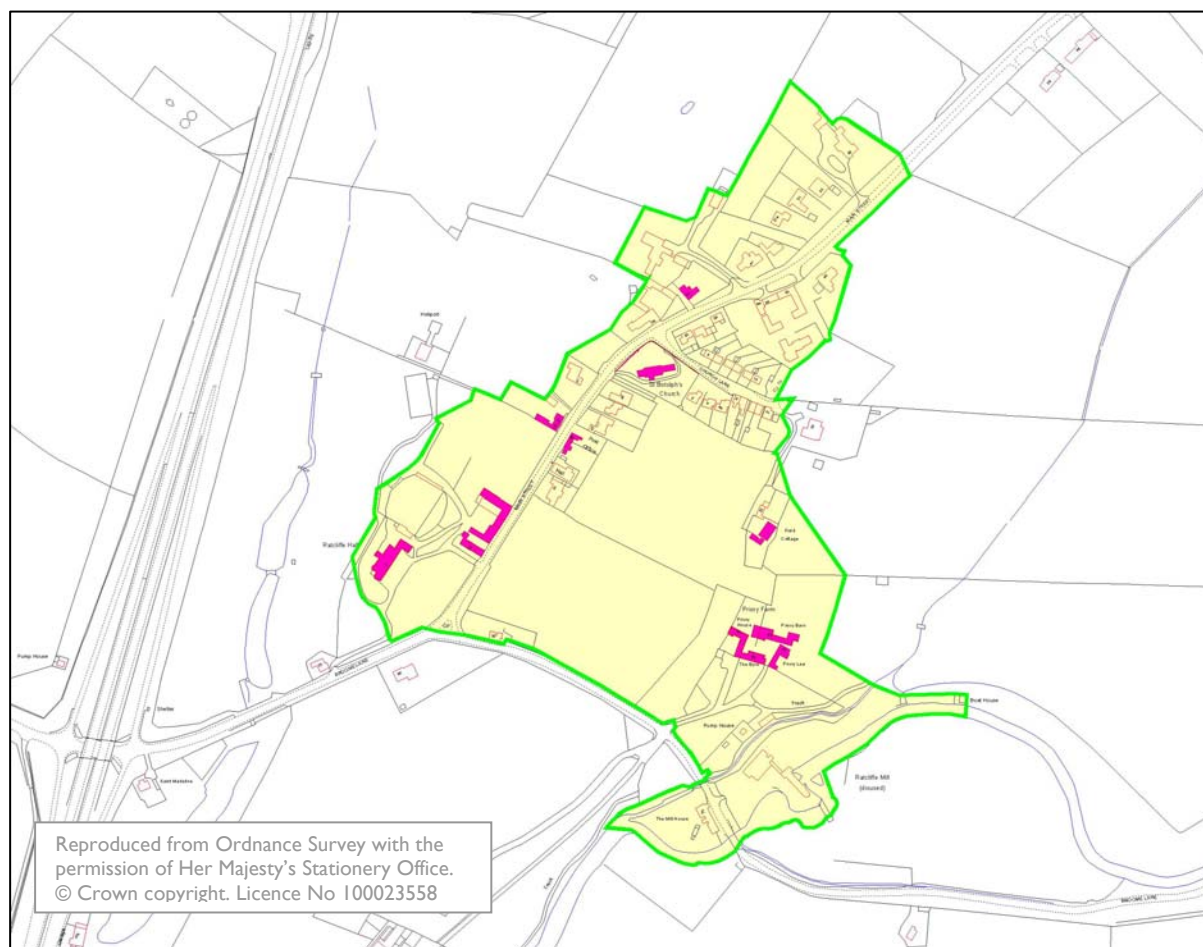




## **Ratcliffe on the Wreake Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

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## **RATCLIFFE ON THE WREAKE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL**



*Current map of Ratcliffe on the Wreake showing the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Fosse Way*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ratcliffe on the Wreake Conservation Area was designated in May 1979 and extended in December 1989 to incorporate the Mill and the fields between the Wreake and Main Street, which were at the core of the medieval village. This Conservation Area is relatively unusual in that it incorporates almost the entire settlement, with the exception of a few properties on Broome Lane. It now covers an area of 15.4 Hectares.

The purpose of this appraisal is to examine the historic development of the Conservation Area and to describe its present appearance in order to assess its special architectural and historic interest.

This document sets out the planning policy context and how this appraisal relates to national, regional and local planning policies.

The main part of the report focuses on the assessment of the special interest of the Conservation Area:

- location and setting describes how the Area relates to the historic village and surrounding area;
- historic development and archaeology sets out how architecture and archaeology are related to the social and economic growth of the village;
- spatial analysis describes the historic plan form of the village and how this has changed, the interrelationship of streets and spaces, and identifies key views and landmarks;
- character analysis identifies the uses, types and layouts of buildings, key listed and unlisted buildings, coherent groups of buildings, distinctive building materials and architectural details, significant green spaces and trees, and detrimental features.

These elements are brought together in a summary of the special interest of the Conservation Area.

The document is intended as a guide for people considering development which may affect the Conservation Area. It will be used by the Planning & Regeneration service in their assessment of development proposals. It may, of course, be used by residents of the Conservation Area.

## **Planning Policy Context**

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' (Section 69). Local planning authorities have a duty to review the overall extent of designation in their areas regularly and if appropriate, to designate additional areas. The Act sets out the general duties of local planning authorities relating to designated conservation areas:

- From time to time, to draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas in their districts and to consult the local community about these proposals (Section 71);
- In exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas (Section 72).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) outlines the government's intentions regarding planning policy. The NPPF emphasises sustainable development as the present focus and future legacy of planning policy. It also places responsibility on local planning authorities to assess and understand the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal by utilising available evidence and necessary expertise. This should be taken into account when considering the impact of a

proposal on a heritage asset to avoid or minimise conflict between an asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. This understanding should not only be used as an aid for decision making, but should take on a more dynamic role by actively informing sensitive and appropriate developments.

Responsibility for understanding a heritage asset's significance and contribution to the local area is also placed on the applicant, bringing into greater importance the need for information relating to the historic environment. The NPPF reinforces this expectation by stating that the local planning authority should make information about the significance of the historic environment publically accessible, as well as being informed by the community.

