

Whittlesey DRAFT
Neighbourhood Plan
2021- 2040
Regulation 14 pre-submission version





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1. Introduction

1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

1.1.1

The Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document that will help guide development in Whittlesey in the period up to 2040. This timescale has been chosen to align with the lifespan of the emerging Fenland Local Plan. Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan Group has produced it in consultation with the community. The ability to make a Neighbourhood Plan was introduced by the Localism Act 2012, which aimed to give communities more power to create a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape development in their local area.

1.1.2

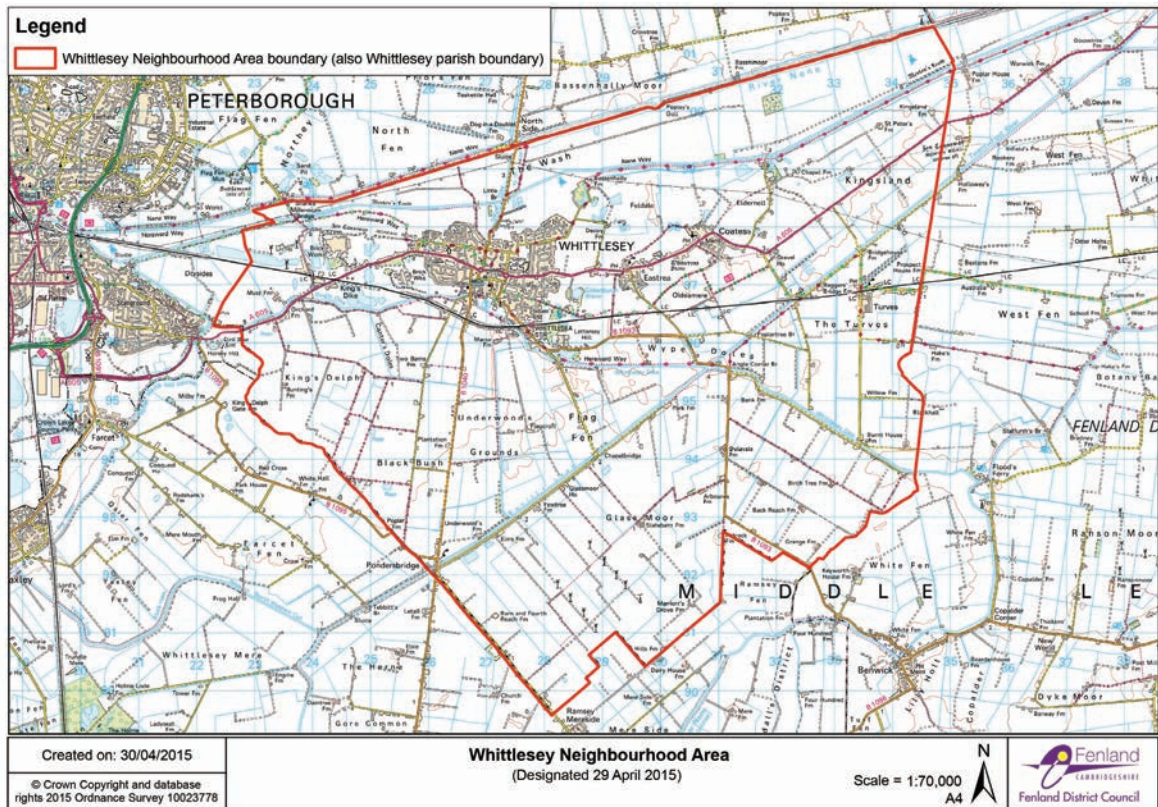
The Plan provides a vision for the community's future and sets out clear policies to help realise this vision. The Localism Act says that policies in a Neighbourhood Plan shouldn't conflict with higher-level planning policy. Those policies are the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Fenland District Council's adopted Local Plan (FLP) for Whittlesey. Because of this rule, there are certain things that a Neighbourhood Plan can and can't do. This is explained in more detail on page 7.

1.1.3

This Neighbourhood Plan doesn't include policies from these higher-level planning documents. Instead, it supports them by providing more clarity on several topics that the community thinks are important. These important local topics were captured in a series of consultation events. Page 6 offers some more details about these events.

1. Introduction

1.2 The Neighbourhood Area



1.2.1

The Parish of Whittlesey was formally designated a Neighbourhood Area under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (Part 2, Section 6) on 29th April 2015.

1. Introduction

1.3 Understanding the Area

1.3.1

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

1.3.2

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.

1.3.3

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

1.3.4

Whittlesey Parish sits within a distinctive, historic wetland landscape which contributes to its beauty and biodiversity but also causes flooding issues.

1.3.5

It has a unique cultural heritage, with Bronze Age history, historic conservation areas, listed buildings, the unique mud walls and the popular tradition of the Straw Bear festival.

1.3.6

Whittlesey town is the largest settlement with a range of shops and services. Road and public transport connectivity is reasonable for a rural area but could be improved.

1.3.7

More information about the area can be found in the Baseline Report.



Straw Bear
Photo © Kev747 via Wikimedia

1. Introduction

1.4 Understanding the Community

1.4.1

The Draft Neighbourhood Plan has been produced in collaboration with the local community of Whittlesey Parish.

1.4.2

The process started with a scoping questionnaire mailed out to every household in the Parish to understand the key issues. This received 2582 responses including 678 responses to a special children's questionnaire and 746 responses from young people at Sir Harry Smith College. The responses helped to guide and shape the topics that this Neighbourhood Plan covers

1.4.3

The next step was to hold a Vision and Objectives workshop where residents thought about what the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to achieve and develop a vision for the future of the Parish. The findings of the workshop were used to develop the Vision and Objectives on pages 8 and 9.

1.4.4

Finally we held a Policy Development workshop, where residents worked in groups to develop policy ideas on a range of topics including housing, design, landscape, employment, conservation and leisure. The work from this session has been used in addition to the questionnaire and previous workshops to develop the policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.



1. Introduction

1.5 Understanding the Policy

1.5.1

An important thing to understand about a Neighbourhood Plan is that it can only deal with issues relating to the development and use of land. The document will only be used in two main ways. By developers preparing applications for a particular site or piece of land. They will look at the Neighbourhood Plan to see which policies their proposed development must comply with. By decision makers to assess applications for a particular piece of land against the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. It will help them to decide whether to approve or refuse permission for the development.

1.5.2

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.

1.5.3

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.

1.5.4

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to the following Local Plan 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

2. Vision and Objectives

2.1. The Vision

2.1.1

The Vision for Whittlesey Parish was developed based on the responses from the Vision and Objectives Public Workshop held on the 13th October 2017. It imagines what a future visit to the Parish might be like:

“It’s the year 2037 and a visitor has arrived in Whittlesey Parish. It’s their first visit to the area - they were attracted by the fascinating heritage and are particularly keen to see the mud walls and explore the Bronze Age settlement at Must Farm.

Our visitor strolls down Market Street admiring the thriving town centre. There are many different shops and businesses and they don’t seem to be short of customers! On rounding the corner they encounter a bustling market. The stalls are bursting with unique local produce and the visitor gets chatting to a friendly stallholder while sampling a local ale.

The stallholder has lived in the area all his life, as have several generations of his family. He’s seen the area change over the years; new people have moved into the community, attracted by well - designed new housing in sustainable locations, great public transport access and excellent local services. New residents feel welcome and part of a strong community, and the population is now a sustainable mix of both younger and older people. The population growth has helped to support local businesses, which is why the town centre and market are doing so well.”

2. Vision and Objectives

2.2. The Objectives

The following Objectives have emerged from the consultation process:

2.2.1

Provide new high-quality homes in appropriate sustainable locations that meet the need of the Neighbourhood Area without compromising the distinctive and attractive setting of the Town and Villages, or their natural environment, securing high-quality development in all new schemes.

2.2.2

The Neighbourhood Area maintains its vibrant community through proportionate growth, which delivers a range of housing, retains or enhances employment opportunities whilst protecting the rural setting of the settlements within. Local people will have opportunities to live and work in the area they have grown up in and remain essential and thriving within the community.

2.2.3

Promote new high quality economic and employment opportunities in appropriate locations and encourage the retention of existing employers in the Neighbourhood Area.

2.2.4

Secure the appropriate regeneration of the town centre, tackling long-standing issues around traffic, parking, and retail offer, to give an improved shopping experience.

2.2.5

Seek ongoing improvements to transport, specifically east-west connectivity and access to industrial areas, and to remove the designated HGV route from residential areas. To encourage a southern relief road or bypass, which local people have said that they support.

2.2.6

Seek ongoing improvement to flood defences, utility infrastructure, and digital connectivity, especially mobile phone reception and broadband.

2.2.7

Seek improvements to public transport, mainly the frequency and span of operation.



Section 3: Policies

3.1 Policy 1: Spatial Strategy - Justification



3.1.1

Whittlesey Parish (the Neighbourhood Area) includes the vibrant Market Town of Whittlesey, the villages of Coates, Eastrea, Pondersbridge, Turves and settlements at Kings Dyke and Kings Delph. The town of Whittlesey is a strategic location for growth in the Fenland Local Plan. In recent years, Whittlesey has made a positive contribution to meeting the areas' housing requirement. The supply of new dwellings, either built, allocated or with planning permission, has significantly surpassed the housing requirement set out in the Fenland Local Plan.

3.1.2

Whittlesey parish is located within The Fens, a distinctive historic, low-lying and flat, wetland landscape. The majority of land within the parish is at risk from fluvial and tidal flooding, as illustrated on the government's Flood Map for Planning, and is unsuitable for many forms of development.

