

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

**WELWYN GARDEN CITY
CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**



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Mid-Valley Residents Association

Longcroft Residents Association

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FOREWORD

Following public consultation the main text of this Conservation Area Appraisal was presented to Welwyn Hatfield Council's Cabinet Planning and Transportation Panel on 23 August 2007.

The Panel recommended to the Council's Cabinet that the suggested boundary changes detailed in section 9.0 of this document be approved. Consultation with the owners of properties affected by the boundary changes had been concluded in July 2007.

The areas to be added to the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area were then formally designated at the Cabinet meeting on 4 September 2007 in accordance with Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The designation was subsequently advertised in the London Gazette and the Welwyn Hatfield Times on 14 November 2007, and all households affected by the designation were notified by letter, under the provisions of Section 70(8) of the Act.

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Above, aerial view of Welwyn Garden City: built up area, red outline- existing built up area; green tone- existing "Town Centre" conservation area; orange tone- proposed extensions; green outline- Beehive CA.

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1 A conservation area is, by law, an area of special architectural and historic interest. The purpose of this appraisal is to help us understand why Welwyn Garden City is special and provide a framework for keeping it that way. Its character, or specialness, needs to be defined. What is happening to it needs to be documented and analysed. What should happen in the future needs to be celebrated, guided and well managed.

2 Welwyn Garden City became world-famous almost from the time of its foundation by Ebenezer Howard and the presentation of its Master Plan by Louis de Soissons, both in 1920. Statutory conservation area designation, of that part of Welwyn Garden City then considered to be of special interest, did not take effect until October 1968, simply because there had been no such legislation until the Civic Amenities Act, requiring local planning authorities to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest,

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in 1967. Welwyn Garden City was clearly an early and outstanding example. Successor legislation continues to place a duty on local planning authorities to identify, designate and develop measures to preserve or enhance conservation areas.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 3 A brief summary of the principal legislation and policy guidance applicable to the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area is set out below:
- 4 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the process of assessment, definition or revision of boundaries and formulation of proposals for conservation areas as well as the identification and protection of listed buildings. Authorities are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, or in case of listed buildings, to have special regard for their preservation in the exercise of their powers under the Planning Acts.
- 5 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note, 15, for local and other public authorities, property owners, developers, amenity bodies and the public, sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment. The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan includes the Council's statutory policies for implementing the Acts and applying the PPG. This

Appraisal should be taken into account when considering, applying for or determining planning or listed building applications within the conservation area.

- 6 The underlying objective of the relevant legislation and guidance is the preservation or enhancement of character or appearance of conservation areas. Any proposed development which conflicts with that objective should normally expect to be refused. PPG 15 and local policy also support a presumption in favour of preservation of any building or object which is considered to make a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area. At the same time, the need to accommodate change which respects or reinforces the character of the area in order to maintain its vitality is recognised.
- 7 Many local planning policies, not just design and conservation, can affect what happens in a conservation area. For example, policies on sustainable development, meeting housing needs, affordable housing, landscape, biodiversity, energy efficiency, transport, people with disabilities, employment, town centres and many others can all influence development and the quality of the environment in conservation areas. However, policies concerned with design quality and character generally take on greater importance in conservation areas. The adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan contains a chapter on design matters. Policy D2 is a key policy and states:

8 The Council will require all new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. Development proposals should as a minimum maintain, and where possible, should enhance or improve the character of the existing area.

9 The Council's policies also extend to Supplementary Design Guidance, adopted in February 2005. The main topics covered by this guidance are:

- **DESIGN PRINCIPLES**
- **GENERAL DESIGN GUIDANCE**
- **SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST**
- **RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDANCE**
- **ADVERTISEMENTS**
- **SHOPFRONTS**
- **DESIGN STATEMENTS**
- **DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS**

10 Other policies of the adopted District Plan deal specifically with the District's conservation areas and development affecting listed buildings. Policies R22 to R27 are relevant.

3.0 CONSERVATION AREA DESIGNATION

11 The original designation appears to have been the work of Hertfordshire County Council. Although another, isolated conservation area has been designated east of the railway line, the present Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area embraces the pre-War Garden City, west of the line. It includes the Town Centre, Parkway and adjoining residential areas and was intended to preserve the architectural unity of the town.

3.1 Boundaries

12 The eastern boundary of the conservation area is defined by the "hard edge" of the East Coast Mainline railway line. The western boundary of the conservation area largely coincides with the Green Belt boundary. The northern edge of the conservation area runs through a predominantly residential area, cutting across rear garden boundaries in many places. To the south, the boundary meanders through residential areas before taking in a large, linear, area of open space running along the south-eastern boundary with Stanborough Lane.

13 Within the conservation area, lies the town centre, which is described in the adopted District Plan as the main shopping and service centre for the district, acting as a minor sub-regional centre for Hertfordshire, providing a range of important civic, cultural, leisure and community facilities and drawing customers from a wide catchment area. The northern boundary of the town centre area follows the curve of the dismantled railway line between the Campus West car park and the Campus East car parks. The eastern boundary follows the route of Osborn Way and the East Coast Main Line railway before veering west at the southern end of the Osborn Way car park. The southern boundary follows the line of the car park up to Church Road, where it continues behind the Doctors Tonic Public House (formerly the Cottage Hospital) and the Free Church. From there the boundary

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extends northwards along the western edge of Parkway, moving behind the properties fronting Parkway before it merges with the northern boundary at Campus West car park.

River Lea valley. The residential areas of the conservation area have generally become a desirable area to live in, with significantly higher property prices reported by residents.

4.0 ASSESSING SPECIAL INTEREST

4.1 Location and setting

14 Welwyn Garden City is the largest settlement in the district of Welwyn Hatfield and is located approximately twenty miles from the northern edge of London. It is one of an almost continuous ribbon of settlements between Brookmans Park and Stevenage, along the A1(M) corridor and East Coast Main Line (ECML). To the north, east and west of the town, however, lies well wooded open countryside of great natural beauty, interspersed with attractive small villages.

15 Whilst the historic plan of the Garden City straddled both the railway line and, what is today, the A1(M), the present conservation area covers only part of the Garden City, being located between these two major transport corridors. Beyond the railway line, to the east, lies the town's main employment area and beyond this lie large areas of, predominantly post-second world war, residential development. Residential areas to the north and south-west, lie outside the conservation area boundary. Between the southwest sector and the town of Hatfield, a short distance to the south of the conservation area, lies the Green Belt corridor of the

4.2 Landscape setting, topography and geology

16 The land on which Welwyn Garden City stands is bound on the north by the Mimram river, on the south by the Lea. From heights of just over 400 feet in the wooded north-west, the land slopes gently south-east. The base rock of these acres is chalk with chalk and clay subsoils. The ice age deposited gravels, sands and clays; thousands of years of weathering shifted, changed and exposed them, so that the acres are a complex mixture of soils with different capabilities. Much of the land is well-drained and medium to coarse textured. Along the river valleys the glacial gravels have remained. Other areas drain only moderately, others consist of poorly drained pebbly clay. Each soil type was covered in the days before mankind's occupation with forest, scrub, fen and marsh according to its soil propensities. Most of the areas were heavily forested with oak, hornbeam, ash and birch, hazel and holly.

5.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

17 Stone Age and Bronze Age peoples lived in the river valleys and sought their food in the woods. Scant evidence of their presence has been found in the area – a stone axe in

Sherrards Wood, a flint arrowhead in Valley Road. Early Iron Age cultivators worked the light chalk soils to the north about 450 BC, no doubt moving from site to site as fertility was exhausted.

- 18 Around 150 BC, the Belgae, Celts with Germanic roots, built a fortress town at Wheathampstead, fortified a Mimram river crossing at Welwyn, and cultivated land on the present site of Welwyn Garden City. Their farmsteads, fortified with ditches and palisades, have been found at Brickwall Hill, Stanborough School in Lemsford Lane, near the Free Church hall and other places. Burial sites have been discovered in Attimore Road and the Crookhams, with a particularly important one at Grub's Barn. Other Belgic sites have been recorded in the area.
- 19 Roman legions confronted and defeated the Belgae in 54 AD and imposed their rule. It seems that the farmers where Welwyn Garden City stands today were left alone, as there is little sign of any Roman occupation, although sites may have been abandoned early in the Roman era as the Romans brought the Belgic settlers into their towns.
- 20 When the Romans left Britain in 510 AD, their major settlements were linked by good roads. Such a road linked Verulamium (St. Albans) with Colchester, almost certainly via Welwyn and along the Mimram Valley. A minor road may have existed from Lemsford across the bottom of Valley Road and Handside Lane to Hatfield Hyde.

5.1 Origins of local place names

- 21 The Saxons established themselves close to the old Roman settlement and gave the place their name of Welga, Welewe, Willen, Wellinge and many variations, meaning 'at the willows'. Dicen's well with fresh water from stream and spring, is probably old English, written down the centuries variously as Dixwell, Dicheleswell and Digneswelle. The Saxon settlement, where Digswell Water is today has also given Digswell Road its name. Handside has an unclear first element, possibly a man's name, but the 'hide' was a Saxon measure of land approximately 100 acres.

5.2 Map regression and morphology

- 22 One of the earliest maps to show the site of the future Welwyn Garden City is John Warburton's map (reproduced in *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living, 1988, M. de Soissons*) of the Welwyn Garden City area, taken from a survey dated 1720-23, and showing Digswell House (the original manor house), Sherwood (Sherrards Wood), Brick Wall House, Handside and Ludwick Hide. However, it would be another two centuries before this area, quite separate from Welwyn village, would be developed into Welwyn Garden City.
- 23 On 11 June 1920 Louis de Soissons, architect and town planner for Welwyn Garden City from 1920 until 1962, produced the first Master Plan of Welwyn Garden City. The formal civic and business centre with Parkway and Howardsgate contrasted with the informal residential sectors. The

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agricultural belt was relatively small and the company, Welwyn Garden City Ltd., was anxious to buy more land in order to secure an open countryside setting as well as to realise Howard's vision of the symbiotic relationship between town and productive farmland near at hand.



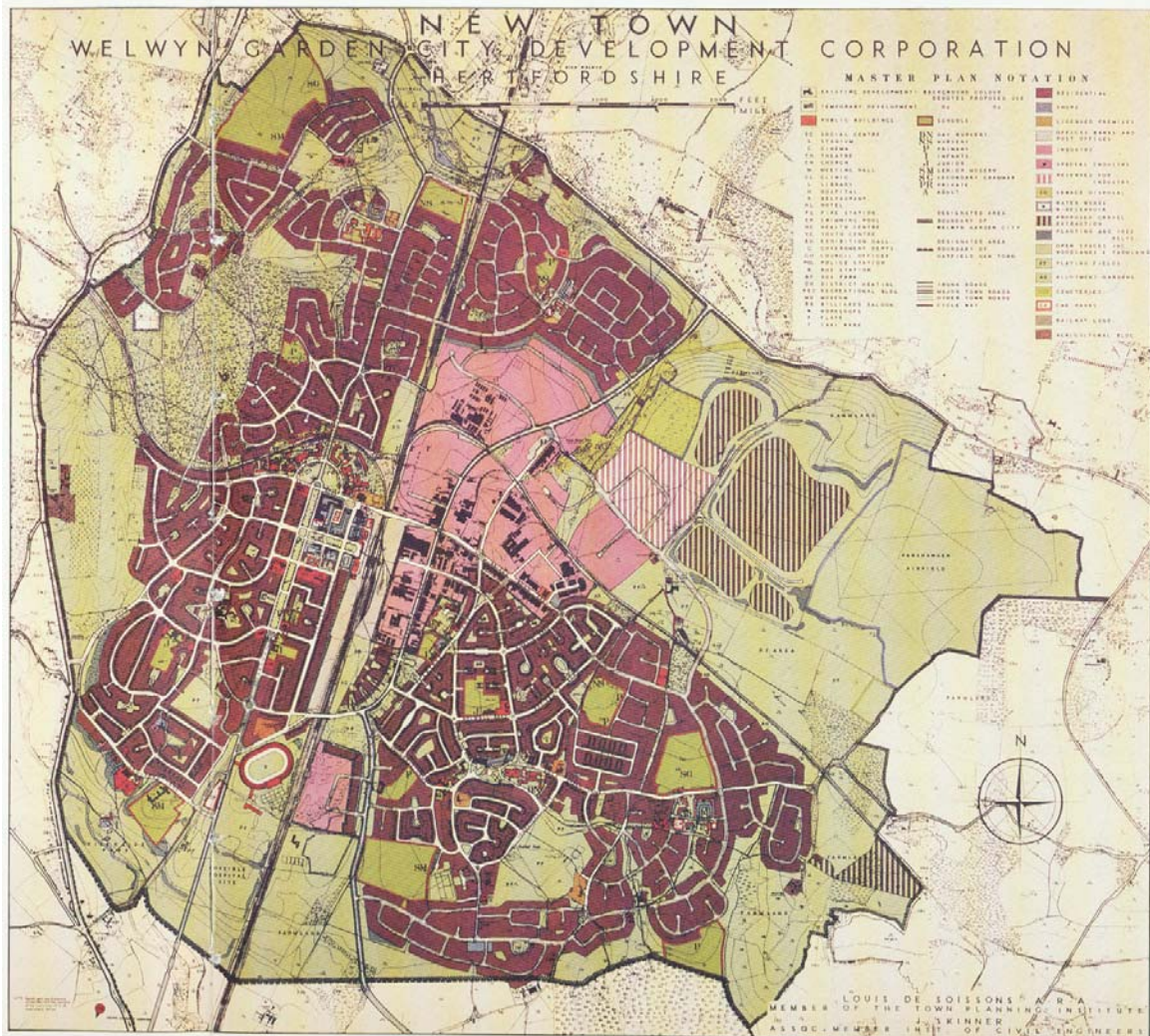
Louis de Soissons' First Master Plan of Welwyn Garden City, 1920

- 24 From the 1920 plan it can be seen how the then proposed roads systems from east to west could have had another access point at the bottom of Howardsgate. Flexibility was built into the plan. At this time the allocations of land for various functions were approximate. The original 2,378 acres (963 ha) was divided as follows: residential including small open spaces, 1,298 (526 ha); industrial, 170 (69 ha); central civic and commercial, 80 (32 ha); schools, 150 (61 ha); railway land, 72 (29 ha); and rural belt, 608 (246 ha). Far more land in

Sherrards Wood and south of Brockwood Lane was given over to housing than was eventually used.

