



Steppingley Conservation Area

Introduction

18 May 2005

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. Steppingley Conservation Area was designated on 30th May 1973 and no review has been undertaken since this date. The setting, character, and appearance of Steppingley Conservation Area are considered separately and this will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals for Steppingley preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.

Setting

Steppingley is a compact rural village situated on raised ground formed by the Greensand ridge. It is 2 1/2 miles south west of Ampthill and a short distance from the M1 motorway to the west. The village is situated in gently undulating countryside of mixed land use, including arable, pasture and woodland. Much of the parish was emarked in the late medieval period for Beckerings and Steppingley Park and later became part of the Bedford Estate. To the south and outside of the conservation area, Park Farm contributes positively to the setting of the conservation area. The village is approached along winding roads lined with trees and high hedges which create a sense of enclosure and anticipation until entering the village which is virtually hidden from view. The conservation area covers the majority of the village.

Character

Although evidence of early settlers has been found within the Parish of Steppingley the character and appearance of the village and its fields today owes much to the C19 strategies of the 7th Duke of Bedford who was responsible for much of the present field-patterns and buildings. Between 1839 and 1842 the Duke purchased the Manor of Steppingley and surrounding land and cleared and rebuilt much of the village. By the late C19 a number of homes had been replaced with two storey, red brick Bedford Estate cottages and this is now the dominant built form in the village. The church and school room were also rebuilt at this time.

Scattered amongst the distinctive Estate buildings is a mixture of earlier buildings and more recent properties which defines the built character of the village. Farms such as Park Farm were rebuilt by the 7th Duke of Bedford as part



Bedford Estate cottages, Rectory Road

of his investment in agriculture, on the basis that he hoped to encourage better tenants who would in turn provide more capital for the Estate.

Appearance

Local building materials are predominantly red brick with slate or tile roofs, there are a few rendered and timber framed buildings and use of the local sandstone which creates a diverse but complimentary palette of building materials.

Flitwick Road

Approaching the village from the east the converted chapel is a useful marker for the boundary of the conservation area. This is an important gateway building and is regarded as a Building of Local Interest. The road then bends and rises sharply to the right and Peakes End branches off to the left.

Continuing uphill along Flitwick Road, two terraces of Bedford Estate cottages are located high up on the east side of the road and almost hidden from view behind a substantial hedgerow. The centre of the village finally comes in to view with the buildings set back from the road forming an

agreeable group around the grassed island where the roads converge. The village centre sits at this complicated junction where views open up but are somewhat spoilt by highway street furniture. The French Horn public house, a cream-painted grade II listed C17 building with later additions, dominates the junction and terminates the view when approaching from Flitwick Road.



The French Horn PH and Village Hall

Adjacent to The French Horn is the Village Hall, an attractive mottled brickwork building with red brick dressings and metal lattice windows, which was erected for the Duke of Bedford in 1851 as a village school before the School House in Church End was built. The clock turret was added in the year 2000 to commemorate the Millennium. The Village Hall is an attractive building and makes a positive contribution to this part of the conservation area and is a Building of Local Interest.

Peakes End



The Croft (grade II listed)

Peakes End is mostly hidden from view from the roads leading into the village and is surrounded by open countryside. Before arriving at The Croft, a grade II listed, thatched C17 building which was once the

village Post Office, there is a footpath link between Peakes End and Eversholt Road from which there are views towards the church. This footpath traverses an Important Green Space.

To the south of The Croft, there are two ranges of red brick Bedford Estate cottages set on a raised piece of ground which look out over the surrounding countryside. The land in front of these cottages is also regarded as an Important Green Space and contributes positively to the setting of the cottages.

Further to the south the lane is flanked by high hedgerows and mature trees beyond which it opens out into open countryside. At this point, the lane turns into a track, open on one side and hedged on the other which leads to Park Farm (a grade II listed model farm) which was built in 1860 for the Duke of Bedford and may have replaced an earlier moated manor house on this site.

Eversholt Road

This is the only original route into the village which still survives. At the entrance to the village is a mature oak tree and a fine view of the Church of St Lawrence, Cook's Farm, and No. 42 Eversholt Road and its outbuildings which form an important group at the entrance to the village. The north side of the road from the start of the conservation area to the



No.42 in the foreground with the Church of St Lawrence behind

junction is marked by brick boundary walls punctuated by three gables. The bungalows on the opposite side of the road are disappointing architecturally due to the poor choice of materials and their affect upon the appearance of the conservation area is at best neutral.



Wall in front of Eastfield

buildings between the Village Hall and the cricket ground are a pair of modern bungalows with associated garaging which have at best a neutral effect on the appearance of the conservation area.

