

Dear Councillor

CABINET - THURSDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2012

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**Agenda Item
No.**

**3. HOUGHTON & WYTON CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY
REVIEW (Pages 1 - 94)**

To consider a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy on the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Character Assessment and Boundary Review.

Hardcopies of the Area Character Assessment and Boundary Review have been circulated to Members of the Cabinet only.

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Houghton & Wyton

conservation area boundary review

October 2012



Contents

Introduction.....	3.
Map 1. Existing Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Boundary	4.
The proposals in detail.....	5.
Map 2. Proposed Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Boundary	7.
Map 3. Proposed Boundary Changes - Western Map	8.
Map 4. Proposed Boundary Changes - Eastern Map	9.
Map 5. 1880 Ordnance Survey Map with Proposed Conservation Area Overlaid.....	10.
Annex 1. Ranging Survey.....	11.
Annex 2. Site Survey.....	13.
Annex 3. Addresses affected by the Boundary Review.....	17.

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October 2012

Introduction

This review specifically looks at the setting of the amended boundary and details the architectural and historic significance of the areas proposed for inclusion, or exclusion, in the revised Conservation Area. A detailed analysis of the amended conservation area is available in the accompanying Conservation Area Character Assessment. This is an important guidance document that forms part of the process by which the nature, extent and significance of the historic environment is gauged during the assessment of planning applications.

The local policy basis of the review is contained in the Huntingdonshire Conservation Area Boundary Review Guidance Document adopted by the District Council in January 2003. The statutory basis for review is Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Area) Act 1990. This states that: -

“It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to review the past exercise of functions under this section and to determine whether any parts or any further parts of their area should be designated as conservation areas: and, if they so determine, they shall designate those parts accordingly.”

The first of the Huntingdonshire Conservation Areas were designated nearly forty years ago (see Map 1). Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area was designated on 14th October 1974 and subsequently amended on 18th February 1980.

This current review takes into consideration changes that have occurred in Houghton and Wyton over the last thirty years and seeks to respect modern best practice in Conservation Area management.

Government planning policy for the conservation of the historic environment is set down in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF considers a Conservation Area to be a

'Designated Heritage Asset' and policies that relate to such an asset are a material consideration which must be taken into account when making planning decisions. NPPF states that:

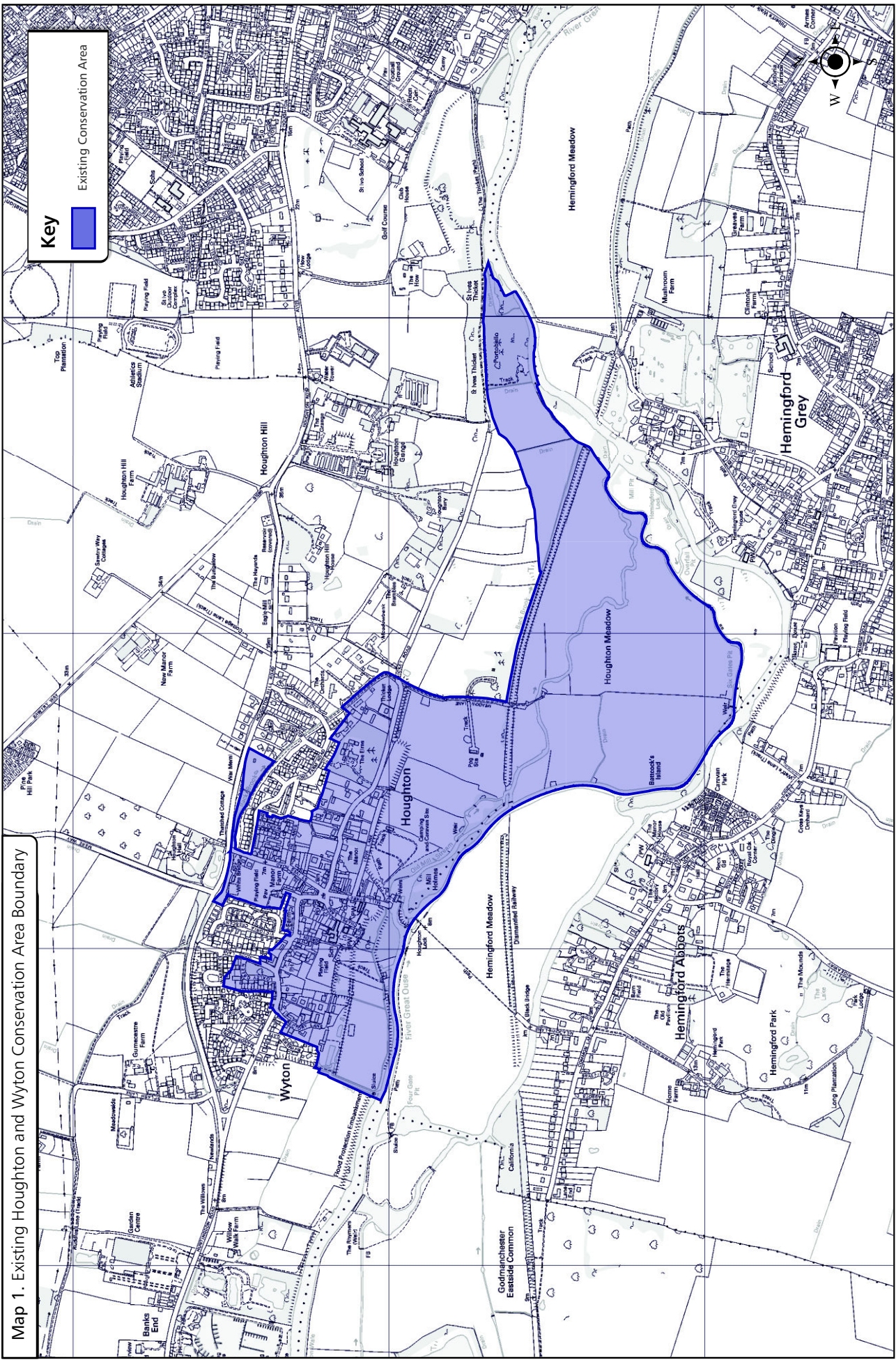
“Planning should [...] conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.”

The Conservation Area boundary review forms part of the process by which the nature, extent and importance of a heritage asset is assessed. Understanding this determines the significance of the heritage asset and its setting when involved in decision-making by local planning authorities.

Previous Conservation Area boundary reviews were based upon guidance produced by English Heritage, published in 2006. This guidance is in the process of being superseded by a draft document entitled, “Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management” (2011). This new document has informed the boundary review.

The seven criteria for review reproduced in Annex 2 of this report are based on an earlier English Heritage's guidance note entitled “Conservation Area Practice” (1993, revised 1995). This approach has been retained as it ensures that a benchmark level of detail is achieved that is both proportionate and sufficient to inform the review process.

The review process comprises a ranging survey looking at historical and cartographical evidence and a site survey of the existing conservation area and its setting (see Map 5). A summary of the results of these two surveys is attached as Annexes to this report. Reference to these Annexes will help to explain the reasons behind the proposed boundary changes.



The Proposals in Detail

The proposed boundary changes were put to public consultation from the 6th July to the 31st of August 2012. As a result of feedback from the consultation process a thorough re-assessment of the draft boundary change proposals was made. This document largely follows the initial proposals but incorporates one change to the boundary through the proposed inclusion of Area N (see map 3).

Boundary revisions occur when a thorough re-assessment of the existing conservation area boundary identifies significant additional historic, architectural or landscape elements that make a contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. However, the review may also identify areas where modern development has eroded some of the special interest of the conservation area or created new property boundaries. The previous Conservation Area was drawn very tightly around the historic cores of Houghton & Wyton and included the majority of the listed buildings. The old boundary did not fully take into account the historic development of the settlement, and consequently left out some key sites and aspects. Other parts which are now less significant in heritage terms will be omitted from the Conservation Area and the boundary realigned to reflect these changes (see Map 2).

The extension of the boundary should not be judged solely on the architectural quality of the streets it includes, but should also consider the historic significance of specific areas to the development of the settlement.

It is proposed that the boundary of the conservation area be extended to include five main areas and redrawn to exclude one area, and to make some minor boundary realignments to higher cartographical standards. The full scope of the proposed boundary changes is illustrated on the accompanying overview map (page 9).

The proposed changes are identified by letter on maps 3 and 4, and are also listed below.

- A Realign a part of the conservation area boundary to reflect recent changes in the pattern of property boundaries.
- B Realign the boundary to reflect recent changes in the pattern of property boundaries.
- C Realign the boundary to exclude all properties in Ward Close and Farm Close.
- D Realign the boundary to include 1-3 Orchard Cottages on Huntingdon Road, reflecting their historic interest and the way they are prominent in views out of Wyton, affecting the setting of the conservation area. This realignment would offer an opportunity for enhancement of the conservation area at an important location at the entrance to the village.
- E Extend the boundary to include Ware Lane and its adjacent verges to reflect the historic interest of this ancient trackway and its characteristic double ditches.
- F Extend the conservation area north of the A1123 at the junction with St. Ives Road into Houghton. This is to include Houghton Hall (the Old Rectory), Ladymere Cottage and the Cemetery, with the proposed boundary between the two running along the hedge line north of the main road at this point. This will better reflect the historic associations and development of the parish and re-establish the integrity of the boundary north of the road. Houghton Hall and Ladymere Cottage are both Grade II listed buildings.
- G Realign the boundary to include the properties of Brambly Hedge, Chaddesley and Glenburn and include the northern edge of what was the historic trackway to Houghton Farm (demolished mid 1960's). To be included to

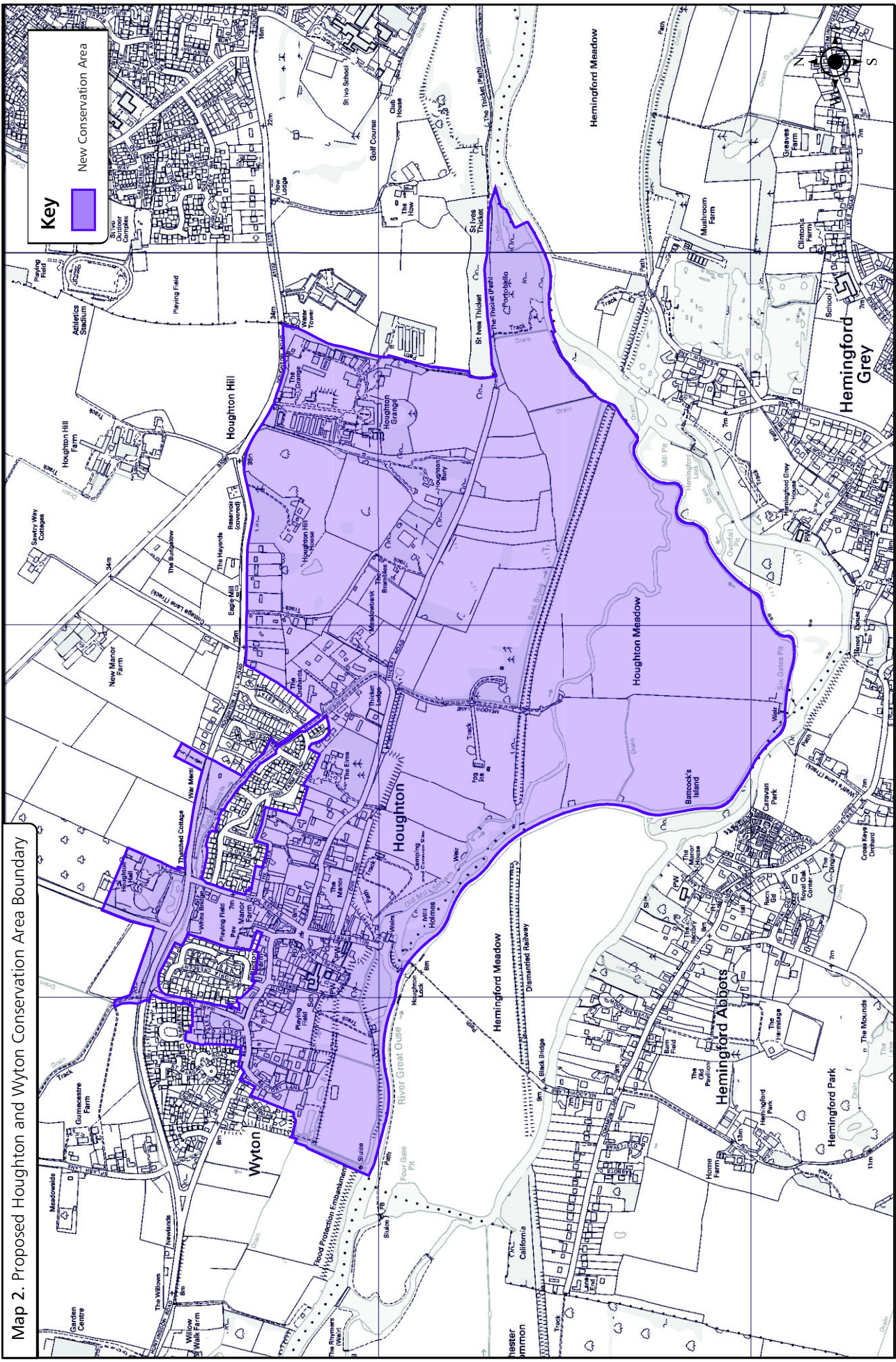
reflect the historic development of Houghton and the rural character of the built environment.

- H Extend the conservation area boundary to include Meadow Lane and its verges to reflect the special interest of this ancient trackway and its importance to the historic development of the parish.
- I Extend the conservation area to the northeast of the present boundary as far north as the A1123. This area to be included due to the number of detached houses which form a characteristic settlement pattern of predominantly large dwellings set within large gardens retaining many of the specimen trees of the former estate lands within which they were built. This area needs to be included to preserve the historic landscape setting of Houghton & Wyton.
- J Extend the conservation area boundary to the east to take in the grounds of Houghton Hill House, Houghton Bury and the open fields, woodlands and gardens of other dispersed properties in this location.
- K Extend the conservation area to include the Grade II listed Gate Houses to Houghton Grange, and the principal Grade II listed Elizabethan Revival country house formerly used as a government research station. The house, associated buildings and landscaped grounds of Houghton Grange are of merit; however, the redundant outbuildings and laboratories are of poor quality and condition.
- L Extend the boundary south of Thicket Lane to merge with agricultural land that has similar landscape qualities already within the conservation area to the west. This is an area rich in archaeological remains with widespread remnants of medieval ridge and

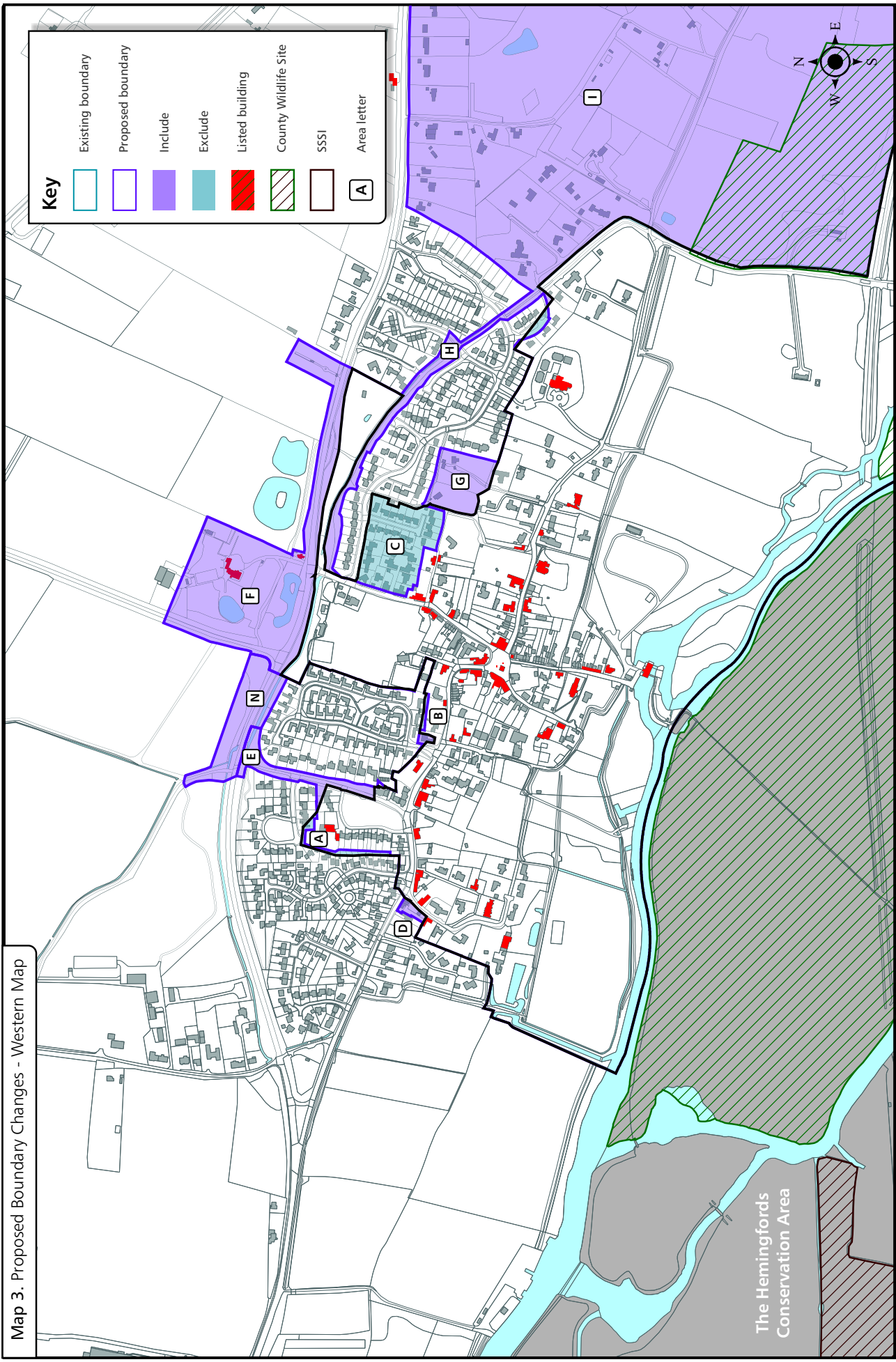
furrow. Some of this land is designated as County Wildlife Site and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

