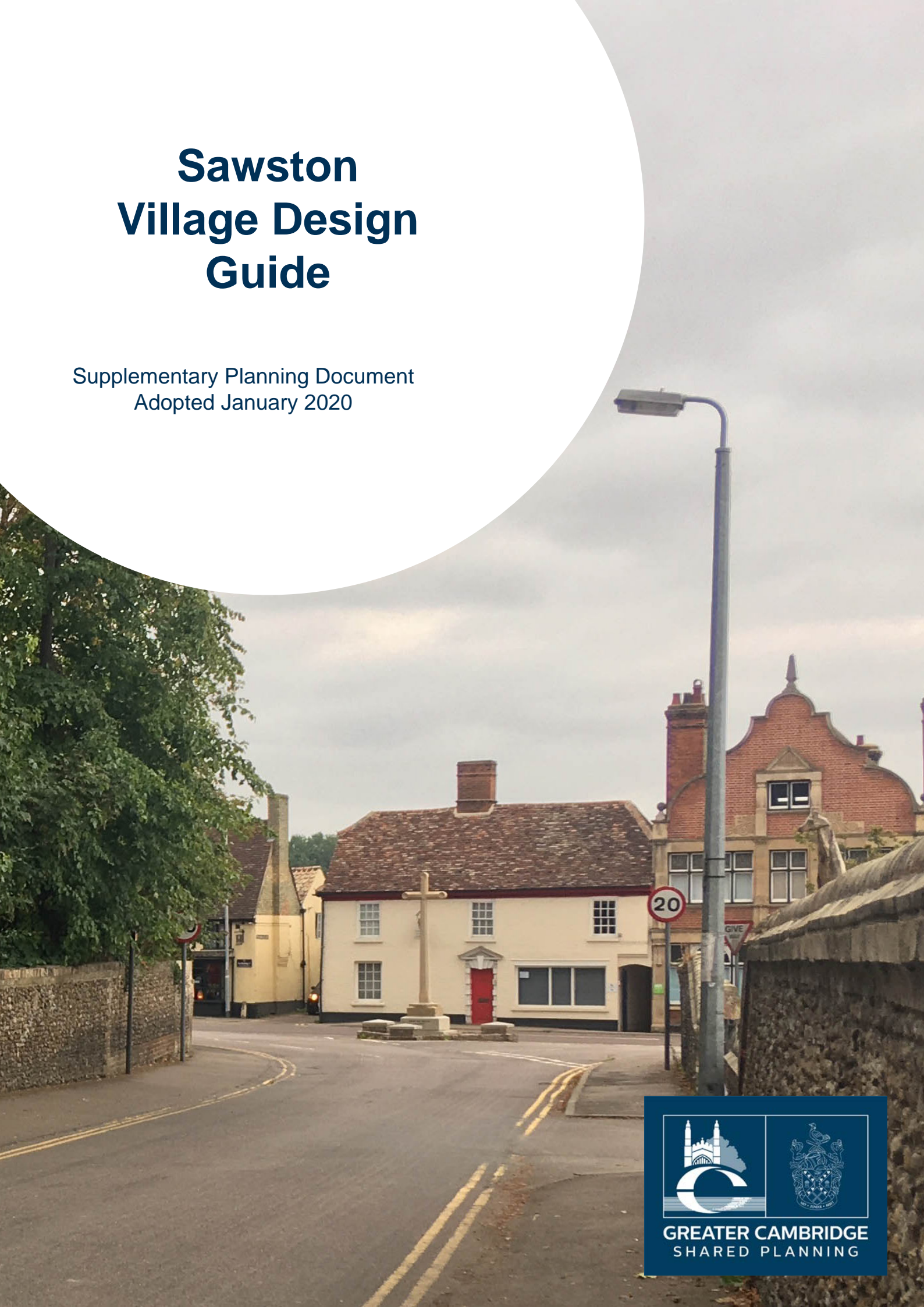


Sawston Village Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document
Adopted January 2020



GREATER CAMBRIDGE
SHARED PLANNING



Aerial photograph of Sawston with the parish boundary highlighted.

