

## **Rearsby Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

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# REARSBY CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

## Introduction

Rearsby Conservation Area was designated in June 1975. It covers an area of 16.75 hectares. Rearsby is one of a string of villages which sit on both sides of the Wreake Valley. It began as a Danish nucleated settlement with a local agricultural economy beside the Rearsby Brook. Great changes took place in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century with the Inclosure of the open fields and the building of the Leicester to Melton turnpike. There was development in Victorian times and a significant expansion of the village in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In recent times the Conservation Area itself has witnessed major changes with the demolition of one of the large houses and development of the gardens and orchards in the centre of the village. The boundaries of the Conservation Area encompass the village as it was up to the end of the Victorian period.

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 will then be used to inform the consideration of management and development proposals within the Area.

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. An assessment of the general condition of the buildings and spaces within the Area is included.

The main issues and proposed management actions are summarised. Recommendations for developing longer term management proposals for the area are suggested.

The document is intended as a guide to people considering development which may affect the Conservation Area. It will be used by Development Control in their assessment of proposals. It may, of course, be used by residents of the Conservation Area.

## Planning Policy Context

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.*

The Department of Communities and Local Government's Planning Policy Statement 5 on "Planning for the Historic Environment" encourages local planning authorities to pursue their duties under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to formulate proposals to preserve and enhance conservation areas and of the need to consult widely in doing so. It also contains several policies that are relevant to conserving the character of conservation areas.

The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands published in March 2009 advises local authorities that the historic environment should be understood, conserved and enhanced, in recognition of its own intrinsic value.. Policy 27: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment.

Local Plan Policy EV/1- Design, seeks to ensure a high standard design of all new development and that the design should be compatible with the locality and utilises materials appropriate to the locality.

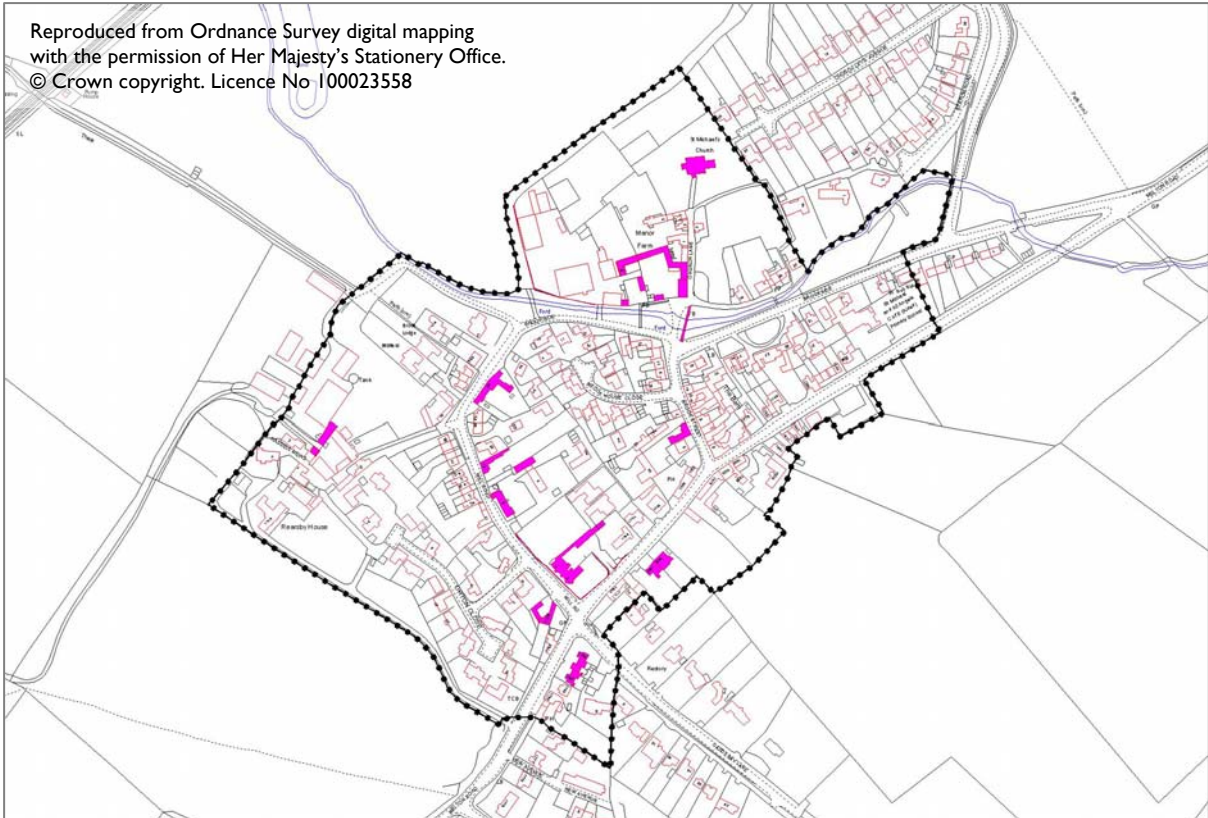
The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Leading in Design' builds on the design policies set out in the Charnwood Local Plan and will contribute to the development of more effective approaches to securing good design in the emerging Local Development Framework. The guide is also intended to support the implementation of the community strategy, Charnwood Together, by providing a set of principles that will inform the physical development implicit in the initiatives and actions of all partners in the local strategic partnership.

