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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Summary

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council appointed Place Services to assess the suitability of the Peartree Area, within Welwyn Garden City, for conservation area designation.

This assessment focused on Beechfield Road, Barnfield Road, Furzefield Road, Sandpit Road, Cole Green Lane, Mill Green Road, Woodhall Lane and Holwell Road south of Beechfield Road. This area is depicted on Figure 1.

The extent of the study area was informed by the Cabinet Report of 9th June 2011 regarding the Proposed Designation of Peartree Conservation Area. The surrounding streets were also visited as part of this assessment.

An initial assessment of this area, completed by Place Services in December 2018, concluded that the Peartree Area was worthy of designation due to its special architectural and historic interest. As one of the first developments to be laid out to the east of Welwyn Garden City, the Peartree area benefits from a distinct character and appearance which also contributes to the understanding of the development of Welwyn Garden City as a whole. Much of the area’s architectural language, landscape and streetscape remains largely intact, providing an insight into an area planned to accommodate lower income housing, comparative to the larger homes built in the west.

Documentary research has been carried out utilising a number of primary and secondary sources including local history publications, maps, original plans and historic photographs held by the Hertfordshire Archives. An archaeological assessment and a number of site visits have been conducted, considering the Peartree Area in the context of the wider designated Garden City. Consideration has been given to the February 2011 report prepared by Welwyn Hatfield Council’s Planning Department: The Beehive Area, Welwyn Garden City: Report on the Proposal for Conservation Area Designation. This report assessed the Beehive, Woodhall and Peartree areas and resulted in the designation of the Beehive area as a conservation area.

1.2 Conserving Peartree’s Heritage

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council appointed Place Services to prepare a Conservation Area Appraisal for Peartree; this document is provided as baseline Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. This information is also produced for applicants to consider when designing or planning new development in Peartree which may affect the special interest of the conservation area, including its setting.

This appraisal provides an assessment of the historic development and character of the conservation area and outlines its special interest. The appraisal will consider the significance of non-designated heritage assets and the contribution that these, along with their setting, make to the character of the conservation area. The understanding of significance will be used to assess the vulnerability of the character areas and the potential impact of new development, highlighting key assets of importance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights good design as one of twelve core principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development relies on sympathetic design, achieved through an understanding of context. This appraisal provides an outline of the elements composing the special interest of the conservation area which, in turn, make up the context of sites and buildings within the area and can be used to inform good design.

This assessment follows best practice guidance, including Historic England’s revised Historic England Advice Note 1 for Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019) and Historic Environment Good Practice in Planning Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017).
1.3 Purpose of Appraisal

This document outlines the special interest of the conservation area, and should be used as a baseline to inform future development and design with regard to the sensitivities of the historic environment and the unique character of the Peartree Conservation Area.

It is expected that applications for planning permission will also consult and follow the best practice guidance outlined in the bibliography of this appraisal.

Applications that demonstrate a genuine understanding of the character of a conservation area are more likely to produce good design and positive outcomes for agents and their clients. This Conservation Area Appraisal will enhance understanding of Peartree and its development, informing future management and development.

1.4 Planning Policy Context

The legislative framework for conservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (HMSO 1990). In particular Section 69 of this act requires Local Planning Authorities to designate areas which they consider to be of architectural and historic interest as Conservation Areas, and section 72 requires that special attention should be paid to ensuring that the character and appearance of these areas is preserved or enhanced. Section 71 also requires the Local Planning Authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these areas. National planning policy in relation to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets is outlined in Chapter 16 of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG 2019).

The proposed Peartree Conservation Area is located within the Borough of Welwyn Hatfield. Current local planning policy is set out in the saved policies (2008) of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005) which will eventually be superseded by the new Local Plan, however, the policies within the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2016) are relevant to consider. The policies relevant to heritage assets, good design and the Peartree area itself include:

**Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Saved Policies:**
- R24 – Character Appraisals and Enhancements
- R27 – Demolition of Listed Buildings
- R28 – Historic Parks and Gardens
- R29 – Archaeology
- D1 – Quality of Design
- D2 – Character and Context
- D3 – Continuity and Enclosure
- D4 – Quality of the Public Realm
- D5 – Design for Movement
- D6 – Legibility
- D7 – Safety by Design
- D8 – Landscaping
- D9 – Access and Design for People with Disabilities
- D10 – Public Art

**Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission Policies:**
- SADM 6 – Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage
- SP 9 – Place-making and High Quality Design
- SP 11 – Protection and Enhancement of Critical Environmental Assets
- SADM 15 – Heritage
- SP 15 – The Historic Environment of Welwyn Garden City
Estate Management Scheme

