

Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area



Character Appraisal & Management Proposals



Acknowledgements

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Character Appraisal & Management Proposals

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Cover photographs: (Main picture) – Lower section of High Street (west side)

Inset pictures from left to right – Doorcase, Alley under No.25 High Street, Town pump N end of High St, Shops to High Street, Charter Tower and spire of St Mary, Austin Mews

Back cover – Spire of the church of St Mary from Gadebridge Park

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Part 1 Conservation Area Character Appraisal

1 Introduction

Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area takes in the entire survival of the medieval core of the town and includes small sections of Gadebridge Park to the north and west. The Old Town now forms a character zone within the emerging Town Centre masterplan. The Core Strategy described the Old Town as comprising of businesses including professional services and quality specialist shops. There is a strong evening economy with a variety of pubs, restaurants, cafes and an arts centre. The historic character offers further opportunities for uses which can attract visitors and new investment.

Nikolaus Pevsner, in his series 'The Buildings of England', describes Hemel Hempstead as:

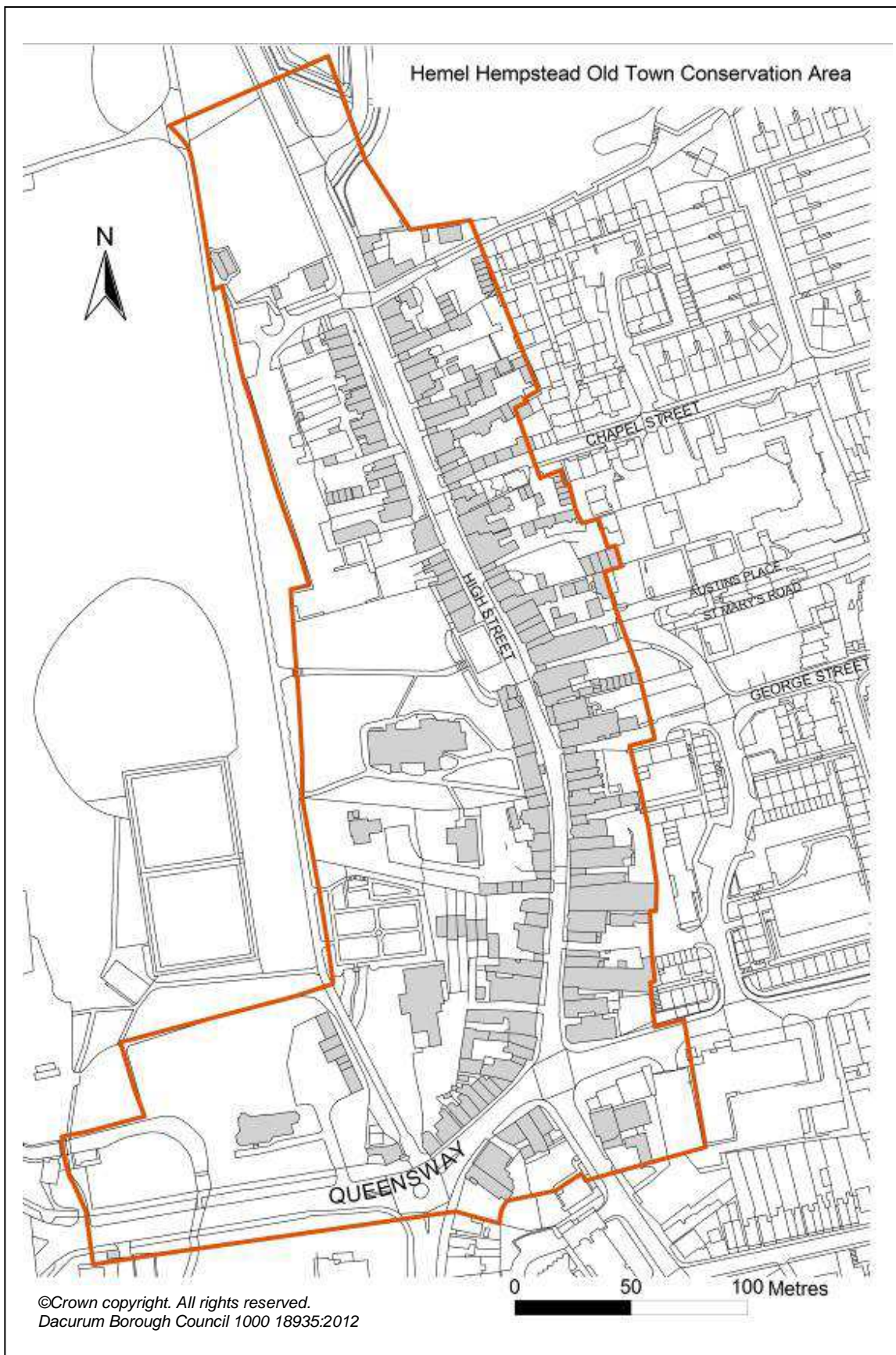
'..one of the most agreeable streets in Hertfordshire. It rises in a gentle curve, skirting the hillside and opens about halfway to reveal the churchyard and church with its spire. It starts at the bottom of the hill with Lloyds Bank, a bold beginning but not typical of what is to come...Side alleys running up the hill to the east are characteristic of Hemel Hempstead High Street. To follow them means to realise how near the countryside still is to the town. But the most characteristic element of

the street is the early 18th century house fronts with distinctive, steeply segment-headed windows...To the north the town comes to an abrupt end at the north end of the High Street with Gadebridge Park sheltering along the valley on the west side and the new town neighbourhoods only just visible beyond.¹

The conservation area covers an area of 7.26 ha. It is set to one side of the wide valley of the River Gade which gives the conservation area much of its topographical character and is an integral part of the division of the conservation area into three distinct character areas. The High Street has two areas, the main section comprises almost continuous development to the frontage of regular plots (which are thought to be medieval in origin) punctuated only by narrow lanes between and through historic buildings. St Marys Close, a small square to the north of the Old Town Hall is the exception to this and acts as a focal point for the Old Town with a strong visual and physical connection with the Church of St Mary and its churchyard.

¹ The Buildings of England Hertfordshire 1977 Pevsner N. 2nd ed (Revised by Bridget Cherry) p178

Map 1: Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area



The northern part of the High Street is notable for its wider section and split to the road with the western side of the street set down from the pavement level. This gives a distinct sense of intimacy and domestic scale to this part of the High Street. The churchyard and areas to the west of the High Street development are characterised by a more open grain with the car park, churchyard and semi-open and enclosed gardens forming the important transition between urban form and open parkland.

The Old Town Conservation Area has suffered somewhat from under investment and has a limited offer in terms of retail uses. However, those independent shops and cafes that do survive provide a unique and distinctly village feel to this part of the town. There is a dominance of public houses and restaurants giving the Old Town a strong evening economy and a high degree of choice particularly for restaurants and food outlets.

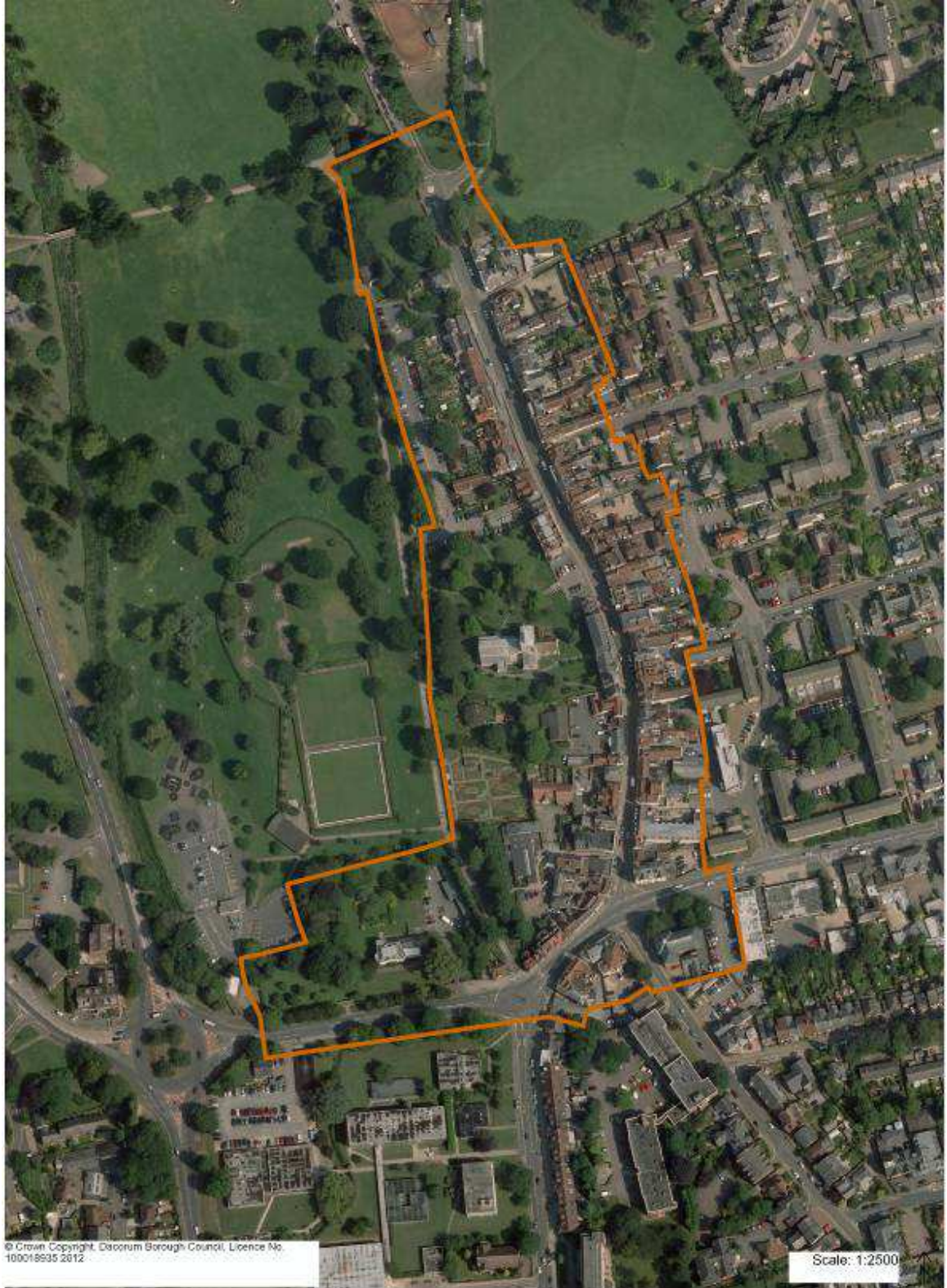
There is a remarkable intactness to the scale and grain of the High Street and Queensway and there is very little modern development within the conservation area to disrupt this attractive and generally historic townscape quality. Pressure to the edges is evident particularly to the east of the High Street and there is a very definite sense of entering the historic core from the east.

There is a high degree of development pressure to both the Old Town itself and edges of the Old Town. This generally takes the form

of alteration and extension rather than new build as there is very little space left within the conservation area which could be sensibly redeveloped although small scale sites may arise. Generally, the development and change to buildings has sought to retain the special character and fine grain of the existing built form, particularly the formation and reinforcement of courtyard developments accessed from lanes and alleys from the High Street.

There is an important survival of historic buildings within the conservation area and this is reflected in the high number of buildings on the Statutory List. Most are grade II, but a number of the Inns, some with medieval origins, are Grade II*. This is often to reflect the presence of early fabric such as timber framing within these buildings. A high number of timber framed buildings have been refronted in the 18th century giving a unified formal appearance to what are, in some cases, late medieval buildings. The sometimes wide variation of the treatment of facades occasionally juxtaposing architectural styles and materials adds to the historic townscape quality of the Old Town Conservation Area.

**Aerial View of Hemel Hempstead
Old Town Conservation Area**



The appraisal and management plan confirm the special importance of this conservation area and highlight the significance of such a high survival of historic buildings still set within their historic context.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Old Town Conservation Area is its strong relationship with its valley setting accentuated by the section change to the High Street at the northern end, the views down into the town from the east and the dominating and unifying effect of the magnificent spire of the Church of St Mary which can be seen for some distance particularly from the valley floor to the south and the slopes to the west. The spire locates the Old Town within its wider valley setting and demarks the heart of the conservation area and unifies the town physically and spiritually.

The Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area was first designated in 1968. Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A conservation area is defined as:

'an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.'

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a

decision on an application for development in a conservation area, special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Although new development and change will always take place in conservation areas, the main purpose of designation is to ensure that any proposals will not have an adverse effect upon the overall character and appearance of an area. Part 1 (The "Appraisal") highlights the special qualities and features that underpin the Old Town's character and justify its designation. Guidelines provided in Part 2 ("Management Proposals") are designed to prevent harm and encourage enhancement. This type of assessment conforms to English Heritage Guidance and to Government Advice provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It also supports and amplifies those policies aimed at protecting the overall character of conservation areas and forming part of Dacorum Borough Council's Local Planning Framework (Core Strategy). Please note that at the time of writing (April 2012), The Core Strategy was at pre-submission stage and therefore references to, and wording of policies may be subject to change:

The purpose and use of a conservation area appraisal is contained within para 17.7 of the Core Strategy:

'Conservation Area Appraisals will analyse the character and appearance of each Conservation Area and identify any negative

features or issues that could be addressed through development. Boundaries of Conservation Areas will be reviewed. The 'Heritage at Risk' review will identify vulnerable historic heritage assets: the Council will act to ensure their protection, using enforcement action, Article 4 Directions, building preservation and urgent work notices, spot listing and applications for funding.'

The main policy base for the protection of conservation areas is contained within Policy CS27:

'All development will favour the conservation of historic heritage assets. The integrity, setting and distinctiveness of designated and undesignated heritage assets will be protected, conserved and if appropriate enhanced. 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. Features of known or potential archaeological interest will be surveyed, recorded and wherever possible retained. Supplementary planning documents will provide further guidance.'

This character appraisal of Old Town Hemel Hempstead Conservation Area is as inclusive and accurate as possible, however it is not exhaustive. Not every building or architectural feature, positive or negative element, urban or green space, commercial/industrial/residential use has been commented upon. Each site is an individual case, but any

change will have a wider effect upon the overall character and appearance of the conservation area.

Listed Buildings

A listed building (or structure) is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from Dacorum Borough Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. The listed buildings are marked on the maps showing the character areas within the conservation area (Maps 7,8 and 9) and are given in **Appendix 1**. Listed buildings form part of a wider group of nationally protected heritage sites, such as Scheduled Monuments, and are known as 'Designated Heritage Assets'.

Locally Listed Buildings

These are buildings or structures that have been identified by Dacorum Borough Council as being individually of special architectural or historic interest but falling just 'beneath the line' for inclusion within the statutory list. They make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. Such buildings and structures of local importance are known as 'Undesignated Heritage Assets'.

Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework advises that a general presumption exists in favour of retaining all Heritage Assets (designated and un-

designated) which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. Heritage Assets have been positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

In the Old Town there are a number of such un-designated Heritage Assets proposed for inclusion on the local list. These are marked on the maps showing the character areas within the conservation area (Maps 7, 8 and 9) and are given in **Appendix 2**.

Information on local listing and the proposed criteria for their inclusion on a local list are also provided (**Appendix 3**).

Exclusion from these two lists does not mean that a building is not of sufficient architectural or historic interest. Earlier fabric can often lie concealed behind later alterations. Always contact Dacorum Borough Council for advice.



The Grade I listed church of St Mary sits at the heart of the conservation area

2 Location and Setting

Location

Hemel Hempstead lies on the east bank of the River Gade, a stream which flows through the chalk landscape out of the Chilterns. A little to the south of the modern town centre the Gade is joined by the Bulbourne which flows from the north-west. The valley of the Bulbourne and, after the confluence of the two rivers, the valley of the Gade, carries the Grand Union Canal.

The historic core of Hemel Hempstead is positioned just above the floodplain of the Gade, the main street following the contour of the hillside which rises from around 90 m OD to around 130m OD at Highfield to the north-east. Its hillside setting and use of the topography,

particularly the winding of the High Street and location of the Church of St Mary to the heart of the Old Town are some of the most defining elements of the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Boundaries

The present boundary was designated in 1968 and has not been altered since that date. It is relatively tightly drawn around the historic core of the Old Town. It seeks to encapsulate the special character and significance of the old High Street and its immediate surroundings, including most of the remnants of medieval plots running perpendicular to the street to the west and more prominently to the east.



Figure 1: View down into the Old Town Conservation Area from Chapel Street

Modern development and encroachment onto the historic street plan defines a strong boundary to the east, whilst Gadebridge Park provides a natural boundary and important setting to the west.

The inclusion of Queensway and The Bury defines an important gateway from south and south-west, whilst the northern extent of the conservation area skirts Gadebridge Park and rapidly becomes open countryside with the exception of strongly defined boundaries in brick and flint walls which provide the lead-in to the conservation area and in part define the north-west boundary.

