

Brightholmlee Conservation Area Appraisal



March 2007

After a period of public consultation Sheffield City Council adopted this Conservation Area Appraisal and the accompanying Management Proposals for Brightholmlee on 27th March 2007, which means that they are now a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications in the area.

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Contents

Introduction

Purpose of the appraisal
Summary of special interest

The planning policy context

Local planning policy

Location and setting

Location and context
General character and plan form

Landscape setting

Topography, geology, relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

Historic development and archaeology

Archaeological potential
Origins and historic development

Spatial analysis

Key views and vistas
The character of spaces within the area

Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

Activities/uses
Plan form and building types
Architectural qualities
Listed buildings
Buildings of Townscape Merit
Local details
Trees and other natural features

Issues

Strengths
Weaknesses
Conservation area boundary review

Bibliography

BRIGHTHOLMLEE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Introduction

Purpose of the appraisal

This appraisal seeks to record and analyse the various features that give the Brightholmlee Conservation Area its special architectural and historical interest. The area's buildings and spaces are noted and described, and marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map along with significant trees, surviving historic paving, and important views into and out of the conservation area. There is a presumption that all of these features should be "preserved or enhanced", as required by the legislation.

This appraisal builds upon national policy, as set out in PPG15, and local policy, as set out in the Local Plan, and provides a firm basis on which applications for development within the Brightholmlee Conservation Area can be assessed.

To be concise and readable, the appraisal does not record all features. The omission of any feature from the text or accompanying maps does not, therefore, mean that it is not of interest or value.

Summary of special interest

The Brightholmlee Conservation Area was designated on 5 January 1977. The special interest that justifies the designation of the Brightholmlee Conservation Area derives from the following features:

- Its exceptional group value as an attractive and close-knit group of farmhouses, barns, byres, stables and cottages
- The number of fine traditional buildings that have escaped conversion and remain in their original form as a reminder of the appearance of pre-industrial Sheffield
- Visual continuity between the hamlet and surrounding countryside resulting from the use of gritstone rubble for barns, garden walls and field boundaries
- The architectural and historical interest of the conservation area's buildings, of which almost all are at least 150 years old and some of which date from the 17th century
- Wide views in every direction
- Rural tranquillity and the almost total absence of non-natural noises



Photograph BHL 5: Brightholmlee's close-knit group of farmhouses, barns, byres, stables and cottages forms an attractive group of traditional farm buildings, several of which have escaped conversion and remain in their original form as a reminder of the appearance of pre-industrial Sheffield.



Photograph BHL 7: An important part of the character of Brightholmlee is its rural setting, amidst small fields surrounded by gritstone field boundaries

The planning policy context

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as “*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*”. It is the quality and interest of an *area*, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area that are designated as conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This document should be read in conjunction with national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment. The layout and content follows guidance produced by English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the English Historic Towns Forum.

Local planning policy

This appraisal provides a firm basis on which applications for development within Sheffield City can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework produced by Sheffield City Council. That framework is set out in a number of documents, notably:

The *Unitary Development Plan (UDP)* which is the statutory development plan for Sheffield adopted in March 1998.

The *Sheffield Development Framework (SDF)* will be the City’s portfolio of local development documents, collectively delivering the spatial planning strategy for the whole of the Sheffield District except for the area in the Peak Park. Once adopted, the SDF will replace the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

The *Sheffield Urban Design Compendium*, a design guide primarily for the City Centre, although much of the design guidance is relevant throughout the rest of the city. The compendium provides information for designers, and sets out strategic information at a city wide level. It provides guidance relating to the specific parts of the city, for both the built form and public realm.

Location and setting

Location and context

Brightholmlee is a rural hamlet located in the north-western part of the city of Sheffield, on rising moorland 11km from the city centre and just 1km west of Wharncliffe. This is in an area of Sheffield that has remained relatively rural, lying just outside the Peak National Park. Development has largely been contained within the narrow bottom of the Don valley, which carries traffic leaving and entering Sheffield from the Manchester direction. The upper slopes of the valley are heavily wooded on the eastern side, with several nature reserves, whilst the eastern side has numerous moorland farms and farming hamlets, of which Brightholmlee is one.

