Holt Village

Character Statement

Version:	1	24th July 2024
Prepared by:	HPC	

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1 Introduction, Scope, and Purpose

This is the first draft of a Holt Character Statement. It is being developed as part of the review of the made Holt Neighbourhood Plan. It is intended as guidance to support implementation of Holt Neighbourhood Plan Policy 2.1 which addresses locally distinct character and design.

It is a draft document at this stage. Its production has been endorsed by the Parish Council at its meeting on 18 July 2024.

It is based upon assessment undertaken by Parish Council representatives and residents of Holt, with input from a resident chartered town planner and qualified urban designer with 36 years practice experience.

Its content is focused entirely on local character. It does not repeat guidance already published in the National Design Guide or Wiltshire Design Guide relating to other aspects of good design. However the Parish Council have highlighted these aspects of equal importance.

This character statement provides a context for future development by trying to define what it is that makes Holt so special to those who live here, and to those who visit us for recreation. Planning in Holt is influenced by both national planning policy, and Wilshire Council strategy. This Holt Character Statement is consistent with these, but in addition adds greater detail. It is intended to guide all aspects of change including through planning applications. It should be read and used by;

- Local residents, businesses, and landowners – who may wish to improve or add to their properties.
- Developers and planning professionals – when considering feasibility and design.
- Holt Parish Council, and Wiltshire Council – when assessing proposals.

2 Introduction to Holt

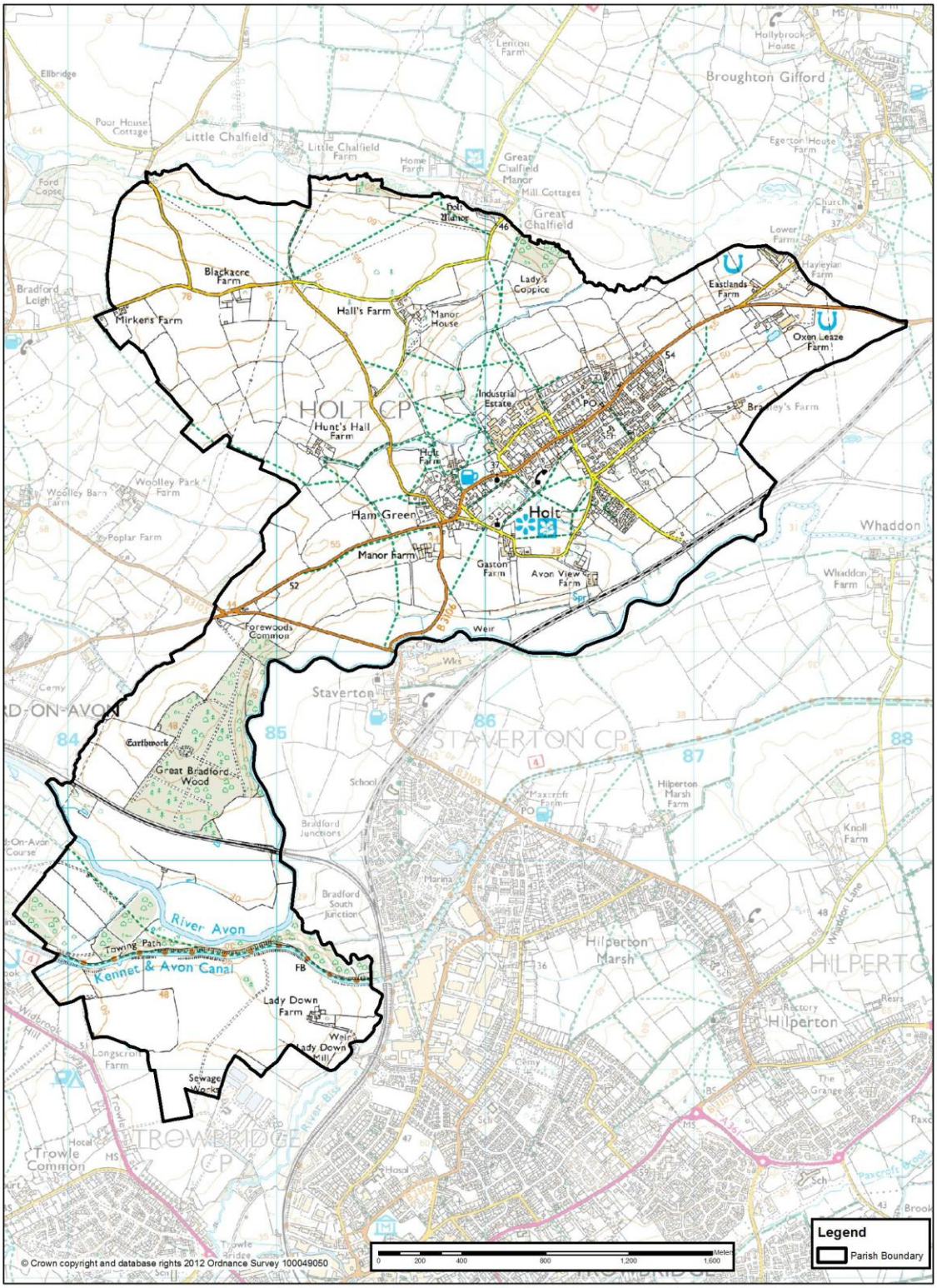
The parish itself has an irregular shape (see map below), with a significant, but sparsely populated area to the southwest. This statement has been written to reflect the character of Holt village itself, and the landscape in which it sits.