In addition to the above mentioned legislation, national policy and local policy, some parts of the proposed conservation area are covered by the Estate Management Scheme (EMS). The EMS was introduced by the High Court in 1973 in recognition of the importance of the Garden City and in order to protect the unique amenities and values of the area and its residents. This means that consent is required for certain alterations to properties within the areas covered including, but not limited to, extensions and alterations to the external appearance of buildings, the erection of new buildings, the formation of hardstanding, and alterations to roofs. There are additional policies to guide decision making with regards to Estate Management consent. These are:

- EM1 – Extensions and Alterations
- EM2 – Erection of New Buildings
- EM3 – Works to Trees and Hedgerows
- EM4 – Hard Surfacing
- EM5 – Energy Efficiency and Other Roof Alterations (awaiting adoption)
2.0 Peartree Conservation Area

2.1 Context and General Character

The Peartree Area is located within Welwyn Garden City, a planned town developed in the early twentieth century. Situated in the south east of the town, Peartree comprises of residential and retail areas, largely built to the designs of the city architect Louis de Soissons.

The following roads are located at the core of this area and were assessed as part of the initial December 2018 Assessment:

- Beechfield Road,
- Barnfield Road,
- Furzefield Road,
- Pinewood
- Sandpit Road,
- Woohall Lane (part)
- Holwell Road (part)
- Mill Green Road (part)
- Cole Green Lane (part)

It is noted that elements of the design and special interest identified within these streets do extend beyond the initial study area highlighted in Figure 1, and Gooseacre, Gainswood, Pondcroft and the Woodhall Shopping Parade have been added to the Peartree Conservation Area following the initial December 2018 assessment.

Following December 2018 report, Moss Green, Woodhall Court, Peartree Court, Four Acres and Hunters Way have been omitted from the study area. This is due to their alternate or diluted architectural character (Moss Green, Woodhall Court, Peartree Court) or distance from the core of the study area (Four Acres and Hunters Way).

Gainswood and Pondcroft cul-de-sacs have been added to the boundary following the initial appraisal. Both are representative of the type of planned closes by de Soissons, adding visual interest and variety to the area.

The conservation area boundary is outlined on Figure 2.

The area is divided into three Character Areas which have been determined by the predominant function of the buildings or their cohesion as a group which makes them discernibly separate. The individual Character Areas are outlined on Figure 3, these will be assessed in later sections of this document.

Some buildings have been identified as negative contributors to the conservation area; these buildings are highlighted on Figure 4. This map also highlights any buildings or features assessed to be neutral contributors to the area.
Figure 2 Peartree Conservation Area in its wider context
Figure 3 Peartree Conservation Area and Character Areas
Figure 4: Significance of Buildings in Peartree
2.2 Origin and Evolution

Early History
Peartree Lane, Woodhall Lane and Cole Green Lane, which traverse the conservation area, are historic routes which were retained and incorporated into the planned development. The names Peartree and Woodhall relate to former farms which occupied the land here. Prior to development the landscape largely comprised of open fields. A scatter of villages were located across the wider area, with the landscape predominantly of an undeveloped agrarian character.

The Garden City
Welwyn Garden City is the largest settlement in the Borough of Welwyn Hatfield and located approximately twenty miles north of London, connected to the capital via the main East Coast train line. The settlement is bounded by two rivers, the Mimram River to the north and the Lea to the south. Its high point is located to the north-west at over 400 feet, the land sloping gently to the south east.

The settlement is predominantly known due to its foundation by Ebenezer Howard as the country’s second Garden City and Master Plan by Louis de Soissons in 1920. It is an early example of a Garden City, and is well preserved both in terms of its building stock and discernible ‘Garden City’ plan and ethos.

Garden Cities focused international attention on Hertfordshire, opening up new swathes of the landscape to the mass of middle class commuters at the beginning of the twentieth century. New railway and road connections, coupled with desirable housing development, allowed the town to grow to reach a population of c.18,000 by 1948, when it was designated as a post-war New Town. In contrast to Letchworth Garden City, Welwyn Garden City was built following the 1919 Housing Act which ‘placed a statutory duty on local authorities to provide working-class housing on garden city lines, assisted by generous Government subsidies.’ From the settlement’s inception there was a need to provide a housing allocation for lower income households within the town, part of this allocation was located within Peartree. The pared back neo-Georgian style employed in the west of Welwyn Garden City by de Soissons (with the exception of the first phase in Handside Lane) was carried through to the working class housing, uniting the town under a single architectural style.

Figure 5 shows Louis de Soissons’ original 1920s masterplan demarcating the Peartree area. Later developments have since encroached upon the boundary and some original houses have been lost. Building in the Peartree Area began in the early 1930s. It followed on from the development of the town centre and the residential neighbourhoods to the west of the railway line and includes some of the earliest houses to be built. Development further to the east continued after the New Town designation with a new masterplan drawn up in the 1940s; the Beehive area is an example of this later phase of development.

