



Shouldham Thorpe Conservation Area Character Statement



SHOULDHAM THORPE, anciently called Garbois-Thorpe, is a scattered village, on rising ground, nearly 5 miles N.E. of Downham, having in it's parish 314 inhabitants and 1,304 acres of land.

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 Shouldham Thorpe Conservation Area was first designated in 1980 and amended in 1992 to accord with new base maps. 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 Thorpe is situated on a small slightly rising plateau in the low-lying relatively flat land east of the Great Ouse river and south of the river Nar, in the triangle between Kings Lynn 11 kilometres 7 (7 miles) to the north, Downham Market 8 kilometres (5 miles) to the south-west and Swaffham 18 kilometres (11 miles) to the east). The surrounding landscape is gently undulating and very different to the open chalk land further east. Lanes are winding

with drainage ditches on either side and with views framed or stopped by woods, individual trees or hedges.



The village is situated 2 kilometres (1¼ miles) south-west of Shouldham, both settlements being separated from the flood plain of the Nar to the north by open heaths and woodland. To the west the land slopes down gradually towards the Great Ouse. To the east, beyond Shouldham, it begins to rise towards Swaffham, making for good distant views in this direction. The geology of the area, with narrow belts of greensands and gault clays running roughly north-south, sandwiched between the chalk higher ground to the east and the low lying kimmeridge clays to the west, has given rise to an unusually rich mixture of local building material

The Conservation Area covers the whole of the main village proper. There is also a small development along the road between Fincham and Shouldham, within the parish but outside the village itself. Trees and hedges tend to screen views of the village from north, east and south.

Origins and Historical Development

There are Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman sites in the vicinity, though the present Shouldham 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. Shouldham Thorpe similarly appears to date from Saxon times: *thorp* being an Old English word meaning a hamlet or secondary settlement. So perhaps it began as an off-shoot of the larger village.

During the Middle Ages Shouldham Thorpe was probably in the hands of the Gilbertine Priory at Shouldham, founded in the early thirteenth century. The Priory was dissolved under Henry VIII in 1539, when the estate passed to the king and then into a number of private hands. But within less than a century, a number of manors in Shouldham and Shouldham Thorpe were amalgamated when, in 1632, lands in Shouldham and Shouldham Thorpe 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, amounting to some five thousand pounds a year, equalling those of many of the great estates of the nobility.

No seventeenth century maps of this area survive, but the picture of farming at this time as seen in the report of a survey of Shouldham carried out by William Hayward for the then new owner, Sir John Hare, in 1633, can also probably be roughly applied to Shouldham Thorpe. 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. Apart from enclosed pastures, fields were open and divided into strips. Sir John owned strips in all the fields amounting to 65% of the total (excluding commons).

Shouldham Thorpe has never been more than a hamlet. In 1603 there were only 98 communicants at the parish church. In 1836 the population was 300, but by 1891 it had fallen to 241. In 1836, for most needs other than religious, the inhabitants of the hamlet appear to have had to rely on the main village: only a wheelwright and a "beer seller" are listed under Shouldham Thorpe in White's Directory for that year. By 1890 however, Kelly's Directory lists, under Shouldham Thorpe, a brick and tile works, a post office, a builder, a shoemaker, a blacksmith and a miller (wind), although for public houses and shops, for a doctor and, since 1866 for education, it was necessary to go to Shouldham. This growth in service provision towards the end of the nineteenth century seems to reflect an increased investment in the village by the Hare estate, still to be seen, for example, in the cottages in West Road, the farm buildings at Hall Farm and the house and farm buildings at Manor Farm.



The Methodist Chapel in South Road was built in 1849, while later in the century the Plymouth Brethren established themselves in Middle Road. In 1857-1858 the established church reasserted herself when the parish church was in large part rebuilt by Sir Thomas Hare to the designs of the nationally renowned architect Anthony Salvin. These religious developments in the parish reflect national trends.



With the exception of four new bungalows, and more importantly Church Farm, there has been virtually no new building in the village since the end of the nineteenth century. The mechanisation of agriculture and the much smaller numbers employed in farming have changed the make-up of the population, the majority of whom no longer work on, or are directly connected with, the land. On the other hand the large-scale planting of orchards on the north side of the village has brought new wealth and employment, while cottages have been modernised, extended or converted from two into one by new owner-occupiers.

Character Overview

Shouldham Thorpe is a very small settlement, divided by open fields into two distinct parts. The larger and more significant part centres on the Parish Church of St Mary, Hall House and the pond, from where it extends south along West Road and east along Middle Road. The smaller part lies along South Road and includes Manor Farm.



Trees and high hedges play a dominant role in the village, framing views of buildings or, in some cases, concealing them almost entirely. The most attractive view into the village is from Church Lane with the church itself in the foreground set against the surrounding trees. In general buildings are confined to one side of each road, leaving open views over fields or high hedges on the other side.

Traditional houses are generally of two storeys, though Hall House has three storeys. Only the modern bungalows are

single storey. Traditional farm buildings, at Hall Farm and at Manor Farm are an important part of the scene.



