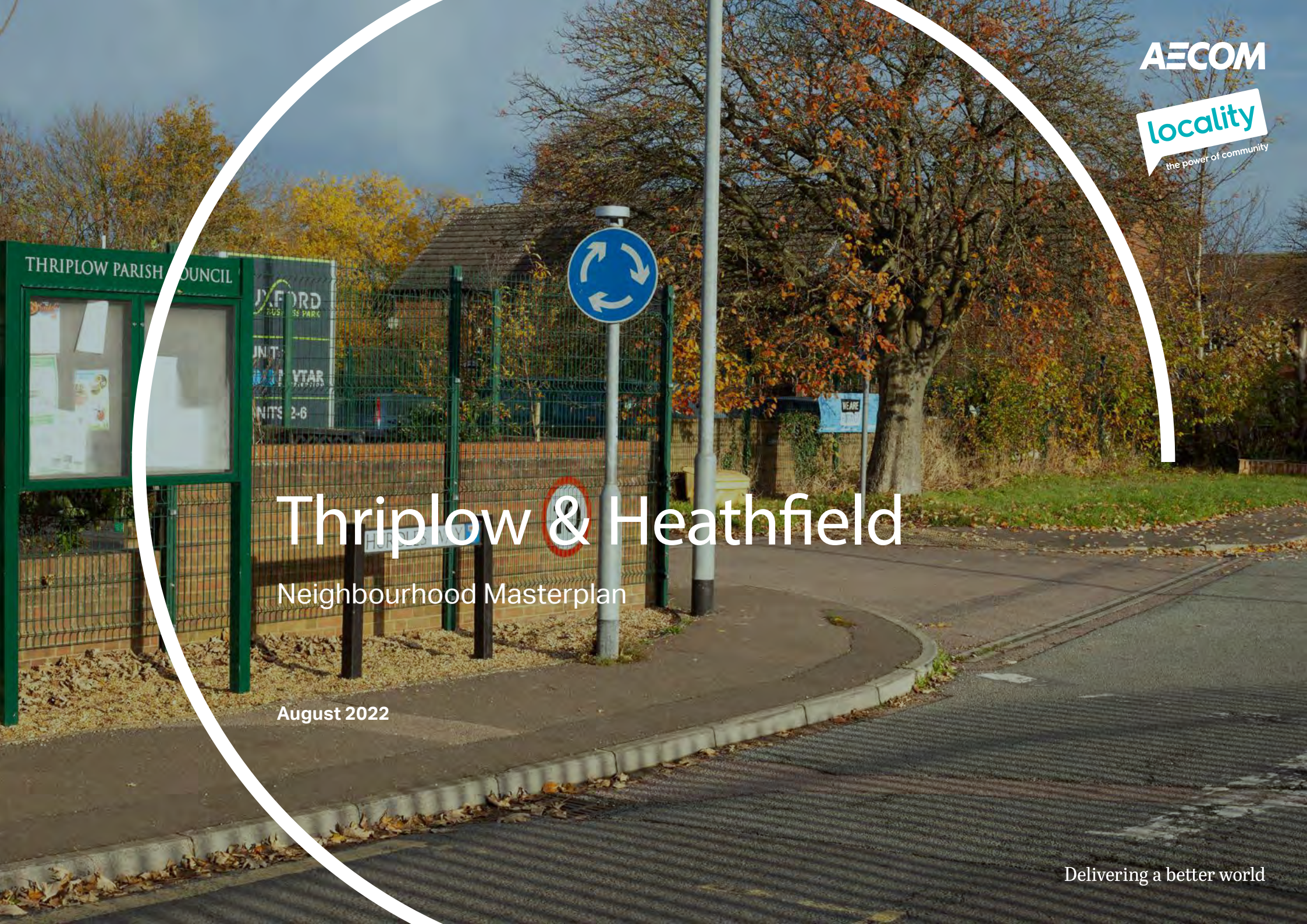


Thriplow & Heathfield

Neighbourhood Masterplan

August 2022

AECOM

locality
the power of community

Delivering a better world

Quality information

Prepared by	Check by	Approved by
Bob Marshall, Graduate Landscape Architect, AECOM	James Dee, Principal Landscape Architect, AECOM	Madeleine Gohin Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Locality

Revision History

Issue no.	Issue date	Details	Issued by/to	Position
5	220608	Review	Philippa MacGarry	Group Chair of Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Planning Group
4	220505	Review	Philippa MacGarry	Group Chair of Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Planning Group
3	220319	Review	Philippa MacGarry	Group Chair of Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Planning Group
1	220317	Review completed draft	James Dee	Principal Landscape Architect
0	220312	Research, site visit, drawings	Bob Marshall	Graduate Landscape Architect

This document has been prepared by AECOM Limited ("AECOM") in accordance with its contract with Locality (the "Client") and in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. AECOM shall have no liability to any third party that makes use of or relies upon this document.

Contents

1 Introduction 5

2 Neighbourhood Area Context 13

3 Heathfield Local Character Areas 39

4 Heathfield Neighbourhood Masterplan 93

5 Next steps 107

Introduction

01

1. Introduction

AECOM has been commissioned to provide design support to the Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Planning Group through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities funded Neighbourhood Planning Programme, led by Locality.

This document is intended to support Neighbourhood Plan policies that encourage high quality design. It includes analysis of character areas within the built-up part of the Heathfield and provides a series of recommendations, in masterplan form, to improve the public realm and overall appearance of Heathfield.

The ideas in the report can be used as a basis for further engagement with the local community. They do not in themselves constitute part of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is hoped that they will stimulate broader discussion about how the area can be improved for the benefit of all.

