

4. Site, context and planning policy

The Phase 1 development is responsive to the site's constraints and features and will capture the essential characteristics of Cambridgeshire settlements.



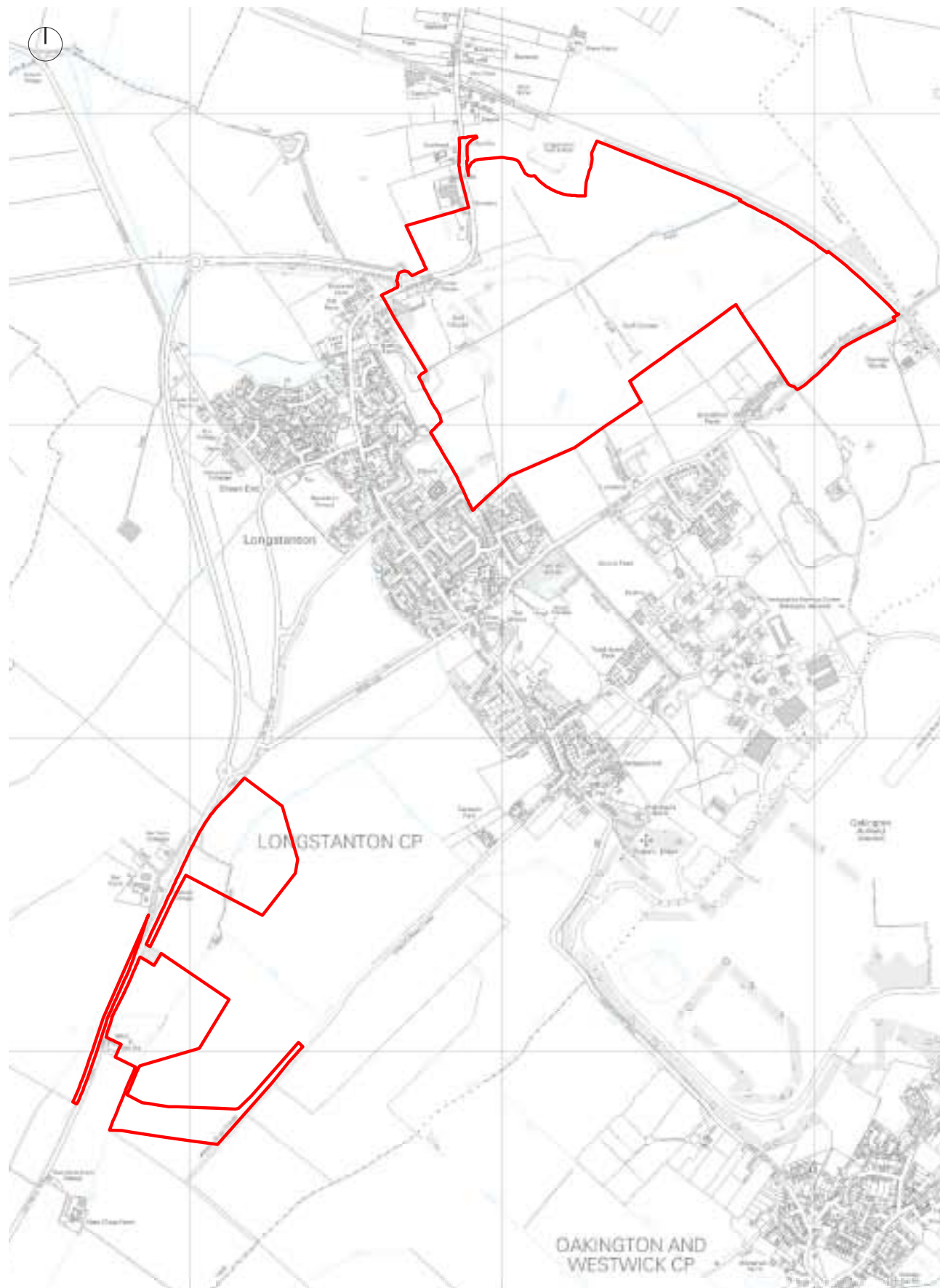


Figure 4.1 Site plan

Site overview

The 122 hectare (ha) application site is located to the north east of Longstanton and immediately to the west of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway (CGB). The settlements of Willingham, Cottenham and Oakington lie to the north, east and west, respectively. The smaller settlement of Rampton lies to the north east beyond the CGB. It is approximately 10km to the north west of Cambridge.

