



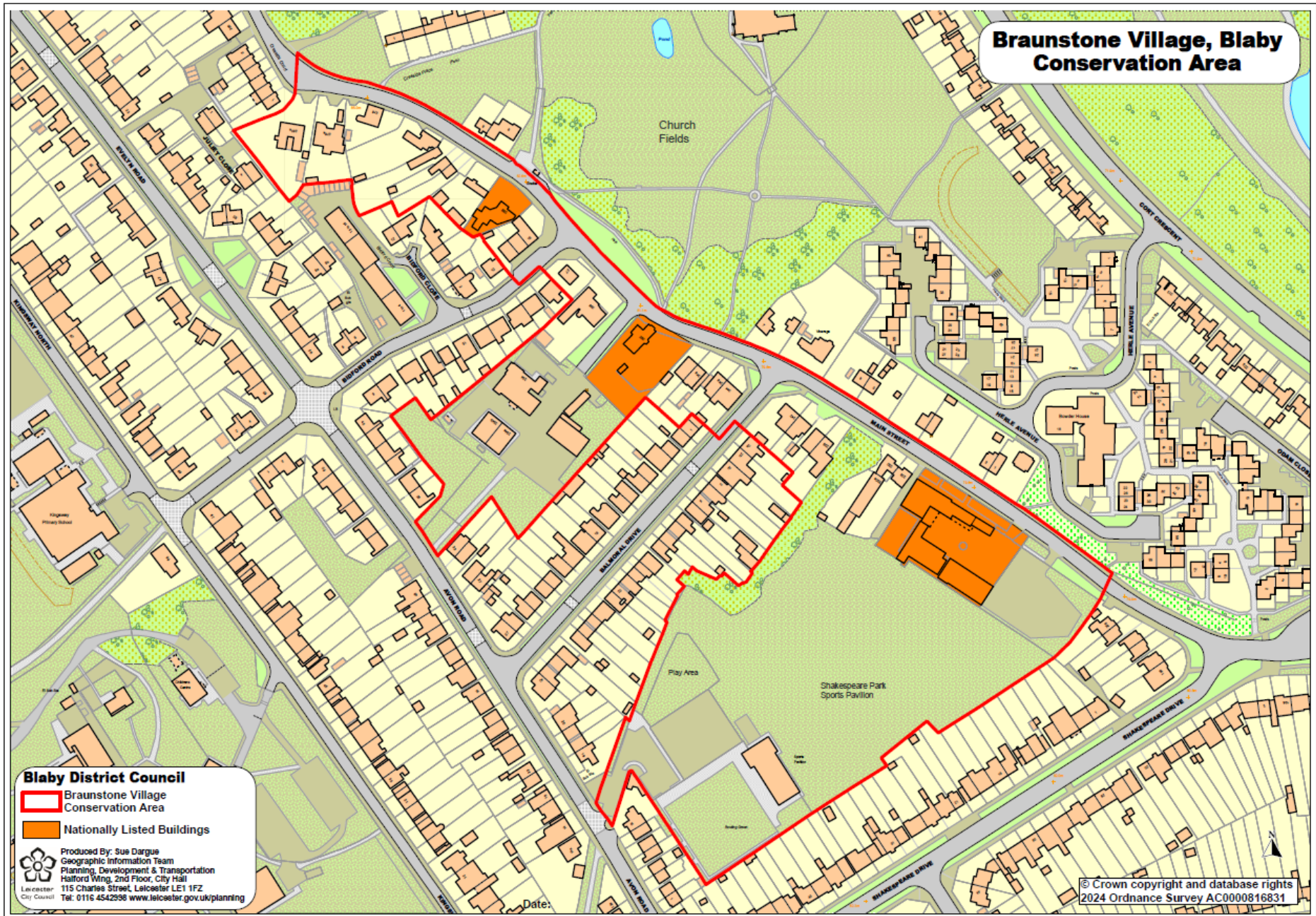
Braunstone Village Conservation Area  
**CHARACTER APPRAISAL**

**2024**



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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is the duty of local planning authorities from time to time to prepare and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas, commonly referred to as Character Appraisals.
- 1.2 The Braunstone Village Conservation Area Character Appraisal aims to set out the area's special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which is desirable to preserve and enhance.
- 1.3 This appraisal will be used to help inform the design of any future development proposals in the area. It is not the purpose of a conservation area to prevent change, but to manage it in ways that maintain and strengthen an area's special qualities.
- 1.4 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, Designation, and Structure

- 2.1 The District of Blaby currently contains 11 conservation areas, the oldest of which were designated in 1972. Braunstone Village would be the district's twelfth conservation area if approved.
- 2.2 The section of the historic village of Braunstone north of Braunstone Lane, falling within the jurisdiction of Leicester City Council, was designated as a conservation area in 1974.
- 2.3 This Character Appraisal was prepared to support the designation of a conservation area for the historic village of Braunstone on the southern side of Braunstone Lane, which lies within the jurisdiction of Blaby District Council.
- 2.4 This appraisal is structured to include:
  - A summary of designation,
  - Policy Background,
  - A definition of the special interest of the area via a spatial and character analysis, historical development, and important features.

