

## **Shepshed Conservation Area Character Appraisal**

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## **Introduction**

Shepshed Conservation Area was designated in March 1983 and covers an area of about 5.2 Ha. The Area includes much of the medieval heart of the settlement, focussing on St Botolph's Church which is Grade I listed and its surrounding roads, with the Market Place and its northern extension into Brook Street. Within these boundaries there is a broad range of residential and commercial development that is representative of the medieval period through to the Victorian and Edwardian expansion of the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The large scale Victorian industrialisation and urban expansion that took place chiefly to the south and west of the historic core is not included in the Conservation Area.

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

- Location and setting describes how the 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.

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

## **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 that new development in conservation areas preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area. Policy EV/10.

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**

Shepshed lies 5 miles north-west of Loughborough on the northern edge of Charnwood Forest. Shepshed's location differs from many other settlements in Charnwood as it is somewhat removed from the Soar valley, a favoured location for many settlements with benefits of accessibility along the river valley, rich agricultural land and a water supply. The siting of a settlement at Shepshed, and its early social and economic development, appears to have been influenced by the Forest and, in the period after the Norman Conquest until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, by the establishment of the Cistercian Abbey at Garendon, on its doorstep.

The population of Shepshed has varied over time. The most recent census figures published by Leicestershire County Council show that in 2001 there were 12,882 people residing in the parish of Shepshed. The steady historical rise in the town's population is commented on by Widdowson (1973) who notes that there were 76 males residing in Shepshed around 1080. This figure rises to 250 people at the time of the 1377 Poll Tax and by the time of the Ecclesiastical Census of 1676 there were 376 people. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1801) the population had risen to 2,627 and steadily rose throughout the century (1821: 3,464; 1851: 3,784, 1881: 4,437) so that by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1901) the population was 5,293.

### **Historic Development and Archaeology**

The origins of Shepshed are not clear. It is possible that it first developed as a Saxon settlement. By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1085-86 it was recorded as a settled manor covering two and a half hides and four plough lands. A small mill and some woodland were also recorded. The Domesday Book provides the earliest known spelling of Shepshed as 'Scepeshefde', which went through various alterations (1539: *Sheppishede*, 1633: *Sheapshead*, 1664: *Sheapshead*) before arriving at its present version in 1888.

It is generally believed that the name translates as a 'hill where sheep graze' and the early prosperity of Shepshed was principally based on the wool industry and its role as a market place. Even as late as 1811 Nichols notes that a great number of sheep were raised on Charnwood Forest chiefly for their wool. White's Directory of 1846 refers to the Forest as chiefly stocked with Forest sheep, a small breed now nearly extinct.

The early medieval development of the town appears to have been based upon agriculture, most likely pastoral farming associated with the rearing of sheep for their wool linked to the Cistercian Abbey at Garendon, since according to Fussell (1948) the ground is generally hard and barren and difficult to produce crops from, so arable farming is unlikely to have been a mainstay of the economy.

In 1133 a Cistercian monastery was founded by Robert de Bossu, Earl of Leicester at Garendon Abbey, who gifted land at Garendon, Dishley and Shepshed, along with rights to use his woods in Charnwood. Over time the Abbey was gifted or acquired other land so that by 1536 it had over 300 acres in Charnwood (Wallace, 1982).

From the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Garendon Abbey appears to have begun large scale sheep farming using an agricultural system based on the establishment of granges (essentially large farm complexes). By 1535 Garendon had 16 such granges staffed by lay brothers and by local labour. It is therefore likely that this pastoral farming would have been an important source of employment for many local people, lasting until the dissolution of the Abbey in 1536 when it passed to Thomas Manners, Earl of Rutland.

Wool was an important commodity; fleeces were sold to Bradford wool merchants and the Abbey had permission to export wool to Flanders. The presence of Grange Farm on Forest Street suggests a direct link to the Cistercians.

In addition to the wool trade, Shepshed appears to have been a local market centre, selling produce from the local villages and possibly from the Abbey granges. Many inns grew up around Market Place to offer refreshment and accommodation to travellers and visitors to the market.

Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries several acts of enclosure were enforced, although the largest act was not passed until 1777 when a total of 2,000 acres were enclosed. These acts of enclosures had a profound effect on the local landscape as the open field system was replaced by smaller closed fields. The people's traditional dependency on the land was removed and the associated loss of the monastery forced many to seek alternative employment.

