

# Broadwater (Marymead)

## Conservation Area Appraisal

### 2009



## CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	4
1.0	Introduction	5
2.0	Planning Policy Framework	6
3.0	Definition of Special Interest	8
4.0	Assessment of Special Interest	9
5.0	Historic Development and Archaeology	10
6.0	Spatial Analysis	21
7.0	Character Analysis	24
8.0	Community Involvement	38
9.0	Management Proposals	39
10.0	Bibliography	40
	Acknowledgements	41
	<i>Appendices</i>	
	Appendix 1. Extract from 'The London Gazette'	42

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Broadwater Conservation Area map	7
Figure 2.	Engraving of the Six Hills in 1724	10
Figure 3.	1766 Dury & Andrews Map of Stevenage Borough	11
Figure 4.	1923 Ordnance Survey map, Broadwater in the early 20 <sup>th</sup> century	12
Figure 5.	Interiors of housing in Stevenage New Town neighbourhoods	13
Figure 6.	Stevenage New Town Master Plans 1949, 1955 and 1966	14
Figure 7.	Examples of house designs in Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	15
Figure 8.	Marymead housing completed in 1954	16
Figure 9.	The church of St. Peter, Broadwater Crescent	17
Figure 10.	Design for the semi-detached police housing on Spring Drive	17
Figure 11.	Marymead shops, Broadwater (1957)	18
Figure 12.	Marymead shops, Broadwater	18
Figure 13.	Disabled persons housing, Gladstone Court	20

Figure 14. Green spaces within Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	21
Figure 15. Landmark Buildings within Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	22
Figure 16. Key views and vistas within Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	23
Figure 17. Various views within the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	24
Figure 18. Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area, character analysis map	25
Figure 19. Church of St Peter, east elevation	26
Figure 20. Wimpey 'no fines' housing, Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area	27
Figure 21. Housing along Spring Drive	27
Figure 22. Semi-detached police housing	28
Figure 23. Housing on The Willows and Willows Link	28
Figure 24. Whomerley Spiritualist Centre; an example of 'Butler Block' construction	29
Figure 25. Varying porch designs within the conservation area	29
Figure 26. Garages within Broadwater (Marymead) conservation area	30
Figure 27. 1950s /1960s bus stop, Broadwater Crescent	31
Figure 28. Loss of front gardens within the conservation area	32
Figure 29. Damage to grass verges along Broadwater Crescent	32
Figure 30. Alterations to windows within the conservation area	33
Figure 31. Alteration to porches within the conservation area	33
Figure 32. Red plastic 'tile-effect' replacement roofs on Burydale	34
Figure 33. Front extension to 108 Spring Drive	34
Figure 34. Vacant car showroom on Broadwater Crescent	35
Figure 35. Collapsed line of timber fence within Marymead Spring	35
Figure 36. Willows Link	36
Figure 37. Blocked up door & window to Mogul Takeaway, 261 Broadwater Crescent	36
Figure 38. New dwelling to the rear of 13 Spring Drive	37

Front cover: Top left, Marymead shops; Top right, St Peter's Church  
Bottom left, Marymead Spring; Bottom right, Burydale

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This appraisal was conducted to define the special interest of Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area in order to help preserve and enhance its character, and to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. The conservation area was designated on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

The conservation area was proposed because of its local and national history, its interesting and diverse architecture, its retained character and as the best surviving example of a new town neighbourhood which comprised all the amenities intended for the modern 1950s urban development.

It comprises early Stevenage Development Corporation architecture in the form of housing, garaging, a church, a shopping precinct, a public house, senior housing and a community centre. The housing developments have an explorative architectural style and plan.

Today the area benefits from its relatively unaltered 1950s and 1960s buildings that are in a good to fair condition, modern land boundaries, hedgerows, paving, green spaces, established trees and a retained area of old woodland.

Overall Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area is in a good to fair condition and has a number of features which have a positive impact upon the character of the area. These relate to its spatial layout, green and open spaces, trees and the design of the buildings within the area. However there are negative issues, in particular the loss of architectural features and vacant retail premises.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This appraisal of Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area was conducted by BEAMS Ltd, the trading company of the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust between August and March 2009. The appraisal was commissioned by Stevenage Borough Council in August 2008.
- 1.2 Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area was designated on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007. A review of the conservation areas within Stevenage was conducted by BEAMS Ltd in 2005, as part of this, new conservation areas were suggested; Broadwater (Marymead) was one of these.
- 1.3 The main objectives of this conservation area appraisal are to:
- Define the special interest of Broadwater (Marymead) 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.

