

Ab-Kettleby Conservation Area
Designated: October 1994
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 5.95 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

Ab-Kettleby is a compact village located some three miles north of Melton Mowbray adjacent to the A606 Nottingham to Melton Road. The Village stands high on the southern 'dip' slope of the Leicestershire Wolds, near the ancient "Salt Way" at a height of approximately 530 feet above sea level. The built up area is concentrated along either side of Main Road on an East-west axis to the west of the A606.

The earliest recorded spelling was Chetelbi, in the Domesday Book. This name comes from Ketil's (a person) by (village or homestead). Abba was presumably an early property owner in the area. At the time of the Domesday Book, the main property owner was Robert de Bucy.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area is centred on the historic core of the village and the 17th Century Manor House and includes St James's Church and open ground to the south of Main Road.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Ab-Kettleby is a small, linear village with several working farms, a grade II* listed Church, a primary school and a public house.

Approaching from Wartnaby Road, the Conservation Area boundary is marked by an area of trees beyond several large modern houses and the village school. Adjacent to the south-west of the Conservation Area is an estate of recent housing. The Manor House to the north of Wartnaby Road is swathed in trees and can only be glimpsed from the road but a very modern bungalow mars the view at this point. The village is densely built with very few open spaces. The exception to this is to the north and east of St James's Church where the Conservation Area sweeps around to encompass an ancient moated site which is notified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Continuing to the east, the houses abut the highway with a mixture of gable end-on or the principal elevations fronting to Wartnaby Road. There are very few properties with gardens to the front and this gives an enclosed feel to the street scene.

Turning into Church Lane the land falls away in a southerly direction towards the village pond, a sacred spring and the spire of St James's Church. This is the heart of the village with a more intimate feel, where the cottages tend to be smaller. The Old Vicarage can be seen within a group of trees from a high point on a footpath by the pond. A Roman mosaic and pavement were found beneath the churchyard indicating the antiquity of the village.

Continuing along Wartnaby Road towards the A606 Nottingham Road the houses and farm buildings are varied in age, size, form and texture with a pinch-point at Pokey Hole Cottage narrowing the street, enhancing the enclosed feel.

A listed K6 telephone kiosk complements the street as it slightly winds upwards and onwards towards a visual stop, a group of cottages and the Sugar Loaf public house to the east of Nottingham Road. The A606 bisects this section of the village.

The floorscape, regrettably, consists of the usual tarmac and concrete, however traditional granite kerb stones are used throughout the village.

Ab-Kettleby consists of three distinct character areas. The built up section of Wartnaby Road, the more intimate pond area on Church Lane and the open textured area surrounding the Church.

Quality And Character Of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials with ironstone and red brick predominating whilst Welsh slate, pantiles, Swithland slate and thatch are used for roofing materials. Number 23 Wartnaby Road is rendered over ironstone.

There are a number of modern houses within the Conservation Area, most notably the property adjacent to Bay Tree Farm which is alien to the older style dwellings within the village. However there is an attractive group of new and renovated barns that form part of the Manor House complex. One of the barns is dated 1870. Most buildings to the north have groups of outbuildings, most notable are the group of stables at Bay tree Farm. To the rear of White House Farm is an impressive cobbled area rising towards the rear of the building.

There are six Listed Buildings in Ab-Kettleby; two listed headstones and the well-head are also listed. St James's Church, built in ironstone, is located in a more isolated position to the south of the village adjacent to the moated scheduled ancient monument. It is dated circa 13th Century but was severely restored in 1852/3 and contains a monument to Everard Digby (of Gunpowder Plot fame).

The Manor House is a grade II* listed dwelling which was formerly the village manor house and latterly a farmhouse. It is of early 17th Century origin and built of ironstone with limestone dressings and a slate roof.

The former Vicarage, dated 1769, and extended in the early 19th Century is constructed of red brick in Flemish bond, with a hipped slate roof and stands in an elevated position overlooking Waterside House and the village pond.

The Willows, a three storied dwelling to the south side of Wartnaby Road, was once a farmhouse and is now divided into two dwellings. It is early 19th Century and built in red brick with Flemish bond and has a 20th century ridged, tiled roof and is a grade II listed building.

Home Farm is the only dwelling within the village that has a thatched roof. It is mid to late 17th century with stone mullioned windows; unfortunately one window has been replaced in a UPVC framework.

Worthy of mention is the Wesleyan chapel on Chapel Lane built in 1843 with extensions in 1887 and 1898. This building overlooks St James' Church, which can be reached via an adjacent footpath. Both places of worship are visually linked, giving a spiritual feel to the area.

Natural Elements

There are few trees along the main Wartnaby Road; however, as the road sweeps down into Church Lane many trees can be seen surrounding the church. There is a magnificent horse chestnut tree adjacent to the village pond with an area of new tree planting visible within a small garden area.

To the side of the village pond is Ab-Kettleby's holy well, a natural spring. However, since 2001, a cover grating has been fitted blocking all access to the spring. Unfortunately the village pond has stagnated and holds little water.

There are few significant hedgerows within the village with the exception of one running along side St James's church and the site of the ancient monument. This open area provides extensive views towards Leicester.

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.

A large, derelict, iron, Dutch barn and pole mounted sub-station are situated adjacent to the moated scheduled ancient monument which detracts from the area surrounding the Church.

The render on number 23 Wartnaby Road could possibly be completely removed to reveal the original ironstone construction underneath.

At white House Farm, a large aluminium tank would benefit from screening from the highway as it detracts from the farmyard setting.

For further help and advice please contact:

*The Physical Environment Section
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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 Ab-Kettleby Conservation Area, which highlights the most significant factors that 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.