3.1.3

As shown on the Flood Map (Map 1 at Appendix A), the town of Whittlesey and villages of Coates and Eastrea are located in Flood Zone 1, but with areas of Flood Zone 3 running close to the edge of the built area. The villages of Pondersbridge and Turves, and most of the open countryside in the Parish, are located in Flood Zone 3 and therefore have little opportunity for development.

3.1.4

An extensive area in the north of the parish, and adjacent to the built area of Whittlesey, forms part of the Whittlesey Washes Flood Storage Reservoir which protects Peterborough, Whittlesey and other settlements and Fenland areas from flooding.

3.1.5

The edges of settlements are particularly visually sensitive due to the open character of the landscape. In addition, the Neighbourhood Area experiences infrastructure constraints particularly in terms of transport and access, at least in part due to the historic street patterns within Whittlesey and the presence of rail line and level crossings.

3.1.6

Opportunities for new development within the Neighbourhood Area are therefore constrained. However, the Fenland Local Plan identifies a strategic allocation to the East of Whittlesey, located north and south of Eastrea Road. This Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of new development to the East of Whittlesey. Such development will be accompanied by infrastructure and facilities, and will be expected to support the delivery of a new country park (see Policy 6 – Country Park).

Section 3: Policies

3.1.7

The different settlements within the Parish have their own unique character and identity. New development should not result in the coalescence (i.e. merging) of these settlements.

3.1.8

This policy sets out a spatial strategy for the location of new development within the Neighbourhood Area. The purpose of the policy is to provide certainty about future growth and ensure new development is sustainable.

Policy 1: Spatial Strategy

a. The Market Town of Whittlesey is the main centre for growth in the Neighbourhood Area.

b. New housing development should be located East of the town, adjacent to the built area and strategic allocation North and South of Eastrea Road. Development at this location will support the delivery of new and enhanced infrastructure, including a new Country Park.

c. Other complementary uses in this area, such as employment, leisure and retail, will be supported where it will not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre or existing employment areas.

d. Retail development will principally be located in Whittlesey's town centre. Employment development should be located at existing employment areas. The Town Centre and Employment Areas are indicated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

e. The villages of Coates and Eastrea are markedly smaller in scale and offer fewer facilities than Whittlesey, but are likely to provide some limited opportunities for new development.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 1: Spatial Strategy (Continued)

f. Development proposals adjoining the built area of Whittlesey, Coates and Eastrea should demonstrate that the development will:

- i.** Reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, in accordance with Policy 10 - Flood Risk and national and strategic policies for flooding;
- ii.** Be designed to minimise visual impacts upon the landscape; and
- iii.** Be supported by necessary infrastructure and facilities.

g. Opportunities for housing development at Pondersbridge and Turves are likely to be limited due to flood risk. In addition, many areas to the North and South of Whittlesey, Eastrea and Coates are also constrained by flood risk.

h. Development in the open countryside, and physically separate from the built area of Whittlesey, Coates and Eastrea will be limited to uses which justifiably require a countryside location, such as agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and access to natural greenspace.

3.2 Policy 2: Local Housing Need- Justification

3.2.1

The Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by a Housing Needs Assessment (July 2017) (HNA). The HNA identifies several key issues affecting housing in Whittlesey, including:

- Increasing house prices resulting in homes being unaffordable for households;
- The declining stock of affordable housing;
- Increasing demand for single-person dwellings, reflecting the number of older residents and an ageing population;
- Demand for smaller house types; and
- Providing housing suitable for families.

Section 3: Policies

3.2.2

Whittlesey is a popular place for family life and retirement, and many of the issues identified by the HNA relate to the needs of families and older residents. Whittlesey Town Council believes that sustainable development will only be achieved if all community sectors are catered for – families should have access to suitable housing. Homes should enable older people to live independently for as long as possible.

3.2.3

To meet the needs of a diverse community, this Neighbourhood Plan supports providing a range of house types, tenures and models for delivery, including starter homes, family homes, executive homes, self-build homes and affordable tenures.

3.2.4

In particular, increasing the provision of affordable housing is a crucial aim of this Neighbourhood Plan. New development should provide opportunities for young people to access the housing market.

3.2.5

Where developers are required to provide affordable housing by the Fenland Local Plan, the Town Council's preferred approach is to deliver on-site, with off-site provision permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Policy 2: Local Housing Need

a. Development proposals will be supported where they contribute towards meeting the housing needs of the local community. Applicants should have regard to the Whittlesey Town Council Housing Needs Assessment (2017) (HNA) when preparing development proposals.

b. Delivering affordable housing

This Neighbourhood Plan places great importance on the delivery of Affordable Housing.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 2: Local Housing Need (Continued)

Developers are required to provide affordable housing by the Fenland Local Plan. The Town Council's preferred approach is to deliver on-site, with off-site provision permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

c. Meeting the demand for homes

Development proposals should provide a mix of house types, which reflects the findings of the HNA. In particular, the HNA identifies a need for smaller homes, particularly for older residents, and housing that is suitable and affordable for families.

d. Accessing home ownership

House prices in Whittlesey are increasing, and homeownership may be inaccessible to many families and households. Development proposals that increase homeownership opportunities will be supported.

e. Meeting changing needs

New homes should be accessible and adaptable to meet people's needs, which may change over time.

New dwellings should make reasonable provision for most people to access them and incorporate features that make them suitable for a wide range of occupants, including older people, those with reduced mobility, and some wheelchair users.

Proposals should strive to achieve Building Regulations Part M4(2), unless there are exceptional design reasons why this is not possible.

Development proposals that include dwellings designed explicitly for a wheelchair user to live in will be supported. Such homes should conform to Building Regulations Part M4(3).

Section 3: Policies

Policy 2: Local Housing Need (Continued)

f. Meeting Wider Needs

Development proposals which make provision for self-build and custom build housing will be supported. Schemes which provide 'executive homes', as part of a wider housing mix will also be supported.

g. Residential care and supported housing

Housing proposals which are designed to meet the needs of those who require care, such as residential care homes and supported housing schemes, will be supported where located in a sustainable location with good access to local services and facilities.

3.3 Policy 3: Primary Shopping Frontages- Justification

3.3.1

Whittlesey Town Centre has traditionally been the focus for shopping and community, cultural and entertainment activities, and whilst the role of town centres is changing. Whittlesey Town Council wishes to ensure the future viability of the town centre, recognising the importance of providing residents with shops and associated facilities as an essential contribution towards sustainable development objectives.

3.3.2

Whilst conscious that traditional shop fronts make up a typical Fenland Market Town, we know that greater diversification can help retain business and attract visitors. A company will flourish on the strength of its responses to local demand. Map 3 at Appendix A illustrates the places within Whittlesey Town centre that residents and visitors consider to be the primary shopping areas, and there is some convergence of retail and other commercial activities.

3.3.3

Not all properties have a traditional 'shop window'. Indeed some vibrant businesses use other media and marketing mixes to attract their customers. We have considered responses from our initial survey (April 2017) that provided valuable feedback regarding what residents wanted to (and did not wish to) experience.

Section 3: Policies

3.3.4

With the right blend of traditional and niche businesses, Whittlesey Town centre can hold trade within the town and attract visitors. This will benefit the local economy, reduce travel to other locations, and reduce emissions whilst enhancing the community.

3.3.5

Retail and commercial business is not restricted to the primary areas, and it is recognised that the existing layout will change over time. However, focussing on a described area helps businesses (new and current) plan their location and logistics associated with their trade. Also the provision of modern and integrated parking and other transport solutions.

Policy 3: Primary Retail Frontages

a. In the Primary Retail Frontages, as shown in Map 3 at Appendix A and where planning permission is required, change of use from Retail (Class A1) to other uses (such as Class A2, A3, A4 and A5) will not be permitted where:

- i.** It would result in non-retail frontages exceeding 40% of the Primary Retail Frontage of the town centre as a whole;
- ii.** It would introduce uses that do not complement the retail function of the town centre;
- iii.** It would create a concentration of 5 non-retail uses that would harm the primary shopping function of the town centre; or
- iiii.** It would harm residential amenity by way of noise, smells, and late-night disturbance.

An exception to criteria a) will be permitted where:

It would secure the re-use of an existing unit that has been vacant for at least 12 months or has been neglected to the extent that it harms the quality of the built environment.

b. New retail development located outside the Town Centre boundary (as defined in the Fenland Local Plan Policies Map), in excess of 500 sq. m gross floor space, and the expansion of existing shopping areas where the new floor space would exceed 500 sq. m will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated by way of an impact assessment (as defined in the NPPF) that it will not harm the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

Section 3: Policies

3.4 Policy 4: Open Space- Justification

3.4.1

There is a significant under-provision of accessible open space in Whittlesey and its villages. In 2006 Fenland District Council carried out an open-space audit of the District, which revealed that (based on the standards set by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)) an overall shortage in provision of 1.82 Hectares in Whittlesey, 0.89 Hectares in Eastrea, but a surplus of 0.13 Hectares in Coates. The study revealed that there was a deficit in outdoor sports provision of 1.42 Hectares in Whittlesey, 1.38 Hectares in Eastrea, and 1.96 Hectares in Coates. The study also revealed that children's play provision has a deficit of 0.40 Hectares in Whittlesey. It showed a surplus of 0.50 Hectares in Eastrea and a surplus of 2.10 Hectares in Coates. It also predicted that the situation would worsen by 2021, with the deficit in outdoor sports provision increasing to 2.76 Hectares in Whittlesey and the deficiency in children's play provision increasing to 0.95 Hectares. (No prediction was made for Eastrea or Coates). These figures were predicated on an anticipated population increase in Whittlesey of 800 in the period 2006-2021. However, as the Fenland Local Plan identifies a housing land requirement in Whittlesey of 1000 dwellings in the period 2011-2031, these projections are conservative at best.

