

# HUSBORNE CRAWLEY

## 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 Conservation Area was designated by Bedfordshire County Council in May 1978. 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 Conservation Area through the planning system.

## 2.0 SUMMARY

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

- Estate village in rural surroundings on the edge of Woburn Park;
- Located on historic turnpike from Woburn to Bedford;
- Separated from the earlier Husborne Crawley settlement at Church End by a shallow valley;
- Linear form along the west side of Turnpike Road;
- Buildings mainly comprise short terraces of four or six model cottages built in the 1850s;
- Residential use complemented by a school, village hall, smithy, dairy and two public houses (Smithy and one of the pubs now converted to houses);
- 34 listed buildings (grade II) include the school, the White Horse PH, Crawley Lodge and most of the cottages;
- Buildings mostly of red brick with tiled roofs and latticed cast-iron windows;
- Views over open farmland to the west ;
- Backdrop of trees in Woburn Park to the east behind a high brick wall;
- Holly hedges along Turnpike Road.

## 3.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

- 3.1 Husborne Crawley lies to the west side of the county on the edge of Woburn Park. 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 A4012 from Leighton Buzzard and Woburn in the south which links to the A421 as the route continues to Bedford.
- 3.2 Husborne Crawley also lies along the shallow valley of Crawley Brook which cuts into the major greensand ridge that crosses mid-Bedfordshire diagonally from southwest to north east.



- 3.3 While the greensand has tended to be marginal for agriculture, resulting in heathland and woods, the overlay of alluvial clays in the valley has resulted in a more fertile landscape. To the south, however, the Gault clay soils are less productive, although 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 even more hedges to provide the wide open landscapes of a modern mechanised arable economy.
- 3.5 The east side of Turnpike Road is edged by a high brick wall that marks the boundary of Woburn Park. Behind the wall are plantations of trees that provide a backdrop to local views and contrast with the arable landscape to the west.



Turnpike Road looking north

- 3.6 The historical focus of Husborne Crawley, including the parish church of St James, is located at Church End on higher ground a short distance to the north west. Church End has a separate conservation area. This newer part of the settlement was laid out as an estate village along Turnpike Road in the 1850s.
- 3.7 The conservation area includes the linear village, from Crawley Lodge at the south end to the Old Smithy on Mill Road at the north end. It also extends a short distance into Horsepool Lane and School Lane which both lead north west towards Aspley Guise and Church End respectively.



## 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 Crawlai 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 1794, it was bought by the Duke of Bedford and demolished.



The Bull (former PH)

- 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’s Church at Church End.



- 4.4 The main road was part of a significant route to Bedford from towns to the south and by the 17th century there were wayside properties providing services for travellers. The importance increased in 1796 when the road was improved to become part of the network of turnpikes, hence the present name Turnpike Road.



Timber framed barn at the Bakehouse

- 4.5 Throughout the 18th century, the Bedford Estate continued a policy of acquiring properties and parcels of land in the area, including the purchase of Crawley Manor. This anticipated the enclosure of common land in 1799, which in turn led to agricultural improvements in the 19th century.
- 4.6 The improvements included improvements to the living conditions of agricultural workers in which the Duke of Bedford played a leading part. Some 400 model cottages were built by the Bedford Estate generally in short terraces of four or six. The ten groups at Husborne Crawley, therefore, represent a significant part of this philanthropy that was later to influence the Garden City movement and the birth of modern town planning.
- 4.7 Until the mid-19th century, the only education provided in Husborne Crawley was a Sunday School at the church. The nearest school during the week was at Aspley Guise. In 1867, the Duke of Bedford funded the construction of the school on a site in what has since been known as School Lane. This was just prior to the Education Act of 1870 that made schooling compulsory. The building was designed by Henry Clutton, the architect of many buildings for the 7th Duke.





