.8** The area is now widely used, particularly in the summer months when tourists and good weather swell the visitor numbers, as a base for families and dog walkers using the Tarka Trail for shorter walks. The quayside is also often used for fishing year round and the café provides a welcome opportunity for a break for more adventurous long distance walkers along the trail.

*The archaeological background set out below is based on information currently held in Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) to date. This knowledge is likely to evolve and be revised over time.*

### **Prehistoric**

**4.9** There are no recorded prehistoric sites within the area under consideration, although Fremington Pill would be a likely location for prehistoric activity indicated by the artifact scatters and the scheduled, submerged stone row on Isley Marsh, Lower Yelland (DV173).

### **Roman**

**4.10** A possible small, bronze Roman brooch was found at Pill Cottage on the western side of Fremington Pill.

### **Saxon**

**4.11** There are no recorded Saxon sites within the area under consideration. However, a late- Saxon stirrup mount has been discovered c. 460 metres to the east of the Conservation Area.



### ***Medieval***

**4.12** There are no recorded medieval sites within the area under consideration although control over Fremington Pill was probably exercised by the lord of the manor at Fremington.

### ***Post Medieval and Modern***

**4.13** Fremington Quay and Fremington Station are shown on the late 19th century historic mapping. A Grade II listed 19th century limekiln is built into the bank of Fremington Pill and is the best preserved of the three limekilns on this west bank. A foot bridge over the railway line on the west side of the Conservation Area is shown on the early 20th century historic mapping. The wreck of the Adieu Vat, a French carvel built (Smooth fitted planks, as apposed to the ridged, layered construction style of clinker built vessels) vessel is located just to the south of the Conservation Area. Quarries are also shown on late 19th century mapping to the east of Fremington Quay. Post-medieval potteries and clay workings are located to the southeast of the Conservation Area at Muddlebridge and Combrew. Muddlebridge Quay served the Muddlebridge potteries and may have been established during the 17th century. It should be noted that it is likely that other quays may have existed, particularly along the eastern side of Fremington Pill.

### ***Historic Landscape***

**4.14** The landscape immediately surrounding Fremington Quay has been categorised as medieval enclosures based on strip fields (now modern enclosures) to the east and post-medieval enclosures to the west.

### ***Archaeological Potential***

**4.15** Little in the way of formal archaeological work has been undertaken within the Conservation Area. Archaeological and artefactual evidence associated with the development of Fremington Quay will be focused around the 19th century limekilns, quay and station. Fremington Pill holds high archaeological potential with regard to palaeoenvironmental evidence, possessing alluvial deposits and there is a high likelihood for the preservation of waterlogged organic remains at this location, for example fish weirs and wreck timbers.

**4.16** Depending upon the nature, location and extent of any proposed development, any consent granted in this area may be conditional upon a programme of archaeological works in mitigation for the impact of the proposed development upon the historic environment.

## 5 Character

**5.1** Fremington Quay Conservation Area is unusual in that it is dominated by open space, with relatively few built structures. Some parts of this space are enclosed to provide picnic areas where animals are not permitted.

**5.2** The structures which do survive are linked through their historic function as part of the trade infrastructure which gave the site its purpose, however the structures themselves have differing appearance which leads to them often being viewed in isolation rather than as parts of a larger complex.

**5.3** The remains of the grade II listed limekilns at the north west edge of the conservation area are visible from all along the quayside on the northern edge of the conservation area. The structures are of slightly differing quality and style of construction, with the southernmost of the kilns probably pre-dating the northern pair which may have been added as demand led to increased production.

**5.4** The kilns now stand in a poor condition with no access to their upper areas, where raw material would have been stored and loaded into the kilns themselves, due to safety concerns. The openings at the lower level, for removing the finished lime, are blocked by modern steel grills to prevent access to the structure. The exterior masonry is in a reasonably stable condition, with pointing and stonework in good condition, except for above the central kiln opening where the masonry above the arch has collapsed. This gives the kilns the appearance, from a distance, of a romantic ruin of the industrial age.

