

Branston Conservation Area

Designated: April 1973

Designating Authority: Leicestershire County Council

Area: 13.32 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

Branston is a pleasant linear ironstone village, some 10 miles north east of Melton Mowbray, lying close to Knipton Reservoir. The village remains an agricultural village and is interspersed with agricultural cottages and other dwellings with many open spaces. A dominant feature locally is Belvoir Castle, seat of the Duke of Rutland who is the predominant land owner. Much of the land in the locality is farmed by the Duke of Rutland or tenant farmers.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The conservation area boundary encompasses the entire built form of the settlement plus large areas of agricultural land to the east and protected open areas within the village envelope.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Waltham Road

Approaching the village in a northerly direction from Waltham Road, an impressive view unfolds as a result of the buildings and church lying at a much lower level. The buildings are encased in swathes of greenery, and the spire of St. Guthlac's church can be seen peeping through the trees. The view encapsulates an archetypal English village.

Nearing the village, the road rises and buildings come into view to the east. These consist of stone built cottages set back from the road within spacious gardens; the similar styling indicating estate ownership. Some have slate roofs and some concrete tiles. Hedges line the road on both sides, and the houses are punctuated by open spaces. The area has an open feel as there are wide roadside verges and open fields to the west. There is a visual stop at the traditional finger post and timber bus shelter at the northern-most end of the road at its junction with Main Street.

The Rock

The Rock forks south off Main Street the junction dominated by a mature conifer tree in the grounds of Lings Farm. Several attractive houses, cottages and outbuildings line the eastern side of the street. The buildings are generally unspoilt and are built in brick and stone. Number 5 has a lovely brick porch which is mirrored by several

others throughout the village; perhaps being built on estate houses. An open area, fronting number 5, includes an attractive brick and stone outbuilding at the rear of the site.

The Rock gradually narrows into a track past four substantial terraced cottages, gable end on to the track, and eventually emerges back onto Waltham Road. These four red brick cottages have a prominent central gable with a smaller gable on either side. These properties benefit from stone drip moulds and attractive barge boards with carved supporting brackets.

Main Street

At the start of Main Street is Beech House whose gardens are enclosed by a significant hedge. Opposite is a fine stone wall adjacent to the grade II listed Lings Farmhouse. There is a large open area to the east allowing views of buildings on The Rock.

Standing at the junction with The Rock, the spire of St Guthlac's church can be seen in the distance surrounded by trees. The buildings 'fronting' the street are predominantly ironstone with red brick window surrounds. Several have stone drip moulds which are very striking. Many of the roofs have Bottesford Blue pantiles; Home Farm is a particularly fine example; several have red pantiles including Wilds Farm.

The Old Post Office has three lovely round stone and brick steps leading up to the central front entrance and there is a post box inserted in the front elevation.

Looking northwards the streetscene displays a rich palette of colour with honey coloured stone and various hues of roofing materials. On the west side of the street is the Wheel Inn, which is a focal point of village life since the village hall, opposite, is at present no longer used. Adjacent to the village hall and opposite the grade II* listed church in an elevated position is an enclave of newer buildings. St Guthlac's church is surrounded by a very well-kept churchyard with slate, stone and metal gravestones interspersed with mature Scots pine trees.

The village war memorial is located within a recess in the stone wall surrounding St. Guthlac's church yard. It is a very unusual feature consisting of a carved wooden Christ upon the cross supported on a stone plinth carved with the names of the dead. Two wooden plaques on either side record the names of men who returned from war.

Manor Farm together with several associated converted outbuildings is located in the most north-westerly corner of the village. A Montessori School is sited to the rear.

A track runs due east between numbers 24 and 34 Main Street and on the north side is a pair of semi-detached brick built cottages with a large central chimney stack and Hall Farm Cottage. Hall Farm's outbuildings are a cluster of attractive brick and stone buildings, one especially, has a beautiful dentil course in red brick. An unattractive, modern steel and asbestos barn lies to the south of the track. The roadway terminates in a lovely view over the surrounding countryside towards Croxton Kerrial.

Towards the end of Main Street, many trees are visible but several telegraph poles and overhead wires mar the view. At this point the road appears to narrow as it dips away and continues out of the village.

The houses to the west occupy a raised location. There is a footpath with small brick wall in front of Mulberry Cottage. On the right is the attractive grade II listed property at number 36 with York stone steps and railings leading up to the central front door.

The pavements along Main Street are generally lined with granite kerbstones. There is, however, a substantial stretch of kerb on the western side, from the Wheel northwards, that is lined with bull nosed red glazed bricks. These are an unusual feature which make an attractive contribution to the character of the village.

Knipton Road

Knipton Road is centrally located and exits to the east of the village travelling downhill, through a 'tunnel' of trees with stone walls on both sides of the road. There is a sense of enclosure and mystery to this small part of the Conservation Area.

Quality and Character of Buildings

Although some buildings are situated with their principal elevations onto the road, gables tend to dominate views within the village and are a strong feature of the Streetscene.

There are seven listed buildings in Branston, the most celebrated of which is the grade II* listed Church of St. Guthlac. This is a thirteenth century building with a later fourteenth century crocketed spire. The south porch was added in 1872 and the south aisle restored.

The Old Rectory, grade II listed, is located north of the Church and is now a private house. Constructed in coursed ironstone with concrete tiled roofs; it was added to in the 1830's with a single storey extension.

Wild's Farmhouse is grade II listed and was constructed in the mid eighteenth century from coursed ironstone with a pantile roof. Eye-catching railings and an iron gate adorn a small area in front of the entrance.

The grade II listed Hall Farmhouse, now without a farm, is a later eighteenth century property constructed in coursed ironstone with slate roofs. There is a central door behind a lovely timber trellis porch. The front elevation has four sash windows with eight over eight panes and the gables have horned sashes with plate glass.

Number 2 Main Street is the Grade II listed Ling's Farmhouse and associated single storied stable range. The property was built around 1800 of coursed ironstone with brick dressings and a roof of black glazed pantiles. The windows are three light mullioned casements under segmental brick arches.

Number 36 Main Street is a grade II listed house built in the mid eighteenth century and altered in the late twentieth century. Constructed in coursed ironstone with a roof of black glazed pantiles it is typical of many of the eighteenth century properties within the village.

The Village Hall is located in a raised location in the heart of the village. It is Grade II listed and was once a County Library and previously the village school. A plaque dates it to 1843. It is built in coursed squared ironstone with limestone dressings and fishscale tiled roof with stone-coped gables and finials. There is a central porch with limestone front and loop-holes to sides. The porch front has a Tudor-arched opening with hoodmould and there is a wonderful pyramidal roof on the bellcote. To the rear is a small twentieth century extension.

Natural Elements

The village benefits from many open spaces, of which several afford good views from within the settlement. The Conservation Area encompasses huge areas of open agricultural land to the east of the village envelope. Adjacent to the village hall is a magnificent Wellingtonia (sequoia) tree that is worthy of its preserved status.

There are wonderful open views from several aspects within the village, most notably to the rear of Hall Farm, 1 Waltham Road and south of The Rock.

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. The village has been subject to limited infill development over the last 25 years.

A pole mounted sub station lies adjacent to the village hall, spoiling the setting of this outstanding building.

For further help and advice please contact:

Regulatory Services
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 Branston 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.