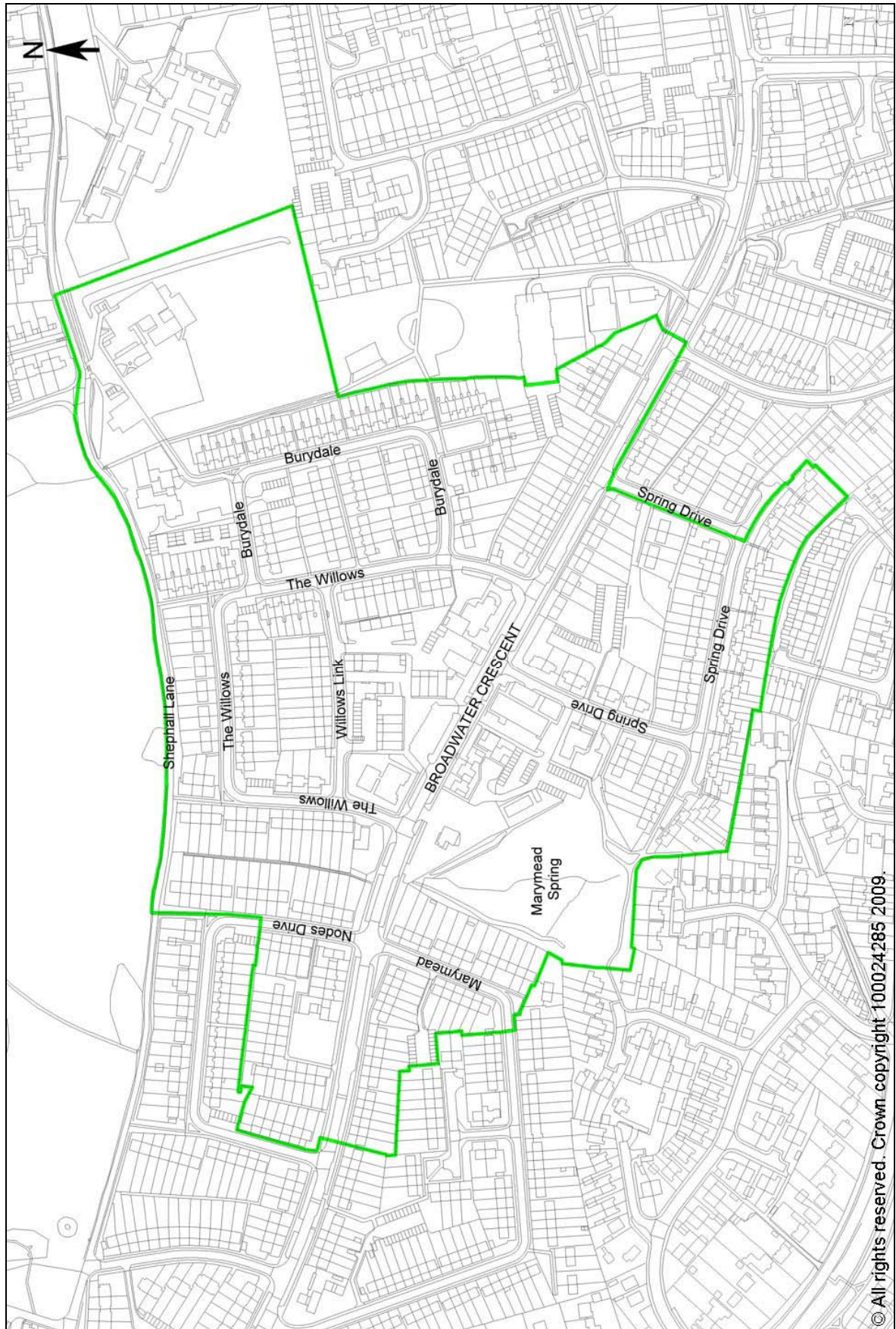
### **Survey**

- 1.4 A full photographic record of Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area was made in line with recommendations by English Heritage (2006) to provide 'a baseline for measuring change and monitoring alterations / physical condition'. This will form part of the project archive for use / 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.





**Figure 1.** Broadwater Conservation Area map (Green line denotes Conservation Area boundary)

### **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, buildings, monuments and place-names.
- 3.2 Broadwater (Marymead) is a cohesive, mid-twentieth century planned housing development and forms part of the third new town neighbourhood of Broadwater constructed within the first 'New Town', Stevenage. It is a good example of a Stevenage New Town neighbourhood and, as such, is of local and national importance.
- 3.3 The principal features of Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area are:
- The planned layout of the area incorporating a number of different housing designs.
  - The green and tree lined approach along Broadwater Crescent.
  - Significant landmark buildings including the church, shopping precinct, public house and block of flats.
  - The green spaces inside the conservation area including greens surrounded by housing, retained hedges, grass verges and front gardens.
  - Views along Broadwater Crescent, views to the south towards the open countryside and to the north where the trees of Shephallbury Park are visible.
  - The retained area of old woodland at Marymead Spring.



## **4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **Location and setting**

4.1 Stevenage is a large town and borough in the centre of 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 (website 1) 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.

4.2 Broadwater (Marymead) is a residential area of Stevenage New Town, constructed in 1953/54 on an area of open fields approximately three miles to the south of Stevenage town centre.

### **Topography**

4.3 Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area stands upon part flat and part sloping ground. Broadwater Crescent runs through the centre of the conservation area curving round in an east to west direction. The ground to the north of Broadwater Crescent is fairly flat but the land to the south slopes gently downwards and continues towards Bragbury End where the land then rises steeply towards Datchworth. The area of old woodland (Marymead Spring) is also contained within a dip to the southwest of the conservation area. The northern boundary of the conservation area follows Shephall Lane (an old trackway, now a footpath) for a short way, the footpath slopes downwards at its eastern end.

4.4 The predominant use within the area is residential with some commercial use centred round the shopping centre; there are also buildings for educational, religious and small-scale industrial use.

### **Geology**

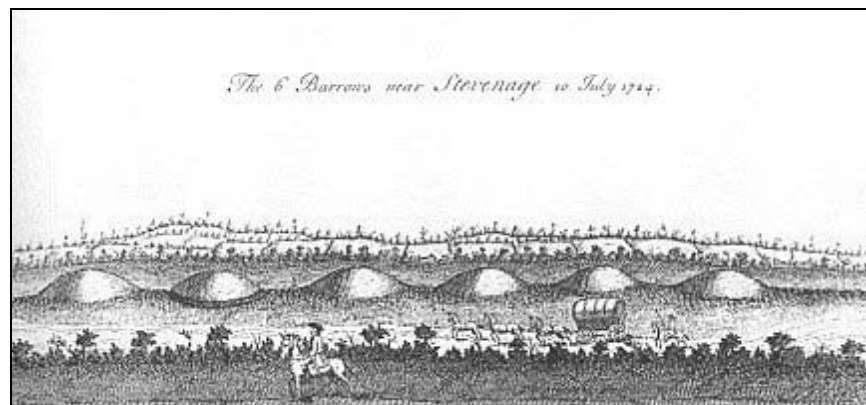
4.5 The underlying geology of the area is chalk but this lies well beneath gravel and clay-with-flints and surface well-drained loamy soils.

## 5.0 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Broadwater (Marymead) is a conservation area chosen as a good representation of the 'new town' development of Stevenage; however this part of Stevenage does have older origins.

### Archaeological background

- 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).

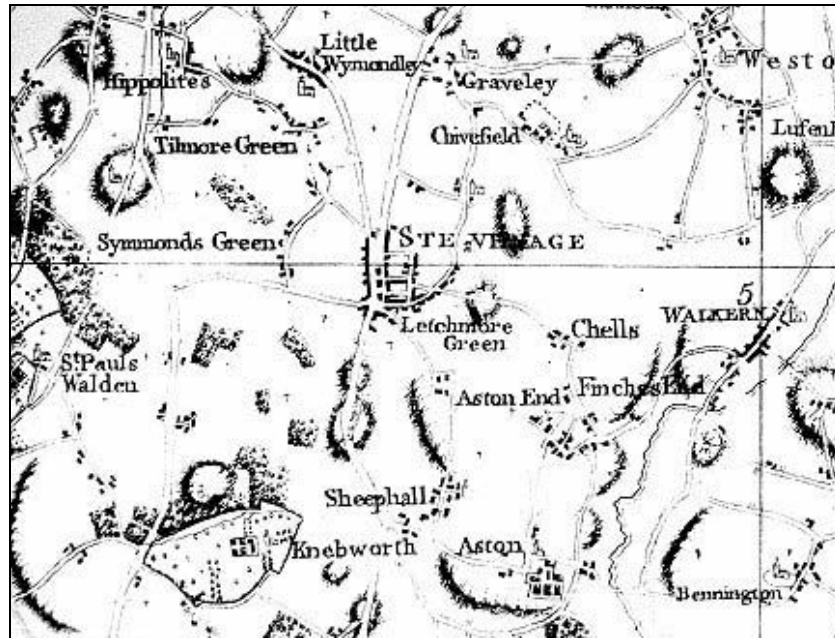


**Figure 2.** Engraving of the Six Hills in 1724 (Ashby 2002)

- 5.2 Evidence of Saxon occupation has been identified from excavation. Traces of a sunken-floored structure, a distinctive Saxon building form, were found at the eastern end of Broadwater Crescent, on the north bank of the Stevenage Brook (east of the Broadwater conservation area).
- 5.3 Broadwater developed as a small settlement on the Hertford Road at the fork of the roads from London and Hertford to the north. Despite its small size it gave its name to the Broadwater Hundred, the administrative centre for this part of Hertfordshire whose area of jurisdiction stretched north-south from Willian to Hatfield and east-west from Great Munden to Knebworth. In the tenth century each shire or county was divided into 'hundreds' for administrative purposes; this was part of a Saxon reorganisation of local government. Hundred Courts met monthly and were responsible for proving wills, dealing with criminal offences, determining land titles and levying taxes. Broadwater was probably chosen as a meeting place because of its location at a crossroads.

