



2

APPRECIATING THE
CONTEXT



Site Location

The site is located at National Grid Reference TL 55055 82509 to the north of Ely.

The site is currently in agricultural use and covers some 200ha. It is bounded to the north-east by the railway; to the south by the existing built-up area of Ely; to the west by the A10; and to the north-west by the small hamlet of Chettisham.

The location and extent of the site is shown on the aerial plan overleaf.

It adjoins an area of Ministry of Defence land to the east of the Princess of Wales Hospital. Whilst it is understood that this land will be retained by the MOD for the foreseeable future, there may be potential for it to become surplus to requirements at some stage in the future. Possible future linkages with this area should therefore be considered in plan development.

Site Appraisal

A detailed appraisal has been undertaken as part of the masterplanning studies and environmental studies that have been prepared for the site.

The key features of the site are described below, and are summarised on the diagram at the end of this section on pages 25 - 25.

The overall masterplan site is divided into two distinct parcels of land with the Lynn Road corridor running north- south between the two areas. Owing to the sometimes different characteristics of the two parcels, where appropriate, the site is described in terms of the 'east' - to the east of Lynn Road, and the 'west' - to the west of Lynn Road.

Landscape and Visual

Landscape Character

At the national scale, significant work was undertaken in the mid to late 1990s by the Countryside Agency and English Nature (now Natural England) to map and describe the broad variations in character that can be identified across England. The entire site falls within National

Character Area 46: The Fens. This is described as typically low-lying, level terrain with isolated islands of higher ground, most notably the Isle of Ely.

The 'Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines' provides further detail of landscape character within the county. The entire site falls within Area 8: Fenland, which describes the open nature of the landscape and the many 'islands' which rise above the fens. The study highlights the importance of tree cover, retained hedgerows and grassland around these areas of higher ground.

There are no landscape designations relevant to the site.

Landscape Features

To the east, the site is predominantly arable farmland, with few trees and hedgerows, situated across gently undulating topography. Other landscape features include a number of watercourses, most notably the watercourse on the eastern boundary and Highflyer Farm Track which connects King's Avenue to Highflyer Farm.

To the west, the site has few structural landscape elements, with only a small number of hedgerows and drainage ditches crossing the site. There is more mature vegetation along the site boundary, with a line of mature Poplar located along the eastern boundary and structural landscape belts along much of the A10 and Cam Drive.

Topography

Ely Island itself ranges from 5m AOD to 26m AOD and is approximately 2.5km across and 5.5km long. The gradient of the island slopes are most pronounced to the east and west sides of the island where the land quickly drops into the flat fen and where built form has traditionally located on the steeper slopes.

The site itself slopes gently from about 20m AOD near Lynn Road to about 5m AOD in the east and about 5m AOD in the north-west.



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Joint Strategic Masterplan Boundary

1. Littleport
2. Little Downham
3. Chettisham
4. Princess of Wales Hospital
5. Phase 1 of North Ely
6. Proposed leisure village site
7. Primary shopping area
8. Ely Cathedral
9. Ely Country Park
10. Station gateway area
11. Lancaster Way Business Park
12. Queen Adelaide

Views

The location of the site, to the north of Ely, means views towards the site are predominantly from the north-east and north-west, from farmsteads, roads and footpaths within the surrounding fenland.

From the south, views of the site are largely prevented by the existing built form of the City. There are views of the site from the residential areas along Cam Drive, Lynn Road and King's Avenue, where a number of dwellings either front or back on to the site. There is also public access to the two towers of Ely Cathedral. Their height above the surrounding landscape permits long range views and inter-visibility between the Cathedral and the site.

Views out from the site, towards the Cathedral and distant views out across the flat fen are notable.

Agriculture and Land Use

The site is generally classified as Grade 2 on the provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) maps published by the former Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food – which, together with Grades 1 and 3, is defined as the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Sugar beet and potatoes are grown as part of a rotation with winter wheat and oilseed rape.

Heritage

Built Heritage

Whilst there are no designated heritage assets within the boundary of the site, there are a number present within the wider context, including listed buildings in Ely and Chettisham, and Ely Conservation Area. The site is also likely to have potential to include undesignated assets, such as unknown archaeological remains.

The heritage appraisal has identified three heritage assets where there is potential for development within the site to affect their significance, and which the design and layout of the development will need to respond to. These are:

- Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Ely (Listed Building, Grade I)

- Parish Church of St Mary, Ely (Listed Building, Grade I)
- Church of St Michael, Chettisham (Listed Building Grade II)

Archaeology

To the east of the site, archaeological investigation has revealed the remains of two potentially significant features. The first is an Iron Age pit close to Lynn Road which probably relates to an Iron Age settlement in this area. The second is the remnant of a Roman period enclosure west of Highflyer Farm. The trial trench ditch section revealed Roman ceramics and preliminary interpretation suggests an inhabited enclosure on the shallow valley side. This is likely to be of local or regional value.

