

Orchard Road Conservation Area Appraisal 2009



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
1.0 Introduction	5
2.0 Planning Policy Framework	6
3.0 Definition of Special Interest	7
4.0 Assessment of Special Interest	9
5.0 Historical Development and Archaeology	10
6.0 Spatial Analysis	19
7.0 Character Analysis	22
8.0 Community Involvement	34
9.0 Management Proposals	35
10.0 Bibliography	36
Acknowledgements	37
<i>Appendices</i>	38
Appendix 1. Extract from 'The London Gazette'	38

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Orchard Road Conservation Area Map	8
Figure 2. Engraving of the Six Hills in 1724	10
Figure 3. 1766 Map of Stevenage Borough	11
Figure 4. The Orchard Road area in the early 19 th century	12
Figure 5. The railway station on Julian's Road in the early 20 th century	13
Figure 6. 1881 O.S Map of Orchard Road Conservation Area	13
Figure 7. 1898 O.S Map of Orchard Road Conservation Area	14
Figure 8. 1923 O.S Map of Orchard Road Conservation Area	14
Figure 9. The Town Hall on Orchard Road awaiting demolition in 1974	15
Figure 10. View along Julian's Road in 1903	16
Figure 11. View along Julian's Road taken from a similar position 2008	16
Figure 12. The Railway Inn, Julian's Road c. 1900	17
Figure 13. The Railway Inn (now The Mallard) 2008	17

Figure 14. Housing along Orchard Road in the early 20 th century	18
Figure 15. Similar view of the housing along Orchard Road 2008	18
Figure 16. Open spaces within the Orchard Road Conservation Area	19
Figure 17. Landmark buildings within the Orchard Road Conservation Area	20
Figure 18. Views of the Orchard Road Conservation Area	22
Figure 19. Orchard Road Conservation Area, character analysis map	23
Figure 20. Examples of 'industrial' buildings	24
Figure 21. Buildings of importance within the Orchard Rd Conservation Area	27
Figure 22. Two plaques, 21-23 Orchard Road	28
Figure 23. Character lamp posts within the Orchard Road Conservation Area	28
Figure 24. Chimney pots within the Orchard Road Conservation Area	29
Figure 25. Red brick gate piers and walls Julian's and Rd and Orchard Rd	29
Figure 26. Examples of traditional window styles	30
Figure 27. Original mid 19 th century red brick boundary wall in poor condition	31
Figure 28. Tall dominant street lamp columns along Julian's Road	31
Figure 29. Loss of front gardens on Julian's Road	32
Figure 30. Housing within Julian's Close	33

Front cover: Top left, View along Essex Road; Top right, The Mallard Public House
Bottom left, 8 Orchard Road Bottom Right, view along Julian's Road

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This appraisal was conducted to define the special interest of Orchard Road Conservation Area in order to help preserve and enhance its character, and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. The Orchard Road Conservation Area was designated on 19th December 2007 because of its local history related to the railway, its fine examples of Victorian architecture and its retained 19th century character.

Orchard Road Conservation Area is in a good to fair condition and has a number of attributes and features which have a positive impact upon the character of the area. These relate to its relatively unaltered Victorian and Edwardian buildings, spatial layout, green spaces, early land boundaries, hedgerows and landmark buildings that provide the area with local distinctiveness.

There are, however, some negative issues including the loss of traditional architectural features; vacant buildings, development pressures and parking issues. Most of these issues could be better controlled through the use of local generic guidance and the provision of an Article 4(2) Direction to reduce permitted development rights.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 This appraisal of Orchard Road Conservation Area was conducted by BEAMS Ltd, the trading company of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust, in conjunction with Stevenage Borough Council between August 2008 and March 2009.

1.2 Orchard Road Conservation Area was formally designated on 19th December 2007 because of its retained character and local history. Its designation was proposed in the document 'A Review of Stevenage Conservation Areas' conducted by BEAMS Ltd in 2005.

Objectives

1.3 The main objectives of this conservation area appraisal are to:

- Define the special interest of the Orchard Road Conservation Area by analysing its historical development, uses, landscape setting, views and spaces, and through assessment of the architectural and historic qualities of its buildings.
- Identify neutral areas, negative features and spaces, and the problems, pressures and capacity for change.

Survey

1.4 A full photographic record of the Orchard Road Conservation Area was made in line with recommendations by English Heritage (2006) to provide 'a baseline for measuring change and monitoring alterations and physical condition'. This will form part of the project archive for use and reference by Stevenage Borough Council. The omission in this report of any particular feature within the conservation area does not imply that it is of no significance or value.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 A Conservation Area is defined under Chapter 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) as *an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*. Each local planning authority is responsible for the designation of such conservation areas under the Act. Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to ‘... formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement...’ of these conservation areas.
- 2.2 Section 4.3 of Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) recommends that local authorities should ‘...periodically review existing conservation areas and their boundaries...’ against established consistent local standards. Assessment of such conservation areas should then form the basis for local plan policies and development control decisions that aim to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.
- 2.3 As a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, local plans will be replaced by Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Unlike local plans, the new LDF will be a series of documents. In combination with the regional spatial strategy (RSS) for the East of England the LDF will set out the statutory development and planning framework for Stevenage.
- 2.4 Some policies contained within the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998 and the Stevenage District Plan (2004) will continue to exist and will have statutory force until new development plan policies are in place. For further information please refer to the Planning Policy section of the Stevenage Borough Council website.
- 2.5 This appraisal utilised the guidance set by English Heritage, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, published in February 2006, which offers advice to those undertaking conservation area appraisals.