This document comprises:

- **Contextual analysis of the settlement of Heathfield**, highlighting key external features, such as connections, views and sensitive environmental features, that may influence the site wide constraints and opportunities of the public realm improvements proposed in the masterplan.
- **Identification and analysis of different character areas within Heathfield**, highlighting defining characteristics, such as architectural periods, building typologies, and street and parking approaches. From this analysis, a series of constraints and opportunities are identified to inform an appropriate design response in the masterplan.
- **Neighbourhood masterplan for Heathfield** suggesting and illustrating achievable design solutions in response to the previously identified constraints and opportunities. The design rationale focuses on the following themes which have been established by the Neighbourhood Planning Group through previous public consultation.
    1. Green space, biodiversity and sustainable connections
    2. Streets and parking
    3. Identity and unity
    4. Community facilities
- **Next steps** with a summary of the findings and outlined methods to move forward.

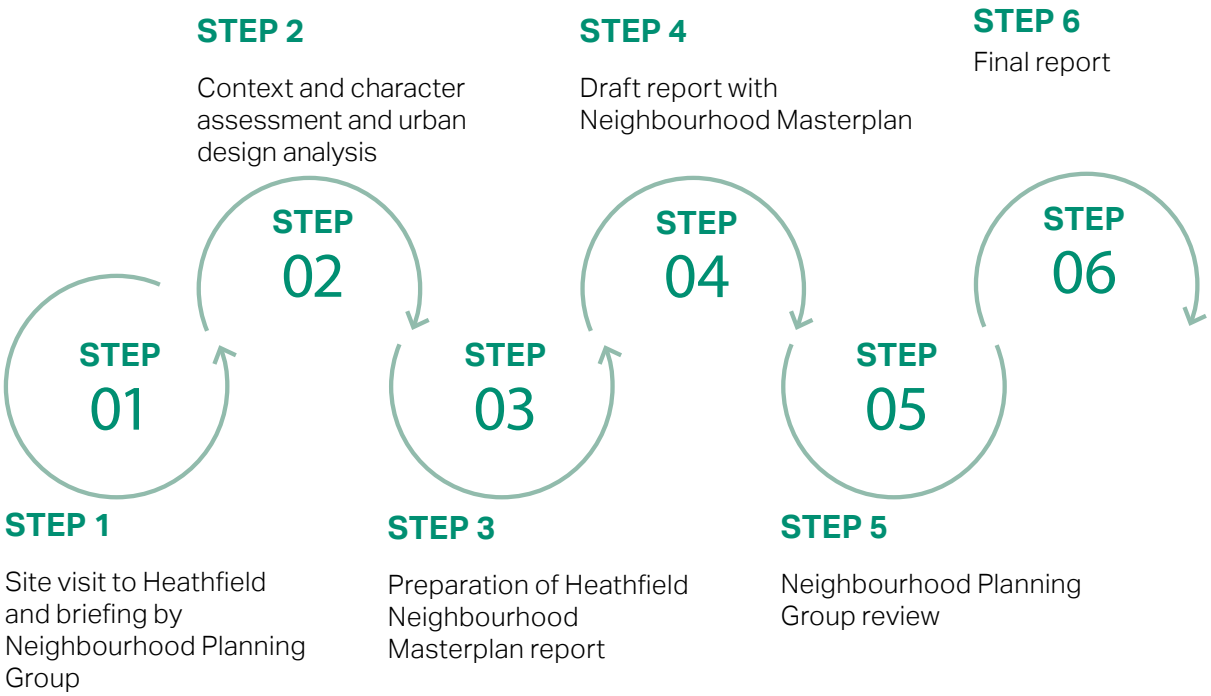
1.1 Objectives

The objective of this report is to advise on how the existing layout of Heathfield and the immediate surrounding context can be enhanced by providing:

- Public realm improvements.
- Potential areas of intervention.
- Ongoing management to maximise biodiversity.

1.2 Process

The following steps were undertaken to produce this document:



1.3 Planning policy and guidance

Local planning policy relevant to Heathfield Neighbourhood Area is found within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This Local Plan was adopted in 2018 and is currently under review as part of the new combined Greater Cambridge Local Plan, predicted to be available in draft in 2022.

Initial proposals of the draft Local Plan include several policy and topic papers that align with those outlined in the Draft Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan. These include:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment and the character of the parish.
- Living village and sustainable development.
- Social cohesion and parish integration.

Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan - Biodiversity and Green Spaces Policies

These policies reflect the desire of residents of Cambridgeshire to ensure that future development supports on and off site enhancements for biodiversity, and to protect and connect green spaces for nature, particularly through increasing tree cover. The policies endeavor to increase and improve the network of habitats for wildlife, and green spaces for people, ensuring that development leaves the natural environment better than it was before.

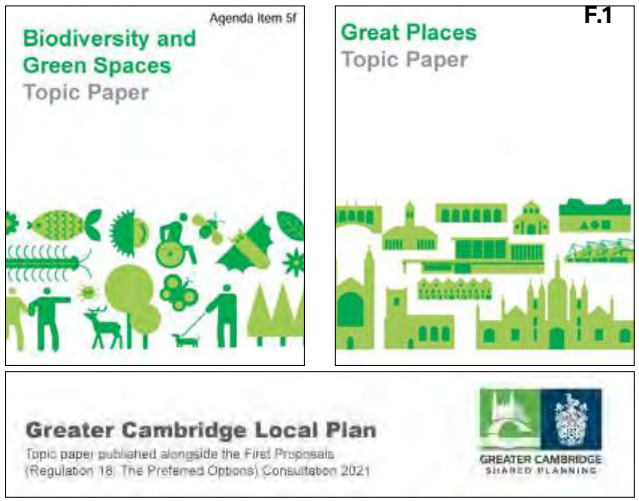


Figure 01: Greater Cambridge Local Plan topic papers

Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan - Great Places Policies

These policies acknowledge the importance of place and aim to sustain the unique character of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and complement it with beautiful and distinctive development, creating a place where people want to live, work and play. This is addressed through the Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth and their four 'C's' of *Community, Connectivity, Climate* and *Character* considered pivotal when creating and assessing high quality design.