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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 the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service 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.

The Sawston Village Design Guide SPD is 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 (2019). 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.

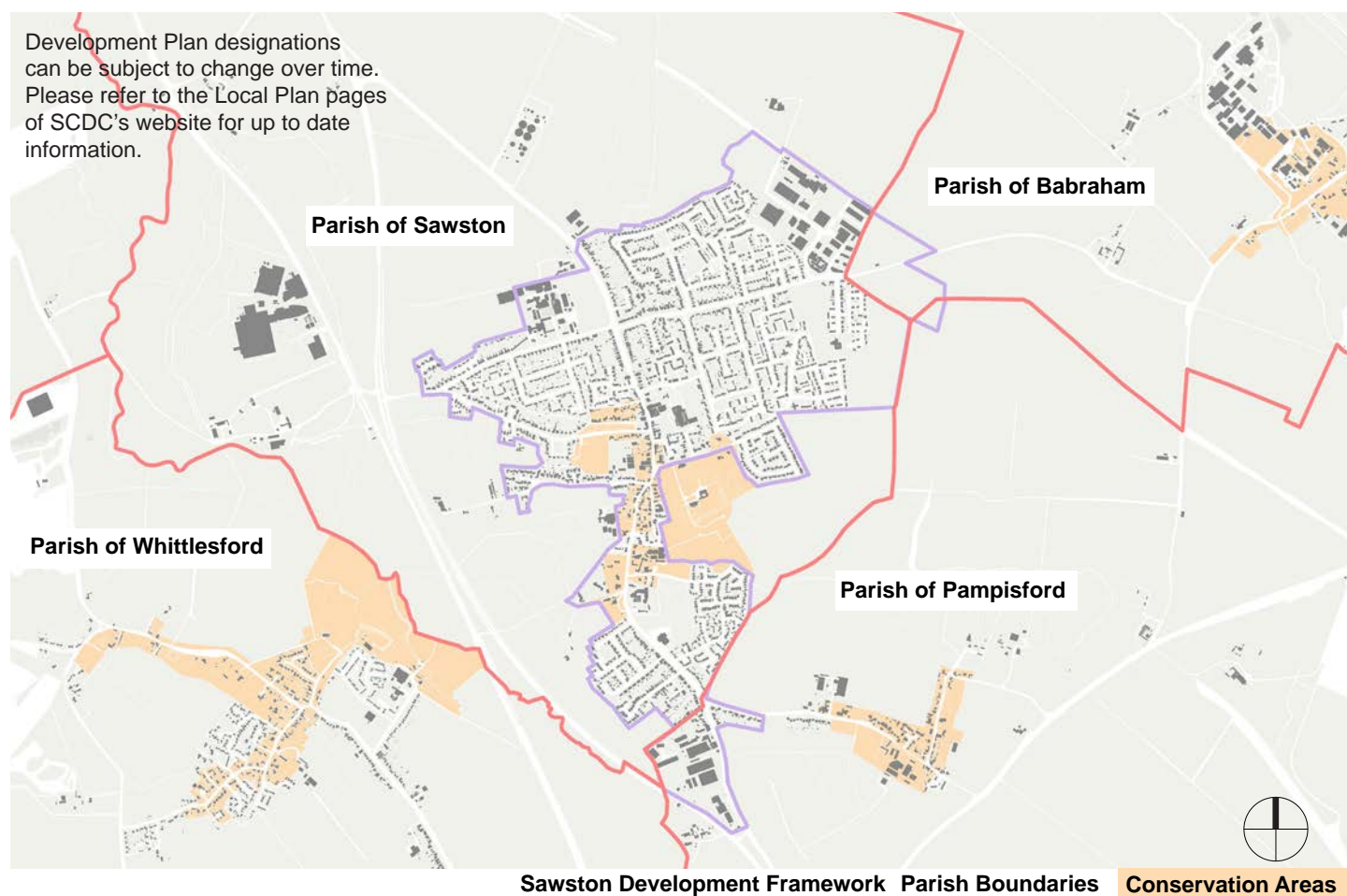


Fig 1 The Parish boundaries of Sawston and surrounding villages

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:

