Heritage, Townscape and Landscape Study

In support of the
Thrussington Neighbourhood Plan
August 2016
Thrussington is a small parish in the Borough of Charnwood, located approximately 7 miles north-east of Leicester. The parish contains one small settlement, the village of Thrussington, but is predominantly characterised by a rural landscape of arable and pastoral farming. To the east of the Parish the boundary is formed by the River Wreake, and to the west by the A46 dual carriageway – originally a roman road.

The Parish Council have recently embarked on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (hereinafter known as the ‘Neighbourhood Plan’). They are undertaking targeted community consultation, reviewing other plans and programmes and undertaking targeted field work to support the policies they wish to develop.

The Parish has a unique character, as a result of its landscape, history and the principle buildings within the village. In many ways its character is similar to other nearby settlements of a similar size, but like all places, there are individual elements which make Thrussington unique. This document sets out these unique characteristics to assist with developing policies for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Like all planning policy, any policies relating to heritage or design within the Neighbourhood Plan should be based on robust evidence. This document is designed to provide some of the evidence in support of heritage, design and landscape policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. It forms part of the ‘technical baseline’ prepared in August 2016. This document seeks to present the components of this distinct character in a manner which can be easily converted into policies to form the Neighbourhood Plan.

This document is split into five sections which are designed to distil the local character into the key components of the local character. They are as follows:

- **Landscape Character** - the features and elements of the wider landscape drawing upon work done at the national and local level.
- **Heritage Assets** - Understanding fully the designated and non-designated assets within the parish and how these contribute or otherwise to the local character
- **Settlement Form** - How the position of the buildings and their relationships with the roads, spaces and landscape create a unique feature such as views, vistas and landmarks
- **Local Detailing** - How the local building materials, architectural details and fenestration (the position of the windows and doors) contribute to the unique local character
- **Character Study** - How the settlement of Thrussington can be broken down into smaller ‘character areas’ based on considering the relationship of each of these elements.
2.1 Landscape Character Designations

The Charnwood landscape Character Assessment shows that the Parish falls within two different landscape character areas. The first, is the Wreake Valley which runs along the south-eastern end of the parish and incudes the village of Thrussington. The second is the land that rises to the north and west of the parish, known as the Wolds. Each character is described in brief below alongside a series of labelled sketches identifying the key elements of each landscape character area. Further details can be found within the Plans and Programmes section of the Technical baseline.

The Wreake Valley – See Figure 2.1. This area is identified in the landscape Character Assessment as being a mixed arable and pastureland agricultural landscape based around the wide valley of the slow flowing River Wreake. The immediate area around the village of Thrussington is very much characterised by pastoral farming, with paddocks covering much of the flood plain. The Leicester – Melton Railway line is a key feature of this area within the parish, however little of it actually runs within the parish boundary, but the causeway between Thrussington and Rearsby is one of the key features of this landscape.

The landscape has some woodland or planting within it but this is mainly of the ‘wet woodland’ typology at the river’s edge with some evidence of areas of marshy land, but it is likely that in winter months the ‘flood plain’ may become saturated. Field boundaries generally are sporadic hedgerows, some with trees within them, but there is evidence of boundaries being replaced by hedgerows, especially in horse paddocks.

Figure 2.1. - Sketch of the Wreake Valley
The village of Thrussington, is very much part of the character of this area of the landscape, sitting slightly elevated within the flood plain (sitting, similarly to Rearsby and Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake villages, on gravel beds). The traditional red brick construction sits comfortably within this landscape, however, some modern features appear incongruous.

**The Wolds** – See Figure 2.2. This gently rolling landscape sits above the river valley. The village itself marks the transition between the two character areas. The elevated landscape allows for long distance views across the village and of the settlement itself. Wide grass verges are very much part of the character, and the pastureland is replaced by arable farming. The Ox Brook, running to the north of Thrussington through a steep, narrow valley, is one of many stream valleys that run through the ‘Wolds’.

The field sizes here are much larger to accommodate modern agricultural practices and this has been achieved by removal of some of the hedgerows. As a result the landscape is not as intimate as within the river valley. The remaining hedgerows are sporadic, many with remnants of mature trees, however, tree cover is relatively limited to a few standards of trees within the far north of the parish.

