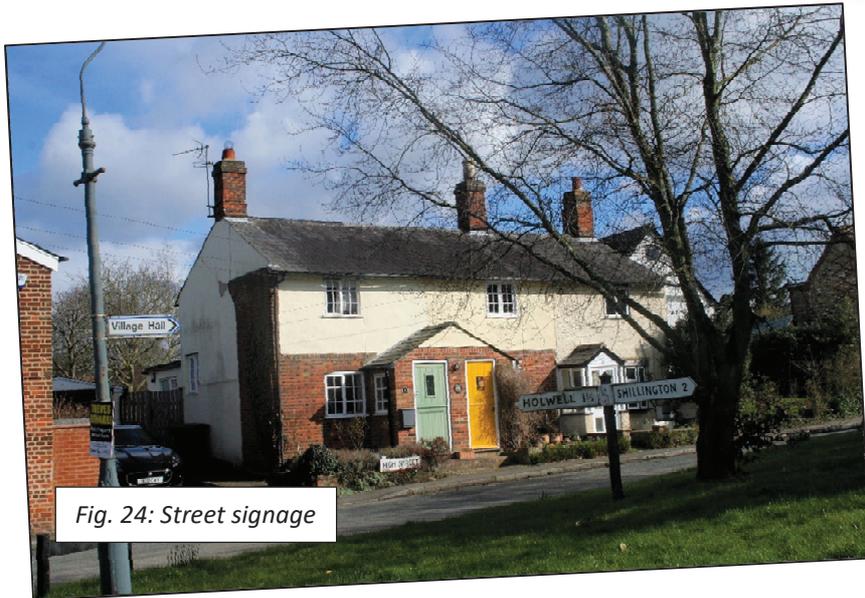




*Fig. 22: Natural wood bench seating*



*Fig 23 War Memorial*



*Fig. 24: Street signage*

## 5.8 Views within the Village

There are many significant views into, out from and within Pirton. For the former two, further details of the most important views are provided in Appendix 1 of this document.

Within Pirton there are views that are significant to the character of Pirton. Sometimes this for what they reveal, such as the views from Walnut Tree Road to The Bury and from the High Street across to The Bury. Sometimes it is because they are simply attractive views, such as the views into the High Street from Hambridge Way. Then there are those that are important because of what they hide or for the impact they have on the street scene. These include areas of green space and trees that break up the built scene such as those in the High Street and at the entrance to Royal Oak Lane.

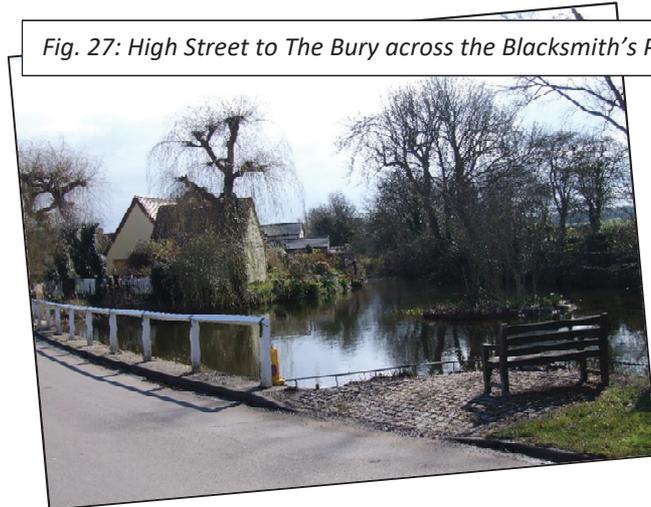
Many are protected by the status the land, e.g. Scheduled Monument or Common Land area, others need the impact of their loss to the village character to be considered.



*Figs. 25 & 26: Walnut Tree Road to The Bury*



*Fig. 27: High Street to The Bury across the Blacksmith's Pond*



*Fig. 28: Entrance to the High Street*

Fig. 29: Breaking up the 'built' View in the High Street



Fig. 30: Breaking up the 'built' View to Royal Oak Lane

## Wildlife



Fig. 31: Singing Thrush

Pirton is underlain by chalk geology which, combined with past and present management of the land, has produced some valuable wildlife habitats. Grasslands on chalk are an increasingly rare habitat in the county and can be very rich in species. Valuable but decreasing areas of chalk downland still remain in the parish, for instance, around Tingley Wood and Highdown. These are fragile and may be easily lost. Remnants of chalk grassland flora are also found on road verges and field margins in the area, including Dane Field, Hitchin Road, Wood Lane and the Icknield Way.

Although not totally within the parish boundary, the springs at Oughton Head are a very important asset of the Parish and a SSSI. They are valued by the village community and are particularly note-worthy. In addition to being a valuable water source, they have important wildlife value and include habitats for water voles and kingfishers. Oughton Head Nature Reserve is designated NR6 in the NHDC Policy proposals and on associated maps of Pirton.

Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve, Pegsdon, owned by Natural England, is just across the parish boundary in Shillington, Bedfordshire. It is an area of species rich chalk grassland at the north end of the Chilterns. The site is of exceptional importance in supporting large populations of a number of rare plants.

Knocking Hoe NNR has five rare plants: moon carrot, spotted catsear, field fleawort, burnt-tip orchid, and pasque flower. The site is also of archaeological interest with a prominent, possibly prehistoric, strip lynchet field system. A Neolithic long barrow, Knocking Knoll, stands just outside the reserve to the north-east, on the county/parish boundary, and a Bronze Age round barrow lies in Tingley Wood Plantation to the south; both are Scheduled Monuments.

Colourful wildflowers cover the chalk grassland, including horseshoe vetch, small scabious, rockrose, and clustered bellflower. The site is also well known for its population of the orchid, autumn lady's tresses, which has been studied continuously on the reserve for 50 years. Various downland butterflies can be seen at Knocking Hoe and vicinity, e.g. along Wood Lane, in summer, including common blue, chalkhill blue, marbled white, and brown argus. Glow worms have been recorded in the reserve also.

## 5.9 Hedges and Trees and Flora



Fig. 32: Trees in Pirton

There are numerous hedges and paths providing green routes, shelter and potential sustenance for wildlife and linking woodland and pasture. They consist of a good range of shrubby species and often support a number of flowering plants at their base, all providing a variety of nesting and feeding opportunities for a wide range of animals, insects and birds.

