

SILSOE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT 2018 TO 2035

Adopted by SPC

August 2018

Foreword

Silsoe Village Design Statement

This Design Statement was produced by the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee, in conjunction with Silsoe villagers and the Silsoe Parish Council as an appendix to the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Design Statement enables us to reflect the true nature of Silsoe and guide future developments to match the village itself. It is influenced by the geography, geology and history of Silsoe, the opinions of village residents and Silsoe Parish Council.

This statement used comments and suggestions from villagers and businesses alike gathered in our Initial Survey 1-30 May 2017, it was then presented for further comment and suggestions at an Exhibition to villagers and businesses on 18th January 2018, ratified by Silsoe Parish Council on 21st February 2018 and final opportunity to comment remained online until 28th February 2018, after which it was adopted by Silsoe Parish Council and the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.

Central Bedfordshire Council will consider this statement when considering planning applications and so it is also expected that developers use this statement to guide their design from the outset.

We would especially like to thank Jane Blumsom (JB), Anne Jarvis (AJ), Richard O'Donnell (RO'D), Helen Flack (HF), Pippa Bremner (PB) and Dave Keens (DK) for their pictures that have helped illustrate our beautiful village in this document. They are credited with their initials.

Thank you

Mike Jarrard

Councillor Mike Jarrard
Chairman
Silsoe Parish Council
June 2018

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1 Introduction

1.01 The Localism Act 2011 empowers local communities in England to take the lead in planning how their own neighbourhoods will develop. The Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan enables our local community to shape the future development of the village for the benefit of the community.

1.02 This Design Statement supports our Neighbourhood Plan. According to Paragraph 56 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012), *“The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people”*, so Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee have created this Design Statement to achieve this.

1.03 We have also aimed to support the objectives stated in Paragraph 58 of the NPPF, it states that –

“Local and Neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping”*

1.04 This Design Statement demonstrates our focus on high quality development yet takes into account the historic nature and setting of Silsoe, so that developments in the area should establish a strong sense of place and respond to local character and history by reflecting the local identity of the place through use of appropriate materials and attractive design.

1.05 In Paragraph 17 of the NPPF, it says that part of the Core Planning Principles is –

“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it”

This means that we have used our vision for Silsoe to help us create our Village Design Statement and Neighbourhood Plan. It is -

“Our vision for Silsoe is to maintain our picturesque and historic village as a place where people aspire to live; with housing and services to meet the needs of all our residents; where traffic is managed so that our sites are accessible to visitors; and that local businesses enjoy the benefits of being advantageously placed, yet respect the heritage of the village”

1.06 We trust that this Design Statement guides developers to achieve these aims. It has been produced by the local community, with the help of the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee and updates the Village Design Plan created in 2008.



High Street in winter – overlooking the Church and War Memorial with Almshouses to the right – *Credit PB*

Our Heritage Environment

1.07 Because Silsoe has a rich heritage, with many heritage assets, we have paid particular attention to the NPPF where it defines the historic environment as - *“all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.”*

1.08 All buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of their heritage interest are referred to as “heritage assets” by the NPPF. Heritage assets include designated assets – such as - Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields, Protected Wreck Sites, Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites; and also, assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

1.09 The historic environment and heritage assets is particularly significant for Silsoe as we are home to a number of highly graded designated heritage assets in the parish, including listed buildings and conservation areas, two scheduled monuments, as well as Registered Parks and Gardens. For this, we refer you to our List of Heritage and Non-designated Heritage Assets 2018 document -see Neighbourhood Plan Appendix 12 - with a map of the conservation areas within our Parish - see Illustration 3a of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.10 The Conservation Areas clustered around the High Street are referred to as the “Village Centre”. Our Village Centre, like every village and parish today, includes distinctive historic buildings, archaeological remains, streetscape and a landscape full of historic information and character. These streetscapes and buildings have been used to inspire our Village Design Statement, as well as our Neighbourhood Plan policies to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

1.11 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that Local Authorities *“should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance”*. This Design Statement therefore sets out to protect and enhance our area’s rich historic environment and to conserve and enhance the historic significance of the Silsoe’s heritage and Non-designated Heritage assets and settings. If we do not do this, then we run the risk of losing local characteristics through unsympathetic design.

1.12 Fortunately, we have no Heritage at Risk in the Silsoe Parish – however if that were to be the case in the future, then we would seek to address this appropriately and quickly by providing an opportunity to repair, conserve or bring heritage assets back into use.

1.13 To support this, when considering applications for Listed Buildings (including for change of use), the repair, renovation, alteration and extension of should not be at the expense of its intrinsic special interest and significance. It is important to guard against unnecessary change or over-restoration. In any change, materials should be sympathetic and appropriate to those used in the original building. In particular we will resist applications that result in the loss of traditional local features such as long straw thatched roofs, locally manufactured clay tiles and bricks and local stone. Demolition will be discouraged.

The Setting of Silsoe

1.14 It is also noted that Silsoe sits within the setting of the Chilterns Area of Natural Beauty, as identified by Natural England. According to Development affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB – Adopted June 2011 (Rev 1) – see Neighborhood Plan Appendix 15 – which provides guidance to –

“local planning authorities, landowners, developers and other interested parties in connection with the need to consider the impacts on the AONB of development and land management proposals which lie outside it but within its ‘setting’” – Paragraph 2.

1.15 The Chilterns Conservation Board considers that, - paragraph 3 –

“although it does not have a defined geographical boundary, the setting of the Chilterns AONB is the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design could be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and special qualities of the Chilterns AONB”

and, paragraph 6 –

“Views out of the AONB and into its surrounding areas can be very significant. Development proposals that affect views into and out of the AONB need to be carefully assessed, particularly in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, to ensure that they conserve and enhance the natural beauty and landscape character of the AONB”.

1.16 Avoiding harm to the setting of the Chilterns AONB means that, as noted in our NP, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be undertaken should any development come forward so that the setting is conserved and enhanced.

With this in mind, we fully support the view of the Chilterns Conservation Board – namely –

“In relation to development within or affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB, the Chilterns Conservation Board supports the following:

- *Measures to consider the impact on the setting of the AONB, including where required through Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, ecological surveys or historical assessments;*
- *Care being taken over the design, orientation, site layout, height, bulk and scale of structures and buildings through the preparation of a design and access statement;*
- *Consideration not just of the site but also the landscape and land uses around and beyond it;*
- *Careful consideration of colours, materials and the reflectiveness of surfaces;*
- *Restraint and care over the installation and use of street lighting, floodlighting and other external lighting to prevent harm to the dark night skies of the AONB and its setting;*
- *The grouping of new structures and buildings close to existing structures and buildings to avoid new expanses of development that are visible and out of context (though any likely detrimental impact on historic buildings or groupings will need special consideration to avoid insensitive development), and*

- *Comprehensive mitigation measures, for example including landscaping and open space that incorporates only native species (where possible contributing to BAP targets and the provision of Green Infrastructure), and noise reduction (though landscaping in certain contexts can be damaging to historic features, deposits, landscape or character so will require careful consideration)”*

1.17 Central Bedfordshire already has a Design Guide that sets out the key principles and standards to ensure all new development are of the highest quality. Adopted on 18 March 2014 as technical guidance for Development Management purposes, we fully support the content of the CBC Design Guide, however the Silsoe Design Statement specifies key design points which are specific to Silsoe and its environment and setting.

1.16 It outlines design principles based on the identification and analysis of the distinctive local character of the village, it’s setting within the wider landscape, the existing shape of the settlement and the nature and character of the buildings themselves. It is meant to provide guidance for development within Silsoe to ensure that they are sympathetic to and in harmony with the setting and enhances the existing character of the village.

