

Woodhouse Eaves Conservation Area Character Appraisal

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WOODHOUSE EAVES CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL



The Village part of the Conservation Area



The Brand Hill part of the Conservation Area

Executive Summary

Woodhouse Eaves Conservation Area was designated in July 1993. It covers an area of 72.3 hectares.

In the original proposal in 1991 to create the Conservation Area the boundary was tightly drawn to include only the built part of the historic village. However, at a public meeting held in the Village Hall in September 1991 it was the overwhelming view of the residents that the Area should be more wide ranging, in particular to include the Brand Hill area as far as the Swithland Triangle.

Thus the Conservation Area now includes the historic area of built development of the village and the traditional landscape, Victorian houses and extensively planted gardens of Brand Hill.

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

- 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, 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. There is a description of the Brand Hill area.

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

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

Planning Policy Context

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced. In making decisions on potential development within a conservation area, the Council is required to '*pay attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area*'. Permission will not be granted for proposals that are likely to harm the character or appearance of a conservation area. *Sections 69 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.*

The Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance 15 on "Planning and the Historic Environment" encourages local planning authorities to pursue their duties under Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to formulate proposals to preserve and enhance conservation areas and of the need to consult widely in doing so. It also contains several policies that are relevant to conserving the character of conservation areas.

The East Midlands Regional Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy): Proposed Changes, published in July 2008, recommends that strategies should adopt an approach based upon the assessment of natural and cultural assets, the contribution that these make to local character and the impact of these assets to absorb change. *Policy 27: Regional Priorities for the Historic Environment.*

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

The Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document 'Leading in Design' builds on the design policies set out in the Charnwood Local Plan and will contribute to the development of more effective approaches to securing good design in the emerging Local Development Framework. The guide is also intended to support

the implementation of the community strategy, Charnwood Together, by providing a set of principles that will inform the physical development implicit in the initiatives and actions of all partners in the local strategic partnership.

Other SPG/SPD guidance

- Backland & Tandem Development
- House Extensions
- Shopfronts & Signs
- Woodhouse Eaves Village Design Statement

ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location and Setting

Woodhouse Eaves is a prosperous village at the foot of Charnwood Forest about 6km to the south of Loughborough. The village is raised well above the valley of the river Soar. The village consists predominantly of Main Street running south from The Bulls Head at the junction with Beacon Road to a dip in the landform which forms the centre of the village, where Maplewell Road runs up to the forest to the south west and Church Hill rises steeply up past St Pauls Church to pass through the woods of Brand Hill. Development in the 20th Century has created Bird Hill Road off Beacon Road on a higher terrace to the west with a connection to Main Street.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Origins and Development

The development of Woodhouse Eaves as a recognisable settlement or village took place mainly in late Georgian and early Victorian times. However, there is evidence of habitation since the early Bronze Age. Significant artefacts from that period have been found at Beacon Hill. It is also known that the Romans were exploiting Swithland Slate. Nevertheless, in contrast to many other settlements in Charnwood, Woodhouse Eaves was not a nucleated village with open fields because the soil did not allow for good enough arable land. The settlement began as isolated houses or collections of houses at the edge of the woods. It was originally a part of the Manor of Barrow upon Soar and the earliest references are in this connection in episcopal registers of 1209-1235.

Woodhouse Eaves was greatly influenced by Beaumanor, of which estate it was a significant part. Much of the Victorian building may be attributed to the energy of Sophia Perry Herrick, in particular the houses for the slate quarry workers on Maplewell Road. However, before this influence, Long Close has evidence of what is believed to be Norman markings on its stonework and The Bulls Head is thought to have its origins in a farmhouse from 1660.

The village may have been the product of the Enclosures of 1812, though in 1800 John Nichols described the village as "... 80 houses actually in the forest and it seems as if the inhabitants had from time to time built a little hut and then made a small inclosure about it in the forest. Woodhouse Eaves is mostly inhabited by framework knitters but there are amongst them several labourers who work at the Swithland slate pits ...".

In mid Victorian times the village was advertised and noted for the quality of its air and much visited as a resort from the smoky cities, including London. John Nichols said it was "a healthy and very pleasant spot, especially in the summer, being situated amongst hills and woods." In the same period the village survived the loss of the Swithland Slate industry and the growth of the factories in the towns to produce the knitting. The slate quarries closed in the 1850s and 1860s, swamped by drainage problems in their very deep pits and unable to compete with cheaper and lighter Welsh slate brought in on the railways.

In 1920 there was a significant sale from the Beaumanor estate of 70 freehold cottages, 10 small private houses, 2 blacksmiths shops, butchers shop, grocers and bakers and 13 building sites. Much of the property was sold to the tenants before the auction. In 1946 the Estate was finally sold off completely. And as a result there is a wealth of building in the village throughout the 20th Century.

In 1997 the Local History Group described the village as bustling. Today the village has a vibrancy to it, living on the edge of the forest with all its opportunities for fresh air and countryside. There is still a variety of shops, post office, school, village hall, pubs and restaurants.

Archaeological Interest

The Conservation Area includes the original area of settlement and a substantial part of the Victorian and later development. It is possible that there are medieval remains and care should be taken to avoid disturbance when new development is being carried out.

