

Freeby Conservation Area
Designated: October 1994
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 8.38 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

This relatively unspoilt linear, agricultural village is located three and a half miles east of Melton Mowbray off the B676 Bourne Road. The village dates from the time of Edward the Confessor (though then called "Fretheby" and "Fredebi"). In the 13th Century it became a manor, granted to Hugh De Spencer. Later it passed to Lord de Ros and, in the 16th Century to the Hartopp family. In the 17th Century Dr Isaac Watts who lived for a time in Freeby, composer of such famous hymns as "God our help in ages past" and "when I survey the wondrous cross", preached in the village United Reform Church. All the properties, with the exception of the United Reform Church, are owned by the Freeby Estate.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary encompasses the whole village with the exception of several farm buildings at Glen Farm, Ivy House Farm, Manor Farm and Birch House.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Main Street

Approaching Freeby southwards along Waltham Lane from Waltham on the Wolds Highfield Farm on the left hand side marks arrival in the village. It is located in the most north westerly corner of the Conservation Area. This red brick building, with Rosemary tile roof, is set back within large grounds and has a series of associated agricultural buildings situated adjacent to the church. To the front of the property is a date stone 1875 and there is a dog tooth dentil course at eaves level.

A single storey link building exists between a barn and the house with arched openings. There are also substantial chimney stacks at differing heights.

Turning left into Main Street at the junction on the northern side and in a slightly elevated position, set back behind a large grassed area is an eye-catching terrace of houses, namely Sykes Row. This row of six houses built in red brick with slate roofs has highly decorative window arches. Similar window arches are echoed elsewhere in the village on Springfield and Brook Cottages and opposite on Rosewood Cottage.

Opposite is Ivy House Farm, situated in an elevated position behind a stone boundary wall. This is a red brick and Swithland slate dwelling with decorative drip moulds over the ground floor windows and door. Adjacent is Woodbine Cottage with a wooden bus shelter fronting it.

Main Street continues downhill with views terminated by a varied roofscape, the Church tower glimpsed through a canopy of trees and a K6 telephone kiosk on the roadside verge.

Continuing eastwards Saint Mary's Church and graveyard can be seen in an elevated position on the north side of the road. The graveyard forms a visual stop at a bend in the road with a retaining stone wall and wide grass verge. Beyond the Church distant views open out as the road continues to dip.

The road meanders onwards dipping slightly past Coy's House – a substantial stone dwelling with Rosemary roof tiles, red brick chimneystacks and a clay pantiled outbuilding. A particular feature is the wall-mounted post box. Adjacent is a row of three unspoilt red brick and slate cottages, (Laburnum, Primrose and Highfield Cottages). They display steeply pitched gables with decorative barge boards and tall ornate chimney stacks.

To the north lies the listed Manor Farm and its many farm buildings which overshadow and almost surround the adjacent Stone Cottage - a stone wall separating the two sites. Stone Cottage has an unfortunate modern brick porch to the eastern elevation.

The United Reform Church is located behind a grass verge towards the centre of the village on the south side of Main Street. This stone building has a double arched stone surround window and a carved wooden and stone porch which is a very attractive feature.

The road continues, past Glen Farm with its working farm buildings. The unspoilt farmhouse stands back in its own grounds and has original sash windows and a dog-tooth plat band as a decoration above the ground floor windows. There are several working farms in Freeby which is unusual in the Borough and creates a very rural feel to both village and community.

Continuing on out of the village, Brook and Springfield Cottages are a pair of very attractive houses with half hipped roofs and unusual slates. They have decorative window arches with chamfered edges and a substantial central chimney stack.

Reaching the bottom end of Main Street, the road levels out and views become more intimate terminated by a red brick farm building. At the end of a farm track stands Birch House which appears to be the most modern house in the village, built in the 1950's.

Quality and Character of Building

The village as a whole demonstrates a fairly limited variety of building styles and materials, reminiscent of an estate village. Ironstone and red brick predominate with slate, Rosemary tiles and red clay pantiles dominating the roofs. There is no infill development and few additions to any of the buildings – with its agricultural heritage, the village is rural England at its finest.

There are two listed buildings within the village, namely the grade I Church of Saint Mary and grade II Manor Farmhouse.

The Church of Saint Mary is mostly built within the 14th Century of coursed ironstone and limestone ashlar with ashlar dressings. The aisles are said to have been re-built in the general restoration of 1893-4. Inside there are four simple open-back 16th Century benches with poppy heads.

Manor Farmhouse is a three storied, grade II listed building constructed in coursed and squared ironstone and brick, with limestone ashlar dressings. There are slate roofs and red brick substantial chimney stacks. A sundial is centrally located under the eaves on the second floor. Manor Farm has several historic farm outbuildings associated with it, some of which are notified as being of local interest.

Natural Elements

Freeby is blessed with many open areas and views out towards open countryside; most notably looking towards the east towards Waltham on the Wolds and areas surrounding Highfield Farm. A stream meanders past the eastern edge of the village adjacent to Birch House.

There are many magnificent trees, adjacent to Saint Mary's Church, that are worthy of their preserved status.

Negative factors

The use of inappropriate materials, such as plastic rainwater goods and modern brickwork and render, although minimal, still has a negative effect on the character of the Conservation Area in part.

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 Freeby 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 apply that it is of no interest.