

FLITCHAM

CONSERVATION AREA

DRAFT CHARACTER STATEMENT



FLITCHAM is an ancient village, lying in a picturesque valley, north of Hillington Park, 9 miles N.E. of Lynn. On the hill above the village, is a remarkable tumulus, called Flitcham Burgh, where the Hundred Court was held.

WILLIAM WHITE 1845

DESIGNATED: December 1990

**PLANNING
POLICY**

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.

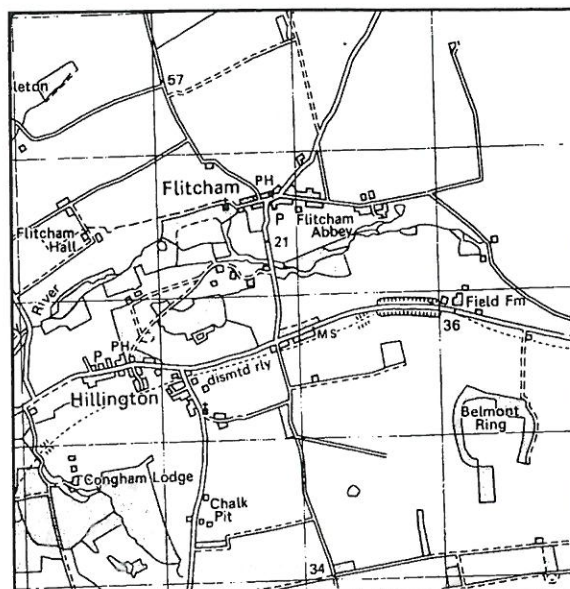
The Flitcham Conservation Area was first designated in December 1990 by the Borough Council. This document highlights the special qualities which underpin the character of the conservation area, justifying its designation. It also seeks to increase awareness of those qualities so that where changes to 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

Flitcham is situated on the north bank of the Babingley valley some 8 kilometres (5 miles) north east of King's Lynn and 14 kilometres (8½ miles) west of Fakenham. The B1153 from Burnham Market runs through the village to join the A148 King's Lynn to Cromer Road 1 kilometre (½ mile) to the south.



The village lies at the junction of two quite different sedimentary rocks. To the north and east the bare dry hills that define the Babingley valley are part of the chalk outcrop running from Hunstanton south south-east across country. This is a landscape of isolated villages wide open fields bounded by low thorn hedges and broken only by coniferous shelter belts. To the west is a narrow band of gently undulating countryside - heavily forested and with sandy soils drained by a series of streams that flow west into the Wash. This is the greensand outcrop from which the locally distinctive carstone is quarried.

The best way to appreciate the quite sudden change between these two landscapes is to approach Flitcham from the north east along the B1153. Approximately 2 kilometres (1¼ miles) out of the village the land falls away quite dramatically from 80m height to 20m (260 ft to 65 ft) near the river crossing. This is the chalk scarp with extensive views south across the valley to Belmont Ring on the opposite flank and more generally south west across the large conifer plantations of the Sandringham estate.

More immediately the contrast is between the large chalky arable fields stretching away to the north of the village and the wooded landscape running east-west along the course of the Babingley river. In Hillington Park the river has been dammed to create a large ornamental lake and the whole valley bottom is laid out as a parkland setting with its 'wilderness' and extensive peripheral belts of beech and oak. To the east of the bridge The Carr is a linear extension of alder and willow alongside the river. The best way to appreciate the effect of Hillington Park as a setting to the Conservation Area is by way of the A148 which sweeps down off the chalk hills.

ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

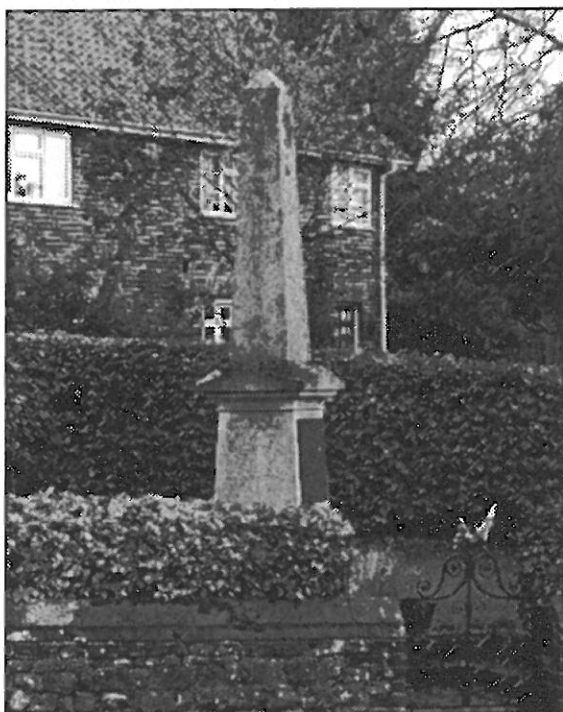
The earliest settlers moved easily across the open chalk hills, and the countryside above Flitcham has the highest concentration of Bronze Age round barrows in the county. Most notable are those along the parish boundary with Houghton and Harpley including the tumulus on Anmer Minque and those on Harpley Common. Another barrow on the Shernbourne road was reputedly the moothill of Freebridge Hundred.



Peddars Way Roman Road that runs along the eastern edge of the parish, was a military road to the coast and there is little evidence of Romano-British settlement nearby. But on the more fertile soils between the chalk scarp and the coastal marshes the woodland clearances established during the Iron Age became the centre for a dense pattern of prosperous Romano-British farmsteads and Roman Villas. These followed the much earlier Icknield Way, an important prehistoric trackway running south along the greensand outcrop. The villa north west of the village and another near West Newton are near the southern end of this remarkable cluster. At the end of the Roman occupation many of these sites, including the Flitcham villa,

continued to be occupied right through the Saxon and into the Medieval period.

Soon after the end of Roman occupation the first Saxon settlers began arriving from north west Europe. The small, slow-flowing rivers of north and west Norfolk provided easy access inland to sheltered fertile sites on the south-facing valley slopes. Place names ending in 'ham' are regarded as evidence of early Saxon village settlement. There is a strong tradition that St. Felix, bishop of the East Angles, landed at the mouth of the Babingley river, founded his first church there and another at Flitcham on the site of the present building. There is little doubt that the village has evolved from the original 7th Century settlement just above a crossing point of the Babingley; but of equal interest is the evidence for settlement change within the parish.



The place name ending 'tun' indicates a subsidiary farmstead or hamlet attached to the main Saxon settlement. At a later date some became quite separate estates that grew into hamlets or villages. These were also the first to be deserted in the Middle Ages as a result of population contraction and the

development of large sheep pastures on the lighter chalk soils. There are no less than 4 deserted 'tun' hamlets in the parish on the south west facing slopes downstream from Flitcham alongside the ancient Icknield Way. The most visible evidence is at Appleton with its late Saxon round tower church in ruins. Nearby are earthworks including the site of the moated hall and its chapel. In fields to the south east is the site of Little Appleton village, a small tertiary settlement. Not far away on the west side of the B1440 is the site of Denton village and its moat and further south near the river crossing is the site of Gatton where pottery finds suggest an earlier Romano-British origin. With the exception of Appleton, where the hall was rebuilt in 1596 (burnt down 1707) all these hamlets were abandoned in the Middle Ages but during the late Saxon period their place names suggest a prosperous and specialised economy. (Flitcham - flitches of bacon produced; Appleton - Apples grown; Gatton - goats kept).

During the Middle Ages, while the Babingley remained navigable for small craft, the village of Flitcham continued to grow, acquiring a larger Norman cruciform church with a sturdy central tower that still survives. Many of the shallow valleys in north and west Norfolk proved attractive to a variety of religious orders including the Augustinians who founded a small priory from Walsingham just upstream from the village in 1251. A few blocks of medieval masonry are all that survive today in the farmhouse that occupies the site.



The present linear form of Flitcham continued to take shape throughout the medieval and post medieval period; but apart from the church there are few buildings of any great age. Among the exceptions are the former Bell P.H., now a community centre, a late 17th early 18th Century building right in the centre, and two cottages - St Felix in Church Lane and one in Anmer Road, each with a mansard roof, a distinctive feature more associated with Fen edge villages and a probable Dutch influence.

