



23/02/23

## Report on the Public Consultation Process for the Ashwell Conservation Area.

### Introduction

After the completion of the first draft of the Ashwell Conservation Area a public event was held at Ashwell Village Hall on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2022, between the hours of 3pm and 7:30 pm. Prior to the event, Place Services produced illustrated posters and large scale maps, which were displayed at the Village Hall. These showed the proposed boundary alterations and described the area's special historic and architectural interest.

Bound copies of the draft document were also available for the attendees to read or take away with them for closer review. The event was well attended and there was much interest from the local community in the Conservation Area and the appraisal process.

A questionnaire had been prepared which was available to fill out by attendees during the event, or they could take them home for completion and submission later. Alternatively, attendees were encouraged to email the local authority with their comments.

### Public Questionnaire Results

In total, 12 copies of the questionnaire were completed and submitted. The questionnaire included the following questions and a summary of the responses is also included.

1. How do you relate to the Conservation Area? E.g., long term resident, landowner, business owner, work or live within or near the area.

Long term resident	7
Live in Conservation Area	2
Live outside Conservation Area	2
Unspecified	1

2. Were you previously aware that there is already a Conservation Area covering Ashwell?

Yes	12
No	0
Don't Know	0

3. Overall, how do you feel about the Conservation Area designation?

Positive	10
Neutral	1
Negative	1 due to meadow area not included
Don't Know	0

4. Do you feel that you understand what a Conservation Area is and what it does? (1 = No not at all, and 5 = yes very well)

1	0
2	0
3	0
4	4
5	8

5. Is there a building or place that you are specifically interested in and why?  
Summary of responses

1	No
2	Partridge Hill
3	Village Hall
4	41 West End
5	West End of the Village - Partridge Hill
6	The Church
7	Station Road and fields beyond
8	Station Road Area
9	No
10	No
11	No
12	Museum

6. What makes Ashwell's buildings and spaces special to you?  
Summary of responses

1	Long family history
2	History and surroundings
3	Timeless atmosphere
4	Variety, tradition, architectural interest and beautiful landscape setting
5	Historic value; ecological value; social value
6	All the houses pre-2000
7	We enjoy the special character of Ashwell
8	Community
9	Character of the village
10	Continuity of community
11	Maintenance and preservation of historic buildings

12	Village atmosphere
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7. Have you noticed any changes in the area, particularly since the year 2019 (the year that the last Character Statement was completed)?

Summary of responses

1	Too many large houses being built
2	New large house built at the bottom of Partridge Hill
3	Development encroaching on landscape to the south
4	Too many changes – outsiders saying when we can have our bells on
5	Excessive building
6	New buildings not in character
7	Inappropriate development permitted off Station Road – devalues Conservation Area
8	Development of Station Road
9	Inappropriate development
10	Too many new houses
11	Infilling
12	Outbuildings to a house on Partridge Hill

8. What potential threats (if any) do you think the Conservation Area faces? Typical threats to Conservation Areas include poor maintenance of buildings and spaces, inappropriate new development, unsympathetic alterations to historic buildings, impact of modern shopfronts and advertisement, vacant buildings, and vehicular traffic.

1	N/A
2	Inappropriate new development in and adjacent to Conservation Area
3	Inappropriate new development – loss of green space
4	Inappropriate new development
5	Inappropriate new development
6	Inappropriate new development
7	New housing in Conservation Areas
8	Inappropriate new development and unsympathetic alterations
9	Inadequate planning building control
10	All threats as above - More careful monitoring needed
11	Overloading infrastructures (hospitals, schools, roads, etc)
12	Inappropriate new development

9. Do you feel the four different character areas within the Conservation Area have been correctly identified?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If you have answered no, which character areas should be changed and why?

Yes	9	
No	2	Both queries regarding Station Road
Don't Know	1	

10. It is proposed to amend the Conservation Area to include elements that are considered to have special architectural or historic interest and remove those that do not. Do you agree with the revisions?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If you have answered no, why do you think these areas either should, or should not be included within the Conservation Area?

