

**Whittlesey DRAFT
Neighbourhood Plan
Baseline Report**



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Introduction

This baseline report accompanies the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan and provides some context for the policies set out within it. It aims to give a high-level impression of the Neighbourhood Plan Area; it is not intended to be a detailed technical report but rather an introduction to the Parish, signposting to more detailed information and supplementary documents where necessary.

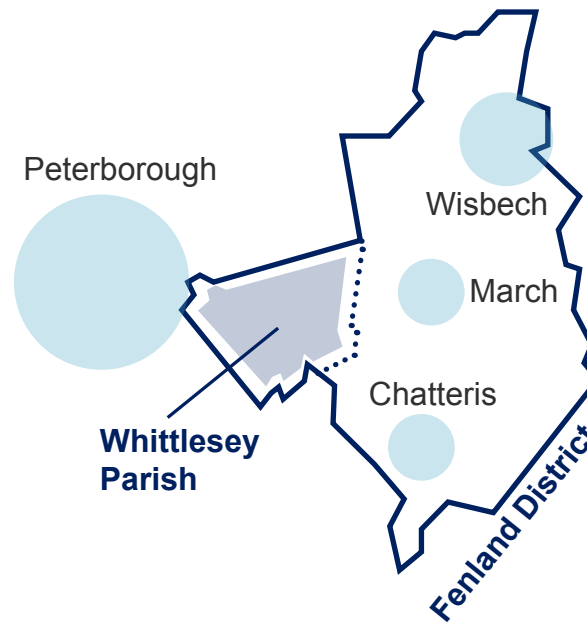


Whittlesey Buttercross

Whittlesey Location



The Parish of Whittlesey is located in the East of England and sits inside the boundary of Fenland District Council.

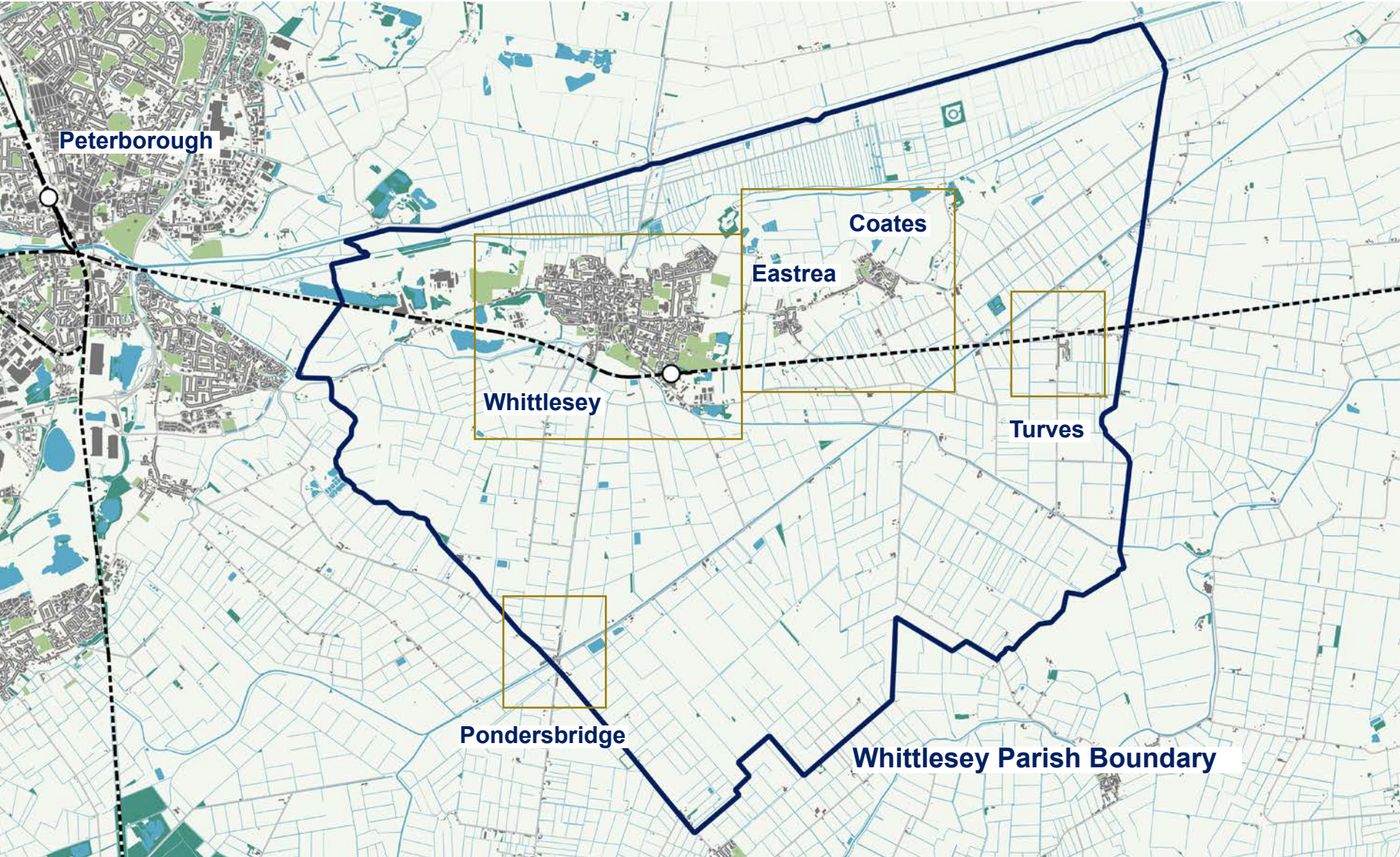


The nearest city is Peterborough, which sits just to the west of Whittlesey Parish. The towns of Wisbech, March and Chatteris also sit inside the Fenland District Council Boundary.

The map opposite shows the Neighbourhood Plan Boundary. Whittlesey Town Council applied to Fenland District Council to designate the whole of the Parish of Whittlesey as a 'Neighbourhood Area'. Planning Committee on 29 April 2015 determined the application: The entire Parish designated as Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area.

The Neighbourhood Area contains the town of Whittlesey, the villages of Coates, Eastrea, Pondersbridge, Turves and settlements at Kings Dyke and Kings Delph.

For clarity, the maps in this document will magnify parts of the Neighbourhood Area, focusing on Whittlesey, Eastrea, Coates, Turves and Pondersbridge. The map opposite shows the rough boundaries for the magnified maps.





Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

A neighbourhood plan or Order must not constrain the delivery of important national policy objectives. The National Planning Policy Framework is the main document setting out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Paragraph 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies in local plans and spatial development strategies. Qualifying bodies should plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside these strategic policies. More specifically, paragraph 29 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.

Fenland Local Plan

For reference, the Neighbourhood Plan has regard to the following local policies. The primary conditions statement will provide more detail about how the Neighbourhood Plan relates to specific elements of these policies:

- **LP1** A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- **LP2** Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents
- **LP3** Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside
- **LP4** Housing
- **LP5** Meeting Housing Need
- **LP6** Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail
- **LP7** Urban Extensions
- **LP11** Whittlesey
- **LP12** Rural Area Development Policy
- **LP13** Supporting and Mitigating the Impact of a Growing District
- **LP14** Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland
- **LP15** Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland
- **LP16** Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments Across the District
- **LP17** Community Safety
- **LP18** The Historic Environment
- **LP19** The Natural Environment

Basic Conditions

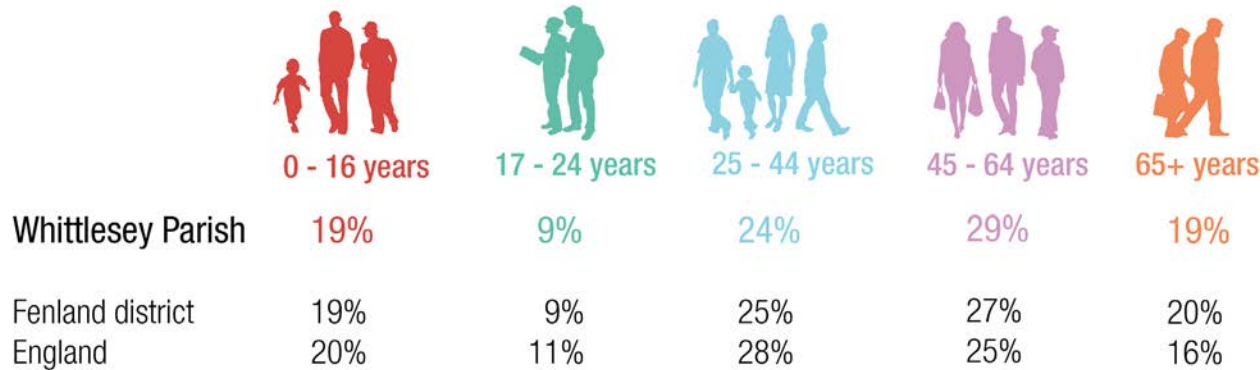
More detailed information about how Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan is regarding the national and local strategic policy set out in the primary conditions statement submitted with the plan.

The “basic conditions statement” is a document that shows how the plan has met the following set of requirements:

- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- The making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- The making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);
- The making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations, which have been incorporated into UK law.

People and Place

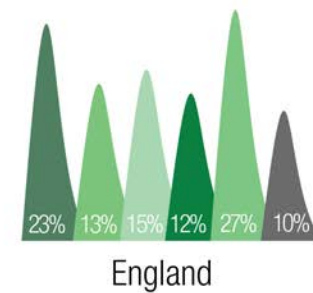
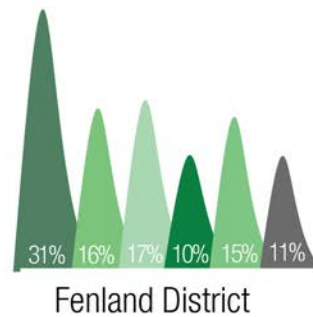
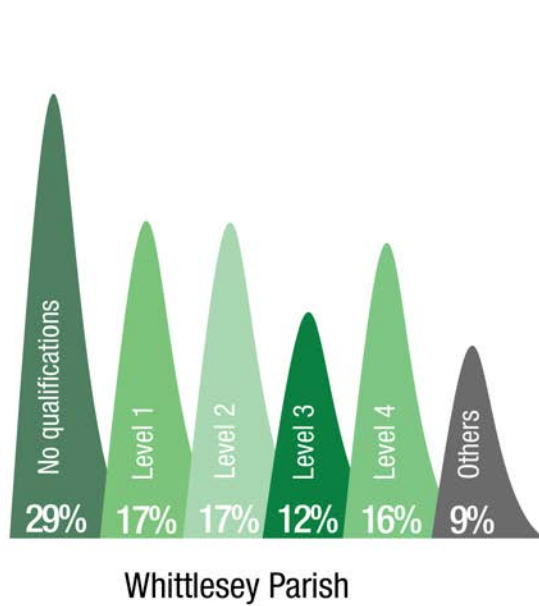
Age Structure



Whittlesey Parish has an older than average population profile, which reflects that of Fenland District. It has a lower percentage of people aged 17-24 and 24-44 years, and a higher percentage of people aged 45-64 and 65+ years. There are several potential reasons for this: high cost/low availability of housing, lack of nearby employment opportunities/amenities. It creates a specific set of opportunities and challenges for the Neighbourhood Plan to address.

