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AECOM

Somersham

Design Guide

Final Report

May 2025

Delivering a better world

Quality information

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Contents

Introduction

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1. Introduction

Through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme led by Locality, AECOM was commissioned to provide design support to Somersham Parish Council.

As the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 131) notes, 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Following an analysis of the parish, a set of architectural and design qualities will be identified. This set of qualities, combined with good design practice, forms the design guidelines that development within Somersham should follow in order to comply with this parish-wide design guidance document.

1.1 Purpose of this document

This document sets out design guidance based on the existing features of Somersham. The document is intended to sit alongside the Neighbourhood Plan to provide guidance for applicants preparing proposals in the parish and as a guide for the parish council and Huntingdonshire Council when considering planning applications.

Figure 01: Approach into Somersham from Chatteris Road.

Figure 02: View down the High Street.

1.2 Area of study

Somersham is a village and civil parish located in the Huntingdonshire district of Cambridgeshire. It is about 9 miles east of Huntingdon and 4 miles north of St Ives.

The A1 (west) and A14 (south) are the closest major roads however the village is predominantly connected by a network of local country roads. The most local railway station is Huntingdon which is on the Thameslink line and has 2 trains an hour towards both London and Peterborough. The village itself is serviced by an irregular bus service throughout the day, with routes going to St Ives, Warboys and Ramsay.

Somersham is a well preserved historic settlement which is highlighted by its mention in the Domesday book as well as its Conservation Area which makes up a large proportion of the settlement area.

Containing a public house, two schools, and many shops, Somersham is a well serviced village. Current shops include a Tesco express, Costcutter & post office, florists, pet shop, chemists, 4 hair salons/barbers, Chinese takeaway, Indian takeaway, café, fish and chips shop, 2 doctors' surgeries. As well as this Somersham has many active clubs such as Somersham Town Footall Club.

Figure 03: Somersham Area of Study map.

To see relevant policies on good design in the NPPF please follow: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/12-achieving-well-designed-places

1.3 Planning policy context

The NPPF 2024, paragraph 132 states that:

'Plans should… set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development…'

The Government is placing significant importance on the development of design guidance in order to set standards for design upfront and provide key principles regarding how sites should be developed. This is highlighted in chapter 12 of the NPPF 'Achieving well-designed places'.

Therefore this report's main objective is to develop design guidances to sit alongside the Neighbourhood Plan to inform design proposals within Somersham and ensure that they remain sympathetic to the character.

Other research, such as for the Government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (now part of the Design Council; see, for example, *The Value of Good Design*[1]) has shown that good design of buildings and places can improve health and well-being, increase civic pride and cultural activity, reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and reduce pollution.

Additionally, these following documents have informed the design guidance within this report to ensure they are best aligned with the needs and opportunities identified for the NA:

1. Available at: https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-resources/archive/reports-resources/value-good-design/

National planning documents

2007 - Manual for Streets
Department for Transport

The Manual for Streets is the Government's guidance on how to design, construct, adopt and maintain new and existing residential streets. It promotes developments that avoid car dominated layouts and place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first.

2019 - National Design Guide
MHCLG

The National Design Guide (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2019) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

2021 - National Model Design Code
MHCLG

The National Model Design Code (NMDC) sets a baseline standard of quality and practice. The NMDC provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes and the outlining of character areas. It expands on 10 characteristics of good design set out in the NDG.

1.3.1 Local planning policy & guidance

Somersham is a civil parish, overseen by Huntingdonshire District Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and situated in the County of Cambridgeshire.

The following planning and design documents (showed also in the table opposite) were reviewed to understand the policy context under which this document has been produced. Although not an exhaustive list, the reviewed documents are particularly relevant to design policies and include the area's Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

Huntingdonshire Local Plan

Section 5 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan is titled 'Requiring Good Design', highlighting its importance to future development in the area. Policies LP11, LP12, LP13, LP14, LP15, LP16 and LP17 create a framework for creating well designed places.

These policies cover topics such as responding to local context; ease of getting around; well designed public spaces; sustainable design and construction method; placemaking; amenity; surface water; and parking.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

To help deliver policies within the Huntingdonshire Development Plan, there are several supporting Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that have been adopted. SPDs do not have 'development plan' status but are subject to public consultation and are 'material considerations' in the determination of planning applications. These include:

- Landscape and Townscape SPD
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD
- Developer Contributions SPD

The Huntingdonshire Design Guide includes principles on:

- Land Use and Density;
- Place making and hierarchy of movement;
- Urban structure and the development block;
- Street Typologies
- Parking and servicing;
- Landscape and public realm;
- Building form; and
- Building detailing.

This document expands on some of these areas and goes into more detail as to how good design approaches should be applied in the context of Somersham.

1.4 Process and engagement

A one-day site visit took place on 31/01/2025 commencing with an in-person meeting between AECOM and representatives of the Somersham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to explore the group's key aims and objectives and to address any initial concerns.

This was followed by a tour of the parish, via car and on foot. This activity allowed consultants to appraise local character and the features informing its sense of place, such as heritage and landscape features. The exercise also provided valuable local insight into the area's pertinent design issues and opportunities, good and bad practice, as well the overall context for which the evidence-base of the Neighbourhood Plan will reflect.

This document has resulted from a collaborative effort between the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and AECOM, reflecting the priorities of local residents. The design process includes the following steps:

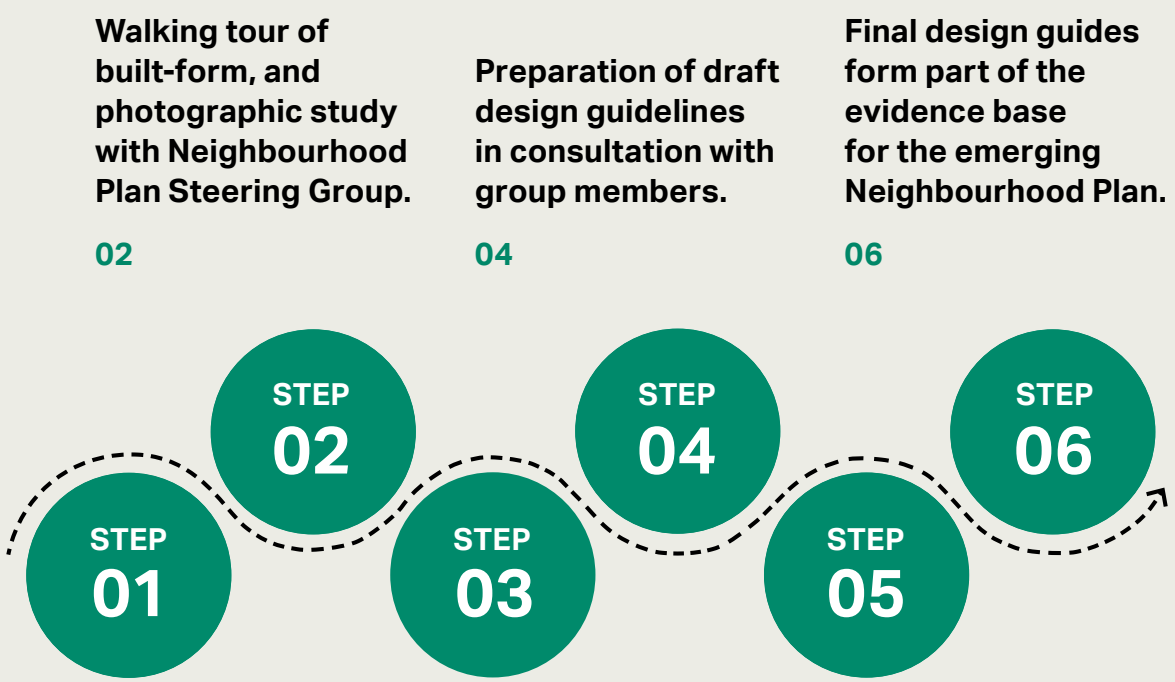


Figure 04: A brief chronological breakdown of the key elements and milestones used throughout the duration of the production of this document.

1.5 How to use this document

This document will be used differently by different people in the planning and development process.

A valuable way guidance can be used is as part of a process of co-design and involvement that seeks to understand and takes account of local preferences for design quality. As such the codes and guidance can help to facilitate conversations to help align expectations, aid understanding, and identify key local issues.

The resulting design guidance can then set out how to adequately respond to these issues in future development.

Design guidance alone will not automatically secure quality design outcomes, but they will help to prevent poor outcomes by creating a rigorous process that establishes expectations for design quality.

