



Swithland Conservation Area Character Appraisal

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	2
Planning policy context	
<u>ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST</u>	5
LOCATION AND SETTING	5
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT	5
Origins and development; Archaeological interest; Population	
SPATIAL ANALYSIS	9
Plan form; Villagescape; Key views and vistas; Landmarks	
CHARACTER ANALYSIS	11
Building types and uses; Key listed buildings and structures; Key unlisted buildings; Coherent groups; Building materials and architectural details; Parks, gardens and trees; Biodiversity; Detrimental features	
<u>DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST</u>	18
<u>CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN</u>	19
General Principles; Procedures to ensure consistent decision-making; Enforcement Strategy; General condition; Possible boundary changes to the Conservation Areas; Proposals for spot listing; Management and protection of important trees, green space and biodiversity; Monitoring change; Consideration of resources; Summary of issues and proposed actions; Developing management proposals; Community involvement; Advice and guidance	
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	24
<u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>	24
<u>LISTED BUILDINGS IN SWITHLAND</u>	25

SWITHLAND CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL



Current map of Swithland showing the Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

Swithland Conservation Area was designated in 1993. The boundary incorporates the majority of the village of Swithland which is focused primarily around Main Street which runs through the village. A significant portion of the Conservation Area is formed of open space, namely the parkland to Swithland Hall. It currently covers an area of 52.4 Hectares.

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

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

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

- Location and setting - describes how the Area relates to the historic village and surrounding area;

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

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

The document is intended as a guide for people considering development which may affect the Conservation Area. When adopted, the Appraisal will help to inform Development Management decisions and will be a material consideration in decision making. It may, of course, be used by residents of the Conservation Area.

Planning Policy Context

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

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

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) outlines the Government's intentions regarding planning policy. The NPPF emphasises sustainable development as the present focus and future legacy of planning policy. It also places responsibility on local planning authorities to assess and understand the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal by utilising available evidence and necessary expertise. This should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset to avoid or minimise conflict between an asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. This understanding should not only be used as an aid for decision making, but should take on a more dynamic role by actively informing sensitive and appropriate developments.

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

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

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

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

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

Other guidance adopted by Charnwood Borough Council

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

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

LOCATION AND SETTING

Swithland is one of a number of villages in the Charnwood Forest, close to the village of Woodhouse Eaves and to the west of the larger settlements of Mountsorrel and Rothley. The village is a linear settlement, developing along both sides of Main Street which connects the village with Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves to the west and Rothley and Mountsorrel to the east. It is approximately 6 miles south of Loughborough and 7 miles from Leicester. To the east of the village are the picturesque Swithland Reservoir and the Great Central Railway line.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Origins and Development

Swithland was described by Nichols in 1790 as a 'considerable lordship' which is testament to the rich history and connections of the village over time. The first mention of Swithland as a village in its own right is not found until 1209 although a settlement in this location certainly existed prior to this. Domesday records Swithland as 'Swithellund', listed as part of the manor of Groby which was held by Hugh de Grandmesnil from 1066. The name itself means 'a grove cleared by burning', referring to the common practice by peasants to grub up woodland and enclose common pasture in order to add to their holdings. This was encouraged at Swithland during the mid-twelfth century by the Beaumont Earls of Leicester.

Medieval Swithland was held by a succession of Lords of the Manors, namely Roger de Quincy Earl of Winchester in 1209, Robert le Waleys in 1255 and John Walcote and his heirs from 1363. The Danvers family however is the family most associated with the fortunes and misfortunes of Swithland. Their acquisition of the manor came in 1435 with the inheritance of the estate by John Danvers (c1412-c1479), the son of Margaret Walcote and John Danvers of Shakerstone. Owing to the peculiarities of succession and a lack of male heirs, the manorial rights were split as both Margaret and her sister Alice inherited the estate from their father, John Walcote. The two halves of the estate were not reunited again for another two hundred years when Francis Danvers (1561-1631) was able to purchase the Shepey/Kendall share of Swithland in 1629.

Life in medieval Swithland was dominated and shaped by agriculture as the community grew and established itself. The village was comprised of three open fields, known as Open (Forest) Field, Middle (North) Field and Exlands (South) Fields. The settlement pattern at the time reflected the farming needs of the community, with the thirteenth century church, manor and rectory at the lower end of the village and labourers' dwellings at the higher end closer to the fields and stream. In 1670, the parish register listed 42 households.

