

# Ashwell Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Client:  
North Herts Council

Date:  
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## **Corrections**

Three paragraphs have been redacted in the CAAMP (pages 24 and 45). These paragraphs referred to heritage assets which have not been included within the final Conservation Area boundary. The paragraphs were included in the draft version of the CAAMP which was subject to public consultation.

October 2024

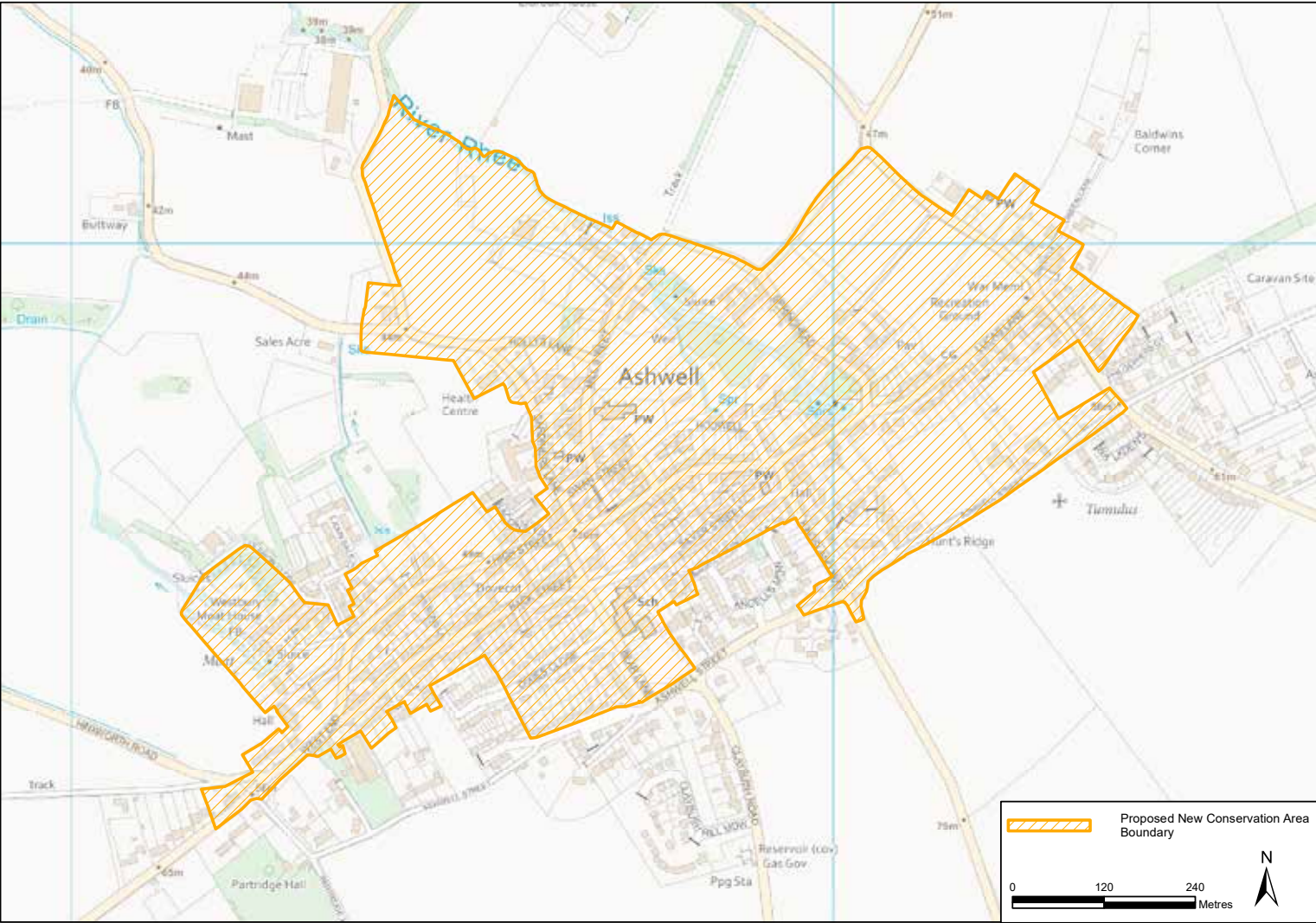


Figure 1: Map of the Ashwell Conservation Area, Proposed 2023 Boundary

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Summary

The village of Ashwell is located on the site of a spring, which feeds the River Rhee, one of the main sources of the River Cam. The village is at the base of a chalk escarpment with large, flat open fields to the north. To the south there is another rising scarp of chalk, also dominated by fields in agricultural use. The village has expanded in recent decades with modern housing extending beyond the boundaries of the Conservation Area to the west, south and east.

The springs at Ashwell have been an important asset and a focus for the local population throughout history, from the prehistoric to the modern era. There is evidence for prehistoric burials and occupation in the surrounding area, while the spring water was used in brewing into the second half of the twentieth century.

The Conservation Area boundary encompasses much of the village, reflecting the valuable archaeological, architectural, social and historic features and spaces which contribute to its character and special interest. The Conservation Area includes seventy-three designated heritage assets including a scheduled ancient monument, a Registered Park and Garden, Ashwell Bury, and a Grade I listed building, St Mary's Church. There are areas of medieval settlement, nineteenth-century industrial development, inter-war civic areas and post-war housing. These elements contribute positively to the Conservation Area's significance and providing a tangible link to the history and heritage of Ashwell and its environs.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Appraisal

This document is to be used as a baseline to inform future change, development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the historic environment and its unique character.

The appraisal recognises designated and non-designated heritage assets within the area which contribute to its special interest, along with their setting. It will consider how different Character Areas within Ashwell Conservation Area came to be developed, their building styles, forms, materials, scale, density, roads, footpaths, alleys, streetscapes, open spaces, views, landscape, landmarks, and topography. These qualities will be used to assess the key characteristics of each area, highlighting potential impact future developments may have upon the significance of heritage assets and the character of Ashwell. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the individual Character Areas.

This appraisal will enhance understanding of Ashwell Conservation Area and its development, informing future design. Applications that demonstrate an understanding of the character of a Conservation Area are more likely to produce appropriate design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography.

### 1.3 Frequently Asked Questions

A selection of frequently asked questions are outlined below. If you require further advice, please contact North Herts Council's planning department. Hyperlinks to further information are included within the text; a list of all links is included as Appendix .

#### What is a conservation area?

Conservation areas are designated by the Local Planning Authority as areas of special architectural and historic interest. There are many different types of conservation area, which vary in size and character, and range from historic town centres to country houses set in historic parks. Conservation area designation introduces additional planning controls and considerations, which exist to protect an area's special character and appearance and the features that make it unique and distinctive. Although designation introduces controls over the way that owners can develop their properties, it is generally considered that these controls are beneficial as they sustain and/or enhance the value of properties within conservation areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework regards conservation areas as 'designated heritage assets'.

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act specifies the general duty of Local Authorities, in the exercise of planning functions (Section 72). The 1990 Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

#### How are conservation areas designated and managed?

The designation process includes detailed analysis of the proposed conservation area and adoption by the local planning authority. A review process should be periodically undertaken, and the Conservation Area assessed to safeguard that it retains special architectural or historic interest. Threats can be identified, and the boundary reviewed, to ensure it is still relevant and appropriate.

This Conservation Area is supported by an appraisal and management plan. The appraisal describes the importance of an area in terms of its character, architecture, history, development form and landscaping. The management plan, included within the appraisal, sets out various positive proposals to improve, enhance and protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

#### How can I find out if I live in a conservation area?

Boundary maps of all conservation areas in the district can be found on North Herts Council's website. The council also has an online interactive map search function, which allows you to search for a specific property. Full details, including contact details for the local authority, can be accessed via <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/conservation-areas>.

#### What are the Council's duties regarding development in conservation areas?

The Local Authority must follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). These set out in clear terms how development proposals within Conservation Areas should be considered on the basis of whether they preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Applications which fail to preserve or enhance the character of the

Conservation Area are likely to be refused as a result. An authorities Local Plan also typically includes a specific policy on Conservation Areas.

### Do I need permission to change a property in a conservation area?

Permitted development rights are not the same within a conservation area as they are elsewhere. This means things that normally would not require planning permission will require consent within a conservation area's boundary. For example, side extensions, two storey rear extensions, roof extensions and the cladding of buildings, which normally would class as permitted development, require planning permission if the building affected is in a conservation area.

North Herts Council's planning team can provide further information on whether alterations require planning permission. Full details of permitted development rights are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020.

Further consideration may also need to be given to the setting of listed buildings, which many conservation areas are likely to contain.

### Do I need to make an application for routine maintenance work?

If routine maintenance works are to be carried out using authentic materials and traditional craft techniques, on a like-for-like basis, it is unlikely that you will need to apply for permission from the local authority. However, it is strongly recommended that you contact the local planning authority for clarification before commencing any works. The use of a contractor with the necessary skills and experience of working on historic buildings is essential. Inappropriate maintenance works and the use of the wrong materials will cause damage to the fabric of a historic building.

### What is an Article 4 Direction?

Some conservation areas are covered by an Article 4 Direction, which brings certain types of development back under the control of a local planning authority. This is in addition to the exemptions outlined in the Permitted Development Order Act and, where in place, an Article 4 direction allows potentially harmful proposals to be considered on a case by case basis through planning applications. Article 4 Directions are used to control works that could threaten the character of an area and a planning application may be required for development that would otherwise have been permitted development. Historic England provides information on Article 4 Directions on their website. [See https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4direction](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4direction).

### Can I demolish a building in a conservation area?

Demolition, or substantial removal of part of a building within a conservation area, will usually require permission from the local planning authority. It is important to speak to them before beginning any demolition works, to clarify if permission is required. This includes the demolition of boundary walls.

### Will I need to apply for permission for a new or replacement garage, fence, boundary wall or garden structure?

Any demolition, development or construction in conservation areas will generally need planning permission. A replacement boundary, garage, cartlodge or greenhouse will need to be designed with the special historic and architectural interest of the Conservation Area in mind. North Herts Council will provide advice as to how to proceed with an application.

### Can I remove a tree within a conservation area?

If you are thinking of cutting down a tree or doing any pruning work,



the local planning authority must be notified 6 weeks before any work begins. This enables the authority to assess the contribution the tree makes to the character of the conservation area and, if necessary, create a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) to protect it. Consent will be required for any works to trees that are protected. Further information on TPOs can be found on Historic England's [website \(https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/tree/\)](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/tree/).

#### How can I find out more?

Historic England's website has information on conservation areas and their designation. Further information on the importance of conservation areas, and what it means to live in one, can also be accessed via their [website \(https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/conservation-areas/\)](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/conservation-areas/).

Historic England has also published an advice note called Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management which sets out advice on the appraisal of conservation areas and managing change in conservation areas. It is available to download [here: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/).

In addition, local planning authorities have information on the conservation areas within their boundaries available on their websites. They will have information pertaining to when the conservation area was designated, how far it extends and the reason for its designation.

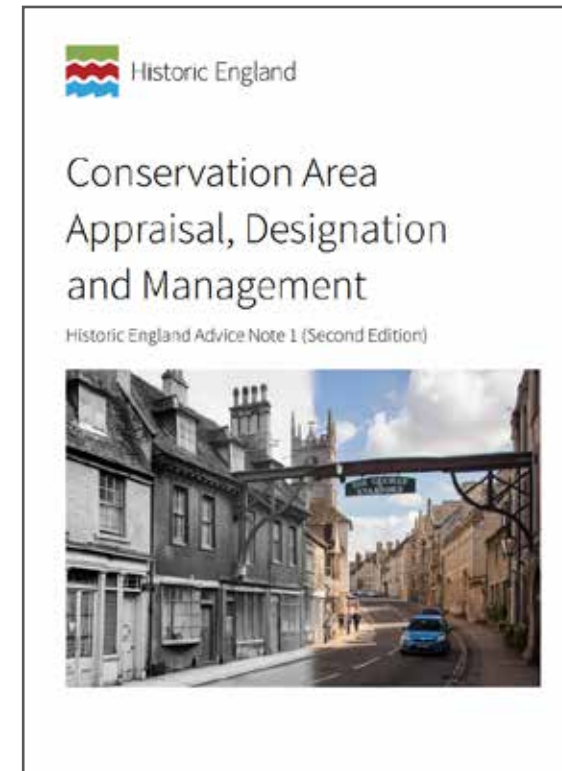


Figure 2: Cover Page, *Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management*, Historic England

## 1.4 Planning Policy Context

### National Planning Policies

The national legislative framework for the creation, conservation and enhancement of conservation areas and listed buildings is set out Part II of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990).

Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider possess architectural or historic interest worthy of preservation or enhancement as Conservation Areas. As part of this, section 71 of the Act requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas, such as in the form of an appraisal document. It is also the Local Authority's duty to ensure that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the conservation when making planning decisions, as per section 72 of the Act.

National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF (DCLG 2021). Chapter 16 of the NPPF relates specifically to the historic environment, with Annex 2: Glossary providing a definition of heritage terms, some of which are reproduced in Appendix 6.4 of this document.

Within the NPPF, the importance of heritage assets is outlined, with emphasis placed upon the contribution they make to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Local Planning Authorities should seek to preserve or enhance the historic environment, developing strategies which consider the wider benefits that the conservation of heritage assets can bring, and draw upon the contribution made by the historic environment to local character and distinctiveness.

A further national planning policy which applies is The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2020.

Careful consideration must be given to the Permitted Development Order by the Local Planning Authority, Residents and other Interested Parties, as many permitted development rights are removed in Conservation Areas.

### Local planning policies

#### North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

The local plan was adopted on 8th November 2022. A summary of the relevant policies is given below:

SP13: Historic Environment. This sets out the Council's heritage strategy and its positive intentions to conserve and enhance its heritage assets and their setting whilst enabling appropriate development in accordance with paragraph 126 of the NPPF. The policy is based on a wide range of evidence that make up the District's heritage.

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets. This policy recognises the significance of North Hertfordshire's designated heritage assets and their settings.

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk. This policy is concerned with the Council's efforts to manage 'at risk' heritage. This covers the national Historic England heritage at risk register, which includes scheduled monuments and heritage assets designated at grade I or II\* and conservation areas. The Council also produces an 'At Risk' register that covers all listed building grades.

Policy HE3: Non-designated heritage assets. This reflects the Council's approach to local heritage assets. Assets are identified as part of a rolling programme of research to inform local lists of heritage assets and through the planning and plan making process

Policy HE4: Archaeology. This relates to archaeological remains and reflects the methods to investigate, and the potential for chance discoveries. Areas of as yet, unknown archaeology may be identified during research, or through the planning or plan making process. These sites or areas should be treated in the same as archaeology areas and areas of archaeological significance.

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance:

#### Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan 2021

Relevant policies:

Policy ASH3 Character of Development

Policy ASH4 Design of Development

Policy ASH8 Protecting Historic Assets

Policy ASH9 Locally Significant Views

Policy ASH10 Natural Landscape and Rural Character

Policy ASH11 Natural Wildlife Assets, Wildlife Corridors and Green Infrastructure

The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan was submitted by the Parish Council to North Hertfordshire District Council on 5 February 2021 and is now

part of the statutory development plan. The plan sets out a vision for the parish and planning policies which will be used to determine planning applications within the parish. The Ashwell community has stressed that new development should reflect the character of the parish and that the design of development should look and feel like local properties and the Neighbourhood Plan requires high-quality design standards that integrate with the area and reflect and reinforce, without overwhelming, the rural character of the parish.

