



Mountsorrel Conservation Area

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Adopted March 2007

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INTRODUCTION

Mountsorrel Conservation Area covers an area of 43.45 ha and, according to the mountsorrel.org website, its designation in 1977 resulted in a marked change in the fortunes for the Market Place, which had become a largely derelict area.

The boundaries of the Conservation Area generally define the extent of the original village as it existed at the end of the 19th century. By that time Mountsorrel had developed as a distinctive linear settlement on a narrow tract of land between the River Soar and the steep edge of the Charnwood Forest, being described in White's Directory of 1863 as 'picturesquely seated on the west side of the river Soar, at the foot of the lofty and abrupt termination

of a ridge of rocky hills, which extend west through Charnwood Forest to Derbyshire'. The Conservation Area includes large areas of open land: The Green; extending west from The Green a finger of land which was set aside as common land at the time of the 1782 Enclosure Awards and an area of meadow alongside the River Soar that is crossed by a mineral railway line constructed in 1860.

The purpose of this appraisal is to examine the historical development of the Conservation Area and to describe its present appearance in order to assess its special architectural and historic interest. The appraisal is then used to inform the consideration of management proposals to preserve and enhance the Area.



PLANNING POLICIES

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced. In making decisions on potential development within a conservation area, the Council is required to 'pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area'. Permission will not be granted for proposals that are likely to harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. Sections 69 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment says that special attention should be paid when considering proposals for development in a conservation area.

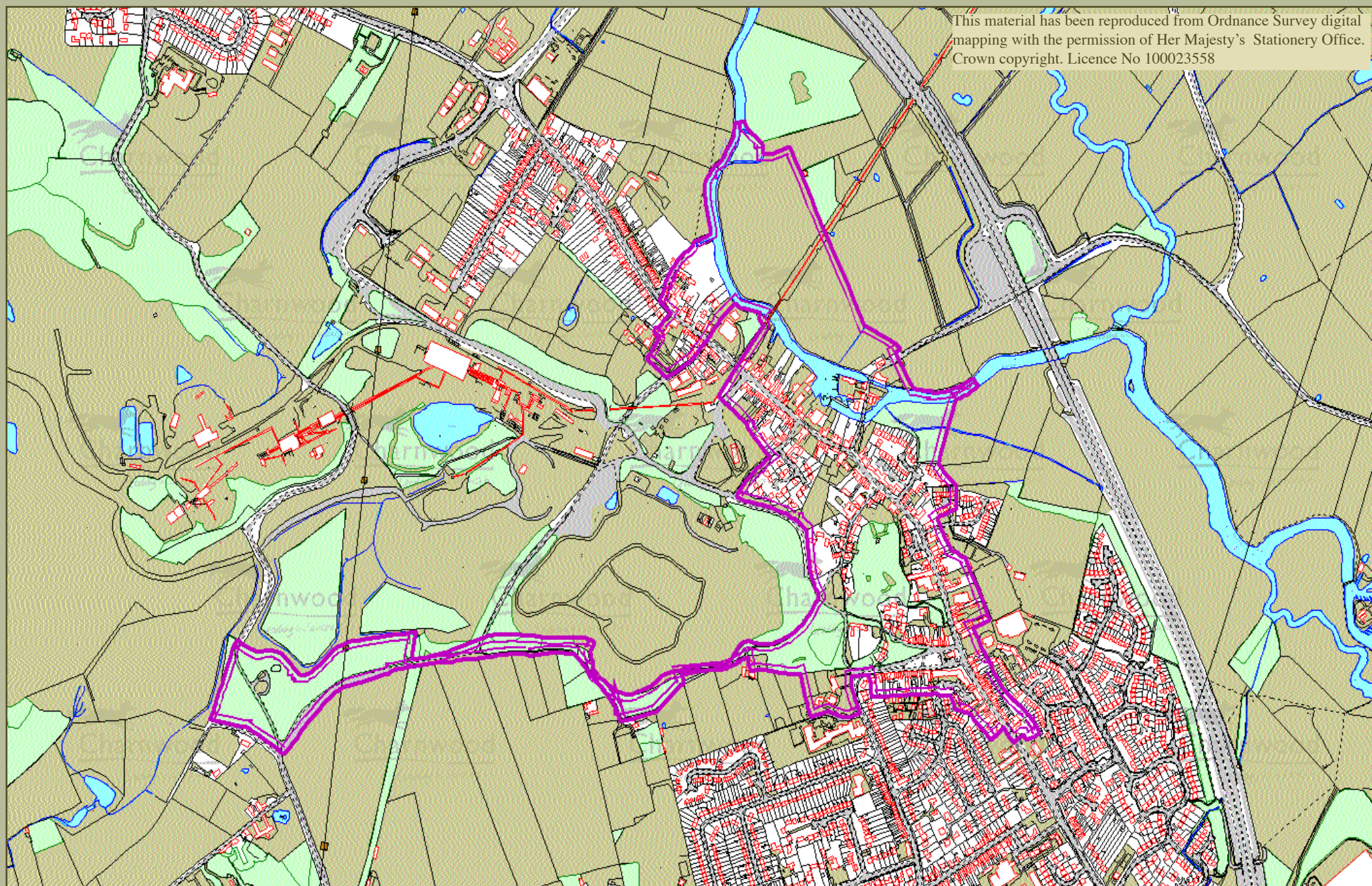
Planning Policy Statement 9: Requires that planning policies and decisions not only avoid, mitigate or compensate for harm but also seek ways to enhance, restore and add to biodiversity and geodiversity.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands published in March 2005 advises local authorities to develop strategies that avoid damage to the region's cultural assets. Policy 27: Protecting and Enhancing The Region's Natural and Cultural Assets.

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 to 2016, published in December 2004, seeks to identify, protect, preserve and enhance areas, sites, buildings and settings of historic or architectural interest

or archaeological importance. Development within conservation areas should preserve or enhance their character and appearance. Environment Policy 2: Sites and Buildings of Historic Architectural and Archaeological Interest.

The Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 1991 – 2006 adopted in January 2004 seeks to ensure that new development in conservation areas preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area. Policy EV/10.



Current map of Mountsorrel showing the extent of the Conservation Area



The built up part of the Conservation Area



LOCATION AND SETTING

CONTEXT AND POPULATION

Mountsorrel lies about 4 miles south of Loughborough and is situated on the western side of the River Soar. As a result of the local topography the historic settlement of Mountsorrel developed in a linear fashion squeezed between the River Soar and the steep edge of the Charnwood hills that run along the western edge of the village. The village itself stands on a gravel terrace about 6 metres above the River Soar.

The population of Mountsorrel has varied over time. The most recent profile published by Leicestershire County Council shows there that were 7,694 people residing in the parish of Mountsorrel at the time of the 2001 Census. The population returns recorded in the Victoria County History show that the population has risen steadily from about 156 people at the time of the 1377 Poll Tax, to 168 households by the time of the 1670 Hearth Tax, to be followed by consistent growth throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries from 1,233 in 1801; to 1,953 in 1841; 1,985 by 1871 and 2,209 and then to 2,417 in 1901.

GENERAL CHARACTER AND PLAN FORM

The core of the Conservation Area is the linear settlement of Leicester Road, Market Place and Loughborough Road, the generally level and narrow gravel terrace. The eastern margins fall into the flood plain and meadows of the River Soar and the western margins rise increasingly steeply to the hills of Charnwood Forest. St Peter's Church, at the head of Market Place and opposite the junction with Sileby Road or York Street, occupies a slight rise in the land, although even in this location the Church is not an obvious focal point in the street scene.





One of the highest and most prominent parts of the village is Castle Hill on the south-western side of the village, where the carved granite War Memorial on the top of the hill is a focal point for views from several directions, especially across the valley.

The physical restrictions imposed by the local topography have strongly influenced the pattern of streets. The original settlement developed in linear fashion following a distinct south-east to north-west alignment described by the Market Place and its continuation into Leicester Road to the south and Loughborough Road to the north.

The presence of the River Soar restricted development of the village on the east side of the terrace, with only one road originally called York Street now Sileby Road running over the river. The original pattern of development along the east side of the main road took the form of long narrow burgage plots, with houses situated along the road frontage and their gardens and paddocks running down towards the river. This distinctive pattern of early development has now been radically altered by the construction of a number of short residential culs-de-sac, such as Baron's Way, Little Lane and Waterside, into the land between the historic frontage development and the river.

The edge of the Forest also restricted development to the west, through a number of short, winding lanes which climb steeply away from the main road. The most important of these is Watling Street, originally called Barn Lane, which marked the historical division between the townships of Mountsorrel North End and Mountsorrel South End or, as referred to by Nichols, 'Mountsorrel Inferior' and 'Mountsorrel Superior'.

At the south end of the settlement, extending west from Leicester Road, is The Green, a gentle slope to the south





of Castle Hill. From the top of the hill there is a long narrow tract of open land which was originally set aside as common land by the 1782 Enclosure Awards. This common continues as a track for nearly a mile to an area of woodland at the junction of Bond Lane with Wood Lane.

The modern and largely 20th century settlement lies to the south and is somewhat detached from the Conservation Area, such that the linear form of the historic settlement is still a distinctive and self-contained part of the village. The settlement has also expanded to the north.

The historic settlement now forms the basis of the Conservation Area, within which there is a significant

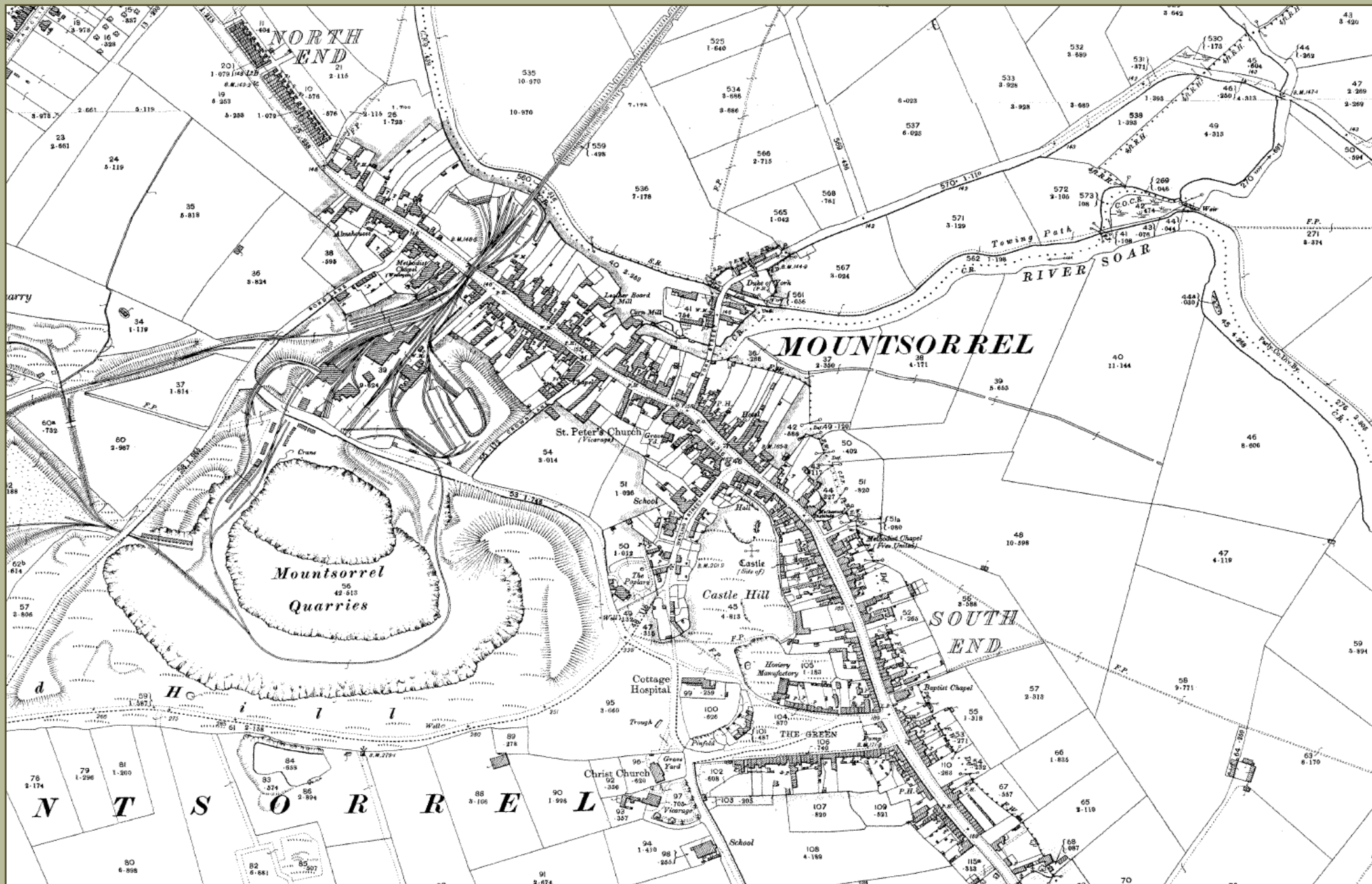
number of surviving domestic and commercial buildings dating mainly from the 17th century through to the late 19th century that contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the Area. There are 36 listed buildings and of these, three are listed Grade II*, the remainder listed Grade II.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTEREST

The Conservation Area encompasses the core mediaeval settlement of Mountsorrel and contains two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Castle Hill and the Market Cross). The historical development of the Area, which is evident in the pattern of streets and the age of many of the properties, would suggest that there is good potential for

below ground archaeology. The excavations carried out by the Mountsorrel Archaeological Project in 1986, and summarised by Lucas (1986), demonstrated that there is good surviving evidence of mediaeval occupation as early as the 14th century below two historic properties fronting the Market Place as well as materials from the 12th and 13th centuries.

Any major development within the Conservation Area requiring excavation works is therefore likely to require a considered archaeological assessment and investigation prior to the commencement of any development.



Mountsorrel in 1903



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Unlike many of its neighbouring settlements in the Soar valley, Mountsorrel is a comparatively recent settlement that was founded following the Norman Conquest. The Mountsorrel Archaeological Project found no evidence of any earlier settlement. From its earliest origins, the settlement was split into two townships: Mountsorrel North End in the Parish of Barrow (under the Earls of Chester) and Mountsorrel South End in the Parish of Rothley (under the Earls of Leicester), with the boundary, according to Nichols, defined by Barn Lane (now Watling Street) until their amalgamation in 1884.

The origin of the name Mountsorrel is not clear. The most popular suggestions being that it derives from 'Mount Soar Hill' in recognition of its location between the River Soar and the steep Castle Hill; or that it comes from 'Montsoreau' after a village in France known to Robert

le Bossu, Earl of Leicester, who had acquired the tenancy of the castle in 1151.

Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester and a nephew of William the Conqueror, had built the castle in 1080 on a site that was clearly chosen for its strategic and dominating position overlooking the Soar Valley and the principal roadway between Leicester and Derby. The castle was however short lived as it was destroyed in 1217, having been used as a bastion against King Stephen, so that all that remains today is a series of earthworks on Castle Hill.

The settlement would appear to have developed around the castle and its location is described by Hoskins (1970) as 'guarding a sort of pass between this crag and the river Soar'. Creighton (1997) observes that Mountsorrel is a typical example of a castle-dependent borough, where the settlement began as an informal trading post at the



castle gate which was then followed by more permanent burgage plots on what was otherwise a restricted and poor site for a settlement.

Although neither township was the principal administrative centre within its parish, their location on the main mediaeval road allowed Mountsorrel to develop as a market town following the granting of a charter by Edward I in 1292 to Nicholas de Seagrave, the then Lord of the Manor. The village grew around the Market Place, but had mixed fortunes, a decline after the 14th century was followed by rejuvenation in the 17th century as new houses were built along the main street. By the 18th and early 19th centuries, the market had attained considerable importance but by the second half of the 19th century it had ceased to be of commercial importance. The 1848 Topographical Dictionary of England noted that ‘the market, which is almost disused, is on Monday’.

A distinctive building in the Market Place is the Butter Market, a neo-classical rotunda of eight Tuscan columns supporting a low-stepped domed roof. This was built in 1793 by the then Lord of the Manor, Sir John Danvers, to replace the historic fifteenth century Market Cross which he had removed to his own park at Swithland Hall. Excavations carried out around the Butter Cross in 2000 found evidence of a cobbled surface and 14th and 15th century pottery. A 20th century interpretation of the market cross by Mike Grevatte was erected at the north end of the Market Place in 1994.

As outlying settlements in each of their respective Parishes, neither township was graced by a parish church. However, the Market Charter of 1292 refers to a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist in Mountsorrel North-End, which was located on the site of the present church. The site itself is quite restricted, situated between the road and the hills behind, resulting in the church being



built on an unusual alignment. The present church dates to 1794 when the original chapel was substantially rebuilt in local granite in a Perpendicular style and it consists of a chancel and nave under one roof built around the 13th century tower of the earlier chapel. Until 1869 this church was under the jurisdiction of the mother church in Barrow but became independent and re-dedicated as St Peter's in 1869, although the earliest mention of it being named St Peter's dates to 1871. In 1891 the church acquired Mountsorrel Hall, which was originally built in 1783, for use as its vicarage.

There was no church at Mountsorrel South End until Christ Church was built in 1844 of local granite in an Early English style, along with a parsonage-house, at a cost of £5,500 following a private donation from Miss Brinton, who lived in Berkshire and had no apparent link to Mountsorrel.