Population

Woodhouse Eaves until its major growth at the turn of the 18th - 19th centuries would have consisted of a small number of houses, in isolated clearings in the forest. However, Charles Allsopp of Broombriggs House who lived from 1780 to 1836 is credited in the church with having "brought a large portion of the surrounding

district of Charnwood into a high state of cultivation". At the same time there was a rise in the demand and use of Swithland slate and framework knitting was being sourced from homeworkers in the village by firms in Loughborough and Leicester: in 1844 there were 158 knitters in Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves.

To accommodate the growth St Pauls Church was built in 1837, described a few years later by Thomas Potter as "the new chapel founded on a romantic rock". It was not the first church, that honour goes to the Baptist Chapel, now rebuilt.

It is noteworthy that even today the two settlements of Woodhouse Eaves and Woodhouse are part of a single parish. The current population of the parish is about 2100 of which Woodhouse Eaves share is probably about 1700.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Plan Form

The contours and landform are an important feature of Woodhouse Eaves, having a strong influence on the form of the village, contributing greatly to the appearance of the village and providing opportunities for views and glimpses, both from within and without.

For the purposes of this appraisal it is useful to consider the Conservation Area composed of two areas: the built part of the village from The Old Bulls Head to St Pauls Church and the wooded area of Brand Hill with open spaces and scattered large houses south of the village.

The village is sited at the verge of Charnwood Forest¹. The present village includes a strip of development along Beacon Road but the origins would appear to lie in two long roads. Main Street follows a fairly level path around the slope of Windmill Hill. At the centre of the village is a crossroads in a dip, where Main Street meets Meadow Road continuing as Maplewell Road, the second long street, which winds and rises to the south west up a rather steeply sided valley between the wooded hills. Meadow Road, now a cul-de-sac, was formerly Bakehouse Lane and was probably one of the principle routes into the village from Woodhouse and the valley. Another still exists as the footpath which enters the village at the playing fields. The edge of the Village is marked by St Pauls Church and its vicarage sitting high above the centre.

There are some small culs-de-sac up and down the hill on either side of Main Street and also leading off Maplewell Road.

From the centre of the village Church Hill rises steeply up the slope of Hunger Hill and a bend takes it into Brand Hill and the area of The Brand. The road runs straight, dropping gently through woods with openings and scattered houses, some very large and important, though most of them hidden in the woods: Charnwood House, Nanhill, Bradgate Park Nursing Home, Swithland Court, The Grange and The Brand itself. Finally the road drops down to the junction with Brand Lane which leads back to the village of Woodhouse and on to the broader valley of Swithland.

Interrelationship of Spaces

The centre of the village is the junction of four roads, Main Street, Maplewell Road, Church Hill and Meadow Lane. It is intimate in character.

Main Street consists of houses and groups of houses which have developed since the growth of the village in the early 19th Century. There is no recognisable pattern: houses may be set at the back of the pavement, or set with a small front garden behind a stone wall. Other houses may have a large front garden; occasionally the buildings are interspersed with an open space, such as a yard or car park. The street is set between the wooded hill above it to the west and the equally wooded slopes leading down to the valley to the east.

The effect for the most part is a rather open aspect. This is noticeable, for instance, where Tuckett Road has been built to link up to Bird Hill Road. The junction has created an area of grass and trees which being raised up above the road on a retaining wall has little use.

¹ Note that part of the Conservation Area to the west of Main Street is included within the new National Forest.

Maplewell Road has a more recognisable pattern. It is tighter, from the proximity of the hills on either side, and with more continuous development. As one goes up the hill, the houses on the left are closer to the road, often at the pavement edge, while the houses on the right have mostly large front gardens. In places the houses are hidden by trees and shrubs. The feeling of enclosure is enhanced by the slate boundary walls and the hedges, shrubs and trees in the gardens which come close to the edge of the road.

The development on Beacon Road that is within the Conservation Area encompasses one of the original groups of buildings. The road is fairly tightly enclosed: on the south side by the houses, some of which are at the pavement edge, and by the boundary walls and trees; on the opposite side, by the narrow verge and dense strip of tall trees. This sense of enclosure is not matched by the road itself, which offers a broad, straight route up and down the hill which, much to the distress of the residents, results in excessive traffic speeds despite the speed limit signs.

Indeed, many of the streets in the village have been widened and the junctions engineered to create greater visibility to take full account of the traffic. These over-wide junctions, for example at Paterson Drive and Rawlins Close, have damaged the distinctive character of the Conservation Area.

The Brand Hill area is a pleasant alternation of dense woodland which comes up to the edge of the highway with open clearings of meadows and openings to private gardens.

Townscape

Most buildings are 2 storey with a simple ridge parallel to the street. There are also buildings with a gable facing the street. Examples include the three gables of the old school building, Nos 26-30 Church Hill, School House itself on the other side of the road, the large red brick semi of Nos 36 & 38 Maplewell Road and the three back gables of Long Close, Main Street behind the high grey rendered wall.

There are exceptions to the simple building form. Most of these exceptions are public buildings such as the Baptist Chapel, with a unique octagonal form and the tall red brick Methodist Chapel.

Within the Area there are also single storey bungalows and shops, a three storey house, Nos 102 & 104 Main Street.

The junction of Main Street with Maplewell Road and Church Hill forms a bowl which is loosely enclosed by the buildings but strongly enclosed by the surrounding hills, the allotment gardens, and backdrop of woods.