The great change came in the late 19th Century when Flitcham was transformed into the estate village it remains today. The original Elizabethan hall at Hillington was extensively altered in the early 19th Century by Donthorne for the Ffolkes family when much of the park was also remodelled. Many of the carstone cottages in Flitcham were built a little later together with the primary school, the Almshouses and the chapel in Anmer Road. The influence of the Hillington estate continued to be felt right through until the 1930s when terraced cobble cottages were built in Church Lane and in Abbey Road where pairs of Victorian red brick cottages already lined the street. Apart from the rows of council houses a little further along on the south side, there has been almost no growth in the late 20th Century.

CHARACTER OVERVIEW

Flitcham is architecturally a small linear estate village with St Mary's church at its western end and estate cottages in Abbey Road at the other end of the Conservation Area. The village divides into two equally important identity areas, each with its own quite different character.

Anmer Road (the B1153) is the busy



through road closely defined by an attractive series of traditional buildings, whereas Church Lane is a quiet cul-de-sac more loosely defined by a mixture of institutional and residential buildings, many of which display distinctive estate details.

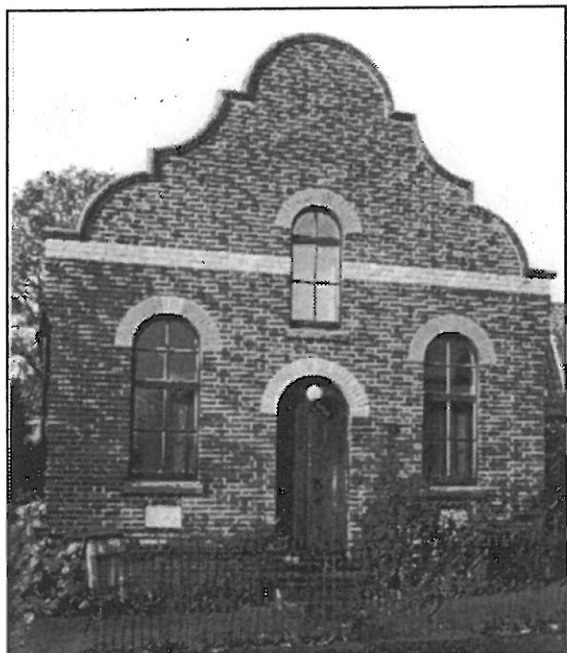
SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Beyond the castellated Gothic lodge to Hillington Hall, the main approach from the A148 continues in a straight line northwards, bounded by the park wall and mature trees on one side and a thick thorn hedge on the other. At a bend in the road the wall is replaced by a tall holly hedge that, at the gate to a rough paddock, provides a glimpse of St Mary's grey flint tower at the far end and more immediately a clump of large beech trees at the bottom of the garden to Flitcham House.

As the road slopes gently uphill the view is terminated by a low range of carstone outbuildings complete with small pane metal casements. Here, at the junction of Church Lane, is the centre of the village. Cottages, set well back, face each other - finely cut chalk block gables behind the war memorial, and estate carstone with blood red brick dressings and heavy, wooden casements behind the village sign. Any real sense of enclosure here is soon dissipated by the road and its traffic.

ANMER ROAD

From here the road curves sharply to the right and climbs gently uphill through the village, revealing an attractive sequence of close-knit buildings on the north side. Carstone outbuildings give way to a cobble gable end and then warm red brick. In the gap between, more brick cottages are



tucked away at the top end of a narrow loke. Then the former chapel with distinctive Dutch gable and tall round-headed windows. These all frame the view ahead to an attractive carstone fronted house in the angle with Abbey Road. At this point Anmer Road curves to the left between more tightly defined roadside cottages and one last pair of estate dwellings before suddenly emerging into open countryside.

ABBEY ROAD

This is no more than a rural lane with wide grass verge on the south side and pairs of well-spaced red brick estate cottages set back, bounded by coped rubble walls and low, thick garden hedges. Opposite, beside the road, is a terrace of 1930's estate vernacular in



cobble with orange pantiles. Beyond this row and set back, but continuing the simple vernacular style, is a recent single storey infill house with large gabled porch. Beyond the Conservation Area boundary estate cottages continue the pattern but there has been a gradual erosion of character here.

