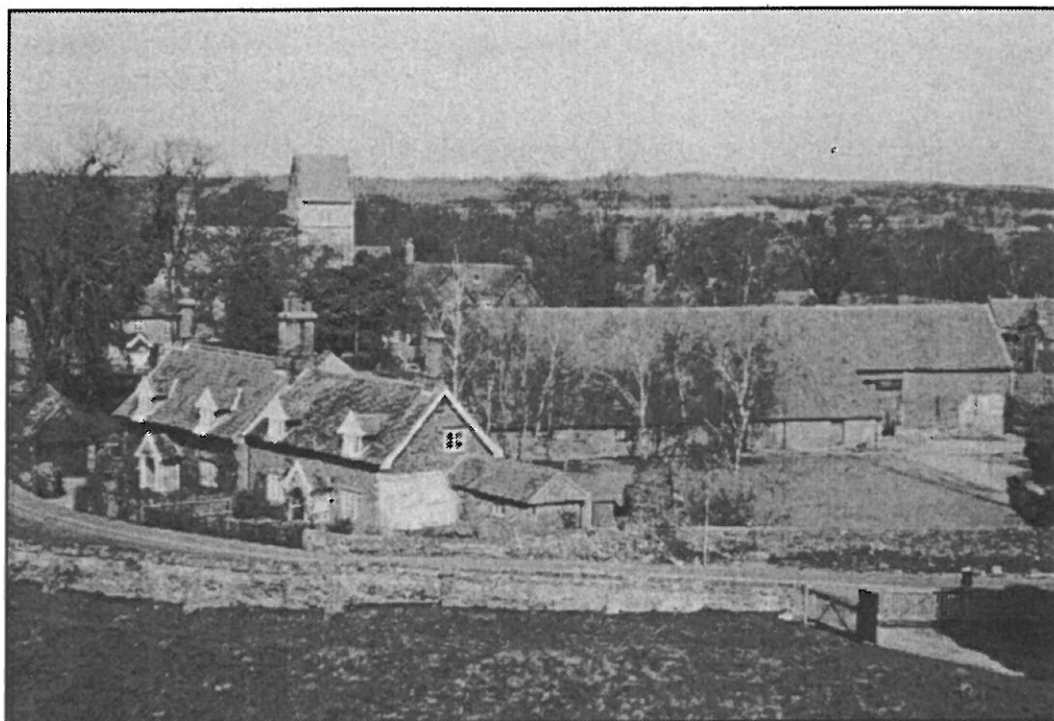


# CASTLE RISING

## CONSERVATION AREA

### DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



*CASTLE RISING though now only a village, pleasantly seated on the crown and slope of a declivity, on the Hunstanton road, 4 1/2, miles N.N.E. of Lynn, is an ancient borough by prescription, and said to have been a considerable sea port – “when Lynn was but a marsh”.*

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: July 1979



POLICY &  
ENVIRONMENT

## 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.

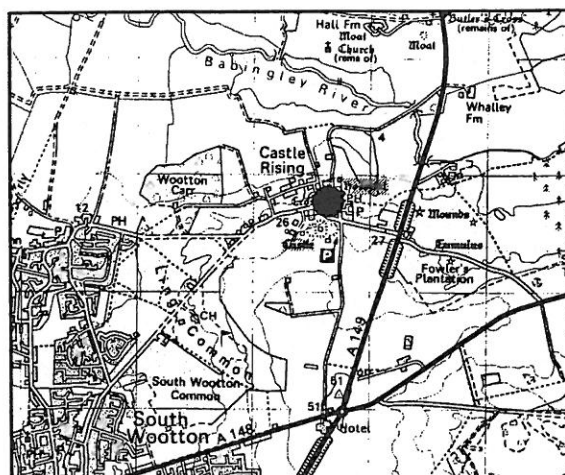
Conservation areas were introduced by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Local Authorities were required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest, whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as conservation areas. This duty is now part 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 Castle Rising 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 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

Castle Rising is located just west of the A149, 5 kilometres (3 miles) north of King's Lynn, 11 kilometres (7 miles) south of Hunstanton and 7 kilometres (4 miles) inland from the edge of The Wash. As its name suggests, the village is situated on ground rising gently to 30 metres (100 feet approx) on the south side of the Babingley valley, a wide flat area of grazing marshes.