What follows is a list of actors and how they will use the design guidelines:

Potential users	How they will use the design guidance
Applicants, developers, & landowners	As a guide to the community's and the Local Planning Authority's expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought.
Local planning authority	As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. The guidance should be discussed with applicants during any pre application discussions.
Parish Council	As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the guidance are complied with.
Local community organisations	As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.

Table 01: A list of potential users of this documents and how they will apply the design guidance.

Context analysis

02

2. Context analysis

For more information on the Conservation Area and the overall parish please see the Conservation Area Appraisal: https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2330/somersham-conservation-area-character-assessment-adopted-2007.pdf

Achieving quality development starts with a comprehensive understanding of place. Places have a clear and strong identity and character. They are a combination of their physical form, their activities and their meaning to people.

2.1 Historic assets

Somersham is a historic settlement which is supported by its mention in the Domesday Book where it is listed as 'Summersham' in the Hundred of Hurstingstone in Huntingdonshire.

Today much of the historic assets are preserved with there being 45 listed buildings, many of which are within the Conservation Area, and 2 Scheduled Monuments. One of these is a medieval magnate's moated residence (also known as the Bishop of Ely's Palace). Somersham was acquired by the abbey of Ely in AD 991 and became part of the bishop's endowment in 1109. There are considerable records of the palace, which was described in detail in a survey of 1588. The buildings had fallen into decay by the 18th century and were finally demolished in around 1762.

The historic core of Somersham is centred around the High Street and Church Street which is to this day a thriving market scene and an area where people meet and converse.

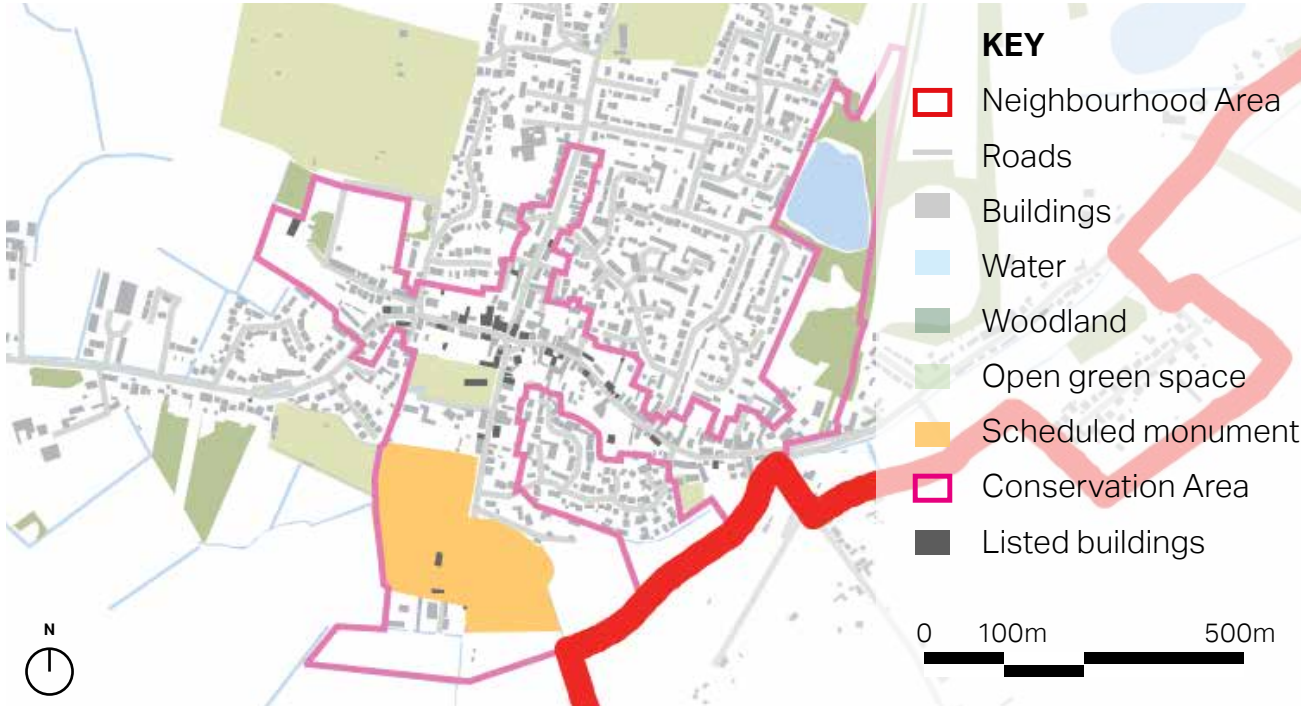


Figure 05: Map showing the heritage assets in Somersham.

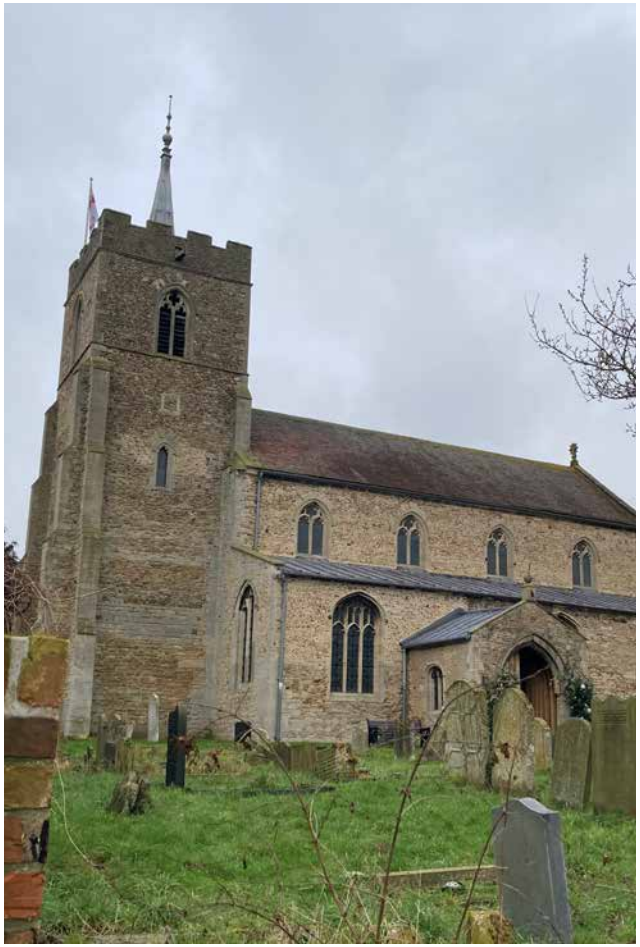


Figure 09: St John the Baptist Church.

Figure 06: View down Church Street to the cross.

Figure 07: View down Pinfold Lane.

Figure 08: The old school.

2.2 Historic settlement character

Somersham is a nucleated village that has evolved organically over time from a central market area outwards into a primarily residential area. During this time, it has managed to retain much of its historic sense of rurality.

Early History

Somersham's name is believed to derive from a Roman summer camp on a nearby hill. The area was known for its fertile land and pure springs.

Medieval Period

During the medieval period, Somersham was a significant market settlement. The market was central to its economy and was therefore the heart of the settlement.

18th and 19th Centuries

By the 18th century, Somersham had developed further with the establishment of a free school endowed by Thomas Hammond in 1730. In the mid 19th century, the Somersham Railway station opened. The railway line connected the village with March, St Ives, Chatteris and Ramsay. This helped the market area thrive and as a result Somersham grew as a settlement.

The village expanded along the main road from Huntingdon and St. Ives to Chatteris. This road, which is now called the High Street has an historic enclosed and vibrant feel to it and is a huge part of Somersham's distinctiveness. Much of the Victorian buildings from this era, now make up the Conservation Area.

Early 20th century

Between 1900 and 1950, Somersham village experienced notable growth and development. The early 20th century saw the expansion of local industries, including agriculture and bee-keeping. The village's connectivity improved with the presence of a railway station that linked it to nearby towns such as March and St Ives. This period also witnessed gradual population growth and the development of community facilities, contributing to the village's overall prosperity. The combination of improved infrastructure and economic activities played a significant role in shaping Somersham's growth during this period.

Late 20th century

Somersham experienced a great deal of residential growth in the mid to late 20th century. Much of this growth came to the north of the High Street and also saw the development of recreation spaces and other community facilities such as Victory Hall.

Modern day

Today, while it is predominantly a thriving residential area, the village offers a variety of shops and recreational facilities, including parks, sports grounds, and community events, making it a lively place for residents and visitors alike. Despite its contemporary development, Somersham retains its historic charm.

