

HENLOW

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

21 JANUARY 2009



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 up-to-date conservation area character appraisals published by Mid Bedfordshire District Council.

The purpose of the appraisal is to define which features contribute to the special interest, what is significant and what requires preservation. Opportunities for enhancement are also identified in the appraisal.

**Central
Bedfordshire**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Henlow Conservation Area was designated by Bedfordshire County Council in May 1971. This document assesses the setting, character and appearance of the conservation area. It also identifies opportunities for improving the character of the area. The appraisal is, therefore, the basis for the management of Henlow Conservation Area through the planning system.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The special interest that justifies designation of the Henlow Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:

- Compact village in rural surroundings to the west of the River Ivel;
- Historic village recorded in Domesday survey of 1086;
- Linear form with planned service road to the east;
- Surviving evidence of farms within the village on the west side;
- Glimpsed views of countryside to the west through former farmyards;
- Important historic buildings include the 12th century St Mary's Church;
- 18th century lodges to nearby Henlow Grange;
- Views from churchyard over parkland of Henlow Grange;
- Significant houses punctuate a strong townscape, including Mulberry House, Westholt and Manor Farmhouse;
- Expansion of housing in late 19th century including 1-5 Park Lane;
- Interesting features, such as the Henlow Pump House, terracotta date plaques on late 19th century terraces, 'rat-trap' bond brickwork at 70-74 High Street;
- Important specimen trees.

3.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

- 3.1 Henlow lies about 4km (2½ miles) west of the A1 trunk road and about 7 km (4½ miles) south of Biggleswade. The county town of Bedford is some 20km (12 miles) to the north west. The village is orientated along the north-south axis of the A6001 from Biggleswade to Hitchin.
- 3.2 Henlow also lies near the confluence of the Rivers Ivel and Hiz. Underlying the broad valleys of these rivers are Gault clays with pockets of gravels and alluvium. Historically, the clays have been extracted for brick-making and the gravels have been used for road improvements and for building, while the alluvial deposits have provided fertile soils for arable farming.

- 3.3 Following the 18th century enclosures, there was a rationalisation of field patterns into large rectangles to suit the introduction of steam ploughing engines. Recent decades have seen the loss of more hedges to provide the wide open landscapes of a modern mechanised arable economy. This wide and largely flat landscape was also ideal for Henlow Aerodrome to the south east of the village. This was the first station to be opened under the supervision of the RAF which was formed in 1918.



- 3.4 The River Ivel does not directly affect the village as it flows a short distance to the east. However, it does provide the location for Henlow Grange and its domestic parkland setting which gives Henlow a distinctive landscape context to the east. Further north, the river is also associated with a series of lakes resulting from past gravel extraction.

- 3.5 The conservation area includes the linear historic core of the village, which mainly comprises the properties either side of High Street from the Crown PH in the south to the recreation ground in the north. It also includes Park Lane, a parallel service road to the east and St Mary's Church at its most north eastern point.

