

CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT FOR POTTERS CROUCH



March 2015



CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER STATEMENT POTTERS CROUCH

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. Potters Crouch Conservation Area was designated on the 27 July 1977.

1.2 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”).

1.3 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.

2.0 DESIGNATIONS

2.1 CONSERVATION AREA - The settlement of Potters Crouch (see map) was designated as a conservation area on 27 July 1977. The boundary is tightly drawn 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 six statutorily listed buildings, all Grade II within the conservation area; these are shown on the attached map. Buildings, including outbuildings within the curtilage of listed buildings are normally protected under the main listing and are not separately indicated on the plan.

2.3 LOCAL LISTING - These are buildings which the Council feels make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of this conservation area. 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, but that ‘double’ designation is not necessary. For this reason there are no locally listed buildings in the Potters Crouch conservation area, as all (apart from two twentieth century buildings of neutral character) are statutorily listed.

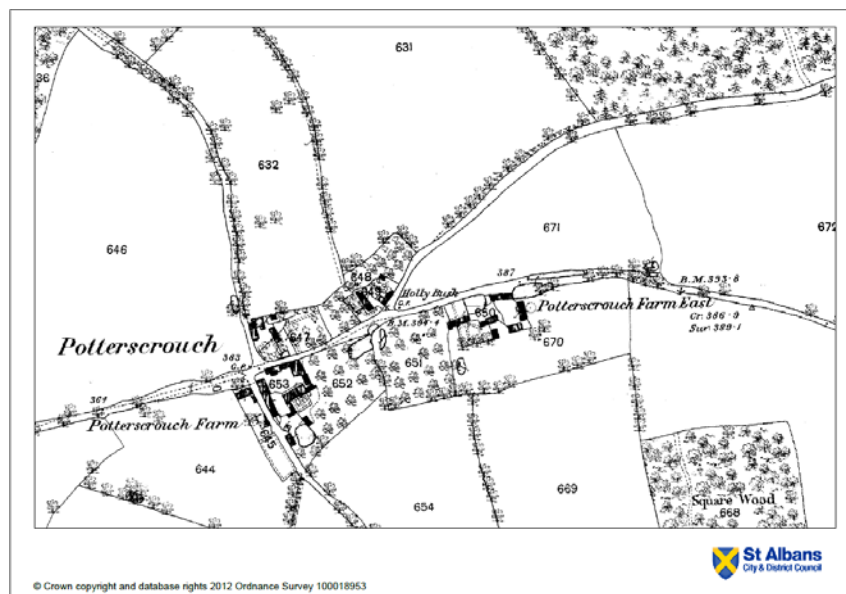
2.4 METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT – The whole of the Potters Crouch Conservation Area is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt, which is subject to retained Policy 1 of the District Local Plan. These state that only very specific types of development will be acceptable, and that it should integrate with the 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 wider Potters Crouch area, including the conservation area, was part of a Late Iron Age and Roman landscape, being the hinterland of the Verlamion Iron Age oppidum (town) and later Roman town of Verulamium. Whilst there is currently little known evidence of any settlements, an Iron Age/ early 1st Century AD brooch and knife were found separately in the general Potters Crouch area; the brooch is now kept at the Verulamium Museum and the knife at the British Museum. An archaeological site subject to recording abuts the conservation area to the north.

3.2 The name Potters Crouch may have come about because a potter lived and worked in the area. Richard Le Pottere is mentioned at Potters Crouch in 1294 and his son William Pottere succeeded him in 1335 and was probably the Potter of Potters Crouch referred to in 1344. Two medieval St Albans Ware jugs have been found locally and are believed to have been made in the area. The name may also have been derived from Potter Cross; “Le Pottercrouch next the way leading from St Albans to Langley” is mentioned in 1346.

3.3 The lands surrounding Potters Crouch historically belonged to the Earl of Verulam and passed to the Crown Estates in 1931 who planted much of the area with European larch and beech trees in 1935. In the late 1950's /early 1960's the M1 and M10 (now reclassified as the A414) motorways were built, which converge just west of Potters Crouch.