The site, as identified by the planning application red line boundary comprises two separate areas: the primary development site that will accommodate the proposed dwellings, employment land, community facilities and open space; and an area for excavation and infrastructure works including flood attenuation ponds adjacent to Hatton's Road. These ponds are provided early to help mitigate existing drainage problems and their excavations will provide 'fill' material for the primary development site in association with raising ground levels to provide suitable drainage across the primary development site.

The 97ha primary development site currently comprises the 18-hole Cambridge Golf Course and driving range and agricultural fields. The principal existing features are:

- The golf course site, including several engineered ponds and a number of fen drains that drain surface water from the course
- Several hedgerows run along the fen drains
- Trees associated with the landscaping of the golf course

- Agricultural fields
- An area of marshy grassland in the south west
- The B1050 corridor that lies in the north western corner
- Three public rights of way in the western part of the site

The site of the flood attenuation ponds (25 ha) lies adjacent to the B1050 Hattons Road, to the south west of Longstanton and north of New Close Farm. It is in arable agricultural use. Longstanton Brook runs through the west of the area.

The primary development site is bordered to the north and east by the Longstanton Park & Ride (P&R) and the route of the CGB, beyond which are fields, and to the south by the remainder of the wider Northstowe site, including an area of fields to the north of Rampton Road, and the former Oakington airfield and barracks (most recently in use as Immigration Centre). The village of Longstanton forms the western site boundary.

The area of proposed excavation and infrastructure work is bordered to the west by the B1050 and to the east, south and north by agricultural fields.

Existing agricultural land to the north west of the primary development site (approximately 58 ha) is identified in the Northstowe Area Action Plan (NAAP) as strategic reserve land to form part of Northstowe. The settlement of Willingham lies to the north east, Rampton lies to the east and Oakington to the south.



Photographs of site and immediate context



Figure 4.2 Aerial photograph (circa 2007) showing Phase 1 boundary

Site constraints and context

A thorough analysis of the site and its immediate context has been undertaken and its current condition and character is described below. The principal constraints are illustrated opposite on figure 4.3.

Landscape

The site includes trees and field boundaries that are locally valued landscape features, particularly in relation to providing and reinforcing the setting of Longstanton. The water bodies are not visually prominent, but are also valued and add to the character and diversity of the site. The strategy has retained and enhanced as many of the more valued features as is practicable and integrated them into the new landscape.

The open ditches and hedgerow are important nature features that should be retained and incorporated into the new settlement wherever possible.

Local views

Local views are from a range of directions. Views from the village of Longstanton are partly screened by site vegetation, with the clearest views being from the public footpath through the golf course and Magdalene Close residential area to the south and from Rampton Road to the east. To the west, clear views are obtained from Station Road. Further north on Station Road, views are constrained by intervening development and vegetation and this effect increases with distance from the site, so that there are very few clear views from the local area north of the site with the exception of the CGB.

The views from the area immediately east of the site include public views from the CGB, Reynolds Drove, a track linking the airfield and Rampton, Pauly's Drove, the upper storeys of the few properties on the west side of Rampton with views towards the application area (similar to views from Pauly's Drove) and Cuckoo Lane, a track linking Rampton and Westwick.

Non-rural development in the area includes the golf course, residential and institutional development on the edges of Longstanton, mixed development along Station Road and the CGB to the south. These are all strong influences on the character of local views.