New development at southern end of Silsoe could be considered visible and out of context with the rest of the village and surrounding countryside. Chiltern AONB in distance **Credit - RO'D**



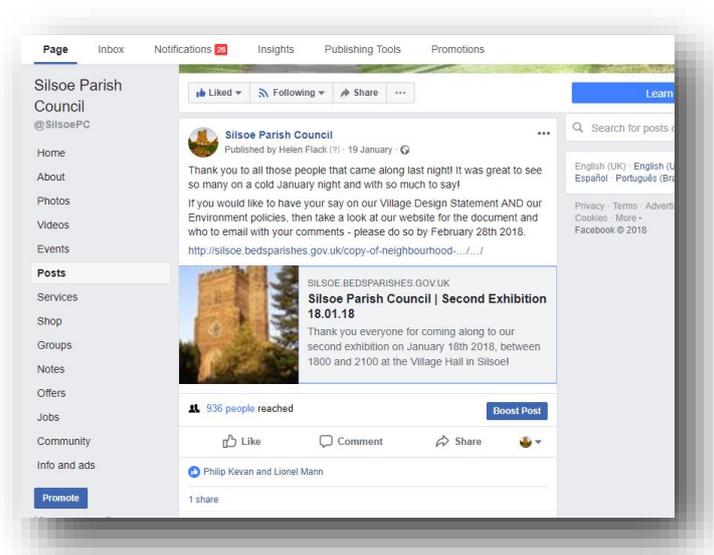
Silsoe – view of the new development on the Cranfield site from north west to south east towards the Chilterns AONB– Credit - RO'D

2 Consultation

2.01 This updated version of the Silsoe Village Design Statement – originally created in 2008 - was revised from views by our local community, with the help of the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.

2.02 Between 1st May 2017 and 2nd June 2017 an Initial Survey took place which went out to all Silsoe residents. With over 300 responses, Attractiveness of the village (84.3%) and local area (48.9%) was the key motivator to move to Silsoe.

2.03 The first iteration of the Village Design Statement was subject to open consultation at an exhibition at the Village Hall on Thursday January 18th 2018, open to villagers, businesses and interested parties alike.



2.04 It was widely publicised in the Silsoe News and Silsoe Parish Council Facebook Page and website, open for comments and suggestions until 28th February 2018.

2.05 Meanwhile, the Silsoe Parish Council was given the opportunity to read and make comments on the Village Design Statement, before ratifying it at the Parish Council meeting on 21st February 2018

2.06 With the full set of guidelines on display and comments gathered to gain agreement, final opportunity to comment remained online until 28th February 2018, after which it was adopted by Silsoe Parish Council and the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.

2.07 This latest version has been updated, based upon comments from the Regulation 14 Consultation.

3 Context - The Growth of Silsoe

In addition to the History of Silsoe in the SNP – 2.01-2.20 -

3.01 The Parish lies predominantly on gault clay with lower greensand to the north. The River Flit forms the northern boundary of the parish.

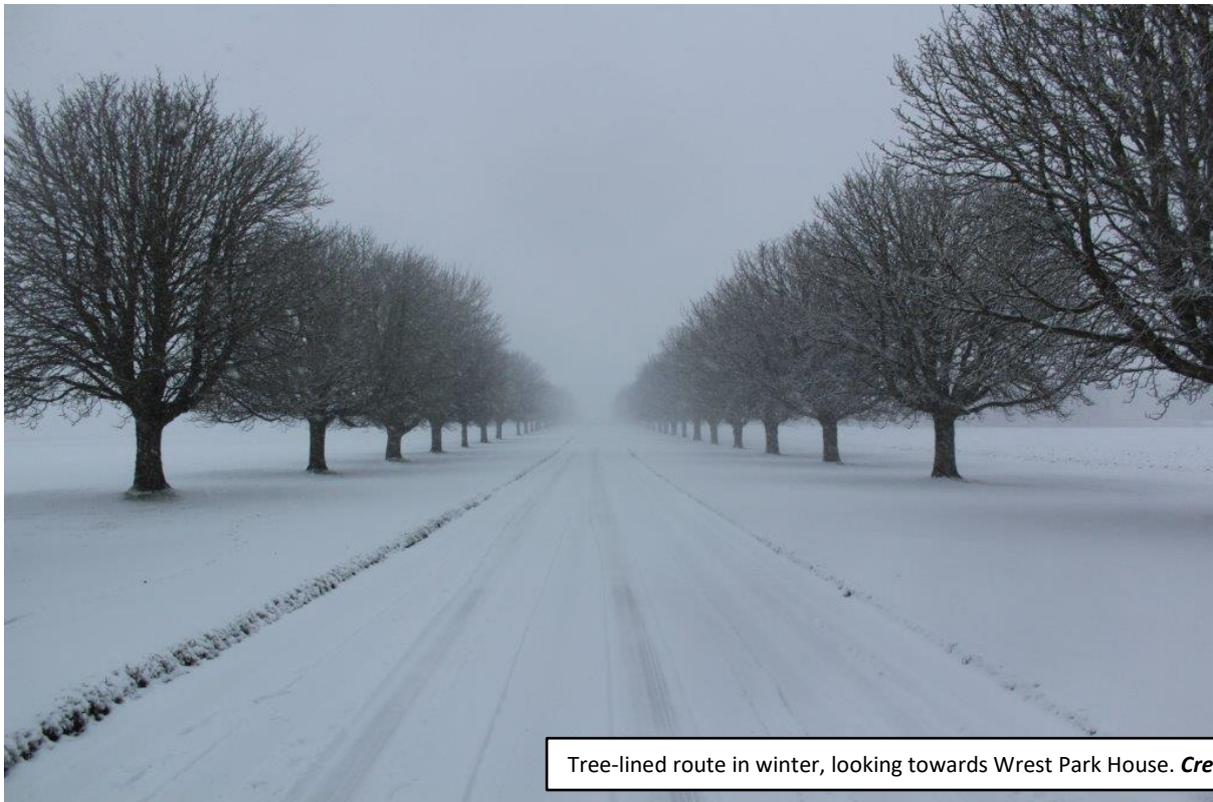
3.02 The character and development of Silsoe is closely associated with the main road from London to Bedford that originally ran through the centre of the village, attributing to its linear shape. The Bedford to London road originally passing through the village had a significant influence on its development as travel and trade increased during the late Medieval period. The village had several inns serving drovers and travellers on the busy road but only the Star and Garter Public House still remains.

3.03 In 1981 the road was diverted through Wrest Park to bypass the village, divorcing some of the western parkland and the Silsoe lodges from their historic context. It now runs through Wrest Park, set in a cutting to minimise its visual and noise effect on the house and its setting and the Lodges and western parkland remain registered to keep this heritage setting intact.



Lodge Houses that mark the entrance to Wrest Park, viewed from east to west, with the village beyond and the A6 behind. *Credit - HF*

3.04 Wrest Park dominates the landscape to the east of Silsoe. Park Avenue leads into Wrest Park with an impressive tree lined route to Wrest Park House at its end.



Tree-lined route in winter, looking towards Wrest Park House. **Credit - DK**

3.05 Wrest Park Estate was also closely association with the village’s development. From the 13th Century until 1917 it was home to the de Grey family, who constructed a church, public buildings and some houses and cottages in the village.