3.4.2

The community recognise the extent of the problem. They have highlighted this as one of its main concerns in early engagement work, with current open space provision is regarded as one of its most precious assets. It is therefore vital that both formal and informal open space is safeguarded from development pressure, and in particular, land in use or which has is for outdoor sports.

Policy 4: Open Space

a. Proposals for development that would result in the loss of formal and informal public open space will not be permitted unless replacement provision is secured of equivalent or greater quality and quantity in a sustainable location, and is brought into use prior to the loss of existing provision.

b. All proposals for new dwellings will be required to provide open space in accordance with the standards set out in the Fenland Local Plan. For schemes larger than 10 dwellings where it is impractical to

Section 3: Policies

Policy 4: Open Space (Continued)

provide the required level of provision on site, this will be required to be provided on off-site locations that can be accessed by residents of the new residential areas. Where this also proves impracticable, a financial contribution will be required equal to the value of the land that would have been required, which will be spent on improving existing open space provision and recreational facilities in Whittlesey and its villages.

c. Where appropriate and safe, public access should be encouraged onto existing and new wildlife habitats, which should be integrated with public open space provision.

3.5 Policy 5: Local Green Spaces- Justification

3.5.1

Local Green Space is a national designation that aims to protect green areas or spaces which are demonstrably unique to a local community and hold a particular local significance. Designation of Local Green Space designation is where:

- Close proximity to the community it serves; and
- Demonstrably unique to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example, because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including playing fields), tranquillity
- or richness of its wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

3.5.2

Local communities have the opportunity through Neighbourhood Plans to identify Local Green Spaces for designation. This gives the green space protection equivalent to Green Belt status.

3.5.3

Whittlesey Town Council has assessed Local Green Spaces, as set out in the Local Green Spaces Assessment, which accompanies this Neighbourhood Plan.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 5: Local Green Spaces

a. This Neighbourhood Plan designates the following Local Green Spaces, as illustrated on Map 4 at Appendix A:

- Bass 1:** Teal Road
- Bass 2:** Pinewood Avenue
- Bass 3:** Feldale Field
- Bass 4:** Viking Way
- Bass 7:** Crescent Close
- Bass 8:** Eastrea Road/ Guildenburgh Crescent
- Bass 10:** Larkfleet (Sorrel Avenue)
- Bass 11:** Hemmerley Drive
- Bass 12:** Otago Road/Close
- Bass 13:** Roman Close
- Bass 14:** Whittlesey Town Bowls Club
- Coates 4:** Barnfield Gardens
- Coates 5:** Grounds Way/Nobles Close
- Coates 6:** Nobles Close North
- Eastrea 1:** Springfields
- Eastrea 2:** Thornham Way
- Latt 1:** Burdett Grove
- Latt 2:** Sycamore Road
- Latt 3:** New Road Lattersey Nature Reserve
- Latt 4:** Station Road
- Latt 5:** New Road Allotments
- Latt 7:** The Grove
- StA 1:** Churchfield Way/Priors Road
- StM 1:** Manor Playing Fields
- StM 2:** Bower River
- StM 3:** St Mary's Churchyard
- StM 4:** The Pound Aliwal Road
- Stm 5:** Garden of Rest Station Road
- Ston 1:** Snowley Park
- Ston 2:** Water Tower
- Ston 4:** Field of Dreams
- Ston 5:** Yarwells Headlands
- Ston 6:** Kings Dyke Nature Reserve
- Turves 1:** Red Barn South

Section 3: Policies

Policy 5: Local Green Spaces (Continued)

These Local Green Spaces will be protected from development, and will be treated as equivalent in status to 'Green Belt' land. Development on a Local Green Space will be regarded as inappropriate and will not be permitted except in very special circumstances, as set out by national policy.

3.6 Policy 6: Country Park- Justification

3.6.1

A Country Park would contribute to the quality of the place and complement the urban environment and the broader public realm. Quality of place is a critical factor in attracting investment, jobs, and growth to an area. It is also vital in making the area an attractive place to live, work, and spend time. A Country Park could bring real economic value to the surrounding area and create community well-being.

3.6.2

The preferred Country Park is a site for a 54.0 acre (22.0 hectare) Country Park previously approved. (East of Whittlesey, South of A605 Ref: F/YR15/0991/F). Whittlesey Town Council will seek to work with key partners, including Fenland District Council, to see how the Country Park might be delivered if the full planning permission is not built out.

3.6.3

Whittlesey Town Council will also support any other suitable site for a country park that might come forward for consideration. It is well located with Whittlesey and is accessible by a range of transport modes. Until an alternative site is located and delivered, Whittlesey Town Council will seek to ensure that the approved site is not developed for any alternative purpose, other than exceptional circumstances.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 6: Country Park

Proposals for a Country Park on a suitable site and location in relation to Whittlesey will be supported, provided it is accessible to the majority of residents by sustainable methods of transport. The Country Park should:

- Enhance the public realm, where informal social interaction can take place;
- Provide pitches and facilities for sports and supporting physical activities;
- Form part of a network of paths and spaces, enabling movement through an area;
- Provide habitats for wildlife, including water-based habitats, natural corridors and spaces through urban areas;
- Provide flexible space for recreation, local cultural events and performance;
- Provide children's play areas and play equipment for a range of age groups;
- Add to local amenity, providing an attractive setting and outlook for surrounding residential and commercial properties; and
- Form part of the character or setting of buildings and townscape.

3.7 Policy 7: Design Quality- Justification

3.7.1

Good design is about the way a development functions, its appearance and its relationship to its surroundings. National planning policy places great importance on delivering well-designed buildings and places. Well-designed, safe and attractive new development can help raise the quality of the built environment and the quality of life of those who live and work there.



Section 3: Policies



3.7.2

The national policy notes the critical role Neighbourhood plans can play in identifying the unique qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development. Policy 7 - Design Quality builds on national policy, providing a specific and relevant policy to the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area.

3.7.3

The Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area is characterised by its open, low-lying, flat, Fenland, principally used for agriculture. The landscape is typical of The Fens, which due to its topography, provides extensive views of the horizon and huge skies. The Neighbourhood Area interspersed by the market town of Whittlesey and the villages of Eastrea, Coates, Turves and Pondersbridge.

3.7.4

Settlements in the Neighbourhood Area include development from many different periods and have been constructed in a variety of different styles. Some using building materials - from 17th century stone and thatched cottages to fine 18th-century brick buildings and 19th-century civic buildings, along with substantial modern development.

3.7.5

Whittlesey's town centre is historical and is designated as a Conservation Area. The town centre includes many historic buildings and landmarks, such as the Buttercross, and provides shops, services and housing. Shop frontages and signage is an essential feature of the character of the town centre. In addition, a Conservation Area is designated in Coates around the attractive North and South Green area.

3.7.6

The purpose of Policy 7 is to set out clear design expectations for new development, providing applicants with clarity and certainty about what is likely to be acceptable. Applicants are encouraged to engage with the District and Town Council at an early stage of the planning application process.

3.7.7

Poorly designed proposals that fail to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and its functions should be refused. The design of a development accords with clear expectations in the following policy will be supported.

3.7.8

In determining applications, consideration should be given to outstanding or innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with their surroundings' overall form and layout.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 7: Design Quality

The design of new development will respect the character, identity and setting of Whittlesey and its villages. Specifically, the new development will

a) Function well and add to the overall quality of the area through proposals which:

- Enable suitable and safe access for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists;
- Provide a high standard of amenity for users of new buildings and maintain the existing convenience of neighbours;
- Maximise energy efficiency and support the provision of renewable energy technologies;
- Provide green areas and other public spaces, and support the provision of local facilities and infrastructure; and
- Include measures for the long-term management and maintenance of assets and services.

b) Be visually attractive, through proposals which:

- Create visual richness through building types, height, layout, scale, form, density, massing, materials and landscape design;
- Provide active ground floor frontages, mainly where located in Whittlesey town centre; and
- Provide attractive, legible, uncluttered streets.

c) be sympathetic to local character and history, through proposals which:

- Are based on an understanding and respect for Whittlesey and its villages' built, natural and social heritage;
- Complement the layout, form and vernacular materials in the local area;
- Are of an appropriate scale to the existing settlement; and

Section 3: Policies

Policy 7: Design Quality (Continued)

- Respect the character of, and minimise the visual impact on, the surrounding landscape, conserving and enhancing landscape features such as field patterns, trees and hedgerows, watercourses and valued built features.

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place through proposals which:

- Create welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit that enhance the identity of Whittlesey and its villages;
- Are comprehensively planned or “master-planned”;
- Are located within the town/village or immediately abut the existing built-up area;
- Where located at the edge of settlements, form attractive ‘gateways’ along transport routes;
- Protect valuable and more extended distance views and vistas of landmarks, landscapes and townscapes;
- Include public and private spaces that are safe, attractive, easily distinguished, accessible, complement the built form, and foster civic pride.

e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development through proposals which:

- Make effective and efficient use of land and buildings; and
- Ensure a sustainable, balanced mix of uses that work together.

