



# LETCHWORTH

## CONSERVATION AREA

### 18 DECEMBER 2001

Letchworth Conservation Area was designated on 17 December 1974 and amended on 5 July 1990. This document forms part of the first comprehensive review for Letchworth and should be read in conjunction with the conservation area map. A register of Buildings of Local Interest for Letchworth also exists but all of the buildings on this register are located outside Letchworth Conservation Area.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **What are Conservation Areas?**

- 1.1 Conservation areas are very special places. Each one is of ‘special’ architectural or historic importance, with a character or appearance to be preserved or enhanced. Conservation areas are an important part of our heritage and each one is unique and irreplaceable. Their special qualities appeal to visitors and are attractive places to live and work. They provide a strong sense of place and are part of the familiar and local cherished scene.
- 1.2 Conservation areas are based around groups of buildings, and the spaces created between and around them. It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings that are the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas. Each area is different and has a distinct character and appearance.

### **Conservation Area Legislation, Government Guidance and Development Plans**

#### **Conservation Area Legislation**

- 1.3 Conservation areas are defined in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.

The Act specifically places the following duties on local planning authorities:

- To identify and designate areas of special architectural or historic interest as conservation areas (Section 69).
  - To review the extent of conservation area designation from time to time and designate further areas if appropriate (Section 69).
  - To formulate and publish proposals for the preservation or enhancement of conservation areas, clearly identifying what it is about the character and appearance of the area which should be preserved or enhanced (Section 71).
- 1.4 Within a conservation area the usual planning requirements apply. In addition, there are further restrictions designed to aid in the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of the area. A leaflet entitled ‘Conservation Areas’ is available from the District Council and explains in more detail about conservation areas and the methods in place for preserving or enhancing their special character and appearance.
  - 1.5 The legislation is designed to provide for the management of change not its prevention. It is designed to allow areas to remain alive and prosperous yet ensuring that we do not sacrifice the quality of our environment and individual buildings for short-term gains. It aims to preserve the quality of our heritage, safeguarding the past for the future. Conservation is not an exact science and the more we learn and understand about our past the better able we are to care for it.

#### **Government Guidance**

- 1.6 Government also provides guidance for local authorities in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, ‘Planning and The Historic Environment’, (PPG15). The contents of PPG 15 must be taken into account in preparing development plans and the guidance is material to decisions on individual development proposals. English Heritage, Central

Government's advisory body for the historic environment, provides further guidance regarding conservation areas.

### **Development Plans**

- 1.7 Development plans are prepared both by county and district councils. The County Council prepares the Structure Plan. The Structure Plan establishes a strategic approach to the amount and broad distribution of new housing and industry and establishes a broad strategy for transport, recreation, tourism, countryside and conservation. The District Local Plan is prepared by the District Council, the plan sets out site specific and detailed policies based on the framework of the Structure Plan. Policy 20 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan No 2 with Alterations provides current the District's Local Plan Policy regarding Conservation Areas.

### **Existing Policies and Guidance for Letchworth**

- 1.8 The current Local Plan (Policy 58) refers to the Garden City design principles of Letchworth and urges that development proposals in Letchworth should be in sympathy with the traditional buildings of Letchworth and should clearly show that the Garden City design principles have been taken into account. The plan also gives, in broad terms, design principles for the Garden City.
- 1.9 Urban Character Guidance (UCG) is being produced by the District Council to define the visual character of the whole of Letchworth (not just the Conservation Area). The UCG Character Areas are identified in terms of their use, layout, landscape and broad building type and materials. These differ from the Character Areas defined in the Letchworth Conservation Area Character Statement, which are based on the historic and architectural interest of the areas. Therefore the areas in the Urban Character Guidance and The Conservation Area Character Statement may differ slightly. The Urban Character document also provides guidance for development proposals to ensure that any changes enhance the area and respects its visual character. The Conservation Area Character Statement is similar in its aims and objectives but providing to guidance on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of its special interest.
- 1.10 Design Guidance for Residential Areas in Letchworth Garden City has been produced by The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation in conjunction with NHDC and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the District Council. It provides detailed advice to owners and their professional advisors on the 'do's and don'ts on property maintenance, alteration and extension. The guidance therefore helps ensure that any changes to Garden City properties, whether old or new, are in harmony with their original design and character and are appropriate to the area in which they are situated. The Guidance is used by the District Council to help determine applications.
- 1.11 The 'Letchworth Shop Front Design Guide' produced by the District Council, provides guidance to shop owners and occupiers on the important characteristics of shopfronts and how to design shop fronts and signage which complement the individual character of buildings and the area in which they are situated.

### **Conservation Area Character Statements**

#### **Why Produce Character Statement?**

- 1.12 Each conservation area is individual and its special character and appearance different. Without having comprehensively identified and defined the character of an area it is very difficult to ensure that decisions truly preserve or enhance this character, hence the formulation of individual conservation area character statements.

- 1.13 Character statements are a means of ensuring that the importance and special interest of a Conservation Area is recognized and understood. This enables informed decisions on how this special character or appearance can be preserved or enhanced when changes are proposed within the area.
- 1.14 A conservation area character statement looks at the quality of an area in its broadest sense and identifies the special interest, character and appearance. The special interest and character of a conservation area are made up from a number of factors that will be individual to each area.

In general they will include elements such as:-

- Its history and development,
- Its landscape setting,
- Archaeology,
- Evidence of past uses,
- Layout and historic street pattern,
- The relationship of buildings to each other and the spaces they create,
- The architectural and historic quality of buildings,
- Local details,
- Prevalent and traditional materials,
- The contribution of trees, hedges and open spaces.

#### **Who Uses a Conservation Area Character Statement?**

- 1.15 The District Council has a duty to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas. Character statements are therefore produced to define the special interest and describe the character and appearance of individual conservation areas. A character statement will be used by the local planning authority when considering planning applications. It is therefore important that any change is assessed with reference to the special interest, character or appearance of a conservation area as described within the statement to ensure that it is preserved or enhanced.
- 1.16 A character statement is designed to be used by anyone with an interest in a conservation area, such as the local authority, homeowners, builders, architects, inspectors at appeals, voluntary groups etc.

#### **The Letchworth Character Statement.**

- 1.17 Everybody who lives, works in or visits Letchworth has their own individual feelings about the town, why they enjoy it and what makes it special. The Letchworth Conservation Area Character Statement draws on all these factors to create a document that records comprehensively what is 'special' about the area. It therefore looks at the quality of the area in its broadest sense, and identifies all factors that combine to create its unique and special character.

#### **How the Character Statement is designed and how it should be used?**

- 1.18 The Letchworth Character Statement will play a key role in ensuring that changes within the Conservation Area preserve or enhance its special character or appearance. The Character Statement forms essential guidance in itself. It is designed not to be prescriptive but to enable flexibility and creativity. It achieves this by identifying and describing the special characteristics of the Garden City that will need to be taken into account when considering changes.

- 1.19 ‘The Design Guide for Residential Areas’ (produced by The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and The District Council) aids in this process by providing general advice that should be considered in relation to the character or appearance of the area or individual building where changes are proposed. The ‘Letchworth Shop Front Guide’ plays a similar role.
- 1.20 The Letchworth Character Statement identifies the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole as well as concentrating on individual sub areas.

The Character Statement is divided into sections:-

- Section 2.0 provides an important overview of the special interest and essential character and appearance of the whole conservation area. Initially describing the history, origins, and the overall layout and Master Plan.
- Section 3.0 describes the special interest and character and appearance of the town centre.
- Section 4.0 looks generally at the special interest or character and appearance of the residential areas in the Letchworth Conservation Area.
- Sections 5.0 to 12.0 look in more detail at the character and appearance of the residential areas in the Conservation Area. The residential areas are divided into sub-character areas determined by considering their date, origins and character. The sub-character areas are shown in the table below.

<b>Character Area</b>	<b>Description</b>
Area One	The Cheap Cottage Exhibition and Early Grouped Layouts.
Area Two	The Glebe Lands - Common View, Glebe Road, North Avenue and Green Lane and part of Icknield Way.
Area Three	Early Pioneer Estates – Pix Estate, Ridge Road, Birds Hill, Rushby Mead, Ridge Avenue, Shott Lane.
Area Four	Small Middle Class housing and The 1907 Exhibition.
Area Five	Post 1914 Estates - Jackmans Place, Campers Estate, The Crescent, Pixmore Way and Rushby Mead.
Area Six	Larger Garden City Housing - The Glade, Broadway and part of Pasture Road.
Area Seven	Letchworth Lane.
Area Eight	Campfield Way and Highover Road

- 1.21 Section 2.0 therefore has relevance to the Conservation Area as a whole and should be considered carefully when considering any change. This section should be used in conjunction with the individual character statements for the town centre and the defined residential sub areas.
- 1.22 Section 4.0 provides an essential background and outlines overall characteristics for the residential areas and should be read in conjunction with the character statements for the individual sub areas.

- 1.23 The individual character statements for the sub areas describe the character and appearance of the areas and broadly identify features, buildings or sites that detract from or make no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **2.0 THE CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA**

### **Designation**

- 2.1 Letchworth Conservation Area was first designated in December 1974 with amendments made in 1990.

### **History & Origins**

- 2.2 Letchworth is the World's First Garden City and represents the principles of Ebenezer Howard in uniting the benefits of town and country in a newly designed settlement. Howard's principles are clearly shown in the layout of Letchworth from the Master Plan to individual housing layouts and are a vital consideration in understanding the special interest and character of the Conservation Area.
- 2.3 Howard went one step further than other housing reformers at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and worked with his pioneering company, to purchase an undeveloped estate and began to layout a complete settlement including housing, industry and open spaces.
- 2.4 Letchworth was the first Garden City in the world and therefore has international influence on Town Planning. Letchworth set new environmental and architectural standards for the twentieth century particularly in regard to housing design and layout.
- 2.5 English domestic architecture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was highly regarded. Germany sent Hermann Muthesius to study English Houses, leading to the publication of *Das Englische Hause* in 3 volumes from 1904-5. This is still one of the major studies of late Victorian and Edwardian housing in England. Letchworth had started just as Muthesius wrote the book. However, Muthesius clearly sees Letchworth as an important development on from the design of Port Sunlight and Bournville, the planned factory villages commissioned by W H Lever and the Cadbury family respectively. Muthesius's book was widely read, as were Ebenezer Howard's works on the philosophy of town planning. Letchworth was thus a focus of attention and its influence can be seen throughout modern planning.
- 2.6 Letchworth was the creation of a town dominated by open space, varied species of trees, and houses sited to obtain the maximum benefits of daylight was a significant achievement. Letchworth created widespread interest in Town Planning and led to the development of pioneer planning legislation and the founding of the Royal Town Planning Institute in 1914.
- 2.7 In late spring 1903, Letchworth Manor, 1,014 acres of freehold land, was the site chosen by Howard. The estate was situated between Hitchin and Baldock, largely to the south of the Great Northern Railway. Letchworth at this time was a small estate containing Letchworth Hall and St Mary's Church, along with small group of buildings including a number of estate cottages. However, Howard required 6,000 acres and the Letchworth Estate, alone was too small to complete what he envisaged, therefore other estates were also purchased, following astute negotiation, near Baldock, Willian and Norton.
- 2.8 First Garden City Ltd. was registered on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1903 at Somerset House. Membership remained unchanged from the pioneer company, including Cadbury, Lever, and Neville. The site chosen, the search began for a layout plan and a limited competition was arranged.

- 2.9 Architects Parker and Unwin supported social reform and elements of Ebenezer Howard's principles were reflected in their previous work, which impressed him. They were invited to produce a plan for the competition and declared that one would be ready in five weeks. On the 11 February 1904 Parker and Unwin's Master Plan was issued as the Garden City Company's Plan.

### **The Master Plan**

- 2.10 Based on the principles of Ebenezer Howard, Parker and Unwin incorporated their own concepts into a Master Plan. They designed a united layout combining formal geometry with the natural contours and features of the land. The Master Plan included a central town square with radiating axes, layouts with crescents and grid patterns as well as retaining existing routes such as the Wilbury to Norton Road, Old Icknield Way and the Hitchin to Baldock Road.
- 2.11 An existing line of trees marked the line chosen for the main axis of Broadway, many of these trees remain and continue to line the road. The main axis ran at an angle from the Hitchin Road, through the area reserved for the Town Square to the railway station. It continued through The Quadrant and then as a broadwalk across Norton Common. The plan originally showed a more elaborate design complementing the main axial line between the railway and Norton Common. However this area was re-planned to accommodate the 1905 Cheap Cottages Exhibition and the main axial line is all that remains.
- 2.12 Roads radiate out from the proposed Town Square and again from the Circus, the first roundabout situated along Broadway. The concept behind this design was to provide open vistas. The axes from the Town Square were to provide vista of countryside, whilst glimpses of the intended public buildings were envisaged when approaching the town. Unfortunately the buildings planned for the Town Square were never constructed. The square now forms a public garden, which is included on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens. Glimpses of the countryside are also no longer possible due to further development encroaching into the open fields, principally after the First World War. However the tree lined Broadway provides visual unity and the gardens at the centre of the square helps to create a visual focus.
- 2.13 Zoned areas also formed an essential part of the Master Plan. A clearly defined town centre along with residential, industrial and recreation areas were planned into the design. The residential areas were also zoned separately, from terraced estates, to areas of semi- detached and detached cottages, to the larger individual houses set in spacious plots.
- 2.14 The town centre was to be situated on an area of almost flat land, near the railway line, which was to provide an ideal location for a station. The industrial area was zoned to the east to form a broad belt to the north and south of the railway line. It was concealed from the Town Centre by a buffer zone for which Parker and Unwin designed the Birds Hill and Ridge Road development. Industry in Letchworth grew and by 1907 there was a clear need for the construction of a large number of economical cottages for the workers. The two main roads of factory development were Icknield Way East and Works Road and housing was provided on the parallel roads of Common View and Glebe Road.
- 2.15 The Pix Brook was used as a logical break, with the industrial areas and workers terraces to the eastern side and the town centre and lower density housing to the

western side. The large middle class houses were located near the main axis to the southwest of the Garden City.

- 2.16 The concept was to have countryside surrounding the town for agricultural use. Other key elements, essential to the layout plan were open spaces and recreational areas. Norton Common was retained in its natural form to enable a large open space in the centre of the town. Other open areas were also incorporated into the Master Plan including a central park as well as recreational areas provided with easy access for the residential areas. The geometrical framework balanced with the natural features united the individual elements into a cohesive layout. Corner and focal buildings were also an important part of the Master Plan. In Letchworth most of the churches are positioned on corner plots.
- 2.17 The Master Plan is a comprehensive layout, which has been largely adhered to during the development of Letchworth and strongly reflects the concepts of Howard, and Parker and Unwin. The principles behind and the implementation of the Master Plan are essential to the special interest and character of Letchworth.

### **3.0 THE TOWN CENTRE**

#### **History and Origins**

- 3.1 The commercial town centre was outlined in the Master Plan to be zoned separately from the residential areas and situated close to the proposed central Town Square, which now surrounds Kennedy Gardens, was intended to be developed with a complex of public buildings. The Town Square is situated on the main axis line of the Broadway and is the central focal point to the radiating pattern of the roads, which form the majority of the layout on the western side of the Garden City. Three of the commercial roads radiate from the Town Square, including Broadway continuing the main central axis. Despite the visions for the town centre including a formal Town Square, the residential areas seem to have taken priority with few buildings being constructed in the town centre and none constructed in the proposed Town Square in the early years of the Garden City. The First World War delayed proposals resulting in piecemeal development which continued through the 1920s and 30s with some plots not developed until the later part of the century, particularly in the Town Square.

#### **Building Layout and Density**

##### **The Commercial Town Centre**

- 3.2 The layout of the town centre conforms largely with the proposed layout shown on the Master Plan. In the commercial town centre buildings line the streets with focal buildings positioned at corners with some buildings arranged to create open spaces.
- 3.3 Station Place forms a terminus not only for the main axis of Broadway, but also the other town centre roads. It therefore links these roads together and provides them with a focal point.
- 3.4 The buildings surrounding Station Place, respect the lines of the roads, often those positioned on corners are stepped back. This is clearly seen on the corners of East Cheap and Broadway producing open spaces and reinforcing the overall open character of Station Place. Station Place provides an important area of open space and is a valuable contrast to the streets of tall buildings within the commercial town centre.
- 3.5 The positioning of the buildings along the main commercial streets results in their front elevations largely being joined to produce a continuous façade and a constant building line.
- 3.6 Large buildings of two and a half or three storeys with continuous façades provide a high density within the town centre. The density becomes slightly lower in the areas of smaller two storey buildings, along Leys Avenue and Station Road. The scale and mass of buildings is counterbalanced by the relative width of the streets.
- 3.7 The buildings are generally positioned on elongated plots. This is either reflected in the widths of the individual facades of each building or through the proportional divisions of the larger buildings. This characteristic is particularly noticeable in Openshaw Way, where buildings often have elongated ranges to the rear following the plot size and shape.
- 3.8 The character of the area surrounding Openshaw Way is very utilitarian with small workshops and outbuildings. A number of the buildings line directly onto the road providing an intimate character.

