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#### Introduction

- i. A Conservation Area is an area of recognised special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- ii. Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to make conservation area designations, where these are appropriate, and to review them from time to time.
- iii. The primary objective of Planning policies and Development Control considerations in designated conservation areas is the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance which define the area's recognised special interest.
- iv. Conservation Area designation introduces additional control over:
- Demolition
- The size and location of extensions
- The insertion of dormer windows/ rooflights into roofs (loft conversions)
- External wall treatment (cladding) including pebble dash and render finishes
- The mounting location of satellite

- dishes
- The installation, alteration (including part-removal) or replacement of chimneys, flues or soil and vent pipes
- Shop signage
- Works to trees (cutting down, lopping and topping)

[Further details can be obtained from the Council's Conservation Officer]

- v. Designated as a Conservation Area in 1977, reviewed in 1993, and extended in the 1995 South Bedfordshire Local Plan, the Houghton Regis Conservation Area partly covers the earlier village settlement. The designated area covers 33.686ha.
- vi. Review of the conservation area allows further consideration of its boundaries in respect of whether aspects of the immediate conservation area setting would merit inclusion in the designated area in their own right, or because of the potential for future change within the setting which might have a detrimental impact on the character or appearance of the conservation area itself.

vii. The current conservation area review, set out in this document, has shown

that the existing boundaries are logical and fit for purpose, and do not require amendment at this time.

- viii. Centred on The Green, Houghton Hall and its parkland, the Conservation Area continues to reflect the character of an agriculturally-based rural village.
- ix. The success of the village in trade, providing fresh produce to Dunstable Market since its establishment in the 1100's, as well as a strong straw plaiting industry through the 17th to 19th centuries, form an essential part of the special interest of the Conservation Area.
- x. The landscape quality of The Green, along with the central location of the 17th century manor house Houghton Hall, and its grounds, are also important to the special interest. There are a number of listed buildings which support this, with special interest in respect of layout, construction, local materials and detailing.
- xi. This Conservation Area Statement has two main sections; the first section includes a *Character Appraisal* of the area, analysing its special interest, character and appearance; the second

section will draw upon the Character Appraisal to identify a conservation area Management Plan, which will focus initiatives for future conservation area preservation and enhancement.

- xii. The *Character Appraisal* sets out what is special about Houghton Regis Conservation Area to enable us to make informed decisions and to manage change, allowing the area to remain alive and prosperous while ensuring that the special quality of the area is preserved and enhanced for the enjoyment of future generations.
- xiii. The *Management Plan* is drawn from the Character Appraisal and aims to introduce active measures for conservation area preservation and enhancement. To be successful, the Management Plan objectives require the commitment of the District Council and key stakeholders.
- xiv. Both the Statement and Management Plan have been compiled with reference to content and format guidelines published by English Heritage ('Guidance on conservation area appraisals', February 2006).

#### How the Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan will be used

- The Conservation Area Statement XV. and Management Plan has been produced as an advisory document to support the Centre Masterplan SPD Town (Supplementary Planning Document), which will guide future redevelopment of the town centre. They are intended to assist an informed and consistent approach to historic environment considerations throughout development and implementation of the Masterplan proposals.
- xvi. Linking the Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan directly with the Town Centre Masterplan will:
- underscore recognition of the continued local relevance and value of the historic environment, particularly in terms of community identity.
- focus attention on the opportunities for enhancement of the historic environment as part of Town Centre renewal.

xvii. As part of the reorganization of the planning system introduced by the Planning

and Compulsory Purchase Act (September 2004), Local Development Frameworks (LDF's) replace Local Plans.

- xviii. A joint Luton and South Bedfordshire Local Development Framework (LDF) is to replace the current South Bedfordshire Local Plan adopted in January 2004, and is currently under preparation.
- xix. The LDF is a portfolio of local development documents that will comprise the spatial planning strategy for the District and Luton. The Town Centre Masterplan is one of the component documents of the joint LDF.
- xx. The preparation and content of the LDF is explained and timetabled in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). A joint Luton and South Bedfordshire Local Development Scheme was adopted in December 2007, and is to be monitored and reviewed annually.
- xxi. Certain policy and guidance documents within the LDF will have particular relevance to the future management of the District's historic environment, such as the Development Control Policies DPD (Development Plan Document), Green

Space Strategy SPD (Supplementary Planning Document), and the Town Centre Masterplans.

xxii. More specifically, a Conservation and Historic Environment Strategy SPD, to be supported by conservation area appraisals, is identified in the Local Development Scheme as a potential future component of the joint LDF.

xxiii. The Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan will be reviewed, as required, in line with the progress of Town Centre Masterplan implementation and preparation of the joint LDF.

#### **Document Status**

xxiv. The Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan has been produced as an advisory document which supports the Houghton Regis Town Centre Masterplan, adopted June 2008, and is part of the on-going development of the joint LDF.

xxv. As such, the document was endorsed by the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee on 19th September 2008.

xxvi. Details of consultation undertaken during preparation of the document are set out in section 13 of the document, and summarised in the Appendix.

#### **Companion Documents**

Houghton Regis Town Centre Masterplan SPD. June 2008

Houghton Hall Park Management Plan 2004-2009

#### Description, Historic Development and Character Appraisal

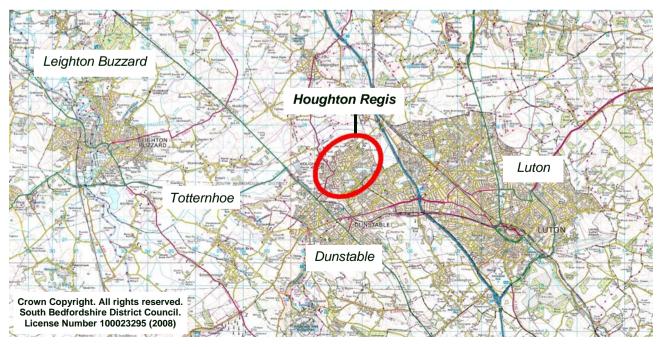
#### 1. Location

1.1. Houghton Regis is situated at the centre of the South Bedfordshire District approximately 4.5 miles north-west of Luton, and merges into the northern side of Dunstable (see Fig.1). Its name is Saxon, meaning 'settlement on a hill', with the Regis meaning 'King's Land'.

#### 2. The Conservation Area

2.1. The Conservation Area encompasses the core of the historic village around The Green and Houghton Hall Park, which is recognised as a park and garden of historic interest in the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review, adopted January 2004, and is owned and managed by the District Council. Historically surrounded by agricultural land, housing developments now surround the historic village core to the north, east and west of the Conservation Area, with a large industrial area to the south.

Fig 1. Indicative Ordnance Survey map to show the location of Houghton Regis in relation to surrounding settlements



2.2. The conservation area is centrally located within the town and is abutted to the northwest by the town centre, which largely comprises a purposely designed shopping centre built in the 1960's. The shopping centre 'turned its back' on the traditional form of the High Street, and a large number of buildings creating the High Street were lost.

#### 3. Landscape Settings & Views

- 3.1. The physical character of Houghton Regis is derived from its situation on a plateau along a chalk ridge, which runs west to east from Totternhoe. The land-scape character also reflects the quality of the agricultural land in, and immediately around, Houghton Regis. The soil is of loam and chalk, with a subsoil of chalk with clay in parts. This provides good crop soil, and the areas of clay enable water to remain subsurface.
- 3.2. The principal crops grown historically in the area were wheat, barley, beans and peas. Fields continue to provide an agricultural setting to the outer boundaries of the town, but there is no longer an agricultural base within the town itself.



Fig 2. Aerial view to show the Conservation Area boundary and the existing layout of Houghton Regis (2002)

3.3. The contribution made historically by the surrounding agricultural land has been lost, due to the redevelopment of the High Street and the vast expansion of the village with housing and business development, which surrounds and invades the Conservation Area.

- 3.4. There are thus no significant views or positive settings existing outside the Conservation Area.
- 3.5. There are, however, key views within the Conservation Area, which are indicated on *Plan I* (page 26).