Topography

The Old Town skirts the side of a hill which forms one part of the broad valley of within which sits the River Gade. Sweeping open hills of arable fields have been developed to the east and south-east of the Old Town but to the west and north the setting is that of landscaped parkland heavily influenced by planting and intervention in the 18th century and earlier. The topography gives the town its essential form and pleasing level change across the High Street resulting in views down into the town from the east (**Figure 1**) as well as from across the valley. The topography is such that particularly from the east the town is seen within a tree lined green backdrop (Gadebridge Park).

Geology

The underlying geology comprises chalk of the Chilterns, which creates

the smooth rounded forms typical of the downland scenery of which Hemel Hempstead forms part. In the wider context, the chalk is exposed along the steep escarpment (towards Aylesbury) and along valley sides. The dip slope is overlain by clay with flints which supports extensive woodlands, medium-grade farmland and remnant heath.

The valleys were primarily formed by glacial melt waters and are now dry. The Gade forms one of the main rivers of the area.

Archaeology

Hemel Hempstead has been the subject of an Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)². This project aims to summarise the known archaeological and historical development of the town in order to understand the archaeological potential of the urban area and develop a strategy to take forward research and management priorities. Although the EUS did not specifically identify an area archaeological potential it has allowed the identification of an area within which archaeological deposits relating to the development of the medieval town may be encountered. Any future development proposals on sites that have not been compromised by development within the Area of High Archaeological Potential may be subject to archaeological conditions in accordance with the relevant policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

² undertaken by Hertfordshire County Council's Archaeology Section, supported by English Heritage

3 The Historical Development of Hemel Hempstead

There is extensive evidence for occupation within the landscape surrounding Hemel Hempstead from the prehistoric period. This includes flint artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods mainly discovered on the areas of higher ground overlooking the river valleys.

Hemel Hempstead lies just 7km west of the important Roman city of Verulamium (St. Albans) within an area of landscape bounded by two major roads; Akeman Street, which ran through the Cotswolds to Cirencester passing to the south of Hemel Hempstead although its course is only definitely known from just east of Berkhamsted, and Watling Street which ran north-west from Verulamium. The quality of the agricultural land and being within the hinterland of a major urban centre would have meant that the landscape would have been intensively settled at this time and there is considerable evidence for occupation in the area of Hemel Hempstead. A villa site was discovered in the valley of the Gade 1km north of the historic core of the town. Another villa, together with cremation burials, has been discovered at Boxmoor to the south-west.

The earliest reference to Hemel dates from the early 8th century when Offa, king of Essex, granted land to Waldhere, bishop of London. The place name means 'Haemele's homestead' which may refer to an individual or be the name of a local tribe. By the late 11th century the

estate, then called 'Hamelhamstede' was in the hands of two brothers. After the Conquest the estate belonged to the Count of Mortain, half-brother of William I and the largest landowner in the country after the king. The Domesday Book records a large manor assessed at 10 hides and which included four mills. Given the possible royal ownership of the estate in the mid-Saxon period followed by ownership by the Church and the apparent size and importance of the manor recorded in the Domesday Book, it is probable that the church at Hemel Hempstead had minster status although a church is not specifically mentioned in the Domesday Book. Certainly there were a number of dependent chapels within the parish which only gained parochial status in the 19th-century.

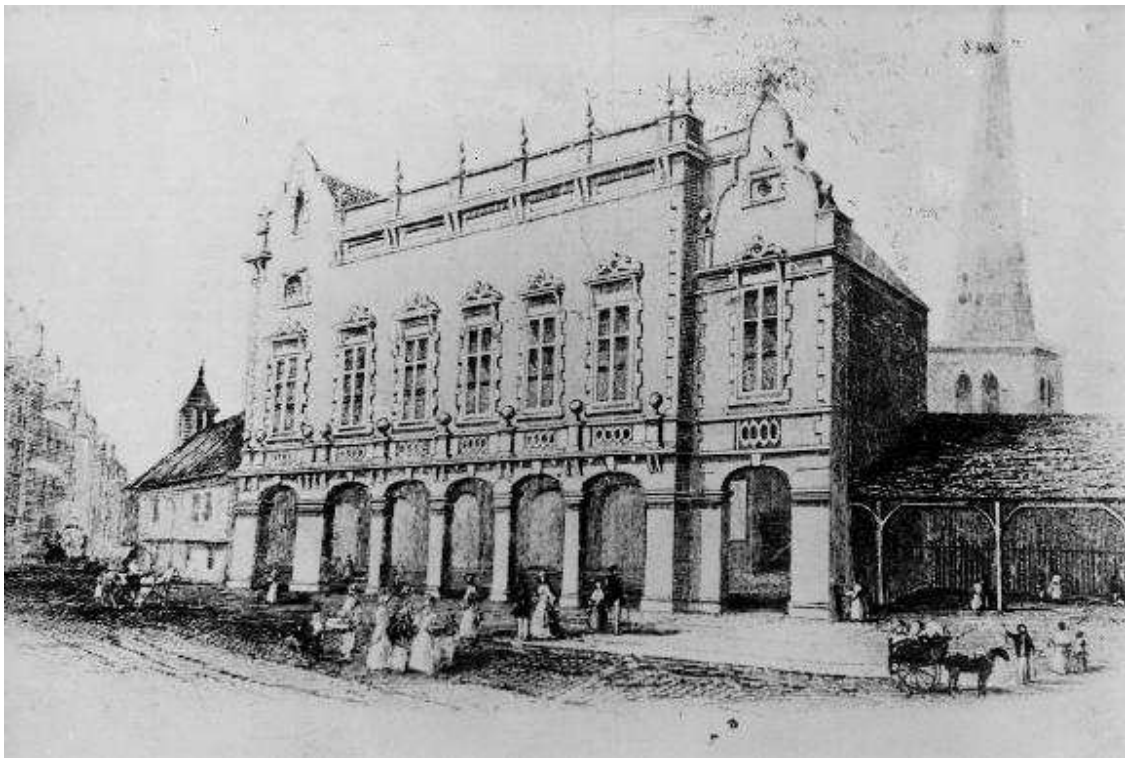
The medieval history of the town is a little obscure. It does not appear to have been a borough until 1539 when it was granted a charter by Henry VIII. At least part of the manor was granted to the rector and brothers of the College of Ashridge by Edmund, earl of Cornwall in the 13th century. At the dissolution of the monasteries the college's property reverted to the Crown. The grant of the charter was also accompanied by the grounds of a weekly market and an annual fair. A survey of 1523 recorded three distinct parts of the town; Chirchend which consisted of ten tenements, Chirchfield and Burymillend. John Leland, 'the king's antiquary' only mentioned Hemel Hempstead in relation to his descriptions of the local rivers and this has been interpreted as an

indication that there was little in the town worth mentioning. However, it is possible that his itinerary for Hertfordshire has been lost. Certainly the town thrived as a market centre and by the late 17th century Hemel Hempstead was described as 'the very granary of London' but it is unlikely that the town grew beyond its medieval size until the second half of the 19th century and a 'new town' developed around Alexandra Road.

In addition to its function as a market centre, the economy of the town was based on a number of inns, straw plaiting which supplied the hat making industry of Luton, paper-making concentrated at Apsley to the south, and milling.

After the dissolution the moated manor house, The Bury, was purchased from the Crown by the then tenant, Richard Combe, who built a new manor house.

The only remnant of this late 16th century house to survive is its porch, known as the Charter Tower, and adjoining walls. This house was demolished in 1790 and a new house was built. In the early 19th century this house was altered and the medieval moat in-filled.



Old Market Hall, Hemel Hempstead, with the spire of the church of St Mary beyond
(Record number DACT : HH 1066)

Gadebridge Park stretches from The Bury northwards along the valley of the Gade and was part of the estate of the Combe family. A farmhouse was built in the 17th century to the west of the park and this house was developed into a country house in the early 19th century. In the late 20th century the park was purchased by the borough council for use as a public park.

- Late 19th century growth to the south of the historic core
- The selection of Hemel Hempstead for major development as a London over-spill town in the mid-20th century

Hemel Hempstead was identified as one of eight towns around London which should be the focus of large-scale development to house London over-spill. Hemel Hempstead was predicted to grow from its 1949 population of 22,000 to a population of 60,000 which was subsequently revised upwards to 80,000. As part of this massive development a new commercial centre was constructed along the valley south of the historic core with housing areas on the higher ground either side of the river.

Key Historic Influences

- Extensive Roman settlement along the Gade valley
- An important Saxon estate centre with a possible minster church associated with a high status manorial complex at The Bury
- Planned development along High Street of possible medieval date
- The early 16th century grant of a borough charter together with the right to hold a weekly market and yearly fair
- Development of transport links canal (1795) and railway (1837)

4 Surviving Historical Features within the Conservation Area

Summary of historical features

- The urban High Street ends abruptly with a clearly defined edge between town and country. This historical feature has been maintained by the existence of Gadebridge Park.
- Mix of building styles and dates and materials typical of an historic High Street, requiring different servicing as it developed.
- Evidence of early timber framed buildings (possibly dating back to the 14th or 15th century) many hidden behind later brick frontages.
- Fine examples of 18th century townhouses (some with later shopfronts)
- Victorian civic design which is also reflected on private houses of this period.
- A rich diversity of materials - red, purple and brown bricks, timber, render and stucco, flint and terracotta. Timber framing seen mostly to the side and rear of buildings. Handmade red clay tiles and natural slate to roofs.
- Presence of many fine brick or brick and flint walls which add to the enclosure of sections of the conservation area, particularly in the Gadebridge Park environs.
- The numerous Inns had access to the rear for stabling and courtyards via covered cart entrances or through alleyways. These often remain and are an important feature of the historic townscape quality of the High Street.
- Lanes and alleyways provide important historic links between the High Street and its environs, particularly with the development of the Victorian suburbs to the east, overlaid by pockets of later 20th century development.
- The rear elevations of many buildings are important due to their prominence from the public realm and in views both near and distant.

Street pattern and building plots

The historic core of Hemel Hempstead had a very simple plan consisting of the principal street, High Street, running along the line of the valley and creating a T-junction with an east-west route across the valley. Except for the area of the Market Hall, the High Street is lined by continuous frontages of pubs, shops and houses. Historic maps indicate that the plots within which these buildings stand had a high degree of regularity, particularly to the east side of the street suggesting that they were the result of planned development. Such long, narrow plots are often described as 'burgage plots' although as Hempstead was not a medieval borough the term burgage is not absolutely accurate.



Figure 2: Development to the east of the High Street is often set in enclosed courtyards (rear of 71-73 High Street

Regardless of terminology, these plots are indicative of being a planned, organised layout of property plots seen in most medieval towns and in some larger villages and often thought to date from the late 12th or 13th century. Not all the plots had the same form, for example, the block properties on the west side of High Street at the north end of the town are set back from the street frontage and below the line of the street.

Perhaps unusually, the church does not occupy a prominent position on the High Street but is set down a slope towards The Bury. The Bury is a significant element of the plan of the town representing a high status site that may date back to the Saxon period.

The use of the name 'Bury' can be found in settlements in southern England where there may have been a royal enclosure which was often associated with an early church foundation.

The regularity of plots throughout the conservation area is one of the overriding characteristics of the Old Town. These have, in places, been amalgamated and subdivided, but the very early boundaries are still well defined; this is more the case to the east side of the High Street although this side has also seen more development within and sometimes across these early plot boundaries. Where this occurs it is generally centred around an enclosed courtyard or along a side lane running from the High Street (**Figure 2**).

To Queensway, the development is much later and plots are far shorter, truncated by the entrance to Gadebridge Park. From the churchyard south to the west side of the High Street there has been far more late (generally 20th century) intervention which has cut across the general plot pattern of the High Street although some care is needed here as, the plots were far more open historically as they related to the former gardens of the Vicarage (which stood adjacent to where St Marys Hall is presently) and The Bury. Nonetheless the recent development has not paid much respect to the strong historic grain of established plot patterns throughout the conservation area.

The sweep of the street line and the change in level on entering from Queensway to High Street is an important part of the gateway effect created by this topographical feature. The continued pronounced curve to the street lends itself to continuing changing and developing views of buildings seen obliquely on travelling along the High Street. This quality is an integral part of the character of the Old Town and provides the key framework from which the historic buildings can be appreciated both individually and in groups (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3: The curve of the High Street (here looking south) is an important part of the character of the street pattern

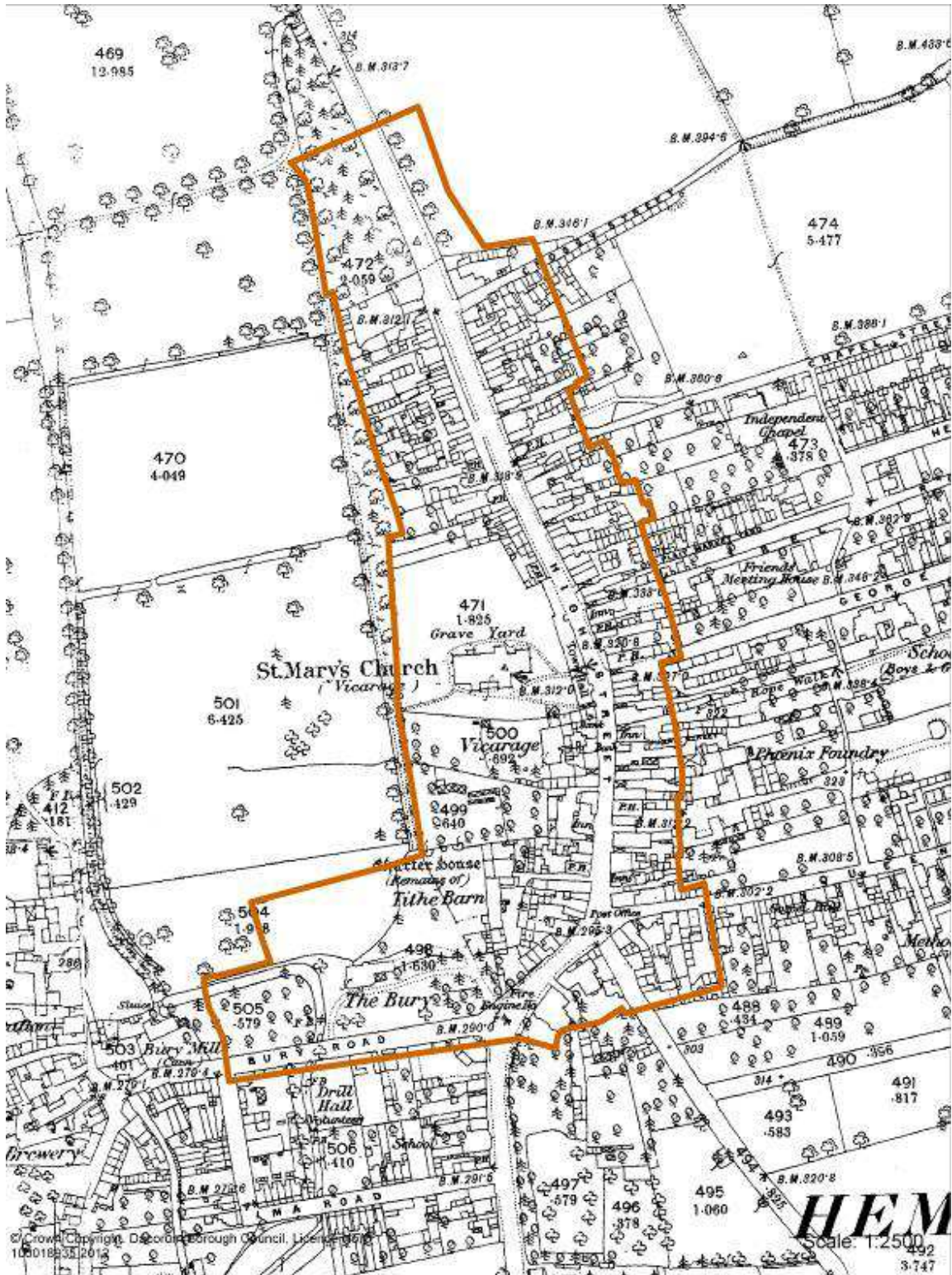
From the High Street there are a series of lanes and alleys, far more abundant to the east side than the west, some of which are historic through routes and some which provide access to courtyards to the rears of properties. Their narrow section, small scale and intimate character in relation to the High Street (as they pass under buildings) forms part of strong sense of an historic core surviving despite modern development occurring to the edges (particularly to the east) which has destroyed this early fine grained network of paths, lanes, alleys and courtyards (seen in the early Ordnance Survey maps of the town). Where these survive, they are of high significance and their character and appearance forms a key element of the quality of the surviving street pattern and plots (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4: Chapel Street looking from High Street