3.06 Some of the most notable architects and designers of the 18th century were employed at Wrest. These included Giacomo Leoni (credited with the design of Diana’s Temple, and a series of arches for the parterre), Hawksmoor (obelisk, archway and possibly the early Bowling Green House), Thomas Archer (pavilions), Batty Langley (Bowling Green House, serpentine paths), James Gibbs (designs for summerhouses and shelters), and William Kent (obelisk). It has also been suggested that Lord Burlington was involved in a design for the Bowling Green House.

3.07 The site was recorded in detail by Peter Tillemans (c1720-30), Edward Lawrence (1719), and John Rocque (1735 and 1737).



Fountain & Archer Pavilion Wrest Park **Credit - DK**



3.08 As Wrest Park expanded from its medieval core it became a substantial house requiring servants, gardeners, stable hands, bakers and blacksmiths, who lived nearby in thatched and terrace cottages, some of which still exist in the village

3.09 Around 1917 the contents of the House and some of the garden monuments were sold. Considerable felling was carried out, including specimen plantings and many of the mature trees in the park. Sun Insurance purchased the House and about 260 acres in 1939 for use as their wartime headquarters, and in 1946 the estate was sold to the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, which leased it to the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering (later the Silsoe Research Institute and then part of the Biotechnology and Biological Research Council).

3.10 The upkeep and maintenance of the garden buildings remained the responsibility of the Ministry, a responsibility subsequently inherited by the Department of the Environment and (from 1986) English Heritage.

3.11 The parkland beyond the garden core was not acquired by the Government and has been absorbed into the modern agricultural landscape encircling the historic garden. Many of the garden buildings and items of statuary have been conserved and repaired. However, the approach to the gardens has been rather ad hoc, characterised by basic maintenance and the occasional introduction of new features, such as the Berceaux Walk and some non-historical planting, such as in the Italian Garden.

3.12 No explicit statement of philosophy for the conservation or restoration of the gardens appeared until 1983, when the first in a series of historical surveys and management plans was commissioned. Following Land Use Consultants' Masterplan for Restoration and Management of 1993, work was carried out with the aim of returning the site to an eighteenth century layout and appearance. English Heritage acquired the House, eastern service buildings, gardens and Old Park in 2006 and is implementing large scale restoration and improvement plans so considerable changes are expected over the next 20 years.

3.13 The narrow High Street where the older buildings are centred is dominated by the sandstone church of St James, a beautiful landmark at the heart of the village. It is an important skyline feature seen on the approach into the village from the A6.



St James' Church, seen in the distance from the southern end of the High Street, Silsoe *Credit HF*

3.14 At St James' Church most of the stained glass windows represent families of Wrest House and the altar rails were made from 17th century oak taken from Wrest House's original chapel showing the close connection between the village and the estate.

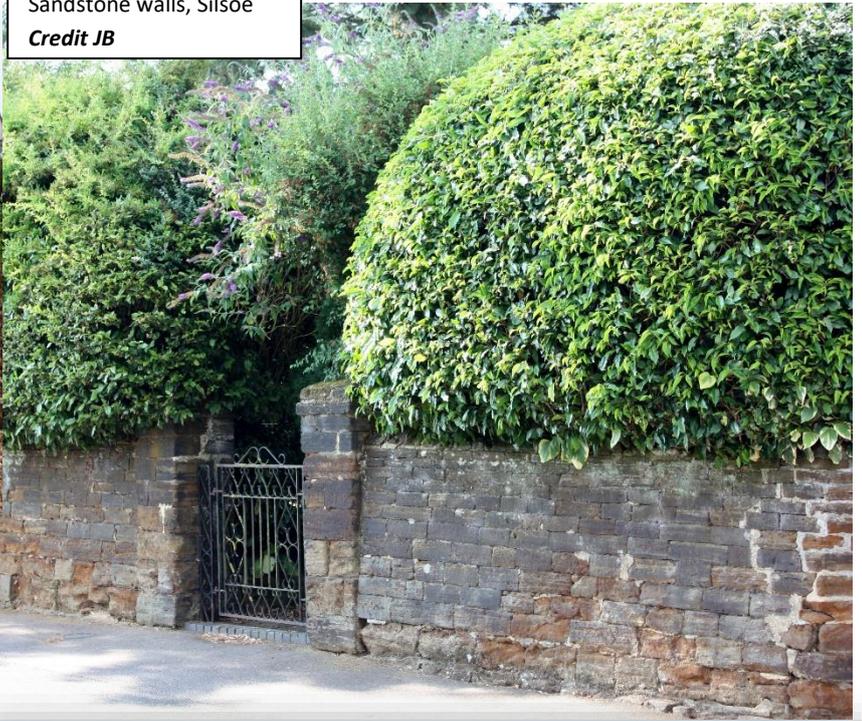
3.15 The local sandstone, used in walls and buildings throughout the village make a significant contribution to the appearance of the village and is an important characteristic feature. At the south end of the High Street the sandstone walls increase in height as the road rises towards the Almshouses, which contrasts with the more informal sandstone walls on Church Road.



St James' Church, Silsoe
Credit JB



Sandstone walls, Silsoe
Credit JB



Rebuilt sandstone wall on High Street, Silsoe
Credit HF



Sandstone walls on Church Road, Silsoe
Credit HF



Sandstone walls on High Street, Silsoe
Credit JB

3.16 All the walls give a sense of enclosure. It is important that the sandstone features of Silsoe are preserved restored appropriately and in a timely manner.

3.17 The older buildings in Silsoe are generally low, timber framed and rendered properties with slate or tile roofs. There are also a few thatched cottages



Cottages, High Street, Silsoe
Credit JB



Thatched cottages, West End Road, Silsoe *Credit HF*



Cottages, West End Road, Silsoe *Credit HF*



Cottage, Church Road, Silsoe *Credit JB*

3.18 The southern approach to the village is marked by modern development yet are set back from the road side and development has been – in the main – in keeping with the village history. The Miller development in particular and that on the corner of West End Road is a good example of locally distinctive design which should be encouraged as a template for future development.

3.19 Therefore, our Village Design Statement has been guided by the points made in our Introduction.



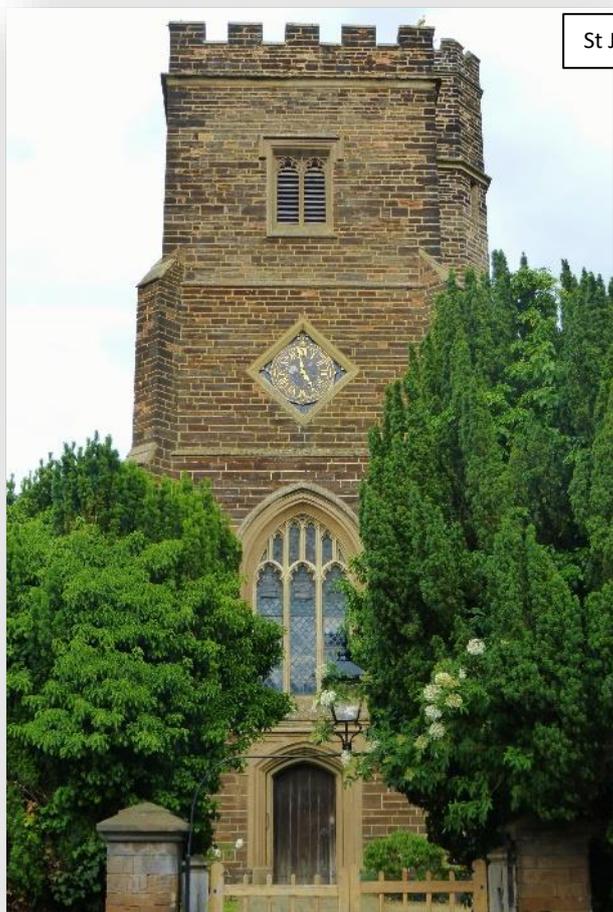
Village Green from Cranfield Road, Silsoe *Credit HF*

