

Dacorum Borough Council

Conservation Area Appraisal

Northchurch



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Northchurch was designated as a Conservation Area in 1969, with the conservation area boundaries being last amended in November 1975 by Dacorum Borough Council.

Definition of a Conservation Area

- 1.2 A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance¹. Designation takes place by local planning authorities under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Local planning authorities also have a duty from time to time to review the extent of designation and to designate further areas if appropriate².
- 1.3 Section 71 of the Act imposes a duty on the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas. Proposals should be publicised and incorporate public comment.
- 1.4 The purpose of the Appraisal is therefore, in accordance with the methodology recommended by Historic England³, to define and record the special architectural and historic interest of the Northchurch Conservation Area.
- 1.5 Finally, a detailed review of the existing boundaries of the conservation area has also been undertaken to determine if areas should be included or removed from the designation.

¹ Section 69 (1) (a) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² Section 69 (2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

³ Historic England, Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 (2016), Chapter 3

2.0 Scope of the Appraisal

- 2.1 This appraisal is intended to be comprehensive in its scope and content. However, omission of any specific building, structure, site, landscape feature, space, feature or aspect located in or adjacent to the Northchurch Conservation Area should not be taken to imply that it does not hold significance and positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset⁴.
- 2.2 This appraisal was undertaken consulting guidance provided by Historic England⁵ including Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management Historic England Advice Note 1 2016.

⁴ Conservation Areas are defined as Designated Heritage Assets within the Framework

⁵ Those pre 2015 being published under the auspices of English Heritage.

3.0 Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the overarching statutory framework. Section 69 provides the Framework for designation of Conservation Areas noting that Local Planning Authorities should determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas. In addition, the Act notes that when considering works within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area⁶.
- 3.2 The document has been compiled in accordance with nationally and locally adopted policy and guidance, further details of which can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

⁶ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - Section 72

4.0 Summary of Special Interest

- Northchurch is a large village⁷, with its historic origins linked to its location upon the Roman road Akeman Street and also as the site of a major Roman villa dating from about AD 60, along with its strategic position upon the River Bulbourne.
- The settlement is set to the south of the Grand Union Canal, elevated from the valley bottom with sloping hills to the north and south. The canal runs east to west to the north of the village and the River Bulbourne runs along the north-eastern edge of the village. The towpath adjacent to the canal gives strong pedestrian routes to the east and west.
- The overarching character of the conservation area is that of a large village, within a rural area. The built form of the village is concentrated along the A4251 which runs from the south east of the village to north-west and was historically the route of the Roman road.
- Key to the character and context of the settlement are the transport routes through and close by to the village, the Grand Union Canal, West Coast Main Line railway and A4251 (now by-passed) all running almost in parallel along the valley bottom on a north west to south east axis.
- St Mary's Church and the timber framed buildings to the village's core form a coherent group within the conservation area. The main street is narrow with buildings built to the edge of the pavement/highway giving a sense of enclosure.

⁷ Population 2,813 (taken from the 2011 Census although including Cow Roast)

- Prominent development is located on the south side of the main road whilst to the north, the School, Church and Alms houses are prominent within the townscape. The rural backdrop of Ashridge to the north also adds positively to the character of the area.
- Character is also provided by the variety in heights and scale of buildings cheek by jowl, with the large scale Baptist Chapel adjacent to the small scale vernacular cottages all abutting the High Street. There are positive examples of turn of the century terraced cottages which have an architectural rhythm in their repetition.
- To the west of the village there is a further collection of buildings dating from the 17th century that make a positive contribution as a cohesive group. These are linked to the central core of the village by late 19th century/turn of the century terraced cottages.
- The Canal and its associated infrastructure are a feature point to the north of the village with a lock cottage and lock 49. The canal, lock and tow paths and view to fields and woodlands are positive features adjacent to the conservation area.

5.0 Assessment of Special Interest

- 5.1 This Appraisal will now consider the landscape and historical character of Northchurch in order to consider what contributes to its significance and thus special interest as a conservation area.

Location and Landscape Setting

- 5.2 There are a number of specific components of the location and landscape setting of Northchurch which contribute to its character, significance and special interest. These are discussed in turn below;

Location and Population

- 5.3 Northchurch is a large village⁸, although the conservation area only includes approximately 100 houses. It lies in the County of Hertfordshire, situated in the river valley of the River Bulbourne, with sloping sides lined with modern housing and fields to the south west and fields and woodland to the north west.
- 5.4 One of the key components to the area are the key arterial transport routes through and close by to the village, all following a common route through the Chilterns and running close to the valley bottom north west to south east and vice versa:
- a) The West Coast Mainline runs north of the village and is prominent across the fields to the north;

⁸ Population 2,813 (taken from the 2011 Census although including Cow Roast)

- b) The Grand Union Canal runs to the north of the village and is a key boundary and orientation point and access for the village. Running alongside the Grand Union Canal is the small River Bulbourne which runs between the canal and the village;
- c) The A4251 road runs through the core of the settlement, with a bypass, the A41 running further south out of sight of the village.

General Character and Plan Form Including Landscape Context

- 5.5 The conservation area only covers a small part of the historic centre of the village, whereas most of the wider development is modern and has occurred as the area has expanded and is thus outside the boundary of the conservation area. This has left a plan form of the village with its historic core centered on the conservation area and stretching linearly along the A4251, whilst suburban developments to the north and south have sprawled away from this central area, encircling the historic core within a 20th century urban plan form.
- 5.6 The wider urban area merges with Berkhamsted, forming a continuous linear development. The plan form of the village is focused on the High Street (A4251) and New Road incorporating St Mary's Church yard its grounds.
- 5.7 The conservation area contains ten separate entries upon the statutory list, consisting of around 16 buildings and structures.



St Mary's Church



School with Church in background

- 5.8 The later development surrounding the conservation area has truncated some of the earlier historic plots; for instance, The Meads has been developed upon the site where The Rectory and its gardens previously stood.
- 5.9 To the western edge of the village, Northchurch House has been lost and replaced with the modern housing incorporating the parade of shops, which being adjacent to the conservation area has an ability to impact on its setting and context.
- 5.10 Likewise, The Old Grey Mare public house which previously stood on the north side of the High Street close to the western edge of the conservation area has been demolished and been replaced with modern housing, again altering the context and setting of the conservation area.
- 5.11 These developments adjacent to the western entrance to the conservation area have negatively impacted on the setting of Rosemary Cottage (Listed grade II). Historically there were small scale traditional buildings built close to the road, with Northchurch House opposite. This historical built form would have given Rosemary Cottage a far stronger historical context and setting when compared with what is presently encountered.



Rosemary Cottage



116 High Street, now Bon Soiree

- 5.12 The building at 116 High Street, now Bon Soiree, is a building of positive impact. It draws the eye when entering the conservation area from the west, incorporates a positive shop front engaging the High Street and includes a gated access within the frontage. This leads to some traditional vernacular barns creating a valuable courtyard and burgage plot, evidencing the more traditional plot formations which would have historically characterised the High Street, and remain surviving in many cases as detailed below.



116 High Street, now Bon Soiree

- 5.13 St Mary's Church (listed grade I) and its immediate setting provide a focal point and important open space within the village. The open graveyard is a heritage asset

contributes to the significance of both the listed Church but also the conservation area. This allows space around the church emphasising its townscape significance and facilitating routes through the grave yard to the rear of the church, which backs onto the River Bulbourne.



The River Bulbourne from the Grave Yard

- 5.14 The Church and its immediate open surroundings provides a strong setting for the Almshouses (84-96 High Street – listed grade II*) to its south abutting the High Street. The range of early buildings running perpendicular to the High Street (82 High Street) behind the Alms Houses remain and give a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area allowing a greater depth of built form to be appreciated.



84-96 High Street



82 High Street

- 5.15 The George and Dragon public house (listed grade II) is a centrally located building which makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area standing within its own substantial open plot (with a barn attached to the rear range, this was recently repaired by way of monies obtained via s.106 contributions) opposite, and engaging with, St Mary's Church and the Almshouses.



George and Dragon

- 5.16 The George and Dragon and the Almshouses form part of a loose historic group of timber framed buildings (interspersed with later buildings), 79 High Street to the west is set back from the road, dating from the 17th century (listed grade II) and finally the grade II listed 69-73 High Street which again have 17th century origins. In addition to

these, historically there were timber framed buildings adjacent to 109 High Street and to the corner of New Road and the High Street, where 100-102 High St is currently located (see historic images at Appendix 3). These buildings provide some evidence of the historic medieval core to the village with St Mary's Church at the core, some of the earlier buildings have been subsequently been overlain by later development.