The A46 is a key landscape feature which forms the western boundary of the parish. Noise and light pollution from the road significantly undermine what is otherwise a tranquil landscape. The road pattern is relatively rectilinear being the focus of later periods of enclosure. The field pattern is equally formal, made often of single species hawthorn hedging.

Figure 2.2. - Sketch of the Wolds
2.2 Settlement Setting

The village itself seems to nestle well within the landscape. Much of the historic fine grain field pattern has remained around the settlement which, along with the mature hedgerows and trees mean that long distance views of the settlement are foiled and softened, see Figure 2.3. Modern buildings and features do have a tendency to stand out, especially where the colours are stark and do not reflect the traditional materials of red-brick, slate and thatch of the village. The church remains a dominant form from all surrounding viewpoints, however it is not one of the most imposing within the Wreake Valley. From the river, the village is slightly elevated (see comments above) and as such the transition is a little more noticeable.

However, again, vegetation and strong hedgerows help to soften any stark edges. Some modern development along the western edge is rather more noticeable given that it is not set within a mature landscape setting and has replaced a gapped hedgerow with a timber fence. More widely, the replacement of pastureland with paddocks further ‘urbanises’ the settlement fringe.

Views into the core of the village along the Seagrave Road from the west and across the causeway along Reasby Road to the east are key features of the settlement interface with the landscape. These routes are both framed by mature vegetation and building frontage creating attractive gateways, see Figure 2.4. The entrances to the village from along the Hoby or Ratcliffe Road are rather less well defined.

Figure 2.3. - Sketch of the settlement edge

Figure 2.4. - Sketch of the village gateway
3.1 The Conservation Area

The Thrussington Conservation Area, designated in 1975, covers much of the village of Thrussington. It’s slightly irregular insofar as it is in two discrete parts; an area around the core of the village and another covering the area around Manor Farm. With only one exception, the Conservation Area includes all of the listed buildings within the Parish. The Conservation Area boundary deliberately excluded new development in the post-war era, however, it is likely that at the time of its designation, many of these areas were devoid of development – much of which has occurred in the last 30 years.

The conservation area reflects a townscape that has been shaped by economic activity over the past 300 years, with the historical farmsteads surround a village core providing commercial premises and workers cottages. Notable buildings within the conservation area – excluding those which are listed and therefore considered below) include the range of workshops and houses along the western edge of the Green and the range of terraced houses running from the Green (by the Blue Lion) into Ratcliffe Road.

The Conservation Area Appraisal and management Plan (2013) includes a complete assessment of the features of the designated area, but also recommends increasing the size of the conservation area to join both elements together and include the setting and ‘sunken’ approach to the village along Ratcliffe Road. It also identifies the importance of the views into the core of the village when entering along the Rearsby Road and the Seagrave Road. The Green is identified as an important green feature within a townscape that other than the occasional verge is devoid of green space.

3.2 Other Designated Heritage Assets

Thrussington includes 17 listed buildings, all of which are within the settlement. The most prominent of these is the Church of Holy Trinity which is the only grade II* listed building within the Parish. Other notable features surrounding the Green include Little Thatch, the war memorial, 2 Hoby road (a large three storey 18th century house) and Number 1 Seagrave Road which includes a former Wesleyan Chapel and the associated outbuildings.

Other listed buildings are associated with the former manorial farmsteads that surrounding the village. Manor Farm on Ratcliffe Road and Old Hall Farm on Church Lane are key examples where the farmhouse and outbuildings are all designated. Strangely other farm complexes in the settlement, of a similar age, are unlisted. The Homestead, a large red brick house opposite Manor Farm is also listed, but its associated outbuildings and barns are not formally designated. They are however, locally listed. A further locally listed building, the Thrussington Mill (accessed from Hoby Road) is outside of the village.
3.3 Non-designated Heritage Assets

Historic England (2015) describe heritage assets as having evidential, historical, aesthetic or communal value. Considering these criteria (as set out in the Conservation Principles policies and Guidance 2008 and updated 2015) it is possible that a number of other buildings within the village and Parish may be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

Both public houses within the village have some heritage value when considered against the guidance, playing both a long term social and economic role within the village, as well as visually contributing to the street scene within the core of the conservation area. The same aesthetic quality could be applied to the run of terraced properties running from the Blue Lion into Ratcliffe Road as described above. The old portions of the school building may also, by long association with the cultural aspects of the village and the attractive architecture, be described as a heritage asset.