People and Place

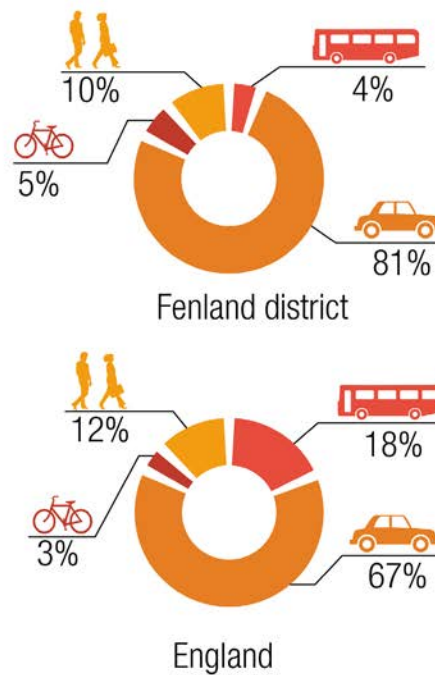
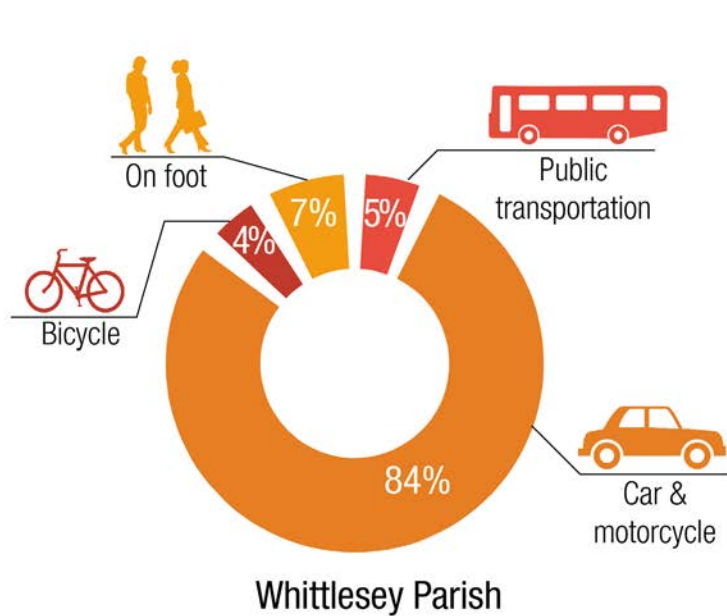
Qualification



Compared to the averages for England, Whittlesey Parish has a higher percentage of people with no qualifications and a lower than average percentage of people whose highest qualification is Level 4 (degree level or above). This may reflect an older population, as it is only recently that so much emphasis has been put on degree level education as a route into employment.

People and Place

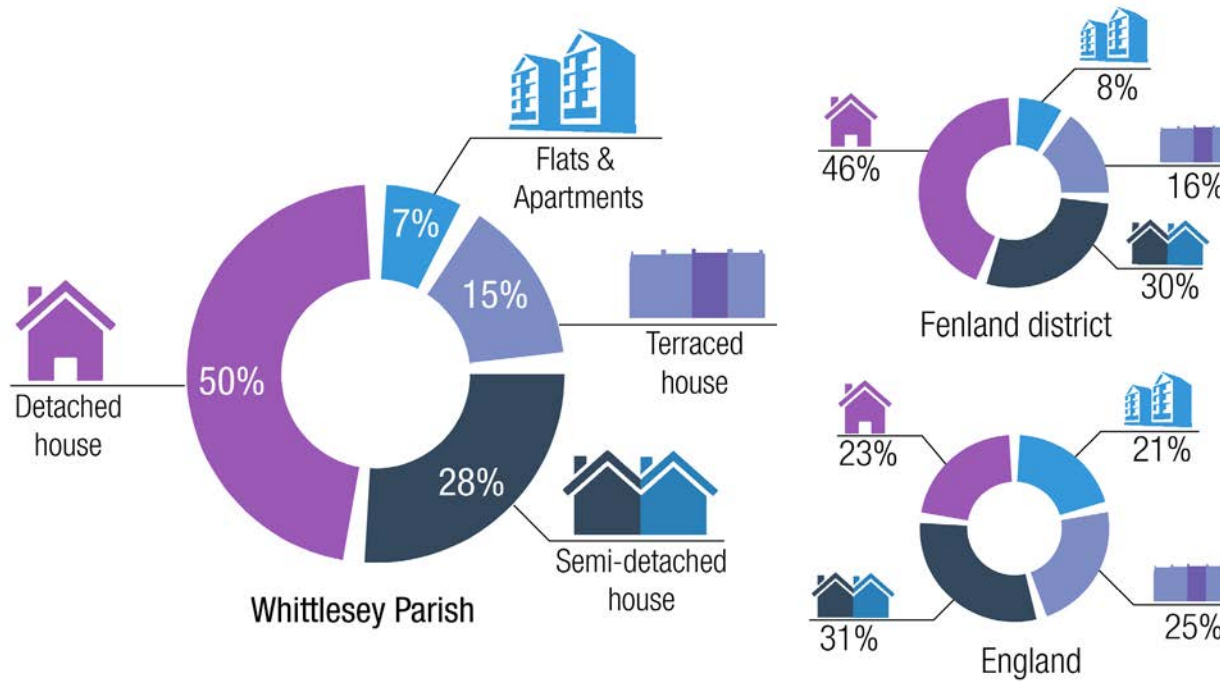
Travel to Work



Whittlesey Parish has higher private car use than Fenland District and significantly higher car use than the average for England. It has lower than average levels of walking and use of public transport, despite the train station and bus services. This may indicate that current public transport services and walking/cycling provision don't currently represent a good enough alternative to the private car.

People and Place

Type of Accommodation



Parish and Fenland District have higher than average levels of detached housing and lower levels of apartments and terraced housing. The Housing Needs Assessment produced by Aecom identifies an undersupply of smaller dwellings and demand for terraced housing that is stronger than for other house types. There is also an identified demand for more affordable housing.

People and Place

Occupation

Fenland District and Whittlesey Parish have a higher percentage of people working as Process, Plant and Machine Operatives than the average for England, which gives an insight into the predominant businesses within the area. Both Fenland and Whittlesey Parish also have a lower than average percentage of people in Professional Occupations and slightly higher than average Skilled Trades Occupations.

	 Managers, Directors & Senior Officials	 Professional Occupations	 Associate Professional & Technical Occupations	 Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	 Caring, Leisure & Other Service Occupations	 Skilled Trades Occupations	 Sales & Customer Services Occupations	 Process, Plant & Machines Operatives	 Elementary Occupations
Whittlesey Parish	6%	11%	11%	13%	11%	15%	9%	12%	12%
Fenland district	6%	10%	10%	10%	11%	15%	8%	15%	15%
England	7%	18%	13%	12%	10%	12%	9%	7%	12%

Flooding

The River Nene runs along the North of the Parish boundary, and the majority of the land within the Parish is low lying, typical of the Fens landscape. According to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, most Whittlesey Parish sits within Flood Zone 3 and has a high probability of flooding (p14). Another Environment Agency map showing the extent of flooding from rivers and sea gives more detail. It shows that the North of Whittlesey town is at a higher risk of flooding than other parts of the Neighbourhood Area (p16).

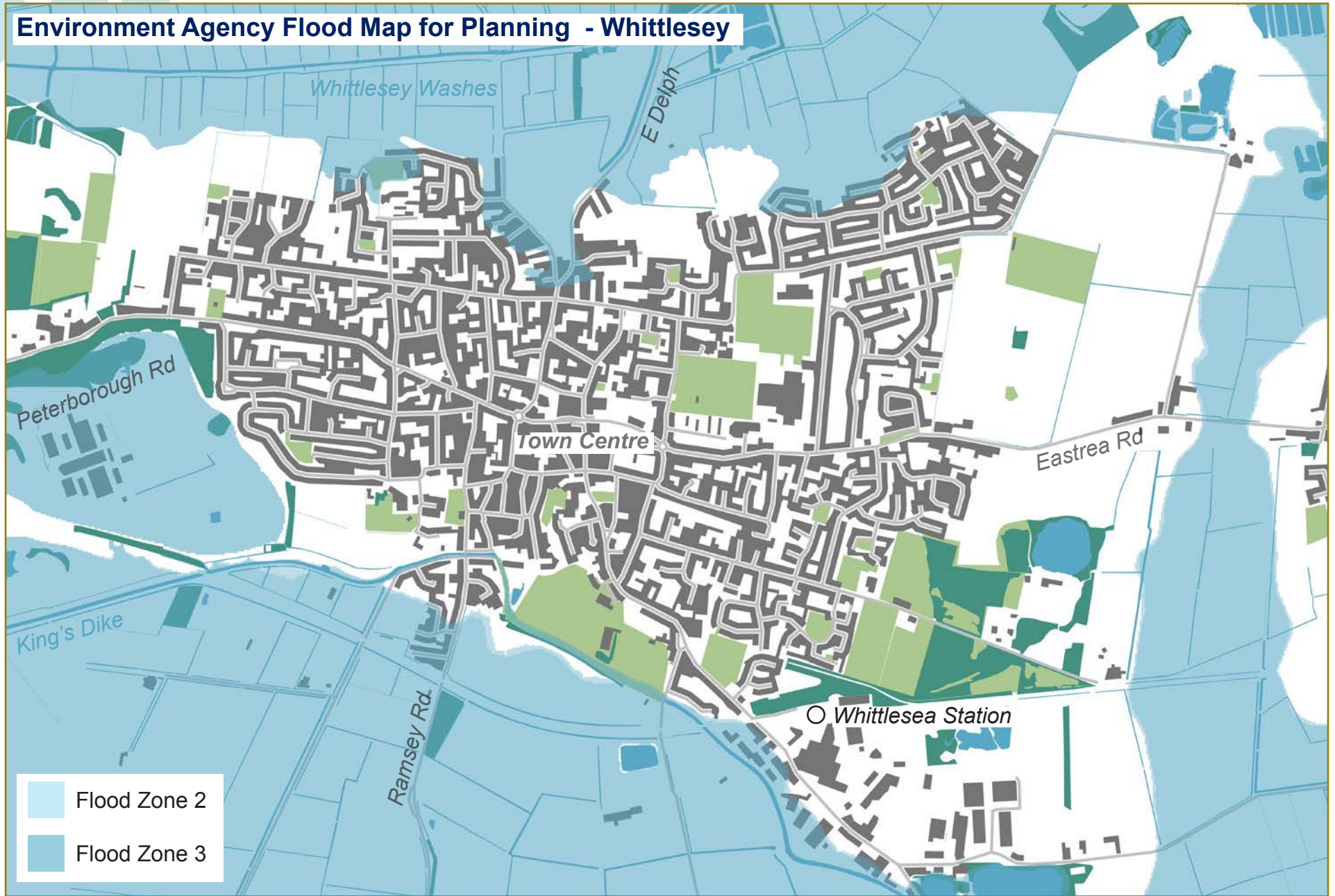
Whittlesey Parish sits within The Fens National Character Area, a distinctive, historic wetland landscape lying to the west of the Wash estuary, which formerly constituted the largest wetland area in England. It is a low-lying, flat landscape with many drainage ditches, dykes and rivers. Most elevations within the landscape do not pass the 10m contour and much of the land is below sea level.

