



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

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MARKFIELD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

February 2010

Markfield village was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and known as Mercenfield in Anglo-Saxon times. It is one of the highest villages in Leicestershire, being sited up against Markfield Knoll.

Outcrops of rock together with granite cottages and boundary walls are the key aspects of the village landscape. Markfield has had no resident Lord of the Manor or monastery or abbey but has developed to serve a population of small farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen and labourers.

Markfield in the 17th and early 18th century was an agricultural community with a wide range of trades and crafts in the village. These included a millwright, a carpenter, a mason, a blacksmith, shoemaker, grocer and several framework knitters. Buildings at the turn of the 18th century included a school house, a turf house, a meeting house, a work house, six licensed premises and two fishponds.

By 1800 Markfield had a population of around 600 residents and it had been transformed into an industrial rural community with over 100 knitting frames in operation, mainly in rooms in houses but also occasionally in small industrial type buildings.

By 1813 there were 99 houses in the village of which 11 had a stable. It was a close knit community and most daily activities took place within the settlement itself. Its population grew slowly and by 1891 it had achieved 1439 residents. At that time residents lived mainly in rough stone houses along each side of Main Street, The Nook and around The Green. The main building in the 18th Century was St Michael's Parish Church. This ecclesiastical building stands at the side of a hill facing onto The Green. It was here that non-conformist John Wesley came 19 times from 1742 and 1779 to preach, first in the church where he was a great friend of the Rector, Edward Ellis, and then as his congregation grew larger, on The Green itself. The Green was also the site of the village water pump and the village wheelwright's Sawpit.

Setting

Views in and out of the conservation area are largely restricted by modern development with the exception of the wide panoramic views towards the M1 motorway from Hillside. This national route has had a major impact on the village. Easy vehicle access has encouraged substantial new residential development however the noise from the motorway has destroyed the rural tranquillity of the western side of the village.

Gateways

There are four principal approaches into the conservation area. At the northern edge of the designated area the approach from both the east along Leicester Road and the west along Ashby Road follows the line of the former turnpike road which is arrow straight. At its junction with Main Street, the strategically sited former police house and Town Head Farm, are a rather formal entrance. This formality is emphasised by the avenue of trees along the northern side of Ashby Road, which together with the grass verges and dry stone walls provides a natural link with the countryside beyond the limits of the village and the densely built up historic core of the village.

At its southern end, Main Street intersects with Forest Road from the west and London Road from the south. Forest Road follows a tortuous route crossing the countryside and the M1 motorway where the road is lined by a mixture of hedges and stone walls to arrive at the conservation area at the former Pinfold. Here stands a small Victorian development of cottages, Jubilee Terrace constructed in 1891.

London Road follows the line of the probably pre medieval drove road which has in the recent past been straightened. Its long passage skirts the edge of recently developed residential estates which are particularly undistinguished. It arrives at the edge of the designated area at its important junction with Forest where the Bulls Head Inn defines the gateway into the conservation area.

Character Statement

The village developed as a small hillside settlement along Main Street and around the Parish Church. Originally an agricultural settlement, its form has gradually changed and been extended to meet the needs of successive forms of industrial employment in the 19th century including framework knitting, quarrying and mining. The church has, however, retained its dominant position and stands in a prominent green space visible from several important vantage points in and around the settlement. During the mid to late twentieth century, the sale of village farms, particularly along Main Street, has encouraged the residential development of vacant sites which has had a major detrimental impact on its character. It has introduced inappropriate buildings and none traditional features into the historic core and the close visual links with the countryside have been lost. This fragmentation is particularly evident along Main Street. It is essential that any future development should repair this damage and roads such as The Nook, Hillside and The Green which are still comparatively intact, are adequately protected.

Character Areas

The conservation area has three distinct areas of different character.

Area A

Main Street and The Nook

The predominant characteristic of this area is that of enclosure. The building line on each side of both streets is practically continuous. The arrangement of buildings reinforces this characteristic by terminating in properties which conceal views of the exits. At the northern ends of the streets, it is the former police house and the Old Rectory and at the southern end of The Nook it is the Victorian properties at numbers 15-19.