3.6. The Church and High Street also provide context and setting to the Conservation Area. The contrast in character between the two areas is important in conveying the historic functions of the village. The High Street is lined with buildings abutting the back pavement edge, whereas the buildings in the Conservation Area are more dispersed and largely set back from the pavement edge.

#### 4. Key Views



Fig 3. All Saints Church from The Green, Houghton Regis

4.1. Houghton Hall is a principal landmark building within the Conservation Area, occupying the southern side of the Green (see Fig. 32). Significant views of the Hall are also provided across the parkland to the rear. 4.2. All Saints Church is also a landmark building within the town, with key views of its tower showing above the roofs of buildings in the High Street and from the Green.

#### 5. Layout

- 5.1. The layout within the conservation area has changed little over the centuries. Centred on the Green, it is still largely based upon historic pre-urban roads and tracks.
- 5.2. A large number of historic lanes and roads continue to define the early layout pattern. Examples of these include Drury Lane, Tithe Farm Road, Lilly Lane, Cooks Lane and Wood Way, which are all shown on an Estate Map dated 1762 (see Fig. 5).
- 5.3. Although the original farmland within the Conservation Area has been developed with housing, evidence of historic field boundaries still remains evident in some areas (indicated on *Plan I*, page 26). A number of existing boundaries relate to the Enclosure boundaries, which in turn were often drawn in relation to the earlier open-field system boundaries (see paragraphs 6.18 and 6.19).

- 5.4. The layout most likely originated with scattered farmsteads, between which further settlement slowly developed. Looking at historic maps, it is likely that there were two main focal areas of settlement, one in East End around the former village ponds, and the other around the Church and later High Street.
- 5.5. The 1762 Estate Map shows these two main areas of settlement with The Green joining them together. East End and The Green largely comprised three farms; Chantry Farm, Green Farm and Easthill Farm, along with Houghton Hall.
- 5.6. In 1762 the High Street is more densely lined with buildings, and includes Townsend Farm and Tithe Farm in its layout.
- 5.7. By 1848 (Fig. 6) the layout has hardly changed, although the High Street has a more traditional 'High Street' form, probably due to its closeness to Watling Street, allowing increasing trade with Dunstable.
- 5.8. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (following the arrival of the railway) land south of the High Street, including

King Street, Queen Street and Cumberland Street was developed with terraced housing.

5.9. The dispersed locations of historic buildings, particularly within East End, reflect the historic character of farmsteads and cottages surrounded by farmland. This is further reflected by the positioning of the houses centrally within their plots, which is characteristic of low density occupation typical of rural agricultural villages.



Fig 4. View of the High Street, Houghton Regis c.1950 (Mrs Lovering's Collection - courtesy of Mr Thompson)

5.10. Unfortunately most of the adjoining orchards, meadows and ancillary buildings have been lost to housing infill in more recent years. Despite this, the original

'open' character of properties around The Green and East End is still discernable. This would have contrasted with the densely packed form of development along the village High Street, where the building-line was characteristically pushed forward to the very edges of the street, before the unfortunate redevelopment of the High Street after the 1950's (see Fig. 40).

#### 6. Historic Development

#### **Prehistory**

6.1. Scattered finds found in the fields around Houghton Regis suggest activity from the Stone Age. It is close to Icknield Way, an ancient and important 'chalk spine' trackway. Hill ridges at this time provided clear routes that allowed long distances to

be travelled.

6.2. It is very likely that the Dunstable Downs around Houghton Regis held other ancient trackways ideal for nomadic traders. Such trackways linked hilltop enclosures such as Maiden Bower, around 1.5 miles to the south-west, which is a Scheduled Monument and dates to 3500 BC.

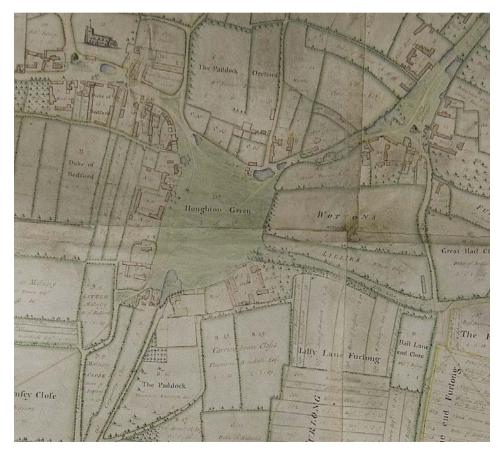


Fig 5. Extract of 1762 map of the parish of Houghton Regis - belonging to the Most Noble John Duke of Bedford (Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service)

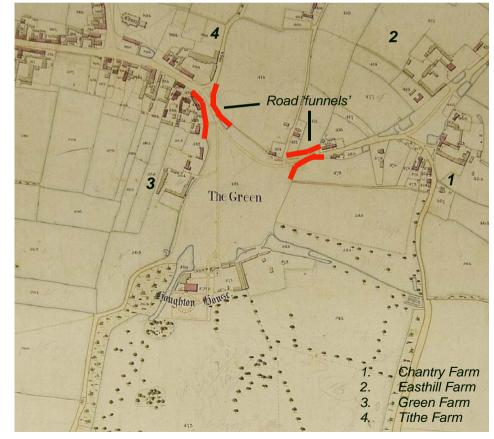


Fig 6. Extract of 1848 map of the parish by John Cumberland of Dunstable, surveyor. (Indicating the town farmsteads and distinctive road funnels, typical of historic commons)

#### The Roman Period

6.3. Watling Street (now the route of the A5) was constructed during the Roman period and passed near to the area Houghton Regis now occupies. A Roman settlement was constructed on Watling Street in the area now occupied by Dunstable, and was known as Durocobrivae.

#### The Anglo-Saxon Period

- 6.4. Following the departure of the Romans roadside settlements were frequently attacked, and it is thought that many communities moved away from the roads and into the hills.
- 6.5. It is likely that this was the time when the earliest settlement of Houghton Regis was established. Indeed its name 'Houghton' is Saxon in origin, meaning settlement on a hill (Hoe = Spur of a Hill + Tun = village).

#### The Conquest

6.6. The earliest written evidence of Houghton (Houstoune) is at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086). This shows that Houghton had 10 hides (1,200 acres) of

productive land, 24 plough (24 x 8 oxen), enough woodland on the heavier land to feed 100 pigs and a surprising amount of meadowland, which is likely to have been located around the springs of the Lea and Ouzel. At Houghton there were 38 villagers and 12 smallholders, making about 50 families in all, and a probable population of about 250.

#### The Medieval Period

- 6.7. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Henry I established a new market town known as 'Dunstaple' at the cross roads of Watling Street and Icknield Way.
- 6.8. He also built a royal residence in Church Street and founded an Augustinian Abbey opposite. There was little land allocated for growing food, and this took place in Houghton Regis, which supplied the market and wealthy businessmen of the new town.
- 6.9. The tax returns of 1309 show the population of Houghton as nearly twice that of other local villages.
- 6.10. During the 15<sup>th</sup> century Abbot John Moore had a large tithe barn built in

Houghton Regis. The Abbey Chronicles recorded 'A good grange [farmstead] on a foundation of stone, of timber and earth, well tiled and enclosed'. The barn was demolished in 1964 due its poor condition.

#### The Dissolution of the Monasteries

- 6.11. Dunstable Priory succumbed under the Dissolution Act in 1539. Due to the gradual shift in power over the previous century the residents of Houghton were not seriously hurt by the change in landownership.
- 6.12. The 1542 rent list of Dunstable showed a subtle shift in the character of the town from an economy based on catering for the needs of wealthy businessmen and merchants, towards that of an agricultural market town with a growing number of travellers inns and beer-houses. This economy provided a sound market for Houghton farmers and artisans who continued to prosper into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### The Brandreth Family

6.13. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century Houghton Regis was brought together under the ownership of the Brandreth family, who

continued to have a major interest in the village into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- 6.14. Henry Brandreth was a wealthy businessman and member of the Cloth Workers Guild. He first bought land in Houghton Regis in 1652, and acquired the Manor in 1654. By 1671 he was High Sheriff of Bedfordshire. He had three children, who would go on to inherit his estate on his death in 1673.
- 6.15. His manor house is believed to have been on the opposite side of the Green to Houghton Hall. The Hearth Tax records list 12 rooms with fireplaces, suggesting a house large in size.
- 6.16. In 1700 Henry Brandreth's daughter Alice built Houghton Hall. As Alice had no children on her death the Hall passed to her nephew Nehemiah, who continued to live in the Hall, although he sold it to the Duke of Bedford in 1750.
- 6.17. The Duke held the manor for 130 years, during which time the estate cottages near the Chequers roundabout, East End, were built in 1848. In 1880 the Duke of Bedford sold the manor back to Henry Gibbs Brandreth in order to buy land

closer to Woburn.

