

Elstow Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



2010



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 This appraisal of Elstow Conservation Area was conducted by BEAMS Ltd, the trading company of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust, in conjunction with Bedford Borough Council between March and October 2010.
- 1.2 Elstow Conservation Area was designated in October 1970; its boundary has not altered significantly since designation. Designation of a conservation area introduces additional controls within the area, including control over the demolition of unlisted buildings, strengthening control over minor development and provides additional protection for trees. However, conservation area designation does not stop change; it ensures that change respects the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 1.3 The purpose of this appraisal is to define the special interest of Elstow Conservation Area by analysing its development, landscape setting, views and spaces and through assessment of its buildings. It is intended to assist and guide all those involved with development and change and will be used by the Council when considering development proposals. The approach used in preparing this document is based on current good practice guidance as set out by English Heritage in 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (English Heritage, 2006).

Objectives

- 1.4 The main objectives of this conservation area appraisal are:
 - To define the special interest of Elstow Conservation Area by analyzing its historic development, uses, landscape setting, views and spaces, and also through assessing the architectural and historic qualities of its buildings.
 - To identify neutral areas, negative features and spaces, and the problems, pressures and capacity for change

Survey

- 1.5 A full photographic record of Elstow Conservation Area was made in line with recommendations by English Heritage (2006) to provide 'a baseline for measuring change and monitoring alterations / physical condition'. This will form part of the project archive for use / reference by Bedford Borough Council. The omission in this report of any particular feature within the conservation area does not imply that it is of no significance or value.

Public Consultation

- 1.6 There is a strong emphasis on community involvement in the production of appraisals to ensure the documents are as accurate as possible by assessing local knowledge, to encourage local involvement and to give people the chance to influence the document. This appraisal and the associated management plan have been produced in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, adopted in May 2006. Further details regarding the Public Consultation exercise can be found in section 8.0.

Status and Contacts

- 1.7 The appraisal will be used as a technical document to inform planning decisions and will be subject to a process of monitoring and review. It was formally adopted by the Council on 8th December 2010.

General advice about matters relating to the historic environment, including conservation areas and listed buildings can be sought from the Council's Conservation Section, which is part of Planning Services at the Town Hall.

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Town Hall,
St. Paul's Square,
BEDFORD
MK40 1SJ

Telephone: 01234 221729
Fax: 01234 325671
Email: planning@bedford.gov.uk

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

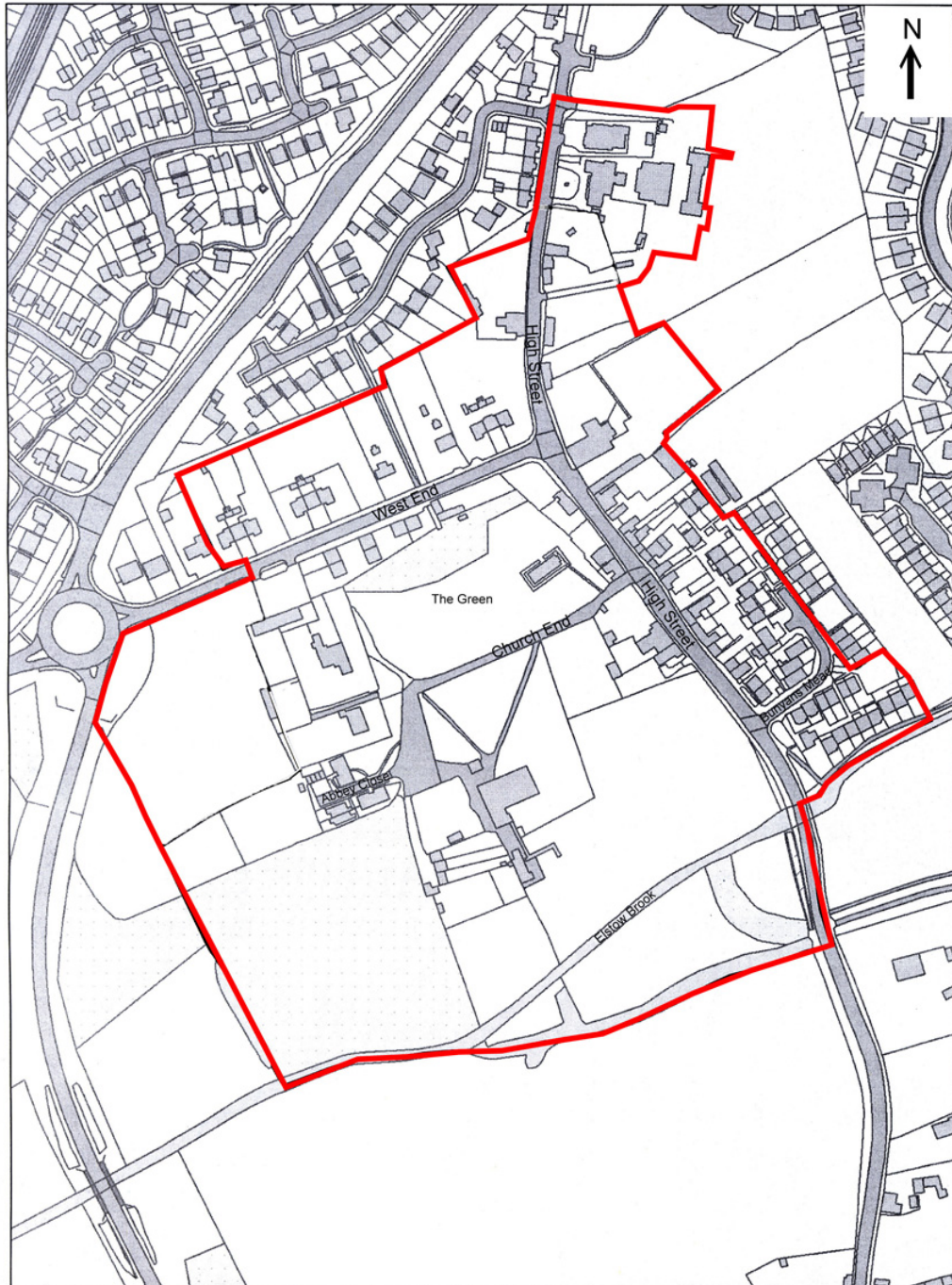
National

- 2.1 A Conservation Area is defined under section 69 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) as *'an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'* Each local planning authority is responsible for the designation of such conservation areas under the Act. Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities *'...to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement...'* of these conservation areas.
- 2.2 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning and the Historic Environment and its associated Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide replaced PPG 15 and PPG16 in March 2010. Planning Policy Statement 5 sets out Government advice on matters affecting the historic environment. It states that when determining applications for consent relating to historic assets, including conservation areas, local planning authorities should seek to identify and assess the particular significance of any element of the historic environment. Conservation area appraisals are considered a crucial tool in such processes. The reason for this is that the more clearly the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area is defined or recorded; the sounder will be the basis for making development management decisions or drawing up further policies to safeguard those special qualities.

Regional and local

- 2.3 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new system for the preparation of development plans, which will comprise a Regional Spatial Strategy and a set of documents known as the Local Development Framework (LDF), sometimes referred to as the Bedford Development Framework (BDF). This series of LDF documents will gradually replace the Local Plan; they will set out the Council's policies for meeting the community's economic, environmental and social aims for the future where they affect the development and use of land within the framework provided by the regional plan.
- 2.4 Within the framework provided by the regional plan, the BDF Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan sets out a long term spatial vision and objectives, policies and proposals to guide decisions about the planning of the Borough. Objectives relevant to the conservation area include:
- Achieving high quality design that takes into account, among other things, local character and local distinctiveness
 - Protecting and enhancing the Borough's built and cultural assets
 - Fostering the development of heritage and cultural tourism
- 2.5 Relevant policies CP21 (Designing in quality) and CP23 (Heritage) can be found in Appendix 1.
- 2.6 For a transitional period a number of policies from the Bedford Local Plan (adopted in 2002), have also been saved and remain in force. Of specific relevance to conservation areas are policies BE9, BE11, BE13, BE15, BE16 and

BE26 which cover a range of issues, including the control of development both within the conservation area and for areas affecting the setting of a conservation area. In addition, policies BE18, BE19, BE20, BE21, BE22, BE23, BE24 and BE25 are relevant to listed buildings and sites of archaeological interest. These policies can be found in Appendix 2.



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Figure 1. Elstow Conservation Area.
The boundary is marked in red.

3.0 DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

3.1 Every conservation area has a distinctive character, which is derived from its topography, historical development and current uses. Features such as streets, hedges, buildings and place names are all important contributors.

3.2 The principle features of Elstow Conservation Area are:

- The village Green with its Moot Hall (a museum) and remains of the medieval market cross
- The group of historic and architecturally important buildings comprising the Abbey church of St Mary and St Helena, church tower and remains of the Hillersden Mansion
- The rows of 'black and white' timber framed buildings along the east side of the High Street
- The wealth of historic buildings throughout the conservation area.
- The archaeological significance of the area
- Views from the High Street across to the church, tower and Hillersden Mansion ruins
- Strong historic associations with John Bunyan
- The row of Southill estate cottages on the north side of West End Lane



Figure 2. 1957 aerial photograph of Elstow, viewed from the west

4.0 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE

- 4.1 Elstow is located two miles to the south of Bedford but the northern end of the village has almost merged with the suburbs of the county town. The village is in the northern part of the civil parish of Elstow; the village and many of the more recent housing developments are located inside Bedford's southern bypass (A421). A large part of the population of the parish nowadays is not located in the old Elstow village itself, but in a large housing development called Abbeyfields to the southeast of the village, this was built in first few years of the 21st century and is effectively a suburb of Bedford. The housing development at Pilgrim's Way is to the east of the conservation area and divided from it by a narrow strip of fields; these fields form an important buffer. To the north is Wigram Close and the housing accessed from Progress Way. As such, the old village is now virtually surrounded by modern development, mainly to its north and east sides. There are some open fields to the west of the village, between Elstow and the A6 which are vital to the village setting.
- 4.2 Elstow lies on level ground, within the broad flat valley of the River Ouse. The underlying geology of the area consists of Jurassic clay, more usually known as Oxford Clay overlain by alluvial deposits and gravel. The topography of the area is therefore very gentle and the Conservation Area itself is entirely flat, at 30 metres above sea level.
- 4.3 Elstow Brook forms part of the southern boundary of the Conservation Area, there is a separate narrow pond associated with it. A network of small watercourses carries surface water to Elstow Brook and it meanders through the landscape eastwards until its confluence with the Great River Ouse near Willington. Elstow Brook was an important feature in Elstow; it fed the Abbey's fishponds and was no doubt the main source of water for the Abbey.



Figure 3. Elstow Brook

5.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

- 5.1 Elstow is a village rich in history and archaeological remains; it is best known for its connections with the Christian writer and preacher John Bunyan who was born nearby and lived in Elstow for a number of years. However, Elstow was also very important as the location of a large and wealthy Benedictine Abbey from the 11th to 16th centuries.

Early development

- 5.2 Excavations to the south of Elstow Abbey have revealed evidence for early occupation in the vicinity. Neolithic flint tools have been found and excavations revealed part of a ring ditch associated with a Bronze Age round barrow. A scatter of Roman coins and pottery dating to the 4th century indicate some Roman activity in the area (HER 262).
- 5.3 The name Elstow is believed to be a Saxon name, probably derived from ÆEllen's Stow (place), with ÆEllen being the name of an individual who settled in the area at one time. During excavations of the Abbey site an early Saxon cremation dating from the 5th to 6th century AD was found as well as a large late Saxon cemetery from which around 270 burials were excavated. This would suggest Saxon occupation in the Elstow area; it is also possible there was a Saxon church at Elstow but no firm evidence for this has been uncovered. Part of a highly decorated Saxon cross shaft was found within the walls of the church during repairs in the 19th century; it is now kept in the Moot Hall.