Policy ASH3 of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to character of development and states the following:

*A) Development should conserve and enhance the Conservation Area, the Character Areas V1 to V5 as shown in Figure 7.1, and key views and assets identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019.*

*B) The design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken account of the local context and reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials, in order to avoid building design that is inappropriate to the ANP area. For example: clusters of large, similar houses (in excess of three bedrooms) are not a characteristic of the village. However, innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.*

*C) As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should address the following criteria:*

*(i) make a positive contribution to the visual impact of the village from the highway and footpath approaches; and*

*(ii) not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local views as set out in POLICY ASH9 Locally significant views.*

*D) Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets (either directly or via a change in their settings), will be expected to respect, conserve and enhance the significance of those assets.*

In Policy ASH9 the Plan identifies locally significant views and states the following:

*A) The Plan identifies twenty one locally-significant views, described and mapped in Figures 6.9 and 6.10. As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals within the arcs of the various views as shown on Figure 7.10 should be designed in a way that safeguards the locally-significant view or views concerned.*

*B) Development proposals are required to ensure that they do not have a significantly detrimental impact on the locally significant views shown in Figure 7.9 and mapped in Figure 7.10 and the policy maps, Figure 16.1 and Figure 16.2*

*C) Development proposals are to comply with the findings and guidelines in Character Area Assessment 224 referred to in paras 7.44 to 7.47 of the ANP.*

In addition, the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan identifies distinct character areas, such as West End, Station Road, Angell's Meadow and Woodforde Close. In addition, it identifies five Visual Character Areas:

- V1: The "Church and Environs" preserves the open nature of the church and surrounding farmsteads and meadows to the North of the village.

- V2: The "Eastern Area" protects the ribbon development east of the recreation area and treats it as part of the countryside.
- V3: "Dixies Meadow / West End" protects farmstead buildings and extensive views of the countryside fields.
- V4: The "Southwest Area" protects against further extension of the village in this area, which would appear to be visually sensitive and located on rising ground.
- V5: The "Southern Edge" protects the low density, ribbon development from further consolidation.

Policy ASH10 states that development proposals should maintain and enhance the natural environment, and retain landscape features, in accordance with Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the East Anglian chalkland character area and enhance the rural character and setting of Ashwell (Policy ASH 10A).

Policy ASH11 states that planning applications should take account of the need to manage wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure, and must demonstrate a net biodiversity gain using the DEFRA/Natural England metric. The proposals must have no adverse effect on Ashwell Springs.

The Neighbourhood Plans states that the NPPF allows for the designation of local green spaces which are of particular importance to the local community. This will afford protection to areas that fulfil certain criteria, including the following

- Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves
- Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Further information on neighbourhood planning policies and guidance can be accessed via this [link: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning).

## 2. Context and Character

The Ashwell Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village, reflecting the scale of the Anglo-Saxon settlement. It includes most of the settlement of Ashwell, excluding some areas of modern housing to the south and east, The High Street runs west to east through the centre of the settlement, while plots extend to the north and south. Beyond the High Street there are secondary west to east running lanes, Back Street and Silver Street to the south and Hodwell and Swan Street to the north. To the north, the Conservation Area includes the Registered Park and Garden of Ashwell Bury.

Ashwell was a planned market town, a borough, probably about 920. By 1086 and the time of Domesday Book, it was one of the five boroughs in Hertfordshire. The early marketplace may have been located at the western end of Swan Street, although being off the main coaching routes across the county, Ashwell's markets and fairs appear to have declined in the post-medieval period. To the north of this area, along Mill Street is the medieval church of St Mary, a Grade I listed building, the scale of which indicates the wealth and prosperity of the medieval village. The historic core of the village has a number of timber-framed domestic houses, while on the periphery of the historic core are examples of timber-framed farmsteads and agricultural buildings. Some timber-framed buildings were re-clad in red brick in the post-medieval period, reflecting changes in architectural tastes. In the nineteenth century there was an expansion to the village, partly due to the brewing industry within Ashwell, exploiting the natural spring. There was also a significant fire in the village in 1850 and presumably many timber-framed buildings were lost, to be replaced with buildings often in Arlesey white bricks.

Ashwell Conservation Area has a coherent character, although within this there are distinct variations, which represent phases in the historical development of the settlement, right up to the twentieth century.



Figure 3: A satellite Image showing Ashwell and its environs

## 2.1 Origin and Evolution

The following section provides an overview of the history of Ashwell Conservation Area and the surrounding settlement.

### Prehistory: Palaeolithic to Iron Age (-10,000 BCE – 43 AD)

The wider Ashwell area has a history of activity originating in the pre-historic period, probably due in part to the presence of the springs which are the source of the River Rhee. There is much evidence for prehistoric activity locally and notably, 1.2km to the south-west of the centre of Ashwell is the site of the Iron Age univallate hillfort of Arbury Banks.

Within the Conservation Area itself, evidence of prehistoric activity has been found. Pits and a ditch dating from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age were found at Westbury Farm in 1997 at the western end of the Conservation Area.

Late Iron Age-Early Roman finds were recovered from the field between the High Street/Lucas Lane and Ashwell Street, known as 'Hunts Close'. A double-ditched enclosure also from the Late Iron Age/Early Roman period has been identified on the western side of Hunts Close, which may potentially represent the site of a Romano-British temple.

Directly opposite Hunts Close, on the other side of the High Street, further multi-period finds were recovered over a number of years including a substantial collection of 258 worked flints dating from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age, late Iron Age-Early Roman pottery, and Romano-British coins.

As well as the sites described above, there are several locations in close proximity to the Conservation Area that contain important prehistoric remains, and therefore have a bearing on the archaeological potential of the area. These include a substantial late Neolithic henge monument and cropmarks of five ring-ditches to the south, a possible Late Iron Age-Early Roman Road east of the Conservation Area, several Romano-British burials to the east, and surviving earthworks of the early Iron Age hillfort of Arbury Banks to the south-west of Ashwell [Figure 4].

### Roman (43 – 410 AD)

The Ashwell area has a wealth of evidence for activity in the Roman era, again due to the presence of the natural springs. Multiple sites within the Conservation Area contain Roman remains. A collection of Roman coins and second and third-century pottery sherds were uncovered in Hunts Close, as well as a decorated handle displaying the head of Neptune, and a copper-alloy bird terminal.



Figure 4: Arbury Banks Hillfort to the southwest of Ashwell (Ashwell Parish Archives)

Several other important Roman sites are located in close proximity to Ashwell's conservation area. Perhaps most prominently, around 1km to the north-west of the conservation area, at Ashwell End, a Roman ritual feasting site was uncovered in 2002, dedicated to the previously unknown goddess 'Senuna' [Figure 5]. It has been suggested that the tributary at Ashwell originally would have borne the name 'Senuna', which linguistically evolved over the intervening centuries into 'Rhee'. The site contained depositions of pottery, figurines and hoards of gold and silver objects.

An area 900m to the north-east of Ashwell is designated as a Scheduled Monument and the location of the Roman Villa, while roughly

1.5 km to the northwest is the site of a Roman fortlet. In addition, around 1.2km to the north-west of the conservation area remains of a substantial Roman villa and surrounding complex were excavated in 1972-3 and were possibly connected to the Senuna site. Further cropmarks 1.3km south-west of Ashwell appear to show another Roman Villa surrounded by an associated field system and other enclosures.

### Anglo Saxon and Early Medieval (410 – 1066 AD)

The layout of the Anglo-Saxon borough is legible in Ashwell's historic core. It is centred around the market place, delineated by High Street, Gardiners Lane, Swan Street, Hodwell and the footpath from the Lock up to The Springs and Mill Street, with the area dominated by the Church of St Mary. An excavation at Merchant Taylor's School, on the west side of Mill Street, in 2004 uncovered several medieval features, of a general eleventh-thirteenth century date. These were interpreted as being indicative of a period of growth in the medieval settlement, as it expanded in the area immediately around the church.

As with earlier periods, Hunts Close has revealed archaeological remains dating to the medieval period including an assemblage of pottery, several metal objects, coins, and a pewter pilgrim's badge.



Figure 5: Statuette of the Goddess Senuna, found at Ashwell End (Ashwell Museum)

Westbury Farm, partially within the western extent of the Conservation Area, is a historic farmstead, with a section of moat surviving on

its western side. Moated sites are a significant class of medieval settlement form, most commonly dating to between 1250 and 1350 and often containing high-status ecclesiastical or private residences. At Westbury Farm twelfth and thirteenth-century buildings underlie the three later moat phases from the fourteenth century.

Ashwell originated as a Borough and thus was a market town in origin. The first documented reference to a market is in 1211, and in 1295 the Abbot of Westminster claimed rights to hold a market and fairs at Ashwell. Several listed buildings within the conservation area have late medieval origins, including the Grade II\* listed Town House, now Ashwell Museum which dated to 1460. The Grade II listed Lychgate of St Mary's Church dates to c 1500, as does the Grade II listed Chantry House. The Grade I listed Ashwell St Mary Church was completed in 1381 and its scale and grandeur are evidence for the wealth of the settlement in the medieval era [Figure 6]. However, Ashwell appears to have entered a period of slow decline in the early post-medieval period. This is likely to have been due to either the decline of the market, or the somewhat isolated position of the village off the main routeways across Hertfordshire and the village became more reliant on agriculture as a source of income.



### Post-Medieval (1540 – 1901 AD)

By 1799 there was no longer an official market at Ashwell, although the last reference to a market existing is in 1862. Expansion of the village was limited before the nineteenth century, although architecturally there are examples of earlier timber-framed buildings being re-clad with fashionable brick facades in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The small country house of Ashwell Bury at the centre of the Registered Park and Garden is early-nineteenth century in date, with late-nineteenth century extensions. The building was altered and extended again by Sir Edwin Lutyens between 1922-26.

At about 11pm on the 2nd of February 1850, what became known as the Great Fire of Ashwell broke out towards the western end of Back Street. It burned until 4am the next morning and destroyed many buildings, to the south of the High Street, reaching as far east as Kingsland Way. This area was subsequently redeveloped with brick-built buildings and as a result has a more prominent nineteenth-century character. A plan of Ashwell before the fire was captured in the 1840 Tithe map [Figure 7].

The Ashwell Spring provided the necessary supply of fresh water for the establishment of breweries in Ashwell and this became an important economic activity in the village. A

brewery was founded in 1843 by Benjamin Christy and John Sale and later acquired by J.R. Page. The brewery was located on the north side of West End but closed in the early twentieth century the malting was retained and converted into a village hall in 1922. The remainder of the buildings were demolished in 1947.



Figure 6: St Mary's Church

### Modern (1901 – present)

George Fordham and his son Edward George began brewing in Mill Street in 1836. The brewery remained open until 1953, but was eventually largely demolished by 1973, with the remaining buildings converted into housing. The country house associated with this brewery is Ashwell Bury, now contained within an early 20th-century planned garden. Along with brewing and agriculture, coprolite digging (fossilised dinosaur faeces) and straw plaiting were also important industries.

When ground up, coprolites can be mixed with acid or water to make agricultural fertiliser. Straw plaiting to make hats and bonnets was an important cottage industry in the 19th century mainly part practiced by women and children to supplement the household income of agricultural labouring families.

Ashwell's population declined between 1891 and 1901, when the demand for straw plait stopped and the supply of coprolites became exhausted. In the twentieth century the two breweries closed, Pages in 1919 and Fordhams in 1966.

Ashwell Railway Station located to the south-east of the village, was opened by the Royston and Hitchin Railway Company (R&HR) in 1850, the station being one of many on the line

between Hitchin and Shepreth. The R&HR was later absorbed by the Great Northern Railway and the station's name was later changed to Ashwell and Morden in 1920. The multi-period archaeological site of Hunts Close also contains the partial remains of a wrecked Second World War airplane. Multiple metalwork fragments have been found on the site and attributed to the plane. The report on the trial trenching investigation of the site in 2019 postulated that the debris recovered from the site is the result of a mid-air collision that occurred in July 1941, between a Wellington Bomber (R1334) and a German Junkers 88. Some accounts state that the Wellington came down in Hunts Close (narrowly avoiding the historic village), while the Junkers 88 crashed in a field on the southern side of Ashwell Street. All crew involved in the

crash were killed.

At the eastern end of the Recreation Ground, on the corner of Lucas Lane and Station Road is the Grade II listed Ashwell War Memorial. It was unveiled in 1921, after Ashwell's war memorial committee had selected a winning design. The Committee was set up in 1919 under the chairmanship of Wolverley Attwood Fordham, of Fordham's Brewery, with his wife Phyllis as secretary. The cross was built in Portland stone by Holland, Hannen and Cubitt Ltd, the same contractors for the Cenotaph in Whitehall. The memorial was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the pre-eminent architect for war memorials in England, France and the British Empire, who's design was selected over other competitors, including the architect Sir Reginald Blomfield.

In the Post-war era, the area between Back Street and Ashwell Street, to the south of the village core, was developed with council housing. With bomb-damaged cities and men returning from service in the armed forces a nationwide short-term solution was needed to the housing crisis. The Ministry of Works undertook a nationwide housing programme, which saw the construction of prefabricated concrete houses, designed by Sir Edwin Airey. They subsequently became known as Airey Houses, of which Dixies Close is an example.



Figure 7: 1840 Tithe Map. The Conservation Area is marked in red

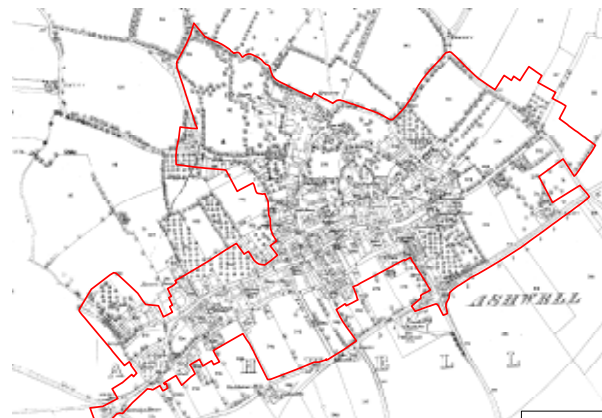


Figure 8: 1888 Ordnance Survey Map. The Conservation Area is marked in red

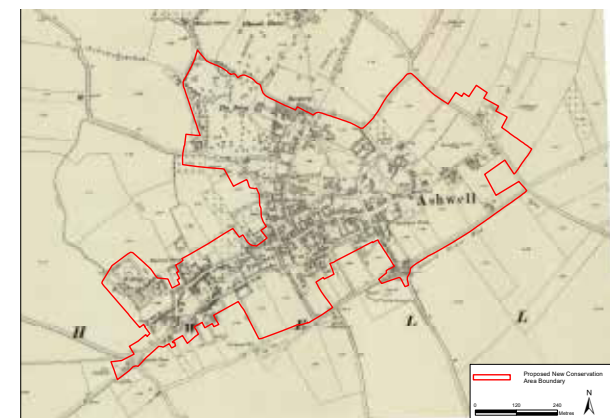


Figure 9: 1903 Ordnance Survey Map, the Conservation Area is marked in red

## 2.2 Designation of the Conservation Area

Ashwell Conservation Area was designated by North Hertfordshire District Council in 1968 and its boundary was amended in 1978 and 1986. A Conservation Area Character Statement was produced in 2019, which identified the significance of the Conservation Area but did not assess the boundary or provide a management plan.

There are currently no Article 4 Directions within the Ashwell Conservation Area.

## 2.3 Revisions to the Boundary

As part of this review, the Conservation Area boundary has been revised to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Ashwell's unique built environment. This review is in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas (paragraph 191).

