

Melton Mowbray Conservation Area

Designed: January 1975 and Extended October 1986

Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council

Area: 27.67 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 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 not only to 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

The market town of Melton Mowbray lies at the heart of Melton Borough in the north-east corner of Leicestershire, just south of the Vale of Belvoir. It is the only large settlement in this region and is equidistant (approximately 17 miles) from Leicester, Nottingham, Loughborough and Grantham. The A607 Leicester to Grantham road and the A606 Nottingham to Stamford road converge on the town centre. The Birmingham to Peterborough main railway line also serves the town.

Melton Mowbray is mentioned, by the name of Medeltune, in the Domesday Book of 1086 described as a thriving market town, in fact the only Leicestershire market recorded. Tuesday was established as market day in 1324 by grant of Edward II then Lord of the Manor. However the name "Melton" may perhaps have been derived from either "Milltown" – there being two watermills in the area, or from "Middleton" – Melton being central to several hamlets. The Mowbray suffix is taken from Roger de Mowbray who held the Manor c.1185.

The growth of the town resulted initially from its position at the river crossing but during the medieval period the economy prospered from the wool trade. The market too continued to flourish,

each commodity - namely sheep, corn, butter and herbs – benefiting from its own market cross. The town continued to prosper until the seventeenth century where there was a marked decline in trade.

A number of small industries developed during the early part of the Industrial Revolution and following the completion of the Melton Mowbray Navigation Canal, from Syston (where it joined the Grand Union Canal) to the Melton Mowbray basin, in 1795 and its subsequent extension to Oakham in 1803, the population expanded rapidly. The manufacture and distribution of two of Melton's most noted products, pork pies and Stilton cheese was well established by the mid nineteenth century. Later that century an important wool mill and boot and shoe factory were in existence within the town, together with a large iron foundry at nearby Asfordby. The number of fine houses built in the town from the eighteenth century onwards reflects the town's increasing prosperity as commercial activity continued to increase.

In the late eighteenth century the town became famous as a centre for foxhunting. During the season the population was increased by those assisting with and administering the hunt as well as royalty, the nobility and gentry from all over country and Europe taking part. As a direct result and to accommodate that fraternity several noteworthy hunting lodges and hotels with their associated stables, yards and utility buildings were built during the early nineteenth century, many of which survive in alternative use today.

In 1844 an Act was passed to build a railway from Syston to Melton Mowbray and on to Oakham, Stamford and Peterborough. Subsequently the Syston to Melton link was completed by September 1846 as a result Melton continued to expand and prosper. When opened Melton Town Station was considered a grand showpiece, one of the best small-town stations in Britain. During the post war years there was further small scale industrial expansion and increases in hosiery manufacture were apparent into the 1960's although there was a decline in engineering and metalworking.

The size of the town has increased most significantly since the 1950's in the form of large housing estates on the northern and southern fringes.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Melton Mowbray conservation area boundary is widely drawn. The historic core of the town was designated as a conservation area in 1975 and the boundary was extended to include Sherrard Street and Egerton Park in 1986. There are 97 listed buildings within the Conservation Area. They are highlighted on the central map and listed at Appendix I. These are supplemented by many fine historic buildings of local interest.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Melton Mowbray town centre is the oldest, most interesting and busiest part of the town. Its unique character as a market town is expressed in the layout of the streets, buildings and spaces between within the central area that has evolved from medieval times. The majority of town centre architecture is Georgian or early Victorian.

The entire shopping area falls within the conservation area and several of the buildings fronting the streets are listed, some dating from the seventeenth century. Most buildings are two - three storeys and in simple gabled form set on narrow plots and grouped to form continuous frontages enforcing a strong sense of enclosure. The narrow widths of individual buildings together with „Georgian“ style windows give a strong vertical emphasis.

Since the nineteenth century shop fronts have been added to these buildings in various styles, many incorporating appropriate traditional details which contribute in a unique way to the character of the town centre.

Market Place/South Parade/Cheapside:

In medieval times South Parade was known as Corn Hill or Corn Market and, as the name suggests, was the place where corn was sold until the corn market building was constructed in Nottingham Street 1854. A replica corn cross currently stands in the area in recognition of this trade.