Medieval

- 5.4 The Manor of Elstow was granted by King William I to his niece Countess Judith, widow of the Earl of Huntingdon. In 1078 Judith founded an Abbey for Benedictine nuns in Elstow. Elstow Abbey was of considerable importance as it had both an Abbess and a Prioress; it eventually became the eighth wealthiest nunnery in England. The Domesday Survey of 1086 records that Countess Judith held 3 ½ hides in Elstow and that a small settlement was in existence at Elstow. The holding included 14 villagers, 11 smallholders and 4 slaves as well as a mill (valued at 24 shillings) and woodland for 60 pigs. In 1066 four freemen had held this manor and it had been worth a substantial £10.
- 5.5 A large Abbey church was built at the start of the 12th century, originally dedicated to St Mary and the Holy Trinity, this partly remains as the current parish church of St Mary and St Helena. Archaeological excavation has demonstrated the considerable size of the original Abbey church which extended to the west, beyond the line of the existing churchyard boundary wall (Fig. 4). The sizeable complex of buildings associated with the Abbey were constructed to the south of the church and would have included cloisters, dormitory ranges, a refectory, chapter house, kitchen and numerous other buildings to serve the functions of the Abbey (Fig. 5). All these structures were rebuilt several times with a major rebuilding occurring in the 13th and 14th centuries. The detached tower also formed part of the Abbey; it was constructed in the 13th century but rebuilt in the 15th century. A parish church, dedicated to St Helena was built within the existing churchyard in the 14th century and a further chapel by the bridge was also built, these were both later demolished.



Figure 4. Excavation to the east of the churchyard wall (Baker, 1968)

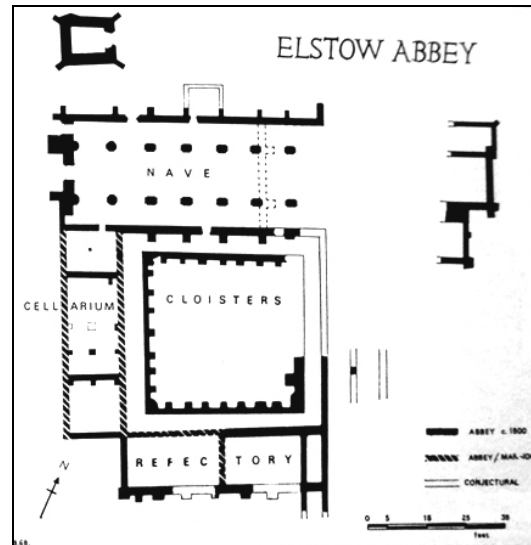


Figure 5. Simplified plan of the Abbey revealed by excavation (Baker, 1968)

- 5.6 A more recent geophysical survey has revealed the remains of buildings or garden features to the south and east of the present church. Fishponds fed by the Elstow Brook were sited to the southwest of the Abbey and although they are now partly levelled their location is shown on the 19th and 20th century Ordnance Survey maps. Excavations alongside Elstow Brook have revealed leets and footings for a bridge, again relating to the medieval Abbey.
- 5.7 The Abbey was not without scandal, it gained a reputation for 'immorality' and in 1421 the Bishop of Lincoln forbade nuns from leaving the Abbey precincts to reduce temptation!
- 5.8 The attending village of Elstow no doubt developed and prospered with the construction of the Abbey as the Abbey would have needed guesthouses for visitors, numerous workshops, shops and inns. The oldest range of properties on the High Street, 1 – 11 Bunyan's Mead, was erected between the 13th and 15th centuries; with nos. 1 – 3 being the oldest. The majority of other houses on the High Street were built in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. Elstow Abbey was granted an annual fair by Henry II and the Green became the scene of regular markets and fairs. The stump of the medieval cross can still be seen on the Green but it was partly destroyed during the Reformation. Elstow's 'Moot Hall' was formerly known as The Green House or Market House. It was built on the village green in the 15th century and was owned by the Abbey and used in association with village fairs. It contained shops at ground floor level which, it is thought, were used all year round, and a hall above.
- 5.9 The Manor continued to be held by Elstow Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries by King Henry VIII when the manor was surrendered to the Crown in 1539 and the remaining Abbess and 23 nuns were given pensions. Such was the size and importance of the Abbey that its use as Bedfordshire's Cathedral was considered for a short while but this plan came to nothing. So, the Abbey church was partially demolished, part of the nave was retained to form the main body of the existing parish church which would have been needed by the remaining village of Elstow (the first three bays from the east are Norman and part of the original abbey, the two western bays are Early

English (13th century). The church was heavily restored in c1881 by T J Jackson of Bedford.



Figure 6. Elstow parish church and tower in 1813

Seventeenth and eighteenth century

- 5.10 The Manor passed through several hands including those of the Hillersden family. In 1625 Sir Thomas Hillersden built a mansion, known as Elstow Place, to the south side of the parish church. It was built using stones from the old Abbey complex and part of the 14th century inner cloisters formed the main body of the mansion. Traces of blocked windows and medieval doors are still visible in the remaining walls. A fine porch, in the Renaissance style, possibly designed by Inigo Jones was added to the east front. A carriage drive leading from Elstow High Street to the porch is still clearly visible as a dip within the field between the porch and the road. The mansion was partly demolished between 1767 and 1781; parts of the mansion can still be made out on the 1767 parish map of Elstow (Fig. 7). In 1782 the Manor was sold to Mr Samuel Whitbread of Southill but the ruins of the Mansion remained. The 1767 parish map shows the layout of the village at this time with buildings along the High Street with narrow plots to the rear and housing clustered around the north and west side of the Green.
- 5.11 John Bunyan, the famous preacher and Christian writer was born in 1628 in a cottage in the hamlet of Harrowden, just to the east of Elstow. He was christened in Elstow's abbey church and spent much of his early life in Elstow; it is recorded he used to play 'tip cat', a type of rounders on the village Green. A cottage where he lived was located on the west side of the north end of the High Street, just outside the current conservation area boundary (Fig. 8). Unfortunately it was demolished in 1968 as the cottage was in poor condition and it was felt to be a traffic hazard on the main Luton to Bedford road; a plaque on a modern brick gatepost records its location.

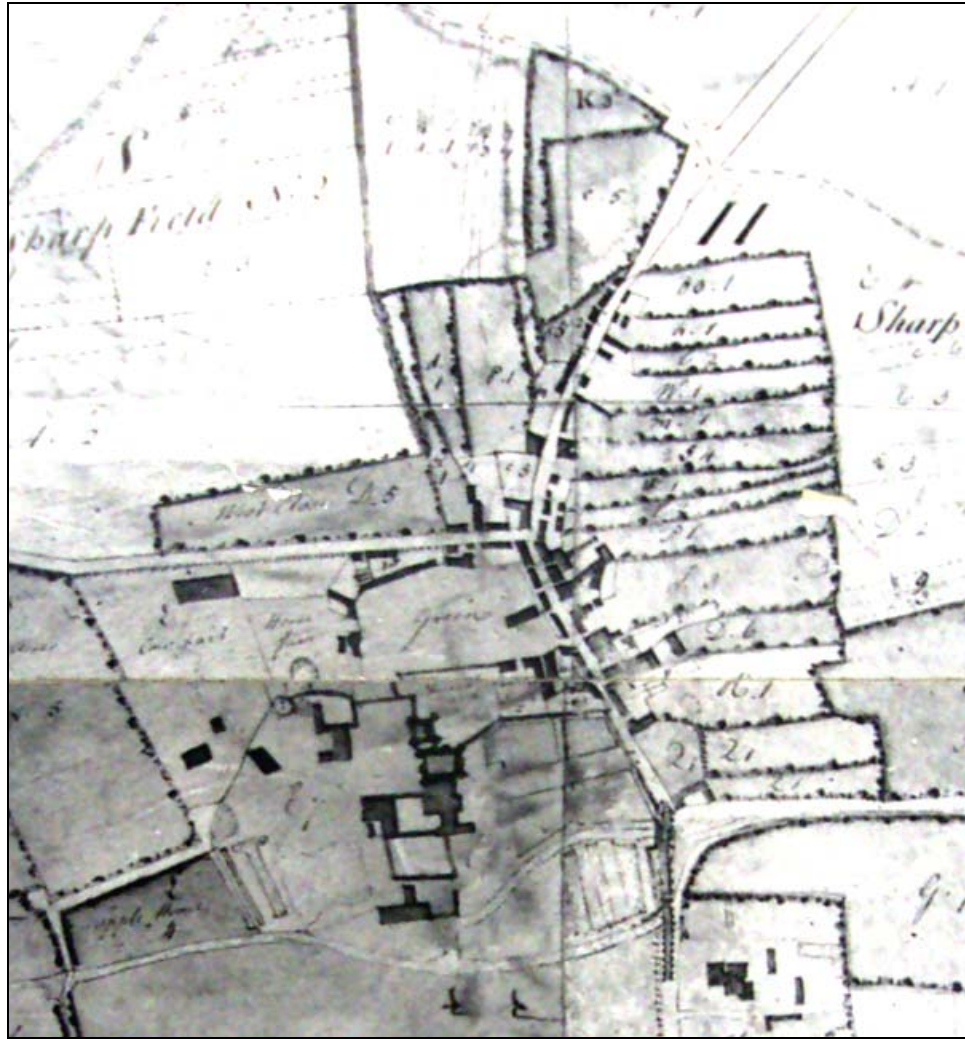


Figure 7. Extract from the 1767 Elstow Parish Map (BLARS)



Figure 8. John Bunyan's Cottage on the High Street, demolished 1968 (BLARS)

- 5.12 The two remaining public houses in the village, The Swan and The Red Lion occupy 16th / 17th century buildings; they have been public houses for much of the time since their construction. A further public house, The Bell is known to have existed on the High Street.

Nineteenth century

- 5.13 The Moot Hall was used as the manor court following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and in the 19th century as a place of worship by the Bunyan Meeting Church. The name Moot Hall (although medieval) was actually given to the building in the latter part of the 19th century. Elstow was well known for lace-making, an industry which apparently employed many of the women of the village, a lace school was even established in a cottage on the High Street. Other industries included farming – the principal crops grown in the area were wheat and barley. Reed matting was also made in the locality using water reeds from Elstow Brook. May Day Festivals are thought to have taken place on The Green for many centuries; a May Pole was recorded on The Green in 1875 and in the early to mid 20th century the May Day Festivals at Elstow became well known nationally and were the subject of British Pathé films; more recently the tradition has been revived within Elstow.

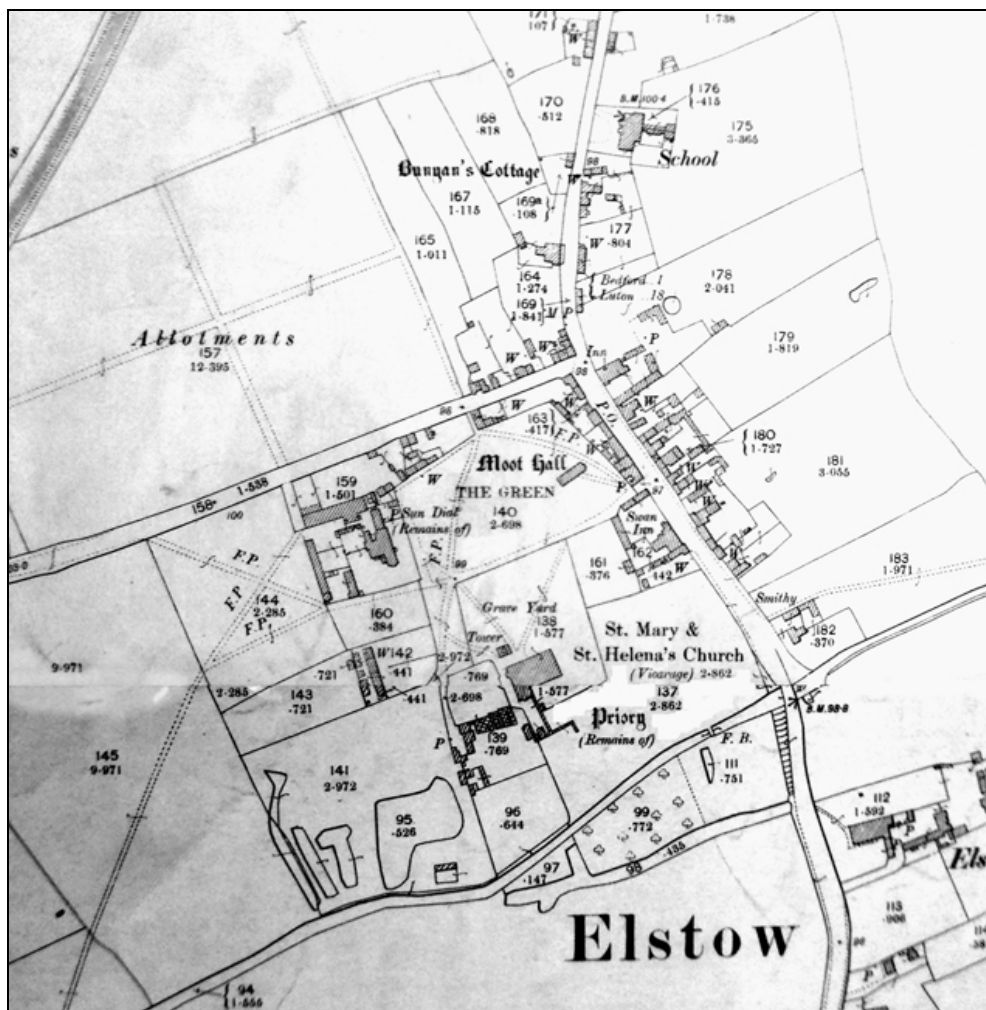


Figure 9. Extract from the 1901 Ordnance Survey map of Elstow

- 5.14 The first Education Act was passed in 1870; this required a school to be provided and in 1874 Elstow's village school was built. It is a fine Victorian school building at the north end of the High Street. It is now vacant as the school has moved out of the village to new purpose built premises at Abbeyfields.