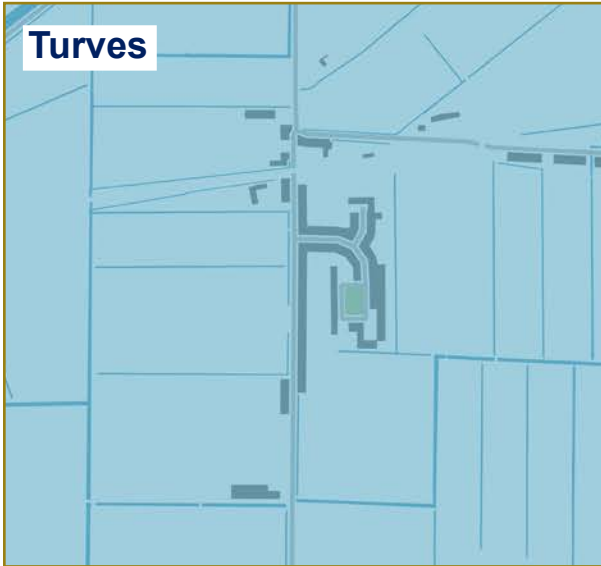
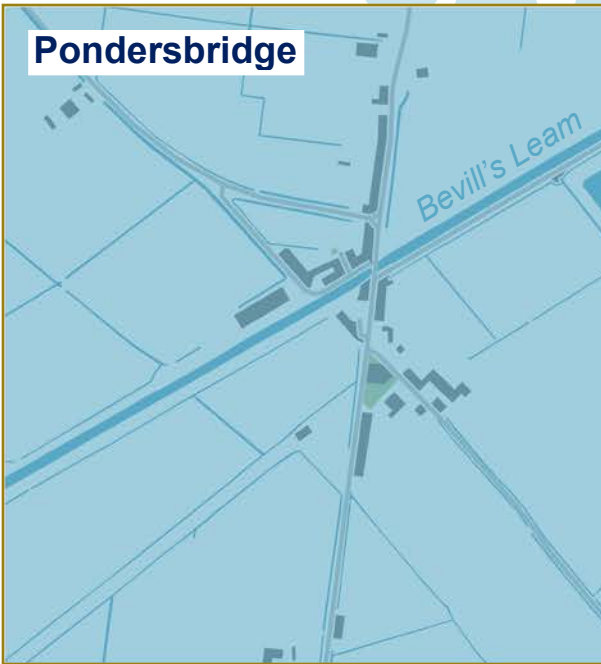
The area to the North of the Parish is known as Whittlesey Washes and functions as an essential flood storage area. Within the Washes sits the Whittlesey Washes Flood Storage Reservoir, which protects adjacent land from flooding. The washes are designated as a Special Area of Conservation Internationally, listed under the Ramsar Convention, are a Special Protection Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Despite this, Whittlesey Parish has experienced several flooding incidents, most notably during November 2012 and February 2013. During this time, Whittlesey was cut off from the North for 65 days. Whittlesey Parish continues to be vulnerable.

