



# Wacton

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Guidelines

December 2019



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# Introduction



Looking south toward the church  
along Church Road.

Wacton is a small rural settlement situated only a few miles from the A140 to the southeast side of Long Stratton. The settlement is more concentrated to its north side along Church Road and Hall Lane but opens up south of Hall Lane at the green becoming more rural, its large historic common to the far south seamlessly blending in with the natural landscape.

Under the terms of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Local Planning Authority is 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 a Conservation Area. The 1990 Act also requires local authorities to prepare management guidance and proposals for Conservation Areas. Wacton Conservation Area was originally designated in 1975. This document should be read in conjunction with the adopted Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

## Key Characteristics

- Includes large open historic common to south
- Conservation area has four distinct sections
- Open landscape views key feature to the south
- Ancient field boundaries
- Ponds mark former medieval moated sites



# Historical Development (also see historic map in Appendix 4 p19)

The name Wacton derives from the Saxon "Wacetuna", "the settlement belonging to Wacca". Domesday Book refers to it under this name and in later mediaeval documents it is referred to as "Waketon". Surviving ancient field boundaries still preserve the form of the Saxon land holding in the parish, which was originally two separate ones, Wacton Magna and Wacton Parva. Following a protracted imbalance in the tithes for each parish the church for the smaller of the two eventually became ruinous and the two rectories merged in 1522.

Tax payment records show that the parish was not a wealthy one in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the numerous timber framed farm houses in the vicinity attest to growing local prosperity in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The most impressive feature of the conservation area is Wacton Common, which today is only a vestige of its former size, being approximately 70 acres. In 1533 it extended to 273 acres and had been reduced by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to a quarter of the total parish land. Modern reduction, through purchases by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1952 produced the present boundary.

## Character Assessment

(Also see Streetscape and Natural Character Maps in Appendices 5 and 6 pages 20 and 21)

### Wacton and its Setting

Wacton, like most of South Norfolk, nestles in a gently undulating landscape.

These subtle changes in level, shape and direction add considerable interest to the setting. From within the area, views can be enjoyed in many directions and from beyond, even as far as the A140, key elements of the area can be appreciated and acknowledged.

### Conservation Area Boundary

The boundary has been drawn around the historic settlement which is linear in form, stretching from Wilderness Farm north of the parish church of All Saints, to Wacton Hall and the huge open space of Wacton Common to the south. The conservation area includes the historic core of the village and while it is enclosed in one boundary, comprises four visually distinct sections. The Common is on a plateau, with its two feeder roads climbing up to service it. Common Road meanders northwards to ease into the Green before it slips out again to Hall Lane. Church Lane then springs from the crossroads slowly climbing to Wilderness Farm. The oldest surviving parts of the settlement are dwellings close to the church and the Green, the moated site and the ancient farm houses which line Common Road

### Street Patterns and Historic Grain

The common is an exceptional space, bounded by hedges and supplemented by trees and buildings in concentrated sites on the north side. This sense of enclosure is lost in the vast open interior where the absence of any physical 'obstructions' adds to the magnitude of the place. Wacton Hall and its outbuildings are the focal point of views to the west side.





View across the common  
towards Wacton Hall



Large pond on the common

Common Road is a lane with narrow verges linking the expanse of the common to the more intimate scale of The Green. Grange Farm provides the main focus, with the buildings at Park Farm marking the entrance to the Green.

The Green is on a more domestic scale with a part open boundary between mature trees at the east side. To the south are historic dwellings of some age and to the west both traditional and modern houses. Buildings nestle with trees in a random fashion contrasting with the more ordered arrangement of Victorian cottages to the north. The remaining section along Church Road has changed in character since the 1960's. New buildings have been built along the street to close the gaps between their older counterparts and this has not been entirely successful. The setting of the church and Wacton House in the south, and Wilderness Farm and Church Farm in the north, are softened by trees and mature hedgerows.

## Perambulation

### Church Road

Church Road has developed in a linear form, running north to south and includes houses and gardens, church and churchyard. A key part of its character are dwellings set behind mature hedgerows, which are separated from the road by grass verges. Most driveway openings are kept to a minimum width helping to retain the character provided by hedgerow boundaries along the road.

All Saints Church has its origins in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, from which the round tower originally dates. The recessed top of the tower is largely from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The churchyard itself is set slightly above street level and contains a number of interesting and aesthetically pleasing grave stones from the eighteenth century set on either side of the church path. The mature trees and hedgerows at the churchyard contain the open views of the churchyard and provide a particularly attractive setting for the church in views from the street. The Wellingtonia tree to the south side at Wacton House towers above the church tower itself.