#### Farming and Enclosure

- 6.18. The 1762 Estate Map (Fig. 5) shows that Houghton Regis had a medieval open field system of furlongs and strips interspersed with greens, meadows and common land. At this time each village had 3 open fields and common land for grazing animals. Typically, two fields grew crops such as barley and oats and a third was left fallow (i.e. not planted-out). This allocation of land would be swapped around from time to time. Each furlong was divided into strips and every farmer had several strips in each field. This shared out the good and poor land fairly, but was very inefficient.
- 6.19. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century an Act of Parliament required that all the land (including common land) be reorganised and redistributed. A farmer's land was now in one area and he could enclose his fields with fences. The 1796 Enclosure Map of Houghton Regis shows a re-allocation of individual fields and the loss of the common land.
- 6.20. The Enclosure Act made farming more efficient. Houghton Regis continued

to prosper, providing the Dunstable Market and supporting the coaching and hat-making trades. The number and size of the farmsteads within Houghton Regis also shows the importance of agriculture at this time. In addition to the 183 straw plaiters there were also 60 agricultural workers, and the village had several farms (see Fig. 6).



Fig 7. Sheep at the gates of Houghton Hall. c.1900

#### Straw Plaiting

6.21. Chalk in the ground at Houghton Regis produced a white straw that was ideal for hat making. Straw hats first became popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in 1689 the inhabitants of Houghton Regis were already involved in an established trade.

- 6.22. The abundance of straw that could be produced locally led to a valued source of straw plait to supply the hat making industries in Luton and Dunstable. Even London firms set up warehouses in Luton for Houghton Regis straw plait.
- 6.23. Straw plaiting was a cottage industry undertaken principally by women and children, while men undertook the heavier work of 'blocking' and 'stiffening' in factories in Dunstable and Luton.
- 6.24. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the 'Dunstable Bonnet' was a popular fashion item. A profitable living could be made in the straw plaiting trade, and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of plaiting schools were set up so that children could continue plaiting whilst attending school. According to the 1841 census, Plait Schools thrived in Houghton Regis.
- 6.25. The plaiting trade brought prosperity and vitality to Houghton Regis throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1869, factory inspectors found that every cottage in the village contained plaiters, but that agriculture also continued as before. By this time the population had grown to over 2,000.

- 6.26. By 1870, however, the plaiting trade began to decline due to the lift of import duties enabling cheap Chinese plait to flood into the Country. This decline was also the result of changes in fashion, and by 1900 there was only one large hat-making factory left in Dunstable.
- 6.27. The Kelly's Trade Directory of 1890 identifies seven straw dealers and one 'straw blocker' living in Houghton Regis.

#### The Coaching Trade & the Railway

- 6.28. By 1657 the London to West Chester stagecoach was running three days a week, bringing more visitors and trade to Dunstable. Again Houghton Regis prospered.
- 6.29. By 1706 there was a toll gate across Watling Street (near the Sewell turning). In an attempt to avoid the summit, a road was laid out around the southwest side of the hill (starting near the Chalk Hill Garage and coming out near French's Avenue).
- 6.30. By 1830 up to 80 coaches a day passed through Dunstable, which was now full of posting stations and inns, providing a ready market for Houghton Regis. In 1836

Parliament provided £10,000 to lower Puddle Hill via a cutting through the chalk.

6.31. However, in 1837 the railway opened as far as Tring and by 1839 as far as Birmingham, providing an alternative and quicker method to travel and transport goods. There were two stations, one in High Street North and the other in Church Street, Dunstable. Housing developed along the road between Houghton Regis and the Station in High Street North in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### The 20th Century & Today



Fig 8. View of All Saints Church from The Green. c.1914-1918 (Mrs Lovering's Collection—courtesy of Mrs Baldock)

6.32. A cement works was established in the 20th century and people began to move into the area looking for work. In 1951 Houghton Regis had a population of 2,826 and consisted of a High Street with small shops, a village green and a number of farmsteads and cottages.

- 6.33. By 1978 Houghton Regis had a population of over 16,000 and the High Street had been largely demolished and redeveloped. Two large council housing estates had also been built, notably Parkside, a Greater London Council (GLC) social housing scheme for London overspill, as well as a lot of private housing and a community college.
- 6.34. Further houses were built on existing farmland, and Houghton Regis changed from a rural village strongly based upon agriculture to a larger residential settlement with a purpose-built shopping centre.

#### 7. Historic Character

7.1. The surviving historic buildings are predominantly cottages or farmhouses reflecting the agricultural history of the area. The plaiting trade, by its nature, was a cottage industry, and although prevalent through the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries did not affect the character of these building types, which remained unchanged and still reflect the strong reliance of Houghton

Regis on agriculture until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- 7.2. Unfortunately the majority of associated farmyard buildings have been lost to new housing.
- 7.3. The wealth of the village resulting from its agricultural success and trading is also shown by the high quality of Houghton Hall and its associated buildings, as well as the re-fronting of buildings with brick in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (such as the Red House, The Green) and the construction of Easthill Farmhouse in brick.
- 7.4. However, building construction and materials are largely locally traditional, again reflecting the 'vernacular' rural character of the village.

## 8. Architectural and Historic Qualities of the Buildings

8.1. The historic buildings within the Conservation Area are farmhouses and cottages dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Timber-framed buildings following the vernacular tradition, and 18<sup>th</sup> century brick buildings following the Classical style, are the principal architectural building types, reflecting the

age in which they were built and the prosperity of the village at these times.

- 8.2. The reliance on local materials in the construction of the buildings up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century is also clearly evident.
- 8.3. Buildings of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries are timber-framed. **Dene Hollow** (Sundon Road), is the oldest known building within the Conservation Area and is a good example of timber-framed construction. The timber with whitewashed plaster infill suggests a 16<sup>th</sup> century date. Its size, form and substantial timber-frame reflect its high status at the time of construction.



Fig 9. Dene Hollow, a 16th century timber-framed building, c.1953 (Mrs Lovering's Collection - courtesy of Dunstable Gazette)

8.4. **The Crown** is another timber-framed building and is dateable to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is the only remaining thatched building in the town.



Fig 10. The Crown Public House, East End

- 8.5. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings began to be constructed or fronted with brick. At this time elements of more 'polite architecture' became fashionable, as opposed to those that followed the local vernacular tradition of the area. Buildings following the Classical style became popular, with their symmetrical and well proportioned elevations, along with the use of Flemish Bond brickwork and vertical sliding sash windows.
- 8.6. The construction of new farmhouses or their upgrading, following the fashionable styles of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, clearly

reflect the wealth of farmers within Houghton Regis during this time.

- 8.7. The 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings within the Conservation Area are principally cottages, and although unlisted are important in representing the homes of the supporting workforce of Houghton Regis. Such buildings reinforce the agricultural character of the Conservation Area.
- 8.8. Houghton Hall is likely to have influenced the construction of new brick buildings and the re-fronting of others in the Classical style. This is reflected in the re-fronting of **The Red House** (The Green), and the construction of **Easthill Farmhouse** (Sundon Road) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig 11. The Red House was re-fronted in the 18th century to follow the fashions of the area at that time

- 8.9. **Houghton Hall** is a key focal building within the Conservation Area, and is important to the history and development of the village as the main residence of the Brandreth family, who owned much of the land and the manor of Houghton Regis from the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It still strongly relates to its parkland to the rear (see Fig. 27), which is important to its historic interest and setting.
- 8.10. The Hall is a building of special architectural and historic interest and is listed grade II\*. It was built in 1700 as a country house, but was altered externally in 1851 by Humphrey Brandreth, using the architect Henry Clutton.