4 Landscape Strategy

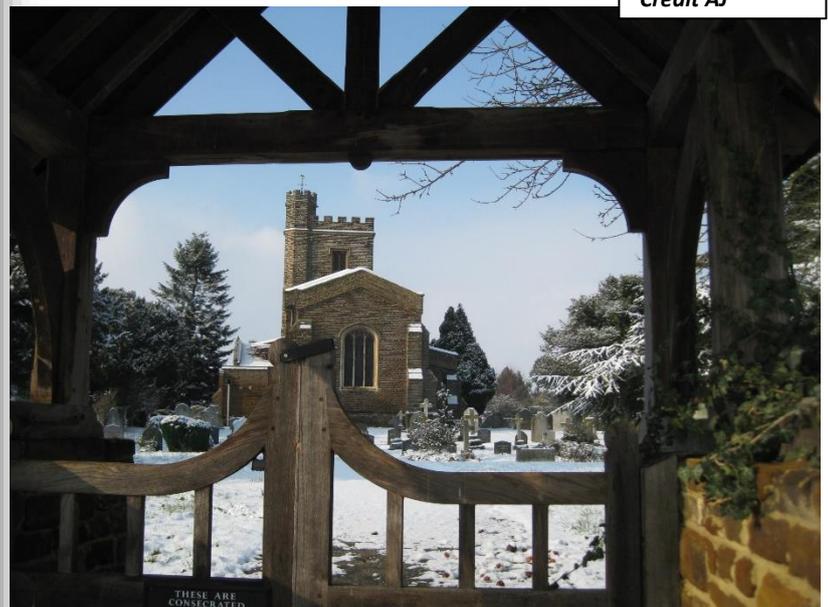
Landscape and Geographical Context and Character

4.01 Silsoe is designated by Central Bedfordshire Council as a large Bedfordshire village and is located half way between Bedford and Luton.

4.02 As mentioned in 3.01, part of the Greensand ridge lies to the north while to the south is a gault clay valley). A ridge of hardened deposits of Greensand, that take the form of sandstone rock, means the village occupies a slightly elevated position. The sandstone has been used in the past for building construction in and around the village; a fine example is St James Church in the centre of the village (see pictures).



St James' Church *Credit JB*



St James' Church
Credit AJ

4.03 All the sandstone excavated from the Greensand Ridge has its own unique characteristics. The distinctive red brown stone was historically the principle building material in the area and was most prevalent in medieval times. In later years, sandstone went out of fashion in favour of cheaper brick. Sandstone is also important for wildlife, because it provides a habitat for solitary mining bees and supports specific varieties of lichen.

4.04 Sadly, many of the sandstone structures, so indicative of the Greensand Ridge, have been lost through re-development or neglect. 'The sandstone architecture and geology of Silsoe, adds to the villages sense of character and place. It is therefore vital that we protect and nurture it' (Greensand

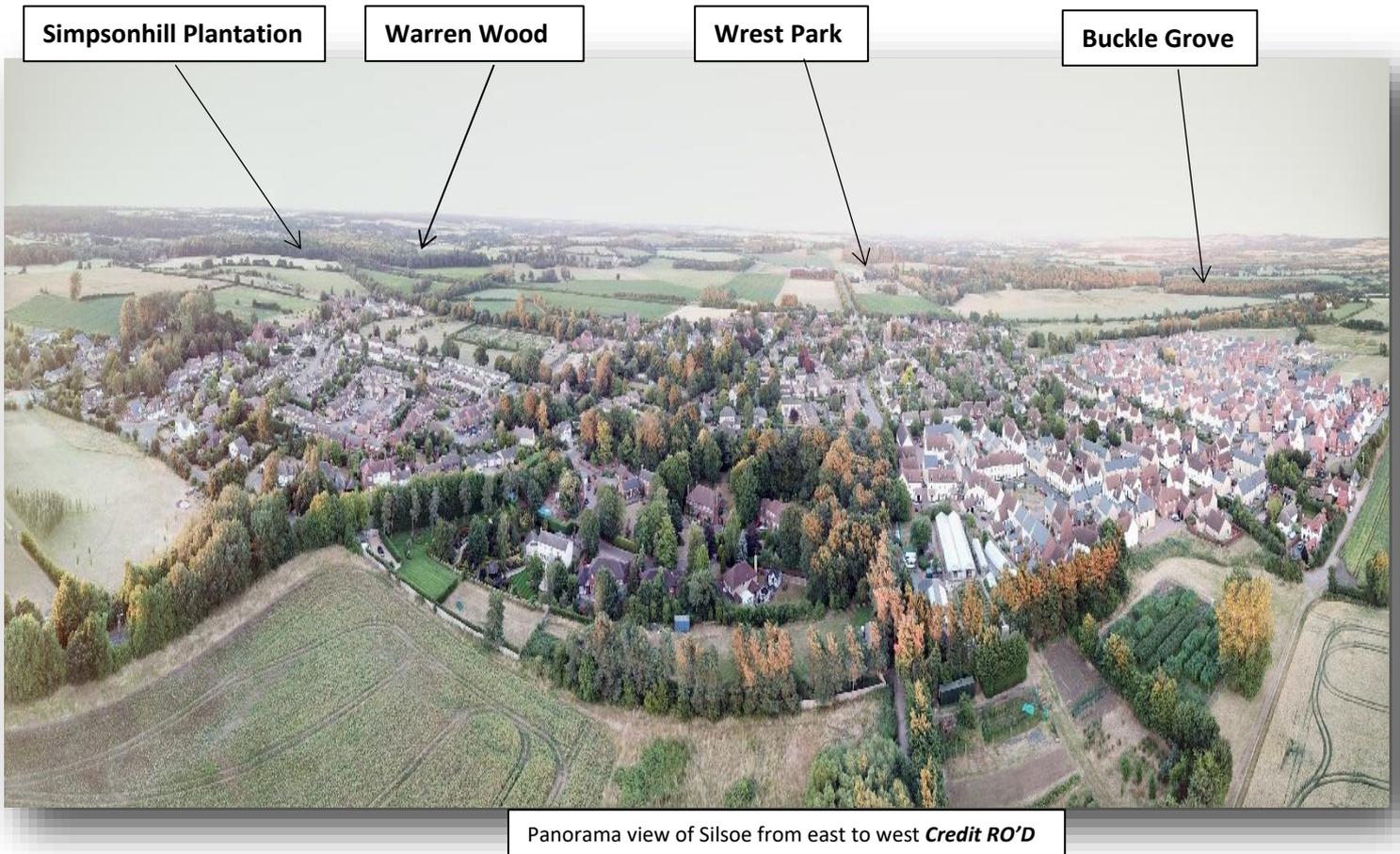
Trust 2008). Guidance on the maintenance and repair of sandstone walls is available from the Greensand Trust.



4.05 The natural landscape surrounding Silsoe is undulating and includes a mixture of open farmland and woodland. Farmland is prominent, surrounding the village on all sides. The various wooded areas act as a backdrop. Thrift Wood dominates the western edge of the parish (see picture).



4.06 Simpsonhill Plantation and Warren Wood frame the village when approaching from the north. The ancient Buckle Grove woodland and the 90 acres of landscaped gardens attached to Wrest Park provide a heavily wooded aspect to the southeast of the village. This mix gives the village of Silsoe a rural appearance and feel.