1.3.1 Other relevant guidance

In addition to the Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan, the following national policy and best practice guidance have been considered when developing the Neighbourhood Masterplan for Heathfield.

TCPA Strategy report 2021 - working to secure homes, places and communities where everyone can thrive.

In recognition that the impact of places on people's lives should not be underestimated, the TCPA advocate strategic priorities informed by the Garden City Principles. Enhancements should seek social justice within and between communities.

TCPA 20-Minute neighbourhoods (2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic put a spotlight on the importance of the accessibility of where we live. This report highlights the benefits and approaches to complete, compact and connected neighbourhoods, where people can meet their everyday needs within a short walk or cycle.

Parking standards as a steering instrument in urban and mobility planning (2020)

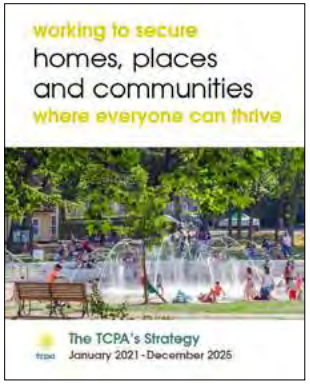
This report discusses best practice for parking allocation as well as considering why historic approaches are not fit for purpose. Strategies should be considered to retrofit Heathfield areas as opportunity arises.

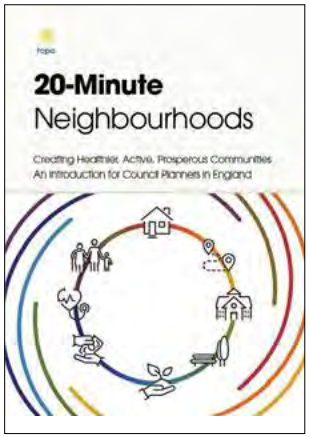
Paths for everyone: 3 years on. Progress update 2018-2021

Paths for everyone is an initiative by the charity Sustrans to open up fully inclusive access to sustainable travel options to increase social equity, fight climate change and improve access to recreational ecosystem services.

The Principles of Inclusive Design (2006)

This Design Council's report makes the case that people's living environment should be easy to use. It considers roads, parking and walkways as some of the landscape elements where access can be enhanced using their principles.





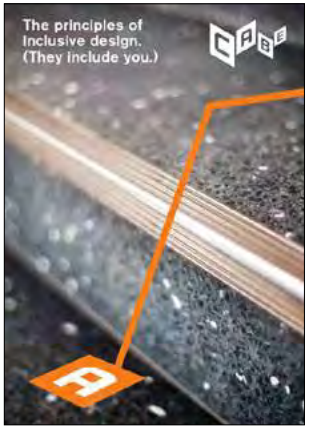


Figure 02: View east looking into Ringstone playing field from public footpath.

1.4 Consultation feedback

In November 2021, a consultation update was issued regarding the draft Neighbourhood Plan for Thriplow and Heathfield, to gather feedback from residents within the neighbourhood area. A draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan is available on the parish website.

The following questionnaire responses relating to the enhancement of Heathfield have been considered as part of the masterplan proposals.

Q.1 Best thing about living in Heathfield:

1. Peace and quiet, rural, countryside **29***
2. Community spirit **19***
3. Good location for transport links **10***
4. Safety **5***
5. Affordable **3***

Other likes: air show, proximity to Thriplow village.

Other dislikes: poor provision of amenities

Q.2 Main issues facing Heathfield:

1. Improve main entrance image **75***
2. Improve community amenities **70***
3. A505 lack of landscaping, maintenance, ease of pollution **67***
4. Car parking problems caused by high density accommodation **63***
5. Limited emergency vehicle access **54***
6. Limited road widths throughout **53***
7. Unadopted road systems **48***

Q3 Three most important improvements to Heathfield:

1. Amenities **39***
2. Car parking issues **30***
3. Emergency vehicle access **24***
4. Front entrance **20***
5. A505 environment, footpaths, verges, maintenance **16***
6. Design and management of open space **14***
7. Adopting road systems **11***
8. Verge maintenance (within Heathfield) **9***
9. Changing road systems **7***
10. Industrial unit environmental issues **5***
11. Speeding traffic **2***

***** number of residents

Figure 03: Extract from Community Parish Consultation Update Nov 2021

SITE ASSESSMENTS

Heathfield

The site assessment for the site west of Heathfield concludes the site is not suitable for housing because it is in the green belt. National policy is clear that new buildings in the green belt is inappropriate. Exceptions could apply, for example for the provision of affordable housing and buildings needed to support outdoor recreation areas but only where the buildings do not impact on the openness of the green belt.

In addition, the site assessment finds that amenities are very poor in Heathfield. The site could only be considered suitable for affordable housing to meet parish needs if there is an identified need in this part of the parish and only if additional community amenities are provided alongside it and the impact of the loss of opens space is compensated for (through the provision of alternative open space) and the constraints relating to the unadopted road and local safety and amenity concerns relating to road safety are satisfactorily addressed.

Therefore, there is a need to put forward an enhancement program for amenities in this area of the Parish. The NPG are in the process of writing a summary of those needs, to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Thriplow Village

After considering the results of the assessment, the NPG and advisors concluded that the Grain Store and Rectory Farm sites had the fewest constraints and represented the best opportunities for housing development provided they met certain criteria.