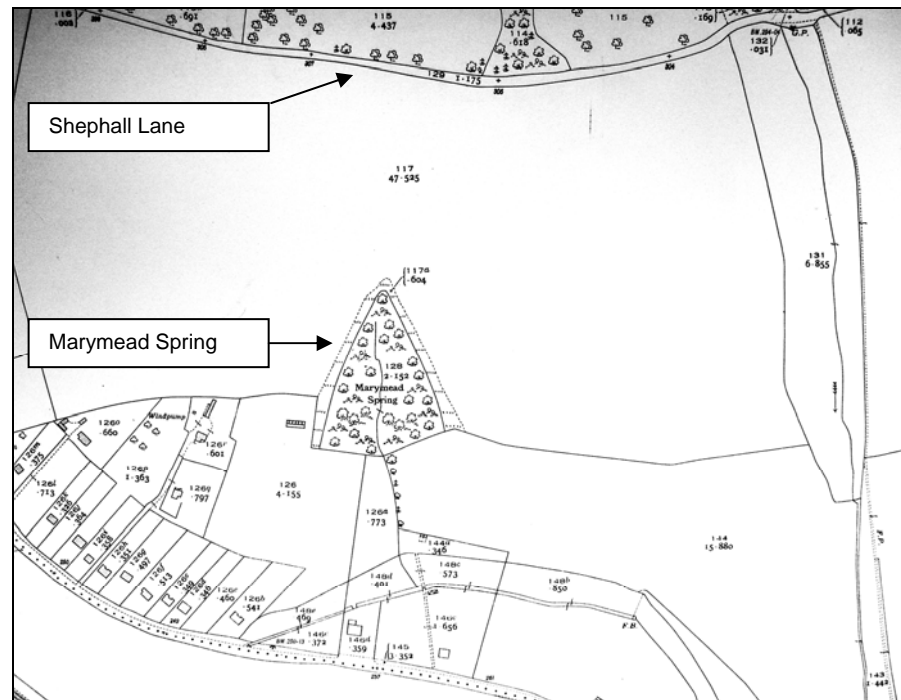
### 1066 - 1947

- 5.4 The first historical record of the manor of Stevenage is found in the Domesday Book dating to 1086. Known as 'Sticenaece' or 'Stithenaece', the estate had been given to the newly founded Abbey of Westminster by King Edward in 1062, to whom the manor previously belonged.



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

- 5.5 Broadwater remained a small hamlet located to the north of Knebworth and south-west of Shephall. The Roebuck Inn was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps at the location of the earlier meeting place for the 'hundred' courts. A blacksmiths forge and cottage was established opposite the Roebuck Inn; during the coaching era of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century the Inn was a popular stopping point from London to the north.
- 5.6 During the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Stevenage began to change; while some trade was lost, new industry arrived and the population grew. The arrival of the railway in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century meant a decline in the coaching trade; Broadwater may have suffered as a result of this and it remained a small settlement on the Hertford Road.
- 5.7 Much of the Broadwater area, including the Broadwater (Marymead) conservation area was an area of open fields until the early to mid twentieth century (Fig. 4). Historic maps show Shephall Lane which led east from the settlement at Broadwater and also branched off to the north towards Shephall village. Also shown on historic maps is Marymead Spring, the triangular wooded area within the conservation area. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century housing was built along the Hertford Road, to the south of the conservation area.



**Figure 4.** The area of open fields now covered by much of the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (1923 Ordnance Survey map)

#### 1945 – The Development of Stevenage New Town

- 5.8 Before the end of World War II, the Government had begun developing a housing scheme for the Greater London area. Sir Patrick Abercrombie's plan for Greater London in 1944 suggested the creation of new 'satellite' towns, which would be designed to take London's overflowing population – one of those suggested was Stevenage. Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning, appointed a New Town Committee in 1945 to formulate plans for the construction and development of self-contained and balanced communities for work and living. In 1946 Stevenage Borough, which had a population of 6,237, was designated as the site of the first New Town, and the Stevenage Development Corporation created.
- 5.9 Such an experiment in building a new large modern town in the heart of the Hertfordshire countryside created much debate, and while it did have support there was also much opposition to the proposals. Public meetings were held, one in particular was attended by Lewis Silkin at the Town Hall in May 1946. A number of newspaper cartoons satirised the creation of new towns. The railway station had its sign temporarily changed from Stevenage to Silkingrad by a local farmer, Jack Franklin of Gravely Hall Farm who opposed the plans.
- 5.10 Stevenage Development Corporation appointed a Chief Architect and Planner, Gordon Stephenson, who instigated the first Master Plan of the New Town in 1949. The plan was to cater for 60,000 people located within six neighbourhoods based upon existing hamlets and clustered around a new town centre (Fig. 6). Each planned neighbourhood would have its own shops, pubs, churches, clinics, primary schools and community centres. The town centre was to be pedestrianised, and factories and business area were located on the west side, away from the housing but near good road and rail links. 60,000 acres of land were chosen for the building of the new town. The area contained 20 farms and affected 80 others, but by 1952 Stevenage Development Corporation had bought 2,000 acres from landowners – some by compulsory purchase orders.

- 5.11 The first New Town houses completed in 1951 were near the Old Town - Broadview, off Sish Lane. No 4 Broadview was the first house to be completed by the Corporation. Work began on the New Town neighbourhoods thereafter; Bedwell in 1952-3 (Whomerley Wood, Bedwell East and North, and Monks Wood), Broadwater in 1953 (Roebuck, Shephalbury, Marymead and Longmeadow), Shephall in 1953-1955 (Leaves Spring, Half Hyde and Bandle Hill), Chells in 1958 (Peascott Spring), and Pin Green in 1962. Other areas of later residential development after the Development Corporation had been dissolved include areas within Pin Green, Poplars, Symonds Green, Chells Manor and St Nicholas.
- 5.12 Although the first Master Plan guided the development of Stevenage New Town for the next five years, it was revised in 1955 by Leonard Vincent (the new Chief Architect and Planner). The population was recorded at 17,500 in 1955 and it was clear that the size and density of the town would out grow the land allocation provision of the 1949 Master Plan. The 1955 Master Plan included changes in the size and density of both residential and employment areas. It included building on land which had originally been intended to be left as a green belt within the designated new town boundary. This had the greatest effect on Pin Green as its planned population of 10,000 was re-planned in 1960 to 22,000. In the 1950s changes to the road system were also underway and the introduction of a large hospital to the north of the borough was considered. Over the next three years the population of Stevenage doubled reaching 30,000 which led to the production of a new draft Master Plan in 1961. In 1966 the Master Plan was unveiled. It included further expanding residential areas, employment areas and re-developing the Old Town to incorporate a new population figure of up to 91,000. Changes to the road system included the introduction of dual carriageways, and an increase to the town centre parking provisions, educational facilities and other services were required to cope with the population. Additional adjustments were made to the Master Plan in 1972 and again in 1978 when the population was recorded as 73,000.
- 5.13 Stevenage Development Corporation was dissolved in 1980 on completion of its work, but between 1951 and 1980 Stevenage Development Corporation built over 20,000 homes under the control of Chief architects and Planners, Gordon Stephenson, Leonard Vincent, Clifford Holliday, Donald Reay, Leslie Aked and finally Brian Alford.