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, through proposals which:

- Contribute to the achievement of a sustainable and mixed community;
- Promote healthy lifestyles;
- Are accessible to all users;
- Encourage social interaction between users of the site;
- Reduce fear of crime; and
- Adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Section 3: Policies

3.8 Policy 8: Historic Environment- Justification

- 3.8.1** The Neighbourhood Area has an extensive history of human settlement. The area includes the site of the recently discovered, 3,000-year-old, Must Farm Bronze Age settlement. Dubbed “Britain’s Pompeii”, Must Farm has transformed our understanding of Bronze Age Britain.
- 3.8.2** Whittlesey is a rural market town with a Conservation Area (Map 5 Appendix A) covering its historic core. This includes the town’s centre and surrounding residential development, based on an irregular grid pattern of growth.
- 3.8.3** The conservation area is split into two sections. The northern part of the conservation area is separate from the main body of the conservation area. The historic focal point of the town is Market Place which comprises a group of listed buildings surrounding a public open space focused upon an open 17th-century market building.
- 3.8.4** The conservation area has two fine parish churches, St Mary’s and St Andrews. However, with its splendid spire, St Mary’s is the church that features most prominently within views through the town and in distance views of the town from the surrounding countryside.
- 3.8.5** Whittlesey’s historic buildings were built over a range of periods and constructed from various building materials, ranging from 17th century stone property and thatched cottages to fine 18th-century brick buildings and 19th-century civic buildings.
- 3.8.6** There are 61 listed buildings within the conservation area, of which one, the Church of St Mary, has grade I listed status and six with grade II* listed status. The Whittlesey Butter Cross is designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument. An inventory of the designated heritage assets within the Whittlesey Conservation Area is set out in the Whittlesey Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 3.8.7** The village of Coates also has a designated Conservation Area (Map 6 Appendix A). The open spaces at North Green and South Green are located at the centre of the Conservation Area, with the boundary extending Northwards and Southwards to include adjacent residential areas.

Section 3: Policies

Mud Walls

3.8.8

A unique and memorable local feature of the Neighbourhood Area is its numerous surviving mud walls in Whittlesey and Eastrea. These are the only settlements in Cambridgeshire where mud walls are found. (See Map 7 at Appendix A)

3.8.9

An unpopular 'Brick Tax' was introduced in 1784 to help fight the Thirteen Colonies' revolutionary war. Unfired clay lump blocks were used in the construction of walls and buildings to avoid paying the tax.

3.8.10

Whilst some mud walls are located within Whittlesey's Conservation Area or have listed status. Others are not protected. The preservation of these unique features is a key objective of this Neighbourhood Plan.

3.8.11

Whittlesey Town Council, Whittlesey Mud Walls Group - a group of local volunteers who work to preserve and maintain mud walls, and Fenland District Council are exploring the possibility of designating an 'Article 4 Direction'. This designation could remove permitted development rights, meaning a planning application would be required for any works affecting a mud wall.

3.8.12

The Fenland Local Plan and national planning policy place great value on the historic environment. Policy 11 builds on these strategic policies to protect, conserve and enhance the rich and diverse heritage assets in Whittlesey and its villages.

Policy 8: Historic Environment

All new development will respect and, where possible, enhance local distinctiveness, historic significance, character, and sense of place.

Proposals for development which would affect designated or non-designated historic assets and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced in accordance with the Fenland Local Plan and national planning policy.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 8: Historic Environment (Continued)

The historic Mud Walls of Whittlesey and Eastrea are of great importance and will be preserved. Development proposals on land containing, or adjacent to, Mud Walls must:

- Demonstrate that the proposal will not result in harm to the Mud Wall;
- Describe how the proposal will conserve the Mud Wall, including how the Mud Wall will be maintained throughout the lifetime of the development;
- Explore opportunities to enhance the setting and views of the Mud Wall, and improve public understanding of the Mud Wall's significance;
- Have regard to the information presented in the Mud Walls Survey Report.

All development proposals within or adjacent to Whittlesey's Conservation Area, as shown on Map 5, must demonstrate how the proposal supports the aims and objectives of the Whittlesey Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

3.9 Policy 9: Garden Development - Justification

3.9.1

Development within the gardens of existing houses can lead to inappropriate development concerning adverse impacts on neighbouring properties and poor means of access. Unless an adequate land area is available or can be assembled and demonstrated to be accessible and sustainable without causing detrimental harm to the amenity of neighbouring dwellings or the area's character, development will be resisted.

3.9.2

Detrimental harm to the amenity of a neighbouring property includes loss of daylight and sunlight (overshadowing), intrusive or overbearing development and loss of privacy (overlooking).

Section 3: Policies

Policy 9: Garden Development

Proposals for residential development of garden land will be supported where it can be demonstrated that proposals will:

- Conserve or enhance the character of the area;
- Be of a form that accords with existing settlement pattern;
- Not introduce an inappropriate form of development which is at odds with the existing settlement pattern, design, scale, street scene or landscape character of the surrounding area;
- Not harm the amenity of a host dwelling and/or neighbouring properties, through loss of privacy, daylight, visual intrusion by a building or structure, car parking, removal of mature vegetation or landscaping, and additional traffic resulting from the development; and
- Ensure vehicle access with sufficient off road parking and turning space for the new dwelling.

3.10 Policy 10: Flood Risk- Justification

3.10.1

Flood risk is a critical issue for the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area due to the flat and low-lying fen landscape. Flood risk will become increasingly more significant due to the impacts of climate change, with related sea-level rises and increased incidence of heavy rainfall.

3.10.2

On its Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea), the Environment Agency identifies specific flood risk zones in the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area. The town of Whittlesey and villages of Coates and Eastrea located in Flood Zone 1 (of least risk from flooding), but with areas of Flood Zone 3 running close to the edge of the built area in some locations. The villages of Pondersbridge and Turves, and most of the open countryside in the Parish, are located within Flood Zone 3.

3.10.3

An extensive area in the north of the Parish, and adjacent to the built area of Whittlesey, forms part of the Whittlesey Washes Flood Storage Reservoir, which protects Peterborough, Whittlesey and other settlements and fenland areas from flooding (See Map 1 at Appendix A)

Section 3: Policies

3.10.4

The Whittlesey Neighbourhood Area is afforded protection by flood defences, including the Whittlesey Washes Flood Storage Reservoir. However, there remains a residual risk of flooding in the area from the overtopping or breaching of defences. Developers should include an assessment of the residual risk where developments are located in areas benefitting from defences. They should consider both the impact of a breach, including the effect on safe access and egress and the potential for flood risk from overtopping. Any improvements to defences should ensure they are in keeping with the broader catchment policy.

3.10.5

Whittlesey has a history of flood events, which has been documented by the Town Council, with the primary source being from 'fluvial' sources (river/watercourse networks). Coastal flooding presents a potential flood risk to the Neighbourhood Area.

3.10.6

Flooding can cause significant damage to property, infrastructure and agricultural land. Flooding increases the risk of pollution and, in severe cases, is a threat to human life. New development can increase the impact of flooding, for example, where it places more homes within the floodplain. Development can also increase the probability of flooding by increasing the surface water run-off rates or impacting the defences' standards.

3.10.7

Following national policy, new development should:

- Be located away from areas most at risk of flooding and designed to be resilient to flooding;
- Take opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding both on the development site and adjacent flood risk areas;
- Provide a sustainable drainage solution to manage flood risk and support the environment; and
- Where there is an identified need, contribute to the delivery of strategic flood defence infrastructure.

3.10.8

The NPPF requires Fenland District Council (the Local Planning Authority) to apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, applying the Exception Test where appropriate.



Section 3: Policies



3.10.9

Fenland District Council will use the Environment Agency's flood map and the Cambridgeshire Surface Water Management Plan to inform decisions on planning applications. The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority has indicated it intends to prepare a county-wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, thereby further refining the flood map for Whittlesey.

3.10.10

In certain circumstances, as set out in this policy, applicants will be required to submit site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) to ensure that flood risk and surface water run-off issues are comprehensively considered and addressed.

3.10.11

Fenland District Council has adopted the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document (2016). Proposals for new development should have regard to the SPD. Applicants should also engage with the Environment Agency, Cambridgeshire County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority) and Internal Drainage Boards at an early stage to obtain further information relating to the potential flood risk of their sites.

3.10.12

Proposals for new development should give early consideration of climate change in scheme design, such as flood management measures, providing evacuation routes and ensuring new infrastructure is built to withstand projected impacts of climate change. New technologies and designs e.g. permeable paving, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), etc., are encouraged to alleviate risks associated with climate change.

3.10.13

As illustrated in the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD, SuDS can provide the best method of minimising flood risk whilst also benefiting biodiversity and the water environment. Developers should incorporate layout measures and the effective use of features such as permeable surfaces, soakaways and water storage areas where technically possible. Systems that mimic natural drainage processes such as retention ponds, swales and wetlands/ reed beds will be particularly encouraged.

3.10.14

To demonstrate that development can be drained sustainably and will not result in adverse impacts on neighbouring properties or sites, water resources and the environment (and where opportunities offered by new development are available, will result in an overall reduction in flood risk), a drainage strategy should support proposals.

3.10.15

This policy seeks to ensure proposals for new development appropriately manage flood risk.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 10: Flood Risk

All development proposals will be considered against the NPPF (including applying the sequential test and, if necessary, the exception test) and the Anglian River Basin Plan (RBMP).

Development proposals should demonstrate:

- That they are informed by and take account of the best available Information from all sources of flood risk, including the impacts of climate change and residual flood risk in defended areas, and by site-specific flood risk assessments where appropriate;
- That reasonable opportunity offered by new development is taken to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, both on-site and off-site;
- That the development will be safe during its lifetime does not affect the integrity of existing flood defences, and any necessary flood mitigation measures have been agreed upon with the relevant bodies;
- That the adoption, ongoing maintenance and management of any mitigation measures (including access to any mitigation measures, for maintenance purposes) have been considered and any necessary agreements are in place;
- How proposals have taken a positive approach to reduce overall flood risk and have considered the potential to contribute towards solutions for the wider area; and
- They have incorporated Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into the proposals unless there is clear evidence that they would be inappropriate.

