

Understanding of Place - The context of the site

Pirton has its roots in the Saxon period as detailed in the character appraisal and evidenced by recent archaeological studies undertaken by The University of Cambridge. As a medieval village it housed a 12th century motte and bailey castle at the heart of the village. During the 15th century, the village became dispersed with three centres located away from the medieval centre. These three centres were at Rectory Farm at the west end of Shillington Road, around Great Green, and at Burge End with other houses and farms scattered throughout the wider area.

A re-enclosure map drawn up in 1800 illustrates traces of the original feudal layout. The application site forms part of a piece of land once owned by John Hanscombe, occupied by earlier cottages built by William Hanscombe (resident a Pirton Grange/ Hall) for his agricultural workers. In 1870, the existing properties (Nos. 2-12) were constructed along Shillington Road. They were laid out along with a row of small outbuildings just to the rear of the houses, and their ancillary and separate garden/ allotment spaces laid out along Burge End Lane. (see JB heritage report 2024). The current arrangement, which can be seen in many small agricultural towns in Hertfordshire could be described as evidence of this previous socio-economic system of freehold, labour and subsistence.

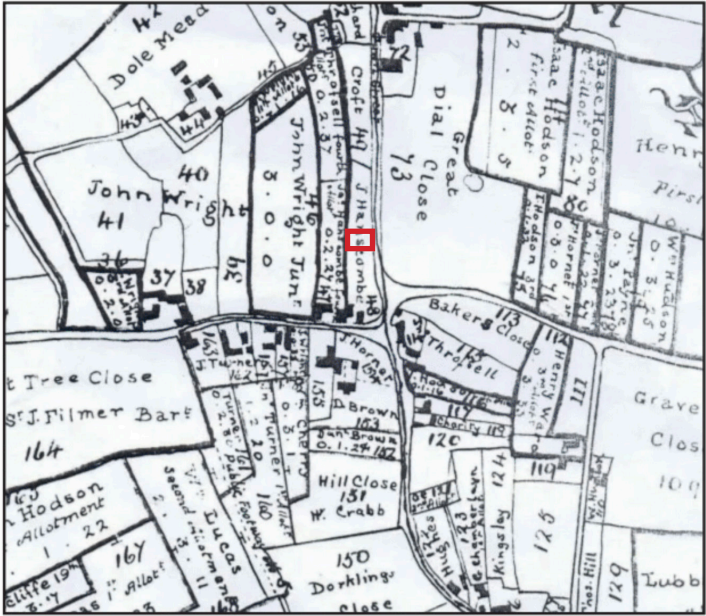
To the north, is a cluster of development around Burge End Farm, with a small cottage located along Burge End Lane The terrace has been extended and outbuildings have has not altered significantly in 200 year but all the former open fields are now assigned to individuals, with some associated field boundary changes.

The Burge End area of development, and the cottage to the north of the site has gained outbuildings. On the opposite corner of the Burge End Lane junction from the site, a new property has also been built on what was Great Dial Close

The setting of the site:

A summary of the conservation area’s assessment notes the following elements:

- The street plan and layout roads, buildings and greens, of the village demonstrate the phases of the village’s development
- The Conservation Area demonstrates a variety of architectural styles, but is overall traditional and typical of the region
- Local materials, such as Arlesey brick, dominate the streetscenes, interspersed with thatch and render. In the village red plain tiles are the most common historic roof covering The site itself has informal quality defined by agricultural materials, timber cladding, corrugated metal cladding.
- Hedgerow, grass verges and large garden plots create an agrarian quality interconnected with the rural landscape beyond the settlement boundary.
- Footpaths and rights of way connect the focal points and greens of the village with sections of built form in the denser village centre opening out into pockets of green space, retaining the rural character of the village. The site has shared pathways and a communal sense of access between buildings.
- Two farmsteads are accessed via Burge End Lane, a narrow, tarmacked route lined with hedgerow and trees. Burge End Farm at the northern edge of the lane, is seventeenth century in date, whilst Hammond’s Farm is early sixteenth century.
- Roof forms vary considerably with gablets and unusual junctions between roof planes, Chimneys are a common feature ad the settlement largely consists of 2 storey buildings
- Boundary treatments are informal on the site, but along the streets are formed of hedgerow, picket or post and rail fencing
- The small triangular green at the top of Burge end Lane reinforces the informal, rural, village character, and views down over the site.
- Many ancillary buildings to the rear of the terrace appear to survive (in some form) in two blocks as originally built with the passage leading to the allotment areas running between the two blocks and the rear of the terrace. The terrace itself has had a number of extensions added to the rear of the properties, and most have replacement uPVC windows and modern doors. The separate garden spaces off Burge End Lane are in varying degrees of active use and contain a number of garden and ancillary structures including a garage in the plot of No.8
- The site is comprised of a plot of ancillary garden land which is associated with one of the terraced properties forming 2-12 Shillington Road. Originally used as small-holdings/allotments to support the agricultural workers who inhabited the terrace, they are now very much residential garden spaces and now have an evolved domestic character formed from their managed planting and the types of structures that are found within them, e.g. pergola, garden shed, garage, greenhouse, etc. Combined with the recent residential development on the other side of the road this southern end of Burge End Lane, whilst rural in character overall, is evidently domestic in use.