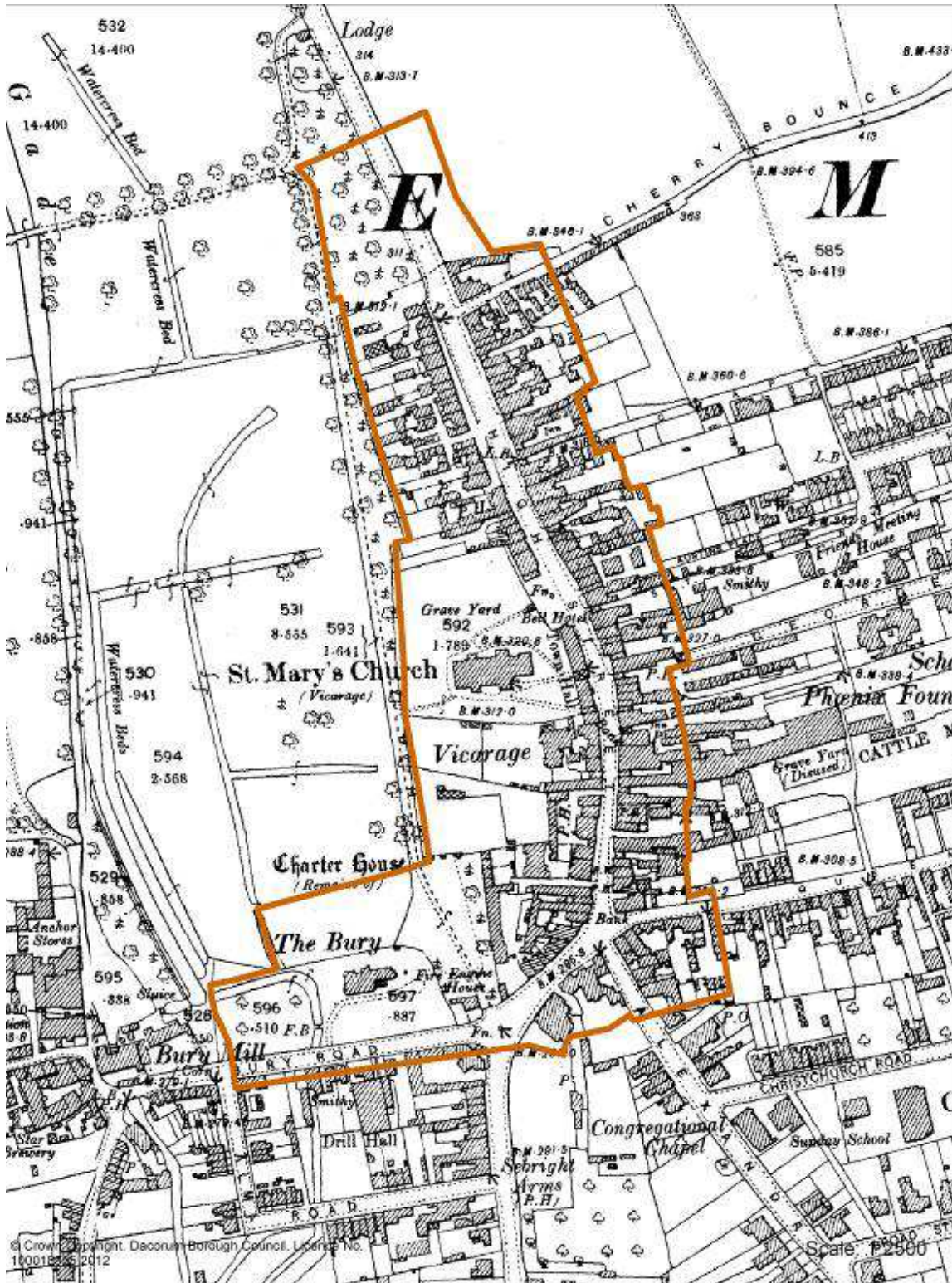
The combination of the street pattern, building plot survival and presence of buildings which in some cases started out as timber framed structures and have been altered and adapted over ensuing periods of development and change for the town has produced a very attractive and high sensitive townscape. This is combined with the topographical nature of the towns layout which means that views are often gained looking down onto historic built form. In this respect the rear of building plots and the pattern of development along these plots forms an important part of the character of the town. This is particularly the case where timber framed buildings of a traditional scale have developed back along plots usually in a series of gabled extensions. The scale, form and traditional appearance of these extensions albeit some have been altered by later external materials or roof coverings form significant and attractive elevations in their own right despite that they would often be considered to be the rear (and possibly) secondary elevations. A buildings origins and therefore its historic and architectural importance can often be summarised from the rear elevations of buildings rather than just confining ones view to the principal frontage facades to the High Street.

Historic Maps of Hemel Hempstead Old Town



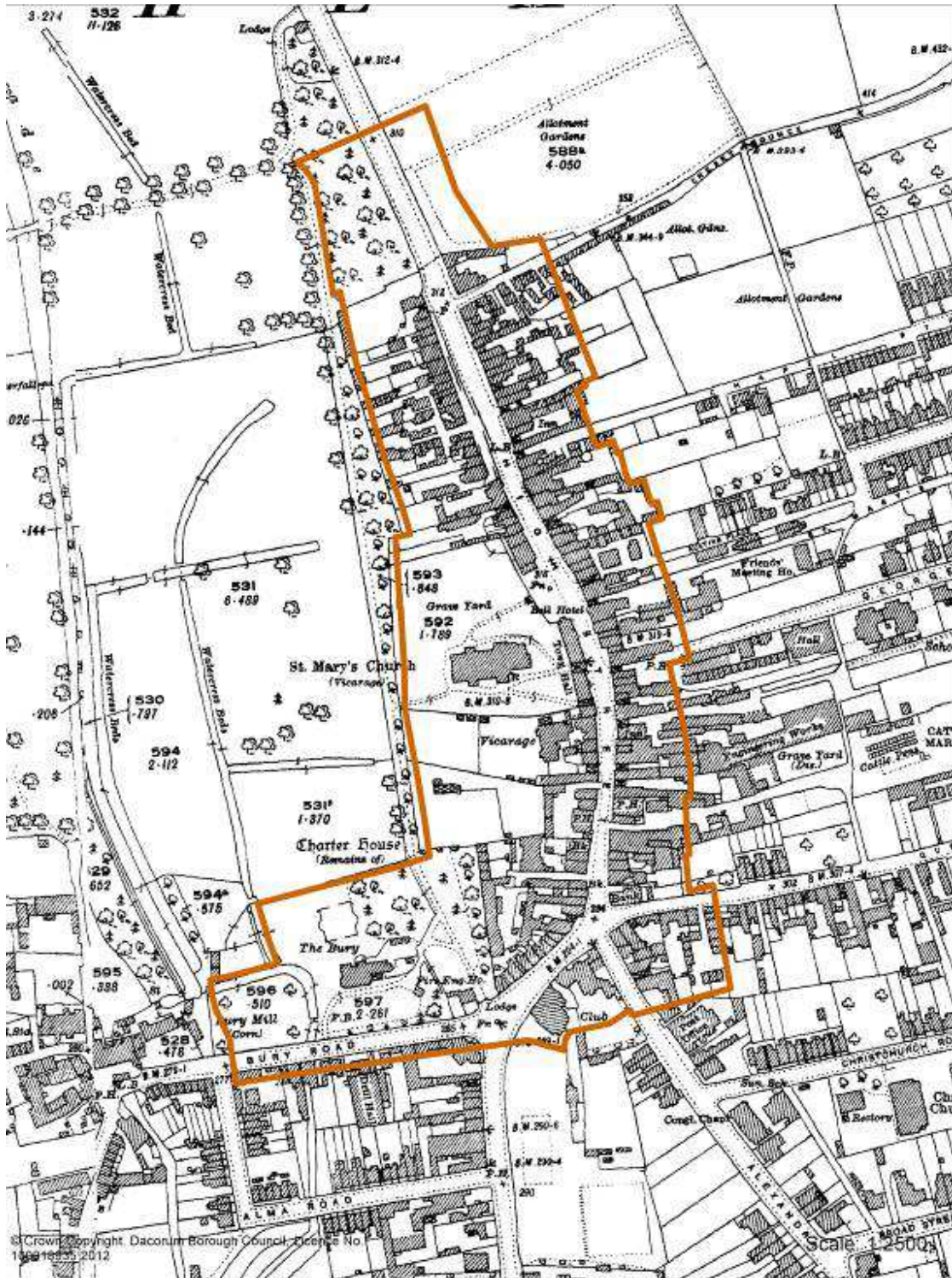
Map 3: 1878

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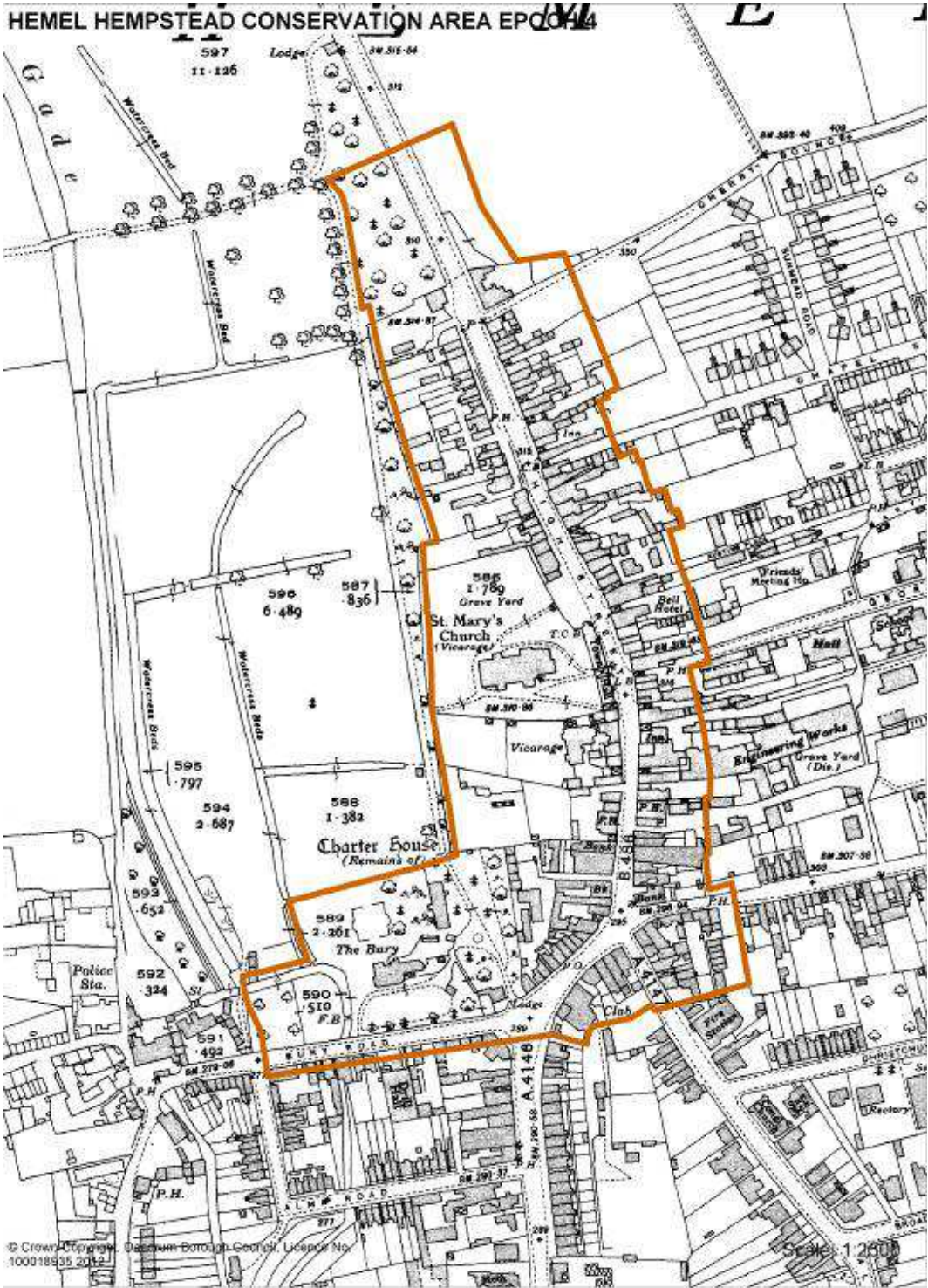
Map 4: 1889

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Map 5: 1898

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Map 6: 1925

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5 The Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

Analysis

The Old Town Conservation Area is notable for its compact and highly defined nature. A mix of modern and 19th century development to the east and south and open landscaped countryside to the west and north effectively encase this very legible part of Hemel Hempstead. The conservation area is primarily about the cohesiveness of the principal street - High Street with Queensway forming the important southern gateway to the High Street (**Figure 5**) but also the transition to very different parts of the town centre to the south.

Gadebridge Park to the west forms an important open setting. The churchyard and the grounds of the The Bury help bring this open treed setting into the heart of the town. At the centre of this transition is the Church of St Mary. This large church is set down from the High Street and up from the valley floor. It more than compensates for this offsetting from the main street with its tall slender spire which is seen from key distant viewpoints particularly (but not exclusively from the west) and from the south where it is clearly seen from some distance along Marlowes (**Figure 6**).



Figure 5: Queensway forms part of the important southern gateway to the conservation area

The church is also dramatically revealed on travelling through the High Street as it opens onto St Marys Close. Here, despite being set down, the full effect of the architectural and needle-like qualities of the spire can be appreciated (**Figure 7**). These townscape features defining short and long views of the church in its Old Town setting are a key part of the compact and fine grained character of the conservation area and its relationship with its varied but important wider setting.

Buildings to parts of the Old Town Conservation Area are remarkably consistent in terms of scale with the majority of buildings fronting the High Street of two and a half to three storeys.

This tends to be on a grander scale on moving towards St Marys Close and falls away on travelling north with the northern section of the High Street with part of the street set down from the street level having a more modest scale of two storeys in places(**Figure 8**). What is also consistent and plays such an important role in defining the essential character of the street is the rhythm of plot division which is a constant almost throughout, however within this historic townscape framework there is variation to the facades of buildings, (**Figure 9**), borne out of the staged remodelling and rebuilding of individual buildings over, sometimes, very long periods of time.



Figure 6: View of the spire of St Mary from Marlowes



Figure 7: *The dramatic impact of the spire in views from St Marys Close*

The layering of change to these buildings includes the re-facing of earlier timber-framed buildings with later brick and/or rendered and painted brick facades. This has provided some of the most interesting and diverse architectural treatments to buildings but with a strong underlying theme which reflects the classical aspirations of the 18th century and early 19th century. The predominant use of the multi-paned single glazed sash window is a key part of the consistent architectural themes which run through the conservation area, even in buildings dating from much earlier than the introduction of the sash window (**Figure 10**).

The spatial qualities of the conservation area are experienced principally from the Gadebridge Park approach. Here, the semi-open character of the churchyard (closed in some views by tree cover) and parking area to the rear of houses (**Figure 11**), the walled garden and the open setting of The Bury contrast dramatically with the well defined and comfortably enclosed character of the High Street and Queensway.

This juxtaposition is important and felt most strongly at the transition at St Marys Close.

There is very little modern development within the conservation area. The most prominent is the red brick building at Nos 47-49 High Street (**Figure 12**) dating from the early 1980s. This building is not of any great architectural quality and spoils what is otherwise an almost uninterrupted High Street of historic buildings of some considerable quality. Given the high number of statutory listed buildings, inappropriate door, window and roof alterations are very limited. There has been some piecemeal and organic expansion to the rear of buildings to the High Street. But in most cases these extensions have been carefully considered and add to the character and appearance of these elevations. This is particularly important in the case of the Old Town as both sides of the rear of High Street are prominent in local and extended views. This is particularly the case for the east side where the high number of alleys, lanes and courtyards combined with the sometimes sharp change in level give public views of the rear of most buildings (**Figure 13**). This makes them as sensitive to inappropriate change as the front of the buildings.



Figure 8: There is a diminishing of scale on moving north along the High Street



Figure 9 : A rhythm created by consistent plot division yet variation in architectural treatment of each façade



Figure 10: The use of the sash window is a unifying characteristic of the conservation area (seen here punched into the facades of an earlier timber framed building – The



Figure 13: Rear of No.37-39 High Street – typical example of the organic extensions and alterations to buildings fronting the High Street.