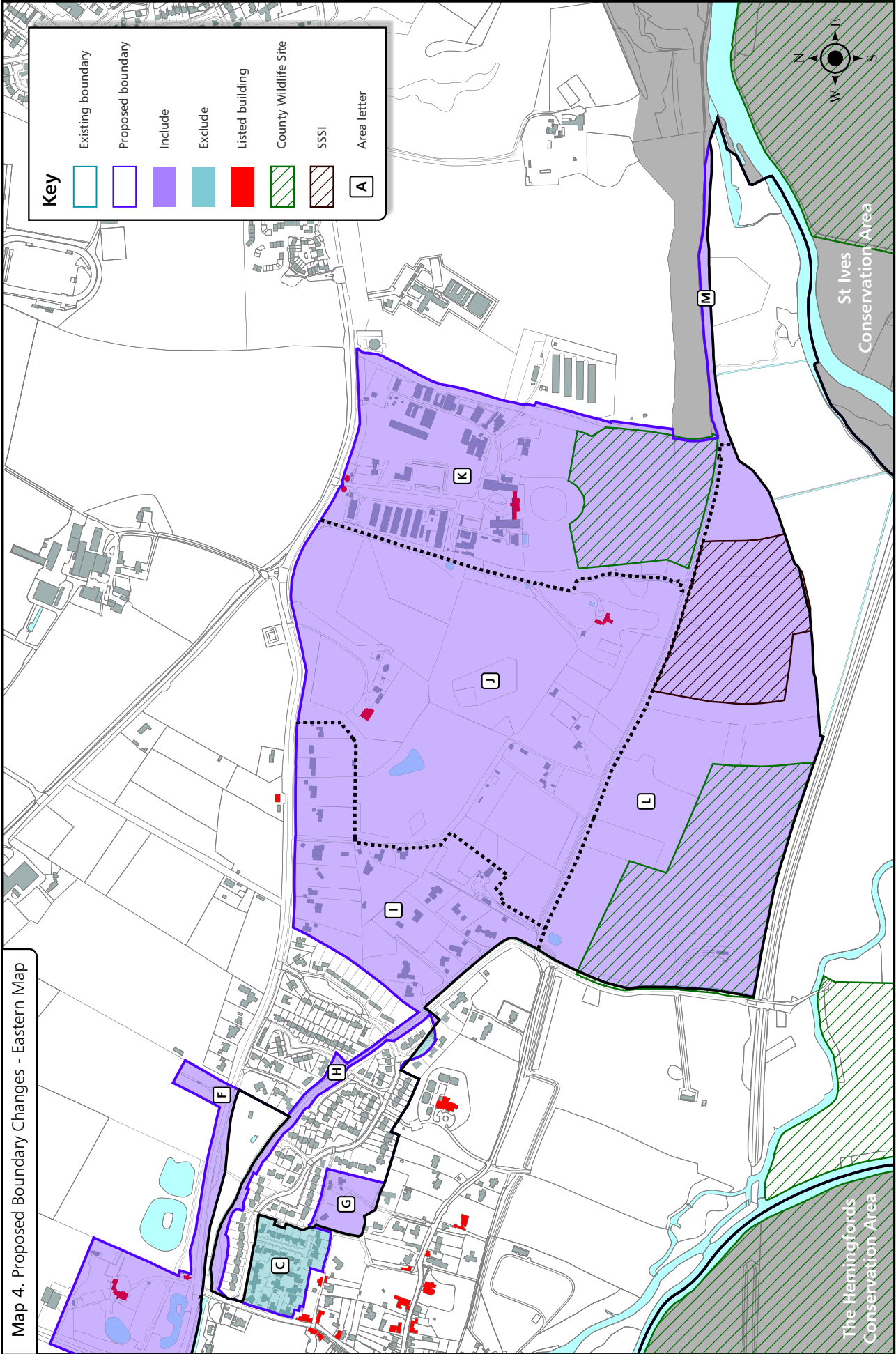
- M Extend the conservation area further to the east to include a small slither of land along the Thicket path adjacent to the St Ives Conservation Area.
- N. Extend the conservation area boundary to include registered common land to the south west of Houghton Hall which represents an important historic gateway to Houghton and Wyton, contributing to the special interest of the conservation area.

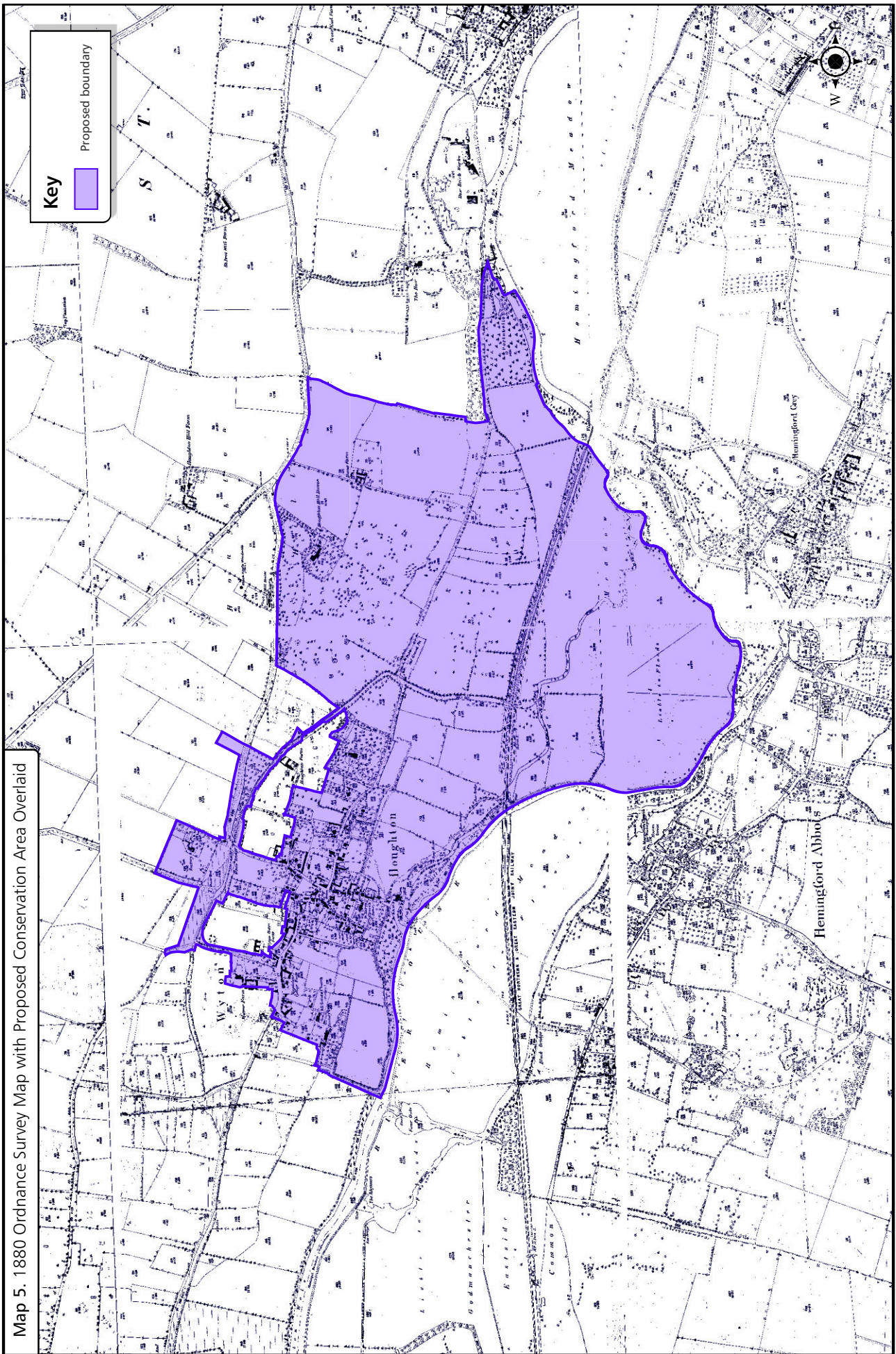
Map 2. Proposed Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Boundary



Map 3. Proposed Boundary Changes - Western Map







Annex 1. Ranging Survey (2003)

Houghton & Wyton map reference:
TL2772 - 2872

Special Character of the Settlement

This is an extended settlement which historically consisted of two adjacent parishes linked by the double manor of Houghton cum Wyton that was part of the foundation grant to Ramsey Abbey. The twin village centres, around their respective churches, lie to the north of the River Great Ouse which meanders along the southern part of each parish.

The old Huntingdon to St. Ives road passed through the centres of both villages and forms a unifying element. Although no longer used as a road for motorised traffic the track to the east (known as Thicket Lane) remains an important through route for pedestrians and cyclists. It provides access to the open countryside that still separates the villages from St. Ives. This open area of countryside is predominantly pasture with significant upstanding ridge and furrow.

The main road from Huntingdon to St. Ives (A1123) forms a physical barrier between the settlements and their hinterland. For this reason, the Old Rectory (now called Wyton Hall), its thatched lodge and the village cemetery to the east are important unifying elements to the north of the A1123.

General Character of the Existing Conservation Area

The conservation area covers the historic village centres and the meadowlands of Houghton-cum-Wyton. To the south it abuts the Hemingford meadows along this stretch of the Great Ouse, whilst to the east it interlocks with the St. Ives and The Hemingfords Conservation Areas. This extensive conservation area already includes most of the historically and architecturally significant

elements of Houghton and Wyton and is one of the better-drawn boundaries in the District.

Key Features Outside the Existing Conservation Area Boundary

Houghton Hill is a topographically significant feature to the east of the main settlement. During the 19th century it passed from being principally agricultural land to parkland associated with (mainly) modest villas and country houses. This locally significant area is presently outside the conservation area.

There are also some important archaeological features between Houghton and St. Ives, including the old road (Thicket Lane) and pasture containing a significant expanse of ridge and furrow. Considering the comparative rarity of this feature in Huntingdonshire, this should be considered for protection. This would complement the meadowland currently within the conservation area boundary.

Wyton Hall and environs form the most northerly elements of Houghton & Wyton, but are currently outside of the conservation area boundaries.

Boundary issues and location

The majority of the boundaries are sound with the exception of some minor elements within the Wyton village sector and modern development to the east of Houghton. The elements identified above as being outside the current boundary need to be surveyed.

Documentation Checked

- Local Plan
- Sites & Monuments Record
- Register of historic parks & gardens
- Archaeological records
- Historic maps: Ordnance Survey Map 1880; Inclosure maps, 1773/74
- RCHME
- Victoria County History

Record of GGP facilities used

Base map with the following overlays:

- Conservation Area boundaries
- Listed Buildings
- Ancient Monuments
- Contour data
- Floodplain
- Protected species habitat

Aerial photographs

Annex 2. Site Survey (2003, revised 2011)

Criteria checklist:

1. The integrity of the topographical framework

Does the existing boundary protect:

- **Historically significant road networks?**

Mainly so, however, the present boundary fails to protect Thicket Lane, a trackway of medieval and possibly earlier origins that runs from St Ives to Houghton and on to Huntingdon (see Map 4). Ware Lane also has the characteristic deep flanking ditches of an important historic roadway and should be considered for inclusion along with parts of the upper road from Huntingdon to St. Ives (the A1123).

- **Ancient curtilage boundaries?**

Ancient curtilage boundaries to the north of the A1123 (notably that of the Old Rectory) and east of Houghton village (principally curtilages of 19th century mansions) are not protected. The boundaries of the medieval open fields to the southeast of Thicket Lane are largely retained. To the north these have been replaced by the formal parkland attached to firstly Houghton Hill House (1840's) and later Houghton Grange (1897). The open parkland has been eroded to the west by recent development and ancient boundaries obscured by garden plots. The existing conservation area fails to protect either the open parkland or the medieval field system.

- **The relationship of buildings to each other and to open spaces?**

In the main this factor is satisfactorily provided for, except to the east where the boundary falls short of the imparked ridge of

Houghton Hill and the area either side of Thicket Lane.

Large detached modern dwellings situated within former parkland to the northeast of Meadow Lane have little spatial relationship to those in the southwest due to the intervening boundaries of this ancient track. There is a firm relationship between these buildings and the remaining open parkland to the east which is reinforced by the scattering of mature specimen trees between the buildings. The current boundary excludes this important transition from the village edge to the open spaces beyond.

2. The identification of key settlement edges

Does the setting of the boundary pay due regard to:

- **The character of the buildings on either side of it?**

In general the present boundary is drawn tightly around the historic built form of Houghton and Wyton and does not include the large detached houses to the east of Meadow Lane. While these buildings are predominantly modern they have some architectural merit and provide a pleasant contrast to the historic parts of the conservation area.

The boundary also includes the modern estate dwellings of Farm Close and Ward Close which have little architectural interest and should be excluded.

- **Spatial qualities or views of importance at the boundary?**

The boundary includes the meadows to the west of Meadow Lane adjacent to the redundant railway line but omits those to the east. Also excluded are the views along Thicket Lane and glimpsed views into the fields on either side of the lane.

- **The use of traditional building materials in existing (or newer) development currently outside the conservation area?**

Yes.

- **The spatial relationships between groups of buildings on either side of the boundary?**

The existing boundary follows Meadow Lane which acts as a linear barrier between the groups of buildings. Otherwise yes, except to the east.

- **Instances of relevant economic activity adjacent to the current boundary?**

The dominant economic activity outside the built form on either side of the boundary is agricultural, specifically pastoral.

- **The extent of traditional patronage?**

The existing boundary fails to respect the full extent of the medieval open fields of Houghton.

3. The preservation of natural elements at the boundaries

Does the boundary recognise the importance of natural elements such as?

- **Green (open) spaces currently outside the boundary?**

North of Thicket Lane the steep escarpment associated with Houghton Hill is omitted from the conservation area even though this is an important physical feature worthy of protection even beyond the additional importance of the remaining planned green spaces associated with the parklands of Houghton Hill House and Houghton Grange.

The boundary to the southeast of the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area follows Houghton Meadows to the north of the river as far as the Hemingford Meadows to the east. The majority of the medieval field system and associated ridge and furrow however is not protected even though it is an equally important green space.

North of the A1123 at the northern entrance to Houghton, where the boundary stops short of the open spaces around the curtilage of the Old Rectory is currently outside the boundary.

- **Hedgerows and trees just within, or beyond the Conservation Area?**

There are a wealth of hedgerows associated with the fields and boundaries of Thicket Lane outside the conservation area.

Many of the trees within the former parklands of Houghton Hill House and Houghton Grange are protected with TPOs however many more would benefit from the additional conservation area protection.

- **Important vistas both out of, and into the conservation area?**

Yes

- **Significant features along the lines of its formal approaches?**

Yes

- Frontages worthy of protection?

Yes

- Water/flood meadows that provide a setting for the area?

This aspect is already fully protected within the current conservation area.

4. The broader relationship of the built environment to the landscape or open countryside

Does the present boundary take account of significant elements of the historic landscape?

No, it excludes extensive ridge and furrow remnants within the medieval field system and the settings of listed buildings within their associated parklands.

Does this include?

- Elements of a designed landscape associated with the area?

Currently the designed landscapes of Houghton Hill House, Houghton Grange and the Old Rectory are not included in the conservation area.

- Significant landmarks?

Yes

- Other important vistas and panoramas?

Yes, but excludes medieval fields and important views from the top of the ridge just south of Houghton Grange.

5. The integrity of significant archaeological sites

Does the present boundary respect archaeological sites that have historical significance for the area? (These will, by their nature, often be obscured visually, ie be below ground).

No, a significant number of prehistoric, Iron Age and Saxon finds have been discovered on either side of Meadow Lane which indicates a large multi-phase archaeological site that is currently partly within the conservation area and partly outside. A scattering of prehistoric finds have been discovered in the grounds of Houghton Grange and most particularly there is what may be an important Romano-British cemetery in the northern part of the site.

Extending eastwards from the existing boundary are extensive examples of medieval ridge and furrow which survived the enclosure of Houghton parish in 1774 and should be considered for inclusion (see above).

Where there is an ancient monument of significance for the conservation area is provision made to protect that relationship?

Thicket Lane is recorded in the HER as a monument and while it is not scheduled it may be considered to be an undesignated heritage asset under PPS5. It currently lies partly within and partly outside the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area.

Is the monument currently outside the conservation area?

Yes, partly.

6. Opportunities for economic regeneration

Would a boundary change create opportunities that might enable or enhance local regeneration?

