

Saxelbye Conservation Area
Designated: October 1994
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 9.34 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 the 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 to not only 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

Saxelbye is a small, relatively isolated agricultural village located within a dip of the Leicestershire Wolds some three miles west of Melton Mowbray. It is served by a minor rural lane with links to Asfordby and the A606. The village was known as Saxelbie in the Domesday book – *Saksulfr* (a male personal name) and *by* (a farmstead).

Conservation Area Boundary

Saxelbye Conservation Area includes almost all of the village except three dwellings to the north east of Main Street. Land to the east of the Old Rectory and a section of railway line to the south-west are all included within the Conservation Area and make an important contribution to its rural setting.

Spatial Character And Townscape Quality

Saxelbye is an open textured village with small clusters of farm buildings and residential properties fronting onto narrow country lanes. There are marked variations in levels with buildings situated in both elevated positions and also in dips. For example Ostler Lane enters the village from the north in a deep cutting whilst the buildings are at high level, making a significant contribution to the character of that part of the village. Open spaces are particularly important to the character of the settlement. Within the main built environment these include the grounds of The Rectory and St. Peter's Church, the front grounds of the Manor House and the well landscaped gardens on

Main Street opposite Japonica Cottage. A glimpse of the Rectory can be seen through the trees at the eastern end of Main Street adjacent to Brook Cottage.

At the heart of the village lies a cross-roads with views extending in all directions generally framed by trees, and to the west by the K6 telephone kiosk with the railway bridge beyond. Likewise each approach to the village centre differs, and by contrast the cross-roads becomes a focal point. The village is swathed in large areas of trees which give an enclosed, intimate feel and there is a backdrop of trees from most points.

The spire of St Peter's Church is also a distinct focal point, visible from outside the village and a dominant feature within. Whilst the village benefits from loose-knit development it maintains an intimate character, most views within the settlement being terminated by a visual stop be it a tree, hedge or built structure.

The distant roofscape is particularly attractive with its mix of styles, ridge heights and materials. Tall brick and slate boundary walls are also a particular feature of the village, which together with high hedges, result in an enclosed feel to the highway.

Quality And Character Of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials but red brick with Welsh slate tends to dominate with the bridge parapet and brick walls adjacent to Brook Cottage having unusual round-topped copings. These coping bricks are echoed in other parts of the village along many other boundary walls. "Ambleside" on Church Lane is noted for its part-thatched roof.

There are 8 Listed Buildings within the village including a row of 7 Listed headstones in the churchyard of St. Peter's church. The Listed buildings generally cluster around the Church in the older part of the village. The Manor House is a particularly superior example built of stone and render with a slate roof and similarly built outbuildings. The Old Rectory can be viewed from the south of the Church along a narrow lane, over a bridge and framed by trees. The Old School, adjacent to the Church is a very attractive building.

Church Farm, off Ostler's Lane, another grade II listed building, is a particularly attractive former farmhouse built in red brick and slate with Yorkshire sliding sash windows. Its setting is marred by the addition of new green corrugated iron sheet roofs onto two of its outbuildings.

Leading into the village from Main Street to the east, Brook Cottage is a particularly attractive vernacular cottage situated adjacent to the stream. The road sweeps up and around into the centre of the village where Church Lane leads to the very fine grade II* St. Peter's Church with its crocketed spire and beyond to The Old Rectory, Brook Farm, the Old School House and the Manor House, all splendid buildings.

Continuing on down Main Street the Webster's Dairy complex can be viewed on both sides of the street. This was founded in 1883 and despite several extensions and alterations the form of the original farmhouse can still be discerned together with the original associated dairy buildings and pig sheds.

Station house, occupies an elevated position, adjacent to the railway line, within a group of trees at the end of Main Street. This former railway station building, together with the Victorian brick and cast iron railway bridge at the entrance to the village, bears witness to the era of the steam train when Saxelbye was once a stop on the Melton Section of the former Midland Railway which opened in 1849. The track is currently used as a high speed testing facility.

Natural Elements

The village is swathed in large areas of trees, which give an enclosed, intimate feel, and provide a backdrop of trees from most points. As the village is set within a dip most views beyond the settlement are limited in distance with the exception of a magnificent view from Webster's Dairy south towards the Manor House. The brook is a particularly attractive feature of Saxelbye meandering through the village from Brook Cottage and flowing east of the Church within the grounds of the Old Rectory.

Negative factors

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

There are a number of unsightly pole mounted electricity pylons within the "Langwood" vicinity which tend to mar distant views; there is also a large substation in the garden and an aluminium storage tank adjacent to the east elevation of Webster's Dairy which would benefit from screening.

Many of the distinctive red-brick walls which dominate the village would benefit from repair and maintenance especially that on the corner of Ostler Lane where tree damage is evident and has caused severe cracking.

For further help and advice please contact:

The Physical Environment Section
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Melton Mowbray
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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 Physical Environment Section as detailed above.

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