Trees provide similar support for wildlife, but many have been lost to disease, housing development and agricultural changes. Elm disease alone claimed 800 trees in the seventies/eighties. The Parish Council has managed a number of tree planting projects within the village.

There are approximately 400 species of flora in the Parish. Of particular interest are bee and pyramidal orchids, common twayblades and spotted orchids in St. Mary's Church Nature Reserve and Wood Lane, and celery-leaved crowfoot and large bittercress in the village ponds. Hedgerow species include hawthorn, blackthorn, buckthorn, field maple, elm, dog rose, hazel, wayfaring tree, spindle, ash, sycamore, dogwood and beech. The main tree species are alder, ash, birch, beech, elder, elm, horse chestnut, lime, maple, oak, sycamore and walnut. There are some very old oak trees in Tingley Wood, and some of the hedges elsewhere are between 600 and 700 years old. Tingley Wood also has carpets of bluebells, a protected flower. The verges of Wood Lane support bluebells and cowslips in springtime. Due to careful management in recent years, the south-east field margins of Dane Field now support a variety of wildflowers, including several species of orchid, encouraging butterflies, for example, the marbled white, and other insects.

### 5.10 Mammals

There are badgers, several species of deer, foxes, brown hare, rabbits, stoat, mink and polecats. Smaller rodents have declined, but there are pipistrelle and long-eared bats in Pirton, field mice, hazel dormice, water vole, and common vole, and hedgehogs, where the green spaces of gardens and ways through their fences and hedges are particularly valuable habitat.

### 5.11 Amphibians

There are frogs, toads, great crested and other newts. Great crested newts breed in the village ponds and migrate to adjacent land up to 500 metres or more away for many months each year. Recognised breeding sites include Toot Hill moat and the Bury ponds.

### 5.12 Birds

66 species of bird have been recorded in the Parish, of which 46 were in gardens, an increasingly important food source. Collared dove, jay, sparrow-hawk, kestrel, buzzard, peregrine falcon, and red kite have increased in recent years. Barn owls are present, but scarce, and there are tawny owls and little owls.

### 5.13 Butterflies and Moths

33 species of butterfly and 158 species of moth have been recorded by a villager. A good location to see a variety is along Wood Lane, and many gardens in the village have regular visitors too.

This diversity of flora and wildlife contributes greatly to the green and rural feel of Pirton and to its attraction to residents and visitors alike. It is also a balanced ecology that merits careful consideration as Pirton faces an unprecedented rate of growth. A fuller description of the flora and wildlife, together with lists of species, can be found in Appendix 4.

## 6. DESIGN

### 6.1 Buildings Overview

Pirton has a considerable diversity of dwellings, which range in age from medieval to modern, with sizes varying from large detached houses to small terraced cottages. Of the more than 521 dwellings, 84% are privately owned with approximately 50% having been built in the past 50 years. Approximately 36% are detached houses, 12% bungalows, 28% semi-detached houses and 24% terraced.

The surviving historic original houses are typically thatched, with exposed timber frames, or clay tiled with handmade brick or rendered walls. During the Victorian period, development was typified by the use of Arlesey white brickwork with soft red brick feature banding and arched lintels. A common feature of this period was the terrace of cottages with several examples being seen in the High Street and West Lane.

The grouping of houses into “estates” is another feature of the village. This commenced during the 1920s and 1930s and included two municipal house estates of semi-detached and terraced houses. This continued in the 1960s and 1970s with a large estate of “modest” housing (Bunyan Close) culminating in recent years with small modern estates such as Docklands, St. Mary’s Close and, most recently, Coleman’s Close.

The single storey bungalow form of housing was popular throughout the country in the middle part of the twentieth century and many examples of this house type are represented in the village, for instance in Royal Oak Lane.

Since then, the development of individual houses, or small groups of houses, has taken place continuously on infill sites throughout the village. These generally respect the village scale and character with common materials being red facing brick or rendering. The extension of existing buildings is another common feature of the village. The best of these respect the scale and design of the original house, using similar or compatible materials.

A small number of successful conversions, at Maltings Orchard and Rectory Manor, of existing barn buildings to houses, form a relatively new building type in the village, adding to its diversity.

In common with most villages, Pirton contains a number of community buildings although these are, generally, of modest scale, including the two churches, the village hall, the sports and social club, the school and the two remaining public houses.

