



Blunham Conservation Area

Introduction

22 June 2005

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. This document is one of a series of revised conservation area appraisals in Mid Bedfordshire. Blunham Conservation Area was designated on 6th October 1971 and no review has been undertaken since. The setting, character and appearance of Blunham are considered separately. This will enable Development Control to determine whether proposals preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area or its setting. Areas in need of enhancement are also identified.



Setting

Blunham is a relatively rural village despite the proximity of major roads such as the A1 to the east, the A603 to the south and the A142 to the north-west. Between the village and the A1 is the floodplain of the River Ivel. The most important part of the village's setting is the open countryside to the south and east from which views are obtained of the village and in particular the parish church and Old Rectory with the river in the foreground. The southern part of the historic village includes the parkland of Blunham House which combines with the aforementioned river valley landscape to provide a pleasant rural backdrop to the village. Further to the south, the disused railway line cuts east-west.

To the north east, the road into Blunham crosses narrow linked bridges which act as a gateway to the village. Between these bridges and the village centre is a ribbon of mostly housing development lining the road. When closer to the village centre, a fine view of the church over The Horseshoes public house announces the heart of the village. The road rises up 'The Hill' westwards out of the village and so again allows attractive views particularly of the C12 Church of St Edmund and St James. At the top of the hill the road is lined by C19 and more modern houses before open agricultural land separates the village from Great Barford to the north west.

Character

The nucleus of the older buildings in the village are centred around the church with cottages, houses and outbuildings dating back to the C16 which mostly face the wide part of the road at the bottom of The Hill. Several of the buildings are either current or former public houses and they combine to create an attractive square. The character of Blunham is derived as much from its buildings as it is from the horseshoe road layout which is Park Lane and which connects at its ends with The Hill.

To the south of the church is Blunham House. This is an C18 country house in a parkland setting, the trees and boundary walls of which contribute much to the village's character despite the building of several new houses within the former walled gardens. The village expanded in the C19 and there are a number of attractive Victorian houses some of which were small holdings and there are several groups of weatherboarded barns and other outbuildings within the village. Even within the village core, there are also a number of C20 houses of variable scale and character which generally make a less positive contribution to the character of the village.

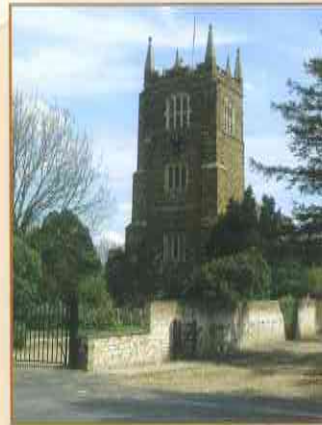
The position of the church on the edge of the floodplain, coupled with the rising land up the hill towards Great Barford means that glimpse views of the church are a vital component of the village's character. Equally important are the views out over open countryside to the south, east and north of the village which act as a backdrop to many of Blunham's fine buildings.

Appearance

Park Lane

The east part of Park Lane is wide due to the pavements being a continuation of the 'black-top' surface of the carriageway. It appears especially wide at its junction with High Street, opposite no.68, which is a prominent gault brick,

C19 block with a hipped slate roof. The view north is stopped by no.1 High Street (modern bungalow). This building lacks the character of its historic neighbours and the location of cabinets, hydrants and a galvanised streetlight on the verge outside further detract from the vista and is an area worthy of enhancement.



The parish church is set back from the road behind an ironstone wall which returns in brick towards the south porch. Within the churchyard there are a number of mature trees including Yew, Holly and pollarded Limes. The west tower with its clasping buttresses and pinnacles is the principal feature. The contrast between the limestone windows and the ironstone walls is also

striking and this emphasises the C12 arch at the base of the tower. The south porch, which dates from the C15 and connects the church to The Rectory boundary, is also an unusual feature, highly visible from the street though it hides views of the grade II listed mausoleum behind.

Opposite the church is a building known as the Old Manor House which has a narrow, two storey wing linked to a block of little more than one storey. The building lines the west side of the road and is predominantly of white painted render



The Old Manor House

but with a painted brick rear addition. The ground floor of the south gable end is exposed timber frame and facing brick. This building also has both clay and concrete tiled roofs. Visible in the rear garden, down the lane at the side,

is the C19, weatherboarded village lock-up. To the south of the Old Manor House is Manor Court, a series of brown brick bungalows with a communal garden accessed through a wide gault brick archway. Further south are more bungalows, this time in a paler brick, sat behind a bland verge and car parking area. In between the two groups of bungalows is a one and a half storey, red brick dwelling.