Fig 12. Houghton Hall, built c.1700

8.11. The building is Classically designed with complimentary stables and other ancillary buildings. Although the stables have been converted into housing, all the buildings ancillary to the Hall retain a character that reflects their original function.

8.12. The relationship between the Hall and its outbuildings is important in conveying the original status and function of the Hall as the family residence of the principal local landowners, which also functioned as the manor within the village through the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

8.13. **The Bedford Estate Cottages** (21-23, Sundon Road) were constructed in 1848 when The Duke of Bedfordshire owned the Manor of Houghton Regis, and



Fig 13. The Bedford Estate Cottages, Sundon Road

reflect the picturesque style favoured at the time, designed to reflect the rural idyll and vernacular tradition of 'the cottage'.

8.14. The cottages are constructed of local plum brick, with steep clay plain tiled roofs and lattice casement windows. The simple 'cottage' style is also achieved through the single storied with attic-room form, gables and tall chimneys.

8.15. The Lodge to Houghton Hall has a similar character to the Bedford Estate Cottages but also reflects the Classical style of the Hall, with slated roofs and timber vertical sliding sash windows. The building demonstrates how the ideals of symmetry continued into the 19th century.



Fig 14. The Lodge, Houghton Hall

8.16. Park Cottages (The Green), have matching open gabled porches, which complement the scale and form of the gabled dormers (see also Fig. 25). They also have distinctive window hoods with shaped timber brackets. No. 3 (to left in Fig. 15) has lost character through the painting of its brickwork, inappropriate replacement windows and ill-matched roof repairs.



Fig 15. Park Cottages, Nos. 2 & 3, The Green

8.17. The coming of the railway in the early 19th century enabled Welsh slate to be imported, and this became a fashionable roofing material. Local brick was still used, but when the appearance of stone became fashionable brickwork was painted or rendered, to suggest it. **Numbers 9 and 10 East End** (Fig. 16) have rendered walls incised to look like stonework (*stucco*).



Fig 16. Nos. 9 & 10 East End, Houghton Regis

8.18. Local brick was used widely again at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. **Sunnyville and Dunleigh**, The Green, are typically designed for their date but are locally distinctive due to their construction in the plum brick characteristic of the Conservation Area.



Fig 17. Sunnyville & Dunleigh, The Green

8.19. **Woodlands Avenue** is a 1940's development of blocks of red brick terraced housing, with elements of the Arts and Crafts style in layout and detailing. It occupies previously undeveloped farmland.



Fig 18. Woodlands Avenue, Houghton Regis

8.20. The layout of the buildings strongly relates to the road, although the building line is set back behind hedged front gardens. The layout consists of one road with a cul-de-sac to one end.

8.21. Small areas of green open space are provided along the road, and at the end of the cul-de-sac, and the layout of the terraces is arranged in relation to them, either simply set back from the main building line or arranged in a group around the grassed area, as within the cul-de-sac.

8.22. Gables and other simple projecting features are occasionally used within the building design and are picked out using yellow rather than red brick.

8.23. The layout and greenery of the estate complement the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The grassed spaces and verges, garden trees and continuous front garden hedging are important elements of character to the estate and Conservation Area.

## 9. Traditional Building and Surfacing Materials

9.1. In respect of the historic introduction of new styles to the village, the construction materials are largely those that were locally available, again reflecting the rural character of the village. The relatively limited palette of materials from the local area results in buildings which complement each other in colour and texture.

#### Brickwork

9.2. The buildings within the Conservation Area are largely constructed or fronted with brick. The brick is

characteristically plum in colour, with a relatively smooth texture as a result of the qualities of the local clays.

9.3 Traditional brickwork is visually distinctive, with a pale lime mortar bedding and jointwork finished-off flush or semi-recessed to the face of the brick.

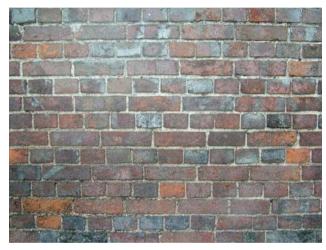


Fig 19. Characteristic traditional brickwork, Drury Lane

#### **Timber-framing**

9.4. A number of historic buildings in the Conservation Area and High Street date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century when timber-framing was a more economical material for construction and timber was locally available (see Figs. 9 & 42).



Fig 20. Plain tile and slate roofs, High Street, Houghton Regis

9.5. The survival of timber-framing indicates that it is not only a successful and long-lasting form of construction, but also that the village had not become so wealthy as to demolish and rebuild its buildings fully in brick or masonry.

#### Clay Plain Tiles and Welsh Slates

9.6. The roofing material within the village is largely that of clay plain tiles, particularly for the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings, with natural Welsh slate becoming imported in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with improved transport links and changes in style. Handmade clay plain tiles are by nature slightly cambered in all directions, varying subtly in form. This provides an attractive texture and appearance to the overall roof form (Fig. 20).

#### Thatch

- 9.7. Judging by the steep pitches of some of the historic buildings, such as The Red House, The Green, it is likely that thatched roofs were once a prominent feature within the village.
- 9.8. Long Straw is the traditional thatching material within South Bedfordshire. The inhabitants of Houghton Regis would have used locally available materials, and in a village based on agriculture, wheat straw would have been readily available.



Fig 21. The Crown, East End (undated), with long straw thatched roof (Mrs Lovering's Collection - courtesy of Dunstable Gazette)

#### **Flint**

9.9. The rear range to The Red House is constructed of flint. Although the clays in Bedfordshire were ideal for brick making, flint was readily available within the landscape. It appears that flint work was typically used for ancillary buildings and lower status ranges to houses.



Fig 22. A small paned vertical sliding sash window with a side hung dormer casement above (The Red House, The Green)

#### **Joinery**

9.10. Both timber side-hung casements and vertical sliding sashes with narrow glazing bars are historically characteristic. The fine detailing possible with timber joinery and the painted off-white finish complements the traditional construction of the historic buildings, and completes the local palette of materials characteristic of the area.

#### **Boundary Walls**

9.11. Although most boundaries in the Conservation Area are hedges, some of the brick buildings have front boundary walls of red/plum brick, reinforcing local character.



Fig 23. Boundary Wall, Park Cottages, Drury Lane (see also Fig. 19)

9.12. The boundary wall and gate piers to Houghton Hall (Fig. 7) are probably contemporary with the Hall and are thus particularly special and listed in their own right. Other important walls include those at Sunnyville and Dunleigh (Fig. 17), The Bedford Estate Cottages, Park Cottages (Fig. 23) and Easthill Farmhouse.



Fig 24. Modern 'Estate' Fencing, Houghton Hall Park

9.13. The recent use of open 'Estate' fencing compliments the character of the open parkland in Houghton Hall Park.

#### Surface Materials

9.14. The historic surfacing materials for the roads and paths has been covered or replaced with tarmac. Some brown cobbles remain in front of the Chequers public house, East End, and there are some granite kerb setts lining the edges of the drive to Houghton Hall.

## 10. Common Characteristics of the Historic Buildings

- 10.1. The buildings are mainly twostoried, although some one-storey cottages with attic rooms are also characteristic (see Fig. 13). Some buildings have dormer windows (a window projecting from a roof). These are characteristically square in shape, with casement windows of two lights and simple gabled roofs (see Fig. 22).
- 10.2. The roofs within the Conservation Area are principally gabled and steep in pitch, with the ridges aligned to lie parallel to the front elevations. This provides simple gabled roof forms, with bedded verges (the tile edges of the roof sealed by bedding mortar) and simple open eaves (eaves not boxed in with fascias and soffits).
- 10.3. The tiled roof ridges have shallow rounded profiles and match the colour of the main roof tile (see Fig. 20).