3.0 DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- 3.1 Every conservation area has a distinctive character which is derived from its topography, historic development, current uses, and features such as streets, hedges, archaeological monuments, buildings and place names.
- 3.2 Orchard Road was proposed as a site for designation as a new conservation area because of its local history and retained character. The boundary includes part of Julian's Road up to the modern railway bridge, all of Orchard Road and a section of Essex Road (Fig. 1).
- 3.3 The area comprises late 19th century and some early 20th century buildings including housing, a public house, shops, warehouses and a series of workshops associated with the development of the first railway station and the ESA factory. A boundary wall from an earlier property, Orchard Court, survives. Although demolished in the 1960s, the house was built by John Bailey-Denton in the 19th century who resided there. He was also responsible for building a number of the houses along Orchard Road. Edward Gordon Craig (1872 - 1966), actor, scene designer and producer was born at No. 23, Orchard Road; The Gordon Craig Theatre built in the New Town centre is named after him. Today the area benefits from its relatively unaltered buildings, early land boundaries, hedges, established trees and character lamp posts.
- 3.4 The principal features of the Orchard Road Conservation Area are:
- The large Victorian and Edwardian detached and semi-detached dwellings on large plots
 - The two landmark public houses on Julian's Road
 - The former railway depot buildings
 - The retained features including lamp posts, brick boundary walls, timber sash windows, finials and barge boards
 - The views along Orchard Road, Essex Road and Julian's Road

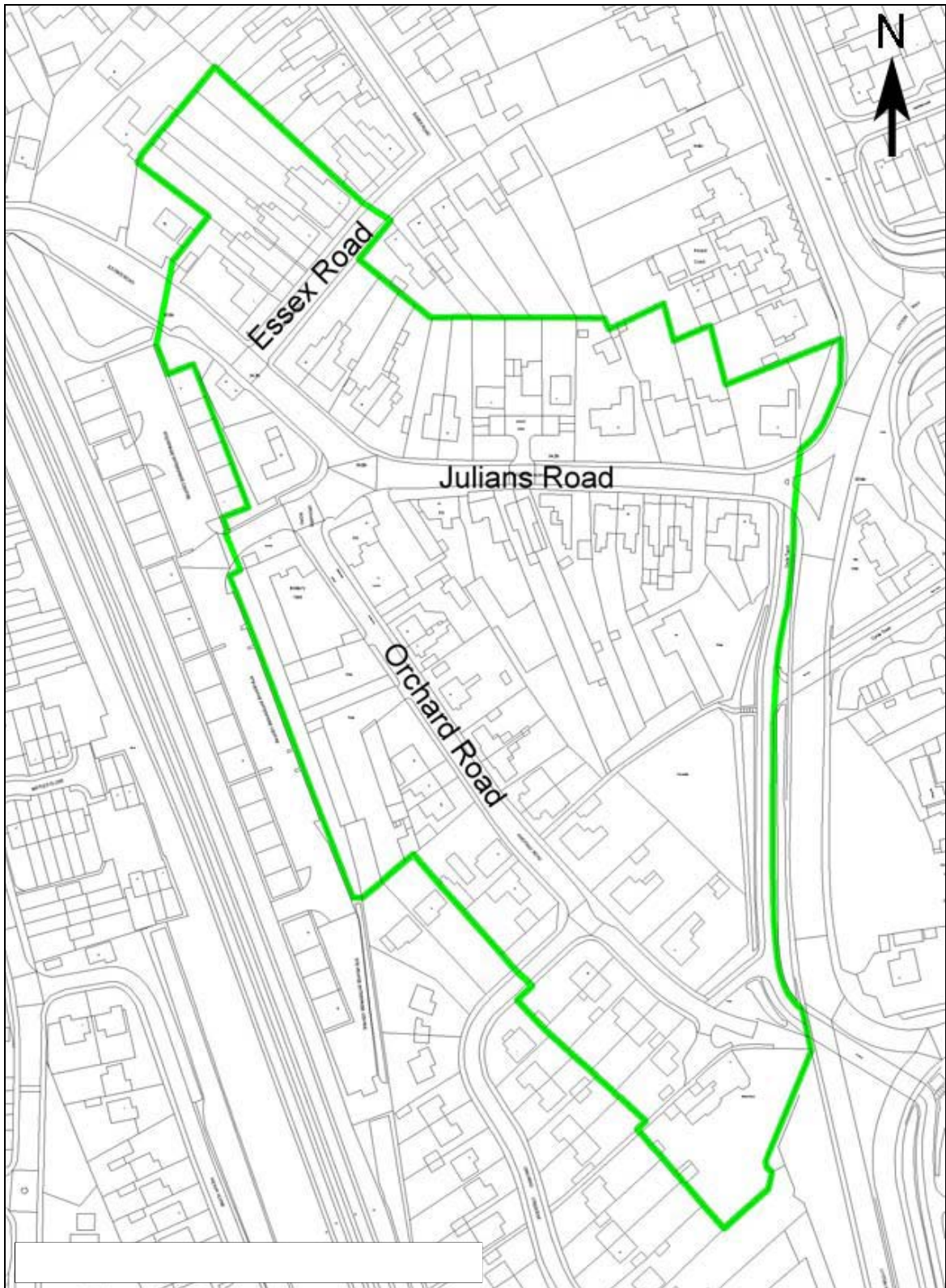


Figure 1. Orchard Road Conservation Area map
(Green line denotes conservation area boundary)

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Location & setting

- 4.1 Orchard Road Conservation Area is located just to the north-west of Stevenage Old Town. Stevenage is a large town and borough in Hertfordshire. It is located between Welwyn Garden City (to the south) and Letchworth (to the north) and lies just to the east of the A1 (M). The total population of the borough is approximately 79,400 with the large area of New Town development to the south of Stevenage being the most densely populated. The Old Town High Street and the New Town shopping centre form the retail centres of Stevenage along with retail parks and local shopping centres.

Topography

- 4.2 Orchard Road Conservation Area lies on a flat area of land, Julian's Road rises slightly to the north east towards the bridge over the railway line (to the north west of the conservation area).

Geology

- 4.3 The underlying geology of the area is chalk but this lies well beneath gravel and clay-with-flints and surface well-drained loamy soils.

General character and plan form

- 4.4 The conservation area is focussed around three roads; Orchard Road, Julian's Road and Essex Road and the Victorian and Edwardian housing along each road. Julian's Road branches off Lytton Way and curves round to the north-west; it leads to Fisher's Green, following the line of a historic lane. Essex Road branches off to the north-east from Julian's Road and Orchard Road branches off to the south-east following the line of an old field boundary. Orchard Road and Essex Road did not exist until the area was developed in the mid 19th century. The conservation area is divided from the Old Town High Street by Lytton Way. There are several large trees and houses are set back from the road behind brick walls and hedge boundaries, mostly with front and rear gardens. The railway sheds and large red brick buildings to the rear of 33 Julian's Road are a reminder of the 19th century industries in this area.

Landscape setting

- 4.5 The landscape setting of the Orchard Road Conservation Area, whilst once completely agricultural, is now completely urban, being mostly residential with some commercial and light industrial use. To the east lies the Lytton Way bypass which separates Orchard Road from the Old Town, and to the west lies the railway and beyond that the A1 (M).