Conservation areas are 'designated heritage assets', each containing a number and variety of elements which combine to create the overall significance of the heritage asset. Its character is formed not only of the elements which it shares with other places, but those which make it distinct. Both tangible static visual elements and intangible aspects such as movements, sounds, and smells create the atmosphere in which we experience a conservation area and shape how we use it. This appraisal describes these elements but it does not attempt to be exhaustive and the policies in the NPPF lay the duty on all concerned, including residents and prospective developers, to understand the significance of any element.

Providing a usable and accessible Conservation Area Character Appraisal to underpin and shape future decisions is now particularly important in response to the Localism Act (2011) which gives local people the power to deliver the developments that their local community wants.

Charnwood Borough Council Local Plan Saved Policy EV/1- Design, seeks to ensure a high standard of design for all new development and that the design should be compatible with the locality and utilise locally appropriate materials.

The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Leading in Design' reinforces the need to understand the setting and context when proposing development in a sensitive location such as a conservation area. It encourages developers to use local guidance such as Conservation Area Character Appraisals when considering their designs.

### **Other guidance adopted by Charnwood Borough Council**

- Backland & Tandem Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- House Extensions (SPG)

## **ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **LOCATION AND SETTING**

Ratcliffe on the Wreake is now predominately a linear village, sitting on a ridge at the edge of the plateau of the Wolds overlooking the broad Wreake valley. It is just off the Fosse Way about 7 miles north east of Leicester, one of a string of settlements on either side of the River Wreake between Leicester and Melton.

### **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Origins and Development**

Whilst it is known that there has been human settlement in the Wreake valley from before the Romans, Ratcliffe as it is seen today has its origins as an Anglo Saxon nucleated settlement. Situated to the east of the Roman road the Fosse Way (now the A46), the basic name comes from the Saxon “read” and “cliff” and describes “the place at the red cliff or bank”. The name of the River Wreake refers to “the winding one”. Ratcliffe on the Wreake has been known variously through time as Radeclive, Ratcliff, Radeclive en Wylawis, Radcliffe on the Wreke and Ratcliffe super Wreake.

Typical of the East Midlands, the village was built on the valley side with access to spring water, arable fields on the drier land above and grazing meadows by the river. The early medieval village was a parish of open fields with cottages and farmsteads at its centre. This open field system was devised to take advantage of the heavy plough which used a team of eight oxen and was thus too expensive for any one farmer. Ratcliffe is noted in Domesday as Radeclive and consisted of approximately 240 acres, a hall and a mill worth three shillings.

The original medieval settlement was based on a network of streets running down the hillside between the church and the mill. By the eighteenth century, agricultural surplus had increased and there was pressure to change the economic system. For centuries, farmers had been allocated strips in each of the open fields but this meant moving from one side of the village to the other. The Enclosure Act of Parliament for Ratcliffe was passed in 1774, starkly dividing the landscape into the network of fields that we are familiar with today. What remains of the medieval network are depressions in the landscape and the two large fields that remain undeveloped.

The OS map of 1884 shows the village to be a predominantly linear settlement comprising a widely spaced collection of farms with St Botolph’s Church, Ratcliffe Hall, a school and post office, a few cottages and the watermill on the river. The school was built in 1875 on the site of a previous

school on land donated by Caroline, Duchess Sforza Cesarini. The Duchess inherited the Ratcliffe estate following the death of her grandfather, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers who built Ratcliffe Hall in c1812. An inn, The Fox & Goose, was known to have existed in the village adjacent to the post office; this building is now 19-21 Main Street. The focus of the village is the church on a slight mound at the side of a ring of streets which are now Broome Lane, Main Street and Church Lane.

Also marked on the 1884 map are the Boathouse and The Melton Mowbray Navigation, for which the Boathouse still standing today is believed to have acted as a tollhouse. The River Wreake was made navigable in 1797 and included the building of two lock chambers along the course of the Wreake near the Mill. The Melton Mowbray Navigation connected Melton Mowbray with Leicester, Loughborough and Derbyshire and was primarily used for the distribution and transportation of coal. The canal was plagued by problems of flooding and water shortages throughout its lifetime and was abandoned in 1877.

Ratcliffe village sits close to the Fosse Way where on the far side outside of the Conservation Area lies Ratcliffe College which with its associated farms covers an area as large as the village itself. This was the first Roman Catholic college to be founded in England since the Reformation and the site comprises a Grade II EW Pugin chapel, teaching buildings, dormitories, masters' houses and extensive playing fields.

To the north of Ratcliffe College is the site of the former Ratcliffe Aerodrome set up by Sir William Lindsay Everard in the early twentieth century, pioneer aviator and the then owner of Ratcliffe Hall. It was opened in 1930 amid great celebration and famed aviator Amy Johnson was present for the occasion. Intended for civil aviation, the site boasted first class hangars and an outdoor pool and was extremely popular. It later became the home of RAF Ratcliffe, an important Air Transport Auxiliary ferry pool in World War II. Whilst some of the buildings are still visible in the landscape, the airfield has now been divided into farmland.

Little has been substantially changed in the village throughout the centuries, with development steadily changing the village from a medieval nucleated settlement to the linear settlement evident on the 1884 OS Map. More pronounced development in the twentieth century has further emphasised this linear form. The once isolated Old Vicarage now more obviously demarcates the edge of the village as modern development has stretched up both sides of Main Street towards Thrussington. In 1927, the village hall was built and entirely furnished by Sir William Lindsay Everard. Building has also been focused along Church Lane where smaller cottages were demolished. As a whole, the larger open spaces and form of the village settlement has remained relatively unchanged since the nineteenth century despite modern interventions.

Ratcliffe on the Wreake has a strong associative value, with the village home to several notable individuals and families. Born in Ratcliffe, Richard Kilbye (1560-1620) was an English scholar and priest charged by James I with translating the latter part of the Old Testament for the King James Version of the Bible. The Earl Ferrers family has a long association with the village, with Washington Shirley, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers (1722-1788) named as Lord of the Manor at the time of Enclosure. This stretches back even further with the familial connection to the Bassets of Drayton, Lords of the Manor in Ratcliffe from the reign of Edward I in the thirteenth century. This connects Ratcliffe to the other lands owned by the Earl Ferrers family at various points in history, namely Staunton Harold and Ragdale Hall in Leicestershire and their family seat in Norfolk. At one stage, the Earls Ferrers also owned land and property in neighbouring Thrussington. Robert Shirley, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers (1756-1827) was particularly notable for the building of Ratcliffe Hall in c1812 and was a great benefactor for the village carrying out repair schemes to the church. Ratcliffe can also be linked to the Italian aristocracy with the inheritance of the estate from the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers by Caroline Shirley (1818-1897) the illegitimate daughter of Robert Shirley, Viscount Tamworth (1778-1824) who married Duke Lorenzo Sforza Cesarini (1807-1866). The current owner of Ratcliffe Hall is the Everard estate, having been purchased by Sir William Lindsay Everard in the early twentieth century, the noted brewer, politician and philanthropist.

