

# Sawston Village Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document  
Consultation Draft April 2019



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council





Aerial photograph of Sawston with the parish boundary highlighted.

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### Note to reader

The draft Sawston Village Design Guide supplements the new Local Plan policies on high quality design, distinctive local character and placemaking. Technically the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Sawston and it has been prepared in collaboration with community representatives.

The outcome of the current consultation will help us to further refine the Village Design Guide before it is considered for adoption by South Cambridgeshire District Council. It is important to understand that the SPD cannot make new planning policy, or allocate sites for development and must be in conformity with the policies of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

The draft Sawston Village Design Guide SPD is being consulted upon along with the following accompanying documents:

- Sustainability Appraisal Screening Report
- Habitats Regulations Screening Report
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Consultation Statement

Consultation is for six weeks and runs between 15 April-31 May 2019. These documents can be viewed online at [www.southcambs.gov.uk/villagedesignstatements](http://www.southcambs.gov.uk/villagedesignstatements) and will be available for inspection at South Cambridgeshire District Council offices at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6EA (8.30am to 5pm Monday-Friday)

## Foreword

South Cambridgeshire is a district of diverse and distinctive villages, as well as being a high growth area. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) wants new development to maintain and enhance the special character of our villages, and for communities to be at the heart of the planning process to help achieve this.

This is supported through our Local Plan which places good design at the heart of its vision for achieving sustainable growth:

### **Local Plan – Policy S/1: Vision**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.



In 2018, the Council was awarded funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to develop exemplar village design guidance, working in collaboration with village communities undergoing significant growth and change, in order to develop locally specific design guidance.

In line with our key objective of putting our customers at the centre of everything we do, we are delighted to have worked with representatives who live and work in these communities, to produce this exemplary design guidance to improve the quality of new developments in our villages.

We look forward to seeing a new generation of locally distinctive, high quality schemes that show the influence of this Village Design Guide.

**Cllr. Dr. Tumi Hawkins**  
**Lead Cabinet Member for Planning**

## Acknowledgements

The Sawston Village Design Guide has been prepared by SCDC and Citizens Design Bureau, and developed in collaboration with the village community, through a process of active community participation and consultation.

SCDC is very grateful to Janet Martin for leading the village steering group for the Village Design Guide project and acting as community project champion.

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose and scope of this document

As a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Sawston Village Design Guide has been prepared to amplify and build on the requirements set out within policy **HQ/1: Design Principles** in the adopted 2018 Local Plan, as well as supporting the other policies within the Local Plan which relate to the built and natural character, and distinctiveness of South Cambridgeshire.

This Village Design Guide SPD:

- Supports South Cambridgeshire's policy that seeks to secure high quality design for all new developments, with a clear and positive contribution to the local and wider context.
- Describes the distinctive character of the village, and those aspects of its built and natural environment that the community most value
- Sets out clear design principles to guide future development proposals in and around the village of Sawston.
- Is intended as a user-friendly tool for planners, developers, designers and community members.

Once adopted, the Sawston Village Design Guide will form a material consideration in determining planning applications for developments within the village.

## Who should use this document

The Sawston Village Design Guide should be read by:

- Developers, property owners and their designers, in considering potential development proposals.
- Development management officers in assessing the suitability and determination of planning applications.
- Statutory and non-statutory consultees, including the parish council and members of the public, in commenting on planning applications.

The Village Design Guide should give confidence to all parties involved with the planning and design process, that they understand the essential character of the village, and how to respond to this appropriately through design. This will lead to better quality, more locally distinctive development that is welcomed by local residents and contributes positively to the sustainability of the village.

## 2. About Sawston

Sawston is an ancient settlement with a Grade 1 listed church and manor house at its heart. Development, predominantly to the north and east, in the later part of the 20th Century has led to today's large village with a population of 7145 (2011 census).

Sawston is classified as a Rural Centre under the Local Plan (2018), indicating that it is considered one of the largest and most sustainable villages in the district. A number of significant residential and commercial developments are planned or underway.

The village has an industrial and agricultural history with a tannery site, some structures now derelict, close to its centre. As well as leather Sawston had paper and printing industries. The village sits approximately 8 miles to the south of Cambridge and is connected by a national cycle route to the city. Sawston has a Conservation Area (updated appraisal 2007), this is considered by Historic England to be at risk. There is a Parish Plan (completed 2008) and a Neighbourhood Plan is under development (2019).

The Parish of Pampisford is at the more developed entry to the South, and the part of Pampisford parish west of London Road is included in the Rural Centre of Sawston for the purposes of village classification. A new Science Park development is underway at this entry to the village alongside existing industrial and light industrial activity. Development sites to the north east whilst considered within the Sawston development boundary and as Sawston in the Local Plan are actually within the parish of Babraham. This approach to Sawston from the north east is more rural than that to the south with open arable fields separating the two villages.