The cottage south west of the church and on the other side of Church Road, is an attractive building of one and a half storeys and is constructed in timber frame with a plaster covering. It looks to date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but is not listed. The cottage is attractively set in its own rising ground with traditional quickset hedge. Utility poles and overhead cables are the only jarring feature next to it.



Early 19<sup>th</sup> century gravestones  
in churchyard



View along Church Road looking north

Moving further north from the aforementioned cottage is the site of the former school, now a dwelling, with a low white painted rendered wall separating it from Church Road. The house has a painted brick finish and slate roof. Next are semi-detached houses, with their distinctive hipped end roof. These have been extended with large front gable ends that are perhaps more in keeping with an earlier style. On the opposite side of the road are a mix of houses dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> and late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are of a modest scale and generally in keeping with the overall traditional street scene, set back from the road and partially screened by mature hedgerow boundaries. No.10 is a particularly attractive 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage that adds much to the historic character of street views. North of this the use of a modern boundary railing and brick paviors stands out from the overall traditional character of the street scene.

The former farm site of The Wilderness and its setting form a punctuation at the northern edge of the village and the conservation area as the road curves directly westward. The farmhouse itself is a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame building, grade II listed. The farmhouse is set back from the road behind a winding drive with accompanying evergreens which largely screen the house. Open paddocks either side of the drive provide a strong natural character and further interest to the street scene.

Opposite is Church Farm, also grade II listed. Its dependant buildings edge the bend in Church road and close the vista from the south. The broad expanse of Church Farm's pantile roof rises above the hedgerow enclosure of the street, its brick chimney stack being the focal point to views. The farmhouse dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, is timber framed and plastered but with brick gable end facing the road. The setting of the farmhouse is dominated by the well-kept hedges and trees along its boundary. Some of the outbuildings survive to the north side helping to conserve the farm group.

Wilderness Cottage as its name suggests is a former dependent of Wilderness Farm and is listed. It stands at the final turn in Church Road before leaving the village and is a 17<sup>th</sup> century plastered timber framed house.

The frontage of the Wacton House site, south of the church, is enhanced by the presence of a pair of brick gate piers, which carry a traditional iron gate through the splayed woodland entrance to the drive. The splay is fenced in traditional form with a close paling which edges the gravel sweep. The mature woodland, which includes several ancient trees, screens the house entirely and even in winter it remains hidden from view.

## Crossroads

The form of the main village crossroads south of the church is attractive and includes a small triangular green with a mature horse chestnut tree. The village sign board with metal legs is wrapped around its trunk. The green is edged from the roadway with standard concrete kerbing, as is the whole of the road's edge in this central part of the village. Viewed from the junction with Church Road, the green is attractive and backed by the highway sign post opposite it, which is of traditional black and white form, standing out against the dark backdrop of evergreens. From this point views of the green to the south are slightly spoiled by the presence of utility poles and wires.

The character of Stratton Road east of Wacton House is very much rural with grass verges and dense mature vegetation either side of the road which screens Wacton House from view.

The crossroads marks the centre of Wacton. The village sign and bus shelter are placed here, the former being a painted timber bas-relief showing the church and village symbols. The bus shelter is a simple brick and tile affair but appropriate to its function and sits comfortably with its surroundings. There is a red brick Victorian house, Crossways, just inside the conservation area boundary south east of the crossroads. The house is largely screened by mature trees and hedgerow but its attractive frontage can be glimpsed through its entrance gate from the green.



Glimpse of 'Crossway' from the entrance to the green Lane



Former Methodist chapel opposite Crossways

To the south of the crossroads, the short length of enclosed roadway between domestic properties leading to The Green has a deep grass verge to its east side and a mature hedge to its west side beyond the pavement. On the pavement stands a red post box and telephone box, both of a traditional design and visible from both directions. These form a focus for the view back into the village looking north from the green. Behind them, beyond the mature hedgerow, is the former Methodist Chapel building which survives in the garden of no.1 Hall Lane at the southwest corner of the road junction.

The part-hipped red brick semi-detached and terraced cottages at the southwest corner of the junction are former estate houses built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have sturdy chimney stacks and the effect of the row is simple but dignified. The backs of these houses form the enclosure of the northern edge of the green and their frontages line the village street behind the brook.





