

Shepway District Council

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



NEW ROMNEY



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INTRODUCTION

- 1 A Conservation Area (CA) is, by law, an area of special architectural and historic interest. The purpose of this appraisal is to help us understand why New Romney is special and provide a framework for keeping it that way. Its character, or specialness, needs to be defined. What is happening to it needs to be documented and analysed. What should happen in the future needs to be celebrated, guided and well managed.
- 2 This appraisal forms one of a series of 14 such appraisals, commissioned by Shepway District Council. Original designation for New Romney High Street came into effect on 5th February 1971 and was amended 12th November 1991. Original designation for New Romney Cannon Street came into effect on 5th February 1971.
- 3 This appraisal has been undertaken using the methodology of the English Heritage consultative '*Guidance on conservation area appraisals*', 2005. Annual reviews and 5 yearly updating are recommended. A companion guide, '*Guidance on the management of conservation areas*', recommends a procedure to follow the appraisal.

PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the process of assessment, definition or revision of boundaries and formulation of proposals for CA's as well as the identification and protection of listed buildings. Authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a CA, or in the case of listed buildings, to have special regard for their preservation in the exercise of their powers under the Planning Acts.
- 5 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 15, for local and other public authorities, property owners, developers, amenity bodies and the public, sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, CA's and other elements of the historic environment. Shepway Council's District Plan includes its statutory policies for implementing the Acts and applying the PPG. This Appraisal should be taken into account when considering, applying for or determining planning or listed building applications within the CA.
- 6 The underlying objective of the relevant legislation and guidance is the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance of CA's. Any proposed development which conflicts with that objective should normally expect to be refused. PPG 15 and local policy support a presumption in favour of preservation of any building or object which is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of a CA. At the same time, the need to accommodate change which respects or reinforces the character of the area in order to maintain its vitality is recognised. Regard must also be had to the requirements of other national guidance, including PPG16 covering archaeology and PPS 1, which includes policies on sustainable development and urban design.

- 7 Many local planning policies, not just those relating to design and conservation, can affect what happens in a CA. For example, policies on sustainable development, meeting housing needs, affordable housing, landscape, biodiversity, energy efficiency, transport, people with disabilities, employment, town centres and many others can all influence development and the quality of the environment in CA's. However, policies concerned with design quality and character generally take on greater importance in CA's. The adopted District Plan's chapter on Built Environment covers conservation and design matters. The key policies of this chapter state:

POLICY BE3

- 8 When considering new CA's or reviewing existing CA's the following criteria will be taken into account:

The area is:

- a. of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance;
- b. includes sufficient buildings of historic and/or architectural interest, listed or unlisted, to give a strong character;
- c. includes sufficient good quality hard and/or soft landscape;
- d. shows strong relationships between buildings, and buildings and open spaces that create a sense of place;
- e. one which either illustrates local architectural development or an area of one architectural period which remains largely in its original condition.

POLICY BE4

- 9 The District Planning Authority will:
- a. refuse CA Consent for the demolition of buildings which contribute to the character or appearance of a CA;
 - b. refuse proposals for infill or back land development which would adversely affect the character of a CA;
 - c. require the height, scale, form and materials of new development, including alterations or extensions to existing buildings, to respect the character of CA's;
 - d. seek to retain materials, features and details of unlisted buildings or structures which preserve or enhance the character or appearance of CA's;
 - e. seek to retain the historic patterns, plot boundaries, building lines, open spaces, footways, footpaths and kerb lines which are essential to the character or appearance of CA's;
 - f. protect trees and hedgerows which enhance both the setting and character of CA's.
- 10 Other policies dealing with historic or built environment matters are BE 1, 2 and 5-19.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

- 11 Greater restrictions on “permitted development” apply in CA’s than elsewhere. In CA’s any Article 4 Direction in force further restricts householder development without planning permission as well as the erection of gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure. Anyone contemplating alterations, extensions or new building should familiarise themselves with the policies set out above and consult the Council’s Planning Department for advice on how to apply for permission and whether the proposal is likely to be acceptable.

