



# Old Warden and Old Warden Park Conservation Area

## Introduction

22 March 2006

This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. Old Warden was designated in October 1971 and reviewed in July 1989. The setting, character and appearance of Old Warden and Old Warden Park Conservation Area are considered separately. This will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals for Old Warden and Old Warden Park preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and/or its setting. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.





## Setting

Old Warden is a small estate village, located seven miles south east of Bedford and approximately three miles west of Biggleswade. The main and northern parts of the settlement were largely created by Lord Ongley in the latter part of the 18th and early 19th centuries as a model estate village to replace the old settlement at Warden Street. The present village is a carefully created composition reflecting the picturesque by the deliberate use of a variety of cottage ornée in irregularly and loosely spaced building groups surrounded by a setting of trees, hedgerows and slopes.

## Character

The village is divided into sub areas: a larger main village group in the High Street, Church End, Bedford Road and Old Warden Park (a grade II\* listed mansion located within a grade II\* registered park and garden).

Old Warden Park (now known as Shuttleworth College) was built for Joseph Shuttleworth (1875-1880), and lies towards the centre of the park, replacing an earlier house on the same site. The three-storey, Tudor-style, ashlar stone mansion is dominated by a massive four-stage clock tower on the north-east corner and 9no. multiple-flue chimney stacks.



*Old Warden Park*

*Photograph by: Shuttleworth Trust*

In 1820 and 1830 Robert, the third Lord Ongley, created the Swiss Garden and the village of Old Warden as we see today. In 1872 Lord Ongley sold the estate to Joseph Shuttleworth who added features to the Swiss Garden and wider estate.

The 172 hectare park lies on the eastern edge of the village and provides a landscape setting to the picturesque village. The Ongley family bought the park in the late 17th century. The park was initially created by the second Lord Ongley c.1800-05, and between

The parkland setting forms an important green backcloth to the village. The many different deciduous tree species throughout the conservation area provide rich contrasts of shape and colour. Evergreens, such as fir, yew and cypress, retain the impact of the landscape throughout the seasons.

The character of the conservation area is partly attributed to contrast:

- Between groups of differently designed buildings,
- Between the linear contained form of the village and the open character of the parkland, and
- Between the verdant northern and southern ends of the High Street and the central section which is uncharacteristically dominated by buildings.



*Verdant northern end of the High Street*

The layout of the village is such that there is little development in depth other than two new houses to the east of the church. Most buildings are set back from the road, however, the character of Church End is principally defined by the row of single storey estate cottages which are built hard on to the back of the highway boundary and lead the eye along the line of the street.

There are a number of locations from which there are good views across the parkland to the mansion, from Church End and particularly when approaching the village from the north. With respect to the former, there is a good view of the mansion from the public footpath running north-south from a ridge to the south of St Leonard's Church. All of these views of the parkland and mansion help to maintain the links and association between the village and the estate. Due to the type, height and location of major belts of planting, it is interesting to note that Old Warden village is not as visible from the mansion and its grounds.



Whilst the initial impression, certainly, within the main village, is that the buildings and structures are well maintained by the Shuttleworth Trust, there are 4no. Buildings at Risk and 6no. vulnerable buildings on the Mid Bedfordshire 'Buildings at Risk Register - June 2004'.

## Appearance

The architectural styles, materials and details used in the village give it a rustic and quintessential English village character which belies its 19th century origin. Although some of the buildings are faced with red/brown or buff bricks, the majority are finished with painted render, usually with exposed, white-painted, timber framing. External paint colours provide a vibrant contrast to the green backcloth of the landscape.



*No.16 High Street*

A few of the cottages are very plainly finished but most show, to a varying degree, the Victorian enthusiasm for ornamentation, often echoing details from previous architectural periods. The use of tiles and thatch are used with varying degrees of decorative detail. Roofs are mainly steeply pitched with large overhangs. Elaborately carved bargeboards or eyebrow windows surmounted by ornamental tile or thatch adorn some cottages.

Windows, sometimes in bay form, are normally latticed in a rectangular or diagonal pattern, but a few are rounded, featuring neo-gothic lights. Chimneys are usually tall and are frequently castellated or decorated with stepped brickwork. The rustic appearance of the village is emphasised by the use of porches and verandas, usually constructed in wood and thatch. This ornamentation is continued to features such as the village pump next to the cricket ground which is encased with decorative twigwork.

## High Street

This group comprises the major part of the village lying between the grounds of Orchard Grange in the north and Bryant's Corner in the south. It is linear in form and follows along the base of the slope of Warden Warren rising to the east. Both the northern and southern approaches are dramatic and heavily treed with abrupt changes of road direction, deflecting views. At the northern approach stands Main Lodge at the principal entrance to Old Warden Park, designed by Henry Clutton in 1874 for Joseph Shuttleworth, in a Jacobean style. Warren Lodge stands at the southern gateway, and was another entrance lodge to Old Warden Park.

