

5.3.2 Views from the city outskirts and from within the City (refer to Drawing Number 1255LP/6 and Photograph Panels C-F)

- The South

*Cambridge Road and A10 Bypass (viewpoint 6)*

From this area views to the Cathedral are seen across open agricultural fields and the vegetation of the golf course which creates a wooded fringe from which the Cathedral rises. The spire of St Mary's Church is also visible but other city development is screened from view. This view typically illustrates the rural character of the edge of Ely, which still exists even when viewing the Cathedral from the 'Ely Island' itself.

- The South and East

*Marina and Riverside Walk (viewpoint 8)*

The views from this area of the city are distinctive due to the proximity and dominance of the Cathedral, the angle of view and the visual and physical connection between the Cathedral and the River from this point, a connection that can only be made in a few limited locations. The significant vegetation within Cathedral Park reduces the impact of the surrounding development and provides an attractive and green setting to the Cathedral.

*Railway approach from the north and playing fields (viewpoint 4)*

Whilst there are a number of distant views of the Cathedral as one approaches the city from the north by rail, it is not until past Roswell Pits that a dramatic view opens up. The Cathedral is seen rising out of Ely Island, while the foreground is wetland, marsh or the playing fields. The vegetation along the railway line, as part of Roswell Pits and along the playing fields contributes to an overall green fringe to the Cathedral view. There are only filtered views to existing development of the town. The views from the playing fields are similar to those from the train although from here there are more views to existing development. The low angle and proximity of this view accentuates the scale and dominance of the Cathedral.

*Views from the railway station*

From the elevated station entrance at Ely there is a dramatic view up Station Road and Fore Hill to the Cathedral. The proximity of the Cathedral, the old buildings along Station Road, and the steepness of the slope of the island, accentuate the visual and physical dominance of the Cathedral from this view. The modern road network, signage and Tesco car park form a detracting foreground, but not to the extent that they diminish the visual dominance of the Cathedral and historic buildings.

*B1382 and Queen Adelaide Way (viewpoint 3)*

Views to the Cathedral from Queen Adelaide Way, are restricted to an area past the works at Queen Adelaide and before the road passes behind the Middle Fen Bank. From here there are clear views of the Cathedral on Ely Island with only limited views to built development of the surrounding town. What makes these views distinctive is the presence of the River Great Ouse in the foreground, which forms a distinctive part of the location and setting of the town.

From Queen Adelaide and the B1382, where the road crosses the railway line closest to

Ely there are views to the Cathedral, although they are oblique and the Cathedral is some distance away.

- The North

*From Lynn Road (viewpoint 1)*

From this old straight approach route into the city there are significant views to the Cathedral. Whilst the road is urban in character these views remain dominant for a considerable length of time and give distinctiveness to the route.

*Newnham Street (viewpoint 13)*

Views from this street are characterised by the vista of the east round tower of the Cathedral which is seen framed by the street buildings either side. The attractive small scale and historic passage and buildings along Market Street form an attractive foreground to this view, their historic character bolstering the sense of history.

- The West

*Downham Road (viewpoint 5)*

Views from this road are seen in the context of housing development to the west and the college/schools to the east. The foreground in the view is comprised of vegetation and the openness of the school playing fields, which form an open and green foreground to the Cathedral.

*Downham Road at the junction with Egremont Street (viewpoint 14)*

From here the view to the Cathedral is close proximity. It is seen towering above existing housing with a foreground of vegetation which is part of adjacent property gardens. This view is dramatic as it follows the climb up onto the Island and is a short glimpse before the streetscape blocks further views.

## 5.4 Conclusions

The visual analysis of Ely has demonstrated the large distance and wide range of views that exist. From middle and distant views, either from surrounding countryside or the outskirts of the city, the Cathedral is most often seen in a green and rural context. The lack of visual competition from other built form, without doubt, makes a significant contribution to the city's identity and distinctiveness. The assessment has also demonstrated how views can alter as one passes through the landscape or town. The sequence of spaces, character, gateways and angle of view all affect the significance of the view and the messages it emanates about the place. It is these aspects which are considered in section 6.0.

## 6.0 APPROACHES TO THE CITY

---

### 6.1 Introduction

Approach routes and departure sequences when entering and leaving historic cathedral cities are of significance because they impact on ones appreciation of the distinctiveness of the place. They are influenced by a number of factors;

- a) Historic route and road network
- b) Character of the landscape / townscape
- c) Gateway character
- d) Settlement edge
- e) Green wedges

Each of these is discussed below. When considered in relation to the character of the setting and townscape and the 'capacity study' it is possible to identify how future development may cause adverse change to the approach route or departure sequence, causing a knock on negative impact on the distinctiveness of the city.

### 6.2 Historic Routes and Road Network

Drawing number 1255LP/1 illustrates the historic nature of the radial routes that lead into the centre of Ely.

Historically the routes to Ely island were causeways connecting the town with surrounding settlements. As the town developed and the Cathedral was constructed these routes would have provided views of the Cathedral long before arriving, travelling along the flat fen landscape or more undulating Transitional Island landscape before rising up onto the higher land of Ely Island and before reaching built development.

The current road network closely resembles early routes and is long established. The routes are characterised by taking a direct approach to the centre of the city. Thus views to the Cathedral are typically in front as one approaches. In contrast the more recent route of the A10 by-pass, which was constructed in the 1980's forms a loop around the western side of the city and by its nature skirts round the city. Its sequence of views, gateway points and sense of arrival is therefore atypical, and views are often oblique.

The historic approach routes to Ely are rural in character, often with grass/soft verges, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, or open ditches if on the fen. The contrast between this rural road character and built development/town is therefore clearly marked and discernible. Alterations to approach roads can however erode this distinct character variation. Where development occurs, even if on one side of the road only, the road character can become more urbanised with concrete kerbs, lighting, roundabout junctions, etc. This affects the historic character of the approach and can undermine the gateway and sense of arrival.

