



Ringstead Conservation Area Character Statement



RINGSTEAD (Great) is a pleasant village, in a fertile valley, 2 miles S.E of Hunstanton, and 8 miles W. by S. of Burnham Market, comprising in its parish 526 inhabitants and 3,280 acres of land, mostly belonging to Henry L'Strange Styleman Le Strange, Esq. the lord of the manor and patron of the rectory.
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 Ringstead Conservation Area was designated in 1990. 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.

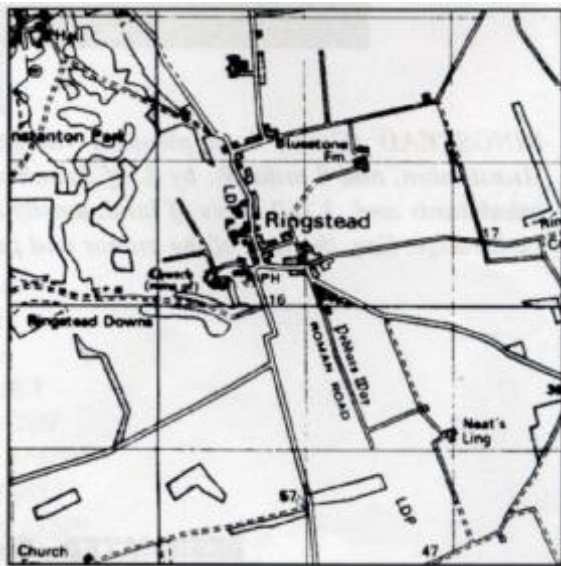
Setting and Location

Ringstead nestles into the upper end of one of the shallow valleys of northwest Norfolk which, cutting into the chalk downland, run westwards to the Wash. This is seen most dramatically in the steep chalk sides of Ringstead Downs, to the south-west of the village, but also, on a gentler scale, in the descent into the village, both from the south-west (from Docking) and from the north (from Old Hunstanton or Holme), where the High Street descends steeply from south of Gedding's Farm to Chapel Lane. Northwards from the Old Rectory, the landscape is open, with distant views over large open fields, notably towards the tree belts of Courtyard Farm to the east.



Ringstead is the junction of several minor roads, radiating (clockwise) from Holme-next-the-Sea, Burnham Market,

Docking, Sedgeford, Heacham and Hunstanton. The A149 coast road from King's Lynn runs northwards through Hunstanton 3 kilometres (1¾ miles) west of the village, before turning east and passing through Holme, 3 kilometres (1¾ miles) north of the village. The village is thus easily accessible by car. Its position on Peddar's Way, shortly before it meets the Norfolk Coast Path at Holme, makes Ringstead an attractive stopping point for long distance walkers. Additionally, there is a network of public and permissive footpaths on Courtyard Farm, linking to long distance paths and Ringstead Downs. The National Cycle Route No.1 passes through the village, making it a centre for cyclists too.



Origins and Historical Development

It has been said that "all roads lead to Great Ringstead". In fact two historic long distance routes come together at this point: the prehistoric Icknield Way, which ran from near Avebury in Wiltshire to the north-west corner of Norfolk, and Peddar's Way, built by the Romans after Boudicca's rebellion of AD 61,

which ran from Coney Weston in Suffolk to Holme-next-the-Sea. Ringstead High Street follows the line of Icknield Way, while Peddar's Way runs only some 250 metres to the east.

On Ringstead Downs evidence has been unearthed of burials dating from the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age (c 2500 to 2000 BC), roughly contemporary with the great earth and stone structures at Avebury.

The present settlement certainly goes back to the Saxon period. The name derives from Old English hring, a circle, and stede, "a place", and probably has the meaning of either "a circular enclosure" or "a place near a circular feature". By 1050 it was already written as Ringside and in the Domesday Survey of 1086 it is written as Rincsteda. A direct derivation from the small Danish town of Ringsted has also been suggested. There were originally two parishes: Ringstead Magna, with St Peter's church, and Ringstead Parva, with St Andrew's. They were joined in the reign of Edward 1(1272 - 1307), when they were under Ramsey Abbey. After the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the Le Strange family of Hunstanton Hall, lords of the manor and principal landowners of Ringstead, became patrons of the living. The family continues in all three of these roles to this day.

