

Keith Mayor - Deputation

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am a resident of Old Bedhampton and represent my neighbours and the local population. I must say this meeting feels a bit like déjà vu. The officer's recommendation has not really changed since the last time this went to the vote, on 17th July, when the motion was lost. Surely it is not very democratic to keep putting the same recommendation forward until the desired result is achieved.

The last Conservation Area review was conducted 25 years ago and there is no doubt that it will be many years before this area is ever looked at again so we need to get this right.

A recent review, by an independent expert in this field, recommended extensions to the Conservation Area included Lower Road, the Farm Cottages, Old Manor Farm, Narrow Marsh Lane and the surrounding fields. The Council officers dismissed these extensions within their consultation so most of the public were totally unaware of the omissions made. This did not give the public the full picture and resulted in poor feedback.

The main reason for cherry picking the comprehensive expert review seemed to be a denial of any special architectural interest in the fields and a reluctance to have a thin strip of land within the Conservation Area along Lower Road to include the farm cottages and the Old Manor Farm. I was also informed the distance to Old Manor Farm was too far away from the Conservation Area but this is simply not true. The pub north of the main road, which is recommended to be included, is at a greater distance.

At the drop in session, there was also a denial that Lower Road was even a sunken lane and that Narrow Marsh Lane was just a farm track. The revised acknowledgement that Narrow Marsh Lane was once an historical route has now been added, but apparently it is no longer an ancient road and therefore of little significance.

The fact that Lower Road is actually a Sunken Lane has also now been established but the subjective view of how good an example continues. The fact remains, that it is one of the best examples within the borough.

The revised recommendations include a car park and a fairly ugly shop frontage. What possible special interest does the car park provide?

Bidbury Mead is also to be included and one could say this is just a field not unlike the field south of Lower Road.

The inclusion of Narrow Marsh Lane is made out to be complicated because it is not recognised as a Public Right of Way even though the public have been using it for over 300 years.

The railway bridge on Narrow Marsh Lane also has some subjective views on whether it meets the special status.

It would be a great loss if all the residents along Lower Road removed the sunken lane banks to build walls and concrete driveways as one resident has already done. There is nothing in place to prevent everyone else from concreting their front gardens and removing the grass bank which creates the historical sunken lane.

I strongly believe the Old Manor Farm, the farm cottages and the sunken lane of Lower Road should be included within the Conservation Area. In fact this would be in line with the

officer's own Recommendation number 9 which seeks to prevent the loss of the verges, banks and hedgerows on the sunken lanes.

Narrow Marsh Lane is an ancient road and is clearly an important heritage asset worthy of inclusion in the Conservation Area, along with the railway bridge.

The field to the South of Lower Road which includes Narrow Marsh Lane is also worthy of inclusion as this is associated with the farm buildings in Lower Road.

This is the last chance, and also the duty of the elected Councillor's, to protect and preserve this unique area within the borough. The Old Bedhampton Conservation Area is within a beautiful village and worthy of protection and this review is an excellent opportunity to provide and expand that protection, enhancing the area even further for future generations.