#### **Other SPG/SPD guidance**

- Backland & Tandem Development
- House Extensions
- Shopfronts & Signs<sup>2</sup>
- Rearsby Village Design Statement

<sup>2</sup> While it is recognised that there are currently no shops in Rearsby, the shopfront at the corner of Brook Street and Melton Road remains and its design is significant to the character of the Conservation Area.

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Current map of Rearsby showing the Conservation Area and the Listed Buildings

## **ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **Location and Setting**

Rearsby lies on the road from Leicester to Melton Mowbray, about 7 miles from Leicester, 8 miles from Melton. The village sits in the shallow valley of Rearsby Brook at the south side of the Wreake valley, but separated from the main valley by the low hill on which the church is a landmark.

## **HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Origins and Development**

Rearsby, as its name suggests, is a Danish settlement founded in the late 9<sup>th</sup> Century. It was a nucleated settlement, similar to the Saxon settlements elsewhere in the East Midlands, with an economy based on three open fields on the drier land for crops, and pastures in the lower wetter land for cattle and grazing.

At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 Rearsby was part of the land of the Lord of the Manor of Barrow. It was recorded as Redresbi or perhaps Reresbi. The name probably derives from the Old Norse personal name, Hrietharr, with the suffix “by” indicating Hrietharr’s Farm.

The church of St Michael and All Angels was built of stone beginning in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century with more work over the next two centuries.

In 1675 the number of open fields had been increased to five, but in 1762 there was a major change when an Inclosure act was passed allowing the wealthier farmers to bring their land together and operate a more profitable system. Nichols notes that they produced “excellent barley, oats and turnips”. Though this must have been at the great expense of the thus dispossessed poor. It is from this time that most of the houses that are seen today were built and the villagescape was established.

Along with Inclosure, which produced the surplus, came the need for much improved transport. The road from Leicester to Melton, which had often been completely impassable for days or weeks at a time in wet weather, was turnpiked. The famous packhorse bridge was rebuilt over the brook in 1714. The navigability of the river was improved and the Leicester to Melton railway was built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1831 a new piece of road for the turnpike was built to eliminate two notorious bends in the village, where the road turns down Brook Street and then along Brookside; this is the current Melton Road which in 2004 was itself superseded by the Rearsby bypass, so that what was once the busy main road of the village is now a very quiet scene.

There was great expansion of the village in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by the building of housing, mostly semi-detached, along the roads to Thrussington and Gaddesby and also along the Melton Road with a number of culs-de-sac. The centre of the village was left as gardens but more recently the parkland of Rearsby House and the gardens of Brook House which constituted a large part of the green centre have been developed with detached housing.