### **Archaeological Interest**

Numerous excavations in this area of the Wreake valley over the years have yielded a Bronze Age cemetery and Iron Age site, prehistoric flints and an Acheulean handaxe. The majority of the Ratcliffe on the Wreake Conservation Area overlaps a significant portion of site marked as an area of archaeological alert. More defined areas of archaeological interest have been identified around the mill and the field surrounding 28-30 Church Lane, both areas with medieval associations. A significant amount of pottery has been found in the higher ground to the north of Main Street.

Historically, there has also been archaeological interest surrounding Ratcliffe on the Wreake with the nearby Shipley Hill representing something of curiosity for previous inhabitants. Over time, it was suspected as being a Viking war chief's burial site, a Neolithic barrow or the final resting place of a Captain Shipley. However investigations in the eighteenth century showed it to be nothing more than a natural spur of sand and clay as suspected by the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers : "The hill is lately proved to be the wonderful work of Nature, not of Art" (Nichols, 1808).

Archaeological potential also exists within Ratcliffe's historic built environment. Many of the older buildings have been adapted and altered, repaired and restored and often incorporated elements of older separate structures. Thus many of the historic buildings may conceal medieval or post-

medieval remains and any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric of such buildings would merit further investigation.

## **Population**

The population of Ratcliffe on the Wreake has fluctuated throughout its history without ever experiencing significant expansion and still remains a relatively small community today. The most recent population estimates by Charnwood Borough Council record a population of 173 in 2004. Domesday records the number of inhabitants as not more than thirty, rising in the mid-1500s to fourteen families, before the 1861 census puts the number of residents at 126. Historically, the employment of the residents of Ratcliffe has been grounded in agriculture, with many inhabitants working as labourers and farmhands. Domestic service was also a prominent occupation for both men and women.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **Plan Form**

Ratcliffe appears today predominantly as a linear settlement, consisting of Main Street with a short spur of Church Lane and Broome Lane going down to the river and across to East Goscote. However, this linear form appears to be a part of the original nucleated form in which there was a closer knit network of streets forming a square.

The church is situated prominently within the village, on a mound which rises above the street level of the surrounding Church Lane and Main Street.

As the backbone of the village, Main Street gently sweeps through the village from the south west, falling by the church and gently rising towards Thrussington. The sense of enclosure within the Conservation Area is minimal, restricted to Church Lane and its junction with Main Street adjacent to the church.

Interestingly, the buildings within the historic core of the village to the south-west of the church are more closely connected to the street, with the stable block and 20 & 22 Main Street lying directly on the road. Others have only a small verge or boundary wall. This is in contrast to the stretch of Main Street to the north-east of the church, where wide green verges and established trees emphasise the open relaxed form of this part of the settlement. The buildings of historic interest in this area are restricted to The Old Vicarage and the group of 48, 50 & 52 Main Street. The other properties on this part of Main Street are modern constructions, often single or one and a half storey buildings set back from the road. It is the careful positioning of these recent buildings which greatly adds to the character of this area of the Conservation Area.



The extension to the Conservation Area in 1989 takes account of the importance and contribution that the fields between Main Street and the mill make to the historic development and character of the present form of the village.

## **Villagescape**

The village generally has an open aspect along Main Street with most houses and farmsteads set back from the road, either with wide grass verges or some form of small boundary or front garden. Church Lane creates a different dynamic within the Conservation Area as the houses are closer to the street. This is further emphasised by the narrowness of the road at this point of the village.

The key focus of the village is the church in terms of marking the core of the original village and linking the present day village with its medieval past.

The character of the Conservation Area is greatly added to by the contrast of the density of the built environment along Main Street with the open fields and scattered farmsteads as the valley slopes towards the Wreake. These two attributes are closely linked both in terms of visual and physical accessibility. It is hard to find a view within Ratcliffe that is not composed of both buildings and green space in varying degrees and the numerous fields fronting the village roads make an important contribution to the overall character.

Views across the fields towards the Boathouse are visible along Main Street in several gaps between buildings and there is a good network of footpaths which crisscross the Conservation Area and link it to the wider landscape. As well as the more obvious views down the valley, views up to the ridge above are equally as important in creating the feeling of space as you travel through the village. The glimpses of the raised ground which displays evidence of previous human activity behind the buildings on the north-west of Main Street are particularly notable.

The long uninterrupted stretch of granite wall opposite the former post office is a particularly important feature in the streetscape, both making the higher ground an important part of the village as well as demarcating it as distinct to the populated stretch of road.

Although currently outside of the Conservation Area, the long stretch of granite wall and woodland on Broome Lane which are part of the Ratcliffe Hall estate are important features of the villagescape by framing the approach to the village.

## **Key Views and Vistas**

Standing at the entrance to the village from Thrussington, the slope of the curving road into the village, views across the fields to the left, the historic farmstead now 48, 50 & 52 Main Street and mature trees to the front of the hidden Old Vicarage makes for an attractive and distinctive view. The potential for the three twentieth century buildings to the front of the church to impact negatively on this part of the Conservation Area is negated by their considered positioning set back along the curve of the road.

At the other end of the village on the approach from Broome Lane standing close to the stretch of granite wall, the open space to the left, the view of the red telephone box, 19-21 Main Street and the opposite 20-22 Main Street with the spire of the church visible as the land falls away forms an interesting and characterful streetscape as the medieval church, red brick buildings and twentieth century telephone box all sit harmoniously within the landscape.

Also from this end of Main Street, there are views through the trees across from the Stable Block which take in Priory Farm and 28-30 Church Lane and the wider valley down to East Goscote. The uninterrupted views of the fields and the Boathouse can be further appreciated from Church Lane.

