



HERITAGE STATEMENT

For

8 Watling Street, Mountsorrel LE12 7BD

On behalf of Ross Tomlyn

Introduction

The proposal lies within the Mountsorrel designated conservation area, although the actual property holds no listed property status. The proposal is for a single storey extension to the rear of the property, consisting of an additional bathroom and a garden room area. The proposal took into account the nature of the conservation area described in the extract below.

Extract from Charnwood Borough Council's Mountsorrel Conservation Area Character Appraisal

Adopted March 2007

Introduction

Mountsorrel Conservation Area covers an area of 43.45 ha and, according to the mountsorrel.org website, its designation in 1977 resulted in a marked change in the fortunes for the Market Place, which had become a largely derelict area. The boundaries of the Conservation Area generally define the extent of the original village as it existed at the end of the 19th century. By that time Mountsorrel had developed as a distinctive linear settlement on a narrow tract of land between the River Soar and the steep edge of the Charnwood Forest, being described in White's Directory of 1863 as 'picturesquely seated on the west side of the river Soar, at the foot of the lofty and abrupt termination of a ridge of rocky hills, which extend west through Charnwood Forest to Derbyshire'. The Conservation Area includes large areas of open land: The Green; extending west from The Green a finger of land which was set aside as common land at the time of the 1782 Enclosure Awards and an area of meadow alongside the River Soar that is crossed by a mineral railway line constructed in 1860. 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. The appraisal is then used to inform the consideration of management proposals to preserve and enhance the Area.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Historic and Prevailing Land Uses

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

The commercial centre of the village historically was the market place, and although the market has gone the large open space it occupied still survives, now given over to car parking. The Market Place is still the important commercial centre of the village containing as it does a range of shops and the public library. There are also shops along Leicester Road at the lower end of the village and whilst there are no shops on The Green, there is evidence of former shop fronts in a number of properties fronting The Green.

The village has had a tradition of cottage industries, one the earliest being the manufacture of gloves, dating back to the late 16th century, and through the 18th and 19th centuries Mountsorrel gloves were highly regarded.

Hosiery was another important cottage industry throughout the Soar Valley from the mid-18th century; in most cases it was combined with agriculture but may have been a principal occupation in Mountsorrel where there was no significant agricultural economy. By the middle of the 19th century the framework knitting was a firmly established cottage industry and White's Directory of 1863 noted that in Mountsorrel South End the vicar of Christ Church had 'in his care about 900 souls, mostly stocking weavers'. The number of frames fluctuated depending on the demands of the market. The records in the Victoria County History show that there were 258 frames in 1844, only 190 frames in

1845 due to a shortage of work, increasing to 203 frames by 1851. Framework knitting was very much a cottage industry with the frames kept in workshops behind houses or on the upper floors. The Women's Guild notes that at 75 Leicester Road, Mr. Antill had ten frames housed in a building at the rear of his premises. As 19th century progressed the hosiery trade moved from the cottages into factories. By 1908 Kelly's Directory notes that stocking weaving was still carried on but only to a limited extent and there is no remaining physical evidence of it in the centre of the village today.

However, the most important local industry over the past 250 years has been the quarrying of the local granite, an extremely hard pinkish stone called hornblende granodiorite. The stone has long been used for road building, originally for kerb and paving stones but now as a crushed aggregate, and the quarry has had a significant impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area from the use of the granite as a building material in many of the houses and prominent boundary walls.

The granite was first worked by the Romans, who transported the stone into Leicester and it is likely that small scale quarrying activities continued from then on, but it was not until the Broad Hill quarry was bought in 1756 by Sir John Danvers that large scale quarrying began. One of the first uses was in the construction of a 10 foot wide causeway along the turnpike road through Mountsorrel North End. Elsewhere Joyce (1997) notes that granite paving was used in Leicester in 1771 and the Rev. Curtis in his Topographical History of The County of Leicestershire (1831) records that granite was 'applied to improved street pavements and turnpike roads'.

