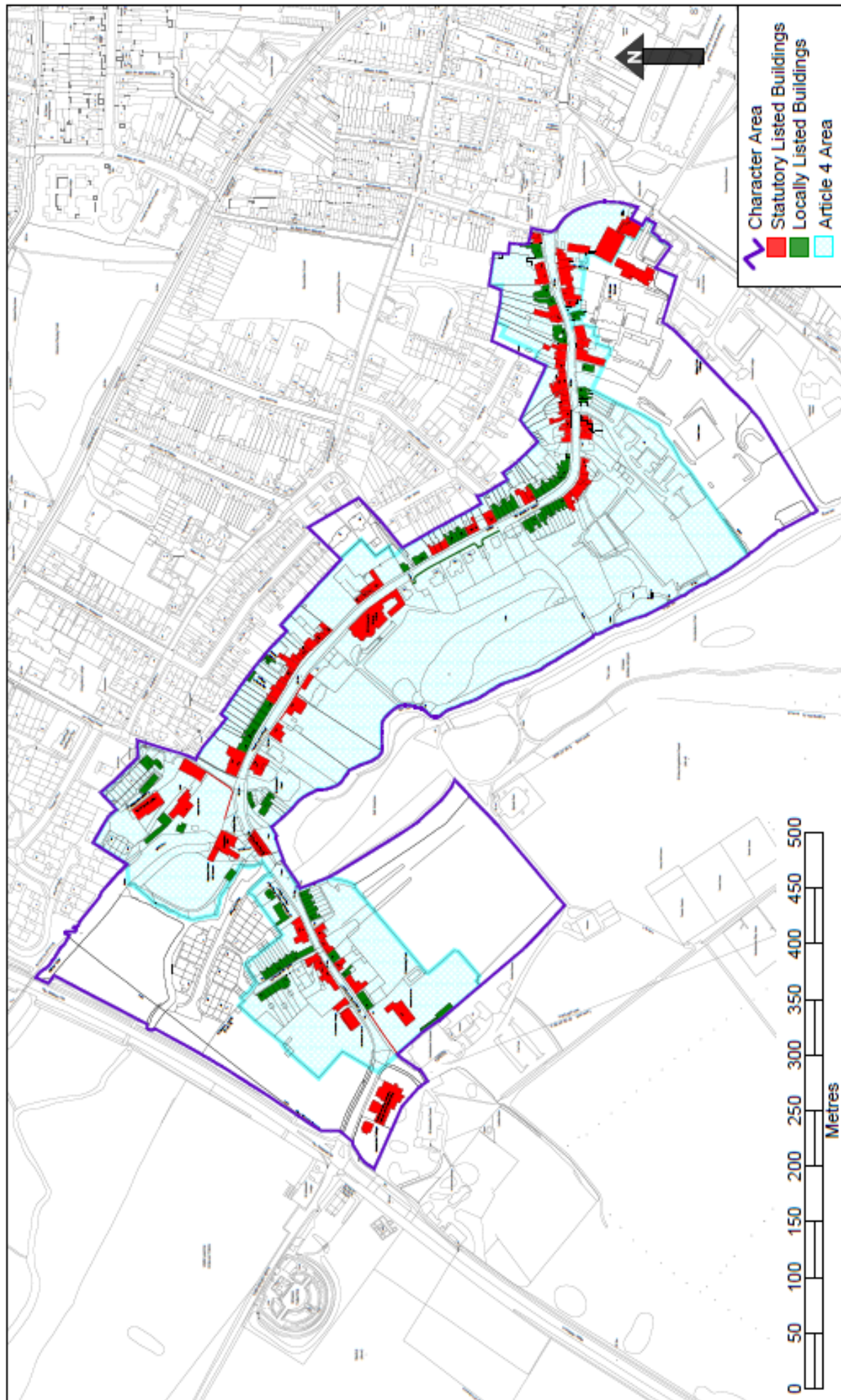


***Character Area 4c***  
***Fishpool Street and***  
***St Michael's Village***







#### AREA 4C: FISHPOOL STREET AND ST. MICHAELS VILLAGE

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## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

*Blacksmith's Lane, Branch Road, Fishpool Street, Prae Close, St Michael's Street.*

**Article 4 Direction - covers most of the buildings in the area except Prae Close (refer to map)**

### Scheduled Monuments

None

### Listed Buildings

#### *Branch Road*

Odds: 3 and wall to number 3 (Grade II), Barn and attached wall at entrance to Express Dairies' Yard (Grade II), Kingsbury Barn (Grade II\*).