Twentieth century

- 5.15 The 1901 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 9) shows the majority of the houses along the High Street had been built by this time. The map shows some houses fronting the north side of West End Lane and on both sides of the junction of the High Street and West End Lane. 'Bunyan's Cottage' is marked on the map indicating its local importance at this time. The remains of the medieval market cross on The Green are mistakenly referred to as the remains of a sun dial. The fishponds associated with the Abbey are shown to the southwest of the Church.
- 5.16 By 1901 allotments had been created on land on the north side of West End; however part of this allotment land and some small houses on the north side of West End Lane, close to the junction with the High Street were re-developed by the Southill Estate and a series of estate cottages were built in 1903. They all have date stones with 'SW 1903' upon them, the SW standing for Samuel Whitbread, owner of the Southill Estate at this time. These cottages are still owned by the Southill Estate along with a few other properties within the village.
- 5.17 The Bunyan Meeting Chapel at the north end of the High Street (adjacent to the village school) was built in 1910 on land donated by the Whitbread family. A stained glass window depicting The Pilgrim's Progress faces the street. In 1919 the village war memorial was erected in front of Elstow School, it is a truncated obelisk of Cornish granite bearing the names of those who died in World War I.
- 5.18 During World War II many local residents, particularly women and children, would have worked at the Elstow Storage Depot which was developed as an armaments factory and became known as Elstow Royal Ordnance Factory. It was an enormous concern and produced 10,000 tons of bombs, approximately one-seventh of the entire tonnage dropped on Germany by Bomber Command. The depot is outside the conservation area but would have been very much part of the village and the surrounding area. The area is currently being developed into a new settlement known as The Wixams.
- 5.19 Elstow's Moot Hall was repaired in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain Celebrations, it is now a museum dedicated to 17th century rural life and to John Bunyan.
- 5.20 The first buildings to be statutorily listed in Elstow include the Hillersden Mansion ruins, The Swan and The Red Lion (in 1952); the majority of Elstow's historic buildings were listed in 1964 and a few more in 1984. The 1967 Civic Amenities Act prompted Bedfordshire County Council to designate a series of Conservation Areas and Elstow was designated in 1970.



Figure 10. Extract from the 1926 Ordnance Survey Map of Elstow

- 5.21 One of the biggest changes to Elstow's High Street in recent years, occurred in 1975 with the much needed repair of a series of timber frame cottages on the east side of the High Street. The 1970 Conservation Area Appraisal recognised the poor state of these building and remarked; 'Unfortunately many of the cottages are in disrepair, some are vacant and some are too small for modern living.' The cottages were purchased by Bedfordshire County Council from the Whitbread Estate for £1. The architects Chrystal and West, under the enthusiastic watch of architect Bernard West were involved in the scheme of repairs and their conversion into flats and maisonettes. The repairs transformed the cottages from a rundown group of pebbledashed properties to what we see today with the timber frame exposed and given the 'black and white' treatment (a marked change!). In addition nine bungalows were built to the rear as accommodation for the elderly. The final phase of the development entailed the demolition of the parish hall and a factory building (the Schweppes factory), both described in negative terms within the 1970 Conservation Area Appraisal. These were replaced by further houses and flats to the south accessed from the new road, Bunyan's Mead. The modern

properties within Bunyan's Mead are managed by the Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association (BPHA) – it provides supported housing for those over the age of 60.

- 5.22 Other minor developments have occurred within the Conservation Area since designation including the 1970's housing development at Abbey Close (south of The Vicarage); this replaced a row of small thatched cottages, 211 – 214 Church End which were burnt down by a firework on 5th November 1970. Nos. 20 to 30 West End were built on or near the site of 218 The Green, a 16th or 17th century cottage.



Figure 11. 'Ring-a-ring o' Roses'. Children playing on The Green (early 20th century)
Image courtesy of Mr E Bowen.

- 5.23 The Elstow Bypass opened in November 1982; it meant the High Street was no longer the main route from Bedford to Luton and Elstow became a quieter place to live.
- 5.24 In recent years the churchyard has been extended slightly to the west incorporating a small area of garden land to the rear of The Swan. Little has changed within the conservation area itself although mid and late 20th century development surrounding the village has continued to encroach upon Elstow.

The archaeological significance and potential of the area

- 5.25 Elstow has a high archaeological significance. Much of the Abbey site to the south and west of the church has already been excavated and recorded in detail with summaries published in the Bedfordshire Magazine and elsewhere. Elstow's timber frame buildings were closely studied by the timber frame expert John Bailey. There are 32 Historic Environment Records for Elstow dating from the all periods, many of these relate to buildings (both listed and unlisted) within the conservation area (Appendix 3).

There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Elstow Conservation Area:

- The Moot Hall (SAM No. 30)
- The Hillersden Mansion and remains of Elstow Abbey (SAM No. 45)



Figure 12. The Red Lion and the High Street. Circa 1860 (Z50/43/56) (left) and today (right)



Figure 13. View to rear between 1 – 11 and 12 – 17 Bunyan's Mead. Early to mid 20th century (left) and today (right)



Figure 14. 1 – 11 Bunyan's Mead. Early to mid 20th century (left) and today (right)



Figure 15. The Swan Public House circa 1920 (X/3/33/597) (left) and today (right)

6.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

- 6.1 Elstow contains an interesting combination of large open spaces with buildings scattered within / around them, and a number of more tightly packed buildings along the High Street. This mix reflects the area's history with the formation of the Benedictine Abbey to the west of the main road running north to south and the linear development of the attending village of Elstow along this High Street. Elstow's High Street and the Church are closely linked, particularly due to the views across from the High Street to the Church.



Figure 16. Glimpse of Elstow parish church from the bridge over Elstow Brook

- 6.2 The approach from the south is through a fairly rural landscape past a scattering of houses and farm buildings along Wilstead Road and then over the Elstow Brook. To the east are views of the Elstow Brook and the cluster of housing on Bunyan's Mead. The west side of the road is initially lined with trees but as these clear or during the winter when there is less tree cover some picture postcard views over pasture fields towards the parish church, the detached church tower and the remains of the Hillersden Mansion are gained. The east side of the High Street is fronted by properties along much of its length giving a sense of enclosure to this side of the conservation area. Despite the flat topography of the village views of the abbey church and tower are visible from various points throughout the Conservation Area due to its height; particularly from the A6 road to the west of the village, with views over fields uninterrupted by modern development.



Figure 17. A view of Elstow High Street from the south end of the conservation area

- 6.3 The approach into the conservation area from the west is rather more perfunctory due to the amount of new housing that surrounds Elstow and the new roundabout just before the 'entrance' to the conservation area. West End itself appears fairly open, the early 20th century estate cottages on the north side of the road are set well back and their regularity of design provides a pleasant introduction to the conservation area. It is only at the east end of West End that the medieval character of Elstow becomes apparent.



Figure 18. View east into Elstow Conservation Area along West End

- 6.4 The conservation area can only be approached from the north on foot as the modern road network, in the form of Progress Way, has cut across the north end of the High Street making the northern end of the High Street a no through road – this has the advantage of reducing through traffic in the village itself.

Open space

- 6.5 There are two principal areas of open space within the Conservation Area; The Green and the pasture fields associated with Elstow Abbey. The churchyard can also be considered as an area of semi-open space.
- 6.6 The Green is a publicly accessible grassed area set to the rear of the High Street and accessed from Church End. It is pleasantly screened from the High Street and on it sits the Moot Hall (Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade II* listed building), now a museum containing an exhibition of life and traditions in 17th century Britain. There is a scattering of trees around and on the Green. The base of a market cross remains in situ on The Green, reflecting the areas' earlier use.
- 6.7 The churchyard is divided from Church End by a low stone wall which forms a boundary around the whole churchyard. This low stone wall is an important feature within the conservation area; it is probably mid Victorian in date with later 19th century additions and repairs. The south boundary of the churchyard wall also comprises a section of old red brick wall.



Figure 19. Two views of The Green; from the west (left) and from the east (right)

- 6.8 The conservation area contains a large amount of open space in the form of pasture fields to the south and west of the church. These fields contain archaeological remains of the Abbey buildings which once occupied the site, and to the south west are remains of the medieval fishponds (largely ploughed out). These fields are not publicly accessible but are crucial to the landscape setting of the church, tower and Hillersden Mansion remains – particularly in views from the High Street.



Figure 20. View across pasture field to the church and Hillersden Mansion ruins (the dip in the ground is the former drive up to the front of the Mansion)

- 6.9 Open spaces outside Elstow Conservation Area also impact upon its character, in particular the fields to the west between the A6 / Abbeyfields and the village; these provide distant views of the church and its associated tower and the village. These longer distance views are crucial to the setting of Elstow village and their importance has been recognised by being identified in the Local Plan as 'Protected Views' (Policy BE34a).

Landmark buildings

- 6.10 Within the conservation area are a small number of landmark buildings; these are visually important structures that make a statement, form a full stop at the beginning or end of a view, hold an important corner position, can be seen at a distance, or stand above the general roof line of the surrounding buildings.

Landmark buildings within Elstow Conservation Area:

- Parish Church of St Mary and St Helena
- Church tower
- Moot Hall
- Bunyan's Mead
- The Red Lion Public House



Figure 21. Landmark buildings in Elstow.
Clockwise from top left; Abbey church of St Mary & St Helena, Church tower,
1 – 11 Bunyan's Mead, Moot Hall

Focal point

- 6.11 The focal point of Elstow Conservation Area is inevitably the group of buildings / structures comprising the Abbey church of St Mary and St Helena, the associated church tower and the remains of the Hillersden Mansion. The church and tower in particular can be seen from some distance away and from many different points within and outside of the conservation area. Other focal points include the black and white timber frame cottages of Bunyan's Mead, in particular the higher gabled section and nos. 2 and 3 Bunyan's Mead with their multiple ogee braces. Elstow's Moot Hall is a focal point on The Green - it sits in isolation and can be viewed from all sides.

Key views and vistas

- 6.12 The flat topography of the conservation area does not afford too many dramatic views and vistas however there are some fantastic views of the parish church, church tower and Hillersden Mansion ruins from the High Street. The church and tower can also be glimpsed in distant views from various points throughout the conservation area, particularly The Green, West End and northern parts of the High Street.
- 6.13 There are good views along the High Street as it gently curves along its length; the focus of these views is inevitably the two long ranges of black and white timber frame cottages of Bunyan's Mead.



Figure 22. Key view of Elstow parish church and tower from the High Street

Trees and vegetation

- 6.14 Trees play an important role in the conservation area. The southern boundary of the conservation area is wooded and hedged. Trees in gardens and the hedge boundaries particularly along the northern end of the High Street are of importance. The holly hedge boundary along the north side of West End and on the corner of High Street and West End is a key characteristic of this area.
- 6.15 There is a scattering of trees upon the Green and a number of trees in the churchyard particularly along the path from Church End to the north door, the churchyard also contains a large and ancient yew tree.