- 3.9 The Wynd is a small street to the rear of the main commercial streets. It has a strong building line, formed by the facades of two rows of single storey buildings. On one side the ridges of the buildings run parallel with the street, whilst on the other gable end face into the street. The buildings are small in scale, with traditional proportions and relatively narrow in span, and some have chimneys. The Wynd provides a link between Leys Avenue and Station Road and has a strong utilitarian character.
- 3.10 Gernon Road forms the boundary between the residential zones to the south and the town centre. The lower end of Gernon Road contains housing to the southern side, however as the road progresses towards the Town Square the building types change to more public buildings such as the Town Lodge.

#### Focal Buildings

- 3.11 Bridge Road was originally intended as a residential area. However, due to the rapid development of the industrial zone, it was considered important to try and regulate the remaining available space for new industrial buildings. This resulted in permission being given for the Spirella Building to be constructed in Bridge Road. The Spirella Corset Factory was designed by Hignett in three phases from 1912 to 1922. This dominant building can be clearly seen from Station Place and is a significant building within the town. It forms three blocks surrounding a courtyard, open onto Bridge Road and is a focal point terminating the line of Nevells Road. It is three storeys in height with large hipped roofs and small gablets. The buildings are constructed of red/orange brick with large mullion and transom windows with leaded lights forming much of the elevations.
- 3.12 The Station forms the focal building at the end of Broadway as well as Leys Avenue. It is constructed in a vernacular form reflecting the Arts and Craft Style. The station is largely masked from Leys Avenue and Station Road by the war memorial situated in its foreground backed by relatively high trees.
- 3.13 The HSBC Bank occupies a prominent site, on a triangular plot on the corner of Leys Avenue and Station Road, facing into Station Place opposite the train station, providing a strong linkage between the two roads and the central space.
- 3.14 At the bottom of Leys Avenue, situated on a corner plot with Gernon Road is The Free Church designed in the Georgian style and constructed of red brick with sash windows and large pediment forms to the roof. The principal façade faces across North Way South along Hillshott.
- 3.15 At the top of East Cheap on a corner plot with Gernon Road is the cinema designed to fit the acute shape of the plot, designed by Bennett and Bidwell in the Art Deco style. This is a prominently positioned and effectively designed building which relates well to its surroundings.

#### **The Town Square (Kennedy Gardens)**

- 3.16 The buildings surrounding the outer edge of the Town Square largely follow the line of the road, enclosing a central space. Most of the buildings are set back slightly from the road edge fronted either by grass verges, and or pavements. The building layout strongly relates to the central gardens and surrounding road. The axis roads also provide uniform breaks in the layout.
- 3.17 The buildings are large in size, most being two to three storeys in height. However, the density is relatively low due the open space provided by Kennedy Gardens, the front verges and the segments of open space adjacent to the residential areas. The space and grassed verges between the road and the frontages of the buildings are

important to the open character of the square, complementing the central open space and relieving the sense of enclosure provided by the buildings.

- 3.18 The overall building line is constant however on the eastern side the line is broken by St. Hugh's of Lincoln Catholic Church which is set far back from the building line and on the western side where Plinston Hall steps forward.

#### Focal Buildings

- 3.19 The Town Hall is situated to one side of the central axis of Broadway facing into Kennedy Gardens. It is a dominant Georgian style building, with an elaborate door surround and cupola on the roof.

#### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

- 3.20 Broadway slopes gently in a northeastern direction, towards Kennedy Gardens and into the town centre. The line of Broadway was an important design concept of the Master Plan, creating long vistas. From Eastcheap the land slopes down towards Howard Park Gardens and Norton Way South, creating view up and down Leys Avenue and Station Road, towards Howard Park or Station Place. The town centre and Kennedy Gardens are surrounded by trees but there are few within the town centre itself to make a significant impact.

#### Kennedy Gardens

- 3.21 The Town Square is formed around Kennedy Gardens which are listed grade II on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Kennedy Gardens is a large green open space rectangular in shape and formal in character. The size and shape of the space was originally designed to be occupied by large municipal buildings, the layout therefore relates in scale and proportion to the plots sizes and spaces forming the outer edge of the square. The formal character of the gardens complements the formal layout of the area with buildings lining the outer edge of the square, defining the central space. The central gardens complement the scale of the buildings that surround it, providing a central focal space. The Kennedy Gardens provide an outlook for the surrounding buildings and views out of the gardens to the buildings through the trees.

- 3.22 The open character of Kennedy Gardens provides a buffer between the town centre and the residential areas, this is an important transition forming part of the character of the Conservation Area, enhanced further by the green open segments to the axis of South View.

- 3.23 The Kennedy Gardens forms an essential part of the main axis of Broadway, providing a focus to the wide linear road to the south and the Broadwalk to the north. The green open character of Broadway and the green open character of the central gardens complement each other and provide openness and vistas along the main axis. There is however, a crest in the landform of Kennedy Gardens that interrupts a continuous vista from one section of Broadway to the other. Kennedy Gardens is an important open space within the Conservation Area.

#### Broadwalk

- 3.24 Broadwalk links Kennedy Gardens to the small area of planting, including a berberies hedge with yew, lime and cherry trees, surrounding the Cenotaph, which provides a green character to the open area of Station Place. However, the formal nature of Kennedy Gardens and the linear nature of Broadwalk, contrasts with the more informal nature of the amenity garden in front of the station.

- 3.25 Broadway contains the Broadwalk of the main axis, which runs through the middle of the road, providing a green barrier and corridor, which reinforces the street pattern of buildings lining the road with a constant scale and building line. The Broadwalk consists of a wide path with strips of planting on either side. Regularly spaced trees are under planted by shrubs, creating a formal avenue. The Broadwalk is an important part of the layout and brings a green open character into the town centre and linking the open character of Kennedy Gardens. The Broadwalk provides vistas from the town centre to Kennedy Gardens.

#### The Commercial Town Centre

- 3.26 Avenues of young trees reflect the more formal character of the town centre with their regular positioning.

### **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

#### Building Design

- 3.27 The Georgian style was envisaged for the town centre for two main reasons. Firstly a formal character was required, which it was felt the heights, building forms, design and materials of the Georgian style would clearly produce. Secondly, it was thought that the zones of the town should be clearly defined and the town centre should be distinctive and contrast from other parts of the town.
- 3.28 Architects working in the Garden City designed many of the he earliest buildings in the commercial town centre follow the Georgian style. However, other styles are seen including the Vernacular style (more characteristic of the residential areas), as well as a couple of buildings namely the Post Office and Garden Corporation Building displaying elements of a Tudor style. Both the Georgian Style and Vernacular style are characteristic, although there is a distinct area around Station Place and the top sections of the adjoining roads, which largely contain the envisaged Georgian style buildings, formal in character and dominant in size and scale.
- 3.29 Some of the slightly later buildings tend to follow the vernacular style of the residential areas. Both styles are characteristic, however there is a distinct area around Station Place and the top sections of the adjoining roads, which contain the envisaged Georgian style buildings, formal in character and dominant in size and scale.
- 3.30 Some of the buildings in the commercial town centre display features often seen on early 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings when the classical influence was just starting to reach Britain. This included the use of cross form stone mullion windows with leaded lights, rather than sashes and gables formed along the parapet. Other buildings are more vernacular in form with gabled roof forms facing onto the street. A few buildings display projecting gables and bays supported on brackets, following the vernacular style of the residential areas of Letchworth.
- 3.31 As in the residential areas the amount of detailing to the buildings varies. However, the larger buildings and terraced blocks tend to display more sophisticated details and complete compositions. The smaller buildings tend to have simple forms of detailing of either the vernacular or Georgian style.
- 3.32 Unwin planned a comprehensive design for the Town Square. The plan showed the outline of the civic buildings as well as a church, arranged in a formal square. The buildings were intended to follow the Baroque classical style, but unfortunately the First World War postponed building. The outer edge of the Town Square was in piecemeal starting with the museum building by Parker and Unwin in 1914.

- 3.33 Three buildings within the Town Square were constructed based on the Georgian style, namely The Museum, The Grammar School Building and The Town Hall. The other buildings are of more modern styles of the 1960s and 70s.
- 3.34 The Georgian style buildings follow the classical proportions and concepts of symmetry. Constructed of red brick largely in Flemish Bond, with sash windows headed with gauged brick arches.

#### Form and Scale

- 3.35 The buildings in the Town Square are positioned with their front elevations facing onto Kennedy Gardens. The elevations mainly have a strong horizontal form, balanced by details and proportions of the Georgian style. The buildings are relatively large in scale and are complemented by the size and shape of the Kennedy Gardens.
- 2.4 In the commercial town centre the form and scale varies, with the largest buildings situated around Station Place, along the majority of Eastcheap and Broadway and along the top sections of Leys Avenue and Station Road. Smaller scaled buildings are found lining the lower sections of Leys Avenue and Station Road. The individual buildings are largely based on rectangular forms, with the ridgeline following the line of the road.
- 3.37 The buildings at the top of Leys Avenue and Station Road, around Station Place, and along the East Cheap and Broadway are tall buildings mainly of two and a half to three storeys in height. The overall height of these buildings is generally constant. These buildings are mainly designed to contain four to six shops. They are rectangular in shape and lie parallel with the street. The overall building is usually divided into composite parts, usually with a central section. Distinction is provided between each individual shop by the divisions of the shopfronts, the positioning of the upper floor windows and in some case the use of pilasters. The buildings have carefully conceived proportions based on the dimensions of the classical style. The blocks are large in scale and their height provides a sense of enclosure to the streets relaxed to some extent by the relative widths of the streets.
- 3.38 The buildings further down Station Road and Leys Avenue are lower, generally two storeys and appear more domestic in scale. In some cases buildings containing three to four shops are also seen at this smaller scale, reflecting the principles of the larger blocks in proportions and divisions. However, the majority of the buildings of this smaller scale are individually designed and constructed rather than forming a block. The ridges continue to run parallel to the road providing continuity to the overall building form. Some of these buildings follow the Georgian style and therefore respect the classical proportions.

#### Building Details and Materials

- Roofing
- 3.39 Full hipped or gabled roofs, sometimes with parapets, are characteristic of the larger individual Georgian style buildings and terraced blocks. The smaller buildings of this style tend to have gabled roofs with no parapet, but sometimes have a form of cornice below the eaves. Many of the buildings have red brick chimneys that form part of the design of the roof.
- 3.40 Plain clay tiles are the predominant roofing material throughout the area and red brick chimneys provide balance to the compositions of the buildings and enliven the roofscape. The plain clay tiles are red/orange in colour, with a relatively rough texture. This, along with the traditional camber of the individual tiles provides a well-

textured and uniting feature of Letchworth, in both the town centre and residential areas.

- Walling

3.41 Orange/Red brick is the predominant walling material within the commercial town centre, complementing the Georgian style, although some render and stucco is also seen. Offwhite/cream roughcast is characteristic on some of the vernacular style buildings. Orange/ red brick is also the predominant material on the buildings around Kennedy Gardens. The larger Georgian style buildings are generally constructed in Flemish Bond, although some are of the simple Stretcher Bond. Sash windows are often provided with lighter contrasting coloured brick surrounds and gauged brick arches. In Georgian times softer rubbed bricks were used to make gauged brick arches to gain very thin joints. These details have been adopted in the design of the buildings in the town centre. In some cases stone or imitation stone is also used as a contrasting material in the detailing of the buildings.

- Windows

3.42 The wooden sash window was essential to the design of British classical architecture in Georgian times. The proportions of the sash windows respect the classical dimensions essential to the classical design. Technology in Georgian times only enabled windows to have panes of glass of a limited size, and hence the characteristic small paned windows with narrow glazing bars. Wooden sash windows with small glass panes and narrow glazing bars are an important feature of the Georgian style buildings. The majority of buildings constructed in the Georgian style therefore have this type of window. However, some buildings have late 19th century window designs with margin lights and circular heads.

3.43 Casement windows are used on the buildings of the vernacular style, again with small panes and narrow glazing bars. Some of these windows are wooden casements whilst others are metal.

3.44 Oriel windows were also fashionable in Georgian times and are displayed on a small number of buildings in the town centre. These oriel windows often had a cross style surround in stone or composite.

3.45 Stone mullion windows forming a cruciform shape are also seen on one or two buildings with square leaded lights as used historically in the 16th century in early forms of classical buildings in Britain.

3.46 The majority of windows have a strong vertical emphasis, usually following the classical proportions. This vertical emphasis is also characteristic of many of the casement windows. The ratio between the walling and windows is mainly in favour of the walling, with classical proportioning also contributing to the window spacing.

3.47 Historically wood was an essential material for making windows, door and shop-fronts. Wooden sashes and casement windows are characteristic in the town centre. The nature of the material enabling both simple and intricate detailing as well as a natural finish when painted, which complements the texture and nature of the other materials use to construct and detail the buildings. The use of traditional leaded lights is also seen on some of the buildings either fixed or in opening iron casements.

- Doors

3.48 Doors in the town centre largely copy the earlier classical style of the Georgian period. These are panelled and each door usually had between six and eight panels

depending on the status of the building and position of the door on the building. Hinges were concealed and handles were in the form of knobs. Symmetry to the door was important to the overall composition of the building. Depending on the status of the door in relation to the composition of the building various forms of surround were used. The more prominent doorway was usually more sophisticated in design. Columns or pilasters often flanked both sides of an entranceway and or the door surround was often moulded. Pediments were used on high status buildings and flat canopies on lower status buildings or doorways.

3.49 In Letchworth these features were used but in most cases the designs steer away from the more elaborate detailing. Most of the shops had shop fronts incorporating a door that was partly glazed. The majority of full panelled doors are generally seen on the larger Georgian buildings.

- Shopfronts

3.49 Shopfronts follow the form and proportions of a Georgian shopfront. The shopfront relates to the composition and proportion of the whole building respecting the positioning and proportions of the upper floor windows in particular. A 'Shop Front Guide for Letchworth' is available from the District Council that explains in more detail the proportions and styles of the shop fronts, and provides information on designing a new shopfront within Letchworth.

- Dormers

3.50 Dormers in the 18th century were relatively small in size and square in form. They were usually roofed with hipped forms and tiled, or with flat or cambered forms and leaded. In many cases they were partly concealed by the parapet at the front of the building. In the town centre a similar usage of dormers is seen. The 18th century dormers had small paned casement windows with narrow glazing bars and again this is utilised in the design of the Georgian style buildings. In Letchworth in cases where a more vernacular style has been used the dormers reflect those seen in the residential areas. They are larger in size and more rectangular in form, often accommodating three lights. The dormers on the vernacular style buildings are either gabled, flat or catslide in form.

3.51 Other details include, pilasters, cornices, pediments, string-courses, and dentilation. These are used very simply in most cases, but slightly more elaborately on the larger Georgian style buildings. The vernacular style buildings also have simple details similar to those seen in the residential areas.

### **Opportunity Areas for Improvement**

3.52 This section lists areas or buildings within the town centre which are considered not to preserve or enhance the special character of the area. The aim is to highlight these areas and to identify the essential reasons why they are not considered to be in character. The improvement of these areas or buildings to ensure that they preserve or enhance the special character of the town centre would be welcomed. However, each proposal would require an individual and detailed development brief to justify approaches and the design of schemes.

- Station Parade to the east of the Station does not make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The materials used are not in character with the area. The windows are arranged to have a strong horizontal emphasis with no solid walling between. The definition of the separate shop

frontages is not very strong. However, it encloses this side of Station Place and follows the form and height of the other buildings in the area.