2.3 Access and movement

Somersham is connected to nearby settlements by a network of B Roads. The High Street, which becomes Pidley Hill to the west and Chatteris Road to the northeast is central to where these routes meet and is perhaps why much of the historic development in Somersham is located along the High Street.

The residential part of the village is lined with a combination of narrow tertiary lanes and cul-de-sacs. The narrow, winding nature of these roads encourages lower vehicle speeds and a more tranquil environment.

Public footpaths are well present both within the village and into the surrounding countryside. Within the village they provide onward connectivity in the residential areas and access to the shopping parade. One example of one of the countryside walks that the local community have access to is the Fen Edge Trail.

Figure 10: View down the high street.

Figure 11: Well maintained path at the Nature Reserve.

Figure 12: Cul-de-sac example in Somersham (Pinfold Lane).

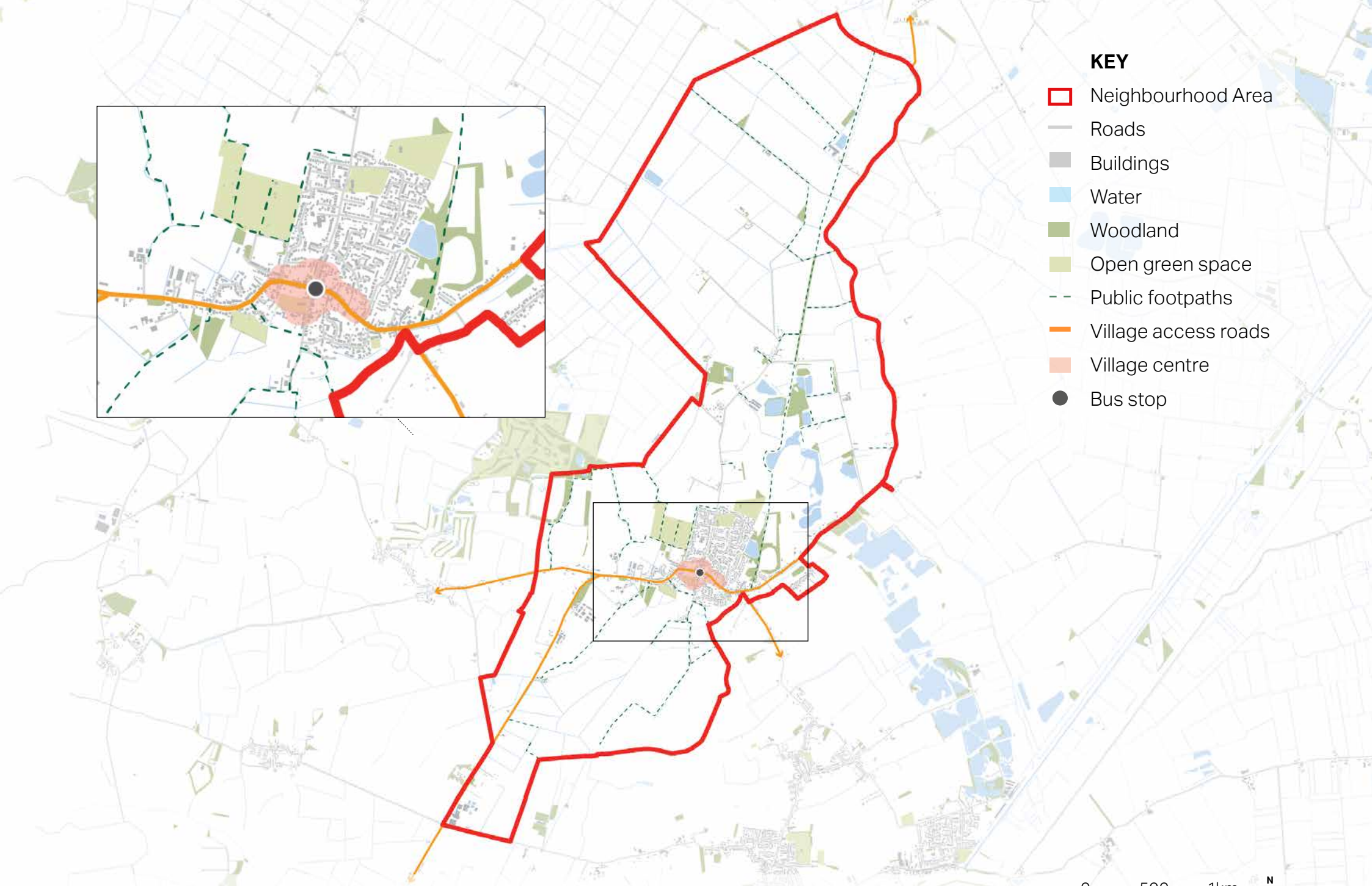


Figure 13: Access and movement map.

2.4 Green and blue infrastructure

Somersham is located on the border of the fenland of East Anglia and therefore has a low lying, flat landscape. Much of the land, particularly to the north between Somersham and Chatteris is naturally marshy supporting a rich ecology and numerous species. Most of the fens were drained long ago and therefore the land surrounding Somersham is predominantly used for agricultural farming, supported by a system of drainage channels.

There is deciduous woodland and traditional orchards scattered throughout the parish which further adds to the rurality of the area. As well as this, within the village itself is Somersham Local Nature Reserve. The nature reserve is home to a wide variety of wildlife and includes areas of woodland, grassland and wildflower meadows, a lake and wet woodland. The disused railway line is designated as a County Wildlife Site to recognise the importance of its neutral grassland within the county. It is an asset which is highly valued and well used by the local community.

Other green infrastructure assets within the village include Meadowlands Park, Millennium Sports Fields, Somersham Football Ground and the Allotments.

Figure 15: Millennium sports field.

Figure 14: The lake at Somersham Nature Reserve.

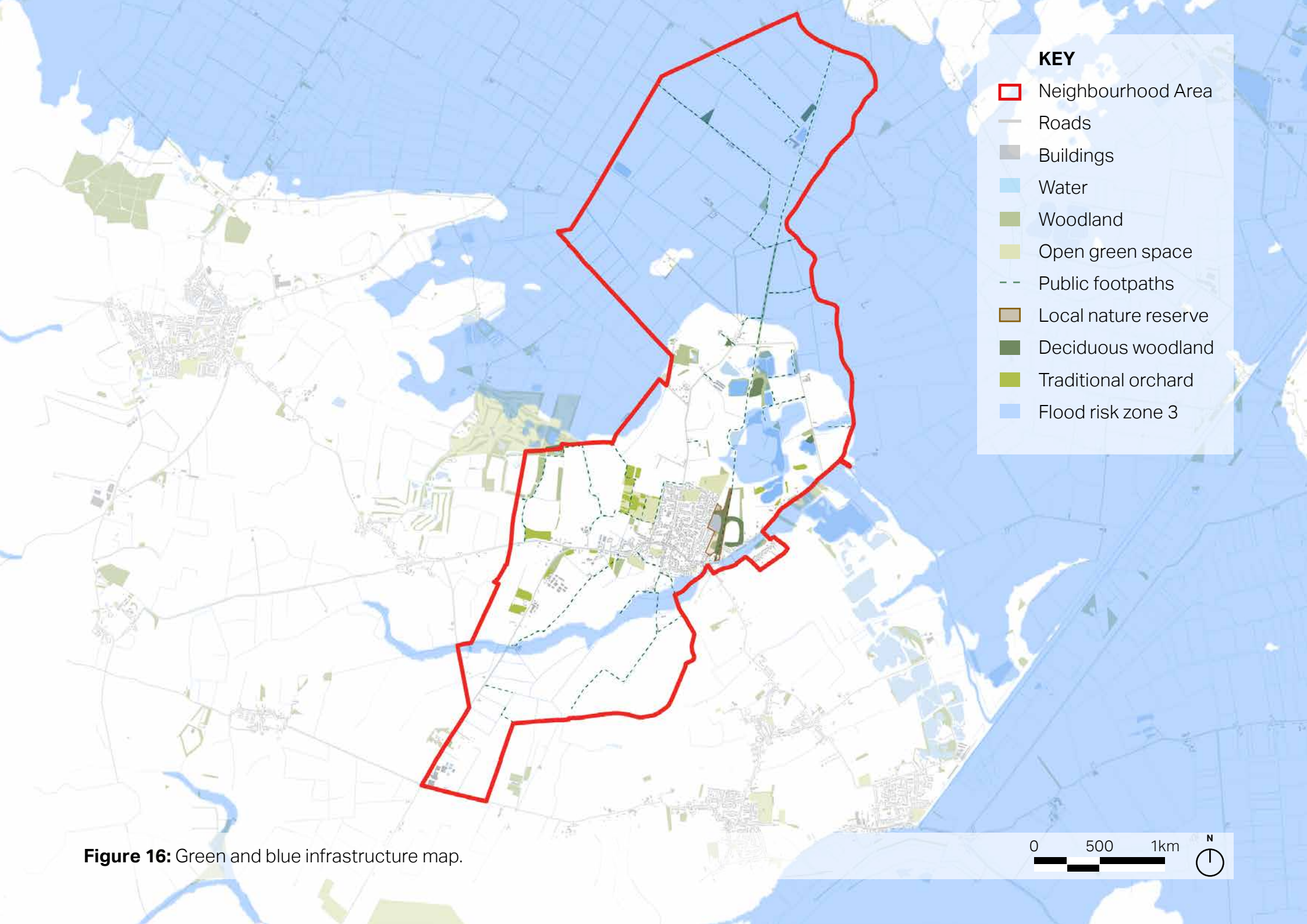


Figure 16: Green and blue infrastructure map.