Main Street is now densely built up and is a mixture of traditional 19th century cottages, stone boundary walls and modern infill development. Many properties are located up to the back edge of pavement or behind short front gardens. There is a mix of residential and commercial buildings although the latter are concentrated in the centre.

The Nook's edges are defined by line of extended properties to the east with a high stone wall along the west. This wall is particularly important and historically formed the rear field boundary of Main Street properties and still extends almost as far as the George Inn. Along the west of Main Street the field boundary also exist but only in occasional places.

The average height of buildings along the streets is relatively low at one and a half to two storeys. The roof shapes and materials play an important role in the character of this street because of the low eaves heights and steeply pitched roofs which reflect the constraints of the traditional slate coverings. Roof shapes are generally simple ridges parallel to the street interrupted by chimney stacks usually of brick. The hipped roof and third storey of the Old Rectory are exceptional and intended to raise this key building above the general standard of the street.

Main Street shows a great concentration of stone buildings amounting to approximately 40%. The remainder are brick or painted render which often conceals stone facades. Garden walls are also principally of stone, either dry or mortar construction which adds considerably to the solid stone appearance of the streetscape.

The pedestrian jitty, Holywell Lane, connecting the first chapel in the village at 79-83 Main Street with the former Wesleyan Chapel at 58 The Green, is an interesting and important local characteristic. The jitty is bounded by high stone walls which channel views towards the former Chapel at its head.

The commercial centre of the village is approximately halfway along Main Street. Its eastern side has retained most of its original buildings and traditional features including a narrow arched cart entrance and small window openings. There are also some good examples of traditional small scale shop windows although modern additions and materials such as tiled canopies and plastic windows are having a detrimental impact. The western side has unfortunately been redeveloped although the recently constructed stone planter fronting 99 Main Street has reduced the impact of these inappropriate buildings on the streetscene.

Area B

The Green, the Parish Church and Hillside

This area falls into two distinct areas, Firstly the green spaces linking Main Street with the church including the churchyard itself. Secondly the terrace of housing along Hillside which closes this area to the north and provides long distance panoramic views across the motorway towards Thornton.

St Michael's Church is the dominant building and together with The Green and the buildings around its edges this area forms one of the best pieces of village streetscape in the Borough. The church stands at the top of the natural slope of land surrounded by high stone granite walls. These and the mature trees in the churchyard, to a degree, separate it from the secular area around. The entrance to the churchyard is framed by a wooden lichgate adjacent to which are a row of diverse but elegant properties from the Victorian and modern eras. The Green itself is a wide space without defined edges which perfectly suits this area. Further traditional properties line the far side of the space but being one and a half storeys in height and further down the slope have only limited impact.

A second green space, sometimes known as Sawpit Green, completes the link to Main Street. Sawpit Green is a gently sloping grassed space edged along Main Street by a series of mature trees. The extent of this Green is enhanced by the adjacent grassed area in front of the Council retirement bungalows.

Overlooking this area is a former National School, the school master's house and several other two storey cottages which reinforce the area's traditional qualities. The school building, which dominates the green has, in the recent past, been converted into residential use. The conversion of this a one and a half storey brick building has unfortunately led to the loss of its original large window openings and seen the introduction of excessively large roof lights. However it has retained the brick and stone boundary wall of the former playground.

