

# Bletsoe

## Conservation Area Appraisal



*Bletsoe in the 1930s    The Avenue at left and Castle Farm right of centre    North at the top*

[Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record / National Monuments Record]

March 2008

## Introduction

1 The settlement at Bletsoe probably originated as a late Saxon manor reorganised in the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century by its Norman conquerors. Five hundred years later it had become an estate village which endured until the middle of the last century. Within living memory Bletsoe has changed from an agricultural community into one mainly of local and more distant commuters and retired people, but it still retains its special architectural and historic interest and traditional character.

2 This Appraisal outlines the historical development of Bletsoe and identifies the surviving evidence. It identifies two main character areas, along with important buildings and features. It describes the setting of the village in the landscape of the Ouse valley and its place in notable views. It contains management proposals for maintaining the significance of the Conservation Area and enhancing its appearance as opportunities arise.

## Planning policy framework

4 Conservation Areas – “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” – can be designated by local planning authorities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

5 Bedford Borough Council is preparing its new Local Development Framework, to replace the existing Local Plan. Its Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State after public consultation in 2006. Two of its five main themes, covering ‘sustainable communities’ and ‘distinctiveness and environmental assets’, relate to policies that seek to ensure ‘All new development is of the highest design quality’ and the ‘Borough’s heritage and its cultural assets and its landscape is protected’.

6 Saved Local Plan policies (BE9, BE11, BE13, BE15 and BE16) controlling development and promoting the enhancement of Conservation Areas accord with national guidance in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, *Planning and the Historic Environment* (1994).

## Origins and historic development



*The village in its valley setting from the Thurleigh road*

7 Bletsoe lies in a long-settled river valley landscape six miles north of Bedford. A villa site west of the village may represent the centre of a Roman farming estate, and 4<sup>th</sup> century burials were found associated with it. The place-name suggests Saxon settlement slightly higher up the valley side, dispersed around the ‘hoh’ or hill-spur where one ‘Blaecc’ once lived. There is no known archaeological evidence from these early times within the proposed Conservation Area.

8 The compact form of the village around an open space suggests mid 11<sup>th</sup> century planning by the new Norman lords, concentrating settlement below a parish church built in front of their main stronghold. Bletsoe Castle probably consisted originally of timber buildings within a circular bank and ditch. Later, buildings would have been replaced in stone and the ditch enlarged.



*Village centre in mid 1970s: Village Hall centre right*

9 These would have included the medieval manor house of the Beauchamps and Pateshulls, the 15<sup>th</sup> century birthplace of Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was acquired by the St Johns who built themselves a new mansion visited by Elizabeth I and James I. The earthworks north and east of Bletsoe Castle are the remains of its formal gardens; castle site and gardens are scheduled as ancient monuments. The layout of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century village can be reconstructed from a written survey of the St John family's estates in the 1620s, just after they had enclosed the medieval open fields. It includes the Great Green, the open space in the centre originating as medieval communal grazing land.

10 From at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the St Johns managed Bletsoe as an estate village, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries constructing rows of terraced cottages for their workers. The Great Green became a series of hedged or walled compartments laid down to allotments. The National School of 1852 encroached on the Green at its northern end next to the church. After the estate was sold up in the 1950s, the north-west side of the green was developed. During the 1980s and 1990s the allotments were abandoned, becoming a series of grassy open spaces, mostly publicly owned; settlement around the Green expanded outwards as houses on both sides extending their rear gardens.

## Location and context

11 The proposed Conservation Area covers the main historic village centre, which is a few hundred metres from the turn off the A6 trunk road towards Riseley and Kimbolton. It excludes a small cluster of buildings around the A6 turn because they are clearly separated from the main village by land outside the main part of the village; also, its important buildings, Bletsoe Cottage and 'Falcon' Inn, are separately protected as listed buildings. It also excludes the shrunken hamlet of North End on the other side of the Sharnbrook – Thurleigh road; its three main buildings are listed.

12 Bletsoe's position on an eastern terrace of the Great Ouse valley makes it visible in the landscape from several directions. The best external view is from the east coming down the valley side, along Coplowe Lane and Footpath 16. The church tower is a landmark in distant views: from the south, on the sharp bend of the main road leaving Milton Ernest, it appears above surrounding trees; from the distant west on the Radwell road it can be seen across the river; nearer, it appears higher up the valley slope from the A6 road running parallel with the river.