Until the arrival of framework knitting the economy was agricultural along with the various trades and professions to support ordinary life. It is known that there were framework knitters in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries but there is little surviving evidence in the cottages. Today, the village still has a working agriculture but mostly the economy is based on people working in Leicester and elsewhere.

As with the straightening of the turnpike when the Rose and Crown by the brook became a domestic dwelling, No 27 Brookside, so the roadside inns, The Horse and Groom and The Wheel have lost their passing trade. The village has no shops or post office any more, but it does have a primary school. John Wesley is famously said to have preached from the Blue Stone by the brook in 1753 but the Methodist Chapel has been converted for commercial use. A new Village Hall was opened in 2009.

### **Archaeological Interest**

The village has two focuses of historic settlement: the church to the north and the main settlement to the south, divided by the brook, joined by the packhorse bridge. The village was originally surrounded by ridge and furrow earthworks, created by mediaeval strip field cultivation, though little evidence of this now remains. Recent archaeological investigation has recorded mediaeval activity to the rear of the houses on Mill Road, thought to be the result of quarrying for building materials. A shard of Anglo-Saxon pottery from this trial trenching indicates the early mediaeval origins of the village. Fieldwork has also recorded prehistoric flint and buried archaeological features demonstrating earlier settlement in the vicinity.

### **Population**

The village of Rearsby appears to us today as small, in 2001 the population was just over 1000, yet Nichols in 1800 called it a “a large and populous village”! However, for most of its life the population of Rearsby has numbered not more than a few hundreds.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **Plan Form**

The village is based on the junctions of the Leicester to Melton road with the road across the Wreake to Thrussington and the road to Gaddesby and up into High Leicestershire. The plan today consists of a loop in which Melton Road forms a primary axis and from which Mill Road and Brook Street curve down to Brookside along the brook. Brookside continues out of the village to the east towards Melton. From Brookside, Church Lane fords the brook and forms a narrow cul-de-sac as far as the gate of the churchyard from where a footpath connects to the Thrussington Road.

Recent development within the Conservation Area has created two new culs-de-sac. The most significant involved the demolition of Brook House to create Brook House Close which has penetrated the gardens behind Brookside and Brook Street, leaving the high brick retaining wall intact along Brookside. Orton Close has had a less dramatic effect but it too has occupied former gardens, this time the parkland of Rearsby House.

### **Interrelationship of Spaces**

The original centre of the village was based on the relationship of the church, the brook and the area known as The Sands. The Sands, now called Brookside, is an open space with little sense of enclosure, from which Church Lane and Brook Street rise up the hillsides. These two lanes still maintain a medieval quality being tightly enclosed on both sides. Brookside running East and West along the willow edged brook has the feel of a quiet country street.

While Brook Street is medieval and enclosed, Mill Road by contrast has a variable quality, being partly enclosed, either by houses or brick or stone walls and partly open as the houses encroach or are set back from its edge.

The cutting through of Melton Road in 1831 created new opportunities for the village. The road curves gently through the village. The original houses or their high brick front walls are tightly enclosed at the edge of the road but later development, Victorian and modern, has created gaps in the sense of enclosure.

### **Villagescape**

The character of the Conservation Area is greatly determined by two factors: firstly, the setting on Rearsby Brook with its fords and the packhorse bridge joining the slopes on either side and, secondly, its position on the Leicester to Melton Road.

With the cutting through of the turnpike in 1831 and more recently the construction of the bypass, the lower part of the Area is quiet, with roads which are in general unmarked and rural in character. There is a spacious feel with many areas of grass and houses sited within their own land plots.

The upper part of the Area has been dominated for many years by the busy road, which still bears all the markings of attempts to control traffic. Pavements are rather narrow and while the road curves gently and the traffic is minimal it is not a place to feel comfortable in.

Overall, the Area is characterised by a great variety of buildings sitting beside each other. Some, larger, more imposing houses sit in their own garden space, separated often by substantial red brick walls from the street. Others join closely to their neighbour, sitting directly at the edge of the pavement. Not one building is the same size or shape as its neighbour with the exception to this pattern of short terraces of housing for the poorer inhabitants, begun in the Victorian period with the Pochin almshouses and continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with council housing.

