

HAPPISBURGH CONSERVATION AREA: (Designated 6/12/74, revised 23/11/89)
FORM AND CHARACTER DESCRIPTION.

- 1.0** The village of Happisburgh lies on the north east coast of the district, approximately 8 kilometres due east of North Walsham. Straddling the B1159 coast road, the village stands on rising ground at a point where the coast makes its transition from low-lying sand-dunes to higher ground with cliffs. This relative elevation means that distant views of the village are afforded from all inland directions, with the 14th century Grade I listed Church of St Mary and the red and white Grade II listed Lighthouse (built 1791), especially prominent on the horizon. These views are complemented by the number of mature trees within the centre of the village which soften the built form of the village on the skyline.
- 1.1** Originally a much larger settlement, the village of Happisburgh (meaning “Haep’s Town”) has suffered from the constant erosion of the North Sea. The present village is predominantly linear in form situated about the coast road over 150 metres from the edge of the cliffs. Within this general form there are several offshoots of built development including those along Beach Road and Blacksmiths Lane. The village centre is a tightly-knit nucleus of development just off the right angle bend in the B1159, which also marks the meeting point of North Walsham Road and Whimpwell Street.
- 1.2** Happisburgh Conservation Area (CA), which embraces the majority of the centre of the village, was designated in 1974. It was subsequently extended in 1989 to take in open land between the village and cliffs. More recent development on the periphery of the village is not included.
- 1.3** Approaching from the south on the B1158, the CA is first marked on the west side by a converted brick and flint roadside barn at Thompson’s Farm, with its buttresses projecting to the carriageway edge partially blocking views deeper into the designated area. On the east side, the former Lighthouse Farmhouse, now a restaurant, has a similar impact in the streetscene by virtue of its position adjacent the carriageway. However neither building restricts the first views of the church which rises behind them to provide an important and constant focal point as the journey continues up Whimpwell Street.
- 1.4** **Whimpwell Street to Beach Road**
- North of Thompson’s Farm access, a mixed thorn hedge runs along the roadside and offers a natural means of enclosure to open fields behind, with a footpath running between. The hedge runs for some 70 metres before firstly acceding to a low grass embankment with a small group of mature Oak trees behind, and then to a grass verge which fronts a small collection of modern bungalows set back from the road. The Oak trees mask these bungalows from the south whilst also softening the immediate views northwards.
- 1.5** On the coastal side of the road, a small pond with associated planting provides an attractive foreground to several late 20th century properties. This pond, which dates back over 200 years, represents the only notable presence of water within the CA. Completing

the built development up to the junction with Beach Road, is the Forge. This is a traditional well proportioned brick and tile dwelling, with black glazed pantiles on the south facing roof slope. It has two roadside outbuildings which hark back to the site's former use as a smithy.

1.6 Beach Road

Leaving Whimpwell Street, the CA boundary returns eastwards, taking in a pair of linked modern properties facing The Paddock before crossing Beach Road and running up its northern side. This boundary is marked by a grassed embankment which provides a strong linear means of enclosure which is further reinforced by a deciduous tree belt behind. This tree belt, and the CA boundary, returns northward where Beach Road splits into two. The nearer the cliff, the more intermittent the planting becomes until it finally peters out near the Coast Guard Lookout Station. This is a modern brick building which stands alone against a backdrop of two open fields behind. These create a rather exposed coastal aspect to the CA as they gently slope down to the cliff edge. However, the absence of development also ensures that the panoramic seaward views are rarely obstructed.

- 1.7 Having briefly followed the cliff edge, the CA boundary then turns back diagonally across the more northerly of the two fields towards the village, following the line of a post and wire fence which delineates the extent of the adjacent caravan park. From here it follows a gravel track which gently rises up into the centre of the village past the rear entrance to the Vicarage and the red brick wall which marks its northern boundary.

1.8 Beach Road to The Street

Returning to The Street, the junction with Beach Road benefits from groups of trees on both sides which soften the entrance to the main body of the village. Also adding to the rural feel is a woven wattle fence which helps to screen the garden to Orchard Cottage behind. Having negotiated the junction, the street straightens to offer a clear view of the church tower above the buildings and trees in the foreground.