*Church tower as a landmark from the Radwell road*

13 Within the main village, the Avenue rises up to the terrace from its junction with the A6. There, the road forks: the single main road rises higher towards the parish church and Bletsoe Castle; Memorial Lane runs east up to the same higher level which holds the northern and eastern parts of the main village.

## Boundaries of the Conservation Area

14 The boundary for Bletsoe is more easily defined in some places than in others. Generally, a Conservation Area should **include** the historic centre, **exclude** modern development that does not contribute positively to its character, and **exclude** large areas of adjacent fields unless they are an important part of the setting of the village or contain important visible historic features. The following description runs clock-wise from the northern end. Comments on alternative variations not adopted are *italicised*. Principal features within the Conservation Area are shown on the separate map. These include the formal designations of listed buildings, the scheduled ancient monument, and trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order. Unlisted buildings, walls and hedges marked as 'important' are mainly restricted to those visible from public land and include some capable of improvement.

15 At the extreme north, on the east side of North End Road, the Conservation Area includes the area containing Tudor / Stuart garden earthworks which is also an important part of the setting of Bletsoe Castle, already a scheduled ancient monument (SAM).

*A closer limit further south-west would be too tight on to the major Castle / garden earthworks and exclude some of the historic garden earthworks running into that field.*



*Tudor / Stuart garden remains north of Bletsoe Castle*

16 The boundary runs south-east from the road along the northern limit of the SAM and turns south-west round a small copse with a stream bed and pond. It goes to the north-east side of the major garden earthworks east of Castle Farm Barns, running just outside their north-east and south-east limits before turning north-west then

immediately southwest to take in Herdsman's Cottage and 6 Coplowe Lane.

*The eastern part of the SAM is excluded from the Conservation Area because the archaeological evidence is now wholly buried. Herdsman's Cottage and 6 Coplowe Lane are included as they form a significant visual element in the setting of the Bletsoe Castle earthworks and Castle Barns.*

17 The boundary runs north-west along the north-east side of Coplowe Lane until it turns to cross the road opposite the north-west boundary of the parish field. It then runs south-west along the boundaries of the paddock adjacent to the churchyard, the spinney behind Oldway Row, and the other properties backing on to the Parish Field. It turns along the south boundary of Old Pear Tree Cottage and the south-east boundary of Top Row. *The Parish field, the Village Hall and Bennetts Close are excluded as modern developments unrelated to the traditional settlement pattern, though the Parish Field and Village Hall do make a significant contribution to village life. The Paddock is included due to its importance in the setting of the Church and conservation area.*

18 The boundary crosses Bennetts Close to the eastern boundary of 17 Memorial Lane and runs along the south boundaries of the buildings until it meets The Avenue. It then crosses The Avenue before continuing north on the boundary of 16 The Avenue. *1 to 7 Memorial Lane are modern properties and not of any particular historic interest or architectural merit in their own right. They have been included due as their frontages form a significant visual element in the setting of the former Great Green and the War Memorial.*



*War Memorial, Memorial Lane, Pixie Cottage at right*

20 It continues along the back of the gardens attached to the modern houses on the north-west side of the Avenue. It includes the garden land taken in at the rear but excludes the rough pasture further out towards the A6.

*These modern houses do not have any distinctive architectural merit but are proposed for inclusion because they reflect the historic settlement form and their frontages form a significant element in the setting of the Great Green..*

21 The boundary continues north-east at the back of the gardens to the timber-framed cottages. It turns in eastwards to a closer line behind the two sets of terraces before moving still closer to the Avenue to exclude the modern development of Captain's Close.

*The front terrace of St Mary's Close are modern buildings and not of any particular historic interest or architectural merit in their own right. They have been included because they reflect the historic settlement form and their frontages form a significant element in the setting of St Mary's Church, one of the most important buildings in the conservation area.*

22 The boundary then runs out again along the south, west and north boundaries in the grounds of the Old Rectory. These are an important part of its setting and in distant views of the setting for this corner of the village. It returns to North End Road along the south-west boundary of the field held in common by the Old Rectory garden and the garden with its former service buildings, Old Rectory Cottage, which is now a separate residence.

## **Form, spaces and views**

23 Bletsoe's original Norman plan persisted through later medieval times and into its development as an estate village. Post-War post-estate development has been largely confined within the limits of the historic village, and further expansion has been limited by the land-use planning controls of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

24 The village has an elongated triangular form arranged around a row of central green compartments. The main road from the A6 (the Avenue) runs along one side of the former Great Green and rises towards the parish church of St

Mary. Beyond it are the Old Rectory and Bletsoe Castle, west and east of the road out to North End and Riseley. The two most significant spaces within the Conservation Area are the former Great Green around which the village is arranged, and the land to the south-east of the church.