- Arena Parade, Broadway and Eastcheap. This building reflects the scale of the surrounding buildings and is constructed in brick does not complement the essential character in its design.
- The Shopping Centre in Commerce Way. The buildings are solid in form, with no breaks between individual units. The division of the buildings with large pentice roof forms at one storey height and the lack of clear division between units produce a strong horizontal emphasis to the area. The layout is an informal cross road, with the buildings to the western side stepping back to create a central rectangular area. Beams and gable forms connect the two sides of the walkways, producing an enclosed and dark character to the shopping centre. The shopping centre is constructed of brown/red bricks, which does not lighten its enclosed character. There is little detailing or attempt to provide some counterbalancing vertical emphasis to the building forms. The buildings do not contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.
- The Council Office Building, Car Park and Service Yards to the north side of Gernon Road. These do not relate well to the layout, scale, form or character of the Conservation Area. The transition between small cottages on one side and large offices etc on the other is too abrupt. There is little permeability between the two areas and blank walls face onto the road providing an unwelcome appearance.
- Council Printing Services Building, Gernon Road. The building does not relate well to the other buildings in this road and is constructed of dark brown bricks that are not characteristic of the area.
- Police Station, on corner of Nevells Road and Bridge Road. Due to its design and materials this building does not make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area.
- Telephone Exchange, Nevells Road. This large square brick building does not reflect the character of the surrounding area and has no principal façade providing an inactive edge to the roads.
- Health Centre, Nevells Road. This helps to provide a transition in scale from the Police Station to the domestic scale of the houses. However, the buildings are set back from the road and fronted by a car park, which breaks the constant building line of the road to some extent. The buildings are single storey with either flat or shallow pitched roofs differing in form to the other buildings within the area.
- Rear elevation of shops in Openshaw Way. Many of the shops have been extended to the rear with additions that are large in scale and do not reflect the proportions of the host buildings.
- Post Office Service Yard, Broadway. This gap site largely enclosed by a brick wall. The continuous facades and constant building line of three storey buildings is therefore broken. The boundary wall continues to line one side of a walkway between Broadway and Eastcheap. The walkway is relatively wide, however there is an incoherent and unwelcome character to the area.

- St Michael's House, Norton Way South. This building is situated between a large scaled corner building and individual houses of a domestic scale. It does not relate to its surroundings in scale or design.

## 4.0 RESIDENTIAL AREAS

### Street Layout and Housing Density

#### **Street Layout**

- 4.1 Street layout and housing density were key to achieving the principles of Howard in avoiding the unsanitary conditions and overcrowding of the industrial towns. Shelter, privacy, sunlight and air space were the key needs recognised by Parker and Unwin in determining the housing and layout design. The housing layouts were also designed to reinforce the concept of ideal communities, each new house was to have regard to the other to avoid as Unwin put it 'the self-centered independence and churlish disregard of others, which have stamped their character on modern towns'. The resulting layouts were often pioneering in their design, with houses orientated and positioned to complement the roads, neighbouring buildings and the overall layout.
- 4.2 The Garden City Company marked out plots in the areas next to be developed. Regulations were provided regarding building lines although houses could be set back or forward within certain limits if agreed and could be set at various angles where this was considered advantageous.

#### Housing Groups and Estates

- 4.3 The provision of housing society estates began in 1905 with Eastholm, which developed as individual buildings rather than a unified group. This contrasts interestingly with Westholm designed and constructed a year later following the ideas of Unwin and his idealized rural layout plan. The housing forming a unified group around three sides of an open ended green.
- 4.4 Parker and Unwin demonstrated layouts for housing estates on a larger scale with the Birds Hill and Ridge Road Estate. At Birds Hill and Ridge Road a cul-de-sac arrangement enabled development in depth, in addition to a village green, and a playground.
- 4.5 These concepts were continued in later estates. Terraces of housing were carefully positioned to maximize the use of space to form housing estates in which individual dwellings had privacy, sunlight and airspace. This resulted in layouts where blocks of housing followed the main line of the roads, sometimes set back, sometimes set around small greens, or private roads. Special attention was paid to corner plots where buildings were often positioned at an angle within the plot. The houses were fronted by small front gardens and adequate space was provided between each terrace.
- 4.6 These provisions are also seen as the social status of the area increased. Detached and semi-detached properties tended to line the roads set back behind front gardens. Parker and Unwin allowed a certain amount of flexibility in regard to the positioning of buildings in relation to the road. As a result there are often slight fluctuations in the positioning of buildings, however, overall the building lines appear generally constant. Regularly positioned with spaces between. Houses were often angled on corner plots to avoid the direct confrontation with another property, to maximize the area of open space between buildings and to provide architectural focal features. The larger houses in individual plots, in areas such as Sollershott West and Broadway continue to relate to the lines of the roads and are positioned to have a constant building line and generous spaces between neighbours

### Housing Density

- 4.7 The houses in Letchworth range from small scaled workers terraces and cottages in areas such as Rushby Mead, Common View and Wilbury Road, to large upper-middle class houses in areas such as Broadway, Sollershott West and The Glade. Due to the zoning of Letchworth there are distinct areas of certain sized houses and housing densities. The scale of the houses is complemented by the relative size of the plot and there are adequate spaces between neighbours. The relationship between the size of the houses and the size of the plots in which they are situated is an important characteristic of the Conservation Area.

### The Contribution of Open Spaces, Trees and Hedges

- 4.8 The Master Plan was designed to link geometric layouts with natural features. The result was the retention of open spaces within the plan including Norton Common and the length of the Pix Valley. Many existing trees and some hedging was retained within the Master Plan.
- 4.9 The regulations of the Garden City Company required frontages to be provided. This resulted in front gardens to all the properties as well as verges to the road edges. Open grassed areas were also provided with developments to provide a low density and green character to the garden city. Gardens also play a vital role in providing further green space around buildings.
- 4.10 Trees were another important feature of the Garden City. The arrangement and type of trees and the use and size of verges tends to relate to the status of the roads. Every road appears to have had a specific tree species. In some roads the character is formal with regularly placed avenues of trees. In others there is a natural arrangement of trees either along the road side or within front gardens.
- 4.11 Hedgerows are very characteristic of the Garden City forming boundaries to the properties and lining the roads. These are both small and boxed in the areas of smaller and terraced housing, or larger and more natural in areas such as Sollershott West.

### The Architecture of the Garden City

#### The Architects of Letchworth

- 4.12 The architects working in Letchworth brought a high standard of design to the Garden City to complement the carefully designed Master Plan and housing layouts. A number of the buildings are listed on the statutory list to reflect their individual special interest. However, most of the buildings within the Garden City, reflect this standard and contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 4.13 Parker and Unwin (the designers of the Master Plan) also designed many of the buildings in Letchworth, mainly based on vernacular models. Many of their assistants also became notable architects such as Bennett and Bidwell, who won second prize for independent work in the 1905 exhibition, and Hignett, who built a thatch cottage for himself in Croft Lane and also designed the Spirella Company Building. These architects designed a number of houses in various parts of the Conservation Area in the early stages of the Garden City, following the vernacular tradition.
- 4.14 Baillie- Scott was also attracted to the work of the Garden City and between 1905 and 1908 he produced five very distinct houses, in his unique vernacular style with dominant roof forms and the downward sweep of the roofs almost to the ground.

- 4.15 Other notable architects who designed houses in Letchworth include Harrison Townsend, Halsey Riccardo, Geoffrey Lucas, Randell Wells, and C.M Crickmer. Crickmer settled in Letchworth producing some very well designed houses many forming effective groups.

#### Building Style and Design

- 4.16 The Arts and Crafts style based on the earlier English Vernacular is a strong characteristic of the Conservation Area. Some of the character areas also have a number of Neo-Georgian or Queen Anne style buildings. However, their scale and overall use of materials generally unite the two different styles of buildings.
- 4.17 Housing reform and The Arts and Craft Movement were closely associated, each a reaction against the industrial revolution. The social implications it imposed, and the crowded and monotonous environment it created with the construction of the bylaw terrace and the use of mass produced materials was considered intolerable. The Arts and Craft style was a result of a movement against the standardization produced through manufacture by machine and reverted back to the traditional methods with ideas of simplicity, truth to materials and the unity of crafts. However, The Arts and Crafts style was never specifically chosen for Letchworth.
- 4.18 The promoters of the Garden City were also convinced that a high standard of beauty should be attained which could only result from simple, straightforward buildings and from the use of good harmonious materials. The buildings were to be designed for their purpose and position and unnecessary ornamentation was to be discouraged. The parameters outlined complemented the ideals of the Arts and Crafts style and vernacular forms.
- 4.19 The first houses to be built in Letchworth were the homes of a number of the members of the Garden City Company. These tended to follow the Arts and Crafts style where buildings took a vernacular form rejecting conventional symmetry, with white roughcast walls, dominant roofs with overhanging eaves and large chimneys. These vernacular style buildings proved to become a prototype for housing in Letchworth.
- 4.20 A competition held in 1905 for the design and construction of 'cheap' small-scaled workers cottages. There was no interference from the consulting architect on design and this resulted in the first large housing development in Letchworth being of mixed design, form and detailing. A large number however followed vernacular design and detailing, whilst other introduced a variety of styles.
- 4.21 Following The Cheap Cottage Exhibition, further workmen's cottages were required close to the industrial area. This resulted in pioneer estates designed by Parker and Unwin, such as Birds Hill and Ridge Road as well as the development of the Glebe Lands to the North of the industrial area. The second exhibition in 1907, devoted to the urban cottage, saw further use of vernacular designs and the use of roughcast walls red tiled roofs, a precedent for this style was starting to be established. The development of Rushby Mead and Ridge Avenue between 1911 and 12 continued the use of vernacular designs. The rectangular forms with prominent gabled and hipped red tiled roofs, with rough cast elevations, enlivened with dormers, bays windows and gabled projections and shows the distinct style established for Letchworth at its height.

### Unity and Variation

- 4.22 The design of housing in the estates and groups is distinct and unified character. There is a careful balance between unity and variation to provide housing which avoids monotony but is cohesive in appearance. This is achieved in different ways.
- 4.23 The size, scale and form of buildings, along with the overall use of roughcast walling and tiled roofs unify the buildings. An element of variety is provided through the selective use of features and detailing, including the use of materials within the design composition. Variety is also provided through the careful positioning of buildings and their overall layout, particularly in areas where the housing is more simple and uniform in design. The level of detailing depends on the status of the various areas and the available monies available at the time of development. Sometimes the variety is subtle, simply reverting between gabled and hipped roof forms, or the differing dormer types or the use of materials to highlight different forms or features of the building.

### Building Details and Materials

- 4.24 Building details enliven the forms of the buildings. They are also used to unify an individual building or group as well as providing variation within some of the sub areas. The particular materials and craft techniques also complement the vernacular design of the buildings. The buildings that follow the Georgian style also use similar materials and craft techniques.
- 4.25 Building details and materials were used to unify an individual composition as well as providing variance to a designed layout. The forms of buildings were enlivened by the use of projecting gables, bay windows, pentice roofs, dormers and various materials from a small palette. Similarly materials were often used to divide and complement the design elements of an individual building such as accentuating projections. The amount and type of detailing varied with the status of the houses and the amount of money available at the time the houses were built. Larger upper middle-class housing having slightly more unique and elaborate forms of detailing these became simpler and less varied moving down through the lower middle class housing and again into the working class cottages and terraces.
- 4.26 Raymond Unwin provided guidance urging architects to ‘Apportion materials with a view to some colour scheme. He will avoid monotony, not by a irregular jumble of materials and colours, but by a sufficient though unobtrusive variation in the different buildings, leading up to more definite breaks of colour in certain parts; treating differently different roads or parts of roads, and so producing interest and variety on his estate, which will be helped by the sense of unity maintained in each individual part , and of overall harmony over the whole’.
- 4.27 The types of materials and craft techniques are characteristic of the age of the buildings and contributes to their character and appearance. The texture and colour of the materials, their use and application complements both the vernacular style of the houses and the soft green nature of the area.
- Roofs
- 4.28 The roofs are a dominant and uniting feature of the Conservation Area. They are all steeply pitched, clad in plain clay roof tiles with carefully positioned red brick chimneys. There is some use of slates, but these form a very small minority.
- 4.29 The use of plain clay tiles with a camber to each individual tile provides an overall texture to the roof. The variances of the tiles in form colour and texture through the way they are made enhance their quality. Modern machine-made tiles are more

regular and produce a constant and rigid character to the roof. Clay is softer in character than concrete and produces a rich red/orange colour characteristic of the Garden City. The use of slate was generally avoided in Letchworth Garden City as Parker and Unwin felt that they resembled the mass construction of terraces in the industrial towns. Slates are therefore not characteristic of the Garden City.

4.30 Roofs are either strong gabled or hipped forms with pitches of 45 to 50 degrees, with simple ridge and bonnet tiles. There are also some roofs with small gablets. A characteristic of many of the buildings is their overhanging eaves and some have short rafters fixed to the bottom to soften the angle of the eave. The eave detail tends to be open rafter feet and some of the eaves are stepped and are often accentuated with the use of red tile creasing. Swept and laced valleys are a feature of many of the roofs providing continuity to the character of the roof. The roofs within the Garden City have a dominant character and are united generally in their steep pitch and roofing material of plain clay tiles.

- Chimneys

4.31 Red brick chimneys are a prominent feature in the Letchworth Conservation Area complementing the dominant form of the roofs and the colour and texture of the plain clay roofing tiles.

4.32 Chimneys in Letchworth are constructed in red/orange brick. The rich colour of the clay materials provides unity to the overall composition of many of the buildings. Chimneys are carefully positioned in accordance with the composition of the buildings and arrangement of roof forms. Depending on the design of the building they are usually positioned either on ridges, often forming bookends or projecting from the slope of the roof. Chimneys are an important feature of the Conservation Area and usually rather dominant in size, some are very tall. They are often a significant part of the design of a building.

- Walling

4.33 Off-white/ cream roughcast walling is used on all sizes of buildings and is the predominant walling finish within the Conservation Area. Off-white/cream contrasts well with the texture and colour of the red/orange tiles and bricks. Some of the roughcast walls remain unpainted. Roughcast has a dimpled surface and is complemented by both sunlight and shadow.

4.34 Red/orange brick is also characteristic in parts of the Conservation Area on both Georgian style and vernacular style buildings. In a number of cases the whole building is constructed of brick, in other cases the brick has been used to almost mid-height of the building and roughcast above. It is largely used for the plinths of roughcast buildings and unites the foot of the buildings with the roof and other tiling details. The bricks are relatively rough in texture complementing the texture of the roofing tiles. The Georgian style buildings are constructed in a similar red/orange brick work often with varying lighter red or blue coloured brick work highlighting features of the buildings such as window openings. The rich orange/red colour of the clay materials provides unity to the overall composition of the buildings.

4.35 Gault clay was quarried at Arlesey three miles northwest of Letchworth, for making the distinctive yellow grey 'Arlesey White' bricks. These bricks were only used on a few buildings and in the early stages of the Garden City. Parker and Unwin did not like their colour and appearance and avoided their use, whenever possible.

- 4.36 Timber-framed decoration and tile hanging are also seen enlivening elevations of some of the housing. Timber-framing was largely reserved for the higher status buildings.
- Projecting Bays
- 4.37 Projecting bays are seen on a number of buildings in Letchworth. They are very effective on buildings that form a terrace or group, providing variance to the composition of design. They are roofed in gables or hips and some-time catslide varieties are seen.
- Timber
- 4.38 Timber is a characteristic material within the Garden City used in the traditional crafts techniques of the time. It is used in the form of timberframed decoration particularly on the higher status buildings, as well as to create windows, doors, porches and verandahs. In the area of the Cheap Cottage Exhibition a number of timberframed buildings were constructed. The principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement at this time supported the use of traditional crafts such as joinery and carpentry, steering away from mass produced detailing and materials. The timber elements and features of the buildings reinforce, and are distinctive of, the vernacular style of the Garden City.
- Windows
- 4.39 The windows reflect either the vernacular or Georgian style of the buildings. Windows are predominantly casements, either wooden with small squared glazing pattern, with narrow glazing bars or in some cases iron casements with squared leaded lights. Sashes are seen on some buildings, but again display a small squared glazing pattern. Windows are usually painted off-white or cream.
- Doors
- 4.40 Planked timber doors reinforce the simple vernacular style of the many of the buildings. Handles on the workers cottages are simple in design and hinges are mainly concealed. As the social status of the housing increases more elaborate door furniture is seen. Ironwork was used for the door furniture including letter boxes and strap hinges. The majority of more ornate door furniture is found principally on the higher status buildings. Simple wooden panelled doors are seen on the Neo-Georgian buildings. The very top section of the doors is sometimes glazed.
- Dormers
- 4.41 The use of dormers is variable depending on the design of the properties. There are a range of types used, some flat roofed, some catslide, others hipped or gabled. Many simply cut slightly across the eaves line whilst others project from the roof form. Dormers always respect the scale and proportions of the roof forms and although often fairly large never over dominate the roof form. They provide variation to the roofscape.
- Bay Windows
- 4.42 Bay windows are used on many houses in Letchworth, but their use depends very much on the style of the building. Some of the informal terraces have bay windows but they are usually roofed flat with lead. Other houses have bays roofed with tiles in a hipped or pentice form. In some cases the pentice roofs are extended to provide a porch over the doorway.

