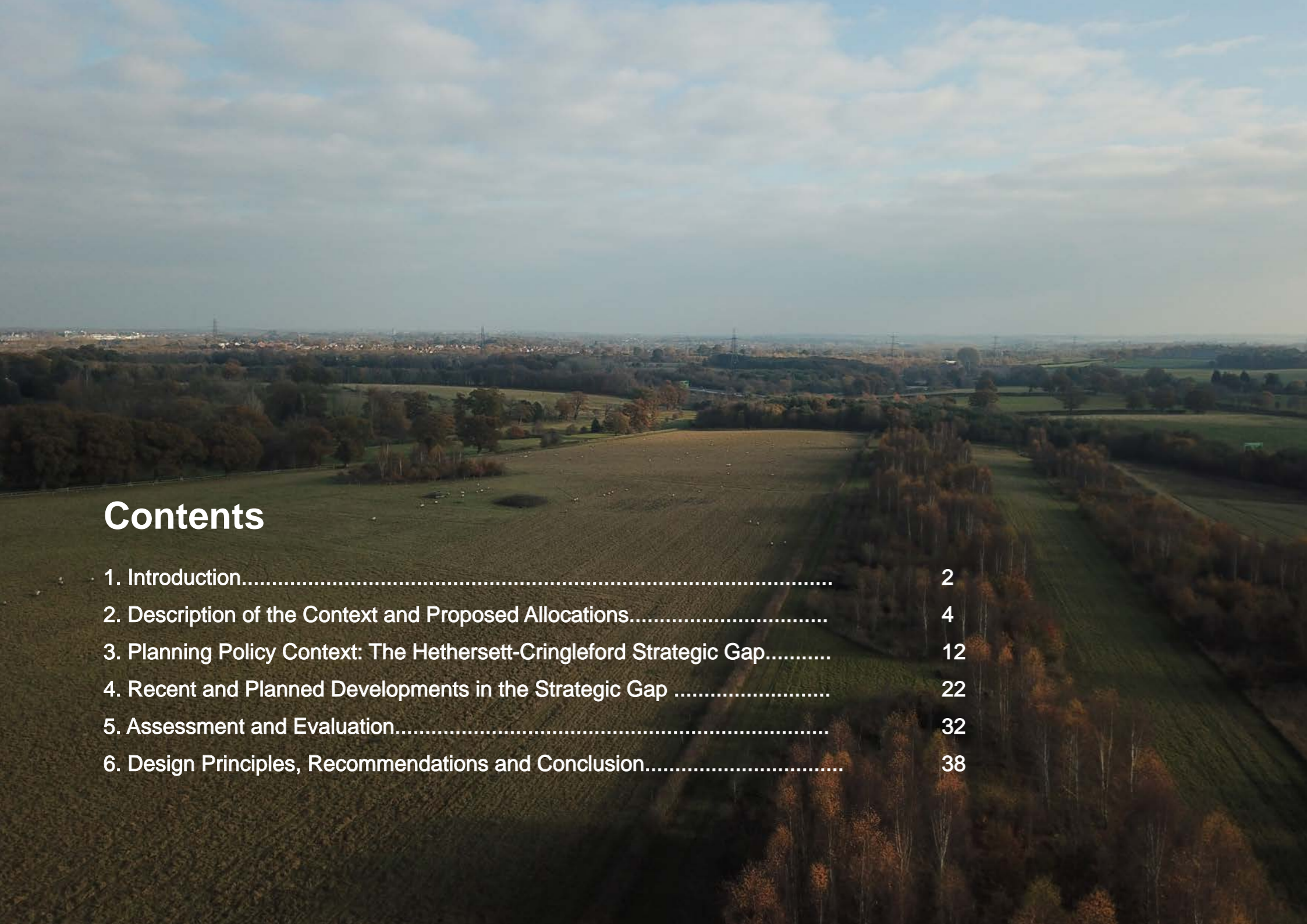


A Review of the impact of proposals on the Cringleford- Hethersett Strategic Gap

The Racecourse Community Hub at the Thickthorn Junction Gateway Zone



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A Review of the impact of proposals on the Cringleford- Hethersett Strategic Gap

The Racecourse Community Hub



Chapter One

Introduction

A need has arisen for introducing development on three sites at the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone. The developments would be part of a 60-year Parkland Management Plan for the area (The Old Racecourse Parkland Management Plan) for the Old Racecourse and Wychwood Park. These development projects would create a community hub and would be located near the site of the Old Hethersett Racecourse to the east and south of Thickthorn Hall. Their delivery is instrumental in securing the long-term management and restoration of the historic parkland and will facilitate new permissive public access and interpretation proposals. The management work proposed goes beyond the current level of day-to-day maintenance to address the predicted impact of forthcoming strategic infrastructure projects and that of permitting public access to the parkland. The works will include restoration of key views, tree planting schemes, historic interpretation, enhancement of watercourses, the creation of publicly accessible routes through the park and short and medium term plans for fencing and gates.

The three sites identified for development projects are all allocated within the Cringleford-Hethersett Strategic Gap (CHSG) as defined by policy DM4.7 of the South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document, 2015 (DMPD, 2015). They have been put forward by the landowners for allocation in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.

This report has been commissioned by the owners of the land to examine whether it will be necessary to review the boundaries of the Strategic Gap (SG) in light of these proposed allocations as part of the local plan review.

The objectives of the study

- Assess the findings of the Sheils Flynn Limited (SFL) Character and Visual Appraisals outlined in the SFL Landscape Strategy 2020.
- To take account of changes that have taken place (e.g. planning applications/appeal decisions) or will take place (e.g. Local Plan allocations and strategic infrastructure works)
- To review the aims and objectives of the Strategic Gap policy and assess whether the land at the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone can continue to fulfil this function.
- To consider recommendations regarding any modifications to the Hethersett-Cringleford Strategic Gap.

The study references historic assessments prepared by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) and the recently produced Landscape Strategy for the developments prepared by Sheils Flynn Limited (SFL), 2020. It also examines the consultation documents prepared by Highways England in support of its A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement Scheme proposals. In addition, it has been necessary to review a number of planning applications and other documents affecting or interpreting change in the CHSG.

This assessment has informed revised site boundaries of proposed allocations sites submitted for consideration in the Greater Norwich Local Plan.



Chapter Two

Description of the Context and Proposed Allocations

Table 1 below describes the location of each of the three sites and their respective distances from Cringleford and Hethersett.

The following three sites are proposed for allocation:

- Site A: Commercial office development
- Site B: Commercial office development
- Site C: Low density care village

Site	Site Area	Distance to Hethersett (Churchfields/Norwich Road Junction)	Distance to Cringleford (Newmarket Road/Round House Way Junction)	Distance to P&R (P&R Entrance)
A	1.44ha	1.79km	0.96km	160m
B	2.23ha	1.61km	1.1km	280m
C	7.64ha	1.42km	1.16km	415m

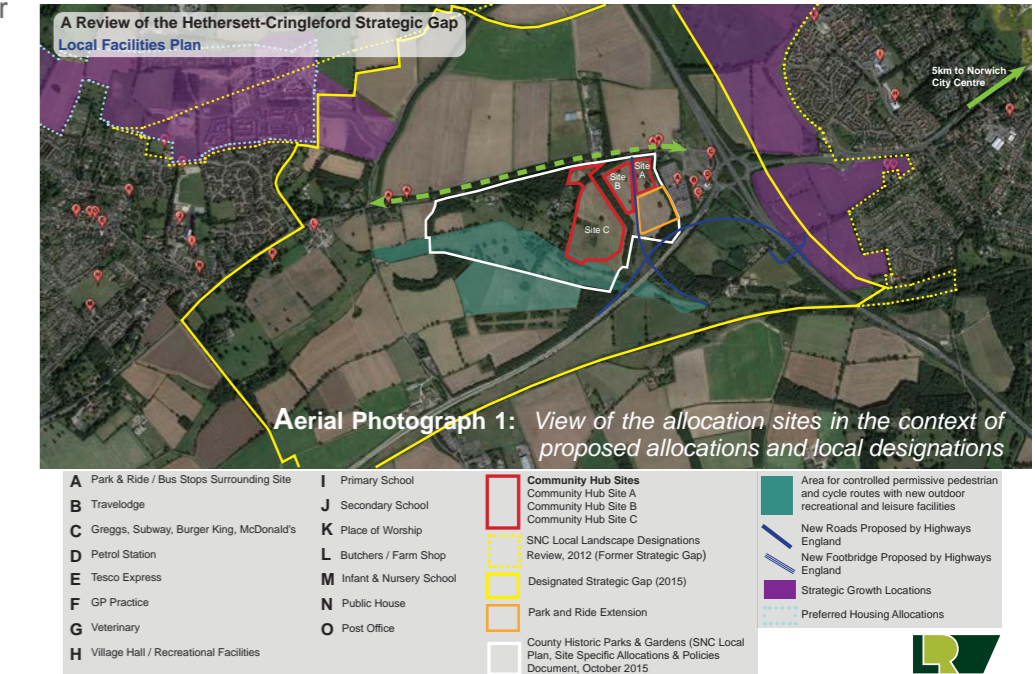
Table 1: Site Descriptions

The following uses are proposed: commercial, health and care.

Site A is approximately 1.4 hectares in area and is located immediately to the east of the proposed new link road which would connect Norwich Road (the B1172) to Cantley Lane South. It is about 1.8km from Hethersett and less than a kilometre from Cringleford. It is bounded to the north by Norwich Road, to the east, by the existing Thickthorn Park & Ride and to the south, by an area of land allocated for an extension to the park and ride. The proposed new link road would form its western boundary.

Site B is approximately 2.2 hectares in area and is located immediately to the west of the proposed new link road. It is about 1.6km from Hethersett and less than about 1 kilometre from Cringleford. Its northern and western boundary are bounded by adjacent woodland and its eastern and southern boundaries by the new link road. Although it would be visible from the new link road it would be an enclosed site.

Site C is approximately 7.6 hectares in area and is located to the east of Thickthorn Hall. It is to the north of the land proposed for sitting the new detention basin as part of the A47/A11 Highways England Thickthorn Junction



Improvement Scheme (HETJIS). It is an enclosed area of land surrounded by woodland on all sides.

The report refers to the sites as being located in the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone. The zone covers the land around the A47 /A11 Thickthorn Junction where significant improvements works are planned by Highways England. The area, and these works are described in more detail in chapter four.

In addition to highways infrastructure, the existing built development in the CHSG is comprised primarily of isolated residential uses and groups of agricultural farm buildings.

Pages 6 and 7 include photographs of the existing built development in this zone.