**5.5** Although the raised area above the kilns is now accessed by a steep ramp on the northern side of the Tarka Trail, the remains of the piers of a bridge can be seen at the western edge of the conservation area. This bridge would have allowed the heavy raw materials (limestone and charcoal, and later coal) to have been taken up gentler slopes to the southern side of the former railway line and carried to the kilns over the bridge.

**5.6** All over the conservation area man-made industrial materials associated with the function of the quay can still be seen, from the riveted composite girders used in the bridge across the mouth of Fremington Pill, to the rusted remains of iron mooring rings and ladders set into the quayside wall, some with decaying ropes still attached.

**5.7** Parts of the quayside still have timber stakes attached to the quay wall, which would have provided protection to moored vessels that would otherwise have scraped against the hard stone quay walls with the rise and fall of the tide. Again the various states of decay that these timbers exhibit serves as a reminder that the function of this place (which was thriving until so recently) is now consigned to the past. The infrastructure and industry has been replaced with leisure and recreation, serving as

a base for short distance walkers and as a place to stop for refreshment on longer walks along the Tarka Trail or South West Coast Path. The Visitor Centre with its museum, café and shop also acts as an attraction to visitors in its own right.

**5.8** The Visitor Centre itself is built to have the appearance of a railway station of the 1930's, and features such as the timber clad signal box tower at the eastern end of the building add to this appearance. The raised area in front of the building is the original platform which had survived the disuse and abandonment of the site.

**5.9** New houses built in the late 1990's, in the form of three properties to the southwest of the visitor centre, are also present within the conservation area. These buildings have traditional features, such as brick chimneys, natural slate roofs and sliding sash windows allowing them to sit relatively well in their surroundings and not detract from the character and appearance of the area as a whole.

**5.10** Building materials within the conservation area include a mixture of local stone, slate, concrete, iron and timber. The vast majority of structures are functional and utilitarian with little or no ornament, the exception being Pill Cottage. This functional simplicity is reflected by the style of the memorial to a local fisherman on the western edge of the Pill mouth.

**5.11** The three new properties on the eastern side of Fremington Pill have some degree of ornament, particularly in the form of arch headed windows.

### **Changes To The Boundary, Adopted December 2010**

**5.12** As part of the appraisal process the boundary of the conservation area was investigated to identify any areas where the boundary should be enlarged or reduced.

**5.13** An area with potential was identified to the south of the old boundary where Fremington Pill reaches the main road (See map in Appendix 3) . This area contains the remains, on the western bank, of Fishley Wharf, the stone walls of which can still be seen. Opposite this are the buildings of Muddlebridge Cottages and Muddlebridge House. These buildings and the quay all had an association with the Fishley Pottery Works established by William Fishley Holland in the 18th Century.

**5.14** This southern area has similar historic functions to the main area, having an industrial past and associations with the transport of goods by sea. Both areas contain an element of housing and both have surviving elements of wharf and quay infrastructure.

**5.15** These structures all lie some 750 metres to the south of the former conservation area boundary, with the space in between having no engineered structures evident. Despite this the river here must have significant archaeological potential given its use

in transporting goods between the potteries and the estuary. As a result the southern area has been designated as a part of the Fremington Quay conservation area but is not connected to the main area.

Maps, showing the main Fremington Quay area which is unaltered from its 1997 designation, and the new Fishley Wharf area of the designation, can be found in Appendix 3.

## 6 Views & Vistas

**6.1** The position of Fremington Quay allows for some good views across the Taw Estuary towards Chivenor and Braunton, while views inland are limited as the quay itself is low lying and the agricultural land beyond slopes upwards preventing any distant views.

**6.2** The only views over any distance possible to the south of Fremington Quay are along the course of Fremington Pill in its shallow sided valley. Here the various small boats moored to the south of the bridge form the foreground interest with the houses around the outskirts of Fremington visible along the edges of the main road in the distance, and green fields visible beyond. The trees and green space along either side of Fremington Pill naturally lead the view towards the horizon.