If acceptable to residents, the Neighbourhood Plan would seek to allocate these two sites for development and have some input on how they should be developed through provision of a 'development brief'.

This brief would constitute a set of principles that a developer would have to meet in order to get planning permission. The brief would not constitute a fully resolved layout or design.

The allocation of the sites through the Neighbourhood Plan, accompanied by a development brief, would have the following benefits:

- The Parish would have more control. As well as directing development to the most appropriate place it can set some parameters for development. For example, this could include the number of plots, the number of storeys, the position of strategic landscaping, and suggestions for the position of the access.
- The allocation of land strengthens the ability of the Parish to withstand applications on other land that might come forward.

It should be noted that planning applications for development can come forward at any time. If the principle of development is not already established through a site allocation in the neighbourhood plan, the application will still be assessed against other policies in the neighbourhood plan and local plan.

HEATHFIELD ENHANCEMENT

Heathfield

The site

Neighbourhood Area Context

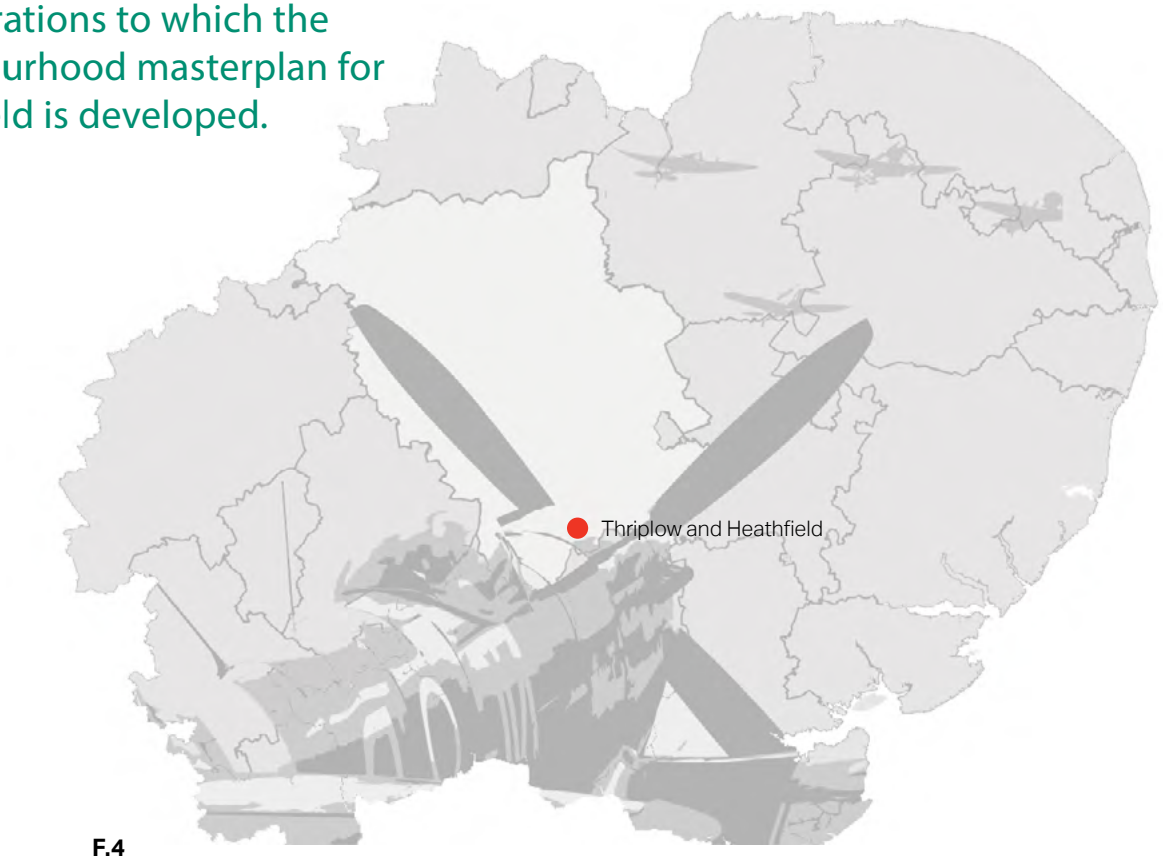
02

2. Neighbourhood Area Context

It is important that the neighbourhood masterplan for Heathfield is based on an understanding of the context and wider opportunities and constraints of the neighbourhood area.

This section outlines the broad physical and contextual characteristics of the neighbourhood area. It looks at key existing transport connections, amenities, heritage assets and external influences from the surrounding rural countryside, including sensitive environmental features and key views.

This section concludes by outlining a series of constraints and opportunities to help to inform the parameters and considerations to which the neighbourhood masterplan for Heathfield is developed.



F.4

Figure 04: Regional map of East Anglia - approximate location of Thriplow and Heathfield.

2.1 Area of study

Heathfield is a small settlement covering approximately 16 hectares (ha) of the southern part of Cambridgeshire. Comprising approximately 300 dwellings, Heathfield is the larger of the two settlements within the neighbourhood area, the other being Thriplow. Heathfield comprises approximately 700 of the 1150 residents living in the neighbourhood area.

Heathfield commands a prime location, approximately 12 km from the centre of Cambridge, and within easy access to the neighbouring counties of Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Suffolk. The immediate connectivity to the A505 provides good transport to major arterial roads such as the M11, A1(M), and A14 to the south east and beyond.

Despite good road connections, sustainable travel and connectivity is one of the key issues raised within the Thriplow and Heathfield draft neighbourhood plan.