The development and prosperity of most mediaeval Soar valley villages relied on an agricultural economy based on open fields typically organized on a four-field system. However the economy of Mountsorrel may not have been solely dependent on agriculture as it is difficult to identify any extensive open fields associated with either township. Joyce (1997) notes that Mountsorrel North End relied on a single field, the Hawcliffe Field, and meadows. At the time of the Enclosure Awards the average holding was about 2.75 acres, although, because of the larger holdings held by the two major landowners (John Danvers had 72 acres and Barrow Hospital had 42 acres), most of the other holdings were smaller consisting of little more than a dwelling with a garden or paddock.

The total acreage enclosed by the 1782 Mountsorrel Enclosure Award which included both the North and South Ends was 279 acres of which 139 were in Mountsorrel North End, further indication of the lack of open fields available to the village.



As part of this Award, the Enclosure Commissioners set aside 76 acres of common land on the Mountsorrel Hills and a commonable place (a unique inclusion according to Joyce (1999)). The legacy of this Award is the large tract of open land to the west of the village and The Green at its centre, both of which are included in the Conservation Area.

There are indications that there was much poverty among households in Mountsorrel North End prior to enclosure. Joyce (1997) points out that at the time of the 1670 Hearth Tax only half of the 168 households in Mountsorrel North End were eligible to pay the tax. The levels of local poverty may also be reflected in the local architecture and the relative paucity of high quality houses in either settlement, the best houses being restricted to a small group to the north of the church.

Another indication that the economy of Mountsorrel was not dependent on agriculture, was its status as a market town and important coaching stop on the main road between London and the north of England during the 17th century. Many of the larger historic buildings tend to be former coaching inns that provided accommodation for travellers and merchants visiting the market and no doubt contributed to the local economy. At one point there were 27 inns along the main street. The Grapes on Leicester Road, now converted to housing, is an example of one such inn with its extensive and distinctive outbuildings to the rear.

The growth in the village through the 19th century was reflected in the improvements and growth of community facilities. An infants' school was built in 1847 by the Countess of Lanesborough. This later became the Mechanics Institute and then the Parish Rooms in 1906 and is still used as the Parish offices.



New chapels were built by the Wesleyans; the first chapel being erected in 1839 (now demolished) following the growth of Methodism in the village after visits by John Wesley in 1783 and 1786 when he preached at Stonehurst Farm; the Methodist Chapel on Leicester Road (built in 1836 and now used as offices) and the Baptist Chapel on Leicester Road (1879), which still survives. Two Church of England schools were built in 1871, one serving St Peter's on Watling Street, now in use as part of a residential home, and a second serving Christ Church on Rothley Road, which is still used as the village school. The latter is outside the Conservation Area.

By the end of the 19th century the historic development within the Conservation Area was virtually complete. The most serious intervention since then has been residential development in the late 20th century. The restrictions imposed by the local topography saved the Conservation Area of Mountsorrel from the intrusion of much of the large scale housing and industrial development that occurred throughout the 20th century to the south of village. The present Conservation Area therefore reflects the basic historic street pattern that had been established as a result of the local topography and the historic development of the village and contains many of the buildings built in the village between the 17th and 19th centuries.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

HISTORIC AND PREVAILING LAND USES

The present activities and land uses within the Conservation Area reflect its historical development and whilst the principal land use is residential, as is typical of many historic settlements, there are also commercial and industrial uses that have developed alongside each other over time and are now well integrated into the urban fabric.

The commercial centre of the village historically was the market place, and although the market has gone the large open space it occupied still survives, now given over to car parking. The Market Place is still the important commercial centre of the village containing as it does a range of shops and the public library. There are also shops along Leicester Road at the lower end of the village and whilst there are no shops on The Green, there is evidence of former shop fronts in a number of properties fronting The Green.

The village has had a tradition of cottage industries, one the earliest being the manufacture of gloves, dating back to the late 16th century, and through the 18th and 19th centuries Mountsorrel gloves were highly regarded.

Hosiery was another important cottage industry throughout the Soar Valley from the mid-18th century; in most cases it was combined with agriculture but may have been a principal occupation in Mountsorrel where there was no significant agricultural economy. By the middle of the 19th century the framework knitting was a firmly established cottage industry and White's Directory of 1863 noted that in Mountsorrel South End the vicar of Christ Church had 'in his care about 900 souls, mostly stocking weavers'. The number of frames fluctuated depending on the demands of the market. The records in the Victoria County History show that there were 258







frames in 1844, only 190 frames in 1845 due to a shortage of work, increasing to 203 frames by 1851. Framework knitting was very much a cottage industry with the frames kept in workshops behind houses or on the upper floors. The Women's Guild notes that at 75 Leicester Road, Mr. Antill had ten frames housed in a building at the rear of his premises. As 19th century progressed the hosiery trade moved from the cottages into factories. By 1908 Kelly's Directory notes that stocking weaving was still carried on but only to a limited extent and there is no remaining physical evidence of it in the centre of the village today.

However, the most important local industry over the past 250 years has been the quarrying of the local granite, an extremely hard pinkish stone called hornblende granodiorite. The stone has long been used for road building, originally for kerb and paving stones but



now as a crushed aggregate, and the quarry has had a significant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from the use of the granite as a building material in many of the houses and prominent boundary walls.

The granite was first worked by the Romans, who transported the stone into Leicester and it is likely that small scale quarrying activities continued from then on, but it was not until the Broad Hill quarry was bought in 1756 by Sir John Danvers that large scale quarrying began. One of the first uses was in the construction of a 10 foot wide causeway along the turnpike road through Mountsorrel North End. Elsewhere Joyce (1997) notes that granite paving was used in Leicester in 1771 and the Rev. Curtis in his *Topographical History of The County of Leicestershire* (1831) records that granite was 'applied to improved street pavements and turnpike roads'.

