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Oxford City Council
LA 078921
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Iffley Conservation Area



Scale 1:5000

Designated 6 October 1969

Extended 21 October 1985

Iffley Conservation Area, No.2

The ancient village of Iffley ("Givetelei" of the Domesday Book) occupies a rocky promontory on the east bank of the Isis, some two miles south of the centre of Oxford. Until the 19th century, the main road to Henley ran along Iffley Turn and through the village. The northern end of the old village is marked by Tree Lane (a medieval sheep-way) and the Tree Hotel, where the Old Tree Inn once stood.

Towards the end of the 18th century, wealthy citizens of Oxford began to build country houses within easy reach of the city and the village expanded to the north by the addition of large houses in landscaped grounds, of which a number still remain with their heritage of fine trees. By the middle of the 19th century, the agricultural village was already acquiring its present, residential character.

The Hospital of Donnington in Berkshire, founded in 1393 by Sir Richard Abberbury, was endowed by a manor in Iffley; the Hospital owned until recently large parts of the village. Abberbury Road, a typical suburban development of the inter-war period, depends for its access on Church Way, and much of the hospital land has now been developed for housing, with a new road, Woodhouse Way, constructed to link Iffley Turn with Tree Lane.

Church Way, the spine of the historic settlement, still retains its rural character: nearly ½ mile long, of irregular width, lacking continuous footpaths and lined with good old stone walls. It meanders in pleasant curves from Iffley Turn southwards to the river, ending in a superb climax at the Church of St Mary - an outstanding example of Norman architecture, with its ancient Rectory and its yew tree in the churchyard, reputed to be over 1000 years old. It is this part of the village, south of Abberbury Road, which still retains most of its original character and charm. Within the sound of the rushing waters of Iffley Lock, it attracts many visitors who have to walk, since there is no vehicular access from the riverside and not much parking space when approached from the city. Most of the houses in this part of Iffley are of stone, covered with thatch or tiles. To the north, the buildings are a mixture of large 19th century villas, interspersed with smaller houses of different styles and materials and a few village shops, all of them reasonably conforming in scale with the old village buildings.

Tree Lane is now divided into two parts and despite modern development on its south and north sides, still retains in part its original character.

In 1967, there were 20 acres of undeveloped land in Iffley - enough to have doubled its population if developed, even at a rather low density. It was perceived that insensitive development of land with its potential traffic increase could have ruined the character of the ancient village road, Church Way, and that of the entire village.

The stone walls lining the roads required maintenance and care. The many trees, which contributed so much to the beauty of this area, were then reaching the end of their natural life, and their conservation and regeneration was to be encouraged.

To these ends, Iffley was designated as a conservation area on 6th October 1969, which was extended on its north-eastern corner on 21st October 1985, with the inclusion of the large, well planted grounds of Denton House and Iffley House residential home for the elderly.