

Leicester
City Council

Braunstone Village Conservation Area

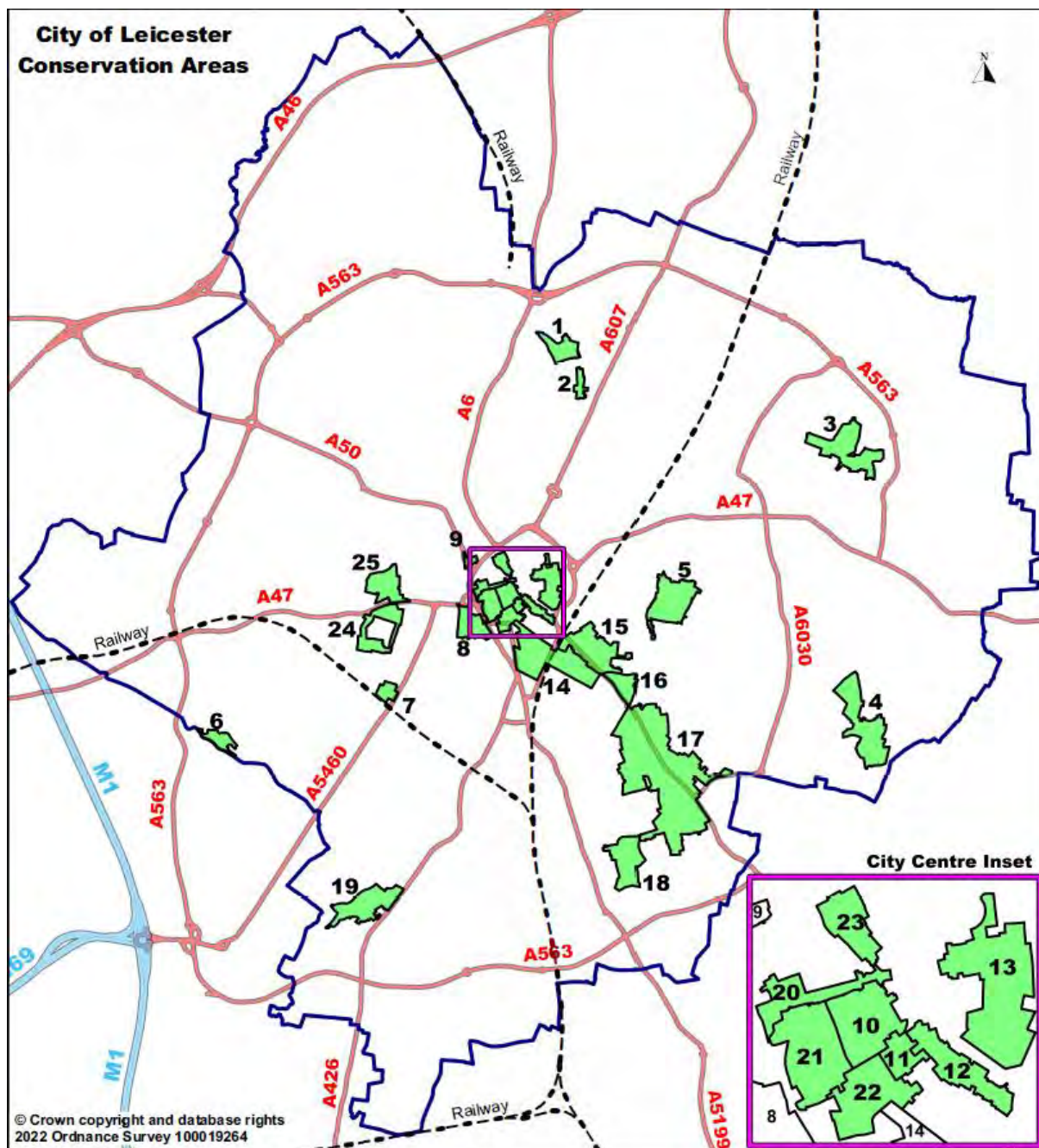
Character Appraisal

September 2024

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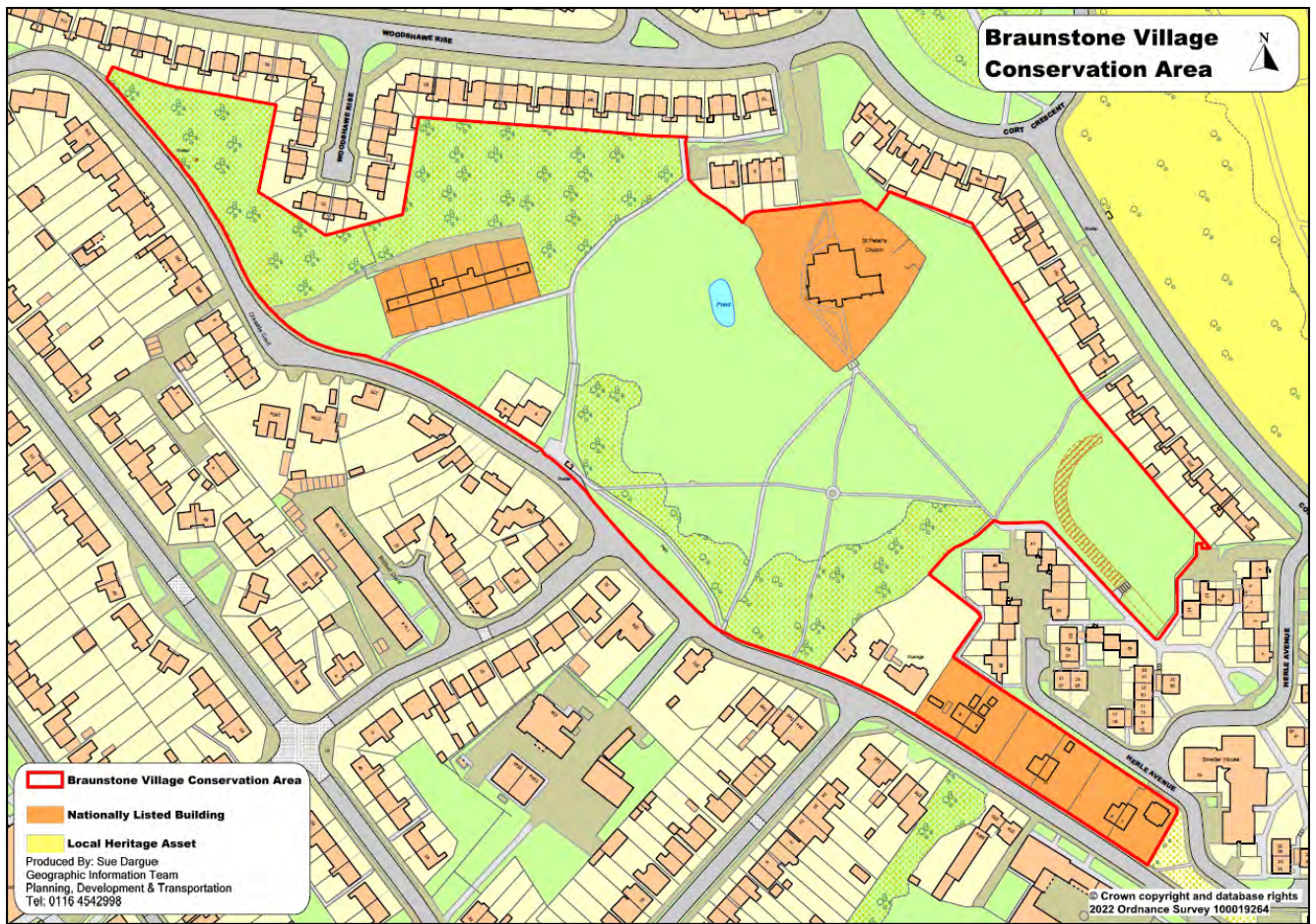
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Braunstone Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal



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| 1. Belgrave Hall | 14. New Walk |
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Braunstone Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal



1 Introduction

- 1.1 This character appraisal defines the special character of the Braunstone Village Conservation Area and sets out how it can be preserved or enhanced.
- 1.2 This appraisal will be used to help inform the design of any future development proposals so that they preserve or enhance the area and acknowledge its features. It is important to note that no appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and that the omission of a particular feature, building or open space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

2 Background, Scope and Structure

- 2.1 The City of Leicester contains twenty-five conservation areas, the oldest of which were designated in 1969 with most recent designated in 2022. This appraisal is structured to include:
 - summary of designation
 - policy background
 - definition of the special interest of the area via spatial and character analysis, historical development and important features.

3 Designation

- 3.1 The Braunstone Village Conservation Area was designated on the 29th January 1974 and covers the part of the former village of Braunstone situated within the City of Leicester. The rest of the former village is located on the south side of Braunstone Lane and Main Street, within Blaby District Council. The latter area was designated as a new Conservation Area by Blaby District Council on the 24th September 2024.
- 3.2 No changes are proposed to the boundary of the Conservation Area which is proposed to remain as first designated.



4 Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 Conservation Areas were introduced in the Civic Amenities Act (1967) which defined a conservation area as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change but to manage change in ways that maintain and strengthen an area’s special qualities.
- 4.2 The definition of a conservation area remains unchanged in current legislation, set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act places duties on local planning authorities:
- To identify those parts of their area that are of special architectural or historic interest and to designate them as conservation areas;
 - To review past designations from time to time;
 - To prepare proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas;
 - To pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of conservation areas when determining planning applications for sites within such areas.
- 4.3 The effect of designation means that planning permission is required for the demolition of buildings, with some minor exceptions. There are also stricter controls on changes that can be made to buildings and land, and there is some protection for trees.
- 4.4 Government policy is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It requires the significance of heritage assets – both historic buildings and historic areas – to be understood by local authorities and by those who propose change. Changes that cause harm to significance will only be permitted where the harm is demonstrably outweighed by public benefits.
- 4.5 Further guidance on the use of the NPPF is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance and in guidance published by Historic England. It requires the significance of heritage assets – both historic buildings and historic areas – to be understood by local authorities and by those who propose change. Changes that cause harm to significance will only be permitted where the harm is outweighed by public benefits. Further guidance on the use of the NPPF is provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance and in guidance published by Historic England.

- 4.6 The protection and positive use of the historic environment within new development is a theme which runs through the City of Leicester Core Strategy. It is identified as a key component in spatial objectives 7 and 9. This is further strengthened in a number of policies. The Core Strategy also makes an explicit commitment to the preservation and enhancement of Leicester's heritage in Spatial Objective 10. This is amplified in a wide-ranging policy (CS18) for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment. There is a general presumption against the demolition of buildings that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area, and the policy expects new developments and conservation-led regeneration to reflect the character and value of the historic environment. Both local and national policy puts the emphasis on the enhancement of heritage assets and positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness that should be made through new development.

5 Summary of Special Interest

- 5.1 The Conservation Area preserves the core of the ancient settlement of Braunstone with St Peter's Church Dating back to medieval times and the original manor house believed to have been located in Church Field
- 5.2 The buildings retain a strong link to the grade II listed Winstanley House, formerly Braunstone Hall, its service buildings, gardens and parkland which are located in Braunstone Park to the north.
- 5.3 The Conservation Area contains excellent examples of 19th century architect-designed estate-worker cottages formerly associated with the Winstanley Estate. The red-brick houses contain decorative facades, pitched roofs and generous soft landscaping.
- 5.4 The Conservation Area has remained largely undeveloped since the late 19th century. It did not experience the redevelopment that affected many of Leicester's suburbs and former villages, something emphasized by the surrounding modern developments.
- 5.5 A large proportion of the conservation area remains as open grassland which allows long vistas, recalling the agricultural and recreational history of the area and which is a key feature of the conservation area.
- 5.6 Mature trees in spinneys and freestanding woodland are a key features of the area and are important historically, aesthetically and for wildlife.

6 Location and Setting

- 6.1 Braunstone is one of six former villages incorporated into the City of Leicester administrative boundary between 1892 and 1935 which have since been granted the conservation area status.
- 6.2 Thought to be Saxon in origin, it was founded on glacial sands and gravels less than a mile from Roman Fosse Way to the east and on the southern verge of the once extensive Leicester Forest. The surface geology of the area is mostly boulder clay, with small areas of gravel and light sand to the east. The land is undulating, gradually rising westwards to a height of about 300 feet above sea level.



Church Field has formed the core of the early medieval village of Braunstone; the first Manor House was located within its grounds.

- 6.3 The Conservation Area covers an area of 5.3 hectares (just over 13 acres); it is bounded by Braunstone Lane and Main Street to the south, Woodshawe Rise to the north, Cort Crescent to the north-east and Herle Avenue to the east.
- 6.4 The Conservation Area is located south-west of the city centre, approximately 2.25 miles from the Clock Tower and comprises the parts of the former village of Braunstone which are located within the City's boundary; the rest of the former village lies on the south side of Braunstone Lane within Blaby District Council.
- 6.5 The area was historically associated with the Braunstone Park and Braunstone Hall, located to the immediate north-east, albeit physically divided by modern development. From the south-east, south-west and immediate north, the area is bounded by post-war housing estates that enclose the central meadow of the Conservation Area.

7 Historic Development

- 7.1 The settlement of Braunstone is most likely Saxon in origin, established around the late 8th or early 9th century AD, as a 'daughter' settlement of Glenfield. It is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey, where it was referred to as Brantestone meaning the place where Brant settled. It comprised eight households and was worth 60 shillings. The contemporary tenant in chief at the time was Hugh de Grandmesnil, a great landowner in England. The presence of *socmen* indicates that Scandinavians settled in the village.¹
- 7.2 The village sat on the edge of what was once the ancient Leicester Forest, which covers land to the north of the Conservation Area. Timber from the area was a valuable resource, and the primary construction material for the local building stock; however, woodlands were gradually converted to pastures, with the Leicester Forest fully enclosed by 1628. Bendbow Spinney remains the only surviving remnant of this former natural asset.²
- 7.3 From the 13th to the 16th century the Harcourt, or Horecut, family held an over-riding interest in the estate. A survey taken in 1299 documented 24 households in the village, then centred around the open land to the immediate south of St Peter's Church, now Church Fields, which has yielded archaeological evidence of an early medieval settlement on site. A Manor House, first mentioned in documentary sources the same year, and defined as "*the capital messuage with herbage and fruit garden*" is thought to have originally stood between the Church and Braunstone Lane. It was demolished around the 16th century. Around the turn of the 17th century, a new Manor House was built by Henry Hastings on Coalpit Lane, now Braunstone Lane.
- 7.4 What is now the Church of St Peter was purpose-built as a private chapel for The Lord of the Manor and referred to as the Chapel of Ease for the Manor and Parish of Glenfield.³ The close physical connection of the ecclesiastical facility to the Manor House physically demonstrated its 'private' function

¹ J. E. Wiltshire (1983). *Old Braunstone*, p.5.