- 25 An Ordnance Survey contour map from the 1920s shows the road layout of Welwyn Garden City but few buildings. In 1947 de Soissons prepared a new master plan which included more house building in Sherrards Wood and neighbouring units on the Lockleys and Tewin Water lands north of the Mimram, recently bought by the Company. However, Lockley and Tewin Water were never designated as part of the New Town and today are separated from WGC by the Green Belt.
- 26 Under the New Town Act of 1946 Welwyn Garden City was designated in May 1948. De Soissons published his *New Town Master Plan* in 1949. Over the next forty years such areas as the Town Centre were gradually filled in, as can be seen by comparing the plan of 1949 to one of the same area in 1988 (*M de Soissons op cit*, pp 120 and 216).
- 27 The 1959 Welwyn Garden City U.D.C. map shows an expanding though still relatively sparsely developed Welwyn Garden City. Since then there has been further infill and building density. A particularly useful map is the one entitled 'Construction dates of residential areas', which is undated but shows the dates of development area by area; for instance the Guessens Court area was first laid out in 1922 but redeveloped in 1974.

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Master Plan of Welwyn Garden City, 1949

5.3 Origins, development and historic significance

28 The real origin of Welwyn Garden City dates from 1898 when Mr. (later Sir) Ebenezer Howard wrote and published a book called *Tomorrow: a peaceful path to real reform*. This was reissued in 1902 under the title known world-wide, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.

29

Howard saw the rapid growth of population and migration to industrial cities in England and observed:

‘It is deeply to be deplored that people should continue to stream to the already overcrowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts.’

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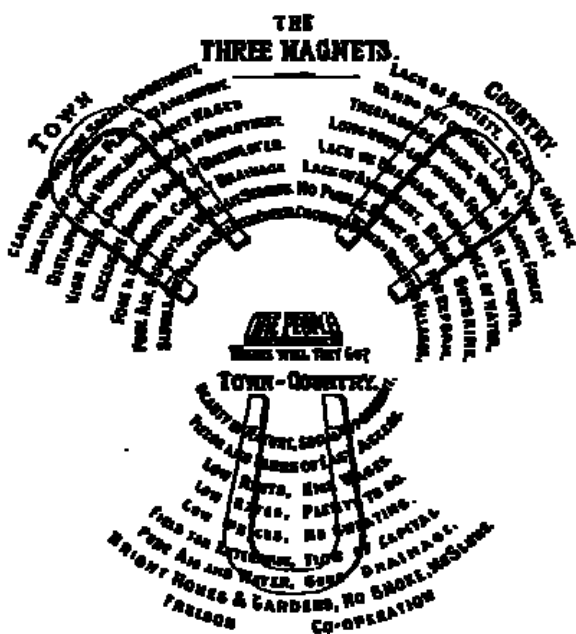
30 Howard analysed the incentives and failures of both city and country, likening them to magnets, and then suggested a third magnet which would combine the advantages of human society and the beauty of nature. 'Town and country must be married,' he wrote. Howard then described, in considerable detail, a strategy for city growth; there would be a network of:

communications; and unified site ownership coupled with leaseholds, reconciling public interests with freedom of choice and enterprise.' (From the preface by F. J. Osborn to the 1946 edition of *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*).

31 His imaginary working model showed how a new settlement would be started once the first had reached its planned size. Quietly persuasive, Howard lectured all over the country, influencing with his ideas a number of influential people, who together in 1899 formed the 'Garden Cities Association', thus attracting even wider interest.

32 Determined to put these ideas to the test, the group formed a Pioneer Company and eventually bought 3,818 acres in north Hertfordshire, which became the site of Letchworth, the first garden city. The story is told in detail in C. B. Purdom's book *The Building of Satellite Towns* (Dent, 1925 and 1949). Progress was made, and industry attracted, before the outbreak of the First World War.

33 As World War One came to an end in 1918, there was great pressure for speedy and much improved housing. In December 1918, *The Home I Want*, an influential book by a housing expert, Richard L. Reiss, was published. At the same time, Howard, Purdom and F J (later Sir Frederic) Osborn, author of *New Towns After the War* were vigorously promoting a national initiative for garden cities.



Ebenezer Howard's "Three Magnets" diagram, 1898

'moderate-sized industrial and trading towns in close contact with a surrounding agricultural countryside, each a healthy, well-equipped and coherent community; zoning of areas within each town for ready access between homes, workplaces, shops and cultural centres; limitation of density to safeguard light, gardens and recreation space, but not exaggerated to the pitch of urban diffusion; civic design aiming at harmony rather than standardization; planned internal and external



Ebenezer Howard

34 In 1919, Reiss was appointed chairman of the 'Garden Cities and Town Planning Association'. Then came the startling news that Howard had purchased at auction, several farms in mid-Herts, on either side of the main Great Northern railway line, and close to the Great North Road, having obtained financial help from friends and well-wishers, for the second garden city. Support from the Garden Cities Association followed. In 1920, Welwyn Garden City Limited was formally established as the owner and developer of the 2,378 acres estate as a garden city for 40-50,000 inhabitants. The site, beautiful as it was, may have been insufficient for the required population, but was a start. Osborn's *Genesis of Welwyn Garden City*, 1970, describes the events at the birth of Welwyn Garden City and the personalities involved.

35 The infant Company faced an immense task and an uncertain future. There were surveys to be carried out, negotiations including starting a brickworks, and a nursery garden, and most importantly, appointment of an Architect/Planner. Louis de Soissons was appointed on 26 April 1920. He got to work at once, presenting his plan on 11 June 1920. This 'master plan' is internationally known and has been illustrated in numerous books and pamphlets.

36 As Osborn said:

'...planning is teamwork, and a first-class design of a town, as of a building, requires a good client as well as a good architect. The WGC directors were clear-minded about their aims, they wanted a beautiful town as well as an industrially efficient one, and socially acceptable to all classes. De Soissons was extraordinarily quick in the uptake, grasping the complex requirements, and giving them expression in a brilliant combination of harmonious buildings and delightful grouping and landscaping.'

37 In *A Town Designed for Healthy Living* Maurice de Soissons explains how his father:

'...took as the main architectural style...the red-brick Hertfordshire Georgian that abounded in Welwyn, Hatfield, St. Albans and Hertford. The bricks produced in the company's brickworks...were sand-faced...strong red, with some containing a slight purplish hue.'

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Left, early houses by CM Crickmer in Handside Lane;



Right, houses in the same group today

38 Houses with these bricks may be seen in many of the earlier streets, but a shortage of materials just after World War 1 necessitated some usage of concrete blocks. Those buildings, in roads such as Guessens Road, the cul-de-sac off Broadwater Road, Longcroft Lane and Longcroft Green have since been demolished.

39 The external design of all buildings was subject to de Soissons' approval and the directors were firmly in support. In the town centre, development of the main commercial and shopping area would be undertaken by the Company, with buildings designed by their architect. Maurice de Soissons continues:

'In the first streets to be built, all in the south-west sector, de Soissons began to develop his street designs. He set blocks of houses back from the roadways, kept front gardens open to the road, planned roads in relation to oaks and elms and the enclosure hedgerows, that had been kept until and if they could be incorporated into streetscapes. He began to experiment with the wonderfully contrived variety of culs-de-sac designs which became

such pleasant backwaters in which to live.'

40 Examples in the south-west sector are Valley Road, Attimore Road, Russellcroft Road and part of Guessens Road, together with the closes off these roads. Virtuosity in applying these principles may also be seen among the schemes of rented housing in the south-east sector outside the conservation area – the Peartree neighbourhood – with culs-de-sac off these streets free of through traffic. Digswell Nurseries Limited (a subsidiary of the main company) was established to provide planting material for the town's landscaping, to carry out the work and to maintain it.

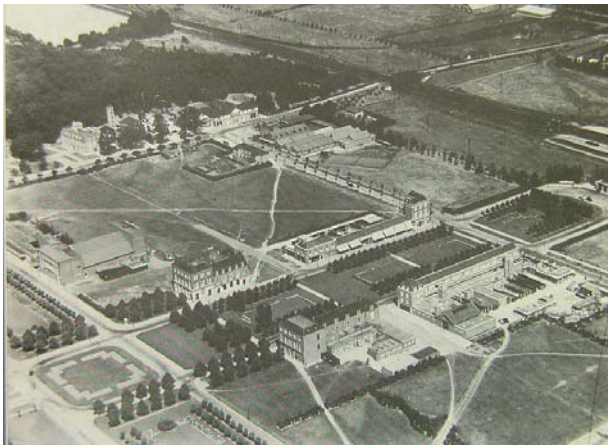
'If you walk in the town there are many small surprises – of tree planting, of vistas, of houses and groups of buildings contrived to make a visual impact' – architect Kirkland Robertson, quoted by Maurice de Soissons.

41 Welwyn Garden City is invariably linked with Letchworth, the first garden city, and Hampstead Garden Suburb, and sometimes compared

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with them. But although Letchworth was inspired by Howard, Hampstead was the project of social philanthropist Dame Henrietta Barnett, who with her husband had also been responsible for such projects as the Whitechapel Art Gallery and Toynbee Hall. Where Howard was the common founder of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden Cities, the link between Letchworth and Hampstead was Arts and Crafts architect Raymond (later Sir Raymond) Unwin, who, with Barry Parker planned both communities and designed some of the buildings.

- 42 Perhaps the outstanding hallmark of Welwyn Garden City is the spectacular layout of the town centre with the spacious Parkway and Howardsgate – the latter almost Continental in feeling - and the vista from the White Bridge.



1938 aerial photo of Town Centre-Parkway is at bottom left.

- 43 The population of Welwyn Garden City had reached 14,000 when the war of 1939-45 interrupted the progress of building. The Garden Cities Association, now renamed the Town and Country Planning Association, continued to press for new towns and urged a

comprehensive town and country planning system.

5.4 The Development Corporation

- 44 The New Town designation of 1948 placed responsibility for completing the development of WGC, whose population was then about 18,200, on the Development Corporation. The designated area was 4,317 acres (1,747 hectares) and the plan was to accommodate 36,500 people overall. Later the plan was revised to allow for 45-50,000 persons. De Soissons, and other key personnel transferred to the new Development Corporation were to continue to implement the established plan.



Vista along Parkway towards the White Bridge

- 45 Over the next thirty-four years, de Soissons and Partners were responsible for many building schemes, as well as the overall plans and control of design. Around the town, the work of some twenty or more architects may be found. 'Their sensibilities in producing plans which accorded, although individual to

themselves, with the general brick built, evolving Georgian style of the Garden City, were much to be commended,' wrote Maurice de Soissons.

46 By 1978 the population was about 41,000 in about 15,000 homes. At the same time, the Commission for the New Towns, which had continued the work of the Development Corporation, considered its functions to be finished and handed over the reins to the Welwyn Hatfield District Council, which took over all the rented housing, local shopping and open spaces and the leasehold function for other housing though not for central shopping property and industrial areas.

47 Outside the conservation area, considerable new housing development and replacement of old industrial premises has been progressing in recent years. By 1987 the population of Welwyn Garden City was just under 42,000 and by 1989 there were around 17,300 homes, the increase being largely due to the continuing demand for smaller homes. The 2001 census puts the population at about 43,000, with some 22,000 homes, continuing the national upward trend towards smaller households.

5.5 Historic significance

48 All sources of evidence and commentary seem to agree that, delightful though its architecture, in ensemble is, the principal historic significance of WGC lies in its planning- possibly the highest expression of the visionary physical,

social, cultural and economic ideals of their period, drawn together by the Garden City's founders, management and professionals. In planning terms the level of significance is global, attracting study and visits from many countries. Its success led directly to the creation, in the UK and abroad, of other new towns such as Harlow, Stevenage, Radburn, New Jersey and Greenbelt, Maryland. It is often held up as the apogee of civilised, sustainable new settlements and a model for others to follow.

5.6 The archaeological significance and potential of the area

49 The conservation area does have some areas of archaeological note. To the south of Church Road there is evidence of late Iron Age occupation. During the digging of a sewer trench in Church Road, a ditch, pottery and animal bone were found and it is likely that there is some further archaeological potential. The south western corner of the conservation area is also within an Area of Archaeological Significance. Excavations that were carried out on the site of the A1(M) revealed evidence of late Iron Age and Romano-British occupation, and it is likely that this occupation extends beyond the excavated area. Four late Iron age cremation burials are also known from Attimore Road. The southern most tip of the conservation area is also within an Area of Archaeological Significance, excavation work at Stanborough School has revealed evidence of an Iron Age/Roman-British settlement and burials and again it is likely that

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the area of settlement extends beyond the excavated area.

