

Houghton & Wyton

conservation area boundary review

October 2012



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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.”

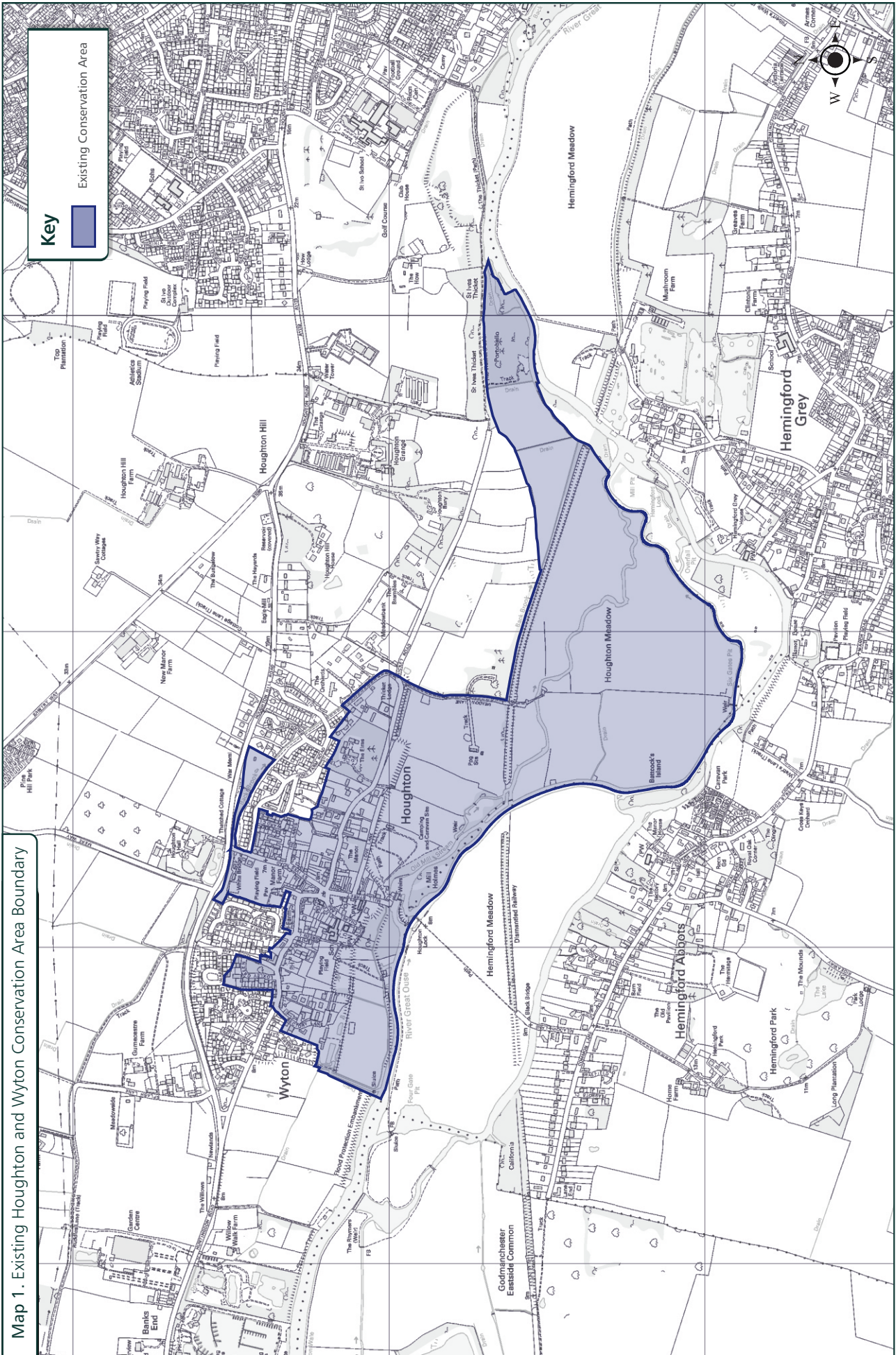
The Conservation Area boundary review forms part of the process by which the nature, extent and importance of a heritage asset is assessed. Understanding this determines the significance of the heritage asset and its setting when involved in decision-making by local planning authorities.