Swithland gradually increased in wealth and standing as the land held by successive Lords grew and its geographical connections spread. Joseph Danvers (1686-1753) is a prominent figure in the history of Swithland. He acquired the lordship of the manor of Mountsorrel in 1732, that of Thurcaston in 1735 and parcels of land in Rothley, Mountsorrel, Newtown Linford and Buddon Wood amongst others. He was also responsible for rebuilding the south aisle of the church in 1727 and erected a memorial in his name. The Danvers continued their influence on the built form of Swithland as John Danvers (1723-1796) buoyed by agricultural prosperity, erected the two barns at Hall Farm between 1749-50 which still stand today. It was this John Danvers who was also responsible for the relocation of the Mountsorrel Cross from Mountsorrel to its present location in The Park, formerly the estate land of Swithland Hall.

By 1783, there were only six landowners in Swithland and across the whole of the village, only 120 acres were not owned the Danvers family. The pressure of Enclosure was beginning to be felt in Swithland with other nearby villages already bowing to it. The Enclosure Act for Swithland was eventually passed in 1799, dividing the three open fields into the patchwork of hedgerow lined fields that we are familiar with today. As well as encouraging new efficient methods of farming, enclosure also reduced many families to poverty as smaller landowners suffered in the face of high costs and the removal of common rights over waste land. Enclosure affected approximately 350 acres in Swithland.

Despite the agricultural prosperity brought about by Enclosure, the estate of Swithland was not so fortunate. In the hands of Augustus Richard Butler-Danvers who inherited the estate following his marriage in 1792 to the daughter of Sir John Danvers (1723-1796), much of the estate's land was lost and what was retained was concentrated around the settlement of Swithland itself. However his son, George John Butler Danvers (1794-1866) who became the 5th Earl of Lanesborough in 1847 was responsible for a thorough programme of restoration, repair and rebuilding as he set about improving the village. Many of the surviving older buildings in Swithland are the result of his efforts. In 1840, 140-142 Main Street and 144 Main Street were built, followed by 81-83 Main Street in 1842, the school in 1843, 146 Main Street in 1845 and several more throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Importantly, he was responsible for building the existing Swithland Hall on its present site, relocating it from its probable original location on the site of the present Charnia Grove. The new Hall was designed by Sir James Pennethorpe and was partially completed in 1834 before being finished in 1852.

As well as the land managed by the Danvers family, by 1851 several principal farms had emerged. The land to the south-east was farmed by Hall Farm, the largest single unit and operated by the Cuffling family. The Cufflings were also responsible for Longlands Farm which farmed land to the north of the village and held the tenancy until 1902. Forest End Farm lay to the west of the village and was farmed by the Bates family who also operated Kinchley Hill Farm which was lost in the construction of the reservoir. Pit Close Farm was the

smallest farm in Swithland with just 6 acres in 1851 and was worked by the Helmsleys and the Leatherlands. With the exception of Kinchley Hill Farm, many of the farmhouses and associated buildings are still standing today although they are no longer used for agricultural purposes. Hall Farm however is the last working farm in the village and also operates Swithland Spring Water.

The prominence of the Danvers family and the extent of their land ownership and influence within the village means that Swithland has been an estate village for most of its lifetime. John Danvers Butler-Danvers, 6th Earl of Lanesborough (1839-1905) managed to purchase the last remaining landholding in Swithland not owned by the estate at the time. However during his time, Sir John was forced to cede land for both the reservoir construction in 1896 and the Great Central Railway which opened in 1899. Changes in social and economic conditions in the early twentieth century meant that Swithland could no longer continue as an estate village and the land and houses were sold by Denis Anthony Brian Butler, 9th Earl of Lanesborough (1918-1998) in 1954, with the sale of Swithland Hall following in 1983.

The main changes in the nature of the settlement over time can be seen clearly in the pattern of development and the design of the dwellings. In 2001, there were 85 properties, virtually all of which with 5 or more rooms compared to 1901 when 50 dwellings were listed, 22 with fewer than 5 rooms. The spaces and farmland between the nineteenth century cottages have been the focus of infill and ribbon development which has accentuated the linear form of the village, joining the area of the church and the Hall with the rest of the village.

