



Shouldham

Conservation Area

Character Statement



SHOULDHAM is a pleasant village, with several neat modern houses, on a small green, 5¹/₂ miles N.E. of Downham, and 10 miles W. of Swaffham. Its parish contains 3,775 acres, including a large rabbit warren. In some writings it is called Market Shouldham.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Setting and Location | 2 |
| Origins and Historical Development | 3 |
| Character Overview | 5 |
| Spaces and Buildings | 5 |
| Listed Buildings | 10 |
| Important Unlisted Buildings | 11 |
| Post War Development | 11 |
| Traditional Materials | 12 |
| Archaeological Interest | 12 |
| Detractors | 13 |
| Conservation Objectives | 13 |

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 Shouldham Conservation Area was first designated in 1979. 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 it 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.

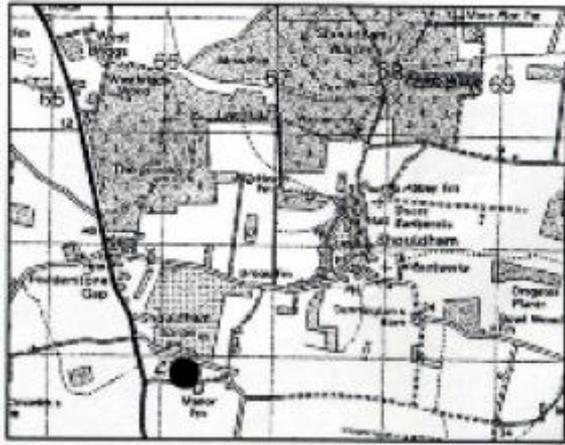
Setting and Location

Shouldham sits in a shallow valley, running roughly north-south. To the west the ground rises gently towards Shouldham Thorpe and The Sincks woods, with views generally closed by trees. To the east the ground rises rather more steeply with open views over the chalk downs towards Swaffham. To the north the view is closed by rising ground and the woodlands of Shouldham Warren and Ling Hills. To the south the view is more open as the shallow valley continues towards Fincham. There are attractive views of the village both from the west, where it appears in the foreground with the church and the rising chalk downs as backdrop, and from the east, looking down from the church.



A market village, with The Green as its nucleus, Shouldham is situated at the junction of several minor roads, within the

triangle of main roads between Kings Lynn (12 kilometres to the north), Downham Market (9 kilometres to the south-west) and Swaffham (15 kilometres to the east).



Origins and Historical Development

Fragments of Roman pottery have been found near the church, suggesting occupation from early times and there are Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman sites in the vicinity. The present village appears to date from Saxon times, its name deriving from two Old English words: *scyld*, meaning debt, and *ham*, meaning a homestead, village or manor, suggesting that it was a manor that paid rent. It has sometimes been referred to as "Shouldham Market". At the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086 the population was about 300 and there were two churches in the parish: the present church of All Saints and the church of St Margaret. St Margaret's was attached to the Priory and although its exact site is not known, it is said to have been sited at Chalkpit Hill.

During the Middle Ages Shouldham was in the hands of the Gilbertine Priory, founded in the early thirteenth century on the site of

the present Abbey Farm, to the north of the village. Its estate would have dominated village affairs. The position of All Saints and the evidence of "house platforms" in the field between the Church and the village suggests the possibility of the settlement having moved westwards during the course of the Middle Ages.



The Priory was dissolved in 1539, when its estate was granted by the King to Thomas Mildmay, but barely a century later it became part of a much larger estate, when in 1632 the Priory manor, together with the lesser manors of Colts and Trusbutts, were bought by Sir John Hare of Stow Bardolph, to become part of one of the great estates of Norfolk. The size and wealth of the Hare Estate may be gauged from the fact that by the middle of the seventeenth century, its receipts from rents alone, amounted to some five thousand pounds a year, equalling those of many of the great estates of the nobility.

Though no maps of the parish survive from this period, a survey report carried out for the new owner presents a picture of the estate and its agriculture in 1633. The village comprised two parallel roads, Westgate and Eastgate, linked by the Green and an east-west road at their southern end. Westgate was the principal residential area

while Eastgate was only sparsely populated. The Green was the Market Place. When Shouldham Hall was built c.1830, Eastgate was diverted into New Road: until then it had continued due north. Otherwise the road pattern changed little until the development of the new residential estate in the grounds of the Hall in recent years.