Holt is a village of close to two thousand people. It sits between the West Wiltshire towns of Bradford on Avon and Melksham, and the county town, Trowbridge. It maintains a strong and independent community life of its own.

Holt has both agricultural and manufacturing traditions. The wool, leather and bedding industries employed hundreds of local workers from the 18th century, until just a generation ago. Many old industrial buildings and redundant factory buildings have been thoughtfully and carefully restored.

People choose to live in villages for a wide range of reasons including the location and amenities, but most particularly the style and character. New developments inevitably affect the village character. This character statement draws on the village's past, to explain how it has shaped the present character of the village, to provide guidance looking forward to the future conservation and growth of the village.

Holt Parish


Broughton Gifford
Little Chalfield
Great Chalfield
Great Chalfield Manor
Blackacre Farm
Mirkens Farm
Hall's Farm
Manor House
Lady's Coppice
Eastlands Farm
Oxen Leaze Farm
Industrial Estate
HOLT CP
Hunt's Hall Farm
Holt Farm
Ham Green
Holt
Manor farm
Gaston Farm
Avon View Farm
Whaddon
Forewoods Common
Weir
Staverton
STAVERTON CP
Great Bradford Wood
Hilperton Marsh Farm
Knoll Farm
Bradford Junctions
Bradford South Junction
River Avon
Towing Path
Kennet & Avon Canal
Lady Down Farm
Lady Down Mill
Sewage Works
Hilperton Marsh
HILPERTON
Hilperton
TROWBRIDGE CP
Trowle Common
Legend
Parish Boundary
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3 Holt Landscape Setting

This document does not attempt to provide a separate assessment of the landscape setting of Holt. However, this may be done at the parish and village level, identifying key views and qualities of the local landscape which would sit "beneath" published assessments for Wiltshire.

The West Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment (Dec 2006)[1] places Holt within the Broughton Gifford Limestone Lowlands. The area has a strong rural character with a mixture of pasture and arable farmland. The small sized, mainly irregular fields are enclosed by mature and intact but in places gappy, hedgerows with trees. Views tend to be open with the main notable vertical elements being pylons and hedgerow trees. A few small woodland blocks are scattered in the area, including the more expansive ancient Great Bradford Wood, in the south, cupped in one of the coils of the River Avon. The villages of Atworth and Shaw in the north of the area are situated linearly along the A365 whilst Whitley, Broughton Gifford and Holt are, also linearly, situated along secondary and more rural roads, except for the higher part of Broughton Gifford, which is centered round a village green or Common. A large number of footpaths cut across the area, linking the villages and many scattered farms.

[1] https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/9710/West-Wiltshire-Landscape-Character -Assessment/pdf/11102101_Draft_Final_LCA_12-06.pdf?m=1660649930387

4 Holt Village Gateways

Holt is approached from the east and west along the B3107, Melksham Road. It is also approached from the north along Leigh Road which is a narrower lane and has less traffic.

The rural roads approaching Holt are lined by hedges, hedgerow trees and grass verges and banks. There are no footways as they approach the village.

Where hedgerow gaps allow, there are sweeping ridge-line views across the gently sloping and open countryside of fields and hedgerow and long views south across the Avon valley towards Westbury.

Western Gateway B3107

Particularly from the western B3107 approach, the village has a strong presence in longer views formed by mature trees and gateway buildings that mark its gateway in contrast to the wide fields and hedges of the rural road. The views of edge of the village to the north (Leigh Road) are defined but softened by hedges and trees along its boundary.

From the west and Leigh Road there is a soft transition of about 100m from rural landscape into the built village. This is formed by rural hedges and farmland, passing through a village gateway pinch-point, and transitioning into wide mown grass verges, enclosed with high hedges and blockwork stone garden walling.