### 3 Planning Policy Framework

- 3.1 The concept of 'conservation areas' was first introduced by 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.'
- 3.2 The definition 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.
- 3.3 The effect of designation means that planning permission is required for the demolition of buildings, with some minor

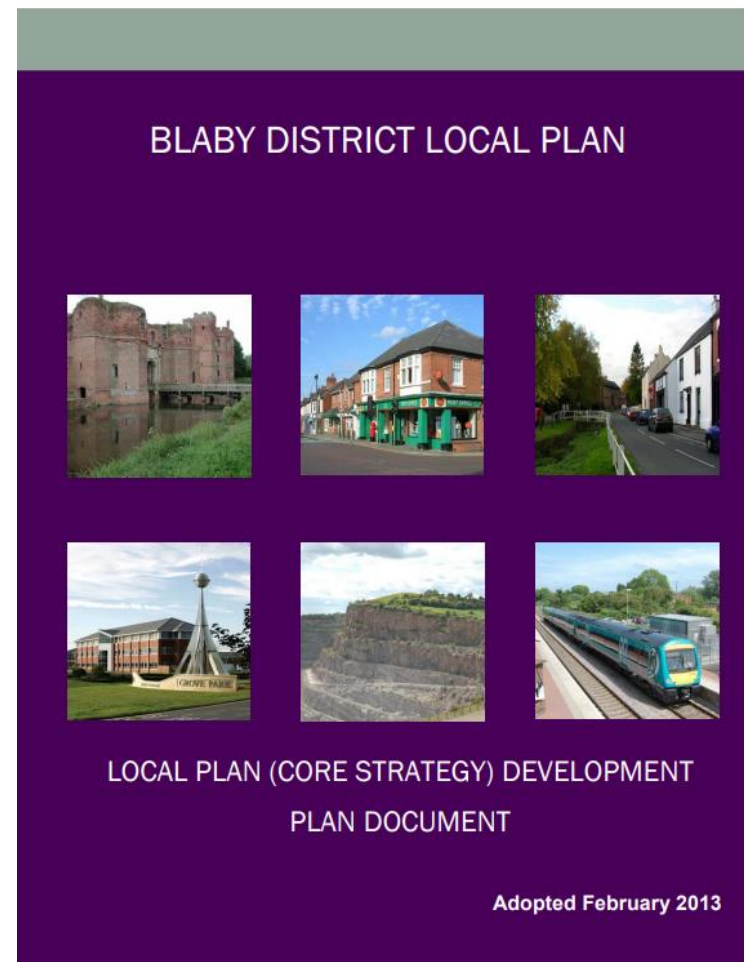


Image 1: Blaby District Core Strategy (2013).

exceptions. There are also stricter controls on changes that can be made to buildings and land, and protection for trees.

- 3.4 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 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.
- 3.5 The protection and positive use of the historic environment within new development is a theme which runs through the **Blaby District Core Strategy**. It is mentioned as a key component in Policies CS2, CS12, CS14, and CS16 and is the subject of a comprehensive policy on the Historic Environment and Culture CS20 and in the Blaby District Local Plan Delivery DPD in Development Management Policy 12 (Designated and Non-designated Heritage Assets).
- 3.6 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.

- 3.7 Both local and national policy puts the emphasis on the enhancement of heritage assets and positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of an area that should be made through new development.

## 4 Summary of Special Interest

- 4.1 The Conservation Area preserves the southern core of the ancient settlement of Braunstone which was first recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086.
- 4.2 It contains arguably the oldest surviving domestic buildings of the original village, several of which can be dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.3 Although no longer in agricultural use, several former farmsteads are preserved within the built form of the village as physical reminders of the once rural nature of the settlement. Demonstrating the changing character of the area as suburban development grew.
- 4.4 Although modern development has taken place within the historic core, it manages to retain a sense of its village origins, principally due to the natural meanders of Braunstone Lane.
- 4.5 Although some 20<sup>th</sup> century development has caused harm and detracts from the area, there are examples of high-quality inter-war architecture which add their own contribution to the understand and appreciation of Braunstone.



Image 2: View looking south-east along Braunstone Lane.

## 5 Location and Setting

- 5.1 Braunstone Village is one of six former villages located outside the historic core of Leicester, which became enveloped by suburban expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- 5.2 The village is likely Saxon in origin and was founded on section of glacial sands and gravels less than a mile west of Fosse Way and on the southern verge of the once extensive Leicester Forest. The superficial 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 90 meters (300 feet) above sea level.
- 5.3 The area was historically associated with Braunstone Park and Braunstone Hall, located to the immediate north-east, albeit physically divided by modern development. Historically, the entire village settlement formed part of the parish of Braunstone, which lay within the jurisdiction of Blaby Rural District Council. In 1935 the city boundaries were amended and the part of Braunstone which had formed the Winstanley Estate was incorporated into the city administration boundary. The remaining parts of the village, principally the land south-west of Braunstone Lane, remained within the District Council.
- 5.4 The open space around the historic village was heavily developed during the post-war period. The land to the

north-west, south-west and south-east is occupied by twentieth century housing laid out in a loose grid pattern which encloses the conservation area of three sides.

