



Little Bowden

NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

**LITTLE BOWDEN REVIEW, DESIGN AND GUIDANCE
STATEMENT, March 2023**

LITTLE BOWDEN REVIEW, DESIGN AND GUIDANCE STATEMENT

The purpose of which is to identify strengths and weaknesses in the built environment and situation of Little Bowden, to recommend evidence based improvements and, in part, serve as a locally specific researched consultative document for developers and planning officers to aid best practice in the design and assimilation of new development.



Overview of the existing settlement of little Bowden, it's history, buildings, and aesthetic.

Little Bowden is an ancient settlement to the south east of Market Harborough, lying south of the river Welland in what was Northamptonshire. It pre-dates Market Harborough and was mentioned, along with it's mother settlement of Great Bowden, in the Domesday book of 1086. Its centre betrays the organic curvilinear layout typical of nucleated mediaeval villages around the Leicestershire/Northamptonshire area. The river Jordan meanders, on a much altered course, through the centre of the old village.

The buildings of the original settlement, up to the seventeenth century, would probably have been constructed of poor quality timber cruck frames, cobb or wattle and daub rendered walls with thatched rooves, none of which survives today. There is no evidence of any higher quality timber box frame construction in the village and very little in the area generally.

Excluding the church as a none domestic building, the earliest surviving structure is the Old Rectory (Fig 1), which is of provincial Jacobean style dating from 1627 and is constructed of, mainly, Northamptonshire iron stone, oolitic lime stone and Collyweston slates. The iron stone/lime stone combination (Fig 2), is a common feature of the area, reflecting the local ecclesiastical style and crops up in many buildings around the town.

The later vernacular is typically Georgian and Victorian displaying the usual cottage mannerisms of the eras such as butted slate gable verges, (Fig 3), decorative string courses, segmental soldier arches with the occasional local variation of an Iron stone plinth. The predominant materials are local Leicestershire red stock brick, iron stone and limestone with some rendered walls. Rooves are of mainly Welsh slate, some plain tiles and occasionally, Norfolk pan tiles. Numerous thatched rooves have survived indicating that thatch on brick walls must have been a very common local feature, (Fig 4).

The more organic layout of the old village is in stark contrast with the rest of Market Harborough outside the town centre and has an aesthetic all of it's own. The surviving sheep field on Braybrooke Road, (Fig 5), and the village green, (Fig 6), beside the church, the curtilage of which traces the old course of the river Jordan, are indicative of a more rural origin. The space circumscribed by Little Bowden Manor, (Fig 7), Stamps Funeral parlour, (Fig 8), the Old Rectory and the village green, encompassing the church and the thatched Cherry Tree pub, (Fig 9), still presents a pleasing aspect despite the intervention of Kettering Road and the railway line. Thoughtful tree planting, hedge rows and grass verges have all helped to integrate later development along the older Scotland Road with it's humpback bridge over the Jordan, (Fig 10), the old thatched shop and traditional primary school. The meandering Braybrooke Road from Quorn Pottery and the sheep field, past the majestic eighteenth century farm house on the corner, (Fig 11), and the quaint back water of Queen Street, (Fig 12), have managed to maintain the feel of the village that Little Bowden once was.

As is so often the case, later developments have done little to enhance the area and have, in the case of the high rise blocks nearby, been clearly detrimental. However, recent developments are now a dominant feature of the local landscape and will, as they mature, evolve a character of their own to compliment the older parts of the village. Many pleasant new neighbourhoods have been created within the expanded village who's sense of identity would surely benefit from a more visible and psychological connection to the old settlement of Little Bowden.



