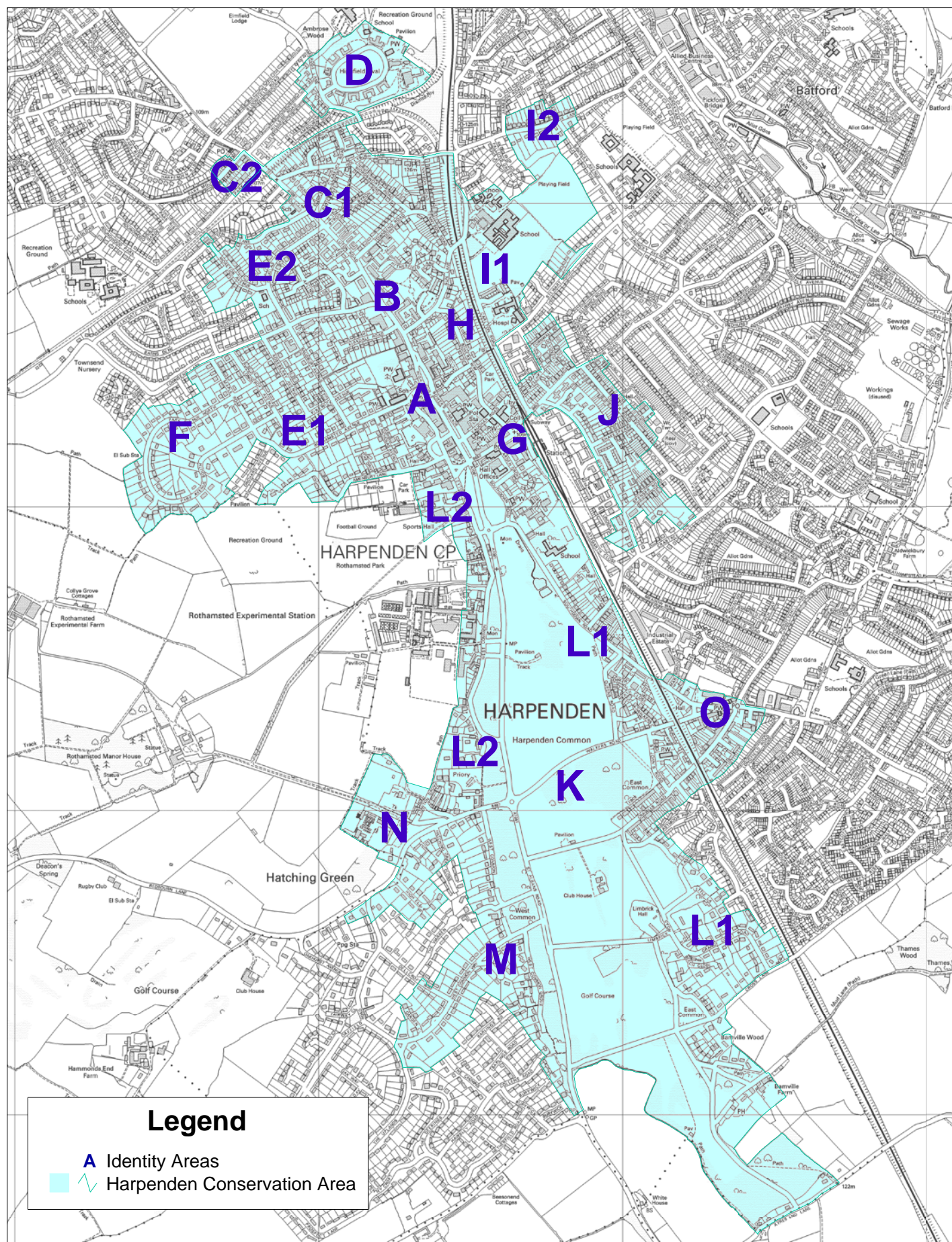


CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR HARPENDEN



April 2008



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St Albans
CITY AND DISTRICT

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HARPENDEN CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Civic Amenities Act 1967 empowered local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest by designating them as conservation areas. Harpenden Conservation Area was originally designated in 1969, and subsequently extended in 1983, 1993, and 1999.

1.2 Conservation should not be thought of solely as a process of preservation and an impediment to change. The designation of a conservation area represents an opportunity to formulate positive policies to improve and enhance its environmental quality and to ensure the successful integration of any development or redevelopment necessary for its continued success as a living and working community. The St. Albans District Local Plan Review (adopted November 1994) sets out the general principles which will be observed when dealing with applications for new development and redevelopment, (Policy 85 – “Development in Conservation Areas”).

1.3 The aims of this leaflet are to show the way in which the form of the conservation area has evolved and to assess its present character; to indicate the principles to be adopted in considering planning applications in the area; and to form a framework within which more detailed proposals may be formulated.

2.0 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Until the late nineteenth century Harpenden was still a small, mainly agricultural, village but in the years since then it has greatly expanded in area and population. Until 1859 Harpenden and Wheathampstead formed one ecclesiastical parish (the parish of Wheathampstead) although, from an early date, the parish had been divided for tithing and civil purposes. Separate parish registers were kept from the sixteenth century and in 1656 an unsuccessful attempt was made to formally divide the ecclesiastical parish. In 1898, by an Order in Council under the Local Government Act of 1894, Harpenden was formed into an Urban District and remained so until the reorganisation of Local Government in 1974.

2.2 The name Harpenden, spelt Herpedene in the earliest known documentary source (AD1060) relates to the topography of the area, from the Old English *harped* (or *herepath*) = a military road or highway and *denu* = valley. In that document, the name refers to the point on the northern side of the town where a Roman road which ran from Cheshunt to Dunstable came down into the valley in which the town now stands.

2.3 As would be expected so near to Verulamium, a major city, artefacts of Roman date have been found in Harpenden and there are the remains of a Roman shrine on the Rothamsted estate; but we do not know what the pattern of settlement at that time was. In the Saxon and early Norman period, settlement at first consisted of isolated farmsteads outlying from Wheathampstead, some of which later developed into hamlets, in Harpenden's case, into a village.