The Tollgate pub and The Causeway and Leigh Road junctions mark the beginning of Holt village. A line of mature chestnut trees and continuous mown grass verges addressed by a variety of single and two storey buildings of differing building lines, ages, uses, and sizes connect through to Ham Green.

Eastern Gateway B3107

From the east, the rural character is maintained, with glimpsed long views to the south and east until a more immediate entrance into the built village marked by a mature tree and small mown verges and traffic island, at the Great Parks junction. The character quickly changes to a variety of two-storey detached and semi-detached houses set behind front gardens and parking that reflect an organic linear growth of the village from the Victorian period onwards. Gardens contain a variety of domestic landscapes but there is no significant public green space or trees except for a small visibility splay space at the entrance to Great Parks. The south-eastern edge of the village is visible in views approaching Holt, partially softened by edge and intermediate hedges and trees.

Unlike the western gateway, there is no significant gateway pinch-point or give-way junction as the B3107 passes into the village. Potentially as a result, traffic speeds are noted as high in both directions.

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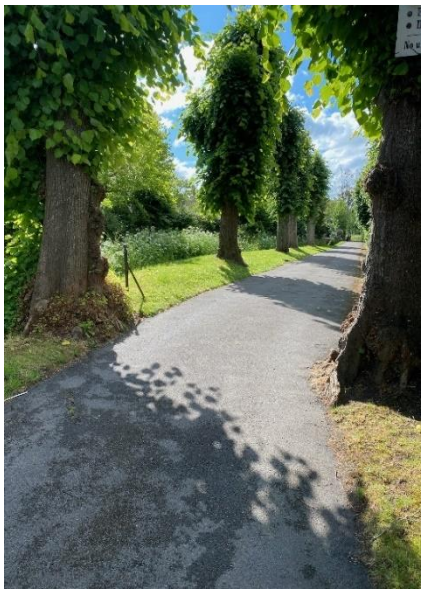
HOLT

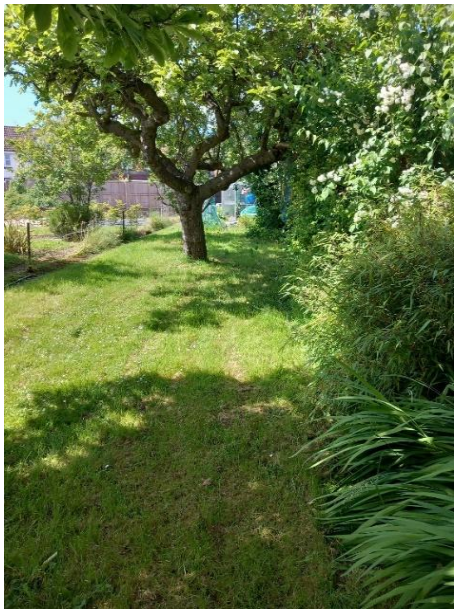
5 Village Trees and Landscape Trees

Trees and landscape make a strong and unifying contribution to Holt's distinct and diverse rural character.

Reflecting the rural setting and its organic centuries of development, trees are mostly informally planted. These are broadly in the following types of locations.

- Single or small groups of landmark trees planted in local green spaces as a focus to a neighbourhood or at junctions.
- Large and ornamental trees within private front and rear gardens, visible from the public realm.
- Clusters of smaller trees within informal groups combined with hedges and boundaries.
- Field boundary trees at the transitions between village and countryside.



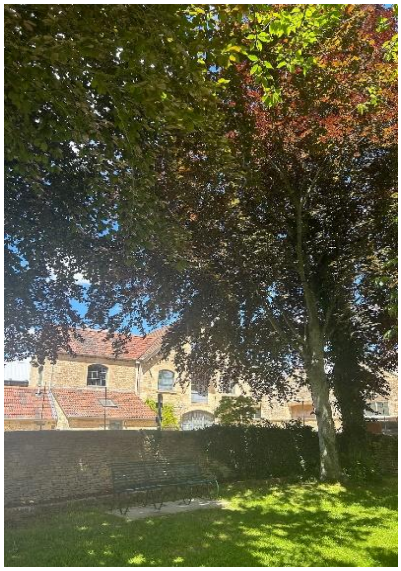


Junction Green Spaces

A common landscape feature through the village are small green spaces set at junction points, often defined by a seat or tree and with the pavement running against the neighbouring house boundary.

Green spaces within residential areas

An additional landscape feature are areas of green spaces within residential areas. These may be recreational or amenity space or planted with trees. These public green spaces can be found across the village.



