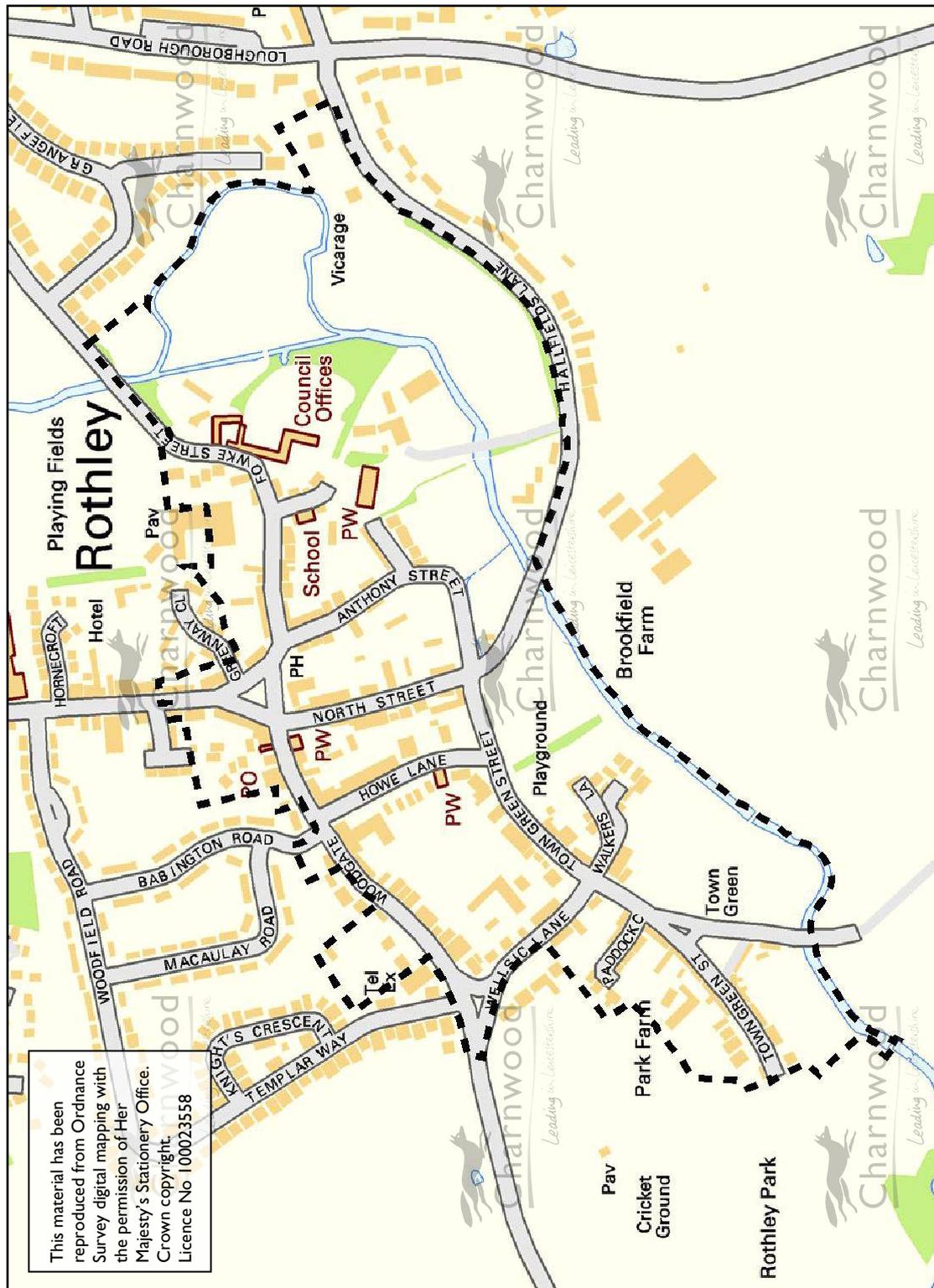


# **Rothley Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
Planning policy context	
<b>ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST LOCATION AND SETTING</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHEOLOGY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SPATIAL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>9</b>
Plan form	
Townscape	
Inter-relationship of spaces	
Key views and vistas	
Landmarks	
<b>CHARACTER ANALYSIS</b>	<b>12</b>
Building uses	
Building types and layouts	
Key listed buildings and structures	
Key unlisted buildings	
Coherent groups	
Building materials and architectural details	
Local details	
Parks, gardens and trees	
Biodiversity	
Detrimental features	
<b>DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN</b>	<b>19</b>
General principles	
Procedures to ensure consistent decision-making	
Enforcement strategy	
Article 4 Direction	
General condition	
Review of the boundary	
Possible buildings for spot listing	
Enhancement	
Proposals for economic development and regeneration	
Management and protection of important trees, greenery and green spaces	
Monitoring change	
Consideration of resources	
Summary of issues and proposed actions	
Developing management proposals	
Community involvement	
Advice and guidance	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>LISTED BUILDINGS IN ROTHLEY</b>	<b>25</b>

# Rothley Conservation Area Character Appraisal



Current map of Rothley showing the Conservation Area

## **Introduction**

The Rothley Conservation Area, which was first designated in December 1972 and extended in March 1997, covers an area of about 31.5 Ha. Rothley was described in Pigot's Commercial Directory of 1835 as "a neat and thriving village" and the boundaries of the Conservation Area generally define the extent of the settlement as it existed at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Area includes much of the village's historic core, focussing on two distinctive areas of settlement; one around the Town Green at the western end of the village, the other around the Church of St Mary and St John at the eastern end of the village. Within this historic core is a broad range of residential and commercial development that is representative of the settlement from the medieval period through to the Victorian and Edwardian expansion of the village in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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

- Location and setting, how the conservation area relates to the historic town and surrounding area.
- Historic development and archaeology, sets out how architecture and archaeology are related to the social and economic growth of the town.
- Spatial analysis describes the historic plan form of the town 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 material and architectural details, significant green spaces and trees, and detrimental features.

