

Proposed South Walsham Conservation Area Public Consultation
Report by Historic Environment Manager

Summary: Members will be aware that the Authority has a responsibility to review its current Conservation Areas and from time to time consider the designation of new ones. This includes the publication of these Appraisals and Management Proposals. This approach has been incorporated into the Authority's Strategic Proposals for the last three financial years

The purpose of this report is to give members the opportunity to comment on detailed Appraisal work that has been carried out on a proposed South Walsham Conservation Area prior to a public consultation exercise.

Recommendations:

- (i) That members consider the South Walsham Conservation Area draft appraisal.
- (ii) That, subject to member comments, the South Walsham Conservation Area Draft Appraisal be endorsed for public consultation.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Members have previously agreed to assessment work being carried out to determine the potential for new Conservation Area designation, and also the phased re-appraisal of existing areas, taking into account the duty of the Authority to identify, designate new areas and maintain up to date appraisals of Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 It was reported to the Committee that an informal agreement had been reached with the Districts' Conservation Officers whereby areas that fell mainly within the Broads Authority area would have the appraisal work carried out by the Broads Authority and areas that fell mainly outside the Broads Authority area would have the appraisal work carried out by the relevant district.
- 1.3 The proposed South Walsham Conservation Area falls partly within the Broads Authority and partly within Broadland District Council. In this case as the majority of the proposed designation is within Broadland District Council,

the appraisal was instigated by Broadland District Council and the appraisal work has been carried out by them in consultation with the Broads Authority.

- 1.4 In this instance Broadland District Council is proposing to organise and fund the public consultation exercise on behalf of both authorities. The details of the proposed public consultation process are outlined below.
- 1.5 A copy of the South Walsham draft appraisal and draft proposed boundary is appended. (Appendix 1)

2 Public Consultation Exercise

- 2.1. Once members have considered the draft Conservation Area appraisal, the next stage of the process is to undergo a public consultation exercise in line with best practice and the Broads Authority Statement of Community Involvement. This will give residents of the parish and other stakeholders the chance to comment on any issues or options arising from the detailed appraisal work. This will take the form of a summary leaflet distributed to all households in the parish and other stakeholders, followed by an exhibition held in the Parish attended by officers of the Broadland District Council and the Broads Authority. The leaflet will contain a summary of the appraisal, a map indicating the proposed boundary and a summary of what the effects of designation area.
- 2.2. Following the public consultation exercise a further report will be brought before the Broads Authority Planning Committee setting out the feedback from the public and stakeholder consultation and the exhibition. Taking into account the duty of the Authority to designated areas, which are considered worthy of designation and other policy issues, the Committee will at that stage consider whether or not to formally designate a Conservation Area in the Parish of South Walsham for those parts of the area within the Broads executive boundary. Broadland District Council as local planning authority will need to consider adoption for that part of the area which falls within its boundary.

3 Continuing Appraisal Work

- 3.1 It is proposed to now continue the programme of providing up to date appraisals, boundaries and management proposals for the existing Conservation Areas in the Broads Authority area and also identify any further areas which may be appropriate for formal designation as new Conservation Areas. This is consistent with the Broads Authority's agreed strategic priorities for 2012/13.
- 3.2 These detailed appraisals will form the basis of further reports to Planning Committee prior to a public consultation.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are financial implications of a continuing appraisal programme for existing and proposed Conservation Areas within the Broads in terms of initial assessment and, if required, more detailed appraisal.
- 4.2 The Authority has a Cultural Heritage Budget of £25 000 part of which has been allocated for carrying out this continuing appraisal programme. The Historic Environment Manager will continue to identify and carry out initial assessment work in house. The existing budget will be used where considered appropriate to fund the detailed appraisal work.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Authority has a statutory duty to consider areas which are worthy of designation as Conservation Areas.
- 5.2 It is considered that the area identified by the draft boundary map and described in the draft appraisal in the parish of South Walsham is worthy of Conservation Area designation following a detailed assessment, and that public and stakeholder consultation is required.

Background papers: None

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Appendices: APPENDIX 1 – South Walsham Draft Appraisal and Draft Proposed Boundary

**SOUTH WALSHAM CONSERVATION AREA
CHARACTER APPRAISAL
2012**

Introduction

A Conservation Area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. The conservation of the historic environment can enhance the quality of life of those who live or work in the area and, by attracting visitors, can benefit the local economy. Under the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, Local Authorities are required to review existing Conservation Areas and, where appropriate, consider the designation of new ones.