To the west of the site a geophysical survey identified potential features of archaeological interest along the western site boundary. These features appeared to be a prehistoric settlement located centrally along the western site boundary. Subsequent trial trenching of the site based on the geophysical survey results revealed a series of prehistoric enclosures and boundaries dating to the later prehistoric period (late bronze Age/ Iron Age). The trial trenching also revealed a small area of domestic Romano-British activity to the north of the site and another small area of domestic Romano-British activity adjacent to Lynn Road/King Edgar Close. The trial trenching also uncovered one inhumation burial and two possible cremation burials across the site, all currently undated, although most likely prehistoric. The southern part of the site also has post medieval ridge and furrow ploughing and evidence of historic drainage.

These findings are consistent with the results of the geophysical survey and previous historic excavations during the construction of the A10 in this vicinity, which identified evidence of Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British activity close to the site. The dispersed settlement pattern is typical for the wider area of Cambridgeshire, with generally a low density of archaeological features identified across the site within well-defined small clusters of predominantly small-scale domestic activity, as would be expected outside of the core of the historic settlement of Ely.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

The majority of the site comprises actively managed, arable monoculture fields, and is of limited nature conservation interest. There are no statutory designated sites or non-statutory sites of nature conservation importance within the site.

There are no sites designated as being internationally important for nature conservation within 5km of the site. The closest internationally designated site is the Ouse Washes Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), RAMSAR and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which lies approximately 6.5km to the north-west of the site.



Two further statutory designated sites and five non-statutory sites of nature conservation importance lie within 1km of the site. The two statutory sites, which are both SSSIs, are Ely Pits and Meadows (locally known as Roswell Pits and part of the existing Country Park in Ely), and Chettisham Meadows, to the south-east and west respectively.

Hydrology and Flood Risk

To the east, the Clayway Catchwater drain is the main watercourse. The Catchwaters form part of a long-established artificial drainage ring around Ely, devised to intercept run-off from the higher ground before it reaches the lower agricultural fenland. A large wetland/pond adjoins the Clayway Catchwater, and there is also a series of ponds close to Highflyers Farm.

To the west, there are several open surface drainage channels within the site. The majority of these are located in close proximity to Cam Drive, with the main channel running along the site's southern boundary. There are no ponds or other water bodies within this part of the site.

Environment Agency (EA) Flood Zone Mapping shows the entire site to be located within Flood Zone 1, land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of fluvial flooding in any one year, (<0.1%).

Ground Conditions

The British Geological Survey indicates that the solid geology of Ely comprises the remnants of a greensand ridge which stretches from Bedfordshire in the west to Hunstanton in the north.

The Isle of Ely stands amongst the Upper Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay Formation. As such the site is characterised by slowly permeable clayey soils, with some peaty fenland loams on areas of lower ground.

A programme of assessment and survey of ground conditions has been undertaken across the site and no significant contamination sources have been identified.

Traffic and Transportation

The site is privately owned, and with the exception of a public footpath (Footpath No.10) crossing part of the eastern site, is not publicly accessible.

Vehicular access is limited to a private track/road connecting Highflyer Farm and King's Avenue, and there are numerous access points around the site boundary for farm vehicles.

A number of 'informal' pedestrian access point and routes exist across the site, namely a gated entrance close the existing water tower (to the east of the site) and a track to the rear of houses running along King Edgar Close (to the west of the site).

The nearest regular bus service to the site is route number 9, connecting Littleport to Cambridge via Ely – a section of which runs along Lynn Road. A circular bus service also serves the east of Ely, connecting Cam Drive with the City Centre.

Ely is served by on and off-road cycle routes covering some of the urban area. There are existing cycle routes along the southern verge of Cam Drive and a short section on Lynn Road connecting to the Princess of Wales Hospital to the north of Cam Drive. Route 11 of the National Cycleway Network also runs near to the site along Downham Road towards the city centre and there are existing pedestrian and cycle routes through the housing developments to the south of Cam Drive and connections through the existing housing developments to the hospital from Lynn Road. However, there are gaps in the network and there is a need to improve connections from North Ely to the City Centre.

Noise

The main noise sources in the vicinity of the site include the A10 and the northbound railway tracks, to Peterborough, Norwich and King's Lynn.