Both Pampisford and Babraham have conservation areas, as does the village of Whittlesford to the west of the village on the other side of the river Cam. This Village Design Guide has been developed with reference to the 2018 SCDC Local Plan and the SCDC District Design Guide (2010). The AM Challis Trust have kindly facilitated access to their archive for the purposes of historical and image research.

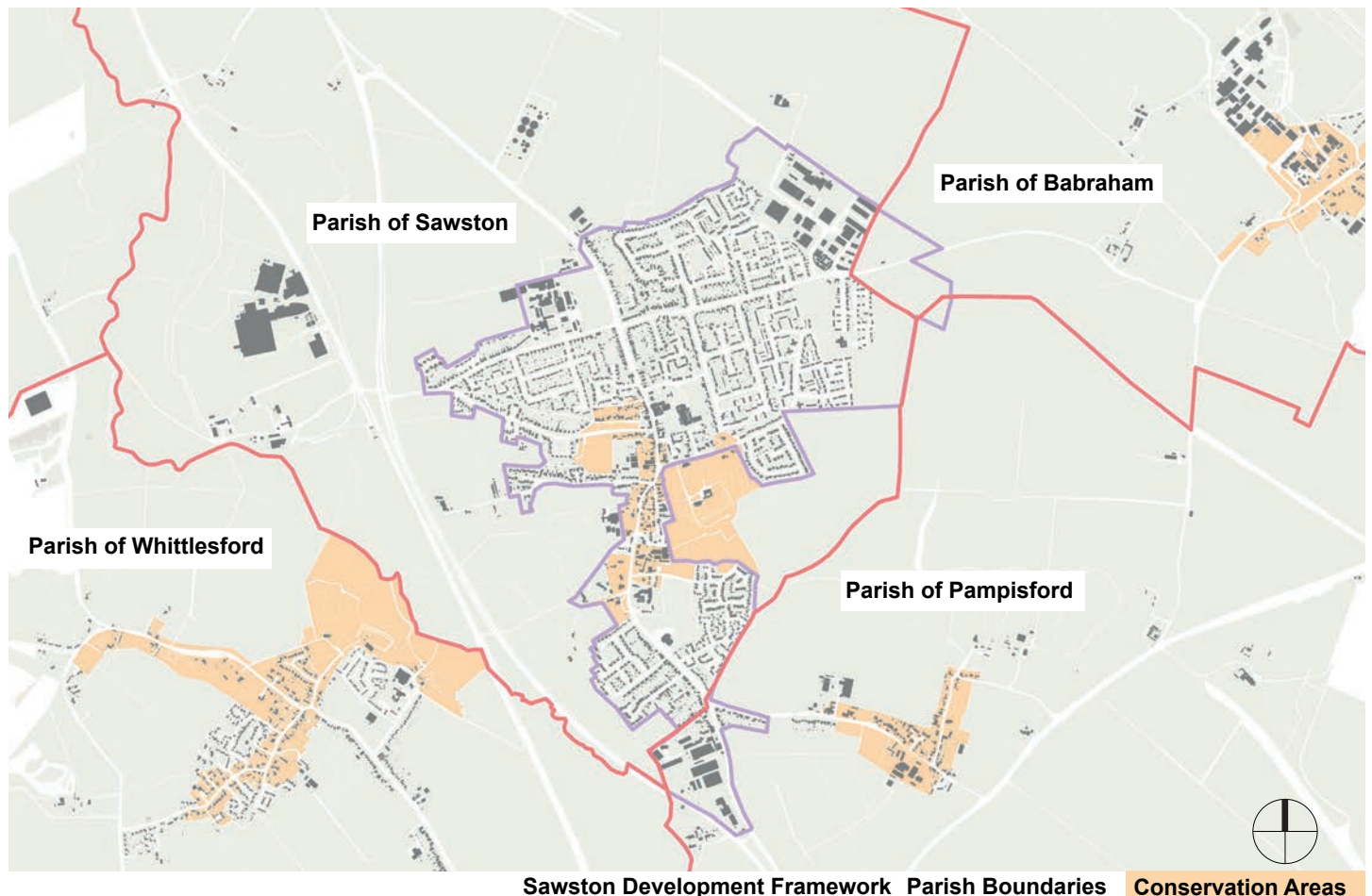


Fig 1 The Parish boundaries of Sawston and surrounding villages

# 3. Community input

This Village Design Guide has been devised in collaboration with the community that live and work in Sawston. Following initial resident-guided tours around the village and the wider area, the content set out in this document has been developed through a discursive process with the Village Design Guide Steering Group and the Project Champion. Representatives of the Parish Council and Sawston residents have contributed enormously to content and direction.

