

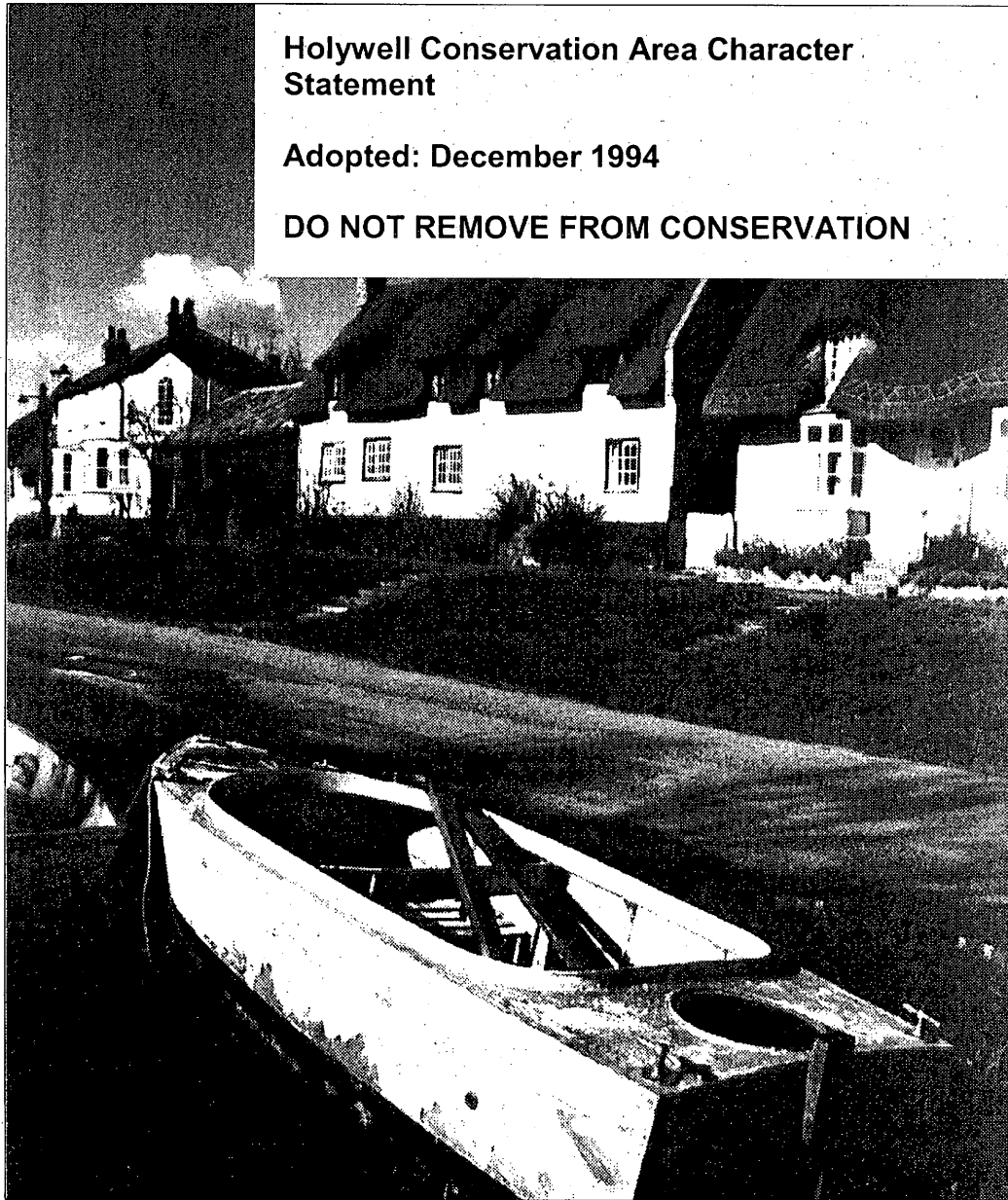
HOLYWELL

CONSERVATION AREA

Holywell Conservation Area Character
Statement

Adopted: December 1994

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CHARACTER STATEMENT

Huntingdonshire  Planning

HOLYWELL CONSERVATION AREA

CHARACTER STATEMENT

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FOREWORD

Sixty-two Conservation Areas have now been designated in Huntingdonshire. However, the act of designation is not an end in itself, but the start of a process to preserve and enhance the character of each Conservation Area. Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas. Furthermore, the Government in its Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, on Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas, seeks the review of existing Conservation Areas and their boundaries against consistent local standards for designation.

Whilst it is the ultimate intention of this Authority to undertake boundary reviews and formulate policies for preservation and enhancement, this represents a very large workload which would require several years to achieve. Therefore, the most pressing priority is the publication of Conservation Area Character Statements which justify existing designations. The Statements are intended to provide guidance for formulating policies for preservation and enhancement and to assist in determining planning applications within Conservation Areas. They will also prove useful in individual cases which go to appeal, by providing additional documentation for Inspectors to assess the merits of the Local Authority's evidence.

The format of each Character Statement will consist of an introduction of the legislative background, followed by an assessment of the local setting, history, character and landscape setting (if relevant) of the Conservation Area in question.

A comprehensive list of the 62 Conservation Areas with plans of each area showing Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments is contained in the booklet 'Conservation Areas in Huntingdonshire' published in October 1991 by the District Council. This document also gives summary information on the special nature of the control of development within Conservation Areas and this is reproduced for information in Appendix 1 to this Character Statement.

The District Council's Local Plan for Huntingdonshire (with proposed modifications incorporated) gives the general planning policies which the Council are pursuing to preserve and enhance Conservation Areas (four policies in all). These are contained in Appendix 2.

The District Council is currently producing advice and guidance notes on "Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings" and on "Residential Design". These documents will provide further information and advice to the householder, developer and others to maintain existing buildings and when building anew in Conservation Areas and elsewhere.