- Sustain and enhance the unique character of the village; the distribution and nature of development over time and the typical character of streets and spaces.
- Achieving dense, sustainable development using appropriate scales and forms of housing, that reflect the varying types of historic and contemporary homes in the village.
- 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



Fig 3 Sawston and its wider landscape setting

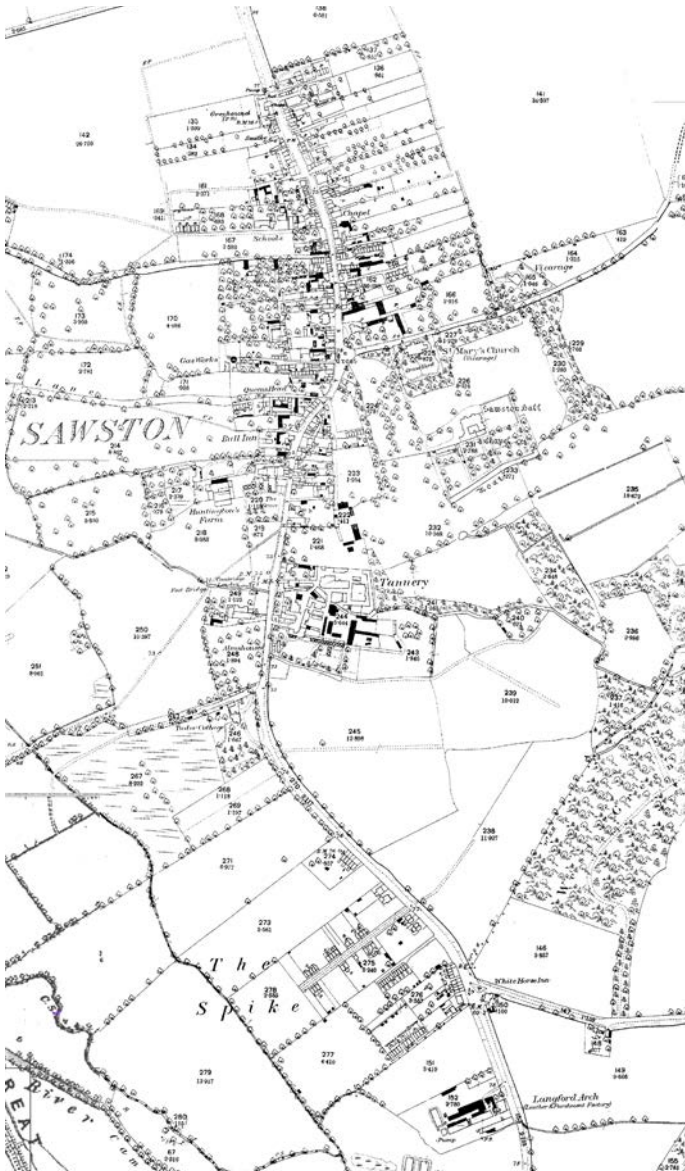


Fig 4 1886 Map of Sawston



Fig 5 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 unsafe by some members of 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

