



# Fring

## Conservation Area

### Character Statement

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*FRING or FRENGE, is a parish with a small village seated in a deep valley, with woody acclivities, between Snettisham and Docking, 14 miles N.E by N. of Lynn.....the hall, a neat cemented mansion, upon a commanding eminence, with extensive gardens and pleasure grounds, is unoccupied.*

**William White 1845**

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## Introduction

**A Conservation Area - “An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.**

The conservation of the historic environment is part of our quality of life, helping to foster economic prosperity and providing an attractive environment in which to live or work. The Borough Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of West Norfolk's historic built environment and significant parts of it are designated as conservation areas.

Conservation areas were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local Authorities were required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as conservation areas. This duty is now part of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act which also requires the review of existing conservation areas and, where appropriate, the designation of new ones. The quality and interest of a conservation area depends upon a combination of factors including the relationship and architectural quality of buildings, materials, spaces, trees and other landscape features, together with views into and out of the area.

**The Fring Conservation Area was designated in 1988. This document highlights the special qualities that underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation.** It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to the environment occur, they do so in a sympathetic way without harm to the

essential character of the area. This type of assessment has been encouraged by Government Advice (PPG15) and has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

This character statement does not address enhancement proposals. Community led enhancement schemes will be considered as part of a separate process.

## Origins and Historical Development

Fring or Frenge is a small village in a deep valley. The meaning of the name is “settlement of the family or followers of Frea”, an old English name. Although the Roman Road Peddars Way runs close to the west of the village, the early settlers preferred the advantages of the valley which provided shelter and a water supply from the surrounding area of high chalk upland and “Frainges” is shown on the Domesday Map of 1086. Benedictine Monks of Norwich Priory also established a cell here, circa 1000, the site of which can be identified in a field north west of the church.

The Church of All Saints was largely constructed between 1300 and 1330; Norwich Cathedral records show a donation towards the building cost in 1327. Inside the Church are monuments and mentions of notable local families - a coffin lid to Henry, Son of Jeffrey de Frenge buried 1370; the stained glass window dated 1984 to commemorate 100 years of farming by the Coe family at Church Farm and White House Farm; and the pulpit donated by the family of 2nd Lieut. Richard Dugate who was killed in France in 1917 and whose family lived at the Hall.

Faden's map of 1797 indicates that the original core of the village was around the Church and Church Farm. It then extended as groups of cottages and farm buildings were built along the Docking and Bircham Roads.



Although Fring has never been a big village, it grew considerably in the C1900 and in 1807 Fring Hall, described as “ a neat cemented mansion, upon a commanding eminence, with extensive gardens and pleasure grounds “, was burnt down in 1935 and rebuilt in 1936. The Lord of the Manor was Richard Dugate who owned most of the surrounding land at that time but, none the less, chose to live mainly in France. Large numbers of trees were planted to create a formal setting and provide privacy for the Hall and the local network of lanes was changed to increase privacy still further. In particular a new route to Sedgeford running further to the west of Church Farm is shown on Bryant's 1826 map and the 1838 Tithe Map.

The White House on Bircham Road was also constructed in the early 19th Century, again positioned on a slope overlooking the village but without the grand setting created around the Hall. The realignment of roads is likely

to have brought about improvements to the drainage pattern at this time and possibly the creation of the bridge and pond area.

