HUSBORNE CRAWLEY
(CHURCH END)

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 Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area was designated by Bedfordshire County Council in January 1973. Local authorities are required to review their conservation areas from time to time. This document fulfils that obligation by assessing 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 Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area through the planning system.

2.1 The special interest that justifies designation of the Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area derives from a number of architectural, historic and environmental factors, including:

2.0 SUMMARY

- Small village developed out of three manors recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086: Crawley, Husborne Crawley and Bray;
- Located at the eastern end of a greensand ridge in an agricultural landscape based on glacial clays and sand;
- Rural setting surrounded by woodland and open fields;
- Settlement based on a road junction with a triangular green at the centre;
- Buildings provide much evidence of a farming economy;
- Important buildings include the 13th century St James' Church (grade II*);
- Crawley House (grade II*) to the south set in parkland;
- Nine further listed buildings (grade II) include Crawley Hall, the Lodge and Manor Farmhouse;
- Some timber framing, such as Manor Farmhouse and Henry VI Cottage;
- 18th and early 19th century buildings in high quality red brick;
- Greensand and ironstone used for the church;
- Views from the churchyard over farmland to the north and east;
- Importance of native hedgerows enclosing the lanes;
- Survival of historic granite kerbs at the centre;
- Network of footpaths and bridleways connect the village to the surrounding countryside;
- Important specimen trees including holly and yew in the churchyard and sweet chestnut on School Lane.

3.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

3.1 Church End lies close to the Bedfordshire/ Buckinghamshire border, a short distance to the south west of Junction 13 on the M1 motorway. The county town of Bedford is some 16km (10 miles) to the north east, and the market town of Woburn is about 3km (2 miles) to the south. The village is on the A507, which links the A4012 from Leighton Buzzard and Woburn in the south to the A421 at Junction 13 where the route continues to Bedford.

3.2 Church End also lies at the eastern end of a greensand outcrop, which forms part of the major greensand ridge that crosses mid-Bedfordshire diagonally from southwest to north east. This provides extensive views over open farmland to the north and east, particularly from the churchyard of St James' Church.

View from the churchyard

3.3 Outcrops of greensand tended to be marginal for agriculture in the mediaeval landscape, so they were largely given to heaths and woodland while agriculture focused on the areas of overlying boulder clay. To the south of the ridge the Gault clay soils are less productive, but they do provide the cream and pale yellow bricks that often contrast with the more ubiquitous red bricks of 19th century buildings.

3.4 The enclosures of the late 18th and early 19th centuries led to a period of agricultural improvements. 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.

3.5 The conservation area radiates from the triangular green at the junction of Bedford Road and School Lane. To the north it includes Crawley Hall; to the east it extends to the churchyard and along School Lane as far as its junction with Crow lane; and to the south it follows the access drive as far as Crawley House taking in properties to either side.

4.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Although evidence for pre-historic and Roman settlement is found along the greensand ridge, there is none recorded in this area. The earliest reference to Husborne is in a charter of 969, when it is called Hysseburnan. However, the derivation is uncertain. The first mention of Crawley comes in the Domesday survey of 1086 as Crawelai or Crauelai – literally, 'crow clearing'. It would appear then that a settlement has existed since Saxon times. The first record of the two names together is in 1276.

4.2 A manor, granted before Domesday, became Crawley Manor. This merged in 1579 with the separate manor of Husborne Crawley. The manor house, said to have stood on the south west side of School Lane, was evidently on a grand scale. By 1765 it was described as 'a handsome large house' but, in 1721, it was bought by the Duke of Bedford and demolished.

4.3 A third manor, called Brays, was held from at least the early 15th century. The manor house survives as Manor Farm next to St James' Church.

Manor Farmhouse

4.4 St James' Church has 13th century origins. It developed in successive centuries culminating in a 15th century tower. However, while some of the earlier fabric survives, much of it was largely re-modelled in 1911 including the whole of the roof structure, the chancel arch and the addition of a south porch.

4.5 The Bedford Estate followed the purchase of Crawley Manor with the acquisition of many more properties and parcels of land in the area. This anticipated the enclosure of common land in 1799, which in turn led to agricultural improvements in the 19th century and the construction of model housing such as that in Crow Lane.