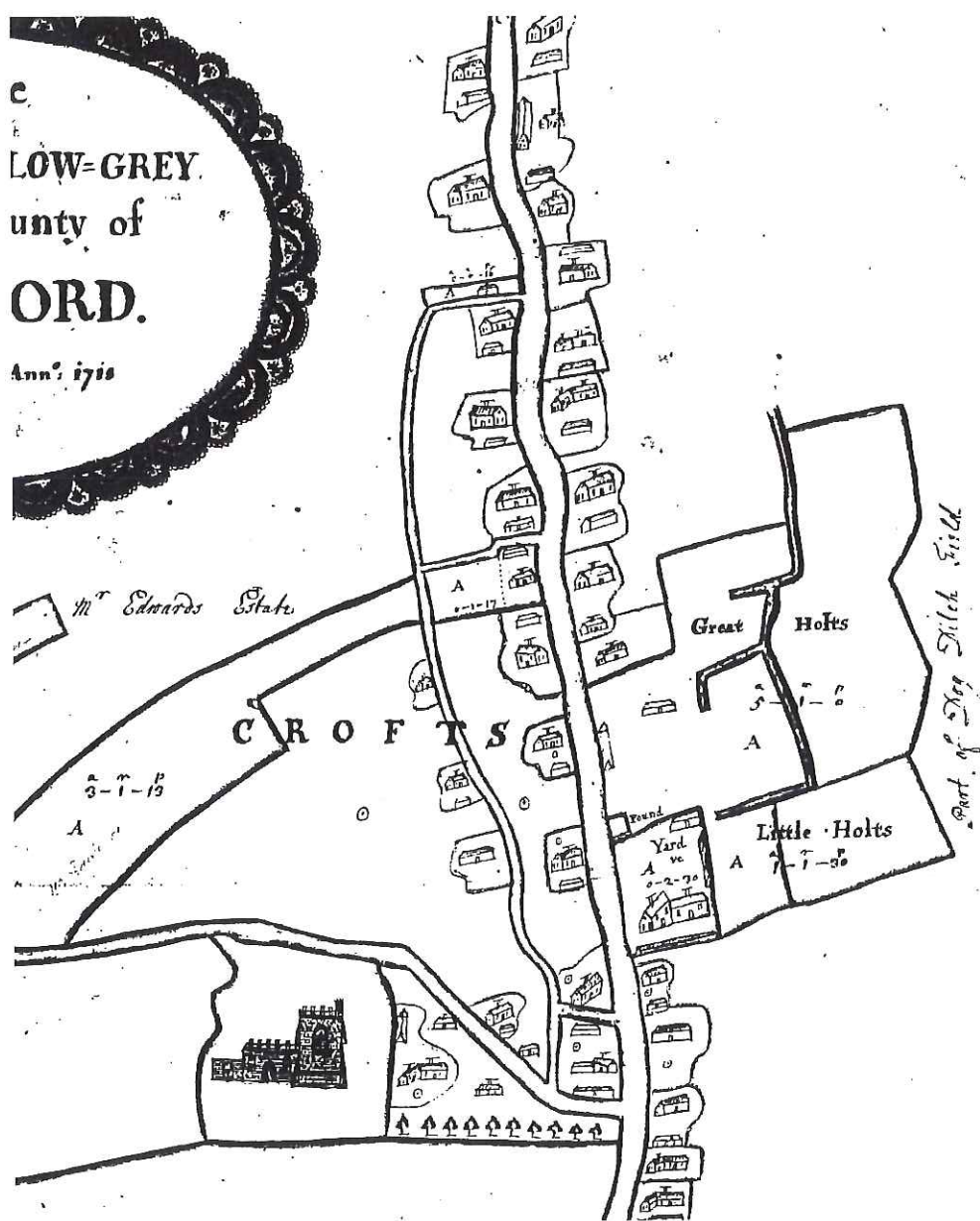


35 Park Lane



4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

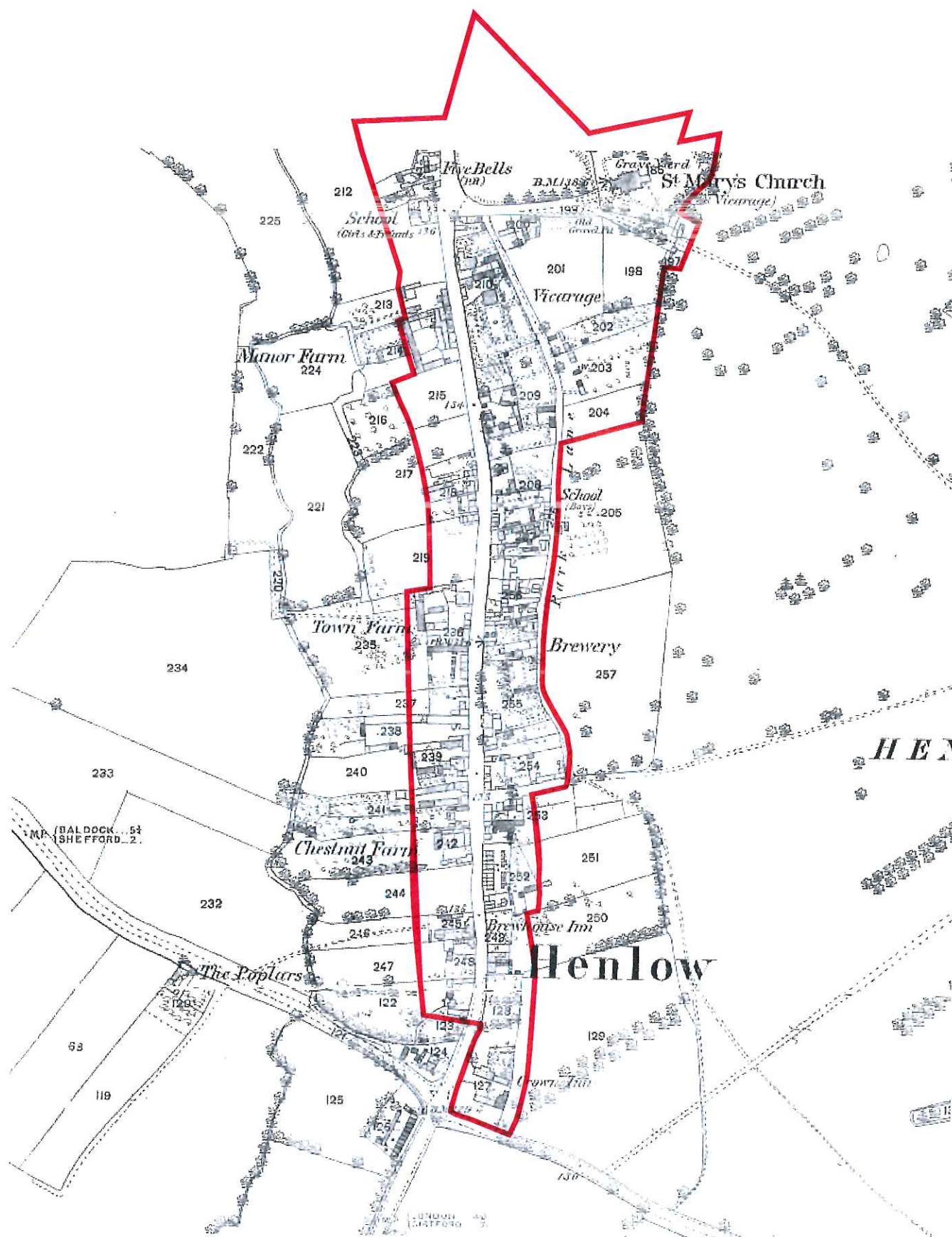
- 4.1 The name Henlow is said to derive from the Old English 'henna hlau' meaning a hill frequented by wild birds. It was clearly an established settlement in Saxon times and it is recorded in the Domesday survey in 1086 as a manor held by Nigel de Albini. In 1199, it became known as Henlow Llanthony following the gift of the manor to the monks of Llanthony Priory in Gloucester.
- 4.2 Such was the significance of Henlow that there were four further manors: Henlow Warden, Henlow Zouches, Henlow Grey and another un-named. The pattern of early land ownership in the area is, therefore, complex. However, the village developed within the estate of Henlow Grange, which still exists to the east. The three-storey brick house dates from about 1700, but is likely to be on the site of an earlier building.
- 4.3 Access to Henlow Grange was by a drive from the north of the village. It is punctuated by paired brick lodges with St Mary's Church lying just outside the private domain. This explains why the church is not more focal to the village.



Survey of the Manor of Henlow Grey 1718

ORDNANCE SURVEY FIRST EDITION 1882

With Conservation Area Boundary





- 4.4 The church includes fabric dating from the 12th century including a Norman window re-used in the Victorian vestry. However, much of the building dates from the 15th century including the three-stage tower. This housed five bells, hence the name of the nearby public house, originally cast from 1628. In the 20th century, they have been augmented to eight.
- 4.5 The village itself has planned elements: a High Street running north-south with a service lane on the east side against the parkland of the Henlow Grange estate, hence the name Park Lane. On the west side of the High Street were farms with small home paddocks leading to the larger fields further west that were formed by the Enclosure Act of 1759. The village subsequently extended further south along High Street to the junction with Arlesey Road.
- 4.6 The late 19th century saw expansion of the village due to rail links with London and also due to the improvement of agricultural dwellings with the construction of several short brick terraces. The school, first built on Park Lane in 1826, was accordingly enlarged in 1876. Agriculture continued to be the mainstay of the local economy and associated with this was a cottage industry of straw-plaiting for the Luton hat-makers. There was also a significant maltings and brewery.
- 4.7 There was little further building until the mid-20th century since when the density of the village has increased with infill development. New housing layouts have also extended the village considerably, particularly to the east and north.