To a lesser extent, traffic on the surrounding local road network, including Cam Drive, Lynn Road and King's Avenue contribute to noise levels. Industrial units and a haulage company close to Chettisham and a vehicle mechanics garage on Lynn Rd/Cam Drive junction are also sources of noise.

The nearest noise sensitive receptors include residential properties adjacent to the site, namely along Cam Drive, Lynn Road, around the Princess of Wales Hospital and along Longchamp Drive.

Air Quality

The main source of air pollution in the county of Cambridgeshire is vehicle emissions, and there are several areas within the county where objectives are not being met because of emissions from traffic. The District Council has not currently declared

any Air Quality Management Areas although they are investigating a potential exceedence of the Air Quality Strategy objectives in the Station Gateway area to the south of the City.

Minerals and Waste

The site lies partially within the Ely Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) (Area of Search) and associated WWTW Safeguarding Area, which are designated by Policies W6A and W7N respectively of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Site Specific Proposals Plan. As development comes forward it must be demonstrated that it will not prejudice the potential provision of a new WWTW on the remaining part of the area of search. It should also be noted that the Environment Agency have indicated that a new waste water treatment works will not be required in the foreseeable future

Local Fenland Character

Key to the understanding of the site context is North Ely's relationship to both the townscape character of the City and the landscape character of the surrounding Fenland. The North Ely development will need to provide the transition between these two. It will also need to recognise and reflect that the built traditions in Ely itself are slightly different to the traditions of the surrounding fen villages,

Important townscape/landscape characteristics include:
Landscape And Interface With Settlement

- There is not a stark contrast between the countryside landscape and the landscape within the settlements. The historic town/village feels integrated into its wider rural setting. There are 'moments' of transparency, with views through, between buildings, to the countryside beyond
- The rural character/urban characters are distinct but merged. The transition is tessellated, not graded. Thus there is agricultural 'language' in urban streets and urban buildings in the countryside
- Trees are usually large scale within hard urban streets. They help to 'draw' the rural landscape into the urban environment, not create a distinct urban landscape.
- Parks and green spaces: Again, these are not regular, formal or urban. They are semi-rural in nature, and help to connect the settlement with its rural landscape. The strong characteristic is urban public buildings (Cathedral and school) and low density housing within an informal rural landscape.

However, the modern response has been high density housing with a hard urban relationship with a more formal urban park.

Development would benefit from a high degree of visual integration into the landscape context. Larger scale structural landscaping will ensure a maximum of integration as well as breaking up views and creating the effect of a 'layered' landscape.

The character of some of the open spaces of the development could re-interpret the agricultural and rural land use pattern that frequently forms part of settlements with land uses such as allotments and orchards forming rural and low key land uses with a character in keeping with the existing.

Sense Of Arrival

- Arriving at and leaving the historic settlement. Distant views of the whole settlement are rare, either because of contours or landscaping. The visitor becomes aware of the settlement through the location of the first houses along the arrival route, and then the increasing number of properties (mixed uses) the closer one gets to the centre of the settlement. Departure away from the settlements is usually marked by a decreasing number of properties, and increasing amounts of space between them, rather than a sudden end to development
- The properties on the edges of the traditional settlements are usually modest domestic dwellings
- Traditional buildings along the arrival routes frame or break down distant views
- 'Ribbon' streets leading into and out of the settlement, with fields behind

Development would benefit from points of arrival into the development that are clearly marked and bear a strong relation to the main existing street.

A sense of arrival could be created by dwellings or open spaces on the main street into the development.

The Core Of The Settlement

- Confluence of routes, which usually creates the feel of town/village centre
- The defining characteristic of the 'centre' is a confluence and concentration of 'activity'. This may include commercial activity, but may just be a confluence of routes around a green space or a concentration of residential activity. Importantly, it is not necessarily defined by dense (i.e. generally taller) development. The grain of development

may be fine, but in many cases the buildings are two or even single storey. The level of 'containment' of spaces is sometimes low, due to the ratio of building height to the size of the space. The sense of containment of streets is usually higher, but this is largely because there are few gaps between buildings – containment is rarely created by a concentration of tall buildings