Views from the wider landscape

The site is not easily perceptible from much of the wider landscape largely due to the flat topography and the screening effects of woodlands, shelter belts and hedgerows. Longstanton, including recent development to the west, screens views from the south and west and the airfield site east of Rampton Road largely screens the site from the east. The clearest longer distance views towards the site are therefore obtained from the agricultural landscape extending to the north east, but even from this more open and flat landscape, trees and hedgerows combine to reduce visibility towards the site to a relatively limited area.



View from Iram Drove, east of Willingham, 2.9km north east of site



View north east from public footpath across golf course

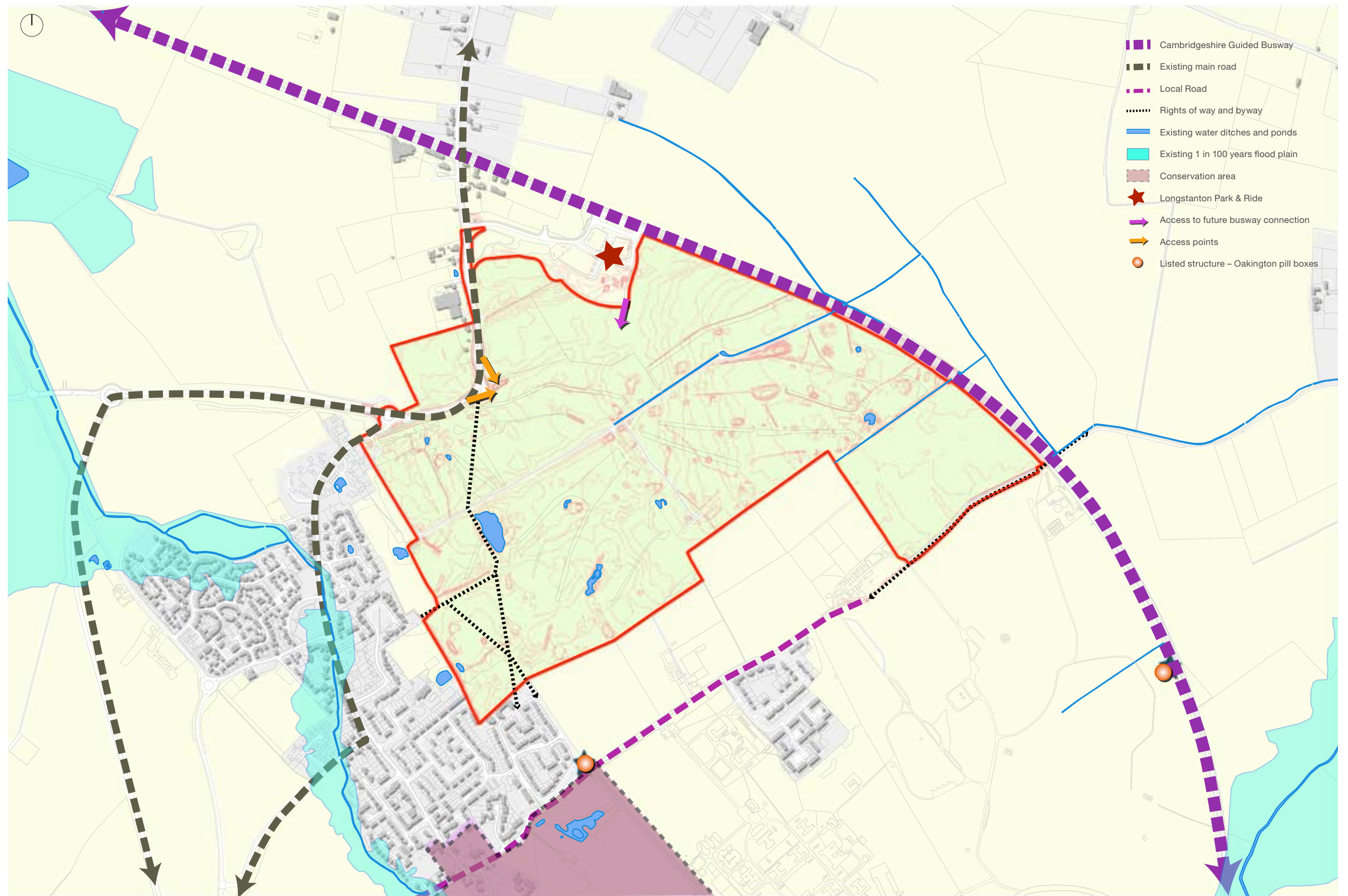


Figure 4.3 Site constraints

Figure 4.4 Existing vegetation

- Significant existing vegetation on site
- Amenity vegetation on golf course
- Vegetation beyond site boundary