Not specifically.

7. Opportunities for character enhancement

Would a boundary adjustment create an opportunity for beneficial management change where there are negative or neutral elements existing that detract from the character of the area (for example where negative or neutral elements have previously been left as “outliers” within the broad conservation “envelope”)?

Yes, there are a number of areas where enhancement would positively benefit the conservation area and setting of Houghton. The area around the eastern Pumping Station is unkempt and requires better management. The hedgerows either side of Thicket Road are overgrown and where maintained have been cut inappropriately; a concerted attempt to rationalise and manage these hedgerows would help open up vistas from Thicket Road and the views from Houghton Hill.

There are instances where inappropriate boundary treatments and unsympathetic environment agency railings might have been avoided under conservation area protection. The inclusion of 1-3 Orchard Cottages (D) on Huntingdon Road reflects the intention that these properties can be enhanced in the future.

Annex 3. Properties Effected by the Boundary Review

Map Area	Address	Action
A	Nos. 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 24 St Margaret's Road; 3, 5, 9 Warren Close, Wyton	Realignment of boundary to exclude gardens from conservation area
B	Nos. 4, 6, 8 Victoria Crescent, Houghton	Realignment of boundary to exclude gardens from conservation area
C	Ward Close, all properties; Farm Close, all properties, Houghton	Realignment of boundary to exclude those properties currently within the conservation area
D	1-3 Orchard Cottages, Huntingdon Road, Wyton	Include properties within the conservation area
E	Ware Lane verges and partial inclusion of no. 29 Ware Lane, Wyton	Include within conservation area boundary
F	Houghton Hall and grounds, Thatched Cottage, Cemetery and verges – Houghton Hill Road	Include properties within conservation area boundary
G	Brambly Hedge & Glenburn – The Lanes. Chaddesley – Thicket Lane Footpath	Include properties within conservation area boundary
H	Meadow Lane and verges	Include within conservation area boundary
I	The Oaks, Four Winds, Hadfield, Greenacres, Vanguard House, Vixen House, Vantage House, Field House, Tall Trees, Taliesyn, Oak Lodge, Woodlands – Houghton Hill Road Selesa House, The Orchards, Tighnabruaich, Old Oak House, Carden House, The Spinney; Ashbourne House, Linden House, Casablanca, Apple Barn, Fairmead – Meadow Lane. Meadowbank – Thicket Lane.	Include properties within conservation area boundary
J	The Bramble, Highlands, Houghton Bury, Houghton Hill House, Houghton Grange – Thicket Lane.	Include properties within conservation area boundary

Houghton & Wyton

conservation area character assessment

October 2012



Contents

1.	Introduction	3.
2.	Planning Policy Context	5.
3.	Special Interest	7.
	Summary	7.
4.	Location and Setting	9.
5.	Conservation Area Overview	13.
	5.1 Built Form	13.
	5.2 Houghton and Wyton Settlement Pattern	13.
	5.3 New Development	23.
6.	Key Views and Vistas	25.
7.	Detailed Analysis	29.
	7.1 Wyton Village Character Area	29.
	7.2 Houghton Green Character Area	32.
	7.3 Houghton North Character Area	38.
	7.4 Thicket Road and The Lanes Character Area	41.
	7.5 Houghton Hill Character Area	44.
	7.6 Thicket Road East and the River Valley Character Area	47.
8.	Open Spaces, Parks, Gardens and Trees	51.
9.	Historic Background	53.
	9.1 Prehistoric Settlement	53.
	9.2 Romano-British Period	53.
	9.3 The Medieval Settlements	53.
	9.4 Water Mills at Houghton and Wyton	57.
	9.5 Post-Medieval Development	58.
10.	An Audit of Heritage Assets	61.
	10.1 An Assessment of Condition	67.
	10.2 Section 57 Building Repairs Grant	68.
11.	Identifying the Boundary	69.
12.	References, Appendices and Contact Details	71.

List of Figures

Figure 1.	Location Map	9.
Figure 2.	Location Map Detail	9.
Figure 3.	Aerial Photography with Conservation Area Boundary	10.
Figure 4.	Conservation Area Boundary Location Map	11.
Figure 5.	Overview Figure Ground Map	15.
Figure 6.	Wyton Figure Plan	17.
Figure 7.	Houghton Figure Plan	18.
Figure 8.	Houghton North Figure Plan	19.
Figure 9.	The Lanes Figure Plan	20.
Figure 10.	Houghton Hill Figure Plan	21.
Figure 11.	River Valley Figure Plan	22.
Figure 12.	Overview Map With Road Names, Spaces and Views	27.
Figure 13.	Wyton Village Detail Map	31.
Figure 14.	Houghton Village Detail Map	37.
Figure 15.	Houghton North Detail Map	40.
Figure 16.	Thicket Road and The Lanes Details Map	42.
Figure 17.	Houghton Hill Detail Map	46.
Figure 18.	The River Valley Detail Map	49.
Figure 19.	Historic Map	55.
Figure 20.	Detail of 1898 copy of 1514 map (Courtesy of Huntingdon Records Office)	57.
Figure 21.	1774 Enclosure Map (Courtesy of Huntingdon Records Office)	58.

Introduction

1.1 A conservation area is 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'¹. This is a statutory designation that enables the proper management of change in historic places.

1.2 The Houghton and Wyton conservation area covers an area of considerable historic, architectural and archaeological interest demonstrating more than a thousand years of continuous settlement. Each phase of development has left a wealth of historic buildings constructed in a variety of styles using traditional materials; 55 of these are listed. The villages largely retain their own distinct characters based on an unusual settlement form and are set within an important historic landscape shaped by successive land use. Rare survivals of upstanding medieval Ridge and Furrow are protected under pasture in the river valley meadows and beneath the unlandscaped parts of private gardens and the grounds of larger houses.

1.3 Today, Houghton and Wyton are thriving and desirable villages both for their residents and for visitors to the district. This can be attributable to the survival of attractive and interesting historic buildings set within a rural landscape of natural beauty.

1.4 English Heritage summarises the importance of conservation areas below:

"The historic development of our villages and towns has a profound effect on our everyday lives. The buildings themselves and how they are grouped, open spaces, views into and out of the area, street plan and street features, trees, water features, archaeology and historic landscapes all go together to produce a cherished local environment. Conservation area designations are meant to

enable the proper management of development in historic places and not to preserve them unchanged for all time"².

Please note

No Conservation Area Appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive, and omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest or does not contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

¹ Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; HMSO

² Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management - English Heritage, 2011

Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area is one of sixty Conservation Areas in Huntingdonshire. Under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 we must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. This appraisal identifies the special interest and character of the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area, and provides guidance on how the preservation or enhancement of its character or appearance can be achieved.

2.2 Government planning policy for the conservation of the historic environment is set down in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)³. The document considers a Conservation Area to be a 'Designated Heritage Asset' and the policies related to these are a material consideration which must be taken into account in development management decisions.

2.3 The Conservation Area Character Assessment is an important document that forms part of the process by which the nature, extent and importance of a heritage asset is gauged during the assessment of planning applications. Understanding the special interest of heritage assets determines the significance of the heritage asset and its setting when assessing the impact of development proposals.

³ Department for Communities and Local Government. March 2012

Special Interest

3.1 The village development of Houghton and Wyton is not directly comparable with the majority of settlements found elsewhere in Huntingdonshire having evolved from two separate but closely allied Saxon settlements. The two parish churches stand on rising ground between the floodplain of the River Great Ouse and the main thoroughfare passing east to west through the settlements from St Ives in the east to Hartford and Huntingdon in the south west. The principal farms lay to the north of this road, with Wyton Manor abutting Ware Lane and Houghton Manor alongside St Ives Road; these marked the two main approach routes from the north into each of the settlements.

3.2 Local traffic between the two settlements, the farms, their fields and the nearby towns created a diverse mixture of historic roads, trackways and paths that today make a major contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The historic routes through the village centres are often winding and narrow leading to back of pavement building lines and views stopped short by interesting historic buildings. Importantly, the historic plan of the villages has been preserved in the arrangement of thoroughfares and property boundaries.

3.3 The importance of farming to the history of the villages can be seen in the survival of high status late medieval timber framed and thatched buildings and the presence of many barns and outbuildings. These contrast with the polite architecture of the Georgian and Victorian houses that flank the lanes and thoroughfares and mark the expansion of the settlement into the countryside. Behind these buildings there are quiet gardens and yards in well defined plots divided and defined by walls, hedgerows and timber fencing. Glimpses of gardens & trees between buildings and over boundaries, together with the presence of significant areas of open space combine with

longer views of the countryside to retain the important and attractive character of a tranquil rural settlement where the landscape context is key. This is despite some areas of intensive modern development.

3.4 The distinct phases of historic growth of Houghton and Wyton has led to an unusually high diversity of building type and status represented by architectural styles from the late 15th Century onwards. This informal juxtaposition of historic buildings combined with the organic development of the settlement makes a significant contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area.

Summary

The special interest of Houghton and Wyton justifying the designation as a conservation area includes:

1. A long history evident in the built form, buildings and historic landscape of Houghton and Wyton.
2. The strong survival of the medieval and post-medieval thoroughfares, village form and buildings, including historic enclosures and ancillary buildings.
3. Significant archaeological potential.
4. The survival of clear evidence illustrating the historic development of the village seen in the size, design and siting of buildings.
5. The contrasting character of zones within the settlement which are nevertheless complementary due to a restricted palette of traditional materials.
6. The number and quality of historic buildings, 55 of which are Listed.

7. The strong visual and historic relationship between the villages and their largely unspoiled river valley setting.
8. The special contribution of Houghton Mill as a landmark building.
9. The special contribution of trees, gardens, open spaces and views to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Location and Setting

4.1 The settlements are located approximately 3 - 4 kilometres east of Huntingdon [map ref. TL 2872] (see Figure 1) and are situated on the north bank of the River Great Ouse in what was the historic County of Huntingdonshire. The villages are situated within the river valley where the flood plain is approximately 100 - 300 metres wide and liable to occasional heavy flooding. The river valley lies at 5 – 10 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), rising to a plateau at around 40m in the north of the parish on which lies the air base of RAF Wyton.

4.2 Houghton Hill is a key topographical feature that forms an escarpment aligned east to west which defines the northern valley edge. This feature, in combination with the winding course of the river, has influenced the development of the villages and their transport links. Houghton Hill Road runs along the top of the escarpment and now forms the main road between Huntingdon and St Ives. The lower route survives as the Thicket Path and Thicket Road which runs along the base of the escarpment just above the

floodplain meadows. These meadows, which lie between the villages and the river, have great historic significance and are additionally an important landscape and wildlife feature.

4.3 The underlying geology is principally Oxford Clay overlain with silt deposits in the floodplain of the Ouse. The river has also deposited river gravels which provide well-drained areas for settlement. The majority of the Houghton and Wyton villages lie on these river gravels which are rich in archaeological remains associated with earlier human habitation. To the north and east of the Parish, the heavier clays support agricultural land and a more dispersed settlement pattern.



Figure 1. Location Map

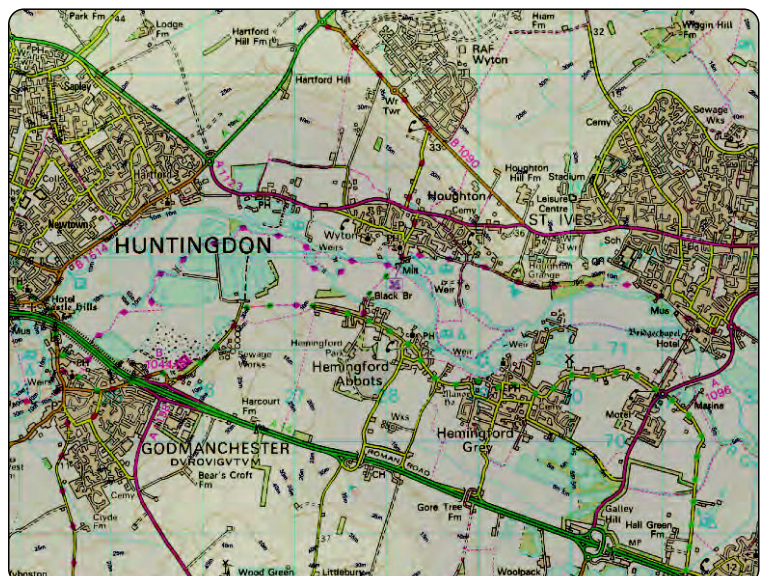
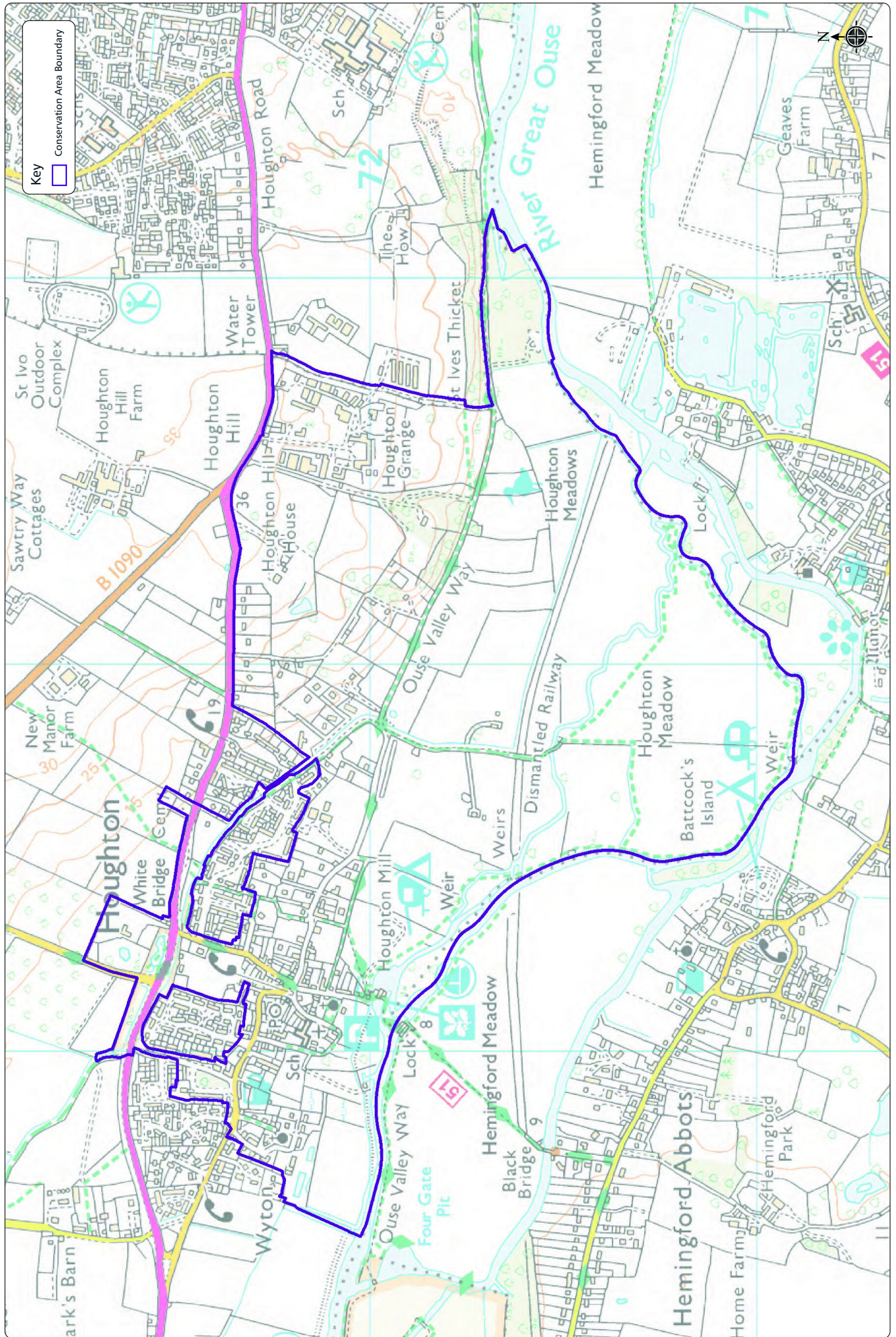


Figure 2. Location Map Detail

Figure 3. Aerial Photograph with Conservation Area Boundary



Figure 4. Conservation Area Boundary Location Map



Conservation Area Overview

5.1 Built Form

5.1.1 The scale of existing development is generally modest; vernacular building forms are common with a large number of traditional one and a half storey cottages and two storey terraced houses and villas interspersed amongst the older timber framed buildings. Earlier buildings are generally located at the back of pavement but often conceal deep garden plots underlining their importance in the settlement development and built form.

5.1.2 The boundary of the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area is drawn to include an extensive network of well established medieval roads and tracks which had a strong influence on both the early and later stages of settlement development. In the village centres, the main carriageways are often not wide enough to support a pavement or, in many instances there is only a path on one side of the road. The constraint of space is frequently emphasised by the back of pavement 17th and 18th Century houses and Victorian dwellings. This somewhat crowded appearance is alleviated by green spaces, mature trees and planting which overhangs pavements from neighbouring gardens to soften the streetscape.







5.1.3 To the east of the historic village cores, wealthy Victorians introduced architecturally accomplished buildings as they expanded the settlement area into the countryside. These larger detached dwellings are generally set within expansive gardens which complement their higher status and make an important contribution to the affluent character and appearance of the conservation area.

