

# Houghton on the Hill

## Village Design Guide & Codes 2025

(A companion document to the Houghton Neighbourhood Development Plan)



**Houghton on the Hill Parish Council**  
**Leicestershire**

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## Table of Acronyms used in this document.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Acronym</b>
AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited	AECOM
Community Questionnaire	CQ
Conservation Area	CA
Designated Area (equivalent to Parish for this plan)	DA
Harborough District Council	HDC
Harborough Local Plan	HLP
Houghton on the Hill Parish Council	HPC
Housing Needs Assessment	HNA
Leicester & Leicestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment	HENA
National Planning Policy Framework December 2023	NPPF
Neighbourhood Development Plan	NDP
Village Design Guide and Codes	VDG&C
Young People's Questionnaire	YPQ

## 1 Introduction

1. This Village Design Guide and Codes (VDG&C) describes the distinctive elements and characteristics of Houghton, and the surrounding areas, into which new developments will be integrated. It then provides a series of Design Codes which developers will be expected to follow when designing new buildings or altering existing ones throughout the Designated Area (DA). Design Codes are defined as “a set of design requirements for the physical development of a site or area”. Policies D1 and D2 in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) define the application of this Design Guide and Codes to future developments in Houghton. The VDG&C is not concerned with the preferred location of new developments nor with the number of dwellings to be built.
2. The National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 (NPPF) , paragraphs 131-132 state that:

*“131. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.*

*132. Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.”*
3. The guidance in this document recognises that developers will probably have a suite of designs for dwellings they prefer to offer in particular locations to provide a particular mix of properties as determined by a [Housing Needs Assessment \(HNA\)](#). It also recognises that infill, minor development or redevelopment of existing buildings / structures may bring forward creative proposals. The guidance does not seek to stifle choice but does seek to improve certain features without destroying the developer’s or individual’s creative designs. Design covers much more than the dwellings and includes the setting of a development within the plan area, biodiversity and environment, roads, parking within new developments, the emphasis on walking and cycling and footpaths linking to the village facilities and to the countryside.
4. Capturing the essence of the built environment in Houghton is not easy as, even within the Conservation Area (CA), 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 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 completely avoid traffic problems created by new developments, it should be an objective through good design to integrate new dwellings into the village and inspire residents to walk or cycle around the village rather than use their cars.

## 1.1 The village context

5. The original village of Houghton followed the line of a high ridge running southwest to northeast 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. In 2024, the population of over 1800 resides in some 800 dwellings, up from the 1524 residents in 641 dwellings recorded in the 2011 census.
6. Houghton's Main Street is the historical centre of the village, lined by 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings that now comprise part of the CA. The village maintained its concentration around this area until shortly after the Second World War, when the arrival of five consecutive housing developments throughout 1960 – 1980 (Appendix A), by different developers, effectively tripled Houghton's population from 600 to over 1500. More recent developments in 2019, 2020 and 2021 (Manor Green, Ashlington Fields, Houghton Meadows, see Figure 1-1) have further increased the population to approaching 2000. Despite these expansions, Houghton retains a strong independent village identity with the developments, each with their own distinctive styles, contributing individually to the 'character' of the village.

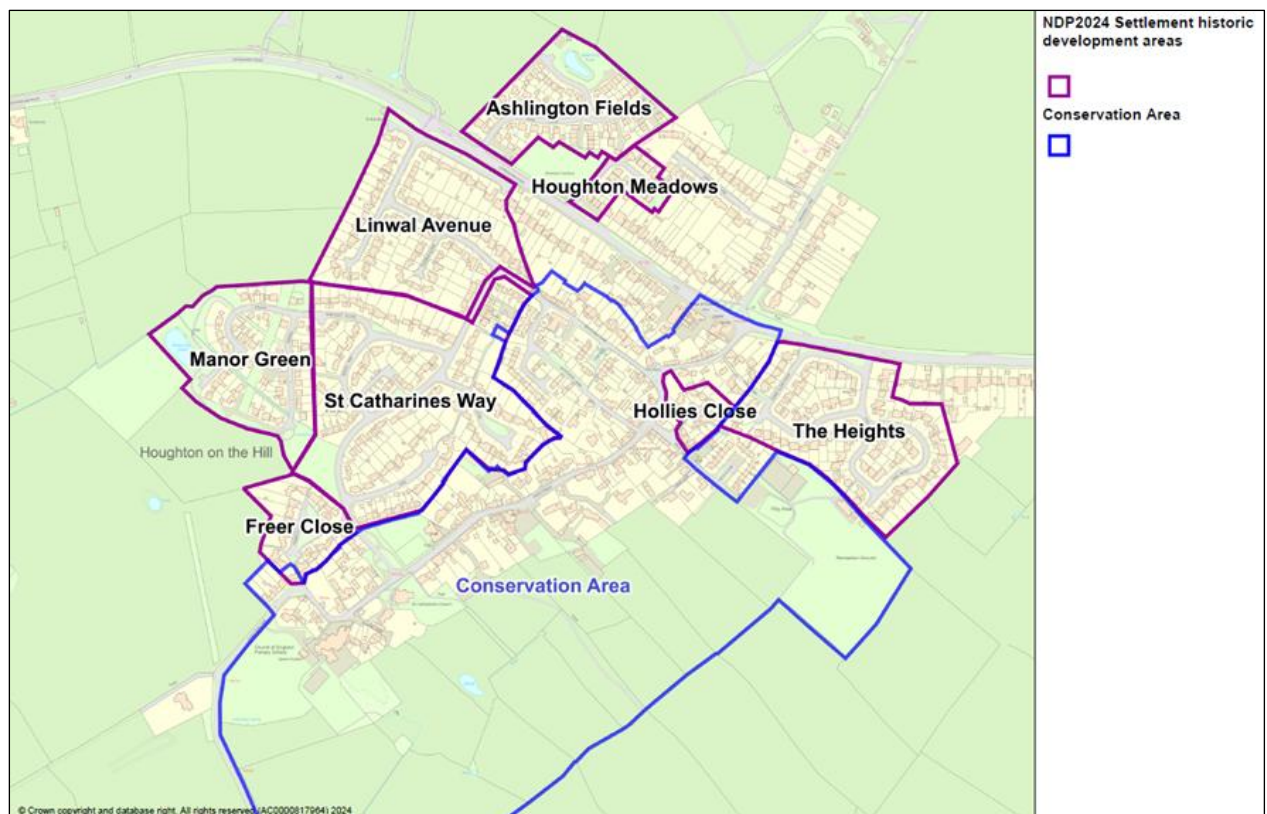


Figure 1-1 The developments which have added to the village settlement since 1960. For further details see Appendix A.