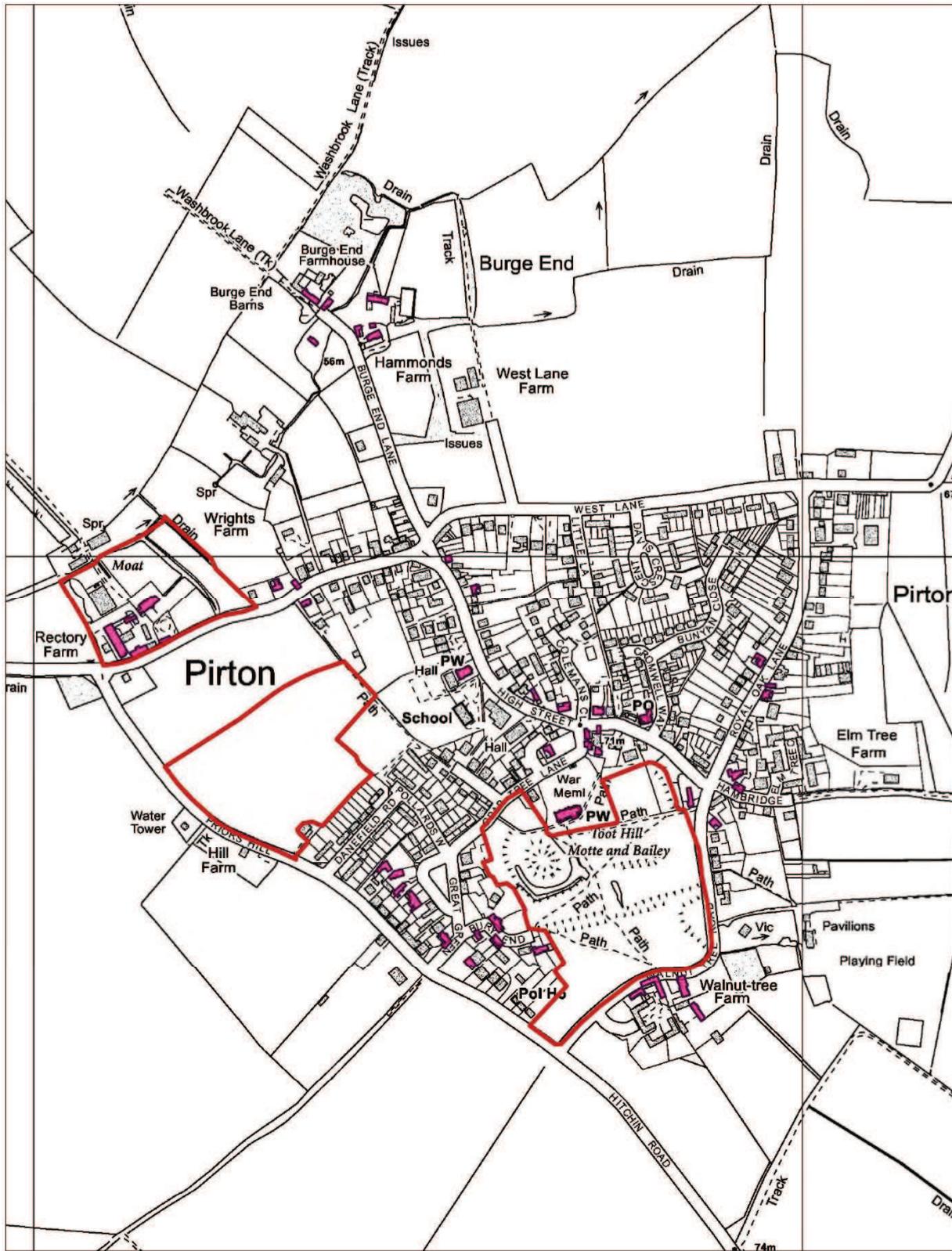
Historically, the village would have been a very low-density environment. Over the years, however, densities have increased due to construction on open sites and infill developments. Notwithstanding this, the design of individual developments seems to have been, on the whole, successful in retaining a village character. One feature of this character is that all of the housing, traditional and modern, is of a maximum of two storeys in height. The only exceptions to this are a traditional cottage and a house extension, both of which, although of three storeys, have the height of a typical two-storey building.

Detailed information on design, taken from the 2003 Village Design Statement, and updated, can be found in Appendix 5.

### 6.2 Building Typologies and Styles

This section provides a description and photographic overview of some of the best examples of the built features and characteristics which contribute to Pirton’s distinct feel and appearance. This gallery, along with the rest of this document, should be used to inform the design of new development proposals (See Figs. 34 to 44).

Pirton has a considerable diversity of building typologies and styles, which range in age from medieval to modern, with sizes varying from large detached houses to small terraced cottages. The vast majority of buildings are either single or two-storey. Apartments and flats are not a common dwelling typology within the village.



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Fig 33: Map of non-Listed buildings of interest



*Fig. 34: Diversity of styles*



*Fig. 35: Thatched roof and timber frames*

Surviving historic original with thatched roof and exposed timber frames. During the Victorian period, development was typified by the use of Arlesey white brickwork with soft red brick feature banding and arched lintels.



*Fig. 36: Typical brick features*

The grouping of houses into “estates” is another feature of the village. This commenced during the 1920s and 1930s and included two council house estates of semi-detached and terraced houses.



*Fig. 37: Davis Crescent built 1920*

Estate development continued in the 1960s and 1970s with a large estate of private housing Bunyan Close (See Fig. 38) culminating in recent years with small modern estates such as Docklands, St. Mary’s Close (See Fig. 39) and, most recently, Coleman’s Close.

Fig. 38: Bunyan Close



Fig. 39: St. Mary's Close



Fig. 40: Barn conversions



A small number of successful conversions, at Maltings Orchard and Rectory Manor, of existing barn buildings to houses, form a relatively new building type in the village, adding to its diversity.

The single storey bungalow form of housing was popular throughout the country in the middle part of the twentieth century.

Fig. 41: Typical bungalow style

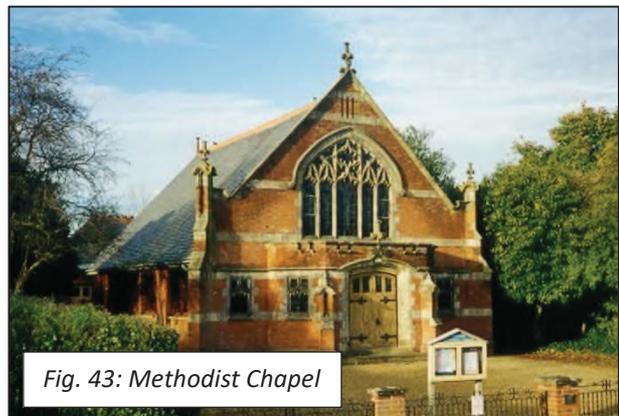


Fig. 42: Village hall



Pirton contains a number of community buildings although these are, generally, of modest scale, including the two churches, the village hall, the sports and social club, the school and the two remaining public houses.

Fig. 43: Methodist Chapel



In recent times the development of individual houses, or small groups of houses, has taken place continuously on infill sites throughout the village. These generally respect the village scale and character with common materials being red facing brick or rendering.

Fig. 44: Small scale infill



## 7. APPENDIX 1: LIST OF IMPORTANT VIEWS IN PIRTON VILLAGE AND PARISH

1. From High Down over Pirton village and the Bedfordshire Lowlands.
2. From the Driftway south-east to Priors Hill, St. Mary's church tower and the village.
3. From Punch's Cross north-west to St. Mary's church tower and Pirton village.
4. The approach into the north-east side of the village along Holwell Road.
5. From Priors Hill northwards over the Bedfordshire Lowlands towards the ridge beyond.
6. From Little Lane/West Lane northwards into Bedfordshire.
7. From Hambridge Way looking north-east, east, south-east and south to the Letchworth ridge, Hitchin, and the Chilterns escarpment.
8. From Holwell Turn over Elm Tree Farm and up to the Chilterns Hills escarpment.
9. From The Baulk footpath towards the westwards extension of the Chilterns ridge and the prominent Sharpenhoe Clappers.
10. From the Bury along the narrow length to the wider part of Blacksmith's Pond, giving a glimpse of the heart of the village.
11. From Toot Hill, particularly looking north-east, east and west, towards Bedfordshire, the Letchworth ridge and Hitchin.
12. From Walnut Tree Road south-east towards Hitchin and Punch's Cross.
13. From Hitchin Road south and west into the Chilterns AONB.
14. From Wood Lane east across intervening landscape towards Hitchin and Letchworth ridge.
15. From Cromwell Way/High Street south-south-west towards the Chilterns escarpment, Tingley Wood and High Down.
16. From Wood Lane down into Pirton village.