5.2 Houghton and Wyton Settlement Pattern

5.2.1 The surviving arrangement of streets, buildings and garden plots is important when considering the historic development of Houghton and Wyton. Constraints of the natural environment, historic roads and the alignments of lanes provide the main structure to the settlement pattern.

5.2.2 The pattern of settlement in the Houghton and Wyton conservation area has been assessed by creating 'figure ground' diagrams which show only existing buildings (listed buildings in red) and those walls that make a significant contribution to the street scene. Lines of buildings have been highlighted with solid blue lines to show back of pavement development and dashed blue lines to show those building lines set further back from the road. By linking this analysis to the history of the villages, character areas have been identified which form the detailed framework for the Conservation Area Character Assessment.



Key	
	Building
	Listed building
	Significant wall
	Back of pavement
	Development line
	Edge of Character Area

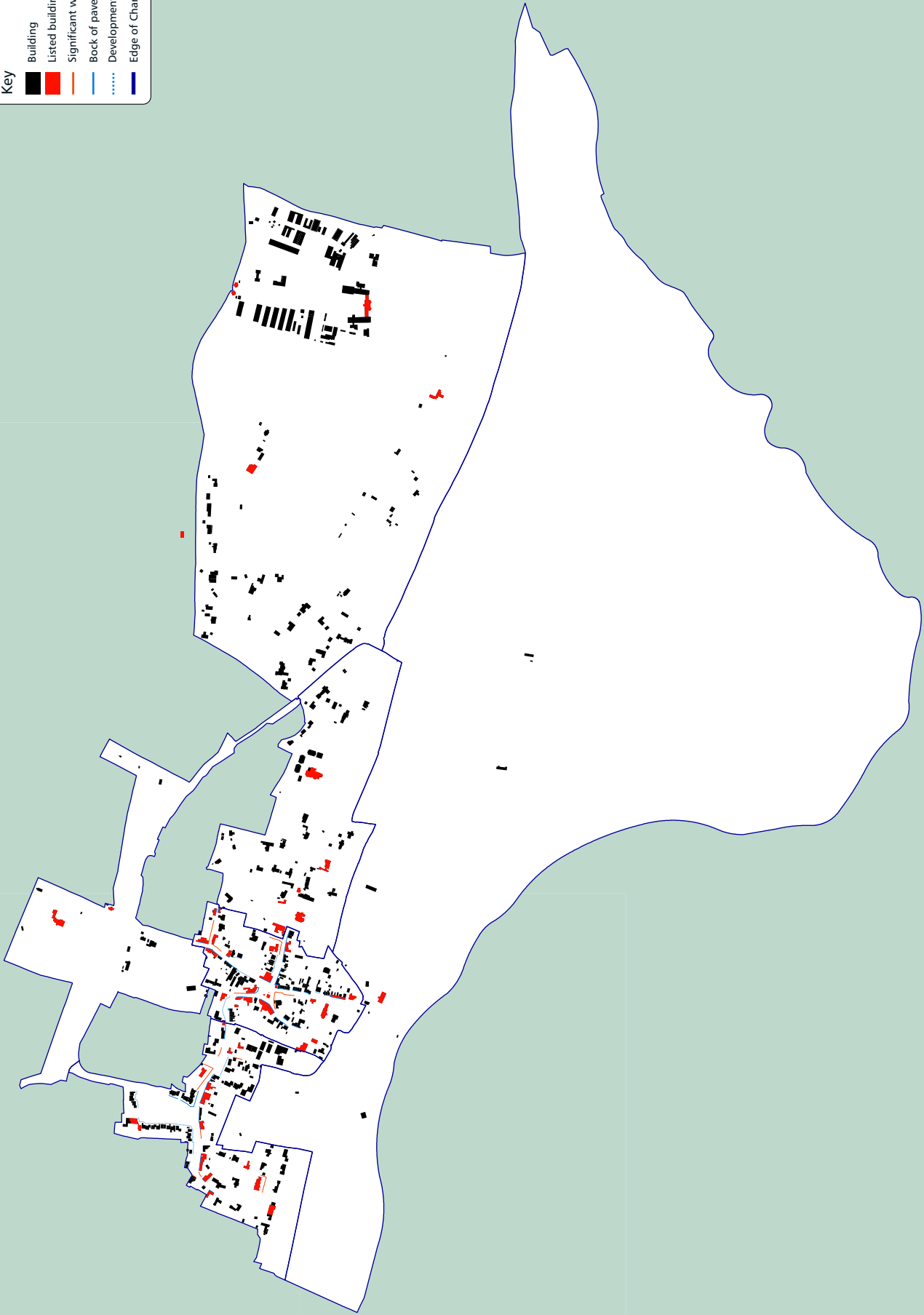


Figure 5. Overview Figure Ground Map

5.2.3 Wyton Village Character Area:

- Linear grain with buildings located at back of pavement on Huntingdon Road with breaks between buildings allowing valuable views to gardens and green spaces.
- Strong building line on southern side of Huntingdon Road fronting the historic gap between village centers.
- Open grained infill development in Old Rectory gardens.
- Large plots where the built form is not dominant or overbearing allows a sense of green spaces with mature planting.

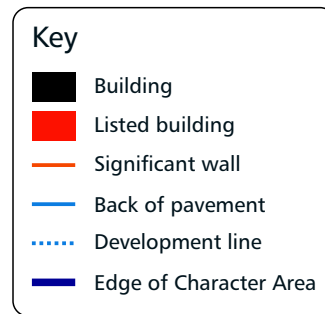


Figure 6. Wyton Figure Plan



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5.2.4 Houghton Green Character Area:

- Tight linear grain surrounding Houghton Green reinforced by back of pavement development and significant stretches of brick garden walling.
- Former 'Village Green' area to the north of the church infilled with Victorian dwellings in an open grain.
- The east side of Mill Lane, eastern part of Huntingdon Road, western part of Thicket Lane and western side of St Ives Road have tightly grained development in well defined linear form with gardens behind.

- Important green space north of Thicket Road part of street scene due to lack of development along eastern side of St Ives Road.

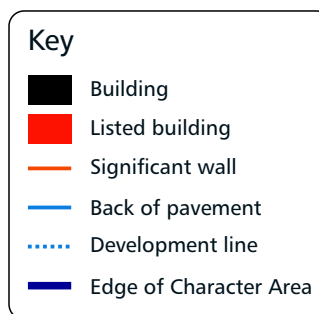
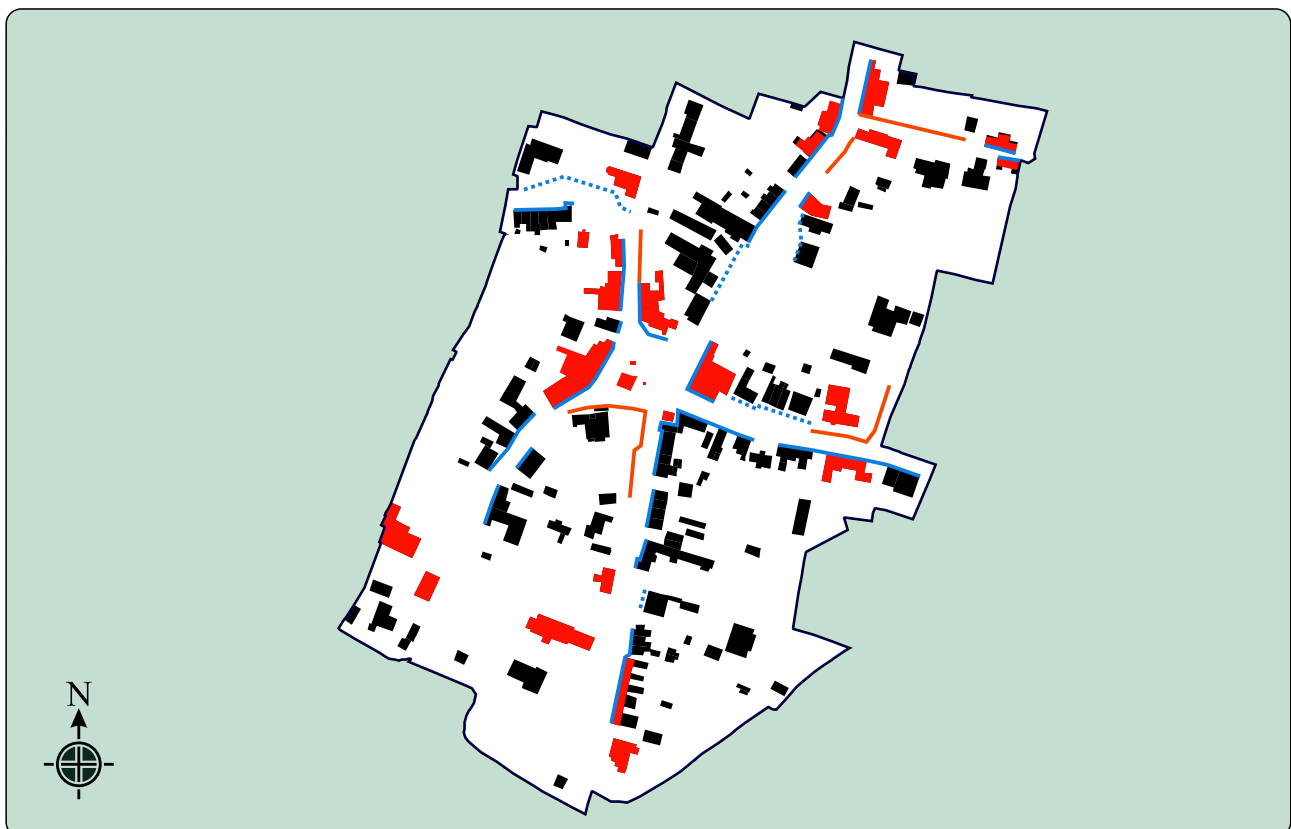


Figure 7. Houghton Figure Plan



5.2.5 Houghton North Character Area:

- An area of limited open grained development within important green spaces.

Key




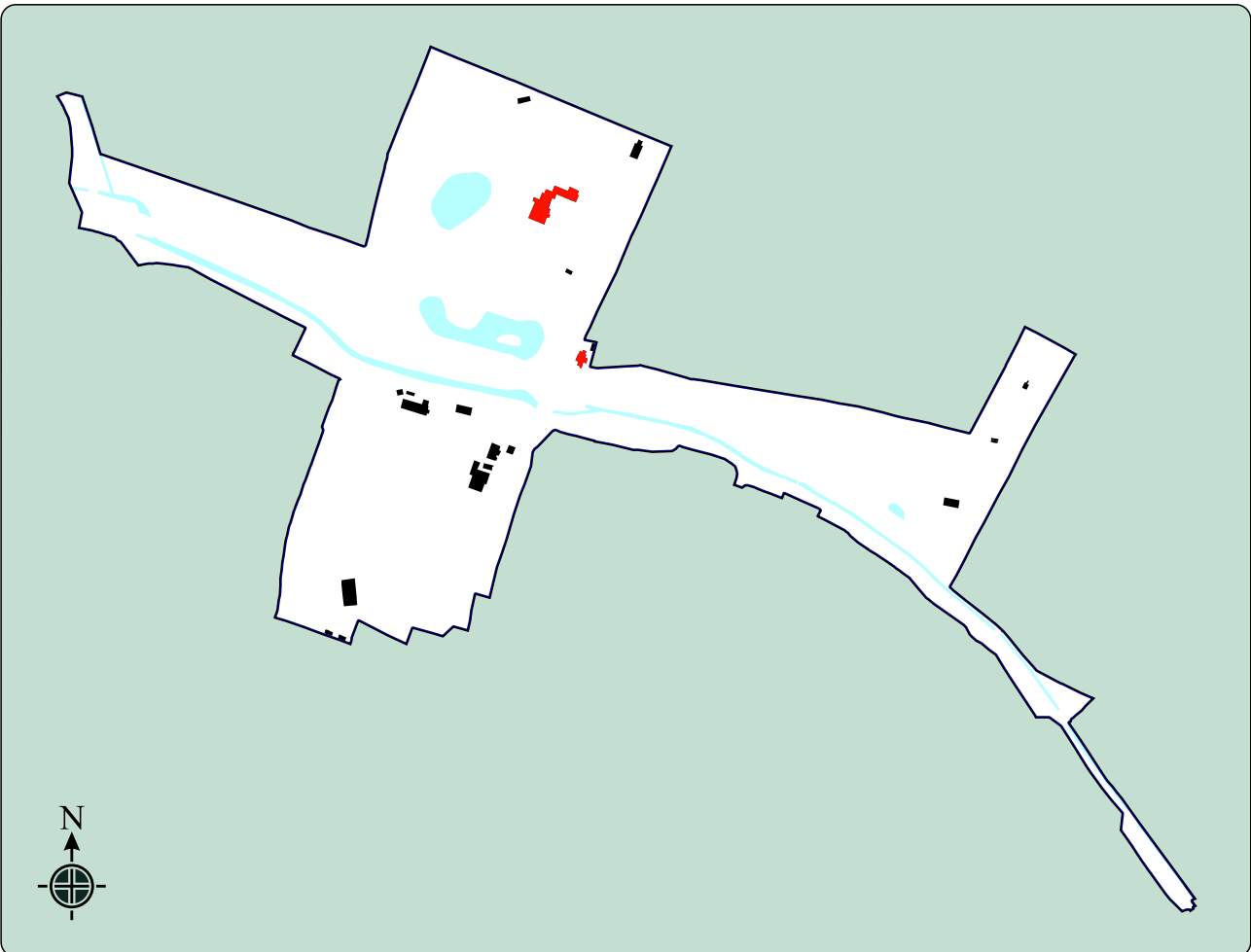
-  Building
-  Listed building
-  Edge of Character Area

Figure 8. Houghton North Figure Plan



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5.2.6 Thicket Road and The Lanes Character Area:

- Thicket Road and The Lanes is an area of low density open grain development within irregular medieval closes interspersed with small workers' cottages.
- 19th and 20th Century development has retained the open rural character.
- Buildings complement rather than dominate the landscape with space around and in front of properties.



Figure 9. The Lanes Figure Plan



5.2.7 Houghton Hill Character Area:

- Open grained dispersed development in large plots set within an historic agricultural landscape.
- The larger 19th and early 20th Century country houses are located well away from one another and set amidst dense screening planting.
- Former Poultry Research Station at Houghton Grange has large blocks of single storey ancillary structures within former landscaped grounds.
- The landscape is the predominant feature in views.



Figure 10. Houghton Hill Figure Plan



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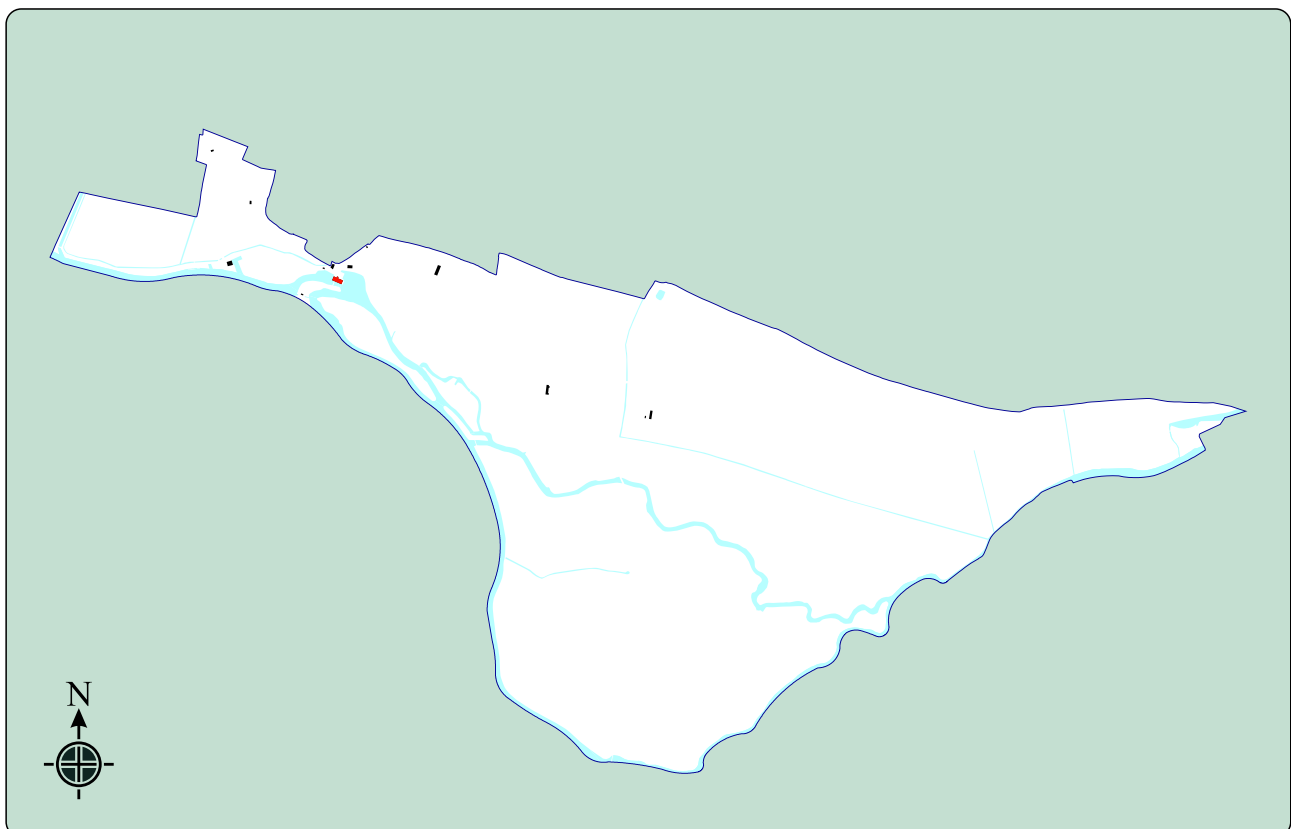
5.2.8 Thicket Road East and the River Valley Character Area:

- Undeveloped meadow and former common fields with a few dispersed infrastructure buildings such as the Pumping Stations.
- A small group of buildings centred on Houghton Mill which includes the Mill House, Mill Café and campsite facilities block.