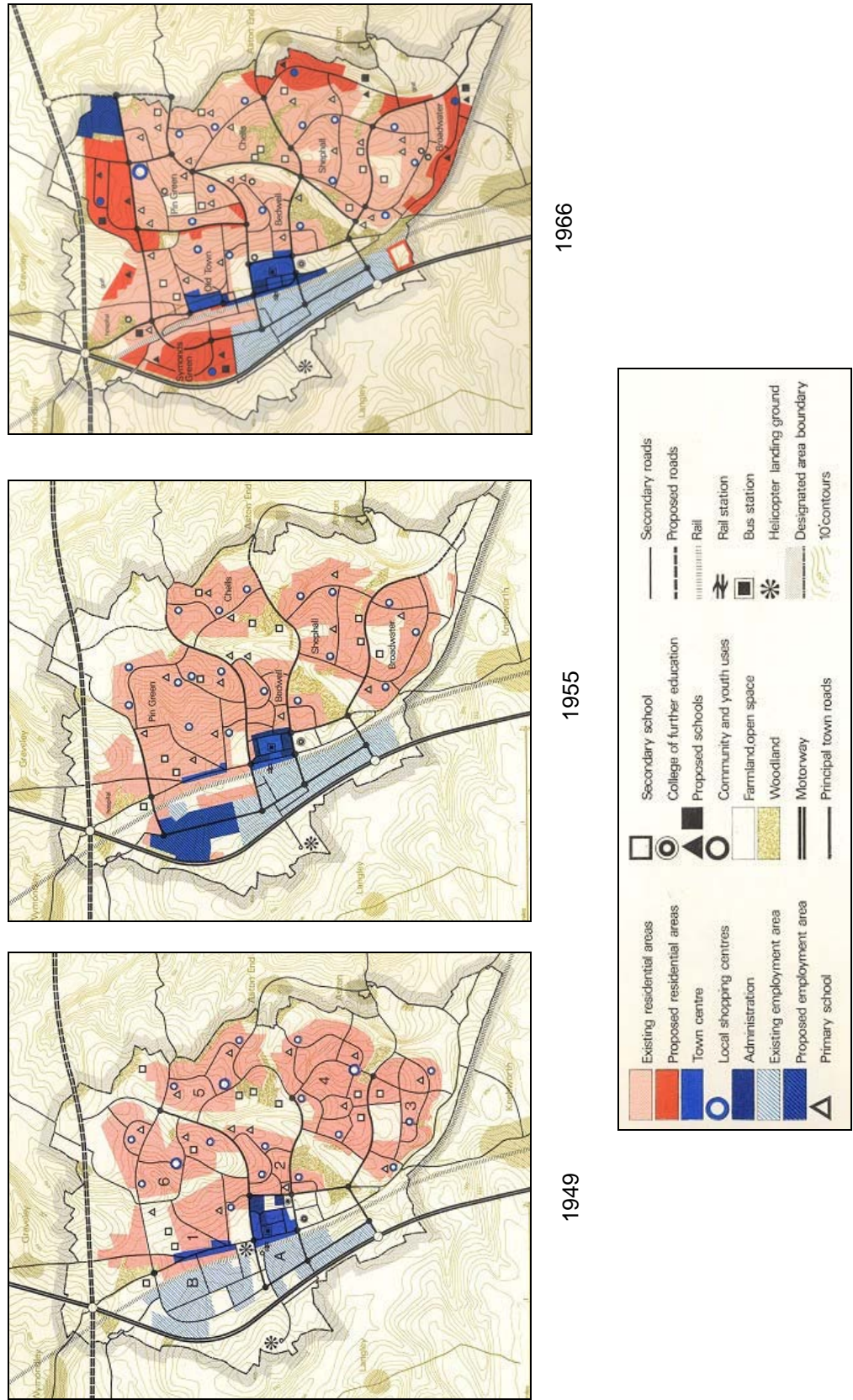


A 1950's kitchen with all 'mod-cons'



