SNETTISHAM is a considerable village, with an ancient cross, and said to have been a market town, seated on rising ground, sheltered on the N.E. by a high range of hills, and having on the west a fine Champaign tract, extending to the beach, from which it is distant 2 miles, being on the Hunstanton road, 11 miles N.N.E of Lynn.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: October 1978
REVISED: October 1980
INTRODUCTION

A Conservation Area – “An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of 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 Snettisham Conservation Area was designated in October 1978 by the Borough Council. This document highlights the special qualities which 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 recent Government Advice (PPG15) and it will eventually form supplementary planning guidance to those policies in the King’s Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas. In particular, the guidance will supplement the Local Plan policies which deal with demolition and new development within the conservation area and new development on land adjoining the conservation area which might affect its setting or the views in or out of the area.

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

SETTING AND LOCATION

Snettisham was effectively a coastal settlement located on the eastern seaboard of the Wash, which stretches from Hunstanton in the north to Kings Lynn in the South, a distance of some 30-32 kilometres (19-20 miles). The settlement lay directly on this north / south route between Kings Lynn 17 kilometres (101/2 miles) and Hunstanton, 8 kilometres (5 miles) the old A149 main road, which now by passes the village to the west and effectively severs the ‘umbilical’ road connecting the core of the settlement from its coastal limb of Shepherds Port.

Snettisham is one of several similar semi ‘coastal’ settlements along this shore. Heacham lies just 4 kilometres (21/4 miles) to the north, Ingoldisthorpe 21/2 kilometres (11/2 miles) and Dersingham 4 kilometres (21/2 miles) to the south.

The important routes leading into the settlement are, apart from the north/south route, all minor roads. Sedgeford lies approximately 31/2 kilometres (21/4 miles) to the north/east, Bircham 101/2 kilometres (61/2 miles) to the east, and Sherborne lies 41/4 kilometres (3 miles) to the south/east. The coast itself is just over 2 kilometres (11/4 miles) to the west.

In terms of the local ‘soil landscape’ the coastal fringe up to the main A149 north/south road is regarded as ‘marshland’, with extensive silt and clay, reclaimed from the Wash itself. However Snettisham lies in the northern corner of the ‘West Norfolk lowland’ which in turn lies to the west of the chalk scarp. This ‘lowland’ soil is sandy with well drained ‘swells’ and wet hollows. It generates a mixed landscape including distinctive orange brown sands on the carstone, together with blown sand, shingle and river gravels.

Topographically, the distinctive feature is the dramatic slope of the land from the chalk scarp to the east and down to the extensive flatland
west. The land also slopes down into the village from Norton Hill, north to south, the route of the old A149 main road.

These changes of level determine the setting for the settlement and provide dramatic wide vistas from the Church on the high ground down to the core of the village.

Views form north to south are more picturesque and contained, as are those from the west and south where the fabric of the village is revealed in a series of different views determined by the twists and turns of the roads.

The setting is also dominated by the important mature landscapes of ‘Ken Hill’ to the north/west and those to the north and east of the Conservation Area. The former is an important archaeological site and is the location for some of the dramatic ‘finds’ mentioned above.

Interesting views of the higher land to the west are afforded from the road leading to Shepherds Port and give a dramatic impression of the essential topography of this area. Snettisham now occupies an area of some 45 hectares and has a population of around 2,250 people.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Snettisham lies on the site of an extremely important historic settlement, evidence for which goes back to Palaeolithic, late glacial / Mesolithic, Neolithic, (2,500 BC) Bronze Age (2,500 BC), Iron Age (650 BC), Roman (AD 43-410), and Anglo Saxon (AD 410-1066) periods. Significant nationally important ‘hoards’ from the Bronze and Iron Age have been found in the area and have been well documented archaeologically.

This intense settlement pattern undoubtedly arose from the fertile coastal location, which was originally much more inundated with water than it is now.

The word ‘Snettisham’ refers to Snaet’s homestead (Old English ‘Snaet’ and ‘ham’ – homestead). Many names ending in ‘ham’ are associated with very early personal names (as in this case) and represent the foci of large, early estates or territories. Snettisham was clearly an important early settlement site which has sustained human habitation for many centuries.

The Post Conquest development of the settlement eventually took the form of the current village, with the inhabited core divorced geographically from all important Church site occupying the high ground to the east. The latter was clearly where the Lord of the manor was located.

Early settlement was most probably located around the Church and was based on the farmsteads now occupied by Manor Farm, Park Farm and Hall Farm.