- 50 There is evidence of Norman open fields near the site of the Queen Elizabeth II hospital and over in Handside. Numbers of charcoal hearths have been found in the Handside area, while such names as Cole Green, Cole Meadow and Cole Heath indicate charcoal-burning places.

5.7 Architectural and historic qualities of buildings and their contribution to special interest

- 51 The following buildings of Welwyn Garden City are included in the statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic interest and illustrated in Appendix 1:

- HAND SIDE FARMHOUSE, BARN CLOSE
- THE BARN THEATRE, BARN CLOSE
- LUDWICK CORNER, 16 BEEHIVE GREEN (in Beehive conservation area)
- THE BEEHIVE PUBLIC HOUSE, BEEHIVE LANE (in Beehive conservation area)
- THE OLD COTTAGE, 39 BRIDGE ROAD
- THE NABISCO FACTORY, BRIDGE ROAD (not in conservation area)
- DIGSWELL LODGE, DIGSWELL RISE
- 82-125 KNIGHTSFIELD (not in current conservation area)
- TEMPLEWOOD SCHOOL, PENTLEY PARK (not in current conservation area)

- LUDWICK HALL, HALL GROVE (not in conservation area)
- ROCHE PRODUCTS FACTORY, BROADWATER ROAD (not in conservation area)
- 1-4 DIGSWELL PARK ROAD (not in conservation area)
- BAILIFF'S COTTAGE, DIGSWELL PARK ROAD (not in conservation area)
- DIGSWELL PARK LODGE, DIGSWELL PARK ROAD (not in conservation area)
- THE BACKHOUSE ROOM, HANDSIDE LANE
- DIGSWELL HOUSE, MONKS RISE (not in conservation area)
- THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN, MONKS RISE (not in conservation area)
- ATTIMORE HALL, RIDGEWAY (not in conservation area)
- GRANARY AND BARN TO ATTIMORE HALL, RIDGEWAY (not in conservation area)

- 52 Sir Nikolaus Pevsner observes in his 'Buildings of England' series that Welwyn Garden City, was:

...founded in 1920... a later creation than Letchworth and the Hampstead Garden Suburb and differs in characteristic ways from both. It is not a pioneer work like Parker & Unwin's, but the architects of Welwyn, Louis de Soissons and A. W. Kenyon, evidently learnt from the mistakes of the pioneers...a garden city as against a garden suburb must possess enough industry to ensure it an independent life. To the W of the station is the civic area, with shops and public buildings. These lie on the edge of the SW quarter, the first housing neighbourhood to be built. The SE

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quarter followed (at first mainly lower-income housing). Both areas expanded after the war. The NW quarter was developed from c. 1950, the NE was begun in the mid 1960s.'

- 53 *A History of English Architecture* (1979) sets WGC in a broader context:

'At Letchworth, laid out by Barry Parker and Sir Raymond Unwin from 1903, the houses are mainly roughcast, and deliberately simple; at Welwyn...they are mostly of neo-Georgian brick. But the importance of these garden cities and garden suburbs lies less in their architecture, than in their triumphant vindication of the planning vision of Ebenezer Howard's *Tomorrow* (1898). Howard gave the Victorian experiments in model industrial settlements – like Saltaire (1853), Port Sunlight (1888), and the garden suburbs - something of the communal idealism which had inspired attempts at cooperative communities, and through this he created the twentieth-century concept of the new town, depending on its own industry, surrounded by open country, and socially self-sufficient. Howard's new town ideal was to be adopted as one of the cornerstones of planning in the reconstruction after 1945.'

- 54 As if to show that Welwyn Garden City is not just full of neo-Georgian architecture, *A History of English Architecture* illustrates the Modernist Primary School (also known as Templewood School) at Pentley Park,

which is described within the following context thus:

'Immediately after the war, Hertfordshire was faced by an acute immediate shortage of school places and by the need to prepare for the building of the new towns and the growth of population in outer London, at a moment when traditional building materials and craftsmen were in short supply. To meet this situation the county architects evolved a new type of flexible prefabrication.'

- 55 Templewood School (recommended for inclusion in the conservation area) was designed C. H. Aslin of the County Architect's Department in 1948 and has been described by Pevsner as 'one of the best of the county's early post-war schools.'

- 56 Pevsner's description of the Town Centre still seems appropriate:

'The civic area of the town also has a feeling of confidence, although the style of the buildings is in no way revolutionary. The earlier public buildings, including the Station, [since demolished] are of brick, with stone dressings and some classical detail. This urban-looking area is something that the Hampstead Garden Suburb lacks and that Letchworth received only slowly and never adequately, owing to its arrested growth.'

- 57 The housing areas are also well observed:

'The residential layout is clearly derived from the Unwin ideas and patterns. Old trees are meticulously kept, straight roads

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are rare, and closes everywhere determine the pattern. The predominant style of the houses...is now a quiet comfortable neo-Georgian, no longer olde-worldly. The brickwork is mostly exposed. The best examples are in the SW quarter.'



The HSBC building and former estate department of Welwyn Garden City Ltd - an example of de Soissons's civic neo-Georgian

58 Indeed, there is nothing 'twee' or overly quaint about Welwyn Garden City's neo-Georgian architecture – it is undeniably twentieth century. A particularly good example is the current HSBC bank on Howardsgate. The description in the Beams (Built Environment Advisory and Management Service) *Welwyn Garden City Town Centre Conservation Area: A Conservation Area Appraisal and Character Study* can also be applied to the conservation area generally:

'The architecture of Welwyn Garden City is based on the Georgian tradition, designed to reflect classical proportions and principles while accommodating modern living requirements – a logical conclusion, de Soissons believed, to the great Georgian architectural tradition cut off prematurely by Victorian gothic

and German modernist styles. In the older areas of nearby Welwyn, Old Hatfield, St Albans and Hertford are many fine examples of Georgian buildings constructed from Hertfordshire red-brick and de Soissons continued in this theme, the materials of the early Welwyn Garden City buildings reflecting the local tradition. The materials included red sand-faced bricks produced at the company's brickworks, imported clay pan roofing tiles, large, white painted timber sash windows, and simple, white painted timber fascia boards and shopfronts. Mansard rooves [*sic*] and dormer windows featured strongly, while decorative elements occurred in the form of pilasters and pediments to building entrances, together with occasional stucco detailing. Later additions to the town centre varied according to materials available, but generally the pattern of red-brick, pan tile roofs and sash windows continued into the 1960s.'

59 Although Pevsner's writings suggest that he did not consider de Soissons a particularly innovative or exciting architect, he fits into a very English, and safe approach to twentieth century architecture. Yet, at the summit of Digswell Road at Knightsfield, he abandoned his usual modesty in the design of six grand neo-Regency villas- actually flats, with elaborate tented balconies, and linked by wings, which are now listed Grade II. (This area is recommended for inclusion in the conservation area. Refer to map in Appendix 1).

60 However, de Soissons showed that he could work in a Modernist idiom.



Part of the 1950s Oaklands College complex

This can be seen in the factory and silos of 1925, on a seven acre site, for the American Shredded Wheat Company, now listed Grade II. It became a landmark and is still closely identified with Welwyn Garden City. Another example of de Soissons working in what could be described as homely Modernism is Oaklands College (formerly known as Mid-Herts College and then De Havilland College), Digswell Road, which was opened on 28 November 1960, having been designed in c. 1958. Originally a college of further education and a library, a £400,000 extension to the College followed in 1968. The Modernist style of this complex is perhaps best explained by the fact that de Soissons was by this time working within an expanded practice: Louis de Soissons, Peacock, Hodges and Robertson.

61 As well as neo-Georgian, one can find other styles such as restrained Arts and Crafts (i.e. The Orchard, off Blakemere Road, and two-storey houses on Brockswold Lane);

'Moderne' at No. 34 Coneydale; neo-early Georgian on Dognell Green; charming neo-Flemish at No. 59 Attimore Road; Expressionism at the Church of St. Francis on Church Road. Expressionism, showing the Scandinavian influence on early twentieth century British architecture, as well as neo-Norman and neo-Byzantine, tended to be reserved for ecclesiastical architecture; whereas neo-Georgian and late Arts and Crafts tended to be employed for domestic and commercial buildings.

5.8 Louis de Soissons



de Soissons' bust graces Howardsgate building

62 Born in Montreal, Canada, but brought to England as a small boy, de Soissons had trained at the Royal Academy Schools and the Ecole des Beaux Arts at Paris. This, and the year spent before the 1914-18 war as a scholar at the British School of Rome, helps to account for his attachment to the classical tradition. The war began shortly after he qualified, and with four years as a soldier behind him, he had had little time to temper a

fine academic record with practical experience. From April 1920 to 1962, he worked as architect and town planner for Welwyn Garden City.

63 Frederic Osborn wrote that the company was clear in its aims of wanting a beautiful and industrially efficient town, socially acceptable to all, and knew how to achieve it. De Soissons was quick to grasp the complex requirements, and Osborn later claimed that the plan which resulted from this good teamwork is now 'internationally renowned as a masterpiece'. Indeed, students from as far as Japan come to study Welwyn Garden City as a pioneering and still inspiring achievement.

6.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

6.1 Character and interrelationship of spaces

63 More than most towns, generous open spaces - and the associated spatial interrelationships - are at the heart of Welwyn Garden City's planned layout. For this reason it was most fortunate in having been developed on almost virgin land, containing only a few existing buildings, and recognising the importance of the few existing structural features- the rail and road lines, in the 1920s. The major open spaces are:



The open space of Parkway

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- Parkway
- The Campus
- Howardsgate
- Stanborough Green
- Anniversary Garden,
- Sir Theodore's Way
- Playing fields



View from Parkway

64 The importance of open space is particularly apparent in the centre of town: The Campus, Parkway and Howardsgate are generously laid out on a pan-European scale, not that common in the UK. The layout and relationships of these broad, open spaces are most evident when seen in aerial photographs of central Welwyn Garden City.

66 By contrast, The Campus is a geometrically formal semi-circular space, bordered by an informal layout of civic, and educational building, comprising the 1970s modernist Campus West; the modern, yet restrained contextualism of the 1950s Oaklands College; the 1930s neo-Georgian Council Offices, extended in the late 1970s/early 1980s; the unremarkable 1950s Police Station; with the John Lewis Store, east of

Parkway, and the large block west of Parkway, both fronting Bridge Road, completing the enclosure. Unfortunately, the space can be difficult for pedestrians to access on the surface, on account of the rate and volume of traffic although three surface level, pedestrian controlled, crossings have been installed to improve access to and from this open space. The dismal pedestrian subways, do not provide access to the open space of The Campus.

67 Howardsgate is the formal space running perpendicular, eastwards from Parkway, at the heart of the commercial sector. The concept can probably be traced back to the principles of a Roman Forum, a focus of community interaction, lined in this incarnation with shops, offices and cafes, filled with planting, seating and distinctive poster stanchions, assisted by a traffic calming road layout and management scheme.



Central green of Howardsgate. Note original guard rails.

68 Stanborough Green forming part of the attractive southern approach to WGC, is a more open, less formal, partly wooded, linear space, whose eastern edge lies on the conservation area boundary. The

western edge is enclosed by modestly scaled blocks of flats.

69 Anniversary Garden occupies the “Project D” site originally intended for building. The mainly grassed and planted space is provided with benches and a diagonal path that serves as a through route from Sir Theodores Way to John Lewis and Bridge Road. Notwithstanding the presence of a short parade of commercial properties to the east, with a traffic roundabout to the north, the multi storey car park and its exit to the northeast and the John Lewis car park to the west, Anniversary Gardens lacks the sense of peaceful, civic enclosure offered by the Co-op store to the south.

70 Two other major spaces, the Welwyn Rugby Ground and Applecroft Road playing field, are important. In addition to the obvious value of their uses, their openness contributes to the character of the conservation area.

71 Finally, many private and semi-private open spaces form the settings of building groups, or are communal play spaces, neighbourhood greens and concealed open spaces at the rear of houses. These spaces are important visual and functional amenities which should be maintained and preserved from any erosion.

72 In many of the residential areas the emphasis is more about seclusion, intimacy and privacy. In some areas, homes are enveloped by pre-existing woods; e. g. Sherrards

Wood, which can be seen on the 18th century map of the area. Like Eric Lyons’ post-WWII SPAN housing situated elsewhere in the south of England, the divisions between public and private are broken down; property boundaries seem sometimes blurred.

6.2 Key views and vistas

73 The major open spaces also create many of the conservation area’s most important vistas. The following key views and vistas are shown on the appended map (see Appendix 1).

- 1 From the White Bridge and The Campus along Parkway.
- 2 Views in all directions from The Campus.
- 3 Vistas along Parkway from either end.
- 4 View from Parkway along Russellcroft Road.
- 5 View from Parkway east along Howardsgate.
- 6 View from Parkway along Church Road, both directions.
- 7 View from Howard Centre towards Parkway.
- 8 View northwards from Fretherne Road towards the original Cherry Tree (now Waitrose) building.
- 9 In a southerly direction from Fretherne Road along Longcroft Lane.
- 10 Views to/from Knightsfield, at the junction with Digswell Road, in all directions.
- 11 Views along Stanborough Green, north and south.
- 12 Views from Russellcroft Road in both directions.

13 Views along Valley Road from Applecroft Road to the A1(M) (contribution to the setting of the conservation area).

14 Views from Stanborough Road to Parkway (contribution to the setting of the conservation area).

74 The roads to the west of Parkway, which undulate gently, present a wide variety of interesting, often picturesque views, typically where a green and leafy foreground and houses, singly, in groups or in terraces, combine.



