

HENHAM – May 2007

Introduction.

Henham is one of the larger villages in the district and is served by a good range of local facilities. There are three distinct areas, firstly the historic core, secondly an area of 20th century development to the south of the Conservation Area, separated in part from the historic core by the tennis courts and thirdly a further small area of dispersed mostly 20th century housing strung out along the Chickney Road. Most genuine infill plots within the built up area have been developed.

Because of its function as a village in the north of the district, situated close to Stansted Airport and adjacent to the important communication route of the M11, it is important to study the sensitivity and capacity to ascertain whether or not the village can accommodate additional residential development without damage to its environmental qualities.

General Character.

Henham is situated in a primarily rural area on a gently sloping ridge some 20 miles south of Cambridge and 6 miles north east of Bishop's Stortford. It is the settlement's proximity to both the M11 and to Stansted Airport, though, that exerts the greatest influences offering opportunities for employment and enhanced communications with Cambridge, London and beyond. The main Cambridge to London railway line can be accessed from Elsenham station situated some 2 miles distant. Because of its location the village will continue to be subjected to development pressures and so now is an appropriate moment to be considering how to best protect its built environment.

There is little local employment and what does exist is mainly confined, as it has been for over a thousand years, to agriculture or agricultural service industries. Other work opportunities based in the village are centered around local services; there is a bustling pub, a community shop and a well-attended primary school. Until recently, there was a motor garage serving petrol and undertaking repair work. This has now closed and residents must travel, if they are able, to Newport or Stansted for such services.

Henham is situated on a ridge where the surrounding farmland falls away gently. 'The soil is chiefly a strong clay and loam; subsoil clay'¹. Geologically Henham sits on the Glacial Tills which characterise much of the central Essex landscape.

The surrounding countryside is intensively farmed with a large scale mostly regular field pattern on the valleysides, and low trimmed or fragmented hedges. Small linear fields on the valley floor are divided by drainage ditches or hedges, some exhibiting the remnants of earlier layering. In the nineteenth

¹ *Kelly's Directory of Essex*, Kelly, 1898, p. 221

century wheat oats, barley and roots'² were cultivated usually on a 'four course shift system'. Today wheat, barley and rape are most frequently grown and except for a narrow band of lower quality land along the western edge of the built-up area, is classified as being of grade 2 quality (very good)³.

General character and plan form. With the exception of the modern development at the southern end of Crow Street Henham has changed little since the 18th century reflecting the comparative poverty that affected many of the more isolated rural settlements that were not easily connected by either road or rail links to larger centres of population. The existing conservation area is a mirror reflection of the community as it existed in the late 19th century and as shown on the 1877 Ordnance survey map The community then, as the conservation area today, consists of three distinct historic areas: Firstly, the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Church Street and the Cock Inn; secondly, Crow Street and the High Street with their well-treed wide green-like verges and ponds, and the narrow passageway comprising The Rows; and thirdly, the open space of Woodend Green.

A large development of 20th century housing abuts the Conservation Area at the southern end of Crow Street, where, because of the general curve in the road and the buffering effect of the open space of the tennis courts, it impinges little on the historic environment. A smaller development of modern housing displaying little architectural sympathy is to be found at Wrights Piece where it is effectively screened from the road by thick vegetation. The combination of gently curving streets, generous open spaces and water features, mature trees, buildings of good proportions and the juxtaposition of varied materials and roofscapes, all contribute to the special quality of Henham. More recent driveways now traverse the greens in Crow Street and infill properties are evident throughout the village. If the open green impression of this area is to be retained and not subjected to further erosion, it will be important to consider the nature of future developments. Similarly, the essential rurality of the village is enhanced by the proximity of open fields to the church and the view looking out from the top of Church Street over countryside towards Elsenham. A very much smaller area of 20th century housing is also to be found at the westernmost extent of the village where it is strung out along the Chickney Road and thus impacts little on the historic core.

If the rural setting of this area is to be retained, it is important that open land to the north and west remains as open countryside. Similar comments apply to the southern end of Woodend Green where the 20th century housing, should it be permitted to expand beyond the existing boundaries, could detract from the area.

The historic core and its relationship with the built up area of the town as a whole.