View looking north from the lane at the south west corner of the Green towards Thatcher's Pride



View looking south from the same lane

## The Green

Houses and mature vegetation enclose the green at its west side. At the east side, gaps in between trees allow for distant views of the landscape beyond. To the west the woodland edging follows the brook, the trees here having grown to a sufficient height to all but screen the row of listed cottages which line its bank. The south side of the green is enclosed by woodland screening Park Farmhouse to the west and the farm building group next to it to the east. Between these, Common Road winds its way out of the village towards the common. In front of the farm buildings to the southeast corner of the green is some traditional metal play equipment, which is well maintained and sits comfortably in views.

The brook flows north through the western part of the green and leaves it by a narrow path which leads to the main Long Stratton road and crossroads at the centre of the village.

The green has various structures upon it which add to its character. One of these is a timber boarded low box with pitched roof which appears to protect a pump or conduit. This has a traditional appearance and enhances the setting of the green. There is also a mini football pitch, only identifiable by its goal posts, which helps to give a community air, as do the play structures previously mentioned.

The absence of kerbs and maintenance of the grass verges and track that converge at the centre of the green helps to conserve the natural character and attractiveness of views. The broad, traditionally managed road verges that enclose the green to the south side have been designated a Roadside Nature Reserve. The maintenance of the green is crucial to the conservation of the character of the conservation area as it is the key open space within the settlement. Views across the green beyond the conservation area boundary help to make the conservation area a special place.

Park Farm is accompanied by traditional farm buildings, some with tar-coated clay lump and black timber boarding with low pitched red clay pantile roofs. The group form an important part of the composition enclosing the green. The electricity poles at this end and adjacent locations detract from the rural scene.

## **Common Road**

The nature of the road's edge north of the moated site is of interest as it winds picturesquely with one or two trees and scrub growing at its margin. Closer to the village are good vigorous traditional thorn hedges. The broad grassed road verges form part of the Roadside Nature Reserve, which extends south towards the common. Good views are to be had from here both of the village settlement to the north and of the road winding south uphill towards Grange Farm. The mediaeval moated site which stands to the west of Common Road is now largely given over to tree cover.

South of the moated site the road provides open views to the east. To the west longer views are largely screened by mature trees behind the road verge and these screen the pond just north of Grange Farm.

Grange Farm and its setting are positioned on Common Road mid-way between the moated site described above and the common itself. Grange Farmhouse is of late sixteenth century date and is a listed building of timber frame in construction. It is rendered with a brick gable wall. The house has a thatched roof with gabled ends. The farmhouse is accompanied by traditional farm buildings, some of them of clay construction with traditional tar wash and black timber boarding, with red pantile roofs. These are arranged in yard form to the north of the house.

The Grange Farm buildings form an attractive group along the road up to the common and can be seen from a distance in either direction as the road is traversed. Although excluded from the conservation area the modern bungalow cottage opposite Grange Farm is incongruous in its setting. The ubiquitous electricity poles opposite Grange Farm also detract from the landscape of the conservation area.

The view south uphill towards the common from Grange Farm is attractive with open views continuing to the east, trees and hedgerows still screening views to the west. The eastern side of the road is edged with a deep ditch and bank which could suggest the survival of a mediaeval enclosure of some kind. The featureless nature of the open fields forming the horizon to the east with the common, still not visible, make this a starker view in character.

## **The Common**

Wacton Common is perhaps the most striking single feature of the conservation area, set on the crest of an open plateau. It is of ancient origin and was originally around three times its current size. Settlement scattered sparsely around its perimeter is dwarfed by the open expanse of pasture. Large open views across the common make it virtually unique, other commons being of smaller visual scale. The central pond and its attendant trees form almost the only focus within the space, which is crossed by footpaths intersecting at right angles close to them. Enclosure around the common is provided by largely traditional native species hedges and occasionally by fully grown trees. The flatness of this landscape is its essential characteristic giving greater emphasises to the sky above. The hedges, mature trees and ponds are all subsumed into the huge scale of the view. Footpaths across the common are an important historic feature and allow non-intrusive access to the wildflower and botanical interest of the site.