St Bonaventure's Roman Catholic Church

75 There are few buildings which can be described as landmarks in the usual sense that they are larger, taller, architecturally distinguished, or having spires or other special features, placed on important axes or terminating key vistas. Rather, the larger buildings tend to emphasise key points such as corner sites, or frame larger open spaces, whilst maintaining the self-effacing neo-Georgian language. The John Lewis building, for example, forms a large and prominent backdrop to the central space of The Campus, but is not a

landmark. The nearest one gets to landmark events is with such distinctive features as the cupola of the Council Offices, or the tower of St Bonaventure's Roman Catholic Church on Parkway.

7.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

76 Maurice de Soissons said of his father Louis - and his work at Welwyn Garden City - that 'his strength lay in the character of the street scene, his sense of scale and order, and his technique of securing variety with few variables'. While the character of a place must inevitably emerge from the inter-relationship of all its parts, we consider that de Soissons' ability to see the broader picture and control its execution in large measure accounts for the overarching significance of WGC, beyond individual architectural achievements.

77 Although de Soissons' town plan straddles the main N-S railway line and is bounded on the west by a golf course, followed by the "hard" edge of the Great North Road/A1(M), the conservation area covers only land to the west of the line. Between the imperial formality of Parkway and the railway, the pattern, which includes the Town Centre, is quite rectilinear. West of Parkway, the residential neighbourhood roads curve gently, creating ever changing perspectives. These forms, at once deliberate, yet accommodating pre-existing roads such as Handside Lane, demonstrate de Soissons' mastery of picturesque layout. With

The Campus forming an interface of civic scaled buildings and character, between the broad divisions of Town Centre and adjoining residential sectors, individual character areas can be recognised as follows:

7.1 Characterisation

Town Centre



The former Welwyn Stores (now John Lewis)

78 Within the town centre the architectural emphasis is generally on horizontality of form, homogeneity and low urban density. Old street patterns did not have to be followed, and buildings rarely rise above four storeys. The neo-Georgian idiom helps to stress this horizontality. The approach throughout is low-key, subtle variation within the formal framework, strongly characterised by its materials and the rhythmic patterns of Georgian style sash windows. This helps even such large buildings as the Welwyn Stores (now John Lewis) to harmonise in terms of scale. The following paragraphs characterise sections of the Town Centre.

Howardsgate

79 After Parkway, Howardsgate is the second principal axis, forming the centre of the commercial shopping area. It is a formally landscaped boulevard, with paved and planted open spaces, metalwork such as railings and balconies, public seating, distinctive advertising stanchions (dating from the 1950s) and street lights originally designed



View towards Howardsgate from Parkway

for the garden city. Two of the earliest commercial buildings in Welwyn Garden City provide an impressive architectural frame at the entrance to Howardsgate. Both the former Barclays bank (now “the Cork”) and the HSBC branch to the south, were designed by Louis de Soissons in 1929. They are similar in scale, but feature subtle differences in detailing.

80 The HSBC building originally housed the estate department of Welwyn Garden City Ltd and Louis de Soissons’ architectural practice. This building is constructed from traditional Hertfordshire brick, and on the ground floor features large sash windows adjacent to a neo-Georgian Portland stone doorway with pediment. Note, however, the



Inappropriate modern signage detracts from the portico bust commemorating Louis de Soissons

inappropriate modern sign (“DBC Food Service for a New Century”) next to the Portland stone doorway with pediment, which commemorates de Soissons (1890-1962). In contrast, the former Barclays building derives its character from a series of round arched windows and simply designed doorways, set within a ground floor of rusticated Portland stone. The impact of the two bank buildings is somewhat diminished by the unsympathetic fenestration of the later building situated on the northern corner of Parkway and Howardsgate.



View across Howardsgate towards the former Barclays Bank (now ‘The Cork’)

81 Behind their principal corner blocks, both “the Cork” and HSBC buildings step down in height to two stories plus a Mansard roof, and continue in a uniform frontage along Howardsgate as far as Wigmores North and South – note the good detailing above the shop fronts, which are well scaled. The theme of a strong and uniform frontage to the south side of Howardsgate is further extended from Wigmores South to the portico of the Howard Centre.



The elegance of the former Barclays bank (right of picture) is diminished by the unsympathetic detailing of the neighbouring building



Well scaled detailing above shopfront level in Howrdsgate is compromised by overly dominant facias.

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82 On the north side of Howardsgate, adjacent to “the Cork”, is a building with classically treated round arch windows in rusticated Portland stone. It once housed Welwyn Garden City’s first Post Office and is now used as a Job Centre. The 1970s ‘new’ Post Office at the corner of Howardsgate and Wigmores North is a bland institutional building, without the character of its predecessor, but it does maintain the rigid composition and proportions of the Howardsgate frontage.



Later architectural additions to the north of Howardsgate show scant regard for the original buildings

83 Continuing along the north side of Howardsgate, the structure between the building on the corner of Wigmores North and that on the corner of Stonehills was originally single storey, but during the 1970s, a lightweight two storey addition was built on top of the original structure. The appearance of the later building is characterised by panels of red mock brickwork between aluminium windows and is generally rather unsympathetic to the classical Garden City buildings

at each corner. As a result, the north side of Howardsgate is less visually satisfactory than the south side, which retains its early Garden City buildings, most notably the continuous row between Wigmores South and Fretherne Road.

84 The 1929 three storey brick range is subtly detailed with classical elements such as decorative architraves, projecting brick quoins vertically dividing the shop-fronts and ornamental first floor railings.



The Howard Centre and the immediate public realm. Use of better quality materials and street furniture would enhance this area.

However, the overall character of the buildings is marred by the replacement of original timber sash windows with UPVC units, which are visually harsh and have already weathered poorly. Also, the area in front of the Howard Centre is not an inspiring introduction to Welwyn Garden City, with its patchy lawn, unvarnished wooden benches and concrete paving.



Looking across Church Road towards Fretherne Road, the unregulated clutter of signage creates visual discord.

Fretherne Road

85 Fretherne Road was extended around the same time as Wigmores South, but in a different style. Behind Louis de Soissons' 1929 Fretherne Chambers building, a row of two storey Garden City-style buildings extends along the west side of the street. They were designed in 1962 by de Soissons and partners and continue the theme of projecting concrete canopies seen in Wigmores South. Towards the southern end, the taller buildings to the east side of the street were completed in the 1970s and rather lack the character of classical Garden City architecture. Both sides of the street have active shop fronts at ground floor level, some of which mar the appearance of the street scene.



Discordant 1970's architecture, poor shopfronts guardrail and painted lines mar original style.



Longcroft Lane streetscape: Projecting end properties add visual interest to the uniformity of the group.

Longcroft Lane

86 At the junction of Longcroft Lane/Fretherne Road and Church Road there is an unregulated clutter of signs. The housing typically consists of low-lying neo-Georgian terraces with steep pan-tiled roofs and through-passages – note how end properties are brought forward. Original front doors, a crucial feature, have unfortunate modern replacements. There is an inconsistency between the employment of UPVC window glazing and the extant original wooden sash windows. Longcroft Lane features wide verges with plenty of room for parking, which is unsightly in places. The verges can reveal too much concrete paving.



Erosion of grass verges with poor quality paving is exacerbated by parked cars.



The Anniversaries Garden functions as a public space and provides a pedestrian link between Stonehills and John Lewis.

Wigmores North

87 Wigmores North retains a strong frontage and sense of enclosure along the western side, through a range of red-brick buildings constructed either during or before the 1960s but with later shop-fronts added during the 1970s/80s in the Garden City style. The roofline of these buildings, however, is somewhat marred by a clutter of antennae, receivers and access ladders. The original Welwyn Stores building (de Soissons, 1938), a John Lewis store since 1983, provides a good visual stop to Wigmores North, although the north-western end of the street and

car park generally lack definition. Note, next to the subway, the traditional ground-floor treatment of John Lewis with its currently painted-in window awnings.



Obscured ground floor windows of John Lewis (left of photo) and uninviting pedestrian subway.

88 According to the Masterplan, the project D site to the east of the car park was intended for development. Until July 1962, the site was occupied by the former Police Station, which provided visual enclosure for the adjacent open space. The Anniversary Garden now existing on the project D site functions as a sitting out space in good weather and provides a useful pedestrian link between Stonehills and John Lewis, but lacks the sense of formal enclosure or focus of activity needed to make it a meaningful public space. The well preserved 1950s Garden City-style former Co-op building fronts the south side of the Anniversary Gardens and would provide a strong reference for any future buildings on the project D site.

Peacock, Hodges and Robertson and features stripped red-brick frontages and large sash windows, above a continuous row of shopfronts. The block was completed in 1959 and continues around the north eastern corner to face the south side of the car park.



Sir Theodore's Way with views across to Stonehills.



Original 1950's pattern paving in front of the former Co-op building (left) has been replaced by concrete slabs (right). Note however the original ironwork of the ramped walk that still remains.

90 The 1930s corner building on the east side of Wigmores North, formerly the Gas Board showrooms, is now used as commercial premises at ground floor level. The row of shops and offices which extends along the east side of the street was designed in classical Garden City style by de Soissons,

Sir Theodore's Way

91 Sir Theodore's Way, originally envisaged as a shopping street in Louis de Soissons masterplan for the Garden City, is now a paved pedestrian thoroughfare, linking Wigmores North and Stonehills. However, the original, specially

designed 1950s paving pattern has been replaced by standard concrete slabs. Note, too, the original ironwork on the ramped walk. The pedestrian way continues on the east side of Stonehills and forms a small public space in front of the north-western entrance to the Howard Centre. The open space is harsh and unappealing and offers unsightly views of adjacent back entrances and rubbish skips.

fountain forming a distant focal point in a spacious and landscaped setting. From the southern end of Parkway, the view up the hill towards The Campus and Digswell Road demonstrates an essential principle of Garden City design, while the mature trees in the distance provide a harmonious background to the more formal landscaping of the central green spaces of the boulevard.

Parkway

92 Parkway provides a dramatic approach to the town centre from both the north and south. From an elevated position at the northern end, the vista south along Parkway is superb, with the Coronation

93 Parkway has neo-Georgian houses on the west side from Church Road to Bridge Road. They are well maintained, blend in well with associated foliage, and were designed by Louis de Soissons in 1924. Although the houses, from the junction with Russellcroft Road, have now all been converted to



The dramatic vista of Parkway

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either offices or surgeries, they retain their essential domestic form and architecture to the primary frontage, reflecting their origin, although some have been extended. These houses, together with those lining Russellcroft Road and Guessens Road, are among the earliest domestic buildings in the Garden City.



Neo-Georgian houses on Parkway

- 94 The Coronation fountain, situated at the junction of Parkway and Howardsgate, was designed by Peacock and Ayres in 1953. The movement of water in this central position creates a significant focal point within and to the area, being clearly visible from all directions.



The Coronation fountain with Howardsgate in background

Churches on Parkway

- 95 Several of the conservation area's places of worship are located on the Parkway and Church Road areas. The planned concentration and variety in the design of these buildings creates a distinctive architectural and townscape statement close to the Town Centre



Christchurch (above) and the Church of St Francis of Assisi (below) are key buildings in the CA.



as well as enhanced potential for interaction between faiths.

Church Road

- 96 Church Road forms a transition zone between the commercial core of Welwyn Garden City and the residential areas to the south. The older part of the road, between Parkway and Fretherne Road, is spacious and leafy along the south side. Here, departures from the

neo-Georgian style seem to have been adopted. The large former Cottage Hospital (now the Doctors Tonic Public House), in a free Tudor manor house style, is set well back from the road. The Free Church, designed in 1929 by Louis de Soissons in a Dutch/Expressionist



The Free Church suffers from discordant signage



stepped gable style, fronts the road with only a small strip of green behind the pavement. This building has some discordant, poor quality modern signage and a view of it is somewhat marred by the void and railings of the subway opposite, leading to Sainsbury's underground car park. Both buildings sit comfortably within spacious plots among mature trees.

97 The Church Road car park, lacking any attempt to mitigate the impact of hardware, harsh lighting and poor paving, renders this stretch more visually alienating. Whilst the north side of the car park is bordered by a row of good 1960s Garden City buildings with ground floor shops, the west is enclosed by the undistinguished 1982 Sainsbury's building. The overall sense of unity to the area is lost in the sprawl of the car park. The western end of the car park supports an unappealing clutter of railings, signboards, poles, bollards etc around a small open seating area which lacks a sense of comfort and identity, while the eastern end of the area is marred by recycling bins and rubbish skips.



Treatment of the Church Road car park degrades the setting of well proportioned buildings.

98 In the residential section of Church Road is the Church of St Francis of Assisi. The Anglican church, by de Soissons, opened in 1935, was intended to have a tower at its western end, but this was never built. Pevsner thought it dull.

Today though, it seems to be more derivative of Scandinavian neo-Expressionism. In this way the conservation area is further distinguished in displaying de Soissons' apparently deliberate change of reference where ecclesiastical architecture was concerned, with the neo-Georgian and Arts & Crafts styles continuing to dominate commercial and domestic buildings respectively.



The White Bridge provides a commanding viewpoint from the north of the Garden City



Red brick simplicity extends to the Garden City's ecclesiastical architecture, as the Church of St Francis of Assisi shows.