² *General view of the Agriculture of the County of Essex drawn up for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture, and Internal Improvement*, London, Richard Phillips, 1807

³ *Agricultural land Classification of England and Wales: revised guidelines and criteria for Grading the quality of agricultural land*, Defra Publications, 1988

The existing conservation area has recently been appraised and its extent as now defined is an accurate definition of the historic core. The English Heritage⁴ register records some 70 individually listed buildings in the parish of Henham, of which 57 are to be found in the designated conservation area. The majority of these (over 90%) are timber-framed and plastered. Most date from the 16th to 18th centuries. Unsurprisingly, the earliest buildings – the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Long Yards, Friars Cottage and Poplar Hall - are to be found clustered around the possible site of the old Medieval village. Other early buildings are to be found dispersed along the top of Crow Street and the Rows with a further grouping along the peripheries of Woodend Green. These three areas define the essential historical foci of the village.

One very important feature of the village is the use of hedging and timber picket fences to define boundaries and link buildings. The use of these materials reflects the local landscape where hedged field boundaries form such a visually important part.

Throughout the conservation area there are trees in abundance, often located on the greens, many of which have already been made subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

There are a number of quality areas of open space principally comprising the many wide verges abutting Crow Street and the High Street. Woodend Green is another important area. There are, though, a number of other open spaces in private ownership that might be susceptible to development pressures, many of which perform valuable landscape functions that are described below.

To the north-west of the church is the important moated site now comprising Down Hall House. This is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. AML20717)⁵, probably being the site of a former brick built homestead known as Henham Hall⁶, the brick footings of which were discovered when the present building was erected in 1961. Further archaeological remains have been discovered to the north and west of the village, mainly in the vicinity of Henham Reservoir⁷. The desirability of preserving these monuments and settings is a material consideration where there is a presumption in favour of the preservation of such important sites and their settings.

Expressed in percentage terms the historic core defined by the conservation area and including the large open spaces that fall within it, represents about 70% of the built up part of the village.

⁴ Listed Buildings Online

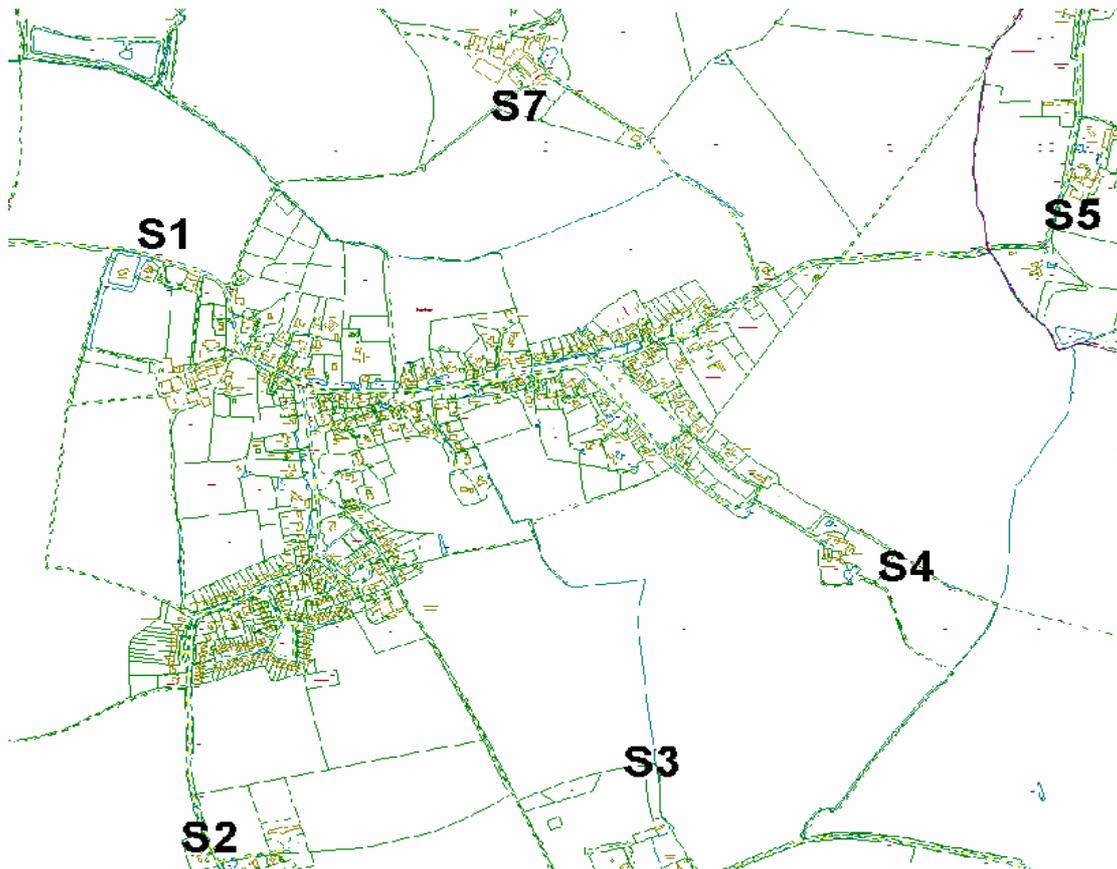
⁵ Henham Hall Moated Site, *English Heritage County List of Scheduled Monuments, Essex*, March 1994