79 High Street

- 5.17 The surviving urban form evidences the manner in which the settlement has developed over time with later architecture being imposed upon a historical morphology. The historic mapping suggests that the settlement developed along narrow plots, and the existing morphology evidences this with narrow frontages and deep plots away from the highway, albeit regularly overlain with later infill development.
- 5.18 Whilst heavily overlain, from Rosemary Cottage to the western entrance to the conservation area through to the surviving 17th century buildings to the east, the village form and land morphology retains its character, as it would have done in medieval times, developing around the focus of St Mary's Church.

- 5.19 Unfortunately, as use of the motor car has expanded the A4251 (High Street) dominates the village. The heavy volume of traffic along this thoroughfare makes it challenging for the pedestrian, which in turn, limits the ability to pause and engage with the architecture of the conservation area.
- 5.20 Provision is made for pedestrians, in part, there is a yew lined pedestrian route adjacent to The Meads linking its two entrances, which makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and provides certain respite from the traffic and noise associated with the main road.



Tree Lined Path adjacent to The Meades

- 5.21 The pavements to the High Street within the conservation area are narrow and often interrupted by modern street furniture and associated highways paraphernalia. Those to the south side are “start and stop”; the footpath from Bell Lane stops at the Baptist Chapel, and starts again at 57 High Street only to stop again at no 53 High Street.

- 5.22 The north side is better served, with a degree of consistency throughout, however, in both cases the modern materials and domination of motor traffic is detrimental to the character of the conservation area.



View looking North West along the High Street towards the George and Dragon

Historical Development and Archaeology

Origins and Historic Development

- 5.23 Northchurch has a long history, and the townscape is a result of its development and the overlaying medieval, Georgian and Victorian development as evidenced by the historic buildings that make up its core.
- 5.24 It is believed that the area was subject to occupation as early as the Stone Age. This is informed by way of the discovery, during the construction of the Northchurch bypass, of evidence that around 2000 BC, people settled on the hillside above the present Cow Roast site. This settlement is likely to have been facilitated by way of the river

below the hillside which would have provided fish for eating along with woodland providing timber and further food sources.

- 5.25 Northchurch High Street is situated on the Roman road Akeman Street which linked St. Albans to Cirencester, suggesting it held some strategic importance during Roman times. This supposition is supported by the discovery during the 1970's, of a substantial Roman villa dating from around AD 60, along with further evidence of Roman settlement which was discovered behind the Cow Roast public house.
- 5.26 The settlement predates the neighbouring larger town of Berkhamsted. Other earlier names for Northchurch include Berkhamsted St. Mary (referencing the church) supporting the view held by many historians that the settlement at Northchurch may have been the site of the original Berkhamsted, with the settlement expanding further down the Bulbourne Valley following the construction of Berkhamsted Castle 2 miles to the south west.
- 5.27 The Romans left in 410 AD. Following their departure Saxon tribes from what is now northwest Germany began arriving, first to plunder but then to settle. The Saxons were initially pagan, but in 793 AD King Offa of Mercia, within which Northchurch lay, converted to Christianity and thus it is likely a church was constructed within the settlement, although this original place of worship would likely have been of timber and thatch in construction.
- 5.28 The surroundings of Northchurch were further affected by the later invasion of the Norse, who began to settle in the area. Under the Treaty of Wedmore that King Alfred signed with King Guthrum of the Danes, part of the kingdom of Mercia north of the Roman Road known as Watling Street, was ceded to Danelaw which brought Northchurch closer to the Danes.
- 5.29 This event possibly prompted the replacement of the earlier church with a more substantial structure of masonry to provide worship and also a place of refuge if

required for the community. The later Saxon significance of the settlement can be evidenced by the fact that the parish church of St. Mary has origins which date from latter Saxon times (perhaps 8th or 9th century) and it is one of the oldest churches in Hertfordshire. Part of the original Saxon building remains in the south and west walls.

- 5.30 With the Norman arrival in 1066 the church is recorded in the Domesday Book along with its parish details. This illustrates the substantive significance of the settlement at this date in that the parish was then known not as St. Mary's Northchurch but as Berkhamsted St. Mary, and with it came the vast parish of Berkhamsted St. Mary which extended from Tring in the north to Boxmoor in the south, and from Hawridge in the west to Little Gaddesden in the east.
- 5.31 The significance of the parish diminished a little during Norman occupation as the Castle was constructed at Berkhamsted which switched emphasis south away from Northchurch.
- 5.32 This encouraged the growth of Berkhamsted and thus the local influence of Northchurch reduced. This is evidenced by way of the 1086 Domesday which records the presence of 52 burgesses at Berkhamsted (as well as a ditch builder who presumably was in charge of the castle earthworks). This was a radical shift from the old centre at Northchurch.
- 5.33 It would appear that the name Northchurch emerged during the 14th century, as the construction of the Church⁹ within Berkhamsted further changed the emphasis of the settlement, and thus the area around St Mary's Church became the area around the north church and hence 'Northchurch'
- 5.34 Little further evidence has been uncovered to track the development of Northchurch between the 14th and 17th centuries, although St Mary's Church was subject to various

⁹ St Peter

later extensions and alterations. In the early 13th century (at the time of the building of St Peter's in Berkhamsted) a new chancel and transepts were built, giving the church a cruciform plan. The transepts were rebuilt in the 15th century and a new Totternhoe stone tower built over the crossing on strengthened arches.

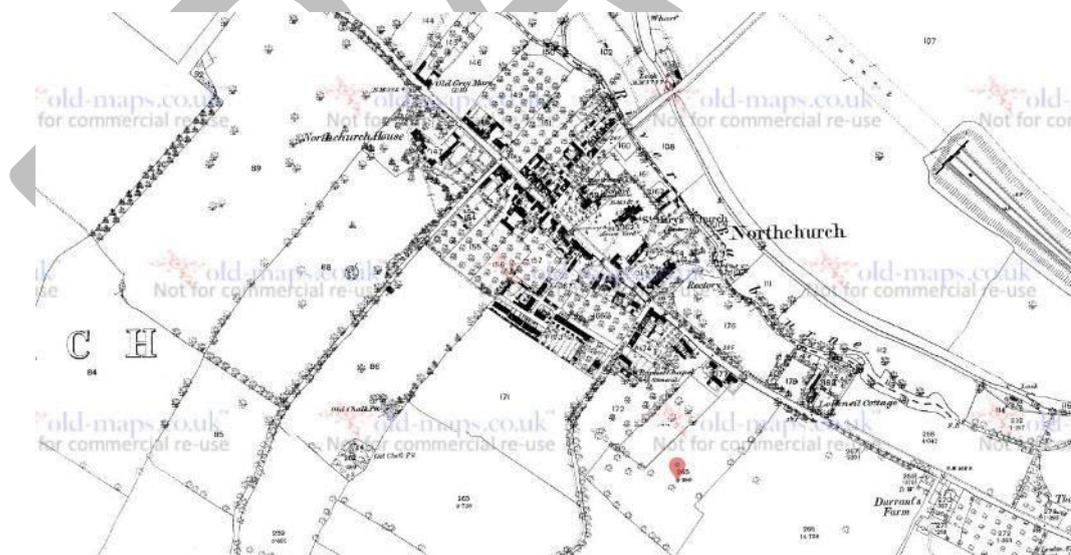
- 5.35 From the surviving buildings as outlined above, evidence remains of the style and form of buildings being constructed for occupation in Northchurch since the 16th and 17th centuries, illustrating the local prosperity that remained in the settlement.
- 5.36 Northchurch was devastated by fire in 1664, the total loss amounting to £824 17s, a petition was sent to the king for permission to collect money for the relief of the inhabitants.
- 5.37 Northchurch appears to have come to some prominence again during the mid-17th century as with the Civil War looming the Crown tried on a number of occasions to enclose the Northchurch Common as part of the Crown Estates. Following the Civil war disaster struck Northchurch again with damage was also being done by a storm in 1774.
- 5.38 The attempts to enclose the Common were opposed by the people of Northchurch led by William Edlyn of Norcott, the manor that lies on the hillside to the north of Dudswell. Later, his son John Edlyn donated the Almshouses to the Parish to house the poor and disabled. Later still in 1864, one of his descendants, John Loxley of Norcott, together with Earl Brownlow of Ashridge, founded the village school.
- 5.39 The development of much of what remains of the core of the settlement has its origins within the 16th and 17th centuries, with Rosemary Cottage to the north-west entrance to the conservation area, the Almshouses, the George and Dragon and 69-73 and 79 High Street all including fabric of these dates, along with the replaced timber framed buildings at 100-102 High Street and adjacent to 109 High Street. This demonstrates that the historic core of the conservation area evidences developments of this period,

albeit overlain with much later alteration to these core buildings and developments within the morphology of the settlement.