The importance of the main north / south to the west gradually generated settlement along its eastern and western sides and provided closer links with the coastal hamlet of Shepherds Port.

The importance of the village is evidenced by the length of the settlement north to south and also by the dense urban fabric around Lancaster Place, Daws Lane, and Park Lane. The built environment provided accommodation for the ‘servant’ industries, which supported and helped sustain the large local landowners, their agricultural pursuits and also the maritime trade which flourished on the coast, including the right to remove shingle.

The ownership, sale, purchase and disposal of land is always a key factor in the generation of urban form and Snettisham is a fine example of a bustling commercial centre with cottages for the labour force employed by the local landowners, in this case the Church itself (the Archbishop of Canterbury once owned land here), the Stricklands, the Bedingfields (Oxburgh Hall), the Le Stranges (late of Hunstanton Hall) and the Stylemans.

The pattern of settlement and resulting urban form seen today are the results of a continual process of change in response to the major shifts in economy, society and fashion over the years.

Snettisham was big enough to support and
sustain a market from early mediaeval times right up to 1845. It also bordered on land to the west, known as 'common marsh' which supported summer flocks of sheep and, interestingly, might have given rise to the name Shepherds Port.

Snettisham lies within the 'Docking Hundreds', the early administrative areas noted in the Domesday Book, 1086, later merging with 'Smithdon' to form the Smithdon Hundred. The area was always agricultural based and enjoyed the coastal/fertile farmland location typical of this part of West Norfolk. Agriculture changed with fashion but predominantly remained the important basis for settlement up to the end of 20th Century.

An endowed grammar school (Classical) was initiated north of the settlement on Norton Hill around 1700 and the area was enclosed during the 18th Century in similar fashion to most rural parts of the nation. Snettisham is also the 'epicentre' of the local carstone industry and just to the north of the conservation area lies the early quarry still producing Norfolk's only stone (apart from flint). As expected this material is used extensively in the village in all its forms, its dwellings affectionately known as 'gingerbread houses'.

The railway came to Snettisham around 1860 and ceased in 1969. Its early use perhaps represented the heyday of commercial activity for the village. It has remained an increasingly popular place to live however being near to the coast, the major urban area of Kings Lynn and routes north, and as a popular retirement location. Its population actually continued to rise at a time when those of many other rural areas were falling.

CHARACTER OVERVIEW

Snettisham Conservation Area contains the historic core of the settlement and because this is of a “dispersed” nature the Conservation Area Boundary is quite large and complex.

It encompasses the Church and important farm complexes in the south east and north which have little density of settlement, and the more complex, dense urban area of the village core which was centred around the old Hunstanton, Kings Lynn main road.

The large modern settlement, largely housing, located to the south west and west of the village is not included.

The Conservation Area therefore contains the historic fabric of the settlement and varies from St. Mary's Church, the 'jewel in the crown' as it were, the beauty of Old Hall, to the more modest cottages along Alma Road and the Lancaster Place area. All these buildings have been subject to change over time and yet the overall historic character of the settlement is still very much intact.

The use of materials in the historic fabric is also important and not surprisingly it is the all pervading use of carstone which is perhaps most distinctive.

However this statement also identifies a degree of complexity in the Conservation Area occasioned by the disparate nature of the urban form and its accompanying historic landscape. The distancing of Church and farms on the eastern boundary from the tight clusters of buildings around the old Hunstanton/Lynn road with the nucleus of the Old Market Place all contribute to the Conservation Area’s unique character, which is described in detail in the next section.

SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Snettisham Conservation Area is divided into several distinct areas; the eastern boundary containing Church, farms and Vicarage with their associated 'in between' spaces and landscape; the landscape buffer in the middle of the Area which contains the Playing Field 'paddocks' to the west of Park Farm and Manor Farm, and the thick tree belt which lies to the north of the Playing field and which forms the southern boundary to Hall Farm; the 'park' landscape to the north of Old Church Road which is essentially private being accessible only by rough tracks; the north west corner of the conservation area including the descent from Norton Hill, and the historic built fabric of the village containing the Alma Road buildings, the Listed Buildings, outbuildings and walls to Old Hall and the ranges of buildings opposite it on the west side of Norton Hill; the dense urban area around the market place containing ranges of buildings on all sides several which are listed – the historic 'core' of the settlement; the densely packed built fabric around Lancaster.
Place, Park Lane, Danes Lane; and finally the
southern edge of the Area which contains the
remaining important historic buildings including
Methodist Church and heavily treed landscape
to the west of the old A149 road.

