

## Houghton on the Hill

### Neighbourhood Development Plan and Village Design Statement (VDS)

2017 – 2031



Houghton Parish Council  
Houghton on the Hill  
Leicestershire

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) applies to an area larger than the present boundaries of the Houghton on the Hill Parish. The planned area includes land in Hungarton Parish to the North of the A47 and immediately west of Houghton village with the agreement and cooperation of Hungarton Parish Council and Harborough District Council.

The Vision Statement of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is that *“In 15 years’ time Houghton on the Hill will continue to be a neighbourly, rural community. It will value its community spirit and sense of belonging and provide people with a safe, sustainable environment. It will continue to be a friendly, stimulating and vibrant place.”*

The Plan defines nine objectives:

1. to preserve and nurture social coherence;
2. to manage the sustainable development of new housing to provide dwellings meeting the requirements of the changing demography;
3. to direct the location of new housing to minimise the impact of increased traffic flows on the core of the village;
4. to initiate new footpaths and cycle ways to encourage less reliance on vehicles;
5. to preserve the rural aspect of the area;
6. to improve car parking;
7. to enhance services and facilities;
8. to ensure new housing has sustainable energy; and
9. to conserve the built heritage of the village.

These objectives will be achieved through a total of 25 policies:

- three on village design (D1 to D3);
- seven on housing location and types (H1 to H7);
- six dealing with services and facilities (S1 to S6);
- four on traffic management (T1 to T4); and
- five on the environment (E1 to E5).

The housing policies plan for 170 dwellings (which includes a 15% contingency) to be distributed over three sites to the north of the A47 unless the appeal by William Davis to build 44 dwellings off Winckley Close is upheld; in which case the numbers to the north of the A47 will be lower. It is envisaged that a decision on this appeal will be received in the summer/autumn of 2017. One policy proposes the provision of a subset of dwellings for people in later life or having mobility issues, which would lie within the proposed development sites. Other policies on services and facilities, traffic management and the environment, plan to improve infrastructure to mitigate the effects of development. The potential construction of a golf course along Gaulby Lane could provide employment opportunities. Policies propose ways of reducing traffic, improving parking, enhancing biodiversity and ensuring that new housing makes use of technology that attains environmental sustainability and facilitates economic sustainability.

A detailed Village Design Statement provides design principles for the layout of new developments and descriptions of construction details that all new builds and alterations should follow.

An on-line document, Part II, contains the large volume of information and factual data which provides the evidence base for the vision, objectives and policies listed in Part I. A contents list for Part II is contained in Appendix 3 of this document.

## 2 HOUGHTON ON THE HILL NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

### 2.1 Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Area Designation

#### 2.1.1 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Area

To promote positive planning the Development Plan Area includes land within both Houghton and Hungarton parishes as shown in Figure 2-1. Following the Annual Parish Council meetings of Hungarton on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015 and Houghton on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015, both Parish Councils have confirmed the agreed boundary shown below in red in Figure 2-1. The parish boundaries are shown in the figure in purple. The Plan Area was approved by Harborough District Council (HDC) on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015. Since the area includes part of Hungarton Parish, there is a necessity for the two Parish Councils to work together in consultation.

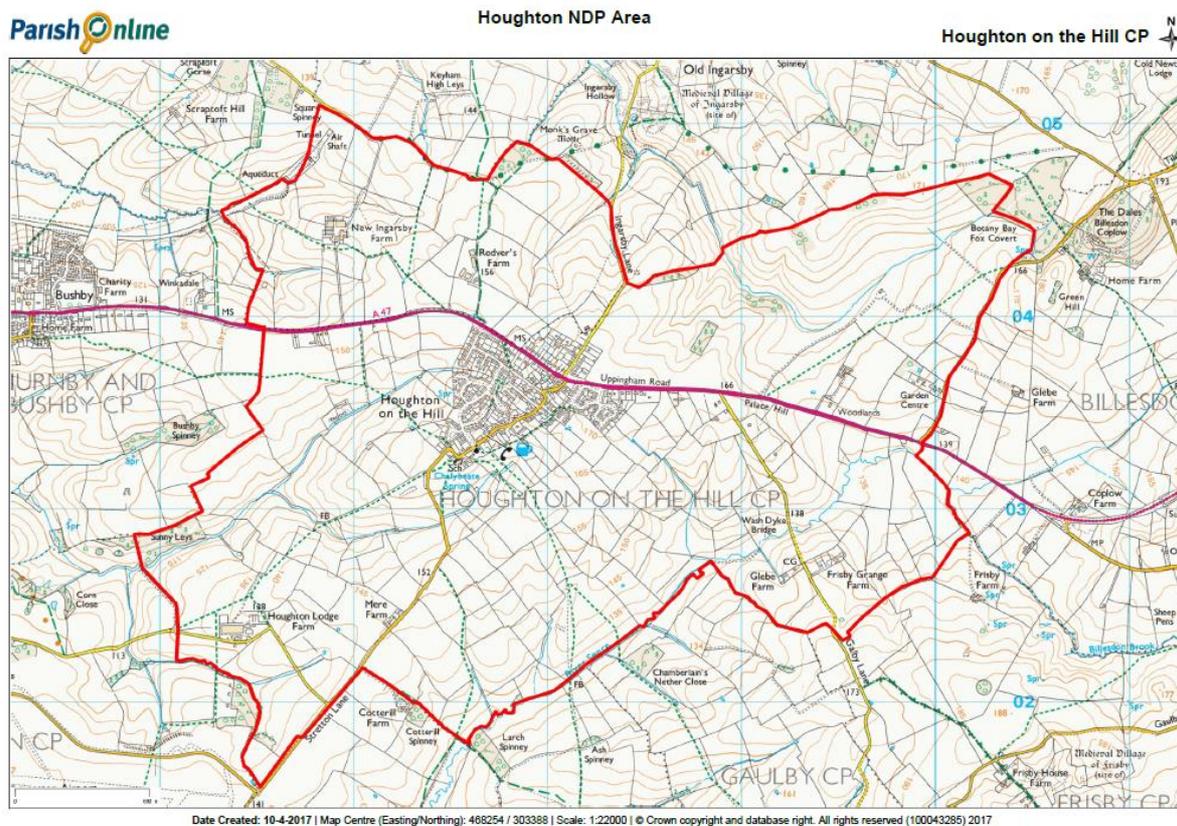


Figure 2-1 Map of the Houghton on the Hill Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Area outlined in red.

### 2.1.2 The Qualifying Body

Houghton Parish Council established a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party (NPWP) to produce a plan, involving data collation and consultation with residents and other stakeholders, and drafting and submission of the draft plan. The working party consists of the 5 members currently serving on the Houghton Parish Council, and additional volunteers from the community. The NPWP has its own website pages

<http://www.houghtononthehillpc.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html>

with details of its Constitution and Terms of Reference, the names of members, minutes of meetings, and associated information.

### 2.1.3 Neighbourhood Area Profile

Houghton is an outstanding community from several perspectives. It has been highly placed in national surveys of quality of life. It has a vibrant community with a large number of social groups and activities from the Art Circle to the Yoga class. It also has some challenges which the NDP seeks to address:

- It has the highest percentage of ageing residents (41% over 55 years) in the HDC area ([HDC Settlement Profile: Houghton on the Hill \(2015\) - based on 2011 census](#))
- Approximately 20% of dwellings are in single occupancy, one third of which have 3, 4 or 5 bedrooms ([Q2, Q5, Q6 and Q2, Q5, Q6 Single Occupancy Analysis & HDC Settlement Profile: Houghton on the Hill \(2015\) - based on 2011 census](#)).
- There is a shortage of small homes for first-time buyers or for downsizing.
- The village street-plan is winding and narrow and generates problems with traffic flow and parking.
- It offers little employment and has poor public transport connections with the nearby city of Leicester, such that it is very difficult to have a regular paid employment outside the village without owning private transport.

The sizeable more elderly and retired element of the community bring many benefits which contribute to Houghton being an outstanding community. There are at least 40 groups, societies and facilities in the village as set out in the local magazine - Houghton News. Very nearly all of those are run by or depend upon the support of older people in the village.

Also within the older element of the community there is a great deal of mutual help and support available. The more able older people are helping the less able with transport to facilities, shopping and assorted tasks about their houses that they are no longer able to do. This is activity over and above that supplied by the Houghton Help Line voluntary organisation. This leads to an unusual level of self-sufficiency for the community and reduces dependency on Council provided welfare services.

A detailed profile of the area is given in Part II of the plan with full reference to the data sources used (see Appendix 3).

## 3 COMMUNITY VISION, KEY ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

### 3.1 The Houghton Vision Statement

“In 15 years’ time Houghton on the Hill will continue to be a neighbourly, rural community. It will value its community spirit and sense of belonging and provide people with a safe, sustainable environment. It will continue to be a friendly, stimulating and vibrant place.”

The first question of the [NDP Community Questionnaire](#) asked respondents to choose key words that best describe their feelings about Houghton. From the 431 responses from 630 households the top 6 words were “community, being rural, friendliness, neighbourliness, safety and belonging” each having over 200 responses ([Q1](#)).

### 3.2 Houghton Community Key Issues

The Key Issues derive from, or are supported by, the results of the [Neighbourhood Development Plan Community Questionnaire](#) (Q) and the Young People’s Questionnaire (YPQ), which were distributed to all households in the village in January 2016, a [Stakeholders’ Consultation Meeting](#) held in the village on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 and the [Pre-submission Consultations](#). A detailed analysis of the outcomes is included in Part II of this document. For brevity and readability in the sections that follow the index numbers of the questions relevant to the point are given for reference to Part II, and the index numbers are hyperlinks directly to the questions in Part II.

#### 3.2.1 Maintaining the Character of Houghton

Maintaining the character of Houghton is a key aspiration embedded in the vision statement. The parish is viewed as a desirable and safe place to live by most of its inhabitants ([Q1](#)).

In order to realise this aspiration it will be necessary to:

- Preserve and enhance the strengths of the community and its heritage (free-form comments [Q36](#) & [Q37](#)).
- Value and protect Houghton as a hill-top village in the “High Leicestershire” landscape area ([Q32](#), [Q33](#) & free-form comments [Q34](#) & [Q35](#)).
- Embrace inevitable change, new technologies and opportunities and use them to develop forward-looking initiatives to enhance the quality of life in the community, and its environmental sustainability ([Q38](#) & [Q39](#)).

#### 3.2.2 Developing a sustainable community

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) advises that “the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.” Sustainability is described as having three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

- Economic** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that local businesses, including those residents working from home, have the requisite infrastructure and services ([Q40](#) to [Q48](#) & free-form comments [Q43](#) & [Q46](#)).

- **Social** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and which supports its health, social and cultural well-being (Q7 to Q18, & free-form comments Q11 & Q14).
- **Environmental** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change including moving to a low carbon economy (Q49).

### 3.2.3 Housing Provision

- The 2015 Consultation Paper on the new HDC Local Plan envisages the need for 170 dwellings, which includes a 15% contingency for increases over the plan period 2015 and 2030.
- This Neighbourhood Development Plan identifies sufficient developable sites to meet this housing provision (Q19). The Plan also allows for infill development within the main built-up part of the Village.
- All green-field, infill and redevelopment of existing properties will be required to follow the guidelines for buildings and their layout described in the Village Design Statement (VDS) in Appendix 1.

### 3.2.4 Traffic Management and Transport

In 2012 the Parish Council produced a report on parking and traffic management in the village (Houghton Parish Council, 2012). Conclusions from that report, supplemented by responses from the NDP Community Questionnaire and Pre-submission Consultation highlighted the following issues:

- Speed and volume of traffic in and through the village is a continuing worry. Speed limits both within and close to the existing village and along the A47 should be reviewed and revised as necessary (Q23, Q25 & free-form comments Q23, Q25, Q26 & Q28).
- Consideration of a possible by-pass scheme to route traffic from the A47 to Stretton Lane is suggested by some villagers in the Pre-submission Consultation, the NDP Community Questionnaire, and at other consultation events.
- Lack of off-street parking, particularly on and adjacent to Main Street, is at times acute and leads to serious congestion (free-form comments Q24 & Q27).
- Cycling and walking will be encouraged to reduce traffic along Main Street and near the school (Q29 & free-form comments Q30).
- New housing developments could lead to an increase in traffic problems, particularly on Main Street and adjacent roads.
- There is evidence of a need for better public transport to nearby population centres and facilities (YPQ8 & free-form comments Q22 & YPQ4); a result of the poor current public service is that the majority of journeys are made by private car (Q21).

### 3.2.5 Environment

To conform with both the NDP Vision Statement and the [National Planning Policy Framework, 2012](#) (NPPF) guidelines the Neighbourhood Development Plan aims to:

- Protect and enhance the Parish's rural landscape, settlement pattern, historic assets, and biodiversity (Q32 to Q37, free-form comments Q34, Q35, Q36, Q37 & [National Heritage – Listed Buildings](#)).
- Reduce the environmental impacts of road traffic, both private and commercial, and lessen the need for car use by encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking (Q23, Q29 & free-form comments Q30).
- Minimise energy demand and maximise the use of renewable energy (Q49).

### 3.2.6 Services and Facilities

- Houghton on the Hill has a scheduled bus service and four of the six key services of a Rural Centre, namely food shop/general store, post office, primary school and two public houses and these are all used by the community (Q38). It should be noted however that the bus service is under threat (see Section 4.5).
- The primary school currently provides for 4-10 year olds but an additional cohort age 10-11 (Year 6) is to be added in 2017. There is a single class for each year group and demand for places is high with about half the pupils coming into the village from outside.
- The village also has a filling station, car repair business, a pharmacy, a hairdresser, and a beauty salon all of which are used to varying degrees (Q38).
- The level of provision of services and community facilities (see Appendix 2) is important for the long term sustainability of the village and new developments will be expected to support such facilities proportionately.

## 3.3 Houghton Neighbourhood Development Plan Objectives

The objectives stem from the overall vision statement.

- Objective 1 – To preserve and nurture the social coherence of the village and its outlying settlements.
- Objective 2 – To manage the development of new housing to provide dwellings, which will meet the requirements of the village's demographic profile while conforming to the principles of sustainability, and to meet the emerging [Local Plan](#) requirement.
- Objective 3 – To direct the location of new housing development so as to minimise the impact of increased traffic flows on the core part of the village.
- Objective 4 – To include in new development layouts, footpaths and cycle ways to encourage less reliance on vehicles within the village.

