

PLUNGAR - Origins:



Church Lane, early 20th century?

Little is known about the early history of the village except that its name is suggested to have originated from the Saxon word "Plumgarth", meaning "land where plum trees grow".

The little information that can be gleaned relates predominantly to the size of its population. Plungar appears not to have been recorded in the Domesday survey of 1085 but in 1564 26 families were recorded as living in the village whilst in 1377 some 59 taxpayers were registered for poll tax. In 1670 the average from the Compton Census and

Hearth Tax returns suggests the population was 133 whilst the 1801 census gives a figure of 157, growing to 252 in 1881.

Few other records can be found although there is evidence in 1225 of fees being paid by knights living in Plungar and Barkestone towards the cost of the marriage between King Henry III's daughter and the Roman Emperor. It is also thought that 14 people died of smallpox in 1785.

In contrast, the history of the village in the early part of the 20th century is fairly well documented, the local residents having produced a paperback book in the 1990s (entitled "Barkestone and Plungar Remembered"), which provides a valuable insight into the way villagers lived.

A couple of incidents from the village's recent history are particularly worthy of note. First is the famous Belvoir Estate sale, which took place in March 1920. Up until this time, the land in and around Plungar was owned by the Duke of Rutland but the death of two Dukes in quick succession combined with the pressures of taxation and increased maintenance costs meant that some of the land and adjoining properties were sold to the villagers. It was during this time that properties such as Pasture Farm, Cherry Tree Farm and New Holme came to be privately owned.

The second event worthy of mention is the discovery of oil in the 1950s. During the Second World War, a few bombs were dropped in the vicinity of Plungar and geological inspection of the craters convinced the oil geologist Percy Kent that it would be worth prospecting for oil. Subsequent drillings proved the presence of oil in the area and some small wells were sunk, but the yields were modest and not long after the village returned to normality.



Drilling for Oil

Present:



Church Lane, 2006

Although its population has changed very little over the last 100 years (the mid-year 2001 population estimate was 226) modern-day Plungar is evidently very different from the village it was in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the most striking differences must surely be work-related. Traditionally, employment within the village would have been based predominantly on local agriculture, with a few villagers also being employed on the railway or the ironstone mines at Branston and Eaton, but Plungar now serves largely as a dormitory village for larger towns and cities such as Nottingham and Leicester.

This shift in employment patterns has been caused in part by changes in transportation, many of which occurred in the early to mid 20th century. For example, Grantham Canal which was opened in 1797 primarily to serve the local agricultural communities and was used for transporting coal and numerous other goods, succumbed to pressure from the railways and closed to traffic in 1929. Ironically, the nearest railway station at Redmile was also pulled down in the late 1950s so the village is now dependant solely on road access.

These changes in transportation and, more specifically, the advent of the car have arguably also contributed to the demise of many of the local businesses. In the early 1900s, the village was fairly self sufficient, being well served by a plethora of travelling salespeople and a number of shops and businesses (including a post office, bakery, butchers and Forge) but few now remain. There are still two working farms within the village and another just outside the village envelope, whilst the former butcher's shop (The Old Wharf) has been converted to provide popular holiday accommodation. All other shops have closed and postal services are provided on a part time basis only.



Awarding Winning Holiday Accommodation

Leisure activities have been affected in much the same way. At one time, people would have rarely ventured outside the village for their entertainment but this is no longer the case. As residents travel further afield in search of amusement, traditional forms of entertainment have suffered. Once popular events such as the Annual Village Feast have ceased to be whilst local sports facilities (such as the cricket pitch in Pell's field on Granby Lane and tennis courts on the old airfield and at Poplar Farm and Vale House) have long since gone.



