

# Pirton Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

Client:  
North Herts Council

Date:  
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**North  
Herts**  
Council





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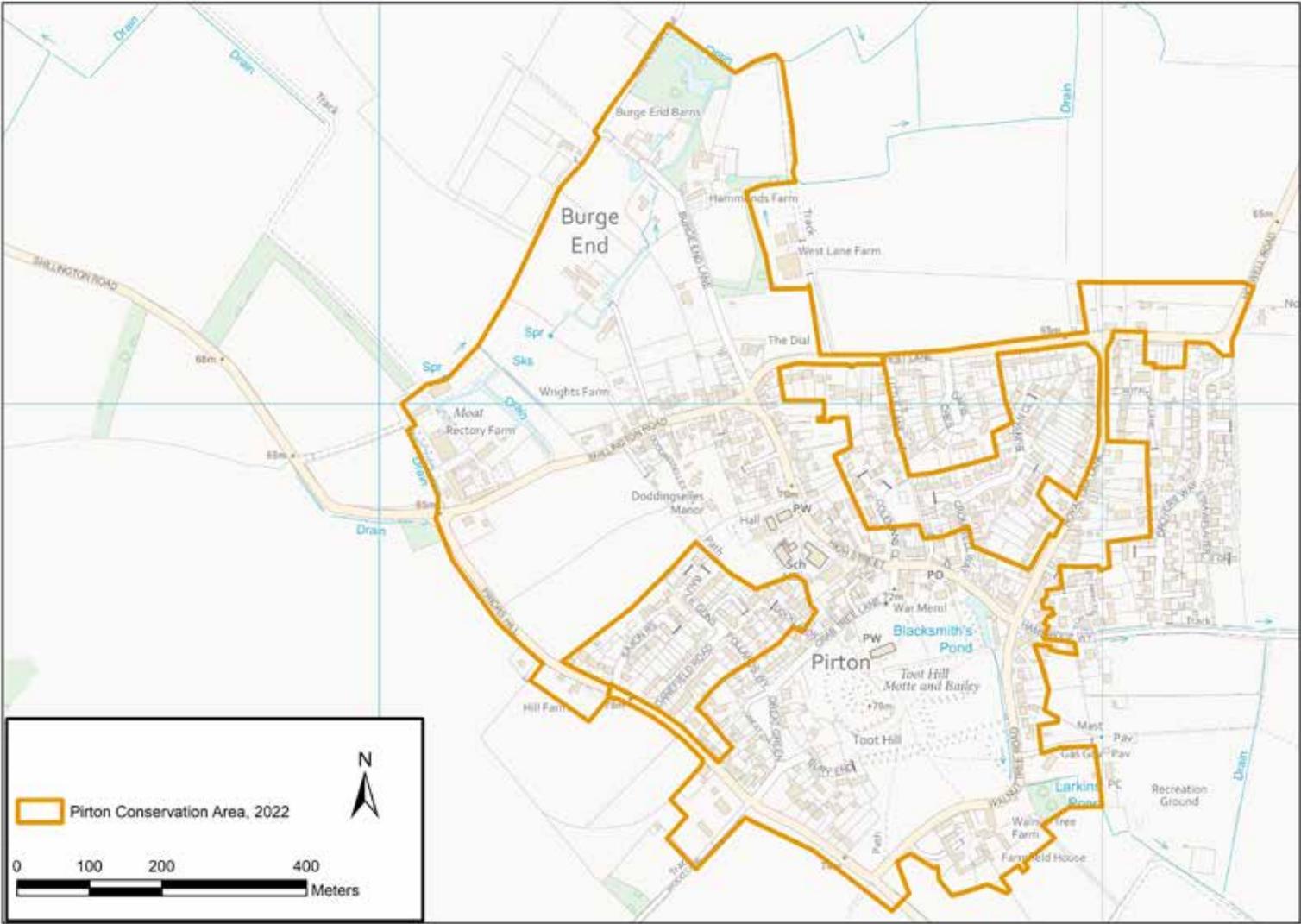


Figure 1: Map of the Pirton Conservation Area, Proposed 2022 Boundary Revision



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Summary

Pirton Conservation Area encompasses the core of the Pirton village, a historic rural settlement with an extensive history. Located in North Hertfordshire, three miles northwest of Hitchin, Pirton is on the northern edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is surrounded by an agricultural landscape. The village has a compact, triangular layout, orientated around St Mary's Parish Church and the remains of Pirton's long demolished motte and bailey castle and original medieval settlement. Although long since lost, the site of the castle and original village remain an important area of green space designated as a scheduled monument at the heart of the Conservation Area.

The village retains many important archaeological, architectural, and historic features which contribute to its character, leading to most of Pirton being included within the Conservation Area boundary. This includes three scheduled monuments, numerous listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, both built and archaeological. Surviving buildings of merit and archaeological features vary widely in age, yet all contribute positively to the Conservation Area's significance as an area of special interest, providing a link to the history and heritage of Pirton and wider area.

## 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 Pirton 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 Pirton. This assessment is based on information derived from documentary research and analysis of the individual character areas.

This appraisal will enhance understanding of Pirton 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 6.5.

#### 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 conservations 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 this [link](#).

#### 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](#).

### 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](#).

#### 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](#).

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](#).

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.



## Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management

Historic England Advice Note 1 (Second Edition)



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

The emerging Local Plan is still under examination (June 2022) but there are a number of policies which set out the Council's approach to the historic environment. These are:

SP13: Historic Environment

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

Policy HE3: Non-designated heritage assets

Policy HE4: Archaeology

Policy NE3: The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

### Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031

Further information on neighbourhood planning policies and guidance can be accessed via this [link](#).



Relevant policies within the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan are:

PNP 8: Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage

### Supplementary Planning Guidance

Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, February 2000

Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031. Including:

- Pirton Village Character Assessment
- Basic Conditions Statement, October 2016

## 2. Context and Character

Pirton village is in North Hertfordshire, within its own Parish Boundary. The village has developed in a triangular formation, southeast of the junction between two routes, Shillington Road/West Lane which runs east/west and Priors Hill/Hitchin Road which runs north/south. Walnut Tree Road/Royal Oak Lane completes the triangle, framing the village core. The Conservation Area includes a large percentage of the village boundary, excluding select areas of modern housing on the outer edges of the settlement.

Located close to Hertfordshire's northern border with Bedfordshire, Pirton is well connected to surrounding towns and villages and has been throughout its history. The Icknield Way, an ancient route across East Anglia, forms part of Walnut Tree Lane, at the southern edge of the Conservation Area. The path remains and is well signposted. Other footpaths and bridleways throughout the village allow quick and easy pedestrian access throughout the village and connect Pirton to Shillington in the north west and Oughton Head, on the edge of Hitchin, to the south east. Nestled in a small dip, the route into Pirton from surrounding settlements is heavily wooded. Tree cover around the village's edges and the low height of buildings largely conceal built form within Pirton in long views looking toward the village from the surrounding countryside.

At the Conservation Area's western edge is the Chilterns AONB, the rolling hills of which form an important part of Pirton's wider landscape. From the western side of the Conservation Area in particular, expansive fields allow for wide views from within the Conservation Area across the landscape punctuated by the hill scape to the west. Long views into an agricultural landscape can also be gained when looking out of the conservation area toward Holwell in the northeast.

Oughton Head Common Nature Reserve, Pegsdon Hills and Hoo Bit Nature Reserve, and Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve, are located just outside Pirton Parish's boundary. As areas of ecological value, they

contribute positively to Pirton's wider setting, emphasising the value of the village's surrounding landscape.

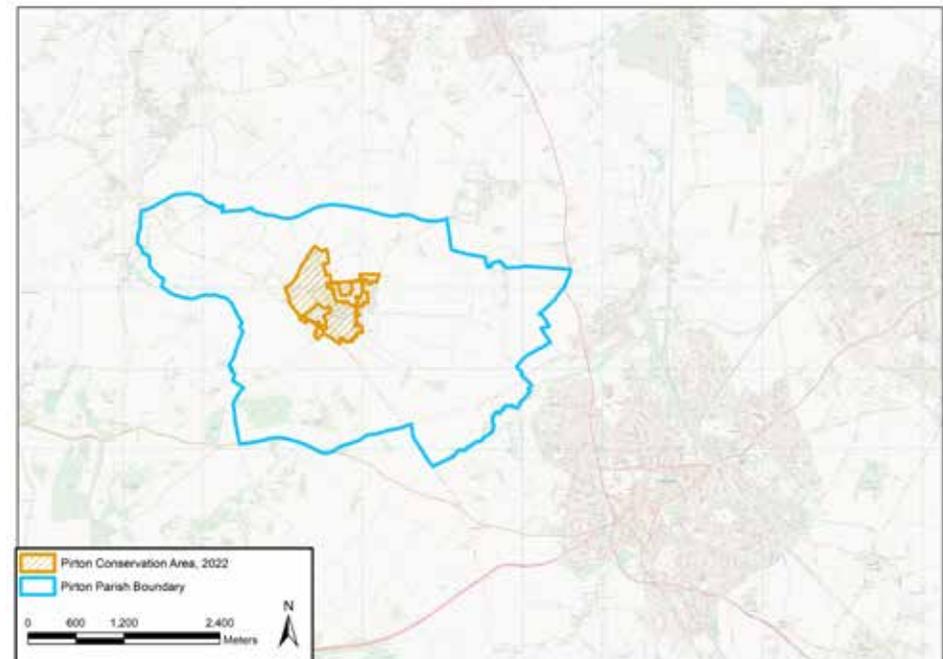


Figure 3: Map showing Pirton Conservation Area in relation to neighbouring towns and the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire border

## 2.1 Origin and Evolution

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

Modern-day Pirton has its roots in the Saxon period, although archaeological evidence has been found which indicates occupation of the area has occurred since prehistory. It is a village with an interesting and extensive history that has been well researched and documented, with the village featuring as one of the settlements studied as part of the ongoing Currently Occupied Rural Settlement (CORS) research project.

For further information and an extensive history of the village, please refer to the texts listed in Appendix 6.1: Bibliography.

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

Archaeological evidence indicates that there has been human activity in and around Pirton since at least the Neolithic period, the final period of the Stone Age, roughly 10,000–4,500BCE. Ring ditches from this Neolithic period have been excavated within the Conservation Area, with these finds designated as part of the Land

to the east of Priors Hill and north of Danefield Road scheduled monument. These ditches are thought to be either the surviving remains of an early type of building, such as a roundhouse, or a barrow, a burial site marked by mounded earth. No human remains were discovered, but at present the scheduled monument remains largely unexcavated and it is suspected that there is high potential for other archaeological material to survive.



Figure 4: A Bronze Age flint arrowhead, found in Pirton and now in the collection of Letchworth Museum © North Hertfordshire Museum 2022

Outside the Pirton Conservation Area, further evidence has been found which indicates human activity in the local area in the Stone Age. These include a scatter of Neolithic flints discovered in the mid-1990s, including flint blades, flakes, cores and a scraper. Further finds in Lower Stondon, north east of Pirton village, as well as the barrows at Tingley Wood and Knocking Knoll, south west of Pirton, highlight the area was known, if not necessarily extensively populated, by prehistoric humans.

### Roman (43 – 410 AD)

There was a strong Roman presence across East Anglia and in Hertfordshire, with many areas of the county featuring Roman remains. Verulamium, modern day St Albans, was an important centre and one of the largest Roman cities, is located approximately twenty miles south west of Pirton.

Archaeological remains indicate a small settlement was present in Pirton during the Roman period, featuring buildings and industrial areas alongside a Roman road. In terms of the Conservation Area, Roman activity is thought to have been concentrated to the centre and south of the current day settlement; although evidence of further Roman activity has been found outside the Conservation Area in an area of agricultural fields west of the modern village

named Dane Field. It is thought this field was occupied from the first century onwards and it was here that the settlement gradually grew, continuing into the fifth century. Evidence has been found which indicates industrial activity including iron working and kilns within Pirton, along with high quality imported pottery and coins.

Excavations in 1955 revealed the floor of a Roman building within the vicinity of Toot Hill, in the centre of the village, with further excavations at Pollards Way and Pirton Primary School also finding Roman artefacts. Between 2007 and 2011, as part of the CORS project, an extensive test pit survey across the Pirton recovered pieces of pottery which indicate almost continuous occupation of Pirton from the Roman period to the present.

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

The history of Pirton in the Saxon and Medieval Period is complex, with the location of the village centre changing throughout this time. In 2015, substantial evidence was found to suggest that, as well as the presence of Neolithic remains, the Land to the east of Priors Hill and north of Danefield Road scheduled monument contains Anglo-Saxon archaeological remains.

During a geophysical survey and trial trenching



Figure 5: Roman Statuette of Mercury in the collection of North Hertfordshire Museum, believed to be found in Pirton in the 1950s © North Hertfordshire Museum 2022

of this field, evidence was found which indicates that Anglo-Saxons lived in Pirton in an enclosed settlement, part of a planned urban layout northwest of the village's present-day centre. Survival of such remains is rare and led to the field's designation as a scheduled monument. In particular, the geophysical survey identified

linear features which are thought to represent early medieval furrows, long narrow trenches formed by ploughing.

