

*Supplementary Planning Document*  
**Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment**



*June 2007*

Operational Services - Planning

**Huntingdonshire**  
district council

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Further information on how the planning system works can be found in: ODPM (2004) Creating Better Places to Live – A Guide to the Planning System, or at [www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144503](http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144503)

## **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LANDSCAPE & TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

### ***Status***

This document forms part of the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework (LDF) as a Supplementary Planning Document.

The new Development Plan system introduced by the Government has replaced Structure and Local Plans with Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Development Plan Documents (DPD). The LDF is made up of DPDs, which have been the subject of statutory procedures, including independent examination, and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), which whilst having been through full public participation are not required to be subject to independent examination. Nevertheless, SPDs are a material planning consideration to be taken into account in determining planning applications.

The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment was the subject of full public participation over a six week period in late 2006/early 2007, consistent with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. All the representations received from that participation have been taken into account in revising this document which was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the Council in June 2007.

The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment should be read in conjunction with the Design Guide which was also adopted as Supplementary Planning Document in June 2007.

### ***Relationship to the Development Plan***

The Landscape and Townscape Assessment provides advice to supplement the policies in the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 2003 and the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 which together form the relevant Development Plan base for this Supplementary Planning Document.

At the same time, it is consistent with the Interim Planning Policy Statement (adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council in April 2007) and the policies in the Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, RSS14, (published in November 2006), although these documents do not form part of the Development Plan. RSS14 is due to be adopted later in 2007, when it will become the Development Plan. It will include references to the "saved" policies from the Structure and Local Plan which will continue to have the status of Development Plan policies. However, it should be noted that a number of the policies which are currently saved from the current Development Plan will be replaced by policies in the RSS when it is finally approved.

*The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 2003*

In particular, the Landscape and Townscape Assessment supplements Key Policy P1/3 of the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan which lists matters on which more detailed guidance is set out in this SPD, including:

- High standards of design and sustainability
- Safe and people-friendly environments
- Direct walking and cycling routes
- Good access by public transport
- Responding to local character
- Integration with adjoining landscapes
- The creation of distinctive skylines, focal points and landmarks
- The creation of variety and surprise within a unified design
- The inclusion of streets, squares and other public spaces with a defined sense of enclosure
- The Inclusion of attractive green spaces and corridors for recreation and biodiversity
- The conservation of important environmental assets
- Attention to detail of forms, massing, textures, colours and landscaping
- The inclusion of energy conservation measures and energy efficient siting of buildings
- The use of renewable energy sources, energy from waste or combined heat and power
- Facilities for waste recycling
- Water efficiency measures
- Sustainable drainage systems
- Sustainable construction processes and materials

Other relevant saved policies from the Structure Plan, on which guidance is included are:

P7/1 – Sites of Natural and Heritage Interest

P7/2 – Biodiversity

P7/4 – Landscape

P7/4 –Urban Fringe

P7/6 – Historic Built Environment

*The Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995*

The following saved policies are relevant: and should be taken into account in preparing proposals:

Policy En5 – development within or directly affecting a Conservation Area required to preserve or enhance character or appearance

Policy En6 – a high standard of design with careful consideration of scale and form and use of sympathetic materials in Conservation Areas

Policy En18 – protection of important site features including trees, woodlands, hedges and meadowland

Policy En21 – takes into account the adverse effect development could have on Area of Best Landscape

Policy En22 – account to be taken of interests of nature and wildlife

Policy En25 – need to respect scale, form, materials and design of existing buildings and make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas

*The Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002*

In particular, the Landscape and Townscape Assessment provides more detailed guidance on Policy HL5 which requires good design in all new housing development including conversions and changes of use. This policy requires development to:

Achieve an efficient use of land

Respect the townscape and landscape of the wider locality, including the pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions and materials, and maintains open spaces, important gaps in development, mature trees and other vegetation which contributes to the quality of the local environment

Incorporate landscaping as an integral part of the design

Create attractive, distinctive and safe places and spaces which focus on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists rather than the movement and parking of vehicles

Promotes energy efficiency.

*The Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 (IPPS).*

The Council adopted this document which comprises policies from the withdrawn Core Strategy 2006 on 18th April 2007. These policies have been subject to substantial public participation and take full account of recent Government Guidance. It will guide the Council's decision making processes pending the preparation of its updated development Plan Documents.

Although the IPPS is not part of the statutory Development Plan, the Landscape and Townscape Assessment (and Design Guide) SPD is consistent with its policies. The following policies are particularly relevant:

P1- Sustainable development

P2- The efficient use of natural resources

P3- Contributing to the social and economic well-being of the District

P10- Flood risk restrictions on development

G1 -Impact on open space or recreation facilities

G2 -Respecting landscape character

G3- Protection of important trees, hedges, meadowland and other environmental features

G4- Protected habitats and species

G7- Biodiversity

B1- Requirement for high quality design

B2- Requirement for positive contribution to street scene

B3 -Accessibility, adaptability and security

B5- Energy and water use

B7- Listed Buildings

B8- Conservation Areas

B9- Archaeology

## **PREFACE**

This report provides information on the visual character of Huntingdonshire's landscape and market towns. It has been prepared following a detailed landscape townscape assessment carried out by Landscape Design Associates in 2001.

It is hoped that the material it contains will raise the general level of awareness and understanding of the special qualities of the district, and assist Huntingdonshire District Council and others in considering future priorities for the conservation, enhancement and regeneration of the area's countryside, villages and towns.

In combination with its companion document, The Huntingdonshire Design Guide, the report will also assist all those involved in the development process to produce sensitive and imaginative designs that make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The report was adopted by the Council as a draft Supplementary Planning Document in October 2006.

# Contents

INTRODUCTION	PART	<b>1</b>
THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LANDSCAPE	PART	<b>2</b>
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	PART	<b>3</b>
THE MARKET TOWNS	PART	<b>4</b>
BUILDING TYPES	PART	<b>5</b>
CONSERVATION AREAS	PART	<b>6</b>
APPENDICES	PART	<b>7</b>

# Introduction



Introduction	1
Background to the study	1
Purpose and structure of the report	2
Practical applications - How to use this document	3

## INTRODUCTION

Landscape Design Associates was appointed in March 2001 to undertake a Landscape and Townscape Assessment on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council.

This document is a report of the assessment findings. It includes a description and analysis of the landscape of Huntingdonshire, including the constituent smaller settlements and villages, and a more detailed assessment of the five market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, Godmanchester, St Ives and Ramsey/Bury. The market town assessment has been informed by a study of typical building types found within Huntingdonshire, details of which are also included within this report.

The landscape and townscape assessment draws upon information provided within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 1991 and provides the foundation for the **Huntingdonshire Design Guide**, both of which should be read as companion documents to this study. The Design Guide provides further advice on the planning and design of new development within Huntingdonshire and builds upon the broader landscape and urban character assessments included within this report.

Both this report and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide have been adopted as Draft Supplementary Planning Documents to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan following a formal period of public consultation and approval by the Council. The Structure Plan and Local Plan both contain policies that seek to conserve and enhance the special character of the district's landscapes and built environments; a list of the key policies is contained in Part 6 of this document.

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The assessment has been prepared in response to a growing recognition of the value of landscape and townscape assessment as a basis for the effective planning and management of our towns and countryside. In particular, the use of such assessments as a tool for describing the special character of the natural and built environment, is an essential first stage in developing proposals for conserving and enhancing locally distinctive features. The impetus for this assessment has come from a number of sources:

**Government Guidance** stresses the importance of landscape assessment through the publication of Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPG's) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS's) which require local planning authorities to prepare policies based upon a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environment and which take account of the defining characteristics of each local area.

**The Rural White Paper** (England 2000) addresses the importance of understanding, evaluating and protecting countryside diversity and character and stresses the need to find ways of 'ensuring that the valued features and attributes of the whole countryside are conserved and enhanced' (see references in Part 7).

**The Countryside Agency** (formerly the Countryside Commission) actively encourages local authorities to complete landscape assessments to provide an informed background for planning policy and development control decisions and to direct countryside management initiatives. The Agency has published guidance on landscape and townscape assessment to which this study has referred (see Part 7).

**Huntingdonshire District Council** has begun work on a new plan for the area that is clear, concise and supported by robust information and research. The promotion of design quality and local distinctiveness are important aspects of the plan and this landscape and townscape assessment is fundamental to achieving this.

## **PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The information contained within this report provides a deeper understanding of the landscape and towns of Huntingdonshire. It describes what Huntingdonshire is like today, how it has evolved and how it may change in the future.

The overall purpose of the assessment is to provide both the Council and others with a more detailed understanding of the character and composition of the natural and built environment, with a particular emphasis upon those features that may need to be conserved, enhanced or reflected in new development. In addition, it is anticipated that the final document will have a wider value as an education and reference resource, and to this end it is being made available through local libraries and the District Council's web site. To allow ease of reference, and following this introduction, the report has been organised into four key sections as follows:

### **Part Two - The making of the Huntingdonshire Landscape**

Describes the evolution of the Huntingdonshire landscape and settlements over time and outlines the natural and human influences that have helped shape them. It provides a general introduction to the landscape and settlements of the district and provides the context for the more detailed description of character included in Parts 3 and 4.

### **Part Three - Landscape Character**

Provides a detailed analysis of the landscape character of Huntingdonshire. It identifies individual landscape character areas and describes these in terms of their history, character and sensitivity to change. In addition, landscape conservation and management priorities are identified in response to the intrinsic character of each area.

### **Part Four - The Market Towns**

Provides a detailed description of the five market towns. It describes the urban structure and form of each settlement and the principal urban character areas, the extents of which are also mapped. In addition, planning, conservation and enhancement priorities are identified for each character area.

### **Part Five - Typical Building Types**

Describes the main building types found within the district and illustrates the variations that occur in building style, architectural detail, materials and colours. The study of building types has informed the assessment of urban character areas as part of a typological approach.

### **STAKEHOLDER REPORT**

The assessment has included a degree of stakeholder participation to help ensure that wherever possible, the conclusions reflect the opinions and values that local people attach to their landscapes and market towns. A series of workshops for interest groups was organised as one input to the report, whilst the draft document was subject to a period of public consultation.

### **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS - HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT**

This report can be used by everyone with an interest in the planning, design and management of Huntingdonshire's landscapes and towns. This includes those responsible for policy development at the County and District Councils, government bodies including the Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency, development control planners, developers, land owners, farmers, countryside managers and local communities.

On a practical level, the report is most likely to be used as a decision-making tool in the fields of project design, development control, environmental regeneration and landscape management. It also has a value to local communities and will assist them in promoting and managing change at a local level. A number of potential applications are considered below in order to provide practical guidance on the use of this document. These include:

#### **Informing Planning Strategies and Policies**

This report contains a detailed description of the character of Huntingdonshire's landscape and towns. The information included in Parts 3, 4 and 5 will assist the District Council in the consideration of local plan policies and any further supplementary guidance, particularly those directed towards the protection, conservation and enhancement of the existing environment. In particular, the report will:

- Raise the general level of awareness of what makes Huntingdonshire special.
- Inform decisions on the inclusion of landscape and townscape policies within the local plan. These may include policies designed to protect the existing character of an area, or promote the restoration and enhancement of areas of denuded landscape and derelict or degraded land, some of which are identified within the report.
- Inform decisions on the need for, and extent of, landscape and townscape designations including determining the boundaries of any special areas of protection.

- Inform strategic land use decisions such as the allocation of land for housing or the siting of major infrastructure or development proposals. These decisions should all be informed by a clear understanding of the character and sensitivity of the existing environment, which is described within this report.
- Inform the preparation of urban capacity studies. Part 4 of the report gives a general indication of areas where new development may help to protect or restore character. This information should be considered as part of any future urban capacity studies.

### Preparing and Assessing Development Proposals

Development is one of the most significant causes of change in the landscape and this assessment can be used on a day to day basis by all those involved with development proposals. This includes proposals for built development and other forms of development which will change land use and land management practices.

The acceptability of a development proposal will often be based upon the degree to which it is judged to have an effect on the existing character of the area. This report should be used as a core reference document by all those involved in the planning and development process. In addition, many forms of development now require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and assessing impacts on landscape and townscape character is a key requirement of the EIA process.

In preparing and considering development proposals, the information contained within this report should be used alongside the more detailed guidance provided within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide in order to:

- Consider the character and context of a site by reference to Parts 3 and 4 of this report, the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, and any other relevant planning guidance. This information should be used at an early stage in the planning and design process to inform decisions on the scale and nature of development that is likely to be acceptable. It should be incorporated into a site appraisal or Environmental Statement as essential baseline information. **Further guidance on the scope and level of information to be provided in support of specific development proposals is provided within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide.**
- Consider the relationship of the site to the surrounding landscape by reference to the descriptions contained within Parts 2, 3 and 4 of this report. As a general rule, development proposals should seek to retain and enhance the existing links between town and country where these are important in defining character.
- Consider the impact of the development upon the important and valued characteristics as identified within the landscape and urban character area descriptions included in Parts 3 and 4 of this report. This may include for example, the direct impact upon important landscape features, the impact on existing views or the impact upon historic buildings and streetscapes.

- Consider the relationship of the proposed development to the form and structure of existing settlements where relevant. Part 4 of the report includes an analysis of the five market towns and for each settlement identifies a number of key features including for example, the important landmarks, key views, gateways and open spaces. These features should be protected and enhanced wherever possible in line with the recommendations of this report.
- Consider the form and layout of the development and assess how this relates to the existing landscape character and/or the typical building patterns as described within Parts 3, 4 and 5 of this report.
- Consider the ability to which a proposal makes a positive contribution to the existing landscape or urban character and addresses the key issues identified for conservation, restoration or enhancement within each character area.
- Consider the siting, scale and design of new buildings and infrastructure to minimise adverse impacts upon landscape and townscape character. Reference should be made to the general guidance contained within Parts 4 and 5 of this report and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide.
- Consider the importance of using locally dominant building materials and architectural details and assess the degree to which the proposed development achieves this. Details of existing building styles and materials area included within Parts 3, 4 and 5 of this report.
- Consider the degree to which the proposal embodies or reflects particular local features as described within the report, which might add distinctiveness to new development.
- Consider the scope and nature of any landscape and mitigation proposals to ensure that they are designed to reflect the local landscape character and support the broad landscape recommendations included within Parts 3 and 4 of this report and within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines.

### **Targeting Landscape Management and Urban Renewal Strategies**

The assessment can be used as a reference document to help prepare strategies for landscape conservation and management and to influence decisions about land use change. The character descriptions and the key issues identified within Parts 3 and 4 of the report can be used to:

- Assist in the preparation of non-statutory countryside strategies and other environmental initiatives such as Forestry Strategies or hedgerow restoration projects. Woodland expansion is now an important government policy and the assessment can be used to help determine the location and design of new woodland to reflect local character and indicate areas where woodland expansion is undesirable in terms of landscape character.

- Assist in the preparation of landscape management plans where appropriate. An understanding of landscape character is fundamental to the preparation of these plans.
- Help target priorities for agri-environmental schemes to prevent the further loss of important landscape characteristics through changing agricultural practices and promote the restoration of landscape characteristics where appropriate. A number of opportunities are highlighted within Parts 2 and 3 of this report.
- Help identify the potential scope of public realm improvement projects. Part 4 of this report contains a number of broad recommendations to improve the character and quality of the market towns. These include for example, planting to public parks and green spaces, improved street lighting, greater control of on street parking and improved signage.
- Help support the case for financial support from other statutory and non-statutory agencies.
- Help achieve the aims and objectives of the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Part 3 of the report contains a number of recommendations for ecological enhancement through both habitat creation and changes to land management practices.

### **Assisting Local Communities**

Local people are particularly well placed to understand and interpret the landscapes and built environments which form part of their daily lives, and their knowledge is increasingly in demand. The results of the assessment can be used by local communities to help promote and manage change in order to:

- Promote a sense of local distinctiveness through a greater understanding of the local landscape and townscape character.
- Help prepare more detailed local assessments of landscape and townscape character, which should use the information contained within this report as a starting point. These may include the preparation of a local landscape character assessment, Village Design Statements or a Parish Map. Preparation of these documents, particularly if adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, will help to ensure that development proposals are designed to reflect local character and meet local needs.
- Assist local groups in identifying opportunities to promote positive change to their environment and to gain support for funding from a wide range of sources. Specific proposals may include the planting of trees and hedgerows in areas where these are shown to have declined, the restoration of areas of derelict land or improvements to areas of public open space. A number of opportunities are identified within this report.

# The Huntingdonshire Landscape



Introduction	7
Geology	7
Topography and drainage	8
Agriculture	9
Ecology	10
Historical development	11
Settlement	12

## THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE LANDSCAPE

### INTRODUCTION

Landscapes comprise many elements, formed over millions of years, and are constantly evolving. They are shaped by a combination of natural processes and human influences, and exhibit features from different stages in their history and development. For example, a specific landscape may include rocks which might be millions of years old, a Medieval village, and young trees planted only last week. The particular combination of influences provides each landscape with a unique identity.

The landscape of Huntingdonshire covers an approximate area of 91,000ha (350 square miles) and embraces a diversity of landscapes from the flat, expansive Fenlands in the north-east to rolling upland landscapes in the west. It contains five very different market towns and over 80 smaller villages expressing a variety of architectural styles and materials.

To understand what makes the Huntingdonshire landscape distinctive it is helpful to understand both the physical and human influences that have shaped them.

### GEOLOGY

The foundation of any landscape is the geology that lies beneath it. Although this may not always be visible on the surface, the type and characteristics of the underlying rock will affect the landform, vegetation and the style and construction of the buildings that develop upon it.

The majority of Huntingdonshire lies upon Jurassic Clay with an overburden of Glacial Till. This glacial till still covers the higher land to the western and southern parts of the district. A small area to the north west corner of the district is not underlain by clay, but by Oolitic Limestone. The evidence of this very different geology is visible in the buildings of the Nene Valley, which are constructed from creamy-yellow limestone rather than the brick and timber which predominates in the clayland areas.

The distinctive low lying and flat landscape of the Fens was formed by the post-glacial accumulation and subsequent drainage of peat across the north eastern areas of the district. Alluvial material has been deposited along the floodplain of the two major rivers, namely the River Nene and the River Great Ouse. Whilst both rivers contain fertile flood meadows, the Great Ouse floodplain has also been extensively quarried for gravels.



*The flat, fertile soils of the fens contrast with the gentle hills around them. Fen skylines and sunsets are often dramatic, with buildings and trees in silhouette on the skyline.*

## TOPOGRAPHY AND DRAINAGE

Huntingdonshire exhibits a wide range of topographic characters as illustrated on Map 1 (included as a fold out map in the front of this report), but can be broadly divided into the following areas:

- the low-lying fens
- the undulating claylands
- the upland areas (the Wolds)
- the main river valleys.

The fens are flat and at or below sea level. They were wetlands until being drained in the recent past to allow agriculture on the rich peaty soils. Ancient dendritic river channels are visible as shallow ridges or cropmarks, but today's watercourses consist of artificially straightened channels, with field ditches that link into a wider network of agricultural drains.

Inland of the fens, the land rises gradually into the claylands, which gently undulate between 10 and 50m AOD. Streams within this area flow into the fen drainage system to the north or the Ouse Valley to the south. The Alconbury Brook (a tributary of the Great Ouse) has a significant catchment area. Streams are generally narrow, and are not a strong visual feature in the landscape.

The highest land (rising up to 70m AOD) lies across the western and southern parts of the district. It has been incised by the wide valley of the Great Ouse, as well as the steeper, narrower valleys of its tributaries. The most significant of these tributaries are the River Kym, the Ellington Brook and the Alconbury Brook. Their meandering courses are often lined with trees and vegetation that are visible in the landscape and have ecological value.

The valley of the Great Ouse flows south-north before turning east-west at Huntingdon. It comprises a broad valley with shallow sides and a wide floodplain, which has been extensively worked for gravel extraction. Only a small section of the Nene valley lies within Huntingdonshire at the north-west tip. It too has eroded a significant valley, with a broad floodplain containing meadows and wetland vegetation. Both the Ouse and Nene valleys are part of major river systems that have been important transport corridors for centuries.

## AGRICULTURE

The clay soils which cover the vast majority of the district have traditionally been used for arable agriculture, and this continues to be the case today. The agricultural landscape includes both arable and pastoral farmland and farming still represents the predominant land use within the district. From the end of the Second World War until the mid 1990's the increased mechanisation and efficiency of farming led to changes in landscape character across the district with significant loss of hedgerows, ponds and drainage systems, and increased use of herbicides and fertilisers. High grain prices led to ploughing of more marginal land such as flood meadows and new construction techniques led to the production of large, standardised farm buildings.

This intensification of agriculture has also affected farming practices in the fens, where the cumulative effect of small changes on the landscape is emphasised by the open views. The number and extent of apple and plum orchards (previously a distinctive feature of the eastern part of the district) has declined rapidly in the last fifty years as a result of increased competition from foreign imports and a reduction in locally available labour.

However, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and government initiatives such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme are encouraging farmers to adopt practices which will help conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Huntingdonshire landscape. Under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, farmers can secure financial assistance to help preserve locally important features such as ridge and furrow fields, and to manage and re-introduce landscape features including hedgerows, ponds, wetlands, woodlands and orchards. These issues are also targeted in the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan, along with field boundaries, road verges, meadows and ditches.

Along the main river valleys, the traditional land uses comprise flood meadows used for hay and grazing livestock, and other unimproved grassland. Traditionally, these have been seasonally grazed by livestock, with cattle being sent from Ireland to graze the Ouse Valley meadows in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A recent decline in traditional management has resulted in neglect of some of these hay meadows and pastures. In addition, many drainage ditches have become choked with reeds, and the reduction in traditional haymaking and grazing has reduced the numbers of herb and grass species.



*Gently undulating clay landscapes are typical of much of Huntingdonshire. This view is of Hamerton, showing the area's large arable fields, mature vegetation and medieval church.*



*Woodland is an important feature within the Huntingdonshire landscape. This ancient deciduous woodland is at Wennington.*

## ECOLOGY

The ecology of Huntingdonshire is rich and varied and there are a number of important wildlife sites, as illustrated on Map 2, (included as a fold out map at the front of this report.)

The Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan highlights many locally and nationally important habitats and species found within Huntingdonshire, including meadows, arable land, field edges, verges, hedgerows, ponds, grazing marsh, woodland, orchards, parkland, fen, wetlands, reedbeds and lakes.

Land in traditional arable agricultural use contains many different pockets of wildlife habitat, including hedgerows, copses, ponds and verges. Hedgerows and copses can contain a wide variety of native shrub and tree species and provide an important habitat of insects and nesting birds.

They also represent an important feature in the landscapes and contribute to perceptions of landscape character. Ponds are important for aquatic plants and amphibians, as are the ditch systems which traditionally surround them. Verges support numerous grass and herb species and also provide habitats for insects and nesting birds.

Woodland in Huntingdonshire is concentrated towards the centre of the district around Wennington, in the south east corner around Waresley, and in the area around Grafham Water. Many of the larger blocks of deciduous woodland are designated as ancient woodland, and many are protected and managed as Nature Reserves, or County Wildlife Sites. Oak and ash are the predominant canopy species with an understorey of shrub including hazel, elder, hawthorn and wild cherry in less dense areas.

In places, the conservation value of woodlands has been reduced due to the replacement of deciduous trees with non-native conifers, to create mixed plantations. It is important to manage the remaining ancient woodlands to protect their historic features and diverse wildlife, and to ensure their protection as key components of local landscape character.

Orchards support a rich variety of wildlife, particularly in the grassland beneath the trees. As outlined above, orchards within Huntingdonshire have declined in number and extent, and are now a threatened habitat. There are also several historic parks within the district, which contain mature trees of species traditionally associated with parkland planting, including lime, sycamore, oak, cedar of Lebanon and giant redwood.

Wetlands are important habitats within Huntingdonshire. For centuries, the fens were a large expanse of wetland, but since drainage only a few pockets of wet fen remain at Holme and Woodwalton fens, now part of the Great Fen Project. Both are National Nature Reserves and are rich habitats, supporting aquatic and marginal plant species, reed beds, wet (carr) woodland species and a diversity of bird and animal life.



*The foreground of this view of the Ouse Valley near Offord Cluny is dominated by an overgrown drainage channel between watermeadows.*

Huntingdonshire also contains some large expanses of open water. The largest of these is Grafham Water, a reservoir which is part managed by the County Wildlife Trust and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Other large water bodies include flooded gravel workings along the Ouse valley. Some have flooded and become vegetated through natural regeneration whilst others have been restored as nature reserves or fisheries. These former gravel workings contribute to both the landscape character of the Ouse Valley and wetland resource of the area.

There are plans to create a major open water bird reserve through a quarry restoration scheme in the Needingworth area.

## **HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Huntingdonshire, like most of England, contains richly historic landscapes, occupied since prehistoric times and altered by man through exploitation for agriculture, industry and settlement. There is archaeological evidence of prehistoric settlement in the Nene Valley and in the drier parts of the Fens and Fen Margin to the east. It is also possible that a number of lanes and trackways within the area have existed since this period.

Until the relatively recent past, the rivers of Huntingdonshire have been important trade and transportation routes, and this has had a major influence on the settlement pattern within the district. The earliest evidence for settlement has been found close to rivers and wetlands, and the largest towns within Huntingdonshire, i.e. Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Godmanchester have all developed on the banks of the river Great Ouse.

The Roman period saw the introduction of infrastructure and roads to the Huntingdonshire landscape, including Ermine Street, which is now the route of the A1198 and the A1. Towns developed at Godmanchester (at the crossing point of the River Great Ouse) and at Dubroviae near Water Newton in the Nene Valley, which had a thriving pottery industry. It is likely that the surrounding land was exploited for agriculture to support the populations of these towns.

Evidence of extensive forest cover in the Saxon period comes from Woodhurst village, just north of St Ives. This is one of the finest examples in the country of a 'ring village', constructed around the 7th Century within a forest clearing. It was probably around this time that developments in plough construction enabled the heavy clay soil to be cleared of trees and put into arable production. By the Domesday Survey in 1067, almost all the villages in the district had been established, with major entries for Little Gidding and Kimbolton.

The Medieval population of rural Huntingdonshire was considerable. Within the landscape there remain many features from the Medieval period, including deserted villages, green lanes, abbeys, churches,



*World War II airfield at Great Staughton. The site is still in occasional use as an airfield, but also contains industrial buildings.*

castles, bridges, numerous moats, manors and ridge and furrow. The majority of these features are now only visible as earthworks, but some, such as green lanes, churches and bridges remain in use. The vast majority of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the district are from the Medieval period. They are distributed across the whole district (as illustrated on Map 2), but there is a concentration in the clayland areas closest to the fens.

The post medieval period saw major changes in the landscape. The most significant of these was the comprehensive draining of the fens, transforming them from a vast wetland into a rich agricultural area with rectilinear fields, roads and drainage ditches. The pumping of water from the land was initially undertaken by wind pumps, which were replaced by steam, then diesel and finally, electric pumps. It was not until the development of steam pumps in the mid 19th Century that the largest areas of water, including Whittlesey Mere, could be drained.

The parliamentary enclosures of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries had a significant impact on the landscape of parts of the district, transforming the field pattern from one of irregular strip fields to larger, regular fields edged with simple hawthorn hedgerows. The development of parkland in country estates had a localised impact on the character of the landscape, particularly around Kimbolton and Elton.

The 19th and 20th centuries have contributed major changes to the Huntingdonshire landscape, including the introduction of railways, the construction and widening of roads such as the A1 and the A14, industrial-scale gravel extraction along the Ouse Valley, the establishment of several large wartime airfields and the creation of Grafham Water in the 1960's.

## SETTLEMENT



*St Neots. The historic core of the town has retained many of its historic buildings, and a strong sense of place.*

There is a range of settlements and settlement types within Huntingdonshire. The largest settlements are the market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, Godmanchester, St Ives and Ramsey/Bury. All but Ramsey began as ancient crossing points of the River Great Ouse, and by the Middle Ages had prospered and developed into chartered market towns.

Late 20th Century development in all these towns has been extremely rapid, and all have increased several-fold in size, with large urban residential and industrial estates extending into the surrounding countryside, sometimes incorporating previously distinct villages, for example, at Eynesbury near St Neots. The four Ouse Valley towns have developed largely due to their position on national and regional transport routes, with fast road access to London, Cambridge and the midlands, whilst Huntingdon and St Neots also adjoin the East Coast Main Railway Line.

In addition to the market towns, the district contains a number of large villages, such as Yaxley, Brampton, and Sawtry. Like the market towns, these villages have seen extensive postwar housing developments at their peripheries, and have a significant commuter population. Small villages are distributed fairly evenly throughout the district, and most are nucleated in form, clustered around a church and village green. However, fen villages are different, being few in number and usually strung out along roads in linear form. The majority of villages within Huntingdonshire contain modern development as extensions or infill, whilst others retain their historic form and character.

The towns and villages contain many fine examples of vernacular architecture. The materials used vary depending on the age, location and type of the buildings. Thatch and render construction is most commonly seen in medieval houses in the claylands, with brick (both buff and red) in buildings from the 18th Century onwards. Red brick is commonly used in fen buildings, whereas buff brick is generally more common in the Ouse Valley. Limestone is the traditional building material in the Nene Valley, and is used for churches and bridges throughout the district.

The Fens have a much sparser settlement pattern, dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. Isolated farms are situated on 'islands' of slightly higher land, and linear villages are strung out along roads. The more historic settlements are located in the fen margin, where they developed above the flood level to exploit the wetland resources of the fens and the agricultural potential of the higher land.

Hamlets are rare in Huntingdonshire, but isolated farms are scattered across the district. The majority of these farms date back to Medieval times or to the redistribution of land during the Parliamentary enclosures of the 17th to 19th centuries.



*Modern housing on the fen edge can often appear highly intrusive within the landscape.*

# Landscape Character



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>The Fens</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Fen Margin</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Central Claylands</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Ouse Valley</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>South East Claylands</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Northern Wolds</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Grafham Water</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Southern Wolds</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Nene Valley</b>	<b>51</b>

## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT ARE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS?

Landscape character areas can be broadly described as a geographic area with 'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape'. Put more simply, particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create distinctive landscapes and places of unique character. Where these combinations occur in discrete geographical areas, they are commonly known as landscape character areas.

Landscape character assessment can be applied at a variety of scales from the national level, to the county, district or parish level. At a district scale, the assessment provides a broad-brush approach to identifying the key distinctions and variations in character that occur within the local landscape. It is not intended as a definitive record of the character of every individual lane, woodland or field.

### APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment builds upon the national assessment of landscape character completed by the Countryside Agency as part of the 'New Map of England' project, and the 'Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines' adopted by Huntingdonshire District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 1991. It has been completed in accordance with established methods of assessment and good practice guidance, specifically the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance published by the Countryside Agency.

Broadly, this approach involved the following stages:

- A desk study which involved the collection and review of existing reports, maps and other published data. This data was used to develop a series of overlay maps, which were helpful in indicating areas of landscape with common characteristics.
- A period of field survey during which additional data was gathered and subjective responses to the landscape were recorded. This period of field study allowed the initial conclusions on landscape character to be tested and refined through observation on site.
- Bringing the information together to classify the landscape into discrete character areas which were then mapped on Ordnance Survey base plans and described in accompanying written descriptions.
- Considering the pressures and changes influencing each character area in order to identify key landscape management and improvement issues.

## THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines provide advice on the siting and design of new development within the County and describe a series of ways in which new, richer and more diverse landscapes can be created. The Guidelines include practical examples of a range of landscape management and improvement proposals and illustrate how farmers, developers, architects, engineers, local authorities and the general public can contribute towards the process of landscape protection and enhancement.

The concept of landscape character is central to the Guidelines and a total of nine landscape character areas are identified across the County. The Guidelines conclude that development should 'reflect local landscape character particularly in the treatment of edges of developments, through the choice of appropriate native species, the pattern of woodland/copses/hedgerows, the use of landform and the avoidance of harsh lines and the use of local materials for walls and buildings'.