- 5.5 The conservation area is located on the north-eastern edge of Blaby District covering an area of approximately 5 hectares (just less than 12.5 acres). It is bounded by Braunstone Lane and Main Street to the north, Shakespeare Drive to the south-east, and Avon Road and Evelyn Road to the south and west.



*Image 3: Gibbons Map (1903) showing village in context with Braunstone Hall and Park.*

## 6 Historic Development

- 6.1 The settlement of Braunstone is most likely Saxon in origin, established around the late 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century AD as a ‘daughter’ settlement of Glenfield. Archaeological evidence suggests this early medieval settlement was possibly located on land immediately south of St Peter’s Church in an area now known as Church Field.
- 6.2 The first recorded mention is in the Domesday Survey, where it was referred to as “*Brantestone*” meaning the place where Brant settled. At this time, it was held by Robert Burdet under Hugh de Grandmesnil, comprised of eight households, and considered to be worth 60 shillings. De Grandmesnil was a proven companion of William the Conqueror who fought in the Battle of Hastings and went on to be a great landowner in England. The mention of “*socmen*” as part of the entry indicates the presence of Scandinavian serfs in the village.<sup>i</sup>
- 6.3 The village sat on the edge of what was once the ancient Leicester Forest, which covered extensive lands to the north. Timber from the forest would have been a valuable resource and primary construction material for the local building stock. The woodlands were gradually converted to pastures and Leicester Forest was fully enclosed by 1628. Bendbow Spinney remains the only surviving remnant of this former natural asset.<sup>ii</sup>
- 6.4 Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the Harcourt, or Horecut, family held an over-riding interest in the Braunstone Estate. A survey taken in 1299 documented 24 households in the village. 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 turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and a new Manor House was built by Henry Hastings on Braunstone Lane, close to the site of Old Hall Farm (now demolished).
- 6.5 What is now the Church of St Peter was purpose-built in the twelfth century 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.<sup>iii</sup> The close physical connection of the ecclesiastical facility to the former Manor House physically demonstrated its ‘private’ function.
- 6.6 Until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Braunstone was a village dominated by open-field cultivation, with the core of the settlement formed along Coalpit Lane (now Braunstone Lane). It was given this name “due to the packhorses bringing coal to Leicester from the Swannington coalfield”.<sup>iv</sup> In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the old agricultural routine of the village was broken up by the widespread conversion of arable land to pasture, followed in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by the inclosure of Leicester Forest.<sup>v</sup>

6.7 By 1483, The Manor was held by the well-known Yorkist William Hastings, who likely received the land as a grant from Edward IV. He and his son Henry were the main actors responsible for the inclosure of the village fields, which totalled over 97 hectares (240 acres) of land. Although no data documenting the exact number of people displaced by the widespread inclosure was recorded, an estimated 40 people left the village, an episode of major depopulation for a village of this size causing vacancy in several properties.<sup>vi</sup> 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.

6.8 Due to the loss of a substantial amount of money as a result of the Civil War, the Hastings family were forced to sell the estate. In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, it was acquired by the Winstanley family from Lancashire 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.<sup>vii</sup>

6.9 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.<sup>viii</sup> 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.



Image 4: 17<sup>th</sup> century map of the county.

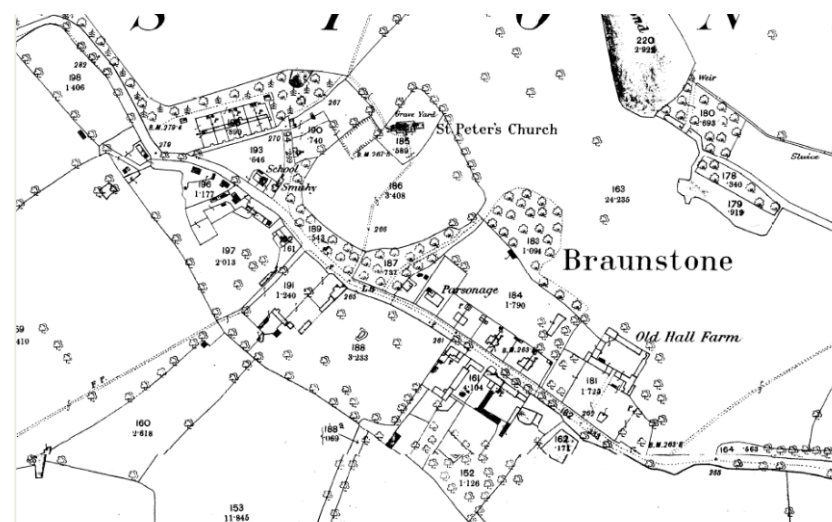


Image 5: OS Map of the village from 1884.