**The view westwards along the Tarka Trail, also the route of the former railway line from Barnstaple to Bideford.**



**6.3** Views to the east and west follow the tree sheltered route of the Tarka Trail and South West Coast Path, along the route of the former railway line between Barnstaple and Bideford. Views within the conservation area are also often focused along the route of the former railway line, identified by the tarmac path along the Tarka Trail, although equally the commanding views out across the estuary are also of high significance here.

**6.4** On the opposite banks of the river various landmarks are identifiable; the bright orange windsocks at Chivenor Royal Marine base being noticeable to the north west next to the low grey arched roofs of hangers. Beyond Chivenor only a small number of the houses to the northeast of Braunton can be seen, the remainder hidden from view on lower ground. The church at Heanton Punchardon on a ridge to the north of the estuary stands out with the pinnacles of its tower just breaking the line of the horizon.

**6.5** More can be seen of Ashford from Fremington Quay than of Braunton, which is obscured in a shallow bowl, a keen eye can pick out the ruined walls of another limekiln out towards Penhill Point along the same sight line as Ashford and Braunton.

**6.6** The isolated buildings at Heanton Court and the Tarka Inn also stand out amongst their relatively green setting.

**6.7** To the north west the view is of the undeveloped area of Braunton Burrows and marsh, with the dunes clearly visible out towards the mouth of the estuary.

**6.8** The southern area covering Fishley Wharf and Muddlebridge Cottages acts as the gateway to Fremington Quay. From here views along Fremington Pill northwards towards the estuary are possible and are the most striking feature. The cottages along the roadside and the brick parapet walls of the bridge are also notable features on the approach road towards Fremington Quay.

**The remains of the retaining wall at Fishley Wharf are visible on the opposite bank.**



**6.9** From here the remains of Fishley Wharf are also visible on the other side of Fremington Pill, some portions of the old Quayside wall still stand although some areas have collapsed. Stumps of timbers can be seen in the surrounding silt indicating that additional timber structures were once associated with the stone quayside here.

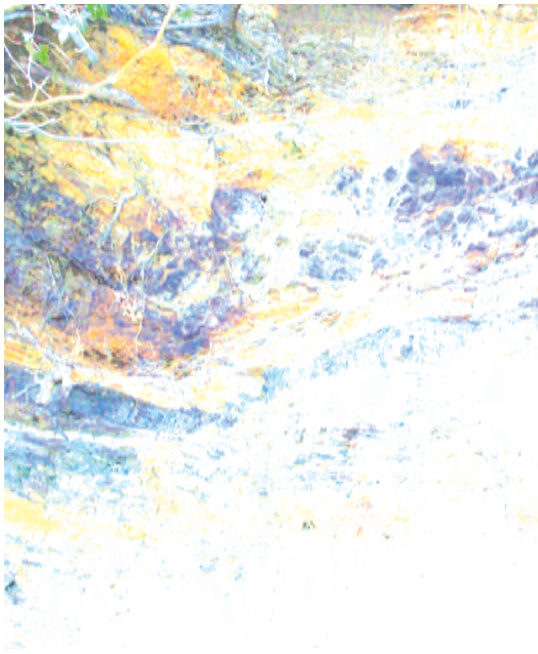
## 7 Landscape and Setting

**7.1** Being located at the mouth of a river, Fremington Quay has a flat and open setting with views across the estuary towards Chivenor and Braunton with Heanton Court and Church acting as focal points for views towards the hills north of the Taw. The mouth of the Estuary is also visible off to the west. The listed limekilns stand on a small promontory of land with a shingle beach.

**7.2** The land slopes upwards inland to the east of Fremington Pill towards Penhill, while a spit of land to Penhill Point blocks views to the east.

**7.3** Trees define the inland boundary of the conservation area for much of its length, while trees within the boundary are found on the banks around the listed limekiln and to the south near Pill Cottage.