As well as being located in the CHSG, sites A and B and the northern end of Site C are also located within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone. Both Norwich Road (B1172) and the A11 are defined as Undeveloped Approaches in the local plan. Norwich Road is also on a Green Infrastructure



Photo LC 1: Bus at the end of Norwich Road, North of the Park & Ride



Photo LC2: Looking towards the end of Norwich Road from the west



Photo LC3: Looking towards the southwest at the petrol station and McDonald's



Photo LC7: View from the Thickthorn roundabout looking towards the Park & Ride at the exit to Hethersett

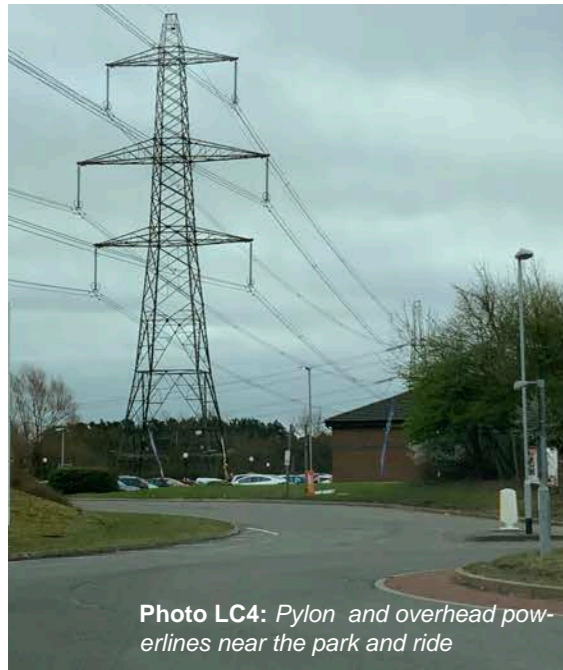


Photo LC4: Pylon and overhead powerlines near the park and ride

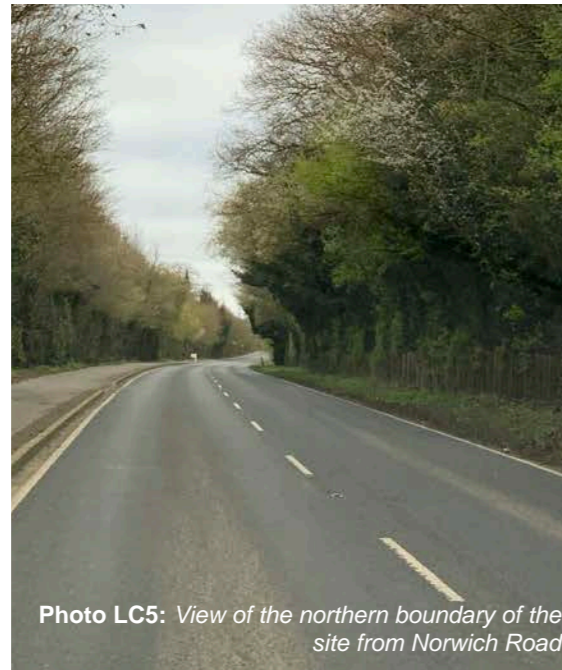


Photo LC5: View of the northern boundary of the site from Norwich Road



Photo LC6: Bus stop at the end of Norwich Road, North of the Park & Ride



Photo LC8: The Travelodge and overhead powerlines located to the east of the Park & Ride



Photo LC9: View from the end of the B1172 across from East Lodge at the Thickthorn Junction looking northwards

Thickthorn gateway photographs of the landscape context (sheet 1)

Thickthorn gateway photographs of the landscape context (sheet 2)

Corridor and the area is within the Norwich to Cambridge Tech Corridor.

Figure 4 of the Landscape Strategy for the sites prepared by SFL shows the geography of the relevant landscape planning policies, as set out in the adopted South Norfolk Local Plan.

The sites are all located in Type C1: Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland. The findings of the landscape appraisal are summarised in the SFL Landscape Strategy.

An extract from the SFL Landscape Strategy 2020 showing the proposed allocations in the context of the relevant landscape character types and areas as set out in the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment 2001 is provided at Figure 14.

The proposed uses

New permissive paths

The strategic gap policy does not seek to prohibit all development, rather Policy DM4.7 of the South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document, 2015 (DMPD, 2015) allows for development which would not erode or otherwise undermine the openness of the strategic gap. The proposed



Aerial Photograph 2:
View at the main entrance to the site from Norwich Road via Wychwood



Aerial Photograph 3:
View of Thickthorn Hall from the south

permissive public footpaths for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders would therefore be a compatible use in the CHSG.

New commercial uses

Whilst there may be some limited harm to the visual openness afforded by the CHSG resulting from these proposals, it will be located on land adjacent to and already affected by the planned highway improvement works. It is clear that the new strategic infrastructure proposals in this location (the approved extension to the park and ride and new Highways England strategic highway improvement work) will inevitably transform the character of the area through the separation caused by the introduction of the new link road, the cumulative impact of noise and light pollution resulting from the building of the new road and its use. This impact will persist and will have an urbanising effect on the CHSG.

Moreover, the socio-economic benefits of the proposed allocation, including the care provision, jobs created, and new permissive pathways add considerable value for some time. The impacts on the setting would reduce significantly over time as the landscaping becomes established. Allowing development here would be easy to define and is unlikely to set a precedent which would undermine the rest of the gap.

Older people's accommodation with care

The need for accommodation with care for older people has already been established by the evidence base for the GNLP. This site provides a highly accessible location within easy reach of outdoor leisure and recreation. It is an ideal location with opportunities for enhancing landscaping along the boundaries. Proposals of the highest quality of design are sought. Figure 11 of the Landscape Strategy 2020 by SFL identifies the area as one of degraded character with opportunities for enhancement.



Aerial Photograph 4:
View from the north-eastern boundary across Norwich Road looking towards Hethersett

In recent years, development pressure at Hethersett and Cringleford has resulted in encroachment into the gap from both ends. The current draft of the GNLP anticipates growth in Hethersett of about 1370 new homes, and at Cringleford, an additional 1720 homes are planned. Please refer to the Housing Growth Locations Map Extract 2. Further detail on the planned growth at these settlements is discussed in chapter four.

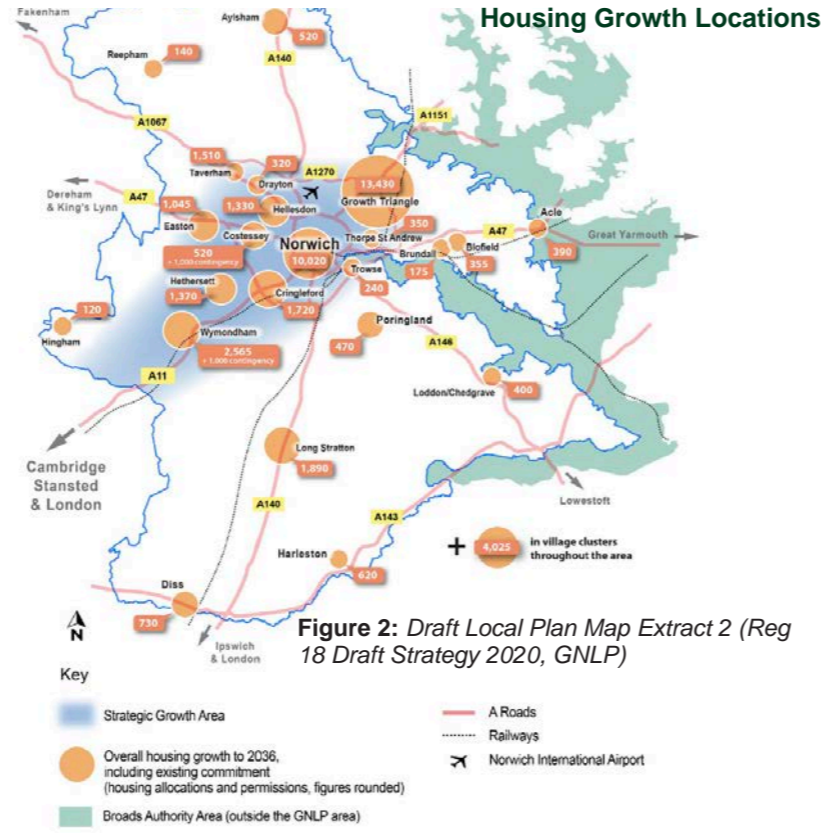
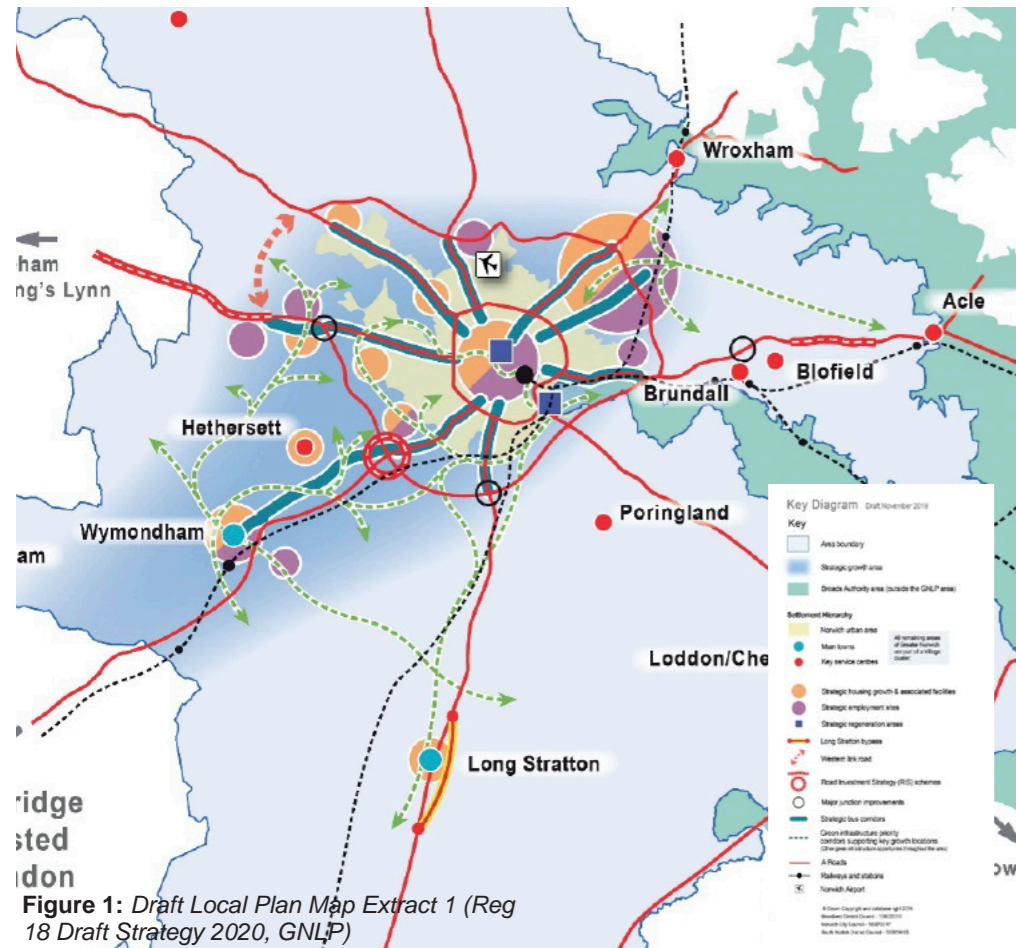


Aerial Photograph 5:
View across the north eastern part of the site towards the church of St Remigius

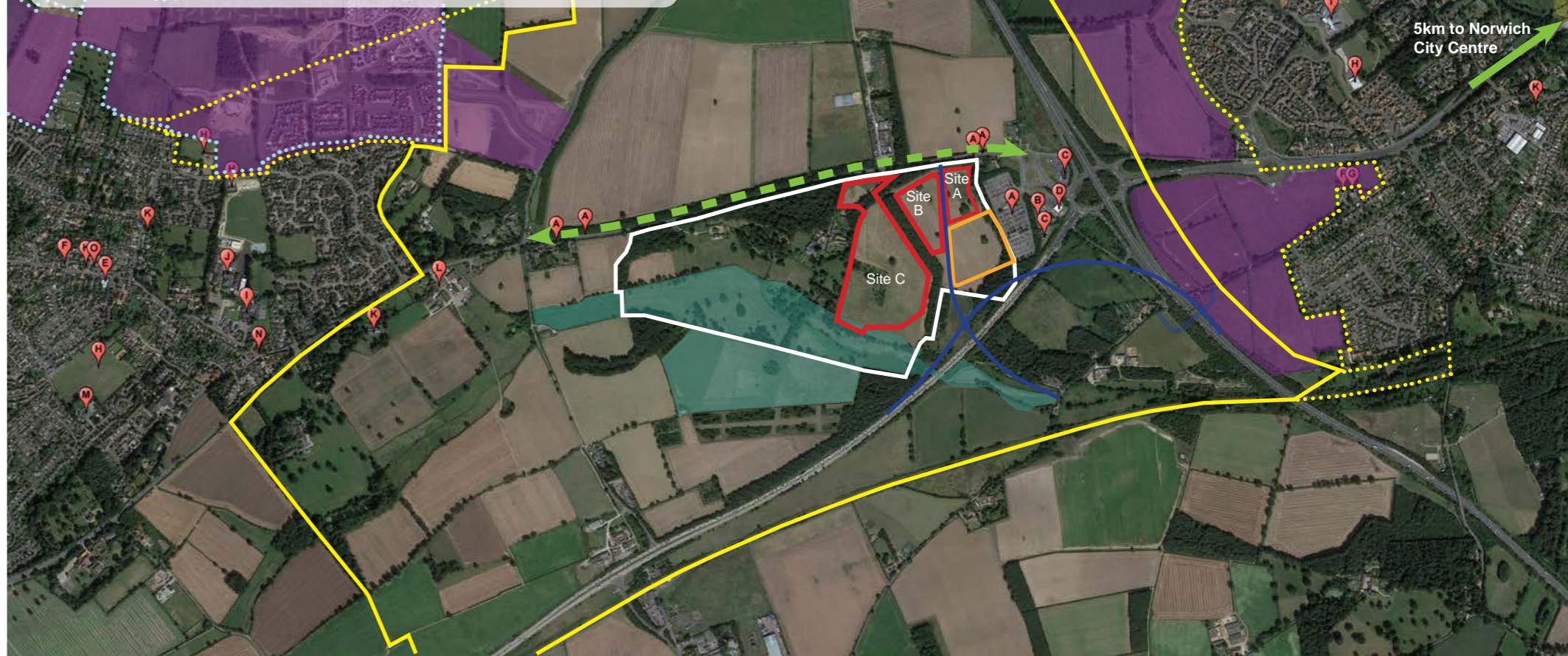
The location of the Road Investment Strategy Scheme proposal and Highways England A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement Scheme, is shown on the GNLP Map Extract 1 on page 10.