Plungar Village Hall

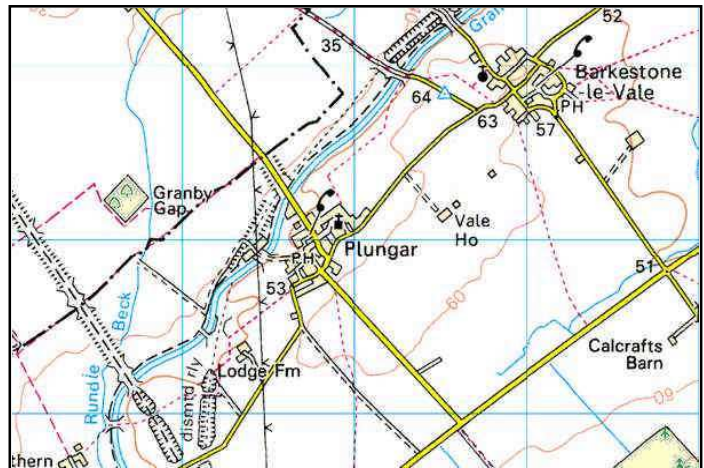
Thankfully, a few amenities are still in use: the Anchor pub and the Village Hall continue to provide a focal point for social activities, the latter staging a varied program of events throughout the year, whilst St. Helen's Church meets the religious needs of the village (although the Wesleyan Chapel was converted into a residential dwelling in the late 1990's). There is, nevertheless, a sense that the community is being eroded and that 21st century pressures are taking their toll on village life.

The Geographical Context:

Plungar is situated in North East Leicestershire, about 10 miles from Melton Mowbray and within the Vale of Belvoir.

Land within the Vale is fairly flat and villages are few and compact, linked by a network of long, quiet country lanes with grassy verges. These settlements are closely linked to the underlying rocks and soils; because the Triassic clays which underlie the Vale of Belvoir tend to be heavy and poorly-drained, villages everywhere are located on slight rises in landform where drainage, and hence agricultural productivity, is improved.

Plungar is no exception. It is located in a slightly elevated position and has grown up around what is essentially the meeting of Granby Lane, which runs approximately North to South through the village, and Harby Lane/Barkestone Lane, which runs approximately East to West. The disused Grantham Canal, which is now used for recreational purposes, lies immediately adjacent to the village on its north side.



Map of Plungar

Open views of the Vale are a feature all round the village but particularly to the south with a splendid panorama of Belvoir Castle and wooded hillsides, and to the North towards Granby.



Aerial View of Plungar

3. BUILDINGS



Village View

Plungar comprises of buildings of many styles and eras, including:

- 2-storey cottages directly fronting the street e.g. on Frog Lane
- Converted buildings e.g. the Forge, the Old Chapel, the Old Post Office, the Old Wharf
- Traditional farmhouses
- Pre- and post-war council houses e.g. on Highgate Close and Barkestone Lane
- Modern bungalows e.g. on Post Office Lane and Frog Lane
- Modern houses built to individual designs e.g. Glen Rose on Granby Lane and Plum Tree House on Frog Lane
- Small groups of modern houses built to similar design e.g. the Cherry Trees development and the houses on the former Manor Farm site. Although these are fairly small in number those that do exist are built in styles that, to a greater or lesser extent, are intended to sympathise with their surroundings.

Listed Buildings:

There are 7 listed "buildings" in Plungar:

- The Old Forge on Granby Lane
- The Old Post Office on Post Office Lane
- The telephone box on Post Office Lane
- St Helen's Church
- The tomb of the Smith family in St Helen's graveyard
- Cherry Trees
- Home Farm



The Forge

Although not listed, there are a number of other notable buildings in the village that contribute significantly to its character. These include the Village Hall, Old Cottage, Church House, the Old Vicarage, the Old Chapel and the recently built Plum Tree House.



The Old Post Office



St. Helen's Church

Building Styles:

It is difficult to identify a predominant style within the village since the general impression is of variety. Nevertheless, there is a preponderance of red brick combined with red-brown pantiles (but sometimes Bottesford blue pantiles or slates) and the buildings are largely simple and cottage-like in terms of shape. They are nonetheless often decorated with brick banding, ornate chimneys, ornate lead flashing and attractive ironwork.

Building Materials:

In the past, the geology of the area dictated the choice of building materials; throughout the 16th, 17th & 18th centuries the lower lias clays of the Belvoir Valley provided the most basic building materials, first in the form of mud walls and latterly in the form of bricks. Unfortunately, although examples of mud walls can still be seen in the village e.g. the Old Cottage on Church Lane, these are rare. Bricks however are widespread, being predominantly red in colour (the iron oxide in the clay giving them their characteristic hue) but also brown and orange. Bonding styles vary.



Clockwise from bottom left: Old Cottage featuring red brick, mud walls and whitewash; Church House built in red brick; Whitewashed Cottage on Church Lane; The Old Vicarage – a traditional stone & brick building; Feature brickwork on a modern property

In keeping with the traditional buildings, the majority of modern dwellings have been built using red brick. Some recently built properties have also incorporated dogtoothed and dentilated brickwork at eaves level and on gable ends to reflect some of the ornate features on older houses.

The use of stone is also evident in some of the older buildings, most of which combine stone at ground floor level with brick on the first floor e.g. the Old Vicarage and the cottage next to the Chapel on Church Lane. The Church is also stone-built, being constructed from ironstone.

Variety is further provided by a number of rendered and whitewashed properties which are interspersed throughout the village.

Roofs and Chimneys:



Roofs are predominantly clad with red pantiles whilst some of the older buildings have been roofed with Bottesford blue pantiles (black in appearance), or occasionally, slate, including interlocking slates on at least one property.

Roof pitches tend to vary with the best being 45 degrees upwards. Parapet gables are also in evidence as are half-hipped gable ends. Ridge vents are also noticed on some functional outbuildings, which add to the character of the village. Gable ends are also complimented by dove-cote detailing whilst gable end barge boards are a feature of 1960's and 70's properties.

Although many of the eaves are plain, there are also a high number of decorated styles such as those that incorporate dentilated and dog-toothed brickwork.

Some of the older, lower, 2-storey cottages have dormers breaking the roof slope, and this feature has occasionally been copied in modern properties (chalet-type bungalows).

Of particular note are the chimney breasts. The majority are internal, with stacks centralised at the ridge and ornate pots of varying different styles. There are nevertheless several external breasts, a notable example being the unusual bow shaped chimney at Old Cottage on Church Lane.



External Chimney at Old Cottage



Clockwise from bottom left: Traditional red pantiles; Ornate roof tiles; Mixture of red pantiles, Bottesford blue and slate; Dovecote detailing; Decorative half hipped gable end on modern property



Rainwater Goods:

Cast iron rainwater goods can occasionally still be found on some of the older properties but in the main, gutters and down-pipes are of modern materials and in darker colours.

Windows:

Window casements are generally timber, with a wide range of styles. Yorkshire sliding sash and sash-cord are well used. Attention to detail, including the use of horns (whether ornamental or not) lends to the attraction of the window frames. The better glazing bars tend to be relatively thin, with a mixture of finishes such as lambs tongue.



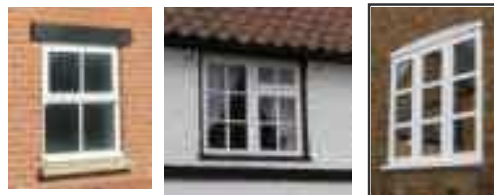
Dormers on the Old Post Office

Multi-paned sash and casement windows are normal in older buildings, while some of the modern houses have larger panes.

Many first floor window heads on both traditional and modern dwellings are close to or at eaves level, enhancing the low-rise appearance.

Some of the older houses have dormer windows. Various styles exist, sometimes breaking the line of eaves gutters. This feature has been copied in some modern properties.

Roof-lights are also present in numerous properties.



Small paned windows on both modern & old properties

Doors and Porches:

In most cases doors are either set flat into the elevation or set into a small porch. These porches are usually small compared with the host building.



Porches on Harby Lane

The majority of doors are solid with small glazed panels although the glazing is larger in some of the newer buildings, particularly those built in the 1960s and 70s. Wood is the most extensively used material.



Typical Doors & Porches

Garages:

The majority of smaller houses do not have garages. Most garages are discreetly situated, e.g. at the side or rear of the house, and do not dominate site frontages. Exceptions exist, especially with modern properties and chalet bungalows.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Building Styles:

P1.1 Careful consideration should be given to the existing street scene. New developments should be designed in relation to the whole street or the surrounding buildings, with particular emphasis on design and style, height and density. Architects and designers should be encouraged to submit detailed statements and drawings to demonstrate how the development integrates with its surroundings.

P1.2 Large developments and estates in a uniform modern style are inappropriate as they conflict with the village's varied architectural heritage.

P1.3 Garages should not be allowed to dominate site frontages. Careful consideration should be given to the area and height of garages to avoid them dominating the plot or adjacent structures. The impact of double garages should be minimised by ensuring that the eaves are as low as possible and by the use of two single doors rather than one large double door.

P1.4 Farmers should be encouraged to preserve and creatively reuse old farm buildings, paying particular attention to good design. Careful consideration should also be made to the construction and siting of new agricultural buildings.

Building Materials:

P1.5 The continued usage of mellow red brickwork is desirable although reclaimed brickwork (or its modern equivalent) or natural local stone would be welcome to add character to external appearances.

P1.6 The use of traditional brick detailing is also encouraged to reflect local architectural features.

P1.7 Decorative timber bargeboards on gable ends are not part of the village vernacular and should not be included in new builds.

P1.8 Stone claddings are not a common feature of the village and should be avoided. However rendered and whitewashed buildings are part of the vernacular and are acceptable, as is painted brickwork in either white or cream.

P1.9 Extensions and additions to existing properties should use materials similar or complementary to the main building to promote acceptable appearances.

Roofs and Chimneys:

P1.10 Roofs on any new build should follow the example of the past with pitched and gable ends using red/blue clay pantiles or slate. The use of reclaimed materials is also encouraged.

P1.11 Chimney stacks should be incorporated in gable walls to avoid isolated offset high stacks.

P1.12 The pitch of garage roofs should, if possible, match that of the main building.

P1.13 Aerials (and satellite equipment) should be discreetly located.

Rainwater Goods:

P1.14 Traditional materials are preferred although modern materials are acceptable. However, preference should be given to darker colours and the use of white or other bright colours on frontages is discouraged.

Windows:

P1.15 Either traditional or modern window frame materials are acceptable providing the style reflects those of surrounding properties, with the emphasis being on small and multi-paned units. Large single paned windows are discouraged.

P1.16 Although small square and pitched roof dormer windows are a feature in some of the existing houses, careful consideration should be given to the installation of new dormer windows. Developers should ensure that they do not dominate the building by keeping their size to a minimum and their position as low as possible on the slope of the roof. Their design should reflect that of the main roof and they should be finished in materials sympathetic to the rest of the structure. Flat roofed dormers are strongly discouraged.

P1.17 If headroom allows, roof-lights are encouraged as a less obtrusive alternative to dormer windows. If possible, conservation or flat "Victorian" style roof-lights should be used to minimise the effect on the roof's profile.

P1.18 Arched brick soldier courses add to the external appearance and are to be encouraged in new build or extensions.

P1.19 Cill and head details should reflect the vernacular.

Doors and Porches:

P1.20 Solid doors or doors incorporating small areas of glazing are preferable. Fully glazed doors do not promote a rural appearance and should be avoided.

P1.21 Porches should not be so large that they dominate front elevations.

4. BOUNDARIES

There are a variety of boundary treatments within the village, but boundaries are usually marked by a simple low wall, hedge, or fence. Open-plan frontages are atypical.

Some of the older 2-storey cottages do not have frontages and open directly on to the street e.g. the terraced houses on Frog Lane. Other frontages vary in size.



Traditional stone and brick built wall



From left: Low brick & hedge boundaries; Low brick wall bounding the recently built Plum Tree House; Cottages opening directly onto the street

DESIGN GUIDELINES

- P2.1 Traditional boundaries should be retained wherever possible and any new development should aim to retain existing walls or hedges.*
- P2.2 Where hedging is planted, repaired or replaced it should be with a variety of native species that are common to the area.*
- P2.3 When constructing new boundaries, the style, height and materials used should be in keeping with the property itself and immediate surroundings.*
- P2.4 Boundaries and gates that are too high should be avoided to prevent them becoming a landmark and dominating the frontal aspects of properties.*
- P2.5 Any new development, particularly fronting on to a thoroughfare, should have a boundary to reflect the traditional image of the village. Open plan frontages should be avoided.*
- P2.6 Either hedging or brick/stone is the preferred material for frontal boundaries. Any decorative features in brick or stone boundaries should reflect the architectural detail in the main house.*

5. STREET FURNITURE



The Post box

The village bus shelter is located opposite St Helen's Church and, although modern, is constructed of wood in a design appropriate to a rural environment. There are also two wooden benches, one located on the corner of Granby Lane and Barketstone Lane and the other at the top of The Gas overlooking the paddock adjacent to the pub.

The public telephone kiosk (one of seven listed "buildings") and the letterbox, both of traditional style and painted in red, are situated on Post Office Lane. The village notice board is located next to the phone box.

A litterbin and several waste recycling bins are situated in the Anchor's car park.

DESIGN GUIDELINES



Traditional red telephone box on Post Office Lane

P3.1 Care should be taken to preserve the rural nature of the village. Street furniture should be of good quality, traditional in design and in keeping with the character of the village.

Lighting:

Street lighting is of the soft yellow type and is used in moderation around the village to reduce light pollution.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P3.2 Street lighting for any new development should be of design in keeping with the village's rural image.

P3.3 To minimise the effects of light pollution, softer yellow lighting is preferred.

P3.4 Private security lighting should be carefully sited to illuminate the required area only, minimising light pollution and nuisance to road users and adjacent properties.

Signs:

Street name signs are white painted metal plates with black lettering on short timber posts or affixed to walls. The design of the more recent plates deviates slightly from the older ones. There are directional road signs within the village, some of older traditional design, one of modern design. Directional signs for footpaths and bridleways are green wooden finger post style.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P3.5 Signage should be kept to a minimum. Any redundant signs should be removed, unless of historic value.

P3.6 Any new signage must follow the traditional style and consideration given where appropriate to positioning on walls or buildings to avoid street clutter and improve visibility for traffic.

P3.7 Modern internally illuminated plastic/lightweight signs of any description are not acceptable.

P3.8 Traditional style hanging signs are acceptable but otherwise all advertising signs should be flat fixed to buildings and unobtrusive. Free-standing advertising signs are discouraged and hoardings are unacceptable.

Public Utilities:

Overhead services are carried on timber poles.

DESIGN GUIDELINES



Traditional road sign

P3.9 All future public utility installations should be encouraged to be underground if practical with sufficient care being taken to carefully restore excavated areas, particularly on roads and pavements.

P3.10 If overhead services are installed or replaced, the continued usage of timber poles is desirable to maintain the rural image.

P3.11 Future television/communication systems cable layers must consider very carefully the siting of the minimum number of junction boxes and ideally these should be below ground level.

6. HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC AND PARKING

The main thoroughfares are Granby Lane and Barkestone Lane, both of which experience modest amounts of through traffic, even at peak times.

Despite the relatively low volumes of traffic, there is concern about its speed, particularly as it enters the village via Granby Lane, Harby Lane and Barkestone Lane. The humped canal bridge means that speeding traffic entering from Granby does so blind, on a stretch of road leading to the towpath where hikers and horse-riders are frequently encountered. Also traffic speeding through the village takes little account of blind corners e.g. where Church lane and Post Office Lane bisect Granby Lane.



**Blue diamond pavers on
the Gas**

There are hard pavements along at least one side of most streets in the village, exceptions being Granby Lane as it leaves the village envelope, and parts of Church Lane, Harby Lane and Frog Lane. Pavements are generally narrow and surfaced with tarmac (although a notable exception is The Gas which is surfaced with attractive blue diamond pavers).

In Frog Lane and parts of Church Lane the absence of garages or adequate off-road parking means that these roads often become congested and parking is difficult. In the other village lanes, although they are in places very narrow, blockages are rare, unless people park inconsiderately.

The Anchor pub has sufficient off-road car parking to cater for all their customers when busy.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P4.1 Any new development should ensure there is sufficient space for off-road parking.

P4.2 Traffic calming measures should be taken to slow vehicles at the points of entry into the village. Special care should be taken with any proposed measures to ensure that they are in keeping with the rural surroundings, will accommodate farm vehicles, and are subject to extensive consultation.

P4.3 Wide hard-surfaced pavements should be avoided in new developments with street frontage. Any new pavements should be tarmaced. Paving slabs are not acceptable.

7. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Plungar may be approached by road from four different directions, along the canal towpath in two directions, and by foot along several footpaths which radiate outwards from the village across farmland to neighbouring villages.

A right of way map is located at the front of the Anchor pub.



Map showing public rights of way

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P5.1 Footpaths and bridleways should be kept open and in good repair, maintained free of obstruction and their distinctive character retained.

P5.2 Any new development should not interfere with the location of existing rights of way. Proposals to close or divert any Public Rights of Way are likely to be strongly resisted.

8. OPEN SPACES



View across the paddock in the centre of the village



Chatterton's Paddock

The continued existence of open space is a vital ingredient to the rural setting of a village, providing a feeling of openness and counteracting the sense of enclosure caused by new developments. Open spaces allow views within the settlement, and are essential to preserving the character of the village.

A significant amount of infilling has occurred over the last 30-40 years and the amount of open land in private ownership is diminishing.

Nevertheless, a few areas remain although most are unprotected. These include Chatterton's paddock on Frog Lane and the paddock adjacent to the pub, which affords open views across the centre of the village.

Other vistas that should be maintained include the view from Barkestone Lane upon entering and leaving the village and similarly, the view from Granby Lane looking towards Granby. The views of St Helen's Church and the neighbouring church in Barkestone should also be preserved.



View towards Barkestone



Granby Lane looking towards Granby



View of St. Helens's Church

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P6.1 Retention of remaining open spaces, protected or private, is considered vital to maintaining the traditional character of the village.

P6.2 Open spaces are also viewed as being significant to supporting local wildlife.

P6.3 Important views, within and of the village and beyond, including sight lines, especially along the village lane approaches, should be preserved.

P6.4 The treatment of spaces between buildings is of considerable importance to the design and should reflect the rural rather than suburban character.

9. TREES/GREENERY/WILDLIFE

Trees, hedgerows, ponds and ditches provide important drainage functions as well as habitats for wildlife and should be maintained or restored as appropriate.



Grantham Canal behind the Old Wharf



Mature trees in St. Helen's churchyard

Plungar is reasonably well treed, with significant numbers of mature specimens within the churchyard, to the north of Church Lane and the end of Granby Lane (at the junction with Barkestone Lane). There are also a few trees in the immediately surrounding farmland.

The now disused Grantham Canal, which lies immediately adjacent to the village on its north side, represents a valuable wildlife corridor as well as an important recreational amenity.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

P7.1 Existing trees, shrubs and watercourses should be retained wherever possible and integrated into any new development.

P7.2 Mature trees and hedgerows should be preserved or replaced within the village boundaries, along all access roads and in the immediate surrounding countryside.

P7.3 Developers and householders should avoid estate type developments at the village boundaries that may adversely affect the visual approaches to the village. Consideration should also be given to the planting of copses and hedgerows as screening as well as construction of ditches and ponds wherever appropriate.

P7.4 New development should include landscaping proposals at the initial design stage, including native tree and hedge planting and the incorporation of mature trees.

P7.5 Appropriate maintenance of existing trees, shrubs, hedges and watercourses within the village will be encouraged.