Key

-  Building
-  Listed building
-  Edge of Character Area

Figure 11. River Valley Figure Plan



5.3 New Development

New Development should:

5.3.1 preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and respect its morphology and settlement pattern.

5.3.2 respect the context of the conservation area in design, including scale, form, proportion and detailing.

5.3.3 use materials in accordance with those traditionally used in that part of the conservation area and maintain a similar mix of materials.

5.3.4 be located within their plots in a complementary way to the general pattern of building in that part of the conservation area.

5.3.5 incorporate boundary walls, railings and hedges in the development in a similar way to those already in existence in that part of the conservation area, and use similar materials detailing, or plant species.

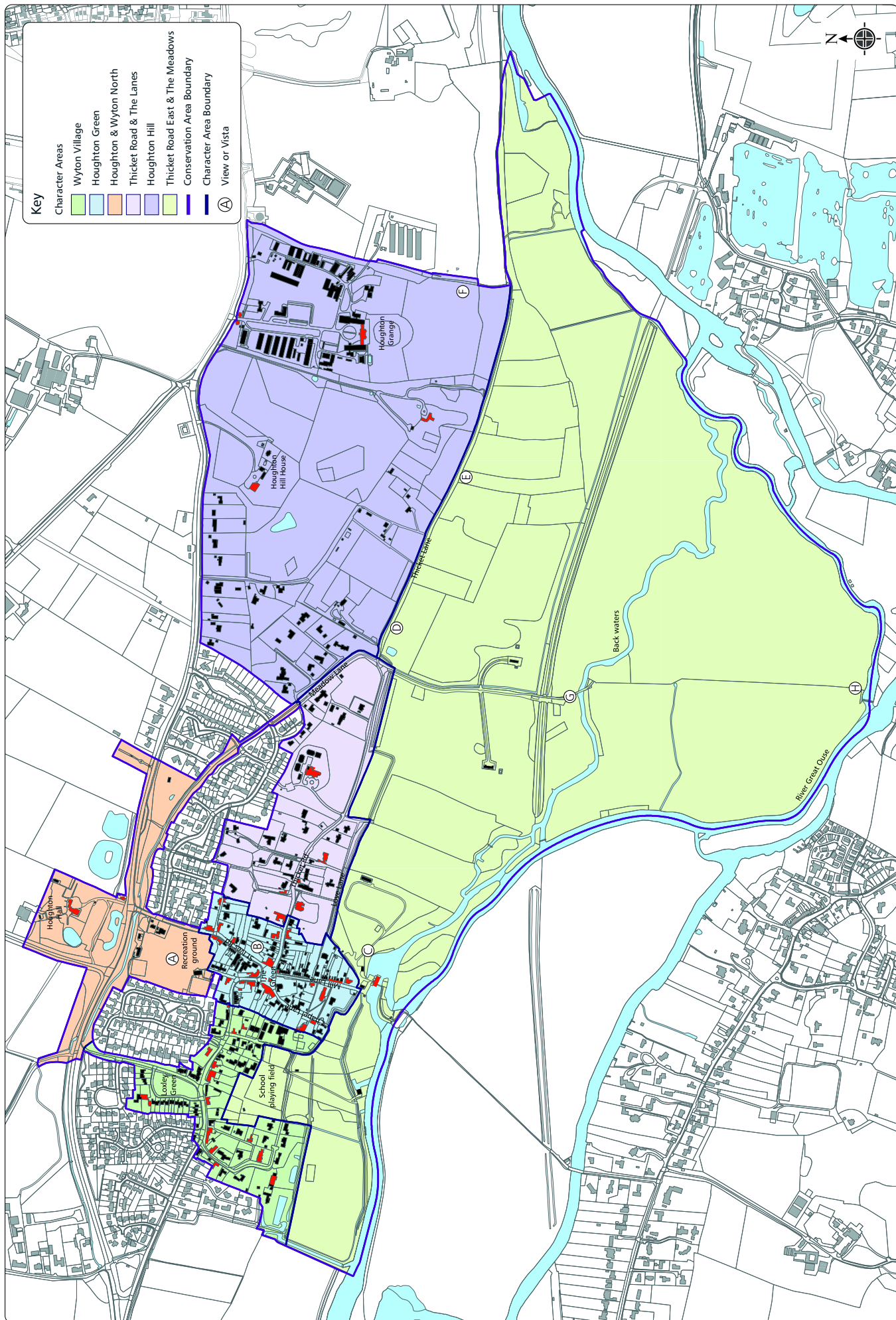
5.3.6 use shop signs that respect the character of the buildings and quality of the historic environment in their siting, size, materials and design.

5.3.7 seek to retain features and buildings that make a contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Key Views and Vistas (see Figure 12 overleaf)

- A There are good views across the recreation Ground to Manor Farm and the attractive roofscape and garden trees of Houghton village.
- B To the north of the Three Horseshoes, unimpeded views are available to the back of houses along Thicket Road, an area of open ground identifiable on the 18th Century map which survives as private gardens.
- C A much photographed and painted view across the mill pond to Houghton Mill set against a backdrop of hedgerows, trees and meadows.
- D Important longer views across the meadows are afforded through gaps and gateways in the hedges that border Thicket Lane.
- E An important but glimpsed view through a field gateway into a narrow historic strip field with surrounding ridge and furrow.
- F Fine views are afforded southwards across the Ouse Valley from an elevated situation south of Houghton Grange.
- G Open views southwards of the meadows beyond the old railway line which include Back Brook, ancient hedgerows and glimpses of The Hemingfords on the far side of the Great Ouse.
- H Open views northwards of the meadows and ancient hedgerows of the valley base set against a backdrop of tree belts, The Thicket and Houghton Hill to the northeast.

Figure 12. Overview Map with Road Names, Spaces and Views



Detailed Analysis

The villages of Houghton and Wyton have developed over a long time and each period of development has contributed distinctive buildings within the settlement. These buildings and the way they are arranged can be seen to be recognisable neighbourhoods with their own characteristics that together create the overall sense of place. Letters and numbers in the text refer to the location of buildings in the detail maps.

Wyton is dominated by 20th Century development. Loxley Green is an important open space within the modern development that creates a focal centre to this part of the settlement and maintains the visible and historic connections between Manor Farmhouse and the late medieval buildings on Huntingdon Road.

7.1 Wyton Village Character Area (Fig.13)

7.1.1 The informal winding character of the main street with its broken building line of predominantly 16th and 17th Century buildings arranged along the southern side of the road are strong reminders of the long history of a village based upon manorial farms. The northern side of



Photo A1. Manor Farmhouse

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7.1.2 Manor Farmhouse [A1] marks the site of the most important manorial complex to the north of Loxley Green with the much extended 18th Century brick built farmhouse standing at the north western corner. Running along the eastern side of Loxley Green is Ware Lane whose wide verges and characteristic double ditches reflect the great age of this ancient trackway which once formed part of the main road from St Ives to Huntingdon and connected with Ruddles Lane. Mature trees and hedging along the eastern edge of the green space offsets the solid line of housing on the western side which creates a feeling of enclosure.

7.1.3 To the south and west of Loxley Green, Huntingdon Road is uncharacteristically wide in comparison to the rest of the settlement which may indicate that it was established early in the history of the village. This is accentuated by the wide sweep of the road where it adjoins Rectory Lane

creating a pivotal corner. Up until the 18th Century, housing was predominantly but not exclusively, situated along the southern edge of the Huntingdon Road; the Three Jolly Butchers [A2], Magdalene House [A3] and Stuart House remain [A4] directly fronting the pavement edge. Smaller timber framed buildings located along Rectory Lane, 'The Barn' [A5] and 'Durley Cottage' [A6], are a further reminder of the agricultural past of the settlement.

7.1.4 The now secluded Old Rectory [A7] lies closely adjacent to the church and its spacious former grounds have provided an opportunity for 20th century infill development. While this has altered some of the original landscaped setting to the house, the garden character of this area can still be appreciated. This building was the 'parsonage' of the incumbent priest until 1847 when the parish was split for the first time and a second rectory for



Photo A4. Stuart House

Figure13. Wyton Village Detail Map



October 2012

the Houghton incumbent was erected north of the St Ives Road by Lady Olivia Bernard Sparrow. The parishes remained separate until 1966 when they merged again and the two earlier rectories were sold and a new rectory built.

7.1.5 Somewhat unusually for a village, the church is not dominant in the landscape; there are few long distance views in the village and mature trees and buildings screen the church from view from most vantage points. The Church of All Saints [A8] is a Grade I listed building built of pebble rubble and narrow, coursed rubble-stone with Barnack stone and clunch dressings. Built mainly in the 13th to 14th Centuries, it was extensively restored in 1841 – 67. The church became redundant in 1974 after which it fell into a state of disrepair. In 2005 permission was granted for its conversion into a private dwelling.

7.1.6 The road into Houghton narrows by Rectory Farm where the thatched barn directly abutting the road is a strong visual feature in the street scene [A9]. On the south side of the road, small thatched timber framed and rendered small holders cottages are arranged on irregular plots and offset from the road and Green Lane leading towards the rear of the present day primary school. More recent open grain development in this area has preserved the irregular plot form of these back lands.

7.1.7 Between Wyton Church and Houghton Primary School lies an area of former farmland that is now partly private gardens, partly grazing land and partly the school playing field. This is an important green space that links directly to the river meadows beyond the flood defences and provides the rural backdrop to Wyton and the farms that were located along Huntingdon Road. Crucially, this space maintains the historic separation between the two villages and for this and the previous reasons this area should remain free of development.

7.2 Houghton Green Character Area (Fig.14)

7.2.1 Houghton village centre is formed by the convergence of five roads to the north of St. Mary's Church [B1] creating an open area still known as 'The Green', now much reduced in size by infill development. This was previously a traditional 'village green' located to the immediate north of the church and set between Chapel Lane and Mill Street. The Green creates a strong focal point to the settlement although these days it is the hard landscaping, back of pavement buildings and brick boundary walls that determine its modern character. The imposing bearded countenance of Potto Brown, the philanthropic Houghton miller, gazes across The Green from his memorial statue [B2] in the southeast corner.



Photo B1. St Mary's Church

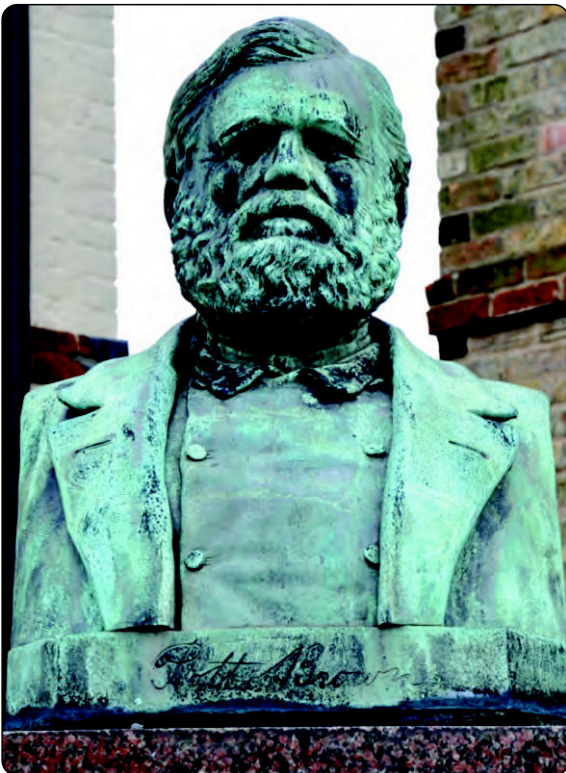


Photo B2. Potto Brown

7.2.2 The Green is dominated by the early 20th Century memorial clock tower erected in memory of G W Brown which provides a focal point of the village. Additional interest is contributed by the cast iron village pump donated by Potto Brown and other street furniture. The George and Dragon public house (now No 1 The Green) [B3] is the oldest house in the Parish and fronts the northern edge of the Green; the Three Horseshoes, Provender House and associated buildings with their range of architectural style and roof line all contribute to the visual interest of this area. Land to the northeast of the Three Horseshoes was previously an area of open ground identifiable on the 18th Century map [B4] but which is now preserved as private gardens. Lack of development along St Ives Road at this point allows unimpeded

views across the back of the houses along Thicket Road giving some visual diversity and making an important contribution to the green space of the conservation area.



Public Water Pump

October 2012



Photo B3. Former George and Dragon Public House; The Green



Photo B4. View to gardens to rear of Thicket Road

7.2.3 From the Green, views are afforded north along Huntingdon Road where they are stopped by the Victorian Picturesque façade of Walden Villa [B5] and south along Mill Street [B6/B7] as it projects towards the river and past the eastern end of the Church of St Mary. The built form of Mill Street is mixed and on the western side reflects the less intensely developed infilling of the former village green area north of the church; in contrast the eastern side has a near continuous building line of back of pavement terraces interspersed with the occasional large detached house.



Photo B7. Mill Lane to south



Photo B5. Walden Villa

7.2.4 As its name implies, Chapel Lane [B9] runs to the Nonconformist Chapel [B8] erected by Potto Brown in the year 1840. Its northern end is intensively developed with a near continuous building line on the western side of the lane but this character abruptly changes after the Primary School entrance where the lane is flanked by the parish churchyard on one side and the chapel grounds on the other. Beyond this the character of the lane is more rural as the street scene changes to smaller cottages with barns and outbuildings.



Photo B6. Mill Lane to north



Photo B8. Nonconformist Chapel

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7.2.5 Views from The Green to the east along Thicket Road are drawn towards Buckley House [B10], a remarkable 16th and 17th Century rendered, timber framed house with continuous jetty. This building marks a significant point where the built-up centre of Houghton Village gives way to a more dispersed collection of Victorian villas and larger detached houses of status.

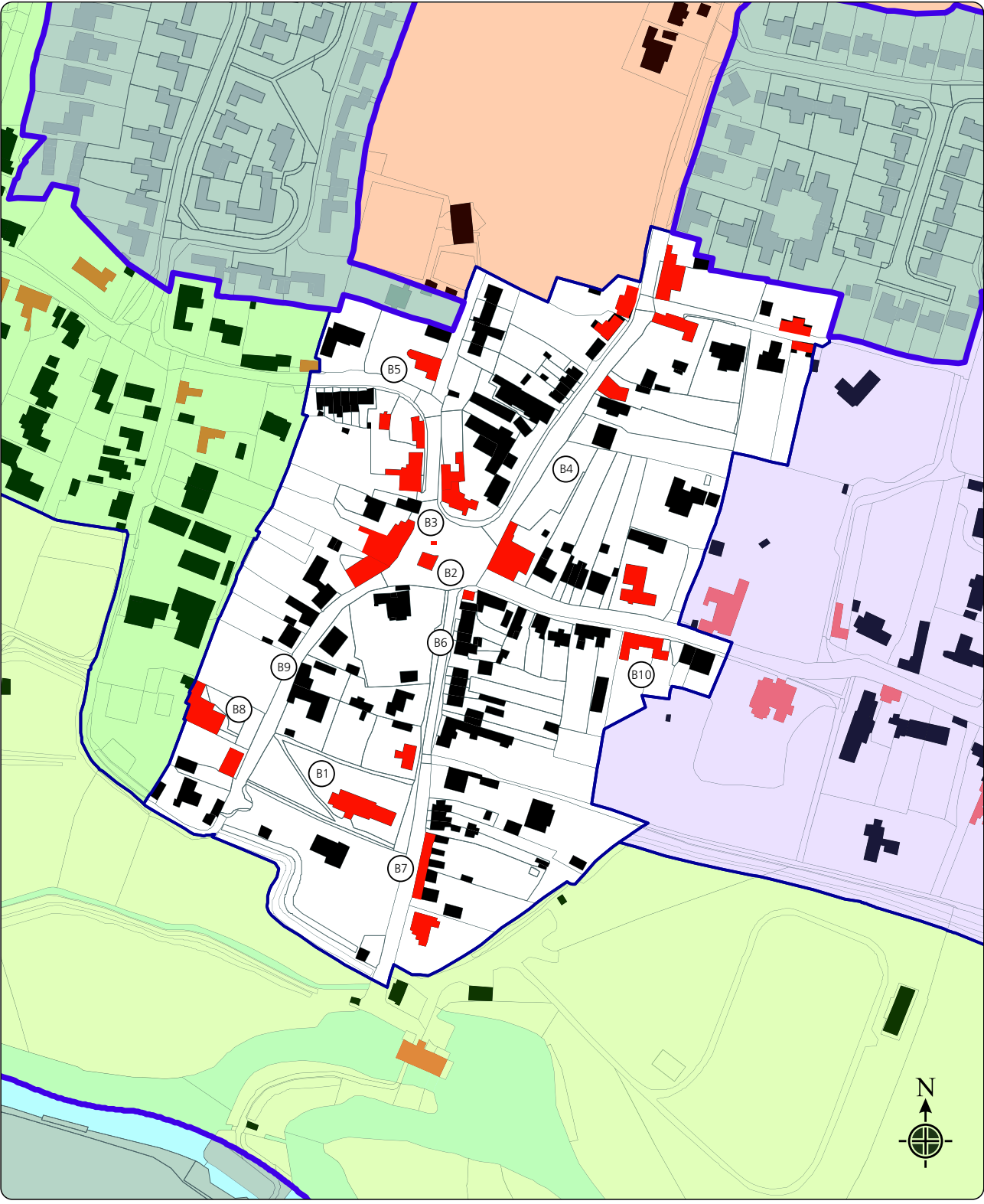


Photo B9. Chapel Lane



Photo B10. Buckley House, Thicket Road

Figure 14. Houghton Village Detail Map



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7.2.6 To the north, the late 16th Century Manor Farmhouse [B11] also occupies a commanding position, in a curve of the St. Ives Road [B12] where it sits adjacent to a cluster of listed cottages which mark the entrance to The Lanes. Before the early infill development on the green, the manor and the church would have been visually connected. Manor Farmhouse also dominates the approach into the village from the north.

