NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

North Hertfordshire District Council

Willian

Conservation Area Character Statement

Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited – February 2020

Report for

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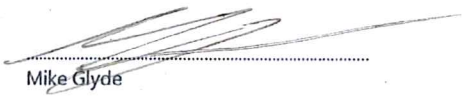

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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Willian Conservation Area was designated by North Hertfordshire District Council in 1973 and its boundary has not been amended since. The boundary includes the majority of the village of Willian, and surrounding fields, which in the northern part of the Conservation Area extend to the limit of the residential development of Letchworth Garden City.

1.1.2 This report has been produced for the purpose of appraising the character of Willian Conservation Area. It includes a character assessment highlighting key features, a statement of special interest, a list of designated heritage assets, undesignated 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 Conservation Area

1.2.1 Willian Conservation Area has, for the most part, the feel of being an isolated rural settlement, but is in reality abutting the southern limits of the residential development of Letchworth Garden City. While to its south, the nearby A1 notwithstanding, a rural setting to the Conservation Area can be appreciated, to the north and east, suburban development is visible immediately beyond the Conservation Area's boundaries. This is, for the most part, well separated from Willian visually, but the setting remains one that is dominated by the proximity of the town.

1.3 Historical Development

1.3.1 Willian appears in the Domesday Survey as a moderately-sized settlement of 15 households. It is centred on the originally 12th century Church of All Saints, which is bound by the village's roads on all sides. As is still clear in the buildings of the village today, settlement in Willian was likely to have been concentrated around the central part of the Conservation Area, with a number of farms and other larger buildings set away from the centre.

1.3.2 The village has few early post-medieval buildings and only the church remaining from the medieval period. The majority of buildings attest to a period of expansion and rebuilding through the 18th and 19th centuries, presumably a combination of agricultural expansion and the replacement of older timber buildings in brick. There are a small number of 20th century buildings in Willian, notably an inter-war group set off Baldock Lane towards the east of the village.

1.3.3 Nearby, Letchworth Garden City was developed through the early 20th century and is now effectively the northern boundary to the Conservation Area, with the boundary seemingly extended to protect the agricultural land between the village and the town.

2. Character and Special Interest

2.1 Character

2.1.1 Willian is, for the most part, a linear settlement along Willian Road and Baldock Lane, but with the addition of a small number of buildings along Willian Church Road as it runs around the south side of the Church of All Saints (NLE 1174914), and Manor Farm on Wymondley Road. The Conservation Area includes all of this built area, plus a significant amount of green space between the village and Letchworth Garden City, and pasture and gardens to the south, as well as small public greens north of Manor Farm and behind Willian Cottages.

2.1.2 Buildings in Willian are predominantly in brick, though of a wide variety of types. Particularly of note are the older brick buildings in the village, including Puncharden Hall (NLE 1295498) which was refronted in red brick in the 18th century (Fig 2.1), Manor Farm, which is a later building in red-brown brick, but which occupies a particularly dominating location within the village (see KV4), the 19th century Lordship Farmhouse (NLE 1347668), and the originally 18th century Three Horseshoes Public House (NLE 1347290), in chequered red brick. The tendency in the village is, however, towards white-painted brick, with most of the buildings in the centre of Willian being of this style and 19th century in date. Of particular note are the terraces of cottages, Manor Cottages, Willian Cottages and Lordship Cottages (Fig 2.2), which were built in 1868 and are roughcast painted. These mirror the slightly earlier Roxley Cottages (NLE 1102822) on the opposite side of Baldock Lane, which are also roughcast and painted, with rendered chimney stacks. The use of roughcast white elevations extends to the inter-war group of houses east along Baldock Lane and is a clear feature of later buildings of the village.

2.1.3 These brick buildings are generally well fenestrated, with the older ones tending towards large sashes while the later buildings, especially the terraces, have a mixture of sashes and smaller casements. The three groups of cottages north of Baldock Lane mentioned above are among the least well fenestrated buildings in the Conservation Area. Their roofs are generally in ceramic tile, though there is slate at The Fox, north-west of the Church of All Saints.

2.1.4 Although several buildings include various timber elements, such as Puncharden Hall, the only clearly timber building in Willian is The Old Vicarage (NLE 1295503), a substantial lobby entry house of the 16th century with projecting east and west wings, probably underbuilt jetties (Fig 2.3). It has most of its timber frame exposed, this painted black and the rest of the building white. The windows are all small to mid-sized casements, and the roof is thatched with tall brick chimney stacks rising above it.

2.1.5 Willian's only stone building is the Church of All Saints. It dates originally to the 12th century and is in flint and ironstone rubble with ashlar detailing. It is fenestrated in the perpendicular style and roofed in slate.

2.1.6 Along Willian and Baldock Lanes, especially in the centre of the Conservation Area, most of the buildings are set back from the road behind hedgerows, tree-planting or timber fences (Fig 2.4). The exception is The Fox and 26-27 Willian Church Road, which form with the Church of All Saints a small group of more prominently sited buildings at what may be thought of as Willian's centre (not least as it includes a car park and the village shop). There are a small number of low brick walls in the Conservation Area, for instance one in red brick in front of Lordship Farmhouse on Baldock Road and one in flint rubble edged in brick around the churchyard of the Church of All Saints.