A map which marks the existing and proposed boundary is included as Figure 10, this revised boundary has been informed by site visits, document research and information provided by residents and the parish council. During the early engagement phase, Ashwell Parish Council proposed areas for consideration for inclusion in the Conservation Area boundary. These were also assessed for their historic and architectural special interest.

When assessing the designation of conservation areas, it is essential that an area justifies such status because of its special architectural or historic interest, and that the concept of conservation is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special interest. The inclusion of areas which lack special interest, undermines the concept of the

Conservation Area and weakens the protection it affords. While an area may be valued by the local community for its ecological significance or its wildlife, or for views that it provides, without a tangible, architectural or historic special interest it cannot be considered appropriate for protection by Conservation Area designation. Other local and national designations are more suited to protecting undeveloped areas of natural wildlife or areas of beauty or ecological significance.

The relationship to the setting of the Conservation Area and its boundary is also an important one to consider. In this case, the setting of Ashwell Conservation Area has a distinct, rustic character and the village is surrounded by open fields, hedgerows and paddocks which enhance the ability to appreciate the Conservation Area's significance and character, but do not have the special architectural or historic interest in their own right. The setting of Ashwell Conservation Area is discussed in detail in section 3.2.6 of this document

### Additions

As a result of the assessment a number of areas were proposed for inclusion within the boundary and these vary in size, with small adjustments to complement property boundaries as well as whole new streets of houses being included. The areas proposed for addition are given below:

#### 1) *Ashwell Street between Bear Lane and Partridge Hill*

This area stretches from the corner of Newnham Way and Partridge Hill, up Partridge Hill to Ashwell Street and along the south side of Ashwell Street to Bear Lane linking up with the present Conservation Area.

In the immediate post-war period, the Ministry of Works undertook a nationwide housing programme, with the construction of pre-fabricated

concrete houses, clad with shiplap concrete panels. Initially, 6 bungalows were built circa 1947 on part of Bear Lane meadow and these were followed by 18 pre-fabricated houses at Dixies Close (nos.6-24 (evens) and nos. 5-19 (odds)). They were designed by Sir Edwin Airey and became known as Airey Houses. They were intended to be a short-term solution to the housing shortage and due to their basic construction, they quickly reached the end of their intended life-span and many surviving examples today are in disrepair. The recladding of the homes became essential and the examples of the Airey Houses on Dixies Close were refurbished with facing brickwork in 1989. Although no longer of their original appearance, Dixies Close remains a distinctive and cohesive development that is defined by its uniformity and has some historic interest.

The inclusion of the unpaved parts of Ashwell Street along with some of its late-twentieth century houses, which are set back from the road with large gardens, has also been considered. In addition, the allotments, a late twentieth century works building and modern houses have been assessed. Views from here out of the village to open fields and the strong connection to the countryside are important attributes but these areas do not have sufficient attributes to contribute to the architectural or historic special interest of the Conservation Area.

In contrast, the Airey Houses on Dixies Close are of historic and architectural interest. The general poor quality of Airey Houses when built has resulted in many being found unsuitable for mortgage and although built across the nation in the 1940s and 50s, those that survive are seldom in as good condition as the examples in Ashwell. They were successfully re-clad in the 1980s, which ensured their continued use and survival. The buildings represent a single phase of development, illustrative of a recognised historic period of construction on a national level, to provide dwellings after the Second World War.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Conservation Area boundary is extended to include the Airey Houses on Dixies Close up to and including the public footpath that runs north-west to south-east. However, the inclusion of the later council houses, the allotment gardens and the late-twentieth century houses, to the west of the allotment gardens is not recommended.

### *2) Ashwell Cemetery*

The village cemetery on Station Road is partially already included within the Conservation Area boundary and it contains two listed tombstones. However, the Arts and Crafts style chapel of ease and a further plot of the cemetery are currently excluded. The extension of the boundary to include the chapel and the rest of the cemetery has been considered. The well-kept cemetery and the chapel are of sufficient character and architectural special interest to warrant inclusion within the Conservation Area and therefore it is recommended that the boundary is extended to include the whole of Ashwell Cemetery.

### *3) West of Gardiners Lane*

The Conservation Area boundary has been amended to the west of Gardiners Lane. The boundary now follows the property line of the Ashwell Surgery, a late-twentieth century building, which with its single-storey profile and weatherboard cladding, was an attempt at the time to replicate an agricultural building on the village periphery.

### *4) Westbury Double Moated Site*

It is proposed to extend the boundary to include the whole of the double moated manor site at Westbury. Moated manorial sites were a development of the later-medieval era, mainly as a demonstration of status, but the moat also would have provided some security and

seclusion. There are in the region of 6,000 moated sites known in England and double moated sites are less common. The site at Westbury is not a scheduled monument but contains the Grade II listed Westbury Farmhouse, a fifteenth to sixteenth-century hall house with jettied cross wings and two associated, later Grade II listed agricultural buildings. The extension of the boundary includes all of the historic earthworks that form the setting of the listed buildings. The significance of the site will enhance the overall historic special interest of the Conservation Area.

#### *5) 34 West End*

On the north side of West End the boundary has been amended slightly, so as to conform to the existing boundary of the garden of the dwelling at number 34. Similarly, the boundary has been adjusted to fit existing property boundaries to the west of the Westbury moated site. Numbers 30, 32 and 34 West End are late twentieth century dwellings retained within the boundary. Number 30 is the most recent and has been built with a brick plinth, rendered finish and a slate roof, which is fitting for the Conservation Area. Numbers 32 and 34 are late-twentieth century bungalows and while they are less appropriate, they are neutral buildings and their retention within the boundary will serve to allow for future enhancement.

#### *6) The Orchard, West End*

In the area where West End intersects with Back Street the boundary has been amended to include the whole of the listed building at The Orchard, on the southern side of West End. This amendment continues to exclude the modern works building adjacent to The Orchard.

### **Reductions**

#### *7) Townsend Meadow*

A modern development of houses on Station Road at what is now called Townsend Meadow has been removed from the Conservation Area. The materials and design of the dwellings do not reference the Conservation Area's character and the cul-de-sac development is somewhat at odds with its historic pattern of development.

#### *8) West of Gardiners Lane and Bacons Yard*

The apartments at Wolverly House are proposed for exclusion from the Conservation Area. These are again a later twentieth century development but there is an extreme contrast in terms of their design and appearance, with the character of the Conservation Area. An open strip to the west of the Grade II Listed cobb and thatched wall has been retained within the Conservation Area to provide a suitable area of separation between the wall and Wolverly House.

At Bacons Yard, the boundary has been amended to remove late-twentieth century development that does not preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area, whilst retaining the two Listed buildings fronting the High Street.

#### *9) Colbron Close*

At Colbron Close the boundary has also been amended to exclude a late-twentieth housing development, which lacks sufficient architectural or historic interest. Number 6 High Street was also built at this time but has been retained in the Conservation Area. It makes a slight contribution to the areas character and faces on to the main thoroughfare. The dwelling has a distinctive barge board to its front gable and also has an earlier, brick-built boundary wall, which are positive elements in the Conservation Area. The retention of number 6 within the boundary will help to ensure future changes to the building are in keeping with the character and distinctiveness of the area.

10) *Land at Hinxworth Road*

A triangular area of open ground on the north side of Hinxworth Road has been removed from the Conservation Area, as it is without architectural or historic special interest. The undeveloped area, along with the adjacent agricultural fields are part of the rural setting of the Conservation Area. This is an important entry point into the Conservation Area and the open, rural and undeveloped character of the triangular space and the adjacent fields, is a positive element of that setting, enhancing the ability to appreciate the Conservation Area's special interest.

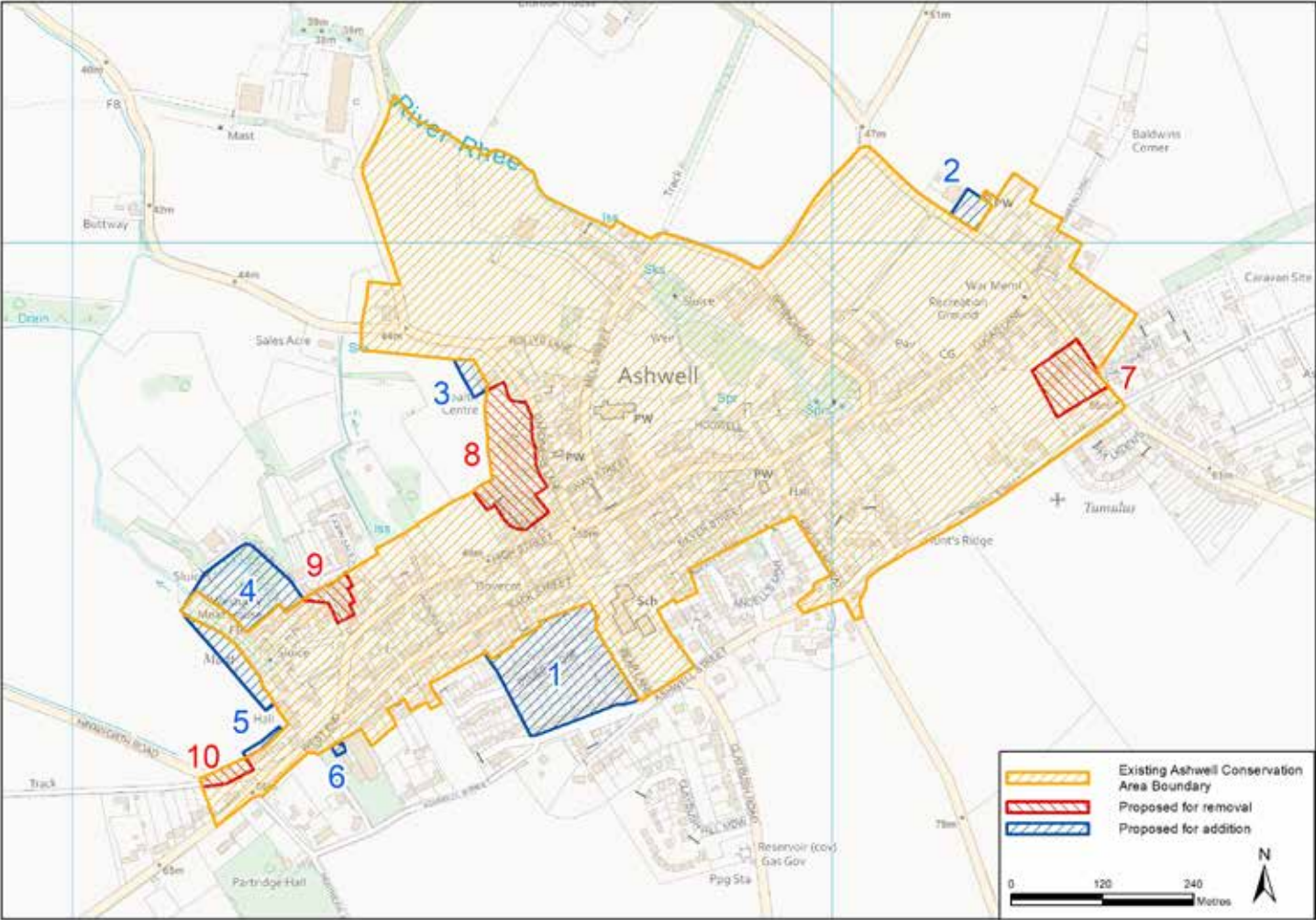


Figure 10: Map showing the proposed additions and reductions to the Ashwell Conservation Area

## 2.4 Designated Heritage Assets

There are seventy-three designated heritage assets within the Ashwell Conservation Area boundary, including timber framed houses, agricultural buildings, monuments and the Grade I listed Church of St Mary. A full list of all the designated assets within the Conservation Area is included in Appendix 6.1.

These buildings, structures and features have been listed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport due to their special historic and architectural interest as defined by Historic England. Further information about the listing process can be found on the Historic England website.

Ashwell Conservation Area contains a very high number of listed buildings which emphasises its special architectural and historic interest. Many building types are designated, including timber-framed buildings, brewery buildings, historic inns, places of worship, cottages and shops, providing a rich and layered representation of English architectural history. The variety is important, highlighting how Ashwell has developed and altered over time and acknowledging the multiple phases of its development.



Ashwell Conservation Area contains Ashwell Bury Registered Park and Garden which lies on the northern edge of the village. The main approach is off Mill Street, between two brick piers flanked by a brick wall, to the south-east of the Grade II listed Ashwell Bury House. The house was built in the early-19th century and extended in the late-19th century. It was remodelled from 1922 to 1923 by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

The formal gardens and pleasure grounds lie to the west and north-west of the house and include terraces, stone steps and a kitchen garden. The gardens date to the early twentieth century and were designed by Gertrude Jekyll. The house and gardens are situated within a further four hectares of parkland. Jekyll's detailed layout and planting plans survive and are dated 1908-1909. Views from the parkland extend south-east towards the church and village, and south and west over agricultural land.



Figure 11: The view towards the spire of St Marys Church from the Registered Park and Garden of Ashwell Bury



## 2.5 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

All buildings, features and planned landscapes within a Conservation Area contribute to its significance. These can be measured on a sliding scale of positive, to neutral, to negative contributors.

Heritage assets are defined in Planning Policy Legislation as 'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest.'

Not all heritage assets are designated. Although a building may not be included on the national list, this does not always mean it is of no heritage value. Buildings and other smaller features of the built environment such as fountains, railings, signs and landscaping can make a positive contribution to the appreciation of an area's historic interest and its general appearance.

Local listing is an important tool for local planning authorities to identify non-listed buildings and heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the locality. North Herts Council currently has Registers of Buildings of Local Interest for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Newnham, Knebworth (parish) and Royston.

No Register of Buildings of Local Interest currently exists for Ashwell. This document has identified some non-designated heritage assets which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and could be considered for local listing in the future. These are listed opposite and described in the descriptions of each of the four Character Areas outlined in Section Three. The assessment of the buildings of Ashwell is not exhaustive and there may be buildings of local heritage significance that are not mentioned in this document, that would still qualify for local listing.

