

Stathern Conservation Area

Designated: May 1976

Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council

Area: 19.05 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

Stathern is an attractive and substantial settlement within the Vale of Belvoir. It is situated at the foot of a wooded escarpment some 8 miles north of Melton Mowbray.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The conservation area was designated in 1976 and encompasses the majority of the built up area of the village together with several open spaces both within and on the periphery of the settlement.

Special Character and Townscape Quality

Stathern literally means 'stake-thorn' which may describe a particular kind of thorn or a thorn tree marking a boundary.

Generally the village form is quite loose knit with dwellings interspersed with important open areas enhancing its character. The older core of the village centred around St Guthlacs Church and the Old Rectory is particularly attractive with narrow lanes and pedestrian ways enclosed by tall brick and stone boundary walls. Building materials are varied and include ironstone and red brick cottages, rendered or whitewashed buildings and a mixture of red, brown and blue pantiles or slate roofing.

The downhill approach along Mill Hill from Melton Mowbray is well treed with the canopies overhanging the highway creating a 'tunnel' effect. Views over the Vale at the base of the escarpment are magnificent.

Church Lane

From the junction with Mill Hill the lane bends towards the heart of the village. A fine series of stone buildings to south east side are randomly arranged - these include Crossways Cottage, a Building of Local Interest and Ivy House a grade II listed building. By contrast properties on The Crescent on the opposite side are more regimented and set around a central grassed area. Verges, boundary hedgerows and individual trees together with stone and brick boundary walls are important elements within the street scene.

Dalliwell, leading off Church Lane, is a very narrow and tranquil lane lined by granite kerbstones. There is a slight incline towards No 10 at the top which forms a visual stop. It consists of a series of fine stone, brick and tiled buildings to the north side, randomly situated but combining to reinforce an intimate feel. Opposite there are fewer properties and the area is generally dominated by greenery including tall hedges and small trees. At the top end the lane peters out to a pedestrian walkway which leads onward to open countryside beyond the village.

Church Lane bends beyond Dalliwell and drops down steeply towards the thirteenth century Church which stands within an elevated churchyard behind a stone boundary wall, the tower of which can be glimpsed through the dense tree cover. Laburnum House on the opposite corner is a fine and unspoilt brick and slate building standing majestic in its elevated location. At this point the lane appears as if it is in a cutting with mature trees at higher levels overshadowing it – the elevated cemetery, tall buildings, including the Vale engineering works together with the narrowness of the carriageway enclosing the street scene. At the side of the road is a unique feature, a drain for the brook known as The Gote which is the Anglo-Saxon word for drinking

hole. The lane narrows further between the Manor House, which was recently restored, and Bassingdean, both of which are listed and snakes onward.

At the end of Church Lane is a small grassed area with a bench which marks a three way junction. Red Lion Street to the western side which is dominated by the Red Lion (PH) which stands at the junction with Water Lane. It is a brightly coloured rendered building which adds a degree of vibrancy to the conservation area. Boundary walls of all descriptions are the essence of the street varying from a magnificent 'crow stepped' stone wall beyond the public house to a plain rendered example opposite. Buildings also vary in age, style and materials – some elevated some at ground level. The Beeches at the far end is a particularly good example, built in stone under a slate roof with steep pitched gables. Chimneys are also a strong visual element in the street scene.

Tofts Hill, climbs steeply out of the village to the east from the junction. There are a scattering of modern buildings at the bottom of the hill before open countryside takes precedent, the exception being Hillcrest with a date stone TH1935. Views from this elevated vantage point over the village roofscape to open countryside beyond are quite stunning.

The Green is another lane typified by a mixture of old and new properties built in various materials. At the top end the nature of the lane changes as it becomes Birds Lane, a narrow twisting lane characterised by terraces of late nineteenth/early twentieth century brick properties with slate roofs.

Water Lane provides a north- south link between the Red Lion PH and Main Street. It is a very narrow lane, only 6 feet wide for the majority of its length and hence very peaceful due to minimal traffic movement. The north end is characterised by loose knit development with a handful of dwellings set back amongst trees and greenery. The tower of the Church can be glimpsed through the trees but the lane is dominated by the grade II listed Old Rectory, a fine ironstone property with limestone dressings stone under a Swithland slate roof, which dates from the mid eighteenth century. The associated stables and splendid stone boundary walls are also listed.

Adjacent The Old Rectory Church Walk provides a pedestrian link to the churchyard, a very serene part of the village. It benefits from extensive tree cover and is enclosed to the east by Church Cottage an unspoilt grade II listed building and to the south by Church Corner, together with a stretch of stone boundary wall, both properties are overlooked by the Church.

The village play area reinforces the rural character of Water Lane and allows views across the village. It is bounded in part by a blue paved pedestrian link to School Lane which loops around the school building. Beyond this point the lane widens a little and the character of the lane changes also with a more enclosed feel, principally due to boundary walls and the more regimented layout of the roadside properties.

School Lane is yet another narrow winding lane with a scattering of dwellings supplementing the village primary school which dominates the lane. Although not listed the building, which dates from 1845 is notified as being of local interest. It is a brick property with stone dressings and a slate roof with stone copings on the gables. It has three Gothic windows with associated tracery.

Main Street twists through the centre of the village with two right angled bends. In general terms, as the road goes north from the first bend, properties of various ages, styles and materials line both sides of the street. Point Farmhouse on the western side is an early nineteenth century brick house with Swithland slate roof and is grade II listed, Opposite there are intimate views across the play area to The Old Rectory and Church with trees beyond and longer extensive views towards the treed escarpment to the north.