A major problem was the transport of the stone. Initially it was carried along the local turnpikes but this caused as much damage as it was laid to prevent. It was not until the arrival of the Soar Navigation canal in 1794 that large quantities could be easily transported. By 1797, 890 tons of granite was shipped by canal along with 193 tons of Swithland slate (both quarries were owned by John Danvers) and by 1807 this had risen to 5,000 tons (Joyce, 1997). However, the canal lost its importance in 1844 with the arrival of the Midland Railway on the opposite side of the Soar. A branch line was constructed to the quarry in 1860 that involved the construction of a bridge over the Loughborough Road and the more spectacular single span, brick-built bridge across the River Soar (the '1860 Bridge').





PREVALENT AND TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS

Hoskins (1970) notes that Mountsorrel retains a great deal of highly interesting vernacular building using 'three almost indestructible building materials: Mountsorrel granite, Swithland slate and Barrow-on-Soar lime-mortar'. To this range of materials should be added brick, particularly as much of it was supplied by the local Britannia Brick Works that was established in the early 19th century to the south of the village. These local materials contribute to the particular character and appearance of the village and demonstrate an important aspect of the self-sustaining nature of village life (Joyce, 1997).

The predominant building materials in the Conservation Area are either granite or brick, and whilst there are no surviving examples of timber-frame and thatched

properties in the village, there is evidence of timber framing in some properties, such as nos. 1 & 2, Watling Street and in the gable end of no. 14, The Green.

The use of brick is common throughout the village, particularly in buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, and it provides a broad uniformity of material and appearance throughout the Conservation Area. In many properties the brick is laid in a Flemish bond, which has been used over a wide period of time, from the early brickwork of no. 14, The Green, where the pattern is emphasised by the use of contrasting headers and stretchers, through to 19th century buildings such as no. 31, The Green, nos. 72 & 74, Leicester Road and no. 36 Loughborough Road and into the Edwardian period at the start of the 20th century, as at nos. 77 & 79, Leicester Road.

Brick is also used to provide decoration. There are two interesting examples of the use of diaper work being used to decorate the outbuildings to the rear of no. 15, Leicester Road (The Grapes) and the principal street elevation of nos. 3 - 7, Loughborough Road. Many properties have horizontal brick string courses between the first and ground floor windows, such as at no. 113, Leicester Road, no. 4, Loughborough Road and no. 31, The Green; or a flamboyant combination of moulded string courses with projecting pilasters as at nos. 131-133, Loughborough Road. The most richly decorated property is the front elevation of Mountsorrel Hall with its projecting pedimented gable, stucco string courses and decorative swags and balusters.

As well as brick, there is a widespread use of the local granite, readily available and no doubt relatively cheap,



typically laid as random rubble. It is used in both high status buildings such as St Peter's Church and in more humble domestic buildings. Some houses are constructed totally in granite as at no. 7, Watling Street and nos. 9 and 58, Loughborough Road, or it is used in the gable walls, such as no. 79, The Green, or as a rubble stone plinth, such as at nos. 72 & 74, Leicester Road, no. 1, Loughborough Road and no. 14, The Green, where it may have originally supported a timber frame.

An exception to the use of brick and granite is either the traditional smooth render used in properties such as at no. 4, Castle Hill and no. 41, Leicester Road or a roughcast render as used on the ground floor of The Grapes.

A number of buildings are constructed of coursed stone although this is not typical in the village as a whole. The main examples of this are the Parish offices (the former infants' school) on Leicester Road, Christ Church on Rothley Road and in the front façade of a range of utilitarian industrial buildings alongside the railway bridge on Loughborough Road.

There are also many granite rubble boundary walls, the most impressive being between nos. 7 & 9 and nos. 133 & 141, Loughborough Road, but many streets, such as Watling Street, are lined by granite walls which make a significant and distinctive contribution to the local street scene and the Conservation Area generally.

There are two sections of iron railings of note remaining in the village: to the front of the Parish offices and along the Leicester Road frontage of nos. 2-16, Baron's Way, where the railings are set on a low granite wall.

Welsh slate is the predominant roofing material, although this material is typically a product of the nineteenth century, relying on the railways for its distribution. Before the

availability of Welsh slate there was a reliance on locally available materials, in particular on Swithland slate and a substantial number of roofs in the Conservation Area are still covered in Swithland slate, such as at nos. 33-37, The Green, nos. 32-40, Market Place, and Stonehurst Farm and its outbuildings.

There are a few examples of roofs covered in plain tiles, such as at no. 1, Loughborough Road and no. 31, The Green, and one use of clay pantiles on an outbuilding at no. 52, The Green.

Given the difficulties in obtaining Swithland slate, Welsh slate or plain clay tiles are the most appropriate roofing materials for any new development. One of the most significant visual changes to the Conservation Area has been the widespread use of concrete roof tiles to re-roof many of the properties. These tiles look out of place and are visually intrusive..

There has been a good survival rate of historic joinery with a range of original windows and doors, features that define the appearance of properties and are integral to their appearance.

Timber sliding sash windows are common in the Area and they provide a strong vertical emphasis. Some of the earliest are used on the surviving Georgian houses at Mountsorrel Hall, no. 4, Loughborough Road (which combines split pane sash windows in the ground floor with multi-pane windows in the first floor) and at Stonehurst Farm and also in a number of Victorian properties, no. 79, The Green, no. 41, Leicester Road and no. 36, Loughborough Road, where the sash windows emphasise the proportions of this three storey, single bay cottage.

There are some good examples of surviving Yorkshire sliding sash windows, such as in the upper floors of nos.



46 - 50, Market Place, nos. 3 - 7 & no. 46, Loughborough Road and at nos. 52 & 69, The Green. No. 1, Loughborough Road has an interesting variety of window styles, with mullion and transom windows on the ground floor with horizontal sliding opening lights in the upper frame and sash windows on the first floor.