[OS map of location of CA i.e. like Broomhill]

Map 1 Ordnance Survey map showing location of Brightholmlee Conservation Area

General character and plan form

Brightholmlee consist of four farmsteads (Manor Farm, Old Hall Farm and High Lea Farm and Lee Farm) grouped along the northern edge of Brightholmlee Road, with associated farm buildings and cottages.

Landscape setting

Topography, geology, relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings

Brightholmlee is located on terrace above the confluence of Ewden Beck and the River Don. The adjacent moorland has numerous springs and brooks draining the higher moors of the Peak National Park, and Brightholmlee not only has its own spring, it also sits above the More Hall Reservoir, constructed early in the 20th century to supply Sheffield and Barnsley with water.

Brightholmlee is linked to the reservoir and to neighbouring farms and hamlets by narrow lanes and footpaths that have their origin as pre-industrial pack-horse tracks and droveways.



Photograph BHL 1: Public footpaths in Brightholmlee follow pre-industrial pack-horse routes.

The relatively thin soils around Brightholmlee support an agrarian economy based on sheep and dairy farming. Durable building stone (sandstone of various grains and densities) is available close to the surface and is the source of the building materials used for the hamlet's farms, cottages, barns and boundary walls.

Historic development and archaeology

Archaeological potential

Although the Sites and Monuments Record and the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service's Historic Environment Characterisation Study cannot be regarded as definitive or comprehensive, data from both sources indicates that the conservation area has a number of early cruck-built cottages, farmhouses and cart sheds, and it is possible that other early farm buildings exist that have not yet been studied or recognised.

The whole of the conservation area therefore has archaeological potential above and below the ground, and it is likely that further consideration will need to be given to the effect of applications for substantial new development.

Origins and historic development

The name Bightholmlee is composed of three elements: 'Bright' is probably based on a personal name (such as Brihtric or Beorhtweald), while 'holm' denotes land partly surrounded by streams, and 'lee' or 'lea' means woodland grove or glade.

No records for Bightholmlee could be found in the Sheffield Archives or Local History Library. The name of Manor Farm suggests that this is a hamlet with medieval origins, but whose earliest buildings are 17th-century in date.



Map 2 Extract from OS map (1854) of Bightholmlee and the surrounding area

With the exception of one modern house (Lea Croft), all the buildings within Bightholmlee are shown on the 1850–1 edition of the Ordnance Survey map.

Spatial analysis

Key views and vistas

From many parts of the hamlet there are extensive views. To the north and west, views extend across Ewden Beck and More Hall Reservoir to the ridge and shoulder of Hollin Edge, with Bitholmes Wood (Woodland Trust) forming a prominent component of the view. The eastern flank of the Don valley fills the view to the east, clad entirely in a mix of deciduous and coniferous woodland. Southerly views look up across the stone-walled sheep-grazed meadows of the Bent Hills.

The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area boundary has been drawn tightly around the boundaries of the built structures and excludes surrounding meadows. The principal green space within the conservation area is the wide verge on the southern side of Brightholmlee Road, and the large stone double trough that is fed from a spring draining fields that rise to the south. These fields, though not within the conservation area, are nevertheless an important component of the area's character; they include, just to the south of Old Hall Farm, a small drystone walled enclosure which was probably built as a pen for livestock.

Definition of the special interest of the conservation area

Activities/uses

Brightholmlee is now almost exclusively residential. Old Hall Farm was, until recently, still in use as the base for an agricultural holding, but the owner has now retired from farming.

Plan form and building types

Brightholmlee consists of four farmsteads set around a rectangular courtyard, each consisting of a farmhouse and the related barns, byres, stables and cartsheds, which have been added to the farms at various dates. These buildings are all tightly packed against each other, with three barns lining the roadside boundaries while their associated farmhouses are well back from the road. The result is a pleasing linearity along the road, but with an equally pleasing jumble of entangled buildings within the farmsteads themselves. In addition to the farmsteads, there are several peripheral cottages. One (Rose Cottage) is early 19th-century in date and its stoutly buttressed and battered walls help to define the road junction at the western edge of the hamlet. One other is modern (Lea Croft, built in the 1980s) but well hidden.