This approach is one of the few vantage points of the church, which like Wyton, is somewhat hidden within mature trees and housing. To the west of St Ives Road a former meadow and orchard is now the village sports ground with a tennis court, pavilion and temporary structure housing the pre-school (see Houghton North Character Area).

7.2.7 The majority of buildings have strong architectural integrity creating a visually pleasing street scene that clearly reflects the key phases of development within the settlement. Views across the backs of gardens from St Ives Road into the open grained development within the Lanes area should be maintained as an important view and because several of the plot boundaries reflect medieval close boundaries. The development of both front and rear gardens should be resisted in order to preserve the visual amenity and softening effect of green spaces, trees and planting on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

7.3 Houghton North Character Area (Fig.15)

7.3.1 At the northern edge of the village, the settlement expanded into open countryside when the second Rectory (now called Houghton Hall) [C1] was built around 1847 and, some fifty years later a new Cemetery [C2] laid out in a style typical of the day. Ladymere Cottage [C3] once sat adjacent to the main entrance to the former rectory



Photo B11. Houghton Manor Farmhouse



Photo B12. St Ives Road with Manor Farmhouse

earliest single storey section of Ladymere Cottage may have been a workers' cottage which lay adjacent to an area of common land that once marked the convergence of Ware Lane, St Ives Road, Ruddles Lane, Mere Way and Meadow Lane. This area is now largely taken up by the verges to the A1123 and parts have been landscaped with a pond and tree planting. The open green character of the common land contrasts with the farmland abutting it to east and west and combines with the meadows on the southern side of the A1123 to create a green and leafy rural northern gateway to the villages.

7.3.2 On the southern side of Houghton Hill Road two meadows provide a pastoral buffer between the main road and the settlement [C4]. The eastern meadow was certainly an orchard in 1926⁴ and may have an older provenance than this; there are a few remaining fruit trees. 'Old Orchards' are a national Biodiversity Action Plan habitat and identification of the fruit varieties and advice on tree management should be considered. These meadows directly abut Meadow Lane, an ancient public right of way that runs southeast to connect with the water meadows of the valley base and which effectively contained the growth of the settlement until the latter half of the 20th Century.

7.3.3 Part of the recreation ground [C5] was also formerly an orchard but is now an important area of open space for residents with good views of Manor Farmhouse and the attractive jumbled roofscape of Houghton which is populated with tall chimneys. A plaque set in the south east corner of the recreation ground records the actions of Jessie Rowell Anderson (1898 - 1972) who preserved the field from development in the late 1930's for the benefit of all.



Photo C5. Recreation Ground



Photo C4. Northern Meadows

⁴ See 2nd edition OS map 1926

Figure 15. Houghton North Detail Map



7.4 Thicket Road and The Lanes Character Area (Fig.16)

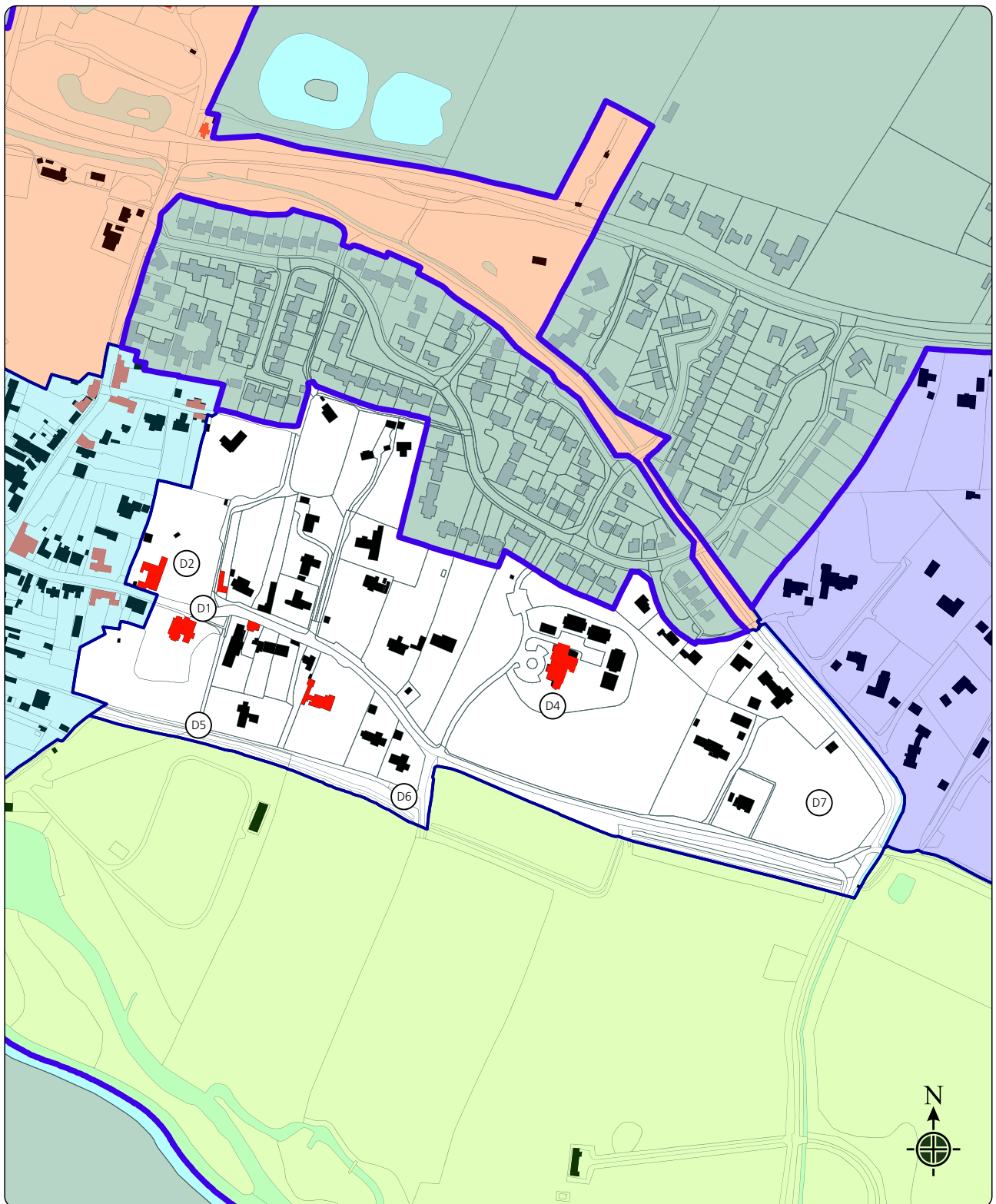
7.4.1 The network of sinuous medieval roads and tracks which serviced the former farmland to the north east of the Green survive today as part of the public rights of way network passing through this part of the village. The footpaths are frequently 'dog legged' as they skirt around the boundaries of closes and infields, perhaps established as part of a formal grid pattern during the medieval period. Close board fencing and thick hedges at the rear of properties create a sense of enclosure and emphasise the short views while mature trees in hedgerows along footpath edges remind the passer-by of the antiquity of the tracks. Beyond the boundaries, modern dwellings sit within large plots that retain a sense of the open agrarian field systems they have replaced.

7.4.2 Lower density development is a feature of Thicket Road [D1] to the east of Buckley House. With the exception of Millers Meade [D2], former house of Potto Brown, which has late 17th century elements, the dominant building type is of 19th Century villas and small country houses of varied architectural style and appearance. These are mostly built set back from the road; The Laurels (gault brick), The Manor (built of red brick with a gothic influenced road side façade) [D3], The Cedars and The Elms [D4], are displayed within large plots that give Thicket Lane a spacious well managed appearance. On the northern side of the lane, several of the plots retain the medieval boundaries evident on the 1774 map. Retention of the mixed planting stock along the road and sensitive infill behind the building line has retained the affluent 19th Century landscape of Thicket Road.



Photo D1. Thicket Lane

Figure 16. Thicket Road and The Lanes Detail Map



7.4.3 Although mostly obscured from view by trees, The Elms is the most substantial of the Victorian houses and it occupies several amalgamated medieval plots. The grounds were heavily planted with a mixed broadleaf and conifer perimeter belt enclosing the house and garden where specimen conifers were also planted. There are occasional glimpses through and above the dwellings along Home Farm Close to the north back to the mature garden trees of The Elms, giving a sense of place of the building in the landscape.



Photo D4. The Elms

7.4.4 Love Lane [D5] is an important and attractive footpath set between the southern boundary of the plots to the north and the flood defence bank and meadows to the south [D6], defining the southern edge of the character area and following a parallel course to Thicket Lane to the north. Due to its location the lane is not impinged upon by housing but is frequently overhung by mature and maturing trees which help sustain its essentially rural character.

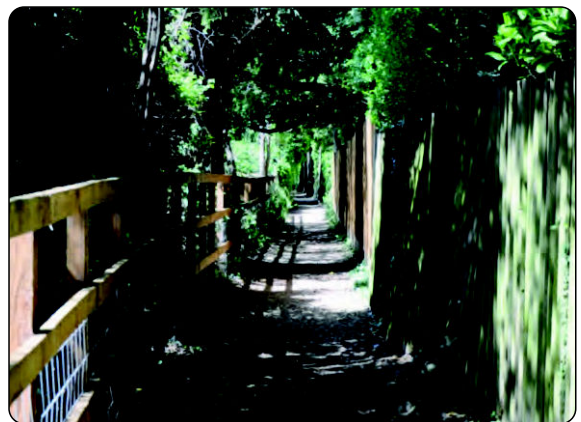


Photo D5. Love Lane

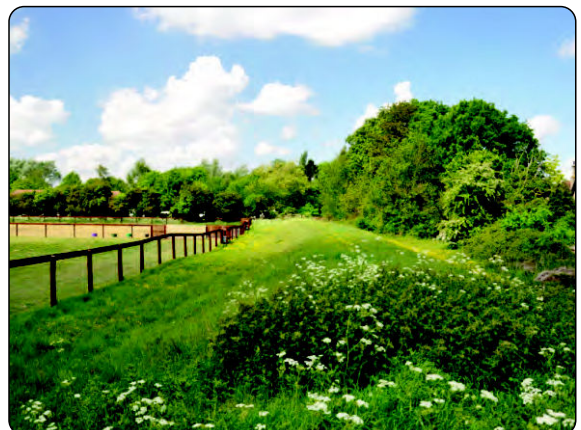


Photo D6. Flood embankment

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7.4.5 To the east, the triangular meadow at the junction of Thicket Road and Meadow Lane [D7] creates a visually pleasing interface between the formal settlement edge and the wider countryside with scattered large country houses on Houghton Hill. Importantly, it also emphasises the form of the two roads as they meet within the landscape. Remains of the iron estate fencing around the meadow illustrate the more formal and affluent role of this meadow in the historic landscape.



Photo D7. Pasture between Thicket Lane and Meadow Lane

7.5 Houghton Hill Character Area (Fig.17)

7.5.1 19th Century expansion continued on a larger scale to the east of the settlement on the lower slopes of Houghton Hill. Here the open informal private parkland is an important feature in the landscape, although the houses themselves are obscured from view by heavier planting. Meadow Lane, the ancient right of way, connects this part of the settlement with the Old Rectory and the Victorian cemetery built on the northern side of Houghton Hill Road.

7.5.2 During the 19th Century, expansion of the settlement continued with larger country houses (Houghton Hill House and Houghton Grange) being set out on sloping land between Thicket Road and Houghton Hill Road. From here, fine views are afforded southwards across the Ouse Valley [E1]. Houghton Hill House [E2] is the earlier of the houses and the open feel of informal parkland remains across a considerable area of the hill, despite the introduction of low density housing



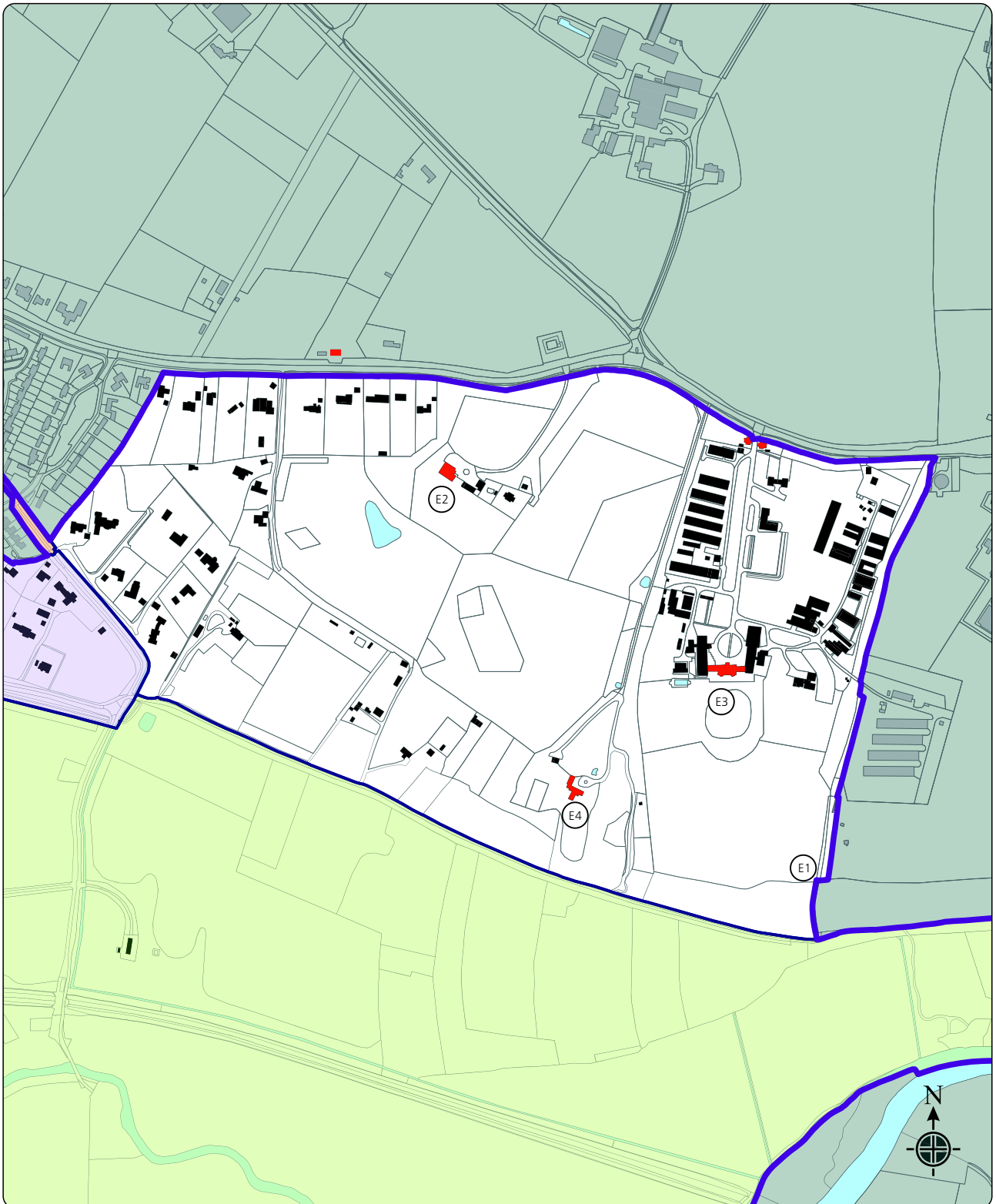
Photo E1. View westwards from the Houghton Grange grounds

on the western and northern fringes of the park in the latter part of the 20th Century. Small areas of ridge and furrow (arable land of the medieval common field system) survive in the pasture. Around 1897, Ransome designed Houghton Grange [E3] and its twin roadside lodge cottages in what Pevsner describes as a 'free Elizabethan style'. The Grange was built on the site of an earlier farm by Harold and Edith Coote; Houghton Bury [E4], once known as 'The Dingle' was built c.1924 in the Arts and Crafts style by their son.