Dormer windows are not a particular local feature but there are some interesting examples, such as the small squat dormers situated at the front of the roof slope on nos. 11 & 15, Leicester Road (The Grapes), at no. 4, Loughborough Road, where the dormers have glazed sides, and at no. 79, Leicester Road, which has a pair of multi-pane casement windows and decorated bargeboards. The multi-pane casements in its paired dormer over no. 77, Leicester Road have unfortunately been removed.

Window and door openings are typically defined by brick or stone arches and projecting cills, and these are a common feature throughout the village, such as at no. 113, Leicester Road, nos. 46-50, Market Place or within the terraced properties on the south side of The Green.

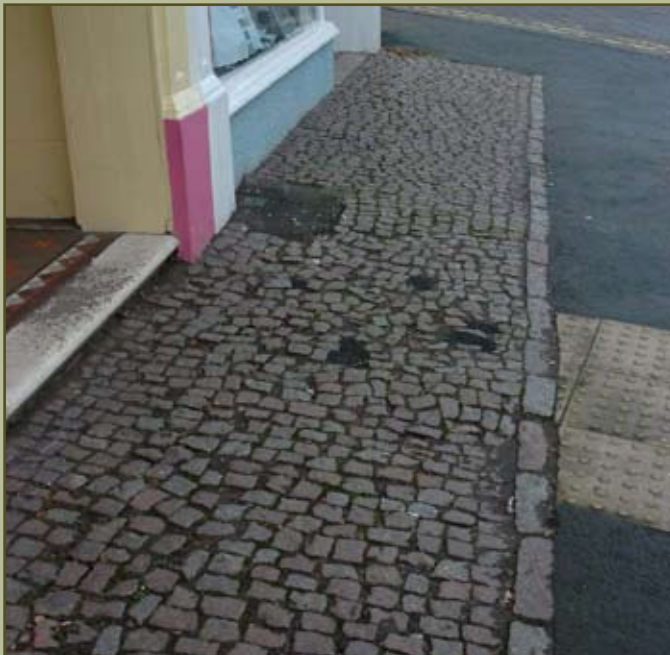
As well as timber windows, there are some good examples of timber panel doors, sometimes partially glazed, and many with toplights above. Some of the best examples can be seen at no. 36, Loughborough Road and nos. 34, 74 & 133, Leicester Road.

A number of properties have retained their original doorcases which in most cases are quite simple with timber architraves and flat canopies supported by console brackets, such as at Stonehurst Farm, no. 47, Leicester Road and no. 31, The Green, or as a range of brackets and hoods such as at nos. 28 & 32-34, Market Place; or with a pedimented hood as at no. 4, Loughborough Road. The most elaborate is at Mountsorrel Hall where the panelled door has a fanlight above it and is framed by robust



architraves, decorated brackets and a prominent hood. These timber surrounds make a unique contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and add to the collective wealth and variety of architectural details within it.

As a longstanding commercial area, there are a number of surviving historic timber shop fronts that make a significant contribution to the historic character of the Area. Typical shop fronts contain large shop windows framed by decorated pilasters with brackets supporting a cornice over the fascia, with particularly good examples at no. 9, Market Place (Bennett's Angling shop); 46 & 48, Market Place (Tailor-Made Weddings and Tickled Pink) and at nos. 77 - 79, Leicester Road (the Post Office and the Mercury News Shop), which are fine examples of early 20th century, Edwardian shop fronts. This latter property also has attractive oriel windows to the first floor accommodation.





VIEWS AND VISTAS

The linear form of the village restricts most of the views to the changing scene offered by the main road. The scene develops best at the rise to St Peters Church with the changing width of the street associated with the Butter Market. There are occasional glimpses up the lanes to the hill.

As with the main road there is a developing scene along Sileby Road which also offers views into the meadows to the 1860 Bridge to the north and importantly to the curve of the canal to the south.

From the top of Castle Hill there is a commanding panorama across the Soar Valley, to the Wolds on the further side. Equally Mountsorrel stands out as a landmark from the roads in the valley, the Castle Hill monument

and, at night in the winter, the illuminated cross are a feature of the area as a whole.

There is a pleasant vista as one descends The Green as it opens out to meet Leicester Road. The view, which once extended over the meadows is now terminated by the blank rear wall of the Leisure Centre.

TREES AND GREEN SPACES

The principal green space within the village is The Green which extends up to Castle Hill. From the top of the hill there is a track, now called Cufflins Pit Lane, which runs for nearly a mile to an area of scrubby woodland at the junction of Bond Lane with Wood Lane. This finger of land was added to the Conservation Area at the specific request of the Parish Council to preserve the woodland and common land. The track runs close to the edge of

the quarry and there are many notices warning people to keep out. Where the land is narrow the track is bounded by barbed wire fences and in the wider places there is a string of large granite blocks to prevent vehicular access off the track. The woodland at the end is well used as an informal playground.

Elsewhere the trees of Castle Hill reach down along the lanes into the urban scene of the village, particularly at Watling Street and Crown Lane and also to the rear of the Library. The terraced cliffs behind the flats at 22-64 Leicester Road provide a natural setting.

There are two landscaped areas in the village: the memorial gardens opposite the Working Men's Club on Leicester Road and the quiet gardens that lead down beside Sileby Road to the river.



BIODIVERSITY AND WILDLIFE

Mountsorrel contains several areas which are of importance to bio-diversity and wildlife both within and adjacent to the Conservation Area.

The finger of wooded track from Castle Hill passes beside an area which was restored when quarrying ceased and is now designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The woodland at the end of Bonds Lane is recognised as a Local Wildlife Site and also as an Open Space of Special Character.

Castle Hill itself is a Local Wildlife Site and the River, the meadows to the north of the Conservation Area and the wet woodlands and undisturbed meadows to the east of the Area are all recognised as Local Wildlife Sites.

The Conservation Area is generally surrounded by an Open Space of Special Character especially the meadows which are included in the Area with the 1860 Bridge.

