

Shackerstone

Conservation Area Appraisal

The early history of the village is uncertain and first reference to the settlement appeared in the Domesday Book of 1086 when reference was made to "Sacrestone" which means town of robbers. After the Norman Conquest when the Saxon estates were handed over to the Norman overlords, a 12th century castle was built to the north of Station Road, the earthworks of which are still visible. In the Elizabethan era the Halls were the prominent family in the village. They occupied Shackerstone Hall next to the church for over 200 years from around 1630 until they emigrated to Australia in 1829 after selling the estate to Lord Howe. The Hall burned down in 1845 and was replaced by the Gopsall estate workers cottage on Church Walk.

At that time, the village was a successful self supporting community and had four farms, two pubs two shops, a bakery, a builder, a carpenter, brickworks, a post office, a coal merchant, a dressmaker, a shoemaker and a blacksmith. It also was the home for a large coach building business until 1935 run by the Insley family which provided employment for a coachbuilder, a wheelwright and up to 30 other people. The coach works supplied wagons and wheelbarrows throughout the country.

The farms included Bridge Farm which also housed the village bakery, Church Farm, Arnold Farm and Cattows Farm. To support the 300 residents in the village Earl Howe funded the construction of the village school and school house in 1844. The school closed in the 1930's and the school house is now the Village Hall. There were also two public houses, The Bull's Head now The Rising Sun where the licensee was also the grocer and The Red Lion which is now Yew Tree cottage.

Shackerstone Railway Station was a very busy line with some 40 passenger trains a day and three trains daily to London. Although the line closed in 1970 the track between Shackerstone and Shenton was acquired by the Shackerstone Railway Society which runs steam engines along the line. Shackerstone Railway Station to the southeast of the settlement adjacent to the Ashby Canal is a listed building. Although still used as a railway station, part of the building is a railway museum.

During the Civil War Shackerstone was near enough to Ashby de la Zouch to attract the attention of both parties. Parliamentary soldiers from Tamworth and Coventry stole horses, including a mare worth ten pounds

from Mr. Hall. The local vicar, the Rev. John Hodges, was ejected from the living in 1646 and brought before the parliamentary sequestration committee for deserting his parish to join the royalist garrison at Ashby for four months. The commissioners charged him with frequenting the village alehouse on Sundays, and of being "a companion with fiddlers and singers".*

Setting

The settlement lies to the south-east of a sweeping curve in the Ashby Canal close to Shackerstone railway station. To the north-east of the church is a mound which is thought to be the site of a castle. During the 18th century the mound could have been part of a landscaped garden of a mansion house which stood between this feature and the church. Other earthworks in the vicinity include level platforms and a pond. To the south of Arnolds Farm is a small moated site, a levelled platform and a hollow thought to have been a fishpond.

Gateways and Views

From the north the Town and from the east the Turn Bridges over the Ashby Canal form the entrances into the village and conservation area. These structures provide exceptional views of the church and the surrounding countryside. Turn Bridge signifies that the tow path changes from one side of the canal to the other.

The southern approach is defined by the 19th century brick lodge and gate piers which guard the tree lined entrance drive to Gopsall Hall, now demolished. Again there are distant views across open farmland to the church and the edge of the village.

Character

The character of Shackerstone Conservation Area is derived from the agricultural origins of the settlement and its close links to the countryside. All of the farms, the houses and the land around were part of the Gopsall Estate and their appearance reflects the traditional qualities favoured by the Howe family. These include eyebrow windows, hood mouldings, back service ranges, even the provision of a pigsty for each family, many of which have survived to reinforce the unity of the settlement. Today, despite the pressure for infill buildings, modernisation and greater living accommodation, the visual quality of the village

remains high, encompassing groups of old red brick buildings, many with low roof lines, mature trees and several tracts of open space which add to its general charm and open character but which need protection.

Appearance

Building Style, Scale and Detail

Vernacular buildings in the village are farming orientated. These properties are simple in plan and appearance. Houses are between two and two and a half stories high and have steep gabled roofs with either clay tile or slate coverings. Brick chimneys are restricted to residential properties and normally sat astride the ridge. They do not project beyond the gable. They are narrow buildings being only one room deep. Elevations are also plain and lack most forms of decoration including dentil courses, bay windows and projecting gables. Traditional windows are made from robust cream painted timber sections and take the form of three or four full height side hung casements beneath a shallow segmental arched lintel of soldier courses with brick plinth sills. Doors are of simple appearance and formed from jointed vertical planks which have been painted in a similar manner. Service facilities were always provided separately to the main property in small single storey brick buildings which included a wash house, privy and coal store. They are easily recognised by small projecting chimney's projecting through the roof. In recent times these have often been incorporated into the main house to create additional space. Local bricks from the Shackerstone brickworks off Allotment Lane have provided a unifying appearance throughout the settlement while a mixture of clay tiles, welsh slates and occasionally swithland slates provided additional interest in the roofscape. The consistent use of these natural materials together with unifying impact of the brick boundary walls coalesce into the distinctive character of Shackerstone village.