### **6.3 Character of the Landscape / Townscape**

The character of the landscape that one passes through before reaching Ely Island influences the sequence of views to the Cathedral. When approaching the city across open fen there are medium to long distance views which are generally uninterrupted except for roadside vegetation. When approaching the city via the Transitional Island landscape character area views of the Cathedral first appear some distance off, will disappear and later reappear much closer, thus building anticipation to the point of arrival.

### **6.4 Gateway Character**

The gateways to and from the city represent the point of arrival or departure. Gateway points in historic cities are demarcated by built form. The nature of this built form is important in terms of first impression of the place. The older the first buildings encountered the stronger the sense of arrival at an historic city.

Similarly departure from the city is demarcated by leaving the built up area, but it is also closely linked to longer distance views of the wider landscape (refer to drawing number 1255LP/6 and photograph panel F). These views are possible because of the elevated nature of the city or the surrounding topography. These views do not just reinforce the sense of departure but also reinforce the sense of place and connectiveness with the surrounding fen landscape. They 'borrow' character from the setting.

The distinctiveness of a gateway and the clarity of its location can be undermined by even minor alterations to road character and built development.

### **6.5 Settlement Edge**

The character of the settlement edge has a significant influence on the distinctiveness of a place, the gateway, and on how long it takes to reach historic built form that confirms the historic character of the settlement. If the edge of a settlement has a significant amount of modern housing development which is indistinctive in character and increases the length of time it takes to arrive at the historic core of the city it can weaken the sense of arrival and distinctness of the place. Similarly if the settlement edge at Ely is visible over a wide area it can have an adverse impact on quintessential views.

Examples of where development influences the perception of arrival includes recent housing along Prickwillow Road. In contrast development along Station Road, whilst detracting from the gateway, does not overpower the historic character of Fore Hill and views of the Cathedral. Adverse impact is therefore closely related to scale and the retention of views to landmarks. In Ely many of the quintessential views of the Cathedral rarely contain views to other development and the Cathedral is often seen set within a margin of trees (refer to Photograph Panel D).

### **6.6 Green Wedges**

Green wedges, like the nature of the settlement edge, influence distinctiveness of place and route, gateway points and generally enable one to reach the historic core of the settlement shortly after passing through the gateway to the city. They therefore assist in linking the settlement with the surrounding landscape setting but also bolster the sense of arrival at an historic place.

Areas of landscape that currently form important green wedges includes the golf course and land between Witchford Road and Cambridge Road in the south, and land to the north of Lynn Road between Ely and the settlement of Chettisham. In both cases the landscapes are in recreational or agricultural use and form part of the Ely Island landscape character area.

## 7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

---

The environmental capacity assessment has been based on a methodology established by Landscape Design Associates, and endorsed by the Countryside Agency (refer to Appendix 2). This methodology was piloted in Winchester and developed in Salisbury. It was also used by Landscape Design Associates in the public inquiry relating to land at Witchford Road, Ely (1998) and was regarded by the inspector at the inquiry as reflecting a shift in assessment techniques.

*“There has been seismic shift amongst informed opinion ... that the setting of an historic town has to be viewed as a whole. Concentration on views of one aspect of that historic town ... will not suffice.”*

This capacity study aims to determine the ‘function’ of the landscape in terms of how it contributes to the distinctiveness of the place and forms its setting. The future development of Ely will need to assess if new development areas will adversely affect the function attributed to the townscape and landscape.

The assessment considers the landscape as it currently exists although, due to the fact that significant development areas have been allocated, these development areas have been taken into consideration, as they will have an impact on the future capacity of Ely to accept future development.

### 7.1 Defining the Study Area – The Setting of Ely

In most situations the definition of the study area, (the area of landscape that forms the setting to the city), can be defined by the zone of visual influence of distinctive landmarks and the city itself. However, in the case of the Ely study, the character of the surrounding landscape results in the city and its Cathedral being visible over vast areas of fen landscape, as defined in section 5.3 ‘Quintessential Views’. In this study, therefore, the study area has been defined by the key significant views from the surrounding landscape where the Cathedral and other landmarks, the settlement edge and its landscape setting, are discernible. Landscape which forms the foreground to these important views has been assessed as part of the capacity study (refer to Drawing Numbers 1255LP/5 and 6).

### 7.2 Character

The distribution and pattern of character within the study area has been described in section 4.0 above. While all the character areas have an identifiable and coherent identity, their impact and relative influence on both the city and its setting is variable. An assessment of the contribution that these character areas make to the ‘essence’ of Ely and the unique sense of place, both within the city and its rural setting, can vary both within as well as between character boundaries.

The environmental capacity assessment therefore classifies the landscape/townscape in relation to the function it performs in supporting distinctiveness. The following classification categories established at Winchester were used and their principal characteristics are described below:-

- ***Visually cohesive historic cores***  
These are areas defined by the highly visible nature of the historic city as pre-1810 settlement cores. Elements such as historic street pattern, building type, scale, architectural style, detailing and materials all generate a strong sense of the story of the city. The area may include subsequent nineteenth and twentieth century development, but the depth of historic character and the street pattern remains clearly visible. This perception of age or multiple layers of history may include modern architecture, but its overarching character remains clearly sensed and valued.
- ***Distinctive townscape/landscape***  
These are areas defined as specifically recognisable and distinctive to the city. These include townscape and landscape components such as quintessential views, the interaction of buildings forming spaces or the setting to local events, landform, backdrops of the city, areas of rich biodiversity, historic approach routes and landmarks of positive character. These areas, frequently contiguous with the historic cores, often borrow from or bestow character to them.
- ***Supportive townscape/landscape***  
These are areas of town/landscape which support the character of the historic cores and areas distinctive to the city. They provide the backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the city and its approaches by supporting and buffering its special character.
- ***Connective townscape/landscape***  
These are areas of townscape/landscape which are an integral part of the city and its environs, but lack individual distinction, or do not play a significant contribution to the setting of the city. This does not signify that these areas are unimportant, or lacking in their own identity. Rather, they are often areas divorced from or weakly attached to their landscape setting, or from landmarks within the landscape or historic cores. The use of mass-produced building materials, standard suburban layouts, styles and details are also contributing factors in the loss of local identity.
- ***Visually Significant Landmarks***  
These are positive and visually significant landscape and townscape landmarks which are recognisable and quintessential to the city and its setting. These include ancient and modern buildings, groups and avenues of trees, landforms, silhouettes, horizons and views.
- ***Visually Detracting Townscape/Landscape***  
These are areas or elements which detract from the distinct and special character of the city and its setting. These may include routes, edges, built elements or districts, or degraded landscapes.