The nine county landscape character areas are mapped on Page 44 of the Guidelines and of these, only five areas fall within Huntingdonshire. These are the **Western Claylands, Fenlands, Grafham Water, the Ouse Valley** and the **Nene Valley**. Descriptions of the landscape character of each area are included within Chapter 4 of the Guidelines, which should be read as a companion document to this report.

## THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

This assessment builds upon these broad distinctions in landscape character and identifies the variations in character apparent within the Huntingdonshire landscape. In some instances, for example the Ouse Valley, the character area name is unchanged from that identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines although the boundary of the area has been amended as a result of more detailed assessment. In other areas, the county character areas have been subdivided to reflect local variations in character for example in the Western Claylands and Fenlands where new character areas have been identified as part of this assessment. A total of nine district landscape character areas have been identified as follows:

1. The Fens
2. Fen Margin
3. Central Claylands
4. Ouse Valley
5. South east Claylands
6. Northern Wolds
7. Grafham Water
8. Southern Wolds
9. Nene Valley

The boundaries and extent of each landscape character area are identified on Map 3, (included as a fold out map in the front of this report), and on Figure 1 over the page. A detailed description of each character area is provided on the following pages.

In some instances, the boundaries between individual landscape character areas are clearly defined and easily recognisable on the ground. For example, the boundary between the Fens and Fen Margin landscape character areas is clearly defined by a marked change in topography and visual enclosure. In other locations, such as the boundaries between the Northern Wolds and the Central Claylands, the change in the landscape is more gradual and the boundaries are less distinct. No definitive line can be drawn between areas such as these and the boundaries illustrated on Map 3 should be regarded as transitional.

## LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

The descriptions of landscape character conclude with a review of the changes and pressures affecting each area, and a number of key management issues are identified in order to help conserve, enhance or reconstruct valuable features of the local landscape. These management recommendations build upon the broader landscape management and improvement principles identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, and references to key sections of the Guidelines are provided within this report where relevant.

Whilst the detailed advice should be drawn directly from the Guidelines, a number of general principles are considered particularly relevant to Huntingdonshire and have been included below for ease of reference. These general principles support the more detailed management issues identified for each individual character area and include:

- Careful consideration of the scale, siting and design of new development to reflect local landscape and townscape character, minimise landscape and visual impacts and promote positive landscape and townscape improvements wherever possible.
- **Further detailed advice on the planning and design of new development is provided within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide which should be read as a companion document to this report. Copies of the Design Guide are available from the Council.**
- Planting of woodland, trees and hedgerows to soften the harsh edges of existing and proposed development particularly where these directly abut open countryside. Edges should be designed as a transition and should achieve an attractive composition of buildings, walls, landmarks and planting whilst protecting important views.
- Working with farmers to explore opportunities for landscape and nature conservation improvements particularly where these can be supported financially through agri-environmental schemes such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and the Woodland Grant Scheme. A range of potential farm improvement schemes are illustrated within Chapter 3 of the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines.

- Careful consideration of the effects of farm diversification including the siting and design of new farm buildings, and the conversion of agricultural land to other commercial and recreational uses. Although often relatively small scale, these changes can have a marked effect upon landscape character.
- Promoting an improved network of public rights of way to provide increased recreational opportunities and to link settlements more effectively with the surrounding landscape.
- Preserving archaeological features and promoting interpretation in key locations.
- Promoting creative nature conservation and environmental education initiatives particularly those designed to support the habitats and species identified within the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

## THE FENS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 1



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Fens landscape character area lies in the north-east of Huntingdonshire, and is distinctive for its low-lying, flat, and often regimented open character. The north eastern edge of the character area is marked by the district boundary (although the fens extend into surrounding districts). The southern and western boundaries of the character area follow the O metre contour (sea level), and abut the Fen Margin landscape character area.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- An expansive landscape of flat land below sea level, with long views to distant horizons. The sky plays a dominant role in creating mood and interest.
- An area characterised by arable agriculture and dark peaty soil.
- Water management (drainage) is fundamental to the appearance and maintenance of the landscape: ditches, dykes and rivers (often artificially straightened and raised above the surrounding land level) are prominent in views.
- Roads, ditches, field boundaries and crops are laid out on regular grids, which gives rise to a geometric landscape.
- The flat and horizontal nature of the landscape can give vertical features an unusual prominence.
- Settlement is limited to isolated farms, with a few linear villages along main roads.
- Sparse woodland cover. Isolated field trees and shelterbelts are visually significant.
- In the western part of the area, the nature reserves at Holme and Woodwalton illustrate the wet and wooded character of the Fens before they were cleared and drained.



*The national nature reserve at Holme fen is a rare example of the wetland fens before draining.*



*Tick Fen, east of Ramsey. The parallel track, ditch and planting create a strong linear landscape which is enhanced by the vertical telegraph poles. The only trees are around the farm building, which is on a subtle "island" of higher ground. Farm buildings and trees punctuate the skyline.*



*Fen village at Ramsey St Mary. The majority of buildings in this area are from the 20th century.*

## FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

For much of their history, the Fens have been flooded by the sea or rivers, creating areas of marshy swamp. Their distinctive peaty soil is the result of the decomposition and accumulation of organic matter from the forests and swamps over many thousands of years. Remnants of wet fen and associated carr woodland (wetland woodland, with alder and willow as the dominant species) are rare, but remain at Holme and Woodwalton Fens. These wetland and woodland habitats support a wide variety of animals and plants.

Attempts to drain the Fens were made in Roman and Medieval periods, but it was not until the 17th Century that the area was comprehensively drained, by initiatives including the Ramsey 40 foot drain, and the re-channelling of the River Nene. The surrounding land was then drained into the channels by a regular series of straight field ditches, initially pumped from the land using wind pumps but later with steam, diesel and electric pumps.

Whittlesey Mere (south east of Yaxley) was one of the largest inland lakes in the country until it was drained by steam pumps in the 1850s. Drainage of the Fens allowed agriculture to be established, the rich organic peaty soils providing some of the most productive land in the UK. However, the pioneering process of land drainage and subsequent agricultural use has resulted in shrinkage of the peat which, as it has dried out, has been subjected to wind erosion.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The essential character of the Fens is derived from the combination of open views of flat land and sky. The horizontal rhythms of regular straight roads and drains are typical, interrupted by vertical features such as telegraph poles, trees, farm buildings and windmills which punctuate the skyline. Key landmarks include the tall chimneys of Whittlesey Brickworks on the northern horizon, while in views to the south and west the rising land of the Wolds and Claylands landscape character areas form a ridge on the horizon. Trees also form landmarks, particularly lines of poplars forming shelter belts, which are a distinctive feature of the area.

Villages are linear in form, sometimes stretching for several miles along roads. Their buildings are usually constructed from locally produced red or buff brick, with slate or pantile roofs. Fen buildings are usually simple in shape and design, with little ornamentation. Farm buildings, built traditionally of brick, though more recently of sheet metal, are usually located on isolated 'islands' of slightly higher ground. Large, modern farm buildings can often appear out of scale with the surrounding buildings and landscape features, and are frequently visible for large distances.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

The fen landscape usually provokes strong responses, both positive and negative. Some people find the open landform and wide fen skies exhilarating and dynamic, whilst others find the lack of hills and the regularity of the landscape monotonous and uninspiring.

The openness of the landscape means that there is no sense of seclusion, although there is a strong sense of isolation in the less settled parts. A very different experience of the Fens is gained in the birch woodland of the nature reserves, which have distinctive colours and textures, particularly the effect of their white bark.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Despite its strong character and sense of place, the fen landscape is vulnerable to inappropriate change. Its long views and horizontal emphasis mean that the introduction of massive or vertical structures can have a significant effect on the character of the landscape, often being visible from very long distances away.

Development within Fen villages can also be highly intrusive in the landscape, particularly when the village form is deepened from its traditional linear layout of single plot depth.

The problem of peat shrinkage is another major issue. As water is pumped from the land into drains and channelled out to sea, the water level is lowered and peat dries out. As it desiccates, it blows away and the depth of the peat is reduced. In some parts of the Fens all the peat has gone and clay is now exposed. This has serious implications for the future agricultural management of the area as, without organic matter, the clay is far less fertile.

*Monotony or expansiveness? The fens provoke strong reactions and widely differing perceptions.*





*Formerly the bed of Whittlesey Mere, this area of land was under water until the 1850s. Note the effect of planting a single tree in this flat landscape.*



*The Holme Post*

*This post illustrates the extent of peat shrinkage. In 1851, the post was sunk into the peat with its base resting on clay and the top of the cap at ground level. The ground level is approximately 15' lower today, and almost all the peat has been lost.*

The Fens contain valuable environments, which are becoming increasingly rare at national and local levels. The open fen, carr woodland, reedbeds, ditches and rivers need careful and sensitive management to retain their ecological and landscape value.

### Some key issues

Major influences on the future of the Fen landscape are related to changing agricultural practices and water management, and a number of key issues are identified below. These build upon many of the landscape management and improvement principles included within Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (pages 72 to 77) and the Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan. They include:

- Retaining the large scale vistas and key views.
- Maintaining the linear form and distinctive architecture of fen villages.
- Management of water and drainage systems to minimise desiccation of the peat, and ensure groundwater quality and consistency in fen areas.
- Management of dykes, ditches and verges to improve ecological value.
- Protection of open fen, carr woodland and reedbeds. \*
- Taking the opportunity to flood areas of Fen to recreate extensive areas of wetlands, as part of the Wet Fens for the Future initiative. This project aims to encourage the development of the nationally rare but ecologically valuable environment of the Wet Fens. In addition, the Great Fen project aims to restore, manage and eventually connect Holme and Woodwalton Fens.
- Improvement of farm management and agricultural practice to minimise peat erosion, including working with farmers and other rural businesses to move towards more organic/sustainable methods of raising livestock and arable crops.
- Carefully considering the siting and design of tree planting. Undertaken with sensitivity, tree planting can emphasise the openness of the landscape and create landscape features such as shelter belts and avenues. It can also provide vertical emphasis along roads and dykes, and may be used to screen elements such as settlements and large buildings. However, tree planting should not detract from the open, expansive scale of the fen landscape.
- Planting of trees and hedges around agricultural buildings and farmsteads to soften the harsh outlines of buildings in the flat landscape.

## FEN MARGIN

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 2



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Fen Margin character area comprises a narrow arc of land, which forms a transition between the Fens and Central Claylands and Northern Wolds landscape character areas. The southern and western boundary of this area is marked by the start of the rising Claylands, while to the north and west it is defined by the 0 metre contour (sea level).

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A low-lying area, which slopes gently eastwards towards the Fens.
- Generally well vegetated, with deciduous woodland, hedgerow trees and orchards, particularly around the village of Colne.
- A matrix of land uses, comprising arable farmland, pasture, airfield, orchards, deciduous woodland and settlements.
- Settlements situated on the higher land, otherwise a sparsely populated landscape.
- Considerable recent housing development on the edges of most settlements.
- Rich in archaeology with numerous Scheduled Ancient Monuments, mostly from the Medieval period, including several moats, an abbey and a motte & bailey castle.



*Traditional Fen Margin view: Pastoral land use at Conington.*



*View from near Sawtry looking towards the Fens, and illustrating 'borrowed character'. Note also the variety of tree, shrub and flower species in the hedge, and the rough grassland where land has been abandoned.*



*Somersham village centre has a bustling character, and contains many attractive old buildings.*

## FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Many of the Fen Margin settlements are ancient in origin. The Fen Margin was an ideal location for settlement, as it had access to the resources both of the wetland fen (including waterfowl, fish, reed, wood etc.) and of the higher land for growing crops. Trackways would have originally crossed the Fen Margin between the fens and the higher ground, and some of these are still visible in the road and footpath network, often lined with hedge banks. The area was heavily settled in Medieval times, and many Medieval features are still visible as earthworks.

The soils of the Fen Margin are not particularly productive, and for many centuries were prone to seasonal flooding. They were, therefore, used primarily as pasture, with settlements on the higher ground. Today, farming has intensified in the productive soil of the adjacent Fens, but to a lesser extent in the Fen Margin. Consequently, the area's character has been less affected by modern developments in farming. The main exception is the loss of apple and plum orchards in the Colne area, which have declined for several reasons, including reduced demand and increased competition from foreign produce.

The most significant development in recent years has been the increased importance of north-south transport routes (especially the A1), and the development of Peterborough as an employment base. Villages which have easy access to Peterborough and the A1 have expanded considerably in the last 30 years.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Fen Margin 'borrows' character from the Fens and the Central Claylands that surround it, and these areas influence both views and atmosphere. However, the Fen Margin also has a distinctive character in its own right, comprised of a mosaic of landscape types united by their flat topography, vegetation (particularly woodlands and treed hedgerows) and skylscapes. These landscape types include farmland in arable and pastoral use, deciduous woodland, settlements, an airfield (Conington) and orchards (in the area around Colne).

The field pattern is very different to that of the Fens, with small, irregular fields divided by hedges. The hedges are often tall, and contain a variety of tree, shrub and flower species. Hedge-banks are common features along the older lanes.

The settlements in the area are diverse in character, ranging from small, isolated historic villages such as Conington, to bustling larger villages like Somersham, and former coaching stops such as Stilton. Many villages, notably Yaxley and Sawtry, have seen considerable growth in the form of housing estates over the last thirty years. Some settlements also have

19th Century development extending out from their historic cores. A variety of building materials are evident, including red and buff brick, render, pantile, plain tile and slate. There are also occasional examples of historic limestone buildings in the western part of the area.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

Inevitably, the different landscape types within the Fen Margin character area (and the influences of surrounding character areas) provoke different responses. In general, though, the area feels tranquil, and parts feel quite isolated. The small size of the fields, and the hedges, trees and woodlands create an intimate scale to the landscape, but this is offset by the expansive and dramatic skies.

The settlements also generate different responses: most housing estates feel featureless and empty during the day, whilst the centres of the larger villages such as Somersham have a bustling character.

*Panorama from Conington airfield, The high proportion of woodland and the treed horizon give a sense of enclosure, and the landmark of Conington church tower provides a focal point. Generally the landscape is in good condition, but where it is beginning to look neglected, such as the rarely-used runway, dumping is starting to take place.*





*Neglected orchard near Earith.*

### LOOKING FORWARD

Overall, the character of the Fen Margin remains largely intact, but there are pressures to which the landscape has succumbed, particularly changes in farming practice. One example is the amalgamation of fields and loss of hedges which often occurred in the shift from pastoral to arable agriculture.

Changes to land management practices have resulted in the loss of landscape quality (and productivity) in some areas. Examples include the abandoned orchards around Colne and some of the rarely-used runways at Conington airfield, which give rise to a somewhat neglected character that is perpetuated by fly tipping, abandonment of vehicles, etc.

New developments in the villages can be visually intrusive in the landscape, particularly when viewed from the Fens. From the lower ground of the Fens, settlements such as Yaxley are clearly visible on the slopes of the Fen Margin.

### Some key issues

The Fen Margin is a transitional landscape that remains largely intact but which continues to be influenced by the effects of modern development, in particular, residential and industrial development at the periphery of existing settlements. Broad landscape management and improvement principles for the more extensive Fenland landscape are included within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (pages 72 to 77) and in relation to the Fen Margin, key issues include:

- Encouragement (through land management grants) to keep remaining pasture in use, rather than being converted to arable use.
- Maintenance of existing hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands, and the encouragement of new native woodland planting.
- Prevention of fly tipping, partly achieved through a general improvement in the appearance and management of the area.
- Initiatives to encourage the management of existing apple and plum orchards, and incentives to plant new ones.
- Protection of the existing lanes and associated hedge banks.
- Protection of existing archaeological features
- Initiatives to soften and mitigate existing raw urban edges which have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding landscape.
- Initiatives to improve the visual character of existing housing estates through the management of open spaces and planting of trees.



*Typical village housing estate: developments such as this reduce the distinctiveness of the settlement, and offer a poor edge between the village and surrounding countryside.*

## CENTRAL CLAYLANDS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 3



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Central Claylands comprise a large character area in the centre of Huntingdonshire. The area consists of gently undulating farmland situated between the Fen Margin (to the north and east) and the Ouse Valley to the south. To the west lies the Northern Wolds landscape character area.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently undulating arable farmland.
- Large scale field pattern with few hedgerows or hedgerow trees, giving rise to a predominantly open landscape.
- Relatively large scale developments, including airfields at Alconbury and Wyton, the major transport corridor of the A1/ A14, and significant northern extensions to the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives.
- Extensive cover of ancient woodland in the north west.
- Regularly spaced traditional villages, often clustered around village greens.
- Numerous Medieval moats visible as earthworks in the landscape.



*Ancient woodland at Wennington Wood.*



*Examples of vernacular architecture in Broughton village.*



*Large-scale, barren landscape at Wyton Airfield.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

This is an area that has been settled for a long period of time. For example, the village of Woodhurst, north of St Ives, is a very fine example of a 'Ring Village', with a street plan unchanged since its establishment in a dense woodland c. 1,300 years ago.

Although the woodland around Woodhurst has long since been felled, the north western part of the character area still contains extensive tracts of ancient woodland, including the nature reserves of Monks Wood and Aversley Wood. The area also contains some small conifer plantations, established by the Forestry Commission.

Although historic buildings remain in the landscape (along with the earthworks of many more), much of their contemporary setting is a result of late 20th Century influences, such as the removal of hedgerows to amalgamate fields, new agricultural buildings, the loss of ditch and pond systems and the decline of orchards. Other 20th Century influences have included the development of RAF Bases at Alconbury and Wyton (built on the higher ground during the Second World War), and the loss of many trees due to Dutch Elm Disease.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

There are several land uses within the Central Claylands, including woodland, urban areas and airfields. However, the great majority of the area is typified by arable farmland, gently undulating between 10-50m AOD. A strong topographic feature within the Central Claylands is the plateau to the north west of Huntingdon, on which Alconbury Airfield is situated. The large field size of farmland creates a strong sense of openness and exposure, which is enhanced by the lack of trees and hedgerows across much of the area.

The majority of the Central Claylands landscape is typical of much of East Anglia. Its distinctiveness, and 'sense of place', is partly achieved by the regular distribution of historic villages and other features such as airfields. In the past, the eastern part of the area was distinguished by its extensive apple and plum orchards, but most of these have now been lost. The Central Claylands also 'borrows' character from the surrounding character areas, with views to the Fens influencing the northern and eastern parts, and the Northern Wolds influencing the west.

The north-western part of the area shares the topography and intensive agriculture of the rest of the character area, but it is distinguished by its extensive woodland cover. Large blocks of woodland (much of it ancient) give this area a greater sense of structure, enclosure, and higher visual quality. The ancient woodland (which is predominantly oak) also has

considerable conservation importance, as shown in the concentration of nature reserves, SSSI's and county wildlife sites in this area. In the past, the Forestry Commission has established some conifer plantations within or adjacent to ancient deciduous woodlands.

Villages are fairly regularly spaced and many are ancient in origin. Many are Conservation Areas. Several are located at crossing points of streams, and some, such as Alconbury Weston, still contain their fords. Village greens are common, often planted with stands of trees. Vernacular buildings display a variety of building materials, including brick, render, thatch, tile and timber. Extensive modern housing and industrial buildings are associated with the RAF Bases and the suburbs of larger towns such as Huntingdon and St Ives.

Along the major communication corridors through the area (the A1, A14, A141 etc) the landscape character is dominated by large scale developments, including air bases, large industrial units, extensive housing areas and the roads themselves, with their associated movement, noise, signage, bridges etc. The abrupt edges of these developments mean that they are particularly intrusive in views of the surrounding countryside.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

Around the main roads and settlements the landscape feels restless, noisy and lacking in distinctive local character. However, away from main roads and settlements, the landscape is tranquil, and there is a sense of remoteness within much of the open arable land. The tranquillity is greatest in the north-west wooded area, where the large blocks of woodland give the landscape a strong sense of enclosure, and provide an attractive feature and backdrop to views. Within the woods there is a strong (but not unpleasant) sense of peace, isolation and secrecy. The



*North-west area of extensive woodland cover.*

*Western part of the character area, looking west. Note how the central Claylands borrow character from the Uplands on the horizon.*





*Large-scale buildings alongside the A1 at Alconbury Weston are very intrusive in the landscape.*

sensory qualities of the woods change with the seasons, from the dappled light through the leaves in the spring and summer to the colours and musty scent of autumn to the silhouettes and crackling frost of winter.

### LOOKING FORWARD

The Central Claylands already contain numerous examples of the vulnerability of the landscape to development pressure, including roads, industrial buildings and town expansion. The lack of trees and hedgerows in much of the area, and the potential for long views, mean that those structures which are out of scale or context are visible for long distances.

Like many rural areas, the Central Claylands are vulnerable to changes in farming practice, such as the removal and over-trimming of hedgerows and diversification of land use for example, through conversion of land to paddocks or evergreen plantations. The remaining orchards are also under threat due to reduced demand and increased competition from foreign imports.

### Some key issues

The Central Claylands are a sub division of the much larger Western Claylands identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines and broad landscape management and improvement principles are included within pages 54 to 57 of the Guidelines. Future management objectives within the Central Claylands should seek to conserve existing landscape features and prevent the further deterioration of the landscape through greater controls on the siting and design of new development. Key issues include:

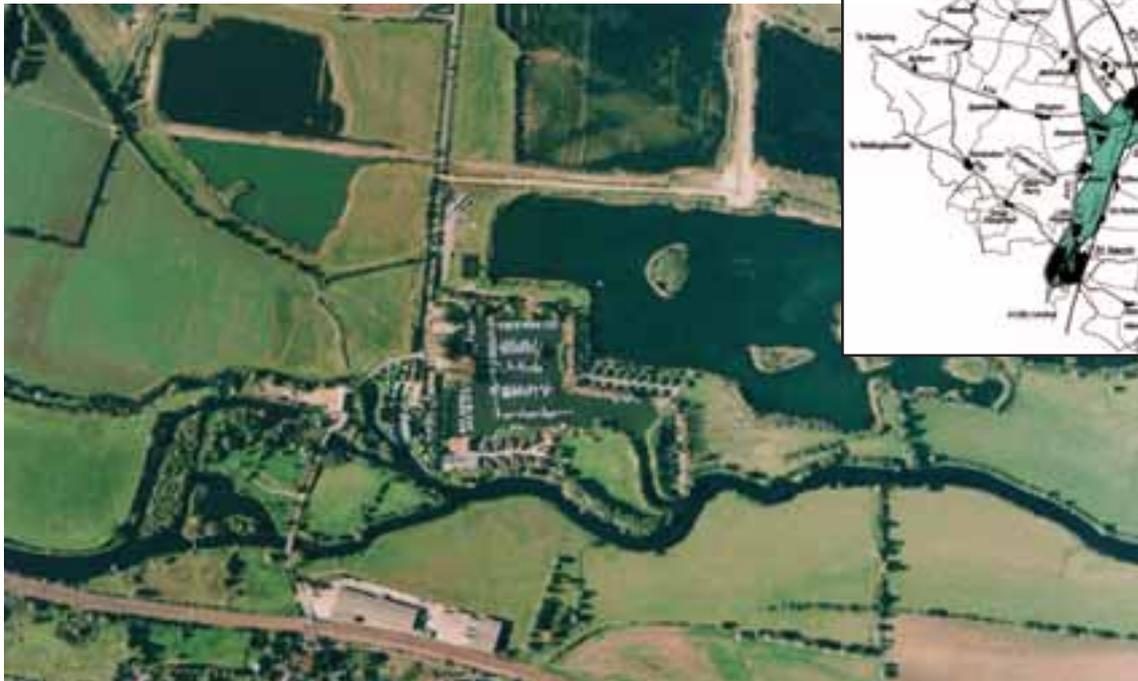
- Protection and management of existing ancient woodland and hedgerows.
- Planting of new blocks of native woodland and hedgerows to provide a stronger sense of structure to the landscape, and to screen intrusive structures where appropriate.
- Protection of remaining orchards. Opportunities to replant orchards should be encouraged through consultations with landowners.
- Protection of village greens.
- Protection of distinctive nucleated villages and urban form.
- Future uses and management of redundant airfields.
- Improved screening and planting of airfield buildings where appropriate.



*Intensively farmed land in the Central Claylands. The large fields and lack of trees give the landscape a bleak appearance.*

## OUSE VALLEY

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 4



#### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The broad, shallow valley of the River Great Ouse cuts a swathe through Huntingdonshire, flowing roughly south-north between St Neots and Huntingdon, then west-east from Huntingdon to the district boundary. Only the river and its valley bottom are included within the Ouse Valley Landscape character area as they together form a distinct entity.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A mosaic of land uses, united by their topography and relationship to the river.
- The constant feature in the landscape is the River Great Ouse. Its meandering channel is approximately 10m wide, although it sometimes splits into smaller channels.
- Several significant towns and large villages contain attractive buildings and have a strong relationship with the river.
- Urbanising influences occur at road crossings and where the valley passes through towns. Otherwise, the valley floor feels tranquil and isolated.
- Wetlands, flood meadows and unimproved grassland are of high ecological value.
- Willow and poplar trees flourish in the valley, and increase its sense of identity and enclosure.
- Existing gravel workings, and former workings which have been flooded to create significant areas of open water.
- Traditional structures of bridges and mill/industrial buildings are characteristic man-made elements.
- Many recreational activities, including the Ouse Valley Way, boating, fishing and camping



*Hemingford Grey village - note the variety of building materials, and the Dutch gables on the Georgian houses in the foreground, indicating considerable prosperity.*



*Urban park management of the Ouse Valley at St Neots.*



*This flooded gravel pit near Earith has been restored as a fishery. Native wetland vegetation surrounds the lake, and it integrates well into the surrounding landscape.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

The gravels and fertile alluvial soils deposited by the river have had a strong influence on the development of the Ouse Valley. The latter have supported the hay meadows and rich grazing land of the area for centuries, whilst the former have been extracted in more recent times for use as aggregate.

The River Great Ouse was used as a transport corridor from earliest times. The town of Godmanchester developed where the Roman road of Ermine Street crossed the river, and other settlements prospered at bridging points, including Huntingdon, St Ives, Offord Cluny and St Neots. Medieval bridges remain at Huntingdon, St Ives and Little Paxton. From the 18th Century until recent times, the river had an important industrial function, and several mill buildings from this period still line the river banks. In the 19th Century, railway lines were constructed along the valley.

Summer cattle grazing was an important factor in the development of the water meadows in the valley. In the 19th Century, cattle were shipped from Ireland to graze in the valley before being sold at St Ives market.

The 20th Century has seen considerable development within the Ouse Valley. Gravel extraction has led to many flooded workings, which have regenerated and/or been restored to provide a range of uses, including fisheries, nature reserves and landfill sites. Other modern developments include marinas, industrial estates and residential areas. Where the river passes through larger settlements, such as Godmanchester and St Neots, the valley is sometimes managed as an urban park, providing public access and recreation.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The variety of land uses and influences in the Ouse Valley have resulted in a complex mosaic of landscape types, including hay meadows and river valley pasture; river valley arable; urban park; industry (gravel extraction); flooded gravel workings (fisheries, nature reserves etc.) and marinas. Each of the landscape types creates a different atmosphere, but, on the whole, the area feels tranquil and relatively isolated because of the screening effect of vegetation and the calming quality of the slow-flowing water.

Vegetation in the Ouse Valley is distinctive, consisting of wetland species such as willow, poplar and alder trees, with reeds, rushes and sedges in drainage channels, river banks and lake edges. Flood meadows that have not been subject to fertilisers or herbicides and are managed traditionally contain a large number of grass species and flowering plants.

Settlements occur throughout the Ouse Valley. They contain a wide variety of building materials, including buff and red brick, render, timber framing, pan and plain tile, thatch and slate. There is a range of architectural styles from medieval through to modern periods. Settlements in the Ouse Valley range in size from small villages to the historic cores of market towns. There are many Conservation Areas. With the exception of Ramsey, the market towns of Huntingdonshire have a strong association with the river, which is important in providing a setting to the towns.

The Ouse Valley is valued for its recreational opportunities. The Ouse Valley Way long distance footpath runs through the valley, and the lakes and water courses offer opportunities for boating, fishing and watching wildlife. There are also several camping and caravan sites within the valley.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

The Ouse Valley is generally a landscape of high visual quality. This is achieved by a combination of influences, including the generally flat topography, the presence of water and the extensive tree cover, which together create a landscape that is both open and intimate. Much of the area outside the towns feels exceptionally quiet and peaceful, and the quality of the vernacular architecture adds to its air of prosperous tranquillity.

Sensitive restoration and regeneration of many gravel workings has enabled them to blend smoothly into the surrounding landscape as nature reserves, fisheries, etc. and to be areas of high landscape quality in their own right. Working gravel pits are generally screened by trees or earth mounding. They have a relatively low visual impact, as many of the associated structures are not particularly obtrusive in the landscape. However, traffic impact can be considerable, particularly on narrow roads.



*Medieval bridge and 18th/19th century mill at Godmanchester.*

*The Ouse Valley, looking south from Offord Cluny Bridge. The watermeadows here will be cut for hay. The bridge crosses a drainage channel that is choked with reeds. Note the sensitive development on the river bank, and the wetland vegetation which closes the view out of the valley.*





*Gravel extraction workings in the Ouse Valley. The lake is open and has not been planted to assist its integration with the surrounding landscape. However, there are plans for this area to become a major wetland nature reserve in the future.*

### LOOKING FORWARD

The Ouse valley landscape has undergone many changes over the last 50 years, including loss and neglect of watermeadows through increased ploughing and a reduction in traditional grazing and haymaking. The area has also seen development of a variety of scales and types, for example, Buckden Marina, the A14 flyover at Huntingdon, several housing and industrial developments, and areas of gravel extraction. All have had an effect on the character of the Ouse Valley, reducing its tranquillity and introducing incongruous features.

The high quality and distinctive character of this landscape make it very vulnerable to changes stemming from developments of an unsympathetic design or scale. Floodplains are particularly sensitive environments, and inappropriate development may have environmental impacts and increase flood risk.

There are plans for a significant future change in the visual and ecological value of the area around Needingworth/ Over, where there are proposals to transform the Hanson Aggregates quarry into a major open water bird reserve and increase the level of the reed bed habitat.

### Some key issues

The Ouse Valley is a landscape, which is under pressure, in particular, from recreational pressures and development. Future management should focus upon the protection and enhancement of the river channel and its floodplain and a number of key issues are identified below. These build upon many of the landscape management and improvement principles included within Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (pages 58 to 60) and include:



*Buckden Marina*

*Scandinavian style lodges have led to a loss of local distinctiveness in this development.*

- Resistance to new development which could be liable to flooding, or reduce the water-holding capacity of the floodplain.
- Protection and enhancement of a 'Green Corridor' along the river Great Ouse, particularly where it passes through settlements.
- Protection of the setting of historic structures such as bridges and mill buildings which contribute to the valley character.
- Maintenance of the river channel and associated ditches.
- Improving management of flood meadows, particularly those which have been neglected.
- Incentives to encourage management and planting of native wetland trees to maintain the traditional vegetation of the area, and to screen intrusive development.
- Careful consideration of the extent of future gravel extraction and opportunities for landscape enhancement through sensitive restoration.
- Management of recreational activities to minimise environmental impacts and to protect the existing nature conservation interests along the river.

## SOUTH EAST CLAYLANDS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 5



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The South Eastern Claylands Landscape character area is situated in the south eastern corner of Huntingdonshire. It stretches from the district boundary in the east and south, to the Ouse valley in the north and west.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Subtle variations in topography, including valley sides, gently undulating landform and plateaux.
- Tall hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees are a distinctive feature in the central part of the area. Woodland cover increases towards the south.
- Sparsely settled with few villages.
- Village forms may be nucleated around village greens or linear. Buildings reflect the traditional vernacular.
- Evidence of its past Medieval settlement includes green lanes, moated sites and deserted villages, indicating that the landscape was once more densely populated.
- Heavy clay soils support cereal crops and arable production.



*View westwards from near Croxton. The pylons are the only intrusive feature in this otherwise remote and tranquil landscape.*



*Vernacular cottages in Great Gransden village.*



*Farm on the plateau in the south eastern corner of the area. The farm buildings include traditional weatherboarded barn, a wartime Nissen hut, and modern, metal clad barns.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Erosion by water has created the topography of the area, with the River Great Ouse eroding a wide, shallow valley in the north and west. As its smaller tributary streams flow from the high land in the south-west of the area towards the Great Ouse, they have formed a gently undulating landscape in the central part of the area.