These elements are brought together in a summary of the overall special interest of the conservation area. An assessment of the general condition of the buildings and spaces within the area is included.

Proposals are made for management actions and recommendations for developing longer term management proposals for the area are suggested.

## **Acknowledgment**

The Council thank Stephen Bradwell of Trigpoint Conservation and Planning for the major contribution he has made to the research and writing of this Appraisal.

## **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.

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

The key principles of PPS9 require that planning policies and decisions not only avoid, mitigate or compensate for harm but also seek ways to enhance, restore and add to biodiversity and geodiversity.

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

The Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Structure Plan 1996 to 2016 published in December 2004 seeks to identify, protect, preserve and enhance areas, sites, buildings and settings of historic or architectural interest or archaeological importance. Development within conservation areas should preserve or enhance their character and appearance. Environment Policy 2: Sites and Buildings of Historic Architectural and Archaeological Interest.

The Borough of Charnwood Local Plan 1991 – 2006 adopted in January 2004 seeks to ensure 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. Policy EV/1.

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

## **Assessment of Special Interest**

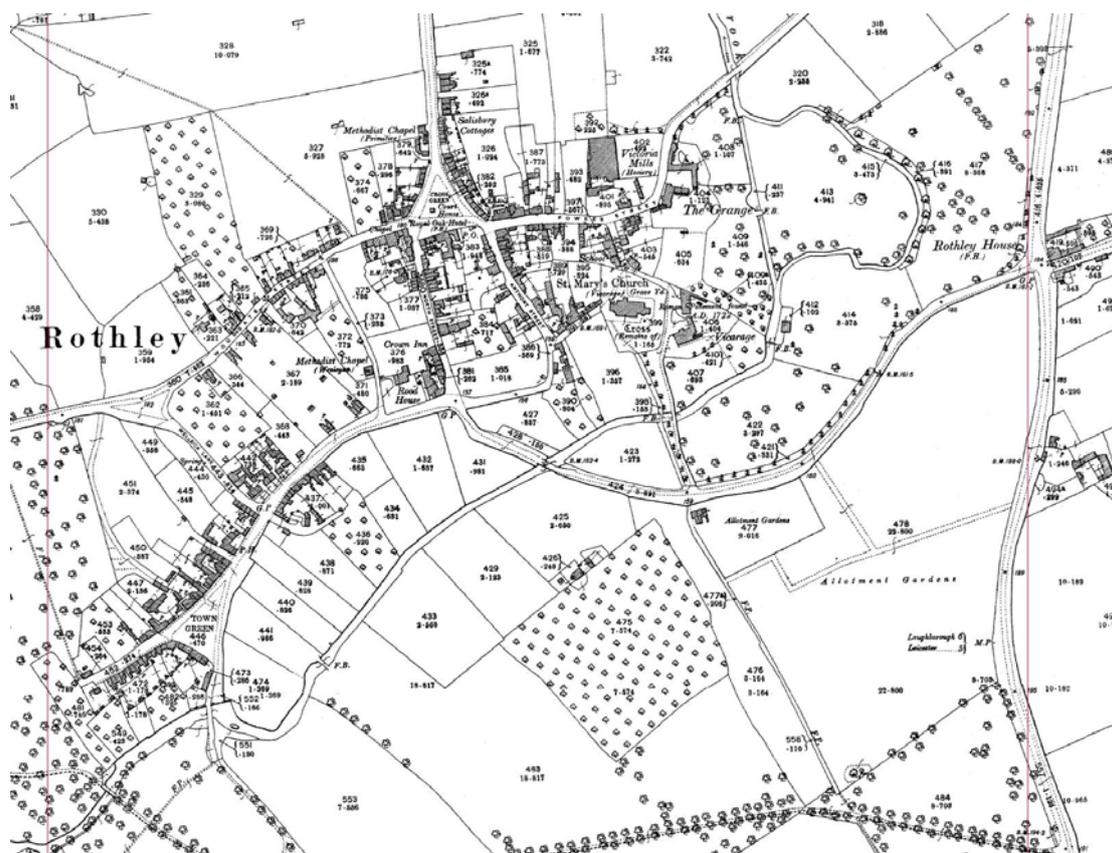
### **LOCATION AND SETTING**

The village occupies a sheltered site within the valley of the Rothley Brook about half a mile west of the River Soar and approximately 5 miles south of Loughborough.

The population of Rothley has varied over time. The most recent census figures published by Leicestershire County Council show that in 2001 there were some 3,612 people residing in the parish. The historical rise and fluctuations of the village's population are recorded in the Victoria County History. These records show that the level of population has varied, from about 181 people at the time of the 1377 Poll Tax to 108 people at the 1670 Hearth Tax returns, and this fluctuating population continued throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from 775 in 1801; to 948 in 1821, 1,055 in 1841; falling to 939 by 1861 before rising to 1,048 in 1881 and 1,463 in 1901. These changes in population are partially explained by changes in the parish boundaries and general economic changes, particularly with the decline of the domestic framework industry in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the subsequent introduction of new hosiery and boot and shoe factories and the arrival of the Great Central Railway (GCR).

Rothley sits on the south facing slopes of the valley beside the Rothley Brook where it emerges into the Soar valley flood plain. This localised topography is reflected in the Conservation Area as the land gently falls from about 55 metres at Cross Green and along Woodgate, to about 49 metres alongside the Brook, where the open fields and meadows provide an attractive, pastoral setting for the village.

## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY



Rothley in 1903

The name Rothley may have come from the old English '*Rothu Leah*' meaning a woodland clearing and it went through a number of variations before being fixed in its present version sometime in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. A settlement at Rothley is recorded in the Domesday Book as '*Rodolei*'; and subsequent variations include '*Rothlea*' in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; '*Rotheleye*' in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and '*Rotheley*' in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The discovery of a Roman pavement near the Old Vicarage in 1722 and the remains of a Roman villa close to the site of Rothley station provide evidence of a Roman presence in the area. And during recent excavations in 2006 on the site of The Grange, in Fowke Street, the team from Northamptonshire Archaeology exhumed over 280 burials from the area of The Grange nearest to the present Churchyard. Whilst the final report is not yet ready, it has been said that many of the burials are of Saxon date, through to early medieval. Other evidence for the early Saxon settlement include the Mercian stone cross in the churchyard that is believed to be 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century in origin and the street name Wellsic Lane, '*well sic*' being Saxon for water course. The team also found significant amounts of Roman floor and roof tiles, many laying in a position were they had fallen when a building might have collapsed.

Local historians have established that from before the Conquest Rothley was the centre of a large manorial enterprise supervised by an enlightened manorial court system. The village was probably first established by the Saxons during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries when there appears to have been a major re-organisation of the landscape and many small dispersed settlements came together as nucleated village settlements surrounded by open fields (Courtney, 2003).

Graham Jones (Jones, 1999) has suggested that the early settlement had significant Royal connections, being part of the Saxon King Harold's estates and that it was the site of a high status church linked to other royal functions at Barrow and Loughborough. However, Vanessa McLoughlin (*The Manor & Soke of Rothley*, McLoughlin, 2006) describes with some precision how Rothley was in effect a Minster church to its six dependent chapelries located in the villis of its 22-member Soke, detailed in

Domesday Book. And because of Rothley parish's status as an ecclesiastical peculiar, outside the jurisdiction of any Bishops, this leading role for Rothley continued right into the major 19th century development of Rothley. The findings at The Grange support the idea of a Minster church, with the dead from the dependent chapelries being brought here for burial, until such time as the chapels were granted their own burial rights

After the Conquest the estate was passed to William the Conqueror, and Nichols notes that in 1086 it was at the centre of the Royal landholdings.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Rothley became a site for a community (preceptory) of Knights Templars at Rothley Court, an Order of Knights started during the first Crusade in 1118 to protect pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and to defend the Cross. The Knights Templars were first established in England around 1140 and by 1203 had been granted land at Rothley by King John, but it is likely that the preceptory was only established in 1231 when the Order was also granted the manor of Rothley.

However, the Order fell out of political favour. In 1308 Edward II arrested all the English Templars and in 1312 the Pope abolished the Order, transferring their possessions to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, known as the Hospitallers, founded to give hospitality to pilgrims. The Hospitallers had been established in England since 1100 and they held Rothley from 1313 until the Reformation in 1540 when their possessions passed to the Crown. The manor was subsequently granted to Edward Cartwright and then sold in 1565 to Humphrey Babington, whose immediate act on purchase was to add a large domestic extension to the Templar Preceptory building, fashioned largely with local granite and Swithland slate. The Babington family remained as Lords of the Manor until 1845 and the Temple buildings, which lie outside the Conservation Area, having been converted to domestic use were ultimately sold and converted to a hotel in 1958.

The Templars in their time had secured the peculiar status of the demesne lands and were able to develop the idea of their own private 'parish', Temple Rothley, which was to continue right through until being swept up into the civil parish at the turn of the 19th/20th century.

#### Economic History

The medieval village relied mainly on farming, based on its open fields, for its prosperity. The Knights Templar had been granted rights to hold a market at Rothley in 1285 but this never established itself, particularly when it was in competition with a market at Mountsorrel that had been granted a charter by Edward I in 1292, and it was transferred to Gaddesby where it fell into disuse.

The enclosure of the open fields following an Act of Parliament in 1781 had a profound effect on both the local landscape, the communal open fields passed into the hands of private landowners, and the local economy of the villagers lost their traditional dependency on the land and were forced to seek alternative employment.

An important alternative source of employment at this time was the domestic framework knitting industry and by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Rothley had become an important centre. Early knitters were traditionally employed as out-workers working within their main home or in purpose built workshops to the rear of their properties with the involvement of the whole family (men on the frame, women seaming and children winding wool onto bobbins). Nichols notes that in 1801 out of a population of 775 persons, 152 were chiefly employed in agriculture while 354 were employed in trade and manufacture; the 1851 Census shows that out of 975 inhabitants, 84 people were employed as agricultural labourers while 132 were framework knitters.

As well as agriculture and framework knitting, Rothley was an important coaching stop on the main road from London to the north of England. Prior to the formation of the Leicester-Loughborough turnpike in 1726, the main road north out of Leicester ran through the centre of Rothley following a route from Wanlip across the Rothley Brook below the Church and then skirting around the Church and Fowke Street before following Mountsorrel Lane. Coaching inns, such as The Old Red Lion and possibly a property on Fowke Street, provided accommodation for travellers and no doubt contributed to the local economy. This circuitous route through the village still survives in the footpaths that run south from the Church and across the open fields towards Wanlip. It was

eventually replaced by the construction of the Leicester-Loughborough turnpike which today is generally followed by the line of the old A6 to the east of the village.

This rapid growth in the village through the 19<sup>th</sup> century was reflected in the improvements and growth of community facilities. A National School on School Street opened in 1837 and new places of worship were built, a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Howe Lane in 1822, which is still in use; a Primitive Methodist Chapel built in Mountsorrel Lane, recently converted to a dwelling; and a Baptist Chapel on North Street.

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the domestic hosiery industries went into decline as the trade became increasingly concentrated in factories, particularly those in Leicester and other Soar valley villages such as Syston and Sileby that had the advantages of canal and railway links with Leicester. Rothley, being somewhat removed from these main routes, did not experience the same degree of Victorian industrial and residential development as many of its neighbouring settlements. The introduction of factories within the Conservation Area was relatively small-scale, with a new hosiery works on Fowke Street (Victoria Mills) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and a boot and shoe factory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century off Town Green Street.