An entirely different sense and perspective of the Conservation Area is experienced as you stand in the fields close to Priory Farm. Looking up towards the village from within the earthworks of the medieval street network, the church spire is visible above the rising land. The undulations in the land which mark the past location of the villages' houses are particularly evident as well as depressions which mark historic access routes. This is a very evocative space within the Conservation Area with a sense of the history of the place.

Particularly important to the Ratcliffe on the Wreake Conservation Area is the setting of the Conservation Area itself. The character and value of the area is greatly added to by the green and undeveloped surroundings. From most points within the Conservation Area, you are either surrounded by the landscape or able to catch glimpses of it. This makes the settlement both separate from and a part of the landscape. This is particularly apparent on the approach into the village on the footpath from Rearsby Mill. The setting of the Conservation Area can be appreciated from the top of the footpath adjacent to 49 Main Street as the whole of the form of the village and valley below is visible.

## **Landmarks**

The dominant landmark within the Conservation Area is the Church of St Botolph's. It is the only building within the village to be constructed mainly of granite, an entirely different material to the rest of the village. It is both a landmark when viewed from the surrounding streets and from the wider landscape as the spire can be seen across the valley from all directions.

The linear village itself is a landmark when viewed from the valley both from above and below.

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **Building Types, Layouts and Uses**

The present buildings within the Conservation Area reflect much of the village's historic development, from the seventeenth century 28-30 Church Lane to the recent twentieth century bungalows and semi-detached dwellings. Where the village hub was once centred around the nineteenth century post office, inn, school, smithy and later a village hall, it is only the recently refurbished village hall and post box which remain following the closure of the village school in the 1970s.

Historically the main employment of the residents of Ratcliffe on the Wreake was agriculture. This is still echoed in the surviving farmhouses and barns that have been converted to residential use which are scattered throughout the settlement. The village never really developed commercial or service based industries other than a smithy, with the only public buildings a post office, church, inn and village hall which was not built until the twentieth century. The return of the Population Act in 1811 noted 22 families, of which 16 were employed in agriculture and 6 in trade.

The majority of buildings are single detached dwellings of two or three storeys. Older buildings tend to have a strong front elevation parallel to the street with projecting wings to the rear. The exceptions to this rule are 48 Main Street which is perpendicular to the road and to some extent the Stable Block whose main entrance faces the original service road to the Hall. Whilst the current access to Priory Farm is from Broome Lane, the principal elevation faces towards Church Lane. This alignment reflects historic access routes, thought to be the original main street in the nucleated village. The conversion of barns and associated buildings such as 37 Main Street and 52 Main Street has made for a number of distinctive and attractive dwellings throughout the Conservation Area. Recent development has introduced semi-detached houses and bungalows into the streetscene. Generally, modern developments do not overwhelm the historic buildings or their settings and in many cases positively contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

Today as has been the case historically, Ratcliffe is principally a residential settlement with the only remaining public buildings the village hall and church.

### **Key Listed Buildings and Structures**

Occupying the most prominent position within the wider landscape and the village itself is St Botolph's Church (Grade II\*). Constructed of granite rubble with stone dressings, its roof is of Swithland slate with an ashlar spire. At its

core are a fourteenth century chancel and a rounded font, possibly dating from the twelfth century. Wright's 'Directory of Leicestershire' (1887-8) places the origin of the core of the existing church as being built in 1310 and it was described in the 'Ecclesiologist' in 1858 as being "chiefly remarkable from containing very creditable specimens of work erected in the worst times". The full length recumbent effigy in the chancel is said to be that of the founder of the church. The church has been substantially altered and extended over the centuries, with the spire rebuilt in 1812 and the church generally restored in 1876.

Although not visible from the Conservation Area, Ratcliffe Hall (Grade II) is the principal building of the village and was constructed in 1812 by Robert Shirley, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Ferrers. It is of red brick with a Swithland slate hipped roof with brick and stone ridge stacks. The windows are primarily vertical sliding sashes in a variety of arrangements and there is an elaborate fanlight above a six panelled door. Extended in the twentieth century in a similar style, it retains many of its original features such as pediments and a one storey Doric columned porch with entablature and balustrade.

The stable block to Ratcliffe Hall (Grade II) is described by Pevsner as being much more interesting than the Hall itself. The stables occupy a prominent position within the village and forms a key component of the main approach into Ratcliffe on the Wreake along Broome Lane. Dating from 1817 it is of red brick with a Swithland slate roof. It is formed of a central range with a pyramid roof and one storey wings on either side. The elevation flanking the original service entrance to the Hall has three panels to the first storey, one with a clock face whilst the other two retain the plaques bearing the coat of arms of the Earls Ferrers.

Priory House (Grade II), the principal building of Priory Farm, is situated to the east of the main stretch of the village and is noted by Young (1932) as being one of the oldest in the village. The left ended gable bears in its brickwork the date '1707' and it is noted on the map of 1884 as Cliffe House, before being labelled as The Priory and Priory Farm on maps from 1929 and 1961 respectively. Constructed of red brick, the building is unusual in that it has a Swithland slate roof to the rear with a pantile roof to the front and on the north-west end, two storeys of two blank Gothic style windows with Y tracery in cut brickwork. The property was extended in the nineteenth century as can be seen from the brickwork and difference in proportions, alignment and style of the windows to the north-west end.

28-30 Church Lane (Grade II) sited just to the north of Priory Farm has at its core a c1600 structure which has been gradually restored and altered over the nineteenth century. 28 Church Lane has two bays of visible timber framing to the front elevation and is variously of red brick and painted render with a granite rubble stone plinth. It has both a Swithland slate and Welsh slate roof. It is now linked to the adjacent 30 Church Lane to form a single dwelling house by a flat roof addition.

The Rectory Farmhouse (Grade II) is an imposing eighteenth century building on Main Street, constructed of red brick with a Welsh slate roof and distinctive wooden mullion and transom windows across two storeys on the front elevation. Situated at the point where Main Street begins to rise on the stretch towards Thrussington, it is prominent as it is surrounded by smaller scale recent development.

### **Key Unlisted Buildings**

Lying just outside the south-west boundary of the Conservation Area is the early nineteenth century lodge to Ratcliffe Hall, situated in the wooded area on the approach into the village from the west on Broome Lane. With red brick walls and a hipped slate roof, a bay window is positioned to allow supervision of the driveway entrance to the Hall. The architectural and historical interest of this building has been recognised by its inclusion on the Local List.

