

HOLTWOOD CONSERVATION AREA



Introduction

The objective of the Holtwood Conservation Area Appraisal is to analyse and record the special character of the Conservation Area, which was originally designated in 1974 (by Kent County Council) and extended by the Borough Council in 1993. The appraisal covers the area within the Conservation Area boundary and provides further details to assist with the interpretation and use of planning policies. It will help guide the Council in making planning decisions on planning applications and to this end will be adopted for development control purposes.

It is intended that this appraisal will inform and influence the activities of the Council and other bodies (eg. Kent County Council and other statutory agencies) where these impact on the Conservation Area. It will also assist in the identification of any programmes of action that are considered appropriate by these bodies, subject, of course, to financial limitations and other priorities they may have.

Importantly, it is hoped that the appraisal will prove to be of help to residents and landowners. For anyone proposing new development or changes within the Conservation Area, the appraisal should be read in conjunction with the Borough Council's **Conservation Area Advice Note**. This includes guidance on the broad issues to be considered and the special controls that apply in Conservation Areas.



*As the purpose of this appraisal is to describe the **character** of the area, it does not include a detailed description of every feature or building. Omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken therefore, to imply that it is not of interest or similarly that there are no opportunities to improve the character of the area.*

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Location, Setting and Physical Form

Holtwood Conservation Area is located within Aylesford Parish adjoining, and extending to the south of, the A20 London Road.

The low density residential area includes a row of detached properties set well back from London Road and is entered through the curved and rising Woodlands Road which forks at a triangular green into the more level, but also curved, Holt Wood Avenue. These roads extend into more modern, higher density development to the north, south and west of the Conservation Area. Short lengths of Birch Crescent and Russet Close are also included in the Conservation Area. The area is well screened from industrial units to the east by a copse of mature trees.

The area is built on the steep Holt Hill which rises to the south, giving some long views of the North Downs across intervening development. Nevertheless, the narrow, curved roads and extensive mature landscape means that long views from the Conservation Area are generally constrained.



View from Woodlands Road/ Birch Crescent

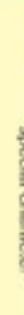
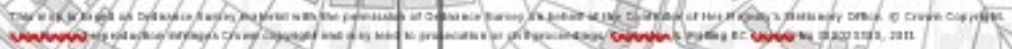
Origins and Development of the Settlement



Typical 1930s detached property built amongst mature trees

The Holtwood estate was developed from about 1933 onwards by Lyons Green Works of East Sussex, starting on London Road. The sylvan setting of Holt Hill was considered by the developers to be the ideal location for low density, individually designed houses. Other builders infilled with the same style of housing up to 1939, with a few additional properties added later. Post war, contrasting higher density residential estates were extended out from the Conservation Area across the remainder of the wooded slopes of the hill.

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Townscape/Landscape Analysis

The map shows the key features of the Conservation Area and forms part of the townscape appraisal. It should be looked at in conjunction with this text.



The Conservation Area is an area of low density housing, set within a mature landscape setting. The landscape dominates the buildings giving an arcadian character to the area. The two storey houses are generally individually designed and set back from the road within extensive landscaped gardens behind verdant hedges or fences. Buildings are often screened from the road by high hedges, shrubs and mature trees. They are glimpsed above the hedge and fence boundaries, through the landscape and between narrow entrances and generally no more than a limited number are apparent from any viewpoint.

Mature trees within side and rear gardens (some protected by Tree Preservation Orders) provide the visual link between one house and the next and unifying the composition of the Conservation Area.

Tall trees and hedge screen the houses from the London Road with access being via narrow entrances.



London Road

Tall pine trees mark the entrance to Woodlands Road from London Road.

Properties along London Road are set well back from the front boundaries and may be glimpsed through the rising narrow entrances sometimes lined with low stone walls.



Glimpses of London Road houses



Throughout the Conservation Area, mature trees and hedging rather than buildings contain the public space. The narrow, curving roads, which are strongly enclosed by landscape, contribute to the quiet, informal residential character. Verges, many planted with hedges and trees, separate footpaths from the road, reduce the visual impact of the highway and, together with the lack of road markings, contribute to the informal layout. The triangular green which forms the junction between Holt Wood Avenue and Woodlands Avenue contains a tall tree which acts as a landmark feature.



Holt Wood Avenue



Woodlands Road



Landmark tree

Woodlands Road and Birch Crescent rise along a curved alignment and at their junction provide long views of the North Downs through gaps in development and landscape features. This more open aspect contrasts with the generally more enclosed streetscape.



Russet Close

A copse of trees punctuated by Russet Close forms the south eastern edge of the Conservation Area.