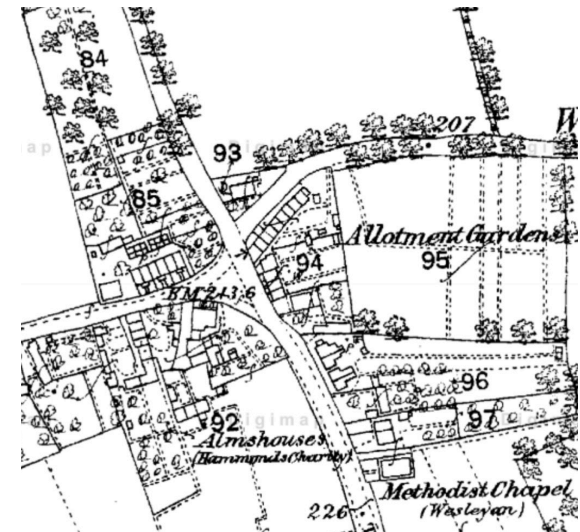
1818 Enclosure Map, source JB Heritage 2024



Burge End Farm, Source Pirton Local History Group



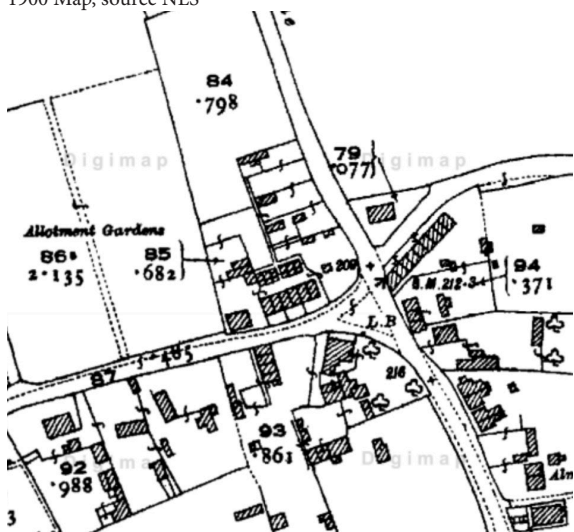
2-12 Shillington Road, Source Pirton Local History Group



1880 Map, source NLS



1900 Map, source NLS



1914 Map, source NLS

Sources:
The Historic England listed buildings register was considered, along with historic mapping using Digimap and recreation of the existing tithe map (1650). Pevsner buildings of England was consulted, along with sources from Hitchin Historical Society and The NHDC Pirton Character area 2 appraisal 2023. JB Heritage Statement 2024

Appraisal

As noted the current pattern of backland development at the rear of nrs 2-12 Shillington Road, is typical within many small agricultural towns in Hertfordshire could be described as evidence of this previous soci-economic system of freehold, labour and subsistence.

The grass verges to Burge End Lane at the eastern boundary of the site and the adjoining garden spaces, together with the green triangular space at the junction with West Lane, contribute to the rural character of the conservation area.

The pattern of ancillary buildings to the rear of the terrace appear to survive (in some form) in two blocks as originally built with the passage leading to the allotment area running between the two blocks and the rear of the terrace. The terrace itself has had a number of extensions added to the rear of the properties, and most have replacement uPVC windows and modern doors. The separate garden spaces off Burge End Lane are in varying degrees of active use and contain a number of garden and ancillary structures including a garage in the plot of No.8

3.1 Approach to Significance

The significance of these assets, including the contribution made by their setting, together with the contribution that the application site makes to their significance, has been assessed.

Significance derives not only from the heritage interests of the asset itself, but also from the contribution made by its setting. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: 'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

The basis of protection for heritage assets is understanding their unique identity, expressed as a collection of values that can be enshrined by a place – in other words, what is important, and what aspects of the building contribute to that importance.

The land along Burge End Lane embodies a range of values relating to historic, cultural, social and associational aspects of its past. An overview of these helps define what makes the building special, and is therefore what significance the wider site has in relation to this Heritage asset. This is essential to the informed decisions about the proposed interventions upon the site.