⁶ Cf. Thos. Wright *The History and Topography of the County of Essex*, 1835, p. 146

⁷ Patricia M. L. Christie A Shafthole Implement from Henham Essex, pp. 103-107 in *Essex History & Archaeology*, Volume 12, 1980 & R Havis & M. Medlycott A Roman Site at Henham, Essex, pp. 143-4 in *Essex History & Archaeology*, Volume 22, 1990

In summary the historic core is of high environmental quality with a wide range of listed buildings of varying ages and styles and important areas of open space. To the south the historic core is surrounded and generally visually isolated from the approach roads by modern housing residential developments that are generally neutral in character and neither seriously erode or add to the quality of its historic qualities. This is similarly true, though to a lesser extent at the western approach. Elsewhere, small pockets of modern development intercede between the historic core and open landscape; such as at Hall Close, to the south of Woodend Green and north of The Bury. The whole village is set on the edge of a large plateau of arable open countryside that ascends from the west and south to the edges of the built up area, generally forming sharp distinct edges between village and open countryside, though in several areas this impact is softened by substantial tree growth on the periphery.

The quality and general function of landscapes in and adjacent to the town by sector and a broad statement as to the effect of development in each sector.



Map of Henham showing the sectors.

Sector 1. Land to the south and north of Old Mead Road, the approach from Henham Lodge and from Pledgdon Hall

Quality of Landscape. The landscape is one of an arable farmland consisting of large fields, many retaining their historic boundaries, with limited tree cover rising from the west and south to the plateau on which the village sits. These

meet the built up edges of the village along the axis of the main thoroughfare demarked by Old Mead Road, Church Street and High Street. The overall characteristics are of an arable landscape of an impressive open scale and character within which the village is located. Mature trees, particularly on the periphery of the church and other historic properties such as Birds Farm and The Bury partly obscure the historic core from view. Several public footpaths traverse part of this sector, generally following a north-south route.

General function of Landscape. An important agricultural landscape that is accessible to the public in parts and one that contains and clearly defines the extent of the built form in this location.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 1 land would impact on that part of the historic core at its north western extremity where Old Mead Road becomes Church Street. This is an area of great sensitivity where quality historic properties, including St. Mary's Church and Birds Farm directly abut open countryside. Elsewhere the effects of development would be mostly mitigated by the buffering effect of twentieth century development that separates the open countryside from the historically sensitive Crow Street. The principal effect of large scale development would be to extend the village beyond clearly defined landscape features thus detrimentally affecting its setting and onto open arable farmland resulting in the loss of agricultural land. It is considered that development in this sector would considerably diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 1 view from Henham reservoir to the M11



Sector 1 view from Old Mead Road

Sector 2. Mill Road approach.

Quality of Landscape. This is a large arable landscape much of which is open in character but also including several smaller field pockets. The land rises from the south and west to the edge of the village where the substantial area of twentieth century development forms a distinct edge. To the south-east the field boundaries are quite strongly delineated in comparison to the much less well-defined landscape to the south and west where, historically, much of the land was open common. There are footpaths linking Mill Road with St Mary's Church and with Old Mead. Another path links Carters Lane with Pledgdon Hall.

General function of Landscape. The landscape clearly defines the edge of the settlement and is generally accessible to the public.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 2 land would not impact on the historic core due to the presence of extensive twentieth century development that separates this sector from the historic core. Subject to the retention of the important hedge boundaries, both peripheral and internal, and subject to high quality design and respect for the adjoining Conservation Area to the north, appropriate residential development could be created that at worst would be neutral and at best would improve the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 2 Distant view from Mill Road to the M11



Sector 2 Mid distance view of 20th century development Mill Road approach

Sector 3. Southern approach to Hall Close.