Nearing the next bend there is a group of three listed buildings, Ashleigh (no 14), Glenleigh (No 16) and Vigornia Cottage (No 18). The social hub of village life can be found in this vicinity – Stathern Stores, the Post Office and corner butchers shop are loosely grouped together and further along The Plough (PH) and adjacent green area which houses the bus shelter, notice board and K6 telephone kiosk whilst opposite is the garage/petrol station and War Memorial Institute. The latter was built in 1937 by local volunteers with money raised locally for materials on land given to the village by the Duke of Rutland.

Further west the character changes again with a varied mix of styles and ages from small stone cottages to modern brick houses. There is a very rich palette of building materials and colours with examples of differing red bricks, yellow bricks, honey coloured stone and white render all enhanced by trees and greenery. Properties generally follow the course of the road whilst some are set back. The top end of the street before it changes to Penn Lane has a more open feel again with properties randomly arranged with open spaces interspersed. Two listed buildings, Sumners Farm and Eastbury - with associated outbuildings - typify this part of the street and are visually prominent with their varied roofscapes. There is a small triangular green at the road junction, which houses the village sign. The juxtaposition of properties in the vicinity adds to the variety and visual interest of the street scene.

Chapel Lane is a cul-de-sac of very few properties and has a very intimate feel. The former Chapel from which the lane derives its name has recently been converted for residential use. Chantry House is situated behind another building in a very private location. It is a very fine grade II listed building that was formerly a public house. It has late seventeenth century origins and is constructed of coursed ironstone rubble under a Bottesford Blue pantile roof. It also has a mediaeval window which it is presumed came from the chantry house which once stood near to this site. The White Cottage is a building of Local Interest.

Narrow Lane runs east – west behind the Plough Inn and other frontage properties on Main Street and links Chapel Lane to Main Street.

The southern end of Penn Lane is lined with Buildings of Local Interest, namely Penn Farmhouse, a cottage to the north east and a barn to the north all of which date from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries and all of which are built in ironstone rubble. That cottage is currently known as Bramble Cottage which is set back on the bend and is a fine example of the village

vernacular. The allotment gardens adjacent area particularly important open space within the village and reinforce the open feel in this part of the conservation area.

Beyond West End Farm views open out and wide verges and tree cover frame views out of the village to the north west. Open spaces continue to be important to the form of the area but associated traditional historic properties randomly scattered around and boundary walls linking them also define the character. Fairview and Plough Cottage are particular examples.

City Road loops around linking Penn Lane with Harby Lane. This is a peaceful part of the village and displays a mix of traditional buildings, modern ones and some residential conversions randomly located and interspersed with open areas. There are a collection of stone buildings clustered around small cul-de-sac leading off, most of which are listed. Greensmith Cottage, on the corner plot, has a thatched roof to the principal house and displays two date stones – John Burke 1742 and MH 1687. Lavesley House set further back is a former farmhouse dating from the early eighteenth century and The Nurseries adjacent dates from the eighteenth century and was previously a row of three cottages.

Only the properties on the north side of Harby Lane are within the conservation area. These comprise for the most part of a bungalow development that has mellowed reasonably well. There is however a fine range of early nineteenth century traditional farm buildings to the rear of Sumners Farm. These are notified as being of local interest and are a fine example of the former agricultural life of the village.

Quality and Character of Buildings

The village benefits from a fine collection of historic buildings and other heritage assets. In total there are eighteen entries in the schedule of listed buildings for Stathern and eight buildings notified as being of local interest. Many of those listed buildings have previously been mentioned in detail. Those meriting further description include:

St Guthlacs Church is a beautiful medieval church built of local soft ironstone with limestone dressings which sits within the historic core of the village but is relatively discretely located. It is situated in a delightful setting in an elevated churchyard but is nestled amongst a group of mature trees which screen it to a large extent. It is a grade II* listed building built in the late thirteenth century but has seventeenth century additions and alterations. Local architect RW Johnson restored it in 1867-8. The roofs are a mixture of lead and Swithland slate. Prior to the erection of the village school the north chancel chapel served as the schoolroom.

There are several listed and other historic buildings clustered around the Church. Next to it is the grade II listed Manor House and attached Blacksmiths Cottage. This building that was recently restored dates from the late seventeenth century but was extended in the early nineteenth century. It typifies local vernacular materials being constructed in ironstone rubble with brick additions under a pantile roof. The main range faces onto Church Lane with a projecting cross wing. Blacksmiths Cottage is in ironstone on the ground floor with a red brick upper floor with pantile roof.

Bassingdean, opposite dates from the eighteenth century with later alterations but there is evidence of older origins. Again local materials have been used in its construction, namely ironstone, brick and pantile.

Natural Elements

There are many open areas within the village which make a contribution to its character. A series of open spaces of particular significance interlink to form a green spine through the centre of Stathern which in effect brings the open countryside into the village. These include the churchyard, allotment gardens, land south of narrow lane and the paddock on Chapel Lane. Several other open spaces add further to the form of the settlement, particularly to the north of Harby Lane. beyond the village there are many more open areas which contribute to its attractive setting.

Tree cover is good at the eastern end of the village between Main Street and the lane to Tofts Hill which provide a fine setting to Stathern when viewed from the Vale escarpment.

Negative Factors

The use of inappropriate materials such as upvc double glazed windows, plastic rainwater goods and unfortunate building materials is relatively widespread within Stathern.

The use of telegraph poles and the associated overhead cables are by contrast fairly minimal and the impact of some is lessened as they merge into the background set against a backdrop of trees.

For further help and advice please contact:

The Regulatory Services Section
Melton Borough Council
Parkside
Station Approach
Burton Street
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 1GH
Telephone: 01664 502502

The Council has 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 for the Stathern 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.