A small section of Victoria Road is included in the Conservation Area. This road is a short cul de sac which rises steeply up the hill from Maplewell Road. It is fairly tightly enclosed by terraces of housing on either side. At the bottom is the ornate Liberty Hall, and a red brick warehouse, followed by a terrace of three small red brick and rendered cottages which are reasonably intact.

Opposite Victoria Road, Mill Road is a lane which runs up to a footpath leading to the Windmill. The lower part of the road, within the Conservation Area, is bounded by individual houses, cottages and bungalows, set back from the road with stone wall boundaries and tall hedges.

Meadow Road, formerly Bakehouse Lane, still has the character of a village lane. It runs down the hill from the village centre to the primary school and then on as a footpath to the village of Woodhouse. At the top it is enclosed by terraces fronting directly onto the street. No 7 is included in the Conservation Area, a small stone built row of cottages with its gable facing the road. Opposite is the former, distinctly industrial, Forest Rock Garage.

Key Views and Vistas

John Nichols noted that the parish "affords several pleasing views". He cites Lincoln and Coventry being visible, presumably from the top of Beacon Hill. However, the quality of the air is less conducive to such extensive views today.

While there are several places from which the valley of the River Soar can be seen the most important views are those of the village itself. Travelling south along Main Street one gradually appreciates the central bowl of the village against the backdrop of the wooded Brand Hill with the tower of St Pauls Church standing on the

rock. In the opposite direction, as one descends Church Hill, there is a dramatic developing view of the central bowl framed by the houses and gardens on the slopes surrounding it.

There are glimpses of the valley from a number of places along Main Street, and a significant view of the valley from the car park and play area next to the Village Hall.

The allotment gardens offer a magnificent view of the central bowl of the village against the backdrop of the wooded hills with St Pauls church on the rock and the valley in the further distance.

There is a pleasing view of the wooded slope of Windmill Hill as one looks up Mill Road.

From lower down in the valley, from Woodhouse and the road from Woodhouse to Swithland, the village can be seen nestling among the woods, winding around the slope of Windmill Hill. The scale of the houses does not intrude into the skyline.

From the Brand Hill area there are views into the open meadows and also delightful views of the open country beyond, particularly from Brand Lane beyond an avenue of mature oaks to the remains of Buddon Wood and the hills of the Soar and Wreake valleys. From Swithland Road there are views into the agricultural land to the south.

Landmarks

St Pauls Church is a prominent feature of the village, sitting high above the central bowl. It is, however, often hidden from view by the trees around it.

The Pear Tree Inn, Le Fevre's Stores and Oakwood Pharmacy in the central bowl constitute an important visual grouping. The latter two are not large buildings in themselves but they contribute to the intimate character of the centre.

At the far end of the village The Old Bulls Head at the junction of Forest Road and Main Street marks the entrance to the village. Poor quality extensions, such as the conservatory, landscaping with timber decking, and the choice of grey paint, have eroded the historic character of this building.

In the Brand Hill area two pine trees mark the junction of Brand Hill and Brand Lane and a tall cypress tree marks the transition from Brand Lane to Main Street Swithland. At the triangle there is a young oak tree which in the future has the potential to become a landmark. The conifers are part of the late Victorian planting schemes.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Building Types, Layouts and Uses

Most of the buildings in the Conservation Area are domestic houses and cottages. Within this description there is a great variety of buildings ranging from modest 1½ storey cottages in simple vernacular style to imposing red brick detached houses with distinct architectural style. Among these domestic properties there are also bungalows, outhouses and garages, and a 3 storey house. There are some terraced houses but most of the houses are individual, even when they are joined to their neighbours. Besides the domestic properties there several shops and a number of important public buildings, such as the churches, pubs and village hall.

Besides the simple vernacular style the Victorians were fond of a more conscious rural style and a good example is found in the centre of the village: the row of cottages, Nos. 2-6 Maplewell Road, for the workers in the quarries. There is a similar group of cottages on Brand Hill, which includes the WHeatsheaf Inn. Both groups are vernacular in both style and scale.

Key Listed Buildings and Structures

1. St Pauls Church and The Old Vicarage;
2. The terrace of workers cottages, Nos 2-6 Maplewell Road;
3. Oakwood Pharmacy, No 2A Main Street (or, as shown on the 1:1250 Ordnance map, No 1 Meadow Road);
4. The village pump, lovingly tended in the centre of the village;
5. The School House, No 11 Church Hill;

6. Charnwood House, partly hidden in the woods;
7. The Brand, though not visible from the road;
8. Swithland Court, only partially glimpsed from the road.

Key Unlisted Buildings

1. The Old Bulls Head marking the entrance to Main Street from Forest Road;
2. The 1981 Baptist chapel has a unique octagonal form;
3. The Methodist Chapel is a tall red brick feature on Main Street;
4. Le Fevre's Stores marking the centre of the village;
5. Pear Tree Inn, Church Hill;
6. The Curzon Arms set back from Maplewell Road;
7. Liberty Hall, No 71 Maplewell Road.

Coherent Groups

Woodhouse Eaves developed as a string of groups of houses along Main Street. These original groups form the basis of the groups that are seen today.

1. The simple vernacular cottages (some of them listed) at the entrance to Main Street, from No 99 to No 123, together with the Old Bulls Head on the other side of the road, and Nos 1 to 19 Beacon Road;
2. A 'row' of highly varied buildings from No 80 to No 112 Main Street;
3. A group from the Village Hall to No 42 Main Street with Hartleys Estate Agents and Nos 17 and 19 Main Street, No 17 being an early 20th Century addition;
4. Nos 20-30 Main Street to which could be added No 32 Main Street;
5. The cottages at the centre of the village: Nos 1 - 4 Main Street;
6. Nos 67 - 71 Maplewell Road, which have a pleasing cascading rhythm of dormers and gables.
7. The cottages and Wheatsheaf Inn on Brand Hill.

