



Sandy Conservation Area

Introduction

17 December 2003

This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. This document has been prepared in order to comply with policy CBE9 of the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan, Deposit Draft 1997. Sandy Conservation Area was designated on 21 March 1978 and subsequently reviewed on 31 July 1990. The character and appearance of Sandy Conservation Area are considered separately. This will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals for Sandy preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.



Character

There is evidence of Mesolithic and Roman settlement among the 'sand islands' that gave the town its name, but the modern town developed out of the market gardening activity that has been recorded since the early C17. The commercial expansion of the town coincided with the C18 and C19 development of road, river and rail transport.

The character of Sandy Conservation Area is partly defined by its setting: areas outside the conservation area but having a direct impact on it. These include the semi-natural environment of the river and meadows; the sandhills forming an elevated back drop to the town; and the industrial backland of the former Jordans Yard and its outbuildings.



The churchyard forms a break in the street frontage. When seen from a distance, the pollarded limes continue the line of the street.

The Conservation Area, does not have a uniform character, it is divisible into parts connected by three nodal points: Bedford Road roundabout, Market Square, and Ivel Road - High Street junction. The High Street developed on the north side of the church, leaving the churchyard as an important open space in the street scene, with its atmosphere of tranquility and calm. Views from the churchyard lead through into the grounds of Sandye Place, the character of which is in sharp contrast to the development and commerce in the Market Square and High Street. The quietness of Sandye Place appears to filter through to the cottages, terraces and yards of Ivel Road. Bedford Road is marked by significant vehicular movement which is in contrast to the quieter space of the recreation ground and Laburnham Road.

Appearance

Many of the buildings in the Conservation Area date from the prosperity of the Victorian/Edwardian expansion, although some earlier buildings are still in evidence.

Time and status have affected the type of materials used for local buildings. The church is impressive in the local deep orange/brown sandstone, known as Greensand. This stone is noticeable elsewhere in the Conservation Area, in outbuildings and walls around the town including the walls of the Queens Head PH, boundary walls behind the shops

on Park Street, outbuildings at 61 High Street and a boundary wall in Ivel Road (*see map*). Some pre-C18 buildings have a timber frame, sometimes exposed, (e.g. Greenacres High Street, the former coal office to Jordans Yard in the Market Square and the outbuildings to 61 High Street). Some frames are covered by a plaster finish (e.g. the Queen's Head P.H., Cambridge Road), or facing brick, (e.g. The Old Bakehouse, 51 High Street). Earlier buildings tend to have tiled or thatched rather than slate roofs, which are a product of C19 transport improvements.

Some weatherboarded outbuildings and barns still exist. Although not always visible from the public highway, they still form an important part of the historic fabric of the town and their use is often linked with the town's history of market gardening. Some outbuildings in Ivel Road are brick with pantile roofs of a pale colour and others survive behind houses in the High Street, such as The Old Bakery. Most Victorian and Edwardian buildings are of 'white' or red brick or a combination of both. Some include paint or pebbledash and window details or quoins picked out in brick. The bank on the corner of Market Square/ High Street is a distinctive building of its period with its white brick and tiled roof, stained glass windows and half-timber detailing. The ranges of shops by the entrance to Cambridge Road are built in brick and slate with simpler architectural detailing.

High Street

Some of the High Street buildings opposite the church are built on long narrow burgage plots. This is evidence of historic division of land, and should be maintained. There are also older outbuildings behind these frontages.

Building density increases towards the Market Square and some of the shops rise to 2 1/2 storeys with gabled dormers and chimneys forming a varied skyline. These buildings are located at the back-edge of the footpath and there are few gaps in the street scene. The building line is not uniform, some buildings close to the church have small front gardens, and there are passage ways leading to yards behind some of the older buildings.

Many buildings have historic shop fronts, which should be preserved and could be used as a template elsewhere. Good examples include, No. 21A High Street and the brackets above the existing shop front at No. 25.



Remains of an historic shopfront at No. 21A High Street.

Ivel Road

This area is characterised by small-scale development, i.e. small cottages with low ridge heights and brick outbuildings behind. The street gives way to a 'greener' environment, in particular down by the river which is a quiet area, offering contrast to the High Street.

Between properties on the west side of Ivel Road, there are views of the trees and green space of Sandye Place. The more mature trees are noticeable above the rooflines of these properties.

Market Square/St Neots Road

The scale and position of buildings defines this important space. Market Square itself is wide open with a central 'island' occupied by buildings with a pleasing jumble of old tile roofs and chimneys. The buildings surrounding The Square do not form a continuous frontage: buildings appear as individual blocks, of various shapes and sizes. The entrance to the High Street appears narrow in contrast.

Not all the buildings make a positive contribution, particularly the local supermarket, the bulk and design of which dominates the High Street end of the Market Square. The more modern blocks of shops in the Market Square have a horizontal emphasis and their design has a negative affect upon the Conservation Area. This is in contrast with the use of materials and architectural detail of nearby older buildings.