Different soil types in different parts of the parish led to the development of a variety of agricultural uses: arable, pasture, common land and warren. The open chalk downs in the south-east corner of the parish provided nine acres of “digging ground” to feed a lime kiln. Apart from enclosed pastures, fields were open and divided into strips. Sir John Hare owned strips in all the fields amounting to 65% of the total (excluding commons), and so would have dominated the working life of the village. Much of the parish has remained in the Hare Estate to the present day.

During the nineteenth century, local directories record a general increase in the level of services supported by the village and the Hare Estate. In 1836 there were five public houses, a miller, a solicitor, a painter-cum-plumber; while a warrener looked after the rabbit warren in the north of the parish and a “fuel allotment” was set aside where the poor could cut peat for burning. There were two annual livestock fairs, which no doubt took place on the Green. By 1845 there were, in addition, a beer seller, a baker, two blacksmiths and three carpenters, and in 1858 a fine bakery was erected in Westgate Street. By 1900 the number of pubs had dropped to three.

The growth of Nonconformity in the nineteenth century was marked by the building of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in 1816 and later by the opening of the

Methodist Free Church. Several generations of the Lemmon family of Colts Hall were Methodist local preachers. In 1845 a Sunday School was attended by more than 100 children, but the first move towards universal education was marked, in 1866, by the building of the School, which (in 1900) was attended by 132 children.



The building of a railway line, with a station only five miles away at Magdalen Road, Watlington, heralded the beginning of the end of the traditional, largely self-sufficient village. Since then, the twentieth century has brought enormous changes in agricultural methods and employment, in road transportation, in means of communication of all kinds, in education and habits of church-going, in shopping patterns and leisure pursuits and in the provision of public services. These changes have had a subtle effect on the physical appearance of the village, as in the surfacing of the roads with tarmacadam, the proliferation of posts and overhead wires and the use of non-local and non-traditional building materials. More obvious physical changes affecting the Conservation Area include the development of the mobile home site abutting the north-west corner of The Green, the building of the new Primary School on Lynn Road, the vacating of the old Victorian school in

Eastgate, the erection of Trussbot Lodge on the east side of The Green and the modernisation of many cottages, often involving converting two into one. Outside the Conservation Area, important changes include the residential development of the grounds of Shouldham Hall and of lands to the south and west of New Road.

Character Overview

The Conservation Area boundary is drawn closely round The Green and its immediate hinterland, but extends to include the Church and the intervening open space: historically and visually, both inseparable from the village. It excludes Shouldham Hall to the north, now surrounded by a modern residential estate, and Westgate Street to the west. The latter, though part of the historic settlement, now contains much modern infill development and has not the same visual cohesion and strong form as the Conservation Area, from which it is separated by open fields.

Its particular shape and size, the way one enters it and the relationship between space and buildings combine to make The Green a memorable place to be in. The buildings surrounding it may lack the quality of many better known Norfolk villages, but the variety of building types and of local materials make for a satisfying whole. The two roads leading to The Green, Lynn Road from the west and Norwich Road from the east, are both gently curved, allowing attractive groups of

buildings, open spaces, walls and trees, and finally The Green itself, to be seen from continually changing viewpoints.



The Church and Hill House (the former Rectory), though isolated from the village, have a striking setting, while the open space separating them from the village is of particular archaeological interest.

Spaces and Buildings

The Conservation Area may be divided into four parts, each with its own distinct character : The Green, the Church and the open space separating it from the present village, Norwich Road and Lynn Road.

The Green. As befits a market place, The Green is essentially an open space at a road junction, with a major road running east-west (Lynn Road and Norwich Road) and a minor road going north (Eastgate). It is large, measuring some 100 metres (330 feet) x 60 metres (200 feet), and tends to dwarf the, mostly modest, buildings which surround it. But it feels enclosed because all three entrance roads curve to block direct views out.

The Green is a fine example of “townscape”. Its shape is a rectangle “tilted” eastwards. This shape, together with the “funnelling” of the space at the three entrances, makes for a great variety of relationships between groups of buildings without destroying the unity of the space.



Going clockwise from the south-west corner:

West Side.

Alpha Cottages, on the north side of the “funnel”, is an attractive nineteenth century terrace, with “penny pointed” brickwork and gauged brick arches to openings. Windows are all original, or good replacements, retaining the unity of the whole row.