A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment appropriate to the scale and nature of the development and risks involved, taking into account future climate change, will be required for development proposals:

- In Flood Zones 2 and 3;
- In Flood Zone 1 where there are critical drainage problems;
- On sites of 1 hectare or greater in Flood Zone 1;
- On sites where development or change of use to more vulnerable uses may be subject to other sources of flooding, and residual risk; and

Section 3: Policies

Policy 10: Flood Risk (Continued)

- On sites of less than 1 hectare in Flood Zone 1 where they could be affected by the breach of the defences or sources of flooding other than from rivers and the sea.

Where a non-modelled ordinary watercourse runs through or adjacent to a site, proposals should be accompanied by an assessment of the watercourse to identify flood risk.

New development must demonstrate that appropriate surface water drainage arrangements for dealing with surface water run-off can be accommodated within the site and that issues of ownership and maintenance are addressed.

3.11 Policy 11: Coalescence of Villages- Justification

3.11.1

Whittlesey is a rural parish. All undeveloped areas around its villages have importance in retaining this characteristic. Several areas are more sensitive concerning maintaining separation with neighbouring settlements and avoiding coalescence.

3.11.2

At present, there is a sense of separation as you travel between these neighbouring settlements. In many cases, development has occurred in these gaps over recent decades, which has somewhat reduced the sense of separation. It is vital to maintain this separation so that the distinctive identities of each village can be maintained.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 11: Coalescence of Villages

It is intended that the Villages of Eastrea and Coates, and the Village of Eastrea with Whittlesey should have a distinct separation. This is to ensure that there is a distinct separation between the villages and Whittlesey Town.

Development proposals should respect the individual and distinct identities of the villages in the parish.

The development will not be permitted if individually, or cumulatively, it would result in the loss of the visual and physical separation of the villages which would harm the setting and identity of these distinct areas or lead to their coalescence. See Map 8 - Green Buffers in the Appendix.

Any development proposals in these gaps should be accompanied by evidence of the visual impact of the proposed scheme concerning the gap.

3.12 Policy 12: Delivering Sustainable Transport

3.12.1

Traffic, congestion and the effects of Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) on amenity are key concerns for Whittlesey's residents and businesses.

3.12.2

The Market Town Transport Strategy for Whittlesey forms part of Cambridgeshire's Local Transport Plan and is an essential source of evidence for this Neighbourhood Plan. The transport strategy attempts to address the existing shortcomings of the transport network within Whittlesey. It sets out a policy basis for the district and county councils to negotiate developer contributions and secure funding.



Section 3: Policies

Heavy Commercial Vehicle movements

3.12.3

The A605 bisects Whittlesey through the centre. It forms part of Cambridgeshire's Strategic Advisory Freight route and as such, traffic from Heavy Commercial Vehicle's (HCV) is quite heavy through the town. The transport strategy suggests that, on average, 5% of vehicles entering and leaving Whittlesey are HCVs, and in some locations, HCVs make up an even more significant proportion of traffic (e.g. 10% of traffic on Station Road near the station). Whittlesey experiences greater proportions of HCV traffic compared with other market towns in Cambridgeshire.

3.12.4

There is a 7.5 tonne HCV ban which broadly covers the central area of the town to the south of the A605 between High Causeway and Broad Street and London Street and the A605, which helps reduce the effects of HCVs in those areas.

3.12.5

From the A605, large vehicles are signposted locally to the industrial area via the B1093 along Inhams Road, which passes through a residential area. Large vehicles have difficulty turning from Eastgate into Inhams Road and need to pass into the path of oncoming traffic to negotiate the corner, causing conflict with other road users. This route to the industrial area is viewed locally as one of the biggest barriers to attracting further business to the town.

King's Dyke and other level crossings

3.12.6

There are a number of level crossings within the Whittlesey ward area, including: at King's Dyke on the A605; at Funthams Lane accessing the brickworks to the west of the town; at the B1040 on Ramsey Road; at the B1093 on Station Road; at Wype Road, Eastrea; and three crossings in the village of Turves.

3.12.7

Although the frequency with which trains stop at Whittlesea Station is quite low, the volume of rail traffic (especially freight) along this line is high. In peak periods, the level crossing barrier can be down for between 12 and 23 minutes per hour, resulting in significant delays to traffic. Plans by the rail industry to increase the number of trains travelling along the route are also set to increase traffic delays further. Cambridgeshire County Council is building a scheme to bypass the existing Kings Dyke level crossing, which will help reduce congestion in this area.



Section 3: Policies

Growing Fenland masterplan

3.12.8

In January 2020, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CA) approved the 'Growing Fenland' market town plan for Whittlesey. This masterplan was developed by a 'town team', consisting of a broad range of representatives from business, local government, schools, and others.

3.12.9

The masterplan seeks to enable Whittlesey's economy to continue to grow sustainably, encourage more people to visit and enjoy the town's rich heritage and cultural offer, and enable residents to access opportunities to improve their CV and boost their career. The masterplan will be used to bid for funding from the Combined Authority and other funding providers.

3.12.10

To deliver this vision, the Plan for Whittlesey identifies a package of necessary transport improvements. These include improvements to bus and train services, provision of a park and ride scheme, a new bridge over the King's Dyke level crossing, and delivery of a new relief road South of Whittlesey.

3.12.11

Similarly, the Fenland Local Plan aims to create a sustainable transport network in Fenland. Through Policy LP15, the Local Plan seeks to deliver new transport-related infrastructure. It requires all development proposals to contribute to a range of transport objectives, including improving and better managing road infrastructure.

3.12.12

The relief road identified by the Growing Fenland master-plan would ensure HCVs can access industrial sites from the East instead of adding to the congestion of residential routes, mainly along Inhams Road and Station Road. It has been a long-held aspiration to see a bypass (or relief road) to Whittlesey for many local people, providing access to the industrial area to the south of the town.

3.12.13

This Plan aims to deliver the transport improvements identified by the master plan to facilitate Whittlesey's sustainable growth.

3.12.14

Policy 12 is intended to complement the Growing Fenland master plan, Fenland Local Plan and Whittlesey Market Town Transport Strategy, through transport improvements.

Section 3: Policies

Policy 12: Delivering Sustainable Transport

All development proposals should support the delivery of the transport objectives of the Fenland Local Plan, Local Transport Plan (including the Whittlesey Market Town Strategy), and *Growing Fenland* masterplan for Whittlesey.

Provision of new and improved infrastructure in the plan area should reflect the following infrastructure priorities:

- More frequent and reliable bus services;
- More train services throughout the day and later in the evening;
- A new park and ride scheme from the town centre to Peterborough;
- New bridge over the King's Dyke level crossing; and
- Provision of a new relief road to the south of Whittlesey.

Developments are expected to contribute toward the above infrastructure priorities. These are necessary to achieve sustainable development and where directly, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.



Section 4: Supporting Information

The following documents have informed the production of the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan:

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework - 2019

Sets out the government's planning policies for England.

4.2 Fenland Local Plan - 2014

Contains the policies and broad locations for growth and regeneration of Fenland over a 20 year period.

4.3 Fenland Open Spaces Audit

An analysis of the amount and quality of open space in Fenland.

4.4 Whittlesey Housing Needs Assessment - 2017

An assessment of the housing need within Whittlesey Parish prepared by Aecom.

4.5 Whittlesey Baseline Report

An analysis of the Parish of Whittlesey looking at the population and the place.



4.6 Whittlesey Consultation Reports

Summary reports detailing the findings of each stage of the consultation process.



4.7 Whittlesey Local Green Space Assessment

An analysis of the location, type and quality of green space within the Parish.

4.8 Whittlesey Conservation Area Appraisal

A description of the history and features of the two conservation areas contained within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

4.9 Survey of Mud Walls in Whittlesey and Eastrea

An analysis of the location and character of the mud walls within the Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

4.10 Cambridge Flood and Water SPD - 2016

A document giving guidance on how to manage flood risk and the water environment as part of new development proposals.

4.11 Anglian River Basin Management Plan - 2018

A document setting out the environmental objectives for protecting and improving the water environment.