7.0 CHARACTER AREAS

- 7.1 The Conservation Area can be divided into three distinct character areas. Each area has a different character and appearance that relates to its past and current function, the design of the street layout and its buildings and the types of material used in their construction. These character areas are shown in figure 23 and have been analysed separately.
- 7.2 There are 24 statutory listed buildings in Elstow Conservation Area (Appendix 4); each is described within their particular character area along with any key unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area.

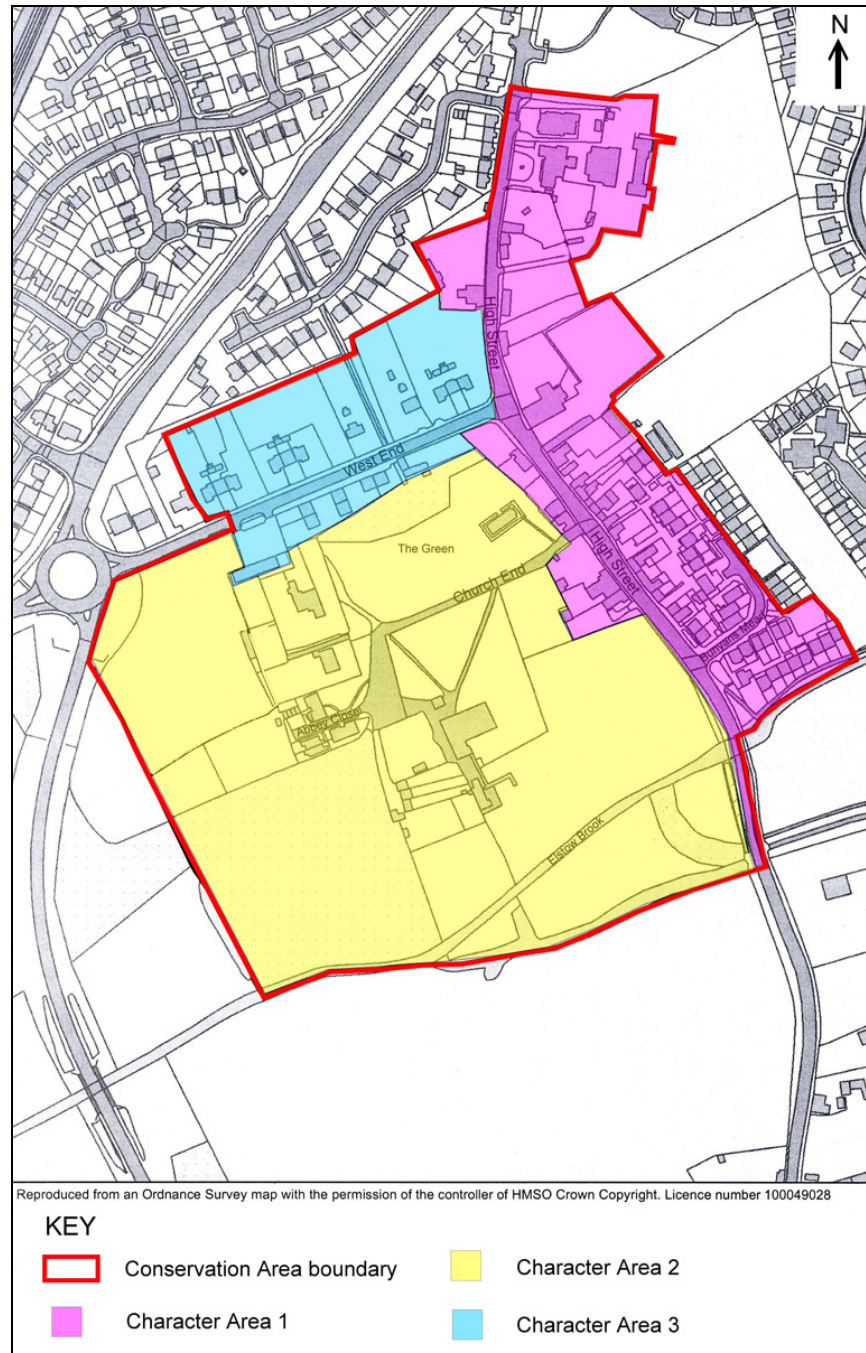


Figure 23. Map detailing the three character areas within Elstow Conservation Area

7.3 CHARACTER AREA 1: High Street

- 7.3.1 Character Area 1 comprises the length of the historic High Street within the Conservation Area and part of the modern Bunyan's Mead development to the east / rear of the High Street. The majority of the properties fronting the historic High Street are statutorily listed reflecting their age and architectural importance.
- 7.3.2 Most of the properties are in residential use and were built as such although many of the timber frame cottages at Bunyan's Mead may have had shops on their ground floors. The village has retained two public houses (The Swan and The Red Lion) and there is only one 'shop' at the post office adjacent to 206 High Street. St Helena is a residential property but also contains a restaurant. The Victorian brick storage building and the stables either side of 174 High Street are still used for storage purposes.
- 7.3.3 The High Street retains its semi-rural character reinforced by trees at the southern end of the conservation area and views of trees and pasture fields on the west side. The High Street is unusual in that it has not been developed much on its west side; this is due to the long established area of church land meeting the road. Cottages front directly on to the pavement along the east side; they form a regular fairly dense pattern of development. The Bunyan's Mead housing has been built to the rear of the High Street within the original gardens of nos. 1 – 11, 12 – 17, 19 & 20, and 28 High Street resulting in the loss of original land boundaries and gardens, the traditional linear form of development along the High Street has been compromised by this area of suburban housing development. The northern end of the High Street is less densely developed and there are properties with good sized gardens to the side and rear.

Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

- 7.3.4 The entrance to the village from the south is marked by a rendered timber frame property with a gabled clay tile roof set back from the road. To the rear and side are a large number of modern properties – part of the Bunyan's Mead development accessed via a road of the same name; these modern properties are rather crammed together and are of no particular architectural merit. To the north of the road opening are a pair of semi-detached modern properties, they are set back slightly behind a small grass verge which allows views of the timber framed side elevation of nos. 19 and 20 High Street; these modern houses fit reasonably well into the street scene. From this point on there are a series of black and white vernacular timber frame cottages (12 – 17 High Street) sitting on stone / brick sills, these front directly on to the pavement and have clay tile roofs – one is clad in timber weatherboard which breaks up the 'black and white' treatment of this group, the property at the north end has an overhanging jetty and has a higher roof; all these differing factors create an attractive variation in this row of cottages.



Figure 24. 1- 11 Bunyan's Mead (left) and 12 – 17 Bunyan's Mead (right)

- 7.3.5 There is a wide gap between the two long rows of cottages on the east side of the High Street. Again there are views to the Bunyan's Mead development to the rear, this time in the form of a single storey red brick building. A tree in the foreground helps to soften views of this modern development.
- 7.3.6 The next long range of timber frame buildings (1 – 11 Bunyan's Mead) were built in stages, from the 13th to 15th centuries (with later alterations); due to its age and historic interest it has been listed grade II*. It has a continuous jettied overhang, a series of decorative timber ogee braces and the higher gabled timber frame element is a focal point in views along the High Street.
- 7.3.7 There are numerous glimpses through the gaps and passageways between some of the houses to the side elevations of some of the cottages and also to the bungalows which make up part of the Bunyan's Mead development. These bungalows have been designed to be subservient to the High Street cottages and are set within landscaped surroundings. A network of paths links the High Street to this rear development. The footpaths are paved, with stone cobbles bordering the edges of houses and boundary walls and there are areas of planting as per the original design by Chrystal and West architects. This part of the Bunyan's Mead development is more low key and blends into the village better than the housing on Bunyan's Mead at the south end of the High Street.



Figure 25. Bungalows forming the rear of the Bunyan's Mead development

- 7.3.8 The long ranges of timber frame cottages along with some of the older buildings on both sides of the High Street give it a singularly medieval character. Houses on the west side of the High Street tend to be in pairs or as single dwellings. The Swan and no. 204 High Street, adjoining, are both timber frame dating to the 16th century.
- 7.3.9 Just to the north of the narrow entrance to Church End are Green Corner and no. 205 High Street (grade II listed), Green Corner is a small single storey plus attic rendered cottage with gabled roof, dating to the 15th century (part of a former hall house), whereas number 205 is an early 19th century (built 1806) Georgian red brick house with a symmetrical façade sash windows and central door with moulded door case. Its polite facade stands out within the predominantly vernacular High Street.



Figure 26. No. 205 High Street, an example of polite architecture on the High Street

- 7.3.10 To the north is 206 High Street, a rendered house with gabled roof (grade II listed); the village Post Office is housed in the single storey block attached – it has a red painted post box within its front wall but the appearance of this part of the building is slightly marred by the large single pane window and modern door to its front elevation.
- 7.3.11 The character of the High Street further to the north of the ‘black and white’ timber frame buildings of Bunyan’s Mead is less obviously ‘medieval’. To the north is a late 19th century brick bake house with its gable end fronting the High Street, views can be obtained to the rear of this plot to greenhouses associated with Simmons Florist, these open views help to give some rural character to the area but the modern housing of Pilgrims Way can be seen in the distance. Adjacent to this Victorian brick building is another 16th century timber frame house covered with roughcast render (174 High Street) and adjoining this is a long brick built stable block with clay pantile roof.
- 7.3.12 The Red Lion occupies a prominent position on the east side of the High Street, opposite the junction with West End. It has a symmetrical façade and

open pediment over the door. Above the door is a circular plaque with 'SW 1798' – a number of properties in the village have a Whitbread plaque on their front elevations, these plaques are thought to mark the date of acquisition or restoration by the Whitbread family.

- 7.3.13 The High Street starts to narrow slightly to the north of the junction with West End, this part of the High Street is no longer a through road; the houses are less tightly clustered and the area has a greener appearance with more trees and hedges in evidence. On the east side of the road are three detached 16th or 17th century houses, all fronting the pavement. No. 173 has a gabled clay tile roof and is entirely rendered. No. 172 has retained its thatch roof, is pebbledash rendered to the front but weather-boarded to the side. Nos. 170 and 171 have a weather-boarded single storey barn attached to the side, the buildings are rendered to the front elevation but the north / side elevation has its timber frame with red brick infill exposed.



Figure 27. High Street looking north with 173 High Street (right) and the double gabled roof of Saint Helena (left)

- 7.3.14 The conservation area formerly ended just to the north of no. 170 High Street but following the review of the Conservation Area the Elstow Village School site has been included along with the Elstow War Memorial (both are grade II listed), and the adjacent Bunyan Memorial Hall. These buildings are very much a part of the village and it was considered logical to include them within Elstow's Conservation Area. The former village school is a Victorian building (dated to 1874), the site is currently vacant and awaiting a new use. To the rear are two 1930's school buildings, these are in poor condition and are not visible from the High Street.
- 7.3.15 Opposite 172 High Street is St Helena, a 17th century house with two gables facing the road. This property is one of the largest residential buildings within the conservation area; it also contains a restaurant but this is not evident when looking at the building. It has a brick wall to the side and trees are visible within the garden. The conservation area boundary finishes at the north end of this brick boundary wall, it does not include the drive which is on the site of Bunyan's Cottage. To the south of St Helena is a hedge boundary that continues to the corner of High Street and West End.



Figure 28. Elstow's former village school (left) and the War Memorial (right)

7.3.16 Buildings recommended for addition to a Local List

Victorian bake house, adjacent 174 High Street

A Victorian bake house constructed of stock brick with red brick dressings and banding, and a gabled clay tile roof (Fig. 29). There is a circular date stone (reading 1888) within the apex of the gable end which fronts the road. The building retains its traditional fenestration with the majority of windows at first floor level only. Now used as a store.

Bunyan Memorial Hall

The hall was built in 1910 on land donated by the Whitbread family (Fig. 29). It is built of red brick with decorative timber and render detailing to the gables. The roof is gabled and clad with clay tile; there is a hipped roof to the single storey porch. A large stained glass window depicting scenes from 'The Pilgrim's Progress' (John Bunyan's famous Christian allegory) faces the street.



