

Grimston Conservation Area
Designated: October 1994
Designating Authority: Melton Borough Council
Area: 8.40 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

Grimston is a small village lying in a secluded location on the southern slope of the Leicestershire Wolds some 4 miles west of Melton Mowbray. The origin of the name is probably "tun" (town or settlement) of a person called Grimr.

Conservation Area Boundary

Melton Borough Council designated the Grimston Conservation Area Boundary in October 1994.

The historic core of the village is centred around the Church, but the Conservation Area includes most of Perkins Lane, all of Shoby Lane and a large area of open pasture land to the south of the village. A significant area of housing in the eastern part of the village is not included.

Spatial Character And Townscape Quality

Grimston has several working farms and many residential properties fronting narrow lanes. The village green is situated at the western end of the village and marks the point where Main Street, Shoby Lane and Perkins Lane converge. Land levels vary throughout the village with the Church area centrally situated occupying the highest land to the north of Main Street. Shoby Lane, Church Lane and the Main Street approaching from the east all lead upwards and onwards into the village, however Perkins Lane rises to the north-west on exiting the village.

Open areas are at a premium within the core of the village, however, a large area of open pasture land is included within the Conservation Area, this lies south of Shoby Lane and includes land to the rear of Church Farm. There are outstanding views to be enjoyed from The White House, on Shoby Lane, over this open countryside looking in a southerly direction towards Leicester.

Shoby Lane is a narrow track which enters the village from the south west, passing Aylesford House with its semi-circular conservatory topped by a conical roof, onward into the heart of the village – the village green. This area is somewhat unusual in that the grassed area is divided into three separate greens by footpaths and Main Street itself. One of the greens is home to the village stocks, Listed Grade II and recently renovated. To the rear of the stocks is a large boulder; its origins are unknown but it is likely that it was placed there within recent times. Adjacent to 'Curate's Folly' an ancient spring emerges and flows into the remnants of a trough which was used by local farmers for watering their cattle. There is also a pump overlooking the green. Nearby is a children's play area and the local public house, The Black Horse, providing a raised backdrop to this particularly attractive area of the village.

Perkins Lane leads upwards and out of the village, lined with mature trees which frame the roadside in a tunnel effect. At the entrance to the village green, high brick walls and buttresses at Hillside Farm form an imposing boundary to the road. A very attractive traditional red-brick barn occupies an elevated and visually prominent position opposite number 7 Perkins Lane.

The Church of St John the Baptist occupies an elevated position on Main Street overlooking Church Farm and Church Cottage at the junction with Church Lane and the distant roofscape beyond. Leading downhill, within a cutting, Church Lane meanders down to Walton Fields and the substantial buttressed brick boundary wall to the property forms a visual stop at the bottom. The stable yard at Walton Fields is enclosed by traditional red brick stables with a half-timbered building with a clock tower at its centre.

Travelling east along Main Street, a glimpse of the Church may be seen within the mature trees that surround the area. This is the highest point of the village and notably the most ancient, containing all of the Listed Buildings within the village. The road is narrow at this point with the churchyard acting as a pinch-point with Church Farm, an imposing three storey building, built at a higher level looking upward towards the Church. An infill development of modern brick houses have been built adjacent to the Church, the stark red brick jarring against the softer mellow ironstone of the Church. This unfortunate intrusion does little to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Further on along Main Street a K6 red telephone kiosk and traditional post box can be seen adjacent to Wesley house and the old village pump on the grass verge adjacent to Oakley Cottages. Turning to the east, the Old Chapel forms a visual stop at the bend in Main Street at the Conservation Area limit.

A particular feature of the village are red brick boundary walls topped with either red or slate grey copings. Granite setts are an edging feature along some of the pavements.

Quality And Character Of Buildings

The village as a whole demonstrates a wide variety of building styles and materials but white-washed cottages, red brick walls, red pantiles, Welsh and Swithland slate and concrete tiles predominate.

Of the nine listed buildings or structures within Grimston the grade II* listed 13th Century ironstone church of St. John the Baptist is the most important as the focal point in the village street scene. It houses a clock, circa 1670, which is an early provincial example of an anchor escapement mechanism. In the churchyard there is a listed cross and two headstones. Red House Farmhouse, adjacent to the church, is a fine example of a timber framed building of 16th century origins. Opposite are Church Farmhouse and the adjacent barn conversion which are both dominant brick buildings in a roadside location. The former carriage arch to the barn has been converted to form a large window with the original doors retained as a design feature.

Church Cottage, Yew Tree Cottage and The Cottage all situated in Main Street are traditional examples of white painted village dwellings. White painted dwellings are also evident around the village green and this appears to be a particular feature of Grimston, examples are The Black Horse, The Old School dating from 1867, complete with bell cote still housing the school bell, White House Farm and Nook Farm which all echo this tradition.

Walton Fields Cottage has ornate chimney pots and No.1 Perkins Lane has two crown topped chimney pots which are unusual features within the village.

At the eastern end of Main Street there are three rendered houses with a date plaque stating that they were built in 1915. The former chapel terminates the conservation area and is a traditional red bricked edifice dated 1892 with an attractive dentil course of bricks below the eaves with granite setts surrounding its entrance.

Natural Elements

A particularly distinctive characteristic of the village is the wealth of mature trees which are in abundance throughout. Many are the subject of preservation orders including the horse chestnut which towers over the village stocks and dominates the green. The village green areas set this village apart from many in the Borough giving Grimston a true centre and focal point for village activities.

Magnificent areas of open land south of Shoby Lane offer splendid views over breathtaking countryside towards Leicester and these should be protected.

Views from within the village are limited due to the number of trees and differing land levels and building heights. Many of the streets fall below the floor levels of adjacent buildings which gives an enclosed and intimate feel. There are several grass verges which play an important part in the more open aspects of the village.

Grimston is a village of contrasts witnessed by the wide-open village green area, the densely treed area surrounding the Church, open tracts of land to the south, narrow lanes and buildings constructed at differing levels.

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. Although a certain amount of modern development is incongruous to the setting of the Conservation Area these are overwhelmed by the traditional essence of the village and its typical rural character.

For further help and advice please contact:

*The Physical Environment 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 Physical Environment Section as detailed above.

The above is an appraisal of the Grimston Conservation Area that highlights the most significant factors that 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.