Appendix A: Policy Maps

Map 1 - Flooding

Map 2 - Employment Area

Map 3 - Primary Retail Frontages

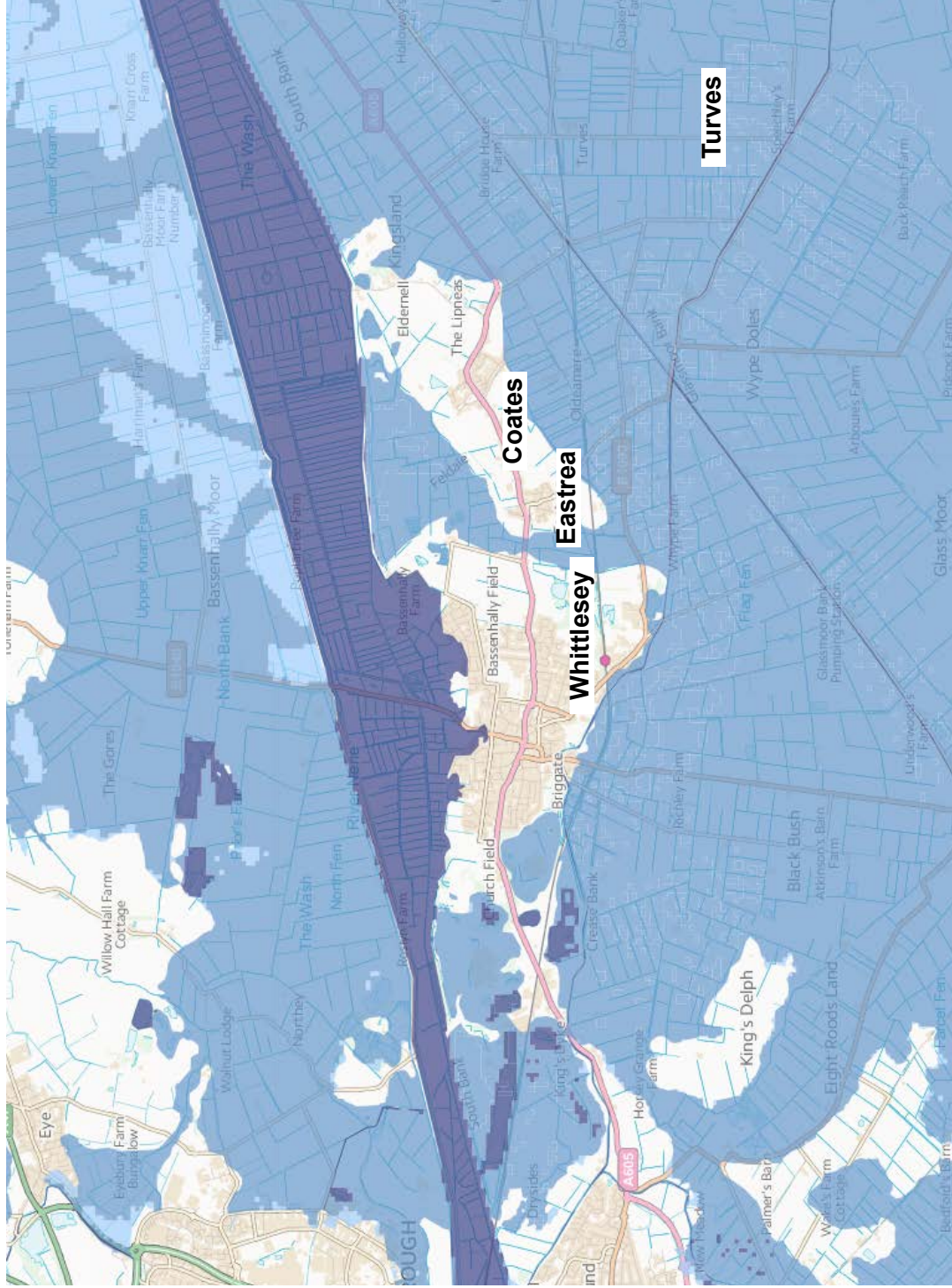
Map 4 - Local Green Spaces

Map 5 - Whittlesey Conservation Area

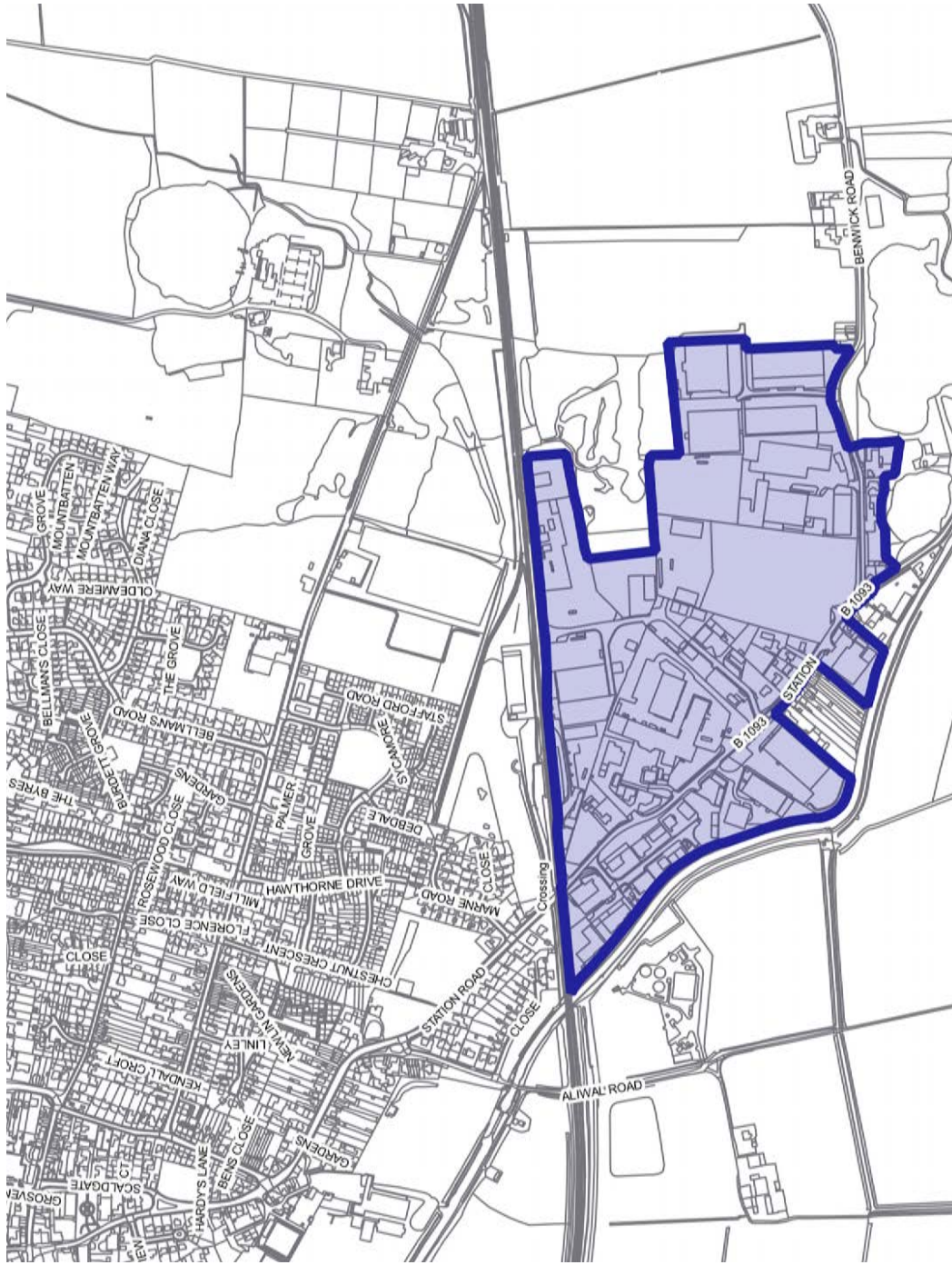
Map 6 - Coates Conservation Area

Map 7 - Mud Walls

Map 8 - Green Buffers



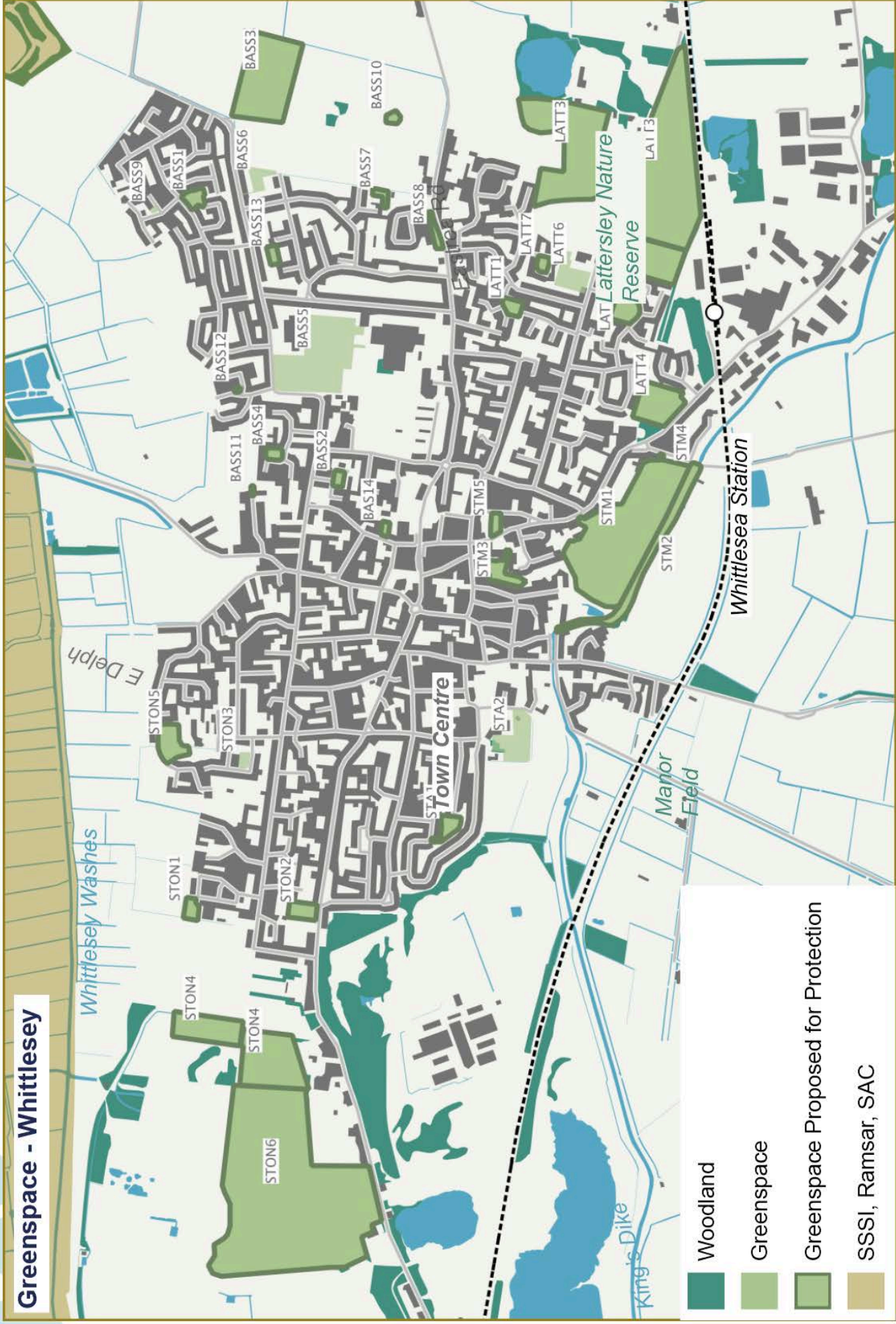
Map 1: Flooding (Gov.uk Long Term Flood Risk Map)