Fig 1 The Old Rectory,



Surviving cob wall



Fig 2 The Church showing the local stone combination

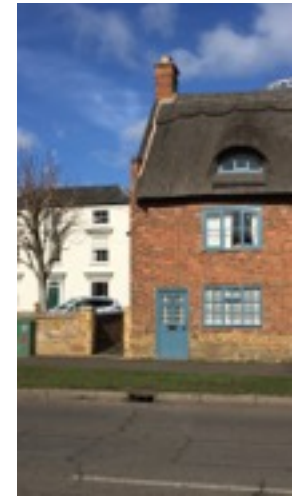


Fig 8



Fig 5

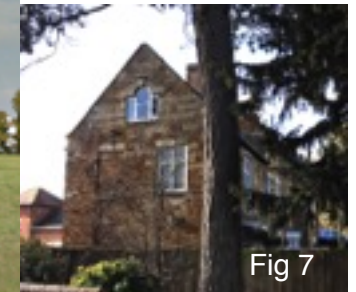


Fig 7



Fig 12



Typical 19thC farmhouse



Fig 3. Typical cottage



Fig 10



Fig 6

1. Good things about Little Bowden to be protected and encouraged in future infill and new developments:-

1.1 Still retains village atmosphere in some parts of the old village and has some attractive old buildings:-



1.2 The rural looking sheep field and river off Braybrooke Road/Scotland Road:-



1.3 The Green and Recreation Ground, well kept, in the main:-



1.4 Easy access to the countryside down the Brampton Valley Way and Braybrooke Road:-



1.5 Close to the Leisure Centre

1.6 Close to the railway station

1.7 Close to the main town

1.8 Close to employment centres

1.9 Good amenities; schools, shops, pubs, parks, toilets etc.

1.10 The Skate park

1.11 The Bowles Club

2. Bad things about Little Bowden to be addressed and remedied where possible:-

2.1 Over Developed, unplanned and piecemeal.



Avoid any further unjoined paths and unnecessary fencing between developments.



Too much ubiquitously bland housing that could be anywhere. The designs carry no reference to local building styles or traditions, are repetitive and show no individuality or innovation.



Consider a moratorium on all future large scale development within the period of the current Local Plan to allow for the assimilation of recent and on-going developments and for the tardy provision of the commensurate infrastructure and facilities.

2.2 Lack of an identifiable village centre:- It is just historical circumstance that Little Bowden's proximity to the main town meant that no commercial centre emerged on the A6 Kettering Road as it runs through the old village. A centre, of sorts, can be identified, south of the main road, around the church and green but it is hard to discern. Could more be done with this area in terms of signage and usage to consolidate it as a defined village centre?

2.3 Schism between old and new lacking community cohesion through geographical identity:- Consider a signage scheme, consisting of a main "Little Bowden" sign at some central position, say The Green or around the Cherry Tree public house, with smaller decorative signs in the same style at central points throughout the area including the new developments.

2.4 Too much traffic on smaller roads caused by "rat running":- For the TWG: Consider the use of LTNs on known rat runs and the possible introduction of one way systems? e.g. the Bellfield Street / Rectory Lane / Kettering Road circuit

2.5 Railway cuts through the middle

2.6 Lack of affordable and secular indoor community space:- There is a community centre being planned on the Overstone Park development which will be dealt with separately by the LBNF. With regard to the village centre, consideration should be given to the future form and uses of the existing church hall and scout building with a view to wider community access and their location as part of an active village centre.

2.7 Lack of comprehensive cycle network:- In hand through the TWG.

3. Other aspects for consideration to be included in the Little Bowden Neighbourhood Priority Statement

3.1 Care to be taken in aesthetic design where developments front on to existing main routes into Town to consider the interface between the old and new environments. These are often gateways to the town and display the first subliminal impression of the town's character and aesthetic:-



Example in Harborough of a disappointing outcome where bland house styles and lack of imagination gives a poor first impression of the town.



In this example, more variety of house styles and materials, along with consideration of the space in front gives a better impression.

3.2 Encourage village green layouts:- to reflect and replicate the village centre.

3.3 Discourage gated development or physical community separation:- If the aim is to form a more homogeneous and inclusive identity for Little Bowden.