Physical archaeological investigation of the field has been limited to only set trenches to date, rather than the whole field, meaning no discernible patterns have been found, however a concentration of post holes in the eastern section of the monument are thought to represent the remains of early houses or other built structures. The grave of an older male was discovered in the north-eastern section of the field; radio carbon dating of this man's bone indicate he was alive between 775 and 970AD.

No evidence was found within the monument from the later Saxon or Saxo-Norman period, suggesting this is when the village centre shifted south, to its present-day location surrounding the parish church. This is supported by evidence which has found pieces of pottery and other remains dating from the ninth century onwards along the High Street, Walnut Tree Road, Little Lane, Elm Tree Close and Shillington Road.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, numerous archaeological investigations were undertaken in Pirton and the wider area. Led by William Ransom, local businessman, these excavations took place at Knocking Knoll, revealed to be a Saxon tumulus south west of the Conservation Area.

Archaeological investigations in the late 1900s identified a Saxon cemetery at Dane Field, a large agricultural field west of the present-day village. Cremations in urns, pots, pins, and graves were discovered and tentatively dated to the sixth or seventh century BCE. In the 1990s, further investigation into the archaeological value of Dane Field took place as part of a wider scheme for the installation of an oil pipeline across Dane Field. The early stages of the 1990 investigation did not uncover evidence of Saxon occupation in the northern section of the field, but it did reveal Anglo Saxon pot sherds in the southern section of the site.



Figure 6: Watercolour of William Ransom excavating Knocking Knoll Tumulus by Samuel Lucas, snr, 1856. ©North Hertfordshire Museum

Remains of a Saxon cemetery, suspected remains of an early church and further indications of a planned settlement were found as part of excavations which took place close to The Fox Public House in 1995 on the village's High Street. An enclosure ditch surrounded

the Anglo-Saxon cemetery, which was found to contain the burials of forty individuals. This further suggests that the early medieval village was located in the eastern side of the Conservation Area, north of St Mary's Church.

### Medieval (1066 – 1540 AD)

Pirton appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Peritone and is recorded as home to 54 villagers, a priest, a knight, a freeman and 12 cottars. This description suggests the total population of the village would have been around 425 people, tiny by modern standards but large for the period. Hitchin, the nearest town and one of the largest in Hertfordshire at the time, had approximately 600 occupants.

Before the Norman Conquest of 1066, Pirton was a thriving manorial estate held by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This appears to have continued following the conquest, evidenced by the surviving remains of a twelfth century motte and bailey castle at the heart of the village. Toot Hill, as the castle motte is known, is a scheduled monument and consists of surviving castle earthworks, surviving earthworks of two baileys and remains of a shrunken medieval village, known as The Bury (see Appendix 6.4 for definitions). The location of the village was carefully planned in relation to the castle, located just south of the castle bailey. Surviving earthworks mark out the position of holloways,

tracks and building platforms.

The presence of two castle baileys is unusual, with the larger outer ring also including the parish church. Beyond the baileys to the west is Great Green which survives today. Once known as Chipping Green, this was likely the location of a market; the word chipping derives from cēping, an Old English word meaning market place.

St Mary's Church also dates from the twelfth century, perhaps built to replace an earlier church. Originally a cruciform church with crossing tower, sections of the building have been extensively remodelled and restored, however there are surviving twelfth century arches within the building.

Evidence has been found in the form of pottery and other features which suggest Toot Hill and The Bury were densely populated until the fourteenth century, at which point the village fell into a period of decline. This is typical of mediaeval settlements across the country, the populations of which were hit by famine and the Black Death in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

### Post-Medieval (1540 – 1901 AD)

Following the substantial reduction in the size of Pirton in the fifteenth century, in the early medieval period the village was reduced to

three centres, located away from Toot Hill and The Bury, with sporadic buildings retained within the castle's grounds. These three centres were at Rectory Farm on Shillington Road, around Great Green and at Burge End. The spine roads of Shillington Road and Priors Hill/Hitchin Road remained prominent, highlighting the village's pre-existing function as a transitory place, connecting larger settlements. This period of decline also helped to define Pirton's surviving character, with the arrangement of roads and open spaces giving the village and Conservation Area an interconnected and sporadic pattern of development.

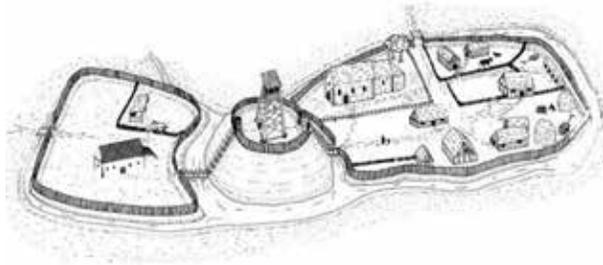


Figure 7: Illustration demonstrating what Pirton's two baileys may have looked like ©North Hertfordshire Museum

Surviving buildings within these three post-medieval areas date from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including a cluster of listed buildings on Great Green and a number

of listed structures and scheduled monument at Rectory Farm. Within the post-medieval period, agriculture remained integral to the local economy and a source of wealth for Pirton's inhabitants. The tithe barn and moat at Rectory Farm both predate the seventeenth century farmhouse, with the moat used as a defensive system to protect the farmstead.

Hammonds Farm, at Burge End, is a sixteenth-century former hall house, featuring panelling removed from Rectory Farmhouse in the 1930s. Externally and internally, there are areas of exposed timber framing, infilled with brick nogging in places externally. The building is Grade II\* listed due to age and construction method.

Three Gables, believed to be Pirton's oldest house, is thought to have been constructed in the late fifteenth century. Located on Great Green, the house has been subject to many alterations in subsequent centuries, meaning its street frontage deceptively hides the building's medieval core.

Development of the village was slow between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, with little change occurring until the industrial age. The construction of the school at Great Green and two Methodist chapels on the High

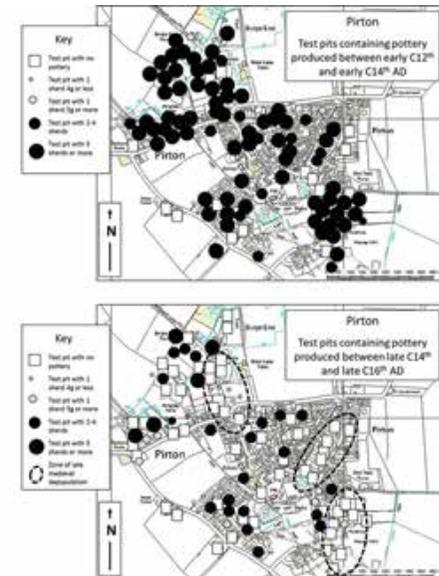


Figure 8: Diagram showing the distribution of pottery pieces found in Pirton, from 'Disaster recovery: New archaeological evidence for the long-term impact of the 'calamitous' fourteenth century' © Carenza Lewis, 2016

Street were important phases of Pirton's development and expansion in the nineteenth century, built in response to increased social welfare and the rise of non-Conformist worship within the Victorian Period. The National School, built in 1841, was demolished in 1969, replaced by the house 'Rafters'. The first chapel, built next to the Hammond's Almshouses on the High Street, was demolished in 1960, replaced

by a bungalow named Wesley.

Agriculture remained the main source of income for Pirton's inhabitants until the twentieth century. The seasonality of the work, as well as high rates of tax, gave rise to periods of food and monetary shortages for families in the village. Many women found a source of income plaiting straw for nearby Luton's millinery industry, supplementing their family's income. Boys in the village could expect to start work from the age of ten, working full time hours as per the men of the village, until the law changed in 1880, requiring all children to stay in school until the age of thirteen.

The 1818 Enclosure Award had a notable

impact upon the surrounding landscape of the village, removing sections of common land and altering how villagers supported themselves. To compensate for this loss of land, sections of the village were allocated as allotments, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map from 1902 (Figure 12). The enclosing of fields, largely by hedging, changed the village landscape from its medieval appearance to a fractured landscape in the nineteenth century. This change did not, however, last. Modern farming practices, including the use of large items of machinery, has resulted in fields opening up again, and the removal of nineteenth century hedgerows. Fields were, nonetheless, no longer farmed in individual strips or lots, as per the medieval period, with industrial farming methods meaning

the land was increasingly farmed by only a handful of farmers who controlled much larger swathes of land compared to their medieval counterparts.

### Modern (1901 – present)

In the twentieth century, areas of green open space within the village began to be infilled. The most perceptible expansion occurred in 1920, when Davis Crescent was constructed. Built as council houses post World War One, the block plan and appearance of the dwellings are built in reference to Garden City ideals, reflective of development occurring across Hertfordshire, notably in Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn. Set around a communal green, with large front and back gardens, the



Figure 9: Pirton, extract taken from Bryant's Map of Hertfordshire, 1820



Figure 10: Pirton, extract from the 1902 Ordnance Survey Map



Figure 11: Pirton Village Hall



houses have a homogenous, uniform appearance with an urban layout that is well considered in relation to the rest of the village. Danefield Road and Pollards Way, built in the 1930s, followed Davis Crescent. Primarily bungalows, buildings in this development are not as architecturally distinct or considered as those on Davis Crescent and are not included within the Conservation Area.

Opened in 1930, the Village Hall was largely funded by charity events held in the village. Despite the spurt of building that occurred in Pirton during the interwar period, development across the village continued slowly. Some historic buildings were demolished and replaced in the later twentieth century, yet most development has occurred on areas of pasture and orchard space, such as on Cromwell Way and Bunyan Close, both excluded from the Conservation Area.

## 2.2 Designation of the Conservation Area

Pirton Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and amended in 1979. A Character Statement for the Pirton Conservation Area was created in 2020, which outlines the significance of the heritage asset. This document provides further analysis of the Conservation Area and is the first document to provide an appraisal and management plan for the Conservation Area.

## 2.3 Revisions to the Boundary

As part of this review, revisions to the Conservation Area boundary are proposed, to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Pirton'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 on page 14, written descriptions and accompanying photographs are included in the following two sections.

### Necessary Reductions

Small sections of modern housing have been removed from the Conservation Area on Hitchin Road, Hambridge Way and Walnut Tree Road. This is because the properties in these areas lack historic or architectural interest to justify their inclusion within the boundary.

### Additions

Following the designation of the Conservation Area, two further assets within Pirton have been added to the national heritage list for England. To



Figure 12: Properties on Hitchin Road, suggested for removal from the removed from the Conservation Area



Figure 13: Holwell Road, proposed to be added to the Conservation Area

recognise their historic value and contribution they make to the overall history of the area, these have both been added to the Conservation Area boundary. These are:

- Land to the east of Priors Hill and north of Danefield Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire (north-east of Hill Farm, Priors Hill), a scheduled monument and
- Barn at Wrights Farm, Grade II listed.

The scheduled monument was designated in 2016, encompassing an Anglo-Saxon settlement to the west of the village. This field was previously excluded from the Conservation Area as its archaeological value was not known.

The Wright's Farm barn was designated as a Grade II listed building in 2020. As part of this appraisal, the Conservation Area boundary has been amended to include this barn and the other remaining buildings at Wrights Farm, including associated fields, within the Conservation Area. This means that the boundary now extends across the far north of the village, whereby the Wrights Farm complex was previously excluded.

West Lane and a small section of Holwell Road, including Davis Close, has been added to the Conservation Area as an acknowledgement of the characteristics exhibited elsewhere in the Conservation Area that these roads possess, including the historic landscape quality of West Lane and the architectural value of Davis Close. Built immediately post World War one, the houses on Davis Close are an example of post war 'Homes for Heroes', marking an important phase of expansion for the village. Other buildings on West Lane now included within the Conservation Area boundary are Victorian houses at the eastern side of West Lane, built in local Arleseey brick. The grass verges on the lane and two triangular sections of grass on the intersections of Royal Oak Lane and Doves

Way with West Lane are also now included within the Conservation Area, acknowledging their importance as a distinctive landscape feature of Pirton.

To adjoin this section of Holwell Road to the core of the Conservation Area, the grass verges and road of Royal Oak Lane are proposed for inclusion within the Conservation Area boundary. The lack of pedestrian provision or on street parking, grass verges and simple form of the lane reinforce the loose, rural character of the village and should be maintained in order to retain Pirton's existing visual quality.



