# LITTLE AMWELL CONSERVATION AREA

# CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS


**Adopted 25 July 2018**

East Herts District Council
Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ

## CONTENTS

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This Character Appraisal has been produced by officers of East Hertfordshire District Council to identify the special architectural or historic interest, character and appearance of the Little Amwell Conservation Area, assess its current condition, identify threats and opportunities related to that identified special interest and any appropriate boundary changes.

The Management Proposals section puts forward initiatives for the Conservation Area designed to address the above identified threats and opportunities that will preserve and enhance its character and appearance.

A public meeting was held in Little Amwell on the 16 April 2018 to consider the draft Character Appraisal and the Management Proposals – for the latter, as required under s.71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The draft document was then put to public consultation between 16 April and 1 June 2018. The comments received by the Council have been included in this document where appropriate. The document was formally adopted by full Council on 25 July 2018 upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

The content of Character Appraisals written from 2015 which include this paragraph differ slightly from predecessor documents. Selected revisions have been incorporated to reflect changes to legislation, the emerging District Plan, nomenclature, consolidation and other improvements resulting from experience gained to date.

## 1. Introduction.

1.1. The historic environment cannot be replaced and is a resource that is both fragile and finite. Particularly in an age when society and its needs change with rapidity, the various historic and architectural elements of conservation areas can be perceived to interact in a complex manner and create a ‘unique sense of place’ that is appreciated by those lucky enough to reside in such special places and the many interested persons who appreciate and visit them.

1.2. East Hertfordshire District has a particularly rich and vibrant built heritage, featuring 42 conservation areas and approximately 4,000 fine listed buildings displaying a variety of styles representative of the best of architectural and historic designs from many centuries. Generally and very importantly the clear distinction between built form and open countryside has been maintained.

1.3. The District is situated in an economically buoyant region where an attractive environment, employment opportunities and excellent transport links, road, rail and air, make it a popular destination to live and work. In addition to London a short commuting distance away, the District is influenced by other factors beyond its administrative area, such as Stansted Airport and the towns of Harlow and

Stevenage. With such dynamics it is inevitable that the historic environment will be subject to pressures which emphasize the need to protect it.

1.4. The East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review, adopted in April 2007, recognises these facts and commits the Council to review its conservation areas and their boundaries. The production of this document is part of this process.

1.5. Conservation areas are places which are considered worthy of protection as a result of a combination of factors such as the quality of the environment, spatial characteristics, the design and setting of the buildings or their historic significance. In addition to the individual qualities of the buildings themselves, there are other factors such as the relationships of the buildings with each other, the quality of the spaces between them and the vistas and views that unite or disrupt them. The relationship with adjoining areas and landscape, the quality of trees, boundary treatments, advertisements, road signage, street furniture and hard surfaces, are also important features which can add to or detract from the special interest, character and appearance of a conservation area.

1.6. This document was produced in accordance with Historic England guidance, the most recent of which is Advice Note 1 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2016). The Character Appraisal recognises the importance of the factors listed above and considers them carefully. Once approved this document will be regarded as a 'material consideration' when determining (deciding) planning applications. The Management Proposals section puts forward simple practical initiatives that would preserve the Conservation Area from identified harm and also any appropriate projects and proposals that would, as and when resources permit, enhance its character and appearance.

1.7. The recommendations concerning non-listed buildings and structures are normally formed by the field-workers observations made from the public realm and seldom involve internal inspection or discussions with owners. Thus such recommendations contained in this Character Appraisal might be subject to reconsideration through the planning application process, where that is necessary, and which would involve the submission of additional information. Similar considerations apply to estimating dates of buildings.

1.8. This Conservation Appraisal:

- Identifies the special architectural or historic interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Identifies elements that make a positive contribution to the above special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area that should be retained, preserved or enhanced;
- Identifies neutral elements that might be beneficially enhanced or, alternatively, replaced by something that makes the above positive contribution;
- Identifies detracting elements it would be positively desirable to remove or replace;

- Reviews the existing boundaries to ensure that they clearly define the Conservation Area and align with distinct changes of character with outside areas such that the Conservation Area is both cohesive and defensible;
- Identifies threats to the Conservation Area's special interest, character and appearance and any opportunities to enhance it;

1.9. The Management Proposals section:

- Puts forward any required boundary changes to omit or add areas to the Conservation Area that would make it both cohesive and defensible;
- Proposes measures and initiatives that address the threats to the Conservation Area's special interest, character and appearance identified in the Character Appraisal;
- Proposes initiatives and projects that exploit the opportunities identified in the Character Appraisal that both preserve and enhance the Conservation Area's special interest, character and appearance
- Puts forward appropriate enhancement proposals mindful of any funding constraints;

1.10 The document was prepared with the assistance of members of the local community and includes additional input from the public through the public meeting and the consultation exercise.

1.11 Acknowledgement and thanks are recorded to Hertfordshire County Council whose Historic Environment Unit has been particularly helpful and Pam Kimpton for her detailed knowledge of the history of the area (see Bibliography on p.50).

1.12. This document is written in three parts:
Part A - Legal and Policy Framework.
Part B – Character Appraisal;
Part C - Management Proposals.

1.13 Location of the Conservation Area within the East Herts District


*Map 1. Location Plan*

*Aerial photograph 2010*

## PART A - CONTEXT

### 2. Legal and Policy framework.

2.1. The legal background for designating a conservation area is set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This states that the Council shall from time to time (now defined as 5 years) review its area and designate as conservation areas any parts that are of *'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.* The same section of the Act also requires that councils undertake periodic reviews.

2.2. Section 71 of the Act requires Councils to, from time to time (now defined as 5 years), *'formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement'* of conservation areas, hold a public meeting to consider them and have regard to any views expressed at the meeting concerning the proposals.

2.3 The production of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal, which identifies the special interest and the threats and opportunities within a conservation area, is an essential prerequisite to the production of s.71 Management Proposals (although, interestingly, it is the production of the latter that is the statutory duty).

2.4. Planning Controls. Within conservation areas there are additional planning controls. If these are to be justified and supported it is important that the designated areas accord with the statutory definition and are not devalued by including land or buildings that lack special interest.

2.5. Planning permission is required for the demolition of a building in a conservation area but is subject to certain exceptions. For example, it does not apply to listed buildings (which are protected by their own legal provisions within the 1990 Act) but is relevant to other non-listed buildings in a conservation area above a threshold size set out in legislation*. Looking for and assessing such buildings is therefore a priority of this Appraisal.

2.6. Certain ecclesiastical buildings (which are for the time being used for ecclesiastical purposes) are not subject to local authority administration provided an equivalent approved system of control is operated by the church authority. This is known as the 'ecclesiastical exemption'. Importantly in such circumstances, church authorities still need to obtain any other necessary planning permissions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2.7. Permitted Development. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England), Order 2015 defines the range of minor developments for which planning permission is not required. This range is more restricted in conservation areas. For example, the Order currently requires that the addition of dormer windows to roof slopes, various types of cladding, satellite dishes fronting a

* The demolition of a building not exceeding 50 cubic metres is not development and can be demolished without planning permission. Demolition of other buildings below 115 cubic metres are regarded as 'Permitted Development' granted by the General Permitted Development Order, subject to conditions that may require the Council's 'prior approval' regarding methods of proposed demolition and restoration.

highway and a reduced size of extensions, all require planning permission in a conservation area.

2.8. However, even within conservation areas there are other minor developments associated with many non-listed buildings that do not require planning permission. Where further protection is considered necessary to preserve a conservation area from harmful alterations carried out under such 'Permitted Development Rights', the law allows Councils to introduce additional controls if appropriate. Examples of such controls can commonly include some developments fronting a highway or open space, such as an external porch or the demolition of some gates, fences or walls or their alteration. The removal of existing architectural features that are identified as being important to the character or appearance of a conservation area (such as chimneys, traditional detailing or materials, porches, windows and doors or walls or railings) can be made subject to protection by a legal process known as an 'Article 4 Direction' which withdraws 'Permitted Development Rights'. The use of such Directions needs to be made in justified circumstances where a clear assessment of each conservation area has been made. In conducting this Character Appraisal, consideration will be given as to whether or not such additional controls are appropriate.

2.9. Works to Trees. Another additional planning control relates to trees located within conservation areas. Setting aside various exceptions principally relating to size, any proposal to fell or carry out works to trees has to be 'notified' to the Council. The Council may then decide whether to make the tree/s subject to a Tree Preservation Order. This Character Appraisal diagrammatically identifies only the most significant trees or groups of trees that make an important contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, particularly when viewed from the public realm. Other trees not specifically identified may still be suitable for statutory protection through a TPO. There are currently 3 TPOs within the Conservation Area; the frontage and at the rear of 24 Mount Pleasant (believed to be the old vicarage), to the rear of the old school (the once striking tree at the front of the school is now gone) and at the rear of 15 Church Hill.

2.10. Some hedges may be protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. This legislation is extremely complicated and only applies in certain situations that are determined by the location and extent of the hedge, its age and or its historical importance, the wildlife it supports and its number of woody species. Whilst the Regulations do not apply to domestic garden hedges, such garden hedges which are considered to be visually important have been identified. It is hoped their qualities are recognised by owners and the community and will be retained.

2.11. National Planning Policy Framework. The principle emphasis of the framework is to promote 'sustainable development'. Economic, social and environmental factors should not be considered in isolation because they are mutually inter-dependent and collectively define what is sustainable development. Positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment should be sought, including replacing poor design with better design. Whilst architectural styles should not be imposed (unless, of course the conservation area is of homogenous

architectural style – which is not the case with Little Amwell) it is considered proper to reinforce local distinctiveness.
2.12. Of particular relevance to this document, the National Planning Policy Framework advises as follows:

- There should be a positive strategy in the Local Plan for the conservation of the historic environment and up-to-date evidence used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make.

- Conservation areas. Such areas must justify such a status by virtue of being of *'special architectural or historic interest'.*

- Heritage assets. A heritage asset is defined 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. 'Heritage asset' includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listings)' and non-designated assets – for example archaeological assets.*

- Considerable weight should be given to conserving such heritage assets and the more important they are the greater the weight. For example the effect of an application affecting a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account and a balanced judgment reached. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building should be exceptional whilst harm to heritage assets of higher status, e.g. a grade I or II* listed building should be wholly exceptional.

- Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas to enhance or better reveal their significance and proposals that preserve such elements should be approved.

- The use of Article 4 Directions to remove national permitted development rights should be limited to situations *'where this is necessary to protect local amenity or the well being of the area…'*

- Green areas. Such areas of particular importance can properly be identified for special protection as Local Green Spaces in selected situations.

2.13. East Hertfordshire's Environmental Initiatives and Local Plan Policies. East Hertfordshire is committed to protecting conservation areas and implementing policies which preserve and enhance them; to support their preservation through the publication of design and technical advice and to be pro-active by offering grants and administering a Historic Buildings Grant Service. With regard to the latter, grants are awarded on a first-come-first-served basis in relation to works which result in the maintenance of listed buildings and other unlisted buildings of architectural or historic interest. Details are available on the Council's website.

2.14. In respect of the above, the Council has produced a number of leaflets and guidance notes that are available on line. These 'guidance notes on the preservation and repair of historic materials and buildings' provide useful information relevant to

the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. They will be updated as resources permit.

2.15. The Council also has a 'Heritage at Risk Register', originally produced in 2006 and updated in 2016 and 2017. This document is available on the Council's website. There are no such buildings within the Little Amwell Conservation Area.

2.16. The East Herts Local Plan was adopted by the Council in 2007. The 'saved' policies set out in the plan remain in force and are relevant in relation to conservation area and historic building considerations. The Local Plan and its policies can be viewed on the Councils website or a copy can be obtained from the Council (contact details are set out at the end of this document).

