

Great Holland Conservation Area

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This Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been produced by the District Council but is based on earlier work by consultants Smith Stuart Reynolds in 2001. These earlier documents contain the views of the consultant and did not necessarily reflect the Council's Officer's views. Although these documents have existed for some time they had no formal, planning status.

The Council subsequently agreed in 2005 to prepare Conservation Area Character Appraisals for each of its Conservation Areas and as a forerunner to updating the above consultant's documents a consultation exercise took place in late 2005/early 2006. This involved town and parish councils and certain local amenity bodies. The results of the consultation exercise were reported to the Council's Planning Portfolio Holder when the document was formally considered for adoption as Council planning policy. As a result of this consultation the Appraisal documents have been amended and updated in the light of the comments received from consultees and as a result of certain changes which have taken place since 2001. Much of the descriptive material used in the original SSR documents has been retained.

Proposals originally put forward by the Consultant involving suggested changes to Conservation Area boundaries, enhancement works or proposed Article 4 Directions have been retained in these latest documents. However, it is recognised that town or parish councils do not support some of these suggestions and this is referred to in the appropriate document. Their inclusion in the documents as suggestions only does not indicate that the District Council supports such proposals at this time. They will be subject to further consideration by the Council in due course. Indeed all such proposals for boundary changes, and any new Article 4 Directions will be required to go through quite separate, statutory processes which will also be carried out with further public consultation.

This document has been formally adopted by the Council as part of its planning policies for this conservation area under the provisions of Section 71 of the Planning [Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas] Act 1990. It will therefore be an important material consideration in relation to the assessment and determination of planning and related applications in the Conservation Area.

SUMMARY

The special character of Great Holland Conservation Area lies in the relationship between a formal, enclosed area in front of the Ship Inn and the sinuous lane leading to the Church, Hall and extensive views over the coast.

The boundaries of the Area have been assessed and no recommendations are made for its alteration.

Great Holland Conservation Area

LOCATION

Great Holland is situated astride the B1032 between Kirby Cross and Holland-on-Sea at the eastern end of the Clacton seafront. It occupies a promontory of higher ground falling gently south east to the undeveloped coastline north of Holland-on-Sea and to the Holland Brook to the south west. The Conservation Area was originally designated in June 1981 around the small square in front of the Ship Inn in the south eastern part of the village away from the main road. The Area was extended eastwards in November 1988 to include All Saints Church and its setting.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Great Holland has its origins in a relatively isolated church in close association with a "great house", contrasting with a wider range of activities at the "public" end of the original settlement. Chapman and André's Essex map of 1777 shows the local road pattern very much as it is today, with the important exception that what was then the Kirby Cross-Little Holland road included what is now Rectory Road and Manor Road. The Ship Inn therefore had an extremely prominent position on the road, and is identifiable on this map, as are Tudor Cottages, the former rectory in its grounds, the church and the Hall.

Otherwise development was sporadic, with the northern part of the village as a common ("Kirby Heath") fringed by a few dwellings. The population had reached 300 by the 1801 Census, less than half the size of Kirby and more than in Walton at this time. Along with most of the rest of this part of Essex, Great Holland would have remained a remote agricultural backwater until the advent of the railways. Colchester was reached by 1843: the branch to Walton was built by 1867, with a station at Kirby Cross 1.5km (0.9 miles) north of the village. Gradual infilling of the older village and the Heath produced a settlement able to support a Post Office, a confectioners and tea rooms within what is now the Conservation Area at the turn of the last century. The village being to some extent bypassed by the railway, building intensified in the 20th century with the gradual dominance of car-borne tourists and the perceived attractiveness of the area for residential development. The common has now been entirely developed, the old centre of the village bypassed and further infill plots built up. Local services have slowly been eroded so that, with the exception of the church and the pub, all buildings in the Area are now in residential use. The historic patterns are still evident in the extended layout of the whole village, the paucity of formal development schemes, the generally detached nature of housing, and the separation of the church at the "Hall" end of the village from the former Rectory closer to its heart.

CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES

The Conservation Area is now centred on Church Lane, a cul-de-sac running eastwards from the small square where Rectory Road and Manor Road divide to give access to the main road. From the west side of the square, the Area boundary takes in Sea View and Tudor Cottages on the south side of Rectory Road, extending a little further up the north side of Rectory Road to include Glebe Barn. The boundary runs round this property and the rear of The Old Rectory, the playing field and The Warren, following the field boundaries on the north to include the derelict nursery, Holland Wood and Hollandhall Wood.