Recent development has broken the tradition of variety. The two culs-de-sac consist of almost monolithic estates of houses which appear to be the same size, and quality, even though there are minor variations in terms of gables, dormers and separate or attached garages.

## **Key Views and Vistas**

The curving streets offer a number of delightful progression of views as one travels along them: the curving Melton Road in either direction; Mill Road as it descends and curves into Brookside and Brook Street as it drops down to the brook.

There is a strong sense of direction as one looks along Brookside as it leaves the village for Melton and a similar sense of the horizon on Melton Road.

There are some pleasant views of the villagescape and roofscape in the Area. Looking across the brook into the yard of Manor Farm with the Retreat beyond and the church on top of the hill gives a wonderful sense of continuing agricultural and village life. From the Melton Road into the back of Brook Street there is a delightful view of the roofscape with several interesting chimneys: from Brook Street this roofscape is seen as a rhythm of simple ridged slate roofs.

From the valley and the approach roads the village appears to be formed of a cluster of trees within which one sees glimpses of the houses. Rearsby House stands out clearly from the West but the church is almost hidden from any direction.

## **Landmarks**

The principal landmarks are St Michaels and All Angels Church and the seven arch Packhorse Bridge. In summertime, the church is hidden by trees. The bridge is a well loved focus of the village.

The Village Design Statement says that the Blue Stone is also a landmark but, since it is set in the grass beneath the willow trees beside the brook at the bend of Mill Road into Brookside, it is not particularly easy to notice. Nevertheless, it is an important feature of the Area: it is said that John Wesley preached from the stone in 1753.

# **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

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

Rearsby contains a variety of buildings based on the agricultural economy. There are the large farmsteads of Manor Farm and Rearsby House Farm and several other houses bear the mark of agricultural use in the past, such as No 32 Mill Road and No 1819 Melton Road with its complex of barns and outhouses which are currently being developed.

The chief buildings are the Church of St Michael and All Angels and the imposing properties of the Rectory, Old Hall and The Olde House and, hidden from views within the village, Rearsby House.

There are relatively few public buildings: two public houses, The Horse and Groom and The Wheel; the Parish Church, Primary School and the new Village Hall. The Methodist Chapel is now a commercial, design studio but otherwise the buildings are domestic.

Regardless of use, the older buildings are simple rectangular forms with a single ridge. The houses are mostly two storey, set close to and parallel to the edge of the street. Some of the houses extend to the rear as a "T" or "L" shape, again with simple rectangular forms and single ridges. There is an assumption that some of the three storey houses, such as No 2 Church Lane and No 11 Mill Road, were used for framework knitting. The shop front of No 2 Brook Street remains.

The Victorians introduced a Gothic form with much steeper rooves, gables, dormers and porches. These houses are set back from the street edge with front gardens and brick walls at the front which are often high enough to obscure the ground floor of the house. Victorian development included the Pochin almshouses, Nos 1787 - 1795 Melton Road and Nos 1794 - 1800 Melton Road, individual houses such as No 1845 Melton Road, and the Village School. The Methodist Chapel is earlier.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century introduced two terraces of council housing, Nos 19 - 25 Mill Road built in the 1930s and Nos 13A - 17A Mill Road built in the 1980s together with some detached houses and bungalows.

The most recent developments in Brook House Close and Orton Close have introduced large suburban style detached houses. The development of Brook House Close in the centre has successfully incorporated some of the historic outhouses into the new structures.

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

The Conservation Area has a wealth of listed buildings, see page 15.

Old Hall is a significant mark at the junction of Melton Road and Mill Road, a playful combination of roofscape and interesting gables and bays. As one descends Mill Road, the street is firstly lined by the separately listed high red brick wall to the grounds of Old Hall after which the delightful timber framed Olde House, a former Yeoman's Manor House, sits in its carefully tended and formal garden. Beyond is the red brick range of No 30 & 32 Mill Road. Within the latter can still be seen a small window of original glass panes.