- Porches and Canopies
- 4.43 The use of porches in the Garden City is mixed depending on the design of each building. However, enclosed porches are not generally a feature of Letchworth. They are usually formed by a continuation formed by the continuation of the roof slope supported on timber brackets or posts, or the use of pentice roofs. Other types include simple flat or gabled canopies supported on simple brackets. A number of houses have recessed porches, whilst some of the simpler buildings have no porches at all.
- Rainwater Goods
- 4.44 Rainwater goods, were originally of cast iron. Depending on the design of the building rainwater goods are either conspicuously placed, or form part of the detailing of the building, with interesting arrangements dividing or connecting elements of the design. The use of this material reinforces the vernacular style of the buildings and has a fairly rough texture, which complements the textures provided by the other principal building materials such as rough cast, brick and clay tiles.
- Balconies
- 4.45 Balconies are a feature often found on the upper middle class houses. They are constructed of wood, with flat balusters, and are often painted to match the other joinery on the house.

## **5.0 AREA ONE THE CHEAP COTTAGES EXHIBITION AND EARLY GROUPED LAYOUTS**

**Wilbury Road, Icknield Way, The Quadrant, Cross Street, Nevells Road, Norton Way North, Eastholm and Westholm.**

### **History and Origins**

- 5.1 This area was the chosen site for housing developed for the 1905 Cheap Cottage Exhibition. Its aim was to provide small affordable dwellings for industrial workers, whilst gaining publicity for Letchworth Garden City. It was a competition inviting architects and builders to design and construct 'Cheap Cottages'. Cash prizes were awarded for various categories, which were mainly based on the number of rooms relative to cost. The Exhibition also encouraged the use of innovative materials and experimental designs. The Exhibition was opened by the Duke of Devonshire on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1905 and was a great public success with over 60,000 visitors.
- 5.2 Parker and Unwin set examples for the design of grouped layouts with Eastholm and Westholm. These were the first grouped arrangements and involved simple vernacular style buildings with red tiled roofs and roughcast walls grouped around central greens.

### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

#### **Road Layout.**

- 5.3 Icknield Way and Wilbury Road existed before the Garden City and were incorporated into the layout. The roads therefore curve slightly with the contours of the land, providing an informal character. The new roads for the Garden City were designed to combine both natural and formal elements and therefore follow a more formal sequence, whilst respecting the contours of the land. The layout forms simple linear patterns creating a well spaced informal grid. The Quadrant is deliberately straight forming part of the planned axis.

#### **Housing Density**

- 5.4 The cottages are small in size and largely detached, although some are semi-detached. The size of plots in relation to the size of cottages and the spaces provided between and around buildings creates a relatively low housing density particularly in Wilbury Road. The situation is similar along Icknield Way and Norton Way South although the spaces between buildings are slightly reduced. The density becomes higher in The Quadrant, The Cross and Nevell Road, where buildings are more regularly positioned and closer together.

#### **Building Layout**

- 5.5 Buildings are positioned to follow the lines of the roads. Therefore in general they follow a linear pattern, but curving slightly with the line of the road. The strong relationship between the buildings and the line of the road is emphasized where the cottages along Icknield Way, curve into the Quadrant providing continuity and unity between the two roads. Corner plots have also been carefully considered, with buildings either positioned diagonally facing directly onto junctions or the building itself is bent at angles to reflect the angle of the road.
- 5.6 The buildings in Eastholm curve around a green and follow the line of the road with a constant building line. The buildings are also regularly spaced with gaps between. Westholm is more formal in design with three elongated blocks around a tapered green and two smaller blocks set back in each corner.

### Building Line

- 5.7 The building line within this area is relatively consistent, reinforcing the strong relationship they have with the line of the road. In Wilbury Road and Norton Way North there are slight fluctuations to the building line however it remains on the whole relatively constant.

### Spaces

- 5.8 The plot sizes developed for the 1905 Exhibition appear to have been rather randomly selected. The few remaining plots having been infilled with slightly later development. The plot shape is predominantly rectangular, orientated with the narrower edge forming the front boundary and the majority of the elongated plot forming rear gardens. In Wilbury Road the proportions of the plot boundaries create some plots which are more square in shape. The plot sizes are slightly larger along Wilbury Road, and the cottages are set back a greater distance from the road. The plots sizes along Norton Way South are a little narrower, and narrower still along Icknield Way, The Quadrant, The Cross and Nevells Road.
- 5.9 The vast majority of the cottages are situated centrally in relation to their side boundaries, with comfortable spaces between. The spaces between buildings create informal breaks. In Wilbury Road some of the houses are situated much nearer to one side boundary than the other, providing relatively large side gardens. Although the plot sizes are narrower, this characteristic is also seen in some of the other roads in this Character Area.
- 5.10 In Wilbury Road the cottages on the northern side of the road are positioned slightly further back than those on the southern side. The situation is similar in Norton Way North where, in some cases, the buildings are set closer to their rear boundaries than to the road.

## **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

### Norton Common

- 5.11 Norton Common was a natural feature designed into the layout to provide a large open space. Norton Common retains its natural contours and mature trees and enables the countryside to penetrate into the centre of the street layout, reinforcing the open green character of the area and providing important settings and views for the cottages.

### Greens

- 5.12 Westholm is a large grassed amenity green surrounded by houses. The front gardens are relatively large and many retain their front boundary hedges. There is a mix of trees in the grass verges around the green including pine, sycamore and horse chestnut. The green has a single weeping beech and is screened from Wilbury Road by a high, formal beech hedge.
- 5.13 Eastholm Green is a quarter circle of mown grass bounded by a formal low privet hedge on the two sides adjoining the roads and a line of large mature trees in front of the houses which surround it, those on the eastern side have open plan front gardens. The trees, hedges and open greens provide an important setting to the buildings, along with the green character of their front gardens. The amenity greens have strong links with the open character of Norton Common and bound its northern edge.

#### The Green Character of the Roads

- 5.14 Wilbury Road, Norton Way North and Icknield Way are all relatively wide roads and have grass verges and pathways increasing the overall width. Norton Common borders a large section of Wilbury Road and nearly the entire length of Icknield Way providing an open soft green character and views for the cottages on the opposite sides. Wilbury Road in particular has a mature green character with mature trees and hedge planting in private gardens making a significant contribution.
- 5.15 Norton Way North is more formal and has narrow verges lined with small birch trees with pathways along side a wide road.
- 5.16 The Quadrant and Cross Street are narrow roads. The Quadrant has narrow verges lined with trees continuing the main axis. Cross Street has no verges, the front boundaries abutting directly onto the pavements which line either side of the roads.
- 5.17 Nevells Road is relatively narrow in character with grass verges on both sides with large sycamores positioned alternately with cherry trees. The canopies of the larger trees meet in the middle to form a tunnel effect.
- 5.18 Hedges form some of the front boundaries in this Character Area and in some areas provide a constant line to the road complemented by the strong building line of the cottages. The front gardens and boundary hedges remain in their majority in Wilbury Road and are a strong characteristic of this part of the Character Area.

#### **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

##### Garden City Architects

- 5.19 A number of the cottages were designed and constructed by architects working in the Garden City, including Parker and Unwin, Bennett and Bidwell, Hignett, and Foxley. The special interest of many is now reflected in their status as listed buildings. However, every 'Cheap Cottage' is unique and has a wealth of special interest locally, and together they form an area of great historic and architectural interest with a distinctive but varied character. The composition of forms and features varies in quality, however the often unusual composition of forms and the informal arrangement of features along with their detailing and use of materials provide a quirky and unique character that adds to their interest.

##### Form and Scale

- 5.20 The cottages are all small in scale and largely constructed of a composition of small rectangular units. The floor plans as a result, form simple squares or rectangles or in some case 'L' or 'T' shapes or cross wings. The main emphasis of the exhibition was on detached cottages, but other classes provided for semi-detached and grouped cottages. Along Icknield Way and into the Quadrant there is a characteristic of small rectangular cottages positioned end onto the roads. The cottages are predominantly one and a half or two storey, although a number of single storey cottages were also constructed. The roofs are a mixture of hipped and gabled, with some gabled and mansard roofs and in some cases the roof forms are very dominant. Gabled and hipped projections are seen on a number of buildings providing a little extra floor space and variety to the design. The gable spans, and roof pitches vary slightly between buildings, but not over a wide range and therefore appear fairly constant. Similarly, although the heights of buildings vary, the more prominent one and a half to two storeys buildings create an almost consistent roof line in most areas.

### Cheap Cottage Exhibition Rules

- 5.21 The board managing the Cheap Cottage Exhibition ruled that ‘Architects are not to be interfered with regards matters of taste by the consulting architect’. This resulted in a wide range of designs, forms and detailing.

### Variety of Styles

- 5.22 The cottages introduce a variety of styles and most buildings have a distinct and individual character. For example, 158 Wilbury Road was designed in a style very different from the Arts and Crafts style chosen for many of the other exhibits. Small in scale and formed of a composition of rectangular and square forms, the building has a flat roof and a hint of Art Nouveau in its detailing. However, a number of the buildings were designed based on the English Vernacular.

### Innovation

- 5.23 Many of the cottages were experimental in design using new construction techniques and materials. Number 4 Cross Street for example was built from blocks made on site by a portable machine and won a special prize for the best cottage of cement concrete. Number 158 Wilbury Road was constructed from prefabricated reinforced concrete. Timber-framing was also used and Bennett and Bidwell won second prize for their timber framed and weatherboarded cottage on the corner of Icknield Way and The Quadrant.

### Designed Groups

- 5.24 Eastholm is formed by a number of small-scale cottages in the vernacular style, which are individual in design but unified by the use of materials and detailing. Westholm is designed with a symmetrical layout of blocks of housing in a vernacular scale and design. The buildings are unified by their form and materials and fenestration pattern with variation provided by the slight differences in detail from one house to the next, however there is symmetry to the overall design and detailing.

### **Building Details and Materials**

- 5.25 The constraints expected by costs did not prevent the design of cottages, which were interesting in form, features and detailing often with quirkily positioned features, individual to each house.
- A mixture of traditional and innovative materials are characteristic in this area.
  - Walling materials include red brick, roughcast, and rendered cement panels/blocks painted off-white/cream. Timber-framing decoration, hanging tiles, and weatherboarding were also used particularly to accentuate gables.
  - Roofs are generally hipped or gabled, with strong roof pitches and are predominantly plain clay tiles, although some pantiles and slates are also used.
  - Windows are largely made of timber and are generally traditional casements or sashes.
  - There are a few dormers in the area. The most usual type tends to be the catslide positioned just above the eaves.
  - The details and materials complement the overall design and style of the buildings.

### **Negative Features**

5.26 The character and appearance of this area is very special and coherent, however, some changes are beginning to occur which if continued could accumulate to have an adverse impact. These changes are outlined below.

- The removal of front boundary hedges.
- The erection or construction of front boundaries which are not characteristic of the area.
- Garages or extensions enclosing spaces between buildings.
- The loss the original windows and doors with uncharacteristic alternatives.
- The construction of hardstandings in front gardens.

### 5.27 **Opportunity Areas for Improvement**

- Macfadden Webb House, Norton Way South. Due to its materials and design this building makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area.

## **6.0 AREA TWO THE GLEBE LANDS**

### **Common View, North Avenue, Glebe Road, and Green Lane.**

#### **History and Origins**

- 6.1 This area was developed early in the history of the Garden City. In Green Lane some houses date from 1905. Common View was largely developed in 1907 and Glebe Road slightly later between 1913 and 1915. The land was originally known as Glebe Fields from which one of the roads takes its name. The area lies parallel to the industrial area and was zoned in the master plan for residential use. The housing was built by various housing societies and contains simple workers cottages.

#### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

##### Road Layout

- 6.2 The layout follows very closely to that shown on the Master Plan, with linear roads that lie parallel to each other running east to west, divided at a mid point by a central axis.

##### Housing Density

- 6.3 The use of terraces enabled fairly high density, however the arrangement and orientation of the buildings provides a relatively spacious character. lowering the overall appearance of the density.

##### Building Layout

- 6.4 The housing is designed to provide areas of in-depth development. The houses follow the lines of the roads as well as being grouped around private roads or central greens, providing variation to the continuous linear form. The housing layout was developed in stages, however, the overall layout is cohesive and unified.

- 6.5 The planned groups follow the principles of the Garden City layout largely following the linear form of the road as well as forming small squares around green central spaces. In Glebe Road, houses on corner sites are positioned diagonally on the plot to provide focal features and a more open feel at road junctions or entrances to closes.

- 6.6 Terraced blocks on either side of the roads are generally positioned to mirror each other. In many cases the terrace blocks are stepped back to complement a square or road junction on the opposite side of the road. At the division between North Avenue and Common View, the buildings are stepped back, but remain parallel, not following the lines of the dividing roads.

##### Building Line

- 6.7 The majority of housing follows the line of the road, although variety and elements of space within the layout are provided by some terraces being set back from the building line.

##### Spaces

- 6.8 Individual plots are long and narrow. The plots at the end of terraces tend to be slightly wider enabling more generous spacing between terrace blocks. Spaces allow sunlight, privacy and airspace to the individual properties. The spaces between buildings are almost regularly balanced complementing the symmetrical forms of the terraces. The terraces also have front gardens which add to the relatively spacious character of the area.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

- 6.9 The boundaries are generally hedges, which enclose front gardens and provide a consistent front boundary unifying the majority of the streetscene. The hedges tend to front the properties in low boxed form and are important to the setting of the buildings. A number of green open spaces are designed into the layout, which are also important to the character and setting of the buildings. Small grassed gardens although generally small provide a green character to the frontages. The long front gardens at the junction between Common View and North Avenue are also important in providing a green open space to the area.
- 6.10 Small trees are placed along Glebe Road, Common View and North Avenue, creating informal avenues. However, the number of trees becomes sparse toward the eastern end and sometimes disappear altogether. There are also few trees in the rear gardens of the properties to provide a green setting. A line of poplar trees continues the line of the central axis across the central open space of Cromwell Green, enlivening and reinforcing its green character.
- 6.11 Green Lane has a significant avenue of mature trees of a mix of species including lime and cherry, the canopies of these trees meet creating an enclosed and shady character to the lane.
- 6.12 The trees in Green Lane provide important setting to the streets of Common View and Glebe Road. The trees can be seen over the roofs of the houses as the road slopes down towards Green Lane.
- 6.13 Cromwell Green forms part of the central axis, linking Common View and Glebe Road. Small greens are also situated either end of Common view providing variety to the street layout. In Glebe Road culs-de-sac are formed providing terraces with longer front gardens forming a green open space in some cases.

### **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

#### Garden City Architects

- 6.14 The leading architects in Letchworth including Parker and Unwin, Bidwell and Bennett, and Crickmer designed the majority of housing. The buildings follow the simple style of the Arts and Craft design.

#### Form and Scale

- 6.15 The housing forms terraced blocks that are small in scale and rectangular in form. The blocks are one and a half to two storeys high and the roofs are largely gabled, hipped or half hipped, although there are also some gabled roofs. The roof pitches are steep and the depth of the buildings relatively shallow. The blocks are unified through their size, form and design, varying only slightly in their simple but effective detailing.

#### St. George's Church

- 6.16 St. George's Church is situated on the corner of Norton Way North and Common View. Built in 1963 it is designed to fit the acute angle of the corner site, resulting in a segmental shaped building. The dominant sloping roof form complements the roof forms of Letchworth which are also dominant in character. The spire is an important feature and focal point of the Conservation Area. Its angular form can be seen from some distances projecting above the trees and cutting into the air.

### **Building Details and Materials**

- 6.17 Each terrace is predominantly symmetrical and the chimneys are positioned to reinforce this, either situated on the ridge or on the hips of roofs. The fenestration pattern also reflects the symmetry of the terraces and is carefully positioned, unifying the blocks. String courses are found on a number of the blocks linking the tops of the first floor windows unifying the design.
- 6.18 Doorways are often in pairs with shared canopies, again linked by a string-course. The doorways of the end two cottages for each block are in many cases on the gable ends. The original front doors that tend to be planked or have elongated panels extending down most of the length of the doors. Rounded arched openings on the front elevations provide access to the rear garden of a number of properties. Brick steps are found leading up to the front door on some of the properties. Bay windows are also a feature on some of the houses and have simple leaded flat roofs.
- 6.19 Many of the terraced cottages have no porches whilst others have simple flat canopies on solid wooden brackets shaped with simple mouldings. The use or lack of porches on individual terraced blocks provide a method of unifying the individual terraces whilst providing an element of variety to the estate as a whole. This is an important characteristic of the area.
- 6.20 In some cases gables and projections enliven the design of the housing. Most of the houses are of one and a half storeys with dormers cutting across just above the eave line. Hipped dormers or catslide dormers that sometimes have up to four window casements in each are common. In Glebe Road paired gabled dormers creating an 'M' shape with linked window opening are an interesting feature on some of the blocks.
- 6.21 The roofs are detailed with up-turned eaves, some with tiles stepping upwards between the top of the wall and the eaves. Bonnet tiles are provided on the hips and plain tiles to the ridges.
- 6.22 Building materials are predominantly roughcast walling painted off white/cream and plain tiled roofs. However, one or two terraces are constructed in the Arlesey white bricks, although it is not clear whether or not they were originally rendered. The buildings in this area are largely unified by the predominant walling off white/cream colour and the plain clay tiled roofs with variation provided by subtle alterations in design, detailing and the positioning of buildings. In some cases plain clay tiles are used to detail around openings and below eaves on the gable ends of buildings.