- 6.10 In 1775, Clement Winstanley, High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1774, commissioned a new Manor House to be set within 40 hectares (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.<sup>ix</sup> The new hall marked the centre of a sizeable country estate, its immediate surroundings comprising of a well wooded park, featuring a lake and a series of ornamental gardens.
- 6.11 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.<sup>x</sup>
- 6.12 In early 1800s, the local population barely exceeded 200, with only around 20 people employed in trade and the manufacturing industry.<sup>xi</sup> The Winstanley's commissioned several amenities within the village throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the benefit of the village inhabitants, including the row of six workers cottages at Cressida Place, the Parsonage and the small National School.
- 6.13 In 1877 Braunstone was described as a “pleasant and picturesque village”.<sup>xii</sup> By this point “it still had to rely on a



*Image 6: 1890s image of The Manor and Braunstone Lane.*



*Image 7: 1890s image of The Manor and Braunstone Lane.*

passing carrier for its main external contact”.<sup>xiii</sup> 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.<sup>xiv</sup>

- 6.14 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. In 1924, a guide to the county described Braunstone as a “curiously remote and isolated little village” with a “quaint, old-world character”.<sup>xv</sup>
- 6.15 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 old village core, 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.<sup>xvi</sup> Braunstone Hall was vacated in 1926 and on 29th of August 1932 it opened as Hall Junior School, after the National School had closed two years previously.
- 6.16 In 1935 the part of the parish, which had been within the Winstanley Estate 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).

6.17 By the mid-1950s, large areas of former agricultural land around Braunstone were extensively developed and some older buildings within the village were demolished. The direct physical connection between the village and Braunstone Hall was lost and small infill developed appeared along the south side of Braunstone Lane. 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.

6.18 In addition to the larger scale development of new housing estates during the 20<sup>th</sup> century at its margins, the core of the village also saw incremental change. For example, the village shop at 266 Braunstone Lane, dominated by a former house dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was extended with a larger residential unit in the 1960s. The most recent addition to the Conservation Area has been a new terrace of houses to the west of the older property at 208 Braunstone Lane, completed in 2023.

6.19 In the 21st Century, some work has been undertaken to help improve the legibility of the historic village core with various pieces of new signage put up. The pathway network within Church Fields was extended and a large heritage panel was installed on Braunstone Lane detailing the historic development of the village.

## 7 Architectural Character

- 7.1 The architectural character of the conservation area is a mixture of the original village buildings and later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development.
- 7.2 Regarding the former, these original village buildings fall within two distinct character groups based on their original purpose and use, they are either domestic or agricultural/ancillary in nature. This has informed their differing appearance, design, form, material, construction, and siting.
- 7.3 These domestic buildings are all typically sited to the front of their plots, adjacent to or immediately abutting the pavement. They were built utilising traditional techniques and materials, such as timber frame construction, which can still be seen in their external elevations to this day. They are typically two storeys in height, likely to have one or more chimney stacks and contain multiple openings in their façades, suggesting the subdivision of internal space which require heating and natural light.
- 7.4 The historic agricultural and ancillary building are instead found to the rear of plots, typically along boundary lines. They are usually single storey in height with random or asymmetric openings, sometimes with large single openings to allow for the access of machinery. Their roofs are devoid of any projecting chimney stacks, reflecting their utilitarian purpose.
- 7.5 The 20<sup>th</sup> century development is principally domestic in nature, however there are also some of examples of ground floor commercial units.
- 7.6 The dwelling houses are a mixture of semi-detached and detached and are typically sited deeper within their plots than their more historic neighbours, allowing for generous front gardens or car parking space. For the most part they maintain the prevailing domestic building height of two storeys, although the roof forms differ as the hipped roof becomes more common in this later architectural style. They do utilise modern versions of traditional materials such as brick and timber framing, as well as incorporating traditional features such as chimneys, bow and bay windows for articulation to their primary elevations.
- 7.7 At the south-eastern end of the conservation is a complex of buildings, formally known as Ashleigh Farm, it is now called **The Shakespeare**. To the front of the plot, running parallel to the highway is the former farmhouse, the oldest sections of which is timber frame construction dating to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, with later alterations and extensions. The porch has the year “1655” recorded on its moulded lintel. The timber framed section contains brick infill in a mix of stretcher bond and herringbone patterns, and the building has been extended south in brick. The roof is thatched with a scalloped ridge and several thatched dormers. The Shakespeare and its curtilage are Grade II listed, designated in 1987.



Image 8: The Shakespeare.



Image 9: The courtyard to the rear of The Shakespeare.