Although no longer in operation, the development of Swithland would not be complete without attention being deservedly given to the slate industry which took its name from this relatively small settlement. There is evidence to suggest that the Romans quarried the slate at Swithland, with examples being found across Charnwood. The earliest recorded evidence of slate working in Swithland is in 1260, with the locations of quarries at 'Swytheland' given in 1343. With its distinctive rough surfaces and tones ranging from a green to purple grey, Swithland slate can most commonly be seen on the roofs of buildings throughout the Charnwood area, as well as across Leicestershire and into Nottingham and Derbyshire. However the uses of the slate are not restricted to roofing, with examples of sun dials, clock faces, paving slabs, fireplaces and cheese presses made from the slate. Ornatly engraved gravestones were another common use of the slate and are easily recognisable in churchyards throughout the area.

Like the village, there is one particular family that is closely associated with the Swithland slate industry. The Hind family was resident in Swithland from at least 1620 and was responsible for the quarrying of the slate at several of the pits throughout the area. It was not until the early eighteenth century that the use of Swithland slate became more popular and widespread and in 1740, the Hinds introduced the use of gunpowder to allow quarrying to greater depths. However the success of the industry was relatively short-lived, with

the Welsh slate industry becoming increasingly competitive. Lighter and more easily worked, the Welsh slate industry was helped by the increase of the rail and canal network and the repeal of the transport tax on the carriage of slate by the sea in 1831. In 1851, there were only seven slate workers which fell to just one in 1881. The Swithland slate industry eventually ceased completely in 1888. The locations of these pits are now visible in the woodland, marked by the murky water which has now flooded them. The Swithland slate industry has been commemorated within the village by the Slate Memorial stone, laid in 2000.

Archaeological Interest

The majority of the Swithland Conservation Area is within an area of archaeological alert, with particular archaeological interest noted at Hall Farm and in various locations within the Swithland Hall parkland including around the Mountsorrel Cross. Specific archaeological findings associated with Swithland relate to the wider area, including a possible medieval cropmark trackway south of the village, a flint core to the east of Leicester Lane and the depressions of a possible pond to the north of the village. A Neolithic scatter of almost 300 flints was recovered south of Buddon Wood as well as a shard of handmade pottery dating from the Bronze Age.

Archaeological potential also exists within Swithland's historic built environment. Many of the older buildings have been adapted and altered or repaired and restored and often incorporated elements of older separate structures. Thus many of the historic buildings may conceal medieval or post-medieval remains and any works involving the disturbance of the existing fabric of such buildings would merit further investigation.

Population

The population of Swithland has varied over time, without ever experiencing significant expansion. Swithland remains today a relatively small village, maintaining a smaller population than some of its larger neighbours. The earliest population estimate can be found in the Parish Register of 1670 which lists 42 households. By 1801, 322 people lived in 58 houses and in 1841, the population is given as 295. The latest population estimate given by Charnwood Borough Council in 2004 is 232.

The majority of residents were historically employed in agriculture, domestic service and commercial industries. The framework knitting industry which extended into so many Leicestershire parishes appears to have left Swithland untouched. In 1841, 30 agricultural labourers and 5 farmers are listed, with 35 employed in domestic service, as well as in professions varying from a carpenter, a shoemaker, a bricklayer, a butcher and a blacksmith. Residents of Swithland were also employed in the slate industry with 5 labourers, a slate cleaver and a gravestone engraver recorded in 1841.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Plan Form

The village of Swithland developed as a linear settlement which has been emphasised and retained through both infill and ribbon development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Main Street forms the backbone of the village, with dwellings located to both the north and south of the road. There is generally a principal line of development which follows the line of the road although recent development has in some cases utilised land behind this principle line. Other minor roads which branch off from Main Street are generally cul-de-sacs with a number of dwellings situated in small clusters; namely Charnia Grove and Keepers Close. 155-159 Main Street are also set back from the road in a small group. The only other main road within the Conservation Area is Leicester Lane which connects Swithland with Cropston and Thurcaston. The main departure from this plan form is of course Swithland Hall which is located to the east of the village in its own parkland.

The older buildings found in Swithland are generally located on or close to the street, with the notable exceptions of The White House and Pit Close Cottage. The majority of recent development is visible from the road but generally makes use of driveways or front gardens.

Villagescape

The village generally has an open aspect but this is contained by the significant amount of trees, planting and housing along Main Street. This greatly adds to the distinctive character of the area, with the grey hues of the Swithland slate found throughout the village sitting comfortably alongside the varying natural tones provided by the planting and trees. The connection of the village with Charnwood Forest is clearly felt from within the village yet it is discernable as a distinct settlement; sharing characteristics with other Charnwood Forest villages whilst retaining its own individual special interest.