Photo LC10:
View along the track to the south



A Review of the Hethersett-Cringleford Strategic Gap Local Facilities Plan



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|--|--|
| A Park & Ride / Bus Stops Surrounding Site | I Primary School | Community Hub Sites
Community Hub Site A
Community Hub Site B
Community Hub Site C | Area for controlled permissive pedestrian and cycle routes with new outdoor recreational and leisure facilities |
| B Travelodge | J Secondary School | SNC Local Landscape Designations Review, 2012 (Former Strategic Gap) | New Roads Proposed by Highways England |
| C Greggs, Subway, Burger King, McDonald's | K Place of Worship | Designated Strategic Gap (2015) | New Footbridge Proposed by Highways England |
| D Petrol Station | L Butchers / Farm Shop | Park and Ride Extension | Strategic Growth Locations |
| E Tesco Express | M Infant & Nursery School | County Historic Parks & Gardens (SNC Local Plan, Site Specific Allocations & Policies Document, October 2015) | Preferred Housing Allocations |
| F GP Practice | N Public House | | |
| G Veterinary | O Post Office | | |
| H Village Hall / Recreational Facilities | | | |

Chapter Three

Planning Policy and Landscape Context: The Cringleford-Hethersett Strategic Gap

The Cringleford-Hethersett Strategic Gap

Strategic Gap Description

The original area of the CHSG was 618 hectares. It is currently 490 hectares in area, 128 hectares have been omitted from the SG since it was originally allocated. When assessed by CBA in 2012, the gap was between 2.5 and 3.5km long and 1.8 to 2km wide. Although the width remains more or less the same in many areas, the length of the SG is currently between 1.5 to 2.6km.

There is a County Historic Park and Garden within the CHSG the boundaries of which can be viewed on Aerial Photograph 1 on page 5.

The A11 and A47 pass through the southern and eastern parts of the SG respectively and the Thickthorn park and ride is located at the A47/A11 junction. Norwich Road (the B1172) passes through its central parts in an approximate east-west alignment and a number of unclassified roads radiate out from the B1172, including Colney Lane/ Hethersett Lane which heads north eastwards. The eastern boundary is located just east of the A47 on the western edge of Cringleford. Its southern boundary is adjacent to the Breckland Railway Line (Norwich to Ely).

The gap lies within the C1: Yare Tributary Farmland With Parkland Local Character area (LCA), as defined by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment¹¹. Key characteristics of this LCA include:

- *Shelving landform with a gently undulating topography created by the presence of small tributary stream valleys cutting through the landscape providing a variety of open/more intimate landscape settings and long/framed views.*
- *Peaceful farmland with small farm woodlands and intermittently wooded tributary valleys creating a quiet rural atmosphere.*
- *Presence of large parkland estates, particularly associated directly with the tributary valleys. Estate railings, boundary fences, tree-lined avenues and traditional wooded parkland contribute to landscape character.*
- *Sparsely settled landscape of small clusters of farmhouses, small villages and rural dwellings interspersed with large manorial buildings and halls*
- *A sense of impenetrability and remoteness despite the presence of major transportation corridors. The Norwich Southern Bypass and A11*

Wymondham Road trisect the landscape and the area is also traversed by the main Norwich London railway line. These routes create corridors of movement and noise in this otherwise peaceful landscape. Elsewhere, there is an intricate network of narrow rural roads and lanes.

- *Arable and pastoral farmland of cereals and sugar beet with more pastoral land uses within the immediate tributary valley corridor. Fields surrounded by sparse hedges and hedgerow trees, with occasional mature/veteran oaks forming a distinctive feature alongside the lanes.*
- *High number of large dwellings set in extensive grounds including characteristic large detached halls and manor houses, usually constructed of brick of high architectural quality associated with the parkland estates of Keswick, Intwood, Thickthorn and Colney. These are frequently screened by woodland, and therefore visible only at close range.*
- *Intermittent long views towards the City of Norwich.*

In terms of the principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this LCA, the landscape character assessment identifies, amongst other things:

- *proximity to Norwich and loss of rural farmland character through expansion of the urban edge of the City beyond the Yare Valley or development associated with the Southern Bypass/A11;*
- *particular vulnerability to loss of clarity of the rural/urban divide created by the Yare Valley;*
- *a gently shelving topography from the plateau and long views making this area especially sensitive to the location of any new development/infrastructure - and potential impact on views to the City; and*
- *suburbanisation of field and parkland boundaries.*

A more detailed assessment can be found in the SFL Landscape Strategy 2020.

Establishing the baseline for the assessment

The SFL landscape strategy 2020 established the baseline for assessment.

The study finds that the enhancements and mitigation identified are essential to maintain the separate identity of the two settlements whilst ensuring that the quality of the 'gap' is preserved.

National Context

The concept of a 'strategic gap' was outlined in the government research paper Strategic Gap and Green Wedge Policies in Structure Plans, January 2001 which discussed the purpose and use of strategic gaps, green wedges and rural buffers for protecting areas of land which were too small to be defined as Green Belt. The paper defined the primary purpose of strategic gaps as:

- protecting the setting and separate identity of settlements and avoiding coalescence;
- retaining the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of the land; and
- retaining the physical and psychological benefits of having open land near to where people live.

The three 'basic arguments' in support of strategic gaps were described as follows:

- the need to protect the setting and separate identity of settlements, by avoiding their coalescence;
- the need to retain openness by resisting 'greenfield growth', and thus conserving the existing character; and
- the need to provide real access and recreational benefits to urban dwellers, and the perceived and real benefits of having open countryside near to where people live.

Strategic gaps fall between the role of Green Belts and Local Green Space. Whilst they are local designations, the role is strategic in what it is aiming to



Aerial Photograph 6:

View of tree belt screening along Norwich Road, The northern boundary

achieve in policy terms and could be seen as more akin to Green Belt than Local Green Space as it could be seen as 'an extensive tract of land' in comparison to what might be considered as 'Local Green Space' as defined by paragraph 99 of the NPPF with strategic gaps serving a more strategic function.

Regarding the protection from development afforded by a Local Green Space designation, Paragraph 101 of the NPPF states that this should be consistent with policy for managing development in Green Belt.

There is no reference to Strategic Gaps in the NPPF, 2019. At Paragraph 99 of the NPPF states that:

“Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Space should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”

Paragraph 100 states that Local Green Space designations should only be used where the green space is:

1. *“In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
2. *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
3. *local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”*

Paragraph 141 of the NPPF encourages LPAs to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of Green Belts such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or improve damaged or derelict land.

Local Green Spaces have the aim of preserving the setting, character and distinctiveness within a locality. Green Belt designation is more concerned with the prevention of urban sprawl and coalescence. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that the five purposes of Green Belt are:

- *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*



Photo LC12: View of track along the south

- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

It would seem from the definition of strategic gaps provided in the local plan that the purpose of these accords with the first two purposes of the Green Belt.

The objectives of the strategic gaps as defined at Policy DM 4.7 of the South Norfolk Development Management Policies Document *“is to maintain the segregation and individual identities of certain settlements in the Norwich Policy Area and so avoid areas of development sprawl which would be detrimental to the rural character of the area [para 4.65, DMPD]. The Policy therefore seeks to conserve the undeveloped character of these areas – Within Strategic Gaps development that would result in a loss of the sense of openness and which diminishes the gap between the settlements in question will be resisted [Para 4.66, DMPD].”* (SFL Landscape Strategy, April 2020)

The Sites are located along a green infrastructure corridor. The NPPF defines Green Infrastructure as:

“A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.”

Local Context

The Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk

The key requirements of the adopted Joint Core Strategy in relation to landscape protection policies within South Norfolk Development Plan Documents which are relevant to this study are:

- DPDs should seek to retain the locally distinctive character of rural areas in accordance with the JCS's spatial vision.
- DPDs should seek to protect 'key landscapes of acknowledged regional or local importance' in order to comply with a core planning objective of the



Figure 7: Evolution of the Cringleford - Hethersett Strategic Gap

JCS.

- The JCS requires that DPDs should safeguard and enhance environmental 'assets of local importance' (including landscape and historic landscape character, countryside and rural character and the setting of Norwich, towns and villages and the Broads).
- DPDs should recognise that assets of local importance are valuable in their own right, and in combination provide a significant resource for the JCS area.
- DPDs should maintain strategic gaps between Wymondham, Hethersett and Cringleford in relation to planning of major new/expanded communities.
- DPDs should protect the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area.

Strategic Gaps

Policy DM4.6 of the Development Management Policies Document, 2015 states that:

Development proposals will not harm and where possible should enhance the landscape setting of Norwich with regard to the following considerations:

- Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ)

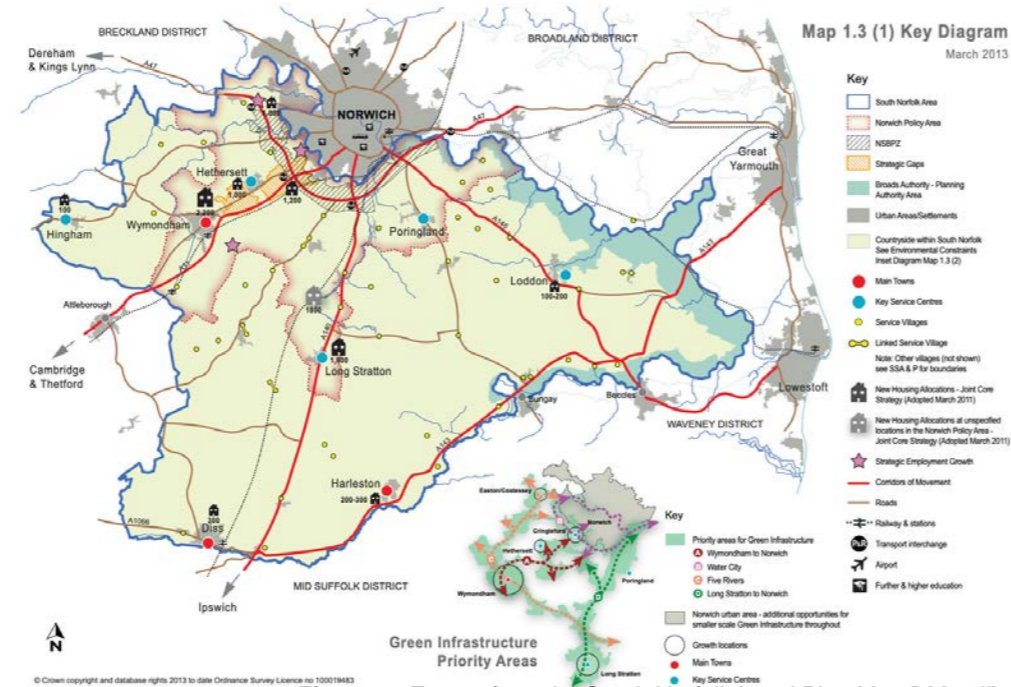


Figure 9: Extract from the South Norfolk Local Plan Map DM 4.6

- Key Views
- Undeveloped Approaches
- Gateways

It emphasises that development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ or the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area will not be permitted.

Two basic purposes of a strategic gap designation were identified by CBA in the Landscape Designations Review, 2012:

1. To protect the setting and separate identity of settlements, and avoid coalescence; and
2. To retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of the land

These are still considered to be relevant.