It may be possible to consider designating these features as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.
4.1 Settlement Form

The village of Thrussington is centred around the village green and a cluster of two public houses, a village shop, cafe and hairdressers, see Figure 4.1. From the village green four key spokes span to the north, east, south east and south west. The village extends along these roads with some culs-de-sacs and short streets inbetween. The figureground of the village reveals the range of type and age of properties within Thrussington from farmsteads to the north east and south west to newer residential streets to the west with large plots and detached houses. Green space is limited to the village green, school playing fields and churchyard. However, the village does contain a number of large verges, large front gardens and mature trees which give it a green feel.

The Townscape Analysis map, Figure 4.2. on the opposite page, shows building frontages in relation to the key routes in and out of the village. This map highlights areas in the village where there is uniformity in the building line, particularly along Ratcliffe Road and in the more modern cul-de-sac schemes which have been build over the past 50 years. This map also demonstrates some key elements of the traditional vernacular - farm courtyards, some of which have been converted to residential use, and the uniform terraced housing which is situated back of pavement.
4.2 Routes and Footpaths

Thrussington is essentially the meeting of four key roads; Seagrave Road, Rearsby Road, Hoby Road and Ratcliffe Road. Off these key main roads are a series of secondary routes which link to smaller residential streets. However, in Thrussington a number of tertiary routes are directly connected to the main routes (shown in red on map 4.2 - Townscape Analysis Plan). These tertiary routes (shown in yellow) simply link to residential streets and are not through routes.

A number of pedestrian routes link the village’s streets to one another via alleyways which run between the churchyard and neighbouring houses and between the side boundaries of houses linking Rearsby Road and Church Lane.
4.3 Landmarks and Views

Thrussington benefits from a number of local landmarks located along its key spine route (Seagrave Road, The Green, and Rearsby Road). Entering the village from the south the church acts as a key landmark and a signpost for Thrussington as Rearsby Road approaches and crosses the river. From this point a key view is identified of this view of the church with the village as a backdrop. Also key landmarks but with less impact are the Blue Lion Pub, the Star Inn and The Homestead which forms the western gateway to the village.

The Townscape Analysis map also demonstrates the three key nodes/junctions within the village - these are at the Regent Street/Seagrave Road crossroads, the Hoby Road and The Green junction, and Rearsby Road and Ratcliffe Road.

4.4 Key Public Spaces

Thrussington contains a number of key public spaces which are critical to the character of the village. The most important public space within the village is The Green, located between Seagrave Road and Rearsby Road. This area of grassed open space is the historic core of the village and is surrounded by some of the most significant historic buildings within Thurssington. It is the focus of community events and has been in Parish Council ownership since it was gifted to the parish by the four lords of the manor in 1907. The Green is fronted by residential and retail properties and has a particularly good interaction with the public house, now known as the Star Inn.

The remainder of open spaces within the village are associated with specific facilities such as the church and school and are not as commonly used for community events. Within the village there are few other areas of open space and the Green plays a crucial role in providing opportunity for social and community activities.

4.5 Massing and Roofscape

The images in Figure 4.3 demarcate the rooflines of a number of buildings in the village. These aim to highlight key characteristics of the village’s roofscape.

Of key importance is the frequent use of gables in the village created by front to rear pitches either side on or facing the highway. Often the exposed gable of a property creates a termination of a view or street, or the change in direction of a road. This is commonly seen in conjunction with stepping within the roof profile of a row of buildings. Sometimes travelling from three to two storey or taking account of a change in levels.

There are some areas where three storey units are common - particularly along Seagrave Road. Ratcliffe Road has some three storey houses but most are two or two and a half storey in height. In key locations across the village are courtyards clusters which are residential in use and are commonly single storey, some are two storey, with very simple from and roofline. Almost universally seen across the village are chimneys, some uniformly located along terraced rows while others are less uniformly placed and are located more in clusters. Chimneys are however, not seen on agricultural or equestrian buildings - many of which have since been converted to residential use.
Figure 4.3 - Roofscape analysis
5. Local Detailing

5.1 Archetypes

This study has identified five different historical archetypes within Thrussington village. These archetypes, or typical building forms, are described and illustrated below accompanied by a typical ‘vignette’.

**Large Manorial Farmhouse**: These are the largest and most grand looking buildings in the village. Typically these are associated with the farmsteads which collective form the historic form of the village, however, there are one or two examples which are not linked to farm complexes. Usually these are very symmetrical wide frontage, built to three storeys with a very narrow front to rear footprint. Curtain walls surrounding garden areas are common associated features of this archetype along with decorative front doors.

