

Wartnaby Conservation Area
Designated: October 1994
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 11.84 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

The village of Wartnaby is situated in the Wold Hills four miles to the north of Melton Mowbray. Ancient forms of the name were Waernodby and Warbuthby which probably is derived from the Old English for "Watch Tower", a look-out post which commanded tremendous view north over the Trent valley. As part of the Soke of Rothley, Wartnaby became the property of the Knights Templar and afterwards of the Knights Hospitallars of St John of Jerusalem.

Wartnaby is a small, intimate village partially owned and managed by the Friars Well Estate. Most of the cottages and houses within the village are inhabited by tenants of the estate.

Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation area for Wartnaby includes the whole of the village encompassing large open areas northwards, and to the south to include Friars Well. These open areas make an important contribution to its rural location.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Of particular benefit to the residents of Wartnaby is the lack of through traffic as there are no roads leading to any other villages. This gives the village an intimate feel and provides a unique sense of belonging for the residents. The roads are narrow and enclosed by trees. Michael and All Angels Church is glimpsed on entering the village from Ab-Kettleby and the entrance to Wartnaby is marked by two name signs; the newer version is carved in timber with reference made to the Knights of Jerusalem.

The road turns in a southerly direction leading down into the village with Church Farm and St. Michael and all Angels Church high on the left hand side, set back in fields beyond open areas. The road continues past Wartnaby Hall and Tower Cottage around a right hand bend passing several cottages and houses towards the entrance to Friars Well Estate. There is a K6 telephone kiosk situated at the entrance, adjacent to farm workers' cottages built directly onto the road frontage with larger houses set back within their own grounds. The road at this point is enclosed by stone walls and is terminated by trees at the entrance to the Estate.

Unfortunately, the floorscape is comprised of tarmac with concrete kerbs. Old iron railings enclose the open space in front of the church where there is a footpath leading up to the church entrance. A substantial brick wall with attractive arched entrance can be seen alongside Wartnaby Hall's substantial and well landscaped gardens.

Quality And Character Of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a variety of building styles thus reflecting its ancient history; but some more modern examples are evident. Generally the buildings are of local ironstone with pantiled roofs, but brick, render, Swithland slate and Bottesford Blue tiles are in evidence.

There are two listed dwellings (Church Farm, along with several listed outbuildings) and Tower Cottage as well as the grade II* listed church of St. Michael and all Angels with two listed tombs in the churchyard.

Church Farm captures the essence of Wartnaby with its beautiful ironstone walls, ancient dovecote and outbuildings topped by glorious red pantiles. Its situation alongside the Church is magnificent. When Sir Rider Haggard was preparing his book *Rural England* he visited Church Farm, where Stilton cheese was made by Mrs Musson, a lady celebrated for her fine cheeses. An adverse feature is the wood and iron barn adjacent to the buildings.

Tower Cottage is dated 1656 and is set back from Main Street within its own extensive grounds. It has an unusual water tower on the roof (hence its name). Adjacent are the remains of a 12th or 13th Century building possibly connected with the Knights Templar.

Situated in a slightly elevated position, enclosed within its own grounds, to the east of Main Street, is the impressive Church of St. Michael and All Angels. This early thirteenth century church is built of local sandstone with limestone dressings. Inside are rare medieval wall-paintings which may date back 800 years. The churchyard contains two listed slate tombs, the resting place of two members of the Wartnaby family. There are splendid views from here towards Tower House and Wartnaby Hall.

Wartnaby Hall is a building noted as being of special interest located directly opposite the Church set in magnificent and well landscaped gardens. It is said that King Charles II took breakfast here with the then owner a Mr. Hacket. It was occupied by military forces during the second world war.

Friars Wells cannot be seen from the road, but this was originally the Vicarage, and was purchased from the church by Colonel John Dane Player as a private residence.

Natural Elements

The village is swathed in large areas of trees, giving an enclosed and intimate feel as well as providing a backdrop of trees from most points. The trees line both sides of Main Street and, it is difficult to see some dwellings as they are situated beyond. There are a number of significant hedges in the village, in particular the magnificent beech specimens on either side of the driveway leading into Friars Well.

In 1966 the Parish Council planted two oak trees in the field adjacent to the churchyard – one in memory of Sir Winston Churchill and one in memory of United States President John Kennedy.

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.

Fortunately the overhead cables blend in with trees on Main Street, but there is an unsightly pole mounted electricity sub-station which could be screened.

The iron railings in front of the church would benefit from renovation.

For further help and advice please contact:

The Physical Environment 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 Physical Environment Section as detailed above.

The above is an appraisal of the Wartnaby 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.