Residential conversion of the Former Brewery

5.0 CHARACTER

- 5.1 The majority of buildings in Henlow are residential and it is clear that the village now serves larger settlements in commuting distance more than it does local agriculture. Indeed, many farm buildings and the maltings have been converted to domestic use.
- 5.2 There are still, however, several shops including the village store and post office. There are also three public houses: the Five Bells to the north, the Crown to the south and the Engineers' Arms in the centre. The latter being a reminder of the increasing mechanisation of agriculture during the 19th century.
- 5.3 In addition to St Mary's Church, there is also the much more modern Methodist Church. The Henlow Parish Hall was built in 1893 – also inscribed as 'The Vicar's clubroom' – while almost opposite is the elegant war memorial.
- 5.4 Much of the open space that Henlow enjoys is open countryside or the parkland of Henlow Grange including the Pyghtles recreation ground. Within the conservation area, St Mary's churchyard is the most important open space together with the adjacent Pit, a sunken recreation ground created in the 19th century out of former gravel workings.
- 5.5 The High Street has a slightly serpentine curve which limits views along it and, instead, allows the townscape to unfold. The buildings tend to be close to the edge of the street providing a sense of enclosure. In many places, this is reinforced by strong boundary walls. Inevitably, the High Street now carries a large volume of traffic that detracts from an otherwise rural character.



Lodges to Henlow Park with important specimen trees

- 5.6 There are wide views of parkland from St Mary's churchyard and across the Pyghtles from Park Lane. There are also important glimpses of countryside to the west through former farmyards. Trees are an important part Henlow's character too. As well as the constant treed background of Henlow Grange, the townscape is punctuated by significant specimens, such as the oak in Park Lane behind the village stores, the yews in the churchyard and in Old Vicarage Gardens, and the limes in front of The Limes.
- 5.7 With 20th century infill housing developments, the character of Henlow has changed as building density has increased. Now, there is a strong case for maintaining the core of the village largely as it is for fear that further intensification will diminish the qualities for which the conservation area has been designated.



Henlow Pump House 1897

6.0 APPEARANCE

- 6.1 In the middle ages, the local material for most buildings was timber. Evidence of timber framing can be seen at Wheelwright Cottage, next door to the village stores, and to the rear of No.8 High Street. Further framing survives, but is less apparent, where it has been refronted or plastered over as at the Old Brew House or Manor Farmhouse.



Wheelwright Cottage, High Street

- 6.2 Stone was used for higher status buildings, such as St Mary's Church and the war memorial. Much of the church is built of ironstone. This is an iron-bearing sandstone that weathers to a rusty brown colour as the iron salts oxidise. The tower is largely built of clunch, which is chalk dressed into building blocks. Clunch is not widely used in exposed positions because it is relatively soft and can weather badly.
- 6.3 From the 18th century, brick takes over as the dominant building material and Henlow has fine examples at the lodges to Henlow Grange, Westholt and Mulberry House. The latter uses contrasting blue headers to make a deliberate pattern. These are produced by over-burning red bricks until they vitrify or by adding a glaze.
- 6.4 The Gault clays of the Ivel valley are particularly suited to the production of cream and pale yellow bricks, which are used to good effect on the later terraces. Red bricks and Gault bricks are used together to provide decorative banding to the later 19th century buildings.
- 6.5 Bricks are generally laid in Flemish bond – alternating stretchers and headers. At Nos.70-74 High Street, adjacent to the Engineers' Arms, the bricks are laid on edge, for economy, creating voids in the walls. This is known as rat-trap bond. Clay is also used for roof tiles, decorative ridges and the distinctive terracotta date plaques found on several of the 19th century rows of houses.





Westholt, High Street



- 6.6 Side-opening casement windows were generally used in earlier vernacular buildings, while vertically sliding sashes were introduced for higher status houses in the 18th century after which they became more fashionable. Window frames were always made of timber except in rare cases where iron-framed casements provide the opening windows for the leaded lights in timber-framed buildings. Many windows have been altered to provide top-hung vents or to make use of modern plastics but always to the detriment of the historic character of the village.



- 6.7 Henlow also has several fine examples of historic panelled doors, moulded and pedimented doorcases and timber shopfronts.
- 6.8 In the past, street surfaces would have been little more than rammed earth and stone until tarmac provided a more durable successor from the early 20th century. The main survival in the streets is of granite kerbs. Street furniture is sparingly used as befits a functional rural village. Traditional swan-neck street lights have been introduced in the High Street, but equally, there are telephone wires distributed on wooden poles. Boundary walls and hedges make an important contribution to the definition of streets and the wide variety of means of enclosure in Henlow adds greatly to its character.