² East Midland Oral History Archive (2016). *Braunstone*. Available at: <https://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/resources/braunstone/village.html> [Accessed 26 February 2019].

³ G. E. England (1970). *The story of Braunstone Parish Church*, p.3



St Peter's Church dates to the 12th century and much altered since. The south approach is little changed since this photo was taken in the early 20th century.

- 7.5 Until the late 16th century Braunstone was a village dominated by open-field cultivation, with the core of the settlement formed along Braunstone Lane, known as Coalpit Lane "due to the packhorses bringing coal to Leicester from the Swannington coalfield".⁴ In the late 16th century the old agricultural routine of the village was broken up by the widespread conversion of arable land to pasture, followed in the early 17th century by the inclosure of Leicester Forest.⁵
- 7.6 The Manor was held at the time by Henry Hastings who with his son, were principally responsible for the inclosure of the village fields, which totalled over 240 acres of land. Although no data documenting the exact number of people displaced by the widespread inclosure was recorded, an estimated 40 people had left the village, an episode of major depopulation for a village its size, which caused vacancy of several properties throughout Braunstone⁶. Henry Hastings contributed personally to further deforestation of Leicester Forest, commissioning the felling of up to 500 acres of tree cover to convert the land into pasture.

⁴ *East Midland Oral History Archive (2016).*

⁵ A. McKinley, ed. (1958). "Parishes added since 1892: Braunstone". *A History of the County of Leicester: Volume 4, the City of Leicester. British History Online. Victoria County History. London. pp. 428–433.*

⁶ *Ibid.*



Photo of now demolished house on Braunstone Lane

- 7.7 Due to the loss of substantial amount of money in the Civil War, the Hastings family was forced to sell the estate. In the mid-17th century, it was acquired by the Lancashire Winstanley family for the total sum of £6,000. They had a significant impact on the broader area of Braunstone for the next three centuries, defining the economic and social history of the wider locality.⁷
- 7.8 In 1670, there appears to have been 28 households in Braunstone, a comparable number to a century earlier, meaning that some recovery had taken place since the depopulation episode.⁸ The 18th century was a period of relative prosperity. At the time, Braunstone became a fashionable spot for foxhunting; the remnants of wide ditches and deer leaps designed to control stags for hunting still survive on Cressida Place.

⁷ M. Burch (2019). "History". *St Peter's Church – Braunstone park, Leicester, UK*. Available at: <http://www.stpetersbraunstone.org.uk/?page_id=16> [Accessed 3 March 2019].

⁸ McKinley, ed. (1958), pp.428-433.



Impression of the Braunstone Village around the mid to late 19th century.

- 7.9 In In 1775, Clement Winstanley, High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1774, commissioned a new Manor House to be set within 100 acres of parkland, now known as Braunstone Park. Braunstone Hall was constructed to the designs of the local builder and politician James Oldham, who later became the Lord Mayor of Leicester.⁹ Around the same time, the old Manor House was demolished, with Old Hall Farm subsequently constructed within its grounds. Although not located in the Conservation Area the hall marked the centre of a sizeable country estate of the Winstanley family the main landowners and most influential family on the village. Its immediate surroundings comprised of a well wooded park, which featured a lake and a series of ornamental gardens.
- 7.10 The prosperity of what remained a small agricultural village continued up to the 19th century. Beside some localised home-based framework-knitting and few tradesmen active in the area, Braunstone remained largely unaffected by the rapid industrial growth of the adjacent town of Leicester, which would engulf the villages of Aylestone, Belgrave, Humberstone, Evington and Knighton throughout the century.¹⁰

⁹ *England (1970), p.29*

¹⁰ *England (1970), p.16.*

7.11 In early 1800s, the local population barely exceeded 200, with only around 20 people employed in trade and the manufacturing industry.¹¹ In 1859 the row of six cottages at Cressida Place were built, to a cost of £231 each. When completed, the locality was nicknamed “New Street”, a name which persisted until the 1930s.¹² Two years later, in 1861, two institutions were commissioned by the Winstanley family, namely the Parsonage and the small National School, constructed in 1864 and 1868 respectively. The latter, originally associated with an adjacent school room, never catered for large numbers, with the number of pupils possibly never exceeding thirty at any one time. It closed its doors in 1930 and was subsequently converted to residential accommodation.¹³



Cressida Cottages, now Cressida Place were commissioned by the Winstanley family and erected in 1859. This photo was taken in 1973, one year before ‘old’ Braunstone was designated as a Conservation Area.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *England (1970), p.18*

¹³ *England (1970), p.17.*

- 7.12 In 1877 Braunstone was described as a “pleasant and picturesque village”.¹⁴ By this point “it still had to rely on a passing carrier for its main external contact”.¹⁵ As of 1871 it had 39 houses and 215 inhabitants across 1,783 acres of land, bounded by River Soar to the east and the borough of Leicester to the north, crossed by the Roman Fosse Way.¹⁶



Braunstone village in the early 1930s, showing the old village forge (left), demolished in 1954.

- 7.13 The rural character of the village and surrounding area remained until the early 20th century; the OS map of 1903-4 shows the relatively undeveloped character of the village, with St Peter’s Church, the properties along Braunstone Lane and the terraced cottages at Cressida Place comprising the total building stock of the area. Worth noting is the Old Hall Farm immediately outside the south-east limit of the Conservation Area, and the direct pathway between the area’s northern limit and Braunstone Park. In 1924, a guide to the county described Braunstone as a “curiously remote and isolated little village” with a “quaint, old-world character”.¹⁷

¹⁴ W. White (1877). *History, Gazetteer & Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland*.

¹⁵ *England* (1970), p.17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *East Midland Oral History Archive* (2016).



(OS Map 1903-1904): By the early 20th century, the area and the surrounding land remained largely undeveloped, with a significant break from the Leicester's core. The townscape of the Conservation Area hasn't significantly changed since.

7.14 In 1925 the Leicester Corporation purchased the bulk of the Winstanley estate to provide for expanded housing provisions in the area. A major housing estate was subsequently built immediately north of the Conservation Area, with further construction south of Braunstone Lane. As a result, the local population grew dramatically from 238 in 1921 to nearly 7,000 in 1931.¹⁸ Braunstone Hall was vacated in 1926 and on 29th of August 1932 it opened as Hall Junior School, after the National School at 8 Main Street had closed as an educational facility two years prior.

