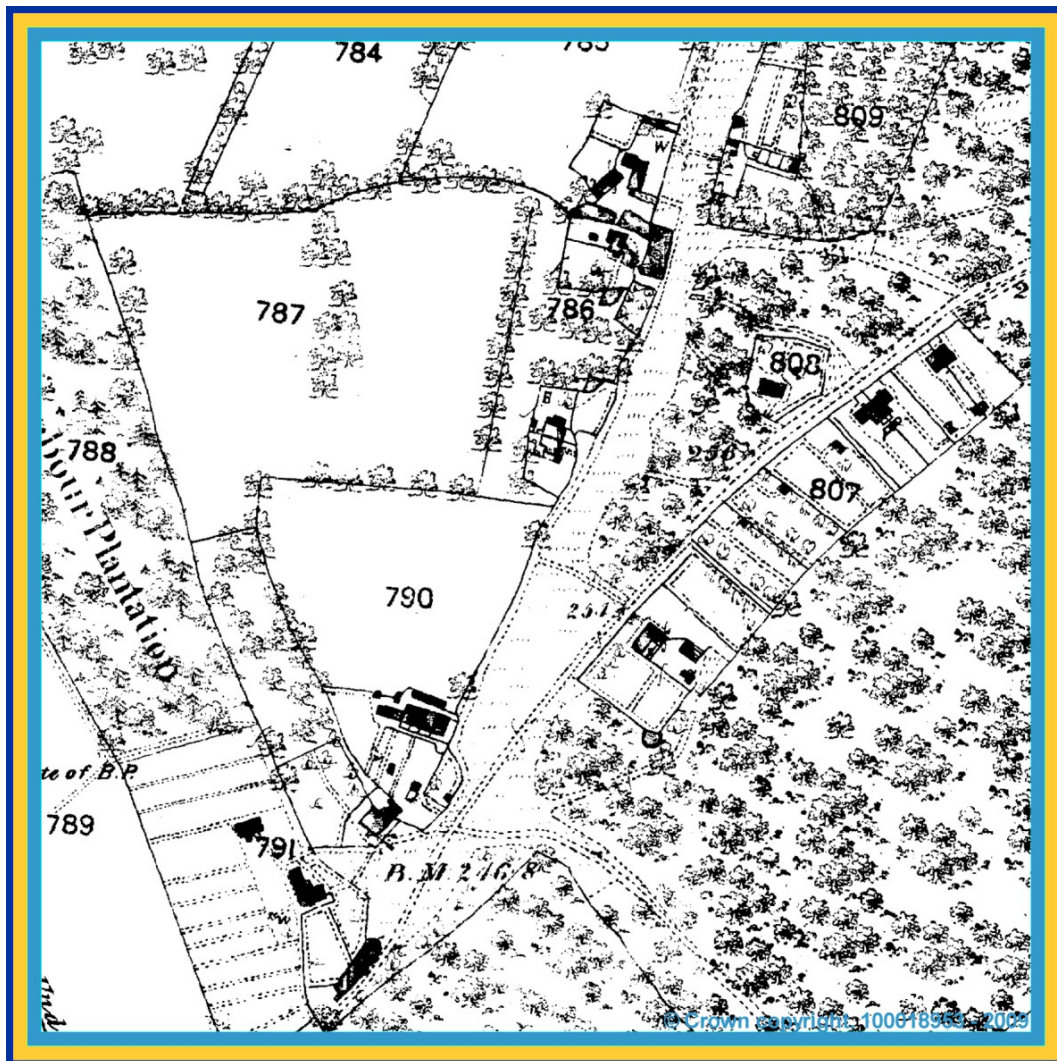


# CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR OLD BRICKET WOOD



December 2009



# CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR OLD BRICKET WOOD

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Civic Amenities Act 1967 empowered local planning authorities to make provision for the preservation and enhancement of areas of architectural and historic interest by designating them as Conservation Areas.