Ringstead prospered during the Middle Ages: taxation records for the fourteenth century show the village, along with several others in the district, as being larger and richer than Fakenham. However, a map of C1600 shows that only a third of the houses were then on the main street, while much of the settlement is shown as being in Ringstead Bury south of the "greene close".

Most of the historic buildings in the village date from the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reflecting a long period of prosperity based on sheep and corn farming and improved agricultural methods. By 1845 the population was 526 and most of the land still belonged to the Le Strange family. The large number of trades and services in the village at this time testifies to its comparative self-sufficiency: they included a shoemaker, a miller-cum-brewer, a saddler, a carpenter, a joiner, two blacksmiths, two butchers, three shopkeepers, two tailors, two wheelwrights and the Compasses Inn, while authority was represented by the Rector, a schoolmaster and a relieving officer.



Important national developments during the nineteenth century were reflected in Ringstead the spread of Methodism in the countryside, with the building of chapels by both the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists; the re-assertion of the Church of England, with the restoration and enlargement of St Andrew's church; and the growth of education in the erection, in 1852, of the school "a neat Gothic building" attended by 100 children [White], and its enlargement in 1872 to take 157 children.

Villages were becoming less isolated as the nineteenth century progressed: in 1868 regular carrier and postal services, as well as a local policeman, are noted in Harrod's Directory; while by the close of the century Kelly found it necessary to advertise the fact that Ringstead was only two and a half miles from the railway station at Sedgeford, where there was also a telegraph office.

The twentieth century saw a gradual decline in population (453 in 1931, 370 in 1996), a decline in the number of people working on the land and the conversion of farmworkers' cottages or farm buildings to holiday homes. These changes, together with the rapid increase in mobility, have led to a steep decline in locally provided services. On the other hand, in some cases new services have come, if sometimes only for a short period, to replace the old: by 1937 the West Norfolk Engineering Works had been established, taking over much of the work of the blacksmith in repairing farm machinery, acting as agents for the sale of new machinery and hiring out their own threshing machine to local farmers. This has now gone. Ward's Nurseries established in 1951 now serves a wide area and provides employment in the village.

After the Second World War a strong community spirit gave rise to the building of the village hall and the setting up of the playing field. In contrast, the closure of the school in 1984, as part of the policy of concentrating resources in fewer, larger centres, was a blow to village life. Other changes, reflecting the growth in tourism,

include the establishment of an art gallery and the addition of antiques and arts and crafts to the stock of the village shop.



widely scattered buildings and the start of the village is marked by a row of council houses

The wide use of squared chalk blocks, the predominant traditional local building material, gives the village a strong "stony" quality, while carstone, flint cobbles and brick provide further variety.



Character Overview

The combination of the relatively flat valley bottom and the steep ascent up the High Street past the church underlies the character of Ringstead. Most of the historic village nestles in the bottom of the valley and is relatively flat.



Traditional walls can be seen everywhere in Ringstead, usually of chalk and often with terra cotta coloured "saddle" copings. Their contribution to the character of the village cannot be too highly stressed. Also important is the relationship between buildings and between buildings and road: some buildings are set back, typically behind enclosing yards; others are at right angles to the road, with gable ends hard onto the pavement.

The approach from Docking is through gently rolling, open countryside, interspersed with belts of trees, with the village appearing as a tightly-knit, red-tiled settlement in a dip, with the church on a ridge beyond, backed by trees. By contrast, the approach from Holme is over bare chalk uplands, with

Open meadows within the settled area of the village, give open views of individual groups of buildings and of the countryside beyond.



Modern development on Foundry Lane partially links the High Street and Peddars Way, but the more extensive new development southwards towards Docking lies outside the Conservation Area. Ringstead Bury, in contrast to the rest of the Conservation Area, has the character of well-wooded countryside, rather than village.

Spaces and Buildings

The Conservation Area may be divided into four parts, each with its own distinct character: the northern part of the High Street, from Top End to the Old Rectory; the southern part of the High Street, from the Old Rectory to the Village Hall, together with Chapel Lane and Foundry Lane; Docking Road and the cross roads at Peddar's Way; and the area centred on Ringstead Bury.