The linear rigidity of the west of the village is in contrast to the more relaxed feel of the east. Here the dwellings are more scattered and are set further back from the road, either on their own or as part of a group such as Keepers Close and Charnia Grove. The wider landscape is also more visible in this area with glimpses into surrounding fields and there are a significantly higher number of trees. This culminates in the entirely open area surrounding Swithland Hall where expanses of parkland and groupings of trees make up the views.

The interrelationship of Main Street with other ways of experiencing the village is also important. There are a number of footpaths which allow you to access the wider countryside and the intersection of these routes with Main Street are quite obvious in the streetscene, helping to break up the lines of housing. The open spaces next to the Griffin Inn and adjacent to the Memorial Hall contrast

with the generally built up feel of the majority of the Conservation Area. Adjacent to Pit Close Farm and Longlands Farm there are small gateways which allow for views into the former farmland and countryside to the south of the village.

The brook is visible – and indeed audible – at varying locations within the Conservation Area. Its route at the east of the village has determined the location of the houses by necessitating them to be situated further back from the street with the brook running alongside the road before curving to the rear of the properties.

The front boundaries of the houses within Swithland are a crucial component of the streetscene and greatly contribute to the character of the area. The long stretches of granite and slate rubble stone wall interspersed with trees, hedges and planting are very important in creating the individual identity of Swithland. They are also utilised to the front of recent development, helping to mitigate the impact of the newer architectural designs and forms within the Conservation Area.

Key Views and Vistas

The built up nature of Main Street means that the occasional glimpses of the surrounding countryside afforded by footpaths or rare breaks in housing add context and interest to the streetscene.

The views of the land around the church with the dense planting of trees is important for the setting of the church, as well as demarcating the shift in the villagescape to one of a more relaxed feel.

From outside 125 & 127 Main Street looking east, the interesting rooflines seen against the trees creates a distinctive view of the village.

As views of the Mountsorrel Cross from outside of The Park are limited, you are able to manage a glimpse of it from the rear of the churchyard whilst there are no leaves on the trees. It is also visible from the Hall Farm gateway opposite 223 Main Street.

The network of footpaths provides attractive views of the village and the importance of preserving or enhancing the character of the Conservation Area as visible from these points should not be overlooked.

Landmarks

The church is not particularly prominent from within the Conservation Area or from the surrounding landscape. However it has been a constant presence in the history of the village from the thirteenth century and occupies a charming position amongst the trees.

The Mountsorrel Cross is a rare survival even if views of it are hard to find. It is an important element in the development of the village, echoing the former connections of the village with others.

At the east end of the Conservation Area are the two gazebos; one to the corner of the garden at 173 Main Street and the other at the corner of the boundary wall of Hall Farm. They are unique features and add visual interest to the streetscene, as well as an element of curiosity as to their original purpose.

The linear village itself is a landmark when viewed from the surrounding footpaths.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Building Types, Layouts and Uses

Buildings within the Conservation Area are generally one and a half or two storey although the historic buildings are generally of a smaller scale and massing than their modern neighbours. Some housing is more exposed than others, such as the stretch of two storey semi-detached houses of 91-101 Main Street. The introduction of bungalows and continuation of building one and a half storey housing in the twentieth century is an appropriate compromise between allowing new development and preserving the character of the area.

In contrast, there are some examples of significantly larger housing being introduced into the streetscene. Generally these are set back or have dense front boundaries which go some way towards lessening their impact on the modest scale of the majority of the housing.

Swithland today is a residential village but traces of its agricultural past can still be seen in the surviving historic fabric even if in many cases this use has ceased. The barn complex at Hall Farm is the most obvious and here farming activities still continue. Surrounding the main houses of Pit Close Farm and Longlands Farm are a number of outbuildings and barns.

As well as agriculture, Swithland also had a small but not insignificant commercial interest although this is less discernable in the surviving built fabric of the buildings. The Griffin Inn occupies the site of a former hostelry with the present building dating from c1700 being used as a bakehouse, a brewery and a mortuary at various points within its history before it was a public house, a use which continues today. Rose Cottage was the village smithy until 1928, a laundress operated from Langton House between c1881 and c1901, a shop was run from 1881-1918 at 134 Main Street and 125 Main Street was formerly the post office, taking over from the telegraph office at 122 Main Street.

The only remaining public buildings today are the church, school, The Griffin Inn and since the twentieth century, the Memorial Hall.