The above views can be referenced by their 'view' number in the photographs below and the map (Ref. Fig. 5).



*View. 01: From High Down over Pirton village and the Bedfordshire Lowlands*



*View. 02: From the Driftway south-east to Priors Hill, St. Mary's church tower and the village*



*View. 03: From Punch's Cross north-west to St. Mary's church tower and Pirton village*



*View. 04: The approach into the north-east side of the village along Holwell Road*

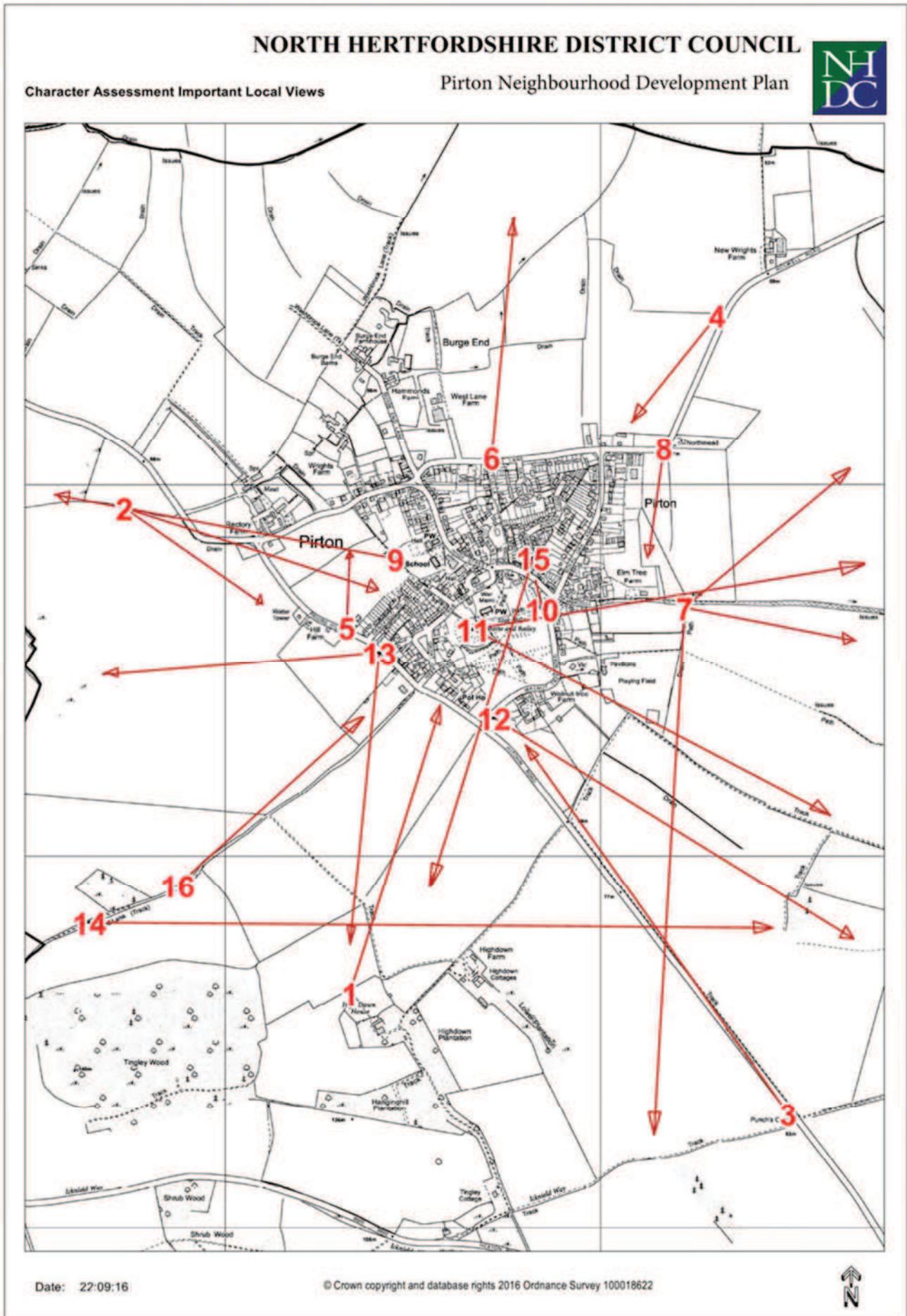


Fig. 45: Important Views in Pirton Village and Parish

**PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**



*View. 5: From Priors Hill northwards over the Bedfordshire Lowlands towards the ridge beyond*



*View. 6: From Little Lane/West Lane northwards into Bedfordshire*



*View. 7: From Hambridge Way looking north-east, east, south-east and south to the Letchworth ridge, Hitchin, and the Chilterns escarpment*



*View. 8: From Holwell Turn over Elm Tree Farm and up to the Chilterns Hills escarpment*



*View. 9: From The Balk footpath towards the westwards extension of the Chilterns ridge and the prominent Sharpenhoe Clappers*



*View. 10: From the Bury along the narrow length to the wider part of Blacksmith's Pond, giving a glimpse of the heart of the village*



*View. 11a & 11b: From Toot Hill, particularly looking north-east, east and west, towards Bedfordshire, the Letchworth ridge and Hitchin*

**PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**



*View. 12: From Walnut Tree Road south-east towards Hitchin and Punch's Cross*



*View. 13: From Hitchin Road south and west into the Chilterns AONB*



*View. 14: From Wood Lane east across intervening landscape towards Hitchin and Letchworth ridge*



*View. 15: From Cromwell Way/High Street south-south-west towards the Chilterns escarpment, Tingley Wood and High Down*



*View. 16: From Wood Lane down into Pirton village*

## 8. APPENDIX 2: HERITAGE - ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Pirton, whose name is first recorded in the Domesday Book of AD 1086 as Peritone, meaning ‘pear tree farm’, lies at the eastern end of the Chiltern Hills, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is on the Icknield Way, an ancient trade route that now is popular with walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Today the village has a triangular plan bounded by Priors Hill and Hitchin Road, Walnut Tree Road, Royal Oak Lane, Holwell Road, West Lane, and Shillington Road. Within the area now defined by these roads, but also at times beyond these boundaries, the village plan has developed. The pattern of its layout and shape has changed over the centuries, as the village economy and population alternately prospered, declined, then revived over the past about fourteen hundred years of its history.



