

Knossington Conservation Area
Designated: September 1977
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 12.46 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 Knossington is located some 10 miles south of Melton Mowbray and 3 miles west of Oakham on an intersection of minor country roads. It is set in attractive undulating countryside in the Leicestershire Wolds at a height of 600 metres above sea level.

The village was known at 'Closintone' in the Domesday book and by 1125 its name had changed to Knossintun.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary encompasses most of the village, with the exception of the modern development at Larchwood Rise, three dwellings in the Hollow to the east of Main Street and several houses to the north of Somerby Road.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Somerby Road

Approaching Knossington along Somerby Road from the north-west, an attractive tree-lined avenue leads downhill then uphill with views of roofscape and buildings set in a swathe of trees as an introduction to the Conservation Area. Here, forming a group, are three attractive and individually styled red brick and slate roofed houses, namely Dairy Cottage, Littledale and Holly Hedge Lodge. All three display individual architectural detailing with Dairy Cottage having roughly-hewn wooden porches and an unusual ventilated pinnacle to the roof. Yellow brick banding and decorative ridge tiles and barge boards unite the group as a family. On the north side, four more attractive buildings namely Garden Cottage, The Old Byre, Littledale and the pump house (formerly part of the Grange Estate) add to the architectural interest of the area.

The road then sweeps upwards with modern infill properties, generally set back from the road, most notably the therapeutic school which is set in large grounds to the north of the road. There are views to the south, of Knossington Grange through the trees, though this is marred by a modern bungalow in the foreground. The old gatehouse at the entrance to Knossington Grange School is a beautiful stone lodge with limestone dressings and a recent stone extension. At the apex of the of the eastern gable is a magnificent plaque showing a galleon in full sail and the Duncan clan motto Disce Pati, which translated means, "learn to suffer". Abutting the road are the

original high stone walls topped with slate copings and ornately carved gate piers with beautiful wrought iron gates.

Continuing in a southerly direction, the Church of St. Peter can be glimpsed through trees, in an elevated position, behind a low herringbone blue brick retaining wall enclosing the churchyard. The road continues to meander past the Fox and Hounds Public House and The Old Rectory into the village terminated by a visual stop at a stone boundary wall to The Granary.

Main Street

Main Street opens out into a much wider aspect on leaving Somerby Road. This area is the ancient centre of the village and was once known as The Triangle. It has the open feel of a former market place. Here, the old village pump is found alongside a terrace of cottages built in different styles and some have porch additions. Opposite is a new house, Beech Cottage, which is built in ironstone with limestone facings, thus ensuring it conforms to the village vernacular and does not "jar" alongside the older properties.

Number 15 (Woodview) is a striking building – constructed in stone with ashlar dressings it is set back from the main thoroughfare. A sundial has been centrally located above the front door. In the past, a public house named The Greyhound was situated where Woodview's driveway is now located. This was demolished in 1930 and Woodview was built both using the stone, saved from the Greyhound and faced with stone from Normanton Hall.

On the opposite side of the road is the village hall, a small stone building which is currently used as a Nursery.

Proceeding eastwards, the road reaches a pinch point which forms a visual stop at The Walnuts and then narrows further into a cutting with The Whalebones house situated to the north in an elevated position. The Whalebones once had a whale's jaw bone forming an arch over the entrance gate. The remains of a Saxon warrior were found on Sconsborough Hill and re-interred in the Whalebone's orchard. The road continues to sweep down towards the old Methodist Chapel and the termination of the Conservation Area.

Braunston Road

There are few properties in Braunston Road. On the south side is a small engineering works at the Forge, a red brick and slate building erected by Mr A L Duncan in 1894, as witnessed by the datestone. Mr Duncan, a former resident of Knossington Grange in 1867 was a benefactor of the village and also built several estate workers' cottages amongst other buildings. The gatepost fronting the Forge is topped by a magnificent stone carved owl.