Trees

Most of the site has undergone a significant amount of change during the 20th century. The majority of the fields that originally occupied the site have been replaced with a golf course. Most of the trees on the site are associated with the development of the golf course and are relatively recent with little landscape or ecological value.

However, some significant features of the original rural landscape remain, including the hedgerows on the south east and north west boundaries of the golf course, the hedgerows on the south west boundary with Longstanton, which includes several trees that contribute significantly to its setting, some of the hedgerows along Station Road and hedgerows associated with the field north west of Station Road. None of the hedgerows classify as important hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 or the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1994) and none of the trees are subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

Topography and drainage



The Cambridgeshire landscape is generally low lying and, although the site reflects this, there are subtle topographical variations within it. The local landscape is a transition area between relatively high ground south east of the A14 and the very flat fenlands 5 km to the north.

The local landscape is slightly undulating and relatively small topographical features can influence the extent of visibility of the site. Surrounding villages are located on slight rises, which, in combination with development and vegetation, helps screen views of the site from beyond the settlements.

Significantly higher ground to the south east and north are distant from the site and although perceptible the site is only a small element of the view.

Drainage

The current Flood Maps (2011) for the Beck Brook prepared by the Environment Agency indicate that the site is located within Flood Zone 1, with approximately one third of the area falling within Flood Zone 3 in an undefended scenario. Further details are included within the Flood Risk Assessment, which forms Technical Appendix H to the Environmental Statement.



Figure 4.5 OS first edition 1887/88

Heritage and archaeology

The Phase 1 development area is located in a landscape of high archaeological potential which has been the subject of extensive archaeological site investigation. There are a range of archaeological sites across the primary development site, dating from the below ground remnants of a Bronze Age burial site, Iron Age enclosures containing house and animal stock pens to the complex former Romano-British settlement north of Larksfield Farm. This site is estimated to be c.8ha in size with previous targeted trenches adjacent to Larksfield Farm in the market garden evaluated in 2004 revealing a series of four graves and a suspected shrine area. These sites do not form part of the primary development site but contemporary connected features extend northwards to the golf course.

The historic cores of the villages of Longstanton, Oakington, Westwick and Rampton are all designated conservation areas. Longstanton differs from the generally compact form, as only a small part of the much expanded village retains a strong historic character, and the designation additionally includes a large area of medieval settlement earthworks alongside Long Lane. The landscape setting of arable agriculture retains some pre-enclosure alignments and the drains that link to the system of fen drainage to the north. Most of the listed buildings are tightly grouped in the village centres and are of modest scale, although the spire of All Saints Longstanton acts as a landmark in views across the flat landscape. The administrative and technical buildings for the airfield developed from 1939, include the distinctive group of cantilevered pillboxes, named Oakington pillboxes for their first use at this base. Nine of the surviving ten examples are now listed (at grade II). The water tower is also a prominent feature in the landscape.



Listed Oakington pillbox

Ecology

The majority of the site comprises habitats of limited ecological value including the fairways and greens of the golf course, arable fields, improved grassland and species-poor hedgerows. Small areas of more interesting habitat are present including a large number of ponds on the golf course which support a number of scarce water beetles, the Longstanton Brook which is home to water voles, wet and semi-improved grassland supporting populations of common lizard and grass snake.