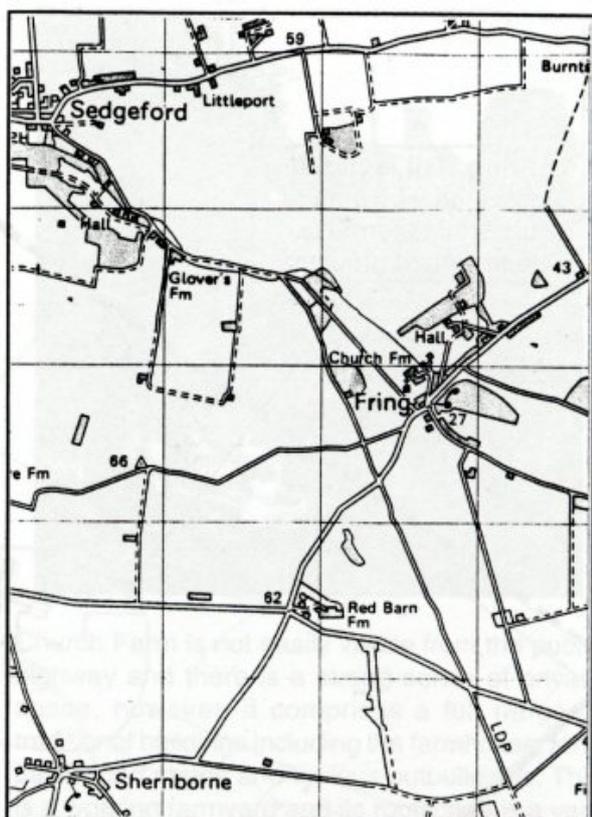
The school was established in 1875 and during the latter part of the 19th Century, seven pairs of estate cottages were built on Docking Road giving the village its current shape. The original hall was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1935 but in 1936 it was replaced by a “modern mansion” which still stands.

There has been very limited 20th Century infilling, but barn conversions on Bircham Road have provided more residential units. The school closed many years ago and is now also in residential use.



## Setting and Location

Fring is a small rural village 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) from Shernborne and 4.0 kilometres (2.5 miles) from Docking and Bircham. It is nestled into the Heacham River valley as it wends its course through the folds of the rolling countryside of the chalk upland. The village is set around the crossroads of local routes between Docking - Dersingham/Snettisham and Bircham-Sedgeford.



The character of the setting of the village varies according to the direction of approach. When approached from Sedgeford, the first impression is the Church sited prominently on the hill with the Church Farm complex in the valley to the east. From Bircham, the approach road gently curves along the valley bottom with buildings to the right and views of open countryside to the left. From Docking, the village is approached through an informal avenue of trees. While from Shernborne, the village suddenly appears in the valley bottom, being viewed across rolling fields as a roofscape with a pronounced backdrop of mature trees.



## Character

The overriding impression of Fring is one of a quiet, peaceful, and well-kept village which still retains its working character. The presence of water, whether flowing in the bubbling Heacham River, or in ponds, is never far away – except when dry local climates prevail. The roads sometimes flood in the winter, especially around White House and the pond at the village crossroads.

Fring Hall is hidden from view by mature, formally landscaped grounds which dominate the setting of the village. Other principal buildings of the area include All Saints Church, Church Farm and the White House. Attractive groupings of cottages, set along the approach roads, mingle with farm buildings. There are a large number of barns in the conservation area mainly in the complexes relating to the White House (now converted to residential use) and Church Farm. There are no village facilities but a Cornish granite war memorial, a stone plaque in the wall of the old school, a listed telephone box and a post box in brickwork on Docking Road are locally distinctive features. Farming activity is still very noticeable, emphasised at certain times of the year by tractors clearly visible on the fields above the village but otherwise it has a quiet, rural air with little traffic - the gentle sound of the wind rustling through the trees adding to the sense of tranquillity.

The area around the Church and Church Farm has a traditional and varied character. All Saints Church stands prominently on the rising ground on the western valley side.



It is well-kept and has a churchyard screened from the road by trees with open views down to Church Farm. To the south of the Church is a neat Edwardian style villa, built of carstone under a Welsh slate roof. The property was converted from a pair of cottages built in the corner of the vicarage garden, and it is seen as a strong feature when approaching the village from Shernborne.

Church Farm is not easily visible from the public highway and there is a strong sense of private space, however, it comprises a full range of traditional buildings including the farmhouse, long barns, cart sheds and

various outbuildings. This is a working farmyard and its roofscape is a very strong character feature in the conservation area.

A road and the course of the Heacham River with ponds and low arched brick bridges link the individual farmyard spaces. The importance of Church Farm House is emphasised by its scale, form and massing as a large detached property, contrasting with the other farm buildings due to the use of slates for the roof, the attractive metalwork porch/veranda and the carstone walls with yellow brick quoins. The modern barn is prominent being set close to the road although this is partly screened by a large, mature tree. Traditional farm cottages set in very attractive gardens form part of the complex of buildings. The open character of the paddock lying between the Church and Farm strengthens this traditional rural scene.