Turning south at the north east corner of Hollandhall Wood, the boundary takes in the farm buildings of Great Holland Hall before turning westwards along Church Lane. Halfway to the square, the boundary turns to include Wood Hall and further infill development on the south side of Church Lane.

REPLACEMENT LOCAL PLAN POLICY CONTEXT

Smaller residential plots on both sides of Church Lane and around the square are included in the village's Development Boundary. The extensive curtilages on the north side of Church Lane are part of the Local Green Gap defining Kirby Cross. Holland Wood and Hollandhall Wood are designated as Ancient Woodland and as County Wildlife Sites.

AREA APPRAISAL

The western approaches

The Conservation Area is now some distance from the main road and is marked only by the 15th century tower of the parish church rising above mature trees. While most of the rest of the modern village is somewhat scattered and unexceptional, both Rectory Road and Manor Road are pleasant, quieter streets with a mixture of residential properties and some more formal public buildings such as the Methodist Church on the Rectory Road corner and the Village Hall on Manor Road. The Manor House is an attractive listed property, now separated from the older part of the village by unexceptional housing developments. The Ship Inn is however pivotal in facing both approaches and identifying the small square as the focus of the Area.

The eastern end of Rectory Road provides the more characterful entrance to the Area, with earlier development recognised by inclusion within the Area boundary. The edge of the Area is defined to the north by the densely-planted frontages to Glebe Barn and The Old Rectory so that these properties can only be glimpsed from the thoroughfare. On the south side, however, the historic interest of the Area is announced by Tudor Cottages, a long row of early 18th century houses, timber-framed with rendered brick facades and charming doorways under segmental heads. Set back a little from the highway behind a grassy strip, the cottages have well-maintained gardens and are only marred by modern softwood casement windows with leaded lights. An attractive row of flat-roofed dormers in the clay-tiled roof is set off by substantial brick chimneys. Beyond this, walls and fences on either side supported by planting frame views into the square.

The square

The square is a surprisingly formal little space in this context. The quality of this space derives from the sense of enclosure generated by the buildings surrounding it, particularly the four blocks which face each other across it, and the incidental way the old main road and Church Lane combine and exit at the corners.

The Ship Inn is the most important of these enclosing buildings, a simple, spreading vernacular building, rendered, of two storeys, and with individuality only in the window patterns under wrought keystones. Next to this, on the north, and across the only enclosed corner of the square represented by the pub forecourt, is Cotehay, a house of similar proportions to the Ship, with rendered walls and replacement small-paned windows masking its origins as a pair of cottages. Two detached houses line the Manor Road entrance, the nearer and more modern being symmetrical but subservient in scale to its neighbours, while the further is set gable end to the road and provides an effective visual termination to development surrounding the square.

Opposite the Ship is Sea View, a symmetrical double fronted brick cottage of early 19th century date, and at one time a confectioner's shop with its shop front on the right hand side of the façade. It is now pink rendered under a gable roof covered with concrete tiles. The last of the four is a two storey pair of Victorian houses, originally of red brick with yellow brick details, eight-paned sash windows under arched heads, and a slate roof. The eastern of these is mostly unaltered though in a poor state of maintenance, while the western has been rendered, with replacement windows, a slim modern door surround and a pantiled roof. Both properties have a road frontage formed by a picket fence, the most visually obvious treatment in the square. The enclosure and interest of the square is assisted by The Saltings, a two storey early 19th century cottage with a hipped roof, at one time the village post office and now covered in green-painted render. The only detracting features of this pretty house are its plastic door surround and the prominent garage door. Opposite The Saltings is a development of unexceptional houses, unfortunately prominent in views from the east, though partly shielded by a substantial evergreen hedge to the south of Sea View.

The properties fronting the square, including those helping to create enclosure along Rectory Road and Manor Road share many characteristics. They are all of two storeys, generally of long, low proportions, with symmetrical facades of red brick or coloured render. They either occupy positions on the edge of the highway, or their front boundaries are negligible so that their front gardens are included visually in the area of the square. The actual areas occupied by carriageway, footpaths, front gardens or the pub frontage are incidental to the quality of the space as a whole. Mature planting to the north associated with the Old Rectory is also important in defining the space and adding to its character.