Photo E2. Rear elevation of Houghton Grange

Figure 17. Houghton Hill Detail Map



7.6 Thicket Road East and The River Valley Character Area (Fig.18)

7.6.1 Thicket Road [F1] marks the northern boundary of the riverside meadows and is part of the historic route between Houghton and Wyton and St. Ives to the east. It has a hard surface as far as the lower drive of Houghton Bury and continues to St Ives as a track way. Part of the Ouse Valley Way long distance path, the route is well used by cyclists and walkers for day to day access in and out of the town and also as a leisure route. Glimpses into the flood plain and up across the hill are afforded through a few gaps in the native hedging or field gateways. Progressing eastwards, the track sides become more wooded. The Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust reserve [F2] lies to the south of the track below Houghton Bury and manages grassland rich in plant and wildlife some of which retains the characteristic undulations of the medieval ridge and furrow land use; the reserve is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest⁵.

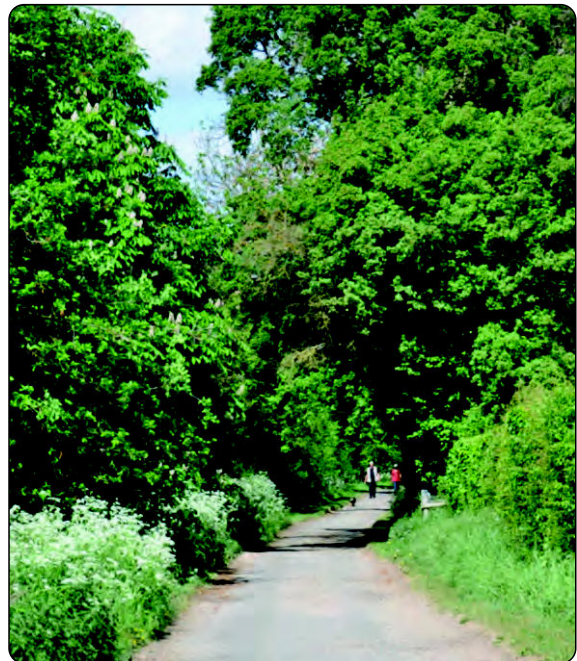


Photo F1. Thicket Road



Photo F2. Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust Reserve

⁵ This grassland is owned and managed by the Cambridgeshire Wildlife Trust

October 2012

7.6.2 Some of the field boundaries that can be traced on the 18th Century enclosure maps have survived and are an important landscape feature to both the north and south of Thicket Lane. These overlie the earlier medieval common fields which can be traced in the meadows as upstanding ridge and furrow earthworks which extend southwards as far as the Back Water.

7.6.3 The character area is cut in two by Meadow Lane which continues across the floodplain towards the river in a southerly direction. Looking west through gaps in the hedgerows at the top of the lane the spire of Houghton Church is just visible but otherwise the mill and the rest of the settlement is obscured from view amidst the heavily treed landscape. Long distance views across the meadows are only afforded through gaps and gateways in the hedge that borders the track. The two pumping stations [F3] and associated mixed conifer and broadleaf planting are a memorable feature although rather incongruous in the meadows landscape. Although still functional, the flood embankment following the southern edge of the settlement is also more or less obscured from view by tree and shrub cover for much of its course.

7.6.4 Beyond the disused railway embankment (the railway from St. Ives to Huntingdon was opened in 1848) the bridge across the Back Brook [F4] offers a fine vantage point across the floodplain grassland (a national Biodiversity Action Plan habitat). The spire of Hemingford Abbots church and the close proximity of The Hemingfords to this point, makes this the more striking settlement in the landscape.

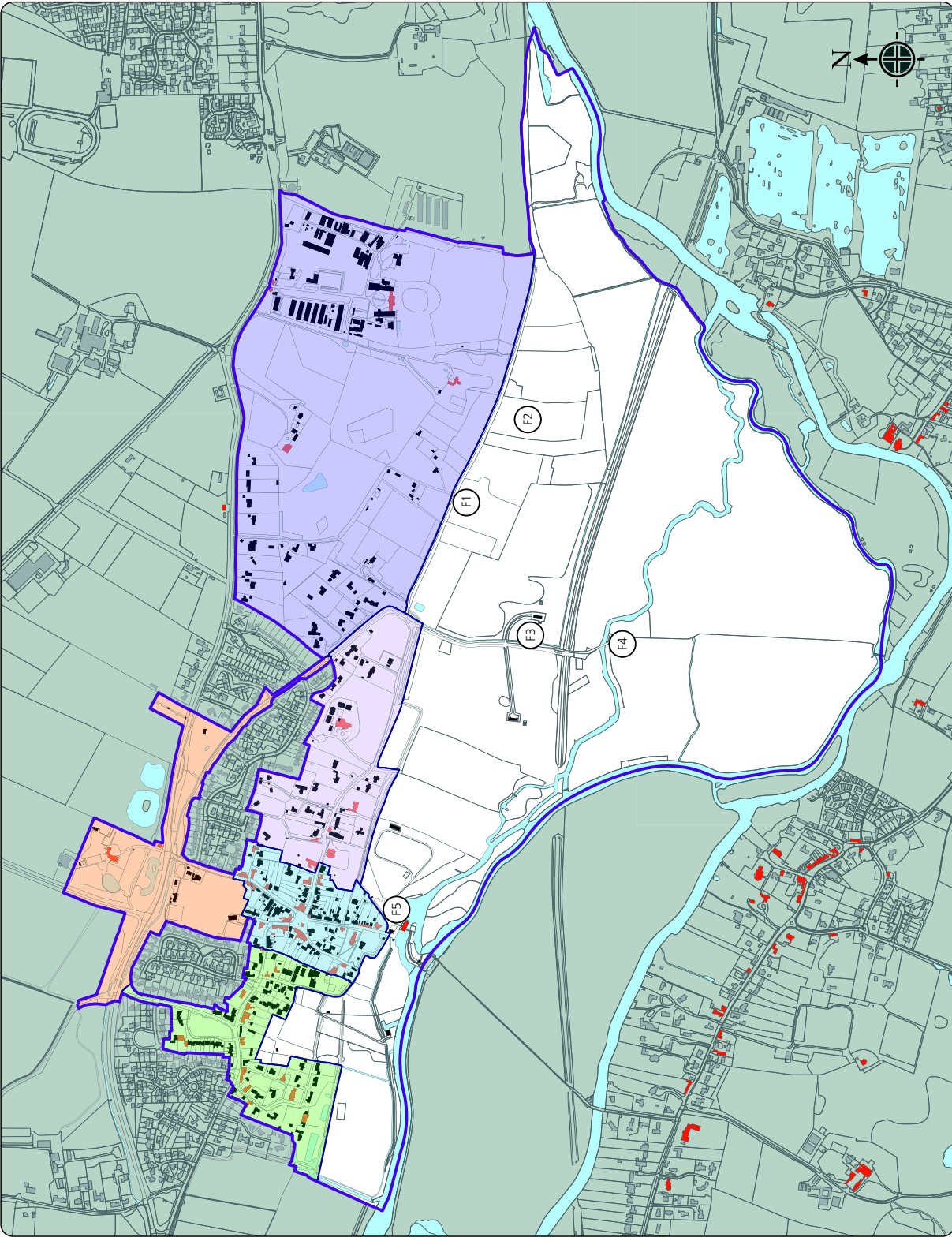


Photo F4. Houghton back waters with the spire of Hemingford Abbots Church



Photo F3. Eastern Pumping Station

Figure 18. The River Valley Detail Map



October 2012

7.6.5 Closer to the settlement, Houghton Mill [F5] is arguably the most iconic building found within the Great Ouse valley which is visited by many tourists and frequently painted by artists or captured on film by photographers. The mill pool, surrounded by abundant riverside trees and vegetation, provides a perfect setting to the building. Despite this it is not a highly visible building in the wider landscape as it lies behind the buildings of Mill Street is screened by mature trees from the meadows, and is partly hidden from the

main navigation channel of the River Great Ouse. The mill site has great importance within the conservation area as it marks the meeting place of the river, the meadows beyond and the village gateway to Houghton; it is therefore a particularly important place which it is desirable to preserve.



Photo F5. Houghton Mill

Open Space, Parks, Gardens and Trees

8.1 There are three main areas of open space within the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area that are of particular importance. Each of these areas provides important green spaces to the villages, which not only enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, but provide important recreational areas to the residents of Houghton and Wyton. They are as follows:

- Loxley Green
- Recreation Ground
- School Playing Field

8.2 In addition to these publicly accessible open spaces, there are areas of private gardens that help shape the character of the conservation area. Where these areas exist, they should remain as open spaces, free of development in order to maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

8.3 Individual trees and groups of trees also make a positive impact on their local surroundings, and these should be preserved where possible. The character zone maps have outlined those trees that are considered to positively contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

8.4 A great many tree preservation orders were made within the conservation area prior to designation. Such orders were only applied to trees considered to be at risk at the time but now all trees within the Conservation Area are protected requiring permission from the Local Planning Authority in order to carry out any works (add contact details).

Historic Background

9.1 Prehistoric Settlement

River valleys such as that of the Great Ouse were often favoured areas for settlement in the prehistoric period as they offered a source of fresh water, abundant natural resources and workable soils. There are numerous find spots for Neolithic flint tools located within the conservation area and find spots of Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation debris which although occasional nevertheless indicate the suitability of the location for habitation.

9.2 Romano-British Period

Two discoveries of roof tile and associated pottery tend to suggest the presence of Romano-British buildings within the parish and a Romano British Cemetery on Houghton Hill was discovered and recorded in 1843. Recent archaeological test pits excavated across Houghton and Wyton from 2005 to 2008 by the Cambridge University Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) have consistently found quantities of unstratified roman potsherds throughout the villages. Chance finds of Roman coins and pottery have also been recorded, tending to suggest that there is a good probability of a local Romano-British settlement in the vicinity.

9.3 The Medieval Settlements

9.3.1 Archaeological remains suggest that Houghton and Wyton villages were both founded fairly early in the Anglo-Saxon period. Notable finds include a bronze saucer brooch and iron spear head found near Houghton Mill and a crouched burial found at The Elms on Thicket Lane. Both villages were well enough established

to have been granted to Ramsey Abbey in the 10th Century by Earl Alfwold whose brother Ailwin founded the Abbey. King Edgar confirmed the grant with a Foundation Charter for Houghton (Houghton) and Wittone (Wyton) in December 976AD⁷.

9.3.2 The Domesday Survey (1086AD) records a church in each settlement but only one priest, and surviving court rolls show that from the early medieval period, the two parishes shared one manorial court. This reflects a shared administration which is seen in other settlements where there was one landlord who held the majority of the estate within each parish. It is likely that the present day sites of both churches are near that of their Saxon predecessors.

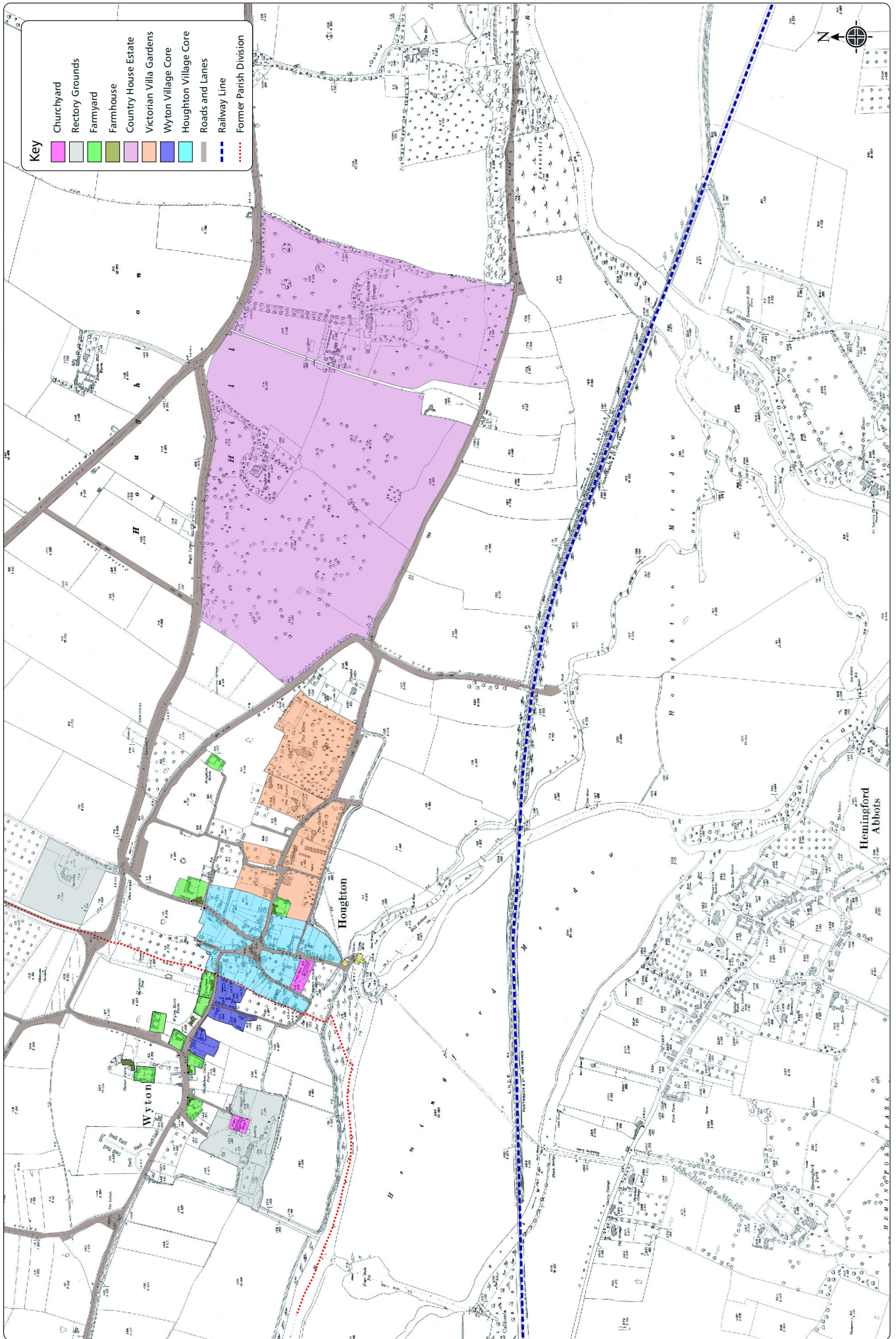
9.3.3 The surviving church buildings have 12th Century architectural features which suggest that in common with much of Huntingdonshire this was a period of population growth and building. The communal management of agriculture through the open field system was also becoming established at this time which has left the characteristic 'ridge and furrow' features seen in many of the meadows, parks and gardens of Houghton and Wyton.

8.3.4 In Wyton the manorial farm was established to the north of the church and east of Ware Lane before it turned west and became Huntingdon Road; a possible moated site was located there in 1932 but no earthworks now remain to confirm this. Map evidence for the site of Houghton Manor is less clear but is likely to have been alongside the St Ives approach road into the village on or, near to the site of the modern day Manor Farm. The George and Dragon public house (now, No 1 The Green) is the oldest surviving building in the parish, dating from around 1500.

⁷ Hart C.R. The Early Charters of Eastern England. Leicester University Press

9.3.5 Agricultural prosperity during the early post-medieval period saw the erection of several substantial buildings that survive today. Yeomen's houses and farm labourers' cottages became established along the southern side of the main street and the lane leading to the church in Wyton; in Houghton, apart from the higher status houses either side of the original village green, the majority of the settlement was dispersed within the area to the east of the St Ives Road and south of Meadow Lane and Back Brook.

Figure 19. Historic Map (1924 Ordnance Survey Map)



9.4 Water Mills at Houghton and Wyton

9.4.1 The owners of manorial estates were zealous in the construction of mills as they allowed the bulk processing of corn gathered from their lands. A water mill had been established at Houghton before the Norman Conquest and it was granted to Ramsey Abbey in 974. By the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 both settlements are recorded as possessing a mill. The Abbot of Ramsey and Lord de Grey built further mills at Houghton and across the valley at the Hemingfords. Unfortunately, for the mills to work it was necessary to erect banks that blocked the river causing widespread flooding and stopping river traffic.

9.4.2 By 1242 the tenants of Huntingdon and Godmanchester were in dispute with the Abbot of Ramsey for blocking the river to traffic and allowing the meadows to flood in times of high water. Nothing appears to have happened as the water mills were again cited in a petition to King Henry the Eighth from the tenants of Huntingdon and Godmanchester in 1514 when they asked the king to intervene on their behalf. This petition included a map that recorded the location of the villages, the river channels and the mills between Godmanchester and St Ives. The king determined that the bank of a water mill at Hemingford Grey should be demolished and that various works should be enacted that allowed the river water to be able to flow properly at times of high water.

9.4.3 The current Houghton Mill is a 16th Century structure standing on the site of an earlier mill that was destroyed by fire; the location of the Wyton Mill, mentioned in the Domesday Book, has been lost. Another mill, probably a fulling mill for processing wool, is indicated on the 1514 map where the modern

navigation lock is now situated. However, in 1627 Arnold Spencer made an attempt to re-open the river to traffic and he built a navigation lock at Houghton, presumably on the site of the fulling mill of which no trace now remains.

