

North Hertfordshire District Council

## St Ippolyts Village

Conservation Area Character  
Statement



## Report for

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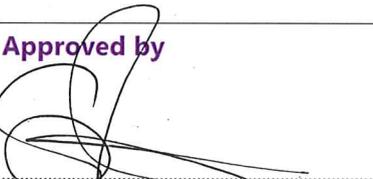
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# Contents

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<b>1.</b>	<b>Background</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	Introduction	4
1.2	Setting of the Conservation Area	4
1.3	Historical Development	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Character and Special Interest</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Character	5
2.2	Statement of Special Interest	6
<b>3.</b>	<b>Key Assets and Views</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1	Designated Heritage Assets	8
3.2	Undesignated Heritage Assets	8
	Buildings of Local Interest	8
	Buildings or Features that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area	8
3.3	Key Views	8
<b>4.</b>	<b>Opportunities for Improvement</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>11</b>

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 St Ippolyts Village Conservation Area was designated by North Hertfordshire District Council in 1970 and its boundary was amended in 1979 and 1990. The boundary surrounds the Church of St Ippolyts, its churchyard and adjacent village green, extending a small way along roads that lead off this central area.
- 1.1.2 This report has been produced for the purpose of appraising the character of St Ippolyts Conservation Area. It includes a character assessment highlighting key features, a statement of special interest, a list of designated heritage assets, non-designated heritage assets and key views within the Conservation Area, and opportunities for improvement. It is accompanied by an annotated map of the Conservation Area which can be found in Appendix A. This report does not consider potential boundary changes in the Conservation Area.

## 1.2 Setting of the Conservation Area

- 1.2.1 St Ippolyts Village Conservation Area lies to the south-east of Hitchin. It is surrounded by agricultural and parkland, which also separates the Conservation Area from an area of largely 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development to the west, on the other side of a valley along which runs Ippolyts Brook. This area of housing, not part of the Conservation Area, merges with the eastern extent of Gosmore, part of St Ippolyts Parish. Due to its location on a ridge, the Conservation Area, and the church tower in particular, are visible from some distance. Pevsner's book on Hertfordshire states that the church is "*on an eminence above the houses of the village*".
- 1.2.2 Just outside the boundary and to the west of the Conservation Area, stand The Foundry House and Foundry Cottage (both Grade II listed) and relate to the foundry which was established here in the late C19 (c.1880). The foundry buildings have a predominantly industrial (and in some cases semi-agricultural) character. When standing on the elevated ground of the churchyard, there are extensive views down to the foundry and then across to the roof tops of residential properties situated on higher ground on the Gosmore side of the shallow valley.

## 1.3 Historical Development

- 1.3.1 The Conservation Area centres on the Church of St Ippolyts that was built in the later 11<sup>th</sup> century and is not mentioned in the Domesday Book suggesting that the settlement may also be late 11<sup>th</sup> century in origin. It lies some way north of the former parish centre at Almshoe and it is assumed that the village centre developed after the church was built. The small settlement spreads along Stevenage Road which runs east from the church.
- 1.3.2 By the post-medieval period, there was a large house, possibly a manor house, in the centre of the village on what is now the village green. This appears to have been demolished and the village green created in its place sometime in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The school in the village is 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, further expansion of the village has taken place along Stevenage Road, with a residential estate of semi-detached houses and maisonettes being built around East View.