In common with much of Huntingdonshire, today's landscape contains visible features from several hundred years of occupation and agriculture: The Roman road of Ermine Street; medieval green lanes, tracks and settlements (several now abandoned); parkland from the 18th Century; field patterns from the enclosures of the 18th and early 19th centuries; Waresley Estate village from the 19th Century, plus pylons, new roads and amalgamated fields from the 20th Century.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Different combinations of the above features predominate in different parts of the South East Claylands. The shallow, even gradients of the Ouse valley sides are the least wooded part of the landscape character area, although there are some plantations of non-native conifers. Modern features such as pylons and amalgamated fields are more apparent. Remaining hedgerows are closely trimmed, and the long views into the Ouse Valley include urban developments .

In the central part of the area the deciduous woodland on the tops of the hills enhances the gently undulating topography, and there are abundant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, including oak, ash and hawthorn. Many Medieval features remain within the rectilinear field pattern of later Parliamentary enclosures, but there are few modern influences. Many verges are wide, and contain a variety of wild flowers and grasses. The plateau in the south east part of the area is also well wooded. Trees and farm buildings are prominent on the flat horizon.

The South East Claylands contain relatively few villages, but most contain Conservation Areas. Some villages (such as Hilton) are attractively clustered around village greens, whilst others (eg, Yelling, the Offords) are more linear in form. Vernacular buildings are constructed in a variety of materials, most commonly with rendered walls and thatched roofs. Church towers and spires form landmarks in views. Farms are generally within villages or hamlets, rather than isolated. There are examples of traditional weatherboarded farm buildings, although brick and modern sheet metal barns are common.

In addition to its villages, the South East Claylands also contains parts of larger settlements such as St Neots and Godmanchester, which have

expanded from the Ouse Valley up the surrounding valley sides. The majority of this urban expansion is in the form of post-war housing and industrial estates.

### HUMAN RESPONSE

The South East Claylands contain extensive areas of high quality landscape, achieved through the combination of landform, established woodland and hedgerows, well managed farmland and attractive villages. The relative lack of settlement in the area, combined with the mature vegetation, creates an intimate and tranquil landscape, which feels remote and has a strong sense of history. The smaller villages also contribute to the area's serenity, with their village greens and 'chocolate box' cottages.

However, in the areas most affected by visually intrusive development, and where vegetation has been lost due to agricultural change, the scale of the landscape becomes much larger, and the sense of intimacy and tranquillity is lost.

*View of Countryside near Waresley, which is typical of the South East Claylands. Note the gently undulating landform, the woodlands and hedgerows, the square 'enclosure' fields, church spire, and the remnant parkland on the left hand side of the picture.*





*View northwards along Ermine Street, south of Godmanchester. The introduction of paddocks, plantations, large scale farm buildings, and the removal of hedgerows have had a significant cumulative impact on the landscape.*

### LOOKING FORWARD

To many, the changes affecting the landscape of the South East Claylands appear to be relatively insignificant: the occasional hedgerow lost; the introduction of paddocks; the planting of a few coniferous trees; the construction of a modern barn etc. However, taken collectively, these changes can have a significant cumulative impact upon the existing landscape character, particularly if undertaken on a large scale, and this has already started to happen in parts of the South East Claylands.

The effects of urban development at St Neots and Godmanchester have had a more significant impact on the South East Claylands landscape, with large scale industrial buildings and residential estates dominating views in places.

### Some key issues

The South East Claylands are a sub division of the much larger Western Claylands identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines and broad landscape management and improvement principles are included within pages 54 to 57 of the Guidelines. Many parts of the South East Claylands are strongly rural and largely unspoilt and their landscape character remains largely intact. In other areas, the loss of landscape features at a local level, combined with the visual impacts of distant development have resulted in some loss of character. Key issues include:

- Management of native woodlands and hedgerows. Replanting where appropriate.
- Careful consideration of the scale, siting and design of new farm buildings, and the conversion of agricultural land to commercial and recreational uses.
- Increased planting around towns to screen visually intrusive urban development.
- Conservation of historic villages, through the avoidance of ribbon development, and maintenance of attractive historic cores.
- Preservation and interpretation of medieval and other ancient features remaining within the landscape
- Protection of tall hedgerows with hedgerow trees which are a distinctive feature of the central area.
- Planting of tree and woodland belts along major roads to screen visually intrusive development particularly to the edges of the main settlements, subject to the needs of highway maintenance, safety of motorists and the need to maintain verge biowestry.



*View towards St Neots from the A428, showing side slopes of the Ouse valley. Note the reduced woodland cover, loss of hedgerows and the visual impact of large-scale buildings in the valley.*

## NORTHERN WOLDS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 6



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Northern Wolds Landscape character area forms a broad north-south strip to the western side of Huntingdonshire, extending from the Nene Valley in the north to the Southern Wolds to the south east. To the east are the Central Claylands.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- A strong topography of ridges bisected by pronounced valleys.
- Valleys are well vegetated and intimate in scale, while ridges/ plateaux feel more open.
- An historic landscape, containing many medieval features.
- Dispersed pattern of historic villages, with little modern development.
- Distinctive square church towers topped with spires form characteristic landmarks.



*Typical ridge top view, this example is looking north towards Winwick. Note the sense of openness, and the landmark of the church tower on the horizon.*



*Typical valley view, near Molesworth. The valley is well vegetated, and contains smaller fields. The valley sides are amongst the steepest landforms in Huntingdonshire.*



*Traditional church at Old Weston. Note the combination of tower and spire which is a distinctive feature of this part of the district.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Two processes have been particularly important in the shaping of the Northern Wolds: landform and medieval settlement.

This area contains the highest land in Huntingdonshire, a result of layers of glacial till being deposited on the underlying rock. The distinctive ridged topography has been formed by streams flowing downhill from this higher land, towards the Fens and the Central Claylands. The streams have eroded pronounced valleys, which are very different in character from the higher land that they divide.

The heavy clay soil was not ploughed until the Medieval period, when a series of regularly spaced villages were established. Most of the settlements in this area are mentioned in the Domesday Book. There were also other Medieval settlements, such as Washingley, which have been abandoned and today exist only as earthworks. Medieval influence is still strongly visible in the landscape of the Northern Wolds, and is reflected in the high number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

In addition to the existing villages and field patterns, the landscape contains numerous archaeological sites of manors, fishponds, managed woodland, ancient hedges and ridge and furrow. Ridge and furrow is usually visible on land currently used as pasture, and looks like long shallow strips of raised earth, in a 'corrugated' pattern. It was caused by repeated ploughing of strip fields in Medieval times.

A further influence on the landscape is the development of the distinctive ecclesiastical architecture of the district. The church towers, with their spires on square bases, are characteristic landmarks in the area.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The landscape character of the Northern Wolds is achieved through the distinctive and repeated pattern of ridges, valleys and settlements. The ridges are generally in arable production. They have a relatively open feel, with long views and few hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valleys have a higher proportion of land in pastoral use. They feel more enclosed and intimate in scale, due to the lack of views out, and the smaller field sizes. They are also more vegetated, with large mixed hedgerows containing ancient and young oaks. The streams in the valley bottoms are narrow. The routes of the watercourses can often be discerned by a line of trees along the bank.

In the northern part of the Northern Wolds, where the topography is less pronounced and settlement is sparser, the large rectilinear fields hedged with hawthorn are typical of 'enclosure fields', planned in the early 19th Century. There are also examples of ridge-top woodlands of oak and ash.

Villages are regularly spaced, linked by straight roads and closely associated with the field pattern. Aerial photographs of the area show extensive patterns of ridge and furrow in the fields around the villages. Most villages are situated in a similar position near the tops of the valley sides, so the church spires stand out on the horizon. Some villages are clustered around village greens, whereas others are more linear in form. They have seen relatively little modern development, 20th Century buildings being largely restricted to infill development. Vernacular styles and materials are much in evidence, including timber framing, thatch and render, as well as occasional examples of limestone buildings in the north-west.

Villages generally contain many trees and therefore have a wooded appearance in distant views. In addition to numerous small villages, the area contains the historic core of the larger settlement of Kimbolton- an attractive former coaching town dominated by a neo-classical stately home.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

The Northern Wolds Landscape character area generates a very positive response from visitors, and is regarded by many as being amongst the most attractive countryside in the district. This is due to a combination of factors, including the harmonious character and relative tranquillity of much of the area, the varied topography (particularly the sense of enclosure and elevation) and the traditional villages.

The repeating patterns of topography, and changes in the scale of the landscape between ridges and valleys creates a rhythm which is particularly strong when travelling north-south through the area. Where

*Buckworth village is an excellent example of a Northern Wolds village: situated almost at the top of the hill, it appears on the skyline as a wooded feature, dominated by its church tower. In the foreground on the right hand side of the picture, there are faint traces of ridge and furrow.*





*The site of Washingley Castle. Although there is an interpretation panel, the earthworks are badly overgrown.*

the A14 passes through the Northern Wolds, tranquillity is reduced, but the visual impact of the road on the surrounding area is localised.

### LOOKING FORWARD

The historic nature of many of the landscape features in this area, for example roads, hedgerows and villages means that their removal or alteration not only has a visual impact on the landscape, but also erodes its fabric, and therefore its intrinsic character.

Non-scheduled archaeological features are at risk of being lost through ploughing, and many earthwork features, such as those of Washingley castle are hidden by overgrowth. The landscape is vulnerable to changes in farming practice and new developments, which may occur at any scale, from improvements to the A14 to new gates and fences in fields.

Villages are also vulnerable to unsympathetic extensions or development that threaten the character of the settlement, through their location, form or style. Kimbolton has particular problems in combining its historic street pattern with access for vehicles. It is necessary to address these issues in future planning and management in the area.

### Some key issues

The Northern Wolds are an attractive and relatively unspoilt area of countryside with a strong historical character. They are a sub division of the much larger Western Claylands identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, and broad landscape management and improvement principles are included within pages 54 to 57 of the Guidelines. In relation to the Northern Wolds, key issues include:



*Kimbolton village centre contains Medieval houses behind Georgian facades. The widened street is typical of an old coaching town, where travellers could rest their horses. Kimbolton Castle dominates the main street, but traffic and parking issues also have strong impacts on its character, and reduce the visual prominence of the buildings.*

- Protection and enhancement of the distinctive characters of the valley and plateau landscapes through the protection of smaller fields and meadows in the valleys, and the maintenance of long views from the upland areas.
- Preservation and interpretation of archaeological features, with improved public access where appropriate.
- Protection of key views towards the distinctive skyline of ridge tops, church towers and woodland.
- Protection and enhancement of historic settlement character through good siting and design of new buildings, and maintenance of village greens.
- Protection of the parkland setting to Kimbolton village and School, and improving traffic management in the village.
- Protection of the existing watercourses. Opportunities to improve the nature conservation value of the streams should be explored.
- Protection of ancient hedgerows and oaks within the valleys.

## GRAFHAM WATER

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 7



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Grafham Water landscape character area is defined and dominated by the wide expanse of open water at Grafham Water and its associated landscape setting. The area is surrounded by the Southern Wolds Landscape character area.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Landscape dominated by the open water of Grafham Water reservoir which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its large and varied bird populations.
- Woodlands and fields give the landscape around the reservoir a rural quality.
- Basin topography creates an inward looking landscape. The open expanse of the reservoir is not visible from the surrounding landscape.
- Recreation is a key activity, with facilities for sailing, fishing, walking and cycling.
- Contains buildings associated with the reservoir, e.g. water treatment works, pumping stations.



*The dam and associated towers are major engineered structures.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Grafham Water reservoir was constructed in the 1960s, in a basin within a clay plateau. The large dam is at the eastern end of the reservoir. The reservoir's form is functional: firstly to store water, and secondly to provide opportunities for recreation.

Prior to flooding, the key land uses in the area were arable land and woodland, and these land uses continue on the land surrounding the reservoir. In addition, recreational facilities have developed around the reservoir, including the distinctive sailing club building, modelled on the bridge of an ocean liner.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



*The landscape around the sailing club has a busy recreational character.*

Grafham Water is a landscape with a strong 'sense of place'. It is a unique landscape within Huntingdonshire, dominated by open water. However, its elevated position, at 50m AOD, high above the surrounding land level instantly makes it feel unnatural. This sense of the lake being imposed on the landscape is increased by the lack of treatment of much of the edge of the reservoir. Tree planting has been undertaken on the most accessible shores, but for many stretches of the reservoir, the shoreline consists of an abrupt and unvegetated edge between land and water. This is particularly noticeable when the reservoir is full.

The shallow ridge which surrounds the lake, and provides its backdrop, is not high enough to give the lake a memorable setting. It is, however, enough to enclose views of the water and give the whole area an introverted character.



*Footpath through new planting at the visitors centre.*

Structures within the area are associated with water management and recreational functions and include the reservoir dam and towers, water treatment works, visitor centres, sailing club, bike shop etc. The landscapes surrounding these recreational facilities are strongly influenced by their function, with expanses of amenity grassland and car parks surrounding the visitors centre. Other man-made structures, unrelated to the reservoir but visible within the view include pylons, masts and the tower of Grafham village church which can be seen on the horizon.

The sails of boats on the reservoir add a dynamic element to the landscape, and become focal points for observers. A concentration of boats occurs around the sailing club on the southern shore.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

From any viewpoint on the reservoir or the shore, the dominant element in views is the open water. The water changes in appearance and character depending on the weather: it can be tranquil and sparkling one day, grey and moody the next, then windswept and exhilarating. Therefore as with any water-dominated landscape, Grafham Water can provoke a wide variety of responses.

The elevated position of the reservoir means that its presence takes unfamiliar viewers by surprise, and gives it a slightly uncomfortable feel. The ridge of land surrounding the reservoir is too low to match the scale of the water body, and the result is a landscape without any sense of enclosure. As all the lake can be seen in a single view, there is no secrecy in the landscape, or any means to draw the eye through it. The result is a very bland landscape composition.



*View northwards from the sailing club showing the lack of edge treatment on the northern shore.*

*Panorama of the lake from the visitors centre. The hills provide a visual boundary to the lake without creating a sense of scale or intimacy. However, the water provides atmosphere and the sails provide dynamism to the landscape.*





*View from the sailing club, illustrating the "behind the scenes" features of rubbish storage, gas cylinders etc. Note also the lack of edge treatment on the far shore.*

## LOOKING FORWARD

Although the Grafham Water landscape is an artificial one, it is important that efforts are made to integrate the area more effectively into its surroundings. Opportunities exist to create added interest and a more 'natural' appearance to the reservoir edge through strategic planting and management, and to improve its conservation value.

### Some key issues

A highly distinctive character area which provides a focus for countryside recreation. The landscape offers significant opportunities for enhancement and broad landscape management and improvement principles are included within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (pages 61 to 63). Key issues include:

- Improving the reservoir edge through planting to soften the edges, both visually and physically. This could be achieved through earthmoving and large-scale planting to create variation in the line of the water's edge.
- Planting of aquatic and marginal plants to aid the conservation value of the shoreline and reduce erosion of the banks.
- Protection/ extension of bird habitats.
- Planting of new woodland to emphasise landform and skyline, to enclose views and to create a series of smaller-scale spaces around the lake.
- Management of existing woodland through a programme of selective thinning and planting, including improving the appearance and biodiversity of the woodland edges.
- Improvements to the agricultural margins of the reservoir, through the creation of a buffer between agricultural land and the water. This could take the form of woodland, meadows, copses and individual trees.
- Enhancement of the stream corridors flowing into the reservoir to improve their conservation value and emphasise their visual significance in the landscape.
- Improvement of the landscape around the car parks and visitor centres through the reduction in the area of featureless amenity grass and the creation of framed views to the water through new planting.
- Improved management of existing footpaths in the vicinity of Grafham Water, and the creation of new footpaths/ bridle paths/ cycleways where appropriate to link the reservoir with the surrounding area.



*The visitors centre is surrounded by car parks and bleak amenity grassland.*

## SOUTHERN WOLDS

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 8



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Southern Wolds landscape character area incorporates the lower valleys of the river Kym and the main tributary of the Alconbury Brook. Grafham Water lies within this Character Area and the Southern Wolds can be described as a transition area between the Northern Wolds, which lie to the north west, and the Ouse Valley, which lies to the east. The landscape of the Central Claylands lies to the north.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Relatively gentle topography, including the broad valleys of the river Kym and the Ellington Brook.
- A well-wooded landscape, with hedged fields, and some more recent plantations
- Scattered villages and few isolated farms
- Significant modern influences on the landscape, including conifer plantations, power lines, housing estates, industrial areas, airfield, prison and the Anglian Water buildings around Grafham Water.



*Ancient woodland at Brampton Wood*



*The Kym Valley, looking north from Hail Weston. Woodland is dominant on the horizon and encloses the view. The line of the river is marked by wetland trees. Hedges have been removed to create large arable fields, and pylons also have a visual impact on the landscape.*



*Great Staughton Village. Buff brick is the primary vernacular construction material. Note the archway of the coaching inn in the terrace of 18th century cottages.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

This landscape has evolved in a very similar way to other landscape character areas in the district. The formative processes of glacial deposition and water erosion which gave the Northern Wolds their distinctive ridge and valley topography also took place in this area, although the rivers (the Kym and Ellington Brook) are larger than those in the Northern Wolds. The resulting topography consists of two broad valleys of very gently undulating ground, divided by the steep ridge that contains Grafham Water.

The settlements in this area are more scattered than in the Northern Wolds, and parishes are generally larger, suggesting a less dense pattern of historic settlement. However, there are several moats and other medieval features in the area and also sites of Roman buildings.

The 20th Century has seen the introduction of many new elements into the landscape of the Southern Wolds, including plantations, pylons, masts, Littlehey Prison, new village extensions, and wartime airfields. Kimbolton Airfield has recently been developed as a business park. Agricultural mechanisation in the latter half of the 20th Century has resulted in a loss of hedgerows, ponds, riverside meadows and other traditional features of the agricultural landscape, although the landscape has generally retained a well-vegetated appearance.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Although the landscape 'borrows' character from surrounding Landscape character areas at its peripheries, the Southern Wolds also have a distinctive character of their own. Their strongest visual characteristic is the extent of woodland cover (particularly on the central ridge, which divides the Kym and Ellington valleys), and vegetation plays a major part in giving this area its distinctive identity.

There are a number of woodland types within the area, including ancient woodland for example at Brampton Wood nature reserve, and conifer plantations, some of which were planted in conjunction with the construction of Grafham Water. Copses, hedgerows and hedgerow trees also make an important contribution to the well vegetated character of the area.

The Valley of the Ellington Brook is dominated by the A14, which runs along the centre of the valley. The stream itself is narrow, meandering tightly within a wide floodplain. The villages of Spaldwick and Ellington, both adjacent to the A14, have been enlarged by new housing development in recent years. The village of Easton, set back from the road, has maintained its traditional form. The valley floor is drained by a

network of ditches, which flow into the Ellington Brook. The Brook is a meandering stream, which is visible in the landscape as a line of trees and vegetation. Woodlands are small, and contain both coniferous and deciduous trees.

The Kym meanders through a broad, gently undulating, shallow valley. Around Kimbolton, the valley sides become steeper, creating a 'bowl' around the village. Large fields of arable crops are interspersed with woodland and copses, and separated by well-grown hedgerows. This part of the Southern Wolds has a deeply rural character and there are long views over the surrounding countryside.

There are several villages in the area, with differing characters. The northern villages of Spaldwick and Ellington have much in common with the villages of the Northern Wolds, including their distinctive church spires, while the eastern village of Buckden (a former coaching stop) has more in common with the market towns of the Ouse Valley. A key difference between the settlements in the Southern and Northern Wolds is the extent of modern development: most villages contain at least one estate of post-war housing. Much of this is poorly integrated with its surroundings due to the use of non-local materials and a lack of screening to the settlement edge.

The historic cores of villages contain a variety of building materials, although the most frequently used is red or buff brick. The largest settlements are in the south east corner of the area, on the sides of the Ouse Valley: The villages of Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon have grown up the valley side and amalgamated to become the western side of St Neots.



*Buckden village, a former coaching stop, now bypassed by the A1, and with considerable modern development on the outskirts.*

*Panorama looking north from Staughton Moor. From a distance, the wooded nature of the landscape is very clear. A mosaic of arable fields is divided by mature vegetation. Note the coniferous trees in the foreground.*





*Coniferous plantation on the northern side of the ridge which contains Grafham Water.*

### HUMAN RESPONSE

Away from the main roads and settlements, the Southern Wolds feel tranquil and secluded. The sense of seclusion is largely due to the lack of settlement and the amount of mature vegetation in much of the area, which also contributes to the sense of enclosure. Yet although the area feels quiet and peaceful (particularly in woodland), it does not have the timeless quality of the Northern Wolds because of the various modern influences such as housing estates and pylons, which are visible in the landscape.

### LOOKING FORWARD

The 20th Century has seen many changes to the landscape of the Southern Wolds. These include the construction of industrial scale buildings, such as those on Kimbolton and Staughton airfields and the prison complex at Perry. Unless such developments are carefully sited and well screened, the landscape character is at risk from a gradual process of urbanisation and fragmentation.

In common with many towns and villages in Huntingdonshire, the settlements in the Southern Wolds (particularly those close to major transport routes) are also under pressure from development. A particular concern is the harsh edges of many new developments, which are often poorly integrated into the surrounding landscape. It is important that this is addressed in any future developments, and also that improvements are made where possible to improve the quality and reduce the adverse visual impact of existing developments.

### Some key issues

The Southern Wolds are under pressure from the effects of intrusive and insensitive development and the gradual loss of traditional features of the agricultural landscape. The Wolds are a sub division of the much larger Western Claylands identified within the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines and broad landscape management and improvement principles are included within pages 54 to 57 of the Guidelines. Key issues include:

- Preservation and management of existing deciduous woodlands.
- Promoting opportunities to improve screening of existing developments and visually intrusive settlement edges.
- Management of streams and rivers to maximise ecological value and including the planting of trees, copses and meadows in the valley bottoms.
- Restoration of riverside meadows where practical.
- Protection of the rural character of long distance views from the Kym Valley.



*Kimbolton Airfield has been redeveloped as a business and light industry park. Whilst such developments are important to the local economy, they can be obtrusive in the landscape unless carefully sited and screened.*

## NENE VALLEY

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA 9



### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The Nene Valley landscape character area comprises landscape associated with the river Nene. Whilst it is only a small area within Huntingdonshire (the north-west tip), it stretches beyond the district boundaries into Northamptonshire.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Valley floor of River Nene.
- Arable and pastoral land use (some traditional water meadows remain).
- Distinctive limestone villages reflecting local geology.
- A1 is a predominant feature in the area.
- Nene Valley steam railway provides a recreational function, and distinctive landscape feature.
- Archaeology includes Dubroviae Roman town.
- Parkland around Elton Hall



*Water Mill at Water Newton. Note the use of limestone for wall and roof construction.*



*Wansford, a former coaching stop and crossing point on the A1 (now bypassed). The building in the foreground is the Haycock Hotel, beyond it can be seen estate cottages built for the Duke of Bedford.*



*Parkland at the Elton Hall estate.*

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

A number of influences have contributed to the form and character of the Nene Valley. The earliest is the process of erosion and deposition by the river, which created a flat floodplain with gravel terraces on the valley sides.

The river has been used as a transport corridor for thousands of years - both as a waterway and also as a good route for roads. The Roman road of Ermine Street (now the route of the A1) followed the valley with an important bridging point at Wansford. The current bridge at Wansford dates back to 1577. A section of the railway line between Peterborough and Oundle followed the valley, and part is still in use as the Nene Valley Steam Railway.

The gravel terraces on the valley sides were good sites for settlements, and have been used as such since prehistoric times. The Roman town of Dubroviae was established on Ermine Street, just south of present day village of Water Newton. Other Roman sites in the area include a villa and numerous pottery kilns.

In the more recent past, large estates have influenced the landscape and architecture of the valley, including the extensive parkland around Elton Hall and the estate cottages in Wansford. The local availability of limestone has had a strong influence on the vernacular architecture of the area.

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Nene Valley landscape character area contains a distinctive combination of vegetation, agricultural land, flat topography and limestone villages. The Valley floor is well vegetated, with the River Nene visible from long distances by the trees which line its banks. Adjacent to the river, trees include poplar, willow and alder, whilst oak, ash and horse chestnut predominate in hedgerows and copses on the drier ground. Views northward across the Nene Valley have the backdrop of the wooded hills of the Oolitic limestone belt.

Distinctive patches of parkland vegetation, with scattered or small groups of trees isolated in grassland occur around country houses, the largest of which is Elton Park. The mature vegetation screens views out of the valley and gives it a strong sense of enclosure.

Distinctive vegetation is not limited to trees - the watermeadows and unimproved grassland meadows along the valley support a rich variety of herb and grass species and provide valuable wildlife habitat. The majority of fields are small in size and this contributes to the small scale of the landscape. The river itself varies between 5 - 10m in width, meandering within the floodplain. Some stretches of the river bank are vegetated with

reeds and rushes, whilst others have been eroded into river cliffs by recent spates.

Much of the valley bottom is in pastoral use for the grazing of sheep and cattle. However, the land is becoming increasingly used for arable production of grain and vegetable crops. A recreational function is also served by the Nene Valley Steam Railway, which itself is a distinctive feature of the valley.

The Nene Valley contains several attractive villages including Elton, Wansford, Stibbington and Water Newton. These villages are distinctive from other settlements in the district in that they are built of attractive creamy yellow Oolitic limestone, with stone block walls and split limestone, (known as 'Collyweston Slates') for roofing. In addition to the many attractive dwellings - ranging from cottages to stately homes- there are many examples of limestone structures such as walls, bridges, churches and water mills. Use of other building materials is very rare in this area and villages have retained their historic form. Some, such as Elton, have village greens, whilst others, for example Stibbington, are a cluster of houses and a church.

Close to the A1, the character of the landscape is dominated by the road. In addition to the visual impacts of the road and its associated infrastructure, the traffic movement and noise are very intrusive.

## HUMAN RESPONSE

The Nene Valley is an intimate landscape, well vegetated and small in scale. Away from the A1 it is very tranquil, with a sense of peaceful isolation. The attractive limestone villages have been bypassed by the A1, and have a timeless quality, particularly as there is little modern development. The popularity of the Nene Valley Way (a long distance path which follows the valley outside the district boundary) and the Nene Valley Steam Railway indicate the pleasure people take in being in this landscape.



*Elton village is another example of a limestone settlement. Note the use of limestone walls rather than hedges as property boundaries.*

*View southwards across the Nene, looking towards Stibbington. Watermeadows are adjacent to the river, surrounded by wetland trees behind.*





*Much of the traditional character and habitats of the Nene Valley are lost when land is taken from pasture into arable production.*

### LOOKING FORWARD

The Nene Valley has remained relatively undisturbed by recent development, but both the landscape and ecology are vulnerable to changes in management and land use. For example the ploughing of watermeadows and abandonment of drainage dykes will lead to a loss of habitats and visual quality, as well as the loss of distinctive landscape character.

The character of the Nene Valley is also threatened by one of its oldest features, the A1. Widening of the road, and the introduction of service stations, bridges etc. would alter the character of the valley and reduce its tranquillity through increased noise and visual intrusion.

The Nene Valley villages have retained their distinctive character through the use of limestone as the main building material. Future development should reflect these existing materials so that the distinctive character of the villages is not undermined.

### Some key issues

The combination of the topography and vegetation of the Nene Valley create an attractive and intimate landscape, which is enhanced by the distinctive architecture of the limestone villages, which typify the area. Broad landscape management and improvement principles for the Nene Valley are included within pages 64 to 66 of the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines. Key issues include:

- Preservation and good management of remaining watermeadows, unimproved grassland and drainage systems.
- Management of river banks to improve ecological value e.g. riverside tree planting, creation of new wetlands and ponds, and re-establishment of aquatic plants to encourage native river bank animal species.
- Management of woodland and parkland to maximise ecological value and to retain parkland character where appropriate.
- Use of local stone or a visually acceptable substitute in new building developments, to retain the distinctive local character of villages.
- Careful design and screening of any improvements to or additional services along the A1, to minimise the impact on landscape character.
- Consider landscape improvements along the Nene Valley Railway to create selected vistas and views to improve the attractiveness of the route.
- Encouraging public access along the Nene Way through improvements to the landscape and nature conservation of the valley.



*The A1 reduces the tranquillity of the area.*

## The Market Towns



Introduction	55
St Neots	57
Huntingdon	71
Godmanchester	83
St Ives	93
Ramsey and Bury	105

## INTRODUCTION

### URBAN CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

The growth and development of most settlements results from the complex interaction of natural and human influences over a long period of time. The market towns of Huntingdonshire are no exception to this having all developed from a historic centre but now containing significant areas of more recent development.

The five market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, Godmanchester, St Ives and Ramsey/Bury considered by this assessment all vary in their urban form and character and there are also distinct variations in character within each settlement. Understanding these differences is fundamental to the preparation of planning policies and proposals that will protect, conserve and enhance Huntingdonshire's market towns. Accordingly, each town has been assessed in terms of its *urban structure* and *urban character*, the conclusions of which are contained within Parts 4 and 5 of this report.

### APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT

The urban assessment involved the following key stages:

- A desk study entailing the collection and review of existing reports, conservation area statements and other published data on the five market towns. This data was used to develop an initial understanding of the form and character of the settlements and allowed initial mapping of key features and character area boundaries.
- A period of field survey within each settlement during which detailed information on building types, street pattern, key buildings, memorable places, vegetation, building materials and colours was gathered using structured survey sheets. This allowed the initial conclusions on urban structure and character to be tested and refined.
- Combining the desk based and field survey information to describe the urban structure and character of the five market towns through the use of plans, photographs and written descriptions.
- Identifying the pressures facing each urban character area and identifying a number of key planning, conservation and enhancement priorities.

### URBAN STRUCTURE

Urban structure can be broadly defined as the overall form of the settlement as determined by reference to the arrangement of urban areas and open spaces and the location of a number of key features and elements as outlined below. The urban structure of each settlement is described in Part 4 and illustrated on the accompanying urban structure plan. The key features referred to in these descriptions include:

**Nodes:** nodes are distinct 'points' within the structure of the settlement. They may be junctions, crossings, a convergence of roads or paths, or places of particular physical presence or importance

**Memorable areas:** areas of well-defined character with a clear sense of place. These may include historic centres, market squares, streets, parks and river landscapes. Only those areas associated with the main urban area have been mapped on the urban structure plans.

**Landmarks:** buildings or physical features, which are significant within the urban fabric of the settlement. They most commonly include churches, memorials, individual buildings of particular architectural or historic note, town halls and squares.

**Historic Gateways:** the main point of entrance and arrival to the historic centre of the settlement. The mapped locations identify the principal approaches to the historic centre and do not necessarily denote the presence of a physical structure or a site of historic importance.

**Urban area:** the main built up area of the town.

**Buffer:** an area of vegetation and/or open space that provides visual and/or physical enclosure or creates a distinct break between two contrasting land use areas.

**Urban Green Space:** an area of open land within the heart of the settlement. Urban green spaces may comprise parks, cemeteries, school playing fields, recreational land and amenity open space.

**Key views:** views of the town from within the urban areas and views out from the town, which are important in linking the town to the surrounding countryside.

**Primary Routes:** the main road and rail routes running through and around the settlement.

**Secondary Routes:** the network of minor roads, streets and lanes.

## URBAN CHARACTER

Urban character areas can be broadly defined as areas with a distinct and recognisable identity. The urban character assessment has been informed by a study of building types within the district as part of a 'typographical approach', which also identifies distinctive building forms, features and details.

The description of urban character considers the setting of the town within the landscape with reference to the landscape character areas identified and described in Part 3 of this report. The urban character areas for each settlement are described in Part 4 and the extent of each area is identified on the accompanying urban character plan. The character area descriptions refer to a number of building types, details of which are included within Part 5.