7. In the adopted [Harborough Local Plan \(HLP\)](#) to 2031 Houghton is designated as a Rural Centre [ reclassified as a Medium Village in the emerging Local Plan to 2041]. This means it provides a focus for rural development, to support existing facilities and provide a focal point for use by residents of surrounding smaller villages and hamlets. Maintaining the rural character of the village, whilst absorbing additional developments of high-quality design, is a challenge which the VDG&C seeks to influence.
8. In 2022, the Community Questionnaire (CQ) showed that more than 100 small businesses were located in Houghton (CQ#34), many operating from residential addresses, and providing valuable, but limited, employment opportunities. There is, however, 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, car servicing operations, a public house, convenience store, and a car sales operation.
9. The majority of the working population commute to other areas, although enabled by improving technology, and the requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain at home, more Houghton residents work from home, at least for part of the time. In 2022, 284 individuals reported working from home (CQ#37.3), with just over 50% spending at least 80% of their contracted hours doing so. It is reasonable to conclude that the reduction in car journeys will have reduced adverse environmental impact. Of those who work outside the village, 93% use a car to commute (CQ#19); a reflection, possibly, of the limited public bus service.
10. The CQ also indicated a higher level of support than in 2015 for limited business developments which might provide more local employment opportunities (CQ#35). These should be appropriate to the size and form of the village and in view of general concerns about traffic volumes on narrow roads through the village should not be approved without a statement of anticipated vehicle movements and of vehicle types /size. A large storage facility with few jobs but many large vehicle movements would not achieve any of these objectives.
11. The [February 2023 Stakeholders' Workshop](#) also referenced having a possible employment-generating development earmarked in the updated plan, but there was no overwhelming support. As an example, *"Industrial or cottage industry areas, a nice idea, but a problem if an area is highlighted for this and then not picked up, it could get a change of use and become a (another) housing estate"*.

## 1.2 The character of the landscape setting



*Figure 1-2 The view east from Houghton Field (recreation ground) which can be enjoyed from the Jubilee Footpath*

12. 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. Located in the northern part of the Harborough District, in what is referred to as High Leicestershire, a key characteristic is the strongly undulating landform with tributary valleys radiating from the more elevated plateau. Treed farmland combining small to medium grazed fields to the southeast and west and larger arable fields to the north and south-west surround the village. Areas of historic ridge and furrow, which are now grazing pasture, are most evident to the southeast beyond the parish church of St. Catharine close to Stretton Lane. 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 Billesdon Coplow and Quenby Hall (built between 1620 and 1630) to the north across a valley. From Houghton Field, off Weir Lane, there are extensive and unspoilt views across the countryside towards the East and South stretching way beyond the parish boundary (Figure 1-2).
13. Consultation evidence (CQ#28) indicates that footpaths and public rights of way around the village are used and valued by 98% of respondent households. The responses to the separate [Young People's Questionnaire \(YPQ\)](#) also indicated a high level of support for these. Footpaths provide walkers with many different and attractive views of the village as well as long distance views over the High Leicestershire landscape.
14. During preparation of the 2018 NDP, some concern was expressed that developments in the nearby villages of Bushby and Thurnby might extend those settlements further to the east such that if Houghton developed significantly in a westerly direction, it might be swallowed up by Leicester City. In the CQ (CQ#16), 87% of responding households indicated support for a formal "Area of Separation" to be created between Houghton and Bushby to reduce the risk of the villages eventually being merged by new developments in each. This is the rationale for Policy L2 in the revised NDP.

### 1.3 Village Gateways



*Figure 1-3 View northeast from A47 towards Billesdon Coplow*



*Figure 1-4 View north from the A47 towards Tilton*

15. The A47 divides Houghton into two unequal parts with the majority of the settlement to the south. There are 4 separate approach roads to the settlement, one from each of the cardinal directions. In addition, there are numerous rights of way as footpaths and bridleways from other directions.
16. From the north, Ingarsby Lane enters the village rising steeply from a valley such that little of the village is visible until reaching the A47/Main Street junction (Figure 1-5).





*Figure 1-5 Approaching the village from the north along Ingarsby Lane.*

17. From the east, the A47 rises steeply up Palace Hill as it approaches Houghton so again the extent of housing development is not evident from this direction, until one is almost in the village, and hardly evident at all if merely passing through Houghton travelling west towards Leicester (Figure 1-6).



*Figure 1-6 Entering Houghton from the east along the A47*



*Figure 1-7 Approaching Houghton from the west along the A47*

18. In contrast, the approach from the west along the A47 from Leicester sweeps around a wide curve offering to the right a panoramic view across the more recent developments to the south, with the spire of the parish church of St Catharine on the skyline. To the north of Uppingham Road the houses on Ashlington Fields are clearly visible; those on Houghton Meadows less so (Figure 1-7).
19. The approach from the south along Stretton Lane provides striking views of the church, though again with little indication of the extent of the various housing developments. Remnants of medieval ridge and furrow field-working can be seen in the fields on this approach and in other fields around the village. The Houghton hilltop is ringed by natural springs which feed the many streams flowing down its sides.
20. Most field footpaths approaching the village, even those where some parts have been lost, can be traced to converge towards St Catharine's Church from the nearby villages of Gaulby, King's Norton, Little Stretton, Stoughton, Bushby and Thurnby, Scraftoft and Keyham. The views from these footpaths provide other vistas of the attractive setting of Houghton within the countryside region of High Leicestershire.
21. Appendix A describes each of the main housing developments which have enlarged the village since the 1960s.



## 2 Village Design Guide and Codes

### 2.1 Introduction

22. The following section outlines design principles and codes based on the distinctive character of Houghton. These should guide any changes or development within the NDP Designated Area (DA), which corresponds to the parish of Houghton, to ensure the local character is respected whilst still allowing opportunity for innovation. Additional considerations for development within the Conservation Area (CA) and in the countryside of the DA follow.
23. Creating an attractive and healthy place to live requires good design that is centred on the needs of people. Some modern developments can be bleak and unfriendly, alienating residents and creating unobserved spaces that can be the site of undesirable behaviour. So that Houghton continues to avoid this dystopian vision, this VDG&C uses as references:
  - [Building for a Healthy Life](#) (which incorporates many of the guidelines from the earlier Building for Life 12. The sign of a good place to live);
  - the 10 characteristics of the [National Design Guide \(2021\)](#);
  - the [NPPE](#);
  - the current [Harborough Local Plan 2011-2031](#);
  - [Leicester & Leicestershire Housing & Economic Needs Assessment \(HENA\)](#) April 2022, Updated June 2022;
  - AECOM [Housing Needs Assessment](#);
  - the results of consultations with Houghton's residents [Community Questionnaire\(CQ\)](#), and young people ([YPQ](#)).
24. The following design principles should where practical be applied to new development, and where applicable to changes to established buildings, within the NDP Designated Area. The extent to which these may be applied will depend on the size of a development or modification and it might not be possible to achieve them all every time. If not done well, the process of setting a new development of high-quality design into the current community space is most likely to change the nature of the village. Developers seeking to build more than 5 dwellings on a site are expected to survey buildings in the village such as the old brick farmhouses on Main Street, thatched roofed houses, and other distinctive buildings and to demonstrate they have done so and explain how they have used elements of these to inspire their own work. This process will not mean copying existing buildings, but to use existing buildings for inspiration to capture the essence of the village look and feel.
25. High quality outcomes depend not just on the design of buildings but on the setting, the green spaces and trees incorporated into developments, design of footpaths and roads, and social space such as play areas.

26. The references used for each of the following Design Codes are taken from the [National Design Guide \(NDG\)](#) which has 10 characteristics as shown on the explanatory diagram shown in Figure 2-1 . The structure of this VDG&C replicates those 10 characteristics.



Figure 2-1 The linked characteristics of good design as expressed in the National Design Guide.

## 2.2 Context (Design Codes C)

27. Most developments in the village have matured to blend well into the village envelope (Figure 2-2). This has been achieved by a variety of considerations in the design/build processes. The first consideration is how well the proposed development will sit within the wider context of the built area and the surrounding countryside, and how the development interfaces with village facilities and the countryside.