Figure 29. Buildings recommended for addition to a Local List. 19th century bakehouse to the south of 174 High Street (left) and Bunyan Memorial Hall (right)

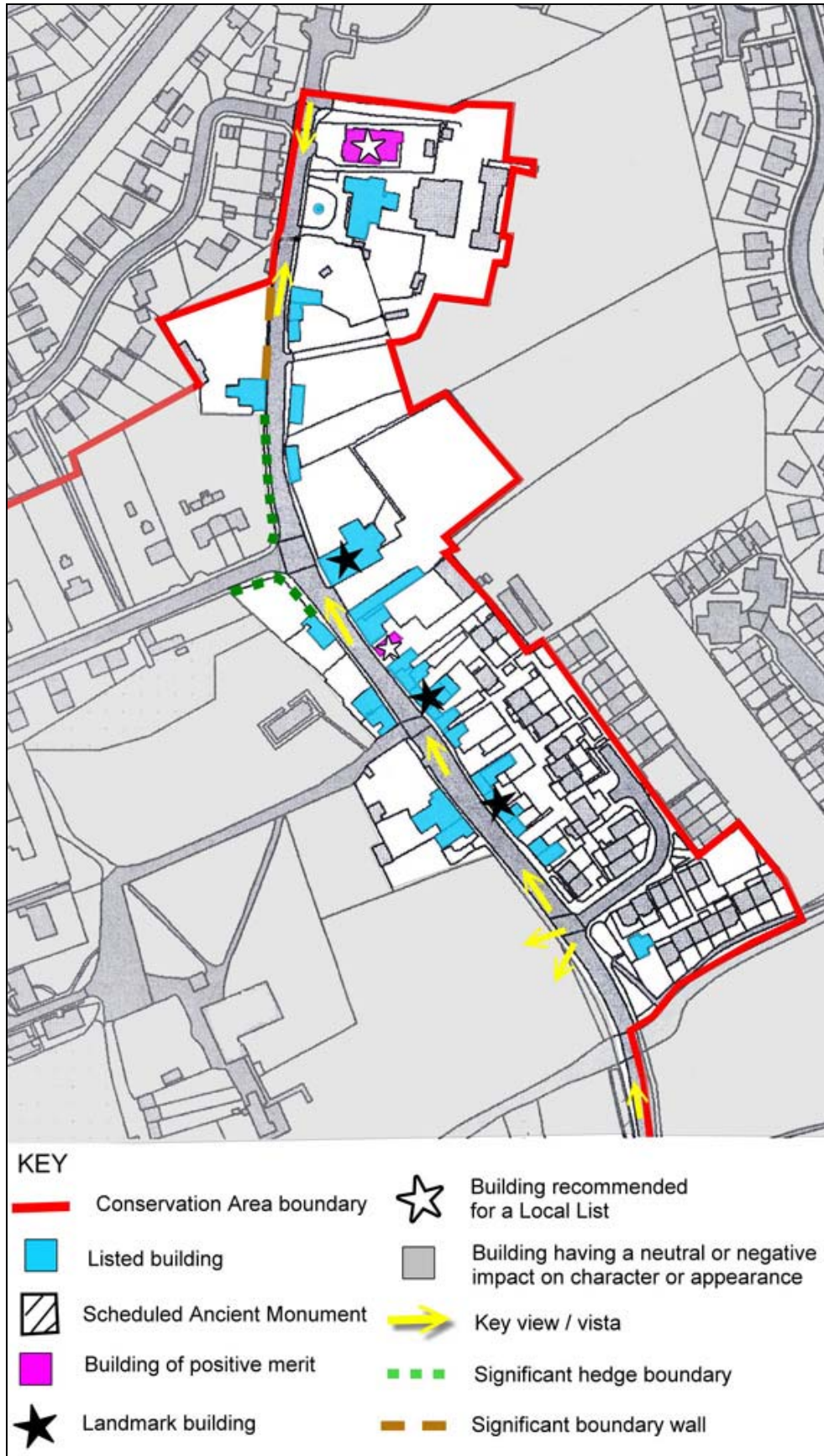


Figure 30. Elstow Conservation Area, Character area 1 appraisal map

Prevalent and traditional building materials

- 7.3.17 The majority of houses within character zone 1 are two storey with gabled roofs and the majority are of timber frame construction, some is of particularly good decorative quality. Some have infill panels of brick or painted render, others have their timber frames partly or wholly concealed by pebbledash render, roughcast render, smooth painted render or horizontal stained weatherboard.
- 7.3.18 Nos. 1- 11 and 12 -17 High Street were given the 'black and white' treatment during their restoration in 1975, before this the cottages were covered in pebbledash render (itself probably an early 20th century surface treatment); whether this timber frame was ever fully exposed is unclear but the 1975 restoration work greatly changed the character and appearance of these cottages and the appearance of the conservation area as a whole. A few of the timber frame properties incorporate stone rubble within their plinths or in the case of The Swan within its gable end.



Figure 31. Decorative timber bracing to nos. 1 – 3 Bunyan's Mead

- 7.3.19 No. 205 High Street is of red brick construction as are some of the 19th century rear extensions to Bunyan's Mead. The brick store building adjacent to 174 High Street is of stock brick construction with red brick dressings. Chimney stacks tend to be red brick. Roofs are generally steep and most are covered in traditional red clay tile; 172 High Street has retained its thatched roof (Fig. 32). The modern properties on Bunyan's Mead have clay pantile roofs with slate verges. As the majority of the buildings within character area 1 are listed they have retained traditional forms of fenestration in the form of timber or metal framed casement windows (many are twentieth century replacements of older windows), a few windows have rectangular / diamond leaded lights. No 205 is the exception, its polite architecture is reflected in its symmetrical façade and the use of 8-over-8 timber sashes and moulded timber door case. Some houses feature small hipped or gabled dormers but these are generally restricted to rear / side wings. The modern housing contains uPVC windows and doors. Porches tend to be a feature of modern properties within the conservation area. Front doors are usually timber; the doors on 1 - 11 and 12 – 17 Bunyan's Mead are heavily glazed modern doors, not characteristic of the more traditional forms of timber door one would expect.



Figure 32. 172 High Street, Elstow

General condition, including neutral / negative factors

- 7.3.20 The High Street area is generally in a good condition and appears well maintained. The High Street itself is a fairly quiet thoroughfare since the Elstow bypass was constructed in 1982 and the north end of the High Street was closed off to vehicular traffic in 1992. It is a primarily residential area and without shops so parking pressures do not seem to be an issue. As such, the High Street has benefited by not having single or double yellow lines marked either side of the road so the High Street appears in keeping with Elstow's 'rural' character. The bus stop is marked on the road in yellow paint; this slightly mars the character of the street but is perhaps a necessary feature.
- 7.3.21 The two-storey housing at the south end of Bunyan's Mead has a neutral character within the area; the development does not respect the typical linear form of Elstow's development and has resulted in the loss of original plot boundaries, the buildings themselves are of no particular architectural interest.



Figure 33. Two storey housing on Bunyan's Mead to the side of 28 High Street (left) and rear of the High Street (right)

- 7.3.22 No. 28 High Street (Grade II listed) is at the southern end of the High Street; its setting has been slightly compromised by the amount of development to the side and rear (Fig. 33).
- 7.3.23 Properties within character area 1 are generally well maintained and in a good state of repair. The Grade II listed 'Green Corner' on the west side of the High

Street is occupied however it is in need of some repair and maintenance, particularly to its windows (Fig. 34).



Figure 34. Green Corner, a property in need of some maintenance

7.3.24 The large car park area to the side of The Swan Public House is tarmac covered, it is very visible from the High Street and some screening or a more suitable surface treatment would be a benefit. Similarly the huge tarmac car park area to the rear of The Red Lion is visible from the High Street. The wide tarmac 'drive' is uneven and mismatched, making for a poor quality area of public realm (Fig. 35).



Figure 35. Large areas of hard standing adjacent to The Swan and The Red Lion

7.3.25 The street lighting throughout the conservation area is functional – the street lamps are tall, they appear prominent and detract from the character of the conservation area. A more traditional form of street lighting would benefit the appearance of the conservation area.

7.3.26 The paving within the Bunyan's Mead development to the rear of the High Street has been poorly repaired over the years. Paving slabs have been lifted / removed and replaced with tarmac instead of a new paving slab (Fig. 36). Much of the pavement has tracks of re-laid tarmac along its length following utility works along the High Street.



Figure 36. Unsympathetic repairs to paving on Bunyan's Mead

- 7.3.27 A green painted utilities unit is sited in the middle of the gap between 1- 11 Bunyan's Mead and 12 to 17 Bunyan's Mead; it is unfortunate this could not have been sited further back from the pavement or in a less conspicuous location.
- 7.3.28 Pub signage attached to the timbers doors on the side of the old stable block to the south of The Red Lion is out of character with the building and conservation area (Fig. 37).



Figure 37. Pub signage adjacent to The Red Lion

7.4 CHARACTER AREA 2; The Green, Church End and land to the south & west

- 7.4.1 Character area 2 is the largest sub-area but contains large areas of open space in the form of pasture fields, which are crucial to the setting of the parish church, church tower and mansion ruins. The area is characterised by its ecclesiastical and residential buildings with the group comprising the parish church of St Mary and St Helena, church tower and Hillersden Mansion ruins being the focal point. The area also includes Church End, Abbey Close, The Green with its Moot Hall and houses on the west side and the fields to the south and west of the church. Following the review of the conservation area and its boundaries, an area of land to the northwest of the Conservation Area was included; it is to the south of West End, adjacent to the roundabout. This pasture field is important to the setting of the Conservation Area, views to the rear of the Old Vicarage and the church tower can be gained.
- 7.4.2 Church End is a narrow road which leads from the High Street towards the entrance to the Parish Church, The Vicarage, The Old Vicarage and Abbey Close. A low stone wall runs along its south side and continues around to form the boundary wall of the churchyard – this wall is an important feature within the conservation area. The churchyard is attractive and well maintained. There are some fantastic views of the Hillersden Mansion ruins, the fields to the south and west and glimpses the High Street itself from within the churchyard.
- 7.4.3 The Green is a well maintained grassed area with trees along its boundary with Church End and trees dotted around it. A new village sign is located in the south east corner of The Green by the side of the road; it incorporates images of John Bunyan the famed 17th century resident of Elstow.
- 7.4.5 At the top of the drive leading to 208, 209 and 210 Church End views into the field to the southwest once occupied by medieval fishponds can be gained; although partially levelled the field contains numerous lumps and bumps suggestive of its archaeological interest.