- Objective 5 – To preserve the rural aspect of the village, its green spaces and its separation from adjacent villages.
- Objective 6 – To provide more parking places within the village to relieve parking problems and reduce traffic hazards, particularly in the areas around the school and Co-operative shop.
- Objective 7 – To enhance village services and facilities to provide for the needs of an increasing population through times of changing lifestyles and evolving technology.
- Objective 8 – To reduce the environmental impact of additional housing by conserving and enhancing biodiversity, and encouraging the adoption of sustainable technologies and lifestyles.
- Objective 9 - To conserve the built heritage of the village by ensuring that all new developments and any alterations to existing buildings conform to the requirements of the VDS.

## 4 THE POLICIES OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### 4.1 Houghton Village Design Statement - Summary

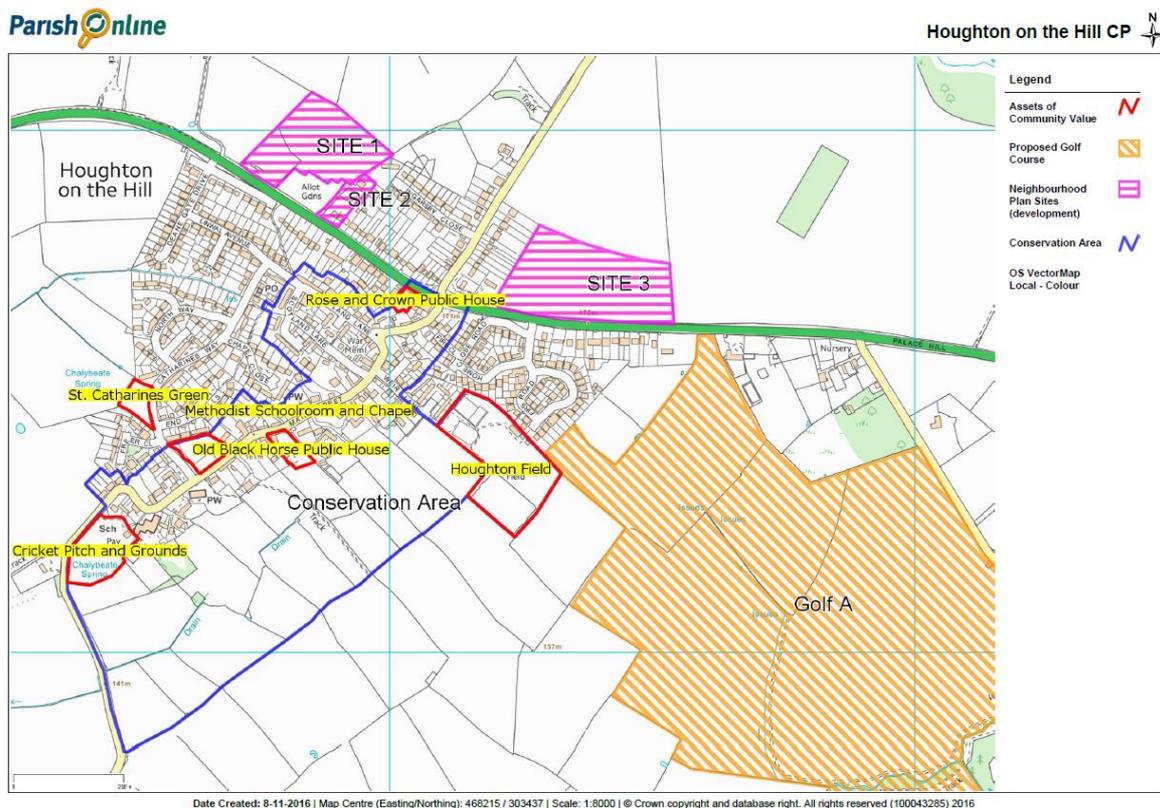


Figure 4-1 Plan of existing village showing Conservation Area, assets of community value and residential development sites.

The Village Design Statement (VDS) sets out the design and layout principles that all new and infill development should follow. The full VDS is included as Appendix 1 and here its main points are presented:

- The Conservation Area (Figure 4-1 above) defines the character of Houghton. Without it Houghton would be less distinctive and less attractive. New developments will have to adhere to all relevant statutory duties ([Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)) to preserve the character of the Conservation Area.
- To ensure that the defining nature of the Conservation Area is preserved, any changes or developments proposed must conform not only to the general provisions of the VDS but also to the specific provisions for the conservation area detailed therein and to the following Policy D1.

**POLICY D1: PROTECTING THE HERITAGE OF HOUGHTON BY MANAGEMENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA (see Objective 9)**

Any proposed change to any feature of the Conservation Area and any new build within the area, will be required to comply with the provisions contained in the VDS in particular the section “New building in the Conservation Area” (Appendix 1 Section 1.6.3. Proposed new building or alterations which do not conform will not be permitted.

To conserve and enhance the character of the village the VDS uses the guidelines in “*Building for Life 12. The sign of a good place to live,*” to provide guidelines for the layout and design of all new developments. The twelve aspects are grouped into

- Integrating into the neighbourhood
- Creating a place
- Street and home

**POLICY D2: PRESERVING THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF HOUGHTON OUTSIDE THE CONSERVATION AREA (see Objectives 5 & 9)**

Even with its diverse more modern developments Houghton has maintained a pleasant and particularly non-urban aspect. This is due to the spaciousness and non-uniformity of layouts within the individual developments. All new developments, including alterations to existing properties and features, must follow these examples and the principles set out in the VDS to maintain this essential character and avoid urbanisation of the village.

New developments of, and modifications to, farmsteads and agricultural buildings in the parish beyond the built environment should respect the rural setting, not detract from the high quality landscape, not impact negatively on the much valued views from the village and take appropriate guidance from the VDS.

The principles are supplemented with descriptions of construction details that all new builds and alterations should follow.

The design principles also ensure that the much-loved rural aspect of the village is maintained.

- When asked in the village-wide consultation survey “What best describes your family’s feelings about living in Houghton?” 327 respondent families cited “being rural” (Q1).
- Houghton’s young people were consulted via a separate questionnaire and in response to the question “What do you most like about living in Houghton?” (YPQ3)

the following answer reflects the view of many “Quiet Village, Friendly People, Semi Rural so more open space and greenery.”

□

**POLICY D3: PRESERVING, AND ENSURING THE PROVISION OF, GREEN SPACE WITHIN HOUGHTON (see Objective 5)**

All formally identified green spaces existing in Houghton and the minor ones which exist should be protected. New developments should incorporate incidental green space as described in section 1.5 of the VDS.

- The VDS recognises the contribution that open spaces, including the many small open spaces, make to the village by linking it to its rural setting and mitigating against urban/sub-urbanisation. Figure 4-7 shows the extent and variety of Houghton’s open spaces.
- The VDS suggests measures that might reduce the effects of traffic on Main Street in particular.

## 4.2 Housing Provision

The policy for General Housing Provision is qualified for each development site by the specific conditions in the respective detailed policy (H3 to H7).

### POLICY H1: GENERAL HOUSING PROVISION (see Objectives 2 & 3)

Permission for housing development within the limits to development, as defined on the Policies Map (Figure 4.2), or proposed redevelopment of existing properties, including infilling within the existing built environment, will be granted if the development complies with all of the following:

- a) Follows the specifications in the VDS and is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings.
- b) Does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of residents in the area.
- c) Minimises additional vehicular traffic flow through Ingarsby Lane, Deane Gate Drive, St Catharines Way, Main Street and Stretton Lane.
- d) Provides safe and suitable access to the site for all people be that by vehicle, cycle or on foot, and provides safe connectivity between adjacent sites and with the rest of the village, so as to reduce car use for local journeys. Road safety must be a priority and where appropriate e.g. on the A47 appropriately located and controlled pedestrian crossings must be an integral part of any scheme. The provisions of Policy E3 will apply
- e) Conforms, where appropriate, with the relevant detailed specific policy for that site (policies H3 to H7).
- f) For sites where planning consent has not already been granted, Policies will ensure that the release of land for residential housing is managed so that the supply is not exhausted early in the plan period
- g) All developments should include 25% bungalows and 75% houses unless evidence at the time demonstrates different proportions. The number of 4 and 5 bed roomed houses should not exceed 10-20%, the balance being an appropriate mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom houses.
- h) A proportion of dwellings to be allocated to Affordable Housing. Bungalows will each be regarded as two affordable dwellings.
- i) Off-road parking for each property must be provided according to Policy T3

A number of indicators emerged from the responses to [Q8](#) and [Q12](#) in Housing and Use of Land. Whilst not required to rank their responses, respondents consistently selected bungalows and houses in almost equal measure and showed preference for 2 and 3 bedroom properties. Evidence for this comes from both the number of ticks awarded to each category and the additional comments expressed by respondents.

It should be noted that the evidence in favour of bungalows could be skewed due to 41% of residents being over 55 years of age (2011 census) and 45% of questionnaire respondents being over 60. This demographic is likely to indicate a preference for the type of dwellings within the village that match the needs associated with ageing: otherwise residents will be required to move elsewhere, as indeed some villagers have already needed to (for example, to the nearby villages of Thurnby and Bushby). These considerations lead the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party (NPWP) to the conclusion that a mix of 25% bungalows and 75% houses is appropriate for new developments.

With regard to the number of bedrooms, the expressed preference for 2 and 3 bedroom properties (Q12) is seen to be in line with the guidance set out in §s 5.9 - 5.12 of [Harborough District Council's Planning Obligations – Supplementary Planning Document, January 2017](#).

The NPWP takes note of the statement in §5.12 that, “...The Council’s Housing Enabling and Community Infrastructure Officer will be able to discuss and seek to agree site/locality specific requirements. There is strong demand for single level development for older people and we encourage apartment and bungalow type development to meet this need.”

1 bedroom houses and 1 bedroom bungalows received some support as did apartments, but not in such significant numbers as to form part of a policy. Nevertheless, this group should be considered by developers.

The above percentages relating to four bedroom dwellings are influenced by the outcome from the village-wide consultation (Q12) and independent analysis (e.g. [Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#)). The consultation survey indicated that twenty-two detached houses in Houghton are occupied by only one person. Of the 22, thirteen have four or five bedrooms.

#### 4.2.1 Affordable Housing

Subject to enabling regulations being issued, the [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) introduces a statutory duty on local authorities to promote the delivery of Affordable Housing for people whose needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market on all suitable, reasonably-sized housing developments. In the 2016 Act and throughout this document, the term Affordable Housing comprises appropriate proportions of the following types:

- Rental
- Shared ownership
- Starter homes.

Midlands Rural Housing produced a detailed investigation into the housing needs of Houghton on the Hill for HDC and identified a need for 11 open market homes and 14 affordable rentable homes in Houghton over the next 5 years for people with a local connection ([Midlands Rural Housing: A Detailed Investigation into the Housing Needs of Houghton on the Hill, September 2015](#)).

**POLICY H2: ACCESSIBLE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING (see Objectives 1 & 2)**

At least 7% of new properties within a development should be built to meet [Building Regulations Part M](#) accessibility standards. These should be a mix of types with emphasis on bungalows and small dwellings.

Affordable housing provision (defined as affordable rented, shared ownership and starter homes) on the allocated sites 1 to 3, as shown in Figure 4-2 and referenced in Policy H3, will be delivered through the planning process in such proportions as local needs dictate at the time. The above types of housing will be distributed within new development areas and thus integrated within the community.

[HDC Core Strategy](#) requires new developments to include a target for 40% affordable homes. Thus the housing target for Houghton in the emerging [Local Plan](#) of 170 would imply between 65 and 70 affordable homes. Given the lack of employment opportunities within the village and the infrequent (and under threat of closure) bus service it is currently very difficult for people to find employment outside the village unless they run their own private transport. This places severe constraints on the practicality of providing in the NDP particular targets for the different types of affordable housing. These constraints would not apply to shared ownership and starter homes as these can encourage and enable young people to continue to live in the village rather than being priced away from it as they reach the stage of leaving the parental home.

HDC have an established approach of accepting that each affordable bungalow requested in developments is counted as two affordable units. This approach is used to ensure that a small proportion of bungalows are provided to meet elderly housing need. We propose that this approach is used in all development sites (Sites 1, 2 and 3).

- 18.8% of Houghton respondents of the NDP Community Questionnaire identified a need for further rental properties in Houghton ([Q13](#)).
- Details of Affordable Housing will be agreed at the time of a planning application. “Shared-ownership” open-market dwellings should be considered alongside or as a substitution for “affordable rentable” dwellings within the overall provision requirement. This will provide a greater opportunity for those young people in Houghton with aspirations of home ownership to remain in the village rather than being priced away from it.
- New Affordable Housing will be allocated firstly to people with a local connection, including those living, working or with close family ties in the Parish.
- The [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#) defines starter homes as new dwellings for first time buyers under 40, sold at a discount of at least 20% of market value at less than the price cap of £250,000. Precise numbers in each development would be subject to analysis of local need at the time of development.

### 4.2.2 Accessible Housing

The [Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment \(HEDNA, 2017\)](#) data suggest that around 4% of housing growth should be built to accessible standards. This would equate to about 6 homes for Houghton. This figure is an average over the whole of Leicestershire, so given the high proportion of older people in Houghton the requirement here could be for 10. On the basis of up to an estimated 170 new properties for Houghton this equates to an average of 5%.

### 4.2.3 Housing development site provision

#### POLICY H3: HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS (see Objectives 1, 2 & 3)

The following sites are allocated for housing development, as defined on the Site Selection Map (Figure 4-2):

- a) Site 1 (Policy H4) (Outline permission for 70 dwellings has been granted for this site).
- b) Site 2 (Policy H5) (Outline permission for 17 dwellings has been granted for this site).
- c) Qualified Reserve Site 3 (Policy H6).

Total number of dwellings on sites 1 and 2 = 87.

The reserve site 3 will be made available for housing development if it becomes necessary to provide for additional homes in excess of that provided for within sites 1 and 2 coupled with the outcome of outstanding planning applications and appeals relating to a site off Winckley Close.

The final HDC Local Plan (as yet undetermined), will provide the overall requirement for new dwellings in Houghton over the plan period.

The developers of all sites will be required to follow both detail of the relevant site-specific policy (H4 to H6) and the guidelines for site layout and building design set out in the Village Design Statement.

Through their responses to [Q19](#) in the consultation process, villagers indicated a clear preference for development north of the A47 on sites 1 and 3. Site 2, also north of the A47 and adjacent to site 1, was not included in the consultation, as planning consent had already been granted at the time of the consultations.

