

Deputation – Edward Rees

Members, I address you today not only as a member of the Bedhampton Residents Alliance but as someone who was born and raised in the ward.

Bedhampton is my home, it is my family's home and I speak on behalf of my community and my neighbours.

The Bedhampton resident's alliance has one purpose and one purpose only. To promote, protect and enhance the historical and cultural characteristics of Bedhampton.

Old Bedhampton is one of the oldest and most precious areas of our Borough. For years it has been protected by the conservation area, and while the world has moved on around it. Old Bedhampton has been protected for the unrelenting forces of modernity.

For many years now the residents of Bedhampton have asked 'is the current conservation area fit for purpose. Does it truly encapsulate the cultural and historical importance of the area?' A question that has not been asked of this authority since the year I was born.

Indeed, it was five years ago that residents asked me if the council would deliver a review of the conservation area. Due to significant local government cuts and under the advice of the previous cabinet I was informed that no funds could be made available for the task.

I note paragraph 3.1 states 'The designation and review of Conservation Areas are an important part of the Councils statutory duty.' Perhaps not the case in 2014.

Despite this, community organisations funded this privately. What David Cameron would call 'his big society at work'

Members I will not quote aspects of policy or show you maps. I have every faith that you are in command of the facts to make an informed decision about what you shall vote on today.

To be clear the Bedhampton Resident's Alliance accepts the 9 recommendations set out in the management plan.

However, we look advise this cabinet of some further recommendations to be considered.

In summary, the conservation area should be extended to include Lower road, its verges, hedges some of which are over 100 years old and banks along with Narrow Marsh Lane and the railway bridge.

These are all part of the original historic network of lanes, which predate all of the current listed sites and buildings of local interest. They are all at least 300 years old and probably date back to the 13th century given the age of part of St. Thomas Church.

The importance of the historic architecture in Old Bedhampton is now well established. These historic routes and the Architecture are more valuable than the sum of their parts and it is now time to recognise and protect them as a whole.

Much debate has surrounded what is and what isn't a sunken lane. Lower Road is part of the original turnpike from Havant to Fareham and is without question a sunken lane.

This was proposed by Eimear Murphy the Planning and Conservation consultant but refuted on numerous occasions by officers.

To solve this matter Emeritus Professor John Boardman of Oxford University, the country's preeminent expert on sunken lanes visited the area to make a finding. I quote directly from Professor Broadman "This is perhaps not the best example of a sunken lane in the in the UK but certainly is part of an extensive historic network, arguably the best in Havant."

Despite Professor Broadman's credentials, officers have not agreed with this assessment and have described it as a carriage way taking two-way traffic. As you have all visited the site you will agree this is disingenuous as in parts it will only take single file traffic and the entire length of road has no pavement or pedestrian refuge.

On entering Lower Road in the west one certainly experiences a transition from the clamour of the Rusty Cutter roundabout to the tranquillity of Old Bedhampton. As one progresses eastward one passes The Old Manor Farm

complex 150 yards from the western edge of the current Conservation area. I have no doubt that you have noted the impressive historic architecture.

Historic England in their submission to the CAAMP consultation, 8th March 2019, state: "The informal semi-rural layout of the roads suggests that there is relatively little traffic through the conservation area and I assume that the place is relatively tranquil. If this is the case this needs to be described as character which is about experience which relates to sounds and activity as much as views."

It is hoped that it has been clearly demonstrated that Lower Road is part of historic network that enhances the core of the current Conservation area and why it requires more protection. To do nothing would allow creeping urbanisation which in turn will threaten to erode the integrity of the core of the Conservation area and undermine the character of a semirural village with an historic farming heritage.

I am the youngest active member of my community. There is perhaps a sense of irony that I stand in front of you today to protect its oldest treasure. I do this for no other reason that one day I hope my children will be able to enjoy this beautiful area as my parents and my grandparents did before me.

I ask you, no plead with you. Help me to preserve our past to protect our future.