

Sproxton Conservation Area
Designated: September 1986
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 29.26 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

Sproxton is located some 9 miles north east of Melton Mowbray on the "Stone Belt" uplands of the Leicestershire Wolds. The village is tucked away in rolling hills in a sparsely populated and relatively isolated part of the County.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary encompasses the whole village and a substantial tract of open land between the northwest edge of the village and the Church of St. Bartholomew including the Church and grounds.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

The heart of the village lies at the junction of Buckminster Road, Coston Road and Main Street which is enclosed by substantial buildings of character. The majority of the buildings in the village are constructed of ironstone or mellow red brick and several combine both materials to pleasing effect. Roofing materials are predominantly of clay pantiles, although plain tiles and some Welsh slate and Swithland slate has been used on a number of older buildings. Concrete tiles are also evident on some of the more modern buildings.

Coston Road

Sproxton Methodist Chapel, built in 1864, once stood at the point where Coston Road joins Main Street. It was dismantled in 1997, after extensive recording, and shipped to the USA where it was rebuilt at Baker University in Kansas where it is now the University's Ministry office. Its former site is now marked by a commemorative garden and seating area. Opposite, sited back from the road, lies the Crown Inn public house, a building of local interest, which is a magnificent stone and slate construction with dressed stone window surrounds. Both contribute to an intimate setting at the onset of Coston Road, supplemented by smaller traditional cottages on both sides. Beyond the public house the road widens with properties more randomly spaced. The road then bends and dips with an apparent "tunnel" of trees interspersed with historic stone buildings and some modern infill to the road frontage. Standing within its own well-tended grounds, behind stone boundary walls, is the Old Barn built of stone with red pantile roof and decorative stone chimney stacks. This defines the limit of the Conservation Area, the land beyond having a more open feel with noticeable tree planting lining the field boundaries.

The Nook

This lane forms a fork with Coston Road and displays a mixture of house styles and building materials on properties of various ages. The unspoilt Edwardian red-brick Nook Farm forms a focal point on entering The Nook with Wheelwright Cottage to the left and a modern bungalow marking the termination of the Conservation Area. Open fields surround this area.

Buckminster Road

The focal point of the village lies at the junction of Buckminster Road with Main Street, an area enclosed by several established buildings of character. To the south is the grade II listed Vine House and to the north is the substantial stone built Corner House, another building of local interest standing in an elevated position overlooking the road. A variety of tree species of many colours and textures line the road to the north as it bends and climbs away past the prominent Mount House. This ironstone dwelling at the junction with Stow Hill has an attached building to the south which has been partially built; the owners hope to complete it in the near future. Balustrades run alongside the road, forming an elevated boundary wall to the property.

Stow Hill

The Conservation Area boundary runs northeastwards along the southern boundary of Stow Hill. A stone wall which fronts Hillside Farm is a particularly attractive feature which follows the road as it meanders uphill past the stone and red-brick Old Vicarage – which stands back within its own grounds forming a distinctive focal point.

Church Lane

This lane links Stow Hill with Main Street and continues on towards the church the majority of its length flanked by open fields including two protected open areas. The village roofscape is particularly attractive when viewed across the open area to the south-west. The grade II listed Hill Crest farm lies to the north east of the lane, diagonally opposite the junction with School Hill. Unfortunately, a pole mounted electricity substation is located in the adjacent field which detracts from this very attractive stone-built property – its bright orange pantiles particularly eye-catching. An attractive view of the Church is visible in the distance.

School Hill

The hill dips and bends to the right from the junction with Church Lane with views of buildings of various styles, materials, textures and colours built at differing levels. There are grass verges running along both sides of the street with granite setts designating the highway. There are splendid views in all directions.

To the south lies a row of several estate stone dwellings that have unfortunately been linked with unattractive yellow brick-built extensions, to their detriment. An old village pump is located in front of 7 School Hill and is positioned in its own stone niche with stone trough.

The old Victorian School, now a village hall, is located at the end of the street at the junction with Main Street in an elevated position behind attractive railings with unusual niches. A date-stone confirms that it was built in 1871.

Main Street and The Green

This is an open and attractive area of the village with several grassed areas interspersed with trees. This forms a distinct sub area within the village and Conservation Area. On the east side of Main Street between its junction with School Hill and Buckminster Road are a row of dwellings displaying a mix of materials and styles typical of historic buildings and reflecting the varied village vernacular.

On the west side of The Green are a cluster of more substantial stone buildings, the majority of which are listed, which form a very attractive group.

Stonesby Road

To the north side is a terrace of stone cottages, most of which have been modernised to a degree. Further west is a barn converted for residential use that marks the end of the Conservation Area. The outbuildings to Greengates Farm are situated on the south side. They display a mix of traditional buildings with modern barns adding to the visual interest of the vicinity.

Quality and Character of Building

Sproxton has a preponderance of stone buildings with either red clay pantiles, Welsh slate, or concrete tiles as roofing materials. Many red brick buildings can also be seen. The grade II* thirteenth century Church of St. Bartholomew is unusual in that it stands in isolation to the north of the village centre. An ancient monument – a tenth century carved stone cross – stands to the south-east of the church. The cross is the only pre-conquest cross in Leicestershire that stands complete and is carved from one single piece of stone.

To the west of The Green and spaced out along Main Street are five, substantial grade II listed stone-built farm-houses, namely Bank House, Middle Farm, 11 Main Street, Beech Tree Farm and Greengates Farm. These buildings have date stones dating from 1795 (Middle Farm) to 1806 (Greengates Farm). Greengates Farm is supplemented by an interesting range of traditional outbuildings in stone and brick with red clay pantile roofs. Beech Tree Farm, named after the mature beech tree fronting the property, has a date-stone to the front DR 1785 and has a range of traditional farm buildings to the rear with stables in red brick within a court-yard.

The grade II Wheelwright Cottage is an early nineteenth century, mainly ironstone house, located to the eastern side of The Nook. It has unusual ribbed roof tiles creating a “ripple effect” and a dentil eaves cornice under the gabled roof.

Hillside Farmhouse, located on Stow Hill, is a Grade II listed coursed ironstone dwelling with some limestone dressings under a pantile roof.

Hillcrest Farm is a grade II listed dwelling on Church Lane. This ironstone building, circa 1810, is complemented by a large range of ironstone and pantiled outbuildings and is located adjacent to a protected open space. An electricity pole transformer mars its setting.

School Hill has one grade II listed cottage which is a fine example of a simple whitewashed dwelling with a small single-storey outbuilding.

Natural Elements

Sproxton benefits from huge swathes of open spaces within its Conservation Area boundary. This is largely due to the isolated location of St. Bartholomew's Church. The upland setting of the village has limited the impact of trees in the locality. There are few significant groups or individual trees to be noted, although beyond the built-up area, the churchyard of St. Bartholomews is well-treed and there are mature clusters lining some approach roads. The village green has benefited from some additional planting in the 1980's. There are many wonderful distant views from the locality especially east and west from Coston Road and from all directions surrounding the Church.

Negative factors

The use of inappropriate materials, such as 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 are 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 Regulatory Services 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 Regulatory Services Section as detailed above.

The above is an appraisal of the Sproxton Conservation Area which highlights the most significant factors which make it worthy of Conservation status. The omission of any particular building, feature or space would not be taken to apply that it is of no interest.