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

HOLYWELL CONSERVATION AREA NO.46

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority based upon the criterion that they are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Considerable scope and discretion can, therefore, be applied in such a designation. The process of designation is contained within Section 69 of the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Prior to this Act, Conservation Areas were designated under the 1967 Civic Amenities Act. Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires the Local Planning Authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning functions.
- 1.2 Apart from giving special consideration to applications for new development, the legislation affecting Conservation Areas also provides for control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and the felling and lopping of trees. Furthermore, in respect of those Conservation Areas designated prior to November, 1985, additional limitations have been placed on permitted development rights. Grant aid may also be available within Conservation Areas, either through Town Schemes or Section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act, 1972.
- 1.3 The Conservation Area for Holywell was designated by the District Council on 28th April, 1980. The purpose of this Conservation Area Character Statement is to:-
- i) Justify the Conservation Area designation.
 - ii) Justify the overall shape and area of the Conservation Area but not specific boundaries.
 - iii) Provide detailed information on history, architecture and landscape and their inter-relationships to guide developers and Development Control Officers when considering proposals within Conservation Areas to ensure the essential character of the area is preserved and/or enhanced.
- 1.4 Further guidance in this respect has been produced recently in Planning Policy Guidance Note No.15 - Planning and Historic Environment issued jointly by the Department of the Environment and the Department of National Heritage. The new document emphasises that it is important that Conservation Areas are seen to justify their status because "an authority's justification for designation, as reflected in its assessment of an area's special

interest and its character and appearance, is a factor which the Secretary of State will take into account in considering appeals against refusals of Conservation Area Consent for demolition and appeals against refusals of planning permission.

- 1.5 This Conservation Area Statement describes the essential characteristics of Holywell Conservation Area in justifying its status, thereby providing a basis upon which the Local Authority can assess development proposals and enable judgements on decisions to be made.