BOUNDARIES

- 12 The main New Romney CA is, like the historic town itself, a rough oblong aligned northeast-southwest and centred on the Dymchurch Road/High Street/Lydd Road axis. On the eastern approach to the town, the CA begins immediately opposite the large Victorian building (now divided into flats) known as The Elms. From there the boundary passes along the middle of Church Road and along the rear boundary of Churchland, Rose and Prospect Villas. It then follows the outer wall of the churchyard, taking in the old school building and its garden before turning northwest to exclude the adjoining modern houses and the fire station, and southeast again to include Mulberry House and West Lawn, rejoining the main axis again just beyond nos. 1 and 2 Lydd Road. From here it zig-zags north behind the old houses on West Street, then turns back via the northern fringes of the historic centre, passing along Fairfield Road and George Lane before returning to its starting point just beyond Stone House.
- 13 There is also a smaller, secondary CA centred on Cannon Street at the north-east end of the town. The boundary extends from the former Blue Dolphin Hotel on Dymchurch Road, along Cannon Street as far as Millside (taking in Oak Lodge a little to the south), then up Oak Lodge Road and back along Fairfield Road.

SUMMARY of SPECIAL INTEREST

- 14 New Romney is the largest settlement in, and the honorary capital of, the low-lying Kentish coastal region known as the Romney Marsh. Its early life was as an important seaport, chief among the ‘Cinque Ports’ that formed Plantagenet England’s front line of defence against Continental invaders. It declined through the Middle Ages as its harbour silted up, leaving it to reinvent itself as a small but prosperous farming and market town.
- 15 The main CA, straddling the High Street, comprises the town’s historic core, whilst Cannon Street takes in a small cluster of historic buildings on the fringe. Together, they contain some 50 Listed Buildings plus one Scheduled Ancient Monument. The principal buildings – the magnificent Norman church of St Nicholas, the medieval remains of St John’s Priory, the C17th Assembly Rooms and Georgian Town Hall, plus numerous inns of all periods – testify to the town’s continuing prosperity and civic pride, whilst the area’s topography and street plan retain traces both of its maritime past and of later medieval attempts at town planning.

Location & setting

- 16 The town of New Romney is in south-west Kent, a mile inland from the coast and about seven miles from the Sussex border. The High Street forms part of the A259, the main road that runs from Folkestone and Hythe in the east to Rye and Hastings in the west. Several smaller roads converge here: the B2075 running south to Lydd, the B2071 to Littlestone and Greatstone on the coast, and a series of smaller lanes that wind across the levels to the nearby villages of Old Romney, Ivychurch and St Mary in the Marsh.
- 17 Romney Marsh is now a broad flat swathe of agricultural land dotted with farms and small villages, bordered by steep hills to the north and west, and to the south and east by the sea. It is a strange landscape, at once lushly fertile and starkly exposed. Its best-known literary chronicler, the Reverend Richard Harris Barham, famously divided the world into 'Europe, Asia, Africa, America and the Romney Marsh.' At the time of the Roman occupation it was, like the East Anglian fens which it resembles, a great expanse of estuarine mudflats and periodically flooded salt-marshes, habitable only on islands of higher, drier land. New Romney originally stood on one of these, a three-mile spit of sand rising some six metres above sea level at the point where the River Rother flowed out into the English Channel – the old shoreline being just beyond the outer wall of St Nicholas' churchyard.
- 18 Even now that the river has changed its course and the sea has retreated a mile to the southeast, the sense of an island settlement has not wholly disappeared. The town's elongated shape and northeast-southwest alignment reflect the topography of the sandbank upon which it once stood, and there is a slight but perceptible fall in ground level as one leaves the old town on the seaward side. Around the compact historic core and the suburban developments that now surround it, the once-flooded fields are still shot through with small streams and drainage channels.

Historic development & archaeology

- 19 Settlement at Romney (the prefix 'New' was not appended until the later Middle Ages) appears to have begun in Saxon times, perhaps during the C8th. As we have seen, the site was once an island, the northernmost of a chain of three that marked the boundary between the waterlogged fenlands of the Marsh and the English Channel. For the first five hundred years of its history it was on both a river estuary and the sea-coast, and fishing must from the start have been a large part of its *raison d'être*. It also soon began to enjoy some prominence as a trading port, and a mint was established there (a sign of considerable status for a small remote burgh) in the late 900s.
- 20 Local legend maintains that Romney was the site of the first battle of the Norman Conquest, in which William of Normandy's army was prevented from landing on the Kent coast by the seamen of the town. Whatever the truth of this story, the Normans were quick to set their stamp on what was by then a strategic port town, founding a new church dedicated to St Nicholas, patron of mariners, by the harbour-side.