Looking across the common  
to Wacton Hall



Looking across the common from its  
south west corner towards  
Pigeon Farmhouse

The group of five houses opposite the central pond on the common are of historic importance, three being listed. White Cottage, a thatched house, is a remarkable listed survival from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. It is fronted to the common by both moat and quickset hedge, the latter now overgrown and containing young trees. The appearance of the house behind these and its unusual, ancient form without chimney stack make it intriguing to the observer. The house is the "Wealden" type, which is now most commonly found south of the Thames. It is a more unique feature of the conservation area and gives a sense of ancient character to the settlement around the common. Fortunately, its unsympathetic rear modern flat roofed extension is hidden in key views. Peck's Cottage, which is at the corner of Common Road where it enters the common, has a thatched roof.

The quality of road surface serving this housing group is not of a modern standard but serves to remind the observer that the state of roads in former centuries was very different. Although not ideal for modern day vehicles to change this surface would be detrimental to the historic rural character of the common.

The listed Le Grys Farm group and its open setting stand at the northern end of the common close to the listed cottages which form with it the closure of the view across the common in this direction. Le Grys Farmhouse stands with its dependant farm buildings on higher ground than the common and is a grade II listed 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame house. As with other houses around the Common, Le Grys has a pond which suggest the survival of mediaeval moats and a means of water supply on this clay upland plateau. The farmhouse group and the nearby Le Grys Farm Cottage share a clump of mature trees of stature, visible across the common from afar. Immediately southwest of Le Grys Farmhouse is a listed seventeenth century timber frame barn which has been converted to residential use.

Wacton Hall is a 16<sup>th</sup> century house which stands prominently at the western end of the common. It is a long two storey grade II\* listed building with rendered finish, mostly onto timber frame, and has a black glazed Pantile roof. The composition of the front facade is centred upon a three storeyed gabled porch with octagonal angle shafts with finials. The round arched doorway carries a cornice and semi octagonal shafts above to either side with its original door in its heavily moulded doorcase. The facade is articulated with three windows to the left of the porch and two to its right, all widely spaced as is the fashion in this part of Norfolk.

South east of the Hall is a listed timber framed barn, which has been converted to a dwelling. The barn forms part of a group of farm buildings at the Hall which conserve the appearance of a late mediaeval manor and its dependencies at this evocative site.





Barn and pond immediately southwest of Wacton Hall and its outbuildings



Looking towards Wacton Hall

It is notable that several footpaths and single-track road, Sallow Lane, all converge upon the Hall, testimony to the importance of the manorial complex in the landscape in earlier days.

The survival of moats at Wacton Hall is notable, though not readily visible from the common. They enclose the western side of the Hall and form the edge of the conservation area at this point. The Wacton Hall group is visually important on the common and can be seen from its furthest extremity.

The position of the two ponds at the extreme western corner of the common is visually important as they mark the edge of the open pasture and the proximity of the manor house. In the woodland opposite these and north of Wacton Hall the remains of a further moat are visible on the map but not easily visible on the ground. The presence of these historic water bodies is archaeologically significant and important for wildlife, creating a special character to this end of the common. A scattered group of houses and farm buildings northeast of Wacton Hall are important in their own right as buildings in the conservation area and their setting forms the enclosure of this edge of the common. Pigeon's Farmhouse is a listed 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century timber framed house with plastered walls. Its roof is not original, being of low pitch with gabled ends.

Sallow Lane winds to the Hall uphill from the modern part of the village of Wacton and may have been the main mediaeval thoroughfare between church and manor house. Only a short part of it lies within the conservation area as it enters in the south western corner.

## Traditional Materials & Architectural Details

Examples of most of the building materials traditional to South Norfolk can be found within the conservation Area.

### Roofs

Clay pantiles are the most prevalent, mostly red, but with good examples of black glazed at, for example, Wacton Hall, and Le Gry's Farmhouse. Thatch is to be found on a number of buildings, Stuart House and Thatcher's Pride at The Green; Grange Farmhouse along Common Road and White Cottage at the common. Slate can be seen on the Church and School House



Victorian cottages, Church Road, with painted render and traditional clay pantiles

Chimneys are an important feature in the roofscape, and several buildings boast ornate stacks most notably at Grange Farmhouse and Wacton Hall.

Dormers tend to be mostly gabled with plain bargeboards although some ornamentation is provided at Owl Cottage.

### Walls

The Church is of flint with stone dressings, but most of the listed buildings, which are part of the earlier settlement, are timber framed and plastered. The general quality of the framing is high, dating mainly from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries although remarkably, White Cottage, is of 14<sup>th</sup> century date. Some cottages of later date are of red brick with the best brickwork of note surviving at Wacton Hall, which has some high-quality timber frame. Clay lump, usually plastered or tarred, can be seen on the farm outbuildings.