From the north the main road slopes downhill emerging from the conifer plantations of the Sandringham estate, past Babingley's estate cottages, to cross the open valley bottom and the Babingley river. From here the saddleback roof of St Lawrence's church and beyond it the equally distinctive roof of D'Albini's castle are just visible above the soft contours of Castle Rising Wood. The main approach from the south is gently downhill from the A149 roundabout at Rising Lodge. Further along, across open fields, the top of the castle keep peers out from between a line of straggly Scots pine but at no time does it dominate the skyline and the village itself is quite hidden from the main road.

## ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The area of land that became Castle Rising parish in the late Saxon period already had a long history of occupation. It lay just west of

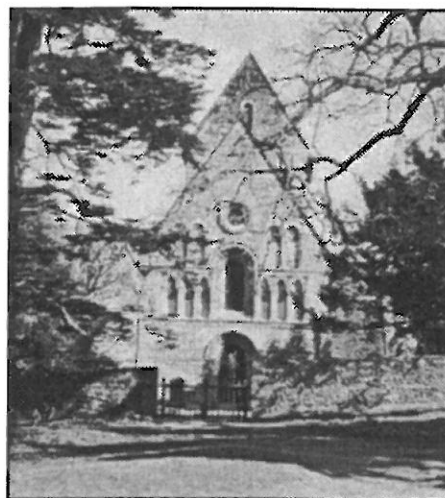
the prehistoric track known as the Icknield Way that ran south from the coast across the well drained greensand soils and crossed the Babingley upstream at Flitcham. Bronze Age traders used this route and semi-nomadic settlers lived nearby - the axe heads found in the parish and the group of round barrows east of the A149 are evidence of this early activity. Roman pottery and other finds near Rising Lodge and in the south east of the parish near Roydon Common would seem to suggest Romano-British settlement kept to the higher, more open ground, but finds in the village indicate a more widespread area of occupation before the Saxons arrived.

At the end of the Roman occupation the coastline of The Wash was several kilometres further east. The Babingley was then a tidal estuary easily navigable by the first Saxon settlers from north west Europe. The ruined medieval church at Babingley is traditionally the site where St Felix of Burgundy built the first church in East Anglia before moving upstream to Flitcham. This is confirmed by early Saxon place names with a personal element such as Babingley (the Leah or settlement of Babba's people) and Rising (Risa's people). An alternative Saxon derivation for Rising is Rissa 'place by brushwood'. The adjacent villages of North and South Wootton also suggest this area of light sandy soil was once well wooded, although none is recorded in Domesday Book which suggests extensive clearance during the intervening 400 years.

By 1086 Rising was a 'berewick' or outlying estate of Snettisham and was held by Odo of Bayeux who, two years later fell out of favour with the king, William Rufus, and Rising was granted to William D'Albini. D'Albini's son, following his marriage to Henry I's widow, began work on the ambitious Norman castle in c.1138, modelled on the royal castle at Norwich, for which Rising is renowned, adding it to the smaller fortification under construction at New Buckenham in South Norfolk. There was clearly a settlement of some kind here but the countryside around consisted largely of open heathland and was not very productive. The site was probably chosen for the relative ease with which the large quantities of building stone could be transported up the Babingley river on the last stage of its journey via the Wash from Barnack in Lincolnshire. The exact position for the castle involved the demolition of the small apsidal church built by

the first D'Albini, the foundations of which were discovered in the 19th Century just north of the keep.

A new, grander church was built to the north of the earthworks, much of which survives today, notably the sumptuously decorated late

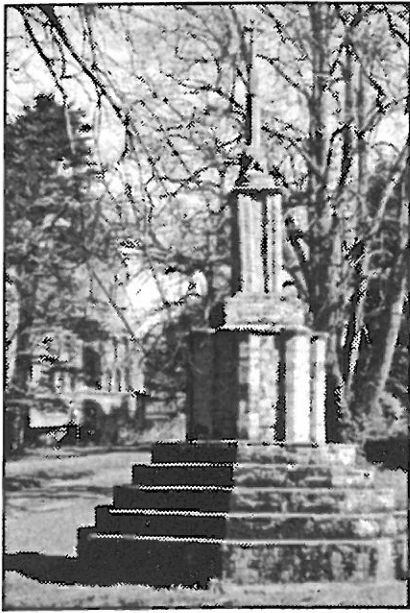


Norman west front. Dedicated to St Lawrence it was prominently situated within the new planned settlement of Castle Rising laid out on a rectangular grid pattern by D'Albini II between the earthworks and the Babingley marshes. The market place was immediately opposite and the main purpose of the new village, as at New Buckenham, was to raise market tolls for its Norman lord. The fact that the castle was not built on the highest point suggests that D'Albini was confident it would not be attacked (it never was). This is confirmed by the extensive deer park laid out to the south within its pale boundary fence.