The area around the village crossroads contains the long pond, the bridge and listed telephone box. The eastern backdrop of trees forms part of the extensive Roundabout Plantation creating considerable enclosure. This contrasts with the more open aspect to the west, where the large open fields seem to sweep right into the village emphasising Fring's rural qualities. The small pond to the

south of the War Memorial adds to this, however, the bollards, which stop parking on the verges are a little intrusive.



Bircham Road has a more open aspect, curving along the valley bottom with the upper course of the Heacham River running along the south side. The White House, an elegant neo-classical farm house has an imposing setting on high ground. An attractive small pond in front of this property, together with the surrounding fields which slope down to the road, add to the area's rural character. The 'Old School' house, with its decorative boundary wall, makes an important contribution and further eastwards, an extensive linear arrangement of agricultural buildings has been sensitively converted to residential units.

Along Docking Road, Fring Hall itself is not visible from within the village. The Park has extensive tree plantations designed to screen the Hall from village buildings and, now that these have reached maturity, they dominate the character of the village along Docking Road and from more distant views from the north and east. The gateways to the drives leading to the hall are features along Docking Road.

A row of seven pairs of neat carstone and pantiled estate cottages on the south side of the road are set back on rising ground. Many of the cottages are now in private ownership and have been altered and extended.



On the north side of Docking Road is a courtyard arrangement of chalk/flint cottages. Although the estate cottages are very attractive in their own right, it is the continuity in use of materials, mature trees, which arch over the road forming a tunnel effect in summer, and chalk and flint boundary walls which are strong characteristics of the this part of the conservation area.



## Archaeological Interest

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Fring Conservation Area. However some archaeological finds have been made and recorded in the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record.

## Listed Buildings

There are 3 listed buildings in the conservation area. The Statutory List was revised in 1984.

### Listed Grade II\*

- **Church of All Saints**, Sedgeford Road. Largely C14, flint with stone dressings, 3 stage west tower.

### Listed Grade II

- **The White House**, Bircham Road. Early C19 Neo-Classical style. Imposing facade, entrance door has Greek Doric columns.
- **K6 Telephone Kiosk**, Designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Added to list in 1994.

## Important Unlisted Buildings

Fring owes a great deal of its built character to unlisted historic buildings; there is no significant post war development. The important unlisted buildings have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their substantially intact character, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by.

## Traditional Materials

A significant element of the character of Fring Conservation Area is the use of local traditional walling and roofing materials in the construction of its historic buildings which provides a strong element of continuity.



These materials include:

- Chalk clunch: dressed blockwork and rough blockwork
- Flint: field pebbles
- Orange and red brick, often used for dressing stone panels
- Carstone: random rubble, coursed rubble, blockwork, with some galletting
- Clay pantiles, including the use of black glazed tiles



## Detractors

The special quality of conservation areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials or unsympathetic paintwork, removal of walls, railings, trees and hedges.

Within the Fring Conservation Area, there are few features which detract significantly from its intrinsic character.

Minor detractors of note are:

- The utilitarian building behind the pond
- An abundance of bollards on the Bircham road
- The unfortunate replacement of traditional windows with UPVC ones
- Rooflights disrupting the roofscape of barns converted for residential use



## Conservation Objectives

**The overall conservation objective is to protect and reinforce the established special character of Conservation Areas and their setting.**

This will be achieved by:

- Encouraging the retention and maintenance of buildings which contribute to the overall character of each conservation area
- Ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the special qualities and character of each conservation area
- Protecting the setting of the conservation area from development which adversely affects views into or out of the area
- The retention, maintenance and locally appropriate new planting of trees
- Maintaining and enhancing local features and details which contribute towards an area's local distinctiveness
- Working with the community to prepare schemes of enhancement
- Encouraging the removal of detractors to the special character of each conservation area

## **Contacts and advice**

**Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alteration, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from Development Services at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may be subject to Tree Preservation Orders. Anyone wishing to carry out work to trees within a Conservation Area should therefore seek advice from Development Services.**

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