Figure 14: Houses on Davis Close, which are proposed to be added to the Conservation Area

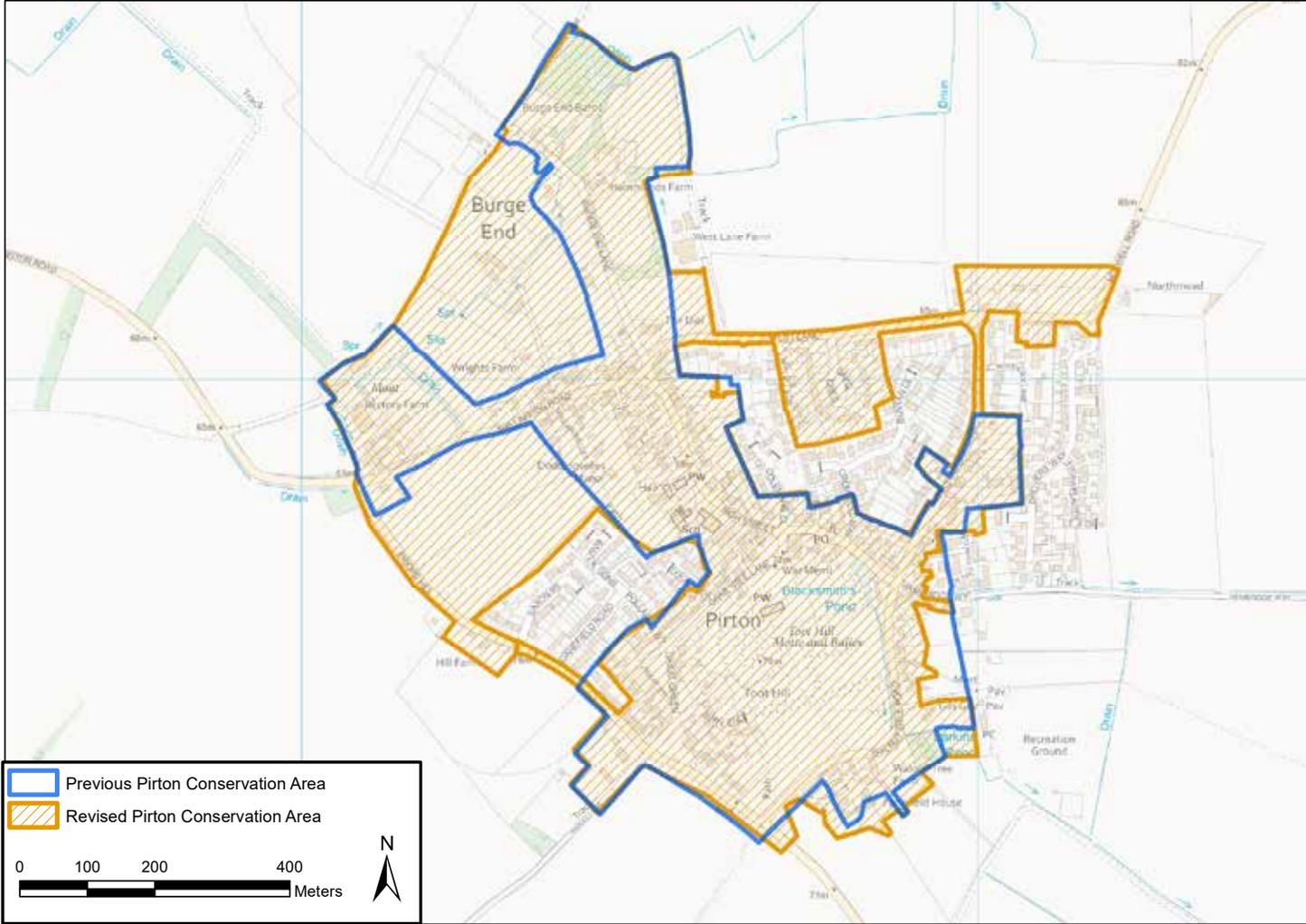


Figure 15: Map of the Pirton Conservation area showing the previous and proposed 2022 boundary

## 2.4 Designated Heritage Assets

There are fifty-one listed buildings and three Scheduled Monuments within the Conservation Area. A map of these assets is included on the following page, as Figure 17.

Of these, one listed building is Grade I (the highest Grade), five are Grade II\* and forty-five are Grade II.



Figure 16: St Mary's Parish church

Listed buildings within the Conservation Area range in date from the twelfth to nineteenth centuries, with the oldest building being St Mary's Parish Church (Grade I) which has twelfth-century elements. The remainder of listed buildings are largely seventeenth-century dwellings, although there are examples of agricultural and residential buildings within the Conservation Area which pre-date these and have fifteenth or sixteenth-century origins.

Believed to be the oldest house in the village, Three Gables is a timber framed building, close to the boundary of the Bury. Originally an open hall house, the building is thought to date from the fifteenth century, if not earlier. Altered and extended in later decades, the house and its location provide an important insight into Pirton's history.

Pirton War Memorial, Grade II listed, was unveiled in 1920 to mark those who lost their lives in World War One, with later inscriptions added after World War Two. It is the most modern designated structure in the village.

The three scheduled monuments within the Conservation Area are:

- Toot Hill motte and bailey castle and shrunken medieval village at Pirton
- Anglo-Saxon settlement, and probable prehistoric ring ditches, west of Pirton village
- Moated site and associated enclosure at Rectory Farm

Together, the three scheduled monuments offer insight into the village's development and possess high archaeological interest. Further study and analysis of the three sites is anticipated to reveal further finds from the prehistoric through the medieval to modern period, with the importance and vulnerability of these site acknowledged in their scheduled status.

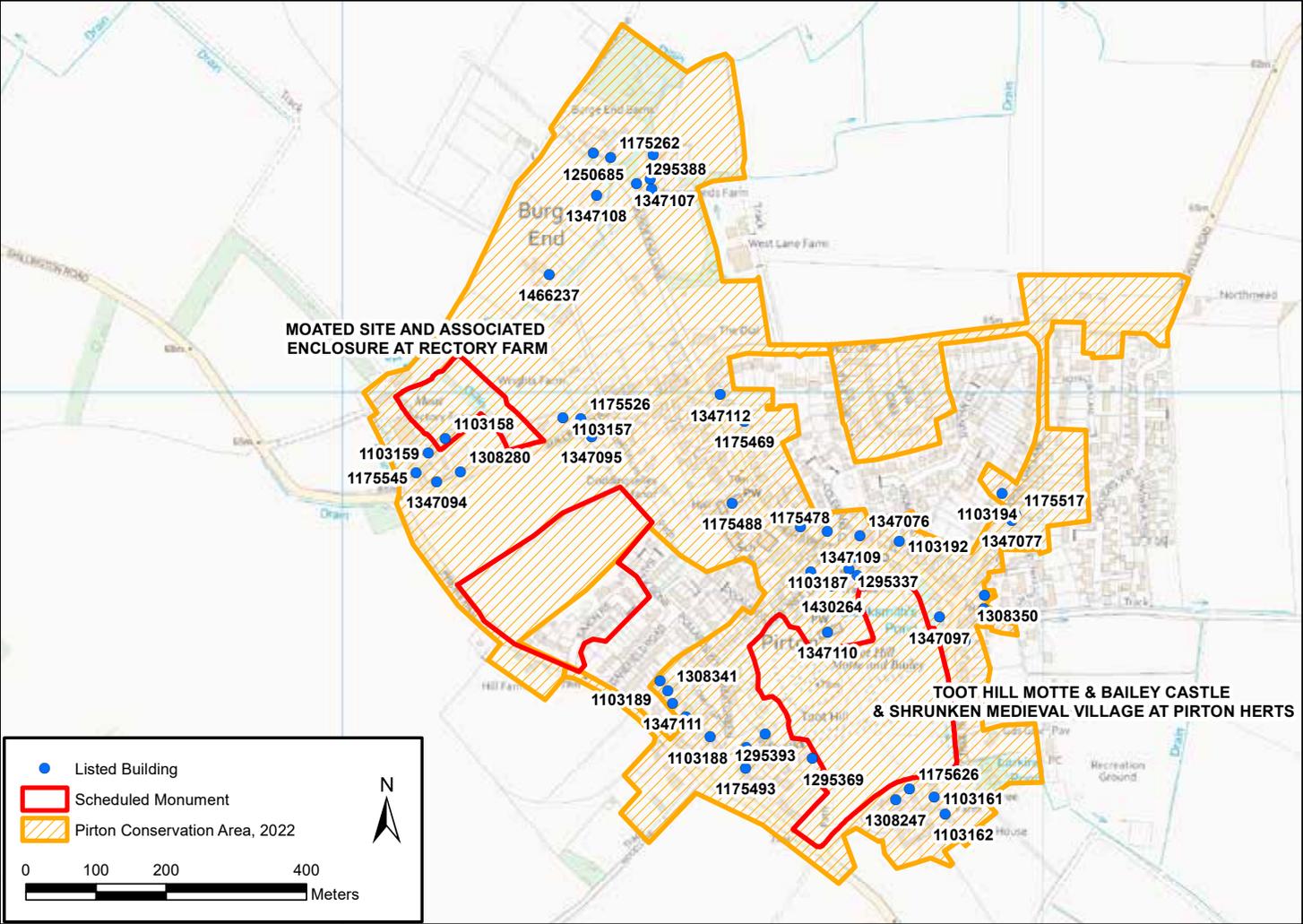


Figure 17: Map showing all designated heritage assets within the proposed Pirton Conservation Area, 2022

## 2.5 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

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

Heritage assets are defined in The NPPF 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 Hertfordshire District Council currently has Registers of Buildings of Local Interest for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Newnham, Knebworth (parish) and Royston.

Buildings of local interest are identified within the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan and within the 2020 character statement for the Pirton Conservation Area. Buildings which make a positive contribution to the Pirton Conservation Area have also been identified in the descriptions of each character area outlined in Section Three. It is recommended that these structures should be considered for formal local listing in the future by the local planning authority.

Figure 18 Nineteenth century cottages on the High Street, built in local Arlesey white brick with decorative red brick banding



Figure 18: Nineteenth century cottages on the High Street, built in local Arlesey white brick with decorative red brick banding



## 2.6 Heritage at Risk

Historic England publishes a yearly list of Heritage at Risk. To be included on the list, buildings must be Grade II\* listed or above, with the exception of Grade II listed places of worship and Grade II listed buildings in London.

Other designated heritage assets can also be included on Historic England's register, including Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Wreck Sites. Non-designated heritage assets are not considered by Historic England for inclusion on the Heritage at Risk Register.

There is one designated heritage asset within the Pirton Conservation Area on the At Risk Register at present, West Barn at Rectory Farm, Shillington Road. At the time of writing, discussions are currently ongoing regarding the barn's future, which is described as in 'poor' condition, class C priority for work (slow decay, no solution agreed).

The Conservation Area itself is not deemed to be at risk by Historic England. There are needless many areas of the Conservation Area which would highly benefit from enhancement which are identified in Section 4 of this document.

## 2.7 Archaeological Potential

Since 2005, Pirton has been one of the study sites of the Currently Occupied Rural Settlement (CORS) project. The project was initially run by Carezza Lewis at Cambridge University, from 2015 it has been led by Lewis' team at the University of Lincoln.

A number of archaeological excavations have been undertaken within and around the Pirton Conservation Area and reveal the potential of the area. Excavations to date have largely comprised of medieval and post-medieval settlement evidence and test pit surveys identifying hot spots of activity.

The Conservation Area has the potential to contain multi period deposits. Prehistoric activity is largely concentrated to the west of the Conservation Area although later prehistoric activity, including occupation of Bronze Age date, is scattered throughout the Conservation Area with a focus currently known at Pollards Way. Test pit surveys have identified largely continuous occupation within the present settlement since the Romans. Roman activity has largely been identified within and to the south of the current settlement area, comprising of both buildings and industrial activity. The majority of Saxon settlement activity is protected by a scheduled monument, located to the west of Pirton. The most common archaeological evidence identified within the Conservation Area will likely be medieval and post medieval remains comprising of features, structures and finds; examples of these have already been found along the High Street and around the castle.

A good survival of archaeological deposits has been found throughout the settlement and Conservation Area; this is particularly evident along the High Street, where truncation from later buildings can so often occur. Saxon burials (skeletal remains) and palaeoenvironmental remains,

identified west adjacent to the Conservation Area, are also well-preserved. Excavation evidence has demonstrated the survival of bone and shell, as well as ceramics, metal objects and building materials. Whilst the post medieval settlement evidence is more likely to be sited along the street frontage, the backyard areas are more likely to contain preserved archaeological remains of the medieval settlement. The survival of the castle and earthworks, medieval street plan of Pirton, and the extensive listed buildings, is an important, well-preserved resource.