¹⁸ McKinley, ed. (1958), pp.428-433.

- 7.15 In 1935 the part of the parish on the north side of Braunstone Lane was detached from Blaby Rural District and incorporated into the City of Leicester, creating the current split between Braunstone *Village* (Leicester City Council) and Braunstone *Town* (Blaby District Council).



Old Hall Farm was built circa 1770 and stood on Braunstone Lane just south of the conservation area.

- 7.16 By the mid-1950s, the areas north and south-east off the Conservation Area were redeveloped, a pattern which continued further afield around the 'old' Braunstone. The direct physical connection between the Conservation Area and Braunstone Hall was lost. In addition, the school room on Braunstone Lane and Bowler House (once located opposite Old Hall Farm) were demolished. The latter was subsequently replaced by a pond, which survived less than a decade due to increased development pressure in the 1960s. The need for social housing led to the demolition of Old Hall Farm in 1967 and the redevelopment of the land for the housing development on Herle Avenue and Odam Close in 1973.
- 7.17 In the 21st Century, the pathway network within Church Fields was extended, creating a formal layout reinforced by the addition of public furniture. In 2016, heritage panels were installed within the Conservation Area. Together with the conservation area plaques, they have improved the legibility of the locality as a designated heritage asset, but also highlighted the halfway split of the 'old' village between Leicester City and Blaby District authorities.

8. Prevailing and Former Uses

- 8.1 When first mentioned in documentary sources from the 11th century, Braunstone was classified a small farming settlement. The historical evidence suggests that until the 16th century, the area was occupied predominantly by arable land and Leicester Forest to the east. By the early 17th century, most of the arable land was transformed into pasture, whilst the forest was gradually felled. Despite the change or use of the open lane, the area remained largely agricultural and residential in use.
- 8.2 Some domestic-scale manufacturing has been documented since the 18th century, predominantly limited to framework knitting. The real change in character occurred from the 1930s onwards, when the open land around the conservation area was gradually redeveloped as residential estates. The agricultural activity dramatically decreased, as did framework knitting, becoming of no substantial bearing on the now predominantly residential locality.
- 8.3 The area has remained an active parish from at least the 12th century, served by the medieval Church of St Peter, which started off as a private chapel for the Lords of the Manor. The open area immediately adjacent to the church was gradually transformed into a churchyard, in use from the 16th century onwards, with the earliest surviving headstone being that of George Parsons (1683).



An early 20th century photograph along Main Street, which has since been laid in tarmac, now busy thoroughfare for motorized vehicles. The old school is visible on the right.

9 Architectural Character

- 9.1 The two main architectural styles in the conservation area relate to the Church of St Peter and the domestic buildings.



The Church of St Peter is a Grade II listed building.

- 9.2 The Church of St Peter is by far the oldest building in the Conservation Area, and dates to medieval times; It was formally designated as a Grade II Listed building in 1955. As a substantial, stone-built structure, it stands out from the rest of the area's building stock. Despite its relatively low-lying position and a 'private' enclosure of mature trees, it has a significant impact on the character of the surrounding area wider area in terms of prominent views. Set within an expansive open landscape, it does read as a local landmark.
- 9.3 While the core of the building dates to the Medieval period, it has been extensively rebuilt, extended, and altered since. It is currently a T-shaped layout with a sizeable tripartite north extension with a prominent gabled front. The main body of the church is faced in a mix of local rubble stone with ashlar dressings while the 1930s extension is effected in a local pink granite. On the south elevation is an unusual red brick porch, believed to have been built around 1704.¹ The roofscape is dominated by a variety of gabled sections and a singular pyramidal hipped roof to the west tower. The roofs of the main are largely clad in Swithland slates laid in diminishing courses with lead trims, with regular Welsh slate on the 1930s extension. The property was extensively re-roofed in the late 19th century.

- 9.4 The tower is one of the oldest features of the church, dating back to the 12th or 13th century, subsequently rebuilt and consolidated in 1704. It is supported by full length corbelling and punctuated by small lancet windows to top, with the addition of one perpendicular window on the west elevation. Otherwise, most of the windows are of a simple gothic arch design with y-shaped tracery, which contrast with the round-arched doorway surround to porch, topped by a triangular pediment. Thus, despite its architectural cohesiveness throughout, the structure features a variety of elevation treatments and architectural feature, adding interest to the local townscape.



Details of the ashlar in buttress to the south west corner of the church tower. The inscriptions record repairs to the tower in 1704 and 1938 and the restoration of the whole church following a fire in 1975

- 9.5 The other buildings in the conservation area are houses and retain a broadly comprehensive architectural quality throughout thanks in part, to the limited post 19th Century development, and historic influence of a single landowner.
- 9.6 The building stock is represented predominantly by mid to late 19th century Vernacular Revival properties with some Gothic Revival influences, constructed in orange hue red brickwork, two storeys in height, with pitched roof. Most are architect-designed with decorative detailing and some elements of surrounding landscaping.

- 9.7 This character contrasts with the that of the of the surrounding area, which is built at higher density, more regular design and predominantly dating to the interwar and post-war eras. The notable exceptions being the historic village buildings on the south side of Braunstone Lane and Main Street, which forms the other half of 'old' Braunstone.



Cressida Place cottages are obscured by mature planting and complimentary soft landscaping, creating a picturesque townscape.

- 9.8 Located towards the west of the conservation area is a designed terrace of six cottages know as **1-6 Cressida Place**. These properties were commissioned by the Winstanley family and designed by the nationally renowned architect William Butterfield in 1859 for the estate's workers They are Grade II Listed, designated in 1973.
- 9.9 The cottages are constructed of orange hue red brickwork (common elsewhere in Leicester) laid in an English bond. The gabled roofscape is punctuated by hipped dormers to front and rear elevations, comprehensively clad in red tiles. The row is of two-storey in height, with sizable chimneystacks piercing the skyline. The chimneystacks have been truncated in height at some point but still contain decorative tumbling-in on the chamfers. Worth noting are also the timber-framed casement windows with narrow glazing bars, the original cast iron rainwater goods and the gabled porches present to a number of properties, with heavily stylized, timber doorways with original ironmongery.

- 9.10 Despite similarities, each property is of a unique design, displaying a range of individualized features. The most prominent are the dark blue-brick diaper brickwork patterns animating the elevations of several properties. These add to the 'vernacular' legibility of this terrace, influenced by the contemporary fashions of the day. Embellished by lush soft landscaping, Cressida Place offers a compelling townscape experience with a strong 'sense of place'.



The front elevation of each property is of slightly different design featuring diaper brickwork, dormers, shallow porches, timber casements and moulded chimneystacks.