Spaces and Buildings

The larger part of the village:

This can be subdivided into three, each with its own distinct character:

The junction of Church Lane, Middle Road and West Road. The focal point of the village and of this part of the Conservation Area is the road junction by the pond. It is dominated by trees. These include two fine lime avenues in the churchyard, a huge cedar, an overgrown yew hedge, a large, but damaged, beech and other important trees in the grounds of Hall House and around the pond. The trees frame views inwards

towards the junction and outwards from it and provide attractive settings to important historic buildings.



The overall character of this part of the village is semi-enclosed but informal. Attractive features include the pond, the village sign and the small green in front, the curve of Church Lane (drawing the eye to the churchyard gate rather than straight on down the Lane), the sloping unmetalled approach to the church, the low curving churchyard wall along Church Lane and the high wall to the adjoining kitchen garden.

Middle Road (east of the pond). From the road junction and the small green, Middle Road runs in a straight line eastwards. Apart from a small modern bungalow, the south side is entirely made up of hedged fields, allowing views across to South Road and of open country. On the north side is a short length of sporadic 19th century development. Laurel Cottage, built of red and buff bricks in a chequerboard pattern, is very pleasing; Cypress and Briar Rose and the converted Old Post Office (built as a chapel by the Plymouth Brethren) form an attractive continuous frontage, marred only

by some inappropriate window replacements. A small modern bungalow ends the development.



West Road (south of Hall Farm). Pairs of well built slate roofed cottages, typical of large prosperous estates of the period, characterise the west side of the road. They date from 1866 and 1880-2. Their design incorporates the consciously "picturesque" use of materials: three pairs, immediately south of Hall Farm, have walls of red brick and carstone, mixed and laid randomly, with gault brick dressings; chimneys are tall and cruciform and one pair is roofed with "fish scale" slates; two pairs, further south and on the bend into Coopers Lane, though built in conventionally coursed brick, have similar elaborate chimneys, as well as decorative eaves courses and, in one case, contrasting

red and gault bricks. Front gardens are enclosed by hedges, giving visual unity to the street.



Sandwiched between these two groups of cottages are an older terrace of three cottages hard on to the road. They are of brick, now painted white, and have pantiled roofs.

West Road curves slightly towards its southern end, so that, approaching from the south, one at first sees no further than the terrace of three two storey cottages. Then the view extends to the further estate cottages with their massed ranks of tall chimneys and beyond to the farm buildings and the tall trees in the grounds of Hall Farm.



The smaller part of the village:

South Road. Open fields on both sides of the road, screened by overgrown hedges, separate houses in West Road from those in South Road. On the north side the fields are interrupted only by a substantial modern bungalow and a short terrace of nineteenth century traditional two storey cottages. The bungalow has a paved front garden with posts and chain boundary. The terrace was originally three cottages but is now converted and extended to form two larger houses, the older part of flint, complete with galletted pointing, the extension in modern red bricks.



On the south side is a larger and most attractive group of buildings. They vary in character, style and size and exhibit the great variety of building materials traditionally available in this part of the county. The relationship between buildings is equally varied : the road itself curves gently, some buildings parallel to it and others at right

angles; some built hard on to it and others set back; some standing alone but many linked by high walls or hedges.



At the western end of the group is the only Listed building in this part of the village: Old Farmhouse, set back behind iron railings and high hedges, with its stable block at right angles. Of particular note is the tiny former Ebenezer Primitive Methodist chapel with a date stone of 1849. Many of the bricks along the eaves bear names, presumably inscribed before the bricks were fired, by members of the original congregation. The front is of gault bricks, but the side has a mixture of reds and gaults and the pantiles are of a similar attractive mix of clays.



Listed Buildings

There are 4 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1985.

Listed Grade II*

Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Lane. Nave and chancel, with bellcote on west gable. 12th Century, but almost entirely rebuilt in 1858 by Salvin for Sir Thomas Hare. Constructed of carstone with ashlar quoins and slate roof. Medieval west tower fell 1732. Norman west doorway relocated from north side.



Listed Grade II

Hall House (formerly The Hall), West Road. Late 17th Century carstone house absorbed by 18th Century enlargement and extensions. 18th century east facade of three

storeys and three bays wide, with pedimented doorcase and gauged brick arches over sash windows.



Foremans House, Church Lane. Subdivided into two houses. Mouldings on bridging beams indicate 17th Century date. Built of carstone with pantiled roof. 20th Century windows in 18th Century openings.



The Old Farmhouse, South Road. Built about 1830 of gault bricks with slate roof. Two storeys and three bays wide. Doorway

has Roman Doric demi-columns supporting entablature. Modern sash windows in original openings with gauged brick arches.



Important Unlisted Buildings

Three out of the four Listed buildings in the village stand close together at its heart and make a major contribution to its character. Elsewhere the particular character of important unlisted buildings have been identified representing 82% of the total number of buildings in the Conservation Area. Important unlisted walls have also been identified.



Important Trees

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

Post War Development

Post-war development in Shouldham Thorpe Conservation Area is confined to two bungalows in Middle Road, one in South Road and one in Coopers Lane and a new prefabricated farm building at Manor Farm. Outside the present boundary of the Conservation Area, but visually inseparable from it, are the recently built house and the associated farm buildings of Church Farm on the north side of Church Lane.