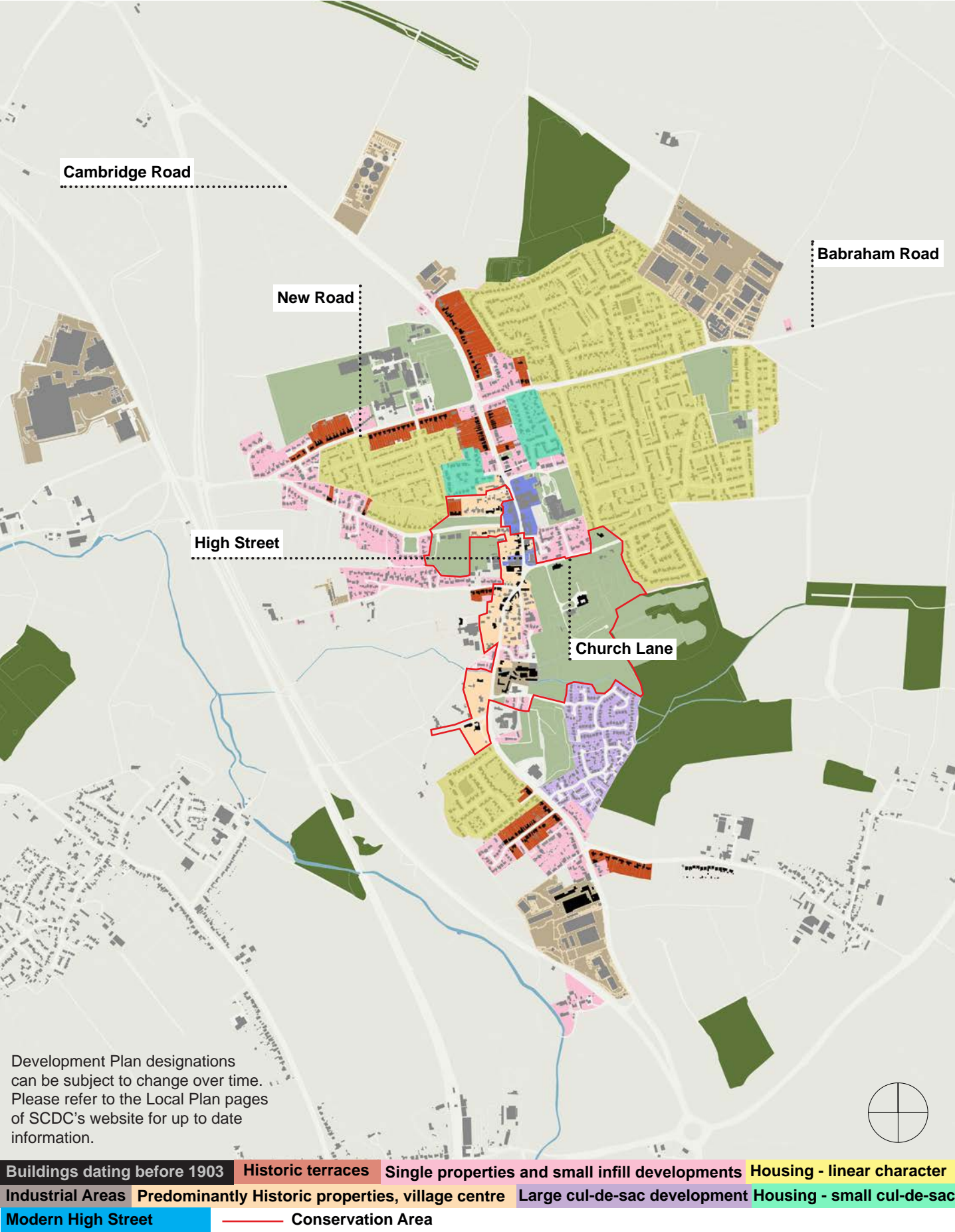


Fig 6 Sawston character mapping

● Modern High Street

A significant proportion of Sawston's High Street was demolished and rebuilt in the 1960's. The main commercial stretch of High Street exhibits no consistent architectural style. There are properties with residential accommodation above whilst others have office or storage space. A supermarket has a large carpark to the rear and a number of smaller commercial units, some vacant, have rear yards and small car parks. Whilst the High Street architecture is of mixed quality and in variable state of repair the area functions successfully as a commercial centre, drawing visitors from the surrounding villages.