1.2 The Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area was designated in 1983. Designation was based on the statutory definition which is “an area of special architectural interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance...they may be large or small, from whole town centres to squares, terraces and smaller groups of buildings. They will often be centred on listed buildings but not always. Pleasant groups of other buildings, open spaces, trees, an historic street pattern, a village green, or features of archaeological interest may also contribute to the special character of the area.”

1.3 Consultations took place with the Parish Council and several local amenity societies, in addition to all local residents. Whilst there was a request to include some of the more outlying buildings in the vicinity, it was considered that to include the large areas of open land in between was against the government guidelines for conservation area designation.

1.4 Conservation should not be thought of solely as a process of preservation and an impediment to change. The designation of a conservation area represents an opportunity to formulate positive policies to improve and enhance its environmental quality and to ensure the successful integration of any development or redevelopment necessary for its continued success as a living and working community. The St Albans District Local Plan Review (adopted November 1994) sets out the general principles which will be observed when dealing with applications for new development and redevelopment (Policy 85 – “Development in Conservation Areas”). However, the Local Plan is soon to be replaced by the Local Development Framework. This includes the Core Strategy which is currently being prepared by the Council.

1.5 The aims of this Character Statement are to show the way in which the form of the conservation area has evolved and to assess its present character; to indicate the principles to be adopted in considering planning applications in the area; and to form a framework within which more detailed proposals may be formulated.



*The listed Bricket Picture House*

## **2.0 DESIGNATIONS**

2.1 CONSERVATION AREA - The small group of buildings at Old Bricket Wood was designated as a conservation area on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1983 (see map). It is drawn tightly around the historic core of the settlement.

2.2 STATUTORY LIST – Listed buildings are buildings included on a list of “Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest” compiled by central government. The Council is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when considering any application for listed building consent or planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting, “to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting”. Applications will be assessed against District Plan historic buildings policies and government advice. There are only two buildings within the conservation area, both of which are statutory listed buildings, Grade II. These are shown on the attached map.

2.3 LOCAL LISTING - These are buildings which the Council feels make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of this conservation area. The locally listed buildings are shown on the attached map. It is not proposed to locally list any buildings which are statutorily listed or any of their outbuildings which are listed by virtue of being in their curtilage – it is considered that such buildings do contribute positively to the character, and that ‘double’ designation is not necessary (see map). English Heritage offer guidance on what qualities unlisted buildings may possess for them to make a positive contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area, and these have been borne in mind when drawing up the local list.

2.4 METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT – The whole of the Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt, which is subject to retained Policy 1 of the District Local Plan and PPG2. These state that only very specific types of development will be acceptable and that it should integrate with the existing landscape. Siting, design and external appearance are particularly important and additional landscaping will normally be required. Significant harm to the ecological value of the countryside must be avoided.



### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area boundary is drawn tightly around the hamlet, now called Old Bricket, which is physically quite separate from the modern village and just east of the M1 motorway. It is in the parish of St Stephen. Old Bricket lies down a remote winding lane and deep in woodland known as Bricket Wood Common. It contains a number of cottages dating probably from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. These cottages were commonly thought to have been built by the owners of the nearby estates – Munden, Hansteads and possibly Bucknalls, to house their work force, though this connection is not proven. Originally there were two beerhouses and a bakehouse, but no church. It still retains an air of isolation largely due to the lack of vehicular traffic, and is considered ideal walking and horse riding territory.



*Bricket Wood Common*

3.2 There is little evidence of this area being occupied before the Romans arrived - it is assumed the Belgic tribes moved and camped beside the river. However the Romans built a number of villas along the fertile rivers Colne and Ver. One dating from AD 330 boasted a hypocaust to the bath-house, two tile kilns and a wharf serving boats to Verulamium. The kilns produced tiles used in building Verulamium. Roman roads fanned out from Verulamium and a network has been found in Bricket Wood, two apparently crossing the Common. Wells lined with Roman bricks have been found in the vicinity. More recent brick pits are plentiful on The Common.