Sites to the south of the A47 were consulted on but were less favoured, often due to the likely adverse impact of additional traffic within the main part of the village.

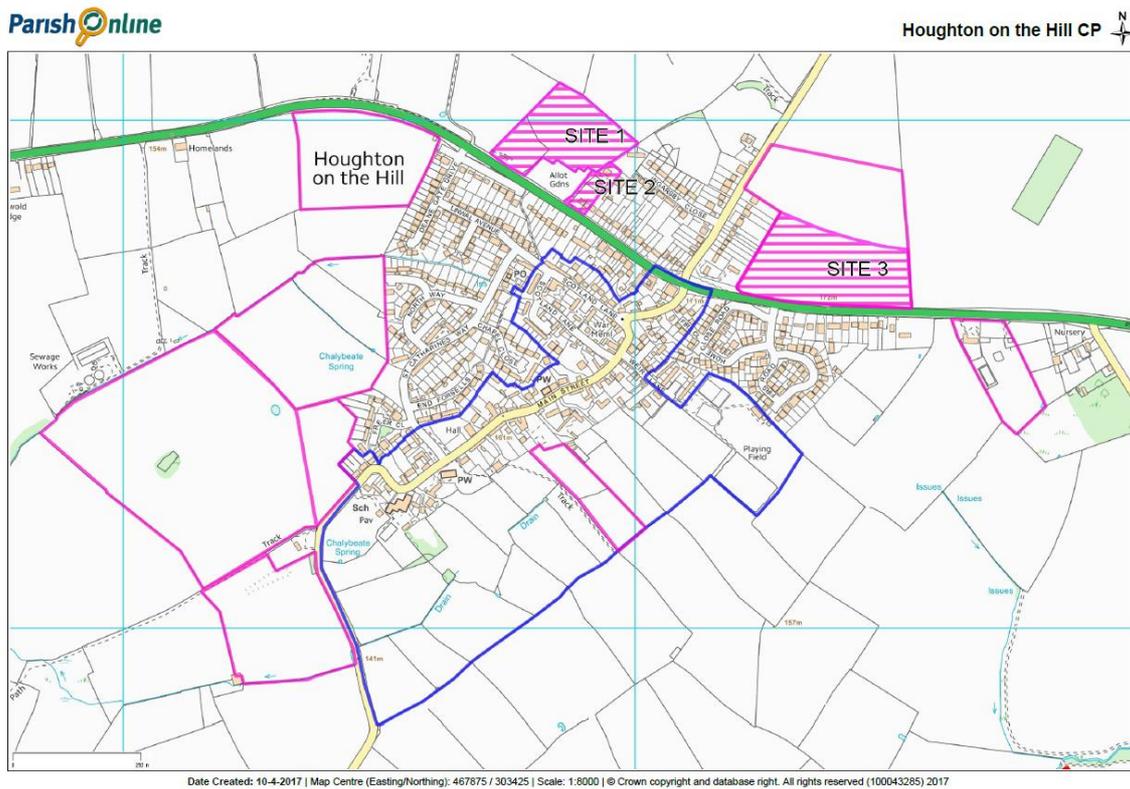


Figure 4-2. Map showing sites for residential housing. SHLAA sites have magenta boundaries; site 2 already had planning approval prior to consultation. Conservation area outlined in blue.

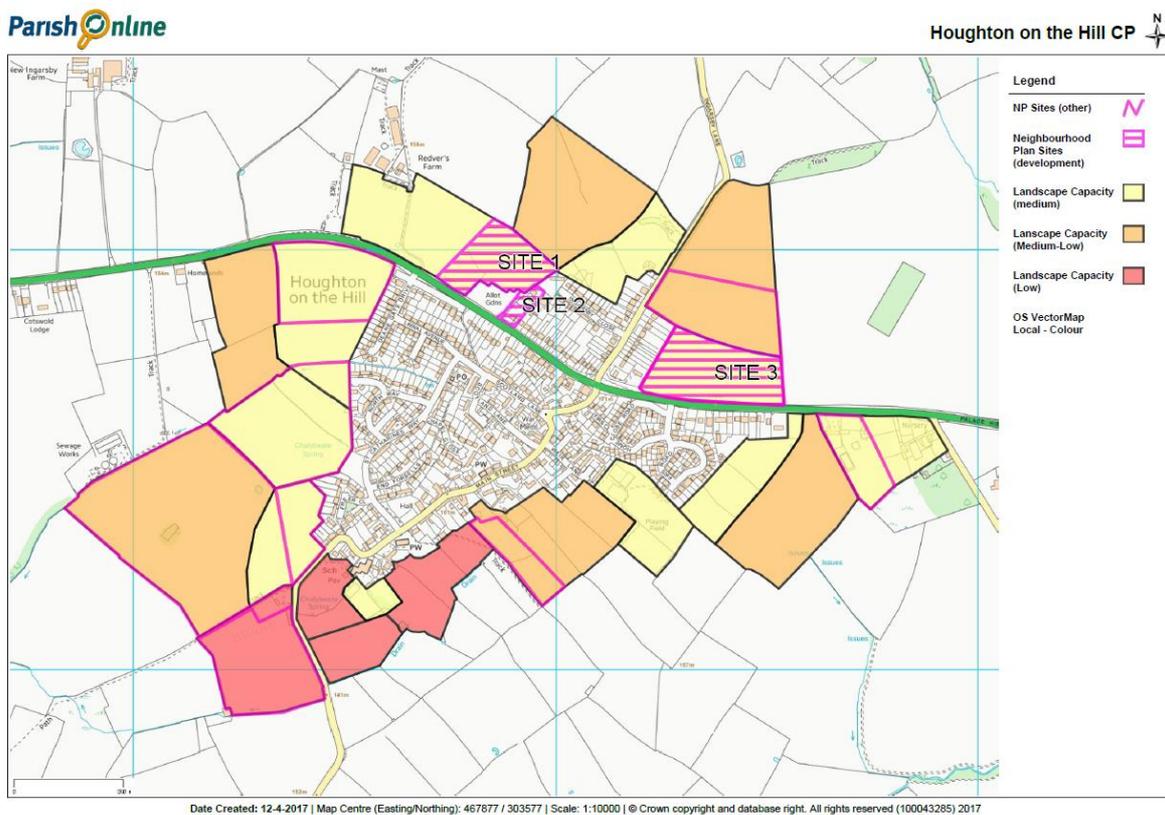


Figure 4-3 NDP residential housing development sites as in Figure 4-2 superimposed on the HDC Landscape Capacity values.

Figure 4-3 shows the same sites superimposed on the Landscape Capacity values determined by the [HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment \(2016\)](#). This assessment provides an estimate of the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, with results being expressed on a 5 point scale from High to Low. No sites in Houghton rate on the High or Medium-High values. The northern boundary of Site 3 is drawn to lie along the boundary between Medium and Medium-Low Landscape Capacity as assessed in the HDC report.

Note there are no locations in the surveyed area where the capacity assessment is “high” or “medium-high”. These are grades given to land where the visual intrusion of development would be very low, and hence have high capacity for development

#### 4.2.4 Site-specific Housing Policies

##### POLICY H4: DEVELOPMENT OF SITE 1 (see Objectives 1,2 & 3)

Notwithstanding that outline planning permission has been granted for this site the development should be subject to Policies H1, H2 & H3 and comply with the following criterion:

A maximum of 70 dwellings.

This site has already been the subject of a successful outline planning application for the development of 70 dwellings. It received a high approval level in the NDP Community Questionnaire (Q19). The planning application received only a small number of objections. The importance of the Policies H1, H3 and H4 is in placing constraints on the types of dwellings and general design as framed by the Village Design Statement (VDS).

For Sites 1 and 2, a foot and cycleway link between the two sites is regarded as important as set out in the VDS 1.5.1 Table 1 A1 & B8.

##### POLICY H5: DEVELOPMENT OF SITE 2 (see Objectives 1, 2 & 3)

Notwithstanding that outline planning permission for 17 dwellings has been granted for this site the development should comply with policies H1, H2 & H3 and the following criterion:

A maximum of 17 dwellings

This largely brownfield site has already been the subject of a successful outline planning application for the development of 17 dwellings. In the NDP Community Questionnaire (Q19) sites north of the A47 received strong support. This site is also north of the A47 but it was not included in the consultation as planning consent had already been approved. The planning application received only a small number of objections. The importance of the Policy is in placing constraints on the types of dwellings and general design as framed by the Village Design Statement (VDS).

For Sites 1 and 2, a foot and cycleway link between the two sites is regarded as important as set out in the VDS 1.5.1 Table 1 A1 & B8.

**POLICY H6: DEVELOPMENT OF SITE 3 (see Objectives 1, 2 & 3)**

Development will be permitted subject to policies H1, H2 & H3 and complying with all the following criteria:

- a) Development of up to 75 dwellings commencing no earlier than 2025.
- b) Consideration should be given to the provision of dwellings for people later in life or having mobility issues. See Policy H7.
- c) In the event of the HDC New Local Plan (or any subsequent variation thereto) requiring Houghton to meet total housing numbers in excess of those provided following completion of the development of sites 1,2,3 and any windfall sites, then further development could occur on the remainder of the SHLAA area which contains Site 3, but should not commence before 2030.

There is no current planning application for this site, but it is in the [HDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\) 2015 Update - p16, May 2016](#), and agents for the developers have been in contact with HDC and Houghton Parish Council. The landowners are supportive of this site being allocated for development. Obtaining Leicestershire County Council Highways agreement for access to the site from the local road network may impact on delivery and timing of development of Site 3 ([Harborough District Council: Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\) 2015 Update - Rural Centres, p41, May 2016](#)). The boundaries of the site, as shown in Figure 4.2, could potentially be modified by agreement between HDC, Houghton Parish Council, LCC Highways Department and the developers if an access could then be positioned in a location acceptable to all parties.

In view of the position of existing road junctions, Ingarsby Lane / A47 / Main Street, and the Firs Road junction on the south side of the A47, particular attention will need to be given to the most appropriate location for site access and pedestrian crossing of the A47

The potential development in Policies 4, 5 and 6 will each add an additional vehicle access road-junction to the A47 within the village limits. Currently there is only one cross-roads (at Main Street and Ingarsby Lane) and two junctions on the south side of the road (Deane Gate Drive and Firs Road). Current approaches to LCC Highways to provide guidance on permissible and/or preferred options for vehicle access have not been productive, so this document follows the simplest option of giving each site a separate access. It can be noted that Sites 1 and 2 have already applied for and been granted planning permission for access only with no opposition from LCC Highways. What is certain is that these developments will affect the traffic flow and associated safety issues along the A47 and the linked roads. These issues are considered in detail in the Traffic and Transport section 4.4 and particularly in Policy T2.

The combination of sites 1, 2 and 3 provides a total of some 162 dwellings, close to the 170 expected requirement for Houghton in the evolving [HDC Local Plan](#).

**POLICY H7: PROVISION OF DWELLINGS FOR PEOPLE IN LATER LIFE OR HAVING MOBILITY ISSUES (see Objectives 1, 2 & 3)**

There is a potential demand from people who no longer need a house the size of their current family home (and who may or may not seek to release capital), those who are generally fit and well but have a mobility problem, those requiring the facilities of sheltered accommodation or a Warden Aided complex, and those needing the facilities provided by a Residential Care Home. Such provision would lie within the areas already allocated for housing development (see H4, H5 & H6). Proposals for such developments will be supported subject to complying with all the following criteria:

- a) It should meet the design requirements of the Houghton on the Hill Village Design Statement.
- b) The number of dwellings will reflect a detailed assessment of demand.
- c) Properties will be a combination of owner-occupied and rented.
- d) Seven percent of properties, including bungalows should be built to accommodate wheelchair mobility and access in accordance with [Building Regulations Part M \(2015\)](#).
- e) A proportion of properties including bungalows should be designated sheltered dwellings, the precise number being determined by demand but 10 overall is a guide based on [The Leicestershire Adult Social Care - Accommodation strategy for older people 2016-2026](#).
- f) A proportion of properties should be constructed as whole-life homes.
- g) A proposal from a developer for a Residential Care Home within the preferred locations for residential developments is likely to be favourably considered, provided it complies with the requirements of the VDS.

A number of indicators emerged from the NDP Community Questionnaire demonstrating a requirement in Houghton for the provision of suitable dwellings for people in later life, or those who have mobility issues. This covers a wider age range than would be the case if provision was solely for what would commonly be referred to as 'retirement homes'. Many residents of Houghton, even when past their prime in terms of age or mobility continue to contribute very actively to managing, belonging to, and ensuring the continuity of clubs and societies in the village. Without the provision of adequate accommodation for people to move to as their needs change there is a risk that an increasing number will join those who have already left the village for more appropriate accommodation as already mentioned in the narrative supporting Policy H4. This is detrimental to the future wellbeing of the community of Houghton and new developments should seek to provide a broad mix of suitable housing stock and accommodation to discourage further migration.

Reference should be made to [Supplementary Document H7](#) for evidence obtained from consultations in respect of the following:

The need for providing suitable re-housing opportunities in communities.	<a href="#">Fixing our Broken Housing Market, Department for Communities and Local Government (February 2017).</a>
Current dwelling too large. Need for smaller properties to move into...otherwise forced to leave the village.	NDP Community Questionnaire, <a href="#">Q10</a> .
Bungalows, warden assisted accommodation, and an independent complex are the three most favoured types of retirement housing in that order.	NDP Community Questionnaire, <a href="#">Q14</a> .
Whole of life homes supported.	NDP Community Questionnaire, <a href="#">Q15</a> .
Support for a Residential Care Home.	NDP Community Questionnaire, <a href="#">Q16</a> .
A proportion of dwellings in new developments should be built for wheelchair access & mobility.	<a href="#">The Building Regulations 2010 Access and Use of Buildings Part M.</a>

### 4.3 Services and Facilities

**POLICY S1: RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF KEY SERVICES AND FACILITIES** (see Objectives 3, 4 & 7)

Development proposals that would result in the loss of existing services and/or facilities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the facilities are no longer required or are no longer viable, or it can be demonstrated that suitable alternative provision is included in the development which is equivalent or better in terms of quality, quantity and location.

HDC has identified the village as a potential Rural Centre ([HDC - Harborough Rural Centres - Houghton on the Hill Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study, §0.1, April 2016](#)). It has a bus service (which is under threat of withdrawal) and at least four of six relevant key services: a food shop, post office, primary school and public houses. Notably it does not have a GP surgery. It does however also have a filling station, motor repair business, a pharmacy, a hairdresser, a beauty salon and various mobile services.