Potters Crouch in the 1800's.

4.0 LOCATION AND SETTING

4.1 Potters Crouch is a small rural hamlet, which lies to the south west of St Albans and to the west of Chiswell Green, surrounded by agricultural land. It is situated on a flat plateau and lies between the M1 motorway and the A414.

4.2 The built form of the hamlet probably originally developed around the two farms, Potters Crouch Farm and East Farm. Whilst the hamlet contains historic buildings from the 15th century, it appears to have gone through a key period of development during the 17th century when the Holly Bush Public House, Holly Bush Cottage and The Cottage were built, and both farms were extended. One pair of semi-detached properties, 'New Cottages', has been built in the 20th century. The Hamlet is mainly residential, as there are currently six dwellings, two farms (one of which is now divided into private dwellings) and a public house within the conservation area.

4.3 The density of development in the hamlet is low and the layout is informal with no strong building line or uniform roofline, other than being of a small scale. The buildings seem to have been built and extended individually to meet the requirements of the owners.

4.4 The roads leading into the hamlet are surrounded by low hedges, beyond which are open views of fields and countryside. In contrast, on entering the village from the North, the roads become narrower and flanked on either side by banks or taller hedges, which screen the views. Likewise, from the south, weather boarded buildings close to the road also create a sense of enclosure.

4.5 When entering the village from the north (via Potters Crouch Lane) the Holly Bush public house is an important feature at the junction of Potters Crouch Lane and Ragged Hall Lane. It creates a prominent feature within the village and marks the north eastern edge of the hamlet.

5.0 APPEARANCE

Potters Crouch Lane

5.1 Access to the Hamlet from the north east is via Potters Crouch Lane, which, along with Ragged Hall Lane, is the primary road within the conservation area. Most of the buildings within the conservation area; the Hollybush P.H, Holly Bush Cottage, New Cottages and Potters Crouch Farm Barn are located on this road. The roof of The Cottage can also be seen from Potters Crouch Lane, although it is located on Appspend Lane and is therefore discussed below.

5.2 The Hollybush P.H is the main landmark within the conservation area. This is because of its setting within a relatively large plot, bordered by low bollards and chain fence, and its position at the junction of Ragged Hall Lane and Potters Crouch Lane. From within the pub site views of the roofs of the buildings along Ragged Hall Lane can be seen. The Hollybush's use as a vibrant public house contributes to its landmark status, as it creates a focus for the small community. Hollybush Cottage, though a separate building, is viewed in context with the pub as it is located within the same site.



The Hollybush P.H is an important landmark and marks the junction of Ragged Hall Lane and Potters Crouch Lane.

5.3 New Cottages are located further along Potters Crouch Lane, but are well hidden behind a hedge. Given their recent date and standard design, they are considered neutral in character.

5.4 East Barn and West Barn (listed as North Barn), whilst primarily part of Potters Crouch Farm contribute to the character of this lane because of the dark stained weather boarded elevation located on the road. This along with the hedge opposite creates a sense of enclosure, which is in character with the rest of the lane, apart from the open area formed by the junction in front of the pub.



Rear of West Barn, Potters Crouch Farm

Ragged Hall Lane

5.5 Ragged Hall Lane provides access to the conservation area from the east. The structures, which form the East Farm complex, are the only buildings along this lane in the conservation area. The farm complex, along with the listed farmhouse, described below, includes a range of outbuildings (some of which may be considered curtilage listed), some of which are modern agricultural barns. One of the outbuildings, in a similar way to those at The Cottage (see later) and Potters Crouch Farm (see above), is situated on the edge of the road and creates a sense of enclosure to the lane. There are various bodies of water within the site; one of which, a circular pond, sits in front of the listed farmhouse creating a picturesque setting for the building. In common with other views out from the conservation area, views to the north are over a bank and consist of open fields with woodland in the far distance.