3.3 The name Bricket Wood appears to date back as far as 1228 in various guises – ‘Briteyghtwood’ in 1505, Bosco de Brygteyght in 1536. The whole area was under the jurisdiction of St Albans Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1539) and then split between different manors. The Earls of Essex held it until the beginning of the last century, and used the Common as a hunting ground. The Bricket Wood boundary was long in dispute up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and a ditch and bank boundary was made across the present day Common. Hunts took place regularly on the Common right up until the 1970’s. The road layout remains unchanged since that shown on the 1766 Andrews and Drury map.

## 4.0 CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

4.1 There are only 24 dwellings in the conservation area, grouped around the historic road layout. Much of the character of Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area comes from its enclosed rural situation surrounded by trees and farmland. The houses are set amongst the wooded areas of Common and small clearings, giving an atmosphere of a peaceful rural idyll. Therefore, it is the spaces between and around the houses which are just as important as the buildings themselves. Buildings are generally modest in scale, and any future development in the area, including extensions, should reflect this small scale of development.

4.2 Most of the land in and around the Conservation Area is wooded, with clearings here and there accommodating the buildings, associated gardens and some fields put to grazing. The extent of the woodland areas are similar to over one hundred years ago. Some areas have been cleared since the 1880s – around Pump House and more recently adjacent No.10 School Lane. The large area of woodland adjoining the northern boundary of the Conservation Area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated for its ancient woodland and lowland heath. There is no overlap between the SSSI and the Conservation Area. The Common is managed by St Albans District Council on behalf of the landowner. Whilst there are no grazing rights to the Common, there are special byelaws imposed by the Council. Fifty years ago the Common had large areas of open heathland but due to the cessation of grazing these have become wooded. Some of these areas have been cleared in recent years and within the SSSI the reintroduction of limited grazing is being explored to bring these areas back into a “favourable” ecological condition.

4.3 The unique rural character derives from the remote woodland setting of the houses and the small green open spaces such as that in front of the Old Fox PH and alongside School Lane. The appropriate management of these open areas and woodland is crucial, and the Bricket Wood Common Management Committee meets three times a year for this purpose.



*Open space adjacent School Lane*

4.4 The field boundaries are generally hedges or trees of native species. Significant surviving trees and hedges are important to the rural character of the hamlet and hedges should not be replaced with fencing without appropriate replanting. They are a fundamental part of the character, appearance and setting of the Conservation Area. Most trees in conservation areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and require permission from the District Council before topping, lopping, felling, or uprooting. Six weeks written notice must be given of any proposed surgery or felling. The Council can make a Tree Preservation Order if deemed necessary.

4.5 There is a variety of building materials used within the area. The oldest buildings were timber framed, some now rebuilt with render and clay tile roofs. 'The Old Fox With His Teeth Drawn' originally had dark stained weatherboarding beneath the thatched roof when still a single storey building. Now it is painted render, changed possibly when extended, but remains the only thatched house in the Conservation Area. The Old Fox pub retains its black stained weatherboarding and clay tiles. The Victorian buildings, such as Nos. 12 and 13 School Lane, and Rose Cottage and St Bees are yellow or Luton Grey stock brick with slate roofs. Others have been rendered and painted, and some have quite large clay pantiles, which are unusual for this area, (pigsty rear of No. 9 School Lane, the single storey side extension to The Old Fox P.H. and other small outbuildings). Local brick and boulder flint is also used on the smaller cottages, with matching outhouses which are important to preserve.

4.6 Front boundaries directly abut the un-kerbed, tarmac road or are set back behind grass verges, and there is an absence of footways, which is an important element of the character of the hamlet. In line with this rural character, driveways are predominantly graveled.