Badgers use the site for foraging and have a sett on site and some of the larger ponds on the golf course are used by breeding waterfowl. The arable fields, although low in botanical interest do support some scarce breeding birds including typical farmland species such as yellowhammer, skylark and yellow wagtail. The ecological strategy aims to create extensive new wetland areas managed to benefit wildlife and increase the extent of semi-natural habitats on site. Key features of ecological interest on site will be retained or any impacts on them will be mitigated.



Access

The A14 runs approximately 3 km to the south west of the site and the B1050 Hatton's Road / Longstanton western bypass runs north from the A14 to a new roundabout adjacent to the site. The existing golf course is accessed from Station Road, to the south of the new roundabout.

The CGB P&R is located immediately to the north of the site, with the CGB providing fast and reliable travel from Huntingdon (to the north) to Trumpington (to the south) via Cambridge. All services stop at the P&R with services approximately every 10 minutes. All guided busway stops feature real time travel information boards. Bus stops are well lit and feature raised platforms reached by ramps making accessibility for wheelchair users and people with pushchairs much easier. At Cambridge and Huntingdon, rail services to London, Peterborough and Kings Lynn are available.

In addition to the CGB the 'Citi 5 Fen service' provides a 60 minute frequency of service between Cambridge, Bar Hill, Longstanton, Over, Fen Drayton, Fenstanton and St Ives. This service provides a key public transport link to facilities such as the large Tesco at Bar Hill and an alternative route to Cambridge.

The existing pedestrian network within the vicinity of the site is quite poor. A pavement runs alongside the B1050 Station Road into Longstanton but this is not of high quality and is not lit. The eastern part of the site can also be accessed by foot and cycle from Rampton Road. There are currently no purpose designed cycle paths in the vicinity of the site, other than alongside the CGB.

There are a series of public rights of way in and adjacent to the site, in particular along the south eastern edge (linking to Rampton to the east) and transecting the western side, providing links into Longstanton.

The proposed development will ensure that good pedestrian and cycle links are provided into and through the site, linking existing public rights of way and creating permeable and safe access.



Figure 4.6 Strategic cycleways, byways and pedestrian routes



Rights of way and cycleways

Along the eastern edge of the site the CGB cycle route provides an excellent direct link into the centre of Cambridge that takes approximately 45 minutes.

There are a number of rights of way crossing the site. Along the eastern edge of Longstanton several rights of way criss-cross the golf course link up with the B1050 to the north and Magdalene Close to the south. Footpath links between the site and Longstanton are currently limited to a connection with Prentice Close via an unpleasant path along the side of panel fences and rear gardens to properties.

There are no rights of way crossing the eastern half of the site. Connections to settlements east of the CGB route are limited, and beyond the site boundary Rampton Road to the south provide the only link to the CGB cycle route and the settlement of Rampton.

Services

There are no significant existing utilities or easements crossing the main development site. A line of overhead cables cross the site of the proposed flood attenuation ponds adjacent (Hatton's Road).

Local facilities

Key local facilities in proximity to the Phase 1 site are illustrated on figure 4.7.

Policy context and Northstowe Area Action Plan (NAAP)

Planning policy context

As set out in detail within the Planning Supporting Statement, in addition to national planning policy (including the draft National Planning Policy Framework) the key documents that form the planning policy context to the proposal are as follows:

- Adopted South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy (January 2007)
- Adopted South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies DPD (DCPPD) (July 2007)
- Adopted South Cambridgeshire Site Specific Policies DPD (SSPPD) (January 2010)
- Adopted NAAP (July 2007)
- Adopted supplementary planning documents prepared by SDCD

The Northstowe site, including the application site, is allocated within the adopted Core Strategy and NAAP for development of a new town with a target capacity of 10,000 dwellings. The principle of delivering a new town on this site is therefore established. The NAAP provides the primary policy framework for the development of the town and comprises a number of individual policies to guide development. The content of the NAAP, along with the requirements of the policies within the documents referred to above have informed the design of the proposal.

Details of the proposals compliance with the relevant policies of the Core Strategy, DCPDPD and NAAP are included within appendix 2 of the Planning Supporting Statement. An explanation and where appropriate justification for non-compliance with individual policies and objectives within each of these development plan documents is also set out within section 5 of the Planning Supporting Statement.