The town itself would have been surrounded by a bank and ditch, the northern boundary running along the first part of what is now Low Road. Situated just outside the bank where Low Road meets Nightmarsh Lane, was a medieval leper hospital. Visitors to the Castle would often have travelled by boat up a channel cut from the Babingley, past the lord's dovecote to disembark at the Isle, a moated enclosure and ornamental garden. From here the approach would have been on horseback along Havengate Lane, into the town then through the market place to the gatehouse.

Apart from the church, there are few tangible signs of the medieval town. The main roads through the village follow the original street pattern but much of the grid has been

gradually built over. The 15th Century market



cross in Barnack stone, one of the most impressive in the county in the centre of what is now a large village green, is a reminder of Castle Rising's former prosperity. Despite the importance of the castle there is little to suggest the medieval grid pattern was ever fully built up and this may help explain the rather spacious, loose-knit character of the place today. The most important new build within the town occurred in the early 17th Century when the Howards, lords of the castle since 1544 (the present owner is a Howard and descendent of William D'Albini), endowed Trinity Hospital. This quadrangular structure, complete with its own chapel, was built around a courtyard to house 10 spinsters. Still essentially medieval in character it completed the main architectural axis of the village - market place, church, almshouse.

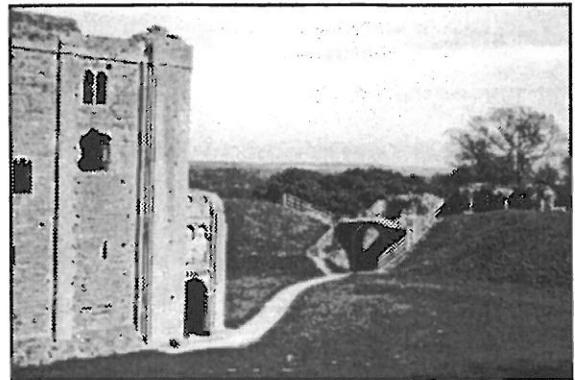
During the 18th Century some of the medieval plots were redeveloped with more substantial brick and carstone estate cottages dotted throughout the village along its existing street pattern. The two most important additions came in the form of Castle Farm (mid 18th Century) together with substantial barns, a reminder that Castle Rising was always primarily an agricultural community; and the rectory, built in 1810 for the Rev Fawssett just north of the church, a large gault brick building in its own landscaped grounds. Unlike many villages Castle Rising changed little in the Victorian period - the familiar Methodist chapel is noticeably absent here but the village did acquire a primary school (now closed) and The Black Horse Inn (still open).



## SPACES AND BUILDINGS

### Castle and Earthworks

Visitors are at once struck by the sheer size and scale of the earthworks that cover approx. 12 acres. Within the shallow oval bowl of the main enclosure stands the keep. Beyond the rampart are two rectangular enclosures; the larger to the east, dotted with several mature beech, oak and Scots pine, is surrounded by its own deep ditch and bank. From here the keep peers out over a dramatic series of manicured earthworks but would originally have been a far more impressive landmark. The main rampart or ringwork was raised in the late 12th Century and the surplus earth used to flatten the western outer enclosure. A brick and stone curtain wall with towers at intervals was constructed by the Black Prince in the 14th Century together with the bridge that carries visitors across the deepest of ditches to the gatehouse, an original Norman feature dating to about 1140.



At this point the full extent of the keep became visible for the first time, a massive rectangular structure, one of the largest and most richly ornamented in the country especially the staircase and forebuilding intended to impress D'Albini's contemporaries. It is, like its companion piece in Norwich, a Norman hall keep rather than the more common tower keep, a large squat building much altered by Robert Montalt in the early 14th Century.



