

Harston Conservation Area

Designated: April 1973

Designating Authority: Leicestershire County Council

Area: 7.98 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

Harston is an attractive village which has strong ties to the Welby Estate. It is located approximately 10 miles to the north east of Melton Mowbray and 2 miles north of Croxton Kerrial, very close to the County border with Lincolnshire. The name means 'the grey stone' which also has connotations with border identification. There is a history of ironstone working in the locality.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The conservation area was designated in 1973 and encompasses all of the built up area as well as extensive open areas to the east and north.

Special Character and Townscape Quality

Harston is a relatively open textured and very tranquil settlement which has essentially developed in linear form along both sides of Denton Lane. There are a mixture of traditional stone built cottages and larger properties which are clustered around the intersection with Croxton Lane. There is also a large farm complex in the south eastern corner of the village.

Knipton Lane

The uphill approach to the village from Knipton is particularly attractive with views of the Church tower and side elevation of Harston House glimpsed through the canopies of the abundance of mature trees. The road levels out at the top of the incline reaching the cross roads which is somewhat of a focal point in the village with two listed buildings diagonally opposite each other, supplemented by a semi circular niche which has a stone bench, village notice board and an ornate directional timber finger post pinpointing surrounding villages. A unique feature of the street scene is the roadside stone wall of Crossway which includes a series of semi-circular niches.

Denton Lane

Beyond the crossroads Denton Lane runs directly east-west and is of mixed character. This is a wide road made to feel more so by the fact that many of the properties are set back from the highway behind

hedges, fences or stone boundary walls, indeed lengths of low stone walling form a visual link between properties.

Whilst each and every building is in natural stone some have red brick detailing and roofs are a mixture of slate or Bottesford Blue pantiles, the only exception being the newer property at the junction with Woolsthorpe Lane which appears to be constructed in bradstone and has a red pantile roof.

More than half of the properties in the lane are either listed or denoted as being of local interest which is testimony to the historic character of this part of the conservation area. Some of the properties demonstrate unique architectural detailing including the Old Post Office with its unusual windows and the ornate window heads and stone shields at Honeysuckle Cottage and its twin which stands directly opposite.

Whilst of local interest one unfortunate aspect of the street scene is Laurels Farm barn and shelter which is a late eighteenth century threshing barn on the street boundary which has sadly lost its roof structure and is deteriorating.

Woolsthorpe Lane

Running north from the crossroads towards open countryside this lane has only two properties, The Cottage a grade II listed building being very prominent on the roadside. The elevated tall hedgerow opposite creates the impression of the lane being in a cutting.

Church Lane

This is a narrow lane leading to St Michael and All Angels Church and churchyard, which is entered via a fine lych-gate, as well as Harston House an unspoilt red brick and slate Victorian villa standing, together with an array of outbuildings with in its own discrete grounds. Two relatively modern detached dwellings complete the group of buildings accessed of the lane.

Croxton Lane

Running south from the crossroads this is a narrow lane with elevated and well treed banks which line either side of the highway and give an intimate feel. Downhill views are terminated by a group of mature trees whilst the gable end of the Old Malthouse, a stone building dated 1841, but with older origins, forms a visual stop to the uphill view towards the village, whilst views towards the Church are framed by the stone churchyard wall.

Back Lane

This lane forks off Croxton Lane and leads towards Harston Grange. It is also particularly well treed with stone boundary walls, tall hedgerows and overhanging tree canopies combining to form a 'tunnel' effect which adds to the rural character and the discrete setting of the late eighteenth century Grange and its associated farm buildings which are a mixture of modern and historic construction.

Quality and Character of Buildings

Local materials are well represented within the village, particularly locally quarried ironstone which predominates. Roofing materials are generally Bottesford Blue and red pantiles or slate. Low stone walling is also a significant feature within the street scene.

There are ten entries in the listed building schedule for the village, which cover a total of fifteen properties and include two table tombs in the churchyard. Amongst those of particular note are;

The Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels which has late fourteenth century origins but had the nave added in 1888. It is in coursed ironstone with slate roofs and has a three stage tower.

Laurels Farmhouse was built in the late eighteenth century and is built in coursed ironstone with a pantiled roof. Some of the associated farm outbuildings including a stone threshing barn and stone shelter shed, are notified as being of local interest.

There are also several pairs of listed Estate houses in coursed ironstone with limestone quoins and window dressings all dating from the 1860's, they have varying styles of chimney and some bear the Welby coat of arms.

Harston Grange (late eighteenth century), Harston House and the Former Village School which bears the inscription 'In memory of Thomas Calvert Beasley – Erected by his children 1868' are other buildings of local interest

The village is blessed with a fine array of individually architecturally rich and pleasing buildings which complement each other as a whole.

Natural Elements

The approach to the village from the west is particularly attractive due, for the most part, to the abundance of mature trees. The grounds of the parish Church of St Michael and All Angels is a significant open space within the village as are the mature gardens of Harston House together with the land fronting Harston Grange.

Negative Factors

The use of inappropriate materials such as upvc double glazed window units and plastic rainwater goods has been kept to a minimum within Harston although there are some examples which do adversely affect the character of the conservation area.

For further help and advice please contact:

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

The Council has prepared a leaflet entitled 'A Guide to Conservation Area' which gives general advice. Copies are available from the Regulatory Services Section as detailed above

The above is an appraisal for the Harston 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 imply that it is of no interest.