Outbuildings, East Farm



Outbuilding forming the road boundary, East Farm



East Farm, Ragged Hall Lane



Views north from Ragged Hall Lane

Appspond Lane

5.6 Appspond Lane provides access to the hamlet from the north, although only the southern end is within the conservation area. The Cottage is the only building on this lane within the conservation area. Mostly hidden by a thick hedge, a gated path allows glimpses of the cottage from the road. Outbuildings within the curtilage mark the northern edge of the conservation area, and like other outbuildings in the conservation area, they are located on the edge of the road and create a sense of enclosure. Like the views from Ragged Hall Lane, the views from here to outside of the conservation area

towards the west, are over a bank and consist of open fields, although unfortunately the views terminate with the motorway in the far distance.



The Cottage and outbuildings

Blunts Lane

5.7 Access to the conservation area from the south is via Blunts Lane, with only the northern end being within the conservation area. Potters Crouch Farm, a complex of buildings which have been divided into separate residential units, is the only building on this road in the conservation area. The use of pavements for the access to the farm courtyard is unfortunate as it is not in keeping with the agricultural character of the area, being an urban material. This site includes the listed farmhouse and East Barn and West Barn (listed as North Barn) and other outbuildings (which may be considered curtilage listed), some of which have been converted to residential units, for example the Saddlery. The farmhouse is hidden from public views as it is set back from the road and contained by the other buildings. The outbuildings on the site include a brick building with clay tile roof (the Saddlery), which together with a brick and flint wall, form the eastern boundary onto Blunt's Lane. Located opposite this building to the west is an agricultural timber outbuilding, which is in a poor state of repair.



Rear of the Saddlery, Potters Crouch Farm forming boundary on Blunt's Lane



Access to Potters Crouch Farm from Blunt's Lane



Blunts Lane, disused outbuilding to west

5.8 In terms of materials, despite the three phases of development in the 15th, 17th and 20th centuries, there is a unity within the hamlet created by the use of traditional and natural building materials. These include timber framing, local soft red/ orange bricks, white or cream render, plain red clay roofing tiles and dark stained weatherboarding on the outbuildings. The traditional windows are wooden casements (many are multipaned) or sliding sash windows, generally with a white painted finish. Some of the properties have gabled dormer windows.

LISTED BUILDINGS

Listed Buildings are buildings included on a list of 'Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' compiled by central government. As noted at 2.2 above, 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 The Local District Plan historic building and conservation area policies and government advice. There are six entries in the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest which are located in the Potters Crouch Conservation Area. These are shown on the attached plan and are described, as follows, in the listing descriptions. Any object or structure attached to a listed building and buildings, including outbuildings, within the curtilage of a listed building and which pre date 1948 are normally protected under the main listing and are not always separately indicated in the description.

The Cottage, Appspound Lane, east side (Grade II)

House. Mid 17th century. Timber frame, exposed on North gable end and rear elevation. C18 red brick casing to front and to rear ground floor. C17 brick nogging to rear upper floor and North gable end. Plain tile roof with large ridge chimney stack of 4 joined square shafts. Lobby-entrance plan. 1 bay each side of half-bay centre; staircase attached to rear of stack. 2 storeys. 3 C19 glazing bar casements in pegged oak frames.

C19 door in C18 chamfered wood frame, the openings each side with segmental heads. North end has a C18 single storey lean-to addition.



The Cottage, Appspound Lane

Holly Bush Cottage, (listed as Ragged Hall Lane north side, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, north side) (Grade II)

House. Early to mid 17th century. Exposed timber frame, ground floor with painted brick. Plaster. Weather boarding. Plain tile roof with dark red chimney stack of 4 square flues near gable end. Probably once another bay toward road. 2 storeys. Upper floor on East side has 2 small C19 glazing bar casements, the ground floor with door and twin casements. Rear elevation with a door and twin casement. Interior with staircase attached to stack.

The Holly Bush Public House, (listed as Ragged Hall Lane north side, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, north side) (Grade II)

Public House C17th. Timber frame. Roughcast, painted white. Plain clay tile roof with two gabled dormers, built off wall plate. One and a half storeys. Massive brick external stack on West gable. Narrow early C19 plastered extension of two full storeys; to east slate roof. Main block has 10/10 pane sash window to left of door and casement window to right. Casement dormers. C20 porch. Interior shows 2 bays and lateral stair on rear in unheated bay. Exposed chamfered ceiling beams. Stair enclosure clad in broad, horizontal planks with plank doors to staircase and to cellar under. C20 rear extension on West side.