For more information on the Conservation Area and the overall parish please see the Conservation Area Appraisal: https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2330/somersham-conservation-area-character-assessment-adopted-2007.pdf

2.5 Materiality

Much of Somersham's character stems from the materials and details that have been used to design its buildings. The below and the Conservation Area appraisal provide analysis of some of the typical and valued materials that help form the historic rural character of Somersham.

Walling

Traditional buildings in Somersham use gault brick with a Flemish bond. Lintels (brick and stone) are also used to add detailing and character to the facades. There are also examples of buff brick, red brick and limewash.

Fenestration

Sash windows are a strong feature on traditional buildings in Somersham. Some of these are horizontal sliding sash and casement windows. The best examples of them are well designed, maintained and positioned on buildings to allow natural lighting, natural surveillance and a uniform street scene.

Roofing

Slate roofing is most commonly used in the Conservation Area and therefore strongly contributes to the historic roofline found in the centre of the village. Pantiles and clay plain tiles are also used throughout Somersham, creating a subtle variety.

Proportions

Characterful buildings in Somersham, many of which are located within the Conservation Area, are designed with windows, doors and other features that are well proportioned with the size of the building. In the Conservation Area, where these proportions are respected by most of the buildings, there is a sense of uniformity that provides a feeling of historic familiarity.

Figure 17: Brickwork and sash windows that represents the character of Somersham.

Figure 18: View of the material and colour pallete in Somersham along the High Street.

2.6 Assets and challenges

The analysis in this section highlights several important assets and challenges that are integral to the unique character of Somersham parish. These help form the design guidance headings following in Chapter 3.

These assets collectively paint a picture of some of the parish's most valuable features and areas for improvement. Preserving the assets and tackling the challenges is key in maintaining Somersham's distinctiveness and ensuring it remains a desirable place for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

By safeguarding the assets and making sure that current constraints are considered, the essence of Somersham can be protected, fostering and environment that continues to attract people and support a thriving community.

Active transport/walkability

- Somersham has a valued network of public right of ways as well as a nature reserve which allow the local community to embrace the surrounding countryside.
- Wide public footpaths and well placed crossings make for a streetscape that feel safe for predestrians of all ages.

Figure 19: Footpath and bench at the nature reserve.

High quality, characterful housing

- The use of warboys brick in the historic parts of the village gives it a locally distict identity.
- Many historic buildings retain original or historic fenestration and doorways or door surrounds. These surviving features greatly enhance the architectural interest of the buildings themselves, but collectively they contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and village overall.

Figure 20: Window and door surrounds on a building on Church Street.

Village approaches

- The rural buffers surrounding Somersham such as the woodland on Chatteris Road and the meadows on St Ives Road add to the rural character of the area.

Enhance the natural environment

- The nature reserve is well used by local people and visitors. It is a selling point for those looking to move into the village.
- Street trees help soften the feel of the streetscape in the finer grain parts of the village and add a sense of rurality to the settlement edges. (Figure 21)

Provision of car parking

- There is unsightly parking in places such as the High Street and Church Street.
- Electric car parking at the Victory Hall shows Somersham Parish's drive to tackle the climate crisis.

Figure 21: Rural approach to Somersham from Chatteris Road.

Figure 22: Example of mature trees within the street scene of the High Street.

Figure 23: Cluttered street scene along Chruch Street.

Design guidance

03

3. Design guidance

This section sets out the design guidance that should be used to improve the design quality of development coming forwards in the parish. This design guide supplements the Neighbourhood Plan, local and national planning policy and guidance on design.

Development in the parish should demonstrate how best practice design guidance contained in national and local policy and guidance documents, including this design guide, has been considered in the layout, architectural and landscape design.

3.1 Guidance themes

This section identifies design guidance for development in the parish. These are organised under the design objectives for the parish.

The design guidance apply to the whole parish. In some instances, guidance may be more relevant to certain areas of the parish than to others.

Guidance are arranged under the following overarching headings:

- **A Built form**
- **B Healthy street design**
- **C Sustainable design**

Figure 25: Somersham Victory Hall and car parking area.

Figure 24: View towards the fenland countryside on Chatteris Road to the north of the village.

3.2 A: Built form

Built form is crucial in Somersham Parish because it preserves the unique architectural heritage and character of the area. The parish features distinctive buildings, such as those constructed with materials like gault brick and slates, which reflect the traditional styles of cottages.

These structures not only enhance the aesthetic quality but also maintain the historical and cultural identity of the community.

Additionally, well designed buildings contribute to sustainable development, blend seamlessly with the existing landscape, and allow people of all ages to thrive in the parish.

The built form of Somersham can be broken down into building features, street pattern and the urban morphology of the area. The Somersham Conservation Area Appraisal analyses this in detail. In addition the Huntingdonshire Design Guide provides guidance on building and street layouts which this document does not supersede. Both of these documents can be accessed by following the links below.

Figure 26: West End Classics, a vintage car garage in Somersham.

For more information on the Conservation Area and the overall parish please see the Conservation Area Appraisal: https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2330/somersham-conservation-area-character-assessment-adopted-2007.pdf

To access the Huntingdonshire Design Guide please follow: hhttps://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2573/huntingdonshire-design-guide-2017.pdf

A1: Heights and massing and plot coverage

Other than a few key landmark buildings, structures in Somersham Parish are most commonly 2/2.5 storeys in height. The guidance below should be followed to preserve this:

- The height of new buildings should be sympathetic to that of neighbouring buildings;
- Heights of buildings should complement/ frame/ respect important views;
- The design of new roofs should reflect the dominant shape and pitch of existing roofs;
- Where it does not distract from the character of the settlement, building innovations on roofs should be considered;
- Building designs must be consistent with the overall bulk and spacing between buildings in the area. Proposals amending plot coverage should reflect the plot coverage ratios of its immediate neighbours;
- Subsequently, plots must retain space for amenity and services such as on-plot parking, bin storage and garden space where possible; and
- Dormers should align with the prevailing scale, shape, and rhythm found in traditional buildings.

Figure 27: House on the High Street showing the typical building heights in Somersham.

Figure 28: St John the Baptist Church, Somersham - a local landmark building.

A2: Local Vernacular

Building vernacular has adapted slightly over time from the classic worker cottages in the historic part of the village to the relatively larger detached houses that came as a part of the estates in the 1980s and 1990s.

- New development **should** complement the village's existing architectural character and materiality, and fit well within the surrounding area it is located in. Urban and suburban layouts are not be appropriate within Somersham, especially in close proximity to local historic structures and where adjoining open landscape.
- New developments **should** use materials that are natural, sustainable, reuasable and reflective of the local vernacular (Figure 29 and Figure 30 are examples of this).
- New development **should** harmonise with the detailing and fenestration abundant within the NA, considering the proportion, symmetry and rhythm.
- Proposals involving multiple houses **should** ensure a variety of detailing is utilised across the development to provide visual interest.
- Developments **should** include architecture that is well designed and proportioned.
- New development **should** display characteristics that illustrates the evolution of architecture in the village.

Figure 29: Traditional cottage in the Conservation Area.

Figure 30: Limewash house along the High Street in Somersham.

A3: Facades and fenestration proportions

Building facades and fenestration design should:

- Respect the horizontal rhythm of plots, ensuring alignments with the width and proportions of surrounding buildings;
- Reflect traditional building patterns with appropriate spacing if windows, doors and architectural elements;
- Ensure window and door placements align with neighbouring buildings, using high quality traditional styles such as sash or casement; and
- Avoid mismatched or overly large windows that disrupt the buildings balance.