Key community priorities for development have been explored and refined through design and review sessions with the Steering Group and through a number of community events. At Sawston Apple Day (October 2018) residents helped characterise different areas of Sawston and contributed ideas for issues that they felt the Village Design Guide should address. Postcards of Sawston provoked discussion about what was valuable to the community and how it might inform new development. Subsequent design workshops and reviews cumulated in a public meeting and presentation (January 2019) giving valuable feedback on the developing draft document.

In the course of consulting on this Village Design Guide, the community have identified a number of more general ambitions for new development which do not necessarily fall within the remit of this design guide. These include:

- **Affordability** for the young, elderly and low income families.
- **Traffic** and lack of adequate parking, particularly with regards to the schools and the High Street. Imaginative solutions for parking in particular would be welcomed.
- **Sustainability** in design and construction and in the enhancement of natural habitats.
- **Accessibility** in new homes and the public realm.
- **Development priorities** including a legible public realm, careful planning for parking, safe play space, mix of property sizes (the village would like to see characteristic basic affordable houses; for instance simple 2 bed terraces) and high quality construction.

Community priorities for new development explored within this Village Design Guide:

- The unique character of the village; the distribution and nature of development over time and the typical character of streets and spaces.
- The varying types of historic and contemporary housing in Sawston. Achieving density without building multiple storeys.
- Guidance for smaller scale development close to the High Street and on vacant lots in existing estates.
- Consideration of both domestic and industrial history and built legacy. Sawston has always been an industrial as well as an agricultural working village.
- Preservation of the landscape setting of Sawston. Identification and protection of locally valued landscape village approaches and features.
- Design priorities for new large scale village edge developments that can learn from the unique characteristics of Sawston.



Fig 2 Character mapping, Sawston Apple Day

# 4. Village Evolution



**Woods** **Buildings dating before 1903** **Flood Risk Areas**

**Development Framework** **National Cycle Network**

- |                            |                 |              |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 Sawston Village College  | 4 Sawston Hall  | 7 The Spike  |
| 2 Development sites (2019) | 5 River Cam     | 8 Pampisford |
| 3 St Mary's Church         | 6 Water meadows | 9 A505 road  |





Fig 3 1886 Map of Sawston



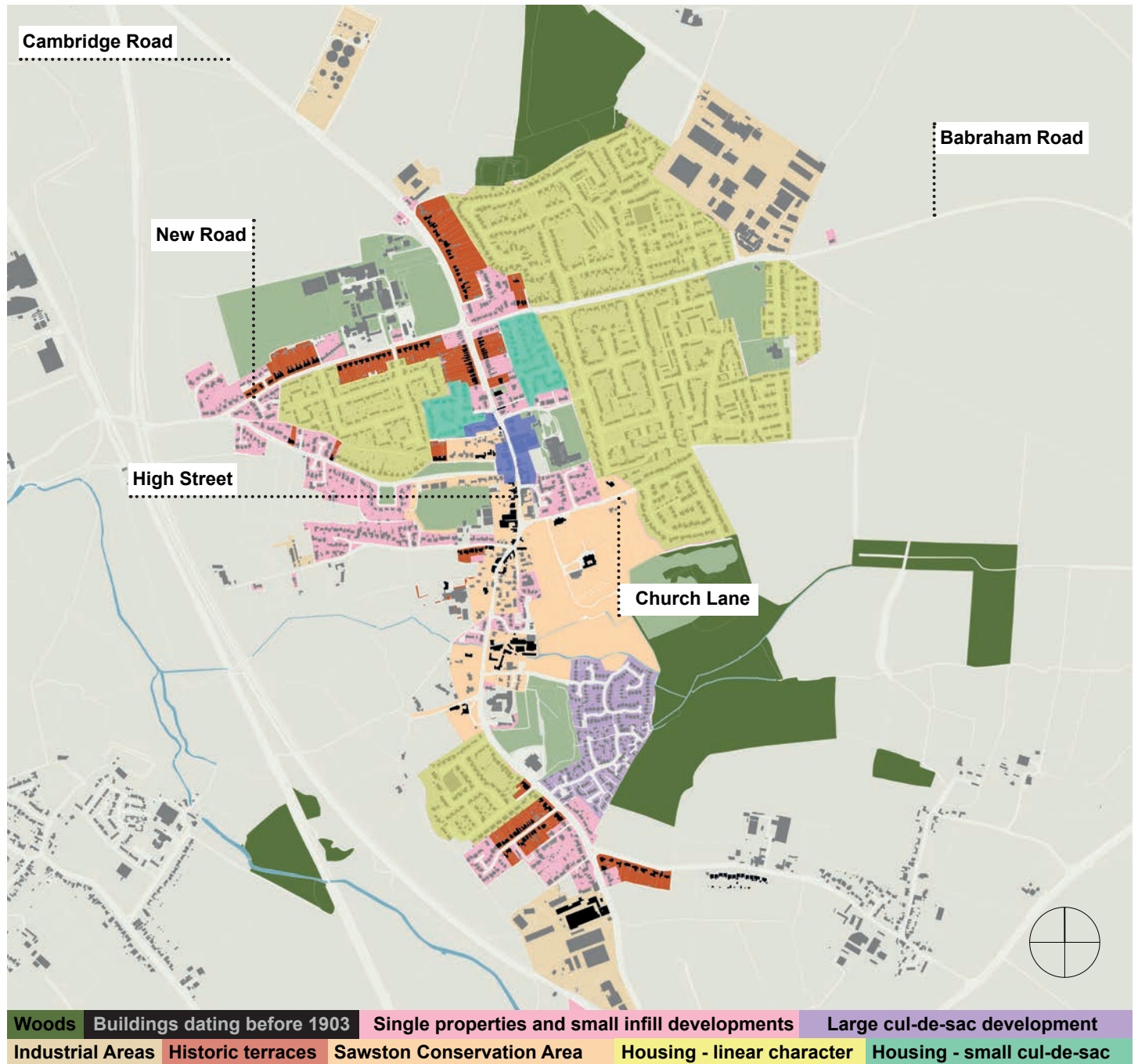
Fig 4 Sawston Hall, Grade 1 Listed Tudor Manor house