Building Materials and Architectural Details

While there is a great variety of building styles in the Area there is a uniformity derived from a small palette of materials used for the domestic and commercial buildings. By contrast the public buildings use a greater variety of materials.

Walls

The predominant material for walls is stone, either slate or granite, from the local quarries. However, since many houses have been rendered with a fairly smooth plaster the stone may more often be seen in plinths or in the low boundary walls. The stone is also used as cladding but, apart from the colour, such usage loses most of its aesthetic quality and thus contributes very little to the character of the Conservation Area.

Next in common usage is red brick, sometimes a buff brick, and both these are used for the quoins, and door and window surrounds in the stone built houses.

The exceptions to this vernacular are generally found in the more important buildings, such as the Baptist Chapel, Methodist Church, the Pear Tree Inn and Liberty Hall. But the common palette of local materials is also used in public buildings such as the Village Hall.

Examples of vernacular style: Nos 119 & 123 Main Street, the former of stone with red brick quoins and surrounds, the latter rendered, though unpainted; No 115 Main Street, one of the listed buildings, is painted; at the pavement are Nos 99-101 Main Street. At the centre of the village are No 4, Forest Way, Main Street and No 2, Squires Cottage, Main Street. Examples of domestic building using the common palette of materials but in a more conscious style is the terrace of Nos 2-6 Maplewell Road.

On Maplewell Road there are houses, both detached and semi detached built in the style more commonly found lower in the valley using red brick laid to flemish bond such as at No 17 and Nos 32 & 34.

Roofs

The most common roofing material for buildings of all styles, periods and degrees of importance is Swithland slate. The quarries closed in the mid 19th Century just at the time of the greatest development in the village. Nevertheless, its distinctive character is so well prized that it was used for many buildings erected in the 20th

Century as well. Old photographs show that thatch was once used but none survives today. Examples of Swithland slate, with variations in colour from different quarries, may be found throughout the Conservation Area.

Besides the local slate there are some examples of Welsh slate, much smoother and without the distinctive diminishing courses and there are also examples of soft red plain clay tiles. Examples of Welsh slate are at Le Fevre's Stores, No 36 Main Street and Nos 59-63 Main Street. Examples of clay tiles are at Nos 32 & 34 Maplewell Road.

Doors and Windows

The vernacular Yorkshire sliding sash is still evident in the older cottages, occasionally replaced with flush casements. Good examples are: the pair of Nos 119 and 123 Main Street, which demonstrate each style; No 115 Main Street has delightful Yorkshire sashes at the first floor and a gabled canopy over the door; No 99 Main Street; No 4, Forest Way, Main Street, where the windows are divided into many small panes.

In the later Victorian houses there are sash windows. Examples are at No 9, No 17, No 25 and No 40 Maplewell Road, There are also cruciform windows and storm casements. However, many fine original timber windows have been lost and replaced by the increasingly ubiquitous uPVC which has no identifiable style and seeks to mimic, without charm, the original.

Noticeable, are two "eyebrow" windows in the slope of the Swithland slate roof at No 17 Main Street which altogether has a fascinating roof with a turret. A second example lies just outside the Conservation Area at No 2A Mill Road off Maplewell Road.

A feature of the village are a number of houses with diamond lattice windows, the lattice made of cast iron, painted white: the row of cottages, Nos 2-6 Maplewell Road; a similar pattern on the School House, Church Hill; simple diamond pattern at Nos 59-63 Main Street.

Doors are generally simple, in a plain reveal. There are some simple canopies and a few well made doorcases. More often the door is set in a gabled porch, which in some cases forms a two storey bay to the house. Examples of doorcases are No 55A Main Street, and No 121 Main Street. Examples of simple canopies are at No 19 Main Street, Wayside Cottage, and at the side of No 1 Beacon Road. Examples of larger porches are the 2 storey bay to the front of No 36 Main Street and the large bracketed porch to the Olde Smithy, Main Street.

There are some fine doors and porches in the early 20th Century houses such as the semi circular doorway to No 112 Main Street, The Elms and the porch to No 14 Maplewell Road with its stained glass side panels.

Dormers and Gables

Many of the small vernacular cottages have dormer windows and this tradition has been continued into the later Victorian and larger houses. Examples of the former are the 3 dormers at No 58 Main Street, Long Close Cottage, and of the latter the single dormer centrally placed at No 57 Main Street, Stone House. Particularly to note is the rhythm of dormers and gables in the group of Nos 67-71 Maplewell Road.

There are some pleasing gables along Maplewell Road, tile hung at Nos 20-24, timbered at Nos 32 & 34.

Boundary walls

Throughout the Conservation Area, where the houses are set back from the pavement edge, there are boundary walls of local slate. The slate is laid fairly roughly with standing slates to cap the wall. The walls range from from a foot in height to several feet. Some may have an associated hedge of holly or privet or bay. Occasionally the wall or its gate posts is made of brick.

Details

There are some wonderful chimney stacks in the Area, dating principally from the Victorian development and the houses of the early 20th Century. Examples are the cottages at Nos 2-6 Maplewell Road, Nos 20-24 Maplewell Road, No 110 Main Street.

