

TEWIN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

1. VILLAGE FORM

Tewin is a clearly defined settlement on an open site, falling from north to south, on a promontory between two dry valleys. The valleys fall to the north bank of the River Mimram. The village church and manor house are some distance from the village settlement and from archaeological evidence, it appears that the settlement has shifted northwards from the medieval buildings of the church and manor house. This helps to explain the predominantly Victorian nature of the village.

- 1.2 The conservation area consists of the area around the triangular Lower Green and portions of the approach roads, mainly in Upper Green Road and Hertford Road.
- 1.3 The essential form of the conservation area is a band of frontage development around the three sides of the green and its approach roads. This historic form has been blurred somewhat by modern development to the south in Cannons Meadow and to the north.

Lower Green is a contained, large triangular open space defined by a variety of buildings dating from the mid 17th century to the late 20th century. The green has a pleasant semi-rural appearance, due to the large grassed area in the centre, and a number of mature trees and hedges around the green and the wide grass verge on the western side.

- 1.4 The area around Lower Green has a sense of containment, which appears to have been deliberately strengthened by the siting of several late 19th and early 20th century buildings. The contrasting long view out, south down School Lane towards St Peter's Church, is of particular importance. Local building materials have been used on the earlier buildings - Clay peg tiles, timber framing and plasterwork can be seen as traditional materials of Hertfordshire. Nos 8 and 9 Lower Green (Grade II) are timber framed with plasterwork, and No 30 has the traditional steep pitch of a peg tile roof and soft red bricks (Grade II).
- 1.5 The approach to Lower green via Upper Green Road has a semi-rural serpentine character with the road falling quite strongly towards the green, between hedges neat grassed banks and verges.

2. PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

A number of listed and unlisted buildings contribute to the character of the area and work together to create an interesting architectural character in the village.

There are only a few early buildings around the green which include domestic buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries, the 17th century Rose and Crown Public House at the north corner of the green, and the Cowper Cottage/No 10 and 11 Lower Green - formerly the Cowper Endowed School. This building dates from 1839 and is constructed of creamy yellow stocks and a pantiled roof in an 'H' plan. These materials were alien to this area and suggest local patronage of fashionable materials from elsewhere.

Distinctive later buildings include five groups of "model" cottages erected by the Cowper Estate and the Tewin Memorial Hall, all of which are examples of local patronage from the Cowper family.

2.1 LISTED BUILDINGS

The listed buildings are all of Grade II and are interspersed throughout the conservation area, providing a framework of built form which later buildings have strengthened.

The Rose and Crown Public House is a prominent 17th century building in the northwest of the conservation area. It is constructed of red brick with attractive decorative vitrified headers interspersed in the brickwork to the front of the building. The building has been extended, but lacks a mature setting with an unscreened parking area and the modern clutter of a public house visible at the rear.

The Listed former Cowper Endowed School at Nos 10-11 Lower Green and the unlisted Tewin Memorial Hall complement one another and create a sense of entrance to the green from the south.

2.2 TEWIN MEMORIAL HALL

The Memorial Hall is a bold red brick building in English Arts and Crafts style, influenced by the architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens, erected in 1922 as a war memorial. The hall is an attractive symmetrical composition, with two gabled wings protruding forward to enclose a small entrance courtyard. The symmetry of the design is accentuated by two yew bushes in the entrance courtyard and by two prominent "Tudor" chimneys. The detail of the building is subordinated to a steeply pitched roof in brown/red clay peg tiles, which is in sympathy with the warm red brickwork of the lower parts. The Memorial Hall does not directly front the green, but is slightly withdrawn behind a mature hedge which continues the line of the field hedge in School Lane.

2.3 GROUPS OF "MODEL" COTTAGES

Five groups of "model" cottages were erected around the green by the Cowper Estate between 1873 and 1903. These groups are similar in their materials but the later groups show an increasing boldness in scale and architectural inventiveness.

- The earliest group, Nos 1 to 4 Lower Green, is typical in its use of gault brickwork, a steeply pitched red/brown plain tiled roof with overhanging eaves and verges, large brick chimneys, punctuating gabled dormers and casement windows with small lights. The rear gardens of these houses have a pleasant domestic appearance with neat vegetable plots and small tile and gault brick outbuildings. No intrusive roof windows or conservatories intrude.
- A second group Nos 4 - 10 Hertford Road dating from 1876 has more steeply accentuated roof pitches, prominent two storey gables jutting forward and grander chimneys.

- A pair of cottages at 7 - 9 Upper Green Road and two pairs at the north end of the green date from 1896.
- The last terrace of seven cottages on the western side of the green dating from 1903 is of fundamental importance to the character of the Lower Green itself and defines its western boundary. The elevation to the green is a bold regular pattern of gabled dormers and large decorative chimneys which contrast with a generous expanse of roof. Windows are side hung casements with glazing bars, with arched heads in contrasting red brickwork. The individual houses are subordinated to a strong architectural whole. Each cottage has a long front garden bounded by a hedge to the front, which sets them well back from the verge. Vehicular access to these houses is available from the rear and the intrusion of out outbuildings into the front gardens, run-ins across the wide verge etc would detract from the appearance of these houses considerably.

2.4 LOCAL PATRONAGE

The present character of the conservation area is the result of aesthetically and socially aware patronage by the Cowper family of Panshanger house and the Beit family of Tewin Water House. As a result it is likely that the model cottages, have been deliberately positioned around the green.

2.5. SETTING OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

The setting of the conservation area, except where modern development abuts it, is generally open grazing land with a rolling character. The edge of the area is generally clearly defined by mature trees and hedges on rising ground, with the buildings not clearly visible except for chimneys and roof forms. To the west the setting is more open with the village clearly visible across the fields. To the northwest the setting becomes almost arcadian, with the village scarcely visible through the mature trees which dot pasture land in this direction.