### Character Area 1, Ashwell's Historic Core

- The Ashwell United Reform Church
- Kingsland Terrace
- The Zoar Baptist Chapel, Gardiners Lane
- 86 and 88 High Street, Cambridge Villas
- 4 West End
- 83 Back Street, Bellbine Cottage
- Dixies Barns
- The Adelong, 63 High Street
- London House, 24 and 25 High Street
- 55-53 Silver Street, Bank Cottages
- Brick Wall, Corner of Mill Street and Rollys Lane

### Character Area 2, The Rural Edge and Ashwell Bury Estate

- Mill Street Stable and Coach House
- 47 Mill Street
- Former Brewery Building, Fordham Close
- Ashwell Grange
- Ringstead House, 18 Springhead

### Character Area 3, Interwar Development

- Former Maltings, Station Road
- The Cemetery Chapel, Station Road
- The Elms, 36 Lucas Lane
- The Cricketers, 32 Lucas Lane
- The Recreation Ground Pavilion

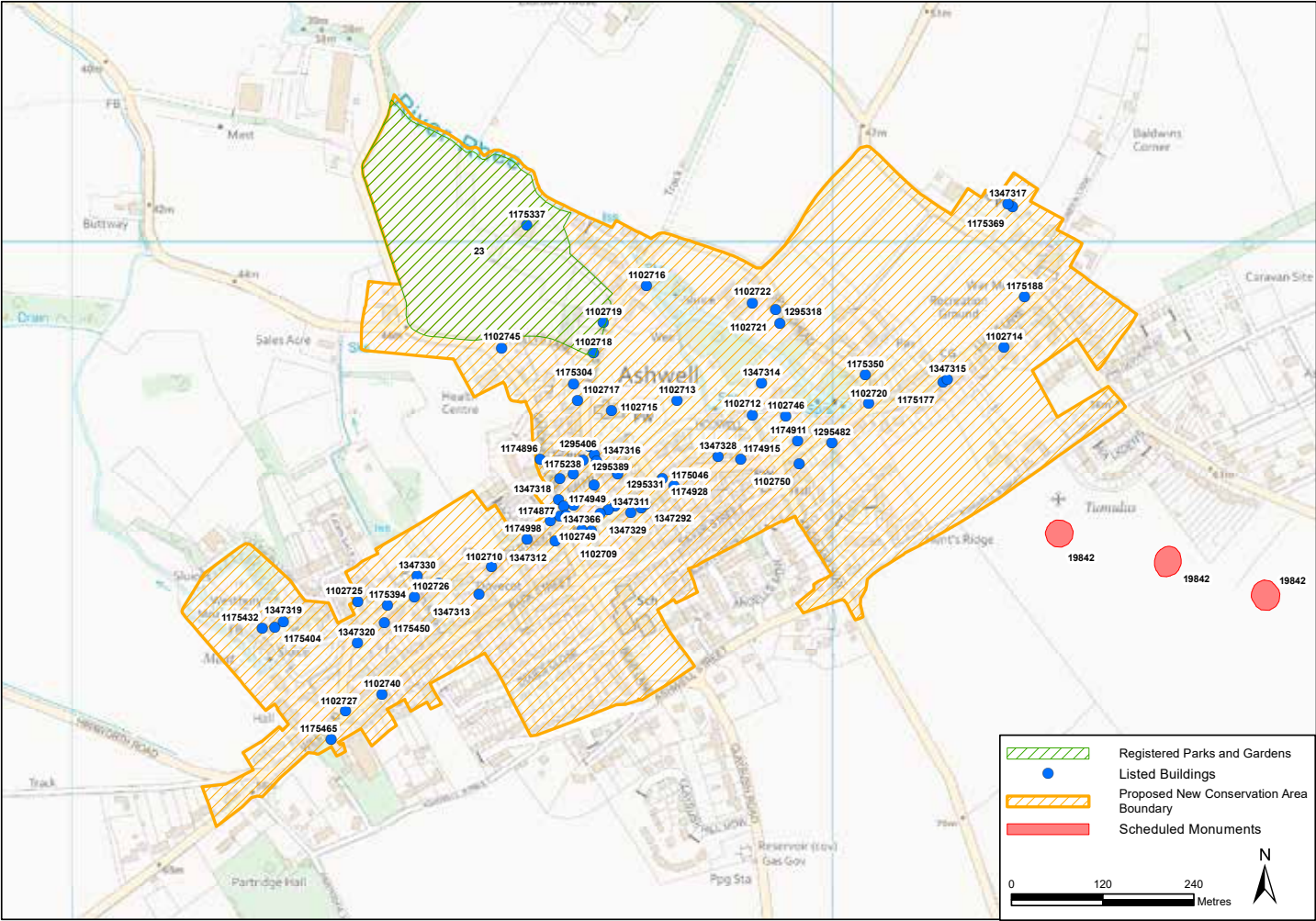


Figure 12: Map of the heritage assets within the proposed boundary for Ashwell Conservation Area

## 2.6 Heritage at Risk

Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Every year the Heritage at Risk Register is updated and the register provides a picture of the sites most at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future.

The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is on the Heritage at Risk Register. The condition is described as very bad and the building is considered a priority case. The church is considered to be at immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric and as of 2022, no solution has yet been found.

The primary issue is the dramatic decay to the clunch stone on the tower, and the north aisle roof covering is nearing the end of its life. However, the Parish Council has been working on project development with an Historic England, in order to shape and scope a new National Lottery Heritage Fund bid for financial assistance.

## 2.7 Archaeological Potential

Based on the evidence provided by the HHER and NHLE, there is potential for archaeological remains within the Conservation Area spanning multiple different periods.

In particular, the area of the village immediately to the east of the springs, most clearly the site at Hunts Close, has produced finds ranging in date from the Prehistoric to Medieval, including some particularly fine examples of metalwork and multiple coins. Such a concentrated collection of finds spanning such a length of time suggests intense and constant use of the area. The presence of a possible Romano-British temple at Hunts Close,

with an associated Anglo-Saxon feature cut into it, possibly a ritual shaft, further highlights the importance of the area adjacent to the springs and suggests it's continued use may have a ritualistic connotation.

Certainly, the presence of a Neolithic henge monument, a long barrow and several ring-ditches all surrounding the village suggests Ashwell sits within a significant prehistoric ritual landscape. This ritual landscape continues into the Early Roman period, with the highly important feasting site at Ashwell End dedicated to the goddess Senuna (see Section 2.1), which, may have linguistical links to the tributary arising from the springs at Ashwell (latterly called the River Rhee). Given the evidence presented above, the presence of further prehistoric (and later) ritual sites and/or associated finds within the conservation area, particularly from the area adjacent to the springs, is considered likely.

Ashwell Street, the southern boundary of the conservation area, seems likely to have been a Roman road, and the multiple Roman building remains either excavated or identified by cropmarks in close proximity to the village prove the area was occupied in the Roman period. Accordingly, there is the potential for further Roman activity within the conservation area, particularly to the south of the conservation area along Ashwell Street.

The Domesday book clearly suggests the presence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Ashwell. Whether this is located in proximity to the possible ritual hollow/sunken-featured building and finds recovered from Hunts Close, or, as postulated by the HHER, to the north of the village at Ashwell End, is unclear, and could only be proven by further archaeological investigation. Regardless, it certainly seems likely that the location of the Anglo-Saxon precursor to the medieval village is located somewhere within the extent of the conservation area.

Archaeological remains of a medieval date are likely to be widespread in

the Conservation Area, particularly clustered around the church and the High Street, as attested to by the still standing listed buildings of a late medieval date. It seems likely that some of the surviving post-medieval buildings would have had medieval predecessors, and evidence for these may still exist throughout the historic core of the village. The medieval moated site of Westbury Farm, at the western end of the conservation area, has already had two archaeological investigations carried out within its extents or in close proximity that exposed high-status medieval remains. If any further archaeological investigation was carried out in this area it would have a high probability of encountering similar remains.

Not unexpectedly, post-medieval remains are likely to be the most numerous within the conservation area. These would likely include evidence of domestic and commercial activity and would be focused within the plots on the High Street and Swan Street, likely interspersed and cutting into earlier, medieval, remains of a similar nature. Certain locations in the village, including Whitby Farmstead, the burial ground of the Quaker meeting house and the two breweries, are likely to contain more specific archaeological remains.

In summary, the archaeological potential of the Ashwell conservation area should be considered medium-to-high from the prehistoric period through to the Medieval. The likelihood of further regionally important archaeological remains surviving within the village is substantial, and the archaeological investigations already undertaken within, or near to, the conservation area have uncovered remains and finds that serve to support this theory.

## 3. Assessment of Significance

### 3.1 Summary

Ashwell Conservation Area is large, covering much of the village and has relatively densely developed areas. The early historic core is centred around the church, while outlying farmsteads from this period also survive. Areas of development and growth from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries can also be perceived. Overall, the character of the village is a coherent one, but nevertheless it can be divided into a number of key areas that illustrate the historic development of Ashwell. A selection of key views within the Conservation Area have been identified at the end of this section.

### 3.2 Character Areas

The Conservation Area has been sub-divided into four Character Areas. This division is based on an evaluation of the various attributes, characteristics and phases of development of each area. While in some cases different Character Areas may share attributes, such as a low density of development and open spaces, generally each area possesses a distinctive character. The four Character Areas and their overall character are as follows:

- Character Area 1 – Ashwell's Historic Core
- Character Area 2 – The Northern Rural Periphery And Ashwell Bury Estate
- Character Area 3 – Interwar Development
- Character Area 4 – Post-War Development

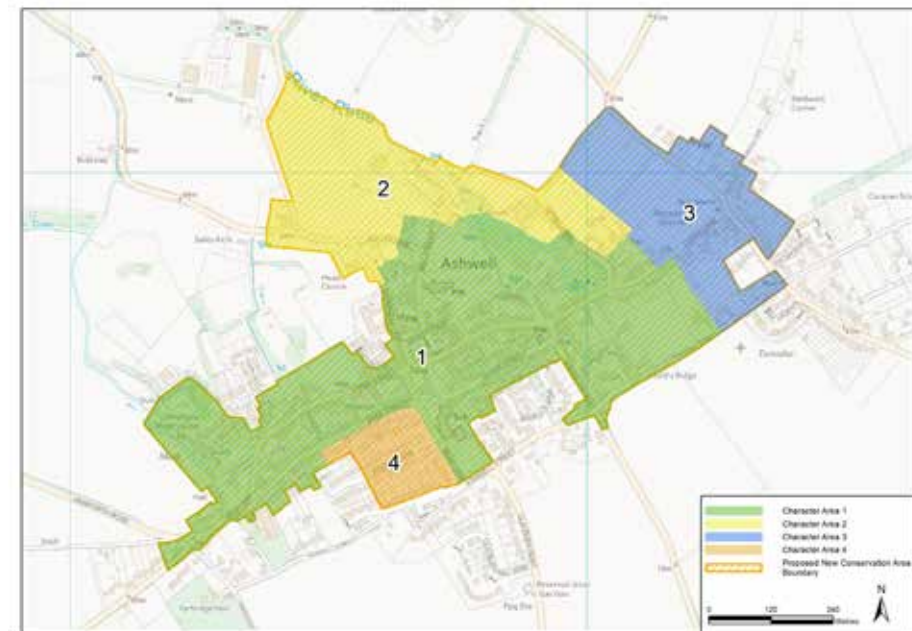


Figure 13: Map of the character areas within Ashwell Conservation Area

The areas have been determined by building typology, historical development, land use and appearance. Many of the defining characteristics of each Character Area are present and repeated in other sections of the Conservation Area, which emphasises the local character and architectural significance of the Conservation Area. The following descriptions are not exhaustive, aiming instead to provide accessible accounts of each Character Area which will allow for an informed understanding of the Conservation Area's special interest and defining features.

Prevailing architectural styles, building materials, spatial planning, landscaping and boundary materials are detailed in the description of each Character Area to highlight the special architectural and historic value of the three zones. Photographs are included to aid the descriptions, providing examples where appropriate to inform the understanding of this document

With the exception of Character Area Four, each Character Area features designated heritage assets; a full list of the designations within the Conservation Area is included as Appendix 6.3 to this document. Designated buildings or structures which make a notable contribution to each Character Area are described in the following sections, however the omission of any buildings from the description does not mean they make no contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. An assessment of the significance of each listed building and the contribution it makes to the special interest of the Conservation Area should be made when development or alterations are proposed.

Non-designated buildings or features deemed to reflect and enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area are also identified in the descriptions of each Character Area. These may be suitable for local listing; information regarding the definition of a non-designated heritage asset can be found in section 2.5 of this document. As with the listed

structures, not all buildings that contribute to, or reinforce the character of the Conservation Area have been identified within this appraisal of the Conservation Area. Other buildings which feature architectural detailing typical of the Conservation Area, for example, would also be considered to contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area. Future development must be assessed on an individual basis, remaining considerate of Ashwell Conservation Area's special interest, with the aim to enhance or preserve those aspects which contribute to its significance.

### 3.3 Character Area 1, Ashwell's Historic Core

#### Description

Character Area One is the historic core of the village of Ashwell and incorporates the main southwest to northeast thoroughfares of West End and High Street along with part of Lucas Lane. In addition, the lesser southwest-northeast routes of Back Street, Silver Street and the eastern end of Ashwell Street are included. These routes form the long spine of the village, from which the shorter north-south routes radiate or cross. These north south routes include Kingsland Way and Bear Lane on the southern side of the village and Alms

Lane, Church Lane, Gardiners Lane, Mill Street and Spring Head to the north. The High Street is the primary thoroughfare through Ashwell and it is where most of the village's shops and public houses are located.

The earliest part of Ashwell is centred around the Church of St Mary, to the north of High Street [Figure 15]. The church dominates the settlement, providing a prominent communal and spiritual way-marker, being visible in multiple views whilst traveling through the village. There is a high density of buildings within this core at the south end of Mill Street, Swan Street and to the High Street. Here the many timber-framed buildings indicate a more urbanised pattern of development. At the western end of

High Street, this form changes and there are examples of less densely packed timber-framed farmhouses. These farmstead settlements, such as Dixies Farmhouse, Woodlands, the barn range at Farrows and Westbury Farmhouse were originally, and more or less remain, on the periphery of the village.

To the rear of buildings on the High Street, particularly on its southern side, a more utilitarian character can be found, with courtyard developments and the remnants of farm complexes. Some modern infill development has occurred on the High Street, which is mostly unsympathetic to the character of the area, due to their inappropriate form and materials. At the eastern end of the High Street is the site of



Figure 14: High Street, looking east



Figure 15: The Lychgate, St Mary's Church



Figure 16: Ashwell Springs



Figure 17: West End, looking east toward High Street



Figure 19: Swan Street



Figure 18: The High Street, looking east



Figure 20: Kingsland Way

Ashwell Springs, the source of the River Rhee, one of the tributaries of the Cam [Figure 16]. The wooded site is open to the public and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

### Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area is linear in form, focussed on the High Street [Figure 18] which runs east-west, and parallel streets, Back Street and Silver Street. A small section of West End, at the western end of the village is also included, as are splinter routes which run north-south and adjoin the High Street such as Bear Lane and Gardiner's Lane. Built form is predominantly built along the spine routes of the High Street and Back Street, with minimal infill. Where infill has occurred, this is typically on the site of now demolished farmsteads, creating small cul-de-sacs such as Bacon's Yard.

At its eastern end, the Character Area includes Ashwell Springs, which is framed by the looping form of Mill Street. Here the centre of the village splits away from the High Street, with the parish church of St Mary located north of the High Street, on Mill Street. The land within Character Area One is predominantly developed with commercial and residential buildings. While the High Street is the main commercial centre of Ashwell, it also has residential dwellings from a variety of periods.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

The area has some modest but notable open spaces, including the site of Ashwell Springs and the churchyard of St Mary and the adjacent paddock and Dixies Meadow (known locally as the 'Donkey Field'). Ashwell Springs is largely wooded over its 0.3 hectare extent and has public footpaths. The area around Swan Street and Gardiners Lane has a more open character with a grass verge which hosts the village sign. The slightly more uncluttered character and grid-like pattern of houses on Swan Street and Alms Lane are a remnant of the presence of an early marketplace.



## Key Buildings

### Designated

There are fifty-six listed buildings within the Character Area. The list entry number and listing Grade for each building are included in Appendix 6.3. All listed buildings contribute to the historic interest of the Conservation Area, but those of particular note are described below.

*St Mary's Church and Lychgate* [Figure 15]. Completed in 1381, the church is one of few stone buildings within the Conservation Area, built in clunch and flint rubble with some sections of red brick. The building's tower is particularly large and prominent throughout the village. The lychgate, separately listed, is timber framed.

*Bear House, 77 High Street.* A former farmhouse, the building is timber framed and features sections of exposed carved framing and a medieval arched doorway on its front elevation.

*Woodlands, 110 High Street* [Figure 21]. Occupying a prominent position on the High Street, Woodlands (formerly Ash Farm) is a timber framed building, re-faced in the Georgian period, with large sash windows inserted. Slightly set back from the road, the house has a small front garden and a one bay, single storey, front extension on its western end.

