



*Basingstoke  
and Deane*

# Conservation Area Appraisal **Ashmansworth**



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## Introduction

The Ashmansworth Conservation Area was designated in 1989 by Hampshire County Council in association with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, in recognition of the special architectural and historic interest of the village.

Having designated the Conservation Area, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that those elements that form its particular character or appearance should be preserved or enhanced, especially when considering planning applications.

It is therefore necessary to define and analyse those qualities or elements that contribute to, or detract from, the special interest of the area and to assess how they combine to justify its designation as a Conservation Area. Such factors can include:

- its historic development,
- the contribution of individual or groups of buildings to the streetscape, the spaces that surround them and;
- the relationship of the built environment with the natural landscape.

They can also include the less tangible senses and experiences, such as noise or smells, which can nevertheless play a key part in forming the distinctive character of an area.

The Appraisal takes the form of written text and an Appraisal plan. In both respects every effort has been made to include or analyse those elements key to the special character of the area. Where buildings, structures or features have not been specifically highlighted it does not necessarily follow that they are of no visual or historic value to the Conservation Area. The document is intended to be an overall framework and guide within which decisions can be made on a site-specific basis.

This Appraisal of the Ashmansworth Conservation Area follows its review in 2003 by the Borough Council and explains what its designation means for those who live and work in the area.

This document was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane on 19th February 2004 and complements the policies of the Borough Local Plan (review).

It has been subject to consultation with Councillors, the Parish Council and local amenity groups. A full list of consultees, copies of their responses, and details of the Council's consideration of the issues raised during the consultation period are available for inspection, by appointment, at the Civic Offices, during normal office hours.

## Location and Population

Ashmansworth is located approximately 23 miles west of Basingstoke, at the edge of the Borough. The village has the distinction of being not only the highest village in Hampshire, but also the highest medieval village on chalk in Hampshire.

## Historic Development

### Settlement Origins

The first surviving reference to Ashmansworth is in a charter dated 909. However, Roman pottery and other artefacts have been discovered within the curtilage of St James' Church and, given its proximity to the prehistoric route of the Oxdrove it is possible that Ashmansworth has pre-Roman origins. In a charter of 934 the village is recorded as Aescmaeres/wyroe. However by 1171 it had become known as Esmereswarde, which is believed to have meant Ash pool. Excavations at Church Farm indicate that this particular site has been occupied since the Iron Age. It is understood that the original church was Saxon. Part of the chancel of the existing church dates from this period, with other parts added in the 11th and 12th centuries.

### Settlement Development

In 1496 Bishop Langton granted a lease for the farm and manor of Ashmansworth to Richard Cole, who was required to reside at the manor with all his family. The Civil War brought a temporary change to the village when the manor was sold to a Covent Garden minister in 1649. The Bishop of Winchester regained control in the 1660s, at which time Ashmansworth was not flourishing. Records from 1665 register only 20 taxable and 10 non-taxable houses in the village. However, by 1788 the population had increased to 150, and by 1851 had reached 239. In 1811 a fire consumed a large part of the village and destroyed all of the parish records prior to that date.

Recent records are more detailed, indicating that the population remained small during the 19th Century. The inhabitants of Ashmansworth were mainly labourers who spent much of their lives in the village, and took spouses from the neighbouring parishes. On 12th May 1802 the "manors of Ashmansworth and the rights of free warrant therein" were sold by the Bishop of Winchester to the first Earl of Carnarvon.



*View south west through Conservation Area*



*View north east through Conservation Area*



*Village Green*



*Pikes Cottage*



*Village Hall*

Blacks Guide, published in 1871, described the village as being “among the least trodden districts and most secluded angles of the country, noteworthy only for its early English church”.

In 1901 a spokesman for the Archaeological Society described Ashmansworth as “a long scattered village, neglected and deserted in its aspect, with a rapidly decreasing population”. At this time the church had fallen into disrepair, probably as a result of it being subordinate to the East Woodhay parish.

An independent Parish Council for Ashmansworth was founded in 1894. One of the first issues it addressed was the water supply. Throughout its history Ashmansworth experienced difficulties in maintaining an adequate supply of drinking water. Prior to the installation of piped water in the late 1930s, the only sources of drinking water for many villagers were Mere Pool and the 100 metres deep well at Church Farm.

Over the course of the 20th century the character of Ashmansworth changed rapidly, largely as a result of the intensive farming practices adopted after the Second World War. These changes were no more apparent than at Lower Manor Farm, where Wilfred Cooper established some of the most technologically advanced agricultural methods in the area. The construction of local authority housing soon after the war, and the conversion of buildings into single dwellings, such as Rank Cottage, resulted in a population change for the village.