4.7 In general, the landscaping in and around this hamlet is the dominant feature. Views between and over the houses to the landscaping beyond is crucial to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **5.0 LISTED BUILDINGS**

5.1 Listed Buildings are buildings included on a list of 'Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' compiled by central government. The Council is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, when considering any application for listed building consent or planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting, 'to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting'. Applications will be assessed against District Plan historic buildings policies and government advice. There is one joint entry in the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest which is located in the Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area which is shown on the attached plan.

### **The Bricket Picture House and Little Bricket (Grade II Listed Buildings)**

These are the only statutorily listed buildings in the Conservation Area. Originally one small house named Brickett (possibly 17<sup>th</sup> Century), it was rebuilt by the architect Frederick Wallen for himself circa 1890, for use as a holiday home for orphaned boys. Remnants of the earlier house may lie in the heart of the rebuild, despite the new house having partially burnt down in 1953.



The upper floor has a remarkable set of plaster reliefs made by Mr Wallen and the boys. Set in panels of the timber frame, the red terracotta figures on brown and white backgrounds show late 19<sup>th</sup> Century sporting activities, including a hunt, four-man scull and a wrestling match. They were cast in situ by the boys. The south end includes panels showing a cricket and rugby match. Some of the plaques are reported to have been sold some time ago, before the building was listed.

This building was statutorily listed in 1984. As listed buildings, most changes to their internal or external fabric will require listed building consent, and new boundary treatment requires planning permission.



*The Bricket Picture House - Some of the plaques in sporting theme*

## **6.0    LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS**

6.1    The following unlisted buildings are considered together with the listed buildings to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are termed 'locally listed'.

**Nos. 10, 10a and 11 School Lane**, 2 storey brick and clay tile cottages, are now split into three cottages, having been extended on both sides. The stone plaque on these cottages, which is becoming illegible, states that the two cottages were originally built in 1611 but rebuilt in 1831. These cottages were donated to the Parish (of Watford) by Francis Combe of Hemel Hempstead.





*Nos. 10, 10a and 11 School Lane*

### **The Old Fox With His Teeth Drawn**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were two public houses within the bounds of the Conservation Area – ‘The Fox’ and ‘The Old Fox with His Teeth Drawn’. The former remains a public house. Names have changed over the years and the progression of ‘fox’ names is slightly confusing... ‘The Old Fox with His Teeth Drawn’ began life as ‘The Fox’, then became ‘The Old Fox’ until its license was withdrawn in 1893. The current Old Fox P.H. began life as The Fox, but known as The ‘Young’ Fox and the two pubs competed for trade until A. Holland-Hibbert (later Viscount Knutsford), bought The Old Fox in 1893. He was a teetotaler and revoked its license in circa 1917 due to the abuse of drinking by the newly attracted in-comers. It then served teas (and sweets and flowers) as a Temperance House under the new name ‘The Old Fox With His Teeth Drawn’. Previously a single storey small scale weatherboarded building, it is now a private house, white rendered with rooms in the roof, and the only thatched property in Bricket Wood. Wrapping around the front of the house is an old pond, discernable in part on the Tithe Map, which is still inhabited by waterfowl. The Old Fox With His Teeth Drawn appears on the 1838 Tithe Map, and is noted in the Tithe Award Schedule as ‘The Fox’.



*The Old Fox With His Teeth Drawn*

### **The Old Fox P.H.**

As set out above, this began life as The Fox, changed to The Young Fox and is now The Old Fox Public House. Extracts from County Records Office show the letting of this Fox Beerhouse in 1897 to include an orchard, stables, yard, outbuildings, garden and a cottage. The road then is named Blind Lane. The accompanying 1897 Plan at The Records Office shows the cottage, Public House and stables as connected buildings, which together now forms the present day pub. The cottage to the left is a late Victorian extension to the earlier pub and said to have been used as a Sunday School in the 1860s. The exact date of the current pub is unknown; however it does not appear in any form on the 1838 Tithe Map or Award. This pub is an important reminder of the gradual development of the settlement and is now the only pub in the hamlet. It also forms the main focal point of Old Bricket Wood, when approaching down School Lane.



