

THE ENVIRONMENT OF WOODHOUSE

Geology

The ancient geology of the area has had a major influence on the appearance of the village, with most buildings constructed from local materials. The rocks of Charnwood Forest to the west of Woodhouse are some of the oldest in England and Wales at between 600 and 400 million years old. They consist of a mixture of pre-Cambrian volcanic and sedimentary rocks, folded by later earth movements. Younger intrusive igneous rocks occur around the edges of Charnwood Forest and have been quarried extensively for road stone. To the east of Woodhouse is sandstone and boulder clay. The Swithland slate 'industry' goes back to Roman times. Limited supplies of this material remain, often through recycling, although quarrying ceased just over 100 years ago.

Trees, flora and fauna

Trees, hedges, streams and ditches are integral features of the landscape. Ancient hedgerow is present in the approaches from Quorn. Streams run under School Lane, to the side of Rushey Lane, along Forest Road past the Defence Sixth Form College and behind and beside Beaumanor Hall.

Mucklin wood to the north of the village has existed since at least 1600 A.D and is defined as ancient woodland. Bluebells are a feature of the surrounding area and can be found here. Other exceptional mature trees include walnut, cherry, apple, and yew.



Mucklin Wood



Ancient oaks exist in many areas of the village



The abundance of ancient and modern trees and the other natural features support a diverse range of wildlife. Bats, owls, foxes and squirrels are common; dragonflies and newts appear near ponds and streams. There are two ancient fishponds and evidence of several weirs. The Kingfisher Pond is still used by a fishing club.



Kingfisher Pond

There are shrews, field mice, moles, several communities of badgers, and some colonies of water voles. Local birds include greater spotted and green woodpeckers, finches, wild geese, robins, blackbirds, coal and blue tits, jays, jackdaws, rooks, crows, starlings, house martins, song thrushes, wrens, sparrows, sparrow hawks, wood pigeons, collared doves and pheasants - most are frequent feeders in domestic gardens - and there are areas where kingfishers reside. A number of these species are protected.

Landscape

Much of the area consists of gently rolling landforms with few major contrasts in relief. The prevailing wind is from the southwest, and like the rest of the County, rainfall makes the area relatively dry in comparison with the country as a whole. Land surrounding the village is a mixture of woodland, farmland, heathland and parkland.

Land forms and use

The settlement pattern of the Charnwood Forest area is generally one of scattered farms and other dwellings, with villages mainly around the edges. Along the eastern edge is the Great Central Railway and Swithland reservoir, forming a natural boundary. The northern edge contains Beaumanor Park, still largely used either for grazing or retained as parkland. There is a distinct green space between Woodhouse and all neighbouring settlements. Particularly important to villagers is the open space between Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves to the west.



Views looking south from Woodhouse

The land between the two villages is shared between livery stables, farming, and the most recent college development on land formerly occupied by the Army. To the south is land mainly in private ownership that lies either fallow or purposely uncultivated e.g. as meadowland. Some of the fields retain the relics of their medieval ridge and furrow systems and some others are Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation [SINCs] and are shown on the map.

Village Setting - Visibility

Woodhouse nestles in the landscape. The village is barely visible to travellers from nearby Quorn and Loughborough until the final sharp bend. From Loughborough it cannot be seen, although it is relatively close 'as the crow flies', because of the ridge of slightly higher ground that culminates in Beacon Hill [248m]. From the top of Beacon Hill it is possible to discern some evidence of a settlement at Woodhouse but the abundance of trees masks most of this so that only a few roofs, the church spire, and the tips of the gables at Beaumanor Hall are visible. Because the Hall is lower than the rest of the village, it is not visible from the main road once inside the village speed limit signs. No other settlement is visible from dwellings in the village apart from the more isolated, former farms in the direction of Quorn. It feels firmly rural.



Beaumanor

Settlement Pattern

The village itself is fairly level but its roads drop away to the north and south. It is a linear village with small, short avenues or closes on both sides of Forest Road, each with a few dwellings. The map shows that its development limits have been

minimally extended. All but a few dwellings reside within the conservation area. New development has been slight.