5.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

The origins and development of the area

The Orchard Road Conservation Area is located to the north-west of Stevenage Old Town; it was an area of farmland until the mid 19th century when the railway line, a railway station and housing was constructed.

Early development

- 5.1 Stevenage and its surrounding landscape have been occupied since the prehistoric period (10,000BC – 100BC). Stone axes found buried in the Old Town, Fishers Green and Shephall suggest use of the open landscape by ‘hunter gatherers’ during the early period. However, the first signs of settlement date to the Bronze Age and Iron Age and have been identified from a number of pottery finds, burial sites and domestic pits. Occupation of the Borough increased into the Late Iron Age and Roman period (100BC to 450AD). Towards the end of the Roman period, the landscape probably comprised a series of small farmsteads with burial mounds and cemeteries. The most prominent monuments in Stevenage, Six Hills barrows, are thought to date to the Roman period and lie alongside London Road at the Six Hills Way roundabout. London Road linked the Hertfordshire Roman towns of Verulamium and Baldock, and later was used to form part of the medieval Great North Road between London and Edinburgh. The barrows are one of three scheduled monuments in the Borough (SM 27904; Fig. 2).

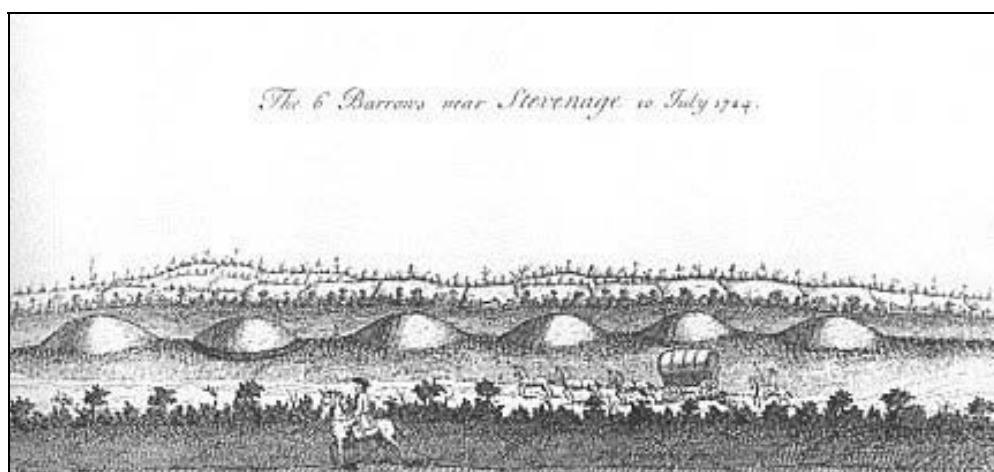


Figure 2. Engraving of the Six Hills in 1724 (Ashby 2002)

- 5.2 The first historical record of the manor of Stevenage is found in the Domesday Book dating to 1086, it was then known as *Sticenaeece* which means a place ‘at the strong oak’. The estate had been given to the newly founded Abbey of Westminster by King Edward in 1062.

1066 - 1500

- 5.3 During the medieval period, the manor of Stevenage appeared to be very wealthy, especially in land, and was granted a market in 1281. The Great North Road ran through the Borough, west of St Nicholas Church, and bringing trade and economic prosperity to Stevenage. A new settlement grew to the south of St Nicholas along the sides of the road, burgage plots were laid, and shops and inns constructed – some even being re-built during the medieval period.

16th – 18th century

- 5.4 After the dissolution of the monasteries, land in Stevenage belonging to Westminster Abbey was given to the Bishop of London. The church leased the land until the 17th century when the Lyttons of Knebworth purchased the manor and much of the land in the Borough.
- 5.5 Settlement grew along the Great North Road in the Old Town and it remained an important stop for the coaching trade to and from London which had increased during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries (Fig. 3). It was also well known for its cattle market and being a stopping-off point for cattle herders to and from London due to its semi-rural location and the presence of ponds for watering.

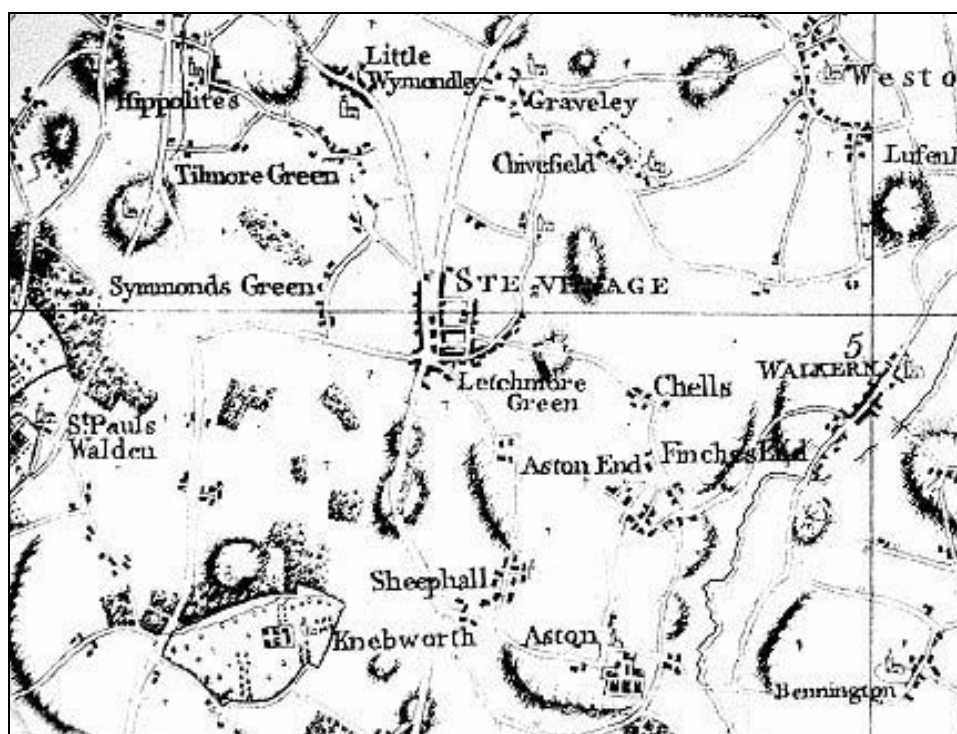


Figure 3. 1766 Map of Stevenage Borough (Dury and Andrews)

19th century

- 5.6 During the 19th century and into the early 20th century Stevenage, like many other towns began to change and expand. This was largely due to the arrival of the railway in 1850, which in turn promoted new industry and an increase in population. It also meant the rapid development of the Orchard Road area; at the start of the 19th century the Orchard Road area was still an area of farmland in close proximity to the Old Town High Street (Fig. 4).