- 7.8 The buildings to the rear of The Shakespeare form a courtyard of ancillary structures, formally part of a traditional farmstead. The original agricultural buildings have been altered and added to in recent years due to their change of use. The simple design and high-quality materials used have ensured the character of the former farmyard remains discernible. Worth noting is the stepped ridges of the south-west range which reflects the cumulative nature of the buildings and adds positively to roofscape in this area (Image 8).
- 7.9 The properties at **228 and 230 Braunstone Lane** are likely older and of more historic interest than their external appearance suggests. There is evidence of a building in this location on the historic mapping and in old photographs, taking on its current form in early 20<sup>th</sup> century but with a potentially older core. Unfortunately, many of its original features have been lost or replaced, and the exterior has been full enveloped in a modern render which detracts from its character and limits its contribution to the area.
- 7.10 The linear range of building to the rear are also of note and would have once formed part of a traditional farmyard. Similarly, they have been altered as their agricultural use fell away, the site has been subject to partial demolition and the original roof coverings have been replaced with modern alternatives. However enough material remains, including the stepped ridges, which allows for this original character to be read and appreciated.

7.11 There are two groups consisting of a pair of inter-war semi-detached properties on either side of Balmoral Drive. Nos. 236 – 242 Braunstone Lane are the plainer of the two groups, with a simple double height bay, decorated with render and a single diamond detail, to each property. They have also undergone a greater degree of external alterations, such as porch and side extensions, which compromise their integrity as a group.

7.12 Nos **244 – 250 Braunstone Lane** are of a higher architectural quality than the other pair, with sophisticated oriel windows, faux timber framed gables, and double height tile hung bow windows. Almost all the properties retain their original timber joinery which makes an important and positive contribution to their appearance and group value.

7.13 **The Manor** is a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame and brick farmhouse, which has been much altered and extended in several stages and over subsequent centuries. The inscription “16 WPM 89” survives on a timber rail. Sited perpendicular to the highway, its principal range is characterised by a prominent gable under a Swithland Slate roof, jettied first floor and later cantered bay window inserted to the ground floor. A secondary range extends north containing an 18<sup>th</sup> century flush panelled door and moulded architrave crudely cut into the beam above it. A 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and Welsh slate extension has been added to the rear with a set of four linked chimney shafts. The brink infill is a variety of stretcher bond and herringbone



*Image 10: 248 & 250 Braunstone Lane.*

pattern and there is a mix of window styles throughout the property including both vertical and horizontal slides sashes. The Manor and its curtilage are Grade II listed, designated in 1952.

7.14 As with the other former farmsteads in the village, The Manor once had a large courtyard of agricultural buildings to the rear. However much of this has been cleared and the area is now a small industrial estate containing modern office buildings and only the remnants of the two agricultural buildings. One 19<sup>th</sup> century structure survives relatively intact with modern cement roof tiles and



*Image 11: Grade II Listed Former Shop with Storage Loft at 266 Braunstone Lane.*

area is not as successful in retaining its former farmstead character.

7.15 **266 Braunstone Lane** is part of a 17<sup>th</sup> century much altered timber framed structure, originally built as a cottage which likely extended further north. It was turned into the village shop in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a poor-quality shop extension was added to the south gable and a brick house was added to the rear, both of which are of no historic interest. It has painted brick infill, in a mix of stretcher bond and herringbone pattern under a Swithland slate roof. It retains some interesting historic features, such as the ledge and brace door and ground floor shuttered window. It is Grade II listed, designated in 1987.

7.16 **268 Braunstone Lane** is a 19<sup>th</sup> century brick house, with a simple rectilinear footprint, three half dormers in a plain clay tile roof and an attractive brick boundary wall. Unfortunately, recent alterations have impacted its character and limits its contribution to the area, including modern uPVC windows and a tall timber close-boarded fence.

7.17 **270 – 272 Braunstone Lane** is another example of a building which is likely older than it first appears although it has been much altered. Unfortunately, many of its original features have been lost or replaced, and the exterior has been full enveloped in a modern render which detracts from its character and limits its contribution to the area.



*Image 12: Holly Tree Cottage, 278 Braunstone Lane*

- 7.18 **April Cottage, 276 Braunstone Lane** is an attractive cottage which has been altered and extended in several distinct phases. Although it is now externally clad in brick, this appears to represent a 19<sup>th</sup> century phase of re-fronting work to an earlier timber frame building, the core of which may survive internally. A single section of frame is preserved within the external brick skin to the left of the bow window. The character of April Cottage is eclectic, with a variety of window style, roof material and ad hoc additions which result in a charming addition to the character of the area.
- 7.19 **Holly Tree Cottage, 278 Braunstone Lane**, similar to April Cottage, likely represents an older timber framed cottage which was re-fronted and extended in brick. Evidence of the previous catslide roof is discernible in the northern elevation. Unfortunately, its original openings have been enlarged and modern uPVC windows installed. However, its traditional proportions and construction remain clearly evident, and it retains sufficient historic material to add positively to the character of the area.