With this new industry came new houses to cater for the increase in the population drawn to the factories. A further rapid increase in population and new house building was generated by the arrival of the Great Central Railway in 1904 and new bus services that enabled people to travel to work in Leicester. This sudden increase in house building is now reflected in the Conservation Area by the ranks of terraced housing along Anthony Street, North Street, Howe Lane, Woodgate and Town Green Street, largely completing the historic development within the Conservation Area.

The present Conservation Area now reflects the basic historic street pattern that had been established as a result of the local topography and the particular historic development of the village and contains a wide range of buildings built in the village between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Archaeological Interest**

The Conservation Area encompasses the core medieval settlement of Rothley and the historical development of the Area, which is evident in the pattern of streets, housing plots and the age of many of the properties, would suggest that there is good potential for below ground archaeology. Therefore any major development within the Conservation Area requiring excavation works should be preceded by a considered archaeological assessment and investigation.

In addition many of the earlier buildings may conceal medieval or post-medieval remains, therefore any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric would also merit further archaeological investigation and recording.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **Plan Form**

The historic development of the settlement appears to have been strongly influenced by two distinctive cells: one on the western side of the village around the present Town Green and a second on the eastern side of the village around the Parish Church.

The Town Green end appears to have developed at the junction of two roadways, one leading to a fording point of the Rothley Brook and a second running towards the boundary of Rothley Court. This early period of development is reflected in the number of timber framed buildings dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that stand alongside Town Green Street and are some of the oldest buildings in the village.

The present Town Green forms a distinctive triangular shaped piece of open land where these two roadways diverge, although it is not clear whether the green is a remnant of the original settlement or was simply open land left at a road junction. Evidence from a map of 1780 of landholdings in the village suggests the latter as there is no indication of a formal green, only a wide junction between the two roadways. The lack of houses on the south side is probably due to the regularity of the brook flooding.

At the opposite eastern end of the settlement is a further cluster of development that has grown up around the Church, with a number of timber framed buildings along Church Street, Fowke Street and Anthony Street. These also date from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and are contemporary with houses on Town Green Street. As the village grew the housing began to spread westwards onto North Street and along Woodgate; further development to the south and east of the Church being restricted by the Rothley Brook.

Between Town Green and the Church is Cross Green, a second large area of open space which appears to have developed as a wide junction between North Street and Anthony Street with Mountsorrel Lane rather than a planned village green.

The two distinct clusters of development were originally linked by Main Street (now known as Town Green Street) and are clearly shown on the 1780 map. At this time the village consisted of a cluster of cottages around the present Town Green and extending beyond Wellsic Lane with a series of narrow fields on the south side of the road running to the brook, land which remains as open fields today.

At the opposite end of the village the Church is shown on the fringe of the settlement with cottages along Anthony Street, Fowke Street and North Street, the main road into the village from a bridge over the Brook. The present Howe Lane appears as an undeveloped back lane behind the properties fronting North Street and this street remained largely undeveloped until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it is first recorded as Lowe Street on the 1929 Ordnance Survey (OS) map.

In between the two settlements was a large open paddock between Wellsic Lane and Howe Lane owned by Thomas Babington.

This polycentric settlement of 1780 experienced very little change in the following 100 years and the two distinct cells were still evident on the 1884 OS map. At this time the village was very much a rural backwater, isolated from the main Soar valley transport routes; the Leicester-Loughborough road ran to the east of the village along the line of the original turnpike and the later Leicester Navigation canal and the Midland Railway were on the opposite side of the River Soar and its flood plain and therefore difficult to access.

However, after centuries of little change the village experienced a rapid surge of development over a relatively short space of a few years at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century associated with the development of hosiery and boot shoe factories and the arrival, albeit at a distance, of the GCR. Harry Rainer Parker, inheritor of the Temple Estate purchased by his father Sir James Parker from the Babington Executors, worked imaginatively with Hamptons, the London agents, to put his holdings onto the market in a mixture of lots in an auction sale in October 1893.

These developments provided the impetus for a spate of new housing in the village, with new properties on Town Green Street replacing earlier cottages; properties moving west along Woodgate and Main Street (Town Green Street) breaching the gap between the two historic settlements and new housing on North Street and Howe Lane consolidating the centre of the village.

Whilst there have been further significant changes in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly along Woodgate with the construction of Babington Court, and pockets of new housing along Church Street, Fowke Street, Wellsic Lane and off Town Green Street, the historic core of the village remains very much intact and is represented by a number of important unlisted and listed buildings (see page 23).

### **Townscape**

Generally the townscape is characterised by continual runs of buildings, in most cases forming terraces, situated close to if not directly at the back of the pavement. This creates streets and lanes that are narrow and tightly enclosed. At varying intervals there are larger buildings in more open settings but the sense of enclosure is maintained by substantial brick and stone boundary walls. Views along the streets are closed by buildings, further enhancing this sense of enclosure to the street scene.

Much of the character of the medieval streets comes from the way many of the buildings are set slightly out of parallel to each other and to the line of the street, which adds significant interest and which is lost by Victorian and later developments. In addition to the tightly enclosed character of the streets, the types of building and activities along them varies. This variety contributes in a very significant way to the character of many of the streets.

The townscape of the village produces a strong silhouette when viewed from the south which is enhanced by the tapestry of colour and texture provided by the variety of roof shapes, walls and trees.

### **Character and interrelationship of spaces**

There are a considerable number of spaces within the Conservation Area and almost all have a distinct informality to their character. The one exception is Cross Green where the formal character is expressed by the war memorial and its associated garden. From the earlier maps it would appear that this space was well enclosed but recent development has, to its detriment, reduced the sense of enclosure especially in contrast to the tightly enclosed streets which lead into it.

Town Green is a larger space but less formal in its arrangement. It is surrounded by some of the oldest buildings in the village and is likely to have been the original principal space for public activity. However, development growth has focused on the central part of the village meaning that Town Green is now situated at one end of the settlement and has become isolated from the main activities of the village.

The open road junction at the south end of North Street marks the entrance to the village when approaching over the Rothley Brook. The entrance to the village from the west is marked by the open junction of Wellsic Lane/Woodgate.