Factors which contribute to the special quality of a Conservation Area may include:

- the architectural quality of the buildings themselves
- the materials of which they are made
- their relationship with one another and their setting in the landscape
- the character of the spaces between buildings, including walls, hedges, trees and ground surface materials
- views both within the area and from outside
- the way in which buildings, spaces and landscape reflect the historical development of the area

The District Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of the historic environment of Broadland. This statement identifies and reaffirms the special architectural and historic character of the area and makes recommendations for its enhancement.

Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary is drawn around the historic core of the village around the east end of The Street, extending south to include the well-designed late-Twentieth century development of Church Close, while to the north and east it includes the grounds of the Hall, the Fairhaven water gardens, and the fields and woodland belts extending from Ranworth Road to South Walsham Broad, which provide a landscape backdrop to the village itself.

Historical development

South Walsham has a long history, with aerial photographs, excavations and chance finds all suggesting settlement in the Neolithic period, with an increase in activity during the Bronze Age, Iron Age and into the Roman, though most of the evidence for settlement and farming during these periods comes from areas to the south and east of the present village.

The name Walsham is believed to derive from the Old English 'Wæl's homestead'

South Walsham was certainly well established by the time of the Norman Conquest with its population, land ownership and productive resources detailed in the Domesday Book of 1086. This document states that after 1066 the King held most of South Walsham, although St Benet's Abbey also owned some land here. Numerous resources were also mentioned including woodland, a large number of sheep and half of a salt-house (meaning South Walsham shared this resource with another parish).

In addition to traditional agricultural practices, peat was cut from South Walsham and Sotshole Broads during medieval times. The woodland at Fairhaven Gardens also dates in part to this time and would have been a valuable resource.

Both churches are mediaeval. St Mary's is the earlier, with parts dating to the 12th/13th centuries. However, the majority of what is visible today dates to around 1290-1350. St Lawrence's Church dated to around 1500 but was burnt in 1827. It was repaired in 1832 but the tower remained a ruin and collapsed in 1971.

In its present form, South Walsham Hall, just to the north of the churches, is a Victorian house in the Elizabethan Revival style with elaborate gables and chimneys - the mediaeval hall stood on a different site south of the village, east of the present Manor Farm.

In the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the Vicarage (serving St Mary's) and the Rectory (serving St Lawrence's) were rebuilt on adjacent sites on the south side of The Street. A few more houses were built, or rebuilt, along the street during the nineteenth century. With the decline of employment in the village in the twentieth century, it now essentially provides accommodation for commuters to local centres.

Activity during the Second World War is evidenced by bunkers in the grounds of the Hall, believed to have been intended for use by the Auxiliary Units who were to have been the British Resistance in the event of invasion. Reused military building materials were to be seen in the barn (built c1950 and recently converted to residential use) on the north side of the churchyard.

After the War, the development of the Hall grounds as the Fairhaven Gardens was begun, though the gardens only opened to the public in the 1970s following the death of the 2nd Lord Fairhaven.

Since the middle of the Twentieth century there have been few major changes along The Street – the handful of newer properties are generally set back behind retained hedges and trees. Even the fairly large development of Church Close in the 1990s is relatively restrained in its effect on the traditional street front.

Location and setting

South Walsham lies about nine miles east of Norwich, between the villages of Woodbastwick and Acle, and south of Ranworth and the River Bure. The village is set amongst gently rolling agricultural farm land and this setting in no small way contributes to the character of the village.

Although many think of Norfolk as having a flat landscape, there is a subtle variety to be found in the area, in gently undulating countryside incised by shallow river valleys. This is certainly the case in South Walsham which stands on rising ground above the marshes which fringe the River Bure, from which the village is separated by the valley of a stream which runs from Pedham into South Walsham Broad on the north, while to the south and east another valley is formed by the stream running off Hare Fen and through the Fairhaven Gardens. Agriculture has shaped the countryside around the village and the Enclosure Acts in the C18 and C19 resulted in medium sized fields, with mainly deciduous woodland, much of it developed from coppiced alder carr which has been neglected as a crop, in the valleys.