In addition to acting as a circular viewing platform for the keep, the main ramparts also provide extensive views down over the orange pantile roofs of the village spread out below. Most notable are the two pairs of estate cottages on the edge of the earthworks, Castle Farm and St Lawrence's



late Norman tower. Its distinctive saddleback top, part of G E Street's 1860 restoration, was designed to mirror Montalt's 14th Century roof to the keep forebuilding. The lasting impression of the village from here is its loose form knit together by numerous mature trees. Beyond, the views open out northwards across the Babingley valley to the low conifer plantations of the Sandringham Estate and westwards to The Wash.

### Lynn Road

From King's Lynn the main approach is via the residential suburb of South Wootton. Beyond it the road skirts the golf course, continuing diagonally to the junction of Ling Common Road on the edge of the Conservation Area. At this point the wide grass verges fringed with bracken and young silver birch show the banked edge of the park pale of the castle, and give way to open farmland, especially on the south side where, at the far end of a large arable field a thick woodland belt effectively screens the castle. More immediately, the road curves gently to reveal a small group of mid-19th Century cottages: The first, overly extended, is notable for its distinctive front elevation - squared blocks of grey sandstone. The second is more typical of estate cottages in the village - thin lumps of brown carstone, simple casements with red brick dressings, red pantile roof and clusters of diagonal brick chimney stacks.

Further along, the road is still open and rural with views north across gently sloping meadows to the attractive straggle of cottages along Low Road. Ahead, the road is lined on the north side by mature lime trees, a prelude to the village and a legacy from the hall that

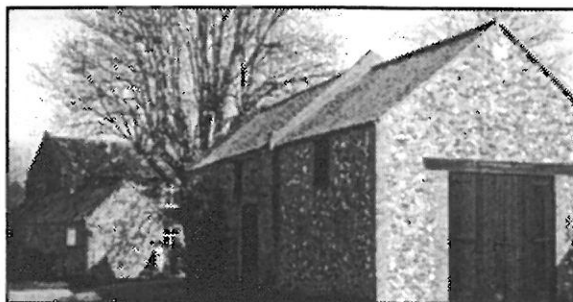
once stood in its own landscaped grounds. The carstone boundary wall also survives



from the 19th Century, overhung by more, well-spaced limes and punctuated at intervals by driveways to a series of unremarkable new houses redeemed by their mature setting.

### Low Road

This country lane leaves Lynn Road and slopes gently down, lined by tall thorn hedges, before taking an abrupt right hand turn to run eastwards into the bottom end of the village. The large asbestos barn is the only real blemish but, unlike the estate cottage on the corner, the substantial pantile house opposite, set back in an expanse of open lawn, is an indication of the way the rural character of this back lane has been changed. Further along a mixture of carstone and flint rubble farm buildings form an attractive series of small scale, courtyard spaces backed by a row of



lime trees. The whole group has been discreetly converted to residential use, but here and elsewhere the grass verges have become private lawns, planted and protected by large blocks of stone.

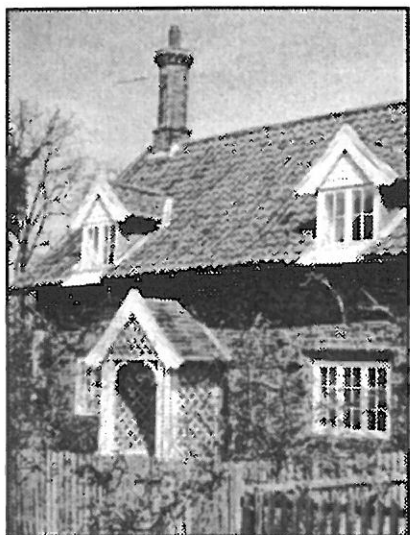
Beyond a tall carstone wall an even higher leylandii hedge is a rather lifeless evergreen screen to the road in contrast to the lengths of more traditional paling fence and low thorn hedge opposite. Along this stretch the tall chimneys of Abel's Cottage are clearly visible and at the far end more estate cottages are an

attractive conclusion to Low Road. The exotic planting - laurel, flowering cherry and more conifers - is an unfortunate distraction, but at this point the first glimpse of the Old Rectory's bulging west facade and the gabled church tower, both on higher ground among trees, is a far more interesting diversion.



