

Vision, Issues and Opportunities - History and Heritage Team

Lead: Cob George. Support: Peter Darlow and Neil Fortey. Neil will also ask for help from Dave Middleton and Pete Topps.

Comments relevant to 'History & Heritage' taken from the community opinion survey, June 2014

Things people don't like about the Parish- No comments immediately relevant to History & Heritage, though several mentioned poor bus and train services. The answers provide a degree of support in that there were no adverse comments relating to H&H.

Things people do like about the Parish - Several enthusiastic comments were made along the lines of "village atmosphere and community", and also references to "the church and its bells", "green spaces", "parks and play areas", "a lovely area", "connection with nature", "a pleasant environment", "retention of village character", "peacefulness", "footpaths and green spaces", "quietness", "rural setting" and "proportion of houses to green spaces" – these are positive comments that sit well with our view that development should be sensitive to the character and identity of the villages and their origins.

How I would like to see the Parish develop

These are some answers picked out as being relevant to History & Heritage:

"Be more of a tourist attraction, it's a lovely village"; "Consider moving centre of village, as it is a strip development and no actual village centre/square/market place as other locations, to protect existing areas"; "Green sites are protected"; "Historic sites are protected"; "Leave undeveloped land in centre of village for shops and their facilities"; "Want to keep the historic and not lose its identity"; "Fear of Rapid, poorly planned and unrestrained expansion of housing"; "Fear of Loss of village character and social cohesion"; "More trees"

These provide an indication that there is support for protecting H&H assets and keeping the character of the village. It should be possible to plan development in a way that respects and enhances historic and heritage assets. This will bring about a better village environment for present and new residents, and also for visitors. In turn, this will help create and maintain a strong diverse economy, while also sustaining community cultural and educational activities. It is an opportunity to preserve our friendly, intimate community and to improve the village while keeping hold of its rich heritage and character.

Stakeholder Survey Responses, November 2014

Little in this document gives specific leads regarding H&H even though a healthy heritage sector would bring visitors into the village thereby increasing use of local shops and services. The Bottesford Local History Society and World War 1 Centenary Project answered the questionnaire, but the questions posed gave little feeling as to community attitudes towards H&H.

What elements of our heritage and history are amongst the most important and in need of preservation?

- Historic buildings, open spaces such as gardens, allotments, paddocks within villages.
- Bottesford's market place and adjacent streets with the Cross and Stocks, St Mary's church, two 19th Century Methodist chapels (one now residential), 18th Century Baptist Chapel, old farm houses, pumps, wells, footpaths (e.g. Granary Lane, path from Flemings Bridge to station and alongside Devon to Washdike Bridge), Old Rectory and gardens, Church St, Chapel St, Albert St, Bunkers Hill and Blue Bank cottages, etc. etc.
- The traditional street plan of Bottesford centre is of historic value, traditional roadways from Bottesford to Muston and Allington, open landscape of Beacon Hill.
- Muston - medieval layout of streets centred on parish church, market place and cross, traditional farmhouses and cottages with gardens and paddocks, 19th Century Rectory, Methodist chapel, 17th Century Hospital Farm, medieval earthworks of monastic farmstead, track of ironstone mineral railway.
- Easthorpe - traditional farmhouses and cottages, with gardens and paddocks, medieval manor site and preserved buildings, medieval village site, Arts and Crafts house.
- Normanton – traditional farmhouses (17th to 19th Century, one with medieval features) and cottages, with gardens and paddocks; Bottesford airfield with its preserved hangars, control tower, runways – one of the better preserved WW2 airfields in England

What elements are opportunities for further enhancement and interpretation to allow residents and visitors/ tourists to be more aware and able to enjoy the H&H of the parish?

- Preserve the visual landscape and key features such as the historic buildings, wartime heritage, ancient farming landscape,
- Visitor information boards,
- Provide a focus by means of developing a heritage centre in Bottesford,
- improved guesthouse/B&B accommodation,
- improved streetscape,
- better signage,
- improvements to transport facilities,
- "blue-plaques"

What elements are most under threat with the development on the SHLAA or in the Melton Issues and Options document?