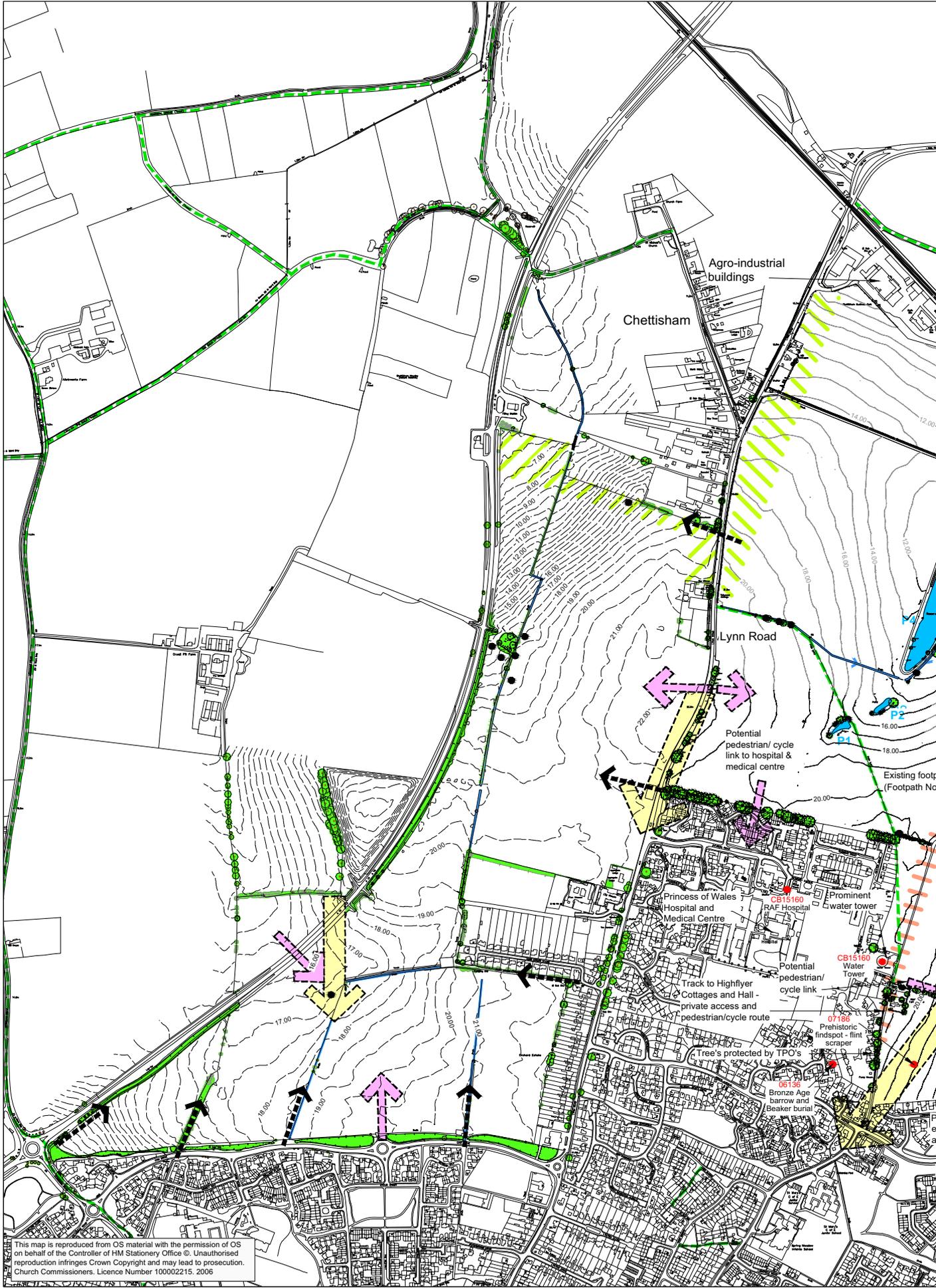
- 'Central' greens
- Short vistas, defined by location of buildings and/or a change in direction of the route, create a sense of intimacy and interest to streets, especially key corridors, as they are broken up visually
- Traditional land uses developed and still co-exist in a haphazard manner. This has often resulted in stark contrasts between juxtaposed built forms and land uses, which now form a critical and defining characteristic. The nature of the built form was a direct result of the uses that needed to be accommodated, the location of the plot of land to be developed and the sequence of delivery
- There is little regularity or uniformity in street form or widths. There is often the widening of road spaces which create focal points and create a sense of place rather than simply a street.

Development would benefit from a network of open spaces with different sizes and character to create a local centre as well as smaller neighbourhood spaces.