4.07 Silsoe benefits from a clear distinction between the built environment on the one hand and the surrounding farmland and wider countryside on the other. The existing relationship between the village and the surrounding countryside provides a number of important views and open land to give Silsoe its distinctive rural setting (see picture).



View of Silsoe from Thrift Wood *Credit JB*

4.08 A key feature of Silsoe is the prominence of St James Church rising above the village. The views of the Church are a distinctive feature of the village and are especially important as you approach Silsoe from both the north and south. The clarity of these views are enhanced by the open land either side of Barton Road as you approach from the south. From the north the view towards the village is across areas of farmland to the east and west of the High Street. Both areas of open space are important in maintaining the attractive rural setting of Silsoe.

Aerial view of the Church in Silsoe *Credit RO'D*



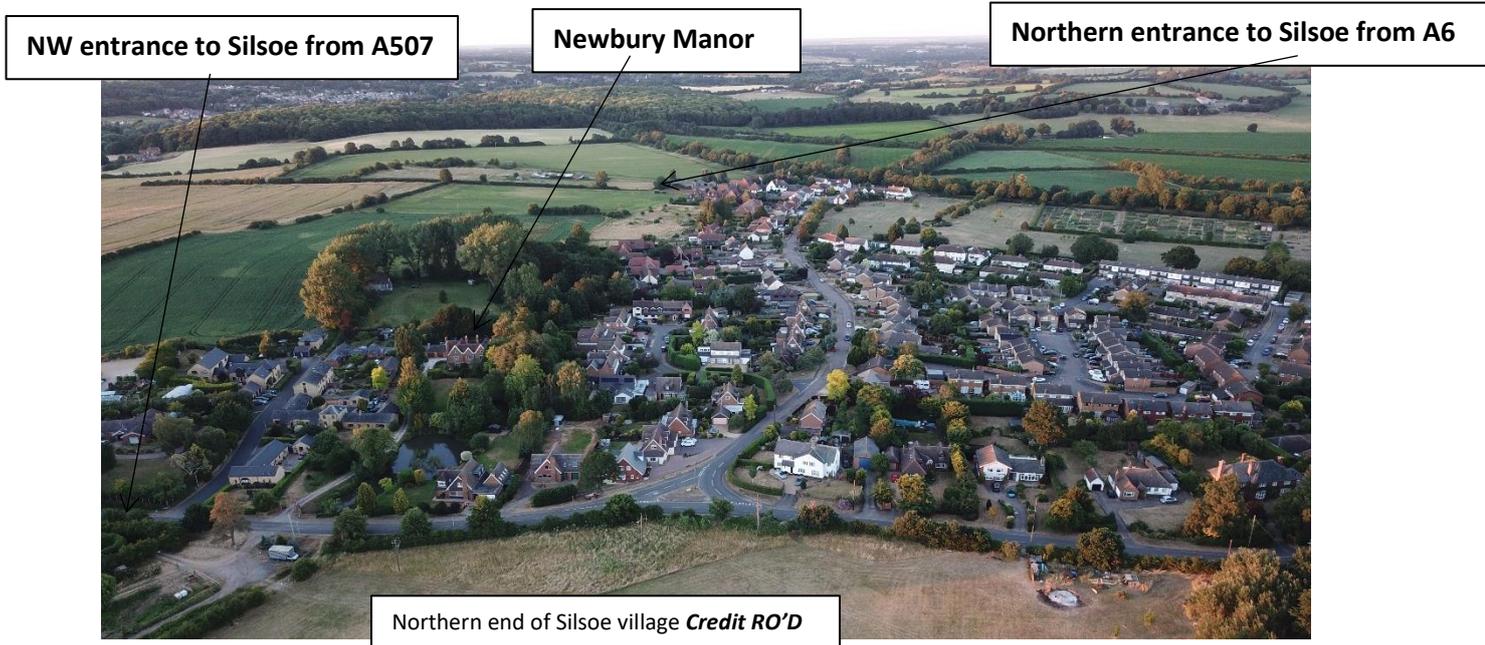
Open fields alongside Silsoe Road *Credit JB*



4.09 The surrounding countryside plays an important role in seating Silsoe in a rural setting. This is evident when approaching the village from the west along Silsoe Road and the northwest from the A507. Silsoe Road is enclosed by a thick hedge and mature trees with agricultural and paddock land extending on either side until the edge of the village starts on Ampthill Road. The village is not visible when approached from the A507 until coming to Newbury Manor and the buildings on Newbury Lane come into view.

4.10 The tree-lined avenue at the northern end of the High Street creates an impressive and important vista as you enter the village from the north.

4.11 The view from Church Road down Park Avenue towards Wrest Park to the east is important, on the grounds that the tree lined avenue links the village with the wider countryside and to its historical past.



Planting

4.12 Trees and shrubs play an important role in Silsoe – for example, the impressive tree lined Park Avenue to Wrest Park House at its end.



Tree-lined avenue towards
Wrest Park from Village
Centre *Credit RO'D*

4.13 Many trees have tree protection orders and we also have Traditional Orchards – to be found at Mander Farm Orchard and in the cemetery by The Beeches.

The Beeches Orchard *Credit HF*



Mander Farm Orchard *Credit JB*

4.14 Planting plays a big role in “framing” views and buildings, establishing boundaries and protecting and enhancing wildlife habitats. Therefore, the protection of existing trees, hedges and naturalised places must be given priority in any design of new development.

4.15 Being surrounded by a mixture of hedgerows, open fields and woodlands, Silsoe is in a very rural setting, so any new development would need to reflect this setting and create a “soft edge” with development around the existing established trees and hedgerows.



Southern end of Silsoe village looking towards Luton **Credit HF**



Southern end of Silsoe village looking into the centre of the village **Credit HF**



Southern end of Silsoe village looking even closer towards the centre of the village **Credit HF**

Wrest Park

4.16 The Wrest Park Estate occupies a site of approximately 500 acres to the east of Silsoe. The estate, now run by English Heritage, contains 90 acres of formal grounds, a mansion house and surrounding arable farmland (previously parkland). The mansion is a Grade I Listed Building and the associated landscape is a Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden (see map below).



Wrest Park House – *Credit DK*

Extent of Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in Silsoe Parish – please see SNP for full map - *Credit – CBC 2016*

4.17 As detailed 3.04 – 3.12, the history and impact on Silsoe needs to be taken into consideration as the influence of the Wrest Park Estate on Silsoe’s development has been significant, the most striking example being St James’ Church in the heart of the village. The Historic Park and Gardens of Wrest Park, with its tree lined main drive, the surrounding open farmland/parkland estate and the wooded formal gardens, have created an important landscape legacy. Retaining the integrity of this legacy is significant, especially in relation to the integration of the village and Wrest Park within the existing natural landscape setting.

4.18 A historic sight line (important view) that links the east and west edges of the Parish together runs directly through Wrest Park Estate. The sight line runs between the Cain Hill monument (from the terrace of the old house it was claimed you could see the spires of Cambridge) and the southern end of Thrift Wood. The strong east-west axis was strengthened further by the erection of the obelisk on the west edge of Wrest Park. Future plans hope to see the obelisk re-instated and has led to one of the new roads in Silsoe being called Obelisk Way, where the houses along it should get sight of the new Obelisk.



Looking towards Wrest Park House with Cain Hill monument in the distance *Credit RO'D*

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY - GUIDELINES

When proposals are brought forward for development in Silsoe, not only would we expect the policies made clear in the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan to be upheld, we would also expect developers to demonstrate how they would follow our Landscape Strategy guidelines, as laid out here.