The Campus/College Way

- 99 The Campus is situated towards the northern end of the conservation area and borders an informal green open space featuring mature trees and winding pathways. The formality of the rigid town structure is retained only in the design of the pedestrian walkway which cuts through the centre of the open space and links The Campus to Parkway.
- 100 The northern end of The Campus open space is elevated and the view from the White Bridge on Digswell Park Road, across the sloping green of The Campus and

on down the length of Parkway is superb and valued locally.

- 101 The institutional and civic buildings around the north side of The Campus display a variety of styles, ranging from the Modernist Campus West building (1973-5), to the 1935 neo-Georgian Garden City style of the Council Offices building located at the south east corner. Between the two buildings lie the c. 1958 Oaklands College campus and the Police Station of c. 1965. Although the architectural styles vary, the use of materials sympathetic to the theme of traditional Garden City architecture, together with the well treed and spacious settings of the buildings, integrates well with the surroundings. Their role as interface between the commercial architecture of the town centre and the residential areas to the north, is well conceived and generally effective.
- 102 Pevsner was more critical, observing: 'the Campus...was intended to have important public buildings. They have been built at different dates, and the result is somewhat lopsided.'



The Modernist Campus West building (left) contrasts with the Neo-Georgian Council Offices (right)

Residential Areas

103 Houses in the residential areas vary in size, type (detached, semi-detached, terraced), style and detail, from the predominant red brick neo-Georgian, through brick or stucco faced Arts and Crafts, to experimental groups such as the Daily Mail Model Village, with the occasional modern or quirky design interspersed. Few groups or blocks of flats lie within the conservation area. In general however, houses and areas have more features in common than factors which divide them: suburban character, grassed and planted road verges, front gardens or communal greens, consistency of layout, building forms, materials and details, often with carefully orchestrated variations. From house to house, group to group, or street to street, distinctiveness is the rule. Defining character areas may therefore sometimes seem artificial.

104 Buildings of any period, particularly (but not exclusively) those which have been designed as a whole,

are more likely to retain their full cultural significance where no part of their architectural language is arbitrarily altered. Where appropriate, properly handled extensions are part of the standard conservation toolkit. Small but unthinking alterations however, can irreversibly degrade an otherwise interesting “original” house, or a whole group of houses. Painting, rendering or cladding of one house in a uniform terrace is an obvious example. The process has often been compared to, say, altering a Rembrandt painting in an abstract manner.

105 The preservation of a conservation area’s buildings depends upon being able to make correct judgements about their capacity to accommodate change. The residential areas of Welwyn Garden City are heavily dependent for their integrity on consistency of style, in groups, or within individual houses. Their external appearance invariably expresses the period in which they were created, and the design intentions of their authors.



An Arts and Crafts language defines the architecture of The Orchard. Note however the inappropriate replacement glazing materials that can erode the group's integrity.

This authenticity can easily be eroded and eventually destroyed incrementally.

106 Capacity for change is not however confined to buildings. The character and openness of spaces between them, the layout of an area, the landscape quality and the impact of vehicles, traffic, services and street furniture require similar judgements to be made. Local distinctiveness, area by area, is described below.

7.2 Local Distinctiveness

The Orchard

107 The Orchard is a most attractive and peaceful enclave on account of the layout, form and proportions of its two-storey terrace housing, with steep, tiled roofs. Note how the end of the terrace houses are brought forward of the rest. The style of this ensemble can be described as being in a sub-Arts & Crafts manner. Some inappropriate window pattern material and glazing alterations which detract from the original unity of the group can be seen here. This area also contains the Tennis Club, a unique feature due to its location and access.



Poor imitations: inappropriate materials and inconsistent window patterns detract from the unity of the overall group

The Vineyard

108 At the Vineyard, only the Barn, formerly part of Digswell Lodge Farm buildings is included in the conservation area on account of its age, associations and surviving representation of development which predates, like the 1876 house on Bridge Road, the rest of the Garden City.

Coneydale

108 Coneydale is a leafy, pleasant road, with street trees, front garden planting and mature hedging providing the attractive setting. Here, three flat-roofed yellow-brick 1930s houses were built in

Coneydale and Pentley Park by Mauger and Kent. Of particular interest is No. 34 Coneydale; a 'Moderne' design by Paul Mauger, dating from the 1930s. However, the original façade has been somewhat compromised by the addition of stylistically inappropriate neo-Georgian columns, which support the entrance of the later garage extension. The replacement window glazing is also inconsistent with the original design.



No. 34 Coneydale, an example of 1930's 'Moderne' design by Paul Mauger.

Reddings

- 110 Typical houses along the Reddings are brick built, with variations in colour, apparently dating from the 1950s through the 1970s, some with later extensions. Architecturally, they tend to be very plain. However, this austerity is relieved and complimented by the generously leafy surroundings which are comparable to Coneydale.



Later, post de Soissons approach at The Reddings, with houses set in leafy surroundings.

Woodland Rise

- 111 This area is notable for containing some unaltered houses of a later period, adhering less rigidly to the neo-Georgian, where fenestration used was small paned Crittal steel casement windows in place of the timber Georgian type sashes. There are also 1960s bungalows in an authentic condition. The green setting is comparable to that at Coneydale.



Authenticity is evident in Woodland Rise.

Sherrards Park Road

- 112 In Sherrards Park Wood the land rises to 400 feet above mean sea level. Sherrards Park Road typically consists of detached two storey red-brick housing dating from the 1950s onwards. Some properties do retain original features such as Crittal windows and oak front doors (i.e. No. 5). Note the unusual green roof tiling at No. 10 Sherrards Park Road. The green setting is comparable to that at Coneydale.



No.5 (left) and No. 10 Sherrards Park Road. Note original fenestration and departure from Neo-Georgian.

Brockswood Lane

113 Even before the town plan had been made, construction of the first houses had begun and these included some in Brockswood Lane, the earliest of which, on the north side, can be identified from photographs on p.153 of Maurice de Soissons' book (op cit). These were designed by C. M. Hennell and C. H. James for a 'public utility society' under the 1919 Housing Acts, known as Labour Saving Houses. They are outstanding examples of small houses, designed for easy running.

The landscape treatment remains a special feature. The power of trees and shrubs to mellow newly-constructed buildings and create streetscapes is shown by the 'before and after' photographs on p. 153, taken from the same spots in 1927 and 1955. Brockswood Lane features a range of two storey white stuccoed semi-detached houses, which reveal some Arts & Crafts influence and whose group value becomes especially attractive when viewed looking from either end along the road. Houses in a similar style at the western end of the road, together with a single diagonally placed house, mark the edge of the conservation area.



Some of the earliest houses in Brockswood Lane mark the edge of the conservation area boundary.



24 High Oaks Road demonstrates the introduction of individually designed homes in the Garden City.

High Oaks Road

114 Individuals built their own houses in this road, lying along the western edge of the conservation area, in which the plots were sold off. This accounts for the wider variety of styles compared with other roads in Welwyn Garden City. Whilst maintaining consistent scale and house size, the release of this individuality produced some distinctive results. These include No. 24, a very horizontal residence, with its original timber windows. Within Welwyn Garden City's residential stock, this is an unusual design. Other notable houses in the road include the Arts & Crafts treatment of a corner/road junction house, with its steep, tiled roof and broad chimney breast.



Arts and Crafts approach to the corner treatment of this group at High Oaks Road and Brockwood Lane.

Dognell Green

115 Named after the name of the hamlet that stood close by, it was fully built up by the mid-1920s. Originally planned as a through road, it became a *cul-de-sac*, this change

alone creating a very pleasant residential backwater, undisturbed by through traffic. There are fastigate hornbeams trees. Here, the neo-early Georgian house is one of the grandest private houses in Welwyn Garden City. On a landlocked triangular site behind this group lies a small tennis club, accessible only on foot and valued as a convenient recreational facility as well as for its openness.



Dognell Green is home to several of the Garden City's grandest private houses.

Brockett Close

116 Brockett Close is like an expanded version of The Orchard. Two storey red-brick terrace housing with end properties brought forward. Note that many of the original windows survive and that there are passage ways through the depth of the buildings, as well as neo-Georgian architraves, well-designed fenestration, and note also the linking far side corner entrances. The ambience throughout is very communal.



The communal setting of Brockett Close is enhanced by it's sense of enclosure. Unfortunately, incremental uPVC window replacement is eroding coherence of the group.

Valley Road

117 This is a major artery linking Bridge Road/Brockwood Lane with the A1(M) junction and access ramp. With the exception of a small group of terraced properties the southern end, most of the houses in Valley Road are semi detached or detached, linked by garages and outbuildings to create a sense of continuity. The spaces between the buildings at first floor level are important to the rhythm of development. At the junction with Russellcroft Road, Valley Green, framed by a symmetrical house layout of houses terminates the vista and provides a picturesque "village green" scene.

118 De Soissons's plan, included a number of culs-de-sac, or closes, located off Valley Road, Handside Lane and other roads in the conservation area. Carefully composed groups of houses are ranged round the open spaces, creating a sense of calm and repose, away from busy main roads, that be even more highly valued today. Collectively, these

must be acknowledged as important and distinctive contributions to the character of the conservation area.

Attimore Road

119 Sweeping round part of the western edge of the conservation area, Attimore Road is on the site of Bull Raffing Common, originally common land prior to the enclosure of 1750. A Belgic burial site has been discovered there. The road was prepared for housing from July 1926. A number of houses on Attimore Road are of interest. Note the neo-Flemish No. 59, which is very pretty. Note, too, its attractive fenestration and empathic Northern European-style gable.



Neo-Flemish gable detail at 59 Attimore Road.



Handside Lane, in existence prior to the establishment of the Garden City, retains its rural ambience.

Handside Lane

120 This was a rural road, predating the establishment of Welwyn Garden City. Even before the town plan had been completed, construction of the first houses, designed by C M Crickmer, had begun in Handside Lane, with the town's first residents moving into No 39.

121 Handside Lane, which has retained a rural ambience with its sinuous course, many original hedgerows, wide verges, and varied building styles, may well have been a primary source for de Soissons' planning, which simply incorporated it. A long road, close to the town centre, Handside Lane can suffer from commuters and

local workers parking. Particularly fine are the pair of houses Nos. 102 & 104, in a high Georgian rectory style. They are built in 2" bricks, but one of the pair has been poorly re-pointed. Handside Lane also gives access to several closes, including the Daily Mail Model Village, Barn Close and the Barn Theatre, the Friends Meeting House and a Synagogue.

Applecroft Road

122 The Applecroft name was chosen from among the names of the fields, commons, and cottages and farm groups that had existed since the enclosures before 1750. In 1921 it was intended that fifty council



No's. 102 & 104 Handside Lane, a handsome and well presented pair in Georgian rectory style, with the exception of the inferior repointing to the left hand building.

houses should be built in Elm Gardens and Applecroft Road. This was the first local authority scheme for Welwyn Rural District Council and the houses were designed by Louis de Soissons. Eventually, a total of 44 three- and four-bedroomed houses of red stock bricks and clay pantiles were built, at a density of 10.95 dwellings per net acre, higher than those in the southern part of nearby Elmwood and Attimore Road. The linear form of development is cleverly relieved by its articulation, with alternating groups of two and four houses and variable house designs. Here, at the junction with Barleycroft Road, there is some attractive two storey Arts & Crafts housing, with steep, tiled roofs. Applecroft School was the first to be built in Welwyn Garden City. Its individual architectural language, historical and cultural/educational importance to the community mark it for inclusion as a key building in the conservation area.

Barleycroft Green

- 123 Located off Barleycroft Road, Barleycroft Green was built in 1932 and designed by A.W. Kenyon. The rhythms created by the gable ended orientation of the houses onto the generous open space, together with mature planting, make this scene particularly distinctive, yet consistent with others, such as The Orchard, off Blakemere Road, and Brockett Close.



Arts & Crafts housing on the junction of Barleycroft and Applecroft Road.

124 The two storey red-brick cottages have steeply-pitched roofs, covered in warm terracotta-coloured clay pantiles. The cottages were originally detached but are now pretty much linked-up by garage extensions. The layout and built forms however have allowed the low extensions to fit in whilst maintaining the important gaps above. Where front hedging has been maintained it helps to conceal parked cars in the foreground.



The Daily Mail Model Village. Experimental housing promoted the Garden City movement.



Houses in Barley Croft Green have been extended with single storey garages. Rhythm, form and views have been maintained, preserving overall character.



Meadow Green is unusual in the Garden City with its flat roof and horizontal emphasis.

Meadow Green Daily Mail model village

125 The Meadow Green Daily Mail model village was sponsored by Lord Harmsworth's Associated Newspapers. Employing various construction methods and materials, the village was intended as a practical housing exhibition. It was meant to be an example of how the huge post-WWI housing problem might be solved, and to fight public indifference to the Garden City movement.

126 Maurice de Soissons described the Village as having 'some architectural features and a character of its own, [while] the architectural control that was exercised succeeded in bringing them [the houses] into harmony with the rest of the town'. Although the scheme was not completed, 43 houses were built, and the 'village' was opened by Earl Haig in March 1922.

127 As its title implies, the Model Village was intended to give both the Daily Mail and the sponsoring house

builders good publicity for their products, as well as provide new houses consistent with the Welwyn Garden City ethos. The distinguishing quality of the ensemble is of course its experimental approach, with considerable variation in form, construction and language.

- 128 Here there is a terrace which is distinctively different from its neighbours, or any other group in the Village or Welwyn Garden City - a white, low-lying, flat roofed block of horizontal emphasis in its proportions and fenestration. Note, too, the broad lawn in front of the Village which provides, as in several other places in Welwyn Garden City, an open, 'village green' setting. The Welwyn Garden City Society's leaflet, in which the original 1922 descriptions of the Model Village houses are reproduced, adds considerably to understanding and appreciating this unique development.

