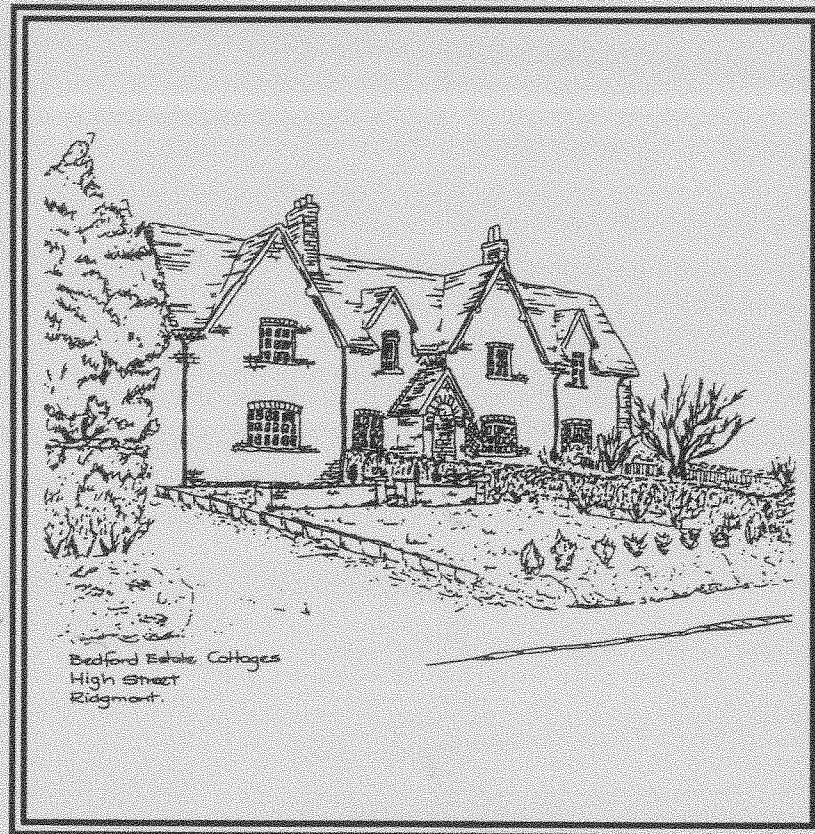


RIDGMONT

CONSERVATION



AREA

A CONSERVATION AREA

This document describes a Conservation Area designated under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Its purpose is to:

- (i) outline the boundaries of the Conservation Area and identify the important features within it;
- (ii) give information on statutory planning policies which govern the control of development within the Area; and
- (iii) offer advice on other matters which can help to conserve and enhance the Area.

The information contained in this document is intended for people living locally, people seeking planning permission or other consents, and anyone interested in conserving the character of Bedfordshire's places of architectural and historic interest.

INTRODUCTION: The Purpose of Conservation Areas

Local Planning Authorities are required under legislation to identify places in their area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which requires special care and protection. These 'Conservation Areas' may be urban or rural in nature. Their special character is generally derived from a combination of many elements, such as listed and other important buildings, open spaces, views and vistas, trees, an historic street pattern, or village green, association with a famous person, or sites of archaeological interest. Other details such as walls, railings, lampposts, steps, gates, shop fronts, paths, streams and hedges also contribute to the special character of a Conservation Area.

One of the best ways of protecting and enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area is by taking care of these detailed elements. This is done through the routine control of development, in addition to everyday care on the part of residents.

Draft proposals for the designation of Conservation Areas are prepared by the Local Planning Authority. The formal designation follows consultation with local people and other interested parties and may introduce extra planning controls.

Planning Controls

Planning Applications for development which the District Council considers is likely to affect the character and appearance of a Conservation Area must be advertised and the plans made available for public inspection. Comments received are taken into account by the District Council when reaching a decision on the application. The local planning authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that development within a Conservation Area makes a positive contribution towards it and is not harmful to its character and appearance. (The District Council can also assume planning control over detailed alterations by means of a special direction order, but only with the approval of the Secretary of State for the Environment.)