**The bands of sediments, run through with pale bands of limestone, which form the banks and hills to the west of Fremington Pill.**



**7.4** These trees provide habitats, shelter and biodiversity links within the conservation area. The trees along the eastern side of Fremington Pill itself are also protected by a tree preservation order (TPO). Designation of a conservation area gives additional protection to all trees within its boundaries. North Devon Council must be notified of works to any tree within a conservation area 6 weeks before those works take place. This applies to all trees, regardless of whether or not they are subject to a specific TPO.

**7.5** The geology of the area is mixed, with outcrops of poor quality slate and shale in the area of the limekilns, while a more organic silt and mud forming the river channel, run through with narrow veins of limestone. It is this limestone which would have been burned in the local kilns for either agricultural or construction use.

**7.6** The area forms part of a green corridor for wildlife while the area immediately around Fremington Pill is a local nature reserve and the Taw-Torridge Estuary is a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). These designations reflect the importance of the site in terms of biodiversity and environmental qualities. The Tarka Trail itself acts as an important linear park.

**7.7** The area sits between the two historic port towns of Bideford and Barnstaple linked to both via the Tarka Trail following the route of the former railway line and acting as an important hub for recreation and leisure.



## 8 Progress and Change

**8.1** When Fremington Quay was first designated as a conservation area in 1997 it was an underused, inaccessible and derelict site. Part of the reason for designation was to ensure that the proposed improvement and enhancement works were carried out in a manner which respected the historic character and industrial functions of the site.

**A derelict and vacant dwelling, seen here in 1997, occupied a site near where the two modern homes now stand on the east side of Fremington Pill.**



**8.2** Much of the area was covered in concrete which was beginning to break up as vegetation became established in the various cracks within the concrete surface. Much of the quayside had no railings or barriers, although some areas had wire and barbed wire fencing.

**The quayside had no barriers and the overgrown, dilapidated appearance of the area, where flytipping and unauthorised camping were problematic together with access difficulties led to the area being underused.**



**8.3** Although the Tarka Trail existed long before the improvements at Fremington Quay and its designation as a conservation area in 1997, it was not so widely publicised and was relatively underused compared to today. The presence of an unsightly and run-down stretch of the trail between Barnstaple and Bideford would have dissuaded many people from utilising the trail to its full potential.

**Although the limekilns remain in poor condition they are much improved from their 1997 state.**



**8.4** Vegetation has since been cleared from the limekilns at the west end of the site, fencing barriers prevent access to the unstable interiors of the structure and low level vegetation, such as ivy, has been cleared. Some repair work to the structures has been

undertaken so as to stabilise them, with slightly more extensive work to the listed kiln (left hand side in this image). Even so access to the elevated area, where loading of the kilns would have been undertaken, is still prohibited for safety reasons.

**8.5** Overall the improvement works, surface improvements, provision of safety barriers along the quayside, visitor facilities, signage and interpretation boards have enhanced the character and appearance of the area and greatly increased its usability without having removed the relics and remains of the previous industrial use of the site which is still apparent.

## 9 Development Pressures

**9.1** Due to the nature of this conservation area, mostly in an area at risk of flooding, adjoining nature protection designations and outside of any development boundary there is unlikely to be pressure for development here in the near future.

**9.2** The small number of occupied and usable buildings within the conservation area means that there is little threat from inappropriate alterations under permitted development rights, and the most striking building is in commercial use and as such does not have extensive permitted development rights.

**9.3** The draft shoreline management plan for this part of the estuary proposes a 'hold the line' policy which may require the provision of coastal defences to protect against sea level rise. Such infrastructure could have a considerable impact on the character and appearance of the area although there is no immediate plans to provide any such physical defence.

**9.4** Increasing use and popularity of the site may bring pressure for improved and extended car-parking provision and cycle storage on site which again may have an impact on the character of the conservation area.

**9.5** Any proposal to reopen the Barnstaple to Bideford Railway along its former route (the Tarka Trail) would potentially have significant impact on the site.

## 10 The Future

**10.1** The aim of this character appraisal has been to identify which buildings, open spaces, and features from Fremington Quay's past and present survive to contribute towards its special character.

**10.2** The character appraisal has also aimed to identify potential development pressures the area is likely to face in the near future and to identify areas within the designation which may benefit from redevelopment or enhancement schemes.