Yes	9	
No	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Just leave our village alone”</li> <li>• All of Donkey Meadow should be included</li> <li>• Include all of Station Road</li> </ul>
Don't Know	0	

11. Do you feel there are any other areas which should be removed from the Conservation Area?

Please state below, using specific street names:

Yes	1	Station Road and Bygrave Road
No	11	

12. Do you feel there are any areas which should be included within the Conservation Area?

1	Partridge Hill
2	Partridge Hill
3	West of village adjacent to Partridge Hill (ancient trackway)
4	Donkey Meadow
5	N/A
6	No
7	No
8	No
9	Public Bridleway – Partridge Hill
10	No
11	Partridge Hill
12	All the surrounding fields

13. Do you think all the opportunities for enhancement have been identified?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If no, please provide details of aspects of the Conservation Area you think would benefit from improvement:

1	Partridge Hill and the area round the surgery
2	N/A
3	West of village adjacent to Partridge Hill (ancient trackway)
4	N/A
5	N/A
6	N/A
7	Unoccupied housing. Protection of trees and hedges
8	N/A
9	Ashwell Street and Claybush Road
10	Ashwell Street

11	N/A
12	Protection from hedges

14. The Management Plan provides guidance on how to improve and/or preserve the significance of the Conservation Area. Do you agree with the proposals?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If you have answered no, or have further comments, please provide them here:

Comments:

1	Don't Know
2	Yes
3	N/A
4	N/A
5	N/A
6	Yes
7	Yes
8	Yes
9	N/A
10	Yes
11	Yes
12	Yes

15. Please provide any further comments you may have:

Only 1 further comment received

The proposals are fully endorsed
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### Assessment of Questionnaire results

The questionnaire respondents generally had strong connections to the village and cited its character, atmosphere, setting, buildings and community as being important. In response to the question regarding their understanding of what a Conservation Area is and what it does, they considered that they generally understood. However, the perception that the strengthening of the Conservation Area could be achieved by its extension into surrounding fields or areas without special interest was expressed by some respondents. The creation of a 'buffer to prevent development' was expressed during discussions at the event by some attendees. In addition, the ecological value of some areas was cited as requiring Conservation Area protection.

This suggests a common misunderstanding of the concept of a Conservation Area. It was stated during the event by Place Services that, as described in the NPPF (Paragraph 191), the designation of an area requires justification because of its '*architectural and historic special interest*' and that the concept of conservation can be devalued through the designation of areas that lack these attributes. In addition, the concept of setting and how it can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset has become more recognised in recent years. This concept is frequently poorly understood, particularly with regard to Conservation Areas.

The respondent's suggestions of areas to be included in the Conservation Area generally focussed on three areas, Partridge Hill, Station Road and Donkey Meadow (Dixies Meadow). These had been assessed during the project but were re-examined as a result of the public consultation (along with other areas also identified through

different means, during the public consultation). While Partridge Hill has some interest and is protected as a public bridleway, the area was found to be lacking the necessary architectural and historic interest for inclusion in the Conservation Area. Bridleways and ancient trackways are abundant in the English landscape, which itself has had thousands of years of management, exploitation and use, but this alone is not sufficient for conservation area designation. Partridge Hill is however a positive attribute within the setting of the Conservation Area. Under the NPPF, new development within the setting of heritage assets, should enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset or which better reveal its significance should be treated favourably.

Station Road was also re-examined. Station Road is within Character Area 3 of the Conservation Area, which represents the inter-War expansion of the village and the large, municipal open space of the Recreation Ground, War Memorial and the 'Homes fit for Heroes', built after the First World War. The special architectural and historic interest of the dwellings on Station Road that are currently within the Conservation Area is derived from their good survival as a group of inter-War houses. These examples on the east side of Station Road are well preserved and in close proximity to the important focal point of the War memorial and Recreation Ground. Other inter-War houses are present further to the south on Station Road, yet these are set to remain outside of the Conservation Area. This is due to two factors. The first is that there are too many examples of infill development along Station Road, with late-twentieth century dwellings that can not be considered to have special architectural and historic interest and could not be included in the boundary. Any extension here would result in a sinuous addition, following the line of Station Road, omitting numerous buildings on either side. Secondly, the preservation of the southern group of inter-War houses was considered not as good as those already within the Conservation Area. Therefore, no extension has been recommended.