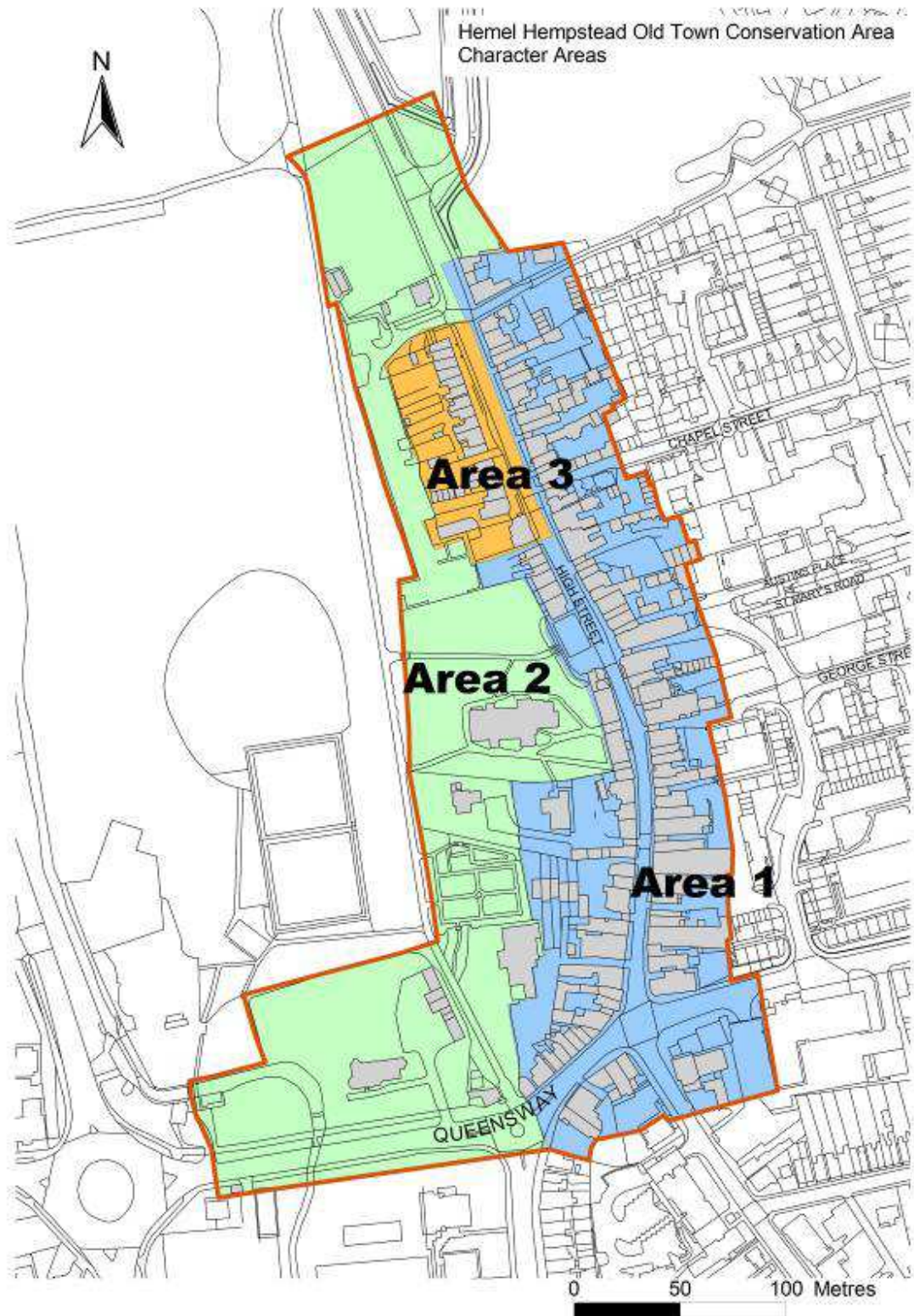
Figure 11: The semi-open character (contained in places by trees) of the car park and churchyard and in contrast to the well enclosed character of the High Street



Figure 12: Nos. 47-49 High Street, the late 20th century intervention to the High Street

The conservation area falls into three character areas, two of which are closely related; that of the High Street and the Lower Section of the High Street. There is a change to the townscape on travelling north. Once past No.60 to the west side (distinctive for its exposed timber-framing to the north and part of its east elevations) the carriageway widens and the development to the west side of the street is set below street level (**Figure 14**). This gives a very different and notable effect to the feel of the townscape, particularly in terms of enclosure (**Figure 15**).

The third character area takes in the section of the conservation area that is adjacent to and forms small sections of Gadebridge Park. This presently comprises the semi-open grounds of The Bury to the south, the walled garden and its setting, the churchyard and church and car park to the north. The conservation area also includes a small section of Gadebridge Park to the north.

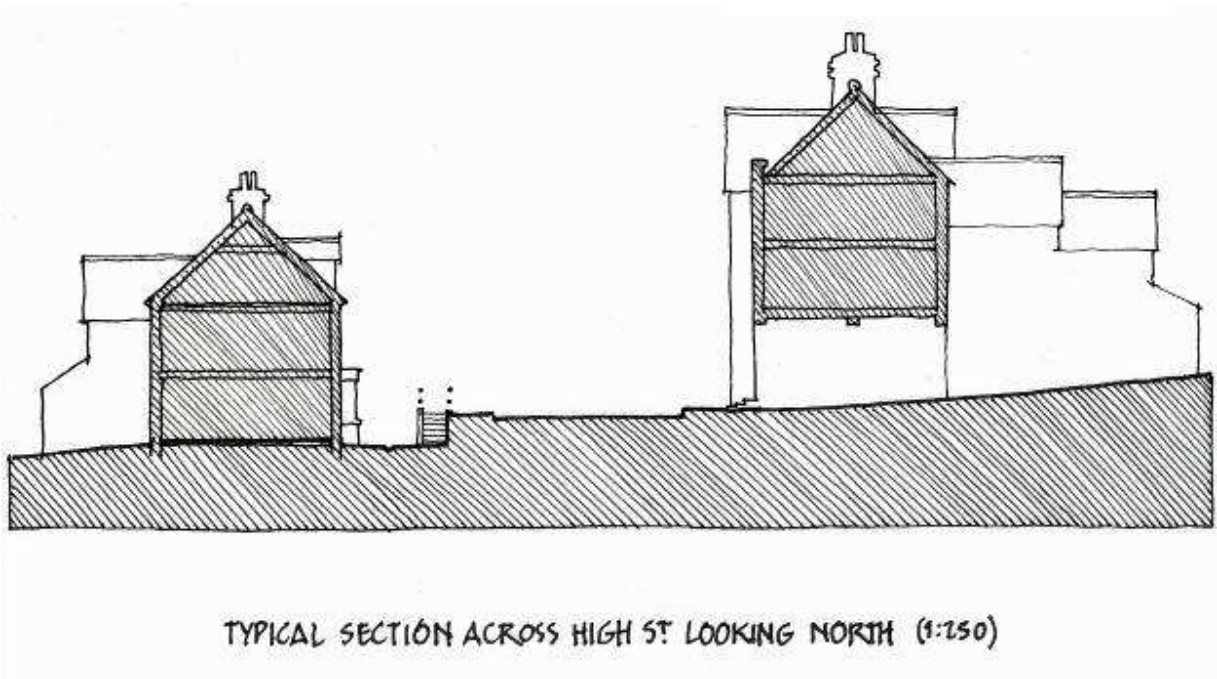


Map 7: Character Areas

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The role of this area is a transitional space between the open and planned landscape of Gadebridge Park and the highly urban and densely developed core of the medieval town. The rear gardens to properties to the west of the High Street also form part of this important transitional area but are also strongly related to the principal buildings set at the back of pavement to the eastern edge of these enclosed plots. A notable characteristic of this area is the permeability of the urban High Street to open landscaped park, both through the churchyard, via St Marys Close and via other lanes and paths (**Figure 16**).

Figure 14: (below) Section through the High Street showing the important change in level from the east to the west side ©Richard Guise Context⁴D



Summary of townscape features

- A strong and regular plot pattern probably derived from medieval planned development of the town – still evident
- A well defined curving High Street which as a result of the underlying topography produces attractive and ever changing building-dominated views throughout
- An almost continuous building line throughout with most buildings set to the back of the pavements
- A series of alleyways, lanes and footpaths, between and passing under buildings in purpose built carriageway openings – these are understated and not architecturally embellished
- A strongly defined 'heart' to the town at St Marys Close dominated by the church despite being set back and down from the road level
- A consistency to the scale of houses in groups with grander town house type development focused to the centre of the High Street (around St Marys Close) and a diminishing of scale (although still townhouses) to the north and south
- A harmonious and in places highly juxtaposed collection of architectural styles and use of materials with perhaps the most striking being the use of shaped gables and the survival of timber framing – sometimes exposed and sometimes set behind later brick or plaster facades (**Figure 17**)
- The presence of public views to the rear of properties which are generally characterised by organic and highly layered extensions to the original building – these very much add to the character and appearance and architectural quality of the host building(s)
- Glimpsed and full views of the needle-like spire to the Church of St Mary which is seen in both short and long range views and is often seen above roofscape and in a treed setting (**Figure 18**)
- Survival of small outbuildings and barns to the rear of properties (most have been converted or extended)
- Courtyards of small scale development and conversion of historic buildings providing an intimacy and strong sense of place
- Glimpsed and full views to the park from points in the High Street (**Figure 19**)
- Gadebridge Park forms an important green and tree lined backdrop to the spire especially in views from the west across the town
- A strong sense of place to St Marys Close which despite the cars feels like a small and formal square set within the curving organic form of the High Street
- To the central section of the High Street, the combination of the topography, the curve to the street, the continuous building line and scale of built form give a sense of almost complete enclosure by historic built form (**Figure 20**)
- Some important boundary walls to the park edges and between gardens and to lane edges (**Figure 21**)



Figure 15: The northern extent of the High Street has a different character to the southern and central sections due to the level change across the street



Figure 16: One of the connecting routes from car park to the west of the High Street to the main street. Note the views to the rear of properties from the car park



Figure 17: Timber-framed buildings seen adjacent to later rendered and brick buildings



Figure 18: Views to the church spire often characterised by buildings roofs (roofscape) and trees



Figure 19: Glimpsed views between houses to the trees and open spaces of Gadebridge Park

Current activities and uses

The Old Town has a very different feel to that of the New Town and shopping centre to the south which has a series of 'High Street' retailers and food outlets generally set within medium to large floorplate buildings. The Old Town in contrast largely comprises small independent shops (**Figure 22**), restaurants, cafes and public houses to the ground floors with a mix of small offices and residential uses above. The northern section of the High Street becomes almost wholly residential with some ancillary office and restaurant uses.

Upper floors are generally in use either as residential properties (often flats or a number of flats accessed from the rear of the property or office accommodation, usually small offices in suites with separate small companies taking a number of rooms as well as entire upper floor spaces. These, as seen for the residential accommodation is also mostly accessed from the rear of the High Street. These uses also generally have small car parks (some are better landscaped than others) accessed from the roads adjacent (for example Figtree Hill, George Street or Chapel Street). Some upper floor space is underused and has been temporarily utilized for storage space. This is limited with most upper storeys being put to some beneficial and complementary use.

The Old Town Hall plays a significant cultural role within the conservation area and the town as a whole providing a space for events; plays,

musicals and other activities (**Figure 23**). Presently the undercroft of the Old Town Hall is an open underutilised space and there are plans (April 2012) to potentially change the use of this space to something which could provide a more useable and flexible space; possibly an exhibition space combining a café? (**Figure 24**).

The Bury presently houses one of the County's Registry Offices (**Figure 25**). This building has seen considerable change over its life and originated as a 17th century house. Most of what is seen today is 19th or 20th century remodelling, alteration and extension. Nonetheless, the building commands some presence set within landscaped grounds to the edge of Gadebridge Park and adjacent to the River Gade. The grounds are presently separated from the park by way of a hedge and within its setting, there is a group of lock-up garages of no special interest which could be replaced or removed completely.

The Bury performs an important role at the entrance to both the conservation area and Gadebridge Park. The plans to consider the future of this building are intended to have a significant influence in linking the Old Town to other parts of the town to the south and Gadebridge Park to the north.

Figure 22: Small independent retailers make up the majority retail premises in the conservation area



Figure 20: The unrelieved building line of development to the High Street strongly defines the townscape of the conservation area



Figure 21: Well defined edge of town and beginning of park to the northern edge of the town



Focal points, views and vistas

In long distance views the key focal point for the Old Town is the Church of St Mary and in particular the striking tall slender spire which can be seen for some distance. It is seen predominantly from the west but also in some view points from the east and south. The setting of the spire itself varies depending upon the direction with some views being attractively framed by green tree-lined sections of the park (those from the east) (**Figure 26**) and others being very much characterised by later mostly modern development to the edges of the conservation area (those from the west) (**Figure 27**). The spire is also seen for some distance from the south along Marlowes clearly identifying where the Old Town is located in relation to the New Town and retail core to the south. Because of the densely developed fine grain character of the conservation area itself, the spire is mostly glimpsed or seen above development or through trees (particularly from the Gadebridge Park sections of the conservation area). The exception to this is the dramatic vista revealed on entering St Marys Close particularly from the north where the church and spire set within its treed churchyard dominate the views at this point and dramatically appear on travelling south along the High Street.



Figure 23: The Old Town Hall has a significant cultural as well as physical presence in the Old Town



Figure 24: The open undercroft of the Old Town Hall, presently an underused space (April 2012)



Figure 25: The Bury within its landscaped setting to the edge of Gadebridge Park

Elsewhere, the nature of the topography, particularly the curve of the street creates a series of closed or semi-closed views through the conservation area particularly to the south of St Marys Close (**Figure 28**) whereas to the north of this point, views can be had (**Figure 29**) out to the landscaped, tree lined edge of Gadebridge Park. In these views in particular, trees form an important part of the character of the conservation area.

In townscape terms, there are a number of buildings which could be considered to terminate important way-finding views into and through the conservation area.

One of the most notable is the view looking east along Queensway that is majestically and expertly terminated by the highly articulated and well considered corner turning facade of No.1 High Street, the former Lloyds Bank building dated 1884 and referred to by Pevsner in his complementary description of the High Street (please refer to the introduction). The corner turret of this Grade II listed building in particular is perfectly placed to draw the eye towards the corner so as to make the turn into the historic street from Queensway (**Figure 30**).



Figure 26: View of the spire from the south-east with a green tree-lined backdrop of Gadebridge Park

Buildings or parts of buildings; for example, the steeply pitched gable of a wing, the timber-framed return, a shaped gable, often partially close views within the townscape. This is closely related to the pronounced and attractive curve to the High Street which progressively brings buildings into view on travelling along the High Street.

Visually and in terms of the townscape character, St Marys Close (**Figure 31**) is very much a focal point for the conservation area. Not only does it reveal views to the fine flint and stone church with its needle like lead spire but it is a key break in the almost unrelieved built form to the back of pavement up to this point from the south.

In this respect it is a focal point as it has an obvious role of providing a stopping and meeting place at the heart of the conservation area.

The Old Town Hall, whilst an important and imposing building does not have strong landmark qualities, with its elevation to the churchyard being particularly regrettable in architectural terms. However, when combined with this important focal space, and when seen in the context of a strongly defined north and east edge (mostly comprising statutory listed buildings) of the 'square' the grouping is of high significance and the sensitivity and use of this space is particularly significant to the future management and enhancement of the conservation area.



Figure 27: View of the spire of St Mary's church from Gadebridge Park (west of Leighton Buzzard Road)

Open spaces, landscape and trees

There are a number of open and landscaped spaces which make an important contribution towards the character and appearance of the conservation area. Perhaps the most important of these is the churchyard to the Church of St Mary. This space both acts as the setting to a Grade I listed building and a number of other listed buildings to the west side of the High Street and as a transitional green space between the edge of Gadebridge Park and the High Street (**Figure 32**). It brings a landscaped, treed green space almost up to the back of the High Street. As such it provides an attractive frame and backdrop to the church in multiple views and a permeable pedestrian route between park and High Street.

There are two further open and landscaped spaces which have a strong relationship with The Bury and Gadebridge Park, both are semi-private but contribute to the character in terms of their spatial qualities and role as settings to listed buildings and scheduled monuments. These are, The Walled Garden (formerly the site of an earlier house known as The Bury) and the gardens to the present house known as The Bury which form the setting to the house and are physically connected to Gadebridge Park and adjacent to the walls of The Walled Garden and the scheduled monument known as Charter Tower (it is also Grade II* listed) (**Figure 33**). Charter Tower is all that remains of a 16th century house designed and built by Sir Richard Combe also known as The

Bury. Whilst The Walled Garden is, by its very nature, enclosed it is of considerable amenity value to the town and is a place for quiet reflection.



Figure 28: The curve of the street and the continuous line of development restricts long views to the southern part of the High Street



Figure 29: View out of the conservation area along High Street into Gadebridge Park (to the north)



Figure 30: The Grade II listed Lloyds Bank terminates the view looking north-east along Queensway towards the junction with the High Street

The setting of The Bury is at present an underused resource and is disconnected from the park by way of weak and poorly maintained landscaping. Part of the setting is taken up by parking (**Figure 34**) and buildings (lock-up garages) of no architectural or historic interest. The path of the river which runs through part of the grounds is lost and not celebrated. It has much changed from the image portrayed of Mr Ginger's Villa (believed to be the same house) published in 1796 (**Figure 35**).