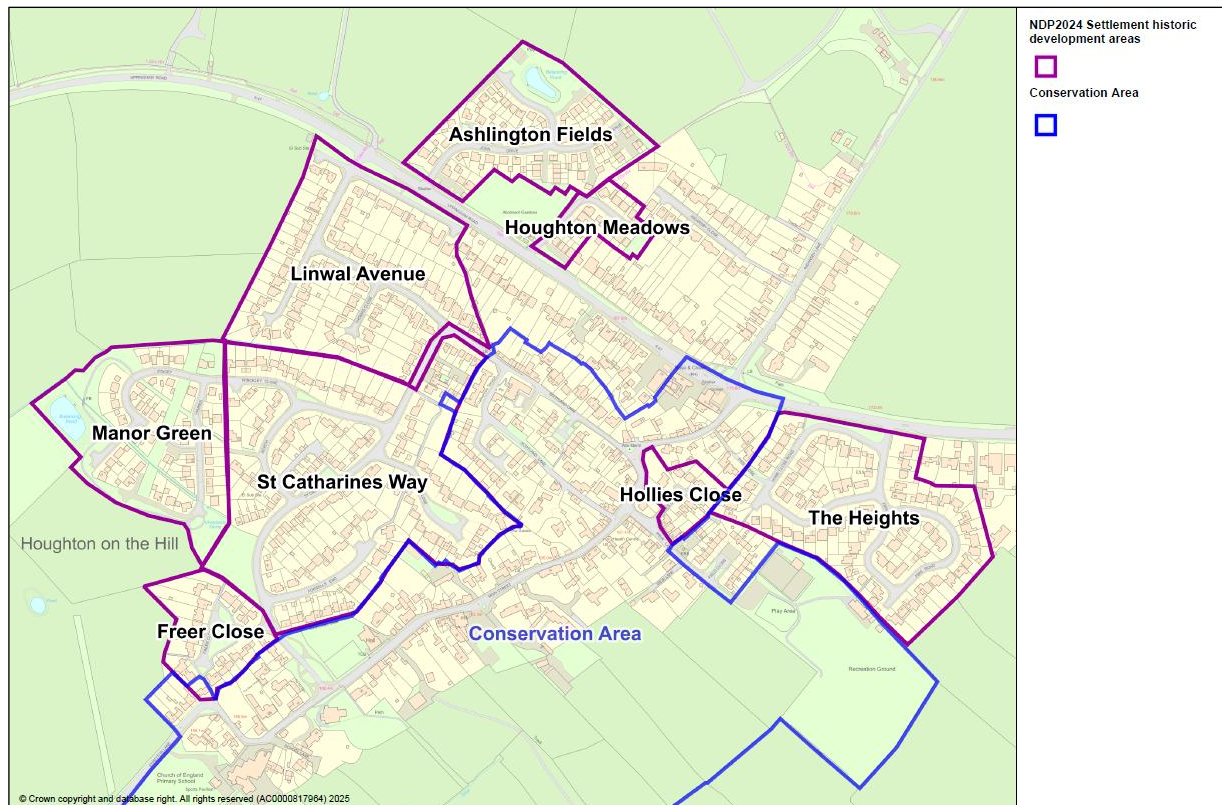


Figure 2-2 The various housing developments which have been added around the core of the Conservation Area (blue outline).

### 2.2.1 Design Code C1: Relationship to the existing village

28. New development should be well integrated into the existing settlement pattern and avoid any kind of fragmentation. For that reason, any future development surrounding the existing village settlement should:

- prioritise connectivity, especially through pedestrian and cycle links to create accessible places and a more cohesive social structure.
- aim to retain Houghton's rural feel by respecting its relationship with the surrounding countryside, enriched by broad views across the landscape from many parts of the village. [see Figures 2-2 to 2-7.]
- respect views into and within the village, particularly of the church of St. Catharine, coupled with extensive green spaces within the built environment.



*Figure 2-3 View southeast from St Catharine's Churchyard.*



*Figure 2-4 St Catharine's Green.*



*Figure 2-5 View west from Freer Close.*





*Figure 2-6 Green space in recent development (St Catharine's Green)*



*Figure 2-7 Green space in recent development. This path allows villagers to make a circuit around the edge of the Manor Green estate emerging on St Catherines Way.*

### 2.2.2 Design Code C2: Respecting Houghton's history

29. Development should respect the heritage and history of the village particularly in the CA (See Section 3). Any new development adjacent to heritage assets or in close proximity to them needs to be sensitive to their existence and should seek ways to further protect and promote

these assets (e.g. by having generous setbacks and green screening to mitigate any negative visual impact).



*Figure 2-8 View south down Main Street towards St Catharine's Church*

## 2.3 Identity (and integration of new developments and their residents) (Design Codes ID)

30. One measure of the success of any new development is how well the new residents integrate into the community. Factors influencing this include:
  - is the development they have moved into well positioned adjacent to, not remote from, the current built form so they can feel part of the same “village community”?
  - are there convenient routes to access village facilities to encourage involvement by new residents as well as improve social cohesion?
  - are there convenient routes to access the countryside?
31. Whilst some people say they would feel safer living in a gated community, the majority of residents responding to the community questionnaire do not believe gated communities encourage a sense of inclusiveness and safety. Gated communities will not be supported.

### 2.3.1 Design Code ID-1: Identity

32. Any new development should be well integrated into the existing settlement pattern, extending the existing settlement rather than introducing pockets of development with no clear continuity. Figure 2-2 shows how well an early 2020s development (Manor Green) nestles into a corner of the village providing footpath access to the school, the bus route, the



many facilities on Main Street and St. Catharines Way, as well as having a circular walk around the development with attractive views of the countryside (Figure 2-7).

33. Priority should be given to providing convenient pedestrian and cycle links to retail and community facilities, particularly those on Main Street (including the school) and St Catharines Way. This will encourage involvement by new residents in village activities as well as improving social cohesion.
34. New development should maintain existing, and introduce new, connections with the surrounding countryside, and where possible create interesting views out to the countryside, as provided by the peripheral footpath around Manor Green (Figure 2-9).
35. Existing attractive views into and within the village should not be harmed by new development, in particular views of St. Catharine's church (see also design code C1).