There were formerly four market crosses in the town and a modern reproduction Butter Cross has also been erected in the Market Place which is dedicated to former Town Warden, the late Gilbert King.

Cheapside also has medieval origins, formerly called Bothe Row, relating to the covered market stalls that once lined the street, and latterly Butchers' Row (until 1963) again witness to commercial activity of the day.

This area is still the focus of town centre retail activity, now a pedestrian preference area and home of the twice weekly open air markets where the area is transformed by stalls radiating out along the adjacent streets. The open air market takes place on a Tuesday and Saturday and is an extremely ancient institution being recorded as a profitable concern as early as 1077 and certainly dating back from Saxon Times.

Surrounding and enclosing the Market Place are a wide variety of buildings in different styles, materials and ages all adding to the diverse character of the area. Predominantly three storey Georgian or early Victorian former town houses in brick with slate roofs and varied fenestration that have long since been adapted for retail use at ground floor levels with the insertion of shop frontages. Within Melton Mowbray, as elsewhere, shop front design has undergone a process of alteration influenced by changing needs which has produced the rich variety of shop fronts that we see throughout the town, not always appropriate to the historic buildings in which they are housed.

Several of the buildings in the vicinity are listed, notably the group of buildings fronting South Parade.

A particular building of note within the area is the Swan Porch which was re-built following severe fire damage in the 1980's. The upper storey projects over the pavement and below the first floor window is a swan on a moulded bracket witnessing the fact that the building was once the Swan Inn.

The adjacent Grapes Inn, occupying the corner plot with Church Street, retains its eighteenth century façade including a fine rounded bow window with its original glazing.

Other unusual features in the area include several former shop display windows at first floor level, survivors of the town's retail heyday.

A curiosity on the skyline, forming part of the frontage of 3 Cheapside, at a higher level is the „gothic“ style tower building. It displays many architectural features including arched stained glass windows with stone surrounds and a parapet roof with pinnacles to all four corners.

The eastern boundary of the market place is marked by a block of buildings that stand in isolation. Their four storey height and ornate designs with varied roofscape, pinnacles and bay windows make them a unique feature of the town centre.

There is a solitary tree in the market place bringing some token greenery and marking the entrance to Leicester Street.

Negative features include a preponderance of poles supporting CCTV cameras and street lights plus many overhead cables.

Park Lane

Park Lane, leading directly south from the Market Place, is a narrow lane lined on both sides by red brick buildings, with interesting roofscape, ensuring a sense of enclosure. The character of the lane is primarily commercial and the only listed building is the mid nineteenth century workshop probably built for stocking frame knitters. The workshop is in a „u“ plan around three sides of a small courtyard and is set back from the road frontage. Its most unusual feature is the continuous bank of high level narrow pane windows designed to allow maximum light into the working area. Opposite stands the Penman Spicer Hall, formerly the Masonic Hall, which was built in 1911 and still retains its original appearance.

The lane is terminated by the commemorative gates of the town park, which were erected to celebrate both the Millennium and the 450th anniversary of the Melton Mowbray Town Estate.

The Town Park

Together with Egerton Park, the Leicester Road Sports ground and the War Memorial Gardens this large swathe of open land which skirts around the south and west of the town centre, forms a large proportion of the conservation area. The river Eye meanders around the north and west of the parkland, whilst the remnants of the Melton to Oakham canal denotes the southern boundary; both water features and associated bridges adding to the attractiveness of the area. An avenue of trees marks the line of the now infilled canal through the Play Close terminated by a pair of reproduction lock gates at the western end. Within this locality the early nineteenth century cast iron former canal bridge on Leicester Road is a particularly fine feature.

The parkland in general benefits from a wealth of mature trees. Particularly fine views of St. Mary's Church can be seen through the trees from certain vantage points in the Play Close whilst mature trees, together with landscaped gardens attributed to Wyatt form a splendid setting to the Grade II listed Egerton Lodge.

Another listed building within the town park is the Japanese influenced octagonal bandstand erected in 1908 to mark the opening of the park.

Church Street

Church Street also leads off the Market Place running south towards the Parish Church, which forms a visual stop at the end, with Church Terrace beyond. This narrow street was known as Church Lane until the mid 19th century. The historic properties, which line both sides, display a mix of styles, materials and a varied roofscape, all adding to the visual interest of the street scene.