Photograph BHL 14: Rose Cottage is early 19th-century in date and has stoutly buttressed and battered walls. Note, however, the intrusive concrete repointing of the upper walls compared to the original well-disguised and recessed lime mortar pointing of the lower wall.

Architectural qualities

The homogeneity of the buildings in the hamlet is part of the conservation areas' appeal. Barns, byres, farmhouses and boundary walls are built of squared coursed gritstone (i.e. sandstone with large gritty particles), under roofs of carboniferous sandstone 'flags'. The barns lining the northern edge of Brightholmlee Road are handsome buildings with an offset plinth up to 1 metre in height, big flush quoin stones, flat-arched cart entrances of cut stone and plank doors. One barn has an owl hole in its gable end and a pitching hole. Two of the barns have one (but only one) coped gable with terminal brackets at the eaves. The farmhouses (where visible from the public highway) have massive sandstone lintels over the doors and windows, timber casement windows and simple plank doors. Boundary walls are generally 1 metre in height, built of squared sandstone rubble with copings of roughly triangular section or rectangular blocks set tall.



Photograph BHL 10: Pig sty with a roof of massive carboniferous sandstone 'flags'.



Photograph BHL 6: The barns lining the northern edge of Brightholmlee Road are handsome buildings with an offset plinth up to 1 metre in height, big flush quoin stones, flat-arched cart entrances of cut stone and plank doors. This one also has an owl hole in its gable end and a pitching hole.

Listed buildings

The hamlet has two listed buildings:

Old Hall Farmhouse (Grade II): this is of three builds dating from the 17th and early 18th centuries. Little is visible from the public highway, but the eastern cross-wing is visible from Town Field Lane and consists of a high status 2½-storey ashlar structure with an elaborate double ashlar chimney with moulded plinth, string courses and cornice, and double-chamfered two-light cross mullioned windows with drip moulds. Although the listing schedule omits any description of the two barns that sit either side of the entrance to the Old Hall Farmhouse farmyard, they are attractive examples of late-18th-century aisled barns and are important for their group value as part of a listed farmstead.



Photographs BHL 20 and BHL 22: The Grade-II listed Old Hall farmhouse, with its elaborate double ashlar chimney with moulded plinth, string courses and cornice, and its double-chamfered two-light cross mullioned windows with drip moulds.

High Lea Cottage and High Lea Farmhouse (Grade II): now one dwelling, this consists of farmhouse and attached cottage of 17th-century date with possible earlier core (see the cruck frames and the small partly blocked ogee-headed light on the ground floor).



Photograph BHL 17: The Grade-II listed High Lea Cottage and High Lea Farmhouse (now one dwelling) consists of a cruck-framed farmhouse and attached cottage is 17th century in date with a possible medieval core.

Buildings of Townscape Merit

The Townscape Appraisal Map for the Brightholmlee Conservation Area identifies a number of *unlisted* buildings that have been judged as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, known as Buildings of Townscape Merit. This follows advice provided in English Heritage guidance on conservation area character appraisals, and within Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15), both of which stress the importance of identifying and protecting such buildings.

In effect these consist of all the buildings within the conservation area with the exception of the recently built dwellings along Town Field Lane.

Local details

- **Wells and troughs:** Brightholmlee has two large water troughs of sandstone located opposite Old Hall Farm, fed by water that drains off the adjacent field; the once-sharp edges of the rectangular troughs are now attractively rounded and worn with use. Wells and troughs are also marked on the Ordnance Survey map around Manor Farm, but these not visible and might not have survived in use.
- **Guttering:** some of the buildings in the hamlet have traditional timber ogee gutters supported by stone gutter brackets.
- **Footpath signposting:** there are three footpath sides at various points in the conservation area made of cast metal and painted green with white lettering that date from the 1950s and are attractively designed.

- **Gateposts:** most of the field gates and property entrances in the conservation area are flanked by pairs of tall sandstone gateposts, shaped like very tall slightly tapering mileposts with a rounded top.
- **Milestone:** A milestone incised with an OS benchmark and the date 1860 is located at the junction of the Brougholmlee Road and Thorn House Lane.



Photograph BHL 8: 1950s cast-iron footpath sign. Note also the plinth formed by the lower three courses of stone of this 17th-century barn.