### **Negative Features**

- 6.23 This area is unified in character, however, some changes are starting to occur which have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- The loss of green open space within culs-de-sac for parking in Glebe Road.
  - The loss of some front hedges, particularly to the eastern end of Glebe Road.
  - Erection or construction of front boundaries not in character with the area, particularly to the eastern end of Glebe Road.
  - Garages constructed on corner plots and spaces between terraces.
  - The loss of the original window and doors, for plastic alternatives.
  - The replacement of roof tiles with hard concrete tiles.
  - The construction of hardstandings, generally between terraces and on corner plots.

## **7.0 AREA THREE EARLY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS**

**Pix Estate, Ridge Road, Ridge Avenue, Rushby Walk, Broughton Hill, Shott Lane, Hillshott and parts of Birds Hill, and Rushby Mead,**

### **History and Origins**

- 7.1 This area of Letchworth was developed between 1906 and the First World War for the Howard Cottage Society. It includes estates of housing layouts designed by Parker and Unwin that strongly display their principles and concepts of informal design and the arrangement and grouping of buildings to avoid monotony and overcrowding. Development started in 1906 with Birds Hill Estate situated to the south of Birds Hill and along the northern side of Ridge Road. The Pix Estate, a pioneering neighbourhood unit, developed between 1907-8 followed this. Development then continued with the Rushby Mead development in 1911 and the slightly later development of Ridge Avenue, Broughton Hill and Shott Lane.
- 7.2 This area shows Parker and Unwin's housing layout design concepts at their most effective in Letchworth and these pioneering estates set examples for later housing in Letchworth and throughout the country.
- 7.3 The area also includes the small group of houses, arranged to form a curved layout facing onto an open green situated on the northern side of Birds Hill. These houses known as the Boat Houses were designed by V. Dunkerley as part of the Cheap Cottage Exhibition in 1905.

### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

#### **Road Layout**

- 7.4 This area forms the eastern side of the Pix River valley with the land sloping down towards the Brook. The roads follow the contours of the land, largely running parallel with the line of the brook along the slope. Roads aligned to run up the hill also form part of the layout as their names suggest Birds Hill, Hillshott and Broughton Hill. Ridge Road curves around a higher section of the land to the north.

#### **Housing Density**

- 7.5 Terrace blocks form the housing in this area. These are small in scale and are one and a half to two storeys high. The overall heights of the buildings are constant, differing only with the subtle changes to the levels of the land. The designed layouts and the arrangement of terraces provide open spaces lowering the overall density of the area. The development layout uses the area of land both efficiently and effectively providing housing which was not overcrowded, with individual gardens and communal areas.

#### **Pioneering Estates**

- 7.6 Parker and Unwin became very well known both nationally and internationally for being at the forefront of housing design. Their estates in Letchworth were featured in an R.I.B.A International Congress Paper, entitled 'The Planning of the Residential Districts of Towns'. (Miller p71).
- 7.7 Birds Hill Estate was pioneering in design. The layout including a cul-de-sac to enable in depth development, a village green, a play ground and a buffer zone of trees

to divide the residential area from the adjoining industrial zone. The estate was designed along a curved road.

- 7.8 The Pix Estate was built for the Garden City Tenants Housing Association between 1907-08. It is the most complete of the early estate developments and was designed as a pioneer neighbourhood unit, with an institute and recreational facilities. The housing is arranged in depth around a narrow 'Z' shaped road.
- 7.9 Rushby Mead was designed with a strong relationship to the River Pix and Howard Park. The housing was arranged to form some interesting layouts relating to the line of the roads and the open character of the Park and Gardens as well as forming groups.
- 7.10 The housing along Ridge Avenue lines the road, with the groups of terraces occasionally stepping forward and backwards to provide variety to the layout. The slightly later housing in Shott Lane simply follow the line of the road. The 'Boat Houses' on Birds Hill curve around a central green.

#### Building Layout.

- 7.11 The layouts were designed to provide variety with houses arranged to have strong relationships with the roads, open spaces and each other. The variety provided by the grouping and positioning of buildings was balanced with an element of unity provided by the overall consistent building line where the facades of the buildings were all positioned in relation to each other. The constant building line is relieved in some areas by a row or group of terraces being stepped back for the remainder of the buildings. This stepping is regular but subtle in arrangement and usually found at a road junction.
- 7.12 The contrasting positioning of the houses either lining the roads or forming groups around open greens or spaces opens and encloses the character of the roads. The houses to the north end of Rushby Mead are set back behind long front gardens, which provide variety to the streetscene and reflect the open character of Howard Park opposite. A single block of housing brings the building line to the road frontage, before the entrance to Rushby Walk. In the Pix Estate the terraces step forward and back opening and closing views. Terraces are also set back with longer front gardens at "The Ridge" and the buildings arranged either side of Hillshott School, this again creates areas of open space within the development, contrasting with the overall building line of the road. In Rushby Mead, south of Hillshott, the road meanders in an 'S' shape which runs diagonally through a space created by twin blocks of terraces set at right angle to each other, effectively closing off the view.
- 7.13 Buildings are positioned to complement the formation of junctions. On the western corner of Rushby Mead and Hillshott are a pair of cottages, which form an effective group. The cottages are detached but each form an 'L' shape situated on a diagonal line. The positioning and forms of the two buildings strongly unify the buildings as well as the roads that combine at the junction. The terraces on the corner of Hillshott and Ridge Avenue are linked with a single storey diagonal blocks, uniting both roads. At the junction between Ridge Road and Ridge Avenue, The Ridge is angled to form a less formal focal point for both roads, visually linking them. In the Pix Estate some of the buildings on corner plots are angled and make effective entrances at road junctions.
- 7.14 Buildings positioned as focal points complement the layout. In Hillshott the school buildings are set back some distance from the road and form a focal point at the end of Hillshott, with housing arranged to form two complementary 'L' shaped blocks

either side. Focal buildings are positioned at the end of the cul-de sacs in Rushby Mead and Ridge Road, they are focal buildings in their position only and no hierarchy is displayed in the design of the buildings. However on the green in Ridge Road the central terrace is distinct in design and scale compared to the other terraced blocks. At the junction between Ridge Avenue and Broughton Hill the situation is similar, the central focus of the terrace opposite the junction is highlighted in the more individual design.

#### Spaces

- 7.15 Spaces are provided between the terraced blocks throughout the whole development. These are rather regular in appearance with more generous gaps provided a corner plots. These spaces are important to the overall appearance of density within the development as well as complementing the regular forms of the terraced blocks. In Shott lane there are quite generous spaces between blocks helping to relieve the regularity of the building line. The positive impact of these has been marred by the introduction of prominent single storey garages.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

#### Howard Park.

- 7.16 Howard Park and Gardens is formed along the valley of the Pix River. It was a natural feature specifically designed into the Master Plan. The Park and Gardens retain a natural and open character and is essential to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Howard Park and Gardens is listed grade II on English Heritage's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

#### Private Gardens and Open Spaces

- 7.17 The terraced properties all have small front gardens providing green frontages and contributing to the green spacious character of the roads. However, the layout also includes longer front gardens on the corner of Ridge Road and Ridge Avenue, including 'The Ridge' and within the majority of Rushby Mead. These larger front gardens provide additional green open space within the area. The tapered green scattered with trees in Ridge Road also provides an important open space within the area.

#### Trees and Verges

- 7.18 Ridge Avenue, Boughton Hill and Hillshott have regular spaced small trees within narrow grass verges. Ridge Road has wider grass verges and large trees, again regularly spaced. The continuous line of the verges and the regular spacing of the trees complement the line of the road and the positioning of the houses. There are also a few large trees within rear gardens, providing backdrop to terraces, notably at The Ridge and at the end of a cul-de-sac in Ridge Road.
- 7.19 Rushby Mead has no grass verges or trees formally placed to line the road. However, there are few large trees to the southern end of Rushby Mead positioned along the road near front boundaries of properties. The essential green open character is provided by the long front gardens, and the open space and trees of the parks and gardens along the Pix River.
- 7.20 Shott Lane has no verges or trees lining the roads, although there are a few small trees and shrubs within front gardens which provide some green character.

#### Hedges

- 7.21 Low-boxed hedges to the front garden of the terraces remain in their majority in all roads except Ridge Road, Shott Lane and the Pix Estate. The hedges in these roads

form part of their essential character. Positioned in a constant line they providing unity and a soft green character to the streetscene.

### **The Architectural Character of Buildings**

#### Garden City Architects

- 7.22 The majority of the terraces were designed by leading architects in Letchworth including Parker and Unwin, Crickmer and Bennett and Bidwell.

#### Form and Scale

- 7.23 The housing forms terraced blocks that are small in scale and rectangular in form. The blocks are of one and a half to two storeys high and the roofs are largely gabled although some are hipped or half hipped.

#### Building Design

- Birds Hill

- 7.24 In the Birds Hill Development the terraced blocks were largely symmetrical in design, all based on similar vernacular designs with very slight variations. However, some asymmetrical terraces also formed part of the design, notably at each end of the tapered green. The form was generally based upon a main range with gabled projections to each end, detailed with an arrangement of double windows. The designs include multiple dormers which alternate in size between two to three lights and are positioned on the eaves line.

- 7.25 An extension of the roof to the front or side of the buildings forms an entrance porch on some of the buildings, whilst on other terraces doorways were recessed under an arch.

- 7.26 Windows are wooden casements of up to four lights and some have glazing bars and others do not. The repetition of various features resulted in a clear identity and unity to the estate.

- The Pix Estate

- 7.27 The Pix Estate is formed by terraced houses, some symmetrical in design others asymmetrical. The master plan and terraces were designed by Parker and Unwin. The designs of the terraces vary from simple rectangular forms to those with prominent gables or double gables. The terraces are vernacular in style and many are detailed with dormer and bay windows adding to the variety of the design. Some of the terraces have porches with pentice roofs that extend across the ground floor windows others have flat canopies. These details are important in unifying the terraces but providing variation throughout the estate. Unfortunately the unity of features has been lost to some extent by alterations. Windows were originally wooden casements, although the majority of windows and doors have been replaced.

- 7.28 The buildings are constructed of Arlesey white bricks in Flemish Bond brickwork with plain clay tiled roofs. Unfortunately a number of the roofs now have interlocking concrete pantiles.

- Rushby Mead and Ridge Avenue

- 7.29 Rushby Mead and Ridge Avenue are again based on an overall rectangular form, with mainly gabled roof forms with some variety provided by hipped roofs. However, a wider range of features and projections are used creating more variety to the detailing of the buildings. Although Parker and Unwin designed the layout, various architects

designed the informal blocks including Parker and Unwin, but also Crickmer and Bennett and Bidwell. Despite the differing architects and a number of individual designs, none of the buildings are individually overpowering and the overall design achieves a good balance between unity and variety, producing an overall consistency and comprehensive design.

- 7.30 The blocks are generally symmetrical, however a number are carefully designed to be asymmetrical. This is very subtle, usually by using differing features either end of the block for example in Rushby Mead a block has a slight full roughcast gable to one end and a half tile hung gable projection to the other.
- 7.31 The rectangular forms are occasionally enlivened with gable projections, either positioned centrally or at each end of the range. In a few cases overhanging gabled projections enriched with hanging tiles supported by ground floor bay windows. These are largely seen in Rushby Mead and the southern end of Ridge Avenue.
- 7.32 Dormers are used to provide variety to the area used on some terraces but not on others. Where dormers feature they appear in many different types and forms including gabled, catslide and simple flat roofed dormers usually positioned at eaves level. Some of the dormers and gabled projections are emphasised with the use of dark brown weatherboarding or tile hanging; others remain roughcast.
- 7.33 Porches are not a feature of this area, although many terraces have a simple canopy on moulded brackets, like in Rushby Walk. Most doorways are either flush with the buildings, such as along the majority of Ridge Avenue, or recessed as seen in many of the buildings within Rushby Mead. Here the doorways are recessed under curved arches with slight drip moulds. Bay windows are also a feature on a couple of the terraced blocks, usually with flat leaded roof. Sometimes the roof of the bay is extended to form a canopy over the doorway.
- 7.34 The use or lack of features such as dormers, flat canopies, recessed doorways and bay windows in separate terraced groups is an essential part of the design concept of the area providing a balance of unity and variety.
- 7.35 Windows are largely small paned casements ranging from one to four lights depending on the design and positioning on the block. Some of the terraces in Ridge Avenue have no first floor windows. In School walk there is a generous space between the ground and first floor windows. Small square casement windows are often a feature of the terraces in Rushby Mead and Ridge Avenue positioned above doorways. The doors are largely wooden planked, ledged and braced doors some with a small area of glazing to the upper part. The majority of the windows and doors survive in many streets within this character area and are an essential part of the vernacular style of the buildings.
- The Boat Houses, Birds Hill
- 7.36 These are semi-detached houses, rectangular in form, one and a half storey in height, with large mansard roofs giving the appearance of up-turned boats. The mansard roofs contain an upper floor with two catslide dormers in each roof form. The buildings have corner buttresses that continue the slope and shape of the mansard. They are symmetrical in design with the front doors at either end of the façade adjacent to a ground floor window. There are two chimneys positioned to reinforce the symmetry of the buildings on the back slope. The buildings have small square additions to each end which are either lean-to forms or have hipped roofs

- Shott Lane
- 7.37 In Shott Lane the buildings are simpler in design. They are rectangular in form but have no gabled projections or bay windows. They are symmetrical with gabled roof forms. The buildings form terraces or semi-detached houses linked by a single storey gabled unit. Most of the buildings do not have porches, although some have hipped additions to the side where the front door is located. They have flat dormers often of up to six lights. The windows were originally wooden casements with small panes. Unfortunately many have been replaced.

- Hillshott
- 7.38 The houses along Hillshott are detached or semi-detached buildings of individual designs. The houses are well spaced and are situated in fairly large plots. Hillshott has similar characteristics to Character Area Four set out in Section 8, and this should be referred to for guidance along with Section 5, which looks at the overall characteristic of the residential areas.

### **Unifying features**

- 7.39 The scale, form and vernacular design as well as the use of plain clay tile roofs and the roughcast wall painted off-white/ cream unite the terraces in this area. This area is also unified by the use of layout concepts, an overall constant building, and regular spaces between buildings. The use of design features and detailing also plays a key role in unifying the estates, such as the use of flat canopy porches.

### **Negative Features**

- 7.40 The majority of special features and characteristics remain in this area especially in Rushby Mead, Ridge Avenue, Rushby Walk, School Walk and Broughton Hill. However, a few changes have occurred which are starting to have a negative impact on the special character and appearance of the area. These have been outlined below.
- The loss of original or characteristic windows and doors in Ridge Road and Shott Lane.
  - The erection of some fencing or boundaries which are not in character with the Conservation Area in Shott Lane and Ridge Road.
  - The creation of hardstandings, particularly in Shott Lane and Ridge Road.

## **8.0 AREA FOUR SMALL MIDDLECLASS HOUSING AND THE 1907 EXHIBITION**

### **History and Origins**

- 8.1 This part of the Conservation Area largely contains small middle class housing including the majority of the cottages for the second Letchworth exhibition held in 1907. The major section of the second exhibition was devoted to the Urban Cottage and included sections of Pixmore Way and Gernon Road with a link road between them, Lytton Avenue. The main objective in 1907 was the construction of a small estate giving a practical demonstration of town planning. The remainder of this area was developed in a similar fashion, continuing to respect the scale, form and materials of the exhibition cottages. The area also contains a number of important public buildings and their grounds, including The Cloisters, St Francis College, Howgills Friends Meeting House and St Christopher School. The cricket ground at St Christopher's School was marked on the Master Plan of Letchworth and was also the site for the official 'opening' of the Letchworth Garden City in October 1903.

### **Street Layout & Housing Density**

#### **Road Layout**

- 8.2 The roads in this area are clearly shown on the original Master Plan. The roads form part of the overall layout radiating out from the main square of the central axis. Lytton Avenue and Souberie Avenue curve to reflect the shape of the central axis reinforcing the radiating pattern. Norton Way South provides the designed north to south link and is linear in character.

#### **Housing Density**

- 8.3 The buildings in this area are largely individual or semi-detached houses, positioned in individual plots. There are also a number of groups formed by terraces. The houses are relatively small in scale and are one and a half to two storeys high. The relationship between the scale and size of the buildings and the spaces around them provides a character of relatively low density.