2.17. In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council is in the process of preparing a planning policy document which will replace the 2007 Local Plan. This will be known as the East Herts District Plan (DP). Once adopted the DP will contain the relevant Council planning policies. As currently drafted this emerging District Plan advises that new development within a conservation area should, *inter alia*, conform with the content of the relevant Character Appraisal.

2.18. Little Amwell Conservation Area was first designated on 10 May 1991 and known then as the Hertford Heath Conservation Area. This is the first review of the designation.

2.19 That review revealed that the village at the heart of the Conservation Area is, in fact, Little Amwell. Hertford Heath is the wider area and, historically, the settlement to the south. The opportunity has been taken to correct this error.

*Late 19th c. photo showing Holy Trinity, the pond and the hedge around the water tank.*

## Part B – CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

### 3. Origins and Historical Development

3.1. There are 3 records within the Little Amwell Conservation Area contained in the Historic Environment Record held by the County Archaeologist. There are an additional 4 records in the immediate area of some relevance to its setting.

Within the Conservation Area

3.1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE OF AMWELL BEACON, LITTLE AMWELL
HER REF: 16154

Elizabethan beacon site on Hertford Heath

One of the beacons set up or renewed to give early warning of the approach of the Spanish Armada in 1588, and the last Hertfordshire beacon to survive. This one was set up on the part of Hertford Heath 'known as the Lesser or Beacon Heath', which has dwindled to become the village green at Little Amwell. Presumably it stood on the highest point. The beacon is shown on Speed's 1611 map, a substantial timber and metal structure. In 1698 it was fully restored, at great expense, but only five years later 'the Beacon on the Heath is ruinous and likely to fall', which it did; in 1703 the constable was given permission to sell off the remains.

The site of the beacon is possibly shown on the 1766 Dury and Andrews map. Little Amwell is named on the map Little Heath, and on the green here at the north end of 'Hartford Heath' is a small round mound, deliberately depicted. This may imply it was thought to be artificial; and it occupied the north end of the spur of high ground. It would be in a good position for the beacon. The HER shows the site as being where the array of cottages to the east of the Church stand (Nos. 2-20 Mount Pleasant).

3.1.2 THE GOAT, 25 VICARAGE CAUSEWAY, HERTFORD HEATH
HER REF: 17591

16th century house, a public house since at least the later 19th century, at Little Amwell

The 16th century Goat stands on the north side of the green at the hamlet of Little Amwell, facing south onto it. It is a one-and-a-half storey timber-framed hall house and a taller two-storey east cross wing. The projecting single-storey west cross wing with gable chimney is later. A two-storey brick east range was added in the 19th century.

It is shown on the later 19th century OS maps as the Goat public house although it appears to have been built as a private house. It has been extended to the west more recently.

### 3.1.3 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, HERTFORD HEATH
HER REF: 13753

1863 church by Ewan Christian, built at Little Amwell to serve the new parish of Hertford Heath

A small church in the Early English style for the new parish of Hertford Heath, built in 1863 by Ewan Christian for Rev David Barclay Bevan (vicar 1864-81) .See list description for details. Some restoration was done in 1913.

The churchyard contains the Listed tomb of George James Coleman (d.1866) and his wife Ann (d.1871), an elegant carved chest sarcophagus on four animal legs with claw feet, and elaborate railings  The fashion for a classical sarcophagus was popular from the late 18th century. The Coleman Tomb represents the end of the tradition and as such demonstrates a lack of subtle refinement which one would find in earlier examples.

The church replaced a pair of cottages shown on the c.1846 tithe map.

Outside the Conservation Area.

### 3.1.4 ERMINE STREET ROMAN ROAD
HER REF: 9271

The Hertfordshire section of the Roman highway from London to York, parts of which are still in use.

The Roman highway from London to York, constructed by the Roman army soon after the conquest of southern Britain in AD 43-45. It enters the south of the county west of Waltham Cross, running due north, and went via Ware and Braughing late Iron Age and Roman settlements, to leave it north of Royston. The course survives well as earthworks, cropmarks, and lengths still in use as roads or rights of way. In 2010-12 it was found to have three distinct road surfaces (surviving about 6m wide, with wheel-ruts in the topmost surface) and several layers of make-up, none closely dated. The original 1st century course was represented by a pair of ditches on its west side, which soon went out of use; the road was encroached upon by buildings from the 2nd century onwards.

The north-south length to the west of Little Amwell from Elbow Lane up London Road and on up Hogswell Lane and the track north are all part of Ermine Street.

### 3.1.5 AMWELL PLACE FARM, HERTFORD HEATH
HER REF: 17590

Late 18th century house with older farmstead

Amwell Place is a late 18th century house set back from the road, in yellow brick with slate roofs, three storeys and cellar. In the early 19th century a two-storey rear wing was added; this has a single-storey 20th century extension at the west end.

The house is shown on the later 19th century OS maps as Amwellplace Farm, at the north end of what was then the hamlet of Little Amwell. It stands 20m north of the farmstead, which in the late 19th century had ranges of buildings on the north and west sides of the rectangular yard and a couple of small isolated buildings to the south. Attached to the rear of the west range were open-fronted sheds.

The timber-framed and weatherboarded barn at the north-west corner of the yard was built in the early 18th century but using older timbers. This barn is the only surviving building apart from the house, and is now part of a recent domestic complex. Both the house and barn are Listed Grade II.

3.1.6 THE TOWNSHEND ARMS, 21 LONDON ROAD, HERTFORD HEATH
HER REF: 31057

Earlier 19th century public house, now housing.

The Townshend Arms, which closed in 2012 for conversion to housing, is an earlier 19th century double-fronted building with low-pitched slate roof standing on the eastern edge of War Memorial Green [12376] at Hertford Heath. It is shown on the c.1846 tithe map, when it may have been comparatively new. Attached on its north side is a narrower single-storey stable block extending to the NW along the edge of the Green, and crossing the line of Roman Ermine Street [9271]. By the time the Townshend Arms was built the main road was the London Road heading NW across the Green towards Hertford, and the course of Ermine Street northwards from here towards Ware was a rural lane. The 1881 OS map shows the stable building divided into three portions, and behind the house itself was a well.

3.1.7 WAR MEMORIAL GREEN, HERTFORD HEATH
HER REF: 12376

Small triangular green at a road junction. Registered common land.

This is a small triangular green at the point where the main road between Hoddesdon and Hertford leaves Ermine Street [9271]. In the early 19th century the Townshend Arms [31057] was built on the eastern edge of the Green. Hertford Heath's war memorial stands in the centre of the triangle.

### 3.2 **Prehistoric (before 600BC), Iron Age (600BC-43AD) and Roman (43AD-c450) and Saxon (c450 - 1066)**

Archaeological finds show that human activity in the area goes back to the late Mesolithic period (circa 6,500 BC). Bronze Age axes have been found at Priors Wood in an area that is now Oak Tree Close.

Prior to the arrival of the Romans the area was a settlement of the Catuvellauni tribe, a celtic tribe centred on St. Albans that covered Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. In 1956 builders laying the foundations for the garages in Trinity Road unearthed an Iron Age Belgic chieftains cremation grave dating from 40-50 AD.

The Roman period saw the making of Ermine Street described above. By the 12th C. large sections had fallen into serious disrepair and the preferred route out of London followed up the Lea to Hoddesdon where it traversed north westward along the now B1197, picking up the short north-south length of Ermine Street described above and then veering northwest again to Hertford, the County town.

3.3 **Norman and Medieval (1066-1500)**

The publication, Place Names of Hertfordshire, English Place-Name Society Vol. XV 1938, Cambridge University Press, 1970 advises several names for what is now Great Amwell beginning in 1086 – Emmewelle, Emuuella and Emwella. By 1220 it was Amwell. However variations still occurred; 1220 – Amwell, 1225 – Emeswell, 1226 – Amewell, 1258 – Ammewelle, 1307 – Ampwelle and in 1426 – Anwell.

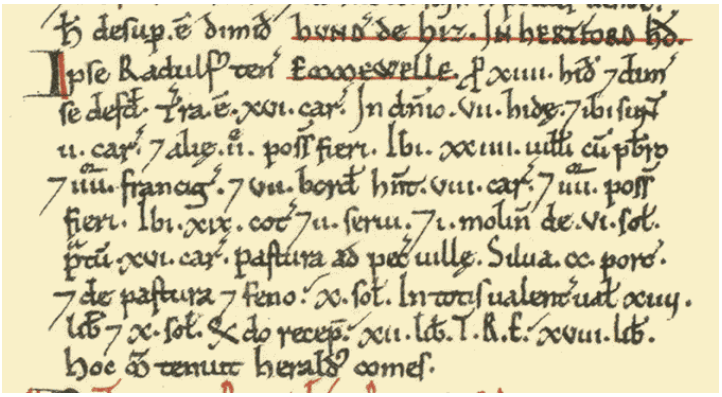
The first reference to Little Amwell as a separate entity was in 1542 where it was already known as Little Amwell. Further variations for greater Amwell are recorded thus; 1593 – Much Amwell and 1655 – Greate Amwell.

The origins of the name are described as '*Æ*mma's spring' or 'wielle'. Æmma would be a pet form for an old English name such as Ēanmær or Ēanmund. According to tradition, Emma, the wife of Canute, is supposed to have given her name to the well (just below the church in Great Amwell), but the place name is "undoubtedly far older than that".

In considering the names of the area it is worth clarifying that prior to the early 19th C the area was known as Great Amwell and Little Amwell – the latter being the area the focus of this study. Before the coming of Haileybury College (The East India Company College at Haileybury) in 1809 'Hertford Heath' was just that - a heath with Priors Wood to the south with only a tiny handful of cottages along what is now the B1197. The main settlement for the area was at Little Amwell. Hence the proposal in this document to adopt this more historic name.

The two Amwells were part of the lands held by Earl Harold – King Harold to us. With his defeat at the Battle of Hastings, William gave the Manor of Amwell to Ralph de Limesi, and it is his name that features in The Domesday Book, the census commissioned by William I in 1086. It records two entries and states that 'Emmewelle' (being Great and Little Amwell) was assessed at 14 ½ hides. There is land for 16 ploughs. In demesne (where the produce went to the Lord rather than his tenants) were 7 hides (about 120 acres). There were 24 villagers, 1 priest and 4 Frenchmen. There were 19 cottagers and 2 slaves. With families that might be as many as 300 people. There was a mill, extensive meadow for 16 ploughs and pasture for the live-stock of the village and woodland for 200 pigs. A large and valuable estate. Source: Domesday Book, a complete translation, Alecto Historical Associations Penguin Books 2002.

Little is known about Little Amwell until the 17th c but it would not be unreasonable to assume that, in common with much of England, the population declined by 1300 and declined further with the arrival of the Black Death in 1348-9. A smaller population and shortage of farm labour may, as elsewhere, have led to greatly expanded sheep farming. Many such areas then saw populations expand again into the middle of the 16th century.



*Extract from the Domesday Book for Amwell.*

3.4 **17th Century**

In 1563 Elizabeth I moved Parliament from Westminster to Hertford to escape the plague. One can imagine the spectacle of her court travelling through Little Amwell on the way.

The threat of invasion from the Spanish Armada in 1588 led to the erection of tall timber and pitch beacons from the south coast to the north of England. High ground was needed so they were in sight of one another. Three such beacons were erected in Hertfordshire, one of which was at Little Amwell. Its exact location is unknown, some say it was set up on 'Beacon' at Amwell Place Farm but this appears to be a later name referencing the bonfires lit for various coronations etc. in the 20th c. The most likely location is shown on the HER – where the present run of cottages to the east of the Church are, an area known as the Lesser Heath. Repaired and rebuilt repeatedly, it was the last of the three still standing, when it finally succumbed to strong winds in 1702, whereupon the materials were sold off. Yet it (or at least the mound upon which it stood) still appears to be shown on the Dury and Andrews map of 1776 (see Fig. 1 below).