To the rear of The Grapes Inn stands the Old Courthouse, a grade II listed stone building with mullion windows dating from the seventeenth century. This building was once the Town Armoury where muskets, gunpowder and body armour for the town's militia was stored.

On the opposite side is a continuous row of either listed properties or those of local interest, all former town houses of late eighteenth century origins, mostly unspoilt by change. Number 18 which

occupies a very prominent corner position overlooking the church and its grounds is a classic nineteenth century building.

Reaching the end of Church Street the vista widens to include St. Mary's churchyard, the row of properties in Church Terrace which mark the western boundary and Priors Close parkland beyond.

Church Terrace consists of seven linked properties, all grade II listed and all dating from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. There the similarity ends as each is a different style. Number 4 in the centre of the terrace, together with its attached garden boundary wall, is perhaps the grandest, a painted white stucco façade with a canted baywindow and gothic arched glazing distinguishing it from the more modest neighbouring properties. Also of interest is the small brick building with arched window and door standing in the corner of the churchyard which was once used to store the bier for use in funeral services in the church.

This area is a peaceful haven within the town centre and has a unique character – mature trees, an ornate listed tomb and a series of nineteenth century cast iron street lamps alongside the footpaths – adding to its identity.

Naturally the focal point of the churchyard, and the wider conservation area, is the large and impressive grade I listed Parish Church of St Mary with its magnificent tall central tower. Whilst dating from Norman times the church also displays thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century workmanship and was restored in the 1850's by Scott.

Pevsner considered that St. Mary's was the stateliest and most impressive of all the churches in Leicestershire and it was a serious candidate for the cathedral church of the newly created diocese of Leicester in 1926.

High Street/ Wilton Road

The map of Melton Mowbray (1500 AD) refers to High Street as Swine Lane, presumably once a route for bringing beast into the town for sale at the beast market, or down to the river Eye to drink.

High Street today is very much the hub of financial activity within Melton as several banks and building societies have branches there.

Looking west from the Corn Cross the street is lined on both sides by grand buildings predominantly three storey. The recently completed hard landscaping scheme and associated tree planting together with the projecting bays on the façade of numbers 19 and 21 have a narrowing effect and "funnel" the line of vision towards Egerton Lodge, with a backdrop of mature trees, which terminates views at the end of the street.

Egerton Lodge is grade II listed dating from 1829 and was designed by Wyatt as a huntingbox for Lord Wilton. In Jacobean style it is constructed in sandstone with slate roof. The adjacent raised terrace is also listed and is the home of the town's war memorial. At the eastern end of the terrace is a seventeenth century door, moved to this location. The door has a large trap said to have been used to dole out bread to the poor.

Most buildings in High Street are listed and generally date that late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century, the exception being number 19-21 which has seventeenth century origins. This splendid building has several interesting features including a highly decorative polychromatic patterned brick gable end, predominantly red but with geometric designs in yellow and blue and an

elaborate bargeboard. The associated coach house, also highly decorative, encloses the rear cobbled courtyard.

On the opposite side of the High Street, the George Hotel, a former coaching inn, which still displays evidence of the centre carriageway, together with numbers 10 and 12 form a distinctive group.

Wilton Terrace

Running due north from High Street, this narrow street, is highlighted by the terrace of small houses that whilst altered to a degree, generally retain their original characteristics. Opposite this terrace once stood the stables to Egerton Lodge and it is likely that the cottages were linked to the estate as workers' cottages. Some granite setts, one of the very few remnants of traditional paving materials within the town centre, are to be found here.

The current outlook is unfortunately marred by a supermarket complex, associated car parking and a public house.

Leicester Street:

Previously known as Eye Gate, meaning the street leading to the river Eye, in medieval times, and latterly Back Street.

The western end of Leicester Street at its junction with Leicester Road is marked by the grade II listed Lady Wilton Bridge and adjacent horse wash. This splendid five arched bridge with cutwaters and piers between is topped with decorative iron lamps and was built by Joseph Vinrace of Ashby de la Zouch in 1822.

The horsewash leads down to the river from Leicester Street and has a cobbled surface, another rare survival of traditional paving materials in the town centre.