## ST NEOTS



### LOCATION AND SETTING

The historic market town of St. Neots is situated in the south of the district and straddles the river Great Ouse. The town still retains several historic features including a bustling market square, a number of ancient churches, attractive parks and common land. Since the 1960's the town has undergone rapid growth and with the exception of Cambridge and Peterborough, is now the largest town in the County with a population of over 27,000. The town has good communication links, being accessible to the A1, the A428 and the east coast mainline railway.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Superb riverside setting provided by the Great Ouse running through the centre of the settlement.
- Large Market Square bordered by 2-3 storey town houses with Georgian facades.
- Former village cores at Eynesbury, Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford clearly evident within the urban fabric.
- Extensive areas of post war peripheral housing with a predominance of cul de sac development.
- Large-scale industrial development dominates the southern and eastern edges of the settlement.
- Settlement physically contained by the A1 to the west and the railway line to the east.
- Traditional building materials found in the Historic Centre and village cores include timber frame, buff and multi buff brick, cobbled facades, slate and plain gault clay tiles.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

The urban structure of St. Neots is illustrated in Figure 2.

The town has developed to an almost equal extent on both sides of the river from its early origins as a small settlement on the eastern river bank. The urban area has increased significantly through post war development and is now physically constrained by the A1 to the west and the east coast rail line to the east. A single crossing of the river at Town Bridge connects the two urban areas and provides a gateway into the historic core where the market place provides a key node in the urban fabric.

The original villages of Eynesbury, Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon can still be clearly identified and provide secondary nodes along the main routes through the town. The urban fabric is punctuated by significant areas of green space notably at Priory Park to the north east, and along Hen Brook and Duloe Brook.

### Key features include:

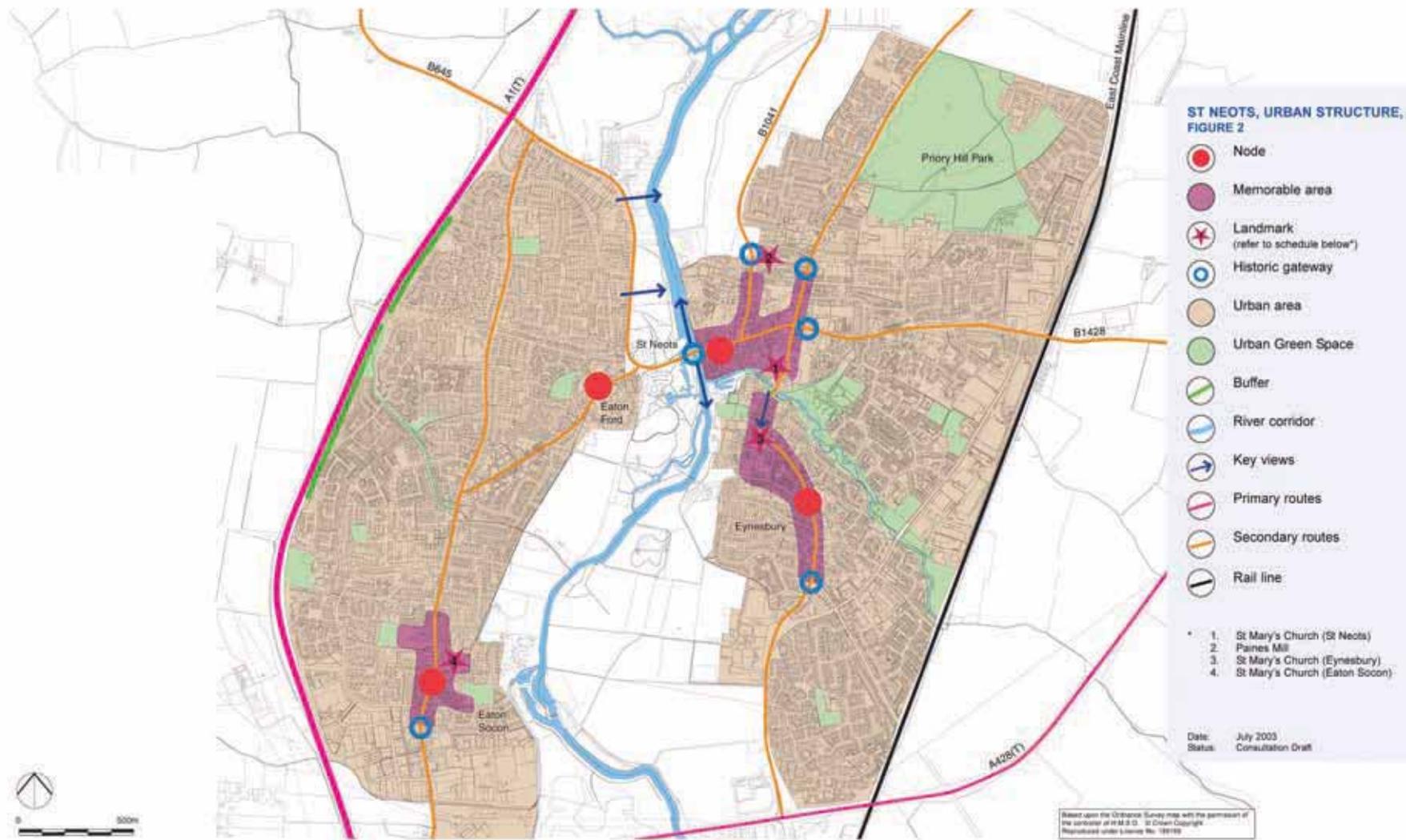
- **Historic routes:** Roman road: A1. North-south route through Eaton Ford and Eaton Socon.
- **Historic gateways:** St Neots Road bridge
- **Landmarks:** St Mary's in St Neots, Paines Mill, St. Mary's in Eynesbury, St Mary's in Eaton Socon.
- **Memorable areas:** the Market Square, St Neots Road bridge, the former village cores, the Riverside Park and Priory Hill Park.
- **Key views:** to the river from St Neots Road bridge, from Priory Park to urban edge, from Crosshall Road across Ouse valley.

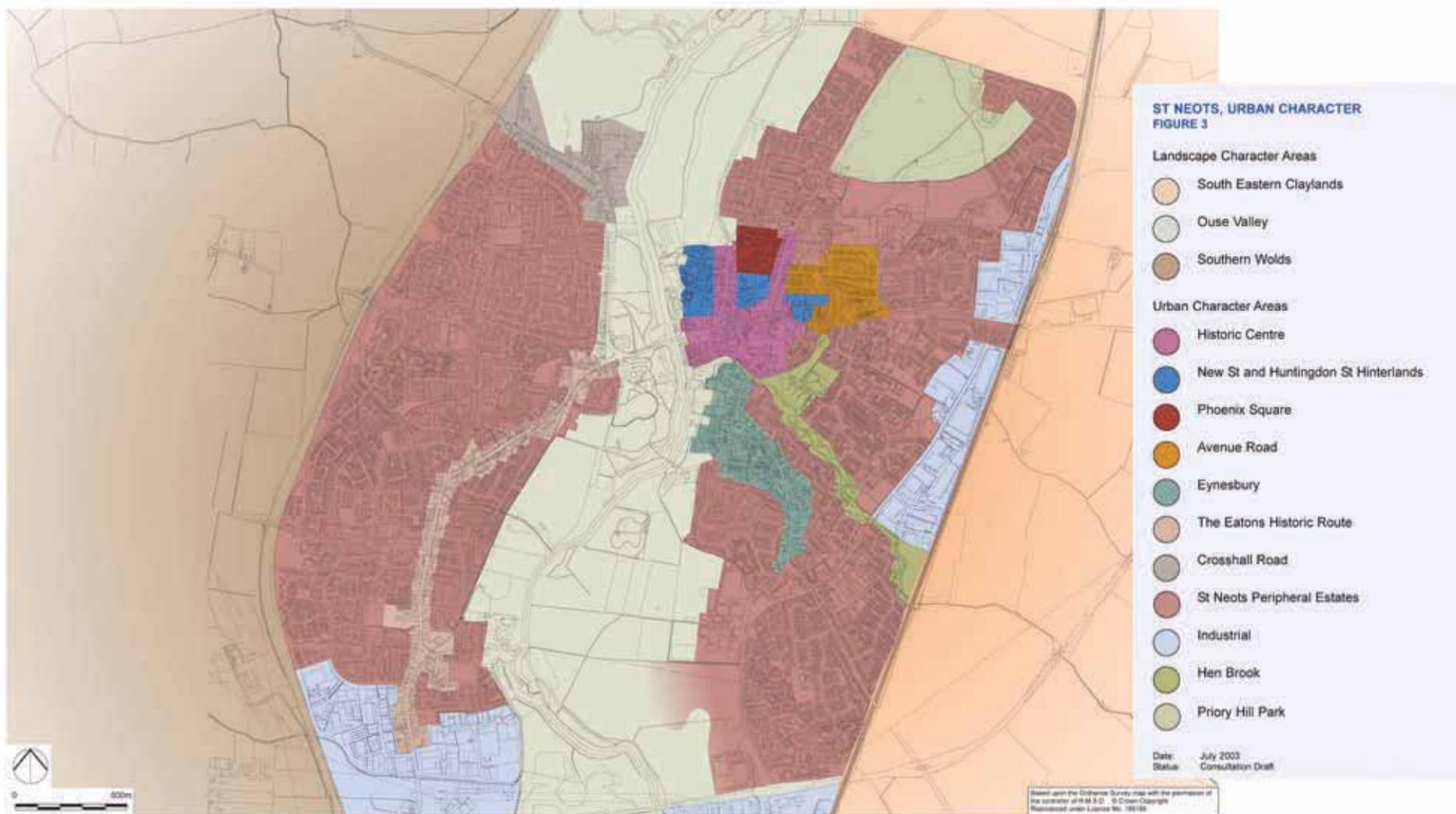
## URBAN CHARACTER AND SETTING

The urban character and setting of St. Neots is illustrated in Figure 3.

The settlement is of varied character and 11 urban character areas have been identified. The greatest diversity of character is found around the original settlement to the east of the river. Here, the Historic Centre is interconnected to areas of 19th and early 20th Century housing at Phoenix Square and Avenue Road. The original village of Eynesbury is distinct in character from the surrounding and more recent housing development. 18th and 19th Century buildings dominate the road frontage between Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford creating an historic route through the surrounding peripheral estates. Priory Park and Hen Brook provide important areas of open space

The town as a whole lies between the landscapes of the Southern Wolds, which provides the setting of the town to the west, and the South Eastern Claylands, which lie beyond the rail line to the east. The river Ouse flows through the centre of the town within a broad, open valley, which provides a superb river setting. The valley narrows as it passes through the historic heart of the town where it provides the setting to a number of historic buildings along the eastern river bank.





## HISTORIC CENTRE

The Historic Centre of St. Neots is located to the east side of the Great Ouse and is closely associated with the river. The area has a historic street pattern and contains historic buildings and landmarks that generate a strong sense of place and help define the distinctive character of the town. Building types present include T2, T3, T10 and T11a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Large Market Square bordered by 2-3 storey buildings with Georgian frontages.
- Mixed use including shops, offices, hotels, pubs and places of worship. Low residential use.
- Medieval street pattern and back of pavement development create well-defined spaces and strong sense of enclosure.
- Varied age with buildings dated to 1730's and earlier, but many streets are degraded by modern infill.
- Bustling and lively particularly on market days.
- The centre is heavily congested and traffic and bus stops are intrusive.
- Lack of unity to street scene along High Street due to diversity of signage and street furniture.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and multi-buff brick, white and cream painted brickwork and render, slate, plain gault clay tiles, modern brown and red brick.
- Colourful shop fronts.

### Some key issues

The protection and enhancement of the Historic Centre should be a key conservation objective. Conservation and improvement strategies should:

- Conserve the historic character of the settlement by retaining the tight urban grain and authentic architectural detailing.
- Ensure that new development reflects the materials and colour palette of surrounding buildings and promote back of pavement development to conserve the intimate scale of streets.
- Enhance the streetscape by improving the quality of modern infill and through controls on shop front design.
- Prioritise pedestrian rather than vehicular movement to ease congestion and improve pedestrian access.
- Consider any further opportunities to free part of the Market Square from car parking, which would significantly enhance the quality of the space.



*The market square provides a focal space within the historic centre.*



*High Street: the commercial heart of St Neots.*



*Views of car parking at Bec Road dominate the approach to the town from the north west.*

### NEW ST AND HUNTINGDON ST HINTERLANDS

The town's service zone located in three distinct areas to the northern edge of the Historic Centre behind the building fronts along Priory Lane, New Street and Huntingdon Street. Building types include T9b and T11b.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Unstructured, open and fragmented with car parking dominating the field of view.
- Strong physical links to Historic Centre.
- Mixed use including car parking, supermarkets, leisure centre, library, playing fields, and some modern housing.
- Busy with pedestrians and vehicles.
- Priory Lane area forms main gateway into town centre from car park at Bec Road. Lane currently dominated by tarmac and cars.
- Car parking casual and intrusive in places. Tree planting is small scale and has little impact.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Asphalt, buff brick, slate, low timber railing, tall metal lighting columns.

#### Some key issues

An important and busy area currently dominated by car parking and which is used by many pedestrians as the main approach to the town centre. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Seek to improve the visual quality of the Priory Lane area through a programme of improvements to building facades and boundary treatments.
- Promote pedestrian priority along Priory Lane as a key link to the town centre.
- Improve signage to and from the town centre and to the Priory Centre to the west.
- Improve tree planting and boundary treatment of car parks.



*Priory Lane provides a key pedestrian link to the historic centre of St Neots.*

## PHOENIX SQUARE

A small area of high-density housing located to the north and west of the Historic Fringe and surrounding Paines Mill. Consisting of small 2 storey Edwardian terraces and inter-war semi's with modern infill. The area is bordered to the north by extensive areas of modern housing development. Building types include T3 and T9a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Mix of building ages and styles including 19th century Victorian terraces, semi's and modern infill.
- Cohesive urban form provided by terraced housing fronting Bedford Street and Ryecroft Avenue.
- Grid-iron street pattern.
- Narrow streets with a strong sense of enclosure.
- Paines Mill provides a significant local landmark.
- Good links to the town centre along Huntingdon Street.
- Parking is in rear courts. No on-street parking.
- Quiet atmosphere.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff brick with red brick detailing reflecting the colours of Paines Mill.
- Slate to roofs.

### Some key issues

A small but distinctive area of residential development offering few opportunities for development. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

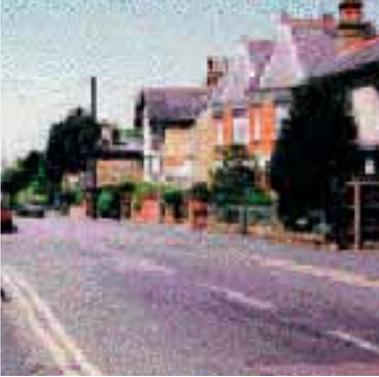
- Conserve the small scale, high-density terrace form.
- Reflect the red and buff colour palette in any new development.



*Paines Mill: a notable landmark within the surrounding residential area.*



*Terraced housing at Ryecroft Avenue is typical of the area.*



*A combination of walls, hedges and fences define the street frontage along Avenue Road.*

### AVENUE ROAD

A discreet area of large Victorian and Edwardian properties situated to the north east of the Historic Centre and centred on Avenue Road. Building types include T4.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Quiet residential area
- Wide, well-defined streets with pavements to both sides.
- Streetscape defined by continuous building frontage and low walls and clipped hedges to front gardens.
- Green front gardens and large mature trees soften hard edges and provide a pleasant green backdrop.
- Homogenous character with houses from the same era with little modern infill.
- Supports the character of the historic centre.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and red brick, slate, cream painted render.
- Green (from vegetation).

#### Some key issues

A small, attractive residential area with a leafy character and a strong sense of place. There are few opportunities for large scale development and planning and conservation strategies should:

- Maintain the integrity of the street scene by conserving the original architectural detailing and providing guidance on appropriate improvements to building facades and details.
- Promote a consistent approach to the design of garden boundaries where these front directly onto the street.
- Ensure that any new development fronts the street and reflects the dominant materials and colour palette.
- Protect existing vegetation along the road frontage.



*Mature trees provide a green backdrop to the road.*

## EYNESBURY

A former village, dating from the 16th Century located on the edge of the Ouse Valley and forming a distinct historic spur through the surrounding peripheral housing estates. Buildings range across a wide age spectrum and include Medieval, 18th and 19th Century town houses, Victorian terraces and some modern residential development to the north. Building types include T1b, T2, T3, T6 and T10.

### Key Characteristics:

- Retains some of its former rural quality despite heavy traffic along St Mary's Street and Berkley Street.
- The primary use is residential with some commercial, together with a school and cemetery. Numerous Listed Buildings.
- St Mary's church provides a significant local landmark, and the village green provides an important green space within the centre of the village.
- Numerous buff and red brick boundary walls to street frontage. Sense of greenness due to large mature trees in the streetscape.
- Good pedestrian links to the Historic Centre via a bridge across Hen Brook.
- Views across the landscape of the Ouse valley from housing and open spaces to the north western fringe.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff, red and brown brick, muted pastel colours on render
- Slate, plain gault clay tiles, thatch, red pantile.
- Green fringe to roads.

### Some key issues

A residential area of varied character containing some fine historic buildings but offering some development opportunities. The conservation and enhancement of the historic character should be the main focus and strategies should:

- Protect and conserve the historic buildings and promote the continued refurbishment and renovation of key buildings .
- Maintain original architectural details through control of building alterations, particularly to windows and doors.
- Protect views of St Mary's church.
- Protect trees to the street frontage and those within the village green, protect the character and integrity of existing boundary walls.
- Seek to provide a surfaced path from Hen Brook bridge to the Ouse Valley.
- Avoid the further encroachment of development into the Ouse Valley.



*St Mary's Church: a notable landmark within the centre of Eynesbury.*



*Historic and Listed Buildings define the approach to Eynesbury along St Mary's Street.*



*Eaton Socon: the historic character is well preserved.*

### THE EATONS HISTORIC ROUTE

The historic route through the former villages of Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford, which was a former coaching route prior to the construction of the A1. Located to the west of the river, the route is lined with buildings of various ages from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The urban structure is well defined with back of pavement development and only occasional modern infill. Building types include T3, T4, T7b and T10.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Ribbon development comprising older properties along the Great North Road which provides the main gateway into the town from the south.
- Continuous street frontage defined by large detached properties to the south and short terraces to the north. Occasional modern infill.
- Surrounded by modern residential development to the west and east.
- Use is predominantly residential, but also includes places of worship and commercial uses.
- Historic character more intact at Eaton Socon, character of Eaton Ford diminished by surrounding modern development.
- St Mary's Church and the adjacent green provides a focal point to the south. Village green at Eaton Ford provides urban node to the north.
- Presence of large mature trees gives the route a green character.
- Subject to heavy traffic with many traffic calming measures in place.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and red brick, cream render, white painted brickwork, timber frame with white render. Slate, pantiles and plain tiles.



*Eaton Ford: the historic character is diminished by the impact of traffic, signage and street furniture along the road.*

#### Some key issues

This Historic Route forms the main approach to St Neots from the south west and the quality of the existing built environment should be protected. Development opportunities do however exist through building refurbishment and new development where gaps in the street frontage occur. Conservation, planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Conserve the existing historic buildings and the integrity of the street frontage.
- Protect the village greens at Eaton Socon and Eaton Ford and the setting of St Mary's Church.
- Close gaps in the street frontage to minimise views of the peripheral housing estates beyond.
- Ensure that new development generally fronts the road and reflects the local building styles and colour palette.

## CROSSHALL ROAD

A small area of residential development located along Crosshall Road to the north western fringe of the town. The road is dominated by substantial detached houses and villas and forms the approach into St Neots from the north west. Building types include T1 and T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Suburban character with substantial inter-war and modern houses and villas, set well back from the road.
- Rising topography with western areas greatly elevated from those to south.
- Road frontage defined by low brick walls, hedges and wide grass verge. Mature trees and vegetation to private gardens creates an overall green character.
- Residential use with the exception of St Neots Golf Club and the Eaton Oak public house.
- More recent residential development including detached houses and bungalows at Savile's Close adjacent to St Neots Golf Club. Houses backed by modern residential estates to the south.
- Views east across the Ouse Valley from houses on the lower slopes.
- Listed Building at Crosshall Manor represents a notable feature when approaching over the A1 from the north west.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and red brick, timber frame with white render.
- Slate, brown tiles, pantiles.
- Green to road corridor.

### Some key issues

A small but prosperous residential area with a strong relationship with the Ouse Valley. Limited opportunities for new development. The green character of the road corridor provides an attractive approach to the town. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Protect the existing views east across the Ouse Valley from the southern end of Crosshall Road.
- Protect the existing mature trees along the road edge and visually significant trees within private gardens.
- Protect the existing grass verges to the road edge.
- Improve screening to the car park of St Neots Golf Club.



*Large houses with established gardens promote a suburban character.*



*Views across the Ouse Valley from Crosshall Road should be preserved.*



*Modern housing estates are typical of St Neots' recent expansion.*

### ST NEOTS PERIPHERAL ESTATES

Extensive areas of peripheral post war housing development dominate the eastern and western areas of the town. These estates are largely homogenous with limited variety in building type although there are differences in architectural style, especially between the 1970's and more recent estates. Building types include T7d.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Disorientating cul-de sac street pattern in many estates.
- Largely monotonous character lacking in distinctive features.
- Hard urban streetscape in southern estates dominated by roads. Lack of tall trees and hedges creates sense of openness.
- Quality of estates along Nelson Road and Cromwell Road diminished by views of adjacent industrial areas.
- Building types include detached, linked detached, short terraces, three and four storey flats and occasional older detached properties.
- Older estates located to south west and east, more recent development to north west and south east along Barford Road. Western estates punctuated by significant linear green space along Duloe Brook, eastern estates punctuated by Hen Brook landscape corridor.
- Intermittent views across the Ouse Valley from the peripheral areas to the west and east.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- 1970's estates: Grey and buff brick, timber cladding, brown concrete tiles.
- 1980's and 1990's estates: red and buff brick, red and grey pantile, timber frame detailing.



*Older estates to the west of the town are linked to areas of open space along Duloe Brook.*

#### Some key issues

The peripheral estates of St Neots are extensive, often poorly connected to the town centre and generally lacking in distinctive character. The estates have already expanded to the physical limits imposed by the A1 and there are few remaining areas of potential growth within them. Within the existing estates planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Conserve the few older properties to protect a sense of local distinctiveness.
- Protect the open spaces along Hen Brook and Duloe Brook and continue with a programme of environmental improvements to enhance the recreational and wildlife value of these corridors.
- Improve screening of housing from adjacent industrial estates through improved boundary planting and/or fencing.
- Protect views across the Ouse Valley.

## INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

Industrial estates are located in discrete areas on the eastern and south western fringes of the town adjacent to the railway line and the A428. These areas are often highly visible from the adjacent residential areas and from the A1 and A428 to the south. They comprise a variety of building types and uses including large scale warehouses, factories, workshops and recent office development notably at Colmworth Business Park to the south. Building Types include T9b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Dominated by roads and heavily trafficked.
- Open, fragmented structure.
- Prominent garish signage to established estates.
- Poor landscape infrastructure, particularly to main through roads.
- Highly visible from approach roads and adjacent residential properties.
- Site boundaries to older estates dominated by security fencing with little screening of internal areas.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Red and buff brick, corrugated iron, asphalt, galvanised steel security fencing.

### Some key issues

The industrial areas of St Neots are relatively well contained and offer some potential for further expansion, particularly to the south west where allocated land exists. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Enhance the quality of the road frontage to the south, which forms the main approach to the town from the A1.
- Improve boundary treatments to the older estates to screen internal storage areas and car parks in key locations
- Retain and protect existing mature and semi mature trees in all estates.
- Create a significant landscape buffer within any future expansion to the south to screen views from the A1 and the A428.
- Restrict the further encroachment of development into the Ouse Valley to protect the character and quality of this important landscape asset.



*The town's industrial area continues to expand south towards the A428.*



*Large scale industrial buildings typify Cromwell Road to the east of the town.*



*Hen Brook: an attractive watercourse linked to areas of open space, popular with local residents.*

## HEN BROOK

The Hen Brook character area includes the open space on either side of the brook, St Neots Cemetery, allotments and areas of public open space to the north east. Together, these areas provide an important network of green spaces within the heart of the residential area, which is well used by local residents both as a means of access and for informal recreation.

### Key Characteristics:

- Mown grassland with occasional mature trees to main brook corridor.
- Willows and native shrubs along the brook.
- Eastern areas bleak with no clear function or purpose.
- Central area well connected to adjacent residential areas through surfaced paths. No formal access to north western area which runs behind residential properties along Chestnut Grove.
- Important wildlife refuge
- Popular recreational space.
- Site furniture vandalised and in poor condition in places.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly green.
- Adjacent housing predominantly buff and red brick.
- Brown timber fencing defines boundary to south.

### Some key issues

An important area of green space which links the eastern peripheral housing estates to the Historic Centre of the town and to the Ouse valley.

Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Improve the wildlife value of the brook and the associated open space through new planting and changes to park management programmes.
- Extend the footpath network to the north west to provide a surfaced link to the town centre.
- Provide a secondary crossing of the Brook to link to the Cemetery.
- Provide shrub planting to rear property boundaries to soften the urban edge and improve security.
- Replace and/or renovate street furniture.
- Improve opportunities for safe access to the water's edge in selected locations.



*St Neots Cemetery: a significant area of open space. Pedestrian links from the cemetery to Hen Brook could be improved.*

## PRIORY PARK

A large park situated on rising land to the north eastern fringe of the town.

The park contains numerous magnificent mature trees principally Oak and Lime set within an undulating landscape that falls significantly toward the urban edge of St. Neots to the south. The park is segregated from the adjacent urban edge by a belt of dense tree and shrub planting along the western boundary.

### Key Characteristics:

- Pastoral parkland with numerous magnificent trees to internal areas.
- Falls steadily from east to west.
- Overlooked by housing at the 'Woodlands' to the north.
- Trees to Huntingdon Road frontage in poor condition, tree felling and management ongoing.
- Visually enclosed with only intermittent views toward Huntingdon Street and Priory Hill Road.
- Recreational uses including informal open space, sports pitches (football and rugby) and children's play area. Small car park and pavilion to south west corner.
- Footpaths and site furniture in poor condition in places.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Green parkland with mature trees
- Brightly coloured play equipment

### Some key issues

An impressive area of open space with many fine trees, Priory Park provides a quiet refuge from the hustle and bustle of the town. The park should be protected as a key asset and conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Consider new pedestrian access points to link the park more effectively with the surrounding residential estates.
- Protect the existing mature trees and continue the programme of replacement planting.
- Maintain the integrity of the tree screen around the western and southern boundaries.
- Continue the programme of tree felling and vegetation management and ensure new trees are planted to replace those lost to the Huntingdon Road frontage.
- Consider opportunities to enhance the footpath network within the park.



*Priory Park: an impressive landscape containing many magnificent trees.*



*Management and replanting of trees along Huntingdon Road is required to maintain the integrity of the western park boundary.*



*Riverside Park: provides an attractive area of open space which is greatly valued by residents and visitors alike.*

## OUSE VALLEY

The Ouse Valley flows through the centre of the town and provides a picturesque setting greatly valued by residents and visitors alike. The Valley landscape contains a variety of building types including T3, T7d, and T9a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Open, flat, pastoral landscape strongly influenced by the river.
- Numerous willow trees along the banks of the river.
- Contains a range of uses including the Riverside Park, water meadows, the historic waterfront, housing, Ernulf Community School, the Priory Centre and numerous commercial premises.
- Overlooked by adjacent residential development to both banks.
- Calm and tranquil atmosphere.
- Junction with urban edge subject to development pressure.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Lush green riverside vegetation, open green pasture
- Historic waterfront: mainly buff/cream/red brick, white painted brick and render.

### Some key issues

The distinctive character of St. Neots is based upon the close historic relationship between the settlement and the Great Ouse. Maintaining the Ouse Valley landscape setting and the historic character of the eastern gateway across the river are the key priorities. Planning, conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Protect the open qualities of the landscape and restrict the further encroachment of development at the urban edge.
- Protect key views of the valley from Crosshall Road, the town bridge, and adjacent residential areas.
- Protect and enhance the ecological value of the river landscape.
- Improve signage from the town centre.
- Improve the quality of the river frontage by the Priory Centre.



*The historic centre of St Neots has a strong relationship with the river.*

## HUNTINGDON



### LOCATION AND SETTING

Huntingdon is the administrative centre of Huntingdonshire and has long been a place of importance. The town is situated on the north bank of the River Great Ouse and is accessible from the A14, which passes around the southern perimeter of the town, and the main rail route between London and Edinburgh. Since the 1960's the town has grown considerably through the construction of housing estates and industrial areas and the population is now over 19,000.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Asymmetrical settlement pattern imposed by riverside location.
- A distinctive historic centre defined by the architecture along High Street and the associated network of streets running north and south.
- Wide variety in building types and ages.
- Characteristic building materials include buff/cream brick and plain tile, red brick, slate, white painted render with black window frames.
- Bustling town centre.
- Extensive areas of peripheral modern housing and industrial development interspersed with numerous large green spaces.
- Insensitive post war development, especially road improvement schemes, has isolated the historic centre and degraded historic gateways.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

The urban structure of Huntingdon is illustrated in Figure 4.

The town lies to the north of the River Great Ouse but is separated from the valley landscape by the Hartford Road. Within the southern part of the town, the Historic Centre remains as a distinctive and memorable area and the main node is formed by High Street and All Saints Church. The historic settlement of Hartford to the north east provides a memorable area on the approach to the town from the east and has a strong connection within the landscape of the Ouse Valley.

Extensive areas of housing are located to the north and west of the town centre. These areas are punctuated by significant areas of open space. The main industrial area is located east of Spittals Way on land either side of the railway. The town is heavily influenced by a number of heavily trafficked roads. These include the ring road which encircles the town centre segregating it from the remainder of the settlement, the A14 to the south west, Spittals Way which serves the northern industrial estates and the A141 which defines the urban residential edge to the north.

### Key features include:

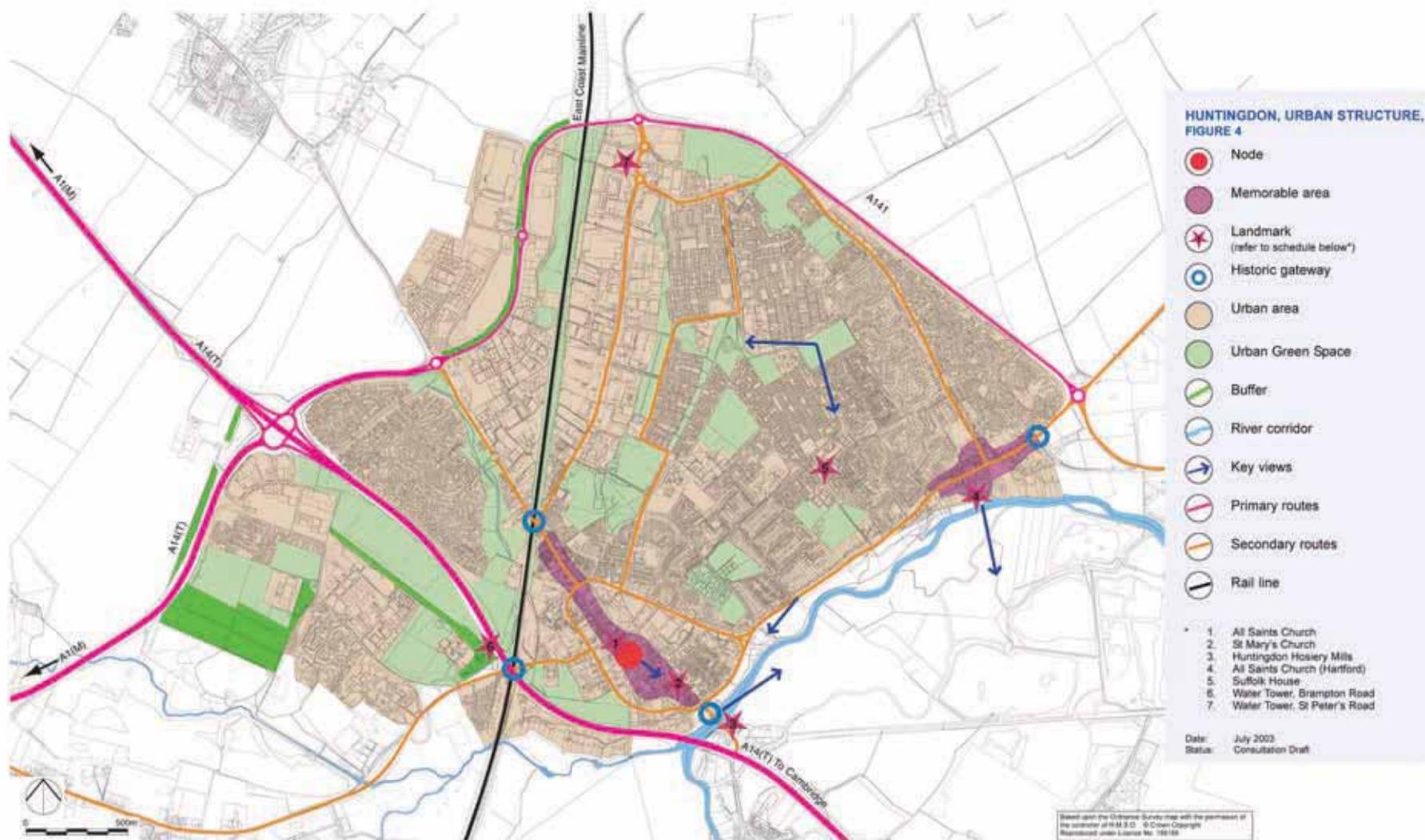
- **Historic route:** Ermine Street (Roman road)
- **Historic gateways:** southern gateway: 14th Century bridge over river, eastern gateway: Hartford
- **Landmarks:** All Saints Church and St Mary's Church (High Street), Huntingdon Hosiery Mills, All Saints Church Hartford, Suffolk House, Water Tower (Brampton Road), Water Tower (St Peters Road).
- **Memorable areas:** High Street, 14th Century bridge, Victoria Square, riverside park and Castle Hills, Hartford.
- **Key views:** from the historic bridge to the river; from Oxmoor estate to Central Claylands and Ouse Valley; from All Saints Hartford to the river.