2.1.7 There is a large amount of green space in Willian Conservation Area, though only a small part of it is accessible to the public. The principal public spaces are a small space, probably best classified as a park, behind Willian Cottages in the northern part of the Conservation Area. This is bounded by higher ground on three sides, and the path on its east side leads north through woodland to the residential streets of the limits of Letchworth Garden City (Fig 2.5). At the east of the Conservation Area, a public footpath leads through pasture south of Baldock Lane, culminating in a pleasant view of the Church of All Saints as the footpath connects to Willian Church Road (see KV2). There is a small green space west of The Fox and 26-27 Willian Church Road, this edged with white-painted timber posts, some connected with chains, but the larger of the public spaces is that south of the corner of Wymondley Road and Willian Lane, which has two footpaths running across it and an impressive view south to Manor Farm (see KV4). There is also public access around the blue space of the pond on the opposite side of Willian Lane from this green space, with good views back towards The Fox (see KV3). Most of the rest of the large amount of green space within the Conservation Area is farmland and pasture north of the village, separating it from the limits of Letchworth Garden City, and the same to the west of Wymondley Road. This is mostly visible from the roads of the Conservation Area, except for that part north of Baldock Lane, which is inaccessible and hidden behind trees and buildings. Lastly, there is a large garden and areas of woodland around Willian Bury (NLE 1102821) in the south of the Conservation Area. This is a former rectory garden, though is not accessible to the public and largely obscured from view.

2.1.8 Significant areas of planting are encountered to the north and south of Willian Bury, surrounding a pond west of the junction between Wymondley Road and Willian Road, and extending along the Conservation Area's northern boundary, where it serves to obscure Letchworth Garden City from view. A Scots Pine standing next to the Church of All Saints is considered a significant tree and is visible from a distance in all directions (see KV1).

2.1.9 What little signage there is in Willian Conservation Area is concentrated on the grassed/planted traffic islands at the junction of Wymondley Road and Willian Road, as well as in front of the Three Horseshoes Public House, on Willian Road. Both are untidy, though the latter is planted with shrubs and makes an interesting feature. Of note is the Letchworth Garden City sign at the corner of Willian Road and Letchworth Lane, a strong reminder within Willian Conservation Area of the village's now far larger neighbour (Fig 2.6).

2.2 Statement of Special Interest

2.2.1 Willian Conservation Area protects the character of a small rural settlement, formerly larger than its neighbour, Letchworth, but now sitting at the edge of the residential extent of the Letchworth Garden City development. It is centred on the Church of All Saints, which sits on a piece of land surrounded by roads and containing a number of other buildings, mostly dating to the 19th century. Much of the Conservation Area is of this period, though the presence of dispersed large buildings from earlier periods attests to the agricultural history and development of the village.

3. Key Assets and Views

3.1 Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings

List Entry	Name	Grade	NGR
1102821	WILLIAN BURY	II	TL 22466 30517
1174914	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	II*	TL 22463 30657
1102822	ROXLEY COTTAGES	II	TL 22528 30723
1347290	THE THREE HORSESHOES PUBLIC HOUSE	II	TL 22488 30783
1347668	LORDSHIP FARMHOUSE	II	TL 22631 30767
1295498	PUNCHARDEN HALL	II*	TL 22419 30736
1295503	THE OLD VICARAGE	II*	TL 22476 30712

3.2 Non-designated 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 Willian Conservation Area.

- The Lodge, Willian Road
- The Warren, Willian Road
- Guysfield Residential Home
- Manor Farm
- Manor Cottages/Willian Cottages
- Lordship Cottages
- School House, Willian Church Road
- New Terrace Cottages, Willian Church Road

3.3 Key Views

3.3.1 A number of key views have been identified within the Conservation Area:

- KV1: From the entrance to the car park on Willian Road looking south towards the Church of the All Saints.
- KV2: From footpath Letchworth Garden City 003 looking west towards the Church of All Saints.
- KV3: From west of the larger of the village ponds looking east towards The Fox public house.
- KV4: From the footpath between Willian Church Road and Wymondley Road looking south towards Manor Farm.

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4. Opportunities for Improvement

4.1.1 Opportunities for improvement within Willian Conservation Area have been identified as follows:

- The public green space behind Willian Cottages, adjacent to the Letchworth Garden City Public Right of Way (006) (Fig. 2.5), could be landscaped to draw people through from Letchworth Garden City as well as from the village.
- Car-parking along the trackway between Willian Cottages and Lordship Cottages could be reviewed.