Much of the rear areas to buildings fronting the High Street are given over to parking. This land use, particularly to the west side of the High Street cuts across the grain of development but on this side of the street is well-screened by trees and enclosed by a brick boundary wall. To the east parking is more informal and tends to relate to particular properties. This means, unfortunately, that many listed buildings have an immediate setting of parked cars (**Figure 36**).

Trees within the conservation area are almost wholly confined to the west side of the High Street and related to the edge of Gadebridge Park and the churchyard. There are a series of mature trees, yews, pines and other species to the churchyard and these form a very important part of the setting of the church. These trees often frame and form the background to short and distant views of the church. Trees also form an important screen to the car park area running along the rear of houses to the west side of the upper section of the High Street.

The southern entrance to Gadebridge Park from Queensway is strongly defined by trees (including a remnant avenue of limes leading towards Charter Tower). These line the footpath and provide a very green corridor (**Figure 37**) through which the park then opens with long clear vistas to the north, taking in the tree lined edge of the conservation area at this point and the riverside setting.



Figure 31: *St Marys Close, a focal space within the conservation area*

It should be noted that the trees and landscaping of Gadebridge Park form a very important part of the setting of the Old Town Conservation Area. Distant views from the western extent of the park see the roofscape of historic houses and the spire of the church between and above a green carpet of trees. This is a very attractive setting which is sensitive to change in terms of trees and landscaping of both the park and green spaces within the conservation area. These views across the park into the Old Town are very aesthetically and historically significant and form a key part of the character and appearance of the conservation area (**Figure 38**).



***Figure 33:** Charter Tower and the walled garden seen with the spire of St Mary beyond*



***Figure 32:** The trees to the churchyard part define and frame the view of the church from Gadebridge Park*



Figure 34: The setting of The Bury is marred by parking



Figure 35: Mr Gingers Villa (published 1796) believed to be an early portrayal of the house now known as The Bury in its riverside setting



Figure 36: The rear of historic buildings often comprises parking courts or public car parks



Figure 37: A remnant avenue of trees lines the southern entrance to Gadebridge Park (from Queensway)



Figure 38: Trees form an important part of the character of distant views into the conservation area across Gadebridge Park

Public Realm: Floorscape, street lighting and street furniture

Over the course of its designation, the conservation area has been the subject of a number of reports and reviews which have looked at ways of potentially enhancing the public realm. The result is a mosaic of projects over time which have addressed particularly the area known as St Marys Close, the lower section of the High Street to the north and some of the lanes and alleyways (**Figure 39**). These have generally comprised the use of stone and manmade cobble and setts in an attempt to bring back the feel of a more traditional finish in these smaller, more intimate spaces. They have, in general, been successful and help break up the monotony of a tarmac surface and composite concrete paving slabs.

Some earlier granite setts survive lining gulleys and cart tracks (**Figure 40**). There are also remnant sections of street paving in clay paviours and other clay components which preserve an important visual record of historic street surfaces within the Old Town (**Figure 41**).

There are some detailed features of the road and surface, with varied materials seen for kerbing ranging from some granite kerbs, narrow slate kerbs (to Cherry Bounce) and modern concrete kerbing which is less successful and along with unrelieved tarmac is to the detriment of the generally high quality public realm. There are some valuable survivals of early manhole and

inspection covers (**Figure 41A**) and these add to the richness and texture of the historic floorscape within the conservation area.

There are some valuable survivals of historic street furniture. The Grade II listed water pump and lamp standard at the northern end of the High Street is of considerable local significance. The pump is cast iron and bears the inscription:

*'Erected by public subscription 1848
Ja^s, Cross Bailiff'*

This was one of a pair with the other having been relocated to Boxmoor. Survivals of street furniture of this quality are very rare and the lamp is a prominent structure demarking, in part, the northern entrance to the conservation area. It also demarks the line of the level change which forms such an important part of the character and appearance of this part of the street (**Figure 42**).

There are a high number of bollards within the Old Town Conservation Area. The black and white striped bollards at the north end of the High Street complement the historic character of the High Street (**Figure 42A**).

The lighting to the Old Town High Street has a very positive effect on the character and appearance of the area. The lantern and globe style lamps are particularly in keeping with the character and appearance of the Old Town. Away from the historic core, lighting is provided on top of lamp posts rather than bracketed to buildings.



Figure 39: Some enhancement of the floor surfaces has taken place over the years (alley between 39 and 41 High Street)



Figure 40: Granite setts to gulleys survive to some of the lanes and alleys (some have been replaced or relaid) (alley between 51 and 53 High Street)



Figure 41: An attractive mix of surviving surface treatments outside The Kings Arms, High Street

Lamp posts are not well co-ordinated in terms of colours, finishes and styles and this can in places be detrimental to the otherwise high quality public realm.

There are several types of street sign in the Old Town Conservation Area. The old style blue signage (**Figure 42B**) significantly adds to the historic character of the High Street and where found it is of particular historic importance.

Elsewhere there is a decommissioned red pillar box to St Marys Close and a modern open telephone kiosk (this probably replaced a traditional red K6 telephone box). The latter does not reflect the quality of its surrounding historic environment.



Figure 41A: A early 20th century cast iron inspection cover



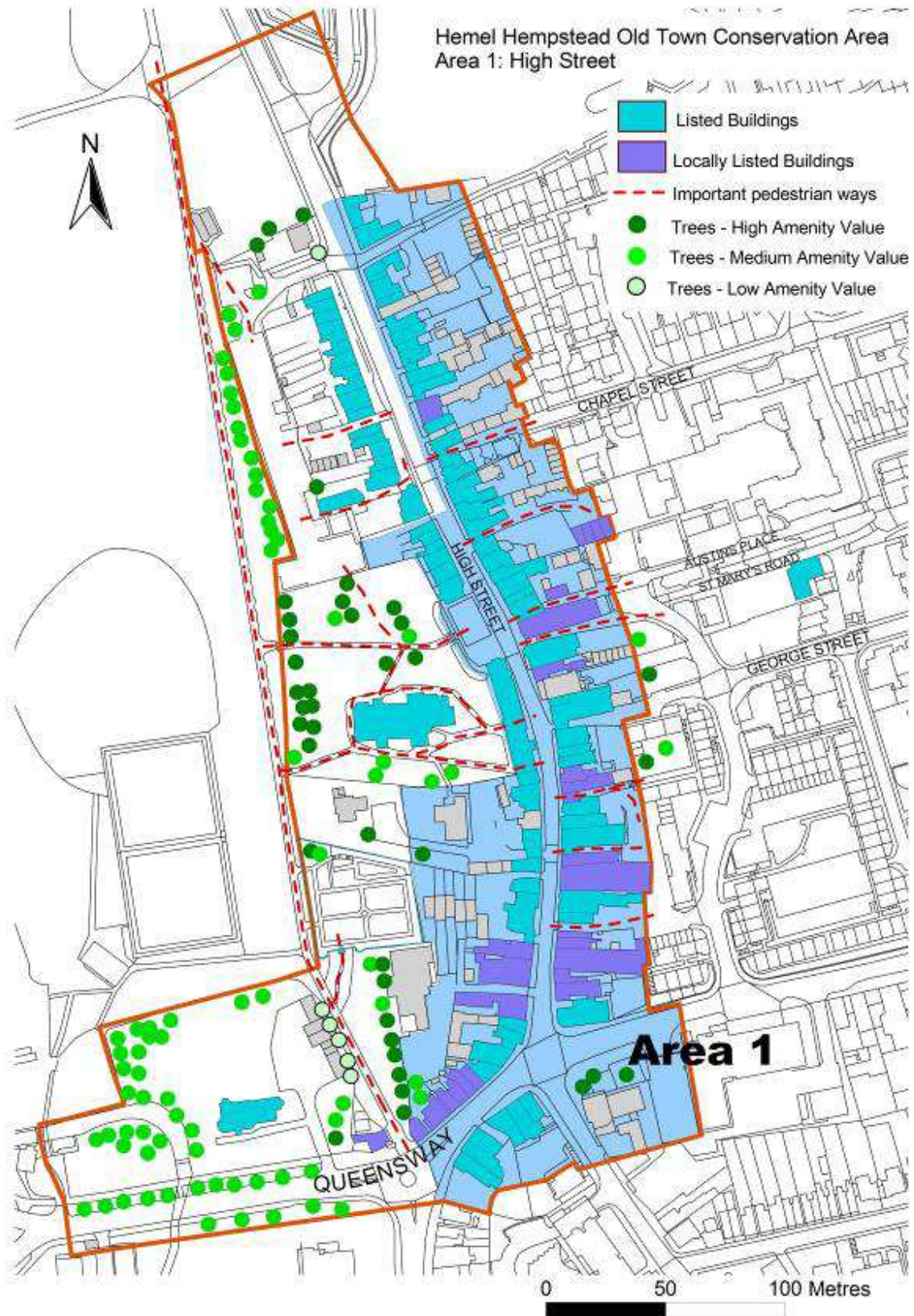
Figure 42: Grade II listed Pump and lamp standard at the northern end of the High Street



Figure 42A: Traditional cast iron black and whiter stripe bollards to the northern end of the High Street



Figure 42B: The old style blue signage adds to the historic character of the High Street



Map 8: Area 1

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6 Character Areas

Identification of character areas

The Old Town Conservation Area can be divided into three areas with distinctive characteristics which relate to their scale, historic development and landscape qualities.

The character areas are:

Area 1: High Street

Area 2: Church of St Mary and edge of Gadebridge Park

Area 3: Lower section of High Street

Area 1: High Street

This area forms the main part of the conservation area and is characterised by its historic framework of regular plots which have given historic development a very pleasing rhythm on passing through the Old Town. The frontages vary widely in terms of their architectural treatment and use of vernacular materials and this adds to the quality of the historic townscape of this part of the conservation area. Its pronounced curve around the church adds to this townscape quality and enlivens and constantly changes views on travelling along the High Street.

The scale of buildings is consistent in groups with the east side of the High Street almost without exception being at two and a half to three storeys. These storey heights gain grandeur and emphasis on moving towards St Marys Close roughly to the centre of the High Street. To the southern end on the western side and along Queensway (**Figure 44**) there is a more modest scale with the majority of buildings at two storey but still with the use of dormers within roofspaces for further rooms. The southern side of Queensway is more reflective of the larger villas being added to the Old Town from the late 18th century onwards and reflected in the survival of the villas further south to Marlowes (most of which are Grade II listed).



Figure 44: Built form to Queensway generally a mix of two and two and a half storey shops with accommodation above (some upper floors are used as offices)

There are multiple and complex groupings of buildings within this part of the conservation area. The Inns to the southern part of the High Street in part define this end of the street both in terms of their scale, their use of materials (timber framing and refronting of timber frames), their lack of shopfronts and presence of covered cartways to alleys/lanes leading to the side and rear of the properties (**Figure 45**).

The central section of the High Street has a more eclectic mix of architectural styles and is dominated by the Old Town Hall and other buildings which have been built or remodelled in the Victorian period.

The northern section of the High Street is a mix of Georgian town houses and Victorian purpose built shops with accommodation above. Use is important in defining and distinguishing this part of the Old Town as there is a concentration of restaurants, some shops but also a large number of wholly residential buildings. This gives this part of the conservation area a very different character to that of the southern end of the High Street. This distinction, particularly in use terms is important to this character area.



Figure 45: The Old Bell, (Grade II* listed) one of a number of early inns which in part define the southern end of the High Street

There are no material distinctions which single out this area as distinctive but rather the area displays examples of the vernacular materials of this part of the County including a good survival of timber framing (seen particularly but not exclusively to side and rear elevations) and also the use of local brick and clay tiles for roofs. There is also the palette of materials associated with the gentrification of buildings of the 18th and 19th century – stucco, painted render, painted brick and decorative plasterwork (**Figure 46**).

Of particular importance to the character of this part of the conservation area is the permeability of the street by way of a network of lanes and alleys which allow access to the network of residential streets to the east and the park to the west. Some are private and lead to courtyard developments of residential buildings. The ability to look into these private areas and appreciate their scale and intimacy when compared with than of the High Street is an important part of the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area (**Figure 47**).



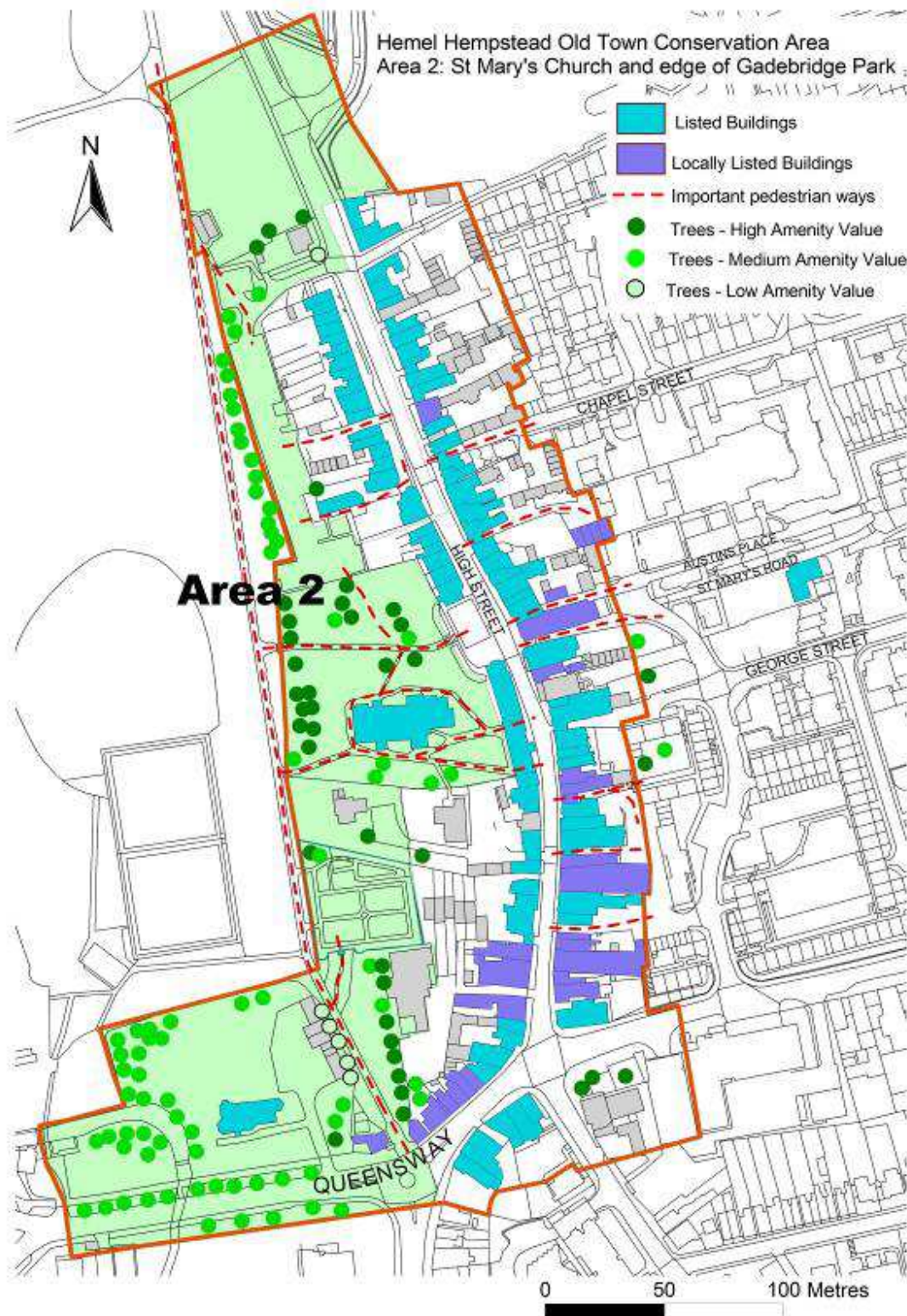
Figure 46: Buildings of the 19th century characterise part of the northern section of the High Street



Figure 47: View into Sun Square from High Street

Negative features:

- Dated surface treatments to some of the lanes and alleys
- Excessive highways signage in places
- The use of double yellow lines in alleys and narrow lanes
- Some poorly maintained and vacant buildings – particularly shopfronts
- Large and excessive commercial signage to some properties
- Presence of large industrial bins to the sides and rear of commercial properties
- Parking to St Marys Close
- The rear (churchyard facing) elevation of the Old Town Hall
- Some uPVC windows to commercial properties (but this is limited)
- Poor condition of pavement surfaces



Map 9: Area 2

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Area 2: Church of St Mary and edge of Gadebridge Park

This area, in terms of character, forms a transition from the high density urban form of the High Street through to the landscaped parkland of the Gadebridge Park. It is very different to the High Street as it has only the Church of St Mary and The Bury in terms of built form. It forms the sensitive linkage between town and country. Most of the trees of importance within the conservation area are within this area.