- 5.40 During the 19th century St Marys Church was subject to further alterations. The cruciform shape disappeared when the north aisle was built in 1881, together with vestries on the north side of the chancel. The south porch was built at the same time.
- 5.41 Also during the 19th century the transport links of the canal (opened around 1799 as the Grand Junction Canal -became Grand Union Canal by amalgamation 1929), road and railway (opened 1838 as part of the London and Birmingham Railway, engineered by Robert Stephenson) provided the strategic importance of Northchurch and this has influenced its growth and emerging morphology as the settlement remains clustered around these arterial links.
- 5.42 Moving into the 20th and 21st centuries Northchurch has become something of a dormitory settlement, benefiting from employment in the surrounding towns and the quality of public transport to London. This has led to rapid expansion of the settlement, initially principally to the south west and north west of the village and subsequently in the 21st century there has been expansion to all sides, however, these later village growth areas are outside the conservation area, allowing the conservation area to retain much of its character and historical significance.
- 5.43 The strategic and logistical importance of the village relates to its historical position standing on the Roman Road as noted above and in more recent times on both the River Bulbourne and the Grand Union Canal. The main road running through Northchurch, the A4251, is built over Akeman Street, the original Roman road from London (Londinium) to Chester (Deva).

Historic Maps

- 5.44 The 1842 Tithe Map is extremely useful for seeing how the town has developed over the past 200 years. It not only shows layout, but is cross referenced to land owners and land usage. The original is held at the British Museum.
- 5.45 The original OS map from 1877 illustrates that even at this date the village form and morphology was concentrated upon its highway network, with properties fronting onto the road system. The village at this date does include substantial areas of open space, with the suggestion that many of these spaces are filled with trees, likely to be orchards.
- 5.46 The railway is visible to the north of the village along with the canal illustrating that by this period the settlement was becoming connected regionally and nationally within emerging modern transport networks.

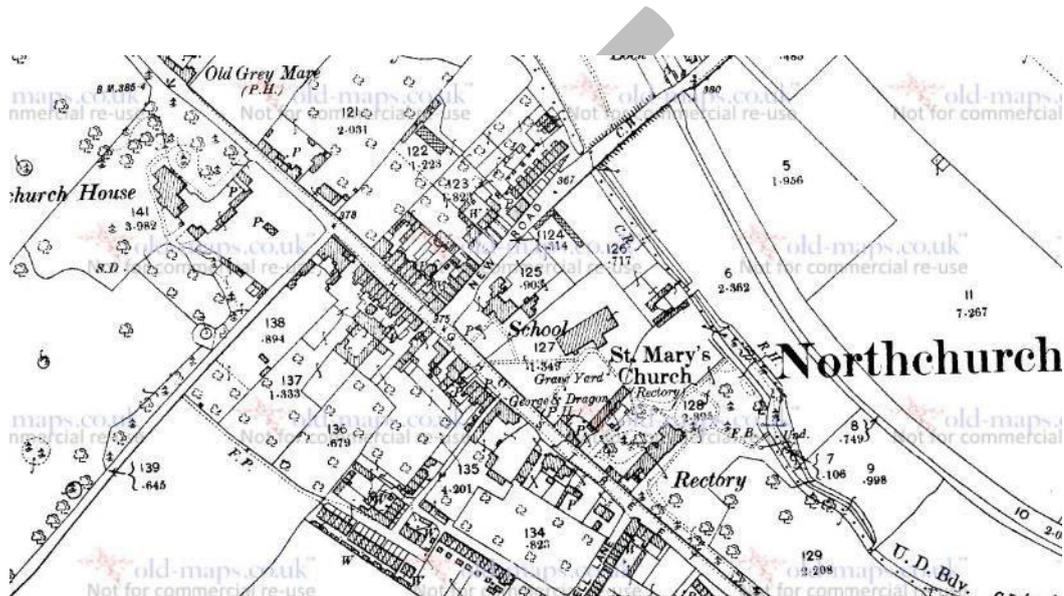


OS County Series, 1877-78 Hertfordshire 1:2,500

- 5.47 Turning to 1898 and the village appears little changed in its built form, orientation and spatial arrangement with smaller properties appearing at the pavement rear, whilst the larger buildings tend to be sited within their own landscaped grounds.

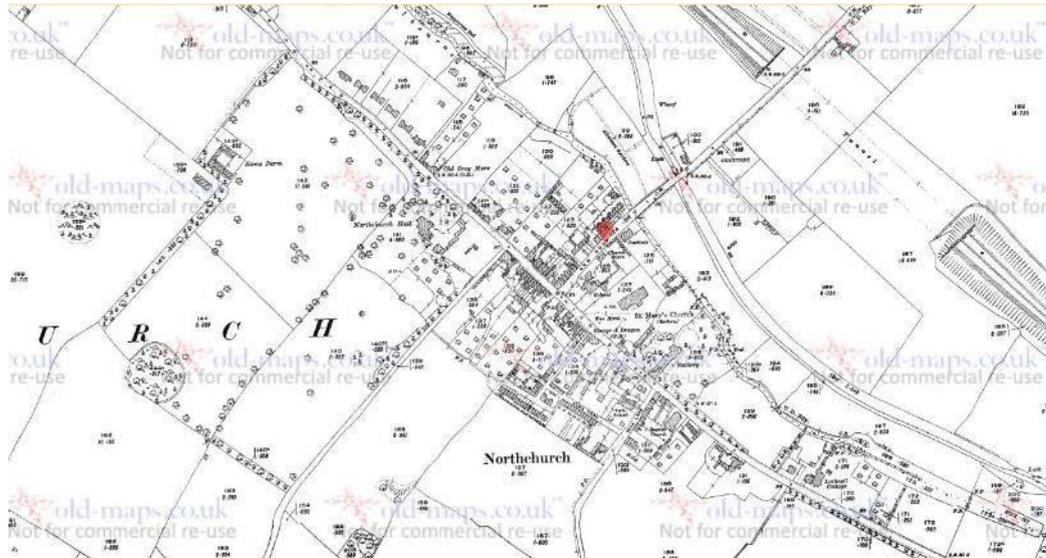
5.48 At this date it is noted that certain backland development has commenced with larger plots often being divided to provide development land. This is a characteristic which continued into the 20th century.

5.49 At this date the village appears to retain its separation from Berkhamsted to its south east, although there is some evidence of creeping ribbon developments which would subsequently link the settlements together.



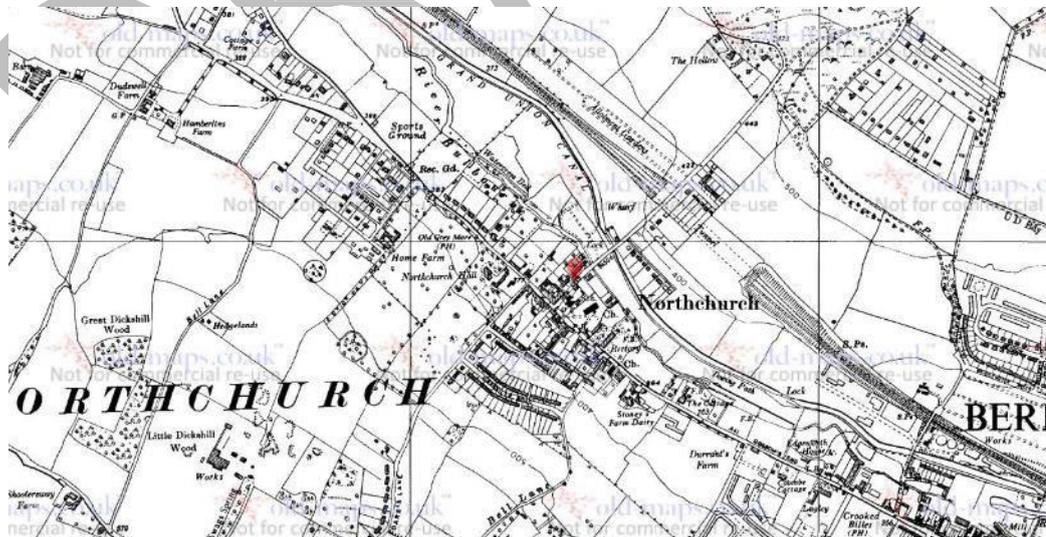
OS County Series, 1898 Hertfordshire 1:2,500

5.50 The next map for consideration is that of 1924. This shows little developmental change within the pattern of the village it still displaying the townscape traits as outlined above, namely localised backland developments as plots become divided.