#### **Building Layout**

- 8.4 A site plan was produced for the 1907 exhibition indicating fairly rigidly a building grouping which entrants were expected to follow. The layout is similar throughout this area, with cottages largely positioned to run parallel with the roads, along with occasional grouped arrangements, such as Paddock Close (part of the earlier Cheap Cottage Exhibition) and numbers 10 to 34 Lytton Avenue. Groups are generally formed by terraces, sometimes with semi-detached cottages, and arranged in squares set back from the road. A good example of this arrangement is seen in Meadow Way. In these arrangements the houses to the opposite side of the road either complete the square or step back from the road to complement the opposite group. This is evident along the section Lytton Avenue between Gernon Road and Pixmore Way.
- 8.5 Houses are largely positioned centrally within the side boundaries of the plots, providing some regularity to the spacing and triangular or square plots are often created at corners. Plot sizes are more generous in Sollershott East set back from the road with larger front gardens.
- 8.6 On corner plots the houses are generally situated at right angles to the road. However, sometimes buildings have been designed to follow the angle of the corner, examples are seen on the corners between Meadow Way and Norton Way South and again between Sollershott East and South View.

- 8.7 Buildings are also arranged in other ways to complement junctions and provide focal points. For example at the junction between Field Lane and Sollershott East, terraces form inverted 'L' shapes on each corner plot.
- 8.8 The public buildings tend to be situated on corner plots or terminating road junctions. Their positioning and design often form focal points to the layout.

#### Building Line

- 8.9 The buildings strongly relate to the line of the road the positioning of buildings varies slightly but on the whole the building line appears constant. Where groupings are made set back from the road the building layout returns to the road to reinforce the building line.
- 8.10 The semi-detached houses in Souberie Avenue are arranged in an exaggerated curve to one side, creating a green to the front of the group. The positioning of the houses strongly relate to the curved shape of the road, whilst producing a constant building line.

#### Spaces

- 8.11 Spaces are provided between each of the buildings and via front gardens and both contribute to the relatively spacious character of the area. Open spaces are also formed where groups of houses are arranged to produce central open greens.

#### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

- 8.12 The roads in this area are characterized by the use of trees and verges to form a hierarchy. Narrow roads rely on trees and shrubs in private gardens, wider roads have avenues of trees, and the widest roads have avenues of large trees in wide grass verges. Roads tend to only have one or two tree species along their length, for example Sweet Chestnut, Ash or Common Acacia. Front boundaries tend to be hedges, generally privet. Street trees, shrubs in gardens and front boundary hedges make a considerable contribution to the character of the area.
- 8.13 The land in this area slopes gently eastwards towards the Pix valley. The Pix valley provides open space and important settings to Norton Way South. Norton Way South is wide in character and has a large avenue of limes and horse chestnuts set in grass verges, which make a significant contribution to the character of the road creating a tunnel effect with joining canopies. There is a strong green character to the road mainly provided by the trees and grass verges, but also front boundary hedges and grassed front gardens of some of the properties.
- 8.14 Baldock Road is a pre-Garden City road and follows the form of the land. It is characterised by significant mature planting and very wide grass verges on the south side with mature trees next to the road. The north side has high garden boundary hedges with a mix of plant species.
- 8.15 On the northern side of Baldock Road opposite the entrance to Cloisters Road there are two areas of open space. One is enclosed by the rear boundaries of properties along Sollershott East and Field Lane, the other open on all sides and lined with an access road to South View and Sollershott East. Both areas are scattered with trees. Roughly semi-circular in shape and informal in character, they reinforce the green character of Baldock Road and provide an element of relief to the layout of houses lining the roads.

- 8.16 Open spaces to the rear of the houses are part of the designed layout and are important to the character of the area, providing recreational space as part of the concept of designed neighbourhood layouts. They are important settings to the buildings as well as contributing to the low density of the area.
- 8.17 Barrington Road is very narrow in character and lined on either side with hedges and mature trees along its boundary with the cricket field. The cricket and playing fields of St Christopher School provide important areas of open space to the school site complementing the positioning of the surrounding school buildings. These areas of open space play a key role in separating housing areas and lowering the overall density of development, as well as providing views and settings for the surrounding residential areas.
- 8.18 There are few other areas of large green open space. However, the layout of the housing provides some grouping around central open areas, and the houses are well spaced lowering the overall density.

### **The Architectural Character of Buildings**

#### **Public Buildings**

- 8.19 Many of the public buildings in this area were constructed early in the history of the Garden City. The Cloisters is positioned as a focal point at the end of Cloisters Road. It was built between 1906 and 1907, for its eccentric patron Miss Annie Lawrence, as a School of Psychology. Designed by W.H. Cowlshaw it is a unique and remarkable design, with an off centre tower with side chimney and conical roof positioned between gabled and circular building forms. The building was constructed in a mixture of walling materials, part creamy brickwork, part flint diaper work and part Purbeck stone. The special interest of the Cloisters is recognised through its grade II\* listed status.
- 8.20 Adjacent to The Cloisters is the site of St Christopher School. Little Arundale built in 1905 is one of the earliest houses designed by Parker and Unwin, its listed grade II\*, now forms part of the school. Other early Garden City houses also now form part of the school site. The main school building was designed by Crickmer and built in 1909. It is constructed of Flemish Bond brickwork, with an 'H' shaped floor plan and hipped plain clay tile roofs. The detailing includes timber sash windows and wooden casements some with timber glazing bars and small panes other with leaded lights. Tall red brick chimneys are also features of the building as are hipped dormer windows and front bays. The School is situated in its own grounds, with courtyard and playing fields to the West. The open playing fields and cricket ground form part of this large open area, which is a major feature of this sub-area.
- 8.21 In 1919 the St Christopher's School Trust sought a site to build a larger day school premises. At this time there were no houses at top of Spring Road and St Francis College, designed by Morley Horder, was built between 1919 and 1924. The building form follows the acute angle of the plot. It consists of a single storey loggia facing south towards the roundabout together with its two single storey wings following the lines of Spring Road and Broadway. The higher buildings, which join the two wings, completing the central paved courtyard, were erected later. The building has a distinct Mediterranean character with white rendered walls and pan tiled roofs. The large scaled additions were made in the 1930's including the large block facing onto Broadway, although at a varying angle, designed in a loosely classical style.

- 8.22 'Howgills' the Society of Friends Meeting House is situated to the southern end of South View. Bennett and Bidwell designed it in 1907, and Numbers 38 and 40 South View were designed to be viewed with conjunction to it. The building is very much in line with the vernacular style with stone mullioned windows, roughcast walls and a steeply pitched plain clay tile roof with sweeping eaves. Set centrally in a large plot, one elevation faces directly onto South View whilst the other faces across the garden, then across the green towards Baldock Road. 'Howgills' is a grade II listed building.
- 8.23 Mrs. Howard Memorial Hall is situated in the corner of Howard Park, which lies between Norton Way South and Rushby Mead along the valley of the Pix River. The Memorial Hall was built between 1905-6, in memory of Ebenezer Howard's first wife and is the first public building in the Garden City. It is a grade II listed building. Parker and Unwin designed the Hall with roughcast walls, a dominant hipped roof, punctuated by dormer windows and tall brick chimneys. The building is orientated diagonally within the corner space, with the front gable end, positioned to face directly towards the road junctions. This part of the building adjoins an angled wing to the rear, cleverly creating a relationship between the line of the building and the remainder of the Park and Hillshott. The building was extended in 1907 with a 'L' shaped wing to the north west elevation.

### **Dwelling Houses**

#### Garden City Architects

- 8.24 Notable Garden City Architects, including Crickmer, Clapham Lander and Bennett and Bidwell, designed a number of houses, although these were largely confined to the area of the second exhibition

#### Building Style

- 8.25 The buildings in this area mainly following vernacular models with roughcast walls, steeply pitched roofs and casement windows. However, there are also a number of buildings, which reflect Georgian influence, constructed in red brick with sash windows and bays with stone heads or surrounds. These buildings are of the Queen Anne style popular at the same time as the Arts and Crafts style.

#### Form and Scale

- 8.26 The houses are largely either detached or semi-detached, there are a few terrace arrangements in this area. The houses are predominantly one and a half to two storeys in height and the roof height is relatively constant. The houses are individual small and middle-sized houses. Buildings are composed of rectangular units either with a simple rectangular floor, perhaps with gabled projections or forming 'L' or 'T' plans. The roofs are predominantly steeply pitched and gabled or hipped.

#### Building Design

- 8.27 Many of the houses are of individual designs, although some similar forms and designs are seen in some areas, varied by the use of materials and detailing. The housing styles tend to be situated together with a number of near similar houses forming a row in a few cases, although this is very informal and follows no defined pattern. Terraces are usually found in planned groups. In these cases the individual terraces and the overall group are given a unified composition, which is usually symmetrical.
- 8.28 Buildings in this area that follow the Arts vernacular style and are typically asymmetrical in design, however there are also buildings that follow a more simple and classically formal style.

- 8.29 Two buildings in this sub-area were designed and based on ideas by Ebenezer Howard, as a means of providing co-operative living for professional people, both are grade II listed buildings. 'Homegarth', or Sollershott Hall, as it is now known, was designed by Clapham Lander, and incorporates Howard's ideas. The building comprises individual flats with a central kitchen and dining room where the residents could obtain their meals. These ideas also formed part of the design concept of a housing group designed by Crickmer in Meadow Way. Positioned around a central green on either side of the road, the buildings were designed for single business women and communal dining facilities were located in a central block. Both Sollershott Hall and Crickmer's group of buildings in Meadow Way reflect the vernacular design adopted in Letchworth. However, Crickmer's buildings are of a scale similar to the cottages in the area, whereas Sollershott Hall was designed as a full three storey building with central courtyard. Set back from the road in a large plot, it faces out onto the Broadway Circus.
- 8.30 The original architectural offices of Parker and Unwin are situated to the eastern side of Norton Way South, within the open area following the line of The Pix River. The building was designed by Parker and Unwin and built in 1906 and is grade II\* listed. The building resembles a thatched medieval hall house and has roughcast walls; mullioned leaded light windows and brick chimney-stacks. It is set back in its plot and is surrounded by trees.

#### Building Details

- 8.31 The slightly higher status of these buildings is reflected in the use and extent of detailing. A wide variety of features are used to provide individuality to the buildings. The buildings following the Georgian influence have different details to those of the vernacular style. They mainly have hipped roofs which are not as steeply pitched as those following the vernacular style, sash windows, panelled doors and square fan lights. The Queen Anne style introduces a more informal use of the Georgian style features.
- 8.32 Windows are largely either wooden casements or sashes depending on the style and design of the buildings. However, some of the Georgian style buildings, display the use of wooden casement windows, a late Edwardian compromise. Some of the vernacular style buildings have iron casements with leaded lights. Smaller windows are often seen above door openings or to the edges of gables particularly when an extended gable is part of the design.
- 8.33 Gabled, and in some cases catslide projections, are features on some buildings. Some of the latter are supported on wooden brackets. These projections are often defined by the use of an alternative material to provide variety to the design, usually red hanging tiles or timberframing. Paired gabled projections are also seen on a few semi-detached buildings, with doorways positioned to the outer most edges of the gabled forms under low eaves.
- 8.34 Bay windows are also characteristic of many of the buildings, mainly on the ground floor, but a few are featured on upper floors again supported by wooden brackets. A pentice roof again with supporting brackets, sometimes links ground floor bay windows of semi-detached properties. The angles of the canted bays vary sometime being distinctly angular, other times fairly subtle. Square shaped bays are also features on some buildings.
- 8.35 Enclosed porches are not a characteristic feature of this part of the Conservation Area. In most cases where porches are part of the design, they are simply extensions of the roof to form a lean-to. The angle of the roof either continuing at the same pitch or

being more defined by a slight change in angle. Other details include extended pentice roofs or simple flat or gabled canopies on brackets. In other cases the front door is recessed to provide a covered entrance through an external semi-circular opening. This feature is part of the design of the terraced blocks although a number have unfortunately been altered and the front door brought forward to be flush with the external wall. Simple pitched roofed porches are sometime found covering the entrance door in the angle of an 'L' shaped building.

- 8.36 Doors are planked or panelled depending on the style of the building. A few of the planked doors have rivets covering and fixing the planks. This type can be seen on the exhibition cottages in Lytton Avenue.
- 8.37 There are a mixed type of dormer windows in this area and some buildings do not have dormers at all. Dormers are usually small in comparison with the size of the roof slope and few in number, enabling the roof form to remain dominant and largely uninterrupted. They are usually situated to cut across the eaves have gabled, hipped, catslide or flat lead roofs. The windows in the dormers match those on the remainder of the building.
- 8.38 Tile creasing and brick nogging in the basket weave or herringbone patterns are also used in some cases to decorate the buildings.

#### Materials

- 8.39 The materials of all the houses are those typical of the Garden City as described in Section 4. However, the Georgian style buildings introduce more use of red brick.

#### Negative Features

- 8.40 There have been a number of changes in this area, which have accumulated and are beginning to have an adverse affect on the character of the sub-area. These changes include:-
- The construction of hardstandings in hard materials often resulting in the loss of the majority of green front gardens.
  - The loss of front boundary hedges or their replacement with boundary treatments that are not characteristic of the area.
  - The replacement of original wooden doors and windows with plastic windows.

## 9.0 AREA FIVE POST 1914 ESTATES

### **Jackmans Close, Campers Estate, The Crescent, Rushby Place, Pixmore Way. and part of Rushby Mead,**

#### **JACKMANS CLOSE**

##### **History and Origins**

- 9.1 The 1919 Housing Act required 707 houses to be built in Letchworth before 1922. As a result Jackmans Place was one of the housing schemes developed. Bennett, who worked in the Garden City since its establishment, designed the development. He and his partner Bidwell contributed greatly to the quality of the built environment in the Garden City, designing shops, individual houses and terraced cottages within the pioneering estates.

##### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

###### Road Layout

- 9.2 The Master Plan shows a layout in this area of roads forming two squares to the east of Pixmore Avenue. The layout of Jackmans Close does not strictly follow this arrangement, but does sit within the allocated area and overall form. The development is square in form consisting of a main loop road with spur cul-de-sac, following the layout diagrams in Unwin's book 'Town Planning in Practice'.

###### Housing Density

- 9.3 Terraced blocks and semi-detached houses form the housing in this area. These are relatively small in scale and are two storeys; the overall height of the buildings is therefore constant. The designed layout results in in-depth development whilst providing spaces between buildings lowering the overall appearance of density.

###### Housing Layout

- 9.4 Jackmans Place was developed in one phase and the houses are arranged in effective groups around a loop road and along a section of Baldock Road. The loop road is square to the southern end with three angled sides to the other. The development contains a central cul-de-sac providing in depth development to the centre of the loop road. Similar narrow roads and groups of buildings are positioned in each of the southeast and southwest corners of the loop road.
- 9.5 In the northeast corner is a group of buildings tempered in arrangement facing onto a once open green. The layout is designed in line with earlier pioneering housing development in Letchworth. Built in one phase the development is very successful in gaining the maximum use of land whilst providing open space, privacy and sunlight.
- 9.6 Buildings on corner plots are arranged to sit either square on to the roads or diagonally across the plot. In some cases the gable projections at either end remain facing onto their respective roads, thus fully incorporating the buildings into both adjoining roads. This is particularly impressive where three roads meet. Diagonal corner blocks bring the main development into Baldock Road. Here the central blocks step back to produce effective grouping and variety to the road. Corner buildings and terraces positioned opposite 'T' junctions provide focal points within the development.

### Building Line

- 9.7 The buildings have a strong relationship with the line of the road, creating a strong overall building line. Variation is concentrated at junctions and at corners of the loop road. Here terraces are stepped back providing groupings or focal points.

### Spaces

- 9.8 The arrangement of the buildings to step forward and back encloses and opens spaces along the road providing variety to the character of the roads. This is reinforced by the buildings grouped around a central space, in each corner of the loop road.
- 9.9 Spaces are provided between terraced blocks throughout the development. These are rather regular in appearance with more generous gaps provided at corner plots. These spaces are important to the overall appearance of density within the development as well as complementing the regular forms of the terraced blocks.

### The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees

- 9.10 The roads are narrow, however the properties are set back from the edge fronted by gardens, providing a comfortable balance between the scale of the buildings and the relative road width. The road width appears to increase at junctions, exaggerated by the positioning of houses set back from the road or orientated to provide more garden space.
- 9.11 The gardens of the properties provide green open spaces and are important to the character of the area. There are no green verges or trees lining the road. There are very few trees in Jackmans Place and those existing are small and positioned within gardens. The one green, originally designed for this layout, now forms car parking spaces.
- 9.12 The trees forming the boundary with the recreation ground to the west provide an important setting to the properties in this area and contribute to the green character of the development.
- 9.13 Low boxed hedging is the main boundary treatment, fronting the properties and lining the roads. A few hedges have been replaced with alternative boundary types, however overall the hedges characteristic of the area remain in their majority.