A typical sitting room – dining room in Half Hyde, 1957

**Figure 5.** Examples of interiors of housing in Stevenage New Town neighbourhoods (Collings, 1987)

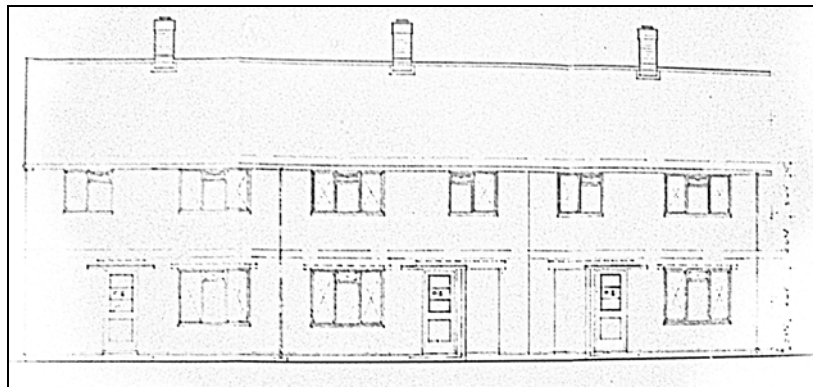


**Figure 6.** Stevenage New Town Master Plans 1949, 1955 and 1966 (Vincent 1967)

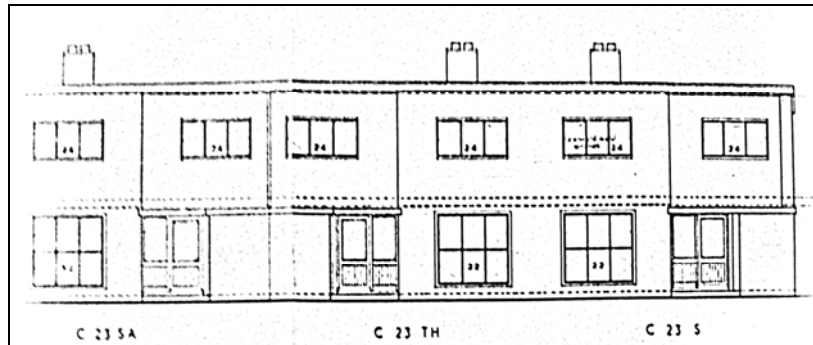


### 1953 - The development of Broadwater (Marymead)

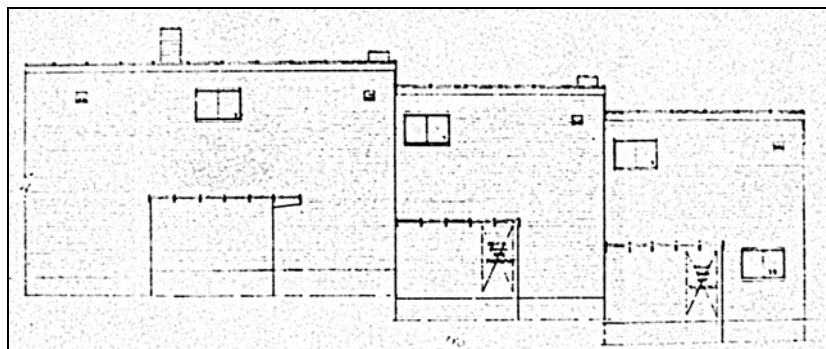
- 5.14 Broadwater was the third 'New Town' neighbourhood to be constructed. The Broadwater area totalled 70.58 acres in all and designs were for 12.3 dwellings per acre / 52.2 habitable rooms per acre. Broadwater was a low density area with two-storey houses predominating; any flats that were originally provided were also of two storeys, although the neighbourhood centres were designed to be of three storeys (shops with maisonettes over). There was a reaction in the early 1950s against building tall blocks of flats, the reason people were moving out of London to a new town was to find a house with a garden they could afford to rent and the planners of Stevenage realised this. Almost all the houses within Broadwater were designed by D P Reay, one of the Stevenage Development Corporation Architects. The unusual stepped maisonettes on the south side of Spring Drive (type B9) were designed by Clifford Holliday (1953) (Fig. 7).



Design PP77 (D P Reay)



Design C23 (D P Reay)



Design B9 (Clifford Holliday)

**Figure 7.** Three examples of the various house designs constructed within the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area

- 5.15 The designs for the two storey terraced housing varied throughout the Broadwater neighbourhood. Almost all the houses were constructed in brick (of various colours), some with rendered areas, all with crittall casement windows, a variety of porch styles and either gabled or monopitch roofs. These designs were all assigned different codes to differentiate them (Fig. 7). The houses were built in terraces of six to ten houses and had relatively long rear gardens. Many had small front gardens.
- 5.16 The first houses to be constructed in Broadwater were 150 'Wimpey no-fines' houses and 15 garages around Marymead, the western part of which is within the conservation area (Fig. 8). The houses were designed by D P Reay (design PP77) and built by George Wimpey & Co Ltd who had developed a style of house building using 'no fines concrete' (concrete with no fine aggregate) cast in situ. Huge reusable moulds were held in place and the concrete for the entire outer structure was poured in one operation. These houses were intended for mass-production of social housing for families and were built in large numbers following the Second World War when there was a shortage of brick and a growing need for housing.
- 5.17 Some garages were provided as lock-ups at the end of streets or to the rear of housing, the first garages were of an unusual cast concrete construction. Garages were provided in the proportion of 1 per 8 dwellings, visitors and others would have to park on the road.



**Figure 8.** Marymead housing completed in 1954 (Appleton, 1993)

- 5.18 The church of St Peter, a Church of England church was designed by N. F. Cachemaille-Day and Partners in 1954 but not constructed until 1955 (Fig. 9). Prior to its construction a temporary church hall was built on the site so that residents could still attend a place of worship.



**Figure 9.** The Church of St. Peter, Broadwater Crescent soon after construction (Collings, 1987)

- 5.19 In 1955 / 1956 three pairs of red brick semi-detached houses were constructed on the western arm of Spring Drive (Fig. 10). These were to house policemen as part of a police housing programme which formed part of a development throughout Stevenage of 24 police houses. A further pair of semi-detached houses for occupation by policemen were constructed to the north of the existing police housing in 1965.



**Figure 10.** Design for the semi-detached police housing on Spring Drive by D P Reay (Stevenage Borough Council)

- 5.20 The Man in the Moon Public House was designed in 1956 by Stewart and Hendry Architects, 80 Fenchurch Street, London and built soon after. The early residents of Broadwater (Marymead) would have had little in the way of local amenities such as a public house or shops. Temporary shops had to be incorporated into the

ground floor of nos. 299 to 309 Broadwater Crescent as the local shopping centre was not built until 1957. The Marymead shopping centre was designed by Leonard Vincent as a 3-storey block of shops with flats above which incorporated balconies arranged in a chequerwise fashion (Figs. 11 & 12). Willows Link, the single storey shops to the northeast were built in 1957.



**Figure 11.** Marymead shops, Broadwater in 1957 (BEAMS, 2005)



**Figure 12.** Marymead shops, Broadwater (Collings, 1987)

- 5.21 Parsonage House (The Vicarage) was designed by Oliver Carey (ARIBA), Hitchin. The vicarage is detached, constructed in red brick with hung tile and a gabled clay tile roof; it is situated on the corner of The Willows and Broadwater Crescent, opposite the church. Land had been set aside for the construction of a vicarage on the earliest plans for the Marymead neighbourhood but it was not constructed until 1956 / 1957.
- 5.22 The building which originally housed the 6<sup>th</sup> Stevenage Scout Group and became known as the Baden Powell Memorial Hall (now Whormerley Spiritualist Church and Centre) was designed and built in 1957 using a unique method of construction known as 'Butler Blocks'; a system of building designed by a building company, Stephenson (Huddersfield) Ltd. These blocks were commonly used for constructing church halls, stores and workshops. Butler Blocks measured 18" x 9" x 9" and were described as 'lightweight aggregate with a honeycomb of cellular hollow cores which stops short of the front face of the block. The lower exterior edge of the block projects over the block below, protects joint and cuts down on need for pointing.'
- 5.23 The area of land now occupied by Shephallbury Park Primary School had been designated for a school in the 1953 plans; the school was not built until 1959. It was designed by G C Fardell, County Architect.
- 5.24 A petrol filling station was built on the triangular plot on the south side of Broadwater Crescent opposite the church and vicarage in c1962. This has since been replaced by a car showroom.
- 5.25 In 1964 the Broadwater Maintenance Depot was built to the east of the Willows Link shopping centre, it was designed by Stevenage Development Corporation Estates Department and consisted of a long single storey brick range with a gabled roof and rooflights.
- 5.26 The Burydale Children's Home (demolished November 2008) was designed by County Architect G C Fardell in 1965 and constructed soon after.
- 5.27 Stevenage Development Corporation realised that they had not built sufficient garages for the increasing car ownership by residents throughout Stevenage New Town so further garage blocks were built. These included the brick built garages at the north end of Burydale.
- 5.28 The provision of a nursery school had been proposed in the area, one possibility was constructing it to the rear of housing along the north side of Spring Drive but this was never built and a secluded area of green space remains as a recreation ground.
- 5.29 Gladstone Court, the six storey block of flats for the elderly, was designed by Leslie W Aked (Chief Executive Architect, Stevenage Development Corporation) in 1968. Disabled persons housing, the unusual single storey buildings with steep monopitch roofs were built in 1971 to the west of Gladstone Court (Fig. 13). A doctor's surgery (Knebworth and Marymead Medical Practice) was constructed to the south of Gladstone Court in the 1970s so by this time the area had a good range of local facilities.