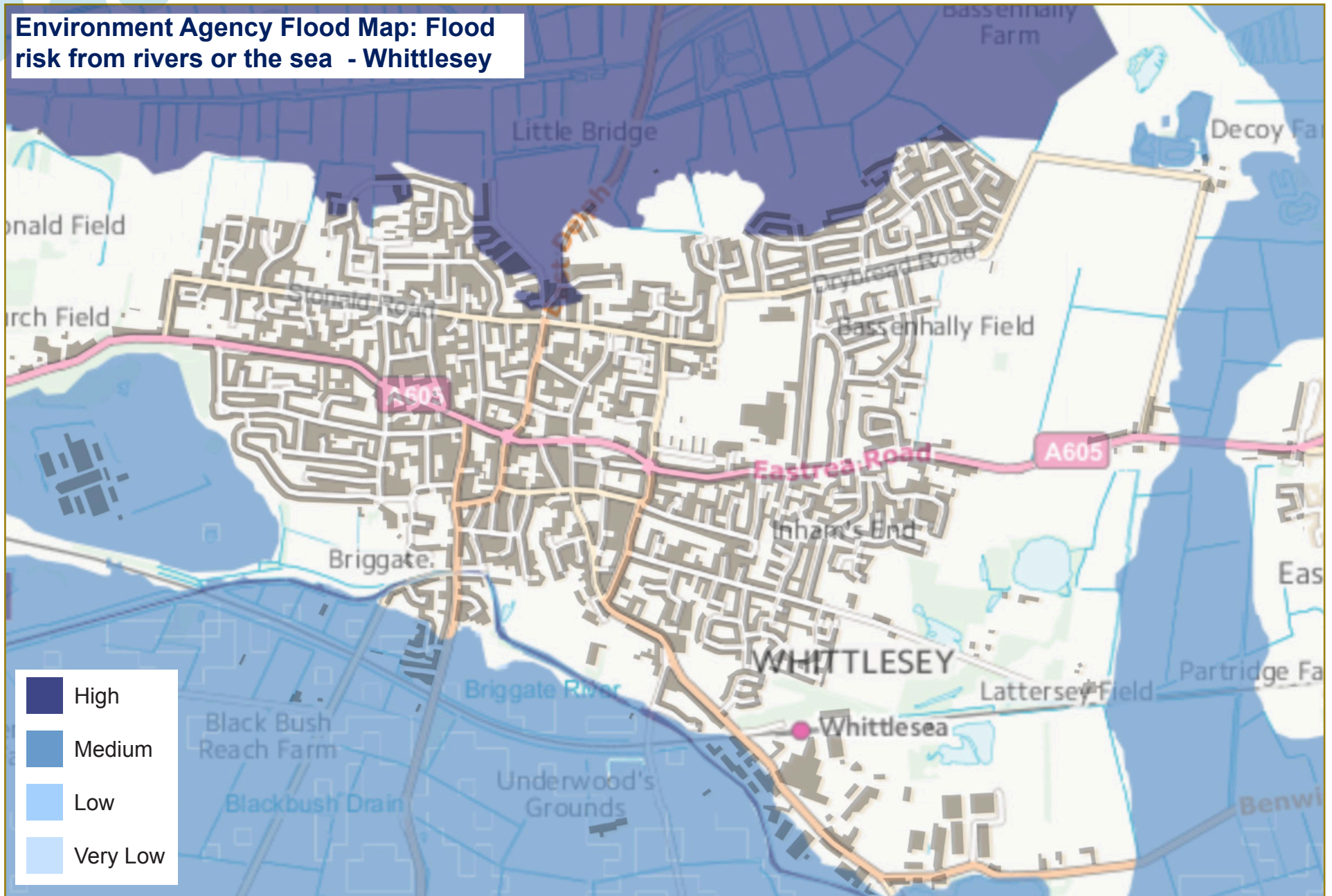


Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning - Whittlesey

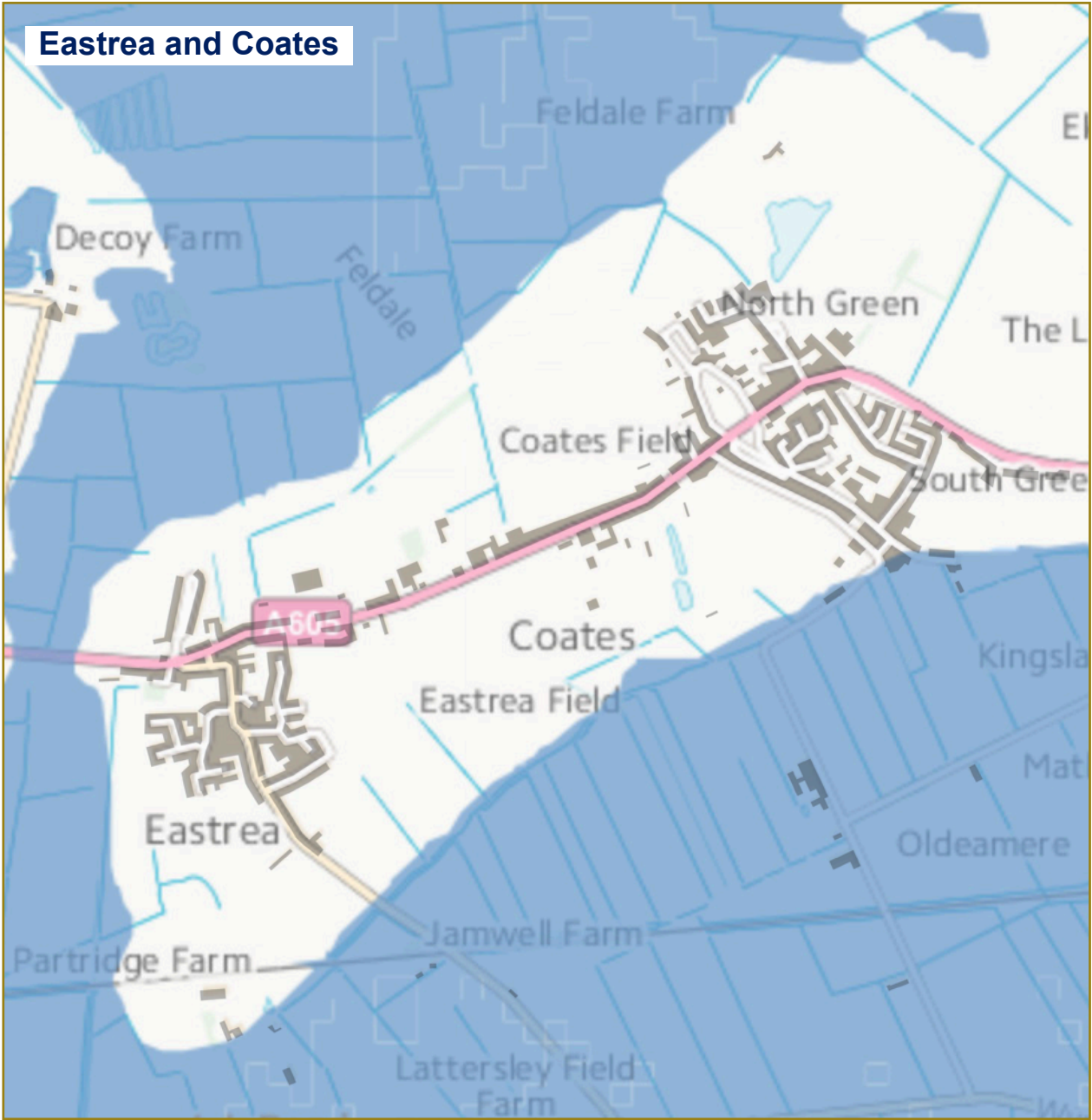




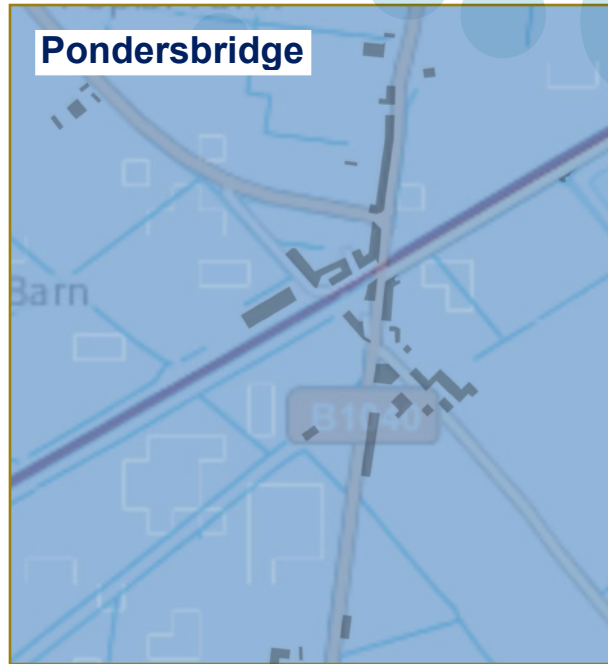
Environment Agency Flood Map: Flood risk from rivers or the sea - Whittlesey



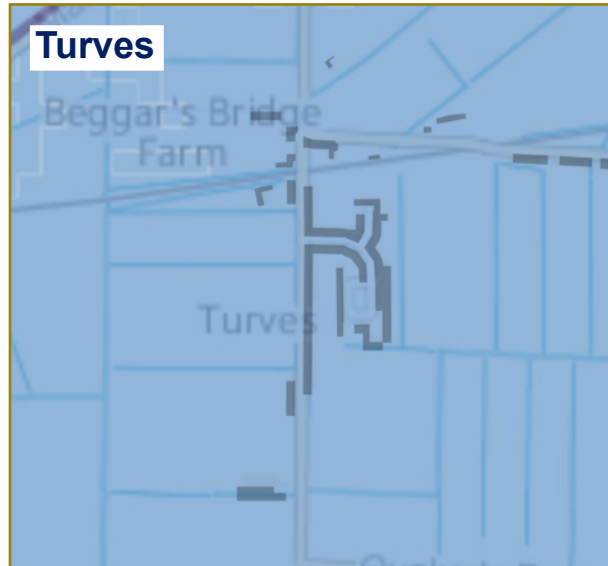
Eastrea and Coates



Pondersbridge



Turves



Greenspace

Landscape Character

As detailed on the previous page, Whittlesey Parish sits within the distinctive landscape of the Fens. The landscape is flat and low-lying. The level horizons and scale of the landscape create large, open panoramas and enormous skies. The area has historically had high-quality soil, resulting in large scale cultivation of crops. The wetlands habitat includes mudflats, which support internationally important wading birds and wildfowl populations. The landscape is a prominent element of the Parish's character, and as can be seen on page 19, is accessible to the community via a network of footpaths and walking routes.

Parks and Play Spaces

There are some parks and play spaces within the Parish. Manor Field is a public park in Whittlesey Town that includes sports pitches and a leisure centre with a pool and gym. Coates has a large, central village green framed by trees, with children's play areas at either end. Eastrea and Turves both have smaller parks with children's play facilities.



Coates Church Photo © Cllr Bob Wickes



Ashline Lock Photo © Cllr Bob Wickes

Greenspace

Natural Space

Several industrial sites within Whittlesey Parish now provide great biodiversity value for the community. Kings Dyke Nature Reserve is located to the West of Whittlesey Town. Once the location of a clay pit, used for brickmaking in the 19th Century. The site was developed as an educational nature reserve for the benefit of the community in 1995. It now covers 70ha and includes a wide range of habitats and species. There are educational facilities on site which facilitate school and university study visits. Lattersey Nature Reserve, to the east of Whittlesey Town, is a disused quarry that now provides a wetland haven for wildlife and a boardwalk route for visitors.

