

Asfordby Conservation Area
Designated: June 1986
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 28.60 hectares

Introduction

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance¹. 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

Asfordby is a large village situated in the Wreake Valley comprising Village, Valley and Hill. The Valley and Hill emerged as satellites of the Village with the growth of the steel works on the Hill. The Village lies on the north side of the River Wreake, three miles due west of Melton Mowbray on the A6006 Melton Mowbray to Hathern road. It is the second largest settlement in the Borough.

Originally Asfordby was called Osseberie, Osferdebie and Offerdebie (probably from Eyefordby) and named after the river Eye near which it stands.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area for Asfordby is tightly drawn and is centred on the historic core of the village. It also includes the area around All Saints Church and an area of the washlands surrounding the old Mill including a footpath leading down to the old canal, which is a Site of Ecological Interest. The medieval bridge on Station Lane and an area of modern housing around The Grove, to the north-west, are also included.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Asfordby is essentially a linear village consisting of a main street with several smaller streets and lanes running off it. The village has been dramatically enlarged and altered within the last forty years and this has had a detrimental impact on the historic heart and character of the village.

Main Street

This street, running from east to west, contains a wide variety of buildings including several listed examples and buildings of local interest; as well as a commercial sector of shops and businesses at the junction with Bradgate Lane. These shops are not attractive in terms of their architectural merits, however as the commercial centre of Asfordby this area gives the village a sense of vitality.

The historic fabric of many of the dwellings along Main Street has been unsympathetically altered and the cumulative effect has had a detrimental impact upon the aesthetics of the village. Two buildings of note on the Main Street are the Methodist Chapel and the old Co-Operative shop which is now a furniture store. The Methodist Chapel remains reasonably unaffected by change – a remnant from a bygone Victorian age. An

unfortunate shop front display window insertion has changed the character of the Co-Operative building. It does, however, display some interesting features not least the detailed brickwork and moulded terracotta, which bear witness to its former glory.

Mill Lane

This lane is a thoroughfare towards the most southerly point of the Conservation Area and includes the mill pond and part of the washlands. On entering the lane there is a high brick wall which forms the boundary to the grade II listed 159 Main Street. The bricks are a more mellow shade on the left of the lane. The lane progresses, narrowing, past several modern houses, which are swathed in trees, towards the millpond and number 15, an attractive Edwardian Villa. Here the character changes and opens out into a beautiful millpond area that is encircled by trees and overlooked by Mill House and the historic remnants of some mill machinery. There is an eye-catching cast iron bridge that crosses the river at this point. This whole area is in a tranquil, calm setting which imparts the rural feel of the countryside into the village.

Pump Lane

Pump Lane forms a right angle junction with Mill Lane and Main Street and consists mainly of Victorian terraced houses. Penarth Cottages have been substantially altered and modernised, however a legacy of attractive unpainted brickwork can be found on numbers 3, 5 and 7. A row of high level, decorative air vents and steps leading up to the front doors adds distinction to the whole row.

Asfordby Place

This leads off Pump Lane and is a modern housing development with the church spire as a backdrop. Their design makes some concessions to the vernacular with red brick, dentil courses and a lighter coloured brick plat band on several of the houses.

Brook Lane

This is a cul-de-sac leading from the main street, with an eye-catching high red brick wall and mature trees at its entrance. The pavements are narrow and edged with granite setts and the view is terminated by greenery which gives a tranquil feel to the street. "Old Beams", number 4, has a view towards Asfordby Place and the church spire.

Church Lane

At the junction of Church Lane with Main Street stands the grade II listed old Cross which has medieval origins plus, unfortunately, a few unsightly bollards which make the lane inaccessible to motor vehicles at this point. Entering the lane there are several attractive cottages to the east forming the foreground to the magnificent All Saints Church with its limestone spire which dominates the lane. Adjacent to the Church is The Old Rectory, Amberley and the replacement modern Rectory.

Quality and Character of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials, but red brick with dogtooth, or ball dentil courses and patterned terracotta tiles are evident throughout the village. Many buildings have been cement rendered or painted to their detriment. Roofing materials are predominantly slate or plain clay tiles on older properties but concrete tiles elsewhere.

Despite the existence of ironstone deposits in the locality, stone has been infrequently used for building construction and only the Church of All Saints is constructed completely in stone.

There are several listed buildings within the Conservation Area most notably the magnificent grade I All Saints Church. The Church was entered in the Domesday book around 1066 with the original church thought to be, perhaps, wooden. In the 1300's the ironstone church was constructed and in the 1500's a limestone crocketed spire was added to the original ironstone tower. Inside the church is a one handed clock dating back to 1824, which used to be situated on the face of the tower. The six bells were cast around 1600 and the east windows are Victorian dating from 1865 – a memorial to the Burnaby family.

To the rear of the Church is the Old Rectory. Of late 18th century origins this building is constructed of red brick, in Flemish bond that has been very finely jointed, and has a hipped slate roof. It also has some artistic and architecturally important features. The associated garden wall is also listed, grade II and is in coursed squared

ironstone but faced with red brick on the garden side. It separates the former Rectory garden from the adjacent churchyard.

The Old Hall, Grade II* listed is a former manor house circa 1620 built of red brick in Flemish bond with limestone dressings and a Swithland slate roof. A Coach-house, stable, barn and pump within its grounds are also grade II listed within their own right.

The Elms, grade II listed, was originally an attractive early 18th Century brick house. Now with painted rendered front it has been very unsympathetically transformed into Asfordby Garage and now retains few of its original features. The original hipped dormers can just be observed behind the garage canopy.

Another grade II listed house is no. 90-92 Main Street. This is a 17th Century house which was remodelled in 1713 and altered during the 20th Century. It is timber framed, rendered with gable end walls of red brick in Flemish garden wall bond with a pantile roof. It has a date stone to a gable inscribed S/G1/1713.

The Blue Bell public house is a grade II listed 17th Century timber framed property with brick infill panels. The polychromatic brickwork adds distinction to this eye-catching building. The roof is of Welsh and Swithland slate and there are two large bay windows to the front elevation.

At the western end of the village lies the grade II listed former farmhouse of Asfordby Lodge with several associated former barns. The dwelling has a 1730 date stone to the front elevation and is built in Flemish garden wall bond in red brick. The roof is of Swithland slate. Adjacent to it stands a stone gate post, witness to the former gateway to Asfordby Hall, built in 1840, sadly now demolished.

Natural Elements

There are few open spaces within Main Street, however an attractively well-treed open space has been formed on the corner of Riverside Walk which shows the church spire to its best advantage. There are many fine Scots Pine trees at the western end of the village which have Tree Preservation orders upon them thus providing a leafier vista when leaving Main Street and travelling further into Loughborough Road.

The old Mill area has a particularly attractive aspect, as previously mentioned. Although slightly neglected, the mill pond is a haven for all kinds of wildlife. It has a character of its own within the wider Conservation Area and as such should be preserved and protected.

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
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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 Asfordby 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.