In essence the Conservation Area is an
assembly of all these built components, the
spaces created between and around them, and
the landscape associated with them whether in
terms of trees, hedges, grass verges or more
distant views of surrounding countryside
outside the Conservation Area. Interestingly
the latter are quite restricted apart from those
westwards from the eastern boundary, which
gives a good indication of the density and
tightness of urban form around the historic core.

Starting at the eastern edge of the conservation
area boundary, the church of St. Mary with its
dominant spire is magnificent in its own right
altogether with the beautiful listed screen wall to
the churchyard, the mature treed landscape of
the churchyard itself and its associated wildlife
habitat. All these components combine to
provide a unique backdrop to views eastwards
from the lower village nucleus to the west. The
sloping ground merely serves to heighten the
scale and majesty of the grouping.

The Vicarage, set on lower ground to the north,
another listed building, is located amongst a yet
more heavily treed landscape.

To the south lies Manor Farm and Park Farm
and their associated outbuildings located on the
Bircham Road which leads off southwards from
the Church before turning sharply eastwards to
Bircham. The subtle twists and turns of this
road, the presence of the Park Farm buildings
as a visual stop, and the heavily treed landscape all serve to create a more intimate
'country lane' atmosphere of varied vistas.
'Suttonlea' and 'Hill Side' occupy the higher land
to the north, the former being a modern insertion, the latter a complex of buildings with
townscape value'. There are also some lovely
screen walls in this area, which are an important
townscape component in Snettisham area as a
whole. The eastern Conservation Area
Boundary takes the line of the heavily treed
hedgerow which runs north/south to the east of
Suttonlea and Hill Side and is a natural division
with agricultural land further eastwards.

Two roads and a track bisect this landscape in
an east/west direction namely Old Church Road
to the north, Church Road in the middle and a
track which leads up to Park Farm further to the
east. All are tree lined although Old Church
Road has an attractive screen wall on its
southern edge.

The buffer creates a distancing between the
eastern 'edge' of the Conservation Area and
western village core which contributes to
Snettisham's own unique character. The
generating influences which gave rise to this
situation are stated in earlier sections. Suffice
to say that today, the range of views west to
east 'up the hill' perhaps with a cricket match in
the foreground and culminating in the church
spire over this soft landscape buffer are
quintessentially English in townscape terms.

The area north of Old Church Road is
essentially private parkland associated with Old
Hall, Old Hall Farm and the other buildings
associated with these architectural 'events'.
The character of the area can best be described
as historic parkland representing as it does the
'private territory' of the landowners and their
power over the settlement as a whole. It is not
an area accessible to public scrutiny and was
never meant to be. Old Hall is glimpsed through
the openings in its magnificent surrounding
southern/western screen wall but this feature
very strongly defines the division between
landowner and village. Access to the farms
located on Old Hall land is by rough track. The
land falls steeply from north to south, water
being collected in a drain located parallel to Old
Church Road.
All the buildings are in private hands although Old Hall itself is now a Sue Ryder Home, but still owned by the National Trust.

Moving to the north western part of the Conservation Area, this area is essentially the ‘north gate’ to the village. The main route to the village is now via the northern roundabout at Norton Hill in the new A149 bypass which directs traffic down in the village. The Conservation Area Boundary contains the historic built fabric on the west side of the road, all of which is of townscape significance with a small nucleus formed in front of Suffolk House, previously a shop, now an artists studio and which marks the junction of a rough track which climbs uphill to the north east. Coming down the hill, the vista is closed by the delightful outbuildings and wall of Old Hall before a more dominant nucleus is reached where Alma Road joins the old coast road from the west. A small triangle of land with a tree marks the junction and provides a visual stop. The nucleus space is heightened by the proximity of the pub forecourt directly adjacent to this junction.

Alma Road itself is a linear settlement of attractive cottage ranges, largely in the northern side of the road but with the Salvation Army Citadel to the south. These are all of historic significance and were once possibly connected to coastal use, Alma Road being part of the ‘umbilical cord’ attaching village core to the coastal hamlet of Shepards Port. The road also contains the vitally important Post Office and chip shop and even though the architecture is undistinguished it is encouraging to see these uses continuing. Modern infill housing has been inserted along this road and further important sites which might be subject to development pressure are highlighted on the analysis map.