Quality of Landscape. This is an open arable landscape partly retaining evidence of historic field patterns. The land slopes up to the edge of the village and its mixture of peripheral historic and modern development with strong mature tree lines which mostly obscure the historic core from view. Some field boundaries are quite strongly delineated with low hedges and ditches in evidence. Public footpaths link Halls Close with Carters Lane and Woodend Green.

General function of Landscape. The landscape clearly defines the edge of the settlement including a significant portion of the historic core and provides a pleasant rural approach to the community.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 3 land would impact on that part of the historic core at its southern extremity to the east of Crow Street and the south of the High Street specifically where Henley's Farm meets the countryside. Elsewhere because of the buffering effect of modern developments, it would not. The principal effect of large scale development would be to extend the village beyond clearly defined landscape features thus detrimentally affecting its setting and this approach by intruding onto open arable farmland with its consequential loss.

Sector 4. Approach from the south to Woodend Green.

Quality of landscape. Here much of the open arable landscape that meets a village edge which is clearly defined by bands of tree cover beyond which are glimpses of the open spaces and mixed twentieth century and historic development which comprises Woodend Green. Public footpaths link Woodend Green with Carters Lane to the west and Green End Farm and the B1051 Mill Road to the south.

General function of landscape. The wooded edges strongly define the settlement at this location.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 3 land would impact on that part of the historic core at its south eastern extremity, and particularly on the important group of historic properties surrounding Woodend Green. Large scale development would detrimentally affect the landscape setting of the village at this location and resulting in the loss of agricultural land. It is considered that development in this sector would diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.

Sector 5. Chickney Road approach from the east.

Quality of landscape. This is an open arable landscape with field boundaries delineated by trees and low growth and meeting the clearly defined village edge in the vicinity of Sycamore Close and the Cemetery. Along this boundary is to be found extensive tree cover beyond which only occasional glimpses of the community may be glimpsed. A track and public bridleway links the Chickney Road with Henham Lodge to the north.

General function of Landscape. Emerging development at the village edge forms a distinct boundary between the settlement and countryside at this location.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 4 land would not impact on the historic core to any appreciable extent because the latter is largely shielded from view by modern edge of village development and tree cover. The principal effect of large scale development would be to extend the village beyond its clearly defined landscape edge detrimentally affecting the setting of the village as a whole and resulting in the loss of agricultural land. However, subject to the retention of the important hedge boundaries and subject to high quality design and respect for the adjoining Conservation Area to the west, appropriate small scale residential development could be created that at worst would be neutral and at best would improve the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 5 view Chickney Road approach from the east

Sector 6. Open spaces within the historic core and Conservation area.

(a) Verges bordering High Street

Quality of Landscape. The combination of well-managed ponds, wide grassy verges and varied tree cover, combine to produce a visual effect of both openness and contained rurality which contribute to make this a most pleasing streetscape. The numerous ponds enhance and reflect the quality historic buildings such as The Willows and Bury Cottage. Free standing trees run in an almost unbroken line from Keyham House to Henleys Farm on the south side and again from Rose Cottage to Dragonholt on the north side and provide useful screening for many of the modern properties, particularly at Wright's Piece thereby lessening their impact on the historic street scene.

General function of Landscape. The fine landscape characteristics compliment the equally high qualities of the built form of buildings fronting the High Street and serve to visually link the significant areas of Church Street and Crow Street with Woodend Green.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development here would detrimentally impact on the historic core and represent a substantial loss of character and amenity. It is considered that development in this sector would be highly damaging and significantly diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 6a Verges bordering High Street

(b) Verges bordering Crow Street.

Quality of Landscape. The combination of gently sloping topography, wide grassy verges, ponds and mixed deciduous with some coniferous tree cover, combine to produce a visual effect of both openness and contained rurality which contribute to make this a most visually arresting landscape. Free standing trees extending from The Old School past Wyndies Cottage and down to White Cottage impart boulevard-like characteristics to this thoroughfare. Mature trees fronting The Glebe House add interest and scale to this part of the village complimenting the historic built form. More modern properties to the west of Crow Street are mostly screened by lower growth which softens the impact on the street scene. Two water pumps add historic interest.