- 10.4. The buildings generally have symmetrical elevations, using either wooden vertical sliding-sashes or side hung casements with small panes (see Fig. 22).
- 10.5. The use of local plum-coloured brickwork is an important characteristic uniting the historic buildings within the Conservation Area, and is locally distinctive.



Fig 25. Example of a porch and door of traditional form, Houghton Regis

- 10.6. Roofs are typically clad in clay plain tiles, and the formerly widespread use of thatch is now only represented by one building, 'The Crown' public house, East End (see Figs. 10 & 21). Welsh slate is used on some of the 19th century buildings.
- 10.7. Chimney stacks are generally tall with careful brick detailing. Enclosed porches are not characteristic; buildings either have no porch, simple door surrounds or open gabled canopies supported on painted timber brackets (see Fig. 25).

## 11. Open Spaces, Trees and Greenery

#### Houghton Hall Park

- 11.1. Houghton Hall was built c.1700 as a large Country House and as such originally had little land to serve it.
- 11.2. This continued to be the case for a considerable period of time, as both the 1762 Estate Map (Fig. 5) and the 1792 Enclosure Map show the area still used as farmland. The Bryant map of 1826 shows a small area of parkland to the west and south of the Hall, but it is not until 1848

that evidence is found of the park and the boundary that we see today (see Fig. 6).



Fig 26. Houghton Hall Park. Entrance gates at the south side of The Green

11.3. Woodland areas to the east and west of the Hall were established by 1879 along with a network of paths and a series of rides (clearings made for riding on horseback), and more formal gardens behind the Stable Block (1st Edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map, 1879).

11.4. An enhancement project in 1996 enabled key elements of the historic

landscape design to be reinforced, including the opening of vistas, reinstating the 1879 path layout, planting an orchard behind the Stable, re-planting in woodland areas, redefining old boundaries, maintaining grassland and improving public access.



Fig 27. Houghton Hall Park, looking north towards Houghton Hall

11.5. Houghton Hall Park forms about half of the land included in the Conservation Area. It has specific historic interest, and makes an important contribution to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area, containing woodland, open parkland and gardens.

11.6. The Park is owned and managed by the District Council through an arrangement with the Greensand Trust, an Environmental Charitable Trust, and has its own management plan in place ('Houghton Hall Park Management Plan 2004-2009').

11.7. As part of an aim to promote greater public enjoyment of the Park, the Park Management Plan has identified the need for highway 'tourist' signage indicating the car parking area for the Park, off Park Road North. Where such signage is proposed within the Conservation Area or its immediate setting, its location should be considered as part of a carefully coordinated signage scheme which aims to prevent unsightly street-sign clutter in and around the Conservation Area.

#### The Green



Fig 28. Travelling Fair on The Green c.19th-20th century (Mrs Lovering's Collection - courtesy of Mr H. Bandy)

- 11.8. The Green reinforces village character, and is an essential element of the historic layout of Houghton Regis. It remains a strong central focus, established in early times, and the remainder of the village has evolved in relation to it.
- 11.9. The Green also complements the other green features characteristic of the Conservation Area, including Houghton Hall Park, private gardens, mature trees and wide green verges.
- 11.10. As typical of traditional English villages, the historic houses face towards the roads and the green and are generally set back from the pavement edge behind front boundary walls or hedges. Where all the building frontages are aligned, they present a strong building line.
- 11.11. There is a clear contrast between the 'openness' of The Green and the more enclosed character of East End and the High Street.

#### **Trees**

11.12. There are a significant number of mature trees of native species within the Conservation Area. They are used formally

to line the drive across The Green to Houghton Hall, and occur informally within its parkland as well as individually or in small groups in private gardens and along road sides.



Fig 29. Lilly Lane - View of pathway enclosed by trees

11.13. Trees provide dappled shade in the sunshine, break the fall of the rain and provide a soft rustling sound in the wind, thus changing the character of the area in different weathers and seasons.

- 11.14. Trees also line lanes and paths, although they do not over-enclose, enabling light to penetrate through. In Houghton Hall Park the light-brown aggregate of the paths compliments the rural 'green' character of the lanes and paths.
- 11.15. Wide grass verges, boundary hedges, roadside trees and private gardens contribute greatly to the green open character of the Conservation Area.



Fig 30. Verges and boundary hedges, East End

11.16. The willows along East End have historic interest as well as a special visual character, as they indicate the location of the former village ponds (see Fig. 31).

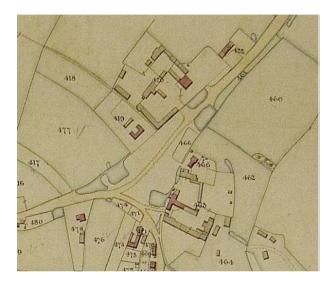


Fig 31. Detail of Parish map of 1848, showing the location of the former village ponds, East End. (Bedfordshire & Luton Archives and Records Service)

The summary of historical development of the area given in this Conservation Area Statement has largely been taken from "Royal Houghton" by Pat Lovering, who also kindly provided the historic photographs.

We would like to give Pat our thanks for all her help.

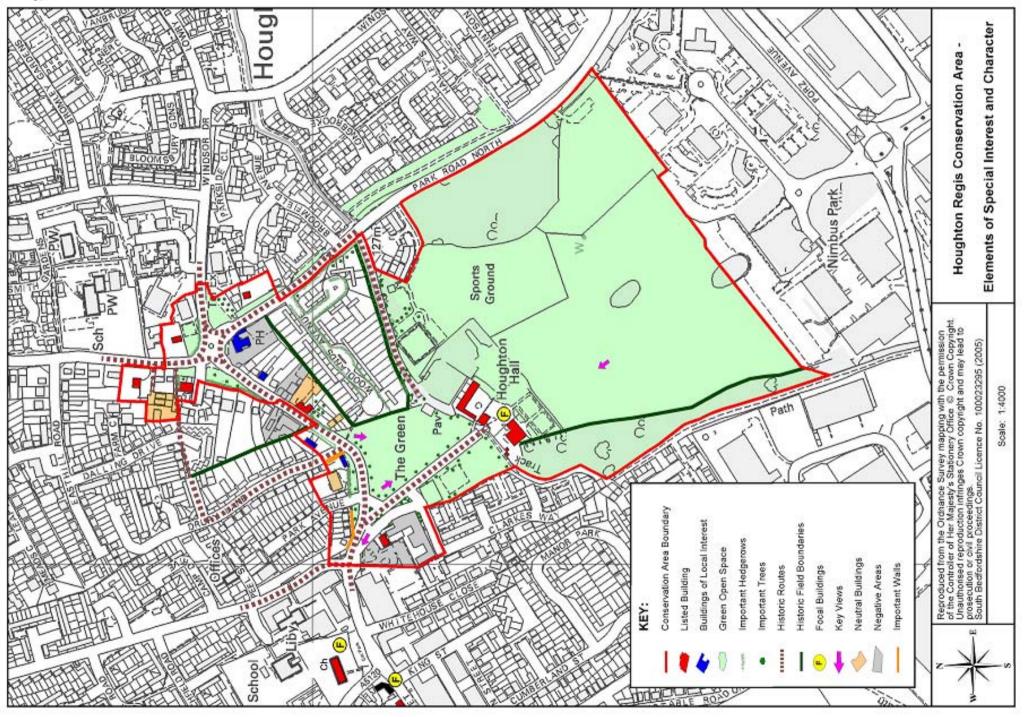
#### **Negative Factors**

- The loss of historic farmsteads, and their open agricultural setting, which defines historic character, as a result of modern housing infill.
- The pressure for growth and the need for the existing town to support it.
- The design of new housing and other buildings which are out of scale or introduce features or materials not respecting the character of the conservation area.
- The loss of front gardens, front boundaries and sections of grass verges to hardstandings for cars.
- The amount and congestion of traffic.
- The lack of character and vitality in the shopping centre and poor visual links with the Conservation Area.
- The weakened edges of The Green where development has not fully respected the historic character of the area.
- The isolation of the Church from the Conservation Area, and its poor setting, fronted by a car park and adjacent to a 1960's shopping centre.
- The amount and random location of street furniture and signage, which has no coordinated design to complement the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The petrol garage and former vehicle sales area in East End.
- The loss of enclosure at prominent sites 'The Crown' and 'The Chequers' public house car parks.
- The disused section of the Co-op Car Park.
- Poor surface materials in and around The Green.