*Ashwell Museum, Swan Street* [Figure 18]. Built as a shop and manor court room, the building features exposed timber framing and front jetty

under its gabled roof. A later chimney stack has been added to the rear.

*Jessamine House, 15 High Street.* Built circa 1700 reusing framing from an earlier house, the building has a chequered red brick front and is two storeys in height with attic accommodation. Five bays wide with a central door, the house is an example of 'polite' architecture from the Georgian period.

*57, 59 and 61 High Street* [Figure 23]. Built as a Guildhall, the building has exposed timber framing at first floor level. An incredibly long building, it is seven bays wide and has a shop at ground floor level. Four shop, bay windows are present on the ground floor, underneath the building's jetty.



Figure 21: Woodlands, 110 High Street.



Figure 22: Ashwell Museum



Figure 23: 57, 59 and 61 High Street



Figure 24: Ashwell United Reform Church



Figure 25: Kingsland Terrace



Figure 26: The Zoar Baptist Chapel



Figure 27: 86 and 88 High Street

*Rose and Crown Public House and K6 Telephone Kiosk.* A late fifteenth/early sixteenth century hall house with jettied cross wings, the pub is timber framed with a roughcast rendered exterior. Grade II\* listed, the building's fabric and late medieval character are well preserved despite later eighteenth and nineteenth century alterations. The phone box, located at the front of the pub is Grade II listed, adapted to house a defibrillator.

### Non-designated

There are numerous buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Historic Core. Some of these are listed buildings but many are not. These undesignated heritage assets may be considered for inclusion within a local list in the future. At present there is no approved local list for Ashwell. Below are descriptions of just some of the notable, unlisted buildings which make a beneficial contribution to Character Area One. This list is not exhaustive and there are many other buildings of merit that it has not been possible to include.

*The Ashwell United Reform Church* [Figure 24] is on the site of an earlier chapel, which burnt down in the Great Fire of Ashwell of 1850. The building stands on the corner of the High Street and Kingsland Way and is set back front the High Street by a small cemetery and has a brick-built boundary wall, cast iron gate and railings. The trees of the churchyard also make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area's character. The adjacent Church Hall is also nineteenth-century in date and similarly is a building of merit.

*Kingsland Terrace* [Figure 25]. At the northern end of Kingsland Way there are two rows of terraced cottages, on both west and east sides of the street. They are distinctive and share architectural details, although some modern alterations and additions have been undertaken. Despite

this they retain their original character.

*The Zoar Baptist Chapel, Gardiners Lane* [Figure 26]. A brick built chapel, with a decorative bargeboard and a porch with an arched doorway. The building dates to 1851 and it is set back from the street by a small cemetery with a boundary wall. The windows have been unsympathetically replaced with uPVC, but the building retains its distinctive character contributes to the Conservation Area.

*86 and 88 High Street, Cambridge Villas* [Figure 27]. These semi-detached dwellings were built in 1892 and although later, they are similar in style to number 63 High Street. Each had a ground floor bay window and they share a projecting porch, which has original cast iron detailing

above its cornice. There are original horned sash windows to the façade and a plaque on the porch proclaims the date and name of the villas.

*Number 4, West End* [Figure 28]. A nineteenth-century, brick-built house, set behind a small front garden with two bay windows and a fanlight above the front door. The building has its original sash windows.

*83 Back Street, Bellbine Cottage* [Figure 29]. This is a nineteenth-century rendered cottage with a tiled roof and timber casement windows. There is a single storey extension to the south and an outbuilding to the west, both also rendered and tiled. The cottage predates other nearby dwellings.

*Dixies Barns* [Figure 30]. Located between Back Street and High Street, this large complex of barns is shown on historic mapping of the late nineteenth-century. The buildings are arranged around a central courtyard and have been reused as commercial premises. The character and layout of the farm buildings has been substantially preserved and the site makes a positive contribution to the area's character.

*The Adelong, 63 High Street*. This two-storey, brick-built house was built in 1881 and has two bay windows in its façade, flanking the front recessed door, within a rounded brick arched opening, with decorative capitals. Above is a plaque with the house name and date. The building has timber sash windows, with horns to the upper sash, which are probably original.



Figure 28: Number 4, West End



Figure 29: 83 Back Street



Figure 30: Dixies Barns

*London House, 24 and 25 High Street.* Built around 1875 and was constructed in local Arlesley White bricks with a slate roof. It was built as a pair of shops, with residential accommodation above and was once occupied by a grocers and drapers.

*55-53 Silver Street, Bank Cottages.* Two semi-detached, late nineteenth century dwellings. The brick detailing above doors and windows has been highlighted by red paint, but otherwise the buildings are of exposed yellow brick. The building has single-glazed timber sash windows and the timber front doors are also of some antiquity.

*Brick Wall, Corner of Mill Street and Rollys Lane.* A white brick boundary wall which contains an inscribed stone that states that the road was widened at that spot in 1837, with ground donated to the parish by the Merchant Taylor Company of London.

### Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

#### Roofs

The predominant roofing material in the High Street is handmade plain clay tiles, with natural slate also being widely used on nineteenth century buildings. Decorative ridge tiles can also be found on some nineteenth-century dwellings. Some late-twentieth century buildings



Figure 31: Examples of roof types within the Character Area. Top row left: offset chimneys. Second row left: decorative bargeboards. Bottom left: examples of tiled roofs. Top right hand side: example of a thatched cottage. Bottom right hand side: an example of slate.



Figure 32: Examples of different wall materials within the Character Area . From left to right: Top Row Weatherboarding, flint and brick, timber Framing with sections of brick nogging and render infill. Middle Row, Rat Trap bond and grey brick, exposed timber with nogging, Flemish bond brickwork. Bottom row, exposed timber-framing with lime render, pargetting, rendered and jettiedhouse

have less appropriate, modern manufactured roofing materials. In the backlands to the south of the High Street, weatherboarded buildings are roofed with either slate (for example Dixie's barns) or clay pantiles. There are also examples of thatched roofs in the historic core, notably at numbers 33 Chantry House and 39 West End

Gables facing the street are a recurring feature of the Character Area, while rooflights and dormer windows are not common. Brick chimneys of varying styles are to be found, with some examples having the upper part skewed, diagonal to the chimney stack.

### Walls

The village's historic core contains the majority of Ashwell's timber-framed dwellings which date from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. There are many fine examples of exposed close studding, has elaborate decorative pargetting, while many other timber-framed houses are plastered and there are some examples of brick nogging infill. Jettied first floors are also common, with the feature being replicated in some later buildings.

An exposed brick finish is also common amongst the historic core's post medieval and modern buildings and walls. Red bricks are widely used, although Gault bricks and local Arlesey White bricks are also often found, primarily on mid-to-

late nineteenth century buildings. These vary in colour from a pale yellow to buff, with occasional pink hues. Flemish bond is widespread and decorative brick detailing is also common. Rat trap bond can also be found, away from the centre in Back Street.

While far less frequent than brick, there are some examples of stone as a building material within the Conservation Area, with flintwork being most prevalent. Stone and flint are used on both buildings and boundary walls, with the Church of St Mary's being the most prominent stone structure in the village. Flint is occasionally used in combination with brickwork on buildings, with brick used as dressings for doors and windows.

Black timber weatherboarding was traditionally used for functional outbuildings, such as agricultural buildings in rural areas. In more urbanised settlements, it was also used on storage and light industrial or manufacturing buildings. Typically, in Ashwell there are weatherboarded buildings in the backlands, behind properties fronting the main streets of the village, while there are also examples on the margin with the countryside. White painted weatherboarding, traditionally used on domestic dwellings, is not prevalent in the village's historic core.

Many of the historic timber framed buildings

within the village core are rendered, with some examples of decorative pargetting. Render has also been added to some nineteenth century brick buildings and can also be found on modern dwellings. White is the most common colour but there are also off-whites, yellows, and cream painted renders.

### Windows and Doors

Character Area One has numerous buildings with architectural or decorative details, which contribute positively to the area's character. A good quantity of traditional timber sash and mullion windows survive, with many eighteenth and nineteenth century examples. High quality joinery, architraves and historic shop windows are also present, as are leaded lights and historic metal window frames.

There are also examples of surviving medieval windows, with a stone example at Chantry House 33 West End and two timber examples and a timber door with arched door head at Bear House, 77 High Street. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century front doors and doorways front the High Street.

Away from the High Street, in areas of nineteenth-century development, Victorian period details are naturally more common. Timber bargeboards are also present, with both simple and decorative examples. There



Figure 33: Examples of windows and doors in Character Area One



Figure 34: Grade II listed K6 Telephone Kiosk



Figure 35: Village sign, Carters Pond

are occasional examples of porch canopies, which are of timber and quite ornate.

### Boundary Treatments

There are a few examples of cast iron decorative detailing, along with iron railings, which enhance the character of the area.

Brick walls, picket fences and close boarded fences are typical rear boundary treatments. Hedgerow is also a feature, giving the Character Area a green appearance.

Many properties front directly onto the street, meaning they have no front boundary.

### Public Realm

The site of Ashwell Springs is the largest undeveloped public space and covers 0.3 hectares. It is a SSSI and consists of a series of freshwater springs, which form a source for the River Cam, with the waters being surrounded by trees and grasses, providing shade. There is access to the High Street and there are public footpaths across the site. The springs are situated at a lower level from the adjacent road, and it is possible to look down onto them from the High Street.

There is a Grade II listed K6 Telephone Kiosk

outside The Rose and Crown Public House on the High Street, positioned next to a letter box [Figure 34].

Grass verges around Swan Street and Gardiners Lane, near the village Museum, provide an area of open space and it is here that Ashwell Cottage Garden and the village sign are located [Figure 36]. This area is likely to have once been the site of the medieval marketplace. Not far to the north, the churchyard of St Mary's provides another important public space.

### 3.4 Character Area 2, The Rural Edge and Ashwell Bury Estate

#### Description

The northern edge of the Conservation Area has a far less dense development and includes the open spaces of Ashwell Bury Park and Garden [Figure 37]. This area was, and remains, the northern edge of the village. Buildings here were often traditionally concerned with agricultural production or industry. The River Cam flows through the area, from its source at Ashwell Springs to the south.

The seventeenth century Grade II listed former Mill is located on the River Cam at the Junction of

Mill Street and Fordham Close. The area by the river the original site of the Fordham's Brewery (now closed) and despite modern development in Fordham Close, some brewery buildings survive. The area extends to the east to include the agricultural buildings and farmstead of Ringstead Farm. To the west the area extends to Ashwell Grange. There are important views that can be appreciated within this Character Area, looking into the centre of the village and the Church of St Mary.

#### Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area includes the northern section of Mill Street, a curving road which frames Ashwell Spring (the southern part of the

street is in Character Area One). Away from the village centre, Mill Street becomes more open and less developed as it rises north then turns ninety degrees to the east. Here, Mill Street takes on the appearance of a country lane, with the converted barns of Ringstead Farm, prominent within the street scape, situated within agricultural fields. A small section of Rollys and Gardiners Lanes are also within Character Area Two, leading out from the centre of the village into the countryside to the north.

The Character Area is dominated by the house and estate at Ashwell Bury which are in private ownership. The permeability of the estate's boundary allows views into the estate, where Ashwell Bury House can be appreciated within



Figure 36: Mill Street



Figure 37: Ashwell Bury



Figure 38: Springhead, looking toward Character Area One



its garden setting. The estate is partially in agricultural use, being used for cattle pasture.

Ashwell Mill, located at the turn in Mill Street, is strategically placed and important part of how the Character Area developed.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

Although not publicly accessible, Ashwell Bury's estate dominates the northern section of the Character Area, marking the village's gradual transition into the surrounding agrarian landscape.

The Character Area has a feeling of openness, due to the loose grain of built form and general lack of development in this section of Ashwell.



Figure 39: Example of fencing and hedgerow within the Character Area

Landscaping is generally informal, with fields marked by hedgerow and estate fencing.

### Key Buildings

#### Designated

There are eight listed buildings within the Character Area. Character Area Two does not have the same concentration of listed buildings as Character Area One, due to its lower building density and position on the village edge.

*Ashwell Bury.* A Grade II listed building within a Grade II registered park and garden, Ashwell Bury is a small country house designed by celebrated architect Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1922-



Figure 40: Ducklake

26. Built in brick, it has a classical design, with a central Doric doorcase. Lutyens also designed much of the interior, including two fireplaces.

*Ducklake* [Figure 40]. The Grade II\* listed at the north end of Springhead is timber framed with roughcast rendered walls.

*The Mill* [Figure 41] Grade II listed, the Mill and Mill house have been combined to form a single dwelling. Extended in 1973, the original Mill House is at the southern end of the building.

*Chain Cottage.* The eighteenth-century, Grade II listed, timber-framed cottage is perhaps one of the earliest buildings in the area and it is rendered and whitewashed, with a thatched



Figure 41: The Mill

roof.

### Non-designated

This list of buildings below is not exhaustive and there are many other buildings of merit that it has not been possible to include.

*Mill Street Stable and Coach House* [Figure 42]. Opposite the gates of Ashwell Bury and to the south of the listed Mill on Mill Street is an unlisted, former stables and coach house building. It is built of white bricks in Flemish bond and set back within a yard, behind a white brick wall and has recently been converted to residential use. The building has a cross wing at either end, with timber, vents to the roof and

a central cupola. The building may have served Ashwell Bury or the Fordham Brewery.

*Number 47 Mill Street* [Figure 43]. This late-nineteenth century dwelling is built of white brick, with a tiled roof. The building has its original timber windows have depressed brick arches above.

*Former Brewery Building, Fordham Close* [Figure 44]. This nineteenth century building has been converted to residential use and is built of white brick in Flemish bond, with a slate roof.

*Ashwell Grange*. A large, nineteenth-century dwelling, which can be viewed from West End and the Historic Core of Ashwell (Character

Area One). It is built of white brick, a clay tile roof and has original sash windows.

*Ringstead House, 18 Springhead*. This is a large late-nineteenth century, brick-built house, with decorative lintels and stringcourses, set behind a white brick wall.

### Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

#### Roofs

Slate, pantile, plain tile and thatch can all be found in Character Area Two. The barn buildings on Mill Street have a mixture of pantile roofs and slate roofs, both of which are typical for agricultural buildings. Dwellings, particularly



Figure 42: Mill Street Stables and Coach House



Figure 43: 47 Mill Street



Figure 44: Former Brewery Building, Fordham Close

those of the late nineteenth century have slate or handmade clay plain tile roofs.

Chimneys are a prominent feature of the Character Area, with many dwellings featuring multiple stacks. Chimney pots have, nevertheless, been lost on many properties.

### Walls

Red bricks in Flemish bond are used on the Grade II listed Mill (along with weatherboarding and roughcast render). However, Arlesey White bricks are more common in this area also in Flemish bond, being used on later nineteenth-century dwellings, boundary walls and the surviving brewery building on Fordham Close. Ashwell Bury is also built in white bricks and rendered in white cement.

The barns at Ringstead Farm on Mill Street are also timber framed [Figure 45], with a black weatherboarded cladding, typical of agricultural buildings. The agricultural character of the barns has been retained during conversion to residential use.

Render is a common material, with the twentieth century dwellings on Fordham Close, rendered a mixture of white render and white brick.

### Windows and Doors

There are a number of prevailing window types within the Character Area, with casement windows being the most common followed by sash windows. Casement windows are a mixture of metal and timber, with sash windows all timber. Many houses feature casement windows with leaded panes, which, due to their single glazed appearance, give an attractive pattern of light reflection. uPVC windows are not a common feature and, where present, incongruous due to their materiality.