Although the *cohesive historical core* within the city is pivotal to the essential character, it is not necessarily of greater importance than the remaining areas of influence. The areas of *distinctive* and *supportive* landscape and townscape play a crucial role in the setting and perception of a city. They may include sites and features of premier importance and are comparable with elements within the historic core. The *connective* areas may also include significant landscape and townscape features but will not share the strength of characteristics that contribute to the 'essence of the city'. The importance of this final category lies in linking between and forming a foil to areas of *distinctive* and *supportive*

landscape and townscape. In addition, all these areas have an importance to local communities and the way they use and identify with 'their' part of the city.

### 7.3 Conclusions

The results of this study are illustrated on Drawing Numbers 1255LP/5 and 6.

They demonstrate the substantial area of landscape that performs a significant role in creating the setting to the city. It also distinguishes between those landscapes that, due to their prominence in views, either due to raised topography or expansive fenland, play a more significant role in 'supporting' distinctiveness compared to other areas that are more 'connective'.

Of particular note is the compactness and cohesiveness of the historic core of the city and its close visual and physical connection with the Great River Ouse. Similarly the significant areas of distinctive landscape that lie adjacent to the historic core and extend out in a radial pattern along the historic routes. Key landscapes that form a 'distinctive' landscape setting include the river and its associated wetlands.

The green wedges of land identified in section 6.6 perform important 'supportive' roles in that they support the historic core and distinctive areas as a foreground to the city, bolstering sense of place and approach routes. In a similar way the western side of the city has been divided into both 'supportive' and 'connective' landscape. The area of 'connective' landscape includes the central and lower landscape between the city and the A10 where new development will reflect the pattern of development seen to the west. In contrast either side, the land rises to contain the city, frame views and is generally more visually prominent. It therefore becomes 'supportive' landscape, reinforcing and buffering the distinctive island character of Ely, and thus bolstering sense of place.

This assessment does not distinguish some areas as more suitable for development than others. What it defines is the way in which areas of the city and its setting relate and function with regard to distinctiveness.

Future development will need to be tested against this classification to ensure areas currently performing 'supportive' roles are not undermined so their contribution is reduced. Similarly opportunities to strengthen the function of a landscape should be sought. This is discussed in more detail in section 8.0.



## 8.0 THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF ELY AND ITS FUTURE

---

### 8.1 The Future Capacity of Ely

The following conclusions have been drawn from the data collected as part of the environmental capacity study and the resulting analysis:

- 1) The distinctiveness of Ely as a special place could easily be undermined by inappropriate planning and design.
- 2) There are few opportunities for growth within Ely or its landscape setting without undermining the city's special qualities and distinctiveness.

However, the environmental capacity of a settlement and its landscape to accept change is not necessarily static. This assessment has considered the capacity of Ely at one point in time, and has identified those aspects of the city and its setting which contribute to its distinctiveness. There are significant opportunities to enhance and strengthen these distinctive qualities which in turn could potentially increase the city's capacity for future development. Thus the question of whether Ely has reached capacity is in part dependent on initiatives to protect and enhance its distinctiveness and create a more robust environmental framework for the city.

*The Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines (1991) set out ways in which the fen landscape and fen islands can be enhanced. In particular it stresses the appropriateness of woodland and tree planting on the fen islands, which already hold a higher concentration of trees than the surrounding landscape. It states that;*

*'there could be substantial benefits from establishing new woodlands on the fen islands around Ely...'*

*'many of the fenland villages have suffered from unsightly fringe development. Planting thick hedgerows with trees or wider shelterbelts on the margins would soften harsh boundaries between rear gardens and farmland'*

*'At the transition area between fen and island, the creation of small grass paddocks surrounded with thick hedges and trees or areas of woodland would reinforce the contrast and the sense of moving from one landscape to the other'.*

The capacity assessment supports these guidelines and is able to, in the context of assessing capacity, identify the areas within the setting of Ely where strategies could be undertaken to implement these landscape objectives and thus positively contribute to the identity of Ely and its environmental setting.

### 8.2 The Long Term Edge to the City

There is creative potential to integrate environmental enhancement works with new development to ensure the protection of existing environmental assets and distinctiveness and also the creation of a positive, attractive long-term edge to the city.

Although this study has not assessed the potential for redevelopment opportunities in Ely,

there would appear to be limited scope for development within the existing urban area. Thus the majority of any new development which is to be accommodated is likely to occur on greenfield sites at the fringe of the settlement. With this scenario, there would be a need to develop ways in which the 'fringe' landscape could have greater capacity to accept well-located and sustainable development opportunities.

A vision for Ely could thus incorporate the rounding-off of the city, involving carefully selected development on its fringes and the establishment of a long-term, attractive soft edge to the city (refer to Drawing Number 1255LP/7).

### 8.3 Environmental Strategies

The essential qualities of Ely identified in the assessment need to be extended into environmental initiatives that can be used to actively enhance the capacity of Ely to potentially accept future further development and also protect and enhance its distinctiveness. These are considered below, firstly looking at environmental issues, which should be considered in connection with new development, and secondly by looking at more specific and strategic initiatives to create an attractive long-term edge.