3. GENERAL CHARACTER AND FEATURES

3.1 HEDGES, VERGES AND TREES

The presence of mature greenery contributes to the general character of the area, both as a backdrop to and as one of the ingredients of the area itself.

Often hedges define the spaces which make up the area. Hedges of particular importance are those on both sides of Upper Green Road and those at the north end of the green. Removal of hedges to provide parking in front gardens has already damaged the spacial quality in some locations.

Green verges and banks augment the grassed expanse of the green itself creating a spacious green heart inside the enclosure of buildings. Verges and banks which make a particular contribution to the character of the area include the verge outside the model cottages and Memorial Hall on the western side of Lower Green and the

grassed banks outside Nos 14 to 26 Upper Green Road, where the pedestrian only approach to these houses via steps up the bank contributes to the village character.

Existing trees are of particular importance and are protected by conservation area legislation or Tree Preservation Orders. Large trees often frame and balance views and in this respect the mature ash tree in the garden of 5 Lower Green and the mature oak at the northwestern corner of the green adjacent to the Rose and Crown public house are particularly important.

The mature fastigate yews which flank the entrance gate to the Memorial Hall are an integral part of the architectural composition of the hall.

Two small areas of mixed woodland within the conservation area have an important role in that they contribute to the sense of enclosure whilst providing a contrast to the built forms; these woodland areas are located adjacent to No 30 Lower Green and adjacent to No 7 Upper Green Road.

3.2 ROOFING MATERIALS

The use of steeply sloping roofs on many of the existing buildings makes roofing materials of particular importance in the visual scene. Hand made clay tiles predominate and they are usually of a soft red/brown colour which complements the red brickwork and gently contrasts with the gault brickwork. Clay tiles often show a wide variation in colour within the same roof and the gradation of colour in some newer roofs is less satisfactory than on older roofs.

Machine made plain tiles of standard colours are not in sympathy with the character of the area.

3.3 BRICKWORK

Brick is the predominant building material. Older buildings are generally constructed in a soft red local brick, with a small proportion of blues, although this material has been painted in some cases. The red brickwork to No 30 Lower Green is a good example. The use of this traditional material in the elevations of the Memorial Hall is particularly attractive.

The 19th and early 20th century buildings are generally constructed in Cambridge Gault brick, with reds used sparingly for contrasting details.

3.4 ROOF FORMS AND CHIMNEY STACKS

The roof forms and stacks of the late 19th and early 20th century buildings are of particular importance. These roofs are generally steeply sloping with wide eave and verge overhangs. The area of roof is accentuated by the use of a semi-chalet design and the extension of roofs downward to form porches etc. These uncluttered roof areas are punctuated by large angular gabled dormers with decorative bargeboards at regular intervals. Roof windows, and dormers within the roof pitch are uncommon.

Chimney stacks are often distinctively large and decorative in form. The stacks to the model cottages and the Memorial Hall are particularly significant and the loss of details which has resulted from later rebuilding in some cases is unfortunate.

3.5 LONG FRONT GARDENS

The model cottages have large gardens which contribute to the spacious character of the green. This is particularly true of the cottages on the western side of the green. The erection of play-houses and greenhouses in these gardens erodes the spacious quality.

4. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

4.1 INFILL DEVELOPMENT

The conservation area is a well defined whole at the present time and opportunities for infill development which would enhance the area are minimal.

A weak point in the sense of enclosure does exist adjacent to No 2 Hertford Road which would be strengthened by careful planting and improved detail treatment of paving and fencing.

4.2 RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN SENSE OF ENCLOSURE

The sense of enclosure created by built form and planting should be retained and strengthened. The primary cause of erosion of this quality is the creation of parking areas in front gardens, requiring the removal of mature hedges to provide the necessary sight lines. The large paved areas which result are out of keeping with the present character. Attention should be paid to limiting this erosion and the choice of paving material is important.

4.3 CAREFUL USE OF MATERIALS

A limited palette of materials are used in the conservation area and attention should be paid to retaining this consistency. Cambridge Gault brick or a carefully selected soft red brick with a proportion of blues should be used. Yellow stocks should be avoided.

Detailing of brickwork should be plain, with limited use of contrasting string courses and other decorative features.

The choice of roof tiles is important and the tile should co-ordinate with the brickwork in the manner of the existing buildings, as described above.

4.4 ROOF LINES, ROOF WINDOWS ETC

The existing buildings have simple bold roof designs, with distinctive features, as described previously. The introduction of roof windows, dormers in roof slopes, intrusive roof ventilators, etc will reduce this quality and should be avoided.

4.5 WINDOWS AND DOORS

Windows are generally simple, white painted, side hung timber casements with well

proportioned frames and glazing bars. Simulated polished hardwood stain finishes are inappropriate. The use of PVC or metal casements with heavy frame and glazing bars should be avoided. The introduction of bow windows, sashes windows etc would be out keeping with the general character.

Modern metal or PVC front doors, with heavily detailed recessed panels and poor proportions should be avoided. Simply detailed painted wooden doors are more in keeping.

4.6 CAREFUL MAINTENANCE

The existing grassed areas are generally well maintained and this makes an important contribution to the quality of the area. A grassed area adjacent to the Memorial Hall would benefit from improved maintenance.

The grassed area at the centre of Lower Green is attractive but the design of pathways and seating in the centre is somewhat municipal in character. The layout of this area could be reconsidered and the seating relocated and paving replanned. The existing tiled shelter is distinctive and should be retained and refurbished to avoid further decay.