2. LOCATION

- 2.1 Holywell Conservation Area is located two miles east of St. Ives and fourteen miles from Ely and contains the entire village together with the flood meadows of the River Great Ouse on the southern side of the village as far as the District boundary with South Cambridgeshire.
- 2.2 The designation reflects not only the attractiveness of the local vernacular architecture of Holywell, typified by rendered, thatched cottages, but also the distinctive historic road layout, forming a "ring" village, with Holywell Front and Back Lane creating a roughly circular route. Vehicular access to the village is gained via Mill Way, the only road linking Holywell with Needingworth, which is located one mile to the north.

3. HISTORY

- 3.1 Holywell takes its name from the existence of a natural spring on the south side of the Parish Church of St. John the Baptist. The well possibly dates from Roman times when the 'Hailiwelle' water was used for holy purposes. It is understood that the well owes its sanctity to the 7th Century Persian Bishop Ivo who was buried in St. Ives and whose remains and the wells/springs associated with his name are credited with healing properties.
- 3.2 It is thought that the village stands on the site of a former Roman post or fort, the elevated position providing a good look-out across the Fens. The high ground on which the Parish Church stands also gives a broad view of the surrounding countryside and from this vantage point boats may be seen navigating the River Great Ouse.
- 3.3 The nearby fords on the River Great Ouse were likely to have been used by the Romans which saved them the task of building bridges. The village gained importance through its role as a ferry crossing to Fen Drayton, and by the time of Roman occupation there would have been a ferry of some sort to transport goods.
- 3.4 Holywell was given to the Monks of Ramsey by Alfwara a Saxon noblewoman, who died in 1007 and was buried at Ramsey; the church and its associated land were subsequently granted to the Monks by Gode, the Priest of

Holywell on his death. Tradition says that a lighthouse or beacon formerly stood on the side of the present church, guiding navigators over the fenland waters. In the Domesday Survey of 1068, it is stated that Holywell was comprised of 9 hides held by Ramsey Abbey.

- 3.5 Moynes Hall is a building of local historical importance and is named after Berenger le Moyne (who lived in the 13th Century). It is the oldest substantial house in the village, the predecessor of which is likely to have been the Manorial Hall, whose lands belonged to Ramsey Abbey prior to the reformation.
- 3.6 Manor Farmhouse is another local building of importance dating from the 18th Century and located at the north-west corner of the Conservation Area. There is a well beneath the scullery floor which is reputedly of ancient origin and is sunk into the same strata of gravel as the spring from which the village takes its name. Roman pottery sherds have been found in the grounds and a paddock area located behind the house is known as The Vineyards.
- 3.7 Another important building in the village is the Ferry Boat Inn, probably established before the Norman Conquest (1066) and forming part of the cultural heritage of the village. St. Patricks Day (March 17th) is an important date as it marks the anniversary of the death of Juliet Tewsley who committed suicide in 1050 after being spurned by her lover. Her ghost is said to walk from the pub (where her grave lies) towards the trees near the river where she hanged herself from the branch of a Willow tree.
- 3.8 It is claimed that the Ferry Boat Inn is the oldest public house in Britain, and "The Guinness Book of Records" 1993 Edition, states that:

"An origin as early as AD 560 has been claimed for 'Ye Old Ferry Boat Inn' at Holywell, Cambs. There is some evidence that it antedates the local church, built in 980, but no documentation is available earlier than AD 1100".
- 3.9 Many of the dwellings in Holywell were built by Dutch settlers who came to the Fens as prisoners of war from naval battles, and together with Scottish prisoners captured by Cromwell at the Battle of Dunbar, they carried out labouring work on fen drainage under the famous Dutch engineer Vermuyden during the mid-17th Century.

4. CHARACTER

- 4.1 The heaviest concentration of historic buildings is formed along the north side of Holywell Front, which stretches from the Parish Church of St. John the Baptist in the west to The Ferry Boat Inn in the east, with most of these properties looking out onto 'Flagholme' and more specifically the area known as 'The Lakes'.

