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Introduction & Summary of the Principal Purposes of the Pyrton Conservation Area Character Appraisal

This draft Conservation Appraisal has been prepared by Asset Heritage Consulting Ltd. on behalf of Pyrton Parish Council as a result of the recent completion of the pre-submission consultation draft of the Pyrton Neighbourhood Plan. In this context both the Neighbourhood Plan and the draft Appraisal accord with paragraph 58 of the NPPF, which states that *'...neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area...such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics'*.

By providing a thorough and comprehensive description and analysis of the existing Pyrton Conservation Area, together with making a detailed and sustainable case for proposed extensions to the currently designated area, the draft Appraisal provides a clear and objective assessment of the 'special architectural and historic interest' of the present conservation area and the proposed extensions to it, as required by Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

In this way the 'special' interest of the existing conservation area and the proposed extensions to it is clearly articulated. But this is not to say that the conservation area should be seen in isolation from the rural and historic character of the wider area. Indeed, as made clear in Terence O'Rourke's recent Landscape & Visual Appraisal (completed in October 2016), the fields between Watlington and Pyrton perform a vital role in

separating Pyrton from its larger, urban neighbour and helping to prevent their potential unwelcome coalescence.

This is particularly true of field PYR2, which lies alongside the south-east side of Pyrton Lane and which has been identified in the pre-submission consultation draft of the Pyrton Neighbourhood Plan as forming an important 'local green space or gap' between Pyrton and Watlington. The open, undeveloped nature of this field is therefore clearly vital to protecting the setting of the extended Pyrton Conservation Area.



In cases where development would be appropriate in Pyrton the Neighbourhood Plan rightly seeks to ensure that it will be sympathetic to the character of its surroundings and is appropriate in scale, form, design and materials.

As such, development proposals should always be of high quality, responding to the site context and ensuring that a holistic approach is taken to the site including landscaping, boundary treatments, together with enhancing the contribution of open space and enclosure. SODC's Design Guide (March 2015), national guidance and Local Plan policies should all be referred to when bringing forward sites for development.

Any sites inside the existing conservation area, the proposed extensions to it or within its setting should also take account of the analysis and advice offered in the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal.



Pyrton

-  Existing boundary
-  Proposed extension

0 90 180 270 360 Meters

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1.0 Summary of the principal characteristics of the Pyrton Conservation Area

The existing Pyrton Conservation Area and its proposed extension is defined by the following key characteristics:

- Strong nucleated village character as the principal settlement in the rural parish of Pyrton, a typical 'strip parish' of Anglo-Saxon origin running from the Chiltern escarpment to the plain below.
- A diverse and attractive collection of rural vernacular buildings (representing the majority of the 20 statutorily listed buildings across the parish as a whole), typical of this part of Oxfordshire, ranging in date from the medieval period through to the late 19th century, with no particular period or type being dominant.
- A wide range of building materials typical of the area: including timber-framing, brick, flint with clay tiles, thatch and Welsh slate used on the roofs of the village's historic buildings.
- Several 'key' buildings prominently located throughout the village, including Shirburn Old Vicarage, The White House, The Court House, Pyrton Village Hall and the former Plough public house.
- There are also a number of other significant buildings, such as the medieval parish church, which is less immediately visible from the road, and the publicly inaccessible Pyrton Manor (both of which are listed at Grade II*), which nevertheless make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- Important open spaces include the churchyard, the grounds of Pyrton Manor and the large paddocks on the east side of the main village street.
- Attractive views along the village streets and lanes, several leading onto public footpaths or bridleways into the surrounding open countryside.
- Fine groups of mature trees and long-established hedgerows, together with flint boundary walls and good sets of railings (to The White House) provide an important sense of enclosure, particularly in the centre of the village and along the approach from the south-east.
- Direct proximity to the Shirburn Conservation Area, most of which is made up of the Historic England registered Historic Park & Garden associated with Shirburn Castle, and the co-extensive nature of its boundaries

with both the existing and proposed extensions to the Pyrton CA, provides the unusual opportunity to form a 'super' conservation area encompassing a significant area of open countryside of readily identifiable heritage value.

- The large paddocks (adjacent to Shirburn Registered parkland) on the east side of the main village street.
- Although not registered by Historic England, the historic parkland associated with Pyrton Manor is far more extensive than that currently included in the Pyrton Conservation Area. This is clearly worthy of proper recognition and an appropriate level of protection by bringing it into the extended conservation area.
- General lack of major visual impact from C20 development along the main village street- this development is mainly well screened and falls outside the existing CA boundary and the proposed extensions to it.
- The tranquil character of the village, enhanced by the presence of trees and other vegetation, green space and the relatively low level of through traffic.
- Mainly shared routes and surfaces for vehicles and pedestrians.
- Low level of light and noise pollution, particularly remarkable given the relative proximity both to Watlington and the M40.

Evidential value

- There is high evidential value in village buildings listed at Grade II* and medium value in the former farmhouses and cottages listed at Grade II, with potential to reveal evidence for building construction techniques and technologies, which are not yet fully understood, as well as the below-ground archaeology of vanished buildings.
- No formally identified area of archaeological interest has been revealed in the material which South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) has provided to the Parish Council, but it is clear that the churchyard (which follows its ancient extent), and the areas around Pyrton Manor and The White House (both of which are of medieval origin) are of significant archaeological interest. Within the proposed extension to the conservation area, there are also well-preserved medieval ridge and furrow earthworks in the field to the south-west of the road leading into the village from the Lower Icknield Way (the B4009). The full archaeological potential of the conservation area and environs has

however yet to be evaluated (see also Section 4.0 below).

Historical value

- Pyrton's plan form is of medium historical illustrative value in the way in which it demonstrates the development of the settlement away from its early nucleus around the parish church and manor to an essentially linear settlement strung along both sides of the main village street (Knightsbridge Lane).
- Pyron Manor House has medium historical associative value owing to its brief connection with the well-known parliamentarian, John Hampden, during the Civil War.

Aesthetic value

- Pyrton Conservation Area has medium aesthetic value as a pleasant rural village with architecture ranging from the mainly 17th-century 'gentleman's house' character of Pyrton Manor, the polite style of Shirburn Old Vicarage to the more irregular form of the vernacular farmhouses, cottages and houses dating from the medieval period to the present day. The predominant building materials are red brick with clay tile roofs; however the earliest buildings are of rendered timber-frame, and there are a few thatched roofs.

Communal value

- Pyrton Conservation Area has medium communal value through the frequent use of its long-established Village Hall for village events. This has to some extent compensated for the closure of The Plough in the 1990s.
- The Oxfordshire Way passes directly through the village.

2.0 Background and Planning Policy Context

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on every local planning authority to determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas can then be designated as conservation areas.

Section 71 of the Act states that local planning authorities should, from time to time, review their existing conservation areas and formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas.

Some additional planning controls come into play in conservation areas, but as most conservation areas include listed buildings, these controls will already be familiar to many home owners in places like Pyrton and are in any case less onerous than those affecting listed buildings.

Indeed, unlike some planning controls that apply only to listed buildings, notably the need for Listed Building Consent for alterations to their interiors, or the need to ensure that the settings of listed buildings are 'preserved' by new development in their grounds or nearby, these additional controls

are there for the benefit of all to ensure that unlisted buildings are not needlessly or carelessly altered, without proper consideration first being given to the effect that such change could have on, for example, a long-established and cherished local street scene.

In essence, the additional planning controls that apply to unlisted buildings in conservation areas remove what would normally be classed as 'permitted development' outside conservation areas and are as follows:

- Demolition of most buildings
- Single-storey extensions that extend more than three meters beyond the rear wall of the house
- Extensions at the rear of a house more than a single storey
- Any extensions at the side of a house
- Additions, alterations or extensions to roofs- e.g. the installation of dormer windows
- Cladding any part of the exterior of a house with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles
- The installation of chimneys, flues or soil and vent pipes on either the principal (front) or side elevation of a wall or roof slope fronting a highway

- The erection of buildings incidental to the enjoyment of a house, e.g. a detached garage or garden shed, if situated between a side elevation of the house and the boundary of the curtilage of the house
- The installation of satellite dishes or antennae on a chimney, wall or roof slope which faces onto and is visible from a highway, or on a building which exceeds 15 meters in height
- The installation of solar panels on a wall which fronts a highway, or on the roof slope of non-domestic buildings which front a highway
- Some change of uses
- Six weeks' notice must be given to the Council before carrying out works to trees in a conservation area, giving the Council sufficient time to serve a tree preservation order if this is considered necessary.

The main onus of conservation area designation however falls on the local planning authority itself, which under Section 72 of the Act has a statutory duty when considering planning applications within a conservation area to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.

It is a national requirement for all local authority development plans to include appropriate planning policies within a Development Plan or Core Strategy.

The Development Plan for SODC currently comprises the emerging Local Plan 2011-2033, which incorporates a review of the Core Strategy adopted in December 2012. Other material planning considerations within conservation areas include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), while the pre-submission consultation versions of the Pyrton and Watlington Neighbourhood Plans have, of course, also been taken into account in preparing this draft Appraisal.

Full details of the relevant legislation, local development management policies and effects of conservation area designation can be found on the Council's website and in the advisory documents listed at Section 10 of this draft Appraisal.