Rural Edges

Where lanes mark the boundary with the countryside the pre-existing rural verge and hedgerow and its trees are retained with no formal footway or kerb edging e.g., Station Road.

Verges and Hedges

Grass verges with informal hedges or front garden boundary walls reinforce the rural character of the village. Pavements are sometimes set behind grass verges. In quieter routes and lanes there are single or no pavements.

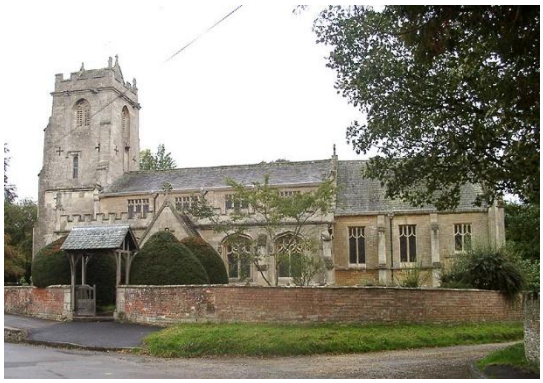
6 Character Areas and Unifying Qualities

There is an overarching scale and use of materials that connects Holt to its wider Wiltshire context and brings coherence to its varied building ages and architecture. Whilst Holt's growth eastward and south is clear from its layout and architecture, there are buildings representing Holt's history and more recent infill development scattered throughout the village.

The Historic Village

- Historic Core and Ham Green
- The Midlands
- The Street (B3107)
- Leigh Road,
- The Star

The village core to its western end has an informal rural form addressing The Street, Ham Green, connecting lanes and The Midlands. Buildings combine historic civic buildings, two pubs, St Katherine's Church, The URC, The Courts, larger houses, and cottages, with Victorian terraces and villas and 20th century infill development.



Within this village core there are 2.5 storey homes with attic rooms. The roof pitch has not been changed from its original elevation. These homes on Ham Green show this.

Other homes using the roof for attic rooms can be found within the centre of Holt.

There is informality of building lines, setbacks and relationships with the road, garden sizes and boundary treatments that reflects the centuries of organic development. All are connected by a unifying relationship with trees, grass verges and hedges and mature garden landscape, simple architectural forms, an ambient two-storey domestic scale and use of locally distinct materials including Bath stone, orange local clay bricks and clay tiled roofs.

19th to 21st Century Village Growth

- The Common and The Gravel
- Station Road and Bradley Lane
- Great Parks and Little Parks
- Lions Orchard, Crandon Lea, and The Spa
- (The Tannery regeneration)

Victorian and Twentieth century development of Holt is largely along south of The Common (B3107) and west of Station Road. Victorian and later detached and semi - detached housing addressing The Common, Station Road and The Gravel maintain the organic character of incremental development of the village, including some large older houses. Whilst the variety in architecture represents the housing age, there continues to be an overarching common use of brick, stone, and some render. There is no formal street tree planting, but mature front garden landscape soften longer views along the straight streets, where this has not been harmed by its loss to frontage car parking.

Low density Twentieth century estate development along Station Road, Bradley Lane and Great and Little Parks introduce a distinct and more formal suburban residential character of houses and bungalows of similar designs laid out in regularly spaced groups with single building lines. Streets and cul-de-sacs reinforce the formality with engineered junctions and placements. There is a consistent use of stone, stone faced blocks, or Bath Stone coloured brick and clay tiled roofs with chimneys. Landmark trees in small public spaces, mature former field trees, grass verges and hedges and front garden landscapes soften the formality. Connecting long and glimpsed views to the open countryside connect the development to Holt and the rural setting.

7 Built Form, Materials and Detailing

The following section summarises key elements of built form that are common within Holt and contribute to its character and coherence.