1 L Munby, The Hertfordshire Landscape, 234
2 Pevsner, Hertfordshire, 396
3 Historic England, English Garden Cities: An Introduction, 37
2.3 Heritage Assets

There are no designated heritage assets within the conservation area.

Buildings of interest include The Peartree Inn, The Woodhall Shopping Parade, The Woodhall Community Centre (all dating from 1938) and Our Lady Queen of Apostles (1959–60). These buildings are located in Character Area 2 and will be described in further detail in the character analysis, section 3.

These buildings are of communal and group value and follow the Neo-Georgian architectural style of the Garden City. Our Lady Queen of the Apostles is a particularly striking building, dominant in its surroundings due to its height and prominent tower. Built from stock brick, with a low pitched roof, the square, angular appearance the church is an interesting contrast to the curved Woodhall shopping parade. The variance in the execution of the Neo-Georgian style between the church and its neighbouring buildings suggests a change in architectural fashion as the twentieth century progressed.

There is currently no adopted local list within the district, however the buildings listed above would be considered as non-designated heritage assets due to their heritage significance and architectural interest. Their built form reflects how the garden city style was applied to community buildings and structures within the public realm.

To the north of the site there are two grade II listed industrial buildings, the de Roche offices (HE ref: 1348142) and the Nabisco Shredded Wheat Factory (HE ref: 1101084). Whilst these buildings do not make any physical contribution to the Peartree area, they may have historical links given they were some of the town’s principal employers.

2.4 Archaeological Potential

There is some archaeological potential within the Peartree area, although much of this may have been lost during the initial development period in the early twentieth century. Although there is some potential for medieval archaeological remains in the area, particularly in the form of moated sites and farmsteads, this is likely to only be the case in open areas, as the extensive development of Peartree will have largely compromised below-ground archaeological deposits. Excavations along Knella Road and Ludwick Way, just outside the Conservation Area, recorded no significant activity.\textsuperscript{4} Soil-conditions are variable within Peartree, but the Lewes Chalk deposits are conducive to the preservation of faunal remains.

Artefacts such as ceramics, building materials and metal also survive in chalky deposits and may also be well preserved in any waterlogged material. Waterlogged deposits may survive in deeper features such as wells and cess-pits.

\textsuperscript{4} Hunn J R/2002/Land at the Junction of Knella Road & Ludwick Way, Peartree, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire/Report ASC:WGP02/2. Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd [assessment & evaluation reports].
3.0 Assessment of Significance

3.1 Introduction

The special interest of Peartree principally derives from its design as a planned residential area for low income housing which is distinct from the development in the west of Welwyn Garden City in terms of density, building types and architectural details. Stylistically, the green spaces, tree-lined avenues and open boundaries found within the area contribute to its overall appearance, and apply the garden city principles of plentiful recreational and ecological space to a denser housing model.

There is a select material palette used within the Peartree area, which enhances the uniform and symmetrical appearance of the buildings. All buildings are constructed from brick, typical of Welwyn Garden City, with simple architectural detailing. As a result the character of the area is typified by a regular and coherent building pattern, with aesthetic interest added through the accomplished application of Neo-Georgian details.

Concrete is the predominant road surface within the area, broken up by grass verges which separate the vehicle and pedestrian routes. There is minimal street furniture, with street and road signs chiefly located at junctions. Bollards have been introduced in some areas to deter vehicle parking on grass verges. This detracts from the open appearance of the street scene, interrupting the symmetry of views down each street on which they are located.

The conservation area is split into three Character Areas according to function, divided between residential and community usage (Figure 3).

Residential buildings are concentrated in Character Areas 1 and 3. Despite the density of units, the front gardens and soft landscaping create a feeling of space and uniformity in the streets.

Retail, community and ecclesiastical buildings are found in the south of the conservation area (Character Area 2). Here the streetscape is much more open. Large areas of grass and landscaping in this area lessen the impact of Cole Green Lane, a busy road which winds from the east of Welwyn Garden City down to the south, connecting the east of the town and the village of Cole Green to Hatfield Hyde.
3.2 Character Areas 1 and 3

Residential units are primarily located within Character Areas 1 and 3 (Figure 3), although there is some flatted accommodation in area 2, above the Woodhall shops. Housing within Peartree is primarily grouped into cohesive terraces, with generous gardens to the front and rear of the properties, creating an impression of space despite the high number of households per street. Terraces typically consist of four or six houses, with the flanking houses on the larger terraces entered via the side of the property. There are up to twelve blocks of terraces per street (split across each side of the road), broken up by areas of grass and corner gardens on each junction, the former maintained by the local authority. Access to the rear gardens is provided through central passageways, which are often below a first floor oculus window (Figure 8).