OS County Series, 1924 Hertfordshire 1:2,500

5.51 Turning to 1937 and the village appears little altered and the relationship between the built form and associated open spaces remains visible, as is the spatial arrangement of the proprieties within the conservation area. To the west of the conservation area additional development has commenced outside the conservation area which is beginning to encircle the area and contribute to a creeping sense of wider suburbanisation.



OS County Series, 1937-38 Hertfordshire 1:2,500

5.52 Even as late as 1960 the village centre which forms the nucleus of the conservation area appears little altered and by this date it is interesting to note that the later suburban developments which enclose the village core have yet to be undertaken.

5.53 Therefore, it is clear from a review of the historic mapping that the conservation area retains much of its built form dating from the 19th century, being characterised by smaller buildings fronting the highways and larger buildings set back within grounds.

Whilst the settlement has expanded greatly, which has affected its prominence, when one enters the conservation area the unifying form is of 19th century origins and earlier.

Archaeology

5.54 A number of sites of potential archaeological importance are noted within the Hertfordshire Historic Environments Record, these are noted below;

- Record No 18191 - Site of Baptist Chapel, Bell Lane, Northchurch - small 1840 Baptist chapel in its own burial ground, superseded in 1900; the burial ground survives.
- Record No 18191 - Probable Post-Medieval Boundary Ditch, 97 High Street, Northchurch - Evaluation of the garden and orchard behind no.97 High Street in 2002 found a ditch, running roughly north-south, towards the east side of the plot. In the fill was a rim sherd of glazed red earthenware, of 16th to 18th century date. This may have been a boundary ditch.

Character Analysis

5.55 A key element of understanding the significance of the conservation area relates to its character, morphology and spatial arrangement. The Appraisal now summarises this character, with further analysis below in detail to provide that understanding.

Summary of Character

- Predominantly brick construction, some flint and timber framing
- Two storey properties
- Traditional fenestration
- Slate or tiled gabled roofs parallel to road
- No dormers (Exhims is the exception)
- Chimneys
- Brick walls with half round coping bricks
- Trees and green setting
- Glimpsed views to open countryside/woodland

5.56 The character of Northchurch originates from a nucleated small scale settlement built to the back of the pavements to the High Street (A4251) running west to east and New Road (B4506) north to south. St Marÿs Church and associated school along with the half-timbered house adjacent and the George and Dragon public house remain key features within the conservation area.

5.57 There is a stronger built form to the south west of the High Street. These properties are predominately two storeys with gabled roof forms running parallel with the road, with projecting gables being in most parts feature details to the primary built form; the Baptist Church is an exception being of a larger scale and gabled to the High Street, with 83, 85 and 89-95 having strong gable details.

- 5.58 The gabled roof form is the prominent form with very few hipped buildings, Exhims and 116 being the prominent exceptions. The roofs are unaltered and simple in form, varying from the steeper vernacular pitches for clay tiles to the more shallow pitches for slate roofs. There are almost no dormer windows to the roof forms.
- 5.59 The buildings in most part are built close to the back of pavement, funnelling vistas through the area. However, there are areas where properties are set back within grounds behind brick walls of varying heights forming a strong boundary.
- 5.60 There are some ranges of buildings behind the High-Street at Exhims along Darrs Lane, to both sides of the George and Dragon public house with the attached range linking to Duncombe Road and there are terrace cottages along Bell Lane.
- 5.61 The buildings behind Exhims and the public house are simple vernacular buildings (some now converted) to serve the principal building. The buildings along Bell Lane are two storey terrace cottages.
- 5.62 From Northchurch Place (49 High Street) to the Baptist Church the buildings are mostly brick and slate (with 51-53 being painted render). The fenestration varies between sash windows and casement windows albeit with altered replacement windows to 51-53 High Street.
- 5.63 The scale of the buildings is low, with the Baptist Church being a strong feature within the conservation area. It is of a large scale with a visibly prominent clay tiled roof.
- 5.64 Along the High Street from the Baptist Church the buildings are of an earlier vernacular, with a variety of brick works and steep tiled roofs punctured with chimneys. The fenestration is varied with examples of sash windows to 49 High Street, however, the rest of this terrace has a variety of modern casement windows.

- 5.65 The junction of Bell Lane and the High Street is finished with a strong walled boundary with half round coping bricks which continues to 81 High Street. The pair of cottages behind (75-77) are of flint and red brick construction with a slate roof building. The garden area in front of these cottages and the adjacent house (79) give a relief from the back of pavement development. Both properties contribute positively to the character of the area.
- 5.66 The buildings up to 95 High Street are of varying ages and styles but are predominantly of brick construction with traditional fenestration. The roofs are tiled and of steeper pitches.
- 5.67 The property adjacent 103, is an altered and extended shop. There is a pair of traditional attached houses which in most part retain their original features. They are of brick construction, with slate roofs, and sash windows.
- 5.68 From 109 - 121 High Street there is a collection of late 19th century terraced cottages with strong elevational and uniformity in the design details such as the horizontal banding, key stone arched windows and door heads and traditionally sized fenestration openings for sash windows albeit most of the sash windows have been replaced; the roofs would have been slate however a number have been replaced. 109 is the only painted building. 123 is a double fronted larger dwelling with sash windows and hood moulds.
- 5.69 Exhims is the final building, whilst originally a single property it has now been divided and had its classically inspired architectural forms altered by later additions including dormer windows. It is red brick with red dressing bricks to the sash windows under a hipped slate roof.
- 5.70 To the north east side of the High Street, that character is dominated by the Church, the school and their setting along with the half-timbered houses 81-85 High Street.

- 5.71 These buildings and the church yard setting (including the properties to the rear of 81-85 High Street) are prominent within the streetscape and positive features within the conservation area.
- 5.72 To the north side of New Road (B4506) the built form is more akin to the south west of the High Street. There is a tighter building line of terraced cottages, built off the back of the pavement. 104-106 are a mirrored pair architecturally as are 108-114 which are mirrored over the central arched rear access.
- 5.73 All of the buildings to this locale of the conservation area are of brick construction with red dressing bricks to openings, slate roofs, sash windows, chimneys and have front doors directly onto the pavement.
- 5.74 The gap between 116 High Street and Rosemary Cottage is a weak area in the overall character of the conservation area with the poorly executed flank of Chapel Crofts and substantial element of utilities equipment on the grassed area between the listed cottage and 116 High Street, drawing the eye and thus causing detriment to the overarching character and significance of the area.

Approaches

- 5.75 When approaching from the North West along the High Street (A4251), Rosemary Cottage is of a low scale set at a lower level than the highway and screened by a tree. The prominent buildings are Exhims along with its ranges of buildings to the east up Darrs Lane and 116 High Street. Their scale and hipped roof forms stand out against the lower level terraced cottages. The other point of note is the pinched linear form that is in close proximity to the road, New Road is not visible from this point.
- 5.76 When approaching from the South East along the High Street (A4251), the key features are the green setting and planting, development is contained behind low level brick walls, and low scale until the Baptist Church. The character from that point

changes to an earlier vernacular scale and form until the Public House, where it reverts to the form of turn of the century terraced cottages.

- 5.77 To the north of High Street, the strong sense of green trees remains. This contains the footpath through the yew trees which continues until the somewhat jarring fencing to the side of The Meades, although at the termination of this one is afforded a glimpsed view through to 81/85 High Street, the half-timbered range of buildings.
- 5.78 The church and school are set back within generous curtilages and act as a key aesthetic and spatial break in the prevailing character, albeit again framed within a brick wall with half diamond coping bricks. The junction with New Road gives views of the terraced houses along the NW side of New Road, with the turn of the century cottages leading to 116 High Street and Rosemary Cottage beyond.
- 5.79 When approaching from New Road (B4506) to the High Street (A4251) the character is a verdant one with roof tops apparent and the square church tower. Low level brick walls with half round coping brick line the side of the road. Initially the buildings are modern and of little note, when the hill ascends towards the High Street, the side wall of the end of the terrace (No.6 New Road) and the school building are strong features within the street scene with a backdrop of the High Street ahead with trees behind.
- 5.80 The traditional buildings of the Church School are of positive value and apparent behind the hedge when approaching the High Street, within the location the sense of openness across the playground is also apparent.