The High Street (northern part)

The tightly-knit group of buildings at Top End and the widely spaced groups of Cottages and farm buildings, some converted to dwellings, culminating in the imposing Geddings Farm to the south, make up almost

a separate hamlet. Most of the buildings face south and are aligned at right angles to the road: they present an attractive picture against the open skyline. The use of chalk, carstone and brick for cottages, farm buildings and the many linking saddle-capped walls give them a tough quality, at one with this high, windswept place. There are extensive views over large open fields to east and west. On the wide grass verge on the west side of the road is a village sign, a footpath map and a seat.



High Street (southern part, with Chapel Lane and Foundry Lane)

A sudden bend in the road and the start of its descent to the valley bottom, coupled with the trees north of the Old Rectory, mark the change from the open northern section of the High Street to the more enclosed section

to the south. The Old Rectory, a large house of many periods, but with a date stone of 1643, dominates this part of the village.



Opposite it, mature trees and the retention of old carstone walls hard onto the road ensure that two modern bungalows and a converted farm building impinge on the street only marginally. Further south, Hillside, a Georgian house with matching modern extension, has a fine view down the hill. It is an important part of the scene. Opposite, set well back from the road, from which it is largely screened by trees and a hedge, the church of St Andrew stands on a terrace with a commanding view over the playing field, the village below and the countryside beyond.



A break in the churchyard hedge and wall and concrete steps allow limited access to the War Memorial. Opposite the church a pair of cottages of varied traditional materials, including galletted (or garnetted) chalk, shows its historical development in the gable end.

South of the church and in the heart of the village, the extensive playing field is ideally situated and allows views of open country to the south and west. Opposite is the attractive former school, now in residential use. In the design of the new house south of the old school care has been taken in the use of traditional local materials, but its proportions are hardly sympathetic.



The High Street south of the former school is the most densely developed part of the historic village, and the buildings and spaces between them vary greatly, providing constant interest and changing views. Everywhere traditional walls, some high, some low, link buildings and give continuity. The only traditional unbroken frontage is on the west side stretching from the shop to the corner of Chapel Lane, an attractive and irregular group of cottages of carstone and whitewashed chalk and brick. Langford Cottages, built in 1984 in the "vernacular" style, echoes the irregular terrace theme,

with a section projecting forward faced in flint and a carriage arch through to rear parking. Its design is generally successful, but more care could perhaps have been taken in the choice of bricks and in the design of the lay-by.



South of Chapel Lane the space opens out, with a paddock on the west side and a large open garden on the east side. Big Yard (Listed) comprises a row of whitewashed cottages at right angles to a converted barn facing a walled yard.



Opposite, Rose Cottage (Listed together with The Nook behind) is set back. It is of two builds and employs an interesting variety of bricks. Manningham House, in complete contrast to the rest of the street, is a large

Edwardian fronted red brick "villa" of 1907. It shares the initials "AWL" with the former bakery next door, now a house.

Attractive cottages, with yards or gardens, now line either side of the street, some parallel, others at right angles, to it. No.16 is a modern bungalow; built of traditional carstone and chalk, though the large random chalk blocks appear rather exaggerated. No. 9 and 11 are marred by very visible upward extensions at the "back". No 7 is another modern bungalow, using traditional materials, but the demolition of farm buildings has left the street frontage weak and undefined.

Sedgeford Road Farm (Listed) is a fine traditional complex of house and barn. The barn, no longer in agricultural use, is set back behind a yard. The gable end of the seventeenth century house, hard onto the road, acts like a full stop at the south end of the High Street, while walls to yard and garden link the buildings and give a firm edge to the street. The wall continues round the corner into Sedgeford Road, enclosing the garden and main front of the house. Adjoining it, a good group of farm buildings has been converted to residential use sympathetically, except for the former stable as viewed from the west.

On the south corner of Foundry Lane, an art gallery faces south over the spacious forecourt of the historic Gin Trap Inn (formerly the Compasses). The forecourt has been left attractively simple, with the surface un-tarred, and a single fine mature tree. The Village Hall, though of great importance socially, (originally built as a reading room after the first world war, becoming the village hall after the second world war) does nothing

to enhance the village visually. The cinder covered car park is partly screened by the former field wall.



Chapel Lane

The character of Chapel Lane changes very quickly from one end, where it is at the heart of the village, to the other, where it is at its edge, with open country beyond.