#### 8.3.1 Protecting and Conserving the Essential Qualities

When considering ways in which the existing urban edges of Ely can be improved, or the how new development (be it housing, commercial or road developments) should be planned and designed, the following should be considered:

- a) The impact which development may have on pushing gateways further out away from the city, thus reducing the sense of arrival and the perception of distance for the historic centre of the city.
- b) Development may alter the historic sequence of views on approaching or departing from the city.
- c) The benefit of creating soft, vegetated built edges, that run with contours and not against them.
- d) Development which may cause a change in character, reducing distinctiveness between landscapes of varying character.
- e) Road design which may create inappropriate urbanised junctions at gateways to the historic city.
- f) The need to reinforce the clarity and distinctiveness of the interface between fen and fen island landscape types through planting and the creation of fen wetlands.
- g) The need to create distinctive places, both built and landscape.
- h) The need to frame and retain views to the Cathedral through street orientation, low buildings heights where appropriate and well located public open space.

#### 8.3.2 Developing Environmental Strategies

With or without development the following environmental strategies could form a key element in the future of Ely. They would enrich Ely without any new development or they could help accommodate new development and potentially be funded by it.

(i) *Proposed wetland/Fen re-creation*

There are a number of initiatives aimed at the re-creation of wetlands in the fen landscape. The Wet Fens Project has been established with support from government agencies, local

authorities, voluntary organisations, and the EU LIFE programme. It aims to develop the tools to help identify and progress options for the reinstatement and management of wetlands in the Fens.

As part of the Wet Fens Project three exciting initiatives, which are independent of any strategies within Ely, have been launched. These include;

- a) A new wetland nature reserve for the Fens based at Needingworth and Over, Cambridgeshire, following gravel extraction.
- b) A major expansion to Wicken Fen stretching to the River Cam in the west to the A14 in the south.
- c) Large-scale habitat restoration in Fenland by the creation of a nature reserve encompassing Holme Fen and Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserves, and recreation of Whittlesey Mere.

These and similar initiatives, particularly when they are located close to settlements, can enhance the settings of towns, provide recreation opportunities and wildlife enhancement, and create distinctive and high quality environments adjacent to where people live. Whilst these projects are not in the vicinity of Ely there is significant scope to undertake similar initiatives around Ely, to extend existing wetland habitats and to use these new landscapes to reinforce the identity of the city and create a strong new landscape edge and setting. These wetlands could also perform a role in developing sustainable ways to treat 'grey water' using reed bed technologies.

*(ii) Proposed areas of landscape enhancement*

Landscape enhancement initiatives, as set out in the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines, should contribute to the distinctiveness of a place, reinforcing existing landscape character or creating a new environment which contributes positively to the whole.

At Ely landscape enhancement initiatives could include:

- appropriate tree planting on the edge of the Ely Island and in the Transitional Island landscape character areas,
- the reinforcement and reinstatement of field boundaries and hedgerow trees to create a more treed character to undeveloped land under agricultural cultivation which forms part of Ely Island,
- the creation of wetlands on the Fenland edge.

The benefits of such initiatives are that they would reinforce the distinctive landscape character areas that contribute significantly to Ely's sense of place and setting. They would create a more attractive edge of the city and assist in avoiding raw development edges. They would create landscapes that could be publicly enjoyed and appreciated on people's doorsteps and could, in a limited number of carefully sited locations, increase the capacity of the city to accommodate further development.

*(iii) Proposed Country Park*

To be successful a country park needs to be carefully located, fit with the existing urban and landscape setting and be easily accessible. Country parks are often very successful at the edge of urban areas because they provide easily accessible open space, and form a gradual transition from urban to rural landscapes, as well as creating an appropriate edge to development. Equally they can create a distinctive landscape on the edge of a settlement which reinforces local identity.

Currently Ely has no such public open space at the edge of the city, although the golf course off Cambridge Road is publicly accessible and has established an attractive and leafy character to the Ely Island slopes and Roswell Pits are popular for recreation and fishing. There is therefore great opportunity to create a country park landscape in Ely, particularly on the northern fringes, where the landscape is still distinctively 'island' in character. Here it is likely that any potential future development would have an adverse impact on the scale and distinctiveness of the city, unless it is coupled with an appropriate landscape design strategy. The development of a country park here would help to achieve local distinctiveness and identity, through the creation of a new fen island landscape incorporating Ely Island and wet fenland and thus creating a soft and robust edge to the city, thus helping to absorb any new development. A country park at this location would also help to absorb and soften existing allocated housing development.

*(iv) Proposed approach road enhancement*

The road approaches into the city of Ely play a very influential role in reinforcing the distinctiveness of the city, building anticipation and providing a sense of arrival. Many of the routes are historically important and this is reflected in their geographical location and the built development that lines them. Many of the routes, as discussed in section 6.0, contribute positively to the experience of approaching and departing the city. However, there are initiatives which could be undertaken to reinforce their important role and protect them from the negative impacts of any new development.

Initiatives could include the creation of wide grass verges, avenues of trees, the planting of hedgerows and the reinforcement of rural character prior to reaching gateways to the city. These initiatives, however, need to respond to two important factors – firstly, the need to reflect existing landscape and townscape character and, secondly, they need to create routes which are distinctive and recognisably different from each other.

#### **8.4 Potential Development Areas - Assessing Future Capacity**

Having considered the opportunities for environmental enhancement this assessment now looks at the existing environmental capacity of Ely to accept new development and its potential when considered with the above strategies.

The city has been divided into four strategy areas as follows;

- Area 1 – North and North East Ely
- Area 2 – North West Ely
- Area 3 – West Ely
- Area 4 – South Ely

The landscape to the east of Ely is not discussed under this heading because environmental and physical constraints preclude development options.

The four strategy areas identified, and their associated environmental initiatives and capacity for further growth, are discussed below.

##### **8.4.1 Area 1: North and North East Ely**

*Context*

This area of land lies on the north east slopes of Ely Island, adjacent to Prickwillow Road, the existing urban edge and Highflyer's Farm, and extending round to Lynn Road. It has been identified in the capacity assessment as an area of 'supportive' landscape. It is therefore important in bolstering the distinctive characteristics of the city. It is a highly visible area of landscape particularly when viewed from Prickwillow Road when approaching Ely through Queen Adelaide, and from Littleport when travelling along Lynn Road. The potential impact of development on this land can be illustrated by the impact of existing recent development both on the skyline and island slopes - there are clear sensitivities which need to be addressed.