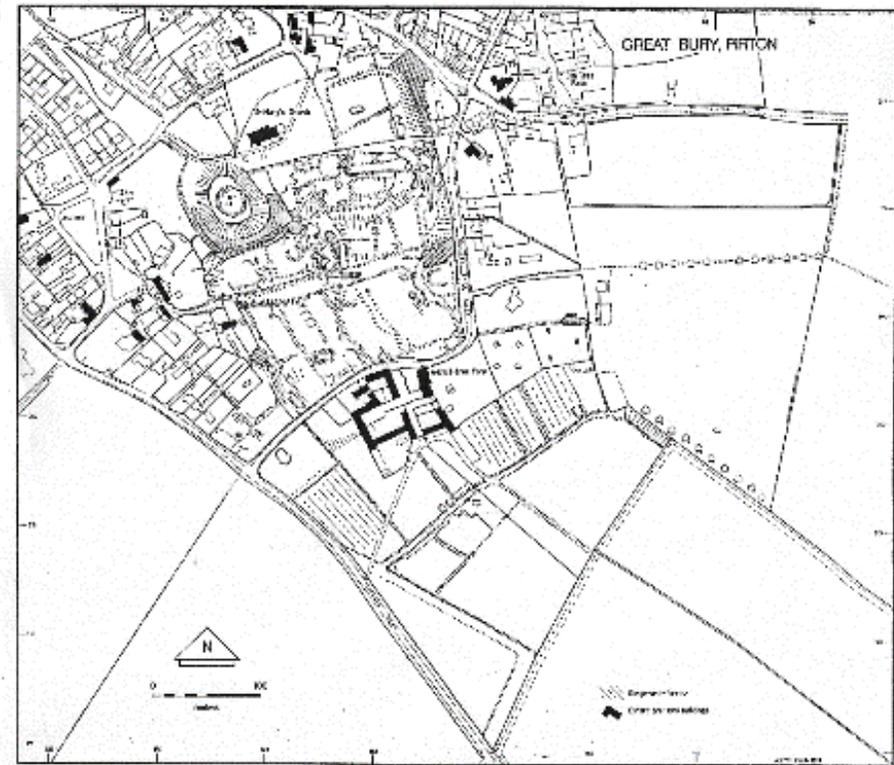


Figure 19: Diagram showing the results of a field survey conducted in 1987/8 of the earthworks to the SE of Walnut Tree Farm. © Gil Burleigh

## 3. Assessment of Significance

### 3.1 Summary

Pirton Conservation Area is significant as an important, historic and continually occupied medieval settlement. For a small village, Pirton contains a wealth of historical features, evidenced by the high number of designations within the Conservation Area. The street plan and layout of the village is indicative of its phased development, providing an insight into Pirton's long running history. From the position of roads, buildings and greens, it is possible to determine how the village grew and declined, representing both local and national events.

Within the Conservation Area, built and archaeological features combine to create a pleasing, attractive example of a North Hertfordshire village. Architecturally, the Conservation Area exhibits a host of styles, although the overall appearance of Pirton is traditional and typical for the region. Timber framed medieval houses are nestled in between Victorian terraces, scattered with examples of former farmsteads and barn conversions in the village core. Local materials, such as Arleseey brick, dominate the street scenes, complemented by examples of thatch and rendered dwellings. Due to the geology of the area, stone is uncommon and features only on the most important of buildings, such as St Mary's Church. Hedgerow, grass verges and large garden plots give the Conservation Area a sylvan quality, interconnected with the surrounding agrarian landscape.

Although much of the village's past remains underground and is not easily discernible to the modern eye, the archaeological potential for further discovery stresses the Conservation Area's position as an important, highly valuable resource from which much can be learnt about past cultures. Toot Hill and The Bury dominate the Conservation Area due to their large size, however the two other scheduled monuments within the Conservation Area are too highly significant as areas of discernible history, indicative of how people lived and worked within Pirton in the last



2000 years.

Despite featuring multiple focal points and greens, Pirton Conservation Area does not have a dispersed appearance, due to the strong sense of interconnection between the village's distinct residential and agricultural areas created by the high number of footpaths and alleys. Pedestrian only routes allow for the Conservation Area to be well appreciated on foot, as it has been for centuries. Alleyways and paths create a sense of secrecy and arrival, replicated across the Conservation Area as sections of built form within the denser village centre open out into pockets of green space. This allows for the rural appearance of the village to be maintained, with the retained sections of green space offering preserving links to Pirton's historic rural setting..



### 3.2 Character Areas

For the purpose of this appraisal, the Conservation Area is divided into three Character Areas, loosely defined as:

- Character Area One: The Medieval Settlement (containing Toot Hill, St Mary's, Great Green and Walnut Tree Farm)
- Character Area Two: Northern Farmsteads (north of West Lane)
- Character Area Three: Post Medieval Residential Development (containing the High Street, Royal Oak Lane and Holwell Road)

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.

Each Character Area features designated heritage assets, a full list of the designations within the Conservation Area are 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 Pirton Conservation Area's special interest, with the aim to enhance or preserve those aspects which contribute to its significance.

Key views have been identified within each Character Area, and views from outside the Conservation Area from which its special interest can be recognised are also highlighted where appropriate. There may, nevertheless, be other views of significance within or beyond the Conservation Area's boundary which contribute to how it is appreciated and understood. Any proposals for development within the Conservation Area, or 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.

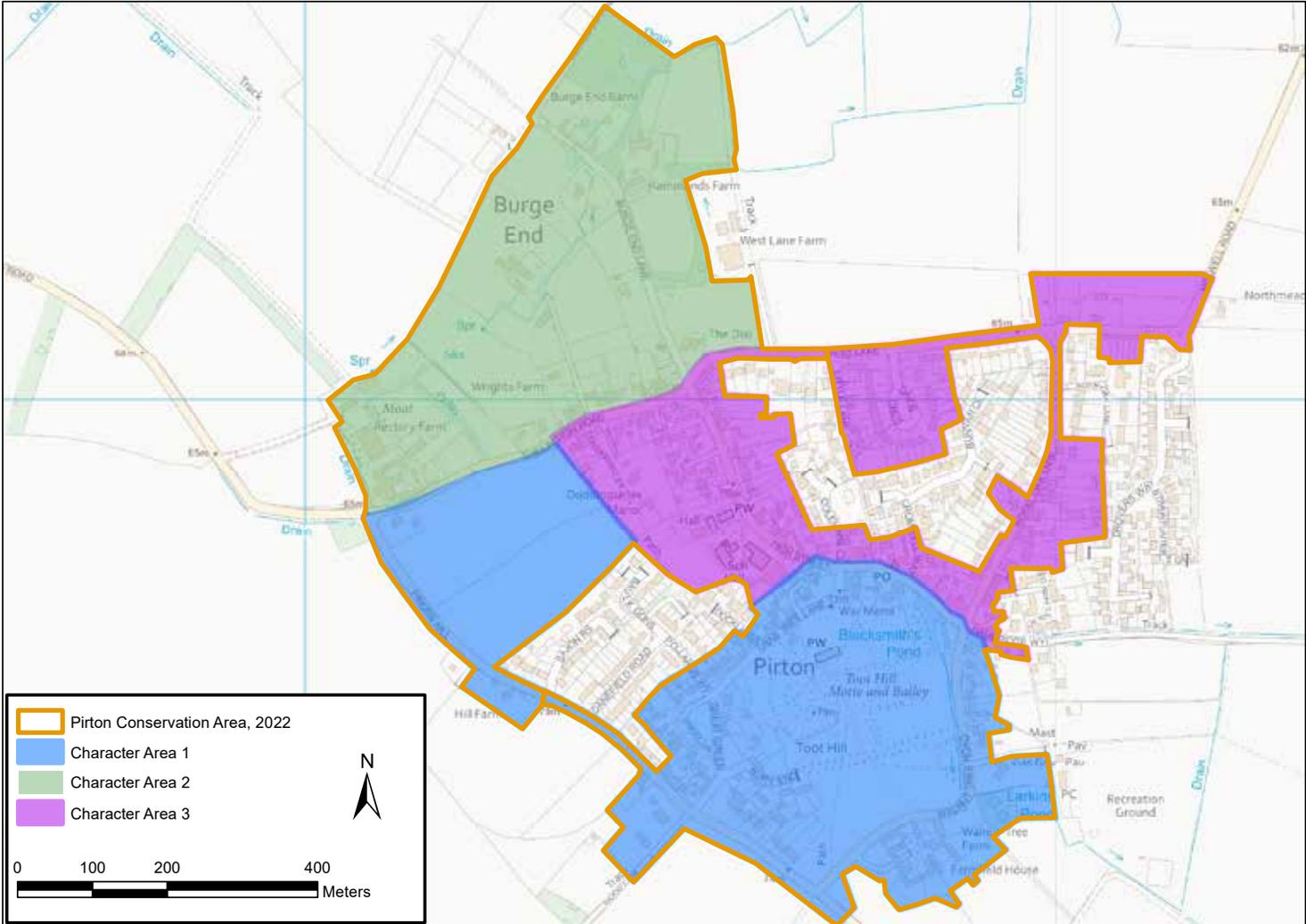


Figure 20: Map of Character Areas, Proposed Pirton Conservation Area 2022

### 3.3 Character Area One, The Medieval Settlement

#### Description

Character Area One can loosely be described as the medieval urban core of Pirton, featuring the earthworks of Toot Hill Motte and Bailey Castle and The Bury, St Marys Church and houses on Great Green. Although buildings in other Character Areas may be contemporary in age, their position in relation to the castle suggests they would have been outliers to the village centre, therefore they are not included within Character Area One. The Character Area's irregular shape is due to the exclusion of twentieth century housing on Saxon Rise, Danefield Road and Baulk Gardens from the Conservation Area.

The Character Area is dominated by Toot Hill and The Bury, which are maintained as an area of publicly accessible green space. Footpaths criss-cross through the scheduled monument, with the space acting as a frequently used pedestrian route through the village. From within the monument itself, built form appears far removed and distant, partially shielded by green screening created by the presence of trees along the monument's boundaries.

Historic buildings within the Character Area are largely late to post-medieval in date and timber framed. Later nineteenth or twentieth century infill buildings, where present, are typically brick constructions. Walnut Tree Farm located immediately south of The Bury is sixteenth century in age and would have stood in conjunction with now lost buildings on The Bury. Priors Hill scheduled monument, in the northwestern section of the Character Area, although now seemingly an agricultural field, in fact contains important remains from the prehistoric and medieval period.

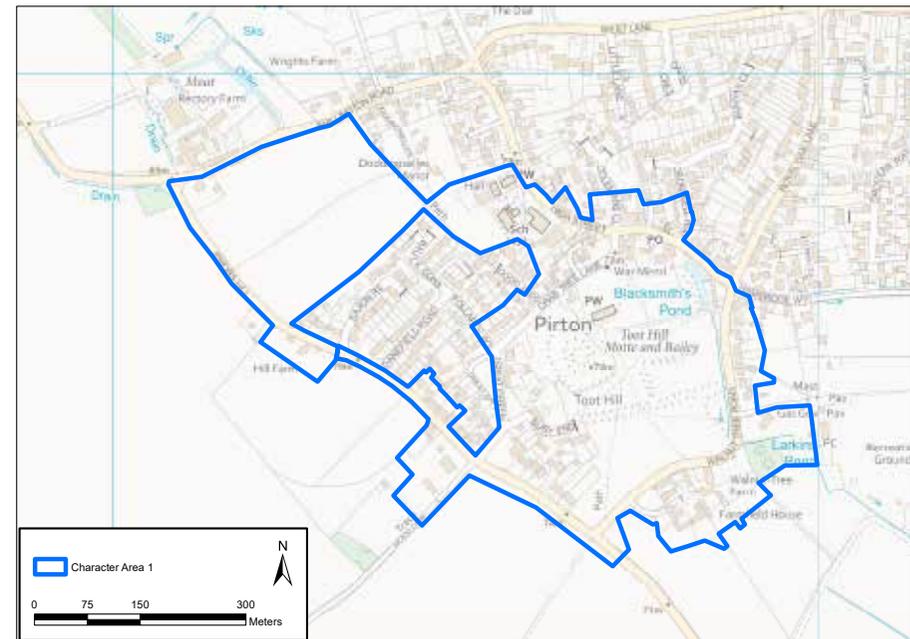


Figure 21: Character Area One, as proposed

### Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area circles out from the site of Pirton's castle, with surviving buildings built along its edge. Walnut Tree Road and Priors Hill frame the castle monument, with Great Green nestled close to the monument's northeastern edge. St Mary's Parish Church, a focal point of the whole village, is central to the northern edge of the Character Area.

Due to the large size of Toot Hill and The Bury, much of the Character Area is open grassland, used as recreational space. Within this Character Area buildings are almost exclusively residential, with the exception of St Mary's church.



Figure 22: Earthworks in The Bury, with St Mary's Church behind

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

Character Area One features swathes of open space, due to the presence of two scheduled monuments. Although publicly accessible, the nature and management plan of both Toot Hill and Priors Hill monuments means that archaeological remains are largely retained in situ. Within Toot Hill and The Buty monument, earthworks are discernible only as grooves and ridges within the landscape, hidden by pockets of tress and vegetation.

St Mary's Church Yard, north of the church, is a well maintained, landscaped area. Bounded by low lying stone walls, the church yard has a tranquil quality, detached from the village with defined exit and entry points marked by



Figure 23: The Pond, High Street

gates, unlike the scheduled monuments. At the churchyard's northern edge, the War Memorial provides a focal point to the lane, complimented by the backdrop of the church and associated church yard.

The Blacksmith's Pond, once part of the castle's moat, is an important ecological feature for the village, with wildlife present. As an urban element, the pond provides a further area for respite for residents and visitors to the village, featuring a bench and small area of paving at its northern edge. Its appearance, framed by willow trees, bullrushes and a small section of post and rail fencing, is calming and naturalistic, adding to the rural, tranquil village feel of the Conservation Area. The pond is not within the



Figure 24: The War Memorial

boundary of the scheduled monument.