### The Architectural Character of the Buildings

- 9.14 The buildings follow the vernacular style of the Garden City with simple rectangular blocks of housing enlivened by the clever use of hipped or gabled projections, and in some cases small bay windows. The building forms are relatively narrow and tall red brick chimneys are positioned on the ridge and to the slopes of the end projecting wings. The roofs are mainly gabled with some hipped projections. The eaves turn upwards reinforcing the Garden City style.
- 9.15 The windows are casements and doorways have either square heads or arches and some properties have recessed doorways. All the windows and a majority of the original doors have been replaced.
- 9.16 Porches do not form part of the design of Jackmans Place. The lack of porches strengthens the unity of the buildings within the development. The roof forms are largely uninterrupted, however some of the terraces have cat-slide or flat roofed dormers.

- 9.17 The use of materials is typical of the Garden City. Cream/off-white colour washed roughcast walls and rich red clay tiled roofs are the predominant building materials, uniting the development.

### **Negative Features**

- 9.18 Jackmans Place remains unified, however some changes have occurred which are beginning to weaken its overall character and appearance. These changes have been listed below.
- The majority of original windows have been replaced.
  - Some of the hedges have been removed.
  - Close boarded fencing or wire fencing and concrete posts have been erected in some cases to replace front hedging.
  - A few of the gardens have been changed into driveways.
  - Satellite dishes are attached to the front of a few of the houses.
  - There are light differences in the colouring of the properties.
  - A number of the buildings have hard brown concrete tiles on the roofs.

## **THE CAMPERS ESTATE**

### **Burnell Rise, Campers Avenue, Campers Road, Spring Road, West View**

#### **History and Origins**

- 9.19 The housing along Burnell Rise, Campers Road and the west side of Spring Road was developed by the Howard Cottage Society Limited, one of the housing societies formed for the purpose of building low cost housing for rental by industrial workers in the Garden City. The housing dates to 1915 and is designed by Bennett and Bidwell, Parker, Osbourn and Pointon-Taylor. Further housing, designed by Cave and Bowers, was created after 1919 continuing development along Burnhill Rise and Campers Road and extended to West View and High Avenue.

#### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

##### Road Layout

- 9.20 The road layout forms a grid system, with linking roads, including greens and culs-de-sac for in-depth development.

##### Housing Density.

- 9.21 Terraced blocks and small semi-detached houses largely form the housing in this area. These are small in scale and are two storeys; the overall height of the buildings is therefore constant. The designed layout results in in-depth development whilst providing spaces between buildings lowering the overall appearance of the density.

##### Housing Layout

- 9.22 This area was developed in two main phases, following the layout principles and characteristics, in line with the Garden City concepts. The housing is arranged to follow the line of the roads as well as forming small culs-de-sac running off at right angles. Separate housing blocks enclose the end of each cul-de-sac. A tapered green is also incorporated into the design layout.

- 9.23 Housing blocks on the corner plots are positioned diagonally creating an effective entrance into each street. The focal point at the end of each street tends to be an arranged group of buildings either around a central green or narrow road. These groups are generally situated opposite either a block of housing set back slightly from the road or those positioned diagonally in their plots. This completes the arrangement, creating open spaces within the street scene and providing frequent relief from the linear roads. The design of the layout results in many blocks of housing contributing the streetscene of two or more streets.

#### Building Line

- 9.24 The buildings have a strong relationship with the road, many simply following the line of the roads; others follow the shape of the green or narrow road around which they are situated. The building line is therefore consistent, although in some cases the occasional block of houses is stepped back from the road.

#### Spaces

- 9.25 Spaces are provided between terraced blocks throughout the development. These are rather regular in appearance with more generous gaps provided at corner plots. These spaces are important to the overall appearance of density within the development as well as complementing the regular forms of the terraced blocks.
- 9.26 Corner plots are triangular in shape and are generally large in size, with the positioning of buildings at angles providing further open space within the layout.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Hedges and Trees**

- 9.27 In most of this area green open space is provided by gardens and small tapered communal greens, although number of gardens have been altered to create hardstandings for cars. There are few trees or grass verges in the centre of the development; any trees are small and situated within gardens. West View and Spring Road are an exception lined with grass verges and mature trees intensifying the green character of the roads. Large pine trees also line the road and railway line along Burnhill Rise. Where they survive low boxed hedgerows provide a front boundary and a soft green character to the roads. Unfortunately a number of hedgerows have been removed and replaced with alternative boundary treatments, often hard in character, spoiling the green character of the road and interrupting the unity of the streetscene.

### **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

#### Form and Scale

- 9.28 The housing forms terraced blocks that are small in scale and rectangular in form. The buildings are one and a half or two storeys high and the roofs are either hipped or gabled. The building forms are relatively narrow in depth.

#### Building Design and Detailing

- 9.29 The buildings follow the vernacular style of Letchworth Garden City. The 1915 buildings generally have symmetrical fenestration arrangement with central door under a flat canopy porch. Simple string courses are also feature on some of the buildings linking the heads of the doors and windows. The buildings along Spring Road have small projecting wings to either end, a projecting gable to one end and a hip to the other. The building forms are narrow and tall red brick chimneys are positioned on the central ridge and to the hip or slope of the end projecting wings. The windows are casements and the doors are of elongated panels with smaller glazed

panels to the top. Again flat canopies head the doorways; however, there are no string courses.

- 9.30 The later buildings have a variety of forms and details. They are basically rectangular blocks with gabled or hipped roofs. Some of the buildings have an interesting roof form consisting of a gable to the front elevation and a mansard to the rear. The eaves of the mansard are very low, much lower than the eaves on the gabled side. Many of the buildings have gabled projections, usually in the centre of the elevation or near each end. Other buildings have shallower gable projections that span across a majority of the front elevations of two properties; they have very low eaves and incorporate the front doors and both upper and ground floor windows.
- 9.31 Flat roofed dormers, which span below and above the eaves also, are features on some of the terraces and not others. Windows are small casements with glazing bars, although many have been replaced.
- 9.32 The vernacular styles, form, scale and use of materials of the buildings provides unity to the area. The universal off-white/cream colour of the properties is essential in uniting the estate and is an important characteristic of the sub-area.

#### Building Materials

- 9.33 The building materials are typical of the Garden City with roughcast walling in off-white/cream with plain tiled roofs and red brick chimneys.

#### Negative Features

- 9.34 The Campers Estate remains unified, however some changes have occurred which are beginning to weaken its overall character and appearance. These changes have been listed below.
- The majority of original windows and doors have been replaced.
  - Some of the hedges have been removed.
  - Wire fencing and concrete posts have been erected in some cases to replace front hedging.
  - Some of the terraces have lost uniformity through the use of various shades of colour on one block.
  - Some gardens changed into driveways, particularly on corner plots.
  - A number of the buildings have hard brown concrete tiles on the roofs.
  - Satellite Dishes have been attached to the front of some of the houses.

#### Opportunity Areas for Improvement.

- 9.35 Area or Garages of Spring Road. The garages are arranged in an informal cul-de-sac and are poorly designed and constructed of poor materials.

### **THE CRESCENT, PIXMORE WAY, RUSHBY PLACE AND RUSHBY MEAD**

#### History and Origins

- 9.36 The Crescent, a section of Rushby Mead including Rushby Place and the housing along both sides of Pixmore Way between Baldock Road and Norton Way South, were built in 1922 to provide some of the housing required by the 1919 Housing Act. The housing here was designed by Crickmer for the Letchworth Urban District

Council. Crickmer is a well known Garden City Architect, settling in Letchworth and designing many notable buildings both individual and within the pioneering estates.

### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

#### Road Layout

- 9.37 The Crescent is formed onto Baldock Road, and resembles a stirrup shape, with the Crescent roads joining together into a single road, before terminating into Pixmore Way. Pixmore Way is one of the main axes radiating from the square formed around Kennedy Gardens and is therefore linear in form. Rushby Mead follows the line of The Pix River, with housing to the eastern side only, retaining a natural open space.

#### Housing Density

- 9.38 The housing in this area is formed by terraces and semi-detached houses. These are small in scale and of 2 storeys, providing a constant building height. The designed layout enables in-depth development whilst providing spaces between buildings lowering the overall density.

#### Housing Layout

- 9.39 The layout of this area is designed to enable in-depth development, through the positioning of buildings around a loop road and into a cul-de-sac as well as lining the main roads.
- 9.40 In the Crescent the houses line the inner and outer sides of the loop road as well as along the northern side of Baldock Road.
- 9.41 The buildings along Rushby Mead line the eastern side only and face out across the open space surrounding the Pix Brook. At a central point of this side of the road, Rushby Place, a cul-de-sac also forms part of the designed layout providing in-depth development and variance to the streetscene.
- 9.42 Along Pixmore Way the houses simply line the roads stepping back occasionally to provide variance to the streetscene. This characteristic is also seen in the Crescent and Rushby Mead.
- 9.43 A terrace terminates the single road entering the crescent from Pixmore Way and creates a focal point fronted by the triangular grassed area where the roads divide. Opposite a group of houses create an 'L' shape where the two roads join to form a single road. The corner plots are occupied by semi-detached houses positioned diagonally, and provide an effective entrance to each of the roads.

#### Building Line

- 9.44 The buildings have a strong relationship with the line of the road, creating a consistent overall building line.

#### Spaces

- 9.45 Spaces are provided between the buildings throughout the development. These are rather regular in appearance, with more generous gaps provided at corners. The entrance to Rushby Place is flanked on either side by the large square plots of the houses on the each corner. These houses are semi-detached and situated over to one side of the plot enabling open spaces, which are important to the character and design of the layout, and relates well to the open space surrounding The Pix River. The buildings along have greater spaces between them to accommodate the greater curve on this side of the road.

## **The Contribution of Open Space, Trees and Hedgerows**

- 9.46 The area surrounding The Pix River is essential to the setting and views of the buildings along Rushby Mead as well as complementing their character and relatively spacious layout. The land follows the line of the river and is natural in character, a quality noted by Parker and Unwin who incorporated the natural features of the area into the Master Plan. The open space also creates a buffer between the surrounding streets of housing, providing a soft division between areas of terraced layouts as in Rushby Mead and The Crescent, and areas of primarily detached and semi-detached houses in individual plots along Baldock Road and Norton Way South. The school building occupies part of the open space, but the spacious character is largely retained due to the low form of the building, which sits centrally within the area, set back from the road surrounded by open space and large trees.
- 9.47 The Crescent is lined with regularly spaced trees within narrow grass verges. Along Pixmore Way the verges are wider and the trees are larger than those in the Crescent. This reflects the status of the road as an axis radiating from the central square of the Master Plan. The verges along Rushby Mead are found only to the side of the park and are not continuous. In Rushby Mead there are no trees lining the road, although there are a number of small trees within front gardens. The open space and trees of the school grounds provides the essential green open character to this road.
- 9.48 Front gardens provide additional open space within the layout. The contribution of their green character marred in some cases by the creation of hardstandings. Hedges form the front boundaries of many of the properties in this area, this is particularly the case in the Crescent.

## **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

### **Form and Scale**

- 9.49 The buildings largely form terraces or semi-detached houses. They are relatively small in size and their construction is largely based on simple rectangular forms. The majority of buildings are two storeys, creating a constant roof height.

### **Building Style and Design**

- 9.50 The buildings in this area follow the vernacular form of the Garden City, and are fairly simple, but effective in design. The houses are based on a few main types, which are repeated throughout the area, providing a balance of unity and variation to the overall design. Pixmore Way is largely lined with buildings rectangular in form with fully hipped roof forms forming a terrace. Alternating with these hipped terraces are gabled terraces with single or double gabled projections to either end. In the Crescent and along Rushby Mead simple hipped terraces are used as well as gabled buildings which have eaves extended downwards to either end of the main façade. Doorways throughout the area are headed with flat canopies again an overall uniting feature.

### **Building Materials**

- 9.51 Walling is of roughcast painted off-white/cream and roofs are clad largely in plain clay tiles, uniting the buildings. The roofs largely have red brick chimneys positioned symmetrically on the ridge. The window arrangements to these buildings are generally regular. The windows are casements reinforcing the vernacular style, although the vast majority have been replaced with plastic forms. Windows sills of tile creasing are a typical detail of the area.

- 9.52 The area is unified by the buildings which clearly follow the vernacular style and are constructed in the same materials. The buildings are also consistent in size. Variety is provided by a limited amount of building designs as well as careful attention to detail. The use / lack of flat canopies provides variety within the estate, but unity within the individual terraces.

### **Negative Features**

- 9.53 This area remains unified, however some changes have occurred which are beginning to weaken its overall character and appearance. These changes have been listed below.
- The majority of original windows and doors have been replaced, many with UPVC.
  - Some of the hedges have been removed.
  - Wire fencing and other boundaries have been erected which are not in character with the area.
  - Hardstandings have been constructed in some front gardens.
  - A number of the buildings have hard brown tiles on the roofs

## **10.0 AREA SIX LARGER GARDEN CITY HOUSING**

### **Broadway, Sollershott West, The Glade and part of Pasture Road**

#### **History and Origins**

- 10.1 This area to the southwest of the town centre includes the larger houses built in Letchworth by the upper middle classes. A vast number of the houses were built by notable architects, some, as their own private homes. Much of this area was developed early in the history of the Garden City, setting precedence for the style of the later Garden City housing.

#### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

##### Road Layout

- 10.2 The housing is situated within the formal layout of the central axis of Broadway and along Sollershott West, one of the minor axes, as well as along Hitchin Road which pre-dates the Garden City. The Glade and Pasture Road are informal roads situated to the south of Hitchin Road.

##### Housing Density

- 10.3 Large houses situated in large individual plots produce a low density character.

##### Housing Layout

- 10.4 The housing along Broadway, Sollershott East and Hitchin Road are positioned to line either side of the linear roads. The houses along Pasture Road and in The Glade are more informal in arrangement, situated in large plots set away from the access roads.
- 10.5 Along Broadway, Sollershott West and Hitchin Road the houses are generally set centrally within their plots leaving spaces either side. In Sollershott West the houses on the northern side are situated closer to rear boundary than the front. The positioning of the houses provides a distinctly spacious character to this road.
- 10.6 The houses along the northern side of Hitchin Road are orientated to follow the line of the road. A number on the other side are angled slightly away, because they also relate to other roads or lanes connecting with Hitchin Road from the south.
- 10.7 The Glade is based around a small narrow lane to the south of Hitchin Road. The houses are sited informally within large plots and are orientated to face out across large gardens.
- 10.8 The facades of buildings positioned on corner plots are largely aligned to respect both roads, the houses are set far back within their plots.

##### Building Line

- 10.9 The building line along Broadway and Hitchin Road is continuous. In Sollershott West the positioning of the buildings varies slightly, however the overall appearance is a relatively consistent building line. There is no building line within The Glade or along the older section of Pasture Road.

##### Spaces

- 10.10 The large individual plots in this area provide generous gardens and spaces between buildings. Along the Broadway and Hitchin Road the spacing between the buildings is almost regular in appearance, with buildings largely situated centrally in relation to

their side boundaries. The situation is similar in Sollershott West, although the spacing is not so regular in appearance. The plots to the eastern side of The Broadway, south of the Circus (roundabout), are more generous compared to those to the north of the Circus and on the western side curving into Hitchin Road. The plots within The Glade are more generous still, and the buildings are situated in the centre of their plots with very large spaces between neighbours.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Trees and Hedges**

- 10.11 The Broadway is wide to reflect its status as a main axis. The width of the road is further emphasised by the wide grass verges to either side, lined with mature trees forming a double avenue. This provides a strong green and spacious character to the road. The houses also line the road set back behind relatively large front gardens providing further space as well as complementing the strong linear form of the road. The tall trees positioned at regular intervals along the verges provide a formal character and unity to the street and complement the regular breaks between the houses. The verges, trees and front boundary hedges provide a soft character to the road and the continuous form of the verges and hedges also reinforces the main axis.
- 10.12 The south side of Sollershott West has a wide verge with mature trees that are not regularly placed, creating an informal character to the road. A narrow verge lines the northern side of the road and there are no kerbs to the verges. Mature hedges form the front boundaries. Driveways are formed via narrow breaks in the hedges, retaining the continuity of the hedgerows. The gardens of the houses on the southern side of the road are scattered with trees. The overall character of the road represents a mixture of both formal and natural. The formal element is the linear design of the road and the regularly placed lampposts. The informal character of the trees, the green hedgerows, front gardens and soft verges, provides the natural element.
- 10.13 The large gardens, grass verges, boundary hedges and trees provide a soft green character to Hitchin Road.
- 10.14 The coppice of trees within The Glade provides scattered coverage reflecting the low density of the houses within the area. The density of the trees enables the houses to be secluded but still visible from the central lane. The trees also provide an essential soft green character enhancing the lawns of the large gardens. The situation is similar in Pasture Road, where the houses are secluded within large plots, with large trees and high boundary hedges.