- New commercial buildings of buff brick with non-vernacular detail to east of High Street
- Remnants of the historical high street architecture interspersed
- Large ground floor commercial openings
- Some singular, large, out of character buildings to west side mixed in with smaller vernacular properties and piecemeal new buff brick infill
- No properties over 3 storeys
- Some empty yards, buildings and showrooms
- Large out of character flatted accomodation above commercial property at Church Lane junction.

● Historic properties - Village Centre

The historic core of the village comprises Sawston Hall and grounds, the Church and numerous listed dwellings and pubs. 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.

- Many historic dwellings are sited south of the church surrounded by mature trees and landscape
- Brick walls and gates mark boundaries.
- Many properties, often with a commercial history, front directly onto the pavement.



Fig 10 Shops and homes to north end of the High Street



Fig 7 High Street supermarket



Fig 8 High Street commercial property



Fig 9 Historic buildings and war memorial



Fig 11 Junction of High Street and Shingay Lane

● 18th and 19th century terraces and semi-detached houses

Sawston has numerous exemplars of terraces of 19th century and earlier, origin. Many of these properties owe their existence and character to the industrial history of the village.

This heritage is explored further in Section 6.

- High density, relatively modest housing stock
- 2-storey in height
- Brick, render, clay and slate roof tiles, small lean-to porches, chimneys
- Small defensible areas of front garden, only occasionally with parking in curtilage
- Variation in width of property and consistency of detail from terrace to terrace
- Both flat and bay windowed frontages are characteristic
- Generally found lining historic roads or perpendicular to them
- Popular properties with access to own exterior amenity space, considered desirable for young families and predominantly situated close to village centre

● Housing - linear character

These areas are characterised by housing developments set out in broadly straight streets of similar and aligned, properties. Estates incorporate some small cul-de-sacs but are reasonably permeable for foot and vehicular traffic. The variety of style and architectural language is generally considered positive in the village. It forms a precedent for continuing variation and demonstrates an openness to new architectural innovation and invention rather than a preference for pastiche.

- Housing generally semi detached or terraces
- One to two-storey properties
- Many post-war 20th Century styles and estate arrangements represented
- Bungalows, houses, semis and terraces
- Permeable street structure with long views through estates, few cul-de-sacs
- Garages and in-curtilidge parking characteristic
- Generous frontages, wide streets
- Low density with many incidental green verges and areas in the public realm
- There are a number of under-used car parking courts which might offer potential sites for future development



Fig 12 Terraced homes with lime render detail



Fig 13 Semi-detached cottages



Fig 14 House with large frontage and attached garage



Fig 15 Surviving pre-fabricated post-war construction

● Housing - large cul-de-sac estate

One large area of housing the south of the village built around two non-through routes; Tannery Road and Park Road. The overall layout is denser than the earlier 20th century developments to the north east with smaller gaps between properties. Although the development has no through routes for vehicles there are some connections by foot and bicycle through to the adjacent Orchard Park, these alleyways are narrow and not clearly signposted.

- Detached houses with narrow gaps in-between properties
- Integral garages, often double, and in-curtlidge driveways
- Some cul-de-sacs of smaller terraces and bungalows to the south of the area
- Larger properties brick faced with bay windows and timber detail loosely drawing from a range of vernacular precedents

● Single properties and small infill development

Throughout its history Sawston has seen small incremental growth parallel to the construction of the larger 20th Century estates. These range from single properties, both one and two storey, through to small housing association and local authority developments such as those in Figures 17 which are characterised by generous shared and private amenity space.

● Industry

A number of modern industrial areas are situated on the village edge whilst the Listed and disused Hutchings and Hardy Tannery is close the village centre.

- North east edge - large sheds with light industry
- South - incorporates historical buildings
- Science and tech industries a growing sector
- Established Employment Area at the Spicers site to the west of the village.