Great Green reinforces this sylvan feeling. As a section of the Conservation Area less affected by traffic, Great Green again creates a feeling of seclusion and calm, with buildings around the green somewhat concealed due to their position and intervening areas of garden space. The green remains a focal point for the village, featuring a May pole at its centre.

Throughout the Character Area, front gardens are common, with buildings typically set back from the road. Where they do front the street, buildings are typically much older in age and smaller worker's cottages, such as those on Bury End. Many properties are detached, and almost all feature large rear gardens, due to the lack of infill and urbanisation of the village that has occurred.



Figure 25: Great Green, Featuring the May Pole

## Key Buildings

### Designated

Within the Character Area there are twenty-one listed buildings.

*The Parish Church of St Mary* [Figure 26]. Grade I listed, Pirton's Parish Church has a crenelated tower and low spire, which means it is not visible throughout the village. The building's position, however, is important and asserts its intended role as focal point for the village. Built in stone, unlike other buildings within Pirton, the church has a humble appearance, betraying the wealth and intent which would have enabled its construction. Restored and renewed in numerous phases subsequent to its twelfth century construction, the church is multi-phased with a largely nineteenth century interior.

*Three Gables* [Figure 27]. Believed to be the oldest building in the village, Three Gables is a timber framed and rendered house located on Bury End, immediately southeast of the demolished castle. Grade II\* listed, the building is a fine example of a fifteenth century (if not older) open-hall house with later inserted floor and extensions.

*Docwra Manor*. Also located on Bury End, Docwra Manor is another late-medieval building



Figure 26: St Mary's Parish Church

gaining its name from Thomas Docwra, for whom the building was constructed. Grade II listed, the core of the building dates from 1609 and is the surviving wing of a much larger building, now demolished. Unusually, the building is partially constructed in limestone rubble; it is the only stone residential building within the Conservation Area. Extended in the twentieth century, it was used as a pub in the nineteenth century, one of several pubs operational in Pirton during that time. It is Grade II listed.

*Buildings on Great Green*. One of the oldest surviving complexes of buildings, there are five listed buildings on the western side of Great Green. These are all timber framed

structures, rendered and ranging in date from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries.

*Crabtree Lane.* Similar to Great Green, there are a cluster of timber framed listed buildings on Crabtree Lane, close to the High Street. Dating largely from the medieval period, their position in relation to the church is testament to their age.

*Walnut Tree Farm and associated barns.* Located on the southern edge of The Bury, Walnut Tree Farm would once have been more interconnected to the village core. The farmhouse is Grade II listed, with associated barns benefitting from their own designation. No longer a working farm, the ancillary buildings are now in residential use, although their block plan and the nature of conversion allows the complex to remain discernible as a farmstead.

### Non-designated

*The Old Rectory, 1 Priors Hill* [Figure 34]. A red brick detached house, The Old Rectory is located on the western edge of Priors Hill Set back from the remainder of the Conservation Area, the building is set within large grounds which extend into the agricultural fields beyond.

*6 Priors Hill* [Figure 35]. Constructed in white Arlesley brick, number 6 is a symmetrical, hipped roof dwelling set back behind iron



Figure 27: Three Gables



Figure 30: Crabtree Lane



Figure 28: Barn at Walnut Tree Farm



Figure 31: 4-6 Walnut Tree Road



Figure 29: 5 Crabtree Lane



Figure 32: Crabtree House

railings. The building retains its awning covers on the front elevation and features a semi-circular fanlight above the front door with single pane, plate glass sash windows.

7, *Great Green*. Two bays, with a central doorcase, the building features bay windows and roughcast rendered walls with a slate roof.

*The Motte and Bailey Public House* [Figure 36]. Occupying a prominent location at the junction of Great Green and Crabtree Lane, the pub is an early twentieth century building.

## Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

### Roofs

Within the Character Area, buildings are roofed in a variety of finishes, including slate, plain tile and thatch. On older buildings, red clay tiles are most common, however many have lost their original roof coverings. Where plain tiles have been removed, many houses have been re-roofed in cementitious tiles which have a comparatively flat appearance.

Rooflights are not common within the Character Area and, where present, distract from the traditional appearance of the roofscape.

Buildings within the Character Area are predominantly two storeys in height, with some



Figure 34: The Old Rectory



Figure 35: 6 Priors Hill



Figure 36: The Motte and Bailey, Great Green



Figure 37: Roof coverings within the Character Area are varied yet predominantly traditional



Figure 38: An example of exposed timber framing and brick nogging, found throughout the Character Area



Figure 33: example of Flemish bond brickwork, common within the Character Area

only one and half storey dwellings tall. Chimneys are a prominent part of the roofscape, with many houses featuring multiple stacks.

### Walls

Exposed timber framing is common, with buildings also featuring rough cast render or brick nogging between the timber studs.

Red brick is most common on older properties, however nineteenth-century dwellings are almost exclusively built in local white coloured Arleseey brick, often with red brick decorative details such as window surrounds or banding.

Feather edged weatherboarding, painted black, features on outbuildings and former farm buildings within the Character Area.

### Windows and Doors

Windows and doors vary, subject to a building's age. Casement windows are most common on timber framed buildings, where windows are typically small in proportion to the building. Nineteenth century buildings feature sash windows where still present, however many have seen their original windows replaced with uPVC top hung casements.

Timber panelled doors are most common, painted in a variety of colours. Fanlights, where



Figure 39: Hedgerow is a dominant boundary treatment



Figure 41: Example of picket fencing used as a boundary treatment



Figure 40: Post and chain fencing on Great Green

present, are indicative of the trend for 'polite' architecture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Porch extensions are uncommon, although have been added to some dwellings. Pitched canopies are more common, above entrances to dwellings.

### Boundary Treatments

Hedgerow and low-lying wooden fences are the dominant boundary type, with few brick boundary walls present around residential dwellings. Where present, brick is typically used for gate posts, rather than as a defined brick boundary wall.

The church yard, featuring a rubble and brick wall, is the most formalised space in the Character Area, however the low height of the church's boundary allows for visual permeability from the church yard into the monument to the south.

As with the residential boundary treatments, the boundaries for the scheduled monuments are mostly marked by hedgerow, gaps within which allow for pedestrian access into the sites. Toot Hill and The Bury is the more formal of the two monuments, featuring a stile and kissing gates at designated entrance points.

Great Green is similarly marked in a minimal fashion, with sections of the green bound by post and chains, as a parking deterrent.

### Public Realm

Unlike the other Character Areas, Character Area One features large swathes of publicly accessible land. Green and grassed, the Toot Hill and The Bury scheduled monument provides recreational space within the heart of the Conservation Area. Here the land is largely open, although pockets of trees add a wild, woodland quality and places of shelter.

Great Green and The Churchyard are comparatively formal spaces, more closely overlooked by surrounding houses and used for community events.

Street furniture is extremely minimal, limited to a bench next to the pond, a scattering of waste bins and a letter box.



Figure 42: View toward St Mary's Church, taken from within the Scheduled Monument

## Views

Key views within the Character Area are identified on the adjacent map. This is not an exhaustive list and other important transitory views may be achieved when moving through the Character Area, either toward important buildings of the wider landscape. Diurnal and seasonal changes may also reveal or conceal views and should be considered as part of any proposal for change within the Conservation Area.

Important views from the edge of the character area and within the Toot Hill scheduled monument toward the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty offer an attractive backdrop to the Conservation Area, set next to the rolling hills of the Chilterns. This provides context to the Conservation Area, reinforcing its rural location and relationship with surrounding agricultural landscape.

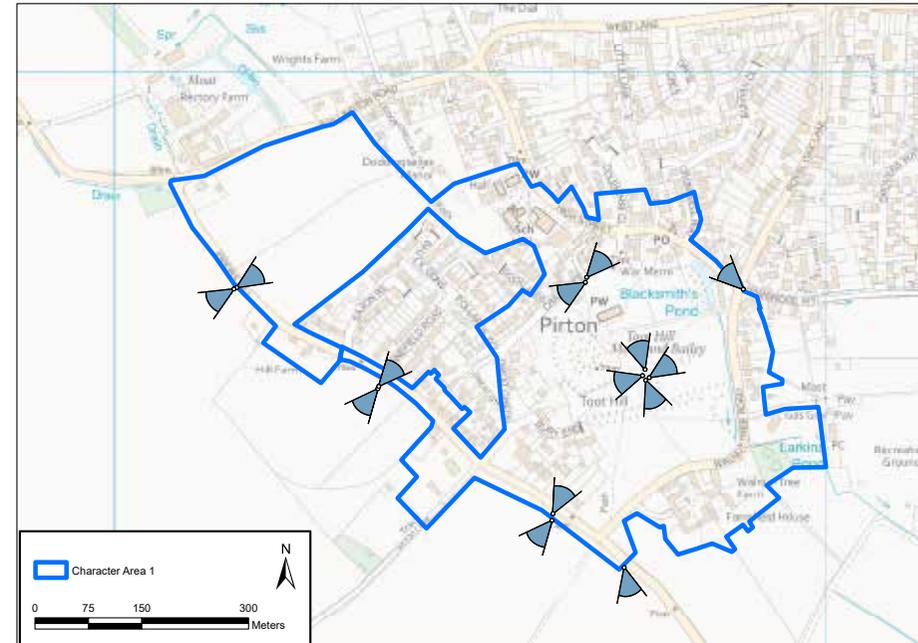


Figure 43: Map of notable views within Character Area One

### 3.4 Character Area Two, Northern Farms

#### Description

The second Character Area encompasses a small section of housing on Shillington Road and four historic farms on Pirton's norther edge, within which there are listed buildings: Rectory Farm, Wrights Farm, Burge End Farm and Hammond's Farm. All four farms have historic value, and Hammond's Farm and Rectory Farm are late-medieval in origin. The most recently constructed of the four farms, Wrights Farm is the least complete, with the farmhouse now lost. A surviving barn, listed in 2020, is eighteenth century in origin.

Although once more disconnected from the core of the village than present, Hammonds Farm and Burge End Farm retain a sense of detachment from surrounding development. The two farmsteads are accessed via Burge End Lane, a narrow, tarmacked route lined with hedgerow and trees. Burge End Farm, at the northern edge of the lane, is seventeenth century in date, whilst Hammond's Farm is early sixteenth century.

Rectory Farm, at the edge of the village and Conservation Area, is a large, moated complex, dating from the medieval period. The moat is a scheduled monument, evidential of a medieval trend for wealthy manorial, aristocratic residences to be protected by wide, water filled ditches. The moat at Rectory Farm is particularly unusual as it has a double island, assumed to have different functions. The farmhouse itself is a replacement building dating from the seventeenth century, predated by surviving barns which are fifteenth-sixteenth century in date.

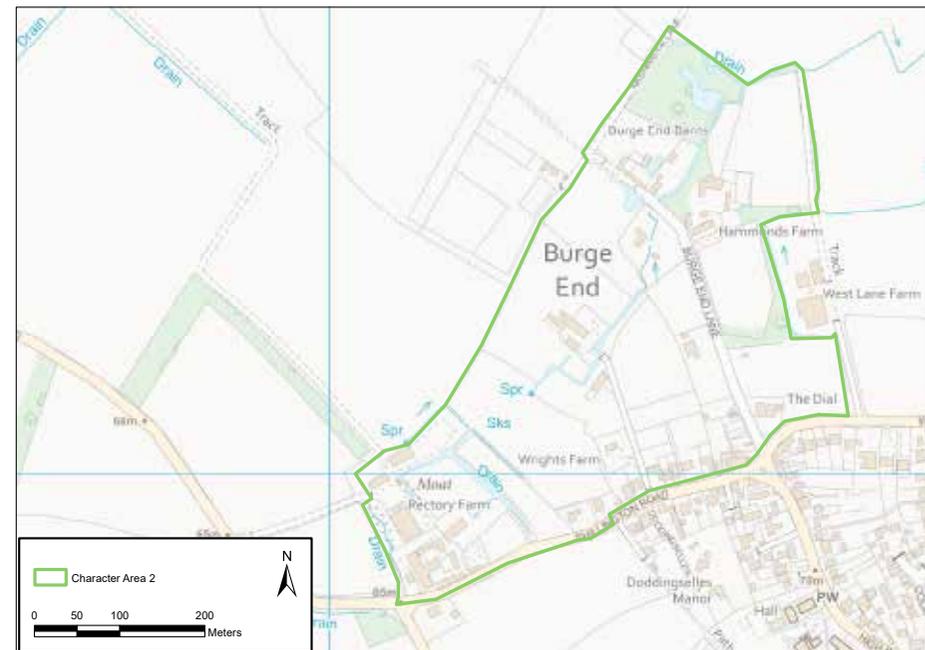


Figure 44: Map of Character Area Two

### Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area is predominantly comprised of areas of open fields with historic associations to the listed buildings within the Character Area. Shillington Road is partially included within the Character Area and is an important historic route running east-west across the northern edge of Pirton.

Domestic buildings on Shillington Road front the road, facing in toward the centre of the village, benefitting from an active relationship with the streetscene.