The churchyard is an important green space within the village. A number of footpaths cross the churchyard providing access between Church Street/School Street and south past the Saxon cross towards Rothley Brook. The southern part of the churchyard is heavily enclosed by trees restricting views across the meadow.

### **Key views and vistas**

There is a significant vista of the village as one approaches across Rothley Brook and there is a continuing view up North Street towards Cross Green.

The other key views are in the remaining medieval parts of the village:

- A view of the Woodman's Stroke Public House down the hill from the northern end of Anthony Street.
- The framed view of St Mary's Church tower from the west end of Church Street.
- Views of the terraces of cottages on either side of Town Green as they sweep in to form a narrow entrance/exit to the green.
- The sense of closure created by The Grange when viewed from the west end of Fowke Street.

### **Landmarks**

The Church occupies a slightly elevated site at the end of Church Street. Whilst the Church is enclosed by buildings and stands off the main thoroughfare, its slightly detached location ensures that the tower is a focal point for views from several directions, with particularly good views of the Church tower across the meadows from Hallfields Lane.

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **Building uses**

The present activities and building uses within the Conservation Area reflect much of the historical development of the village and whilst the buildings are principally houses, there is a range of retail and industrial buildings that are well integrated into the urban fabric.

The basic economy of the medieval village was tied to agriculture, which provided both employment and activity within the village. The legacy of this agricultural economy is reflected in the number of farmhouses and agricultural buildings that still stand within the Conservation Area, such as those at no. 17, Anthony Street, no. 36, North Street and more extensively at what was Park Farm at no. 81, Town Green Street.

After the enclosure of the open fields, the population of Rothley relied on domestic framework knitting and then as this industry declined in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on local hosiery and boot and shoe factories and, when the GCR made it possible, on commuting.

Whilst the framework knitting was an extensive domestic activity, the only surviving example of a knitter's workshop appears to be the single storey building complete with a range of long, narrow 5-light windows and single chimney attached to the rear of nos. 10-12, Woodgate (now Grade II listed).

With the decline of framework knitting new employment opportunities were provided by the development of a hosiery factory, the Victoria Mills on Fowke Street, which was built by Harry Hames in 1887, and by Willett's boot and shoe factory off Town Green Street. Whilst the boot factory has now been replaced by housing (Paddocks Close), the Victoria Mills and other commercial uses along Fowke Street still survive, maintaining a tradition of industrial enterprise in the village.

Rothley also has a busy retail centre and whilst most of the shops are now concentrated along Woodgate, the Rothley History Society (2003) notes that there were a considerable number of shops scattered throughout the village.

### **Building types and layouts**

Most of the historic development in the village is orientated towards the street and there is little evidence of historic development at 90 degrees to the road as is often found in other historic villages.

There are several relatively short Victorian terraces, which address the change in level along the length of the street and also the change between street level and ground floor level of the buildings in a distinctive way, for example, the raised pavement along North Street, one part of which has an associated railing.

Terraces of cottages that are often sited directly at the back of the pavement with the principal rooms facing on to the street and in some cases interspersed with larger farmhouses as at Park Farm, Town Green create a distinctive layout.

Chapel buildings are evident and the historic example that survives intact on Howe Lane takes a very simple vernacular form.

### **Key listed buildings and structures**

The Parish Church of St Mary and St John, described in 1877 as 'a large and handsome fabric', is thought to have existed on this site since the 11<sup>th</sup> century with Norman-work in the foundations of the present tower and in the chevron pattern around the font bowl. The present Church however generally dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries with major Victorian restorations undertaken in 1861 and 1877, under the architect R. Reynolds Rowe of Cambridge.

The timber frame cottages on Fowke Street and Town Green are fundamental in determining the predominantly medieval character of these streets and spaces.

The War Memorial is the focus of Cross Green and an important listed building in this part of the Conservation Area.

The grouping of listed buildings along Church Street and the south end of Anthony Street determine the historic character on the approach to the churchyard.

Rood House is one of the most important listed buildings in the village but its location means that the building itself contributes little to the character of the street scene because it is set back from the street in its own grounds. It does however contribute to the character of the area by providing, in the winter months, glimpses through the trees. The trees within the grounds and the boundary walls are the features that make a significant contribution to the character of the street.

### **Key unlisted buildings**

The Grange, Fowke Street.

### **Coherent groups**

The buildings on the corner of Fowke Street and Anthony Street are not of significant architectural quality in their own right but collectively they form a run of buildings that contribute significantly to the character of this part of the Conservation Area, due to the continuity of their built form and their position in relation to Cross Green. They effectively form a hinge point for views from Cross Green.

Many of the simple terraces of buildings form coherent groups as they are such strong features of the character of the village.

### **Building materials and architectural details**

The most common building materials in the Conservation Area are red brick and slate but there is also a good number of surviving timber frame properties. Despite its location on the edge of Charnwood Forest, the use of Forest granite and Swithland slate does not appear to have been as common as in other villages which had strong historical links to the Forest and its resources, such as Barrow and Mountsorrel.

Whilst examples of local granite can be found throughout the village it is rarely used as a principal building material. Buildings constructed entirely of granite tend to be the principal civic buildings, such as St Mary and St John's Church (Grade II\* listed) at the head of Church Street, the village hall on Fowke Street and the Wesleyan Chapel on Howe Lane. In domestic properties, granite was commonly used to provide a solid plinth below a timber frame and these plinths are a distinctive feature of many houses in the village. In some rare instances it was extensively used. For example at no. 3, Town Green Street (Rood House) (Grade II listed), perhaps because of changing fashions or social pretensions, the front elevation is of brick while the rear elevation is in the local granite.

Granite is also commonly found in the boundary walls that line many of the streets, such as Anthony Street and Howe Lane. These walls make a significant and distinctive contribution to the local street scene and the Conservation Area generally.