Development, largely confined to the north side is dominated by the former Methodist Chapel, built in 1867. Its conversion to a garage has meant the loss of the interior, but external alterations have been carefully handled. The chapel is followed by a row of traditional two storey cottages and, further on, by an attractive pair of single storey farm cottages with dormers. The south side of the

Lane is open until the far end, where Westgate, a house converted from smaller cottages and extended, faces Chapel Lane.

Foundry Lane

No.1 Foundry Lane, at the junction with the High Street, is attractive and an important element in the street scene.



To the south is a hedged field. On the north side are the low modern buildings of Ward's Nurseries, a row of semi-detached pre-war houses and a modern bungalow. As the lane turns south into Peddar's Way, the works which gave their name to the lane, are brought to mind by Foundry House and Foundry Cottages, all altered by the insertion of new windows.

Docking Road and Peddars Way

The saddle-capped chalk wall screening the Village Hall car park continues round the corner along the north side of Docking Road as far as East End Farm, where, in a fine example of townscape, it merges first with the gable end of the large seventeenth century farm house (listed), goes on to form the backs of the substantial farmyard buildings beyond, and finally bends round into Docking Road and Burnham Road. In contrast, the south side provides open views

over hedged fields until, starting opposite the farmyard entrance, a continuous frontage of houses bends round into Peddar's Way. They comprise The White House (listed, though with modern windows and some rebuilding), a row of whitewashed two storey cottages and a long single storey cottage, converted from a farm building.

The road junction is attractive, with a small green and a large tree in the middle with traditional two, and one-and-a-half, storey cottages and garden walls on the corners of Docking Road and Burnham Road.



Ringstead Bury

This is essentially a rural area, with three distinctly separate historic groups of buildings: Ringstead Bury, Glebe Farm and Hall Farm. It is linked to the main village by Sedgeford Road and Hall Lane, which meet by a tree-fringed pond where Sedgeford Road turns south, an attractive corner, marred only by a chain-link fence with concrete posts.

New bungalows with carstone fronts have been built along the north side of Hall Lane opposite the high wall of the kitchen-garden of Ringstead Bury house (listed) to the south. This large Georgian house, formerly the Rectory, is set in open parkland surrounded

by tree belts, effectively hiding the house from the road. A service drive from Hall Road leads past the stables (listed), and grand front entrance gates give access from Sedgeford Road. In the grounds is the remains of the twelfth century round tower of St Peter's church (listed and a scheduled ancient monument).

Glebe Farmhouse (listed) is an attractive smaller Georgian house facing Sedgeford Road. Its barn, to the north at right angles to the road, has been converted to residential use. The former farmyard has been converted to a shared entranceway, with a new wall, of traditional materials, fronting the road. Further back is a second converted - or perhaps re-built - barn. In the garden is an attractive and unusual new summerhouse.



Hall Farm is an extensive complex comprising a farmhouse, barns and other farm buildings and cottages. Though not listed, the whole farm is of local architectural and historic interest.

Listed Buildings

There are a number of listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was published in 1953. One building, outside the Conservation Area, was added in 1982.

Listed Grade II*

- **Church of St Andrew**, High Street. Tower, Nave, chancel and north aisle. Flint, limestone and carstone. Dates from C14 and C15, but in late 19th century, tower part re-built in brick and pyramidal roof added, aisle added and interior much "restored".

Listed Grade II

- **Geddings Farmhouse**, 84 High Street. Long 2-storey house of 2 builds. Chalk, carstone and brick. C17 with C18 and C19 details.



- **Old Rectory**, 58 High Street. Substantial 2- storey "double pile" house. Carstone and brick. C17 but much altered and extended. Canted bay window on S gable with date 1643 in head.
- **Rose Cottage and The Nook**, 27 and 23 High Street. Rose Cottage, now incorporating former Tyler's Cottage to

north 2-storey, of two builds. Part red brick with pink gault dressings, part pink gault brick with dark red dressings. Brickwork considerably damaged: formerly all whitewashed). Dates from C1800. At the rear, The Nook: 2 storey whitewashed clunch cottage.