## 2. Character and Special Interest

### 2.1 Character

- 2.1.1 The settlement of St Ippolyts is small and although historically centred around the Church of St Ippolyts, is currently better described as being spread along Stevenage Road as it leads eastwards away from the church, especially given the modern housing around East View. However, that part of St Ippolyts contained within the Conservation Area is largely centred on the church. At the very centre of the Conservation Area are three key features; the Church of St Ippolyts, St Ippolyts Primary School, and the St Ippolyts Village Green. Of these, the church is the more historic feature in this location, being a medieval building. The church stands on the crest of a hill within the village which is surrounded by agricultural land. The school is a Victorian addition to the village and the village green appears to be a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century creation following the demolition of a large house and row of cottages on the site. The pattern of settlement in St Ippolyts seems atypical in that it does not have a linear principal street or historic village green.
- 2.1.2 There is a wide variety of materials used in the Conservation Area. For example, red brick (Brook End Farm House and Folly House (Park View)), flint and stone (Parish Church), flint and brick (school), exposed timber frame (The Olive Branch), weatherboarding (barn at Brook End Farm) and cobb (The Cottage Loaf).
- 2.1.3 The ground floor of the Olive Branch is evidently timber framed, shown by the presence of braces to the jetty and the house has a prominent red brick end stack. The lych-gate of the church is also in timber on a brick sill.
- 2.1.4 The Cottage Loaf fronting onto the green at the head of Stevenage Road is late C18 or early C19 and was altered to village bakehouse c.1840 and continued as a shop until 1976 when altered to a house and the oven was removed 1977. There is an amusing irony in that this building is built of cob (a mixture of sandy-sub soil, clay and straw) on brick foundations with a slate roof with exceptionally deep eaves to protect its walls.
- 2.1.5 The older part of the school is in flint with brick dressings and quoins, as is its wall to the street, with other parts of the school in brick, particularly the more modern wing to the east. The school is roofed in slate with varied courses in fish scale and other decorative forms. The roof of the school retains high chimneys with pots and timber slate-clad pinnacles which add to the character of the building and appear in some long views of the green. The Church of St Ippolyts is a rubble-stone construction with stone quoins and detail, though with a brick and timber porch. Residential buildings are generally mostly rendered in white or cream although most have some exposed brick, and Park View (renamed Folly House) has mainly exposed red brick. The residential part of Brookend Farm is a soft red brick and its barn is weatherboarded.
- 2.1.6 Despite the undeveloped land adjacent to the school and churchyard there is a distinct sense of enclosure at street level within the core of the Conservation Area around the church and due to the definition of the churchyard boundary, hedging and the hedges, fences and walls around the church. Beyond this immediate context trees can be seen beyond the buildings and within the open spaces in and around these buildings and spaces.
- 2.1.7 As previously stated, the Church of St Ippolyts sits on raised land at the highest point in the village. The development of the graveyard over time has contributed to the wide, sloping grassed graveyard that rises above the surrounding land. The graveyard is surrounded by a retaining wall running from the top of Brookend Lane into Ashbrook Lane but is a grass bank above stone kerbs opposite the school entrance, south of which the churchyard and street become of the same level.

Brookend Lane itself has a stone-kerbed pavement on its north side with a bank rising to fields beyond, while the west side has a grass verge and bank with some tree planting, and the whole is suggestive of a former hollow way leading into the village from the west. At the top of the slope, Brookend Lane joins Ashbrook Lane which, opposite the church, has a stone-kerbed pavement running outside the school. This continues for a short way beyond the school entranceway before merging into a tarmacked path across the village green. The green itself has stone kerbs to the road and along Stevenage Road the green is defined by a timber rail on posts, providing a level of definition to the green. Along Stevenage Road, properties front directly onto the street, with all buildings except The Olive Branch set back slightly from the street itself behind forecourts of planted gardens. Many of the properties now contain significant areas of hard standing and parking reducing the soft, planted character of the street. The spaces between them are hedged and the house east of The Jolly Tailors, which is outside the Conservation Area, has a garden wall against the street. Folly Lane, running south from the village green, is also tightly hedged on both sides with the exception of driveways although on the west side, this hedge hides a footpath leading to the churchyard with meadow beyond.

- 2.1.8 A number of properties are bordered by brick or stone walls of various types and simple low timber railings are common. For the provision of access to parking many properties have lost much of the definition to the street with wide, ungated openings, and reduced plantings to their front gardens. The most common of which is a low brick wall across all or part of a property, sometimes along a hedge. Property boundaries to the rear of buildings tend to be in the form of fences or hedges, or both.
- 2.1.9 The village green, the field between Ashbrook Lane and Brookend Farm, and sloping parkland west of the Church of St Ippolyts are the principal green spaces of the Conservation Area. There are significant areas of tree planting in the churchyard of St Ippolyts and between the school and the village green. This tree planting, in summer, terminates long views and contributes to the green character of the village
- 2.1.10 Street furniture within St Ippolyts Conservation Area is limited to a bench and village sign on the village green and it has a single streetlamp at the junction of Brookend Lane and Ashbrook Lane. Public memorials within St Ippolyts are limited to the war memorial in the churchyard, although the graves of the churchyard and its extension are prominent within the Conservation Area.