The Old Rectory (formerly known as Hinton House) is a grade II listed building dating from the early to mid C18, built of red and yellow chequered brickwork with a hipped clay tiled roof. This building was obtained by William Green in 1836 as a rectory in place of the much older parsonage that was situated next to the churchyard and demolished about that time. Beyond the Old Rectory the high red brick wall continues along the eastern side whilst hedges form the other side of the road. As the road rises it bends out of sight, thus, terminating the view.

The cricket ground opposite The Old Rectory is an Important Green Space which is surrounded by a protected holly hedge and other mature trees. This open, verdant area forms an



Oak tree close to conservation boundary

important setting to the Church of St Lawrence. Further along Rectory Road rows of Bedford Estate cottages line the western side of the road and gaps in between are in-filled with modern housing. The Estate buildings are an essential part of the appearance of the conservation area

Rectory Road

Turning into Rectory Road the most striking feature is the attractive high red brick wall forming the frontage to Eastfield and The Old Rectory and is an important boundary feature. On the opposite side of the road the only

Townsend Farm, its associated farm buildings and the buildings immediately to the north are an attractive group of C19 buildings. The yellow gault brick and tiled farmhouse and associated farm buildings were built in the late 1850's. The Old Mill building is red brick with attractive dog tooth eaves details and was split and converted into two residential properties (The Mill House and Townsend Mill) along with the nearby red brick barns (Lower Barn, Good Ley and Top Barn).

Turning to look back towards the village the roof of The Old Rectory terminates the view. The open fields on the eastern side add to the rural setting of the conservation area.



Church End

As its name suggests, the Church of St Lawrence dominates this part of the village and was built in the late 1850's for the Duke of Bedford by Henry Clutton. The current building replaced the collapsed medieval church which the Duke had attempted to repair. The Church is built of local coursed ironstone with Bath stone dressings and a slate roof.

On entering Church End, an electricity sub station (an area where enhancement is to be encouraged) stands next to the village pump. Walking further along Church End, no.16 is a small, extended, grade II listed, timber framed cottage which is situated at the point where the road veers to the left. The road then bends sharply to the right and The Folly (the former school) and School House come into view. These two buildings were designed to form a group with the Church and are both grade II listed buildings. The Folly is constructed in a Tudor style, with coursed ironstone, ashlar dressings and slate roof. The Old School House has mock timber frame with white painted infill panels. The two properties are



fronted by a sandstone wall with attractive hooped metal railings in front of which is a gully giving the appearance of a brook (see photo).

No.20 is a pre C19 cottage of rubble ironstone with a modern red brick extension. This property has a tiled roof, dormer windows and two distinctive tie plates in the letters "T" and "S" on the front elevation. This building is very attractive and is a Building of Local Interest.

This area is considered to be the most attractive part of Steppingley and is complemented by a number of fine trees which add to the beauty of the area. The diverse palette of materials utilized in this area are used to great effect. The area is verdant in character and the buildings around the edges give a sense of enclosure to this part of the conservation area.

However, interspersed amongst these attractive buildings are more recent buildings. The scale of some of these buildings together with the choice in materials, for instance, the use of tile hanging and a Doric portico entrance, do not preserve or enhance the appearance of the conservation area.