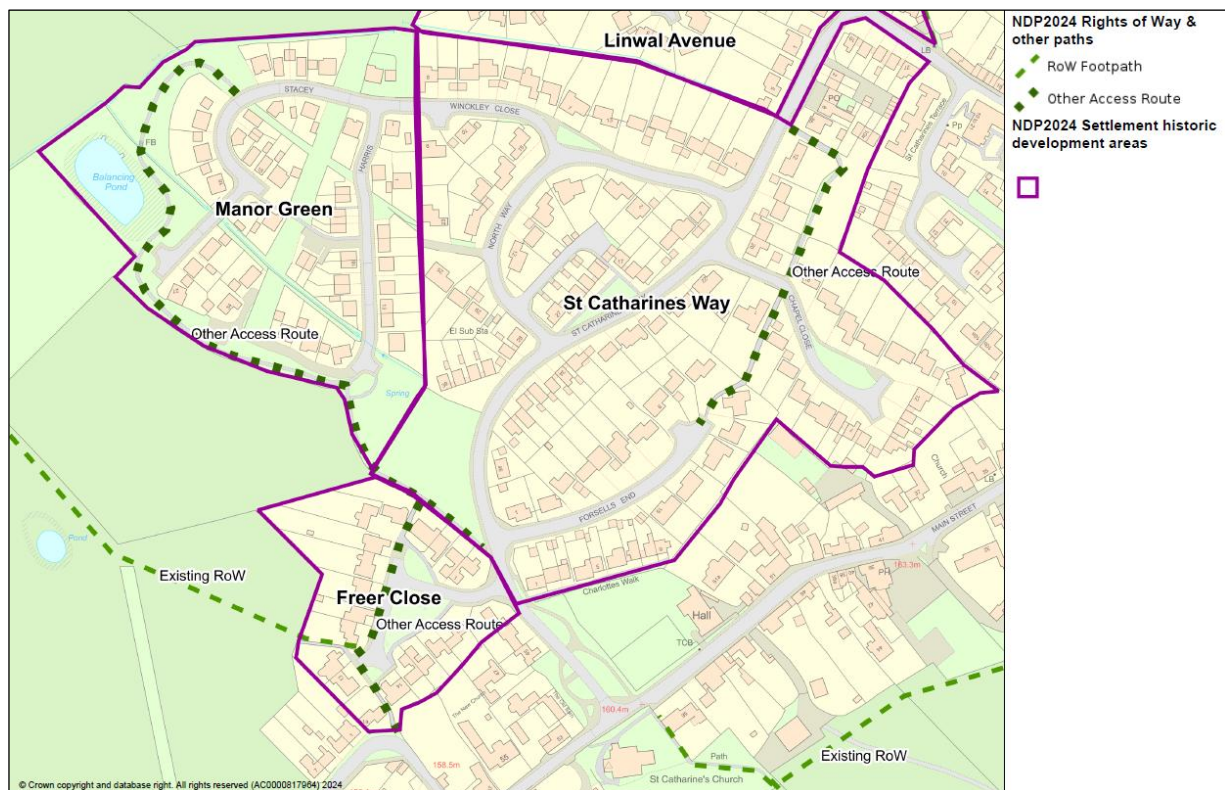


Figure 2-9 Manor Green development showing nearby footpaths



*Figure 2-10 Hairdresser, Post Office and General Store on St Catharines Way*



*Figure 2-11 St Catharine's Church spire on the skyline with the Manor Green development in the middle distance.*

36. Housing mix should be influenced by the most recent assessment of housing needs (see [AECOM HNA](#) and NDP Policy H1). Maintaining an appropriate housing mix should be a priority to enable people to remain in Houghton where they may have many friends and enjoy local facilities. This affects all residents, particularly those:

- seeking their first home.
- seeking a larger family home.
- in later life seeking to downsize to a more appropriate dwelling, including single level accommodation.

## 2.4 Built Form (Design Codes B)

37. The various developments around the village are diverse in both form and mass. Despite the diversity most incorporate open frontages and considerable green space. The majority are of red brick and several have a Georgian style. Walls of any significant height are evident mostly on Main Street within the CA (Figure 2-12). On the west side of the village, the 1960s developments use low level walls to delineate a boundary, but subsequently open frontages have been the norm.

### 2.4.1 Design Code B1: Form and Massing

38. The use of open frontages in new developments is preferred to create a greater feeling of space and inclusiveness and also safety with fewer places for people to hide (Figure 2-13).
39. The layout of dwellings in new developments should reflect the typologies evident in the immediately adjacent sites. Existing road layouts, scale, development patterns, densities, boundary treatments, massing and materials should be analysed to make sure that new buildings sit sensitively next to existing properties and spaces providing a pleasant transition from existing to new.

### 2.4.2 Design Code B2: Spacing

40. Spaces between adjacent dwellings should be sufficient to avoid an impression of overcrowding, thereby protecting the rural aspect of the village. Adequate spacing should be maintained when planning extensions to existing properties.
41. Well placed and frequent green spaces should be used to avoid overcrowding.

### 2.4.3 Design Code B3: Boundary treatment

42. Boundaries normally mark the limits to individual curtilages, but non-curtilage boundaries may also be significant in the street scene. The style, height and materials used in new boundaries should be in keeping with the property and its immediate neighbours, and harmonise with its surroundings, rather than standing out.
43. Appropriate regard should be given to providing wildlife corridors e.g. by ensuring at least one fence panel in each timber fence is set high enough for hedgehogs to pass under. Similarly for solid walls and hedges.





Figure 2-12 Boundary walls on Main Street



Figure 2-13 Open frontages on The Heights

44. Where walls feature as the boundary with the pavement they should be constructed from natural brick, with height limited to 0.7 metres.
45. Boundary treatments should permit some view of a property from the road. This is a practical consideration for visibility which applies both for safety of pedestrians and vehicles and as a deterrent of crime and anti-social behaviour.
46. 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 to avoid future problems for residents.
47. Boundary 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.
48. Front gardens open to the highway are encouraged.
49. Hedging can add to the attractiveness of the street scene but should use easily-controlled native species. Rapid growing hedges such as Leylandii should not be planted to delineate or privatise a boundary.
50. 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.

## 2.5 Building Design (Design Codes BD)

### 2.5.1 Design Code BD1: Sustainable building

51. Sustainable design, materials and construction techniques, including advances during the plan period, should be used in order to always achieve the highest possible standards for energy efficiency, water efficiency, and minimum maintenance.

### 2.5.2 Design Code BD2: Styles of dwelling

52. A mix of styles should be used avoiding a predominance and repetition of a few standardised designs which can create monotony. Designs which capture and reflect the distinctiveness of the village will be supported.



53. Building materials should generally 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. Quality rendering can add character and variety to the street scene. Solar roof tiles and solar panels are encouraged in the NDP so conformity with adjacent roofs may need to be sacrificed in the interests of reducing reliance on fossil fuels. [See Section 2.5.4]
54. Featureless and window-less walls can be made to look more attractive by selective and sympathetic use of bricks to form a pattern (Figure 2-14). Walls 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 and not repeated too frequently. 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.
55. A varied orientation of dwellings within a development is preferred to a too regimented approach. Manor Green, Houghton Meadows, and Ashlington Fields developments provide good examples of what can be achieved.



*Figure 2-14 Unattractive plain slab wall contrasting with brickwork details providing a more attractive view from the street.*

56. Building orientation, window positions and design, should encourage natural light into rooms to reduce the need for artificial lighting, encourage solar gain, heat conservation and low maintenance.
57. When windows are replaced, the replacements should (where possible) be in keeping with the originals in terms of design, scale and detail albeit of more energy efficient design.
58. Natural timber, tile, or to a lesser extent UPVC may benefit a design 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.

### 2.5.3 Design Code BD3: Height of dwellings

59. The height of dwellings should generally be limited to no more than 2 floors, though some houses within a development having 2½ floors, or even 3, may be acceptable if the design is sympathetic with the surroundings and topography, and provided that those dwellings having more than 2 floors are not positioned on high ground (Figure 2-15).



Figure 2-15 Views of 2 ½ storey houses of a variety of styles

#### 2.5.4 Design Code BD4: Roofs

60. Roof design must avoid a low pitch, and where possible be orientated to maximise potential for solar power generation. Tiles should be sympathetic to those in adjacent developments. Inclusion of solar panels or solar tiles is preferred.
61. Flat roofs on new build, and on extensions to existing dwellings, are to be avoided unless their use preserves an established, attractive view of the countryside which might otherwise be lost.
62. Roof and wall construction should apply technical best practice for integral bird nest boxes and bat breeding and roosting sites, where appropriate.
63. Flat roofed dormers (often seen in large loft conversions) do not look attractive in a village setting and should not be used in new dwellings. For extensions or modifications to existing properties they must be restricted to the rear of a property so as not to negatively impact the street scene.