Proposals should reflect the strong sense of place and setting in the natural environment in Silsoe, as mentioned in our Introduction. The picture below shows Silsoe from west to east, where the new developments on the Cranfield sites – to the right of the picture – can be seen to be at odds from the rest of the village where more greenery can be seen – this will not be supported in the future.



Important Views and Open Land

4.1.01 The landscape and ecological setting should be enhanced as a habitat for wildlife through native and indigenous planting of local provenance

4.1.02 Any proposed development should safeguard important views and open land – specifically identified in the Green Infrastructure Plan 2018 and in the SNP, for example the setting of the Chilterns AONB.

4.1.03 Because of the role they play in giving Silsoe shape and form, features would also include –

- the church at the centre of the village
- significant trees – for example, the horse chestnuts and willows on the Village Green, the horse chestnuts along Wrest Park Avenue, the beeches in The Beeches and along the High Street to the north of the village
- the open fields to the west and east of the village
- the obelisk to the south and
- the tree-lined avenue to the north of the village.

4.1.04 New buildings, extensions, and group of buildings as well as changes to the field pattern should seek to harmonise and be in scale with the existing landform to avoid adverse impact on the landscape.

4.1.05 Buildings should be sited so that they sit below the ridgeline that runs within the Parish boundary directly to the north of the village.

Planting

4.2.01 The ultimate aim is to create a landscape setting that protects and reinforces the pattern of existing hedges, shrubs, trees and naturalised places to be found in Silsoe, therefore, the protection and reflection of these must be given highlighted in any design of new development.

4.2.02 New residential development will have a planting schedule that will demonstrate an attractive and practical environment for residents to enjoy, which will include a mixture of mature and young trees to reflect the species and ages of those already planted in and around Silsoe

4.2.03 Tree planting should focus on mature trees or trees that establish and mass quickly and provide effective screening such as Oak, Ash, Birch, Whitebeam, Robina, Wild Cherry or hardy Acers.

4.2.04 Hedge planting should be mixed and of native varieties, rather than a focus on conifer or laurel, to give a better variety of flower and colour. Examples would include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Elder, Goat Willow.

4.2.05 A maintenance schedule of new planting should accompany plans for new developments to ensure planting reaches a point where it is fully established, with replacement as necessary.

4.2.06 Traditional Orchards will be encouraged and protected as another key priority in Silsoe. Examples can be found at The Beeches and Mander Farm Orchard off Cranfield Road.

Wrest Park

4.3.01 Great weight is given to conserving the areas of land that are Registered Parks and Gardens, the setting of heritage and non-designated heritage assets, as well as preserving the Conservation areas and significance of the historic Wrest Park. Please see our policies on this in the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan and in our Green Infrastructure Plan.

5 Building Strategy

In addition to the points made in the SNP, as well as that made in the CBC Design Guide, and our Introduction, we would also add that while new housing and commercial developments should respond to local character and history, innovative and high quality contemporary design will also be encouraged. Therefore -

5.01 Proposals will be supported if they are seen to be of interesting and innovative, modern and contemporary design that, owing to the use of locally distinctive materials and appropriate scale, will make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Silsoe, allowing the village to evolve more naturally, and avoid inappropriate or poor quality pastiche designs that are neither vernacular nor historic.

Property Mix and Building Style

5.02 As mentioned in 3.17, Silsoe's built environment is defined by an eclectic growth and diverse mix of building styles and materials that includes –

- Vernacular cottages and houses – including Thatched cottages, Farmhouses and Almshouses
- Georgian
- Converted barns
- New build projects with Design Awards

5.03 No single property type dominates and this variety is important in defining the local character of the village. The older properties, built pre-1920, tend to display the distinctive characteristics associated with the vernacular style of the village. Post-1920 developments have tended to illustrate a higher level of uniformity. However, recent new developments have tried to reflect local distinctive characteristics.

Pre-1920 Developments

5.04 One of the oldest buildings in the village is Newbury Manor, a Grade II listed building set within moated grounds which are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The 3 storey building, which is set back from the road, has a distinctive 3 gable frontage with imposing but intricate chimneys. Local red bricks have been used in a Flemish bond and the roof is covered in red clay tiles.



Newbury Manor *Credit AJ*

Development pre c.1800

5.05 Properties and development during this period typify Silsoe's vernacular style with a mix of detached; semi detached and short terraced developments. Many of the developments are concentrated on or near the High Street reflecting how the village originally developed.



High Street, Silsoe *Credit AJ*



5.06 The buildings are characterised by the use of traditional, local and natural building materials, including local sandstone, timber frames, buff bricks, natural slates and clay roof tiles. The properties are predominately 1½ and 2 storey and are finished in pale coloured renders or painted timber. Roofs, windows, chimneys and porches all achieve a high level of detail that adds interest to the individual properties and the street scene.

West End Road, Silsoe *Credit HF*



Estate Cottages

5.07 Silsoe has some fine examples of Estate Cottages. Park View is the most outstanding and stands in the prominent location at the end of Church Road. There is a high level of architectural detail, including intricate and decorative chimneystacks, mouldings above the windows, dentil courses and ornate ridge tiles .



Park View, Church Road, Silsoe *Credit HF*

Georgian and Victorian Buildings

5.08 There are only a small number of Georgian and Victorian buildings to be found in Silsoe. Nevertheless, both styles are important in creating variation and interest in the street scene, most notably on the High Street.



High Street, Silsoe *Credit HF*



High Street, Silsoe *Credit AJ*

5.09 The Georgian buildings have a limited amount of architectural detail; instead, interest is created through the scale and form of the building. In contrast, the few Victorian properties in the village have a high level of detail with decorative porches, intricate brickwork and dormer windows.

Post 1920 Developments

5.10 Silsoe experienced limited development in the early and mid 20th century. During the 1930's and inter war period, small scale development took place which was concentrated predominately in and around Newbury Lane. The buildings took the form of detached, semi-detached and small terrace developments and were built in a simple style using plain red brick with concrete roof tiles.

5.11 During the mid 20th Century, development took the form of small estates, with Bedford Avenue and parts of The Grove being good examples. The property mix took the form of semi-detached, small terraces and detached properties set in their own grounds. The buildings are of a simple style, frontages are either of brickwork or white painted render, small canopies frame doorways, roofs are shallow in their pitch and covered in concrete tiles with simple chimneystacks.



Bedford Avenue, Silsoe
Credit JB

Late 20th Century

5.12 Silsoe experienced a period of rapid expansion and an increase in development post 1960. Detached buildings set in individual plots with small open front gardens characterise the properties built during this period. In contrast to previous periods of development, there was little variation.

5.13 The architecture of the post-1960 developments conflicted with earlier developments as the new styles employed did not reflect the distinctive local characteristics and building traditions used previously. This change in architectural style clashed with Silsoe's existing built environment. The properties and each estate in turn, tended to be uniform in their appearance; the brickwork and roofs were standard in both form and look; and the developments were laid out in cul-de-sacs and did not relate to the existing street pattern of the village.

West End Road, Yew Tree
Close, Silsoe **Credit HF**



5.14 In the late 20th century and early 21st century, a number of new developments and infill properties have reflected the distinctive local characteristics and features that define the vernacular style.

5.15 The Beeches development, cottages at the end of West End Road and a number of properties on the High Street are all good examples. A Green Apple Award for conservation projects was awarded to the four cottages at the end of West End Road, reflecting the level of detail in the design, materials and level of build quality.