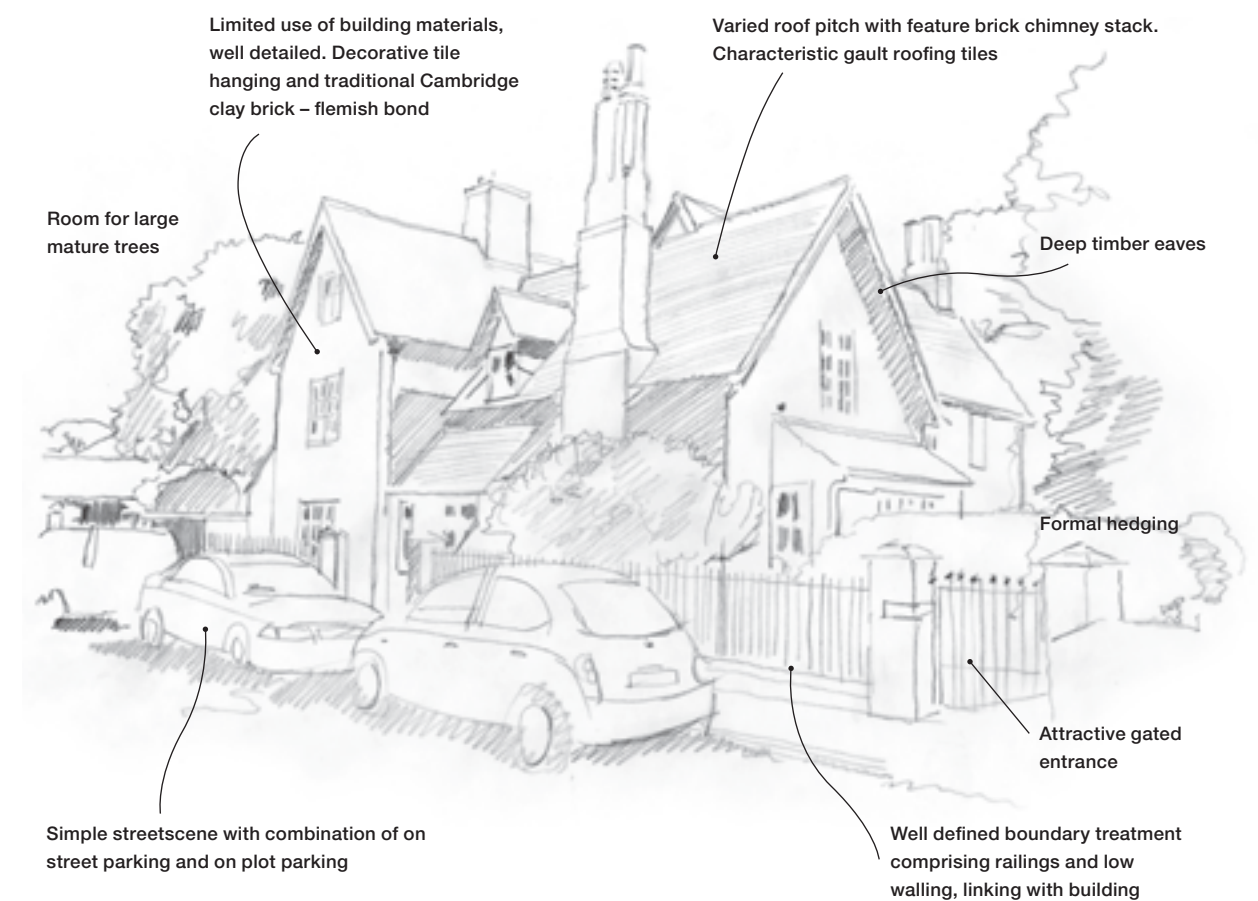
All Saints Church, Longstanton

Local settlements form and vernacular

The settlements of Longstanton and Oakington have a number of distinctive urban characteristics that are considered both attractive and representative of the locality. While the morphology of the village is not considered appropriate at Northstowe, aspects of the urban form and vernacular are relevant to the lower densities and housing typologies anticipated to be built within Phase 1.