Despite the early importance of agriculture, Shepshed had become an important centre for domestic framework knitting by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the early knitters being traditionally employed as out-workers by larger factories principally based in Leicester. They worked within their main home or in purpose built workshops to the rear of their properties. White's Directory of 1846 noted that Shepshed was one of the oldest seats of hosiery manufacture giving employment to most of its inhabitants, and church records from as early as 1664 show that a large number of frames were in use. Widdowson (1973) attributes this growth in framework knitting to the absence of any other major employment alternatives, suggesting that local agriculture was not sufficient to sustain the population.

The development and economic importance of domestic framework knitting continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. By 1753 there were 1,000 frames in operation at Shepshed and the 1801 Return to Parliament records that 1,493 people out of a population of 1,628, were involved in either the hosiery trade or woollen manufacture. By 1812 there were 11,183 frames present in the town. The *Topographical Dictionary of England* (1848) comments that the manufacture of hosiery affords employment to more than 500 families.

After 1845 the cottage industries that had previously dominated Shepshed went into decline as the business became concentrated in factories, principally in nearby Leicester.

However, framework knitting was not the only industry carried out in Shepshed. In particular Nichols (1811) refers to a considerable number of people employed in a cotton mill, that was in operation from about 1780 to 1845, which may have been the Smith Churchill mill on Sullington Road outside the Conservation Area. There was also a modest boot and shoe industry, although perhaps because of the lack of available labour supply, due to the employment in the hosiery trade and Shepshed's relative remoteness from Leicester, a large-scale boot and shoe industry was never established as it was at other villages in the Soar and Wreake valleys.

Shepshed was also known for the manufacture of glove fabrics and its lace production which was traditionally centred in Nottingham during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The growth of Shepshed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is reflected in the improvement to local services and new community facilities such as the opening of a National School on Loughborough Road in 1836. A post office was set up in 1863 in Britannia Street and a co-operative shop followed three years later. A number of chapels were built, including the General Baptist Church (from 1822), St Winefrede's Chapel by A W N Pugin (1842) (now grade II listed) on Belton Street and Bethesda Chapel (1823) (now grade II listed) just off Forest Road.

The Conservation Area reflects the basic historic street pattern that had been established by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and contains a range of domestic and commercial buildings constructed in Shepshed since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century urban and industrial expansion of the town took place to the south and west of this core, between it and the traditional pastures on Charnwood Forest.

The Conservation Area encompasses much of the original medieval settlement around St Botolph's Church and the Market Place. Although there is no evidence for any buildings dating to the same time as the church (11<sup>th</sup> century), many buildings may have an older core than their outward appearance would suggest, concealing medieval or post-medieval remains. There are also a number of 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings relating to the domestic hosiery industry that are of social and historical significance.

This strongly suggests that there is great archaeological potential both below ground and within the fabric of many of the standing buildings. Any major development within the Conservation Area

requiring excavation works should be preceded by a comprehensive archaeological assessment and investigation prior to the commencement of the development. In addition to this any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric of domestic buildings would merit further archaeological investigation in the form of an historic building survey and recording.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **Plan Form**

Shepshed lies in the lee of Charnwood Forest. It appears to have developed as a small settlement clustered around its church, the Market Place and the Bull Ring.

Nichols, writing in 1811, commented that Shepshed was a relatively isolated village with no considerable roads passing through it, noting that the main Ashby to Loughborough road (now the A512) ran about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile to the south of the settlement. However, contrary to Nichols' view, the town and the Market Place in particular appears to have been at the centre of a local network of roads with streets extending from it in a number of directions.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century Survey of Leicestershire lists Shepshed and Hathern as one village and Brook Street, which forms the northern extension of the Market Place, runs directly to Hathern. The survey also lists Long Whatton, Lockington and Hemington within the Shepshed Hundred, and Belton Street, running westward from the Market Place, provides a route to these outlying villages as well as to the main Coleorton to Rempstone road. Early Shepshed therefore appears to have been an important village or town in the area and able to develop as a market centre at the hub of an extensive local road network.

This historic street pattern is clearly shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey plan and this along with the internal layout of the town has been very much influenced by the local topography.