Church Lane

Church Lane leaves the square between the pair of Victorian cottages and the attractive gabled side elevation of the Ship. Properties immediately on the south side are unexceptional post war houses: they dominate the first section of School Lane and views from the square as far as Anne's Cottage, a prominent mid 19th century house of white render under a hipped slated roof. On the other side of the road, a group of small cottages, possibly

built on former village “waste”, are heavily altered and generally set behind well-stocked gardens. These give way to a large paddock, an informal, rural space fringed with mature trees and offering a delightful and important view back to The Old Rectory. This is revealed as an elegant late Georgian house, with typically understated design and proportions, of two storeys under a hipped slate roof. A tall cedar is a prominent feature in Church Lane at this point, as well as being visible on the village skyline in wider views from the south and south east.

Infill development on the south side of Church Lane includes The Cobblestones, a Victorian cottage of red brick with a clay tiled roof, substantial front gables, and a prominent front wall of brick with panels of painted render. Between 1906 and around 1920, this property operated as the Fairlight Glen Tea Rooms, presumably to motor borne traffic as well as to those exploring the area on foot or bicycle. Two undistinguished modern houses lead to Wood Hall, of Arts and Crafts derivation with attractive detailing. A long elevation to Church Lane is enlivened by the massing of the painted pebbledashed walls, the chimneys rising through the tiled roofs and the paving details, particularly those leading from the personnel gate to the front door. Its manicured hedge contrasts with the pollarded oaks and softer planting on the frontage of The Warren, another fine house which in this case is typical of the Vernacular revival of the late 19th century, with render, mock half timbering and tile hanging all evident on the low spreading facades. The frontages of these two houses together make a relative “pinch point leading to the last section of Church Lane.

Beyond the hedges, the Lane opens out slightly into a more typical suburban form, with mown grass, ornamental planting and gate piers. Houses on the south side are more regular: towards the east, the vegetation is thinner, revealing a row of relatively unaltered houses from the 1960's and 70's: these are all outside the Area. Those on the north side within the Area are more varied, beginning next to The Warren with a recent infill group of four detached houses relatively open to the road and utilising applied half-timber with limited success: The Hawthorns and Copperfield are the better designs. Beyond the footpath and the drive to the nurseries stand a more varied post-war group, of which the most attractive is probably Holland Wood, reinterpreting the simple vernacular scale of the Ship Inn with distinctive brick and tile details.

The footpath is one of a number connecting Great Holland to surrounding developments to the north, east and south east. It is entirely rural in character, starting from Church Lane hemmed in by planting before leading to extensive views over farmland to Kirby, to the woods at the north east end of the Area and to the church tower. The nursery itself is set within planted margins and comprises a range of considerable masonry and glass single storey structures in varying states of disrepair.

All Saints Church, Great Holland Hall and surroundings

All Saints Church is a substantial and important building, and listed grade II*. Its extremely fine 15th century brick tower has a projecting octagonal stair tower complemented by smaller octagonal corner buttresses turning to slim diagonals below the belfry. While the belfry windows have stone tracery, the west window of the lowest stage is entirely in brick. This tower contrasts with the body of the church, rebuilt with septaria and flint facings to the designs of Sir Arthur Blomfield in 1866. It is set well back from the road within a rather plain churchyard, the most attractive features of which are the lych gate on Church Lane, the nearby yews, and the low flint churchyard wall with its tiled copings. Seats tucked against the wall under the yews are a delightful element in the Area. A significant feature of the churchyard is the strong hedge separating it from the Hall, a tall and dignified though not extensive 18th century house with a large range of outbuildings dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. This hedge is carried across the road to reinforce the Hall's entrance and the effective end of the carriageway. There is an important view of the sea to Holland Gap to the south east, made possible by the relatively open setting of the modern houses opposite the church.

Public footpaths continue past the Hall into an area shown as common ground in Chapman and André's map. The Conservation Area extends to the pond before the footpaths separate to east and south east, giving fine views over countryside to the sea and to Holland-on-Sea and the edge of the Clacton conurbation. Views north encompass Hollandhall Wood, while immediate views back to the village are dominated by the Hall and its utilitarian outbuildings. The church tower and its woodland setting are prominent in all longer range views from Frinton and Holland Gap.