25 The centre of the village is less open visually than it was fifty years ago, due to the growth of trees and hedges which have made its subdivisions as conspicuous as the spaces themselves. Next to the former school is the David Bayes Memorial Garden. Two smaller areas between Old Way and the Avenue and in front of Old Pear Tree Cottage are privately owned. The largest, between the Avenue and Memorial Lane retains several apple trees from its days as allotments.



*Grassed over former allotment site on the Great Green*

26 The land south-east of the village comprises the paddock south-east of the church and the village field. There is access on foot to the village field from Coplowe Lane, along Old Way to Footpath 16, and past the Village Hall. The paddock between the village field and the church is important in both near and distant views of the church in its churchyard setting.



*Church, churchyard and land to the south-east*

27 There are several important views from within the Conservation Area out to the surrounding landscape. The view north from Bletsoe Castle looks across the former medieval deer park towards Park Farm, on the site of the medieval park keeper's lodge. From the north-east side of Castle Farm Barns, the view towards the skyline buildings of the Thurleigh Business Park takes in the site of Whitwick End, a Bletsoe hamlet demolished to make way for the wartime airfield.



*View out north-east towards site of Whitwick Green*

Several views from within the village look across the Ouse valley, from the top of Memorial Lane, from the footpath behind Captain's Close and past the south side of the Old Rectory.



*View across the Ouse valley at the Old Rectory*

### **Character area – the main village**

28 The central part of the village, the former Great Green and the buildings fronting it, is a long triangle framed by the focal point of the War Memorial, the former village school and the Village Hall. The area contains four lion-head standpipes that predated the arrival of main services in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, one opposite the

church, two on the Avenue and one in Memorial Lane at the end of Top Row.

29 The main road to Riseley and the A6 – the Avenue – runs along the west side of the Green, uphill towards the parish church and the historic high status core of the village. The lower part is relatively informal: modern houses on the left hand side are set back behind generous front gardens and paved areas; on the right hand side former allotments now grassed are defined by hedges and a row of pavement edge semi-mature trees. Through these trees are glimpses of the historic buildings on the other side of the Green.

30 The upper part, beginning around the break of slope level with the turn into Old Way, is more defined. On the left hand side thatched cottages set further forward than the modern bungalows are followed by two rows of Estate terraces set on the back edge of the pavement. The nearer, in a pleasant chequered mid 19<sup>th</sup> century local brick, encroaches upon the space of older timber framed cottages; the further is one of two later 18<sup>th</sup> century blocks with fully plastered timber frames. Beyond, on a set-back building line, is a later 1960s terrace in white brick replacing a demolished stone terrace that used to stand on the pavement edge. On the right hand side are characteristic low coursed limestone rubble walls, linking allotment area, school and churchyard. Just before the church is the former village school and school house, built in 1852, closed in the 1960s, and now forming two residences; the playground in front of the school is a mature garden.



*Former village school*

31 From the War Memorial, going along Memorial Lane towards the Village Hall, modern bungalows on the right hand side are followed by a truncated timber-framed house before the road rises on to higher ground with another terrace of Estate cottages. At the near end is a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick addition or rebuilding, with a possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century element in the middle and is a 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house at the higher far end. Opposite it, on the north side, at right-angles and gable end on to the lane is Top Row, the other later 18<sup>th</sup> century terrace built of fully plastered timber frame, with an attractive view along the flower-beds between the houses and the access path.



*View across the front of Top Row*

32 Old Way probably originated as a route between the Great Green and the medieval open fields. A cul-de sac off it serves Old Way Row, a terrace of three built in the 1960s originally as farm cottages. Old Way runs between two houses, on the north side a multi-period 'L' shaped former farmhouse in limestone and timber-frame and on the right a smaller limestone cottage with a large modern rear extension. Beyond them are 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick outhouses and the gate leading to the footpath across the parish field.



*View down Old Way towards the parish field*

### **Character area – church and ‘castle’**

33 The northern character area is around the junction of the road leading out towards North End and Coplowe Lane going up the valley slope towards Thurleigh. It comprises the historic grouping of the Old Rectory, the parish church of St Mary, and Bletsoe Castle; Castle Farm Barns form a distinctive sub-area. Stone walls and mature trees give the dominant character to the street scene. Granite setts define the pavement along the west side of North End Road, but there is concrete kerbing to the pavement adjacent to the churchyard wall. In Coplowe Lane, a grassy verge and a row of trees pleasantly mix informality and regularity; the gable end of the converted barn side-on to the lane provides a visual stop in the view out of the village and an introduction to it coming the other way.