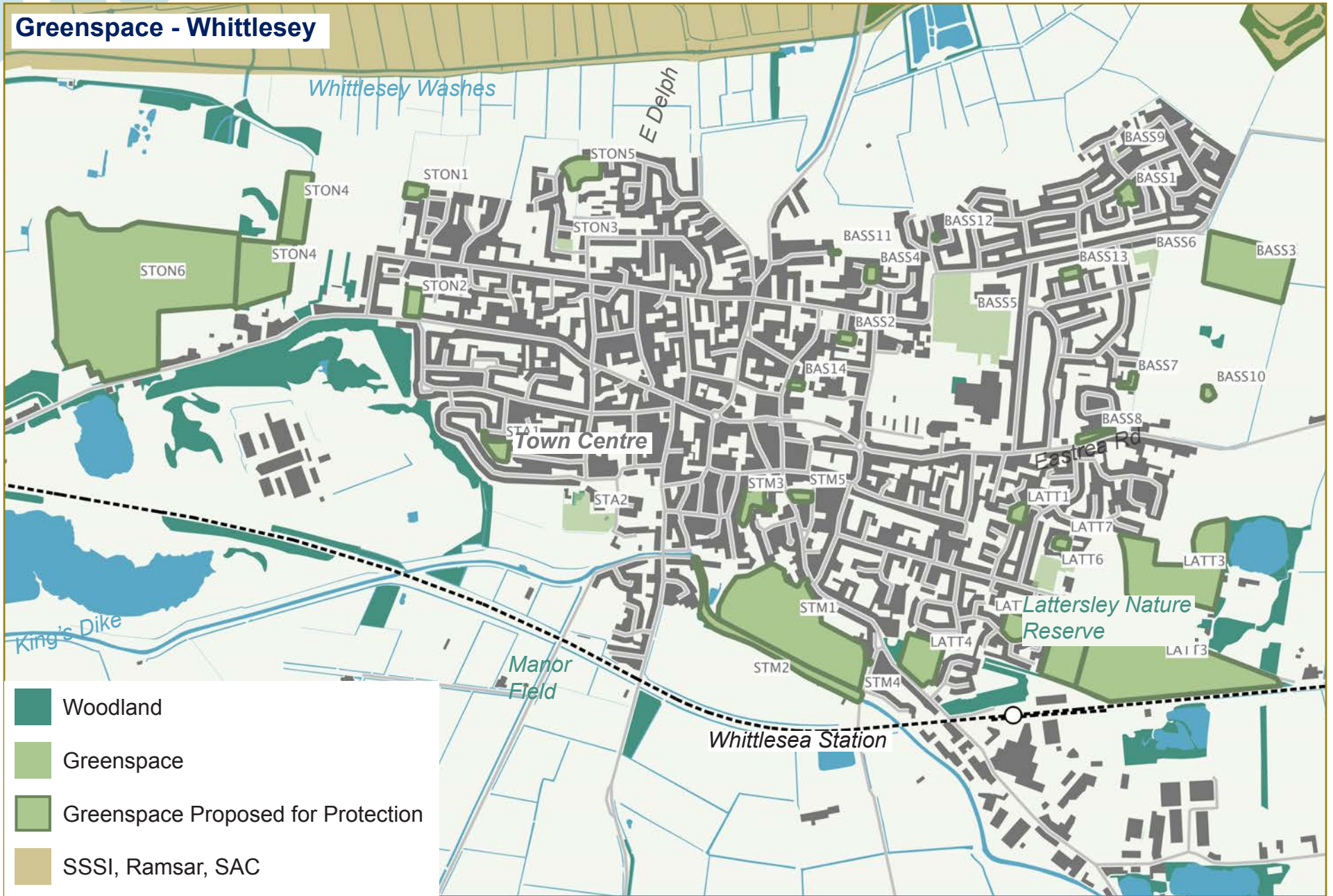


*Lattersey Nature Reserve
Photo © Tony Bennett*



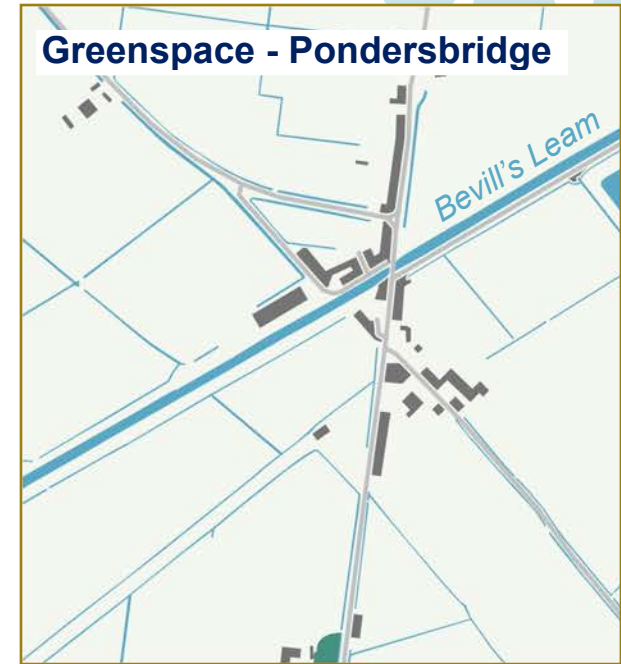
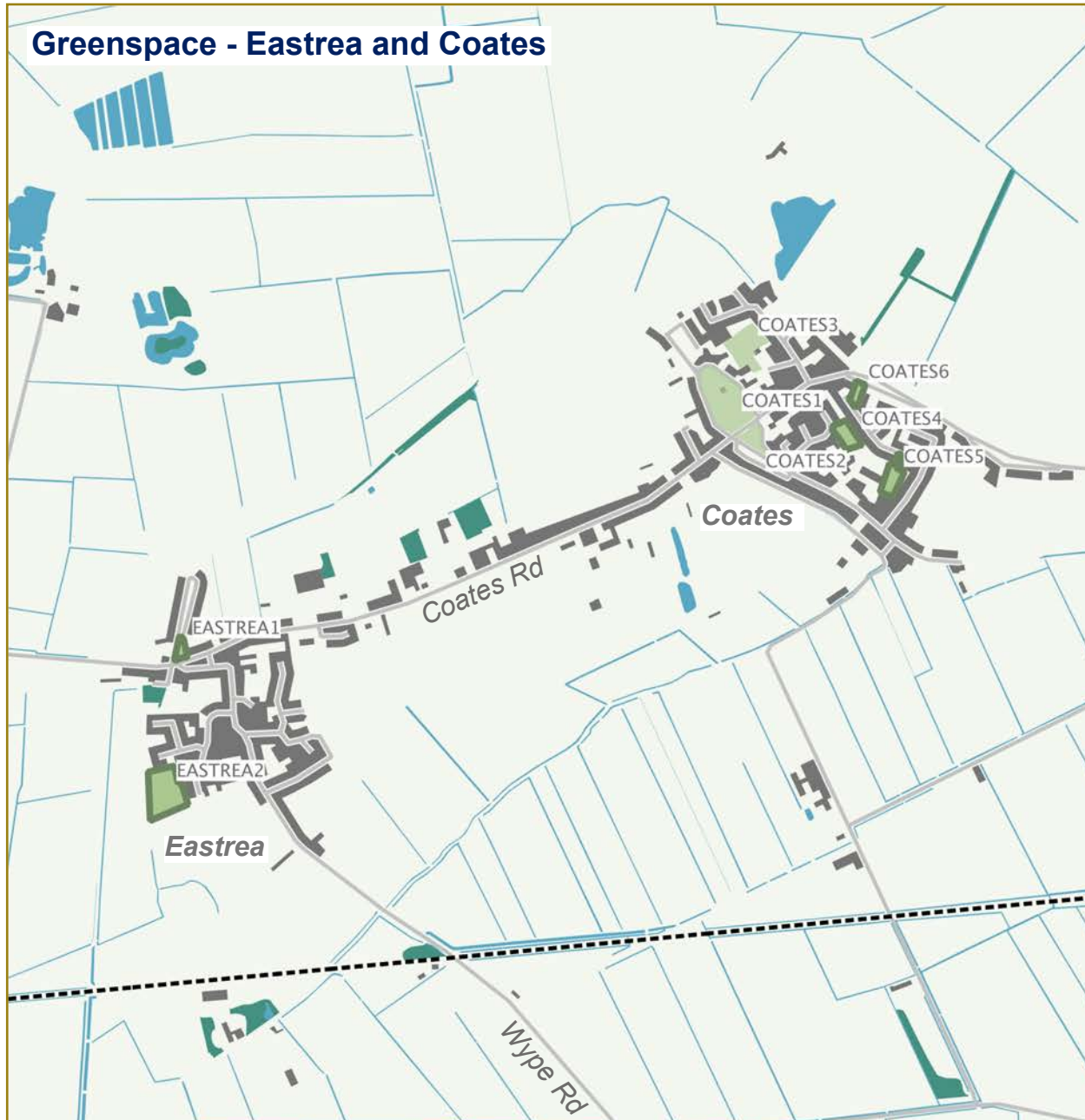
*Whittlesey Dyke
Photo © Rodney Burton*

Greenspace - Whittlesey



King's Dyke Nature Reserve


Further detail can be found in the Whittlesey Local Greenspace Assessment



Further detail can be found in the *Whittlesey Local Greenspace Assessment*



Heritage



Whittlesey town was once a settlement on an island surrounded by marshland. Now it is surrounded by agricultural land. This land was created by the draining of the Fens in the mid-17th Century (Conservation Area Appraisal March 2018).

The area has a rich Bronze Age history. At Must Farm, just to the west of Whittlesey town, archaeologists found a Bronze Age settlement so well preserved that it is described as “Britain’s Pompeii”. They found several 3000-year-old homes and a complete wooden wheel.

The Neighbourhood Plan boundary contains two Conservation Areas, one in the centre of Whittlesey and the other in Coates. Whittlesey contains the historic town centre and the historic area around Gracious Street, Delph Street, and Claygate. Coates’ is focused on the central core of the village, taking in North

Green and South Green and the property immediately around these open spaces. Both areas have unique architectural and historical interests.

The Neighbourhood Plan area also contains many listed buildings and structures recognised for their remarkable architecture or history. Most of these sit inside the two Conservation Areas, with a few scattered around the rest of the area. One of these is the Buttercross, which sits in the middle of Market Place in Whittlesey town and dates back to 1680. It was originally used as a place to sell goods.

One notable part of the area’s history are the mud walls, a unique type of wall construction found only in Whittlesey Parish built between the mid 18th and late 19th Century. As you might expect, the walls are made with mud and other materials to make them stronger. The

walls had to be thick to keep them stable and would have been built up in layers. Although some mud walls have been lost through decay and development, 28 sections of the wall survive.

A popular tradition in the Neighbourhood Plan area is the Straw Bear festival. No one quite knows when the festival started, but it was the custom on the Tuesday following Plough Monday (the 1st Monday after Twelfth Night) to dress a local person head to foot in straw and lead them, dancing, around the town. The tradition fell out of fashion, but it was revived in the 1980s by the Whittlesea Society. Now the festival takes place over three days at the weekend closest to the original date every January. The procession now has many dancers, musicians and performers, and locals who dress up in traditional costumes.