*The current Old Fox Public House*

**No. 9 School Lane** The old bakery built in 1852/3 (date brick). The bakery and living quarters had separate front doors and the occupants of the pigsty in the rear garden dealt with the leftovers. The adjacent outbuilding, a coach house was reputedly built approximately 10 years later. This later had its roof raised and a first floor added. The bay window to the main frontage is a later addition which has been enlarged. It ran as a bakery up to the Second World War and supplied Park Street and Colney Street.



**Pump Cottage No. 14/16 School Lane** This used to comprise two or three separate cottages and appears on the 1838 Tithe Map. The area around it was orchard. Although now with a modern white rendered exterior, there is likely to be the remains of an earlier building within.



*Pump Cottage*

**Nos. 1 and 2 School Lane** are Victorian red brick, in the style of estate cottages, with high gables and double brick headers over the windows. They form an attractive stopper to the southern end of the Conservation Area.

**Nos. 3-8 School Lane** A visually striking row of cottages running at ninety degrees away from the Lane, these are sometimes referred to as 'The Barracks' because of reputedly housing French prisoners of war in the Napoleonic Wars. They are a mix of red brick and local boulder flint with clay peg tile roofs. The row of outhouses associated with these cottages shares the same materials and is important to preserve. These cottages are marked on the Tithe Map.

**Rose Cottage and St Bees, School Lane** A pair of attractive vernacular Victorian yellow brick and slate cottages, with decorative stone lintels and cills. More simple in appearance are **Nos. 12 and 13 School Lane** probably built at a similar time following the introduction of the railways (the bricks are not locally made). They show the gradual development of the area.



*Nos. 3-8 School Lane and outbuildings*

## **7.0 OTHER BUILDINGS**

7.1 The four bungalows along School Lane ('The Castle', 'Rust-I-Kana', 'Greensleeves', and 'Orchard End') are relatively modern and not of any particular historic or architectural interest. They were in their current format by the 1960s. The northernmost, Orchard End, is reputedly named after an orchard recorded on this site in the Tithe Award Schedule - apples were needed for cider-making to supply the local beerhouses. The palette of materials (brick and tiles) used on these bungalows is recessive - dark coloured bricks and tiles - allowing the full impact of the landscaping to dominate.

## **8.0 PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCEMENT**

8.1 It is important that any new development is of a high standard of design, sympathetic to its surroundings and the Conservation Area as a whole. It should not detract from the setting of nearby existing buildings, its form should have regard to the surroundings and the existing balance of buildings and landscape, and should be of good quality, normally built with traditional and natural materials. Existing houses are generally small scale, and this should be reflected in any new development or extensions. Dormer windows would generally be discouraged on front or visible roof slopes as they are not a characteristic of the settlement.

8.2 Along School Lane are a series of four single-storey and one and a half-storey houses see "Other Buildings" in 7.1 above. The modest height of these dwellings allows the mature trees on the Common behind to dominate the street scene. Any new development should respect the height of existing houses.



8.3 Opportunities for enhancement include the retention and re-introduction of traditional materials and techniques of repair. Any new development or change of use should respect the grain, setting, scale, materials and use of existing development or land. Hardstanding materials should reflect the hamlet's rural character, gravel being particularly suitable, whereas block paving has too harsh an appearance, being more suited to urban use, and will not be considered favourably.



*School Lane bungalows*



*Typical frontage boundaries*

8.4 Boundaries comprising native hedgerows and trees should be retained and enhanced or replaced with similar whenever possible. The introduction of any inappropriate boundary treatment detracts from this otherwise rural area and creates alien and obtrusive features and should be avoided. Low fences, walls and timber gates are the predominant boundary treatment fronting the houses, which have an informal rural character. Modern railings, metal gates and other non-traditional boundary treatments should be avoided. Planning permission is required for the erection of means of enclosure in the curtilage of listed buildings

8.5 UPVC windows and doors lack the finish and details of traditional joinery. They should be avoided and will not be acceptable for listed buildings, conversions or new development. Painted timber windows of the appropriate style will be encouraged.