Key Listed Buildings and Structures

The church of St Leonard (Grade II*) dates from the thirteenth century although it has been altered and extended throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its granite and slate rubble stone walls with Swithland slate roof are complemented by pinnacles and battlements and the south aisle was built as the Danvers Chapel in 1727. The mid-eighteenth century memorial to the children of Sir John Danvers was described as a “tour de force of the slate workers” by Pevsner.

Swithland Hall (Grade II) was partially completed in 1834 and finished in 1852 to designs of Sir James Pennethorpe. It is cement rendered with rustication to the ground floor and its cream elevations are in contrast to the earthy natural tones of the rest of the village. In a simple Neo-Classical style, a Greek Doric portico projects from the principal façade and large sash windows dominate alongside cantered bays with a Grecian oriel window to the first floor, observed by Pevsner as an “English oddity”.

The two barns at Hall Farm (both Grade II) date from 1749 and 1750. They are highly significant in terms of their survival in such a relatively unaltered state, as well as their location as they dominate the approach into the village from the east. They are both double storey of granite and slate rubble stone with Swithland slate roofs. Red brick has been used to the end walls with black headers used decoratively. A moulded brick cornice defines the eaves.

Swithland Hall Lodge (Grade II) is relatively isolated, lying outside of the core of the village on the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area marking the driveway to Swithland Hall. Built in 1847 as part of the completion phase of the Hall, it is slightly different in style to the rest of the estate cottages built in this period. Its rusticated granite ashlar is finer than the rubble stone used elsewhere and it has been finished with stone quoins. The cantered bay to the front elevation is formed of strong stone mullions framing diamond leaded lights and there is a distinctive arcade to the left. There is a large carved stone panel depicting the Butler-Danvers arms to the front gable end.

The gazebo structures found at 173 Main Street and Hall Farm (both Grade II) are thought to date from the eighteenth century and are small circular granite and slate rubble stone towers with a pointed Swithland slate roof. Both are two storeys and have a small door and small one light opening with slits above. Believed locally to be have been used as lock-ups, their listing descriptions name them as gazebos and refer to their probable use as folly boundary towers.

Key Unlisted Buildings

The Griffin Inn has some of the earliest origins in the village with the present building thought to date from the 1700s. The open form of the village at this point means that it is a prominent building within the streetscene. It is of granite and slate rubble stone with a Swithland slate roof and distinctive large red brick chimneys. There are distinctive mullion and transom windows to the front elevation which has been whitewashed. It has been heavily altered and extended over the centuries but retains its historic interest.

Quite separate to the rest of the village in terms of its architecture is 24 Main Street which lies at the western edge of the Conservation Area. Dating from the early twentieth century, its Arts & Crafts form with external chimney stack, mixture of gable ends and half-hipped roofs and craggy rubble stone construction is unique in the Conservation Area. Although its original thatched roof has since been replaced in slate, it retains its distinctive style.

The Memorial Hall is a prominent building at the intersection of Main Street with Leicester Lane. Erected as a memorial to the inhabitants of Swithland who lost their lives in World War I, its wooden construction and veranda which wraps around the building give it a distinctive form and is instantly readable as a community building.

Coherent groups

There are several points in the village where there is a high concentration of listed buildings and their historic interest still dominates and characterises the streetscene. The first is the grouping of Pit Close Farm and Longlands Farm with 125 Main Street, 127 Main Street, 118-122 Main Street and Pit Close Cottage adjacent to Leicester Lane.

The second is the small stretch of cottages to both sides of Main Street which include 132-134 Main Street, 136-138 Main Street, 137 Main Street, 140 Main Street, 144 Main Street and 146 Main Street.

Building Materials and Architectural Details

Walls

Historically, the use of granite and rubble stone was the principal building material within the Conservation Area.

Render was not commonly used for the older properties in the village but is most notable at Swithland Hall and The White House. However render has been used as the finish for much of the twentieth century development within the village such as 102 Main Street and 105-113 Main Street. In some cases this has been used in combination with rubble stone as seen at 102 Main Street.

Until the twentieth century, the use of brick within the village was restricted to dressings and chimneys providing a distinct and uniform architectural finish to

many of the estate cottages. In many cases this was a buff brick as demonstrated by 81 & 83 Main Street, 125 & 127 Main Street and 140 Main Street. Examples of blue brick dressings can be found at 146 Main Street. The only entirely red brick buildings in the village prior to the turn of the twentieth century were the school and the barn adjacent to Pit Close Farm.