Some blocks of flats are located within the area on Mill Green Road and these too follow the same symmetrical appearance of the terraced houses. Their setting, located further back from the road, and the lack of subdivision to the front gardens are the only exterior clues to the additional subdivision of these properties. Smaller semi-detached properties are also found within the area, often deliberately placed to break up the appearance of terraces. Communal green space was planned to the rear of terraces with examples between Beechfield and Bamfield Roads, Holwell Road and Gainswood, and infilled by the bungalows on Pinewood (Figure 9). Designed as children's play areas and for local amenity, these areas are accessed via small alley ways and are currently underused.
The curving cul-de-sacs of Pondcroft and Gainswood provide interesting contrasts to the linear symmetry of the area, breaking up the otherwise uniform roofline found within Peartree. Similarly, the curved arrangement of houses on Beechfield Road provides visual interest, emphasised by their contrasting stock brick (Figure 10).

Combining a mixture of hipped and gabled terraces, all the residential units are consistently two storeys high with red pantile roofs. Some properties on Woodhall Lane incorporate half dormers, giving the impression of a reduced building height, without compromising the amount of accommodation within the properties. Chimneys are prominent within the skyline and have largely been retained, punctuating rooflines and adding interest to the street scene. The placement of houses adds interest to road junctions, with houses located directly opposite the junctions in order to terminate views down each street with a symmetrical façade (Figure 11).

Both red and yellow stock brick were used in construction across Peartree, suggesting differing development phases and providing variety which enhances aesthetic value and the conservation area’s character. Yellow brick is used in distinct areas, creating groups of properties, differentiated by their colour if not their building style. Houses in the area follow a strict typology which is also discernible in the Beehive Conservation Area, with central doorways and a symmetrical arrangement of the bays within each terrace (Figure 12). Beehive, however, was constructed almost thirty years after Peartree, suggesting the importance of Peartree as an influential building typology within the town. Architectural features such as oculus windows, pediments and porticos articulate each terrace and enhance aesthetic value, contributing to the unique character of the area. Almost all of these features survive intact, although care and maintenance are required in many areas to ensure their continuing survival.

Little modern development has taken place within the Peartree area outlined in Figure 2, allowing the area to retain much of its original character and appearance. Where modern development has taken place, this has largely occurred to the rear of properties, with some,
but not many, side extensions to end terraces. There are few surviving original windows and doors across the area, which is a detractor from its significance. The wholesale replacement of windows with uPVC alternatives, some poorly detailed with surface applied glazing bars and storm-proof casements, has undermined the original appearance of the houses and detracted from their aesthetic value. However, the consistency in the design of the replacement windows and their replication of the original windows does at least create a uniform character.

The retention of the original window design in the replacement windows is due to the influence of the Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme and is one positive outcome of the replacement windows and doors. The form of the bay windows within the area has largely been retained, maintaining the street side appearance of the houses in part.

The bungalows at the end of the Pinewood cul-de-sac are considered to be intrusive to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Although they feature pediments above their entrances and green space to their front, this is their only similarity to the other properties within the area. Lacking the finesse of the Neo-Georgian style executed elsewhere within Peartree, they are typical of their later construction date and do not respond positively to the aesthetic quality of the surrounding properties (Figure 13).

Boundary treatments in the residential area, as in Character Area 2, are typically soft, with hedgerow used to demark residential curtilage. Some front gardens have been lost to hardstanding, allowing for off road parking which detracts from the area, as does the introduction of hard boundaries, such as fencing, railings and gates. Where hard boundaries have been introduced to properties, this is often in isolated areas, affecting only one property within a terrace which helps to mitigate the loss of hedgerow.

Communal corner garden plots found at junctions enhance the open feel of the area and sense of space, enhanced by the use of curved hedgerow to provide a contrast to the linear symmetry of the buildings.
3.3 Character Area 2

Character Area 2 is the community area and the location of the public amenities within Peartree. These consist of:

- The Woodhall shops (including The Oak Veterinary Practice)
- Woodhall Community Centre
- The Salvation Army Church
- The Catholic Church of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles
- Little Tulips Day Nursery
- Pear Tree Inn Public House

Opened in 1938, the Woodhall Shops are three storeys tall and higher than the rest of the area, with the exception of the Catholic Church. Built on a convex curve, its Neo-Georgian appearance provides an interesting contrast to a typical Georgian terrace, which normally sweeps away from the road (Figure 14). Retail units are located on the first floor with flatted accommodation above. The accommodation is accessed via shared stairwells, interspersed across the terrace, each of which has a sign above naming the building, Woodhall House. A large number of satellite dishes and aerials crowd the frontage, hinting to the multiple households within the building but detracting from its appearance.