2.4 It is uncertain when this development took shape in Harpenden. There is no mention in the Domesday Book of a church here (which does not necessarily mean that there was none) but a chapel of ease dedicated to St. Nicholas existed before 1221, and much Norman work survived in the church until it was substantially rebuilt in 1862. The topographic evidence suggests that the earliest settlement was south of the church around a green at the northern end of the great triangular common, which was then much larger than it is today.

Parts of this green were gradually colonised by buildings, producing the pattern we see today between High Street and Leyton Road and (on a smaller scale) around the 'Silver Cup' Public House. Settlement also spread southwards along both margins of the common so that by the eighteenth century, buildings existed along the western side as far south as Hatching Green, although not as a continuous built-up strip.



Church of St. Nicholas.

2.5 Between 1563 and 1603 the population of Harpenden and Wheathampstead rose by over a half, although the rise was much the same in the county as a whole. However, the settlement outline in the eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century remained much as it had been for the previous four or five centuries. Harpenden achieved rapid growth not from a naturally increasing population but as the result of immigration from outside.

2.6 By the time the Ordnance Survey of 1878 was prepared, Harpenden was expanding rapidly with the coming of the railway age. In 1860, the Great Northern Railway company built the (now-abandoned) Kings Cross to Dunstable line. The main Midland Line arrived in 1868. A branch line was added running north of the town to Hemel Hempstead (known as the Nicky Line) which closed to passenger traffic in 1947. It continued to be used for goods traffic until the 1970's, supplying materials for the Hemelite company in Hemel Hempstead and the track bed is now in use as a cycle path.

2.7 Cottages, such as those built in Cravells Road on surplus railway land, were an early result of the arrival of the railway. These modest brick terraces provided homes for the increasing number of builders and tradesmen engaged in serving the growing village. The sale of the Pym and Packe Estate (later St. Nicholas Estate) in 1882, and Church Farm (Park View Estate), Manland Common, and Cooters End Farm facilitated the great railway-based suburban growth that gave Harpenden its present-day character.

2.8 By the 1890's, the potential of Harpenden as a base for London commuters had begun to be exploited by developers and local builders. The various avenues west of the parish church were laid out to provide spacious, individually-designed houses set in large, well laid out gardens. The new residential architecture of this period typifies the marriage of vernacular revival design with trees and landscaping which stemmed from the work of Norman Shaw at Bedford Park in West London during the 1870's. A variety of informal designs based on traditional or vernacular architecture set in generously planted gardens was seen as an ideal setting for family life, in reaction to the high-density of London's smoke-filled squares and terraces.

2.9 During the first four decades of the twentieth century, Harpenden was enriched by a variety of suburban domestic developments. The fringes of the Common in particular have many fine quality houses, displaying a high degree of craftsmanship in decorative timber-framing, brickwork and moulded joinery, difficult to repeat today.

2.10 To service the new middle class inhabitants, the High Street and Station Road were redeveloped, largely in the early 1900's, with shops set below decorative brick elevations, complementary to the surrounding residential areas. This mixture of comfortable residential areas and a homely shopping High Street, which grew up to serve them, set the character of Harpenden which exists today.

3.0 CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

3.1 In 1968, following the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, a town centre appraisal plan was prepared by the County Council from which there followed, in 1969, the designation of the Harpenden Conservation Area which originally included most of the town centre together with The Common and Hatching Green.

3.2 The 1969 Harpenden Conservation Area excluded many areas of historic interest and townscape value. Subsequently a much greater awareness of the importance of nineteenth century buildings and their place in the history of our towns resulted in a substantial review of the conservation area boundary in 1983. Redevelopment in towns since 1967 was often rapid, involving great changes in the urban environment: individual houses were replaced by flats and terraced houses, and shops gave way to monolithic commercial development, often much resented by local people.

3.3 Victorian and Edwardian neighbourhoods of established mature character contain fine examples of building design and craftsmanship virtually impossible to reproduce today. Even modest buildings, taken as a group with their neighbours, often contribute to the distinctive character and historic development of the town. Piecemeal redevelopment will result in the progressive erosion of this special character, destroying the very reason for conservation area status. The spacious character of the area makes it especially vulnerable to redevelopment, involving the amalgamation of sites, demolition of original houses and the erection of flats of banal design. Experience has shown that the only effective way to conserve such established historic townscape is to designate it as a conservation area so as to control demolition and to encourage creative conversion schemes and a high standard of new building design.

4.0 VISUAL ANALYSIS

4.1 The Harpenden Conservation Area is one of the largest in the county and consists of four main elements:- the Town Centre, the Common, Hatching Green, and the post-railway suburbs. These, in turn, can be further subdivided into smaller identity areas. The interrelationship between these main elements has produced the unique character of Harpenden.

4.2 Harpenden lies in a shallow glacial valley broadening out to the south west to form the rolling landscape of the Common which largely consists of rough grassland with clusters of oaks and patches of gorse. The Common gradually narrows at the northern end to approach the town and is contained between Leyton Road, West Common and Southdown Road. It continues into the town centre as a greensward separating High Street and Lower High Street. Subsidiary greens, Church Green and Leyton Green, opening out to the west, create a pattern of blocks of building alternating with landscape elements. This smooth transition from a landscape which contains buildings to a sequence of buildings containing landscape elements is visually one of the most satisfying aspects of the Harpenden Conservation Area.

5.0 IDENTITY AREA A HIGH STREET

(Including the High Street, from Station Road up to Sun Lane and Kirkdale Road; Leyton Road adjacent to and north of Leyton Green; Church Green; Thompson Close and The Putterills)

5.1 This is the centre of the town, bounded to the north by Harpenden Lodge, a late Georgian reminder of Harpenden's rural past, and by the spreading expanse of the Common to the south. A sense of enclosure is provided at the southern end by the robustly-modelled Italianate stucco and brick Harpenden Arms. This enclosure is reinforced by the mature trees on the Common. The tall trees around the Glen Eagle Manor Hotel marks the northern enclosure.

5.2 This area has been substantially rebuilt since the second half of the nineteenth century. Until then the High Street and Leyton Road were still lined with timber framed buildings, essentially as shown on the 1843 Tithe Map. Several of these were open field farms, such as Home Farm and Church Farm, backing directly onto the fields.