Church Road

- 6.9 The junction with High Street is marked by the Henlow Pump House (listed Grade II). This open hexagonal structure was built in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a fact recorded in the inscription on the adjacent horse trough. It has a pyramidal tiled roof supported on six timber posts. This originally sheltered a pump mechanism, but that was removed in 1925 after a mains water supply had been introduced through the village.

- 6.10 Opposite, on the north side, is the Pit. This former gravel working became a sunken recreation ground and is shown as such on the map of 1891. It is edged by an estate-type iron fence. Beyond the Pit is St Mary's Church (listed Grade I), which provides the other main open space in the conservation area. The newly cleaned tower is an important landmark visible in glimpses from the High Street. The churchyard includes significant yew trees and is bounded by a brick wall with a distinctive roll topped terracotta coping.
- 6.11 Church Road was the entrance to Henlow Grange and this is marked by a pair of 18th century red brick lodges. Henlow Park has since been developed with housing and schools and, at peak times, Church Road is congested with traffic.
- 6.12 The south side of Church Road has more modern houses set behind clipped hedges. Belmont (No.14) is a slightly earlier example of Edwardian sobriety.



Belmont, Church Road

Park Lane

- 6.13 The existence of Park Lane as a service road to the High Street suggests that Henlow was deliberately laid out in a planned manner. On the Park side to the east, apart from a few modest cottages, it is bounded by recent developments such as Sparkfield, the bungalows of Park Lane Crescent and Raynsford Lower School. Then there is the open space of the Pyghtles Recreation Ground.



Former School, Park Lane



- 6.14 On the west side, a high Gault brick wall once contained the extensive curtilages of large properties fronting High Street. Now, it largely obscures a series of infill housing developments such as Old Vicarage Gardens.
- 6.15 Further south, there is the variegated brick and tilework of the former school. A gothic arch added to the right hand side is inscribed: 'Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Erected July 1826 WBH. Rebuilt and enlarged by the Parish 1876.' Nearby, at about the mid-point of Park Lane, there is an alleyway leading through to the High Street beside the Engineers' Arms. A further mix of older property and new infill includes the rear of the Maltings which also spans though to the High Street.

- 6.16 As Park Lane turns west to rejoin the High Street, there is a gothic terrace of red brick houses with contrasting Gault brick details, angular dormers and imposing chimney stacks. On the opposite side, outside No.2, there is a very large specimen oak tree.



Gothic cottages, Park Lane

High Street

- 6.17 In the 18th century, the area between High Street and Park Lane was residential and very low density. The principal houses were Mulberry House, Westholt and the former Vicarage. There were also a few smaller houses, such as Nos.2-4 Church Street dated 1794. Infilling of this area began in the 19th century with the school and several cottages on Park Lane, then the Maltings, several houses fronting the High Street and Henlow Parish Hall. The high roof of the kiln at the Maltings and the cupola over the Parish Hall add to an already diverse roofscape.
- 6.18 Housing infill of this area continued in the 20th century in the grounds of the large houses. This has changed the character of the area considerably placing all the more importance on the mature trees and brick boundary walls that have survived as evidence of the earlier layout.
- 6.19 The west side of High Street evolved differently because it bordered agricultural and rather than the park. Here, a series of farms, such as Manor Farm and Town Farm, developed and evidence of farm buildings and routes through to open countryside still survive. The farmyards, which are clear in the early Ordnance Survey maps, can still be traced in the 20th century development of courts and closes.
- 6.20 In the 19th century, a series of comfortable houses were added to the west side. These are typically three bays wide with a central entrance. A late example, set in extensive grounds, is The Limes, while No.31 has a well detailed shopfront.
- 6.21 South of Park Lane, there was sporadic historical development as the timber framing evidence at Wheelwright Cottage, the Old Brewhouse and the Crown PH suggests. The Crown appears to be located to take advantage of the High Street and Arlesey Road crossroads.





Old Barn Close



6.22 A very distinctive development in the late 19th century was the introduction by the Henlow Estate of artisan dwellings in short terraces of three or four houses. They made full use of the contrasting effects of Gault and red bricks and some are set back slightly behind small front gardens. They also carry decorative terracotta date plaques with monogram initials and images of farming life.