Husborne Crawley Lower School and Schoolhouse

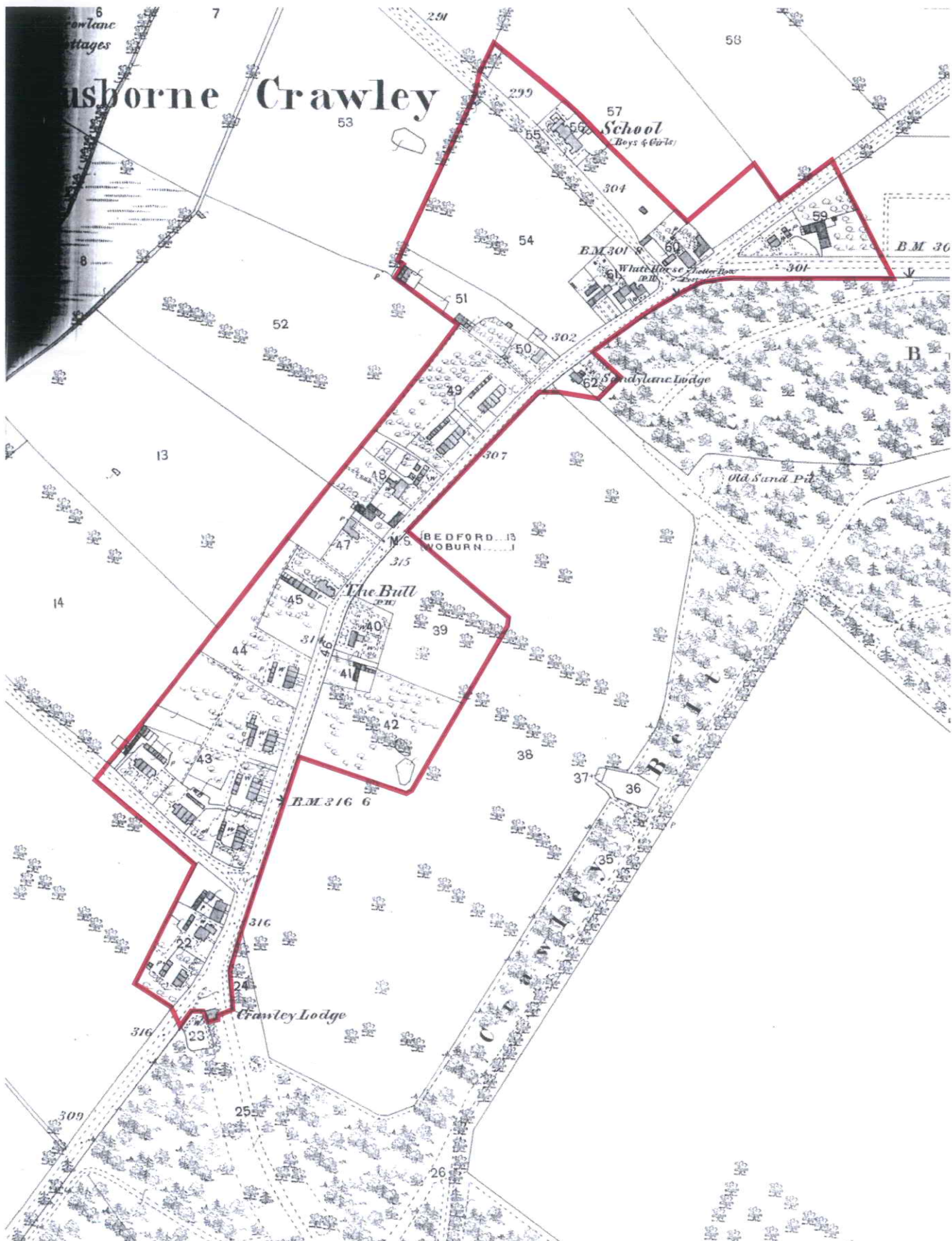


- 4.8 In 1894, the Village Reading Room was built on the corner of School Lane and Turnpike Road. It has an eccentric design in which the central bay with a six-light window breaks forwards and up through the deep eaves to form a parapet framed by two tall chimney stacks that are linked by a sweeping stone coping. This captures the spirit of the transition from Victorian to Edwardian building.
- 4.9 The nearest railway station was opened at Ridgmont in 1846 giving access to London for both passengers and agricultural produce. However, Husborne Crawley did not experience the intensification of housing in the late 19th century that so often followed the railways. Indeed, the population of the parish, which had been 680 in 1831, declined to 317 in 1951 as agriculture became increasingly mechanised.
- 4.10 The 20th century had little affect on Husborne Crawley until the significant growth of through traffic led to road improvements to the north resulting in a new roundabout on Mill Road and the attendant signage and street lighting.