The Crofts is an attractive narrow pedestrian lane leading westwards to the School playing fields and to Lamson’s Lane. The north side of the lane is built up with a continuous row of cottages (**Tory Cottage** and **Bates Cottage** are listed buildings) followed by a high garden wall. The south side, by contrast, is bounded by hedges, over which is a pleasant view of gardens and the backs of cottages. The garden wall turns northwards along Lamson’s Lane. This lane appears on old maps as a “back lane” roughly mid-way between Eastgate and

Westgate, but when Eastgate was diverted in the nineteenth century, the northern end of the lane became part of New Road.

Storom Cottage and **London House**, the adjacent former shop face The Green, but form one block with The Crofts. They are both listed buildings. Situated at its highest point and solidly built of chalk, carstone and red and gault bricks, to a uniform and simple Georgian design, they dominate this end of The Green. A carriage arch gives a view through the building.



North side.

The north-west corner of The Green is disappointing with the entrance to the Caravan Park a weak link between the historic built up frontages to either side. The rest of the north side of The Green is an attractive frontage of very varied materials, including galetted limestone blocks, probably from the former priory.

The railings and very pronounced piers to the playground of the former Primary School make an interesting and visually strong north side to the “funnel” into Eastgate.



East side.

Forming the south side of the “funnel” and continuing north along Eastgate, **Colts Hall Barn** (listed) dominates the view looking down The Green. It is long, being two barns built end on, and has a great “presence”. It probably dates from the eighteenth century, but is built of chalk and brick with reused blocks of limestone, possibly from the former priory.



South of the barn is **Colt's Hall** (listed), a fine substantial late Georgian house, with a “warm” gault brick front facade, low pitched

slate roof and overhanging eaves. It is set back behind an attractive curved brick wall, a hedge and mature trees, which form a “solid” frontage to The Green.

Further to the south, the sense of enclosure is much less, with **Trussbot**, a modern suburban-type house, and then **Alpbach**, two cottages of chalk and brick, converted to one, with a large open garden on the bend into Norwich Road.

South side.

The Green's south side has an almost continuously built-up frontage, but at its eastern end, where it curves into Norwich Road, it is “weaker” and more open. As the space “funnels” into Lynn Road, this group reaches its climax with **The King's Arms**. Of flint and brick, it is the finest example of vernacular building on The Green. The east gable presents an interesting mixture of traditional materials. The boarded fence to the car park does it less than justice.



The Green itself is still largely grass, and its character remains un-fussy and rural. Fully made up modern roads skirt its south and east side, but elsewhere tracks and other hard surfaced areas are more traditional and informal. Remarkably, the space is pleasantly uncluttered by road signs and

concrete kerbs have only been introduced where essential to protect the grass. There is one young tree towards the eastern end, with a seat around it. Other “street furniture” includes a “traditional” telephone box (listed grade II), a cast iron pump, a post box, a flag staff and, by Trusbot Lodge, a village sign featuring Shouldham Priory and a seat. Posts and chains have been erected along a length of the south side and oak posts have been erected to protect the edges of the grass.

Norwich Road.

Descending from the higher chalk downland to the east by the Norwich Road, a good overall view of the village can be had. It appears as compact without being densely developed while, on this side particularly, the traditional distinction between settlement and open countryside remains clearly marked. On the south side of the road the village, and the Conservation Area, starts with **Forrester’s Row**, a nineteenth century terrace of cottages at right angles to the road. On the north side, in the large field separating the village from the church, “house platforms” are clearly visible as evidence of earlier settlement, and the village starts with a nineteenth century terrace of three houses facing the road. The road then curves sharply northwards to The Green, which only comes into view at the last minute. On its south-west side a long high wall of flint and brick is an important feature. It screens the substantial nineteenth century farm buildings of Melrose Hall, including a long brick and clunch barn, possibly the remains of the original hall. It has been broken in two places to give access to modern bungalows. **Melrose Hall** itself is screened from the road by an important group of trees to the north of the farmyard.

On its north-east side the road is loosely built up with a mix of older cottages of different local materials, a modern house, and a former service garage of white painted concrete blocks.



Lynn Road.

The approach from higher ground to the west gives a good view of the whole village, although modern developments have blurred the boundary between open country and built up settlement.