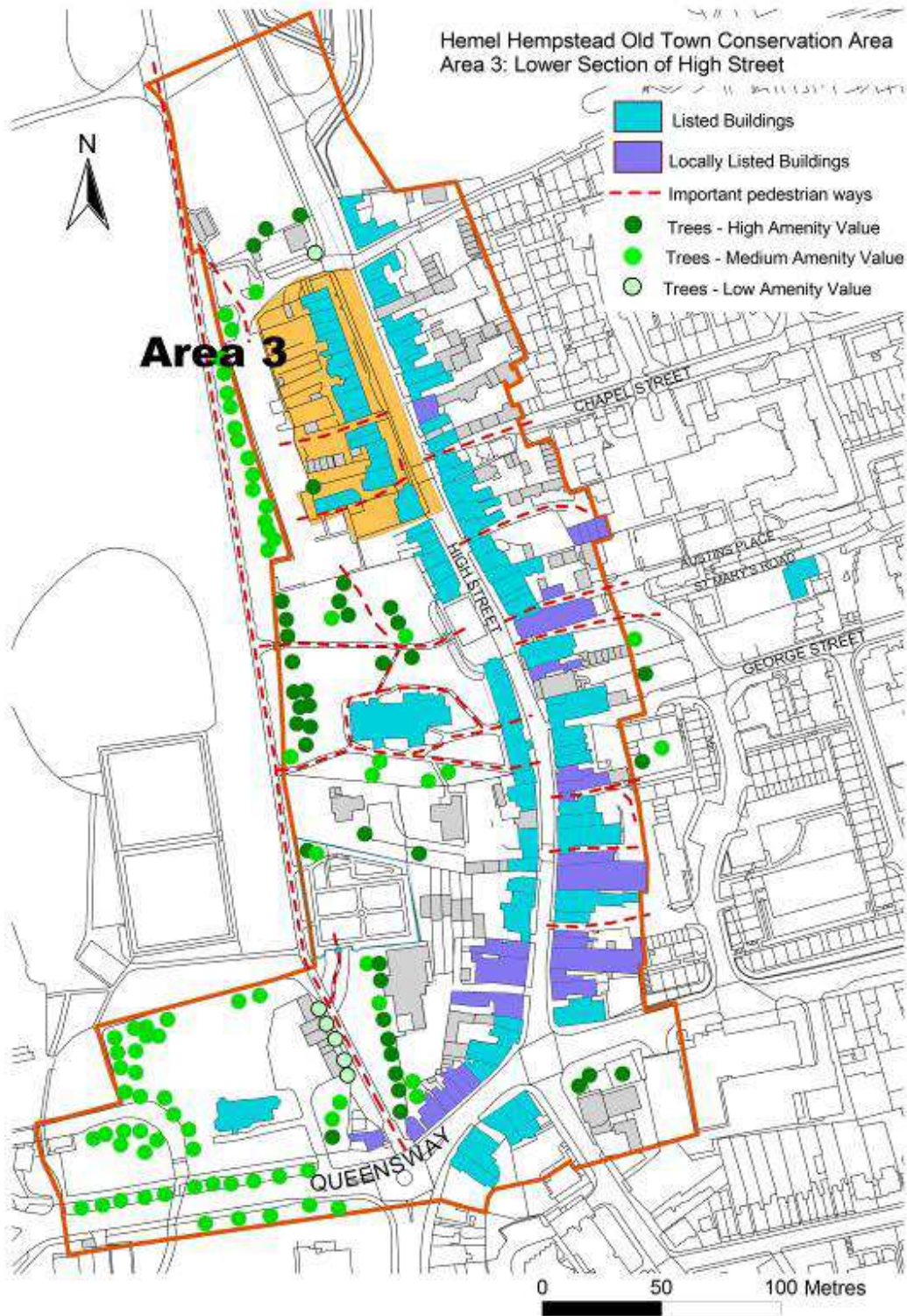
The open landscaped spaces of mixed uses (car park, churchyard, walled garden, private grounds) interspersed with trees and punctuated by buildings of very high architectural and historic significance form an essential part of the character of this area and is an important part of the setting of the Church and The Bury and also to buildings fronting the western side of the High Street. This collection of green spaces is particularly sensitive to change as they are seen both individually and collectively in short and long views from Gadebridge Park to the west. In this respect, this transition between park and urban town is of great importance to both and as such is a well defined and significant sub-area within the conservation area (**Figure 48**).



Figure 48: The trees and green space between the park and the High Street are an important sub-area of the conservation area

Negative features:

- Large areas of tarmac for car parking
- Poorly defined entrance to Gadebridge Park from Queensway
- Poor quality of the landscape setting for The Bury
- Excessive ivy growth to the walled garden
- Poorly maintained and under-used public space at the entrance to the car park to the west of the High Street



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Area 3: Lower section of High Street

This part of the conservation area is distinctive for its consistency in scale and architectural treatment, use of materials and the use of the buildings. It is perhaps the most cohesive group of buildings within the conservation area but nonetheless forms an important part of the more diverse broader character of the High Street as a whole. It is also defined as a sub-area in terms of its topographical qualities- set down from the street level and back from the pavement (Figure 49).

Features which unify this part of the conservation area are the use of painted render; various colours (mostly soft pastel shades- yellows, blues and pinks), the use of hand made clay tiles for roofs and the almost ubiquitous use of the multi-paned sash window (Figure 50).

The wider street section, the use of stone setts for the lower lane and the quieter nature of the predominantly domestic uses make this part of the conservation area distinctive and well-defined within the wider urban context of the High Street.



Figure 49: The distinct qualities of this part of the High Street single it out as a separate character area



Figure 50: *The consistent use of the mutli-pane sash window unifies this part of the conservation area*

Negative features:

- Cast iron retaining rail and posts require repainting
- Pre-cast concrete paving slabs to sections of the lower lane
- Missing pointing to retaining walls of lower street section
- Use of colour on and designs of front doors is poor to this part of the conservation area

7 The Buildings of the Conservation Area

Architectural styles and detailing

Given the importance of Hemel Hempstead as a regional centre and place of wealth and fashion historically, its buildings reflect this and there is less emphasis on the local vernacular which is often hidden behind plaster, render or brick. However, these materials are glimpsed at and seen within the context of the constant up-grading and gentrifying of town houses and inns along the length of the High Street.

In common with most historic High Streets, Hemel Hempstead has been the subject of continual development and change as demand and fashion dictated.

The Georgian and Victorian periods have had the strongest influences architecturally over the town and the mix of these periods overlaying earlier buildings gives the very attractive and complex mix of styles and materials seen today.

These include:

Timber framed domestic and commercial dwellings, from the late 15th century to the early 18th century. Exposed framing is rare with most having been 'modernised' with the addition of 18th or 19th century brick skins.



Figure 51: Development of the early 18th century (dated 1736) with notable use of the cambered head to windows

The 18th century saw the emergence of fine brick town houses of two or three storeys with elegant sash windows, details to the brickwork and fine rainwater goods.

A key characteristic of this period is the cambered heads to windows with rubbed brickwork giving a very distinctive 18th century character to the host building (**Figure 51**).

The Victorian period saw a number of grand public and commercial buildings added to the High Street indicating the importance of the town at this time.



Figure 52: *Decorative Wrought iron railings to steps, High Street*

The Old Town Hall (originally of 1851 by George Low) occupies a long and constrained site and represents the architectural aspirations of a public building of its time. The former Lloyd's Bank (No. 7 High Street) with its ornamental terracotta and red brick treatment is also representative of this exuberance of materials brought about by the increasing wealth of the towns' influencers. Town houses, seen more to the northern end of the High Street, are also seen to use a palette of materials which hope to emphasise the success of their proprietors. Here we see decorative plaster, stone details and wrought and cast iron details added to buildings (**Figure 52**).

The High Street is not easily divided into particular groups of buildings as there is such a high degree of survival of large amounts and even small fragments of early buildings which sat in sites (as small section of timber framing to a bay or a section of historic roof structure) and this has dictated the degree of change which has taken place on certain sites. Other sites have been completely cleared of historic fabric and buildings are of a far more consistent date throughout. However, along the High Street there are no clear areas of a single fixed period and this is part of what makes the High Street such an important homogenous story of constant evolution and adaptation.

Whilst it could be said for example that the area around St Marys Close (to the west side) is largely the construct of the 19th century, the east side of the street has some of the oldest surviving buildings in the conservation area. This pattern (or lack of a pattern) is repeated throughout the conservation area with pockets of very early (part or completely timber framed buildings) sat next to much later Georgian, Victorian or even early 20th century buildings. To parcel the conservation area up into periods based on the facades would be to miss the richness and subtlety of the High Street especially when considering the varied architectural treatment of frontages and rear elevations on the same building.

It should be noted that the legacy of both historic plot divisions and the scale and form of the medieval and later timber framed building have strongly defined much of the form of the buildings within the conservation area and this is particularly apparent when viewing these buildings from the rear of their plots or when looking down into the town from the higher ground to the east. What is very apparent (and this also true of views from the west) into the rear of properties is the richness and complex nature of the plan forms of earlier timber framed buildings which have often been refronted or partially altered or rebuilt but still retain the essential scale and form of their origins.



Figure 52A: Examples of dormer windows, 68-72 High Street

This is evident in the way in which the roofs are orientated and their form, often tall narrow gables projecting perpendicular to the building line fronting the High Street. This form, scale and general rhythm of rear extension to buildings fronting the High Street is very sensitive to even small changes and the complexity, subtlety and evidential value which is present within these surviving structures forms a significant part of the character and appearance of the Old Town Conservation Area.

Throughout the conservation area, the quality of the built form is expressed in a number of architectural features which are consistently seen to a high quality both individually and collectively.



Figure 52B: *Corinthian pilasters to No.25 High Street*

These are as follows: overhanging first floor signage, particularly that incorporating decorative brackets and good quality traditional hand-painted signs, dormer windows seen throughout the conservation area, generally gabled with simple detailing and casement windows (**Figure 52A**). Cornice detailing and classical decorative finishes to facades is particularly notable in places and sets a number of buildings out for particular note such as No. 25 High Street with its Corinthian pilasters (**Figure 52B**) or No.68 High Street with its decorative plaster Doric pilasters.

The shopfronts of the town are generally of a good quality and appropriate to their historic setting (with a number of notable exceptions – generally where modern materials have been used unsympathetically or there is poorly designed signage). Survival of historic shopfronts (**Figure 52C**) (including those from the 20th century) and fascia signs (**Figure 52D**) add to the character and appearance of the conservation area. These shopfronts are often subtly detailed with moulded transoms or mullions and some stall risers are decorated with tiles or painted. These are often complemented by the survival of traditional thresholds which often record previous owners or tenants and are in themselves of significant historic value as a physical record of uses and ownership.

Door and door hoods are notable features within the conservation area which often subtle variations on the classical and vernacular door surround and much variety and quality in terms of finishes and materials (**Figure 52E**). These are sometimes found within alleys and lanes as well as to principal facades (**Figure 52F**).



Figure 52C: There is a good survival of traditional historic shopfronts



Figure 52E: No.28 High Street - mock Tudor door



Figure 52D: Hanging signage on decorative brackets - The Old Bell, High Street



Figure 52F: door surround and hood, High Street

Boundaries

Of particular note is the survival of brick and flint boundary walls to gardens and between properties. Whilst less prevalent than other parts of the Borough, these wall survivals are significant as they often provide an insight into the vernacular traditions of the area. The brick and flint of walls particularly to the boundary with Gadebridge Park are important features of the conservation area (**Figure 53**).

Listed buildings (see Appendix 1)

A listed building is one that is included on the Government's Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. These buildings are protected by law and consent is required from Dacorum Borough Council before any works of alteration, extension or demolition can be carried out. The listed buildings are marked on the Conservation Area map.



Figure 53: Brick and flint boundary walls are important vernacular features which survive within and to the boundaries of the conservation areas

Locally listed buildings (see Appendix 2)

These are buildings which have been identified by Dacorum Borough Council as being individually of special architectural or historic interest but falling just 'beneath the line' for inclusion within the statutory list. They make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area (**Figure 53A**).

The majority of buildings in the Old Town Conservation Area are protected by listed building legislation. However, there are other buildings which although not worthy of listing, still make an important contribution to the street scene and as such should be retained.

Please note that exclusion from these lists does not mean that a building is not of significant architectural or historic interest – it is highly likely that early fabric lies concealed behind later alterations. Always contact Dacorum Borough Council for advice.



Figure 53A: This group of Buildings to the north side of Queensway are of significant local architectural and historic importance

8 Negative Features and Issues

Parking to St Marys Close

The present parking arrangements for this key part of the conservation area have a detrimental impact on the setting of Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings. This is a highly sensitive heritage location and this space provides the opportunity of providing a space which can be far more than a car park and could be more highly valued by the people who live, work and visit the Old Town. The dominance of vehicles in this space is a particularly negative feature of this conservation area (**Figure 54**).

Excessive highways signage (to roundabout to Marlowes/Queensway)

There is generally a build up of unnecessary highways signage. This is particularly the case to Queensway where signage to the mini-roundabout obscures views up the street towards the former Lloyds Bank. Unnecessarily large and poorly designed signage is also seen to the High Street (**Figure 55**).



Figure 54: *St Marys Close is dominated by parking*

Poor surface treatments

Many of the pavement surfaces are looking worn, dated and tired and do not reflect the quality of the buildings for which they form a significant part of the setting.

Empty shop units

A number of buildings lie vacant at the time of writing (April 2012) and some are in a poor condition, most notably Nos. 21 and 21A (**Figure 56**) and Nos. 33-39 High Street.

Large amounts of hard surfaced parking areas

There are a large number of small hard surfaced car parks and a single large area of public parking which although screened detracts from the special character of its built surroundings.



Figure 55: Unnecessarily large and inappropriate signage to the High Street



Figure 56: Nos. 21 and 21A a vulnerable buildings in poor condition requiring re-use

Poor shopfronts and signage

Whilst most shopfronts conform to a traditional set of principles (timber, with stall riser and fascias), some of the detailing is very poor and some is outsized when compared to the host building. This is particularly the case for fascias where a number within the High Street are far too large for the shopfront and significantly detract from the architectural qualities of the host building.

Double yellow lines

When seen lining narrow lanes and placed over stone setts (**Figure 57**) the application of yellow lines is completely inappropriate and parking restrictions would be better controlled by appropriately designed and carefully sited signage.

Industrial bin storage

To the side and rear of commercial buildings, the storage of sometimes multiple industrial sized bins is having a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of these

equally sensitive side and rear elevations.

Nos 45-47 High Street

The only late 20th century intervention to the High Street Nos. 45 to 47 is looking dated and its use of a strong red stock brick in stretcher bond combined with an oversized attic storey with flat mansard emphasizes its bulk and mass in an otherwise historic street scene. As a minimum, the painting of the brickwork white or cream would greatly diminish the impact of this large and bulky modern building.



Figure 57: *Inappropriate and unnecessary use of double yellow lines in alleyways*

Part 2

Conservation Area Management Proposals

1 Introduction

1.1 The Management Proposals

The designation and appraisal of any conservation area is not an end in itself. This Conservation Area is under pressure from commercial uses, excessive signage, infill, inappropriate extensions and alterations, and development to its fringes. It is important that the development control process ensures the preservation of its special character and that opportunities are taken to identify and implement enhancements.

As well as defining the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and what makes it special, it is important to develop proposals for the future management of the Conservation Area. The resulting Management Plan relates the designation and management of a Conservation Area to the principles of historic environment planning.

1.2 Mechanisms for Management

There are several mechanisms through which the Council can manage the future of the Conservation Area:

- Application of policy
- Policy and design guidance
- Development briefs
- Monitoring change
- Boundary changes
- Appraising the condition of significant buildings that contribute positively to the Conservation Area and developing a strategy for repair
- Enforcement proceedings
- Proposed enhancement schemes
- Designation of Heritage Assets

2 Application of Policy

2.1 Introduction

Designation as a conservation area brings a number of specific statutory provisions aimed at assisting the 'preservation and enhancement' of the area. Dacorum Borough Council will apply such policies rigorously when considering development proposals affecting the Conservation Area.

Recent changes in national planning policy regarding the historic environment, in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), place renewed emphasis on conserving and sustaining the significance of heritage assets and their settings. This includes designated heritage assets (such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, etc) and non-designated heritage assets (including local interest buildings, unregistered parks & gardens or areas of archaeological interest). Non-designated heritage assets are identified at Appendices 2 and 3. At

a local level, an historic environment policy will be included in the emerging Local Development Framework, which will replace the existing Dacorum Local Plan. The Core Strategy (see introduction of Part 1- appraisal) is about to be adopted at the time of writing (April 2012).