Traditional casement windows are numerous. There are mullion and transom casements at Wilderness farm, with leaded casements at Park Farm. Some new houses have sympathetic windows in a traditional casement style



New house, Church Road, in brick and clay pantiles



Early casement windows on a 17<sup>th</sup> century house at the green

## **Natural Character and Open Spaces**

The principal trees and hedges are shown in the map at the end of this document. There are several groups of trees that soften and disguise buildings and provide a natural backdrop to the variety of views in and out of the village.

The trees around Wacton House, Wilderness Farm, Church Farm, the green, Wacton Hall are notable. The lines of natural hedgerow form many of the boundaries, particularly along Church Road, Common Road and at the north entrance to the Green where their contribution to the character of the area is significant. Any new planting should take a lead from such examples in order to retain this important part of the character of the conservation area.



Lane looking south west at the green



The common should retain its natural informal finish as this contributes much to the natural and historic character of the common. Similarly, the footpaths across the common are all informal, and no attempt should be made to change this. Grass and natural vegetation does, and should, remain dominant

## Street Furniture, Walls and Railings



Telephone kiosk and post box at the junction of Hall Lane and Common Road

Utility poles and wires spoil the views and aspects within the conservation area. The village sign, bus shelter, traditional telephone kiosk and post box, all contribute to the setting of the central crossroads. There are various items on the Green which provide evidence of its popularity. Any additions need to be carefully considered so as not to over populate this natural environment.



# Conservation Management Guidelines

## Highways



Looking towards Hall Lane across the green

It is important to retain the strong rural character of the conservation area.

**Verges should be kept informal and not kerbed. Avoid erecting obstacles on verge to stop cars parking. Keep the natural finish of existing paths and tracks.**

## Upgrading windows and doors



Early casement windows at Grange Farmhouse

Generally, the windows on listed buildings have been preserved or sympathetically replaced. Some new houses have traditional style casements, some in uPVC. In some cases, windows and doors have been replaced with units of a different design to the original unit.

**If door or window frames need to be replaced they should ideally be replaced with the original materials. However, if different materials are chosen then the window style should still remain the same. The opportunity should be taken to reinstate traditional style windows where they have been unsympathetically replaced in the past.**

## Fencing and walls



Traditional picket fencing at the church

The village is mainly characterised by mature hedgerows at boundaries with only a few boundary walls and fences. The traditional naturally finished timber picket fence in front to the church adds interest to the church setting and street scene.

**Walls and close boarded fences should be avoided as they generally have an urbanising effect. Low walls can sit comfortably, as can be seen at School House in Church Road. They sit particularly well with adjacent planting. Boundary treatments where considered applicable should be hedgerows or low traditional picket style fences**

## Painting/colour washing buildings



Painted house along Church Road

A number of properties within the conservation area are timber framed and rendered with light colour pastel finishes that sit comfortably with the historic character. Some brick buildings also have similar painted finishes as can be seen at the north end of Church Road.

**Colours should be well chosen to provide a similar appearance to existing painted finishes and have a similar appearance to historic limewash.**

# Appendix 1 (i)

## Listed Buildings

Church Road	Wacton House Church of All Saints (Grade I) War Memorial Church Farmhouse Barn north of Church Farmhouse Wilderness Cottage The Wilderness
Common Road	Grange Farmhouse
Wacton Common	Le Grys Farmhouse Barn to Le Grys Farmhouse North End Farmhouse (Le-Grys Farm Cottage) Wacton Hall (Grade II*) Barn south east of Wacton Hall Pigeons Farmhouse Pecks Cottage The White Cottage The Cottage
Wacton Green	Stuart House Owl Cottage Thatcher's Pride The White House Park Farmhouse

# Appendix 1 (ii)

## Unlisted Buildings of townscape significance

Church Road	Farm buildings to Church Farm
Hall Lane	Numbers 1-13, Bus Shelter, outbuildings to Wacton House. Telephone Kiosk.
The Green	Farm buildings to Park Farm.
Common Road	Crossways Outbuildings to Grange Farmhouse Le-Grys Barn
The Common	Willows Cottage Millers Cottage Outbuildings to Pidgeons Farm, Oakbank Farmhouse Outbuildings to Wacton Hall Old Millhouse at North End Farm



# Appendix 2

## Policy background

In recent years, the approach to conservation area designation has changed considerably. It is now recognised that development plan policies, development control decisions, and proposals for the preservation or enhancement and the management of conservation areas, can best be achieved when there is a sound understanding of the special interest of the conservation area.