Land use is primarily residential and garden curtilage, with the fields at Wrights Farm in the centre of the Character Area not currently in agricultural use.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

Landscaping is a mixture of formalised garden spaces and areas of agrarian land, demarked by hedgerows. Much of the Character Area is open, which means that from publicly accessible areas, such as the footpath and Burge End Lane, wide views are afforded over the centre of the Character Area.

Within garden spaces, particularly around Rectory Farm, there is a sense of containment



Figure 45: Burge End Lane

and seclusion, contrasting sharply with the appearance of the surrounding agricultural fields.

### Key Buildings

There are fifteen listed buildings within the Character Area, including four Grade II\* buildings, The Tithe Barn at Rectory Farm, Rectory Farmhouse and Hammond's Farmhouse. The remainder are Grade II.

### Designated

*Rectory Farmhouse* [Figure 46]. Once the manorial building, the building is now a farmhouse. Dating from the early seventeenth century, the building likely replaced an earlier structure. Built in clunch and red brick, the building has roughcast rendered gables, with an adjoining, single storey brewhouse to the rear.

*Tithe Barn at Rectory Farmhouse* [Figure 47]. Grade II\* listed, fifteenth/early sixteenth century. Timber framed on a narrow brick plinth, the building would have been used to store 'tithes', produce given as tax payment. Tall and rectangular, the building is ten bays long and aisled.

*Dovecote, Stable and Granary at Rectory Farm.* Multiphased, the three interconnected buildings include a seventeenth- century dovecote, used to house pigeons. The granary building features a raised floor, to protect the grain from pests and vermin.

*Hammond's Farm.* Grade II\* listed, Hammond's Farmhouse is an early- sixteenth century former hall house, modified post its initial construction to include a floor, stair tower and additional wing. Timber framed and rendered, the house is on the eastern side of Burge End Lane and surrounded by three, individually listed outbuildings.

*Burge End Farmhouse* [Figure 48]. Dating from the seventeenth century, Burge End Farmhouse is a timber- framed building, refaced in brick in the eighteenth century. The building retains many original features and is built to a lobby entry-plan form.

*Outbuilding at Burge End Farm.* Timber- framed and boarded, the outbuilding dates from the seventeenth century with later alterations.

*Barn at Wrights Farm.* Eighteenth- century in date and almost entirely complete, the barn is a surviving structure of a now almost entirely lost vernacular farmstead.

*28, Shillington Road and individually listed barn* [Figure 50]. A sixteenth- century or earlier open hall house with inserted floor. The building features sections of exposed framing. The barn has been converted to residential amenity space, including the addition of three rooflights on the western roof slope.

### Non-designated

*Hanscombe Cottage, 14 Shillington Road* [Figure 51]. A two-bay cottage with central doorway, pebble dashed and painted with timber sash windows.

*2-12 Shillington Road.* A small terrace of nineteenth century cottages, built in gault brick



Figure 46: Rectory Farmhouse



Figure 48: Burge End Farmhouse



Figure 49: Barn at Burge End Farmhouse



Figure 47: Tithe Barn at Rectory Farmhouse



Figure 50: 28 Shillington Road

with red brick banding.

*71 Shillington Road.* A gault brick and gabled two storey detached dwelling, sympathetically extended with an additional two bays on the eastern side.

### Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

#### Roofs

Red plain tiles are the most common roof coverings, cementitious tiles are also present on twentieth century infill dwellings. There is one example of a thatched dwelling and some roofed in slate. Due to the age of many of the buildings, several buildings feature irregular roofs, with gablets and unusual junctions between roof planes.

Chimneys are common feature, located at the centre of buildings and/or on the exterior wall. Chimney pots have been lost on many dwellings, although their stacks remain. Ornamentation is minimal, with buildings exclusively two storeys in height, some with attic accommodation.

Solar panels are present on some properties, however where visible in the street scene they are a detracting, modern element. Similarly, satellite dishes are an incongruous feature.

#### Walls

Render is common, with elements of exposed timber framing featuring on multiple buildings. Where they are not rendered, some timber-framed buildings feature brick nogging infill panels or are clad in timber weatherboard. Boarding is exclusively found on ancillary buildings until the twentieth century. Infill buildings on Shillington Road, built in the late-twentieth century, do feature cladding or tile hanging at first floor level.

Brick is used for the Victorian terrace at 2-12 Shillington Road and late- twentieth century dwellings also on Shillington Road. Like other properties in the High Street and on Holwell Road, 2-12 Shillington Road are gault brick with red brick banding.

#### Windows and Doors

Windows are typically casement design, timber-framed units. Some buildings feature sash windows, however many sashes have been lost and replaced with top hung casements.

uPVC windows, where present, are largely on modern or non-designated buildings. Where present, uPVC windows have been installed in existing openings, meaning that all older buildings have retained their arched lintels, an important characteristic of the village.

Dormer windows and rooflights are not common



Figure 51: 14 Shillington Road



Figure 52: An example of where modern uPVC windows have been installed to replace wooden sashes



features and loft conversions are not commonplace.

There is a wide variety of doors within the Character Area, the majority of which are timber close boarded or panelled units. Side lights and fanlights are not common door features. Where properties have lost their original doors (eg. on 2-12 Shillington Road), two panel glazed doors are prevalent.

Doors are typically simple in design, without pedimented or ornamented doorcases. Porches are uncommon, with few buildings featuring canopies above the main entrance. Where canopies are present, they are simple in design, either flat or featuring a small pitch. Doors are typically flush with the external wall of a building.

### **Boundary Treatments**

Like the remainder of the Conservation Area, boundary treatments are informal and consist primarily of hedgerow, picket or post and rail fencing. Iron railings are not a common feature, nor are formal entranceways or gates.

Brick walls, where present, are low in height and, if nineteenth century or earlier, built in white Arlesey brick with wooden gates. Twentieth century walls are typically red fletton brick, also low in height.

Parking is generally off road, with houses benefitting from large plots which allow for residents to park at the side or in front of their property.

### **Public Realm**

There are very few areas of public realm. Pedestrian provision is restricted to one side of Shillington Road, where vehicular traffic is dominant. Footpaths and bridleways leading out of the Character Area

do, nevertheless, provide pedestrian interconnectivity to other sections of the Conservation Area and out into the wider landscape.

At the junctions of the High Street and Priors Hill with Shillington Road, there are small triangular pockets of grass, as is typical for the village. These help to reduce the speed of vehicular traffic and reinforce the informal, rural, village character of the Conservation Area.

### Views

Key views are within the Character Area are identified on the adjacent map.

Particularly important are incidental views toward historic buildings which are somewhat concealed by tree cover and their set back from the road.

At the northern edge of the Character Area, on the Hertfordshire border, wide views across the Bedfordshire landscape can be achieved, showcasing Pirton's isolated position and providing insight into its position in relation to other settlements, such as Holwell, which is visible to the north east.

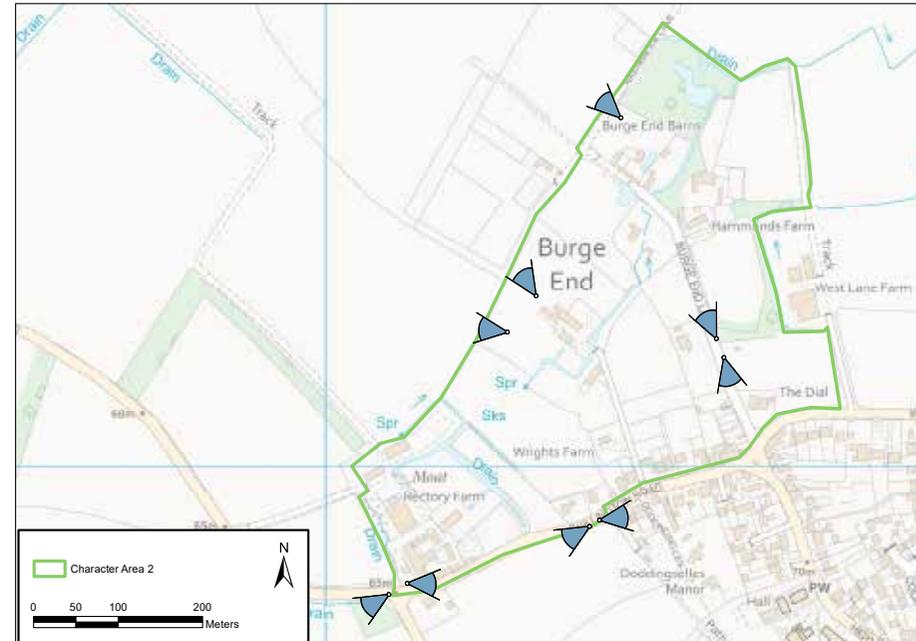


Figure 53: Map of some highlighted important views within Character Area Two

### 3.5 Character Area Three, The High Street and Royal Oak Lane

#### Description

Character Area Three represents a later phase in the village's development, east of the medieval village and castle. Buildings have a mixture of residential and amenity functions; within this Character Area there is the village hall, school, a public house and a shop.

Most buildings within the Character Area date from the nineteenth century or later, meaning they are predominantly brick constructions, rather than timber framed and rendered. Good examples of Arleseey brick buildings are present on the High Street and on Holwell Road, the light colour and appearance of which are a strong component of the Character Area. Where they do feature, older buildings within in the Character Area typically date from the seventeenth century and would have once been outliers to the village core, such as Elm Tree Farm and 17 High Street. Buildings from the post-medieval period within the Character Area are almost all listed, due to their age and architectural interest.

Sections of modern infill have expanded the village, encroaching upon the Conservation Area's boundary and infilling sections of land between the High Street and Royal Oak Lane, including Davis Crescent, within the Conservation Area boundary. Built in 1920, the crescent has a strong designed layout which references the appearance of Great Green, in Character Area One.

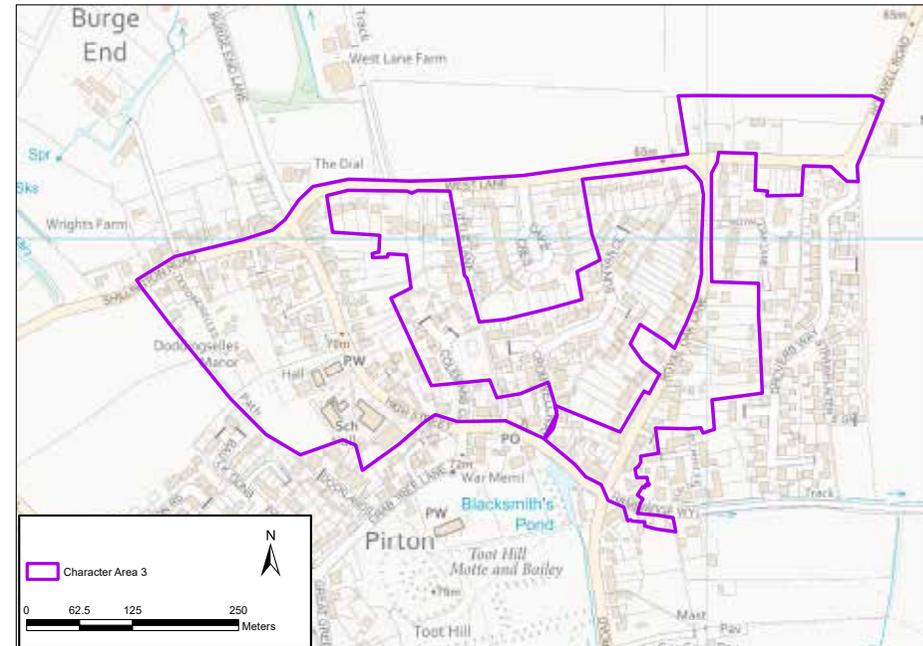


Figure 54: Map of Character Area Three

### Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area is roughly triangular in shape, including two spine routes out of the village (the High Street and Royal Oak Lane) and a connecting road which runs east-west at the northern edge of the village, Holwell Road. At the junction of each road, sections of grass are present which have a widening effect, contrasting to the narrowness and undulation of the roads they adjoin.

Grass verges are a prominent part of the Character Area, which lacks formal pedestrian provision in places, often only featuring a pavement on one side of the road.

Land usage is split between residential, commercial and municipal use, including almost all of Pirton's amenities. The Village Hall, a chapel, the school, The Fox and village shop are all within the Character Area.

### Landscaping and Open Spaces

Little Green [Figure 55], at the junction of Royal Oak Lane and the High Street, is the largest of publicly accessible open spaces within the Character Area. The school, Methodist Chapel and The Fox PH do, nevertheless, feature areas of associated land which have a community function. To the rear and front of the village hall the land is partially tarmacked for car parking.



Figure 55: Little Green



Figure 58: Green Space at the junction of the High Street and West Lane



Figure 56: Grass Verges on Royal Oak Lane



Figure 59: The Fox Pub (left) and associated garden



Figure 57: Open Space at Cromwell Cottage



Figure 60: The Village Hall, High Street

Pockets of grass verges and small greens are a dominant feature of the Character Area, some featuring benches and offering areas of respite for residents and visitors to the village [Figure 56]. These small greens help to prevent the Character Area from appearing too urban, retaining a link to the surrounding rural landscape and emphasising the loose grain of development within the village.