## 2.2 Statement of Special Interest

- 2.2.1 St Ippolyts Conservation Area is notable for its impressive landscape location, with its church sitting on a raised area within the village on a ridge and visible from a distance, fitting for its location at the centre of a parish covering a number of other nearby villages. The church is not mentioned in Domesday and is a later 11<sup>th</sup> century foundation. The prominent location is a key part of the Conservation Area's character. The church and its topographic location, together with the green and early housing surrounding the green contribute significantly to the character of the area.
- 2.2.2 The Conservation Area is centred on an attractive village green which is a 20<sup>th</sup> century creation following the demolition of a large house on the site. The centre of the village contains a small number of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, with other complementary buildings of later periods spread along Stevenage Road, as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century St Ippolyts School. The school building has a simple roof form enlivened with chimneys, pinnacles and an elaborate slate roof. The overall architecture ensemble contributes to the character of the setting of the church and core of the Conservation Area.
- 2.2.3 The Conservation Area also extends to take in Brookend Farm and runs up to Ippolyts Brook. This area strengthens the character of the Conservation Area through the inclusion of a small part of the

agricultural land within which this settlement has developed, the brook and the church essentially being the lowest and highest parts of the landscape here, though in relative proximity. The effect created is one of rising or climbing into the centre of the Conservation Area which serves to heighten the landscape significance of the church at its centre and its setting as a heritage asset.

## 3. Key Assets and Views

### 3.1 Designated Heritage Assets

Table 3.1 Listed Buildings

List Entry	Name	Grade	NGR
1347411	Church of St Ippolyts (Church of England)	I	TL 19792 27127
1102509	Park View 60 Metres along lane beside The Cottage Loaf	II	TL 19834 27005
1102510	Brook End Farmhouse	II	TL 19661 27139
1102511	1 Jolly Tailors	II	TL 19902 27045
1175336	Barn at Brook End Farm 35 Metres to North East of House	II	TL 19684 27160
1175345	The Olive Branch	II	TL 19844 27047
1347413	The Cottage Loaf	II	TL 19820 27053

Table 2 Listed buildings in St Ippolyts Village

### 3.2 Undesignated Heritage Assets

#### Buildings of Local Interest

- 3.2.1 Recommendations for buildings to be included on North Hertfordshire's Register of Buildings of Local Interest will be included in the Summary Report at the conclusion of the project.

#### Buildings or Features that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area

- 3.2.2 The following non-designated buildings are considered to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of Charlton Conservation Area. These buildings have been selected through the contribution they make to the townscape of the Conservation Area.

- Hillrise, Stevenage Road
- Dellview Cottage, Stevenage Road

### 3.3 Key Views

There are nine significant views identified within St Ippolyts Conservation Area. These are:

- from Brookend Lane eastwards uphill towards St Ippolyts Church and the school (KV1)
- from outside the school north-west along Ashbrook Lane (KV2)

- from outside the school south past the village green towards The Olive Branch, The Old Bakehouse, and Folly Lane (KV3)
- from Stevenage Road east of The Olive Branch west towards St Ippolyts Church (KV4)
- from west of Brookend Farm towards the Church of St Ippolyts (KV5)
- from Ashbrook Lane south towards the Church of St Ippolyts (KV6)
- from the village green towards the Church of St Ippolyts and St Ippolyts School (KV7)
- from Folly Lane north towards the Church of St Ippolyts (KV8)
- from the Conservation area boundary on Stevenage Road north-west towards the Church of St Ippolyts (KV9)

## 4. Opportunities for Improvement

There are opportunities for improvement within St Ippolyts Village which have the potential to further preserve or enhance the special interest of the Conservation Area. These are:

- consideration for on-site parking in new development and addressing the loss of gardens to car parking
- street signage and modern railings outside school