Figure 38. View from the field adjacent to the roundabout on West End towards Elstow's church tower

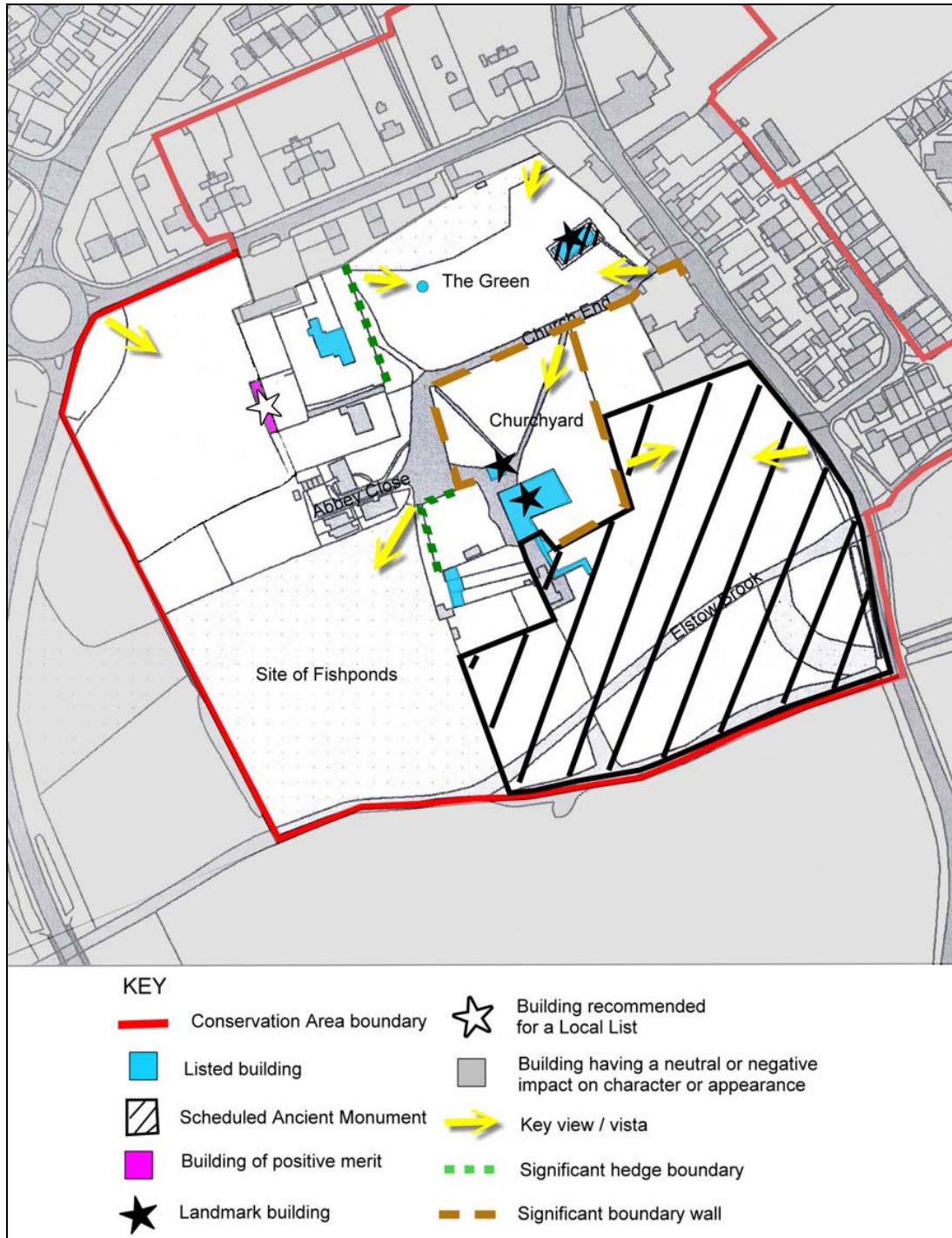


Figure 39. Elstow Conservation Area, character area 2 appraisal map

Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

- 7.4.7 This character area boasts the oldest buildings within the conservation area, in the form of the Church of St Mary and St Helena, with parts of it dating from the early 12th century; the church tower dates to the 15th century whilst the ruins of the Hillersden Mansion incorporate parts of the 14th century west and south ranges of the cloisters of the Benedictine Abbey. To reflect their age and national importance these structures are each Grade I listed whilst the Hillersden Mansion ruins are also designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument along with the fields to the south and west.



Figure 40. Parish church of St Mary and St Helena viewed from the east (left); 12th century tympanum above north door to church showing Christ flanked by St Peter & St John (right)



Figure 41. Ruins of the Hillersden Mansion viewed from the churchyard

- 7.4.8 To the southwest of the church is an early seventeenth century property (208, 209 and 210 Church End; Grade II listed); it has some related weather-boarded outbuildings and sits in slight isolation set well back from Church End behind a neat hedge and within a good sized garden.
- 7.4.9 The 1970's development at Abbey Close, west of the church is rather out of character with the conservation area as a whole; there are three blocks of two-storey red brick flats with uncharacteristically long steep monopitch and dual pitch slate roofs.

7.4.10 To the north of Abbey Close is the Vicarage, this is a 1970's brick built property with a gabled clay tile roof. It is set back from the road behind a low boundary wall, tree planting and a grass verge. Although of no particular architectural interest its size and general appearance respects The Old Vicarage, which is sited to the north. The Old Vicarage is a 17th century rendered timber frame property set behind a high hedge looking over the village green from the west, it helps to frame the village green and enclose it upon its western edge.



Figure 42. The Vicarage (left) and The Old Vicarage (right)

7.4.11 To the rear / west of The Old Vicarage, but within a separate plot of land is a farm building, it is more easily seen from the west side of the conservation area looking in. This farm building is of positive architectural merit although it can only be seen from distant viewpoints. The north side of the Green has the gable ends of the small bungalows of West End fronting directly onto it and a low red brick boundary wall, where a hedge or fencing would be more suitable. The rear of the listed farmhouse (215 and 216 West End) also backs directly onto the Green.



Figure 43. Housing on the north side of The Green

7.4.12 The east side of the Green incorporates the rear plot boundaries of Green Corner and 205 High Street, the rear elevations of which publicly visible. The Moot Hall is the focal point on The Green and it sits in splendid isolation. The base of the medieval market cross is also a feature on the Green, albeit one

that is less noticeable. Both structures are a reminder of the original use of this area as a market place and the site of medieval fairs.



Figure 44. The Green. Base of the market cross with Moot Hall in the background

Prevalent building materials

- 7.4.13 The parish church, church tower and remains of the Hillersden Mansion are all built of coursed Totternhoe stone rubble with ashlar dressings, the mansion ruins also contain some old red brick and its finely carved porch is faced in Totternhoe clunch. Totternhoe stone was quarried near Dunstable.
- 7.4.15 The Moot Hall is of timber frame construction with red brick infill on all sides (a later addition), the building is a rare survival of this type of medieval 'market house'. The Old Vicarage and 208, 209 and 210 Church End are timber frame and rendered with clay tile roofs. The new Vicarage is of brick construction, as is the development on Abbey Close. Most of the buildings have clay tile roofs except for the Abbey Close properties which have slate roofs, a roofing material not used elsewhere within the conservation area.

Building recommended for addition to a Local List

- 7.4.16 A farm building lies to the rear / west of The Old Vicarage (listed building) but appears to be within its own separate curtilage. The farm building consists of a long weather-boarded range running north to south with a gabled clay tile roof and a 19th century 2-storey wing at the south end with a gabled clay tile roof and two windows (boarded up) within its west elevation.



Figure 45. Farm building to the west of The Old Vicarage

General condition including neutral / negative areas

- 7.4.17 There is some evidence of fly-tipping / rubbish accumulation at the south end of the conservation area, on the land west of the road. The gate leading into the small triangular field between Elstow Brook and the ditch which comprises the south boundary of the conservation area has fallen over so it is no longer stopping access onto this area of land.
- 7.4.18 The roofs of Abbey Close do not reflect the general built form of the surrounding dwellings and local roof forms due to them being unusually tall and steep. This group of buildings and in particular their roofs are very visible in views into the conservation area from the west despite the tree planting which surrounds the development.



Figure 46. The steeply pitched roofs of Abbey Close viewed from the west

- 7.4.19 The existing parish hall is of some detriment to the character of the area and the setting of the Hillersden Mansion ruins; however it is understood permission has recently been granted for its demolition and replacement with a more suitable parish hall in a similar location.
- 7.4.20 The boundary wall to the churchyard is in need of some maintenance and repair on its east and south sides (Fig. 46). Some repairs have been undertaken (summer 2010) since the preparation of the draft appraisal.
- 7.4.21 The ruins of the Hillersden mansion have been included upon the 'Heritage at Risk Register 2010' (English Heritage). As is the case with many ruinous structures the walls are suffering from the effects of plant growth and weathering, despite works to stabilise and preserve them carried out by Bedfordshire County Council several years ago.



Figure 47. Damage to churchyard boundary wall (left) The Renaissance porch to Elstow Place - in an 'at risk' condition (right)

7.5 CHARACTER AREA 3; West End

- 7.5.1 West End is a long established route leading from Elstow High Street to the west. The character of this area mainly derives from the series of Edwardian estate cottages on the north side of West End. The south side of the road is of a very different character as it comprises modern bungalows (Nos. 20 – 30 West End), to the east is the historic farmhouse and to the west is a plot of land with an associated farm building. There is a short footpath to the west of 215 & 216 West End which leads to The Green.

Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings

- 7.5.2 On the north side of the road are 223 to 233 West End which comprise short terraces of estate cottages (3 groups of 3 cottages) and 2 single estate cottages. They were designed in the Arts and Crafts / Edwardian style to a broadly identical design; as such they contribute greatly to the character of the area. These properties are all set back from the road behind an impressive well established holly hedge and have large front and rear gardens. They remain in the ownership of the Southill Estate; as such they retain their original fenestration, green painted front doors, large chimney stacks, front gates and other details which may well have been lost if they had been in private ownership. The associated outbuildings to the rear of each have also been retained. All these early twentieth century estate cottages are of positive merit despite being markedly different from the predominantly medieval character of the High Street.



Figure 48. Examples of the estate cottages on the north side of West End, built in 1903

- 7.5.3 The south side of the road is more typical of village development. At the west end of the road and in the northwest corner of the conservation area is a mid twentieth century brick farm building with clay pantile roof; it is set back from the road behind a low earth bank and timber post and rail fencing. Whilst not a particularly attractive building in itself, it does contribute to the semi-rural character of the area.
- 7.5.4 20 – 30 West End comprise three single storey semi-detached bungalows on the south side of the road, they date to the 1970's or 1980's (to check). Two of the bungalows have their gable ends fronting the road and have an open arched brick wall between them; a feature which is incongruous to their village setting and the more traditional forms of boundary treatment in the area; however this open arched wall does serve to retain some openness and views through to The Green. The rest of the boundary treatment is high red brick wall; a less formal type of boundary treatment such as fence or hedge would have been more appropriate in this location. These buildings are of no architectural merit and their boundary treatment is not characteristic of West

End but at least they are modestly sized bungalows so do not have too great an impact upon the overall street scene.



Figure 49. Bungalows on the south side of West End

7.5.5 To the east of the bungalows is a farmhouse (215 and 216 West End), it is a grade II listed building, one and a half storey, roughcast rendered with a clay tile roof. There are a series of small attached sheds and outbuildings on its east side which add to its rural character; it is an interesting contrast to the symmetrically designed estate cottages on the opposite side of West End. The site has a low timber fence boundary and views across to the Moot Hall and the Green can be gained from this point. The corner of High Street and West End has a substantial holly hedge along its boundary.



