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Gayles Conservation Area



gateway at Manor House

Gayles Conservation Area was designated in 1982 in connection with the preparation of a non-statutory village plan. The following brief statement identifies the environmental qualities which led to designation, and which the District Council considers should be preserved or enhanced, as the case may be.

Gayles lies on the south side of a wide valley, and even from relatively close quarters, merges into the surrounding landscape which largely dominates the buildings. The form of Gayles is unique in Richmondshire, being divided into three quite distinct 'streets' running at right angles to the largely un-developed through road, resulting in the bulk of the village being hidden from the view of the passing motorist. Why the village developed in this way is unclear, but its fragmented form and the prominence of the intervening landscape, give clear definition to character of the village.

The smallest of the 'streets', East Street, contains only a handful of buildings, informally grouped, and significantly including Thimbleby Cottage, the only dwelling in the village which lies to the north of the through road. Middle Street, in contrast, has a slightly more formal air with a wide range of building types. From its narrow entrance by the Bay Horse Inn, West Street gradually widens to the open expanse of Quarry Hill Common, providing an interesting sense of both enclosure and open space in the same scene. Buildings are more formally arranged in frontage groups.

The village contains some fine examples of vernacular buildings including, The Grange (East Street) and Gayles House (West Street). Manor House (Middle Street) dates from the late C17th and is a very early local example of classical architecture. Otherwise the buildings are of basic vernacular style with simple and restrained detailing, limited openings, and a strong sense of solidity. Buildings typically incorporate vertically sliding sashes, Yorkshire sashes or mullioned windows, and solid doors. Although lead and copper were mined locally, the village is more commonly associated with the quarrying of very fine sandstone, extensively used for the construction of many local houses. The use of good stone enhances the appearance of even the most modest cottage, and its quality contrasts starkly with the imported stone used on a number of more recent buildings. Roof coverings are generally of stone slate, Welsh slate and pantiles, though some re-roofing has been carried out in artificial materials. A notable contrast to the general character of buildings in the conservation area lies in East Street, where one cottage is rendered. This traditional finish provides interesting variation to the otherwise dominant stone walling.

Although there are no formal areas of village green, the grass verges throughout the village and Quarry Hill Common play an important visual role in providing a setting for the various building groups.

Trees, hedges and stone walls make a particularly important contribution to the character of Gayles, both in terms of their influence on the appearance of the three 'streets' as well as the overall setting of the village.

The unusual form of the village highlights the importance of the spaces between the existing building groups. The C20th development between Middle and West Street demonstrates how easily the character of the village could be damaged through further insensitive infilling. Ill-considered alterations have marred the architectural quality of some buildings, and care should be taken in the future to avoid damaging change, with restoration encouraged wherever possible. A further area for concern is vehicle damage to the verges and "green" areas, resulting in the erosion of these important features.

NOTE: PANTILES NOT WIDELY USED ON OLD BUILDINGS ONLY 2 EXAMPLES IN VILLAGE

STRESS IMPORTANCE OF SPACE + GROUPINGS UP STREET TO AVOID INFILL ON MAIN ROAD

* LOOK AT EAST STREET TO GET TIDIED UP *