This position is reinforced as follows: The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in section 66(1) makes it a duty of local authorities when considering applications to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest; Under section 72 of the same Act, it is a duty with respect to any buildings or land in a conservation area, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area; Department for Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2018 Paragraphs 184 to 202 cover “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”; Joint Core Strategy- Policy 2 : Promoting Good design South Norfolk Local Plan; The South Norfolk Local Plan Development Management Policies Document was adopted in 2015 and policy 4.10 covers Heritage Assets.

## Public Consultation

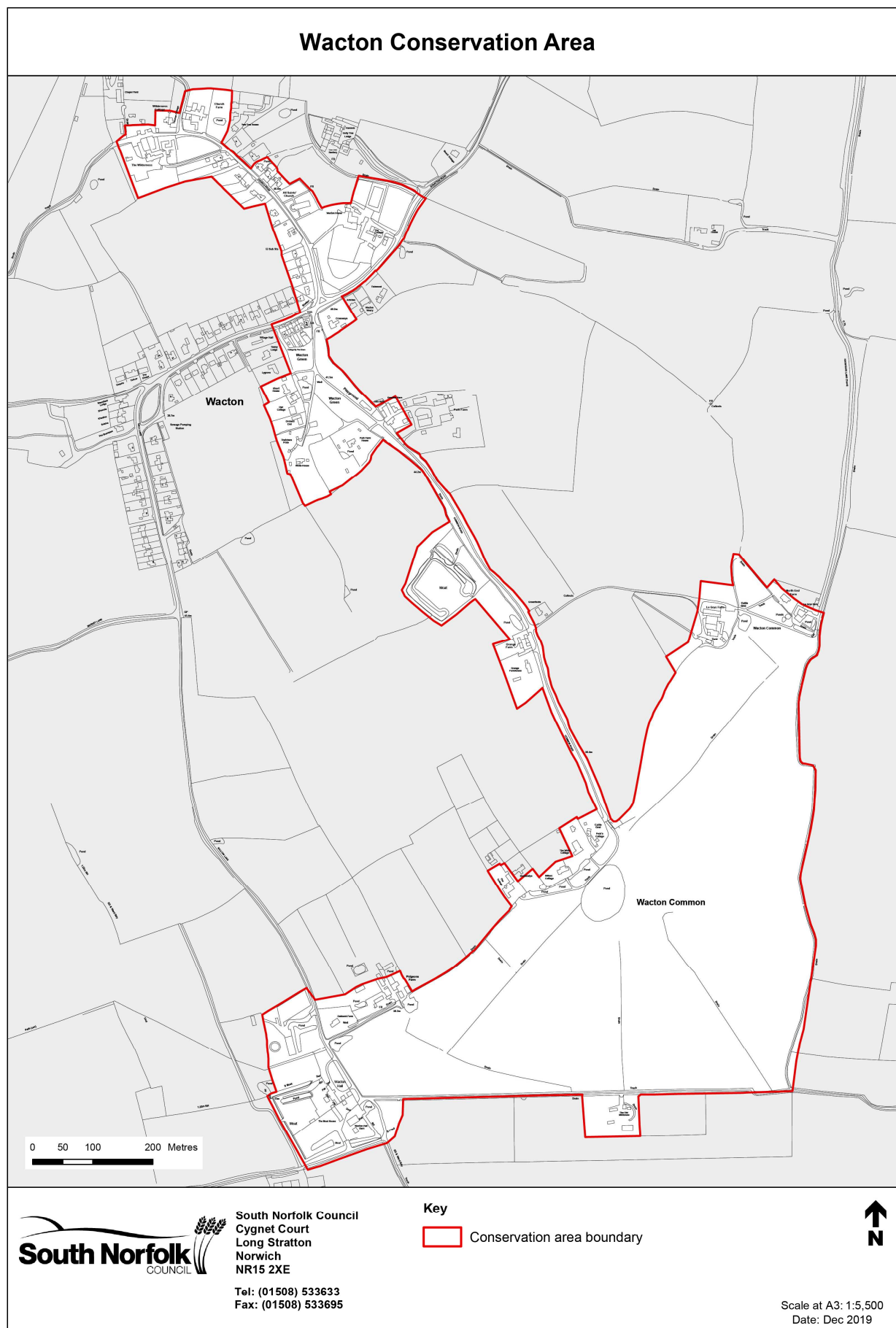
An informal ‘walkabout’ of the area was organised with the Parish Council on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019. This informed the proposed boundary changes and the conservation management guidelines within the draft appraisal. The public consultation on the draft appraisal took place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> July.