Photograph BHL 4: Manor Farm with its tall sandstone gateposts

Trees and other natural features

Prominent trees and tree groups are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map. Lack of a specific reference on the map does not imply that a tree or group is not of value. Trees make an important contribution to the Brightholmlee conservation area by framing the entrance to the hamlet from the east, and by screening modern buildings from view.

Issues

This section contains a brief summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Brightholmlee Conservation Area together with recommendation, if any, for changes to the current conservation area boundary. Strengths and weaknesses, together with other more specific 'positives' and 'negatives' that were identified during the appraisal process, form the basis of a separate document, known as the *Brightholmlee Conservation Area Management Proposals*.

The *Management Proposals* set objectives for addressing the issues arising from this appraisal and make recommendations for possible improvements and the avoidance of harmful change.

Strengths

- the historic character of the hamlet, which largely preserves its mid-19th century appearance
- the unaltered state of many of the buildings
- tranquillity: there are times and places when the only sounds to be heard in Brightholmlee are those of birdsong and running water;



Photograph BHL 13: This milestone is incised with an OS benchmark and the date 1860, though over-painting has obscured the directional details.

Weaknesses

- the poor state of some of the buildings at Old Hall Farm, including the westernmost of its two barns, where the eastern gable end wall has collapsed;
- heavy cement repointing of some buildings;
- roof lights and over-large dormers inserted into the prominent roof slopes of traditional buildings;
- boundary walls and field boundaries have been left in poor condition or have been crudely repaired in places where they have collapsed; some have been patched with barbed wire, chicken wire or post-and-wire fences;
- domestic white enamelled bathtubs used as cattle troughs, and builders' rubble dumped in fields;
- gates of tubular galvanised steel instead of traditional timber gates;
- farmyards concreted over and in one instance used as hard standing for unused caravans;
- farm buildings with roofs of corrugated asbestos in place of sandstone flags, and heavy cement pointing in place of the minimal clay and lime pointing of adjacent farm buildings.



Photograph BHL 18: Buildings at Risk: the eastern gable end wall of this aisled barn at Old Hall Farm collapsed after heavy rain in the winter of 2005. Note too the loss of traditional roofing materials on several of the barns and the replacement of traditional flags with corrugated asbestos and concrete tile.

Brightholmlee Conservation Area boundary review

No amendments to the Brightholmlee Conservation Area boundary are proposed.

Bibliography

Ordnance Survey map of 1850–1

List of photographs

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Photograph BHL 1: Public footpaths in Brightholmlee follow pre-industrial pack-horse routes. (NB needs cropping)

Photograph BHL 14: Rose Cottage is early 19th-century in date and has stoutly buttressed and battered walls. Note, however, the intrusive concrete repointing of the upper walls compared to the original well-disguised and recessed lime mortar pointing of the lower wall.

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USEFUL CONTACTS AND ADDRESSES

For information on listed buildings and conservation areas:

Urban and Environmental Design Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 5804

www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development/urban-design

For information on the status and interpretation of the statutory Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance:

Forward and Area Planning Team
Sheffield City Council,
Howden House,
1 Union Street,
Sheffield S1 2SH.
Tel: 0114 273 4157

www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/planning-and-city-development/forward-and-area-planning

For further information relating to listed buildings and conservation areas:

English Heritage
37 Tanner Row
York
YO1 6WP
Tel: 01904 601901

For an excellent range of technical advice leaflets:

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
37 Spital Square
London E1 6DY
Tel: 020 7377 1644

The Georgian Group
6 Fitzroy Square
London W1T 5DX
Tel: 020 75298920
The Victorian Society,
1 Priory Gardens,
Bedford Park,
London W4 1TT
Telephone: 020 8994 1019

The Twentieth Century Society
70 Cowcross Street
London EC1M 6EJ

[INSERT TOWNSCAPE APPRAISAL MAP HERE]

Summary of Consultation Undertaken

A consultation draft of this document was subject to a period of consultation between 24th January and 16th February 2007. All local residents in the conservation area were sent copies of the document along with a survey form asking for their comments. Residents were also invited to contact the Urban Design and Conservation Team if they wished to discuss the Appraisal or Management Proposals further. Local members and local community groups were also consulted as part of the process.