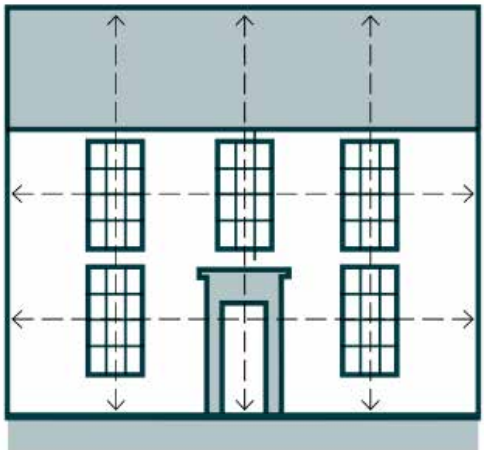


Figure 31: Diagram showing example building proportions in a detached house in the historic core of Somersham.

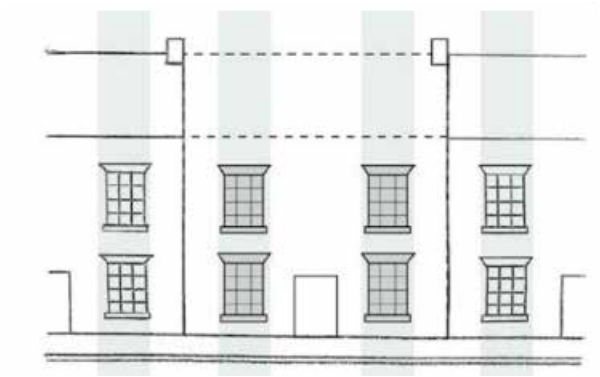


Figure 32: A good practice diagram where window typology and pattern are harmonious with neighbouring properties.

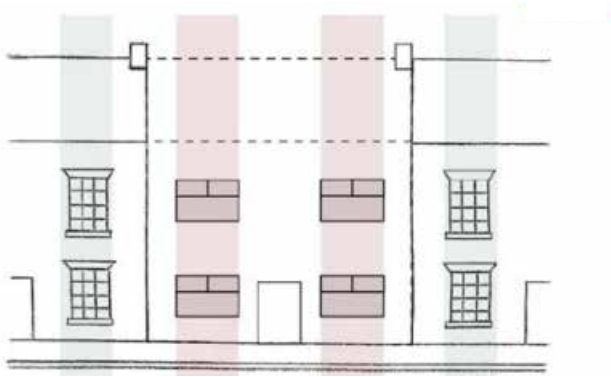
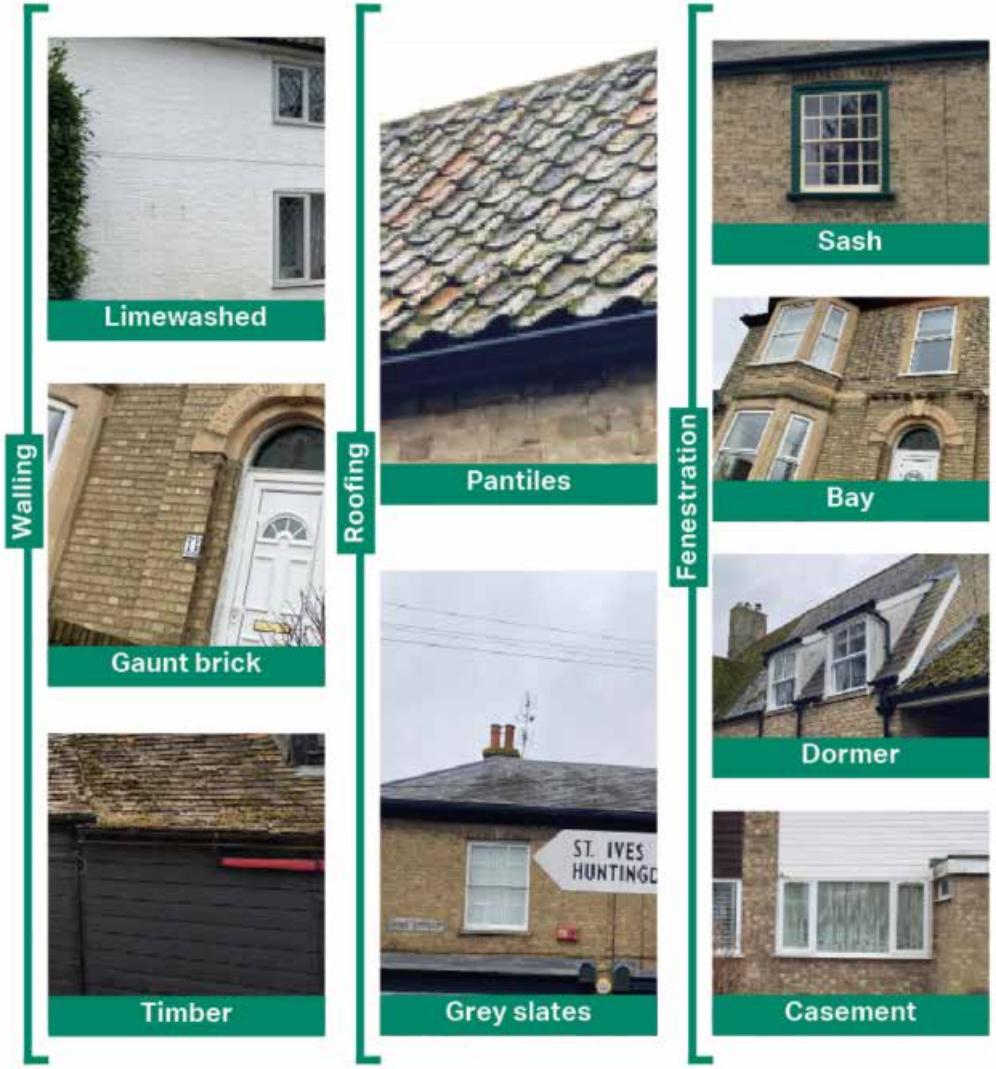


Figure 33: A bad practice diagram where the different fenestration impacts the visual harmony of the neighbouring facades. .

A4: Architectural details and materials

Future constructions **must** demonstrate respect for existing architectural styles and utilise materials that are considerate of those employed in nearby residences. Key materials and finishes found across Somersham are listed opposite.

- New developments **should** draw inspiration from the high-quality local design references. It is essential for these designs to make a meaningful contribution to preserving the rural character of the village.
- New development **should** ensure that it puts forward a comparable level of greenery, incorporating native and context-appropriate plant species, to establish a cohesive setting that aligns with the existing natural environment.



3.3 B: Healthy street design

The street layout in Somersham plays a crucial role in shaping the community's accessibility, safety, and overall quality of life. Well-designed streets ensure efficient traffic flow, provide safe pathways for pedestrians and cyclists, and enhance connectivity between residential areas, local amenities, and green spaces. Additionally, thoughtful street planning supports local businesses by facilitating easy access and creating inviting public spaces.

This holistic approach to street layout not only fosters a sense of community but also contributes to the village's aesthetic appeal and environmental sustainability.

Healthy street design in Somersham is made up of several features, street pattern and the urban morphology of the area. The Huntingdonshire Design Guide provides guidance on street layouts which this document does not supersede. That document can be accessed by following the link below.

Figure 34: Photograph showing an example of a rural street that is safe for pedestrians, Elsewhere in the UK.

To access the Huntingdonshire Design Guide please follow: hhttps://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2573/huntingdonshire-design-guide-2017.pdf

B1: Rural streets character

The leafy streetscapes within the parish are a reoccurring characteristic and create the canvas for the rural identity of the settlements. Overhanging trees, hedges and grass verges, in particular on The High Street, breaks up the continuous hard infrastructure and make for a pleasant experience when traveling through the village that is distinctive to the parish. The following guidelines **should** be considered by developers to ensure that streets are locally distinctive.

- Ensure streets are laid out to encourage connectivity, including direct access to key destinations such as The High Street, the Victory Hall and church. Designers should provide connections to existing and potential future development areas, particularly via walking and cycling routes.
- Encourage public access to community facilities, green space and the countryside by ensuring publicly accessible streets are adjacent, and provide direct access and views, to these places;
- Streets should be designed to have the appearance of a rural village by incorporating:
- Narrow geometric street layouts that encourage active frontages, slow traffic and avoid large impervious areas; and
- Minimal street furniture and road markings. The limited use of timber bollards and wayfinding signs that are already present in the Parish may be appropriate.