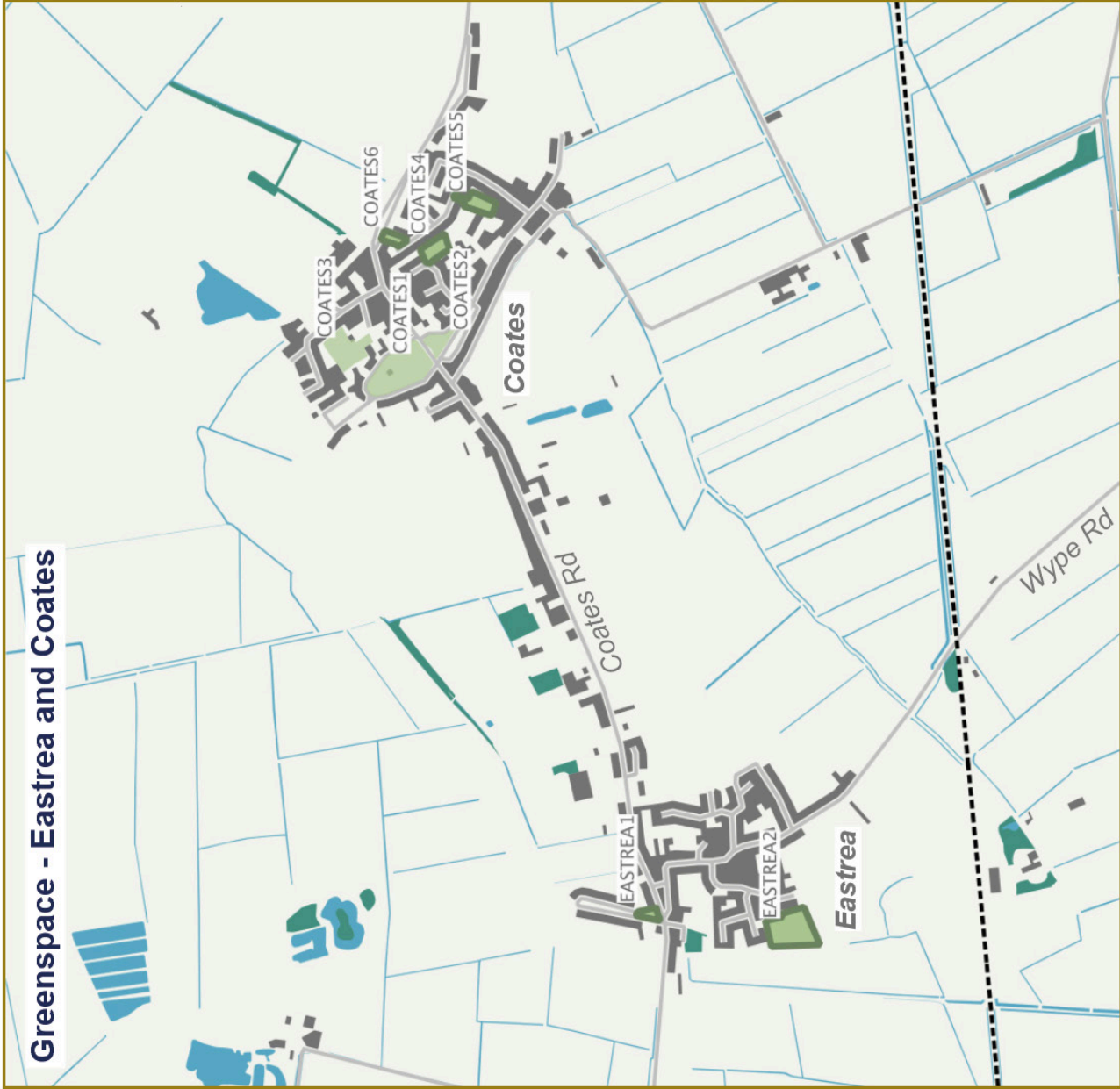
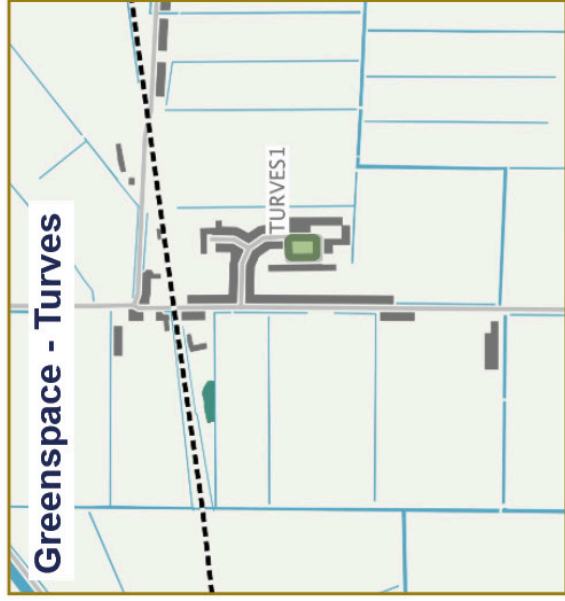
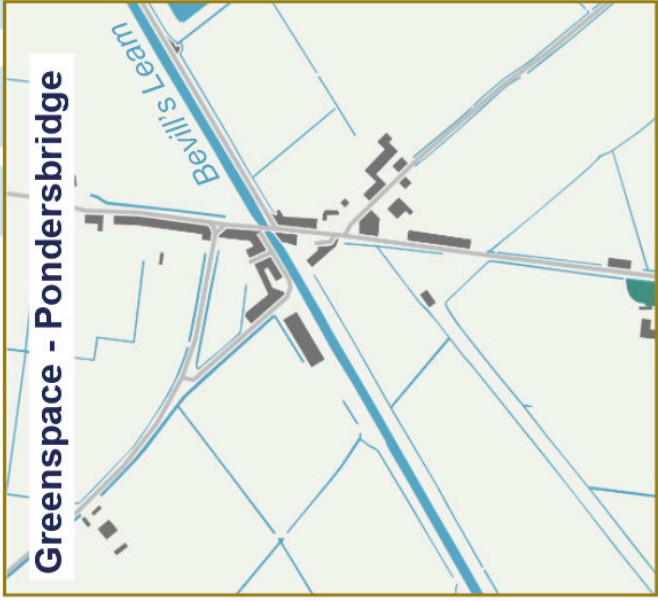
Map 2: Employment Area