The purpose of carrying out this draft character appraisal is to provide SODC with a sound evidence base to help inform development control decisions and also to develop properly considered local initiatives to help improve the character and appearance of the conservation area, irrespective of whether such initiatives would themselves need planning permission.

But, and this cannot be emphasised too strongly, no conservation area or accompanying Appraisal, should be seen as a means of preventing appropriate

development either within its boundaries or in the immediately surrounding area.

In this connection, it is important to remember that constructive and sustainable heritage conservation should be seen as a means of managing change rather than preventing it.

In due course it is possible that SODC will wish to use this appraisal as part of preparing a full Conservation Area Management Plan for the village.

Meanwhile, this document seeks to define the special interest of the Pyrton Conservation Area, including proposals for extending the boundaries of the currently designated area and for the enhancement of its character and appearance. The more clearly the special interest that justifies designation is analysed and defined, the sounder will be the basis for development plan policies, development control decisions and proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the character of an area.

It is intended that this guidance will be useful for residents, potential developers and the general public in understanding the significance of the area and will help to ensure its special interest and character can be preserved and enhanced for future generations.

As such, this document follows Historic England's latest guidance on the production of Historic Area Assessments (April 2017), which includes advice on preparing Conservation Area Appraisals and supplements their own 'Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal & Management' (February 2016). *Inter alia*, these helpful advice documents suggest that Conservation Area Appraisals should:

- Assist in defining what is of 'special' architectural or historic importance
- Give recommendations on features and characteristics that should be protected
- Identify possible areas for future enhancement within the designated area
- Provide guidance on the form, style and location of future change and development within the designated area.
- Pyrton Conservation Area was first designated on 11 December 1984. As was then usual, no Appraisal document was produced at that time, nor have the boundaries of the designated area been reviewed at any time by SODC since.

- As part of producing this draft Appraisal, detailed field surveys of the area were carried out by Dr. Nicholas Doggett, FSA, IHBC, MCIfA, Managing Director of Asset Heritage Consulting, on behalf of Pyrton Parish Council, which commissioned this study, in April to June 2017. This draft document has been prepared in close consultation with members of the Parish Council and other village residents (see Section 11 for individual acknowledgements).

3.0 Assessment of Special Interest

3.1 Location and Geography

The present parish of Pyrton extends to approximately 3,279 acres from the Haseley Brook to Christmas Common. It is made up of the village of Pyrton and the hamlets of Clare, Golder and Standhill, as well as part of the hamlet of Christmas Common, all of which are of medieval origin.

Pyrton is thus easily the largest settlement (and only true village) within this parish, lying approximately one mile (1.6 km) to the north-west of the ancient small market town of Watlington.

Immediately to the east of Pyrton is the parish of Shirburn, with its Castle and Estate (the ancestral home of the Earls of Macclesfield), the parkland and small estate village of which are included at Grade II* on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks & Gardens and also form a conservation area, part of the boundary of which is shared with that of the existing Pyrton Conservation Area.

The land ownership of Shirburn and its long-established Estate has protected both Shirburn and Pyrton from potential encroachment outward from the nearby M40, enabling both parishes and villages to retain their ancient layouts and character.

3.2 General Character and Plan Form

Pyrton is today a village of predominantly linear plan-form with houses and cottages ranged on each side of the main road (sometimes known as Knightsbridge Lane) running through it on a roughly north-south axis, with a large area of open paddocks on the east side of the road, some of which comes up to the road and the remainder of which lies behind the houses on this side.

This is not however the earliest part of the village, its nucleus being situated around the medieval parish church and original vicarage (now known as The White House), with Pyrton Manor, known to be in existence by c.1327, lying a little further to the west.

Although not publicly accessible (and indeed largely invisible from the village itself), the grounds of Pyrton Manor form a significant part of the conservation area and, as discussed in Sections 5.0 and 7.0 below, there is a good case for bringing those parts of its extensive grounds that are not already within the conservation area into the designated area.

Pyrton has a wide range of building materials typical of this part of South Oxfordshire including timber-framing, brick, flint with clay tiles, thatch and Welsh slate used for the roofs of the majority of the village's historic buildings.

There is another key focal point at the northern end of the village just beyond The Old Plough where a track (now part of The Oxfordshire Way) diverges from Knightsbridge Lane to lead north-eastwards out of the village past West Lodge, one of the former lodges to Shirburn Castle.

Immediately to the south-east of the village's original nucleus, the areas of land on either side of the approach road to the village, that on the north-east side bounded by a grass verge with an old flint wall running alongside, from its junction with Pyrton Lane onwards contribute significantly to the rural feel of this approach to the village.

These areas of land currently lie outside the conservation area but, as with the grounds of Pyrton Manor, there is a good case to be made for bringing these areas of the village into the extended designated area.

There was relatively little significant development in the village during the 20th century and this has continued into the first two decades of the 21st. What modern development there has been (notably the four detached houses on the east side of the main village road opposite Pond House and Hall Close immediately to the north of the Village Hall) is by now mainly well screened by trees and other vegetation and has had no major visual impact on its character and was clearly deliberately excluded from the

conservation area when it was first designated in 1984.

3.3 Landscape Setting

As stated in the VCH, the greater part of the ancient parish lies within the 250–350-ft. (76-107 m) contour, rising in the north to a small ridge, on which lie what is left of the hamlets of Goldor and Clare, and then descending towards Haseley Brook and the site of Standhill hamlet. Farther south, the Chiltern escarpment bisected the ancient parish, and from about a mile south of Pyrton village the ground rises steeply to Pyrton Hill and Christmas Common (785 ft. [239m]).

The land on which the village of Pyrton sits is however more low lying and prone to flooding (this requires careful management to protect its historic buildings), including across the historic parkland associated with Pyrton Manor and Shirburn Castle, both of which directly abut the existing conservation area and provide it with an air of unchanging tranquillity, with public views from the village across the latter in particular towards the Chiltern Hills beyond.

The surface soil in the village is stony, as it is throughout most of the parish. There is an area of well-preserved medieval ridge and furrow earthworks corresponding with the open strips shown on the 1738 Estate map (see below) in the pasture fields to the

south-west of the road leading into the village from the B4009. This lies within the proposed extension to the conservation area.

Further information on the historic landscape of Pyrton and the surrounding area can now also be found in the recently completed full report (July 2017) on the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project carried out by the County Council and Historic England.

4.0 Historical Development & Its Influence on the Settlement's Topography

The chalk and clay geology of Pyrton parish, like many others in the Chilterns, has encouraged an agricultural rather than an industrial economy and the area has been farmed for centuries.

There are various indications of early settlement in the parish. Mount Tree, Home Farm (formerly Slay Farm) is thought, for instance, to be the site of a prehistoric round barrow¹, while another site of high archaeological interest is Pyrton Heath, where in 1957 a late Iron Age cremation burial from the first half of the first century A.D. was discovered.² There is a Saxon burial place at Christmas Common, suggesting 5th- and 6th-century settlement in the district and there is little doubt that by the end of the 8th century the parish was already in existence.³

The Anglo-Saxon origins of the parish, which is of classic 'strip' form running from the Chiltern escarpment to the plain below, are documented in a charter of 887 recording King Offa of Mercia's gift of land in the area to Worcester Cathedral. This charter lists boundary sections and landmarks which still survive today. These include the Haseley

Brook (*rappan broc*), Pyrton Heath (*on pone haep*) and Knightsbridge (*cnihta bricce*).

In this charter the estate was named *Readanora* or "red slope" after either the autumnal colour of the beech trees or more likely the red sub-soil associated with the top of the Chilterns. *Readanora* began at present-day Standhill (*Stan(ge)delf*) in the north, it continued past Golder (*Goldora*) and Clare (*Clayora*), descended down to and across the valley floor, up the scarp slope of the hill to Christmas Common, then down to Stonor (*Stanora*) and Assendon (*Assendene*).

From the 12th until the mid-19th century the total area of the parish remained more or less constant at just over 4,800 acres, only decreasing during the 19th century when 1,500 acres were transferred to Pishill parish, eventually joining with Stonor in 1922. Ten years later the parish lost 211 acres to Watlington and so came to cover 3,292 acres.

Pyrton was chief of the Hundreds⁴ (an ancient administrative unit) and comprised Watlington, Shirburn, Stoke, Wheatfield, South Weston and Pishill, being bounded by Ewelme and Lewknor Hundreds. It is one of the few Hundreds in Oxfordshire that is named in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and

¹ Salzman, L.F. (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England – The County of Oxfordshire*, Volume I, *Early Man: Early Iron Age*, 1939, p.285

² *Oxoniensia*, Vol XXIII, p.141, *A Late Belgic Burial at Watlington, Oxon* by H. Case, 1958

³ Lobel, M. (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England – The County of Oxfordshire*, Volume VIII, *Lewknor and Pyrton Hundreds*, 1964, Pyrton Hundred, p.157

⁴ The Rev. H. Coxe, *Pyrton Lectures*, 1890, p.8

the hundred court was held at Pyrton every three weeks during the Middle Ages.

Pyrton, the main settlement in the parish, and, in particular, the Church of St. Mary, stands at the crossroads of two pre-Saxon roads, the Lower Icknield Way (today's B4009), running with the natural grain of the land and Knightsbridge Lane (cnihta bricce), going transversely across it (see fig.5 in M. Hammond's conjectural map of *Readanora* (*Oxoniensia*, Volume LXIII, p.26).