# ORDNANCE SURVEY FIRST EDITION 1881

With Conservation Area Boundary







## 5.0 CHARACTER

- 5.1 Almost all of the buildings in Husbome Crawley are residential and the majority of these are the model cottages of the Bedford Estate. The remaining few houses are generally those that pre-date the estate village and the house converted out of the former smithy. In addition, there are the Infants' School, the Village Reading Room, the White Horse Inn and the dairy.
- 5.2 On the east side of Turnpike Road, there are lodges at three entrances to Woburn Park: Sandylane Lodge, Woodcroft Lodge and Crawley Lodge. The latter is a main entrance while the others provide service access.



The Model Dairy



- 5.3 There is no real focus to the village as it is essentially a working outpost of the more historic Church End. Nor are there any formal open spaces. A grass verge along the east side of Turnpike Road widens at Crawley Lodge. There is also the spaciousness generated by large private gardens, the Reading Room car park and the school playing field.
- 5.4 The linear layout of the village emphasises its functional nature and that of the main road. Nonetheless, the gentle curve of Turnpike Road ensures that the view unfolds progressively and there are picturesque aspects in the historicist design of the cottages and the ornamental dairy that make it unmistakably the planned product of a singular owner.
- 5.5 Although the buildings are well spaced, the planting of gardens prevents views between them across the open fields to the west. There are, however, views from Horsepool Lane and School Lane. From the latter, a public footpath starts with a sign commemorating the crash landing nearby of a British bomber in 1941 killing two of its four-man crew.







Estate Houses, Horsepool Lane

- 5.6 Within the conservation area, trees do not dominate as they do at Church End. However, this is more than made up for by the trees in Woburn Park which provide a dramatic element in views along Turnpike Road and in views across the conservation area from the western approaches on Horsepool Lane and School Lane.
- 5.7 The low density of building in the conservation area is a major factor in its rural estate character. While the 20th century has not succeeded in spoiling this with infill housing developments, there is pressure of another kind. Proximity to Junction 13 on the M1 motorway means that a heavy volume of traffic passes through the village to its considerable detriment.



Turnpike Road looking south to Crawley Lodge



## 6.0 APPEARANCE

- 6.1 In the middle ages, the local material for most buildings was timber. Evidence of timber framing can be seen in the barn that fronts Turnpike Road at the Bakehouse. It is less apparent in the Bakehouse itself because the frame was later enveloped with brick. Similarly, the 17th century timber framing at No.32 Turnpike Road and at No.3 Mill Road is obscured by rendering.
- 6.2 Stone was used for higher status buildings and is, therefore, more prevalent at Church End. Here, it is used as a plinth for timber framing and occasionally for garden walls.



No.3 Mill Road

- 6.3 In the 18th and 19th centuries, brick takes over as the dominant building material. Crawley Lodge (1852) is an early example of the creamy yellow brick produced from Gault clays. More common are the red bricks used to build the estate cottages from 1852 to 1854. These bricks are an uncommon size with a section that is almost square. They are laid so that the headers are slightly taller than they are wide. This produces a so called 'rat-trap' bond that gives an early form of cavity construction.
- 6.4 As the 19th century progressed, the school (1867) minimised the use of brick by substituting the cheaper use of render applied to softwood framing. The Reading Room has an element of this in its gables, but it also uses imported stone for details that contrast with the red brickwork.