On the east side of the street, is a section of high brick wall, laid in rat-trap bond in front of The Old Rectory adjacent to which is a modern, high metal railing. The Old Rectory is a very substantial high Victorian Gothic house of yellow brick with stone and red brick detailing and clay tiled roofs. This two and a half storey building with its half-hipped roofs and numerous chimney stacks has a strong silhouette despite being partly hidden by substantial mature trees. Slightly to the south is an attractive view of open countryside with trees and hedges on The Old Rectory boundary contributing to the area. Only the A1 in the distance mars the view and the River Ivel is hidden from view at this point. From the footbridge, and the east side of the river, the view back towards the church and The Old Rectory is especially fine with both buildings sitting comfortably within the landscape. Before reaching the bridge a public footpath runs south under the canopy of a group of trees until opening out onto a paddock.

At the south of Park Lane the road continues to become a track through to Blunham House, the north side of which is defined by an old brick wall. The trees in the vicinity contribute positively to this part of the conservation area. Directly ahead is a glimpse view of 'Fountains', a bungalow partly shielded by trees and hedges, whilst further west is Blunham House. This small country house of red brick with clay tiled roofs was built in the C18 and sits within an attractive tree-filled garden. Returning to Park Lane, on the south side are nos.21-25, three large modern houses which sit behind an attractive brick boundary wall which was originally Blunham House's walled garden.

At the side of no.19 is a view through to outbuildings and boundary wall of Blunham House. Opposite, nos.14-20 are a gault brick C19 terrace with slate roofs set back some distance from the road and with fences dividing the front gardens. To the west is a range of weatherboarded sheds which contribute to the character of the area. There is, however, permission to replace these buildings with a new weatherboarded residential unit.

At the side of no 9, a footpath leads through to Station Road. South of this fenced path are the converted barns and outbuildings of The Old Dairy. Looking east from this point the silhouette of the church tower can be seen to the side of a large tree in the foreground. The buildings on the east side of the road are of interest, and include no.12, an early C19 gault brick and slate property and no.10, a timber framed, C18 dwelling part of which lies adjacent to the road. The outbuilding was the Wheatsheaf Ale House in the C19 and the village fish and chip shop in the more recent past! Either side of no.8 there are views of the church. The Baptist Chapel near the end of the street is a very plain C19 building with uPVC windows.

The vista north, across The Hill overlooks pleasant open countryside which again adds to this village's rural setting. Unfortunately the view is marred by the location of a telegraph pole and poor quality galvanised street lamp.

The Hill

On entering Blunham Conservation Area from The Hill, the first properties on the south side of the road are nos.12 and 14, the latter being a butcher's shop. These properties are C19 and constructed in gault brick. To the east of these is Prospect House (no.16) which has an unusual design with its weatherboarded first floor and multi-paned sash windows. Unfortunately, the house, which is on the footpath edge, is in very poor condition and the site offers the opportunity for a sensitive redevelopment (probably a single dwelling on the same building line as its neighbours) which would enhance the character and appearance of the area. Further east, stand nos.18 and 20 which are fine double fronted houses of gault and red brick respectively. On the opposite side of the road are nos.15 and 17 which are both rendered and a weatherboarded barn (in need of some repair) sits on the west side of no.15.

The stretch of road between the east and west legs of Park Lane contains mostly modern houses the following being unremarkable architecturally: 24a, The Herbs, no.64 and Peelers Lodge. From this point the vista into the village square is extremely attractive with several historic buildings set against a backcloth of mature trees. On the north side of the road, nos.73 and 75 are a pair of grade II listed, C18, thatched properties with



Nos.73 and 75 The Hill

painted rendered walls. The former has a group of painted and weatherboarded barns with pantiled roofs. Both buildings form a pleasing group and their position to one another adds to the visual and townscape interest. Set back from the road on the west side of no.75 is a C19 gault brick house. On the opposite side of the road, the single and two-storey rear ranges of no.68 Park Lane are of similar age and materials.