### Eastern Approach

Beyond the raw edge of Church Crofts and with the earthworks on one side, Castle Farmhouse is the first vernacular building of



any distinction, a sturdy 18th Century carstone dwelling half hidden by a beech hedge and the group of tall lime trees that separates it from the sweeping pantile roof of two adjoining barns set well back. The carstone wall follows the road round to a pair of estate cottages on the corner - dormers, octagonal stacks and trellis porches - and a buttressed brick wall on the edge of the earthworks. The only blemishes to this picturesque set piece are the concrete roof tiles and the 1960's chalet bungalow opposite

in such a prominent position. Near the cross roads a tall horse chestnut overhangs a boundary wall - reused blocks of limestone from the castle here and in the gable end of the barn.

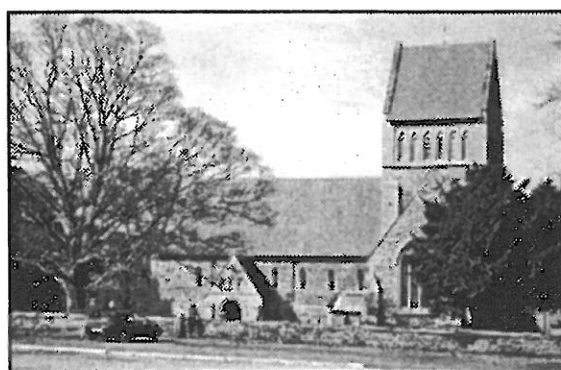
### Village Centre

There is no strong sense, architecturally, of being in a village centre. The arrangement remains loose knit throughout a place surrounded by open fields and notable for the mature trees, mainly lime, within its boundary. At the main crossroad several cottages and The Black Horse PH are more closely



grouped but are never tightly packed alongside the road. Each is set in its own well stocked garden bounded by low carstone walls. Nearby the larger, more distinctive village buildings appear as a series of separate architectural statements. This is very much a legacy of the original planned layout and the concentration of new housing in two small estates rather than the more destructive policy of infill development. The spacious character of Castle Rising can only be retained by a strict adherence to this policy.

The rural character of Castle Rising is nowhere more evident than the site of the medieval market, approached along the road leading to the church. Here low boundary walls, especially on the east side, are a strong linear feature before Salvin's restored (1849)



Norman church becomes fully visible across open ground. The view straight ahead is terminated by the dense mass of trees in a corner of the Old Rectory grounds. Beside the lychgate the lane then drops away across the village green with a neat row of estate cottages on the northside but otherwise almost entirely rural and with the market cross almost hidden among tall beech and lime trees. Travelling in the other direction up from Low Road the beautiful west end of St Lawrence's church is an impressive introduction to the village at the top end of the green.

Travelling eastwards from the crossroads with Castle Farm barn on one side behind a tall carstone wall and the Black Horse on the



other, the view ahead takes in the former school, recognisably Victorian and institutional with its rusticated brick quoins and thin carstone chips. The foreground is now a car park and the playing field a neat paddock with more estate cottages beyond. As the road swings round, the full length of the church is again visible across the pub car park. Opposite and by way of contrast, is the quadrangular form of the 17th Century Trinity



Hospital with its imposing gatehouse entrance. Built of red brick with a low pegtile roofline broken at intervals by massive chimney stacks and gables, the whole is set

down below road level in a beautifully kept walled garden as though to emphasise its deferential position. From here, while the main road sweeps round in front of the hospital, a lane heads northwards past the Old Rectory, overhung by a line of mature trees, part of the belt of planting that defines its landscaped grounds. On the other side are playing fields that run down to the edge of the wood.

## LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 12 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1988 and there have been no further additions.

