

# **KNAPWELL**

## **CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**



**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

This Conservation Area Appraisal for Knapwell was considered in draft form by the Conservation Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1999. The Committee approved the document and recommended that it be considered and adopted by the Planning Committee.

The appraisal was corrected and revised before being presented to Planning Policy Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2000, when Members approved its use as supplementary planning guidance.

This decision was ratified at Full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2000.

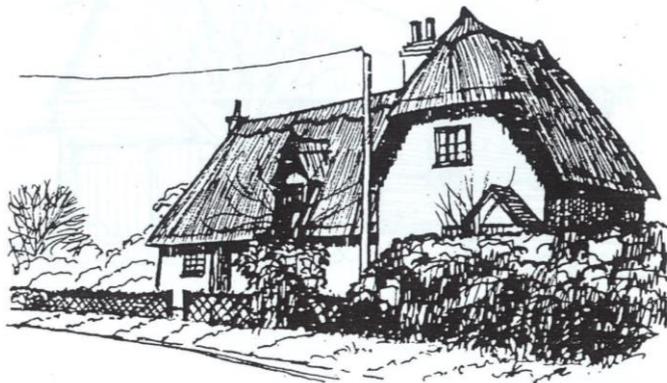
RF Walker  
Conservation Manager  
29<sup>th</sup> September 2000

## 1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This document is one of a series produced by the District Council which look individually at South Cambridgeshire's Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 The purpose of this appraisal is twofold:
- 1) To act as a guide for development control in the Conservation Area.
  - 2) To identify the features which contribute to the special character of Knapwell and those features which need to be enhanced.

## 2. **WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AREA?**

- 2.1 The statutory definition of a Conservation Area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' (The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 2.2 The District Council has a duty to assess those areas which are considered to fall within the above definition and to designate them as Conservation Areas. There is no standard criteria upon which an area is designated. 'They may form groups of buildings, open spaces, trees, historic street patterns, village greens or features of historic or archaeological interest. It is the character of areas, rather than individual buildings that Conservation Areas seek to enhance.'
- 2.3 Once a Conservation Area has been designated the Local Planning Authority has a duty to ensure that the character of that area is preserved or enhanced. This is normally achieved through the careful control of development and through the formulation of a scheme for the preservation and enhancement of the area. Any such scheme must be discussed with local residents.



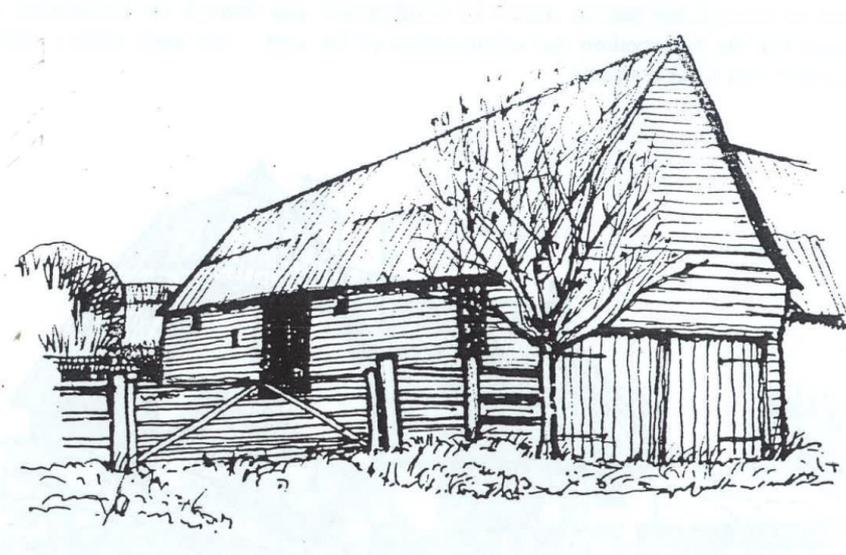
*8 High Street – listed grade II*

- 2.4 The purpose of this appraisal report is to draw attention to the features

that make the Knapwell Conservation Area special, to set out the policy and controls in respect of development in Conservation Areas, to identify the opportunities for enhancement and provide information regarding the grants available from the Local Planning Authority to assist with historic building conservation.