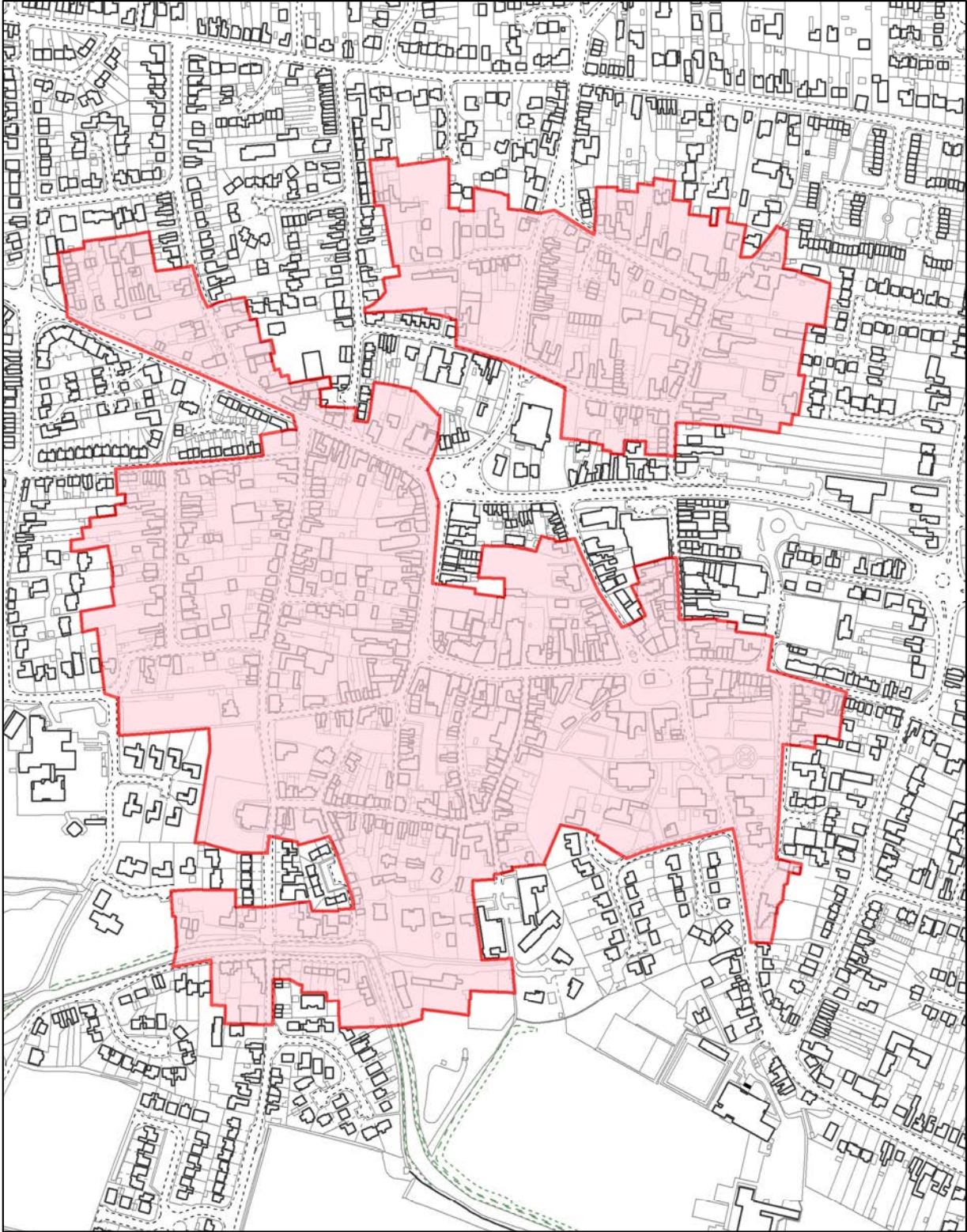


Map 3: Primary Retail Frontages



Map 4: Local Green Spaces





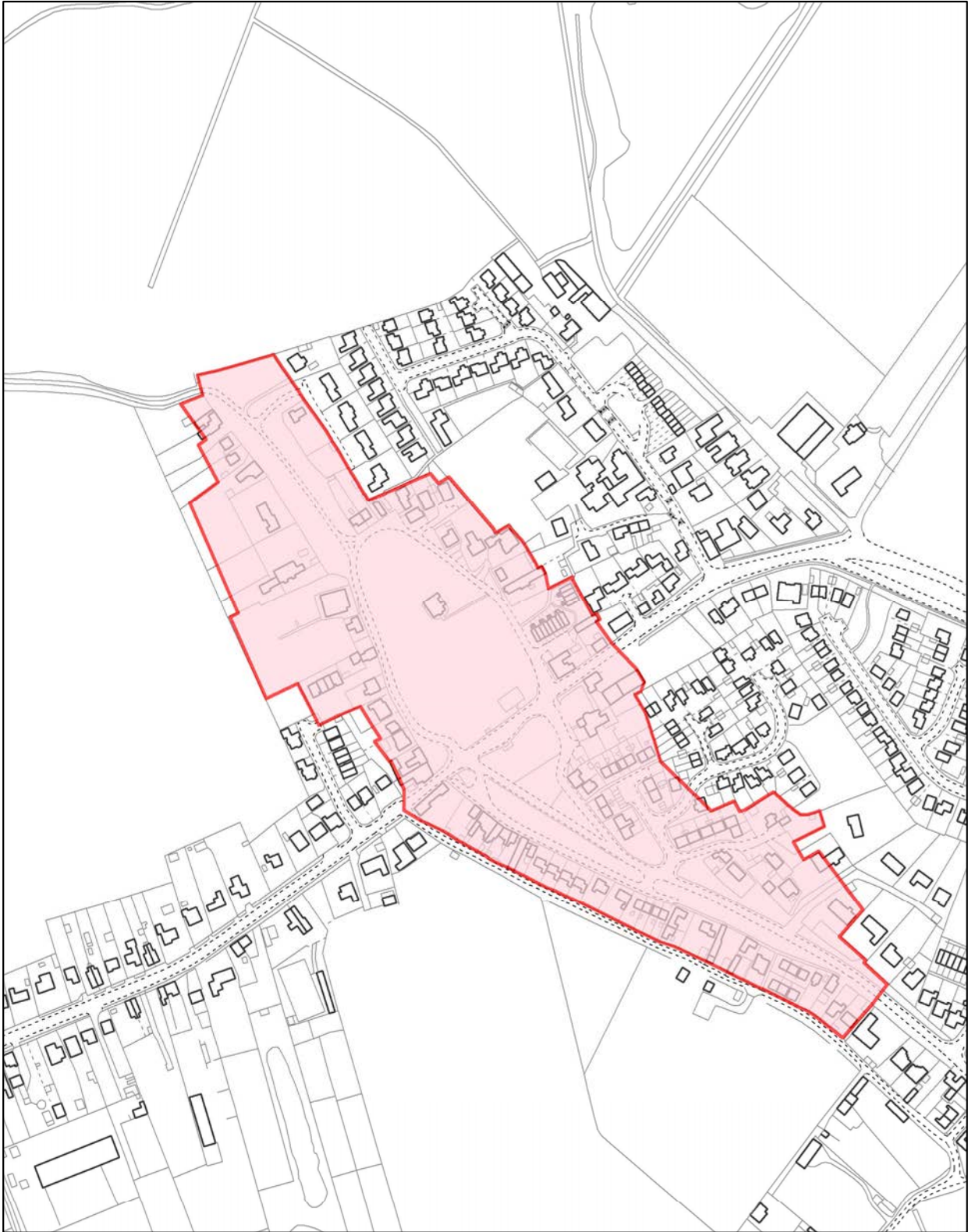
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**Whittlesey
Conservation Area**



Map 5: Whittlesey Conservation Area



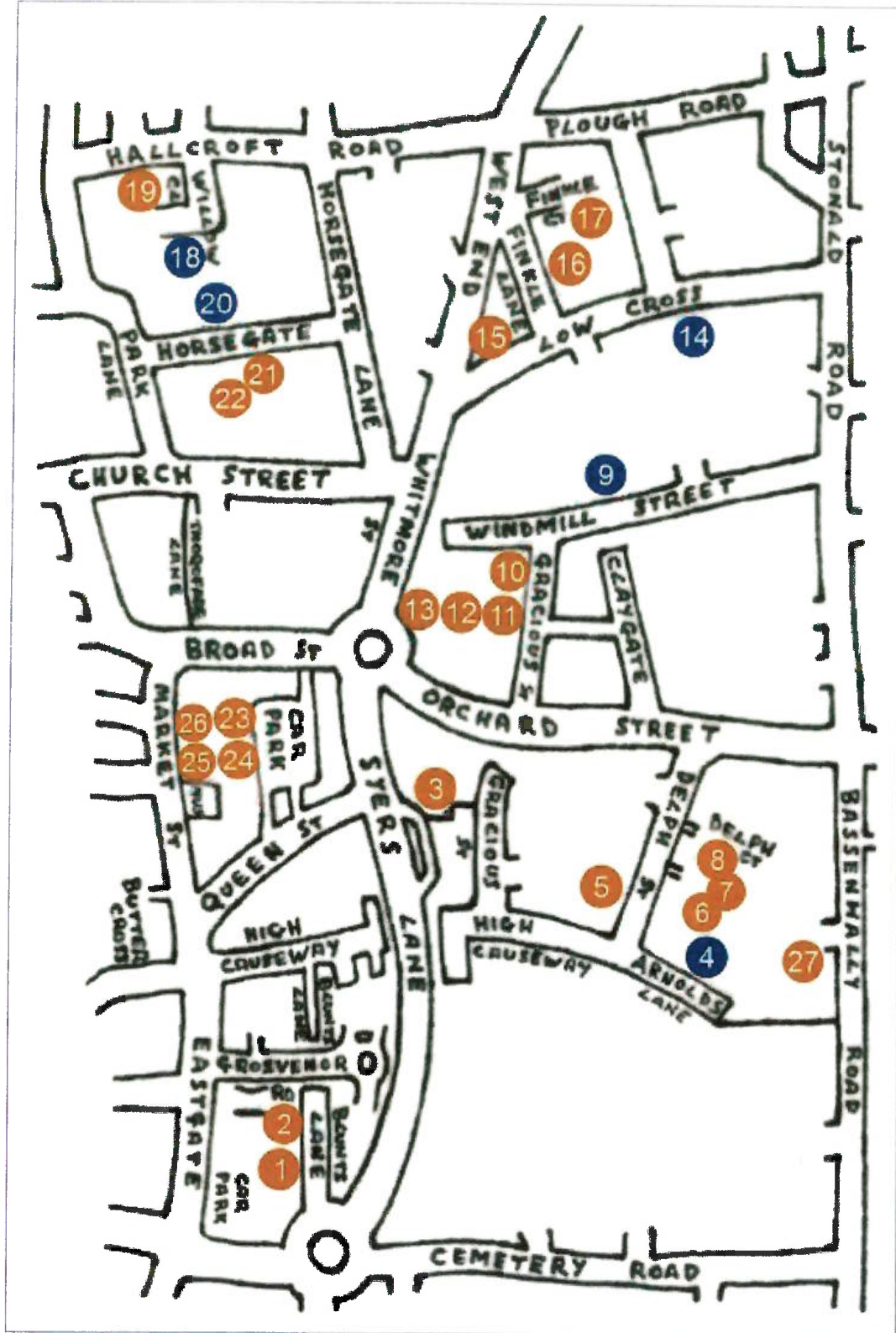
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**Coates
Conservation Area**



Map 6: Coates Conservation Area



Map 7: Mud Walls (Extract from Mud Walls Survey)



Whittlesey/Eastrea Buffer

Eastrea/Coates Buffer

Map 8: Green Buffers