At the core of the village is the seven arched Packhorse Bridge of which six arches are easy to spot but the seventh, hiding in the grass bank, must be sought for. The bridge is beside the ford which leads to Manor Farm, a splendid complex of farm buildings with a separately listed barn and pigeon house. The buildings have great variety, of red brick with cobble and granite, Welsh and Swithland slate, simple rooves and hipped, dormers and gables and several interesting chimneys. To the west of the main farm buildings the yard is surrounded by an ancient mud wall, topped with clay tiles.

On Melton Road, two large buildings stand out: the Pochin almshouses, Nos 1787 - 1795 by virtue of the Gothic architecture and the beautifully decorated rooftiles; and the Old Rectory, Nos 1807 & 1809, by virtue of its dramatic symmetrical fenestration, picked out in black, with square hoods, against the white painted render of its walls.

### **Key Unlisted Buildings**

It is perhaps unusual to describe a ford as a building, however, the ford at Rearsby is a most important feature at the core of the village.

The ford leads directly into the yard of Manor Farm and behind the farmbuildings can be seen the four bay Georgian house of The Retreat, No 3 Church Lane, with its sash windows, hipped slate roof and interesting chimneys.

The original wall of Brook House has been retained around the development of Brook House Close. It is massive and solidly built, forming a long imposing and nearly impenetrable boundary to Brookside.

### **Coherent groups**

The buildings surrounding the junction of Brook Street and Melton Road form an excellent village group. In particular, The Wheel Inn, No 2 Brook Street and No 1819 Melton Road, define the junction and the bend in Melton Road.

### **Building Materials and Architectural Details**

The general building materials are red brick with slate rooves and white painted timber sash windows.

### **Walls**



Soft red brick predominates throughout the Area. The church is the exception being built of ironstone, grey limestone and granite. In the older properties the brickwork is simple, often standing on a plinth of cobbles or occasionally granite. The bricks are rather longer and narrower than is normal in England: it is said that they were carried as ballast in boats from France to replace the trade in wool from this country. In the wealthier houses which have 9 inch walls the brickwork is laid to Flemish bond but only occasionally with the contrasting pattern of differently coloured stretcher and header. The Victorians used dark blue, almost black, and buff brick to decorate their brickwork, with plinths, quoins, strings and cornices, and window arches.

The Rectory and Old Hall are rendered and painted. The Olde House is astonishingly timber framed with herringbone brick infill panels, carefully restored by Sir Frank Craven in 1934.

No 1792 Melton Road has a lovely piece of dogtooth brickwork to the apex of the gable, topped with a terracotta finial.

### **Roofs**

The general roofing material is Welsh slate. There is evidence of thatch in some of the houses but all have now had their first floor raised and been re-roofed with slate. Examples are No 27 Brookside and No 12 Mill Road. Besides the Welsh slate there is some use of Swithland slate and plain clay tiles, a very sympathetic new example is at 39A Mill Road. In more recent time, concrete tiles have been used.

There is some excellent decorative tiling of the Pochin almshouses at Nos 1787 - 1795 Melton Road. There are examples of decorative ridge tiles at No 11 Mill Road and No 1845 Melton Road.

### **Doors and Windows**

There is a variety of timber windows: fine Georgian and Victorian vertical sashes and the more vernacular and thus cheaper horizontal sliding sash windows, some of which have been converted to casements. There are also examples of timber mullion and transom windows. In the older properties the window arches may be of rubbed red brick, the Victorian houses have window heads of stone, such as No 8 Brook Street. There is an older example of curved stone window arch at No 2 Brook Street with a carved head in the centre.

Many of the timber windows have been lost to replacement uPVC double glazing which has no aesthetic charm. These modern windows crudely mimic the timber sashes and casements, they damage the character of the historic houses and erode the character of the Conservation Area.

