

Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022

Huntingdonshire District Council | Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary
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Chapter 4 - Settlement based landscape and townscape character area analysis

4 Settlement based Landscape and Townscape Character Area Analysis

- 4.1** The growth and development of most settlements results from the interactions of natural and human influences over centuries. Huntingdonshire's market towns and key service centres all have historic cores established centuries ago, coupled with 18th and 19th century developments along with extensive 20th century growth and some modern developments. This supplementary planning document identifies the different qualities that make each town and village special or distinctive from somewhere else. Significant variations in character exist within the settlements themselves, reflecting their differing evolution and contributing to each town and village's unique sense of place. A better understanding of townscape is essential to prevent the erosion of the distinctive characteristics which create that sense of place and identity.
- 4.2** Figure 4.1 shows the Key Diagram found on page 51 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan. It identifies in a conceptual way the location of settlements classed as spatial planning areas (SPAs) and key service centres (KSCs) in relation to one another and the key transport routes within the District. Their broad townscape and settlement nature are provided below with detailed assessments provided in the subsequent chapters.

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Figure 4.1 Key Diagram from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan

Huntingdon SPA

4.3 Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area is defined on page 55 of [Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036](#). It incorporates the whole parish of Huntingdon, and parts of the parishes of Brampton and Godmanchester including the settlements and the intervening land connecting them to Huntingdon. It also covers small parts of Alconbury, Kings Ripton, Wyton on the Hill and Houghton and Wyton parishes where they closely relate to the built-up area of Huntingdon. The Spatial Planning Area includes a substantial part of The Stukeleys parish covered by the strategic expansion location of Alconbury Weald, but specifically excludes the villages of Great and Little Stukeley. Huntingdon is the primary settlement within this Spatial Planning Area.

4.4 Huntingdon is the administrative centre and is located toward the centre of the District on the northern valley slopes of the River Great Ouse. It is accessible from the A14, which passes around the southern perimeter of the town. The eastern edge of the town has a strong historic association with the river. Parts of the town centre are undergoing redevelopment and regeneration. Much of the historic core based on the Market Hill and High Street remains largely intact. Huntingdon is a major housing and employment

centre with a high jobs to employment ratio. It is well connected with the strategic road network and the east coast mainline railway. It has a relatively strong retail sector and functions as the primary shopping centre for the District.

- 4.5** Brampton and Godmanchester to the southwest and southeast respectively have a closer relationship with the services in Huntingdon. Huntingdon benefits from a larger supporting population than just the town itself and the residents of Brampton and Godmanchester benefit from the wide range of services and facilities available in Huntingdon. Brampton is a visually contained village located within the Great Ouse Valley and has experienced extensive residential development, one being the redevelopment of a former RAF base providing a range of new homes and community facilities. Godmanchester is heavily influenced by its riverside location and the views out across the Great Ouse Valley landscape at Portholme Meadow in particular. There has been significant residential expansion to the southern and eastern sides of the centre of the settlement including Romans Edge which has seen the edge of the settlement continually evolve.

St Neots SPA

- 4.6** St Neots Spatial Planning Area is defined on page 55 of [Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036](#). It incorporates the whole parish of St Neots and the part of Little Paxton parish lying east of the A1. St Neots is the primary settlement within this Spatial Planning Area.
- 4.7** St Neots is, in population terms, the largest settlement in the District. It is a market town established on the eastern banks of the River Great Ouse. This settlement has expanded significantly over recent years and the smaller and previously independent settlements of Eaton Socon, Eaton Ford and Eynesbury to the south and west have been largely assimilated into the urban fabric of St Neots, although their historic and separate character is still recognisable within the town. Significant housing development has taken place to the east of the railway and north of Cambridge Road, further strategic expansion of this area is underway. St Neots has its own railway station, on the east coast mainline, located in the northeastern quarter of the town, and has direct access on to the A1. It is connected to Cambridge via the A428. Attracting retail, leisure and employment development to St Neots is challenging due to competition from Bedford and Cambridge.
- 4.8** Little Paxton lies approximately 1km north of St Neots east of the A1. It is a modest sized village which has retained its own separate identity to the town due to significant open river floodplains acting as a landscape gap. Here significant riverside development provides the river gateway with an attractive setting which relates to the historic riverside milling and industrial works commonly located within settlements of the Great Ouse Valley. It is located within an area of high landscape and ecological value with Paxton Pits Nature Reserve to the north of the village.

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St Ives SPA

- 4.9** St Ives Spatial Planning Area is defined on page 55 of [Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036](#). It incorporates the parish of St Ives except for the land north of Marley Gap Brook. It also includes parts of the parishes of Hemingford Grey, Houghton and Wyton, Fenstanton, and Holywell-cum-Needingworth where the built-up area of St Ives extends into them and/ or development is allocated in this plan. The main built-up areas of the villages associated with these parishes do not form part of the Spatial Planning Area. St Ives is the primary settlement within this Spatial Planning Area.
- 4.10** St Ives is an historic market town situated on the northern bank of the River Great Ouse. The town centre contains many original buildings and retains its distinctive medieval street pattern. The town has grown asymmetrically to the north of the river; the extensive floodplain to the south being retained as open land. The historic core of the town developed around the bridge over the River Great Ouse, and along the northern bank of the river. St Ives has developed an extensive base of small specialist shops which have enabled it to successfully compete with other market towns in the area. Expansion of retail and recreational opportunities in the town have taken place with the opening of the Abbey Retail Park by the junction of the A1123 and A1096. St Ives is a picturesque town and is a popular destination for tourists and visitors.