The Conservation Area Boundary is at the obvious defining line between historic and modern settlements. The latter has crept close to the village core and whilst the design of the new housing is relatively bland its extent does indicate the attraction of living in this part of Norfolk.

The next major area to consider is the real nucleus of the settlement, the village core centred around the market place. The form of the area is roughly triangular with connecting routes coming into it from four directions. The eastern and western sides are bounded by continuous building façades and there is also building actually on the central market area which creates further interesting spaces and connecting routes. To the north, enclosure is provided by the massive screen wall and mature trees fronting Old Hall. To the south the ‘funnel’ of the triangle is closed by the prominent Listed Building, the Surgery (now bed and breakfast). At this point a further minor connecting route, School Road travels off to the south-east and the old main road continues southwards.

The arrangements of roads and buildings create a series of interesting views and vistas although somewhat spoil by the intrusive wirescape, poor townscape components (bins, signage etc., especially in the market place itself) and unattractive floorscape. There is room for improvement here.

The space contains several important Listed buildings and most other buildings are considered to be worthy of townscape significance, even though some are marrred by unsympathetic modern insertions (windows/doors etc.). In summary, this is a very important nucleus space in the Conservation Area. The historic fabric is still intact and it is encouraging to see commercial buildings still being used, albeit on a scale far removed from the heyday of Snettisham as a flourishing market town. Such specialist use such as bookshop, the chemist, the Bistro Restaurant/coffee shop and village shop all encourage vitality in the settlement.

The final area of the Conservation Area is perhaps the most complex one and encompasses the area to the south of the market place including School Lane, Church Road, Daw’s Lane, Lancaster Place, Park Lane as well as the old A149 Hunstanton/Lynn main
road. This is a tightly knit urban area, particularly to the south east which again contains several important Listed Buildings (along School Lane including the School), unlisted Buildings of townscape significance, including three large houses, the Methodist Church and numerous historic cottage ranges.

It is also an area where there has been much insertion of new houses and although the immediate post war examples are nondescript the most modern schemes have been designed more sensitively and have been inserted into the existing historic fabric with great care. Of particular note is the housing around School Road and that to the south and east of the Old Maltings.

Soft landscape in the form of mature trees and hedges is also an important feature of the area and the most important examples are shown on the analysis map. Hard landscaping in the form of connecting screen walls is also an important component of the Conservation Area and these are also identified.

The southern boundary of the Conservation Area is irregular in form as it encompasses the extent of the historic fabric after which the older buildings become more and more dispersed amongst a sea of modern housing developments.

The south east Conservation Area Boundary protrudes to encompass a range of two cottage buildings lying at the end of a pleasant grassed access track containing a nice hedgerow to the 'dispersed' nature of the Conservation Area.

In summary this part of the Conservation Area has its own unique character largely formed by the tight form of the urban fabric which was generated largely to provide accommodation for workers associated with the surrounding agriculture or who were employed by the many businesses carried on in the commercial part of the village. The scale of such operations is suggested by the size of the warehouse building now used as a Ridgeons building material depot.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 21 listed buildings or structures within the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1984 and there have been no further additions.

Listed Grade I
- Church of St. Mary, Old Church Road. All late 14th Century. Decorated. Flint with stone dressings, lead roofs, stone spire. Restored 1856.

Listed Grade II*
- Snettisham Old Hall, Lynn Road (east). Hall, incorporating Manor House of late 16th Century or early 17th Century. Remodelled in 18th Century and early 19th Century by the Styleman family. Rubble carstone with brick dressings with later galleried carstone work' coursed, squared and dressed carstone of 18th Century on north front. Black glazed pantile roofs, slate, 20th Century pantiled to west service wing.

Listed Grade II
- Ice House, north east of Snettisham Old Hall. 18th Century. Carstone with some internal brick dressings. Tunnel and chamber. NB location not found. Believed to be near Old Hall outbuildings. Further investigation needed.
- Stable Block, north west of Snettisham Old Hall. Mid 18th Century. Squared, coursed, carstone, black smut pantiled roof. 2 storey, 5 bays, symmetrical Palladian façade.