*Straw Bear
Photo © Kev747 via Wikimedia*



*Must Farm Bronze Age Excavations -
Photo © Dr Colleen Morgan via Wikimedia*

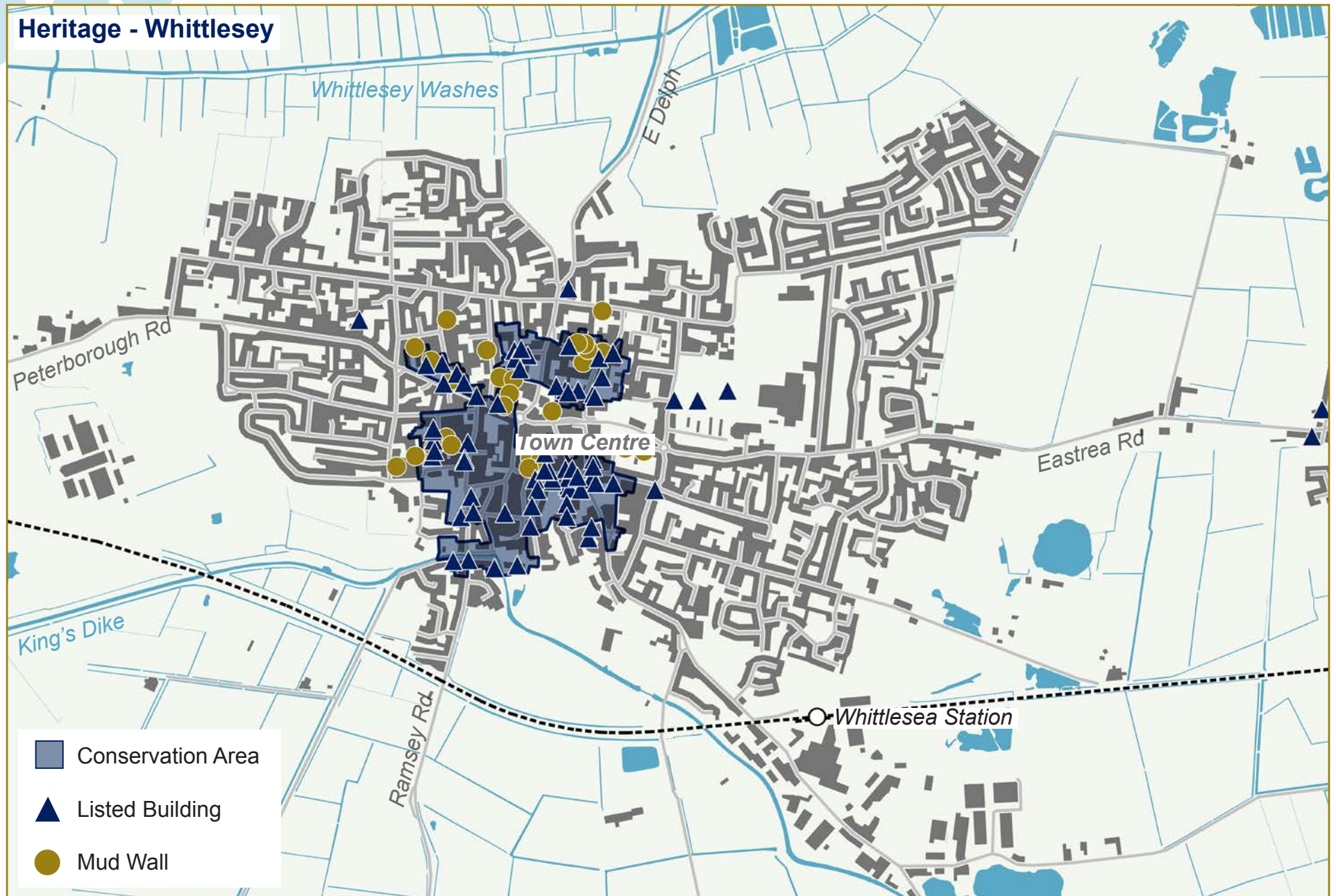


Mud Wall - Photo © Robin Stott

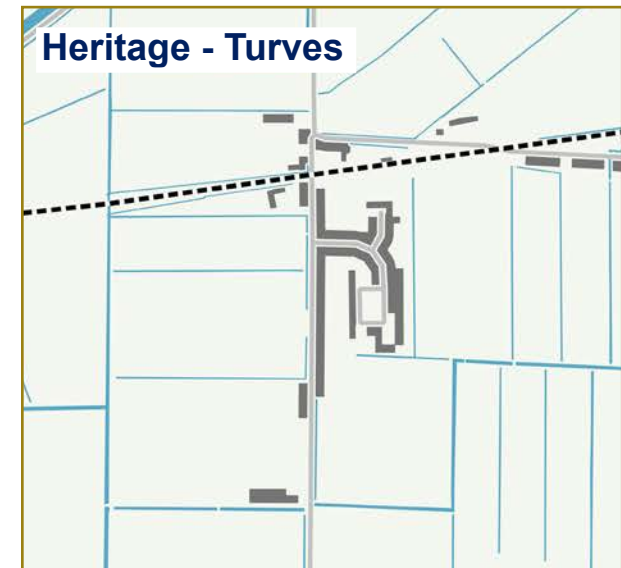
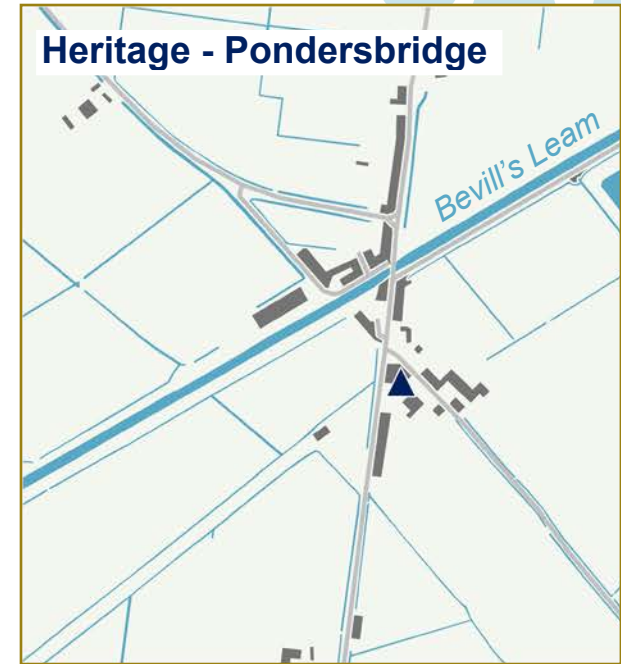
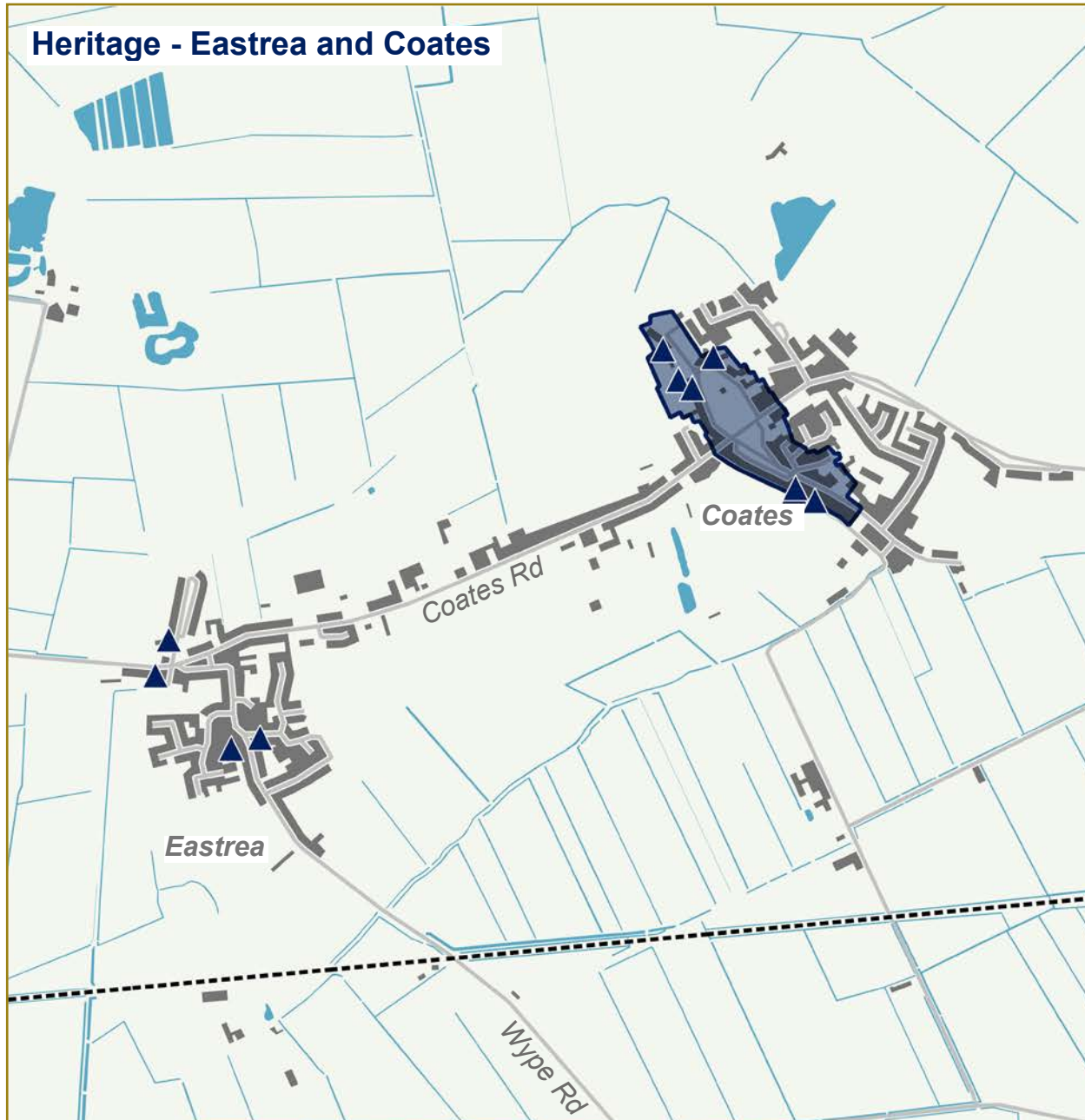


Buttercross - Photo ©Tim Heaton

Heritage - Whittlesey




Further detail can be found in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Mud Walls Survey



Further detail can be found in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Mud Walls Survey



Land Use



As the largest settlement, Whittlesey town has the widest variety of different land uses. The centre has a range of mainly independent shops and services focused along Market Street. Surrounding the centre are housing areas, and beyond the housing are two industrial sites, one to the west and one to the south. Whittlesey is also the location of the leisure centre and the local museum.

The villages of Eastrea, Coates, Turves and Pondersbridge are small and mainly made up of houses plus a local pub, small shop or takeaway. Residents need to travel outside of the village to access day to day shops and services.

The rest of the Neighbourhood Plan area comprises open farmland, with houses and farm buildings scattered throughout. The economy of Fenland relies on the production of crops, including grains, vegetables and cash crops, so the farmland is an integral part of the area.

There is currently no large supermarket within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, though applications have been submitted in the past. There are also no large “comparison” retailers (that sell products bought less often - like clothes or electrical items) or larger department stores.

This is not necessarily a disadvantage, especially as we have seen this type of shop struggle in recent years. Residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area can travel to Peterborough to access this type of retail, travelling 20 minutes by car or 30 minutes by bus.

Peterborough is also the location of the nearest hospital and has cultural attractions, hotels, and a wider range of places to eat and drink.