**Detached Dwelling (Victorian)**: The typical detached dwelling in Thrussington dates from the Victorian period. They are distinct from the large farmhouse since they are only two storeys in height. However, the symmetrical design approach is retained. This type includes a series of properties built to a similar style into the early years of the 20th century. Arched-top windows are often a distinctive feature of a number of these properties as shown in the accompanying vignette. Many of these properties have decorative Flemish bond brickwork.
Older Detached Cottage: Older detached cottages, including the two thatched examples within the village, typically provide accommodation over two floors, with the upmost floor mainly within the roof space. The symmetrical design is common, but often the doorway is in the side or end elevations, often with a porch (these often later additions). Many of the cottage buildings have timber framing, which is now filled with the traditional local redbrick. Many have a series of brick infill in a herringbone pattern or course. Where these properties are not thatched they have deep eaves (sometimes sproketted eaves) and a clay tile roof is most common.

Workers Cottages: Whilst there are some examples of the typical two-up and two-down terraced property built to the back of pavement, some of the more interesting cottages present a narrow front to back measurement, and include integral doors, yards and a garage built to the back of the pavement that belie their previous mixed use as a commercial and residential property. Decorative eaves are commonplace but the entire fenestration is more random than on any of the other archetypes. In some cases, the first floor uses part of the rooftops offering an appearance which is low in scale and low in mass.

Georgian Terraces: Towards the northern end of the village, there are two ranges of three storey terraces which appear to be later Georgian or early Victorian in age. These terraces, replicate the civic grandeur of the age with a pair of dwellings forming a symmetrical fenestration. The frontage of each property is quite narrow, in most cases approximately 4-5m but the depth of the properties increases over the three more traditional typologies previously detailed. In addition, these dwellings have very small front gardens, or are built to the back of pavement and present a strong unified frontage which changes the character of the overall archetype.
5.2 Fenestration and Detailing

The archetypes clearly demonstrate the importance of the symmetrical fenestration pattern which stress a vertical element to a mass that is typically wide. In almost all of the large homes this forms the dominant architectural feature, often supported by decorative window surrounds, lintels and cills which are usually constructed using the local stone. Windows are almost entirely multi-paned (unless replaced by modern uPVC). The less symmetrical buildings have smaller windows, often lacking the elaborate cills and lintels.

Architectural detailing tends to relate to the brick bonds, see Figure 5.6. There are a great many examples of Flemish bonding and English bond walls which use the headers as a decorative string course, with some using a yellow brick to counterpoint the red brick. Some of the properties exhibit a brick detailing at the eaves or decorative brick work in the form of herringbone patterns brick panels. This detailing is more prevalent on the older properties, with new buildings more typically using a Flemish bond. Brick lintels and header courses have been used on more modern buildings, but are less common on the traditional buildings.

In most cases the roofs are simply pitched front to rear, with brick gables, but in some cases, especially where there is a run of terraces, a hipped roof can be found. Chimneys are a key feature of all the properties and the skyline all with a decorative light brick band. They offer a vertical element to many of the buildings that are short and wide, and without which would, especially on the cottage type buildings, look squat or boxlike in their massing and appearance. There are very few properties with dormer windows within the village (as shown in the vignettes).
5.3 Materials and Colours

The settlement is almost entirely constructed of traditional red-orange brick. The exception is the church which is entirely constructed of local yellow soft limestone. In some areas, the yellow brick has been used alongside the red-brick to add details. Render is not common in the settlement, however, when it is used it is typically white or cream in colour. Some buildings have painted white brick (including both the public houses in the village) although again, this is uncommon. Blue engineering brick is used occasionally but should not be considered a dominant feature of the settlement, see Figure 5.7.

Roofing materials are typically small clay tiles and slate, which over time have been replaced with concrete tiles. In more recent periods these tiles have become larger in their visual appearance which has already the appearance of some of the archetypes. There are no pantiles within the village with all the roofs exhibiting a grey-green or deep red colour.

Boundaries were traditionally red-brick walls with either a brick or stone coping, with some examples of a wall with hedging above. More recently hedges have begun to be used and more modern developments are devoid of any boundary treatment which appears somewhat incongruous. There are very few examples of wooden fencing or picket fencing or metal railing.