Ratcliffe Mill, although the subject of extensive renovation in the latter part of the nineteenth century, occupies a prominent position both in terms of its location and the history of the development of Ratcliffe itself. Whilst its current imagining dates from 1816, the presence of a mill in Ratcliffe harks back to Domesday, predating the surviving St Botolph's Church. A watermill is also referred to in 1260 a when William Burdet handed it over to the control of Aucote Priory. The location of the Mill on the Wreake would have also made it a prominent landmark to the users of the Melton Mowbray Navigation throughout the nineteenth century.

A notable building within the Conservation Area is The Old Vicarage. Although originally somewhat isolated from the main core of the village, the settlement has gradually crept up this stretch of Main Street to reach the wooded boundaries of this property. It is a fine red brick building with slate roof and attractive details to the window surrounds, doorway and chimneys.

The Boathouse is situated at the furthest western extent of the Conservation Area and is currently in a bad state of disrepair. However it still retains its clay pantile roof, coats of arms to the gablet roof and its previous form is still evident. It is a distinctive building and is highly visible at different points within the Conservation Area, namely the stretch of Main Street outside the Vicarage and from various footpaths through the surrounding fields. Its exact history is unknown but it has been described as being used variously as a tollhouse for the canal and as a garden summer house. It is a rare and unusual focal point within the village and care should be taken in order to ensure it is not lost.

### **Coherent groups**

On Main Street, the grouping of the granite wall and open space to the left, the village hall, 20-22 Main Street and 19-21 Main Street opposite which with

the post box and telephone kiosk is important as it can still be identified as the historic core of the village.

Another group are the recent buildings on the north side of Main Street towards Thrussington. There are five properties between the Vicarage and the Rectory Farmhouse, all of varying styles, forms and detailing. Whilst maybe not architecturally significant in their own right, the group value of these buildings greatly adds to the character of the Conservation Area. This lies in their careful positioning within the streetscape and their design, ensuring that they do not dominate or overwhelm the surrounding historic buildings or landscape.

## **Building Materials and Architectural Details**

### **Walls**

The predominant building material in Ratcliffe is a soft red brick. In Young's 'History of Ratcliffe', it is remarked that the oldest cottages and farmsteads were of mud and stud of which the last remaining one fell at beginning of the nineteenth century and was formerly the smithy, located on the site of 27 Main Street. The clay for the bricks used in the construction of the Mill and older cottages was purportedly dug out of the hill side opposite the church and was known as 'Brickyard Close' to the residents.

The principal buildings within the village are all constructed of red brick, including Ratcliffe Hall, 28-30 Church Lane, Priory House, Rectory Farmhouse, The Old Vicarage, 19-21 Main Street and 20-22 Main Street. The bricks are typically laid in a Flemish bond, with 19-21 Main Street utilising a slightly paler header to the front elevation. The use of a more pronounced Flemish bond with paler header is also found to the north-west end of Priory House.

There is a prominent string course to the principal elevation of Priory House between the ground and first storey which is echoed partially on the rear elevation.

Plinths marked out by using different materials occur in a number of properties. The Stable Block utilises blue bricks whilst both 28-30 Church Lane and Rectory Farmhouse have evidence of granite plinths. The granite used within the Rectory Farmhouse extends into the granite garden wall which turns to the front of the house.

70 Main Street has been significantly altered, with a modern roughcast render concealing its historic fabric.

The only exceptions to the red brick historic buildings are the church which is built of granite rubble and the village hall which has been clad in timber.

More recent buildings have utilised a range of materials, either painted render or bricks of an orange or brown hue.

### **Roofs**

The predominant roofing material throughout the Conservation Area is slate with some occasional use of clay pantiles, namely to the front elevation of Priory House.

Both Swithland and Welsh slate can be found within the Area and sometimes on the same property. Good examples of the use of the locally sourced distinctive Swithland slate are the Old Vicarage, 48-50 & 52 Main Street, the Stable Block, Ratcliffe Hall, Ratcliffe Mill, the rear elevation of Priory House, and 10-12 Church Lane. Welsh slate can be found to the Rectory Farmhouse, 19-21 Main Street, 20-22 Main Street, the village hall and 70 Broome Lane. 38-40 Church Lane utilises both Welsh and Swithland slates.

Modern developments have utilised a range of roofing materials, from Welsh slates on the more traditionally brick built dwellings, to concrete and clay tiles to the roofs of the infill developments on Church Lane and Main Street.

Chimney stacks are generally limited to simple brick constructions with plain pots. Some buildings make use of decorative courses and detailing in blue bricks, such as 19-21 Main Street, 20-22 Main Street and the Stable Block. The most elaborate chimney stacks can be found to The Old Vicarage, indicative of the Victorian design of the building. Courses of red and blue bricks and a dog-toothed band combine with moulded chimney pots including distinctive diamond cut-out edging to the top, commonly known by the name 'The Bishop'.

### **Doors and Windows**

Ratcliffe on the Wreake is in possession of a wealth of historic window types. There is no one dominant style, with a mixture of vertical and horizontal sashes, timber mullion and transom windows and the occasional casement windows visible throughout the village. Buildings frequently contain more than one type of window and often more than one style or size of each type.

Perhaps the most distinctive windows are those to the Rectory Farmhouse. The front elevation utilises wide paned timber mullion and transom windows across two storeys. The left hand side elevation also utilises large mullion and transom windows but these have divided into smaller panes.

Other prominent windows are those to the Priory House. To the rear elevation there is a mixture of two light casement windows, with two larger four light timber mullion and transom windows used to the left hand side bay across two storeys. To the front are very fine vertical sliding sash windows, with larger sashes to the right hand side. The difference in sizes and positioning of the windows hints at the different phases of the building, with the end containing the Y tracery in cut brickwork thought to be an extension of a later date. There

are three smaller two light casement windows to the second storey on the principal elevation.

The most interesting window detailing can be found at The Old Vicarage. The vertical sash windows are free from glazing bars and arranged in sets of two or three side by side, a popular arrangement in Victorian architecture. They are divided by elaborately moulded stone mullions. The arch details above the windows are picked out in an attractive mix of decorative brick and stone work. The recessed panel between the window lintel and the arch is laid in a herringbone pattern.