CBA used these two basic purposes to identify whether or not it is appropriate in planning terms to designate an area as a Strategic Gap

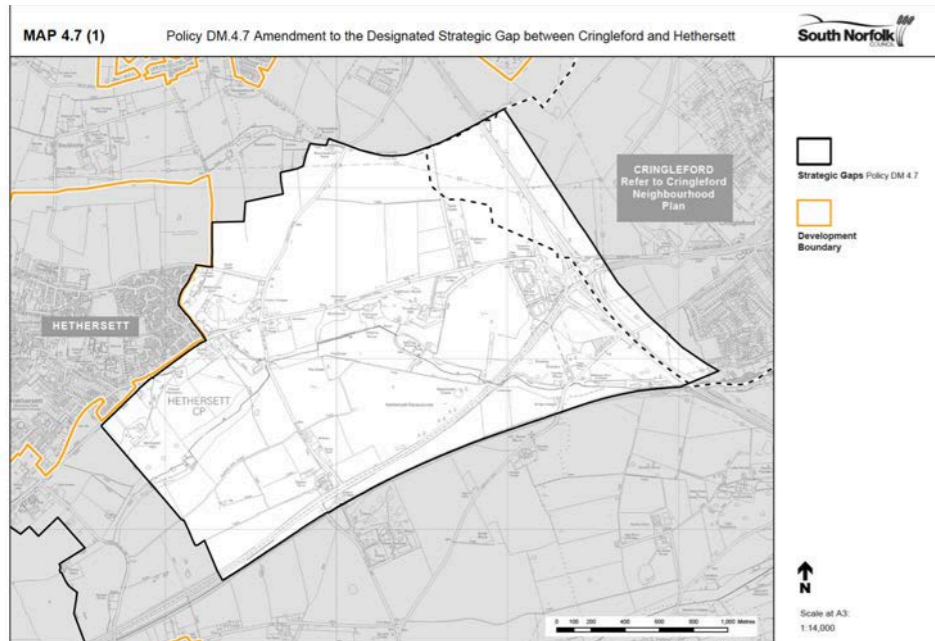


Figure 8: Extract from the South Norfolk Local Plan Map DM 4.6

- i. It examined whether an area of land helped to avoid coalescence, thereby protecting the setting and separate identity of settlements, and
- ii. It assessed whether such an area of land could help maintain the openness of the land, thereby retaining the existing settlement pattern.

Given the sustainability of the locations of Cringleford and Hethersett, the level of development pressure experienced over the years, is not surprising. It is unlikely that this pressure will reduce significantly in future years.

This study has identified a strong need to retain the separate identities of Cringleford and Hethersett. The public consultation responses submitted on the draft proposals for the Highways England A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction improvement scheme have identified a need for enhanced local walking and cycle networks and better access to outdoor leisure and recreational facilities.

Development Management Policies Document' (adopted October 2015). The current boundaries of the 'Strategic Gaps' are defined on Map 4.7 (1): Amendment of the Designated Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett; and (2) Amendment of the Designated Strategic Gap between Hethersett and Wymondham.

Paragraph 4.66 defines the type of development that would be appropriate in strategic gaps as:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry
- facilities for outdoor sport and recreation,
- cemeteries, and
- extensions to, or replacement of existing buildings

Policy DM4.7 Strategic Gaps between settlements within the Norwich Policy Area states that:

"Development will be permitted in the Strategic Gaps identified in the Policies Map between the development boundaries of the settlements listed below, where it would not erode or otherwise undermine the openness of the Strategic Gap and complies with other Development Plan policies.

- Cringleford to Hethersett
- Hethersett to Wymondham"

Notes

- South Norfolk Landscape Assessment 2001 identified designated Strategic

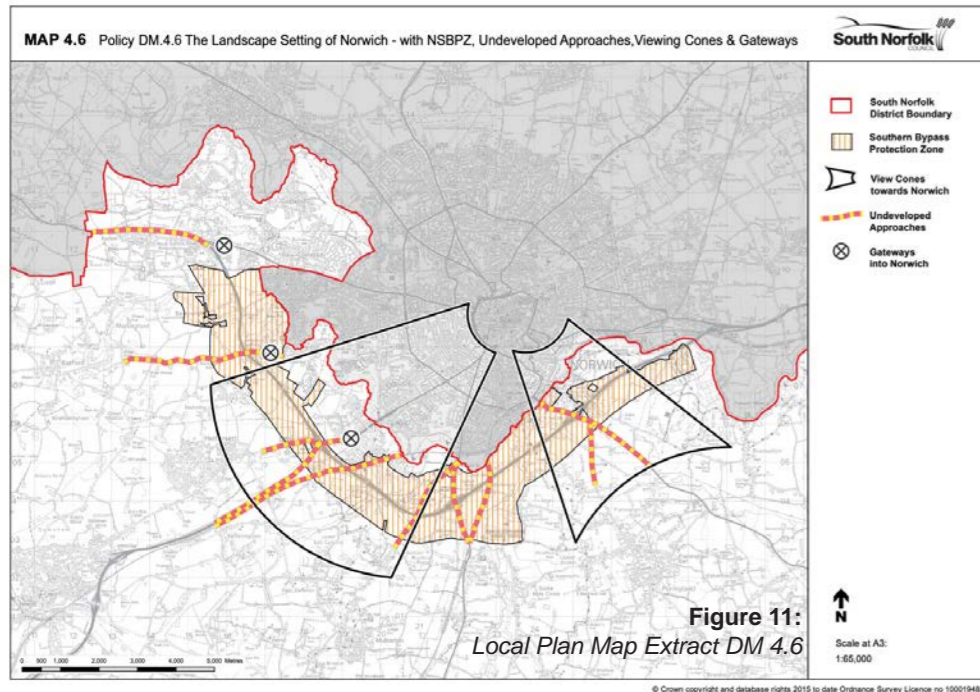


Gaps – and the 2012 report reviewed these. These designations are based on detailed analysis conducted in 2001 and reviewed in 2012. As a result, both of these Strategic Gaps are proposed to be amended. This is fully detailed in the 2012 study.

- GNDP Historic Characterisation and Sensitivity Assessment assessed options with the Norwich Policy Area, where the Joint Core Strategy directs most development
- Joint Core Strategy Objectives 8 & 9 and Policies 1,2 & 10 addresses the importance of protecting and enhancing the landscape setting of settlements and the urban/rural transition, and require the definition of Strategic Gaps
- In relation to development in the Cringleford area, also see the Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ)

Paragraph 4.56 of the DMPD 2015 states that a Landscape Zone has been identified 'where there are high levels of visual accessibility to and from the



road to a predominantly open rural area that plays an important part in making the landscape setting of Norwich. This Zone does not have a distinct or special landscape character in its own right.' The revised Landscape Zone is identified on the Policies Map DM 4.6.

Paragraph 4.60 of the DMPD 2015 states that there are several road and rail corridors approaching the city that have a very distinctive rural character and that afford views across the surrounding countryside and to Norwich. These are defined on Policies Map DM 4.6. All development within the wider zone of visual influence visible from the transport corridors' will need to be designed to reinforce and avoid undermining the rural character experienced when travelling along the Undeveloped Approaches into Norwich.

Paragraph 4.58 of the DMPD 2015 states that any development to be permitted within the Landscape Zone (including that within the highway and other transport corridors) should have regard to protecting the openness of the Landscape Zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the Southern Bypass, including the practice of wild flower planting and management regimes.

Paragraph 4.60 of the DMPD 2015 states that there are several road and rail corridors approaching the city that have a very distinctive rural character and that afford views across the surrounding countryside and to Norwich. These are defined on Policies Map DM 4.6. 'All development within the wider zone of visual influence visible from the transport corridors' will need to be designed to reinforce and avoid undermining the rural character experienced when travelling along the Undeveloped Approaches into Norwich.

Landscape Context

The former historic parkland extends to the eastern edge of the existing park and ride. According to SFL this eastern part of the parkland has a degraded character. *The former parkland adjacent to Thickthorn Hall (Site C) has been replaced by a large arable field and, while there are some remnant specimen mature parkland trees in the field adjacent to the park-and-ride, this area is strongly influenced by road infrastructure with a proliferation of associated signage, lighting, extensive parking (the park-and-ride), access roads and services, including a Travelodge, cafés and a petrol filling station. The character of the landscape in the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone is also influenced*

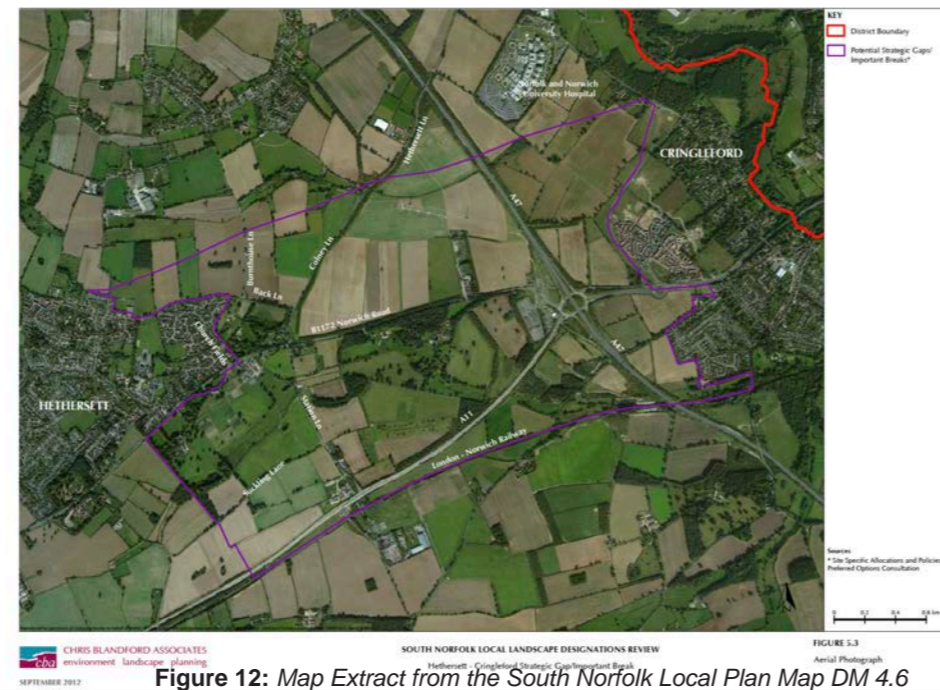


Figure 12: Map Extract from the South Norfolk Local Plan Map DM 4.6

by two major sets of overhead power lines, which run along the east and west sides of the A47 corridor and are aligned close together in the eastern part of the Strategic Gap.

This is a major junction and the location of one of the six park-and-ride interchanges on the periphery of Norwich. The planned highways infrastructure and proposed extension to the park-and-ride will ensure that the dominance of road infrastructure is set to increase.

The alignment of the parkland edge woodlands and the slope of the valley, with views directed eastwards towards the A47, Cringleford and the city of Norwich, ensure that landscape of the Thickthorn Junction gateway is perceived as a component of the A47 corridor and not as part of the parkland.

By contrast, the arable fields and parkland on the west of the Thickthorn Junction gateway currently have an enclosed and relatively rural character. Views to the small Cantley Stream valley are hidden by belts of woodland, but this secluded tributary valley, which flows through an attractive historic parkland landscape, is a secret gem. Note that the above description applies to the eastern part of the Cantley Stream (south of Thickthorn Hall); the part of the stream corridor to the west of the lake has been realigned and the watercourse flows within a steep-sided channel. There is an opportunity to restore the natural character of the stream in this part of the parkland.