**10.3** What this document does not aim to achieve is to propose the means and methods by which the identified character is to be safeguarded, or enhanced, for the future. This will be the subject of a subsequent management plan for the conservation area. The aim of such a document will be to propose the ways in which the characteristics identified within this character appraisal can be protected from unsympathetic alterations and future developments, or enhanced by positive and well designed schemes. This will also ensure that all future planning decisions that affect the conservation area and its setting are treated in a consistent manner.

## 1 Appendix 1 - Listed Buildings Within The Conservation Area

***Limekiln circa 10 Metres north of the disused railway track on the west bank of the entry to Fremington Pill Estuary:***

Grade: II

Date Listed: 29/05/1986

National Grid Reference: SS5134933199

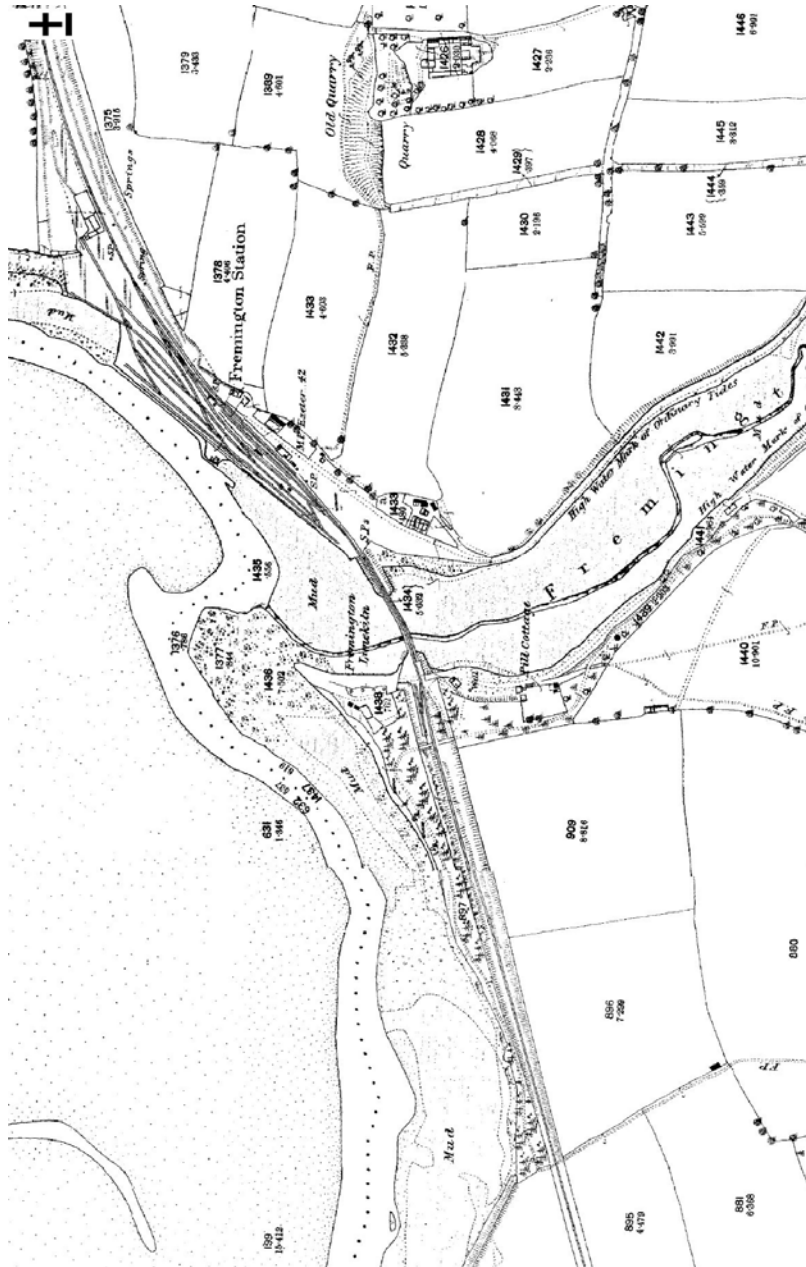
Limekiln. C19. Stone rubble with interior brick lining. Square on plan with 2 massive buttresses to front. Access to brick lined well with firing holes around base by rear passage with entrance to left side. The limekiln is built into the bank of Fremington Pill Estuary and is the best preserved of the three limekilns on this west bank.