Prior permission known as '**Conservation Area Consent**' must be obtained from the District Council for:

- the demolition or partial demolition of buildings over 115 cubic metres volume (with certain exceptions); and
- the demolition of all walls over 2 metres, or over 1 metre in height where adjacent to a highway.

6 weeks prior notice must also be given to the District Council in respect of the intended lopping or felling of trees.

In addition to normal planning controls, within a Conservation Area planning permission must be sought for:

- extensions which add more than 10% or 50 cubic metres (whichever is the greater) to the original volume of a house;
- exterior cladding of a building with stone, artificial stone, timber, plastic or tiles;
- alterations to the shape of house roofs, including dormer windows; and
- garden sheds etc greater than 10 cubic metres in volume (with certain exceptions).

Planning Policies

A number of general planning policies are given later in this document. These are intended to help protect and improve what is best in the Conservation Area, and to take account also of any opportunities for carefully designed and appropriate new development.

Voluntary Action

Everyone living or working in a Conservation Area should be aware of the need to preserve and enhance its character, and of the opportunities for doing so. Buildings, walls, hedges and other structures should be kept in good repair. The care of many of these important details lies directly within the control of local residents, individually and collectively.

Grants

Both the District Council and the County Council can make grants or loans for repair works carried out to historic buildings and other important features in the Conservation Area. Grants under the Housing Act may also be available from the District Council for the general improvement of properties. These are described in a leaflet on 'Grants and Loans for Historic Buildings', available from the Planning Department.

Parish Council Powers

Parish Councils can raise money to maintain local facilities, including land with public access and open spaces.

RIDGMONT CONSERVATION AREA

The Historical Development of Ridgmont

The village of Ridgmont lies on a north-easterly to south-westerly diagonal on a 400ft spur of the lower Greensand Ridge overlooking the Marston Vale. The original settlement in this location was the now deserted hamlet of Segenhoe situated on a plateau about half a mile to the south east in the vicinity of All Saints Church and Segenhoe Manor. The name Segenhoe is of Saxon origin.

Ridgmont, however, possesses Bedfordshire's only French-derived place name and was probably a Norman creation, although there is no clear evidence of settlement on the present site before about the 14th century.

By the middle of the 18th century Ridgmont was a thriving place and was beginning to dominate Segenhoe. This population shift was accelerated by the opening of the turnpike road in 1766. The present A507 road follows the line of the original turnpike and the heavy flows of traffic passing through the village demonstrate its continued importance as a major route. Plans for a bypass are currently well advanced however.

Three main periods of change in the development of the village have taken place during the last two centuries. Throughout, though, it has retained its ribbon-like plan along a major route.

At the time of the 1797 Enclosure Award, the principal road was the High Street, with most buildings fronting onto it. Several trackways and footpaths led directly off it, however, such as Lydds Hill, Eversholt Road, Church Street and Holcot Road. The earliest area of development was probably at the north eastern end of the village where a number of dwellings were informally grouped around the 'Rose and Crown' and a small green called Parrott's Field (now Mount Pleasant).

After the Enclosure, gaps along the High Street were steadily filled by Bedford Estate cottages, these sometimes replacing 18th century or earlier buildings which may have been thatched. These estate cottages make a significant and distinctive contribution to the overall character of the village, all being set back from the road and well planned. Hedges are a dominant feature of the cottages, separating their open front gardens from the road and enclosing the plots themselves. They provide a continuity of building style and materials throughout the village, with the early 19th century 'picturesque' style repeated in simplified form on many later estate buildings added in this century. The predominant materials are red brick, clay tile and slate.

Station Road was created at the time of the enclosure to join up with the road which crossed Brogborough Hill. Its importance grew, however, when it became the main thoroughfare to Ridgmont Station which opened in 1846, and this encouraged the growth of the small settlement at the foot of Lydd's Hill.