3.5 **18th Century**

The historic record has little to say about Little Amwell during this period. The Goat PH was built at this time and is shown on pre-1756 maps.

3.6 **19th Century**

The population had grown to 403 people by 1801 living in 78 houses. However, with the opening of the East India Company College at Haileybury in 1809 there appears to have been something of an exodus to take up the jobs and new housing there as by 1811 the population of Little Amwell had fallen to 243 in 38 houses (one imagines that a number of hovels were pulled down at this time). Indeed the College was a vitally important part of the local economy employing laundry workers ('washer women'), cleaners, porters, heating engineers, matrons, gardeners, laboratory assistants, pig stockmen and labourers to produce the fruit and vegetables necessary to support the College. The village greens were once full of washing lines with billowing sheets and shirts (see historical photo below). Over half the village were employed there, so it must have come as devastating news when, in 1855 Parliament, conscious after the so-called 'Indian Mutiny' that the East India Company was an untenable presence on the sub-continent, began the process of winding it up. They began with the College which closed in 1858. Happily, the College reopened as a new public school in 1862 after what, for local villagers, must have been an

extremely anxious period (the alternative source of work, agriculture, was having its own crisis faced with cheap food imports from America). The education of the locals was secured with the opening of the school in 1837 and its subsequent expansion as the century drew on such that by 1894 the school could accommodate 280 children.

*Late 19th c. photo showing the pond and the washing lines along Mount Pleasant.*

In 1863 Holy Trinity Church was founded and the following year Little Amwell as a separate secular and ecclesiastical parish was created from parts of All Saints, St. Johns and Great Amwell parishes. However, this left an unsatisfactory situation for the wider 'Hertford Heath' area as it now fell to two separate parishes – Little Amwell and Great Amwell; a matter that was not resolved for over a hundred years.

Yet Little Amwell was only a small village and in 1900 consisted of just London Road, Hogsdell Lane, Vicarage Causeway, Church Hill, Mount Pleasant and the newly named Downfield Road. As with any such village it was, of necessity, quite self-contained and a number of what are today simply houses, once were premises for bakers, shops and other facilities. Kelly's directories of 1890-1914 lists a full complement of such tradesmen, many of whom would have 'worn more than one hat'. In 1891 the population was 843.

### 3.10 **20th century and beyond**

The War memorial erected in 1920 commemorates the 37 men in the First World War and, later, the 10 in the Second World War who made the ultimate sacrifice. Zeppelin bombs dropped in 1916 caused some localised cratering and damage around the Vicarage.

A substantial change to the character of the area happened in 1937 when the pond was filled in, apparently due to 'misuse' and the fact they were almost grown over. This pond is plainly visible on the old maps up to 1923 (see Fig. 4.). Old photographs show its location and extent at the south east corner of the Green with the washer women's clothes lines behind on Mount Pleasant.

Various infill developments around the Green can be tracked on the OS maps (see below) c/w typical ribbon housing development along London Road.

Further south the extensive post-war public housing development at Hertford Heath led to the gradual relocation of the 'centre of gravity' of the area away from Little Amwell. This was acknowledged when in 1990, after over a hundred years, the separation between Little Amwell and Great Amwell parishes was ended with the creation of the new Hertford Heath Parish Council. Note, it was not called Little Amwell PC.

The area has remained largely unchanged until recent years when a spate of demolitions and rebuilds has occurred leaving a scattering of large and mainly undistinguished post war houses and bungalows. Most of this can only be described as of 'neutral' quality consideration of which has generated the proposal to reduce the size of the Conservation Area by removing much of Downfield Road and Portland Place. An undoubtedly attractive Conservation Area, care must be exercised to ensure that future new development is of high architectural quality in sympathy with the traditional styles and materials. Too often recent development has paid scant attention in their designs to the prevailing grain, scale, design and materials of local vernacular tradition and, devoid of any meaningful contextual input, have consequently failed to make any positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Thus, if left unchecked, developers gradually erode and destroy the very attractive qualities that they feed on.

High house prices fuel this process, with developers able to offer temptingly high land prices to existing landholders. Regrettably, and in common with the rest of south east England, the process is inflationary, making houses unaffordable to locals, priced out by those looking to retire to the country or those with well-paid urban jobs. Commuters tend to shop at the supermarkets in the towns where they work (and/or go there recreationally at weekends). Faced with such competition local village shops and services have been lost.

This Character Appraisal seeks to identify the special architectural interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area so that it can be better preserved and enhanced. The derived and approved Management Proposals, local action, the influencing of individual owners, directing the various authorities with rights over the public realm, better design and the more informed decision-making by the Council's own planning system can help prevent or mitigate some of the harm now being experienced.

3.11 **Historic and contemporary maps.**

The early historic maps show something of the location of key villages and features. In this instance they show the relationship of the hamlet with Ermine Street and the later route from Hoddesdon along what Is not the B1197. They also show that the main focus of development before the 19thc was along what is now Downfield Road. This was known as the Ware Road before then and the maps show it wending its way north through Rush Green to Ware. This, then, was the importance of Little Amwell – it stood on the high ground at the junction of the roads out of London to Hertford and Ware. It would appear Ware was the more historically important destination – hence it was on the Ware Road that the houses were built.

The later OS maps show the development of the area during the 19th c. spreading along Mount Pleasant (the road to Great Amwell) with many gap sites gradually infilled as the century progressed.

The 1846 Tithe map on p. 21 shows the 2 cottages where the Church is now. The later OS maps show the large underground water tank on the Green. This was donated by Rev. Barclay in 1898 and supplied off the new artesian well at the Vicarage, many of the existing cottage wells having inexplicably become unpotable the year before. This may be related to the huge scale of the laundry operation by this time – the village being known as 'Soap Sud Island' – all that waste water must have been tipped somewhere and it is not difficult to see how it could have entered the water course. Old photos show the water tank hidden behind hedging.

The 1923 OS maps show Goat Cottages on the site of the present carpark. These were pulled down after 1925.

The big change in the area can be seen in on the 1973 OS map with the post war public housing to the south. This was part of a national housing policy to provide better quality housing for locals and those moving out of the overcrowded slums of London. Many similar estates were built by the County authority at this time as extensions to Hertfordshire villages. To many newcomers the move to the rural quiet of 'ertford 'eaf' (or 'The Bush' as it was popularly known) must have been quite a shock. Originally built as council (social) housing, these houses are now under mixed ownership, some privately owned, others having passed from the local authority to housing associations.

More recent development has taken the form of opportunistic infill or demolition and redevelopment as described above.

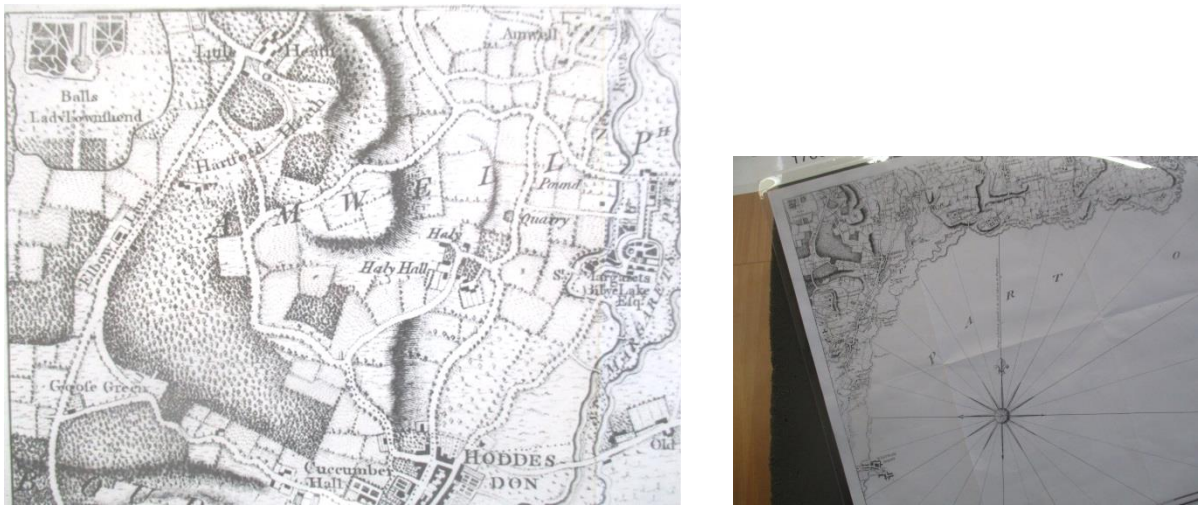



*Fig. 1. Dury and Andrews map of 1776. Little Amwell is here called Little Heath. The mound, assumed to be the Beacon, is clearly visible, much though the beacon itself was removed some 74 years earlier. NB. this map is not to true north (Elbow Lane – Ermine Street - runs north-south)– the insert shows the necessary correction.*


*Fig. 2. Bryant Map of 1822. This survey was at 1" = 1 Mile so not particularly detailed. The Goat Inn PH and various cottages along Downfield Road (then called Ware Road – hence it's pre-eminence) and Amwell Place Farm can be identified.*


*Fig. 3. OS First series map of 1805 (from a spread of 1805-1869). This shows Hailey Bury as East India College (founded in 1806) so may be a later amendment. This survey was at 1" = 1 Mile so not particularly detailed. The spire symbol may well denote the then historic Beacon. The hamlet is identified as Little Amwell with Little Heath now shown to the west. Most development is still along Downfield Road. The waste (Bury W.) appears to be crossed by a mere track.*


*Fig. 4. OS First series map of 1863 (from a spread of 1805-1869). 1" = 1 Mile so not particularly detailed. Little change from the previous map.*