The present street furniture and surfacing is a mish-mash of modern materials and is considered to be a site where enhancement is to be encouraged. Trees make an important contribution to this urban space.

On the north east side of the roundabout, No.'s 2, 2A and 4 St. Neots Road and No. 18 Market Square form an important group. Collectively, they make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. For instance, No. 2 has margin light glazing and No. 4 has quoins, doorcase and margin lights. No. 18 is also impressive with its red brick bays, fanlight and delicate dog-toothed dentil course under the eaves. Together they form the town centre front of the Jordan's Yard site, their retention is important and their restoration to good condition would be an important step towards improvement of the area.



1 High Street (The Woolwich).

Pleasant Place

The simple but attractive 'white' brick chapel that forms the backdrop to the cul-de-sac is currently not in use and is cut off by boarding and brambles. Jordans Yard abuts it to the left, with a large barn forming an important 'stop' to the view. This area is blighted by traffic accessing the service yard to the rear of the shops fronting the Market Square. Pleasant Place is also used as a pedestrian cut through to the health centre and poorly maintained light industrial land behind.

Pleasant Place to the right, turns and becomes a narrow gravelled street with gault brick Victorian cottages, brick walls and outbuildings. It is a peaceful place, the access to which could be enhanced by surface repairs in the lane. The Pleasant Place Cottages which face towards the Market Square date from 1877 and are an attractive feature. These cottages retain their decorative window arches and No. 4 still has its original windows.

Bedford Road

This is a strikingly suburban area marked by villa properties finished in a palette of colours and details, for instance, the glazing details at No.'s 16-20 (evens), carved bargeboards at No. 29, decorative brickwork under the eaves (dentil courses) at Rose Villa, polychrome brickwork at No.'s 34-36, and a pedimented double doorhood at No.'s 38-40 (Chestnut Villas).

Each building is given status by the space around and in front of it, with trees, gardens and boundary treatments being important. A good example being the pollarded limes which add formality to the frontage of The Limes and No. 14. The recreation ground is an important open space, with the war memorial on the street frontage being an important landmark.

The group of buildings at the top of the street: the Baptist Church, the church hall and the Roundabout Club (bears "Town Hall" plaque) form an impressive gateway to the town centre and are regarded as a focal frontage. The buildings display a variety of interesting architectural details.

Laburnum Road

Laburnum Road includes some short terraces, built onto the backs of larger houses in Bedford Road. These houses have small front gardens contained by low boundary walls. The 'feel' of the street is quiet but urban. The similar sizes of the houses provide unity although minor alterations over the years have altered the characters of the individual houses.

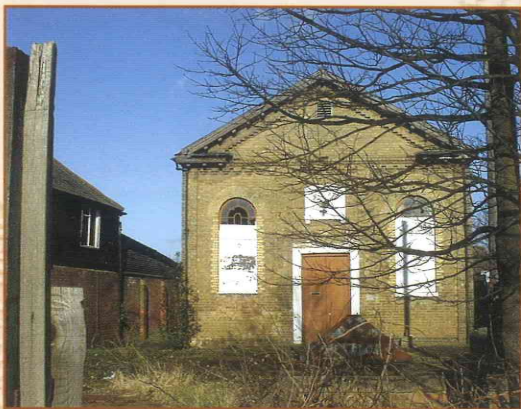
The dominant building in the streetscape is Laburnum School. This building makes a positive contribution to the streetscene as do the railings and greenery that surround it.



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 warranted 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 shop fronts and alterations. Areas which warrant special consideration are marked on the Conservation Area Plan and are:

- Pleasant Place



Chapel to the north of Pleasant Place.

- The light industrial site on the south side of Robert Hunt Gardens
- Budgens and the entrance to its carpark, the ranges of modern shops in the Market Square
- The flat roofed office block on the corner of Bedford Road.

Two areas outside but immediately adjacent to the Conservation Area that would benefit from enhancement and improve the setting of the Conservation Area are:-

- Jordan's Yard
- The carpark to the north of the conservation area and the accesses to it from the High Street and Cambridge Road.

General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of Sandy Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

1. Retain Listed Buildings and Buildings of Local Interest. There will be a general presumption against the demolition of unlisted buildings located on the back edge of footpaths. Such proposals will only be considered appropriate where the building does not contribute positively to the street scene and where the replacement scheme is also in a back edge of footpath location. There will be a general presumption against the creation of gaps within built up frontages.
2. Ensure that 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 there is a consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over shop fronts, alterations and lighting schemes.
4. Where necessary, seek to retain important boundary treatments as identified on the Sandy Conservation Area Plan.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

This document was subject to public consultation between 11 October 2003 and 11 November 2003. Consultation included advertised exhibitions in Sandy Public Library and the offices of Sandy Town Council, and entry on the District Council's website.

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



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