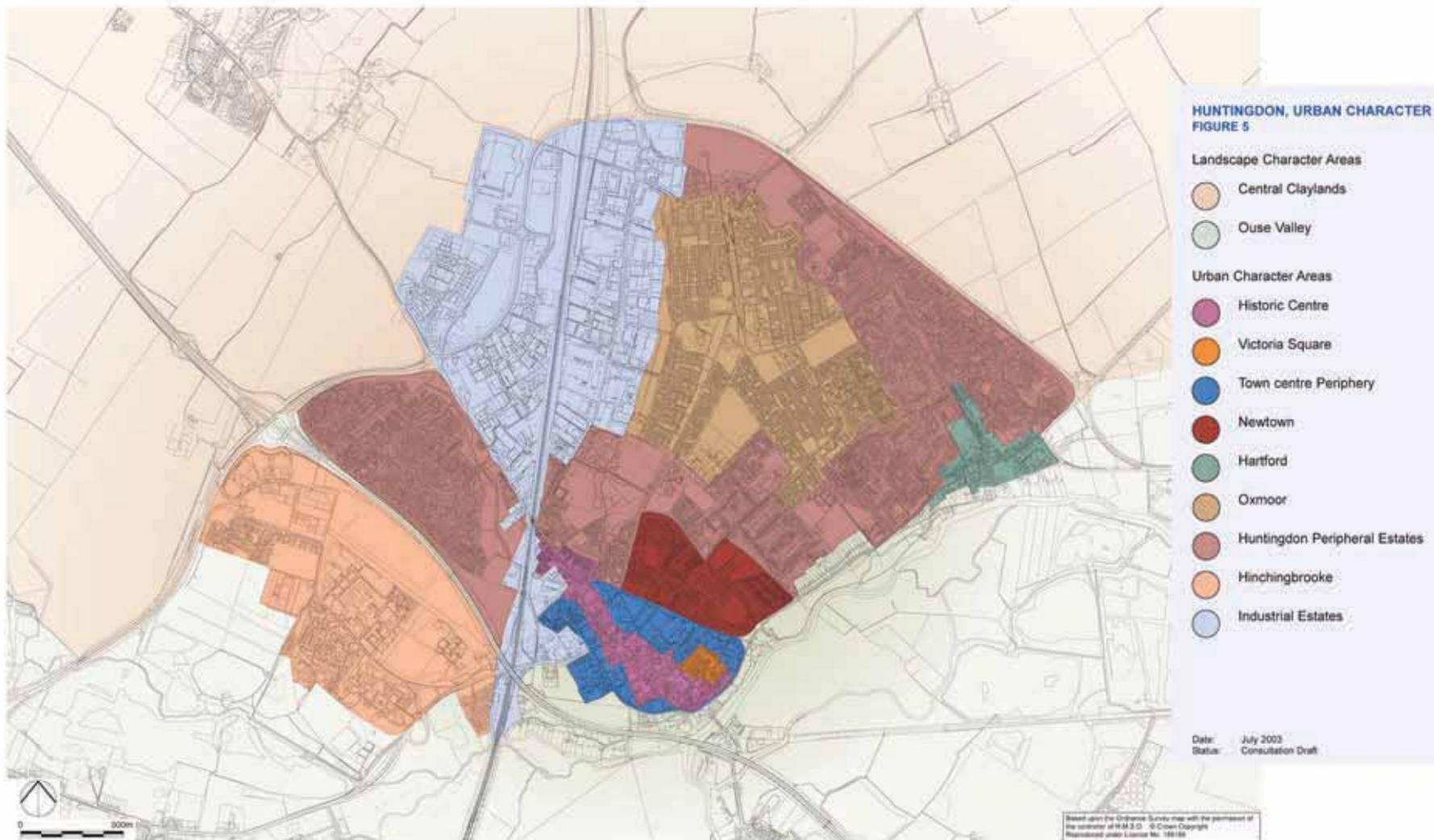
## URBAN CHARACTER AND SETTING

The urban character and setting of Huntingdon is illustrated in Figure 5.

A total of nine individual character areas have been identified. The character of Huntingdon to the south is dominated by the ring road and the modern commercial development situated around the town centre periphery. The extensive residential areas to the north vary in character and the older, higher density development at the Oxmoor is clearly recognisable from the surrounding modern peripheral estates. The industrial estates dominate the north western periphery of the town.

Whilst the historic centres of St Ives, St Neots and Godmanchester retain their direct relationship with the Ouse Valley landscape, the historic centre of Huntingdon is cut off from the river by the ring road which forms a visual and physical barrier. The river landscape does however provide a setting to the town when approached along Hartford Road from the east. From parts of the Oxmoor estate there are views toward the Central Claylands and the Ouse Valley.





## THE HISTORIC CENTRE

This area represents the medieval core centred on the High Street. The buildings are mainly 2-3 storey of mixed style and ages including Medieval, Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and modern infill and include building types T1a, T2, T3, T10 and T11a. Huntingdon's importance as a coaching stop, not a river port, meant that the town developed along the High Street rather than the riverbank. Unlike other Ouse Valley towns Huntingdon has a limited historic river front and the historic centre is less connected to the river setting.

### Key Characteristics:

- The pedestrian High Street contains some notable buildings including All Saints Church, St Mary's Church, Cromwell Museum, Commemoration Hall, The George (a former coaching inn with a medieval courtyard and gallery) and the Town Hall.
- Broad range of uses including commercial, office, residential, civic, a hotel, public houses, places of worship and churchyard.
- Intimate scale, interspersed with grand town houses. Continuous building front creates a strong sense of enclosure. Views down narrow alleyways and back courtyards from the High Street.
- Significant historic character highlighted by medieval churches, burgage plots and buildings.
- Bustling atmosphere.
- Low level of traffic.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Varied: predominantly buff and red brick. White and pastel painted brick work and render.
- Colourful shop fronts and signage.
- Plain clay tiles and slate on 19th Century properties.

### Some key issues

The protection and enhancement of the Historic Centre should be a key conservation objective. Conservation and improvement strategies should:

- Conserve and reflect the intimate scale of the compact historic centre through the control of shopfront design and building renovations.
- Restrict the proliferation of modern signage along the High Street
- Seek to improve the main historic gateway across the river and if possible protect the 14th Century bridge by reducing vehicular flow.
- Promote increased activity in the public square outside All Saints Church.



*High Street: despite changes to shop frontages, the high street retains a strong historic character.*



*Examples of grand town houses can still be found within the historic centre.*



*Terraced housing of consistent style and materials provides a strong sense of character.*

### VICTORIA SQUARE

A distinctive 'island' of residential development located between the Historic Centre and the Town Centre Periphery between Hartford Road, Montagu Road and Riverside Road. Building types include T3.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Dominated by Edwardian and Victorian terraces, many with bay windows to front.
- Consistency of architectural style and materials
- Some loss of original architectural features including changes to sash windows, doors and boundary walls.
- Well defined streetscape with few gaps.
- Back of pavement development with the exception of houses along Ouse Walk which have small front gardens.
- Visually well contained with restricted views out.
- Rear gardens concealed from street frontage resulting in lack of greenery.
- Attractive green space at Victoria Square enclosed by housing and the Victoria public house which provides a focal point.
- A quiet area within the bustle of the surrounding town centre.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Local gault brick with red brick trim to windows and doors, slate roofs, tarmac paving to roads and paths, stone paving to Ouse Walk.

#### Some key issues

A sensitive and well defined residential area within which change should be carefully controlled. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Protect and conserve the original terraces.
- Reflect back of pavement layout in any new development.
- Retain the existing colour palette.
- Promote the continued retention of original architectural features within buildings.
- Protect Victoria Square and consider the long term replacement of the existing trees, the removal of street clutter and routing overhead wires underground.



*Victoria Square provides a welcome area of greenspace overlooked by the Victoria pub.*

## TOWN CENTRE PERIPHERY

The town's service area surrounding the Historic Centre, largely contained within the ring road and dominated by large scale office and commercial buildings. Building types include T9b and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Large scale buildings of varied height.
- Open, fragmented structure, dominated by car parking.
- Large trees along the town centre ring road provide sense of greenness.
- Uses include car parking, bus station, supermarket, offices, fire station, library, garages, the town park and small areas of residential development.
- Unattractive, dominated by the ring road and heavy vehicular traffic.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Modern buff brick, red pantile, tarmac surfacing, garish signage in places.

### Some key issues

An area dominated by large scale development and highways that is capable of accommodating further change. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Improve the appearance of the key gateways into the town centre through appropriate enhancement programmes.
- Improve pedestrian links across the ring road to the residential areas to the north.
- Reduce the visual dominance of cars through increased planting and improved boundary treatments to existing car parks.
- Promote high standards of design in any new development.



*Car parking and modern development dominates areas of the periphery.*



*The ring road segregates the town centre from the rest of Huntingdon.*



*Terraced housing along Primrose Lane is typical of the area.*

## NEWTOWN

Located to the north east of the Historic Centre and comprising mixed housing including small Edwardian terraces, interwar Arts and Crafts semis, 1950's and 1970's houses. Building types include T3, T7a, T7b, and T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Comprising predominantly residential development with short terraces and semi's.
- Formal 1920's geometric street pattern.
- Arts and Crafts and Garden City aesthetics predominate.
- Some back of pavement development, small front gardens.
- Central areas dominated by open space including Priory Road cemetery and allotment gardens.
- Green backdrops: views to the cemetery and allotments, the river and Spring Common.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Muted colours: primarily buff brick, slate, red pantiles, picket fence

### Some key issues

An established residential area with a largely coherent character punctuated by significant areas of open space. Limited opportunities for small scale infill development. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Reflect the dominant building pattern of terraces and semi's in any infill development.
- Protect the existing areas of greenspace which contribute to the character of the area.
- Reflect the dominant buff brick colour palette in any new development.



*A mix of short terraces and semi's overlook the cemetery on Priory Road.*

## HARTFORD

Former village on the eastern fringe of Huntingdon containing 1-2 storey Medieval buildings, 18th and 19th Century terraces and some red brick modern infill. Building types include T1b, T3, T4, T7d and T8.

### Key Characteristics:

- Back of pavement development and continuous building front on Main Street creates sense of enclosure and village character.
- Short terraces with small front gardens dominate Sapley Road and local park provides open aspect.
- Some substantial detached properties south of Main Street/Longstaff Way.
- Historic character retained despite some modern infill and influence of Hartford Road/Longstaff Way, which divides the village.
- Mixed use including residential, civic, place of worship, public house and small-scale commercial.
- Large trees along the river provide a green backdrop.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff brick to Sapley Road, white and pastel painted brick, timber frame, red brick, plain gault clay tiles, slate.

### Some key issues

An attractive historic village which has retained many original buildings. Limited opportunities for small scale infill development. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Conserve the existing village character through the protection of important historic buildings and areas of green space.
- Maintain, and improve where possible, views to the Ouse valley and protect the existing vegetation as a green backdrop.
- Improve pedestrian access across Hartford Road.
- Reflect the existing built forms and relationship with the street in any new development.
- Reflect the existing materials and colour palette.



*Large historic properties define the eastern approach to Huntingdon along Longstaff Way.*



*Hartford retains a strong village character.*



*Housing at Buttsgrove Way arranged around a central green is characteristic of the Oxmoor estate.*

## OXMOOR

A large area of relatively high density housing situated north of the Historic Centre between the St Peters Road industrial area and the more recent peripheral estates. Building types include T7c and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Drab hard streetscape with high walls and lack of vegetation.
- Vehicular and pedestrian circulation segregated.
- Terraces arranged around communal grassed areas with parking courts to rear.
- Lack of large trees and elevated location creates sense of exposure.
- Extensive network of green spaces often with little sense of ownership or purpose.
- Good views to surrounding landscape.
- Poor distribution of services and community facilities.
- Poorly screened from the industrial estate to the west.
- Visually obtrusive footbridges cross Coneygear Road.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly buff brick houses with brown concrete tiles, red brick walls, black steel railings.

### Some key issues

An older residential area lacking in community services and facilities and offering opportunities for regeneration and enhancement. Planning and regeneration strategies should:

- Consider the long term use of the existing areas of green space and promote improvements to key areas for public access, recreation and nature conservation purposes.
- Protect the green space along the western edge of the estate and promote its enhancement through new planting as a buffer and screen to the adjacent industrial estate.
- Support initiatives for the creation of additional services and community facilities within the residential area possibly through conversion or redevelopment.
- Consider opportunities for the creation of 'Home Zones' in pilot areas to provide a safer, car free environment for children.
- Retain key views to the surrounding landscape from the Oxmoor estate.
- Enhance the visual qualities of the estate by planting large trees to reduce the sense of exposure.



*Visually intrusive footbridges across Coneygear Road.*

## HUNTINGDON PERIPHERAL ESTATES

Large areas of modern housing dominate the north eastern areas of the town and the land at Stukeley Meadows to the west. These estates are of varied age and character and include short terraces, semis, detached houses and bungalows. Building types include T7d and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Cul-de sac street layout predominates.
- Northern estates comprise generally lower density detached, semis and bungalows with mature trees, shrubs, hedges and small local greens which provide an attractive, open character.
- Housing at Stukeley Meadows set back from main road and bordered by significant area of green space with brook, mature trees, public access and play areas. However, there is little planting within the estate.
- Road-dominated layouts create a bleak appearance in places.
- Views from Stukeley Meadows open space dominated by traffic and large scale industrial and commercial development along Stukeley Road.
- Recent residential development comprises a diverse mix of architectural styles, materials and detailing which provides little sense of coherence and is visually chaotic in places.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly red brick with some buff and grey brick, brown concrete tiles, red pantiles. Green fringe to Stukeley Meadows.

### Some key issues

- The character of the peripheral estates varies although there are few opportunities for further development within them. In general, any future development should seek to reinforce the dominant building types and patterns as a means of consolidating, rather than fragmenting the existing character. Planning and enhancement strategies should:
- Control the use of materials and colours in any building extensions to reflect existing properties.
- Protect the existing local greens and mature trees in the Desborough Road area and elsewhere where they occur.
- Protect the existing roadside vegetation along Sapley Road.
- Promote opportunities for the enhancement of the Stukeley Meadows green space to improve screening to Stukeley Road and provide increased opportunities for wildlife.



*Recent housing at Stukeley Meadows.*



*Small greens with mature trees at Desborough Road are typical of the northern estates.*



*Hinchingsbrooke Hospital dominates the character of the main spine road.*

## HINCHINGBROOKE

Hinchingsbrooke is a large character area to the west of Huntingdon railway station and south of the A14. It contains areas of very recent residential development, a new business park, police and fire headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and school. Building types include T6, T7d and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Relatively open character to the north with significant area of open space north-east of the hospital at Views Common.
- Buildings all relatively recent with the exception of Hinchingsbrooke House which is visible from the Brampton Road.
- Large scale buildings on business park highly visible from the A14.
- Recent residential development comprises a diverse mix of architectural styles, materials and detailing which provides little sense of coherence and is visually chaotic in places.
- Areas to the south have a strong relationship with the surrounding landscape and areas of open space within the former Hinchingsbrooke Park.
- Significant areas of mature tree vegetation around hospital and police and fire headquarters.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- A diverse range of materials and colours including red and buff brick, white timber boarding, white render and timber frame, cream render, stone detailing, portico's, ornamental balustrading, conservatories, range of window details, timber shutters, red and grey pantile roofs, slate, brick walls, railings.

### Some key issues

- The character of the Hinchingsbrooke area is changing rapidly through continued commercial and residential development. Whilst the area is capable of accommodating further change, future development should be carefully planned and designed to create a sense of coherence and distinctiveness. Priorities should be to:
  - Control future residential development to minimise the further proliferation of architectural styles, materials and details.
  - Encourage screen planting along the boundary of the A14 to provide a more substantial landscape buffer to areas of new development.
  - Protect areas of mature trees and develop a strategy for their long term maintenance and replacement where appropriate.
  - Protect Hinchingsbrooke House including its landscape setting.



*Recent housing at Hinchingsbrooke comprises a diverse range of architectural styles and materials which provide little sense of unity.*

## INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

- An extensive area containing large-scale warehouses, industrial and office buildings located to the north west of the Historic Centre on both sides of the railway line. Stukeley Meadows industrial area lies to the west and is accessed from Stukeley Road and Spittals Way. Industrial development to the east lies along St Peters Road. Ermine Business Park extends to the north of the A141 (Spittals Way) and Ermine Street. Building types include T9b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Open, fragmented structure.
- Prominent vertical features such as tall lighting columns, chimneys and silos.
- Uses include factories, warehouses, offices, superstore, retail sheds, car parking.
- Many areas within the estates dominated by visually intrusive security fencing and external storage areas.
- Wide green verge along St Peter's Road, but small trees make little impact.
- Industrial areas along Spittals Way are generally well screened by dense vegetation along the road edge.
- Well trafficked including many lorries.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Red and occasional buff brick, grey, green and white steel cladding.

### Some key issues

The majority of the industrial areas are well established and dominated by roads, traffic, security fencing and car parking. The area is capable of accommodating further development though renovation of older and vacant properties and/or the construction of new units. Immediate planning and enhancement strategies should focus upon the estate frontages and seek to:

- Protect the existing grass verges and provide additional large scale planting along St Peters Road to screen external parking areas and enhance the approach route into the town.
- Improve the screening of the eastern estate where this abuts the Oxmoor residential areas.
- Promote high standards of design for any new frontage development.
- Carefully consider the visual impact on the Central Claylands landscape character area in determining the potential for any expansion of the Ermine Business Parks and industrial areas to the north.



*Recent industrial development at Ermine Business Park.*



*Established, large scale industries dominate the St Peter's Road area.*



*Views across the Ouse Valley are a key feature of the southern approach to the town.*

## OUSE VALLEY

The Great Ouse with its extensive water meadows is a key feature of the southern gateway to the town, which is entered across the notable 14th Century bridge. Building types associated with the river are mainly historic industrial buildings and large detached houses backing onto the river. They include building types T2, T4, T9a and T10.

### Key Characteristics:

- Castle Hills and large riverside park and playing fields with long views across the Westside Common and Port Holme water meadows.
- Numerous willow trees along the watercourses.
- Primary uses are water meadow and riverside park with some marinas and residential development.
- Main views to the river are from the riverside park, the bridge and All Saints Church, Hartford. Limited views to the river from Main Street.
- Heavy vehicular traffic has a negative impact on the historic bridge and southern gateway to the town.
- The river promotes a quiet and peaceful setting away from the main roads.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Lush green.
- Buff and red brick, plain gault clay tiles, red pantiles, pastel painted render.

### Some key issues

The Ouse valley landscape defines the southern edge of the town providing an attractive approach and an important ecological and recreational asset. The protection and enhancement of this landscape must be a key objective and strategies should:

- Restrict further development along the river frontage in order to protect views of the river and the open qualities of the landscape.
- Protect and conserve the unique characteristics of Westside and Eastside commons and water meadows, and continue the programme of willow pollarding.
- Consider improved pedestrian links between the river meadows and the town centre through improved crossings along Hartford Road and additional signage along clearly defined routes.
- Explore opportunities for the creation of 'green links' extending from the river into the town centre and beyond.



*The medieval river crossing provides a distinctive landmark to the south of the town.*

## GODMANCHESTER



### LOCATION AND SETTING

Godmanchester is situated immediately south of Huntingdon on the eastern bank of the river Great Ouse. The town has a highly distinctive historic core generated by the Roman pentagonal street layout and narrow lanes, fine historical buildings including well preserved 17th Century timber framed houses and a superb river setting.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Asymmetrical urban form due to riverside location.
- Wide variety in building type and age with good historic character.
- Charming views from Causeway across the river to the Chinese Bridge, park and water meadows beyond.
- Numerous historic farm buildings generate village rather than town character.
- The most important historic gateways to the town remain intact.
- Areas of modern housing estates located to the south and east of the town centre.
- The A14 flyover and the large warehouses at Cardinal Park have a significant impact on the setting of the town when approached from the north east.
- Characteristic building materials include timber frame, red and buff brick, white and pastel painted brickwork and render, thatch and plain gault clay tiles.
- With the exception of the main thoroughfare along Post Street and Causeway, the town has a relatively quiet atmosphere.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

The urban structure of Godmanchester is illustrated in Figure 6.

The urban structure is strongly influenced by the town's riverside location and the street pattern of the original Roman settlement which remains largely intact. The pentagonal streets encircle the central core of narrow residential lanes, which are a remnant of the original Roman settlement. The main urban node is located at the junction of Cambridge Street and Causeway.

The majority of buildings of historic interest are found along the pentagonal streets and strung along the approach roads. Modern housing and industrial development has taken place on the south and east side of the Historic Centre but is relatively limited in extent. The Great Ouse defines the western edge of the settlement and the A14 skirts the town to the north.

### Key features include:

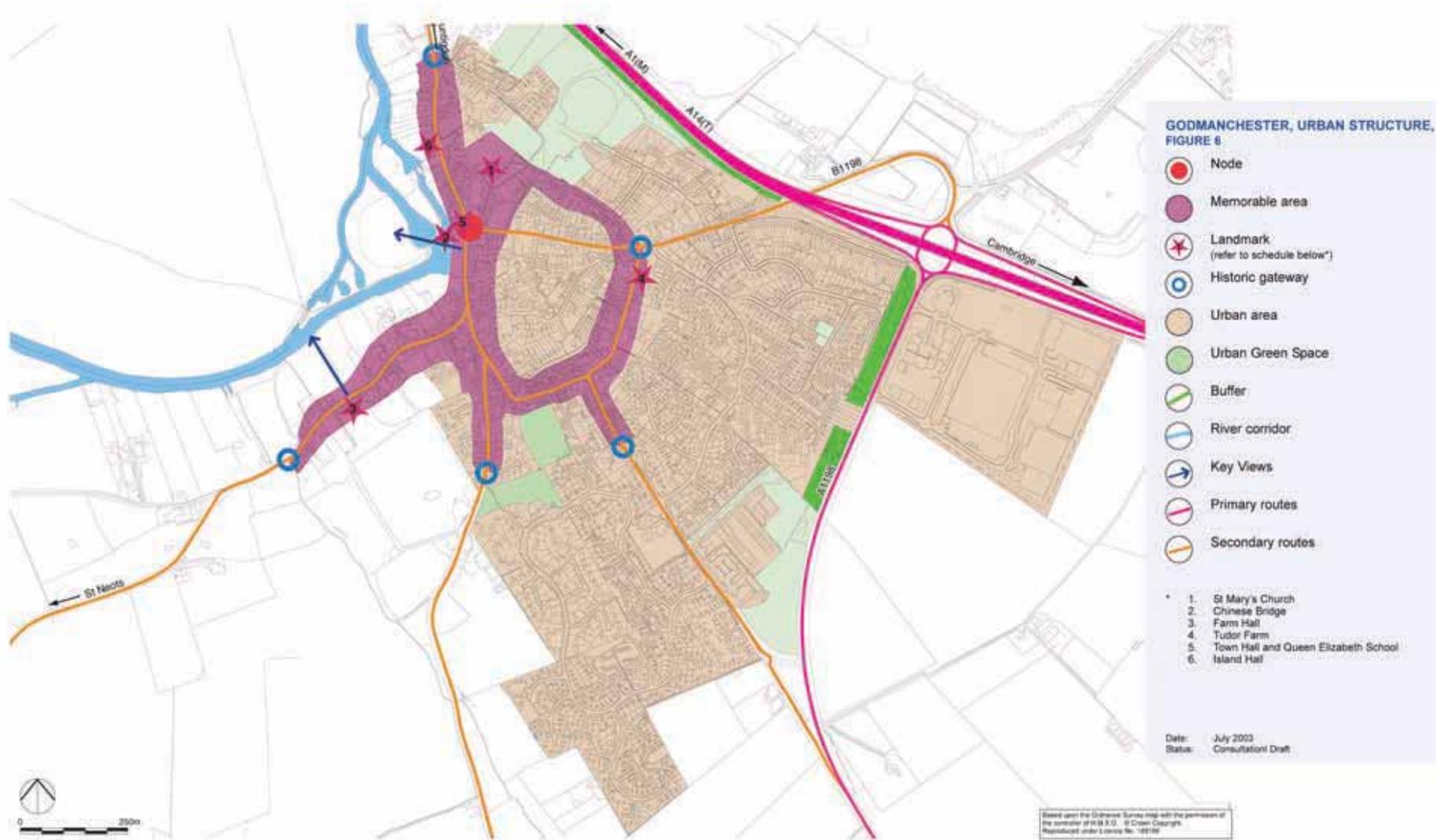
- **Historic routes:** The Avenue/Post Street, Cambridge Street/Cambridge Road, London Road, Earning Street.
- **Historic gateways:** Post Street, West Street, Cambridge Road, Silver Street, London Road.
- **Landmarks:** St Mary's Church, Chinese bridge, Farm Hall, Tudor Farm, Town Hall, Island Hall, Queen Elizabeth School.
- **Memorable areas:** Causeway, Post Street, Earning Street.
- **Key views:** from Causeway to Chinese bridge and riverside park, from Farm Hall towards the river, east along Earning Street, along West Street.

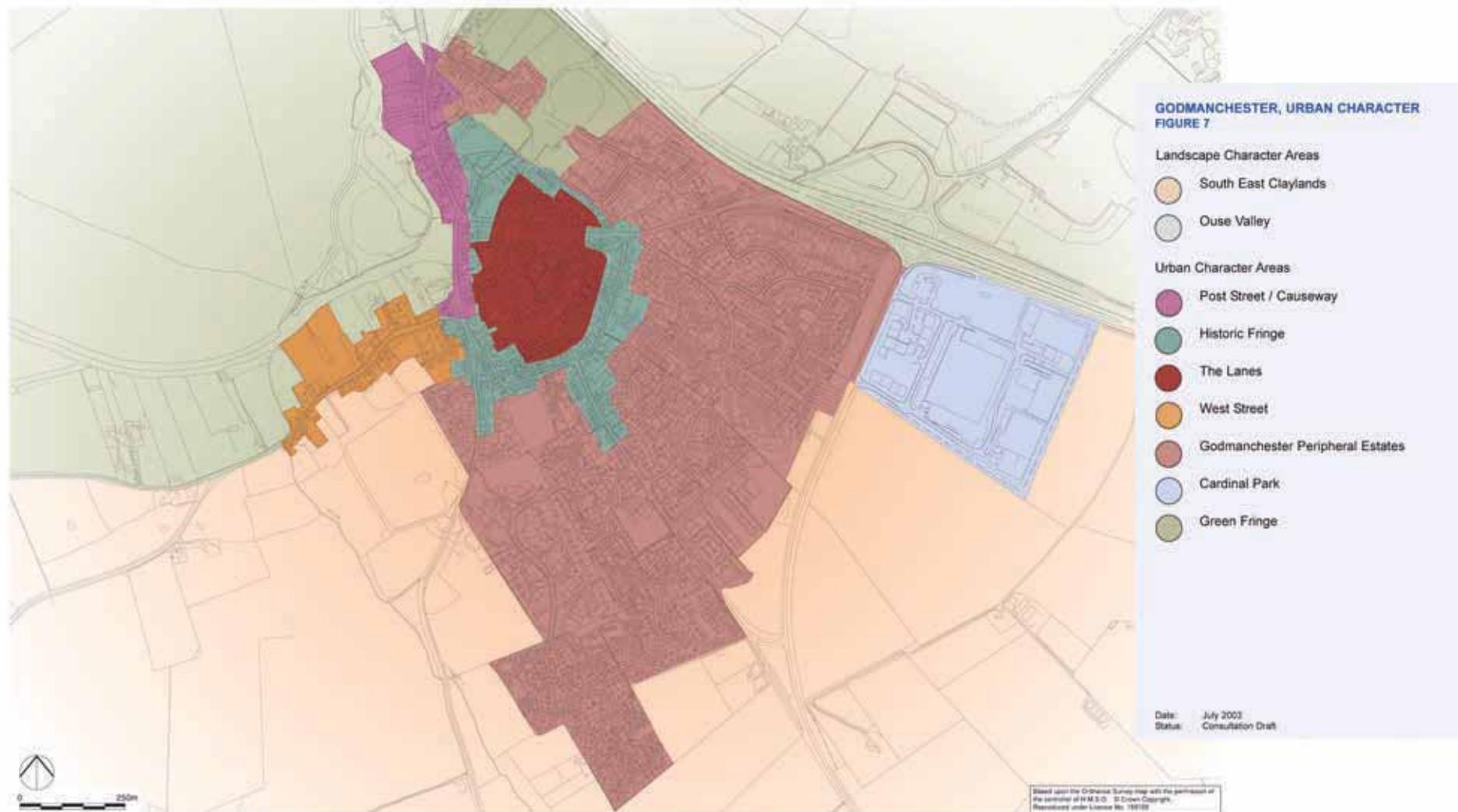
## URBAN CHARACTER AND SETTING

The urban character and setting of Godmanchester is illustrated in Figure 7.

Of all the market towns, the urban character of Godmanchester is perhaps the most clearly defined and a total of seven character areas have been identified. Four character areas define the town centre and, with the exception of the larger central core of 'The Lanes', the remaining character areas are linear in form and associated with the main roads. There is a clear boundary between the historic settlement and the modern housing estates and industrial areas to the east.

The town centre has an enchanting riverside setting with fine views west to the Great Ouse from Causeway and Farm Hall. To the north, visual and physical links to the Ouse Valley are largely prevented by the embankments of the A14. To the south and east the urban area rises into the South East Claylands which provides a rural context to the town edge.





## POST STREET / CAUSEWAY

Post Street and Causeway make up the high street of Godmanchester. There is a variety of building types including 2-3 storey 18th and 19th Century town houses, grand town houses, some with Dutch gables and public buildings, medieval half-timbered buildings and modern infill. Building types include T1a, T2, T6 and T11a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Linear development defining the routes into the town centre.
- Great historic character generated by wide diversity of building ages and several impressive and imposing historic buildings.
- Mixed use including residential, offices, shops, public houses and a restaurant.
- Great variation in roof height.
- Street frontage well defined by back of pavement development.
- Glimpsed views to St Mary's Church from Post Street.
- Fine views across river and recreation ground from Causeway.
- Links to Ouse Valley across Chinese Bridge.
- Busy atmosphere along Post Street often dominated by heavy through traffic.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and red brick, white and pastel painted brickwork and render,
- Plain gault clay tiles, slate.