The Icknield Way led from the Wash to Salisbury Plain and was divided into two sections, the upper and lower, the Lower Icknield Way coming from the Chinnor area on towards Benson and Dorchester. The upper Icknield Way went further south to Benson, Goring and from there it joined the prehistoric Ridgeway to run towards Avebury.

By the Anglo-Saxon period, these ancient trackways had become important thoroughfares and here formed the boundaries of Pyrton parish. Another major route for the transport of goods started from Henley, came up through Assendon and Hollandridge Lane to Christmas Common and along Knightsbridge Lane to Standhill. From here the road linked with Islip and Oxford and eventually led to Worcester.

The name Readanora disappeared sometime between the 887 charter and that of 987 which calls the estate Pyrton, historically spelt Peritone and Pyriton (meaning 'Pear Tree Farm'). This is the first reference to the name Pyrton, the 987 charter also containing the first reference to Pyrton Manor⁵.

It has been argued that the name Pyrton came into existence when the old Anglo-Saxon estate system was superseded by manorialisation.⁶

At the time of the Domesday Survey a mill is recorded at Pyrton, and was probably located at Pyrton Heath.⁷

Domesday also records that after the Norman Conquest Pyrton Manor passed to Hugh d'Avranches, first Earl of Chester, whose heirs retained it until John de Scotia, seventh Earl of Chester died in 1237. It was then annexed by the crown, and in 1360 was recorded as part of the Honour of Wallingford. In 1480 Edward IV gave it to the Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel, Windsor, who remained lords of the manor until about 1870 when it was bought by Hugh Hamersley, whose family had leased it since 1781. It has remained in private hands ever since.

⁵ see Pevsner, N, Sherwood, J , *The Buildings of England: Oxfordshire*, 1974, 732-733

⁶ *Oxoniensia*, Volume LXIII, p.24, *The Anglo Saxon Estate and Readnora and the Manor of Pyrton Oxfordshire* by Madeleine Hammond, 1998

⁷ Rev. H. Coxe, *Pyrton Lectures*, 1890, p.15

Pyrton Manor also played an important part in local history through its connection to John Hampden. During the Civil War the house was leased by Edmund Symeon whose daughter, Elizabeth, married Hampden at St. Mary's Church in 1619. A strong Parliamentarian, Hampden became known as 'The Patriot' and was gravely injured at the Battle of Chalgrove Field in June 1643. His biographer recorded that he then rode towards Pyrton Manor, three miles away from Chalgrove Field, before being headed off by Prince Rupert's men, turning his horse northwards and riding five miles to Thame, where he took to his bed and died.

As far as the actual building of Pyrton Manor is concerned, documentary evidence confirms that a moated manor house has existed at Pyrton since at least 1327 and that originally, the manor estate coincided with the extent of the parish lands. The present Elizabethan manor house, which stands in 40 acres of parkland, was either constructed between 1582 and 1601 by John Symeon or soon after in 1604 by Edmund Symeon.

The village's other principal building is, of course, St. Mary's Church, parts of which may be of Anglo-Saxon origin, although it has of course been altered and extended many times since. In 1115 William Fitznigel, Lord of Pyrton, granted the church to his foundation, the Augustinian priory at Runcorn (later Norton Priory), Cheshire.

When the priory was dissolved the church, parsonage and about 115 acres of land were granted to Christchurch, Oxford.

The church was rebuilt in 1856 by J.C. Buckler, better known as topographical artist, but parts of a 12th-century building remain, including the south doorway and the chancel arch. Today the churchyard is managed as a 'Living Sanctuary'.

As is typically the case with such villages, the area immediately around Pyrton was farmed according to the open field strip system in the medieval period, these strips still being shown on an estate map of 1738, which also depicts 21 dwellings besides the Manor House and Parsonage (now known as The White House).

By the mid-17th century however approximately 2,000 acres between Pyrton and Golder were already enclosed, although the remaining lands to the south east of the village survived as open fields until 1851. Enclosure brought an increase in the number of farmsteads in the parish and some of the earliest included Spier's Farm (later Franklin's and Cromwell's), Quartremain's Farm, Golder Farm (belonging to Magdalen College), together with the various village and hamlet home or manor farms.

Until the 19th century, most were held by landowners such as Norton (originally Runcorn) Priory in Cheshire (before the

Dissolution of the Monasteries and Christ Church, Oxford thereafter), the Deans and Canons of Windsor, the Stonor family and various lords of Shirburn.

By the middle of that century, most of the farms in the parish were divided into farms of between 100 and 600 acres and it is documented that the majority of the cottages in Pyrton village were occupied by farm labourers: *'There are nearly sufficient cottages in the village for the accommodation of the laborers (sic) required on the property, but they are chiefly of the old thatched description, most if not all of them having a piece of garden attached...'*⁸.

During the 20th century farms increased in size and most of the farming that takes place in the parish today is arable, present farms in the parish including Home Farm, Pyrton Field, Golder Manor Farm, Manor Farm Clare, Poppet's Farm and Standhill Farm. Some dairy and sheep farming takes place in Clare, and cattle farming at Pyrton Field.

By 1835 the main focus of settlement in the Pyrton village had moved from around the church to the axis of Knightsbridge Lane, probably due to the encroachment of the manor house and its park⁹, and this remains the form of the village today.

This significant change was observed by Frank Emery in his 1974 book, *The Oxfordshire Landscape* in which, comparing the 1738 estate map referred to above with maps of a century later noted that by c.1835 *'...the grouping of houses around the church was much less distinct. Instead the main focus of settlement...had shifted to the axis of Knightsbridge Lane. Due to encroachment by the manor house and its park (it was landscaped by 1792), the village had been thinned out at the park approaches, and deflected away in the direction of the Lane. By the end of the 19th century, and as we find it today, the village had shrunk overall but unequally so. Pyrton Church ceases to be a centralising feature, the park dominates what was once half the village, and most of the houses range along the Lane'*.

There was minimal building during the 20th century and it was noted in 1964 that *'the secluded position of Pyrton village and single ownership has enabled it to preserve its ancient character'*¹⁰. What is now the village hall was built in 1895 as an elementary school (replacing an earlier one) and was used as the village school until its closure 1933, since when Pyrton's children village have been educated in Watlington. The Victorian building itself fell into some disrepair but as a result of the energies and commitment of the local community it has

⁸ Bodleian Library, University of Oxford DD Ducat-Hamersley

⁹ This is based on Bodleian maps (E), C17:49 (66), (181), (182), (184).

¹⁰ Lobel, M. (ed.), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England – The County of Oxfordshire, Volume VIII, Lewknor and Pyrton Hundreds*, 1964, Pyrton Hundred, p.157

now been refurbished and hosts a wide range of activities and events.

Indeed, following the closure of The Old Plough in the 1990s it now accommodates many of the activities that would formerly have taken place in the pub.

Pyrton today remains a vibrant community with a strong sense of its own identity. Understandably, its residents believe that the significant natural and cultural heritage of their village should be appropriately guarded from development potentially spreading out from nearby Watlington.

Archaeology

The District Council is required to take account of archaeology as a material consideration when determining planning applications.

Planning applications in SODC are monitored by Oxfordshire County Council's Archaeology Service, which advises the District Council on the potential archaeological implications of any application that falls in an area of known archaeological constraint.

Records relating to both above- and below-ground archaeology are held on the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the County Council:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/historic-environment-record

It is however worth noting that neither the medieval churchyard of St. Mary's Church, nor the extensive medieval ridge and furrow earthworks referred to in various sections of this draft Appraisal have as yet been identified as archaeological sites or monuments on the HER.

5.0 Spatial Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Pyrton Conservation Area was first designated on 11th December 1984. No formal Character Appraisal was carried out at this time, nor have its boundaries been reviewed by the District Council at any time since then. It is therefore important (particularly in light of the potential development pressures in the immediate area brought about by the proposed Watlington by-pass), that a detailed Character Appraisal, including a full review of the boundaries of the designated area, is now carried out.

5.2 Street Pattern & Layout

The village street plan is made up of one principal road, which is formed by the road leading into the village from the south-east off the Lower Icknield Way (the B4009), which runs between Watlington and Chinnor, with lesser roads running off, including Pyrton Lane, which forms a back route to Watlington, and a no-through track leading off the principal road at the point where it turns sharply to the north on the north-east side of the churchyard running down to Garden Cottage. From the point where the principal village road turns sharply to the north (just to the west of Shirburn Old Vicarage) it is sometimes known as Knightsbridge Lane. This lane, which has

relatively little through traffic, leads north-westwards from Pyrton eventually to join a back road to Stoke Talmage near the hamlet of Clare.

The principal road through the village as described above also forms part of the Oxfordshire Way, a 65-mile public right of way running from the Cotswolds to the Chilterns, until the point where Knightsbridge Lane leaves the village at The Old Forge. Here there is a well-used bridleway running off the road to the north-west past Pyrton Lodge towards Model Farm, Shirburn and from this point this is the route that the Oxfordshire Way follows as it leaves the village.

The character of the principal road through the village is that of a village street. On the approach to the settlement it is straight but narrow, with the south-west side enclosed by trees and hedging on a bank raised up well above the road; on the north-east side there is a grass verge with a roughly trodden path on it extending from Shirburn Old Vicarage to just before The Lodge House. This verge and pathway runs alongside an old flint wall, which continues in front of The Lodge House. The condition of much of this wall has been poor for many years and sections of it are now badly leaning towards the pathway (other parts are now missing), which must be a cause for concern as pedestrians, including walkers of the Oxfordshire Way, use the pathway as a

refuge from cars, this stretch of road scarcely being wide enough for two cars travelling in opposite directions to pass each other.