34 Most of Bletsoe Castle is visible only from private land. From the frontage of its gardens to Coplowe Lane a long low stone wall curves round into the present approach drive, at the end of which is a good view of the long front elevation of the main house; its regular ashlar stonework contrasts with the coursed rubble limestone of the side and rear elevations which show some evidence for the earlier history of the building.



*Bletsoe Castle*

Two limestone barns survive from the post-medieval arrangements for the home farm: one of 17<sup>th</sup> origins is gable end to the current approach drive and one of 18<sup>th</sup> century origins is gable end to Coplowe Lane. Bletsoe Castle became a farmhouse after the St Johns had moved to Melchbourne House, as is shown by the set of red brick 19<sup>th</sup> century model farm buildings now

converted, like the 18<sup>th</sup> century limestone barn, to residential use.

35 A dominant feature of the gardens is the partly filled moats, adapted from their medieval origins by Tudor and Stuart landscaping with a more direct formal approach over a rustic limestone bridge to a front courtyard. On the north-east side, the moat at its deepest and widest forms the boundary to the modern gardens. Here there is a sharp transition to pasture in which the earthworks of the main Tudor and Stuart gardens are still clearly visible.

36 The medieval parish church is an important focal point, standing up on higher ground within the village in the centre of a compact and partly cleared churchyard. This has low stone walls on three sides holding in ground raised up on its east and south boundaries by centuries of burying; it was extended south at the original lower level in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The west front of the church faces the Avenue, on which is a solid timber Arts-and-Crafts lych-gate erected by the St Johns in 1912. Mature trees on the north side are part of a generous provision around the road junction, including several large specimen trees planted in the churchyard.



*The moat at Bletsoe Castle*

37 Probably the Normans built the first stone parish church. Now dedicated to St Mary, it has an apparently simple cruciform plan with a central tower, but closer inspection shows a complicated sequence of development. What exists now dates mainly from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and there was substantial mid 19<sup>th</sup> century renovation. The chancel may incorporate some Norman work though the earliest surviving compartment seems to be the 13<sup>th</sup> century nave.



*Parish church: chancel at right*

The large north transept probably began as a medieval chantry chapel for the Pateshull family, later becoming the St John Chapel. A fine memorial to Sir John St John (died 1559) was moved from the chapel into the nave in the 1970s after repairs. The disused chancel is blocked off from the nave; the 19<sup>th</sup> century vestry is roofless and has capped walls.

38 Where the medieval priest lived is unknown, but his post-Reformation successor occupied the timber-framed building demolished when the present Rectory was built in the 1840s. This was altered and extended at least twice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; its extensive grounds were sub-divided and the southern part was developed in the 1980s. The Old Rectory and a former service building, now a separate dwelling, form a distinct group connected with the main village by long, and in places impressive tall, stone walls through which two new entrances have been cut.



*Stone walls looking towards the Old Rectory*

They are an important feature visually marking the end of the village on the road to North End and, coming the other way, its beginning before the churchyard wall comes into view and the road falls away down the Avenue.



39 Castle Farm, east of Bletsoe Castle, is the site of the manorial home farm: the written survey of the St John Estate in the 1620s mentions building and yards. 19<sup>th</sup> century red brick model farm buildings probably incorporated limestone barns facing Coplowe Lane, shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Ordnance Survey Map and now represented by a low stone wall with raking brick buttresses.



*Coplowe Lane: stone walls of former barns*

The brick barns were converted to residential use in the 1990s, and, though some new-build has been introduced, the model farm plan still reads clearly.



*Model farm barn conversions at Castle Farm*

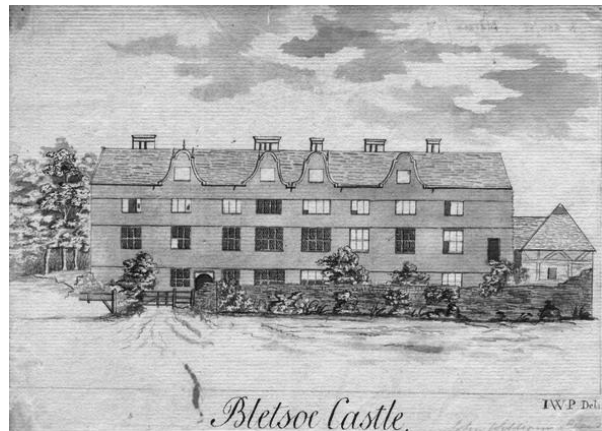
There are well-defined spaces in the yards to front and rear. The main eastern range is impressive in scale and design and overlooks the earthworks defining the Tudor / Stuart formal garden, still legible across their sub-division into several long paddocks.