Sawston is believed to have originally developed around an east-west track which passed in front of the present church, one of the routes of the Icknield Way, a path of Iron Age, if not earlier, origin. Sawston then grew along the north-south High Street, first to the South in the late 12th century and then to the north east in a planned extension in the 13th Century on plots laid out in open fields. The High Street, known as London Road to the south and Cambridge Road to the north, became the primary route through Sawston. St Mary's Church and Sawston Hall (both Grade 1 listed) remain at the historic heart of the village, the latter surrounded by a large 88 acre estate. Prior to the 20th Century the village remained linear in form and characterised by long plots perpendicular to the High Street.

The flood plain to the west and south-west of Sawston, around the River Cam, has restricted growth in that direction, but large post war estates were constructed to the north-east of the village, significantly expanding the population. The hamlet, known as The Spike, to the south of the village, has been subsumed into the urban centre by similar growth. There is continuing development of housing, both of larger estates and infill to existing estates and at the centre of the village.

London Road, which becomes the High Street, remains the 'spine' of Sawston. It is an active commercial centre and a significant asset to the village. A bypass takes traffic from the village centre but there remains a problem with the amount of vehicular traffic using the High Street. This causes road safety issues as there are no pedestrian routes that circumvent the main road through the centre. Church Lane is also considered particularly unsafe by the community. Sawston Village College to the north of the village was founded in 1930 and was the first of the Cambridgeshire Village Colleges. The college still operates as a school today for children aged 11 - 16 years. There are two primary schools in the village. The former Victorian village school, sitting on a historic strip of village green space on Crampton Terrace off Mill Lane, to the west of the High Street, has now been converted into housing.

# 5. Village character



● Modern High Street



Fig 5 High Street commercial property

A significant proportion of Sawston's High Street was demolished and rebuilt in the 1960's.

- New commercial buildings of buff brick with non vernacular detail to east of High Street
- Large ground floor commercial openings
- Shallow pitched roofs
- Large car park to the rear of supermarket
- Some singular, large, out of character buildings to west side mixed in with smaller vernacular properties and piecemeal new buff brick infill
- Some empty yards, buildings and showrooms
- Large out of character flatted accommodation above commercial property at Church Lane junction

## ● Conservation Area - Village Centre

The historic core of the village comprises Sawston Hall and grounds, the Church, numerous listed dwellings and pubs and listed tannery buildings. The former Victorian school, now housing, overlooks a green that was once a key public space for the village but is now in private hands.

- The former tannery is one of a number of historic industrial sites in the village
- Many historic dwellings are sited south of the church in an area with mature trees and landscape. Brick walls and gates mark boundaries to historic properties.



Fig 6 Historic buildings and war memorial

## ● 18th and 19th century terraces and Semi-detached houses

Sawston has many exemplars of terraces of 19th century and earlier, origin.

- High density, relatively modest housing stock
- Brick, render, clay and slate roof tiles, small lean-to porches, chimneys
- Small defensible areas of front garden, no parking on curtilage
- Vary in length and consistency of detail
- Generally found lining historic roads or perpendicular to them



Fig7 Semi-detached cottages

## ● Housing - linear character

These areas are characterised by housing developments set out in broadly straight streets of similar (to each estate) and aligned, properties.