Where the principal road bends sharply to the north (with Shirburn Old Vicarage set back from the road behind fine, mature trees, including the horse chestnuts and the TPO'd cedar, on one side and The White House set hard against it on the other) there are excellent views across the wide and well-maintained grass verges (which almost have the appearance of a small village green) towards Lodge Cottage/Hampden Cottage, past which the driveway to Pyrton Manor leads in one direction and towards the well-screened churchyard in the other. As the road bends to the north there is a strong sense of enclosure on the western side provided by the end wall of The White House, which is flanked by tall roadside hedges set behind railings on a low brick wall to one side of the house and behind a timber fence on a low brick wall to the other, a row of tall yew trees, followed by the strangely wedge-shaped Hubbards Cottage and the larger Pond House (itself only slightly set back from the road behind a lower Lonicera hedge).

On the eastern side of the road, the sense of enclosure is slightly less strong owing to the presence of the four modern detached houses set back from the road. These houses fall outside the conservation area but the

beech hedge and the trees in front of them (including the silver birches- presumably planted at the time the houses were built in the 1970s (there was previously a row of six terraced cottages occupying the site of the two northern houses) - at least maintain some sense of enclosure on this side of the road too.

To the north of these houses as built development becomes more sporadic a series of extensive views unfolds, including from the road outside The Court House westwards along the farm track towards Home Farm and just to the north of the Village Hall a good prospect of the AONB of the Chiltern Hills to the east. Beyond the modern cul-de-sac development of Hall Close on the western side of the road, the character of Knightsbridge Lane changes again with, at the northern end of the village, houses and cottages (both old and new) more tightly grouped into clusters on both sides of the road. Finally, as Knightsbridge Lane leaves the village, there is once more an 'open' almost farmyard-like feel (happily, the visual impact of the large and architecturally undistinguished Orchard House and Tara House on the street scene is relatively minimal given the fairly extensive screening that exists around them), engendered by the presence of the Dutch barn and pole barn and other utilitarian farm structures interspersed with the more 'permanent' buildings around them and the bridleway (forming part of the Oxfordshire

Way- see above) which bisects them at the small triangular 'green' located here. All the way along the main village road the plain surface and the absence of white lines all contribute to the rural feel, as does the minimal signage and other street furniture. Strangely, however, the untidy and apparently unplanned cluster of overhead wires supported on old wooden telegraph poles at the intersection of the main road and the bridleway section of the Oxfordshire Way at the northern end of the village is reminiscent of the rural images depicted by John Piper and other war artists in the paintings and drawings they made as part of the 'Recording Britain' project during the Second World War, and which today is almost entirely vanished, particularly in affluent areas such as South Oxfordshire.

5.3 Views and Vistas

Significant views include those towards and from key buildings, such as the parish church, Pyrton Manor, Shirburn Old Vicarage, The White House and The Court House, although as this document is a Conservation Area Character Appraisal it is appropriate only to identify on the map at Fig.1 those views which are readily available from the public realm.

More general views of the street scene (not necessarily identified as important views on the map) also contribute to the character and appearance of the village, particularly

where the form of the street or track, green verges, boundary features such as walls and hedgerows, garden foliage, trees and buildings combine to create a composition that expresses Pyrton's essential rural.

In this context, the specific views referred to in Section 5.2 are particularly important and, along with the views into and out of the village at both its northern and southern approaches, together with that along the bridleway section of the Oxfordshire Way at the northern end of the village, and the views from Pyrton Lane towards the large arable field to its south-east (which forms an important part of the setting of the proposed extension to the conservation area in this direction), are all marked on Fig.1.

Among more local views (not identified on Fig.1) are glimpsed views of the parish church and churchyard from the tree-lined track (Church Lane) running alongside its northern boundary, and of various historic buildings (notably the Grade II listed Home Farm Cottage and The White House) from the other side of this track.

Indeed, one of the special qualities of the church is the fact that (particularly in summer) the building (large though it is) is largely hidden from view, only the lych-gate at the entrance through the tall and well-maintained privet hedge on its south-eastern boundary providing the clue to the observant visitor of what lies beyond, the

best view of the church becoming available only after the visitor has passed through the lych-gate.

As noted elsewhere in this Appraisal, the same 'secretive' quality also applies to Pyrton Manor, which is effectively completely hidden from the public realm by the trees and other well-established vegetation which almost appear to 'guard' the approach to it from the village.

5.4 Trees and Green Landscape

The green impression formed by trees, fields and gardens of the Pyrton Conservation Area and its proposed extension is an important element of its character as an historic village in a rural setting.

Notable elements include:

- The trees around the boundaries and within the churchyard
- Trees flanking the grounds of properties along Church Lane
- Trees on the bank lining the south-west side of the approach road to the village from the B4009
- Trees at the corner of the main road through the village where it turns sharply to the north, particularly the horse chestnuts

and the TPO'd cedar in the grounds of Shirburn Old Vicarage

- Row of yew trees lining the road between The White House and Hubbards Cottage, and the willow overhanging the road close to the infilled former entrance to The Court House
- The trees and well-established hedgerows forming the boundaries to the grounds of Pyrton Manor along Pyrton Lane and along the south-western boundary of the Manor, together with the trees that can be seen beyond the old stone piers flanking the driveway on the approach to it from the village.

As will be clear from the aerial photograph on the front cover of this Appraisal, the grounds of Pyrton Manor (both inside and outside the existing conservation area) contain numerous parkland trees, while extensive additional planting was carried out only a few years ago by the previous owner inside their boundaries with Pyrton Lane and to the south-east.

This collection of some 6,000 trees (both old and new) is highly valuable, both in its own right and as a major and positive contributor to the setting of Pyrton Manor as a Grade II* listed building, and the role which the house and its grounds play in establishing what is significant about the character and appearance of the Pyrton Conservation Area.

As such, it is high time that the boundaries of the conservation area are extended to include these trees.

A full list of all these trees is provided at Fig.3, but as the trees, together with the various landscaped features within the Manor's grounds (including the ha-ha), are not visible from the public realm and their detailed location mapping falls outside the scope of this study, they are not shown on Fig.1.

Other positive elements of the conservation area's green landscape include the lawns and planting of front gardens of private houses and areas of public or semi-public green open space, such as the grass verges referred to in Section 5.2 above, and in particular the large almost village green like space between the churchyard and Lodge Cottage/Hampden Cottage.

The areas on either side of the road on the south-eastern approach to the village (making up one of the proposed extensions to the existing conservation area), although not directly visible from the road, very much form part of the green open space that is characteristic of so much of the village and contribute to its heritage significance.

They clearly do not form part of the surrounding open countryside but instead directly adjoin the historic parkland

associated with Shirburn Castle on one side and with Pyrton Manor on the other.

In addition, the parcel of land proposed for inclusion on the north-eastern side of the road corresponds exactly with what is called Parsonage Close on the 1738 estate map. Interestingly, this map shows a series of long-vanished buildings, including what appears to be a roadside terrace of cottages on the part closest to the road.

Likewise, the area to the south-west of the road also includes an area of 'green' heritage value in the form of a set of well-preserved medieval ridge and furrow earthworks in the field adjoining Pyrton Lane and which can be seen from there over a timber gate in the dense hedge boundary along the lane.

These earthworks clearly relate to the extensive open field strips marked on the 1738 estate map and which have otherwise gone, due in no small way to the extension of the parkland associated with both Shirburn Castle and Pyrton Manor from the late 18th century onwards, and by their ploughing up outside those areas.

As clearly shown on the 1738 map the main entrance to the Manor was through a tree-lined avenue across the parkland to the south-east; i.e. the same parkland which it is now proposed to include in the extended conservation area. In 1738 this land was designated as glebe land but was

demonstrably connected with the Manor and its functioning and parkland environment.

In 1738 the parkland did not stretch all the way to Pyrton Lane, but clearly extended south-eastwards well beyond the existing conservation area boundary making the current designation even more *ad hoc* and lacking in historical justification. It is also worth noting that the land on the other side of the road leading into the village from what is now the B.4009 is shown as parkland and not strip agricultural land on the 1738 map.

Furthermore, by the late 19th/early 20th century the OS map of Pyrton and Shirburn (Fig.4) clearly illustrates that the historical parkland of Pyrton Manor included the two main areas in which extension of the conservation zone is now sought; namely, the Pyrton Manor parkland to the south-east of the current conservation boundary and up to Pyrton Lane, together with the land on the other side of the road leading into the village from the B.4009, which is contiguous with both the Shirburn Castle Registered Park and the Pyrton Manor parkland.

This map shows these areas as shaded and continuous parkland and does not split Pyrton Manor's land into parkland and non parkland. This fact aligns with the arguments made in this Appraisal seeking extension of the conservation area over these very areas.

Moreover, some of the main groupings of historic trees (described above and in Fig.3) are clearly identified on this map and remain to this day, indicating their planned and purposeful planting more than a century ago.