#### *Fishpool Street*

Odds: 1 and 3 (Grade II), 5 (Grade II), 7 (Grade II), 7a (Grade II), 11 (Grade II), 13 (Grade II \*), 15 (Grade II), 37-41 (incl) (Grade II), 41a (now 43) (Grade II), 51-55 (incl) (Grade II), 57-61 (incl) (Grade II), St. Michael's Manor Hotel (Grade II\*), 133 (including wall) (previously listed as walls and stables to number 135) (Grade II), 135 (Grade II\*), 137 (Grade II), 145 (The Blue Anchor) (Grade II).

Evens: 2 and 4 (Grade II), 8 (Grade II), 8a (Grade II), 18 (Grade II), 20 (Grade II), 26 (Grade II), 28 and outbuilding at rear of 28 (Grade II), 30 and 32 (Grade II), 34 and 36 (The Lower Red Lion P.H) (Grade II), 38- 42 (incl) (Grade II), 44 and 46 (Grade II), 50 (Grade II), 52 (Grade II), 54 (Grade II), 78 and 80 (Grade II), 92 (Grade II), 98 and 100 (Grade II), 114-118 (incl) (Grade II), 122(Grade II), 124 (Grade II), 128-132 (Grade II), 142-148 (incl) (Grade II), 150 (Grade II), 152-158 (incl) (Grade II), 160 (Grade II), 162 and 164 (Grade II), 166 and 168 (Grade II), 170 (Grade II), 172 (Grade II), 174 (Grade II), 198 (the former Black Lion P.H.)



*The Blue Anchor (grade II listed). Image courtesy of John Bethell.*

#### *St Michaels Street*

St Michael's Bridge (Grade II), Kingsbury Manor Farmhouse (Grade II), Kingsbury Mill (Grade II), 8 (Grade II), 10 (Rose & Crown P.H) (Grade II), Old Forge (Grade II), 14 (Grade II), 16 (The Six Bells P.H) (Grade II), 18 (St Germain's) (Grade II), outbuilding to 18 (Grade II), 17 (Grade II), 19 & 21 (Grade II), 29 (Grade II), 33 (Grade II), Darrowfield House (Grade II\*), Gates, gates piers and railing to Darrowfield House (Grade II), St Michael's Church of England Primary School (Grade II), Jessamine Cottage (Grade II). Also see area 1 (Roman Forum) and 3 (Church).



*Kingsbury Mill (grade II listed).*



*St Michael's C of E Primary School (grade II listed).*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Locally Listed Buildings

#### *Blacksmith's Lane*

Odds: 11-21 (incl)

Evens: 2-20 (incl), outbuilding to Rose & Crown PH (also LB curtilage)

#### *Branch Road*

Dairy buildings (1930s front section) (now converted), Outbuildings attached to barn at rear of Dairy site, Outbuildings to rear of Kingsbury Manor Farmhouse (also curtilage LB)

#### *Fishpool Street*

Odds: 9, 17, 25-29 (incl), 63-81 (incl), High wall fronting 87-95, St. Michael's Court 1-8 (incl).

Evens: 6, 10, 16, 22, 24, 58, 60, 64-76 (incl), 82-90 (incl), 104-112 (incl), 120, Outbuildings between 120 and 122, St Michael's Cottage, South-end Cottages, 176-194 (incl).

#### *St Michael's Street*

Odds: 1-13 (incl), 23, 31, 35 & 37, outbuilding at Darrowfield House (also LB curtilage), Museum, Grebe House, St Michaels' JMI (adj.6)

Evens: 6 and outbuilding to Kingsbury Mill (also LB curtilage)



*Nos. 11-21 Blacksmith's Lane (locally listed)*



*St Michael's JMI (locally listed).*



*Verulamium Museum (locally listed).*



*Nos. 1-13 St Michael's Street (locally listed).*

## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Character Summary

The character area is located to the west of the commercial main town beyond George Street (Character Area 4a) and Romeland (Character Area 2c). The campus of St Albans School is located on the eastern edge of this character area, on a large site between Romeland, Fishpool Street, Abbey Mill Lane and Verulamium Park, at the beginning of the otherwise predominantly residential Fishpool Street. This character area's location, near to the Abbey and the town centre, has shaped its history. As this was a poor area during the C19 and early C20, when the railway and the construction of Verulam Road (Character Area 5b) diverted traffic and therefore commerce away, much of the historic fabric was retained instead of being redeveloped. This has meant that there are visible survivals from many periods, including much from the ancient medieval origins.