The Hollybush Pub (right) and Hollybush Cottage gable (left)

East Farm (listed as Potters Crouch Farm East), Ragged Hall Lane south side (Grade II)

Farmhouse. C15 hall house of 3 bays, extended by 1 bay on West in mid or late C17, and chimney stack inserted into hall. Timber frame. 2 storeys. Mostly plaster walls. Painted brick to right side. Mid C19 flush panel door with cut bracketed hood. 3 glazing bar casements of same date. Interior has well-preserved 2 bay former open hall in centre of range. 3 trusses, each with crown post retaining longitudinal straight braces. The East crown post has inverted curved braces from the tie beam to the top of the post. C17/18 stack inserted in C15 2 storey wing near this truss, but original stair trap still visible in floor beams of cross wing. Hall fireplace has ovolo-moulded bressumer.



East Farm, Ragged Hall Lane

Potters Crouch Farmhouse (listed as Ragged Hall Lane, south side, but located on Blunt's Lane, east side) (Grade II)

Farmhouse. C15/16 century hall and wing with late C17 chequered brick casing and tall West extension. Timber frame interior. Plain tile roof. 2 storeys, the wing 2 storey with attics. Main range has three C20 glazing bar casements, its upper floor with early-mid C19 red brick. Door to left of wing is early-mid C19th in reeded frame with flat moulded hood and blank fan. Similar door towards left; lean-to at far end; 2 segmental-headed ground floor windows. The wing has a chequered floor band and tile-hanging to 1st floor on West side, above which are 2 gabled dormers. Interior: part to East of wing comprises a 2 bay hall, floored over and with a 1 bay wing. Beyond that is a late C17 single storey barn, now kitchen. Hall has heavy tie beams, the roof with curved wind braces. C17 wing has heavy clasped purlin roof.



Main Farmhouse, Potters Crouch Farm

East Barn and West Barn (listed as North Barn at Potters Crouch Farm, Ragged Hall Lane south Lane, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, south side) (Grade II)

Barn range. C18 main part, late C17 return on East side to form L-shaped range. Weatherboarded with plain tiled roof. Main range is 6 bays with gabled porch to centre farmhouse side, later addition to right. Clapsed purlin roof. Barn on East is lower. Rear walls with C17 red brick. 4 bays, a gabled porch on 2nd bay from south on rear side.



West Barn (on left) and East Barn (on right) at Potters Crouch Farm



Internal face of the Saddlery, Potters Crouch Farm

OTHER BUILDINGS

New Cottages – a pair of semi detached cottages with brick and plain concrete tiles still retaining original Crittal windows. These cottages were built in 1948 as farm cottages by T & B Builders for Crown Estates to replace the ones at Appspound Lane, which were condemned and later sold off and renovated. The cottages are set back slightly from the road and well hidden by vegetation. They are not particularly attractive features within the conservation area but because of the screening they do not detract from it and are therefore considered neutral in character.



New Cottages, Potters Crouch Lane

6.0 SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

6.1 Much of the character of the Potters Crouch conservation area comes from its rural situation and its views out across open fields and countryside.

6.2 Important views from the conservation area are:



Views looking west across open fields from Potters Crouch Farm, Blunts Lane.



Views from Appspend Lane to the west.



The views along Ragged Hall Lane towards the edge and north of the conservation area.



Views of open land and scattered buildings, looking back into the conservation area from the surrounding countryside, this view is from Potters Crouch Lane.

7.0 TREES AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

7.1 The significant mature trees and surviving hedges are major contributors to the conservation area's setting, character and appearance. The way that the lanes, particularly those leading into the conservation area, are bordered and enclosed by greenery, adds to the isolated and rural feel to the area. Many of the historic field boundaries still retain their hedgerows, which are also important wildlife habitats.