**Figure 13.** Disabled persons housing, Gladstone Court

- 5.30 The drawn plans for the Broadwater area went into a great deal of detail, even the treatment of boundaries was considered. Some of the proposed fencing / boundary treatment methods included oak palisade fencing, cleft chestnut fencing, concrete bollards, concrete posts with galvanised tubular rails, hazel wattle hurdles, brick walls and hedge; a few examples of which remain today.
- 5.31 Many of the road names used for the new housing in Broadwater were taken from existing local field names or names of local landowners. Spring Drive takes its name from Spring Field or Marymead Spring. Marymead is likely to derive its name from the word 'mirey' or marshy, an indication of the lands past tendency to flood; Marymead Spring lies in a dip and contains a spring / watercourse so it would have been naturally wet and prone to flooding. Nodes Drive is named after the Nodes family who were lords of the manor of Shephall from 1542 to the end of the eighteenth century.

#### **The archaeological significance and potential of the area**

- 5.32 Human activity has been recorded in and around Stevenage since prehistory. Of the 200 entries that currently appear on the Historic Environment Record for Stevenage, none are sited within the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area.
- 5.33 However it is likely that this area was occupied in the Roman and early Medieval periods. Roman building materials (brick and tile) and a bronze coin of Constantine were found near the eastern end of Broadwater Crescent; it has been suggested there was a Roman villa in the vicinity (HHER 444). Traces of an Anglo-Saxon hut, a rare archaeological discovery, and associated pottery were also found at the east end of Broadwater Crescent (HHER 455). Although the conservation area has been extensively developed there may be the potential for further archaeological finds.



## 6.0 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### The character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

- 6.1 Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area has a strong residential character, Broadwater Crescent is lined on either side by short terraces of two-storey houses, semi-detached houses and residential streets lead off from Broadwater Crescent to the north and south. The core of the conservation area is the shopping centre, church and public house on the north side of Broadwater Crescent along with the block of flats (Gladstone Court) opposite.

### Open spaces

- 6.2 Broadwater, as a whole, was well planned and contains a number of green open spaces; the area also has a large number of trees, grass verges and hedges. Terraced housing is occasionally set back from the road and laid out surrounding a green on three sides; examples of this are seen along the north side of Broadwater Crescent and at the south end of Burydale.
- 6.3 A secluded grassed recreational area is hidden behind the houses on the north side of Spring Drive; it is reached from footpaths along the east and west sides of Spring Drive.
- 6.4 Marymead Spring is a triangular area of old woodland containing a spring. Although not an 'open space', as it is thickly wooded, its footpaths are used by local residents. The trees are visible from many parts of the conservation area and form an important backdrop.
- 6.5 Shephall Lane, an old trackway and now a footpath, forms much of the northern boundary of the conservation area. Hedgerows line either side of the path with several large trees forming the boundary of Shephallbury Park. Views into the park contribute to the rural nature of this footpath.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 14.** Green spaces; recreation ground behind housing on Spring Drive (a), housing set round a Green on Broadwater Crescent (b)

### Landmark buildings

6.6

Within the conservation area are a small number of landmark buildings; these are visually important structures that make a statement, form a full stop at the beginning or end of a view, hold an important position, can be seen at a distance or stand above the roofline of the surrounding buildings. These landmark buildings are:

- Gladstone Court. This 6-storey block of flats stands out due to its height.
- The church of St Peter. Holds a prominent position on the corner of Broadwater Crescent and The Willows.
- Marymead shopping centre and flats. The two blocks hold a prominent position and at 3-storeys are higher than the surrounding terrace housing.
- The Man in the Moon Public House. Holds a prominent position on the corner of Broadwater Crescent and The Willows.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Figure 15.** Landmark Buildings within Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area; Gladstone Court (a), Church of St. Peter (b), Marymead shops (c), Man in the Moon Public House (d)

### Focal point

6.7

The focal point of the conservation area is the group of four landmark buildings in the centre of the conservation area and either side of Broadwater Crescent, in particular Gladstone Court and Marymead shops.

### Key views and vistas

- 6.8 Within Broadwater Conservation Area are various views and vistas which relate to its planned development, original landscape features and topography. The views along Broadwater Crescent with its avenue of trees and grass verges are pleasant, particularly during the summer and autumn. Views along Shephall Lane with its hedgerows impart a rural and historic feel to the northern boundary of the conservation area. Distant views of the open countryside near Datchworth are gained when looking to the south from the top of Spring Drive. Views of Marymead Spring with its woodland are gained from many viewpoints and views into Marymead Spring from the north with its gnarled tree trunks give a clear indication of the ancient nature of this area of woodland.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Figure 16.** Key views and vistas. View along Shephall Lane (a), view into Marymead Spring from the north (b), views along Broadwater Crescent (c and d)



## 7.0 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area is part of the larger 1953 New Town area of development. It was carefully designed with housing surrounding the central core of shops, church and public house. The six-storey block of flats for the elderly, the adjacent single storey dwellings for the disabled and a bus stop are sited directly opposite the shops. Marymead also contains a doctors surgery, again, conveniently sited to the south of the elderly persons housing. A school was provided to the northeast, near Shephallbury Park and provision was made for a childrens home on Burydale (now demolished). The carefully planned design of the area has been retained and none of the original terraced housing appears to have been demolished.



**Figure 17.** Various views within the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area





**Figure 18.** Broadwater Conservation Area, character analysis map

## **Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and their contribution to special interest of the area**

- 7.2 The appearance of the buildings within the conservation area is similar and relates to their period of construction, size and architectural style. The houses are almost all designed by Stevenage Development Corporation architect D P Reay in 1953. Interest has been created by the mixture of different house styles and materials employed, uniformity has been avoided. Efforts were made to create attractive, modern yet affordable housing to make Stevenage a place people would want to move to.
- 7.3 There are no statutorily listed buildings within the conservation area. Despite this the housing is still architecturally interesting. One building is of particular importance to the conservation area due to its interesting architectural design and detailing, in particular its east elevation:

- Church of St. Peter, Broadwater Crescent (Fig. 19)



**Figure 19.** East elevation of the Church of St Peter, Broadwater Crescent

- 7.4 The housing on Marymead Drive and fronting on to Broadwater Crescent at the west end of the conservation area is a good example of Wimpey 'no fines' housing, an affordable post-war building method and the first houses to be built within Broadwater (Fig. 20). The terraced houses are plain in style with a pebble-dashed finish, concrete roof tiles and simple flat roofed projecting concrete porches supported on one side by a narrow concrete wall.
- 7.5 Various styles of houses front onto Broadwater Crescent, there are short terraces of houses with gabled roofs; pairs of semi-detached houses with an unusual mix of orange brick at ground floor level and yellow brick at first floor level (Nos. 300 – 318 even, Broadwater Crescent) and a block of maisonettes. The vicarage is sited on the corner of The Willows and Broadwater Crescent; it is a detached dwelling on a corner plot. Gladstone Court, the six-storey block of flats is noticeable due to its height. The parade of shops, the public house and the church are also focal points along Broadwater Crescent.