This contributes to the character area as one of the jewels in the crown of St Albans. When combined with Fishpool Street's topography comprising a serpentine street, winding downhill to the "village" of St Michael's, also included in this character area, this makes it a picturesque area providing many classic views associated with historic St Albans. St Albans Council's preservation of a number of the buildings in the 1960s through compulsory purchase orders and building preservation notices, plus an early use of an Article 4 Direction (1976) for Fishpool Street, has also helped to preserve the area and level of historic fabric and details. The high concentration of historic listed buildings and locally listed buildings is key to the character and appearance of this area.



*Fishpool Street has a high rate of survival of historic buildings.*



*St Michael's has a village feel.*



*Fishpool Street curves downhill to the south following the contours of the north bank of the River Ver.*



*Historic fabric has been preserved through lack of development in C19-early C20 and the use of an Article 4 Direction.*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### History

Fishpool Street is believed to owe its name to fishponds which provided a livelihood for the Saxon residents of Kingsbury. It follows the higher ground on the north bank of the River Ver. Originally part of a medieval route from London to Chester, and one of the principal routes into and out of the town from the north, Fishpool Street is one of the oldest roads in the city, first documented around 1250 and its lower part was known as Salipath from the old English for willow trees. Many of the buildings date from the C16 and C17 and many were re-faced during the C18 in order to keep up with the changing style of the times, without the expense of complete rebuilding. A high proportion of the buildings are statutorily listed, and, amongst the predominantly older buildings, there are some fine examples of Victorian terraces, e.g. nos. 70-74, 82-90, 104-112, and 77-81, which are among those that have been locally listed

The character and layout of the area lies in its early origins and response to the topography. On the southern side, long and verdant rear gardens fall gently southwards towards the river and the park, whilst on the northern side the gardens rise up, for the most part steeply, behind the houses towards Mount Pleasant (originally Downefield) and the residential areas built in between in the C19 (Kings Road and Offa Road). Another distinctive feature of this character area is the raised pavement along much of the north side of the street. This, along with the lack of front gardens to most of the buildings, allows the pedestrian to be close to the buildings and removed from the busy road, which enhances appreciation of the ancient origins of the street and its details, and the piecemeal way that it has developed, especially when compared to the planned nature of other areas of the conservation area. It also elevates the pedestrian relative to the buildings on the south side, allowing views above and between the buildings creating a spacious feel.

The predominant era of buildings, particularly to the upper (eastern) end of the street, is medieval and here overhanging jetties and timber framing are displayed. The Crow (no. 15) (Grade II\*) is a jettied building with exposed timber frame which epitomises the medieval origins of the street.



*The Crow (grade II\* listed) on the right is a perfect example of the medieval buildings remaining on this street. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*The raised pavement lifts pedestrians above the traffic and allows views into gardens on the south side of the road. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*The lower part of Fishpool Street used to be called Salipath from the old English for willow trees. This part of the road is close to the River Ver and its overhanging willows.*

## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### History contd.

Three distinctive buildings at the lower (western) end of Fishpool Street are Bank House (Grade II) on the north side, Manor Garden House (no. 135) and St Michael's Manor Hotel (Grade II\*) on the south; both in large plots. Bank House has a fine, wide and symmetrical, red brick Georgian frontage, with a large plot behind which has recently been divided for new residential infill of two houses accessed from Offa Road and Kings Road. St Michael's Manor is a large C17 building, possibly incorporating an older building and much altered in the C18 and C19 centuries. Unusually the entrance is to the side. It has a large garden extending down to the park and along the river. Manor Garden House is a rendered C17 front with a formal C18 Queen Anne brick garden elevation.

The campus of St Albans School is located on a large corner site between Romeland (Area 2c) Fishpool Street, Abbey Mill Lane (Area 2b) and Verulamium Park (Area 1). There are a number of interesting listed buildings dating from the 1906, by Percival Blow, local architect of note, including the School Hall, which borders Fishpool Street. It echoes the Abbey architecture with the large Gothicised arches and also utilises a local material, knapped flint with stone detailing, which is matched with the wall which borders part of the school grounds as well as making a direct reference to the Abbey Gateway (Character Area 2a) which also belongs to the school.