**POLICY S2: INFRASTRUCTURE (see Objectives 3, 4 & 7)**

New development will be supported by the provision of new or improved infrastructure, together with financial contributions from developers as appropriate for the following off-site infrastructure requirements:

- a) Measures that address local traffic congestion and parking problems, particularly associated with the Primary School and other community buildings.
- b) Measures to promote pedestrian and cycle transport within the village and the broader plan area (see also Policy E3 and Community Projects).
- c) The improvement, remodelling or enhancement of village community facilities to include greater provision for young people.

Contributions may be phased or pooled to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure, services and facilities where necessary.

Houghton has a range of community facilities such as the Village Hall, Sports Pavilion and Sports Field, St Catharine's Church and the Methodist Chapel, all of which are used for an array of community activities. A review of the facilities available and their suitability as resources for an expanding village population are considered in Appendix 2.

**POLICY S3: PROVISION OF ALLOTMENTS (see Objective 7)**

Community allotments will continue to be provided within Houghton so long as there is sufficient demand from Houghton residents. The Parish Council owns the land on which the present allotments lie. The current allotment site is now surrounded by areas which have planning permission for development of new housing (Figure 4-4). The Parish Council has been looking, and will continue to look, for land for possible re-location. Subject to an alternative site being available and subject to laws that govern the sale of an allotment site the Parish Council has resolved that it would offer the allotment land for sale for development. If this were to happen it would potentially impact on the shortfall in the number of new houses required elsewhere in the village.

The current allotment site lies north of the A47 and to the west of the village, and is owned by the Parish Council. Some surplus plots are let to residents of neighbouring parishes. The Houghton Gardeners' Club administers the day-to-day issues of the allotments and refers back to the Parish Council as necessary. Currently the allotments lie on the outskirts of the village, but development of Sites 1 and 2 will change the surrounding environment considerably.

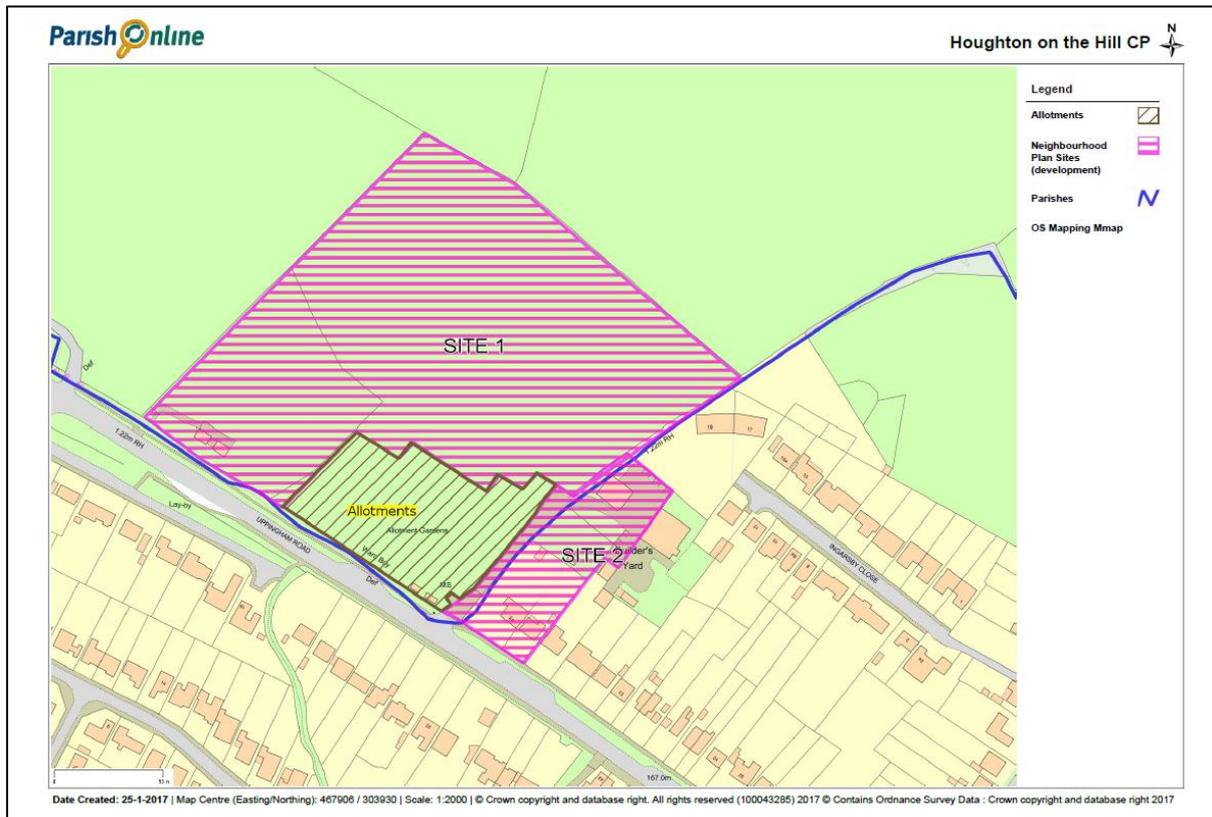


Figure 4-4 Location of the Allotments and their relationship to sites 1 and 2 allocated for residential housing development.

#### POLICY S4: RETAIL AND EMPLOYMENT (see Objective 7)

Proposals for new retail outlets, small business units, and conversion of rural buildings for retail or local employment use will be supported if there is a clearly identified sustainable business plan and subject to satisfying at least one of the following criteria:

- a) The development will provide a retail outlet which contributes to the sustainability of the village community.
- b) The development will make a contribution to sustainable employment within the plan area.

While responses to the NDP Community Questionnaire indicated no particular demand for business starter units there was an indication of a broad spread of opinion about additional types of retail outlets (Q44, Q45 & free-form comments Q46). With no clear demand there is no rationale for a proactive policy. However, any demand-led transition of existing buildings to retail activities which might strengthen the local economy and provide local employment opportunities is to be encouraged.

**POLICY S5: PROVISION OF HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND (see Objective 7)**

Every individual dwelling in new housing developments should have a connection installed capable of supplying broadband operation at speeds of 30 Megabytes per second (Mbps) or better.

Where there are adventitious gains in broadband connectivity for existing housing in proximity to new developments, these are to be welcomed and such gains exploited to the maximum. Where opportunities arise to increase the broadband connection speed for existing parts of the village these will be supported.

Installation of broadband connections is relatively cheap at the time of house construction relative to retrofitting; hence there is a considerable advantage in economy and efficiency in default installation in all new dwellings. The choice of a speed requirement of 30Mbps is based on standards being rolled out from the Superfast Leicestershire initiative.

While the existing village is now connected to “Superfast Broadband”, the actual broadband speed achievable in individual homes is significantly less than 30 Mbps, usually limited by the length of the copper (or aluminium) cable connection to homes from the BT cabinets. While this is a serious problem for many villagers, especially in the southern and eastern areas of the village, it is not a problem directly addressable by the Neighbourhood Plan.

**POLICY S6: CONSTRUCTION OF A GOLF COURSE (see Objective 7)**

The construction of a golf course to the east of Houghton on the Hill is not opposed subject to conforming with all the criteria below:

- a) Retain the general rural aspect of the east side of the village.
- b) Retain access to the area for recreational walkers similar to that currently enjoyed under the permitted access regime.
- c) Restrict any building development to only that which is essential to the normal operation of a golf club.
- d) Comply with the provisions of §1.8 of the VDS
- e) Mitigate against increased traffic using the dangerous junction of Gaulby Lane with the A47.
- f) Potentially provide employment opportunities for villagers.
- g) Protect the River Sence as a waterway and wildlife corridor.

The proposal emerged after the NDP Community Questionnaire was completed and hence there is no evidence from that source to support a particular view.

The [Neighbourhood Plan Pre-submission Consultation](#) generated views on the proposed golf course, which the NPWP used to formulate the above policy S6.

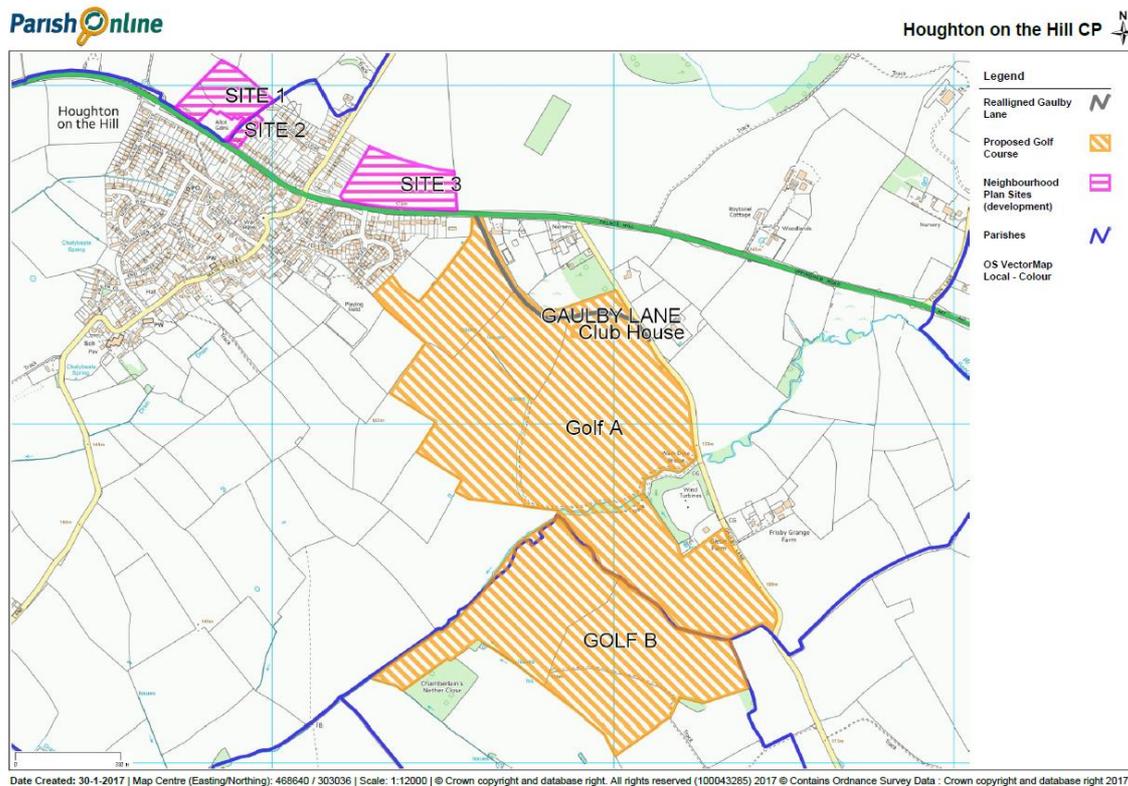


Figure 4-5 Location of the proposed Golf Course for Scraftoft Golf Club. The total area of the course is some 80 hectares. Golf A is the area in Houghton NP Area. Golf B area is in Gaulby Parish.

## 4.4 Traffic and Transport

There is a widespread perception within the village that there are significant safety issues caused by traffic flow and parking at many locations throughout the village. The Parish Council sought to address these by setting up a working party which produced a report in December 2012 ([Houghton PC, 2012](#)). The NDP Community Questionnaire contained a specific section designed to explore these concerns ([Q20](#) to [Q31](#)). The following policies address these issues.

### 4.4.1 Traffic Management

#### POLICY T1: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT (see Objective 3)

With the exception of those developments allocated in Policies H4, H5 and H6, new development will only be permitted where it will not cause a significant increase in the volume of traffic using Ingarsby Lane, Deane Gate Drive, St Catharines Way, Main Street and Stretton Lane.

**POLICY T2: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ALONG THE A47 (see Objective 3)**

In view of the comments received via the various consultation processes, a complete review of the traffic management and safety consideration along the part of the A47 that lies within Houghton NDP Area (Figure 2-1) should be undertaken as part of the planning process for new developments. In the light of the multiple new access points to the A47 through and adjacent to the village due to proposed developments, this review should include consideration of such measures as:

- a) Light controlled pedestrian crossings allowing safe pedestrian access across the road to facilities on either side.
- b) Adequate ghost lanes in the road centre allowing safe right turns as appropriate.
- c) Traffic calming measures at both east and west portals to the village to slow vehicles entering the speed-limit area, including radar speed signs.
- d) Installation of a phased 40 to 30mph speed limit restriction at both ends of the village.

During consultations many respondents expressed major concern about the volume of traffic using Main Street (free-form comments [Q26](#)). Free-form comments in the NDP Community Questionnaire and the Pre-submission Consultation process identified support from some villagers for the building of a by-pass. This would run from the A47 to Stretton Lane thus relieving Main Street of much of the through traffic.

Without a viable and more convenient route for

- a) motorists currently using Main Street as a through route between A47 and A6, and
- b) those parents from outside the village bringing children to, and collecting from Houghton School

the problems will not be resolved and indeed are likely to worsen.

Further, in order to relieve parking issues in Main Street and around the school and church, a car park at the south end of such a bypass adjacent to Stretton Lane could provide a convenient access to these important facilities (see Table 1).

It could be claimed that in its current form the village layout encourages people to use cars and this is exacerbated by the temptation offered to through traffic to use Main Street as a short cut between the A6 at Oadby and the A47 in Houghton. For example a survey over four days and done at different times of day at the end of August and beginning of September 2015 on Stretton Lane ([Traffic Movements on Stretton Lane](#)) recorded an average of 231 cars in one hour with about half entering the village and half leaving. At school times and in the morning this total can increase to 289.

These concerns have been considered in the selection of development sites. These new homes will, subject to Highway Authority approval, have vehicular access to the A47 without a need to pass through the centre of the village. The VDS (Appendix 1) discusses traffic management options on the A47 and on Main Street, especially near the school. It also ensures that new development does not make the current situation significantly worse. Houghton Parish Council will keep traffic management under review.

Connectivity of these proposed sites to the rest of the village by walking and cycling will be encouraged through provision or improvement to walkways as detailed in Policy E3 and the principles A1 and A2 in Table 1 of the VDS.

#### 4.4.2 Parking

**POLICY T3: PARKING IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND WHEN ALTERATIONS ARE MADE TO EXISTING PREMISES (see Objectives 2 & 6)**

Within the curtilage of each new dwelling at least two car parking spaces shall be provided. Three such spaces should be provided for 4-bedroom or larger dwellings. One additional communal parking space should be provided for each 4 dwellings on a multiple-dwelling site, in close proximity to the respective properties.