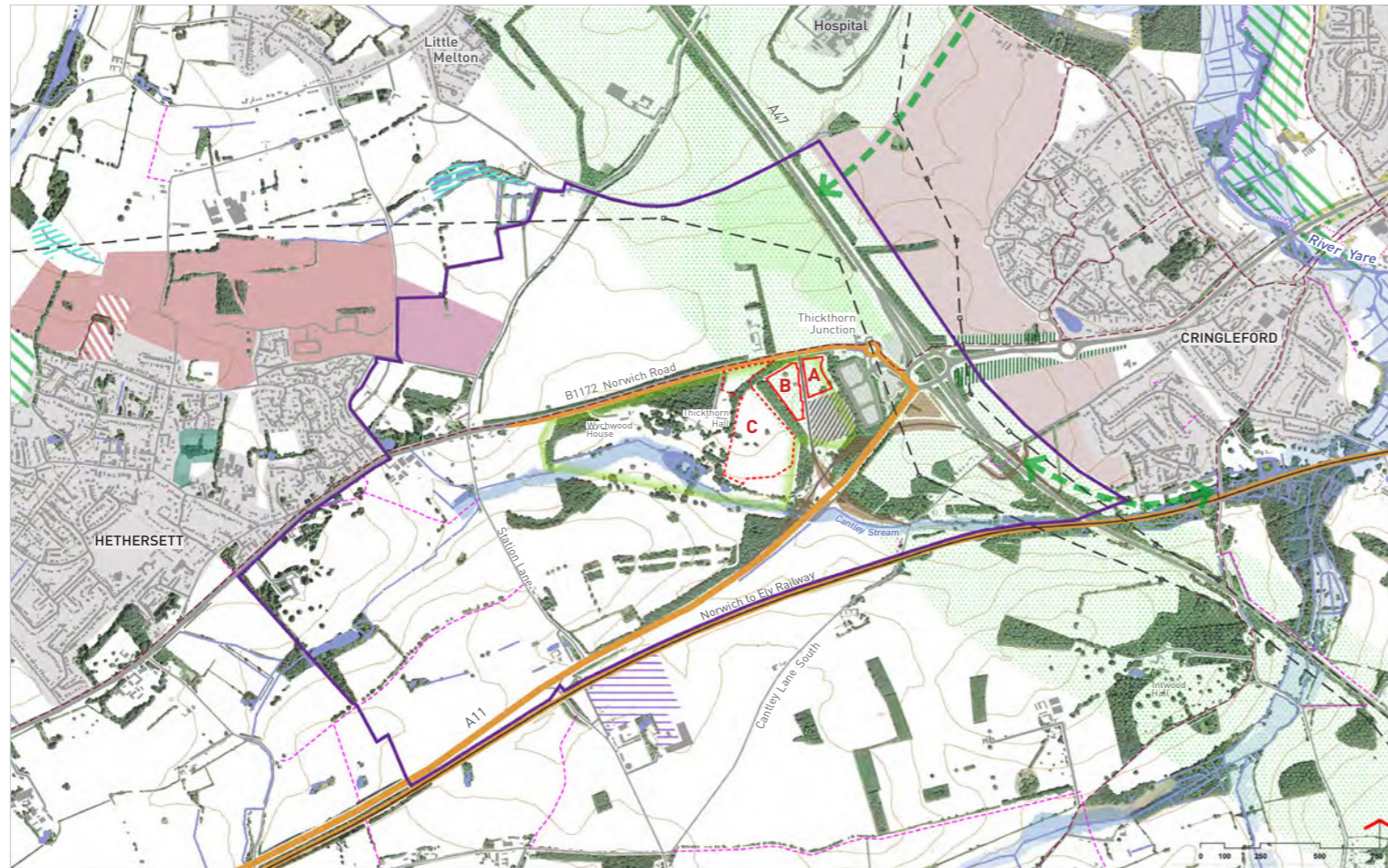
The layout of the valley, lake, specimen trees, wooded dell, avenues and farm courtyard buildings is composed to provide a sequence of framed views and attractive circular walks - within the valley there are views westwards to the tower of Hethersett Church while the walk along the ridge to the south of the parkland offers more open views back to both Wychwood House and Thickthorn Hall. However, the valley within the parkland is not currently accessible to the public.

The landscape of Site C is currently perceived as part of the enclosed farmland and valley landscape while the landscape of Sites A and B is perceived as part of the landscape of the A47 road corridor and the Thickthorn Junction gateway. The existing belt of trees which separates Sites B and C would ensure that some of the seclusion and privacy experienced in this area is conserved ensuring a tranquil setting for the development. The development would enable public access along a multi-user route through the parkland and the replanting and management of the Thickthorn parkland woodlands so that their contribution

to local landscape character and quality is sustained into the future.

It will be important to develop a landscape-led strategy for development which conserves and enhances the landscape elements and features and perceptual aspects of landscape character which form the context to the site and are relatively sensitive to development (listed in Box 1 on page 21). These 'landscape receptors' are the components of the landscape that are considered likely to be affected by the scheme; they are therefore relevant factors which may be used as criteria for making informed judgements about landscape change. A high quality development that is structured to retain and strengthen these key aspects of landscape character will reinforce local identity and sense of place.

- Site boundary - Sites A, B and C
- A11/A47 Thickthorn Junction Improvement (roads + associated embankments)*
- NCC Park-and-Ride extension
- Woodland
- Contour line (interval 10 m)
- Principal built-up areas
- Overhead power lines
- Public right of way
- Riverside walk
- Local cycle route
- South Norfolk Local Plan**
- Mixed Use Allocation
- Area with planning approval for residential development (2011/1804)
- Care home allocation
- Open Space Amenity
- Important Local Open Space
- Hazardous Installations Consultation Zone
- Strategic Gap (Policy DM 4.7)
- Southern Bypass Protection Zone (DM 4.6)
- County Historic Parks and Gardens
- County Wildlife Sites
- Undeveloped approaches to Norwich (DM 4.6)
- Cringleford Neighbourhood Development Plan**
- Flood zone
- 35m Gateway Zone and new planting
- Residential development allocation
- Open Farmland/Countryside
- Green Infrastructure Corridors



* The Highways England scheme for the A11/A47 Thickthorn Junction is shown in DRAFT form (July 2019). The layout is subject to update

Figure 4 - Landscape planning policy context

Figure 13: Extract from the Sheils Flynn Landscape Strategy 2020: Landscape Planning Policy Context

- Site boundary - Sites A, B and C
- Woodland
- Contour line (interval 10 m)
- Principal built-up areas and development allocations
- Landscape character types and areas - South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, 2001**
- C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland
- D: Settled Plateau Farmland
- F: Valley Urban Fringe



Figure 14: Extract from the Sheils Flynn Landscape Strategy 2020: Landscape Character

Chapter Four

Recent & Planned Developments in the Strategic Gap

This chapter of the report describes the recent and planned developments in the area:

1. Housing Growth Locations at Hethersett and Cringleford including the following recent planning applications:
 - Planning application 2011/1804 including the proposed extension to the Thickthorn Park & Ride
 - Planning application 2017/2120
2. Highways England A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement Scheme

Planning permissions at the growth locations at Hethersett and Cringleford

Proposals determined under application 2011/1804 for Land north of Hethersett Village Centre, Little Melton Road, including extension to the Thickthorn Park and Ride



This application covered the HET1 allocation plus an extension to it. It was for residential led mixed use development of 1196 dwellings and associated uses including primary school, local services (up to 1,850m² (GIA) of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 & B1 uses) comprising shops, small business units, community facilities/doctors' surgeries, sports pitches, recreational space, equipped areas of play and informal recreation spaces. It also included an extension to the

Thickthorn Park and Ride with a new dedicated slip road from the A11. These proposals have been amended and the slip road from the A11 is no longer part of the proposal.

The boundaries of planning permission site 2011/1804 are shown on the plan opposite. The boundaries of the site for the extension to the park and ride included in this application are shown below.



The EIA Scoping Opinion provided in relation to the above proposal was provided under 2011/1489. It concluded that it was likely that the impacts of the development would be felt beyond Hethersett at the nearby settlements of Little Melton and Great Melton and that the cumulative infrastructure impacts of developments planned at Wymondham and Cringleford would also need to be considered. Given the proximity of these locations to the sites and the parkland, they have been taken into account in this study.

With regard to socio-economic effects, the Scoping Opinion recognised the impact that the scheme would have as a result of an over 50% increase in population of the existing village in terms of pressure on facilities and sense of community and stated a need to address the challenge of integrating both the existing and new communities.

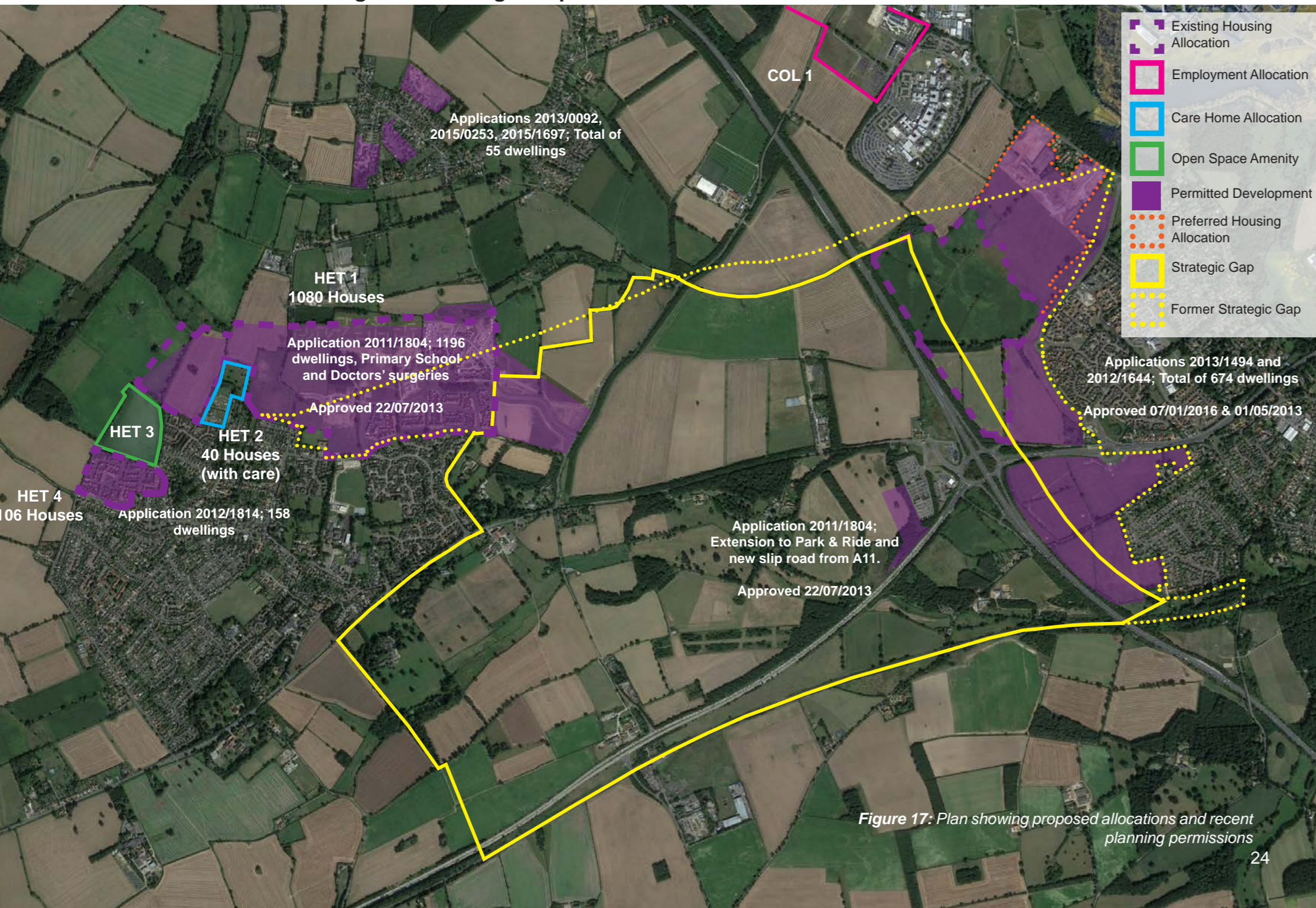


Figure 17: Plan showing proposed allocations and recent planning permissions

Proposals determined under planning application 2017/2120 for Land East of the A11 And North and South of Round House Way, Cringleford, Norfolk

This application was for outline planning permission with all matters reserved (save access) for the creation of up to 650 residential dwellings (use class C3), up to 2,500m² of use class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and D1 floorspace, together with highways works, landscaping, public realm, car parking and other associated works.

The Scoping Opinion provided in relation to the above proposal was provided under 2013/0552. Similarly, it highlighted the importance of taken account of the direct, indirect and secondary effects of the proposals, including cumulative effects, recognising that the cumulative impact on the physical and socio-economic environments would be substantial.

Schemes consented in the Hethersett-Wymondham Strategic Gap

A brief review of planning permissions in the Hethersett-Wymondham Strategic Gap was undertaken for comparison purposes and to inform the assessment. The applications considered are listed on page 31.