Figure 05: A505 forms the southern boundary to Heathfield providing vehicular connections to the M11 to the east and Royston to the west

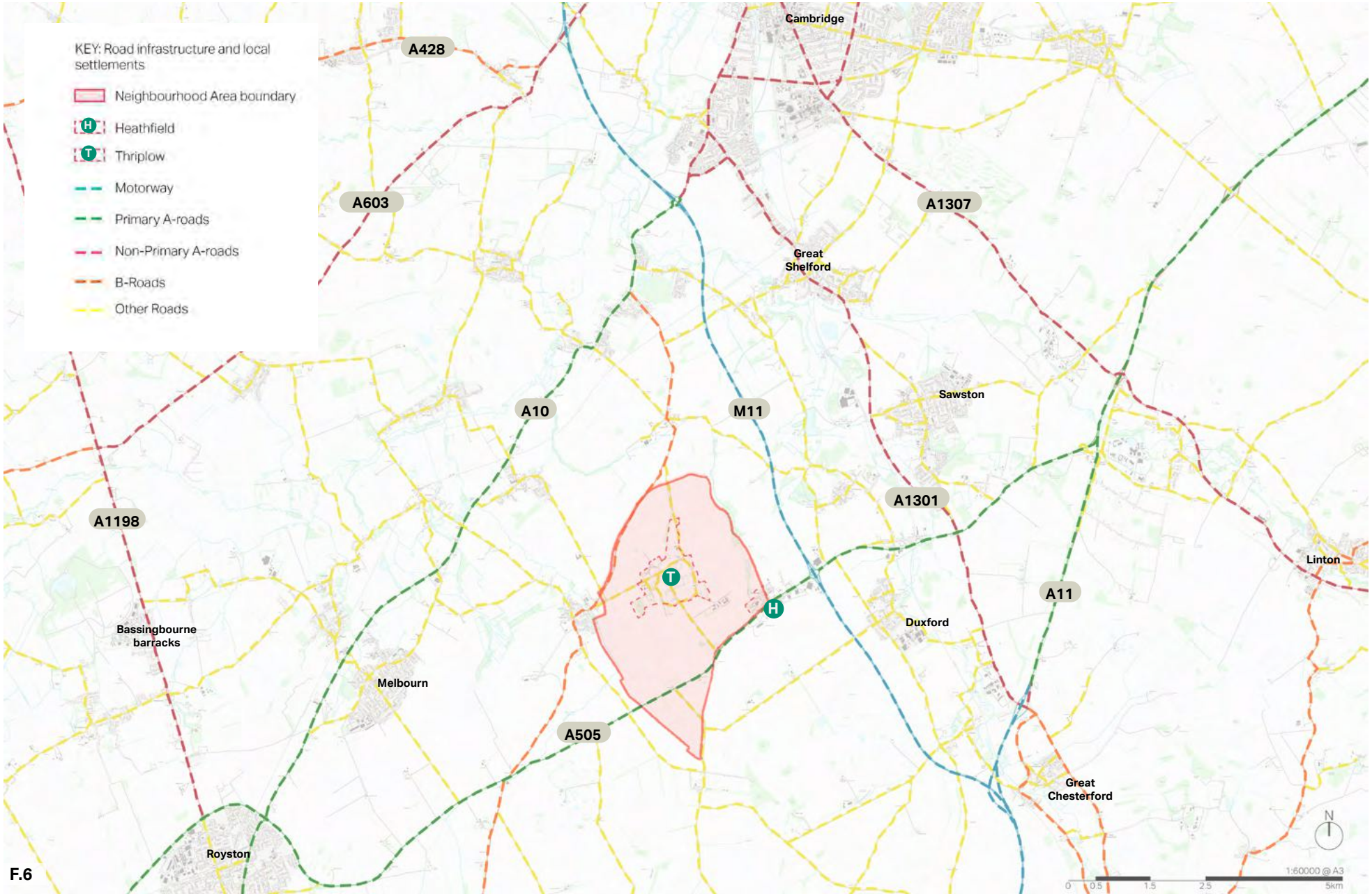


Figure 06: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - road infrastructure and local settlements.

Sustainable transport

There are currently no direct sustainable transport opportunities for residents of Heathfield. Although there are expansive train connections via the Great Northern and Greater Anglia railway lines available from Foxton and Whittlesford respectively, both stations are approximately 6 km from Heathfield and there is no train line within the neighbourhood area.

Whilst there are local bus connections within the neighbourhood area, Heathfield is limited to one active bus stop on Hurdles Way. Bus routes are also available via the number 31 bus from Thriplow and the 132 bus from the Imperial War Museum (IWM) Duxford.