When there is to be an extension, change of use, or alteration to the premises of existing buildings, whether housing, commercial or community, such changes will be required to include demonstrably sufficient car parking spaces to minimise the need for on-street car parking ([The 6Cs Design Guide](#)).

The public houses and some retail outlets in the village have their own, limited car parking. On-street parking availability on and around Main Street is insufficient to meet demand at certain times. The Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is unable to propose a solution to the parking problem in the centre of the village as there is no land currently available to create an additional car park. The community does not want additional parking restrictions and the associated road markings and signage with the exception of electronic signs at the double bend by the school and on the A47 ([Q25](#)). The new housing developments will be required to include generous car parking spaces to minimise the need for on-street car parking.

**POLICY T4: PUBLIC PARKING AREAS WITHIN THE VILLAGE (see Objectives 2 & 6)**

Construction of public car parking will be supported where it clearly addresses specific parking problems as identified in the report of the PC working party on [Parking and Traffic Management \(2012\)](#), while minimising adverse effects on the character of the village. Some specific opportunities are identified in Table 1, but this list is intended to be indicative rather than prescriptive.

To mitigate the worst effects of inconsiderate parking the PC should consider in detail the provision of additional bollards in pavements, and Junction Protection markings at critical locations.

There is a clear and longstanding view in the village that there is inadequate parking provision. This was documented in the PC [Parking and Traffic Management Report \(2012\)](#). The combination of the following factors produces specifically acute problems for this community:

- a large proportion of the population being over 55,
- the narrow and winding street layout in the old section of the village,
- the high levels of community activity (particularly for the senior members),
- the poor level of public transport to exit the village,
- the use of the main street as a rat-run between the A47 and A6 arterial routes.

The resulting problems (see Table 1) affect both safety and quality of life and are thus an issue for “sustainability” within a Neighbourhood Plan.

Many respondents to the 2012 PC survey supported measures that might be taken to alleviate parking problems. In the NDP consultation (Q27) 84% of respondents believe parking in the village will be worsened by additional volumes of traffic (implied as a consequence of new developments).

The main areas of parking congestion and resulting traffic obstruction are clearly recognised in the PC [Parking and Traffic Management Report \(2012\)](#) and in the free-form comments to Q27. One solution is to seek out multiple areas where additional safe parking could realistically be provided. This is made difficult by the lack of free space within the village itself. Nevertheless respondents, particularly through the Pre-submission Consultation, did indicate that the NDP should address this issue. The particular problem areas are considered in Table 1.

In 2016 the PC invited Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to review possible solutions, but despite meetings, consultative walks through the village, and traffic observation exercises carried out by LCC no written comment or advice has so far been provided by them. Their expressed view is that the level of traffic problems is not sufficiently severe to warrant its attention in these times of budget cuts.

Table 1 Possible options for construction of additional public parking in the village.

Problem area/times	Possible solution	Benefits
Schoolchildren arriving at the school in parental cars 08.30 - 09.15 and 14.30 - 16.00.	Build a car park on Stretton Lane opposite the cricket field. This would be nearer to the school than any other parking, linked to the school and Main Street by a footpath through the rear of the cricket field.	Provides safe and convenient access for schoolchildren to the school. (School due to expand with additional Year 6 in August 2017). Would also benefit the Cricket Club, the Church for large events (weddings and funerals) and also potentially the Village Hall.
Main Street/Weir Lane junction for customers of the Co-operative Store, Pharmacy and Beauty Salon. Continuous problem while store is open 07.00 - 22.00.	Identify nearby land to create a car park. One possibility is to reconfigure the space off Weir Lane currently bearing lock-up garages. Alternative is to buy up a large house in the area and use the land. Improve the existing car park on Houghton Field at the end of Weir Lane.	Would remove a persistent traffic bottleneck and road safety hazard. Could involve the commercial businesses in an overall improvement of a core area of the village.  Approx. 180 metres from Main Street, but readily available. Would have spin-off for use by visitors to Houghton Field, play areas, Soccer Club and Tennis Club.
Church and Village Hall, central Main Street. Parking congestion on Main Street and St Catharines Way when holding events with many visitors from out of village.	Possible access to parking area via old farm entrances. (Village Hall green unlikely to be used as registered as a community asset)	Reduced risk of obstruction of bus route, which happens occasionally and may lead to withdrawal of bus service through the village.

## 4.5 Buses



Figure 4-6 Plan of Houghton showing the peak-time (direct) and off-peak (through the village) bus routes.

Houghton is currently served, until early evening Monday to Saturday, by the Centrebus Midlands 747 bus service between Leicester and Uppingham. Since August 2016 this service has been reduced from hourly to 2-hourly during all Monday to Friday off-peak times and on Saturdays (no Sunday or Bank Holiday services). Before 09.50 and after 15.55 buses only serve stops on the A47. Between these times buses serve Main Street, St Catharines Way, Linwal Avenue, and Deane Gate Drive.

Currently this bus service is under threat. The operator (Centrebus) threatened to close the service from January 2017, but it has been supported for one year (to January 2018) by subsidy from LCC and Rutland County Council (RCC) to allow time for negotiations between stakeholders to provide a sustainable public transport option.

Responses to the NDP Community Questionnaire which pre-date the reduction of the bus service to 2 hourly, and the threats to its continuation at all, indicate that the community would like to see a continuing and more frequent bus service to Leicester and a new service to Oadby, connecting with services to Market Harborough (free-form comments Q22). This would provide residents with improved access to employment, retail and leisure opportunities, particularly those who do not have access to private cars.

In answer to YPQ4 of the Young People's Questionnaire, Houghton's young people indicated that public transport is the thing they like least about the village. When asked, "Does the currently available transport meet your needs?" 42% said it did not (YPQ8). Responses requested that the service to and from Leicester needs to be more frequent and a public bus service to Oadby is needed as that is where many attend school and consequently are involved in after-school activities.

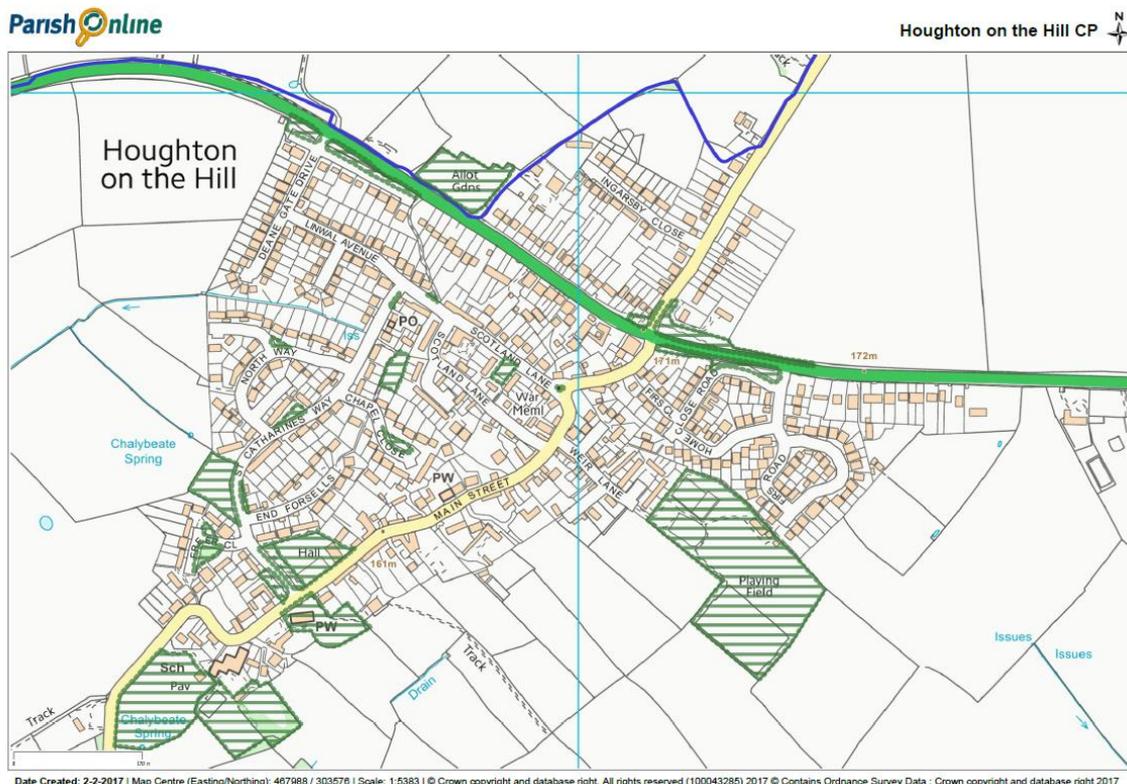
### 4.6 Environment

Even with its diverse more modern developments Houghton has maintained a pleasant and particularly non-urban aspect. This is due to the spaciousness and non-uniformity of layouts within the individual developments including provision of large and small public open space which serve to link the village to its rural setting and mitigate against urban/sub-urbanisation.

**POLICY E1: MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN SPACES (see Objective 5)**

The village has five major existing green spaces and many important smaller open spaces as shown on Fig 4.7. These will be preserved and maintained. New developments will be required to offer additional green spaces, the minimum being that calculated by reference to HDC's [Provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation 2015](#) or the most recent HDC guideline on this subject and the [National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government \(March 2013\) - Achieving Sustainable Development - 8. Promoting healthy communities §76 & §77](#).

In the NDP Community Questionnaire 82.2% of residents considered defined green spaces as important (Q33). HDC is currently conducting a review of existing Green Spaces and consulting with Parish Councils about their adequacy of provision. Houghton Parish Council will be participating in this consultation.



**Figure 4-7 Green Spaces in Houghton.** The five largest areas are those referred to in the text (Houghton Field, Cricket Field, Church and Cemetery, Village Hall and Field, and St Catharines Green). Other green spaces occur throughout the village.

**POLICY E2: CONSERVATION OF HABITATS AND BIODIVERSITY (see Objective 8)**

Existing terrestrial and aquatic habitats in the parish will be protected. Developers will be encouraged to provide undeveloped corridors to connect the countryside with the village centre so allowing wildlife the opportunity of unrestricted movement into and out of the village. Where appropriate, landowners in the parish will be encouraged to maintain the integrity of the hedgerows, wooded areas and water courses that are important breeding sites for threatened bird species.

77% of NDP Community Questionnaire respondents chose 'being rural' as one of the most important feelings of living in Houghton (Q1). Over 75% of Houghton residents value the rural nature of the village with its diverse flora and fauna. They appreciate access to the open countryside and want it conserved and enhanced. This is consistent with [HDC's Core Strategy](#) which includes the encouragement of policies that will enhance the Parish's distinctive rural landscape, settlement pattern, historic assets, natural environment and biodiversity. This policy is also fulfilling the recommendation of point 109, page 25 of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#).

Outside the village of Houghton, the parish has a population of both skylarks and yellow hammers. Both species are in decline and have overly localised populations nationwide. Their reduction has been caused by habitat changes and destruction (evidence for this is in the British Trust for Ornithology's Bird Trend documents for [skylarks](#) and [yellowhammers](#)).

**POLICY E3: REDUCING THE USE OF CARS FOR MOVEMENTS WITHIN THE VILLAGE AND THE WIDER PLAN AREA (see Objectives 4 & 8)**

Within the Neighbourhood Plan Area the following measures will be encouraged:

- a) All new developments should include adequate cycleways and footpaths to link with the rest of the village.
- b) All existing footpaths within the village will be maintained to make use easier for people with limited walking capacity.
- a) Additional seating will be installed where appropriate to provide resting places for less-mobile walkers.
- b) To encourage the use of bicycles, cycle racks will be installed at appropriate points around the village.
- c) In view of the developments proposed to the north of the A47, and the proposed pedestrian-controlled crossing of the A47, particular attention should be given to improve the footpath from Uppingham Road to Linwal Avenue, the direct route for pedestrians from the new developments to the village centre. Improvements, should include the provision of lighting along the whole length of the path, and might be funded with Section 106 monies generated by those developments.

The Parish Council is currently considering implementation of some of these measures (see Community Projects, section 6.1.4).

Significant numbers of NDP Community Questionnaire respondents (~70%) walk or cycle for leisure and to the shops within the village (Q20). A very small number use bicycles to go to work or to shop outside the confines of Houghton (Q21). Making walking more enjoyable in all seasons could be encouraged by a reduction in traffic along Main Street and improvements to the footpath that runs parallel to Main Street between Weir Lane and St Catharine's Church. There was some support for the creation of more cycle ways in the village and alongside the A47 to Thurnby (Q23). Possible sites for cycle racks could be in the vicinity of the Co-operative Store and outside the Village Hall.

**POLICY E4: MAXIMISING THE EFFICIENT USE OF WATER (see Objective 8)**

All developers will be expected to provide all new dwellings which:

- a) have a high specification for all mains water systems in terms of efficient use of mains water resources; and
- b) rainwater collection systems, or provide evidence that such installations are not sustainable.

**POLICY E5: MAXIMISING THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY (see Objective 8)**

All developers will be expected to provide all new dwellings with photovoltaic collectors, or provide evidence that such installations are not sustainable or financially viable.

61.5% of NDP Community Questionnaire respondents agreed that new dwellings in Houghton should have some means of harvesting surface water; 55.1% of respondents agreed that new dwellings in Houghton should have means of generating energy (Q49). These outcomes support [HDC's Core Strategy](#), which encourages policies to minimise energy demand and maximise the use of renewable energy.

## 5 PROGRESS, USE AND MAINTENANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The [NDP Pre-submission Consultation Document](#) was available for consultation for a period of 7 weeks from 27<sup>th</sup> June to 14<sup>th</sup> August 2016 to collect views from the community and all stakeholders. This subsequent document is a revised draft designed to combine the conclusions drawn from existing evidence including NDP Community Questionnaires and views on the draft document received during the consultation period. Additional information has been received through continuing consultation with relevant departments of LCC, HDC and other stakeholders as their operational constraints have changed, particularly in respect of budget cuts and delayed development of the over-arching Local Plan.

A detailed listing of all the responses received during the open consultation period and the actions taken as a result of them are available in Part II of the Neighbourhood Plan, available through the Parish Council website at:

<http://www.houghtononthehillpc.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html>

The revised document is then subject to a further review period by Harborough District Council (HDC), and then to review by an Independent Examiner. Each of these further reviews has a set timescale, and combined they are likely to occupy a period of about 3 months.