5.3 The east side of the High Street has a variety of domestic scale buildings set back from the main carriageway behind trees and landscaped greenswards, a feature that developed from the early nineteenth century, possibly comprising a former rope walk. Although many of the properties have ground floor shops, the small scale is maintained by the individual character of the buildings. The variety of pitched, slated or tiled roofs and carefully detailed brick elevations, dating mostly from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, form a visually harmonious relationship with the few statutorily listed buildings that survive from Harpenden's rural past. The listed Methodist Church, built in 1929, is simply designed in a reticent Tudor style and is finely built of stone and red brick. It is a sensitive low-key exercise in fitting an institutional building into domestic-scale surroundings.



Harpenden Arms.



East side of High Street.

5.4 Apart from the listed buildings, two others stand out as being of especial interest. The Harpenden Arms forms a striking corner to Station Road. Further north, the National Westminster Bank has a ground floor arcade of rubbed orange bricks alternating with bands of Portland Stone.

5.5 The west side of the High Street lacks the green landscaping separating the buildings from the road and is consequently more urban in character, (although until 1935 there were trees on this side of the street as well).



West side of High Street.



16 High Street.

5.6 This side of the High Street contains many examples of two and three storey buildings, generally larger in scale than those opposite and mostly composed of shops or banks with flats or offices above. Well detailed brick facades predominate, with painted timber sash windows, gables and prominent chimney stacks adding to the urban domestic character. A particularly fine example of this building type is Barclays Bank designed by Percival Blow, a local architect, in 1923. Two storeys high with a clay tiled roof set behind a parapet, the elevations are faced in red brick with rubbed brick dressings to windows and doors in the early eighteenth century manner.

Other buildings of interest include:

- The continuous row of shops (with flats or offices above) from 34A High Street to the return elevation facing Church Green - because of its dominance since 1890. 34 & 34A High Street flanked by what appears to be original stone marble or imitation marble pilasters (painted over at 34A). Further north pilasters are made of wood.
- 66-72A High Street – it is Grade II listed.
- The Old Cock Public House.
- Kingston House – decorative pargetting between 1st floor windows dating from 1912 and interesting wheatsheaf motif.
- The Leys – a recent shop conversion

5.7 Further north nos. 78-84 form a good group that largely retain their original unity although some have modern shopfronts. This group dates from the early twentieth century and is designed in an Arts and Crafts style, with panelled roughcast pargetting to the upper facade and distinctive ceramic pilasters separating the ground floor shops. Nos. 78 and 84 retain their original heavily framed timber shopfronts, a feature which it would be desirable to restore to the other shops in the group.

5.8 Nos. 92-102 is another two-storey terrace with ground floor shops. In this case, the upper storey is designed in a flamboyant Edwardian Baroque with red brickwork with orange rubbed brick dressings. There are gables, a dentelled eaves cornice, and the shops are separated by panelled pilasters. The original hardwood frame survives in several of the shopfronts, and this important feature should be ideally be restored in each case to complete the unity of the original building.

5.9 Between the two shop groups mentioned above is a former car showroom, which has an obtrusive shaped fascia and large plate glass windows. These features are at odds with the smaller scale of the adjoining buildings. Some improvement of the shopfront and the removal of the shaped fascia would be an enhancement of the area as a whole.

5.10 To the west of the High Street are Church Green and Leyton Green linked by Leyton Road. Between the churchyard and the green is a wide stretch of road with the nineteenth century red brick Gothic church school to the west and the High Street junction to the east. Seen from the green, the Parish Church, Cock Public House, and the Church School form a traditional village centre group further reinforced by views of the early twentieth century stonework of the Roman Catholic Church in Rothamsted Avenue.



Roman Catholic Church.

5.11 The wide road between this group of buildings and the Green is dominated by car parking detracting from the setting of the surrounding buildings. This area has recently been modified with some better quality materials.

5.12 On the west side of Church Green is Church Green Parade, a long modern building which replaced a row of old cottages in 1967. The horizontal nature of this building, accentuated by the overhanging canopy above the shopfronts is out of character with the more individual, vertically proportioned buildings elsewhere in the area. The car parking area in front of this building is bland in appearance due to the lack of landscaping.

5.13 Leyton Road joins Church Green to Leyton Green. On its east side are small shops built on the back land of the High Street buildings; recent development here, as at the back of The Leys, has been in scale and keeping with what already existed. The Waitrose supermarket on the west side has been carefully designed in massing and materials to match the small scale of the buildings opposite. Immediately to its south is the restored Wellington House, an attractive, Grade II listed, Regency villa. As a quiet alternative to the busy traffic of the High Street, Leyton Road has great potential for environmental improvement where priority should be given to pedestrians over cars.



Leyton Green.



Wellington House.

5.14 Leyton Green is similar in many respects to Church Green. On the eastern side are small shops and outbuildings built on the back land of the High Street buildings. To the north is Wellington House and the fairly inconspicuous entrance to the Waitrose car park. The western side is occupied by some pleasant cottages and houses set in their own gardens with The Oak Tree Public House forming the corner with Amenbury Lane. The south side of the green presents an opportunity for improvement. At the corner of Amenbury Lane and Leyton Road is a two storey building with ground floor shops, and the Leyton Road frontage has a wide tarmac pavement which is unsightly, despite the tree. Some improvement to the landscaping of this corner would be an advantage.

5.15 Along Amenbury Lane is a small group of industrial buildings. This frontage would be improved by a redevelopment which improved the sense of enclosure and mirrored the design qualities of the houses on the green's western side.

5.16 The majority of Harpenden's shops are located in the High Street or nearby roads. Shopfronts and advertisements are frequently changing and can have a great visual impact on the character of the conservation area. The District Council seeks to improve the quality of shopfront design and has published 'A Guide to Shopfront and Advertisement Design' October 1985 to advise and assist designers and building owners. Proposals for new shopfronts will be assessed in the light of the Council's Design Guide and Policy 90. Most of the existing shopfronts are modest in scale and generally in keeping with the area. Several good historic shopfronts survive in whole or in part and should be maintained or, if necessary, repaired.