Figure 50. 215 and 216 West End

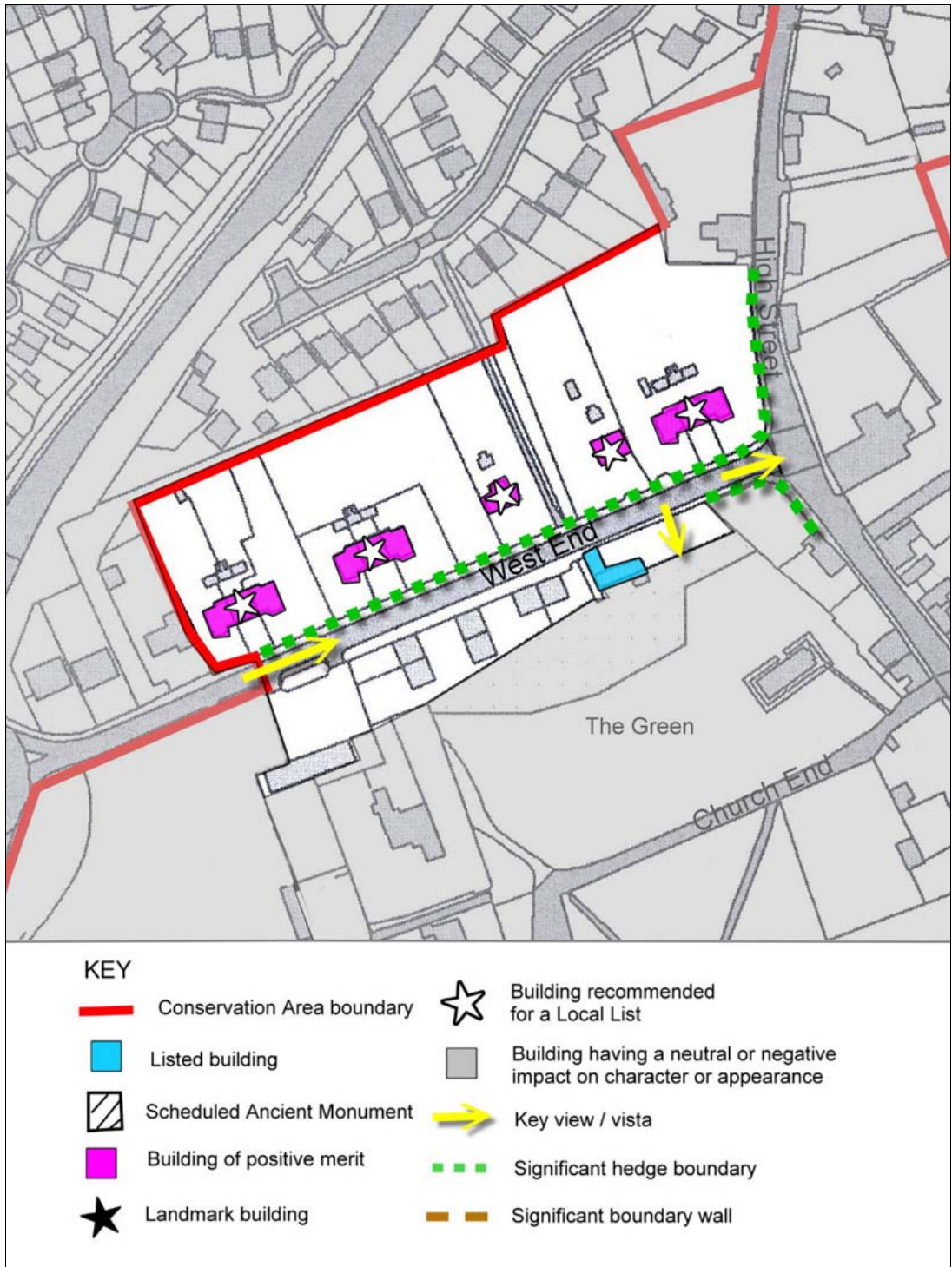


Figure 51. Elstow Conservation Area, character area 3 appraisal map

Buildings recommended for addition to a Local List

7.5.6 223 – 233 West End

223 – 233 West End are all suggested for inclusion upon a Local List (Fig. 52). They comprise 5 buildings with 11 separate dwellings in all. The properties form an attractive group of purpose built, symmetrically designed, estate cottages; all built in 1903 by the Whitbread family, they have date stones marked SW and 1903 on their side and / or front elevations.



Figure 52. Series of estate cottages on the north side of West End

7.5.7 The houses are two-storey with gabled clay tile roofs, constructed of red brick with pebbledash render at first floor level. The single dwellings have two narrow projecting front gables set in from the side elevation; each contains a casement window at ground and first floor level. The central door is protected by a gabled porch. The terraces of three cottages are of the same construction material but have gabled end ranges, two narrower projecting gables. There are three doorways to the front elevation, all covered by a continuous pitched roof porch. All these properties have distinctive pairs or groups of four moulded chimney stacks of red brick construction with terracotta dressings and caps (Fig. 53).



Figure 53. Examples of chimney stacks, windows and date stones seen on 223 – 233 West End

Prevalent building materials

- 7.5.8 The distinctive Edwardian / Arts and Crafts estate cottages on the north side of West End are constructed of red brick, their first floors are rendered. All have large decorative red brick stacks in the Tudor style and gabled clay tile roofs. The farmhouse is timber frame with roughcast render and gabled clay tile roof. The bungalows are red brick with concrete tile roofs. The estate cottages have, without exception, retained their original timber casement windows; the frames are painted black and the windows painted white, all the doors are painted green. The farmhouse contains small timber casements but the new bungalows have uPVC windows.
- 7.5.9 The holly hedge front boundary running the length of West End (within the conservation area) is a key feature. It has benefited from being retained in its entirety and has not been broken through to create driveways in too many instances although this has occurred towards the east end of the road.

General condition, including neutral / negative factors

- 7.5.10 The bungalow housing on the south side of West End could be said to have a neutral impact on the character of the area, fortunately their relatively small size limits their overall impact. The farm building is of no architectural merit and the earth bank along the front boundary of the site is hopefully not a permanent solution, a timber post and rail fence would be a more appropriate boundary treatment in this location.



Figure 54. Mid 20th century farm building on the south side of West End

- 7.5.11 The street lamps along West End (and throughout the village) are tall, modern and functional, not well suited to the character of the conservation area.

8.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There is a strong emphasis on community participation in the production of both a conservation area appraisal and the associated management plan.
- 8.2 With the publication of the draft documents a formal 6 week period of public consultation commenced on 16th August 2010. A public notice was placed in the Bedfordshire on Sunday newspaper (August 15th edition) informing readers of the dates of exhibitions / meetings and how and where the documents were available. A total of 242 letters were sent out to relevant stakeholders. Elstow Parish Council made local residents aware of the public consultation through its newsletter.
- 8.3 Paper copies of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan were available to view at Planning Reception in the Town Hall and at local libraries in Putnoe, Bromham, Kempston, Wooton and at Bedford Central Library. A copy of the appraisal was available to view on Bedford Borough Council's website: www.bedford.gov.uk/elstowcaa. Paper copies of the document were available to purchase from Bedford Borough Council.
- 8.4 A response form for comments on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was posted on the website and was available at the exhibitions / public meeting. Once completed, the response form could be submitted to the following email address enquiries@beamsltd.org or returned via a drop-in box in the Town Hall reception area during opening hours or to Pilgrim House, High Street, Elstow; or returned by post to BEAMS Ltd, The Castle, Hertford.
- 8.5 Two public exhibitions were held at The Moot Hall, Elstow on Wednesday 25th August 2010 (6.30 to 9.00pm) and on Saturday 28th August 2010 (9.30am to 12.30pm). A public meeting was also held at Elstow Playing Field Hall, Wilstead Road on Thursday 9th September from 7.30 to 9.00pm to discuss the appraisal and management strategy.
- 8.6 The public consultation period ended on 24th September 2010. Following the closing date, a summary and evaluation of the responses received was prepared to inform preparation of the final version of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan. The report is available from the Council, as a companion document.

9.0 MANAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

- 9.1 The designation and appraisal of any conservation area is not an end in itself. The purpose of this plan is to provide a strategy for the management of Elstow Conservation Area in a manner that will safeguard and enhance its character and appearance. It follows on from the Conservation Area Character Appraisal, in which the special character and visual qualities of the area are identified, along with any issues that are currently affecting the area.
- 9.2 Although the conservation area is generally in a good condition this guidance draws upon the themes identified in the character appraisal as 'general condition, neutral / negative areas'.

Summary of special interest

- 9.3 As identified in section 3 of the Conservation Area Appraisal, the distinctiveness of Elstow Conservation Area derives from its large number of historic buildings, its green and open spaces and views of the parish church, church tower and mansion ruins from various points throughout the village and from outside the village. The local museum and the village's association with John Bunyan are also of importance.

Statutory controls

- 9.4 Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the area. Additional planning controls exist within conservation areas including, but not limited to, those set out below:
- Demolition of certain buildings will require the Council's consent
 - It will become an offence to carry out works to trees without the Council's consent although certain exemptions apply.
 - The Council is required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area when exercising its powers under the Planning Acts / Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act.
 - Planning applications require a greater level of publicity.
 - Permitted development rights are more restricted.
 - Specific statutory duties are placed on telecommunication operators.
 - The right to display certain types of illuminated advertisement without consent is excluded.

It is always advisable to check with the Planning Department when considering carrying out any works to your property to determine whether any consent or permission will be required.

Listed buildings

9.5 Listed buildings are protected by law as set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The listing covers the whole building, inside and out, and any structure or building within its curtilage which was built before 1947. There are currently 22 listed buildings within Elstow Conservation Area. 'Listed Building Consent' is required from the Council for any works which may affect the architectural or historic interest of a listed building.

- *All extensions / alterations to listed buildings should conform to Local Plan Policies BE19, BE21, and other relevant guidance. The Council should ensure all works to listed buildings seek to preserve the building together with its setting and architectural / historic interest.*

Building repair, maintenance and alteration

9.6 The preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of a Conservation Area is dependant, to a substantial degree, upon the retention and appropriate maintenance of its historic buildings and upon the nature of any alteration to the built fabric.

- *The Council will produce design guidance to assist owners with the care and repair of their properties. This guidance will be made available to owners at no cost, both online and in paper form.*
- *When determining applications for planning permission for alterations to buildings in the Conservation Area, the Council will permit only those proposals considered to preserve the character of the Conservation Area. The issues to be considered in assessing such applications will include proportion, height, massing, bulk, use of materials, use, relationship with adjacent assets, alignment and treatment of setting.*
- *Before building works are put in hand within the Conservation Area, the Council should be consulted to establish whether formal permission is required. There are formal procedures to give owners certainty about the need for formal permissions.*

Archaeological remains

9.7 The archaeological potential of the area is high and has been recognised as such through the two Scheduled Ancient Monuments and the large number of Historic Environment Records relevant to the conservation area. Any proposed works to the Scheduled Ancient Monuments will require formal consent as set out in National Planning Policy.

- *In accordance with saved Local Plan Policy BE24, where a proposed development may affect a site or area of archaeological interest, any application for development should be accompanied by an archaeological desk based assessment.*

Heritage Assets at Risk

- 9.8 There is one Heritage Asset 'at risk'. The ruins of the Hillersden Mansion are included upon the English Heritage (2009) Heritage at Risk Register due to its ruinous condition and the exposed nature of the structure.

- *Proposed measure: The Council will explore all funding options to ensure the upkeep and future preservation of the ruin.*

Buildings of Local Architectural or Historic Interest

- 9.9 A few buildings within the conservation area have been identified as being of considerable local interest. It is suggested these are included on a Local List and the Council seeks to retain these buildings and ensures that alterations / extensions to the buildings do not harm their character, appearance or setting.

- *Proposed measure: The Council will consider the production of a list of locally important buildings to increase the focus of conservation policies on relevant buildings.*

Additional Planning Controls

- 9.10 The appraisal identified an impressively high survival of original timber windows / doors and other decorative features on the early 20th century unlisted houses on West End. The following alterations would affect their special character and the character of the area:

- Loss of timber windows and doors
- Alterations to window / door openings
- Painting of brickwork / render; application of additional render
- Changes to roof including change of roofing material, change to roof pitch / form, introduction of roof lights / dormers / removal of chimney stacks

- 9.11 Some minor works to unlisted buildings, in use as single residential dwellings, can normally be carried out without planning permission. Development of this kind is referred to as 'Permitted Development' and falls into various classes as listed in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. Unfortunately these minor alterations can cumulatively have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area. Certain powers exist, known as Article 4 (2) Directions, which can withdraw some permitted development rights in the interests of preserving / enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

- *Proposed measure: The Council will consider the introduction of Article 4 (2) Directions on a case by case basis.*

New Development

- 9.12 The appraisal has identified the way in which buildings and the open spaces in between contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Opportunities for large scale development / redevelopment appear non-existent; however any small scale development should preserve or enhance the Conservation Area, comply with relevant planning policy and be based upon good design principles. A small area at the west end of West End Lane

has been identified under the Bedford Local Plan, Elstow Proposal Map as a Housing Site with a capacity for 3 dwellings. Key principles relating to this site refer to it being 'an important 'gateway' site on the approach to the village and its conservation area.

Proposed measures:

- *Any new development should comply with all relevant planning policy and be based on sound design principles. The English Heritage / CABI guidance 'Building in Context. New Development in Historic Areas' (2002) is a useful source.*
- *All forms of new development in the Conservation Area or affecting the setting of the Conservation Area should be contextually appropriate in respect of scale, massing, architectural character and views created or affected.*
- *Carefully chosen materials should be used in order to exactly match or convincingly complement those used in the immediate setting.*

Setting and Views

9.13 The setting of the conservation area is very important and development which is detrimental to the immediate setting and longer views into and from the conservation area should be resisted. Development proposals which are likely to affect the historic skyline and interrupt important views of the church tower should be carefully considered.

9.14 The village of Elstow is at present divided by a narrow strip of land from the Pilgrims Way development to the east. It is considered important that this land is retained as setting to Elstow village, or it will be merged into the rest of Bedford's suburbs and 'lost' as has almost happened on its northern edge.