The following assessment of significance is laid out in accordance with the documents Historic England Conservation Principles, 2008 and British Standard 7913: Conservation of Historic Buildings, 2013, which acknowledge that understanding both the tangible and intangible significances of this site to enable effective decision making about its future. Further, The ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (1988, also known as The Burra Charter), lays down the principles for assessing cultural significance, defined as “the aesthetic historic, scientific or social values for past,

3.2 Assessment of Cultural Values

BS Standard 7913 identifies four categories of primary values, paraphrased as follows:

1. Evidential value

An element of an historic asset that provides evidence about past human activity, including standing structures that are easily visible, as well as those that may be hidden below ground or under water. This aspect of value is strongly related to physical remains, but may also include documentary sources, pictorial records and artefacts.

2. Historical value

These aspects of significance are often less tangible than physical evidence, including associations with notable people, or historical events or developments. They often connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present, and are likely to have changed with time of shifting perspectives. Historical values are less vulnerable to change than evidential values.

3. Aesthetic value

This is derived from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an historic asset, including its appearance and how it lies within its setting. As such, this aspect of value is more subjective than the preceding classifications, being particularly sensitive to change over time and subject to fluctuations depending on many factors.

4. Communal value

This element of value derives from the meanings an historic asset holds for those who relate to it, or for whom it forms part of a collective experience, or memory. This may include emotional links, and aspects of the site that people can relate to their collective history and heritage.

3.4 Summary of key significances related to the proposed site

Relative Significance

As identified by BS 7913, where changes to a heritage asset are planned, the potential impact of that change on its significance should be identified and quantified. The impacts from change can either be direct (i.e. affecting the fabric or character of the asset), or indirect, (i.e. altering spatial qualities or relationships within its setting). Change that protects or reveals heritage significance should be encouraged, whilst change that has the potential to be detrimental to the significance of the historic building should be avoided where possible. The various parts of the site have been assessed and graded, based upon the contribution they make to the overall significance of the site and its setting.

Exceptional Significance

A space or element of the heritage asset, which is of great importance, and is integral to the overall significance and character of the building. Layout and original fabric are intact, and the space or element is a strong example of a particular period or style.

Considerable Significance

A space or element of the heritage asset, which makes an important contribution to the significance and character of the overall building. Layout and original fabric are substantially intact, and the space or element is a good example of a particular period or style.

Moderate Significance

A space or element of the heritage asset which contributes to the overall significance of the building but is not a key component.

Neutral Significance

A space or element which neither contributes, nor detracts from the significance of the building or its setting.

Negative

A space or element which detracts from the significance of the building or its setting.



3.3 Summary Statement of Significance

The site in question is within the curtilage of the conservation area.

The proposals do not directly connect to or involve alterations to existing listed historic structures or built non-designated heritage assets, but do involve the within the curtilage of the Pirton conservation area and with an influence upon the setting of the site. The land site itself has been subject to change since its appearance on historic maps in the 1700s. Whilst the evidential grain of plot divisions remains a prevailing residential character has transformed the site in the last 50 years.

- **Aesthetic Value:** The site makes a contribution to the streetscape and Conservation Area. of importance is the view from the south which down Burge end lane. The agrarian character of the street links the conservation area to the wider rural landscape, however the implementation of new housing across the lane has arguably diminished this. Its is clear that a blanket assessment of the site would not be helpful in this regard. Accordingly parts of the site have been classified with regards to their significance in relation to potential impacts upon the setting when viewed from the backlands to the south and from the road to the north. The central section of the site is obscured by outbuildings and there is a pattern of existing development which justifies a lower level of significance in relation to potential development.
- **Evidential Value:** The legibility of the existing plot divisions and fine grain of development provide evidence of past economic activity and the former limits of the village. These are of considerable significance within the context of this site, and their retention of the boundaries and the small scale nature of development is key to preserving the character of this site.
- **Eidential/historical Value:** The relationship between the terrace and the plots is of significance, and the presence of outbuildings whilst making a direct visual relationship visible, links these through their residential character. This aspect is of moderate significance
- **Communal/Aesthetic Value:** Distant views from the northern pedestrian path are significant, and the site foregrounds the village and is rooftops. This aspect is of considerable and moderate importance and varies across the site.



5.1 Introduction

As stated by BS 7913, The purpose of heritage impact assessments (HIAs) is to gain an understanding of the effect of developments and changes on the historic asset, and how the impact of change might be mitigated.

5.2 Overview

The proposals are broadly comprised of:

The demolition of an existing out-building and the erection of a a new 2 bedroom singke storet dwelling.

The sensitivity of this site within the context of the conservation area warrants a site specific design approach.

The proposals aim to align the form, massing and materiality of the new dwelling to the character of existing outbuildings on this former allotment site and make reference to the agrarian qualities that informed the site.