Doors are generally simple without doorcases, porches or canopies. The exceptions give individuality to the variety of buildings. Examples are at No 2 Brook Street, a much simpler rustic canopy at No 10 Brook Street, and the superbly restored canopy and doorcase at No 32 Mill Road.

Several houses have carriage entrances to give access to the rear yard. Examples are at No 4 Brook Street, No 8 Brook Street, with a modern example in the terraced housing at Nos 13A - 17A Mill Road.

### **Other details**

A number of buildings have date stones and other decorative devices. Examples are the initials WAP and date on both Pochin Almshouses on Melton Road, a carved lion over the door at No 12 Mill Road and a rosette and date-stone in the gables of the new house at No 39a Mill Road.

Mulberry Cottage at the corner of Melton Road and Mill Road has a multicoloured tile path in the front garden.

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

The village of Rearsby is remarkable for the number of trees in a landscape which has relatively few trees and the centre of Rearsby Conservation Area is remarkable for its extensive area of grass and willows beside the brook.

Public open space is rather limited to the area of grass beside the brook and in front of the old post office but beyond the brook is a quiet secluded area known as The Park. Around the church is the peaceful, rather secluded, churchyard.

The centre of the village between Mill Road and Brook Street still maintains a substantial quality of garden and orchard, despite the development of Brook House Close. This is largely due to the private gardens of Old Hall and The Olde House.

Along Brookside the built area merges almost seamlessly into the countryside, especially at the end of Manor Farm where another ford leads into Bog Lane, a muddy footpath and tractor way. There is a small area of paddock at the junction with the road to Thrussington.

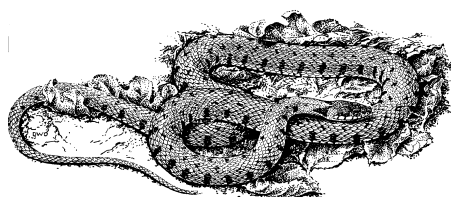
## Biodiversity

The Conservation Area has retained small oases of valuable habitats for wildlife in the midst of the surrounding countryside, which is largely managed for intensive arable production. Rearsby Brook flows through the Area and forms the main wildlife corridor, connecting the Conservation Area to the countryside across the landscape of the Wreake Valley.

The brook is lined in places with trees such as crack willows *Salix fragilis*, but the banks are mostly open. Next to the watercourse, small paddocks and wet grassland provide a valuable resource for many species which rely on damp ground conditions.

Although strong groups of mature trees are present within the Conservation Area, the hedgerow network is fragmented and interrupted and, except for the brook, there is a lack of strong habitat connectivity throughout and around the Area.

A small area of wet woodland to the east of the Conservation Area has been notified as a Local Wildlife Site. It comprises mature crack willow pollards *Salix fragilis* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* trees and complements the habitats found within the Area, such as the watercourse, damp grasslands, lawns and mature trees.

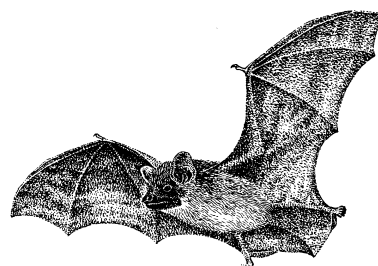


The grass snake *Natrix natrix*, a species associated with damp grounds has been recorded basking on the bank of the brook within close range of the Conservation Area. This harmless snake is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species.

The water vole *Arvicola terrestris*, another UK BAP species and a Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, has been recorded along ditches off Rearsby Brook. It is likely that the species commutes along the brook, although human disturbance may prevent it from establishing territory within the Conservation Area.

Bats such as the common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* are known to roost within the Area, whilst the brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* has been found in very close proximity.

The song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, another UK BAP species, can be seen feeding on the lawns of larger gardens within the Conservation Area. The loss of lawns from paving, hard surfacing, and infill development is likely to decrease the



availability of foraging habitat for this and other species.

Mature trees will eventually senesce and decline. Without the provision of the next generation of trees to replace existing mature trees, both the wildlife resource and visual quality of the Conservation Area may be affected in years to come.