Fig 19 Large industrial units to the north east



Fig 16 Detached houses with integrated garages



Fig 17 Early 20th Century housing



Fig 18 Recent small infill development



Fig 20 Hutchings and Harding tannery buildings

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

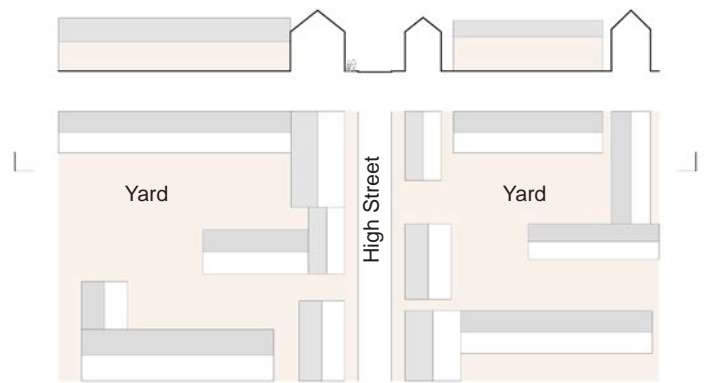


Fig 21 Characteristic historical massing and roovescape around the High Street



Fig 22 High Street photographed prior to 1960's demolition and rebuild



Figs 23 and 24 Archive photographs of 19th century workers homes



Fig 25 Crampton Terrace



Fig 26 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 14). New development should consider site massing and layout that avoids the curved cul-de-sac and adopts more village specific massing and planning.

6.4 New development within established areas of housing, including infill development, to be informed by and seek to reinforce the character of its immediate surroundings.



Fig 27 1974 Aerial view of Sawston illustrating the almost linear grid of development outwards from the High Street



Fig 28 Sawston Terraces (Dimensions indicative only)

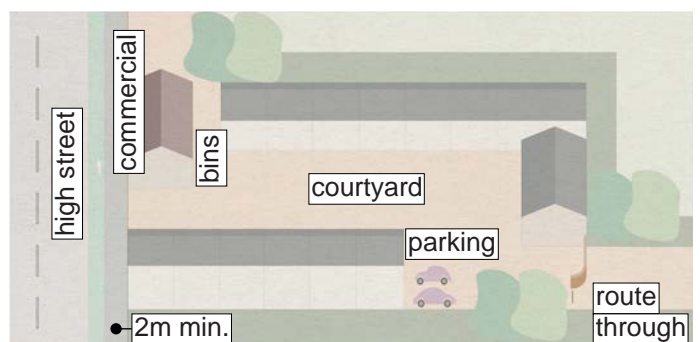


Fig 29 Indicative arrangement of terrace mews court

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 31); the Victorian former school and the adjacent former Printworks building built in 1900 (Fig 30); the Victorian former Free Church (Fig 32) and the Village College (Fig 33). 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 where viable options for conversion can be found. 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 36), historic properties on and behind the High Street including the Georgian Challis House (Fig 38), a rare 3 -storey property for Sawston, and a number of timber framed very early dwellings (Fig 35).

- 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 30 Former Victorian School and paper works



Fig 31 Hutchings and Harding tannery buildings



Fig 32 Victorian former Free Church



Fig 33 Village College



Fig 34 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 be carefully sited in order not to detract from the character of the village when seen from key routes and views across open countryside.

7.4 Material qualities of 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 32 Landscape setting of Listed buildings (red) south of the High Street and Church Lane junction