#### **Summary of Special Interest**

- The character of the Conservation Area as a rural agriculturally-based village as reflected in its layout and the type and character of its historic buildings.
- A layout which has remained unchanged for centuries, based upon pre-urban tracks and the locations of dispersed farmsteads.
- The important focal and historic buildings of All Saints Church and Houghton Hall and the key views of them from The Green.
- The significance of The Green to the historic layout, and as a key focal element and important green open space.
- The contribution made by Houghton Hall Park to the green open character of the Conservation Area, the setting of Houghton Hall and its historic development in relation to the development of the village.
- The dispersed locations of historic buildings, particularly in East End, and their situation centrally within their plots, which reflect the historic character of farmsteads and cottages surrounded by farmland.
- The wealth of the village due to its agricultural success and trading as shown through the high quality of Houghton Hall and its associated buildings, as well as the fashionable re-fronting of local buildings with brick in the 18th century.
- The principal building types of farmhouse and cottage, and their construction in timber-frame following the vernacular tradition, or in brick following the Classical style, which reflects the age in which they were built and the prosperity of the village at these times.
- The alignment of building frontages, hedges and walls providing an element of unity and enclosure to the overall layout.
- The conspicuous use of local materials, particularly timber-framing, red/plum brick and clay plain tiles, in the construction of the buildings until the 20th century.
- In the Conservation Area, the relatively consistent building height of two storeys, with some one-storey cottages with attic rooms.
- The predominantly symmetrical elevations of the historic buildings.
- The predominance of simple architectural forms and detailing, such as simple gabled roofs with open eaves, with ridges aligned parallel to front elevations.
- The number and quality of boundary walls constructed in local brick.
- The contribution of trees, open spaces, hedges, verges and private gardens throughout the Conservation Area.

#### Plan I



## **Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest in Houghton Regis Conservation Area and its High Street setting**

#### **Listed Buildings**

#### **Buildings of Local Interest**

<u>Еа</u>	<u>ıst</u>	E	n	d

'The Chequers' Public House, East End Nos. 9 & 10, East End

•	Vane Cottage, Park Road North	Grade II
,	Easthill Farmhouse, Sundon Road (west side)	Grade II

Nos. 5 & 6, East End
 'Park Cottages' Nos. 2 & 3. The Green

Dene Hollow, Sundon Road (east side)

• 'Park Cottages' Nos. 2 & 3, The Green

Nos. 21-23 East End (Bedford Estate Cottages)

76 High Street (former Odmans Newsagents)

20 High Street (former Village School Teachers House?)

The Crown Public House

Grade II Grade II

Grade II

- 86 High Street (Sandy and Kirsty Hairdressing)
- 100-102 High Street (Wilson's Car Sales)

#### **The Green**

•	'Houghton Court' (former stable block of Hall)	Grade II
•	Houghton Hall (The Green, south-east side)	Grade II*
•	Outbuildings to NW of Houghton Hall	Grade II*
•	Lodge to Houghton Hall	Grade II
•	Wall and gate piers to Houghton Hall	Grade II
•	The Red House (The Green, west side)	Grade II

#### Key 'focal' or landmark buildings

- Houghton Hall, The Green
- The Church of All Saints, High Street
- King's Arms Public House, High Street

#### The High Street (north-west side)

•	The Church of All Saints	Grade I
•	Nos. 104 and 106	Grade I

# **Management Plan**

#### 12. Introduction

- 12.1. The Houghton Regis Conservation Area was designated in November 1977, and was reviewed in the 1995 South Bedfordshire Local Plan.
- 12.2. The current review comes at a time when significant local growth within the District is being considered and planned.
- 12.3. As part of the government's regional growth area agenda, set out in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (MKSM SRS), 26,300 new dwellings and 23,000 new jobs must be provided in South Bedfordshire and Luton by 2021.
- 12.4. While the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities are seen as key, the regeneration of Houghton Regis and the other Growth Area towns are considered important objectives.
- 12.5. The regeneration of Houghton Regis as a local centre is to be guided by the Town Centre Masterplan SPD (Supplementary Planning Document), which recognises at its core the relevance and value of the town's past in respect of local distinctiveness and community

identity.

- 12.6. The designated conservation area brings together the surviving physical elements of this historic legacy which most strongly define local distinctiveness, and has special character as a result.
- 12.7. The Houghton Regis Conservation Area Statement demonstrates that the special character of the designated area is derived from its farmstead and village origins, and has identified where this special character has been lost, eroded or is under threat. These 'negative factors' are summarised towards the end of the Conservation Area Statement and, together, have provided the baseline focus of the Conservation Area Management Plan.
- 12.8. The primary objectives of the Management Plan are:
- to ensure that an effective Planning 'toolkit' is in place to support a commitment to future conservation area preservation.
- to highlight where enhancement would be appropriate, sustainable and locally beneficial as part of the wider

Town Centre renewal agenda set out in the Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

#### 13. Community Involvement

- 13.1. The District Council fully recognises the significance of local support in its development of initiatives seeking the enhancement and future preservation of the conservation area and the wider historic environment of the town. The Management Plan recommendations for conservation area enhancement, in particular, will require close working with key stakeholders for delivery.
- 13.2. The initial stages of the current conservation area review were assisted by the results of analytical (SWOT) exercises undertaken at a Town Centre Masterplan Stakeholder workshop held at the Memorial Hall on the morning of 25th May 2007. Feedback from the workshop has given a useful indication about what is locally valued about the historic environment of the town, along with perceptions of what has damaged or threatens it, and this has helped to focus the objectives of the Management Plan.

13.3. Because the Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan are advisory documents intended as supporting the Town Centre Masterplan SPD, there is no requirement for any consultation during their preparation. It has been felt, however, that given the close relationship between the work of the conservation area review and preparation of the Town Centre Masterplan, there would be particular benefit in presenting review findings and drafted the recommendations at the major Masterplan consultation events.

13.4. Details of the consultation programme followed, and responses received, are provided in the Appendix to this document.

## 14. The Conservation Area today

14.1. The former village green, which annually hosts the popular Houghton Regis Carnival and Medieval Fayre, retains its historic local significance as an open space and this, along with the surviving parkland of Houghton Hall to the south, remains the dominant feature of the Conservation Area today.



Fig. 32. An important view - Houghton Hall glimpsed from the north—east corner of The Green.

14.2. Although dominated by through-traffic, something of the intimate, rural character of the former village still exists, conveyed by the form of the older buildings and in the conspicuous use of traditional local building materials, for instance. This essentially *local* character is reinforced by key views of Houghton Hall and the parish church, which provide essential historic and visual 'anchors' in a busy modern street-scape.



Fig. 33. An example of the historic rural housing that survives amongst later development - Nos. 9 & 10 East End.

## 15. The Historic Context & the Modern Setting

15.1. The parish church and former village High Street, beyond the boundaries of the conservation area to the west, provide both its essential historic context and immediate setting. For this reason, the isolation of the church, and the almost total loss of High Street character through redevelopment since the 1950's, may be identified as the most significant negative factor impacting upon the character of the conservation area itself.

15.2. The anticipated programme of Town Centre renewal provides a significant

opportunity to rectify this. The immediate thrust of the Conservation Area Statement and Management Plan is therefore to raise awareness of the continued relevance of the local historic environment and to feed the findings of the conservation area review into the Town Centre Masterplan.

### 16. How the Management Plan is set out

16.1. The Management Plan is to operate within three 'Management Zones' (*Plans II and III*):

Zone 1 - East End/Woodlands Avenue

Zone 2 – The Green/Houghton Hall Park

#### Zone 3 - The High Street setting

16.2. The management recommendations (sections 19 & 20) have the primary objective of securing the preservation and enhancement of the special interest and character of the conservation area (and its High Street setting) which has been defined and set out in the Conservation Area Statement following the conservation area review.