## 5. Bibliography

Online mapping from National Museum of Scotland <<https://maps.nls.uk/>>

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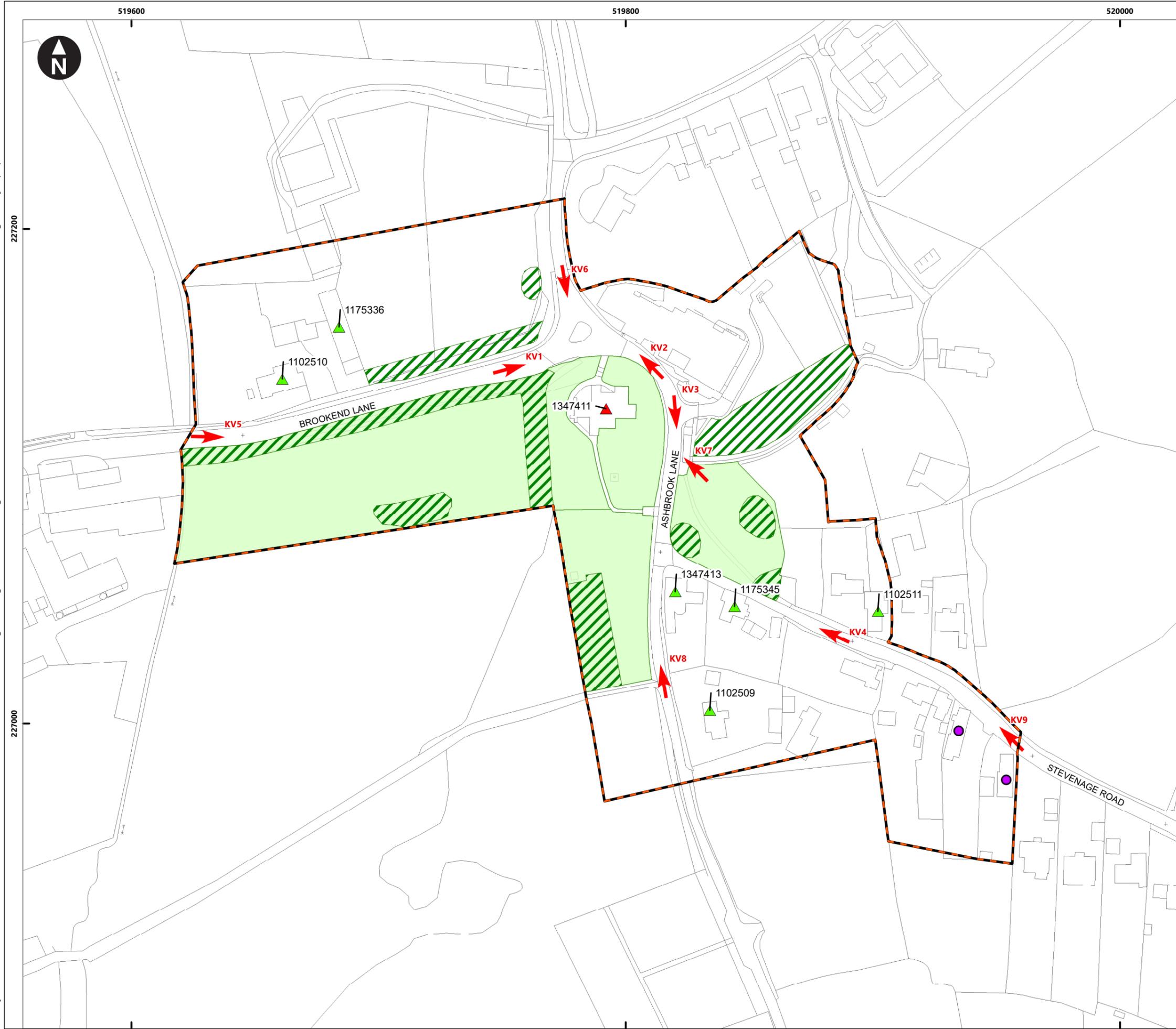
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# Appendix A

## Conservation Area Map





- Key
- Conservation area
  - Listed Buildings**
  - Grade I
  - Grade II\*
  - Grade II
  - Scheduled monument
  - Historic parks and gardens
  - Heritage at risk
  - Significant key view
  - Building or feature that contributes to the character of the Conservation area
  - Significant areas of trees
  - Significant tree
  - Significant green space
  - Significant blue space

Note:  
The Historic England GIS data contained in this material was obtained on 12/04/2019. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from <http://www.historicengland.org.uk>

0 25 50 75 m  
Scale at A3: 1:1,500  
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Client

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**



North Hertfordshire District Council  
Conservation Area Character Statement

**St Ippolyts**

July 2019



# Appendix B Photographs

## B.1 Character Photographs



Fig 2.1 The Olive Branch on Stevenage Road, a Grade II Listed Building.



Fig 2.2 The Church of St Ippolyts, a Grade I Listed Building.



Fig 2.3 Village green looking north-west towards the Church of St Ippolyts.

## B.2 Key Views



Key View KV1: View from Brookend Lane towards the Church of St Ippolyts.



Key View KV2: View from outside the school north-west along Ashbrook Lane.



Key View KV3: View south over village green towards The Olive Branch and The Cottage Loaf on Stevenage Road.



Key View KV4: View north-west along Stevenage Road towards the village green and the Church of St Ippolyts.



Key View KV5: View from west of Brookend Farm east towards the school and the Church of St Ippolyts.



Key View KV6: View from Ashbrook Lane south towards the Church of St Ippolyts.



Key View KV7: View from the village green towards the Church of St Ippolyts and St Ippolyts School.



Key View KV8: View from Folly Lane north towards the Church of St Ippolyts.



Key View KV9: View from the Conservation area boundary on Stevenage Road north-west towards the Church of St Ippolyts

**wood.**

