

Pickwell Conservation Area

Designated: October 1994

Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council

Area: 6.35 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 the 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 to fenestration and materials.

A Character Appraisal is seen as the best method of defining the key elements that contribute to the 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

Pickwell is situated in undulating countryside in the marlstone uplands of the Leicestershire Wolds. It is basically a linear village located 6 miles to the south of Melton Mowbray on the rural road which connects the nearby village of Somerby to the A606

The Conservation Area Boundary

The boundary of the conservation area is centred on the original nucleus of the village and includes the majority of the built up area of the village with the exception of the more recent developments at Saxons Lea, The Crescent and selected dwellings on the north side of Main Street. It is widely drawn and also includes the extensive grounds of The Rectory, the formal garden area of Pickwell Manor and former stone quarries to both the north and south of Main Street.

Special Character and Townscape Quality

The village form is concentrated around the junction of Main Street with Leesthorpe Road, Somerby Road and West End, a small cul-de-sac. The junction is marked by a small triangular grassed area that is the site of the village War Memorial.

Leesthorpe Road

The approach to the conservation area along Leesthorpe Road is well treed with glimpsed views on the left hand side, through the greenery, of the Church tower and roofscapes in the distance. The mature hedgerows and tree canopies provide a 'tunnel' effect, terminated by a backdrop of superb mature trees within the grounds of Pickwell Manor.

Nearing the crossroads on the left hand side, close up to the highway and denoting the start of the conservation area, is a fine ironstone barn with an unfortunate tile and corrugated sheet roof. Opposite is a small 'village' green, home to the village sign, notice board, K6 telephone kiosk and a single mature tree.

West End

West End is a pleasant cul-de-sac of only four properties. White Horse Cottage at the junction is an unspoilt ironstone cottage with a slate roof which retains some of its original Yorkshire sliding sash windows. Honeysuckle

Cottage occupies the corner plot at the turn in the road, a small rendered building with a slate roof which stands out due to its deep pink colouring. Beyond and marking the end of the conservation area, are a pair of stone cottages with modern brick flat roofed additions to the rear.

Main Street

At the crossroads is a small triangular grassed area which houses the village war memorial and is a focal point within Pickwell. On the north side of the street are two very fine stone buildings: No 1 has a Swithland slate roof, contrasting stone quoins and decorative window and door surrounds with a datestone W1895?. Immediately adjacent is Home Farm House with similar features, but unfortunately with a concrete tiled roof.

Beyond the road drops away and the parish church stands proudly in its elevated position with the mature trees of the grounds of The Old Rectory, located to the rear of the church, providing a backdrop. Opposite is the rear elevation of the stable outbuildings to The Manor, a large expanse of stone walling punctuated by few openings but including some fine cast iron air vents. Further down the street as it continues to fall away is Strawberry Court, a good example of farm building conversions. The buildings are of various styles situated in a tranquil courtyard setting but brick dentil courses and detailing provide a degree of unity.

The character of the street changes somewhat at this point, the road starts to climb and the backdrop of mature trees in the distance marks the transition into open countryside beyond. Buildings on the north side are set back behind generous highway verges and hedges. Many of the dwellings are modern infill buildings, mostly of good design with the choice of materials and styling respecting the village vernacular. The juxtaposition of styles and ages of buildings on both sides adds to the variety of the street scene. Stone walls however are a unifying feature.

Stonepit Terrace denotes the easternmost extent of the conservation area. This row of generally unspoilt cottages probably once provided accommodation for workers at the disused ironstone workings to the rear. Opposite is a well tended and maintained allotment garden and small pond adjacent to the entrance drive to Oundle House which sits back from the road.

Somerby Road

The only building of note on the short stretch of Somerby road that falls within the conservation area is the village hall. This is a fine stone building with slate roof and displays a series of arched windows with stone surrounds. It stands within its own compact grounds enclosed behind railings and a stone wall and has recently been refurbished to a high standard.

Quality and Character of Buildings

The village contains a mixture of building styles of varying materials and ages. Naturally local ironstone, which was quarried within the village, is the dominant material generally under slate roofs but there are also several examples of red brick buildings and alternative roofing materials. Of particular note are the extensive lengths of granite kerbstones that have survived on both sides of Main Street.

There are only three listed buildings in the conservation area namely the Church of All Saints, Pickwell Manor and an associated barn and outbuildings to the north.

The grade I listed Church sits tall and proud within the elevated churchyard which is enclosed by a fine stone boundary wall on the north side of Main Street. Its magnificent limestone tower is the focal point of the street scene and the wider conservation area being visible from several vantage points within the settlement. The Church has thirteenth century origins, the west tower was added in the fifteenth century. The south porch and south aisle were restored by local architect R W Johnson in 1860. It is built of local ironstone with limestone dressings.

Pickwell Manor with its associated stabling and outbuildings stands within its own extensive and well treed grounds and is approached through ornamental gates via a long drive off Somerby Road. A grade II listed building which is described as a small, ironstone rubble with Collyweston stone slate roof, country house of seventeenth century origins which was added to in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

There are several outbuildings related to the Manor including stables, a summerhouse and a barn and outbuilding to the north of the Manor which is grade II listed and contemporary to the principal house being built in the seventeenth century in ironstone and brick with limestone dressings under a slate roof.

Another building of note within the village is the former Rectory which also stands within its own extensive and heavily wooded grounds immediately to the north of the Church. This is a fine example of an imposing and virtually unspoilt Victorian rectory constructed in local ironstone.

Also worthy of mention is Stonepit Terrace, a row of several fine and virtually unaltered stone cottages under slate roofs.

Natural Elements

Ironstone was once actively quarried in and around the village and remnants of those former operations are still evident in the local landscape. Pickwell benefits from a wealth of mature trees which add greatly to the visual amenity of the village. Significant tree groups can be found in the grounds of the former Rectory and to the south of The Manor whose grounds extend into wooded countryside providing an attractive approach to the village from Somerby Road.

Pickwell also has several significant open areas which contribute to the character of the settlement. These include amongst others, All Saints churchyard and the grounds of Oundle House.

Negative Factors

Thankfully the use of inappropriate materials such as upvc double glazed window units, plastic rainwater goods and render is fairly minimal within Pickwell, although there are some examples which have an unfortunate effect on the character of the conservation area.

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 prepared a leaflet entitled 'A Guide to Conservation Area' which gives general advice. Copies are available from the Regulatory Services Section as detailed above

The above is an appraisal for the Pickwell 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 imply that it is of no interest.