Figure 16 opposite shows how the recent applications at Cringleford and Hethersett relate to the CHSG boundary.

Highways England Proposals for the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Improvement Scheme

Key components of the proposal

The A47 is part of the Strategic Road Network (SRN). The Thickthorn Junction is located on the south-western edge of Norwich and is the intersection between the A47 and A11. The A47 connects Norwich with Great Yarmouth to Leicester and the Midlands via King's Lynn, Wisbech and Peterborough. The A11 is the main route connecting Norwich with Thetford, Cambridge and London (via the M11 and A14).

The junction is connected through a roundabout which splits the A11 South

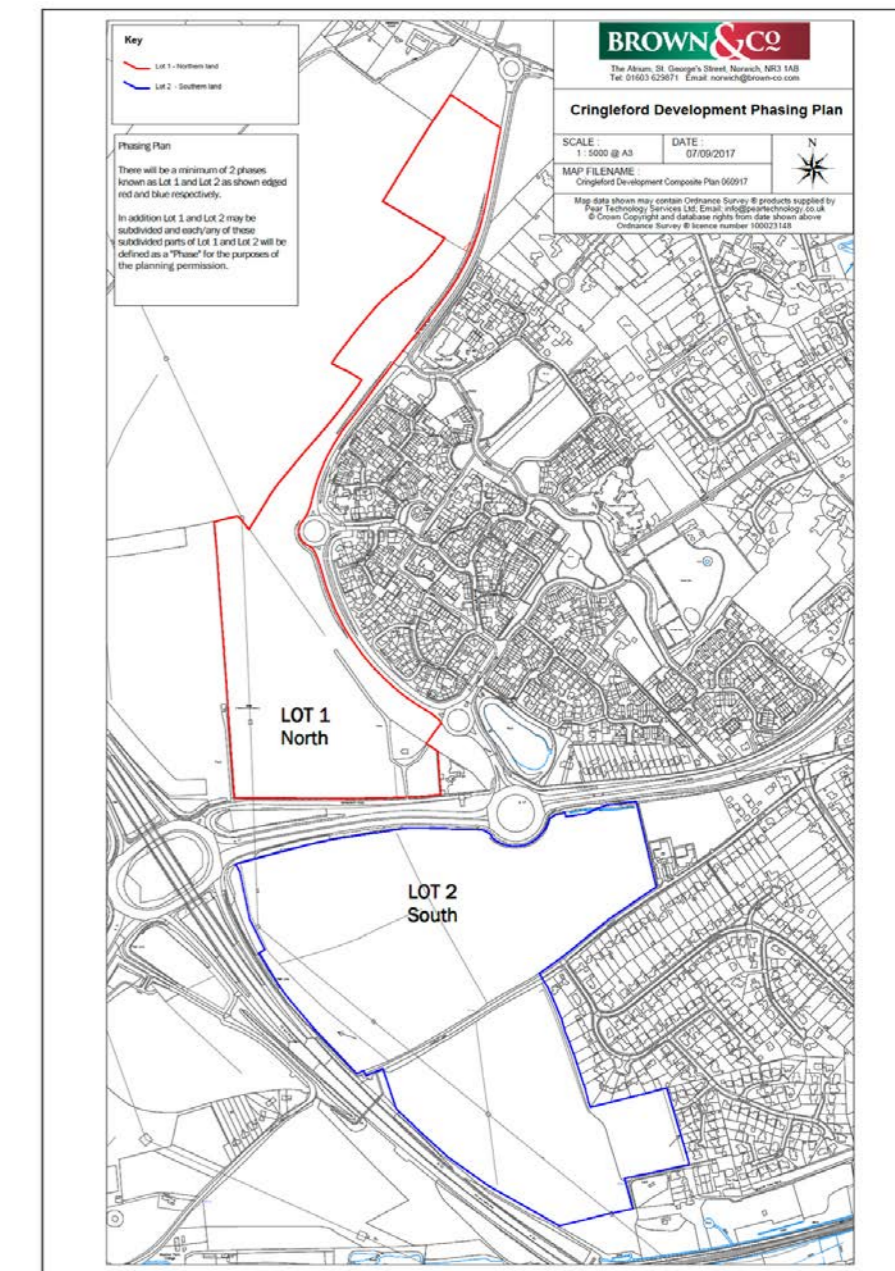


Figure 18: Planning application phasing boundaries: Extract from Planning Application 2017/2120

The Development Consent Order (DCO) site boundary is shown Figure 21 above. This covers a significant area in the south eastern part of the SG.

Figure 23 shows how the extension to the park and ride relates to the proposed development the DCO boundary. Two of the proposed development sites, A and B, are within the DCO site area. The third is only partly within this area. All three are immediately across from the commercial premises at Thickthorn Farm.



Figure 22: Extract from the Highways England July 2019 Consultation video

The A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction Side Road Strategy Options Report, PCF Stage 3 May 2019 (Reference HE551492-GTY-GEN-000-RP-CH-00001) in summarising the impact on the landscape, identifies alignment impacts on tree cover at Cantley Wood which is likely to be of landscape value.



Figure 23: Extract from the Highways England July 2019 Consultation video

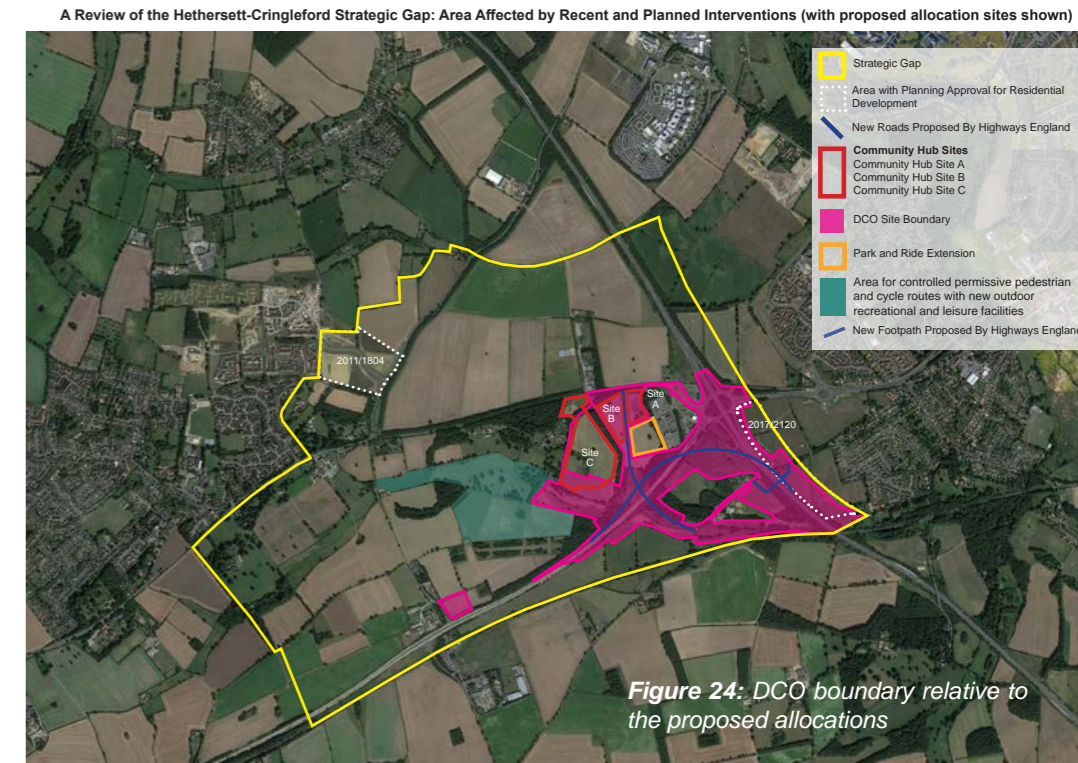


Figure 24: DCO boundary relative to the proposed allocations

It states that “alignment passes through the centre of an open field to the west of the A11 causing fragmentation of the existing field pattern”. This area referred to is located between the extension to the park and ride and the site identified as Site C. It will be important that the landscape and visual impact of this change on the strategic gap is assessed and mitigated.

In terms of landscape character, the report concludes that there is likely to be a moderate effect on the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland landscape due to tree removal along the southern edge of Cantley Wood, new sections of highway on embankment, incorporation of two new overbridges at the A11 crossing and fragmentation of field pattern between the A11 and Norwich Road (B1172).

In relation to visual impact, the report concludes that there will be a visual effect on visually sensitive private property at the eastern end of the link, where the new link road meets Cantley Lane South. Otherwise, few visual receptors

Other than low sensitivity travellers on the A11 would be impacted visually. There would be a limited visual effect on the footpath network. However, glimpsed views are likely of the raised embankment and overbridges from footpath Hethersett FP6 which runs just north of the Breckland Railway Line (Norwich to Ely) and west of Cantley Lane South at the southern boundary of the Hethersett to Cringleford SG.

The possibility of some increased noise disturbance from the construction of the new link road has been identified in the area around Thickthorn Hall. It is likely that this would affect Sites A, B and C. Additional disturbance is anticipated from the construction of the extension to the park and ride.

The extracts from the Preliminary Environment Information Report, Phase 1 Habitat Survey, May 2019 show that the part of the SG to be affected by the new link road proposed to connect Norwich Road to Cantley Lane South is primarily covered by neutral semi-improved grassland and an arable field. A small part of the Broadleaved Woodland Plantation would also be affected.

The construction of the new road is scheduled to start in 2021 with a completion date expected in 2023.

The Cringleford to Hethersett Strategic Gap also plays a role in preserving the cultural heritage of the area. In addition to the views of the wider landscape, the historic parkland affords splendid views to the listed assets in its context, including St Remigius and Thickthorn Hall.

The following planning history was assessed as part of this study

Planning applications affecting the Hethersett to Wymondham Strategic Gap

Reference	Location	Description	Decision
2020/0620	Land to The Rear Of 16 Norwich Common	Proposed development of 2 new dwellings and detached garages, re-positioning of existing access drive and amenity space	Pending
2019/2534	Land South East Of 9 Spinks Lane	Erection of dwelling and garage	Approved
2019/0780	Land South of Norwich Common	Outline planning application for the erection of up to 630 dwellings, land for a two form entry primary school, local centre, 0.83ha for apartments with care (C2 use), public open space, allotments, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and four vehicular access points from Norwich Common. All matters reserved except for means of access.	Pending
2018/0091	Land Rear Of 86 And 88 Ketts Oak	New dwelling	Approved
2017/2802	Land to East Of 88 Ketts Oak	Outline planning permission for proposed dwelling	Approved
2017/2490	Land Adj to 4 Norwich Common	Construction of detached dwelling together with detached garage	Approved
2015/2655	Land South East Of 9 Spinks Lane	Erection of new dwelling and garage	Approved (on appeal)
2015/1836	Land South East Of 9 Spinks Lane	Erection of 5 new dwellings and garages with highway improvements.	Approved
2014/0799	Wymondham Rugby Club and Land West of Elm Farm, Norwich Common	Outline application for up to 90 dwellings at Tuttle Lane, including the demolition of existing Wymondham Rugby Club buildings and sports pitches and closure of existing access; up to 300 residential dwellings at Norwich Common with multiple access points, including the demolition of 63 Norwich Common; a replacement rugby club (use class D1) with sports pitches including an artificial pitch, floodlighting, clubhouse, car parking and accesses including an emergency only access from Melton Road; and associated works including open space, sustainable urban drainage systems, landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks.	Approved (on appeal)
2010/2132	4 Norwich Common	Proposed replacement dwelling	Approved
2001/2183	Land At Ketts Oak Filling STN, Ketts Oak	Erection of 2no residential dwellings	Approved
2001/2049	Planet Farm & Adjoining Barns, Norwich Road	Renovation of existing farmhouse, conversion of 3no barns to residential units and ancillary works	Approved
2001/2064	Planet Farm & Adjoining Barns, Norwich Road	Conversion of barns to 3no residential units	Approved
2000/0254	Hollybrook, Ketts Oak	Erection of bungalow and garage	Approved

Table 2: Planning applications affecting the Hethersett - Wymondham Strategic Gap