As the road bends northwards there is a short break with open field on either side, with a view ahead of flint gables, chimneys of red and gault brick and red pantile roofs. The Conservation Area begins, on the north side with an attractive group of former farm buildings of flint and carstone, now in residential use, followed by **The Gables**, a substantial vernacular house of carstone and red brick, probably originally a farm house but with considerable Victorian alterations and additions, including half-timbering, pantiles and tall elaborate chimneys. In front of it is a long low flint wall which extends to meet the entrance to the new St Martin at Shouldham Primary School. The conservation area boundary has been amended to include it. Wide gates are set

back between well built walls of flint and brick: these are angled to give good sight lines but the visual effect is to “blow open” the traditional street frontage. There is a sudden spectacular view of The Green, with the Church beyond.



Eastgate Street.

The former Primary School is a fine example of a late nineteenth century church school, with pointed arched windows and steep slate roofs and built of gault bricks with decoration in red brick. Opposite, beyond Colt's Hall Barn is the attractive hedged garden of Colt's Hall, with trees and a large pond. North of the garden the Conservation Area boundary follows the field boundary running eastwards, to include the historic

earth works west of the Church but to exclude the further earthworks in the field beyond.



Church Road.

The Church of All Saints enjoys a magnificent setting, raised on higher ground beyond the meadow to the east of the village and clearly visible from miles around. The pleasing southern approach, along an unmade-up road, focusses directly on the tower, its dark carstone contrasting sharply with the white portland stone of the war memorial in front. The church was much restored by the Hare family towards the end of the nineteenth century. A low flint retaining wall runs along the west side of the churchyard: from here the earthworks containing the remains of former settlement can be clearly seen and there is a fine view over the village to the west. The church is sheltered by an important group of mature trees which extends into the grounds of **Hill House**, immediately to the south. This former Rectory is a good example of late nineteenth

century domestic architecture in the gothic style, very possibly designed by the same architect as the former school.



Listed Buildings

There are 8 Listed buildings and features in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985 and added to in 1995.

Grade 1 Buildings

Church of All Saints, Church Road. Nave, chancel, west tower and south transeptal chapel. 14th, 15th and 19th centuries. Of carstone and flint with ashlar dressings and slate roofs.



Grade 2 Buildings

Headstone to Allen Mills, Churchyard, Church Road. 18th century.

Headstone to Margaret Mills, Churchyard, Church Road. 18th century.

Colts Hall, Eastgate (facing The Green). Early 19th century. Refined gault brick facade of three bays with slate roof. To the side, lower service wing of clunch.



Colt's Hall Barn, Eastgate (partly facing The Green). Probably 18th century, but built of re-used Medieval and 16th century chalk and brick. Large double barn, with buttresses and hipped roof.

London House (formerly Spar Shop), The Green. Late 18th century with attached 19th/20th century shopfront. Five bay front elevation. Walls of chalk with brick dressings and roof of glazed pantiles.



Storom Cottage, Tory Cottage and Vic Cottage, corner of The Green and The Crofts. Late 18th century. Five bay front elevation to The Green is continuation of London House facade and includes carriage arch.



Telephone kiosk, The Green. "K6" type designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935.

Important Unlisted Buildings

Although there is a modest number of listed buildings, there is a much larger number of important unlisted buildings which contribute to the special character of the Conservation Area. Both categories taken together represent 86% of the total number of buildings in the Conservation Area. Important unlisted walls have also been identified.



Post War Development

The principal post-war developments in Shouldham are the residential estate centred on Shouldham Hall, the new Primary School and infill houses in Westgate and Lynn Road. With the exception of the entrance to the school, these are all outside the Conservation Area. Within the Conservation Area, new development has been confined to three bungalows on the south side of Norwich Road, two of them largely hidden behind a high wall; a rebuilt end-of-terrace house on the north side of Norwich Road; two larger detached house: Trusbot Lodge

(facing The Green) and Melrose (at the back of other properties in Lynn Road) and, finally, the caravan park north-west of The Green.



Traditional Materials

The geology of the area, with narrow belts of greensands and gault clays running roughly north-south, sandwiched between the chalk high ground to the east and the low-lying kimmeridge clays to the west, has given rise to an unusually rich variety of local building materials, reflected in the character of Shouldham. These traditional local materials may be seen both in older vernacular buildings and in later buildings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

They include :

- Chalk, frequently galletted (joints filled) with small pieces of carstone
- flint
- carstone (sandstone with iron oxides)
- 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

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Shouldham Conservation Area. Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman finds have been made in the parish. The site of former settlement, both roads and buildings, can be clearly seen in the field between the church and the present village, indicating that historic Shouldham has either shrunk or moved westwards, leaving the church in its present isolation.