*St Albans School Hall uses typical local materials of knapped flint and relates to the Abbey and Abbey Gateway in its gothic style and materials.*



*St Michael's Manor on Fishpool Street (grade II\* listed). Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*Bank House (grade II listed). Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*Manor Garden House (grade II\* listed). Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Buildings

St Albans was a coaching stop from London and, as Fishpool Street was at that time a main road through the city and thus part of the coaching route, there were naturally historically many inns on this street, two of which survive as public houses and, as hostelrys, continue one of the street's traditional functions and contribute to character and appearance. These are all timber framed listed buildings: the Lower Red Lion half way down the street and The Blue Anchor at the west end of the street. This building function is continued where the street becomes the parish of St Michael's, where the Rose and Crown and Six Bells are located. Studies of historic records and maps from C16 through to the C20, including the 1756 Victuallers Billeting list, have found at least eleven inns and public houses named in Fishpool Street alone, with such signs as The Angel, Blockers Arms, Crane, Unicorn and Mermaid. Not all can be accurately placed, but several of the buildings survive but are now houses, e.g. The Crow (no. 15) and The Cock and Flowerpot (no. 120).

The most dominant historic façade material on Fishpool Street is plaster render painted white, although there is also a fair amount of exposed timber framing. Later, from the C18, new building and re-fronting of older buildings was in local red brick. The uniform white coloured render sections contrasting with red brick are very much part of the character of the street. The roofs are generally of a high pitch, the majority of which are covered in plain clay tiles, though a few roofs have parapets, with lower pitched slate roofs behind. There are many distinctive doors, frames, fanlights and a variety of styles for these; there are also some fine windows, of a variety of styles, though all are wooden on the historic buildings, including some pegged casements and a lot of older glass.

Modern development on Fishpool Street has been limited, especially on the street front due to the tight plots. However, there has been some modern development, most connected to the school site to the south of the character area, which is set behind the street frontage, for example Aquis Court on the former Miskin's Builders Yard. Some modern infill developments are hidden from the street scene, or largely so, by high walls which are another feature of sections of the street.



*The Lower Red Lion is one of the few pubs left over from St Albans' time as a major coaching stop.*



*No. 120 Fishpool Street—the old Cock and Flowerpot—used to be one of the many inns on this road, which served visitors stopping over night mid-coach journey.*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Buildings contd.

The buildings on St Michael's Street, in the south west of the character area, are also predominantly historic and of mixed appearance and function. However, the scale of most buildings is more uniformly modest and two storey, white paint and timber framing dominates and, with the narrowness of the street and level pavements, the character is more coherent, although the number of parked cars is a distraction from the buildings. The feel of this area is different from Fishpool Street and the areas closer to town. Although now merged with the main town, due to its origins as part of the separate parish of St Michael with a parish church, its character is village like. This is especially evident where the bridge (erected by the Turnpike Trust in 1765 and believed to be the oldest in the county) and ford cross the river, the mill and farm sit back behind a small green triangular verge, with the Victorian school, former school house and public house all juxtaposed in an informal village group.

The group of buildings which mark the beginning of this subtle change are St Michael's Court, a set of narrow cottages set in an L-shape away from the road, originally very small cottages for

the working class. Beyond the bridge and the nearby entrance to the park is a well mannered terrace of dark red brick C19 cottages with slate roofs, good sash windows and red brick arches. This contrasts with the harsh orange brick and modern detailing of the late C20 detached house adjacent. The street includes a large number of C17 listed buildings, one with exposed timber frame and several buildings of Georgian appearance, c.1800, with brick façades and classic door cases. There are two houses of larger scale and particular note on St Michael's Street which are on opposite sides at its southern end. Firstly on the west side and straddling the line of the Roman Road is St Germans, a c.1800 house of two storeys with a two storey, north extension with a jettied front, from a much earlier building. It has a series of outbuildings to the north side including a small former staff cottage. Secondly on the east, Darrowfield House, the former Dower House of Gorhambury sometimes known as "New House", a fine example of a formal Queen Anne house of c.1700 with a remarkable red and blue diapered patterned brickwork façade, which is set well back behind walls (which includes a GR post box) and railings.



*St Michael's Bridge (grade II listed) marks the entrance to St Michael's village, adds to the village feel and is one of the oldest in the county. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*Darrowfield House (grade II\* listed)*

## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Buildings contd.