Traditional Materials

The character of Shouldham Thorpe Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of the great variety of local materials traditionally available in this part of Norfolk, both in the older vernacular buildings and in the Hare Estate buildings of the nineteenth century.

These materials include:

- clunch (chalk), frequently galletted (joints filled) with small pieces of carstone
- flint
- carstone (sandstone with iron oxides)
- redbrick
- gault brick (pink-buff, but tends to weather to grey)
- red clay pantiles

- gault 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 Thorpe Conservation Area

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. Features which detract from the special character of the Shouldham Thorpe Conservation Area include:

- deteriorating farm buildings at Hall Farm, West Road
- overhead cables
- worn verges due to traffic, along West Road and on the grass triangle by the pond
- road drainage poorly executed causing blocking of drainage ditch in South Road

A number of modern, minor alterations to properties in the village detract from the traditional character, including window replacements, and some boundary walls and fences are poorly maintained.

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

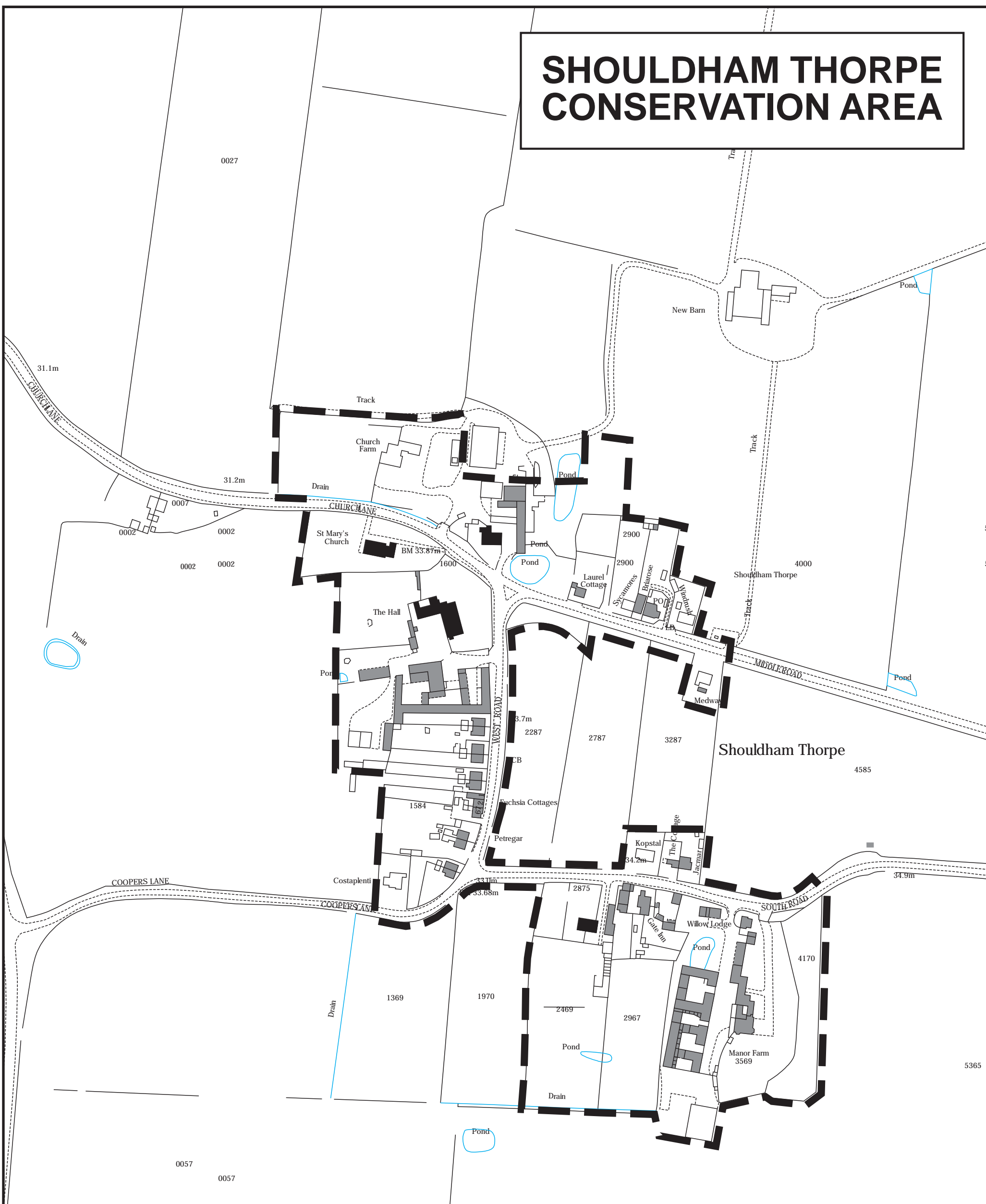
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alteration, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from Development Services at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some may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

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SHOULDHAM THORPE CONSERVATION AREA



NOTATION

-  CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
-  LISTED BUILDINGS
-  IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS



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