Figure 35: Parkhall Road, with a grassy ditch on the east side.

Figure 36: View into the village from Station Approach.

B2: Accessible and attractive footpath network

There are numerous footpaths within Somersham Parish which link the settlement with the surrounding countryside as well as the nature reserve. Footpaths allow people to get closer to nature, enjoy a tranquil environment and undertake physical exercise by walking. Some design guidelines are:

- Where possible, newly developed areas should retain or provide direct and attractive footpaths between neighbouring streets and local facilities. Establishing a robust pedestrian network across new developments and among new and existing development is key in achieving good levels of connectivity and promoting walking.
- Where possible, new proposed footpaths should link up green spaces and woodlands to create a network of green walking routes and promote biodiversity. For example, the Strategic Wildlife Corridors, could include footpath connections and other green links that could connect new development and form part of an integrated green infrastructure network;
- Design features such as gates or barriers to footpaths must be kept at a minimum and the latter must be avoided;
- Strategically placed signposts could assist pedestrians and cyclists with orientation and increase awareness of publicly accessible paths beyond the parish. However, new signposts must respect the rural character of the parish and avoid creating visual clutter; and
- The footpath network should be in place before first occupation of houses on the site.

Figure 37: Tarmaced footpath within the nature reserve.

B3: Parking

Due to the remote location of the parish and the current lack of public transport, the demand for private cars and car parking remains high. Car parking typologies across villages include on-plot parking (front and side), on-street parking, and garages. Therefore, the design guidelines on the next pages will focus on the prevailing typologies.

On-plot parking

- On-plot parking should be sufficient to the local residents' needs to avoid issues of parking overflow along the narrow rural lanes. The level of car parking provision should be in accordance with current Huntingdonshire guidance.
- As a general rule, no more than a third of the front garden space should be dedicated to parting, while two-thirds of the front garden should remain as green space.
- Parking should be well integrated into design so as not to dominate the public realm. Especially, high-quality and well-designed soft landscaping, hedges, hedgerows, and trees, should be used to increase the visual appeal of the parking, at the same time increasing local biodiversity and enhancing the natural character of the Parish.

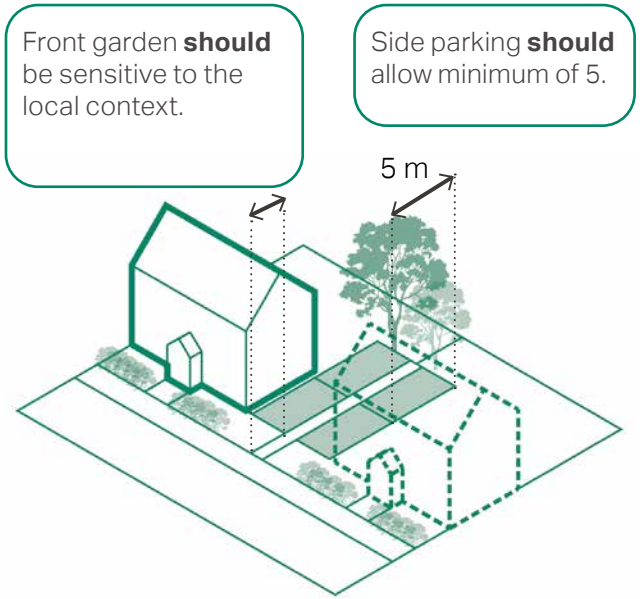


Figure 38: An illustrative diagram showing the indicative layout of on-plot parking.

3.4 C: Sustainable design

This section presents sustainable design principles and tools that should be encouraged to increase climate change resilience. It presents energy efficient or eco design technologies that could be incorporated in buildings. It also discusses lighting solutions to protect wildlife and the night sky. Finally, sustainable drainage techniques are considered to mitigate against flooding from surface water.

The guidance in this section should be read alongside that in the 'Huntingdonshire Design Guide' and 'Sustainable Construction in Cambridgeshire SPD'.

Figure 39: Wind turbines just off Chatteris Road, to the north of Somersham.

To access the Huntingdonshire Design Guide please follow: https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2573/huntingdonshire-design-guide-2017.pdf

To access the Sustainable Construction in Cambridgeshire SPD please follow: https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/8157/greater-cambridge-sustainable-design-and-construction-spd.pdf

C1: Permeable paving

As displayed in figure 16 , Somersham as a parish is susceptible to flooding and therefore it is important that where development takes place, impermeable surfaces are minimised.

It is recommended that the majority of the unbuilt areas in the plot (i.e. gardens) are permeable by means of landscape such as grass or earth as well as permeable and filtrating pavements. As a rule of thumb the % permeable area should be between 30% to 70% of the unbuilt areas. Permeable pavement **must** also comply with:

- Regulations, standards, and guidelines relevant to permeable paving and sustainable drainage are listed below:

- Sustainable Drainage Systems - non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems;
- The SuDS Manual (C753);
- BS 8582:2013 Code of practice for surface water management for development sites;
- BS 7533-13:2009 Pavements constructed with clay, natural stone or concrete pavers; and
- Guidance on the Permeable Surfacing of Front Gardens.

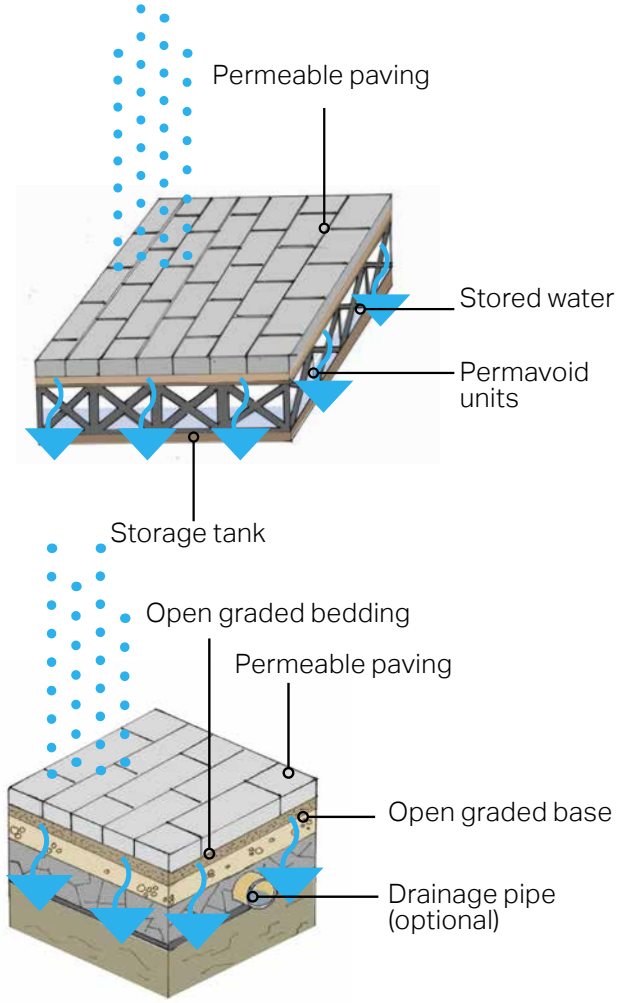


Figure 40: Diagrams illustrating the functioning of a soakaway.

C2: Sustainable drainage systems

It is a general consensus that the risk of flooding is a major concern in Somersham due to its close proximity to the fenlands, and the majority of the residents would want to see some improvements to the surface water drainage.

The abundance of woodland, hedgerows, drains and ditches in Somersham provide opportunity for biodiversity to thrive in the parish. New development should therefore consider the following drainage solutions to further encourage local biodiversity:

- Manage surface water as close to where it originates as possible;
- Given Somersham's rural setting natural SuDS such as swales, ponds and wide ditches could be more appropriate;
- Where the right mix of plants is used, hedging could be used as barriers to surface runoff while also contributing to local biodiversity.
- Runoff rates should be reduced by providing attenuation that stores water to help slow its flow down;
- Attenuation areas should support different aquatic plants and wildlife;
- Attenuation areas should also include shallow margins and gentle slopes to encourage the growth of marginal vegetation; Improve water quality by filtering pollutants to help avoid environmental contamination;
- Integrate into development and improve amenity through early consideration in the development process and good design;
- SuDS are often also important in areas that are not directly in an area of flood risk themselves, as they can help reduce downstream flood risk by storing water upstream;
- Some of the most effective SuDS are vegetated, using natural processes to slow and clean the water, whilst increasing the biodiversity value of the area; and
- Best practice SuDS schemes link the water cycle to make the most efficient use of water resources by reusing surface water.