#### 2.5.5 Design Code BD5: Garages and In-curtilage Parking

64. In-curtilage parking provision exceeding the Leicestershire County Council standard will be encouraged: CLASS C3 – Dwellings with 4 or more bedrooms minimum 3 spaces. Dwellings with 3 or less bedrooms minimum 2 spaces.
65. Setbacks from public footpaths should ensure resident's vehicles can be parked without impeding the progress of footpath users including those in wheelchairs or with pushchairs (Figure 2-16). (For on-street parking see Code M3, paragraph 84).



*Figure 2-16 Insufficient setback in new development*

66. Garages should be set back from the pavement and, unless alternatives are not available, should not extend forward of the building lines of dwellings and garages in the same street. Garages should not be built immediately adjacent to the pavement. In Figure 2-17 the left image garage is close to the pavement masking any view of the dwelling it serves, unlike the garage in the right image.



*Figure 2-17 Garage adjacent to pavement (Left), as opposed to setback (right)*

67. Garages should not dominate the site, and their design should be sympathetic with that of the dwelling. They should not be located totally in rear gardens, as that detracts from the social space provided by rear gardens.
68. Garages in residential areas will not generally be permitted to be converted for alternative uses if that impacts negatively on the street scene. Special attention should be given to ensure adequate on-site car parking if any garage or driveway space is lost.
69. When a business is permitted to be sited in a converted garage or building constructed specifically for the purpose, signage should be proportionate and appropriate for the location. Illuminated signs in predominantly residential areas are not permitted.

## 2.6 Resources and Sustainability (Design Codes R)

70. The CQ and YPQ identified considerable support for measures to conserve resources and to counter the negative impacts of climate change. For example, more than 80% of respondents



supported measures to reduce mains-supplied potable water consumption and energy usage and to incorporate methods of energy generation (CQ#14).

### 2.6.1 Design Code R1: Energy Generation

71. In-curtilage means of generating energy (e.g. solar tiles, full panel roofs, on-site battery storage) will be supported. Air-source heat pumps as an integral part of the design for new builds will also be supported.
72. Community electricity/heat generation should be considered if appropriate for the size of the proposed development.

### 2.6.2 Design Code R2: Water

73. Water-efficiency should be designed into new and modified dwellings through the installation of water efficient fittings and appliances that can help reduce water consumption. Systems for harvesting surface water, which can then be used to water gardens and for car washing, should be included in all new builds. The re-use of grey water (i.e. household waste water without faecal contamination) should be considered, as technical solutions develop and become reliable and cost-effective.

### 2.6.3 Design Code R3: Sustainable Technologies

74. Advances in green technologies should be integrated into the design of new dwellings as these technologies emerge over the plan period.

## 2.7 Movement (Design Codes M)

75. New roads and pathways should ensure convenient and safe movement for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians to, within and beyond a development, and integrate logically with existing networks (Figure 2-18). Within a development equal priority should be given to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

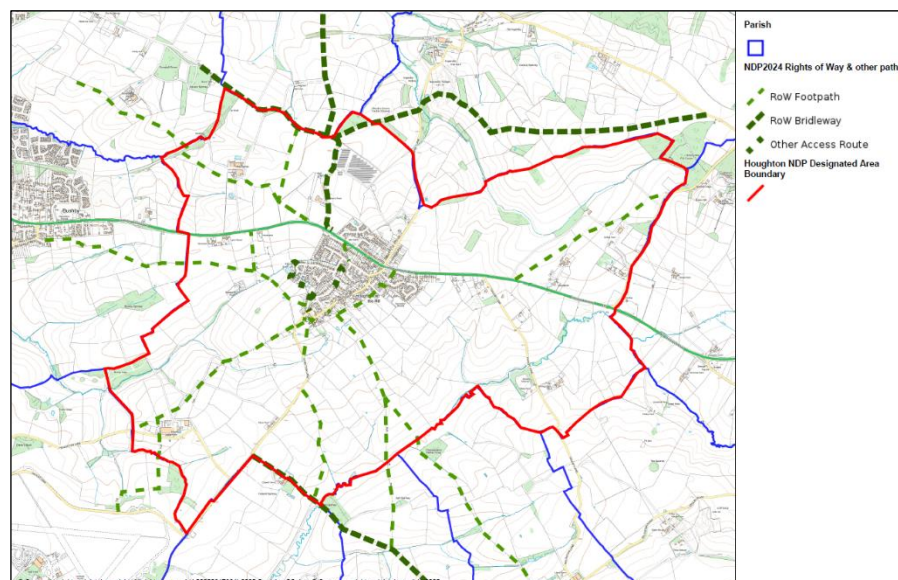


Figure 2-18 Footpaths and bridleways linking the village to the countryside and to the neighbouring settlements.



76. Well-designed footpaths can encourage social interaction, provide convenient safe access to children's play areas, encourage the taking of exercise to improve health, potentially easier walking/cycling routes to village facilities, to the countryside and to surrounding villages. Houghton's young people also identified these as important in responses to the YPQ.

#### 2.7.1 Design Code M1: Roads

77. New roads/streets should be gently winding with a design speed of no more than 20 mph. "Design speed" is different from "speed limit" in that good design discourages speeding making cycling and walking safer and more pleasurable.
78. Pavements should be wide enough for pedestrians to walk at least two abreast when pushing a pram, and for people using a wheelchair or disability scooter. Dropped kerbs should be provided at appropriate places to ensure easy and safe progress of those using wheelchairs or mobility scooters or pushing prams. Views along roads should provide variety; avoiding straight roads provides interest as people round turns.



Figure 2-19 Gently winding roads in a 2021 development, spoilt by an example of on-pavement bad parking

#### 2.7.2 Design Code M2: Access

79. Points of entry and exit, whilst being safe, should minimise the distance into a development from existing roads and footpaths to encourage social interaction, and access to village facilities. Dead-end roads (cul-de-sacs) should be relatively short and provide onward pedestrian/cycling links with signage.

80. All parts of the street should be visible from houses to facilitate street monitoring by residents ([Harborough Local Plan](#) Policy GD8). There should be no 'dead areas' where unwanted activities can take place unseen. It should be obvious which areas are public, and which are private, to remove the potential for dispute.
81. For all new developments, footpath access for walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users and those with pushchairs should be incorporated to create easy car-free routes from and to other parts of the village, to adjacent developments, to the wider network of footpaths in the village (Figure 2-20) and beyond (Figure 2-18).
82. Where residents of new developments would need to cross the A47 to access village facilities, safe crossing places must be provided such as pedestrian controlled lights.
83. A well-designed perimeter footpath, taking in available green space, should be considered for all developments of 10 dwellings or more. This encourages social interaction, attracting residents from other parts of the village, as well as providing convenient space for exercise and for enjoying local nature.