- 21 The town now boasted three parish churches, the others being St Martin's, whose remains lie beneath the Recreation Ground and St Lawrence's on the High Street. These were joined in the C13th by St John's Priory, part of which survives in Ashford Road (and which owned a chapel, also dedicated to St John, on the western edge of the town), and a leper hospital dedicated to SS Stephen and Thomas.
- 22 It is at around this time that we find the first reference to Romney's special status as part of the famous confederacy of the 'Cinque Ports'. The precise origin of this grouping is obscure, but by the early 1200s it was a recognisable entity, with Hastings, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich as its other members. Each town had to provide a number of fully-crewed warships and merchant vessels to the Crown for a certain portion of the year; in exchange, they were granted important political, economic and honorific privileges, including exemption from various levies and tolls, the right to hold their own courts and raise their own taxes, and the duty honour of sending representatives to carry the canopy over the Sovereign at coronation ceremonies. Traders from these ports, along with those from the numerous others that later joined the association as 'corporate members' or as 'limbs' of the original five, presided over the Herring Fair held annually at Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, for the duration of which they took effective control of the town.



The arms of the Cinque Ports

- 23 Cinque Port status brought Romney immense prestige – from 1266 onwards it returned two MPs to Parliament – but by the end of the C13th events beyond political control forced it to turn its back on the sea. Romney's was an estuarine harbour, and as such had always been liable to silting-up. This problem became acute during the early 1200s, despite the tremendous efforts that were devoted to reversing the process: the Rhee Wall, an artificial channel built across the Marsh at around this time, seems to have been designed to bring water from higher up the Rother valley to sluice out the rapidly receding harbour at Romney. (The attempt was a failure, and the channel was abandoned a century later, eventually forming the course of the modern Romney-Appledore road.) The process was further accelerated by a series of storms in the late C13th. The last of these, that of 1278, was so violent as to destroy much of the town and cause the Rother to shift its course: the loop that brought the river out to sea past Lydd and Romney was cut off, and a new estuary was formed at Rye Bay. The change in ground level in parts of the town, such that buildings like St Nicholas' Church have their entrances set two or three steps below the street, is also attributed to the 1278 cataclysm.



Sunken west doorway to St Nicholas' Church

- 24 From this point on, the town was increasingly cut off from direct access to maritime trade, and had to look inland for its future prosperity. The Romney Marsh had through the course of the previous five centuries been subjected to a programme of piecemeal drainage and reclamation, often initiated by the great Benedictine monasteries of Christ Church and St Augustine at Canterbury, who between them owned much of the land and wished to turn it to profitable use. Much of the Marsh had now been turned into rich pasture-land on which large flocks could be raised. The local merchants lost little time in setting up trade in wool and livestock, and 'New' Romney – as it now became known, its neighbour and one-time rival at 'Old' Romney having dwindled to a marshland hamlet – embarked upon a second career, less adventurous but no less profitable, as a market town.
- 25 It was probably at this time, in the rebuilding that followed the 1278 storm, that the town acquired its distinctive grid-plan – once probably more extensive, but still clearly discernible today. Its oldest surviving residential buildings, small late-medieval hall-houses such as those at nos. 3-4 West Street and no. 43 High Street, also date from this period. These were probably the residences of the merchant elite, who as the assembly of 'Jurats' or councillors continued to direct the town's affairs with the pomp and ceremony befitting a Cinque Port – this despite the fact that New Romney's maritime connection was now dwindling to a modest fishing industry based on the fast-receding shoreline. It must have been agricultural wealth, plus the patronage of the French Cistercian abbey of Pontigny, that added a tall Decorated chancel to St Nicholas' Church in the early C14th.
- 26 New Romney's fortunes were by no means constant, and it must have seemed especially forlorn in the immediate wake of the Reformation, with its Priory suppressed and two of its three parish churches closed. The traveller and antiquary John Leland, who visited the town during Elizabeth's reign, painted a melancholy (and perhaps somewhat exaggerated) picture of a settlement in decline:

"Rumeney is one of the v portes, and hath bene a netely good haven...The se is now a ii myles fro the towne, and so sore thereby now decayed that where there wher iii great paroches and chirches sumtyme is now scant one wel mayntined."