The farmsteads

Arnolds Farm was the largest and most important of the village farms. Although some distance from the end of the avenue of trees leading to Gopsall Hall, it is sited to act as its visual end stop. Historically it had an extensive farmyard which included cowsheds, fodder store, trap house, chaff house, foul house, granary, pigeon loft, pigsties, a duck pen, cart hovel and walled rick yard. The farmyard stood between the house and Church Road. Since the sale of the Gopsall Estate in 1925 most of the

farmyard buildings have been demolished and replaced with modern houses in a similar agricultural style. Now only a few small stables, a pump and a three hole privy remain within its setting. The farmhouse itself is of brick and tile construction, two storeys high with attic rooms and a basement. Recent owners have improved the property to modern standards. Changes have included the loss of its Victorian twin bays, the integration of the two southern frontage blocks into a single elevation and the introduction of new windows and a porch. However it is still possible to recognise that it was constructed in three separate phases.

Wharf Farm stands at the intersection of Station Road and Church Road. It is a two storey building of brick and tile construction with a distinctive front elevation consisting of a series of eyebrow first floor windows. It has recently been rendered. Attached to the house are a former brick coal house and a churn house. Buildings forming the yard which is separated from the road by a low brick wall include a former brick and tile stable, cutting house, cowshed and calf pen. The large timber and iron sheds standing near to the canal were formally cowsheds.

Bridge Farm is sited next to Turn Bridge on the outskirts of the village. It is a small two storey building with an entrance porch off centre, a steeply slated roof and decorative chimneys on each gable. Its extensions and out buildings included a bake house, stable, pigsties and a chaff house all of which are in disrepair.

Cattows Farm stands at the intersection of Insleys Lane and Main Street. The farmhouse was originally two cottages set at the back edge of the road with a short rear range. The buildings remain traditional in appearance with a mixture of two and three light casement windows beneath segmental arched lintels. An open porch has been added to the front entrance and a dormer to the gable addition. A new brick workshop building has been added in the yard. Immediately to the north on the road frontage is a small single storey building which until around 1900 was a butchers shop.

Cottage Farm (formerly a cottage and wheelwrights shop) the brick built cottage was constructed in two phases with eyebrow windows and gable stacks. The second phase was probably a stables and fodder

store which has been incorporated into the dwelling. An open porch has recently been successfully added to the attractive front elevation.

The adjacent range of buildings has recently been partly converted into a dwelling but was once the workshop of Thomas Insley, a well-known coachbuilder in Leicestershire. When this company was operating, the buildings included a wheelwright's shop, paint shop, sawing shed with pit, shoeing shed, forge sawing shed, and office and a store. The conversion unfortunately suffers from excessive improvements and the trappings of a suburban house.

The Gopsall Estate Cottages along Church Walk were constructed in the late 19th century in the Arts and Craft style. These are very fine buildings of quality design which is highly unusual for estate workers cottages. There were originally six pairs of single storey properties although one was used as the school. When first constructed, each property had the same accommodation with two bedrooms in the roof and a living kitchen, scullery, and a pantry on the ground floor. Outside across a paved yard in a small range, were a separate wash house, coal house, pigsty and privy. Each property was approached along a narrow track parallel to Station Road. Although now in private ownership and often having had large extensions, they still retain many original characteristic and features. These include steeply pitched roofs, massive ridge top chimneys, projecting gables, bay windows, plinths, hood mouldings and lead flashings covering the ends of roof purlins. Only occasionally has an owner introduced discordant details such as plastic windows, a plastic porch, render or white painted bargeboards

The School

The Almshouses These single storey dwellings were originally four cottages which have been linked in pairs to form two cottages. Their design was favoured by the owners of the Gopsall Estate and examples occur in Twycross, Congerstone and other villages nearby. Their appearance is highly distinctive with projecting gables, prominent chimneys and pointed windows with hood moulds, canted brick lintels and sills. It is unfortunate that one of the pair has been unsympathetically modified and has lost some important details.