5.17 Unlike many of the surrounding small villages, where shops were usually adapted from older, domestic properties, many of Harpenden's shopfronts are in purpose-built buildings where the shopfronts form a cohesive part of the design. Old photographs show a number of good late Victorian designs with attractive sign-written fascias, pilasters, and external gas lamps. As a long term conservation area aim it would be desirable to restore missing elements in important shopfront groups and resist unsympathetic changes.

5.18 Where new fronts are replacing recent examples of little interest, the District Council will insist on a high quality of design and materials, with architectural features such as pilasters and entablatures being incorporated. Proposals to visually unify two or more previously separate shopfronts will be resisted in order to maintain the varied elevational treatment that typifies the High Street.

5.19 The District Council supports the retention of the existing paving pattern on the High Street. The retention of this paving or the use of brick-sized blocks is considered essential to preserve and enhance the character of the area. The use of tarmac for pavements will be discouraged as being detrimental to the townscape.

6.0 IDENTITY AREA B HARPENDEN LODGE **(Including Kirkdale Road; Luton Road from Kirkdale Road and Sun Lane up to, but not including, Old Rectory Close and Townsend Road; and the Lydekker estate, including Hitherfield Lane; Lodge Gardens; Hales Meadow and Arcadian Court)**

6.1 This is a transition area between the High Street, as an urban shopping street, to the south of it, and the residential area on either side of Luton Road, stretching away to the north. The Glen Eagle Manor, originally a late nineteenth century house, has been much extended to become one of the largest hotels in the District. The large scale of this building group is alleviated by the generous landscaping among mature trees, which form an important feature as seen from northern end of High Street.

6.2 Kirkdale Road is a residential cul-de-sac of largely inter-War houses; it has some affinities with Identity Area H.



Harpenden Lodge.



Kirkdale Road detail.

6.3 Harpenden Lodge, dating from 1803, became the home of the Lydekker family in 1857, which it remained for a century and a quarter. The walled grounds of the house were developed after the death of Miss Hilda Lydekker but the central area has been made into a small park to meet her wish for a permanent open space in memory of her brothers killed in the 1914-18 War.

6.4 The modern buildings north of the Glen Eagle Manor Hotel include Ogglesby's car showrooms and the petrol station. The latter was built in the 1980's on the site of the Embassy Cinema and care has been taken through the use of brick and stained timber to help it fit in with its surroundings.

7.0 IDENTITY AREA C

IDENTITY AREA C1 LUTON ROAD AND HOLLYBUSH LANE

7.1 This area lies to the north of Harpenden Lodge and is chiefly composed of comfortable late Victorian and Edwardian suburban houses. There are a few large detached houses comparable with those in the Avenues areas (E1 and E2) but for the most part they are of medium size, sometimes detached but more usually in semidetached pairs. All these houses are set in mature gardens. The character of the area depends on the range of architectural design and materials used in their construction, and on the continued existence of their surrounding trees and gardens.



Luton Road.



Clarence Road.

7.2 In Hollybush Lane, Akrill House is of especial interest. It was built in 1879 by Sir John Blundell Maple as a convalescent home for workers from his store (Maple's) in Tottenham Court Road, London; it is in 'Tudor' style, in red brick with tile-hanging at first floor level. Close by, in Clarence Road, he also built Maple Flats in a similar style, for retired employees; this has decorative half-timbering to the first floor. In Tennyson Road, some of the houses have polychromatic brickwork. The use of white window frames maintains the unity of the street scene, throughout that road and the nearby ones.



Akrill House.



Maple Flats.

7.3 The area includes some modern development. There are a number of blocks of flats in Luton Road, of varying architectural quality. Much of Byron Road and part of Townsend Road were built on land vacated in 1966 by the former Hardenwick School.

7.4 The District Council considers that the special character of this area depends on its mix of late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses of pleasing design set in mature gardens. The District Council would strongly resist any proposals to demolish these houses or amalgamate sites for redevelopment. Proposed conversions or extensions to existing buildings must respect the style and architectural features of the building and maintain or augment the present landscaping

7.5 At the northern end of the area is a railway bridge which formerly carried the Hemel Hempstead branch of the Midland railway. The track bed now forms the 'Nicky Line' footpath and cycleway. The monumental brick arch is a reminder of the importance of railways in Harpenden's history and is a major local landmark acting as an 'archway' at the entrance to the central part of town. The brickwork would benefit from cleaning and the District Council will seek to remove the advertisement hoardings adjacent to the bridge.

IDENTITY AREA C2

PARK HILL

7.6 This is a small area north of the former Hemel Hempstead railway line with houses contemporary with those which characterise area C1, but smaller or set more closely together and in smaller gardens. In Luton Road, they are in semi-detached pairs, but these are closely spaced. In Park Hill and Park Mount there are some terraces of four houses; and, particularly in the two latter roads, there is a range of attractive detailing, especially at eaves level. Houses of this kind are more than usually susceptible to unsympathetic alterations or enlargement, which the Council would strongly resist.

8.0 IDENTITY AREA D

HIGHFIELD OVAL



Highfield Oval.

8.1 This is a formal self-contained development and is a fine example of an early 20th century children's home built on "garden suburb" lines. The original buildings, dating from circa 1912-13, and some later ones in a complementary style survive. They include children's residential units, a chapel, an administrative block, and a laundry, all set round a landscaped oval green on the edge of open countryside. Every effort was made to give children a homely atmosphere by the use of traditional cottage design using red brick, tile hanging, rough cast and mock timbering to complement the white sash windows and create variation between buildings, as around a village green. Though no longer a residential children's home, the Oval remains in institutional use.

9.0 IDENTITY AREA E

THE AVENUES

IDENTITY AREA E1 THE AVENUES WEST OF THE TOWN CENTRE

(Amenbury Lane, Hay Lane, Avenue St Nicholas, The Drive, Rothamsted Avenue, Salisbury Avenue, Kirkwick Avenue, Rosebury Avenue, Longcroft Avenue, St Andrews's Avenue and the east side of Maple Road)

9.1 Amenbury Lane originally linked farmhouses in the village centre with their fields in the vicinity of what is now Longcroft Avenue. Its proximity to Rothamsted Park has ensured that the upper parts of the road have retained an agreeably semi-rural character, which should be preserved. Amenbury Lodge (no. 34) bears the date 1834 and is in the style of a 'cottage orné'. Except at its eastern end, all the other development in the road is comparatively recent. The same applies to the two short roads (Hay Lane and The Drive) which lead out of it.