## **2 Appendix 2 - Historic Maps**

**I - Ordnance Survey Map c. 1880**

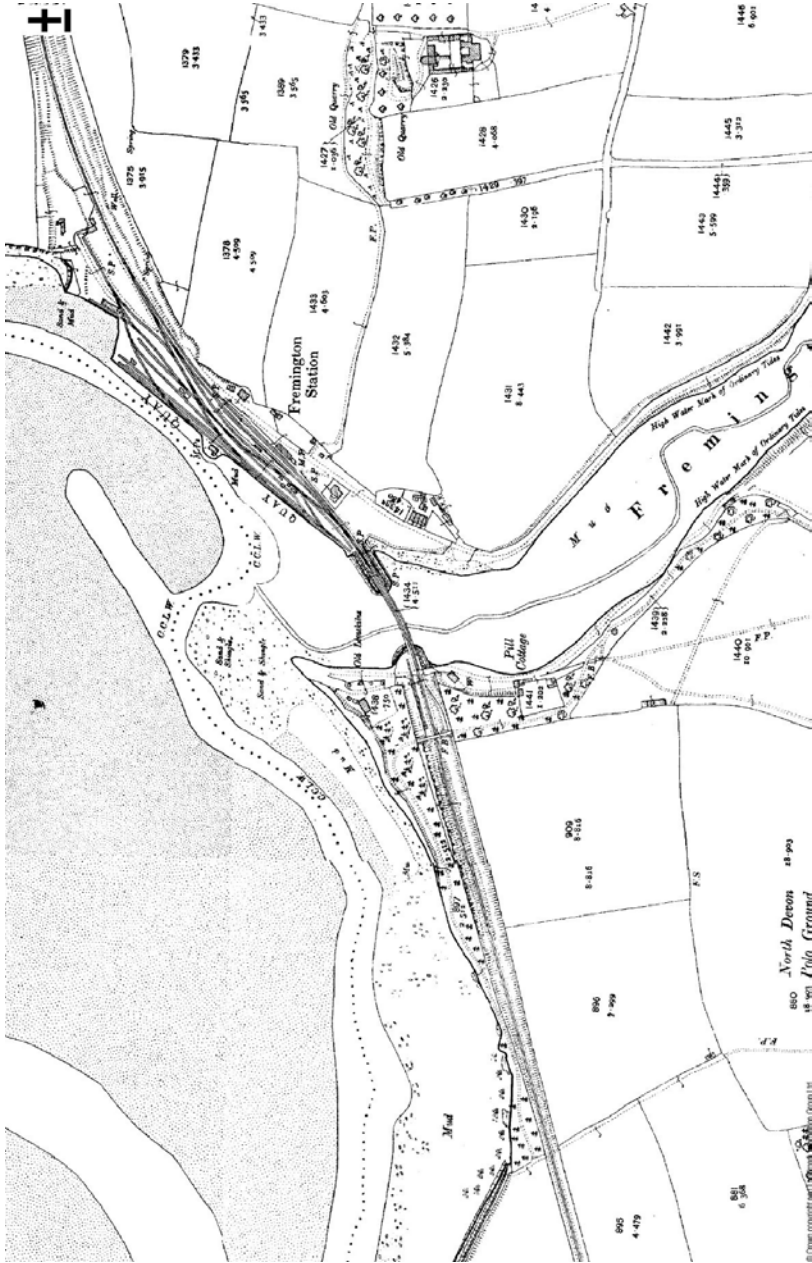
**II - Ordnance Survey Map c. 1904**

I - 1880 Ordnance Survey Map





II - 1904 Ordnance Survey Map



### 3 Appendix 3 - Conservation Area Maps