Where St Michael's Street turns abruptly west to join Bluehouse Hill, St Michael's Church of England School, Jessamine Cottage and St Michael's Church form a group of listed buildings: the school and cottage dating from the mid C19 are flint faced which relates to both the church (Area 3) and St Michael's Lodge (Area 1). Flint is also the prevalent material for walling and flint and brick walls stretch along the frontage of Jessamine Cottage and the school to the traditional wooden church gates. Opposite there is some flint walling at Darrowfield House and the 1930s frontage to the Roman Museum charmingly echoes this and incorporates panels of knapped flint. This stretch of the street frontage is particularly verdant and there are several very prominent trees, in particular Darrowfield House has two deciduous trees on the frontage and on the corner adjacent to St Germain's is a mixture of deciduous and evergreen including tall pines and yew.

The street rises gently southwards and the school with the church immediately beyond it, together with the massive cedar trees in the churchyard, fill the vista which opens up at this southern end of the street, particularly as the road mouth is extremely wide leading to the Roman Museum and one of the popular entrances to Verulamium Park (Area 1).

Although the street appears reasonably straight looking northwards, the slight bend in St Michael's Street places the Rose and Crown in an important focal position and it is seen against a backdrop of trees rising up the hill behind Kingsbury.



*The knapped flint of the school relates to the wall and church, as well as St Michael's Lodge.*

To the west of St Michael's Street is Blacksmith's Lane, a narrow cul de sac which is of a planned mid-Victorian layout; the small ground plan and subtlety of the yellow stock and blue bricks give it an unostentatious character. The southern rear elevation of the Blacksmith Lane cottages is visible across the paddock to the rear of St Germain's.

Less in keeping are the 1960s houses on Prae Close constructed of a bright red-orange brick, many with white PVC fenestration, but they are only two storeys, set away from the frontage of St Michael's Street on a cul de sac and well integrated with vegetation, therefore they, fortunately, make little impact on that historic street. From Bluehouse Hill (Area 1), they are set low and back behind an open space and are largely screened by hedging alongside the main road. It is in views along Blacksmith's Lane that they are most visible as a modern intrusion into the historic street scene.

Apart from these two areas of development, the pattern of building in St Michael's is linear following the street frontage. To the rear of this frontage are green areas; on the western side, paddocks with Gorhambury beyond and, on the eastern side, gardens with the park beyond Manor Farmhouse.



*St Germain's (grade II listed) with a group of trees fronting the street on the corner to the south. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Buildings contd.

To the north of St Michael's Street is Branch Road, cut in 1826 to link St Michael's to Verulam Road. At the southern end of Branch Road, on the corner of St Michael's Street and Branch Road, the site of Kingsbury Farm dominates. The listed Kingsbury Manor, the former farm house for the site, is a visually attractive building on the corner of St Michael's Street, opposite the bridge, and set back behind a fine C17-18 red brick wall. It is a complex two storey house of C18 appearance with an attic storey, but probably incorporating three former buildings of earlier date, including part from the C14. Set back from Branch Road is a monastic tithe barn dating from the 1390s, which is listed Grade II\*, and adjoining the road frontage is a late C18 listed barn. These, along with watermill to the south (over the centuries known as the Malt Mill, St Michael's Mill and now Kingsbury Mill; now in part a restaurant), were originally part of the Kingsbury Farm and together form an attractive historic group. The former Express dairy, also historically part of this plot, has been redeveloped for housing from 2006 (Kingsbury Mews). All the historic buildings, including the unusual art deco dairy building on the frontage, have been retained and converted and there has been some sensitive new infill. As part of the redevelopment, the historic tithe barn and the C18 barn have been reabsorbed into the historic curtilage and ownership of the Manor Farmhouse, whilst seeking to preserve the farm grouping and setting of the barns by carefully sited and designed fencing to achieve the minimal subdivision of the space.



*The old Express Dairy buildings have been redeveloped as housing.*



*All the historic dairy buildings were retained in the redevelopment, including the art deco frontage building.*



*Grade II\* listed monastic tithe barn from the 1390s.*



*A grade II listed, late C18 barn fronts onto Branch Road.*

## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Open Spaces

Whilst the built up frontage of Fishpool Street is largely devoid of landscaping, the character area does not suffer for the lack of direct landscaping. This is because it borders the park, which is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt, and many of the buildings have sometimes deceptively extensive back gardens. There are good landscape gaps, which impact on the public realm, particularly through the Abbey Gateway to the Abbey Orchard (part of Character Area 2a) and on St Michael's Street to the park. Elsewhere along the street there are views to the gardens behind. Also of note is Romeland Garden, a small area of green space in Character Area 2c, which is surprisingly tranquil given its location closely surrounded by roads and which, due to its visibility from the eastern end of Fishpool Street, impacts on and contributes positively to the character area.