The third phase of change in the settlement pattern came with the development after 1925 of Mount Pleasant and Segenhoe Close, the layouts of both of which appear inconsistent with the scale and dominant linear character of the village.

Description of the Conservation Area

Ridgmont lies just outside the north eastern corner of Woburn Park and has the general character of a linear estate village, comprising several types of Bedford Estate cottages and other estate-built properties mostly situated in groups with associated hedges, walls and railings.



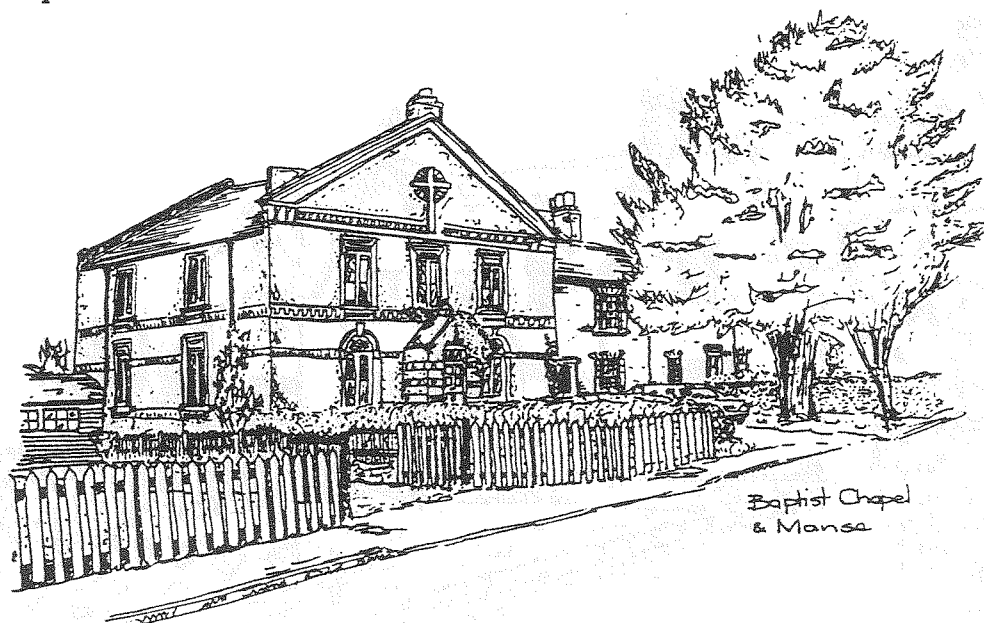
Bedford Estate Cottages
High Street
Ridgmont.

The village lies along the edge of a scarp overlooking the southern end of the Marston Vale and views can be glimpsed through gaps on the north western side of the High Street and down Station Road.

Approaching from Ampthill and the north east, the village High Street continues in a straight line towards the Park Lodge gates before bending sharply round to the west and running along the outside of the Park wall.