CHURCH LANE

The beginning of Church Lane is marked on one side by the estate cottages at the junction with Anmer Road and on the other by the most attractive group of buildings in the village. Here the former Bell P.H. with steeply pitched roof and gable porch-cum-veranda, complete with small pane metal casements, is set back from the



road with an L-shaped range of late 19th Century outbuildings on one side and pair of red brick estate cottages on the other. From here the view westwards beyond the beech trees on the edge of the playground is terminated by St Mary's tower, but more immediately the lane widens into an elongated space, made more noticeable by the absence of pavements, before narrowing again by the school.

As in Anmer Road, the most interesting mixture of buildings is on the north side, where a long terrace of late 19th Century estate cottages in carstone with heavy brick details and large gables is set prominently at right angles to the road with long front gardens bounded by low flint walls. Facing east, they present a rather blank rear elevation to a single storey row of alms houses set well back and half hidden by shrubbery. The diminutive scale, simple catslide porches and small pane metal casements are in direct contrast to the farm labourers cottages next door.

Beyond, the character changes again in the shape of the primary school, a large squat building in familiar dark red brick and carstone, overtly institutional with its ponderous terracotta coat of arms. The roadside wall here is a random mix of grey coloured sandstone (the local 'green' sand) and a reminder of the importance of such minor structures here and elsewhere in red brick, cobble and carstone that help define the street scene.



Houses on the south side are less prominent. Flitcham House is completely hidden and others are partly obscured by planting - until the small, late Georgian cottage opposite the school, one of the few clunch buildings, complete with original sashes, fanlight and six panel door. Further along and linked by more garden walls, is St Felix House, its unusual mansard roof clearly visible. The areas of chalk, green sand blocks and carstone are a measure of

the alterations it has undergone in the last 300 years.

At this point the church becomes fully visible, tucked away at the far end of the lane against a low backdrop of young sycamores in the hollow beyond the churchyard. In the foreground irregularities in the grass mark the position of the former chancel which together with the ruined south chapel and Norman arcading in the tower are graphic reminders of the way in which this most important building has undergone change.

LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 2 listed buildings in the Conservation Area. The statutory list was revised in 1988 and there have been no further additions.

Listed Grade II *

- **Church of St Mary.** 11th and 14th Centuries - restored 1881. Flint with stone dressings, slate roof. Central tower, nave, south aisle and porch, ruined south chapel, chancel lost. Tower with carstone, Roman tiles and rubble. Windows mainly Victorian. Black marble font C1880 from St Mary Magdalen, Sandringham.

Listed Grade II

- **Telephone Kiosk:** K6 type designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Cast



Iron, margin glazing bars. Painted red.

IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

These have been identified because of their prominent position, use of traditional materials, their substantially intact character, and because they often relate to other historic buildings close by. Among the more distinctive are the primary school and the former Bell P.H.



TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The character of Flitcham Conservation Area owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historical buildings. The most common combination is carstone with orange clay pantiles but the full range includes:

- Carstone (blocks and slivers)
- Chalk blocks
- Brick (Blood Red and Orange)
- Greensand
- Flint (cobble and nodule)
- Orange pantiles

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Flitcham Conservation Area.

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 the Flitcham Conservation Area there are few features which detract significantly from its intrinsic character. These include:

- The temporary classroom in the school playing field which is a major eyesore in the centre of Church Street. The plastic markers in Church Lane installed to prevent car parking on the roadside verge. Wooden bollards would be more attractive and equally effective.
- A hedge of native species along the southern boundary of the churchyard would be appropriate replacement for the present post and rail fence.
- The character of several cottages is spoilt by the installation of unsuitable wooden or UPVC windows.