High Street

The High Street contains the best group of historic houses in the village. On the north side are nos.5 & 7, formerly the Queen's Head but now known as the Ragged Staff. This is a timber framed range dating from the C16 with painted



Nos.5-7 and 'Shoe Cottage'

rendered walls and a clay tiled roof. Adjacent is no.15, a timber framed and thatched house, with a plaque on the front elevation stating 'Shoe Cottage 1666'. The upper parts of the gable ends are weatherboarded and the same

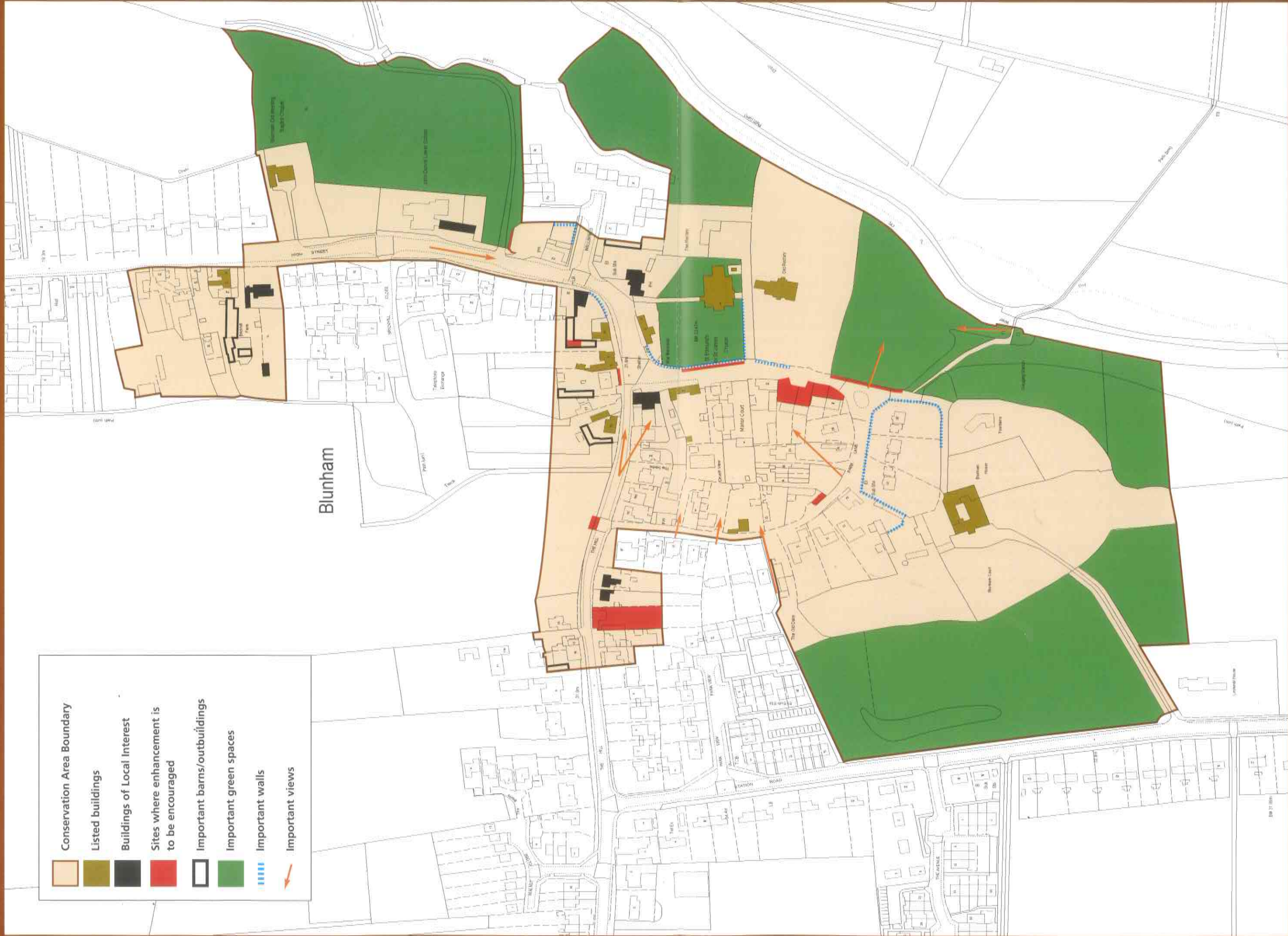
material is used for the first floors of the attractive range of barns to the rear. These are L-shaped and link to no.21 on the corner. Parts of these barns have been stripped of their roof coverings and are in urgent need of repair. A gault brick boundary wall links to no.21 which is also constructed in gault brick with mansard and hipped roofs and makes a positive statement at a prominent position in the village.