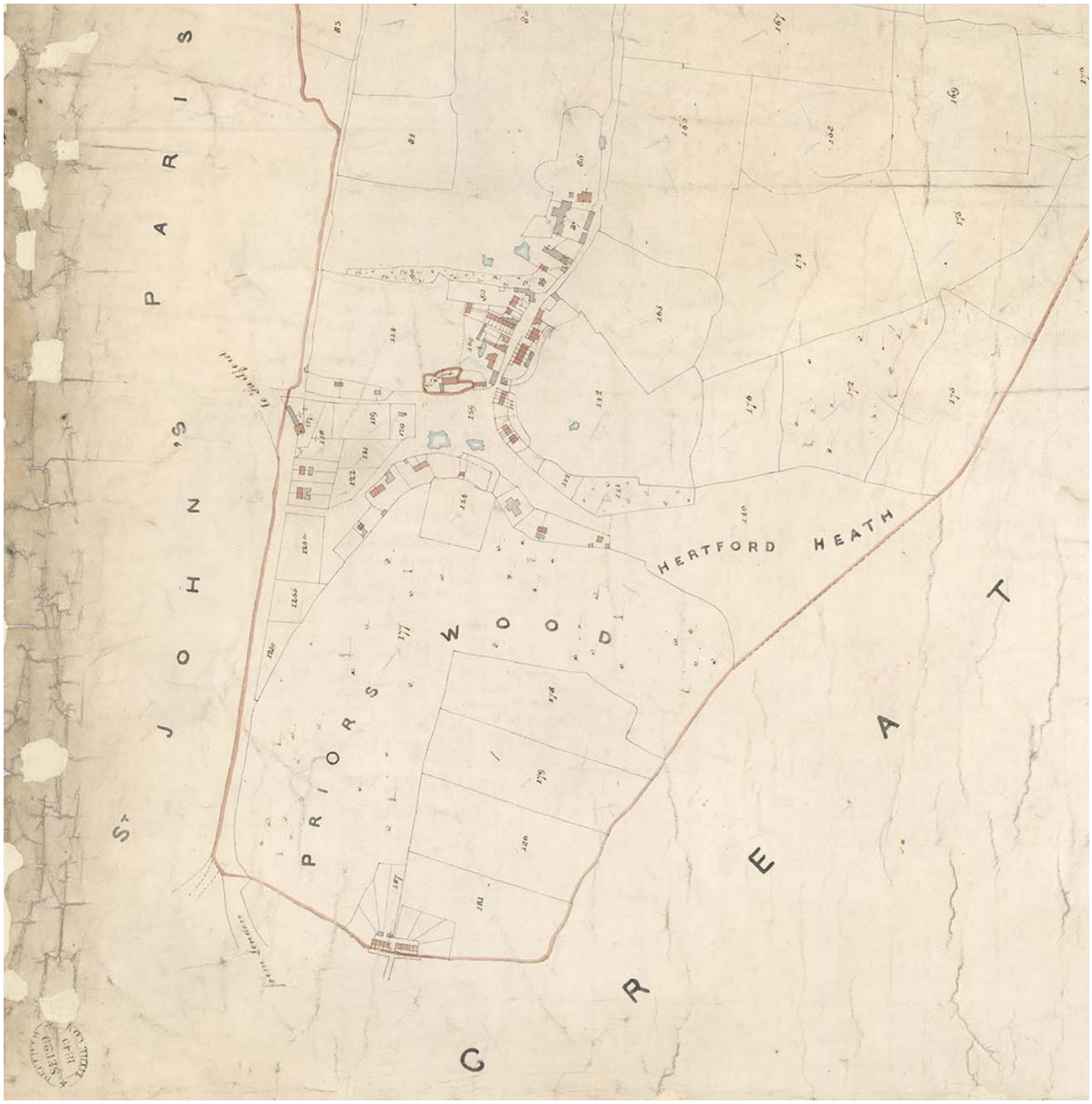



*Fig 5. Tithe map 1846*

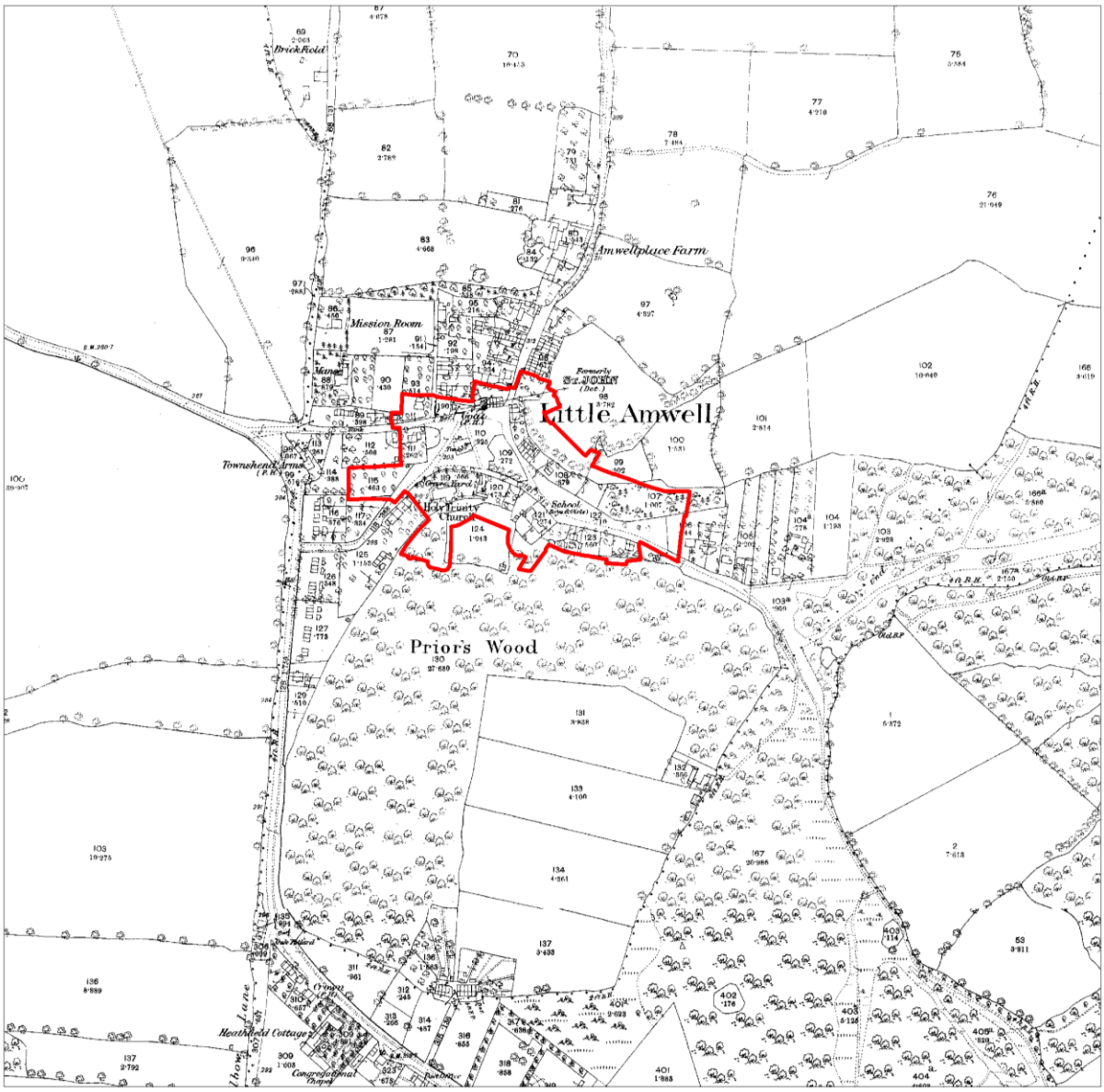



*Fig. 6. OS map of 1880-81*

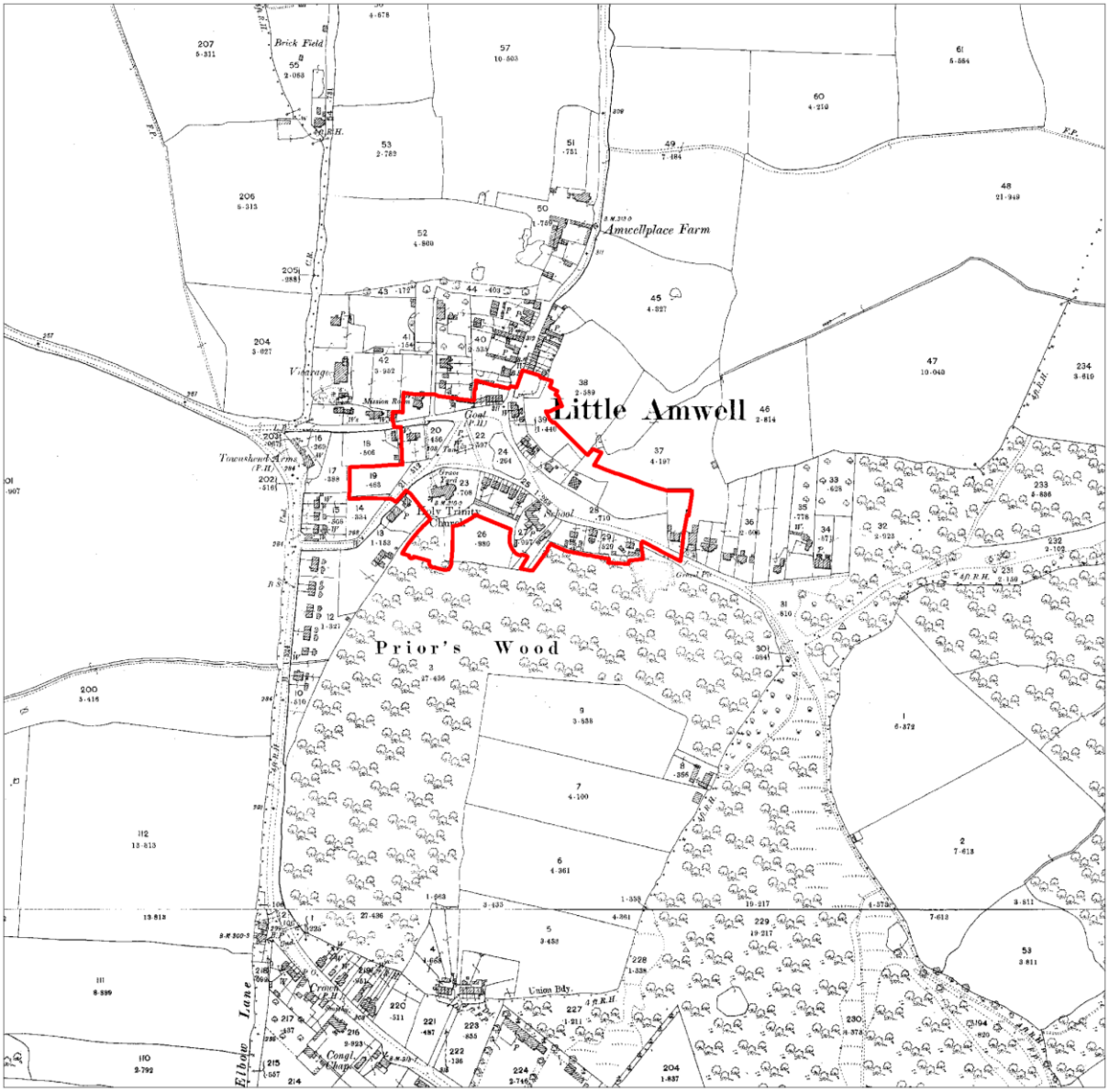



*Fig. 7. OS map of 1898*

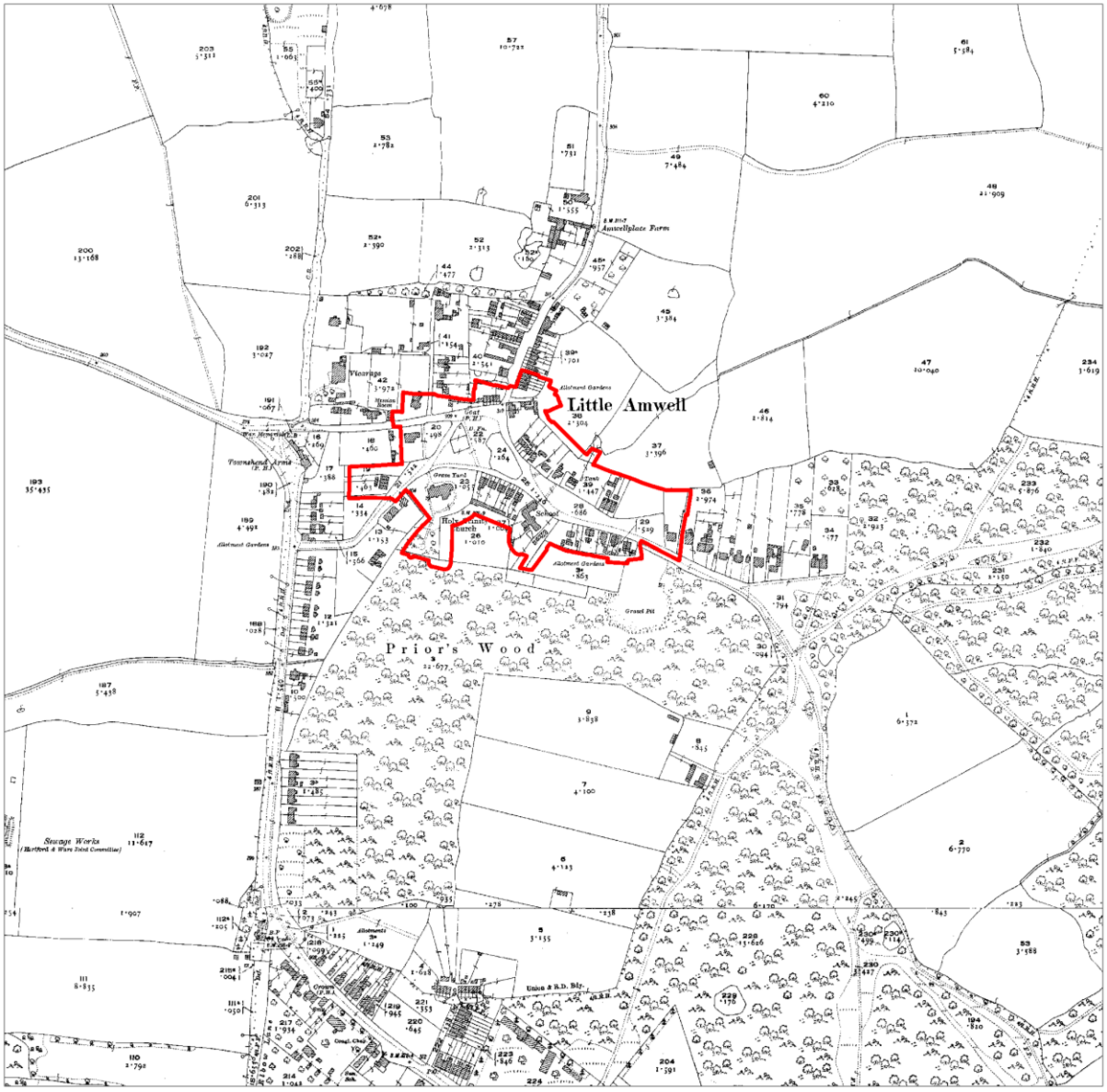



*Fig. 8. OS map of 1923*

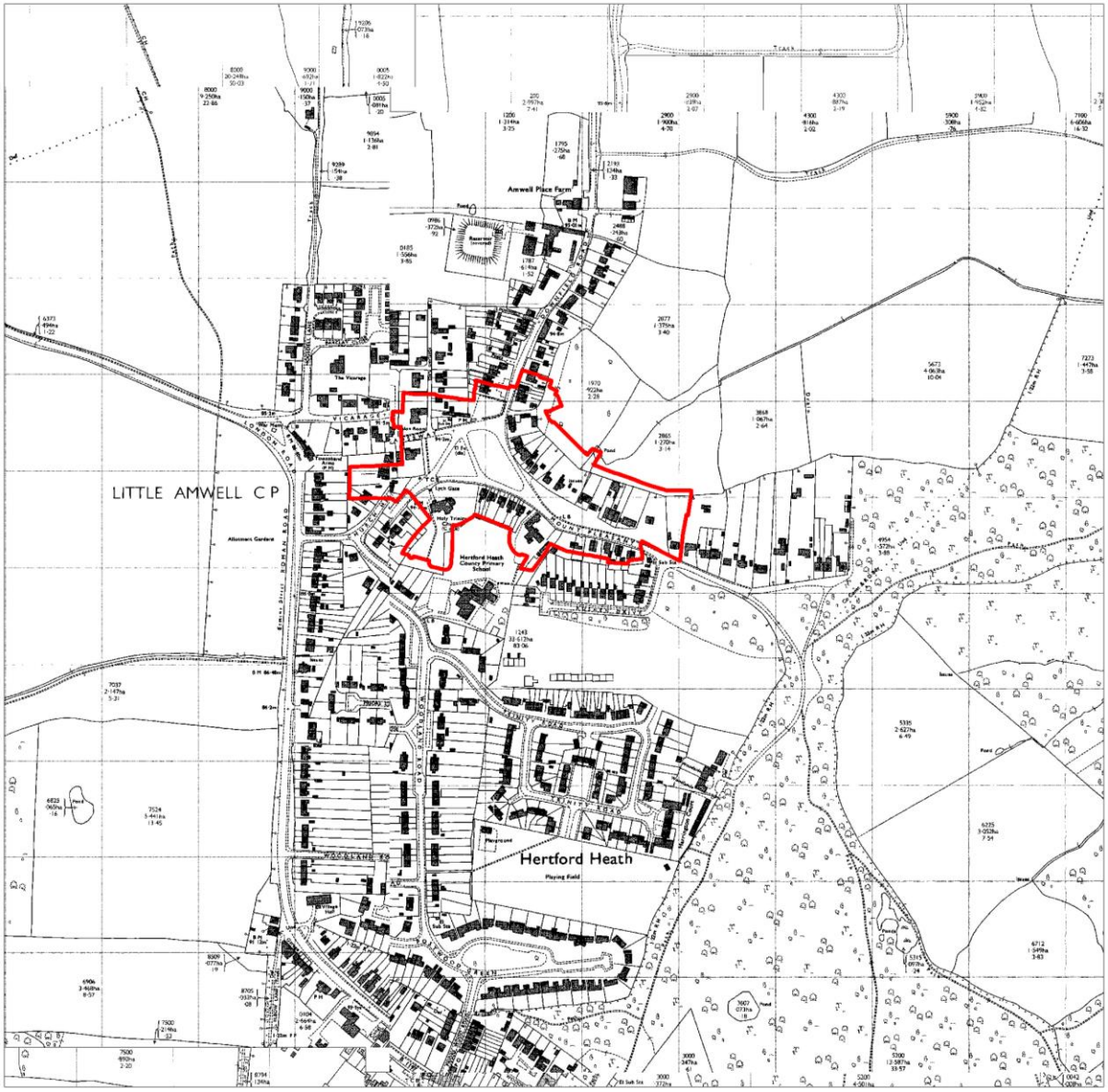



*Fig. 9. OS map of 1973*

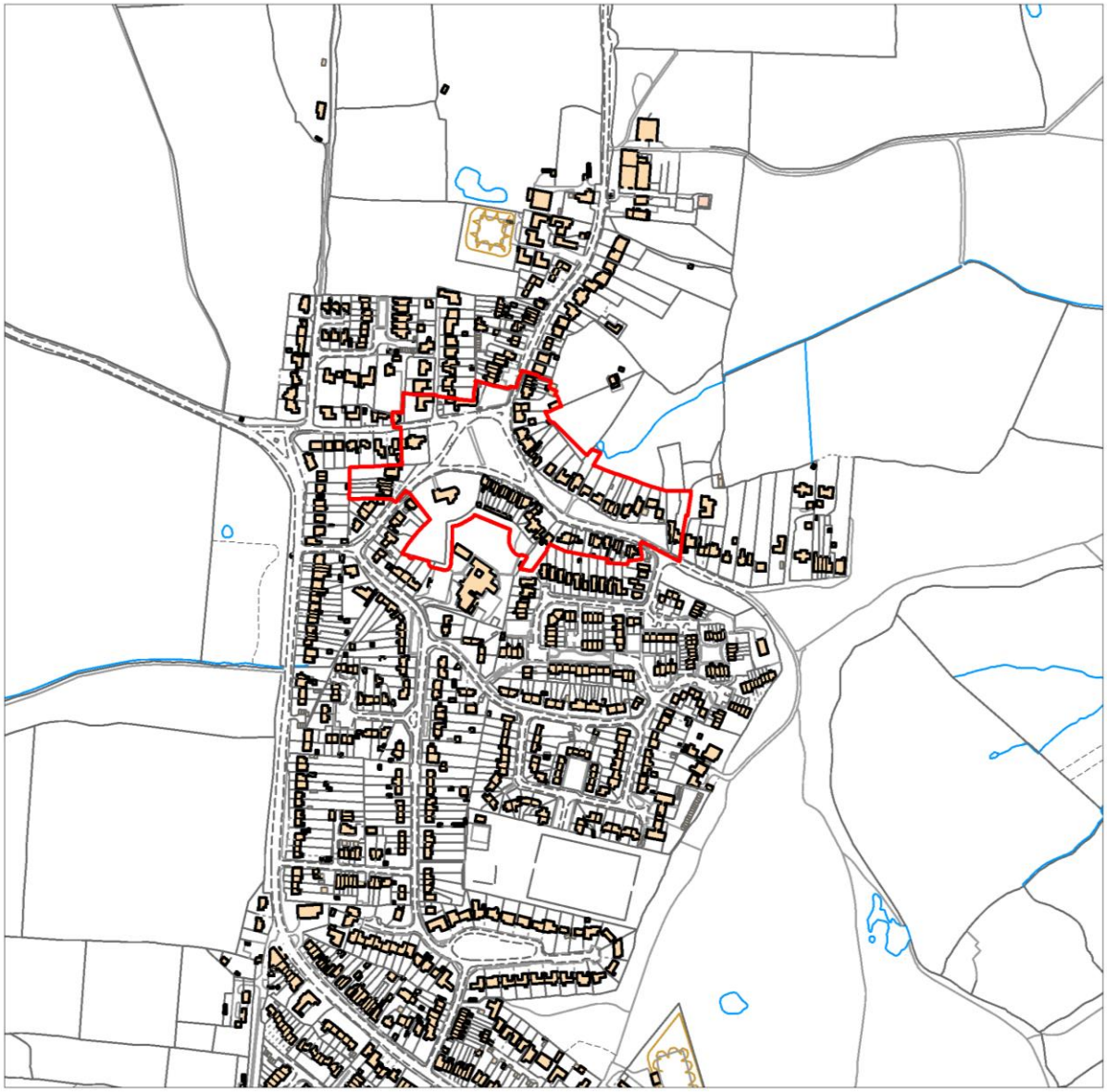


*Fig. 10. OS map of 2016*

## 4. HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGNATIONS AND THE CRITERIA USED TO IDENTIFY OTHER IMPORTANT FEATURES

4.1. Scheduled Ancient Monuments (a National designation).
There are no SAMs within the Conservation Area. The Iron Age cemetery SAM is within the loop of Trinity Road to the south of the Conservation Area.

4.2. Areas of Archaeological Significance
These are designated locally by East Herts District Council on advice from Hertfordshire County Council. There are no AAS designations within the Conservation Area. An area surrounding the above SAM has been designated a AAS and is shown in the adopted Local Plan and the emerging District Plan.

4.3. Listed buildings (a National designation).
There are three grades of listed buildings; in descending order of special interest, Grade I (approximately 2.5% of the national total), Grade II* (approx. 5.5%) and Grade II making up the rest. Listed buildings are protected from unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension. They are protected both internally and externally. Structures, including railings and walls, within the curtilage of listed buildings, if they are pre-1948, are also subject to the same controls as listed buildings. Individually listed buildings within the Conservation Area have been identified, plotted and are briefly described, such abbreviated descriptions being based on the national list, occasionally with additional comments in italics by the fieldworker. Full descriptions can be obtained on line at Historic England's website
List.HistoricEngland.org.uk

4.4. Non-listed buildings of quality and worthy of protection.
A number of other non-listed buildings and structures make an important positive contribution to the architectural or historic special interest of the Conservation Area and are identified by this Character Appraisal. The basic questions asked in assessing such buildings/structures are:

(a) Is the non-listed building/structure of sufficient architectural or historic interest whose general external form and appearance remains largely unaltered?
(b) Does the building contain a sufficient level of external original features and materials?
(c) Has the building retained its original scale without large inappropriate modern extensions that destroy the visual appearance particularly in respect of the front elevation?
(d) Is the building visually important in the street scene?