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.

Map 1. Existing Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Boundary



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

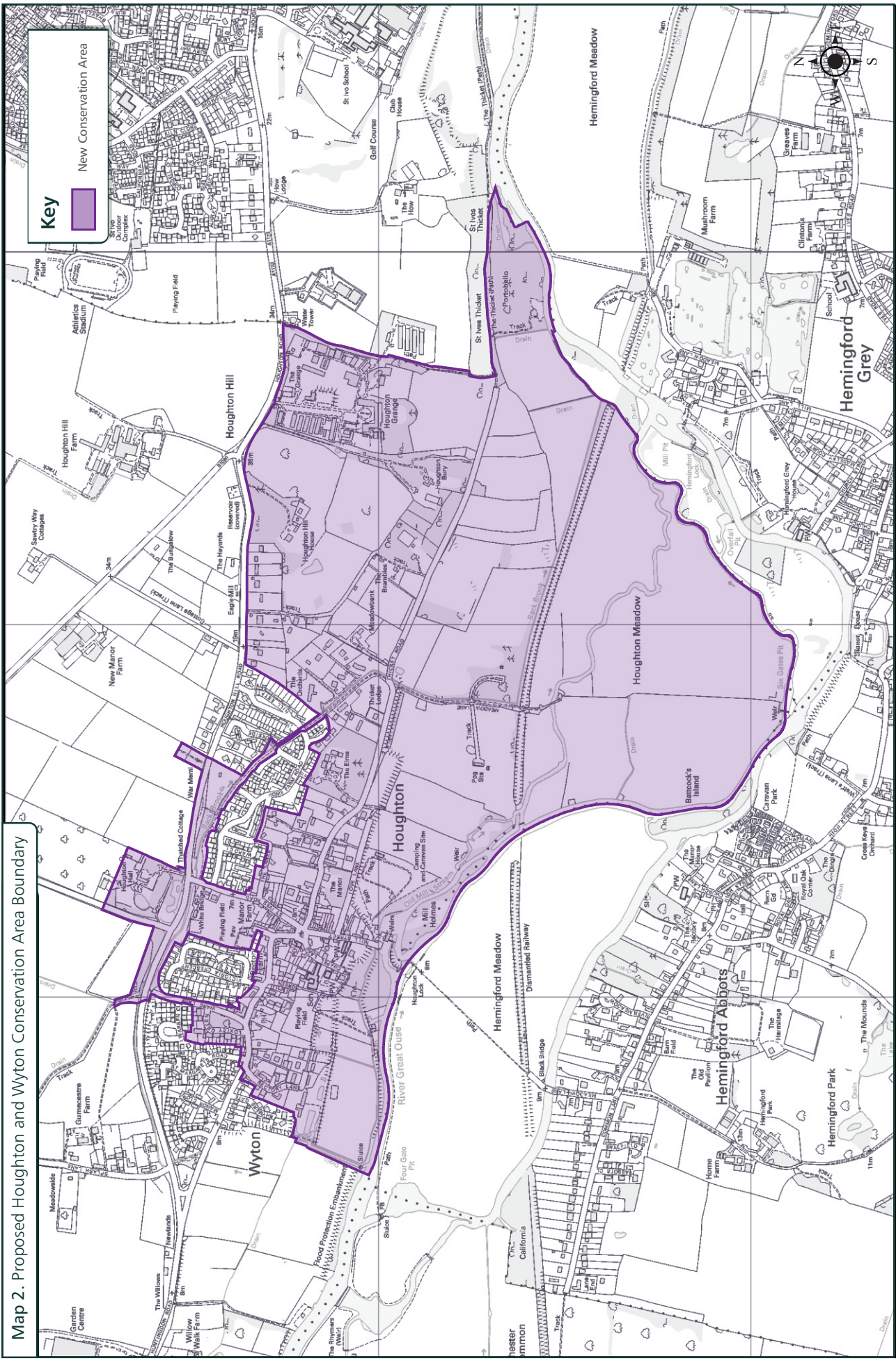
reflect the historic development of Houghton and the rural character of the built environment.