## 8 Townscape

- 8.1 The naturally meandering character of Braunstone Lane helps recall the village character of the area. As the road bends, differing views and focal points come to attention. Despite some of the more intrusive 20<sup>th</sup> century development, and the general loss its historic rural setting, its character as a village remains discernible in the surviving townscape.
- 8.2 This character is reinforced by the green and leafy appearance of the Conservation Area. Where they are present, mature trees, natural boundary treatments and soft verges make a positive contribution to the significance of the area.

### *Views and Vista*

- 8.3 The principal views of the Conservation Area are the two gateway points into the historic village core. At the south-eastern edge, the distinctive gable of The Shakespeare containing dovecot openings is an important focal point. It marks the entrance to old Braunstone and has captured the attention of generations of visitors; this view has been represented in paintings and postcards of the village from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 8.4 The northern gateway is a similarly important view into the Conservation Area. The curve of the road at this point introduces its village character and allows for a clear view

of Holly Tree Cottage, 278 Braunstone Lane, showcasing its traditional cottage proportions. Although historically Holly Tree Cottage sat just shy of the edge of the village core, it is now the oldest surviving building at this important transition point. The low scale, generous set back and green character of the bungalows at 278A and 280 Braunstone Lane help protect the rural feel of this entry to the historic village core.

- 8.5 Another view of note is the view eastwards from within Shakespeare Park. The open space of the park allows for clear views of the cluster of former agricultural buildings to the rear of The Shakespeare and nos. 228 and 230 Braunstone Lane. This dynamic roofscape demonstrates the variety of roofing material found within the Conservation Area as well as physical remnants of the traditional farmsteads which would have once defined the character of the area.

### *Landmarks and Corners*

- 8.6 The loose urban grain of the Conservation Area means many of the buildings have a landmark quality without being tall or imposing and without forming prominent corners.
- 8.7 A good example is The Manor, which is prominent in the street scene based on the spacious character of its curtilage, its position abutting the highway and the distinctive jettied gable.



Image 13: "Entrance to Braunstone Village, near Leicester". A post card sent to Miss W Lewis on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1908, from the oil painting by Geo. S. Ramsey.

### *Lighting and Street Furniture*

- 8.8 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.
- 8.9 Street furniture in the area is mostly found within Shakespeare Park, which contains some simple wood benches and litter bins. As the park is a relatively recent amenity space gifted to the local council in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, these items are modern in character, and of no special historic interest.

### *Activity*

- 8.10 Despite the somewhat 'rural' character of the Conservation Area and its peripheral urban setting, Braunstone Lane 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.

### *Signage*

- 8.11 Although many properties within the Conservation Area are dwelling houses with clearly domestic appearances, there are some commercial units within the boundary. These properties are distinguishable by the presence of advertisements and signage.
- 8.12 The Shakespeare, which was formally a public house and is now in use by funeral directors has an attractive and

cohesive signage scheme which allows for the advertisement of the business while respecting the sensitive heritage setting. They have utilised a combination of contemporary and traditional painted techniques which balances well the needs of the business and the appearance of the building (Image 13). Notably, the former pub sign has been retained and sensitively amended, preserving this element of the building's history.



Image 14: Painted signage advertising Paul Pender & Sons Funeral Directors.

## 9 Building Materials

### *Facing Materials*

- 9.1 The most widely used building material within the Conservation Area is brick, both painted and unpainted. The oldest properties, such as The Shakespeare, The Manor and the former village shop utilise a combination of structural timber framing and brick infill, sometimes laid in a chevron or herringbone pattern (Image 14). There is some variety in the tone and size of bricks corresponding with the age of the buildings. Red brick is the prevailing material throughout; however, some of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century infill development utilises lighter, buff coloured brick.
- 9.2 Render is also found in the area, mainly as a decorative motif of the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached dwellings, i.e. to embellish gables and bay windows. One exception is 228-230 Braunstone Lane where it is used as the principal surface material. However, based on the smooth texture and tell-tale indications around openings, this is a modern alteration and not a historic or original finish on the building.

### *Roof*

- 9.3 Roof coverings vary significantly throughout the Conservation Area. Traditional materials such as thatch, Swithland slate laid in diminishing courses and Welsh slates are common on the oldest properties in the village. Red clay tiles are prevalent mostly in the 1930s semi-



*Image 15: The Manor, detail showing herringbone brick pattern, later inserted door and surround and vertical sliding sash window.*

detached houses. Modern cement tiles are used mainly in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century development, or as a replacement material on older buildings. There is one instance of a corrugated metal roof on an outbuilding in the grounds occupied by the 4th Leicester Scout Group (Image 15).

- 9.4 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, 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 Manor, 252 Braunstone Lane, which add great interest to the building and Conservation Area.

### *Boundary Treatments*

- 9.5 Boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area vary and range in type, scale, and material, meaning there is a lack of overall consistency and cohesion.
- 9.6 Where present, front boundary treatments in the form of brick boundaries, timber fencing and trimmed hedges, provide a clear definition between the public realm and private property, creating a sense of enclosure and positively contributing to the local townscape. Decorative metal railings and gates are rare within the Conservation Area, with some examples found along Braunston Lane; however, there are instances of modern security fencing used in the vicinity of Shakespeare Park.