Those characteristics considered relevant are summarised opposite, and comprise:

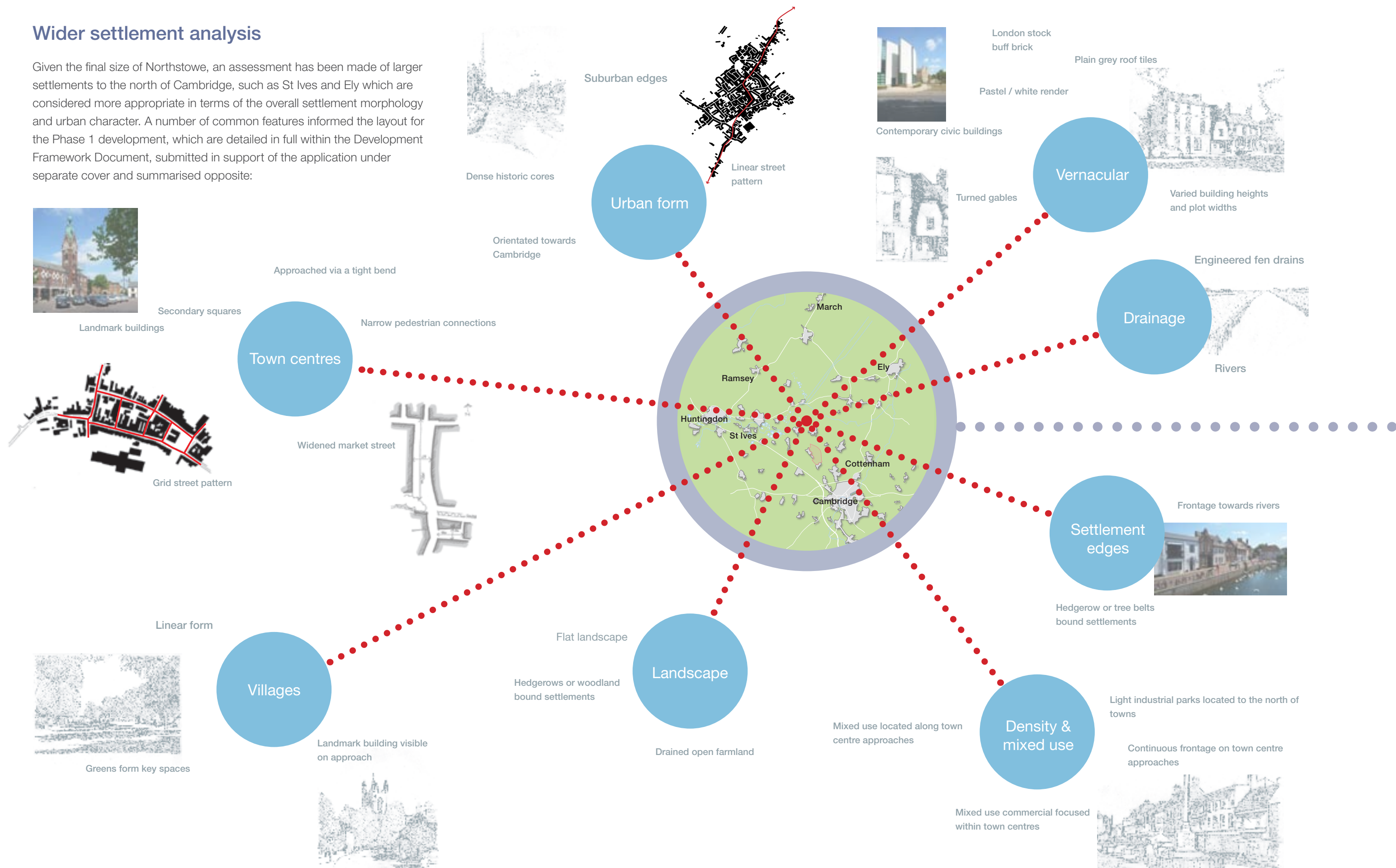
- Streetscene
- Built form
- Public realm
- Boundaries
- Materials
- Planting