16.3. Towards achievement of this objective, the recommendations fall into two categories of action:

- (I) Enabling preservation and the appropriate management of change through the Development Control process
- (II) Promoting and seeking implementation of specific works of enhancement

#### 17. Implementation

- 17.1. Implementation of the Management Plan will be subject to:
- The progress of Local Development Framework (LDF) preparation (for policy-related Development Control matters).
- The priorities of the Town Centre Masterplan.
- Funding initiatives available.

#### 18. Boundary Changes

18.1. The existing boundaries of the Conservation Area, as amended in the

1995 South Bedfordshire Local Plan, are considered logical and fit for purpose, and are not proposed for further amendment at this time.



Fig. 34. A significant local 'landmark' building – the King's Arms public house,

#### 19. Recommendations (I)

Preservation and the management of change through the Development Control process.

## The case for a 'Local List' of buildings of special interest

19.1. Review of the conservation area and its setting has highlighted a number of buildings of particular local interest which have not satisfied the criteria for inclusion on the national 'statutory list' of buildings of

special architectural or historic interest ('listed buildings'). The identified buildings of local interest are detailed at the end of the Conservation Area Statement (see page 27) and would merit inclusion on a 'local list' of buildings of special interest, should this be initiated and supported within the Local Development Framework (LDF).

19.2. The Local List might usefully be based on the national statutory list in terms of the selection criteria – architectural and historic interest or group value (part of a group of buildings together forming an important architectural or historic group) - and might also usefully include buildings with a significant local 'landmark', or focal, value, such as the King's Arms public house, High Street (Fig. 34).

19.3. Buildings included on a Local List do not enjoy the level of protection afforded to those on the national statutory list, but the Local List may be given essential substance and weight as a Planning 'tool' by being supported by policies and supplementary guidance within the new Local Development Framework (LDF), for instance through Area Action Plans (AAP's) and through



Fig. 35. A building of local interest – No.20, High Street (originally the Village School Teacher's House?)

endorsement within key Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

19.4. It is recommended that future consideration is given to the endorsement of Local Listing within the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), for instance through the Development Control Policies DPD (Development Plan Document).

### Specific Development Control Considerations

19.5. **Zone 1** 

(East End/Woodlands Avenue)

The loss of enclosure at prominent sites (Figs. 36 & 37).



Fig. 36. The former Vantec site & The Crown public house car park, East End

19.6. Where schemes of redevelopment are proposed, these should respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and any listed buildings on or adjacent to the site, and should also be seen as an opportunity to improve boundary treatments and site enclosure where these are considered inadequate or inappropriate.



Fig. 37. The Chequers public house car park, East End - part of the town's logical eastern 'gateway'

19.7. The character of Woodlands Avenue is strongly defined by:

- the distinctive form and configuration of window openings on the building elevations
- the distinctive front hedge and verge boundaries



Fig. 38. Woodlands Avenue

19.8. These essential defining elements of character may be protected through happropriate Development Control decisions. Although the hedging cannot be treated as 'development' and regulated in the same way as boundary walls, fences and gates, it may be protected and reinstated through planning condition.

19.9. **Zone 2** (*The Green*)

 New development has not respected the historic character of the area



Fig. 39. The Green (west side) - the visual impact of unenclosed modern development

19.10. The negative impact of poorly designed and detailed 'infill' development around the margins of The Green has been heightened by a lack of adequate

enclosure, and the edges of The Green have been weakened as a result (Fig. 39).

19.11. Zone 3 (The High Street setting)

- The scale, massing and density of new development
- 19.12. At the east end of the High Street, where Bedford Square and the Co-op site form the immediate setting of the Conservation Area (Management Zone 3a), the scale of redevelopment has respected the historic predominance of the church tower on the skyline (see Fig. 3), and it is vitally important that this 'visual hierarchy' is maintained.
- 19.13. Further west, however, where the Bedford Road junction forms the immediate setting of the church, this visual hierarchy has been weakened by the scale of office development to the south (shown on the left side of Fig. 41), and the skyline impact of this has been amplified by recent rooftop telecommunications installations.

19.14. Roof-mounted telecommunications equipment can have a wide-ranging and detrimental impact on both roofscapes and

ground-views, and needs to be carefully located, particularly where it will affect the setting of a listed building or conservation area.

19.15. The wider High Street setting (Management Zone 3b), extending west to a logical 'gateway' at the present Mill Road junction - the historic termination of the High Street - retains a handful of buildings on its north side which are remnants of the historic village street (see p.27) but have lost their context through the scale, form and detailing of neighbouring redevelopment (Fig. 42).

#### 'Buildings at Risk' (BAR)

19.16. The District Council will monitor vacant and poorly-maintained listed and non-listed buildings in the conservation area and its High Street setting, and is committed to using powers made available under the Planning Acts to pursue remedial measures, wherever necessary.

19.17. These measures include the serving of Urgent Works and Repairs Notices, and Notices requiring the proper maintenance of land issued under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act



Fig. 40. High Street, looking west (postcard, c.1900 - Mrs Lovering's collection)



Fig. 41. High Street, looking west October 2007

1990 (as amended).

19.18. Classification of the buildings monitored, recording the *degree of risk* of individual buildings, will be undertaken in accordance with survey guidelines published by English Heritage in 1992 (see

Table 1, Appendix). Regular monitoring assists the instigation of prompt remedial action, which may only require works of basic maintenance or simple repairs if addressed quickly enough.



Fig. 42. The High Street setting, looking west

19.19. The District Council currently maintains a small annual grant-fund to assist essential repairs, and is available for listed buildings and also significant non-listed buildings in the conservation area.

[Further details can be obtained from the Council's Conservation Officer]

19.20. It is recommended that a 'Buildings at Risk' strategy is developed for the District and

considered for future endorsement ii) within the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), for instance through the Development Control Policies DPD (Development Plan Document) and the Growth Area Planning Obligations SPD (Supplementary Planning Document).

#### 20. Recommendations (II)

#### **Enhancement works**

- 20.1. Zone 1
  (East End/Woodlands Avenue)
- i) Improve the eastern 'gateway' to the Town and conservation area formed by 'The Chequers' roundabout.
- ii) Reduce and coordinate traffic signage, where possible, and coordinate street lighting design.
- iii) Preservation and the management of change through the Development Control process.
- 20.2. **Zone 2**

(The Green/Houghton Hall Park)

i) Reduce and coordinate traffic v) signage, where possible.

- ii) (Public telephone kiosk). Look to provide a kiosk more sympathetic in design to a designated conservation area, or remove altogether if redundancy can be proven.
- iii) Improve the paved setting of the War Memorial.



- iv) Provide fingerpost signage/ information panels for Houghton Hall Park at the north side of the Green.
- Provide more seating and litter bins viii) around The Green.

vi) Improve the treatment of the driveway to Houghton Hall (eg. improved surface dressing and verge markers).



- vii) Replace the current street lights along the western edge of The Green with a design of lighting more appropriate to the conservation area.
  - Improve the children's play area.

#### 20.3. **Zone 3**

(The High Street Setting)

i) Seek to improve the church car park (eg. provide lighting more appropriate to the setting of a listed building and restore the historic churchyard wall, with moulded brick cappings, along its complete circuit).





- ii) Reduce street signage clutter.
- iii) Seek to mitigate the effects of heavy traffic movement in line with 'best practice' approaches to traffic management in historic areas.



iv) Seek to improve the visual linkages between the church and the conservation area, for instance through appropriate 'soft landscaping'.