5.4 Biodiversity Value

The mature parkland directly abutting the village, its trees, and various water features in the grounds of Pyrton Manor (notably the lake to its north-west, which is visible through the foliage on the western side of the churchyard) combine to form a series of diverse and important habitats for wildlife, including protected species such as bats and water voles.

The private gardens of the village's houses and cottages, together with the long-established hedgerows to the fields or parkland which adjoin them and the generally wild (rather than overly manicured) grass verges that border the village roads and tracks all also provide significant habitats for native wildlife.

It is also worth noting here the particular importance that Natural England attaches to the landscape setting of Pyrton which lies within their 'Chilterns Target Area'. Notably, their Statement SE01 records this Area as *'important for its significant contribution to the following Higher Level Stewardship objectives: Biodiversity, Historic*

Environment, Landscape and Access. This area forms a line of chalk hills extending north-east from the River Thames at Goring in Oxfordshire, across Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, to Hitchin in Herefordshire and is protected as The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The prominent steep scarp slope on the northern edge gives way to a gentle dip slope which is incised by numerous dry valleys and chalk streams to the south. Within this target area a diverse mix of nationally important areas for biodiversity occurs including extensive beech woodlands. Important areas of chalk downland on the northern slopes and valley sides and lowland meadows are also present. These areas support important populations of rare butterflies such as the Duke of Burgundy, with adjacent arable land supporting nationally important areas for rare arable plants and arable birds including stone curlew. The landscape is rich in archaeological remains including Bronze Age Barrows, Iron Age hill forts, ancient green lanes and parklands'.

5.5 Public Realm

As a general rule, street furniture is not common in rural areas and Pyrton is no exception. For instance, a bus service stops on request outside The Old Plough but there is no sign to mark this.

Paving of roads is all in simple tar macadam, almost entirely without kerbing, although

where it does exist, it is of good quality with granite setts used across the wide cross over to the bound gravel driveway leading to Pyrton Manor by the churchyard. Likewise, granite setts are used to the cross overs to the short gravel driveways of modern houses such as Mount View and Lothlorien and to the Village Hall car park, while granite kerbing is used to the road in the cul-de-sac development of Hall Close.

Church Lane and the bridleway section of The Oxfordshire Way at the northern end of the village are both roughly made tracks and, happily, gravel rather than hard-paved surfacing is the material adopted for the great majority of the village houses' driveways and parking areas.

Street signage has been kept to a minimum helping to reduce additional street clutter and there is hardly any public street lighting within the conservation area. Where it does exist (to the Village Hall car park) it has been mounted on a telegraph pole, which minimizes its visual impact.

There are several overhead wires attached to telegraph and electricity poles throughout the village, but where it is arguably most visually intrusive (at the 'open' northern end of the village- see Section 5.2) it has an old-fashioned and rustic character.

There is a K6 red telephone kiosk on the grass verge outside The Old Smithy and there are two timber benches for public use

in the conservation area, one situated in the very attractive churchyard, the other (rather less invitingly) on the grass verge facing a hedge close to the Village Hall.

5.6 Boundary Treatments

The varied form of the boundary treatments found in Pyrton has already been described above (see Section 5.2 in particular), meaning that it is necessary here only to highlight the most typical and/or significant in heritage terms.

The boundaries in the village range from natural 'soft' boundaries made up of well-established hedgerows formed of native species, good quality cast-iron railings atop low brick walls (notably to The White House and Shirburn Old Vicarage, this treatment to the boundary of the former giving way to a flint wall along Church Lane).

Flint walls are, of course, characteristic of Pyrton, as they are in most parts of the Chilterns and the vale beneath them, and several are found in the village, one of the most prominent being that on the north-eastern side of the road leading into the village from the B4009, which lies within the proposed extension to the conservation area.

A parkland-style metal fence flanks the wide driveway entrance to Pyrton Manor next to the churchyard, while post and rail fences

are found to a number of properties, including Home Farm, Garden Cottage and Court Cottage/Red Kites and to several of the modern houses at the northern 'open' end of the village, although hedged boundaries are of course also found here, such as at The Old Forge. The Old Plough has a traditional picket fence to its small roadside front garden.

The most significant man-made boundaries are shown on the map at Fig.1.

6.0 Character Analysis

6.1 Definition of character areas

Four sub-character areas have been identified within the Pyrton Conservation Area and its proposed extension as a result of this Appraisal (see Fig.2):

- Pyrton Manor
- Approach to the village from the south-east (NB- this area lies entirely within the main proposed

extension to the conservation area)

- Church and village core
- The 'open' northern end of the village

The character areas relate to the identification of visually and physically distinct parts of the conservation area, both as it currently exists and as it is proposed to be extended. As the first of these character areas straddles the 'boundary' between the already designated area and the proposed extensions to it, for clarity of discussion it is treated here as if it were already within the conservation area.

Before moving into this discussion it is however first worth noting the key influences that have shaped the distinctive character of Pyrton as a whole. These include the geography of the village, which is located within a mixture of flat agricultural land (currently mainly pasture) and the historic parkland associated with both Pyrton Manor and Shirburn Castle. Pyrton is an unplanned settlement that has evolved in a piecemeal fashion, the historical background to which is set out in some detail in Section 4.0 of this Appraisal.

A good number of 17th and 18th century properties still survive, built of local materials and in the traditional style. Lodge Cottage and Hampden Cottage, for example, are a pair of two estate cottages (Grade II listed) at the entrance to the driveway of Pyrton Manor. They are built of knapped flint

rubble with brick dressings and thatched roofs. Other listed properties built of similar materials include The Old Smithy and the Old Smithy Granary (early-mid 18th century), the Plough (late 17th century, former inn) and Home Farm Cottage (17th century). Other buildings of historical and architectural interest are Old Shirburn Vicarage (1788), the Court House (early 16th century timber framed farmhouse), Pond House (c.1760), West Lodge (early 19th century), The White House (the medieval building is encased in a largely 17th century house with 18th century additions).

Character Area 1: Pyrton Manor

This effectively comprises the buildings and extensive grounds of Pyrton Manor, a Grade II* building of significant architectural and historic interest. Much of the grounds are made up of historic parkland, which although not included on Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens remains clearly recognizable as such and is thus of historic as well as visual importance, not only to the setting of Pyrton Manor as a Grade II* listed building but also to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

It is true, as noted elsewhere in this Appraisal, that the grounds of Pyrton Manor (and the house itself) are hidden from public view, but the perception of a large ancient house set discreetly within its own private grounds (as it has been for many centuries) is nevertheless a significant contributor to

the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Character Area 2: Approach to the Village from the South-east

As noted above, this area lies entirely within the main proposed extension to the conservation area. The areas on either side of the road on the south-eastern approach to the village (making up one of the proposed extensions to the existing conservation area), although not directly visible from the road, very much form part of the green open space that is characteristic of so much of the village and contribute to its heritage significance.

They clearly do not form part of the surrounding open countryside but instead directly adjoin the historic parkland associated with Shirburn Castle on one side and with Pyrton Manor on the other.

In addition, the parcel of land proposed for inclusion on the north-eastern side of the road corresponds exactly with what is called Parsonage Close on the 1738 estate map. Interestingly, this map shows a series of long-vanished buildings, including what appears to be a roadside terrace of cottages on the part closest to the road.

Likewise, the area to the south-west of the road also includes an area of 'green' heritage value in the form of a set of well-preserved

medieval ridge and furrow earthworks in the field adjoining Pyrton Lane and which can be seen from there over a timber gate in the dense hedge boundary along the lane.

These earthworks clearly relate to the extensive open field strips marked on the 1738 estate map and which have otherwise gone, due in no small way to the extension of the parkland associated with both Shirburn Castle and Pyrton Manor from the late 18th century onwards, and by their ploughing up outside those areas.

The existing buildings within this area are not particularly significant either for their intrinsic architectural merit or for the contribution that they make to the character and appearance of the proposed conservation area.

On the south-eastern side of the road is Gate House, a pleasant if architecturally uninteresting house of the early 20th century, which is shown on the OS third edition map of 1921 on part of the site occupied by Field Farm at the time of the first edition map of 1879. Both Gate House and the modern L-shaped single-storey Gate House Cottage are well screened from public view by the dense hedge boundary along the road, although the cottage can be glimpsed at the end of its own gravelled tree-lined driveway off the drive leading to Pyrton Manor.

On the other side of the road is Old Garden Cottage, as its name implies an old building (it is marked on the 1878 map), the red and grey brick gable end wall of which can be seen alongside a nicely executed modern extension at the end of the short gravelled driveway to the house off the road.

Character Area 3: Church and Village Core

This character area is very much at the heart of the village, both historically and visually, and therefore also forms the nucleus of the conservation area.

Although the church itself is largely hidden from public view until one enters the churchyard, the perceptive visitor is immediately aware of its presence as he or she comes to this part of the village in the form of the attractive lych-gate set in the well-vegetated boundary to the churchyard.

There are good views from the road in this part of the conservation area of some of Pyrton's most important domestic buildings, The White House and Shirburn Old Vicarage, roughly at the point where Church Lane begins, running tantalisingly off the main road as an unmade trackway skirting the northern boundary of the churchyard.

Further up the main village road (Knightsbridge Lane) there is a clear view of Pond House and, filtered through vegetation,

of Court House on the other side of the road before the Village Hall is reached.

Character Area 4: The 'open' northern end

Although there is, of course, no absolutely clear dividing line between the village core and the northern 'open' end of the settlement, The Village Hall (originally built as an elementary school in 1895) marks the transition between them.