St Botolph's Church sits on the highest ground, described by Hoskins (1970) 'as though it was built on top of a gigantic mound.' In this location, the Church is a distinctive landmark and its tower can be seen rising above the surrounding buildings from a number of streets.

The topography is reflected in the gradients of Church Street, Church Gate and Queen Street as they fall steeply away from the Church forming a relatively closed network of streets around it.

This steep landform appears to have deterred a direct route through the village, leaving Britannia Street and Field Street, which marked the extent of the western and southern edges of the early settlement, along with The Lant to provide a southern loop around the town by-passing the Market Place and the high ground around the Church.

The eastern extent of the town was defined by Forest Street which was linked to the Market Place by Loughborough Road and provided a route into Charnwood Forest past Grange Farm.

The Market Place itself occupies an area of flat land, gently rising from north to south, lying at the bottom of a noticeable slope that runs along its eastern margins that is evident in the sharp gradients of Church Street, Loughborough Road and the Dovecote.

The historic core of the settlement forms the basis of the Conservation Area although the Bull Ring has not been included. Within it there are a number of surviving domestic and commercial buildings that date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as shown on the 1884 OS map. Within this core there are 14 listed buildings, of which St Botolph's Church is listed Grade I and the remainder are Grade II. There are 14 other Grade II listed buildings in Shepshed but outside the Conservation Area.

### **Character and Interrelationship of Spaces**

The Market Place itself is a historically important and significant open space within the Conservation Area. Its overall form follows a very traditional layout, with a wide base at its southern end that narrows towards its northern end into Brook Street. This distinctive layout provided a large open space for the market stalls, while the narrow entrances enabled tolls to be collected and traders and goods to be monitored as they entered and left the Market Place.

It was traditional for market places in the Middle Ages to have a market cross, which would have been the focal point of the market (Girouard, 1990). Whilst there is no evidence of a cross today,

Nichols (1811) refers to and provides an illustration of a cross with a hexagonal shaped base and a stone column some 4.5 m (15') high, that stood in the centre of town.

It was also common for the central spaces of market places to be filled in by development as permanent buildings replaced temporary stalls, particularly where, as Hindle (2002) notes, cattle trading was moved out, as may have been the case in Shepshed. Early OS plans and photographs collected by the Shepshed Local History Society (1986, pages 28 and 30 for example) show the development of Cheapside as a linear block of buildings standing along the eastern edge of the Market Place. These buildings have now been demolished; Lacey et al (1969) noted the removal of certain houses in Cheapside as they blocked the approach to the Market Place.

An unusual feature of Shepshed is the existence of a second commercial centre around the Bull Ring, some 250m south of the Market Place, and outside the Conservation Area. The Bull Ring is a large rectangular space much wider than any of the surrounding roads, although it is now little more than a large traffic junction. It may have developed as a separate beast market as Girouard (1990) notes that sheep and cattle markets required large spaces and were often kept separately on the edge of town. The Bull Ring is linked to the Market Place by passageways off Field Street through Hall Croft, which extends south from the Market Place. This would have also provided the opportunity for Cheapside to be built in the Market Place. Over time the Bull Ring became a commercial centre in its own right leaving Shepshed with its two distinct commercial centres.

## **Townscape**

The undulating topography of the historic core of the town on which the Conservation Area is based is a very significant feature. Much of character of the Area is derived from the way in which the construction and design of the wide variety of building types, address this change of level. The undulation also means that roof slopes are more evident in views along the streets and therefore the texture and colour of traditional roofing materials on these slopes has a significant impact on the character of the Area.

All the streets within the Conservation Area have a strong sense of enclosure formed by either a building line that is tight to the street or substantial boundary walls. This is punctuated by the open space of the Market Place and one or two road junctions. In certain places this strong sense of enclosure has been lost through the poor siting of buildings or the removal of boundary walls.

The narrow streets up to and around the churchyard, including the footpath across the front of the church retain much of their medieval character, even though some of the buildings that line these streets are much later in date.

## **Key Views and Vistas**

Limited or glimpsed views of St Botolph's Church from the narrow medieval streets leading up to the churchyard are significant to the character of the Area. There is a progression of views into the Market Place as one enters the Conservation Area along Brook Street, particularly as one passes between the two gateway buildings of The Lifeguardsman Pub and Brooklyn House. From the top of the hill, both Loughborough Road and Church Street, there are glimpses down to the Market Place and out into the open countryside beyond the town.