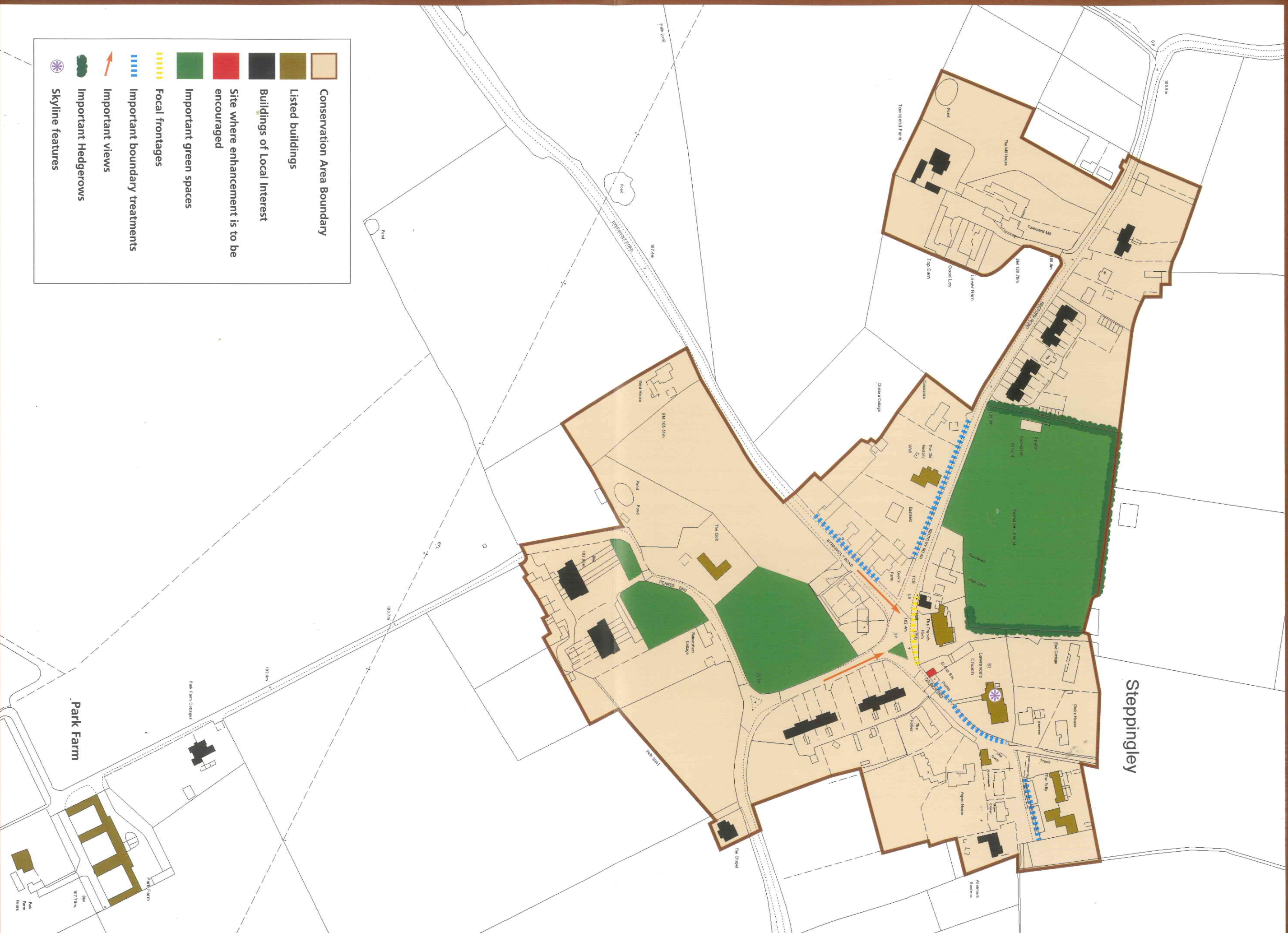


Steppingley

Scale: 1:2500



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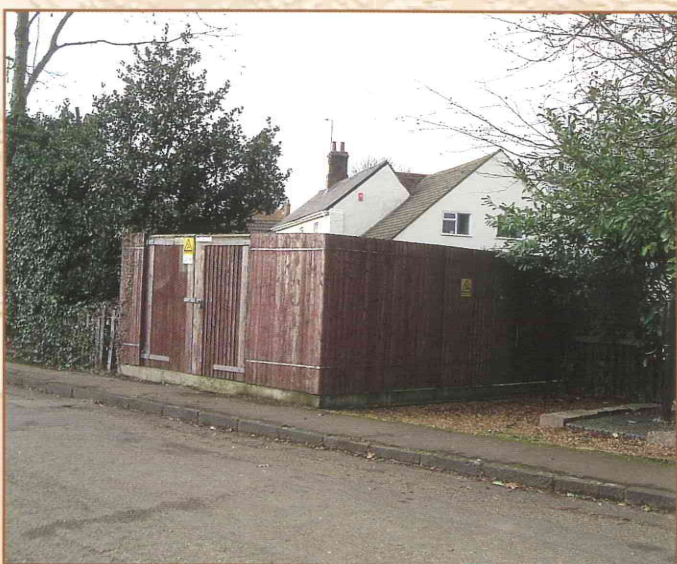


Enhancement

Steppingley is fortunate in that there are few areas in need of 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 extensions and alterations.

Area which warrants special consideration are marked on the conservation area plan and are:

- The electricity sub station near The French Horn public house (see photo below).



General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character and appearance of Steppingley 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. Such demolition will only be considered appropriate where the building does not contribute positively to the street scene. 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, local distinctiveness, design and materials used.
3. Ensure that house extensions and alterations satisfy, where possible, the District Council's Technical Guidance entitled "Extensions and Alterations: A Design Guide for Householders".
4. Where necessary, seek to retain important boundary treatments as identified on the Steppingley Conservation Area Plan.
5. Ensure the protection of locally important green spaces with a presumption against new development.

PLANNING GUIDANCE – APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES

This document was subject to public consultation between 19 February 2005 and 21 March 2005. Consultation included an advertised exhibition at Steppingley 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 **01767 602493**
- যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন। **01767 602493 (Bengali)**
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