Figure 41: Example of SuDS designed as a public amenity and integrated into the public realm, Stockholm.

For guidance on adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency please see: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/

C3: Assessing alternative energy sources

Key considerations in the assessment of alternative energy sources for development should inlcude (but are not limited to):

- Optimise solar orientation of streets and buildings. Aim to increase the number of dwellings on the site that are oriented within 30' of south (both main fenestration and roof plane) for solar gain, solar energy (solar panels) and natural daylighting;
- Links to local estates for sustainable coppicing, harvesting or recycling of biomass fuels; and
- Local wind speed and direction in Somersham for micro-generation wind turbines.

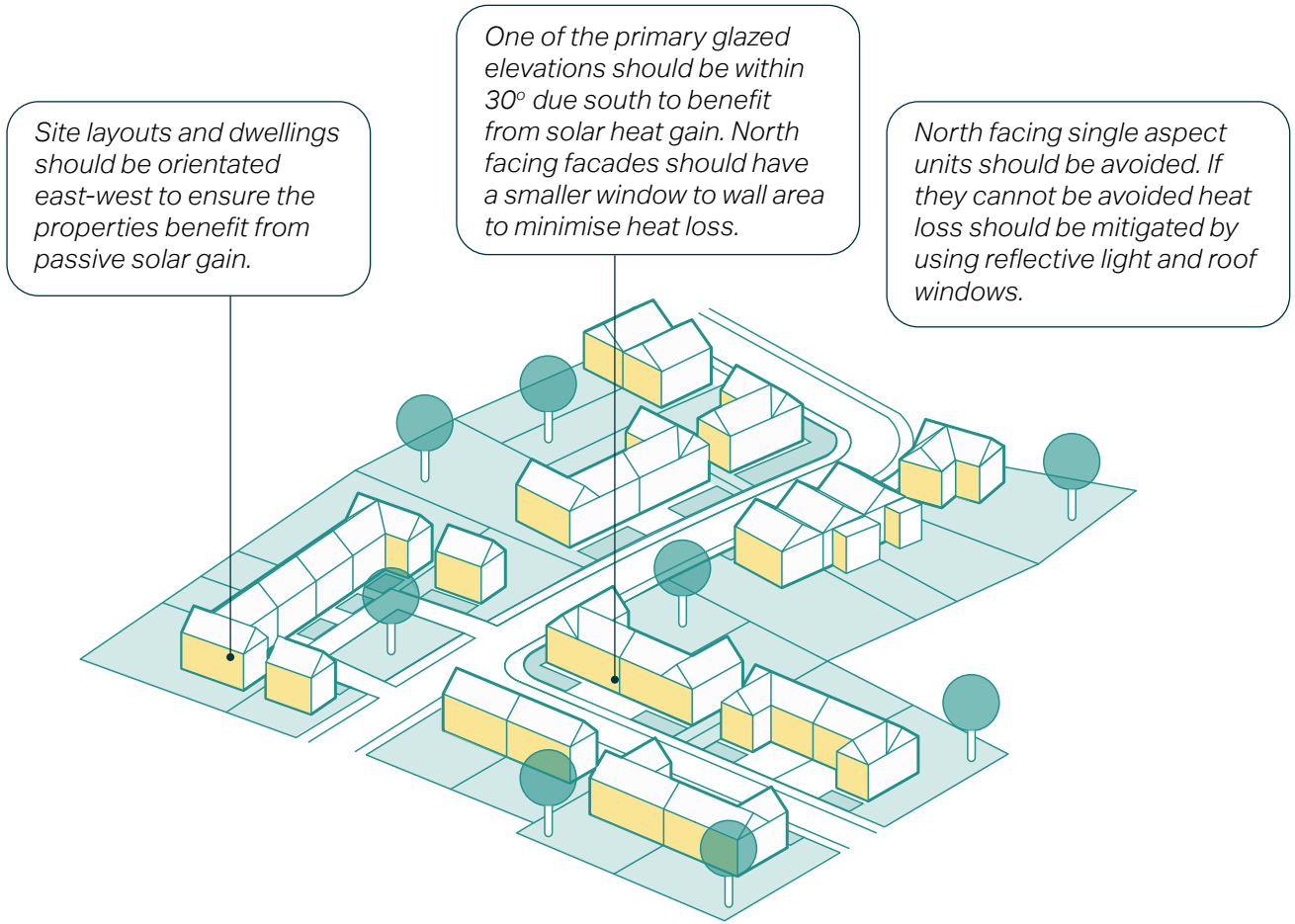


Figure 42: Diagram illustrating elevations that benefit from solar gain.

For guidance on adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency please see: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/

C4: Energy efficiency measures towards Net-Zero carbon

By default, new development in Somersham should adopt a fabric first approach in line with the governments Future Homes Standard, to attain higher standards of insulation and energy conservation.

- Reducing energy demand further by employing passive design principles for homes is desirable and can make some forms of development more acceptable to the community (window orientation, solar gain, solar shading, increased insulation, ventilation with heat-recovery);
- Maximise on-site renewable energy regeneration (solar, ground source, air source and wind driven); and
- Consider building form and thermal efficiency: terraced, semi-detached and detached houses all have different energy efficiency profiles. This should be balanced with local design preference and character considerations to ease acceptance for development.

Figure 44: Example of an air source heat pump.

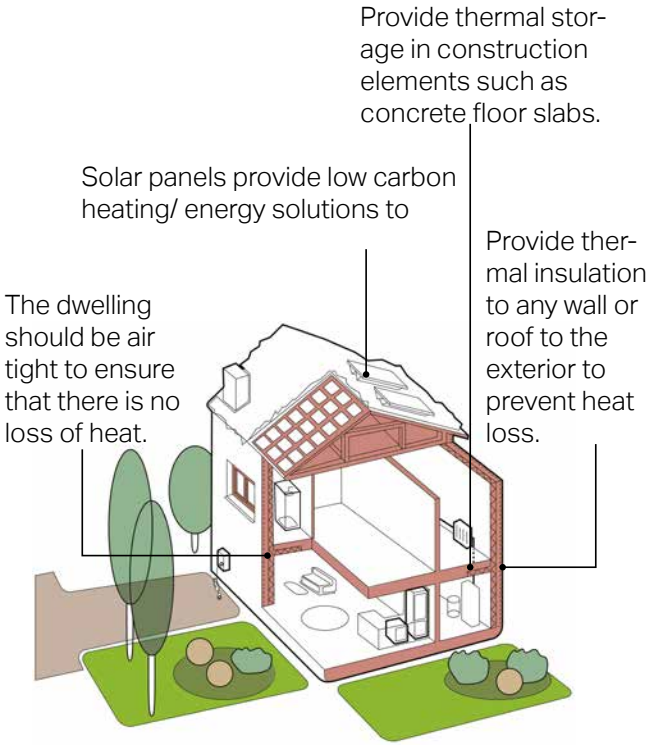


Figure 43: Diagram showing some elements of the building fabric to be considered.

C4: Minimising construction waste

As part of the environmental management system it is important that the waste generated during construction is minimised, reused within the site or recycled. Guidance to follow includes:

- Developers should plan to re-use materials by detailing their intentions for waste minimisation and re-use in Site Waste Management Plans. The actions that this plan will include are:
- Before work commences, the waste volumes to be generated and the recycling and disposal of the materials must be described;
- On completion of the construction works, volumes of recycled content purchased, recycled and landfilled materials must be collated;

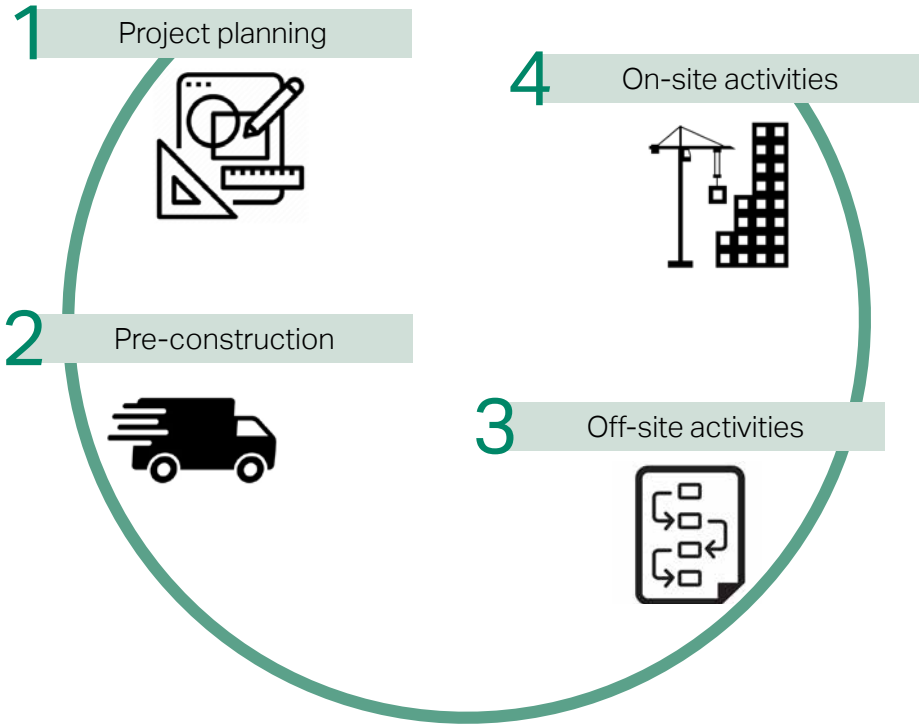


Figure 45: Diagram to illustrate the 4 main stages where waste management practices can be implemented.