### Listed Grade I

- **The Castle Ruins and 11th Century Church:** c1138 for William D'Albini II. Barnack limestone with carstone and flint. Surrounding circular rampart with parts of curtain wall, gateway and bridge across deep encircling ditch. The keep is one of the largest and most decorated in England, the forebuilding or entrance to the staircase being most lavishly decorated. Main rooms above the basement consist of the Great Hall, Great Chamber and Chapel. Bridge is perpendicular, the gatehouse Norman. Curtain walls formerly with 3 equidistant towers. Ruins of 11th Century parish church north of keep (plan of nave, central tower and apse). Replaced by 12th Century church in village. Early 14th Century the castle was residence of Isabella, wife of Edward II. Decayed in 15th Century. In 1544 it came to Howard family who still own it. Scheduled Ancient Monument Norfolk No. 3.
- **Church of St Lawrence:** 12th Century. Restored by A Salvin c1849 with additions 1883 for members of the Howard family. Carstone from Sandringham with Barnack stone dressings. Plain tiles. Nave, central tower, chancel, south porch and south transept. West front "a swagger piece of Norman decoration" with some additions by Salvin (Also the nave windows, and south transept). Saddle back top of tower by G E Street 1860. Tower rib-vaulted inside, sumptuous west arch. Fine 13th Century lancets in chancel. Norman font with animal heads. Victorian stained glass.



- **Trinity Hospital:** Almshouses 1609-15 for Henry Howard. Red brick with some carstone, plaintiles. Single storey quadrangle except for west entrance - a gable between 2 turrets. Casements with leaded panes and lozenge shaft stacks. East range is taller, containing hall and chapel (restored 1935). Hospital now governed by Mercer's Company.

#### Listed Grade II\*

- **Market Cross, The Green:** 15th Century Barnack limestone. Octagonal. 7m high. 5 tall steps. Slender tapering shaft surmounted by cross. Scheduled Ancient Monument, Norfolk No. 188.



- **20/21 Low Road: Pair of cottages.** 17th Century carstone, pantiles. Some galletting and 17th Century brickwork. Casements. Lean-to's.



#### Listed Grade II

- **Castle Farmhouse:** c1740. Galletted blocks of carstone, pantiles, gable parapets. Symmetrical facade with fluted doorcase and casements. Left gable, carstone rubble, external stack. Built on site of 15th Century lodge to castle.
- **Barns at Castle Farm:** Two under one roof. 18th Century. Variety of local stone including limestone from castle. Pantiles. Each barn of 3 steads.
- **Lamp Posts:** North of barn at Castle Farm. 2 lamp posts, War Memorial 1919. Oak posts, wrought iron octagonal lanterns.
- **Telephone Kiosk:** K6 style 1935 by Giles Gilbert Scott. Cast iron, margin glazing bars. Painted red.
- **The Old Rectory, north of church:** 1810 for Rev. Will Fawsett. Gault brick. Double pile, hipped roof. Symmetrical front with central pedimented bay Sashes.

#### IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

Castle Rising Conservation Area is dominated by its Norman castle keep and impressive earthworks. Together with St Lawrence's Church and Trinity Hospital it forms a group of nationally important historic buildings that define its distinctive character. Nevertheless the considerable number of attractive unlisted buildings, notably 18th and 19th Century estate cottages, scattered throughout the village, make a valuable contribution to the form and townscape character of the Conservation Area.

These buildings have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their character is substantially intact, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by.

#### POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

Apart from the occasional new infill house,



new development has been confined to two small housing estates. Church Crofts, the more prominent of the two is situated on the eastern edge of the village. Clearly visible from the main approach off the A149 and the Castle earthworks, the unimaginative layout and design is partly redeemed by the use of clay pantiles and some mature boundary oak trees. The Old Hall development is tucked away more discreetly off the green but with a series of detached houses along Lynn Road. Unimaginative design has again been offset by mature roadside trees and the carstone boundary wall that originally enclosed the hall grounds.

### TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Castle Rising Conservation Area owes much to the use of local materials in the construction of its historic buildings and minor structures such as outhouses, stables and boundary walls. The most widely used are carstone and orange clay pantiles but the full range includes:-

- Orange clay pantiles
- Black glazed pantiles
- Plain tiles
- Carstone (squared blocks and slivers)
- Red brick
- Barnack Limestone
- Greensand (squared blocks)



### ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Castle Rising Conservation Area; The Castle keep and earthworks, and the market cross. In addition there are 5 sites recorded on the Norfolk Sites and Monuments Record

including the church and Trinity Hospital, both of which are also Listed Grade 1.

### DETRACTORS

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

Within Castle Rising Conservation Area there are few features which detract significantly from its intrinsic character. Some of the more noticeable elements are:-

- The abundance of exotic planting in Low Road, especially leylandii and laurel hedging, has transformed this rural lane into a suburban road.



- The neglected condition of the outbuildings alongside the Black Horse PH.
- Some appropriate hedging and a scheme of landscaping would improve the large and rather exposed pub car park.