The parish contains a wealth of historic heritage, much of which deserves to be better appreciated. Comparative isolation from industrial expansion has resulted in slow, gradual evolution such that we still have heritage from Anglo-Saxon (or Roman?) up to the present

day. The parish has preserved the ancient pattern of nucleated settlements within an unbroken expanse of open farmland. Later features such as the turnpike, canal, railways and WW2 airfield have become familiar components. The village centres preserve farmhouses and workers cottages alongside Victorian and 20th Century housing. They provide comfortable environments for young families and elderly people alike, where village facilities are appreciated and appropriate for most needs. There are about 40 Listed Buildings, two Scheduled Ancient Monuments and a National Nature Reserve. There are four Conservation Zones, which coincide more or less with the historic village and hamlet centres.

Open spaces within the villages, such as gardens and paddocks, have been at risk of infill development, threatening the visual landscape, weakening the sense of community with links to local and national history.

Transport and traffic facilities are poor, even though the A52 bypass relieved the worst congestion and traffic hazard. The shops are only just adequate, and parking can be a nightmare. As the population increases, these weaknesses will become more of a headache.

There is potential to attract more visitors to explore Bottesford and Muston as well as walks in the surrounding open landscape. At the moment, the villages and surroundings are not visitor-friendly, lacking accommodation, and with an unwelcoming railway station, poor bus access, limited parking facilities and a lack of visitor information.

Bottesford Market Place could be re-adopted as the central focus of the village, as it was historically, by using traffic calming and widened pavements to make the area usable as a pedestrian meeting place with shops, pubs, restaurants/cafes. This would relieve some of the congestion in Queen Street. Market Street itself should not be permitted to remain as a through route for traffic to the A1 and the airfield industrial estate. There should be facilities for safer street crossing especially on High Street (for Hands Walk and Granby Drive estate residents) and at the Market Place.

The proposal to retain a village library should be supported, as should the additional proposal to develop a Local Heritage Centre based in Bottesford. Both can be efficiently created and run within the Old School in Bottesford. The combined facility would be valuable as a library and educational resource for local history, family history, leisure, exhibitions, continuing education, local information and potentially for uses such as a crèche, book sales, etc. It would give a much-needed focal point which the village lacks at present. Its facilities could also be designed to accommodate the services identified as desirable to local small businesses (see input from the Local Economy Subgroup).

Bottesford could expand its horizons to become a regional visitor centre for the whole of the Vale of Belvoir. The proposed Heritage Centre could be a tourist hub for the wider area, with benefits to many businesses within the Vale as well as in Bottesford itself.

Who would benefit: Local people (a comfortable place to live, sense of identity and location, educational opportunities), visitors (tourists, special interest groups e.g. church visitors), local economy (shops, catering, accommodation), wider area (transport usage, tourism).

Our vision

Our vision is of a parish in which the richness of heritage is protected and given increasing appreciation as a major asset to the quality of life and hence to the attractiveness of the parish as a place to live, visit and do business. The gains will be expansion and enhancement of the parish economy and the ability to retain a rich harmonious community. Historic buildings, trees and landscapes should be maintained and integrated into rejuvenated village centres. Surrounding farmland should be seen as providing space for leisure and a healthy environment, as well as being a pre-industrial heritage asset, and given sensitive development accordingly. Major intrusions including large-scale wind turbines should be opposed.

The main issues.

The main issue is that planning the future requires balancing the need to accommodate a modern expanding community with that of conserving the assets of character and heritage.