8.6 St Albans District Council leaflet 'A Householder's Guide to Living in a Conservation Area' provides general guidance on best practice within Conservation Areas.

## **9.0 SUMMARY**

9.1 It is the Council's policy to encourage the retention of those features which make the conservation area special; including historic buildings, their historic and architectural features and their settings, trees, hedges, verges, graveled driveways. In addition the Council demands a high standard of design and materials for any new development in the Conservation Area.



## Legend

- Conservation Area
- Statutory Listed Building Grade II
- Locally Listed Buildings

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100  
Metres

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## **STATUTORY LISTED BUILDINGS**

The Bricket Picture House and Little Bricket, School Lane (Grade II)

## **LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS**

Nos. 1 and 2 School Lane, The Old Fox Public House School Lane,  
Nos. 3-8 School Lane and associated outbuildings  
Nos. 10, 10a and 11 School Lane, 'The Old Fox with his Teeth Drawn' School Lane,  
The Old Bakery No. 9 School Lane, No. 12 School Lane, No. 13 School Lane,  
Pump Cottage Nos. 14/16 School Lane,  
St Bees School Lane, Rose Cottage No. 15 School Lane

## **STATUS OF THE DOCUMENT**

This document should be read together with saved Policy 85 of the St Albans City and District Local Plan Review 1994. It has been produced as part of DPR Project 9: Policy Statements – Conservation Areas and includes locally listed buildings.