Form and character

Early maps show that the village was formed from scattered development along the main road running roughly east west, particularly from the junction of Burlingham Road and Panxworth Road as far as the churches. The shape of the village changed little until the 1920s, when residential development extended further to the west along both Burlingham and Panxworth Roads, with later development filling in the land between them. Further east along the street there are instances from the 1960s to the 1990s of new houses being built to fill between the older buildings. Although Church Close and the residential conversion of farm buildings near the Hall have "widened" the village at its east end too, The Street still retains much of its historic character.

The Street, from the churchyard, east to School Road

South Walsham is one of a number of villages in Norfolk which have more than one church sharing a churchyard. This historical accident is the result of the village's location at the junction of two mediaeval manors, which shared one convenient centre of population. Both churches were rebuilt in the 14th century though records of both stretch back at least two centuries earlier.

St Lawrence's was the larger of the two churches but was badly damaged by fire in 1827. The chancel was repaired and continued in use as a separate church until 1889, after which it became a school but became derelict after the Second World War until being restored for community use in the 1990s. The western half of the tower survived the fire and stood until 1971 when it collapsed. The ruined base and the outline of the nave have been laid out as a pleasant garden.

St Mary's remains in use as the parish church and is a fine example of a Norfolk village church, the tower standing out as a landmark in distant views,

above and among the large mature trees which line the northern half of the churchyard.

The churchyard is well-maintained and contains a number of tombs and gravestones of good quality. The long brick wall along the street, broken only by a narrow pedestrian access, is an important feature which provides a solid visual boundary to the road and pavement.

The south side of The Street has softer boundaries. Glebe Cottage at the entrance to Church Close is a red brick house with a hipped roof and prominent chimney stacks. The main part of the house, set back behind a low wall and picket fence, is a simple symmetrical design, probably early Victorian but retaining a Georgian character with sash windows. Behind this, a service wing and a stable and coach house complete the group. These retain slate roofs whereas on the main house there are now concrete tiles.

Hedges, picket fences, and low brick walls are combined in the boundaries of the next properties along the south side of the street. The former St Mary's Vicarage is set well back from the road, to which it presents its rear elevation, with an arched staircase window and chimneys decorated with straps of raised brickwork. The former St Lawrence's Rectory presents a far grander front to the street, handsomely set off by the large garden with its gravelled carriage circle. The house is a well-proportioned design of c.1800, in brick with a pantiled roof. The chimneys are oddly placed, implying that the fireplaces must be against the shorter walls of the main rooms.

As the road bends round to the right, a group of single storey outbuildings to the Old Rectory is arranged around a yard which formerly opened onto the street. These, however, may not be readily noticed, since the long, sweeping, blank wall and roof of the barn opposite command attention and create a very effective "stop" to the view along The Street. The entrance to the church car park, and an entrance to the Hall and its outbuildings, are tucked to the side. At its eastern end, the barn is attached to a house, set slightly above the road, which seems to have been an estate cottage connected with the Hall (though probably of earlier origins). This has crow-stepped gables, and Tudoresque brick hoodmoulds over the ground floor windows. Disfiguring plastic windows have recently been replaced in timber.

From this point onwards The Street takes on the character of a country lane, bordered on both sides by hedges and trees. A little further along on the south side, and set well back, Hare House is a much more modern house that has little effect on the street scene. Facing this is the main entrance to the Hall, a tall pair of gate piers erected in the twentieth century but Baroque in style, flanking grand wrought iron gates. The view through these shows manicured hedges along the drive, and fine specimen trees.

The Street, from the churchyard, west to the Post Office

25 The Street, adjacent to the churchyard, is an attractive brick and pantile house with casement windows and a simple doorcase. It has been extended

to the east, and has a long single-storey outbuilding, once a blacksmith's forge, to the west. Its front boundary is another picket fence. Further along the street, two fairly modern houses (The Rectory and Ramada) are set well back behind hedges and mature trees, and have little impact on the street scene except where their shared driveway meets the road. The double redbrick gate posts and iron gates of Ramada strike a slightly incongruous, suburban, note.

The corner beyond Ranworth Road is occupied by two typical 1960s chalet-style bungalows surrounded by a close-boarded fence, which is softened a little by ivy. A private gravelled track leads to an older cottage and a further chalet bungalow at the rear.