### **The Architectural Character of Buildings**

#### Design

- 10.15 The buildings in this area are individually designed, and mainly follow the vernacular tradition of the Arts and Crafts style. Examples include 'Tettenhall' designed by Crickmer in a style based on the medieval jettied timber framed hall, and numbers 22/24 Sollershott West designed in a 'Butterfly Plan' with Yeoman Tudor detailing. The majority of buildings are listed for their architectural and historic interest, designed by notable Garden City architects such as Parker and Unwin, Bennett and Bidwell, and Crickmer.
- 10.16 There are a number of later buildings in a more classical style, notably 'Oakengates'. It is in the Queen Anne Revival style, double fronted, with large hipped roof bay windows and recessed quoin treatment of the brickwork.

### Form and Scale

- 10.17 All the houses in this area are large in size and many are designed as a collection of rectangular forms. Most have steeply pitched gabled roofs, but there are also some hipped roofs. A number have interesting geometric plan forms, some which are very ingenious.

### Building Details

- 10.18 A variety of building details are used both on the vernacular and Georgian style buildings and they are essential to their individual designs.
- 10.19 The buildings have dominant roof forms, those of the vernacular style are often accentuated with sweeping slopes and overhanging eaves. Dormers are found both at eaves level and within roof slopes. They are carefully positioned, within large areas of roof slope. Gabled projections and bays are also used to enliven elevations.
- 10.20 The majority of the vernacular style buildings have small paned wooden casement windows, although some iron casement or stone mullion windows are found with leaded lights. Windows are carefully proportioned. Although some windows contain a number of lights, the ratio of walling to openings is always clearly in the favour of the walling. Most of the Georgian style buildings have sash windows, although some have small paned wooden casements. The windows are well proportioned and positioned to complement the symmetrical design demanded by the Georgian style.
- 10.21 Entrance doors in the vernacular style buildings are either single or double and are largely planked, although some have the upper section glazed. The Georgian style buildings have panelled doors, often with the upper section glazed. Porches tend to be incorporated into the overall design of the Arts and Crafts style buildings by an extension of the main roof form. The Georgian buildings tend to have flat canopies over the doors.
- 10.22 Verandahs are a feature on many of the largest buildings in this area, mainly Sollershott West and The Glade. They are generally two storeys, accessed by doors to the ground and at first floor level, and face out over the garden. They are constructed of wood, with flat balusters, and are often painted to match the other joinery colouring to the house. They are roofed by an extension to the main roof form of the building.

### Materials

- 10.23 On the Arts and Crafts style buildings the composite forms are often accentuated by the use of varying materials. Timber-framing decoration or plain clay tiles are often used particularly to highlight gabled projections or gabled features.
- 10.24 The brickwork of the Georgian style buildings is often used to provide forms of decoration, treatments are used at the quoins of the buildings, string courses and arches, as well as around windows.
- 10.25 Roughcast is the predominant walling material particularly for the vernacular style buildings, although a rich orange/red brick is also characteristic. Brick forms the plinths to the vernacular style buildings, in some cases the brick has been used to almost mid-height of the building. In the majority of cases the roughcast is painted cream and contrasts well with the texture and colour of the brickwork. The red brick plinths complement the red brick chimneys, and the use of plain clay tiles for the roof and hanging tiles to areas of walling. The rich red/orange colour of these clay materials provides unity to the overall composition of the building. The Georgian style buildings are constructed in a similar red/orange brick work often with varying,

lighter red or blue coloured brickwork highlighting features of the building such as window openings. The majority of buildings along the Broadway are constructed of red brick.

### **Negative Features**

10.26 Changes that are beginning to have an impact on the special character and appearance of this area are outlined below.

- The creation of driveways across the grass verges.
- The construction of garages infilling the important spaces between buildings.

## **11.0 AREA SEVEN LETCHWORTH LANE**

### **History and Origins**

- 11.1 This is the old village including the manor house and church of the original Letchworth Estate pre-Garden City era. A manor was in existence at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086. Letchworth Hall is very likely to retain the position of the original manor situated in close relationship with St. Mary's Church. The Hall is based on a 15<sup>th</sup> century construction but was extensively remodelled, in two separate phases, during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 11.2 When purchased by the First Garden City Company in 1903 the Estate had been uninhabited since the death of its owner John Arlington in 1863.

### **Settlement Pattern**

- 11.3 Letchworth village is centred around St. Mary's Church and Letchworth Hall, which originally formed the manorial site of Letchworth. The houses of the estate developed along the line of Old Letchworth Lane, following closely to the line of the road which connects with Hitchin Road to the north and Willian Road to the south. Letchworth Lane descends from Hitchin Road and winds down the hill to bend sharply before the Golf Club, and continues to follow the boundaries of St. Mary's Church and Letchworth Hall. At the sharp bend in Letchworth Lane, Garth Road connects from the west and continues the loop of Pasture Road. At this sharp bend there are glimpsed views across the Golf Course. The houses in Letchworth Lane follow the line of the road, although a number of which line the hill are positioned higher than the level of the road. The majority of houses are set back, positioned more centrally to their plots with front gardens, although a couple abut directly onto the road. There are generally generous spaces between each property, providing a spacious and rural character.
- 11.4 The Post Office, situated on the corner of Spring Road and Hitchin Road, and the estate cottages situated on the corner of Hitchin Road and Letchworth Lane, provide an indication of the pre-Garden City Estate. These are positioned at a cross point of a number of Garden City and Pre-Garden City Roads. The Post Office and estate cottages at the corner of Letchworth Lane, provide an entrance to Old Letchworth complemented by the positioning of Scudamore on the opposite corner with its tall Tudor style chimneys.
- 11.5 The houses to the first section of Letchworth Lane from Hitchin Road, also form part of the layout of The Glade. However, they are positioned to respect the lines and character of both roads. The green and spacious character of The Glade retains the rural and informal character of Letchworth Lane. The situation is similar on the eastern side of the road where Arunside is sited between and orientated parallel to both Letchworth Lane and Muddy Lane. Arunside was designed by Parker and Unwin and built between 1904-5. The left handside of the building known as Laneside was the home of Raymond Parker, whilst the right side known as Crabby Corner was the home of Barry Parker. Arundale is situated closely to Muddy Lane in the corner of a large plot. It faces across the plot towards Letchworth Lane, masked by a high hedgerow.
- 11.6 Small narrow lanes are formed to the eastern side of Letchworth Lane connecting with St. Christopher School and Muddy Lane. These create narrow breaks in the hedgerows that line the lane and are informal in character with natural surfaces.

- 11.7 Other estate cottages are dispersed amongst later Garden City houses, providing a vital indication of the past. The later Garden City housing respects the original character and development of the road, with properties following the line of the road and situated within spacious informal plots.

#### Building line

- 11.8 Most of the buildings are orientated to face onto the road. The original estate cottages have a stronger relationship situated close to or abutting directly on to it. The later Garden City houses are generally set back from the road behind front gardens, however, they continue to reinforce the line of the road which winds and descends from Hitchin Road.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Trees and Hedges**

- 11.9 The road retains its historic course winding and descending from Hitchin Road and then bending sharply at the bottom of the hill and following the line of the grounds of St. Mary's Church and Letchworth Hall. Letchworth Hall Cottages date to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and are situated close to the road at a slight bend in the road and form a focal point from the main bend when descending the hill. As the lane descends the level of the road becomes lower and banks are formed either side topped with trees. Driveways form small breaks in the banks or hedgerows that line the road and winds up to the houses, taking a natural route and respecting any gradient and reducing their impact on the character of the road without creating wide splays or cutting sharply through the banks. The character of the road is very rural, with a winding route, soft green banks, trees and a natural development of buildings following the line of the road.

### **The Architectural and Historic Character of the Buildings**

#### Form and Scale

- 11.10 The mix of original estate cottages and later Garden City houses produces a variety of building scales. The Garden City houses are generally individual and large in scale, although a few semi-detached and rows of terraced cottages were also constructed in this area. These reflect the form and scale of the estate cottages and are also interspersed with the larger Garden City housing. The forms of all the houses in this area are based on traditional forms largely rectangular units of traditional proportions with steeply pitched roofs.

#### Design

- 11.11 The original estate houses vary from timber framed cottages of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century which line the road near the Church to Victorian cottages constructed with red/orange bricks or Arlesey white bricks. They have vernacular forms of a domestic scale with narrow spans and sharply pitch roofs. The Garden City houses also follow the traditional vernacular design and detailing with dominant and steeply pitched plain clay tiled roofs, although in most cases they tend to be larger in scale.

#### Materials and Detailing

- 11.12 Both the original and Garden City houses have vernacular detailing. However, bay windows and dormers tend to be more of a feature of the Garden City houses. Wooden casement windows with small panes, wooden planked doors and red/orange brick chimneys are characteristic to all the houses. The walling of Garden City houses are largely roughcast, painted cream, whilst the original estate cottages are brick or timber-framed with brick infill. Plain clay tiles are the predominant roofing material uniting the buildings within this sub-area.

### **Negative Features**

- 11.13 Driveways constructed along Letchworth Lane could have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of this area, due to the change in levels as well as breaking the continuous line of the hedgerows.

## **12.0 CAMPFIELD WAY AND HIGHOVER ROAD AREA EIGHT**

### **History and Origins**

- 12.1 Campfield Way and Highover Road contain a small estate of sixty prefabricated bungalows constructed between 1950 and 51. They were designed by A.W. Hawksley Limited of Huddersfield Gloucestershire (a subsidiary of the Hawker Siddeley Group), who after the war had switched from building aircraft to the production of aluminum panels for prefabricated buildings. They were primarily constructed to house key workers moving into the area to take up positions in local industry. The layout follows the Garden City principles and the buildings are unified in their design like many of the terraced buildings within the pioneering estates.

### **Street Layout and Housing Density**

#### Road Layout

- 12.2 The road layout is formed by one linear and one 'L' shaped road which join at a 'T' junction. This creates three right-angled corners within the road layout, one of which is formed at one of the junctions with Icknield Way.

#### Housing Density

- 12.3 Pairs of small bungalows are arranged to follow the line of the wide road with regular spaces between them. The low level and scale of the buildings coupled with the wide road, verges and spaces results in a relatively low housing density.

#### Building Layout

- 12.4 The layout shows careful planning and a strong relationship with the principles of the Garden City. The layout follows the form of the Garden City ideals, with some buildings following the line of the road fronted by wide grass verges and others arranged in groups set back around small greens. The layout of the bungalows provides balance between the unity of the building designs and their regular spacing with the variance of the layout pattern. As in the earlier Garden City layouts, housing is positioned diagonally on corner plots or set back slightly when positioned opposite groups of housing.

#### Building Line

- 12.5 The bungalows follow the line of the road, despite the varied layout the front elevations are all positioned to follow the same line.

### **The Contribution of Open Spaces, Trees and Hedges**

- 12.6 The character of the estate is very open due to the width of the road, the wide green verges and the low level of the buildings. Open grassed spaces are formed at each corner of the road, with a small green on the inner and outer edge of the bend. Further greens are provided within the development with houses grouped around them. Wide verges line either side of the road and abut the front elevations of the bungalows. There are no enclosed front gardens, creating an open character to the road. Trees are regularly placed within the verges complementing the regular spacing of the buildings and unifying the designed layout. The small greens and verges contribute greatly to the open character of the area and are an integral part of the layout design. Cherry trees line the grass verges and provide further unity to the street and a softness in character complementing the green character of the area. There are no dominant boundaries within the area. None of the bungalows have front boundaries only low fencing or hedging linking the facades of one bungalow to another. The grass verges provide continuity throughout the streetscene.

## **The Architectural Character of the Buildings**

### **Form and Scale**

- 12.7 The bungalows are elongated in form with shallow pitched roofs. They are simple in form and appear relatively small, although they have three bedrooms internally.

### **Building Design**

- 12.8 The bungalows are of the type built between 1948 and 1952 to be 'permanent' unlike the bulk of popularly known bungalows that were intended for only 10 to 15 years of use. The buildings are identical providing a strong unity throughout the estate, varied only in their positioning and relationship with each other.

### **Building Details and Materials**

- 12.9 The prefabricated buildings survive with little alteration although many of the windows have been replaced with plastic alternatives. The window openings are relatively large and elongated in shape. The windows were originally made from galvanized steel with glazing bars creating narrow vertical divisions to help counterbalance the horizontal emphasis of the overall building. The buildings are timber-framed and clad with 12ft/8ft aluminum panels that were lined with fibreglass insulation. The timber roof trusses are also largely covered with aluminum sheets. The buildings stand on a concrete base. The panels of aluminum prove the walls and roofs with a corrugated texture. The bungalows are united by the cream colour of the walling and the grey asphalt roofs. They have small square chimneys positioned on the ridge to either end of the building.

### **Negative Features**

- 12.10 This area retains its unity and the majority of its original features. The changes that are mainly occurring are outlined below.
- The alteration of the original doors and windows to plastic versions.
  - The introduction of some driveways across the grass verges and green frontages.

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Arts and Crafts Style	A movement inspired by William Morris's ideas of simplicity, truth to materials and the unity of craft and design that flourished from about 1880 to about 1910
Baluster	A small vertical member, shaped so the thickness varies at differing levels.
Baroque	A classical style principally applied to the style or architecture current in Italy in the C17th which was very ornate.
Bay Window	A window which projects outwards from the external wall of a building.
Brackets	A projection from a wall designed as a support.
Caroline	The period embracing the reigns of Charles I and Charles II. The term is often applied to a comfortable looking red brick, hipped-roof style, that flourished between 1640 and 1670.
Casement Window	A window hinged on one of its edges to opening inwards or outwards.
Cornice	A moulded projection that finishes the part to which it is fixed, for example a wall or door.
Dentilation	A series of small rectangular blocks arranged like a row of teeth, projecting from the lower part of a cornice.
Dormer Window	A window projecting from the slope of a roof and having a roof of its own.
Eaves	The lower edge of a roof overhanging a wall.
English Vernacular	The type of domestic building style that developed in England. See <i>Vernacular</i> .
Flat Balusters	A Baluster which is flat in section. See <i>Baluster</i> .
Flat Canopy	A flat projection above a door, forming a type of porch, usually supported on brackets.

Flemish Bond	Consists of the headers (ends) and Stretchers (lengths) of bricks laid alternately in the same course (line of brickwork).
Gable Roof	A triangular roof form.
Gauged Brick Arch	Soft bricks cut to shape, rubbed smooth to finish and laid with very fine joints to form an arch.
Georgian Style	Generally the style of architecture during the reign of the four Georges, 1714-1840.
Laced Valley	A valley on a roof which is tiled by the tiles being overlapped and laced together to form a junction.
Leaded Lights	Window lights formed by small sections of glass held together by lead framework. Usually found in wooden or metal casement forms of window.
Mullion	A vertical member dividing a window into lights.
Neo-Georgian	A revival style of formal simplicity which generally began in the mid-1890s.
Panelled Door	A door constructed with small square panels as part of the design.
Parapet	A low protective wall usually above the cornice of a building, usually hiding part of a roof.
Pediment	A triangular gable that either finishes the end of a sloping roof or is used above doors and windows.
Pilasters	A rectangular pier projecting slightly from the face of a wall. A shallow relief of a column.
Plain Tile	A simple rectangular tile which is cambered usually in both sections.
Queen Anne Style	The term is usually applied to a development of domestic Caroline forms principally constructed in red brick. The sash window is usual, and hipped roofs are often concealed behind parapets. See <i>Caroline</i> .

Rubbed Bricks	See <i>Gauged Brickwork</i> .
Sash Window	Consists of two glazing frames (sashes) that slide up and down with the aid of counterbalancing weights, pulleys and cords.
Stretcher Bond	Brick laid on its side so that only the side shows on the wall face.
String Course	A moulded projecting band running horizontally across a wall.
Stucco	An exterior finish of render that has a hard smooth surface and was often incised to look like stone.
Swept Valley	A valley on a roof which is tiled by the tiles sweeping round to form a continuous curve.
Vernacular Architecture	Designed by one without training, guided by a tradition based on local needs, materials and construction methods. Unconcerned with national or international styles.
Vernacular Style	A style of architecture that drew its inspiration from traditional building methods shaped by local needs and materials. Particularly associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The definitions above are largely taken from *Illustrated Dictionary of Architecture 800-1914* by Jill Lever and John Harris, published by Faber and Faber in London 1993.

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## STATEMENT OF CONSULTATION AND PROCESS

21 October 1997	Workshop at Plinston Hall, Letchworth
28 August 2001	Exhibition launch to Public Consultation
21 September 2001	End of Public Consultation
12 December 2001	Letchworth Committee
18 December 2001	Executive Committee

In addition, there was local publicity and letters were sent to various stakeholders, details of which are available from the address below.

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