## **Landmarks**

St Botolph's Church sits on top of the hill and, although it is obscured from view from much of the Conservation Area, it is the only significant landmark.

## **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

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

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

Although the medieval economy of Shepshed was tied to agriculture, there is no evidence of any farm buildings within the Conservation Area, as is typical in other settlements within the Borough, such as Hathern. This is perhaps an indication that Shepshed was reliant on pastoral sheep farming in Charnwood Forest and not a traditional arable farming community reliant upon its open fields. The principal surviving farmstead in the village is 'The Grange' on Forest Street, which is some distance from the historic core and may have developed as a Cistercian farm holding. The Grange may also have been the location of the wool yard where locally produced wool was traded with merchants.

The Conservation Area does include the Market Place, the historical commercial centre of the town. The market has gone but the large open space survives, now largely given over to car parking and Market Place is still or at least has the potential to still be an important commercial centre within the town containing a range of shops and public houses. The early role of Shepshed as a market centre is reflected by the public houses, of which four lie within the Conservation Area: the Blue Ball, Red Lion and Crown Inn around the Market Place and the Black Swan on Loughborough Road.

There are many other shops outside the Conservation Area principally along Hall Croft and Field Road into the Bull Ring, which may have developed as an extension to the market outside the Market Place.

With the loss of the Cistercian monastery and the enclosure of the open fields in the post-medieval period, the population of Shepshed had to rely on domestic framework knitting that involved the majority of the population until its demise in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Whilst there are no factories within the Conservation Area, there is good surviving evidence of this early domestic industrial activity. For example, the knitters' cottages at nos. 9-13 Brook Street are a much-altered terrace of 3-storey cottages with a cart access through the ground floor to the rear yard and large elongated windows in the upper storey, which may indicate a domestic knitting workshop. At the rear of nos. 26-28 Church Street there appears to be a 2 storey workshop in the garden. There are also a number of brick-built sheds at the rear of properties that may at one time have been small workshops.

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

The Grade I church of St Botolph, sited at the highest point in the town and built in the local granite and Swithland slate, is the most important of the Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area.

Brooklyn House on Brook Street is the only substantial house in the Area. Three storeys of red brick with a Swithland slate roof, it dominates the northern entrance to the Conservation Area.

Many of the other listed buildings within the Area are situated on the streets leading up to the church and provide the basis for the special character of these streets. Many still have remains of timber frames exposed, such as at Nos. 32 and 34 Queen Street, which enhance the medieval character of the streets.

### **Key unlisted buildings**

The former Vicarage at the top of Church Street, although partially hidden from view by a boundary wall, makes a valuable contribution to the character of this part of the Area. The former National School at the top of Loughborough Road is a substantial building, constructed of local slate. Its dominant position means that it makes a valuable contribution the street scene.

## Coherent groups

Few coherent groups of buildings exist within the Conservation Area, the exception being the runs of cottages on the medieval streets around the churchyard, in particular nos. 28 to 34 Queen Street, nos. 26 to 32 Church Street and the group formed by nos. 1 to 3 Church Side with nos. 41 to 43 Queen Street. Although physically detached, St Botolph's Church and the former Vicarage along with the walls and railing along the footpath linking Church Gate and Church Street have a significant group value.

## Building Materials and Architectural Details

Despite being on the edge of Charnwood Forest, few buildings are built of the local stone. Within the present Conservation Area it is used as a principal building material for the Church and for the former National School buildings on Loughborough Road, while beyond the Conservation Area it is used in St Winefride's Chapel on Belton Street. However, stone is used in conjunction with other materials, such as in the gables of nos. 28 & 34 Church Street and the rear wings of nos. 7-8 Market Place and as a plinth to support timber frames, as seen at no. 32 Queen Street and no. 2 Bridge Street.

One of the most extensive uses of Forest stone is in the construction of boundary walls, most notably around the churchyard and along Church Gate and Loughborough Road. These make a significant and distinctive contribution to the local street scene and the Conservation Area generally.