Kingsleigh (15 The Street), set at a slight angle to the road, has been heavily altered over many years (a partial refacing in Victorian yellow brick, and numerous changes to window sizes and styles, for example) but shows evidence for an early core. Its attractive red brick garden wall, with half-round copings, continues along the street as the boundary of the next three properties. The first of these is a semi-detached pair, perhaps originally one house, of red brick with a roof of black glazed pantiles. It has been extended at both ends and the windows have been replaced, but the original building can still be discerned. 7 The Street is an early nineteenth century house, originally symmetrical but now with an extension which, though sympathetic in design and materials, does throw the elevation out of balance.

Beyond this, the farmland comes down to the street, where it is bordered by a hedge. This break in the built form on this side of the road is visually important and separates the village into two distinct areas, the historic core to the east and the (mostly) more recent development to the west. Though there are a few pre-1920s buildings beyond this gap - the Post Office and the adjoining houses, the pair of semi-detached villas facing it, the former Kings' Arms pub (now a Chinese restaurant) beyond, and the cottages and farmhouse a little further away at Street Farm on Burlingham Road - Tyegate, as it was known, no longer forms as coherent a group as the older buildings along the eastern part of the street, being interspersed with more modern development, and have in some cases been rather unsympathetically altered in the past. The proposed conservation area boundary therefore ends at the break between 7 The Street and the Post Office.

On the south side, the boundary omits the three modern houses, 12, 12a and 12b, but includes the green with its fine trees, village sign and rustic bus shelter. This important open space reinforces the separation between the two parts of the village and provides a foreground to the modern Church Close development beyond.

14 and 16 The Street are a pair of red brick semi-detached houses, built about 1910, with distinctive crow-stepped and battlemented gables. The Ship Inn, beyond, is a fine eighteenth century building. Its painted brick façade shows evidence of many alterations over the years. The pub is set back between banks with prominent trees which also serve to screen the entrance to Church Close.

Church Close

Church Close is a discrete development of the 1990s which is of a higher than average standard of design for the period. It consists of a cul-de-sac of (mostly) detached houses and bungalows, designed in a consistent Norfolk Vernacular style and using a palette of red brick, render and boarding, with red and smut pantiled roofs. The development is unified by a careful attention to layout and details, particularly in the way garages and other outbuildings are positioned to form pinch points along the roadside, and the mixture of hedges, fences and walls used as boundary treatments to create an attractive streetscape. The cul-de-sac form, however, is not a traditional one and is at odds with the linear character of South Walsham as a whole, and there is perhaps a little too much variety of materials and forms, compared with the rest of the historic village, while the steep roof pitches (though they seem traditional) are not often found among the older properties in the village..

The Hall, Fairhaven Gardens and South Walsham Broad

The approach to the Hall from the street is along the east side of the churchyard. This was historically the back entrance and runs between former farm buildings (now converted to residential use). The more formal entrance to the Hall is further east, marked by a fine pair of urn-topped gatepiers and wrought iron gates.

The Hall itself is a curious building whose history is not fully understood. Externally it is entirely Victorian and Edwardian, in a red-brick neo-Tudor style. This may conceal an earlier core, although the staircase dated 1693 was brought from an important seventeenth century house in Covent Garden in the 1960s.

The ancient woodland to the north and east of the hall was developed from the late 1940s into a woodland and water garden stretching down to South Walsham Broad. This was the work of Major Henry Broughton, the younger brother, and eventual heir, of the first Lord Fairhaven (who himself was creating the notable garden at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire during the same period). The garden was created by selective clearing and the introduction of exotic, shade- and water-loving, plants. Originally a private retreat, the gardens were opened to the public in 1975 and remain a popular attraction.

The gardens and woodland overlie a landscape which includes what is said to be a mediaeval fishpond, as well as the Second World War relics mentioned above.

The modern car park and visitor facilities for the gardens are on School Road and lie outside the conservation area boundary. School Road runs back to The Street, past a rendered and pantiled house, Rose Cottage (originally two dwellings) which probably has eighteenth century origins but which has been

extensively altered, though it preserves its simple rectangular form. Further cottages stood at the junction but have been demolished since 1945.