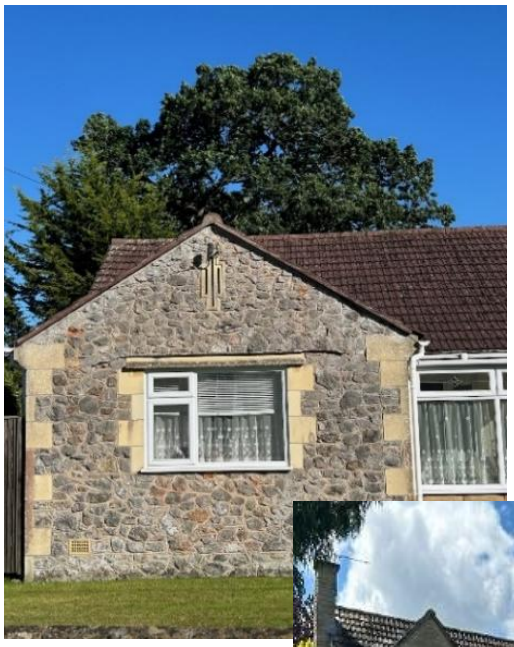
Residential Building Forms

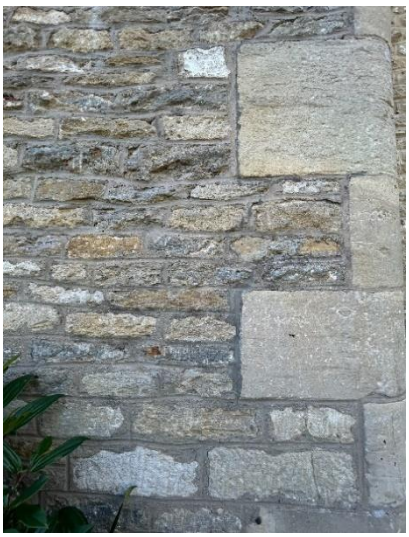
- Detached, semi-detached and short terraces.
- Front and rear and side garden plots.
- Single and two storeys.
- Pitched roofs, and dormer windows.
- Gable frontages gable ends.
- Separate parking or garages.

Building Materials

The character of Holt combines examples of:

- Bath stone (Natural)
  - Random and coursed rubble
  - Blockwork and Ashlar
- Clay Brick; Orangey /Bath stone
- Render (White)
- Bath stone faced blocks (20th Century estate development)



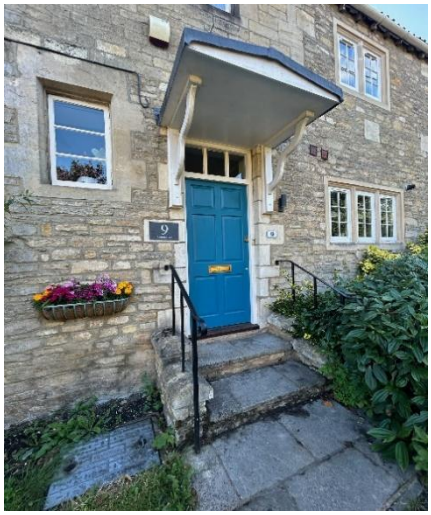


Detailing - Walls

- Bath stone quoins
- Brisk bond patterns
- Gable detailing Chimneys

Windows and Doors.

- Mixed styles.
- Some bays (Victorian and interwar)
- Bath stone surrounds and cills

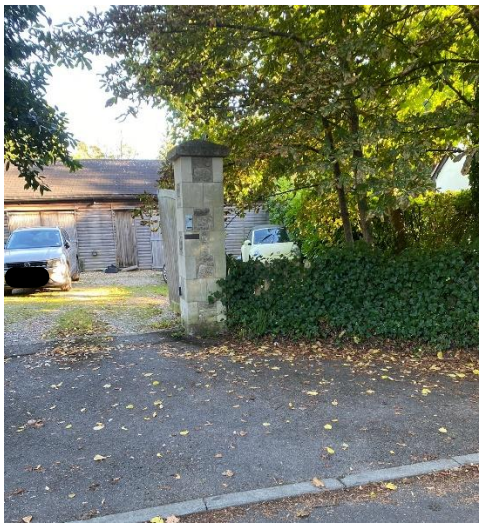


Boundaries

- Bath Stone walling
  - Rubble cock and hen
  - Drystone with cement coping
  - Blockwork or Ashlar
- Iron railing
- Native hedge (with grass verge)

Parking

- Driveways with garages or car ports set back from the houses
- Low stone walls, trees and greenery shielding driveways and parking spaces
  - Rear courtyard parking with trees and greenery



Original village pub has been converted into flats with rear courtyard parking. This has been successfully replicated in a 20th century infill development.

7 Homes for all

Affordable Homes in Holt are built to be tenure blind with parking, build materials and landscaping important considerations. The 2024 Star Ground site is built to "Passivhaus" standards with a central green space, seating, play equipment and bug hotel. Landscaping has not yet been completed.

8 Community Life

Holt has a variety of community facilities, including its pubs, village hall, shop/post office and churches. The public open spaces within the village supports neighbourliness and community cohesion. Public open spaces are used for both informal recreation and organised community events. The strong sense of community is valued by Holt residents. The following photographs show some of these activities and gatherings which utilise public open spaces across the village.