

Holwell Conservation Area Designated: September 1977
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 6.51 hectares

Introduction

Conservation Areas are 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Designation of a conservation area recognises the character of an area worthy of preservation and enhancement and ensures the safeguarding of the best of our local heritage as represented by both buildings and the ambient environment, ie: the spaces between and around buildings when viewed as a whole. Local Planning Authorities have a general duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas, consequently there are more stringent planning controls and obligations in respect of new development, demolitions, alterations, highway works and advertisements.

Conservation Area status is not just about the attractive areas of settlements. In some instances, areas, which either contribute little, or are even detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area, are included within the boundary because of their potential for enhancement. Conservation Area status does not mean that new development may not take place but must reflect the local architectural vernacular in scale, siting, massing, details and materials. Special attention should be paid to not only building form but also fenestration and materials.

A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that contribute to that special historic and architectural character of an area. It is important that all interested parties are aware of those elements that must be preserved or enhanced. It is intended that the character appraisals will guide the local planning authority in making planning decisions and, where opportunities arise, preparing enhancement schemes. It will be a material consideration when considering applications for development within the conservation area.

Location and Context

Holwell is situated approximately three miles north of Melton Mowbray in a relatively isolated rural location east of the A606. The settlement is secluded within a fold in the elevated, undulating countryside that lies between the valley of the River Wreake and the Vale of Belvoir.

Early settlers smelted iron from the local iron ore deposits. The village has a long history of iron working. In the mid 19th Century a mineral railway line was constructed to serve the local iron workings. It ran west of Holwell to link with the main Nottingham to Melton Mowbray line. The mineral ore was taken by rail to the local Asfordby 'Holwell' iron works or further afield to Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire or Yorkshire.

Browns Hill Quarry, a former iron working near the village, is notified as a Regionally Important Geological Site and is managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust as a local nature reserve.

Conservation Area Boundary

Holwell Conservation Area includes the principal settlement, with the exception of the separate group of dwellings on Nursery Lane. It also encompasses Ben's Cottage and a large swathe of open countryside to the south-east of the village.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Holwell is a linear, village that consists of the main street with a narrow lane leading up to and beyond the Church. The majority of the buildings are domestic dwellings but there is one working farm within the village confines. The buildings at the western end of Main Street, when approached from Nursery Lane, are situated at a higher level as the road has been formed by cutting into the base rock. This gives an imposing feel to that part of the village with Manor Cottage, set at an angle channelling the eye downwards into the village centre, beyond which Main Street slopes away towards open countryside. Hall Farm dominates the street scene when looking uphill approaching the village from the east.

Open spaces are an important element within this village with a large area of agricultural land to the east of Manor Cottage, the village green alongside St Leonard's Church and a large area, with lake, to the east of Ben's Cottage making significant contributions to the village setting.

Land levels drop considerably to the east but unusually the roof ridge heights appear to maintain a constant level. On the right the tower of St Leonard's Church dominates views, its distinctive bell-cote topped by two stone crosses. The spire of Ab-Kettleby Church is also visible in the distance maintaining a parochial link.

In front of St Leonard's church lies the village green complete with a reproduction village pump erected in 1992 alongside a bench. This forms the centre of the village, both physically and spiritually as opposite the green are situated the old Wesleyan Chapel and the old Methodist Chapel. A path leads up, over the village green encircling the church, giving views over the fields towards Leicester.

The road progresses onwards, descending to the east beyond Manor Farmhouse and out of the village. It sweeps to the left where a large open area and lake can be glimpsed through the trees.

The roads are attractively edged with granite kerbstones and there is a beautiful cobbled area outside Fernleigh which may be the remnants of an older paved area.

Quality and Character Of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials but ironstone with Welsh slate or pantiles tend to dominate.

There are several listed buildings within the village, the most notable of which is the grade II* St Leonard's Church. This is a modest thirteenth century building built in local ironstone. The nave and chancel are in one and there is a bellcote on a buttress in the centre of the west wall.

Hall Farm is a grade II 16th Century dominant ironstone building at the top of Main Street overlooking the rest of the village. Towards the village centre lies a very attractive line of grade II listed terraced cottages numbered 19 – 23, built in ironstone these have an outstanding red pantiled roof. Grade II Church Cottage overlooking the village green is built

in ironstone with a brick extension and is gable end-on to the road with a lovely timber weather boarded porch. There is also a listed K6 telephone kiosk on Main Road.

The Grade II ex public house – King William IV, currently undergoing an extension, is enviably built behind the Church in a secluded position and is adjacent to 22 and 24 Main Street – a pair of small semi-detached ironstone cottages and Ivy House farm and Cottage. These are all built in ironstone and are Grade II listed.

At the eastern end of the village the substantial Manor Farmhouse is located. This is a mid-late 17th Century L-shaped former farmhouse constructed in coursed, squared ironstone with red brick and is grade II listed. The former outbuildings have now been converted to a dwelling.

Other buildings to note are the Old Methodist Chapel, with its unusual round window, and the brick and ironstone Old Wesleyan chapel adjacent.

Opposite Fernleigh, in a slightly elevated position, sits the slightly ramshackle, but unique, village hall, constructed in corrugated iron.

Natural Elements

The village does not benefit from large areas of trees, however there are three beautiful horse chestnuts in the field between Manor Cottage and the Village Hall. There is also a significant hedgerow running alongside the road in the garden of Manor Cottage. The village culminates in the east with a significantly treed area that is a haven for wild life.

There are few views out of the village due to its slightly elevated hilltop location and winding road.

Negative factors

The use of inappropriate materials, such as upvc double-glazed window units, plastic rainwater goods and modern brickwork and render, although minimal, still has a negative effect on the character of the conservation area in part.

There is an unsightly, pole mounted electricity sub-station to the west of the Village Hall.

The village hall, an asset to the village community, is an important facility. Its appearance does, however, detract from the village street scene

For further help and advice please contact:

The Physical Environment Section
Melton Borough Council
Council Offices
Nottingham Road
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire LE13 0UL
Telephone; 01664 502502

The Council has also prepared a leaflet entitled 'A Guide to Conservation Areas' which gives general advice. Copies are available from the Physical Environment Section as detailed above.

The above is an appraisal of the Holwell Conservation Area that highlights the most significant factors that make it worthy of Conservation status. The omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to apply that it is of no interest.