The Old Drive

- 129 Here de Soissons laid out triangular beds of roses and shrubs the junction with Handside Lane, in conjunction with great field and hedgerow trees. Opposite The Old Drive, on Handside Lane, there is a series of steep roofed gabled houses, some of which are turned to face the road, the variations increasing their rhythmic effect and group interest. Low garage infills do not unduly disturb the scene.

Bridge Road

- 130 Two houses on Bridge Road (west) which predate Welwyn Garden City are considered to be key buildings on account of their historic interest:
- a. No 39, an ancient house and the oldest survival in Welwyn Garden City;



Steeply roofed gabled houses in The Old Drive. Garage extensions are later additions.

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- b. A house of 1876 with double gable. The bulk, height and density of the large blocks of flats (Woodside House) nearby are discordant with the prevailing, small scale character of the residential areas.



Above: Built as Victorian estate workers cottages in 1876, No.'s 52 & 54 Bridge Road pre-date the Garden City. Below: The former Cherry Tree.

pair of unusual houses, faced in apparently artificial stone blocks, with a brick tiled string course. The siting in relation to the road junction and unaltered exterior create both interest and a sense of authenticity.



“Stone” clad houses at the junction of Handside Lane and Youngs Rise contribute to the visual interest of the area



- 131 Notable also is the original Cherry Tree building, now part of a supermarket.

Youngs Rise

- 132 At the junction of Youngs Rise and Handside Lane is no. 1 Youngs Rise and no. 100 Handside Lane, a

Guessens Road

- 133 Guessens Road was one of the first to be laid out. It adjoins the town centre and therefore can suffer from commuter and office workers parking there. In 1923 Welwyn Rural District Council was well into the construction of its second scheme, 93 houses in Guessens

Road, swiftly erected without cavity walls, which appear to survive at the southern end of the road.

134 If Welwyn Garden City had a meritocratic aristocracy, they certainly all chose to reside in Guessens Road, as is evident from the listings, below, for this road. Typical housing consists of semi-detached red-brick houses with steep, tiled roofs and emphatic, angled chimney stacks. Houses on the east side tend to be detached. The following houses are of particular interest:

1 No. 5 Guessens Road was the home of Sir Ebenezer Howard during the early development of the town.

2 No. 9 Guessens Road, featuring mature oaks, was formerly the home of Sir Theodore Chambers, then subsequently the Public Library, education offices and currently occupied by a children's day nursery.

3 Sir Frederic Osborn lived at No. 16 Guessens Road from 1927-78.

4 Louis de Soissons lived at No. 17 from 1925-37. This is surprisingly modest – a two storey red-brick box with a steep tiled roof, but not the only house he occupied. Note the unusual façade fenestration – the return elevation's fenestration being more conventional, with its four sash windows.

Guessens Court

135 Designed by the architect H. Clapham Lander for the New Town Trust Ltd, this 'set piece' is in the form of a quadrangle, framed by two storey ranges of service flats, with a restaurant block. The attractive central lawn, acts as urban lung as well as a fine setting. The unity of the simple sub-classical symmetry, with raised stuccowork, is entirely intact. Note too, the engineering brick plinths and the attractive handling of the arched entrance ways.



Guessens Court.



Longcroft Lane Area

136 This is the principal road running south from the Town Centre, and one of the few straight residential roads in the CA. Development

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along this road is consequently quite linear in character, with two storey cottage style houses grouped into terraces. To compensate, their building lines often break forward and back to create a more varied streetscape.

137 The absence of original provision for car parking has resulted in additional hardstandings being created to accommodate vehicles, some of which are being resurfaced in ad-hoc, uncoordinated materials. Removal of front hedging, another consequence of the parking situation, further reduces the more intimate scale and setting.

138 To the east of Longcroft Lane lies a recently developed estate, comprising a series of cul-de-sacs. Although still immature, density here appears greater and houses tend to have simplified detailing compared with those on Longcroft Lane itself. The absence of chimneys from their rooflines also diminishes interest.

7.3 Activity

139 The emphasis throughout Welwyn Garden City was based on egalitarian principles; therefore even the 'grandest' homes (i.e. homes in Parkway, Guessens Road or the neo-early Georgian house at Dognell Green) are relatively modest. Such an emphasis reflected the visionary aims of Sir Ebenezer Howard and the founding fathers of Welwyn Garden City. That is not to say there is no hierarchy at all; smaller properties, developed to higher densities east

of the railway line, appear to have been geared to lower income groups. Conversely, property to the west, where the conservation area is drawn, has both generated and reflected higher prices and incomes.

140 In terms of usage, the conservation area can be divided into three categories:

- Commercial/retail in the Town Centre.
- Civic area around The Campus.
- Residential areas to the north, west and south of the Town Centre.

141 Although a carefully planned network of roads links all areas in the conservation area, they were not designed for the traffic and parking pressure they now have to accommodate. Issues arising from these conditions are discussed further below. The railway line to the east and the A1(M) to the west also restrict E-W movement to a few crossing points.

7.4 Architectural and Historic Qualities of Buildings

142 Architecturally, although much of Welwyn Garden City is neo-Georgian, it is a very simple neo-Georgian, pared-down, free of too many features and therefore was eminently suitable for the C20th. Although neo-Georgian revival was also not uncommon elsewhere during the 1920s and 30s, the planned, singularly controlled concentration here is unique. On

the whole, while individual buildings of all styles, public and private, are apparently not considered at this point in time to be of such exceptional merit as to be eligible for listing, the collection is of the highest significance, defining the character of the Garden City and vital to its integrity. Architectural significance can therefore be seen as local or regional. Key unlisted buildings are set out below.

143 The few listed buildings present contribute because their age and character provide a link with the pre-history of the Garden City. With the exception of a small number of negative buildings (identified on the map) the historic significance of the collection, which is inseparable from the City's concept and planning, is of national and international significance. However, by way of example, the rather dated Postmodernism of the Howard Centre (1989) does not fit entirely comfortably with the earlier, more reticent, architecture.

7.5 Contribution made by key unlisted buildings

144 Key unlisted buildings are those which fall within one or more of the following criteria:

- a. Age – the earliest buildings in WGC should merit greater attention towards preservation.
- b. Authenticity - Buildings or structures should be substantially unaltered and should retain the majority of their original features.

- c. Architectural Significance - Buildings or structures of local architectural significance for aesthetic merit or craftsmanship of any period; principal works of principal architects or designers of local importance; exemplars of key building types.
- d. Local technological significance or innovation.
- e. Historic Significance – Buildings/structures illustrating or associated with local architectural/social/cultural history or events, locally or nationally well known people.
- f. Townscape Significance - Individual buildings, objects or groups of exceptional quality in their context - for example, landmark buildings, notable buildings marking or creating interesting places, vistas, or interesting skylines.

145 The buildings below are recommended as key buildings and illustrated on the map in Appendix 1. These should be considered for inclusion on a local list. The importance of a local list is twofold: to acknowledge and raise awareness of buildings of higher than average importance and to establish potential candidates for statutory listing, particularly where their significance may be diminished or through alteration or lost entirely through demolition. Those marked * are recommended as potentially suitable for consideration by English Heritage for statutory listing.

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- The Council Offices (original building), The Campus
- Original Cherry Tree building, Bridge Road
- Welwyn Stores building (de Soissons, 1938)
- *Detached houses, Nos. 8-22 Parkway (de Soissons, 1924, individual architectural quality and group value)
- HSBC Bank building, No. 14 Howardsgate (de Soissons, 1929, architectural quality)
- Nos. 12-24 & 30-50 Howardsgate (de Soissons, 1929, architectural quality)
- Original Barclays Bank building, No. 13 Howardsgate (de Soissons, 1929)
- Former Post Office building, No. 15 Howardsgate (de Soissons, 1929)
- Original Gas Board building
- Lloyds Bank building
- Nos. 31-33 Howardsgate & No. 49 Howardsgate (Marshall Sissons, 1930)
- Nos. 51-63 & 52-68 Howardsgate
- Nos. 41-53 & 36-42 Wigmores North (de Soissons, Peacock, Hodges and Robertson, 1959)
- Nos. 4-16 & 7-17 Wigmores South
- Nos. 26-40 & 7-35 Stonehills
- Nos. 2-6, 32-44 & 37-43 Fretherne Road
- *Original School/Cottage Hospital building, Church Road (architectural quality)



The Lloyds Bank building.

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Unity Church, Parkway.

- * The Free Church, Church Road (architectural quality)
- *No 5 Guessens Road – residence of Ebenezer Howard (association with historically important persons)
- *No 9 Guessens Road – residence of Sir Theodore Chambers (association with historically important persons)
- *No 16 Guessens Road – residence of Sir Frederic Osborne (association with historically important persons)
- *No 17 Guessens Road – residence of Louis de Soissons (association with historically important persons)
- Original advertising stanchions, Town Centre
- 50 Church Road
- No 21 High Oaks Road, at the junction with Dognell Green (occupied by Louis de Soissons)
- *102-104 Handside Lane, Queen Anne Style, designed by Theodore Lake, erected by disabled ex-servicemen as part of the Daily Mail Model Village (architectural quality and social significance)
- *Handside Close, designed by Louis de Soissons (architectural group value)
- *Applecroft School, Applecroft Road (architectural and historic importance)
- *Unity Church, 69 Parkway (architectural quality)
- *Catholic Church, 81 Parkway (architectural quality)

- *Houses by CM Crickmer in Handside Lane 29-51 odd and 42-60 even (architectural group and historic importance as first houses)
- *The White Bridge, by Louis de Soissons (architectural quality)
- Coronation Fountain, Parkway
- Ebenezer Howard Memorial, Parkway at Howardsgate
- The Vineyard Barn, Digswell Rise
- The Friends Meeting House, 109 Handside Lane
- Pair of Victorian estate workers' cottages, 52-54 Bridge Road, predating WCG
- The pair of white cottages, 48-50 Bridge Road
- *St Francis of Assisi, Church Road
- Christ Church 110 Parkway
- Daily Mail Model Village



Despite UPVC door and window replacements, 5 Guessens Road, the former home of Ebenezer Howard, is recommended for statutory listing.

146 With further potential for applying the above criteria, it is recommended that proposed additions to the above list are evaluated for inclusion as they arise and that the list is reviewed at least once every five years.

7.6 Local detail, prevalent local and traditional building materials and the public realm

147 In the most numerous, neo-Georgian buildings, the predominant local facing materials are red brick walling, white painted softwood sash windows and red clay tiled roofs. Doors and door cases are painted timber. The architecture intentionally reflects authentic Georgian buildings in Welwyn, Old Hatfield and St Albans nearby. In the earlier houses, mansard roofs and dormer windows featured strongly. Later building tended towards steeply pitched roofs. Stone dressings and details appear occasionally, particularly on public or commercial buildings. Decorative elements include pilasters and pediments to building entrances, and occasional stucco detailing.

148 Arts & Crafts forms and details made their appearance early as well. The first houses, by Crickmer in Handside Lane, were faced in stucco, with painted timber casement windows and hipped tiled roofs. Later houses, sometimes in groups or terraces often took gabled forms and were fitted with metal casement windows. Doors and door cases were painted timber. Some additions to the town centre and residential areas, particularly in the early post war period vary according to materials then available, but generally the pattern of red-brick, pan tile roofs and sash windows continued into the 1960s.

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149 The public realm comprises all elements within public highways or open spaces. It is what connects buildings with one another, creates a positive or negative setting or experience and forms the space within which people interact. In Welwyn Garden City the public realm includes generous landscaped spaces as well as highway floorscapes, lighting, engineering works, street furniture, sculptures and monuments.



Example of random floorscape treatment in the public realm. Note original guard rails in background.

150 Floorscapes include footways, verges, kerbs and roadways. Footways are generally concrete paving slabs. Kerbs are concrete sections, dropped and studded at pedestrian crossings in the town centre. In residential areas footways and paths are concrete paving slabs or tarmac. Verges, where present, are grassed, typically with mature tree planting. Roadways are tarmac, except where traffic calming tables have been installed. In Sir Theodore's Way, a distinctive 1950s pedestrian paving pattern, visible in a period photograph, is no longer present. Floorscape materials are often varied in an uncoordinated manner.

151 Street lighting in the town centre, The Campus and some residential streets is distinctive Welwyn Garden City lanterns on steel columns. Elsewhere, standard pattern lanterns are used. In some residential streets standard fluorescent fittings have been introduced.

152 Engineering works in the highway are the pedestrian underpasses, introduced for pedestrian safety to cope with the increasing volume of traffic around Bridge Road. As with many such works throughout the UK, their necessity degrades an otherwise pleasant and safe pedestrian environment.



Distinctive original lighting survives in Howardsgate.

153 Street furniture such as benches, litter bins, bollards and guard rails is of a common proprietary nature and are often uncoordinated. Notable exceptions, distinctive to Welwyn Garden City include the town centre poster stanchions, low guard rails in Howardsgate and railings in Sir Theodore's Way.

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154 Other distinctive public realm features include numerous statues and monuments throughout the town, and the special metal canopy marking an entrance to Anniversary Garden. The many greens and squares in residential areas also form part of the public realm.

