



Apsley End (Shillington) Conservation Area

Introduction

18 October 2006

This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. Shillington Conservation Area was designated in September 1973 and included Apsley End. The setting, character and appearance of Apsley End are now considered separately. This will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals for Apsley End preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and/or its setting. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.

Setting

The origins of Apsley End date from at least the early medieval period, its name being Old English for 'Aspen Wood'. The settlement is also mentioned in the Charter Rolls of 1253.

Apsley End is one of the five 'Ends' which surround the village core of Shillington and which, together, comprise Shillington. Apsley End is the southernmost of this group of settlements and adjoins the county boundary with Hertfordshire along much of its southern side. The settlement lies along a stream flowing from south to north to join the River Flit at Shefford. To the immediate south east of Apsley End, the land rises forming a low chalk escarpment, an outlier of the Chilterns. Apart from this, the landscape to the west and north is low lying and open: it frames and defines the edge of the settlement.



View from Apsley End Road looking east towards High Road and Pirton Hall

The approaches to the settlement are quite varied: that from the north is via High Road, from Shillington village a kilometre away, and separated by a narrow belt of farmland. Hanscombe End Road forms the north easterly approach across the cultivated fields and sporadic development of the wide valley. From the south east the road descends from the low crest of the escarpment topped by Pirton Hall.

From this point the village can be seen in its wide valley setting, and its relationship to the church tower of Shillington can be appreciated. The approach from the south descends at a gentler gradient and is framed by trees. As the road bends the southern end of the settlement is revealed.

Character

Apsley End is a small, linear and low density settlement focussed on the intersection of four roads converging on the bridge which forms its spine. It is small scale and spacious. The handful of medieval farmsteads and vernacular timber framed cottages, most being listed buildings, alternate with one or two 18th century and late Victorian houses, later estate workers cottages and sporadic recent infill. Generally, buildings of all these periods, with a few significant exceptions are set back from the roadway and are situated on large plots allowing extensive views of the countryside setting.

Apsley End has a very verdant feel particularly with a number of Horse Chestnut trees dominating the southern end of the conservation area. Hedges, many Beech, also play an important

role in the street scene, defining the frontage of plots and creating continuity and screening between buildings. Verges are common, providing a soft, spacious edge to the highway. The stream running parallel to Apsley End Road is an important part of the settlement's character, the sound of fast running water from the sluice to the north of Pirton Grange is audible on a still day with no passing traffic.

The medieval moated complex of Pirton Grange lying just south of the intersection of the four roads, contributes to the character of Apsley End as it encloses the core of the settlement and is the focus of many local views. An area has been marked on the conservation area map highlighting the fact that Pirton Grange is considered to be worthy of conservation area status but lies outside the administrative control of Mid Beds District Council and has, therefore, not been included in the conservation area. The Grange is, however, listed and thus it and its setting are protected.

To the south of Pirton Grange, where the stream turns back towards Apsley End Road, views open up towards the wider countryside setting. Apsley End, being part of Shillington does not possess a church or any other place of worship, and today the only social focus of the settlement is the Musgrave Arms public house.

Appearance

The palette of traditional building materials contributes to the character of Apsley End. Exposed timber frame, mainly with lath and plaster infill characterises the earliest buildings.



No. 34 Apsley End Road

Brick noggin is less widely used as an infill to the timber frames and is seen on later framed buildings. Otherwise red brick is the most widely employed material, contrasting with the light coloured gault brick on some Victorian houses. Render is widely used on buildings of all periods and sizes, whilst horizontal lapped weatherboarding, painted black, is used to clad a number of farm buildings. Roofing materials range from thatch to plain tile to slate whilst post and rail fencing (either timber or metal) is often used as a front boundary treatment.

Owing to its relatively small size and consistent character, Apsley End does not subdivide into well defined character sub areas. However it is convenient to consider it mainly in two parts. Firstly the bridge and crossroads, the nucleus of the settlement and secondly the linear southern stretch of Apsley End Road.

Hanscombe End Road and High Road (north of the crossroads)

When entering the conservation area from Hanscombe End Road, the north side is marked by mature hedgerow whilst the south side is marked by three properties (a listed building and two buildings considered to be of local interest). In many respects, a similar situation exists on the High Road where the west side of the road is marked by hedgerow and the east side by listed buildings and buildings of local interest. The open land between these roads is identified as Significant Landscape Space.

The bridge and crossroads including High Road to the south

Successive road improvements have reduced the visual impact of the bridge and gives the area the sense of a highway intersection. This area is identified as a site where enhancement is to be encouraged and remains a focal point. Due to some of the buildings which are located on the back edge of the roadway on the eastern side and the hedges on the other sides, this area is relatively well enclosed. The buildings on the west side of the



No.2 Apsley End Road

northern end of Apsley End Road and the east side of High Road face each other across an area regarded as Significant Landscape Space which funnels into the settlement at the bridge and forms part of Pirton Grange Farm.