65/67 High Street

- 6.23 Nos. 1 and 3 High Street, dated 1870, are a feature at the southern entry to the conservation area opposite the Crown Public House.
- 6.24 The 20th century has seen the infill of most of the gaps on the west side of High Street to provide a continuous succession of buildings including the unusual octagonal pavilion of the Methodist church. On the east side, the car park of the Crown PH and the unused land behind it are less resolved.
- 6.25 Most of the 19th century and earlier buildings front the High Street directly or are set back only slightly. This gives a very positive sense of enclosure and a townscape that unfolds with the slight curves.
- 6.26 At the south end, the High Street is relatively narrow and it widens a little towards the centre. However, although this middle part has the best defined townscape, in social terms there is no centre. Henlow was laid out as a working agricultural village with no need of a market place or village green and, instead of being at the heart of the village, the church is accordingly located at the gate to Henlow Park. Also, the shops and public houses are dispersed through the village and the main focal points are, therefore, the war memorial and the Parish Hall.
- 6.27 North of the centre, the High Street becomes more spacious because the higher proportion of later infill housing tends to be set further back resulting in a more suburban feel. This gives greater prominence to planting, boundary walls and hedges, which become even more significant at the Pit.

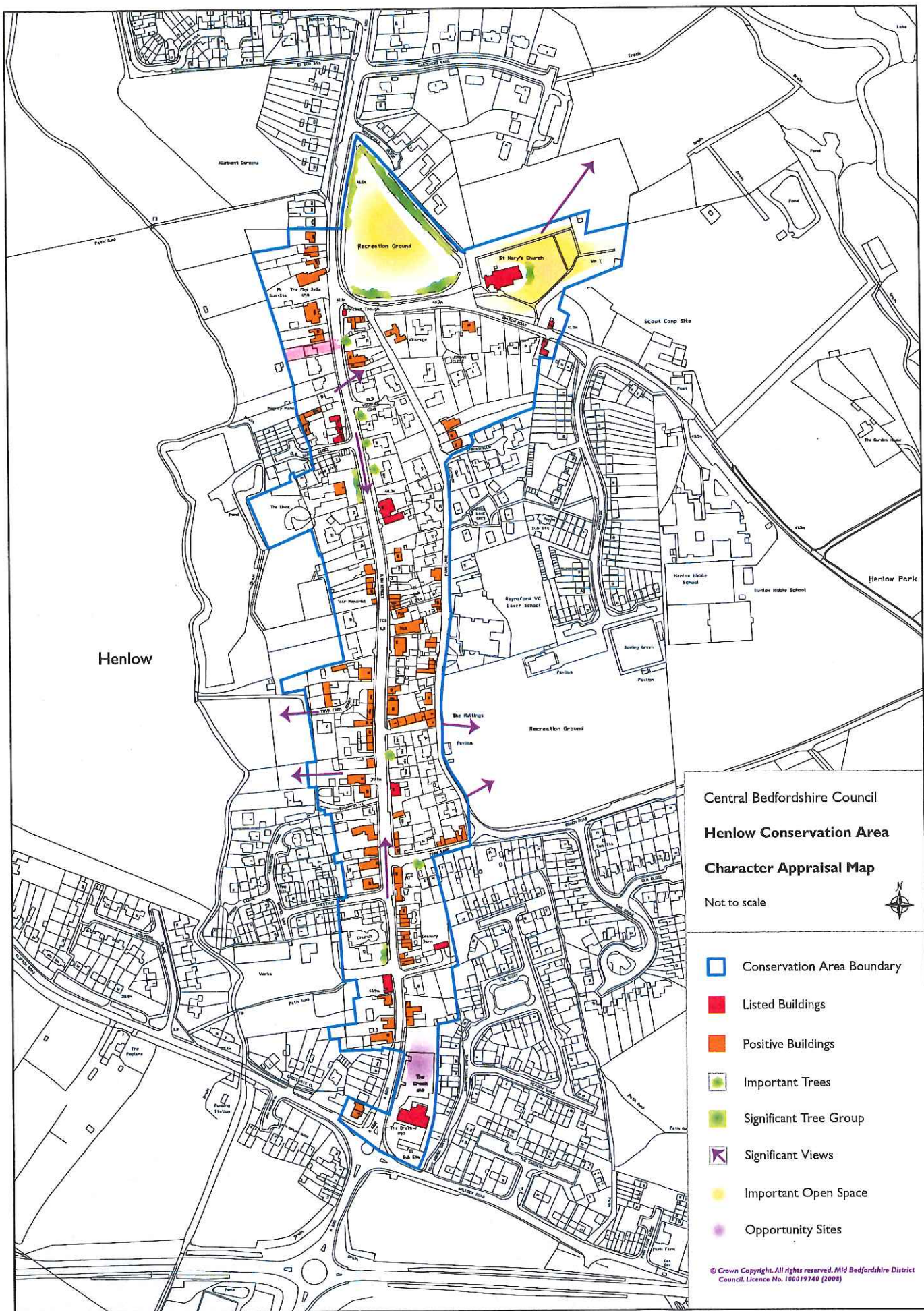




7.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

7.1 While the general condition of the conservation area is good, there are always opportunities to enhance buildings and spaces:

- A programme of undergrounding of overhead wires would allow the removal of wooden telegraph poles;
- The introduction of an Article 4 direction would stem the further loss of traditional materials and detailing from single family dwellings;
- Improvements to the surfacing and lighting of the alleyway between the High Street and Park Lane would greatly enhance this historic route;
- The land between the Crown PH and No.6 High Street is capable of enhancement possibly by strengthening the frontage onto the High Street with planting ;
- Improvements to the setting of the war memorial;
- Improvements to the front area to the Parish Hall;
- Additional planting in public spaces generally;
- The most significant of the unlisted buildings should be put forward for the Council's proposed list of Buildings and Structures of Local Importance;
- Street furniture should be well-designed and co-ordinated ;
- Encouragement to be given for the reinstatement of traditional doors and windows;
- Encouragement to be given to the reinstatement of traditional thatched roofs, using long straw with vernacular plain flush ridges and detailing;