This included:

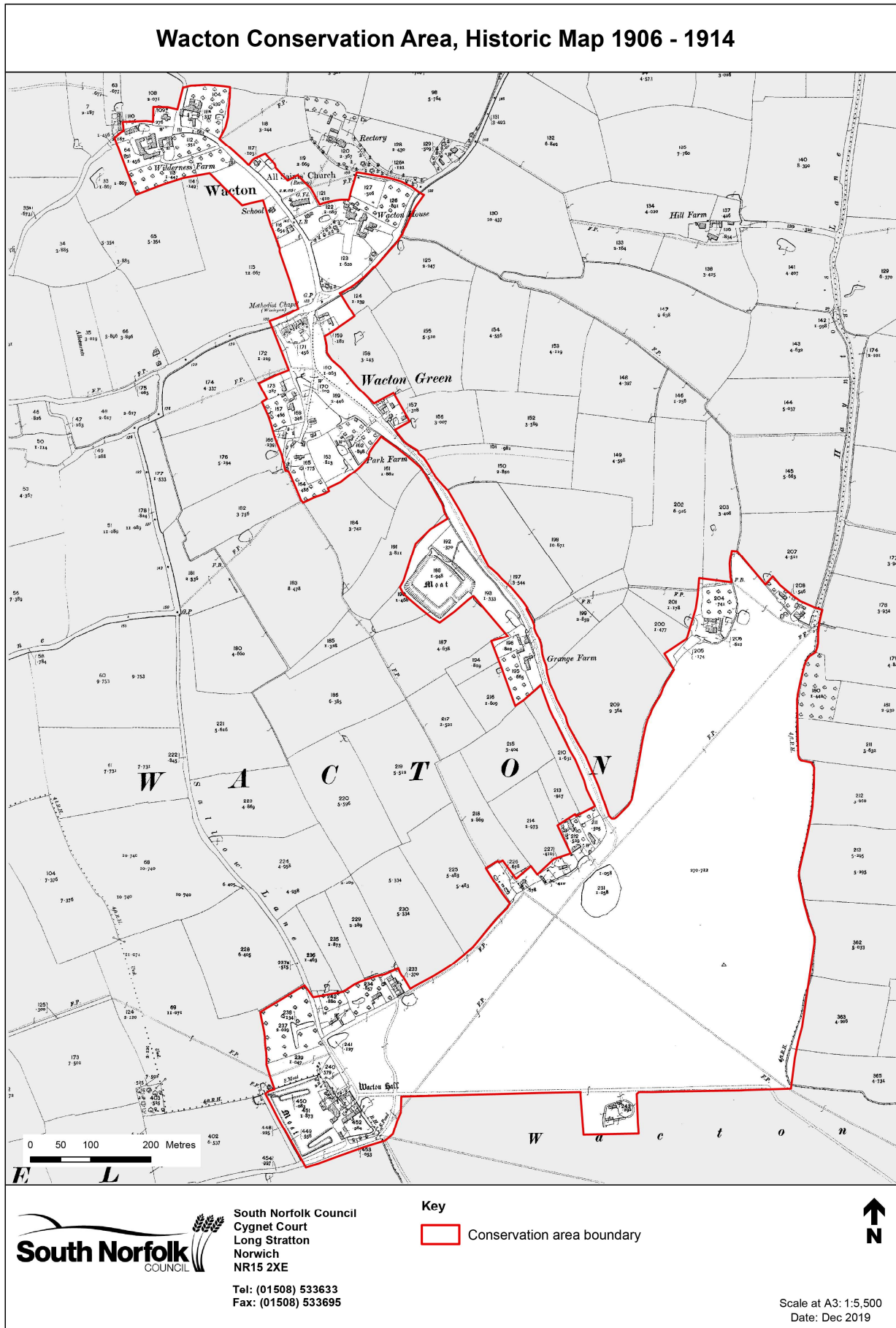
- A public exhibition held in the village hall on the 15<sup>th</sup> July for one hour with an officer in attendance to answer any queries.
- An advert in village notice board and local publicity by the parish council
- The draft appraisal being available to view on the council’s website and at the reception desk.
- Emailing Ward Councillors, County Councillors, the Parish Council and Historic England.
- A presentation made to the Parish Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> July.
- Contacting residents directly affected by the proposed boundary changes by letter informing them of the proposed changes.

As a result of the consultation and further assessment a section of Haynton’s Lane has been omitted as it is considered to be a rural lane in open countryside rather than being part of the conservation area or contributing to the character and appearance of the common as part of the conservation area.

# Appendix 3

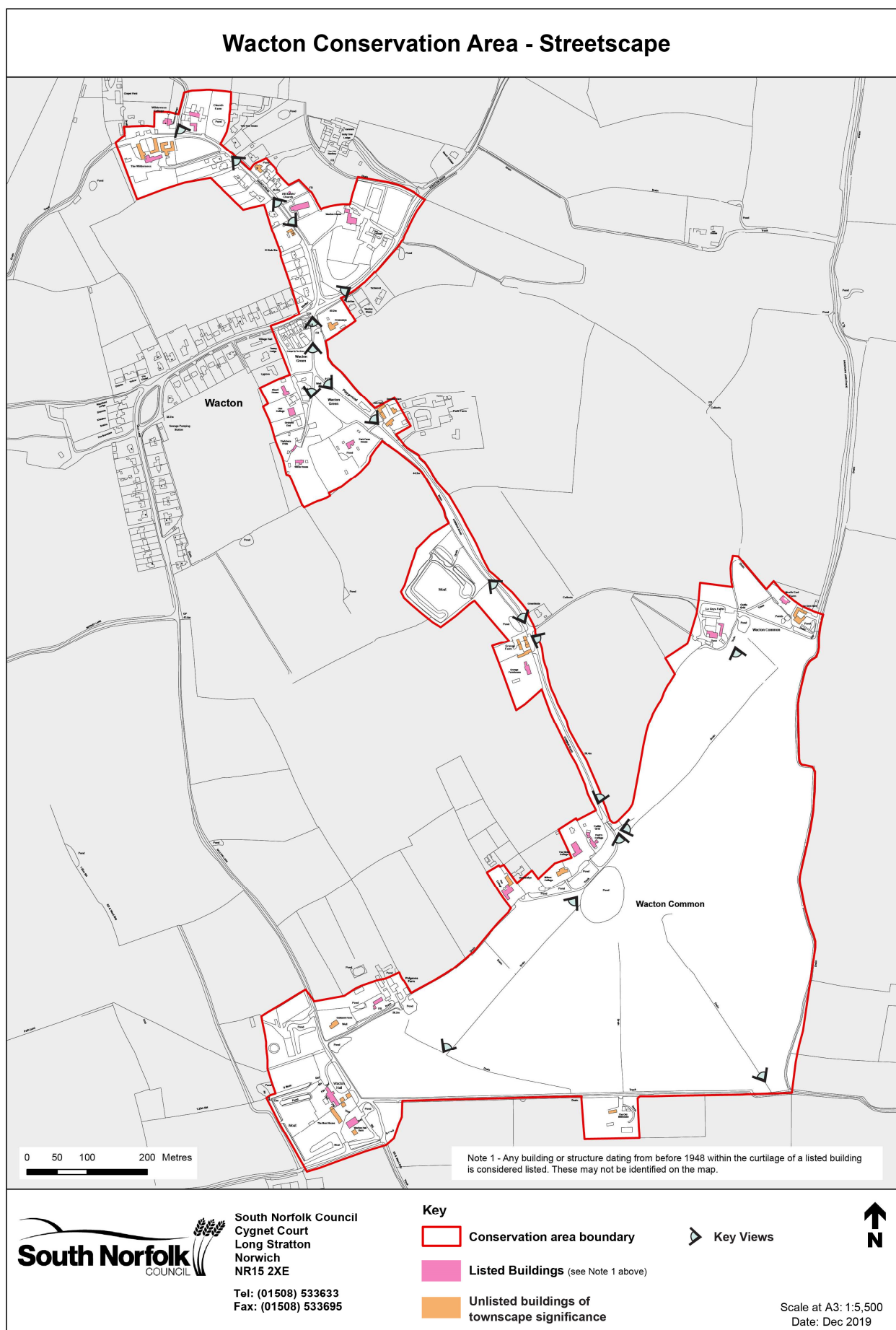


## Appendix 4





# Appendix 5



# Appendix 6