Early medieval buildings were likely to have been timber frame and thatched properties, and whilst there are some good surviving examples they represent only a small portion of the timber-framed buildings that would have existed. Many have been lost either by demolition or improvement or as a result of fire, with reports of a Great Fire in 1753 that destroyed 85 bays of buildings.

Complete examples of timber frame and thatch are particularly rare, the best examples being no. 34 Church Street and no. 2 Bridge Street, both relatively small 2-bay houses, and nos. 42-44 Loughborough Road (known as 'Style Twy-Chel'), which may have been adapted for use by framework knitters given its range and number of windows. There are other buildings where there is a visible timber frame, such as no. 32 Queen Street and no. 32 Church Street. There are also examples of buildings where external improvements and alterations hide an earlier timber frame, such as nos. 7-9 Market Place and nos. 26-8 Church Street, where the remnants of an earlier timber frame building has been faced in brick and the walls raised by 3 or 4 courses of brick to accommodate a slate roof.

For the purposes of new development in the Conservation Area the most predominant building materials in the Conservation Area are red brick and slate, which are widely used on all buildings but particularly on those dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. They provide a degree of uniformity of material and appearance throughout the Conservation Area.

In many of the properties the brick is laid in a Flemish bond, and in some cases the pattern is emphasised by the use of contrasting headers and stretchers. Examples of Flemish Bond can be seen at nos. 2-8, 21 & 44 Brook Street and the Lifeguardsman public house, also on Brook Street, and no. 49 Queen Street. There are examples of other bonds such as stretcher and English Bond.

The use of these different bonds is particularly evident along Belton Street where there is a mixed terrace of former almshouses. Nos. 2-8 Belton Street and nos. 20-24 (turning the corner into Britannia Street) are built using a Flemish bond. These two terraces are broken by a later terrace at nos. 10-18 Belton Street, which has an Edwardian Arts and Crafts influence in its design, with the ground floor constructed in brick laid in English bond while the upper floor is faced in roughcast render.

A small number of the properties have also been rendered either in whole or in part. The Crown and the Blue Ball on Market Place are both rendered and painted white, while a number of Edwardian properties have a render at first floor level over a brick ground floor, such as at nos. 10-18 Belton Street and nos. 16-18 & 37-47 Church Street.

To maintain the character of Shepshed, any new development should ideally use red brick (laid to follow the prevailing bonding pattern) or as an exception it may be acceptable to use a roughcast render. Care should be taken in specifying reclaimed brick to avoid significant variations in the colour of the brick that can give a random and mottled appearance.

Welsh slate is the predominant traditional roofing material, used on properties such as nos. 28-30 Queen Street and the Red Lion at the Market Place, although, there are examples of plain tiles, such as at nos. 7-8 Market Place (the post office), no. 15 Church Gate and a two-extension between the Lifeguardsman public house and no. 53 Brook Street (Spencer's Bakery).

The use of traditional Swithland slate is rare in Shepshed. The main examples are at no. 44 Brook Street, no. 34 Queen Street and the former National School and Vicarage on Loughborough Road. There is occasional use of pantiles, restricted to outbuildings, such as at the rear of no. 21 Brook Street and the rear of 44 Brook Street (although this outbuilding is not presently in the Conservation Area).

A number of properties retain attractive clay ridge tiles such as nos. 10-12 Market Place and nos. 37-47 Church Street.

There is a broad range of window types throughout the Conservation area and such features greatly contribute to the character of individual streets.

Of the surviving traditional windows the most common are sash windows. The best examples are the multi-pane sash windows in the front elevation of no. 44 Brook Street, the large pane Victorian sashes at no. 21 Brook Street and a sash window with margin panes in the first floor of Spencer's Bakery at no. 53 Brook Street.

There are some good examples of other traditional window styles. No. 44 Brook Street has a mixed range in its rear wing with timber mullion and transom windows at the first floor and Yorkshire sliding sashes in the upper floor. There are more examples of traditional Yorkshire sliding sashes at no. 9 Church Street (Bluntz Hairdressers) and at nos. 42-4 Loughborough Road. Nos. 10-18 Belton Street has a range of mullion and transom casement windows.

As well as timber windows, many of the properties in the Conservation Area would have had timber panel doors but there are now few surviving examples. Some of the best are those at no. 44 Brook Street, which is surrounded by an attractive timber doorcase, and no. 45 Church Street.