Perhaps due to the limited availability of local Forest stone, the village developed a strong vernacular tradition of timber frame and thatched construction and there are a significant number of surviving timber-frame cottages dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries throughout the Conservation Area. There are few examples of surviving thatched roofs, the only surviving timber-framed building complete with its thatched roof being no. 6, Fowke Street (Grade II listed). However, photographic evidence from the Rothley History Society (2003) shows the extensive use of thatch on now-demolished cottages in Wellsic Lane, (pages 34, 44 & 46); Anthony Street (pages 17 & 46); Woodgate (page 32) and Cross Green (pages 18 & 22).

Whilst the Area may have lost its thatch roofs, it does have a significant number of timber-framed cottages, with examples throughout the village, both around the Church, such as no. 10, Church Street (April Cottage) (Grade II listed) which has a pair of cruck blades in the end gable; no. 9,

Anthony Street (Grade II listed) with timber framing in its front elevation; and no. 13, Fowke Street (Grade II listed) with a cruck blade partly visible in its front elevation; and around the Town Green, such as at no. 81, Town Green Street (Grade II listed) with timber framing in its front and side gable elevations; no. 91, Town Green Street (Grade II listed) with a visible pair of cruck blades in its side gable and no. 80, Town Green Street (Grade II listed) with timber framing in its front and side gable elevations.

However, the most prevalent building materials in the Area are red brick and Welsh slate. These materials directly reflect the most significant period of development within the Conservation Area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and provide a broad uniformity of material and appearance.

In many properties the brick is laid in a Flemish bond, such as at nos. 2-8 Anthony Street, nos. 18-20, Anthony Street (where the distinctive pattern is emphasized by contrasting lighter headers with darker stretchers); nos. 27-41, North Street; nos. 43-45, Woodgate; and nos. 25-35, Town Green Street. An exception to the use of red brick can be seen at nos. 25-29, Fowke Street which are built of a cream brick with red brick banding. In many cases the external brickwork has also been painted, such as the Woodman's Stroke on Church Street; no. 13, Fowke Street and no. 103, Town Green Street (Keeper's Cottage) (both Grade II listed).

A number of properties are also finished, either in whole or in part, in render. The main examples include no. 4, Church Street (Grade II listed) which has a smooth stucco render which appears to have been lined to represent stone; no. 8, Fowke Street (Grade II listed) and nos. 83-87, Town Green Street which have a roughcast render finish; and nos. 7 & 9, Cross Green with render over granite.

Render can also be mixed with brick as part of the original design as in the late-Victorian properties at nos. 92-100 & 102-106, Town Green Street, and the Edwardian properties at nos. 6-12, North Street (Memorial Cottages), which all have a rendered first floor over a brick ground floor.

Welsh slate is the predominant traditional roofing material throughout the Conservation Area and it is used in such the properties as nos. 2-14 and 18 & 20, Anthony Street; nos. 15-21, Woodgate; nos. 27-41, North Street; and nos. 25-35, Town Green Street.

In addition to Welsh slate there are a few remaining examples of locally sourced Swithland slate, such as at the Old Vicarage at the head of School Street; nos. 4 & 8, Church Street; no. 17, Anthony Street; the former village hall on Fowke Street; no. 4, School Street; 10a, Woodgate (the Grade II listed former stockinger's workshop); the Wesleyan Chapel on Howe Lane; nos. 3 (Rood House) and nos. 84 & 86, Town Green Street (both grade II listed).

Other roofing materials in the Conservation Area include the use of Roman tiles at nos. 81 (Park Farm) and 91, Town Green Street, although photographic evidence shows that these buildings were originally thatched (Rothley History Society (2003) page 40).

One of the most significant visual changes to the Conservation Area has been the widespread use of concrete roof tiles to re-roof a large number of properties. These tiles look out of place and are visually intrusive and should be avoided by specifying Welsh slate for any new development within the Conservation Area.

There is a broad range of window types throughout the Conservation Area, but unfortunately the survival rate of original windows and doors has not been good. Whilst such features are often integral to their appearance, a substantial number of properties have been fitted with replacement upvc windows and doors that have little respect for the building's original appearance.

Of the surviving traditional windows the most common are sash windows and typical examples include the Georgian multi-pane sash windows in the front elevation no. 3 (Rood House), Town Green Street; the multi-pane sash windows without horns at no. 4 School Street; and the Victorian split-pane sashes at nos. 10 & 12, Anthony Street; or mixed sashes such as at no. 6, Fowke Street, with a split pane lower sash and a 6-pane upper sash, and nos. 2-6, Anthony Street, which have a split lower sash with a 4-pane upper sash in the first floor. A common variation of window type used

throughout the Conservation Area is the tripartite sash window, with examples in the first floor of nos. 18-20, Anthony Street, nos. 43-45, Woodgate; and no. 31, Town Green Street.

As well as sash windows, a number of properties also have casement windows, such as the mullion and transom windows with opening casements at nos. 25-27, Fowke Street and no. 89, Town Green Street; the ground floor windows of no. 30 (Ivy House), Anthony Street (Grade II listed); the first floor windows of nos. 17-21, Woodgate, that project forward of the front wall, although the only original windows are at no. 21; the range of casements at no. 81, Town Green Street, which has a mixed range of 3-light and 2-light casements, and at nos. 92-100 & 102-106, Town Green Street, which have a range of 3-light casements on the ground floor and 4-light casements on the first floor.

There are also some good examples of other traditional window styles such as the Yorkshire sliding sashes in the outbuildings to no. 17 (Draycott House), Anthony Street; nos. 6 and 13, Fowke Street; and in the upper floors of nos. 91 and 103, Town Green Street.

A number of properties have distinctive bay windows, such as no. 4, Church Street which has a pair of box bays on the front elevation; nos. 18-20, Anthony Street with canted bay windows under a monopitch roof that extends across the two properties; and a series of canted bays at nos. 29-35, Town Green Street which are also under a continuous monopitch roof that is supported by timber brackets and also provides a canopy over the front doors. Nos. 27-41, North Gate retain a series of simple box-bays with monopitched roofs but these have been much altered.