- Stable Court Gate Piers and Wall, west of Snettisham Old Hall; main entrance gate and piers.
- 37, 39, 41, 43 Lynn Road (west). Terrace of
4 houses, some with original shop fronts. 1838. Squared, course, carstone blocks with slate roofs.
- **4 Hall Road** (west) Cottage, 1840. Rubble carstone with brick dressings, red pantiled roof. 2 storeys. Gothick. End Gable to Hall Road.
- **45 Lynn Road** (west) House. Mid to late 18th Century. Whitewashed brick, red pantiled roof. 3 bay. 3 storey. Late Georgian domestic style.
- **Hope House**, 47 Lynn Road (west). House. Late 18th Century. Squared, course, carstone, ashlar blocks with brick dressings, black pantiled roofs with red pantile insertions. 2 storey. 5 bay façade to the east.
- **9, 11, 11A, 13 Hall Road** (east). 19th Century late 18th Century pair red brick, Flemish bond, red pantiled roof. 2 bay. 2 storey.
- **1 Hall Road** 18th Century house. 19th Century details. Squared course carstone blocks to south; carstone rubble to north, brick dressings, red pantiled roof.
- **1,2-4 School Road**. 1700. 2 houses with range of workshops attached at south. Houses early 18th Century, workshops 1793. Coursed, squared and dressed carstone ashlar brick dressings, pantiled roof.
- **The Hollies**, 12 Lynn Road. Mid 18th Century house. Brick façade, carstone returns, pantiled roof. 2 storey, double pile, 5 bays.
- **8 School Road** (north). 1840, house. Coursed, squared carstone ashlar on south front, brick dressings, carstone rubble returns. Slate roofs. 2 storeys.

- **Century Churchyard wall**, Church of St. Mary. 18th Century churchyard wall with gate piers and gates. Rubble carstone with some church flint and brick dressings and stone copings.

**IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS**

The character of Snettisham Conservation Area benefits from a wealth of Listed buildings but a good deal of the townscape character rests on the vernacular styles of its unlisted buildings. These buildings are shown on the analyses map and are identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their character is substantially intact, and because they often relate to other historic buildings nearby.

**POST WAR DEVELOPMENT**

Most post war development within the Conservation Area consists of infill housing on practically all sides and on individual sites within the Conservation Area itself. The early modern housing is bland and best described as 'anywhere housing'. The more modern developments are much better and all try to make a sensitive response to 'place' and 'context with a growing use of more traditional local materials.

There has been little new commercial development apart from the reuse of existing buildings (eg Ridgeons). This has been caused by and in response to the dramatic changes and shifts in English society and economic life as a whole. In essence the agricultural and commercial raison d'être of all important market villages such as Snettisham has simply gone. The size and attractiveness the village as a place to live has continued however and this has at least served to sustain the infrastructure seen today and mentioned above. Despite these dramatic changes in late 20th Century Britain Snettisham is still a vital and energetic community (the Memorial or Village Hall is at present being extended) but one which is now centred on car ownership. This is a national phenomenon seen in countless villages.
throughout the country as a whole and will undoubtedly create the need for further change in the built fabric of the settlement. It is clear however that this fabric and its character is greatly cherished by the local population who are deeply aware of the need for its continued protection in the face of such change.

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Snettisham Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historic buildings.

These materials include:
- Carstone - in all its varied forms - a random rubble walling, coursed, ashlar, tile slips, sometimes galletted and sometime mixed in with brick and flint.
- Chalk (or clunch)
- Flint - generally random rubble.
- Brickwork - either as dressings to flint/chalk/carstone walling or in its own right as the major walling material.
- Clay pantiles - both natural red/orange and black glazed.
- Welsh slate
- Colour washed brick, flint and render.
- Limestone - Church and Churchyard walls.

ARCHEAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Conservation Area but Snettisham and its environs contain sites of immensely important 'finds'. The Snettisham hoard, gold and silver ornaments from the 1st Century BC, is the largest ever British treasure (now in the British Museum), and evidence has been found of settlement from all subsequent periods. All future development whether new build or as alterations to the existing fabric, or the insertion of services should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief to monitor the possible discovery of other finds.

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.

Examples of all these detractors are visible in Snettisham, it is hoped that positive encouragement will be given to people to redress the situation.

The list includes the following:

- Prominent overhead wires, poles and other equipment especially around the market place, Alma Road and Park Lane.
- Poor enclosure to the south east corner of Alma Road/High Street junction.
- Poor paving to the playing field entrance off Old Church Road.
- Severe metal railings to the playing field and school. Soft hedgerow planting would help here.
- Poor enclosure to some of the modern housing.
- Parking/traffic congestion around the central core of the village.
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, whether listed or not
- 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, alterations, extensions, installations, demolition or work to trees should seek advice from the Planning Policy at an early stage. A leaflet summarising these issues and including general information on conservation areas can be obtained from the Planning Policy free of charge.