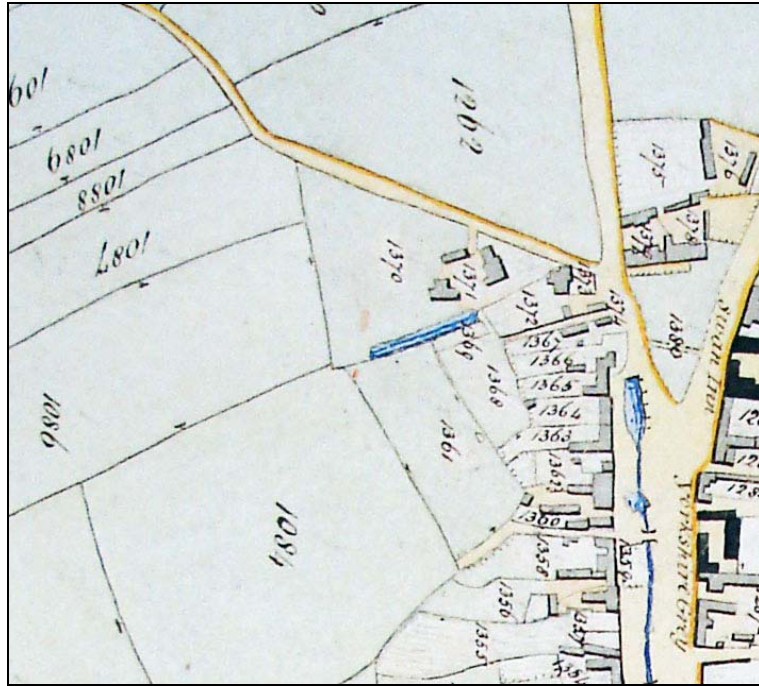


Figure 4. The Orchard Road area in the early 19th century (1834 Tithe Map)

- 5.7 The railway line ran in a north to south direction just to the west of Orchard Road, the railway station was located at the west end of Julian's Road on land belonging to Julian's Farm and it opened in 1850 (Fig. 5). A new street (New Road, now Orchard Road), was built from the High Street through Brock's Orchard and across fields to the Railway Station. An extract from the Hertford Mercury dated November 23rd 1850 reads:

'It is intended to make a new road advantageously designed for the building of small villas and several parties have taken land with an intention of building forewith. The sites being high, dry and healthy and the fare by railway from London limited to three shillings and sixpence second class, it appears reasonable that such a speculation should answer. The new road will enter the main street of Stevenage opposite Walkern Lane.'

- 5.8 The opening of the railway had an adverse effect on Stevenage as a coaching stop and cattle market; trade in these areas fell and a couple of inns went out of business but others sprang up in close proximity to the railway. By 1851 the Rising Sun and The Railway Inn had opened to cater for the new business brought in by the railway.
- 5.9 New Road was known as Railway Street by 1861 (Fig. 5). The road gained a reputation as a street of ill-repute and its buildings were largely demolished and rebuilt by John Bailey Denton of Orchard Court, who then renamed it Orchard Road. John Bailey Denton built Orchard House, 5 Orchard Road in 1854 on some of the land he had acquired in 1851. In 1872, a large Public Hall was built alongside the Police Station on Orchard Road, followed by the town's first bank, an agent for Barclay's in 1873 (until they moved in 1896), and later the Council Offices. Orchard Road became something of an administrative centre of the town as well as the location of a number of comfortable villas from which wealthier residents could commute to London. The houses built along Orchard Road were, in the main, large and select. One property was advertised as comprising: entrance hall, breakfast, dining and drawing rooms, two staircases, eight bedrooms, store

room, detached two-stall stable, coach-house with coachman's room over, wood house, plenty of good water and garden. The police station in Orchard Road had moved to Stanmore Road by 1916. The Town Hall rapidly became the accepted place for all manner of events, including talks and protests about the development of the New Town, but later, ironically it was demolished to make way for some of this new development.



Figure 5. The railway station on Julian's Road in the early 20th century (Ashby, 2004)

5.10 Julian's Road already existed as a lane leading to Fisher's Green but it was widened and improved in the late 19th century when a number of large villas were built. In 1882 Julian's Road had its road surface drained by new drains, also three cess pools and accompanying gratings were built. By 1888 both Julian's Road and Orchard Road had street watering. Gas lighting was introduced into Orchard Road in 1896 and Julian's Road in 1900. A station master's house (39 Julian's Road) was constructed in the late 19th century at the west end of Julian's Road opposite the Railway Inn.

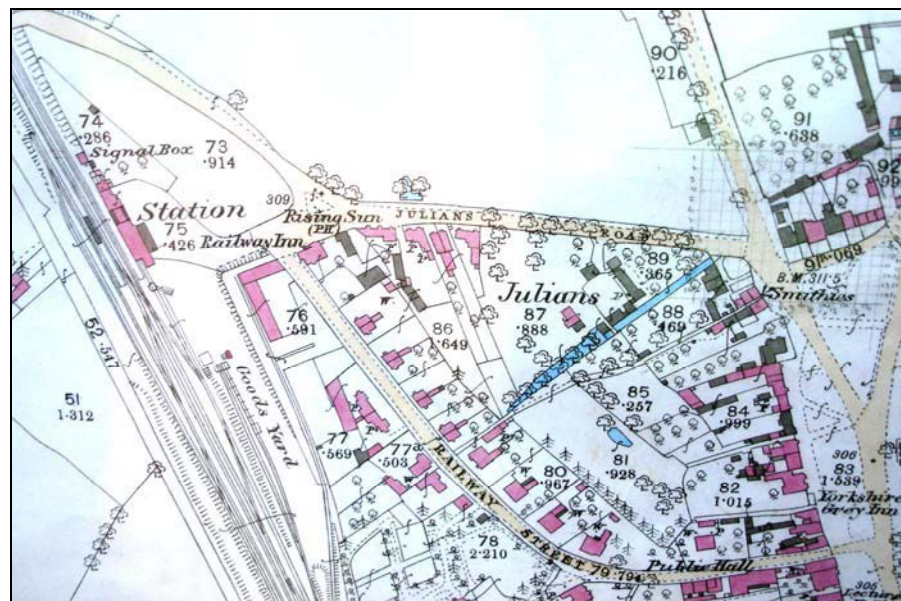


Figure 6. Extract from the 1881 Ordnance Survey map of the Orchard Road Conservation Area

- 5.11 Essex Road had been laid out by the late 19th century and although un-named one pair of houses had been built on its north side (Fig. 7). Further houses were built along the north side of Essex Road in the early part of the 20th century and plots along Julian's Road were also developed (Fig. 8).