High Street

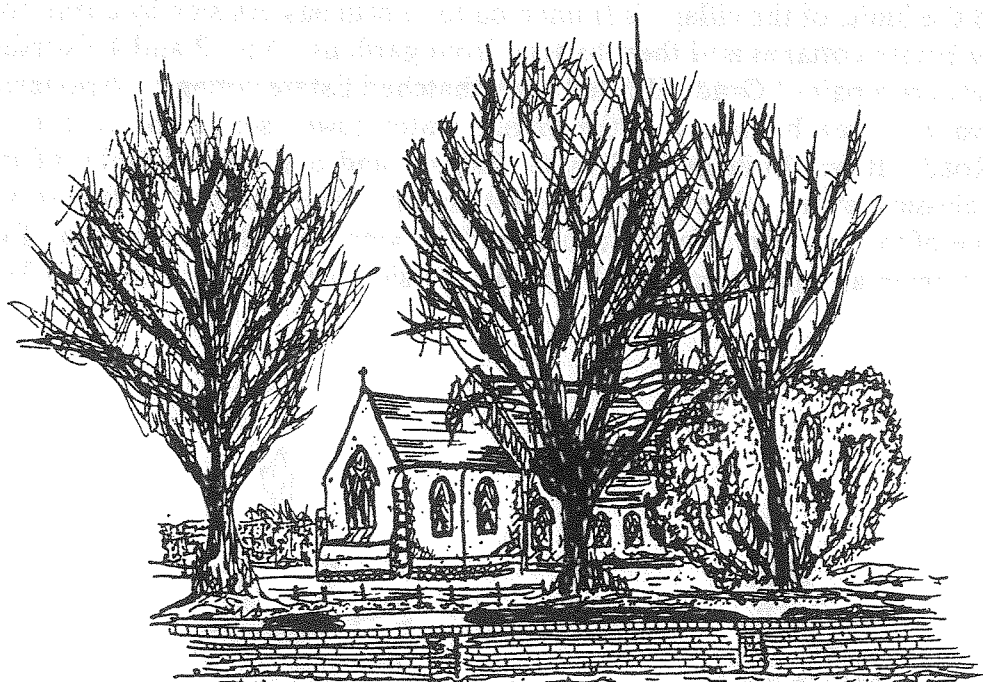
A short tree-lined avenue leads from the Park Lodge and its gates to the southern end of the High Street which is adjoined by well hedged front gardens. A terrace of four Estates cottages makes an important outlying introduction to the village along the road from Husborne Crawley. Small paddocks separate them and the Park wall from the rest of the village. The other estate cottages at this end of the High Street form an important group; Nos. 9-11 and 18-24 are Grade II listed and the Baptist Chapel and its Manse were recently added to the statutory list. Several yew trees on each side of the road in this location further frame a view of the bend at the other end of the High Street. Beyond two other terraces of Bedford Estate Cottages on the south-eastern side of the road, No. 44 High Street is an interesting building, which although not listed is apparently an older property with a late 19th Century front wing extension, formerly used as commercial premises.



In the middle of the High Street there are dominant groups of buildings on both sides of the road. Warren Farmhouse and its farm buildings stand opposite the Eversholt Road junction. The classic 'E' shape plan 19th century 'model farm' buildings have been converted to residential use but generally without excessive alterations or reducing the importance of their contribution to the street scene. On the opposite north eastern corner of the High Street and Eversholt Road, set well back behind simple iron railings, is the imposing old school building and masters house, now Ridgmont Lower School.



A little further along on the same side of High Street past Station Road on the left, and similarly set back from the road behind a sandstone wall in a cleared churchyard, is All Saints Church. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and dating from 1854-55, it is listed Grade II*. The church spire rises above the surrounding trees and dominates many views of the village. The trees themselves, however, and the open areas of land surrounding the church, in particular to the north east, are also important elements of the village scene. Adjoining the south-western boundary of the churchyard is a terrace of red brick cottages set at right angles to the road. The windows to No. 58, the post office which itself fronts onto the road are worthy of note as are its interesting steps. There are several other important buildings nearby, of which Nos. 57, 59, 61 and 68 are Grade II listed. No. 61, in particular, with its gable end to the road, is conspicuous in distant views of the bend seen from both ends of the High Street.