The high number of retail units means there is a proliferation of security alarm boxes and cameras on the shopping parade's main facade, detracting from the parade's orderly and symmetrical appearance. Few elements of the original shop frontages survive, however the windows to the accommodation above follow a similar arrangement to when originally built despite being replaced by uPVC casements, as per Character Areas 1 and 3. The balconies on the first floor have also been replaced with modern railings, removing the original platforms, converting them to Juliet balconies (Figure 15).

Unsympathetic signage is present across the shopping parade, including A-frame advertisement boards and protruding signs, interrupting the streamlined curve of the building. Reduction of unsympathetic signage would enhance visibility of the architectural features of the building, which includes decorative pillars with recessed brick banding on the ground floor. Some shops retain their awnings, although many have been removed. Metal shutters are present on some units, creating an intrusive appearance outside of trading hours (Figure 16).

Due to the dilution of the shopping parade's original form and insensitive modern alterations, the shopping area has been identified as requiring improvement and a neutral contributor to the significance of the conservation area. Further information regarding opportunities for enhancement is outlined in section 4.
Planned parking and green space is located to the front of the shopping parade, with trees providing a green barrier between Cole Green Lane and the precinct. The high volume of green space typifies Character Area 2, enhancing the public access and usage of the buildings in this area. The circular planted areas and pathways provide an interesting contrast to the formality of the Community Centre, the pillared portico a good example of the refined Neo-Georgian style. The Community Centre and Salvation Army Church as a group form an interesting pair, their corner location and large windows contrasting with the residential units across the street on Gooseacre (Figure 17 and Figure 18).

The Catholic Church of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles is a prominent building and its tower acts as a distinct marker in the landscape. On the approach to the conservation area, from Hollybush Lane, the church’s location on the curve of the road dominates the views of the street and The Pear Tree Inn, located on the opposite side of the road. The church’s stock brick and arched windows positively contribute to the streetscape, presenting the Neo-Georgian style in a way that contrasts with its execution throughout the rest of Peartree (Figure 19).

The church buildings on the corner of Woodhall Road have been included within the conservation area due to their association with the church and the contribution they make to its significance as a group. Unsympathetic alterations to the side and rear of these buildings are
however considered to be intrusive to the character and appearance of the conservation area (Figure 20). This includes the Little Tulips Day Nursery, which presents an opportunity to enhance the setting of the church and neighbouring houses. Our Lady Catholic Primary School and the developments between the school and Hollybush Lane are excluded as they do not date from the original development phases of Peartree, nor do they display the architectural features distinctive of the area.
3.4 Key Views

The views considered in this appraisal are a selection of key views; this list is not exhaustive and there are numerous other views of significance. Any proposals for development within the conservation area, or its environs, should consider the views below and any others which may be relevant or bespoke to that proposal. It is also notable how these views alter in character between winter and summer months which must be taken into account. These views are shown in Figure 21.

Key views within Peartree include those towards the community areas and Cole Green Lane, where the density of buildings declines and the streetscape opens out (see Figure 22). The Church of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles, is visible at multiple points across the area due to its height, acting as a marker in the landscape (Figure 23).

Throughout the area, the tree lined streets create a sense of place and symmetry, echoing the orderly appearance of the residential units. Views looking out from Beechfield Road onto Woodhall Lane and Holwell Road, and from Barnfield Road onto Woodhall Lane and Furzefield Road are significant as they encapsulate the leafy garden city ideals. These views showcase Louis de Soisson’s planned formation of the streets in Peartree, with each view bookended by the symmetrical façade of a property located opposite the junction (Figure 11).
3.5 Landscaping and Open Spaces

There is a prominent green aspect to the streetscape present across Peartree, with large open spaces in character area 2. Existing trees were retained when the development was laid out and these now provide attractive features in the streetscape. The planting of additional street trees and hedges to front boundaries, combined with wide roads and deep grass verges, create an attractive material and colour contrast to the predominant red brick.

Topographically, Peartree is relatively flat, with a slight incline from Cole Green Road west toward Broadwater Road and the centre of the garden city. This places character area 2 in a slightly lower position, although the change in level is minor.

3.6 Beyond the Conservation Area Boundary

Elements of the housing designs showcased in Peartree are found throughout Welwyn Garden City and there are marked similarities between Beehive and Peartree. This highlights the role of Peartree in the initial development of the town and echoes the design principles showcased in other areas which are also formally designated.

Modern development has gradually encroached upon the conservation area boundary, which lacks the refined Neo-Georgian detailing of Peartree and is harmful to its setting. The future redevelopment of the Shredded Wheat Factory should bring further prominence to the eastern side of the garden city, enhancing Peartree and the surrounding area.