ORDNANCE SURVEY 1ST EDITION 1882

With Conservation Area Boundary

4.6 The 18th century also saw the development of significant houses at Crawley Hall and Crawley House, the latter with the layout of Crawley Park. In 1796 communications were improved when the road from Woburn to Bedford was turnpiked. The nearest railway station was opened at Ridgmont in 1846 giving access to London for both passengers and agricultural produce. However, Church End did not experience the intensification of housing in the late 19th century. Indeed, the population of the parish, which had been 680 in 1831, declined to 317 in 1951 as agriculture became increasingly mechanised.

Crawley House

4.7 The 20th century has had little affect on Church End. The church was remodelled, redundant buildings at Church End Farm have been converted to residential use and a handful of infill houses have been built. Perhaps the main legacy of recent times is the increased level of through traffic.

5.0 CHARACTER

5.1 There are not many buildings at Church End and the majority are residential. They range from the country house scale of Crawley House to the cottages at the corner of Crow Lane. The influence of a farming economy can be seen in the barns at Crawley Hall, Church End Farm and Crawley Park Farm, but they are generally now used for housing and the Crawley Park estate office.

5.2 The only other non-residential use is St James' Church. However, other facilities, such as the school, the village hall and public house are found nearby at Husborne Crawley.

St James' Church

5.3 Church End has an informal layout around the triangular green at the meeting of Bedford Road and School Lane. The three approaches are very different. From Aspley Guise, the wooded curves of Bedford Road mean that a view across the green the Lodge unfolds suddenly, whereas the approach from the north across open farmland is announced by long views of the church tower. Contrastingly, School Lane has a sunken feel as it was clearly cut into the shoulder of the hill to ease the gradient coming up from Crawley Brook. Brick retaining walls to either side surmounted by trees and shrubbery give a strong sense of enclosure until the White House and Manor Farmhouse become apparent.

School Lane approaching the village centre

5.4 The green itself is roughly mown grass edged at the roadside with short granite kerbstones. The buildings facing it compete visually with an abundance of mature trees.

5.5 St James' Church occupies a commanding position on the highest ground. The churchyard is the other significant open space in the village punctuated by standing gravestones and holly and yew trees. It affords panoramic views across a landscape of large arable fields marred only by the M1 motorway in the distance.

5.6 In general, Church End is characterised by generous spaces between its buildings and considerable planting in the form of trees and hedges. The setting is essentially rural with arable land to the north and the distinctive parkland pasture of Crawley Park to the south. The tranquillity of this rural isolation is however broken by the impact of modern traffic volumes on lanes that have not evolved at the same pace.

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 Manor Farmhouse, at Henry VI Cottage and at Crawley Park Farm. Agricultural use of timber framing is also evident in the barns at Crawley Hall and in Crow Lane. The tradition of heavy timbering was perpetuated in the lychgate to St James' churchyard built in 1911.

6.2 Stone was used for higher status buildings, such as St James' Church where a mix of greensand and ironstone was used. This gives a startling colour to the building that led Pevsner to ask 'Has any other church such green greensand as the west tower of Husborne Crawley?' Ironstone is also used for the churchyard wall either side of the lychgate. This is an iron-bearing sandstone that weathers to a rusty brown colour as the iron salts oxidise.

Greensand and ironstone of the church tower

6.3 From the 18th century, however, brick takes over as the dominant building material and even the timber frames were refurbished with brick infill. Church End has several fine examples of Georgian brickwork at Crawley Hall, Crawley House (1777) and at No.270 Bedford Road.

6.4 The brickwork at Church End is generally of red brick, although No.270 has diamond-shaped patterns using flared blue headers. The cream and yellow bricks, made from the Gault clays found further south, tend to indicate a later date. At the Lodge, which is mid-19th century, yellow bricks are used for pilasters and banding while, at the late-19th century Elm Cottage on School Lane, blue bricks are used to emphasise corners.

Contrasting brickwork of the Lodge

6.5 The roofing material for earlier buildings was thatch, which still survives at Henry VI Cottage and at the Thatched Cottage. With the production of bricks, clay tiles became into widespread use. Although Welsh blue states were imported after the railway had opened in 1846, they have tended to be used on the more utilitarian farm buildings and, unlike the tendency in many places, they have not challenged the dominance of tiles.