- 4.2 The dwellings on Holywell Front occupy an elevated position above the floodplain fringed by a sloping grass verge and only occasionally breached for vehicular access. A footpath runs along the top of the bank, whilst most of the properties have a pedestrian pathway leading to their southern facades. Vehicular access for some properties is provided via long driveways off Back Lane, thus reducing the visual impact of the motor car along this sensitive narrow street frontage.
- 4.3 The long, narrow, grassed areas on either side of Holywell Front, together with two parcels of land in the vicinity of The Ferry Boat Inn, are registered as Common Land and are actively managed by the Parish Council.
- 4.4 Many of the properties on Holywell Front date from the 16th and 17th Centuries and are mostly single storey cottages with attics, dormer windows and thatched roofs, a good example of which is the Grade II* Listed, Anchor Cottage, located towards the east end of Holywell Front and adjoining Reed Cottage. Most of the buildings are timber framed with rendered or white painted, rough-cast exteriors, Hill Farm and 'Goodyers' (both Grade II Listed) provide the exception to this, being constructed of local gault and red brick. 'Savernake' located at the point where Holywell Front begins to narrow and climb towards the Parish Church, provides considerable visual interest to this part of the Conservation Area. The distinctive, atypical, mauve colour-wash exterior singles out this 17th Century cottage from other timber framed, rough-cast dwellings in the Conservation Area.
- 4.5 Located in between those listed buildings on Holywell Front are some modern detached dwellings namely The Croft, Colne House, Lamorran and Marica. In terms of Holywell's character these properties are of a relatively plain architectural style. The setting of the listed buildings is, however, respected because these modern dwellings are set back behind landscaped or walled frontages and are only visible within the street scene when viewed from directly in front.
- 4.6 Between 'Savernake' and the Parish Church, the character of Holywell Front changes rapidly from open views southwards to one of a narrow, leafy, country lane dominated at its midpoint by Goodyers farmhouse, which occupies a clearing between the trees. The road continues upwards, turning northwards where it wraps around the southwest boundary of Holywell House (former 19th Century Rectory) and is hemmed in on either side by a dense tree screen. The effect is, therefore, one of only limited views both ahead and to either side creating 'dark' tree-lined corridors linking Goodyers farmhouse with 'Savernake' and the Parish Church. The distinct changes in natural light created by the extent of tree cover, are a salient feature of this part of the Conservation Area.

- 4.7 One of the most distinctive landmarks within Holywell Conservation Area is the Parish Church, a Grade I Listed Building which was well established in Holywell by 969. The early church walls have been constructed of daub and wattle with a reed thatched roof. The present church building dates no earlier than the 13th Century and is built of stone and pebble-rubble with Barnack Stone and some reused material in the tower, possibly from Ramsey Abbey. The church overlooks Holywell Fen and the flat pasture land of the Ouse Valley, with field boundaries marked by mature Weeping Willows.
- 4.8 Each year the parish celebrates a feast day with a blessing of the Grade II Listed Holywell, which is decorated for the event. The well is covered by a semi-circular brick shelter with an elliptical arched opening facing east and capped by a 13th or 14th Century stone corbel and plaque.
- 4.9 To the north west of the Parish Church, where a group of farm buildings once stood on the south side of Conger Lane, there now stands four modern, detached properties. Further west is 'The Pastures', a large, red brick, detached house with mock timber framing set back behind a walled frontage and contrasting with the appearance of Manor Farm, a Building of Local Interest, opposite.
- 4.10 The views of farmland to the north (particularly through Manor Farmyard) are almost as important as those over 'The Lakes' to the south. The trees located at the entrance to Conger Lane enhance the rural character of this settlement and should be retained.
- 4.11 The Ferry Boat Inn overlooks a broad section of the River Great Ouse at the most easterly point of the Conservation Area. A large gravel car park is situated within the grounds to the rear of this Grade II Listed Building. The car park has well landscaped northern and eastern boundaries. A less formal parking area exists at the front, between the Inn and the River. The relationship between the Inn and the River is an attractive feature of the Conservation Area, preserving the listed building's tranquil setting and it is important that this be protected.
- 4.12 Back Lane is characterised by its long, relatively narrow route, accentuated by the 17th Century red brick wall and saw-toothed top, timber, close board fence forming the southern boundaries to Moynes Hall and The Pantiles respectively. A lesser concentration of historic buildings front onto the north side of Back Lane, to the east of its junction with Mill Way and convey similar architectural styles to those present on Holywell Front. The exception to this is Moynes Hall which is set back behind its walled frontage. This substantial brick wall separates the orchard (situated to the west of Moynes Hall) from Back Lane and was probably built with 'seconds' from the kilns of a nearby former brick and tiles works.