### Key Buildings

#### Designated

There are seven listed buildings within the Character Area, including the Methodist Chapel, The Fox PH and a selection of older residential dwellings. Many of the listed buildings are post-medieval in age and once would have been more scattered in appearance than they are today. For a details of all the listed buildings in the Pirton Conservation Area, see Appendix 6.3.

*The Methodist Chapel.* Built in 1906, the building is constructed in red brick with steep slate roofs. The chapel features Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau elements, an elaborate frontage and stained-glass glazing.

*The Fox PH.* Dating from the seventeenth century, re-fronted in the eighteenth century. The pub is timber framed and two storeys high. Originally a lobby entry house and two cells wide, the building was extended in the eighteenth century with an

additional two bays, lower in height.

*17 High Street* [Figure 62]. Built circa 1600, the house has a lobby entry plan form, thatched roof and roughcast rendered walls. From the street only the side of the building can be seen, the front of which is perpendicular to the High Street.

*Cromwell Cottage* [Figure 57]. Grade II listed, the building has a nineteenth century brick frontage which disguises its sixteenth century origins. The rear range of the building is the oldest section, featuring exposed timber framing.

*41-45 High Street.* Seventeenth century in age, with later alterations, the small terrace was originally two dwellings rather than three. Timber framed, the building is set back from the road and features rough cast render and casement windows.

*Elm Tree Farmhouse.* Dating from the sixteenth century but primarily seventeenth century in age, Elm Tree Farmhouse was the farmhouse for the land between Hambridge Way and Holwell Road, now infilled with modern housing. Elm Tree Farm was closely linked to Little Green Farmhouse, which was located immediately to its north and demolished in the early twentieth century.

*Orchard Cottage.* Built circa 1600, Orchard Cottage is at the bottom of the High Street, on the route to Burge End, in the northern part of



Figure 61: The Methodist Chapel



Figure 62: 17 High Street, largely concealed from the road due to its elevated position



Figure 63: 21 Royal Oak Lane

the village. Timber framed and rendered; the house has a steep slate roof which would have once been thatched.

### Non-designated

Properties which feature typical local and traditional materials, such as Arlesey brick, lime render, natural slate and handmade tiles contribute positively to the Character Area. The following have been identified as positive contributors to the Conservation Area due to their display of such materials and relatively unaltered appearance.

*1 and 3 Holwell Road* [Figure 64]. Both detached, these two buildings are typical in appearance for the nineteenth century, with a roof gabled at the sides and featuring a central doorway, with windows either side. Windows across the front of each house are wooden sashes. Built in gault brick, both houses are simply designed, with red brick used as ornamentation at the eaves, around windows and as strip bands across the buildings. Although they have been extended, each house retains large gardens to the side and rear.

*2-24 Holwell Road, '12 Apostles Terrace'* [Figure 65]. Constructed in the late- nineteenth century, this terrace of twelve cottages is simple in appearance, with each house one bay wide.



Figure 64: 3 Holwell Road



Figure 67: Barn on the High Street



Figure 65: 2-24 Holwell Road



Figure 68: 51-65 High Street



Figure 66: 19 and 21 High Street



Figure 69: 81-91 High Street

*45-51 West Lane.* A further example of Victorian terraced housing, these five cottages on West Lane are constructed in red brick and each one bay wide. Although the terrace is seven houses long, dwellings on the western edge of the terrace are excluded due to the alterations that have taken place, including the addition of render on the first floor.

*19 and 21 High Street* [Figure 66]. Built as almshouses, Hammonds Cottages, as they are known, are a single storey brick pair of cottages, set back from the High Street in an elevated position. They feature stone window and door surrounds. There is a plaque on each dwelling, located in the centre of the gable, which read 'Hammonds Almshouses' and 'Built 1607, Rebuilt 1877' respectively.

*51-65 High Street.* [Figure 68] Short terrace of two storey brick cottages with slate roof, including the village shop.

*81-91 High Street* [Figure 69]. A short terrace of six brick cottages, with the flanking cottages featuring a street fronting gable. Number 81, on the northern edge, has been extended to the side.

## Building Materials and Boundary Treatments

### Roofs

Welsh Slate and red plain tile are the most common roof coverings, with examples of thatch and cementitious tiles also present. Some properties feature bargeboards and ridge tiles, but on the whole roofs are unadorned.

Chimneys are common feature, located at the centre of buildings and/or on the exterior wall. Chimney pots have been lost on many dwellings, although their stacks remain. Chimneys are typically simple in design, perhaps featuring dentiled or contrasting courses of brick but with little ornamentation.

### Walls

White Arlesley Brick is the most common building material within the Character Area. Produced locally in the nineteenth century to early- twentieth century, the bricks have a characteristically pale-yellow colour, due to the presence of vast amounts of chalk within the local landscape. Other brick colours are used, possibly coming from brickworks in Luton which produced grey and red bricks.

Red brick, more commonly used in other areas



Figure 70: Examples of brickwork within the Character Area

of the county, is a small feature of the Character Area. Where it does feature, red bricked historic buildings, such as the Methodist Chapel and The Fox PH, are focal points within the village due to their contrasting appearance.

Davis Close, a new addition to the Conservation Area, is constructed in common Fletton Brick [Figure 71]. These bricks are wire cut, meaning they have a different texture to the older bricks in the village which are hand pressed. Wire cut bricks are the dominant brick type on twentieth century buildings within the Character Area.

### Windows and Doors

Timber sash windows would have been dominant within the Character Area when the nineteenth century dwellings were constructed; however, a variety of windows are now present throughout the Character Area. Casement windows are now the most common, often double-glazed uPVC replacements of sashes which have been removed. The arrangement of panes on timber windows, where present, are in a variety of patterns, with each casement or sash divided into multiple panes with integral glazing bars.

Surface mounted glazing bars are not a prevailing feature of the Character Area, nor are surface mounted trickle vents. Where timber casement windows are in situ, they are flush

and single glazed. Modern windows have been installed almost wholesale throughout the Conservation Area, with older timber windows generally only retained on listed buildings. Metal framed casements are not a feature of the Character Area, with twentieth century infill dwellings almost all featuring uPVC windows.

On brick buildings, windows are typically deeply recessed with stone or tile sills, arched lintels and picked out in contrasting brick or stone. On rendered dwellings, windows are smaller, with wooden sills and flat render detail or a pence board around the window lintel.

The retention of original timber doors is more common, although some properties have been extended at the front to create a single storey porch addition. Most properties are entered via a door flush with the exterior wall, leading to an internal lobby or directly into the front room of the building.

Composite doors are, like uPVC windows, common. Doors within the Character Area are in a variety of styles, dependent upon the design of the property. Sidelights and fan lights are not a feature of the Character Area, although some doors are part glazed.

### Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments are minimal, limited



Figure 71: Houses on Davis Close, constructed in Fletton Brick



Figure 72: example of where uPVC windows mimic traditional window types



Figure 73: Timber Casements at The Fox PH

to hedgerow, picket fencing and tree cover throughout the Character Area. The set back of buildings, including the presence of grass verges on both High Street and Royal Oak Lane creates a sense of separation meaning high or solid boundary walls are not necessary for privacy.

Iron railings are uncommon, and where present, incidental to the street scene. This is due to their visual permeability and the lack of grand formal gates or entranceways forming part of the boundary they mark.

Hedgerows have been removed in places to facilitate off road parking. Although beneficial to the appearance of the Conservation Area by removing cars from the road, the loss of hedging diminishes the green appearance of the street scene.

### Neutral Elements

Within the Character Area there are numerous twentieth-century infill buildings on the High Street and Royal Oak Lane which do not detract from, but do not add to, the overall appearance and special interest of the Conservation Area. This is due to the sympathetic massing and materials used on these buildings, which allow them to remain innocuous within the street scene.

The general appearance of the twentieth century buildings allows them to be easily read as modern additions, with these later additions to the village typically featuring larger windows and reddish-brown bricks, rather than the orange-y red or gault brick of nineteenth century dwellings.

### Public Realm

Public realm is limited within the Character Area to streetlamps, traffic signs and general paraphernalia, such as utilities cabinets and litter bins.

Outside Cromwell Cottage [Figure 57], there is a Victorian post box and bench which, together with the bench next to the pond, provide an attractive focal point to the village.

Streetlamps, where present, are a variety of styles. As part of the Parish's Neighbourhood Plan, streetlamps were appraised, with swan necked lamps considered most favourable by residents.



Figure 74: Hedgerow on Royal Oak Lane



Figure 75: Neutral modern buildings on the High Street



Figure 76: Infill dwellings on Royal Oak Lane

**Views**

Key views are within the Character Area are identified on the adjacent map. These include the view toward St Mary’s church at the bottom of the High Street and along the High Street toward the village shop.

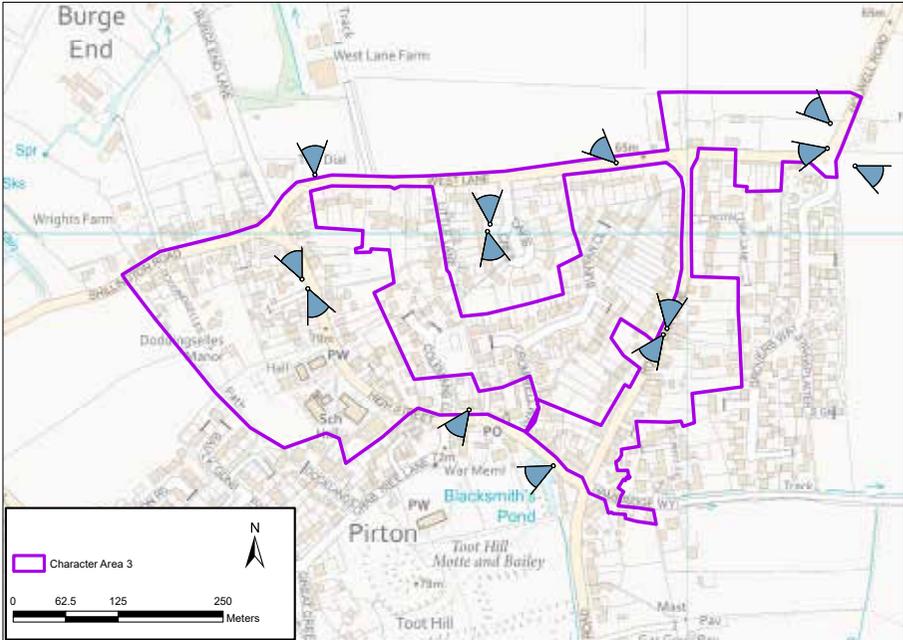


Figure 77: Map of important views within Character Area Three identified as part of this appraisal

### 3.6 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).*

Pirton's setting remains as it has for centuries, surrounded by an agrarian landscape. Although nearby settlements such as Luton and Hitchin have expanded, their distance from the village means there has not been encroachment onto Pirton's setting.

There are numerous listed buildings and scheduled monuments outside the Conservation Area boundary which contribute to the understanding of how Pirton developed. These include Pirton Grange, a Grade II listed building north of the village and the scheduled monuments at Knocking Knoll and Pegsdon Hill.

The Chilterns AONB makes an incredibly important contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area, adjoining its western boundary. The protected status of this area means tighter development controls are in place within the AONB and the prevailing natural beauty of the area both recognised and protected. Its designation also prevents further expansion of Luton northwards towards Pirton, with the AONB acting as an important landscape buffer to prevent encroachment upon the Conservation Area.

Luton Airport, some ten miles south of the Conservation Area, has some effect on the noise and tranquillity of the Conservation Area but is sufficiently removed to not have a high impact upon the rural feel of the village. Further expansion of the airport, could however, alter this.



Figure 78: View toward the Chilterns AONB, from Priors Hill



Figure 79: View looking north out of the Conservation Area, from Burge End

Further development of Pirton, either in immediate proximity to the Conservation Area, or some distance away, must be mindful of the Conservation Area's setting. Development which will alter entrances into the Conservation Area, for example, would change how it is understood and appreciated. Similarly, the construction of uncharacteristically tall buildings or a suburban block form on the edge of the village could detract from its character, appearance or overall aesthetic value.

Change will occur, and it is acknowledged that the setting of the Conservation Area has already been compromised in some areas, comparative to its appearance in other historical periods due to the construction of small estates both infilling sections of open land (such as Cromwell Way, Figure 81) and at the village edge. However, there is the opportunity to both enhance and preserve the setting of the Conservation Area through good design and appropriate mitigation.



Figure 80: Modern housing on Priors Hill



Figure 81: Cromwell Way, a late twentieth century development, is accessed off the High Street

## 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 Pirton Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas.

### 4.1 Access and Integration

Pirton 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 can have an adverse effect on the character of a conservation area, impacting the street scene and how the area is experienced. Pirton contains some areas where parking is particularly an issue and presents an opportunity for enhancement, to rid congestion and improve the appearance of the area. Particularly on the southern section of the High Street and Great Green, there is a shortage of off-road parking and parking is predominantly on-street, and thus does little for the appearance of the Conservation Area.