- 1.9 On the western side of the street, a tarmac footpath fronts a diverse range of properties situated, in the main, up to the edge of the carriageway. Of note is the thatched property called the Pyghtle and the fine rounded beach pebbles on the front elevation of the property known as Farthings. In contrast, Manor Cottage occupies a backland site to the rear of Whimpwell Cottage and as a result is largely secluded from view.
- 1.10 The majority of properties on this side of the road have low level walls providing enclosure to front gardens. These are variously constructed in brick and flint, and although broken by access points, help to provide an element of continuity through the disparate dwelling types up to the Post Office. Their sizeable rear gardens define the extent of the CA before agricultural land is reached beyond. Past the Post Office is Happisburgh School constructed in 1861. Its polychromatic brickwork walls and slate roof patternation result in a building of unique visual appeal within the village.

- 1.11** The eastern side of the street beyond Beach Road is in contrast comprised of a small number of larger properties set within their own large grounds. The first two properties, St. John's and St. Anne's, were designed by Detmar Blow in the Vernacular Domestic Revival Style in 1900. They were built for staff working at the main manor house situated to the east. Both properties are large two storey dwellings, situated gable-end immediately to the road, and constructed of pebble flint with brick dressings and thatch. Of the two, the Grade II listed St Anne's is the most impressive with its two storey porch and off-centre external chimney stack, with its rather ornate brick detailing, being especially prominent when viewed from the south. Within the curtilage of St John's lies an engaging little brick and thatch outbuilding of later date which faces the street, whilst to the east a grass paddock is defined by perimeter hedging and the Beach Road tree belt.
- 1.12** North of St Anne's lies the access to the Grade II* listed St Mary's (otherwise known as Habbisburgh Manor), which again is by Blow and constructed in 1900. Built for the Cators, a local Roman Catholic family, it is said to be the first example of a four-wing butterfly plan house and influenced architects such as Prior and Lutyens. Particular features of note include the central two storey gabled dormer with brick diaper which provides the focal point from the driveway, the array of chimney stacks which appear in the thatch, and the flint and brick containing wall (separately listed Grade II*) which follows an oval course around the house.
- 1.13** Reached by a Holm Oak and Sycamore lined avenue, St Mary's sits well back from The Street within a designated Historic Park and Garden. This designation includes formal gardens to the south and west of the house and encompasses both St Anne's and St John's and the open fields stretching down to the cliff edge. In contrast to the well established planting on the approach to the house, the rear garden is open to take advantage of the coastal views. This gives the house added prominence in the landscape from the seaward side of the CA.
- 1.14** At the entrance to St Mary's, and sited behind the flint walls which guard the narrow access point, are a pair of former stable blocks. Constructed of red brick and thatch with some flint dressings, these are also by Blow and are Grade II listed principally for group value. Their current very poor condition detracts from the appearance and character of the CA.
- 1.15** Leaving the Historic Park and Garden, the Slater Memorial Church Hall (1896) is the next building to be found along The Street. In contrast to what has previously been described on this side of the road, the relatively modest brick hall occupies a small enclosed site with little curtilage. Only by virtue of its advanced position adjacent the carriageway, does it assume prominence in the streetscene.
- 1.16** Restoring the character previously identified is the white painted 19th century Vicarage, which is set back off the street up a curved tree-lined drive. The planting and trees within its curtilage, allied to the planting and open space already encountered in the Historic Park and Garden, give this part of the CA a green and verdant feel, relatively free from development. Indeed it is this concentrated planting which is so visible when the village is viewed from a distance.

1.17 The Centre of the Village

North of the Vicarage and the school, the village assumes a tightly-knit nucleated form. This is based around the sharp right angle bend in the coast road and a triangle of unadopted gravel and tarmac tracks which lead off from it. This convergence of roads has produced an open area of tarmac from which several important views radiate. The most significant of these is northward up Church Street with the west tower of the church acting as the dramatic terminus. Leading to the church, the street is in fact more of a leafy lane, punctuated by several trees located within the front gardens of the properties behind. An absence of kerbing and lining emphasises the rural character of this part of the village.

