

Hoby Conservation Area
Designated: February 1976
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 12.38 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

Hoby is a compact attractive linear village situated on a ridge affording splendid views over the Wreake Valley. It is some seven miles to the west of Melton Mowbray.

The name Hoby means "the settlement on the hill". It is unclear as to whether the village was founded by the Anglians in the 6th century or was established as the Danes conquered the region in the 9th century. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 Hoby is recorded as having a population of twelve families and a cultivated area of about 500 acres. Historically Hoby was held by a series of Lords who resided at The Manor. The dominant occupation within the village was farming, with principal crops being barley and beans. A certain amount of land was set aside for cattle, and pigs were allowed to graze on the common land.

In the years prior to World War II Hoby was self-sufficient. Hoby corn, ground at Brooksby Hall, sold to the Hoby corn merchant and to the Hoby baker. Cattle reared on Hoby fields were slaughtered by a villager in the cottage opposite the Church and sold to the butcher next door. Clothes were mended in the cottage, which formerly stood in the Blue Bell car park. There was briefly a revival of village industry in the 1920's and 1930's when a hosiery factory was opened on a site behind Rose Villa. It seems to have had a comparatively short life, apparently closing in 1939, for not trace of it can be found today. The Old School, Post Office and Smithy are now residential properties located adjacent to the Church on Main Street.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The boundary embraces the majority of the built up area of the village. It also includes some open areas on the village fringe.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

The main entrance to the village is from the north via a well-treed approach into the first of a series of hairpin bends as the Main Street meanders through the village. There is a loose texture to the lead into the village where the buildings are predominantly detached dwellings set back from the road within large gardens.

Around the first bend into Main Street the juxtaposition of properties and styles becomes evident. The buildings are tighter knit and generally larger, resulting in a more dominant appearance to the street scene. The road widens considerably towards the centre of the village near All Saints' Church, giving a feeling of spaciousness. The green verges fronting Mill House and the hedge bordering the cemetery also adds to the rural feel in this part of the village. Exiting the village to the south the road again narrows and properties about the highway reinforcing the sense of enclosure.

The area north of the Church has a varied character. A mixture of detached buildings and terraced cottages result in a more open feel at the bottom end of Church Lane with the open views of the surrounding countryside adding to the rural character of the village. Along Regent Road and Chapel Lane the properties to the east are detached dwellings set back from the road whilst to the west the buildings abut the road. The orchard at the junction of Chapel Lane and Main Street provides a welcome break within the street scene. The cottages at the top end of Chapel Lane form a visual stop but allow glimpses of open countryside to the north. Looking to the village from this point the roofscapes notably form a foreground to the Church and its spire.

Accessed on foot from Main Street to the rear of the Village Hall there are some properties hidden away at lower level. These tiny cottages are located on a steep hill with a winding footpath, giving a sense of mystery as it twists and turns finally opening to panoramic views over the valley.

The sharp bends within the village offer visual stops at all turns. Whilst most of the dwellings and buildings are centred on Main Street, the narrow lanes, which lead to the east and west, add further interest. Variations in the floorscape also contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. The variation in levels is highlighted by the elevated churchyard and sloping grass verges fronting properties. The use of granite kerb stones and cobblestones, that are highly prevalent throughout the village, all add visual interest. Other hard landscaping materials include gravelled driveways and courtyards.

Within the curtilage of Redwood House, and hence hidden from general view, is a niche. It was once a garden feature within the grounds of the Old Rectory and is grade II listed.

Quality and Character of Building

The Conservation Area benefits from a wide range of listed buildings with a total of eleven within the village. The Listed Buildings are predominantly scattered along Main Street where they offer examples of a variety of architectural styles from the vernacular to the polite, materials ranging from red brick and Swithland Slate roofs to timber-framed thatch properties.

To the east of Brooksby Road stands Rooftree Cottage its side elevation facing the road where a blocked doorway above the present road level is visible. This is a rare example of a "Cruck framed" cottage with rendered infill panels and a thatched roof. Both Rooftree and Holm Cottages flank the entrance to the village from Brooksby Road.

The village Church of All Saints forms a focal point within the Conservation Area, the spire being visible through the rooftops from most places within the village. The location of the Church also forms a visual stop in both directions passing through the village. The Church originally dates from the 13th and 14th centuries built of ironstone with limestone dressings. The chancel has a Swithland slate roof whilst the nave and aisles have lead roofs. The Church occupies an elevated position within the village and is enclosed by a stone boundary wall.

The once associated Rectory to the north of the Church is an imposing two storey building with a six-window range frontage. It is set back from Church Lane within mature landscaped grounds and offers a fine example of a red brick building with Swithland slate hipped roof.

Towards the north of the village lies The Thatch, dating from 1615. This timber framed red brick infill thatched cottage is a building of high visual impact when entering the village from the north.

On the edge of the village at the end of Church Lane, another listed building, the very impressive Hoby House, can be found. This is an unspoilt and attractive example of a three storey Georgian farmhouse in red brick with a Swithland slate roof.

There are several unlisted buildings within the village that make an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. A notable example is the Chantry, a fine brick building with splendid architectural detailing including a brick dentil course. Another contrasting example is the Tudor Style Church Gables now incorporating the adjacent grade II listed Chantry Cottage to form a single dwelling.

Also on Main Street lies the farmhouse and associated outbuildings of Manor Farm. The barns feature a diamond pattern of air vents formed within the elevations fronting the highway and the courtyard beyond encloses an intimate view to the rear of the property. The grand frontage of The Grange forms a visual stop on the bend leading into the village from the north.

The dominant building material is red brick with slate roofs although there are several timber-framed buildings with white render evident. There are many interesting examples of brickwork patterns with brick dentil courses, patterned air vents and herringbone brickwork infill panels. The wide variety of building styles creates a wealth of architectural diversity within the village. There is some thatch as well as Swithland slate.

Natural Elements

Splendid views are available from several points within the village. Brooksby Road leading from the village to the South East descends to the River Wreake and provides an attractive setting for the village when viewed from this location. There are also splendid views across the Wreake Valley, most notably on entering the village along Brooksby Road, from Lower Lane and from Main Street opposite Manor Farm.

There are several mature tree groups west of the Rectory and All Saints Church, which provide a fine setting for the village when viewed from the Thrussington Road. Within the village there are several paddocks, mature gardens and other open spaces of particular significance to the village character.

Negative factors

The use of inappropriate materials, such as upvc double glazed window units, plastic rainwater goods and modern brickwork has had a negative effect on the character of the conservation area in some instances. The southern end of the village has been extended since the 1960's with developments along Brooksby Road, Thrussington Road and Holmfield Close. Between 1981 and 1995 a further ten new dwellings have been built. The new developments do not sit comfortably with the overriding architectural design of the village.

For further help and advice please contact:

The Physical Environment Section
Melton Borough Council
Council Offices
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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 Physical Environment Section as detailed above

The above is an appraisal of the Hoby 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