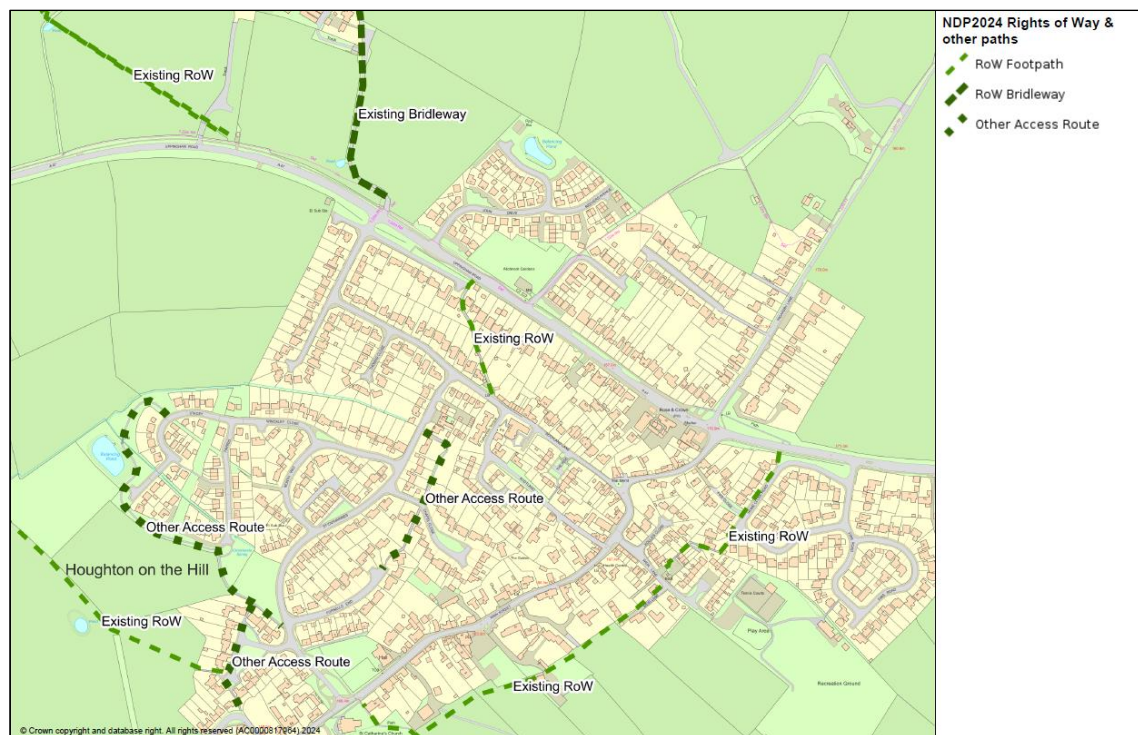


Figure 2-20 Footpaths including those accessing the A47

### 2.7.3 Design Code M3: On-street Parking

84. Parking bays should be provided to discourage parking on roads and pavements, and to address the reality that in-curtilage parking provision in new developments can be inadequate for residents and their visitors. The width should be sufficient to allow each bay to be provided with means to charge electric vehicles, without impeding progress of pedestrians with pushchairs, and wheelchair users (see NDP Policy H3).

#### 2.7.4 Design Code M4: Essential Additions

85. Adequate seating, litter bins and notice boards should be situated close to pavements and should be consistent with the existing style within the settlement. Notice boards in new developments are an important facility to help ensure new residents are well informed and foster a sense of a welcoming inclusion into the community.
86. Street furniture should be carefully located to avoid a feeling of clutter. Road and footpath signage should be in keeping with existing village signage and reflect the character of the village, be of good quality, and adequate to inform visitors and emergency services without being overbearing.

## 2.8 Nature (Design Codes N)

87. Sensitive landscaping can help to make a place pleasant to live in and create a memorable character. Publicly accessible green spaces, as well as less formal open spaces, support biodiversity and enhance the rural feel of a development. Incorporating exercise areas into such spaces provides health and social benefits. There was strong support in the CQ and YPQ for the incorporation of measures to support biodiversity and improve wildlife habitats. This section should be read in conjunction with the environment policies of the NDP.

#### 2.8.1 Design Code N1: Landscaping

88. Publicly-accessible green spaces should be integrated into developments of more than 10 dwellings, aiming to achieve at least the proportion found in the 1970's developments in the village. Consideration should be given to making these diverse, such as by incorporating wildflower meadows, and orchards. Such areas will need to have a proper care and maintenance regime.
89. New development must be sympathetic towards existing views out from and into the village as shown in Figures 2-3, 2-5, 2-11.

#### 2.8.2 Design Code: N2 Biodiversity and Wildlife

90. Biodiversity and wildlife habitats should be mapped in accordance with legislation and proposals put forward to demonstrate that integrity and effectiveness will not be harmed as a consequence of the development, unless appropriate mitigation is provided.
91. Green corridors such as hedges, and water courses, facilitate wildlife movements. They should be clearly identified in development proposals and steps taken to maintain or enhance them. Existing hedges should be retained whenever possible.
92. If practical, bird and bat boxes should be provided by developers on retained and newly planted trees. An appropriate maintenance regime should be in place for any boxes located within the development but outside the curtilage of a dwelling.



### 2.8.3 Design Code N3: Trees

93. Trees and green spaces make new developments more attractive, healthier places to live, and increase biodiversity and carbon capture (however small that contribution might be). Developers must comply with the NPPF relating to trees.
94. Existing mature trees should only be removed where it can be demonstrated that they present a specific risk or obstruction to an otherwise deliverable development.
95. New tree planting should be linked to the size of new development with a view to maintaining the pre-development density, or 1 tree per new dwelling, whichever is the larger. UK grown native trees should be used.
96. Clusters of trees should be incorporated where possible. Species should be native and suitable for the built environment in terms of potential height, canopy, root spread and depth, to avoid future maintenance and damage to footpaths and drains.
97. Large trees, such as oak or ash, should be confined to hedgerows beyond the Settlement Boundary. The locations for trees in new development sites should be decided in consultation with the Parish Council.

### 2.8.4 Design Code N4: Surface Water Management

98. Developments should incorporate sustainable drainage and landscaping schemes which provide a controlled flow of surface water through networks of pipes and storage ponds to nearby watercourses. They should reflect current advances in technology with inbuilt resilience, including resource management systems to ensure effective performance over time if climate change impacts negatively. Habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement should inform the design and implementation.

### 2.8.5 Design Code N5: Play Areas

99. Play areas should be established in developments where none are available nearby. Provision for early teenagers would be especially welcome, as none currently exists in the village. Developer contributions to provide appropriate facilities elsewhere in the village may be considered as an alternative to on-site play areas.



Figure 2-21 Children's play areas in 2 housing developments completed in 2021. A 3rd popular playground is on the Weir Lane playing field.

## 2.9 Lifespan (Design Codes L)

### 2.9.1 Design Code L1: Maintenance

100. Dwellings, and the external spaces in developments, should use sustainable materials and finishes so as to minimise ongoing maintenance, maximise lifespan, and maintain an attractive street scene for longer.

### 2.9.2 Design Code L2: Adaptability

101. Houses constructed in a conventional way are not always suitable for all stages of life. Easily adaptable whole-life/lifetime homes were a high priority in the CQ#10 and should form part of all new developments of 10 or more dwellings to at least the level set by Policy H5 in the [HLP](#), and preferably higher. The inclusion of enhancements such as wider doorways and easily modifiable bathing facilities in new dwelling is encouraged. The [HNA](#) emphasises such provision, especially in the light of the elderly demographic of Houghton which is predicted to increase significantly over the period of the NDP.

## 2.10 Modifications to existing dwellings (Design Codes MD)

102. Modifications to existing dwellings can provide clear benefits to the incumbent residents but if not managed well can create problems for neighbours and disappointment or annoyance for the wider community. This section should be read in conjunction with the design and housing policies of the NDP, in particular POLICY D3: EXTENSIONS & MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING DWELLINGS WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY.
103. All modifications which require planning approval should demonstrate that the resulting property will have a lower energy requirement per cubic metre than the existing one.