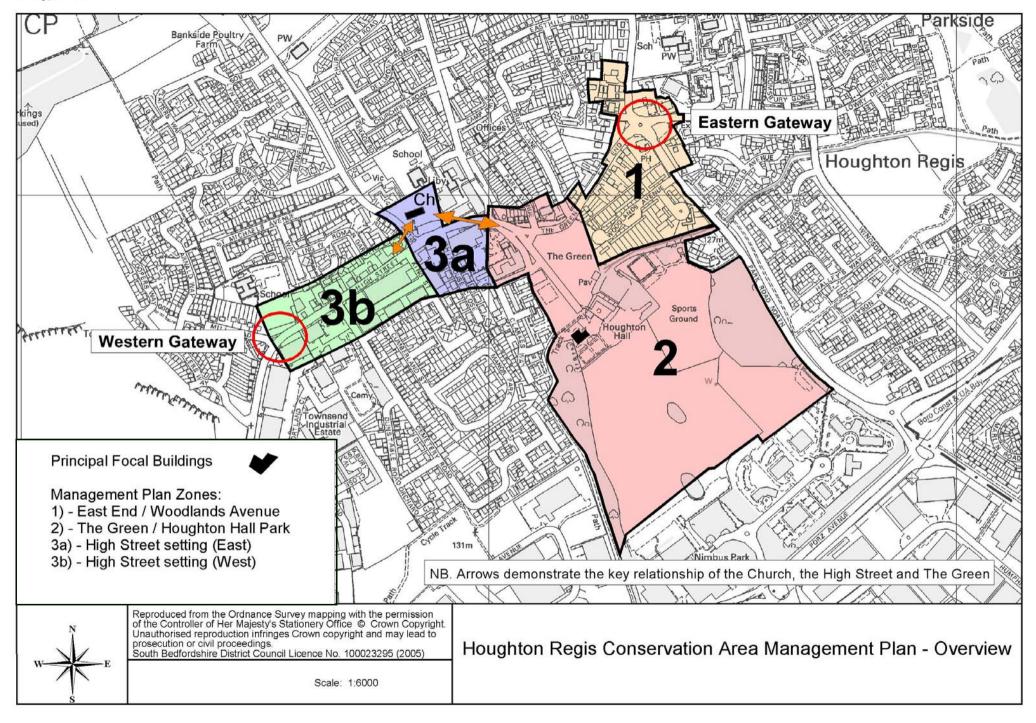


v) Create a western 'gateway' feature to the Town Centre in the vicinity of the Mill Road junction.

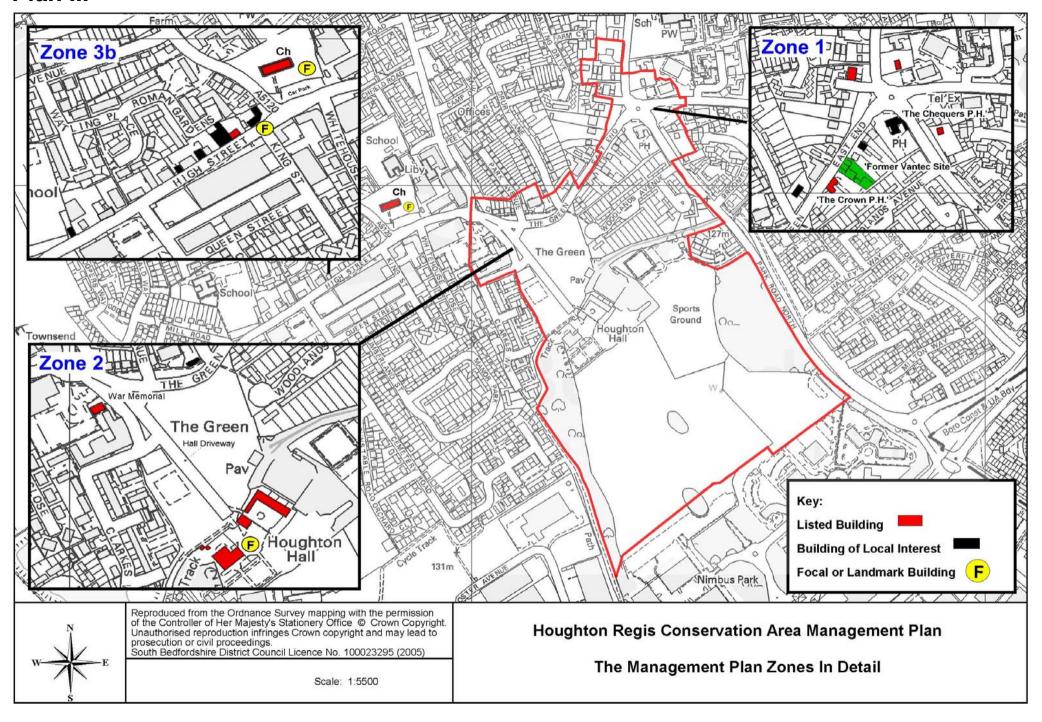


20.4. The recommendations for conservation area enhancement will be subject to further discussion and agreement, as appropriate, and will be reviewed in accordance with the progress of Town Centre Masterplan implementation and the availability of necessary funding.

#### Plan II



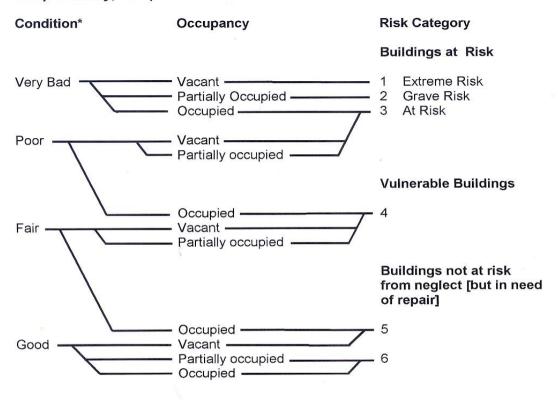
#### Plan III



# **Appendix**

Table 1 'Buildings at Risk'

English Heritage scale to measure the degree of risk (from *Buildings at Risk, A Sample Survey*, 1992)



#### \*(Condition)

- Very Bad evidence of structural failure, or signs of structural instability; significant loss of roof cover with major deterioration of interior, or serious fire/flood damage to most of building.
- Poor deteriorating masonry/leaking roof/defective rainwater goods leading to rot outbreaks and a general deterioration of the building fabric, or fire/flood damage to part of building.
- Fair building structurally sound, but in need of minor repair or general maintenance works.
- Good building structurally sound and weathertight, with no significant repairs needed.

#### **External Consultation**

(Masterplan Stakeholder Workshop) Houghton Regis Memorial Hall, 25th May 2007

(Exhibition)

Houghton Regis Town Centre Management Committee, 6th September 2007

(Display Stand)

Houghton Regis Medieval Fayre 8th September 2007 [Manned]

Houghton Regis Town Council Chamber 10th September 2007

Houghton Regis Village Green Pavilion Re-launch 23rd September 2007

#### **Summary of Masterplan Consultation Responses Relating to the Historic Environment**

[Taken from 'Comments on draft SPD and Issues & Options Statement', Halcrow, November 2007]

The bulk of responses focused upon the characteristics of redevelopment proposed in the draft Masterplan, and on associated social issues such as tackling anti-social behaviour, community facilities and car parking.

A general appreciation of the town's historic environment, and the need to preserve it, was evident during discussions held with visitors to the Town Centre Masterplan Exhibition at Houghton Regis Medieval Fayre on 8th September 2007.

Written consultation responses which have been received followed a similar pattern, although two specific issues prompted stronger concerns:

- Additional housing on the western edge of The Green
- · A perceived 'opening-up' of All Saints Churchyard

One respondent advocated general enhancement through traditional signage and 'historical plaques', while another suggested that The Green would benefit from hanging-baskets and railings.

#### Comments/Actions in respect of consultation responses received

All comments received have been noted.

The received suggestions for townscape enhancement accord closely with those proposed in the Conservation Area Management Plan and the Town Centre Masterplan SPD.

It can be reported that consideration of additional housing on the western edge of The Green has been dropped.

It can also be affirmed that there is no intention to open-up All Saints Churchyard by demolishing the historic churchyard wall; this wall is valued and works to restore its structural and historic integrity are a recommendation of the Conservation Area Management Plan.

It is clear that perception of an opening-up of the Churchyard is a direct result of the graphics produced to accompany the Masterplan consultation proposals. 'Conceptual' graphics, by their nature, often omit finer detail (in this case the churchyard walling), and it is regrettable that this has proved misleading.

## **Notes**