Overlooking the church, Hillside marks the upper most extent of the village fabric on the Markfield knoll. A short length of modern or poorly extended properties mark the entrance to this street but it is the long stone terrace, which is the dominant building

form. These low two storey cottages have retained their stone facades and slated roof although they have suffered badly from unsympathetic window changes and the introduction of modern materials. Access to their steeply terraced gardens at the rear is through occasional arched passages. These also connect with their rear access passageways, privys and stores. The terrace fronts directly onto the narrow street opposite which is a continuous stone retaining wall. This wall is broken only by a narrow gap giving access to a footpath again flanked by a stone wall which descends steeply to link with Queen Street and The Pieces, another of Markfield's narrow jitties. On Queen Street is the former bake house, now called Three Gables and a former farm complex. Although both properties are now dwellings, they have retained their out buildings, original features and their character. The former bake house is a one and a half storey property which is unusual in having gabled dormer windows. The Pieces, a further narrow and steeply falling jitty links this area to Area C which is centred on the former Pinfold of the village.

Area C

The Pinfold

This area is somewhat detached from the main part of the conservation area. It consists of a mix of older farms and Victorian cottages, either detached or in terrace form. Prior to the turn of the 20th century this was centred on the village pinfold which is still marked out immediately to the south of Alma Villa on Forest Road. The gentle curve of the street maintains the sense of enclosure although much of the modern buildings along the street are unexceptional. However a number of particularly distinctive properties distinguish this street from elsewhere, notably the Manor House, the Bull's Head public house and Stepping Stone Farm. The variety of eaves heights and building planes accentuates the individuality of the buildings along this street. However the modern row of bungalows along the eastern side of the street provides an unsatisfactory transition between the Pinfold and London Road. This row would be disastrous for the street if it were not for their being sited on slightly raised ground and provided with substantial retaining walls along the roadside. Until comparatively recently this area was open farmland extending up to Main Street and The Green. A row of trees along the grass verge in front of these properties which will mature to form an edge to the space would be a great advantage. Along the western side of the street is the Manor House, which was formerly a farm. This is a pleasant complex of stone buildings, high wall and trees in mature grounds which add significantly to the character of this area. Beyond this lies the Bulls Head Public House and down the adjacent green lane, Stepping Stone Farm which is grade II listed.

Building Style, Scale and Detail

Properties at the north, east and south of the designated area still adjoin open field areas. Within the conservation area buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area are shown on the attached map. Buildings blocks traditionally are one and a half or low two stories in height and have simple rectangular plans with flat elevations. They are mainly parallel to the street or occasionally at right angles. Roofs are gabled and steeply pitched with natural slate coverings, either Welsh, Swithland or clay tiled. In some instances the roof forms a third storey with gable windows but this is not common. Typical architectural details include brick ridge chimneys, and dentil eaves courses. Bargeboards, unless they are modern additions, are restricted to Victorian buildings. Frontage gables and all but the simplest of plans with access directly into the property directly off the street are also inappropriate

Traditional window can be either double hung vertical sliding sashes or three light casements depending on the age of the property. Lintels have various detailing including fine gauged brickwork, flat and segmental brick arches, stone/plaster lintels and occasionally are tile covered. Bay windows and roof dormers are not a feature of the conservation area and should not be introduced in new development.

The predominant building material is stone and this should be maintained. Occasionally traditional buildings have been constructed of red brickwork and overtime this has weathered into a pleasing texture which contrasts with the poorly selected dapple brickwork of modern constructions. Where buildings in recent times have been given a smooth rendered appearance, they retain a distinctive pleasant appearance. Very recent developments have been constructed from stone and follow the pallet of traditional features. These have added significantly to the character of the village and should be followed in any future developments.

Boundary and garden walls in Markfield also add significantly to the character of the designated area. Traditionally these are dry stone walls which should be retained and any new openings avoided. Properties with open frontages are totally inappropriate.

Architectural and Historic Qualities of Listed and Unlisted Buildings.

There are three buildings in the conservation area which are included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

The Church of St Michael grade II*: This building consists of elements from the 12th, 13th, 14th 16th, extended and restored in 1865 by Millican and Smith. It consists of random coursed granite, ashlar dressings, and slate roofs. Its form consists of a south-western tower with spire, nave, aisles, chancel, south porch and vestry. The cast iron gates c 1820 on the east side of the church yard are also listed grade II.