Typical views of hedges and trees within conservation area

7.2 The boundaries and hedgerows of the conservation area mainly consist of native trees and shrubs.

7.3 Most trees located in conservation areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Six weeks prior written notice must be given to the local authority of any proposed surgery or felling. This period enables the Council to make a tree preservation order if it considers that the proposal is unacceptable.

8.0 ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS

8.1 Much of the character of the conservation area is created through the combination of rural and residential usage and the dispersed settlement pattern with informal and low layout and verdant setting.

8.2 The building materials show a strong harmony of colour, texture and type creating pleasant visual relationships within the area.

8.3 The soft textural contrast of the trees to the buildings adds to the tranquil setting of the area and enhances the sense of rural cohesion within the conservation area.

8.4 Open spaces are a characteristic of the area. In terms of boundary treatment, where spaces are enclosed this is with informal hedges, open style wooden fences and, agricultural style open metal gates. Small stones or bollards are sometimes used to mark verges and there is one example of a brick and flint wall, which along with a building forms a boundary along Blunts Lane, all of these treatments are in keeping with the rural feel of the area.

9.0 PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCEMENT

9.1 Opportunities for enhancement include the retention and re-introduction of traditional materials and techniques of repair, for example the repair of the outbuilding to the west of Potters Crouch Farm. Hard standing 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. 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, but painted timber windows of the appropriate style will be encouraged. St Albans District Council leaflets provide general guidance on best practice within conservation areas.

9.2 Rural, often soft, boundary treatments form an important part of the character of the area and should be retained and enhanced whenever possible. Where in existence, boundary treatments are predominantly hedges, open timber fences and some open agricultural metal gating. There are also some low level informal bollards and stones marking the edges of the road and some boundaries, all of which have an informal rural character. Whilst there are some examples of brick and flint walls, these are attached to buildings and are not the dominant boundary treatment. The introduction of any inappropriate boundary treatment detracts from this otherwise rural area and creates alien and obtrusive features and should be avoided. To this end boundaries comprising native hedgerows and trees should be retained and enhanced or replaced with similar whenever possible. Modern railings, elaborate metal gates and other urban or non-traditional boundary treatments should be avoided. Planning permission is required for the erection of means of enclosure in the curtilage of listed buildings.

9.3 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. Any change of use should respect the grain, setting, scale, materials and use of existing development or land.

9.4 An unfortunate and very noticeable problem within the conservation area is the intrusive noise and views of the motorways. The use of a "thin wearing course" surface for the motorway would help to reduce the traffic noise levels, and tree screening would help to reduce the visual impact of the motorways in the surrounding landscape.

SUMMARY

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, including trees, hedges and verges. Every effort should be made to maintain landscape features, including spaces between buildings, as well as trees and hedgerows to avoiding infilling gaps and losing the sense of openness and rural quality of the area. In addition the Council demands a high standard of design and materials for any new development in the conservation area.

STATUTORY LISTED BUILDINGS

East Farm (listed as Potters Crouch, Farm East), Ragged Hall Lane (south side) (Grade II)

The Holly Bush Public House, (listed as Ragged Hall Lane north side, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, north side) (Grade II)

Holly Bush Cottage, (listed as Ragged Hall Lane north side, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, north side) (Grade II)

The Cottage, Appspound Lane (east side) (Grade II)

Potters Crouch Farm House, (listed as Ragged Hall Lane, south side, but located on Blunt's Lane, east side) (Grade II)

East Barn and West Barn (listed as North Barn at Potters Crouch Farm, Ragged Hall Lane south, but located on Potters Crouch Lane, south side) Grade II)