3.7 Summary

The special architectural and historic interest, which justifies the designation of the conservation area, is considered to be drawn from the following features:

- Good example of the application of Garden City principles, parts of which date from the original development of the town;
- Planned low income housing, providing an interesting contrast to the contemporary developments in the west of the town;
- Much of the original street plan remains, including plot sizes, street plan and layout, punctuated by the strong symmetrical appearance of the buildings at road junctions;
- Many surviving architectural features indicative of Louis de Soisson’s Neo-Georgian architectural style, including porticos, pedimented porches and oculus windows;
- Tree lined avenues, open frontages separating estate gardens and estate road verges, adding to the dominant feeling of green space;
- Strong sense of symmetry and order, contributing to a sense of place;
- Distinctive usage zones, with a differing application of architectural features subtlety demarking each character area.
3.8 Potential Harm

There are a number of elements which have the potential to harm the special character and significance of the Peartree area. These elements are not uncommon in other conservation areas, reflecting the pressure of social changes in how people experience and use their local environment.

Principally the issues are:

- Increased car usage and the need for additional parking
- The desire for greater thermal efficiency, resulting in changes to windows and the outward appearance of buildings
- The need for additional residential accommodation, resulting in the desire for extensions and new development
- Changing requirements for community space and accessibility
- Increased connectivity and security, adding satellite dishes and surveillance cameras

An awareness of these issues will allow for careful planning of how to mitigate their potential harm and provide an opportunity to enhance the Peartree area. Further information and guidance regarding these issues is described in the next section.
4.0 Opportunities for Enhancement

The areas for enhancement identified below reflect and expand upon issues raised in the Character Appraisal and by the Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme, which Peartree falls under. Priority should be given to the retention of elements and buildings which positively contribute to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

4.1 Inappropriate Modern Development

To date there has been minimal modern development within Peartree following the initial laying out of the area. The loss of concrete houses on Woodhall Court and the addition of bungalows on Pinewood have removed some of the original layout of the area; however this has had minimal impact on the street plan.

Demolition of any positive feature within the conservation area is likely to be unacceptable as it will interrupt the symmetry of the area. Planning Permission would be needed for any demolition, including the demolition of garages or chimneys.

The dilution of positive buildings by unsympathetic extensions and alterations can lead to an underwhelming and indistinctive overall character, as seen in the changes to the Woodhall shop fronts and extensions to buildings adjacent to Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Church. Therefore, the quality of design within the area must not be ‘averaged down’ by the neutral and negative elements of the built environment and, wherever possible, unsympathetic additions should be enhanced through the reinstatement of lost architectural details or alterations which better respect their context. The Local Planning Authority must where possible seek schemes which enhance the built environment and not allow previous poor quality schemes of development to become precedents.

Great weight should be given to the design principles outlined in the Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme, which outlines appropriate extensions, alterations and new buildings (policies EM1 and EM2). This is particularly relevant for any changes to corner plots in Peartree, which have a strong visual importance in the streetscape and contribute positively to the character of the area.

4.2 Maintenance of Architectural Features

Many porches and pediments throughout Peartree are in a state of poor repair, perhaps in some cases due to their shared ownership. A maintenance scheme should be implemented for communal areas, including the painting of the entrances to shared passageways, to ensure a consistency in the appearance of Peartree. Repair of all porches and pediments is encouraged over replacement, in order to retain as much original fabric as possible. Any proposals for replacement should be accompanied by an application for planning permission and replaced on a like-for-like basis.

Some porticos in the area have been infilled, creating a porch to the front of a few properties. Such development is inappropriate and the reinstatement of the original portico arrangement to properties is encouraged.

A number of unsympathetic front doors have been installed into properties in Peartree, often in a more contemporary style than appropriate for the Neo-Georgian detailing of the area. All new or replacement front doors should be sympathetic to the form of the properties and would require Estate Management Consent prior to installation. Figure 24 shows an appropriate door in Welwyn Garden City.
4.3 Windows: existing and additional

UPVC windows are present across the area and detract from the architectural character of Peartree. This is because uPVC units are unable to replicate the finer details of timber or steel windows, often appearing clunky in comparison. Similarly, the use of surface applied glazing bars is unable to fully replicate the appearance of separate panes of glass within a window casement or sash. Existing original windows, if any, should be retained and repaired where necessary.

Replacement of uPVC units with a more appropriate material is encouraged, to help restore the original appearance of the area. Where the original arrangement of the window panes and casements is known, this should be reinstated.

The introduction of roof lights or dormer windows to the front of properties is inappropriate. The introduction of these elements would disrupt the symmetry of the streetscape, harming one of the area’s key characteristics. The Welwyn Garden Estate Management Policies EM1 and EM5 should be referred to for all changes to roofs within the area.