Looking eastwards from the junction, a swathe of mature trees marks the boundary of the park, together with the listed wrought iron entrance gates erected 1907-1909 but in mid eighteenth century style with a row of fine brick buildings opposite naturally lead the eye towards the visual stop at number 27. This is a grade II listed 17th century building with an unusual blow lamp weathervane.

Beyond, the street narrows slightly and rises as it bends to the left fronted on both sides by three storey Georgian and Victorian buildings, many of those on south side being either listed or of local interest. The Fox Inn is a fine unspoilt example on the opposite side. The former Barnards Garage building (1906 datestone) is of local interest and still retains many original features.

Leicester Yard, leading off Leicester Street is a courtyard development with an unspoilt terrace of nineteenth century cottages. This area has a unique identity within the town centre, one of the few yards that remain.

The roofscape and chimneys are a particularly striking feature in Leicester Street and the tower of St. Mary's church is a distant focal point above the rooftops.

Leicester Street terminates at the Market Place where the vast expanse of common brickwork of the Boots building mars the street scene.

King Street

It is believed that Melton's castle stood on the north side of the Market Place somewhere near King Street and the street takes its name from King Richard, Coeur de Lion who once visited the town in 1194.

The entrance to King Street from the Market Place is today marked by a recently erected decorative metal archway at high level. The street is narrow and its enclosed nature is reinforced by two and three storey buildings on both sides, many listed and many with traditional shop frontages.

At the top end of the street the former Three Tuns Public House is a fine eighteenth century building with gable end addition onto the street topped with a datestone WAH 1898. The building also has a handsome Regency doorway with tracery fanlight above. The roof is in Swithland slate, quite rare within the town centre. Opposite, and terminating the street, is number 7 a medieval building dating from 1330. This is the oldest secular building in the town, remodelled throughout the centuries and currently displaying a splendid Edwardian shop front with handwritten sign bearing witness to its latter use as Manchester's gentlemen's outfitters. Internally the building has a fourteenth century crown post roof structure earning the building its grade II* listed status. The timber framework is exposed to view and again, unusually for Melton Mowbray, the roof is finished in Collyweston stone tiles. There is little doubt that the core of this building once formed the major part of the medieval manor of Melton.

Nottingham Street

One of the oldest streets in the town and until around 1850 known as Spital End or Spitalgate because the land was owned by the Knights Hospitaller from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The shepe cross, or sheep cross, once stood in Spital End marking the original home of the sheep market.

The present day street is a wide pedestrian preference thoroughfare with a variety of building styles in a range of different materials on both sides, all adding to its diverse character.

One of the most imposing buildings in the street is the listed Corn Exchange. Built in 1854 in Italianate style in red brick with stone dressings and splendid arched sash windows at upper levels. It has arched openings to the ground floor, topped off with a central polygonal wooden roof turret with clock face fronting the street. It has clearly been an important building in the town's history having various uses including, amongst others, the home of the county court and petty sessions, library and savings bank. Latterly it was an entertainment centre for the town, hosting concerts, dances, balls and functions attended by Royalty. Today behind the unchanged façade lies the Bell Centre shopping precinct.

Nearby is "Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe" another of Melton's most famous buildings and grade II* listed. Formerly the bakery of John Hill and taken over by John Dickinson in the last century to make pork pies. He was joined later by Mr. Joseph Morris; hence the name Dickinson and Morris that is retained to this day and is synonymous with the pork pie industry. Architecturally the building is simple but pleasing to the eye; of seventeenth century origin this 2½ storey building with Swithland slate roof has one bow window and one canted bay window around a central door. Both retain their original glazing bars.

Other listed buildings adding to the architectural heritage of the street include the façade of the Bell Hotel (eighteenth/nineteenth century), White Lion public house (eighteenth/nineteenth century),

Latham House – the former doctors' surgery with ornate iron porch, former Baptist chapel (1872) with unusual plate tracery windows and number 36/38 with its unique wrought iron shop name projecting from the façade.

Although not listed, the former Stamford and Spalding Bank built in 1890 which occupies the corner plot with High Street is a distinctive three storey stone building with turrets, pinnacles, gables and a range of architectural detailing typical of bank premises of the day.