- 27 This is not wholly borne out by the first detailed map of the town, dated 1611, which shows a densely built-up urban grid, dominated by the great church of St Nicholas, and with the sea shore still within easy reach. (The grid plan was once more extensive than it is today: archaeological investigations and the analysis of plot boundaries point to the existence of a number of 'lost lanes' filling in gaps in the street pattern, for instance between North Street and Cannon Street.)
- 28 Leland's account of the Marsh, which 'increasith dayly' due to land reclamation and continued silting-up, and 'is a marvelous rank grownd for fedynge of catel', suggests a flourishing agricultural life that formed the mainstay of the local economy. In fact, the Marsh was a nationally-important centre of sheep-farming, and New Romney was the site of a famous livestock fair that took place annually on St Martin's Field, giving the name of 'Fairfield Road' to the adjoining lane. One early C17th merchant, John Southland, was rich enough to endow both a group of almshouses (Southland's Hospital on West Street, rebuilt in the C18th) and a grammar school. Several fine tombs of this period in St Nicholas' Church testify to personal wealth and enduring civic pride. This is especially true of a dual-purpose monument erected in 1622 by Clement Stuppeny, partly as a memorial to his great-grandfather and partly 'for the use of the auncient meeting and election of the Maior and Jurats of this towne'.



Ashford Road c.1900, showing the surviving remains of St John's Priory with the Georgian Priory House in front

- 29 Later in the C17th and around the turn of the 18th, the townsmen's sense of dignity began express itself in the erection of a series of civic buildings in an up-to-date Classical style. First came the Hall of the Ports – later known as the Assembly Rooms – which reinforced New Romney's ancient status by providing a permanent meeting place for the Courts of Brotherhood and Guestling, the principal governing bodies of the Cinque Ports. (The oldest part of the building, which also housed the schoolroom, is dated 1676.) Then, in 1702, came the Town Hall, which did the same for the town's own administrative and judicial bodies; the open loggia beneath (blocked up in the C19th) housed a market, and the adjoining Gaol, added in 1750, added a penal function to the complex. As was common across the country, many of the older timber-framed houses were re-fronted in brick and stucco at this time, and the remains of the old priory were rebuilt as a surprisingly grand Georgian town-house with a seven-bay front to the High Street. This was the town that Edward Hasted described in 1787:

“...about one hundred houses in it, which are mostly modern, neatly built in brick...It consists principally of one very wide street, well paved, running the whole length of it, in that part of which leading to the church stands the hall...In the midst of the high-street is the market-place, a neat modern building...”

- 30 The C19th, here as elsewhere, saw a rapid acceleration in the pace of political and social change. During the Napoleonic Wars, the Romney Marsh was seen as the most inviting target for an invasion force, and two lines of defence were accordingly built: a string of Martello towers along the coast and, further inland, the Royal Military Canal – effectively a 28-mile moat stretching along the foot of the hills from Hythe to Rye. The great movements of population occasioned by the war, and the agricultural depression that set in soon afterward, intensified the social upheavals already set in train by the revolutionary new methods being employed in industry and farming. At this time, the Marsh was perceived as a lawless region, a centre for cross-channel smuggling which the large numbers of excise-men based in the area tried in vain to control.
- 31 The social and economic life of New Romney itself became much more diverse. By the mid-century, the town’s ancient religious, educational and charitable foundations – St Nicholas’ Church, Southland’s School and Hospital – were joined by newer institutions: nonconformist chapels (the Methodists on High Street and the Baptists on North Street), private and national schools (the latter, adjoining the old churchyard, is now the local heritage centre), and the Romney Marsh Union Workhouse. Even the churchyard, now full to capacity, was superseded by a municipal cemetery.



High Street c. 1900, showing gas lighting. The jettied medieval buildings on the centre left were demolished after WWII

- 32 Agriculture remained central to the local economy, and the annual sheep fair was important enough to receive occasional reports in the national press. But other trades and occupations – eighty-one were listed in the 1851 Census – began to grow up in the town, and shops, inns and offices proliferated along the High Street, which from 1854 was gas-lit by the Corporation. This body, the successor to the council of Jurats that had governed the town since the Middle Ages, was formally incorporated in the local government reforms of 1834-5; a ratification of New Romney’s civic status which must have been some compensation for the loss of its two Parliamentary seats under the Reform Act of 1832.