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

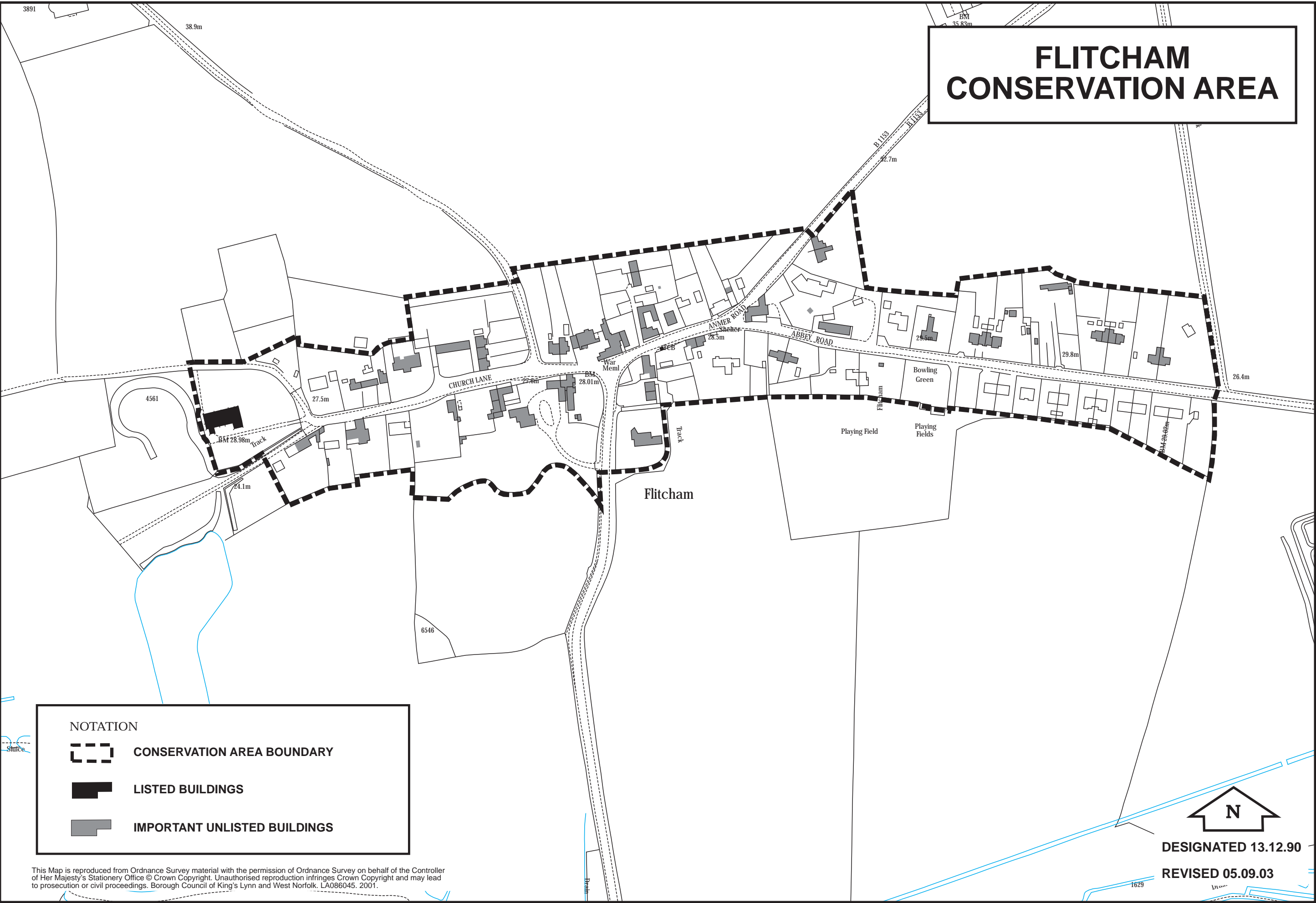
Within conservation areas, a number of special controls apply and it is advisable that anyone proposing to carry out new development, alterations, extensions, installations, demolition or work to trees should seek advice from the Planning Policy at an early stage. A leaflet summarising these issues and including general information on conservation areas can be obtained from the Planning Policy free of charge.



**PLANNING
POLICY**

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FLITCHAM CONSERVATION AREA



NOTATION

- CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- IMPORTANT UNLISTED BUILDINGS

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