### **The contribution of buildings to the area**

40 Bletsoe's statutory list was revised in the early 1980s. Some buildings contributing to the character of the area are within the curtilage of a listed building and are protected as such. Bedford

Borough has no local list. 'Important' unlisted buildings include the brick barns at Castle Farm and the stone barn next to Coplowe Lane.

41 As in many rural villages, the surviving historic buildings reflect past social hierarchies and traditional uses, overlain by modernisation and conversion in recent decades. There is no definite evidence for the traditional view that Bletsoe Castle is the surviving wing of an originally quadrangular Tudor mansion, but the existing building lost its top storey and Dutch gables around 1800. Downgraded to a farmhouse after



*Bletsoe Castle c 1800 before loss of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and attics*

the St Johns moved to Melchbourne, it regained its country house status in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. 2-3 Old Way, probably the principal farmhouse within the village in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, had been subdivided into four estate cottages by the 19<sup>th</sup> century before becoming a single house again in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The four surviving rows of terraced cottages housed families of estate workers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; now they hold fewer people, and two sets of adjacent cottages have been combined into single units. The agricultural barns of Castle Farm are redundant for farming purposes and most have been converted to residential uses.

42 There is a wide range of traditional building materials from several sources. Limestone was used for the Castle (including some ashlar for facings), the parish church and the Old Rectory. It was used at the outset in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for 1 Old Way; in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it replaced defective timber-framing at 2-3 Old Way which also has the most south-easterly surviving Bedfordshire example of ironstone quoins in a gable end of c1700. Most of the limestone used

for houses, cottages and stone walls in the village is relatively thin-bedded coursed rubble from exposures in the Ouse valley. The other older cottages are timber-framed with wattle-and-daub infill and, originally at least, thatched roofs. In most cases, and certainly the long estate terraces, the timber frame was relatively slight and fully plastered as constructed. The 19<sup>th</sup> century chequer-brick cottages drew upon local clay fired in one of several documented local kilns; the bricks for model barns at Castle Farm probably came from further afield. These brick buildings have slated roofs; elsewhere, traditional thatched roofs are being well maintained in long straw and combed wheat reed.



*16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century stone barn at Bletsoe Castle*

43 Several late medieval and early post-medieval buildings survive. Probably the oldest is 2-3 Oldway, beginning as a two-bay open hall with felling dates of 1459/60 for its primary timbers, and 1642/43 for a floor inserted within it.



*2-3 Old Way: 15<sup>th</sup> century open hall at right of centre*

The small group of timber-framed buildings on the other side of the Avenue probably date from the 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Pixie Cottage in Memorial Lane, only half of a two-bay building with a central fireplace, may have 16<sup>th</sup> century

origins, like the timber-framed south-eastern end of the terrace at the end of the Lane. The plain stone barn on the approach to Bletsoe Castle is probably also of this period.

44 To the 18<sup>th</sup> century belong the two terraces of fully plastered timber-framed buildings, in the Avenue and at Top Row. I Old Way, a small stone cottage, is probably originally of this date, as is the converted stone barn gable end on to Coplowe Lane. All contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



*18<sup>th</sup> century terrace of estate cottages: the Avenue*

45 In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Estate terrace tradition was continued in chequer brick and slate roofs, at the east end of the terrace in Memorial Lane, and in the south-western terrace on the Avenue.



*Mid 19<sup>th</sup> century brick estate cottages: the Avenue*

A late example of the timber-frame tradition, probably 19<sup>th</sup> century, can be seen at Old Pear Tree Cottage. The brick model farm buildings at Castle Farm are later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

46 20<sup>th</sup> century development has made two different contributions to the Conservation Area. The houses and bungalows on the north-west side

of the Avenue are characteristic mid-century ‘anywhere’ buildings. However, two sets of terraces do echo the dominant building form in the village, one opposite the parish church and one in Old Way Row.