The south side of the street contains nos.2 & 4 which are another range of timber framed houses with thatched and clay tiled roofs dating from the end of the C17. The rear boundary is interesting in that it is marked by a line of gravestones. Between these houses and The Horseshoes PH is the north entrance to the church. The canopy of trees means that only the north porch can easily be seen. The church boundary wall encloses the war memorial on three sides and runs from the west gable of no.2 round into Park Lane.



The Horseshoes PH probably dates from the C19 and has painted walls and a tiled roof and neatly encloses the corner of 'the square'. In a similar way, the good range of weatherboarded outbuildings with pantiled roofs defines the north and east sides of pub car park. Between The Horseshoes PH and the Salutation PH is a modern estate of bungalows arranged around a turning head which is outside the Conservation Area. The Salutation PH to the north is an early C20 building of red brick and applied timber framing. It has a clay tiled roof and a fine willow tree to the rear. Beyond the bland car park of The Salutation, is the long range of the thatched former village institute which is now part of John Donne Lower School (John Donne, poet and preacher and rector at Blunham from 1621-31).

When leaving the conservation area in a northerly direction, a cluster of older buildings are noted on the west side of the High Street, principally ranging from C17 to C19. Nos.77 and 81 are grade II listed and behind these buildings are a number of weatherboarded outbuildings including an onion store.



- Conservation Area Boundary
- Listed buildings
- Buildings of Local Interest
- Sites where enhancement is to be encouraged
- Important barns/outbuildings
- Important green spaces
- Important walls
- Important views

Blunham



Enhancement

Generally, Blunham Conservation Area is well maintained. The enhancement of the character and appearance of a conservation area can be defined as a reinforcement of the qualities providing the special interest which warranted designation. Firstly, it may be through the sympathetic development of sites identified in the detailed analysis of the area as opportunity or neutral sites. Secondly, it may involve positive physical proposals or thirdly, by the consistent application of positive, sensitive and detailed development control over extensions and alterations.

Areas which warrant special consideration are marked on the conservation area plan and are:

- Restoration or redevelopment of Prospect House, no.16 The Hill, in a manner which preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Prospect House, no.16 The Hill

- Better location of telegraph poles, streetlights etc.
- Surface treatment and road layout outside the church on Park Lane.
- Better screening of the Salutation PH car park.
- Better landscaping of the car parking area adjacent to nos.44-50 Park Lane.
- Western, roadside field boundary to the south of The Old Rectory.

General Conservation Area Guidance

To maintain the distinctive character of Blunham Conservation Area it will be necessary to:

1. Retain Listed Buildings and Buildings of Local Interest. There will be a strong presumption against the demolition of such buildings unless there is clear justification for doing so, for instance, being beyond repair. Where possible, other buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area should also be retained. If any of the above buildings become vacant efforts should be made to find a beneficial reuse.
2. Ensure that new development positively contributes to the setting of listed buildings the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of siting, mass, scale, design and materials used.
3. Ensure that house extensions and alterations satisfy the District Councils technical guidance entitled 'House Extensions and Alterations – a Design Guide for Householders'.
4. Seek to retain important boundary walls as indicated on the Conservation Area Plan.
5. Where necessary retain trees within the conservation area and ensure that where new development is permitted, proper consideration is given to tree planting and appropriate landscape treatment.
6. Ensure the protection of locally important green spaces with a presumption against new development.

PLANNING GUIDANCE – APPROVED FOR DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PURPOSES

This document was subject to public consultation between 26 February 2005 and 30 March 2005. Consultation included an advertised exhibition at Blunham Village Hall and entry on the District Council's website.

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

- This information can be provided in an alternative format or language on request **01767 602493**
- যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে অন্য কোনও আকারে বা ভাষায় এই তথ্য আপনি পেতে পারেন। **01767 602493 (Bengali)**
- 你可以要求以另一種格式或語言提供這些訊息 **01767 602493 (Chinese)**
- ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਹੋਰ ਢੰਗ 'ਤੇ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ ਵੇਰ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਨਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। **01767 602493 (Punjabi)**
- یہ معلومات آپ کے درخواست کرنے پر متبادل زبانوں یا زبان میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ **01767 602493 (Urdu)**

Mid Beds District Council

23 London Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 8ER

Tel: Planning Division: **01767 313137**

Conservation & Design Team: **01767 602405**

Email: conservation@midbeds.gov.uk

www.midbeds.gov.uk/services/planning

Planning Division