1.18 North east of the junction, a narrow tarmac and gravel track known as The Hill rises up to the 17th century Grade II listed Hill House public house. At first, views of Hill House are restricted by buildings lining the track, particularly the thatched 18th century Grade II listed “Thrums” whose projecting hipped gable partly obscures beyond. However, as the track widens into an informal gravelled car park, the full extent of the pub’s later 18th century colourwashed brick and flint front range can be seen. Attached to the south wall of the pub is the three storey Cliff Top House which is part of the same listing. By virtue of its height and elevated position, this property is extremely prominent, especially when viewed from the seaward side, where its yellow colourwashed walls and hipped roof dominate.

1.19 From the car park, The Hill returns westwards and descends past Lodge Cottage which is notable for its hipped roof of black glazed pantiles, and because visually it appears to eat into the curtilage of the church behind. Opposite Lodge Cottage is Manor Bungalow. Enclosed by walls and trees, this flint and brick bungalow occupies an important central position within the triangle of tracks which provide an informal framework for the core of the village. Also within the triangle is Camberley Cottage which is prominently sited just off the coast road, and orientated to face down The Street.

1.20 Where The Hill meets Church Street, pedestrian access to St Mary’s Church is found. Although the Domesday Survey records a village church in 1086, the current building belongs originally to the 14th century. Since then it has been variously rebuilt and restored over the centuries, most significantly in the 15th century, and most recently in the 1950s as a response to war damage. Standing within the churchyard, the full majesty of the four stage west tower can be appreciated. Supported by diagonal buttressing, and constructed of flint with ashlar dressings, the perpendicular tower soars upward with commanding authority. Equally impressive are the panoramic views from the churchyard stretching northward out to sea, and inland to the surrounding villages. The visual juxtaposition between the seaward views and the churchyard, with its numerous sailors’ graves, serves as a reminder of how dangerous the coastline can be, with its dreaded “Haisboro Sands”.

1.21 Moving westwards, the CA boundary follows the northern extent of the churchyard as the land falls. By following a continuous boundary hedge, it then terminates around the curtilage of the thatched property known as “Thatchers”. This large two storey dwelling sits within well-planted surroundings, and provides a “green” introduction to the village

when approached from the west along Blacksmith's Lane. The boundary hedge returns along the road frontage and creates a narrow entrance to this part of the CA. Although this sense of enclosure is momentarily lost at the point where Blacksmith's Lane turns south, it is reinstated as the CA continues east up Church Street. Here flint boundary walls to the churchyard and to the classically proportioned Fairview House impose lateral restraint which is reinforced by mixed planting behind. This latter property is notable for its Victorian slate roof.

1.22 North Walsham Road

Before the CA is reached, the western approach along North Walsham Road yields several impressive views of the church and village. Most significantly, the church tower again dominates from its elevated position drawing the immediate attention of the visitor. Complementary views include the medium range views of the rear elevations of the properties on The Street with the thatched roof of The Pyghtle particularly prominent, and the short range "channelled" view of the property known as The Monastery which sits at the head of North Walsham Road. This is a flint and thatch Grade II listed building of medieval origin which is joined to the later "Thrums". Situated above the coast road, and behind the village sign, it is said that the medieval monks of Wymondham used this building to look after their property in Happisburgh.

1.23 Approaching the CA, a series of 20th century buildings are passed before the boundary of the designated area is marked firstly on the south side by a small group of converted flint farm buildings. These are separated from the carriageway by a small grass verge and consist most notably of the thatched Tithe Farm Barn. Past these buildings, the grass verge gives way to a footpath which follows the route of the coast road as it turns southwards around the splayed gable of the red brick Northdenes House. The symmetrical three bay facade of this property provides an attractive conclusion to the southern end of Church Street.

1.24 On the north side of North Walsham Road, the CA is introduced by the new development on the former garage site on the corner of Church Lane. This scheme successfully mixes single and two storey elements to give visual interest in this prominent location. The use of flint, brick and render also creates variety, reflecting the palette of materials found throughout the village.

1.25 Conclusion

Although having a diversity of building types, Happisburgh CA is held together by the recurrence of a limited range of vernacular materials; principally flint, red brick and red pantiles. Complementing these, render, colourwashing, slate and thatch are also found to a lesser extent.

1.26 Developing from a core centred around the church and The Monastery on rising ground, the village has spread west and south along the two limbs of the coast road. In both directions the elevation of the land decreases gradually to the level of the surrounding farmland. This gives the village centre added prominence in the landscape.

(Approved by Development and Conservation Committee 21/5/98)