- 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

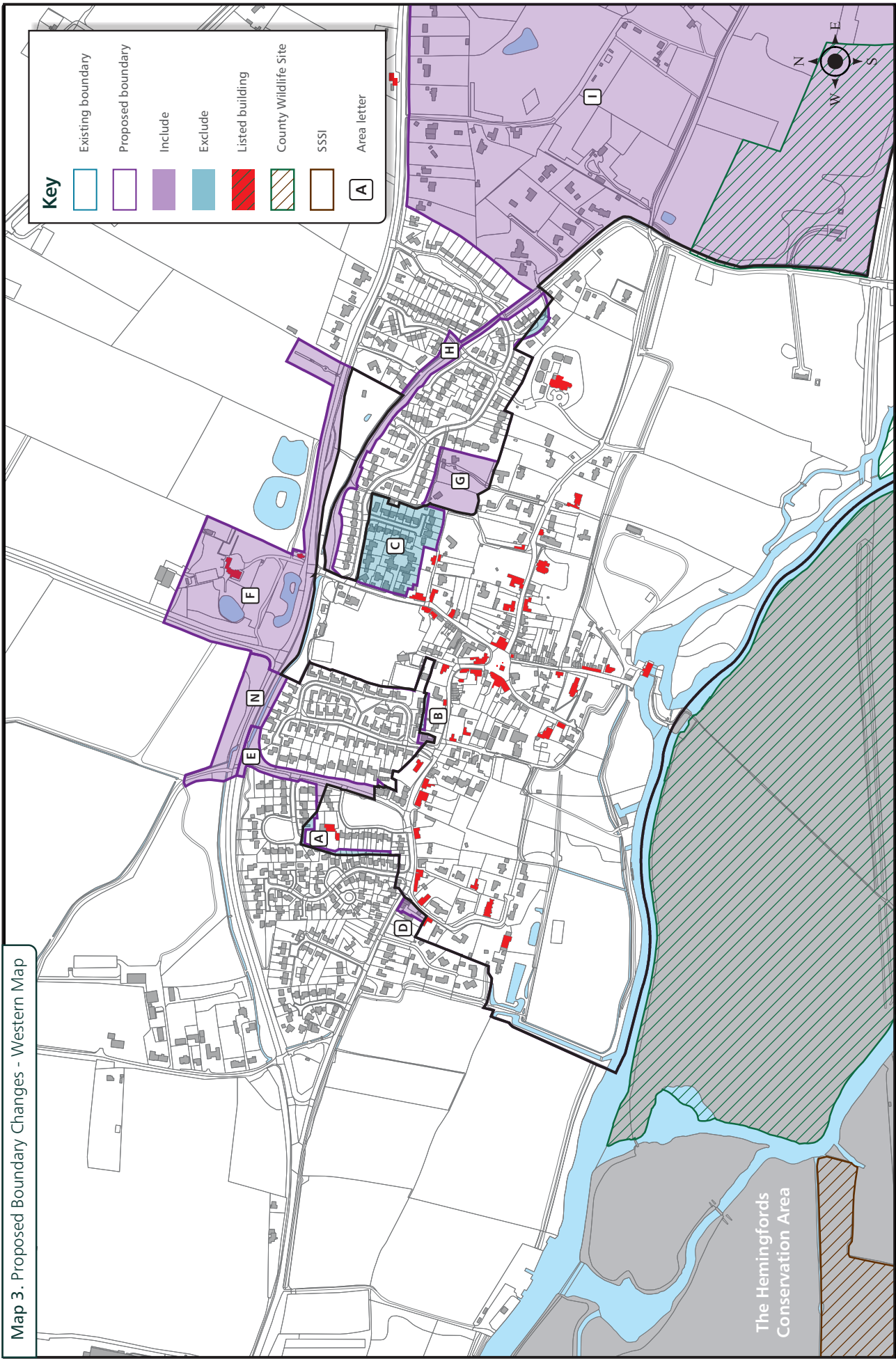
furrow. Some of this land is designated as County Wildlife Site and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