- **Big Yard**, 22, 24, 26 and 28 High Street. Row of three 2-storey cottages and former barn at right angles to them. Barn now converted to house Chalk and brick dressings all whitewashed. C18.
- **Gin Trap Inn**, High Street. (Formerly The Compasses). 2 storey, with additions. Chalk with brick dressings, whitewashed. C1700, "lobby entrance" plan.
- **Sedgeford Road Farm**, corner of High Street and Sedgeford Road. 2-storey, of 2 builds plus modern rear extension. Carstone with brick dressings. Date stone 1678, "lobby entrance" plan, but much altered and extended in C18, including main S facade. Barn and outbuildings attached to north.



- **Walnut Tree Cottage**, Docking Road. Formerly known as The White House, dating from the late 18th century. Painted brick with pantiled roof.
- **East End Farmhouse**, 15 Docking Road. 2-storey with 2-storey porch, of 3 or 4 bays. Flint, carstone and chalk, including chequer work, with brick dressings. C17.



- **Ringstead Bury**, Sedgeford Road. (Former Rectory). Large 2-storey house. 2 wings: east of 5 bays, west of 4 bays. Part brick, part clunch, part carstone. C1800, in simple Georgian domestic style. Modern porch with recycled columns.
- **Stables to Ringstead Bury**, Hall Lane. 1-storey. Carstone (squared and rubble) with brick dressings (including rustication). C1800, simple Georgian style.
- **Ruins of Church of St Peter**, in grounds of Ringstead Bury. C12 flint round tower, with C15 or C16 brick belfry window, survives as ornamental garden feature, and with E face adapted as classical grotto. Rest of church demolished 1792.
- **Glebe Farmhouse**, Sedgeford Road. 2-storey of 3 bays, with cruciform

casement windows. Buff-grey gault bricks. C1800.

Important Unlisted Buildings

The special quality of Ringstead Conservation Area, while greatly enhanced by its listed buildings owes as much to the large number of important unlisted buildings within its boundaries. These are traditional buildings which, by their position, their group value in relation to other buildings close by and their use of local materials, contribute to the character of the village. Sixty such buildings have been identified, representing 76% of the total number of unlisted buildings in the Conservation Area. Important walls, linking buildings and enclosing spaces, have also been identified.



Important Trees

Trees, individual and in groups, make a vitally important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. These have been identified.

Post-War Development

Development within the Conservation Area since 1945 comprises the building of a small number of new houses; the conversion of a

number of redundant buildings, mostly to residential use; the conversion to single dwellings of some cottages; some substantial house extensions; the establishment of Ward's Nurseries in Foundry Lane and the conversion of the Reading Room into the Village Hall. A rare non-residential conversion is that of the former Methodist Chapel to a garage.



Traditional Materials

Chalk is not far beneath the surface throughout the parish. It is therefore the predominant local building material and gives Ringstead its particular strong, pale grey-white character. But a wide range of other materials from slightly further afield have also always been available and have provided a rich palette for building in the village. Local materials include:

- Chalk (clunch), rubble or squared, sometimes galletted (joints filled with small pieces of carstone)



- Pieces of red chalk (Hunstanton red rock)
- Flint
- Carstone (sandstone with iron oxides) rubble or squared
- Red brick
- Gault brick (pink-buff, either "warm" or "cool", but tends to weather to grey)
- Red clay pantiles
- Colour washed brick, flint or render

To these local materials should be added Welsh slates.

Archaeological Interest

The ruins of St Peter's Church in the grounds of Ringstead Bury are scheduled.

Detractors

The special character of Conservation Areas can easily be eroded by poorly proportioned new buildings as well as by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials,

unsympathetic paintwork, the removal of walls, trees or hedges or the use of inappropriate front boundary features.

Features, which detract from the special character of Ringstead Conservation Area, include:

- Corrugated sheds in corner of Playing Field.
- Unsympathetic design of new house south of former school.
- Unsympathetic design of external works in front of Langford Cottages : lay-by,
- Unsympathetic timber fencing in front of nos. 10 and 12 High Street.
- Unsympathetic rear upward extensions to nos. 9 and 11 High Street.
- Heavily lopped tree stump at corner of High Street and Docking Road.
- Unsympathetic rear upward extension to converted farm building, W of Sedgford Road.
- Concrete posts and chain link fence in front of pond and adjoining land, Sedgford Road.
- Overhead cables.

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.

Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



**King's Court
Chapel Street
King's Lynn
Norfolk PE30 1EX
Tel: (01553) 692722
Fax: (01553) 691663
DX 57825 KING'S LYNN**