The parish is noted for having a wall mounted letter box from every reign since their introduction and four of them are within the Conservation Area, one from the reign of George VI in the wall by the Village Hall, a Victorian one in the wall at the junction of Main Street and Beacon Road and one from the current reign of

Elizabeth II in the entrance wall to the Post Office. There is another letterbox from the reign of George VI on Brand Hill near Swithland Court.

There are two boundary stones at Longdale Cottage. These stones, which constitute a listed building Grade II, are relics of the parish of Longdale, a small area which was merged with Woodhouse Eaves at the end of the 19th Century.

The tower containing the school bell, which used to stand on top of one of the gables of the school on Church Hill was set in 1975 into the front garden of the School House.

There are reminders of the 19th Century in the small fire insurance marks to be found occasionally. An example is at No 121 Main Street.

St Pauls Church and its Vicarage

The church and its vicarage are built with materials in common with the rest of the village. St Pauls Church was designed by William Railton in 1837. It is of Early English Lancet style in local granite, with high pointed arches. The original building consisted of the nave, north transept and tower. The chancel was added in 1871, the south transept in 1880. The tower was strengthened in 1904 and a peal of six bells hung. The pinnacles on the tower were being renovated as this appraisal was being carried out.

The vicarage is built of local stone with stone mullioned windows, including bay windows and dormers. It has a crenellated parapet surrounding the Swithland slate roof and stone chimneys.

Both the church and the vicarage are set well back and above the road.

Parks, Gardens and Trees

The backdrop of Charnwood Forest forms a vital part of Woodhouse Eaves; furthermore, a major part of the Conservation Area comprises the woodland and meadows surrounding The Brand (see below for an appraisal of this area). Within the Village area the beautiful gardens of Long Close have been included in the Conservation Area. The gardens are privately maintained and not visible from the street but they are often open to the public on payment of a small fee.

Nearby to this private garden is a well cared for public green space containing a play area for children and leading to tennis courts and the village cricket pitch and football ground. Adjoining the green space is a public car park which makes a useful starting point for walkers going into the forest.

Running up the hill behind Maplewell Road is a strip of allotment gardens, approached by a rather insignificant gate by the bus stop in Main Street. These gardens of which only the footpath access is included in the Conservation Area form a healthy green space within the built environment and offer dramatic views of the village, the forest and the valley.

There is a composite green space at St Pauls church. The church itself is set within a churchyard of grass with fine trees at the front and an avenue of yews bordering the path from the lychgate. Behind the church is an area of grass, bounded by a tall straggly hedge. To the north is the rocky outcrop on which stands a cross and flagstaff which are part of the war memorial; to the south is the garden of the Vicarage. On the opposite side of Church Hill is the extensive grave yard, a broad green space with some fine individual oak trees as well as sycamore and larch, bounded on the south by the woods of Hunger Hill and giving delightful views into the valley of the Soar to the east. On both sides of the road the boundaries are of slate walls typical of Woodhouse Eaves. Below the rock, approached by a private drive off Church Hill there is a romantic glade leading to a cave, known as the Stone Hole, which was a former slate quarry.

The Conservation Area includes a broad strip of woodland on the north side of Beacon Road. The strip includes a great variety of species, including spruce, pine, oak, birch, sycamore, hornbeam, horse chestnut, lime and oak.

Besides the trees and woodland surrounding the village, there are many individual trees which form an integral part of the street scene: the maple, birch and cherry trees planted at the entrance to Tuckett Road; an oak and four pine trees outside No 116 Main Street; a cherry tree at No 64 Main Street; two palm trees in the

garden of No 17 Main Street, a cypress, a cherry and two lime trees in the garden of the Curzon Arms and many fine shrubs and hedgerows which form an essential part of the townscape.

Two houses have fine pyrocanthus growing at the front wall of the house: No 4 Main Street, Forest Way, and No 19 Main Street, Wayside Cottage.

Brand Hill

Brand Hill is a sub area of the Conservation Area. It comprises a large piece of woodland and meadows with some cottages, a pub and some scattered large houses.

This part of the appraisal has been carried out by observation from the roads, and not from any part of the private estates; and thus most of the individual important large houses are not fully described and there may be important elements of the woodland which have not been appraised.

Proceeding along Brand Hill from the churchyard the road turns a bend and reaches the top of Hunger Hill from where it runs straight and almost level. On the right hand side are some individual properties which are not in the Conservation Area. On the left hand side is an area of woodland which shows signs of lack of maintenance. The dominating species is sycamore with an understorey of holly. Many of the trees are covered with a thick growth of ivy. The sycamore is preventing the growth of other more native species such as oak.

Shortly after the bend is Nanhill Drive with Charnwood House on the opposite side of the road. The woodland in front of Charnwood House has been considerably thinned allowing pleasing sights of the fine red brick house with its white painted sash windows, plain clay tile roof, chimneys and belfry. The railing at the entrance to the drive is not in keeping with the traditional styles of slate wall boundary and it is unfortunate that the entrance is frequently adorned with "To Let" or "For Sale" signs due to the large number of subdivisions of the house. At night the site is illuminated with a vast number of street lamps which is wholly inappropriate in this sylvan setting and makes a statement which is undeserved.