Pentice boards and wooden windowsills are most common, with bell mouth render detail not a common feature. Dormer windows are a feature of older properties which have had attic accommodation added; where present, dormer windows feature gabled roofs.

Doors vary in style, subject to the property on which they are located. Traditionally styled panelled doors, where present are a positive element. Fanlights, side lights or glazed doors are not a common feature and incongruous where present.

### Boundary Treatments

Within Character Area Two the use of post and rail fencing, such as that of the boundary of Ashwell Bury Park and Garden helps to



Figure 45: Example of weatherboarding, Ringstead Farm



Figure 46: Boundary wall, Springhead

enhance the open, rural character. Hedges of native species are also contributors to this character. Elsewhere, white and red brick walls can be found, with Flemish bond predominating. Brick-built walls will often have decorative copings and cap stones on brick gate posts.

### Public Realm

Public realm is limited, given the agrarian quality of the Character Area. However, the verdant nature of treelined avenues, verges and hedgerows contribute positively to the character of the area. There are also examples of streetlights which reinforce the historic character of the Conservation Area and, where present, contribute positively to the overall character of the street scene.



Figure 47: Mill Street, looking east



Figure 48: Rolly's Lane looking east

### 3.5 Character Area 3, Interwar Development

#### Description

Character Area Three encompasses a section of early-twentieth century development, which saw development spread east from the village centre in Character Area One. Within Character Area Three there is the large, municipal open space of the Recreation Ground, which has a pavilion and is an important recreational space for residents of Ashwell.

The early-twentieth century civic character of the area is further enhanced by the nearby cemetery on Station Road [Figure 49] and its unlisted chapel. The cemetery contains two Grade II listed tombs, by Sir Edwin Lutyens and is laid out with cruciform footpaths. Lutyens designed the original layout, and his plans are held at Ashwell Museum. The cemetery's first interment was in 1918. The village's War Memorial, also on Station Road, adds to the sense of seclusion and reflection that is felt throughout the Character area, on the fringes of the village [Figure 50]. Within the southern section of the Character Area, a section twentieth century housing reinforces the appearance of this section of the village.



Figure 49: The Cemetery, Station Road



Figure 50: The War Memorial, Station Road

### Layout and Land Usage

Land use in Character Area Three is mixed, split between recreational space, a cemetery and areas of housing. Production at the former industrial buildings of the Maltings ceased in the 1970s and the building has been converted to residential use. The civic nature of the area survives in the form of the recreation ground, the War Memorial and the cemetery.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

Character Area Three has notable public spaces in the form of the Recreation Ground [Figure 51], which contains a children's playground, as well as the Cemetery. The recreation ground is

well maintained and overlooked by surrounding dwellings, making it an important part of the village. Ashwell Street to the south of the area [Figure 52] provides an east-west route and visual links to the surrounding setting of fields, beyond the Conservation Area boundary.

### Key Buildings

#### Designated

For details of all the listed buildings in Character Area Three, see Appendix 6.3.

The oldest building in Character Area Three is the Grade II listed 34 Lucas Lane opposite the Recreation Ground, which is a timber framed

and roughcast rendered, seventeenth-century house

#### Non-designated

The list of buildings below is not exhaustive and there are many other buildings of merit that it has not been possible to include.

*Former Maltings, Station Road* [Figure 53]. Built in 1902 by Fordham, the industrial building provides evidence for Ashwell's connections to the brewing industry. The building has been converted to residential use, but its distinctive industrial character remains. The building has been converted to residential use.



Figure 51: The Recreation Ground



Figure 52: Ashwell Street. The scheduled monument is in the field to the left



Figure 53: Former Fordham Maltings, Green Lane/Station Road

To the south on Station Road are a small group of semi-detached dwellings on the western side of the road, which were built shortly before 1914. On the eastern side of Station Road are large, later semi-detached council dwellings [Figure 54]. These were built in the early 1920s under a government initiative to build 'Homes fit for Heroes' after the First World War. New standards were set for building quality and facilities, such as a bath in every house and the buildings were designed to be economical and pleasant to live in. The examples on Station Road have more generous proportions than the earlier dwellings, with long garden plots to the rear and generous front gardens. The inter-war housing continues outside of the Conservation Area boundary, but the best preserved examples, which contribute

to the character of the Conservation Area are those running south from the junction of Lucas Lane up to Philosophers Gate.

Station Road is an important route into the village and the buildings and the War Memorial are key gateway buildings into the Conservation Area.

*The Cemetery Chapel, Station Road* [Figure 55]. The small chapel is built in an Arts and Crafts style, with little ornamentation. It was designed by Sir Albert Richardson in the 1930s, post-dating the establishment of the cemetery. It is built of brick, painted white and has a ceramic tiled roof. The porch is supported by narrow Tuscan columns and the windows have leaded lights.

*The Elms, 36 Lucas Lane.* A late-nineteenth century dwelling built in red brick in Flemish bond. It retains its original, horned sash windows.

*The Cricketers, 32 Lucas Lane.* A rendered cottage fronting directly onto Lucas Lane, with a slate roof and timber windows. Its appearance and position suggest it may be of some antiquity and a building in this location is depicted on the late-nineteenth century mapping.

*The Recreation Ground Pavilion* [Figure 56]. A white timber weatherboarded building with a slate roof. There is a central gable supported by timber columns, flanked by wings on either side.



Figure 54: Station Road, looking north



Figure 55: The Cemetery Chapel



Figure 56: The Recreation Ground's Pavilion

## Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

### Roofs

Slate is common throughout the Character Area, although all of the inter-war dwellings have ceramic roof tiles.

Chimneys are an important part of the street scene, punctuating the roofscape and adding visual interest.

There is a mixture of roof types within the Character Area, however the repetition of roof forms on Station Road creates a homogenous appearance to the street scene.

### Walls

Render is used on later buildings along Lucas Lane, as is red brick in Flemish bond [Figure 58]. The Maltings and the very earliest twentieth-century semi-detached cottages are built in white Arleseey brick, with some examples having been subsequently rendered. The larger inter-war houses are all rendered, generally with a smooth finish, but with some roughcast examples also [Figure 59].

Slate is often used on roofs, although all of the inter-war dwellings have ceramic roof tiles. Boundary treatments include low panel fences, picket fences and hedges. Occasionally brick-built walls to front gardens can be found on Lucas Lane.

### Windows and Doors

Casement windows are most common throughout the Character Area. In many cases, buildings have lost their original windows, having been fitted with uPVC double glazed units. Where present, glazing bars are



Figure 58: Example of brickwork used for walls and timber sash windows



Figure 59: Example of 1920s housing 'fit for heroes', Station Road





Figure 60: The Recreation Ground

typically surface mounted in these units which is atypical compared to elsewhere in the Conservation Area, but does help to preserve some of the character of the buildings' original appearance.

There are a variety of window surrounds, with some houses featuring arched brick lintels and others featuring pentice boards.

Doors are predominantly opaque and panelled, with a few examples of glazed doors scattered throughout the Conservation Area. Porches are not common, nor are canopied entranceways.

#### Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments within the Character Area are typical for the Conservation Area. Hedgerow is common, as are sections of low-lying fencing or brick walls. Close boarded fencing is the dominant boundary choice for rear gardens.

#### Public Realm

The Recreation Ground [Figure 60] and the cemetery are important public areas and in addition, the War Memorial at the junction of Station Road and Lucas Lane is a significant public monument [Figure 50]. There is a lack of street furniture and signage which contributes to the sense of openness. Pavements occasionally give way to grass verges, such as that on the north side of Lucas Lane adjacent to the Recreation Ground and on the north section of Station Road by the Cemetery.

### 3.6 Character Area 4, Post-war Development

#### Description

Character Area Four is a section of post-war housing to the south of Back Street, on Dixies Close [Figure 61] and Ashwell Street. The development retains its uniformity and can be perceived as a distinctive, cohesive phase of Ashwell's development.

The buildings and block plan of properties in Character Area Four are typical of the national post-war housebuilding programme, with each house benefitting from generous gardens. The dwellings are generally semi-detached, with some examples of terraces of three dwellings on Ashwell Street and flats on the western end of Dixies Close.



Figure 61: Dixies Close

### Layout and Land Usage

Houses in the Character Area are built south of Back Street, on what was once agricultural land. Bear Lane runs north south and takes its name from Bear House, on the High Street. It forms the eastern edge of the Character Area.

Dixies Close is central to the development, framed by houses on either side. A further row of houses, which back onto the gardens of houses on Dixies Close, front Ashwell Street.

Land use is exclusively residential; the allotment gardens at the western side of Dixies Close are excluded from the Conservation Area. Flat roofed garages infill side gaps between properties, however their low height and roof

profile maintains sky gaps between buildings. As the topography rises to the south, the dwellings on the southern side of Dixies Close are in an elevated position [Figure 62].

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

At the entrance to Dixies Close, grass verges frame the street, creating a green entrance to the cul-de-sac [Figure 63]. Trees are present on these verges, as well as hedgerow, and create a sense of verdant openness which highlight the homogeneity of the street scene, drawing the eye along Dixies Close. Hedges to front gardens are common and enhance the green character of the area [Figure 64].

The set back of properties behind large front gardens on Dixies Close emphasises this feeling of openness, despite the suburban nature of the street scene.

Planting along Bear Lane is dense, allowing the lane to retain a historic character, emphasised by its narrowness and the lack of pedestrian provision. Trees and hedgerow, along with the steep bank on the western side of the lane, replicates other routes leading out of the Conservation Area in other Character Areas.

Further tree planting and a green at the junction of Ashwell Street and Bear Lane add to the green appearance of the Character Area, lessening the contrast between this section of



Figure 62: Dixies Close, looking south east



Figure 63: The Green at the junction of Dixies Close and Bear Lane



Figure 64: Hedges on Ashwell Street

the Conservation Area and Character Area One which, without the planting, would seem a particularly stark, incongruous addition.

### Key Buildings

There are no listed buildings within the Character Area. Due to the block plan and layout of the Character Area, buildings on corner plots are particularly prominent, especially as there are no terminating buildings located at the western end of either Dixies Close or Ashwell Street.

### Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

#### Roofs

Roofs are exclusively covered in brown plain

tilled roofs, adding to the sense of homogeneity and consistency throughout the Character Area [Figure 66].

Chimneys are present on the centre and flank walls of buildings, typically featuring short, squat chimney pots. Where chimney stacks or chimney pots have been removed, this detracts from the visual rhythm of the roofscape.

#### Walls

The Character Area largely consists of Airey houses, which were built using prefabricated concrete structural elements, clad with shiplap concrete panels. Longevity was not a concern, and they were intended to be a cheap, speedy

solution to the shortage of houses in the post war period. The examples on Dixies Close in Character Area Four have been successfully reclad in red/brown brick in stretcher bond, which has ensured their survival [Figure 67]. A contrasting band of dark brick above the ground floor lintels and underneath the windows sills break up the appearance of the brick work, which, due to the colour and material nature, would otherwise look monotonous and flat.

#### Windows and Doors

Windows on all buildings within the Character Area are casement windows with top or side hung opening elements. There is a variety of window sizes, with some homes featuring



Figure 66: Brown plain tiled roofs within the Character Area



Figure 67: Brickwork with a decorative band



Figure 68: Canopies on Dixies Close



tripartite windows. All buildings have lost their original windows and feature uPVC double glazed replacements, some with trickle vents and surface mounted glazing bars.

Doors vary in style, with some featuring large sections of glazing. Like the windows, uPVC or composite doors are dominant. Some houses on Dixies Close feature side lights next to their front door, allowing additional light into hallways. Mono-pitched, lean-to porch canopies are present over the front entrances to some houses [Figure 68] but generally porches are not a feature of the Character Area. Flat canopies are present on some houses on Ashwell Street.

### Boundary Treatments

There is a sense of space to the development on Dixies Close, with grass verges and open front garden plots. Where front garden boundaries exist, they are low picket fences, brick walls or hedges [Figure 70].

### Public Realm

There are small areas within the public realm at the eastern edge of Dixies Close and on Ashwell Street. There is a bench on the green on Ashwell Street, offering an area of respite.

Streetlamps, where present, are green in colour and in a swan-necked heritage style with hanging lantern as per other character areas within Ashwell Conservation Area [Figure 69]. Trees and grass verges on the street scene create a sylvan, tranquil appearance to the street scene, whilst the changing land levels add visual variety to the street scene.



Figure 69: Vintage streetlamp on Dixies Close



Figure 70: Example of hedgerow boundary treatments in the Character Area

### 3.7 Views

The views included in this assessment are just a selection of key views and are intended to demonstrate the type of views that can be gained from within the Conservation Area and from outside its boundary. This list is not exhaustive and there will be other views which contribute to how the significance of the Conservation Area is appreciated and understood. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or beyond its boundary within its environs, should thus not only consider the views identified within this document but also any others which may be relevant or highlighted as part of a bespoke assessment of that proposal.

Due to its layout and areas of open space, the Conservation Area has a varying visual permeability. Within the Conservation Area long distance views as well as short views framed by buildings are possible. From outside the Conservation Area looking towards Ashwell, there are important views which allow the historic character of the settlement to be appreciated.

The locations of the numbered views reproduced here are shown on the views map on the following page [Figure 71].

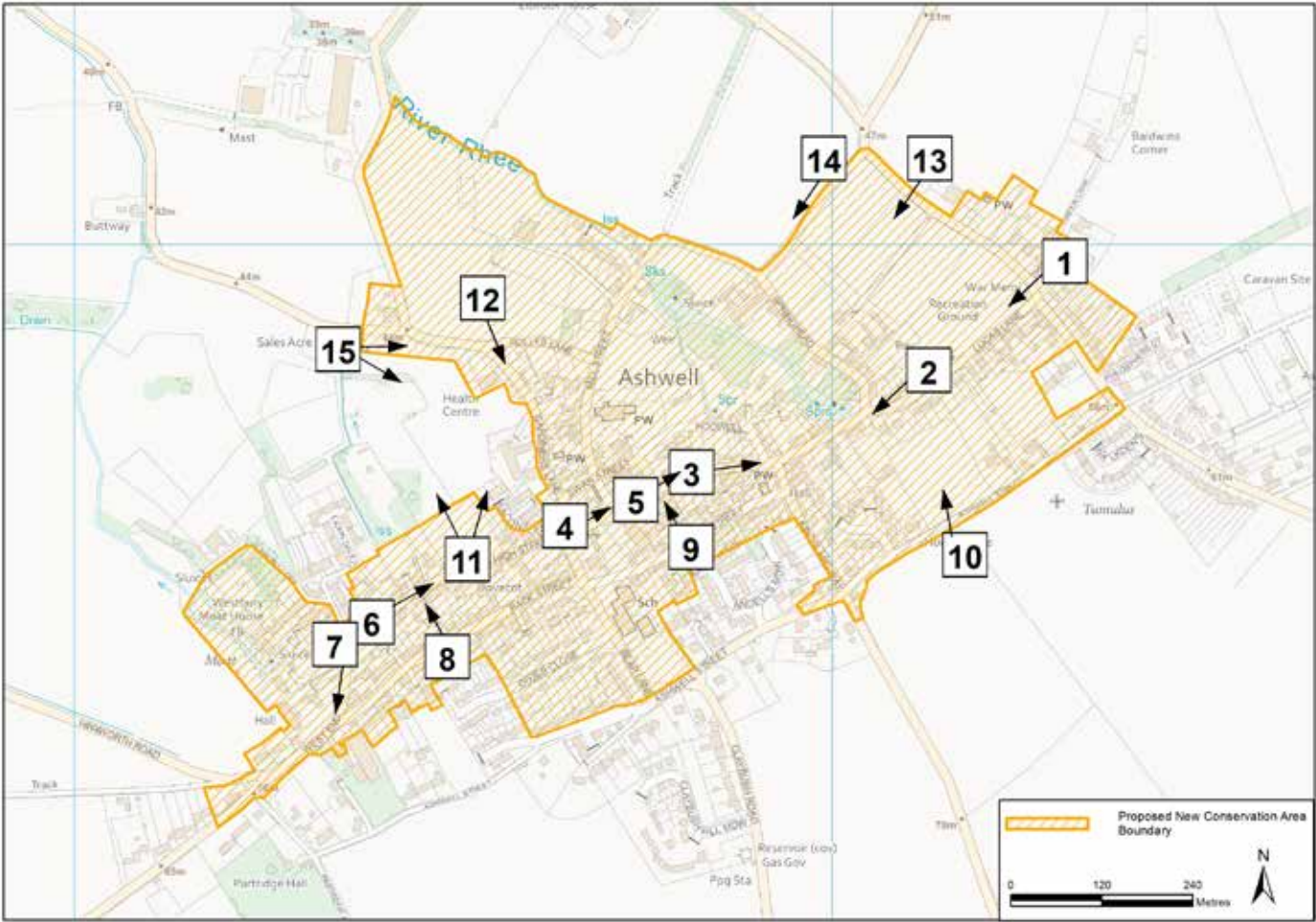


Figure 71: Views map, images of these views are reproduced in the following pages

### Views Within the Conservation Area

The main thoroughfare of Ashwell is composed of Lucas Lane to the east, which becomes the High Street, eventually becoming West End to the west. The kinetic views that can be experienced when traveling along this route demonstrate to the observer the successive variations in Ashwell's historic character and architecture.