Recent development however has made increasing use of red brick as the principal building material. This is most notable at 116 & 116A Main Street and the development of Keepers Close. Red brick has also been used in combination with other materials, such as its use with render at 141 Main Street. The buildings of Charnia Grove utilise a clumsy mix of red brick, render and rubble stone.

Roofs

As to be expected, the most common roofing material throughout the Conservation Area is Swithland slate and this is found on almost all the historic properties. The distinctive texture, finish and diminishing courses of the slate adds to the character of the Area and echoes the industry that the village is known for.

Twentieth century development has in many cases used replica or reclaimed Swithland slates. An appropriate alternative is Welsh slate which can be seen at 64 Main Street and 116 & 116A Main Street. Although the finish is not the same, its grey tones balance those of the Swithland slate.

There are several examples of thatched roofs in the Conservation Area at Pit Close Cottage, 144 Main Street and 36-38 Main Street. There was originally a thatched roof at 24 Main Street before it was replaced.

Chimneys are quite an important feature of the rooflines in Swithland, adding further interest to the buildings. Although all relatively simple in form and design, prominent examples are found at 81-83 Main Street and 132-134 Main Street as well as the large external chimney stack at 24 Main Street.

Historically the roofs within the Conservation Area are generally pitched, with the exception of the hipped roof at Hall Farmhouse. This allows interest and character to be created with projecting gables such as at 125 & 127 Main Street and 81 & 83 Main Street. This form is emphasised by the use of shouldered gables to some of the properties.

Windows and Doors

The most common window type in Swithland is the casement window arranged in either pairs or threes. Two light examples can be seen at 132-124 Main Street, 136-138 Main Street and 140 Main Street. Three light casements are found at several properties including 118-122 Main Street, 125 Main Street and 127 Main Street

Horizontal sliding sashes can also be found in several buildings in the Conservation Area with two light examples at 137 Main Street and larger three light sliding sashes at Pit Close Farm and Longlands Farm. The lower

floor of Hall Farm Farmhouse utilises distinctive three light examples with top lights above. Vertical sliding sash windows are uncommon in Swithland but are found in the more polite elevations of Swithland Hall and The White House.

Dormer windows are particularly characteristic of the historic architecture of the village and have continued to be used in recent development. Examples of hipped dormers can be found at 136-138 Main Street and 137 Main Street whilst gabled dormers are more common in modern development such as at 68 Main Street and 73 Main Street. At 144 Main Street the dormers are found half below eave height and there are two light eyebrow dormer windows at Pit Close Farm peeping out from under the thatch.

Larger than the majority of windows found within Swithland are the mullion and transom windows at The Griffin Inn and to the front elevation of the former Methodist Chapel incorporated into 36-38 Main Street.

Many of the windows are relatively simple forms but intricately leaded lights found to several of the buildings within the Conservation Area add interest and character to the streetscene. These are notable at 81-83 Main Street, 136-138 Main Street, 140 Main Street, 144 Main Street and Swithland Hall Lodge.

A number of historic door features have been retained and add to the quality of the surviving buildings. There are three pointed arch panels to the front doors at 144 Main Street and 136-138 Main Street. This distinctive Tudor arch is echoed in the shape of the door itself at others, such as at 146 Main Street, 81-83 Main Street and 127 Main Street.

Ornamentation of doors is equally important, with simple rectangular overlights found at 132-134 Main Street and Longlands Farm. More decorative fanlights can be seen at 54 Main Street and The White House which also retains its decorative canopy with pilasters.

Details

The buildings within Swithland are generally simple forms and rely on the use of dressings in a contrasting material and tone to create interest as demonstrated by the estate cottages.

Typical of an estate owned village are the numerous references to the Butler-Danvers family. This is found primarily in the use of decorative coronets and coats of arms carved in stone as at 125 Main Street and Hall Farm Farmhouse. The most prominent example is the large stone panel depicting the coats of arms on the front elevation of Swithland Hall Lodge.

The initials 'JPE' are found at 137 Main Street and the more recognisable initials of 'G.J.B.D.B' are found at 146 Main Street.

Dates are commonly marked on older properties as found at the school, 125 Main Street, 146 Main Street, 36-38 Main Street, 36-38 Main Street, Swithland Hall Lodge, and inscribed on a stone shield at 81-83 Main Street.

Other distinctive details are the characteristic hoodmoulds found at 140 Main Street, 144 Main Street, 146 Main Street, 127 Main Street, 81-83 Main Street, 132-134 Main Street and the school.

There is an interesting triple arched arcade at Swithland Hall Lodge.