Figure 7. Extract from the 1898 Ordnance Survey map of the Orchard Road area



Figure 8. Extract from the 1923 Ordnance Survey map of the Orchard Road area

- 5.12 In the 1930's two pairs of semi-detached houses were built on land between Orchard Lodge and Orchard House; the land had probably formed part of the Orchard House estate until then.
- 5.13 The biggest change to the Orchard Road area occurred in the 1970s when the gyratory system and bypass for the Old Town was created. The south-eastern end of Orchard Road was cut through by Lytton Way; this involved the demolition of the 19th century Town Hall which ironically had seen much public demonstration against the development of Stevenage 'New Town' and the changes which would be brought about (Fig. 9). The remaining eastern section of Orchard Road was renamed James Way. An old timber-framed property (The Old Cottage, a listed building) at the east end of Julian's Road was divided from the rest of Julian's Road by the newly constructed Lytton Way. The Old Cottage is now sited to the north-west corner of the Bowling Green and on the east side of Lytton Way (within Stevenage Old Town Conservation Area). The houses within Julian's Close were built in the 1970s on a piece of land that had remained entirely undeveloped until this time. What now remains is a small corner of Victorian expansion and development now divided from the Old Town High Street area by Lytton Way. The railway station on Julian's Road closed down in 1973 and was subsequently demolished; it was replaced by the existing Stevenage railway station to the south.



Figure 9. The Town Hall on Orchard Road awaiting demolition in 1974 (Ashby, 2004)

The archaeological significance and potential of the area

- 5.14 There are no Historic Environment Records for sites / structures within the conservation area. However finds of prehistoric stone tools have been made in the surrounding area; a Neolithic stone adze (HER 0422) was found in Essex Road, just to the north of the conservation area. There is potential for similar finds and for finds relating to the post-medieval use of the land prior to the existing development.



Figure 10. View along Julian's Road in 1903 (Magdin, 2001)



Figure 11. View along Julian's Road taken from a similar position, 2008



Figure 12. The Railway Inn, Julian's Road c.1900 (Ashby 2004)



Figure 13. The Railway Inn (now The Mallard), 2008



Figure 14. Housing along Orchard Road in the early 20th century (Magdin, 2001)



Figure 15. Similar view of the housing along Orchard Road, 2008

6.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

6.1 The spatial layout of the Orchard Road Conservation Area is based on the layout of residential streets. Some, like Julian's Road, follow the line of an older trackway, and others, like Orchard Road itself follow the line of historic field boundaries. They are all inter-connected and lead into one another.

Open spaces

6.2 There is only one area of publicly accessible open space within the conservation area, a small park on the eastern edge of the conservation area; it has shrubs, fruit trees and a bench for seating. The park was at one time part of a field which had remained undeveloped between Orchard Road / Julian's Road and the Old Town High Street but it was later divided by Lytton Way. It is accessed by a long-established footpath (which follows the line of an earlier field boundary) from Orchard Road and continues under the Lytton Way underpass to join with the Old Town High Street. Other areas of open space are the front and rear gardens of many of the properties and some quite large areas to the rear of the industrial units along Julian's Road; however these are not publicly accessible.



(a)



(b)

Figure 16. Open spaces within the Orchard Road conservation Area; park on the east side of the conservation area (a); land to rear of industrial buildings on Julian's Road (b)

Landmark buildings

6.4 Within the conservation area are a few landmark buildings dating to different periods. These are visually important structures that make a statement, hold an important position or can be seen at a distance (Fig. 17). These landmark buildings are:

- 2 Julian's Road – on the prominent corner position of Lytton Way and Julian's Road
- The Rising Sun Public House
- The Mallard Public House
- Number 39 Julian's Road, on the corner of Julian's Road and Orchard Road.
- Stevenage Hire Services – a double-fronted shop on Julian's Road with a distinctive painted timber shopfront



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)

Figure 17. Landmark buildings within Orchard Road Conservation Area; The Mallard Public House (a), 2 Julian's Road (b), Stevenage Hire Services (c), Rising Sun Public House (d), 39 Julian's Road (e)

Focal Point

- 6.5 There is no clearly established focal point within the conservation area. However both of the public houses are clearly recognisable within the local area. The junction where Orchard Road and Julian's Road meets is wide and open; 39 Julian's Road, which was once the stationmaster's house stands out in a prominent position at the junction of Julian's Road and Orchard Road (Fig. 17e).

Key views and vistas

- 6.6 The key views and vistas in the Orchard Road Conservation Area are those along the quiet residential streets, looking north and south along Orchard Road and east along Essex Road (Fig. 18). The views into and around the small park area are also important to the character of this area. Glimpses of the 19th century buildings to the rear of 33 Julian's Road are gained from Julian's Road, Orchard Road and the small park by Lytton Way.

7.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Character zones

- 7.1 The Conservation Area of Orchard Road is one distinct character zone of mid-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century housing, with some mid-nineteenth century industrial buildings related to the railway located on the west side of Orchard Road and to the rear of 33 Julian's Road. The majority of the houses are in residential use although a few along Julian's Road are partly commercial, containing offices at ground floor level.