The open nature of the eastern part of the Conservation Area with its Recreation Ground and War Memorial (Character Area Three) allows for long views, where the area's character and special interest can be appreciated [Figure 72].

In views along Lucas Lane, the gradual increase in density of buildings can be appreciated [Viewpoint 2, Figure 73]. On the High Street, again in both directions the Conservation Area's dense body of historic buildings of varying architectural styles can be easily perceived [Viewpoints 3,4 and 5, Figures 74, 75 and 76]

Views in both directions along West End continue to allow the changing built form and character of Ashwell to be easily perceived, with cottages and agricultural buildings sites on the periphery of the village. The dominance of the Church of St Mary can also be appreciated



Figure 72: Viewpoint 1, toward the War Memorial, Lucas Lane



Figure 73: Viewpoint 2, Lucas Lane



Figure 74: Viewpoint 3, The High Street



Figure 75: Viewpoint 4, The High Street



along this route (Viewpoints 6 and 7).

The north/south routes through the Conservation Area provide views with a distinctive character. Historic buildings are framed by narrow alleys, such as Wilsons Lane, Bear Lane and Church Lane, the latter providing another view of the Grade I listed Church of St Mary [Viewpoints 8 and 9, Figures 77 and 78].

There are open spaces within the Conservation Area boundary some of which are of archaeological significance, which enable important views to be appreciated, such as the view north from Ashwell Street Figure 79, (Viewpoint 10), which looks down from higher ground to the village and its buildings below. Viewpoint 11 [Figure 80] from the High Street across Dixies Meadow provides important views of the Conservation Area, its open rural setting, along with views of St Marys Church spire. Viewpoint 12 [Figure 81] from the junction of Rollys Lane and Gardiners Lane provides an important view within the Conservation Area, where the church spire, traditional buildings and hedges provide a clear example of the Conservation Area's character.



Figure 76: Viewpoint 5, The High Street



Figure 77: Viewpoint 8



Figure 78: Viewpoint 9

### Views Outside the Conservation Area

The rural setting of the Conservation Area and the views it provides are important, positive elements that allow its historic special interest and character to be appreciated (the setting of the Conservation Area is discussed in section 3.2.6). From outside of the Conservation Area boundary, it is possible to appreciate the historic built form of the Ashwell settlement. Again, the church spire of St Mary's is a prominent feature in the landscape. In views from the northern part of Station Road [Figure 82, Viewpoint 13] and Mill Street [Figure 83, Viewpoint 14] the church spire, which pinpoints the heart of the village, can be appreciated, within the rural countryside.

Viewpoint 15 is located at a north-western entry point to the Conservation Area close to Ashwell Grange [Figure 84]. From this viewpoint the character of the Conservation Area and its setting can be appreciated. The spire of St Mary's Church is clearly visible, while there are also views over Dixies Meadow, which forms an important part of the Conservation Area's setting.



Figure 79: View 10, looking north from Ashwell Street



Figure 82: Viewpoint 13



Figure 80: View 11, looking north from the High Street across Dixies Meadow



Figure 83: Viewpoint 14



Figure 81: Viewpoint 12



Figure 84: Viewpoint 15

### 3.8 The Setting of the Conservation Area

The setting of the Conservation Area is a contributor to its significance, allowing for the Conservation Area to be understood and appreciated. Setting is defined within the NPPF as:

*The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. (NPPF: Annex 2: Glossary).*

Along with its high-quality buildings of historic and architectural merit, the Ashwell Conservation Area derives significance from its historic settlement pattern. The agrarian landscape that surrounds the settlement of Ashwell has played a vital part in the evolution of this settlement pattern, the village's development and the economy of the community for many centuries. The quality of the surrounding rural landscape therefore makes an important contribution to the historic setting and significance of the Conservation Area.

There are many vantage points within the Conservation Area, where the open pastoral landscape of its setting can be viewed and experienced. The historic and rustic character of this setting is highly tangible and the enhancement it brings to the Conservation Area's significance, along with that of individual listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets is clear. The surrounding open landscape and fields have a direct historical and functional association with Ashwell village and the conservation area and the setting's surviving agrarian character, which is generally empty of modern development, greatly enhances its significance.

Revisions to the boundary of the Conservation Area have been undertaken



Figure 85: Dixies Meadow, north of the High Street, the undeveloped nature of this part of its setting enhances the Conservation Area



Figure 86: The view south from the open area of Ellbrook and Cow Lane Meadows to the north of the Conservation area, taken from the public footpath 018.

as a part of this appraisal, to ensure those areas designated fulfil the necessary criteria for designation (Section 2.3). The boundary revisions were undertaken to reflect the changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges Ashwell's unique historic built environment. This review is in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas (Paragraph 191).

Open areas and fields outside the edge of the village remain excluded as they do not have the necessary level of special architectural or historic interest. As part of the setting of the Conservation Area, the open and agrarian character of the surrounding fields and meadows greatly contributes to the understanding and appreciation of the Conservation Area's significance. The contribution made by setting is recognised in national policy and guidance.

For example, paragraph 206 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably. In addition, any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification. (NPPF Paragraph 200).

There are many vantage points within the Conservation Area, where the open pastoral landscape of its setting can be viewed and experienced. The historic and rustic character of this setting is highly tangible and the enhancement it brings to the Conservation Area's significance, along with that of individual listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets is clear. The surrounding open landscape and fields have a direct historical and functional association with Ashwell village and the conservation area and the setting's surviving agrarian character, which is generally empty



Figure 87: The view of the Conservation Area's agricultural setting to the east, taken from Ashwell Cemetery



Figure 88: The undeveloped pasture that forms the setting north of Dixies Meadow, looking east near Ashwell grange and Rollys Lane

of modern development, greatly enhances its significance.

Prehistoric human activity in the area has left its mark on Ashwell's setting. To the south of Ashwell Street is an open agricultural field [Figure 89], which contains archaeological deposits. The five ring ditches to the south of Ashwell Street are Scheduled Ancient Monuments (List UID: 1451703) and are protected in their own right. The open agricultural fields containing such historical landscape features are a positive element within the Conservation Area's setting and they enhance its significance.

Within Ashwell's setting are areas that are currently and were historically empty of development. They have had agricultural uses in the past, historically supporting the community of Ashwell (such as Dixies meadow, Elbrook Meadow and Cow Lane Meadow [Figures 85 and 86]). In general, the village is surrounded by a landscape which has a pronounced agrarian character, which allows an appreciation of the significance of the Conservation Area. The fields and meadows to the north and west of Ashwell Bury, to the north and northeast of Mill Street, Elbrook Meadow and Cow Lane Meadow and also to Dixies Meadow on the north side of High Street would be particularly sensitive to unsympathetic development. There are public footpaths around Ashwell which allow the Conservation Area to be viewed and appreciated within its setting, such as Footpath 018, which runs northeast from Mill Lane.



Figure 89: The field that forms the setting to the south of Ashwell Street, which contains five ring ditches

## 4. Opportunities for Enhancement

The following key issues have been identified and are summarised below in brief. The list is in no way exhaustive, and neither are the issues identified unique to Ashwell Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas.

### 4.1 Access and Integration

Ashwell can be accessed through multiple routes, on foot or by vehicle. In many places entry to the Conservation Area is not discernible and better acknowledgment of the Conservation Area, either through signage, changes in streetscape features or markers would be beneficial. Interpretation boards and the creation of integrated approach, utilising uniform signage and specific lighting and paving throughout the Conservation Area, or Character Areas, would allow for improved public awareness.

### 4.2 Car Parking

Car parking is currently provided by roadside spaces, such as those on the High Street. Generally, although this is not ideal, this provision is perhaps adequate for the numbers of vehicles. However, the character of the area would benefit from a reduction in the practice of parking to the side of roads, particularly on the High Street.

### 4.3 Inappropriate Modern Development

There have been inappropriate modern developments within the Conservation Area. Many of these, such as infill developments on the High Street, date to the later twentieth-century and they are notable for their unfitting design, materials and fenestration. There are also more recent developments, which do not enhance the character and special

interest of the Conservation Area. In particular, the development at Townsend Meadow was within the Conservation Area boundary and is now recommended for exclusion [Figure 90]. While the buildings at Townsend Meadow may be of good quality, their design is fairly repetitive, and the cul-de-sac development plan do not reflect the character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 90: Townsend Meadow development

As is stated in the NPPF, local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (Paragraph 206). Therefore, for the future positive management of the Conservation Area, any new development should ideally enhance or at the very least, preserve the character or special interest of the Conservation Area. This

can be achieved through appropriate layout, design, materials, form, size and landscaping. It would be necessary for any application for a new scheme to demonstrate that these aspects have been considered and that the character of the Conservation Area has been referenced in the new scheme.

#### 4.4 Neutral Contributors

A significant proportion of buildings make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

##### Windows and doors

The removal of traditional windows and doors has occurred in some instances within the Conservation Area. Most notably, in Character Area Four, where the original windows to the post-War housing, (probably originally of metal) have been entirely replaced with uPVC. However, in general, the High Street and other areas have retained a significant number of their historic timber doors and windows. The continued use of traditional, timber doors and windows and the preservation of those that exist at present, will ensure the character and special architectural interest of Ashwell Conservation Area will be conserved. The replacement of timer windows with inappropriate, modern, mass-produced examples, such as uPVC, will have a detrimental impact on the significance of the Conservation Area.

##### Meter boxes and other services

Additions to buildings within conservation areas, such as meter boxes, solar panels and car charging points can potentially result in harm to the area's character. For example, meter boxes have been added

to the front of dwellings in Kingsland Terrace [Figure 91], which has had a detrimental impact on the character of the terrace, due to their incongruous appearance at odds with the traditional materiality of the terrace. With careful choices in terms of design, size, position, materials and colour, the negative impact resulting from such additions can often be reduced to a negligible level.



Figure 91: Meter boxes on Kingsland Terrace

The installation of unsympathetic additions to buildings in the Conservation Area, will dilute the historic Character of the area. Additions such as oversized extensions, poor quality materials, unsympathetic doors and windows, rooflights, extraction flues, TV aerials, satellite dishes, uncharacteristic modern porches, close-board or panel fences and inappropriate finishes to drives and paths.

A lack of maintenance of both public and private buildings, can detract from the quality of the Conservation Area. In general, Ashwell is well

maintained, yet private dwellings can be susceptible to the risk of decay and continued engagement with landowners to sustain and improve the appearance of properties will be beneficial. Regular maintenance, including painting, cleaning and the clearance of vegetation should be promoted as a key component of preserving the quality of the Conservation Area.

#### 4.5 Public Realm

Generally, there is not an over-abundance of road signage in the Conservation Area, which is beneficial. There are instances where road signs have been placed with a lack of sensitivity, such as the road signs outside the Grade II listed thatched cottage at 39 West End, which is at an entry point to the village and Conservation Area.

Street Furniture (Lampposts, benches, signage, bins, bike stands, bollards etc.)

There are some historic and decorative lamp posts which have been well looked after and their continued upkeep would ensure their beneficial contribution remains [Figure 92]. Fluted iron bollards can also be found on the High Street. Adjacent to the Rose and Crown on the High Street is a Grade II listed K6 red telephone box and a letter box from the reign of George VI, which enhance the area's character. Bins belonging to the domestic dwellings can be found, but they do not dominate the High Street. In areas away from the High Street, particularly in areas of terraces of dwellings where bins could be an issue, they are generally kept away from the main frontages.

#### Open Spaces

The open and green spaces in the Conservation Area make a positive

contribution and are integral to its character in many instances, defining road junctions and passing places. The long-term maintenance needs of these spaces should be considered and, where appropriate, opportunities taken to enhance them and ensure access is maintained through roadside pathways and public rights of way.



Figure 92: Example of a heritage style lamp post which contributes positively to the Ashwell Conservation Area

#### Trees and Planting

Appropriate levels of maintenance need to be ensured and, where required, opportunities for enhancement sought to maintain and manage the trees within the Conservation Area. There are opportunities to enhance the verdant appearance of the Conservation Area along periphery roads, reinforcing areas of hedgerow which feature gaps.



## 5. Management Proposals

There are a wide range of issues facing the Ashwell Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This section presents recommend management proposals for consideration, which could address these issues in both the short and long term . The adoption of any recommended measures would be subject to available resources and funding.

The delivery of these management proposals provide the opportunity for partnership working with key organisations, the Parish Council, landowners and the local community and would be subject to available resources and funding arrangements.

### 5.1 Positive Management: Short term

The first set of proposals relate to positive management and focus on good practice and improved ways of working with the local planning authority. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short timeframe, typically within one to three years.

#### Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order, the Local Planning Authority's powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the Conservation Area, as well as avoiding a precedence being set for similar, uncharacteristic works.

#### General Maintenance: Public Realm and Highways

The mature trees within the Conservation Area, in places such as the

Recreation Ground and Ashwell Springs make a positive contribution to its appearance and character. Although there are no trees on the densely packed High Street, the village has a distinctly green character away from the historic core. The implementation of Tree Preservation Orders will protect important trees, while trees within the Conservation Area that are not protected by an Order are protected by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Local Authority must be notified before carrying out certain work on such trees unless an exception applies.

Through the agreement of a standard good practice within the Conservation Area between relevant Local Authority teams and other landowners, long term goals can be set to promote good design within the public realm, such as avoiding excessive road markings or signage and agreeing a standard street furniture within Character Areas to ensure consistency over time as elements are introduced or replaced. This will have a long-term positive impact on the Ashwell Conservation Area and ensure the preservation of characteristic features of the area including historic lamp posts, bollards, letter boxes and the listed phone box (now used to house a defibrillator).