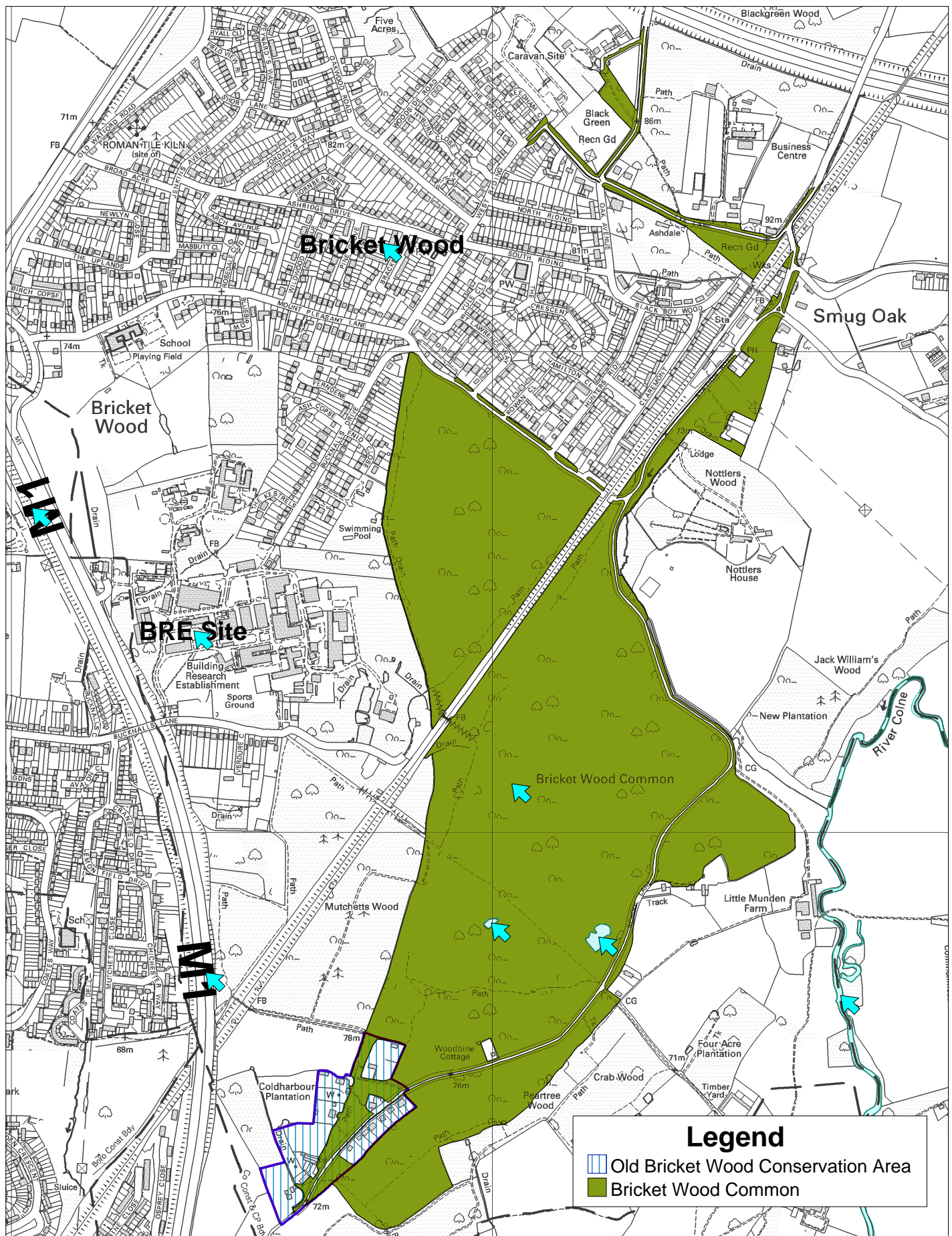
The Planning and Conservation Portfolio Holder considered a report on the draft Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area Character Statement dated 28 August 2009 and resolved that the document should go to local consultation. Consultation took place from 28 September to 4 December 2009 with the following: local residents, owner/occupiers of the Old Fox Public House, St Stephen Parish Council, Ward Councillors, Planning (Development Control) Committee South, Bricket Wood Common Management Committee, Viscount Knutsford, The Bricket Wood Society, The Bricket Wood Residents Association and St Albans City and District Council's Senior Parks and Green Spaces Officer. As a result of this consultation comments were received and addressed and some alterations were made to the text as agreed by the Planning and Conservation Portfolio Holder on 22 December 2009. This amended version forms the Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area Character Statement December 2009.

If further advice or guidance is required please contact The Department of Planning and Building Control, St. Albans City and District Council, Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3JE Tel. St Albans (01727) 866100.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING**

1. 'A Souvenir of Bricket Wood' The Bricket Wood Society, reprinted 1989.
2. 'The Voice of Bricket Wood' Bricket Wood Residents Association newsletter.
3. 'The Fairgrounds of Bricket Wood (1899-1929)', The Bricket Wood Society.
4. 'Bricket Wood in Old Picture Postcards (1880-1930)', Brenda Burr.
5. 'All My Wordly Goods – Wills and Probate Inventories of St. Stephen's Parish, St. Albans (1418-1700)', Meryl Parker.
6. '12 Circular Walks Around Bricket Wood' 2008, Rosemary Wenzelul and Pat Blake.
7. Report from Lord Knutsford (1983) on Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area designation consultation.
8. Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment.
9. St Albans District Plan Review 1994.
10. Tithe Map 1838, plus various plans - Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (County Hall).