From this point onwards there is undoubtedly a more open feel than there is to the more enclosed village core to the south, this clear difference in character being even more evident on the OS maps of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Vegetation is sparser, the dwellings smaller and more humble with large open spaces formed by the paddocks on the eastern side of the road across which there are fine views towards the Chiltern Hills.

The majority of the village's modern houses are located here but, apart from the cul-de-sac development of Hall Close on the western side of the road and the large detached houses on this side of the road at the northern end of the village, is mainly included within the conservation area owing to the way in which they have been successfully integrated into the prevailing character of this part of the village.

At the far northern end of the village at the point where the Oxfordshire Way leaves Knightsbridge Lane to run past West Lodge on its way to Shirburn and beyond there is an untidy and apparently unplanned cluster of overhead wires supported on old wooden telegraph poles. As referred to in Section 5.2 of this Appraisal, this scene is reminiscent of the rural images depicted by John Piper and other war artists in the paintings and drawings they made as part of the 'Recording Britain' project during the Second World War, and is now curiously attractive.

6.2 Activity and prevailing or former uses and their influence on the plan form and buildings

Pyrton originated as a small core of buildings of medieval origin around the church and manor house (Pyrton Manor), which sits at a slight distance from the rest of the village, before developing during the course of the 18th and early 19th century into a predominantly linear settlement strung out along Knightsbridge Lane. Despite (or rather because) of its proximity to the Lower Icknield Way (the B4009), Pyrton was not historically on a major communication route. This remains the case today, giving the village the peace and tranquillity which is still so evident as part of its character and feel.

Historically, the main landowner in the village was the lord of Pyrton Manor,

although the influence of the family associated with Shirburn Castle is also a strong feature in the village.

This manifests itself through the presence of the historic parkland which abuts the village, Shirburn Old Vicarage and The Lodge (House), which although it lies in Shirburn parish (and Conservation Area) marks the approach to Pyrton at the junction of Pyrton Lane with the road leading towards the village from the B4009.

Pyrton Manor remains self-contained with its own small complex of buildings and once had importance in providing employment, a role it still provides to a smaller degree today. The rest of the village seems to have evolved from cottages and farmhouses, with a range of village support industries, including a public house, smithy and school, all of which have (in common with many villages of a similar size elsewhere) have now ceased to operate.

6.3 Prevalent qualities of the built form

Qualities of buildings

Pyrton is a small rural village and comprises a church, two former vicarages and a manor house, together with numerous other buildings dating from the medieval period to the present day. Predominantly, the buildings are from the latter part of this time frame, but earlier examples of good quality survive in the village. The conservation area

contains 14 statutorily listed buildings, while 12 buildings of local note have also been identified as a result of this Appraisal within the designated area.

Siting

The majority of buildings within Pyrton are distributed in the original core of the village and along its later linear extension along Knightsbridge Lane. There is also a less dense distribution of buildings along Church Lane. Most buildings are sited parallel to the main streets either directly on the frontage or set behind brick or flint walls or behind railings or hedges. The parish church is situated off Church Lane with its former vicarage (The White House) and Old Shirburn Vicarage located close by. Pyrton Manor sits in extensive grounds (much of it historic parkland) away from the rest of the village.

Size types and storey height

The tallest buildings are those of the highest status Pyrton Manor and St. Mary's Church. The remainder of the village houses are generally two storeys in height, although some such as Pond House and The Old Forge are of two storeys with dormer- or gable-lit attics, while outbuildings are single or one and a half storeys high. The majority of buildings are small, modest cottages and there is also a good proportion of middling sized dwellings. Unsurprisingly, the larger detached buildings tend to be set within

larger plots, including Shirburn Old Vicarage, The White House, Court House and Gate House.

Historic buildings within the village tend to have narrow spans and gabled roofs, some of which have been extended with rear wings. There are some 18th- and 19-century examples where shallower pitches with slate have been used with full hipped and gabled fronts.

Building style, origins and plan form

Several buildings in Pyrton are vernacular cottages of very simple and understated form. There are also a few examples of symmetrical Georgian houses, like Pond House, while the much earlier The White House was re-fronted in c.1800 and The Old Forge is a good example of a Victorian former farmhouse, also with a symmetrical frontage. Several of the larger listed cottages like The Old Smithy, the former Plough and Home Farm Cottage have been altered and extended piecemeal over the centuries, with much of their special character and appearance deriving from their vernacular origins and plan-form together with the local palette of materials in which they are built.

Apart from The Old Forge, the main Victorian building of note is the imposing, brick-built former school of 1895 (now the Village Hall) with its Dutch gable facing the road.

The earlier buildings in the village have generally developed more organically than the more recent ones and tend as a result to have more irregular plan forms.

The White House is probably one of the earliest timber-framed buildings in the village (dating to the late 15th century), although none of its timber framing is now visible externally. The Court House also retains some 16th-century timber framing. Other examples of (later) exposed timber-framed construction include Home Farm Cottage and parts of the former Plough.

6.4 Buildings of local interest ('positive buildings')

Some buildings are not statutorily listed but nevertheless add considerably to the special historic character of the conservation area, particularly those that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area as it is perceived from the public realm. These buildings, which are referred to in this appraisal as 'positive' buildings, all meet the criteria for local listing as outlined in the Historic England document: *Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7* (May 2016) and as such are identified on the map at Fig.1 and are listed below (from north to south):

- The Old Forge (both the house of that name and the disused forge to its north-west)
- The K6 telephone kiosk on the west side of Knightsbridge Lane
- The outbuilding on the roadside in the grounds of The Old Smithy
- Flintstones, Christmas Cottage & Hedgerows
- Pyrton Village Hall
- Court Cottage/Red Kites
- Hubbards Cottage
- Barn on Church Lane to the south-west of The White House
- Lych-gate to St Mary's Church

NB: Some of the buildings referred to above may also be regarded by SODC as 'curtilage listed'.

6.5 Local details

- Walls, railings and gates: Red brick walls and piers with stone capping (with ball finials to Shirburn Old Vicarage); half round brick coping to brick or flint walls; decorative wrought iron gates; walls usually at chest height or higher.
- Windows and doors: Wood mullioned and transomed windows, Stone mullioned windows or traceried windows with decorative hood moulds (Pyrton Manor and St. Mary's Church); glazing bar sash windows (The White House, Pyrton Manor, Shirburn Old Vicarage), leaded windows

(The Court House, West Lodge), flush-fitting cottage casements (Brook Cottage, Home Farm Cottage); plank doors on cottages and ancillary entrances, four & six panelled doors to polite buildings.

- Masonry treatments: Dentil cornicing at eaves, brick arch window heads, chimneys in red brick with terracotta pots, diagonal set chimney stacks, stone dressings and quoining; clunch with brick dressings (The Old Smithy, Garden Cottage and The Old Forge- house and forge building); date stone (The Village Hall); typical orange red South Oxfordshire brick mostly laid in Flemish bond, extensive use of glazed blue-grey headers (e.g. The Court House, Court Cottage/Red Kites).

- Roof treatments: mainly clay peg tiles (some with crested ridge tiles- e.g. The Village Hall); Welsh slate (The Old Forge); straw thatch (Hampden Cottage/Lodge Cottage, The Old Smithy, the former Plough public house).

6.6 Prevalent local building materials

As discussed in Section 6.3 above, the earliest surviving buildings in the village, including The White House and The Court House, are of timber-framed construction but in both these cases this is not visible externally. Other examples of (later) exposed timber-framed construction include

Home Farm Cottage and parts of the former Plough.

The majority of buildings in Pyrton are however constructed of warm red brick with clay peg tiled roofs, with Welsh slate roofs used to later additions or remodelling work. Several houses are constructed of the local clunch stone (both coursed and uncoursed) with red brick dressings (The Old Smithy, Garden Cottage and in the earlier element of the largely Victorian The Old Forge). Flint is also widely used, not only in St Mary's Church (where it is combined with limestone ashlar dressings) but also in smaller vernacular cottages like the Grade II listed Lodge Cottage/Hampden Cottage and the unlisted Hubbards Cottage and Hedgerows, Christmas Cottage and Flintstones, where red brick dressings are used. Flint is also used in boundary walls, again with red brick dressings.

Existing or converted traditional agricultural buildings are also generally timber-framed with brick or rubble plinths and weatherboarding which is either left untreated or tarred black (the former barn belonging to The White House on Church Lane and the smaller structures at New Farm, where the roof to the weatherboarded structure has been replaced with corrugated iron sheeting. As noted earlier, Hampden Cottage/Lodge Cottage, The Old Smithy and the former Plough public house retain their thatched roofs.

6.7 Issues and Opportunities for Preservation and Enhancement

In general, Pyrton is a well-kept village and most properties and their boundaries are in a good state of repair. This appraisal of Pyrton Conservation Area has so far identified features which contribute to the special architectural and historic interest of the village. Opportunities exist within the settlement to enhance existing built development and enhance open spaces and landscape features which contribute to the architectural and historic interest of the area.

There are some specific areas within the Conservation Area that would benefit from some preservation or enhancement in order to reinforce the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These include repairs to the boundary wall within the proposed extension to the conservation area on the north-east side of the road approaching the village from the B4009 and reinstatement of the missing sections where necessary. The decorative iron railings on their low plinth walls to the boundary of The White House would also benefit from repair and repainting.

