



One of the modern residential estates built around Braunstone Village Conservation Area from the 1920's onwards.



First 'Old' Hall Farm was built in 1600 and demolished in the 1770's, when the new Old Hall Farm was constructed; this was demolished in 1967 to make way for the new residential estate.

The critical turning point for the whole of Braunstone came, when Leicester Corporation purchased the bulk of the Braunstone Hall estate in 1925, to provide for expanded housing provisions in the area. A major housing estate was built immediately north of Braunstone 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 Braunstone Lane closed as an educational facility two years prior.

Subsequently, a part of the parish was detached from Blaby and incorporated into the county borough of Leicester in 1935, creating the current split between Braunstone *Village* (Leicester City Council) and Braunstone *Town* (Blaby District Council).

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 intensification of localized modern development in the 1960s. As a direct result of the continued redevelopment, Old Hall Farm was demolished in 1967.

¹⁸ McKinley, ed. (1958), pp.428-433.

8. Prevailing and former uses

When it was first mentioned in the documentary sources in 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.

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 Braunstone Conservation Area was gradually redeveloped as residential estates. The agricultural activity decreased dramatically, as did framework knitting, becoming of no substantial bearing on the now predominantly residential locality.

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.

10 Architectural Character

Due to the modest size of the area and limited development since the 19th century, Braunstone Conservation Area retains a broadly comprehensive architectural quality throughout. This comprehensive quality stands in stark contrast to the bulk of development surrounding the area, with notable exception of the historically related architectural stock to the south side of Braunstone Lane, which forms the other half of the 'old' Braunstone.

The area is defined by a loose urban grain throughout, with ample distances between most buildings. The building stock is represented predominantly by Victorian (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.

Church of St Peter is the oldest building in the Conservation Area, formally designated as a Grade II Listed asset. Although the core of the building dates back to the medieval period, it was extensively rebuilt, extended and altered since. Following manifold additions, it is currently of a T-shaped layout with a sizeable tripartite north extension with a prominent gabled front. All elevations are constructed of Leicestershire granite rubble and ashlar dressing. The only exception is the red brick porch to the centre of the south elevation, believed to have been built around 1704. The roofscape is dominated by a variety of gabled sections and a singular pyramidal hipped roof to the west tower, clad in Welsh slates and lead. The property was extensively re-roofed in the late 19th century and comprehensively refurbished and extended the following century (1930s).

The church tower is one of the oldest external 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 tripartite, of intersecting tracery design, in stark contrast to the semi-circular 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.



Top: The south elevation of the church, with the main body of the nave, 13th century west tower and Swithland slate roofs.



Left: A brick porch, most likely early 18th century in date.



Cressida Place, located at the west extremity of Braunstone Conservation Area, is defined by, and was constructed contemporaneously to, a cohesive row of terraced brick cottages. These properties were commissioned by the Winstanley family and designed by the well-known architect William Butterfield in 1859 for the estate's workers. Alike St Peter's Church, they are Grade II Listed, designated in 1973.

The cottages were constructed entirely of orange hue red brickwork (common elsewhere in Leicester) laid in English bond. The gabled roofscape is punctuated by hipped dormers to front and rear elevations, clad in red tiles. The row is of matching two-storey height throughout, with architecturally unique, sizable chimneystacks piercing the local skyline. 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.



Despite broad similarities, each property is of a slightly different design, displaying a range of individualized features. The most prominent are the dark diaper brickwork patterns animating the elevations of several of the terraced properties. These add to the 'vernacular' legibility of this terrace, influenced by the contemporary fashions of the day.

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

Left: The red brick elevation of each property is of slightly different design to its neighbours, featuring diaper brickwork, dormers, shallow porches, timber casements and moulded chimneystacks.

The Old National School at 8 Braunstone Lane, as the name suggests, originally formed part of the local village school. When constructed in 1868, it was separated from the adjacent teachers' house at 8 Braunstone Lane. These two properties have since been amalgamated but architecturally read as separate. A local smithy once positioned to the immediate east of the group has since been demolished. It was formerly occupied by the renowned local blacksmith, veterinary surgeon and a dentist, Edmund Jones.

Both properties (8 and 9 Braunstone Lane) are constructed in a mix of red (of varying colour and finish) and blue brickwork, topped by pitched roofs, with dormers. This contained group stands solitary at the southern end of Church Fields, substantial distance away from Cressida Place to its north.

An engraved stone with a '1863' date is present to central gable of the former school building, indicating the date of the building's construction. This projecting gable is the single most 'embellished' feature of the building's frontage, presenting a number of Gothicized architectural elements, including lancet windows, gauged brick arches, a moulded bargeboard and ashlar hood mould with ornate head stops. The entrance porch at 6 Main Street is more restrained, comparable to examples present along Cressida Place, which cements a tangible connection, as both properties (including the school) were commissioned by the Winstanley family. Three prominent chimneystacks with moulded brickwork compliment the elevations. Regrettably, all of the original timber windows have been replaced by poorly matched plastic units, to the detriment of the architectural merit of the building.

Right: 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 weatherboard.



A considerable distance south-east from numbers 6-8 Braunstone Lane is a two-storey dwellinghouse at 7 Main Street. It is architecturally modest, despite a broadly contemporary date to its more elaborate neighbour, and lacks any distinguished historic architectural features. Its architectural merit and historic legibility have been significantly undermined by extensive modern alterations, including the introduction of uPVC windows, modern roof cladding, external render and a sizeable two-storey extension at the rear. Worth noting is the blue brick that accentuates the bottom and corner extremities of the building, adding interest to its elevations.