*Whittlesey Market Street
Photo ©Vicky Payne*

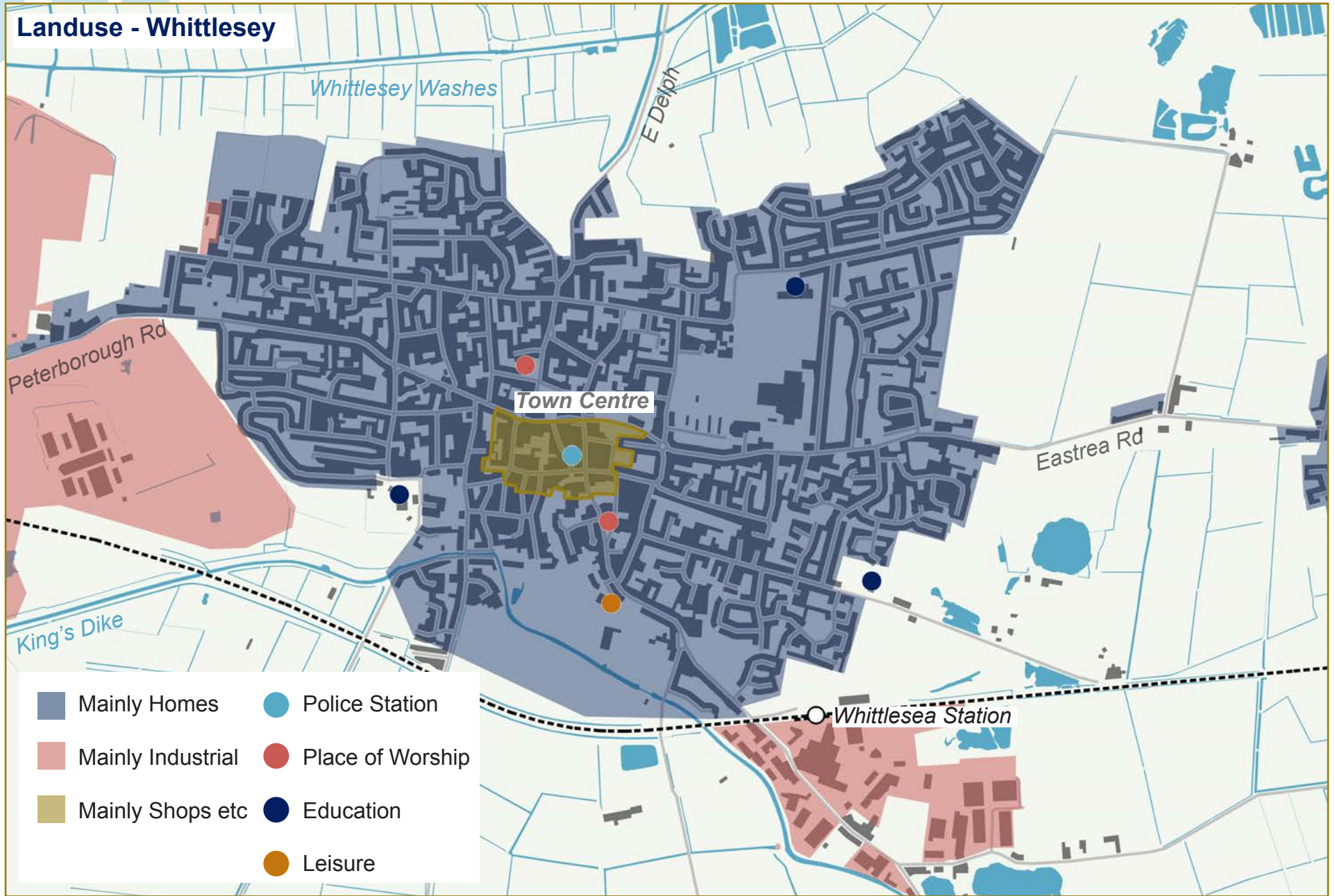


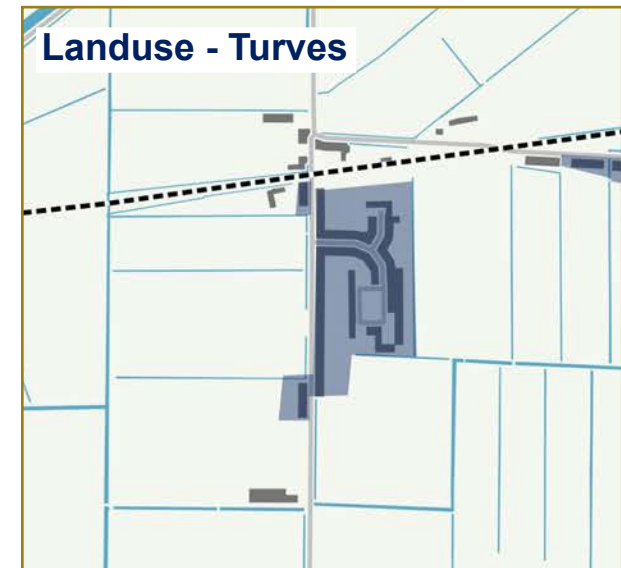
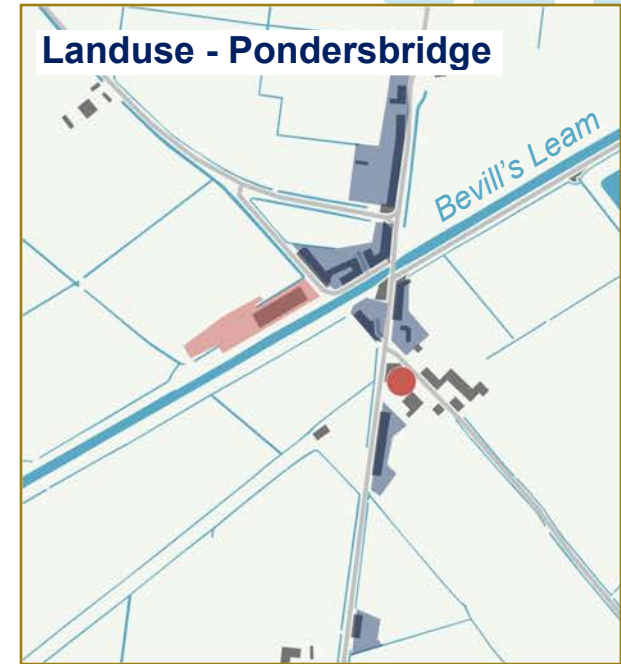
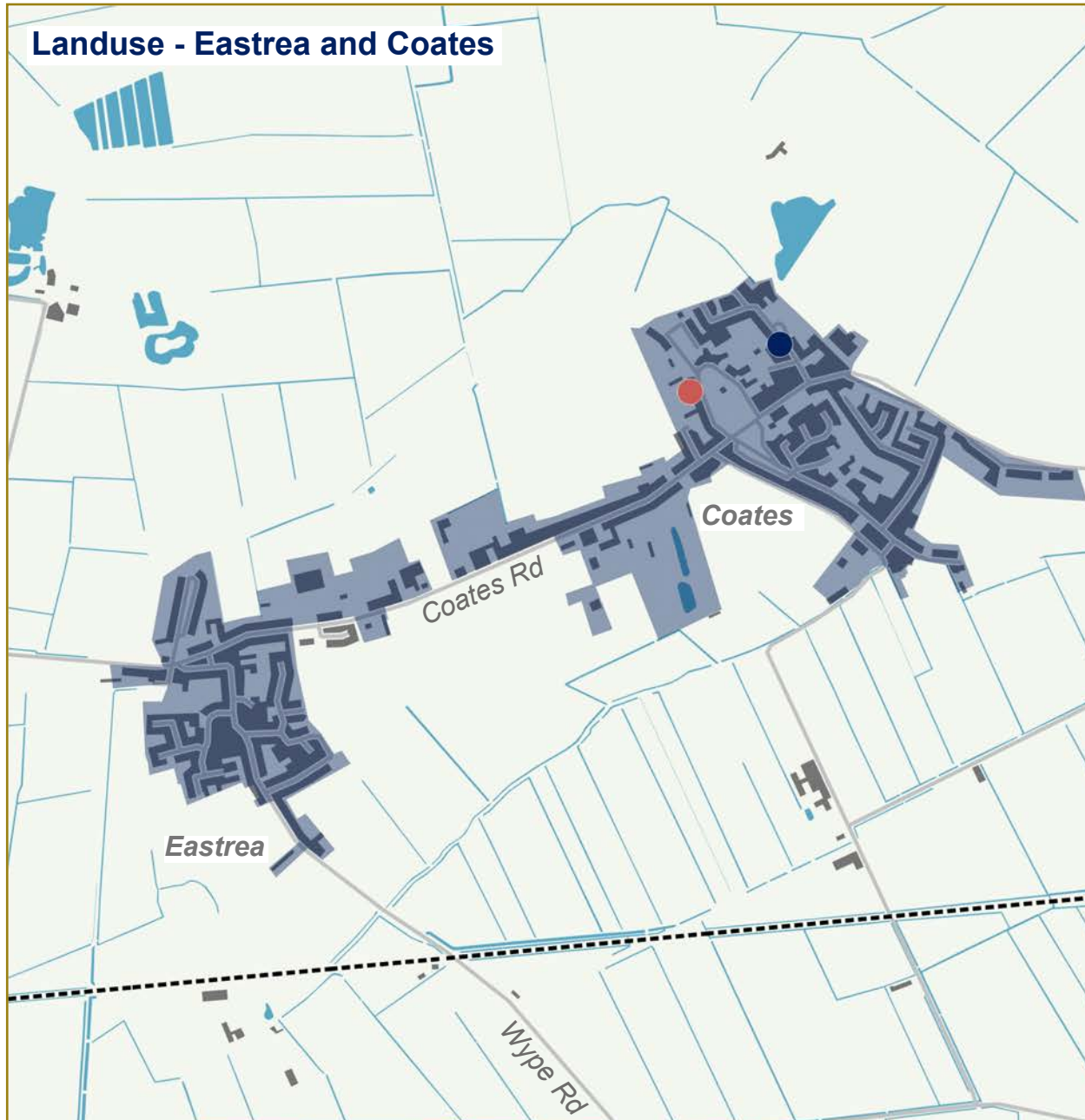
*Coates housing and local shop
Photo © Google Streetview*



*Pub, Whittlesey Town centre
Photo ©Vicky Payne*

Landuse - Whittlesey








Roads

Primary Road



The A605 runs through the Parish, connecting the A1139 (and Peterborough) in the west and the A141 in the east. Problems: the road is not wide, and there is little flexibility within the surrounding road network to re-route traffic in congestion, accidents or flooding.

Secondary Road

The most significant Secondary Road is the B1040, which runs North to South connecting with Thorney to the North (and then linking to the A47) and Pondersbridge, Ramsey, Huntingdon to the south. The B1093 also provides a connection to Benwick to the south east.

Local Street

The local streets break down into two different characters. There are the narrow roads that cross the surrounding Fens landscape, often running alongside dykes and watercourses. Then there are the residential streets and side streets within Whittlesey Town and the villages.

Parking

As Whittlesey has an older population and infrequent or disconnected public transport options there is a high demand for car parking spaces. There are a number of car parks in and around Whittlesey town centre, but in the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan area car parking is on street. Parking issues are felt more acutely in the centre and within housing estates.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Heavy goods vehicles pass through the Neighbourhood Plan area to access various industrial sites, which can cause congestion and noise issues. Particularly problematic are the routes through Whittlesey town centre indicated on the following map. There is local support for a relief road to enable HGVs to access industrial sites from the east rather than adding to the congestion of town centre and residential routes.