Figure 82: Car parking on Great Green



Figure 83: Visible satellite dishes and disproportionate modern windows distract from the appearance of buildings which otherwise contribute positively to the Conservation Area

### 4.3 Inappropriate Modern Development

Throughout the Conservation Area are examples of inappropriate and unsympathetic additions which can make a cumulative negative impact on the area. The addition of uncharacteristic modern porches to residential units, the replacement of windows and doors, as well as the installation of unsympathetic additions to buildings such as air conditioning units, rooflights, extraction flues, and TV aerials and satellite dishes, harm the historic character and qualities of the area. In some cases, unsympathetic fixings can also affect the historic façade of buildings.

Maintenance, and the lack of it, can detract from the quality of the Conservation Area. In general, Pirton is well maintained however the risk of decay is most common on private dwellings, and there is scope for better engagement with landowners to improve the appearance of properties. 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.

#### 4.4 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.

#### 4.5 Public Realm

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

Street furniture throughout the Conservation Area is generally of an acceptable quality, although in some places generic in appearance and requiring maintenance. Streetlights are not common on the outer fringes of the Conservation Area and predominantly present in the core of the village, however they are particularly inconsistent in design and would be enhanced through replacement with traditional and consistent streetlights which respect the historic character of the area.

Traditionally styled directional signs, with pointed ends [Figure 86], reinforce the village's character. Replication of these signs throughout the Conservation Area should be considered in order to enhance the sense of place and character.



Figure 84: Street lamp requiring repainting, Little Green



Figure 86: Traditionally styled directional signs are positive reinforcement of Pirton's rural character



Figure 85: Cluttered street furniture at Little Green



## **Hard Landscaping**

While road surfacing is generally of a good quality, there are some areas that would benefit from consistent maintenance, removing pot holes and areas of erosion. Pavements are of varying quality throughout the Conservation Area, featuring a range of coping stones and edge treatments. Granite edge stones, where present are a positive reinforcement of the village's character, utilising a traditional material, however in some places these have been lost. Reinstatement of granite and the prevention of further removal or replacement with cement stones, is recommended. Therefore, great consideration should be taken by the Local Planning Authority for all new applications.

## **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..

## **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 Pirton Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. This section seeks to recommend management proposals which could address these issues in both the short and long term.

The delivery of these management proposals provides 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

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.

The existing swan necked lamps, where present, are a positive feature of the street scene and would benefit from a regular programme of maintenance. A survey of all lamps, noting their style and placement is recommended in order to inform a programme of renewal and repair.

Traffic signs within the Conservation Area would benefit from consolidation and re-assessment in places, as they add visual clutter to the street scene. Little Green, at the junction of the High Street, Walnut Tree Road and Royal Oak Lane [Figure 55], is an example of one area where signs have accumulated with little consideration of existing signage. Similarly, the range of bollards and posts used throughout the Conservation Area, whilst an important parking deterrent and preserver of grass verges, introduces a level of inconsistency and visual clutter which detract from the verdant quality of the Conservation Area.

#### 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.

North Herts Council's requirements are as follows.

Heritage statements must be provided if the development effects a listed building.



Design and Access statements need to be provided for:

- Major development
- One of more new houses within a conservation area
- Applications where floorspace created is more than 100m<sup>2</sup> and any part of the development is within a Conservation Area or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Applications within the Conservation Area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement.

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 (2017), which can be accessed [here](#).

### 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. The exercise of creating a Register of Buildings of Local Interest 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.

### Neutral Elements

The dilution of positive buildings amongst those which are neutral leads to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character.

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.

Care should be taken to ensure that unsympathetic additions do not have an impact on views along historic streets and the character of groups of historic buildings is preserved. For example, where buildings form a distinct terrace or pair, consideration should be given to all replacement windows, doors or paintwork, to ensure the homogeneity and design of the group is not undermined by one particular stand-out, incongruous property.

The introduction of an inappropriate colour palette and low-quality modern materials (cementitious render and roof tiles, or uPVC windows, for example) is also a concern within the Conservation Area, particularly in residential areas which are vulnerable to a diminishment of quality through the replacement of windows, doors and roof cladding. By using a palette or modern material which is out of keeping with the area, buildings can be visually domineering within a streetscape, and therefore have a

negative impact upon the character of the area.

There are examples of extensions to existing buildings within the Conservation area which have failed to adequately reference the prevailing character, be that through an inappropriate massing, height or material palette of the extension. Within residential areas in particular, the agglomeration of structures through additional side developments between detached properties can have a detrimental impact to the historic grain of the village, and our appreciation of its development. Pirton is a historic settlement and has been subject to a considerable degree of infilling and building on larger gardens and backland sites. It is considered that further development in this way would most likely harm the character of the Conservation Area. The more substantial domestic properties within the outer section of the Conservation Area are enhanced by the setting provided by their reasonable and proportioned gardens. Side extensions which remove gaps between buildings can have a crowding, urbanising effect and should be resisted.

Great consideration should be given to building heights of all modern structures, especially if seen from areas of particular importance, such as The Bury. Buildings that are visible from important areas or from some distance should also seek to use materials which are typical of that building type within the village. For example, render and brick are used for dwellings, whereas timber boarding, was historically reserved only for agricultural or ancillary structures (cart lodges etc).

Modern outbuildings, where permitted, should also be appropriately scaled, to relate well to the host dwellings. In some cases, this may mean a traditional roof pitch cannot be achieved, and a slacker pitch with a lower ridge height, would be more appropriate. On garages and single storey buildings in particular, a traditional roof pitch can make the roof scape of the building incredibly dominant, and careful consideration should be given to any outbuilding which has attic space.



Figure 87: Example of a terrace where the replacement of windows diminishes the group value of the houses



Figure 88: Poorly matched, bright modern brick, can contrast poorly next to original buildings if not well considered

Backlands are important features of old town centres and villages, being part of the grain of the historic town plan and representing areas that had a service function in relation to the main street frontages. Those that survive in Pirton provide spaces useful for service areas and off-street parking. Similarly, the installation of unsympathetic and piecemeal boundary treatments can harm the immediate setting of historic buildings and spaces and the use of inappropriate railings, walls, and fences cause cumulative harm to the street scape and character of the area.

### New Development

There are limited opportunities within Pirton Conservation Area and its setting for development which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. This is due to the village's existing loose grain of development, which would be compromised by infill dwellings. Similarly, the creation of further development, such as cul-de-sacs or ribbon development, on the village fringes, would lessen its rural character and compromise how the surrounding landscape is experienced within the Conservation Area. To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character of Pirton Conservation Area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan provides details and recommendations for new development. As part of this appraisal of the Conservation Area, the following recommendations are made.

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)



Figure 89: Poorly proportioned modern outbuildings detract from the appreciation of their host dwellings



Figure 90: An example of where recently altered dwellings are prominent due to their incongruous height and material choice

- 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 Pirton'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 Pirton as a historic settlement.

### **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.

### **Access and Integration**

The Conservation Area is easily accessed by bus, foot and vehicle. Further promotion of the village's footpaths, bolstering work already conducted by Pirton Parish Council would allow for a renewed level of engagement between visitors and residents to the village.

Toot Hill/The Bury scheduled monument is an integral part of the village's history yet lacks opportunities for engagement. The introduction of interpretation boards within the monument, explaining the earthworks and highlighting their importance should be considered. Careful consideration must, nevertheless, be given to where these are placed and what information they give. The security of the archaeological remains should not be compromised through the introduction of such elements.

### **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 District Council in conjunction with local stakeholders.

Additional hard landscaping could have a particularly harmful impact on the character of the Conservation Area, adding an urban quality at odds with Pirton'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 (2019) and Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2018). The boundary is proposed to exclude areas which are deemed to not reflect the historic and architectural qualities for which the Conservation Area was designated and includes sections of housing from the later nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century which are indicative of the period in which they were built, offering an understanding of the village's development in its more recent history. 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 are scattered examples of interpretation boards and signs within the Conservation Area aimed at improving understanding and awareness. These are primarily ecology based and offer little about the history of the Conservation Area or wider village. Updating, upkeeping and enlarging their reach would be an effective way to improve the awareness of Pirton Conservation Area's significance.



Figure 91: Car parking strategies should consider where within the village there may be places for off road parking

The creation of an advertised, easily accessible heritage trail, unification of signage across the Conservation Area and introduction of additional interpretation boards would be beneficial., particularly in aiding understanding of the village's scheduled monuments.

### 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. Sites which may provide opportunity for enhancement include those where premises or buildings are empty, back land areas or corner plots.

The Council should consider utilising existing powers to intervene where

any building has been vacant for over six months so that it does not detract from the area's character and appearance. Small grant funding schemes would also provide an incentive to encourage private property owners to carry out works to enhance their property and thereby the wider Conservation Area.

### 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.

Consistent 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



Figure 92: Ecological interpretation board, the pond, Pirton

schemes North Herts 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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## 6.2 Legislation, Policy and Guidance

LEGISLATION/POLICY/GUIDANCE	DOCUMENT	SECTION/POLICY
Primary Legislation	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.
National Planning Policy	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> . London: UK Government, 2021.	Section 16;  Annex 2
National Guidance	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. <i>National Planning Practice Guidance</i> . London: UK Government, 2014.	ID: 18a
National Guidance	Historic England, <i>Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Historic England Advice Note 1</i> . Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2019.	

National Guidance			Historic England, <i>The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3</i> . Second Edition. Swindon: Historic England, 2017.	
Local Supplementary Document	Planning		Ashwell Parish Council	Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan 2021
Local Supplementary Document	Planning		Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited, on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council.	Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement, 2019

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

List Entry Number	<u>Address</u>	Grade
1347109	<u>Crabtree House</u>	II
1103187	<u>Ivy Cottage</u>	II
1308350	<u>Elm Tree Farmhouse</u>	II
1175488	<u>Pirton Methodist Church</u>	II
1103193	<u>20, High Street</u>	II
1347112	<u>Orchard Cottage</u>	II
1175517	<u>14, Royal Oak Lane</u>	II*
1295388	<u>Farm Building at Entrance to Yard at Hammond's Farm</u>	II
1308247	<u>23-25, Walnut Tree Road</u>	II
1103184	<u>North Barn at Hammond's Farm</u>	II
1347095	<u>Lavender Cottage</u>	II
1175626	<u>Farmbuildings Fronting Road at Walnut Tree Farm</u>	II
1103190	<u>South-East Barn at No 1 (Elm Tree Farm)</u>	II
1250685	<u>Farm Building to The North West of Burge End Farmhouse</u>	II
1347107	<u>Outhouse 10 Metres to North of House at Hammond's Farm</u>	II
1103162	<u>South-East Barn at Walnut Tree Farm</u>	II*
1103185	<u>Three Gables</u>	II

List Entry Number	<u>Address</u>	Grade
1295337	<u>5, Crabtree Lane</u>	II
1103191	<u>31, High Street</u>	I
1347110	<u>Church Of St Mary (C Of E)</u>	II
1175262	<u>Burge End Farmhouse</u>	II
1103188	<u>The Cottage Tudor Cottage</u>	II
1430264	<u>Pirton War Memorial</u>	II
1175526	<u>Barn At Number 28</u>	II
1103194	<u>19-21, Royal Oak Lane</u>	II
1103159	<u>Dovecote, Stable and Granary at Rectory Farm</u>	II
1175469	<u>17, High Street</u>	II
1103189	<u>16, Great Green</u>	II
1175478	<u>The Fox Inn</u>	II
1295369	<u>Elm Cottage</u>	II
1308280	<u>Cartshed Next Entrance to Forecourt at Rectory Farmhouse</u>	II
1175604	<u>7, Walnut Tree Road</u>	II
1103186	<u>4-6, Bury End</u>	II
1347076	<u>41-45, High Street</u>	II
1103157	<u>28, Shillington Road</u>	II

List Entry Number	Address	Grade
1295393	<u>7-13, Bury End</u>	II
1295356	<u>8, Great Green</u>	II
1347094	<u>South Barn and Adjoining Stable at Rectory Farm</u>	II
1347077	<u>Primrose Cottage</u>	II*
1103158	<u>The Rectory Farmhouse</u>	II
1466237	<u>Barn At Wright's Farm</u>	II*
1175545	<u>West Barn at Rectory Farm</u>	II*
1175235	<u>Hammond's Farmhouse</u>	II
1347108	<u>Ashburn</u>	II
1308341	<u>14, Great Green</u>	II
1175493	<u>Docwra Manor</u>	II
1347097	<u>4-6, Walnut Tree Road</u>	II
1103161	<u>Walnut Tree Farmhouse</u>	II
1103192	<u>Cromwell Cottage</u>	II
1347111	<u>Sawford Cottage</u>	II
1295373	<u>1 And 3, Crabtree Lane</u>	N/A
1012325	<u>Toot Hill Motte and Bailey Castle and Shrunken Medieval Village at Pirton</u>	N/A
1434415	<u>Anglo-Saxon Settlement, And Probable Prehistoric Ring Ditches, West of Pirton Village</u>	N/A
1009451	<u>Moated Site and Associated Enclosure at Rectory Farm</u>	N/A

## 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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