- *Proposed measure: The Council will seek to ensure that all development respects the important views, within, into and from the conservation area. The Council will seek to ensure that these views remain protected and that regard is paid to these views during public realm works or enhancement schemes.*

Boundary Treatment

9.15 A feature of the conservation area is the use of traditional materials for boundary treatments, notably the stone wall surrounding the churchyard and running along Church End and the hedge boundary on West End. Other boundary treatments include timber post and rail fencing, metal rail fence, timber fence, red brick wall (not traditional); gates are usually timber 5-bar gates. Details which are not traditional to the area include ornate metal railings and gates.

- *Proposed measure: The Council will seek to resist proposals to remove traditional / historic boundary walls and to ensure any new boundary treatments respect the form and materials of traditional boundary treatments within the conservation area.*

Enhancement of the Public realm

9.16 The appraisal has identified the absence of traffic calming measures, double yellow lines etc as a positive characteristic of the village. The present road layout reflects the historic street pattern and is unlikely to change. Street / highway signage is present but does not appear superfluous; any additional signage could detract from the character of the public realm. Street lighting throughout the conservation area is functional and may represent an opportunity for enhancement.

9.17 While it is recognised that there will inevitably be tension between issues of cost, quality and ongoing maintenance, the following measures are put forward to safeguard the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area;

- *The Council will ensure that the replacement of existing street works or new street works across the conservation area is undertaken in agreed materials and design in order to produce a unified, consistent and high quality public realm that is consistent with the historic context;*
- *The Council will ensure the retention of all existing construction and surfacing materials and street furniture which contribute positively to the character of the conservation area.*
- *The Council will ensure that new street furniture, including signage, is sympathetic to the particular character of its location.*
- *The Council will engage with stakeholders, including statutory undertakers, to achieve a unified design approach to works in the public realm within the conservation area, in line with national guidance.*

Open space / trees

9.18 Two principal areas of open space were identified within the appraisal, one being publicly accessible (The Green) and the other (pasture fields to south and west of the church) being inaccessible, but in visual terms they are crucial to the setting of the village and its parish church. This land is partly protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument; the other field to the southwest is also archaeologically sensitive as the site of medieval fishponds associated with Elstow Abbey.

Proposed measures:

- *The Council will ensure, in conjunction with the appropriate partners, that the areas consisting of The Green and the pasture fields are appropriately managed and protected.*

In partnership with other stakeholders, the Council will ensure that the tree population of the Conservation Area is protected in accordance with government guidelines.

Elstow Brook

9.19 Elstow Brook comes under the statutory jurisdiction of the Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board (IDB). As a Statutory Authority working under the Land Drainage Act 1991 (amended 1994) and the Flood and Water

Management Act 2010, the Board is empowered to carry out maintenance and improvement works to the watercourse to manage water levels and flood risk. Maintenance works are likely to comprise tractor flailing to control vegetation on the watercourse banks, weed cutting and dredging. Hedges and low tree branches can be trimmed to gain access for machinery.

Resources, Monitoring and Review

- 9.20 Significant expenditure will be required for some of the proposals put forward and the Council will seek to pursue opportunities for funding both from central government and by planning obligations. Some however, can be secured by influencing and encouraging individual property owners at no extra cost.
- 9.21 Where funding and resources allow, the Conservation Area will be reviewed on a 5 yearly basis and the conservation area appraisal and management plan will be updated where necessary.

Conclusion

- 9.22 The successful management of the Conservation Area will depend on the joint commitment of the local planning authority and other stakeholders, including those living and working in the area.
- .23 General advice about matters related to the historic environment, including conservation areas and listed buildings can be sought from the Council's Conservation Section, which is part of Planning Services at the Town Hall. The team are happy to provide advice on any aspect of the built environment within the Elstow Conservation Area and to receive further ideas concerning its preservation and enhancement.

Postal address: Conservation and Historic Buildings
Planning Services
Bedford Borough Council
Town Hall
St Paul's Square
Bedford
MK40 1SJ

Telephone: 01234 221729

Fax: 01234 325671

Email: planning@bedford.gov.uk

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Repositories and Collections Consulted

Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service

Historic Environment Record, Bedford County Council

Conservation Department, Bedford Borough Council

Appendices

Appendix 1. Relevant Policies from the Bedford Development Framework Core Strategy

Appendix 2. Relevant Policies saved from the Adopted Bedford Local Plan

Appendix 3. Historic Environment Records relevant to Elstow Conservation Area

Appendix 4. Listed Buildings within Elstow Conservation Area

Relevant Policies from the Bedford Development Framework Core Strategy

POLICY CP21 – DESIGNING IN QUALITY

All new development should:

- i) be of the highest design quality in terms of both architecture and landscape; and,
- ii) have regard to good practice in urban design; and,
- iii) fully consider the context within which it will sit and the opportunities to enhance the character and quality of an area and local distinctiveness; and,
- iv) preserve and where appropriate enhance conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments and listed buildings; and,
- v) be fully accessible by all members of the community; and,
- vi) incorporate measures to promote crime prevention and community safety; and,
- vii) address sustainable design principles including renewable energy resources, energy efficiency, recycling, and sustainable construction practices and
 - mitigate against the effects of any pollution including air quality, noise, groundwater, light and land contamination
 - improve the character and quality of the area.

POLICY CP23 – HERITAGE

Development will be required to protect and where appropriate enhance:

- i) the character of conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, listed buildings and other important historic or archaeological features; and,
- ii) the borough's cultural assets, including its landscape, in order to underpin sense of place, cultural identity and promote quality of life.

Relevant Policies saved from the Adopted Bedford Local Plan

POLICY BE9

The Borough Council will seek to protect the character and appearance of conservation areas shown on the Proposals Map, through the careful control of development and by general support for enhancement schemes.

Within such areas proposals which fail to preserve or enhance their character will not be permitted.

POLICY BE11

The Borough Council will ensure that all new development within, adjoining, or likely to affect the setting of conservation areas, preserves or enhances its character or appearance. Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i] the scale, form and density of development in relation to its surroundings;
- ii] the quality and type of materials and architectural detailing;
- iii] levels of traffic generation, the visual impact of car parking/servicing arrangements or other environmental problems which could have an adverse effect on the character of the area;
- iv] the effect on the streetscape, roofscape and skyline including important views both into and out of the area;
- v] whether or not any open space will be affected by the proposals;
- vi] the extent to which the proposed works would bring about substantial benefits in terms of economic regeneration and environmental enhancement.

POLICY BE13

Demolition consent will be refused where the building or other structure make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. An applicant applying for demolition consent will need to demonstrate that the economic viability of alternative uses has been fully investigated and that a satisfactory scheme for redevelopment can be achieved. In considering applications for demolition, the Borough Council will need to have full information about what is proposed for the site.

POLICY BE15

The Borough Council will protect important views in conservation areas and development will not be permitted on any open space which contributes to the inherent character of a conservation area.

POLICY BE16

Within conservation areas, the Borough Council will exercise strict control over applications for new advertisements and shopfronts, having regard to its published design guidance.

POLICY BE18

Listed building consent for the demolition of any building of special architectural or historic interest will not be granted other than in the following circumstances:

i) the condition of the building makes it impracticable to repair, renovate or adapt to any reasonable economic use for which planning permission may be given, or to enable it to be incorporated into any redevelopment scheme; or

ii) the proposed works would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh any loss arising from demolition.

In all cases, before any listed building consent is granted, it should be demonstrated that every possible effort has been made to retain the building in its current use or to find a suitable alternative.

POLICY BE19

In considering applications for Listed Building Consent which involve development, either for alteration, extension or demolition, the Borough Council will take the following into account:

i) the importance of the building in terms of architectural or historic interest at both the local and national level;

ii) the impact on particular features of the building eg the interior, plan and structure;

iii) the effect of the proposals on the character and setting of the listed building;

iv) the extent to which the proposed works would bring about substantial benefits in terms of economic regeneration and environmental enhancement.

POLICY BE20

The change of use of a listed building will only be permitted if it would not have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the listed building.

POLICY BE21

The Borough Council will seek to preserve and enhance the setting of the listed buildings by appropriate control over the design of new development in their vicinity, over the use of adjoining land and, where appropriate, by the preservation of trees and landscape features.

POLICY BE22

When granting listed building consent for development, the Borough Council may impose a requirement for adequate access for the purpose of investigation or recording during building or other operations.

POLICY BE23

Proposals which would have an adverse effect on scheduled ancient monuments and other important archaeological sites and monuments, and their settings, will not be permitted except in circumstances where the adverse impact of a proposal can be overcome and the site or monument physically preserved in situ.

POLICY BE24

In considering planning proposals, the Borough Council will have regard to the need to protect, enhance and preserve sites of archaeological interest and their settings. It will, where appropriate, require the archaeological aspects of development proposals to be examined and evaluated before a planning application is determined. In the absence of an adequate assessment of the archaeological implications, planning permission will be refused.

POLICY BE25

Where the Borough Council decides that the physical preservation in situ of archaeological remains is not justified, and that development affecting such remains should proceed, it will require applicants to submit proposals that:

- i) minimise as far as possible the effect of a proposal on the archaeological remains; and
- ii) ensure satisfactory provision for the excavation and recording of the remains, prior to the commencement of development.

Appendix 3

Historic Environment Records relevant to Elstow Conservation Area

| HER Number | Site name |
|------------|--|
| 261 | Moot Hall, The Green. |
| 262 | Elstow Abbey, site of |
| 269 | Market Cross (remains of) |
| 821 | St Mary and St Helena church |
| 822 | Parish church tower |
| 1196 | Hillersden Mansion |
| 1583 | 170 & 171 High Street |
| 1585 | 172 High Street |
| 1586 | 173 High Street |
| 1587 | The Red Lion Public House |
| 1588 | 174 High Street |
| 1589 | 1 – 11 Bunyan's Mead |
| 1597 | 19 & 20 Bunyan's Mead |
| 1598 | 28 Bunyan's Mead |
| 1599 | 218 The Green (demolished) |
| 1600 | 215 & 216 West End Lane |
| 1601 | 206 and Post Office, High Street |
| 1602 | 204 (Green Corner) and 205 High Street |
| 1603 | The Swan Public House, High Street |
| 1604 | Building south of Swan PH, High Street |
| 1605 | 12 – 17 Bunyan's Mead, High Street |
| 1608 | 211 – 214 Church End (demolished) |
| 1609 | Listed building |
| 1610 | 208 / 209 / 210 Church End |
| 1620 | St Helena, High Street |
| 8889 | St Helena's Parish Churchyard |
| 12560 | 223 – 233 West End Lane |
| 12562 | The Old Vicarage, The Green |
| 15897 | Medieval harness and Roman pot, Elstow |
| 16154 | Earthworks at West End Lane |
| 16396 | 18 Bunyan's Mead |
| 17018 | Elstow Medieval village |

Listed buildings within Elstow Conservation Area

| Property address / Location | Listed Building Grade |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 208, 209 and 210 Church End | Grade II |
| Hillersden Mansion, Church End | Grade I (& Scheduled Ancient Monument) |
| Parish Church of St Mary & St Helena | Grade I |
| Parish church tower, Church End | Grade I |
| The Old Vicarage, Church End | Grade II |
| Bunyan's Mead, 1 – 11 High Street | Grade II* |
| Bunyan's Mead, 12 – 17 High Street | Grade II |
| 170 & 171 High Street | Grade II |
| 172 High Street | Grade I? |
| 173 High Street | Grade II |
| 174 High Street | Grade II |
| Bunyan's Mead, 19 & 20 High Street | Grade II |
| 204 High Street | Grade II |
| Post Office, 206 High Street | Grade II |
| Bunyan's Mead, 28 High Street | Grade II |
| Green Corner & 205 High Street | Grade II |
| St Helena, High Street | Grade II |
| The Red Lion PH, High Street | Grade II |
| The Swan PH, High Street | Grade II |
| Base of Market Cross, The Green | Grade II |
| Moot Hall, The Green | Grade II* (& Scheduled Ancient Monument) |
| 215 and 216 West End Lane | Grade II |
| Elstow Village School, High Street | Grade II |
| The War Memorial, High Street | Grade II |