### Some key issues

The commercial and community heart of Godmanchester containing several landmark buildings with a strong relationship with the river Great Ouse. The protection and enhancement of the historic centre should be a key objective and future strategies should:

- Conserve the many buildings of historic interest, especially the 17th Century timber-framed buildings that contribute significantly to the historic character of the town.
- Maintain views across the river and consider the removal of car parking along the Causeway to allow the creation of a wider riverside promenade.
- Explore longer term options to reduce the volume of heavy goods traffic passing through the town centre.



*Post Street: historic buildings dominate the street frontage providing an impressive approach to the town from the north.*



*Causeway: views across the river are hindered by parking along the road.*



*Earning Street: historic buildings create a strong sense of place and a village character.*

### HISTORIC FRINGE

A narrow, linear character area largely defined by the buildings of the pentagonal streets of Earning Street, London Street and Old Court Hall. The area contains many historic buildings including half-timbered Tudor farmhouses and barns and 18th and 19th Century townhouses. Building types include T1a, T1b, T2, T3, T7b, T8 and T10.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Village character generated by timber-framed structures and agricultural buildings.
- Strong sense of enclosure generated by back of pavement development to both sides of road with few gaps in street frontage.
- Intimate scale and sense of enclosure.
- Predominantly residential use with many fine historic buildings.
- St Mary's Church forms a significant local landmark.
- Some modern infill.
- Brick walls enclose gardens. Edges and building frontages softened by vegetation.
- Good links to Northern Green Fringe.
- Quiet and relatively peaceful atmosphere.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Warm, earth colours: red and buff brick, timber framing, white and pastel painted brickwork and render.
- Plain gault clay tiles, slate, thatch.

#### Some Key issues:

A sensitive area containing many historic buildings of great character. There are few opportunities for development other than through building extensions and/or conversions and conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Protect and conserve the historic buildings particularly the half timbered houses along Earning Street.
- Protect the setting of St Mary's Church and maintain existing views.
- Protect and conserve the original architectural detailing, including window and door details to existing terraces.
- Consider the long-term replacement of the existing utilitarian street lighting columns along Earning Street.
- Consider restricting car parking to discrete zones or to alternate sides of the road to enhance the setting of key buildings.



*London Street: a variety of building styles are found throughout the historic fringe.*

## THE LANES

The historic residential core of Godmanchester lying on the site of the original Roman settlement within the pentagonal streets of the Historic Fringe. The area is typified by small scale 18th and 19th Century terraces fronting a network of narrow lanes. Building types include T3, T7b and T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Network of narrow lanes well connected to the Historic Fringe.
- Mainly residential with building types including short terraces, semi's and detached.
- Streetscape well defined in places by continuous building frontage and back of pavement development. Other areas defined by low walls and planting to front gardens.
- Intimate scale and strong sense of enclosure.
- Small areas of modern housing notably at Pinfold Lane and Linden Grove.
- Quiet peaceful atmosphere.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly buff brick, older terraces with red trim, some red brick, white and pastel painted brickwork and render.
- Slate, brown pantile.

### Some key issues

An area of great charm where the historic character remains intact despite the impact of modern residential development. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Avoid the further proliferation of architectural styles, materials and colours in any new development in order to protect the historic character.
- Maintain the integrity of the older residential terraces where possible, through controls on alterations to architectural details.
- Consider options for resurfacing the lanes with new paving materials to reflect their historic character and intimate scale and create improved pedestrian links to the town centre.
- Explore the provision of public art at key locations to 'announce' entry points and interpret the historical significance of the area.



*Buff brick terraces provide an intimate character to much of the area.*



*The style and design of modern infill housing has resulted in a loss of character in some areas of the Lanes.*



*Large, historic houses line the western approach to the town.*

## WEST STREET

A linear character area located along both sides of West Street and forming the main approach to the town from the south west. The area is dominated by substantial and often impressive villas and houses which are distinct from the historic buildings along Causeway and Old Court Hall, the junction of which forms the northern gateway into West Street. Building types include T1a, T1b, T4 and T6.

### Key Characteristics:

- Prosperous residential area, semi rural in character, and containing numerous large historic houses of high architectural quality. Mature trees and hedges to plot frontages enhance the historic character.
- Broad, sweeping main street with footpaths to both sides.
- Predominantly back of pavement development although larger villas often set back from street frontage with gardens and brick walls to frontage.
- Uses predominantly residential but occasional larger villas now converted to offices.
- Landmark building at Farm Hall dating from 1746 overlooking designed landscape setting leading down to the river Great Ouse.
- Small enclave of timbered houses and more recent residential infill at Corpus Christi Lane with views from West Street.
- Strong relationship with the Ouse Valley, the vegetation of which provides a green backdrop to the north.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Red and buff brick, cream render, timber frame with white render to upper elevations, white painted brickwork.
- Roofs of slate, stone tiles, pantile and thatch.
- Green backdrop provided by Ouse Valley.

### Some key issues

A distinctive area of high architectural and historic quality which is considered highly sensitive to change. The protection of the existing environment should be the key priority and conservation strategies should:

- Protect and conserve the historic buildings including the brick boundary walls which define the road frontage in places.
- Protect the existing mature trees where these contribute to the character of the street scene.
- Protect the landscape setting of Farm Hall and maintain the open aspect to the river.



*Brick walls to property boundaries are an important element of the streetscape.*

## GODMANCHESTER PERIPHERAL ESTATES

Areas of peripheral housing estates are located to the south and east of the historic centre and include a variety of terraces, semi's and detached houses. The older estates are located to the east with more recent development to the south. Building types include T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Pleasant but relatively non-descript estates with little sense of place.
- Higher density and older housing to east connected by meandering network of roads and closes.
- More recent development to the south arranged around cul de sac layout connected by pedestrian and cycle path links.
- Wide grass verges to newer estates but a lack of large trees.
- Mainly residential use but including open space, schools and the Chord Business Park.
- Lacking in shops and community facilities.
- Often disorientating with no clear visual links to the centre of the settlement.
- Views from northern parts of the area across green fringe landscape, cricket ground and St. Mary's Church.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Mostly red brick with some multi brick and buff brick, mock Tudor timber framing.
- Brown and red pantile roofs.

### Some key issues

With the exception of the northern parts of this area, which have a stronger relationship with Post Street and the Historic Centre, the peripheral estates lack distinction. Limited opportunities may exist for further infill development. Planning and improvement strategies should:

- Consider ways of increasing the vegetation cover through the planting of street trees where space and service restrictions permit.
- Protect the landscape setting of the northern estates around East Chadley Lane and Pavilion Close.
- Protect the landscape and open space buffer along the western edge of the A1198, which provides screening to the urban edge and separates areas of housing and industrial uses.



*Housing at Crowhill is typical of recent development to the south of Godmanchester.*



*Older and higher density estates are found to the north east of the town.*



*Large scale industrial units are highly visible from the surrounding landscape.*

### CARDINAL PARK

A distribution park located adjacent to the A14 on the eastern fringe of the settlement containing numerous large, high bay warehouses. Building types include T9b.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Site level falls significantly from east to west.
- Buildings of varying scales and range of materials and colours.
- Warehouses on elevated eastern areas are highly visible from the A14 and the wider landscape.
- Screen bunding, planting and native hedgerow provides a clear boundary to the south and east.
- Ornamental tree and shrub planting on individual sites not generally visible from outside the estate.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Grey and white steel cladding, buff and red brick.

#### Some key issues

A discrete area segregated from the main residential estates by the A1198. Planning and improvement strategies should:

- Improve screening of the estate from the A14 to the north.
- Minimise and co-ordinate the range of materials and colours in any future development.
- Provide landscape improvements to the north eastern gateway to the town through planting along the eastern edge of the A1198.
- Seek improved pedestrian and cycle links across the A1198 into the peripheral estates and the town centre.



*Opportunities exist to improve screening and enhance the quality of the road frontage along the A1198.*

## NORTHERN GREEN FRINGE

The landscape setting to the northern periphery of the town located between the recent residential development at Pavilion Close and Fox Grove, and the A14. The area contains a number of rural edge uses and a network of landscape and public open space.

### Key characteristics

- Rural edge landscape to north comprising areas of rough grassland with intermittent tree and scrub planting.
- Areas to south linked to urban edge and comprising cricket field and school playing fields.
- Contains isolated areas of development including glasshouses and Caravan Park.
- Views north dominated by the A14 which is elevated on embankment.
- Views over cricket field from adjacent housing.
- Footpath link between Park Lane and East Chadley Lane to the Historic Fringe.
- Footpath link to St Mary's Church and Post Street to the south.

### Materials and Colour Palette

- Predominantly green.
- Backed by red and buff brick housing and timber fences.

### Some Key issues

The Green Fringe provides a valuable buffer between the A14 and the northern edge of Godmanchester and should be protected from large scale development. There are significant opportunities to enhance the value of the urban edge and improvement strategies should:

- Improve screening of the A14 through additional planting along the northern boundary of the open space.
- Promote nature conservation initiatives to enhance the ecological value of the land and provide an educational resource for the local school.
- Maintain the quality of the footpath between Park Lane and East Chadley Lane.
- Provide low level lighting and street furniture along main pedestrian routes.



*The Green Fringe provides the setting of the town to the north. Views to St Mary's church are widespread.*



*Opportunities exist to enhance the ecological value of land within the Green Fringe.*



*The river provides the setting of the town to the west.*

## OUSE VALLEY

The Ouse Valley landscape provides the setting of the town to the west and contributes significantly to the character of the settlement.

### Key Characteristics:

- Open valley landscape containing main river channel and network of inlets.
- Houses front on to the river along Causeway.
- The riverside park on the ornamental island has large mature Sycamore and ornamental tree species along the banks, which frame the river.
- Uses predominantly recreational and pasture.
- Views to Port Holme water meadow to west.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Lush green

### Some key issues

Godmanchester has a strong association with the River Ouse, which provides a highly distinctive setting to the western edge of the town. The protection and enhancement of this landscape must be a key objective and strategies should:

- Protect views of the Chinese Bridge.
- Consider the removal of parking from the front of the Town Hall and enhance the quality of this space as the major gateway to the river.
- Improve signage to the river from the town centre.
- Protect existing views toward the Recreation Ground and Port Holme meadows.
- Protect the open character of the southern river edge formed by the rear gardens of residential properties along West Street.
- Protect the existing mature trees along the river banks.



*Chinese Bridge: a highly distinctive structure which links the town to the riverside park.*

## ST IVES



### LOCATION AND SETTING

St Ives is situated in the east of the district on the north bank of the River Great Ouse. The historic market town is a thriving shopping and tourist centre that has retained its distinctiveness with medieval streets and buildings, fine monuments and a picturesque riverside quay. Since the 1970's the town has expanded greatly through the construction of extensive peripheral housing estates, and at present has a population of over 16,000. Despite the scale of peripheral development the essence of the place remains intact.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Asymmetrical settlement pattern imposed by riverside location.
- Highly distinctive historic centre generated by the well defined medieval street pattern, market square, burgage plots and architecture of the small scale 2 or 3 storey town houses.
- Wide variety in building types and ages.
- Green riverside setting is fundamental to the character of the historic town centre.
- Large areas of nondescript modern peripheral housing and industrial development extend north of the historic core.
- Characteristic building materials include buff/cream, mixed buff and red brick, peg tiles, slate, white painted render with black window frames.
- Shoppers and tourists create a busy and lively atmosphere.
- Traffic and parking in parts of the town centre detract from the otherwise high visual quality of the area.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

The urban structure of St Ives is illustrated in Figure 8.

St Ives has developed to the north of the Great Ouse and has a very distinct historic centre with a large market square that forms the main node of the settlement. The town is linked to the A1 and Cambridge via the A1096 and the A14(T), and to Huntingdon via the A1123, which cuts straight through the settlement providing a secondary node at the junction with Ramsey Road.

Due to the riverside location the town has expanded in an asymmetrical manner into the landscape of the Central Claylands and to the limits currently imposed by existing roads, which define the settlement edges to the north and east. Extensive areas of modern housing estates extend north from the historic centre. These areas are clearly segregated from the industrial development located to the north east of the town. The southern and south eastern edge of the settlement is clearly defined by the river and the landscape of the Ouse valley and a number of high quality historic buildings front the river.

### Key features include:

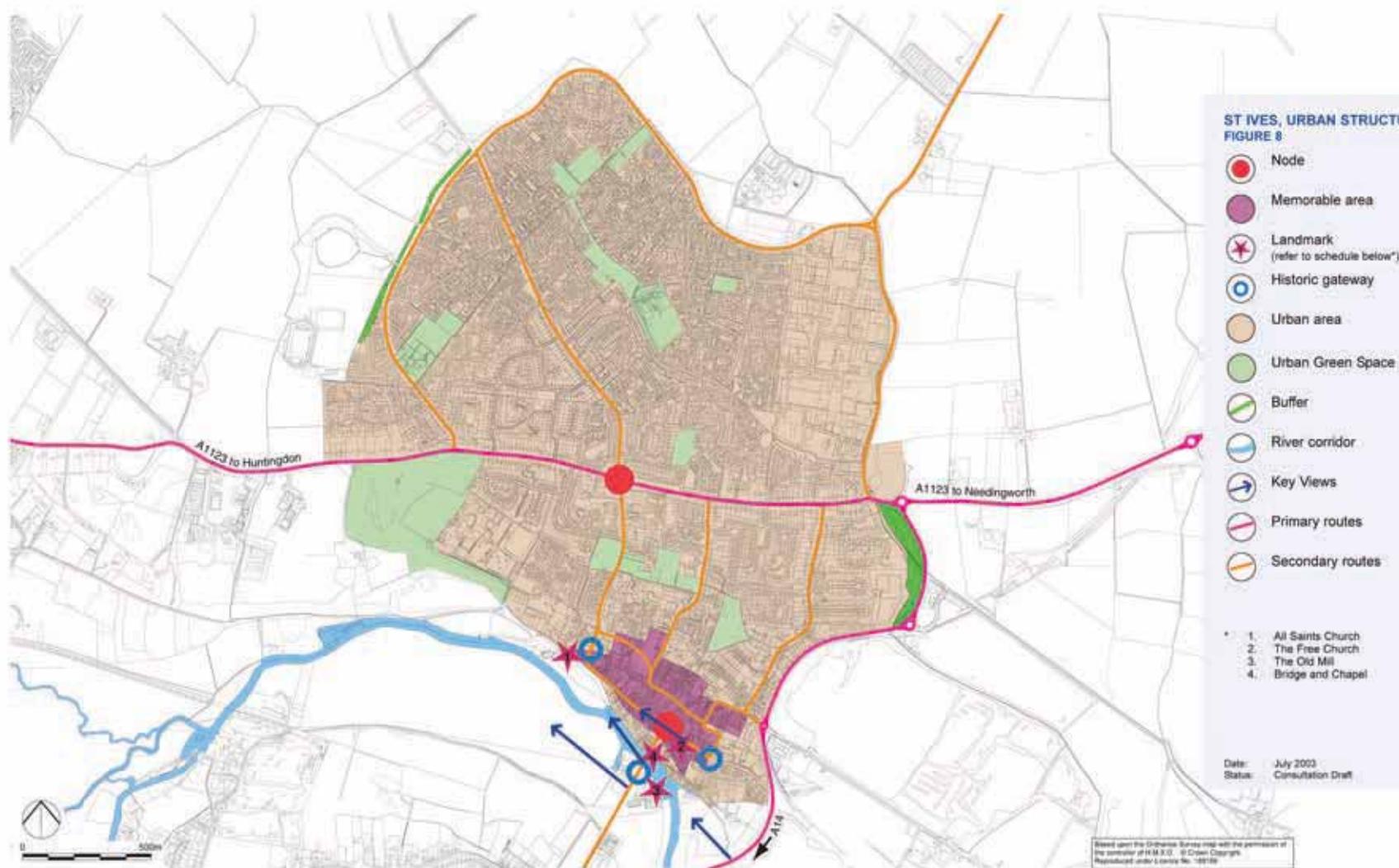
- **Historic route:** London Road.
- **Historic gateways:** The early 19th Century New Bridges and the 15th Century bridge and chapel consecrated in 1426, All Saints Church mostly built between c.1450 and c.1470 and the east end of Market Hill.
- **Landmarks:** All Saints Church, The Free Church, the Old Mill, the 15th Century bridge and chapel.
- **Memorable areas:** the historic centre, the Quay, the Waits, the Ouse Valley, Warner's Park.
- **Key views:** From the historic bridge towards the river and the river front; from the A1096 crossing the Ouse Valley towards the Old Mill, bridge and Quay, from the river frontage across Hemingford Meadow.

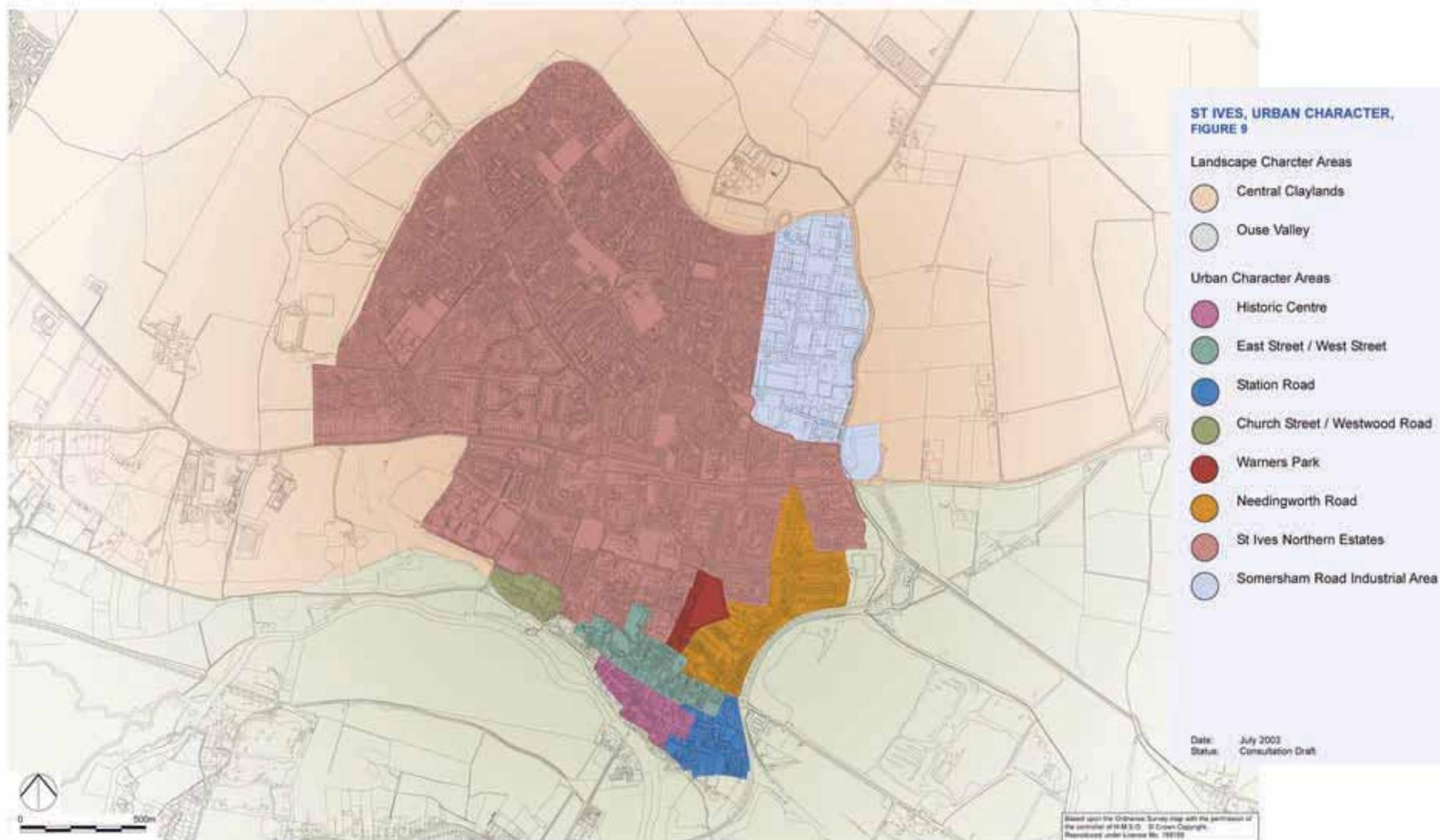
## URBAN CHARACTER AND SETTING

The urban character and setting of St Ives is illustrated in Figure 9.

A total of 8 individual character areas have been identified although the majority of these occur within a relatively small area of the town to the south east. Here, the character of the historic centre dominates providing a distinctive area with a number of key landmarks. The Historic Centre is linked to a number of smaller character areas to the north and east which include a mix of commercial, light industrial and residential development and a range of building types. The remainder of the settlement consists of the northern residential estates, which are generally bland and lacking in identity.

There are good visual and physical links between the historic centre and the river, which provides a distinctive and high quality setting to the town. There are few visual links between the peripheral estates and the landscape of the Central Claylands which surrounds the town to the north. Here the distributor roads and hedgerows form a clear boundary between town and country.





## THE HISTORIC CENTRE

The medieval core of St Ives centred around The Broadway, Market Hill and Bridge Street. The buildings are mainly 2-3 storey of mixed style and ages including Medieval, Georgian, Victorian, Edwardian and modern infill. Building types include T1a, T2, T3, T6, T10 and T11a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Significant historic character highlighted by medieval street pattern, buildings, monuments, burgage plots and alleyways.
- Intimate scale and distinctive street pattern including a network of passages and alleyways linking Broadway to the river and West Street.
- Frequent views of All Saints Church and the Free Church.
- Broad range of uses including commercial, office, civic, a hotel, public houses and places of worship.
- Lively and busy atmosphere along the main streets created by colourful shop fronts and pedestrian activity. Market still takes place in Market Hill.
- Car parking and poorly planned street furniture diminish the visual appreciation of Market Hill.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Varied: predominantly pale and mixed buff brick with painted stonework detailing. White and cream painted brickwork, colour rendered facades. Colourful shop fronts and signage.
- Plain Gault tiles, Peg tiles and slate on 19th Century properties.

### Some key issues

The Historic Centre and the relationship with the river are fundamental to the character of the town and the protection and enhancement of historic buildings, open spaces and river views should be a key conservation priority. Conservation and improvement strategies should seek to:

- Conserve the river setting and retain its function as a natural edge and buffer between St Ives and Hemingford Grey.
- Protect and conserve the historic riverfront including the Quay, the Waits and the 15th Century bridge and chapel.
- Conserve and enhance the historic route (London Road) as the gateway to St Ives from the south across the river.
- Conserve the intimate scale and distinctive street pattern and promote streetscape improvements to existing lanes and passages.
- Enhance Market Hill to reduce parking, improve pedestrian thoroughfares and improve signage and paving.
- Protect views of All Saints Church and the Free Church.



*Merryland : a good example of the street pattern and range of architecture that typify the historic core.*



*The Broadway: the historic character is diminished by the effects of traffic, parking and modern lighting and street furniture.*



*A mixture of residential and commercial properties typifies West Street.*

### **EAST STREET / WEST STREET**

An area of 18th, 19th and 20th Century expansion adjacent to the Historic Centre which includes a network of narrow residential streets mixed with retail, commercial and industrial uses. The buildings are mainly small scale two storey terraces. Building types include T3, T4, and T7b.

#### **Key Characteristics:**

- Housing generally fronts directly onto street.
- Frequent gaps in street frontage on East / West Street with views through to external storage areas and car parks.
- Access passages lead to The Broadway , Crown Street and The Pavement.
- Some empty and derelict properties.
- Views to rear of Burgage plots.
- Little greenery to street frontage
- Narrow side streets, some with back of pavement development creating intimate scale and strong sense of enclosure notably along Crown Walk.

#### **Materials and Colour Palette:**

- Muted pastels, red and buff brick, white painted brickwork, slate.

#### **Some key issues**

East Street/West Street is a distinctive area closely linked to the historic centre of the town but which has been subject to change through redevelopment and the conversion of housing to offices and shops. It contains a number of empty buildings and areas of dereliction. It is considered able to accommodate further change, and conservation and improvement strategies should:

- Close gaps in the street frontage where appropriate through new residential development and/or improved boundary treatments.
- Conserve the character of the residential streets and provide guidance on appropriate improvements to building facades and details.
- Ensure that any new residential development fronts the road and reflects the dominant materials and colour palette.
- Promote the renovation of derelict properties for residential and/or commercial use, and encourage the redevelopment of industrial premises for these purposes.



*Crown Walk. 19th and 20th Century housing set within narrow streets.*

## STATION ROAD

Located south east of the Historic Centre and historically the site of the Priory and the old cattle market. The area contains a mix of building types including large scale commercial buildings, town houses and bungalows including building types T7d, T9b and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Undefined, open urban structure.
- Dominated by large scale buildings and car parks.
- Some recent residential infill.
- Varied building height and scale creates discordant character.
- Uses include commercial, supermarket, car parking, the main bus station, town library, garage and housing.
- Areas of car parking to street frontage dominate some areas.
- Busy traffic and pedestrian area around Waitrose.
- Streetscape dominated by tarmac.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Limited colour palette: modern buff brick, red brick, white render, pantile, slate, concrete tiles.

### Some key issues

Station Road is a busy area in mixed use which contains a number of older properties which offer the potential for renovation, conversion or redevelopment. The area is considered able to accommodate a relatively high degree of change and planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Consider the long term development potential of the area as part of a comprehensive urban planning and design initiative.
- Protect and retain the older buildings as a framework for any new development.
- Ensure high standards of design within any new development and provide off street parking where possible.
- Improve visual links to important landmarks within the historic centre.
- Protect the entrance lodges and gates into the main car park
- Promote a more pedestrian-friendly crossing at the junction of Station Road and Market Hill.



*Station Road. A mix of building types and the location of key services within St Ives including the central car park and bus station.*



*New Road. The area continues to offer opportunities for regeneration and environmental enhancement.*



*Westwood Road. Green and leafy roads flanked by large houses with extensive plots.*

### CHURCH STREET / WESTWOOD ROAD

A small, prosperous area of housing to the west of All Saints Church lying between the river which borders the area to the south, and Westwood Road which lies to the north. The houses comprise large detached villas, substantial town houses and cottages and include building types T4, T7b and T7d.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Housing along Westwood Road comprises large villas set back from the road and generally concealed by vegetation and high boundary walls, promoting a sense of privacy and seclusion.
- Houses to Church Street generally older and front directly onto the street or have small front gardens bounded by low walls.
- Houses to southern end of Church Street overlook All Saints Church.
- Modern garage block to east of Church Street detracts from historic and architectural quality.
- Large mature trees and tall hedges to properties along Westwood Road provide a green and leafy character.
- Views to houses from the Ouse Valley Way to the south restricted by vegetation and high walls to rear property boundaries.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Lush green.
- Red and mixed buff brick, white render, pastel render, slate, concrete tiles.

#### Some key issues

The limits of the Church Street/Westwood Road character area are clearly defined by the river and roads which contain it and consequently there are few, if any, opportunities for new development. Conservation of the existing environment should be the priority and strategies should in particular:

- Conserve the historic buildings along Church Street.
- Protect views of All Saints Church.
- Conserve the brick boundary walls along Westwood Road and the Ouse Valley Way.
- Protect the existing mature trees along Westwood Road.



*Church Street: large historic houses front on to the street and overlook All Saints Church.*

## WARNER'S PARK

A small park overlooked by a row of Edwardian properties (building types T3 and T4) located north of the Historic Centre and bordered to the west and north by modern housing estates.

### Key Characteristics:

- Green and leafy with a well defined park boundary.
- Medium scale houses fronting onto park accessed via pedestrian path to front with rear access as well.
- Large mature trees in closely mown grassland, with remnants of the ridge and furrow.
- Strong sense of enclosure provided by the surrounding housing.
- Lack of facilities and slightly neglected appearance.
- Quiet, with absence of traffic.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly green with buff and red brick, white painted render, slate.

### Some key issues

Warners Park is a small area of distinctive character which provides an important area of greenspace within the urban fabric of the town. There are few opportunities for new development and inappropriate building alterations and extensions would detract from the unity and simplicity of the area. Planning and enhancement strategies should therefore:

- Retain the simplicity of the building line and the relationship of houses to the park.
- Maintain a continuous building frontage to protect the sense of enclosure.
- Control the use of materials and details in house extensions and alterations to maintain the integrity of the original design.
- Restore the original landscape of the park and/or plant new trees in selected locations.



*Warners Park. A row of Edwardian properties front onto the park to the west.*



*The park provides an important area of greenspace within the urban fabric of the town.*



*Needingworth Road. Wide roads with mature vegetation promote a more suburban character.*

### NEEDINGWORTH ROAD

A leafy residential suburb located on the eastern fringe of the town, which provides a key link between the peripheral estates to the north, and the town centre to the south. The area contains numerous large detached houses, mainly 20th Century of varied style set back from the road, and areas of higher density local authority housing which border the Ouse Valley to the east. Building types include T3, T4, T7a and T7d.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Mix of housing types including large 2 and 3 storey detached, semis and short terraces.
- Winding main road with housing to both sides, straight dead end side streets.
- Large mature trees and hedges provide a sense of enclosure and greenness.
- Brick walls and hedges to front gardens create a well-defined street frontage.
- Harmonious and peaceful atmosphere, despite significant through traffic.
- Views to Warners Park from adjacent housing areas.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Buff and red brick, white and pastel painted render, slate, red pantile, brown concrete tile.

#### Some key issues

Needingworth Road is an established residential area which provides a key route into the town centre. It contains a mix of building style but presents few opportunities for large scale development. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Seek to improve the quality of the northern entrance into Needingworth Road which is dominated by the external storage areas of the Building Centre.
- Protect mature trees within private gardens where these contribute to the character of the road frontage.
- Encourage traffic to use the main distributor road to the east.



*Hedges and walls define the road frontage providing a sense of greenery.*

## ST IVES NORTHERN ESTATES

Extensive area of post war housing located north of the Historic Centre. The northern and southern estates are split by the A1123 (St. Audrey's Lane/Houghton Road), which bisects the town. Building types include T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Open and exposed with a lack of street enclosure.
- Low density housing set back from the pavement.
- Sweeping tarmac roads dominate the northern areas.
- Lack of large trees, hedges and planting to road creates a bleak internal appearance, except in some older areas (e.g. High Leys)
- Often disorientating and confusing layout due to cul de sac street pattern.
- Housing all post-war so little or no historic character.
- Well defined urban edge around much of the town's perimeter.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Mix of buff, brown, grey and red brick, and brown timber boarding, brown concrete tiles and red pantiles.

### Some key issues

The residential estates dominate the central and northern areas of St Ives particularly when the town is approached along the A1123. The estates are generally fully developed and offer limited opportunities for new building. In many places, however, the estates have little sense of place and are somewhat bleak in appearance. Planning and improvement strategies should:

- Enhance the visual quality of the northern estates through planting of large trees and hedges to soften hard edges, reduce exposure and to provide a greater sense of enclosure.
- Strengthen visual links to the Central Claylands landscape to the north by improving views from the northern peripheral road.



*Northern Estates. Extensive areas of modern residential development.*



*High Leys: a small enclosure of older housing is distinct in character from the surrounding estates.*



*The older industrial estates are dominated by roads and large scale buildings.*

### SOMERSHAM ROAD INDUSTRIAL AREAS

The main industrial area is located to the north east of the town and includes the older Somersham Road industrial estate and the recently built Compass Point Business Park. Building types include T9b.

#### Key Characteristics:

- Wide diversity of architectural styles, colours and materials.
- Uses include warehouses and industrial premises.
- Southern areas of Somersham Road estate dominated by tarmac roads and paths with little greenery. Northern areas contain grass verges with some tree and shrub planting.
- Poor boundary treatments in places allow views of internal storage areas and car parks.
- Some older buildings partly redundant.
- Pavilion style architecture to new buildings within Compass Point.
- Views out across the Ouse Valley and Central Claylands from Compass Point.

#### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Steel cladding, red and white painted brickwork to south, buff and brown to north.
- Wide range of colours including yellow, dark blue, white and green with some brashly coloured roofs and signage.

#### Some key issues

The older industrial areas are dominated by tarmac roads and paths and there is little planting or screening to soften the impact of large scale buildings. The more recent buildings to the north and those at Compass Point are more unified in terms of design. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Improve the boundary treatments to individual sites to screen views of internal parking and storage areas.
- Promote the planting of large trees within the southern estate to provide a green backdrop to large scale industrial premises.
- Require comprehensive planting to all future development sites.
- Consider a recommended list of plant species to be used throughout the estate to reflect patterns of existing planting wherever possible.



*Pavilion style architecture at Compass Point.*

## OUSE VALLEY

The River Great Ouse and its extensive flood meadows are key features of the southern gateway to the town and provide a lush green setting. There are a large number of historic industrial and commercial buildings and merchant houses along the riverfront including building types T1a, T2, T9a and T10.

### Key Characteristics:

- Historic buildings along The Quay and The Waits, and views of All Saints and the Free Church, create a memorable and well-defined riverside edge, particularly when viewed from the Hemingford Meadow.
- Mixed use including hotel, marina, residential properties and offices.
- Recent development at St Ives Business Park and Meadow Lane located on the edge of the Ouse Valley.
- Extensive public access to the river edge notably at The Waits, The Quay and to the Hemingford and Wilhorn Meadows.
- The river promotes a quiet and peaceful setting. This is supported by limited vehicular access to the area.
- Numerous willow trees.

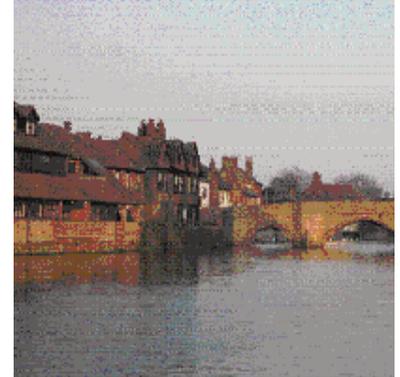
### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly green.
- Mixed buff and red brick, plain gault clay tiles, white painted render, modern buff brick, slate.

### Some key issues

The Ouse valley landscape provides the setting of the town when approached from the south and the river corridor is fundamental to the historical evolution and perception of St Ives. The protection of the Ouse Valley and strict control of river front development should be a key conservation objective. Strategies should seek to:

- Restrict further development along the northern banks of the river particularly along the important frontage at The Quay and around All Saints Church.
- Improve pedestrian signage to The Quay and The Waits from the town centre.
- Conserve the ecological value of Hemingford Meadows and Wilhorn Meadow, whilst ensuring public access.



*The medieval bridge across the River Ouse is a key landmark.*



*The Waits. A charming riverside promenade.*

## RAMSEY AND BURY



### LOCATION AND SETTING

Ramsey and Bury are situated to the north east of Huntingdonshire, equidistant from Peterborough to the north and St Ives to the south. Ramsey was founded around the Abbey in AD 969 and although a relatively small town, it has experienced considerable recent growth. Bury lies to the south and is a small settlement with strong links to Upwood Airfield, which has developed on the south-western edge of the village. Originally two distinct settlements linked by the B1040, Ramsey and Bury have now merged as a consequence of recent residential development to the south west of Ramsey and along Upwood Road north east of Bury.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Original settlement developed around the Abbey to the north east of the present town.
- Few medieval and post-medieval buildings as a result of extensive damage caused to the town by fires during the 17th and 18th Centuries.
- Highly distinctive and memorable area centred around the Abbey Greens (including the Gatehouse, Church of St Thomas a Becket, the Abbey buildings, three historic greens and a large pond).
- Diverse range of building types and ages including Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian houses as well as more recent development from the 19th and 20th Century.
- Building materials range from buff, slate and red/brown plain tile, red brick and white cream rendering to the corrugated iron of the industrial warehouses.
- High level of traffic in town centre. Pedestrian activity along the Great White creates a bustling atmosphere.

## URBAN STRUCTURE

The urban structure of Ramsey and Bury is illustrated in Figure 10

The settlement lies along the B1040 on the edge of the fenland landscape. Although historically Ramsey developed around the Abbey, this has since been demolished and the town centre is now defined by the High Street and Great Whyte, the junction of which provides the main urban node. A number of important landmark buildings are located around the former Abbey, notably the Church of St Thomas a Becket which dominates views from the northern end of the High Street.

Bury lies along Upwood Road to the south and has expanded east through recent peripheral housing development. The junction of Upwood Road and the B1040 forms the main urban node and defines the point at which Ramsey and Bury merge. The urban area extends south west to include areas of MOD housing associated with the Upwood Airfield. When approached from the south east along the B1040 a number of older houses at 'The Cross' define the southern gateway into the village.

### Key features include:

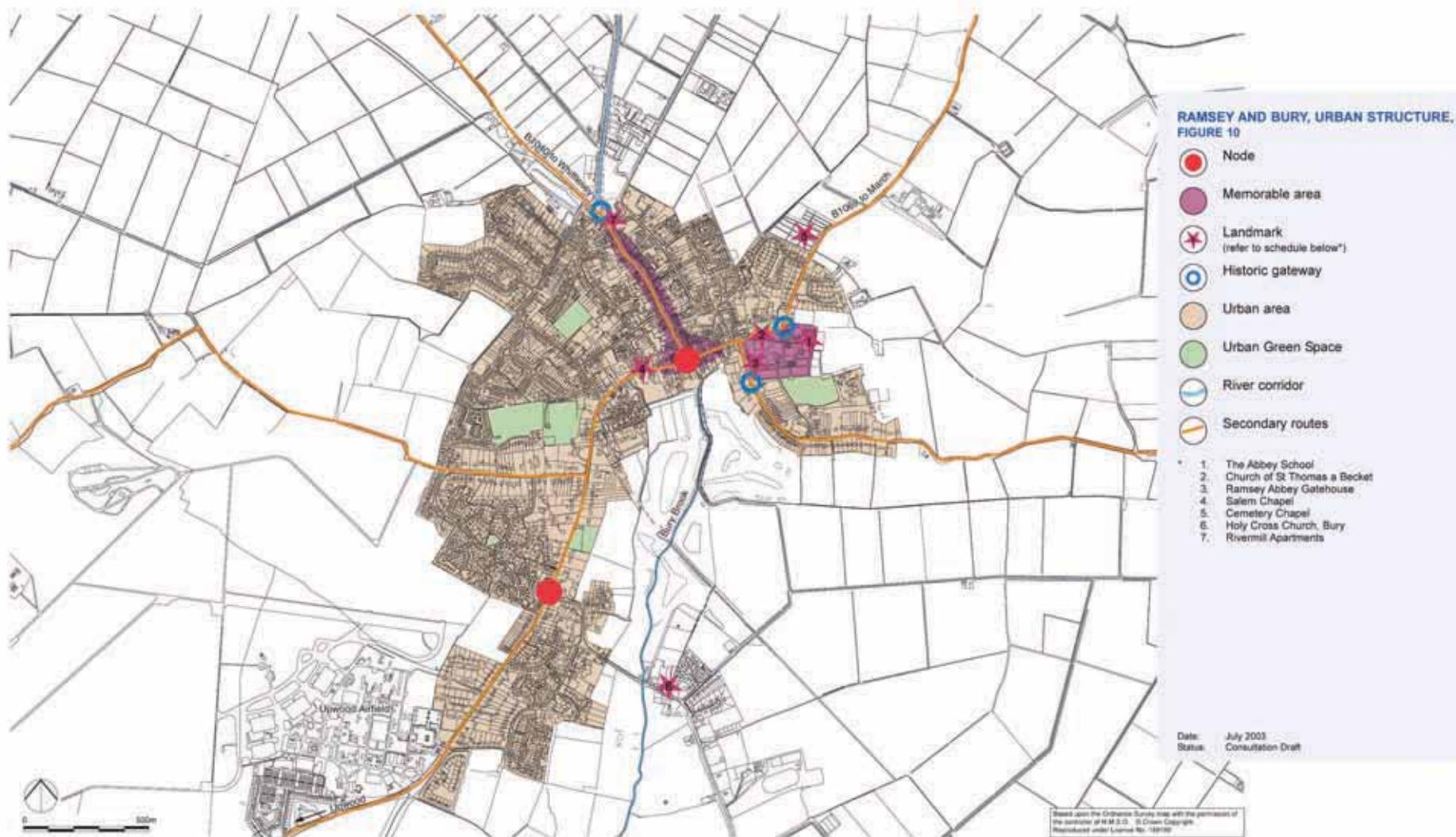
- **Historic route:** Wood Lane, High Street, Great Whyte.
- **Historic gateways:** Gatehouse by Hollow Lane, eastern approach into the Abbey Greens, northern approach into Great Whyte by High Lode and Mill Basin.
- **Landmarks:** The Abbey School, Church of St Thomas a Becket, Ramsey Abbey Gatehouse, Salem Chapel, Cemetery Chapel, Holy Cross Church, Bury, Rivermill apartments,
- **Memorable areas:** The Abbey Greens and pond, the High Street and Great Whyte.
- **Key views:** Along High Street and Great Whyte, Wood Lane at Church Green, St Mary's Road to north.

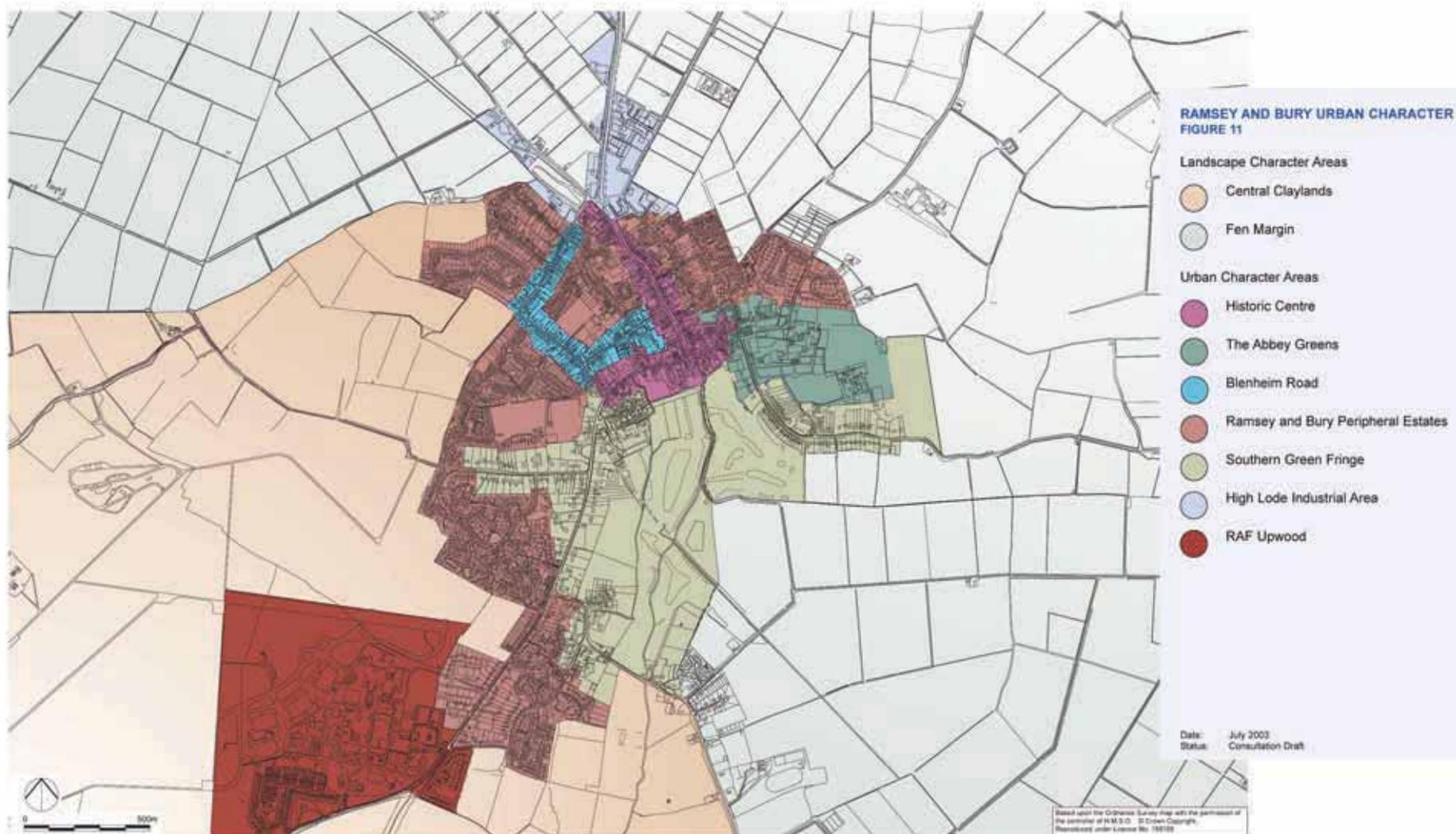
## URBAN CHARACTER AND SETTLEMENT SETTING

The urban character of Ramsey and Bury is illustrated in Figure 11.

A total of seven individual character areas have been identified. The Historic Centre of Ramsey is defined by the buildings and streets of the High Street and Great Whyte, and to the north the Abbey Greens represent one of the most unique features in Huntingdonshire. Housing along Blenheim Road and within the Southern Green Fringe is distinct in character from the surrounding peripheral estates, and the High Lode Industrial Area defines the northern edge of the town. The character of Bury is dominated by recent housing development to the east of Upwood Road and the Upwood Airfield to the south west.

There are good visual links between the settlement and the landscape of the Fen Margin, which contributes significantly to the character of the Southern Green Fringe. The elevated landscape of the Central Claylands to the south and west, combined with the lack of significant vegetation allows extensive views both to and from the settlement.





## THE HISTORIC CENTRE

The historic centre is characterised by the two major routes through Ramsey, the High Street running east to west and the Great Whyte running approximately north to south. Whilst the most significant historical buildings and landmarks are located in the Abbey Greens, the two main streets maintain their character as the distinctive core by their well-established street pattern, high density and mixed use. Building types include T2, T3, T10 and T11a.

### Key Characteristics:

- Contains building types ranging from 18th Century town houses and terraces to old warehouses and 18th to 20th Century housing.
- Some derelict buildings to the northern end of Great Whyte and some poor quality modern infill.
- Functions of the area focus on commercial and residential provision but also incorporate public houses and a garage
- Well-defined street pattern created by back of pavement development
- Significant historic character highlighted by the varied style and structure of the buildings.
- Drab central space along Great Whyte dominated by traffic and car parking.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Varied: Predominantly buff with one or two red brick. White and pastel painted brickwork and render.
- Colourful shop fronts and signage.
- Slate on 19th Century properties, plain clay tiles.

### Some key issues

Ramsey's historic and commercial heart contains a diversity of building types. The area continues to present opportunities for new development through the renovation of redundant properties and/or improvements to the public realm. Conservation and improvement strategies should:

- Conserve the existing historic buildings.
- Promote renovation or redevelopment of redundant buildings.
- Control the proliferation of modern signage and shop pavement displays along Great Whyte.
- Consider reducing parking within the town centre, in particular along the Great Whyte. Seek to introduce tree planting to the central space.
- Improve pedestrian circulation and enhance paving along the Great Whyte.



*Great Whyte: the commercial centre of Ramsey.*



*High Street: historic buildings define the street frontage framing views to the church.*

## THE ABBEY GREENS



*The Abbey School: one of a number of magnificent buildings within the Abbey Greens.*

Located on the north eastern fringe of Ramsey, the 'Abbey Greens' is a highly distinctive character area centred around Church Green and containing a number of landmark buildings and unique historical features. The unifying characteristics are the open space and natural ambience. Building types include T4, T5, T10 and T11b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Village-like appearance with pond, three greens bordered by low-density housing.
- Range of building ages include Georgian, Victorian and modern housing overlooking Newtown Green. The row of Victorian cottages, north of Church Green, is of particular note.
- Modern housing has intruded little on the unique character established by the historic buildings.
- Predominantly residential use but also contains two schools (Abbey School and Ailwyn Community School).
- Southern approach from High Street dominated by Abbey Green and St Thomas a Becket's church.
- The presence of the pond and a row of lime trees alongside Church Green reduces the impact of traffic along Wood Lane (B1096).

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Building materials contributing to the distinctive character of the greens include buff and dark buff brickwork with slate and brown tile as well as red brick.
- A lush green setting is created by open grassed areas (school playing fields, greens and the pond).



*Church Green: the duck pond creates a village character.*

### Some key issues

The Abbey Greens is the most distinctive part of Ramsey and represents a sensitive environment within which there is little potential for development. Conservation strategies should:

- Conserve the historic buildings and their setting.
- Protect the existing greens.
- Protect the row of Lime trees along Wood Lane
- Protect views of the church from the High Street.
- Improve pedestrian signage to and from the town centre.

## BLLENHEIM ROAD

An established residential area located along three main streets to the north west of the Historic Centre. The area is closely linked to the Historic Centre and forms an area of older housing which is distinct from the surrounding residential estates. Building types include T3, T4 and T7b.

### Key Characteristics:

- Linear development with housing to both sides of road.
- Well defined street frontage with few gaps.
- Diverse range of urban types including Victorian and Edwardian villas, 1930's bay fronted semi's and 19th Century terraced housing
- Uses predominantly residential.
- Generally back of pavement development or houses with small front gardens bounded by walls and hedges.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Predominantly buff brick with occasional red brick, white render.
- Grey pantile, slate.

### Some key issues

A residential area with a strong sense of character and a mix of building types and ages. Some potential for development through building extensions and urban infill. Conservation and enhancement strategies should:

- Reflect the dominant building pattern of terraces and semi's in any infill development.
- Reflect the dominant buff brick colour palette in any new development.
- Enhance the gateways to Great Whyte.



*Semi-detached housing with small front gardens typify the character of Blenheim Road.*



*A consistency of boundary treatment to front gardens provides a sense of unity.*



*Recent housing at Owls End Bury has an overall green character.*

## PERIPHERAL ESTATES

Large areas of modern housing surround Ramsey to the north and west and link Ramsey with Bury to the south. The older estates lie to the north with more recent development to the south. Building types include T7a, T7b and T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Housing of varied age and type including Victorian and Edwardian terraces and semi's, 1930's semi's and more recent housing dating from the 1970's onward.
- Higher density layout to north western estates with housing generally fronting the road and bounded by small front gardens.
- Southern estates more recent and lower density, arranged around cul de sac. Established planting to front gardens provides a sense of greenery.
- Greater mix of uses to northern estates including schools, playing fields and occasional shops.
- Significant area of open space in use as playing fields to central area forms a boundary to the housing along Biggin Lane
- Small area of larger detached housing along Owls End, Bury with greater sense of greenery.
- Hard edge to western and southern estates with no buffer to surrounding landscape.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Mix of buff brick, red brick, white and cream render.
- Slate, red pantile, concrete tile.

### Some key issues

The character of the peripheral estates varies and the issues facing each area differ. However, without outward expansion, future development is likely to be restricted to occasional residential infill and building extensions. Planning and enhancement strategies should:

- Protect the older properties within the north western estates.
- Avoid a greater proliferation of house types to avoid any further fragmentation of local character.
- Reflect the dominant building materials and colours in any new development.
- Protect the mature trees and vegetation along Owls End.
- Enhance the landscape buffer around the eastern and northern edges of the settlement.



*Recent housing to the north of Ramsey is typical of much recent development.*

## SOUTHERN GREEN FRINGE

A large character area dominated by residential development and significant areas of open space which abuts the Fen Margin landscape character area and Bury Brook to the east. The Southern Green Fringe links Ramsey with Bury and is important in providing a landscape setting to the town when approached from the east. Building types include types T4, T7b and T7d.

### Key Characteristics:

- Low density layout mainly comprising large detached houses with large gardens set well back from the road.
- Uses predominantly residential but include Ramsey Golf Course and a small industrial estate south of Fairfield Drive.
- Watercourse known as Bury Brook is a key influence on the character of the area.
- Biggin Lane to the west is flanked by rows of large villas whilst Hollow Lane to the East contains housing from the 1920's to 1950's.
- Sense of unity achieved through an open character that is consistent throughout the area.
- Mature tree lines and hedgerows obscure views to housing along either side of the road and further enforce the green character of the area.
- Tree lines help to reduce the impact of traffic and Biggin Lane and Hollow Lane maintain a calm and peaceful atmosphere.
- Contains a small enclave of historic properties around 'The Cross', Bury.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Strong green colour palette supported by the golf course and vegetation along the major roads.
- Materials include white render, red and buff brick, white painted brick, timber frame, slate and thatch.

### Some key issues

A distinctive area with a leafy character containing some substantial houses and providing the eastern landscape setting to both Ramsey and Bury. Development opportunities are restricted to occasional gap sites and planning and conservation strategies should:

- Ensure that new residential development is set back from the road.
- Protect important trees along main roads and in private gardens to maintain the leafy character.
- Promote ecological improvements to Bury Brook.
- Seek to improve pedestrian links across Bury Road.



*Biggin Lane: houses are set back from the road which has an overall green character.*



*Hollow Lane provides an attractive approach to Ramsey from the east.*



*Old industrial premises offer opportunities for refurbishment, such as the completed scheme at Rivermill.*

## HIGH LODE INDUSTRIAL AREA

The High Lode industrial area is a large area of degraded land that extends northwards from the junction of Great Whyte and Field Road and extends into the landscape of the Fen Margin. Building types include T9a and T9b.

### Key characteristics

- Developed within the context of the disused railway and the High Lode.
- Disjointed character with little sense of place.
- A variety of uses including scrap yards, plant nursery, industrial buildings, a supermarket and recent housing conversion at Rivermill Apartments.
- Areas of derelict and low quality land degrade the northern approach to the town.
- Limited historic character and dominated by 20th century industrial development.
- Extensive views from the Fen Margin landscape to the north due to flat topography and poor boundary treatment.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- A harsh colour palette ranging from dull grey and brown building materials to yellow and blue signage highlights the unbalanced character of the area.

### Some key issues

A generally poor quality environment at the northern gateway into the town. The area is already undergoing change (e.g. through the conversion of the 19th Century Mill to housing) and is capable of accommodating further development. Planning and improvement strategies should:

- Promote environmental improvements schemes to restore areas of derelict and vacant land.
- Provide screening to the northern edge.
- Enhance the northern approach to the town along Stocking Fen.
- Provide screening to industrial premises through improved planting and fencing to site boundaries.



*Recent industrial developments are poorly screened and highly visible in the landscape.*

## RAF UPWOOD

An extensive character area associated with RAF Upwood located at the south western fringe of Bury. Building types include T12.

### Key Characteristics:

- Former airfield situated on elevated land at the urban fringe.
- Large areas of tarmac and redundant buildings.
- Boundary with Upwood Road defined by chain link fence.
- Limited views into airfield due to screening effect of boundary vegetation.
- Clinic and active military site opposite Tunkers Lane.
- Prohibited and restricted access.
- Small areas of MOD housing at Valiant Square and Fairmead Park.
- Large disused house (Upwoodhill House) visible from road.
- Airfield is visually open to landscape of the Central Claylands to the west.

### Materials and Colour Palette:

- Grey, red and buff brick, concrete render, brown steel cladding to roofs.

### Some key issues

The redundant airfield offers opportunities for re-development. Any proposals should:

- Consider the impact upon Bury, including the provision of employment opportunities and local services.
- Minimise the adverse visual impact upon the surrounding landscape to the south and west.
- Provide pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre.



*Large redundant buildings at the former airfield site.*



*Areas of MOD housing have a unique regimented character.*

## Building Types



T1 Vernacular cottage/house

T2 18-19 Century town house

T3 18-19 Century terraced house

T4 18-19 Century villas and semis

T5 19 Century picturesque

T6 18-19 Century grand house

T7 20 Century housing

T8 Agricultural buildings

T9 Industrial buildings and retail parks

T10 Ecclesiastical buildings

T11 Civic buildings

T12 Military airfields

## HIGH STATUS MEDIEVAL TIMBER FRAMED HOUSE

### TYPE T1 A



Large medieval timber framed houses are found mainly in the centre and south of the district, and generally date from the mid to late 16th Century. The type is frequently rendered, or faced in brickwork, and re-fenestrated in later periods, disguising its medieval origins.

Some fine examples of timber framed houses are found in Godmanchester.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Oak framing (often reused) infilled with wattle and daub and covered with lime plaster/render
- Two storeys, some with later dormer windows added to create attic rooms
- Picturesque roofs; with steep pitches, numerous gables and large, sometimes ornate, red brick chimneystacks. Roof coverings depend on location, but the predominant types include plain gault-clay tiles and thatch
- Overhanging eaves
- Frequently built with L and H plan forms, with additive ranges of outbuildings
- Jettying at ground and first floors, with bay-windows to some grander examples
- Originally, windows (mullioned, with leaded lights) were set within the framing, but these were generally replaced by timber sliding sashes or casements in later periods
- Medium to low density housing, depending on plot size
- Varied form and scale, but usually detached, built within settlement boundaries. Commonly associated with burgage plots, and frequently set at back of pavement creating a well defined street pattern

## VERNACULAR COTTAGES

### TYPE T1 B



The underlying geology, gault clays and limestone in the north west, together with reeds and straw from the nearby Fens and local farms, has generated the palette of traditional building materials for vernacular buildings. This, together with building techniques developed by the local population over many centuries, has created the simple and charming vernacular cottages of the district. Vernacular cottages from late 16th century to late 18th century occur throughout the area, but show distinct local variations.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Long, low double-fronted single, 1.5 or 2 storey cottages
- Simple flat-fronted building form, generally eaves to the road
- Buff or rosy-buff brick or stone built, depending on location. Rendered and painted timber framing is common throughout the District
- Shallow plan depth with a simple steeply pitched roof and outbuildings
- Clay plain or pantiles, thatch or Collyweston-slate roof coverings, depending on location
- Eaves and gables are generally clipped close to the building, except for the deep overhangs found on thatched roofs
- Originally built with small, horizontally proportioned window openings with casement or horizontally sliding sash windows. Flat or segmental brick lintels
- Dormer windows are a common feature, with pitched, cat slide or eyebrow roofs, depending on material and location
- Panelled or ledged and braced doors, with some later simple timber porches or canopies
- Large brick chimneystacks were positioned first centrally and later at the gable ends
- Within settlements, cottages are generally terraced and set at the back of the pavement, creating well-defined streets and space.

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The form and proportions remain fairly constant throughout the district, but the materials vary with location.

### The Fens and Fen Margins

The fens contain few pre 19th century buildings, but cottages on the margins are predominately buff brick often painted, or rendered and painted white. Roofs are mainly covered with clay plain tiles and pantiles although there is also some thatch present. 1.5 storey cottages with catslide dormer windows and outshoots are a common feature



### The Central Claylands and Ouse Valley

Long low houses built of rosy buff and dark buff brickwork depending on the settlement. Roofs are typically thatch or Cambridgeshire mix plain-tiles, with pantiles frequently found on outbuildings



### The South East Claylands

In the south of the District rendered and painted timber-framed cottages are common, with projecting weather-boards a distinctive feature. Cottages are frequently 1.5 storeys, with many later examples built of a characteristic dark warm-red brick. Cambridgeshire peg tiles and thatched roofs are common.



### The Nene Valley

Cottages are built from the locally occurring limestone, laid as coursed rubble with dressed stone cills, window and door surrounds on larger properties. Roofs are generally of Collyweston slate, although thatch is also present, especially in the larger villages.



## 18-19TH CENTURY TOWN HOUSE

### TYPE T2



The Town House building type is found throughout the district; its adaptability to a wide range of scales, materials and uses creates the variety, and strong architectural cohesion of the historic centres of the towns and larger villages. This classically inspired style creates well-defined and elegant streets and public spaces.

During the 18th century it became fashionable to 'modernise' earlier vernacular houses, and it is common to find medieval buildings re-elevated behind Town House facades.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Predominately terraced form, 2 to 3.5 storeys, generally double stacked with central gutter
- Flat fronted and symmetrical, 2-4 bays wide, vertically proportioned facades
- Vertically proportioned window openings, with flat brick or stone lintels, and timber vertical-sliding sash windows.
- Roofscape minimised by the use of parapets, shallow and double pitched roofs with the eaves to road. Cambridgeshire peg tiles and slate are the most common roof coverings.
- Stone detailing, often painted, including cills, string-courses, architraves etc.
- Drive-through archways, gaining access to the rear are a common feature, especially in former coaching towns
- 6 and 4 panelled doors, with door-surrounds and glazed fanlights or door canopies
- The terraced form, often built at back of pavement creates a well-defined street frontage of urban character
- High-medium density, depending on the numbers of storeys, bays, and plot width. Generally built with additive ranges of outbuildings
- Originally built as dwellings, some with shops on the ground floor. The majority are now in commercial and office use.

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The form, detailing and proportions remain fairly constant throughout the district, but the materials show some variation with location. Painted and rusticated render is found throughout the district, especially in St. Ives

### The Central Claylands and Ouse Valley

The market towns of Huntingdonshire contain Town Houses in their historic centres. Built of warm soft red, dark buff and pale buff brick depending on age, and the settlement. Huntingdon, Buckden and the Offords have some fine examples of the warm-red brickwork. Roofs are typically gault-clay plain tiles, although slate is found on later properties.



### The South East Claylands

St Neots has some fine examples of townhouses. They are generally built of buff coloured brickwork with Cambridgeshire peg tile roof coverings.



## 18-19TH CENTURY TERRACED HOUSE

### TYPE T3



The agricultural and industrial revolutions precipitated major growth of towns in the 18 and 19th centuries. Streets of small terraced houses were built on the edges of the historic towns throughout the district. The type is ubiquitous throughout the country. Although influenced by local materials the advent of the railways improved transportation and encouraged the use of non-local materials, especially mass-produced bricks and Welsh slate for roofs.

The majority of terraced houses in the district are built at the back of pavement, however there are examples of a larger version of this type with small front gardens, which creates a wider, greener and more relaxed streetscape

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Small, generally flat fronted houses; bay windows are a feature on larger examples
- Brick built, occasionally with contrasting brick detailing, such as string courses and door and window surrounds
- Vertically proportioned window openings, with flat and segmental brick arches, and stone cills
- Vertical sliding sash windows and timber panelled doors, typically with glazed fanlights over
- Eaves and gables are generally undecorated and generally clipped close to the building
- Chimney stacks are usually positioned on the party wall
- Simple pitched roofs with slate roof covering
- High density terraced form, laid out in long straight streets, creating a distinctive urban character
- Parking on street

## 18-19TH CENTURY VILLAS AND SEMIS

### TYPE T4



This building type is found in the larger villages and towns of the district, where it forms the wealthier 18-19th Century fringes to the historic centres. The classic simple architecture of the Georgian period became increasingly eclectic and decorative during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Although influenced by local building materials, improved transportation brought non-local materials, especially mass-produced bricks and Welsh slate.

