# West Norfolk Council threatens enforcement action over crumbling Thornham Coal Barn



The Coal Barn by the quay in Thornham, near Hunstanton, has long enchanted film makers and locals alike, serving as a picturesque relic of the area's maritime history. However, the structural integrity of this 300-year-old building is now under scrutiny, as significant masonry collapse has left a large hole in its side. This frightening development has prompted West Norfolk Council to consider enforcement action after receiving complaints about the site’s untidy state.

Recent inspections have revealed fallen bricks and rubble littering the quayside adjacent to the harbour, leading authorities to contemplate a Section 215 notice under planning laws, effectively ordering the owner to restore the site. While a council spokesman confirmed that no formal notice has yet been served, they acknowledged that the situation is "still under consideration."

Concerns about the Coal Barn's condition have persisted for over a year, with the local parish council expressing fears about safety, particularly for children fishing in the vicinity. The council's minutes reveal that they have attempted to communicate safety concerns to the building's owner; however, there has been no response. The deputy leader of Norfolk County Council, Andrew Jamieson, has remarked on the local government’s goodwill, expressing hope for a solution that ensures the preservation of this iconic structure for future generations.

The significance of the Coal Barn stretches back to its origins when it was instrumental in storing coal delivered by ships from north-eastern collieries. The structure is one of the last remaining vestiges of what was once a thriving harbour, which began to decline in the early 20th century as transportation evolved toward railway systems. Notably, the coal barn was a filming location for a BBC adaptation of Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" in 1998, highlighting its cultural importance.

Despite multiple attempts to repurpose the building over the years—such as plans to convert it into an art studio in 2007 and a proposed home in 2014—none have come to fruition. The latter was notably rejected due to flooding concerns, even with the barn's elevated position on a knoll. More recently, the owner indicated intentions to carry out repairs after the latest incident of masonry fall, as reported to the parish council. However, with the building now fenced off for safety reasons, the urgency for decisive action has grown.

Local sentiment strongly favours not only maintaining the structure but also finding a viable solution to revitalize it in a manner that respects its historical significance. The ongoing inaction raises questions about the balance between heritage conservation and public safety, emphasizing the need for swift and effective collaboration among stakeholders to secure the future of the beloved Coal Barn.

As discussions and considerations unfold, the fate of this cherished landmark hangs in the balance, embodying the community's hope for thoughtful preservation amidst escalating deterioration.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: Source [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25145572.enforcement-action-threatened-thornham-coal-barn/?ref=rss)
2. Paragraphs 3, 4: Source [[2]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24529212.coal-barn-thornham-harbour-fenced-off-safety-reasons/)
3. Paragraphs 4, 5: Source [[3]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24245841.thornham-coal-barn-serious-concerns-state-building/)
4. Paragraph 5: Source [[4]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24302826.meeting-state-crumbling-coal-barn-thornham/)
5. Paragraph 5: Source [[5]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24630158.happening-coal-barn-thornham-harbour/)
6. Paragraph 6: Source [[6]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/21106305.thornham-coal-barn-sale/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25145572.enforcement-action-threatened-thornham-coal-barn/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24529212.coal-barn-thornham-harbour-fenced-off-safety-reasons/> - The Coal Barn at Thornham Harbour has been fenced off due to falling masonry, raising safety concerns. The Thornham Parish Council has contacted the building's owner to discuss repairs, but no response has been received. The council has referred the issue to CNC Building Control, which oversees building regulations in Norfolk. The Coal Barn, built around 300 years ago, is virtually all that remains of Thornham's once-bustling harbour. It was used to store coal brought by ships from the north-east collieries until the early 20th century, when it became cheaper to deliver fuel by rail. Local legend has it the building was also used to store smugglers' booty. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24529212.coal-barn-thornham-harbour-fenced-off-safety-reasons/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24245841.thornham-coal-barn-serious-concerns-state-building/> - The Thornham Parish Council has expressed serious concerns over the deteriorating state of the Coal Barn, a 300-year-old structure that is almost all that remains of the village's once-bustling harbour. The building's timbers are rotting, and areas of masonry are crumbling. The council has contacted the owner to discuss repairs, but no response has been received. Plans to convert the building into an art studio in 2007 did not materialize, and a 2014 proposal to turn it into a house was turned down on appeal due to flooding risks. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24245841.thornham-coal-barn-serious-concerns-state-building/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24302826.meeting-state-crumbling-coal-barn-thornham/> - The owner of the crumbling Coal Barn at Thornham Harbour has agreed to meet with villagers to discuss concerns about its deteriorating state. The Thornham Parish Council has serious concerns over the structure, whose timbers are rotting, and areas of masonry are crumbling. The owner has agreed to visit the site and meet with councillors to discuss the situation. Plans to convert the building into an art studio in 2007 did not materialize, and a 2014 proposal to turn it into a house was turned down on appeal due to flooding risks. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24302826.meeting-state-crumbling-coal-barn-thornham/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24630158.happening-coal-barn-thornham-harbour/> - More masonry has fallen from the Coal Barn at Thornham Harbour, exposing a large hole in the side of the building. The area has been fenced off for safety reasons. The building's owners have informed the Thornham Parish Council that they intend to carry out remedial works. The council has referred the issue to CNC Building Control, which oversees building regulations in Norfolk. The Coal Barn, built around 300 years ago, is virtually all that remains of Thornham's once-bustling harbour. It was used to store coal brought by ships from the north-east collieries until the early 20th century, when it became cheaper to deliver fuel by rail. Local legend has it the building was also used to store smugglers' booty. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/24630158.happening-coal-barn-thornham-harbour/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/21106305.thornham-coal-barn-sale/> - The Coal Barn at Thornham Harbour has been put up for sale for £189,000, as its owner abandons plans to turn it into an arts centre. The 300-year-old building is almost all that remains of Thornham's once-bustling harbour. Artist Luisa di-Pietro had hoped to convert the building into an arts and study centre, obtaining planning permission in 2007, but the scheme did not materialize. The building is now on the market, with estate agent Max Sowerby noting that while there is significant interest, potential buyers are limited due to the building's unique nature. ([edp24.co.uk](https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/21106305.thornham-coal-barn-sale/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.northnorfolknews.co.uk/news/23774944.warning-next-high-tides-van-stranded-thornham/> - A van driver was stranded during unusually high spring tides at Thornham, with drone footage capturing the scene near the Coal Barn. The photographer, Paul Stearman, noted that the high tides, combined with strong winds, can raise water levels higher than anticipated. He advised visitors to low-lying coastal areas to check tide times to avoid similar situations. ([northnorfolknews.co.uk](https://www.northnorfolknews.co.uk/news/23774944.warning-next-high-tides-van-stranded-thornham/?utm_source=openai))