9.2 The extreme eastern end of Amenbury Lane, directly facing Leyton Green, is discussed as part of Area A. Nearby buildings have links with the former Yew Tree Farm (15 Leyton Road). 1-8 Amenbury Lane consists of an alternative row of former farm cottages. Ellard House, now restored and used as an office, is a former Congregational chapel originally dating from 1839.

9.3 Most of the rest of the area formed part of the Pym and Packe estate and was sold, as substantial building plots, in the 1980's. The houses of that time were built for well-to-do middle class families, many of whom were moving out of London in search of a more satisfying way of life in the countryside. These houses, of red brick and frequently with decorative timbering, are set in attractive well-planted gardens; they have a broad uniformity of style, and all of this creates a visual impact which admirably expresses the suburban ideal of their period. The houses differ from each other, but are frequently set in groups of two or

three of similar design, each of which is identified by its own distinctive detailing. In carpentry, brickwork and stonework, the detailing often shows a high standard of inventiveness and craftsmanship.



Rothamsted Avenue, detail.



Salisbury Avenue.

9.4 Because of the spacious gardens, there has been a significant amount of infilling in the space between previously existing houses. The 'infill' houses are of various dates and in a variety of styles. The success with which they relate visually to their late-Victorian and early-Edwardian neighbours is also variable. Some of them make use of decorative features, borrowed from the older houses; but the most successful ones include a number where this is eschewed; and they stand, alongside their older neighbours, on their own merits as representing the building style of a later stage of development in the area.

IDENTITY AREA E2 THE AVENUES NORTH-WEST OF THE TOWN CENTRE (Douglas Road; Moreton Avenue; Aplins Close with Lavendon and Timbers Court; part of Townsend Lane; and part of Moreton End Lane)

9.5 This is also an area which began to be built up in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period; but the building styles of that period do not pervade the area in the way that they do in Area E1. The older houses are to be found in Townsend Lane (nos. 32-36), in the part of Douglas Road between Luton Road and Moreton Avenue appear to be of Edwardian date. They have somewhat shorter frontages than is usual in Area E1 and more of them are semi-detached houses in Moreton End Lane. Nos. 23 and 25 are the oldest houses in that road, dating from 1908; nos. 39 and 41, which are 1924, face into and close the view along Moreton Avenue.

10.0 IDENTITY AREA F PARK AVENUE (Park Avenue North; Park Avenue South, and the west side of Maple Road)

10.1 Along with other areas west of the town centre, the land here was part of the Pym and Packe estate, from which it passed to a Luton developer, Henry Steers, who laid out the roads in the early years of the twentieth century; the avenue of lime trees with conifers alongside the road dates from this time. He and his successors insisted that development should consist only of detached houses at a certain minimum building cost and on plots normally having a street frontage of at least 80 feet (24 metres). Development proceeded slowly and the Avenues have only a few Edwardian houses, though in the inter-war period a substantial number were built in styles which complemented their Edwardian neighbours. Nearly all the pre-1939 houses are locally listed and they include most of the largest houses.

10.2 Even so, not more than half of the Avenues had been built up by 1954. Construction then began again after the 1939-45 War and the building-up was completed within a few years. Though some of them have since been enlarged, the houses of this period were

typically of more moderate size. The remainder are designed in a variety of styles. The requirements about plot width largely remained in force, and it is the open layout of the houses set in mature and spacious gardens which, together with the avenue of trees, has created the most distinctive feature of the local environment – giving, for most of the road, an almost woodland rather than suburban quality to the street scene. Conservation area status here is important in order to preserve the mature landscape setting as well as the individual buildings.



Park Avenue.

10.3 The western side of Maple Road is included in this area because a substantial part of it consists of the side gardens of Park Avenue houses, and because 1, 3 and 3a Maple Road resemble in character the houses in Park Avenue.

10.4 The Council will resist the demolition of any original house in the Avenues area unless every other possibility for conversion and extension can be shown to be impracticable. The Council will expect all mature trees to be retained and the landscaping augmented in any proposed development. Development must respect the existing open layout of the area, with particular regard to the spacing of buildings from each other and from site boundaries. Extensions and conversions should be in scale and proportion with existing building, and will be expected to be of a high quality to maintain the 'Arcadian' character of the townscape.

11.0 IDENTITY AREA G STATION ROAD **(Including Station Road west of the railway bridge; Station Approach; Arden Grove; Victoria Road; Vaughan Road; and the southern part of Bowers Way as far as and including the car parks)**

11.1 This is a relatively small area, on the eastern side of the High Street, which to a substantial extent provides institutional and other services for Harpenden. Besides two churches, the area contains the town's railway station, main Post Office, new Police Station, Public Library, telephone exchange, shops, offices and other facilities. There are also a number of restaurants. On the edge of the area, two sizeable car parks provide facilities for town centre shoppers.

11.2 Notwithstanding the coming of the Midland railway in 1868 and the proximity of this area to the station, it did not develop substantially until the turn of the century, and the United Reform church and the Library and Further Education Centre (formerly a Board school) are amongst its oldest buildings. They date from 1897 and are well-detailed brick buildings typical of their time. The former Police Station (now converted for use as a nursery school) in yellow stock brick, is also notable and is of a similar period.

11.3 Edwardian residential development took place in Arden Grove, where the older houses are spaciouly planned with mature gardens and distinctive boundary walls. Recent commercial development in this road, though in red brick and tile and evidently intended to match in scale the Edwardian houses nearby, is however disappointingly featureless.



Arden Grove.



Station Road.

11.4 Recent (1988-90) offices and shop development in Vaughan Road have more interesting detail and consorts much better with the closely-built Edwardian houses opposite. Immediately adjacent, the new Police Station (which is in yellow brick, like its predecessor) seems uncomfortably massive in comparison with this development.