Whilst the street, for the most part, retains its character it is marred to an extent by some unfortunate modern shop front inserts and inappropriate signage. At its northern end, Nottingham Street narrows at the junction with Park Road, the small group of shops at that junction forming a pinch point. The character of the conservation area displays a marked change at this point, the busy junction of Scalford Road and Norman Way characterised by a plethora of traffic signs.

Park Road/Norman Way/Scalford Road

This area marks the northernmost extent of the conservation area. In the 1980's Park Road was truncated by the construction of Norman Way. This involved the demolition of several buildings which has altered the character of the area. The former line of Park Road, however, is still evident by the alignment of the remaining properties. It was known by that name because the properties once overlooked the back park to Egerton Lodge. On the northern side stands a row of fine and generally unspoilt historic buildings. All are constructed in brick with slate roofs and all have substantial chimney stacks. The pairs of properties at either end are grade II listed and have painted facades. Both premises also benefit from trellised porches which enhance the appearance of the principal elevations.

Interspersed between more modern properties is the recently restored grade II listed former stable block to the now demolished 16 Park Road. This early nineteenth century building is in painted brick with slate roof and has a centre pediment with a cartouche. It has now been incorporated into the newly constructed shopping complex that occupies the corner site at the junction with Scalford Road.

A building of note on the southern side is the impressive Harwood House. Built in stone in Art Deco Style this building was once the head office of the National Farmers' Union. The front elevation is decorated with an Egyptian Head at the apex with a cow's head beneath.

Sherrard Street/Thorpe End

The conservation area was extended in 1986 to include Sherrard Street and Thorpe End. As with most of the major streets in Melton Mowbray, Sherrard Street was once central to market life in the town. The market extended from the Market Place, along Sherrard Street to Thorpe End where the Sage Cross once stood. This was where vegetables and herbs were sold, such as sage – an important herbal remedy in Medieval times. Sherrard Street today is still very much a hub of retail activity. Extending eastwards from the central core of the town it could be described as a neutral area within the conservation area.

There are three eighteenth century listed buildings, and a group of buildings of local interest interspersed within a mix of Victorian and modern buildings dating from the 1930's. The buildings display a variety of styles and materials primarily with newer shopfront inserts.

Marking the eastern extremity of the conservation area at Thorpe End are two prominent buildings of note. The grade II listed Roman Catholic Church of St. John, built in 1840 and possibly designed by

Pugin, on the northern side and opposite the Melton Carnegie Museum, opened in 1905 as the town's library. The original building is in mellow red brick under natural slate roofs. The majority of the windows and doors, especially on the principal elevations, benefit from natural stone surrounds and there are other natural stone features, decorations and adornments around the building. The spire of the central clock tower is clad in lead, as are the louvered rooftop vents. The principal roadside elevations of the building are fronted by a dwarf red brick wall topped by iron railings.

Burton Street

Burton Street has always been the principal route into the town centre from the south. The northern end of the street was previously called Hog Market as the site of the pig market until the sixteenth century. The southern section was known as Burton End as the Burton bridge over the River Eye marked the end of the town.

Perhaps the most historic and best preserved street in the town, it benefits from a fine array of impressive historic buildings. Virtually every property is either listed or notified as being of local interest.

Three of the most important listed buildings in the town centre form an impressive group at the top end of the street, namely the grade I listed Church of St. Mary, grade II* Bede Houses and grade II* Anne of Cleves public house. The Church is undoubtedly the most prominent feature in near and distant views of the town.

The Maison Dieu Bedehouses, which stand overshadowed by the church, were built in 1640 and restored in 1890 as almshouses. They are in coursed stone with a Collyweston stone slate roof with original, but restored, stone mullioned windows.

Anne of Cleves house, adjacent to the church, also has medieval origins. Another fine stone building with a steeply pitched slate roof, it occupies a prominent elevated roadside position.

Whilst of major importance these buildings are supplemented by other listed buildings in the locality including the Blakeney Institute, a sixteenth century former vicarage; the Colles Hall (1890); the Crown Inn with K6 telephone kiosk adjacent and the former Manor House (1870).

Beeby's Yard is located to the rear of Crawford House. Historians believe that this site is the last remnant of medieval burgage plots within the town centre. The group of buildings once formed the stud yard of John Beeby, renowned breeder of cob horses and the range is a unique feature within Melton Mowbray. Another example of a town centre yard with its own distinctive character.