### 5.1.1 Referendum

On successful completion of the review stages the plan is subject to a community referendum. Providing the referendum approves the Plan, it can then be formally declared as “made” by HDC.

### 5.1.2 Monitoring and Delivery

Each of the policies has to be delivered through the operation of an implementation plan, which gives details of where responsibility rests for carrying out the several actions which are required to complete each policy. Progress in each of these implementation plans must be monitored by the Parish Council.

Houghton Parish Council will maintain regular contact with Harborough District Council in order to monitor the implementation of the Plan and consider the need to review the Plan in response to changing National, District and local requirements.

### 5.1.3 Periodic Updating of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

The completed plan is only useful if the policies within it are periodically reviewed and their results monitored. This process is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

Periodic review is expected to take place at intervals of about 5 years. Currently there are no Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) which have yet been old enough to undergo such a periodic review. Also, government legislation is currently evolving to provide improved clarity on the process for reviewing and updating Neighbourhood Plans.

## 6 COMMUNITY PROJECTS TO BE CONSIDERED

These projects do not fall within the remit of the NDP policies, but are regarded as interesting options for the community which have emerged during the consultations and discussions of the NDP. They could be promoted by Houghton Parish Council.

### 6.1.1 Village welcome/transport information packs

Provision of such packs to incoming residents is to be encouraged. The Parish Council could coordinate the production of such information. This could be extended to include collaboration with Houghton News to encourage new subscribers. Practical effects include the integration of new residents to the community, and encouragement for them to use walking and cycling for movement within the village, and public transport as much as possible. Benefits would relate to health, well-being and exercise, reduction of parking issues and fossil-fuel consumption.

### 6.1.2 Community wood

The provision of additional green space as a community open-access woodland was supported in the NDP Community Questionnaire (free-form comments [Q35](#)). This could be of benefit to the community in terms of quality of life, health, well-being and exercise. It could support additional activity such as a community orchard, green-waste recycling and/or wood supply as a carbon-neutral fuel source. This initiative could be supported collaboratively by the Parish Council and several existing community groups.

### 6.1.3 Community car pool

While many residents are able to provide for their own personal transport needs, this results in a large number of cars which do relatively low mileages, and contribute to the parking issues throughout the village. Many families run 2 or more cars. A car pool may provide an efficient and cost-effective way of catering for the occasional need for a second car, or a different type of car for specific purposes, small (even electric?) car for town shopping trip or larger car for longer-range visits. A feasibility study for such a project could be conducted by Parish Council, collaborating with existing motor traders in the village.

### 6.1.4 Traffic management initiatives

Over several years following from the [Parking and Traffic Management Report \(2012\)](#) Houghton PC have engaged with LCC Highways department to investigate in detail various options for improving traffic flow in the village, mainly by increasing safe parking locations and protecting footpaths from pavement parking. It is to be expected that the PC will be involved in the realisation of Policies T4 and E3.

### 6.1.5 Cycleway to Thurnby

The need for a cycleway from Houghton to Thurnby along the A47 is a longstanding issue. The existing tarmac footpath has not been maintained and is now reduced in width and has an uneven surface. Upgrading this route as a combined cycleway and footpath would provide a safe alternative for cyclists relative to the main A47 carriageway and encourage both environmentally friendly transport and active lifestyles.

### 6.1.6 Facilities for young persons

The Young People's Questionnaire indicated a lack of facilities for young people in Houghton (YPQ11). While Leicester city is not far distant, bus services are infrequent and expensive. The only public transport route to Oadby, where many young people have social connections due to attending schools there, is via Leicester city centre. In the absence of an economic solution to the transport problem, young people have no access to facilities outside Houghton. While sporting clubs (football, cricket, tennis) do exist in Houghton there is limited provision for more casual sports and social meeting.

### 6.1.7 Facilities for older persons

As stated at several relevant points in this document, Houghton has a significantly high proportion of elderly people. Many retired people are deeply involved in voluntary activities which support the many community organisations which form the core of community activity. Indeed most of our community organisations would collapse without the input from these volunteers.

However, the increasing numbers of less active elderly people do have a requirement for increased community support across the range of community care from befriending and good-neighbour schemes to active support by trained carers. Over the last 2 years a lunch club and an afternoon tea group have become successfully established on a regular basis to encourage both physical and social activity. These are to be encouraged since demand for these can be expected to grow due to demographic trends. Currently these activities are run mostly by voluntary effort by the active-retired cohort described in the paragraph above. Such activities which have great social and personal benefits in keeping individuals actively engaged in the community are likely to need more support in the future.



Figure 6-1 Main Street in the heart of Houghton Village.

## APPENDIX 1 – VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

### 1.1 Introduction

The Village Design Statement does not aim to offer advice for the design of buildings. Its purpose is to illustrate the distinctive elements and characteristics of the village that should be considered by developers when designing new buildings or altering existing buildings. It is not concerned with the preferred location of new developments if a number of potential locations exist, nor with the type of dwellings.

Capturing the essence of the built environment in Houghton is not easy as even within the conservation area building styles and ages are diverse. Just describing buildings does not capture what they mean to residents and each will mean different things to different people. How the built environment influences the behaviour of the people living in the village, in other words their function is the most important factor. Although it will not be possible to avoid traffic problems created by new developments, it should be possible through good design to integrate new houses into the village and make it more attractive for residents to walk or cycle around the village rather than use their cars.

### 1.2 The village context

The original village followed the line of a high ridge running south west to north east formed of sand and gravel on top of Leicestershire clay. Water came from the many local springs formed at the interface between sand and clay. The village pump on Scotland Lane marks one of these water sources. Houghton's Main Street served as the historical centre of the village, lined by numerous 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings that now comprise part of the Conservation Area. The village maintained its concentration around this area until shortly after the Second World War, when the arrival of five consecutive housing developments throughout 1950 – 1980, by different developers, effectively tripled Houghton's population from 600 to over 1500<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, Houghton retains a strong independent village identity with each of the developments, each with their own distinctive styles, contributing individually to the 'whole character' of the village.

Houghton has a population of 1524 in 641 dwellings, (2011 census). This is about 30 people fewer than in the 2001 census. In the [HDC Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study \(2016\)](#) Houghton is identified as a potential Rural Centre in the emerging new Local Plan for the Harborough District (previously a Selected Rural Village).

Maintaining the rural character of the village, whilst absorbing additional developments is clearly of concern to almost the whole of the residents. When asked: '*When determining Planning Applications how important is it to consider the impact on the overall landscape and setting of the village?*' 96% of responses responded with 'Important' or 'Desirable'. Fewer than 1% of responders ticked 'Not important' (Q32).

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Linwal Avenue/Deane Gate Drive - Smarts 1960s; 2. The Heights - Clarksons 1969-1970; 3. St Catharines Way - Wilsons 1972-1974; 4. Hollies Close/Weir Lane - Wilsons 1975-1976; 5. Freer Close - Fletchers 1976.

A number of small local businesses exist, providing valuable, but limited employment opportunities, but there is no dedicated business area with units for commercial or industrial activities in the village. The nearest the village comes to such an area is on the A47 at the junction with Main Street where there is a petrol station, some car servicing operations and a car sales outlet. The majority of the working population commute to other areas. In a survey in 2012 undertaken to support a case for bringing super-fast broadband to the village, a sizeable number of small businesses operating from private dwellings was identified. The NDP Community Questionnaire identified in Q40 that there are 41 businesses based in the village. In response to Q41 fifty-two respondents reported that they worked from home either full or part time.

There seems to be little enthusiasm for industrial or retail units to be made available in the village. When asked via the NDP Community Questionnaire *'Would you welcome a number of small industrial office units being located within or adjacent to the village?'* only 98 people responded and of these, 73% answered 'No' (Q42). 376 Questionnaire respondents gave a view on the desirability of a business park of which 70% were in the negative (Q44). When asked for their vision for the village in ten years' time, Stakeholders suggested that the village would by then have a small business park (Stakeholder Consultation Workshop p12). This is in strong contrast to the views of residents.

### 1.3 The character of the landscape setting

#### 1.3.1 Setting

Although only some 7 miles from the centre of the City of Leicester, Houghton is the first settlement when leaving the city on the east side that has managed to retain its true village character and identity. The village has commanding pastoral views over open countryside. These reinforce its sense of place and history as a once agricultural community. Examples include the views of Quenby Hall (built between 1620 and 1630) to the north across a valley. From the Weir Lane community field there are extensive and unspoilt views across open countryside towards the East and South stretching way beyond the parish boundary. Although not asked specifically about views, 301 NDP Community Questionnaire respondents (71.5%) said they regularly used footpaths and public rights of way around the village and 226 respondents or 53.7%, said they valued these rights of way (Q34). By using these paths villagers will have ready access to long views over the high Leicestershire landscape.

Respondents to the NDP Community Questionnaire expressed concern that developments in the nearby villages of Bushby and Thurnby might extend those settlements further to the east such that in the fullness of time Houghton, if developed significantly in a westerly direction might be swallowed up into the environs of the City itself (Q18, Q19 & free-form comments Q19).

#### 1.3.2 Gateways

The A47 running east to west is on the northern boundary of the larger part of Houghton and dividing the village into two unequal parts with the majority to the south of the main road. There are houses adjacent to the A47 itself, which on the north side become linked

with the housing developments along Ingarsby Lane and the cul-de-sac Ingarsby Close. Ingarsby Lane enters the village from the north rising steeply from a valley so little of the village is visible on this approach until reaching the A47/Main Street junction.

Similarly the A47 from the east rises steeply as it approaches Houghton up Palace Hill so again the extent of housing development is not evident from this direction, until one is almost in the village, or hardly evident at all if merely passing through Houghton travelling west towards Leicester. In contrast the westerly approach along the A47 from Leicester sweeps around a wide curve offering a panoramic view across the modern developments of Deane Gate Drive, Linwal Avenue, St Catharines Way and adjacent roads, with the spire of the parish church of St Catharine on the skyline. The approach from the south along Stretton Lane provides an alternative view of the church, though again with little indication of the extent of the various housing developments. Remnants of Medieval ridge and furrow field working, and springs, can be seen in the fields on this approach and also in many other fields around the village.

Most field footpaths in close vicinity of the village, even those where some parts have been lost, can be traced to converge on St Catharine's church from nearby villages of Gaulby, King's Norton, Little Stretton, Stoughton, Bushby and Thurnby, Scraftoft and Keyham. The views from these footpaths when approaching the village provide other vistas of the attractive setting of Houghton within the countryside.

## 1.4 Settlement pattern and character

At the north western end of the village the extent of the built environment has been influenced by the position of the boundary between the parish of Houghton and the parish of Hungarton, where it effectively runs adjacent to the A47. Discussions have recently taken place the outcome of which is mutual consent for the parish boundary to be realigned to the position shown on the Neighbourhood Development Plan Area map.

### 1.4.1 Principal 20th Century Developments

#### 1.4.1.1 Linwal Avenue/Deane Gate Drive

This development was constructed in the 1960s by then local builder A. Walter Smart. It contains a mixture of houses and bungalows with a variety of sizes of conventional design. The layout benefits from this variety and most properties have both front and rear gardens of reasonable size with low walled boundaries at the front. The *cul de sacs* have narrow roads and the A47 junction with Deane Gate Drive has become very busy as a result of the further developments on St Catharines Way and the increasing traffic loads on both roads at this point.

### 1.4.1.2 *The Heights*



Figure A- 1-0-1 Home Close Road on the Heights Estate.

This development was constructed in the early 1970s and comprises mostly houses with a few bungalows. Whilst the house designs are typical of their time, the road layout has been imaginatively constructed with curves and bends which together with the open frontages and individual residents' planting schemes has achieved a spacious and well-ordered appearance. A number of properties enjoy the benefit of open views across the valley of the River Sence towards Gaulby, and there is easy access to the Playing Field and children's play area.

### 1.4.1.3 *St Catharines Way, Forsells End, North Way, Chapel Close and Winckley Close*



Figure A-1-0-2 St Catharines Way looking towards the Church, with many mature trees.

This development followed quickly after The Heights in the later 1970s. The layout incorporated several mature trees, some of which have since been removed, and open green areas some of which were planted with trees, which are now a dominant feature of

the area. Examples are in Chapel Close and Freer Close. There are a variety of houses, (but no bungalows) including some modern terraced and link-detached designs, which has enabled a wider range of house values. The landscaping is arguably the best of the new developments and quite a number of properties benefit from open country views. One or two *cul de sacs* end openly probably with further development in mind, but the road widths of these are inadequate for more than a very limited number of vehicles.

#### **1.4.1.4 Freer Close**

This small development was built by Fletchers, a company that is no longer active. Building started in the mid-1970s but was delayed for 2-3 years after the first few houses had been built. The design of the Close is similar to the Wilson development along St Catharines Way with houses built of red brick and having a Georgian flavour. There is an attractive green area in the centre of the development which now has mature trees. The houses on the northwest facing aspect have magnificent views to the west and north, which will be seriously changed by any development to the NW of the village.

The St Catharines Way, North Way, Winckley Close, Chapel Close and Freer Close developments between them comprise 121 dwellings. Set in amongst these are eight significant green spaces. They give a spaciousness to the development which connects with the rural nature of Houghton, and contributes a great deal to the character of the settlement by preventing aspects of urbanisation/sub-urbanisation pervading this part of the village. When asked via the village-wide consultation over 50% of respondents indicated they value the St Catharines and Chapel Close accessible green spaces as well as other green spaces around the village (Q34).

#### **1.4.1.5 Hollies Close**

This group of houses takes its name from, and sits on the former yard of Hollies Farm, a building which remains, and which is within the Main Street Conservation Area. Built in 1975/76 by Wilsons in red brick the houses are a mixture of detached and linked detached styles.

## **1.5 Buildings and spaces in the village**

### **1.5.1 Desirable features for new housing developments**

Creating a good place to live requires good design that is centred on the needs of people. Many modern developments have produced bleak and unfriendly environments, which alienate residents and create unobserved spaces that can be the site of undesirable behaviour. So that Houghton avoids this dystopian vision, the guidelines in *Building for Life 12 The sign of a good place to live*, should guide all new developments within the NDP area. This document lists 12 principles which should be used to guide the design and layout of new housing and these are divided into three groupings which deal with integrating the new housing into the village, creating an attractive place to live and making sure that homes and streets encourage communication between people and protect against unwanted activity. The twelve points are presented as a series of questions that should be asked about the new development.

Table 1 The application of the design principles of "Building for Life" to Houghton.