In simple terms, modern Pirton comprises a large open area in the south-east, known as the Bury and Toot Hill, which was the site of a Medieval motte and bailey castle and an area of streets and houses, now surviving as earthworks, finally abandoned in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries. To the north and west exists a larger area of houses and farms, dating from the Medieval period through to the present day. There is another open area on the hill-spur east of Priors Hill, with Shillington Road and, beyond, Rectory Farm and Manor to the north, while Burge End Lane with its

scattered houses and farms forms a northwards extension out of the compact triangular village plan. The arrangement of roads, open spaces and buildings, and the particular way the village has developed down the centuries, gives Pirton a special and unique character.

Parishioners are aware and proud that Pirton has a particularly rich heritage of historic buildings and archaeological monuments, including many of national or regional importance. These contribute significantly to the character of the village and make it one of the most historically important settlements in the region. Pirton has an active Local History Group which researches and publishes historical documents related **to the parish, with an excellent website**

[www.pirtonhistory.org.uk](http://www.pirtonhistory.org.uk). The parish of Pirton has

benefitted considerably over the years from the amount of archaeological fieldwork, surveys, excavations, other investigations, and research that have been undertaken and reported. Since 2007, the University of Cambridge, and now the University of Lincoln, have included Pirton in an East of England project looking into the origins and development of Medieval villages by using schoolchildren and adult volunteers to dig archaeological test pits throughout the village, with highly informative results. See

[www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/schools/hefa](http://www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/schools/hefa) and the website of the North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society [www.nharchsoc.org](http://www.nharchsoc.org). Another excellent village website with historical information and much more is [www.pirton.org.uk](http://www.pirton.org.uk).

From all this archaeological work, we may now relate a fascinating and comprehensive story about the history and development of Pirton Parish. Neolithic (4000-2500 BC), such as Knocking Knoll, and Bronze Age (2500-750 BC), such as at Tingley Wood Plantation and on Priors Hill, barrows or tumuli (burial mounds), on the high

ground would have been viewed from contemporary settlements on the lower ground by the spring-lines.



## PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

During the later Iron Age (150 BC – 43 AD), Roman (43 – 410 AD), sub-Roman (410 – c.500 AD), early Saxon (c.500-650AD), to middle Saxon (c.650 – 850 AD) periods, there was a large area settled at the north end of Dane Field by the Driftway to Shillington. In the late Iron Age and Roman periods, this settlement was connected by a trackway, visible on aerial photographs, to another large settlement the other side of the ridge that forms the parish boundary with Shillington, lying between Pegsdon Common and Kettledean Farms. In the area of the present day village, there were a number of scattered Romano-British farmsteads, for example, in Bannisters Close near the Recreation Field, on the Bury, in Pollards Way, and alongside the stream between Rectory Farm and Burge End and Hammonds Farms.

In the early pagan Saxon period (5th – 6th century AD), a cemetery was located on the ridge overlooking Dane Field, in the area known as Cat's Brains, found during quarrying in the 1790s and 1830s. It contained many burials of warriors with weapons, such as swords, spears and shields. Two coins of the Mercian King, Offa, are known to have been found, one at the Dane Field settlement, near the Driftway; the other on the south side of Priors Hill, dated c.792-796 AD.

Recent archaeological work on the spur of land on the east side of Priors Hill has revealed a rare enclosed, probably high status, early-middle Saxon settlement, perhaps originating c. 500 AD and continuing into the tenth century. A human burial was discovered, radiocarbon dated to around the eighth century AD. On its north side there exists still a 250m length of the earthwork bank, standing up to 2 m high, which enclosed it together with a ditch that survives on the south side of the enclosure.

During the same period, Pirton is a very rare recorded example in an English village of the establishment of a pioneering early Christian community, with a Middle Saxon timber church and associated graveyard to the south, together with surrounding timber domestic halls, excavated by archaeologists in the mid-1990s behind the Fox Public House, on Coleman's Close. Two of the burials here have been radiocarbon dated to the eighth and ninth centuries AD, and the other 38 are likely to be of the same period. This was a high-status Middle Saxon settlement with imported pottery from Ipswich and Maxey in East Anglia, and a fine-ware jug from north France. Occupation of the site continued into the fourteenth century, although the church and its graveyard seem to have been abandoned in the tenth century, to be replaced by present day St. Mary's parish church on Great Bury.

From the late Saxon period, the village spread along the low ridge on the east side of the High St, running from the area of Maltings Close and the Recreation Field (Cotman End), right through to the Burge End Farm vicinity. There was contemporary occupation also to the north-west at Docklands, Priors Hill, and near Rectory Farm. From the late Saxon period to the mid-14th century, Pirton was a nucleated village, as it is now. This Medieval settlement from the mid-11th to the mid-14th century occupied the whole area of the modern village. The timber motte and bailey castle surviving as earthworks at Toot Hill, meaning 'look-out hill', and the Bury is thought to have been constructed in the Anarchy period during the civil war between King Stephen and Queen Matilda (1135-54). This comprises a large earth mound (the motte), which would have been surmounted by a tall timber tower or keep, constructed from the soil up-cast by digging out the surrounding water-filled moat, and, to the east and west, two moated embanked and stockaded enclosures (baileys), in which would have stood the manor



*Fig. 49: On The Driftway, looking towards Pirton*



*Fig. 50: Maypole dancing on Great Green*

## PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Fig. 51: Earthworks of motte & bailey castle & village houses and streets



To the south-east of the castle and church is a large grass field known as The Bury or Great Bury, which contains the earthwork remains of a now deserted area of the Medieval village of Pirton. Long depressions are clearly visible which were once streets in the old village, and areas of raised ground are where houses and other buildings once stood. The site of this deserted part of the village extends to and can be seen as further earthworks marking more former streets and building positions in the field (Maltings Close) on the south side of Walnut Tree Road.