A major problem was the transport of the stone. Initially it was carried along the local turnpikes but this caused as much damage as it was laid to prevent. It was not until the arrival of the Soar Navigation canal in 1794 that large quantities could be easily transported. By 1797, 890 tons of granite was shipped by canal along with 193 tons of Swithland slate (both quarries were owned by John Danvers) and by 1807 this had risen to 5,000 tons (Joyce, 1997). However, the canal lost its importance in 1844 with the arrival of the Midland Railway on the opposite side of the Soar. A branch line was constructed to the quarry in 1860 that involved the construction of a bridge over the Loughborough Road and the more spectacular single span, brick-built bridge across the River Soar (the '1860 Bridge').

Prevalent and Traditional Building Materials

Hoskins (1970) notes that Mountsorrel retains a great deal of highly interesting vernacular building using 'three almost indestructible building materials: Mountsorrel granite, Swithland slate and Barrow-on-Soar lime-mortar'. To this range of materials should be added brick, particularly as much of it was supplied by the local Britannia Brick Works that was established in the early 19th century to the south of the village. These local materials contribute to the particular character and appearance of the village and demonstrate an important aspect of the self-sustaining nature of village life (Joyce, 1997).

The predominant building materials in the Conservation Area are either granite or brick, and whilst there are no surviving examples of timber-frame and thatched properties in the village, there is evidence of timber framing in some properties, such as nos. 1 & 2, Watling Street and in the gable end of no. 14, The Green.

The use of brick is common throughout the village, particularly in buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, and it provides a broad uniformity of material and appearance throughout the Conservation Area. In many properties the brick is laid in a Flemish bond, which has been used over a wide period of time, from the early brickwork of no. 14, The Green, where the pattern is emphasised by the use of contrasting headers and stretchers, through to 19th century buildings such as no. 31, The Green, nos. 72 & 74, Leicester Road and no. 36 Loughborough Road and into the Edwardian period at the start of the 20th century, as at nos. 77 & 79, Leicester Road.

Brick is also used to provide decoration. There are two interesting examples of the use of diaper work being used to decorate the outbuildings to the rear of no. 15, Leicester Road (The Grapes) and the principal street elevation of nos. 3 - 7, Loughborough Road. Many properties have horizontal brick string courses between the first and ground floor windows, such as at no. 113, Leicester Road, no. 4, Loughborough Road and no. 31, The Green; or a flamboyant combination of moulded string courses with projecting pilasters as at nos. 131- 133, Loughborough Road. The most richly decorated property

is the front elevation of Mountsorrel Hall with its projecting pedimented gable, stucco string courses and decorative swags and balusters.

As well as brick, there is a widespread use of the local granite, readily available and no doubt relatively cheap, typically laid as random rubble. It is used in both high status buildings such as St Peter's Church and in more humble domestic buildings. Some houses are constructed totally in granite as at no. 7, Watling Street and nos. 9 and 58, Loughborough Road, or it is used in the gable walls, such as no. 79, The Green, or as a rubble stone plinth, such as at nos. 72 & 74, Leicester Road, no. 1, Loughborough Road and no. 14, The Green, where it may have originally supported a timber frame.

An exception to the use of brick and granite is either the traditional smooth render used in properties such as at no. 4, Castle Hill and no. 41, Leicester Road or a roughcast render as used on the ground floor of The Grapes.

A number of buildings are constructed of coursed stone although this is not typical in the village as a whole. The main examples of this are the Parish offices (the former infants' school) on Leicester Road, Christ Church on Rothley Road and in the front façade of a range of utilitarian industrial buildings alongside the railway bridge on Loughborough Road.

There are also many granite rubble boundary walls, the most impressive being between nos. 7 & 9 and nos. 133 & 141, Loughborough Road, but many streets, such as Watling Street, are lined by granite walls which make a significant and distinctive contribution to the local street scene and the Conservation Area generally.

There are two sections of iron railings of note remaining in the village: to the front of the Parish offices and along the Leicester Road frontage of nos. 2-16, Baron's Way, where the railings are set on a low granite wall.