4.4 Satellite Dishes

Satellite dishes detract from the architectural simplicity of the buildings within Peartree. The addition of further satellite dishes to the front of properties is to be discouraged, with and the removal or relocation of any existing dishes would be supported so as to not interrupt the facades of the buildings in the area (Figure 25).
4.5 Boundary treatment and Green Space

To maintain the open, green character of the area, soft boundaries are encouraged. The introduction of hard standings, metal gates and railings is considered harmful to the conservation area, as is the construction of masonry walls. The use of picket wooden fencing may acceptable in small areas, but this should not compromise the green appearance of the conservation area. Reinstatement of hedgerow is encouraged, as is the removal of any existing non-original boundary walls or metal gates/railings.

Grass verges have largely been retained within Peartree, which is positive and enhances the character of the area. Pressure to remove these verges for the creation of additional parking spaces should be resisted, in order for the character of the area to be preserved. Similarly, parking on the grass verges should be discouraged and bollards are in place in several areas for this reason. Whilst incongruous to the open street scene, the bollards are a necessary deterrent to prevent any harm to the grass verges as a result of parked vehicles. The introduction of additional bollards is not encouraged, yet may be considered necessary in other areas and, if so, timber posts should be used (Figure 26).

Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Policies EM1, EM3 and EM4 should be considered for all proposed changes to boundary treatments and soft and hard landscaping within the Peartree Conservation Area.

4.6 Tree Management

Any prominent trees, street trees, and trees with amenity value on private land throughout the Conservation Area should be monitored and maintained appropriately. This will preserve the symmetry along tree lined streets and visual rhythm, as well as maintain the green character of the area. Any tree that makes a positive contribution to the area should be retained, maintained and, if felled (only if dead, dying or dangerous) replaced with an appropriate new tree.

Policy EM3 should be referred to for guidance regarding applications which will affect soft landscaping.

4.7 Car Parking

Car parking is an issue within Peartree as the area was not designed to accommodate the number of cars required per household for modern living. Many roads lack off street parking, often leading to cars being parked on grass verges. As a result of the need for parking, a number of front gardens have been lost and paved over to allow for cars to be parked off road. This has negatively contributed to the appearance of the area due to the loss of hedgerow and garden space. Policy EM4 should be referenced for any proposals to convert further gardens to parking space.

4.8 Shop Frontages

The Woodhall Shopping Parade is considered to be a neutral contributor to the conservation area due to unsympathetic modern additions and alterations; however it has the potential to make a positive contribution.

Efforts should be taken to remove the excess signage, satellite dishes and security devices from the precinct’s façade. This will enhance the architectural features of the building, streamlining its appearance and giving greater emphasis to its form. The removal of box signage, replaced with flush signs, would also enhance the character and architectural interest of the shopping parade.

Reinstatement of awnings above the retail units and removal of metal shutters should also be encouraged to help restore the original appearance of the shopping parade.
The principles outlined in the Welwyn Garden City Guide to Shopfront and Advertisement Design should be consulted within the area, increasing the expectation of good design within Peartree. This will also enhance the sense of unity between Peartree and the town centre, strengthening their relationship through aesthetic regularity.

4.9 Street Furniture

There is a lack of consistency in the street furniture within Peartree, with differences in the types of lamp posts and signage. None of these are considered to be significant detractors, yet any changes to street furniture should aim to enhance the coherence of the area.

A King George V (1910-1936) post box on Woodhall Lane is contemporary with the early 1930s development of the area and is of interest as an original piece of street furniture (Figure 27). Any other surviving pieces of street furniture from this period should also be maintained.

Proposals for any additional street signage and furniture should be assessed fully against need and potential harm to the conservation area. A proliferation of excess furniture would harm the symmetrical and orderly appearance of the area, interrupting sightlines and views.

Figure 27  King George V Post Box on Woodhall Lane
5.0 Management Proposals

As outlined in the previous section, there are a wide range of issues facing the Peartree Conservation Area, many of which share common themes. The set of proposals below relate to positive management and focus on good practice and improved ways of managing change and development within Peartree. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short time frame, typically within one to two years.

5.1 Positive Management: Shorter Term

The first set of proposals relates to positive management and focuses on good practice and improved ways of managing change and development. These are generally low cost and can be implemented within a short time-frame, typically within one or two years.

Local Heritage List

As described in section 2.3, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council does not have an implemented local list. The implementation of such a list would afford greater protection to undesignated heritage assets, such as the community buildings located within character area 2.

A local list may also be beneficial to ensure the upkeep of buildings which are significant within Peartree, helping to maintain the conservation area's history and character. The exercise would also facilitate a wider appreciation of the special characteristics of the area and could allow for public engagement with the issues that Peartree faces, improving awareness and understanding.

Enforcement

Where the necessary permission has not been sought for alterations, such as advertising signage and building alterations which are not contained within the General Permitted Development Order, the Local Planning Authority’s powers of enforcement should be considered. This could assist in reinstating any lost character or architectural features whose loss may have a negative cumulative effect on the Conservation Area, as well as avoiding a precedence being set for similar, uncharacteristic works.