Movement

Forest Road is the main thoroughfare. It has a straight stretch that connects the two villages and then kinks by the church before running through the village. This is an accident spot.



Church bend



School Lane bend

There is a relatively high volume of vehicle traffic, much of it travelling at excessive speeds [see survey results on Page 19]. The road is also narrow, has been reduced from a B to a C classification, and is prohibited to heavy goods vehicles over 7.5 tons. There is an exception for vehicles belonging to local hauliers in Woodhouse Eaves. Moving along the village on foot is possible for most of its length. The pavement is narrow and difficult for wheelchair users to negotiate. Drivers entering Forest Road from Home Farm Close, Vicary Lane, School Lane and Briscoe Lane report sight-line difficulties. The roads in both directions out of the village have several significant bends that have a history of vehicle accidents, some serious. Some villagers living closest to the bends report dangers when leaving their properties.

Travel directly to the east of the village is possible only along rural tracks. Footpaths and bridleways appear like veins on the landscape and are routes for many walkers. Tracks and official bridleways are used for horse riding in common with much of the wider Parish area, which has a particularly high ratio of horses to households [1:2]. A cycle track runs from the back of Beaumanor to Loughborough.



To Mucklin Wood



**Footpath School Lane
to Woodhouse Eaves**

GUIDELINES

Design should emerge from an understanding of the context of Woodhouse. Good practice would be for potential developers or applicants to be aware of archaeological, ecological and heritage interests within the village, and would be recommended to contact the Archaeology and Heritage Wardens in the Parish.

There is an expectation that developers will follow the guidance in Charnwood's *Leading in Design* Supplementary Planning Document, the Local Development Framework and Planning Policy Guidelines relevant to rural areas.

In particular:

Trees

There should be a strong presumption that trees that provide significant amenity value will be retained to maintain the appearance and character of the village and to preserve the existing diversity in wildlife. Trees are a dominant feature of the street scene, especially on Forest Road, but also throughout the village. Where trees have to be removed an appropriate quantity and selection of native trees should replace them. Where the trees that have to be cut down are protected by Tree Preservation Orders, appropriate replacement tree planting will be a requirement.

Historic legacy

It is expected that all development should be sympathetic to archaeological, ecological and heritage interests in the village. All parties should be aware of the presence of ancient ridge and furrow fields, which are part of the village's heritage. Some fields and hedges are SINCs and are shown on the map.

Wildlife

Every care must be taken to preserve the protected species and their habitats in accordance with the Local Biodiversity Plan. The Charnwood *Leading in Design* SPD requires a Design Statement for any development in a sensitive area such as a conservation village. The SPD emphasises that good design arises from an understanding of context, which includes consideration of existing trees and natural/ecological features.

Footpaths

The network of footpaths and bridleways should be sensitively managed and added to where possible, as residents and visitors regularly use these. School Lane to Woodhouse Eaves, Vicary Lane, and Beaumanor Drive to Woodthorpe are valuable arteries.

Landscape Setting

Open spaces of Special Character [OSSC] are distinctive features of the village setting and these green areas should be protected. Examples are the agricultural and meadowland between Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves, Quorn, Woodthorpe and Swithland. Residents consider these to be the most important features of village surroundings and they are of importance to the County as a whole.

New development should incorporate a soft-approach landscaping scheme that is in keeping with the majority of existing development. Creeping urbanisation should be avoided to preserve the rural character. For example, Forest Road exhibits a balance between buildings and soft edge boundaries and planting.

Roads

Bends at either end of Forest Road and on School Lane are accident spots. They are also visual assets that define the extent of the village. Whilst their safety should be monitored and improved, they should be retained as historic features of rural England.

New developments that increase the amount of traffic in the village should contribute to sensitive road safety solutions that encourage drivers to respect the village environment.

Roadside verges, highway footpaths and hedgerows in open countryside should reflect the character of their surroundings and be maintained in a way that retains or enhances local wildlife as well as safety.