(a)



(b)

**Figure 20.** Wimpey 'no fines' housing within the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area along Marymead Drive (a) and Broadwater Crescent (b)

- 7.6 Spring Drive is a U-shaped road with both ends connecting to Broadwater Crescent. This design was employed to stop roads being used as through roads and to keep the main flow of traffic to Broadwater Crescent. Spring Drive contains two very different styles of architecture. On the north side are red brick terraces with gabled clay tile roofs, these are traditional in appearance (Fig. 21a). On the south side of Spring Drive are five blocks of six houses of an unusual stepped layout designed by Clifford Holliday, built using a buff colour brick with monopitch roofs (Fig. 21b). At the east and west ends are similar blocks of three or four houses, also designed by Clifford Holliday. Hedge boundaries have been retained along much of the length of Spring Drive.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 21.** Housing along Spring Drive; red brick terraces on north side (a), houses designed by Clifford Holliday on south side (b)

- 7.7 On the western side of Spring Drive are four pairs of semi-detached houses constructed for housing police officers. One of these pairs of houses has retained its original crittall windows and flat roofed porches (Fig. 22a). On the opposite side of the road are the Doctors' Surgery and also a short terrace of four houses fronting on to a footpath.
- 7.8 The Willows, like Spring Drive, is a U-shaped road with both ends connecting with Broadwater Crescent. Willows Link, as the name suggests, links both sides of The Willows and runs just to the rear of the Marymead shops.
- 7.9 Burydale is located to the east of The Willows. The terraces lying in an east-west direction between The Willows and Burydale are designed using the 'Radburn' principle and layout with houses fronting on to a paved footpath instead of the road.

This system was commonly used in post-war housing areas throughout the country, copying the pioneering development of Radburn, New Jersey in the 1930's and designed to keep pedestrians separate from motor traffic. The Radburn system was not always popular as people could not park outside their house, house numbering was complicated and it made deliveries very awkward. The houses on Burydale with monopitch roofs and unusual porch designs are another good example of the avant garde nature of the designs employed by the Stevenage Development Corporation architects (Fig. 22b).



(a)



(b)

**Figure 22.** Semi-detached police housing on Spring Drive (a), 19 – 53 Burydale, houses laid out on the Radburn system (b)

7.10 Housing on The Willows, Willows Link, Burydale and Nodes Drive is all of two-storey terraces, variation being provided by the differing house designs, roof styles and brick colours (Fig. 23). Footpaths link either end of The Willows to Shephall Lane.



**Figure 23.** Housing on The Willows and Willows Link



- 7.11 The scout hut building / Baden Powell Memorial Hall (and now the Whomerley Spiritualist Centre) was constructed using Butler Blocks, a 1950s affordable construction method involving the use of precast concrete blocks (Fig. 24).



**Figure 24.** Whomerley Spiritualist Centre; an example of ‘Butler Block’ construction

- 7.12 Of particular interest are the differing styles of 1950s porches used throughout Broadwater; they are all flat roofed and some are asymmetric so very typical of the period (Fig. 25). The porches often project out from the front of the house and are constructed with a flat concrete roof with either steel supporting columns, brick support walls or concrete support walls. Often the porches are party enclosed and include a bin store / coal store area – these are either slatted timber or brick with small openings to allow ventilation. The replacement of original porches is one of the most damaging alterations made to these terraced houses.



**Figure 25.** Varying porch designs within the conservation area

- 7.13 Although they are only ancillary structures, some of the garages within the conservation area are of particular interest due to their unusual design and construction. Terraced houses were built without integral garages but garaging 'en-bloc' was sited throughout the Broadwater area; at the end of streets or to the rear of terraces. The 1950s garage blocks were constructed using pre-cast concrete blocks, the original garage doors were timber and were held by large cast iron straps and pintle hinges (Figs. 26 a & b); few examples of these remain. In the 1960s the need for additional garaging was realised and a number of brick built garage blocks were constructed (Fig. 26c). There is still insufficient garaging for the number of cars now being used resulting in a large amount of on-street parking.
- 7.14 There is one example within the conservation area of a single garage on the east side of The Willows which appears to be formed from four large interlocking precast concrete slabs, a highly unusual form of experimental 1950's construction (Fig. 26d).



**Figure 26.** Garages within Broadwater (Marymead) conservation area; 1950s garage to rear of Spring Drive (a); original garage doors (b), 1960s brick built garages (c), unusual 1950s garage (d)

### **Prevalent and traditional building materials**

- 7.15 The majority of houses within the conservation area are two storey terraces with gabled tiled roofs or monopitch felt roofs. The common building materials are:

*Walls:* Brick, machine made in a variety of colours - red, yellow, orange, buff; some areas of painted render. A few houses have been painted. The 'Wimpey no fines' housing on Marymead is of cast concrete construction.

*Roofs:* Mostly brown clay tile / pantile. Monopitch roofs are covered with felt roofs or have been re-covered with a projecting plastic covering when the felt roof has failed.

*Gutters:* Some of the terraces have integral concrete guttering systems at eaves level. Plastic gutters are also common.

*Windows:* uPVC casement windows, a few metal / crittall casement windows have been retained.

*Doors:* uPVC with glazed panels; timber with glazed panels.

*Chimney stacks:* Brick (to match the brick colour of the house).

### **Retention of original features**

- 7.16 The conservation area retains some of its original 1950s / 1960s features including crittall windows, cast concrete lamp-posts on Marymead, concrete bollards and the bus stop on Broadwater Crescent (Fig. 27).



**Figure 27.** 1950s / 1960s bus stop with associated cast concrete post on Broadwater Crescent

### **Contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces**

- 7.17 Green spaces contribute greatly to the character of the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area; these areas have already been examined in the spatial analysis. The importance of setting houses around small greens, planting trees and hedges, laying grass verges and retaining old areas of woodland was realised early on in the development of Stevenage new town. A large number of trees (in particular maple and lime trees) were planted within Broadwater and other new town neighbourhoods; these trees have now reached maturity. There are no Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) within the conservation area; trees are protected under existing conservation area legislation. Marymead Spring is protected as a wildlife site and Shephall Lane is protected as an ancient lane with associated hedgerows.



## Negative factors

### *Street paving and furniture*

- 7.18 The paving along Broadwater Crescent is uneven in places and may require re-setting. The pavements along the residential streets have tracks of re-laid tarmac along their lengths following utility works. As this is a comparatively modern residential conservation area the appearance of the pavements is less visually disruptive than it might be in a more historic or rural conservation area.

### *Car parking / loss of front gardens*

- 7.19 In a number of cases front gardens have been replaced by driveways (Fig. 28). Car parking is a particular problem on Broadwater Crescent where there is not sufficient space for the number of cars. This has meant cars parking on grass verges and causing them damage (Fig. 29). Along some parts of Broadwater Crescent timber posts have been inserted along the verges to stop parking, this measure has been effective. However the issue of a lack of parking still remains.