On the opposite side of the road is a fine stone boundary wall enclosing the grounds of the Walnuts, whilst further down, the Conservation area is terminated by a modern dwelling. Beyond are extensive views over open countryside.

Owston Road

Owston Road runs almost directly south from Main Street. At the junction of the two stands the Grade II listed Tojoni House with more modest cottages opposite. The road at this point is wide, however, it narrows as it falls away downhill. Views are terminated by a right angled bend and a group of trees in the grounds of the Manor House. Numbers 5, 7, 9 and 11, which abut the highway, enhance the 'narrowing' effect. Both The Old Post Office (5) and Coach House Cottage (7) benefit from diaper patterned brickwork and polychromatic brick window arches, however, The Old Post Office has since been painted white. The Old School House (11) is built of stone as are school cottages. The Old School itself is situated on the opposite side of the road. It is a typical Victorian red brick building with bell tower and was built by A L Duncan in 1899.

The Manor House, a large dwelling with associated outbuildings set within its own extensive grounds, stands at the bottom end of Owston Lane and marks the southern limit of the Conservation Area.

Quality and Character of Building

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials, but ironstone with limestone dressings and red brick with slate or collyweston roofing slates predominate.

There are several Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area most notable of which is the grade II* listed Church of St. Peter. This late thirteenth century church is built of ironstone and was restored in 1830. The chancel was rebuilt and organ chamber added in 1882 by A W Blomfield. There are several stained glass windows, two marble and alabaster war memorials dated 1918 and 1945 and three twentieth century brasses.

Knossington Grange, a grade II listed building, lies within its own extensive grounds surrounded by gardens and plantations on the western side of the village. This country house was built of stone in the Tudor style in the late 19th century. The house was begun by Francis Thursby about 1864, but he died before it was finished. Alexander Duncan (d.1889) bought the property in 1867, completed the building, and lived there until 1883. He was followed by his son A. L. Duncan, who apparently enlarged the house in 1895. Outbuildings and cottages were built near the Grange by the Duncans; one example, a cottage on the road to Cold Overton is dated 1899. In 1955 the building was occupied as a preparatory boarding school and now houses pupils with special needs.

Tojoni House is a grade II listed former hospital which dates from 1820 and was used as such until 1958 when two beneficiaries were resident and two non-resident. It is a two-story brick building with a frontage of five bays and a central doorway. The middle three bays are enclosed by tall round-headed recessed panels and surmounted by a pediment. Four bay windows to the ground floor are later additions.

The only public house in the village is the grade II listed 'Fox and Hounds', a stone building opposite the church, which probably dates from the eighteenth century. It is built of coursed and squared ironstone and brick with Collyweston slate and pantile stacks. It is three storeys in height.

Woodland View on Owston Road is a grade II listed cottage incorporating in its south wall an arched window constructed from odd pieces of medieval stone tracery and containing fragments of stained glass. These remains are reported to have come from Owston Abbey been inserted by Charles H. Scott (d. 1895) who once occupied the house.

At the east end of the village street is a T-shaped ironstone house, known as the Walnuts. This grade II listed building has stone mullioned windows with moulded hoods, two belonging to the ground floor are 1950's inserts. The nail-studded entrance door in the south wing is dated 1610 and internally there is an inscription 'Gulielmus Gould me fecit 1610', probably the result of a nineteenth century re-modelling. The interior of the south wing has 17th Century fine wooden panelling. According to a 1898 village history there is supposed to be a beam dated 1570 with the initials of a William Peck, a former resident, but this has not been found.

Natural Elements

Knossington is blessed with many open areas and swathes of mature trees, most notably the areas around Knossington Grange School and to the east of the Fox and Hounds public house. There are several magnificent trees within the Conservation Area that are worthy of their preserved status, and indeed there are many with "blanket" protection areas.

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. There have been several modern developments within the Conservation Area which, together with cumulative change and modernisation, has not been of benefit to the historic character of the village.

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 Knossington 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.