11.5 Station Road itself, formerly a country lane, rises eastwards from the High Street with occasional cottages leading to Batford. The north side is lined with gabled shop terraces stepping up the hill to the railway bridge carrying the main line over the road. They exhibit a variety of detail and materials, with slate and tile roofs, decorative brickwork and moulded joinery, and a number of attractive original shopfronts dating from circa 1900. The Post Office, dating from 1928, is a good example of the neo-Georgian style widely used by the G.P.O for its new buildings in the inter-war years. The station itself is situated in a short cul-de-sac off Station Road, which also retains several attractive kiosk shops.

11.6 The southern end of Bowers Way is an area of the town centre which offers opportunities for improvement. The car parks at the southern end of Bowers Way are operated by the District Council. The eastern one benefits from the mature trees which were on the site when it was created. The western car park has recently been extended.

11.7 The Council will normally seek the retention of existing buildings that form the special character of this area, and will expect new development to match the scale and materials of the existing townscape. Most of these buildings are locally listed.

12.0 IDENTITY AREA H BOWERS WAY NORTH **(Including Bowers Way from car parks to the junction with Sun Lane; and the southern side of Sun Lane from High Street to the railway bridge)**

12.1 Situated immediately north of the nineteenth century Station Road area, Bowers Way is an attractive example of inter-war suburban housing situated between the High Street and the railway line. These medium sized houses represent the extreme development of the nineteenth century vernacular revival and exhibit a wide variety of decorative devices typical of their period, including half-timbering and chequered brickwork. There are a few larger houses in Sun Lane.

13.0 IDENTITY AREA I

IDENTITY AREA I.1 ST. GEORGE'S SCHOOL AND HARPENDEN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (Including Carlton Road; Maldon Court; Sun Lane east of the railway line; and nos. 7-15 Stewart Road)

13.1 This area, to the east of the main railway line, contains two large nineteenth century buildings set in park-like grounds which contrast with the residential development of the surrounding roads.

13.2 Harpenden Memorial Hospital was originally built as a private house for Vaughan Stephens, a London businessman and was and later became the home of Sir Halley Stewart. It was rebuilt in 1896 after a fire, and became a hospital in 1941. Designed in a Jacobean style, it is constructed of brick with Portland stone dressings; the south elevation has particularly splendid stone decoration, including ogee arches and a corner dome.

13.3 St. George's School was built in 1886 in a free Elizabethan style. It is constructed from Luton Grey bricks with stone dressings. With its chapel, it has a romantic skyline of varied roof pitches and gables and stands amongst extensive playing fields well set with trees. The original school has been extended to the north-east.



St. George's School.

13.4 Adjoining the school grounds are five houses (7-15 Stewart Road), designed by H.W. Horsley in an attractive cottage style. They date from 1926 and were initially built for school staff. They are set behind a curved grass verge which is well covered with trees and shrubs and are bordered to the north and north-east by a public footpath.

13.5 The railway here runs in a cutting, with banks covered in undergrowth rising up to the road. At some place there are hedgerows between the road and the railway, though at the northern end there is a small wooded area.

IDENTITY AREA I.2 OX LANE AREA

(Including nos. 15-61 on the northern side of Ox Lane, nos. 18-28 on the southern side; and no. 31 Sauncey Avenue)

13.6 The Harpenden Conservation Area was extended in 1993 to include part of Ox Lane. On the northern side, nos. 15-57 are a row of late Victorian or Edwardian semi-detached houses which have been very little altered. Nos. 59- 61 are smaller, but contemporary with the others. They combine to form a unified and coherent townscape.

13.7 The houses on the southern side are more varied in character, dating from 1910 to 1926. They are representative of that period and are set in mature gardens.

14.0 IDENTITY AREA J THE POETS

(Including Cornwall Road; Devonshire Road; Station Road from the railway bridge to Kipling Way; Cowper Road; Shakespeare Road; Spencer Road; and parts of Milton Road, including Poets Close)

14.1 This area is an enclave of late Victorian and Edwardian houses, to the east of the railway line and now almost surrounded by more recent development. The size and character of the houses varies as between one road and another. In Milton Road, some of the surviving houses are large, detached, and set in spacious gardens. Elsewhere, they are usually in semi-detached pairs. At Carlton Bank in Station Road they are of more moderate size; while in Cowper Road they are often quite small. Cowper Road also has some polychromatic decoration and extensive use of slate for roofs. Some of the smaller houses exhibit particularly attractive detailing.



Shakespeare Road.

14.2 Cornwall Road is a short street characterised by three terraced rows of generally similar design, one of seven houses and two of six which, with some semi-detached houses between them, create a street of small-scale, intimate quality.



Cornwall Road.

14.3 Both Station Road and Milton Road suffered from piecemeal redevelopment before the introduction of conservation area control. Original houses were lost and blocks of new flats inserted. Milton Road, in particular, illustrated why the character of such an area needs to be conserved; though, fortunately, most of the large mature trees in this road were kept.

15.0 IDENTITY AREA K

THE COMMON

15.1 The green expanse of the Common is one of the major natural features of the Harpenden Conservation Area, penetrating the heart of the town and providing long dramatic views from the highest points of the Common as the town is approached from the southern side.



The Common.

15.2 Formerly there were several farms on or close to the Common and local Farmers kept sheep and exercised grazing rights there. With the growth of motor traffic, this became increasingly difficult and in 1963 sheep were driven on to the Common (by Charles Dickinson of Cross Farm) for the last time. There used to be a large natural pond near The Silver Cup Public House. This Public House was associated with the horse racing which took place on the Common from 1848 until 1914 and which attracted large crowds, including some pick pockets and undesirables. At bank holidays, fairs still visit the Common and in September there is in addition a 'Statty' fair – at the season when agricultural workers were, traditionally, hired for the coming year.



The Silver Cup.

15.3 Today, the Common is used for recreation including golf, cricket and football, and with footpaths for walkers, a nature trail, a horse ride and space for informal activities. The drainage ponds adjacent to Southdown Road attract ducks and moorhen. Although part of the Common is still semi-wild in character, much of it – with a well-kept golf course, sports areas and clumps of specimen trees – is more like parkland.