This Conservation Area Appraisal is an approved Council document and will, therefore, be a material consideration in any planning decision. It is anticipated that the Conservation Area Appraisal will help inform and strengthen decisions made in line with this policy framework, which will be one of the most direct and effective means of managing the Conservation Area in the long term. For example, the Appraisal helps define the plan form of the area, the typical scale, form, massing and materials of buildings, traditional detailing, important views, significant trees, etc. These elements should be considered when looking at any development proposal. The Appraisal also sets out key buildings and features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, there should be a preference against demolition or loss of any building or feature identified as meeting these criteria. **The exclusion of any building or feature within the Appraisal does not necessarily indicate that it makes no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.**

By defining and identifying significant buildings and areas of open space, trees, etc, the Conservation Area Appraisal provides information that will inform planning decisions on the merits of development proposals.

2.2 Legal framework

The legal basis for Conservation Areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. National policy guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.3 The Local Development Framework

The existing Dacorum Local Plan is due to be replaced by a new Local Development Framework (LDF). This Conservation Area Appraisal will be used to support the conservation/heritage Development Management policy that forms part of the LDF Core Strategy.

2.4 Planning controls in Conservation Areas

In addition to the above, there are a number of planning controls that relate specifically to Conservation Areas:

Extensions to dwelling houses

Planning permission is required for any extension that would extend beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original house, or if the extension would have more than one storey and extend beyond the rear wall of the original house;

Cladding or rendering the exterior of a house

No part of the exterior of a dwelling house can be clad in stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles without planning permission from the District Planning Authority;

Alterations to the roof of a dwelling house

Planning permission must be obtained for any enlargement of the house, which would consist of alterations to the roof (i.e. loft conversion). Any alterations that would protrude more than 150mm beyond the plane of the original roof, or would result in part of the roof being higher than the highest part of the original roof, will require planning permission;

Erecting new outbuildings in the grounds of dwelling houses

The provision within the curtilage (grounds) of any building or enclosure, swimming pool or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the house, or the maintenance, improvement or alterations of such buildings or enclosures, will require planning permission if the building, enclosure, pool or container would be situated on land between a wall forming a side elevation of the house and the boundary of the curtilage of the house;

Installing, replacing or altering chimneys, flues and soil vents on dwelling houses

The installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue (including flues for biomass or combined heat and power systems) or soil vent pipe on the wall or roof slope which fronts a highway and forms either the principal elevation or side elevation of the house will require planning permission;

Microwave antennas

The installation of an antenna on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto, and is visible from a highway, or on any building which exceeds 15 metres in height, requires planning permission in Conservation Areas. Generally, planning permission is needed for all of the following:

more than two antennas; a single antenna exceeding 100cm in length; two antennas which do not fit the relevant size criteria (only one may exceed 60cm for example); an antenna installed on a chimney, where the length of the antenna would exceed 60cm or would protrude above the chimney; an antenna with the cubic capacity in excess of 35 litres; an antenna installed on a roof without a chimney where the highest part of the antenna exceeds the highest part of the roof; or in the case of an antenna installed on a roof with a chimney, if the highest part of the antenna would be higher than the highest part of the chimney, or 60cm measured from the highest part of the ridge tiles of the roof, whichever is the lower.

Installing, replacing or altering solar photovoltaic or solar thermal equipment on a dwelling house

If the solar photovoltaic or solar thermal equipment on the roof of a house or a building within the curtilage (grounds) of the house will protrude more than 200mm beyond the plane of the roof slope when measured from the perpendicular with the external surface of the roof, or would be higher than the highest part of the roof excluding the chimney, planning permission will be required. Permission will also be required if it is to be installed on the wall forming the principal elevation of the house and is visible from the highway.

Installing, replacing or altering stand alone solar within the curtilage (grounds) of a dwelling house

Planning permission will be required for any stand alone solar within the grounds of a dwelling house if it is visible from the highway or if more than one is installed; permission will also be required if the solar will: be higher than 4 metres above the ground; be situated within 5 metres of the boundary of the curtilage; be within the curtilage of a listed building; or have a surface area exceeding 9 square metres or any other dimension including housing exceeding 3 square metres.

Installing, altering or replacing a ground or water source heat pump within the curtilage (grounds) of a dwelling house

Installing, altering or replacing a ground or water source heat pump within the curtilage (grounds) of a dwelling house is permitted development and planning permission is therefore not normally required.

Display of advertisements

Advertisements are regulated by controls set out in the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. The display of advertisements in Conservation Areas is subject to additional restrictions. Illumination, for example, generally requires advertisement consent. Tethered balloons, flags displayed by house builders and advert hoardings around building sites also require advertisement consent.

Demolition

A listed building will always require Listed Building Consent for demolition. However, the total or substantial demolition of unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area that are over 115 cubic metres requires Conservation Area Consent. The demolition of any wall over 1 metre high facing a highway, waterway or open space, or any wall over 2 metres high elsewhere, will also require Conservation Area Consent.

Works to trees

In most cases, six weeks notice must be given to the District Planning Authority for any cutting down, topping, lopping or up rooting of

trees greater than 100mm diameter at 1.5 metres above the ground in a Conservation Area. There are however exceptions to this: Where a tree is covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), for example, a formal application seeking approval to carry out works to trees protected by a TPO must be made to the District Planning Authority. Alternatively, where works to trees have been approved by planning permission in conjunction with development proposals, additional applications are not required.

2.5 Other statutory designations Listed Buildings

Listed buildings are recognised in statute as being of special architectural or historic interest. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, it is a criminal offence to demolish or alter the special architectural or historic interest of a listed building without approval from the District Planning Authority. There are three types of listed building: grade I and II* (considered to be the most special listed buildings); and grade II buildings.

The listing covers both the inside and outside of the building, and any structure or building within its curtilage which was built before 1947. 'Listed Building Consent' is required from the Council for any work which affects the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. Most of the buildings within the Old Town Conservation Area are listed buildings or within the

curtilage of a listed building (please refer to Map 1)

Extensions and alterations to listed buildings should conform with the Policies of the emerging Core Strategy and should generally:

- Take into account the prevailing forms of development
- Complement the form and character of the original building
- Be subordinate in bulk and scale to the principal building
- Use high quality materials and detailing
- Pay particular attention to roof lines, roof shape, eaves detail, verge details and chimneys

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Certain important archaeological sites and monuments enjoy special protection under the Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument in the Old Town Conservation Area – Charter Tower (also a Grade II* Listed Building).

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)

A tree preservation order (referred to as a TPO) is an order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees or woodlands, the principal effect of which is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping or damaging of those trees without District Planning Authority approval. It is worth noting that

regardless of whether a tree is covered by a TPO or not, it is likely to be protected if it lies within the Conservation Area boundary. Advice should always be sought from the District Planning Authority on any proposed works.

Disclaimer

This advice is intended to be a general guide and does not purport to be a definitive guide to the legislation covering Conservation Areas. For specific proposals you should seek advice from the District Planning Authority.

2.6 The consent process

Where permission is required for development within the Conservation Area, details will need to be submitted to the Council for consideration.

Inappropriate replacement windows here upset the rhythm of traditional cottage fenestration

For most works in a Conservation Area you may only require planning permission. Where demolition is involved, however, you may also require Conservation Area Consent. If your building is listed, works to it including extensions and installation of a satellite dish, will require a separate Listed Building Consent.

If you have any doubts as to whether or not your building is listed or in a Conservation Area, or would like to know whether specific works require planning permission or other consents, then please seek advice from the planning authority. Contact

details are given at the back of this document.

2.7 New development in Conservation Areas and the importance of design

The purpose of Conservation Area designation is not to arrest development but to guide it so that the special character of an area is not adversely affected. New developments should be sympathetic in their design and use appropriate materials. They should complement established patterns and strengthen local distinctiveness, but not necessarily imitate existing buildings. Before applying for planning permission it is advisable to contact the Council's Development Control and Conservation Teams to discuss your proposals. The value of employing a suitably qualified architect/designer with a track record of conservation projects to draw up your proposals cannot be stressed highly enough.

There are a number of features that contribute to the Old Town's identity and character and which should be preserved through a programme of regular maintenance. These elements should be retained and used to influence further development or alterations to existing properties within the conservation area.

Of great significance to the Old Town Conservation Area is the survival of the historic grain of plot division dating probably from the medieval period of the towns planning. The plots and their grain, particularly how small buildings tend to run down the

plot rather than across is a very important part of the character of the conservation area and should be carefully considered in any proposed development.

Of equal importance is how the rear of buildings have developed and evolved over time to give an attractive organic mix of roof levels, slopes, gables and hips. The scale, form and massing of these extensions and alterations should be respected and where possible reflected in future alterations and extensions to the rear of buildings fronting the High Street or Queensway.

Great attention should be paid to the retention of alley ways, courtyards and access between and through buildings. These should be maintained and preferably left open (possibly with the application of openwork gates set back from the building line) to ensure that views into these intimate spaces are maintained.

Views

The setting of the conservation area is very important and in the case of Old Town far reaching (taking in much of the western extent of Gadebridge Park for example). Development which impacts in a detrimental way upon the immediate setting and longer views into and from the conservation area will be resisted.

Street Pattern

The appraisal has identified that the Conservation Area retains a strong historic street pattern, and there is a strong presumption in favour of preserving the roads, lanes and paths of the Old Town, together with the boundary treatments that form their borders. The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council, landowners and partners to ensure the historic street pattern is fully protected.

Open Spaces

The appraisal identified the areas west of the High Street as being an important green treed transitional space forming the western edge of the Conservation Area boundary. The Council will work with appropriate partners to ensure this area is properly managed, protected and where appropriate, enhanced.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

In addition to the listed buildings, there are many individual and groups of buildings and associated features which are of considerable local interest. These are included on a Local List and the Council will seek to retain these buildings and ensure that new development does not harm the character, appearance or setting of the building. There is a presumption that all such buildings will be retained. There are presently twenty two buildings identified and being of local importance (a terrace or group is counted as one) within the conservation area. The Council will seek to ensure that all Locally Listed Buildings (as identified on the Conservation Area Map) are protected from inappropriate

development or unjustified demolition.

3. Policy and design guidance

The Council has produced relevant guidance documents on development in Conservation Areas, including Development in Conservation Areas or affecting Listed Buildings –

Environmental Guidelines SPG Section 7.

Further advice is contained on the Council's website:
www.dacorum.gov.uk.

These guidance sources are relevant to anyone thinking of undertaking development within Conservation Areas. It is hoped that this advice will help stakeholders of the historic environment make informed decisions and, therefore, contribute positively to the management of Conservation Areas. In addition to policy guidance, local generic guidance will be produced from time to time with specific advice on topics relevant to Conservation Areas e.g. window replacement.

4. Development briefs

The Management Plan can be used to identify any sites that would benefit from a development brief. A development brief is an outline of what might be expected or acceptable in principle on an identified development site prior to a formal development proposal. For example, this might be a gap site, or

a site under pressure for demolition and re-development, or perhaps areas that have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area where redevelopment might readily be accommodated. The definition and characterisation of the Conservation Area can be expanded to form a detailed design brief in order to help promote an appropriate form of development on the site. At the time of writing this Appraisal, there are no such sites identified by the Council within the Conservation Area boundary.

Where development is proposed on garden sites or infill plots, and the Council considers the principle of development in this location acceptable, the Council may take the opportunity to produce development briefs to inform developers or applicants as to what may be appropriate in terms of design and layout for the site.

5 Monitoring change

Monitoring change, both positive and negative, is very important for the long- term management of a Conservation Area. For example, it can help highlight problems that can be best tackled through the application of planning policies and other legislative frameworks (see above) or show how effective policies have been.

Monitoring change can assist in identifying where more resources are required and in modifying priorities or policies.

A Conservation Area is thoroughly surveyed and described when first

designated or when modified. Local planning authorities should seek to review Conservation Areas from time to time and update Appraisals. The Council will develop a schedule of Conservation Area reviews in due course.

The following actions are recommended to ensure that this appraisal and management proposals are accepted and acted upon by the local community:

Public Consultation

The appraisal and management plan has been subject to a period of four-week public consultation commencing on 30th April 2012. This included placing the document on the Council's website and in local libraries and consultation with local amenity and residents' groups. The document has subsequently been amended to incorporate relevant comments and suggestions.

Document Review

This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:

- A survey of the conservation area and boundaries;
- An updated 'Heritage Count';
- An assessment of whether the management proposals in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements;
- A Buildings at Risk survey;
- The production of a short report detailing the findings of

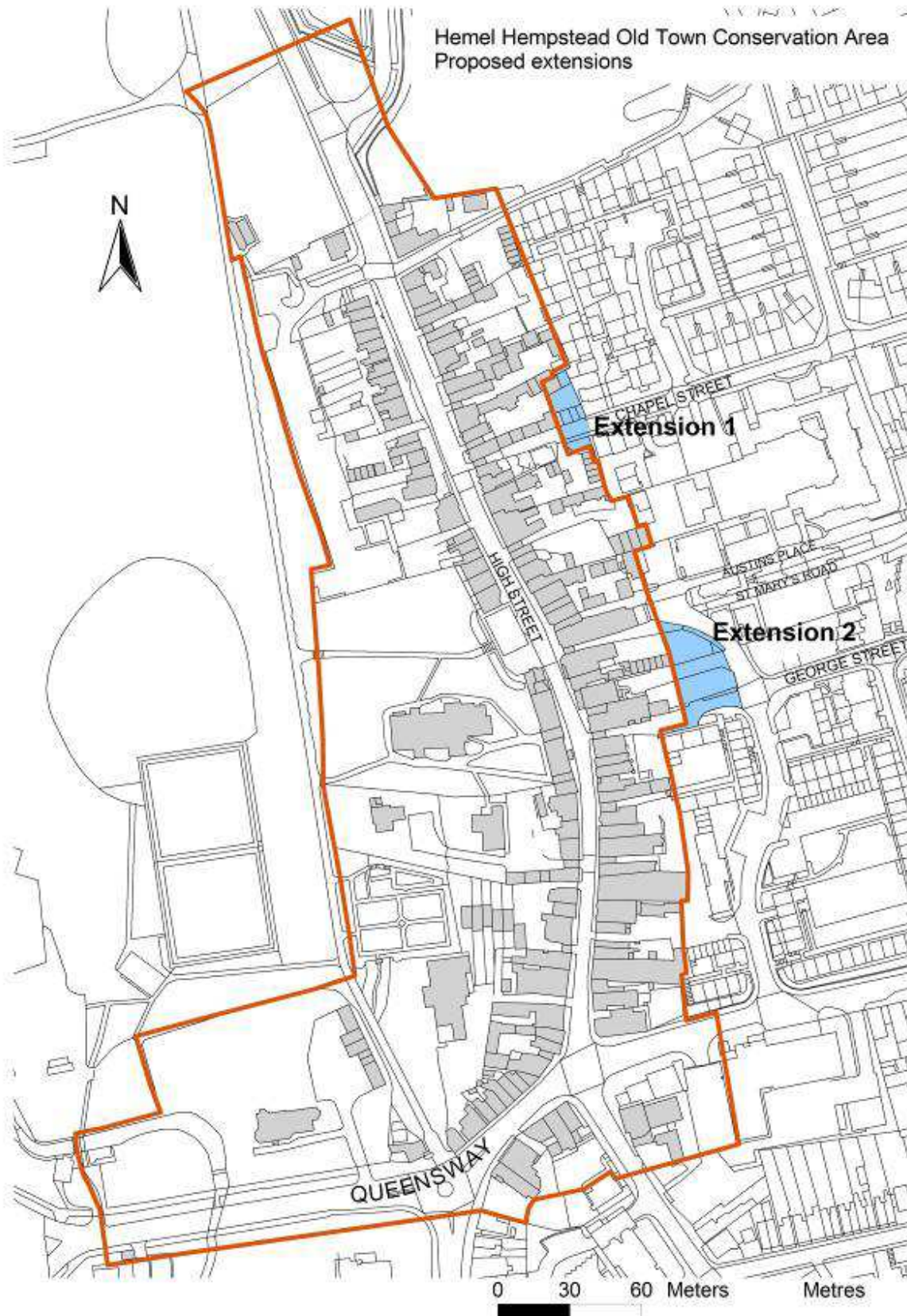
the survey and proposed actions and amendments

- Public consultation on the review findings, any proposed changes and input into the final review.

7. Boundary changes

An important aspect of Appraisals will be considering where the boundary of the Conservation Area should be drawn. Thought should be given to the appropriateness of the boundary. Conservation Area boundary reconfiguration might include reduction or extension to an area. Specific justification should be given for proposed changes. For example, an extension to the boundary might be proposed to incorporate the wider setting of a Conservation Area.