Detailed Character Analysis

- 5.81 In order to better explain the observations regarding character and significance completed above, the Appraisal now considers the contribution that certain buildings make to form that overall character and thus significance.

Properties to the south side of the High Street.

- 5.82 No 49 High Street, Northchurch Place:** this is an unlisted building which makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. It has stone dressed window openings with timber sash windows, decorative barge boards and imposing chimneys.



No 49 High Street, Northchurch Place

- 5.83 No 51-53 High Street – East to West** – This is a pair of buildings which have been subject to substantive change and alteration leaving a somewhat disjointed pair. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



No 51-53 High Street – East to West

- 5.84 No 55 – 57 High Street**, - a modern housing development albeit showing some evidence of an attempt to incorporate detailing within the design which reflects that encountered in the locale.



No 55 – 57 High Street

- 5.85 No 59-61A High Street**, - a terrace of three cottages set back from the High Street, again these have been subject to change and extension now displaying very prominent porches to their principal elevation.



No 59-61 High Street

- 5.86 **Northchurch Baptist Chapel**, this is an imposing late 19th century red brick high Gothic building with steep clay tiled roofs and plate tracery to the principal elevation. Designed and constructed 1899-1900 with the cost of the new chapel being paid by John Marnham Esq. JP, a Christian benefactor living in Boxmoor. Adjacent is the 20th century 65 High Street, a modern house associated with the Chapel.



Northchurch Baptist Chapel

- 5.87 **No 69 - 73 High Street**, Listed Grade II terrace of three cottages dating from the 17th century. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



No 69-73 High Street

5.88 No 75-77 High Street, A pair of flint cottages with red brick dressings, casement timber windows with lead lights. An imposing feature of the building is its large central chimney stack.

5.89 The scale of the building contrasts somewhat with the adjacent Baptist Chapel, illustrating the manner in which scales vary upon the High Street. This pair of cottages make a positive impact on the character of the conservation area.



No 75 - 77 High Street

5.90 No 79 High Street, - a Grade II listed 17th century timber framed building that makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.



No 79 High Street

- 5.91 No 81/83 High Street**, - a gothic inspired residential building with a strong projecting gable and multiple chimneys. The fenestration has stone dressings and stone mullions with lead lights. This is a dominant building within the street scene with a positive role to play within the wider character of the conservation area.



No 81-83 High Street

- 5.92** There is certain linearity relationship between **85 High Street** and the George and Dragon public house due to their spatial arrangement being built close to the road giving a strong physical presence within the street scene.
- 5.93** There is a group of timber framed buildings concentrated at this point, the **George and Dragon Public House** (late 16th century) and the Almshouses opposite, these are key visible timber framed buildings set close to the roads edge, this collection of buildings is complemented by no 79 High Street, which is set back off the road. In addition to these buildings, historically there were timber framed buildings in the location of 100-102 High Street and adjacent to 109 High Street, this collection of timber framed buildings is concentrated at the historic core of the village alongside the church. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



George and Dragon

- 5.94 **89 - 95 High Street**, - is an interesting terrace of four cottages, presented as a pair of large gabled houses of similar symmetry. The principal High Street elevation is finished with prominent arched stone hood mouldings to the first-floor level and banding details between ground and first floor and across the gable to the second floor. There is also a stone name and date plaque located centrally at first floor level, now partially obscured by the rainwater goods. A positive building within the conservation area. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



No 89-95 High Street

- 5.95 **No 97 High Street**, - a much altered property, the building to the right used to be a shop, now altered to form a flatted development. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



No. 97 High Street

- 5.96 **No 99 High Street**, - originally a well-proportioned cottage, now with a porch and bay window addition. Red brick elevations, sash windows and a slate roof returning up the hill. (see historic images at Appendix 3 showing a historical picture of 99 High Street when it was a shop and Post office run by Mr and Mrs East).



99 High Street

101 High Street (right)

- 5.97 **No 101 High Street**, is a later cottage with slate roof and sash windows, stands at a prominent location at the New Road, High Street junction.

5.98.1 No 1-4 Tudor Orchard - a modern infill development, it is formed of flats and of little merit. From this 1955 photograph it is clear to see the timber framed building in the same location at 1-4 Tudor Orchard. (see historic images at Appendix 3)



1-4 Tudor Orchard

5.99 No 109 - 121 High Street, - a row of 7 terraced cottages with strong horizontal banding and key stone details, this terrace is a positive feature within the conservation area. A unity in the expressed detail to the complete terrace would increase the positive impact this terrace would have visually on the wider area.



109-121 High Street

- 5.100 **No 123 High Street**, a double fronted, symmetrical house with strong hood mouldings to the ground floor fenestration and bracketed cills to the upper floor windows



No 123 High Street

- 5.101 **Exhims**, - a Grade II listed building, creating a strong entrance feature and thus a key building when approaching from the west. The building is of brick topped with a prominent hipped roof with front dormers and tall chimneys. The building has scale and presence within the street scene, with blind windows to the west elevation particularly attracting the eye. The building has been subject to alteration which has diluted the strength of its classically inspired architecture, its dormers being particularly visible. (see historic images at Appendix 3 - image re 97 High Street shows Exhims at the end of the terrace, interestingly with hipped dormers)



Exhims

North side of the High Street – West to East

- 5.102 **Rosemary Cottage**, - a Grade II listed 16th to early 17th century timber framed cottage, of brick and timber, its elevation being noticeable for its proportionally wide eaves breaking dormers within its tile roof.





Rosemary Cottage – Grade II listed

- 5.103 **Bon Soiree**, this is an important building with a shop and access to the yard and barns to the rear illustrating the manner in which commercial premises often incorporated a rear access within their design. This building is a prominent building at the western edge of the conservation area.



116 High Street – Bon Soiree

- 5.104 **Terrace of cottages no. 104 -114** are a good example of 6.no terraced cottages, the first 4.no (108 – 114) with a central alley are of yellow stock brick with red brick dressings (no 112 retains the original sash window recessed within the reveals). The pair of cottages, 104-106 are finished in a red brown brick with red brick dressings.



104 -114 High Street

- 5.105 At the corner of New Road is a single storey building office (100-102 High Street) that turns the corner. The gable end of the office building faces onto New Road. (see historic images at Appendix 3 - image re 97 High Street shows the earlier building on the right-hand side of the image)



100 -102 High Street

- 5.106 At the eastern corner of New Road is **St Marys Church School**, the building is designed in the gothic style having steep tiles roofs and strong gable forms, it dates from the 1860's being built in flint with stone dressings.. The architectural composition incorporates later additions and is set back from the road side with a tarmac finished play area to the front enclosed by a brick wall and railings. Whilst the tarmac play area

does not contribute to the character of the conservation area, the enclosed play ground is an important visible element of the contribution the building makes as a whole to the area.



St Marys School, High Street

- 5.107 **St Marys Church** is the key focal point within the conservation area that positively dominates the area, through its scale, the open setting and its strong materials palette. It is enclosed with a brick wall abutting the back of pavement.



St Mary's Church

- 5.108 It is a located within the Grave Yard, a large green space that reaches the River Bulbourne. This is an important green area and open space within the conservation area of strong built form in very close proximity to the High Street and significant traffic. It acts as a green buffer breaking up the hard urban form that prevails over the majority of the conservation area.



St Mary's Grave Yard

5.109 The rear of the site overlooks the playing fields to the school and canal beyond, which are on the north side of the River Bulbourne.



River Bulbourne at the NE end of the Church grounds

- 5.110 The Almshouses**, - these are 15th and 16th century timber framed buildings built very close to the road edge with a part jettied upper level under a tiled roof with prominent stacks. They retain their presence within the conservation area although the proximity to the highway and the proliferation of traffic does compromise their setting.



Front and rear of the Alms Houses 84-96 High Street

- 5.111 Behind the Alms Houses is a linear built form consisting of a timber framed dwelling with a church hall beyond. The dwelling closest to the High Street makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.



Front and rear of 82 High Street

- 5.112 At this location to the north of High Street the built form does not reflect the spatial arrangement shown on the map of 1877. Historically these buildings would have

looked upon The Rectory, now demolished and replaced by the Meades. However, there is an important avenue of yew trees that run parallel with the High Street in front of the Meades, these create a pedestrian route to the east.