Donkey Fields, also known as Dixies Meadow, is an important open space within the setting of the Conservation Area. There are no buildings currently on the meadow and historic mapping shows that the area has never been developed. Its open nature allows views from one part of the Conservation Area to another and its undeveloped character enhances the ability to appreciate Ashwell's architectural and historic special interest. The green space is also an important element of the setting of the nationally important Grade I Listed Church. As a positive element within the setting of the heritage assets the preservation of the undeveloped character of Dixies Meadow should be well assured, under the policies of the NPPF. However, its lack of buildings, both in the present and in the past, means that it cannot be considered to have architectural special interest. Its use as a donkey meadow in the past is of some local interest, yet this alone is insufficient to provide historic interest. Every field in the Conservation Area's setting has had some form of use in the near and distant past that provides a historic link to the village, yet this does not provide sufficient architectural or historic interest.

## Further consultation results

In addition to the feedback from the questionnaire, detailed comments were received from members of the public, representatives of the Parish Council, the Local Authority, Historic England and other stakeholders. These are summarised in the table below, along with responses from Place Services to the comments and the actions taken.

Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
David Cook (member of the public)	Understands and empathises with the tone of the consultation document.	1) Dixies Close (west) Considers the net has been thrown a little too wide. The properties to the west of the footpath should not be added into the conservation area. They do not meet the criteria	1) Agreed	1) Boundary revised to exclude Council House dwellings to the west of the footpath
		2) Western entrance to the conservation area, nos. 30, 32 & 34 West End should be removed from the conservation area.  Traffic signage is also a negative element	2) Disagree. Number 30 is a new build but of appropriate scale and materials. Numbers 32 and 34 are neutral and could be enhanced by retention in the Conservation Area.  Traffic signs may not be a positive element but they do not have sufficient detrimental impact to warrant the removal of this area.	2) Slight amendment to boundary to exclude corner of open field, but buildings retained.
		3) Area 3 – field to the south of Ashwell Street. Not architecturally or historically special. It has protected historic features, but is outside of the village boundary and in open countryside.	3) Agreed, the area lacks architectural special interest and the archaeological sites are protected as Scheduled Monuments. Its inclusion is problematic, though as setting it is highly important.	3) Proposed boundary revised to exclude the north edge of open field.
		4) Doctors Surgery & Woverly House – sees no special historic or architectural merit to either of these buildings and	4) Partially agree in the case of Woverly House. But there was an attempt in the design and use of materials in the surgery to	4) Boundary revised. Doctors' Surgery retained, Woverly House excluded.

Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
<p>Xavier Preston Senior Planning Officer. Growth and Infrastructure Unit. Sustainable Growth Hertfordshire County Council</p>		<p>1) We would always advise that authorities engage with the HCC Historic Environment team during the preparation of consultation documents of this nature</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>No action required</p>
		<p>2) Not clear if the Historic Environment Record (HER) was consulted. If not, then this should be done as a requirement of the NPPF.</p>	<p>2) The HER was consulted as stated see P28, 29</p>	<p>2) Use of HER has been made clearer in the caption of Fig 13 and in the text that the HER has been consulted</p>
		<p>3) At least one of the Scheduled Monuments shown in the document for Pirton are incorrect and therefore Historic England should be contacted to confirm the correct extent of Scheduled Monuments.</p>	<p>Relates to Pirton CA Appraisal - N/A</p>	<p>No action required</p>
		<p>4) Both the documents should be prepared using a comprehensive walk over survey of the settlements to inform their respective recommendations.</p>	<p>4) Multiple site visits were undertaken to inform the character analysis and assess architectural and historic special interest. A comprehensive archaeological walk-over survey would be beyond the remit of the appraisal of the CA.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
		<p>Archaeological and heritage terminology requires clarification</p>	<p>5) Agreed – terminology can be made clearer.</p>	<p>5) Additions made to text on P64</p>



Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Dominic Rogers Natural England	Natural England has no comments to make on the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans for Ashwell and Pirton		N/A	N/A
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Mark Simmons BA Senior Conservation Officer NHDC		1) Requests different cover image	Agreed	New cover image used.
		2) Amendment to text suggested on p17/18	Agreed	Text amended
		3) Amendment to text suggested on p19	Agreed	Text amended
		4) Additional text suggested on p20	Agreed	Additions to text made
		5) Questions inclusion of council houses of Dixies Close	Agreed	Amended boundary to exclude council houses
		6) Concerns regarding inclusion of the strip of field to the south of Ashwell Street and Bronze Age barrow.	Agreed	Boundary amended to exclude strip of open field.
		7) Inclusion of Double Moated Site at Westbury Farm supported. Suggested amendment to boundary at Colbron Close. Consideration of inclusion of Dixies Meadow, although the justification for its remaining outside CA boundary, as part of setting is accepted.	Agreed	Boundary amended. Dwellings without special interest on Colbron Close excluded.  No changes made to boundary to include Dixies meadow
		8) West End – suggested boundary change to exclude area of field	Agreed	Boundary amended
		9) Question regarding critical description of Townsend Meadow. Agreement as to its lack of appropriate character within the CA	9) Any criticism of recent planning decision was not intended. Yet the unfitting character of the development cannot be ignored	9) Text amended, but exclusion of Townsend Meadow remains.

		10) Suggested amendment to text on p29	Agreed	Text amended
		11) Suggested minor amendments to text on P 31	Agreed	Text amended
		12) Suggested addition - sites under the subheading 'Landscaping and Open Spaces'	Agreed	Text amended
		13) Minor additions recommended to text on Page 51	Agreed	Text amended
		14) Two further views recommended for inclusion Done	Agreed	Two further views added
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Parishioner and local historian David Short	Multiple comments mainly focussed on additional historical facts, corrections and information, with some.  Also corrects some typo errors		Many proposed alterations from Mr Short are relevant and useful and most suggested additions have been added to the text. However, the Appraisal Document is intended to provide a brief historical overview, rather than an in-depth volume on the history of Ashwell. Therefore, some more specific or lengthy historical notes were not included	Additions made to text to clarify or flesh-out historic background.  Typo errors corrected
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Ashwell Parish Council	We accept the overall proposals made by the author in terms of both the additions and deletions to the Conservation Area. However, we believe there are a number of additional areas that merit inclusion as justified below:	1) Station Road South of Ashwell Street - suggest further consideration given to including more 'Homes for Heroes' inter-War housing.	1) Too many examples of infill development of late-twentieth century dwellings without special architectural and historic interest. Further extension here would result in a sinuous addition, following the line of Station Road, omitting numerous buildings on either side. Also - the preservation of the southern group of	1) No extension to boundary proposed

			inter-War houses is considered to be not as complete as those already within the Conservation Area. Therefore, no extension has been recommended.	
		2) Ashwell Street (to the West of Bear Lane) and Partridge Hill Considered to represent historically parts of the boundaries to the South and West of the Village and merit further consideration for inclusion in the Conservation Area.	2) Disagree - While the recognised historic boundaries of the village may be partly defined by Ashwell Street and Partridge Hill, the late twentieth century buildings within this area lack the necessary cohesive character or architectural and historic special interest.	2) CA boundary not extended to include Ashwell Street West and Partridge Hill
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Magnus Willatts  Co-owner of property potentially affected by proposed extension of Conservation Area	Voiced an objection, to those areas proposed for inclusion by Ashwell Parish Council during an early-stage engagement (November 21).  Concern on grounds of potential inappropriate use of policy as development control tool.	1) Large areas suggested (by Ashwell PC) without sufficient justification to individual properties or features; inclusions variously do not fulfil the requirements for Conservation Status.	1) Generally, agree.  The large open areas proposed for inclusion by the Parish Council were considered to be lacking in sufficient historic or architectural special interest and have not been included.  The only areas proposed by the Parish Council for inclusion that have been recommended by Place Services are Ashwell Cemetery and less than half of the area that the PC proposed, covering post-War houses in Dixies Close. The revised boundary is based solely on guidance from Historic England and the need for an area to demonstrate sufficient special	None