*Image 16: View from Shakespeare Park looking east.*

### *Road Surfaces*

- 9.7 Road surfaces in the Conservation Area are dominated by dark tarmac and grey concrete, which defines the highway and pedestrian pavements along Braunstone Lane. Few granite kerbstones survive, the overwhelming majority being modern concrete examples. The path leading from Braunstone Lane to Shakespeare Park is unsurfaced. Additionally, the private curtilages of properties feature a wealth of additional surface treatments, including gravel, grass, cobbles, red tiles, brick and stone paving, and concrete slabs.

### *Windows and Doors*

- 9.8 There is a variety and range of window type and material within the Conservation Area. Where they survive, original and historic timber windows make an important and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Worth noting is the relatively rare Yorkshire (horizontal) sliding sashes present in The Manor (Image 14) and the survival of the original timber casements with stain glass top lights in nos. 244-250 Braunstone Lane typical of the Arts and Crafts movement.
- 9.9 The Shakespeare is the only property in the Conservation Area to contain metal frame casements with lattice patterned leaded lights. Although they are a later alteration to the building, dating to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they are an increasingly rare feature with historic interest and make a

positive contribution to the character of the building and wider area.

- 9.10 There are several examples of historic timber doors and original metal fittings within the Conservation Area, of differing styles and construction. The former village shop retains a traditional ledge and brace door with a latch, while The Manor has been retrofitted with a flush panelled door and ornate knocker set within a moulded architrave which cuts through the beam above it (Image 14).
- 9.11 Several buildings in the Conservation Area have installed replacement uPVC windows and doors. Although attempts have been made to replicate glazing patterns and decorative detailing in some examples, it has resulted in inconsistency within groups of buildings and the fine detail of the originals have been lost.

### *Other Materials*

- 9.12 Timber is used for other features of contribution to the local streetscene, such as soffits and bargeboards and the faux timber framing of the inter-war houses.
- 9.13 Some of the oldest properties in the Conservation Area retain original cast-iron or replacement metal rainwater goods, compete with thin gutter brackets.



*Image 17: Mixture of more and less traditional boundary treatments.*



*Image 18: More natural vegetation dominates along the public footpaths with more utilitarian fencing.*



*Image 19: Traditional materials dominate on the building with less cohesive floorscape materials below the plinth.*

## 10 Open Spaces

- 10.1 The Conservation Area boundary line is intentionally drawn as a tight perimeter around the historic built core of the village. The open space and field system which once defined the setting of old Braunstone has mostly been lost.
- 10.2 Shakespeare Park is the principal area of open space which appears within the Conservation Area boundary. Although this is a relatively recent element of the village's character, it is considered to make a positive contribution to the appreciation and appearance of the area.
- 10.3 The park was gifted to the local council by Everards Brewery in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when The Shakespeare (formally known as Ashleigh Farm) was converted into a public house. Historically, this land was subdivided into various smaller fields and orchards associated with the agricultural use of the farmstead. Although the park does not retain this agricultural use or character, it does replicate the sense of openness which once would have defined the village setting. Evidence of historic field boundaries can also be found within the grassed area and in parts, the perimeter of the park loosely follows the line of these original boundaries.



*Images 20 & 21: Shakespeare Park playing fields and clubhouse.*



## 11 Historic Routes

- 11.1 Interestingly, two historic routes originating within the Conservation Area have been preserved within the modern plan of the wider Braunstone area. Evidence of at least one of these routes can be found as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century they are clearly recorded and labelled on maps of the village and wider area.
- 11.2 On the 1884 OS Map, a footpath simply marked “F.P” is shown extending from Braunstone Lane, approximately 60m north of The Manor, in a south-westerly direction.
- 11.3 In the mid-20th century, it appears this footpath formed the basis of a new road. At the section closest to Braunstone Lane, new housing was constructed along the recently widened and paved street, now named Bidford Road. This new road retained the natural meanders of the original footpath evident on the historic mapping, whereas elsewhere other new roads such as Balmoral Drive were built on a straighter axis. Bidford Road runs in a south-westerly direction until it meets Kingsway North. After this point it continues in the form of a paved footpath, now aptly named *The Old Bridal Lane*, reinforcing the historic origin of this route.
- 11.4 The second route marked “B.R” for Bridle Road, evident on the historic mapping further south on Braunstone Lane. It appears to originate immediately north of 228 and 230 Braunstone Lane, pass through the courtyard of buildings,

skirt the corner of a field boundary and continue in a general southerly direction.

- 11.5 This historic route is preserved as the path leading from Braunstone Lane to Shakespeare Park. It can be traced through the park, crossing Avon Road, and continuing along the public bridleway and Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road through Mossdale Meadows. Again, continuation of the term “bridleway” and “bridle road” confirms its historic origins.