### 2.10.1 Design Code MD1: Scale

104. The scale of an extension to an existing building should be subordinate to, and harmonious with the existing building. An extension should not dominate or subsume the original dwelling if this results in an undesirable visual effect, particularly at the front of a dwelling where this will have an adverse impact on the street scene.

105. Conversion of smaller dwellings (3 or fewer bedrooms) into larger 4- or 5-bedroom dwellings which overdevelop the available curtilage and have overbearing effects on neighbouring properties will not be supported. The [HNA](#) emphasises the skewed ageing demographic of the Houghton population and contrasts this with the current overprovision of large housing. Housing developments over the last decade have only increased this undesirable trend. To address this acute local problem, the HNA suggests that only dwellings with fewer than 4-bedrooms should be built in Houghton. This proposal is supported by the community in their responses to CQ#9.
106. The [HENA](#) encourages Local Authorities to consider the role of bungalows within the mix. These can be particularly attractive to households wishing to downsize and may help to release larger (family-sized) accommodation back into the market. Proposals to convert bungalows to 2-storey dwellings will not be supported.

#### 2.10.2 Design Code MD2: Street Scene

107. Extensions should blend in with the existing building particularly when viewed from the street. Windows and doors should match existing styles or be sympathetic to them. Gables used in order to create an upper extension should blend with, not contrast to, the existing design of the dwelling. Dormer roof extensions should not be visible from the street (see Design Code BD4 Roofs).
108. Extensions should not reduce the number of garage and driveway parking spaces as that increases the likelihood of vehicles parking on the adjacent footpath or road. Such parking impedes the free and safe passage of other vehicles (including emergency service vehicles), and pedestrians, particularly those with wheelchairs or pushchairs (see Design Code BD5 Parking).
109. Extensions should respect the privacy previously enjoyed by neighbouring properties and not have an adverse impact on the residents (e.g. by avoiding clear glass windows which provide new direct views into neighbouring properties).
110. Modifications to existing properties should not destroy a valuable or attractive view in to or out from the village (such as those indicated in Figures 2-3, 2-5 & 2-11).
111. Modifications should not extend an existing, or add an additional, building such that there is insufficient space between adjacent plots for access for maintenance or to get to the rear of the properties with equipment. An attractive street scene should not be damaged by over-development of a plot, and overbearing intrusion on the neighbouring property should be avoided.



### 3 New development in the Conservation Area (CA).

112. The CA defines the core of the original village. Without it, Houghton would simply be a quite pleasant, slightly detached but somewhat bland, dormitory suburb of Leicester. The CA (Figure 3-1) includes 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. Many roads are narrow as is typical for the historical part of a settlement. This inevitably creates traffic problems, notably accommodating large vehicles, on-street parking for residents as garages and driveways are infrequent, and parking to visit retail outlets and attend community facilities. The parking issue is further exacerbated when children are dropped off and picked up from school, particularly if that coincides with an event at the Village Hall or St. Catharine's church.
113. Whilst all the provisions of this document should be considered for the CA, additional detailed considerations are required. The CA, particularly Main Street, reflects the village's origins as an agricultural settlement. There have been many alterations, in-fills and redevelopments over the years but this connection with its origins should not be broken. This is not to say that there should be no changes at all, but even very limited unsympathetic change could damage it irrevocably.



Figure 3-1 The Conservation Area showing listed buildings and non-designated heritage buildings

114. The CA does not have any particular style other than its historical, agricultural content, as almost no two features are the same. The diverse architectural features provide a unique appeal and identity. The CA includes all of the listed buildings within Houghton and many of the non-designated heritage assets (Figure 3-1 and [Houghton Heritage assets](#)).



*Figure 3-2 Main Street in the Conservation Area with contrasting building styles, and St Catharine's Church in the distance*

115. Where changes are being proposed for the CA, the influence of such changes on the wider street scene must be carefully considered, in conjunction with the influence on neighbouring properties. To facilitate this, a realistic representation of the proposed street-scene should be provided as part of the planning application. Due to the considerable number of large trees and other planting, aspects can differ significantly between the seasons. This seasonal variation must feature in all deliberations.

### 3.1 Key additional considerations for the Conservation Area

116. **Context.** The CA acts as a focal point for Houghton. New development must demonstrate an understanding of the immediate context, and design proposals must respect the existing historic character and listed buildings of the area.

117. **Scale and massing.** As in many historic village centres, clusters of terraced houses with small or no front gardens and front doors opening directly on to the narrow pavement, are mixed with dwellings on relatively large plots, all of which adds variety and character and should be retained. Some extensions into large plot-filling multi-storey dwellings have spoilt this over recent decades.

118. **Boundaries.** Boundary walls, some of which are also retaining walls, are largely of traditional and substantial proportions and construction. Any new building should take design and style cues from those adjacent structures.

119. **Roofs** are almost exclusively of a fairly steep pitch and traditional materials such as thatch, slate and tiles dominate. Where there are changes to roofs, this theme should be continued with particular attention being paid to the type and colour of any tiles to give a best visual fit with the surrounding roofs.

120. **Windows and doors.** New development (and changes to existing building) should have high quality windows and doors preferably of timber, taking as reference those on surrounding properties. UPVC is discouraged on street-facing elements.
121. **Finishes** to buildings are very varied in the existing stock, with stone, various renderings and aged brickwork featuring. The majority of established forms of finish may be appropriate, but again colour and harmony (even if that harmony is at times a pleasing contrast) with the surrounding construction will be the key consideration. Exposed modern brickwork is very unlikely to meet the criteria.
122. **Architectural consideration** must be given to the 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 vicinity. For instance, larger more modern houses next to a cottage might take cues from other, similar properties in the street, not necessarily those adjacent.
123. **Spaces** around and between individual buildings and 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 area. 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. Over-development of a plot will be seriously detrimental to the whole and should be avoided.
124. **Variety.** A key objective will be to keep variety in the CA 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 detrimental to the CA and will not be supported. It would eventually bring a uniformity that will be seriously detrimental to the whole.



## 4 Aspects of the design of new construction or re-development of existing buildings in the countryside

### 4.1 Landscape impact

125. There are several farmsteads and other agricultural buildings scattered throughout the parish, and a solar farm off Ingarsby Lane. Any modification to existing buildings, and new construction should respect the rural setting, the high-quality landscape, and demonstrate appropriate regard for the much-valued views from the village, taking appropriate guidance from this document. This section should be read in conjunction with the design and employment policies of the NDP.
126. Where necessary, to conform with the above, the height of new buildings should show appropriate regard for the contour and scale of the landscape in which they are set. This will generally infer a preference for low-rise construction, except where substantial evidence of functional need can be produced.

### 4.2 Tall structures

127. Towers, masts, floodlights or other features which may intrude upon on the setting, and on the visual impact of the surrounding areas, should be avoided. Where essential for operational reasons, their siting must show careful regard for their impact.