Reading Room

- 6.5 With the production of bricks, clay tiles became into widespread use for roofing, replacing the thatch of earlier buildings. The roof of the White Horse Inn has a shallower pitch than most of its neighbours. It was evidently designed to take Welsh blue slates which became available after the railway had opened in 1846. The timber framed barn at the Bakehouse is roofed with corrugated sheeting an expedient that was not uncommon with agricultural buildings.
- 6.6 Side-opening casement windows, originally with iron frames and leaded lights, were generally used in earlier vernacular buildings. This tradition has continued at Husborne Crawley in that the historical form has been imitated in cast-iron for the estate cottages. This historicist reference, at a time when technology was beginning to allow window panes to be larger, is a major factor in the picturesque character of the village.





Cast-iron window detail

- 6.7 Other buildings also have casement windows usually framed in timber and the White Horse Inn is perhaps the only building to have double-hung sliding sashes. Some windows in the non-estate properties have been altered to provide top-hung vents or use untraditional details 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 survival in Turnpike Road is of granite kerbs, although some kerbs are modern concrete. On the side lanes, it is the absence of kerbs that reinforces the rural character.



- 6.9 Recent highway works at the north end of the conservation area have left a closed section of Ridgmont Road on the south side of the Old Smithy. This presents an opportunity for enhancement that might in part mitigate the very urban affect of the new roundabout. Nearby, No.1 Mill Road is a red brick house bearing the Bedford crest and the date 1880. It is currently boarded up and clearly in need of repair and refurbishment.
- 6.10 There is virtually no street furniture in Husborne Crawley, as befits a functional rural village, and this makes the line of concrete bollards outside the school all the more discordant. A better design or management approach could make these redundant.



Cast-iron pier in wall to Woburn Park



- 6.11 Boundary walls and hedges make an important contribution to the definition of public and private spaces. On the west side of the main road, properties are fronted by a mix of brick walls or post-and-rail fences, but the main form of enclosure are hedges. In some parts, these are tall holly hedges no doubt intended to reduce the noise and intrusion of heavy traffic.
- 6.12 On the east side, the estate wall to Woburn Park is by far the largest brick structure in the area. It is very architectural with a chamfered plinth and coping, and buttresses at regular intervals. At about two metres high and extending the whole length of the conservation area (and beyond), it asserts the presence of the estate and achieves its deterrent effect. At the lodges, there are heavy brick piers and close-boarded gates except at Crawley Lodge where the heavy timber gates are built in an open grid and the gateposts have massive finials.