*Image 22: View looking south from Avon Road down the public footpath below Shakespeare Park*

## 12 Intrusive or Harmful Factors

### *Building Alterations*

- 12.1 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.
- 12.2 Satellite dishes and antennas have been installed on several buildings adding clutter and making a negative contribution to the streetscene along Braunstone Lane.
- 12.3 Where non-designated historic properties have been externally clad in modern render, it stands in stark contrast with the prevailing use of both traditional and modern brick in the area.

### *Boundary Treatments*

- 12.4 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 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 properties and obscured the definition of the private and public domain.



Images 23 & 24: Issues with boundary treatments and hard landscaping, as well as traffic on Braunstone Lane.



### *Traffic and the Public Realm*

- 12.5 Traffic can dominate Braunstone Lane and make the experience for pedestrians and cyclists less comfortable. Sections of public pavement and highway along Braunstone Lane are in poor condition. In particular, the junction of Bidford Road, and the parking and forecourt area associated with 266 Braunstone Lane is dominated by mixed quality hardstanding. There is poor integration between different sections of hardstanding here, made worse by poor quality boundary treatments.
- 12.6 Commercial signage in this area is also of a more standard quality and does not reflect the sensitivity of its historic setting.

### *Infill Development and Setting*

- 12.7 Some of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill and surrounding development has a big impact on the character and setting of the Conservation Area. The bulk and scale of 12 – 16 Bidford Road is out of keeping with the prevailing character of the area, its largely blank gable fronting Braunstone Lane is particularly harmful and incongruous.
- 12.8 While many houses further north along Braunstone Lane are well maintained, there are some unsympathetic alterations which detract from the setting of the Conservation Area.

## **13 Capacity for Change**

- 13.1 The only larger scale undeveloped area within the Conservation Area is Shakespeare Park, which benefits from its own status as public open space. As such, there is limited scope for new development here.
- 13.2 As outlined in previous sections, some buildings within the Conservation Area boundary make a neutral or negative contribution to the character and appearance of the area. These sites represent a potential opportunity for enhancement in the future. The frontage to 266 Braunstone Lane is a notable example of a more visible space that has clear capacity to be enhanced.
- 13.3 The land to the rear of the Manor has been subject to a series of development proposals. If further proposals were to be submitted, these should be carefully considered in terms of the historic development of the site and the setting of heritage assets close by.
- 13.4 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.

## 14 Conservation Area Boundary

- 14.1 The Conservation Area boundary line is intentionally drawn as a tight perimeter around the historic built core of the village, based on historic maps of the area.
- 14.2 At the northern edge of the boundary, nos. 278A and 280 Braunstone Lane were included as it was felt their low-scale, generous set back and green character contributed to the character of the area and act as an effective “buffer” at this important transitional point.
- 14.3 At the south-eastern edge, the newly completed terraced row was included within the designated boundary. Historically this site was associated with The Shakespeare (formally Ashleigh Farm), during its operation as a public house and traditional farmstead. The new properties are considered to be of sufficient quality to warrant inclusion and add cohesion to the Conservation Area.
- 14.4 The boundary extends to Avon Road at two points. It is good practice for Conservation Area boundaries to follow physical features and avoid bisecting properties.

## 15 Local Consultation

- 15.1 This draft Character Appraisal is being published for public consultation. The final version will be produced with the benefit of the comments received during this exercise.

## 16 Management Proposal

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

## 17 Additional Planning Controls

- 17.1 The District Council is consulting on an option to potentially introduce a bespoke Article 4 Direction for unlisted 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.

## 18 Contact

- 18.1 For further information on this, or other, conservation areas you can contact the Council's Planning Development & Strategy Team by phone, letter or via the contact form available on the Council's website:

Planning Development & Strategy  
Blaby District Council  
Council Offices  
Desford Road  
Narborough  
Leicester  
LE19 2EP

Tel: 01162 272 7710

Contact Form: [www.blaby.gov.uk/contact-us/](http://www.blaby.gov.uk/contact-us/)

Information on all conservation areas is available on the Council's website:

[www.blaby.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation/conservation-areas/](http://www.blaby.gov.uk/planning-and-building/conservation/conservation-areas/)

## Appendix 1: Map



## Appendix 2: Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> J. E. Wiltshire (1983). Old Braunstone, p.5.

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

<sup>iii</sup> G. E. England (1970). The story of Braunstone Parish Church, p.3

<sup>iv</sup> East Midland Oral History Archive (2016).

<sup>v</sup> 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.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid

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

<sup>viii</sup> McKinley, ed. (1958), pp.428-433

<sup>ix</sup> England (1970), p.29

<sup>x</sup> England (1970), p.16.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xii</sup> W. White (1877). "History, Gazetteer & Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland".

<sup>xiii</sup> England (1970), p.17

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid

<sup>xv</sup> East Midland Oral History Archive (2016).

<sup>xvi</sup> McKinley, ed. (1958), pp.428-433.