Cills and lintels around window and door openings are not a particularly common or pronounced feature. The most pronounced are found in the Victorian and Edwardian cottages, such as at nos. 2-12 Brook Street which have floral motifs in the lintels and heavy stone cills; no. 21 Brook Street has painted cills supported by brackets with floral motifs and moulded brick architraving around the windows; while no. 44 Brook Street, an earlier Georgian building, has good examples of splayed brick arches over its windows.

Most properties are simply detailed and lack architectural embellishment although some buildings have some subtle detailing. The Lifeguardsman public house on Brook Street, for instance, has simple brick string courses at the first and second floors to give some relief to its front elevation, while a number of the later Victorian and Edwardian terrace houses have a moulded floral motif band at first floor level, such as at no. 21 Brook Street and nos. 37-47 Church Street.

Some of the properties retain their original chimney stacks and pots, in a great variety of styles, which adds considerable interest to the skyline.

Whilst this is a longstanding commercial area, there are few surviving examples of full height traditional timber shop fronts. The best examples are those at no. 15 Market Place (Newbold Flooring) and no. 53 Brook Street (Spencer's Bakery). These both have a single shop window framed by pilasters with brackets supporting a cornice over the fascia. Given their rarity within the Conservation Area they make a significant contribution to the historic character of the Area. There are a number of small scale traditional shopfronts on the streets leading away from the main commercial centre, some of which are sited within the streets suggested for inclusion in the

Conservation Area Many of these have not been subject to alteration and therefore they are important the character of the area.

Ironwork is not a common feature in the Conservation Area except for one example of railings set on a low wall to the front of no. 44 Brook Street.

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

The churchyard is a peaceful green space above the town. And the most important trees are those in and around the churchyard which together with the church form a landmark in themselves on top of the hill and provide a backdrop to views of the town. They are mostly sycamores in the churchyard with a chestnut and an oak and there are sycamores on Church Side and several limes, a cherry and prunus associated with the Vicarage on Church Street.

The other green spaces in the town centre and in the Conservation Area are minimal. There is a small landscaped area on the corner of Brook Street and Chapel Street which contains a fine flowering cherry tree and some limes behind. There is a small public area of garden to the side of Brooklyn House which contains two horse chestnuts and a cedar. The cedar has unfortunately lost much of its shape due to severe pruning.

Some years ago the centre of the Market Place was planted with a line of maples to divide the carriageway from the area set aside for parking. There are also some birch trees associated with the maples.

Loughborough Road has a pleasant green feel from the private gardens with many shrubs and small trees which slope gently down the hillside. The road itself has a distinctive boundary of stone walls and grassy banks. At the top of Loughborough Road there is a line of lime trees and a prominent privet hedge against the former school building.

### **Biodiversity**

The Conservation Area offers a range of urban wildlife habitats, including buildings, managed green spaces, private gardens, small pockets of amenity grassland, and planted shrubberies. This variety of habitats gives some species the combination of breeding sites, foraging resource and shelter they need within relatively small spaces.

Private gardens create a fine resource of habitat mosaics: individual gardens may be small, but together they form a patchwork linking urban green spaces. Many residents also seek to bring wildlife into their gardens by providing nest boxes and food and by recreating small pockets of semi-natural habitats.

Some bat species are closely associated with urban habitats and have been recorded within the Area. With their complex life cycle, bats need warm summer breeding roosts and cold, secure hibernation sites, both usually found in buildings. A few species may also rely on mature trees for roosts throughout the year. Some bird species, such as the swift and house sparrow, are also dependent on buildings for nesting.

The green spaces and associated wildlife of the area give residents a daily contact with nature which contributes to a sense of well-being and quality of life.

### **Detrimental features**

The area around the electricity substation at the north end of the Market Place is visually detrimental to the character of this part of the Conservation Area. In contrast the small open space at the junction of Chapel Street/Brook Street shows how well considered hard landscaping can make a significant contribution. A similar approach could be taken with the area around the substation.