On a strategic level it is worth noting that in the *South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment* (adopted in July 2003), Pyrton falls within 'Landscape Character Area 5 (LCA5): The Eastern Vale Fringes'.

With regard to this area, the LCA states that: '*Key landscape enhancement priorities should be to...maintain and restore typical landscape features of existing parklands at Shirburn Castle and Pyrton Manor*'. It also goes on to note that '*the high quality parkland landscapes within this area are particularly sensitive to change and least able to accommodate new development.*'

Opportunities:

- Keep boundary walls in a good state of repair, as they contribute significantly to the overall character and appearance of the conservation area. Repairs should be in matching brick or flint as appropriate, stone and lime mortar with appropriate original capping, rather than a mortar capping where possible;
- Any use of the medieval ridge and furrow in the fields belonging to The Gate House (within the proposed conservation area extension) should be carefully managed to avoid erosion of this historic landscape feature;
- Continued management of St Mary's Churchyard as a 'living sanctuary' with dedicated areas of wild flowers and wild life refuge areas;

- Consideration be given to the drawing up of a Conservation Management Plan between the owner of Pyrton Manor and SODC for the historic parkland associated with the house, including appropriate management of the extensive belt of tree planting carried out by the previous owner of the property along Pyrton Lane and against the park's south-western boundary.

guidance and Local Plan policies should all be referred to when bringing forward sites for development within and in the setting of the conservation area.

Issues

- Although generally a quiet and tranquil village with little through traffic there are periods of the day when the road from the B4009, Pyrton Lane and Knightsbridge Lane are used as a 'rat run'. This is a situation that requires careful monitoring;

- Potential for the erosion of front gardens and removal of boundaries for car parking, including to the modern houses in the village.

The designation of a Conservation Area is intended to manage change not prevent it. Where policy permits development, it is important that new housing preserves or enhances the character of the area. As such, proposals should be of high quality, responding to the site context and ensuring that a holistic approach is taken to the site including landscaping, boundary treatments, together with enhancing the contribution of open space and enclosure. This document, SODC's Design Guide (March 2015), national

7.0 Boundary Changes

The existing conservation area boundary is tightly drawn around the village core and has not been amended since the initial designation (as part of the work associated with the long superseded Rural Areas Local Plan) in December 1984. As part of a comprehensive review of the conservation area boundary undertaken as part of this Appraisal in May 2017, it is proposed to include the area on the approach to the village from the south-east (see Fig.2 and described above in Section 6.0), as it is considered to meet the criteria for inclusion as an *'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*.

This extension would involve extending existing boundary to include the south-eastern approach to the village from the junction with Pyrton Lane. This would include the flint wall on the north-east side of the road and the land on the south-west side, which contains some well-preserved medieval ridge and furrow earthworks associated with the open field strips shown on the 1738 Estate map.

For similar reasons it is proposed that those parts of the historic parkland associated with Pyrton Manor, which are not currently included in the conservation area, are brought within the designated area.

Finally, it is proposed to correct the mapping anomaly where the existing boundary line of the conservation area is drawn (for no apparently logical reason) through the middle of Lothlorien and across part of the rear gardens of the adjoining properties to the south-Flintstones, Christmas Cottage & Hedgerows - simply by incorporating all of their gardens, and all of the back garden of Lothlorien, within the conservation area.

Inclusion within the designated boundary results in some changes to permitted development rights. A summary of these changes is included in Section 2.0 of this document, with further details available on the Council's website.

The extent of the proposed boundary changes can be seen on the maps at Figs.1-2 and in the aerial photograph on the front cover of this document.

8.0 Management & Enhancement of the Conservation Area

The Council can initiate improvements and control development in the conservation area. However the success of any conservation area designation and its future management depends upon the co-operation and enthusiasm of stakeholders including residents, statutory undertakers and business owners to work with the council in achieving common aims and objectives. These are listed below:

General

The Council will aim to:

- Promote awareness of the special value of the conservation area and encourage promotion of the special character and appearance through works of preservation or enhancement;
- Encourage statutory undertakers to retain, repair and re-instate historic street surfaces, grass verges and banks, street furniture, signage and lighting; reduce street clutter including inappropriate 'wirescape' and rationalise street furniture where necessary;
- Encourage high quality, energy efficient design which aims to fit

in with the established 'grain' of the conservation area and be sympathetic to it. Heritage Appraisals and Impact Assessments along with Design and Access Statements will assist this process;

- Encourage the regular maintenance and repair of buildings and walls in the conservation area with appropriate traditional materials and finishes including the removal of inappropriate and harmful cement renders and plasters;
- Seek to reinforce the special quality of historic buildings through the use of traditional materials and construction techniques, including the use of lime mortars, plasters and renders, combed wheat reed or long straw thatch and painted timber windows and doors;
- Encourage regular tree/hedge management with re-planting where appropriate;
- Proposals for development should enhance or better reveal the significance of the conservation area, including responding to views both in, out and around the conservation area and in its wider setting;

- Encourage the retention of front gardens rather than their change to vehicular parking areas. There are several modern houses within the conservation area where the front gardens have been largely lost to areas for car parking. It should however be acknowledged that this minimizes the need for on-street car parking.

conservation area) the view looking towards the village from the south-east and the views towards open countryside from Pyrton Lane (see Fig.1).

- Achieve the appropriate repair and reinstatement of the roadside flint wall between The Lodge House and Old Shirburn Vicarage and the repair and repainting of the iron railings to The White House.

Specific

Stakeholders should jointly aim to:

- Retain and repair historic street surfaces and preserve grassy banks and verges throughout the village;
- Achieve effective tree management, especially of the trees flanking the driveway entrance to Pyrton Manor, trees in the churchyard, trees along Church Lane, and other prominent trees visible from the public realm (see Fig.1);
- Preserve or enhance the open views at the northern end of village; views looking towards Home Farm from Knightsbridge Lane and across the paddocks towards the Chiltern Hills to the east; the views around the village core towards the churchyard, the driveway entrance to Pyrton Manor, Shirburn Old Vicarage and The White House; and (within the proposed extension to the

9.0 Monitoring and Future Revision

As recommended by Historic England in its 2016 document, 'Advice Note 1: *Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas*', it is essential to monitor the conservation area and to review the published character appraisal on a regular basis.

Changes to the conservation area may occur through the implementation of schemes approved by the Council, such as new development or changes to the public realm, and through both permitted and unauthorised alteration. General deterioration or changes to the condition of the area's physical fabric may also occur over time.

A dated photographic record of the conservation area has been created by the Parish Council as part of the preparation of this Character Appraisal. The main aim of this is to provide a baseline for measuring change in the appearance of the conservation area and for monitoring the physical condition of its buildings. The record can also be used as an aid to any enforcement action by the District Council should unauthorised alterations be carried out.

In order to take enforcement action on unlisted buildings the unauthorised alteration must be shown to have been carried out within the last four years, so for

these purposes it is important to ensure that the photographic record is updated on at least a regular four-year cycle.

In the case of listed buildings too, where there is no time limit on when enforcement action can be taken (provided, of course, that the unauthorised works were undertaken after listing took place), regular updating of the photographic record is equally important, not just as a record of change but as possible evidence in enforcement or prosecution cases.

Where appropriate, local community awareness of the conservation area may be maintained by engaging their assistance in the updating of the photographic record. This might be achieved through the use of volunteers from local historical or amenity societies, or even by groups of schoolchildren or students. Information should be stored on electronic 'pro formas' which show dated 'then and now' photographs to illustrate where change has occurred. These could be added to every four years with each phase of review.

Historic England also recommends that a 'virtuous circle' of monitoring, review and action should be established in order to maintain a sustainable equilibrium. Ideally, a five-year cycle of review should be established. With the aid of an updated photographic record, a review of the

conservation area by the District Council in five years' time (2022) to establish what has changed (and why) since this character appraisal was produced will enable it to be updated if necessary.

Importantly, such a review will also allow an assessment of the effectiveness of the District Council's current conservation area policies and a measurement of how successful the Council has been in implementing them during that time period. The reasons for success or otherwise can then be appraised and policies modified or specific actions proposed as appropriate.

Such review may also lead to further alterations to the conservation area boundary, either to bring new areas into the conservation area, or to remove areas from it that no longer contribute to or reinforce its character and appearance.

The review may either result in a thorough overhaul and updating of the existing Character Appraisal and production of a new version, or could take the form of an addendum to the existing document, focusing specifically on changes that have occurred over the relevant five-year period.

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Legislation

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Planning (Listed Buildings and
Conservation Areas) Act 1990

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11.0 Acknowledgements

To be completed

Appendix 1:

Fig. 1: Character Appraisal Map (also showing proposed extension to CA)

Fig. 2: Sub-Areas Map- including to proposed extension to CA

Fig. 3: List of Trees in the Grounds of Pyrton Manor (not included in the
existing CA)

Fig.4 Late 19th-/early 20th-century OS map of Pyrton and Shirburn



Pyrton

-  Existing boundary
-  Proposed extension
-  Listed building
-  Positive building
-  Important man-made boundaries
-  Significant trees/hedgerows (visible from the public realm)
-  Important open spaces
-  Important views (in/out/around)

0 90 180 270 360 Meters

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Pyrton Manor Parkland Notable Trees

(Included in Manor Parkland; but NOT currently within Conservation Zone)

A. Pyrton Lane Boundary

The full length of the Manor's Parkland boundary with Pyrton Lane has a continuous and planned row of mature oaks, sycamores and pines with young sycamores and field maples, as follows:

34 mature oaks at heights of 20-30m

2 mature pines 20-30 m

2 mature sycamores 20-30m

The great majority of these trees are more than 100 years old and were specifically planted to protect the manor Parkland from the Lane. These trees appear of similar age to the oaks planted further along the Lane and on the boundary of Shirburn Parkland.