Many of the properties in the Conservation Area have retained their original timber panel doors, such as in the terraces along North Gate and at nos. 43-45 and 58, Woodgate, all of which have attractive toplights above the door. The most elaborate doorways are naturally found on the older properties such as at no. 4, Church Street, where the original panel door and fanlight is surrounded by an attractive timber doorcase with a pedimented canopy; at no. 30, Anthony Street, which has a panelled door framed by a timber doorcase and small bracketed hood; no. 3, Town Green Street, which has a panelled door and overlight framed by a timber doorcase with dentilled pediment and fluted pilasters; and no. 89, Town Green Street, which has a panelled door within a wooden doorcase.

Such original architectural features make a unique contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and wherever possible should be retained as they add to the collective wealth and variety of architectural details within it.

Most of the Victorian and Edwardian cottages have quite pronounced projecting cills and flat lintels with a range of decorative motifs around the door and window openings. Nos. 29-35, Town Green Street have a first floor lintel with an acanthus leaf motif within a pediment; while nos. 7-11, Town Green Street have a scroll motif within the lintels; and nos. 58 and 60-62, Woodgate have a floral and scroll motif. A number of properties also have distinctive brick arches, such as the segmental arches with projecting painted keystones on the North Street terraces while the earlier Georgian houses, that are built in more polite architectural style, have splayed brick arches over the windows, such as no. 3, Town Green Street, which has gauged brick lintels with central projecting painted keystones.

Although most properties are simply detailed and lack architectural embellishment, some buildings have relatively subtle detailing. A typical detail within many of the terraced properties are the moulded brick string courses under the eaves, such as the egg and dart motifs over a dentil course at nos. 29-35, Town Green Street and nos. 58 and 60-62, Woodgate; or the single dentil course at nos. 15-21, Woodgate. Nos. 92-100 & 102-106, Town Green Street have a simple brick dentil stringcourse between the brick ground floor and the rendered upper floors.

Many properties have retained their original chimney stacks, most of which are quite simple brick stacks with an oversailing course surmounted by simple pots, which add considerable skyline interest.

Whilst there are a number of commercial properties in the Conservation Area there are few surviving examples of traditional timber shop fronts, the best are those at nos. 19-21, Woodgate, which contain a single shop display window framed by pilasters with brackets supporting a cornice over the fascia. Given their rarity within the Conservation Area these make a significant contribution to the historic character of the Area.

## **Local details**

Two features of Rothley, not found elsewhere in the Borough, are the historic street lanterns, some hung from the walls of houses, others set on individual lamp-posts, and the original blue enamel fire hydrant signs found on several houses around the Area.

Another feature is the use of the Templars Cross as an emblem on street furniture in Cross Green.

## **Parks, gardens and trees**

Rothley Brook and its associated meadow lands make a significant contribution to the setting of the village. They create a calm rural quality to the landscape and they create opportunities for views of the village from outside and vistas across the valley from within the village. The meadows are bordered along Hallfields Lane by a fine row of pine trees and other deciduous trees and the brook itself has many willows and other trees along its banks.

The garden of The Grange contains some fine specimen trees but these are difficult to assess while the redevelopment is taking place.

An important individual tree is the Beech, planted as a memorial in 1953 to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, on Town Green. The trees at the junction of Woodgate/Wellsic Lane/Westfield Lane are a continuation of the park setting to Rothley Temple. Significant groups of trees are the group of four around the War Memorial at Cross Green and the many Yews and other trees within the churchyard.

## **Biodiversity**

One of the main influencing factors on biodiversity within the Conservation Area comes from Rothley Brook, which has been notified as a Local Wildlife Site. The brook contains valuable features such as sections of eroding earth cliff, a series of riffle and pool systems and sediment bars exposed at low flow. The brook is also fringed by tall trees with overhanging branches and exposed roots. A number of these are classed as veteran trees. Species include crack willow, alder, pedunculate oak, ash, sycamore and black poplar hybrid.

The section of brook within the Conservation Area is known to support white-clawed crayfish, which is listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and has also been identified as a key species in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The white-clawed crayfish is the only native crayfish in the Country, and is fully protected under wildlife legislation.

In recent time, Rothley Brook has also seen the return of the otter, another BAP species. The otter, which marks its territory with characteristic spraints often deposited close to bridges or on prominent rocks, has been recorded further downstream and along the River Soar, showing that it must be travelling through the Conservation Area. The presence of the otter is a measure of how the water quality of the brook has improved.

Through the Conservation Area and beyond, the tree-lined brook functions as a wildlife corridor, along which kingfishers feed and travel. Bats such as pipistrelle and Daubenton's are known to forage along the watercourse, and the well-wooded areas around the Town Green, Rothley Grange and St Mary's Church are particularly good feeding grounds. Bat roosts have been recorded close by within the built fabric of the Conservation Area and several mature trees are also known to have potential as bat roosts.

Badgers and their setts occur within the Conservation Area and use the network of grassland fields and hedgerows to forage and commute.

Off Town Green Street, a group of three grassland fields are separated by tall, free-growing hedgerows, mainly comprising ivy-clad mature ash and hawthorn. Ivy is an important source of nectar and pollen for invertebrates when few other plants are in flower, and its berries can sustain blackbirds and thrushes in early spring. The gaps in the roadside hedgerow at Donkey Field have recently been planted with woody species: in time this will provide a fine habitat and restore a

wildlife corridor, although the remaining hedgerow is rather severely trimmed, except for a few holly and ash standards.

The field where the playground is located comprises areas of rough grassland and wet woodland, whilst the middle field is scrubbing over. The resulting habitat mosaic is a valuable wildlife resource, providing food and shelter for a wide range of birds, such as robin, dunnock, blackbird, blue tit, great tit, wren and house sparrow. An informal footpath enables local residents to come into contact with the natural environment close to home.