All Saints Church

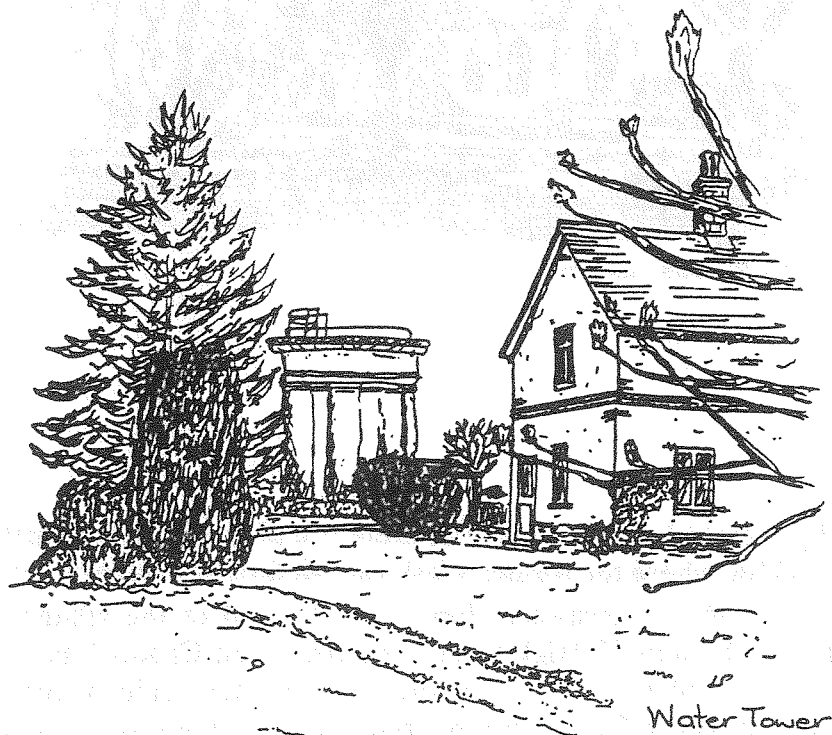
At the far end of the High Street towards Ampthill, there is a pleasant row of varied traditional buildings between Lydd's Hill, where the former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel recently converted to residential use, adjoins a steep downward slope, and the end of the village. The chapel building, together with Nos. 85 and 87 High Street, the Rose and Crown P.H. and the group of estate cottages at the edge of the village, on the north western side of the road, are all identified as being important on the Conservation Area Map. On the south eastern side of the road, the small Mount Pleasant estate, which is the most recent and the most extreme dilution of the traditional cottage design in the village, is well framed by the lodge-like positioning of Nos. 1 and 10 facing onto the High Street.

Station Road

A fine view to the north east can be obtained from the junction of Station Road and the High Street, although this is presently marred by the large volumes of traffic turning in and out of the road. This has resulted in the use of high ugly kerbing on the northern corner of the junction, however it is anticipated that the proposed Ridgmont By-Pass will eventually restore much of the village's lost amenity. The brick wall on the western corner of the junction is, further considered to be, of particular importance.

Church Street and Eversholt Road

The 1797 enclosure map of the area shows two footpaths running south east from the High Street in the direction of Segenhoe. These are followed today by Church Street, to the north, and Eversholt Road, to the south, which run parallel along either side of an area of horticultural land which adjoins the rear of the church grounds. Church Street is a dead-end road petering out into a footpath which leads to Segenhoe Manor and the ruined Old Church of All Saints beyond a row of five pairs of inter-war estate cottages. Along Eversholt Road, the view beyond the limits of the village is framed on the north eastern side by a fine group of early 20th century Estate cottages and their hedged front gardens. Nos. 2 and 4 Eversholt Road to the south west are a pair of Grade II listed early thatched Estate cottages. Also included within the Conservation Area boundary is the village water tower set to the rear of No's. 13/15 Eversholt Road. It was built in 1913 by C. Balfour and Son for the Duke of Bedford in a simple neo-classical style. It's method of construction is also unusual in that it is a relatively early example of the use of reinforced concrete. The view back down Eversholt Road towards the village is given an important visual stop by the side wall of the converted Warren Farm buildings.



POLICIES and ADVICE

The District Council has published proposals and policies for the countryside areas of the District, such as Ridgmont, and the Conservation Areas, in the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan. This Conservation Area document, however, identifies further specific policies and various other opportunities for preserving and enhancing the character of the Conservation Area.

Changes made within a Conservation Area may enhance or detract from its character and appearance. Proposals for development therefore need to be assessed on their individual merits, but within broad guidelines. The following policies will be applicable in cases where planning controls exist, and advice is also offered for situations outside these controls. This is in addition to other planning policies governing matters such as infilling. Listed Building Consent is outside the scope of this document, but many of the points given below will also be applicable to listed buildings. In all cases, however, the District Council's Planning Department will be able to give advice.