## 5 APPENDIX A: Brief details of developments in Houghton 1960-2023

128. There have been several developments, of varying sizes, in Houghton since the 1960s, constructed by different developers. Although they differ in detail, they share many characteristics, such as open frontages and the inclusion of green spaces which contribute to the pleasant and spacious feel of Houghton. Brief details of these follow, in chronological order

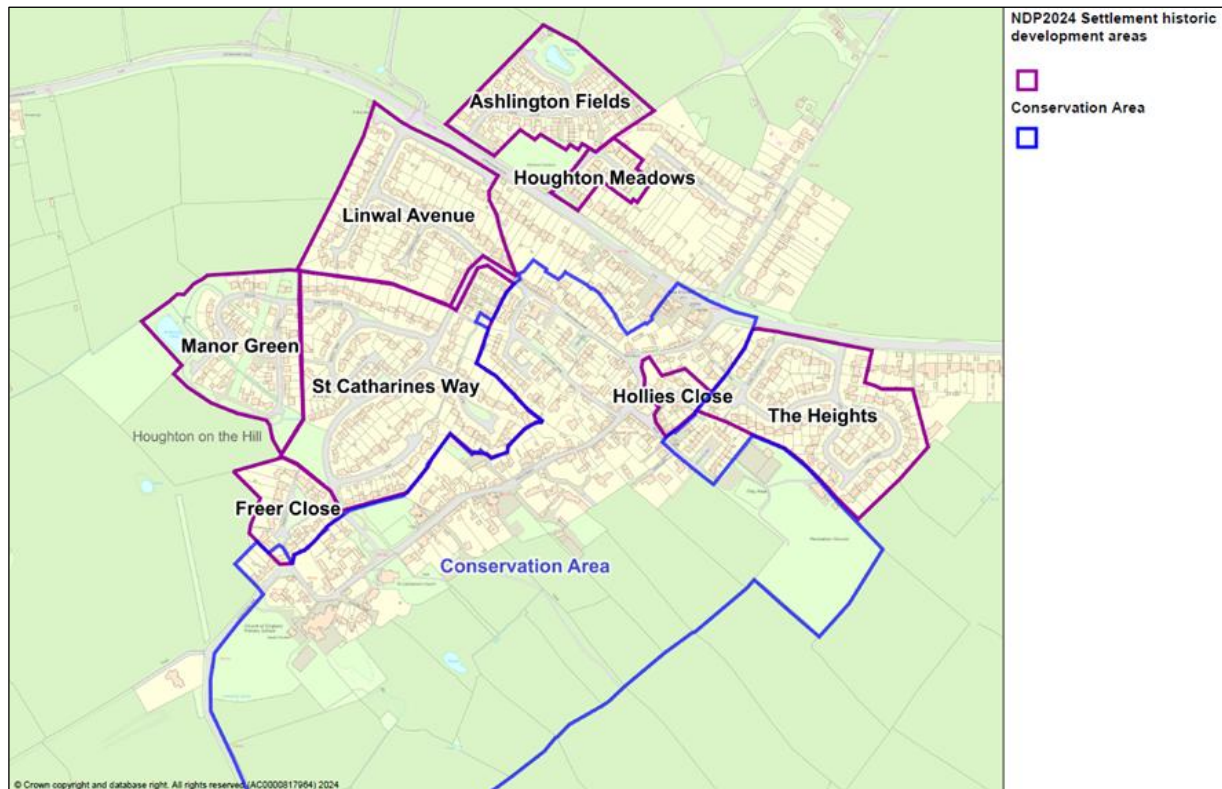


Figure 5-1 New developments since 1960.

### 5.1.1 Linwal Avenue/Deane Gate Drive

129. 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. The A47 junction with Deane Gate Drive has become very busy as a result of the further developments on St Catharines Way and more recently off Winckley Close.

### 5.1.2 The Heights

130. This early 1970s development comprises mostly houses together 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 residents' own planting schemes has achieved a spacious and well-ordered appearance (Figure 5-2). Properties on the eastern side of Firs Road enjoy the benefit of open views across the valley of the River Sence towards Gaulby, and there is easy and safe pedestrian access to the Playing Field and children's play area as well as a footpath link to Weir Lane and onward to Main Street.



*Figure 5-2 A view of the Heights, Home Close Road*

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

131. These developments between them comprise 121 dwellings built in the later 1970's by David Wilson. 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. 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.
132. These roads include eight significant green spaces which give a spaciousness to the development, connecting with the rural nature of Houghton and contributing to the character of the settlement by preventing aspects of urbanisation or sub-urbanisation pervading this part of the village. 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 Green, Chapel Close itself, and Freer Close. The landscaping is arguably the best of the new developments and quite a number of properties benefit from open country views.





Figure 5-3 Views of St Catharines Way. Left, towards the church, right to St Catharine's Green

#### 5.1.4 Freer Close

133. This small development was built by Fletchers starting in the mid-1970s but delayed for 2 to 3 years after the first few houses had been built. The design of the Close is similar to the David 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 northwest of the village.

#### 5.1.5 Hollies Close

134. 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 CA. Built in red brick in 1975/76 by David Wilson, the houses are a mixture of detached and linked detached styles. There is convenient access to Houghton Field via a short walk along Weir Lane.

#### 5.1.6 Manor Green

135. Manor Green is the William Davis Homes development of 48 dwellings completed in 2021 on Stacey Avenue and Harris Drive accessed from Winckley Close. Stacey Avenue and Harris Drive are named after 2 pairs of brothers from Houghton killed in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War recorded on the War Memorial at the Main Street / Scotland Lane junction. There is a mix of sizes and styles of property from 2-bedroom bungalows and houses through to 5-bedroom houses some reaching 2 ½ storeys. Some of the bungalows are affordable rented dwellings. Attractive green space is provided within the development by the area containing the attenuation pond with a pleasant footpath surrounding the whole development. A small children's play area, with equipment, is also on the development adjacent to a footpath which leads to St Catharines Way and provides a convenient shorter route to the school, church and Village Hall.

#### 5.1.7 Houghton Meadows

136. Houghton Meadows is the Hazelton Homes development of 16 dwellings on Ash Tree Close north of Uppingham Road. Built mostly in 2020 access was left to serve a further 4 dwellings which were planned to be built on the site of gardens behind Uppingham Road and Ingarsby Close dwellings.



Figure 5-4 2.5 storey houses on Stacey Avenue, which back on to (right) a SuDs pond and public walkway.

137. Facing the Uppingham Road are a number of shared ownership properties as seen in the distance on the right-hand image (Figure 5-5). Most of the development is comprised of 3, 4 and 5-bedroom family homes of an attractive variety of designs as seen on the left hand image. The community allotments are close by, accessed from Ash Tree Close.

138.



Figure 5-5 Views of the Ash Tree Close development .

### 5.1.8 Ashlington Fields

139. Ashlington Fields is a Davidsons Homes development of 70 dwellings built in 2020 / 2021 on Redvers Avenue and John Glover Drive, north of the A47. It forms the northern and northwestern extents of the current built environment of Houghton. There are a few bungalows with the majority of the dwellings being 2 or even 2 ½ storey family houses of an attractive variety of styles. The roads are laid out with pleasant curves that result in different views as one progresses into the development. Four of the bungalows are at the northern boundary giving those residents the longest walk to reach village facilities or to access the LC7 bus route making them less attractive to those of limited mobility. There are views of the countryside over the attenuation pond. A solar farm lies to the north beyond the development. The development lies close to the bridlepath leading from the A47 past Redvers farm and into the fields beyond, connecting eventually to the village of Scraftoft.





Figure 5-6 Views of the Ashlington Fields development.

#### 5.1.9 Weir Lane infill housing

140. Three linked 2-bedroom social houses were built in 2020 off the north side of Weir Lane on behalf of Waterloo Housing Group (now Platform Housing Group) on land formerly occupied by garages available to be rented by residents. Houghton playing field is just a short distance away, as are shops on Main Street. A footpath to Home Close Road, and beyond, runs by the west (left) end of the houses.



Figure 5-7 Weir Lane infill housing

*End of Appendix A.*