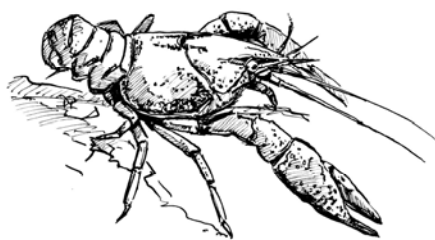
Parks, Gardens and Trees

The most significant open space both in terms of importance and size is the parkland and fields around Swithland Hall, providing the setting and context for the Hall and the Mountsorrel Cross. However this is not publically accessible from within the Conservation Area and views are limited. The open space with its scattering of trees to the west of the Griffin Inn is more visually accessible and provides a break from the line of housing to the south of Main Street and frames the view of the Griffin Inn. Recreational space is provided by the land adjacent to the Memorial Hall.

Gardens can generally be found to the rear of properties however many properties make use of a front driveway or small garden. In some cases this has been determined by the geographical features, with the course of the brook at the west end of the Conservation Area pushing houses further back from the road.

The number of trees is a key characteristic of Swithland and adds to the attractiveness and quality of the Conservation Area. There is hardly a view in Swithland that does not comprise at least several trees and their contribution both dominates the streetscene and complements it. They offer a clear reminder of the location of the village and its links to the wider Charnwood Forest. The trees are testament to the history and development of the village from a 'grove cleared by burning'. The high number of group and woodland Tree Preservation Orders reflects their importance.

Biodiversity



Swithland Brook meanders throughout the length of the Conservation Area. The watercourse represents a valuable habitat which has been known, through monitoring surveys carried out by the Environment Agency until the early 2000s, to hold a population of white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, the only native crayfish in Britain. This species relies on high

quality watercourses providing adequate shelter and with beds mostly sediment-free. The white-clawed crayfish has generally been greatly affected by direct competition from non-native crayfish species, particularly the signal crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* which carries a fungal disease against which the native species has no resistance, and by a general decline in habitat and water quality, but there are no reasons to believe that the species is no longer present along Swithland Brook.

The tree-lined brook functions as a wildlife corridor across the Conservation Area, reaching into the Charnwood Forest landscape. It also forms a key part to the biodiversity network, linking neighbouring nationally important sites.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are located only a short distance from the Conservation Area: in the north-east to the reservoir which is part of Buddon Wood & Swithland Reservoir SSSI, and in the south-west to woodland which is part of Swithland Wood & the Brand. Just outside of the Conservation Area a species-rich paddock adjacent to the brook has been notified as a Local Wildlife Site.

Crow Wood, which is listed in Natural England Inventory of Ancient Woodland and has been notified as a Local Wildlife Site, is partly located within the Conservation Area. Although the wood has been planted up with mixed broadleaved and coniferous trees, the ground flora still comprises some ancient woodland indicators such as bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, wood sedge *Carex sylvatica* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis*.



Bats and their roosts have been recorded within the Conservation Area. Of particular note is the whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*, a small species often associated with old buildings with stone walls and slate roofs. Bats fly along regular routes alongside hedgerows and woodland edges, and the vegetated brook undoubtedly provides a key feature across the Conservation Area. All bats are highly vulnerable to disturbance and loss of habitats.

Detrimental Features

The high volume of traffic and the associated noise is a weakness as you travel along Main Street.

The cumulative effect of the red brick used as the principal building material in new builds is at odds with the historic character of the Conservation Area.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

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

- the contribution of the estate cottages and their distinctive architecture to the overall charm and atmosphere of the village;
- the retention of features and details which link the village with the family and estate which shaped it;
- the consistency and style of the front boundaries with the use of granite and slate rubble stone walls mixed with hedging, planting and trees reflecting the surrounding area;
- the character afforded by the prevalence of trees along the streetscene, reinforcing the connection of the village with Charnwood Forest;
- the quality and survival of historic fashions, forms and features which still dominate the built fabric of the village.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

General Principles

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

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

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

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

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

nearly always leads to unsuitably detailed windows which will be generally unacceptable in the Conservation Area. In most cases the Building Regulation requirements can be met without the need to use clumsy and awkwardly detailed windows.

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

Procedures to ensure consistent decision-making

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

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

Enforcement strategy

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

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

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

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

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

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

General condition

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

Possible Boundary Changes of the Conservation Area

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

The boundary at the west end of the village

At present the Conservation Area ends along the west boundary of 24 Main Street close to the boundary of the Woodhouse Eaves Conservation Area which incorporates 1 Main Street and the flooded pits associated with the Swithland slate industry. An assessment needs to be made to ascertain whether this area of land would be better suited to forming part of the Swithland Conservation Area.