- The workforce should be properly trained and competent to make sure storage and installation

practices of the materials is done under high standards.

C5: EV charging points

Somersham strongly supports proposals for in private transport using electrically and other non fossil fuel powered vehicles. Those can be integrated both on and off street. Some design guidelines on how new development should design for electric vehicle charging points are:

On-street car parking or parking courts

- Car charging points **should** always be provided adjacent public open spaces. Street trees and vegetation **could** be used to minimise any visual contact with the charging points;
- Where charging points are located on the footpath, a clear footway width of 1.5m **must** be required next to the charging point to avoid obstructing pedestrian flow; and
- Car charging points within parking courts are highly supported and therefore **should** be implemented, since they can serve more than one vehicles.

Off-street car parking

- Mounted charging points and associated services **should** be integrated into the design of new developments, if possible with each house that provides off-street parking; and
- Cluttering elevations, especially main façades and front elevations, **should** be avoided.

Figure 46: Example of off-street electric vehicle car charging point.

Figure 47: Example of electric vehicle charging points in a parking court.

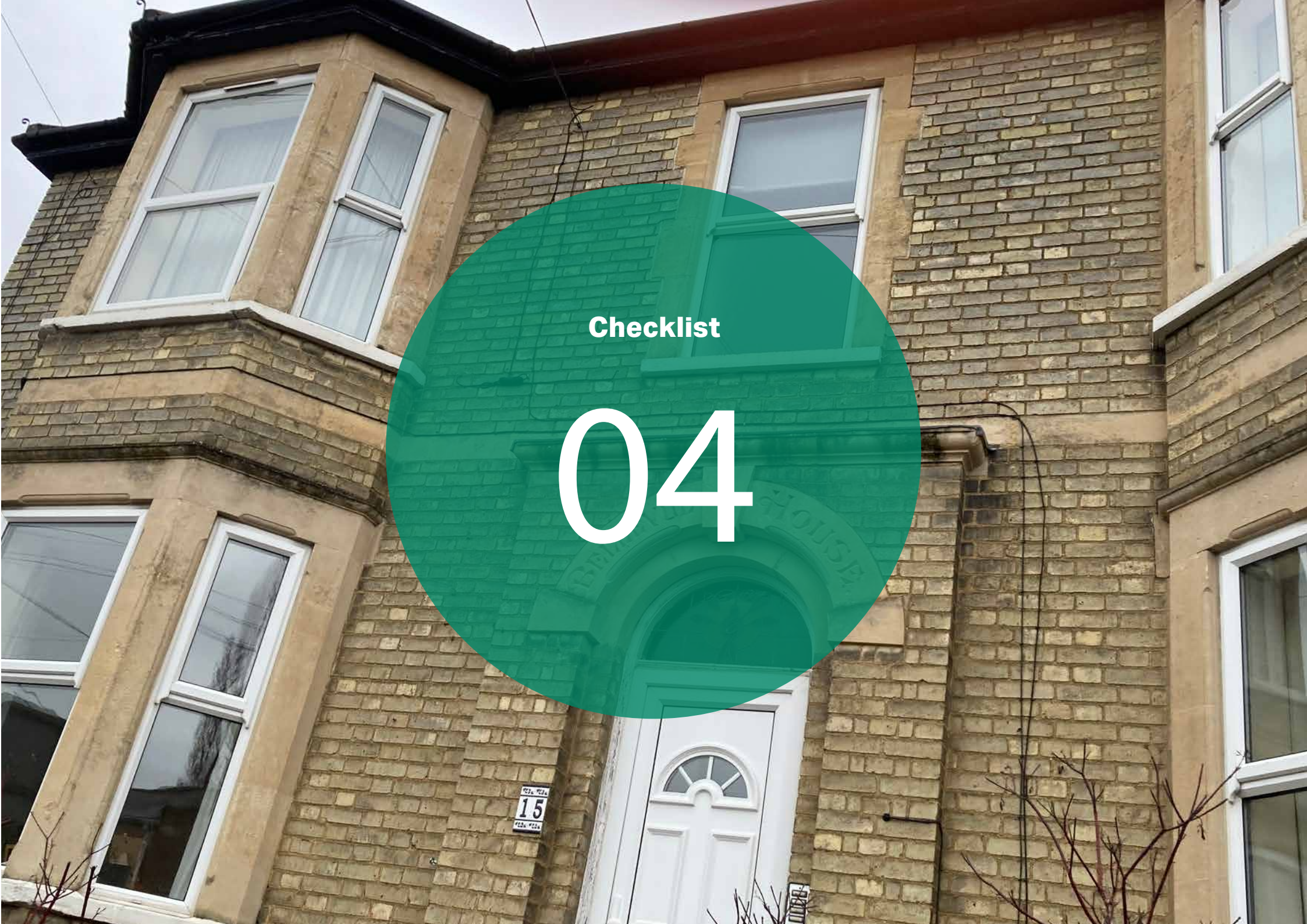
C6: Solar panels

Installing solar panels is a tried and tested way of adapting existing dwellings to make them more environmentally friendly. The following guidelines explain how solar panels can be added to existing dwellings while minimising the impact on the character of the street:

- Solar panels that blend with the roof colour and style **should** be selected. Black or dark blue panels often integrate well with traditional roofing materials;
- Where possible, panels **should** be installed on the least visible side of the roof from the street view, however south-facing roofs are ideal for optimal energy production;
- Low-profile mounting systems **should** be used to keep the panels close to the roof surface, reducing their visual prominence;
- Panels **should not** be installed on or near distinctive architectural features such as dormers, chimneys, or decorative trims.
- Panels **should** be installed in a symmetrical pattern that aligns with the roof's lines and angles to maintain a harmonious appearance;
- Developers **could** consider using solar shingles (see Figure 101) or tiles that mimic traditional roofing materials for a more seamless look; and
- Landscaping elements like trees or trellises **could** be used to help screen the panels from view without causing shading issues.

Figure 48: Use of shingle-like solar panels on a slate roof, with the design and colour of the solar panels matching those of the adjacent slate tiles.

Figure 49: Positive example of implementing solar panels since the design stage.


Checklist
04

4. Checklist

This section sets out a general list of design considerations by topic for use as a quick reference guide in design workshops and discussions.

General design guidelines for new development:

- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- Reinforce or enhance the character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;
- Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
- Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
- Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources.

Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

Local green spaces, views and character:

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- Can trees be used to provide natural shading from unwanted solar gain? i.e. deciduous trees can limit solar gains in summer, while maximising them in winter.
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?

Local green spaces, views & character:

- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how this will be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Can green space be used for natural flood prevention e.g. permeable landscaping, swales etc.?
- Can water bodies be used to provide evaporative cooling?
- Is there space to consider a ground source heat pump array, either horizontal ground loop or borehole (if excavation is required)?

Gateway and access features:

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between hamlets?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

Buildings layout and grouping:

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

Buildings layout and grouping:

- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles, with, for example, one of the main glazed elevations within 30° due south, whilst also minimising overheating risk?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night? This is to reduce peak loads. And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?

Building line and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

Building heights and roofline:

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?

Building materials & surface treatment:

- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality, long lasting and natural materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Do the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?

Building materials & surface treatment:

- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at an individual building level or through a central/ communal facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a biodiverse roof in its design?

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