

Wymondham Conservation Area

Designated: November 1973

Designating Authority: Leicestershire County Council

Area: 21.20 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

Wymondham is one of the larger villages in the Borough located close to the border with Rutland and Lincolnshire, approximately 6 miles east of Melton Mowbray. The village acts as a minor rural service centre for smaller settlements in the vicinity. The Domesday Book (1086) calls the village *Witmeham*, *Witmeha* and *Wimundesham*, generally interpreted as meaning "Wygmond's ham" i.e. Wygmond's homestead. In Saxon times Wymondham lay within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Mercia and has Neolithic and Roman remains along with evidence of Iron Age occupation. Indeed an extensive Roman Villa site was discovered in 1796. Wymondham is on the route from Melton Mowbray to the A1 - "the Great North Road" - which links London and Edinburgh, and the village was a stopping-off point for cattle-drovers and other travellers in earlier centuries. The village was also noted as one of the major manufacturing centres for Stilton cheese, notably made by Mrs Paulett and transported to the Bell Inn at Stilton village on the Great North Road.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The conservation area was designated in 1973 and the boundary encompasses all of the older built up area of the village and large open areas to the south west.

Special Character and Townscape Quality

Historically development in Wymondham has largely concentrated to the south of Main Street. Further development has been restricted by the poor standard of access provided by the narrow lanes. As a result, whilst Main Street is generally a busy through route, this is a peaceful village.

The approach to Wymondham from Melton Mowbray is well treed reinforcing the rural character of the village. The northern extent of the conservation area is generally defined by Main Street which is a through route to the A1 and as such is relatively busy contrasting with the rest of the village which is typified by quiet and peaceful lanes. Entering the village the open feel to the street is evident and is reinforced by the wide grass verge to the south side which includes well spaced individual specimen trees and is lined to the rear by a row of fine stone buildings. Indeed there are several groups of prominent stone buildings on either side of Main Street interspersed with open spaces, particularly on the north side, which allow views towards the grade II* listed Wymondham windmill (1814) and open countryside beyond. The Old Police House stands at the junction with Brickyard Lane which leads northward towards the dismantled railway line and open countryside beyond.

Old Bakery Antiques is a fine building, which although not large, has a particular presence in the street scene. Likewise the decorated red brick Wesleyan Chapel, built in 1891 and adjacent Old Forge and former Three Horseshoes Inn, which dates from the mid eighteenth century and still bears the painted sign on the front wall. The Bowery is another fine building built of local stone under a Collyweston roof, topped by hexagonal chimney pots. Set into a niche in the principal elevation is a stone Stilton cheese bearing witness to the dairy based history of the building and village.

Opposite is another broad grassed verge with several individual trees and a rather unfortunate telegraph pole. To the rear are a row of stone buildings, including the grade II listed Japonica Cottage, collectively displaying a variation in styles, roofing materials and ridge heights which add visual interest to the street scene. The Cottage Stores/Post Office, Berkeley Arms (PH) and Old Gallery, one of a row of several small stone cottages, on the opposite side of the road form a cluster of commercial premises which, supplemented by the K6 telephone kiosk and the nearby village hall in Church Lane, combine together to form the social hub of the village.

Past the junction with Butt Lane stands The Manor House, a grade II listed building dating from the early eighteenth century. It is constructed in local stone and has a Collyweston mansard roof with a curious chimney stack arrangement. Village folklore suggests that it was designed to represent a bird cage. Further east is another row of slightly elevated stone cottages which are adjoined by Park Cottages which demarcate the conservation area boundary and are built perpendicular to Main Street. These are in a mix of stone and brick with varied roofing materials but have predominantly been modernised which gives a different feel/character to this part of the conservation area. From this point there are extensive views over open countryside and the treed landscape beyond.