Approaching from the south east means entering the conservation area from North Hertfordshire. In fact, an approximate centre line through the large weatherboarded barn situated gable end onto High Road forms the county boundary and the barn creates a pinch point in the streetscene. The name of this road denotes the fact that there are elevated views down towards Pirton Grange and the weatherboarded buildings on its east side.

Further towards the crossroads and within the conservation area is a large modern farm building which does not enhance the domestic scale of the area and is regarded as a site where enhancement is to be encouraged. The design of any further new development in the vicinity would have to pay special regard to scale, height, footprint and boundary treatment. The linear arrangement of buildings and their relationship to the road, either parallel or perpendicular to it, is an essential element contributing to the character and appearance of the area.

Apsley End Road

This linear element of the conservation area winds gently to the south, away from the nucleus of the bridge and crossroads. At the northern end of the road, Apsley End House is disappointing in terms of scale, massing and general design when compared with listed buildings and buildings of local interest in the vicinity. Development, similar to that of Apsley End House should be resisted in the future, thus safeguarding the character and appearance of the area.



Enclosed countryside setting to the east

stream forms the edge of the road at its northern end, whilst at the southern end, allotments and recent house plots fill the space between the road and the stream. At various points, the fields and meadows interrupt the line of buildings, offering views of the wide valley to the west, and through trees, the more enclosed countryside rising to the ridge to the east.

The road pinches on the bend halfway along its course, at the point where the stream meets the roadside verge on one side and tall hedges and trees enclose the highway on the other.

At this point, the Musgrave Arms and a pair of cottages form a cluster, contrasting with the open nature of the rest of the road. The verge on the western side of the road creates a soft edge to the highway and is only significantly interrupted at the forecourt of the public house.



Musgrave Arms Public House

To the south, is no.24 (grade II listed) set back from the road behind a hedge. A barn, on the south side of no.24 but within the curtilage of no.26, is regarded as a building of local interest and contributes positively to the setting of no.24. Beyond, nos.26a and 28 together with the housing on the opposite side of the road make a minimal contribution to the streetscene. The 1½ storey estate workers cottages to the south of nos.34-36 (grade II listed), are solidly built and maintain the modest scale of the settlement. The cottages date from the interwar era, in a late version of the Vernacular Revival style.



Entrance to Shillington Manor

South of the cottages, the conservation area extends to the grade II listed cast iron gates of Shillington Manor on the east side of the road, where it is framed by trees, and turns away from the settlement. Whilst the conservation area terminates on the west side of the road at The Old Court House (grade II listed).

Enhancement

Generally, Apsley End Conservation Area is well maintained, the enhancement of the character and appearance of a conservation area can be defined as a reinforcement of the qualities providing the special interest which warranted designation. Enhancement may involve positive physical proposals or the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over extensions and alterations.

Areas which warrant special consideration are marked on the conservation area plan and are:-

- The banks of the stream around the bridge and footbridge.
- Edge of highway footpath hard surfacing
- Close board fencing to the south of no.4 Apsley End Road
- Large agricultural building at Pirton Grange Farm
- Site to the north of no.24 (Mulberry Cottage), Apsley End Road
- Front boundary to paddock area at no.48 Apsley End Road



Bridge and footbridge intersection

General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character of Apsley End Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

1. Retain Listed Buildings and Buildings of Local Interest. There will be a strong presumption against the demolition of such buildings unless there is a clear justification for doing so, for instance being beyond repair. Where possible other buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area should also be retained. If any of the above buildings become vacant efforts should be made to find a beneficial reuse.
2. Ensure that new development positively contributes to the setting of Listed Buildings and the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, footprint, mass, scale, design and materials used.
3. Ensure that house extensions and alterations satisfy the District Council's technical guidance entitled 'Extensions and Alterations: A Design Guide for Householders'.
4. Seek to retain important boundary walls and hedgerows where they positively contribute to the character and appearance of the area particularly in terms of frontage boundary treatments.
5. Where necessary, retain trees within the conservation area and ensure that where new development is permitted, proper consideration is given to tree planting and appropriate landscape treatment.
6. Ensure the protection of significant landscape spaces with a presumption against new development.

PLANNING GUIDANCE – APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES

This document was subject to public consultation between 15 July 2006 and 25 August 2006. Consultation included an advertised exhibition at Shillington Village Hall and entry on the District Council's website.

A full statement of the consultation process is available from the address below.

- This information can be provided in an alternative format or language on request **08458 495405**
- যদি অনুপ্রবেশ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন। **08458 495405 (Bengali)**
- 你可以要求以另一種格式或語言提供這些訊息 **08458 495405 (Chinese)**
- ਹਿਧ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬੇਠਤੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਰਲ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। **08458 495405 (Punjabi)**
- یہ معلومات آپ کے درخواست کرنے پر متبادل ذرائع یا زبان میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ **08458 495405 (Urdu)**

www.midbeds.gov.uk/services/planning
08452 304040

For further information contact:
Conservation and Design Team,
Mid Beds District Council,

Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds SG17 5TQ
Tel: **08458 495405** Fax: **08458 495333**
Email: **conservation@midbeds.gov.uk**

Planning Division