Throughout its history Ashmansworth suffered from a lack of amenities. At the turn of the century the Plough Inn was established, as were a hurdle maker, and a blacksmith in a building next to the inn. The Flint House was a bakery and post office until the late 1930s. By the 1950s only the post office and the inn survived and the village was heavily dependent on travelling salesmen. The post office moved from the Flint House to Pikes House in the 1940s. It remained there for many years until, after a brief period at the Old Cottage, it eventually relocated to no.6 Highfields in the 1980s.

The village hall was built with money provided to mark the Queen’s Coronation in 1952. Since then the village has continued to change from an agricultural community into a desirable location for professional people commuting to larger towns. One of the more obvious consequences of these changes is the increased investment in the maintenance and improvement of domestic properties, and a deterioration of some of the older agricultural buildings. However, Ashmansworth remains a working village, and there are five operational farms within the Conservation Area boundary.

## An Appraisal of the Conservation Area

### Overview

The Appraisal plan identifies those buildings, views and key features that are considered essential to the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area. In addition to the listed buildings, it also includes unlisted buildings of particular individual or group value, which are indicated on the Appraisal plan as notable. This is not to undermine the value of other unmarked buildings, or structures, that reflect the historic development of the village, without detracting from its special qualities. Individual hedgerows have not been included on the Appraisal plan. However their contribution to the character of the Conservation Area cannot be underestimated, and their significance is implicit in the Appraisal.

### Built Form

The development pattern in Ashmansworth is characteristic of a settlement that has evolved slowly. It has a central core, concentrated around the main thoroughfare where the Plough Inn, Village Hall, Village Green, War Memorial, former Chapel and Old School House are all located. This central area is relatively small in terms of the overall scale of the settlement, which stretches longitudinally for almost 2 kilometres, from Manor Farm in the north to Lower Manor Farm in the south. Ribbon development is interspersed by small fields along the main north/south thoroughfare. This pattern of development is complemented by, and approximately follows, the contours of the ridge-line on which the village is situated.

The houses in the village centre are more closely knit than those further north or south. Each of the five farmhouses in the Conservation Area has its own historic character (two are Listed Buildings). There are also two very large residential properties in the village, Ashmansworth Manor in the north and Ashmansworth House near the centre, both listed. These combine to make Ashmansworth a distinctively rural settlement, with many obvious signs of its agricultural heritage reflected in its development pattern.



*Village Green*



*War Memorial*



*Manor Farm*



## Key Individual Buildings



*Ashmansworth Manor*



*Flint House*



*Mere Cottage*



*Ashmansworth House*

There are eight listed buildings in the Ashmansworth Conservation Area. All are Grade II listed, except St James' Church which is Grade I listed and dates from the 12th century. Most of the others are of 17th and 18th Century origins, with some additions dating from the 19th Century.

Ashmansworth Manor, near the northern edge of the Conservation Area boundary, dates from the early 19th century with c.1900 and modern alterations. This large Grade II listed building is constructed of red brick in Flemish bond, with a hipped tiled roof and Victorian sash windows. The Regency door case with its moulded canopy, decorative frieze, panelled pilasters and fanlight is a key feature. The later single storey brick and flint extensions dominate views from the roadside. The complex of farm buildings surrounding the manor are protected as curtilage structures, and treated as if they were also listed buildings. Extensive refurbishment was carried out to the roadside barn and the cowshed in 2001.

The Old Cottage adjacent to the village green is Grade II listed and dates from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Constructed in red brick with a hipped thatched roof, the surviving timber framing has been clad in header bond brickwork with red rubbed brick arches. The original symmetrical 17th century front was added to at each end during the 18th and 19th centuries. The thatched brick porch is a modern addition.

Adjacent to The Old Cottage is Flint House, which served as the village bakery and post office until the late 1930s. This early 19th century, two-storey, symmetrical house is constructed in flint, with red brick window surrounds, and sash and case windows. The modern tiled roof is hipped with two chimney-breasts on the rear slope. The plain door canopy and panelled door are typical features of the Regency period in architecture.

Mere Cottage, facing the War Memorial, dates from the 16th century and was originally a timber-framed house, which was re-fronted in the early 19th century. Constructed in red brick with blue headers in Flemish bond and a thatched roof, with catslide to rear, the bay windows to the ground floor were also added in the early 19th century.