The Old Rectory: A late 18th century building with some 20th century alterations which has been listed as a building of national importance. Grade II. It is red brick in Flemish bond with ashlar dressings. It has a slate roof and lies at the junction of Main Street with The Nook. It was acquired in 1847 by Alfred Stokes Butler who was the Rector at the time. If the rear dwelling is included, its form and appearance indicates that before its purchase it was likely to have been a Master hosier's house with attached workshop, being very similar to the Master hosier's house in Darker Street, Leicester. Both are three storeys with three bay frontages, a windowed gable and an attached two storey rear building. A similar property has survived nearby in Desford.

Stepping Stone Farmhouse is grade II listed farm complex on a green lane off Forest Road: It is a partially rebuilt stone house dating from the late 16th to early 17th century and probably the oldest domestic building in Markfield.

There are a number of unlisted buildings of some architectural or historic merit which make a positive contribution to the streetscape of the area. These buildings are largely nineteenth century and are shown on the attached map.

Of these, the key historic buildings where particular consideration should be given to proposals which affect their character or appearance is scheduled as follows:

The Old Bake House, Queen Street: is now Three Gables in Queen Street. This is a fine one and a half storey stone building with a series of half dormers forming an attractive elevation but which are unique in the village.

The Old Bake House, Main Street: This property has retained its shop front and the bake house itself, complete with fittings and other out buildings are still attached off a yard at the rear.

The Old Police House: This landmark building was sold by the Leicestershire constabulary in 1968 and stands on a walled island at the intersection of Main Street and Ashby Road. It has retained many original features including a slated roof and timber sash windows.

The Post Office: This stone building which closed in 1997 has been rendered and radically altered to the detriment of its original character. It was earlier the Old Red Lion Public House and later a green grocers shop. Above the door is a slate plaque indicating it was built in 1760 by Benjamin and H Read.

The Village School: The first Day School in the village was set up in 1741 by John Taylor although it did not survive any length of time and its site is not known. In 1847 a further school was established adjacent to the Old Rectory by the Reverend J Coghlan which again soon failed.

A Dame School was held in a room of a house on Forest Road in the early 19th century. Here children received basic education from an elderly woman in return for

a small fee. In the driveway of the house is a large square of blue bricks which marks the site of the village pinfold. The pinfold is the place where stray farm animals were impounded until claimed by their owner.

In 1861 Markfield School was established on The Green on land given by the church. This was followed in 1866 and 1872 by the infant room extension and the school house. It closed in 1982 and has subsequently been converted into residential properties.

Other Churches in the Village

Wesleyan Chapel (The Temperance Hall), Holywell Lane: This was erected in 1811 at the top of Holywell Lane. This building remains in use as a car repair business but it has been much altered externally and has no features left internally which record its former use.

The Trinity Methodist Church (Bottom Chapel or Wesleyan Methodist Chapel): overlooks The Green, built in 1893 and which until 1960 was known as the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.

Primitive Methodist Chapel (known as Bourne Methodist Chapel): Early preachings took place in cottages and it was in the 1820's that a chapel was built. This building was subsequently turned in to a public house and then a cottage. In 1842 the new building (Top Chapel) for the Primitive Methodists was constructed in Main Street, now the Markfield Congregational Church.

The Markfield Congregational Chapel (Middle Chapel): This was constructed in 1852 by a local builder, Henry Chapman assisted by local quarrymen. The chapel was relocated to another chapel building constructed for the Bourne Methodists (later the Primitive Methodists) in 1842, further along Main Street in 1960 and this building is now the Chapel Hall.

These chapels together with their Sunday Schools exercised a powerful influence on the village during the nineteenth century.