In the 1086 Domesday Book, Pirton is recorded with one of the highest populations in a Hertfordshire village, perhaps nearly 500 inhabitants. Historians estimate that the population of England tripled between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and about 1300.

During the 13th century it became popular amongst wealthier landowners to construct moats around their dwellings as a mark of high status. This fashion is visible in Pirton at Rectory Manor, Wright's Farm, Hammond's Farm, Burge End Farm, and at the outlying Pirton Grange on the northern narrow tip of the parish and county, bordering Shillington, Beds. There was another moat at the former Middle Farm near St Mary's church, now the residential street Docklands. Archaeological investigations have revealed other moated sites along the stream between Rectory Farm and Burge End, and possibly one-off Royal Oak Lane (formerly Dead Horse Lane).

The 1349 plague, known as the Black Death, appears to have hit Pirton particularly hard because the archaeological record from the test pitting carried out in the village since 2007, specifically the dramatic slump in the amount of pottery recovered, indicates a catastrophic 76% decline in population by the 15th century. Historians estimate an average decline in the population of England at this time of between 40% and 55%, and that's disastrous enough.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Pirton seems to have had a scattered and low-density occupation throughout the area of the present village. There were small cultivated fields, paddocks, orchards, and vegetable plots between clusters of farms and cottages, all linked by tracks. Medieval and later documents record the names of some of these separate settlement areas that made up what was now a dispersed polyfocal village: Great Green, formerly Chepyng or Chipping Green, meaning 'market'; Chepyng or Chipping End (now Bury End); Great Bury; Cotman, meaning 'cottar'/'cottager', End; Little Green or Green End; Middle Green; and Burge, meaning 'bridge', End.

The population gradually recovered through the 17th and 18th centuries, and then expanded rapidly and considerably in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, it is interesting to note a steady decline in numbers of inhabitants between 1881 and 1921, before the population recovered and increased again, with a slow rise between 1921 and 1961, followed by a sharp increase. The biggest fall was between 1901 and 1911, when a large number of people moved from the village to seek work in the nearby towns of Hitchin and Luton, with some moving to London and elsewhere.

house, barrack blocks, stables, storehouses, workshops, and other buildings. The parish church of St. Mary, which probably dates from the 10th/11th century, maybe originally constructed in timber and reconstructed in stone in the late 11th/early 12th century, is enclosed by the eastern bailey.

Fig. 52: Earthworks of motte & bailey castle & village streets and houses on the Bury



## PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

At the beginning of the 19th century the population was no higher than it was in 1086: in 1801 it was 481; 1841, 814 in about 140 households; 1861, 1023 in 190 households; 1881, 1125 in 243 households; 1901, 1109 in about 215 households; 1911, 814 in 200 dwellings; 1921, 792; 1981, 1111; 2011, 1275 in about 500 dwellings; and in 2015, about 1325 in about 520 dwellings. So Pirton's population today is probably no more, and perhaps less, than it might have been in about 1300 AD, although there would have been far fewer dwellings then, and mostly much smaller than modern ones, probably less than half the number now.



*Fig. 53: Victorian cottages in High Street built with Arlesey White bricks*

In the later 19th century many new houses were built to accommodate the rising population. While some were individual houses, some were terraces using the distinctive Arlesey white bricks, made from the local gault clay, a number of which are spread throughout the village. Such terraces in Walnut Tree Road (4 dwellings); High Street, opposite the pond (6 dwellings), and adjacent to Cromwell Farm, now Cromwell Cottage, (8 dwellings); in Shillington Road (6 dwellings dated 1870); and in Holwell Road (12 dwellings), were constructed in the 1870s. Some individual much larger

Victorian houses were built also, for example, Pirton Court (1855) on the west edge of the village, and Pirton Hall at the north end of the parish. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, new houses within the village tended to spread in ribbon fashion along the lanes which had linked the separate Greens and Ends.

The following significant developments in Pirton's history occurred in the 20th century. In the 1920s and late 1940s/early 1950s, council housing estates were built on the then edge of the village at Davis Crescent and West Lane (30 dwellings constructed 1920), and at Danefield Road (29 dwellings in two phases between 1947 and 1954), and Pollards Way (14 dwellings in two phases during the same period), to house the expanding village population. The village hall, which



*Fig. 54: Danefield Road*

was built in 1930, still provides an excellent, well-used and much-loved facility for groups, functions and other activities.

Between 1965 and 1990 a large modern estate of 68 private houses was constructed as four separate developments at Cromwell Way and Bunyan Close on former farm orchards. The first and largest comprised 35 houses built in 1965; the second in 1968 comprised 7 houses in Bunyan Close only; the third, again in



*Fig. 55: The Village Hall*

Bunyan Close only, was 20 houses in 1970; and the fourth in Cromwell Way only consisted of 6 houses constructed in 1990. In addition, between 1965 and 1990 there were 6 individual houses built as infill development in these two roads.

Since then, smaller developments of private houses have been built in places such as Franklin Close (3 dwellings in the 1960s), St Mary's Close (7 dwellings in 1978), and Docklands (10 dwellings added in 1984 to a 1974 street of 9 dwellings), the latter following the



*Fig. 56: Infill Franklin Close*

## PIRTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

demolition of the medieval Middle Farm and the infilling of its moat in the late 1960s. In about 1980, the Parish Council built Three Closes sheltered housing over one end of the open space of Great Green, comprising 5 dwellings. The last large infill development of 17 houses was at Coleman's Close in the late 1990s on a pasture field to the rear of The Fox public house. Four detached dwellings were constructed in Shillington Road, near the junction with High Street, in 1987, and three very large detached dwellings off Royal Oak Lane, near the junction with Holwell Road, in about 2004. In 2006 12 dwellings were completed at Elm Tree Farm Close, off Hambridge Way.

These small and large infill developments in the second half of the 20th century on former open spaces, farmyards, fields and orchards within the village altered its historic character to a significant extent, changing it from the late Medieval and Post-Medieval dispersed poly-focal settlement pattern of Greens and Ends linked by lanes into the compact nucleated village it is today, restoring its layout to as it had been in the High Medieval period. A number of smaller developments, many comprising single dwellings, continue to be built in large gardens and small open areas. Over the last few decades, many small houses in the village have been extended, turning them into larger dwellings, a process which continues today.