- Housing generally semi detached or terraces
- Wide variety of styles and details, all post-war
- Bungalows, houses, semis and terraces
- Permeable street structure with long views through estates, few cul-de-sacs
- A number of unused car parking courts



Fig 9 and 10 Houses on linear estates

## ● Housing - large cul-de-sac estate

One large estate to the south of the village

- Detached houses, narrow spaces in-between
- Integral garages
- Variation in vernacular inspired architectural detail



Fig 11 Detached houses with integrated garages

## ● Industry

A number of modern industrial areas are situated on the village edge.

- North east edge - large sheds with light industry
- South - incorporates historical buildings
- Science and tech industries a growing sector



Fig 12 Large industrial units to the north east

# 6. Sawston housing and density

The 1886 map of Sawston (page 9) records parallel linear plots arranged perpendicular to the High Street. The domestic and commercial buildings facing the High Street sit hard against the pavement edge, their roofs running parallel to the street. Also visible on the 1886 map is an aligned pattern of terraced housing blocks, facing onto yards or courts, usually containing a well or pump. Long tracks or paths stretch the length of the long plots. A number of these terraces remain although many were demolished when the High Street was rebuilt in the 1960's. The historic roovescape of Sawston also reflected this characteristic arrangement with pitches running parallel and perpendicular to each other (Fig 13). Much of the post war housing in Sawston also runs parallel and perpendicular to the High Street (Fig 19), albeit with a more grided low density layout.

This urban arrangement of dense terraced housing offers a precedent for housing which can inform future development in Sawston. The terrace typology has its roots here in both the agricultural and the unique industrial heritage of the village, where industrialists from the leather and paper mills built homes for the factory workers. This type of housing arrangement is considered pertinent to high density and affordable housing. Characteristics of Sawston terraces which should be considered when new development is proposed include:

- Defensible front gardens or courtyards
- Grouping of 3, 4, 6, 8 terraces in one block
- Mirrored plans resulting in paired front doors and window layouts
- Alleys to rear gardens to allow easy access to out of site bike and bin storage

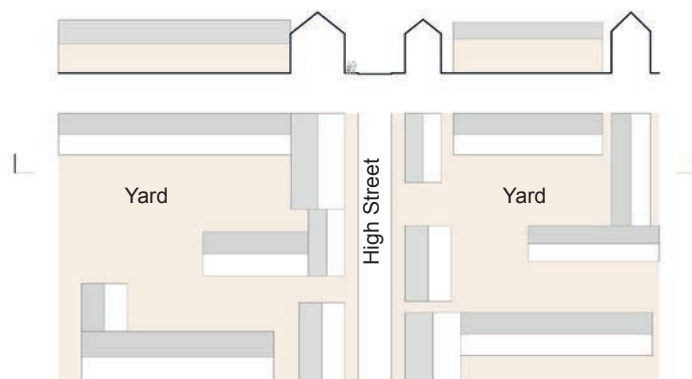


Fig 13 Characteristic historical massing and roofscape around the High Street



Fig 14 High Street photographed prior to 1960's demolition and rebuild



Figs 15 and 16 Archive photographs of 19th century workers homes



Fig 17 Crampton Terrace



Fig 18 Springfield Road rendered terrace with decorative pargetting

## Guidance

6.1 Village centre infill development can learn from characteristic Sawston settlement patterns. New housing, low rise but of relatively high density, could adopt the form of terraces or mews around yards or courts with limited parking. Infill sites might include brown field plots on and behind behind the High Street, little used parking courts and some left over spaces on larger developments.

6.2 The terrace form is characteristic of Sawston and should also offer a good solution for achieving housing density in development on larger village edge plots. This should be considered as an alternative to higher rise accommodation.

6.3 A roofscape of pitches running parallel and perpendicular to each other is characteristic of the village (Fig 13). New development should consider site massing and layout that eschews the curved cul-de-sac and adopts more village specific massing and planning.



Fig 19 1974 Aerial view of Sawston illustrating the almost linear grid of development outwards from the High Street



Historic terrace of four homes



Historic terrace (South Terrace) with four homes



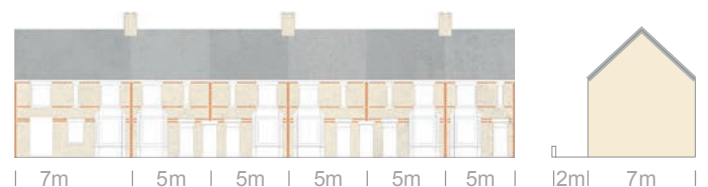
Contemporary terrace (Huddleston Way) with three homes



Historic terrace with two homes



Historic terrace (Springfield Road) with five homes



Historic terrace (Crampton Terrace) with five homes

Fig 20 Sawston Terraces (Dimensions indicative only)

