

POTTER HEIGHAM CONSERVATION AREA:
FORM AND CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

(Designated 14/8/85)

- 1.0 The village of Potter Heigham is situated close to the south-eastern boundary of the District roughly 6^{1/2} kilometres south-east of Stalham and some 2^{1/2} kilometres east of Ludham. It has been divided almost into two halves by the A149 which follows the route of the former Midlands to Great Yarmouth railway line. That part of the village which lies to the south-west of the main road is also on the north bank of the River Thurne. Here the old road, running parallel with the new, crosses the Thurne by a listed medieval bridge, however the development at this point is almost entirely commercial in character having sprung up in response to the demands of tourism, Potter Heigham being one of the key attractions on the Norfolk Broads leisure itinerary.
- 1.1 Potter Heigham's Conservation Area (CA) is, however, quite remote from this activity and embraces only Church Road and part of Marsh Road which are at the north-eastern extremity of the village. It is intensely rural in character and embraces parts of open fields.
- 1.2 Approaching the CA from the west, it begins where a minor road from the south joins Church Road forming a small triangular grassed island. Here, on opposite sides of the junction, are two listed farmhouses with their attendant barns. To the north, Bethel Farmhouse which has historic connections with the Bethel Hospital in Norwich, dates from the 17th century and is in flint with brick dressings and red clay pantiles. It has an important frontage wall, head high and in plain red brickwork with semi-circular brick coping. Its barns at the rear have been converted and extended for domestic use. To the south, fronting onto Dove House Lane, is Dove House Farmhouse. Originating in the 16th century it has been much altered in subsequent centuries but maintains excellent historic character with flint walls and thatched roof and a well maintained setting. Its principal barn, Dove House Barn is also set hard up to the edge of Dove House Lane and is a restrained domestic conversion. To the west of the junction and just outside the CA lies Heigham House.
- 1.3 Moving along Church Road towards the Church, an imposing thatched roofed barn, standing almost on the edge of the highway, dominates the scene. It has been successfully converted to domestic use. However it suffers from having too many dormers in conflicting styles, which affect the otherwise simple design of this building. Immediately next to the barn is a comparatively modern chalet bungalow set well back from the road and partially concealed by Willow trees bordering a large and attractive pond that extends almost to the edge of the highway. There follows a bungalow which is set well back from the road, next door to which is a large plot containing two interesting and contrasting cottages. Immediately behind a frontage hedge is a quite recent building which is a virtual replica of an ancient cottage which occupied the same site. This has red brick and a thatched roof with two dormers. Alongside this cottage, set well back and almost concealed from view, is an intriguing single storey cottage rendered and whitewashed and again with a thatched roof. Moving further towards the Church on the north-west side three late Victorian houses complete the development before giving way to an open field. With the exception of the last, these have been modernised using inappropriate windows and detailing. The middle house has been converted into a semi-detached pair.
- 1.4 On the south-eastern side of the road there are no buildings until, at a point opposite the thatched cottage, lies Holly Cottage which is a tiny 19th century building, located

close up behind the frontage hedge. Permission exists for a further pair of semi-detached cottages to the east which could well enhance this frontage. Further restoration work has been carried out on a pair of houses to the north-east. These are set well back from the road in undefined plots but are nevertheless probably late 19th century. The first is in red brick and pantiles and abuts the second which is rendered and colourwashed in pale grey, also with red pantiles. An extension to the first has involved the introduction of a full width catslide roof down to single storey level. This sits somewhat uncomfortably alongside its full height neighbour which has seen the replacement of its vertical sash windows with clearly modern versions. Next to these, set gable on to the road is a fine late Victorian house in red brick and black glazed pantiles which has been converted into a semi-detached pair by the addition of a lean-to single storey extension at either end. Completing the development on this side of the road is a post-war red brick bungalow set well back from the road behind a wide verge and a frontage of a low hedge and several mature trees. At this point the road divides at a large grassed triangle, Marsh Road swinging round to the east and Church Road becomes Church Lane as it runs to the north. Facing the junction and set back behind a wide verge and a listed wall in cobbles and red brick diaper work, is the splendid Church of Saint Nicholas which is listed Grade I. With its circular based tower and thatched roof it is in flint with stone ashlar and dates from the 12th century. Behind the listed wall a line of mature Lime trees almost screens the Church from view. In front of the wall, on the corner of the grass triangle, is an historic mounting block.

- 1.5 Hall Farm is situated immediately to the east of the Church and the buildings comprise a farmhouse and a considerable group of barns and outbuildings some of which front Marsh Road behind a head high plain red brick wall and narrow grass verge. The boundary of the CA has been drawn to exclude two modern agricultural buildings on the eastern edge of the group. The older buildings all have red pantiles and several are clad in tarred vertical boarding. The farmhouse is possibly 18th century with a Georgian style facade and a roof that was perhaps originally parapetted but is now simplified with plain verges and grey pantiles. Opposite the farm group the CA boundary takes in a large pond which is now so heavily overgrown that the water is no longer visible from the road.
- 1.6 Although the CA includes open fields, views out of the village are not far reaching due to the contours and tree and hedgerow screening. The cornfield to the south-west of the Church is open to view. The absence of a frontage hedge misses the opportunity of enclosure at the junction in front of the Church means that there is a sense of ‘openness’ at this point in the Conservation Area.
- 1.7 Trees are important in the CA particularly those around the Church and the pond at the north end. More generally they add considerably to the rural character and help to screen some of the less interesting buildings. The linear nature of the village and the proximity of open fields emphasises the importance of the landscape setting.
- 1.8 Materials used in the CA are mainly plain red brick and red and black pantiles. However, thatch makes a striking contribution at the southern end of the CA where the two listed farmhouses are constructed in flintwork.

(Approved by Development and Conservation Committee 4/3/99)