Historic England, in its Advice Note 1 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2016) provides a useful checklist to identify elements in a conservation area which may contribute to the special interest. The checklist is reproduced in Appendix 1.

4.5. Important trees and Hedgerows.
These are identified by this Appraisal and shown on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30. The basic criteria for identifying important trees and hedgerows are:-

(a) They are in good condition.
(b) They are visible at least in part from public view points.
(c) They make a significant contribution to the street scene or other publicly accessible areas.

4.6. Open spaces or important gaps.
Those that contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and where development would be inappropriate are identified by this Character Appraisal and on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30. The basic question asked in identifying such areas is does the open space or gap form an important landscape feature contributing to the general spatial quality and visual importance of the Conservation Area? Private open spaces forming an important setting for an historic asset and unkempt spaces that have the potential to be enhanced are candidates for selection subject to complying with the principle question.

4.7. Other distinctive features.
Those that make an important architectural or historic contribution are identified in this Character Appraisal and on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30. In relation to walls and railings, those at and above prescribed heights in a conservation area, being 1m abutting a highway (including a public footpath or bridleway, waterway or open space) or 2m elsewhere, are protected and require permission for their demolition.

4.8. Enhanced controls.
Reference has previously been made to the potential of introducing Article 4 Directions to control minor development in conservation areas in justified circumstances. The character appraisals undertaken to date for other conservation areas have identified that while many important historic architectural features remain unaltered on some non-listed buildings, the exercise of Permitted Development Rights on other buildings has eroded their quality and harmed the special interest of the conservation areas. Article 4 Directions have been piloted for another conservation area and the Council has now resolved to make them for its other conservation areas. Such important historic detailing including features as identified below would be retained and inappropriate alterations to them controlled. In time some of the lost architectural detailing could then be restored.

- Chimneys, in good condition, contemporary with the age of the property and prominent in the street scene.

- Windows and doors visible from the street/s, where they make a positive contribution to the special interest and character and appearance of the Conservation Area. An Article 4 Direction made through a s.71 Conservation Area Management Proposal can be a useful tool in controlling the loss of such features and, where already lost and replaced with inauthentic modern replacements, their restoration.

- Other features might include good quality architectural materials and detailing constructed of wood, metal or other materials.

- Walls or railings which make a positive architectural or historic contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

- Hardstandings and measures to prevent the loss of front gardens for off-street parking.

- Measures to prevent the installation of PV and solar panels on prominent roofslopes.

- It may also be appropriate to introduce Article 4 Directions to retain quality buildings below the prescribed Permitted Development threshold.

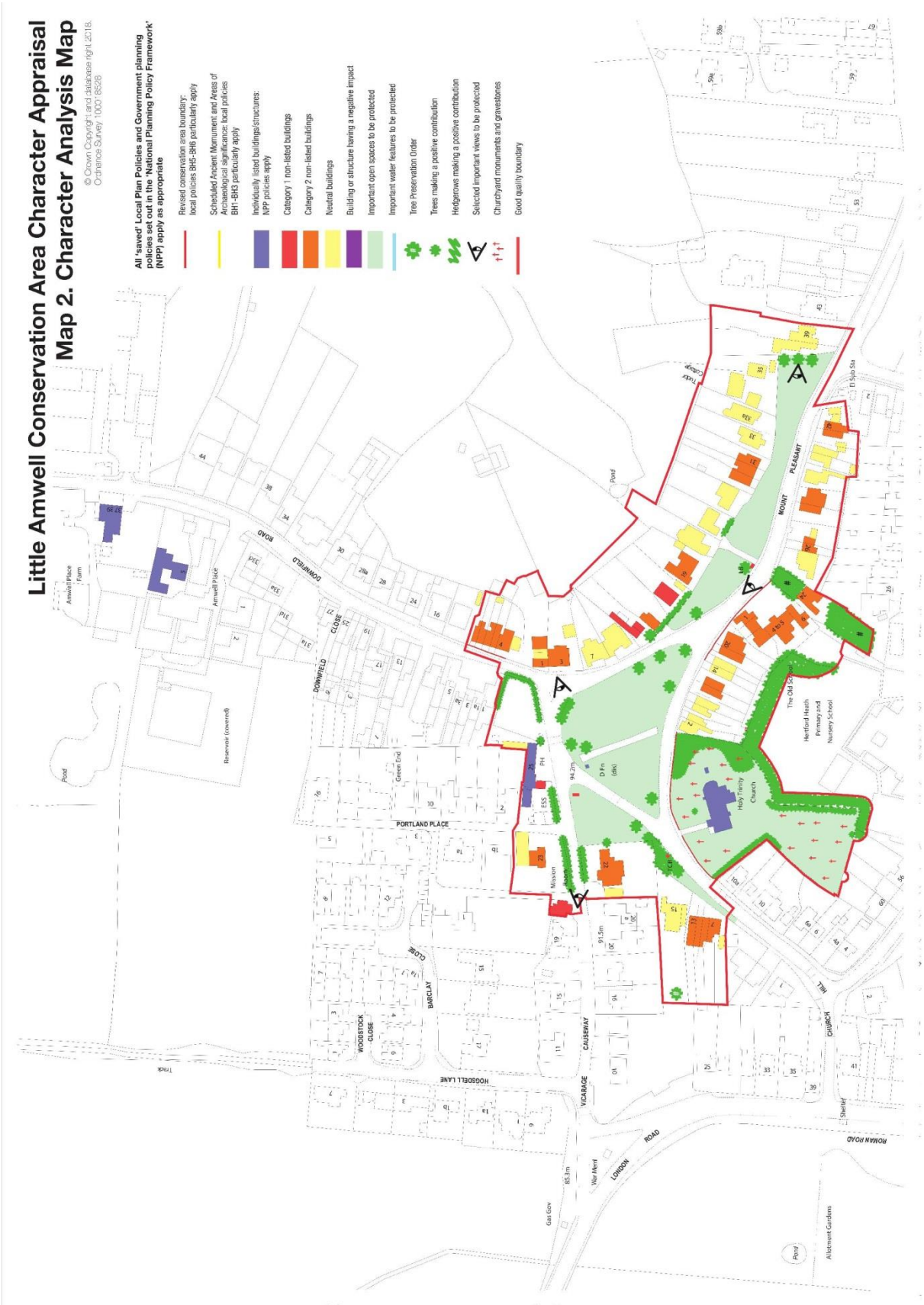
4.9. Negative features.
Buildings and features that are out of character with the Conservation Area and detract from or harm its special interest or are in poor repair are identified in the Character Appraisal and on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30.

4.10. Important views.
These are identified on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30.

4.11. Conservation Area boundaries.
In suggesting any revisions to the Conservation Area boundaries, principal consideration has been given as to whether or not the land or buildings in question form part of the area of 'special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Too often modern development lacks the necessary architectural interest to merit retention. Similarly, large tracts of open space or farmland around a village should not now be included. The boundary should describe a clear change in character or appearance if it is to be both logical and defensible in law.

Boundaries will normally, but not always, follow existing features on the ground and property boundaries. Where appropriate, it will also follow the crown of the road. In addition, where conservation area legislation protects features such as wall/railings or trees that would otherwise form part of a conservation area boundary the latter is extended a small but obvious distance beyond the protected feature in question to avoid any ambiguity in interpretation as to whether or not it lies within the conservation area.

## 5. CHARACTER ANALYSIS.



**5.1 General Landscape setting**

In terms of its wider setting, the Landscape Character Assessment produced in 2007 as a Supplementary Planning Document, describes the wider area ('Area 64, Hertford Heath') as *'An area of gently undulating wooded farmland, much of it pasture, with extensive areas of woodland and heath. At the heart of this rural area lies Haileybury College, which also influences the only settlement in the area, from which it takes its name. The damp acid grasslands and relic heath are ecologically and visually important'.* It defines the key characteristics as: *'Gently undulating wooded pasture, open aspect to east, strong presence of woodland with regular field pattern, ancient woodland throughout with heathland.*

The SPD informs us that *'Hertford Heath is now a sizeable village, but developed from two seperate hamlets including Little Amwell to the north end around the Goat Public House and another hamlet closer to the site of Haileybury College now an educational establishment. There are also some isolated farms'.*

**5.2 General overview**

Little Amwell is a typical rural village approximately 2 miles south of Ware. It sits on a heath (Hertford Heath) above the River Lea valley on its south side. On higher ground, it sits at 90m (300') above sea level. Surrounding fields are arable farm land, or cattle and horse grazing. It is sited immediately above Ermine Street, the old Roman road from London to York (via Ware), on its east side. This section of Ermine Street is still in use and forms part of the B1197 – the later route from London linking to the north, this time via Hertford. Downfield Road was known as the Ware Road before the 19th c and was an alternative route to Ware on this higher and therefore drier and more passable land. It was along this road up to Amwell Place Farm where historic development prior to the 19th c. occurred.

The green sits on an elevated platform and is contained by the necklace of buildings now arrayed around its perimeter with the feeder roads providing views beyond. Some peaked views between houses to trees and landscape beyond. Sadly the ponds that once were an important feature of the Green were filled in in the last century.

Little Amwell, like so many similar rural villages, is evidence of the typical decline of rural villages and way of life across Hertfordshire since the War. The village was once largely self-sufficient with shops, butchers, pubs, local tradesmen, the Church and Mission Hall, school, etc. to support the village, its outlying farms and the rural community. Today, many of those facilities have gone, a sad reflection of the suburbanisation of the rural way of life, the increased use of the motor car and the consequent availability of other, more competitive goods and services.

Many of the more recent developments have also succumbed to those suburban characteristics with scant reference to local architectural styles, size, bulk and materials. This is diluting the area's local character and must be addressed when considering future developments.

**5.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments** None.

**5.4 Areas of Archaeological Significance** None.

## 5.5 Individually Listed Buildings

There are 37 entries on the national list for Hertford Heath Parish of which the majority are at the Haileybury and Imperial Service College. Within the Conservation Area there are 4 entries, all Grade II. Immediately to the north, and previously included in the Conservation Area are 2 entries;- Amwell Place and the Barn at Amwell Place Farm, both Grade II. Of those in the Conservation Area, only The Goat PH with its 16th C origins, dates before the 19th C.

GRADE II

Longer list descriptions of the listed buildings in the Conservation Area can be found on the Historic England website at:-
http://list.historicengland.org.uk/results.aspx?index=1

The Goat Inn PH, Vicarage Causeway (N side).

House, now a public house. C16, C19 E block. Timber frame on brick plinth, rough-cast with weatherboarded apron to front. E block painted brick ground floor and roughcast first floor. Steep old red tile roofs. 1½ storeys hall range with higher 2-storeys E crosswing, later single-storey projecting W crosswing, and brick 2- storeys E block. Set back a little from road, facing South. Hall range has 2 gabled dormers at eaves and 3-lights casement window to ground floor. E crosswing gable has 4-lights ground floor window with 2-lights window on first floor. Present entrance into gable of lower W crosswing beside 3-lights window. This has a W gable chimney. E block has an entrance on the LH and a window on each floor on RH, a 2-lights window with 2/2 sash window on first floor. Rear wall central chimney to this block. Interior has exposed framing in walls and axial joists.

Drinking Fountain on the Green, Church Hill.

Drinking fountain. Dated '1898' on N side. Portland stone on blue brick base with York stone front slab. 3M tall, 1M square Gothick structure facing W, on green, beside road. Symmetrical in form of a pointed pinnacle with gabled faces and chamfered pointed panel on each face. Projecting bowl on W with disused outlet in panel over. Inscription from bible on S side. Red brick cross motif on each side of brick base. Included for group value.

Church of the Holy Trinity (Church of England), Church Hill.