Award-winning cottages, West End Road, Silsoe **Credit JB**

5.16 Building strategy should seek to draw inspiration from these buildings and demonstrate provenance of where the design has come from by specifying building types in the village. Examples are provided at the end of this section.



Good example of 21st century extension of Victorian cottage, High Street, Silsoe **Credit JB**

Building Heights and Scale

5.17 Existing development within Silsoe is predominately 1½ or 2 stories in height. There are only three 3 storey buildings found in the village: Silsoe House; Newbury Manor; and the Red House. All three of these developments are set in their own substantial plots appropriate to and in scale with each property.

5.18 Contained within Silsoe's conservation area are limited 2½ storey buildings, one example being 20 High Street. These buildings punctuate the existing street scene and add interest to the eclectic mix of distinctive properties found within the historic core.

5.19 There is a great variation in the scale of buildings found within Silsoe. The buildings found in the conservation area, although mostly 2 storeys, are of various sizes. This diversity in scale is an important characteristic and a distinctive feature of the village. In contrast to the historic character and appearance of the village the developments of the mid to late 20th century replaced variation in building heights and scale with uniform developments that did not reflect or enhance the village



character.

5.20 More recent developments, most notably The Beeches, have been sympathetic in their approach and included a variation of building heights and scales. The quality of the design was recognised in 2000 by the Bedfordshire Design Awards. It was also 'Highly Commended' in the Mid Beds District Council Civic Design Awards.

Roofs and Chimneys

5.21 A range of roof materials can be found throughout the village; from concrete pan tiles through to a couple of older properties being thatched. Roofs in the vernacular style are generally clay tile or slate.

5.22 The use of flat roofs in developments is limited and is not a characteristic of the built environment of Silsoe. Within the historic centre of the village, the variation in roof types adds a dynamic vertical dimension to the street scene.

5.23 The vertical plane is strengthened further with an array of chimneystacks from the substantial to the decorative. Many of the chimneystacks complement and define the properties in the historic centre of the village through a high level of design and intricate detailing visible in the brickwork.

5.24 Distinctive roof features include:

- A mix of hips and detailing on gable ends;
- A variation in ridge heights;
- The use of dormer windows;
- A variety of pitch and distinct changes in roof geometry;
- A use of ornamental ridge tiles; and
- A plethora of chimney stacks and pots;



Walls, Windows and Doors

5.25 The historic core of the village is dominated by walls painted white or cream, either directly over brick or after render and/or pebbledash has been applied. On some properties a roughcast render has been used on the first floor with painted brick below. Detail is added in the form of a projecting string course of brick or tile and a black painted buttress. Exposed timber framework and painted render is also a feature of the older buildings.

Holly Walk, Silsoe *Credit JB*



High Street, Silsoe *Credit JB*

5.26 A number of distinctive properties in the village have been built using patterned brickwork and traditional bonds. The most striking examples are the Estate Houses built from the local buff coloured bricks. The more modern cul-de-sac developments have tended to be built using mass-produced bricks in simple stretcher bond. The level of detail and the colour palette of the materials used are in stark contrast to the appearance of the older properties.

5.27 Many properties in the conservation area were built with, and still retain, the casement or sash windows with small proportioned panes of glass. Detail is added by setting the windows back in reveals to add strong shadow lines and in the intricate design of the windows, examples are the Bedford Estate Windows. Although the traditional style window has been used in some modern properties, many developments have used large windows to accommodate bigger panes of glass.

5.28 Porches are commonly used to frame front doors, but they are usually small in scale and tend to either have a pitched tile roof or a simple cantilevered canopy. More ornate examples can be found but these are not a true representation of the vernacular style.

Example of porch and windows *Credit JB*



Road Layout and Street Scene

5.29 Silsoe, due to its location, developed as a linear settlement along what is now the High Street. Subsequent development (known as back-edge-of-footpath development) was undertaken on a small scale.

5.30 The combination of different development patterns created a grid system of narrow roadways running to the west of the High Street, including Church Road, Vicarage Road and parts of Ampthill Road and West End Road. Many of these properties used a combination of low walls and hedgerows to make a clear distinction between public and private space.

5.31 The level of boundary treatment tends to be the same regardless of the size of the front garden, with many of the early buildings using the local sandstone to form their walls.

5.32 The road layout and level of boundary treatment found in the historic centre of the village provides a great sense of place and enclosure. The developments of the mid and late 20th century were predominately estates, based around cul-de-sacs, with small-unenclosed front gardens that were fragmented in their appearance and lacked the enclosure of early developments.



Ampthill Road and Fir Tree Road, showing plot size – Credit RO'D

Pavements, Footpaths and Rights of Way

5.33 The village has a network of predominately narrow, yet well-proportioned pavements, in relation to the overall scale of the street scene. Originally the pavements had a granular buff finish to define the pedestrian areas. Over time, this detail has been lost and pavements now have a standard tar macadam finish.

5.34 The Parish enjoys a good network of footpaths and bridleways.

Street Furniture

5.35 Street furniture is taken to include benches, bollards, road signs and lighting. Presently throughout the village there is an ad hoc mix of the old and the modern, many of which do not reflect the rural character and setting of the village.

5.36 To add to the sense of place, a consistent approach to street furniture will be encouraged. As road safety has become important the level and number of signs has increased. In places, especially within the conservation area, the level of signage can detract from the character and rural appearance of the village.

5.37 The style and appearance of the new street lamps and bollards have been chosen to mirror and match where possible existing street furniture that reflects the character of the conservation area.

5.38 The shape of the Windsor Street Lamp has tried to mirror the light hanging in front of the church. The style of the bollard echoes one found in the conservation area.

DW Windsor Street Lamp



DW Windsor Ely lamp with wide brim, teardrop glass and standard swan neck



DW Windsor Trafalgar bollard



Existing cut off capped sewer vent



Commercial Facilities

5.39 There is a range of commercial facilities found within the Parish. These include a Shop/Newsagent, Garage on the A6, Public House - The Star & Garter, Estate Agents, Hairdressers, Farms, Offices at Wrest Park Enterprise, Wrest Park – English Heritage Property.



Aspects Hairdressers & Village Homes Estate Agents, Newbury Lane – Credit - JB



Route 66 Barbers & Silsoe Newsagency, Newbury Lane – Credit - JB

5.40 Offices based in Wrest Park are to be found in the old estate buildings, as well as commercial development on the Wrest Park Estate.

5.41 The office developments to the north of the mansion house in Wrest Park are insensitive in terms of their scale, design and materials used. Future development in and around the Wrest Park Estate will only be supported if it is sympathetic to its historic surroundings and setting.

5.42 Many of the buildings that housed small commercial activities and services from earlier centuries have predominately been converted into private houses or are being currently developed into housing. Examples include the Old Diary, The Old Post Office. The Post Office on Newbury Lane, Silsoe Lower School, The George Inn, Hotel and Restaurant on the High Street, The Lord Nelson public house and the beer house on West End Road.

Community Facilities

5.43 Silsoe is home to some community facilities that serve the local community, as well as a wider catchment area. These include, the Village Hall, Horticultural Centre, school and community sports centre.

5.44 Due to the recent growth of Silsoe – as documented in the Neighbourhood Plan, Silsoe has a new Lower School, as well as been provided with the Sports centre and sports pitches at the southern end of the village.



L-R – Silsoe Village Hall,
Community Sports
Centre, Lower School,
Horticultural Centre –
Credit JB



BUILDING STRATEGY - GUIDELINES

When proposals are brought forward for development in Silsoe, not only would we expect the policies made clear in the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan to be upheld, we would also expect developers to demonstrate how they would follow our Building Strategy guidelines, as laid out here.