### **Detrimental Features**

Melton Road, now by-passed, is superfluous as a major road, yet it is still marked as if it were a road to take volumes of traffic. It could have been part of the project of building the bypass to restore the village character of its street and return it for the enjoyment of the inhabitants.

## **DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

The main contributions to the special character of Rearsby Conservation Area are:

- The setting on Rearsby Brook with the fords and packhorse bridge
- The agricultural economy: Manor Farm and No 32 Mill Road
- The imposing larger properties of The Rectory, Old Hall and The Olde House
- The Victorian Pochin almshouses
- The extensive areas of grass and willows beside the brook
- The developmental views along Melton Road
- Views of Manor Farm
- The number of trees in a landscape with relatively few trees
- The great variety in shape and size of the older buildings
- The common use of a restricted palette of red brick, slate and timber sash windows

# MANAGEMENT PLAN

## General Principles

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 village.

Within the Conservation Area, where the quality of the general environment is already considered to be high, 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 PPS1 and PPS5, Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Leading in Design and other SPD, and Village Design Statements 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:

1. The Conservation Area has a distinct “grain” or pattern of built form and spaces which are part of its historic development. This gives the Conservation 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.
2. 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. Good modern design can be used to create positive changes in historic settlements
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 lead 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.
6. The appraisal has identified the types of materials that characterise the Conservation Area and where possible this should be used to help alterations respect that established character.
7. Applicants for planning permission must provide a meaningful “Design & 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.

### **Procedures to Ensure Consistent Decision-Making**

The basis of this character appraisal is to inform and guide development control decisions. A consistent approach to 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 any necessary remedial action.

The powers set out in Section 215 of the Village & 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.

### **Article 4 Direction**

The quality of a conservation area is often threatened by the cumulative impact of numerous small changes to many buildings which individually 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.

While the survey has identified a loss of character through the replacement of timber windows with uPVC it is not thought advisable to seek an Article 4 Direction.

## **General Condition**

Rearsby Conservation Area is in a reasonable condition. The buildings and their gardens and the public spaces are well cared for.

The by-pass, by removing almost all the through traffic, has restored peace and calm to the village but it has also taken away some of the vitality. Although there is still a working agriculture in the village, it has very little other economic life.

## **Buildings at Risk**

It is the intent of the Borough Council to take necessary action to secure repair & full use of any buildings at risk.

During the survey of the Area it was noted that uPVC windows fitted some years ago to Charlotte Cottage have damaged the character of this listed building.

The old barn at Brookside is very dilapidated.

## **Review of the Conservation Area Boundary**

The present boundaries of the existing Conservation Area incorporate the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest within the village. The appraisal has not identified any need to change the boundary.

## **Possible Buildings for Spot Listing**

In carrying out the Appraisal none of the buildings within the Conservation Area were identified for spot listing, i.e. considered for inclusion on the list of statutory listed buildings.

## **Enhancement Opportunities**

With the building of the by-pass there has been an enormous reduction in traffic using Melton Road. This road should now be returned as a village street. The road width could be reduced and all trappings and markings of traffic control should be removed. Widening the pavements would allow the street to regain some social function with particular opportunities outside the Horse and Groom.

The railings at Brookside are functional in design and not inappropriate to the village. An improved design that would enhance the character of the village is an option.

The telephone exchange is untidy. Enhancement could be achieved by a greater level of care.

The mud wall at Manor Farm is the subject of an ongoing scheme of repair. Dialogue with the owners and their agents is being maintained.

The wirescape of telephone and electricity cables detract from the character of the Area. Undergrounding is a possibility but is likely to be low priority for the utility companies.

## **Proposals for Economic Development and Regeneration**

Historic building grants are available from both Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council. 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.

## Management and Protection of Biodiversity

Threatened species and habitats can be 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.

The Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Borough Council's priorities for conservation of a variety 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 maximised to restore or enhance such habitats and populations.

## Monitoring Change

It is planned to review the conservation area character appraisal and its management plan every five years, although the management plan may under certain circumstances need to be reviewed over a shorter time period. 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.