Principle	Neighbourhood Plan Comment
<b>Group A. Integrating into the neighbourhood</b>	
<p><b>A1. Connections</b></p> <p>Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones, while also respecting existing buildings and land uses around the development site?</p>	<p>It is important that any new development has more than one route in and out. There should be easy and safe access for pedestrians and cyclists, which is separate from the access for cars.</p>
<p><b>A2. Facilities and services</b></p> <p>Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?</p>	<p>If the development is not close to community facilities then it should have good connections to them, especially for people on foot or bicycle, to minimise existing traffic congestion in their vicinity.</p>
<p><b>A3. Public transport</b></p> <p>Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?</p>	<p>Any new development should have all its houses within 400m of existing public transport stops.</p>
<p><b>A4. Meeting local housing requirements</b></p> <p>Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?</p>	<p>The general principles of planning for the provision of an appropriate mix of accommodation types to support the community are discussed in section 4.2 of the NDP document.</p>

<b>Group B. Creating a place</b>	
<p><b>B5. Character</b></p> <p>Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?</p>	<p>Character can be achieved either by replicating elements of the traditional building style in the village in new houses or by distinctive modern architecture that echoes the themes prevalent in the community.</p>
<p><b>B6. Working with the site and its context</b></p> <p>Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?</p>	<p>Houghton is a rural village and many residents have named this as one of the attractive features that should be preserved. When asked what it was like living in Houghton 77% of respondents said they felt a sense of being rural (Q1), and when asked to describe two particular aspects of Houghton which they valued and would like to have preserved, 47% of 305 respondents mentioned the rural feel (Q37). 28 of the 75 Young People's responses indicated countryside/rural/peaceful as what they most liked about living in Houghton (YPQ3). New developments need to create interesting views out to the open countryside without spoiling existing views, and use green space and trees to enhance the rural feel of the development.</p>
<p><b>B7. Creating well defined streets and spaces</b></p> <p>Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?</p>	<p>The development must have streets that create a feeling of space, perspective and security. Views along streets should provide interest through variety. Avoiding straight roads and rows of houses enables there to be surprises revealed as people round turns. Main Street has this aspect along its length, for example the view towards the church from outside the present vicarage.</p>

<p><b>B8. Easy to find your way around</b></p> <p>Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?</p>	<p>Layout of roads should follow a logical pattern through a development making it easy for those unfamiliar with the area to progress in safety for themselves and for residents. Pedestrian and cycle ways should be clearly marked and pathways accessible to wheelchairs and pushchairs. Pedestrians and cyclists should be provided with more than one access to all new developments.</p> <p>Road/street signs should be in keeping with existing signage and reflect the character of the village, be of good quality, and adequate to inform visitors and emergency services, but not overbearing.</p>
<p><b>Group C. Street and home</b></p>	
<p><b>C9. Streets for all</b></p> <p>Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?</p>	<p>New developments should have winding roads with broad pavements, which will slow traffic and give pedestrians room to walk two or three abreast.</p>
<p><b>C10. Car parking</b></p> <p>Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?</p>	<p>It is important that there is sufficient parking for each house to provide a sense of space that residents are not tempted to park on public spaces intended for recreation, nor on pavements. Parking of this nature on grassy areas can also cause damage to the ground producing unsightly areas that detract from the visual delights of the area. The use of specialist parking surfaces allowing grass to grow through should be considered in order to maintain safely the visual attraction afforded by grassy surfaces.</p>
<p><b>C11. Public and private spaces</b></p> <p>Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?</p>	<p>All parts of the street should be visible from houses so providing natural street monitoring. There should be no 'dead areas'</p>

	<p>where unwanted activities can be practiced unseen. It should be obvious which areas are public and which are private so as to remove the potential for dispute between neighbours.</p> <p>Publically accessible green spaces should be incorporated into new developments using as guidance the ratio of publically accessible green space to dwellings found in the developments of St Catharines Way, North Way, Winckley Close, Chapel Close and Freer Close. The opportunity for appropriate arboreal planting is most valuable in this context.</p>
<p><b>C12. External storage and amenity space</b></p> <p>Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles with space for recycling bins and boxes positioned so as not to present an eyesore when viewed from the street?</p>	<p>This should be applied consistently throughout all new developments and any changes to existing properties should not compromise these important spaces in the interests of creating more living space.</p>

These principles should be applied to new development within the NDP area although it might not be possible to achieve them all every time. As already mentioned Houghton on the Hill has a rural nature much appreciated by residents. The first and sixth principles in the list capture this aspect of development and are the ones that are most likely to change the nature of the village if the process of setting a new development into the current community is not done well. The four developments that have been added to the village since the 1960s have been of this nature. The Heights, St Catharines Way and Freer Close are all composed of one style of house that bears little relation to the original buildings of the village apart from being built of the vernacular red brick in two of the developments. A critical activity that will be encouraged is for developers at an early stage of the design process to survey buildings in the village such as the old brick farmhouses on Main Street, thatched roofed houses and other distinctive buildings and to use elements of these to inspire their own work. This process will not mean copying existing buildings, for example no modern work will use thatch, but to use existing buildings for inspiration so capturing the essence of the current village look and feel.



Figure A-1-0-3 St Catharines Green provides an open green space alongside the main route through the development. This is a good example of the use of public open spaces.

## 1.6 Guidelines for the design of buildings in new developments and for modifications to existing buildings within and adjacent to the village

The addition of new developments over some 25 or so years introduced into the village a range of different styles, and building materials, bearing little in common with the properties in the older parts of the village. In particular new technologies will create additional opportunities for addressing climate change ([Code for Sustainable Homes, 2010](#)). With no dominant attractive style, which can be used as a reference for new developments, some general guidelines should be applied to guide the design of buildings.

### 1.6.1 Building design

- a) The height of dwellings should be limited to no more than 2 floors, though some houses having 2½ floors will be acceptable if the design is sympathetic with the surroundings, and provided those dwellings having 2½ floors do not dominate the development.
- b) New developments should include a mix of sympathetic styles avoiding a predominance of a few standardised designs, and avoiding monotony. Designs which capture and reflect the distinctiveness of the village will be encouraged.
- c) Building materials should generally and where appropriate be in keeping with the existing materials in the vicinity of the development site. Brick size and colour, mortar colour, and roof materials will all be features to be considered. Roof design is to follow traditional practices avoiding a low pitch. Roof tiles should follow the examples in existing developments such as those in the St Catharines Way area. Flat roofs can be more difficult and expensive to repair and will be permitted on single-storey new-builds and on single-storey extensions to existing dwellings only if they preserve an established attractive view of the countryside. Flat roof extensions of two or more storeys will not normally be permitted, particularly in visible locations.

- d) The village-wide consultation identified a desire for means of generating energy to be incorporated into new dwellings. Results from [Q49](#) show more than 55% of responses thought that '*New dwellings in Houghton should have means of generating energy (e.g. Solar tiles)*'. Only 9.5% of respondents disagreed.
- e) Featureless and window-less walls can be made to look more attractive by selective and sympathetic use of bricks to form a pattern and this will be encouraged. Walls built from traditional block work and finished with painted rendering, will also be encouraged in order to break up an otherwise monotonous view from the street, though placed selectively within a development, not repeated too frequently. A varied orientation of dwellings within a development is preferred to a too regimented approach.
- f) Where a chimney is a feature of the design, it should be incorporated into an external chimney breast to break-up the unattractive impression of a slab wall.
- g) Incorporation of some cladding, be that natural timber, tile, or UPVC, should be permitted provided it does not become a dominant/over-bearing feature, is easy to access for maintenance, and is in keeping with the design of buildings close by.
- h) Window design should maintain a visually acceptable proportion of glass to wall when viewed from the street and should encourage solar gain, heat conservation and low maintenance. Where possible, when windows are replaced, the replacements should be in keeping with the originals in terms of design, scale and detail. This applies particularly to the replacement of wooden frames by UPVC.
- i) Garages should be set back from the pavement, not extending forward of the building lines of dwellings and garages in the same street. Garages should not dominate the site, and their design should be sympathetic with that of the dwelling. The relationship of garages to the street scene must be a prime consideration in planning decisions. Garages located totally in rear gardens detract from the social space provided by rear gardens and should be avoided.
- j) Over 60% of responses to the village-wide NDP Community Questionnaire agree that new dwellings should be provided with some means of harvesting surface water to water gardens, flush toilets, and/or for washing cars. Only 3% disagreed ([Q49](#)). Water conservation inside buildings should be maximised through appropriate specification and installation of water-efficient appliances and fittings combined with good overall plumbing design.
- k) The demographic structure of the village is dynamic so that houses constructed in a conventional way are not always suitable for all stages of life. Recent architectural ideas have proposed the concept of the Whole-Life House which is constructed so as to be readily adapted when required to accommodate the changing physical needs of the occupants over time - see [Adaptive Flexibility in Housing – The Whole Life House, John Brennan \(2010\)](#). Developers in Houghton will be expected to include a proportion of whole-life dwellings in their housing mix.

### 1.6.2 Boundaries

The style, height and materials used in new boundaries should be in keeping with the property itself and its immediate neighbours, i.e. designed to harmonise with its surroundings, rather than stand out as a landmark.

Walls of any significant height are evident mostly on Main Street. On the west side of the village the 1960s development of Linwal Avenue and Deane Gate Drive introduced low level walls to delineate a boundary, and in subsequent developments open frontages were the norm, though some planting, walls and fences have been added. Where walls feature as the pavement boundary in a new development they should be constructed from natural brick, with height limited to 0.7 metres.

Water courses should not be used as boundaries to properties. For new developments the existence of springs should be established in advance of laying out a site, and appropriate measures taken to ensure the spring water is ducted appropriately in order to avoid future problems for residents.

Fencing, particularly high metal or timber fencing with decorative features, is not in keeping with the styles of pavement boundary found in the village, and should be avoided.

Front gardens open to the highway are a regular feature within the newer parts of the village, and should be encouraged.

Hedging can add to the attractiveness of the street scene, but native box or beech type hedging should be used. Rapid growing hedges such as *LeylandII* should not be planted to delineate or privatise a boundary. There are examples in the village which demonstrate how unsightly and impractical that type of species can become over time as its natural height is far in excess of that appropriate for a boundary to a residential property within the built environment, even when maintenance is practised. Other native species in established hedges should be retained if appropriately maintained to avoid becoming over-bearing or a nuisance to neighbours and those passing by.

Decorative trees can be incorporated into a boundary provided they will not grow beyond seven metres high. Traditional “field trees” such as oak and sycamore, which grow to a substantial height, should not be planted within new developments. Existing trees of these types along the boundary to a development should be retained provided they will not, over time, lead to subsidence of the ground adjacent to properties or impact adversely on roads, pavements, drainage and other underground services.

### 1.6.3 New building in the Conservation Area.

The conservation area defines the core of the original village. Without it Houghton would simply be a quite pleasant, slightly detached, somewhat bland, dormitory suburb of Leicester. When asked in the NDP Community Questionnaire to describe two particular aspects of Houghton “...which you especially value and would like to see preserved,” the character of the Main Street was the fourth most frequent free-form comment (Q37). The conservation area consists of Main Street, the adjacent arms of Scotland Lane, including The

Rise and Elizabeth Close, Weir Lane, Hollies Close, School Lane and part of Stretton Lane (see the map in Figure 4-1 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan).

Whilst all the provisions of the VDS apply to the conservation area, it also requires some additional, detailed, consideration. It is the conservation area, particularly Main Street, which reflects the village's origins as an agricultural settlement. There have been so many alterations, in-fills and redevelopments permitted over the years that this connection is in danger of being broken if appropriate management of the street is not exercised in any future development. This is not to say that there should be no changes at all. Not all works which may be proposed would necessarily detract from the appeal that it has. Indeed, some might enhance it. However, even very limited unsympathetic change could damage it irrevocably.

The conservation area, with the exception of the more modern developments of Elizabeth Close and The Rise, cannot be described as having any particular style other than its historical, agricultural content, as almost no two features of Main Street/Scotland Lane are the same. It is a diverse architectural continuum, and thus has a unique appeal and identity.

This is the particular strength which gives it such a defining role in the character of the built village. The aim must be to protect and enhance that continuum.



Figure A-1-0-4 Contrasting building styles down Main Street

The influence of any proposed changes to a building or a new site must be considered in their effects on all aspects of the section of street they occupy. To facilitate this consideration a realistic representation, perhaps a computer generation or artist's impression may need to be prepared. This consideration of changes must be of all aspects of every proposed change, not just changes to actual dwellings. The continuum comprises many elements. It isn't practical to attempt to list them all, but some key considerations, which should be addressed when considering changes, are set out below. With the

considerable number of large trees and other planting, including that next to the road, adjacent to the road, and visible over and through the spaces between buildings along the road, aspects can differ significantly between the seasons. This seasonal variation must feature in all deliberations.

## 1.7 Key considerations

- There should be no further loss of historic features. This includes walls, other boundary features, outbuildings and actual buildings. Considering particularly boundary walls, some of which are also retaining walls, they are largely of traditional and substantial proportions and construction. Any new building should take design and style cues from those adjacent structures. Any proposals for insubstantial constructions using non-traditional or otherwise inappropriate materials should not be permitted.
- Roofs are almost exclusively of a fairly steep pitch and traditional materials with thatch, slate and tiles predominating. Where there are changes to roofs this theme should be continued with particular attention being paid to the type and colour of tiles where they are proposed, to give a best visual fit with the surrounding roofs.
- Finishes to buildings are very varied in the existing stock, with stone, various renderings and aged brickwork featuring most commonly. The majority of established forms of finish will be acceptable, but again colour and harmony (even if that harmony is at times a pleasing contrast) with the surrounding construction will be the key consideration. Simple modern exposed brickwork is very unlikely to meet the criteria.
- Consideration must be given to the architectural interest and detail of proposed changes. Thus the addition of details to break up otherwise featureless frontages and the provision and style of windows, doors and construction detail should take cues from other similar elements in the continuum. The continuum would be particularly important here as for instance a cottage next to larger or more modern houses might take its cues from other, similar properties in the street, not necessarily those adjacent.
- Most importantly spaces around and between individual buildings and all other features, including substantial trees, must be considered. The views and aspects afforded by spaces and the changes in light they cause are fundamental to the cohesion of the continuum. The placing of a building or feature in relation to neighbouring constructions and to its own plot can only be properly considered in the context of the features and the space around it. Here scale is most important. The diminishment of space in the continuum by a proposed construction and an inappropriate scale within its setting, particularly with regard to height, will be seriously detrimental to the whole. Thus proposals for developments, which overbear their plots or their setting, must be resisted.
- A key objective will be to keep variety in the continuum, as this is the essence of its formation. The gradual conversion of smaller houses to larger ones and the re-building of bungalows to houses is a trend, which will not sustain Main Street. It will

eventually bring a uniformity that will be seriously detrimental to the whole. This trend also gives rise to houses that overbear their plots, with serious consequences for the balance of the continuum both in terms of diversity and the built/un-built space balance.