Planning applications affecting the Cringleford to Hethersett Strategic Gap

Reference	Location	Description	Decision
2017/2120	Land East of A11 And North And South Of Round House Way	Variation of conditions 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 33, 36, 38, and 39 following application 2017/0196 which relates to - (Outline planning application with all matters reserved (save access) for the creation of up to 650 residential dwellings (use class C3), up to 2,500 sq mtrs of use class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and D1 floorspace, together with highways works, landscaping, public realm, car parking and other associated works.) - to facilitate the development coming forward on a phased basis.	Approved
2016/0662	Land at Thickthorn Roundabout	Drive Thru Restaurant, Car parking, Landscaping, 2no Customer Order Displays with Associated Canopies, Remote Refuse Store, Covered Cycle Parking, Play Space, Patio Furniture and Fencing.	Approved
2013/1494	Land East of A47, West Round House Way And North Of A11; And Land To The South Of A11 To The East Of A47 And West Of Cringleford	Outline planning application with all matters reserved (save access) for the creation of up to 650 residential dwellings (use class C3), up to 2,500 sq mtrs of use class A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and D1 floorspace, together with highways works, landscaping, public realm, car parking and other associated works.	Approved (on appeal)
2011/1804	Land North of Hethersett Village Centre Little Melton Road Including Extension To Thickthorn Park & Ride Hethersett	Residential led mixed use development of 1196 dwellings and associated uses including Primary School, Local Services (up to 1,850 sq. mtrs (GIA) of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, D1 & B1 uses) comprising shops, small business units, community facilities/doctors' surgeries, sports pitches, recreational space, equipped areas of play and informal recreation spaces. Extension to Thickthorn Park and Ride including new dedicated slip road from A11.	Approved

Table 3: Planning applications affecting the Cringleford-Hethersett Strategic Gap

Chapter Five

Assessment and Evaluation

The planning policy framework in relation to Strategic Gaps falls between the role of Green Belts and Local Green Space. It performs a strategic role in what it is aiming to achieve - i.e. the prevention of sprawl and coalescence.

The NPPF promotes improving access to the countryside in order to promote health and well-being of local communities. Paragraph 138 states that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously been developed or is well served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.

Although it is not found to be necessary to redraw the CHSG boundary, the facilitation of public access is a significant benefit of assisting in the delivery of the Parkland Management Plan. Further support is provided by the following paragraphs of the NPPF: Paragraphs 91, 92, 96 and 118(a).

At a local level, Policy DM4.7 does not aim to prevent all development - it sets out the criteria for determining appropriate development in the Strategic Gaps and describes this as development that would not result in a loss of the sense of openness or diminish the gap between the settlements.

The Sheils Flynn landscape character and visual appraisals found that the three sites in question could be developed in fulfilment of these criteria. The landscape of the strategic gap is sufficiently robust to accommodate the planned changes as long as key design principles and the advice of the SFL Landscape Strategy 2020 is adhered to.

The landscape is found to have the capability to deliver *'a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits to the local community'*.

Having examined the degree to which the landscape is robust i.e. the extent to which it is able to accommodate the proposed change without adversely impacting on its character, the Landscape Strategy concluded that:

- Development of sites A and B will have no effect on the landscape setting of Thickthorn Hall. However, the development of site C could potentially have some adverse landscape impacts if the layout and design do not follow the design principles and advice set out in the Landscape Strategy.

- There are no predicted effects on the perimeter tree belts. There are opportunities to reinforce the tree belts and sense of enclosure on the eastern fringes.
- There may be some minor adverse effects on the quality and character of the remnant historic parkland and eastern fringes.
- Beneficial effects are predicted on the mosaic of woodland and wetland habitats along the Cantley Steam valley.
- Some loss of tranquillity may result from the permissive public access but this is said to be balanced by the net benefits to social inclusion, health and quality of life.
- There will also be new access to and appreciation of historic and cultural heritage gained from parkland views and experiencing the parkland. New historic interpretation to be introduced.
- There will be a neutral impact on views from the A47
- Increase in the built-up character at the Thickthorn Junction is not considered to be inappropriate. However, this will need to be balanced with a high standard of innovative design and green building principles. Please refer to Table 5 for further details.

The Sheils Flynn Landscape Strategy 2020 identifies key development principles to be taken into account in any intervention in this area. Table 4 summarises the assessment of the impact of the development of the three sites.

The SFL Landscape Strategy 2020 concludes that the planned interventions (if led by the landscape strategy) would:

1. reinforce existing planning policy;
2. establish a robust landscape edge to the CHSG; and
3. transform the accessibility, quality and value of the CHSG landscape and contribute to the wider delivery of the Greater Norwich green infrastructure network.

The much-needed improvements at the A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction will introduce new activity, noise and light pollution along the eastern end of the CHSG within the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone where the following uses already exist: residential, commercial car sales, McDonalds, Shell petrol station, Hotel, Thickthorn Park and Ride.

The SFL Landscape Strategy, 2020 identifies nine landscape receptors; locally distinctive landscape elements and features and perceptual aspects of the landscape character and setting which form the context to the sites and are relatively sensitive to development. The Landscape Strategy has appraised these as follows:



Figure 25: Extract from The Sheils Flynn Landscape Strategy 2020

- i. The landscape setting of Thickthorn Hall and its associated outbuildings which are grade II listed buildings
- ii. The visually important perimeter tree belts on the outer fringes of the Thickthorn Hall parkland, which provide enclosure and a wooded backdrop to local views
- iii. The remnant historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall, with its specimen trees, avenues, lake, formal walks and framed views
- iv. The diverse mosaic of woodland, wetland and riparian habitats along the Cantley Stream valley
- v. The secluded, tranquil and deeply rural character of the Cantley Stream valley as it passes through the parkland of Thickthorn Hall.
- vi. Local views (from within the parkland) to Hethersett Church and Thickthorn Hall
- vii. The wider landscape setting of Norwich - specifically the rural character experienced when travelling along the 'undeveloped approaches' to Norwich along the B1172, the Norwich-Ely railway and the A11

Number:	Development Considerations:	Assessment of Impact:
i.	Respect the sparsely settled character of the area with small villages, isolated buildings of vernacular character and large institutional buildings in extensive grounds.	Low density proposals of a high quality of design are being considered which would help to enhance the character of the area. Additional planted buffers would help to address the impact of Highways England proposals on the setting.
ii.	Protect the quality, character and setting of the key landscape assets, notably the characteristic tributary corridors and the historic parklands.	The Landscape Strategy proposes key mitigation and enhancements to ensure that these are protected.
iii.	Seek to ensure the restoration and management of historic landscapes as a condition of permission for new uses/development within these areas.	The intrinsic part of the proposals is the management plan proposed to be adopted.
iv.	Consider impact of proposals on the intricate rural lane network – avoid widening, kerbing, lighting which will quickly impart a more urban character.	The siting of built proposals, design and materials used in recreation and leisure facilities would all be carefully selected to respect the rural character of the area.
v.	Consider impact on key views from the higher plateau landscape, adjoining character areas and views towards the City.	Careful consideration of key viewpoints and how these are to be protected are an important part of the proposed policy and brief for the site.
vi.	Ensure that the rural character of the landscape of the Norwich Southern Bypass Protection Zone is maintained and that differential development north and south of the road does not erode the unity of the character area.	Paragraph 4.56 of the DMPD 2015 states that a Landscape Zone has been identified 'where there are high levels of visual accessibility to and from the road to a predominantly open rural area that plays an important part in making the landscape setting of Norwich. This Zone does not have a distinct or special landscape character in its own right.' The revised Landscape Zone is identified on the Policies Map DM 4.6. The part of the site within this zone is well screened from the road and with the proposed enhancements would ensure that there would be little impact on the Landscape Zone a result of the proposals.

Table 4: Development Considerations 34

- viii. The rural, undeveloped character of views to and from the A47 Southern Bypass (within the NSBLPZ)
- ix. The distinctive landscape setting of Cringleford and the rural undeveloped character of the landscape of the Strategic Gap which separates the settlements of Hethersett and Cringleford.

The gap provides a key contribution to the perceived separation of Cringleford and Hethersett. People travelling westwards to Hethersett or eastwards to Cringleford enjoy a reasonable stretch of open countryside before arriving at Hethersett or Cringleford respectively.

It is clear that policy DM4.7 is principally concerned with the perceptual or physical loss of the separation between the settlements and considers that some development in the strategic gap would be acceptable subject to meeting the prescribed criteria. Similar conclusions were reached in the Wymondham Rugby Football Club and land west of Elm Farm Business Park appeal – Planning Inspectorate reference APP/L2630/W/15/3007004 (SNC planning application reference 2014/0799).

Having carried out site-based visual appraisals, the arable land east of Thickthorn Hall and west of the proposed extension to the park and ride is thought to be capable of accommodating some changes without adversely affecting the character of the area. This is due to:

- the modified nature of the landscape
- the 'urban edge' characteristics of the wider gateway zone
- the enclosed nature of the site surrounded on all sides by mature woodland forming natural well-screened boundaries which allow for its development without significant landscape and visual impact.
- its proximity to the park and ride, and other compatible neighbouring uses.

Discussions and debate on the concepts of Landscape Sensitivity, Capacity and Value have been ongoing for some time.

Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Capacity, a discussion from Topic Paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging capacity and sensitivity, Landscape Character Assessment (Guidance for England and Scotland), 2002

"The terms sensitivity and capacity are often used more or less interchangeably. Others treat them as opposites, in the sense that low sensitivity is taken to mean

high capacity and vice versa. Indeed, the earlier versions of the Landscape Character Assessment guidance used the term sensitivity in the definition given above but this was changed to capacity in the published version to avoid confusion with the guidance on landscape and visual impact assessment. However, as experience of the issues involved has developed, it has become clearer that the two are not the same and are not necessarily directly related. A clearer distinction therefore needs to be drawn between them. Definitions vary among those actively engaged in this work and opinions vary about the acceptability and utility of different definitions."

Landscape capacity

"Landscape capacity' refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed"

Landscape sensitivity

"Landscape sensitivity... relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that, once lost, would be difficult to restore; a character that, if valued, must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive."

"Landscape sensitivity... is a property of a thing that can be described and assessed. It signifies something about the behaviour of a system subjected to pressures or stimuli. One system, when stimulated might be robust and insensitive to the pressure, whilst another may be easily perturbed. The system might also be thought of in a dynamic way - the pressure could send the system off into a new state or the system might be resilient and bounce back rapidly and be relatively insensitive to disturbance. Sensitivity is related here to landscape character and how vulnerable this is to change.... Landscapes which are highly sensitive are at risk of having their key characteristics fundamentally altered by development, leading to a change to a different landscape character i.e. one with a different set of key characteristics. Sensitivity is assessed by considering the physical characteristics and the perceptual characteristics of landscapes in the light of particular forms of development.

The landscape sensitivity issues are discussed in the SFL Landscape Strategy, 2020.

In consideration of the reasoned justification provided for Policy DM 4.7 in the DMPD 2015 and the defined role of the SG discussed above, it is considered appropriate to judge 'value' in an integrated way, i.e. measured by means of the Quality of Life Assessment approach 'with considerations of landscape and sense of place set alongside other matters such as biodiversity, historic and cultural aspects, access and broader social, economic and environmental benefits.'

“Reaching conclusions about capacity means making a judgement about the amount of change of a particular type that can be accommodated without having unacceptable adverse effects on the character of the landscape, or the way that it is perceived, and without compromising the values attached to it. This step must clearly recognise that a valued landscape, whether nationally designated or not, does not automatically, and by definition, have high sensitivity. Similarly and as already argued in Section 3, landscapes with high sensitivity do not automatically have no, or low capacity to accommodate change, and landscapes of low sensitivity do not automatically have high capacity to accept change. Capacity is all a question of the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change, and the way that the landscape is valued^[1].”

Our preliminary site level assessment finds that the value of the landscape in the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone is low-medium increasing to high as one travels westward along Norwich Road past Thickthorn Hall towards Hethersett.

Paragraph 6.6 of Topic Paper 6 states that *‘It is entirely possible for a valued landscape to be relatively insensitive to the particular type of development in question because of both the characteristics of the landscape itself and the nature of the development. It may also be the case that the reasons why value is attached to the landscape are not compromised by the particular form of change. Such a landscape may therefore have some capacity to accommodate*

change, especially if the appropriate, and hopefully standard, steps are taken in terms of sitting, layout and design of the change or development in question.’