Ashmansworth House, to the south of the village core, is a Grade II listed, two-storey and attic property, with a hipped tiled roof and several tall chimneys. Dating from the 18th century, with alterations in the early and late 19th century, it is constructed in red brick, which is rendered at the front elevation. The form of the building has been much altered by later extensions and as a result the original 18th century core is no longer discernible.

Steeles Farmhouse dates from the 17th century with alterations made throughout the 19th century. The original farmhouse was a narrow block of one storey and attic, which was extended to the south in the mid-19th century. The roughcast walls are tile hung at the gable ends. The associated brick and flint, weatherboarded barn, and the roadside wall to the front of the farmhouse are protected as curtilage structures.

The oldest surviving building in Ashmansworth is St James' Church. Parts of the church date from the 12th century including a Norman aisleless nave and chancel arch. Faint medieval wall paintings also survive around the arch. The brick porch was added in 1694, and the east wall of the church dates from 1745.

Lower Manor Farmhouse, with its Dutch flat arches to the ground floor and Gothic gabled porch, is a particularly distinctive building, dating from the early 19th century. Located at the southern edge of the Conservation Area, and isolated from the main settlement core, the building is prominent in views towards this part of the Conservation Area. The farmhouse is a two-storey, Grade II listed building of red brick in English bond with blue headers. The Gothic gabled porch was added in 1878. The brick and flint barn and roadside walling are both protected as curtilage structures.



*St James Church*



*Lower Manor Farm*

## Buildings of Local Interest

In addition to its Listed Buildings, Ashmansworth has many other buildings of local interest. Most date from the 19th century and are two storey, red brick properties. These include Cross Lane, Knights Cottage, Barley Cottage, Thurston Cottage, Pheasant Cottage and Plough Cottage – which was originally three cottages.

There are also several unlisted thatched cottages, such as Tower Cottage and Beech Cottage, a pair of two-storey red brick and flint cottages, and Corner Cottage, a large thatched cottage in red brick with some exposed timber framing – the only example of this in the village.

Brick and flint properties survive throughout the village and demonstrate the local vernacular style. The Old School House dates from the late 19th century. It is a small rendered brick and flint property with modern tiled roof, and a later side extension with slate roof and rendered brick. Burnies, again in red brick and flint, has a tiled roof, with catslide roof to single storey extension. The use of flint decorative panels is evident at Meadowside Cottage, another two-storey property.



*Plough Cottage*



*Corner Cottage*



*Meadowside*



*Church Farm*



*Plough Inn*

A number of the farm complexes within the Conservation Area contain buildings of individual and group value. Manor Farm at the northern edge of the Conservation Area boundary is a large two storey and attic property in rendered brick with tiled roof, (catslide to single storey outshot), and an open timber porch. Its isolated position results in this building dominating views to the north-east through the Conservation Area. At Alexander Farm there is an 18th century barn at the roadside which is weatherboarded with corrugated iron roof. The 19th century farmhouse is in rendered brick, with tiled roof and central tiled porch to the front elevation. At the southern end of the Conservation Area is Church Farm Barn, an 18th century brick and flint barn with tiled roof. The long stretch of 2m high roadside wall, in brick and flint with tiled copings, is also notable in views through the Conservation Area.

Other notable buildings include: the Old Vicarage (now Melincourt) a two-storey and attic, red brick dwelling, with hipped tiled roof, sash and case timber windows and three dormers to the front elevation; The Chapel built in 1888 with slate roof and arched openings; Hughbourne House, a symmetrical red brick property, with blue header detailing above ground floor windows, hipped tiled roof, stone lintels over windows and a central doorway porch with moulded decorations; and The Plough Inn, also red brick with blue headers, slate roof and a central porch in brick and timber. The former smithy, a small brick and tiled property, occupies an important position adjacent to village green and pub, and was used in living memory.

## The Character and Importance of Public and Private Spaces

Ashmansworth is characterised by its wide verges, opening out in places to form green areas, providing an expansive feel to the centre of the village. The most distinctive open area is the village green, with its centrally located hornbeam tree. This modestly sized green is bounded on two sides by well-maintained mature hedgerows to private gardens. Its remaining boundaries have open aspects to the main thoroughfare and Cross Lane.

Directly opposite the green is the Plough Inn where the wide verges characterising the northern approach to the village become narrower. From the Plough Inn to the second central green area around the War Memorial (at the junction of Facombe Road and Stoney Lane) private front gardens are closer to the main thoroughfare.