5. Bibliography

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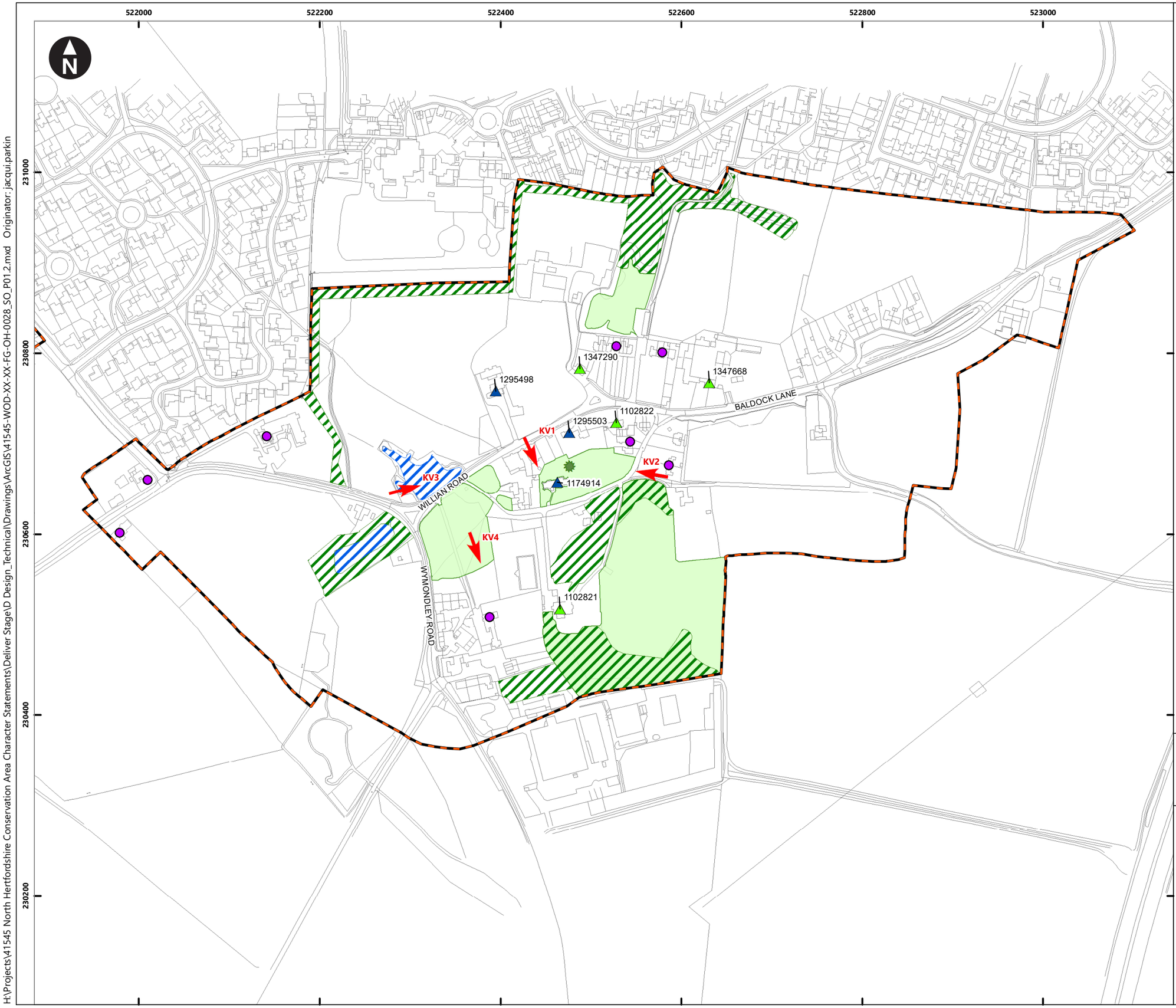
Appendix A
Conservation Area Map



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Key

- Conservation area

Listed Buildings

- Grade I
- Grade II*
- Grade II
- Scheduled ancient 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 26/06/2019. The most publicly available up to date Historic England GIS Data can be obtained from http://www.historicengland.org.uk

0 50 100 150 200 m

Scale at A3: 1:4,000

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Client

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

North Hertfordshire District Council
Conservation Area Character Statement

Willian

February 2020

wood.

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Appendix B
Photographs

B.1 Character Photographs

Fig 2.1 Grade II listed Puncharden Hall, Willian Lane (NLE 1295498).

Fig 2.2 Lordship Cottages, north of Baldock Lane behind long gardens.

Fig 2.3 The Old Vicarage, Willian Road (NLE 1295503).

Fig 2.4 Willian Road, looking towards Baldock Lane, showing boundary hedges and fencing.

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Fig 2.5 Path through the woods (Letchworth Garden City PRoW 006) in the northern part of the Conservation Area, leading towards the residential area of Letchworth Garden City.

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Fig 2.6 Letchworth Garden City sign at the corner of Willian Lane and Letchworth Lane, a reminder within Willian of the proximity of its now larger neighbour.

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B.2 Key Views

KV1: From the entrance to the car park on Willian Road looking south towards the Church of the All Saints, showing the relatively open space the church sits in, prominently within the centre of the village and fine trees within this view.

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KV2: From footpath Letchworth Garden City 003 looking west towards the Church of All Saints, framing the church at the entrance to the village across the fields from the east.

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KV3: From west of the larger of the village ponds looking east towards The Fox public house.

KV4: From the footpath between Willian Church Road and Wymondley Road looking south towards Manor Farm, showing the dominating position of Manor Farm as it sits beyond one of Willian's few pieces of public open space.