Fig 35 Listed Dwelling Fig 36 Brooklands House



Fig 37 High Street Fig 38 Challis House



Fig 39 Buff and red brick detail Fig 40 Lime render

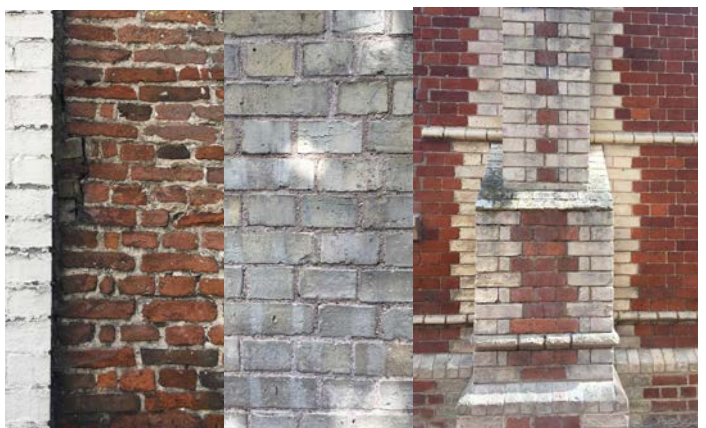


Fig 41 Brick details

8. Landscape setting and village edge



Flood Risk areas				Cycle Path	Cycle Path on road	Off-road	Footpaths	Bridleway	Development Framework	Desirable new route
1	Sawston Village College	4	Sawston Hall	7	The Spike	10	Desirable new safe pedestrian and cycle link north-south			
2	Development sites (2019)	5	River Cam	8	Pampisford	11	Links from new development to school and wider village			
3	St Mary's Church	6	Water meadows	9	A505 road					

Fig 42 Sawston landscape setting

Sawston lies within the Cambridge Green Belt and the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA). The village landscape setting and the routes into Sawston are characterised by large open agricultural, mostly arable, enclosures. Trees and hedges mark the boundaries between this 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 respected.

8.2 The character of the landscape setting as shown on figure 42 should be respected and key views to and from the village retained.

8.3 Development 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. New pedestrian, equestrian and cycle routes are desirable and should be encouraged.



Fig 43 View across development site on the Babraham Road with planted buffer to industrial site on the left

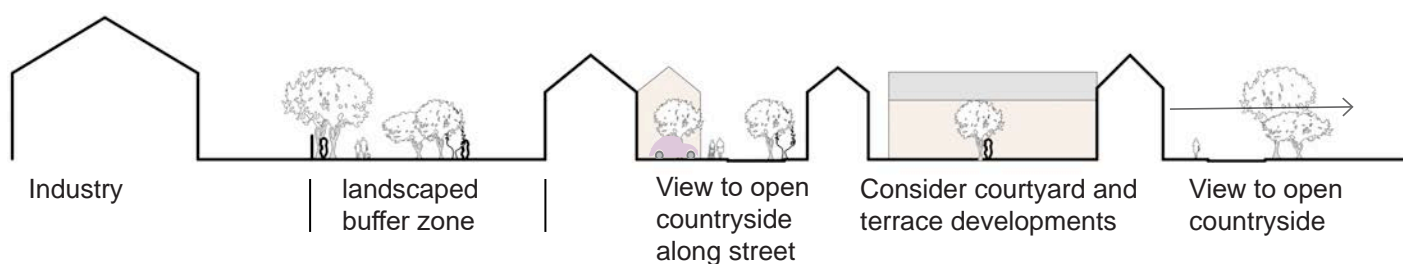


Fig 44 Indicative section through new development at the village edge

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.

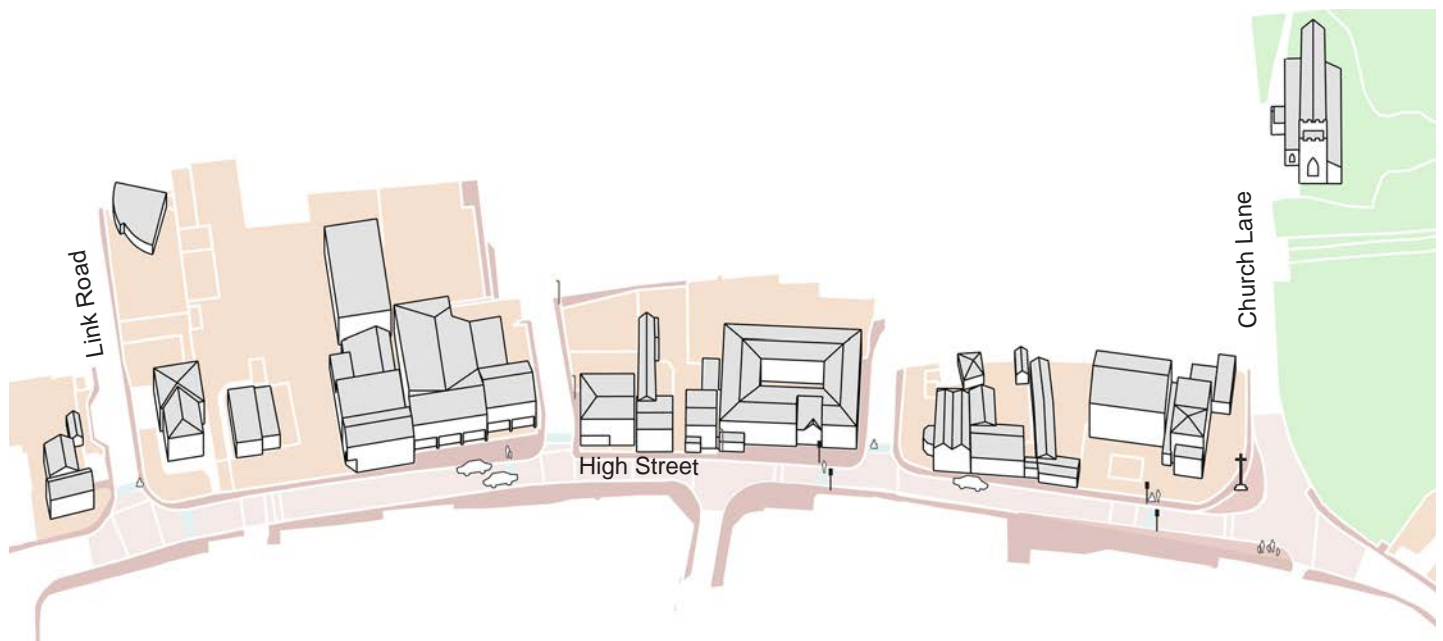


Fig 45 High Street, east side, with potential for street improvements indicated

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 would also contribute to traffic calming and pedestrian safety.

Potential for the rearrangement of Church Lane and High Street junction to create a more attractive public space. Pavement could be extended to allow for an expanded more generous pedestrian realm and for traffic calming.



Fig 46 High Street, east side looking north at junction with Selsingen Way



Fig 47 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 48)

- 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

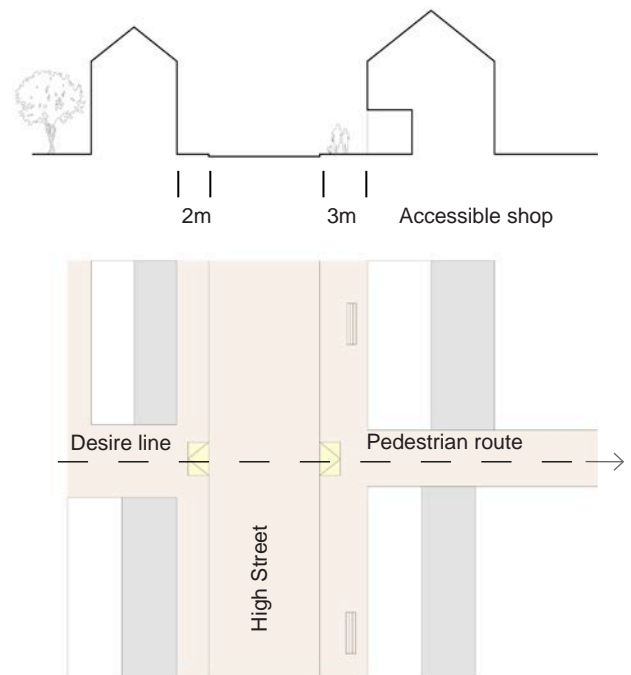


Fig 48 High Street section and plan illustrating measures for improved accessibility



Fig 49 High Street frontages - Challis House

Fig 50 High Street frontages - Historic shopfront



Fig 51 High Street frontages - Renovated pub

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