## Other Features of Architectural or Historic Interest

Notable sections of brick and flint walls survive at Ashmansworth House and Steeles Farm. At Church Farm there is a good example of knapped flints re-used to form a wall. The barns at Lower Manor Farm, Steeles Farm and Ashmansworth Manor all date from the 18th century and have group value architecturally, as well as individual historic merit.



*View from War Memorial*

## Building Materials

Most of the historic properties within the Conservation Area are constructed in orange/red bricks of handmade appearance and soft texture. Some have knapped or unknapped flints and blue headers and stretchers in varying proportions. The boundary walls are a mixture of low walls built of the same local brick and flint vernacular as many of the buildings. All the thatched roofs in the village are in combed wheat reed.

The majority of roofs are in plain peg or nib clay tiles, and are orange/red in colour, although there are a few examples of slate being used. Windows are usually timber, with some Georgian/Victorian panelled doors on later buildings.



*Steeles Farm Barn*

## Green Spaces, Trees and other Natural or Cultivated Features

Ashmansworth occupies an elevated position in the North Hampshire Downs on a 'T shaped' plateau forming part of a ridge running south-west/north-northeast. The village has developed in a ribbon fashion, and retains an essentially rural character. There are outstanding views of the surrounding landscape, typified by deciduous woodland and mixed farmland in undulating downland countryside.

There is a considerable variety of trees in the village, with ash the most common. Lime is prominent in the centre of the village within the curtilage of the Old Vicarage and Hallam, at the junction of the main thoroughfare and Cross Lane. There are six large beech trees around the Village Hall, plus several oak, hawthorn, hazel and beech on the Woodhay Road. The combined effect of all these deciduous trees is an impressive leafy backdrop to the village which emphasises its rural character, particularly in the summertime. Other species of tree present in the village include horse chestnut, sweet chestnut, bird cherry (village



*Beech Tree Cottage*



*View from Church Farm*



*View out of Conservation Area*



*View towards Flint Wall Cottage*

green), sycamore (north of the village), yew (churchyard), scots pine, spruce, larch, field maple, holly and evergreen oak (Church Farm).

Boundary features in the village mostly comprise hedgerows, with mixed agricultural hedges on banks adjoining the narrow lanes. These are either close to the road or set back behind the distinctively wide verges.

Mere Pond, immediately to the west of the War Memorial, is a large dew pond set back from Facombe Road and surrounded by ash, hawthorn, blackthorn, willow and pine. The southern area between the pond and the road provides a good bog habitat and a carpet of snowdrops in the spring. There is a second attractive pond just off Woodhay Road, to the west of Manor Farm, which has a large expanse of vegetation and scrub.

## The Setting of the Conservation Area

The approaches to the Conservation Area from the north comprise of rural lanes, with impressively wide grassed verges. From the south the approaches are along narrow lanes, enclosed by high banks and well-maintained mixed hedges. Cross Lane, the eastern approach road, is characterised by a mixture of wide verges, close hedgerows and a canopy of overhanging trees.

Due to the elevated position of Ashmansworth, there are some commanding views of the surrounding countryside of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These views extend over many miles to the south and south-east. The views to the west in the vicinity of the War Memorial are of exceptionally high quality. Cross Lane offers commanding views over farmland to the south. Views to the north from the Conservation Area are limited, although Woodhay Road offers views towards The Ridgeway.

## Areas of Archaeological Significance

There are three Areas of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP), centred on the farms along the main thoroughfare. Between the designated AHAPs is land regarded as Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAI). It is not known whether the settlement pattern is the result of a more regular line of habitation, breaking up to leave the irregular rows still existing. In some valley settlements it has been shown that spaces between areas of existing development have been previously occupied, and subsequently abandoned in the medieval period.

The area around the larger focus of houses at the northern end of Ashmansworth, and the areas around St James' Church and Lower Manor Farm are AHAPs connected by Areas of Archaeological Potential (AAP) which straddle the road. The footpath to the north of the church runs parallel to the main thoroughfare, along a line that may previously have fronted onto the main thoroughfare.

## Conservation Area Planning Controls

The following controls apply within the Conservation Area in addition to normal planning controls:

- Conservation Area Consent is normally required for the demolition of buildings or structures over a certain size within a Conservation Area.
- The Council must be given six weeks notice of any intention to undertake works to, cut down or uproot any trees in the Conservation Area.
- Planning applications which, in the opinion of the Borough Council would affect the special character of the Conservation Area must be advertised and the opportunity given for public comment. This may include proposals outside the Conservation Area which nevertheless affect its setting.