Behind the church tower stands a simply-detailed church hall which is looks a little temporary given the antiquity of the church itself. The churchyard gives way to tall grass, beyond which are the ancient woodlands acting as a backdrop to the Area. These in turn lead to extensive views of Kirby Cross over open fields.

Summary

The essential character of Great Holland Conservation Area is of a relatively quiet, mostly residential cul-de-sac, with a simple street pattern which contrasts a formal square with a sinuous lane which at its best is still essentially rural in character. There is a wide range of mostly detached house types and styles, of three kinds. The first has with a direct relationship with the road, particularly in the square, while the second type is only glimpsed in significant and well-planted grounds, such as The Warren and the Old Rectory. The third type has a more suburban arrangement, with regular front gardens ornamentally planted: most modern infill is of this type. Development south of the road network tends to be more open, less planted, with the potential for views downhill to the sea and the Holland Brook. The north side is characterised by denser and less formal planting, framed and reinforced by the significant mature trees screening the village from Kirby Cross.

BOUNDARY REVIEW

Great Holland is a long-established settlement, and has an identifiable character provided by the interplay of houses and mature planting around a simple road pattern. It lacks a large number of listed buildings or significant groupings of older properties as the obvious starting point for area designation.

The greatest sense of place within the village occurs in the square, in association with the older and more attractive houses down Church Lane, and at the end of the Lane in association with the church, Hall and pond. The Area boundary round the square includes everything with a direct relationship with it, and those parts of Rectory Road which relate to the perceived importance of the belt of mature planting separating the village from Kirby Cross. The Area boundaries are therefore supported at its western end.

At the western end of Church Lane, the more obvious building candidates for inclusion are interspersed with modern properties less appealing on grounds of historic and architectural interest. At the eastern end, all the properties on either side of the lane between Wood Hall/The Warren and the church are modern. Those on the north connect the important backdrop of mature trees to the north with the full length of Church Lane while avoiding a patchwork boundary.

This last grouping presents the only real problem regarding boundaries, for it might be argued for consistency that all modern houses should all be included or excluded. In this case, the relative simplicity of the current boundaries has a great deal of merit. The setting of the Area will doubtless be invoked if there is a perceived threat from development affecting properties outside the Area on the south side of the Lane. In these circumstances, no boundary alterations are suggested.

APPRAISAL PLAN

The above analysis has been used to generate the Conservation Area Appraisal Plan (Map 1). This includes negative and neutral factors, as follows:

Negative factors

- Modern dwellings along Church Lane with insufficient screen planting to soften their outlines. Their “anywhere” designs and materials have compromised the essential rural character of the lane. Of particular note are the houses on the south side of Church Lane east of the square, because of their impact on the quality of this special location, "Hedgerows" immediately west of the church, which is insufficiently screened from the churchyard and affects the rural character of this space, and "Tudor Lodge" in the group east of The Warren. This house has a considerable bulk with insufficient articulation or variety, while the large concrete forecourt reached by a short central drive is at odds with the relative informality of Church Lane.
- The detached garages north of Anne's Cottage, which are unattractive in their own right and fail to relate to the rural scale of the lane.
- The loss of enclosure in views along Manor Road from the square. The Saltings and the village hall are important in this view but cannot compensate for the lack of distinctive character and vitality in the intervening houses.

Neutral factors

- Great Holland Nursery. This is sufficiently well screened in its backland setting not to be a negative feature. Renovation, development or redevelopment must not increase the impact that this group of buildings has in

views around the Area, either from Church Lane and its associated buildings, the church and churchyard, the significant woods to the rear or to wider views from outside the Area to the north.

- The frontage of the Old Rectory on Rectory Road is a prominent feature in the Area and helps define the street scene at this important entrance to the square. The lower courses of concrete blocks lack the interest and variety of other kinds of facing material, as is evident in comparison with the attractive brick wall south east of Tudor Cottages on the other side of the road.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: BUILDINGS

Wood Hall

This attractive building shares a flat roofed garage with its neighbour to the west, which extends an unsympathetic design close to one of the finest houses in the village. The replacement of this garage with a design to match the main house would be an undoubted improvement, along with the reconsideration of the plain tarmac access to reflect the delightful designs used elsewhere in the curtilage.