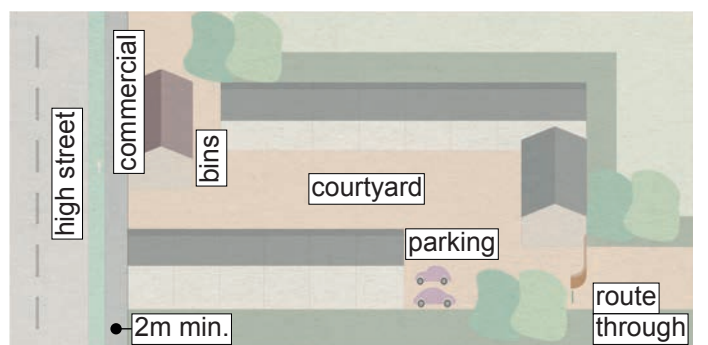


Fig 21 Indicative arrangement of terrace mews court

# 7. Building scale, materials and details

Noteworthy non-domestic Buildings in Sawston are generally of public or industrial origin. As well as the Grade 1 Listed church and Hall these include the former Hutchings and Harding Tannery (Fig 23); the Victorian former school and the adjacent former Printworks building built in 1900 (Fig 22); the Victorian former Methodist Church (Fig 24) and the Village College (Fig 25). These are larger in massing, footprint and scale than the domestic properties in the village and exhibit a broad range of materials and styles:

- red and buff bricks
- flint and stone facings
- timber weatherboarding and louvres
- both refined and utilitarian detail including ridge lines, chimneys and spires
- window openings of large scale and expression
- slate and clay tiles and pantiles for roofs

The Hutchings and Harding Tannery Buildings, a number of which are Grade II and Grade II\* should be preserved, some are already at risk. These represent an opportunity for the village to conserve a strong characteristic element at its heart. Other former tannery buildings to the south of the village have been successfully renovated as commercial properties within a larger business park.

Beyond the domestic terraces and more recent housing stock already discussed there are a number of significant, often listed, properties: the Regency style Brooklands House (Fig 28), historic properties on and behind the High Street including the Georgian Challis House (Fig 30), a rare 3 -storey property for Sawston, and a number of timber framed very early dwellings (Fig 27).

- red and buff bricks with lime mortar
- saw tooth brick details
- timber frames
- painted brick and render
- black pitch painted and brick plinths
- clay and slate roof tiles
- multiple roof forms, eaves levels and pitches

A number of new buildings in the village are of poor design and have no formal or material relationship with Sawston. The community have expressed an openness to good modern design that works within the existing scale and massing of the village.



Fig 22 Former Victorian School and paper works



Fig 23 Hutchings and Harding tannery buildings



Fig 24 Victorian former Methodist Church



Fig 25 Village College



Fig 26 Boundary wall to churchyard

## Guidance

7.1 Development should draw upon the scale, form, materiality and massing characteristic to Sawston buildings; domestic, industrial and civic.

7.2 Retain the architectural character and landscape setting of historic industrial sites (Fig 31). These have a characteristic massing and form, larger than the surrounding domestic and commercial properties.

7.3 Blocks of flats and dwellings above three storeys are not characteristic of Sawston and should not form part of new village edge development.

7.4 Material qualities of the the setting of listed and other significant buildings within the village should be maintained with new development not encroaching upon key views. Elements that may be appropriate for the setting of new development include walls and significant tree and hedge planting.



Fig 27 Listed Dwelling Fig 28 Brooklands House



Fig 29 High Street Fig 30 Challis House



Fig 31 Landscape setting of Listed buildings (red) south of the High Street and Church Lane junction



Fig 32 Buff and red brick detail Fig 33 Lime rendered terrace



Fig 34 Brick details

# 8. Landscape setting and village edge



Flood Risk areas		Cycle Path	Cycle Path on road	Footpaths	Development Framework
1	Sawston Village College	4	Sawston Hall	7	The Spike
2	Development sites (2019)	5	River Cam	8	Pampisford
3	St Mary's Church	6	Water meadows	9	A505 road



Sawston lies within the Cambridge Green Belt, and is in the Area of Restraint South of Cambridge. The village lies in the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA). The village landscape setting and the routes into Sawston are mostly characteristic, with trees and hedges marking the boundaries between rural landscape and development. A new Science Park development is underway at the southern entry to the village. The flood plain to the west and south-west of Sawston, around the River Cam, has restricted growth in that direction. The historic water meadow and arable landscape is largely intact, with historic market garden enclosure and pasture. Dernford Fen to the north west and Sawston Hall Meadow are both designated SSSI's.

Sawston originally developed as a linear village. Post war development saw it expanding, predominantly to the north east, with a number of large housing estates. Further development is planned beyond this on the sites that sit on the Babraham Road and within the Village Development Framework. This edge of Sawston is characterised by large arable fields with hedgerows and trees to the boundaries. There are long views over open fields towards Babraham and to Wandlebury Hill and the low chalk ridge of the Gog Magog Hills.