In 2015 construction was completed of 11 affordable, shared ownership and social houses at Baulk Gardens, on the north side of Pollards Way, promoted by the Parish Council as an exception site outside the village development boundary.

As can be seen from the above paragraphs, since 1870, the largest number of dwellings built as one development were the 35 at Cromwell Way and Bunyan Close completed in 1965. Not counting the numerous single dwellings or any development of less than three houses constructed over the period, the average number of dwellings per development from the review above is a little over 11.5. If all the single dwellings were included, the average would be considerably less. Since 1965, again excluding less than three dwellings, the average per development is about 9. Since 1996, the year of the last NHDC Local Plan, represented now by the Saved Policies, the average is under 8 dwellings per development.

From this review of the history of house building in Pirton since 1870, it can be seen that the residents preference, in the November 2014 Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, for limiting the size of future developments to no more than ten dwellings, actually is an accurate reflection of the historic and recent evidence for development size in the village. However, after much consideration, the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group decided that, in order to promote development within the village, as the Plan must, and to support the NHDC proposed numbers of dwellings to be built in the District, a more realistic and constructive development size in Pirton would be up to 30 dwellings per development. Three times the average size villagers have experienced before and nearly four times the average since 1996.

In this light, it is unfortunate that the NHDC in December 2015 granted outline planning permission for up to 82 dwellings on land east of Elm Tree Farm, Pirton. It is out of all proportion to prior development in the village, ten times the average size since 1996, and against the wishes of the local community.

### 8.1 Heritage Assets - Most Significant Archaeological Assets

1. Toot Hill and The Bury: the Medieval castle and village earthworks are designated as a nationally important Scheduled Monument.
2. Medieval moated Rectory Manor is designated as a nationally important Scheduled Monument.
3. Medieval moat at Pirton Grange is designated as a nationally important Scheduled Monument.
4. Neolithic Knocking Knoll long barrow, on the parish boundary with Shillington, is a nationally important Scheduled Monument.
5. Field east of Priors Hill and north of Pollards Way and Danefield Road: The mid-late Saxon enclosed settlement and boundary earthwork, known as the Old Baulk, on its north side are now Scheduled as a Monument of national significance.
6. The abandoned village buildings, lanes, and ridge and furrow earthworks in Maltings Close are of regional and, probably, national significance.
7. The historic village area of Pirton.

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8. The Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks at Rectory Farm and Grove Lane are of regional significance.
9. The Medieval earthworks and buried remains in grass fields around Wright's Farm, west of Burge End Lane and east of Rectory Manor are of regional significance.
10. The Iron Age, Romano-British and Saxon settlement at the north end of Dane Field, by the Driftway, is of regional significance.
11. The Cat's Brains area of Dane Field, on the parish boundary with Shillington, which has the potential to contain more of the pagan Saxon cemetery discovered two hundred years ago, is of regional significance.
12. The area around Walnut Tree Farm, Bannisters Close and the west side of the Recreation Ground, historically known as Cotman End, contains well-preserved buried remains of the Roman and Medieval periods and is of regional significance.
13. The area of Great Green contains regionally significant well-preserved buried archaeological remains of the Medieval period.
14. There are well-preserved stratified buried archaeological remains of the Medieval and earlier periods in other parts of the village, such as Burge End Lane, Davis Crescent, Hambridge Way, High Street, Little Lane, Royal Oak Lane, Shillington Road, and West Lane.
15. Roman religious site off Holwell Road.
16. Prehistoric and Roman religious settlement at Oughton Head.
17. Medieval earthworks at High Down.
18. Prehistoric and Roman cropmarks south of Hambridge Way.
19. Prehistoric and Roman cropmarks north of Hambridge Way.

## 8.2 Hertfordshire County Council Historic Environment Record Designated Archaeological Alert Areas

1. Pirton historic village area and surrounds, including Prehistoric and Roman cropmarks to the south of the village and Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks by Rectory Manor Farm.
2. Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlement remains and Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks either side of the Driftway on the west side of Shillington Road.
3. High Down House and surrounds.
4. Prehistoric and Roman remains either side of Hitchin Road near Punch's Cross.
5. Prehistoric and Roman remains either side of the Icknield Way.
6. Prehistoric and Roman remains south of Hambridge Way.
7. Prehistoric and Roman remains around the former Holwell Pit.
8. Roman religious site south of Holwell Road.

See Fig. 57: Pirton Parish Archaeology Alert Areas shown by **purple boundary lines**.

See Fig. 58: Pirton Village Archaeology Alert Areas shown by **purple boundary lines**.