Parish church. 1863 by Ewan Christian for Rev David Barclay Bevan (vicar here 1864-81), restored 1913 at cost of £220. Red brick banded with blue brick. Bath stone keystones to pointed arches and plate tracery to S transept. Steep red tile roofs with bands of scalloped tiles, swept valleys, and moulded wooden bargeboards. Square slender timber fleche over crosswing, lead clad and with square shingled spire over louvred bell chamber. Small church in Early English style, with nave, apsidal chancel, crosswing and S transept, SE vestry, and entrance by N

porch. Small lancet windows with red and buff brick pointed arches in pairs to nave and singly around the apse, tall stepped triplets of lancets to W end and N gable crosswing. High wheel window to S transept. Stained glass to chancel and transept, lattice leaded clear glass with margins elsewhere. Moulded bricks drip course externally and buttresses between nave windows on line of truss. Interior has a wide pointed polychrome chancel arch on stubby E E marble columns with over large foliate stone caps. Low plaster-vaulted chancel has wooden ribs rising from a moulded wallplate. Plastered walls with polychrome inner arches of splayed windows exposed. Moulded band below window sills. Simple wooden rail on foliate ironwork at line of arch. Low stone orthostat on RH and coved corbelled stone base to octogonal oak pulpit on LH outside arch but at raised level. Lofty open timber roof of arch-braced collar construction has 2½ bays to nave and a further bay taken up by the crosswing with lower roofs coming in from each side. Heavy chamfered stone corbels in nave support wallposts and feet of moulded arch-braces. Polychrome arch of 2 chamfered orders into transept, the inner order carried on moulded corbels. Nave walls plastered with polychrome arches left exposed. Stone shaft and carved foliate capital supplies central support between each pair of lancets. Uniform pine skeleton pews with reversed Y ends. Organ in S transept dated 1864 built by T W Walker, London. Large stone font on square platform and moulded octagonal shaft and base. Heavy rounded bowl with inscribed band and circular oak cover with iron handle. Low raised platform at W end. Marble relief carved wall monument in chancel to H F Durnford d.1878, signed H F Williamson, with Figure of the Good Shepherd. Large gabled enclosed N porch in red brick with timber framed upper part forming a band of quatrefoil windows to sides and at front flanking a very large single-leaf oak door with decorative ironwork in timber gable end with pierced and cusped bargeboards. (VCH (1912)414: Kelly (1914)22: Pevsner (1977)235).

Coleman Tomb in Holy Trinity Churchyard 4 metres to east of Apse, Church Hill.

Tomb. To James Coleman d.1866, later inscription to wife Ann d.1871. Portland stone or weathered white marble, raised on York stone slab on brick walls. Ornate cast iron railings fixed into slab. A monolithic carved chest sarcophagus with bellied sides and supported on 4 animal legs with claw feet and wreathed knees. Weathered top with carved palmette band. Double chamfered base. Elaborate railing with corner and central standards on each side. Knobs on standards. Linking rails and scrolls.

### 5.6 Important buildings within the curtilages of Listed Buildings

It should be noted that s.1 (5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 extends the protection of the listing given to the main building to include curtilage structures, buildings and boundaries. These have, therefore, enhanced protection above that provided by being within a conservation area.

### 5.7 Non-listed buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution

This Character Appraisal identifies other buildings of high quality that are not listed but that should be retained. These principally date from the 19th century and are an important element in the built form and historical evolution of the Conservation Area and make a positive contribution to its special interest, character and appearance.

Category 1 buildings are shown cerise on the Character Analysis Map and are well-preserved and retain most important architectural features, for example good quality windows, chimneys and other architectural features that are considered worthy of additional protection through an Article 4 direction.

Category 2 buildings are shown in orange on the Character Appraisal Map and are good buildings, clearly worthy of retention but which have lost some key architectural features or have suffered modern replacements out-of-keeping with the building. These buildings are considered worthy of restoration which additional planning controls through an Article 4 direction would help deliver (and then, subsequently, retain).

*Vicarage Causeway: South side (W-E)*

Category 1.
Village Sign

Category 2.
22 Vicarage Causeway

*Vicarage Causeway: North side (W-E)*

Category 1.
Mission Room
South outshut to The Goat PH

*The Mission Room 1882. Originally used for Bible classes, Mother's meetings and entertainments designed to keep the men out of the pubs. Nowadays used by various clubs and societies and for private parties.*

<u>Category 2.</u>
23 Vicarage Causeway

*Downfield Road: East side (S-N)*

<u>Category 2.</u>
4-12 Downfield Road

*No. 4-12. Altered but the historic structure remains.*

*Mount Pleasant: North side (W-E).*

<u>Category 1.</u>
11 and 13 Mount Pleasant
17 Mount Pleasant

*No. 11 Mount Pleasant. Well maintained and good features preserved.*

*No. 17 Mount Pleasant. Well preserved and good hedging at the*

<u>Category 2.</u>
1 and 3 Mount Pleasant
15 Mount Pleasant
19 Mount Pleasant
27-31 Mount Pleasant

*Nos. 27-31 Mount Pleasant. Well preserved with good low fencing and hedging at the boundary.*

*Mount Pleasant: South side (W-E).*

<u>Category 2.</u>
10 and 12 Mount Pleasant
18 and 20 Mount Pleasant

*Nos 2- 20 Mount Pleasant.*

Nos. 1-9 The Old School

*The Old School 1837. The magnificent lime tree on the frontage proved rotten and sadly had to be felled.*

24 Mount Pleasant

*24 Mount Pleasant . A TPO covers the front and rear gardens.*

26 and 28 Mount Pleasant
30 and 32 Mount Pleasant
40 and 42 Mount Pleasant

*No. 42 Mount Pleasant. Extended and altered.*

*Church Hill: North side (W-E).*

Category 1.
K6 Telephone box

Category 2.
7-13 Church Hill.

**5.8 Other distinctive features that make an important architectural or historic contribution**

*NB The village sign shows the name of the parish as against the name of the village.*

Low front boundary brick walls and picket fencing and the railings to the churchyard so identified are protected to varying degrees by virtue of exceeding specified height relevant to the Conservation Area or by being listed or within the curtilage of a listed building. Notable and attractive features include the Fountain and Village sign on the green, the K6 telephone box opposite the church, the post box pillar and plate on the deep grass verge on the north side of Mount Pleasant and the many fine memorial stones in the church, particularly the unusual cast iron ones.

*The front graveyard with cast iron markers*

*The rear church yard*

*GR post box pillar on the Green.*

**5.9 <u>Important Open Spaces</u>**

As can be seen on the maps, the Conservation Area is centred on the village green and the deep grass verges along Mount Pleasant and, to a lesser extent, Church Hill. The central area of the green is identified in the Local Plan and the emerging

District Plan as 'Existing Playing Fields/Open Space/Recreation Areas' and is protected by relevant policy.

These green open areas, with their necklace of dwellings around their edge are central to the special interest, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

**5.10 Any others e.g. Wildlife sites/ Historic Parks and Gardens**

The area to the north east of the Conservation Area behind 21-39 (and further east) Mount Pleasant is designated a Wildlife Site in the Local Plan and emerging District Plan. Large tracts of land surrounding the village are also so designated and also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

**5.11 Particularly important trees and hedgerows**

The Conservation Area includes a number of fine trees – particularly within the greens and the churchyard. There are Tree Preservation Orders in place covering trees at the front and rear of the Old School and, to its side, in front of and to the rear of 24 Mount Pleasant and also in the rear garden of 15 Church Hill. Many site boundaries are marked by good hedges which soften the landscape and reinforce its rural and semi-rural character.

*Highly attractive treed vistas at Mount Pleasant*

A large number of the above trees are important to the Conservation Area and are shown diagrammatically on the accompanying Character Analysis Map on p. 30. Together with the many hedges, these serve to underline the rural origins and character of Little Amwell and are central to its special interest.

**5.12 Important views**

A selection is shown on the accompanying Character Analysis Map on p. 30. Long picturesque views are evident along Vicarage Causeway and Mount Pleasant across the greens that display the rural and semi-rural character and sylvan charm of the Conservation Area.

**5.13 Elements harmful to the Conservation Area**

Concern has to be expressed at the neutral quality of much post-war and modern development, which although they may not cause overt harm, are perceptibly diluting the special interest of the Conservation Area. These are shown in yellow on the

attached Character Analysis Map on p. 30. In being new they intrinsically lack historic interest making it all the more important that any new development is of high quality architectural interest if it is not to cause harm to the Conservation Area. Future development must be of a scale, density and in materials and craftsmanship that reflect the local vernacular tradition.

The quality of many historic buildings has been eroded by poorly designed minor works – notably windows, porches and the poor siting of satellite dishes.

*Various alterations including the satellite dish that have harmed this historic building.*

As discussed under 5.7 above, The Character Analysis Map shows buildings and places that make no particular contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area ('neutral'). The Map shows that there are no buildings within the Conservation Area that can be described as actually harmful (a very rare instance). The demolition of neutral buildings would not normally be a concern, subject to the details of the replacement being known and the opportunity to secure development that makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area being taken.

**5.14 Threats and opportunities**

While Little Amwell is the product of many years of development such that there are a range of styles that were contemporaneous with their times, it has to be said that little since the middle of the last century is of any special interest. This has rather diluted the character and appearance of the area. It is vital to the protection of the Conservation Area that any new developments are of excellent urban design and architectural quality in keeping with the area with a grain, density, siting, form, size, height and bulk that fits within its historic context and are executed in local vernacular crafts and materials such that they make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

A growing trend within East Herts is an increasing demand for excessive extensions to historic and listed buildings. These are often 'life-style' driven in order to facilitate single-function rooms and, following the hotel model, an en-suite bathroom for each bedroom, all reflective of the increasing fragmentation of family life. This demand needs to be monitored and, where harmful to heritage assets, contained if historic

buildings are not to lose their intrinsic character and special interest and the Conservation Area is not to become increasingly built-up and urbanised.

The design and quality of existing boundaries is rural vernacular and low key – usually hedging or simple timber picket fencing. Efforts must be made in this regard to protect such features, require that new boundaries are in keeping with this character and appearance and thereby to ensure that the rural quality of the area is maintained. This will require the making of an Article 4 direction.

**5.15 Suggested boundary changes.**

Paragraph 4.11 above details the policy requirements in this regard under the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (2014) and the current Historic England Advice Note 1 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2016). Paragraph 127 of the NPPF is particularly pertinent.

Councils have a responsibility to ensure that conservation areas justify their continued designation and that their status is not devalued through the designation of areas that lack special architectural or historic interest. In reviewing Little Amwell, we have concluded that that special interest is vested in the greens and associated grass verges attractively enclosed by the necklace of buildings of various ages that surround them. As such, we propose to extend the boundary to encompass the east end of the verge along Mount Pleasant such that it is all included. Minor alterations of the boundary are needed to align it with rear property boundaries and features on the ground. Given the above identified special interest, we find that there is no value in the inclusion of the length of Downfield Road which, as a place, is of no special interest. Our survey has shown that the buildings along it are of little and mostly no special interest save Amwell Place Farm, which, in being listed does not need, under the 1990 Act, the extra designation. We are of the same mind with regards to Portland Place and the area to the rear of the Mission Room; these too lack special interest.

Consequently, the existing boundary does not define, as current Historic England guidance requires it should, where there is a clear change of character from the area of special architectural or historic interest. Without such a defensible boundary, the Conservation Area is vulnerable in planning law. This review has taken the opportunity to put that right.

The survey for this Character Appraisal revealed that while the majority of the boundary is appropriately located it should be amended as detailed above so that the area of special interest only is included and is well-defined by the new boundary. These boundary changes, therefore, are included in the Conservation Management Proposals.