### Natural history

47 The most notable trees, some covered by Tree Preservation Orders, are in the northern character area, in the grounds of Bletsoe Castle, the Old Rectory and the churchyard.



*Specimen trees in the churchyard*

48 The hedges around the four compartments of the former Great Green, some recently planted, have single- and multi- species lengths; some are maintained better than others.

49 There are several potential wild-life habitats within the proposed Conservation Area. The greatest concentration is in the grounds Bletsoe Castle, with its moats and ponds, and the area fronting Coplowe Lane. Parts of the southern

extension to the churchyard have been allowed to grow out.

### Physical condition

50 The proposed Conservation Area is generally in good condition. There are no buildings on a Buildings-at-Risk register, but the parish church of St Mary has three significant problems. Structural movement is affecting the west end of the nave and the south transept; the north transept or St John chapel has some internal floor settlement; the chancel is walled off from the rest of the church and its interior is in serious disrepair following damage from a leaking roof repaired in the 1970s.

### Neutral areas

51 The main neutral area is that part of the village developed in the post-War period, mainly along the north-west side of the Avenue and the south west end of Memorial Lane. Here, the housing is mainly standard types of a basically suburban character, though pair of former police houses does vary the typology.

### Visual intrusions

52 There are several negative visual factors in the proposed Conservation Area. Overhead wiring runs up the Avenue and Memorial Lane with lateral spurs to houses.



*Overhead wiring looking south-west down the Avenue*

The kerbing is concrete apart from a length of granite setts up North End Road past the Old

Rectory; footpath and road surfaces are of black tarmac without gravel rolled into its surface.



*Concrete kerbing, lion's head standpipe, repaired churchyard wall*

53 Car parking is a visual problem in any village laid out before the advent of the motor car; it is most conspicuous at the top of the Avenue and in Memorial Lane adjacent to the terraces.

### **Problems and the capacity for change**

54 No major problems are identified in the main village. Despite its small size, the village has a well-distributed demographic profile, so development pressures are more likely to be externally generated and speculative.

55 The four listed terraces, Top Row, Memorial Lane and the two in the Avenue, present special problems of maintaining their character as individually uniform groups of (mostly) four dwellings. When owned by the Estate, its allocation to families and its maintenance regimes had that effect. Individual ownership has introduced the familiar tension between expressions of individuality and the maintenance of character through neighbourly conformity. Listed building status does provide control though some changes were made before the buildings were listed. A typical problem is roof materials: fortunately, all four cottages in Top Row were last re-thatched at more or less the same time in the same material by the same thatcher.



*Well maintained thatch on the Avenue*

### **Local guidance and management strategy**

56 Alterations to listed buildings that might affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area are controlled by the need to obtain listed building consent from the local planning authority.

57 Owners of unlisted buildings should give careful thought to ensure that proposed changes not requiring planning permission are sympathetic to the area, such as small alterations or repainting of front elevations and the landscaping of front gardens.

58 The main management proposals for a generally well-kept Conservation Area are in the public realm.

59 Some amount to ensuring the continuation and review of maintenance arrangements already managed by the Parish Council with some voluntary help from residents and private owners. These include:

- (a) grass mowing in the compartments of the Green and on the parish field
- (b) hedge cutting and laying in the centre of the village to ensure hedges do not grow unkempt and straggling, and that self-set trees do not obstruct good views
- (c) maintenance and repair of stone walls to a consistent specification: retaining existing dry-stone construction; in repairing mortared walls using well-brushed out pointing and avoiding hard cement-based mortar - the length of the churchyard wall facing on to the Avenue provides a good model. Other lengths of churchyard wall need attention varying from minor repairs to complete rebuilding.



*Unrepaired churchyard wall*

- 60 Some are longer term objectives that require other sources of public funding.
- (a) The overhead cabling should be placed underground wherever possible.
  - (b) At the next resurfacing of the footpaths, a top gravel dressing should be rolled into the surface of the tarmac.
  - (c) Existing concrete kerbs should be replaced with granite setts or 'countryside' kerbing or an equivalent.

### **Useful information and contact details**

61 Further information about aspects of the proposed conservation area can be found in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record and the Bedford and Luton Archives Service, both in County Hall, Bedford, MK42 9AP.

62 For further advice on planning matters within the conservation area please contact:

Planning Services  
Bedford Borough Council  
Town Hall  
St Paul's Square  
Bedford MK40 1SJ

Tel: 01234 221729

# BLETSOE CONSERVATION AREA