Horizontal sliding sashes are also common throughout the Conservation Area. These can be found at 20-22 Main Street where the windows to 22 Main Street are distinctively painted in white with painted black frames, and 28-30 Church Lane. More intricate tripartite horizontal sliding sashes can be found to 19-21 Main Street.

There is a simple cantered oriel bay to the front elevation of 20-22 Main Street.

Windows throughout the village are generally simple in style, relying on the rectangular division of the glazing bars to add interest.

Within the Conservation Area there has been a good retention of historic doors. Of note are the broad six panelled doors which can be found at Ratcliffe Hall and Priory House.

Several doorways can be found with overlights. The doors to the principal elevations to Priory House and Rectory Farmhouse are rectangular, divided into two and three panes respectively. Interestingly, 10-12 Church Lane has decorative leaded glass to the overlights to the front doors on the principal elevation. There is also an interesting doorframe formed of laying the brick headers end on in pairs to form columns and the lintels, typical features of the 1930s style of the property.

### **Details**

There are a number of interesting brickwork features to historic buildings throughout Ratcliffe which hint at the development and use of the buildings over time. The converted barns of 52 Main Street still have evidence of simple ventilation slits to the principal elevation. More elaborate and decorative perforated honeycomb ventilation panels can be seen to the right hand barn of 37 Main Street.

In contrast to the functionality of the ventilation panels are the decorative brickwork details, found on the north-west gable end of Priory House. A later addition to the rest of the building which is dated 1707 on the south-east gable end, the Y tracery formed of cut brickwork are unusual and unexpected. There are also decorative dentilled eaves to the gables of Rectory Farmhouse.



Brickwork details can also indicate changes to the form and appearance of buildings as shown in the changes in brickwork to the front elevation of Rectory Farmhouse which possibly indicate historic changes made to accommodate a different roofing material.

There are a number of plaques and datestones in various buildings throughout Ratcliffe. The Stable Block bears the coats of arms of the Earl Ferrers to the service entrance, as well as stones marking the date '1930' to the elevation facing the road. The date '1707' is prominently marked out in the brickwork to the left end gable of Priory House. The coats of arms present in the gables of the Boathouse are thought to be that of the village school which used the Boathouse following the closure of the Melton Mowbray Navigation. There are two plaques to the front elevation of 10-12 Church Lane, marking 'WLE' and the name 'Jubilee Cottages, 1932'. A sun fire mark can be found above the central first storey window to the principle elevation of Rectory Farmhouse. This was historically an indication of a particular insurance company's fire service which was responsible for extinguishing fires at that property.

There is evidence in the right hand range of the Stable Block of openings into a cellar.

One particularly interesting and unusual feature in Ratcliffe is the Grade II listed headstone in the churchyard. Dated in 1839, it is inscribed 'In memory of Samuel Matthews, Labourer, who had both his legs broke, and one of his ankles dislocated by falling off a load of beans, on Mr King's Farm, at Ratcliffe on the Wreake; and died in Leicester Infirmary, Oct 13<sup>th</sup>, 1839, Aged 60'.

There are pink granite cobbles to the two entrance ways to the Stable Block from Broome Lane.

There is a good level of retention of the granite edging to the pavement throughout the Conservation Area.

### **Parks, Gardens and Trees**

Trees are not a particular feature of the arable landscape of the Wolds or the meadows of the river. However, a significant number of trees can be found within Ratcliffe on the Wreake and they are a distinctive feature of the Conservation Area. The panorama of the village of the valley is marked by the line of buildings among trees with the spire of the church rising above the tree line.

Also important within the village, the mound of the churchyard and Church Lane are well planted with trees as are the gardens of the Vicarage. Ratcliffe Hall lies in parkland hidden from view by trees.

There are a number of Tree Preservation Orders on trees to the front of the Vicarage along Main Street. These relate to the pine, larch, oaks and horse chestnut.

The field boundaries are well planted with hedges and occasional trees with some isolated trees in the centre field. The river itself is lined with trees and the Mill is surrounded by woodland. There is a substantial piece of woodland along the Fosse Way.

Gardens typically lie to the rear of the properties but a significant number of buildings within the Conservation Area have small front gardens or wide verges. Boundary treatments are an important feature within the Conservation Area, with the mix of hedging, brick walls and planting creating a pleasing variety within the village.

The most important green space within the Conservation Area are the two undeveloped fields between Main Street and Ratcliffe Mill. This area is well accessed both visibly in views across the valley and physically as there a number of public footpaths which run through the fields.

## **Biodiversity**

The Conservation Area is in immediate proximity to the countryside and views of the pastoral landscape on the valley slopes can often be glimpsed from the highway. Grassland fields have generally been improved for agriculture and consequently support restricted plant assemblages. However, the predominant cattle-grazing management still brings tangible benefits to biodiversity, particularly to invertebrates and insectivorous birds and mammals.

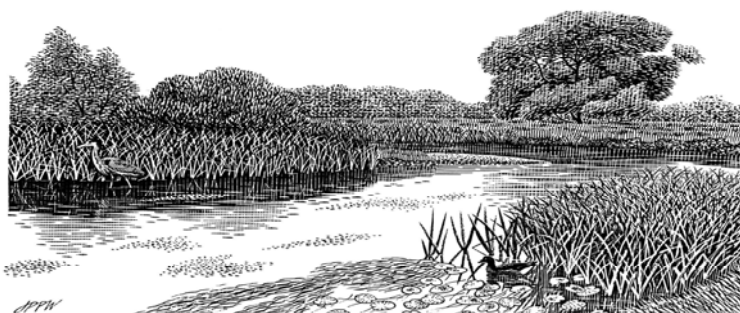


There is a high tree cover within the Area. Strong groups of mature trees are present, notably within the parkland setting of Ratcliffe Hall. Isolated trees within pastures are likely remnants of long-gone field hedgerows. Trees form invaluable habitats once they reach maturity as they then offer a more varied range of physical features and micro-climates upon which large numbers of species depend.

The hedgerow network is interrupted in places, especially along street frontages, but field hedgerows often reach right into the built environment. The insect-rich pastures, mature trees, tree lines and hedgerows create a

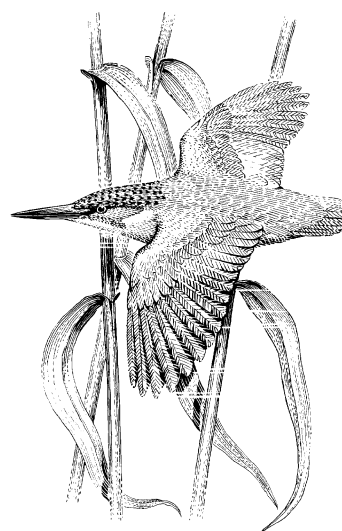
strong local biodiversity network and provide habitat connectivity within the Area itself and with the wider countryside.