The Public Houses: In the 1870's with a population of around 1500 there were 11 public houses. These included The Queen's Head, The Earl Grey, The Plough, The Rising Sun, The Abraham Lincoln, The George Commercial Inn, The Wagon and Horses, The Boot Public House, The Bulls Head, (reputedly the oldest pub now in the village), The Old Red Lion, The Wellington and the Coach and Horses. The first three are in the same location today. The Wellington (later the Stamford Arms) used to be on Altar Stones Lane but has long gone. A further inn now lost, The Plough stood opposite the southern end of The Green. Two other pubs opened in the 1860's on Main Street, The Earl Grey and The George Commercial Inn. There are currently 4 inns remaining in existence, the Queens Head on Leicester Road, The Bulls Head on Forest Road, The Old Red Lion and The George both on Main Street although the latter is currently closed. These four buildings are landmark buildings

and represent an important part of the village's heritage and they should be protected and any future changes should be limited.

Markfield Quarries:

The stone around Markfield was utilised in Neolithic times for stone axes which have been found as far away as East Anglia. During the medieval period it was used to construct churches around the area such as Quorn and the church in the village itself. Ellis and Everard worked the first local quarry known as Hill Hole from around 1860 to 1914. The stone was principally used for road metalling although it was also used for steps, sills and paving setts and to construct village buildings and walls. It was in the 1860's that New Row, now part of Hillside was built to accommodate the quarry workers and stone is the predominant building material within the conservation area. Although not within the designated area itself, the Markfield quarry impacts on the setting of the conservation area and has played a key role in the life of the village.

The Miners Welfare: Coal-mining was common throughout the local area with pits at Coalville, Desford, Bagworth and Ellistown. It provided employment for many villagers and led to the construction of the Miners Welfare Institute on Main Street. Originally constructed in the 1920's as a picture house it was incorporated in 1925 into the Miner's Institute although it still continued to be used as a cinema until it closed in the early 1950's. Although this building was an important local facility it has no historic or architectural interest and it is anticipated that the site will be developed.

The village Farms

Agriculture continued to play an important role in villagers' occupations until the mid twentieth century. However the sale of land for building houses in recent years has radically change the appearance of the centre of the village. Some of the farms are:

Stepping Stone Farmhouse: This is a partially rebuilt stone house dating from the late 16th to early 17th century and probably the oldest domestic building in Markfield.

Town Head Farm stands at the northern end of Main Street and is a survivor of the days when the village had many farms. The building has a plaque over the front door bearing the initials WWM and the date 1711.

The Old Manor House: This group of buildings was originally a farm complex although during the early 20th century it took on the current name.

Traditional Building Materials

The principle building material in the conservation area is granite and only occasionally brick. The granite was extracted locally from Markfield quarry and it has given the village a unique appearance in the Borough which it is very important to

maintain. The stone walls have traditionally been laid with a horizontal grain incorporating both large and small pieces of granite and sometimes slate. Traditionally walls were never constructed from large blocks alone. The mortar face in all cases is slightly recessed and this pattern should be closely followed. In several cases, particularly at the north end of Main Street, stone buildings were provided with rich orange brown brick edges around window and door openings which enliven the stone detailing. Where brickwork has been used it has generally been laid in Flemish bond which was common in the 19th century. In a number of instances, both stone and brick walls have been finished in rendering which appears to have been used to cover disguise or protect poorer quality local stone. This is not unpleasant but it is not a traditional material. The roofs of several older buildings are covered in swithland slate in diminishing courses which is important to retain There is also widespread use of Welsh Slate particularly along main street. Welsh slate should be used on all new development. Imported or reconstituted slates or concrete roof tiles are not part of the historic palate and are inappropriate in the conservation area. Where the slate has been replaced with concrete tiles it has had a major detrimental impact and is not acceptable.

Boundary Treatments

The village has numerous stone boundary walls with brick copings which terminate at openings with brick piers and slate copings. They provide a strong sense of enclosure, channel views and provide a distinct local identity. It is important that they are retained and any new openings which are unavoidable should be as narrow as possible. The stone walls which run along the rear of properties on Main Street, The Nook and Hillside have particular historical significance identifying the original edge of the settlement in the 19th century.

Contribution of Spaces and Natural Elements

The traditional terraces on the back edge of pavement or with short front gardens have restricted open space within the street scene. With the exception of The Green, open space is contained behind the rear of properties. Particularly between Main Street and properties on the east side of The Green which is where the majority of mature trees can be seen.