- 9.11 The Old National School at **8 Main Street**, as the name suggests, was originally the local village school and stands at the southern end of Church Fields around 50 metres away from Cressida Place. It was built in 1868 along the with attached schoolmasters house, both properties are now private dwellings. The properties are constructed in a mix of red (of varying colour and finish) and blue brickwork, topped by pitched roofs, with dormers piercing the eaves.
- 9.12 The old school room is identifiable by the large gable Main Street. It is characterised by decorative details such as the tripartite windows with moulded and polychrome brickwork, a carved datestone of '1868' and slender moulded bargeboards. The original door is with gothic arch is still present and sits within a stone band. A tall chimney with tumbled-in brickwork and highly decorative capping is on the east elevation along with an interesting stone detail and Welsh slates with a subtle banding formed by two different-toned slates.



The frontage of the former National School is the single most architecturally embellished element of the structure, with stone dressing, a commemorative carving, and a moulded bargeboard.

- 9.13 To the east of the old school is a substantial extension which dates to the early 1980s and contains the new front entrance. It continues some of the decorative detail of the school with red brick and Welsh slate, bargeboard details, oculus window, and moulded brick sill and header details. The use of common bricks is less successful as is the join with the old school.
- 9.14 The old schoolmasters house **9 Main Street** is less decorative than the adjacent school with which it is adjoined. It has a symmetrical front elevation with a simple porch with an integrated stone pediment above a simple timber door. The windows have stone lintels with chamfered detailing and a blue-brick sills, which provide some decorative interest. The lower courses of bricks appear a different tone to the first floor, which suggests this storey may be a later addition.
- 9.15 On the west elevation there is a projecting chimney with tumbling-in details which rises to a tall stack with decorative capping. This is of the same design as the other chimney on the building and that of the old school room which helps unify the buildings. The roof to the front is in Welsh slate but at the rear there is a large Swithland slate roof, which adds to the historic an aesthetic interest of the property.
- 9.16 Regrettably, all the original timber windows have been replaced with uPVC units to the detriment of the architectural merit of the building. Notwithstanding these alterations, both properties make a positive contribution to the historic and visual character of the area.



Former Schoolmasters House with gabled dormers above

- 9.17 Immediately south-east of Church Field is the two-storey dwelling at **7 Main Street**. It is architecturally modest, compared to the other houses in the conservation area despite being of a broadly contemporary date. Historic photos show it once had multi-pane windows and a door with a small front porch. Regrettably, its architectural merit and historic legibility have been undermined by modern alterations, including the introduction of uPVC windows, modern roof cladding, the loss of the main chimney, new bricks to the frontage, external render and a sizeable two-storey extension at the rear. The blue bricks which accentuate the bottom and corners of the building, is a feature which helps it to blend-in with the other properties within the Conservation Area.

Braunstone Village Conservation Area: Character Appraisal



Above: Photo of 7 Main Street from mid twentieth century showing before alterations.

Below: Contemporary photo of same property



9.18 **St Peter's Vicarage** is a two-storey property was built by R. G. Pochin in 1864, as noted by the engraving on the first floor tympanum. Built in orange hue red brickwork with ashlar dressing and a gabled Swithland slate roof, it is a refined Victorian property with a prominent frontage to Main Street. Worth noting are the elaborate window surrounds, with monochrome stone & brick segmental arches topped with 'stepped' hood moulds A projecting gable contains a pointed arch surround topped with a hood mould at first floor and a shallow keystone-pointed arch at ground floor level. The single storey extension to side may be contemporary with the building, or an early addition, as of matching materially and design, with a monochrome segmental arch above window (to match those to the main frontage).



The frontage of St Peter's Vicarage is framed and partially obscured by mature conifers. It features stone dressings in the form of carved hood moulds and an engraved date.

- 9.19 Further east at **1-6 Main Street** is a group of Grade II Listed cottages designed by nationally renowned 19th Century architect William Butterfield. These six properties are arranged in three semi-detached pairs, all two-storeys in height, constructed in orange hue red brickwork laid in an English bond, topped by red tile pitched roofs with hipped dormers and sizeable chimneystacks. Each property retains its cast iron downpipes and timber-framed casements, albeit some of a later date. As the properties at Cressida Place, despite these broad similarities, each pair displays subtle differences in design and elevation treatments.



1-6 Main Street looking north on Braunstone Lane; the trees surrounding church field can be seen in the distance.

- 9.20 The houses were built as cottages for workers on the Winstanley estate and are examples of the vernacular revival style which would characterise Butterfield's early career. Each of the properties has a generous side and rear garden, something which is key to their significance.
- 9.21 The eastmost pair at **5 & 6 Main Street**, is the 'simplest' of all three. It has a symmetrical and a well-defined frontage with a pair of segmental arches, tripartite casements to ground floor, each topped by paired casements at first storey level, the latter topped by shallow hipped dormer projections. The building has a modulated gabled roof, with angular ridge tiles to top. The entrances to both units are provided by simple ground floor openings located at side elevations. The central chimneystack is of a 'two-stepped' form, unique in the Conservation Area.



The pair of cottages at 5-6 Main Street

- 9.22 The pair of houses at **3 & 4 Main Street** is more elaborate in comparison. The frontage was deliberately designed as an asymmetrical composition and reads like a single dwelling. There is a blue brick band above the ground floor level, running along the whole property and adding horizontal emphasis to the dwellings. A two-bay dormer projection cuts through the eaves line of the frontage, with diaper blue brickwork to its top portion, flanked by two single casements. The street facing elevation also features a gabled porch, with a simple bridgeboard and flanked by stylized buttressing. The entrance porch at 3 Main Street is located to its side (east) elevation, whilst blue diaper brickwork animates the west elevation of 4 Main Street, adding visual interest to this asymmetrical gable end.
- 9.23 The pair at **1 & 2 Main Street** is rich in detailing. It has a roughly symmetrical, visually balanced, façade, with matching features to both units, mirrored through the central chimneystack. The window composition is comparable to 5-6 Main Street, as are the paired dormer projections. Yet, in contrast to the other pairs, the front and side elevations feature blue diaper brickwork and a double-brick stringcourse above the ground floor. The front doors are provided by porches to side elevations, of comparable design as found elsewhere within the Conservation Area, with steep gabled roof and stylized timber doors.



3 & 4 Main Street are distinctive for the asymmetrical design, which gives an impression of being a single property.



1 & 2 Main Street. The diaper brickwork at comprehensively defines the upper portion of the dwellings' frontage

10 Townscape

10.1 The local townscape largely retains a village character with a stone church visible across an open field and mature greenery. Most houses are deliberately positioned for aesthetic effect evoking an estate village, something unique within the city.

10.2 The open and green field is critical to this and allow for a sense of openness and space which evokes the historic agricultural character of the area, which lasted until the 20th Century.

10.3 Views and Vistas

St Peter's Church and the terraced cottages at Cressida Place are both enriched by their landscaped setting being well set back from the main road. The church is almost entirely encircled by mature trees that obscure its elevations. This is broken when approached from the north, where the trees attractively frame the building. The church is most visually commanding when viewed from within its graveyard. Together, these create a complimentary vista, which visually highlights their historic and functional association.

10.4 Within Church Field, the open vista onto Cressida Place is notable, allowing the terrace to be viewed as a whole. The internal views within Church Field are enhanced by mature trees located at its edges and allow the appreciation of the full scope of this ecologically, historically and archaeologically important space.