Heritage Statements, Heritage Impact Assessments and Archaeological Assessments

In accordance with the NPPF (Para.194), applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

All applications for one or more houses with a floor space of more than 100 square metres, proposed within the Conservation Area require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement . Heritage statements are

also required for any application relating to a Listed building. Large scale developments should also be accompanied by a design and access statement.

It is important to consider the importance of the setting of any heritage asset as part of any new proposal. A new development or change within the setting of the Conservation Area or a Listed Building will have the potential to alter the buildings significance or affect the ability to appreciate its significance. Heritage Statements, landscape and visual studies accompanying an application will help in the assessment of any impacts.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition, alteration or removal of buildings, structures, trees or highways on key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England's Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2019).

### Local Heritage List

A Local List identifies buildings and structures of local architectural and/or historic interest, and these are considered to be 'non-designated heritage assets' under the provisions of the NPPF. Local Lists can be beneficial in ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of historic buildings that contribute to the character of the settlements.

There is currently no local list for Ashwell. The exercise of creating a Register of Buildings of Local Interest (as per other settlements in the district) would also facilitate a greater understanding of the area and could be utilised as a public engagement strategy to improve awareness

and understanding.

Within this document, buildings of merit have been identified as non-designated heritage assets within each Character Area. These identified buildings should form the basis of any local list, although a complete survey of the village, excluding buildings outside the Conservation Area, should be conducted. The non-designated heritage assets identified in this document is therefore not a full or exhaustive list.

Non-designated heritage assets are defined in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets. They can therefore be below-ground archaeological remains as well as above ground structures or places.

### Neutral Elements

There are buildings that make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the Ashwell Conservation area. These will serve to dilute the contribution of positive buildings over time and can result in an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character. Any new development should not simply aim to have a neutral impact on the area but actively make a positive one. Applications to change the appearance of existing neutral buildings will allow more appropriate materials to be used and therefore, it may be possible to bring some enhancement to the area's character through the planning process.

North Herts Council must not allow for the quality of design to be 'averaged down' by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment. Officers must where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and look to conserve and reinstate historic features. It is

also considered that poor-quality or unsympathetic schemes should not be allowed, both within the Conservation Area and its setting.

### New Development

To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character of the Conservation Area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability. Any scheme for new development of any size within Ashwell and its setting, should seek to make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area as a core design aim.

Successful new development will:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land,
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths)
- Respect important views,
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings,
- Use materials and building methods which as high in quality of those used in existing buildings, and
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting.

North Herts Council should guide development in a positive manner by:

- Engaging with developers at an early stage through the Pre-

Application Process to ensure modern development is high quality in design, detail and materials.

- Ensuring medium-large scale development schemes are referred to a CABE Design Review (or similar) to ensure that new buildings, additions and alterations are designed to be in sympathy with the established character of the area. The choice of materials and the detailed design of building features are important in making sure it's appropriate to a conservation area.
- Seeking opportunities for developers to make a positive contribution to the wider historic environment through Section 106 Agreements.

### Public resources

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area. In addition, a maintenance guide would assist property owners in caring for their property in an appropriate manner. A revised Good Practice Design Guide on standard alterations such as signage, shopfronts or advertisements, windows, doors, rainwater goods, boundaries and roof extensions will ensure inappropriate development does not continue to be the accepted norm.

- Provide guidance on appropriate design and materials for windows and doors and encouraging the retention or reinstatement of historic glazing patterns and door designs and the use of appropriate materials.

- Provide guidance on the traditional form of boundary treatments and encourage their reinstatement where they have been removed or compromised.
- Provide guidance on traditional roofing materials and encouraging the reinstatement of good quality slate and the removal of unsympathetic modern materials such as interlocking concrete tiles.
- Provide and update guidance relating to signage. This should address appropriate size and design, the extent and amount and associated lighting. All further planning applications and advert consent applications should be required to comply, where possible, with this standard, designed to help to restore the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Ashwell's built heritage. At present there is a range of interpretation (information boards, signage, webpages) within the Conservation Area and relating to the Conservation Area, aimed at improving understanding and awareness. These must continue to be maintained and updated where appropriate to ensure awareness and reinforce the identity of Ashwell as a historic settlement.

### Shop Frontages

The main commercial centre of Ashwell is along the High Street, although the number of commercial buildings is outnumbered by residential dwellings, some in converted former shops. In general, where they exist, shopfronts are understated, with traditional shopfront joinery surviving in places. This has significantly helped in the preservation of the Conservation Area's character, particularly that of the High Street.

The careful regulation of new shop fronts as part of the planning decision making process would ensure this positive characteristic remains into the future.

There is potential to raise awareness of the importance of historic shopfronts and traditional signage and the contribution they make to the special interest of the Conservation Area through the production of information leaflets or web pages which provide guidance for shop owners on upkeep and maintenance of historic frontages. Article 4 Directions could also be used to prevent loss of historic shop frontages.

### Tree Management

In line with the Town and Country Planning Act, all trees in Conservation Areas are afforded the same protection as a Tree Preservation Order. Trees which have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm, at a height of 1.5m from the ground, may not be felled or lopped unless six weeks written notice has been given to the Council. Six weeks notice has to be given to the council under S211 of the Act.

It is also considered that any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

### Twentieth Century Buildings

There are some twentieth century buildings which make a neutral or negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area. There is scope to enhance these sites and buildings through a considered design approach which can guide future improvements. Should opportunities for redevelopment arise in the future, high quality design should be pursued

and encouraged through design guidance.

## 5.2 Positive Management: Longer Term

The second set of proposals are also focussed on positive management but either take longer to implement or are better suited to a longer time frame.

### Car Parking

This should begin with a car parking survey to establish the need for car parking. Once the level of necessary car parking has been established a landscape strategy should be created by North Herts Council in conjunction with local stakeholders.

Additional hard landscaping for parking could have a particularly harmful impact on the character of the Conservation Area, adding an urban quality at odds with Ashwell's overall character. Where areas of private front gardens have been paved over, this is often in a piecemeal approach and inconsistent with neighbouring properties and adjoining paving. Parameters should be set for all such changes in the Conservation Area as part of an up-to-date design guide, reinforced by an agreed assessment of planning applications by the Local Planning Authority. Planning applications for additional hardstanding which removes sections of hedgerow should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, with great care and consideration given to all new materials such as paving. Consideration of an Article 4 direction which limits permitted development rights in relation to driveways should also be considered if the issue of hardstanding becomes more pressing

### Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan should be

reviewed from time to time to monitor change and inform management proposals.

### Conservation Area Boundary

The Conservation Area boundary has been revised within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2021) and Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019). These alterations to the boundary are described in detail in Section 2.3 of this document. The boundary should continue to be assessed as part of future reviews of the Management Plan to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.

### Interpretation: Improved Understanding and Awareness

At present there is no interpretation (information boards, signage, interactive QR Codes) within the Conservation Area aimed at improving understanding and awareness of the village's built heritage. This could be an effective way to improve the awareness and re-establish the identity of Ashwell as a historic settlement.

### Opportunity Sites

There are some opportunity sites across the Conservation Area which, if sensitively redeveloped, may enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Development Plan (2020 Policy ASH1) seeks to focus new development within the defined settlement boundary and to apply a more restrictive approach elsewhere in accordance with national and local policies.

Policy ASH2 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan focuses on design and heritage. This states that in order to maintain the character of the Ashwell Conservation Area, a balance should be struck between the scale, bulk, density and height of the built form of new developments

with open green spaces and, where relevant, the countryside.

All new development should be designed to a high quality and reinforce and enhance local character, heritage assets and the rural setting of the area. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available. Lower density housing should be located towards the outer edges of the settlement where it abuts open countryside, to maintain views from and into the individual settlements. Development should have regard to both the character of the area in which it is set and to the character of the area overall.

### Public Realm

The first opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area is through investment to improve the wider public realm. This can be achieved through continuing to improve and rationalise existing street furniture.

Better maintenance of areas of public space, through weeding, planting, the renewal or introduction of additional benches and the maintenance of existing features through the creation of an integrated management plan, combined with developer, landowners and the local authority would be of benefit.

## 5.3 Funding Opportunities

There are three main funding opportunities which would assist in the execution of these plans:

### National Heritage Lottery Fund

The National Heritage Lottery Fund is the single largest dedicated

funder of heritage in the UK and therefore is the most obvious potential source of funding. Funding is often targeted at schemes which preserve, enhance and better reveal the special interest of the area whilst also improving public awareness and understanding. Grant opportunities and requirements change overtime, for up-to-date information on NHLF schemes North Herts District Council should consult their appointed Heritage Specialist.

### Section 106 Agreements

Planning obligations, also known as Section 106 agreements, can be used by the local authority to ensure any future development has a positive impact upon the Conservation Area. These agreements could be used to fund public realm or site-specific improvements.

### Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (Historic England)

Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas is a programme run by Historic England to target funding for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. As the name suggests, the scheme forms partnerships with local authorities (along with any additional funding partners) to facilitate the regeneration of an area through the conservation of its built heritage. The scheme makes funds available to individuals to enable them to carry out repairs or improvement works to their property to enhance the area. This would be suitable to preserve and enhance the architectural detailing throughout the Conservation Area.

## 6. Appendices

### 6.1 Bibliography

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Three Tuns. History <https://threetunsashwell.co.uk/history-of-ashwell/>

Victoria County History Hertfordshire, Volume 3, London 1912. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol3>

## 6.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
<b>Primary Legislation</b>	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions.  72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.
<b>National Planning Policy</b>	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. London: UK Government, 2021.	Section 16;  Annex 2
<b>National Guidance</b>	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. <i>National Planning Practice Guidance</i> . London: UK Government, 2014.	ID: 18a





<b>National Guidance</b>	Historic England, Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1. Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2019.	
<b>National Guidance</b>	Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3. Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2017.	
<b>Local Supplementary Planning Document</b>	Ashwell Parish Council	Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan, 2021
<b>Local Supplementary Planning Document</b>	Ashwell Parish Council	Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement, 2019

### 6.3 List of All Designated Heritage Assets within the Conservation Area

List Entry Number	Address	Grade
1102707	Guild House	II
1102708	Rose And Crown Public House	II*
1102709	73, High Street	II
1102710	Dixies Farmhouse and Dixies	II
1102711	The Old Cottage	II
1102712	Village Lock-Up in Garden of Number 20	II
1102713	The Rectory	II
1102714	34, Lucas Lane	II
1102715	Church Of St Mary	I
1102716	The Mill	II
1102717	Ashe Cottage	II
1102718	29, 31 And 33, Mill Street	II
1102719	37 And 39 Mill Street	II
1102720	Spring Cottage	II
1102721	Ducklake	II*
1102722	Barn At Ducklake	II
1102723	Pin Cottage and Numbers 12 And 16	II
1102724	Town House (Ashwell Museum)	II*
1102725	Barn Range at Farrow's Farm, 30 Metres West of No 4 (Farmhouse)	II

List Entry Number	Address	Grade
1102726	1 And 5 West End	II
1102727	39, West End	II
1102740	Wayside Cottage	II
1102743	5, Gardiners Lane	II
1102744	2 And 4, Gardiners Lane	II
1102745	Chain Cottage	II
1102746	Barn At Rear of Three Tuns Hotel	II
1102747	56, High Street	II
1102748	Ashwell Stores and Number 72 (Including Attached Rear Barn)	II
1102749	Digswell Manor (Including Outbuildings at Rear)	II
1102750	Jessamine House	II*
1174877	Cheney Cottage	II
1174896	Cob Wall	II
1174911	The Three Tuns Hotel Public House	II
1174915	Forresters Cottage	II*
1174928	Plait Hall	II
1174949	Two Brewers	II
1174973	Christy's Corner	II
1174998	Bacon's House and Number 84 (Including Attached Outbuildings)	II
1175046	Beams	II
1175177	14, Lucas Lane	II

List Entry Number	Address	Grade
1175188	Ashwell War Memorial	II
1175238	Lychgate and Adjoining Churchyard Wall	II
1175304	Ashwell Further Education Centre	II
1175337	Ashwell Bury	II
1175350	Mulberry Tree Cottage	II
1175369	Tombstone In New Cemetery to Mary Morwenno Bolitho, Wife Of Philip Le Grand Gribble	II
1175394	Barn Adjoining Number 4	II
1175404	Westbury Farmhouse	II
1175432	Outbuilding To Rear Of Westbury Farmhouse	II
1175450	The Cottage	II
1175465	The Orchard	II
1295318	Granary Adjoining South Corner Of Ducklake	II
1295325	Swan House	II
1295331	Tower Cottage (Including Attached Rear Outbuildings)	II
1295389	1 Mill Street	II
1295406	4 And 6, Mill Lane	II
1295482	Spring House	II
1347292	53, High Street	II
1347311	57 And 59, High Street	II*
1347312	Bear House	II*

List Entry Number	Address	Grade
1347313	Dovecote At Dixies Farm	II
1347314	The Green	II
1347315	Alder Cottage	II
1347316	2, Mill Lane	II
1347317	Tombstone In New Cemetery to Wolverly Attwood Fordham	II
1347318	18-24, Swan Street	II
1347320	Chantry House	II
1347319	Granary At Westbury Farm, Immediately East of Farmhouse	II
1347328	Vine Cottage	II
1347329	Smithy Cottage	II
1347330	Woodlands (Including Rear Attached Barns)	II
1347366	K6 Telephone Kiosk Adjoining the Rose and Crown Public House	II
1451703	Crop Marks of Five Ring Ditches West of Station Road, Ashwell	N/A
1000904	Ashwell Bury	II

## 6.4 Glossary

Bargeboard - A board fastened to the projecting gables of a roof.

Bay window - Window of one or more storeys projecting from the face of a building.

Capital - The topmost member of a column (or pilaster).

Casement window - Window hung vertically, hinged one side, so that it swings inward or outward.

Coping - The capping or covering of a wall.

Cornice - Upper section of an entablature, a projecting shelf along the top of a wall often supported by brackets or corbels.

Cross-wing - Wing attached to a main or original house block, its axis at right angles to the original block, and often gabled.

Domesday Book – survey conducted in 1086 following the Norman Conquest, detailing towns and parishes within England.

Dormer - A structural element protruding from the plane of a sloping roof surface. Dormers are used to create usable space in the roof by adding headroom and usually also by enabling addition of windows.

Façade - An exterior side of a building, usually the front.

Gable - A triangular portion of an end wall between the edges of a sloping roof.

Henge Monument - A prehistoric circular or oval earthen enclosure, dating from around 3000 BC to 2000 BC.

Hip roof - A type of roof where all sides slope downwards from the ridge to the

eaves.

Holloway – lane or road, marked in the ground by raised banks either side

Jettying - A building technique used in medieval timber frame buildings in which an upper floor projects beyond the dimensions of the floor below.

Parapet - A low wall built up above the level of a roof, to hide the roof or to provide protection against falling.

Sash - The horizontal and vertical frame that encloses the glazing of a window. A sash may be fixed or operable and may be of several different types depending on operation.

Sherd – a shard or piece of pottery

Univallate Hillfort - A defended enclosure common in the later Bronze Age and Iron Age of northwest Europe, bounded by a single line of ramparts, often with strengthened defences around the entrance.

## 6.5 Links

All hyperlinks included within the text of this document are reproduced in full below.

Historic England's Guidance on conservation area designation:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-appraisal-designation-management-advice-note-1/>

Details on Historic England's At Risk register:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/>

North Herts Council's Conservation Areas:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/conservation-areas>

North Herts Council's Planning Team:

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning>

Historic England's guide to tree preservation orders:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/consents/tree>

Historic England's guide to Article 4 directions:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4directions>

Historic England's Guide to conservation areas (webpage):

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/has/conservation-areas>

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