## 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

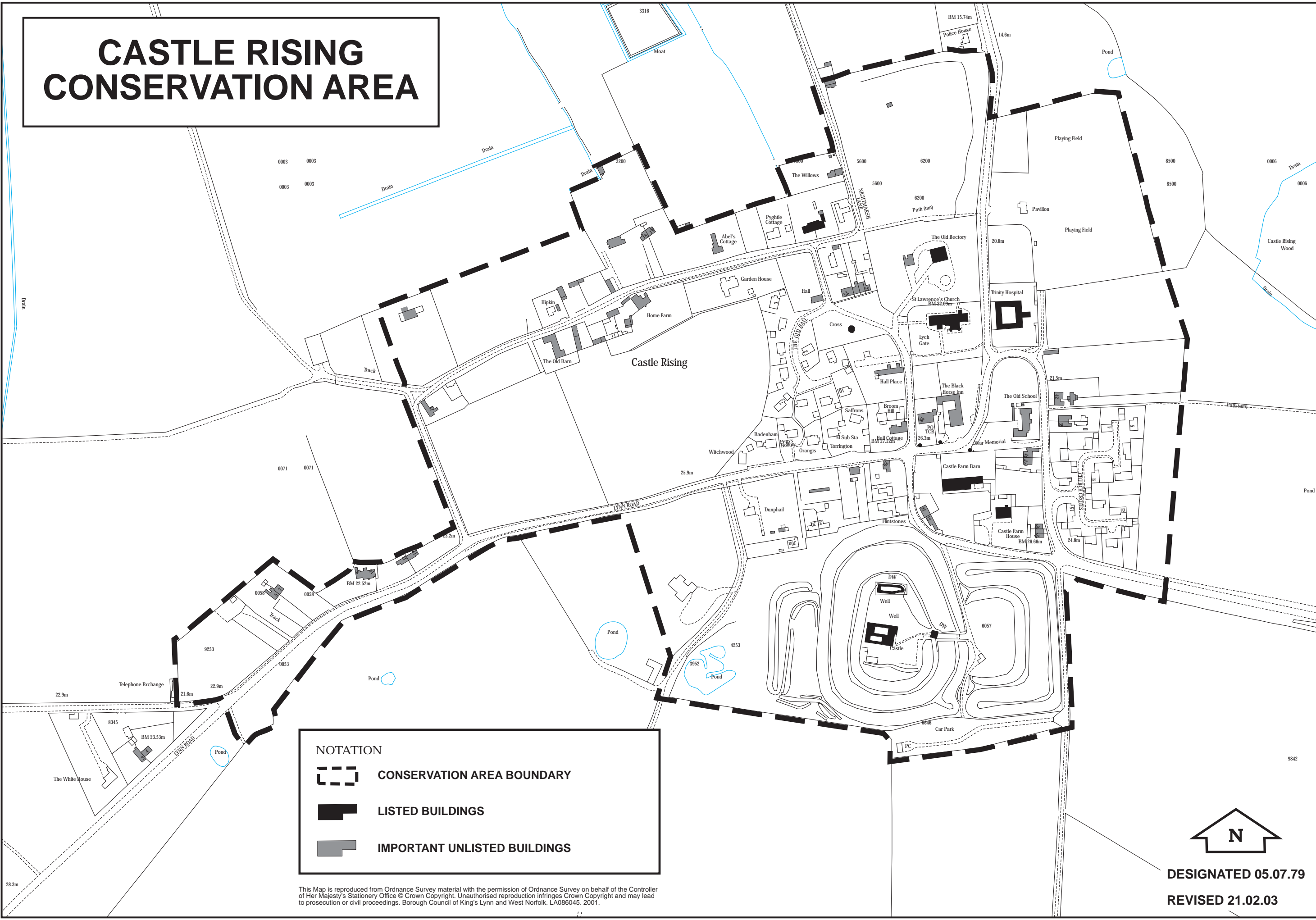
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alterations, extensions, installations or demolition should seek advice from the Planning Department at an early stage. Special controls also apply to the trees and some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



### **BOROUGH PLANNING**

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# CASTLE RISING CONSERVATION AREA



**NOTATION**

- CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

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**DESIGNATED 05.07.79**

**REVISED 21.02.03**