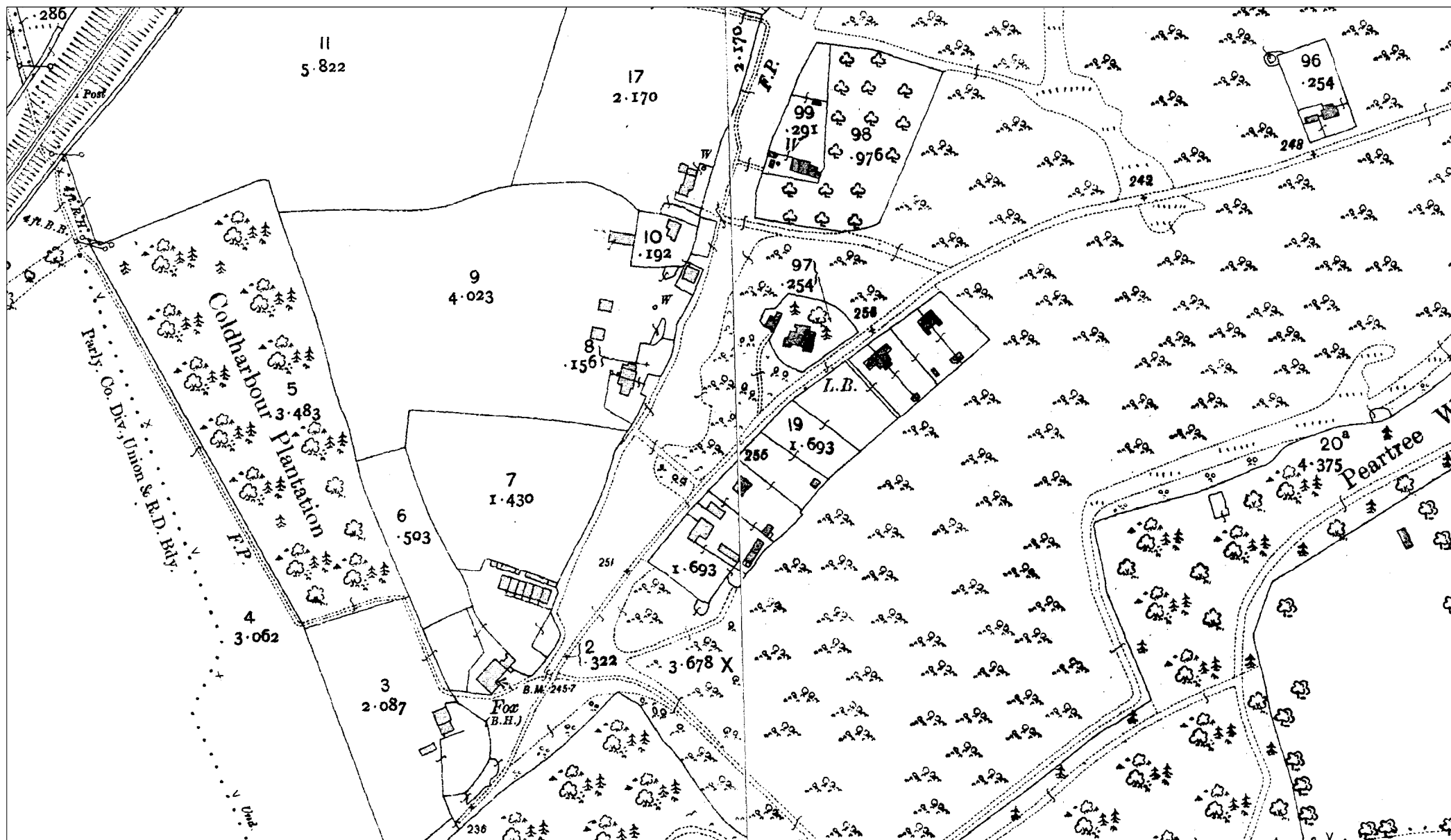
# **Bricket Wood Common**

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## Old Bricket Wood circa 1920s

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The front cover is Old Bricket Wood, O.S. circa 1880s.

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**If you require this information in another format e.g. in large print, Braille, audio or in a language other than English, please contact the Conservation and Design Team on 01727 866100 or e-mail [planning@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:planning@stalbans.gov.uk)**