Ranworth Road, north to Norton Hill and Sotshole Broad

Ranworth Road has the character of a tree-lined country lane, although this is intruded upon a little by domestic paraphernalia towards its south end. Further north, there are good views back to the church tower, seen among mature trees, across fields. A track leading off to the east serves a rather ramshackle group of sheds and workshops which, because they are low, have little impact on these views. Fairhaven View, between this site and the churchyard, is a post-1945 barn which has been converted into three houses, retaining its simple form and industrial aesthetic.

There has been recent tree planting in the fields further north, on the east side of the road, which may have a significant effect on the character of this approach to the village in years to come, but at present the impression is one of openness, above and beyond roadside hedges and hedgerow trees.

At the northern end of the conservation area, Ranworth Road becomes Norton Hill, which drops through mature woods (part of the shelter belts relating to the hall) into the scrubber, naturally-regenerated, carr woodland which fills the marshy valley between Sotshole Broad and South Walsham Inner Broad. The stream that links the two forms the parish boundary, and is also the limit of the conservation area.

Trees and hedgerows

The trees in South Walsham are of great importance, to the streetscene, to views into and out of the village, and to its wider rural setting. Most are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).

Within the village, the various mature trees soften the houses. The veteran Oak and the Oak trees on the green in the heart of the village are protected by Tree Preservation Order 2012 No.83 which also protects a number of significant trees in the gardens of Church Close. The two mature Oak trees outside the Ship Inn are protected by TPO 2008 No.49.

All of the trees within the grounds of St Lawrence Church are protected under TPO 2008 No. 10. This TPO protects 22 individual trees, in addition to a group of 20 Beech, a group of 15 Limes, 7 Scots Pine and an area of trees surrounding South Walsham Hall.

The mature Oak trees on the East side of Ranworth Road, up to the property The Stables are protected by TPO 2008 No. 51, also protecting the Pine, Larch and Sycamore within the boundaries of Ramada, The Rectory and Forge Cottage.

There are mature trees at The Old Rectory and Hare House that are of local importance. The veteran Oak trees either side of Ranworth Road are also of landscape importance.

Fairhaven water gardens are an area of landscape, biological and ecological importance, a niche for trees, flora and fauna. This unique ecosystem has a number of veteran Oak and Elm trees, and a large number of other trees that all contribute to the unique character of the area.

Traditional materials

The predominant building material in South Walsham is a soft red local brick. There was a brick works in the village, on the site of Church Close, in the later nineteenth century and there were others elsewhere in the parish at other periods.

The churches are both of flint, as is usual in Norfolk, but there is otherwise very little flint visible in the village. A couple of the older houses, and the Ship Inn, are painted or rendered, but render is only much in evidence in the modern development of Church Close. This does show how preconceived ideas of what is “traditional” may not be correct.

Roofing materials also bear this out. The older houses are not universally roofed in red clay pantiles (and thatch is nowhere to be seen, except on a boathouse in the Fairhaven Gardens) - the “smarter” classical houses frequently have smut or black glazed pantiles, and several are roofed in slate (as are the churches). Even after twenty years’ weathering, modern red pantiles can seem strident and out of place.

Boundary treatments are a mixture of low red brick walls, plain but often with an attractive semicircular coping, picket fences, and hedges. There are a few close-boarded fences which are more modern but which do not intrude when left to weather naturally or allowed to become a little overgrown. Domestic gates, in the few examples which exist, are usually of timber and of the agricultural “five bar” type. Ornate wrought iron gates between tall gatepiers form an appropriate (though relatively modern) entrance to the hall, but attempts to create a similar effect outside more modest dwellings look out of place.

Listed Buildings

The Street (north side)

Church of St Mary	Grade I
Church of St Lawrence	Grade II*
Remains of the tower of St Lawrence’s Church	Grade II

Unlisted Buildings of Interest

The Street (north side)

7

9 and 11

15 (Kingsley)

19

25

27 (outbuilding to South Walsham Hall)

29 (South Walsham Hall)

31 and attached outbuilding and barn

Gates to South Walsham Hall

The Street (south side)

14 and 16

18 (The Ship Inn)

24 (Glebe Cottage and outbuildings)

28 (Former St Mary's Vicarage)

30 (Former St Lawrence's Rectory and outbuildings)

School Road (west side)

1 and 2 (Rose Cottage)

It should be noted that the 1980s resurvey of listed buildings seems to have missed South Walsham village. Several of the unlisted buildings of interest noted above would normally be considered to meet the criteria for listing.