Given the characteristics of the landscape in this part of the CHSG and the sites in question and the fact that:

- site C is almost entirely enclosed by woodland and set back from the road
- there is dense belt of trees along Norwich Road ensuring a green, well-screened corridor is experienced as one travels through the CHSG
- the proposed extension to the park and ride and new link road would introduce a more open character and new activities within this eastern part of the SG
- new landscape and biodiversity enhancements are an integral part of the proposals

It was concluded that there is sufficient capacity for the low density, sensitively planned change proposed to be accommodated within this part of the CHSG. Although there may inevitably be some glimpsed views through to the sites the design principles established would ensure that any proposed development would be well-assimilated into the landscape.

The SFL Landscape Strategy 2020 concludes that there will be some adverse effects on the rural undeveloped character of the Strategic Gap but these will be balanced by a step change in the provision of high quality multi-functional green infrastructure and arrangements for long-term management of the historic parkland.

The interventions proposed in this part of the SG would not adversely affect its ability to perform its function effectively.

Landscape receptors (baseline studies)	Predicted landscape effects resulting from the Thickthorn Junction highways improvements and extension to the park and ride	Predicted landscape effects resulting from the development proposals (Sites A, B and C), assuming the highways improvements and park-and-ride extension are implemented	Impact on the local community	Description of the impact
The landscape setting of Thickthorn Hall and its associated outbuildings grade II listed buildings	Most views to the new road junction from the listed buildings will be screened by thick tree belts; the elevated Cantley Lane South to Norwich Road Link Road may be visible on the sky-line and traffic noise will have a negative influence	Development on Sites A and B will have no effect. Development of a care village on Site C could potentially have some adverse landscape effects, depending on the detailed layout. However, the landscape setting and outlook of the listed buildings is directed towards the parkland to the south and west rather than to the east and there is scope to mitigate any adverse effects on this large site	-+	Only single to 1.5 storey development is proposed at this site which would be subservient and remain sympathetic to its closest neighbour, Thickthorn Hall. Additional tree planting would be proposed on the western boundary of this site enhance the setting of Thickthorn Hall in this direction and improve screening to the proposed development. Limiting the height to 1.5 storeys would ensure that the development would not be visible in distant views. Although the development could result in minor adverse impacts, careful design consideration could mitigate this impact. At worst this would be a minor impact to the north of this site and a minor-moderate impact nearer the south of this site where additional mitigation would be required to address the impact of the new link road along the south east boundary of this site.
The visually important perimeter tree belts on the outer fringes of the Thickthorn Hall parkland, which provide enclosure and a wooded backdrop to local views	No predicted effects on the tree belts, although two mature trees will be lost. The elevated Cantley Lane-Norwich Road Link will be visible on the skyline, disrupting the unity and rural character of the wooded backdrop to local views	No predicted effects on the perimeter tree belts - opportunities to reinforce this landscape element and the sense of tree enclosure on the eastern fringes of the Thickthorn Hall Parkland	--	Neutral impact is anticipated with clear opportunities to reinforce the eastern fringes
The remnant historic parkland of Thickthorn Hall, with its specimen trees, avenues, lake, formal walks and framed views	Major adverse predicted effects on the character and quality of the historic parkland; the remnant parkland is already degraded in the Thickthorn Junction gateway zone, but its remaining parkland characteristics will be severely damaged, including the quality of the ride/access drive to Thickthorn Hall from the eastern lodge.	Minor additional adverse effects on the quality and character of the remnant historic parkland on the eastern fringes of the estate.	-	The introduction of the essential infrastructure will result in a major adverse effect. Additional mitigation and enhancement are thought to be needed to compensate for the damage anticipated. The significant community benefits to result from opening up the parkland to the public will go some way to balancing these effects.
The diverse mosaic of woodland, wetland and riparian habitats along the Cantley Stream valley	Some adverse effects predicted, particularly during construction, but scope to improve quality, extent and diversity of wetland habitat mosaic in longer term	Beneficial effects predicted - restoration of the Cantley Stream in the western part of the parkland; extensive wetland habitat creation and enhancement and improved long-term management	++	Significant community and environmental benefits will result from these actions
The secluded, tranquil and deeply rural character of the Cantley Stream valley as it passes through the parkland of Thickthorn Hall.	Some loss of tranquillity, due to increased highways infrastructure, lighting and traffic noise nearby	Some loss of tranquillity as a result of public access, but overall benefit in terms of improved health and quality of life	+	The overall resultant benefit is strongly positive/ highly significant and would add great value
Local views (from within the parkland) to Hethersett Church and Thickthorn Hall	Minor adverse effect on distant view from Station Road to Thickthorn Hall as elevated Link Road will break the skyline	View to Hethersett Church from within parkland will (for first time) be available to the public.	++	As above, this is of great significance and value providing maximum positive benefit to the local community
The wider landscape setting of Norwich - specifically the rural character experienced when travelling along the 'undeveloped approaches' to Norwich along the B1172, the Norwich-Ely railway and the A11	There will be major adverse effects on the enclosed (well treed and wooded) character of these approach roads to Norwich during the construction stages of the works; in time, the new roads will be integrated by extensive tree planting, but this approach will have a more urban character, not least because most of the Thickthorn Junction area, including the park-and-ride and service facilities, will be visible in the extensive elevated views from the new Cantley Lane to Norwich Road Link Road (and associated overbridges).	Development on Sites A and B would also result in an adverse landscape effect on the rural character of these undeveloped approaches but, since the change would be experienced in conjunction with the changes due to the highways works and park-and-ride extension, it may be perceived as relatively minor.	-	Moderate adverse impact on the landscape. There is medium to high capacity to withstand the proposed change
The rural, undeveloped character of views to and from the A47 Southern Bypass (within the NSBLPZ)	The existing views from the A47 do not have a rural character; the skyline is dominated by overhead power lines and the road corridor is enclosed by belts of mature woodland, which restrict views. However, there are clear views to the Thickthorn Park-and-Ride and services (Travelodge, McDonalds etc.) where there are breaks in the tree cover. The new highways infrastructure will lead to a moderate increase in the built-up character of the junction area, particularly during construction and before new planting is established.	Development on Sites A, B and C will not result in additional changes to the character of views from the A47.	Neutral	Negligible impact
The distinctive landscape setting of Cringleford and the rural undeveloped character of the landscape of the Strategic Gap which separates the settlements of Hethersett and Cringleford	The A47 corridor functions as a divisive landscape element and forms a clear boundary to the landscape setting of Cringleford in approaches from the west. The Thickthorn Junction Gateway Zone and any works to the east of the A47 corridor will not influence the distinctive landscape setting of Cringleford. The planned works will lead to an increase in the extent and visibility of road infrastructure, with two new overbridges, link roads, embankments, culverts and a 50% increase in the extent of the park-and-ride, with associated signage, lighting and traffic noise. These works will result in a permanent change to a more built-up (less rural) landscape character in the eastern part of the Strategic Gap.	Development on Sites A and B will lead to a further increase in the built-up character of the Thickthorn Junction although the change to high quality, well landscaped office development will be appropriate and potentially beneficial within the context of a major transport interchange at one of the principal gateways to Norwich. The layout of a care village development on Site C can be designed to conserve the rural undeveloped character of the Strategic Gap; there will be some adverse landscape effects, but these will be balanced by a step change in the provision of high quality multi-functional green infrastructure and arrangements for the long-term management of the historic parkland.	--	Minor adverse impact. The proposed development would have a minor impact on the character of the landscape but would not serve to diminish the gap between the settlements.

^[1]John Benson et al. University of Newcastle. Landscape Capacity Study for Wind Energy Development in the Western Isles. Report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage for the Western Isles Alternative Renewable Energy Project, 2003

Chapter Six

Design Principles, Recommendations and Conclusion

The sites sit within a gateway zone at the Thickthorn Junction adjacent to the park and ride, residential and commercial premises. The proposed care village and community hub at appropriate densities would be highly compatible and sustainable uses in this location.

The developments in question would help to secure a number of community benefits alongside the delivery of the aims of a future Parkland Management Plan, including:

- i. enhancing the parkland for the benefit of people visiting the site and to facilitate public access without degrading the character of the area.
- ii. to conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the landscape and nature conservation of the parkland.
- iii. to conserve, and where appropriate, enhance features of historic or cultural interest in the parkland.

Development of Sites A, B, and C would not impinge on the landscape settings of Hethersett and/or Cringleford and would not result in coalescence. Particularly, given the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed in the Sheils Flynn Landscape Strategy

Design principles

It will be important for the design of any proposals to provide a unified form and layout that connect well with the setting and minimise any perceived impact on the strategic gap and sense of openness.

- The scale and massing of the development must aim to minimise impact and visibility.
- Proposals should seek to improve the quality of the green infrastructure provision to new and existing residents by maximising opportunities for outdoor activity and recreation and improving the quality of life of local residents.
- Improve connectivity between existing footpaths and bridleways encouraging walking and cycling and travel by alternative modes.
- Mitigate the impact of the Highways England A47/A11 A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction improvement scheme on the environment by increasing planting and sense of enclosure around site C.

Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. (Paragraph 96, NPPF, 2019)

Finally, it must be said that the viability of maintaining the parkland without the introduction of some complementary viable use is not realistic. 'Pursuing sustainable development requires careful attention to viability and costs in plan-making and decision-taking' (Para 173 NPPF,2019)

The proposed allocation sites differ in character from the more historic parkland nature of the land to the west for the following reasons:

- i. It is less open in character
- ii. Its proximity to the park and ride and Thickthorn Hall
- iii. It is well screened from views

The planned extension to the park and ride and the introduction of the new link road will result in further change to the character by:

- iv. Increased noise and activity in this eastern zone
- v. The physical separation to result from the introduction of the new link road.
- vi. They will become more visible as the proposed strategic infrastructure works are delivered.

Recommended Guidelines, Landscape Mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure

1. Any development in this location will need to respond carefully to its context.
2. It will be important to maintain and enhance the historic character of the area including retaining the rural setting of the locality
3. Ensure positive open views are retained
4. Enhance existing woodlands and groups of trees
5. Conserve hedgerows and allow the growth of hedgerow trees
6. Introduce locally distinctive boundary treatments and features as appropriate
7. New development must assimilate into the wider landscape without significant landscape and visual effects,
8. New trees and hedgerow planting will need to be appropriate to the setting

9. The introduction of any built form must be of the highest standard of design and must be carefully considered to ensure that they do not have a detrimental impact on the landscape or the openness of the gap
10. Ensure that the vegetated edges are retained and protected and plant new tree belts as necessary to preserve views and introduce new screening.
11. Enhance gaps in the woodland boundaries as appropriate
12. Secure long-term management of woodland

landscape setting and strategic gap through a few careful measures as set out in the SFL Landscape Strategy 2020.

Informed by an historic landscape survey and extended Phase 1 survey the Racecourse Parkland Management Plan sets out a clear framework to inform the future management of the parkland and ensure its historic and cultural contribution to the landscape setting is retained. It will be important to ensure that the landscape and biodiversity enhancements are implemented in full.

A clear set of considerations has been identified. These inform the parameters of potential future development at the three sites and would help to achieve successful developments appropriate to the setting that would assimilate into the landscape without compromising the principles of the CHSG.

The Parkland Management Plan is a live document that will need updating regularly to ensure that it remains up to date and informs the approach for achieving biodiversity gain. It has helped in establishing the cost of ongoing management and restoration work required.

Although the use of these sites for the proposed developments would result in a physical loss of land within the gap, the community hub and associated permissive public access to the parkland would help to secure the future management and sustainability of the historic parkland and its rich cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The development of the sites in question would enable the long-term preservation and management of the historic parkland and assist in making the strategic gap better perform its function. This would enable the introduction of new publicly accessible paths to be made available for walking, cycling and horse riding in accordance with Policy DM4.7 of the DMPD 2015.

It will be important to ensure that development proposals are well integrated into the context and are ‘designed to reinforce and avoid undermining the rural character of the area’.

Given the over 2000 new homes planned at Hethersett and Cringleford, the introduction of this new social and economic infrastructure and improvements to the green infrastructure corridor would play a vital role in reducing the pressure on existing community facilities in these settlements. It would significantly address the need for additional health and well-being enhancements helping to promote outdoor activity and social integration.

It is possible to achieve the schemes proposed with minimal impact on the

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