The appraisal has examined the conservation area boundaries and is proposing that there be three minor amendments made to the existing boundary. These are shown on Map 2 and described below:



Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area
Proposed extensions

Map 11: Proposed extensions

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Extension 1:

Area to the rear of Nos. 75 to 85 High Street (east side) incl. Nos.9, 10 and 11 Sun Square

The conservation area boundary presently cuts through the centre of the development known as Sun Square. It is suspected that the conservation area was drawn prior to this development. The inclusion of Nos. 9, 10 and 11 and part of No.4 (the boundary presently passes through this building) will regularize this boundary to include all of the development known as Sun Square, a section of Chapel Street and a small area of hardstanding used as private parking to the east side of Chapel Street.

Reason: This would then form a sensible and logical boundary which better reflects the original extent of historic development relating to the boundary plots of the High Street properties.

Extension 2:

Area to the rear of Nos. 41 to 51 High Street (east side), including sections of footpath (formerly highway)

This area comprises a series of plots running back from the High Street and includes a series of open and closed garden spaces and areas used for parking. It also includes two sections of what were previously highway now (due to their width and scale) reduced to footpaths linking the High Street to the network of

later (mostly) Victorian Streets to the east of the Old Town centre.

Reason: Presently the boundary follows an illogical path truncating these sections of the historic plots from their related buildings on the High Street. The proposed amendments would regularize this situation and afford protection for these spaces which are of historic and potential archaeological significance and form the setting of important Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings to the east side of the High Street.

8. Appraising the condition of heritage assets

A survey is carried out from time to time at both a national and local level to assess the condition of heritage assets. This survey includes the identification of buildings that have fallen into disuse, dereliction or disrepair, commonly referred to as 'Buildings at Risk'.

This survey can provide a useful means of monitoring many significant historic buildings within Conservation Areas. The national Heritage at Risk Register covers grade I and II* buildings at risk and is available through www.englishheritage.org.uk.

A Building at Risk can be addressed through the grant aiding of target buildings, or through the use of legislation such as Repairs Notices or Urgent Works Notices, to bring about works to a building to either repair it or make it secure or

weather tight. This is of particular relevance where a building is important for maintaining the character and appearance of the area. The Council may carry out such works as are necessary and recover the costs incurred from the owners.

Generally, the buildings in the Old Town are well maintained and in a reasonable condition with some notable exceptions (see proposed enhancements).

The Council will monitor the condition of statutory listed buildings in the conservation area and, where a listed building is threatened by a lack of maintenance or repair, the Council will use the available statutory powers to force the owner to take action. The Council will monitor the condition of other unlisted buildings as resources permit.

9. Enforcement proceedings

Unauthorised works and breaches of planning control can cumulatively harm the quality of both the built environment and surrounding spaces within a Conservation Area. An obvious example of this sort of damage could be unauthorised works to a listed building. A listed building is a building of special architectural or historic interest and is enshrined in law under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listed Building Consent is required for any works of alteration to a listed building and it is a criminal offence to carry out unauthorised works.

The removal of traditional timber windows and doors, for example, and their replacement with PVC-u or poor modern imitations, can be detrimental to the building's intrinsic special interest.

It is not only alterations to listed buildings that can damage the character and appearance of Conservation Areas. The unauthorised demolition of buildings, or detrimental alterations to unlisted buildings, can all erode the special character of a Conservation Area. The use of non-approved materials, for example, can be particularly harmful (e.g. modern cement rendering, inappropriate 'ribbon' pointing style, plastic rainwater goods, etc). It is important, therefore, that the Council investigates breaches of planning law within Conservation Areas, as this can help preserve the quality of the historic environment. The survey process utilised in the production of an Appraisal may highlight planning breaches and unlawful alterations to listed buildings. In response to this survey, the Council will take appropriate action with owners on an individual basis. Anyone can report a suspected planning breach by contacting the Council's Enforcement Team. The District Council regularly follows up reports of unauthorised work and may take enforcement action.

Where work has been carried out without planning permission and it is considered that such works are harmful to the character of the Conservation Area then an

enforcement notice may be served requiring remedial measures to be taken

10. Proposed enhancement schemes

There a number of projects proposed for the enhancement of the conservation area and these directly link to the **Heritage Improvement Strategy** for the whole of the Hemel Hempstead town centre masterplan area (presently being prepared by consultants – April 2012).

A. Improvement to the surface treatment of St Marys Close, to include:

- Part removal of cars from St Marys Close
- Provision of an entertainment space
- Removal and replacement where appropriate of street furniture
- Possible reinstatement of a traditional red telephone box

B. Alterations to the ground floor of the Town Hall

- This will potentially include a more positive connection with the proposed entertainment space on St Marys Close to the north
- The possible enclosure of the ground floor cloistered area for possible use as a café, information facility, promoting the Town Hall and the Old Town

C. Improvements to the The Bury and its setting

- Pursue alternative uses or combinations of uses for The Bury
- Potential alterations and extensions to the building to have a more positive relationship with Gadebridge Park
- Look at the removal or poor quality buildings
- Improvements to the landscape setting of The Bury

D. Repair, refurbishment and possible change of use of a number of properties in the High Street to include:

- (i) No.21 and 21A
- (ii) No.28
- (iii) Nos. 33-39
- This would include repair and/or replacement of existing shopfronts (where appropriate)
- Repair of external facades
- Possible re-use, focussing on retail/café/bar at ground floor and residential uses above
- Possible partnership with housing associations to provide affordable units in the town centre

Further reading and sources of information

Further Reading:

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**For Further Information regarding
all Planning and Conservation
Matters:**

Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
The Marlowes
Hemel Hempstead HP1 1HH

Tel: 01442 228000

www.dacorum.gov.uk

See also Department for
Communities and Local Government
www.communities.gov.uk
including 'A Householder's Planning
Guide for the Installation of
Antennas, including Satellite Dishes'.

**For Further Information relating to
Listed Buildings and Conservation
Areas:**

English Heritage
1, Waterhouse Square,
138-142 Holborn,
London EC1N 2ST
General enquiries: 020 7973 3000
www.english-heritage.org.uk

For Technical Guidance:

The Society for the Protection of
Ancient
Buildings (SPAB)
37 Spital Square London E1 6DY
Tel: 020 7377 1644
www.spab.org.uk

The Georgian Group
6 Fitzroy Square London W1T 5DX
Tel: 087 1750 2936
www.georgiangroup.org.uk

The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
Bedford Park London W4 1TT

Tel: 020 8994 1019
www.victorian-society.org.uk

The Twentieth Century Society
70 Cowcross Street London EC1M
6EJ

Tel: 020 7250 3857
www.c20society.org.uk

Appendix 1: Listed Buildings in the Old Town Conservation Area

(Note: GV = Group Value)

Grade I

Church of St Mary

Grade II*

High Street No.41 The King's Arms
Public House

No.51 The Old Bell Public House

No.80

No.109

Queensway

The Bury,

Charter Tower,

Nos.6 and 8 wrought iron front
railings

Grade II

High Street

Nos.17 and 19 (Rose and Crown
Public House)

No.25

No.27

No.29

Nos.33 to 39 (odd)

No.43

No.57

No.59

No.61

No.63

No.63A

Nos.65 to 69 (odd)

No.71

No.73

Nos.75

and 77, Nos.79 and 79A

No.81 and No.83

No.87

No.89

Nos.91 to 95 (odd)

No.97

No.99

No.103

Nos.105 and 107

No.107A

No.111

Nos.16 and 18

Nos.30 to 34 (even) (The White
Hart Public House)

No.36

No.38

No.40

Nos.44 and 44A

Town Hall

Nos.48 and 52

Nos.54 to 58 (even)

No.60

Nos.62 and 64 Barn in garden of

Nos.62 and 64

No.66

No.68

Nos.70 and 72

No.74

Nos.76 and 78

Nos.82 to 88 (even)

Nos.94 and 96

Nos.98 and 100

Pump and

Lamp Post Numbered 5036

Queensway

Garden Walls of Manor House

Nos.23 and 25

Nos.27 and 29

No.4

Nos.10, 12 and 14

Appendix 2: Locally Listed Buildings in Hemel Hempstead Conservation Area

Queensway Bury Lodge, Nos.5-7, Nos.9-21

High Street No.20, No.28, No.9, No.11, No.21 and 21A, No.23, No.31, No.49, Nos.53-55 and No.85.

No.13 should also be noted for the art deco shopfront and No.24-26 for the late 19th century shopfront.

Appendix 3: Criteria for Local Listing

The following is an extract from the English Heritage Guidance Note: *Good Practice Guide for Local Listing: Identifying and Managing Significant Local Heritage Assets* (February 2011). These criteria have been used to assess whether buildings within the conservation area should be locally listed.

Criterion	Description
Age	The age of an asset may be an important criterion and can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics
Rarity	Appropriate for all assets, as judged against local characteristics
Aesthetic value	The intrinsic design value of an asset relating to local styles, materials or any other distinctive local characteristics
Group value	Groupings of assets with a clear visual, design or historic relationship
Evidential value	The significance of a local historic asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant contemporary or historic written record
Historic association	The significance of a local historic asset of any kind may be enhanced by a significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures
Archaeological interest ¹²	This may be an appropriate reason to designate a locally significant asset on the grounds of archaeological interest if the evidence base is sufficiently compelling and if a distinct area can be identified
Designed landscaping	Relating to the interest attached to locally important designed landscapes, parks and gardens
Landmark status	An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value, may be singled out as a landmark within the local scene
Social and communal value	Relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence; often residing in intangible aspects of heritage contributing to the “collective memory” of a place

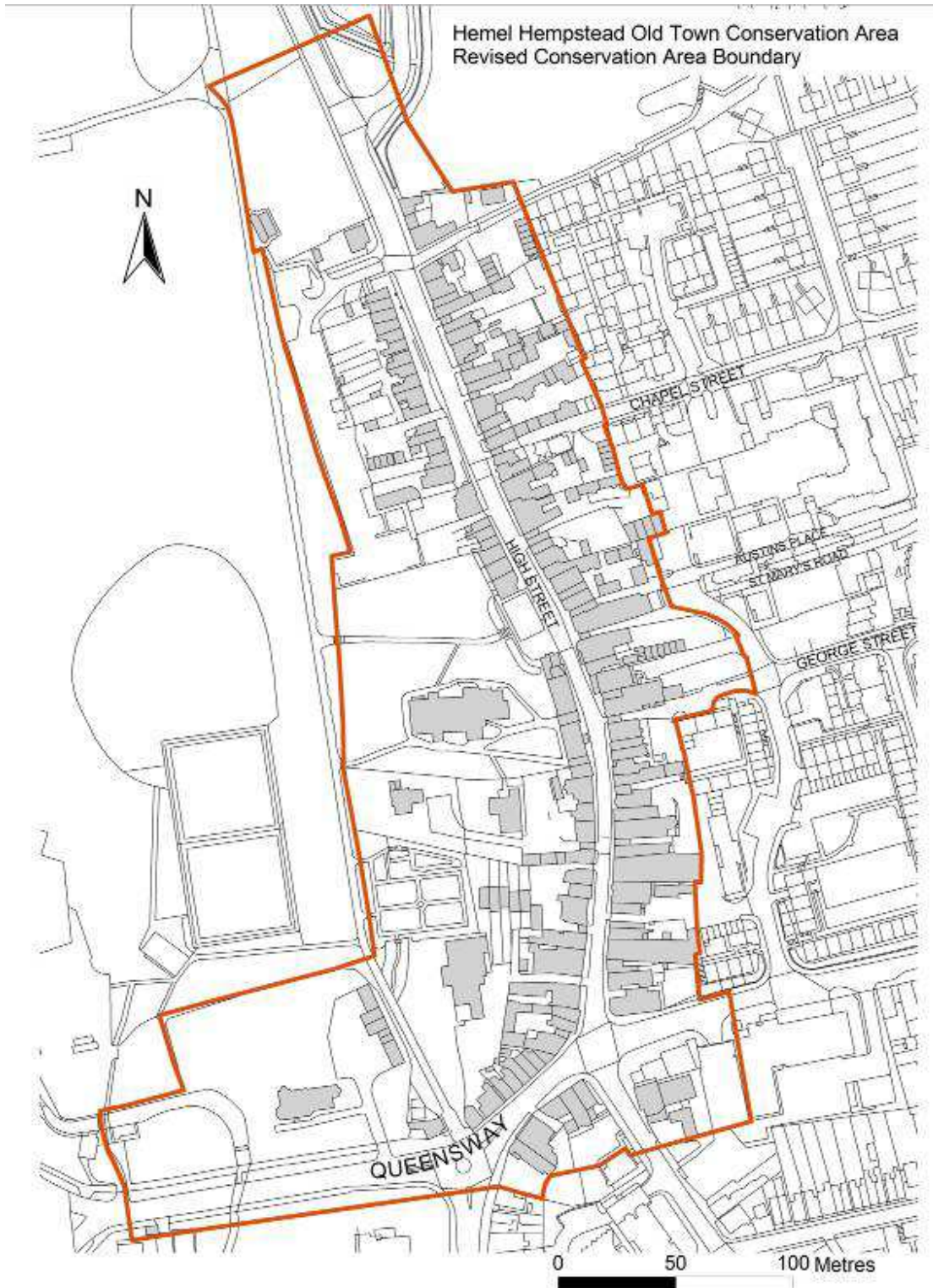
Appendix 4: Historic Environment Register (HER) data, Herts County Council

There are records relating to the following, in an in the vicinity or relating to the Old Town Conservation Area as at April 2012

Record Number	
<u>71</u>	THE CHARTER TOWER, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>1047</u>	ST MARY'S CHURCH, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5215</u>	LAMP STANDARD, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5311</u>	WALL BOX, GARDEN WALL, MIDLAND ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5312</u>	WALL BOX, HERBERT STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5465</u>	SITE OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD RAILWAY STATION, ADEYFIELD ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5476</u>	PILLAR BOX, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5494</u>	WALL BOX, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5596</u>	RAILWAY BRIDGE, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>5672</u>	DRINKING FOUNTAIN, W SIDE OF HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7099</u>	SITE OF BURY MILL, GADEBRIDGE LANE, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7101</u>	SITE OF ENGINE HOUSE, BURY ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7103</u>	SITE OF BOXMOOR IRONWORKS, MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7104</u>	SITE OF A CHALK PIT AND KILN, HANDLEYS DELL, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7105</u>	SITE OF WATERWORKS AND PUBLIC BATHS, MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7107</u>	SITE OF ALBION MILL, LOWER MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7118</u>	SITE OF AN ENGINE HOUSE, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7119</u>	SITE OF THE PHOENIX FOUNDRY, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>7120</u>	SITE OF A KILN, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>9579</u>	HEMEL HEMPSTEAD WATER GARDENS, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10204</u>	SITE OF BAPTIST CHAPEL GRAVEYARD, OFF QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10205</u>	FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, ST MARY'S ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10206</u>	SITE OF SMITHY, ST MARY'S ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10207</u>	SITE OF CATTLE MARKET, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10208</u>	CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, ALEXANDRA ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10209</u>	BAPTIST CHAPEL (CAREY BAPTIST CHURCH), MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10210</u>	WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL, MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10211</u>	SITE OF WATERCRESS BEDS, DACORUM COLLEGE OF

<u>10426</u>	FURTHER EDUCATION, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD SITE OF THE UNION WORKHOUSE, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10427</u>	SITE OF ISOLATION HOSPITAL, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10428</u>	SITE OF ST PAUL'S CHURCH, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10429</u>	SITE OF CHRIST CHURCH, CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10431</u>	TOWN HALL AND MARKET HOUSE, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10432</u>	THE BURY, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10433</u>	SITE OF THE OLD BURY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10434</u>	SITE OF POST-MEDIEVAL BARN, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10435</u>	SITE OF THE VICARAGE, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10436</u>	SITE OF WEST HERTS COUNTY INFIRMARY, MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10494</u>	76-80 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10497</u>	OAK HOUSE, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10498</u>	74 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10499</u>	POST-MEDIEVAL BARN, 62-64 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10500</u>	75-79 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10501</u>	63 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10502</u>	61 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10503</u>	THE OLD BELL, 51 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10504</u>	THE KING'S ARMS, 41 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10505</u>	38 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10506</u>	THE ROSE & CROWN, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10507</u>	THE WHITE HART, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10508</u>	16-18 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10510</u>	25 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10511</u>	COCK INN, 23 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10512</u>	TOWNEND HOUSE, 60 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10513</u>	SUN INN, 81 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>10514</u>	SWAN INN, 29 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>15815</u>	18TH CENTURY HOUSE, 33-39 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>15816</u>	65-67 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>15818</u>	70-72 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>15819</u>	83 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>16428</u>	51 MARLOWES, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>17778</u>	SITE OF PUBLIC HOUSE, HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>17779</u>	SITE OF HANDPOST FARM, QUEENSWAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>17877</u>	103 HIGH STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
<u>17887</u>	SITE OF PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL, KING HARRY STREET, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Appendix 5: Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area - updated boundary 2012



Map 11: Revised Conservation Area boundary

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Hemel Hempstead Old Town Conservation Area