Yew lined walk to the North East of the High Street

New Road

5.113 The eastern side consists of the school buildings and playing fields.



St Marys School from New Road



St Marys School and view North, New Road



View of properties on New Road when approaching the High Street

Comparable historic image within Appendix 5

- 5.114 The western side of the road has turn of the century terraces with a site already hoarded ready for redevelopment. This site, former CD Wright Electrical, is an important site when entering the conservation area from the north.
- 5.115 In addition, Compass Point beyond is set back from the street scene and is relatively low scale with extensive planting, therefore this site is a significantly visible site when entering the Northchurch Conservation Area. (see historic images at Appendix3)



View of properties on New Road; Development Site at 8 New Road

5.116 The area to the north including the canal and associated lock and lock keeper's cottage and playing field to the east are being considered for inclusion into the conservation area. The road at this point has brick walls to either side delineating the back of pavement and channel viewpoints that lead to the brick bridge over the canal. This area is an important element for explaining the story of the development of Northchurch and the relationship between ever changing transportation methods.

5.117 The area around Duncombe Road, Seymour Road and Alma Road have incurred considerable change and parts of these areas are proposed for removal from the conservation area. There are many new builds interspersed with terraced housing that has now lost much of its detail.



New Builds around Duncombe Road, Seymour Road and Alma Road

- 5.118 The photograph below also illustrates the manner in which the loss of detail detracts from the character and significance of the conservation area.



Loss of detail

Bell Lane

- 5.119 This retains a number of positive terraces and the old cemetery grounds to the south side. It does have two new build houses that do not follow the scale or form of the conservation area and the conservation area boundary should be amended accordingly.



New Build, Bell Lane



Positive terrace east side of Bell Lane



Positive buildings west side of Bell Lane

Architectural and historic quality of buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area.

5.100 This section refers in more detail to the historical buildings in the conservation area.

5.121 There are 8 entries on the statutory list within the conservation area, some listed as groups, these are noted below with the listing descriptions being available via:

<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

- **Rosemary Cottage, 126 High Street – Grade II**
- **Exhims, 127 High Street, Grade II**
- **George and Dragon Public House, 87 High Street - Grade II**
- **Alms Houses, 84-96 High street – Grade II***
- **79 High Street - Grade II**
- **69-73 High Street – Grade II**
- **Church of Saint Mary – Grade I**
- **Gravestone of Peter the Wild Boy – Grade II**

The Contribution of Key Unlisted Buildings

5.122 There are many buildings that are part of Northchurch Conservation area which are unlisted but make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area. Thus their protection is an important component in maintaining this identified significance.

Important Views

5.123 There are a number of important views, which form part of the character and significance of the conservation area and are referred to in the text and shown plotted on the draft Appraisal Plan. These tend to be concentrated into three distinct elements;

- Views to the north towards the river and canal;
- Views within the vicinity of the Church, encompassing the building, graveyard and its immediate context;
- Funnelled views along the High Street.

Importance of Boundary Treatments

5.124 The engagement of properties to the highway contributes much of the significance of the conservation area. However, in certain cases some of the boundary treatments are limited due to the development being in such close proximity to the road edge, or directly abutting a road without a footpath.

5.125 The brick walls to front boundaries are often a positive feature within the conservation area, this includes the brick walls to either side of New Road. The iron railings to the school and hedging are important boundary treatments that help to provide a more natural character to certain areas, contrasting with the prevalent hard boundaries experienced.

Prevalent and traditional building materials

5.126 Vernacular Chilterns materials are prevalent within Northchurch conservation area and add greatly to its charm. Below are listed some of the most common materials within the Northchurch Conservation Area which contribute to its character and significance.

Material	Discussion	Example
Brick	Brick is the most common material in the conservation area, and the majority of buildings from all eras utilise the subtle Chilterns palette of red, browns and greys to great effect.	
Flint	The use of flint as a building material is not uncommon in the Chilterns AONB and within the conservation area there are examples of flint used in the construction of the Church, cottages, the school buildings as well as in boundary walls.	
Timber Framing	Timber-framing is a highly visible construction technique within Northchurch and many of the listed buildings are clearly timber framed. This is a very strong characteristic of this conservation area. There may be further evidence of timber framing within the village core but many of the buildings were updated in the 18 th century. Many of the frames remain in older houses, but have been concealed by later brickwork.	
Stone	The use of stone is limited principally to St Mary's Church in this conservation area. However, there are examples of stone dressings to windows, stone cappings to walls within the conservation area.	

Material	Discussion	Example
Painted Brickwork	The effect of render is often achieved by painting brickwork, either on the whole façade such as the George and Dragon pub, or within the infill panels to the timber framed houses such as Montagues piano shop and flanks of terraces in Bell Lane.	
Roof Coverings	Tile and Slate are the prevalent roofing materials. Within the conservation area there are examples of both clay tile and slate; however, the clay tile is the local material and more predominant.	
Timber cladding	There is a limited amount of timber cladding, the rear barn of the George and Dragon is timber clad as are the barns to 116 High Street, Bon Soiree.	

Contribution made by the natural environment.

Open Space

5.127 There is no open space in the sense of a formal park or defined area within Northchurch Conservation Area. However, St Marys Church grounds provide a break from the built form and an area of tranquility. The area beyond the River Bulbourne is proposed for inclusion in the conservation area and will incorporate the towpath to the Grand Union Canal.

5.128 Open space for this conservation area is defined on a more piecemeal basis. The tow path leads east to Berkhamsted, west to Dudswell, Cow Roast and Tring. In addition, the allotments to the west of New Road provide further open space in that component of the conservation area.

Trees and Vegetation

5.129 Trees and vegetation form a part of the character of Northchurch Conservation Area, in particular, the trees within the Church grounds. The trees lining the canal to the

south side are a very strong and positive feature in close proximity to the conservation area.

- 5.130 The Yew tree lined walk to the east is also of significance, both introducing a much needed tranquility and calm adjacent to the busy road, but also helping to integrate later modern development within the context and setting of the conservation area.
- 5.131 However, it is clear that the once prevalence of orchards as shown on the historic mapping of the latter 19th century have now been lost. This is a substantial change from the historic form of the settlement and whilst there are certain trees encountered, the conservation area displays much evidence of 20th century urbanisation and development.

6.0 Intrusions and Negative Factors

- 6.1 The Northchurch Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the area. Whilst there are some buildings that do not contribute to the overall character, they equally do not detract and allow a context and setting for the conservation area boundaries to be drawn.
- 6.2 However, there are certain modern developments from the mid-20th century which are not particularly in keeping with the overall character, drawing the eye and intruding upon the overall character. These areas have been highlighted with a recommendation for omission from the conservation area.
- 6.3 One of the major impacts on the village is traffic and the motor car. Parking is a key problem with very limited potential for on-road parking, resulting in a clutter of cars which has a detrimental impact on the character of the conservation area.
- 6.4 The volume and consistency of high level of traffic makes it very difficult to navigate through the conservation area, and when walking in the conservation area, it is difficult to appreciate the value of some of the buildings due to the dominance of the traffic, the noise and narrowness of the footpaths or in certain cases dangerous abruptness of the termination of the footpath.
- 6.5 This is an area that needs to be very carefully evaluated and considered and consulted upon within Northchurch to try and achieve an improvement to the current format.

7.0 Pressures, Problems and Opportunities for Change

- 7.1 This Appraisal will now consider pressures, problems and opportunities for enhancement within the context of the Northchurch Conservation Area.

Buildings Which Cause a Detriment to the Character and Special Significance of the Conservation Area

- 7.2 As noted elsewhere within this document, Northchurch has suffered somewhat from 20th century development. However, conservation areas are evolving assets and thus this overlain arrangement is now part of Northchurch character. The new development in most part does respond to the established character albeit the scale and mass of the buildings are often “stretched.” Therefore, new housing or extensions to existing housing need to be carefully considered to protect the overall character of the area.
- 7.3 Care should be taken, when considering new development or extensions, with regards to the scale and block form, its proximity to boundaries and impacts upon, and relationship to, hedging, and planting.

Buildings at Risk

- 7.4 No buildings were identified to be at risk.

Proposed Boundary Changes

- 7.5 During the assessment process certain boundary changes have been identified. These are shown graphically upon the draft appraisal plan and discussed in greater detail within the text of the appraisal above and summarised below;

- 1) An extension of the conservation area boundary to the north east is proposed to encompass the canal, tow path, lock gates, lock keeper's cottage and open space between the River and Canal.

This area has been proposed for two reasons:

- a) as the Grand Union Canal is an important historic influence on the wider area from the latter 18th/early 19th centuries, the area forms a key amenity link to the Grand Union Canal tow path which creates a pedestrian/cycle route to Berkhamsted to the east and Dudswell and Tring to the west.