St Peter's Church is the focal point of the village. It is listed grade II* and is a stone building in the Early English style. In its embattled western tower hang three bells. The church building has a nave, north and south aisles and a chancel. The church was restored in 1845 at the expense of Lord Howe who also presented the organ

The Post Office was formerly a room within the property on Main Street. The original arched entrance, the only opening on the road frontage, is now behind the red telephone box and is bricked up. This two storey brick building is unusual in the village in having a half hipped roof. At the rear is a single storey range which formerly housed a wash house, coal house and pigsty.

The Rising Sun Public House This is a two storey building with a tiled roof and gable chimney. The attached single storey range, now a restaurant, was a former malt house, cooling house and coal house. Both the range and inn have been recently rendered and plastic windows and a conservatory introduced.

The Council Houses on Church Lane were constructed in the 1950's by the Local Authority. They suffer from the use of a standard national design which makes no attempt to accommodate traditional features. Their hipped roofs, concrete roof tiles and the recent plastic windows are inappropriate in the village and detract from the character of the conservation area. Their impact on the street scene, however, is reduced by being set well back from the road behind an almost continuous brick boundary wall

The Methodist Chapel (Wesleyan) was built in 1827 and unlike other properties on the village was funded by James Insley, the coach builder. Although now converted into a house with the addition of a highly distinctive porch and inappropriate plastic windows, it still retains a unique appearance which together with Town Bridge defines the northern entrance into the settlement.

Boundary Treatment

The village is defined by its distinctive road pattern which forms a loop around the church. Within the vicinity of the church, this route is reinforced by the low brick boundary walls topped with saddleback

copings which, together with the close proximity of building frontages, define its progress and provide a strong sense of enclosure without interrupting distant views. Elsewhere picket fences and hedges maintain a similar feel.

Contribution of Spaces and Natural Elements

The dispersed nature of Shackerstone has provided many significant areas of green space and opportunities for deciduous forest trees and spinney's to be retained. The Conservation area includes an important large open field bounded by the canal. This provides good panoramic views to the church and the northern edge of the village. The village Green, also a key space and being slightly elevated, provides good views of the buildings on Insleys Lane and the countryside beyond. The village's south, east and western edges are defined by large open fields of medieval ridge and furrow which also permit distant views. Within the village, wide road verges also enhance its rural character.

FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Buildings of Poor Visual Quality

Recent Development The rural setting of the village and the attractive appearance and disbursed nature of the buildings have combined to make Shackerstone a very desirable settlement to live in. Unsympathetic barn conversions and a varied range of extensions, some of which are quite unsympathetic have been added to modest cottages to meet the spatial demands of their recent owner-occupiers. This has had a detrimental impact on the character of the village. These modern extensions which have in some cases doubled the size of the original cottage detract from their prevailing scale, form and design and reduce the space and views between them. Many small cottages have been combined which has reduced the number of houses and the number of people living in the village. Where new dwellings have been constructed in gardens or former farmyards, they are often out of character and this has had a similar impact.

Traditional details have also not been followed. Render has been introduced, dormer windows, excessively thick plastic and stained timber windows and doors have replaced full height painted casements and

planked doors, hood moulding and segmental arched lintels have been changed to modern soldier courses. The introduction of double garages on the street frontage, particularly if incorporating a large metal door, and the formation of vehicle entry points through brick boundary walls is also unfortunate.

These changes, although often minor in themselves and not requiring planning consent, are combining to change the character of the village.

In the streets, overhead cables and transformers have a negative impact on the quality of the area but the cost of undergrounding them is prohibitively high.

Enhancement

The enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area can be defined as the reinforcement of the qualities providing the special interest, which warranted designation. 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 Shackerstone Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

- Retain buildings of local interest.
- Ensure new development contributes positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, scale, design and materials used.
- Ensure house extensions comply with the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- Resist development proposals in key areas, which have been identified on the map.
- Ensure the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over proposals to alter former farm buildings, yards and estate cottages.

- Ensure important views of the church and other key buildings and out into the countryside 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:

- The external cladding of any building with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles.
- Extensions beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwelling
- Extensions of more than one storey which extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwelling.
- The enlargement of a dwelling consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.
- A satellite dish on chimney, wall or roof fronting a highway.
- Solar PV or solar thermal equipment on a wall or roof slope forming the principal or side elevation of a dwelling
- Stand alone solar equipment
- Installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil vent pipe on a wall or roof slope which fronts a highway and forms either the principal or side elevation of a dwelling.
- Anyone proposing works to a tree in a Conservation Area must give six weeks prior 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 for further advice.