LOCALLY LISTED BUILDINGS

None

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012

St Albans District Local Plan Review 1994

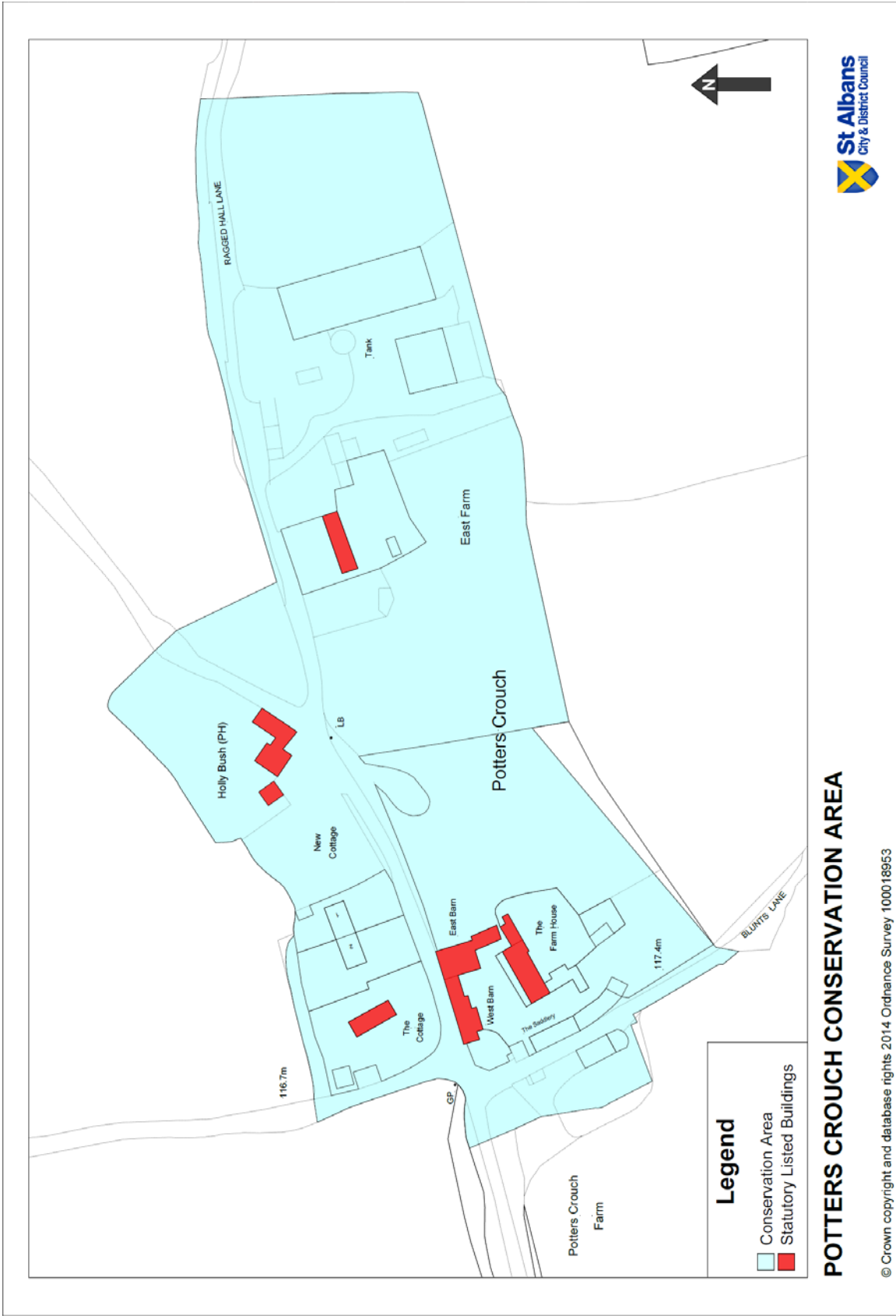
Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (March 2011)

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.

This document is a revision of the original Character Statement which was published in July 2001. Public Consultation was carried out between the 22nd October 2014 and the 28th November 2014. The Portfolio Holder agreed the changes on the 20th March 2015.

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 Albans. Herts. AL13JE. Tel. St Albans (01727) 866100.



POTTERS CROUCH CONSERVATION AREA

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 1000 18953

For more information about these services please contact the Council at:

**The District Council Offices
St Peter's Street
St Albans
Herts AL1 3JE**

Telephone: 01727 866100

Fax: 01727 845658

Web site:

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

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