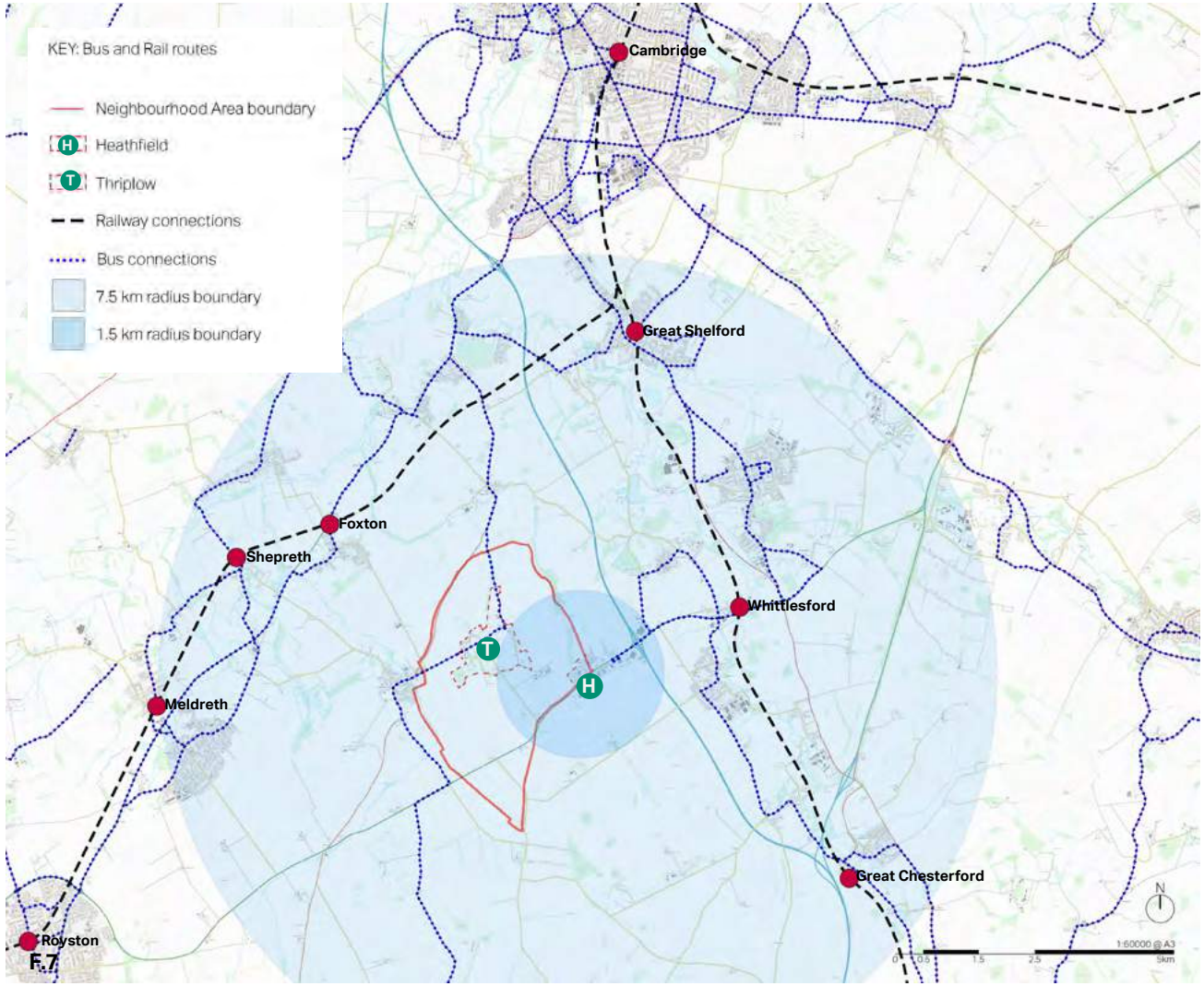


Figure 07: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - rail and bus connections.

2.2 Cycling and walking

Heathfield is nestled within a rural backdrop. There are several footpaths and bridleways at the edge of the neighbourhood area. These terminate at Heathfield rather than providing multiple connections. Expansion of the Public Rights of Way from the neighbourhood area could facilitate reconnection to the Icknield Way as well as bringing the West Anglian and Hertfordshire Way within reach.

Unlike Thriplow, Heathfield is not directly connected with the national and regional cycleway network. The bridleway between Heathfield and Thriplow is therefore an important transport corridor.

There is a regional cycle access route crossing the A505, however, Heathfield is disconnected from this and only accessible to confident cyclists prepared to ride on the busy main road or the adjacent narrow footpath.