The meanders of the River Wreake define the southern boundary of the Area. The watercourse has been notified as a Local Wildlife Site, a designation of the best non-statutory ecological sites in the County. It functions as a significant



wildlife corridor, connecting the Area across the wider landscape of the Wreake Valley. Marginal aquatic vegetation of common reed *Phragmites australis*, reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima*, lesser bulrush *Typha angustifolia*, common club-rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* and water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum* can form dense patches in places. Small pockets of scrub and mature trees, such as crack willow *Salix fragilis* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, with overhanging branches and exposed roots, line the river banks. In places sections of earth cliff have been eroded away.

Associated with the river corridor are several species of principal importance (UK Biodiversity Action Plan [BAP] species). The otter *Lutra lutra* returned to the River Wreake in the late 1990s. Field evidence, notably spraints left in prominent locations, is known from both upstream and downstream, and the species will be regularly passing through the Area. The kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* has been recorded nesting in the exposed banks of the river further upstream and is likely to commute through the Area.



Several bat roosts have been recorded within the Area, particularly of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*. This is the more widespread species but nowhere as common as in past decades. Due to their small size, pipistrelles have the ability to use small gaps within the fabric of buildings. All bat species in Britain are strictly insectivorous and hibernate to survive the winter months. Tree cover in proximity to roosts and good quality habitat networks, such as continuous hedgerows and vegetated water courses, are ideal for bats.

## Detrimental Features

The most visually intrusive element within the Conservation Area are the pylons and other communication equipment which are visible along the length of the streets.

The noise of the nearby A46 is also very prominent within the village.

In general however, the Conservation Area is in a good state.

### **DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

The main contributions to the special character of Ratcliffe on the Wreake Conservation Area are:

- the use of a limited palette of materials to create a wide range of individual and distinctive properties spanning both polite and vernacular architecture;
- the wealth and quality of surviving details to historic properties from obvious date marks and coats of arms through to often overlooked window details, decorated chimney stacks and granite edged paving;
- the linear form of the village evident in the nineteenth century that developed from the medieval nuclear settlement, which has been emphasised and preserved by recent development;
- the distinct spaces created by the varying layout and form of the settlement and the contribution made by recent development as well as historic buildings, particularly to the character of Church Lane and the north-east stretch of Main Street;
- the far reaching historic and geographical associations of this relatively small settlement through individuals and families that have left their mark on the buildings and landscapes;
- the evocative green open space of the fields at the centre of the Conservation Area, its connection to the historical development of the village and its influence on how the village is viewed and experienced today.

## **CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **General Principles**

The appraisal above should be used to inform and guide development decisions.

Any proposed changes should be carried out in a sensitive manner, taking into account the established character. New development must respond to its immediate environment i.e. its context, in terms of scale, form, materials and detailing. Otherwise, alterations will have a detrimental effect on the historic and locally distinctive form of the Area.

Within the Area the Council will insist on good quality schemes which respond positively to their historic setting, this extends to small buildings such as garages and even boundary walls and fences. Minor alterations need to be carefully considered as incremental change can have a significant detrimental affect on the character of an area over a period of time.

Central government guidance contained in the NPPF, the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Leading in Design and other SPD will be used to assess the quality of proposal for new development.

The character of the Conservation Area identified in the appraisal document is such that the following general principles should be noted when considering any development in all parts of the conservation area:

- The Conservation Area has a distinct “grain” or pattern of built form and spaces which are part of its historic development. This gives the area great individuality, characterised by the pattern of historic buildings, ancient footpaths and highways and clearly defined boundaries. This “grain” is an important part of the character of the Conservation Area and will be protected.
- The emphasis for new proposals will be on high quality of design. There may be opportunity for innovative modern design. However a dramatic contemporary statement is unlikely to be appropriate.
- Scale is the combination of a building’s height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Proposed new development must take into account the scale of the existing buildings, and must not dominate or overwhelm them.
- Alterations and extensions must respect the form of the original building and its locality. The use of high quality materials and detailing, whether modern or traditional is essential. Roof lines, roof shape, eaves details, verge details and the creation of new chimneys are important considerations.
- Windows and doors of a traditional design respect the historic nature of the buildings to which they belong and make a very important

contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The use of uPVC and standardised high speed joinery techniques nearly always leads to unsuitably detailed windows which will be generally unacceptable in the Conservation Area. In most cases the building regulation requirements can be met without the need to use clumsy and awkwardly detailed windows.

- The appraisal has identified the types of materials that characterise the Conservation Area and where possible they should be used to help alterations respect that established character.
- Applicants for planning permission must provide a meaningful “Design and Access Statement”, to explain the design decisions that have been made and to show how proposed alterations relate to their context. A detailed analysis of the locality should demonstrate that there is a full appreciation of the local streetscape and how it has developed, including prevailing building forms, materials and plot ratios.
- Safeguarding of protected species must be taken on board when considering planning proposals such as conversion, tree felling, housing development and other changes which may affect their roosting places, commuting routes and feeding areas.

### **Procedures to ensure consistent decision-making**

The purpose of the character appraisal is to inform and guide development control decisions. A consistent approach to this decision making will be aided by providing:

- Conservation and design surgeries to help development control officers to make informed decisions, no matter how minor the proposed changes.
- Opportunities for pre-application discussion regarding significant alterations.
- Opportunities to review decisions and assess the impact of approved alterations through post development site visits.

### **Enforcement strategy**

Effective enforcement is vital to make sure there is public confidence in the planning system to protect the special character of the Area. Unauthorised development can often be damaging to that character.

Taking proactive action can improve the appearance and character of the Area, making it more attractive and in some instances increasing the potential for investment. Effective monitoring of building work to make sure it is carried out in accordance with the approved details and with planning conditions ensures new development makes the positive contribution envisaged when permission was granted.

In order to protect the character of the Conservation Area the Borough Council will seek to:

- use enforcement powers in cases where unauthorised development unacceptably affects the character of the Conservation Area;
- take proactive action to improve or enhance the appearance of the Area;
- monitor development under way to make sure it fully complies with the terms of any planning permission or listed building consent.