Policies

In order to maintain the distinctive character of the Conservation Area the District Council will seek to:

1. Resist the demolition of important buildings and walls within the Conservation Area, and will actively encourage their proper maintenance. It will not be accepted that a building is wholly beyond economic repair without evidence that reasonable efforts have been made to continue the existing use or to find an appropriate alternative use, including offering it for sale or for rent.
2. Safeguard important open spaces by resisting development of these areas. Three of especial importance are marked on the Conservation Area Map.
3. Safeguard important views within, into and out of the Conservation Area by resisting inappropriate development.
4. Retain important trees wherever possible, and encourage new planting schemes where appropriate. The possibility of making Tree Preservation Orders will be considered.
5. Require the submission of full planning applications from the outset, showing the site as existing and the proposal with comprehensive details of buildings, trees and other relevant features; outline proposals normally provide insufficient information to assess their full impact on the Conservation Area and will not be acceptable.
6. Safeguard the character of the street scene by controlling the location, siting, grouping, scale, design and materials used in new development where permitted. The scope for new development is extremely limited however. New buildings, boundary walls and landscaping schemes including the planting of hedges should be designed to a high standard, and so as to respect, preserve and enhance the quality of their surroundings.

7. Investigate the possibility of replacing the overhead telegraph and electricity poles and wires by undergrounding services - care must be taken that new installations do not detract from the appearance of the area.
8. Resist proposals involving unsympathetic cladding of buildings.

Advice

1. Important architectural features and detailing should, wherever possible, be retained and kept in good repair. If they cannot be saved they should be carefully copied and the opportunity taken to remedy unsympathetic alterations wherever possible.
2. The Council wishes to encourage the retention and use of traditional materials and building skills wherever possible, including natural slate, hand made tiles and bricks, and timber windows and doors. Modern synthetic materials such as fibreglass, aluminium and uPVC should be avoided.
3. Old windows and doors should be retained, or carefully copied if repair is not possible. Particular attention should be paid to the materials, size and proportion of the original. Exterior timber on old houses was always painted rather than stained. There are a number of items currently on the market which claim to be suitable for old buildings, including 'Regency' and 'Georgian' front doors and bow windows. These, however, are usually inappropriate and should not be used in a conservation area. A leaflet on "Doors and Windows in Traditional Buildings" prepared by the County Council is available from the District and County Planning Departments.
4. Repairs to brickwork should ensure that new work blends well with the texture and colour of the old. Old brickwork should not be repointed unless absolutely necessary. If repair is essential, old mortar should be carefully raked out so as not to damage or widen the joints, and a lime based mortar should be used. New pointing should match the profile of the old as closely as possible. Brickwork should not be rendered or painted unless this was previously done in the past.
5. The care and repair of hedges, together with the reinstatement of lost lengths, is particularly important in Ridgmont where hedges are a dominant feature. The use of conifers which are alien to the estate character of the village should be avoided.

LISTED BUILDINGS

Several of the buildings within the Conservation Area are also on the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. It will be necessary, therefore, to obtain Listed Building Consent from the District Council for any works which affect the character of these buildings (internally or externally), as well as anything attached to them, or any structure within their grounds, including boundary walls erected before 1948. Planning permission may also be required for the construction of walls or other structures within their gardens, or for alterations to modern gates and boundary walls.

The Listed Buildings within the Ridgmont Conservation Area are as follows:-

<u>No./Name and Address</u>	<u>Grade</u>
Nos. 2 and 4 Eversholt Road	II
Nos. 9 and 11 High Street	II
Baptist Chapel and Manse	II
Nos. 18 to 24 (evens) High Street	II
Nos. 57 and 59 High Street	II
No. 61 High Street	II
Parish Church of All Saints	II*
No. 68 High Street	II