7.7 The contribution made by greenery and green spaces

155 The quantity, layout and design of landscape and green space in all its forms are inseparable from the vision, planning and execution of the Garden City. Hedging is the main form of enclosure for both public and private open space. Lime, Horse Chestnut, Lombardy Poplar and Hornbeam trees, rose and shrub beds are set formally within the open spaces of Parkway

and Howardsgate and provide a complimentary setting for the rigid formation of the buildings in the town centre. Along the length of Howardsgate, the composition of geometrically placed hedges, rows of perimeter lime trees, paved walkways and open spaces achieves a spacious and distinctive urban character, which is further enhanced by specially designed de Soissons street lights and advertising kiosks.

156 Parkway, by contrast, is less enclosed and derives its character from its spacious, park-like layout and the long north-south vistas it provides. The Campus, which forms the head of Parkway, is partly wooded with mature trees and provides a sustainable transition from the formality of the dense town centre to the spaciousness of the residential areas to the north.



Formal geometry of the generous open space in Howardsgate.

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Parkway and The Campus are included on the list of Unregistered Historic Parks and Gardens in Appendix 2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

157 In residential areas, verges and street trees define the spaces between roadway and footway, typically edged in turn by the hedged boundaries of private gardens. Where these elements are missing or eroded, the local character is degraded. The role of some spaces such as Parkway in creating or terminating vistas has been noted above.

158 Landscaping, therefore, is a foremost feature in the character of the conservation area and was originally designed to provide the public with a continuous park-like environment throughout residential, educational and commercial areas of the city.

7.8 Negative factors - The extent of loss, intrusion or damage

159 Negative factors can be categorised as follows:

- Buildings
- Extensions
- Alterations
- Shopfronts
- Landscape
- Public realm elements
- Traffic engineering measures

160 Negative buildings (marked on the appended map) are those which detract from the character of the conservation area and would benefit from major enhancement

measures or redevelopment. They include:

- The multi-storey car park at Bridge Road
- Health Centre, Birdcroft Road
- Multi-storey car park, Osborne Way (rear of Howard Centre)
- College Way car park



Negative impact of multi-storey car park in Bridge Road.

161 Negative extensions are those which detract significantly from the original form or appearance of a building or group.

162 Incremental alteration is the most seriously degrading threat to the character of the conservation area. Most of these occur as “permitted development” to individual houses. They can affect whole groups of houses which were intended to be part of a single composition. Common alterations include:

- Replacement windows of different patterns and materials to the originals
- Replacement doors of different patterns and materials to originals
- Poor siting of rooflights
- Poor siting of solar panels
- Obtrusive external plumbing, meter boxes,

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- Poorly sited or designed signage

163 Many shopfronts originally designed as an integral part of the building have been altered. Oversized fascias or sub-fascias, reflective or strongly coloured materials, oversized or poorly designed lettering, internal illuminated signs, excessive lighting and obtrusive security measures all detract from the intended harmony and unity.



Replacement shopfronts in Welwyn Garden City detract from the original form and intended unity of the parent building.

164 The quality of soft landscape and planting generally epitomise the garden city concept. The chief threat to it is erosion. In the public realm this has taken the form of increasing traffic and parking capacity at the expense of landscape. In residential streets and closes, parking space has been created with a variety of lay-bys, grasscrete and hard standings, sometimes accompanied by removal of front boundary hedging. Balancing the need or demand for road and parking space with environmental quality, sustainability and energy saving objectives is a national problem. The issues for the conservation area are therefore to correctly weigh capacity for

change against impact on character. The problem is often not whether change per se can be accommodated, but managing it through good design and co-ordination, and preventing discordant, ad-hoc measures.

165 Public realm elements also need to be better co-ordinated. Seemingly arbitrary variation in street furniture and fittings, from distinctive Welwyn Garden City models to standard utilitarian types suggests the need for a detailed inventory in which design, date installed and quality are recorded as part of the overall enhancement strategy. Occasional uncoordinated signage, creating unnecessary clutter, would benefit from rationalisation.

166 Traffic engineering measures, especially in the town centre, have increasingly favoured vehicles at the expense of pedestrians.



Subway at Bridge Road testifies to difficult pedestrian circulation in this area.

Examples include:

- The subways that channel pedestrians across the gyratory system to or from buildings around The Campus.

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- Fretherne Road and the eastern end of Church Road
- The car park behind Wigmores South
- The subway/car park entrance at Church Road (east) near Parkway.



Subway and guardrails at Church Road

- The Police Station
- Campus West
- Woodside House, Bridge Road
- Old Parkway School



Height and form of Campus West is questioned

7.9 The existence of any neutral areas

167 Neutral buildings and areas are marked on the map. They include:

- The Sainsbury's building (1982) on Parkway and Church Road, with its 'blind' bays onto Parkway and over scaled service entrance.



Unfriendly "blind" façade of Parkway supermarket

7.10 General condition of the area and built fabric

168 On the whole this is good but there are areas, especially in the town centre, which appear poorly maintained or eroded, as described and exemplified above. Private housing, throughout, seems to be well-maintained.

7.11 Problems, pressures and the capacity for change

169 The Town Centre plots of the masterplan have been gradually developed to the pattern so strongly set by de Soissons, though the detailed design of more recent buildings sometimes fails to live up to that of the best earlier work. An example is The Howard Centre, where lack of interest in the upper storey and crude Post-modern

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entrance monumentality seem misplaced. The few places now remaining however offer fresh opportunities for reinterpreting the established idiom as high quality, contextual yet contemporary architecture.

170 The residential areas have generally maintained their character. The original neighbourhood layouts were, perhaps unknowingly, designed with sufficient loose-fit to allow for modest extensions, garaging and parking where car ownership was previously almost non-existent. Although some erosion of setting has taken place, as described above, due to parking and traffic pressure, the primary threat lies in the potential for uncontrolled, divergent alteration and the cumulative impact of poor maintenance, e.g. bad pointing.

171 As highlighted above, the conservation area covers only the western part of the original Master Plan area, the railway line acting as the great divide. Pressure for change in the eastern sector, including recent higher density, housing is degrading the global historic significance of the planned community and the garden city ideal. The increasing disparity between east and west Welwyn Garden City strongly supports a further conservation area review of the eastern sector.

172 Long term erosion of a number of important features and characteristics, has been identified throughout this report and can be

summarised together with issues identified by stakeholders, as set out below.

173 Issues, identified by stakeholders from the initial questionnaire consultation include:

- a large number of uPVC window and door replacements
- removal of front hedge boundaries
- extensive areas of hard standings in front gardens
- some bulky extensions
- poor quality and uncoordinated shopfronts
- some loss of views through gaps between buildings
- increased street clutter
- inferior/uncoordinated street furniture
- uncoordinated or inferior repaving
- erosion of verges to roads to accommodate parking
- erosion of integrity of relationship between buildings and local open spaces
- lack of traffic and speed restraint
- poorly designed car parks, some inconvenient pedestrian crossings
- unpleasant pedestrian subways
- inferior design/increased density of recent housing developments

174 Calls for further, pro-active guidance have been received from stakeholders, whose comments are summarised below. The evidence presented through this appraisal

suggests that, where alteration to individual properties is concerned, erosion of character can be resisted either through rigorous and consistent application of the Management Plan, by imposing an Article 4 Direction, or both. Enhancement can be promoted primarily through commissioning and adoption of good design guidance or codes both for potential applicants and in the public realm.

8.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

175 In accordance with English Heritage best practice advice, the Council's brief included a requirement to involve named key stakeholders in the appraisal process. These included Councillors and officers as well as community and special interest organisations. The two principal means to do this were agreed as:

- A questionnaire, the content of which was agreed with the Client, requiring careful consideration and in some instances detailed responses, and,
- A workshop session with stakeholders which would follow circulation of the draft appraisal.

176 The brief required an analysis and report of questionnaire responses. Hence, careful regard to the questionnaire responses has been paid in the draft text, which could then self evidently form a body of feedback for review at the workshop. Following the workshop, the team would again report to the

Council on how the consultations have been taken into account in redrafting the appraisal and feedback provided.

8.1 Phase 1 Consultation

177 The questionnaire was sent to 27 groups and individuals as advised by the Client. These included Council Members, specialist advisors, residents associations, amenity, business and other groups and individuals who had responded to local plan consultations on conservation matters. Of these, 9 responses (33.3%) were received. The most significant positive themes expressed were:

- Low density, human scale, well ordered, generally pleasant place to live.
- Consciousness and pride in Welwyn Garden City's historic importance.
- Overall architectural coherence, with studied variation enhancing attractiveness.
- Generous open spaces and gardens, excellent landscape qualities, mature trees.
- Many excellent views and vistas, both dramatic (Parkway from the bridge) and intimate (hidden communal gardens/play areas).

178 Negative themes in questionnaires returned are set out, with our responses, in the following table:

WELWYN GARDEN CITY CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Issue		Response
1	Inferior new development, alteration and extension.	Agree, as noted in text.
2	Overdevelopment.	We are not convinced from observation that overdevelopment is a significant problem.
3	uPVC window and door replacements.	Agree, we consider this problem to be rampant and seriously degrading.
4	Failure to enforce management scheme, leading to bad permitted development.	See our comments under Management Scheme below.
5	Low quality shopfronts/lack of guidance.	Agree, SPD and strict control is recommended.
6	Howard Centre disappointing.	Agree, see comment in text.
7	Abandonment of specially designed street furniture and floorscape.	Agree, see comment in text.
8	Removal of front hedges/ boundaries for hardstanding.	Agree, see comment in text.
9	Erosion of open space and setting of buildings through parking, garaging, new development.	Partly agree – there may be a need for design guidance and co-ordinated public realm design.
10	Felling of mature trees.	Recognise that management of aged trees is necessary, lack evidence to support contention of unnecessary felling.
11	Failure to list key buildings of interest.	Agree. See list in text.
12	Central retail and leisure areas should be car-free.	Ideally. Could be highly attractive and sustainable, but would require major re-planning to accommodate vehicles at edges of central area.

8.2 Phase 2 Consultation

179 Following an informal consultation by questionnaire and an in formal meeting with resident representatives, the resulting draft Appraisal was then subject to extensive public consultation by the following measures:

- a) Two workshop sessions held on 20 September 2006, notes of which are appended. These comprised a presentation of the content of the draft Appraisal, followed by a structured discussion based on issues identified by delegates, and suggested amendments emerging at the end.
- b) Summary leaflet, questionnaire and equal opportunities monitoring form sent to 4000 residential and commercial premises, including those potentially affected by proposed extensions.
- c) Full draft, questionnaire, leaflet and equal opportunities form posted on the Council's website.
- d) Paper copies of all documents available to view or buy at various locations.
- e) Poster and map display.

180 The Council's full report on consultations can be obtained by contacting the Planning Policy Unit at Welwyn Hatfield Council. Contact details can be found at the end of this document.

181 The Council's questionnaire was directed at gauging public support for the key issues and recommendations of the draft in terms of:

- Proposed extensions
- Public realm improvements
- Need for design guidance
- Need for additional planning control
- Identification of key buildings, views and vistas
- Character analysis, local details, open space descriptions
- Identification of negative and neutral factors/areas
- Issues identified by stakeholders at pre-draft stage

182 In general, overwhelming support was expressed by workshop delegates and respondents to all questions included in the questionnaire. Many individual comments were also received. These can be broadly grouped into the following categories:

- a) factual and technical accuracy
- b) suggestions for consideration as proposed boundary changes
- c) comment on powers, process or implementation
- d) arguments concerning merit of buildings or elements

183 Wherever possible the text has been revised to take account of comments relating to a) and b)

above. Comments relating to c- and d- are generally beyond the scope of an appraisal to reconcile, for example, buildings suggested for local or statutory listing must await the Council's and/or English Heritage formal consideration. Likewise, issues such as commissioning detailed guidance need to be considered in relation to the future Management Plan stage. Sections which have been amended are referenced below.



Templewood has sensitive scale and detailing, but uPVC window replacements undermine authenticity.

9.0 SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGES

184 No areas are recommended for deletion. The map indicates areas which are considered to warrant extension of the conservation area boundary. The following areas (shown on the map in Appendix 1) are recommended for inclusion, for reasons set out in the following text:

Templewood, Pentley Park, Pentley Close, Nut Grove, Great Dell, Pitsfield, The Vineyard area

185 These roads mainly comprise later, more simplified neo-Georgian housing, generally two storeys in height. The scale is sensitive, consistent with the Masterplan and works well on the incline. Note such details as the balconies and 'porthole' lunettes on certain properties. However, many of the properties have inappropriate modern uPVC window glazing. The area includes the listed Templewood School.

Knightsfield, Digswell Road and Harwood Hill (part)

186 At Knightsfield, de Soissons marked the importance of the summit with these impressive three-storey buildings, now listed. Pevsner described the 'houses here, still with muted neo-Georgian allusions, are by L. de Soissons, Peacock, Hodges & Robertson and date from the early 1960s'. These and the other Knightsfield buildings have considerable presence and relate well to the road layout, where Digswell Road forms a main route



The excellent 1950s Templewood School



1950's houses adjoining Knightsfield with original detailing

to the town centre from the north. Nos. 2-18 Harwood Hill adjoining Knightsfield are included as part of a relatively intact group of 1950's date on both sides of Knightsfield east of Digswell Road.

Heather Road

188 The houses on the east side of the road form a coherent group which, though later, is consistent with the character of the conservation area and should therefore be included.

Marsden Road (north side),
Springfields, **Downfields,**
Stacklands and Lemsford Lane
(part)

189 Marsden Road, which connects Handside Lane and Stanborough Green, contains groups of houses which are consistent with groups in the conservation area. They also back onto the large playing field, within the conservation area and therefore form its southern backdrop. Springfields, Stacklands, Downfields and part of Lemsford



De Soissons' buildings Knightsfield are elegant and urbane at this gateway to the conservation area.