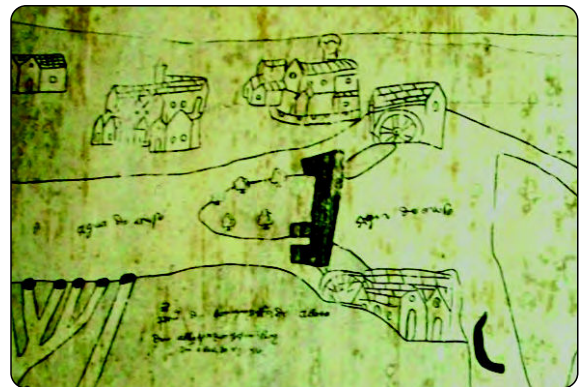


Figure 20. Detail of 1898 copy of 1514 map (Courtesy of Huntingdon Record Office)

9.4.4 Houghton Mill is a rare survivor of mills on the Great Ouse and was working up until 1930. Houghton Mill was threatened with demolition by the river Authority in the late 1920s and early 1930s until a small group leased it from the boroughs of Huntingdon and Godmanchester (acting jointly) who had already leased it from the River Authority. The group promptly sublet the Mill to The Youth Hostels Association (YHA) for 2s 6d per year rent. In 1939 the National Trust bought the Mill for £1.00 and it was endowed by a descendent of Joseph Goodman who was Potto Brown's partner in the milling business from 1822 to 1844. The YHA lease ended in 1982 when full control reverted to the National Trust. The Trust was responsible for a major restoration program between 1998 and 1999 and lately a further phase of restoration work and installation of a water-powered electricity generating turbine

has been undertaken. Despite its industrial heritage Houghton Mill came to be artistically admired after Constable established the romantic ideal of watermills into the nation's psyche. At that time the industrial age was in full swing, and the old mills represented a peaceful, gentler way of life which is still appreciated today⁸.

9.5 Post-Medieval Development

9.5.1 The manor remained in the possession of Ramsey Abbey until the dissolution of the monasteries when it passed with St. Ives to the Princess Elizabeth in 1539AD. In 1574AD it was granted to Helen, Marchioness of Northampton for life. By the late 17th Century the manor was held by Edward, Earl of Manchester whose seat was at nearby Kimbolton. The land in Houghton and Wyton was held in the late 18th and 19th

Figure 21. 1774 Enclosure Map (Courtesy of Huntingdon Record Office)



⁸ Flanagan, B. pers. comm. c.f Artists along the Ouse 1880-1930 (2012)

Century by Lady Olivia Bernard Sparrow of Brampton Park. Upon her death in 1863 she left her interests in the village to her late daughter's husband's family, the Dukes of Manchester, who sold their last remaining properties in the village in 1918.

9.5.2 The post medieval period saw radical changes in the organisation of land ownership and advances in agricultural practices. By the 18th Century piecemeal Inclosure of the common fields had begun and many village closes were established on the land between the river and the lower edge of the ridge marked by Houghton Hill Road and Ruddles Lane. An Inclosure Award of 1774 further subdivided larger parcels of land to the north of the settlements with the Inclosure Map illustrating some of the narrow fields respecting blocks of earlier ridge and furrow. By the 19th Century most of the houses in the Back Brook area (except for Houghton Farm) had been lost and the area was given over to agriculture.

9.5.3 The location of Houghton and Wyton between the market towns of Huntingdon and St. Ives led to considerable development during the 19th Century. The settlement expanded as terraced and detached cottages were built, predominantly as infill between the two settlement centres and incorporating the late medieval timber framed houses. Land on the south facing hill to the east of Houghton as well as land on the eastern edge of the village was brought into the settlement and here larger country houses set within landscaped grounds such as The Elms, Houghton Hill House and Houghton Grange (designed by the architect Ransome⁹) were laid out. The origins of the flood embankments are unclear but are thought to also date from the mid 19th¹⁰ Century.

9.5.4 One of Houghton's most well known residents was Potto Brown - a tenant of Lady Olivia Bernard Sparrow from 1822 until his death in 1862, Brown worked the mill as his father had done before him and, rented land at Manor Farm, Wyton. He introduced a steam roller milling process from France and built two steam mills – one at Huntingdon and one at St. Ives. This c19 philanthropic industrialist made several positive contributions to the quality of life and the architecture of Houghton. A one time Quaker turned Congregationalist, Brown built a non Conformist chapel at Houghton, supplied the village with clean water through the pump on the Green and built a school in the village. He is commemorated by a bust standing on the junction of Mill Street and Thicket Road. Potto's son George, is commemorated by the clock tower which was first sketched out by his son in law, the artist Charles Whymper. George Brown lived in The Elms which was designed by William Edis.

9.5.5 Houghton and Wyton have continued to be a popular area for development, and the late c20 has seen the establishment of housing between the original main thoroughfare through the village up to Houghton Hill Road and the A1123 to the north. Since the establishment of the Conservation Area in 1974, new housing has largely respected local architectural styles and settlement morphology.

⁹ Pevsner N. Buildings of England (Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire & Peterborough). Penguin 1968.

¹⁰ Cambridgeshire County Council HER

An Audit of Heritage Assets

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the parish and the majority of Heritage Assets are designated. There are 59 buildings on the National List including the Church of All Saints which is listed as Grade 1 and, Houghton Mill, Manor Farmhouse, and No1 The Green, that are Grade II*.

Designated Heritage Assets						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Houghton	II*	30/05/58	Manor Farmhouse, St Ives Road.	Timber frame, render. Local red brick	Plain tile	Late C16 farmhouse
Houghton	II*	24/10/51	No. 1, The Green	Timber frame, render. Local red brick	Plain tile	C15 and C16 house, formerly an inn.
Houghton	II*	24/10/51	Houghton Mill, Mill Street	Timber frame, gault brick, local red brick, weatherboard	Plain tile	C17 water mill, rebuilt and extended in C18 and C19
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Monument to Potto Brown, The Green	Bronze, granite	None	Bronze bust of Potto Brown
Houghton	II	24/10/51	United Reform Chapel, Chapel Lane	Gault brick	Slate	Circa 1840 Non-Conformist Chapel
Houghton	II	30/05/58	Parish Church of St Mary, Mill Street	Pebble, barnack limestone, modern brick	Plain tile, lead	Parish church largely C14 with C13 chancel rebuilt
Houghton	II	24/10/51	No.'s 1, 2 & 3 Chapel Lane, (including adjoining barn)	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Plain tile	C18 cottages with outshut at rear
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The Lindens, Chapel Lane	Gault brick	Thatch	Early C19 gault brick cottages
Houghton	II	04/11/82	White Cottage, Huntingdon Road	Gault brick	Thatch, slate	Originally pair of early C19 cottages

Designated Heritage Assets cont...						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Houghton	II	04/11/82	No.1a (West End Cottage), Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render, brick	Thatch, corrugated iron	C18 cottage, originally two, with outshut at rear
Houghton	II	04/11/82	No.1 (Tun Cottage), The Lanes	Timber frame, render, brick	Modern tile	Dated 1776 on plaque. Originally two houses.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	No.3 The Lanes	Local brick	Plain tile, corrugated iron	Late C18 cottage
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Glebe Cottage, Mill Street	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Thatch	Early C17 cottage of two buildings
Houghton	II	30/05/58	No.6 (May Cottage), St Ives Road	Timber frame, render, brick	Thatch	C17 cottage
Houghton	II	24/10/51	Elder Cottage, St Ives Road	Timber frame, render, brick	Thatch	C17 cottage
Houghton	II	30/05/58	Little Dormers, St Ives Road	Timber frame, render, local brick	Thatch	C17 cottage
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Ladymere Cottage, St Ives Road	Timber frame, render, brick	Thatch	Late C17 cottage with later addition at rear
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Rose Cottage, Thicket Road	Timber frame, local brick, render	Thatch	C17 cottage L-plan
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Allanby Cottage, Thicket Road	Timber frame, render	Pantile	C17 cottage, two unit plan
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The thatched cottages (No.'s 1, 2 & 3; No.4 (Dolly Peg Cottage); No.5 (Beth Hac)	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Thatch	Late C16 row of cottages, timber framed and roughcast with C19 gault brick street facade
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Provender House and Scriveners Foodstore, The Green	Gault brick	Slate	Mid C19 houses and shop with common facade of colour washed brick

Designated Heritage Assets cont...						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Houghton Bury, Houghton Road	Red brick, timber frame, render, stone	Pantile	Late C19 Vernacular Revival house
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Houghton Hill House, Houghton Hill Road	Gault brick, stone	Slate	Circa 1840. Small country house of two storeys and square plan
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Small House and Fernleigh, Huntingdon Road	Gault brick	Plain tile	Mid C18 house with C19 addition to right hand side
Houghton	II	24/10/51	No.5 (Silver Birches), St Ives Road	Local brick	Plain tile	Late C18 house, three unit plan with outshut
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Sweet Briar, Thicket Road	Local gault brick	plain tile	Early C19 house, L- plan
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Millers Meade, Thicket Road	Local red brick, gault brickl	Plain tile	C18 house
Houghton	II	30/05/58	Buckley House and Thrae, Thicket Road	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Plain tile	C16 and C17 rendered, timber framed house with continuous jetty and two bayed cross wing to right hand
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The Manor, Thicket Road	Red brick	Plain tile	Dated 1905 on rainwater head. Designed by Rev Oliphant, in the Vernacular Revival style.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Walden House, Huntingdon Road	Gault brick	Modern plain tile	Circa 1880 house, T- plan, gault brick
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Riverside, Mill Street	Gault brick	Slate	Mid C19 house. Two storeys and L-plan.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Houghton Poultry Research Station, Houghton Road	Red brick, lime stone	Plain tile	Elizabethan Revival country house dtaed 1897 on tympanum

Designated Heritage Assets cont...						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Black Horse Cottage, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, local red brick, gault brick	Plain tile	Late C16 house. Timber framed, refaced in brick and extended C19
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The Cedars, Thicket Road	Gault brick	Plain tile	Circa 1880 house and stable block. Gault brick, L-plan.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The Old Rectory, St Ives Road	Gault brick, limestone	Slate	Circa 1840 house with service and stable wing to right hand
Houghton	II	04/11/82	The Elms, Thicket Road	Gault brick, ketton stone	Slate	Dated 1868 on plaque. Florentine Renaissance Revival style house.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	West Lodge to Houghton grange, Houghton Road	Red brick	Plain tile	Built in 1897
Houghton	II	04/11/82	East Lodge to Houghton Grange, Houghton Road	Red brick	Plain tile	Built in 1901
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Memorial Shelter and Clock Tower, The Green	Timber frame, red brick	Thatch	Dated 1902. Erected in memory of G W Brown by Mr Whymper. Open shelter, square plan with oak posts and braces at corners.
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Three Horse Shoes, The Green	Timber frame, local brick	Pantile	C17 inn. Timber framed, cased in colourwashed brick
Houghton	II	04/11/82	Village Pump, The Green	Cast iron	None	Cast iron Gothic hand pump made by John Warner and Son, Cripplegate, London.
Houghton	II	22/12/88	Telephone Kiosk, by Clock Tower, The Green	Cast iron, glass	Cast iron	Telephone kiosk, Type K6. Designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

Designated Heritage Assets cont...						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Wyton	I	30/05/58	Church of All Saints, Church Walk	Pebble, limestone rubble, barnack, limestone, clunch	Plain tile, lead	Formerly Parish Church. Early C13 nave; C14 chancel; C19 north aisle, north vestry, south west tower and south porch.
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Thatched barn at Rectory Farm, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, local brick, weatherboard	Thatch	C17 three bay barn
Wyton	II	04/11/82	The Barn, Rectory Lane	Timber frame, weatherboard, brick	Thatch	C17 barn, now house with C18 bay to west
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Schae, Church Walk	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Thatch	C17 cottage
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Thatched White Cottage, Green Lane	Timber frame, render	Thatch	C17 T-plan cottage
Wyton	II	04/11/82	The Homestead, Green Lane	Timber frame, render, local red brick, modern brick	Thatch	Mid C17 cottage
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Stuart Cottage, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render	Thatch	C17 cottage, timber framed and roughcast.
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Durley Cottage, Rectory Lane	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Thatch	C17 L-plan
Wyton	II	24/10/51	Magdalene House and Dove Cote, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render, local brick	Thatch	Early C17 farmhouse, two storeys and four bays, continuous jetty
Wyton	II	24/10/51	Stuart House, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render, local red brick	Plain tile, thatch	Farmhouse and barn. Dated 1648 on stack.

Designated Heritage Assets cont...						
Village	Grade	List Date	Address	Walls	Roof	Description
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Holme Cottage, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render, gault brick	Slate	Early C17 house. Two storeys, three unit plan. Early C19 facade.
Wyton	II	04/11/82	The Old Rectory, rectory Lane	Gault brick	Modern tile, slate	Mid C18 or earlier house
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Manor Farmhouse, Loxley Green	Gault brick, local red brick	Plain tile	Late C19 house incorporating part C18 house at left hand
Wyton	II	04/11/82	Soma House, Post Office and Wayside, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render	Asbestos tile	C17 house now two dwellings and a shop
Wyton	II	24/10/51	Three Jolly Butchers Public House, Huntingdon Road	Timber frame, render, local red brick	Plain tile	Inn, dated 1622 on panel in stack, with continuous jetty to hall and two bay cross wing.

10.1 An Assessment of Condition

The District Council's conservation team has a responsibility to “monitor the condition of Listed Buildings in the district and maintain a register of such buildings under threat.”

This register is known as the Buildings at Risk (BaR) register and is produced on a regular basis, identifying those Listed Buildings that are considered at risk, as they may be no longer

wind, watertight or structurally stable. Those buildings that exhibit long term vacancy and high risk of theft or vandalism are also included within the register.

At the time of producing this appraisal (July 2012), there were six Listed Buildings within the Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area that are on the BaR register at one of the following categories.

Buildings at Risk Categories	
<p>Category 1</p> <p>A building at severe and immediate risk of further rapid deterioration where extensive repair and/or stabilisation works are urgently needed.</p>	<p>Likely to be suffering from one or more of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe structural failure and/or structural collapse • A susceptibility to wind and water penetration • Long term vacancy and/or under-use • Extensive damage to or failure and loss of historic fabric. • The threat of architectural theft or vandalism
<p>Category 2</p> <p>A building, structure or architectural feature at high risk of further deterioration where extensive repair and/or stabilisation works are urgently needed.</p>	<p>Likely to be suffering from one or more of the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural failure in part • A susceptibility to wind and water penetration • Long term vacancy and/or under-use • A definite risk of future extensive damage to or loss of historic fabric
<p>Category 3</p> <p>A building, structure or architectural feature at moderate risk and in need of a scheme of essential repairs to prevent further deterioration, loss of historic fabric and the potential for structural failure.</p>	<p>Essential repairs might relate to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A condition that that would be conducive to structural failure • A potential risk of future damage to or loss of significant external and internal historic fabric • Significant areas of failing masonry, pointing, external joinery, external render, roof finishes and rainwater systems • An accumulation of failing historic internal finishes

Buildings at Risk Categories cont...	
<p>Category 4</p> <p>A vulnerable building, structure or architectural feature in need of a scheme of general repair to secure its future preservation.</p>	<p>Necessary works might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-pointing of masonry • Repairs to historic joinery • Minor render repairs • Minor architectural metal work repairs • Repairs to historic internal finishes • Repairs to general roof coverings including junctions and lead work • Repairs to rainwater disposal systems
<p>Category 5</p> <p>A building, structure or architectural feature that is in need of general maintenance and localised minor repairs to secure its future preservation.</p>	<p>Works might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-pointing of masonry • Repairs to historic joinery • Minor render repairs • Minor architectural metal work repairs • Repairs to historic internal finishes • Repairs to general roof coverings including junctions and lead work • Repairs to rainwater disposal systems
<p>Category 6</p> <p>A building or structure with individual elements that are liable to further deterioration and therefore requires monitoring.</p>	

10.2 Section 57 Building Repairs Grant

Since 1967 Huntingdonshire District Council has been operating a discretionary Historic Building Repair Grant Scheme. The role of the grant scheme is to provide financial assistance to listed building owners contributing to the higher costs of traditional repair techniques and materials that

need to be employed in the repair of historic buildings. The scheme is currently operated in accordance with Section 57 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Identifying the Boundary

11.1 When the first conservation area was designated it principally encompassed those neighbourhoods with the oldest buildings as well as the meadows that provide an important setting and framework to the village between the settlement and the River Great Ouse. The new conservation area has been expanded to include further elements of the medieval landscape and the most significant areas that reflect the c19 expansion of the settlement.

11.2 The expansion of the Conservation Area is the result of a major re-assessment of the village communities of Huntingdonshire and a re-appraisal of the architectural and historic merits of many aspects of those settlements. The resulting boundary is quite broad and falls naturally into defined localities that correspond to the historical phases in the settlements development. The boundary covers an area that reflects the special historic and architectural interest of the Houghton and Wyton villages and is not intended to preserve landscape features or support biodiversity, however desirable this might be.

11.3 It is important to note, however, that the assessment and interpretation of the new and enlarged Conservation Area (in accordance with the statutory and regulatory requirements set by government and English Heritage) needs to take account of the whole area. Its division into localities and neighbourhoods is intended only to make analysis and understanding more accessible and does not imply that each locality would pass all tests set by statute and regulation as if it were a self-contained conservation area in itself.

References, Appendices and Contact Details

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Wickes M – A history of Huntingdonshire

Maps

- A 25 inch OS Maps, 1887, 1926, & 1950
- B OS map 1880
- C Houghton & Wyton Inclosure Map 1773
- D Houghton & Wyton Inclosure Map 1774

Contacts

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