Statutory policies relating to Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings are set out in the adopted Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan. These policies reflect the statutory duty on the Local Planning Authority to have regard for the preservation of historic buildings or their setting, and to promote the enhancement of areas designated as of special interest. These policies seek to ensure that particular regard will be paid to the scale, height, form, materials and detailing of proposals including boundary treatments and other features of note. In order to consider the implications of development and given the detail required, the Borough Council will normally require proposals within the Conservation Area to be submitted in the form of a full, and not outline, application. The Borough Council's Conservation Officers are available for advice and information on all matters relating to development proposals in a Conservation Area.

## Grants

The Borough Council provides grants for various types of work. These include Historic Building Grants, Environment and Regeneration Grants, and Village and Community Hall Grants. Leaflets are available explaining the purpose and criteria for each grant. Please contact the Council for further information on any grant.



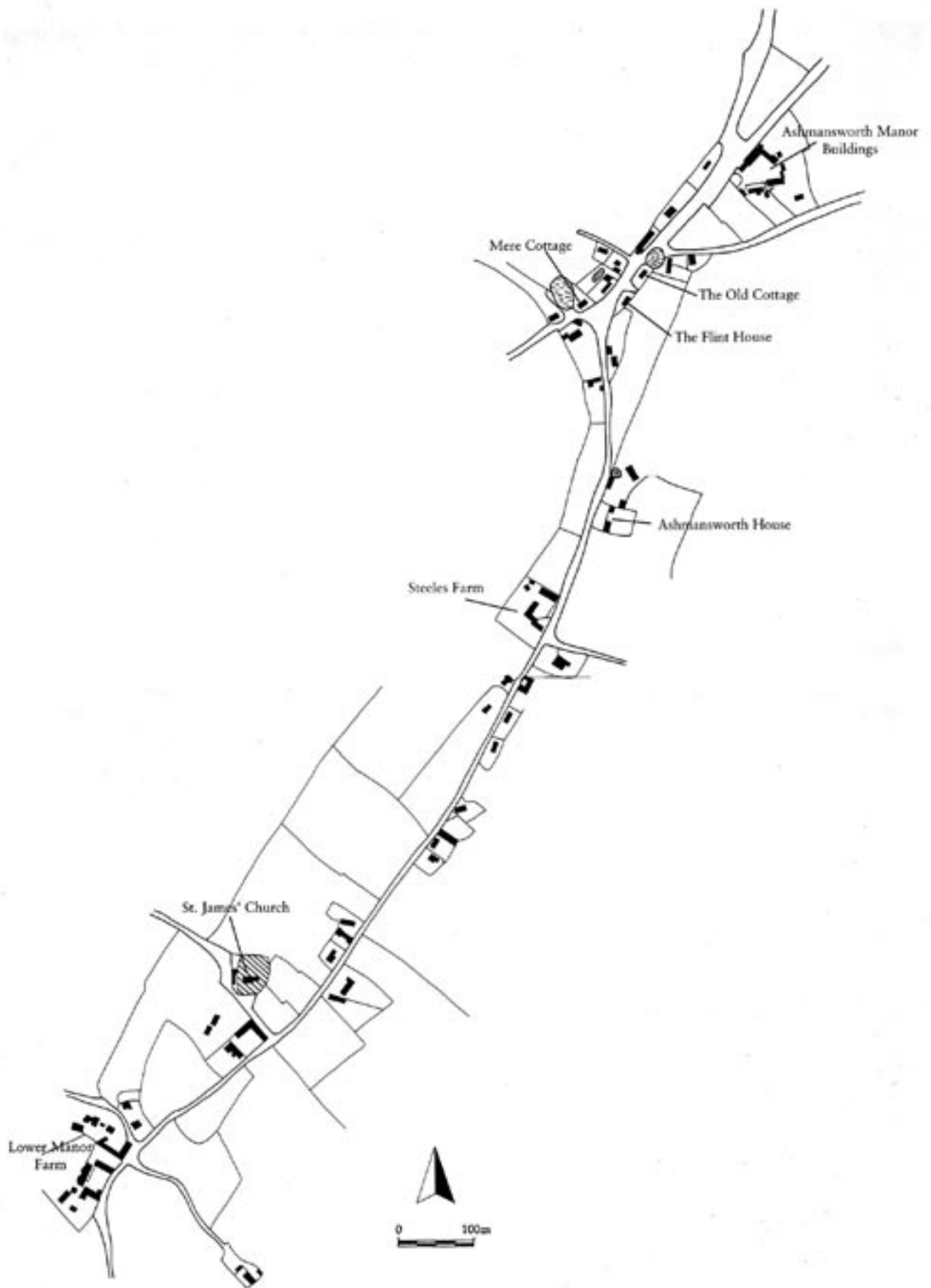
*View into Conservation Area*



*View west*

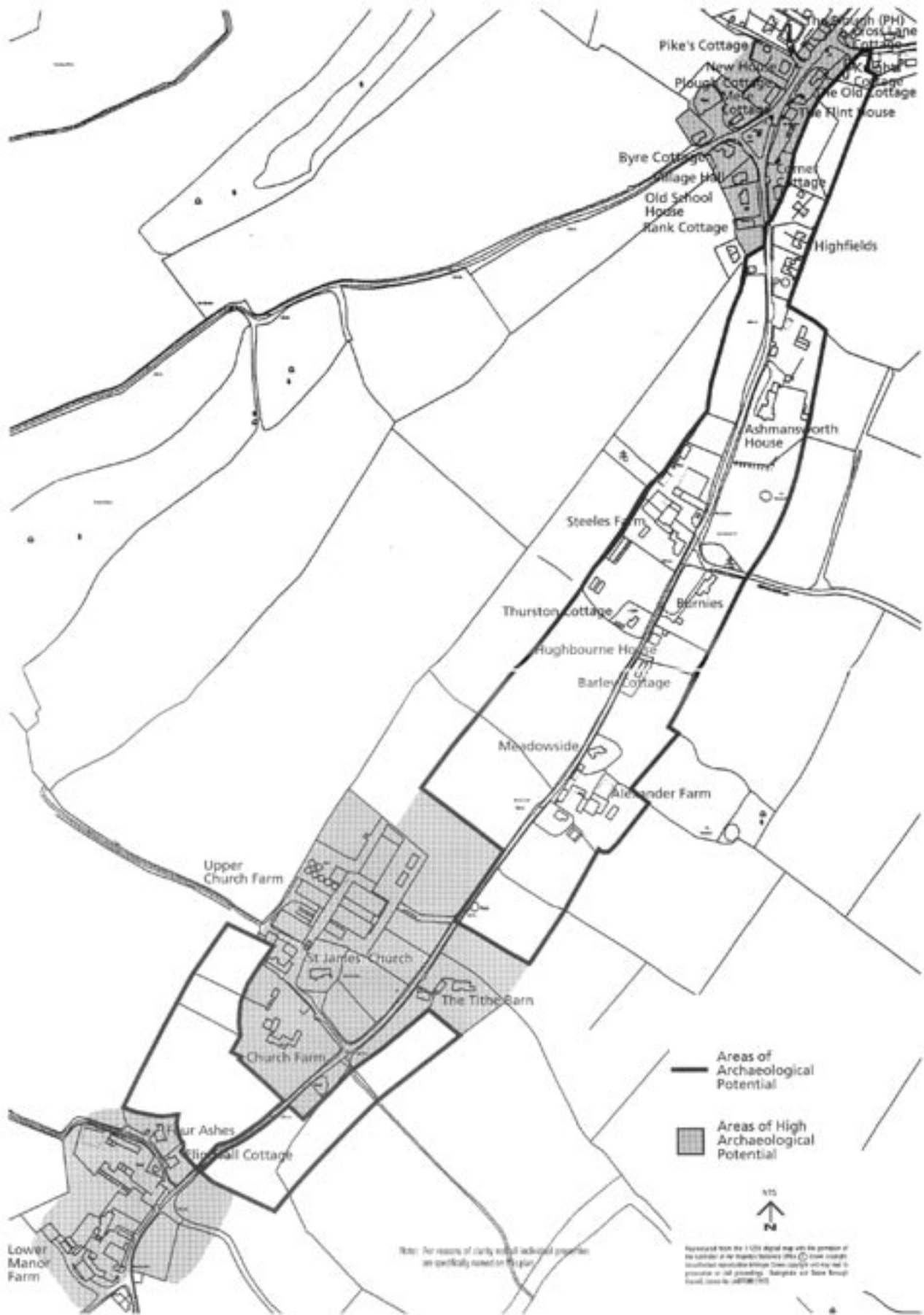


*View from Lower Manor farm*



Ashmansworth Based on Tithe Map of 1840





Areas of Archaeological Potential







# Conservation Area Appraisal

# Ashmansworth

An excellent Borough - together we can be even better!

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