4.13 The south side of Back Lane is characterised by detached modern 20th Century dwellings, built along the road frontage, thus maintaining the historic village form. The centre of the 'ring' is largely undeveloped and may be described as an area of quiet.

4.14 However, on the 9th August, 1993, an application was received for the erection of 6 no. dwellings on an open area of land off Back Lane and at the heart of this 'ring' settlement. The application subsequently went to appeal, which the Inspector dismissed on 1st July, 1994. The Inspector concluded that:

"...while the undeveloped centre of the ring cannot be easily seen from the roads it is visible between gaps in the houses and is also a feature of their outlook at the rear. Development of even part of this central space with houses would, in my view, detract considerably from the distinctive historic form and character of the village".

This central space is also visible from the gap between 'Fielding' and 'The Bungalow' (currently used for sheep grazing). In fact, the only development to have breached the 'open', central area is Langdale, a house built in the 1960s.

4.15 Several good examples of Victorian architecture are evident in Holywell and White Rose Cottage on the south side of Back Lane is a good example of its type. This building provides a vista on the approach to Holywell from Needingworth and is surrounded by mature Scots Pine. These trees should be retained and the setting of White Rose Cottage should be respected.

5. LANDSCAPE SETTING

5.1 Holywell stands in an elevated position overlooking a large area of meadow between the village and River Great Ouse. This area is known as 'Flagholme' and may, in the past, have been a harbour for boats at Holywell. The eastern part of 'Flagholme' is included within the designated Conservation Area.

5.2 The name 'Flagholme' is probably derived from the abundance of flag plants, which are still plentiful in the area, whilst the term 'holme', is associated with a river island (flat land lying along a river which is occasionally covered by water). During the 14th Century, Holywell gained a few acres of land to the south as the River Great Ouse acquired a more southerly course, the old river bed is still traceable in the meadows and is still called the 'Old River'. This area of meadows is prone to flooding and is known locally as 'The Lakes', and forms part of the area known as 'Flagholme'.

- 5.3 These traditional water meadows are an attractive feature and a valued element of the Conservation Area, not only enhancing Holywell's edge of fenland setting, but also creating a link between the settlement and River Great Ouse. The low lying meadowland emphasises Holywell's elevated position and it is important that this area is protected and retained.
- 5.4 The Ouse Valley Way, a long distance public footpath, follows a route across Holywell Fen (south of the parish church) and along Holywell Front, onwards to the Pike and Eel Inn at Needingworth. The footpath provides attractive views of Holywell Front and Holywell Church. Much of this section of the Ouse Valley is designated 'Area of Best Landscape' in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.

APPENDIX 1

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS

One of the most effective ways of preserving and enhancing Conservation Areas is through the control of development. Listed buildings cannot be demolished or altered or extended without obtaining consent from the Local Planning Authority or the Secretary of State for the Environment. Similarly the right to carry out certain developments, within the curtilage of a dwelling which is listed, without having to obtain planning permission are reduced. When determining planning applications for development which affects listed buildings or Ancient Monuments, the Planning Authority must give consideration to the effects of the proposed development on their character. Since many Conservation Areas are centred on areas where there is likely to be significant archaeological interest, consent may be withheld or conditions imposed to enable investigation and recording to take place.