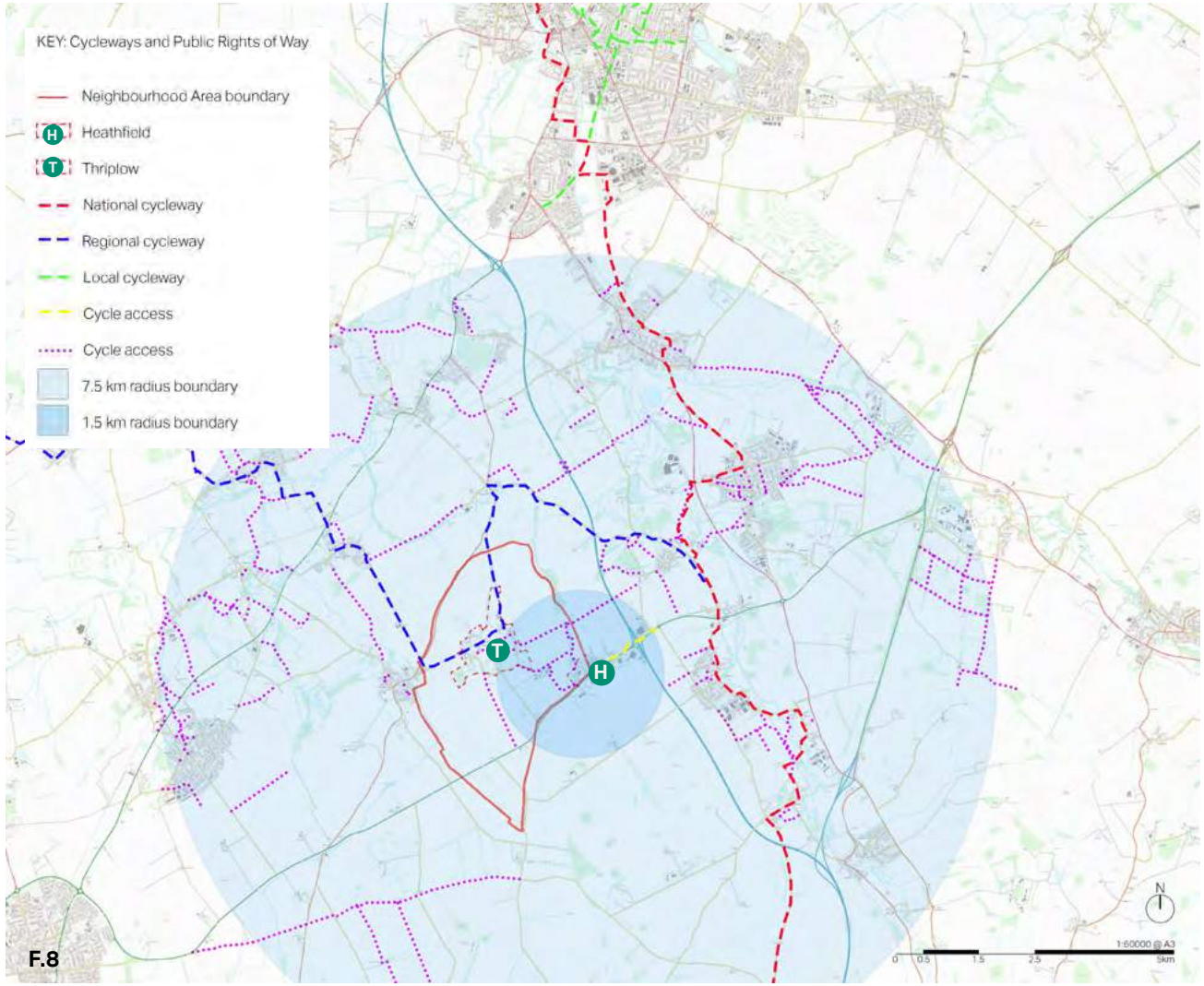


Figure 08: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - pedestrian and cyclist connections.

2.3 Educational resources

The small urban footprint of Heathfield and its proximity to the rural landscape are desirable features, offering the chance to create a vibrant community and connections to the surrounding countryside.

Access to resources and facilities are also a key issue within the draft neighbourhood plan and are particularly important when building cohesive and walkable neighbourhoods.

Whilst there is a primary school within the neighbourhood area, located within Thriplow, there are no secondary schools. Access and lack of sustainable transport options place a greater reliance on the car when travelling to local schools and other facilities.

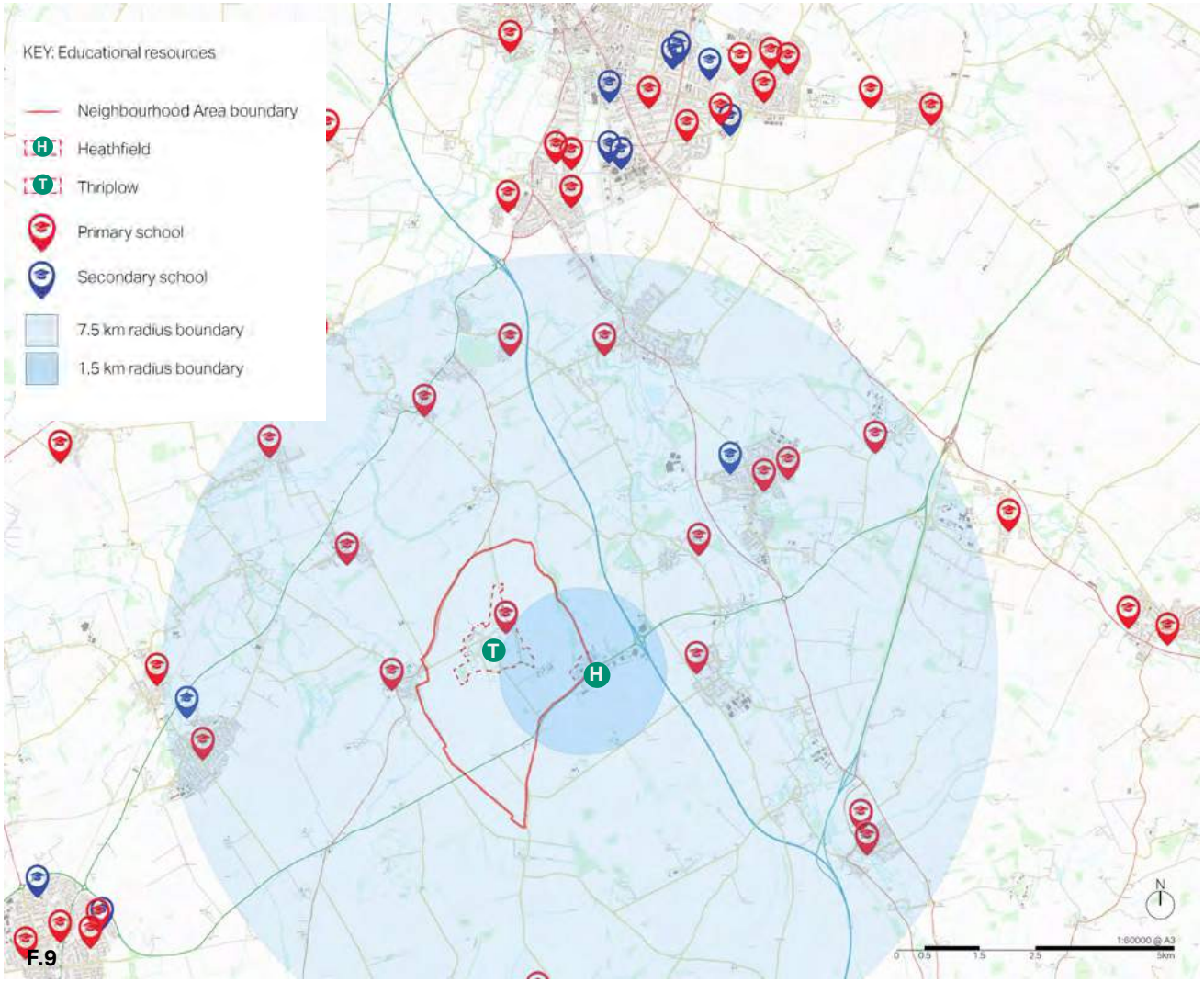
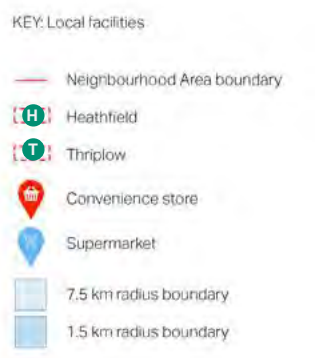


Figure 09: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - educational resources.