The extensive green space around the church which is visually link to The Green and Sawpit common is the principle open space within the Conservation Area extending as far as Main Street. This provides a distinctive open break in the street scene and provides a pleasing contrast to the enclosure of Main Street and contributes significantly towards the areas character. The space also provides an

attractive setting to the listed church providing long distance views of this important building.

Elsewhere with the exception of the mature trees in the garden of the Old Police House and 153-157 Main Street, trees are limited to gardens outside of the conservation area which provide occasional but important focal points for views between buildings.

Buildings of Poor Visual Quality

Within the area there was a degree of new development in the post war period. Nevertheless those buildings which were erected, have not, for the most part added to the architectural interest of the area. Single storey buildings particularly, by reason of their design, modern materials and their position set back from the road frontages appear discordant with the streetscene. The row of garages on the eastern side of The Green severely detracts from the setting of this area and the church. The modern development along Main Street detracts from the prevailing scale, form and grain of the conservation area. These are typically detached house, often bungalows, set back behind large front gardens or with open frontages. Where minor alterations have been made to historic buildings, the cumulative effect has had an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. These changes have included asymmetrical roofs, window opening enlargement, replacement plastic windows, particularly top hung sashes, doors to none traditional design, inappropriate dormers and a proliferation of none traditional shop front designs. Other works detrimental to the character of the designated area include the capping or removal of chimney stacks, the replacement of black cast iron water pipes with grey or white plastic and the removal of slate or clay tiles and their replacement with concrete.

Within the area there has been the application of modern cement based render to the facades of a number of traditional buildings. This, because of its extent, has to a degree undermined the previously dominant stone character of the properties within the street scene.

Parking in the conservation area has been a major consideration in the recent past. It is now relatively well provided with car parking and the car park at the junction of Upland Drive and Main Street rarely appears to be filled. Additional parking may be provided as part of the development at the rear of the George public house depending on the redevelopment of the Co-op site which will provide adequate screening; this would have limited impact on the conservation area. On street parking provides a particularly difficult dilemma. It can never be said to be in character with a conservation area but the provision of short term parking in close proximity to the shops creates vitality in the commercial centre which prevents it

becoming sterile. Consequently it is recommended that on street parking is maintained but not extended.

Enhancement

The enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area can be defined as the reinforcement of the qualities which provide the special interest which warranted designation, It may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites; it may involve physical proposals or the application of sensitive detailed development control over extensions and alterations. Areas which warrant special attention for enhancement are marked on the Conservation Area Plan.

GENERAL CONSERVATION AREA GUIDANCE, PLANNING CONTROLS AND POLICIES

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of the Markfield Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

- Retain listed buildings and buildings of local interest.
- Ensure new development contributes positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area regarding siting, scale, design and materials used.
- Ensure house extensions satisfy the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- Resist development proposals in key areas, which have been identified.
- Ensure the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over proposals to develop the rear of The George Inn site and the Miner's Welfare building site
- Ensure important views of the church, The Old Rectory and others identified on the attached map are protected.

Special attention is given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area. Planning Applications in Conservation Areas are separately advertised. The principal effects of the designation of a Conservation Area are summarised as follows:

- Consent is required for the total or substantial demolition of any building exceeding 115 cu metres.
- Applications for Outline Planning permission are not normally acceptable. Full planning applications are likely to be required.

Planning permission is required for:

1. The external cladding of any building with stone, artificial stone timber, plastic or tiles.
2. Alteration of the roof which results in its enlargement.
3. A satellite dish on chimney, wall or roof fronting a highway.

The design of all new shop front, advertisements and security grilles should be in accordance with the Council's Shopping and Shop Front Design Guide.

Anyone proposing works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give six weeks written notice to the local planning authority.

These requirements do not cover all aspects of control in Conservation Areas and you are advised to contact the Local Planning Authority.