## **DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

The characteristics of special interest are:

- The variety in the nature of the streets and spaces and the way in which these and the buildings address the undulating topography of the Conservation Area.
- The dominance of the hill top church tower in a number of views from within and on the fringe of the Area.
- The surviving medieval street pattern and narrow width of the streets leading to and around the churchyard.
- Groups of trees and individual specimens that provide townscape elements and foil or contrast certain buildings within the Conservation Area.
- Survival of some unbroken groups or blocks of historic buildings that produce the enclosed character of many of the streets.
- The wide range of building types and layouts that display the social and economic history of the town.
- The quality of historic building stock, St Botolph's Church and churchyard along with the former Rectory, the remains of the medieval buildings around the church, and some good examples of Victorian and Edwardian architecture.
- Much of the value and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area is derived from the wealth and variety of the architectural details that survive in many of the buildings. These details reflect the quality and status of the original buildings and now make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The use of a range of local materials derived from the local geology are significant; red brick from local works is common, many of the commercial buildings display terracotta and faience decoration of local provenance, and surviving roofs of the locally quarried Swithland slate are very distinctive.
- The colours and textures that these distinctive local materials provide.
- The value that traditional independent shops contribute to the character of some streets within the area.

## 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.

## **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**

The quality of a 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.

The character assessment does not identify a sufficient cluster of significant historic features to justify the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. Currently, no Article 4 Directions are planned.

## **General Condition**

There is a broad range of window types throughout the Conservation area, but unfortunately the overall survival rate of original windows and doors has not been good. Such features are often

integral to the appearance of buildings but a substantial number of properties have fitted replacement upvc windows and doors which greatly detract from the appearance and character of the Area.

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. They should be avoided for new development within the Conservation Area by specifying either Welsh slate or plain clay tiles.

### **Buildings at Risk**

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 of the Boundary**

The present boundaries of the existing Conservation Area incorporate the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest within the village but following the survey, it is recommended that consideration be given to the following changes to the existing boundaries:

- **Brook Street:** it is proposed that the boundary be extended to include the whole of the curtilage of The Lifeguardsman. The garden to the side of the public house makes a particular contribution at the entrance to the Conservation Area. On the other side of the road the outbuildings at the rear of no. 44 should also be included.
- **Belton Street:** this was one of the principal roads out of Shepshed and may have some archaeological potential. There is also a good range of buildings including a semi-detached pair of Edwardian houses at nos. 21 & 23 that have strong architectural features and good surviving details; the Baptist Church; St Winefride's Chapel and no. 36 Belton Street;
- **Forest Street:** to include the former Co-operative bakery and garage site and the Bethesda Chapel; these buildings mark a distinctive entrance to the Conservation Area, the Chapel also being listed. Together they provide an attractive setting for the listed buildings at nos. 44-42 Loughborough Road.

There are a number of other important buildings along Forest Street as recognised by Peter Ryder (2002). Of particular note is Grange Farmhouse with its associated buildings. There is also the possibility of the old wool yard being located within its vicinity but all these buildings are relatively isolated and not strong enough to warrant an extension of the Conservation Area along Forest Street.

Consideration could also be given to the following changes:

- **Pick Street:** an interesting range of vernacular cottages at nos. 13-15 may be worthy of consideration, particularly if the boundary is extended along Belton Street, although the end bay of no. 15 has been significantly rebuilt and overall they are an isolated group;
- **Hall Croft to Field Street:** is an important link to the Bull Ring from the Market Place and whilst the buildings along it are not exceptional there are some interesting buildings and architectural features: the shop fronts to nos. 12 & 21 for instance; no. 52 Hall Croft, a 17<sup>th</sup> cottage, and an attractive area of public open space in front of the library;
- **Britannia Street:** generally the buildings along Britannia Street have been poorly treated through modern alterations; however, The Britannia Inn comprises an extensive range of early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and any extension along Hall Croft could include this building;
- **Field Street (north side) - Bull Ring - Queen Street:** to round off any potential extension along Hall Croft, the properties on the north side of Field Road into the Bull Ring

(an important historical space, now little more than a road junction/traffic island) and along Queen Street to include the former National Westminster Bank.

A short term aim of this Plan will be to adopt these proposals as an amendment to the Conservation Area boundary

### **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**

A comprehensive approach is needed to address the generally poor quality and neglected condition of some of the public spaces and highways within the Area. Possible enhancement opportunities are listed below. It is not an exhaustive set of proposals but the major areas of need have been identified.