Detractors

The special character of Conservation Areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor alterations such as unsuitable replacement windows and doors, inappropriate materials, unsympathetic paintwork and the removal of walls, trees or hedges or the use of inappropriate front boundary features.

Specific features which detract from the special character of the Shouldham Conservation Area include :

- Mobile home and fence at entrance to Caravan Park, NW corner of The Green.
- Overhead cables.

Conservation Objectives

Statement 1

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

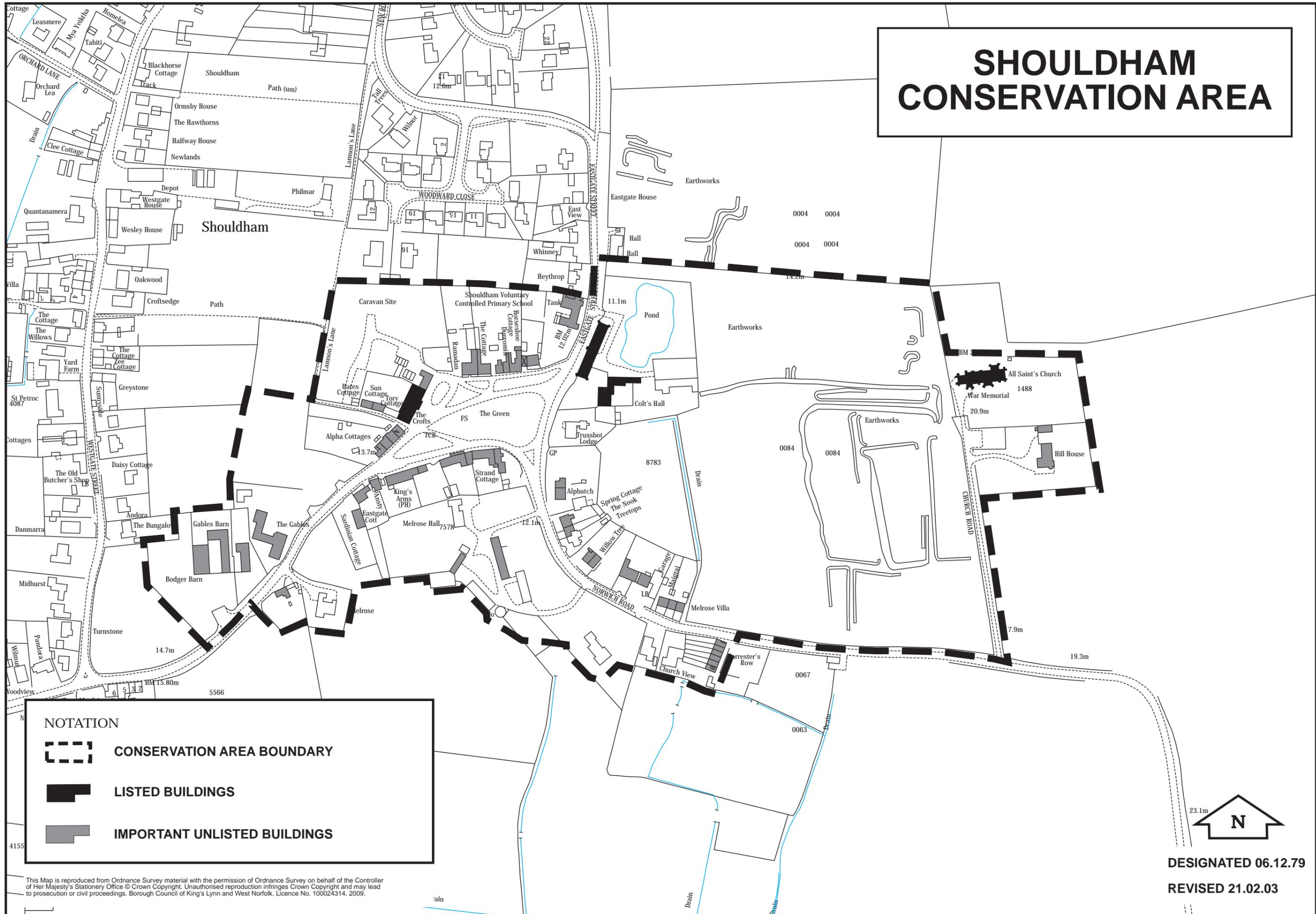
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alteration, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from Development Services at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may 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**

SHOULDHAM CONSERVATION AREA



NOTATION



CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY



LISTED BUILDINGS



IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

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