Welsh slate is the predominant roofing material, although this material is typically a product of the nineteenth century, relying on the railways for its distribution. Before the availability of Welsh slate there was a reliance on locally available materials, in particular on Swithland slate and a substantial number of roofs in the Conservation Area are still covered in Swithland slate, such as at nos. 33-37, The Green, nos. 32-40, Market Place, and Stonehurst Farm and its outbuildings.

There are a few examples of roofs covered in plain tiles, such as at no. 1, Loughborough Road and no. 31, The Green, and one use of clay pantiles on an outbuilding at no. 52, The Green.

Given the difficulties in obtaining Swithland slate, Welsh slate or plain clay tiles are the most appropriate roofing materials for any new development. One of the most significant visual changes to the Conservation Area has been the widespread use of concrete roof tiles to re-roof many of the properties. These tiles look out of place and are visually intrusive.

There has been a good survival rate of historic joinery with a range of original windows and doors, features that define the appearance of properties and are integral to their appearance.

Timber sliding sash windows are common in the Area and they provide a strong vertical emphasis. Some of the earliest are used on the surviving Georgian houses at Mountsorrel Hall, no. 4, Loughborough Road (which combines split pane sash windows in the ground floor with multi-pane windows in the first floor) and at Stonehurst Farm and also in a number of Victorian properties, no. 79, The Green, no. 41, Leicester Road and no. 36, Loughborough Road, where the sash windows emphasise the proportions of this three storey, single bay cottage.

There are some good examples of surviving Yorkshire sliding sash windows, such as in the upper floors of nos. 46 - 50, Market Place, nos. 3 - 7 & no. 46, Loughborough Road and at nos. 52 & 69, The Green. No. 1, Loughborough Road has an interesting variety of window styles, with mullion and transom windows on the ground floor with horizontal sliding opening lights in the upper frame and sash windows on the first floor.

Dormer windows are not a particular local feature but there are some interesting examples, such as the small squat dormers situated at the front of the roof slope on nos. 11 & 15, Leicester Road (The Grapes), at no. 4, Loughborough Road, where the dormers have glazed sides, and at no. 79, Leicester Road, which has a pair of multi-pane casement windows and decorated bargeboards. The multi-pane casements in its paired dormer over no. 77, Leicester Road have unfortunately been removed.

Window and door openings are typically defined by brick or stone arches and projecting sills, and these are a common feature throughout the village, such as at no. 113, Leicester Road, nos. 46-50, Market Place or within the terraced properties on the south side of The Green.

As well as timber windows, there are some good examples of timber panel doors, sometimes partially glazed, and many with top lights above. Some of the best examples can be seen at no. 36, Loughborough Road and nos. 34, 74 & 133, Leicester Road.

A number of properties have retained their original doorcases which in most cases are quite simple with timber architraves and flat canopies supported by console brackets, such as at Stonehurst Farm, no. 47, Leicester Road and no. 31, The Green, or as a range of brackets and hoods such as at nos. 28 & 32-34, Market Place; or with a pedimented hood as at no. 4, Loughborough Road. The most elaborate is at Mountsorrel Hall where the panelled door has a fanlight above it and is framed by robust architraves, decorated brackets and a prominent hood. These timber surrounds make a unique contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and add to the collective wealth and variety of architectural details within it.

As a longstanding commercial area, there are a number of surviving historic timber shop fronts that make a significant contribution to the historic character of the Area. Typical shop fronts contain large shop windows framed by decorated pilasters with brackets supporting a cornice over the fascia, with particularly good examples at no. 9, Market Place (Bennett's Angling shop); 46 & 48, Market Place (Tailor-Made Weddings and Tickled Pink) and at nos. 77 - 79, Leicester Road (the Post Office and the Mercury News Shop), which are fine examples of early 20th century, Edwardian shop fronts. This latter property also has attractive oriel windows to the first-floor accommodation

The proposed works and its impact.

The proposed single storey rear extension is not visible from any public highway or foot path. The materials used for the proposed extension are render to match immediate surrounding buildings and slate affect roof covering which are sympathetic to neighbouring properties and the greater conservation area.

In conclusion, the impact of the extension is considered to have no negative impact to the conservation area.