15.4 Key Features.

Open grassland interspersed with patches of gorse, areas of scrub made up of blackthorn, hawthorn, wild rose and bramble, and groups of naturally regenerated oak trees represent stages in the natural succession of vegetation. Other tree species have been planted around the ponds, along the main road and on the golf course. Trees and scrub add to the character of the Common and partially screen buildings on the edges, creating the impression that it is part of the countryside and not merely a green space surrounded by suburban housing. This link between town and country should not in any way be prejudiced.

15.5 Problem Sites.

The popularity of the Common has led to problems of overuse, principally erosion caused by cars, especially in the northern part nearest the town. Also vehicles become visually intrusive when parked in large numbers - such as at weekends. Action has been taken to restrict the area available to cars opposite The Silver Cup Public House by constructing a small car park for walkers only. Other areas subject to erosion by cars are near the cricket club, near the picnic area at the top of the Common, and along parts of West Common. Parking which intruded on to the edge of the Common along Leyton Road a long time ago became permanent and the area had to be hard-surfaced. Erosion by horses and mountain bikes is evident in some places.

15.6 At present, the sports pavilions are low-built wooden structures which blend well with their surroundings.

16.0 IDENTITY AREA L DEVELOPMENT SURROUNDING THE COMMON.

16.1 The buildings that surround the Common fall into distinct groups, with a remarkable variety in size, massing and density, which in part reflects their date of construction. The relationship between the buildings, the spaces between them, and the Common provides much of the spatial interest of the area, but for this reason it varies substantially from place to place.

L1 THE EAST SIDE.

16.2 On the eastern side, the built-up area between the Common and the railway line can be considered in three parts. Southdown Road (as far as the Skew Bridge) and Queens Road are at the northern end; then there is a smaller middle section from Walkers Road to Cravells Road; and, beyond Cravells Road, Limbrick Road and Bamville Wood stretch away to the south.

Southdown Road with Crabtree Lane, and Queens Road with Bowling Close, Heath Close and Gorselands.

16.3 The northern end of Southdown Road includes some large houses from Harpenden's rural past. Harpenden Hall dates in its earlier parts from the sixteenth century and The Dene from the eighteenth; both are listed. Between them, the gables of a row of 1870 cottages and of the adjacent Friends' Meeting House also make a significant contribution to the view from across the Common; as does the eighteenth century part of the Harpenden House Hotel. There are some attractive old flint and brick walls on the front boundaries. Further south are well-spaced modern houses in mature gardens; the scene here is determined by the ponds on the Common opposite and the trees around them. On either side of the junction with Crabtree Lane and in that road itself are rows of attractive, but more closely-set, Edwardian houses, some faced in Luton Grey brick and often with rough-casting at first floor level.



Harpenden House Hotel.

16.4 The public-sector housing of the 1960's centred on Heath Close seems austere in juxtaposition with the Common; it would benefit from better landscaping, but is low-built and relatively unobtrusive. Further south, Gorseland is a private sector development. In Queens Road between them, there is an attractive terrace of Victorian cottages facing the Common and, from that viewpoint, this helps to mask the denser development which lies behind it.

Walkers Road, St John's Road, Cravells Road and 1-24 East Common.

16.5 For its visual relationship between the open space and its surrounding buildings, the green in front of St Johns Road is one of the most satisfying parts of the Common. On three sides of the green there are low-build houses of different periods spaced well apart and with the church as a focal point in the midst of them. A little distance away, 1-12 and 14-24 East Common form an attractive row of medium-sized houses, mainly Edwardian or late Victorian, with the unusual feature that they have no front carriageway: their front gardens open directly onto the adjacent part of the Common which, bounded by trees, has a feeling almost as if it were a private enclosure.



East Common.

16.6 In Cravells Road the houses are much smaller. They are brick-built terraces originally constructed for workers on the railway. The eastern end of the road has two Public Houses, one of them 'The Engineer'. To provide rear access to the East Common houses, most of the road is built on one side only. The terraces curve attractively up to the Common. Though modest, the cottages are well detailed; they are the type of small house which could easily have been spoiled by unsympathetic alteration.

Limbrick Road, Cross Lane and Ayres End Lane, with Grange Court Road, Little Lane, Bamville Wood and the remainder of East Common.

16.7 In contrast with the compact development of Cravells Road, the area to the south has a spacious rural character. Limbrick Hall, dating from the seventeenth century, is entirely surrounded by the Common. The Grange, a turn-of-the century mansion (now divided) also stands in extensive grounds. Limbrick Road, Little Lane and this part of East Common have detached houses that range in size from cottages to a substantial Victorian residence. Grange Court Road includes the former stable block of the Grange. Otherwise, along with Cross Lane, it has inter-war and post-war detached houses, specially laid out.

16.8 South of Cross Lane are modern detached houses and bungalows screened from the Common by trees; and then, at Bamville Farm, a handsome tile-hung turn-of-the-century farmhouse with, close by, the 'Three Horseshoes' public house, which is Grade II listed and was originally a pair of eighteenth century cottages.

L2 THE WEST SIDE.

16.9 The western side of the Common falls more naturally into two parts. To the north of Redbourn Lane there are still many buildings which have links with Harpenden's past as an agricultural village. Further south, however, the roads are essentially residential and are separated from the rest of the Common by a dense belt of trees and undergrowth.

Leyton Road from Amenbury Lane southwards, and West Common north of Redbourn Lane, with Sir Joseph's Walk.

16.10 The extension of the agricultural village along the western side of the Common has left behind a number of early buildings of considerable interest and character. Yew Tree Cottage (15 Leyton Road), The Inn on the Green, Bennets (the Royal British Legion headquarters), The Old House, and Coach Lane Cottage (27 and 39 Leyton Road) all date, in their oldest parts, from the seventeenth century or earlier. All are Grade II listed. Yew Tree Cottage was formerly a farmhouse; The Old House was formerly an inn, The 'Bull'. These buildings contribute substantially to the view of the west side as seen from across the Common, as do the nineteenth century buildings which stand between them, such as Park Hall and the entrance lodge to Rothamsted Park, with good brickwork and gabled roof pitches.



Leyton Road.