Carrying out unauthorised work to a listed building or to protected trees and hedgerows and the unauthorised demolition a building within a conservation area is an offence. In such cases, the Council will consider prosecution of anyone responsible and enforcement of any necessary remedial action.

The powers set out in Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be used where sites are identified as detracting from the character of the conservation area by being eyesores or untidy.

### **General condition**

The Conservation Area is in a good condition. A number of issues have been identified as weaknesses in the appraisal.

### **Possible buildings for spot listing**

The Boathouse, although currently in a bad state of disrepair, is an important and rare survival of its type. Further investigation into its history and the level of survival of other similar buildings should be undertaken in order to assess whether the Boathouse is worthy of listing.

### **Possible Boundary Changes of the Conservation Area**

The present boundaries of the existing Conservation Area incorporate the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest within the village. However following the survey, it is suggested that consideration be given to the following minor amendment:

#### Parkland to the west of Ratcliffe Hall

The area of meadow and parkland surrounding Ratcliffe Hall bordering the A46 and Broome Lane should be considered for incorporation into the Conservation Area. There are a number of historic features associated with this area, including a re-sited dovecote and a series of fishponds. This stretch of parkland is the first visible area of the village on the approach on Broome Lane and the woodland and granite wall positively contribute to the character of the area as a whole. This extension would also bring the Locally Listed Lodge to Ratcliffe Hall into the Conservation Area. In the course of investigating this proposal, it may be appropriate to designate additional areas of the parkland such as the area including the heliport and ice house.

### **Proposals for developing an economic development and regeneration strategy for the area**

Repair and reinstatement works to historic buildings that make a vital contribution to maintaining and improving the character of the Conservation Area may be eligible for grant assistance. Charnwood Grants includes an element to assist in the repair and maintenance of historic buildings such as listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas. The County Council operates a scheme for listed buildings.

### **Strategy for the management and protection of important trees, greenery and green spaces**

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan) sets out the Borough Council's priorities for conservation of habitats and species within Charnwood and details the actions required to bring about a reversal in their decline. Not only should habitats and species of principal importance (UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species) be retained and protected, but opportunities to restore or enhance such habitats and populations should be taken.

Many species are protected by wildlife legislation. Where protected species may be present, appropriate surveys and assessments should be carried out to ensure that development or management proposals will not have a detrimental effect. Mature trees will eventually senesce and decline. Without the provision of the next generation of trees to replace existing mature trees, the wildlife resource and visual quality of the Conservation Area may be affected in years to come.

The Landscape Character Assessment (2012) contains a structured evaluation of each landscape area within the Borough and details the Council's commitment to achieving high quality sustainable development proposals which will protect, conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Borough's landscape and reinforce local distinctiveness. This Assessment should be utilised to inform and guide development decisions in conjunction with guidelines for the built environment.

General management guidelines:

- Retention and protection of mature trees.
- Replacement planting to provide the next generation of trees.
- Additional planting at key strategic points to reinforce habitat connectivity within the biodiversity network.

### **Monitoring change arrangements**

A photographic record of the conservation area has been made and will be used to help identify the need to review how changes within the Conservation Area are managed. A greater degree of protection will be accomplished if the local community help monitor any changes.



### **Consideration of resources**

This management plan sets out the commitment of the Borough Council to protecting the character and appearance of Charnwood's conservation areas and how it will use its resources to achieve these aims. Pursuing all actions may be seen as desirable but continued monitoring and review will help focus the use of available resources in the most effective way.

### **Summary of issues and proposed actions**

<b>Conservation Area Issue</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Other Partners</b>
Boundaries of the Conservation Area	Review the Conservation Area boundary with a view to including additional areas of the Ratcliffe Hall parkland	Charnwood BC	
Restoration and possible listing of the Boathouse	Ascertain desire and strategy for the restoration of the Boathouse. It may be appropriate to create a Building Preservation Trust.	Ratcliffe on the Wreake PC	Charnwood BC
Management of trees to churchyard	Implement management plan for the maintenance of trees and their renewal where/when required	Ratcliffe on the Wreake PC	

### **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 investment in the area itself, and in the encouragement of initiatives to the benefit of the wider community.

### **Community involvement**

This document will be made available as a draft via the website for 4 weeks prior to submission to Cabinet for adoption. A public meeting will be held in the Area so that local residents and businesses may contribute their ideas about the Area. All comments and responses will be considered and

appropriate amendments made to the document before it is submitted to Cabinet.

### **Advice and Guidance**

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, alterations and extensions and suitable materials.

Contacts: Conservation and Landscape Team  
Tel. 01509 634971  
built.heritage@charnwood.gov.uk

Development Management  
Tel. 01509 634737  
development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

Planning Enforcement  
Tel. 01509 634722  
development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Council is grateful for the images, information and documentation provided by Thomas & Sally Chaplin about the village both past and present.

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### **Internet Resources**

'Listed Buildings: Ratcliffe on the Wreake' at  
[http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed\\_buildings/search?location\\_type=settlement&listed-building\\_settlement=Ratcliffe+on+the+Wreake&listed-building\\_parish=&listed-building\\_ward=&listed-building\\_category=&listed-building\\_grade=&go=%3CSPAN%3EGo%3C%2FSPAN%3E](http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/listed_buildings/search?location_type=settlement&listed-building_settlement=Ratcliffe+on+the+Wreake&listed-building_parish=&listed-building_ward=&listed-building_category=&listed-building_grade=&go=%3CSPAN%3EGo%3C%2FSPAN%3E)  
[Date accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2012]

'Ratcliffe on the Wreake' at  
<http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/ratcliffeonthewreake/>  
[Date accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2012]

### **LISTED BUILDINGS IN RATCLIFFE ON THE WREAKE CONSERVATION AREA**

All are Grade II listed except the Church of St Botolph which is listed Grade II\*

Priory Farmhouse, 62 Broome Lane  
Ratcliffe Hall, Broome Lane  
Stable Block, 27 Broome Lane  
28-30 Church Lane  
19-21 Main Street  
20-22 Main Street  
K6 Telephone Kiosk, Main Street  
Matthews' Headstone, Churchyard  
Old Rectory Farmhouse  
War Memorial & retaining wall to Churchyard