The Saltings

The appearance of this building would be improved by two alterations to its integral garage. Firstly, the present flat roof might be replaced by a low-pitched hipped roof, springing from an eaves line just above the lintol of the garage doors. Secondly, the horizontal pattern of the doors themselves draws attention to their over bearing scale: doors with the effect of vertical boarding would be more sympathetic.

SUGGESTED ENHANCEMENTS: CURTILAGES

Church Lane

The use of additional tree and shrub planting of suitable native species (not ornamentals) in the front gardens of the more modern houses would reinforce the rural character of Church Lane. This would be of particular benefit in relation to the houses east of the square in helping to enhance the visual enclosure of the square. The treatment could be extended to the houses opposite the churchyard and outside the Area. Additional screening would help relate the garages opposite Annes Cottage to their prominent setting.

The churchyard

The opportunity could be taken to strengthen the planting screen between the church and the residential properties to the west.

Rectory Road frontage, The Old Rectory

As well as the replacement of the concrete block walling, the derelict brick structures immediately next to the drive are an anomaly and should be removed.

SUGGESTED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The square

The forecourt to the Ship Inn is partly bounded by concrete bollards. Their replacement with suitable cast iron patterns would be an improvement, as would the use of some contrasting paving instead of the areas of tarmac away from road surfaces. Road surface improvements are also possible: any designs should retain the current equilibrium between the fluid shapes of the carriageway and the relative formality of surrounding buildings.

Undergrounding of overhead wires

Though not of excessive proportions, overhead wires are a significant element in the Area. Putting cable underground would reinforce the rural charm of the Area.

ADDITIONAL CONTROLS

The character of Great Holland Conservation Area is derived from the varied character of its constituent buildings and the sequence of spaces they enclose. There are no largely-unaltered set pieces or formal layouts which might benefit from additional controls to retain or promote consistency.

Further Information

For further information about the Conservation Area Reviews please contact Tendring District Council's Heritage and Conservation Manager on 01255 686170.



1. The tower of All Saints Church is a significant feature of the wider landscape. As with many local villages, it rises from a belt of mature trees which is a particularly important part of the character of this Area.



2. Tudor Cottages on Rectory Road are an attractive group which announces the edge of the historic part of the village from this direction. Listed grade II, they probably date from the early 18th century, and there is documentary evidence of their existence in 1720-30.



3. The Ship Inn is prominent in views towards the square and is its major defining building. Walls and trees help to define the view: the brick wall on the right is more sympathetic than the concrete blockwork on the left.



4. Nos 32 Ash Cottage (right) and 34. This modest pair of cottages gains additional importance from their formal relationship with other buildings in the square. The survival of original facing materials and joinery at no 34 demonstrates how much original character has been lost in the Area in the last fifty years or so.



5. Buildings, hedgerows and trees combine to define Church Lane. The older buildings on the right have greater interest both in design terms and in their constituent materials, and have a more positive relationship with the Lane.



6. This glimpse of the Old Rectory is one of the most charming features of the Area. It depends upon the relationship of a significant historic building and its setting of mature trees, another important feature of the Area in general.



7. The addition of surface features to mimic vernacular buildings is not in itself enough to enable a modern building to blend in with an historic setting. In this case the bulk and massing of this house make it a negative feature in the Area, along with its bland access and forecourt.



8. Church Lane stops at the churchyard but a bridleway continues through the gates past the Hall to connect with public footpaths to give superb views over the coast. Such sequences of views are an important component of this Area.



9. The formality of buildings arranged round the square contrasts with the sinuous lines taken by kerbs and pavements. The square would be even more attractive if the surfaces were more carefully considered, while cast-iron bollards would reflect the character of the surrounding buildings better than the current concrete ones.



10. Accommodating the private car requires considerable thought and ingenuity to find satisfactory solutions that retain the character and appearance of private land in historic settings. While these drives and garages are no doubt useful, their location, design and details do not enhance the rural character of Church Lane.



11. The Saltings is an attractive house, important in helping to define the square. The flat-roofed garage is a significant part of the house frontage at odds with the original design. The sketch shows how its roof might be reconfigured as a general example to keep ancillary parts of buildings in proportion with the main building as a whole.



12. The design of these garages and their open forecourts not only disrupt the mature planting along Church Lane but also affect the setting of Wood Hall, one of the Area's most significant and attractive houses. The sketch shows potential solutions for the garages in keeping with the character of this distinctive building.