At the southern corner of the Manor Parkland but still on Pyrton Lane there is a clump of five semi-mature pines (c.50 years old) with a mix of sycamores and oaks. In addition, a hedge of holm oak has been planted in the last ten years as evergreen additional screening to the parkland from Pyrton Lane.

B. Parkland planned tree clumps:

Mature Trees – more than 100 years old:

3 mature oaks at height of 20m

16 semi-mature pines at height of 25m

6 mature horse chestnuts at height of 25m

6 mixed clumps of mature beech & sycamore at height of 30m

12 semi mature pines with mix of hornbeam and oak at heights of 20-30m

2 individual mature holm oaks at height of 20m

14 mixed clumps of mature beech and oak at height of 25m

7 semi-mature (50 years' old) pines at height of 25m.

Young Trees of note:

6 young elms; 2 hornbeams at heights of 3-4m

4 young elms; 1 sweet chestnut; 1 hornbeam; 2 beech trees at height of 3m

2 young cedars at height of 5 m.

C. Arboretum – collection of young specimen trees

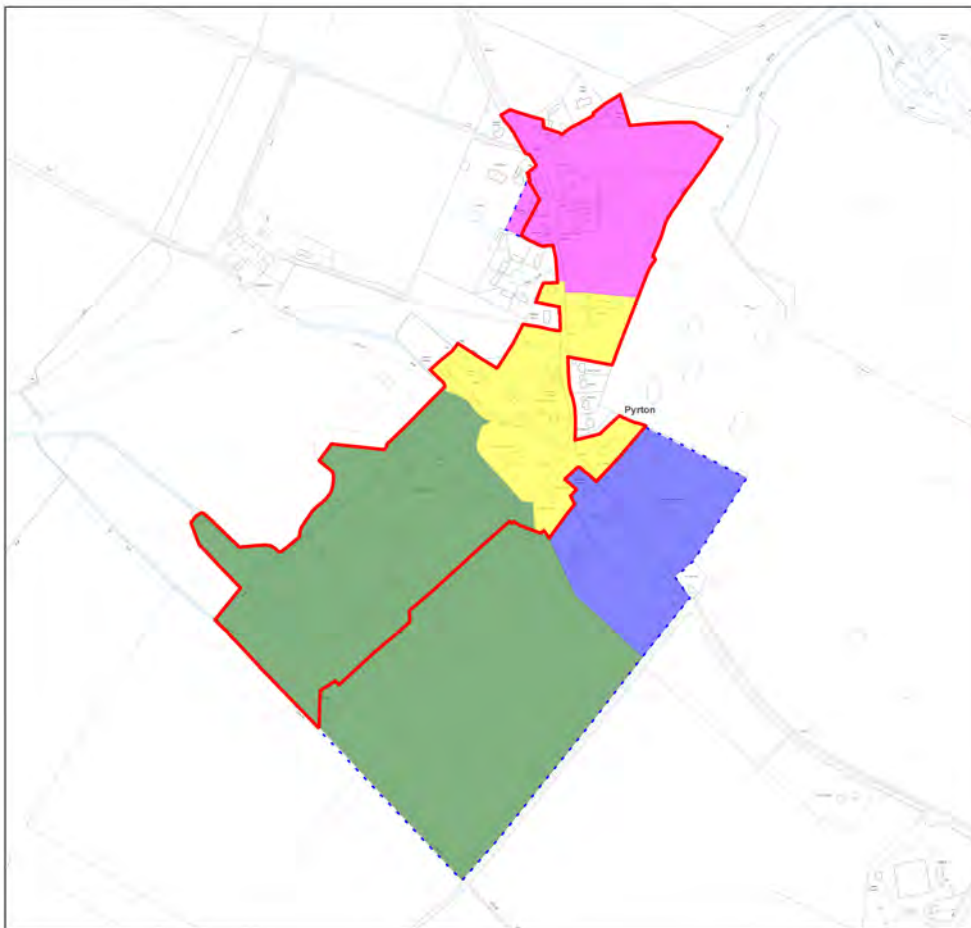
The arboretum has a carefully curated collection of young specimen trees, of ages between 5-15 years:

8 limes (at height of 8-10 meters) in an avenue; 26 pines; 10 birch; 12 hawthorn; 8 pin oaks; 7 hornbeam; 7 cherry; 6 ash; 5 beech; 4 purple beech; 4 apricot; 3 walnut;
2 alder; 2 amelanchier; 2 sweet chestnut; 2 sorbus; 1 oak.

D. Additional plantings of approx 5000 trees of circa 10 years old

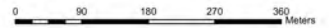
An extensive shelter belt of c.5000 trees and bushes has been planted during the past five to ten years. This wide belt of trees lines the parkland to the north-east, south and south-west and consists of the following mixed natives:

Hazel, dogwood, hawthorn, blackthorn, crab apple, spindle, pine, yew, box, ash, field maple and holly.



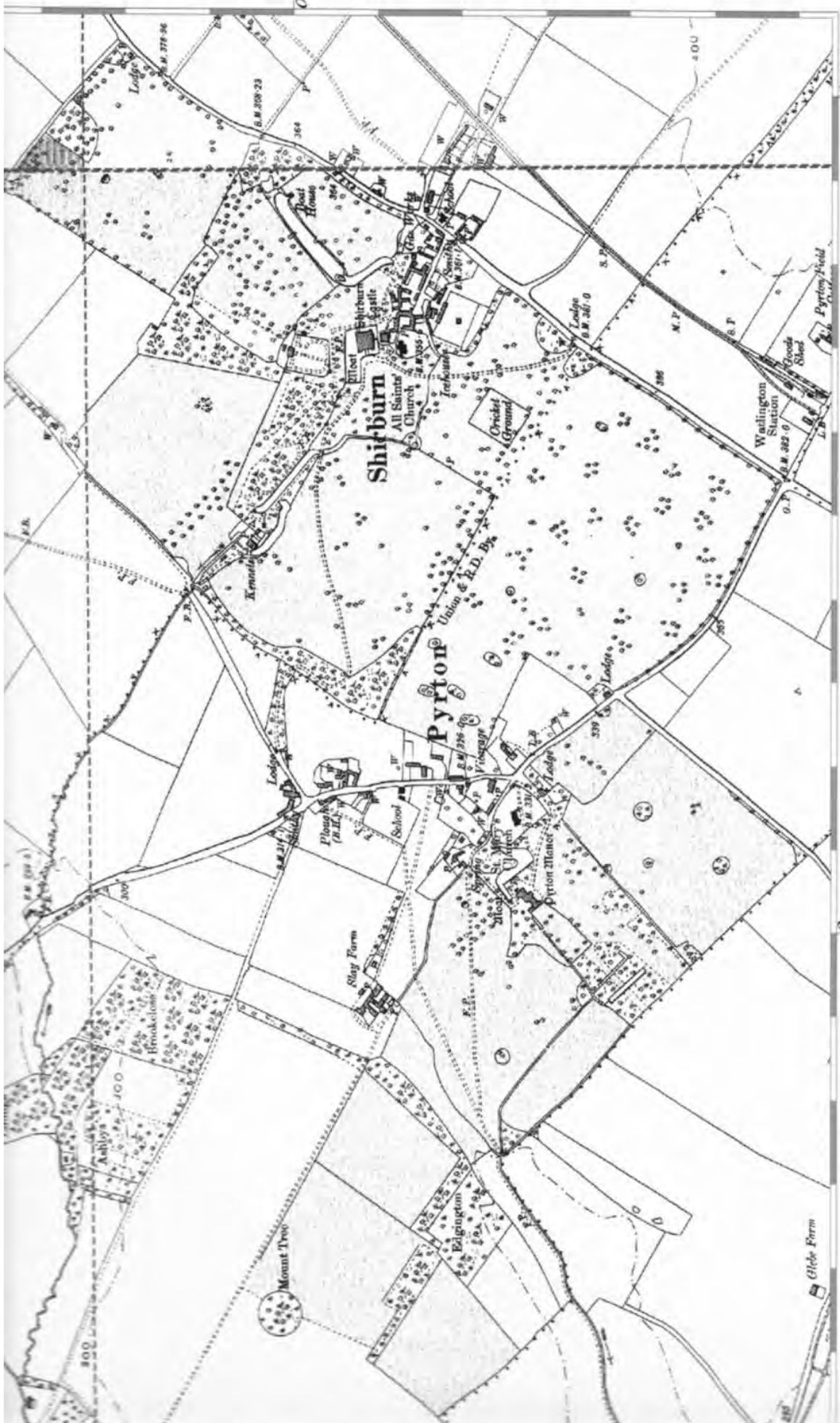
Pyrton

- Existing boundary
- - - Proposed extension
- Pyrton Manor
- Approach to the village from the SE
- Church & Village Core
- The 'open' northern end



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Fig 4



Pyrtom, 1897 - 1919