## 6. SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST OF THE LITTLE AMWELL CONSERVATION AREA

The overall characteristics of the Little Amwell Conservation Area can be summarised as follows:-

1/ A historic village on high ground off Ermine Street. Important and picturesque greens and verges attractively enclosed by a necklace of buildings including a pub on the north side facing the church on the south,

2/ Limited views from within the Conservation Area to the landscape beyond, together with its urban form as an enclosed green, lend the area an intimate air,

3/ A number of fine listed and historic buildings including Holy Trinity Church with its attractive churchyard, tombs and unusual cast iron memorials, the rambling pub with its 16$^{th}$ C core and the drinking fountain on the green. A scattering of interesting historic buildings and structures add to the picturesque quality of the area and include the Old School, post pillar, K6 phone box, and low-level boundaries and hedging that define front property boundaries,

4/ The public realm is relatively simple in design and materials, with tarmacked roads and footpaths lining the important greens and verges. Together they create a harmonious relationship between private, public and communal land that integrates the various parts into a pleasing whole. Relatively low levels of traffic help sustain the rural tranquillity. Unobtrusive, if modern, street lighting helps preserves the rural character. The village sign adds charm,

5/ Buildings along the roads follow a traditional and disciplined building line, address the road and have short front gardens. They are a mix of detached, semis, and short terraces, and although collectively are enclosing of the greens and streetscene, there are some retained gaps between buildings that allow transverse glimpsed views through to trees and land beyond. The buildings are mainly two storeys high and of traditional construction. Only a small number of the historic buildings remain unaltered; while many have been adversely effected by modern ‘improvements’ and extensions,

6/ Traditional front boundaries such as low brick walls, hedges and wooden picket fences allowing visually permeable public and private space,

7/ A number of buildings built in the second half of the last century are of little interest. As modern buildings they lack historic interest and, too often, they lack architectural merit and have not reinforced local character. The net effect is of a number of neutral buildings that are diluting the character and appearance of the Conservation Area,

8/ Many fine trees evident throughout the Conservation Area, notably on the greens and verges, within the churchyard and providing a skyline background to the buildings.

## 7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Issues facing the Conservation Area at present can be summarised as follows:-

1/ The openness of the green and verges must be preserved from *ad hoc* structures and excessive planting,

2/ The simplicity of the streetscene and comparative lack of road signage and markings must be preserved from well-meant but often harmful interventions that erode the rural quality of the area,

3/ Some good quality historic houses have been harmed by poor quality alterations and the use of modern materials. Increasing public interest in PV and solar panels has much potential to cause harm. Such matters readily contribute to the declining quality and run-down appearance of conservation areas. Consideration should be given to introducing an Article 4 direction to control minor development, prevent any decline of the area and, in time, restore those buildings presently harmed by poor quality alterations,

4/ The loss of timber windows and doors and other architectural joinery and their replacement with PVCu, aluminium or other inappropriate modern materials is a particular blight affecting conservation areas. The use of double-glazed units in non-listed buildings is generally acceptable with, in many instances, the casements and sashes capable of adjustment to accommodate slimline units. If not, new double-glazed timber frames may be acceptable provided that the original window design and materials are replicated,

5/ The demand for excessive extensions to historic and listed buildings needs to be contained if the buildings are not to lose their intrinsic character and special interest and the Conservation Area is not to become increasingly built-up and urbanised,

6/ Much recent housing has been of only neutral quality that has diluted the character and appearance of the area. High quality design and materials that reinforces local character should be demanded of all future development within the Conservation Area,

7/ Where buildings are identified on the Character Analysis map as being ‘neutral’ it must be possible to redevelop to a high design standard such that the replacement property enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Development effort should focus on these sites,

8/ The large expanse of the car park to the side of the pub is not very attractive and would benefit from appropriate landscaping and planting,

9/ Reasonable steps should be taken to protect local facilities as a means of supporting village life and avoid Little Amwell becoming a dormitory village.

Many of the above issues are under planning control, or can be brought under planning control with an up-to-date and rigorously applied Article 4 direction. Steps to seek the restoration of lost vernacular features may also be sought through local policy, grants, persuasion and appropriate Conservation Area Management Proposals designed to both preserve and enhance.

## PART C – CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS.

### 8. MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS.

8.1. *Revised Conservation Area Boundaries.*
The revised boundary alignments are shown on the accompanying Character Analysis Map on p. 30 and include the following amendments -

(a) Designate. The east end of the grass verge along the north side of Mount Pleasant and the associated buildings at Nos. 35, 37 and 39.

*To rationalise the boundary.*

(b) Designate. The treed area at the rear of 24 Mount Pleasant.

*To rationalise the boundary.*

(c) Designate/dedesignate. Various minor adjustments to align the boundary with property boundaries and features on the ground.

*To rationalise the boundary.*

(d) Dedesignate. Land at the rear of the Mission Room. Nos 1, 1a, 1b, 3 and 5 (odd) and Nos 2 – 16 (even) Portland Place. Nos 1, 1a, 3, 3a, 5-27, 31a, 31b, 31c, 31d, 33a, 33b, 33c, 33d, 37-39 (Amwell Place Farm) Downfield Road (odd), 14, 16, 24-28, 28a, 30 Downfield Road (even), 1-6 Downfield Close, 1- 6 Amwell Place.

*To remove land with no special interest.*

8.2. *General Planning Control and Good Practice within the Conservation Area.*
All 'saved' planning policies are contained in the East Herts. Local Plan Second Review adopted in April 2007. It is currently against this document and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that the District Council will determine applications. The NPPF is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance. One such guidance note of particular relevance is 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'. In due course the 2007 Local Plan will be replaced by the District Plan whose policies will then have full weight.

8.3. *Contact and advice*
Applicants considering submitting an application should carefully consider the relevant policies and if necessary contact Officers to seek pre-application advice.

Telephone 01279 655261 (For development proposals ask for Development Management).

E-mail planning@eastherts,gov.uk

Website: www.eastherts.gov.uk

Or write to Development Management, East Herts District Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8EQ

8.4. *Guidance Notes*
Applicants should refer to the relevant Guidance Notes previously referred available on the Council's website at :- http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=15387

8.5. *Development Management - Potential need to undertake an Archaeological Evaluation.*
None.

8.6. *Listed Building Control and Good Practice.*
Those buildings that are individually listed are identified on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30 and within the text of this document. Other pre-1948 buildings, structures or walls within the curtilage of a Listed Building may be similarly protected in law. Please seek pre-application advice on this point. Listed Buildings are a significant asset in contributing to the quality of the Conservation Area. It is essential that their special interest and architectural detailing is not eroded nor their other qualities and settings compromised.

8.7. *Development Management – Unlisted Buildings that make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.* The Character Appraisal above has identified at 5.7 a number of unlisted buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Any proposal involving the demolition of these buildings is unlikely to be approved.

8.8. *Planning Control – Other unlisted distinctive features that make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.*
This Appraisal has identified a number of railings and walls that make a particular contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Some are protected from demolition by virtue of exceeding the specified heights relevant to Conservation Area legislation or by Listed Building legislation. Any proposal involving the demolition of these walls is unlikely to be approved. Removal of other Permitted Development rights involving the alteration of non-listed walls will be considered.

8.9. There are other distinctive features that are integral to some of the important unlisted buildings identified above that make an important architectural or historic contribution, including chimneys, windows and other architectural detailing. In some situations protection already exists through existing planning controls but in other cases protection could only be provided by removing Permitted Development Rights via an Article 4 Direction. The Council has resolved to introduce Article 4 directions for its conservation areas. Affected owners will be notified of the introduction of the direction at a later date. The Council would then consider any comments made before deciding whether to confirm or amend the Direction.

8.10. *Planning control - Wildlife Sites.*
Any development that adversely affects wildlife species occupying such sites will not normally be permitted and would need clear justification. Proposals will be considered against Policies ENV 14 and ENV 16 of the Local Plan.

8.11. *Planning Control – Important open land, open spaces and gaps.*
This Character Appraisal has identified the greens and verges within the Conservation Area as being very important to its special interest.

8.12. *Planning Control – Particularly important trees and hedgerows.*
Only the TPOs and the most significant trees and clumps or trees are shown diagrammatically on the Character Analysis map. It has not been possible to plot trees on inaccessible land. Subject to certain exceptions all trees in a conservation area are afforded protection and a person wanting to carry out works has to notify the Council. Trees that have not been identified may still be considered suitable for protection by Tree Preservation Orders. Owners are advised to make regular inspections to check the health of trees in the interests of amenity and health and safety. Boundary hedges within the Conservation Area are of particular importance. All stakeholders have a role to play in protecting these hedges.

8.13. *Planning Control - Important views.* A selection of notable views are diagrammatically shown on the Character Analysis Map on p. 30. Policy BH6 is particularly relevant.

8.14. *Enhancement Proposals.*
Section 7 of the Character Appraisal, 'Summary of Issues', identifies a number of elements that detract which are summarised in the Table below together with a proposed course of action; other actions are also identified.

Within the staff and financial resources available, Council Officers will be pro-active and provide assistance. It must be recognized that such improvements will generally be achieved only by the owner's co-operation.

8.15. *Schedule of Enhancement Proposals*

| **Detracting element** | **Location** | **Proposed Action.** |
|---|---|---|
| Poor quality alterations and materials implemented under permitted development rights. | Scattering. | Introduce an Article 4 direction. Protect and preserve surviving features and seek to restore previously lost features through future planning applications. |
| PVCu replacement window and doors and thick double glazing. | Scattered. | Introduce an Article 4 direction. Retain historic originals and Improve quality through future planning applications. |
| Excessive extensions to historic and listed buildings. | Scattered. | Introduce an Article 4 direction limiting sizes. Contain extensions of listed buildings through the consent regime. |
| Neutral buildings diluting or harming the character and appearance of the CA. | Scattered. | Seek better architectural quality that reinforces local styles and materials for future developments through the planning system. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Pressure for back-land development on gardens. | Scattered. | Avoid harm through the planning system. |
| Loss of pubs, shops and other local facilities that is eroding village life changing the character of the area. | General. | Through Neighbourhood plan, planning system and associated protection measures. |

## Bibliography

The Buildings of England, Hertfordshire. Nikolaus Pevsner, second edition revised by Bridget Cherry. Penguin Books 1977.

Kelly's Post Office Directory of Hertfordshire 1874

The Place-Names of Hertfordshire, Gower, Mawer and Stenton, English Place-Name Society Vol. XV Cambridge UP 1938 and 1970.

Beating about the Bush – A History of Hertford Heath. Pam Kimpton. The Rockingham Press. 2008.

## Appendix 1

Historic England, in its Advice Note 1 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (2016) provides a useful checklist to identify elements in a conservation area which may contribute to the special interest (Cf 4.4 above). The checklist is reproduced below:-

- Is it the work of a particular architect or designer of regional or local note?
- Does it have landmark quality?
- Does it reflect a substantial number of other elements in the conservation area in age, style, materials, form or other characteristics?
- Does it relate to adjacent designated heritage assets in age, materials or in any other historically significant way?
- Does it contribute positively to the setting of adjacent designated heritage assets?
- Does it contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces including exteriors or open spaces with a complex of public buildings?
- Is it associated with a designed landscape e.g. a significant wall, terracing or a garden building?
- Does it individually, or as part of a group, illustrate the development of the settlement in which it stands?
- Does it have significant historic association with features such as the historic road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?
- Does it have historic associations with local people or past events?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character or former uses in the area?
- Does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the area?

A positive response to one or more of the above may indicate that a particular element within a conservation area makes a positive contribution provided that its historic form and values have not been eroded.