The majority of the conservation area lies in the southern part of the village. Rookery Lane marks the western extent of the boundary. This is a narrow lane very rural in nature and very peaceful. Buildings are interspersed amongst overhanging trees, hedgerows and open spaces with a cluster of properties and the southern end. Situated midway down the lane is The Thatch, an unspoilt grade II listed building built in stone under a thatched roof, as the name suggests. It dates from pre 1652, as it appears on the first known map of Wymondham, and was once three cottages. Other properties include Meadow Farm, a stone building in a secluded setting and the secluded Rookery House within its own well treed extensive gardens. Of particular interest are the pair of cast iron gates that mark the entrance driveway. There are extensive views over open countryside to the village roofscape beyond and also the site of the Roman Villa in the distance.

West End is another narrow lane leading off the west which is typified by a group of randomly arranged stone buildings as well as a terrace of red brick and slate properties one of which bears the datestone 'G I + H owner founded by G I + S 1812'. This is a pleasant area.

Polka Walk provides a well treed and tranquil footpath link. Railings are evident along part of its length. The rear elevations of a terrace of properties on Sycamore Lane can be viewed to the north. These are predominantly built in stone with a mixture of slate and tiled roofs which vary in height and are topped by chimneys which provide a strong visual feature.

Sycamore Lane, which leads from Bursnells Lane has a curious 'horseshoe' road layout and is typified by randomly arranged stone buildings with a mixture of roofing materials, chimneys, ridge heights and alignments all of which makes for a visually rich and interesting townscape and provides intimate views between properties. Of particular historical interest are Homestead Cottage, which bears a blue plaque noting that Stilton Cheese was believed to be first produced in the cottage by John Mann in 1782; and York Cottage which displays unusual sash windows whereby the small panes have a horizontal emphasis. The Homestead is another fine building which has a fire plaque to the front elevation 'UNION SOCIETY - NORWICH' and Sycamore House has a fine mansard roof. In general the properties are well maintained and boundary walls are a strong visual feature. There are also some newer properties in the lane.

Craggs Walk is a well treed footpath link to Spring Lane which has a more regimented layout, properties lining both sides of the lane. There are several modern properties but a group of historic properties midway down add character to the street scene. Spring Cottage, for example, is a rather fine stone cottage under a very steep pantile roof and has Yorkshire sliding sash windows. It is a grade II listed building and dates from the seventeenth century. Further south the lane narrows to a track, with boundary walls a particular feature, and continues down over the spring, past Spring Farm to the Roman Villa site beyond. Two buildings of particular note are also found off Spring Lane. the Old Rectory is a splendid stone buildings in a secluded spot surrounded by well treed grounds whilst opposite the grade II listed Wymondham House (1801) benefits from similar surroundings.

Back Walk is yet another peaceful and green footpath link to Chapel Lane and continuing onward to the churchyard. Boundary walls, particularly the stretch enclosing Wymondham House feature strongly.

Chapel Lane is a very narrow lane running south of Main Street that is lined by walls to both sides whether they be boundaries or dwellings and hence has a very intimate feel. Stone predominates and the roofscape is visually important. A very ornate building, known locally as Miss Gills Shop, occupies a site at the junction with Main Street. It is very stylish and comprises stone, polychromatic brickwork, carvings and arched window heads in the Gothic revival style. It is a late Victorian building (1880's) and is very important to the street scene and social history of the village. Adjacent is the Old Chapel (datestone DEO 1846) the second non conformist chapel built in the village which closed in 1959 and The Old Manse (1892).

Opposite, the rear entrance to The Bowery is adorned by the Norfolk Gates within an archway, which allude to the owners previous business producing sauces and stuffing in the village factory (now the Old Manor Gardens housing development) - the pathway continues through another arched opening in the wall to the garden beyond.

The gable end of The Priory and tall chimneys adorning its roof is a strong feature of the street scene. Towards the southern end of the lane the properties are larger and more randomly arranged.

Church Lane is another narrow lane leading down towards the Church. Buildings on the east side are generally built close to the highway and include a variety of small stone cottages and later semi detached houses. On the opposite side the stone gable end of The Old School, with arched windows and mouldings topped by a red brick bell tower, is a strong visual feature. Adjacent is the traditional Village Hall, a stone fronted building which opened in 1928, it hosts the thrice-weekly doctor's surgery as well as other village functions.