Figure 18. Views of the Orchard Road Conservation Area

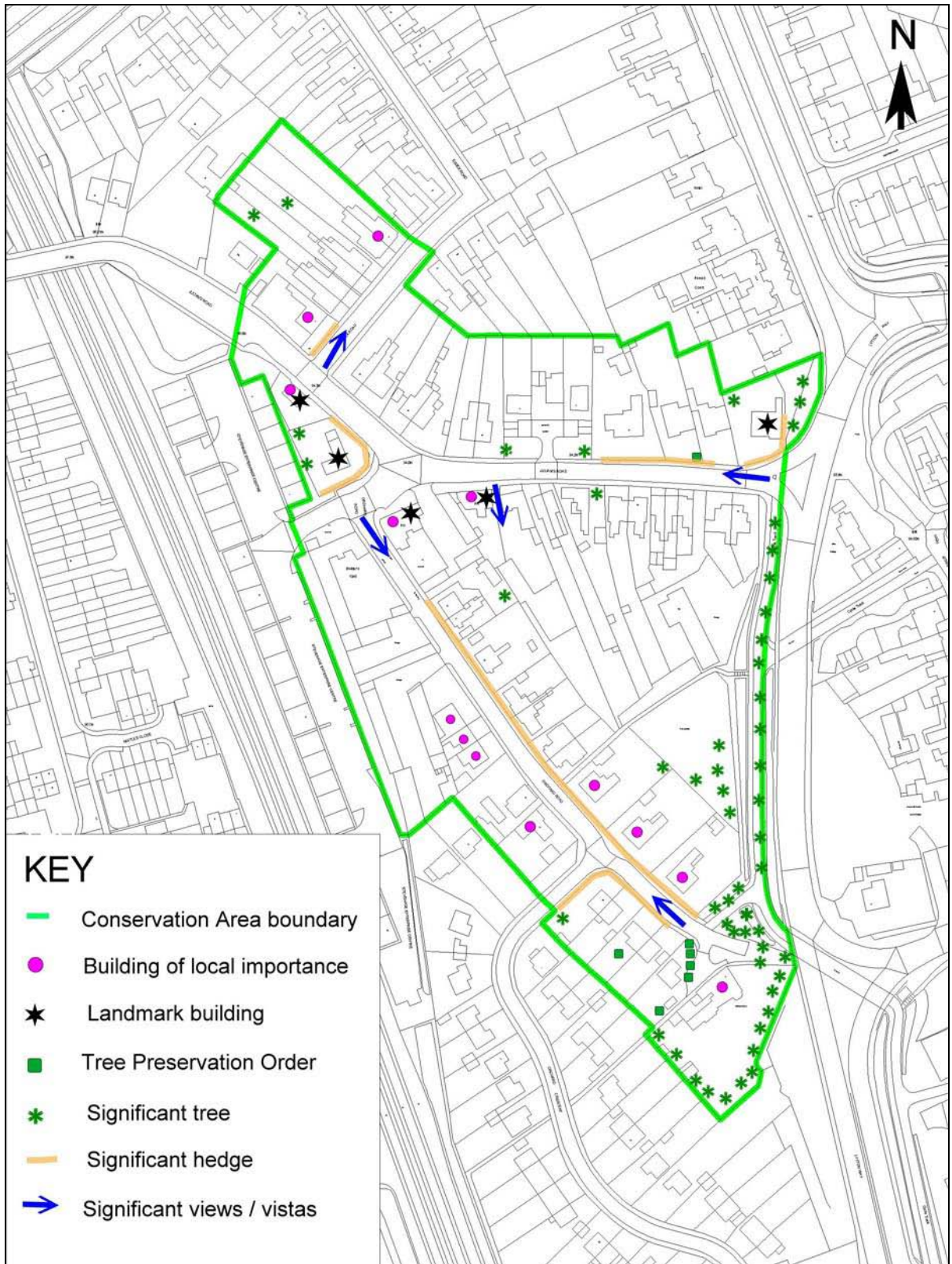


Figure 19. Orchard Road Conservation Area, character analysis map

The architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the area

- 7.2 An impressively large number of properties within the conservation area are of high architectural quality, whether they are terraced, semi-detached, or larger, and more imposing detached houses. This is directly related to their location next to the old railway station where large houses were built for purchase by wealthy individuals who could commute into London from Stevenage. The mid to late 19th century Victorian architectural style in which they were built and the high quality decorative use of materials, design and build is of importance. The grandest houses were built along Orchard Road; many were built by John Bailey-Denton.
- 7.3 There are a number of buildings within the conservation area which were built as sheds / workshops for the Stevenage railway station, as such they are of historic interest and are evidence of the industry that led to the development of the Orchard Road area (Fig. 20 b, c & d). The single storey sheds are mostly on the west side of Orchard Road; they are plain in style, red brick with gabled slate roofs. Many of these buildings have been altered since they were built. However their basic form remains. The 'Conamar Building Services' building fronting on to the west side of Orchard Road is a good example of a late nineteenth century building that has been greatly altered or rebuilt, thereby losing its original built form and appearance. There are some substantial late 19th century warehouse buildings to the rear of 33 Julian's Road, these buildings can be glimpsed from several parts of the conservation area (Fig. 20a).



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Figure 20. Examples of the 'industrial' buildings within the Orchard Road Conservation Area; late 19th century buildings to rear of 33 Julian's Road (a), late 19th century brick building on Orchard Road (b), workshops on Orchard Road (c and d)

7.4 There are no statutory listed buildings within Orchard Road Conservation Area; however a large number of the buildings could be considered of importance to the conservation area, these are indicated on the character analysis map forming part of this report (Fig. 19). Some buildings are described as a group, rather than individually; where buildings are included within a joint description they are indicated separately on the character analysis map.

- *Orchard House, 5 Orchard Road*
A large two storey house constructed of red brick with a gabled slate roof. Timber sash windows. John Bailey Denton built Orchard House in 1854 on some land that he had acquired in 1851.
- *6 Orchard Road*
A two-storey roughcast rendered brick house with a hipped slate roof. Red and gault brick chimney stacks with 19th century decorative chimney pots. Three 6-over-6 timber sash windows to first floor, semi-circular arch to central window. Central ground floor doorway with arched head and fanlight. Two 6-over-6 sash windows to ground floor. Projecting keystones over windows. String course. Nos. 6, 8 and 10 Orchard Road form a group.
- *8 Orchard Road*
Two-storey brick house built of red brick with burnt headers, gault brick to window and door jambs and a gault brick string course. Hipped slate roof, red and gault brick chimney stacks. Two 6-over-6 timber sash windows to ground and first floor with a central arched 6-over-6 sash window above the central doorway. Painted keystones. Nos. 6, 8 and 10 Orchard Road form a group.
- *10 Orchard Road*
Two-storey brick house, rendered. Hipped slate roof with two red brick chimney stacks. Early twentieth century multi-pane timber sash windows. Two early twentieth century projecting bay windows at ground floor level either side of central doorway with arched head. Nos. 6, 8 and 10 Orchard Road form a group.
- *Orchard Lodge, 17 Orchard Road*
Sited on the corner of Orchard Road and Orchard Crescent. Brick built house, painted white with black window heads; with a gabled slate roof. Timber sash windows. Mid-nineteenth century. Its name and location suggests it had connections with Orchard House, 5 Orchard Road. Retains its mid 19th century red brick front boundary wall.
- *21 – 23 Orchard Road*
Two-storey terrace of 3 houses. Red brick with blue brick bands at window head and sill level. Gabled slate roof. Casement windows; no. 22 has retained its original timber casements, nos. 21 and 23 have uPVC casements. Date plaque (1864) and initials (JBD) on front gables. Slate canopy porches supported on timber brackets.
- *The Mallard Public House*
Mid-nineteenth century public house (built when the railway was constructed – formerly The Railway Inn). Red brick, painted at first floor level. Decorative brick banding at eaves and brick string course. Gabled slate roof. 6-over-6

timber sash windows. Early twentieth century front extension at ground floor level with timber fenestration.