Cycle paths within Sawston are generally on-road with dedicated cycle routes to Cambridge and Babraham beginning at the village edge. The grid of housing to the north of Church Lane allows for quiet back route cycling through to the schools but routes from the south of the village are squeezed onto the High Street at the junction with Church Lane. Footpaths and cycleways lead across development sites to the north east and these should be retained as landscaped routes.

## Guidance

8.1 The water meadows to the west of the village are key to Sawston's character and should be preserved.

8.2 The character of the landscape setting should be preserved and key views to and from the village retained.

8.3 Houses to be set back from site boundaries to open landscape to minimise the visual impact at the rural edge.

8.4 Hedge and tree planted boundaries should be used to rural edges with locally characteristic indigenous hedge and tree varieties.

8.5 Existing hedges and trees should be retained within new developments as landscape features.

8.6 Existing cycle and footways should be retained and routes enhanced through development both through the village and at the village edge.



Fig 35 View to Sawston and development sites from the east on the Babraham Road

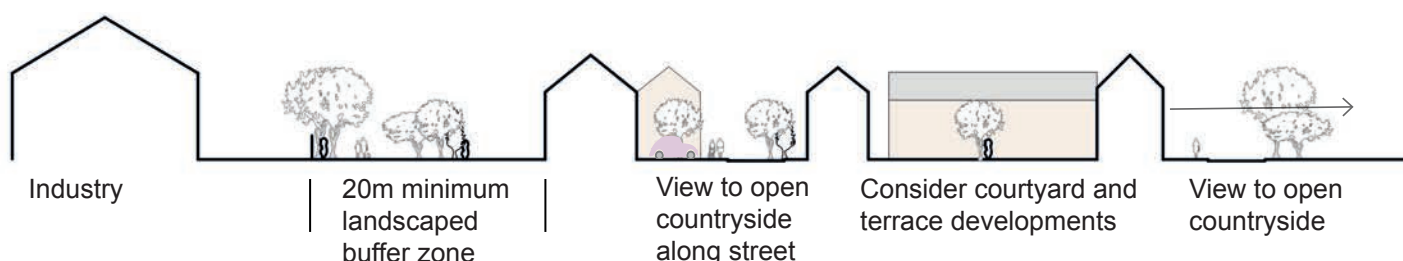


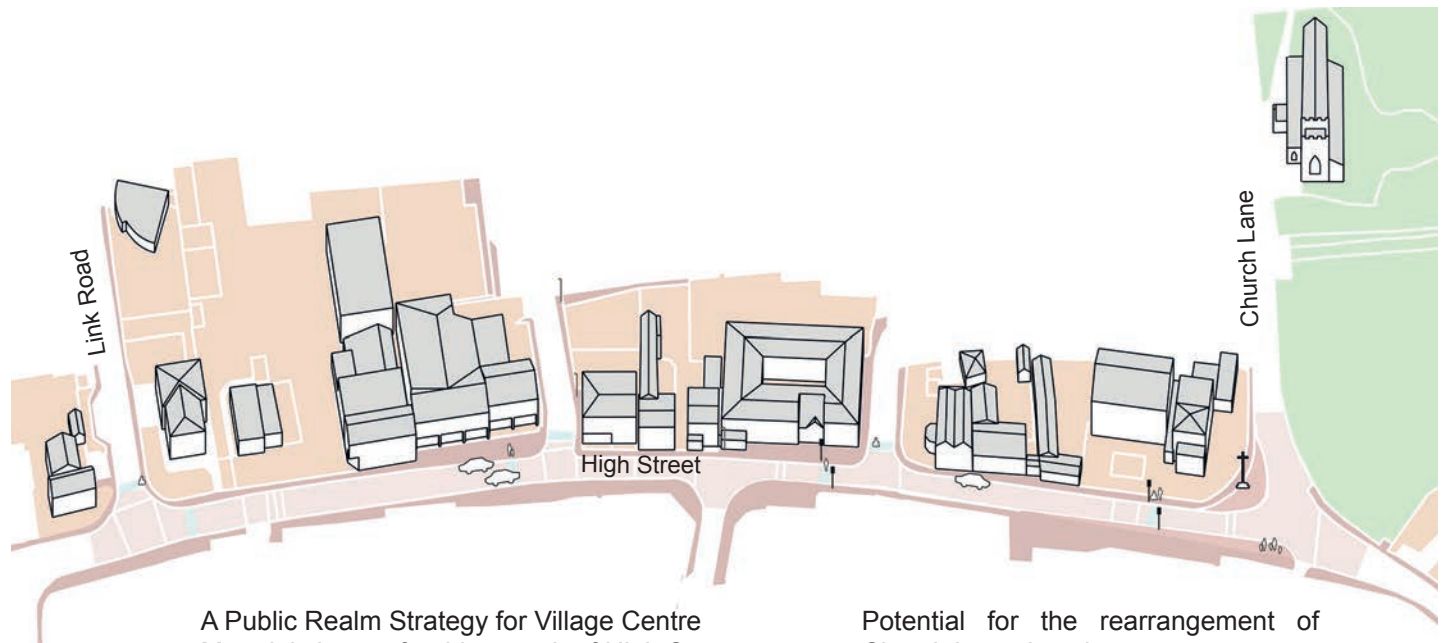
Fig 36 Indicative section through new development at the village edge