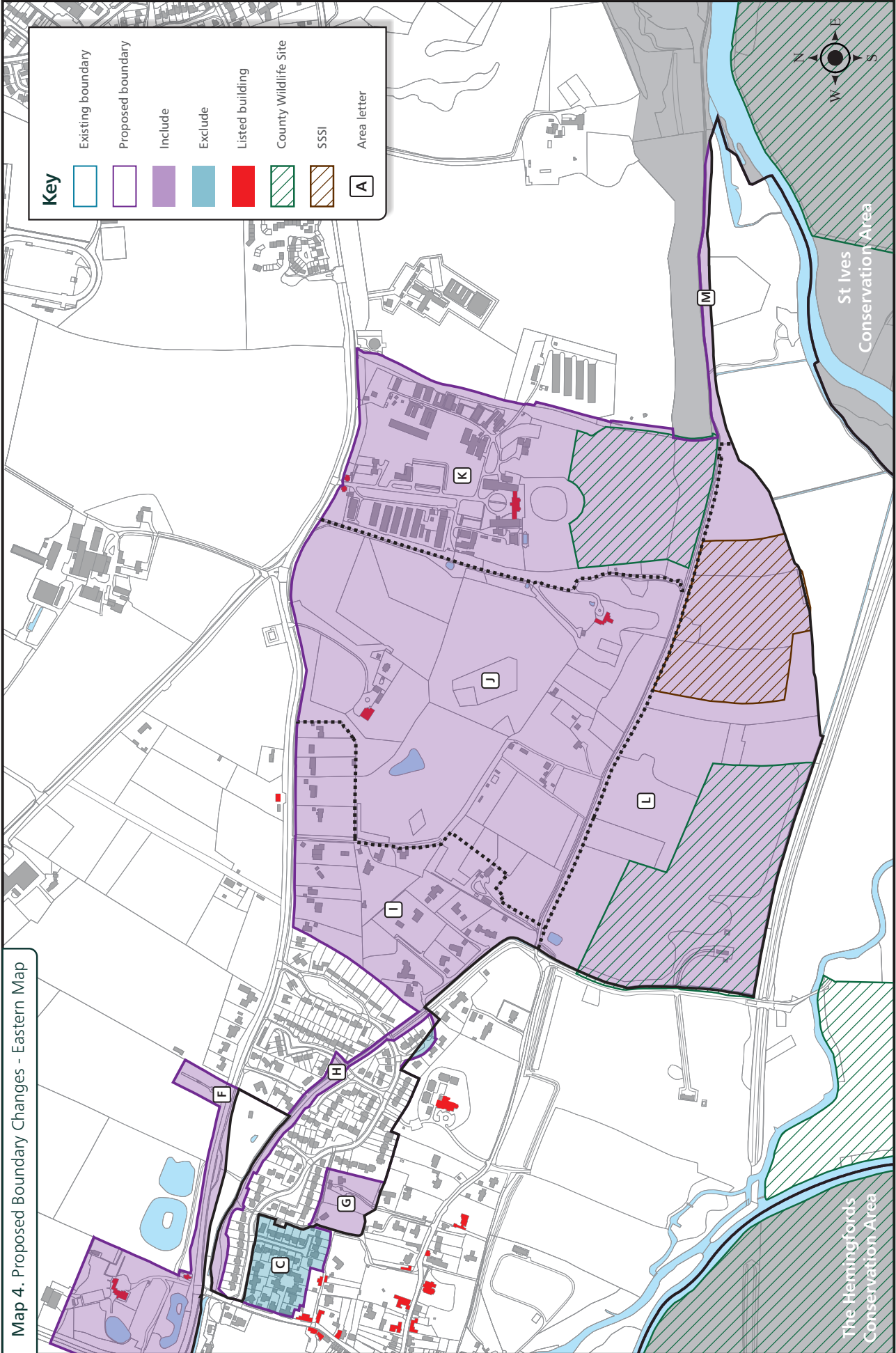
- M Extend the conservation area further to the east to include a small slither of land along the Thicket path adjacent to the St Ives Conservation Area.
- N. Extend the conservation area boundary to include registered common land to the south west of Houghton Hall which represents an important historic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