General function of Landscape. The fine landscape characteristics compliment the equally high qualities of the built form of buildings fronting Crow Street whilst the gently sloping topography serves to conceal the modern development at the southern end.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development here would detrimentally impact on the historic core and represent a substantial loss of character. Another principal effect of development would be to merge distinct elements of the village causing the loss of the fine treed boulevard-like setting that supports a varied ecological system. It is considered that development in

this sector would be highly damaging and significantly diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 6b Verges bordering Crow Street

(c) Tennis courts on Carters Lane.

Quality of Landscape. This is a small flat area mostly enclosed by trees and hedges with additional high fencing. The courts form the southern extent of the conservation area in this vicinity.

General function of Landscape. The land here plays a vital role in providing recreation for the village and also acts as an open space that performs a buffering function between modern development in Sages and the historic core at its southernmost extent in Crow Street.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development here would detrimentally impact on the adjacent historic core and result in a considerable loss of amenity to the village. It is considered that development in this sector would be damaging and would diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.

(d) The churchyard and green at Church Street.

Quality of Landscape. The part-walled churchyard with its graveyard and wealth of stone grave markers enjoys unbroken views over the open countryside to the west of the village. There are significant numbers of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees of considerable environmental and ecological importance. Between the churchyard and the road is a small green traversed by several track ways. Both areas are enjoyed by visitors and the general public.

General function of Landscape. The green and churchyard are important in providing an historic landscape framework for setting off the key landmark building in the village, namely the church, together with other quality buildings and walls nearby. They also provide a tangible link with the open countryside and serve to emphasise the rurality of their setting at the westernmost extent of the Conservation Area.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development here would exert a seriously detrimental effect on the historic core and would lead to considerable loss of open space and trees which support a varied ecological system and serve to define this area of the village. It is considered that development in this sector would be highly damaging and significantly diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 6d the churchyard and green at Church Street

(e) Woodend Green

Quality Landscape. The large areas of grass, fine avenue of Chestnuts and gently sloping topography impart parkland characteristics to this delightful public open space. Trees fronting Pleasant Cottage, Ham Cottage and Prompt Corner make a significant contribution to the overall landscape in this location and provide a strong vertical emphasis complimenting the historic built form.

General function of Landscape. The extensive tree cover provides additional variety of form colour scale and shape to the historic street scene making a pleasant visual contrast with the more enclosed built form of the street scene at Wright's Piece and along the Chickney Road. Woodend Green provides an area of mixed recreational enjoyment for the general public with significant tree cover. Viewed from the Chickney Road junction few modern properties are visible due to the gentle slope of the landscape towards the south.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development here would detrimentally impact on the historic core resulting in the loss of fine open spaces and trees that support a varied ecological system. It is considered that development in this sector would be damaging and diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.



Sector 6e Woodend Green

Sector 7. Land to the north of the High Street.

Quality of Landscape An open arable landscape of arable fields displaying substantial evidence of historic boundaries meets a clearly defined village edge along the northern line of the High Street. Tree cover partly obscures views into the historic core. A public footpath runs north to the Henham reservoir.

General function of Landscape. The landscape clearly defines the edge of the settlement including a significant portion of the historic core and provides a pleasant rural approach to the community.

Broad statement of effect of development. Development on Sector 7 land would impact on that part of the historic core at its central northern extremity between The Bury and Yarrow Cottage. Elsewhere because of the buffering effect of modern developments, it would not. The principal effect of large scale development would be to extend the village beyond clearly defined landscape features thus detrimentally affecting its setting and this approach by intruding onto open arable farmland with its consequential loss.

Overall summary.

Land in Sector 2, to the west and south along Mill Road is the only area identified where, subject to retention of trees and hedges, the effect would at worst be neutral and at best improve the sense of place and local distinctiveness of the settlement.

It is accepted that whilst the quality of new development can be designed to reduce detrimental effect, new development in all sectors, excepting limited development to the south of Hall Close in Sector 3 and along Chickney Road in Sector 5, would result in a detrimental impact on the historic core to varying degrees. The effects would be greatest in respect of any development that would occur within, or on the periphery of Sector 1.

In relation to all sectors except Sector 2, the conclusion reached is that significant development would diminish the sense of place and local distinctiveness of Henham for the reasons expressed above.