*Verulamium Park as seen from St Michael's.*



*Large back gardens and landscape gaps contribute to the street-scene.*



*The area has plenty of green landscaping despite buildings being predominantly built right up to the pavement.*



*The large extent of the back garden can be seen here through a gap in the houses on Fishpool Street.*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Public Realm

Fishpool Street is still a busy thoroughfare and traffic, particularly parked, does in some places dominate the streetscape. The street furniture of the road is generally appropriate and includes the classic St Albans blue brick channel setts at the edge of the roadway and pavements of historic blue brick. A key characteristic of Fishpool Street are the sections of the pavement unusually raised above road level, seen elsewhere in the conservation area in Spencer Street. In St Michael's Street the pavements are not raised. To the west side of St Michael's Street blue brick pavements have survived (or have been renewed in blue brick albeit in a smaller size), but on the east side they have unfortunately been replaced by grey concrete blocks. There is some survival of historic lamp posts, although a few have been replaced with modern versions.



*The raised pavement in Fishpool Street is an interesting and unusual feature, which contributes positively to the character of the area. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*Fishpool Street has raised, blue brick pavements. Some historic lamp posts have also survived.*



*Traffic and parked cars have a detrimental effect on the character of the area, dominating the streetscape.*



*The west side of St Michael's Street has retained its traditional blue brick pavement and channel setts.*



*St Michael's Street has normal height pavements, the traditional blue brick has been replaced with grey concrete blocks on the east side. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*

## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

#### Positive

- ✓ Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Abbey Gateway (Area 2a), which can be seen from the eastern side of the character area.
- ✓ The listed buildings, locally listed buildings and the settings of the buildings which contribute so much to the area and the street scene.
- ✓ The parkland which surrounds the character area to the south and east, which is also part of the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- ✓ The landscape gaps and extensive gardens of many of the buildings which contribute to the street scene.
- ✓ The proximity of the area to the city centre (Character Area 4a) which, along with the popular tourist route to the park, museum, mill and public houses, gives vitality to the area.
- ✓ The degree to which character and detail has been retained, and unspoiled pleasing picturesque views and vistas.
- ✓ The distinct character of St Michael's Street which retains its own village like atmosphere, having many of its own community amenities such as public houses and schools.
- ✓ The historic street furniture still in existence, including traditional bollards and street lamps.
- ✓ The raised pavements in Fishpool Street.
- ✓ The historic kerbs, channel setts and blue brick paving which should be maintained and repaired rather than replaced with tarmac or concrete, which have detracted from the historic floorscape of many of the other residential roads in St Albans.
- ✓ Signage for the Museum is suitably muted and sensitive to the historic environment.



*The Six Bells P.H. is grade II listed and an important community amenity, thus adding to the village atmosphere of St Michael's. Image courtesy of John Bethell.*



*The park provides green space adjacent to the character area and is commonly reached through the area, giving it vitality.*



*The character area is very close to the city centre. Fishpool Street is seen here from George Street (Area 4a The Commercial Centre) through Romeland (Area 2c Romeland and the Abbey Gateway).*



## Area 4c: Fishpool Street and St Michael's Village

### Positive & Negative Characteristics and Scope for Change

#### Negative

- ✖ The amount of parked cars in the character area and the high levels of traffic along Fishpool Street and St Michael's Street.
- ✖ The odd piece of modern street furniture or street material which breaks the uniformity of the area as well as the odd missing kerb or blue bricks.



*Large numbers of parked cars are detrimental to the setting of the historic buildings.*



*Modern street material breaks the uniformity of the area.  
Image courtesy of John Bethell.*

#### Scope for change

- The character area is largely covered by an Article 4 direction, which aims to preserve its characteristics by withdrawing Permitted Development rights for changes which could otherwise be carried out without planning permission. Along with the listing of many of the buildings, this should preserve this important area from unsympathetic development. However, vigilance is required as unsympathetic changes, such as street furniture, plot division, infilling, incremental changes and development, as well as increased traffic, could easily damage this extremely important and sensitive area.
- Caution with modern development so that it does not dilute the unique character of the area, which is sensitive to change.
- Maintenance and re-instatement of the historic paving rather than replacement with alternative materials.
- Replacement of out of character modern street lamps.
- Retention of the landscape gaps.