- Promotion of the use of lime-based mortars, plasters and renders for older buildings and structures in place of cement-based materials.



APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

- Henlow Village Design Association – *Henlow Village Design Statement* – 1998
- Mid Beds District Council – *Henlow Conservation Area: Designation statement* – 1971
- Mid Beds District Council – *Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan*
- Ed. William Page – *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 2* – Victoria County History 1908
- N. Pevsner – *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough* – 1968
- www.henlow.net/history

Maps:

- Ordnance Survey Old Series 1805-1874 – *Map 153: Bedford and Huntingdon* – Cassini edition 2006
- Bryant, Map of the County of Bedford, 1826
- Ordnance Survey – 1st Edition 1882
- Ordnance Survey – 2nd Edition 1901

Websites:

- The Heritage Gateway gives access to national and local heritage records: www.heritage-gateway.org.uk
- English Heritage will also access a range of free publications under the HELM initiative: www.english-heritage.org.uk
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings provides advice on maintenance and repair: www.spab.org.uk
- The Georgian Group: www.georgiangroup.org.uk
- The Victorian Society: www.victorian-society.org.uk
- The Twentieth Century Society: www.c20society.org.uk
- For a range of general information: www.buildingconservation.com

Contact:

The Conservation and Design Team at Mid-Bedfordshire District Council are always interested in receiving further information or updates in relation to conservation areas. They can also give advice on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings and on the management of conservation areas:

Conservation and Design Team
Environmental and Planning Services Department
Mid Bedfordshire District Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
SG17 5TQ

01462 611339 or 08452 304040 (Customer Services)

rob.uff@midbeds.gov.uk

APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDINGS

Listed buildings within the Henlow Conservation Area:

• Arlesey Road	The Crown PH	Grade II
• Church Road	St Mary the Virgin Church	Grade I
• Church Road	North lodge at entrance to Henlow Park	Grade II
• High Street	No.21, The Old Brewhouse	Grade II
• High Street	No.44, Mulberry House	Grade II
• High Street	Nos.84&86, Westholt	Grade II
• High Street	Barn to west of Parkside	Grade II
• High Street	Nos.87&87b, Manor Farmhouse	Grade II
• High Street	Henlow Pump House	Grade II

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This appraisal has been prepared in association with Mid Bedfordshire District Council by:

The Conservation Studio
1 Querns Lane
Cirencester
Gloucestershire
GL7 1RL

t. 01285 642428

www.theconservationstudio.co.uk



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