Heritage Statements

Paragraph 189 of the NPPF states that where proposal development could impact on the significance of heritage assets or their settings, applicants must describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, and assess the impact of the proposal on this significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. This information is usually contained within a Heritage Statement.

All applications within the conservation area and immediate setting require an appropriately detailed Heritage Statement in order to understand the impact of a proposed development on the area. Any application without a Heritage Statement should not be validated.

The key views analysed within this document are in no way exhaustive. The impact of any addition to, alteration to or removal of a building, structure, tree or highway within any of the key views should be considered to aid decision making. This includes development outside the conservation area. Where appropriate, views must be considered within Design and Access or Heritage Statements. This should be in accordance with Historic England’s Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2017). Applications which fail to have assessed any impact upon views and setting should not be validated.
**Architectural Details: Maintenance**

Poor maintenance leads to the deterioration of the fabric of the built environment and results in a loss of architectural details. Improved awareness of simple maintenance and repair would be conducive with the preservation of Peartree’s built heritage.

Maintenance of these elements should be prioritised:

- Porches
- Porticos
- Pedimented door surrounds
- Communal garden spaces

**New Development**

There is little opportunity for large new developments within Peartree, due to the dense nature of the planned layout. Extensions to properties should be confined to the rear, with no dormers or roof lights added to the front of buildings. There may be potential for development on corner plots or end terraces, however this should be considered against policy EM3 of the Estate Management Scheme.

To be successful, any future development needs to be mindful of the local character of the conservation area, while at the same time addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability.

In accordance with guidance published by CABE and Historic England Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas, 2001, successful new development should:

- Relate to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land;
- Sit sympathetically in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it (including public footpaths);
- Respect important views;
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings; and
- Use materials and building methods comparable to those used in existing buildings.

**Public Facing Resources: Improved Understanding and Awareness**

The preservation and enhancement of private properties can be improved through the publishing of resources aimed to inform property owners and members of the public. An introductory summary of the Conservation Area Appraisal in the form of a leaflet or factsheet(s) is a simple way to communicate the significance of the area and ensure members of the public are aware of the implications of owning a property within a conservation area.

**5.2 Positive Management: Longer Term**

The second set of proposals are also focussed around positive management but either take longer to implement or are better suited to a longer time frame.

**Character Appraisal and Management Plan and Boundary**

The Conservation Area and its boundary have been proposed within this appraisal in accordance with the NPPF (2019) and Historic England Advice Note 1 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management (2019). The boundary excludes areas of no special interest, and include areas of historic significance, which improve our understanding of the original purpose and growth of the settlement.

The conservation area should be reviewed regularly to monitor change and inform management proposals. The boundary should be assessed as part of this review to ensure it is robust and adequately protects the significance of the area.
Architectural Details: Reinstatement

Longer term proposals should seek to replace windows across the area with a more sympathetic material, maintaining the arrangement of casements and glazing bars.

The retention of soft landscaping should also be considered as a longer term proposal, seeking a solution to the need for increased parking spaces.
6.0 Appendices

6.1 Bibliography

Books and journals


Archives

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Library (HRO)
### 6.2 Legislation and Planning Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEGISLATION/POLICY/ GUIDANCE</th>
<th>DOCUMENT</th>
<th>SECTION/POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Legislation</strong></td>
<td>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990</td>
<td>66: General duty as respects listed buildings in exercise of planning functions. 72: General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Planning Policy</strong></td>
<td>National Planning Policy Framework (2019) DCLG</td>
<td>Section 16; Annex 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Guidance</strong></td>
<td>National Planning Practice Guidance (2014) DCLG</td>
<td>ID: 18a</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Local Policy | Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2016) | SADM 6 – Shopfronts, Advertisements and Signage  
SP 9 – Place-making and High Quality Design  
SP 11 – Protection and Enhancement of Critical Environmental Assets  
SADM 15 – Heritage  
SP 15 – The Historic Environment of Welwyn Garden City |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Policy | Estate Management Scheme (EMS) | EM1 – Extensions and Alterations  
EM2 – Erection of New Buildings  
EM3 – Works to Trees and Hedgerows  
EM4 – Hard Surfacing  
EM5 – Energy Efficiency and Other Roof Alterations (awaiting adoption) |
### 6.3 Glossary (National Planning Policy Framework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological interest</td>
<td>There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation (for heritage policy)</td>
<td>The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated heritage asset</td>
<td>A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage asset</td>
<td>A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic environment</td>
<td>All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic environment record</td>
<td>Information services that seek to provide access to comprehensive and dynamic resources relating to the historic environment of a defined geographic area for public benefit and use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of a heritage asset</td>
<td>The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (for heritage policy)</td>
<td>The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>