Bennets (Royal British Legion).

16.11 Coach Lane, though now a bridleway, leads towards Rothamsted Manor, and there is another lodge house here. Though smaller than others, it is broadly similar in style. Next to Coach Lane, Sir Joseph's Walk is a very recent high-density development arranged round an attractive communal garden.

16.12 A little further south, the neo-Georgian buildings of IACR Rothamsted, designed in 1914-18 by Freeman and Hodges, have a sense of grandeur as they face the Common. From other viewpoints in the conservation area, Rothamsted's new laboratories and conference centre are visible in the landscape.

16.13 From this point southwards, the buildings are increasingly separated from the main part of the Common by the intervening belt of trees and undergrowth. Pimlico Place is an attractive terrace of sixteen cottages of 1822 built in red and blue brick for the Benefit and Annuitants Society of St Albans. Thereafter, except for Flowton Priory, the houses are mainly of the twentieth century and residential.

17.0 IDENTITY AREA M WEST COMMON

17.1 In 1983 the conservation area was also extended to include most of the best examples of the suburban growth of Harpenden in the inter-war period. Although there had been a limited amount of earlier development alongside the Common south of Redbourn Lane – for example, the group of semi-detached estate houses known as Maple Cottages – this area largely remained open farmland until the construction of West Common Way in the 1930's, which marked the beginning of its layout with relatively large detached houses. The resulting residential roads are spaciouly planned and well landscaped, and the whole area is set behind a thick screen of woodland, which separates it visually from the Common. The first houses were built in the fields and the plot boundaries often followed the old hedge lines or contain mature trees which contribute to the mature landscaping.



Maple Cottages.

17.2 Much of this development was initiated by a local building firm, E.C. Jarvis, who designed and built many of the houses. Other designs were the work of a Harpenden architect, Eustace Salisbury. In 1925, Flowton Priory, a very substantial timber-framed house of the sixteenth century, had been moved from Ipswich to Harpenden and set up in a large garden in West Common just north of Redbourn Lane. It is now Grade II listed. Flowton Priory provided a model for many of the decorative features used in the new houses, with imitation timber-framed and seventeenth or eighteenth century types of brick detailing, often displaying unusual craftsmanship or inventiveness. Once much reviled as “Stockbroker Tudor” they are now recognised as possessing considerable merit.



West Common Way.

17.3 All these factors contribute to give the original houses a distinctive similarity of style and character. Just as The Avenues area (area E1 and E2) can be seen as expressing the ideal of well-to-do suburban living at the turn of the century, so this area bears similar witness to the aspirations of the inter-war period.

17.4 Development was interrupted by the Second World War, but began again in the 1950's with different styles but generally similar plot sizes. Nos. 70, 71 and 73 West Common are interesting examples of the 'contemporary' style of that time.

18.0 IDENTITY AREA N

HATCHING GREEN

(Hatching Green, including the former M.A.F.F. laboratories; Flowton Grove; the south side of Redbourn Lane from West Common as far as and including 2 Oakfield Road; Hatching Green Lodge and nos. 2 & 4 Hatching Green Close; and part of High Elms)



Hatching Green.

18.1 Hatching Green comprises a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses grouped around an attractive small green on the northern side of Redbourn Lane. The main entrance to Rothamsted Manor is situated on the north-western side and is approached by a driveway across the Green. The entrance lodge is one of a group of four, which vary in size and detail but are broadly similar in style, which mark present or former entrances to the former Rothamsted Estate. The others are in Amenbury Lane (area E1) and in Leyton Road (area L2).

18.2 The original settlement may have consisted of an outlying farmstead belonging to the estate, with an inn nearby serving the main road. This developed into a small hamlet. In its older parts, the White Horse PH probably pre-dates the seventeenth century. The Thatched Cottages are possibly from later in that century. Both are timber-framed. The other small cottages on the northern side of the Green date mainly from the early to mid-nineteenth century.

18.3 South of Redbourn Lane, Hatching Green Lodge is a large Edwardian house in spacious grounds. The other houses here are mainly detached houses dating from the 1930's to the present day and are generally similar in character to those in area M.

18.4 The Green contains several fine trees including a horse-chestnut. The former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food laboratory site, accessed off the main drive to Rothamsted Manor, became redundant and has now been replaced by housing.

19.0 IDENTITY AREA O SOUTHDOWN AREA

19.1 The small triangular green, flanked by nineteenth century houses, small shops and two public houses is the focus of this area. The Somerfield supermarket on its northern side is sympathetic in scale and materials with these surroundings; although its car park might benefit from more landscaping.

19.2 Cravells Road is divided in two by the railway, carried here on an embankment. The upper part, linked with the Common, is included in area L1; the lower part, in this area, has similar nineteenth century terrace housing and, close to the green, two more small Victorian public houses.



The Plough Public House.



Southdown Common.

20.0 SUMMARY

20.1 It is the Council's policy to encourage the retention of those features which make the Harpenden Conservation Area special; including buildings, trees, hedges, walls, fences etc. In addition, the Council demands a high standard of design and materials for any new development in the conservation area.

STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT

This document should be read together with saved Policy 85 of the St Albans City and District Local Plan Review 1994. It has been produced as part of DPR Project 9: Policy Statements - Conservation Areas. This document should also be read in conjunction with the Harpenden Local List which identifies those buildings which are considered to positively contribute to the character or appearance of the Harpenden Conservation Area (see also Policy 85(ii)b and Policy 87).

The former Planning and Heritage Committee considered a report on the draft Harpenden Conservation Area Character Statement and resolved that the text should go to local consultation. Consultation, including a public exhibition, took place in July 2000 with the following: local residents, Harpenden Town Council, Ward Councillors, Planning (Development Control) Committee North, the Harpenden Local History Society, and The Harpenden Society.

As a result of this consultation comments and queries were received and addressed. Some alterations were made to the text as agreed by the Planning and Conservation Portfolio Holder on 4TH April 2008. This amended version forms the Harpenden Conservation Area Character Statement.

If further advice or guidance is required please contact the Department of Planning and Building Control, St Albans City and District Council, Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Albans, Herts, AL1 3JE. Tel. St Albans (01727) 866100.

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