- *The Rising Sun Public House*
Mid-nineteenth century public house (built when the railway was constructed). Painted brick with applied timber decoration at first floor level. Gabled slate roof with yellow brick end stack and red chimney pots. Two-storey projecting bay to front elevation with two large multi-pane timber sash bay windows to ground and first floor. Three 6-over-6 timber sash windows to first floor, the central window is arch headed. Projecting porch with tiled roof above continues along to bay window.
- *The Manse, 1 Essex Road*
A two-storey, gault brick property with a gabled slate roof and two gault brick stacks. Three 2-over-2 timber sash windows to the first floor with chamfered stone lintels. Two projecting stone bays windows to ground floor with crenellated tops and chamfered window surrounds. The bay windows contain three timber sashes, a central 2-over- 2 sash with a 1-over-1 sash each side. Projecting brick porch with a crenellated stone top.
- *6 & 7 Essex Road*
A pair of large semi-detached late nineteenth century houses. Two-storey, red brick with slate roof. Two gabled projecting bays to front elevation with mock-Tudor timber work / render. Large 8-over-1 timber sash windows to first floor. 12-over-1 sash windows to ground floor (one uPVC replacement window). All windows have chamfered brick jambs and chamfered stone lintels. Both front doors have Venetian glass lights to the side and above. The porches are of elaborate carved stonework.
- *Stevenage Hire Services*
An early twentieth century single storey red brick building with a hipped clay tile roof and two gables to the front elevation. This double fronted shop (it was originally two separate shops) has a moulded timber shopfront.

7.5 There are a number of houses / buildings within the conservation area which have been considerably altered / extended; despite this they still retain some original features such as their timber barge boards, finials, porches, associated brick walls and other 19th century features; all of which are vital to the character of the area.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)

Figure 21. A selection of 'buildings of importance' to the Orchard Road Conservation Area; 6, 8 and 10 Orchard Road (a, b and c), 17 Orchard Road (d), 21 – 23 Orchard Road (e), The Mallard Public House (f), 1 Essex Road (g), 6 and 7 Essex Road (h)

Local Details

- 7.6 John Bailey Denton of Orchard Court, a wealthy local landowner and well known civil engineer / surveyor was responsible for building of many of the houses along Orchard Road. His initials (JBD) and the date (1864) appear on two plaques on the front gables of 21 – 23 Orchard Road (Fig. 22).



Figure 22. Two plaques bearing the initials of James Bailey Denton (JBD) and the date of construction (1864) on the terrace of 21 – 23 Orchard Road

- 7.7 An attractive feature of the conservation area is the retention of old lamp posts, some of which may even date to the late 19th or early 20th centuries (Figure 23). A number of brick walls have also been retained, the section of curving mid 19th century brick wall by numbers 5 and 7 Orchard Road is a good example (Fig. 25b).



Figure 23. Character lamp posts within the Orchard Road Conservation Area

Prevalent local & traditional building materials

7.8

Most of the houses within the Orchard Road Conservation Area are two storeys and constructed of red brick with hipped or gabled slate roofs.

Walls: Brick, red brick is the most common building material, occasionally with yellow brick dressings. A couple of the houses are constructed using yellow / gault brick or have been rendered / painted at a later date.

Roofs: Slate, some clay tile.

Windows: Timber sashes (various styles) / timber casements (Fig. 26). uPVC replacement windows, both sash and casement style.

Doors: Timber, uPVC.

Chimney stacks: Brick, to match the brick colour of the building. A number of chimney pots also survive.

Walls: Low red brick walls are a common feature within the conservation area. Some red brick gate piers with decorative terracotta / brick caps also survive.



Figure 24. Chimney stacks and chimney pots within the Orchard Road Conservation Area



Figure 25. Red brick walls and associated red brick gate piers with decorative terracotta caps on Julian's Road (a), curved red brick wall to north of 5 Orchard Road (b)



Figure 26. Some examples of the original 19th and early 20th century timber window styles within the Orchard Road Conservation Area

The Contribution made by Green Spaces

7.9

The conservation area is residential and lacks public open space although there is a small park on the east side of the conservation area. The park is used mainly as a route from the Old Town High Street to the Orchard Road area, it is not particularly well maintained and its location close to the busy Lytton Way is not ideal however it is an important area of open space in this locality. Many of the houses have front and rear gardens and these provide a leafy and attractive setting.

There are two Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the Orchard Road Conservation Area where particular trees are afforded specific protection;

- TPO72 Orchard Road and Orchard Crescent
- TPO80 Hitchin Road / Julian's Road / Essex Road

Negative factors

- 7.10 The Orchard Road Conservation area is regarded as a generally well-kept neighbourhood and many of the houses have retained their original features; however the following issues should be highlighted.

Loss of traditional architectural features

- 7.11 A number of original timber sash and casements windows have been replaced with uPVC alternatives; this is particularly noticeable on Julian's Road which is a busy route and where some of the properties have a business use. Some of the 19th century slate roofs have been replaced with clay tile instead of slate which does not reflect the 19th century tradition of house building; this is particularly noticeable on semi-detached or terraced properties. A number of original 19th century red brick boundary walls have been retained but many have been replaced or removed. An original mid 19th century wall outside 21-23 Orchard Road is in a poor condition (Fig. 27a).



(a)



(b)

Figure 27. Brick boundary walls in poor condition within the conservation area

Street-lighting

- 7.12 The conservation area does contain a number of old lamp-posts (along Orchard Road) and it is important these are retained. The lamp-posts along Julian's Road are very tall, taller than the surrounding buildings; therefore they appear very prominent and detract from the 19th century character of the area (Fig. 28).



Figure 28. Tall dominant street lamp columns along Julian's Road

Loss of front gardens

- 7.13 A few of the houses have paved over their front gardens to turn them into drives, this is a particular problem along Julian's Road. The loss of front gardens and hedges / brick boundary walls has the potential to affect the 19th century characteristics of the area (Fig. 29).