Gates at Crawley Lodge



## 7.0 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT

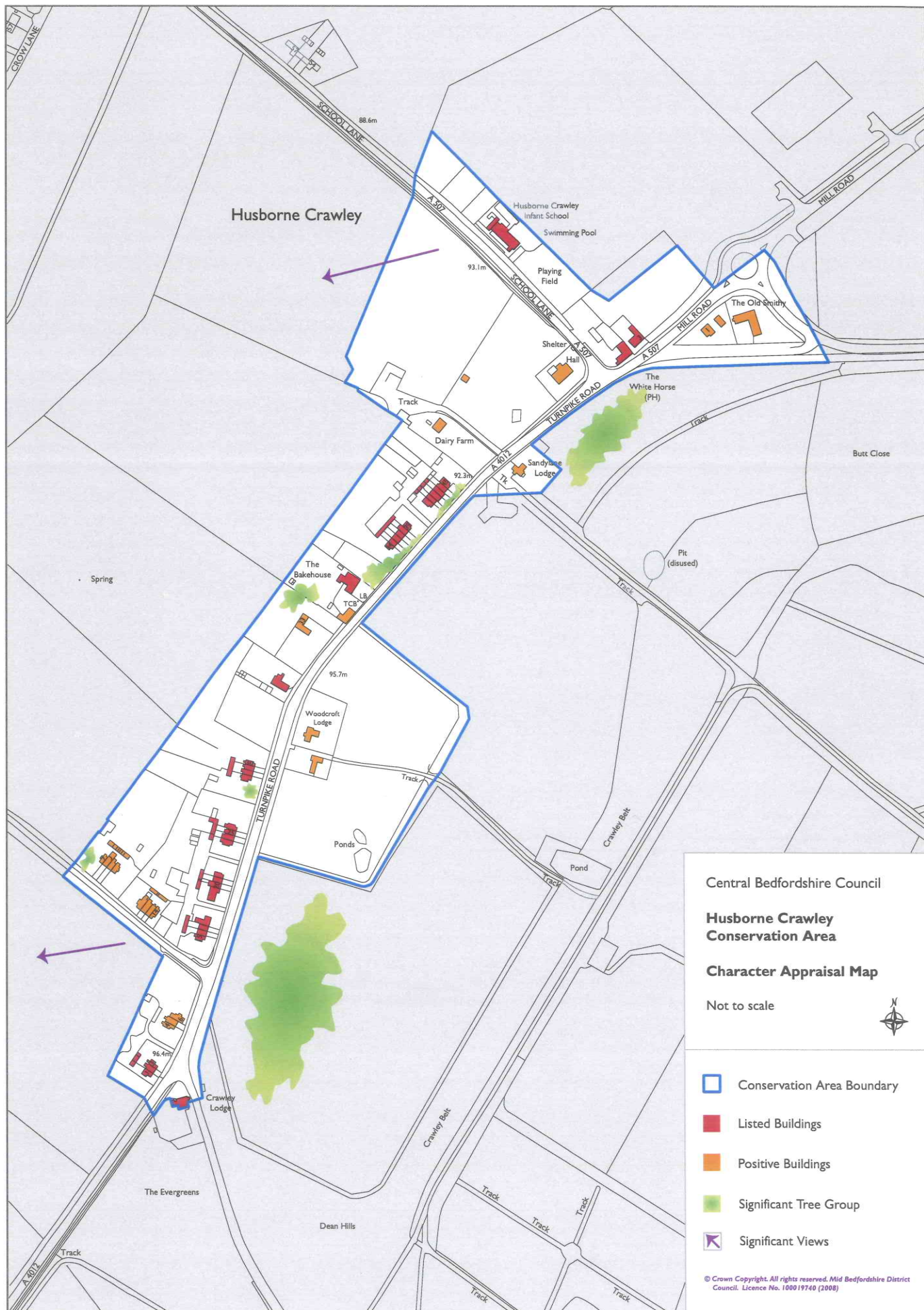
7.1 While the general condition of conservation area is good, there are always opportunities to enhance buildings and spaces:

- A traffic management strategy should consider both the volume and the speed of through traffic;
- A scheme of repair and rehabilitation for No.1 Mill Road should be sought;
- A scheme for landscaping the aftermath of highway improvements adjacent to No.1 Mill Road is also necessary;
- Encouragement to be given for the reinstatement of traditional doors and windows, particularly those not already protected by the Bedford Estate;
- Improvements could be made to the surfacing of footways including the retention of granite kerbstones;
- A landscaping scheme would enhance the setting of the village Reading Room;
- Improvements could also be made outside the school to make the row of concrete bollards unnecessary;
- The most significant of the unlisted buildings should be put forward for inclusion in the Council's proposed list of Buildings and Structures of Local Importance. However, statutory listing should be considered for Nos.7-14 Horsepool Lane and Nos.4-6 Turnpike Road as these are to all appearances the same as the terraces that are listed;
- Street furniture should be well-designed and co-ordinated;
- Promotion of the use of lime-based mortars, plasters and renders for older buildings and structures in place of cement-based materials.



No.1 Mill Road





## APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

- J Godber – History of Bedfordshire – 1984
- 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](http://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 1901

### Websites:

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

## APPENDIX 2: LISTED BUILDINGS

Listed buildings within the Husborne Crawley Conservation Area:

|                 |                              |          |
|-----------------|------------------------------|----------|
| • Mill Road     | No.3                         | Grade II |
| • School Lane   | Lower School and Schoolhouse | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Crawley Lodge                | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.1-3 and outhouses        | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.15-17 and outhouses      | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.20-22 and outhouses      | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.23-26 and outhouses      | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos. 27-30 and outhouses     | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | No.32                        | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.34-39 and outhouses      | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | Nos.40-45 and outhouses      | Grade II |
| • Turnpike Road | The Bakehouse                | Grade II |



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