Example of primary road: A605



Example of secondary road: B1040

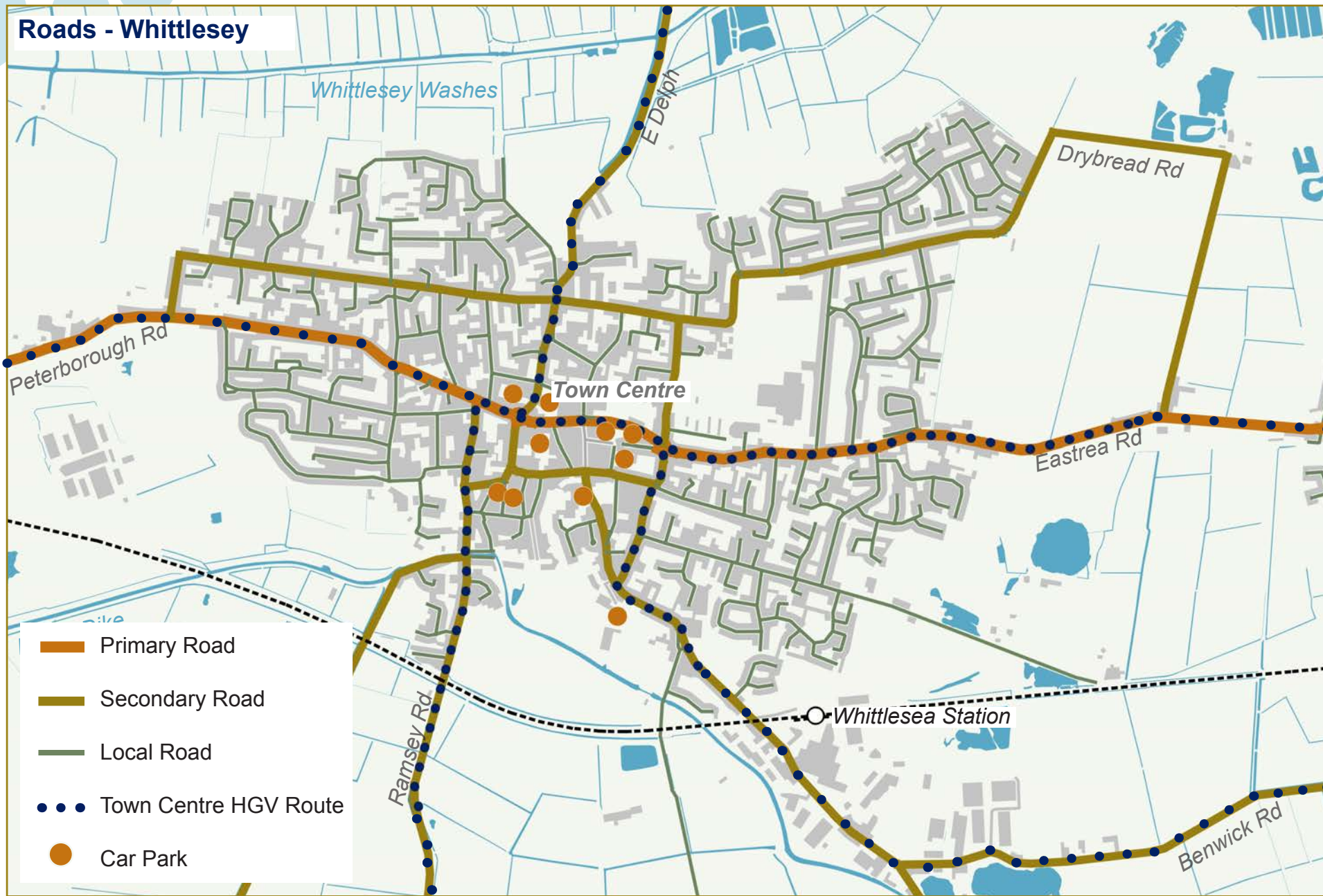


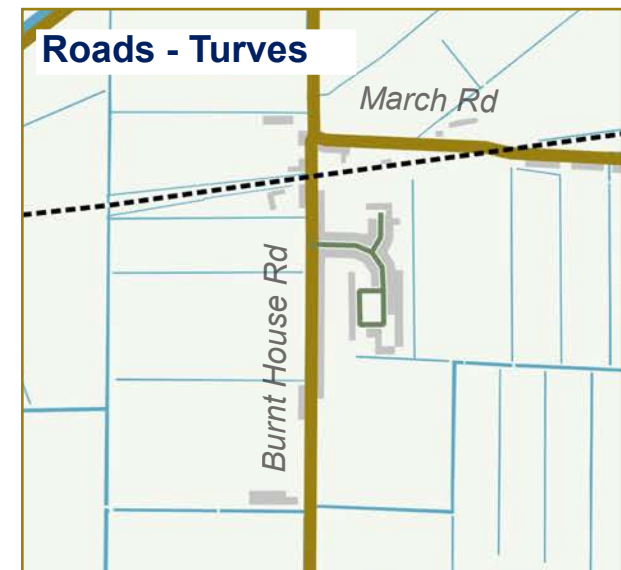
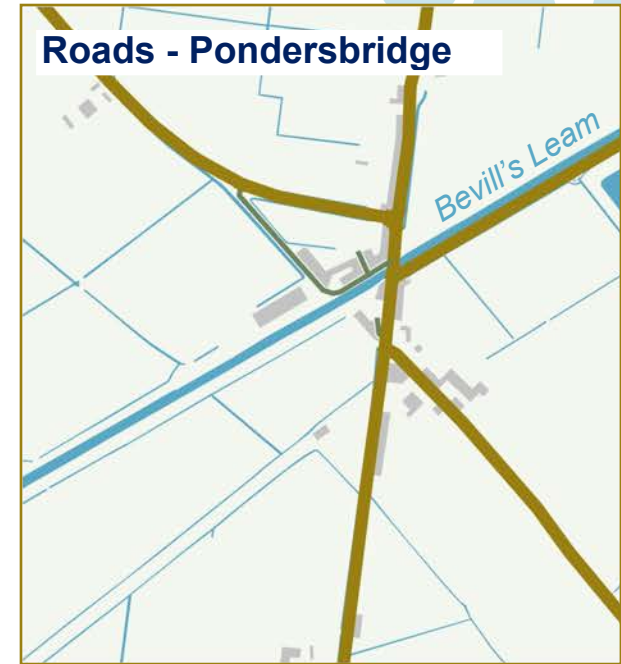
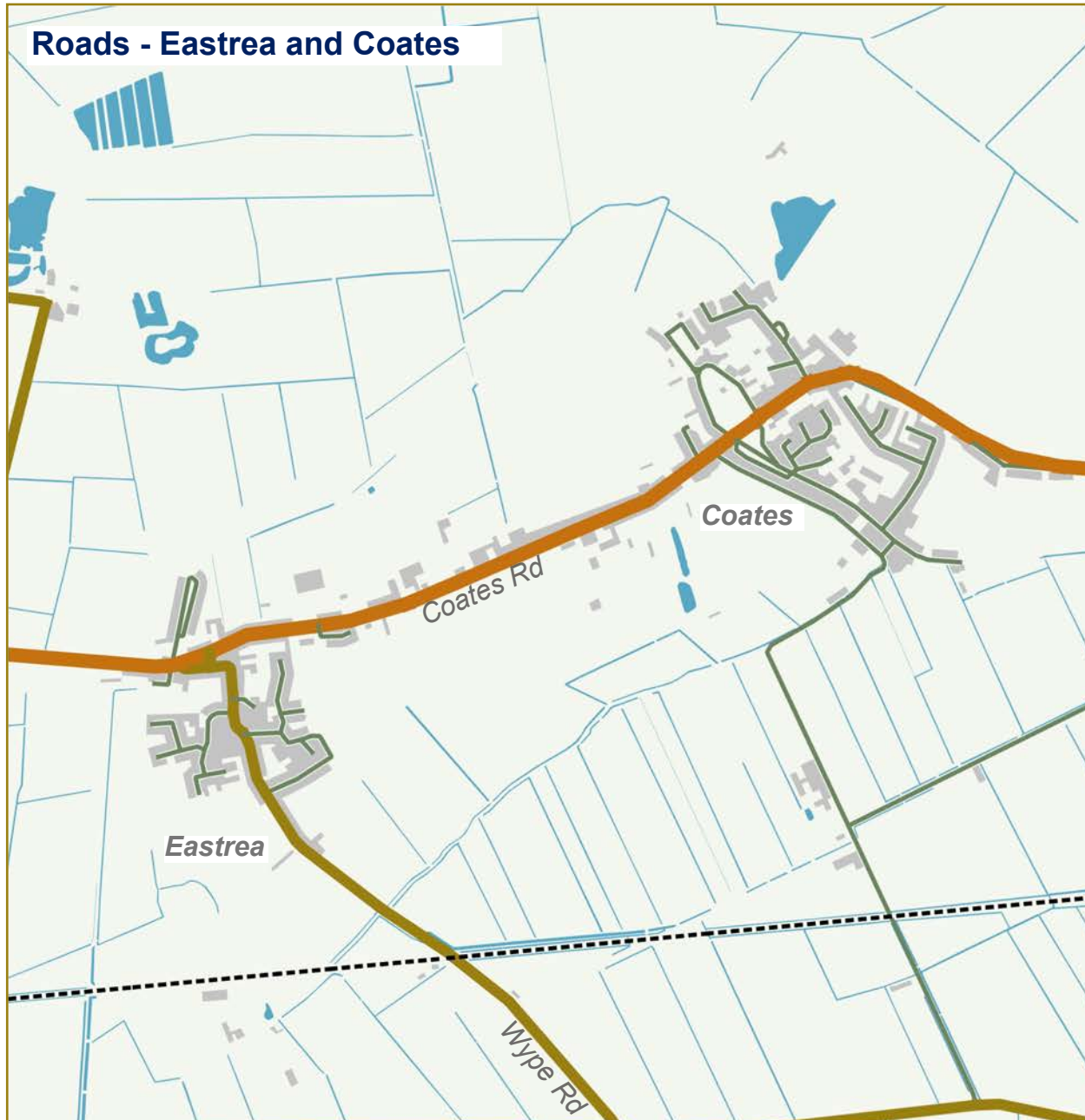
Example of residential street: Stonald Avenue



Example of local road between settlements: Wype Road

Roads - Whittlesey







Walking, Cycling and Public Transport



Walking

The map shows several footpaths extending out from Whittlesey and the villages, which provide valuable leisure routes and access to the Fens landscape. In terms of the pedestrian experience within Whittlesey and the villages, pavements are sometimes narrow and easily blocked by irresponsible parking. The quality of surfaces is inconsistent, and there are fewer crossing opportunities than might be required.

Cycling

The route shown on the map is National Cycle Route 63. It is a combination of trails, low traffic and on-road sections. The route connects the wider cycle network, connecting Peterborough and March. There are very few segregated cycle routes in the Parish and little cycle parking provision.

Bus

The bus route shown on the plan opposite is the 33 Stagecoach service which runs from Peterborough to Chatteris. There are bus stops within Whittlesey, Eastrea and Coates. The service runs roughly every half hour from Monday to Friday. From Whittlesey Town Centre, Passengers can access Peterborough by bus in around 25 minutes. However, buses do not run after 19:30. Depending on where the journey starts and finishes, service ends between 5 and 7 pm. Service is worse on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Bus Route 31 links Peterborough with Ramsey, including one stop in Grosvenor Road, Whittlesey and Pondersbridge.

Train

Located to the South of Whittlesey is Whittlesea Train Station. As shown on the map, only a tiny portion of Whittlesey is within the 800m walking radius of the station, and it feels very separate. Trains from Whittlesey run once every two hours to Ipswich and Peterborough and select CrossCountry services call three times a day between Birmingham and Cambridge. Two of these extend to Stansted Airport. During the week, East Midlands Trains operate an additional service to Liverpool Lime Street. The journey time from Whittlesey to Peterborough is only 11 minutes, but the frequency of the service and distance to the station may be undermining this advantage.

Disconnection

Although Whittlesey Parish has reasonable walking, cycling, and public transport provision for a rural area, this plan could make many improvements. Notably, the identified cycle route does not link up with the Whittlesey train station. Neither do any of the bus routes. Combined with inconsistent pedestrian and cycle routes, it is challenging to complete a journey without using a private car.



Roads - Whittlesey