Figure 29. Loss of front gardens on Julian's Road

- 7.14 The single storey sheds on the west side of Orchard Road are not in great condition but they are in small scale industrial use and are an important reminder of the original history and development of the area. Any substantial alterations to these buildings, such as the re-fronting of the Conamar Building Services property should be discouraged.
- 7.15 The disused warehouse buildings to the rear of 33 Julian's Road are a negative factor due to their current poor condition and broken windows. However they have much potential to be reused and rejuvenated, perhaps as offices or storage facilities.
- 7.16 To the west of Orchard Road is The Enterprise Centre, a small modern industrial estate. It has little impact on the conservation area apart from the large sign outside the entrance to the centre and on the corner of Orchard Road which is quite visually intrusive.
- 7.17 Parking is an issue along Orchard Road. Most of the houses were built before car access was needed. Parking for employment uses along the west side of Orchard Road during the day can also cause congestion. Julian's Road is used as a through route for local traffic between Lytton Way and Fishers Green Road.
- 7.18 The pavements within the conservation area have tracks of re-laid tarmac along their lengths following cable / pipe laying works.

Neutral Areas

- 7.19 The 1970's housing within Julian's Close is set back from the main road but the layout and style of the housing does not relate to the rest of the properties along the north side of Julian's Road and the conservation area as a whole. Despite this the houses are subservient to the general street scene (Fig. 30).



Figure 30. Housing within Julian's Close

- 7.20 Lincoln's Tyre Service is sited to the rear of nos. 15 and 17 Julian's Road. The single storey red brick buildings are set back so they are not noticeable from Julian's Road however they are visible from within the small area of park adjacent to Lytton Way. Due to their low pitched roof and simple gabled form they do not detract greatly from the character of the area.

8.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

8.1 A new conservation area centred round Orchard Road was suggested as part of the 2005 Stevenage Conservation Areas Review by BEAMS Ltd due to the retained 19th century character of the area. Stevenage Borough Council carried out public consultation between 9th July and 17th August 2007 regarding this proposed new conservation area. Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and comprised:

- Letter and A4 booklets sent to each household (approx. 1,100) within existing or proposed conservation areas
- Letters and A4 booklets sent to neighbouring councils, regional and national agencies and other key stakeholders
- An advert in the Comet newspaper for the start of the consultation period
- A similar advert in the Comet towards the end of the consultation period
- Posters in the reception area at Daneshill House
- Publicity on the council's website with the ability to view proposals and provide feedback.

8.2 There was strong support for designating the Orchard Road Conservation Area. 55% of respondents agreed with the creation of Orchard Road as a conservation area, only 3% objected. The general opinion received was that the area has maintained its character and should be protected by conservation area status.

9.0 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Unlisted buildings / buildings of local importance:

- 9.1 The appraisal has noted that the architectural integrity of some unlisted properties within the conservation area has already been compromised by the use of modern materials such as uPVC windows, modern roofing materials or the removal of chimney stacks. The Council may wish to consider the introduction of Article 4(2) Directions to restrict permitted development. Article 4(2) Directions would be a useful tool in strengthening controls over the unsympathetic alteration of unlisted buildings which cumulatively have an adverse affect on the character of the conservation area. This could be developed further in future detailed Management Plans.

New development:

- 9.2 Back-land development within the conservation area should be discouraged. The 19th century character of the area comprising houses with large rear gardens could be compromised. The railway workshop buildings on the west side of Orchard Road should preferably be retained and re-used if this site were ever proposed for re-development.
- 9.3 Design briefs should be produced for any significant development sites. There are limited opportunities for development within the Conservation Area due to the relatively tight suburban form.

General principles should be applied regarding any new development:

- Proposals to develop / redevelop sites or convert buildings to new uses will be required to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area.
- The design, position, scale, massing and materials of new development will be expected to respect the existing character of the conservation area.

Enhancement of historic buildings:

- 9.4 The Council could consider establishing a grants scheme to encourage sympathetic repairs to Victorian / Edwardian properties within the conservation area (including for example, roofing in appropriate slates / tiles, repair of brick boundary walls, timber windows rather than uPVC etc).
- 9.5 The provision of some information regarding the relatively new status of Orchard Road as a conservation area and what it means for local residents would be beneficial. This could be in the form of a leaflet and contain good examples of the local Victorian and Edwardian architectural style and design advice regarding appropriate repairs and building alterations. It could encourage property owners to undertake sympathetic repairs / alterations thereby enhancing the special character of the conservation area.
- 9.6 The replacement of the tall street lamps on Julian's Road with shorter street lamps of a more appropriate style should be considered, perhaps as part of a wider enhancement scheme.
- 9.7 The improved maintenance of the small public park adjacent to Lytton Way would enhance this part of the conservation area.

Public Houses:

- 9.8 The conservation area contains two public houses built in the mid 19th century when the railway came to Stevenage; these are an important part of the local areas history and their retention should be encouraged.
- 9.9 Some older style street lamps have been retained along Orchard Road, enhancing its character. Julian's Road would benefit from the replacement of its tall, modern lampposts with shorter posts with a more traditional appearance as the existing do not enhance the character of the conservation area. The pavements within the conservation area have tracks of re-laid tarmac along their lengths following cable / pipe laying works; it would be beneficial to the character of the area if the pavements were paved. With regard to any street management schemes affecting the character and appearance of the conservation area; the Council should consult a conservation specialist and liaise with relevant departments ie Highways Authority.

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APPENDIX 1: Extract from 'The London Gazette' regarding the designation of Orchard Road Conservation Area

Stevenage Borough Council
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS)
ACT 1990
AMENDMENTS TO 3 CONSERVATION AREAS AND
DESIGNATION OF 2 NEW CONSERVATION AREAS
Notice is hereby given that at its meeting on 19 December 2007
Stevenage Borough Council resolved to:

Amend conservation area boundaries at:	Rectory Lane & St Nicholas Shephall Green Symonds Green
Designate new conservation areas at:	Broadwater (Marymead) Orchard Road

Copies of the appraisals and plans defining the conservation areas can
be obtained from the Stevenage Borough Council website at:
www.stevenage.gov.uk/planningandregeneration or, the Planning Policy
Team at Stevenage Borough Council, Daneshill House, Danestrete,
Stevenage, SG1 1HN. (438075)

Extract from The London Gazette, 25 January 2008