Next to Charnwood House is Dormer House, a rendered, white painted house with a Swithland slate roof and interesting dormers and hips as its name suggests. Beyond Dormer House is Brand Hill House which is effectively hidden in the woods. Opposite is No 50 Brand Hill, a white painted rendered house with a plain clay tile roof. This house has a delightful garden glimpsed from the road. The windows have been replaced with uPVC. Further along are two cottages of local granite with red brick quoins and window surrounds with a Swithland slate roof and metal casement windows. They stand next to the drive to Bradgate Park Nursing Home which is completely hidden in the woods. The woods are mostly beech with a holly and rhododendron understorey but sycamore is beginning to dominate.

The complex of Charnwood House to Bradgate Park Nursing Home was originally the Zachary Merton convalescence homes.

On the left hand side Brand Hill opens out with views across a large meadow with a line of pine trees running down the left edge and a group of pines in the middle. The road is bounded by an avenue of mature oak trees with a trimmed hedge beneath. On the right hand side is a relic of the convalescence homes: a car park denoted by large circular stone pillars bearing "In" and "Out" in stonework, now clad with ivy. The woodland on this side is dominated by sycamore and birch, both weeds in this context.

The next house along the road is No 56 Brand Hill, of red brick with a plain clay tiled roof, standing beside the drive to Swithland Court. The drive is lined with a trim laurel hedge beyond which one sees glimpses of the magnificent building in red brick with cruciform windows and a stone oriel bay above the front door. The woodland beyond the drive is mostly sycamore with a yew understorey.

The road is here bounded by a terrace of cottages with the Wheatsheaf Inn. The cottages and the pub are in typical Woodhouse Eaves Victorian style: slate built walls with red brick quoins and window surrounds, Swithland slate roof, Yorkshire sash windows (occasionally flush casements), and bracketed canopies to the front door. The cottages are listed grade II. They have pleasant tiny front gardens. There is a glimpse through the archway of the pub into the open space behind. Beside the terrace is a pair of semi-detached houses, which have been rendered and painted white and then two individual houses of stone. No 96 has a small mounting block and, attached to the wall, a metal basket for hay for the horses.

Opposite this group the woodland is composed of oak and pine with holly understorey. It hides The Grange and its cottages.

No 106 Brand Hill is another typical Woodhouse Eaves house, rendered and painted with a Swithland slate roof. At the pavement is a blue brick mounting block. Behind the house is a delightful garden. The boundary wall has been rebuilt in slate but a little too neat for the traditional style. Opposite are some stone and red brick garages.

The road dips down to the junction with Brand Lane bounded by a thick cypress hedge and slate wall. At the junction is the entrance to The Brand. The 30 acre garden of The Brand was laid out as a botanical garden by Alfred Ellis who bought the property in 1852. Much of this planting is still in evidence but it is gradually being lost as trees die, or are knocked over by gales, or are threatened by the growth of weeds such as sycamore and birch. The drive passes between post and rail fences through a meadow which rises up to The Brand Cottage which can be seen briefly between the trees but The Brand itself is hidden. The road junction is marked by two tall pine trees.

Continuing on towards Swithland the woodland on the right is planted with pines with a yew understorey but it is becoming rather dominated by sycamore. On the left is an oak woodland with holly and laurel understorey which is also becoming dominated by sycamore. The road bends and on the right in a small clearing is the listed Longdale Cottage of slate with red brick quoins, Yorkshire sash windows, a Swithland slate roof and a small canopy over the door. In front of the house is one of the listed Longdale Parish boundary stones. The end of the clearing is marked by an imposing tall cypress and a brook flows under the road.

At a triangle of grass with a planted oak in the centre, Brand Lane meets the junction with Main Street, Swithland and Swithland Road leading back up the hill.

On the left is predominantly beech woodland but the mature trees are gradually being lost to gales. A stone wall bounds the woodland in which is a circular stone folly, said to have been the gunpowder store for the quarrymen, and two of the disused slate pits which are now deep, very deep, ponds. At the bend there is a view to the right over the fields. Further up the hill the woodland has a better quality of beech with pine, larch and oak with a yew and laurel understorey. The Conservation Area ends where the woodland ends and becomes pasture. The stone wall continues around the woodland.

From the triangle going back towards the village of Woodhouse on the right is the property of The Cottage, practically hidden. The entrance drive has been marked with an out of character railing and planted with bamboo. Within the clearing the area is well managed and has been planted as an orchard. However, the wooded surroundings are showing signs of needing regeneration. The trees are oak with a lot of sycamore, holly and laurel and some yew understorey.

Brand Lane is a long straight and level road. Initially it passes the larch and spruce plantation of The Grange on the left. On the right are open fields which can be seen through a poorly managed line of oak and sycamore saplings over a low stone wall.

The Grange Lodge is built of stone with buff brick quoins, cruciform windows and Welsh slate roof. At the entrance are two Wellingtonia trees whose roots are damaging the stone boundary walls. The solution should be to rebuild the walls with a bridge to allow the roots to develop and not to cut down the two trees. The garden is a Victorian plantation with cedars and other evergreens. Beyond is the meadow that reaches to Brand Hill.

The road now passes through a fine avenue of mature oaks on each side with trimmed hedges and grass verges. To the right is a peaceful view over the open fields to what remains of Buddon Wood and the hills of the Soar and Wreake valley beyond.