6.6 Side-opening casement windows, originally with iron frames, were generally used in earlier vernacular buildings. This tradition continued, using timber casements for most of the buildings at Church End. Cast-iron was also used as a framing material for windows in utilitarian farm buildings and for the estate cottages, such as those in Crow Lane, where lattice patterns are used for a picturesque effect.

6.7 However, in the 18th century, vertically sliding sashes became fashionable for higher status houses, such as Crawley House and Crawley Hall. Many windows have been altered to provide top-hung vents or to make use of modern plastics but this is always to the detriment of the historic character of the village.

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 survivals at Church End are the granite kerbs no doubt imported in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Street furniture is sparingly used as befits a functional rural village. An octagonal cast-iron bollard protects the brickwork of Manor Farmhouse at the entrance to Church End Farm and adjacent is a wall-mounted letter box also of cast-iron. On the green, there is a modern bench and a plastic litter bin, and a plain steel bollard outside the Lodge.

6.9 Boundaries make an important contribution to the definition of the public areas. There are stone and brick walls around the churchyard and there are some modern fences, but the predominance of hedges adds greatly to the local character.

6.10 Within the overall contribution made to the character of Church End by the many mature trees, there is a wide variety of species and several notable specimens. The Scots pines in the churchyard and the garden of the Old Vicarage are characteristic of the heathland that emerges on the greensand ridge. A row of sweet chestnuts on the north side of School Lane was deliberately planted at the entrance to the village and there is a dramatic oak tree opposite the junction with Crow Lane. There are ornamental conifers at Crawley House and it is surrounded by Crawley Park with its characteristic parkland planting.

The Thatched Cottage

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 traffic management strategy should consider both the volume and the speed of through traffic;
- The introduction of an Article 4 direction would stem any further loss of traditional materials and detailing from single family dwellings;
- Improvements could be made to the surfacing of footways including the retention of granite kerbstones;
- A tree strategy for the roadside verges and the churchyard would provide succession planning to maintain the wooded character of the village;
- 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.

Barns at Crawley Hall

Central Bedfordshire Council
Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area
Character Appraisal Map
Not to scale
N
Conservation Area Boundary
Listed Buildings
Positive Buildings
Significant Tree Group
Significant Views
Important Open Space
© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Mid Bedfordshire District Council. Licence No. 100019740 (2008)
Pond
Crawley Hall
Track
92.6m
270
Rooftops
Henry VI Cottage
Oakley House
The Lodge
Church End Farm
Church End Barn
BEDFORD ROAD
A 507
102.1m
96.4m
St James's Church
Lych Gate
The White House
99.1m
The Old Vicarage
Thatched Cottage
Red Cottage
Crawley Park Farm
Church End
SCHOOL LANE
94.1m
1.52m RH
107.5m
Def
Parkside
Venison Lodge
Path (um)
Crawley Park
Gardeners Cottage
Crawley House
Pond
TCB Pumping Station
CROW LANE
The Orchard
Quarry House
Eastwood
The Birches
SANDRINO ROAD
Crawley Park
Husborne Crawley

APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

- J Godber – History of Bedfordshire – 1984
- Bedfordshire County Council – *Historic parks and gardens register review* - 1996
- Mid Beds District Council – *Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area: Designation statement* – 1973
- Mid Beds District Council – *Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan*
- Ed. William Page – *A History of the County of Bedford: Volume 3* – Victoria County History 1912
- N. Pevsner – *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough* – 1968
- www.bedfordshire.gov.uk – Husborne Crawley

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 1923

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:

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APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDINGS

Listed buildings within the Husborne Crawley (Church End) Conservation Area:

• Bedford Road	No.270 (listed as No.70)	Grade II
• Bedford Road	Crawley Hall	Grade II
• Bedford Road	Barn SW of Crawley Hall	Grade II
• Bedford Road	Henry VI Cottage	Grade II
• Crawley Park	Crawley House	Grade II*
• Crawley Park	Crawley Park Farmhouse	Grade II
• Crawley Park	The Thatched Cottage	Grade II
• School Lane	St James's Church	Grade II*
• School Lane	Manor Farmhouse	Grade II
• School Lane	The Lodge	Grade II

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