The designation of a Conservation Area gives further powers of control to the Local Planning Authority. In these areas the right to carry out certain developments without the need to obtain planning permission are reduced. In particular:

- i) the amount of extension to a dwelling is limited to less than 50 cubic metres or 10% of the original dwellinghouse.
- ii) no cladding of any part of the exterior by stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles is permitted to a dwellinghouse.
- iii) no alterations may take place to the roof of a dwelling which would result in its enlargement.
- iv) no alterations or extensions can take place within the curtilage of a dwelling to buildings over 10 cubic metres in volume.
- v) Satellite dishes are not allowed on a chimney, nor on any wall or roof slope fronting onto a highway.

Generally, planning controls in Conservation Areas are directed to controlling demolition. In this respect, Conservation Area Consent is required for the demolition of buildings and structures over certain sizes. Furthermore, anyone who wishes to lop, top or fell a tree within a Conservation Area must give the Planning Authority six weeks notice of their intention. This gives the Planning Authority the opportunity to make a Tree Preservation Order.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES ON CONSERVATION AREAS

En5 DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR DIRECTLY AFFECTING CONSERVATION AREAS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THEIR CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE.

Conservation is not preservation, and whilst the District Council is concerned to see the retention of the most important features and characteristics of designated areas, it is at the same time attempting to assimilate good modern architecture in historic locations.

The relevant statutory provisions are to be found in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. Subject to minor exceptions, no building in a Conservation Area may be demolished without the written consent of the Council, and trees within a Conservation Area (again with minor exceptions) are also given additional protection. Six weeks notice of any lopping, topping or felling of such trees must be given to the Council, in order that a Tree Preservation Order may be made if necessary. In Conservation Areas, there are reduced permitted development rights and proposals for development that are likely to affect the character or appearance of the area, may be of public concern and must therefore be advertised.

The District Council will continue to protect and enhance the character of the designated Conservation Areas. Particular attention will be paid to alterations to existing buildings and the design of new developments within the Conservation Area.

En6 IN CONSERVATION AREAS, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE HIGH STANDARDS OF DESIGN WITH CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO THE SCALE AND FORM OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA AND TO THE USE OF SYMPATHETIC MATERIALS OF APPROPRIATE COLOUR AND TEXTURE.

It is important to lay down basic design criteria when new development in a Conservation Area is being proposed. This criteria will ensure that new dwellings will follow the general pattern of the existing built form, materials and styles. The District Council will use the provisions of Article 7, of the General Development Order, 1988, to require details to support outline planning applications in Conservation Areas.

En7 WHERE DEMOLITION IS TO BE FOLLOWED BY REDEVELOPMENT, CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT MAY BE WITHHELD UNTIL ACCEPTABLE PLANS FOR THE NEW DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN APPROVED. IF APPROVED, THE TIMING OF THE DEMOLITION WILL BE STRICTLY CONTROLLED.

Proposals for redevelopment sometimes take a considerable time to implement. The demolition and clearance of sites before a new scheme has been approved or implemented could lead to the situation where an unsightly area in a Conservation Area is created and left for some time. The opportunity for a sympathetic replacement scheme may be lost if the designer does not appreciate the scale and form of the original building(s) now lost.

En8 DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD IMPAIR IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES, TREES, STREET SCENES AND VIEWS INTO AND OUT OF THE CONSERVATION AREAS.

Conservation Areas are made up of buildings, trees and open spaces (both public and private) which together form a cohesive area. It is recognised in the chapter on housing that within the environmental limits not all areas of land should be built on. There are important open spaces, gaps and frontages that should be preserved in their own right.