Adjacent the churchyard wall the fine stone building is The Old Grammar School/Reading Room built in 1637. It has had many uses but is now a private residence and is grade II listed. The churchyard wall, lych-gate and Church beyond with its tall spire combine to form a visual stop at the bottom end of the lane.

The churchyard, that is well tended, is entered via the listed lych-gate which was built in 1897 to commemorate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. There are several stone cottages around the churchyard The grade I listed St Peters Church itself dominates this part of the conservation area. Built in ironstone with limestone dressings, in perpendicular style, it has thirteenth century origins and was restored between 1864 and 1873.

Nurses Lane The first stretch of the lane is enclosed by tall boundary walls to both sides which emphasises its narrowness. There are a group of historic buildings, which are constructed in a mix of red brick, stone and render, on the roadside and the Church spire

can be glimpsed over the rooftops. Opposite is the Old Manor Gardens development and the associated open space behind a continuation of the retaining boundary wall. Approaching the Church, beyond Badgers Sett (1735), the character of the lane changes and has a more open feel with grass verges to both sides and boundary walls alongside.

The lane bends sharply as it turns towards Edmondthorpe Road and defines the conservation area boundary. There are excellent views back towards the Church from this point.

Edmondthorpe Road is wider than most in the village and as a result has a different more 'open knit' character. There are a mixture of buildings, some historic and some newer, to the east side, randomly arranged along its length. On the opposite side is the Old Manor Gardens development which has been very well designed and is respectful of both the village character and local vernacular. The grade II listed Hunters Arms (c1795), formerly a public house, is a particularly prominent building in the street scene.

Wrights Lane is yet another narrow lane but does not benefit from the enclosed character of others within the village. Stone boundary walls, grass verges and overhanging trees combined with the juxtaposition of building layouts, locations and heights adds to the visual interest. There are extensive views of distant countryside set against a backdrop of trees looking north and of the varied roofscape looking back towards the village

Quality and Character of Buildings

Buildings styles throughout the village are varied as are the materials that they are constructed from. The use of natural stone is widespread although red brick and render are also evident, slates and pantiles are most widely used in the roofscape. Some of the newer buildings in the village have been constructed in natural materials to a high standard, reflecting the local vernacular and hence respecting the conservation area, there are however by contrast instances where inappropriate materials such as bradstone have been used.

There are eleven listed structures within the conservation area, most of which have been mentioned previously, and represent a cross section of building types within the village.. Other examples include The Priory which is one of the finest and grandest grade II listed buildings in the village and Apple Tree Cottage which by contrast is a more modest dwelling.

The Priory in a Victorian House, built c1840 but appears much older than it actually is. It is built in ironstone with limestone dressings and has a Collyweston roof adorned by four stone gable stacks with Tudor styled patterned chimney pots. It is thought that some of the decorative features that adorn the principal frontage of the house may have been salvaged from the demolition of the Manor House, in particular the 1637 date stone. It stands within its own well landscaped grounds its principal entrance approached by a gravel drive from Church Lane, whilst its side elevation abuts Chapel Lane.

There is also one Scheduled Monument, namely the Market Cross, a standing stone cross dating from the fourteenth century that is located within St Peters churchyard. It includes a socket stone and part of the staff and is also grade II listed. It is thought that the cross once stood in Main Street, where it may have been used to validate transactions, and was moved to its present position in 1830.

Natural Elements

The village benefits from several open areas both on the outskirts and within which contribute to its open textured character. The linear village green type features along Main Street are of particular importance as are the series of interlinked open areas along the southern edge of the conservation area which include the grounds of Wymondham House and the Old Rectory. Also significant are St Peters churchyard, the allotment gardens and land west of Wrights Lane.

Wymondham is also fortunate to benefit from extensive tree cover with several groups of mature trees interspersed amongst buildings which reinforce the rural character of the village.

Negative Factors

The use of inappropriate materials such as upvc double glazed windows, plastic rainwater goods and unfortunate building materials is relatively widespread within Wymondham. Likewise telegraph poles and the associated overhead cables.

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 Wymondham 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.