View looking north-west from Church Field onto Cressida Place, where the cottages are obscured by deciduous trees and tall hedging.

10.5 The main thoroughfare of Main Street (Braunstone Lane) is defined by its gently curved form, diverting the eye along the route. Throughout, it is characterised by lush mature tree cover (notably along the edge of Church Field), often extending over the road and towering over the local buildings. Due to the loose urban grain, there is no continuous building line along this stretch of Braunstone Lane, with trees defining the edge of the highway.



View onto the Grade II listed Manor as approached from Church Field. The Manor is located outside the conservation area to the south within Blaby District Council.

10.6 Landmarks and Corners

The loose urban grain of the Conservation Area allows many buildings have a landmark quality without being tall or imposing and without forming prominent corners.

10.7 A good example is Cressida Place which is prominent within the streetscene of the Conservation Area based on its relative isolation as combined with group merit and good architectural definition. St Paul's vicarage is a notable landmark when viewed from Balmoral Drive outside the Conservation Area where long views are possible.

10.8 St Peter's Church is the most notable local landmark within the Conservation Area a status highlighted when approached from the north (Woodshawe Rise). Even when screened by mature vegetation, it dominates the open grassland of Church Field and the local townscape. The sturdy western tower of the church is the single most dominant feature of the building, accentuated by a decorative metal weathervane on top.



The imposing north entrance to St Peters Church dates to the 1930s and was part of an unfinished proposal to re-orientate the church.

10.9 Activity

Despite the somewhat 'rural' character of the Conservation Area and its peripheral urban setting, Braunstone Lane (Main Street) is a busy thoroughfare, with high levels of vehicular activity. This is to the detriment of the pedestrian movement and cyclists' safety; especially as limited facilities are provided for both.



Main Street (Braunstone Lane) is a busy thoroughfare to the south-west of the city, with Church Field (left hand side) offering a quiet refuge for pedestrians.

- 10.10 Church Field offers a quiet refuge and a great place for recreation. The area is popular with dog walkers with increased number of users during the spring and summer months.
- 10.11 Cressida Place is conspicuously private despite its accessibility, acting as a successful transition between the busy thoroughfare of Braunstone Lane and the sheltered open space of Church Field.

11 Building Materials

11.1 Facing Materials

The most widely used building material within the Conservation Area is the orange-hue red brickwork common to Victorian properties elsewhere within the city. All buildings except for St Peter's Church are constructed in brick. A significant number of properties also features blue brickwork, used for foundations and 'in-built' decorations, such as stringcourses and diaper patters. The Old School does feature some darker red brickwork to the lower portion of its elevations, in slight contrast to the preeminent orange variety. The rendered side elevations at 7 Main Street, matching the treatment of associated outbuildings, are unique for the area, introducing a visually unsightly break in the streetscene of this part of the Conservation Area.



Decorative brickwork details at Cressida Place and Main Street

11.2 St Peter's Church is the only building within the area constructed predominantly of stone, comprising undressed granite and limestone in the body of the church with ashlar used for buttresses and around the north entrance. Stone is also prominent as a 'supplementary' facing material throughout the Conservation Area, used for dressing at St Peter's Vicarage and at 8 & 9 Main Street.

11.3 Roofs

Most roofs within the area are clad with stone slates or clay tiles. Swithland slates dominate the roofscape of the Church of St Peter and are also present at its Vicarage at 7 Main Street and the rear of 9 Main Street. The properties attributed to William Butterfield, that is Cressida Place and 1-6 Main Street are topped with pitched roofs clad with red tiles, most substantially weathered.



Roof detail at Cressida Place

- 11.4 Chimneys have a significant visual impact on the townscape of the Conservation Area, piercing the local skyline. The difference of massing, form and design between individual examples, even within the same group of buildings (Cressida Place and 1-6 Main Street), is subtle but notable, and adds considerably to the architectural merit of these historic properties. All are constructed in red brickwork, with many clay chimney pots in place. The most decorative chimneys are found on the former school at 8 Main Street, which add great interest to the building and conservation area.



The southern roof of St Peter's Church has a large expanse of prominent Swithland Slates laid in diminishing courses

- 11.5 There are only a few decorative roofscape features besides chimneystacks, but worth highlighting are the ridge features that animate the roofscape of St Peter's Church, most notable being the prominent weathervane to the top of the medieval west tower, adding prominence to this feature.



Left: The weathervane on top of the tower of St Peters forms an eye-catching feature

Right The prominent chimneystack of the old school room is of decorative interest and forms and prominent within the street scene.

11.6 Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area vary and range from the elegant brick boundary with blue clay coping stones at 8 Main Street to the simple timber fencing next door. At 1-6 Main Street different fence treatments impact on the unity of the group, while the prevalence of trimmed hedges brings some cohesion.

- 11.7 Where present, front boundary treatments, in the form of brick boundaries and trimmed hedges, provide clear definition between the public realm and private property, create a sense of enclosure and positively contribute to the local townscape. Metal railings and gates are rare within the Conservation Area, occasionally punctuating the Main Street (Braunstone Lane) streetscene.
- 11.8 Of particular interest is the low-lying rubble wall that defines the southern boundary of Church Field. It is made of the local granite with a simple capping feature of slate topped with rough stone running along the top. A pair of rusticated stone gate piers puncture the wall towards its southern end; iron hinges inset in the piers hint at the former presence of a gate. The piers are of a darker, non-local stone and are likely a later feature. Historic maps indicate this gate once served a direct route to the Winstanley Estate, avoiding Church Field. This path was lost in the 20th century but part of the route can still be traced through to Cort Crescent.



The low rubble stone wall to Church Field is a unique feature within the Conservation Area. The rusticated gate piers appear to be a later feature and are of a non-local granite.

11.9 Road Surfaces

Road surfaces in the Conservation Area are dominated by grey tarmac, which defines the highway and pedestrian pavements along Main Street (Braunstone Lane). Few granite kerbstones survive, the overwhelming majority being modern concrete examples. Subsidiary pathways and access roads, at Cressida Place and within Church Gardens, are defined by a mix of gravel and tarmac. Additionally, the private curtilages of properties along Main Street features a wealth of additional surface treatments, including red tiles, concrete paving slabs and rubble masonry.



The frontages of Cressida Place cottages are lined with hedging, adding to the visual merit of this historic residential enclave.



Most of the pavements, side roads and the main highway in the Conservation Area are laid in tarmac, with a variety of boundary treatments long Main Street.

11.10 Other Materials

Most windows in the conservation area are made from timber, with multiple panes. These are either original or good replacements of the original units.

11.11 The terraced dwellings at Cressida Place and the semi-detached properties at 1-6 Main Street feature timber framed casements of traditional construction. This is not the case at the non-designated 8-9 Main Street and at 7 Main Street. Here, the once timber windows have since been replaced by poorly proportioned uPVC windows.

11.12 Timber is also used for other features of contribution to the local streetscene; stylized solid timber doorways with original metal fittings can be found along Main Street and at Cressida Place. Timber bargeboards are also common within the Conservation Area. These range from the more elaborate examples as present to 8 Main Street, to the more simplified angular examples to single-storey porches at 1–6 Main Street.