## Summary of Issues and Proposed Actions

Conservation Area Issue	Proposed Action	Lead Partner	Other Partners
Melton Road	Reduce the carriageway width, widen the pavements and remove markings of traffic control.	Leics CC Highways	Rearsby Parish Council and Charnwood BC
Barn at Brookside	Ensure that the building does not fall into disrepair. Encourage renovation.	Charnwood BC	The owner.
Mud wall at Manor Farm	Continue to monitor ongoing scheme of repair.	Charnwood BC	The owner.

## 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.

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:

- 1 Review how the Council's adopted 'Shopfronts & Signs' guidance and the adopted Rearsby Village Design Statement are being used.
- 2 A policy regarding the co-ordination of the placing of all permanent items within the streets needs to be formulated. The opportunities to renew, redesign, re-site, eliminate or combine existing street furniture are substantial. 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.
- 3 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.

### **Community Involvement**

This document was made available as a draft via the website prior to submission to Cabinet for adoption. A public meeting was held in Rearsby so that local residents could contribute their ideas for enhancement and preservation of the Conservation Area. All comments and responses have been considered and appropriate amendments made to the document prior to submission 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, changes to shopfronts, alterations and extensions and suitable materials.

Contacts: Conservation & Landscape Team  
Tel. 01509 634748  
[built.heritage@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:built.heritage@charnwood.gov.uk)

Development Control  
Tel. 01509 634691  
[Development.control@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@charnwood.gov.uk)

Planning Enforcement  
Tel. 01509 634722  
[Development.control@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@charnwood.gov.uk)



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John Nichols, "History and Antiquities of the County of Leicestershire", Vol 3, 1800  
Barrie Cox, "The Place Names of Leicestershire", Part III, 2004  
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Rearsby, The Story of a Village, Rearsby Local History Society, 1984  
Sue Dix, Portrait of Rearsby, Article in Leicester Advertiser, 25 April 1980  
Bryn Howell, A History of The Olde House, Rearsby, 2007  
David Smith & Robert Hayward, Rearsby Old Hall, A Standing Building Evaluation  
Guidance on conservation area appraisals, English Heritage, 2006  
Guidance on the management of conservation areas, English Heritage, 2006

## **Internet Resources**

[www.rearsby.net](http://www.rearsby.net) (accessed 18 May 2009)  
[www.leics.gov.uk/rearsby.pdf](http://www.leics.gov.uk/rearsby.pdf) (accessed 7 July 2008) giving census 2001 information  
[www.natural-england.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing/species/bats.htm](http://www.natural-england.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing/species/bats.htm)

## **Statutory Listed Buildings in Rearsby**

The Church of St Michael and Old Hall are Listed Grade II\*.  
The Seven Arch Packhorse Bridge besides being listed Grade II is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument.  
The other buildings are listed Grade II.

Church of St Michael and All Angels, Church Lane  
Seven Arch Packhorse Bridge, Church Lane  
Charlotte Cottage, No 5 Brook Street  
The Old Vicarage, Nos 1807-1809 Melton Road  
Nos 1787-1795 Melton Road  
Mulberry House, No 1756 Melton Road  
The Olde House, No 8 Mill Road  
Barn to rear of The Olde House, Mill Road  
Moorhurst & Pump, No 12 Mill Road  
Manor Farmhouse & Outbuildings, Mill Road  
Barn at Manor Farm, Mill Road  
Wall at Manor Farm, Mill Road  
Pigeon House at Manor Farm, Mill Road  
Old Hall, Mill Road  
Wall to grounds of Old Hall, Mill Road - Melton Road  
Barn at Rearsby House Farm, Mill Road  
Former stable at Rearsby House Farm, Mill Road  
No 30 Mill Road  
No 32 Mill Road

## **Other Listed Buildings in Rearsby Parish**

Rearsby Mill, Grade II  
Rearsby Station, Locally Listed  
Church Leys House Convent, Locally Listed  
The Grange, Locally Listed