Property Mix and Building Style

5.1.01 Built form should focus on the more historic, vernacular cottages and houses.

5.1.02 Uniformity of design and shape should be avoided, with a focus on individuality to reflect the ad hoc growth of this historic village. Any significant development should contain the full range of property types in an appropriate mix, including smaller properties for first time buyers and for people wishing to downsize in the village.

5.1.03 Cul-de-sac developments should be avoided to maintain existing property layouts and vistas.

5.1.04 New dwellings or groups of dwellings, of an infill nature, should be of an appropriate size to their plot and reflect the character of the surrounding area.

5.1.05 A visual separation between properties, where this contributes to the character of the locality, should be maintained.

5.1.06 New development should contribute to and respect the context of the existing built environment.

5.1.07 Extensions, modernisation and maintenance should retain and/or match existing features, especially where local sandstone has been used. Modern or original materials should be used that are sympathetic to the surrounding environment.



The Beeches Credit - JB

Building Heights and Style

5.2.01 New dwellings should be of a size, height and scale appropriate to their plot and the character of the surrounding area.

5.2.02 New development should not adversely affect or significantly alter the context of the existing built environment.

5.2.03 The size, height and positioning of developments on their plots should take into account the visual impact on neighbouring buildings with no “standing out” either by features not in keeping with surrounding properties, nor building height, scale nor roof line.

5.2.04 Any proposed large-scale developments should ensure there is a mix of building heights and scales that reflects the character and vernacular style of the existing built environment. Three storey buildings would be inappropriate.

Walls, Windows and Doors

5.3.01 The use of painted walls and/or rendered and then painted walls in new developments should complement the colours already used in the village.

5.3.02 New development should use wall materials that are sympathetic and match commonly used existing materials, such as buff coloured bricks.

5.3.03 The use of artificial features should be avoided, such as mock Tudor.

5.3.04 The use of traditional bonds and brickwork that contains a high level of detail is to be encouraged in new developments. Large expanses of stretcher bond in single brick colours should be avoided.

5.3.05 The use of windows with smaller panes that reflect the prominent vernacular style in the village are to be encouraged.

5.3.06 Porches and canopies, if provided, should reflect the scale of existing designs, the local style and be modest in scale.



Example of good design – West End Road –
Credit JB

Road Layout and Boundary Treatment

5.4.01 Existing sandstone walls should be safeguarded and maintained.

5.4.02 The level and provision of boundary treatment particularly to the front of properties should be a consideration in any new development, especially in the conservation area where the use of hedges and walls that complement the vernacular would be encouraged.

5.4.03 New developments, where practically possible, should reflect historical street patterns.

Pavements, Footpaths and Rights of Way

5.5.01 New and/or replacement pavements should be a gravel bonded resin or similar. Private driveways should use materials sympathetic to the rural village vernacular.

5.5.02 All footpaths and bridleways should be well maintained and kept open, with any necessary signage appropriate to a rural setting.

5.5.03 Where appropriate the provision of new footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways should be encouraged.

5.5.04 Amenity areas should have adequate placement of dog waste and litter bins.

Street Furniture

5.6.01 Consistency in Street furniture is encouraged, using the examples given in this document. The style and appearance of the new street lamps and bollards have been chosen to mirror and match where possible existing street furniture that reflects the character of the conservation area.

Accessibility

5.7.01 The Lifetime Homes Design Statement, first published in November 2011, is to be used as the benchmark for Accessibility, as favoured by Silsoe Parish Council. This Guide describes the design requirements for accessible homes that will meet the differing and changing needs of households as they experience life events.

Commercial Development

5.8.01 New commercial developments should take into account the relevant guidelines set out in this document.

5.8.02 The same level of detail should be given to the design of commercial developments, with attention to roof heights, using traditional materials and colours that define the vernacular style of the built environment, with no encroachment on the conservation areas.

5.8.03 Disabled access should be clearly indicated and in line with government guidelines and submitted as part of planning proposals – as standard.

5.8.04 Litter bins are to be placed around retail areas. Bring banks will also be encouraged in these areas.

5.8.05 Developers to consult with CBC about street cleansing for new retail areas, as well as the waste strategy for refuse and recycling collections eg. storage, capacity and access for the refuse crew/vehicle, and the extent of any additional grounds maintenance to be adopted and maintained by CBC.

Glossary & Abbreviations

Affordable Housing	Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the housing market. Generally provided by housing associations, working in partnership with CBC.
Asset of Community Value	An asset of community value is land or property of importance to a local community which is subject to additional protection from development under the Localism Act 2011. Voluntary and community organisations can nominate an asset to be included on their local authority's register of asset of community value.
Brownfield site	Abandoned, closed or under-used industrial or commercial facilities
CBC	Central Bedfordshire Council, the relevant local authority responsible for all planning matters.
CBC Mid Bedfordshire Local plan 2005 saved policies.	This local plan was the development plan for the Mid- Bedfordshire area (and which covered the Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley area) which was in force before the Local Plan in 2009 but from which there are still “saved policies” which are still in force, but not up to date.
CBCLP	Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan. At the time of the publication of this Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has submitted a new Local Plan.
Conservation Area	An area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.
Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2009	The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2009 which is the development plan for the area within which Silsoe lies, which is still in force at the time that the NP is published.
Development	In planning terminology, development means any new building, any alteration to a building, or change of use of land or building.
Dwelling	A house, flat, or other place of residence
GI Plan	Green Infrastructure Plan – Silsoe has a new updated one (2018) to accompany the SNP
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HE Policies	Historic Environment Policies
Heritage asset	An NPPF definition - a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)
Historic England - HE	Formally English Heritage
Historic environment	An NPPF definition - all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.
Listed Building	A building that has been placed on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest
Local Community Space	Space valued by the local community, both for the environmental and social benefits it brings

Local Green Space	Designating areas as Local Green Space is a way to provide special protection for green areas of particular importance to local communities.
NP	Neighbourhood Plan, brought forward under the Localism Act 2011.
NPSC	Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee. For the Silsoe NP, the Steering Committee comprised a group of Parish Councillors, volunteers and specialists who came together under the umbrella of the Parish Council, to produce the NP.
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework; the Central Government overall planning policy document which includes topic based policies, with which the Neighbourhood Plan has to comply.
Settlement Boundary	Settlement boundaries are an essential tool for the management of development, principally to prevent the encroachment of development into the countryside
Significance (for heritage policy)	An NPPF definition - The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
SLS	Silsoe Lower School
SNP	Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan
SNPSC	Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee
SP	Standard Policies
SPC	Silsoe Parish Council
Strategic Environmental Assessment - SEA	All land use plans likely to have affects upon the environment are required to undergo this process to comply with European Directive 2001/42/EC concerning Strategic Environmental Assessment. A "scoping" report is initially produced followed by a full report which is produced alongside the Plan. The Local Planning Authority can decide that this is not required and can provide the NP with a decision as to why.
Strategic Gap	The space between settlements which protects individual settlements' unique identity
Sustainable Development	The NP must deliver sustainable development. A definition of sustainable development is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
Tree Preservation Order - TPO	A TPO is made by a Local Planning Authority to protect specific trees or a particular area, group or woodland from deliberate damage and destruction. TPOs can prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or otherwise wilful damaging of trees without the permission of the Local Planning Authority.
Vernacular	Is a category of architecture based on local needs, construction materials and reflecting local traditions.
Windfall	Sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.