**Figure 28.** Loss of front gardens within the conservation area



**Figure 29.** Damage to grass verges along Broadwater Crescent

### *Loss of traditional architectural features*

- 7.20 The majority of 1950s housing in the conservation area (and throughout Stevenage) have lost their original metal framed (crittall) windows, which have been replaced with uPVC alternatives. If the uPVC replacements are plain casements and replicate the 1950's style of windows they do not look too out of place as the houses are comparatively modern. In a few cases bow fronted uPVC windows and other more elaborate uPVC window styles have been inserted (Fig. 30b). These do not work so well with the plain linear 1950s architectural style.





(a)



(b)

**Figure 30.** Windows: Original crittall window (a), bow fronted uPVC replacement window (b)

- 7.21 A large number of the original porches have also been replaced. The original porches were of varying designs, flat roofed and commonly of concrete construction, so prone to decay. They have often been replaced with large, enclosed porches with pitched tiled roofs which do not resemble the original porch style and can appear very dominant. It is particularly noticeable when a double porch serving two properties has been treated differently for each property (Fig. 31).



**Figure 31.** Alteration to porches within the conservation area

- 7.22 The majority of terraced houses along the east side of Burydale have had their clay tile roofs replaced with a modern plastic roof-tile system. The roofs are now covered with a bright orange-red plastic tile effect cladding which stands out and will not weather with age like clay tiles (Fig. 32).



**Figure 32.** Red plastic 'tile-effect' replacement roofs on Burydale

*Inappropriate extensions*

- 7.23 There is little opportunity for extending on to the terraced housing so the houses have, in general, retained their original scale and massing. 108 Spring Drive has been extended out to the front with a flat-roofed single storey extension (Fig. 33). Unfortunately this has upset the visual appearance of the building, which was, until recently identical in appearance to the series of houses designed by Clifford Holliday along the south side of Spring Drive. It has also resulted in the loss of the hedge boundary which stretches along much of the length of the south side of Spring Drive.



**Figure 33.** Single storey front extension to 108 Spring Drive

*Sites that make a negative impact*

- 7.24 The Childrens Home on Burydale was vacant and in a poor condition; it has recently been demolished (November 2008). It is understood a new Childrens Home will be built on the site.
- 7.25 The vacant car showroom (Stevenage Car Centre) on the south side of Broadwater Crescent is a late twentieth century grey painted metal clad building; now that it and the large site it occupies is vacant this building stands out and does nothing to enhance the conservation area.



**Figure 34.** Vacant car showroom on Broadwater Crescent

- 7.26 The side door and window of the Mogul Indian Takeaway fronting on to Broadwater Crescent are boarded up, giving this elevation a neglected appearance (Fig. 35). The adjacent building (263 Broadwater Crescent) houses the Wheels Community Youth Project; the shopfront is covered by a steel roller shutter which remains closed for much of the time, this does little to enhance the street scene.



**Figure 35.** Blocked up door and window to the Mogul Takeaway (261 Broadwater Crescent)



- 7.27 The metal seating outside the Marymead shops has been vandalised; some enhancement of the public realm in this area would be welcomed.
- 7.28 Marymead Spring is an attractive area of woodland containing a small stream. A footpath runs round the side of the wood and is popular as a route to and from the Marymead neighbourhood centre shops, and doctor's surgery from Devonshire Close, to the south-west of the conservation area. The timber fence has collapsed along much of the length of the footpath and there is evidence of rubbish being dumped in the vicinity which mars the appearance of an otherwise attractive part of the conservation area.



**Figure 36.** Collapsed line of timber fence within Marymead Spring

*Neutral areas / buildings*

- 7.29 The two single storey ranges of retail units on Willows Link are not in the best condition and have lost their original frontages. Some of the shops are vacant and the shopfronts are covered with metal security grilles for much of the time. The area has a slightly dilapidated feel and Willows Link is dominated by the large CCTV camera at its north end. The shops on Willows Link would have once been busy and in regular use; it still contains the Marymead Coffee Bar and the Stevenage Furniture Recycling Centre so does still serve the local community; it would be of value to the local community if this type of use was to continue.



**Figure 37.** Willows Link

- 7.30 The small industrial units, garaging and the surrounding area to the east of Willows Link is not particularly attractive but the area serves a useful local function and is in regular use by local small businesses.
- 7.31 A detached dwelling has been constructed to the rear of 13 Spring Drive, it has steeply pitched gables, a gabled dormer and timber weather-boarding at first floor level; it does not fit with the architectural style of the surrounding 1950s housing. As it is set back from the road its impact upon the character of the conservation area is lessened; however infill development in this style should not be encouraged.



**Figure 38.** New dwelling to the rear of 13 Spring Drive

## **8.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 A new Conservation Area at Broadwater (Marymead) was suggested as part of the 2005 Stevenage Conservation Areas Review by BEAMS Ltd. Stevenage Borough Council carried out public consultation between 9<sup>th</sup> July and 17<sup>th</sup> 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 42% of respondents thought that Broadwater (Marymead) should be designated. 44% of respondents did not express an opinion on this proposal.
- 8.3 Of the eight additional comments, two concerned the protection of open space at the end of Nokeside that is not within the conservation area boundary. However this area is protected as a principal open space.
- 8.4 Hertfordshire County Council commented that Shephalbury Primary School and Burydale Children's Home are peripheral sites and, considering their redevelopments over the years, offer little to the conservation area. The principal idea of this designation is to preserve a good example of a Mark 1 New Town neighbourhood, and, as such, this includes the primary school.



## 9.0 MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

### *Unlisted buildings / buildings of local importance:*

- 9.1 The appraisal has noted that the architectural integrity of some terraced properties within the conservation area has already been compromised by the addition of extensions, large porches and the loss of front gardens. 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 Due to the tightly planned layout of the Broadwater (Marymead) Conservation Area there is little opportunity for infill development. However there are sites, such as the vacant Stevenage Car Centre on Broadwater Crescent which may be appropriate for re-development.

- 9.3 Redevelopment of existing sites should respect the existing 1950's architectural style of the conservation area and apply the following principles:

- 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.

- 9.4 The original design of the Broadwater (Marymead) area with its neighbourhood centre on the north side of Broadwater Crescent acting as the focal point of the area should not be compromised by any re-development of these existing buildings (church, public house, Marymead shops and Willows Link).

### *Public realm:*

- 9.5 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.

- 9.6 Hedge boundaries and trees lining many of the roads are important to the character and appearance of the area and should be retained.

- 9.7 Car parking on the grass verges along Broadwater Crescent has caused them significant damage. The verges either need to be repaired and timber posts inserted to stop parking or an option such as reinforced grass paving on the verges could be considered.

- 9.8 The wooden fencing at Marymead Spring should be repaired and any rubbish removed on a regular basis.

- 9.9 The enhancement of existing shop-fronts should be encouraged.

- 9.10 The provision of some information regarding the relatively new status of Broadwater (Marymead) as a conservation area and what it means for local residents could be beneficial. This could be in the form of a leaflet and contain design advice about suitable styles of replacement windows and porches which would sit comfortably with the existing architectural style.

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**APPENDIX 1: Extract from 'The London Gazette' regarding the designation of Broadwater (Marymead) 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:

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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](http://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