Ramsey SPA

- 4.11** Ramsey Spatial Planning Area is defined on page 56 of [Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036](#). As Ramsey parish is so extensive the Ramsey Spatial Planning Area is focused on the town of Ramsey and the built-up parts of Bury parish and the former RAF Upwood airfield that adjoin it. It excludes the villages of Ramsey Forty Foot, Ramsey Heights, Ramsey Mereside, Ramsey St Marys and Upwood. Ramsey is the primary settlement within this Spatial Planning Area.
- 4.12** Ramsey is located on the edge of the fenland landscape. The original settlement focused around Ramsey Abbey has extended south now forming a continuous built-up area with much of the village of Bury, although part of Bury around Holy Cross church remains separate. The buildings of former RAF Upwood also form part of the continuous built-up area. Ramsey has a wide variety of urban character. The 'historic core' is centred on High Street and Great Whyte and the 'Abbey Greens' associated with the former Abbey to the east of the town. Ramsey is relatively remote as it lies off the main road network and this restricts the opportunities for future development. Ramsey continues to be the focus of a number of regeneration initiatives and is developing its heritage assets.

Buckden KSC

- 4.13** Buckden is a village approximately 4 miles south of Huntingdon, located immediately to the west of the A1. The village has a rich historic environment concentrated along the High Street, formerly the Great North Road resulting in it being a key stop on the coaching route. The combination of Buckden Towers and St Mary's Church creates a distinctive sense of place in the centre of the village. The village expanded rapidly during the middle of the 20th century with large residential estates forming to the north, east and south of the historic centre. To the east of the main village lies Buckden Marina and gravel pits with habitats rich with biodiversity and high valued landscapes associated with the Great Ouse Valley.

Fenstanton KSC

- 4.14** Fenstanton is a village approximately 6 miles east of Huntingdon and 2 miles south of St Ives. It has a slightly elevated position and a strong southern edge due to the location of the A1307. Fenstanton has an unusual form with a series of village greens and is mostly defined by the historic routes of the High Street and Chequer Street which have contrasting characters. The High Street has higher density development including many of the village's shops and services, whereas Chequer Street has a much more village like nature with lower density development and village greens. Modern developments have expanded the village considerably eastwards from the historic core which has more than doubled the size of the original village.

Kimbolton KSC

- 4.15** Kimbolton is a village approximately 3 miles west of Grafham Water and 7 miles north-west of St Neots. It consists of two distinct parts to the north and south of the River Kym which flows through the centre of the village within a green corridor and acts as a green wedge between its old and new parts. Kimbolton Castle and its parkland dominate the south eastern townscape and landscape of the village. It has a wide High Street which is that of a planned mediaeval settlement and has been dated to the early 13 century. The village experienced significant residential growth during the 20th century, most notably within Newtown with additional local services such as a medical centre and primary school. Two green links across the river connect the area to the village centre to the south east which provides a strong sense of place.

Sawtry KSC

- 4.16** Sawtry is a village midway between Peterborough and Huntingdon. Within its historic core, Sawtry retains a strong village character, created by the arrangement of terraced brick houses along the High Street and surrounding the Green. Large modern residential estates dominate the southern approaches to the village and development to the west has now extended as far as Sawtry Brook to the north west, along Gidding Road and to the rising landform of High Holborn Hill to the south west. School playing fields form large green spaces in the centre of the village. The village centre is, however, heavily influenced by traffic, crossings and signage. Several roads, particularly to the east of the village have retained their distinctive rural character. The village has two employment locations, one to the north and the other on eastern side of the A1(M).

Somersham KSC

- 4.17** Somersham is a village approximately 4 miles north east of St Ives at the edge of the Fens. The village has a distinctive historic environment formed of two principal streets, High Street and Church Street which form a cross at the centre of the village. The site of the Bishops Palace, is located to the southern edge of the village and the church of St John the Baptist provides a notable landmark. The village expanded rapidly during the middle of the 20th century with large residential estates to the north of the High Street. To the east of the village is Somersham Local Nature Reserve (which includes a disused railway line) which provides the village with a transitional point to the surrounding countryside as well as recreational and leisure opportunities for residents.

Warboys KSC

- 4.18** Warboys is a village approximately five miles south east of Ramsey served by the A141 connecting the village to Huntingdon and Chatteris. The village has a clearly definable historic centre which has retained many aspects of its original Victorian townscape features. At one end is the Weir, a central amenity area which provides an attractive area for wildlife, habitats and enjoyment which in combination with the Clocktower at the other end create a strong sense of place. It also remains the commercial centre for the village with shops and services, while industry is concentrated well outside the village at the Warboys Airfield Industrial Estate. Extensive post war housing estates now dominate the northern edge of the village and smaller, more recent residential development has occurred to the southern and south eastern edges of the village.

Yaxley KSC

- 4.19** Yaxley is located in the north of Huntingdonshire immediately south of recent development at the Hamptons in Peterborough and some three miles from the city centre. Yaxley has seen considerable growth and change over recent years through post war residential and industrial development. The central areas of the village are strongly suburban in character with the linear arrangement of historic buildings along Main Street and Church Street creating a strong sense of place which is more intimate in scale than the post war residential estates to the north. St Peter's Church provides a notable landmark. The area to the east of the railway is industrial in character with the Eagle Business Park forming a key expansion of Yaxley's employment offer.