The land to the west of the footpath adjacent to 67 Main Street

The boundary of the Conservation Area in this area north of Main Street is defined by the course of the brook which is subject to alteration. The open land at this point of the village is important for framing the village on the approach from the west. Consideration should be given to enlarge the boundary at this point to include Phoenix Barn and its surrounding fields.

Proposals for spot listing

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

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.

General management guidelines:

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

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

Monitoring change arrangements

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

Consideration of resources

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

Summary of issues and proposed actions

Conservation Area Issue	Proposed Action	Lead Partner	Other Partners
Boundaries of the Conservation Area	Review the Conservation Area focusing on: The boundary at the	Charnwood BC	

	west end of the village		
	The land to the west of the footpath adjacent to 67 Main Street		
The speed of traffic through the Conservation Area and general highway safety concerns	Investigate appropriate methods of traffic calming through the village	LCC Highways	Swithland PM Charnwood BC
The listing of the John Prior headstone in the churchyard	Investigate the history of the headstone to ascertain its special interest and submit an application for listing to English Heritage	Swithland PM	Charnwood BC

Developing management proposals

Various historical, cultural and commercial forces have shaped the development of the Conservation Area, creating a sense of place and individual identity. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area is vitally important, both in attracting investment in the area itself, and in the encouragement of initiatives to the benefit of the wider community.

Community involvement

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

Advice and Guidance

The Borough Council can advise on the need for Planning Permission or Listed Building Consent and can provide guidance on matters such as appropriate methods of maintenance/repairs, alterations and extensions and suitable materials.

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

Development Management
Tel. 01509 634737

development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

Planning Enforcement

Tel. 01509 634722

development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council would like to gratefully recognise the time and knowledge generously given by Mr Adam Page and Mr Jason Page, Canon R. Anne Horton and Mr & Mrs Leatherland.

The publication "Swithland: church and estate" (Osbourne & Horton) was also an immensely useful and interesting resource, containing a wealth of local history and collective memory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Charnwood Borough Council (2012) *Landscape Character Assessment*

McWhirr, A (nd) *The Roman Swithland Slate Industry*

Natural England (2013) *National Character Area Profile: 73 Charnwood*

Nichols, J (1790) *The History & Antiquities of the County of Leicester Vol III, Part II*

Osbourne, B & Horton, A (2011) *Swithland: church and estate: the story of a Leicestershire village*

Pevsner, N (1992) *Leicestershire and Rutland*

Pitt, W (1809) *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Leicestershire*

Internet Resources

'Leicestershire County Council: Swithland' at

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/swithland-3.pdf>

[Date accessed 8th March 2013]

'Swithland' at <http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/swithland/>

[Date accessed 5th March 2013]

'Swithland, Leicestershire' at
<http://www.pastscape.org.uk/SearchResults.aspx?rational=q&criteria=swithland,%20leicestershire&search=ALL&sort=4&recordsperpage=10>
[Date accessed 8th March 2013]

'Swithland, Leicestershire & Rutland HER' at
http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Application.aspx?resourceID=1021
[Date accessed 8th March 2013]

LISTED BUILDINGS IN SWITHLAND CONSERVATION AREA

The Mountsorrel Cross, Main Street is listed at Grade I, and the Church of St Leonard, Main Street is listed at Grade II*. All buildings below are listed at Grade II.

Main Street

Nos. 36-38

The White House, no. 78

Penny Cottage & Cherry Tree Cottage, nos. 81-83

No. 106

Longlands Farmhouse, no. 110-112

Long Close, Gladys Cottage & Corner Cottage, nos. 118-122

Pit Close Cottage, no. 124

No. 125

No. 127

Nos. 132-134

Nos. 136-138

No. 137

No. 140

No. 144

Langton House, no. 146

Rose Cottage, no. 160

Gazebo at corner of no. 173

Hall Farmhouse, no. 227

Barn at Hall Farm

Stable at Hall Farm

Gazebo, walls & outhouse on corner of road at Hall Farm

Swithland Hall

Swithland Hall Lodge

St Leonard's C of E School & Head Teachers House

Danvers Tomb at churchyard of St Leonard

Hall headstone in churchyard of St Leonard

Lynchgate at churchyard of St Leonard

Swithland Cross War Memorial

K6 Telephone Kiosk