Views of the Cathedral from the surrounding landscape and roads are across the long section of the island and thus the Cathedral appears to be some distance away, sitting over the brow of the hill. The existing water tower forms a dominant vertical element, which competes visually with the Cathedral. This landscape is currently in agricultural use and is predominately open with few hedgerows and trees. It is the topography and field pattern that most clearly defines the change from the fenland character area to the Ely Island character area.

The existing gateways into the city occur once development is reached along Lynn and Prickwillow Roads. From the former, the street creates a strong vista to the Cathedral. These views are distinctive.

#### *Extending development – Local Plan allocation*

Development on the slopes as allocated in the Local Plan will have a significant impact on views of the city when approaching along Prickwillow Road through Queen Adelaide and on the gateway to the city. This development, if not sensitively undertaken, will cause the visual convergence of Ely with Queen Adelaide, confusing the gateway point to the city and potentially pushing it back to the edge of the Queen Adelaide settlement. It is therefore imperative that, if development is to occur in this area of the city, it should not be highly visible on the slopes when approaching the city from Queen Adelaide, the train or from the village of Littleport along Lynn Road.

#### *Environmental improvements and further development*

The following could be undertaken to improve the environmental quality of this landscape and to reinforce its role as an area of supportive landscape.

- a) Screening the water tower so that it competes less with the Cathedral
- b) Screening of existing urban edge, but avoiding screen planting which runs against the contours
- c) Avoidance of raw development edge seen from approach roads
- d) Retention of gateways at existing points by pulling back any future development from the edge of the approach roads, and establishing significant and appropriate planting buffers.
- e) Creation of wetlands in the landscape at the edge of the island to reinforce the change in character and the arrival at Ely.
- f) Increased tree and hedgerow cover to reinforce Island character and to screen views to existing and future development edges
- g) Potential to create country park and associated wetland reserve linking to the SSSI site and other wetlands in the vicinity, creating a buffer between development and wider countryside, reinforcing character and increasing capacity of landscape to

- absorb future development
- h) Avoidance of development that visually and or physically links Ely with existing adjacent settlements of Queen Adelaide and Chettisham.

In summary, the future development potential of this area of landscape will be dependent on a significant and bold step to strengthen the character and landscape structure of the northern end of Ely Island, and to increase its environmental capacity. Typical screen planting at the new edge of development is likely to reinforce the sharp edge to the development, run against the contours and thus be out of character with the characteristic vegetation distribution on the island and at its fringes. It is therefore unlikely to contribute positively to the distinctiveness of Ely.

#### 8.4.2 Area 2: North West Ely

##### *Context*

This area is similar to Area 1 in that it consists of rising land from the fen landscape which is predominately in agricultural use, and lies adjacent to the existing urban edge. It is located between Lynn Road and Downham Road and is crossed by the A10 bypass.

This landscape has been identified as both Ely Island character area and the Transitional Island character area, linking Ely to Little Downham. The capacity assessment identified this landscape as 'supportive landscape', in particular when viewed from the northwest and when approaching the city along Downham Road or the A10. From these approaches and locations this landscape performs an important role in providing the rural setting to the city and a context to views to the Cathedral.

##### *Extending development – Local Plan allocation*

An area of residential development, proposed in the Local Plan, and currently under construction, extends across the southern portion of this area.

There remains some capacity for further development along the western edge of this area adjacent to existing housing. Development here, if appropriately screened, would not impact on the approach routes into the city or significantly alter existing views of the city from Little Downham. Development may reduce or block views of the Cathedral when heading south on the A10; however these views are not historically important, and their loss would not alter the approach or sense of arrival, which is gained when turning off the A10 into the city. Views to the Cathedral from this land could be retained within the site layout and masterplan for development, and could be secured through a development brief.

The undulating character of the Transitional Island character area affords it greater potential to accommodate development; however, its location to the west of the A10 bypass would result in a development which is poorly related to the existing urban form of the city.

##### *Environmental improvements and further development*

The following could be undertaken to retain and improve the environmental quality of this area:

- a) Retention and framing of views of the Cathedral when seen from the A10.
- b) Reinforcement of arrival onto the Ely Island by woodland planting at points of character change.

- c) Retention of open views from the Island to the wider fen landscape, particularly when leaving the city along Lynn Road or the A10.
- d) Landscape enhancement of land between new urban edge and A10 for use as recreation / agricultural use, with improved hedgerows and tree planting in order to soften the urban edge.

### 8.4.3 Area 3: West Ely

#### *Context*

This area of land lies on the western slopes of Ely Island, adjacent to the A10 bypass. It comprises the land between the existing urban edge and the A10 which has been identified as part of the Ely Island character area, and land to the west of the A10 bypass which comprises the fen landscape character area and the transitional character area to the south. The capacity study has identified this area as both 'supportive and connective' landscape. Generally the fenland landscape, transitional landscape and the upper slopes of the Ely Island are 'supportive landscape' and are important for bolstering and forming the foreground to distinctive views of the city, particularly when approaching along the A142 from Witchford, West Fen Road and Little Downham. The landscape on the lower Island slopes is less important at forming the foreground to views of the city because it is generally seen in shadow when viewed from the west.

#### *Extending development – Local Plan allocation*

The land between the existing urban edge and the A10 bypass has been allocated for development. Whilst much of the development will have limited impact on the setting of the city, the area to the south, on the upper slopes of the island, will have greatest visual impact and require careful design and integration with structural landscaping. The landscape buffer strip proposed between the A10 and new urban edge will help to soften the urban edge and reinforce the wooded character of the island in contrast to the open fen. Its structure and form should aim to create attractive spaces for people to move through and should avoid being a linear strip of planting that reinforces the line of the A10 bypass. The planting should therefore follow the line of the island and transitional character areas, crossing over the A10 bypass where appropriate. In the same way the fenland, and wetland character of the fens should penetrate the linear buffer at its lowest point, creating a visual connection with the built up areas and their wider fenland setting.