### **3. Knapwell Conservation Area – Designation and Topographical Character**

- 3.1 The Knapwell Conservation Area was first designated by South Cambridgeshire District Council in 1989.
- 3.2 The boundary was drawn to include most of the village High Street from Thorofare Lane to the Church Drive together with adjacent fields and the deserted mediaeval village. The important setting of fields and trees outside the boundary falls within an Area of Best Landscape (designated in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (designated by Central Government and protected under nature conservation law). The boundary of the Conservation Area is shown on the plan accompanying this document.
- 3.3 Knapwell village is located to the north-west of Cambridge about a mile north of the Cambridge to St Neots Road (A428). The Parish is roughly triangular in shape and situated on Kimmeridge and boulder clay. The majority of the land is under cereal production, although the backdrop to the village is woods and pastures.



*Manor Farm – listed grade II*

- 3.4 Knapwell originated as a daughter hamlet of Elsworth, and there is evidence both of Roman and Anglo-Saxon occupation. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century much of the Parish was controlled by the Abbot of Ramsey,

who was probably responsible for the grid of streets on which the early village was based. The village consisted of two parallel streets running in an east-westerly direction at right angles to the stream which still forms the boundary to the ancient woodland of Overhall Grove.

- 3.5 The church was built on the earlier village green and nearby were a manor house and rectory. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Abbot ordered villagers to build defences, and a small motte about 25 metres in diameter and 2 metres high was constructed, probably to protect the manor house and church, and is now a scheduled ancient monument.
- 3.6 At the Dissolution in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ramsey Abbey lost much of its property and the road links to the north and south became more prominent. At the time of enclosure in 1775 a few houses still existed on "Church Lane", but money was allocated to re-surface the north-south street now known as High Street.
- 3.7 Sources:  
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments England, West Cambridgeshire (London, 1968).  
Alison Taylor, The Archaeology of Cambridgeshire –Volume 1: South West Cambridgeshire (Cambridge, 1997).

#### **4. VISUAL AUDIT**

##### **4.1 Listed Buildings**

- 4.1.1 There are eight buildings of architectural or historic interest within the Conservation Area. The Parish Church of All Saints is a Grade II\* Listed Building. The remainder are all Grade II Listed Buildings.
- 4.1.2 A description of the Listed Buildings is contained in Appendix ?? and their location is indicated on Plan 1.

- 1) Parish Church of All Saints (Grade II\*)
- 2) Willow Cottage, 4 High Street
- 3) Manor Farmhouse, High Street
- 4) Barn north of Manor Farmhouse, High Street
- 5) Telephone Kiosk, High Street
- 6) Manor Cottage, 19 High Street
- 7) Nos 8 and 9 High Street
- 8) Walnut Tree Cottage, 17 High Street

##### **4.2 Buildings of Local Interest**

- 4.2.1 There are several buildings within the Conservation Area which are judged to be of local interest. These do not have the same statutory protection as Listed Buildings but are still considered to make an important contribution to the built environment and are worthy of protection. There is no set criteria used to identify these buildings.

However, they tend to exhibit local building styles and materials which are characteristic of the village and have had limited alterations over past years. The District Council will encourage any proposals that seek to preserve the original form and character of these buildings. The location of the following buildings is identified on Plan No. 1:-

- 1) The Old School
- 2) Grange Farmhouse
- 3) 12 High Street and outbuildings
- 4) 13, 14, 15 and 16 High Street
- 5) Bwthyn Bach and adjacent cottage

### 4.3 Fences

4.3.1 Fences can be very distinctive as a means of enclosure and as such can be important components of the street scene. The village generally and the Conservation Area contain several examples of both old and new replacement trellis fencing which is an eye catching feature of the village.

4.3.2 The areas of fencing listed below are considered to play an important part in contributing to the character of the Conservation Area and as such the District Council would wish to see them retained.

- 1) From the boundary of the Old School northwards to the Grange Farm access.
- 2) The boundary of 8 and 9 High Street.
- 3) The boundary of 7 High Street including the section along the church drive.
- 4) North of Willow Cottage, 4 High Street.

### 4.4 Views

4.4.1 The following are a series of views into, out and within the Conservation Area that are considered to be important elements in contributing to its special character. The District Council will seek to retain such views when considering development proposals. These views are shown on the key plan.

- 1) Northwards along the High Street from the southern boundary of the Conservation Area.
- 2) Westwards across open land south of Grange Farm.
- 3) Four views eastwards from High Street towards Overhall Grove.
- 4) The enclosed view down the church drive towards the church.
- 5) Eastwards towards the church.

## 4.5 Trees

4.5.1 Trees can make an important contribution to a Conservation Area and in Knapwell this is particularly relevant, as there are several ancient trees. A Parish Tree Preservation Order was served in May 1974 and covers many of the trees within the village. However those trees not covered by the Tree Preservation Order, if they are situated within the Conservation Area, have a certain level of protection.