Further south beyond the junction with Mill Street the road widens considerably on the approach to the bridge. The eastern side of the highway is lined by a fine row of Georgian buildings, the western side less impressive.

The Harborough Hotel, dating from the late eighteenth century, is a particularly attractive listed building, its former carriageway arch still evident. Cardigan House too is an impressive red brick house with a central cast iron balcony above the porch. The building is noted as the former residence of Earl Cardigan who ordered the charge of the light brigade during the Crimean war.

The simply built Boat Inn public house adjacent bears witness to the day when there was a large canal basin and wharf in this area linking the Wreake Navigation with the Oakham canal. Turning the corner are Coventry House and Claret Lodge, two fine examples of former hunting lodges which mark the southern boundary of the conservation area.

Looking towards the town centre the group of trees, on the raised pavement, fronting the church, add a touch of greenery to the street scene and provide a foreground to views of properties beyond.

Negative factors include some unfortunate shop front inserts together with the use of upvc windows, particularly at the southern end of the street.

Quality and Character of Buildings

The primary use of town centre buildings is commerce and retail. There are a number of inns and public houses and a few residential properties dating mainly from nineteenth century developments.

The majority of grade II listed buildings within the town centre generally comprise Georgian and Victorian former town houses, converted for retail use along the main shopping frontages. The typical form is the three storey building with street facing shop area with service rooms to the rear. Those in Burton Street, Leicester Street and Nottingham Street are primarily nineteenth century commercial buildings.

The grade I listed St Mary's Parish Church, dating from 1170 and described as the stateliest and most impressive of all churches in Leicestershire, together with the recently restored No.7 King Street (1330), Anne of Cleves House (1384) and the Maison Dieu Bedehouses (1640), all grade II* listed are perhaps the finest examples of historic buildings in the town centre. Other ecclesiastical buildings in the town include the Roman Catholic Church of St John (1840), The United Reform (1821), Methodist Church (1871) and the former Baptist Chapel (1872).

To the south of the town centre the grade II listed Egerton Lodge on Wilton Road was built in 1829 on the site of an earlier house and has important gardens which lead down to the river. Adjacent is Lady Wilton's Bridge (1822) and the horse wash also grade II listed.

Amongst the most important of the town's public buildings within the conservation area are the former Police Station, now the Magistrates Court (1878), and the former Corn Exchange (1854) both in Italianate style and grade II listed.

The Georgian, Victorian and later post-industrial developments within the town essentially comprise of red brick buildings with Welsh slate or rosemary tiled roofs. In a few cases yellow brick can be found as can clay tiles. Surviving medieval buildings are of local yellowstone.

As the majority of town centre buildings have been designed for high quality retail and commercial uses the typical form of fenestration is variations of the vertical sliding sash; there is occasional use of Yorkshire sliding sash and early casement forms. Doorways are generally plain without elaborate fanlights or doorcase surrounds although there are some exceptions.

Natural Elements

The built form of the town is enhanced by a swathe of open green land which generally follows the course of the River Wreake through the town centre. The grounds of the Play Close, Town Park, Egerton Park, Leicester Road Sports Ground and the formal gardens to Egerton Lodge are all mature parkland settings that enhance the character of the town centre and wider conservation area. Other open areas within the town are St Mary's Way with a scattering of mature trees and St Mary's Churchyard.

Negative Factors

Within the historic town centre there are several inappropriate shopfronts that detract from the character of the area. Some of the larger shops together with the smaller units combine to give an unattractive appearance. The Council have prepared guidance on shopfronts and advertisements which note that careful treatment of these frontages with the introduction of traditional features could alleviate the problem.

There are also some vacant town centre sites that detract from the area, notably the Town Station site, former Ladbury's garage site on Burton Street and the overgrown site adjacent 7 King Street. A Design Brief has been prepared for the Town Station site to guide development proposals.

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

Considerations

Conservation area status does not mean that new development may not take place. When considering proposals for new development the Council will seek to retain and enhance the character of the area through good design and sympathetic adaptation and conversion of existing dwellings.

Existing highway boundary features (walls, fences, hedgerows and railings), important individual trees, groups of trees and open areas should be retained.

For further help and advice please contact:

The Regulatory Services 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 Regulatory Services Section as detailed above.

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