			architectural and historic interest.	
		2)No consideration to relaxation of current Conservations area - areas of little heritage or historic area within current area not considered for exclusion.	Agree - the Parish Council 2021 document made no recommendations to exclude areas with no special interest.  However, reductions to exclude Townsend Meadow have been made based on Place Services assessment	None
<b>Name/Organisation</b>	<b>General Comments</b>	<b>Specific Comments (abridged)</b>	<b>Place Services Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
Stephen Fleming Chair of Ashwell Show	Concerns over possible inclusion of Elbrook meadow		Elbrook Meadow not recommended for inclusion	None
<b>Name/Organisation</b>	<b>General Comments</b>	<b>Specific Comments (abridged)</b>	<b>Place Services Response</b>	<b>Action</b>
Jane Porter, 12 September 2022	Suggestion for the inclusion of Partridge Hill and western section of Ashwell Street	Cited evidence of current unmade state of pathways reflects their historic character and this contributes significantly to that of Ashwell. Cites possible origins as a Roman road, parish boundary and ancient approach to Arbury Banks	Disagree that the boundary should be extended in this area, although agree that these routes have historic origins, as do the majority of bridleways and public footpaths. They are positive elements in the setting of the CA. Yet the area lacks architectural special interest, due to the twentieth-century development. The historic origins of the trackways is not sufficient, on its own for Conservation Area designation.  As public rights of way (ASHWELL 015 and ASHWELL 031), both Partridge Hill and western section of Ashwell Street are already protected by law.	None

			A Protected Lane designation would be far more applicable in this instance, than an extension of the Conservation Area.	
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Mrs Beth Byrne [REDACTED]		Considers that their property is not architecturally and historically special and the adjacent dwellings should not be in the conservation area which should end at the village side of The Hedgerows (no. 30) over to the listed thatched cottage opposite.	The dwellings included at West End (34, 32 and 30) make a neutral Contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Number 30 (hedgerows) is marginally more positive in its contribution, being built and finished with appropriate materials. The buildings are set back from the highway which is beneficial and they are not of an incongruous scale. The hedge boundary of number 32 is also a positive element to the Conservation Area. Their retention within the boundary will potentially enable enhancements to their appearance in the future.	None
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Faye Morley Senior Planning Officer   Property   Resources Hertfordshire County Council	HCC as landowner in Ashwell have no comments to make on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans (CAAMPs) for Ashwell.			N/A
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Neville Doe Assistant Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas	The appraisal is thorough and well-detailed. It includes a well-researched historical	We recommend the inclusion of a glossary containing relevant historic environment		Glossary included  Corrections to text made.

	analysis of Ashwell which provides a useful context to understanding the conservation area designation and its significance as heritage asset. It is generally well illustrated with good photographs that show views, building exemplars and architectural features and details. The cross-referencing with other relevant local plan policies and documents is also very useful.	terminology contained in the NPPF  Minor typographical errors suggested for correction		
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Drs Paul Pover & Susan Scott. [REDACTED]	disappointed that the conservation area was not extended to include Partridge Hill.	Cites mid-twentieth century age for dwellings, as well as presence of orchards, hedgerows and a wildlife corridor and gardens. The area has amenity value for residents and visitors who enjoy walking, horse-riding and cycling.	While the area has a tranquil character which is a positive element in the CA's setting, this is not sufficient for inclusion within the Conservation Area, which requires architectural and historic special interest. A wildlife or community designation or protected lane status would be more appropriate in this instance.	None
Name/Organisation	General Comments	Specific Comments (abridged)	Place Services Response	Action
Magnus Willatts [REDACTED]		Requests correction to the boundary to include historic Listed building but exclude the adjacent industrial building and the concrete driveway servicing the works. The Historic England Listing for the property describes the proposed additional part of the building as follows: "Large C20 extension on	Agreed	Boundary amended to exclude buildings of no interest, but retain Listed building

		left is not of special interest.”		
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