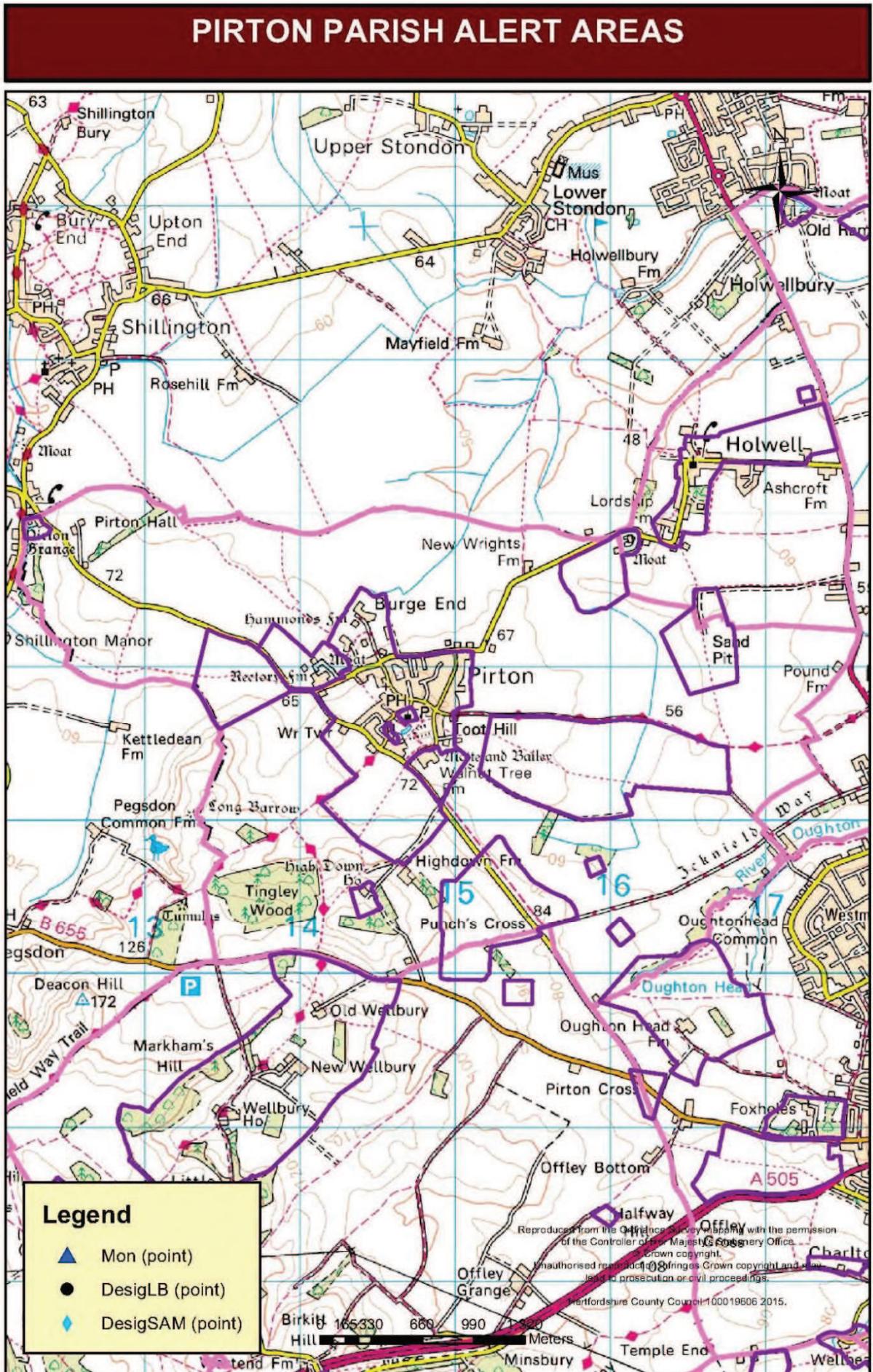
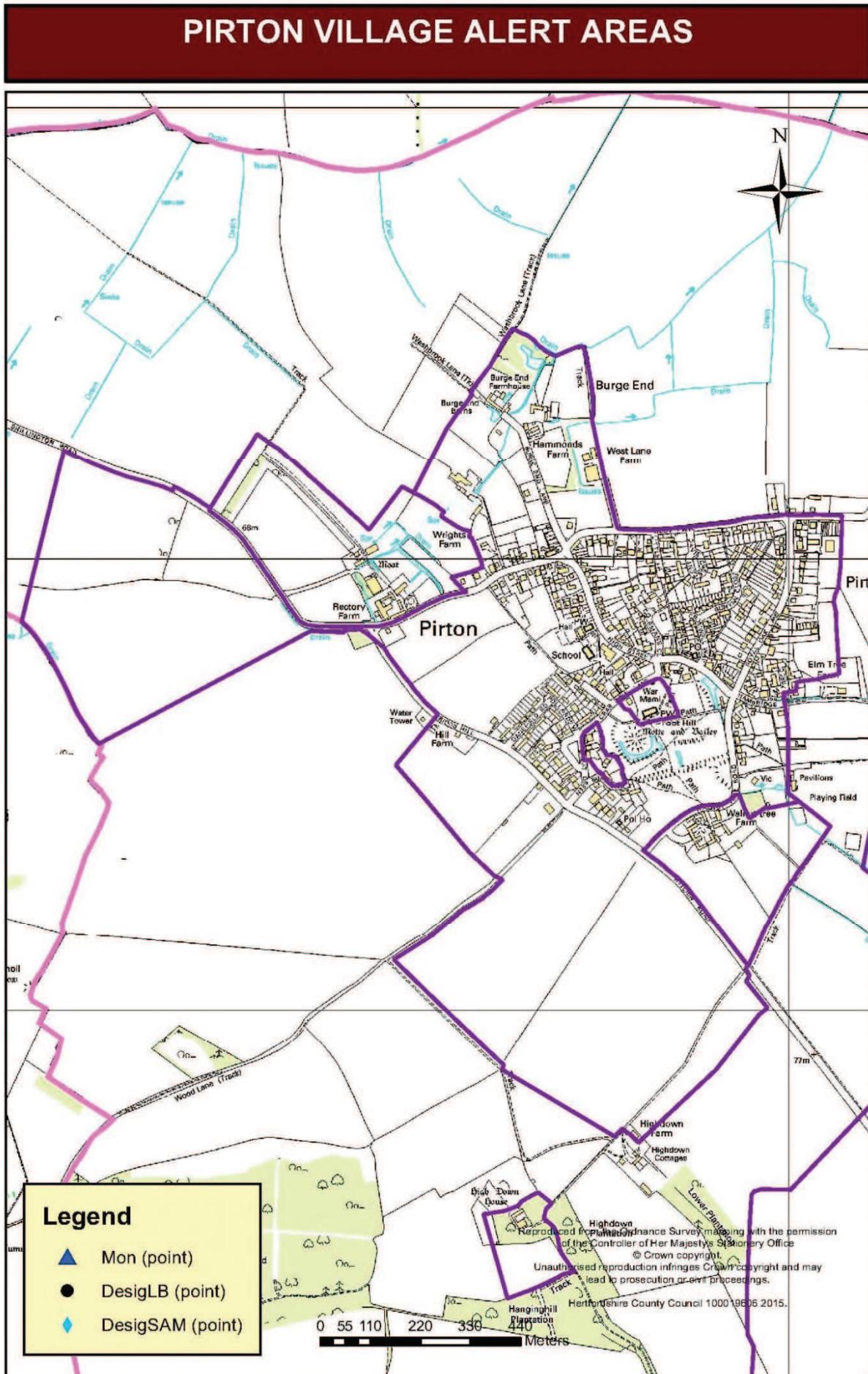


Fig. 57: Pirton Parish Archaeology Alert Areas shown by *purple boundary lines*



See Fig. 58: Pirton Village Archaeology Alert Areas shown by purple boundary lines