The section of the Grand Union Canal from Brentford to Berkhamsted was completed in 1798, and the link to Birmingham was opened in 1805. The building is a component of a nationally significant canal development which linked London and Birmingham by 1905 and which remained commercially operational until the 1960's.

The setting of the building alongside the lock chamber to the north of Northchurch remains unchanged, enhancing the clearly legible functional relationship between the 2 structures. The lock cottage stands alongside the lock chamber of one of 2 operational locks. The lock retains wooden gates of traditional design to both ends of the chamber, which is brick lined below massive stone copings. The building is of distinctive architectural form and character and remains clearly identifiable as a canal-related structure.

- b) The open area to the north east of the current conservation area boundary is open space which is visually connected to the existing conservation area and leads to the tow path and canal and a definable boundary.

Northchurch is a close knit urban environment abutting the Grand Union Canal and on the edge of an Estate parkland and wider rural area. The interplay between the town and the wider environment is a strong character for this area. The activity between the tow path and town is high.



The relationship between the river, playing fields and the lock cottage

- 2) The areas around Duncombe Road, Seymour Road and Alma Road have incurred considerable change and parts of these areas are proposed for removal from the conservation area.

A collection of many factors has eroded the special architectural and historic interest of this area; new builds interspersed with terraced housing that has now lost much of its detail. Many of the traditional terraces have been altered with front extensions, roof alterations, front gardens altered to accommodate parking and most have lost the original fenestration. The culmination of all these piecemeal alterations has negatively impacted on the special architectural and historic character of this area.

- 3) To the west of Bell Lane, this area retains a number of positive terraces and the old cemetery grounds to the south side. It does have two new build

houses that do not follow the scale or form of the conservation area and the conservation area boundary should be amended accordingly.

This is a small change to the area to omit the new buildings from the conservation area, allowing the buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area to remain within the conservation area boundary.

- 4) The area to the south of the conservation area – this area is for discussion purposes. It has the potential to include some key positive features at the entrance to the conservation area from the south, namely; The Cottage on the corner of the High Street and Midcot Way along with some visually important substantial trees and potentially the new development to the south of the High Street.



The Cottage, Midcot Way with the large trees behind



New Build, Stony Close

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8.0 Recommendations and Plan for Further Action

- 8.1 **The Conservation Area Appraisal and possible boundary amendments:** The Appraisal should be adopted by the Council, following consultation, incorporating the boundary amendments as laid down within this text and supporting plans.
- 8.2 **Buildings that make a positive contribution to the conservation area:** A review of the conservation area to identify locally important buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, by virtue of their age, design, massing, scale, and enclosure. In future planning decisions these should be considered as being non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of assessment under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 8.3 Following consultation, **the buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area could be individually assessed for being identified for Local Listing and/or potentially an Article 4.2 Designation, subject to further consultation and discussion with Dacorum Borough Council.**
- 8.4 **Appropriate boundary treatments:** Boundary treatments have been identified as an important feature in terms of the character and significance of the conservation area, therefore it is important to ensure that existing boundary treatments and hedges are retained and suitable boundary treatments are encouraged within proposals.
- 8.5 **Appendix 2** sets out draft additional development control guidelines, guidance of an informal nature which aims to assist householders and developers in ensuring that the character and appearance of Northchurch is preserved and enhanced.

Appendix 1

Planning Policy Detail

DRAFT

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides the overarching statutory framework. Section 69 provides the Framework for designation of Conservation Areas noting that Local Planning Authorities should determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and shall designate those areas as conservation areas.

In addition, the Act notes that when considering works within a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area¹⁰.

Relevant National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) provides an overarching planning framework to which local planning policy must relate. Additional detail is provided by the Planning Practice Guide (March 2014), which provides more practical guidance on how the policies laid down with the Framework should be interpreted and implemented.

The Framework notes that heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

The Framework also places certain responsibilities upon Local Planning Authorities in that they should have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.

¹⁰ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - Section 72

The Framework then goes on to outline certain principles which should be considered when considering applications affecting heritage assets¹¹.

Local Policy and Supplementary Guidance:

Dacorum Borough Council Core Strategy 2006-2031 (2013)

The Dacorum Core Strategy was adopted September 2013 and should be read alongside the Local Plan. The Local Development Framework (LDF) for Dacorum Borough Council is currently being prepared and will in time replace the existing Local Plan. The documents of the LDF have yet to be adopted, until this time the 'saved' policies of the Local Plan will remain in force. The Core Strategy (2013) should be read alongside the Local Plan 2004 for a complete picture of current planning policy.

With relation to the Historic Environment Policy, CS27 is of relevance, this notes that all development will favour the conservation of heritage assets and that the integrity, setting and distinctiveness of designated and undesignated heritage assets will be protected, conserved and if appropriate enhanced. Specifically regarding conservation areas, it notes that development will positively conserve and enhance the appearance and character of conservation areas. Negative features and problems identified in conservation area appraisals will be ameliorated or removed.

Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan, 2004

Dacorum Borough Councils Local Plan as adopted on the 16th April 2004 under transitional arrangements in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, but is not a plan adopted in accordance with the 2004 Act i.e. the Local Plan is a plan prepared under the 1990 Act.

¹¹ National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 131-138

Whilst the Core Strategy has now been adopted certain Policies within the Local Plan relate specifically to conservation areas and remain saved and current. Policy 120 relates to proposed developments within conservation areas and notes a presumption against the demolition of any building that contributes to the character of a conservation area. It goes on to note that new developments or alterations or extensions to existing buildings in the conservation areas will be permitted provided they are carried out in a manner which preserves or enhances the established character or appearance of the area.

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Appendix 2

Draft Development Control Guidelines

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This guidance gives advice on works to buildings in Northchurch Conservation Area and sets out the guidelines which will be taken into consideration when planning applications are determined.

In conservation areas, Councils have an overriding duty to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. Many seemingly minor alterations, if insensitively carried out, can have a cumulative and highly damaging effect on the overall appearance of the area. Such alterations not only damage appearance, but reduce the value of buildings as historic features and forming part of attractive areas, all of which are highly desirable in today's property market.

Preservation of existing character

The maintenance of historic buildings in Northchurch Conservation Area

1. The use of traditional materials and detailing can have a considerable positive effect in enhancing the conservation area.
2. Repointing should only be carried out when structurally necessary, and kept to a minimum. Variations in colour and the application of excessive amounts of mortar in a non-traditional manner can detract from brickwork and obscure it. Inappropriate mixes can cause brickwork to deteriorate. This is equally important when repointing boundary flint and brick walls, which should be repaired with matching materials and a traditional lime mortar. Oversized flints and the use of flint panels are not generally acceptable.
3. A variety of window types can be seen across the conservation area including sliding sash, casement, or metal windows. They all add to the charm and character of the area. Original windows should generally be retained as they have a character of their own which derives both from the proportions of the frames and glazing bars and from the charm of old glass which has a 'wobbly' or rippled effect. Original single glazed

windows can be draught proofed and upgraded by specialist companies and secondary glazing installed to improve heat retention. uPVC windows should not be installed as their proportions, opening methods, modern shiny plastic appearance and the reflection of the double glazed units are all very much at odds with the character of historic buildings. Modern windows can appear very out of place, particularly if surrounded by more traditional types. Dark staining of timber is a modern technique which does little to enhance windows, and can look out of place when juxtaposed to traditionally painted windows. Care should be taken to ensure all casements windows are matching in size whether openable or not.

4. The use of modern machine made roof tiles should be avoided as a replacement for traditional handmade tiles. Concrete or artificial slate should be avoided as these materials are visually detrimental.

The maintenance of trees, hedges and green spaces

5. Trees make a positive contribution to the character of the village and property owners should continue to manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top most trees. Consideration should be given to important views into and out of the town when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.
6. Trees make a positive contribution to the character of the town and property owners should continue to manage existing trees sensitively. Within the conservation area, consent is required to fell, lop or top most trees. Consideration should be given to important views into and out of the town when planting or undertaking tree works, as should the setting of historic buildings.
7. Most trees in conservation areas are protected but special consideration should be given to those trees indicated on the conservation area map to ensure that they are not harmed. New development should recognise this and should not present a risk to

their continued growth and habit.

8. Some agricultural hedges are protected by the 1997 Hedgerow Regulations. The majority of hedges are not covered by these regulations; however, in the conservation area the hedgerows indicated on the survey map form an element of the area's character, and should be retained and where possible enhanced.