Our rural parish is one in which compact villages sit within a continuous belt of farmland. People appreciate the sense of identity and character that comes from the mixing of housing and open spaces within the village environment. There is an open friendliness that comes from a long history of gradational development that has retained a sense of being part of a community with deep roots that has been accustomed to looking after itself. The setting is not urban, and many villagers share the desire to avoid being engulfed in large-scale suburban development. The street plan is part of the heritage fabric

Stages of history are superimposed: historic farms and cottages are interspersed with stages of 19th and 20th Century housing in a happily piecemeal fashion. There are some 40 Listed building and a significant number of additional houses that arguably ought to be listed. There are open paddocks and gardens that are remnants of the old pattern of small farms within the villages themselves. The existing village envelopes reflect the extent of the older areas

In short, we have a rich heritage of villages and farmland that make our parish a good place to live, to raise families and to enjoy retirement. New development should respect this. The NP should seek to ensure that new housing and development of village amenities should preserve and where possible enhance the character of our villages.

Since WW2 there has been considerable development of housing and expansion of population. It is arguable that many aspects of the village have failed to meet the new demands placed on them, some have deteriorated. Enhanced personal mobility has transformed many aspects of life in ways that have adversely affected the village: the number and variety of shops has decreased, streets have become more hazardous and hostile to pedestrians especially elderly people using the cluttered pavements and crossing roads, and children seeking safe places to play.

In accommodating new development a guiding principle should be to actively improve our environment where possible while keeping the positive benefits of our age.

Recent changes in local authority funding have brought about closure of the Community Centre and now closure of the village Library. These represent a significant deterioration in the quality of life and opportunities. There are moves to retain the library as a community library, and also a bid for HLF funds to add to the library a heritage centre. The result would be a hub where activities such as continuing education, society and social activities, local and family history services, etc. can be located alongside traditional library activities, information and internet access. This will be made possible by imaginative sharing of the

space and facilities of the Old School (formerly the village school). A large and expanding village community needs a central point such as this.

The village can become more attractive without destroying its heritage. Traffic calming and restriction of rat-running can improve the streets. The village centre should be a place for local traffic, while E-W through traffic uses the A52 as at present and N-S traffic uses to A1 and/or A46 rather than cutting through our narrow residential streets as a short cut. Commercial access to the Normanton Lane and Orston Lane industrial areas could be assisted by creating a spur from the A52 past the Orston Lane site and round the north of Bottesford to Normanton Lane. This would create a quiet traffic zone in the village itself which could then regenerate as a healthy residential area with a greater variety of retail and services. The Market Place could be the central point that it traditionally was, before excess traffic throttled it, with the Old School, pubs and restaurants and shops grouped on or close to.

A revitalized and attractive village centre would also benefit from drawing in shoppers and others from around the Vale area. At present many villages are starved of facilities and their people have to use the congested roads and shops in local towns. Some of them might come to Bottesford (some already do).

In addition to creating an improved place for people to live in, the village could also become a place that visitors will enjoy. At present, people come to visit St Marys, but there is little else for them. Indeed, factors such as the bleakness of the railway station are a disincentive. A more peaceful, commercial active village would draw people in, to the benefit of our shops and other businesses. The Old School hub would become an attraction in itself, as the heritage centre would be akin to a local museum.

There are many ways in which we could develop Bottesford, quite apart from just weighing the place down with ever expanding monolithic areas of housing. Through it all, there must be a constructive respect for our roots and our heritage. It is no good saying there must be no development at all. Bottesford is not a good candidate for become a sort of historic theme-park. It is a place that has been changing step by step for a long time. In one sense, we can say that it embodies a continuity of heritage, in that it contains elements of many historic stages, no one period dominates and yet the total heritage is so much the richer.

The former RAF Bottesford WW2 airfield is a major heritage asset whose surviving buildings and wartime infrastructure should be retained alongside residential or other future development, as it has hitherto.

Questions that you think we need answers to (some of these questions could become part of the February Residents Survey)

How should development be planned in order to conserve and enhance the sense of identity and character of our village?

What elements of the parish are most worth preserving?

Should development within the historic village areas be kept to a minimum?

Should the range of Listed Building, Ancient Monuments and Nature Reserves be increased in order to protect features of importance historically and in terms of maintaining the natural environment?

What other buildings or features should be protected from unsuitable development?

Should we support development of a central community hub in order to continue to deliver services such as the library, the continuing-education centre (formerly the Community Centre), clubs and societies, information services and so on?

How should the village be improved by designing better transport routing?