The meadow on the left is bounded by a line of pine trees and beyond on either side of the road is mixed mature woodland with field maple, pine, oak, hazel, ash, beech, elm saplings with a holly and laurel understorey. Within the woodland is hidden The Spinneys. Two smaller houses are nearer the road: Pinewood is of painted brick with a Welsh slate roof and windows in uPVC; Oakwood is of brick with timbered gables and a Swithland slate roof.

Biodiversity & Geodiversity

The Conservation Area encompasses part of 'Swithland Wood & The Brand' Site of Special Scientific Interest. SSSI are statutory sites which are afforded legal protection and represent the country's best wildlife and geological sites. The former slate workings of The Brand have largely become re-colonised by heath, scrub and sessile oak woodland. The site possesses a rich lichen flora which includes many species which are rare in the East Midlands.

Another Site of Special Scientific Interest, 'Beacon Hill, Hangingstone & The Outwoods', is only one field away from the northern limit of the Conservation Area. Beacon Hill supports a succession of semi-natural habitats ranging from acidic grassland around the rocky outcrops, down through bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* covered slopes into areas of secondary oak *Quercus robur* and birch *Betula pendula* woodland.

Adjacent to the Conservation Area are several Local Wildlife Sites which have been notified for their species-rich grassland fields. Local Wildlife Sites are non-statutory sites of ecological interest and often the best examples of important habitats which sustain species of conservation importance. Species, which are now uncommon in the wide countryside, include lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, pignut *Conopodium majus* and black knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.

One of the gardens within the Conservation Area supports a population of pink waxcap *Hygrocybe caliptiformis*. This unusual fungus is one of a group of often brightly-coloured waxcaps which are typically associated with unimproved grassland and have declined across Europe. They have attractive pointed caps 5 to 7cm tall and a white or pinkish stem up to 10cm high.

Bat roosts of several bat species¹ have been recorded within the Area: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*² and the rare Leislers's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*² are known to occur both with the Area and adjacent to it. Bats emerging from their roosts often rely on the tree canopy close by for cover and feeding. In the Conservation Area, bats are able to use the robust network of interconnecting trees and hedgerows to commute and reach their foraging ground.



Brown long-eared bat



Common lizard

The common lizard *Lacerta vivipara*² and adder *Vipera berus*² are species closely allied to the upland character of the Charnwood Forest. Both species, which have been recorded within and in close proximity to the Conservation Area, truly reflect the geographical location of Woodhouse Eaves within the Forest.

Hedgerows and trees provide an excellent biodiversity network linking the Conservation Area with the surrounding countryside which is particularly attractive for its rich biodiversity and geodiversity.

Detrimental Features

There are some untidy yards within the village. In general these are the remnants of the industrial heritage of the village. The main examples are the car sales garage and the engineering yard on Maion Street. The former Dragon restaurant is itself a most inelegant building created out of the former Forest Rock Garage and its vast unused car park is a tragedy. Next to it stands an unused petrol station. The house behind, despite being stone clad instead of built with stone, has some merit.

There are some unfortunate examples of additions to fine buildings, such as oversized and flat roofed dormers as at No 36 Maplewell Road, an overconsciously designed extension to No 17 Maplewell Road and the extensions to the Old Bulls Head, which have eroded the character.

¹ All bat species and their roosts are legally protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. Advice must be sought from Natural England for any work which may affect bats and their roosts. Further information can be found on Natural England's website at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing/species/bats.htm>.

² These species are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also listed as Section 41 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 species of principal importance. All bat species are also priority species in the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location at the edge of Charnwood Forest and the backdrop of trees;
The topography which allows many views and glimpses of the village, forest and Soar valley;
Views of the central bowl of the village from Main Street, Church Hill and the allotment gardens;
Wide variety of building styles unified by use of simple palette of painted rendered walls with Swithland slate roofs;
Several coherent groups of houses;
Good examples of development from early 19th Century to the present day;
The composite space focussed on St Pauls church which includes the vicarage, the grave yard opposite, the cave, and the private house, No 24 Church Hill;
The use of local slate in boundary walls, sometimes combined with a hedge;
Many individual trees, shrubs and hedges forming the character of the townscape;
The beautiful and peaceful wooded area of Brand Hill with its open meadows, oak and beech woodlands and Victorian plantations of evergreens, spruce, pine and larch;
Disused slate pits.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

General Principles

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

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

Central government guidance contained in PPS1 and PPG 15, Borough of Charnwood Local Plan, Leading in Design and other SPD, and Woodhouse Eaves Village Design Statement 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 buildings 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. The addition of dormers or roof lights must be carefully considered since they can easily damage the integrity of the existing building.
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

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

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

Enforcement Strategy

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

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

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

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

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

The powers set out in Section 215 of the 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. 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.

This character assessment has identified that the slate boundary walls are a significant feature which could justify the introduction of an Article 4 Direction.

General Condition

The Conservation Area is in reasonable condition. The highways have long been engineered to take account of

the traffic so that there are no village lanes. Nevertheless, any further aggressive signing should be resisted.

The centre of the village is damaged by the vacant and unused property on the south east quadrant.

The loss of traditional windows to upvc gives cause for concern. The new material has not established any style of its own and thus detracts from the character of the historic buildings in which it is used.

There is a developing domination of much of the woodland of Brand Hill and the Victorian plantations by sycamore. This is an invasive non-native species which threatens both the native oak and ash woodlands as well as the plantations of pine, spruce and larch. The woodlands and plantations would benefit from a more active maintenance regime.