The villa form became a popular antithesis to the narrow streets of small working-class erected housing during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The semi-detached form, creating the illusion of detached villas, is also found in some locations. Ramsey has the largest collection of this building type.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Medium to large brick-built, detached or semi-detached houses
- Decorative, contrasting brickwork stringcourses, eaves courses, lintels and window reveals
- Canted and square bay windows are a feature, often with stone mullions, now generally painted white
- Decorative stone detailing, including mullions, copings, padstones and plaques
- Vertical window openings with stone cills, flat and segmental brick lintels, and vertical sliding sash windows
- Fairly low-pitched slate covered roofs, some with Italianate hipped roofs. Prominent brick stacks and chimneys
- Large houses are set in spacious grounds. Urban examples have small front gardens that create a greener, more suburban street character
- Parking in urban examples is generally on street

## 19TH CENTURY PICTURESQUE

### TYPE T5



During the Victorian era it became fashionable for wealthy and philanthropic landowners to build housing and other facilities for their tenants, and the local community. The predominant style was based on a gothicised version of the idealised 'English' cottage, often creating picturesque groups or even whole villages. Generally, materials were of local origin, excepting more decorative elements such as cast iron windows and ornate rainwater goods

The type is found in small numbers throughout the district; Abbey Green, Ramsey has several fine examples along its northern side.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Generally symmetrical but with intricate plan forms, layouts and elevations
- Architectural detailing used for decorative effect, such as buttresses, dentil courses, mouldings, bargeboards and string courses
- Picturesque rooflines, with tall decorated chimney stacks, numerous gables, finials and decorated ridge tiles
- Steep roof pitches, with slate or gault clay plain-tile roof coverings. Dormer windows are a feature on cottages
- Strongly mullioned windows often with decorative lattice-work glazing patterns
- Generally set back from the road with small front gardens and low walls to the front boundaries. Alms-houses often for courtyards defined by railings
- Originally built for a range of uses, including schools, estate offices, village halls, alms-houses and estate workers cottages. The majority are now in residential use
- Medium to low density depending on use and plot size
- Parking is generally on street

## 18TH-19TH CENTURY GRAND HOUSE

### TYPE T6



The agricultural and industrial revolutions brought new wealth to the district, and many of the landed gentry built themselves grand houses, based on the classically inspired stately homes of the aristocracy. Later Victorian examples are influenced by non-classical traditions, and are often less symmetrical displaying stylistic motifs such as gothic arches, round towers, tile hanging and decorative bargeboards. Designed to be seen, and to impress, they are often found on settlement edges throughout the district.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large, detached houses with symmetrical, wide-fronted facades, usually on expansive plots
- Georgian examples are wide-fronted, with tall floor to ceiling heights, creating an imposing scale
- Vertically proportioned window openings vertically aligned, frequently graduating in height up the façade, with flat-arch stone or 'red-rubber' brick lintels
- Timber vertical-sliding sash windows. Georgian examples generally follow 9, 12 and 16 pane patterns. Victorian sliding sash windows incorporate larger pane sizes
- Roofscape views are minimised through the use of parapets and shallow double pitched roofs, with the eaves to road. Mansard roofs are found on some examples.
- Decorative dentil eaves courses or painted timber cornice eaves detail
- Brick or stone detailing, often painted, including cills, string courses, keystones and quoins
- 6 and 4 panelled doors, with decorative-glazed fanlights or door canopies
- The grand detached forms, usually set back from the road behind railings or walls, create a restful, stately and less urban character
- Frequently set in gardens, with dark evergreen planting, with a backdrop of mature trees

### REGIONAL VARIATIONS

The form, detailing and proportions remain fairly constant throughout the district, but the materials vary with location.



#### The Fens and Fen Margins

Buff/Gault coloured brick with Cambridgeshire peg tiles are the most common regional materials.



#### The Central Claylands and Ouse Valley

Built of warm soft red, dark buff and pale buff brickwork depending on the settlement. Roofs are typically gault-clay plain tiles, although slate is found on later properties.



#### The Nene Valley

Grand Houses form the focus to the larger villages. Built of ashlar stone with stone details, roofs are typically Collyweston stone slates

## ARTS & CRAFT INFLUENCED HOUSING

### TYPE T7A



The Arts and Craft Movement in the late 19th century, and the Garden Cities of the early 20th century exerted considerable influence on housing until the 1950s. This applied especially to social housing throughout the district, where estates of this housing type are found on the peripheries of the larger towns. 'The Garden City' cottage aesthetic, and the vision of a green and leafy arcadia became increasingly compromised through increased densities and mass production, but the architectural style and geometrical layouts still retain vestiges of the original influences.

The type is found throughout the country, and does not generally show regional variations. An example is Newtown in Huntingdon.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Geometric, regular layouts with crescents, cul de sacs, and orthogonal junctions
- Semi detached and short terraces of simple flat fronted properties
- Clipped privet hedge front boundaries, often with timber gates, and small front gardens
- Shallow pitched, double-hipped roofs, with slate or plain tiled roof coverings. Simple chimneys on ridgeline
- Originally, multi-paned painted timber casement windows, with soldier-course brick lintels.
- Timber front doors with small canopies
- Built of red mass-produced brickwork, frequently roughcast-rendered, and painted cream or pastel colours
- Simple string-courses of soldier brickwork or render
- Semi detached form, hedges and grass verges to some streets, create a suburban character
- Parking generally on street

## 1920S AND INTER-WAR SUBURBIA

### TYPE T7B



The poor living conditions of the urban poor in the 19th century, and growing wealth and mobility resulted in the massive growth of suburbia in the 1920 and 30s. A few properties in the district retain influences of the 'Art Deco' of the 1920s. The Arts and Crafts movement also heavily influenced the architectural style of the period, using motifs such as timber framing, tile hanging, leaded lights and stained glass to invoke the idyll of the 'English Cottage'.

This building type is found in small numbers throughout the district. They are especially noticeable in the Fens and the periphery of Ramsey.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Simple rectangular semi-detached plan form
- Fairly rectilinear street pattern
- Shallow pitched, double-hipped roofs, with slate or plain tiled roof coverings. Chimneys generally on the ridgeline
- Originally painted metal, and later timber casement windows, some with latticed-lights or stained glass panels
- Mass-produced red brickwork and painted roughcast render
- Decorative gables with timber-framing effect, frequently painted black and white
- Double height bay windows, with rendered or tile-hung panel, are a defining characteristic of the type
- Recessed porches with tiled floors, and glazed front doors, often with stained glass panels
- Semi detached form, hedges and grass verges to some streets, create the archetypal 'suburban' character
- Medium-low density
- Parking off street, generally between properties

## THE 'RADBURN' ESTATES

### TYPE T7C



The original 'Radburn' estate, a satellite town of New York, was conceived in 1928 as an American garden city. The word is now generally used to describe housing layouts in which vehicles and pedestrians are segregated by keeping one side of the house (usually the front) free from vehicles, and the 'rear' access cul de sac for servicing.

The 'Radburn' estates in the district follow the principles of vehicular/pedestrian segregation. However, the visual character of the service cul de sacs, the poor architectural quality, and the minimal impact of the landscaped areas have not realised the original concept of a garden city.

The largest 'Radburn' estate is the Oxmoor Estate in Huntingdon.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rectilinear layout, with long straight vehicular routes, numerous culs de sac, wedges of open space interspersed with large school complexes, and local centre
- Pedestrian/vehicular segregation with rear vehicular access via paved culs de sac, with tall-timber gated entrances
- 'Front' elevations facing deserted, grass communal spaces, with occasional small trees
- Generally built of pale red brick, with white painted timber boarding fascias and facades
- Generally 2 storeys, with occasional 3 storey town houses, and local facilities
- Low-pitched roofs, with brown concrete interlocking tile covering
- Medium to high density of a highly distinctive urban character
- Parking is in-curtilage.

## MODERN HOUSING ESTATES

### TYPE T7D



This building type is found in profusion throughout the district, on the periphery of every major settlement. It forms the major expansion of house building from the 1960s onwards, and although the architectural style evolves each decade, the overall principles of development remain fairly constant.

Generally, the architectural style and materials are uninfluenced by local materials and building traditions, and the use of standard house types has led to the type being standard across most of the country.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Curvilinear, tree-like road hierarchy, terminating in numerous culs de sac, generate disorientating layouts
- Units laid-out in an arbitrary winding street pattern create visually fragmented building and rooflines, and poor street enclosure
- Generally, set back from the street, with small, unenclosed front gardens and driveways, creating poorly defined street patterns.
- Constant eaves, and window and door head heights
- The use of a wide range of architectural features, including porches, gables, bays and complicated set-backs frequently creates an over decorated effect
- White painted timber boarded fascias and panels a feature on 1960-70s examples
- Brown-stained timber window and door joinery, and timber framed effect to some 1980s properties
- Prominent elements include close-boarded fencing, harshly engineered road geometry and details
- Mass produced red and buff brickwork with brown and red interlocking roof-tiles create a brash colour palette

## AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS

### TYPE T8



This building type is found dispersed throughout the rural areas of the district, but also within some of the older villages, and coalesced into the suburban fringes of the larger settlements. The majority date from the time of the 17-19th Century Enclosure Acts, with some remaining examples from the medieval period.

Post-war intensification of farming practices have necessitated large-scaled, industrial type barns, stores and silos which have come to dominate many traditional farmsteads, and often their landscape setting.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large farmhouses (see vernacular cottages and T6), generally set close to the road, with long, low additive ranges of farm buildings set to the side and rear
- Traditional buildings are small-scale, built of stone, buff and red brick or timber-framed clad with timber weatherboarding, depending on location
- Roofs are generally simple pitched construction, covered with thatch, clay plain or pantiles, and picturesque in appearance
- Modern buildings are large-scale steel-framed single span structures, usually clad in profiled steel sheet, coloured grey

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS

### South East Claylands



Timber weather boarded barns are a feature in this area, many of which now have corrugated iron roofs, which suggests that they were once thatched. Materials in later examples include red brick with slate roof coverings.

### The Fens and Fen Margin



A few Fen farmsteads date from the late 19th century, but the majority of the agricultural buildings in the Fens are of recent construction. Due to the flat topography of the Fens, the large scale of the barns, sheds and silos are frequently visually apparent over large distances.

The agricultural heritage of the Fen Margins is far older. A few medieval timber-framed and weather boarded barns remain; later examples are generally gault-clay brickwork with Cambridgeshire peg tile and pantile roof coverings.

### Central Claylands and Uplands



Groups of gault-brickwork barns and outhouses, often laid out in additive ranges. Plain and pantile roof coverings.

### The Nene Valley



Traditional farmsteads are frequently built of coursed rubble stonework with thatched or Collyweston slate roof coverings.

## PRE-20TH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

### TYPE T9A



The district has a rich heritage of pre 20th century industrial buildings, especially in the Nene and Ouse Valleys, where historically the rivers provided both good transport routes, and a means of power to mill corn and oil seed grown on the surrounding farms. Other mills in the Ouse Valley were associated with papermaking and textiles.

Windmills were formerly found throughout the district, especially on higher ground. In the Fens however, windmills pumped ground-water into the drains and lodes thereby creating the Fen landscape. Wind-powered mills were replaced by steam-pumps in the 1850's, and later by diesel and electric powered pumps; pump-houses remain a distinctive feature of the Fens today.

Due to the diversity of characteristics of the type throughout the District, key characteristics are indicated on a regional basis.

### THE OUSE VALLEY MILLS KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale, visually prominent, discreet and free-standing mill and granary buildings
- Positioned in the river floodplain, often surrounded by willows
- 3-6 storeys tall. Generally built of buff brick, with slate covered or plain tiled roofs.
- Projecting timber weather boarded loading-bays, and pulley houses
- Simple, robust symmetrical elevations with segmental-arched window openings, and loading bays positioned vertically one above another
- Rudimentary neo-classical detailing, such as pilasters and Italianate porticos are a feature on later examples. 'Gothic' detailed examples are also found
- Originally built as mills and warehouses, the majority are now converted for residential use

## REGIONAL VARIATIONS



### The Nene Valley Mills

- Small to medium scale, long low ranges of mill and granary buildings, associated timber water-wheels and races; often in a secluded riverside setting
- 2-3 storeys tall. Generally built of coursed rubble masonry, with dressed stone quoins and openings. Collyweston slate, or gault-clay pantile roof coverings, and some small dormer windows.
- Early examples are simple vernacular buildings, often formalised in the Georgian era
- Originally built as water-mills, the majority are now converted for residential use



## WINDMILLS

- Brick tower mills are predominant, although a few timber Post and Smock mills remain. Draining engines, as mills in The Fens were known, were generally smock mills with brick bases
- Domed, lead covered, clay-tiled, or slate pitched roofs
- Small windows with a single door opening at the base
- Mills were originally fitted with four canvas sails, although later examples had up to twelve. In the 19th century mills were fitted with self-regulating sails.
- Originally built as pumping, flour and seed mills, the majority are now derelict or converted for housing or recreational use



## RAILWAY STATIONS

- The railways first came to the District in 1846, but the surviving station buildings are generally of a later date. Many of the older station buildings were closed or, unfortunately, demolished during the 1960s. There are various styles depending on age, but they generally do not exhibit regional characteristics.
- 19th century examples are generally built of red or buff brick, with stone cills, stringcourses and other detailing
- Generally pitched roofs with slate roof coverings. Canopies often glazed with characteristic white painted timber 'gingerbread' fretwork fascias
- Often associated with extensive hardstanding, car parking and former coal yards

## 20TH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL ESTATES & RETAIL PARKS

### TYPE T9B



Industrial estates and retail parks occur on the peripheries of all the main towns, and some larger villages. A twentieth century phenomenon generated by the rise of mass car ownership, heavy goods vehicles, improved road networks and large retail chains; they are ubiquitous and almost identical throughout the country.

Large supermarkets have also been included in this type, and are found both within some town centres, and also in out of town locations.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale, wide span shed-type buildings. Generally steel framed construction, clad with buff or red brickwork, or plastic coated profiled sheet. Recent supermarket buildings tend to be of a more pleasing and distinctive visual appearance
- Roofs are low pitched and expansive, although parapets on in-town supermarkets generally mask their appearance
- Colours tend to be grey or brown, with garish or bright coloured fascias, trims and signage
- Large expanses of tarmac road surface and car/lorry parking. Supermarket car parks may incorporate some tree and shrub planting, which softens the effect
- Industrial estates frequently have heavily engineered road layouts with mown grass verges, and large expanses of steel security boundary fencing, creating a harsh exposed effect
- Tall lighting columns and large signage often creates an impersonal scale
- Industrial estates are heavily trafficked by cars and heavy goods vehicles, but generally few pedestrians
- Supermarkets and retail parks are fairly well trafficked, with bustling pedestrian movement at busy periods

## PARISH CHURCHES

### TYPE T10A



This type is found throughout the district, the earliest surviving example, dating from around 1000 AD, is the Anglo-Saxon church at Great Paxton. However, ecclesiastical buildings survive from every century and architectural style - unique monuments to the districts' history and culture. Buildings range from Norman and Medieval parish churches to the inter neo-gothic of the Victorian era and the marvellously idiosyncratic Non-Conformist chapels of the 18-19th centuries. For clarity, key characteristics are listed under two subtypes as below:

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large scale buildings for Christian worship and former monastic complexes, including surviving gate-houses and hospitium, typically built and altered over a long periods of time
- Set in a churchyard, often with mature trees, especially yews. Generally, parish churches are located centrally in the town or village, while monastic houses were usually situated on the periphery
- Although many are older, the majority appear externally to be Gothic in style, with large, pointed arched and traceried windows, and stained glass. Moulded stringcourses and hood mouldings, buttresses, castellated parapets and other structural and decorative architectural devices evolved and incorporated over time
- Simple, pitched roofs, generally with plain gault-clay roof coverings
- Building materials range from corstone and cobbles to coursed limestone-rubble, and fine ashlar limestone in the north
- Fine, tall spires are a landmark feature of the District. Lancet windows (small pointed window openings) are characteristic of spires in the Northern Wolds. Towers became increasingly common in the 15-16th centuries and were often added to earlier buildings in the 15-16th centuries.
- Lych gates are characteristic of church in the area and are defining features of many churchyards. Construction varies from oak with clay tiles to stone structures.

## NON-CONFORMIST CHAPELS

### TYPE 10B



### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Simple, generally unadorned facades, consciously avoiding the gothic architectural references of the established church
- Diverse stylistic influences, typically neo-classical
- Simple rectangular plan form, frequently gabled to the road
- Round headed windows, typically cast-iron frames, with clear or pastel-coloured glass
- Generally built of buff brick, with slate roof covering
- Cast iron railings and small paved forecourts are typical

## VICTORIAN AND EDWARDIAN CIVIC BUILDINGS

### TYPE T11A



This diverse type is found throughout the towns and larger villages of the district. It forms the focal point for community, civic and working life, and includes places of assembly, police and fire stations, shopping complexes, schools, libraries, administrative centres and office blocks.

Comparatively rare in the 18th century, the notable example is 'Commemoration Hall' in Huntingdon, with its grand painted stuccoed and pilastered neo-classical façade. Coaching Inns often performed civic functions during the Georgian period, but were similar in appearance to Town Houses (type T2).

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Generally, architect designed buildings reflecting status and function
- Medium to large-scale buildings usually discreet in their own plot. Bank buildings often sited at landmark positions within the streetscape to reinforce status
- Variety of architectural styles, including some good examples of Arts and Crafts, and Neo-classical designs
- Diverse good quality materials, including buff and red brick with ashlar masonry and painted render. Dressed stone stringcourses; ornamental pilasters, cornices and copings are common embellishments
- Pitched, slate covered roofs are typical
- Frequently single storey but of very grand proportions
- Window styles vary with function; school buildings frequently have large vertically proportioned openings, positioned high in the wall

## LATE 20TH CENTURY CIVIC BUILDINGS

### TYPE T11B



This type is found throughout the towns and larger villages of the district. The late twentieth century has witnessed substantial growth in population, changes in building technology and working practices. Large school complexes in the peripheral housing estates, office blocks, hospitals and shopping centres, have generated an architectural aesthetic for civic buildings of our era; some examples use contemporary styles and materials, while others reflect aspects of the regional vernacular.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Large to medium scale buildings, generally with large areas of associated car parking or hardstanding
- Varying number of storeys depending on function, varying from single storey schools and village halls to multi-storey office blocks.
- Amenity shrub planting, small ornamental trees and mown grass typify landscaped areas
- Generally avoid the use of decorative architectural devices, although good design generates pleasing visual effects through the manipulation of form, function and materials
- Mass produced buff and red brick are the most common facing materials, with large areas of glazing also a feature
- Other twentieth century materials found in civic buildings include metal trims and copings, cedar boarding, glulam beams, coloured powder-coated metal window frames and large areas of toughened glass
- Flat roofs were a feature of 1960-70s civic buildings, and low-pitched roofs on later examples. Brown or slate grey concrete roof tiles are typical roof coverings
- Generally, rather shallow detailing with minimum set backs at door and window reveals, creating rather flat, poorly modulated facades

## MILITARY AIRFIELDS

### TYPE T12



There are several large airbases in the district originally dating from the Second World War. Due to the large areas of land that they occupy, and the scale of some of the buildings, airbases can have a considerable impact on the landscape.

On the positive side, airbases often act as valuable habitats for flora and fauna, due to the low use of herbicides, and general lack of human disturbance.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Assemblies of diverse but ubiquitous building types including hangars, office buildings, recreational buildings, timber-boarded huts, barracks and married-quarters
- Very diverse scale of buildings from single storey huts, 2 storey domestic houses (see Types 7A,B and D), 2-4 storey office buildings (see Type T11B) to very large aircraft hangars (similar to Type T9B)
- High chain link fences often backed by vegetation to some bases create strongly defined boundaries, but usually with a degree of visual penetration. Other bases e.g. RAF Wyton, are highly visible from local roads and the surrounding landscape
- Wide variety of building materials, but little or no reference to regional character. Materials include painted corrugated iron, red brick, buff brick, and colour-coated metal cladding
- Large areas of tarmac hard standing and runways
- Areas of close mown grass, clipped hedges and tree planting

## Conservation Areas



What are Conservation areas ? 139

Conservation area guidance 140

Assessment Method 140

Boundary Review 141

Character Assessment 141

Management Plans 142

Status of documents 143





### Conservation Area Guidance

The District Council designates Conservation Areas and it is also obliged by law to review them and make proposals for their enhancement. In March 2006, English Heritage published detailed advice to assist Planning Authorities in meeting this obligation, entitled: *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals and Conservation Area Management*.

The initial designation of a Conservation Area requires a boundary to be drawn around the area to be afforded additional protection. The course of this boundary should be thoroughly researched and justified to ensure that it is in an appropriate and sustainable location. The process of making a boundary, or reviewing existing boundaries through a 'Boundary Review', is an important process and one which should ensure justifiable results.

Character Appraisals (also referred to as Character Statements or Assessments) are the means by which a Local Planning Authority explains and justifies the designation of a Conservation Area and offer a definition of its importance against which future decisions can be judged. They are therefore extremely important documents which must be carefully assembled in conjunction with the local community. They must also be up-to-date, and should be reviewed every five years.

The future management of a Conservation Area is also an evolving process which needs to be reviewed regularly. The Character Assessment usually highlights particular issues relating to the future management of a Conservation Area and these should be distilled into a series of proposals for positive enhancement.

### Assessment method

The District Council operates its review and assessment of its Conservation Areas in the following manner:

#### Stage One:

Boundary Review – where a Conservation Area is already designated, its boundary is thoroughly re-assessed to determine whether its position and extent is justified, or whether extensions or omissions should occur as a result of historic or more recent evidence. Where a new Conservation Area is proposed, the drafting of the boundary will be based on careful analysis of historic map material and on-site assessment. Boundaries should be reviewed every five years to ensure that they remain appropriate.

#### Stage Two

Character Assessment – once a boundary has been drafted and/or adopted, a statement of its particular character should be published. This will identify the characteristics specific to each place and which result in its distinctive appearance. The Character Assessments should be reviewed every five years.

#### Stage Three

Management Plan – as a result of the character assessment work, a series of proposals should be developed in conjunction with the local community to encourage enhancement. These plans should be reviewed every five years.



## BOUNDARY REVIEW

The District Council's Cabinet approved a methodology for the review of Conservation Area boundaries on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2003. The aim of this review was to establish a set of consistent local criteria for the assessment of Conservation Area boundaries in the district. These are the criteria:

- the integrity of the topographical framework.
- the identification of key settlement edges.
- the preservation of natural elements at the boundaries.
- the broader relationship of the built environment to the landscape or open countryside.
- the integrity of significant archaeological sites.
- opportunities for economic regeneration.
- opportunities for character enhancement.

Each boundary review undertaken within the district will address these criteria and the evidence will be presented in the form of a Boundary Review document which will indicate how each has been considered.

Involving the community will be an integral part of the boundary review process and the final boundary review document will identify how the views of local people have been taken into account.

## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

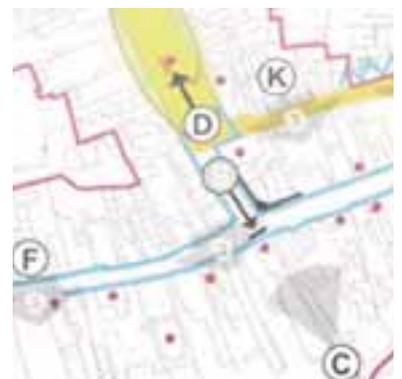
Character Assessments must also be produced in a consistent manner but allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to the individual character of each settlement.

As English Heritage advises, the following criteria will be applied during the analysis of character assessment, under the general headings shown:

- location and context
  - general character and plan form
  - landscape setting
  - Historic development and archaeology
  - the origins and historic development of the area
- 
- archaeology, including scheduled monuments
  - Spatial analysis
  - the character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area
  - key views and vistas
  - Character analysis
- 
- Definition of character areas or zones
  - Activity and prevailing or former uses and their influence on the plan form and buildings
  - The qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the area
  - Unlisted buildings
  - Local details



*Analysis of historic maps and archive material underpins the preparation of a conservation area boundary.*



*Townscape analysis is important for understanding the character of towns and villages.*



- Prevalent and traditional building materials and the public realm
- An audit of heritage assets
- The contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces; and its biodiversity value
- The extent of intrusion or damage (negative factors)
- The existence of neutral areas
- General condition
- Problems, pressures and capacity for change

As with boundary review, involving the community will be an integral part of the appraisal process. The final document will include details of how the community has been engaged in the process and how its comments have been taken into account.

### MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Management Plan for a conservation area takes the form of a mid- to long-term strategy, setting objectives for addressing the issues and recommendations for action arising from the character assessment work and identifying any further or more detailed analysis needed for their implementation.

The Management Plan will form the basis for on-going discussion with the community and will evolve on a regular basis to respond to priorities. In addition, the local community should be directly involved in carrying forward projects.

The content of Management Plans may include:, amongst other initiatives:

- the application of policy guidance, both generic and local, as it relates to planning applications, new development, repairs, alterations and extensions to historic buildings, demolition etc.
- consideration of the resources needed to sustain the historic environment in the area concerned;
- procedures to ensure consistent decision-making based on the published policies and guidance;
- a mechanism for monitoring change on a regular basis
- an enforcement strategy to address unauthorised development
- proposals for the imposition of Article 4 Directions;
- intended action to secure the repair and full use of any buildings at risk;
- proposed enhancement schemes for the public realm
- proposals for developing an economic development and regeneration strategy for the area, including grant-aid for repair and restoration of architectural features
- a strategy for the management and protection of important trees, greenery and green spaces
- proposals for an urban design and/or public realm framework, dealing with spaces/movement etc.

**Status of documents and their use.**

All Boundary Reviews, Character Assessments and Management Plans are adopted as Council policy following an appropriate period of public consultation.

The documents are available to be used in a range of situations. Principally, the boundary review and character assessments will be used to assist and support policy and development control decisions made by the Local Planning Authority. They should also be used by other sections of local government and statutory organisations when making any decisions which might impact on the character and appearance of a Conservation Area. Furthermore, the documents should be available as a resource for the local community in taking forward enhancement proposals as part of the on-going management plans.

# Appendices



Useful contacts 145

Key reference documents 146

Mapped information sources 148

Development plan policies 149

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### **Cambridgeshire County Council**

Environment and Transport Directorate  
Castle Court  
Shire Hall  
Castle Hill  
Cambs CB3 0AP

Tel: (01223) 717111  
[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

### **Forestry Commission**

Lady Hill  
Birches Valley  
Rugely  
Staffs WS15 2UQ

Tel: (0845) 3673787  
[www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

### **Countryside Agency**

2nd Floor  
City House  
126 - 128 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
CB2 1PT

Tel: (01223) 354462  
[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

### **Huntingdonshire District Council**

Pathfinder House  
St. Mary's Street  
Huntingdon  
Cambs PE29 3TN

Tel: (01480) 388423 / 388424  
[www.huntsdc.gov.uk](http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk)

### **English Nature**

Ham Lane House  
Ham Lane  
Nene Park  
Orton Waterville  
Peterborough  
PE2 5UR

Tel: (01733) 455000  
[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

### **Wildlife Trust BCNP**

The Manor House  
Broad Street  
Great Cambourne  
Cambridge  
CB3 6DH

Tel: (01954) 713500  
E-mail: [cambridge@wildlifebcnp.org](mailto:cambridge@wildlifebcnp.org)

## KEY REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

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## MAPPED INFORMATION - SOURCES

*Soil Survey of England and Wales - 1:250,000  
sheets 4+6*

*Huntingdonshire District Council digital information:*

*Roads  
SSSIs  
County Wildlife Sites  
Scheduled Ancient Monuments  
Conservation Areas*

*OS 1:250,000 Explorer Series Nos.208,224,225,227*

*British Geological Survey 1:50,000 series nos: 188, 171, 158, 172, 187,  
204*

*Agricultural Land Classification 1:250,000 Eastern Region*

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

*The Landscape and Townscape Assessment has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and Cambridgeshire Structure Plan. The key policies which it supports are listed below:*

### STRUCTURE PLAN

*Some of the key policies relating to design and site analysis contained within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are presented below:*

#### **Key policy:**

Policy P1/3 - Sustainable Design in Built Environment.

*High standards of design and sustainability will be required for all new development. Refers to issues of land use, linkage, sense of place, local distinctiveness, townscape, energy efficiency, recycling and community participation.*

#### **Other relevant policies:**

##### **P7/1 -Sites of Natural and Heritage Interest.**

*The following sites will be protected from the adverse effects of development:*

- *habitats where a statutorily protected species is known to exist or has previously been recorded and has the potential to re-colonise;*
- *nationally registered historic parks and gardens;*
- *Regionally Important Geological Sites;*
- *Local Nature Reserves;*
- *County and City Wildlife Sites;*
- *Protected Roadside Verges.*

*In circumstances where development is necessary, disturbance should be minimised, and mitigating and compensatory measures, including replacement habitat creation and enhancement of existing features, will be required.*

**P7/2 - Biodiversity.**

*All development will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the areas which they affect. Landscape features of major importance to wild fauna and flora will be retained, managed and enhanced. Where damage is unavoidable agreements will be sought to re-create features on or off-site.*

**P7/3 - Countryside Enhancement Areas**

*Any Countryside Enhancement Areas will be identified in Local Plans. Within these areas particular emphasis will be given to the promotion of schemes for quiet recreation and biodiversity and landscape enhancement. Access to them by foot or cycle will be preferred and localities may be identified where non-essential motor traffic and noisy recreational activity should be discouraged or appropriately managed. The County Council and Peterborough City Council will work with relevant organisations to identify appropriate schemes and other measures required to implement this policy.*

**P7/4 - Landscape.**

*Development must relate sensitively to the local environment and contribute to the sense of place, identity and diversity of the distinct landscape character areas. Local Authorities should carry out Landscape Character Assessments in support of Local Plans.*

**P7/5 - Urban Fringe**

*Local Planning Authorities will draw up strategies for urban fringe areas where this will assist in maintaining and enhancing their character and conservation value, and in improving public access to the countryside. The strategies will inform Local Plan policies and development briefs.*

**P7/6 - Historic Built Environment**

*Local Planning Authorities will protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the historic built environment.*

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN (1995)****Policy En5**

*Development within or directly affecting conservation areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character or appearance.*

**Policy En6**

*In conservation areas, the District Council will require high standards of design with careful consideration being given to the scale and form of development in the area and to the use of sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture.*

**Policy En18**

*The District will seek to protect important site features including trees, woodlands, hedges and meadowland.*

**Policy En21**

*The District Council will not normally grant permission for development which would adversely affect the character of the Area of Best Landscape.*

**Policy En25**

*The District Council will expect that new development will generally respect the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality of the application site and where appropriate make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas.*

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN ALTERATION (2002)****Policy HL5**

*Good design and layout will be required in all new housing development including conversions and changes of use. Planning permission will only be granted if it:*

- i) achieves an efficient use of the land;*
- ii) respects the townscape and landscape of the wider locality, including the local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions and materials, and maintains open spaces, important gaps in development, mature trees and other vegetation that contributes to the quality of the local environment;*
- iii) provides an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and affordability;*
- iv) incorporates landscaping as an integral part of the design;*
- v) creates attractive, distinctive and safe places and spaces which focus on the needs of pedestrians and cyclists rather than the movement and parking of vehicles; and*
- vi) promotes energy efficiency.*

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK DRAFT CORE STRATEGY

### **Policy P1**

Sustainable Development- a development proposal should contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development. A Major development should show how it complies with the criteria in policies P2 and P3.

### **Policy P2**

*The Efficient use of Natural Resources- a development proposal should contribute to the efficient use of natural resources.*

### **Policy P3**

*The Social and Economic Well-Being of the District- a development should contribute to the social and economic well being of the district.*

### **Policy P10**

*Flood Risk – explains the restrictions on development where there is a risk of flooding.*

### **Policy G1**

*Open Space and recreational land- considers impact of development proposals upon open space or recreation facilities*

### **Policy G2**

*Landscape Character -requires development proposals to respect and respond to landscape character*

### **Policy G3**

*Trees Hedgerows and other Environmental Factors- states that important trees, hedges, meadowland and other environmental features will be protected*

### **Policy G4**

*Protected Habitats and Species- a development proposal should not harm sites of national or international importance for biodiversity or geology*

### **Policy G7**

*Biodiversity- a development proposal that could affect biodiversity should be accompanied by a suitable assessment and mitigation methods when appropriate.*

### **Policy B1**

*Design Quality- a development proposal should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.*

**Policy B2**

*Street Scene-requires development should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of streets and public spaces.*

**Policy B3**

*Accessibility, adaptability and security- the location and design of new development should enable ease of access, incorporate appropriate facilities and minimise crime.*

*B4 Amenity- a development proposal should not have an unacceptable impact on amenity.*

**Policy B5**

*Energy and Water Use- a development proposal should aim to maximise the level of energy efficiency and minimise water consumption.*

**Policy B7**

*Listed Buildings- deals with development proposals affecting the fabric or setting of a listed building including demolition.*

**Policy B8**

*Conservation Areas- a development proposal within or affecting a Conservation Area should seek to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.*

**Policy B9**

*Archaeological Interest-a development proposal that could affect an area of archaeological interest should be accompanied by a suitable assessment of the site and implication of the scheme.*