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

REVIEW OF CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

Mountsorrel Conservation Area was designated in January 1977. The boundaries were reviewed and extended in April 1987 but they have not been reviewed since.

The present boundary incorporates the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest. This Appraisal suggests that the Area should include the quarrymen's cottages at the north west end of the village, the car sales garage and Nos. 105 to 113 on either side of Loughborough Road and it should extend along Bond Lane to include the stone bridge, in order to provide continuity in the protection of this section of the historic A6 and a more coherent boundary to the Conservation Area.

GENERAL CONDITION

In recent years much has been done to improve the quality of the Market Place in the centre of the Village, including investment in environmental improvements and traffic calming measures, the repair of the listed Butter Market and the introduction of a number of pieces of public art.

A brief survey of the condition of the traditional buildings within the area has been carried out as part of this Appraisal. It reveals that although the overall condition of the built fabric when viewed from the street frontage appears reasonable, many have ill conceived restoration works, particularly inappropriate replacement of roofing materials, windows and doors, which has caused significant harm to the traditional character of the area.

The condition of the listed 1860 Bridge which carries the conveyor from the quarry, is of considerable concern. The use of ill conceived repair techniques has led to an accelerated deterioration of the face of the brickwork.

The render has blown in several places; some has fallen to the ground and into the river. Remedial repair works need to be carried out as soon as possible to protect the historic fabric of the bridge.

The Appraisal has highlighted that many traditional shop fronts survive but that they are sometimes in a poor condition and therefore vulnerable to inappropriate repair and replacement.

A great deal of past repair work to the historic fabric of the area has been carried out by inexpert contractors, cheaply and without consideration or knowledge of good conservation practice. The dangers of cheap, speculative contractors being employed, resulting in poor quality and inappropriate restoration, or no work being done, thus endangering the future of the buildings, are very evident.

The targeting of favourable grants through the Council's Historic Building Grant Scheme may provide a persuasive incentive to property owners to undertake necessary repairs and to consider improvements, such as the authentic reinstatement of architectural features. It will also give the Council the opportunity to advise on good practice, to control the standard of work and to monitor the quality of its execution.

ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION PROPOSALS

The quality of the conservation area is often threatened by the cumulative impact of numerous small changes to many buildings. Terraces that once displayed integrity of design through the use of matching features such as doors, window, chimneys and porches, have been unbalanced by various alterations and additions. On the whole such changes do not require planning permission.

In order to preserve and enhance the character of conservation areas, many planning authorities use Article 4 Directions to restrict permitted development rights on groups of buildings or areas. Restrictions normally relate to particular elements such as replacement windows and doors, or roofing.

One of the outcomes of the Public Meeting, undertaken as part of the consultation process, was the identification of the loss of traditional windows and doors on the character of the area, significant enough to justify the consideration of an Article 4 Direction. It is proposed that the appropriateness for the use of Article 4 powers in this instance be investigated.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

Previous enhancement schemes have sought to overcome the fundamental problems that were associated with the busy A6 trunk road. With the construction of the bypass, a comprehensive approach was taken towards reducing traffic speeds along Loughborough Road and Leicester Road but undertaken in a way that improved the visual amenity of the village and enhanced the setting of the listed and other buildings in the Conservation Area. In addition the opportunity was taken to improve the two small public parks, Beside Sibley Road, and on Leicester Road opposite the Working Men's Club. A number of pieces of public art were introduced and a new village cross established.

A Town Scheme - Conservation Area Partnership Scheme which functioned during the 1990's provided a considerable amount of funding for the repair of historic buildings within the Conservation Area and contributed to lifting the image of the village.

Possible further enhancement opportunities are listed below. It is not an exhaustive set of proposals but the major areas of need have been identified.

- Improvements to the former entrance to the quarry and the bridge on Loughborough Road, in order to better integrate the frontage with the character of this part of the Conservation Area.
- Implementation of a scheme to reinstate a row of traditional cottages on the library site at the north end of the Market Place.
- Construction of a new library and cultural building as an extension to Church House on The Green at Leicester Road.
- Improved pedestrian links from The Green across Leicester Road to the Leisure Centre and the area of housing beyond.

The Borough Council has adopted a Percent for Art Policy and has also created an annual budget of £25,000 for public art within Charnwood. It is intended to work with Charnwood Arts to involve artists in environmental improvements.

DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Various forces, historical, cultural and commercial, have shaped the development of the conservation area, creating a sense of place and individual identity. The character and appearance of the conservation area is vitally important, both in attracting business and new commercial investment in the area itself, and in the encouragement of initiatives to the benefit of the wider community.

Based on the issues that have been identified the following objectives will have a positive impact in both protecting and enhancing the character of the conservation area, and provide the basis of a long term management plan:

TABLE OF PROPOSED ACTIONS

CONSERVATION AREA ISSUE	PROPOSED ACTION	LEAD PARTNER	OTHER PARTNERS
The present boundary of the area is somewhat incoherent around Loughborough Road - Bond Lane.	Amendments to the Mountsorrel Conservation Area boundary, as outlined in this Appraisal, will be examined and consulted upon by the Borough Council.	CBC	
Gap sites and poor frontages that damage the character and appearance of the historic area.	Where necessary formulate design/development briefs to encourage appropriate new development for identified sites.	CBC	

1. Identify and target for action historic buildings at risk within the area. Action may range from gentle persuasion and the incentive of grants to the use of compulsory powers as necessary/appropriate. Any historic buildings showing signs of neglect need to be identified. They could be enhanced by removing clutter from elevations (pipes, wiring, brackets etc.), masonry cleaning or repainting. Owners could be approached with suggestions as appropriate. The encouragement of the cleaning of buildings, using methods appropriate to their materials, could achieve significant results visually.

2. Review how the Council's adopted 'Shopfront & Signs' guidance is being used. The Borough Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document to clarify the Council's policy and provide advice on shop front design, including the issues of advertisements and security measures. Identify any outstanding enforcement issues.