Map 2. Proposed Houghton and Wyton Conservation Area Boundary

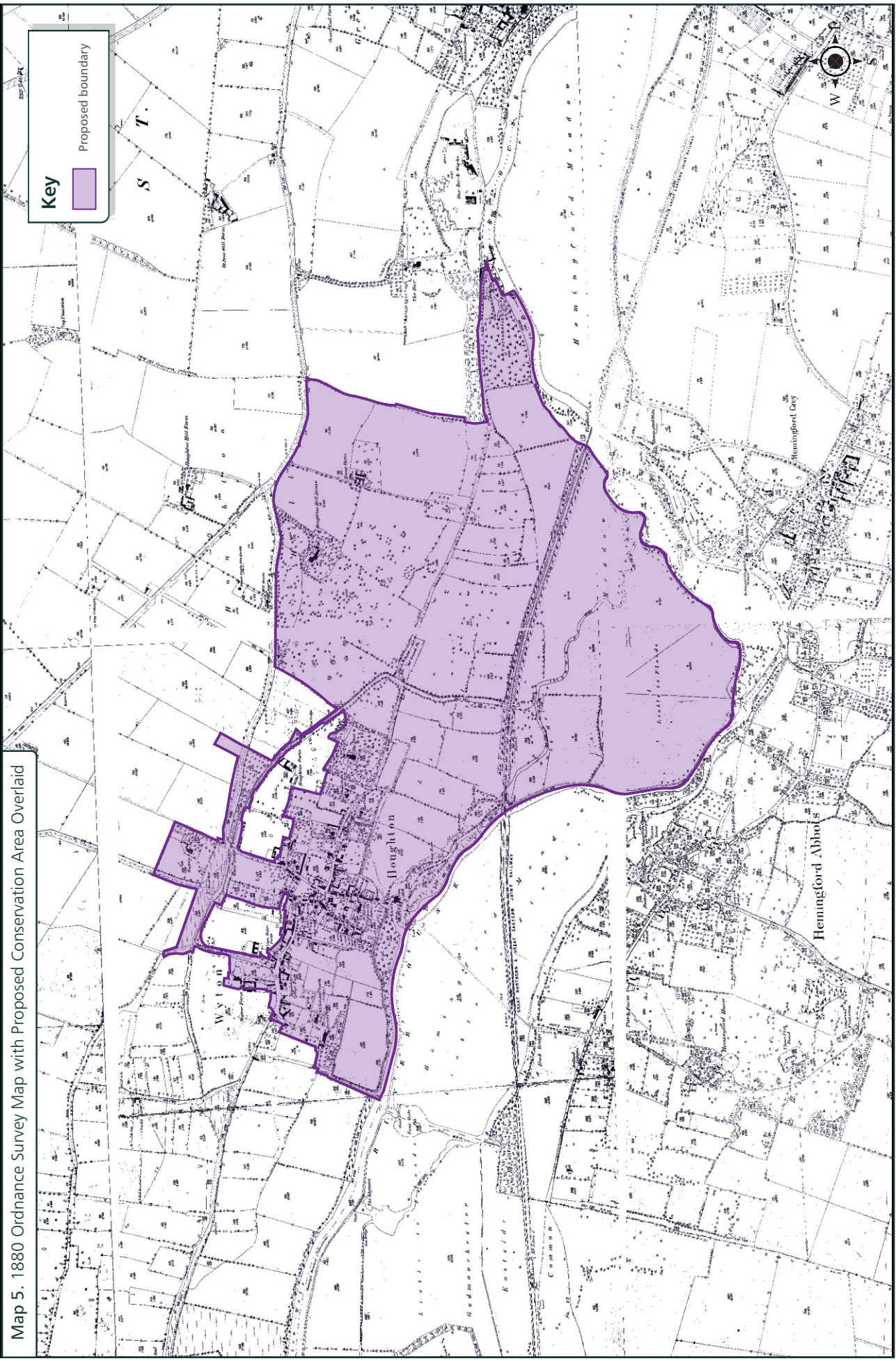


Map 3. Proposed Boundary Changes - Western Map





Map 5. 1880 Ordnance Survey Map with Proposed Conservation Area Overlaid



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