Buildings at Risk

It is the intent of the Borough Council to take necessary action to secure repair and full use of any buildings at risk. The appraisal has not identified any of the statutorily listed buildings as being at risk.

Review of the Conservation Area Boundary

The present boundaries of the existing Conservation Area incorporate the principal areas of special historic and architectural interest within the village. The Area includes a large piece of woodland and meadows, Brand Hill.

In carrying out the appraisal it was noted that Nos 77 to 91 Maplewell Road are of a similar architectural quality and intactness to properties within the Conservation Area. It is suggested that the Area could be extended to include them.

At present the boundary excludes five properties on Hunger Hill, No 32 Church Hill to No 44 Brand Hill. These are highly individual houses which, apart from one, are built from the traditional and common palette of materials found in the rest of the village and Conservation Area. They could be included in the Area.

The allotment gardens have been noted as providing an asset to the village. It is suggested that they be included in the Conservation Area.

Possible Buildings for Spot Listing

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

Enhancement Opportunities

The appraisal has noted that there are gaps in the townscape at the forecourt to the Car Sales Garage on Main Street and also at the entrance to the engineering yard on Main Street. There are currently proposals for the redevelopment of the Dragon Chinese Restaurant, formerly Forest Rock Garage.

Proposals for Economic Development and Regeneration

Historic building grants are available from both Charnwood Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council. Repair and reinstatement works to historic buildings, that make a vital contribution to maintaining and improving the character of the Conservation Area may be eligible for grant assistance.

Management and Protection of Biodiversity

The management of SSSI should adhere to the site's citation which lists potentially damaging operations that can only be carried out with Natural England's prior consent. Threatened species and habitats which are not protected through designated sites can be protected by wildlife legislation. Where protected species may be present, appropriate surveys and assessments should be carried out to ensure that development or management proposals will not have a detrimental effect.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plan sets out the Borough Council's priorities for conservation of a variety of habitats and species within Charnwood and details the actions required to bring about a reversal in their decline. Not only should habitats and species of principal importance be retained and protected, but opportunities maximised to restore or enhance such habitats and populations.

Monitoring Change

It is planned to review the conservation area character appraisal and its management plan every five years, although the management plan may under certain circumstances need to be reviewed over a shorter time period. A photographic record of the Conservation Area has been made and will be used to help identify the need to review how changes within the Conservation Area are managed. A greater degree of protection will be accomplished if the local community help monitor any changes.

Consideration of Resources

This management plan sets out the commitment of the Borough Council to protecting the character and appearance of Charnwood's conservation areas and how it will use its resources to achieve these aims.

Summary of Issues and Proposed Actions

Conservation Area Issue	Proposed Action	Lead Partner	Other Partners
Conservation Area Boundary	Consider extension of Conservation Area to include Nos 77-91 Maplewell Road and No 32 Church Hill to No 44 Brand Hill Consider inclusion of the allotment gardens	CBC	
Slate boundary walls	Consider an Article 4 Direction	CBC	
Vacant and unused property at the junction of Church Hill and Meadow Road	Develop a planning concept brief	CBC	
Gaps in the townscape on Main Street	Discuss opportunities for enhancement with landowners	CBC	Parish Council
Encroachment of woodland by sycamore and birch	Encourage landowners to take a more active part in managing woodland	CBC	Natural England

Developing Management Proposals

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

Based on the issues that have been identified the following objectives will have a positive impact in both protecting and enhancing the character of the conservation area, and provide the basis of a long term management plan:

- 1 Review how the Council's adopted 'Shopfronts & Signs' guidance is being used.
- 2 Review how the Council's adopted Woodhouse Eaves Village Design Statement is being used.
- 3 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.

- 4 The production of heritage trail leaflets to increase community awareness and appreciation, including the encouragement of tourism, should be considered. This might involve interpretation material, plaques or similar for key sites and buildings.

Community Involvement

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

Advice and Guidance

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

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

Development Control
Tel. 01509 634691
development.control@charnwood.gov.uk

Planning Enforcement
Tel. 01509 634722
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(unpublished manuscript)

Particulars, Plan and Conditions of Sale in the Village of Woodhouse Eaves, Leicestershire, 1920

John Nichols, History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, Vol III, 1800

Desmond Jenkins, "Leicestershire Villages" in The Leicester Graphic, 1956

Woodhouse Eaves, Proposed Conservation Area, Charnwood Borough Council, 1993

Statutory Listed Buildings within Woodhouse Eaves Conservation Area

All Grade II Listed except the Church of St Paul which is Grade II*.

No 123 Main Street

Nos 119 & 121 Main Street

No 115 Main Street

No 90 Main Street

No 1 Meadow Road (formerly Bakewell Lane)

Village Pump, Main Street (next to No 2 Maplewell Road)

Nos 2-12 (even) Maplewell Road

Nos 10, 12 & 14 Church Hill

No 11 Church Hill

No 24 Church Hill

Lych gate to churchyard of St Paul, Church Hill

Church of St Paul, Church Hill

The Vicarage, 32 Church Hill

Charnwood House, Brand Hill

Nos 80-88 Brand Hill

Stable block & pig sty at The Brand, Brand Hill

Brand Cottage at The Brand, Brand Hill

The Brand, Brand Hill

Summerhouse at The Brand, Brand Hill

Longdale Cottage, Brand Hill

Parish Boundary Stones, Longdale Cottage, Brand Hill