The entrance in to the High Street is marked by a small circular green at a pivotal corner in the ensemble, which is enclosed by white painted estate fencing. On this corner, the gable end of Parsonage Piece is a prominent feature and forms a visual gateway in to the High Street. The High Street is sensitively laid out with subtle relationships between buildings and spaces.



*Parsonage Piece (above right)*

The main core of the village is at the highest part of the street and focuses on the Post Office, the Hare and Hounds Public House and a tightly knit group of cottages. The Post Office was a former stables and has a clock and square louvered bell-cote with pyramidal roof and weathervane which forms a local landmark. To the south of the post office stands the only two-and-a-half storey building in the village. On the west side of the road is the former lower school, also designed by Henry Clutton for Shuttleworth Estate, and the Village Hall, a former reading Room in the picturesque Tudor style. The road gently falls away from this point to either end of the group.

The gaps between buildings are of fundamental importance because they allow the landscape to penetrate freely into every part of the area. The spaces are linked by holly, laurel and box hedges. The eastern side of the street is noted by its sloping grass banks.



The picturesque quality of the main village group is completed by densely planted areas of trees around Orchard Grange and the wooded mass of Warden Warren. The Lower Greensand Ridge forms the skyline and cottages nestle lower down the slope.

### *Church End*

Ickwell Lodge is grade II listed and sets the scene before entering this sub area from the north-east. To the south-west, the timber framed former granary is raised on straddle stones and makes an interesting feature within the street scene. It's half-hipped, clay tile roof, painted weathered boarding, planked doors and ranges of narrow mullioned windows reflect its utilitarian nature. Further along in the street scene, there is a group of estate cottages with colourwashed roughcast render and clay tile roofs with bands of fishscale tiles.



*Nos. 4, 5 & 6 Church End*

Opposite no. 5 of this group is the 19th century village pump which is encased in rustic twigwork as is the shelter protecting it.

St Leonard's Church and the Ongley Mausoleum are separated from the cottages and stand in an elevated position, approached by Church Lane which is narrow and sunken. The church that once served the nearby Warden Abbey was built in the 12th to 14th century period and restored and remodelled in the 19th century, and is constructed mainly of brown ironstone rubble with limestone dressings. Its visual impact is not just limited to Church End, distant views of the tower are available from within Old Warden Park and from Bedford Road.

The Ongley Mausoleum was built in 1787 for the Ongley family, and is a small square building located in the eastern part of the churchyard.



*St Leonard's Church*

Church End is linked to the main village group by low well trimmed holly hedges on the east side of the road. On the west side of the road, Orchard Grange (the former vicarage), is a late 18th century house which is heavily screened by trees and is not readily visible from the public highway. The wooded grounds of Orchard

Grange and an intermittent hedgerow, physically separate this building from the rest of the village.

### *Bedford Road*

Laundry Farm is a small listed farmstead in the cottage ornée style situated to the west of Bryant's Corner. Although displaying a date plaque '1879' and the Shuttleworth emblem, the building is a reworking of an earlier 18th century one. To the west of Laundry Farm is a gap from which there is a view of the church tower. The field to the north of Laundry Farm, as seen from Bryant's Corner and other public vantage points, makes an important contribution to the setting of the conservation area and on which there will be a presumption against development. Continuing further up the hill are a number of houses including Richard's Crescent, which is formed by three properties linked with screen walls in a post-war, neo-Georgian style. Each of these properties has a '1948' date plaque. The village culminates at the western gateway with a pair of cottage ornée buildings facing each other on either side of the road and is a fitting western approach into the conservation area.



*The Lodge, Bedford Road*



## Old Warden Park

The main entrance to the park is set back off the north end of the main village street and is overlooked by Old Warden Lodge. This two-storey, Tudor-style, stone lodge stands in an open lawn south of the drive, which in turn is flanked by wooden gates and two sets of square stone piers. Beyond the Lodge, the road snakes upwards towards a point at which there is an open view into the park including the carriage sweep to the south front of the mansion.

The stable block and coach house, lying some 50m east of the mansion are in the French Gothic style, built of yellow brick with stone dressings. The buildings are arranged in a U-plan, entered through a round-headed archway within a low tower.

The mansion is edged to the west and north by a gravel path. Beyond, terraced lawns are bounded by white-painted, metal estate fencing which also contains the south entrance court. A path runs north-east from the north front, passing a thatched pavilion with rectangular canal and associated garden, entering a band of pleasure grounds north of the old stables and old kitchen garden which lead north to the Swiss Garden at the north-east corner of the park. The path continues north through open glades and evergreen shrubs, including yews and mature trees, to reach the bridge and underpass. The bridge is brick faced with rough concrete to imitate rusticated stonework; it is used as access between fields. The path emerges from the underpass to continue north and east, arriving at the delicate wrought-iron gate screen, which is the original main entrance in to Swiss Garden. A spur north from the path runs past a boathouse, around the northern tip of the upper east lake, arriving at Lakeside Cottage.