Design Guidance for new development (including extensions to buildings)

General

9. In the conservation area high standards of design are required, as it is the function of the planning authority to consider all applications as to whether they preserve or enhance the special character or appearance as identified in conservation area appraisals. The sides and rear of buildings, where visible to the public, must be of equally good design and materials.
10. Planning applications for development within the conservation area will be required to include both a Heritage Statement¹² and Design and Access Statements accompanying them. Applications for development which require a statement will possibly not be registered unless they have one.
11. Listed and other significant buildings are identified on the survey map and their specific qualities are described in the text above. Any new development should not harm the buildings or their settings or any special architectural or historic features that they may contain. It should be recognised that new development may not always be acceptable if the impact on a listed building is considered adverse.

¹² In order to address Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework

12. Applications for development within the setting of the conservation area will be assessed for their effect upon the conservation area's character, appearance, and setting, and may be refused permission if they fail to address the tests as laid down within the National Planning Policy Framework.
13. Any proposals that affect important views in and out of the conservation area will be assessed to establish the potential effects upon these views. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map, and where numbered are referred to in the text.

Contextual design

14. Within the Northchurch Conservation Area, new development or proposals should respect the character of this village. Building works such as extensions must be designed not as a separate entity, but should be sympathetic in form and scale with the existing buildings and the conservation area as a whole.
15. Areas of open space, yard layouts and gaps between buildings will be carefully considered for protection from development or enclosure in order to protect the character of the Northchurch Conservation Area, the setting of listed buildings, and any important views.
16. The Appraisal describes the important features of buildings in the conservation area. Whilst there is some variation in the characteristics of the buildings, there are key features as described in the accompanying text and in relation to the individual buildings which new development proposals should take account of. These key features include:

- a) The height and scale of buildings, including the location of windows and doors within the elevations.
- b) The form of buildings, e.g. detached, terraced.
- c) The siting of new buildings, e.g. in relation to the highway and spacing between buildings.
- d) The density of development.
- e) The style and materials of doors and windows.
- f) Detailed design features, e.g. gables, brick course, treatments around doors and windows, bay windows, decorative features, etc.
- g) Roof styles and chimneys.
- h) Building materials.
- i) Garden boundary treatment.

The intention of this guidance is not that new development should automatically replicate buildings in the locality but that important features set out above should be taken into account where appropriate, especially in relation to the individual circumstances of each case.

Scale and density

17. Scale is the combination of a building's height and bulk when related to its surroundings. Respecting the existing scale of adjacent buildings within the conservation area is of particular importance as the cumulative effect of development over time erodes the character. Applicants should demonstrate that their proposals have had regard to the scale of surrounding buildings and show how new development will relate to them. New buildings should generally be no more than two storeys high.

18. Density is the amount of development related to the site area. Government guidance states that high density development can make good use of land, provided it is carefully chosen and sensitively sited. However higher density schemes will be considered as to whether the special character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced, in particular to ensure that sites are not overdeveloped.
19. Form: layout of new buildings should respect the width of existing plots in the village.

Height and massing

20. New development should reflect the hierarchy of buildings. New buildings should generally be no more than two storeys high in the conservation area and allow enough sufficient space to the boundary to reflect the character of the conservation area.
21. Proposals for new buildings within the conservation area should include a detailed analysis of the locality and townscape, and show how the proposals have been drawn up in relation to this. Proposals on backland sites should always be secondary to the more important buildings that face onto the main roads.

Appearance, materials and detailing

22. The emphasis in conservation areas is to provide high quality design. Conservation area status does not preclude good modern design provided that it takes account of the prevailing form of existing development, scale, density, height and massing. Innovative modern design can be successfully integrated into historic areas and can provide vitality and interest to the street scene. Natural materials and high quality detailing should be incorporated into any proposals.
23. Where a more traditional approach is appropriate buildings should be designed in a traditional form (including plan form, roof spans etc) and include pitched roofs. If

needed, dormers and rooflights should be modestly sized and situated on rear facing roofslopes. Use of historic detailing such as stringcourses, eaves details, fenestration pattern etc, will be acceptable if they are appropriate to the design of the new building. Such detailing, or an appropriate modern interpretation of it, can do much to break up facades of buildings. Chimneys are essential in roofscapes and should be incorporated into designs.

24. Materials for any new building works should be sympathetic to those prevailing in the area. Where possible local traditional material should be used – good quality traditional brick for walling and sand faced clay roof tiles, and slate. Care should be taken if reusing bricks to avoid ones which have old paint on them, as the visual effect is usually unacceptable. Although some of the buildings within the conservation area are rendered or have painted brickwork, the modern interpretation and techniques associated with these finishes are not always visually successful and should thus be used with care. Where traditional materials survive they should be retained. The Chiltern Building Design Guide gives general information on Chiltern building materials; specific advice will depend on the immediate locality.
25. Inappropriate windows and doors can damage the character of the conservation area. Traditional natural materials should be used in order to safeguard the special character of the conservation area. Windows should be timber, painted, not stained, and their design should reflect local styles, usually sliding sashes or side hung casements. If windows are to be double glazed these should be carefully designed to reduce the bulkiness of glazing bars. Joinery details should be submitted with planning applications. Top hung lights and modern materials such as uPVC and aluminium are generally inappropriate in the conservation area. Traditional doors were wooden panels or vertical matchboard on vernacular cottages, more complex designs may be appropriate for polite buildings.
26. Applications for development adjoining but beyond the conservation area boundary will be assessed for their effect upon the conservation areas character, appearance,

and setting taking full note of the guidance prepared by Historic England and held within the Planning Practice Guide.

27. Special care should be taken to ensure that views looking into and out from the conservation area are not spoilt. Those of particular importance are marked on the survey map, and are referred to in the text.

Extensions to existing buildings

28. Extensions to existing buildings require the same approach as to new build in that they must take into account the prevailing forms of development and complement the form and character of the original house. This is of particular importance when designing extensions to listed buildings.
29. Design should be of high quality, and take account of existing roofscape and chimneys, eaves details, fenestration patterns, and architectural detailing. Extensions should not dominate the original buildings or result in the loss of historic plots, but should be subservient to the main buildings, with a lower roofline. Gaps between buildings delineate their separate identity and care should be taken that these are not filled, creating a continuous line of development.

Public realm

30. Modern day street furniture, lampposts, CCTV camera mountings and posts, telephone boxes and other public works often fall outside planning control and can have a significant impact on the streetscape and character of the conservation area.
31. Most of modern day street furniture will be inappropriate in this rural setting, where control is available any street furniture proposed should respect the character of this area, those responsible need to bear in mind this potential effect when considering installations and should seek advice from the Council's conservation staff before

specifying or undertaking any works to ensure that any potential detrimental effects can be minimised.

32. Satellite dishes are unsightly especially where dishes are poorly sited on front elevations. Care should be taken to site these in the back garden or on roof slopes that are not visible from a street or other publicly accessible location.

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Appendix 3

Comparison of Historic Viewpoints and Modern Photographs

Photographs taken from Hedgehogs Northchurch, Bert Hosier (1994)

Para Ref	Address	
5.85	51-53 High Street	
		1963 photo of the Co-op Stores
5.87	69-73 High Street	
		1962 image of Bell Lane Store

Para Ref	Address	
5.94	No 89-95 High St Adj to George and Dragon	
		<p>Pre 1896 image of the Post Office (adjacent to the G&D) – Note the archway spanning Duncombe Road.</p>
5.97	99 High Street	
		<p>On LHS Grocery Store in the foreground and the timber framed building in the middle of the picture (replaced with 1-4 Tudor Orchard). Note 109-121 High Street and Exhims at end of the terrace.</p> <p>On the RHS note the timber framed building on the corner of the junction with New Road (replaced with 100-102 High Street).</p>

Para Ref	Address	
5.97	99 High Street	
		<p>An image of when 99 High Street was the Post Office run by Mr and Mrs East</p>
5.98	1-4 Tudor Orchard	
		<p>1955 photo - Please see in the centre of this photograph, the timber framed building adjacent to 109 High Street. Note; 100-102 High Street, the earlier building has been replaced.</p>

Para Ref	Address	
5.105	100-102 High Street	
		<p>On the RHS of the image note the timber framed building on the corner of the junction with New Road (replaced with 100-102 High Street).</p>
5.115	New Road approaching the High Street	
		<p>1960 historic view of The Compasses and New Road Cottages replaced by Compass Point. Modern photograph at 5.113</p>

Northchurch Conservation area with proposed amendments