On the north side of Hallfields Lane, Bunny's Field is used for informal recreation. The field is managed intensively as amenity grassland and the boundary hedgerow along Anthony Street is trimmed at a height too low to be of great significance to wildlife. However, a strip running either side of a water-filled ditch on the northern boundary provides another wildlife habitat. The ditch supports a range of wetland species including reed sweet-grass, reed canary grass, great willowherb and meadowsweet. Along Hallfields Road, a few oak and alder trees have been recently planted and in years to come should provide some much needed habitat continuity.

The area between the Old Vicarage Lane, St Mary's Church and the Public House is rather more domesticated. The proportion of conifers and other ornamental trees is more common there with dense yew, leyland cypress, laurel and beech hedgerows with occasional holly, privet, hawthorn, ash and oak, still providing good cover for garden bird species.

Opposite Rothley Grange, the brook splits between a straight canalised section and a gentle meandering course: the secluded field between the two branches of the brook is used as a playing field and is mostly intensively cut as amenity grassland, although a fringe of willow scrub and tall vegetation, combined with mature crack willow and alder trees, offers a good wildlife habitat.

Along Hallfields Lane and part of Fowke Street, the Conservation Area is characterised by tall, free growing hedgerows with many mature Scot's pine and a mix of woody species such as yew, holly, ash, beech, horse chestnut and oak. These hedgerows form part of a biodiversity network throughout the Conservation Area and beyond.

### **Detrimental features**

There are no significant detrimental features.

### **Definition of special interest**

- The location beside the Rothley Brook;
- The two clusters of development, of Town Green and around the Church both containing a wealth of timber framed buildings;
- The narrow streets and lanes, tightly enclosed with rows of buildings up to the back of the pavement;
- The way many of the buildings in the medieval streets are set slightly out of parallel to the street;
- The raised pavements and their associated railings;
- Views of the parish Church and its tower;
- The open aspect and silhouette of the village when seen from the south;
- The historical links with Rothley Temple;
- The variety of buildings and activities;
- The use of local granite, particularly in boundary walls;
- The survival of street lanterns and fire hydrant signs.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **General Principles**

Any proposed changes should be carried out in a sensitive manner, taking into account this 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 PPG 15, 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 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.
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.

8. 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**

As mentioned previously the basis 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 any necessary remedial action.

The powers set out in Section 215 of the Town & 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 proposals**

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

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

Nos. 78, 82, 83-87 & 90-108, Town Green Street, are a key group of unlisted buildings which make a major contribution to this part of the Area. With the exception of two front doors, all the doors and windows are intact. An Article 4.2 direction will be considered to prevent inappropriate changes.

## **General condition**

It is intent of the Borough Council to take necessary action to secure repair & full use of any buildings at risk. At the moment none of the listed buildings are at risk of decay and all appear to be in a good state of repair. The locally listed buildings are generally in good condition.

## **Review the boundary**

The present boundaries of the existing Conservation Area incorporate the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest within the village. However, it is suggested that Rothley Temple and all its parkland, including that which is no longer within the onwership of Rothley Court be included in the Area.

## **Possible buildings for spot listing**

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, by the character assessment.

## **Enhancement opportunities**

No particular sites or issues have been identified.

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

Historic building repair 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 are likely to be eligible for grant assistance.

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

The Borough Council supports the priorities set out in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan for the conservation of a variety of wildlife and their habitats within Charnwood. The Council will collaborate with its partners when the plan is reviewed and modified to ensure that the necessary actions are being taken by the appropriate agencies.

## **Monitoring change arrangements**

It is planned to review the conservation area character appraisal and its management plan every five year, 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. 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

Conservation Area Issue	Proposed Action	Lead Partner	Other Partners
Include Rothley Temple and all its associated parkland.	Review the Conservation Area boundary.	Charnwood BC	
Protect the doors and windows at nos. 78, 82, 83-87 & 90-108, Town Green Street, against inappropriate change.	Consider an Article 4.2 direction.	Charnwood BC	
Part of the boundary wall to Rood House is damaged due to tree growth.	Encourage an appropriate restoration.	Charnwood BC	

## 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:

- Protection of Rothley Brook and its tree-lined banks to sustain recorded species. The management of pollards to prolong the life of mature willow trees would be desirable.
- Retention of areas of rough grassland / scrub along the wet ditch at Bunny's Field, in fields to the south of Town Green Street, and in the field opposite to Rothley Grange.
- To ensure continuity of the 'mature tree' habitat, a programme of native species planting to replace the network of veteran trees which will eventually become senescent, would be desirable.
- Likewise, the retention and maintenance of hedgerows as wildlife corridors through a planting up programme and sympathetic management would be desirable.

## Community involvement

This document was made available as a draft via the website for 4 weeks prior to submission to Cabinet for adoption. A public meeting was held in Rothley so that local residents could contribute their ideas for enhancement and preservation of the Conservation Area. All comments and responses were considered by Cabinet and appropriate amendments have been made to the document.

## **Advice & 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.

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## **LISTED BUILDINGS IN ROTHLEY CONSERVATION AREA**

The Parish Church is listed Grade II\*: the rest are all Grade II.

### **Anthony Street:**

No. 9 (Moon Gate)  
No. 17  
No. 30 (Ivy House)

### **Church Street:**

No. 2  
No. 4  
No. 10  
Church of St Mary the Virgin and St John the Baptist - Grade II\*  
The Hunt Headstone within the churchyard

### **Cross Green:**

War Memorial and Walls

### **Fowke Street:**

No. 6  
No. 8  
No. 13

### **North Street:**

No. 36 (Old Farm House)  
No. 55, includes no. 1 Town Green Street

### **School Street:**

No. 4 (Tower House)

### **Town Green Street:**

No. 1, includes no. 55 North Street  
No. 3 (Rood House)  
No. 80  
No. 81  
Nos. 84 & 86  
No.89  
No. 91  
No. 103 (Keepers Cottage)  
Bridge 100m south of Town Green Street, Rothley Park

### **Woodgate:**

Nos 10, 10a and 12