# 9. High Street and public realm

Sawston has a busy and successful High Street with many commercial and community facilities. The area between Church Lane junction and the Link Road junction is generally considered the main centre of the Village by the Sawston Community. The centre however is not well defined with no clear open space or green marking its heart. By focusing village centre development and improvements on this commercial stretch of the High Street, and defining a design approach to the public realm, a more cohesive High Street could evolve. New developments on brown field sites should contribute to the street improvement.

Sawston would like to be a fully accessible village, both in terms of its public realm and its housing provision. There are a number of charities active in housing and social support in Sawston and this ethos is embraced by the village overall.

- Integration of learning, mental and physical disability into the built environment
- Inclusive design as the norm
- Consideration to partially sighted and blind
- Accessible design should feature in design guidance developed for the High Street and overall village public realm.



A Public Realm Strategy for Village Centre  
Material change for this stretch of High Street - carriageway and pavements - would mark it as special. Specification of materials such as stone sets may also contribute to traffic calming and pedestrian safety.

Potential for the rearrangement of Church Lane Junction to create a more attractive public space. Monument moved to the edge of the junction and pavement extended to allow for an expanded pedestrian realm and traffic calming.

Fig 37 High Street, east side, with potential for street improvements indicated



Fig 38 High Street, east side looking north at junction with Selsingen Way



Fig 39 View North from the war memorial illustrating lack of cohesion in form and public realm

## Guidance

9.1 New development should contribute to the legibility of the public realm through appropriate massing and architectural character and detail.

- Landscape detailing and materials for pavements, courtyards and roadways to be of high quality to High Street
- Massing of the High Street to be predominantly two storey with pitches of roofs running parallel to the street for buildings to the pavement edge

9.2 New development, and any works to the High Street, streets and highways, should reinforce the community desire for an accessible public realm throughout Sawston (Fig 40)

- General pavement width to be a minimum of 2m, ideally 3m outside retail entrances.
- Consider maximum walking distances with pedestrian rest stops and street furniture.
- Dropped kerb crossings to be rationalised where possible and desire lines for crossings reinforced.

9.3 Language of sympathetic commercial signage should be developed, avoiding out of scale and excessive corporate branding.

9.4 New development on the High Street should consider parking and highways solutions for traffic pressures which will be exacerbated by increased use of village streets:

- Integrate safe pedestrian and cycle routes that connect to wider networks from north to south in the village and along Babraham Road, especially routes to the schools and to the High Street.
- Provision of car share spaces on sites
- Parking out of sight of the public realm

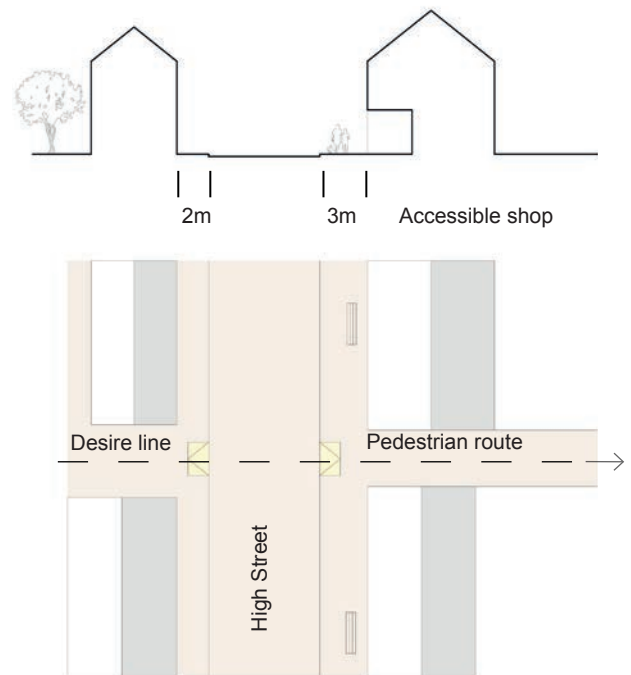


Fig 40 High Street section and plan illustrating measures for improved accessibility



Fig 41 High Street frontages - Challis House

Fig 42 High Street frontages - Historic shopfront



Fig 43 High Street frontages - Renovated pub

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