- 33 Although the sea had retreated from the boundary of the town, there remained a harbour of sorts in the form of Romney Sand, a great enclosed bay stretching a mile inland, into which small boats could be drawn up at high tide. This land was finally reclaimed in the second half of the C19th, permanently cutting New Romney off from the sea. Its overland connections improved, however, with the opening in 1884 of a railway line along the coast from Romney to Dungeness, with a spur running north to join the Ashford-Hastings line at Appledore. Littlestone and Greatstone, once the two peninsulas at the mouth of Romney Sand, began to develop as seaside resorts, over time becoming as large as the old town itself, which they seemed increasingly likely to swallow up.



New Romney Station in 1940 (photo by JRF Roberts)

- 34 This never quite happened; the Romney Marsh beaches were perhaps too windswept and remote to enjoy any great success as holiday destinations, and although a continuous strip of housing stretched its way all along the coast from Hythe as far as St Mary's Bay, the development never came very far inland. Despite suburban expansion in the 1930s and '50s (the bungalows of the Churchlands estate typifying the latter), New Romney remained a separate entity, keeping its seaside neighbours at arms' length at the far end of Station Road and The Avenue. Tourism nevertheless became more and more central to the area's economy. The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, a miniature tourist line from Hythe to Dungeness, opened in 1927, and passengers disembarking at New Romney would walk up Station Road to view the 'Ancient Cinque Port' in all its unspoilt charm. In spite of a brief return to the nation's defensive front line during the Second World War, when a miniature armoured train plied the length of the RH&DR, this has remained the case up to the present day.
- 35 The years following the war witnessed further social and economic upheavals. Both agriculture and seaside tourism have declined steadily, their role in the local economy supplanted by the Dungeness A and B nuclear power stations (opened in 1965 and 1983). The standard-gauge railway line closed in 1967, both the result and a further cause of increased reliance on private cars carrying commuters to Hastings, Folkestone, Ashford and (via the M20 motorway, built between 1960 and 1991) London. Alongside have come changes, some highly regrettable, in the

town's physical fabric. The medieval timber-framed house 'opposite the New Inn', which according to Charles Igglesden's 1930s guide-book was 'the great attraction of the street' (and which can still be seen in pre-War photographs), disappeared shortly after the War to be replaced by the over scaled Spar supermarket, and a sprawling petrol station has come to dominate the eastern end of the High Street. The Listing of most of the town's pre-Victorian buildings from the 1950s onwards, and the designation of two Conservation Areas in 1971, helped to restrain the pace of development, but it has by no means come to a standstill, as the recent opening of the Sainsbury's supermarket attests.



The town's first garage, Smith's of High Street, c.1905

Map regression

- 36 The earliest detailed map of New Romney is a town plan dated 1611 (Appendix 1), now in the library of Magdalen College, Oxford. It is fairly schematic, but shows a layout that is recognisably that of the grid-planned town that exists today. Its buildings are tightly packed on burgage plots, clearly indicating an urban centre and not a mere village. The High Street can be seen running through the centre, with a large building halfway down that is presumably the predecessor of the Georgian Town Hall. Below (to the north, in this map) are North Street and Fairfield Street, showing the 'kink' that still persists where this axis meets Ashford Road. Above is Church Street, at this date still the main approach route from the east, with the great bulk of St Nicholas' Church looming over all. Just beyond – perhaps rather closer than was really the case by this time – is the sea-shore, defended by what are presumably two large cannons.
- 37 Hasted's map of 1793 shows much more of the town's topographical setting, including – fascinatingly – the last relic of what was once its harbour, the great bay known as Romney Sand on the site of the former estuary of the River Rother. Littlestone and Greatstone, which today are small seaside towns, here name the two peninsulas that mark the northern and southern boundaries of the bay, which finally silted up around the middle of the following century. In the town itself, the grid plan and distinctive northeast-southwest alignment are evident, as is the fact that, despite the reclamation of the surrounding fields, development does not yet extend beyond the ancient island site.

