

Barsby Conservation Area

Designated: October 1994

Extended December 1995

Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council

Area: 8.07 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

Barsby forms part of the Parish of Gaddesby with the nearby village of Ashby Folville and Gaddesby. It is a small linear village located to the south west of Melton Mowbray approximately mid way between the town and Leicester. It is set on a hilltop with extensive views over open countryside and is bisected by the road linking Ashby Folville to South Croxton. The name Barsby originates from the words Barnesbi, meaning Barn's-settlement, mainly due to its agricultural origins.

The Conservation Area Boundary

The conservation area boundary is widely drawn to include the majority of the built up area of the village as well as extensive tracts of open land to both the north and south.

Spatial Character and Townscape Quality

Whilst Barsby sits astride a north-south through route, the village is in fact orientated east-west. As such there is little traffic movement along Main Street or Baggrave End, resulting in a tranquil settlement.

The up-hill approaches from both the north and south are well treed and the road splits the village into two parts, each with their own identity. The western part of the village is centred on Main Street, a straight stretch of road terminated by the derelict King William IV former public house on the bend. This part of the village is characterised by larger properties abutting the highway, which together with boundary walls give a strong sense of enclosure. There are few gaps within the built form, the exception being the village field site of the former Village Hall, thus limiting views out from this part of the village.

The eastern part demonstrates a different character altogether. Whilst some properties do abut the highway others are set back within their own grounds, presenting a more random layout. The road alignment too is less regimented with lanes and alleyways leading off Baggrave End. This together with the presence of open spaces, tree groups and hedgerows gives a more rural feel to this part of the settlement.

In general the floorscape is very bland, the only concession to traditional materials being a section of granite kerb stones to the south side of Baggrave End.

The village lacks a significant focal point, as Barsby's church was lost several centuries ago. Godson's Folly however is probably the most visually significant building. The property is located within the west of the village to the rear of Broom Cottage along Church Lane. The building was described in the 1930s as one of the most peculiar dwelling houses in England. It looks like a church but it has never been used as one. It was built some time before World War I, the original construction consisting of one small room with a high tower. The architect of the scheme was the Rev. J Godson. With no church at Barsby, when a death occurred in the village, the inhabitants had to carry the coffin to the neighbouring village of Ashby Folville. Godson intended the building to be the village mortuary. However, the request to dedicate the building was refused. The Folly was subsequently converted for residential use with the addition of a modern extension and is now known as Tower House.

Quality and Character of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a variety of building styles and materials. The western section of the village is predominantly red brick, with thatch, slate or concrete tiled roofs. The majority of the buildings along Main Street have been built close to the carriageway, ensuring a sense of enclosure to the street scene. The village to the east also offers a variety of building styles, including render, whitewashed brick and timber framed dwellings, with a mixture of roofing materials.

There are several interesting early buildings within Barsby including four listed buildings. One of them, "Stoneleigh", situated on Main Street, dates from 1691 and is the oldest building in the village. This is a particularly fine example of the local vernacular, built of red brick with leaded Yorkshire sliding sash windows. Brick detailing in the form of a diaper and checkerboard patterning, divided by a stringcourse, reinforce its attractiveness.

At the far end of Main Street and forming a visual stop when approaching the village from Gaddesby Lane, stands Walnut Tree Farm; another grade II listed building dating from the 18th century. An unfortunate later flat roof extension somewhat mars its appearance.

There are many other attractive buildings along the Main Street, some of which are notified as being of local interest, which also contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. The Firs is an unspoilt Georgian brick building with the original sash windows, some patterned brickwork and a door hood over the central panelled timber door. Barsby Farm, on the south side of the Main Street, provides a glimpse through to the courtyard where a range of original brick built farm buildings are visible, opening to further extensive views over open fields where the church at Gaddesby is just visible in the distance.

The Cottage and Dairy Farm situated at the crossroads are two further examples of unspoilt red brick vernacular buildings. The former Barsby Methodist Church on Baggrave End opposite is another fine example of village architecture. The date stone records that it was built in 1826 and is yet another example of patterned brickwork.

However, the street scene is dominated by the thatched property known as Broom Cottage, its central location surrounded by open grassland forms a focal point looking to the east along Baggrave End, with Tower House beyond.

There are two listed buildings in the eastern part of the village. The appropriately named "Thatch Cottage" formed by the amalgamation of the cottage and adjoining dairy demonstrates a variation of building materials including brick, rubble stonework and render. Adjacent is Old Oak Cottage, also grade II listed, in timber frame with brick infill and formerly thatched. A particularly fine and unusual feature of this part of the village is the boundary wall enclosing The Cottage, a dry laid red brick wall in herringbone pattern.

Barsby has been subject to significant amount of new development on infill plots in recent years. Although the new buildings are noticeable, in most cases attention has been given to brick detailing and use of appropriate materials.

Natural Elements

Due to its hill top setting there are important views both into and out of the settlement, particularly across attractive open countryside to the south. Breaks in the built form along Main Street and Baggrave End afford particularly splendid views to the south. There are few open spaces within the built environment the most notable being within the eastern section of the village providing an open texture. The triangular section of protected open space that surrounds Broom Cottage and land at the end of Baggrave End are particularly important to the village character.

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.

Several derelict and poorly screened farm buildings, together with a few incongruous modern buildings and the visually prominent former King William IV Public House all combine to give a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of parts of the village and conservation area.

The entrance to Baggrave End is marred by a significant group of telegraph poles and associated overhead cables, particularly those situated on the green areas. Likewise views into the village when approaching from the south are terminated by the unfortunate rear elevations of the terrace cottages on Baggrave End.

For further help and advice please contact:

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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 Barsby 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