Lane display similar characteristics-well composed groups of houses, often with cross-winged gables at their ends, clad in red brick . The part of Marsden Road between Stanborough Green and the start of the modern bungalows is contiguous and consistent with groups within the conservation area and should therefore be included.



Balcony access flats at Stanborough Green

10.0 LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE

190 Threats to the character of the conservation area have been noted above. The most numerous are uncontrolled householder alterations. A Householders Guide providing topic-based detailed advice on process, acceptable and

unacceptable design and other relevant matters should therefore be considered as a priority. This could include reference to the scope of the Management Scheme and details of any Article 4 Directions, as they may arise.

191 The main problems and pressures identified in the analyses of the character areas, as identified above should be addressed in this guide. Topics could include:

- Description of principal design features
- Extensions
- Building materials and details
- Roof conversions and dormers
- Rain and foul water systems
- Chimneys
- Porches
- Windows and doors
- Garages and parking spaces
- Garden buildings
- Fences, walls and hedges
- Trees and landscape
- Communication aerials
- How to make an application

192 The Council has already included shopfront guidance in its Supplementary Design Guide document. This could be augmented by a further leaflet detailing acceptable and unacceptable approaches and examples of shopfront installations.

193 Issues concerning works within the public realm, which are within the control of the Council, should be grouped together for inclusion in a policy document for implementation by the Council or County Councils, as appropriate. Specific guidance on the importance of co-ordinated design of objects, installations and surfaces within the conservation area, and of collaboration between

Council services to that end should be included.

10.1 English Heritage criteria (from their publication *Conservation area appraisals*) used for assessing the contribution of unlisted buildings to a conservation area.

194

- Is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- Has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics that reflect those of at least a substantial number of the buildings in the conservation area?
- Does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- Does it, individually or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or of an earlier phase of growth?
- Does it have a significant historic association with the Master Plan or established features such as the road layout, a park, or landscape?
- Does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces?
- Does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?

- Has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?

195 A positive answer to one or more of the above questions is likely to indicate that the building makes a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

11.0 SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

11.1 Useful Contacts:

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/>

Planning Policy Unit,
The Campus
Welwyn Garden City
Hertfordshire AL8 6AE
Tel: 01707 357000

Hertfordshire County Council

<http://www.hertsdirect.org>

Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8DQ
Tel: 01923 471555

The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust

<http://www.hgs.org.uk/hgstrust/index.html>

862 Finchley Road,
London
NW11 6AB
Contact: Jane Blackburn
Tel: (020) 8455 1066 or
(020) 8458 8085

The Letchworth Heritage Foundation

<http://www.lgchf.com/>

The Spirella Building
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 4ET
Tel: 01462 476000

English Heritage

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>

English Heritage
PO Box 569
Swindon
SN2 2YP
Tel: 0870 333 1181

The Twentieth Century Society

<http://www.c20society.org.uk>

70 Cowcross Street
London
EC1M 6EJ
Tel: 020 7250 3857

The Town & Country Planning Association

<http://www.tcpa.org.uk>

17 Carlton House Terrace
London
SW1Y 5AS
Tel: 020 7930 8903

The Civic Trust

<http://www.civictrust.org.uk>

Essex Hall
1-6 Essex Street
London
WC2R 3HU
Tel: 020 7539 7900

11.2 Bibliography

The following reference works were used in the preparation of this appraisal:

Management Scheme for Welwyn Garden City, Welwyn Hatfield DC, 1976

Supplementary Design Guidance, Welwyn Hatfield DC, 2005

Maurice de Soissons, *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living* (Publication for Companies, 1988).

Peter Kidson, Peter Murray and Paul Thompson, *A History of English Architecture* (Penguin Books, 1979).

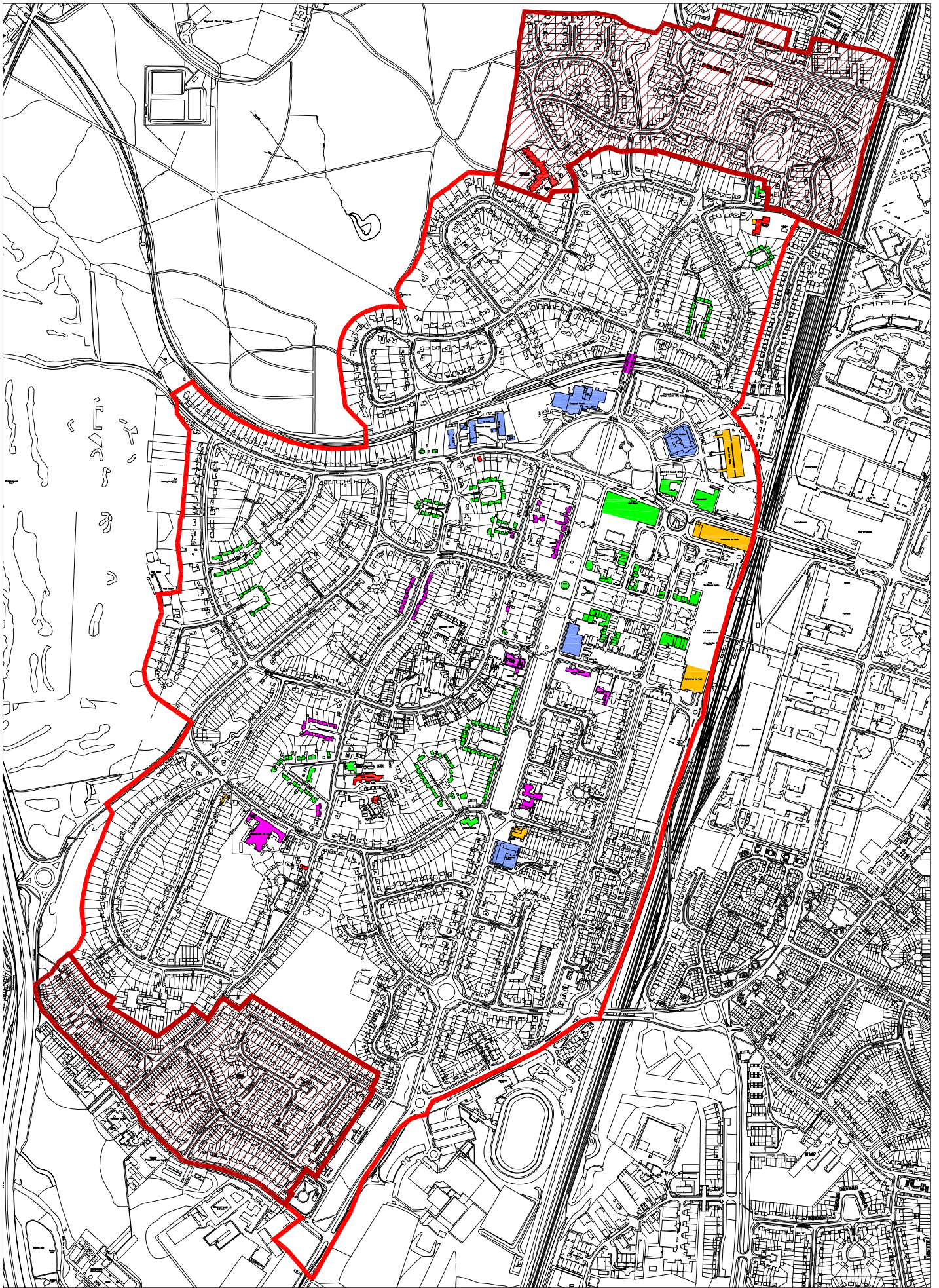
Welwyn Garden City Official Handbook (1962).

Welwyn Garden City Official Guide (1967).

Nikolaus Pevsner & Bridget Cherry, *The Buildings of England Hertfordshire* (1977).

Welwyn Garden City Society, *Welwyn Garden City Heritage Map 101 Features Selected by Welwyn Garden City Society* (March 1991).

APPENDIX 1
ANALYSIS MAP



- ORIGINAL CA BOUNDARY
- LISTED BUILDINGS
- KEY UNLISTED BUILDINGS
- BUILDINGS RECOMMENDED FOR STATUTORY LISTING
- EXTENSIONS TO CA
- NEGATIVE BUILDINGS
- NEUTRAL BUILDINGS

Conservation Architecture & Planning
 Key House Standford Lane
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PROJECT: Welwyn Garden City
 DRAWING: Conservation Area Analysis Map
 SCALE: N/A DATE: 02/07 DRAWN: EC

APPENDIX 2

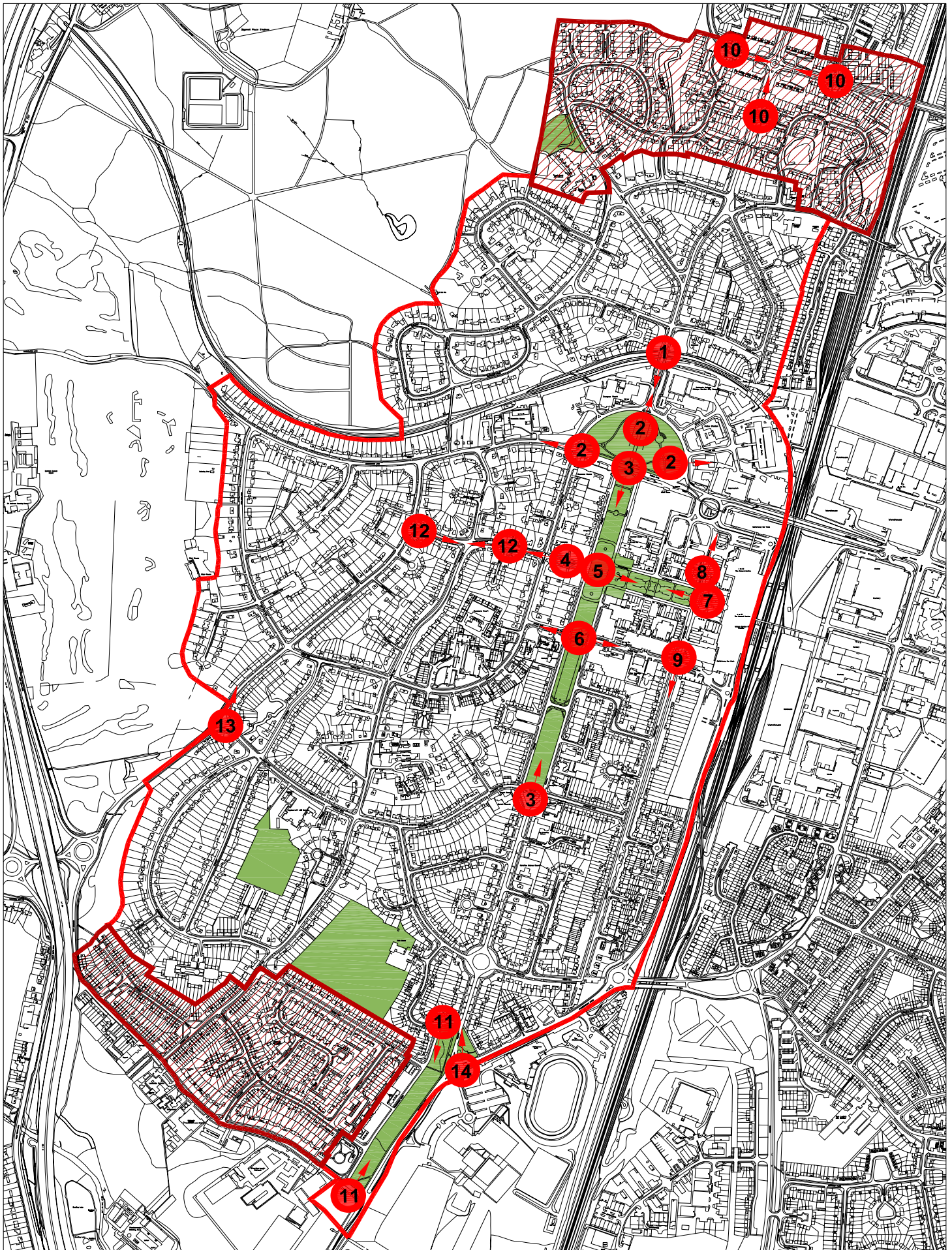
VIEWS & VISTAS MAP

Appendix 2

Key views & vistas

The following key views and vistas are shown on the appended map:

- 1 From the White Bridge and The Campus along Parkway.
- 2 Views in all directions from The Campus.
- 3 Vistas along Parkway from either end.
- 4 View from Parkway along Russellcroft Road.
- 5 View from Parkway east along Howardsgate.
- 6 View from Parkway along Church Road, both directions.
- 7 View from Howard Centre towards Parkway.
- 8 View northwards from Fretherne Road towards the original Cherry Tree (now Waitrose) building.
- 9 In a southerly direction from Fretherne Road along Longcroft Lane.
- 10 Views to/from Knightsfield, at the junction with Digswell Road, in all directions.
- 11 Views along Stanborough Green, north and south.
- 12 Views from Russellcroft Road in both directions.
- 13 Views along Valley Road from Applecroft Road to the A1(M) (contribution to the setting of the CA).
- 14 Views from Stanborough Road to Parkway (contribution to the setting of the CA).



 ORIGINAL CA BOUNDARY

 KEY AREAS OF URBAN OPEN LAND

 EXTENSIONS TO CA

 VIEWS & VISTAS



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CON SITE Welwyn Conservation Area Appraisal DRAWING TITLE Urban Open Land and Views & Vistas SHEET NO. A3 July 2006 SCALE NTS DRAWN EC		
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