4.5.2 Trees which are just outside the Conservation Area can still make an important contribution to the overall character of the area and can form a natural backdrop to the built up area. This is the case with the ancient woodland of Overhall Grove (in Boxworth Parish) which is designated as a SSSI (site of special scientific interest).



*Manor Farmhouse – listed grade II*

## 4.6 Important open spaces

4.6.1 The linear form of Knapwell means that the village is presented in one glance. Apart from the Listed Buildings and buildings of local interest within the Conservation Area the backdrop of trees and open land makes the village particularly attractive.

4.6.2 The relationship of buildings to one another and to the road layout contribute towards creating the overall form and character of the village. Trees, hedges, fences and walls also have a role to play in forming its character. In Knapwell these help to create an enclosed feeling along the High Street but with open views beyond. In some locations wide grass verges without kerbs to the road enhance the rural appearance.

4.6.3 The rural character of the “church lane” with an avenue of trees enclosing the driveway “frames” the central feature of the parish church.

## Gardens

- 4.6.4 It is often the case that green open spaces found in a village area in the form of private gardens rather than being publicly owned spaces. They can nevertheless provide an important sense of space and contribute quite significantly to the character of the Conservation Area. In Knapwell the larger gardens are enclosed by hedges and fences and their contribution towards any feeling of space is limited.

## 'Soft' Areas of Open Space

- 4.6.5 These tend to be larger areas of green open space accessible to the public and could be in the form of parks or greens. In Knapwell Conservation Area there are not significant examples of this type of area.

The general openness of the northern part of the village provides these soft areas although these meadows are privately owned and public access except by public footpath is not available.

## 'Hard' Areas of Open Space

- 4.6.6 Not all open spaces need to be green areas. Sometimes areas of hard landscaping can be just as effective in providing a sense of space or setting for a building. The most notable piece of 'hard' open space in the Conservation Area is the area by the bus shelter. This is surfaced with gravel which softens its appearance and does not detract from the overall character of the area, although the junction of the church drive and the High Street has been surfaced in tarmac to allow for coach turning area.

## 4.7 Archaeology

The history of Knapwell has provided the present village with interesting archaeological remains which are well documented. However, some of these features are being eroded and destroyed by the expansion of residential cartilages into agricultural pasture land, the infilling of ponds and the removal of ancient pollarded trees.

## 5. THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 5.1 The visual elements and topography of the area described above combine to produce a character which is typified by the following:
- i) The buildings are of relatively modest scale and dominated by domestic character.
  - ii) The buildings are threaded through the valley in a loose-knit way but invariably sited close to the road like irregularly spaced beads on a string.

- iii) Throughout the village the frontages have spaces which allow visual unity with the surrounding fields and woodland so that this is one of the most intensely rural villages in the district. This character of openness is crucially important.

## 6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

- 6.1 One the whole individual properties and their grounds are maintained to a high standard. The District Council will advise owners on suitable species for tree and hedge planting to help to ensure the dominance of native species.
- 6.2 An obvious improvement would be the burial of telephone cables and electricity lines. Although this would not overcome the most disfiguring feature – the major electricity pylons and cables which cross the village street and cut a swathe through the ancient woodland.
- 6.3 One other area worthy of consideration is by the bus shelter on the Church drive where a series of posts have been installed to restrict parking. A trellis fence in the local tradition would create a more attractive rural enclosure.

## 7. DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

- 7.1 The policy framework on which planning decisions are made is the South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan. This document is in three parts. Part one sets out the general policies which apply across the district whilst Part two consists of the detailed policies and proposals for each village and should be read in conjunction with Part one. Part three contains the maps which correspond with the written statements in Part two.
- 7.2 Knapwell is identified as being appropriate for “infill only” within the defined framework of the built up area. The framework excludes the dwellings north of the main village as it is considered that they form sporadic development in the open countryside. Within the framework there does not appear to be any scope for infilling without adversely affecting the setting of nearby listed buildings and the openness, loose texture and rural character which were identified as the defining characteristics of the Conservation Area above.
- 7.3 It is possible that existing buildings which do not contribute to the special character of the area might be suitable for redevelopment in which case the following characteristics of the village should be part of the design consideration.
  - 1) Traditional buildings close to the edge of the street, with, in some instances grass verges.
  - 2) Views to open countryside and woodland forming a backdrop to the village.

- 3) Traditional trellis fencing and native hedges for boundaries.
- 4) A variety of local building materials but mainly render or red brick with some gault brick.