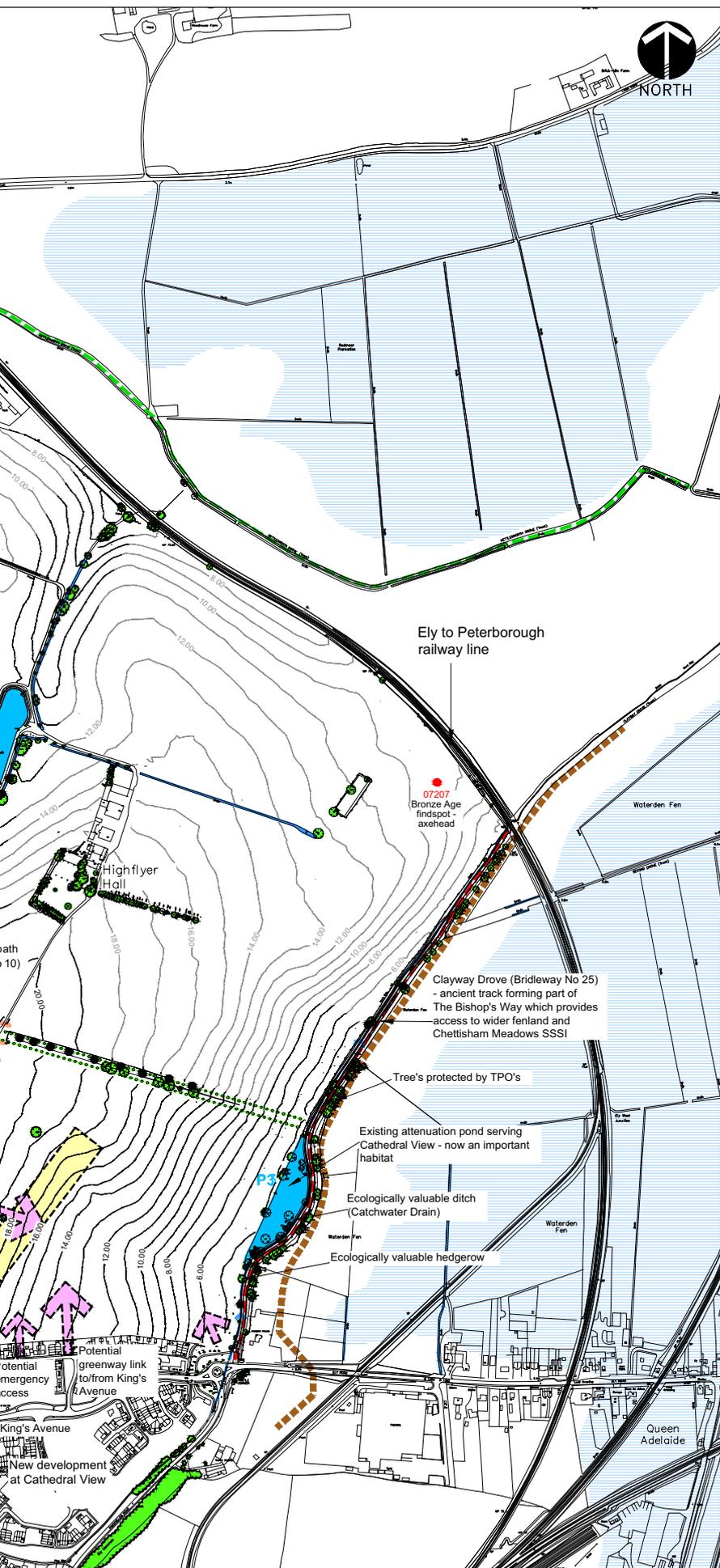
Local centres should be located at spatial nodes within the development, so that activity is concentrated and enlivens the place.

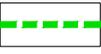
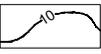
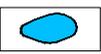
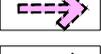


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-  Approximate Extent of Extreme Flood
Environment Agency Flood Map
-  Watercourses/Ditches
Ordnance Survey Explorer 226 Map
-  Known Archaeological Sites
Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record
-  Fen-edge
Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record
-  Public Rights of Way
Ordnance Survey Explorer 226 Map
-  Bridleway/Track
Ordnance Survey Explorer 226 Map
-  Contours at 1m intervals
-  Existing Vegetation
(on and in the vicinity of the site)
-  Standing Water (P1-P4)
Phase 1 Ecological Survey, March 2006
-  Mature Tree/Potential Bat Roost
(not exact number or location)
Phase 1 Ecological Survey, March 2006
-  Young Plantation
Phase 1 Ecological Survey, March 2006
-  Buffer to Chettisham
-  Ridgeline
-  Proposed Primary Highway Access
-  Potential Greenway
-  Views of Cathedral

Note: According to the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record there are no listed buildings on or in the vicinity of the site

Highflyer Farm

Site Appraisal for Wider Holdings

Scale 1:10,000 at A3
September 2012