3. Encourage development on sites where infill building would be desirable. Design briefs will need to be prepared for such sites to stimulate interest and assist owners and developers to achieve appropriate design and layout.

4. A detailed appraisal is necessary to identify sites within the highway where hard ground surfaces need to be introduced or renewed, including consideration of the scope to redefine sections of carriageway, realign kerbing, extend and repave pedestrian areas, provide and mark vehicle parking bays. A policy for the selection and use of materials appropriate for particular situations will need to be agreed with the Highway Authority.

5. It is also necessary to identify any land in public control that is under utilised and might be appropriate for a landscaping scheme to be prepared. The adequacy of maintenance for such areas will need to be addressed. Similarly any neglected private land that can be cleared and reclaimed for positive use will be examined. Consideration should be given to the introduction, or reinstatement where they have been lost, of walls, railings and planting to create enclosure.

6. A policy regarding the co-ordination of the placing of all permanent items within the streets needs to be formulated and the opportunities to renew, redesign, re-site, eliminate or combine existing street furniture need to be identified. Similarly there is a need to look at

traffic signs and highway markings, with a view to their rationalisation. The appropriateness of the existing street lighting and the scope to introduce imaginative lighting schemes, including the illumination of key buildings, also merits examination. Guidelines could be set out in a public realm manual.

7. The opportunities for public art in various forms to create distinctive and quality solutions to landscape improvements will be examined.

8. The production of heritage trail leaflets to increase community awareness and appreciation, including the encouragement of tourism, should be considered. This might involve interpretation material, plaques or similar for key sites and buildings.

9. Identify biodiversity enhancements such as the provision of bat and bird boxes, particularly swift nest boxes within the fabric of new/converted buildings.

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Part of the purpose of this Appraisal is to inform and guide development control decisions about the Conservation Area.

Any proposed changes should be sensitive to and take into account the character as described in this Appraisal. New development, including extensions and alterations, must respond to the context and environment, the scale, form, materials and detailing of the existing buildings and the grain and pattern of the built form and the urban spaces of the Area. This is particularly important in Mountsorrel where the enclosed streets of variable width and the massing and scale of existing buildings can both be easily damaged by inappropriate development.

There are a number of design features in many of the properties which characterise the Conservation Area. Any new development should either incorporate these features or the new design should respect them in a way that they can be seen and recognised both in the old and in the new properties. Given the difficulties in obtaining Swithland slate, Welsh slate would be an alternative; imported or reconstituted slates or roof tiles, either clay or concrete, are not part of the historic palette of materials.

Care should be taken when decisions are made to use materials that are not part of the prevailing palette that the existing character and appearance is enhanced and not damaged. Roof lines, roof shape, eaves details, verge details and the creation of new chimneys are important considerations.

Windows and doors of traditional design make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Area. The use of upvc and standardised high speed joinery techniques nearly always leads to unsuitably detailed windows which will generally be unacceptable in the Area.

The Council will insist on good quality schemes which respond positively to the historic setting of the Area. This extends to small buildings such as garages and also to boundary walls and fences. Minor alterations need to be carefully considered as incremental change can have a significant detrimental effect on the character of the Area over a period of time.

There may be opportunities for innovative modern design. Good modern design could create positive changes in the Area.

Any development within the Conservation Area requiring excavation works is likely to require a considered archaeological assessment and investigation prior to the commencement of development. Many of the earlier buildings may conceal mediaeval or post-mediaeval remains; any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric will require archaeological investigation.

Many species of wildlife are protected by legislation. Prior to any proposals for development a survey of the wildlife should be carried out where there is a likelihood of a legally protected species or a priority Biodiversity Action Plan species being present and at risk of impact from the development or other management. This may often be the case where it is proposed to use or develop previously unused attic and roof spaces.

Applicants for planning permission must provide a Design and Access Statement to explain the decisions that have been made and to show how proposals relate to the context. It should demonstrate a full appreciation of the local streetscape, how it has developed, including prevailing building forms, materials and plot ratios.

Proposals will be assessed against the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Leading in Design and other Supplementary Planning Documents and government guidance contained in PPS1 and PPG15.

The Borough Council Development Department can advise on the need for Planning Permission or Listed Building Consent and can provide guidance on matters such as appropriate methods of maintenance/repairs, changes to shopfronts, alterations and extensions and suitable materials.

LISTED BUILDINGS IN MOUNTSORREL CONSERVATION AREA

CONTACTS

Conservation & Design Team
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built.heritage@charnwood.gov.uk

Development Control
Tel. 01509 634691
Development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

Planning Enforcement
Tel. 01509 634722

Castle Hill

War Memorial Grade II
The Bungalow No 2 Grade II

Leicester Road

Parish Rooms with wall piers, gates & railings Grade II
The Grapes Grade II

Loughborough Road

Church of St Peter Grade II*
Stonehurst Farmhouse Grade II
The Swan Inn Grade II
No 1 Grade II
No 2 Grade II*
No 4 Grade II
Nos 3, 5 & 7 Grade II
Workshop at No 7 with walls of No 9 Grade II
Barn at No 9 Grade II
Barn 20m south of No 9 Grade II
No 9-9a & Walls Grade II
Nos 17-19 Grade II
No 46 Grade II
No 89 Grade II

Market Place

The Market Cross Grade II*
No 28 Grade II
No 30 Grade II
Nos 32-34 Grade II
Nos 36-38 Grade II
Nos 46-50 Grade II
Mountsorrel Mineral Railway Bridge Grade II

Rothley Road

Christ Church Vicarage Grade II
Christ Church Grade II

The Green

Village Pump Grade II
Gorden House Grade II
Nos 12-14 Grade II
No 32 Grade II
No 33 including carriage entrance Grade II
No 50-52 Grade II
No 71 Grade II

Watling Street

Nos 1-3 Grade II
Nos 5-7 Grade II

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TRANSLATING COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

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