To its immediate east is the St Peter's Vicarage. The three-storey property was constructed to the design of R G Pochin in 1864, as noted by the engraved stonework of the spandrel to gable. Built in orange hue red brickwork with ashlar dressing and a gabled Swithland slate roof, it is an elegant Victorian property with a relatively prominent frontage. Worth noting are the elaborate window surrounds, with monochrome stone and brick segmental arches, hood moulds, angular stone lintels and carved head stops.



The frontage of St Peter's Vicarage (left). The front gable features intricate stone dressing in the form of carved hood moulds with carved end stops and a spandrel with an engraved date (top).



Despite varying elevation treatments, the dwellings at 1-6 Main Street are constructed from red brick, with pitched clay tile roofs and timber casement.



The pair of cottages at 5-6 Main Street is the most architecturally plain of all, but nonetheless of much visual interest and architectural merit.

Further down (south-east) Main Street is a group of Grade II Listed cottages designed by William Butterfield, at 1-6 Main Street. 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 being later replacements. Similarly to the properties at Cressida Place, despite these broad similarities, each pair displays subtle differences in design and elevation treatments.

The first pair of the group, at 5-6 Main Road, is the 'simplest' of all three. It has a symmetrical and a well-defined frontage with a pair of segmental arch, 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. The entrances to both units are provided by simple ground floor openings located at the side elevations. The central chimneystack is of a 'two-stepped' format.



The pair at 3-4 Main Road is more elaborate in comparison. The frontage was deliberately designed as an asymmetrical composition, as were the side elevations. 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 cuts through the eaves line of the front elevation, with diaper blue brickwork to centre, flanked by two single casements. The street facing elevation also features a gabled porch, with a simple bargeboard. 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 Road, adding visual interest to this asymmetrical gable end.

The pair at 1-2 Main Road is equally 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 Road, as are the paired dormer projections. Yet, in contrast the first pair, and alike the adjacent pair (at 3-4 Main Road), the front and side elevations feature blue diaper brickwork and a double-brick stringcourse above the ground floor. The main entrances to both units are provided by porches to side elevations, of comparable design as found elsewhere within the Conservation Area, with steep gabled roofs and stylized timber doors.



11 Townscape

The visual quality of the Braunstone Conservation Area stems from many factors, including its winding spine, ample greenery and historic building stock. The area's townscape has survived largely unchanged since the 19th century, being of considerable interest.

Views and Vistas

St Peter's Church and Cressida Place are important features of the Conservation Area in townscape terms, with a strong sense of enclosure. The former is virtually encircled by a row of mature trees that obscure its stone elevations. This is somewhat broken up as approached from the north, where the trees attractively frame the building, enabling more 'open' views onto the structure.

Whilst Cressida Place can be viewed in its entirety from certain points from within the Church Garden and along Main Street, views onto the elevations of its individual cottages are obscured by mature trees and tall hedges. Moving from south and north is a transitional experience, with increasing level of greenery away from the main spine of Braunstone Lane.

The curved form of Main Street diverts the eye along the route. Due to the loose urban grain, dominated by detached dwellinghouses, there is no continuous building line along the street; front boundaries and hedges do offer some visual 'edge' to the highway. The large green island to centre (between numbers 7 and 8) which features a great number of mature trees, whose foliage is spilling over the pavements, adds greatly to the visual quality of the views north and south, as do the historic buildings on the other side of the road (Blaby District Council). Glimpses onto some of these buildings, whilst located outside of the Conservation Area, add further interest to views from Church Fields.



Top: View onto the Grade II Manor, as approached from Church Fields, located on the south side of Main Street (Braunstone Lane), within the boundaries of the Blaby District Council.

Left: View looking south-west from Church Fields onto Cressida Place, where the cottages are obscured by deciduous trees and tall hedging.

Landmarks and Corners

Braunstone Conservation Area lacks prominent corner properties; nor does it feature eminent visual 'stops'. However, due to its loose urban grain and significant distances between separate buildings, most structures do display some level of landmark quality. Both the Cressida Place cottages and the paired brick dwellings at 1-6 Main Street are prominent within the streetscene of the Conservation Area.

St Peter's Church is the single structure that can be defined as a 'local landmark'. Visually and physically it dominates the open grassland of Church Fields at the core of the Conservation Area. The relatively sturdy western tower of the church is the single most dominant feature of the building, accentuated by the decorative metal weather vane to top.



Left: St Mary's Church emerges in full view as approached from the north, the most prominent 'gateway' onto the Conservation Area.

Top: The west tower topped with the gilded weather vane emerges as prominent orientation point throughout the Conservation Area, emerging from beyond the tree cover.

Activity

The Conservation Area has varying levels of activity across it on account of its differential access arrangements and land uses.

Despite the somewhat 'rural' character of the Conservation Area and its peripheral urban setting, Braunstone Lane (Main Street) is a busy thoroughfare, with much vehicular activity. Its narrow pavements do not create a particularly pedestrian friendly environment.

This changes drastically beyond the reach of the main highway. Church Fields positioned at the core of the Conservation Area offers a quiet refuge and a great place for recreation.

Cressida Place is a heavily landscaped access road, acting as a successful transition between the busy thoroughfare of Braunstone Lane and the open green space of Church Fields.



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