#### *Environmental improvements and further development*

The following could be undertaken to retain and improve the environmental quality of this area:

- a) The re-creation of wet fenland and reedbeds to the west of the A10 to reinforce the distinction between the city and its fenland setting, and to enhance views of the city from the west and to improve the nature conservation value of this landscape.
- b) Improvements to the A10 approach to the city and reinforcement of the distinction between character areas by woodland planting where the fen becomes the transitional landscape character area/island character.

### 8.4.4 Area 4: South Ely

#### *Context*

The southern edge of Ely has developed an attractive balance of public open space, trees and agricultural land that contributes positively to the approach to the city. This urban edge and sequence of spaces has resulted in limited views to the developed edge of the city, which is generally screened by trees and vegetation. The Cathedral is seen rising above this fringe of trees – one of the quintessential views of the city. As a result of this attractive existing edge it would be inappropriate to allow development which diminishes these spaces, character and approach. This is recognised in the landscape capacity study, which



identified the area as 'supportive' landscape.

*Extending development – Local Plan allocation*

The Local Plan has allocated two development sites within this area: firstly a small development between Witchford Road and Cambridge Road adjacent to the existing urban edge, and secondly an extension to the Cambridgeshire Business Park at Angel Drove. The former of these developments, if coupled with structure planting to soften the new edge, will have limited impact on the setting or approach routes. The latter development is currently being designed to include an appropriate landscape edge that reduces impact on views from the A10 to the wider fenland setting and reduces the impact of new buildings.

*Environmental improvements and further development*

In addition to the proposed landscape works associated with the Angel Drove site there are also opportunities at Cawdle Fen to re-create wet fen habitats and reed beds. Their location adjacent to the city's sewage works could present opportunities for the reeds to assist in sewage and water treatment, although this idea is subject to technical studies and land ownership constraints (the existing land owners are believed to have development aspirations). Wetland and reed bed creation in this location would reinforce the fen landscape character at the edge of the city and enhance the approach to the city when arriving by train.

The development of trees and vegetation associated with the golf course has resulted in an attractive leafy edge of the city. It has also increased the capacity of this landscape to accommodate future development. There are possible opportunities to develop an area at the edge of the existing urban edge without adverse impact on the setting of the city or approach. However, this would cause the loss of part of the golf course and would require a detailed feasibility study. This may conclude that there should not be any development. If, however, development on part of the golf course was deemed feasible it would be imperative to retain the remainder of the golf course as open space to protect the setting and this leafy edge to the city in the long term.

## **8.5 A Vision for Ely**

The vision for Ely (refer to Drawing No. 1255LP/7) creates a landscape and townscape that are closely related and inter-twined in their roles. The landscape enhancement proposals bolster and reinforce the elements and characteristics of Ely as a place, strengthening its identity and distinctiveness.

The capacity assessment has identified that there is limited opportunity for growth both within the urban core and within the current landscape structure and setting of the city. However, by undertaking the identified environmental improvements the landscape so created will hold greater capacity for the extension of the city, opening up some development opportunities.

However, it is rarely possible to create the landscape structure in advance of development, often development which provides the vehicle for environmental improvements to be undertaken on adjoining land in the same ownership or where good planning persuades land owners to enter into consortium arrangements, perhaps with equalisation agreements to share 'planning gain' costs and development rewards. In realising the vision for Ely it is therefore imperative that decisions on development allocations include strategic landscape

works as an integral part of the proposals, and that their characteristics and locations are in keeping with the guidance established in this study.

Any potential extension areas identified in the study have been selected from a 'city wide' perspective. Their suitability for development will depend upon more detailed investigations such as landscape, environmental, and transportation studies. They are also very dependent on land ownership and land owner aspirations and, potentially, their willingness to enter into consortium arrangements. This can, however, be stimulated by 'plan led' approaches to development which takes on a comprehensive view of Ely including, potentially, the vision set out in this report.

The environmental capacity assessment of Ely has highlighted the importance of integrating both environmental initiatives with development proposals to ensure the protection and enhancement of existing environmental assets. Such an approach, if applied to the future planning of Ely, will ensure the long-term protection of its distinctive qualities, for future generations.

**REFERENCES**

---

References:

COBB, Gerald (1980) English Cathedrals: The forgotten centuries Thames & Hudson

DORMAN, B.E. (1986) The Story of Ely and its Cathedral Norwich: Black Horse

DOWDY, Mac (1974) The Monastic Setting of Ely The Cambridgeshire Education Authority