Element	Defining features
<div data-bbox="314 352 516 390" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Streetscene</h2> </div> 	<p>Streets provide a legible and attractive place to live. On street / on plot parking prevails. Planting often is as dominant as the architecture. Historic streets are often straight or have subtle curves that afford attractive axial views. Limited use of kerbing and a grass verge with a swale provides sustainable drainage and should be replicated within the Phase 1 development.</p>
<div data-bbox="314 640 477 678" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Built form</h2> </div> 	<p>A diverse range of building styles, including contemporary architecture that skillfully incorporates traditional building materials. Predominately 2 / 2.5 storey and detached. Varied roof profile and well-designed fenestration are important. Occasional use of hanging tiles and weatherboarding.</p>
<div data-bbox="314 924 522 961" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Public realm</h2> </div> 	<p>Public spaces are simple, comprising small parks often tree lined. Simple use of materials and layout is appropriate, otherwise the more formal and contemporary parks of larger settlements such as Cambridge or St Ives are considered to be more applicable. Extensive use of native planting should similarly be adopted on the development edge and greenways of Phase 1.</p>
<div data-bbox="314 1207 507 1245" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Boundaries</h2> </div> 	<p>With a predominance of detached housing, boundary treatments are a vital feature of the streetscene. A combination of walling, railings and hedging link buildings and provide a strong sense of enclosure. Importantly, materials for boundary treatment and buildings match.</p>
<div data-bbox="314 1491 471 1528" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Materials</h2> </div> 	<p>Cambridge gault clay tiles and slate common for roofing. The characteristic Cambridge clay brick is a defining feature with shades of white, pale buff / yellow and grey bricks common, contrasted occasionally with red brick. Painted brick is also an attractive feature. Render is limited.</p>
<div data-bbox="314 1774 454 1812" data-label="Section-Header"> <h2>Planting</h2> </div> 	<p>Extensive use of evergreen and mixed species hedging. Mature large specimen trees such as Lime, Oak and Ash are an important part of the streetscene, providing shade and enlivening the skyline. Limited use of ornamental planting except in private garden. Climbing plants often cloth building façade.</p>

Wider settlement analysis

Given the final size of Northstowe, an assessment has been made of larger settlements to the north of Cambridge, such as St Ives and Ely which are considered more appropriate in terms of the overall settlement morphology and urban character. A number of common features informed the layout for the Phase 1 development, which are detailed in full within the Development Framework Document, submitted in support of the application under separate cover and summarised opposite:



Key findings

Linear development form

Most settlements in the study area have developed a linear form following a key route, or routes through the town. This route normally has the town centre on or adjacent to it, has a high level of continuous frontage and a mix of uses along it.

Alternating street alignment

The main routes through the study towns are rarely straight, there are normally significant bends, with the general alignment focused towards Cambridge.

Town centre street widening

The town centre 'market space' of several of the study settlements is recognisable by a simple widening of the street allowing a space for activities such as markets entertainment or parking.

Town centre grid pattern

Several settlements exhibit a loose grid pattern of streets within their town centres, with many of the narrow side streets now only accessible by pedestrians and cyclists. Ely provides the clearest example of this.

Varied building heights and architectural vernacular

There is a great mix of architectural styles, building heights and densities. This mix is particularly concentrated in the town centres. Contemporary architecture of high quality is common place.

Fen edge drainage

Water and drainage are a key defining feature of the landscape and play an important role in the setting of many Cambridgeshire towns and villages. It defines often the 'grain' of the landscape.

Inter connected green spaces

A series of green spaces, formal, recreational and children's play areas are interconnected along strong linear axis. Formal parks close to town centres are contrasted with more naturalistic linear parks on the edge.

Cambridgeshire
settlement
summary