- 38 The tithe map of c.1840 shows the picture in more detail. Development within the town centre is shown as rather patchy in character, with the main concentrations – on High Street between Ashford Road and Rome Road, around West Street and George Lane – corresponding to today’s surviving clusters of listed buildings. The smaller group that now forms the Cannon Street CA is also visible in the bottom right-hand corner. The newly-built Romney Marsh Union Workhouse is shown just south of Church Road, and the sites of the lost churches of St John and St Martin are also marked, the latter in the middle of the fairground field – then much larger than today – which takes its name.
- 39 The Ordnance Survey map of 1898 shows few changes. Such distinctively Victorian structures as the Baptist and Methodist chapels and the National School have appeared, along with new housing types such as the terraces in Lion’s Road and large villas like The Gables on North Street (now the Broadacre Hotel). Next door to the latter stands a windmill, once a familiar feature of the Marsh landscape. A new vicarage for St Nicholas’ has been built on Fairfield Road, with a large garden carved out of the eastern half of St Martin’s Field; next door can be seen the red-brick houses adjoining the Prince of Wales Inn.
- 40 The 1938 OS map shows the first beginnings of more intensive suburban expansion. Groups of new detached and semi-detached villas can be seen on Church Road, Church Lane, Fairfield Road and the upper part of the High Street, the latter acting as infilling between the historic centre and what is now the Cannon Street CA. Other new arrivals include the public library on the high street and the town cemetery on Church Road. The Methodist Church and the row of buildings next to it burned down in the 1920s, and are shown in their modern form. The Workhouse no longer exists and the windmill has both disappeared, while the Vicarage has moved to a new site on Sussex Road, with the old building becoming a private house called Mabledon.
- 41 The modern OS map shows how, in the years following the Second World War, the old town rapidly burst the boundaries of its ancient site. Large tracts of new housing have appeared: more large villas and bungalows to the north and west along Rolfe Road, Sussex Road and Lydd Road, smaller terraces of informally laid-out public housing such as the sprawling Churchlands estate, and even small blocks of flats like Prescott House and Springwood Court. The C19th former vicarage has been demolished and replaced with a cul-de-sac called Mabledon Close, and other older houses – The Gables, Yew Tree House – have sold off part of their large gardens for development. The school has transferred to much larger premises opposite The Elms, its former building becoming a heritage centre. The impact of the motor car is everywhere apparent: several buildings have been demolished to make way for car parks on West Street, Rome Road and Church Road, a petrol station has appeared next to the Ship Hotel, and a large new supermarket has appeared between High Street and Fairfield Road, its car park occupying the former gardens of the demolished house known as Green Court.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

- 42 Although in the course of its history New Romney has been both a major seaport and a prosperous market town, it lacks the distinctive features associated with these types of settlement. As we know, there is no longer a harbour – the sea-shore is not now even visible from the town – nor is there an identifiable market place, either in the form of a town square, as at nearby Lydd, or even as a

widening of the main street, as at Tenterden. Instead, there is simply the grid-plan, dominated by the broad, built-up High Street, bounded by the quieter, more sparsely developed thoroughfares of Church Road and North Street/Fairfield Road, and bisected by a series of narrow lanes and alleyways: West Street, Rome Road/Victoria Street, Ashford Road/Church Approach, Tritton Lane and George Lane. Public open space is restricted to the churchyard and the large green field behind the High Street, once the site of St Martin's Church and later of the livestock fair, now a recreation ground.

- 43 The High Street is New Romney's main public forum, home to all of its shops and all but one of its pubs, as well as the main public building, the Town Hall. Its character is exceptionally linear: it is almost perfectly straight, and continuously built up along both sides with two-storey buildings of roughly similar character. Nearly all are built right up to the pavement line; only at the outer extremes do buildings like Rome House and The Elms stand back a little from the roadway. Although larger buildings such as the Town Hall and no. 44 provide some visual incident, the street's main spatial drama comes just from its regularity and seeming endlessness, an effect made more powerful by the extreme flatness of the landscape and the huge marshland skies overhead.



High Street looking south-west

- 44 Church Road and North Street/Fairfield Road, which run parallel to the High Street on the south and north respectively, have a very different character. Each is bounded for at least part of its length by a large area of green space – the churchyard, the cemetery, St Martin's Field – and for the much of the remainder by detached houses set back from the pavement line in their own grounds, their boundary walls overhung by trees and shrubs, creating an impression by turns 'villagey' and suburban.
- 45 North Street is somewhat more formal in its layout, especially around the Broadacre Hotel where the houses press together more tightly; Church Street by contrast is much more dominated by a single building, the great bulk of St Nicholas', and the other houses are too scattered to create any real space of their own. (The large car park behind the Assembly Rooms does the street few favours in this respect.) The exception is the small informal square at the foot of the church tower, where the sheltering mass of the church itself, the humble little stone