3.4 Consider including small office, workshop and communal spaces within new and existing developments to facilitate local enterprise, ad hoc trading and “pop up” businesses. These could also accommodate WFH networking and resource sharing. Space could be left for modest business self build:- Since the pandemic, ever changing work patterns are increasingly affecting how and where we live. The introduction of Working From Home and the consequent reluctance to return to workspaces is changing dormitory towns and suburbs into mixed work centres of their own. This, in turn, is creating a demand for facilities to service this new workforce within their locality. More people are questioning the idea of lifetime employment and are exploring new business opportunities or acquiring new skills during their working life. Again this trend will need physical facilities locally. It is only right that we should be planning for this demographic shift, within both existing and new developments. The encouragement and facilitation of enterprise within any community benefits both the local and national economy.



WFH HUBS



WORKSHOPS



POP UPS



SOCIAL



MARKETS



EVENTS



LEARNING AND CLUBS

3.5 Consider the incorporation of thicker planted areas within developments such as coppices, spinneys, hedgerows and boulevards with careful thought about screening, shading and green coverage from distant views. Consider road centre and roundabout planting:-



3.6 More use of barrier screening using planted bunds or mounds, especially on elevated sites:-



As here, on the Welland View development where the bund provides a green break between new and existing roofscapes, even in winter.

3.7 More meadows, walks, fallow and wild spaces:-



3.8 Avoid uniformity especially the repetition of strong architectural features such as prominent fascia boards, on multi house developments as seen from a distance:-



The repetition of white fascia boards on the gables here creates an unnecessarily dominant distraction.



While the individual house types here are innocuous enough, their repetition, inadvertently, creates the ugly signature of much modern housing development.

3.9 Consider leaving spaces on sites for more innovative self build projects:- To encourage innovation in materials, energy efficiency and individual expression.

3.10 Apply common sense to building heights when building on hills to avoid unnecessary visual intrusion:- Self-evident

3.11 No more unnecessary high rise developments:-



A visibly intrusive high roof line here behind much older buildings.



Clearly out of scale with the neighbourhood here.

3.12 Promote the use of vandal proof materials in public spaces such as rough stone or course brick. Avoid large blank or rendered walls. Consider anti-vandal planting around vulnerable surfaces:- Self-evident

3.13 Encourage clusters of more contemporary style dwellings and landscaping using modern building techniques and materials, within developments:- To encourage developers to innovate in the use of materials, energy efficiency and stylistic experimentation.

3.14 Urgently consider the accommodation of retro fitted exterior insulation and heat pumps on to older housing stock:- Self-evident

3.15 Any further supermarket development should be located in other parts of the town:- to alleviate the cross town and local traffic congestion caused by the concentration of such development in Little Bowden.

3.16 incorporating re-wilding projects into existing green spaces around Little Bowden and more tree planting around existing and future attenuation ponds on new developments:- to provide cost effective green enhancement to existing urban spaces.

3.17 Consider the incorporation of "on street" charging points or hubs for older terraced housing:- Self-evident

3.18 Consider the need for the visual enhancement of the roundabout at the junction of Springfield Street and Kettering Road:-



As a gateway to Little Bowden, should more be made of this aesthetically neglected feature?

3.19 Consider a total ban on all exterior mounted box shutters on commercial premises:- There is no more effective way of creating an image of urban desolation and disfunction than these cheap and expedient security devices. They affront the community with their ugliness, broadcast a sense of distrust and paranoia and are a magnet for graffiti and vandalism.

3.20 Consider space for public art or features:- Although the visual aesthetic is often low down on general planning priorities it ultimately benefits all stakeholders to live, work and socialise within a pleasant environment. Although there is no overriding definition of what is, subjectively, pleasing there is, however, a general consensus as to what constitutes a pleasant and salubrious urban environment. The general cleanliness, tended gardens, well maintained houses, trimmed hedges and those bits of frippery that so often give individual expression to the typical English street, all contribute to the subliminal impression of the safety and wellbeing of an area. A relevant piece of public art or feature, designed to stimulate and intrigue the viewer can so often contribute to the general sense of wellbeing in the same way. Everybody has a stake in the visual aesthetic of where they live and its consequent affect on individual and community contentment, even if this is for no other reason than to maintain the desirability and therefore the asset values of their neighbourhood.