- The space within the Market Place is generally poorly defined. Widening of certain footways, reorganisation of parking arrangements and possibly reduction of the the proportion of space given to the vehicle carriageway would help to make the Market Place a better public space for all users.
- The footpath across the front of the church between Church Gate and Church Street could be considerably improved by resurfacing, repair and painting of the railings, and re-instatement of the metal lantern overthrows at each end of the footpath.
- The detrimental visual impact of the electricity substation at the north end of Market Place could be significantly reduced by improving boundary walls and possibly introduction of screening.

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

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.

### **Management and Protection of Important Trees, Greenery and Green Spaces**

The Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Borough Council’s priorities for conservation of a variety of wildlife and their habitats within Charnwood and details the actions required to bring about a reversal in its fortune. The BAP will be reviewed and modified as required, to ensure that the necessary actions are being taken by the appropriate agencies

### **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
The general quality and organisation of the public space within the Market Place.	Assess the extent of necessary work and investigate the possibility of implementing an enhancement scheme.	Shepshed Partnership/Town Council	Charnwood BC
The poor state of the footpath link across the front of the church.	Assess the extent of necessary work and investigate the possibility of implementing an enhancement scheme.	Shepshed Partnership/Town Council	Charnwood BC
The detrimental visual impact that the electricity substation makes at the north end of the Market Place.	Assess the extent of necessary work and investigate the possibility of implementing an enhancement scheme.	Shepshed Partnership/Town Council	Charnwood BC
The flats on Queen Street do not enhance the Conservation Area. Can something be done to improve them?	Assess the extent of necessary work and investigate the possibility of implementing an enhancement scheme	Charnwood BC	Shepshed Partnership/Town Council
Weeds are growing from the churchyard wall and over time are likely to damage it.	CBC Green Spaces Team to investigate the problem and instigate remedial work.	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:

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

- 2 Review how the Council's adopted 'Shopfront & Signs' guidance is being used. A face lift scheme for shops could be considered. Aspects could include shop fronts and fascias, blinds, colour schemes, advertisements and signs. The Borough Council has adopted a Supplementary Planning Document to clarify the Council's policy and provide advice on shop front design, including the issues of advertisements and security measures. Identify any outstanding enforcement issues.
- 3 A detailed appraisal is necessary to identify sites within the highway where hard ground surfaces need to be introduced or renewed, including consideration of the scope to redefine sections of carriageway, re-align kerbing, extend and re-pave pedestrian areas, provide and mark vehicle parking bays. A policy for the selection and use of materials appropriate for particular situations will need to be agreed with the Highway Authority.
- 4 It is also necessary to identify any land in public control that is under utilised and might be appropriate for a landscaping scheme to be prepared. The adequacy of maintenance for such areas will need to be addressed. Similarly any neglected private land that can be cleared and reclaimed for positive use will be examined. Consideration should be given to the introduction or reinstatement where they have been lost, of walls, railings and planting to create enclosure.
- 5 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.
- 6 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.
- 7 Identify biodiversity enhancements to encourage the provision of bat and bird boxes, particularly swift nest boxes within the fabric of new/converted buildings.

## **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 Shepshed so that local residents may 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.

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## Listed Buildings in Shepshed

### In the Conservation Area

St Botolph's Church	Grade I
26 & 28 Church Street	Grade II
30 Church Street	Grade II
32 Church Street	Grade II
34 Church Street	Grade II
15 Church Gate	Grade II
2 Bridge Street	Grade II
Brooklyn House, 44 Brook Street	Grade II
9 & 9a Market Place	Grade II
9B Market Place	Grade II
32 Queen Street	Grade II
34 Queen Street (The Old Queen's Head Restaurant)	Grade II
42 & 44 Loughborough Road	Grade II

### Other Listed Buildings in Shepshed

Charnwood Dental Centre (formerly National Westminster Bank), Bull Ring	Grade II
The Pied Bull, Belton Road	Grade II
St Winifreds Church, Belton Street	Grade II
36 Belton Street	Grade II
25 Chapel Street	Grade II
37 Charnwood Road	Grade II
Bethesda Chapel, Forest Street	Grade II
The Grange, Forest Street	Grade II
77 Forest Street	Grade II
The White House, Forest Street	Grade II
Forest House, 25 Leicester Road	Grade II
40 Sullington Road	Grade II

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