Views of the North Downs

Physical Fabric

The form of the two storey houses generally includes a single or two storey projection to the front elevation (often marking the entrance) or is 'L' shaped.



There is a generally varied roof line. Steeply pitched, and sometimes hipped or half hipped, roofs are formed predominantly of red clay peg tiles. Some houses have exaggerated cat slide roofs sloping below the roof line of the remainder of the house. The roof lines are broken by 'eye brow' and discrete traditional dormer windows in the same style, materials and window proportion as the house.

Gable ends face the road often as part of an 'L' shaped property or as part of a two storey front projection above the doorway.

The mock Tudor style with exposed timbers relies on traditional building materials – primarily bricks, clay peg roof and half timbered upper storeys with white painted render or decorative brickwork infill panels – which creates a subtle palette of colours based around red, orange and white.



Generally horizontal or square casement windows align horizontally and vertically with each other. Frames are normally of dark wood, though occasionally they are white. Additional decorative features include shallow brick arches above doors and windows, projecting brick sills below windows, chimneys and some stone quoins.



Boundary treatments are predominantly hedges, wooden fences or both with brick piers marking the entrance.



Conservation Area

English Heritage good practice advocates that local authorities should prepare a management plan to address the issues arising from the Conservation Area Appraisal and set out recommendations for action. Some of these actions will be applied generally to Conservation Areas in the Borough, whilst others, such as enhancement proposals, are specific to the Holtwood Conservation Area.

Management Proposals applicable to all Conservation Areas in the Borough

Application of Planning Policy and Building Regulations

The Borough Council will consistently apply adopted and future planning policy to ensure high quality design which is appropriate to protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and will continue to apply Building and Fire Regulations sensitively in Conservation Areas to attempt to ensure that there is no conflict with the preservation of the character of the area.

Features affecting the character of Holtwood Conservation Area and proposals for enhancement

Enhancement of Footbridge and Railings



The unsympathetic large angular, concrete footbridge with metal railings marks the entrance to Woodlands Road. Abutting the hedged boundaries, the structure significantly detracts from the setting of the Conservation Area. Whilst the structure is important to road safety and likely to remain, it would be less obtrusive if the railings were painted black during the next programme of maintenance in order to help merge the utilitarian structure into the background and reduce its visual impact.

Tree Management

In order to maintain the character of the area, care must be taken to manage a succession of mature trees and to maintain hedges. Coppicing the original dominant sweet chestnut should be carried out on a phased basis, even within individual gardens, to allow regeneration without destroying the verdant appearance. Some replacement with alternative species such as oak and birch which are already becoming established in the area should be allowed to provide diversity when the chestnut coppice dies out naturally.



Design Guidelines

- It is not anticipated that there will be significant change in the Conservation Area. However, when proposals come forward, the scale, massing, height, form, alignment, density and layout of any new development should respect the character of the area within which it is proposed as described in this Appraisal. Buildings within the Conservation Area should generally be 2 storeys in height and set back from the road behind a hedged boundary.
- Good quality design relies, amongst other things, on the choice and combination of materials. This is crucial to the success of a scheme. A richness of design and texture can be achieved through careful detailing and use of materials, and through a fine balance between variety and uniformity in a building or development. The number of different materials used should generally be kept to a minimum. Any new buildings should consist of materials which respect the character of the area within which they are proposed as listed in the Physical Fabric section.
- Extensions and new outbuildings should be well designed and be subordinate to the original building. Over development of each plot would change the character of this Conservation Area and should be avoided where this would significantly increase the appearance of built development from the street and/or reduce tree cover.
- Replacement doors, windows and roofs should closely match the design, materials and colour of the original features of the building.
- Careful consideration should be given to ensuring that good quality traditional detailing on buildings is retained eg brick detailing, quoins and chimneys.
- Additions such as satellite dishes, flues, extractor fans and alarm boxes should preferably be located where they are not visible from public vantage points.
- Front boundaries and verge planting should be retained or restored to the prevailing feature in the area: for example, boundaries of approximately 1 - 2 metre high hedges or 1 metre high fence with hedge appearing above.
- Trees, hedgerows and verges which are important to the character of the Conservation Area, should be retained and managed for the longer term.
- Views of the countryside beyond the built up area should be preserved.
- Buildings which would be visible from the Conservation Area, or form part of its setting, should preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.

Planning Policy Background

The Appraisal will help interpret

- Planning Policy Statement 5 (Planning for the Historic Environment),
- the Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy (Policies CP1 – Sustainable Development; CP24 – Achieving a High Quality Environment and CP25 – Mitigation of Development Impacts), and
- the Managing Development and the Environment DPD (Policy SQ1)