## 1.8 Guidelines for new construction or re-development of existing buildings beyond the village

### 1.8.1 Landscape impact

There are a number of farmsteads and other agricultural buildings scattered throughout the parish and recently a solar farm completed off Ingarsby Lane. Any modification to existing, and/or new construction should respect the rural setting, enhance the high quality landscape, and not impact negatively on the much valued views from the village taking appropriate guidance from the VDS. Where necessary, in order to conform with the above, the height of new buildings should not create a negative impact upon the contour and scale of the landscape in which they are set. This will generally infer a preference for single storey construction, but not exclusively so where evidence can be produced.

### 1.8.2 Tall structures

Any incorporation and/or use of features such as towers, masts, floodlights or other features which may intrude upon on the setting and visual impact of the surroundings will need to be assessed and agreed before approval is given.

## 1.9 Highways and traffic

### 1.9.1 The traffic problem and design

It is important to consider how traffic could be discouraged within the village. Principles three, seven and nine of the *Building for Life 12* document deal with transport within a development, but the principles apply to the whole village. If the traffic issue is to be satisfactorily dealt with in a sustainable way, these three principles need to be built into the design of the village as a whole as well as for each new development.

Principle nine asks *'Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?'* At present the streets in the village, in particular Main Street, are biased towards traffic use rather than pedestrians. The location of buildings influences how people access them and which mode of transport they use. It is acknowledged that bringing about significant changes to the pattern of road use will be difficult. Nevertheless, it is worth expressing here an ambition for changes, which could enhance the ambience of the village.

One of the biggest traffic issues in Houghton is car parking around the school in the morning and evening. It is unlikely that the school can be both viable and mostly populated by local children, so this problem, mainly created by parents who live out of Houghton, is intractable without enforceable new solutions. An innovative solution to the provision of additional car parking in this area is urgently needed.

New developments should not be permitted in locations which are likely to generate a significant increase in the volume of traffic using Ingarsby Lane, Deane Gate Drive, St Catharines Way, Main Street and Stretton Lane. Parking issues in the vicinity of the school could be eased if a car park could be incorporated into any changes in the use of land on Stretton Lane.

Notwithstanding the views received in the recent past, discussions should be entered into with Harborough District Council and Leicestershire County Council, to ascertain if their combined knowledge and experiences could offer a workable solution to the traffic issues on Main Street.

### 1.9.2 Street furniture

Street furniture should be carefully located to avoid a feeling of clutter. It should be in keeping with the existing signage and reflect the character of the village, of good quality, and adequate to inform visitors and emergency services but not overbearing. Pedestrian and cycle ways should be clearly marked.

Utilities, particularly telephony and power distribution companies, must be encouraged to replace their pole mounted overhead wiring with more modern, tidier construction, and take all opportunities to replace it with underground wiring.

Adequate seating should be provided consistent with the initiative stemming from the Parish Plan. Litter bins and notice boards should be provided in new developments, the latter to ensure new residents are well informed and to foster a sense of inclusion into the community.

Energy efficient street lighting should provide safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Lighting should satisfy recognised safety standards but not be brighter than guidelines indicate. Poles to be as sympathetic as possible to the rural nature of the particular road but because of the diversity of developments they do not need to be uniform throughout the whole village. Wall-mounted street lights as evident in the Conservation Area, can be effective and reduce the amount of clutter at street level, and make it easier and safer to pass along pavements.

## APPENDIX 2 – HOUGHTON SERVICES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### 1.1 Community Facilities and Services

#### 1.1.1 Houghton C of E Primary School

The school currently provides for 4 to 10 year old children but an additional cohort age 10-11 (Year 6) is to be added in August 2017 along with seven other primary schools in the area. Houghton School feeds into secondary schools based in Oadby with school contract transport provided on school days.



Figure A-2-0-1 A view of part of the play areas in the school grounds.

There is a single class for each year group and demand for places is high with about half the pupils coming from outside the school's catchment area. An additional classroom will accommodate the new Year 6 pupils and the maximum number of pupils attending the school will rise by 30 to 210, seven classes of 30.

The school is an integral part of the local community and is committed to fostering in all pupils a strong sense of respect, honesty, co-operation and responsibility. Importance is placed on developing skills in reading, writing and numeracy and the school offers a creative curriculum through which it hopes to see all pupils realise their full academic, creative and personal potential. The school attaches a great importance to its Christian ethos and works closely with the Parish Church of St Catharine to this end but it welcomes children from all faiths and none.

In 2016 the school was rated "Good" following an OFSTED inspection. It is very likely that the school will convert to an academy school and become part of a Multi-Academy Trust in 2017.

New housing developments in the catchment area will have implications for pupil numbers but it is not expected that this will generate a demand for more than 25 extra places across the 7 year groups. Admissions of four-year-old pupils are prioritised in the following order: a) Special Educational Needs, b) catchment area children, c) siblings already at the school, and d) distance from Houghton. Currently approximately half of the pupils are from outside the catchment area. As a result of housing developments in Houghton it is anticipated that the number of pupils from within the school catchment area will increase and it is therefore likely that the number of pupils admitted from Leicester City and its outskirts will reduce. Four year olds from nearby villages will not be affected as they will continue to have priority over those from further afield.

### 1.1.2 Houghton Village Hall



The Village Hall was built in 1922 and has benefitted from significant investment and improvement in the last five years. It comprises a main hall which can seat 140, a committee room, a modern kitchen and storage inside and in outbuildings. It still bears a legacy from piecemeal development over nearly 100 years and has particular deficits in energy efficiency and space for the present, let alone increasing, village population. It is used for a very diverse range of activities, including dances and social functions, indoor bowls, committee meetings, mums and toddlers group, exercise group, Brownies, Circuit training, Community Meetings, Guides, Karate, Lunch Break for senior citizens, Messy Church, Polling Station, Scouts, Singing Sally and Ducks Friends for pre-school children, Yoga and private lettings.

### 1.1.3 Sport & Recreation

Houghton is well provided with facilities insofar as there is a large playing field of some 4 acres on Weir Lane, a cricket pitch on Dixon's Field, a sports field and multipurpose hard court at the school, and a bowling green on the Village Hall field with a good area of surrounding recreation field. Some of the green spaces on St Catharines Way are also enjoyed for informal games.

The children's playground and young people's shelter on the Weir Lane Field were both installed in recent years and are in fairly good condition, but consideration is being given to additional facilities. The tennis courts and tennis pavilion are in very good condition but the main pavilion has been declared as near the end of its useful life by a structural surveyor, and is in need of radical renovation or replacement.

#### 1.1.4 Places of Worship

St Catharines Parish Church commenced building in about 1220 and is well used by its congregation and by villagers for baptisms, weddings and funerals as well as for school use and occasional musical performances and meetings. The Church plans to re-order the interior to enhance the potential for much wider community and Church use complementary to the Village Hall.



Figure A-2-0-2 The Methodist Chapel, Main Street.

The Methodist Chapel was built in 1852 and comprises the chapel room and a school room which is let quite regularly. The Chapel plans to open the front approach to create a garden. Both these buildings face continuing maintenance costs that are difficult to afford.

#### 1.1.5 Burial Ground

The HDC report on [Provision for Open Space Sport and Recreation \(2015\)](#) includes assessment of adequacy of burial ground facilities. This report highlights Houghton as having a shortfall of both burial and cremation ashes space within the 15-year Plan period. St Catharine's church owns agricultural land adjacent to the current burial ground and there is potential to expand the burial ground into this area. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) are aware of the need for such expansion and are developing plans to meet the anticipated long-term needs for burial space while respecting the conservation area status of the land involved, and providing a positive contribution to the needs of the community.

#### 1.1.6 Health Services

There is no medical or dental practice in Houghton. Medical practices at Billesdon, Bushby, and Downing Drive Evington, are highly regarded by their patients; 5 residents (7% of those

expressing an opinion) wish for a new Health Centre and Practice in the village (free-form comments Q39). Houghton Helpline assists many people who have no car or can no longer drive to access medical or dental services elsewhere, including hospital services. The Pharmacy in Main Street provides an excellent service both for advice and for dispensing with only 2.9% stating they never used the service (Q38). It is highly valued within the village though it operates from very cramped premises.

### 1.1.7 Voluntary Organisations and Clubs

Houghton is blessed with a large variety of clubs and organisations, all of which welcome new members. They include the following:

After School Clubs	Art	Bird Watching	Bridge
Bowls	Brownies	Church Home Groups	Cricket
Cubs	Duck`s Friends	Gardening Club	Guides
Houghton Helpline	Houghton Singers	Karate	Keep Fit
Lunch Break	Mothers` Union	Music Club	Petanque
Photography	Scouts	Soccer	Tennis
Walking Groups	Women`s Institute	Yoga	Knitting

There are 4 organisations which have particular roles within the village:

#### Houghton Field Association (HFA)

This is a registered charity which is responsible for the administration of the Houghton Playing Field and the care and maintenance of the pavilion in the field. The field and the pavilion are the home of Houghton Rangers Football Club. HFA is also landlord to the Tennis Club which has its own clubhouse on the field.

#### Houghton Gardeners Club

Houghton allotments are owned by the Parish Council but day-to-day administration is delegated to Houghton Gardeners Club.

#### Houghton Helpline

This is a volunteer group which maintains a phone line through which volunteers will provide help within its range of abilities to anyone in need in the village.

Most calls involve provision of volunteer drivers for a range of visits e.g. trips to Doctor, Dentist, Hospital, Shopping, Social Event. Help can also be provided for one-off domestic jobs, providing social company, etc. Helpline volunteers do not cover ongoing services (e.g. cleaning, personal care) or technical repairs.

#### Houghton Village Hall Trust

The Village Hall is administered by an independent trust which is a registered charity. It is responsible for the care and maintenance of the Village Hall building and its associated recreation field. The hall and field are the home of Houghton Bowls Club. The hall is heavily

used by a many of the village organizations in the table above, averaging about 70 bookings per month.

## 1.2 Commercial Services

### 1.2.1 Co-operative Store



Figure A-2-0-3 The Co-operative Store at the junction of Main Street and Weir Lane.

This sells a wide range of products and has an off-licence for wines, beers and spirits. It is a small retail establishment so cannot carry a large stock. It also finds receiving deliveries problematic because of the parking difficulties, largely caused by the customers of the shop itself. Nevertheless, it is highly valued by villagers used extensively by residents. In the village wide consultation 97% of respondent households reported using the store (Q38).

### 1.2.2 Newscentre & Post Office

The Newscentre & Post Office in St Catharines Way provides most post office services as well as banking facilities. It offers newspapers (including a village-wide delivery service), confectionary, and stationery. Apart from the village-wide newspaper delivery service, these extra services compete with other retail services within the village. The establishment is highly valued.

### 1.2.3 The Village Public Houses

There are 2 public houses in the village, the *Rose and Crown* and the *Old Black Horse*. Both provide extensive ranges of food provision as well as drink. They also serve as important social centres within the community. Both have been assigned as community assets.

#### 1.2.4 The Village Motor Services.

The village motor services are used extensively by residents as evidenced by the responses to Q38. The largest, Houghton Garage, has been in current ownership for the last 40 years providing fuel and motoring related services plus a small convenience store.

#### 1.2.5 Other Facilities.

The village has a hairdressing salon *Studio Image* and a beauty salon *Annabella's*. There is a range of small businesses operating from within the village, including builders and related trades, personal services including hairdressing, aromatherapy and general and technical consultancies such as for IT and design.

#### 1.2.6 Solar Farm

In 2016 a Solar PV Farm was constructed on agricultural land to the north of the village. This land is part of the area which has been agreed for transfer from Hungarton Parish to Houghton Parish in 2019 as explained in section 2.1.1. The solar farm is part of the agricultural operations of the Ingarsby Hall farm which is mainly in the Hungarton parish.

While the solar farm is in a location where its visual impact is mitigated by the shape of the immediate local landscape it still forms a prominent feature, visible particularly from the north and east. The essential nature of Houghton on the Hill on the western boundary of the High-Leicestershire landform ensures that any such facility occupying a large area of land almost inevitably becomes prominently visible, and will hence form a significant intrusion on the landscape. This effect is evidenced by the [HDC Landscape Capacity Assessment \(2016\)](#) (and see this document section 4.2 and Figure 4-3).

## APPENDIX 3 – INDEX of NDP Part II Evidence Base

The Evidence Base component of the Plan is held online on the Parish Council website and can be accessed via dynamic links in the NDP document, or by visiting the PC website at:

<http://www.houghtononthehillpc.org.uk/evidence-base.html>

In addition, all sources consulted or referred to have been collected together in a single document, which can be downloaded to view at:

<http://www.houghtononthehillpc.org.uk/uploads/evidence-base---listed.pdf>

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# Neighbourhood Planning

## Evidence Base

### Introduction

As set out in §040 of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2016), "*while there are prescribed documents that must be submitted with a neighbourhood plan[...]there is no 'tick box' list of evidence required for neighbourhood planning. Proportionate, robust evidence should support the choices made and the approach taken. The evidence should be drawn upon to explain succinctly the intention and rationale of the policies in the draft neighbourhood plan[...].*"

The evidence presented can be in the form of guidance documents e.g. National Planning Policy Framework, facts and figures e.g. Census data, as well as opinions expressed during consultation with the community and stakeholders. It should be used to support the decisions taken and the policies made during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The following documents, arranged under appropriate sub-headings, have been consulted or referred to during the NPWP's development of a draft Neighbourhood Plan for Houghton and provide evidence to support the policies contained in this. They have also been collected together in a single document, which can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

- [Neighbourhood Planning - Context](#)
- [Planning Policy](#)
- [Demographics and Profiles](#)
- [Consultation and Engagement](#)

The following sections correspond to those present in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. They contain links to specific documents and evidence referred to in the text.

- [Neighbourhood Area and Profile](#)
- [Community Vision, Key Issues and Objectives](#)
- [Village Design Statement \(VDS\)](#)
- [Housing Provision](#)
- [Services and Facilities](#)
- [Traffic and Transport](#)
- [Environment](#)