11.13 Cast iron rainwater goods would have originally been present on all 19th century properties and still exist on most nationally listed properties but have been partly or comprehensively removed elsewhere. Modern uPVC gutters and pipes can be found at the Old National School, and contrast to bespoke original iron pipes and hoppers still present on 1-6 Main Street.



Left: The cast iron downpipe with a stamped rainwater hopper at St Peter’s Church.

Right: Original timber casements and good replacements of the original units (timber framed or matching design) are the most common windows throughout the Conservation Area.

12 Open Spaces and Trees

- 12.1 Green and open spaces are at the heart of the Conservation Area and are one of its defining characteristics. These provide a historic link to the area's past, provide a pleasant setting for the buildings and have a character of their own.
- 12.2 The public park at the centre of the Conservation Area is known as St Peter's Open Space. At the centre of this is the expansive meadow of Church Field, with its fringes defined by mature tree cover. The historic east and west boundary have been lost, but to the churchyard to the north and tree belt to the south mark its historic limit.
- 12.3 Church Field is believed to have formed the core of an early medieval village of Braunstone, with likely archaeological remains preserved below ground. As previously outlined, the original manor house once stood on site, demolished by the 17th century. The field is managed as a hay meadow and is considered a species rich grassland of high ecological value. West of the church is a seasonal pond, which is in a historic dip within the field although the current alignment is modern.
- 12.4 The easternmost part of the open space is a lower area of land, which now forms a continuation of Church Field. This land historically was part of the Winstanley Estate and historic maps show it held a small woodland. It now serves as amenity grassland and was landscaped as part of the Herle Avenue development in the 1970s.
- 12.5 Immediately west of Church Field is an area of mown grassland where two buildings once stood with large gardens behind. This extends across the footpath to the land in front of Cressida Place which is historically undeveloped.
- 12.6 Bendbow Spinney is part of a surviving shelter belt of trees, which once protected the western edge of the Winstanley estate and is also thought to be a surviving fragment of the once expansive Leicester Forest.

- 12.7 The narrow section of the spinney within the Conservation Area sits immediately to the north of Cressida Place, was the former edge of the Winstanley estate; this can still be seen in places marked by a shallow ditch. It is characterised by a mix of mature trees and shrubs and provides a woodland backdrop to Cressida place and is of historic, aesthetic and ecological value.



St Peters Church as viewed from Church Field to the south in Summer.

- 12.8 The churchyard to St Peter's Church is positioned at the north end of Church Field, bounded by mature tree cover from the south, west and east, visually framed by mature planting to the north. It is sheltered and compact enclave which wraps around the church on all sides.
- 12.9 The churchyard contains many gravestones including some finely detailed Swithland Slate headstones dating to the 18th century and a memorial area dedicated to the Pochin family.
- 12.10 In addition to the public green spaces the houses in the Conservation Area contain open space and greenery within their gardens which are an integral part of the character of the conservation area. The soft landscaping in front of Cressida Place is of particular note with topiary partially obscuring the facade.
- 12.11 There are many mature trees within the Conservation Area, some of considerable age. These are both in copses and belts and freestanding within grassland and private gardens. The trees hark back to the rural and parkland history of the area and are of considerable historic and amenity interest. The mature trees are visible from long distance including from within Braunstone Park providing a key historic visual link.
- 12.12 There is one formally recognized wildlife site, which comprises mature Chestnuts, Oak and Ash trees to Cressida Place and Main Street. Most of the open space is designated as a Biodiversity Enhancement Zone, comprising the totality of Church Field and Bendbow Spinney.



A rich variety of trees and shrubs are present in Cressida Place



Church Field

13 Lighting and Street Furniture

- 13.1 The majority of the street lighting within the conservation area is of a standard design and does not contribute to the character of the area. The main highway and footways of Main Street and Braunstone Lane frame the southern border of the conservation area but fall outside the City boundary. The lights here are also of a standard design and do not enhance the setting of the Conservation Area or properties within. A row of standard street lamps light the pathway through Church Field and are also not of notable design.
- 13.2 The one lamp standard of character is the surviving Victorian era lamp standard on Cressida Place, which was adapted to an electric light in the 20th Century. This lamp makes a striking feature on the footpath and enhances the setting of the houses on Cressida Place.



Left: A few cast iron street name plates survive throughout the Conservation Area, including the example at Cressida Place.

Right: The adapted Victorian lamp standard to the north end of Cressida Place is the only surviving example of its kind in the area and is of visual and historic interest.

- 13.3 Within the open space of Church Field, there are several public benches and refuse bins, of no particular note. Heritage and nature interpretation panels are located throughout the Conservation Area. Set alongside the green cast iron conservation area plaques, these communicate the designated status of the locality and highlight the historic and ecological significance of the area.
- 13.4 Some historic cast-iron street name plates survive in the area and are of both historic and aesthetic interest.

14 Intrusive or Harmful Factors

14.1 Building Alterations

As outlined in the appraisal, uPVC windows and PVC rainwater goods have had an adverse impact on some of the non-designated historic structures in the Conservation Area. Particularly ill-fitting are the asymmetrical casements with applied glazing bars at 9 Main Street, which has disrupted the original definition and properties of the frontage of this property.

14.2 Satellite dishes and antennas have been installed on several buildings adding clutter and making a negative contribution to the otherwise cohesive streetscene along Main Street.

14.3 The externally rendered side elevations and outbuildings at 7 Main Street stand in stark contrast to the otherwise exposed red brickwork elevations of its neighbours, even looking across the street, and mismatch the otherwise elegant front boundary treatment and street-facing frontage.



Left: The rendered side elevation of 7 Main Street sits at odds with the brick character of the other houses

Right: A nature information board is obscured and faded

14.4 Boundary Treatments

The inconsistent boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area have already been noted but are worth highlighting as negative factors affecting the character of the area. Despite its compact size, the disparity of front boundaries is prominent, especially along the main thoroughfare of Main Street (Braunstone Lane). Not only are the boundaries different in height, design, materials, and finish, but they are often incomplete, with notable 'gaps' punctuating the streetscene. This has caused visual disconnection between comparable properties (1-6 Main Street and Cressida Cottages) and obscured the definition of the private and public domain.

14.5 Condition of Public Realm

Some isolated examples of graffiti, on signage, panels and timber fencing, are present. Fortunately, these have had a limited negative impact on the Conservation Area, and damage remains low-key and generally reversible.

14.6 Setting of the Conservation Area

The public realm and streetscapes north and south of the Conservation Area have a big impact on its setting. While many houses on the south side of Braunstone Lane are well maintained, there is an inconsistency of boundary treatments and some unsympathetic treatments to historic buildings. The tall commercial buildings on Bidford Road, which presents a largely blank gable to Church Field has a particularly harmful impact, as does the expanse of tarmac between it and the public highway.

14.7 The northern approach to the Conservation Area is across a wide expanse of car parking associated with St Peters Church. This provides a poor setting for the medieval church and sits in stark contrast to the managed and green landscapes beyond.