The Swiss Garden, created in the 1820s, is an outstanding example of the Swiss picturesque. It has many small separate vistas achieved through screens of shrubs and mature trees around lawns and grassy spaces. Two linked ponds of irregular shape, with islands, are situated in the north-eastern part of the garden: Middle Pond and Upper Pond, with a smaller linked pool further north. The Swiss Cottage, an ornate two-storey, octagonal building with thatched roof, set on a 'curved mound or knoll', provides the main element for this unusual and atmospheric garden. It provides the principal aspect for a number of contrived vistas which lead the eye towards this attractive thatched structure. A thatched tree shelter lies 50m south-west, a large oak with thatched roofing around the lower trunk.



*The Swiss Cottage, Swiss Garden*

The Shuttleworth family introduced a number of Victorian 'improvements', most notably a sunken grotto and fernery, of cruciform plan with an iron and glass dome at the intersection and decorated with Pulhamite rockwork. Some 50m north-west, an Indian Kiosk overlooks the Middle Pond, consisting of a circular timber building with ornate stained-glass panel, elaborate bark and twigwork and covered by a thatched roof. The Middle Pond has two ornate humped-backed cast-iron bridges. Notable mature trees include natives planted as specimens in the 19th century, together with a variety of exotics.

Old Warden Park retains many mature trees, particularly to the south. Two lakes dominate the park; they lie 300m north of the house but are not visible from it due to rising land between. A 19th century redbrick icehouse lies 190m south-west of the house, set into a circular earth mound.

Warden Warren, now largely coniferous woodland, was probably planted c1800. Queen Anne's Summerhouse stands on open land at the highest ground within the wood. The building is redbrick and has circular towers at the corners extending above the stone balustrade parapet.



*Queen Anne's Summerhouse*

Four straight rides extend across the wood from it, including one aligned on the south front of the house across the park. Keeper's Cottage, lying at the east edge of Warden Warren, surrounded by

woodland, is a two-storey, timber-framed cottage ornée with leaded windows and a prominent brick chimney.



## Enhancement

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 warrant designation. Firstly it may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites. Secondly, it may involve positive physical proposals or thirdly, by the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over extensions and alterations. The following areas warrant special consideration for enhancement:

- Front boundary to west of Laundry Farm.
- Large barn at Laundry Farm.
- Electricity substation, Bedford Road.
- Close-boarded fence between Ongley Mausoleum and Melford Lodge.
- Intermittent boundary hedging on the west side of the road between Orchard Grange and Church End.
- Bollards, bins, inappropriately designed signage etc. in the setting of Old Warden Park mansion.
- Modern buildings to the east of the mansion.
- Restoration of the historic park and gardens at Old Warden Park, including tree planting to enhance the setting of the mansion.
- Buildings at Risk and buildings described as 'vulnerable' on the Mid Bedfordshire 'Buildings at Risk Register - June 2004'.
- Remove poles and undergrounding of overhead cables.

## General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of Old Warden and Old Warden Park 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 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 any new development positively contributes to the setting of listed buildings and/or the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, scale, design and materials used.
3. Ensure that house extensions and alterations satisfy the District Council's technical guidance entitled 'House Extensions and Alterations – a Design Guide for Householders'.
4. Seek to retain, where necessary, important views, important green spaces, hedgerows and other important boundary treatments as identified on the conservation area plan.
5. Ensure that development proposals are resisted on sites identified as important green space on the conservation area plan.
6. Retain trees within the conservation area and, where necessary, ensure that where new development is permitted, proper consideration is given to tree planting and appropriate landscape treatment.
7. Prepare a Conservation Management Plan for Old Warden Park – dividing into an appraisal and evaluation of the landscape and buildings, and policies for restoration and management.

### PLANNING GUIDANCE – APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES

This document was subject to public consultation between 22nd October 2005 and 22nd November 2005. Consultation included an advertised exhibition at Old Warden 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 অনুরোধ 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)
- ਸਿੱਖ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨੀ ਬੇਰੁਜ਼ੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਸਾਹ 'ਤੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਸਰਲ ਸਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। **08458 495405** (Punjabi)
- یہ معلومات آپ کے درخواست کرنے پر متبادل ڈیڑا ان زبان میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ **08458 495405** (Urdu)

### Mid Beds District Council

23 London Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8ER

Tel: Planning Division: **08452 30 40 40**

Conservation & Design Team: **08458 495405**

Email: [conservation@midbeds.gov.uk](mailto:conservation@midbeds.gov.uk)

[www.midbeds.gov.uk/services/planning](http://www.midbeds.gov.uk/services/planning)

*Planning Division*