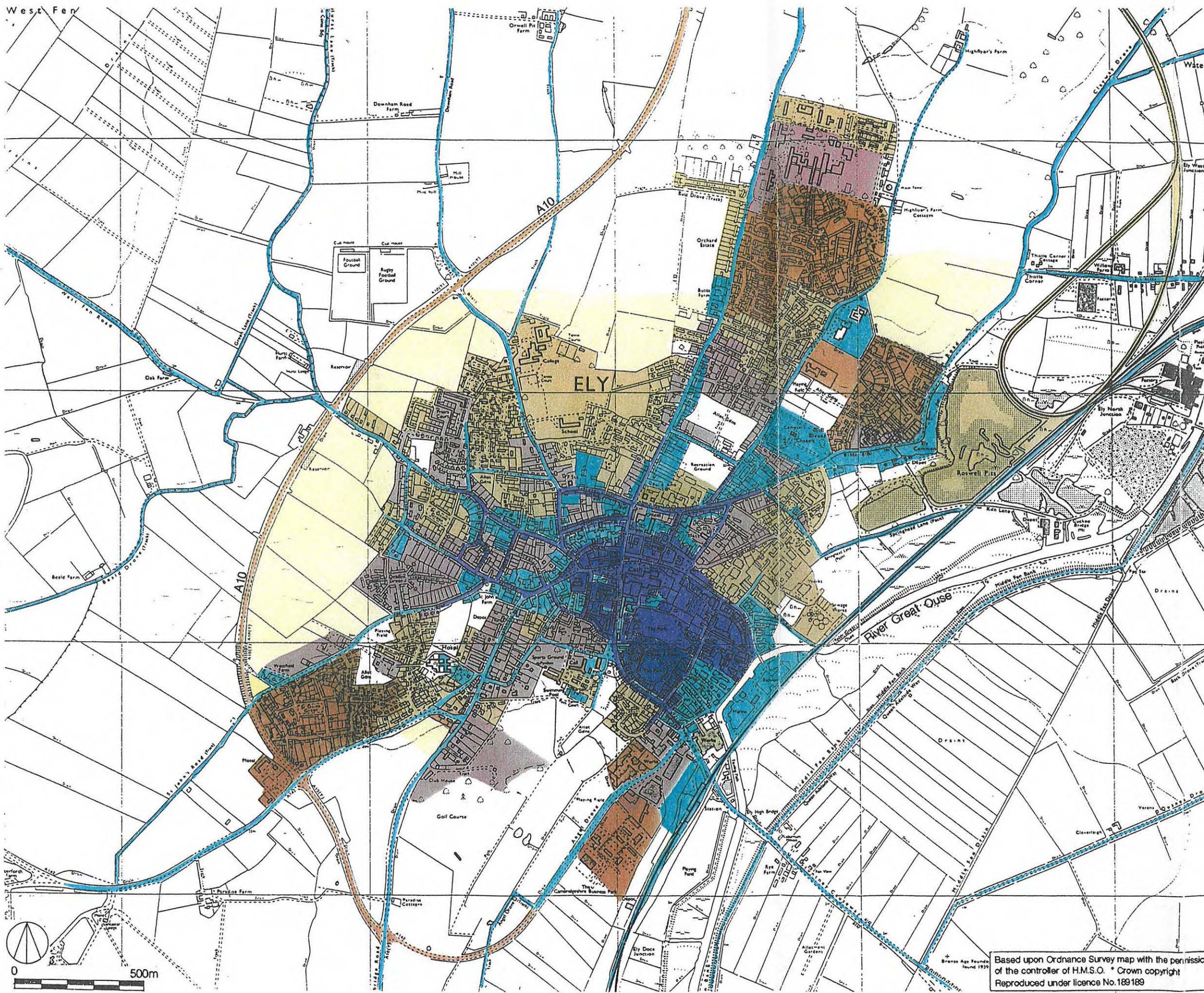
DRING, W.E. (1975) The Fenland Story: from Prehistoric Times to the Present Day Cambridge: Cambridgeshire Libraries

PARKER, A.K. & PYE, D. (1976) The Fenland Devon: David & Charles

PUGH, R.B. (ed.) (1953) The Victoria History of the County of Cambridge and The Isle of Ely Oxford University Press

SEYMOUR, John (1970) The Companion Guide to East Anglia London: Collins

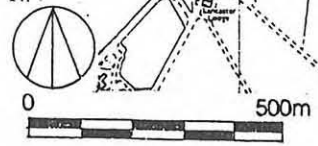
DRAWINGS AND  
PHOTOGRAPH PANELS



# Ely Environmental Capacity Study Historical Development

- 17th Century and earlier
  - 1610 and 1661
- 19th Century
  - up to 1885
- Early 20th Century
  - up to 1950 / 1951
- Late 20th Century
  - up to 1975
  - 1990's
- 21st Century

**Note:**  
This map illustrates the phased development of Ely. It has been compiled from historic maps. Today not all buildings within a particular area date from the period indicated as areas of more recent development have often occurred since.






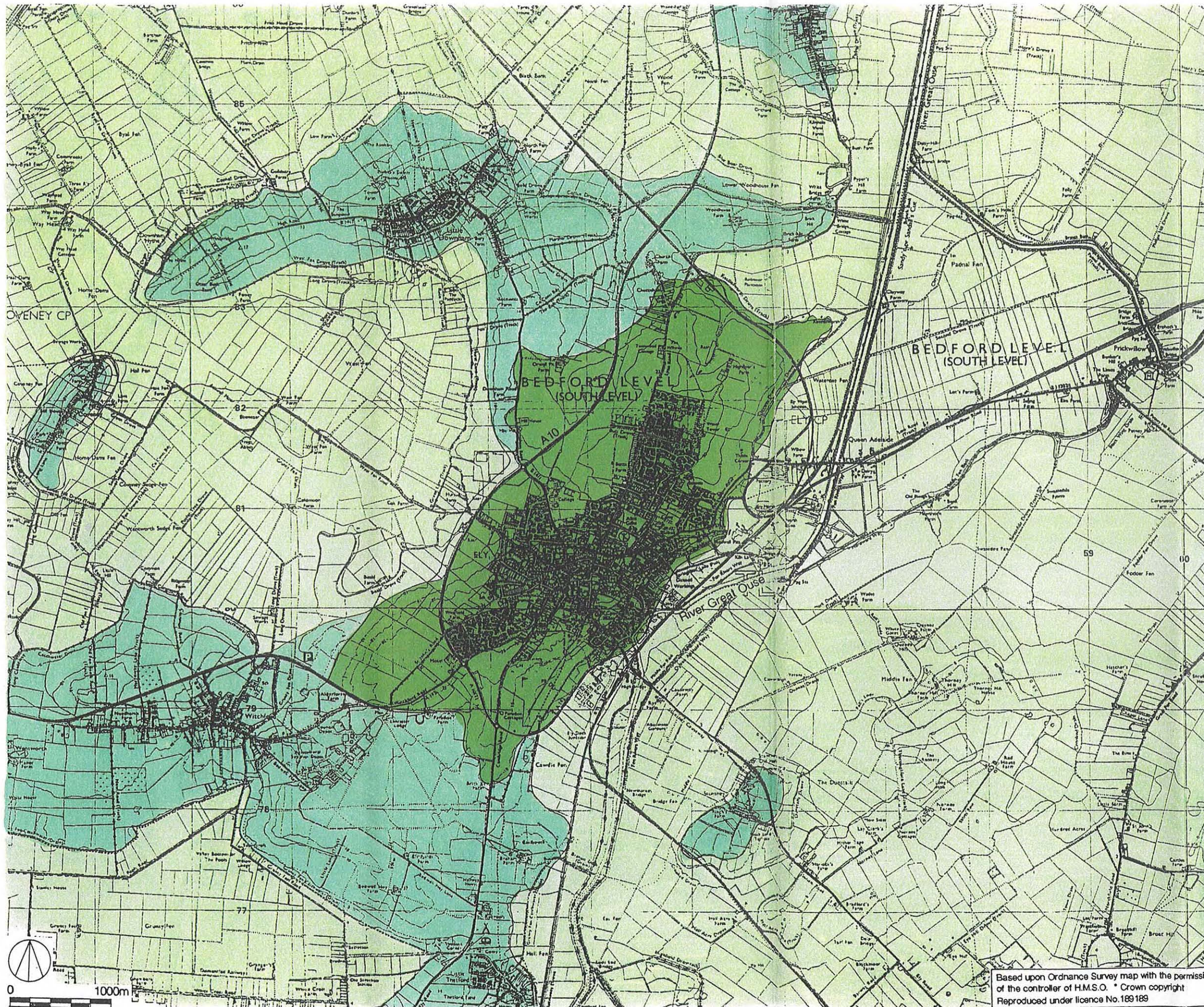
Based upon Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of H.M.S.O. \* Crown copyright  
Reproduced under licence No. 169169



LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

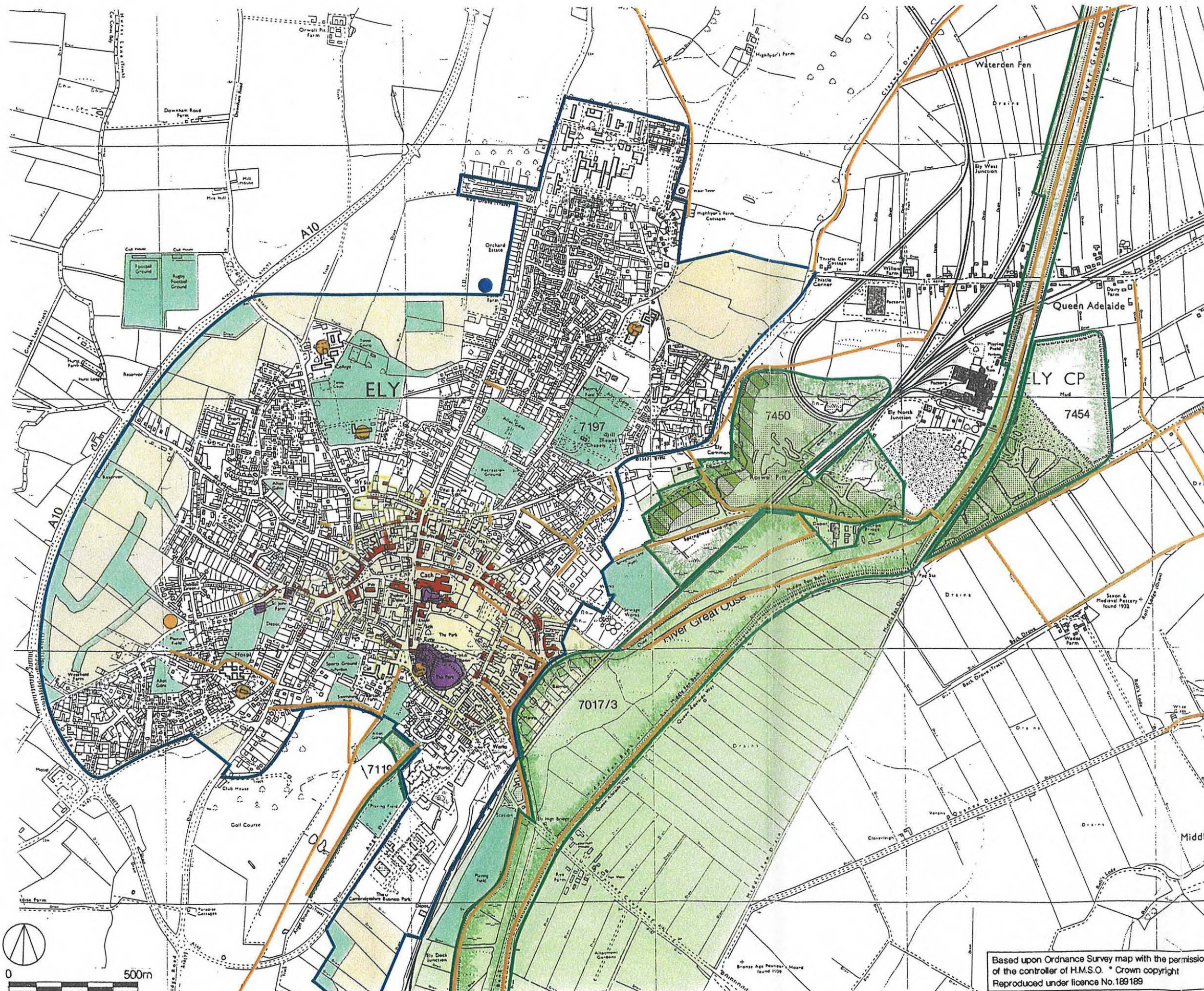
Ely Environmental Capacity Study  
Landscape Character

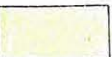










-  Ely Island
-  Transitional Island
-  Fenland



LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

# Ely Environmental Capacity Study Planning Context



-  Conservation Area
-  Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
-  Listed buildings
-  Public Rights of Way
-  Nature Conservation Zone
-  Development Envelope (including residential and employment/business)
-  Sites allocated / under construction (including areas of proposed P.O.S. and structure planting where information available)
-  Public Open Space / Recreation grounds / Allotment gardens and Cemetery
-  Schools / Proposed School
-  County Wildlife Site
-  Scheduled Ancient Monument

Based upon Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the controller of H.M.S.O. \* Crown copyright  
Reproduced under licence No.169189



LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES