

CHARACTER OF SHEARSBY POLICY GROUP

Parish profile

Shearsby Parish extends from the southernmost point on the Bruntingthorpe road at Shearsby Lodge Farm then to the east following field boundaries to the A5199, Welford Road, at John Ball Farm. A further 3 fields along the boundary turns due north to cross the Saddington Road and follows the Arnesby road turning west at the intersection and then south westerly adjacent to Grange Farm.

From here field hedges are followed returning to the A5199, crossing at the head of the old road and forwards once more using field boundaries to eventually sweep south to complete the perimeter at the starting point.

With an area enclosing 455.87 hectares, approximately 1126.5 acres, the Parish of Shearsby is of a wholly rural nature. Narrow country lanes lined with ancient hedges and ridge and furrow fields enclose a mixture of tilled agricultural land and managed grassland.

Population

The Parish population of usual residents is 240, giving a density of 0.5 persons per hectare compared with a density of 1.4 for the entire the Harborough District. ⁽ⁱ⁾
In comparison the recorded population in the 1841 census was 379 persons with an age range of 1 year old to 75 years old.

Economic activity of usual residents lists 165 persons aged between 16 and 74 years with 30.3% full time employed, 12.1% part time employed, 20% self-employed and 20% inactive and retired* the remaining 17.6% are not employed and may be sick, disabled or carers, looking after family or full time students.

Shearsby Village

The main settlement is fairly centrally situated and has Conservation Status designated in 1975 and revised in 2006. The Conservation Area embraces the largest part of the compact village including land either side of the junction with the A5199 where there are some older buildings but the most recent revision excludes 2 houses in a spur off Church Lane.

The tranquil setting of Shearsby is greatly enhanced by there being no road access through the village to other locations confining traffic to residents and visitors. It is also well served by several converging footpaths including the Leicestershire Round passing through the village. One path to a neighbouring village brings the schoolchildren from Arnesby on nature walks to Shearsby.

A “shrunk village” late Anglo Saxon to late Post Medieval – 850 AD to 1899 AD, the historic settlement core has been deduced using historic mapping and research referenced in the Domesday Book as Seuesbi in 1086. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

The village lies in a hollow close to the A5199 Leicester to Northampton Road and includes peripheral open areas of pasture which are important to the overall character and settlement. ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

Back Lane drops steeply from the A5199 with a generous tree lined grass verge; at the top it is very narrow at its lower end it is flanked by red brick buildings on a cobble or granite

plinth. The original Grange Farm House, now renamed The Old Vicarage, is a long and low red brick building sitting well back at an angle directly in front of the church and looking outwards up Back Lane. The former farmyard has been sympathetically developed into dwellings with the addition of two properties.

A side road off Back Lane slopes upwards past several 1950s semi-detached houses to newer bungalows in a cul-de-sac. An offshoot of this road sweeps past The Cottage, a red brick house and round to The Bank where two 1960s bungalows sit near to a row of old cottages, the first of which was The Old Crown public house.

The centre of Shearsby is a large (100m long) enclosed open space of the Green with an encircling road. The road at its lower and narrow end is The Square with sizeable houses overlooking it and a smaller old red cottage at the edge of the Green and flanking it. In one corner is a small grassed area with a K6 telephone kiosk and water pump. The Square itself has a double width road surface with narrow pavements either side.

The Green is enclosed, in part by the buildings adjacent to The Square, in part to the south by a red brick wall and partly by a hedge. It is the centre of the village structure. Around the Green are cottages and more substantial houses, in red brick or slate or rendered. At its upper (western) end a red brick wall on the outer side links dwellings and forms the boundary to the pasture land behind. The wall helps to emphasise the sense of enclosure round the Green.

From the Green and its encircling road lead out various roads: the narrow Back Lane rises up to the A5199; Mill Lane with early cottages on either side rises to the Bruntingthorpe Road passing by the site of a windmill mound at the highest point where there are panoramic views of the countryside.

The short Fenny Lane is a cul-de-sac rising towards open countryside from the Chandlers Arms Public House. It is closely developed with a mixture of buildings in age and style including Woodbine Cottage, a 17th century Grade 2 listed timber- framed thatched house.

A fourth road, the narrow Church Lane is a large no-through road straggling downwards to the north and forming its own distinct area. Close to The Square and facing in from a bank is the symmetrical Church Farm House. Behind it is the churchyard gate with its cast iron overthrow looking downwards towards The Square. A yew tree adjacent to the church gate partially overhangs the lane closing the view downwards from The Square. Opposite, facing Church Lane is the significant 16th century timber- framed and thatched Yeomans Cottage. Beyond, the churchyard rises steeply with retaining granite walls and the church's squat limestone ashlar tower of 1789 with elaborate weather vane that make a visual stop looking up towards the village. Immediately opposite is the former 19th century village school now the village hall (enlarged in 1997).

Adjacent to the Church and sloping upwards, open grassland offers a pleasant vista to the north east emphasising the country Church on the hill. The last remaining village farmyard opposite was developed in 2014 with two substantial houses cloaking the view on the western side of the lane. The rest of Church Lane is a mixture of old and new, former farmhouses, cottages, individual new houses and a close of fairly new houses whose materials and massing orientation are in sympathy with the irregular form of building in the lane. The use of Swithland slate and thatched roofs for houses, cottages and farm buildings are notable features of Shearsby.

Encapsulation

- Shearsby parish encloses a very small area, a little over 1100 acres.
- Usual residents total 240 with an age range between 0 and 90 years.
- The number of residents that are retired is in excess of 20%.
- It is a conservation village with eight grade 2 listed buildings and evidence of medieval village earthworks.
- The village enjoys a tranquil setting enhanced by access roads from the north-east and south and no through traffic.
- The ancient village settlement has surviving 17th century buildings intermingled with 20th century development including former farm yard conversions.
- A radial village with the green as a centre piece, a rare feature in modern Britain.
- The steep approach from Bruntingthorpe Road down Mill Lane shows the village nestling in a hollow.
- A similar incline from the A5199 emphasises the compact form.
- The streetscape, in particular at the entrance to Church lane with Yeomans cottage next to the former school and opposite the church, accentuates the historic significance of the village.
- The use of Swithland slate and thatch, red brick and render together with the irregular form of the whole village layout mark out a clear identity.
- The village amenities are the church, the village hall and the public house. There is no bus service or shop.
- Entering the village via one of many footpaths there is always the immediacy of surprise enriched by the soft tones of the changing seasons and the pleasant settings of the houses mixed with open spaces along the streets.

Possible addendum

going to add a point about the high ratio of 'old to new buildings' and 'green space to built on space' which may mark the village as unique relative to other villages?

(i) 2011 census, Office for National Statistics.

(ii) Leicestershire and Rutland Historical Environment Record MLE9331

(iii) With acknowledgement to the Conservation Area Character Statement produced by the Planning Policy and Conservation Group 2001 a large part of which is reused and updated.

**compared with 15.5% inactive and retired in the Harborough District and 13.7% in England.*