15 Capacity for Change

15.1 The undeveloped areas within the Conservation Area (Bendbow Spinney and Church Field), are of historic, archaeological, and ecological importance. As such, there is limited scope for new development.

15.2 Change must not come at the expense of the character that makes the area special, and alterations to properties need to be sympathetic to their context. Any new development should aim to preserve or enhance the character and streetscene of the locality, be compatible with the existing building stock and the local townscape.

16 Conservation Area Boundary

16.1 The boundaries of the Conservation Area have been reviewed and found to reflect the historic settlement pattern within the City's boundary. None of the surrounding houses have a strong relationship with the area and are not of historic or architectural interest. As such the City Council does not propose to add to, or to remove any parts of the area it presently covers.

16.2 Many properties on the south side of Braunstone Lane along with the street itself are part of the historic village of Braunstone and make a positive impact on its setting.

17 Local Consultation

17.1 An earlier draft of this Character Appraisal document was published for public consultation from 5 July 2024 to 19 August 2024. This final version has been produced with the benefit of the comments received during that consultation.

18 Management Proposals

- 18.1 A separate Conservation Areas Management Plan has been produced. This management plan sets-out proposals and actions to preserve and enhance the special character of the Conservation Area.

19 Additional Planning Controls

- 19.1 Beyond the restrictions deriving from the Conservation Area status, the area is not currently subject to additional planning controls. The City Council is proposing to introduce a comprehensive Article 4 Direction for the non-listed properties within the area to remove certain permitted development rights. This would mean most works affecting the external appearance of properties within the Conservation Area would now require planning permission or listed building consent.
- 19.2 More information on the proposed Article 4 Direction is provided in the Braunstone Village Conservation Management Plan

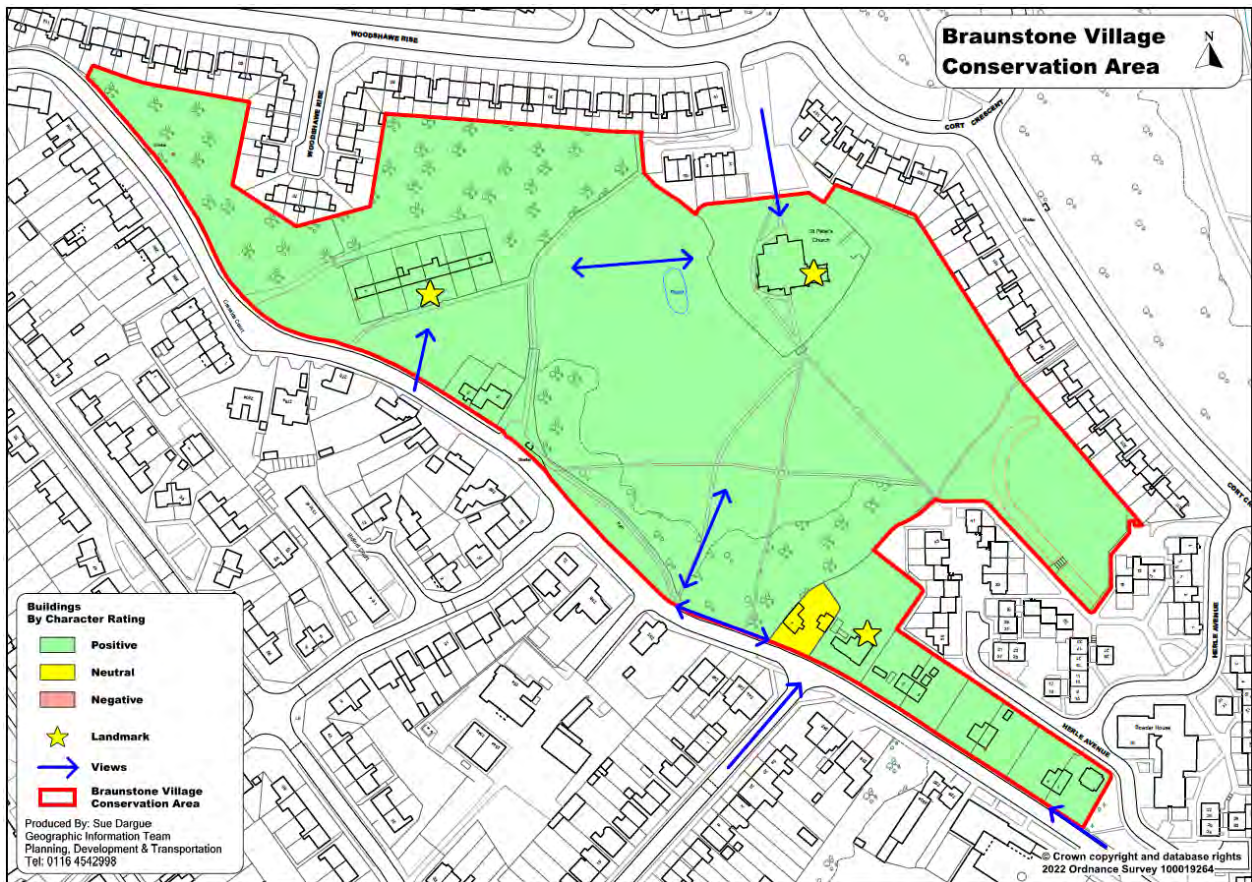
20 Contacts

- 20.1 For further information on this, or other, conservation areas you can contact the Council's Building Conservation Team by phone, letter or e-mail at the following addresses:

Conservation Team
Planning Department
City Hall, 115 Charles Street
Leicester
LE1 1FZ
(0116) 454 1000
planning@leicester.gov.uk

Information on all conservation areas is available on the City Council's website:
www.leicester.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Character Map



Appendix 2: Glossary of Architectural Terms

ashlar	smooth-faced masonry blocks laid horizontally
bargeboard	a timber board fixed at projecting gable ends of roof, usually carved
corbel	a weight-carrying bracket projecting from a wall
cornice	horizontal projecting section at the top of a building or wall
diaper brickwork	geometrical brick pattern of repeating diamonds
diminishing courses	a way of laying slates of different sizes with the smallest at the top grading down to the largest at the base
doorcase	decorative timber or stone framing a doorway
fanlight	a window over a door
finial	formal ornament at the apex of a gable or spire
header	smallest end of a brick
hood mould	projecting moulding over an arch or lintel
lancet	a slender, pointed window
pediment	a low-pitched gable shape over a door or window
pilaster	rectangular element of vertical masonry which projects slightly from the wall and resembles a flat column
rusticated	ashlar stonework which has been artistically carved to have a rough or rustic finish
segmental arch	a shallow arch
stringcourse	a continuous decorative horizontal band projecting from a wall and usually moulded
stretcher	longest end of the brick as seen when laid horizontally
spandrel	a triangular space between the top of an arch and the outer frame of the associated opening
Swithland slate	a rough local slate, quarried in the Charnwood Forest used for roofing and headstones until the late 19 th Century
tracery	ornamental stone or metal openwork in a window opening
tumbling-in	brickwork laid at an angle, so the header forms the outside plane. Often used to decorative effect
tympanum	the surface between a lintel and the arch above it or within a pediment