As described in the statement of significance, the key elements of the site’s significance include the fine-grained nature of the plot, divisions, the small-scale outbuildings, its agrarian character, and the roof step down from the terrace behind. The sense of openness that existed historically has been fragmented over time, and the evidence of historic plot division is now referenced by the presence of fences, garden structures and small buildings. When viewed from the top of Burge End Lane, the significance of this area to the conservation area is the character of a country lane. The importance of the site is evidential in nature. The significance of the site is also as a foreground and a backdrop to the non-listed heritage assets that form historic Terrace.

Accordingly this analysis identifies the following overarching objectives that form a driver for intervention within the heritage asset:

1. To retain the legibility of the existing grain of boundaries on the site.
2. To set back the development to ensure the openness along the laneway and garden side is retained.
3. To maximise the sense of openness across the site, by reducing the height and tying into the pattern of development formed by out-buildings.
4. To create a well considered, honest, addition to the setting of Burge end lane materials but utilising modern detailing and create complementary contrast with the existing building.
5. An exemplary approach to environmental sustainability.

To follow is a detailed critical analysis of the proposed changes to the site in the form of an assessment of each major individual alteration or intervention. The purpose of this analysis is to manage the change methodology as advocated within BS 7913 and Historic England Planning Advice Note, “Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment”, 2015.

The historic plot divisions.

The proposals retain the existing plot divisions and involve the development of one of the garden sites in isolation.

A right of way is retained to the south and West of the plot, separating it further from the adjacent garden sites

Mitigation

The scale and massing of the structures proposed relates to the scale and massing of historic out-buildings and boundary structures. The articulation and setback from the laneway further retains the legibility of the existing site.

Reversibility

Limited

Compensation

The site is curently poorly managed and overgrown, the development of this site will not only help encourage a modest home within the settlement in an area of housing shortage, but will also encourage better management and upkeep of the site. Thedevelopment of the site also plays a role in managing the edges of the site and management of the laneway and associated impacts on the non-listed heritage assets.

Impact - moderate

Impacts upon the non designated heritage assets 2-12 Shillington Road

Impact

It is acknowledged that the introduction of a new dwelling whilst within a residential garden presents some change in spatial terms. In physical terms, the massing of the building has been reduced and scaled to line up with the existing pattern of garages and sheds, and aims to avoid setting up a precedent for more harmful development or confusing the existing development pattern

Mitigation

The visual separation and the different treatment, formally and materially of this proposal differentiate from the character of the existing terraces and relates it to the language of this back-land area. This does not create a new street edge or a wrapping of the Terrace around the corner. The impact in relation to the terrace is therefore considered small.

Compensation

The proposed dwelling is located a distance away from the rear of the Victorian Terrace and separated, visually by a number of existing extensions and I buildings.

Impact - Low

The backland/rural character of the site

Impact

The edging of hedges, fences and grass Burgess along the lane combined with the irregular rhythm of out buildings is part of the character of this laneway. The significance of this has been subject to some erosion overtime the addition of a new dwelling will introduce a more established access across the verge. It is not considered however that the paraphernalia associated with a residential dwelling would vary considerably from the existing residential nature of these plots.

Mitigation.

The dwelling is set back from the edge new hedge planting is incorporated. The materiality character of the two principal volumes relates to the informal character of these blocks. The driveway and parking is screened. Green Surfacing systems will be used a flat roof is incorporated to one of the wings and a slim pitch roof to the other as a way of reducing the overall mass of the building

Impacts from within the site. The materiality of the property and its ‘dacha’ aesthetic links it to the shed aesthetic present on the site. The new dwelling will occupy the central portion of one of the garden plots. Consideration has been made to the height of this which might alter the character of the overall site from within the other garden plots.

The scale of the dwelling has been considered in relation to adjacent structures, and areas of open garden positioning of windows is restricted to the rear front and roof of the property to avoid overlooking, but also to line these with the character of the garage is and other buildings across the site.

Compensation

The proposals aim to be a modern, progressive, low-energy precedent of how a small family can live modestly within the core of Pirton in a property linked to its allotment setting.

Impact Moderate/low

Views north along Burge End Lane

Impact

The property occupies the central zone of the site, which has been determined to be of a lesser level of significance as it is largely obscured by other outbuildings and does not contribute significantly to the street scene.

Mitigation

The height and massing of the dwelling matches the adjacent out-buildings. The flat section of roof over the bedroom wing incorporates a wildflower roof to soften its appearance further.

Impact Low

This document demonstrates that there is sufficient information, subject to detail, to comprehensively understand the impact of the works on the character of the listed building, and that the consequence of the proposals has been assessed.

The proposals will result in a degree of change to the character of the backland area, this change is determined to be moderate due to the scale and massing, respect of the historic plot divisions and the character proposed to link the dwellijng to the site. The proposals are set back to avoid impacts on the streetscape and views. Overall it can be assessed that the proposals constitute less than significant harm to the heritage asset.