2.4 Local facilities

There is heavy reliance on the private car for accessing groceries and local amenities. The closest convenience store is a small shop within a petrol station along the A505.

A community shop and pub at Thriplow are accessible for pedestrians and cyclists using a public bridleway.



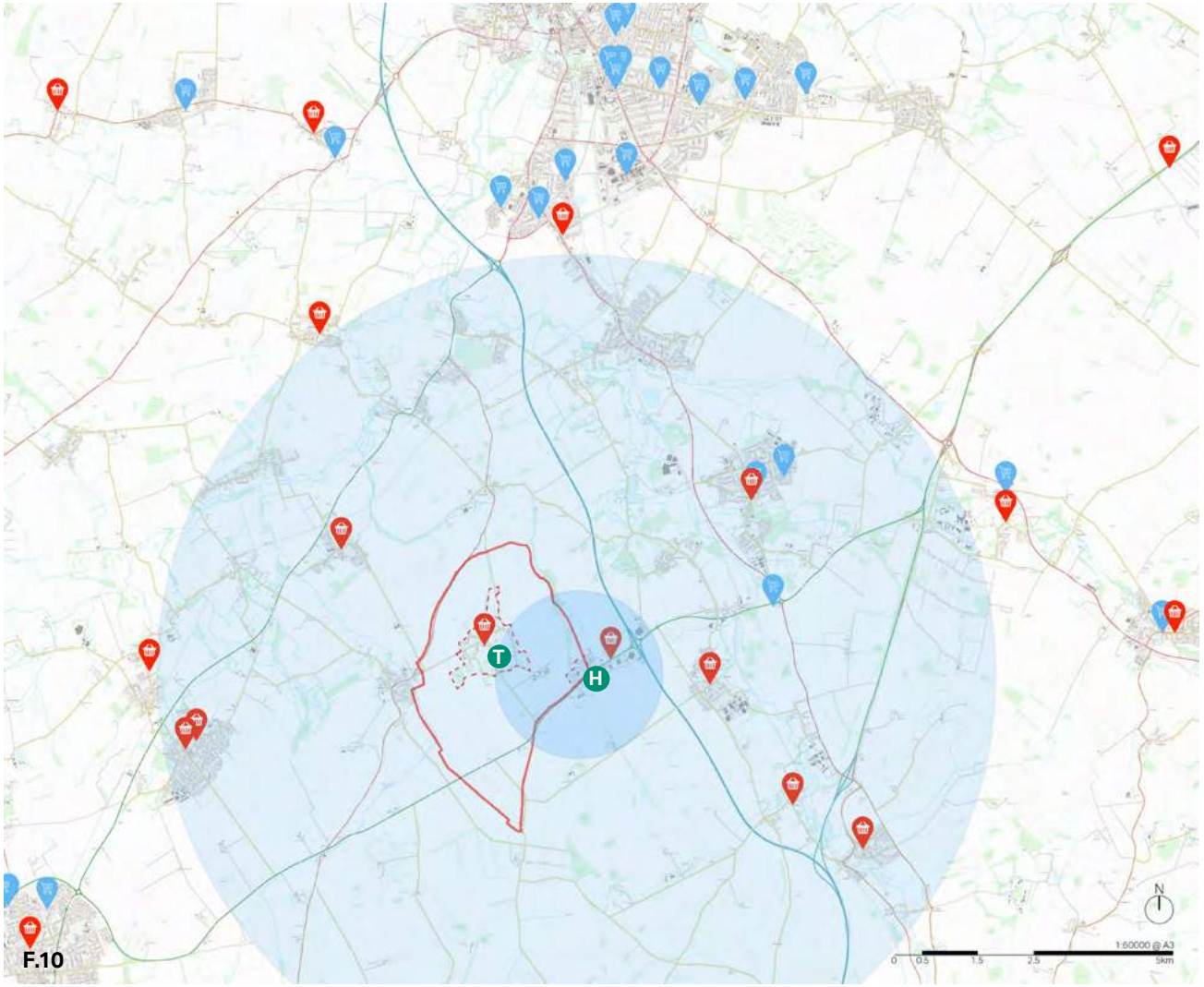


Figure 10: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - convenience and large shopping facilities.

2.5 Environmental designations

There is a variety of landscape designations within the region.

As shown in Figure 14, there are numerous sites protected by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designations including three sites within the neighbourhood plan boundary (*). These include:

- Thriplow Peat Holes*
- Thriplow meadows*
- Whittlesford - Thriplow Hummocky Fields *
- Fowlmere Watercress Beds
- Barrington Pit
- Barrington Chalk Pit
- Dernford Fen
- L-Moor Shepreth
- Holland Hall Railway Cutting

Figure 11: Thriplow Meadows SSSI - rare low land habitat with wet areas featuring many uncommon plants such as *ragged robin*, *fleabane* and *purple loosestrife*.

Figure 12: Whittlesford - Thriplow Hummocky Fields SSSI comprising of two sites, one in Whittleford and the other in Thriplow.

Figure 13: Thriplow Peat Holes SSSI comprising fenland habitat with ditches and ponds supporting a wide variety of invertebrates.

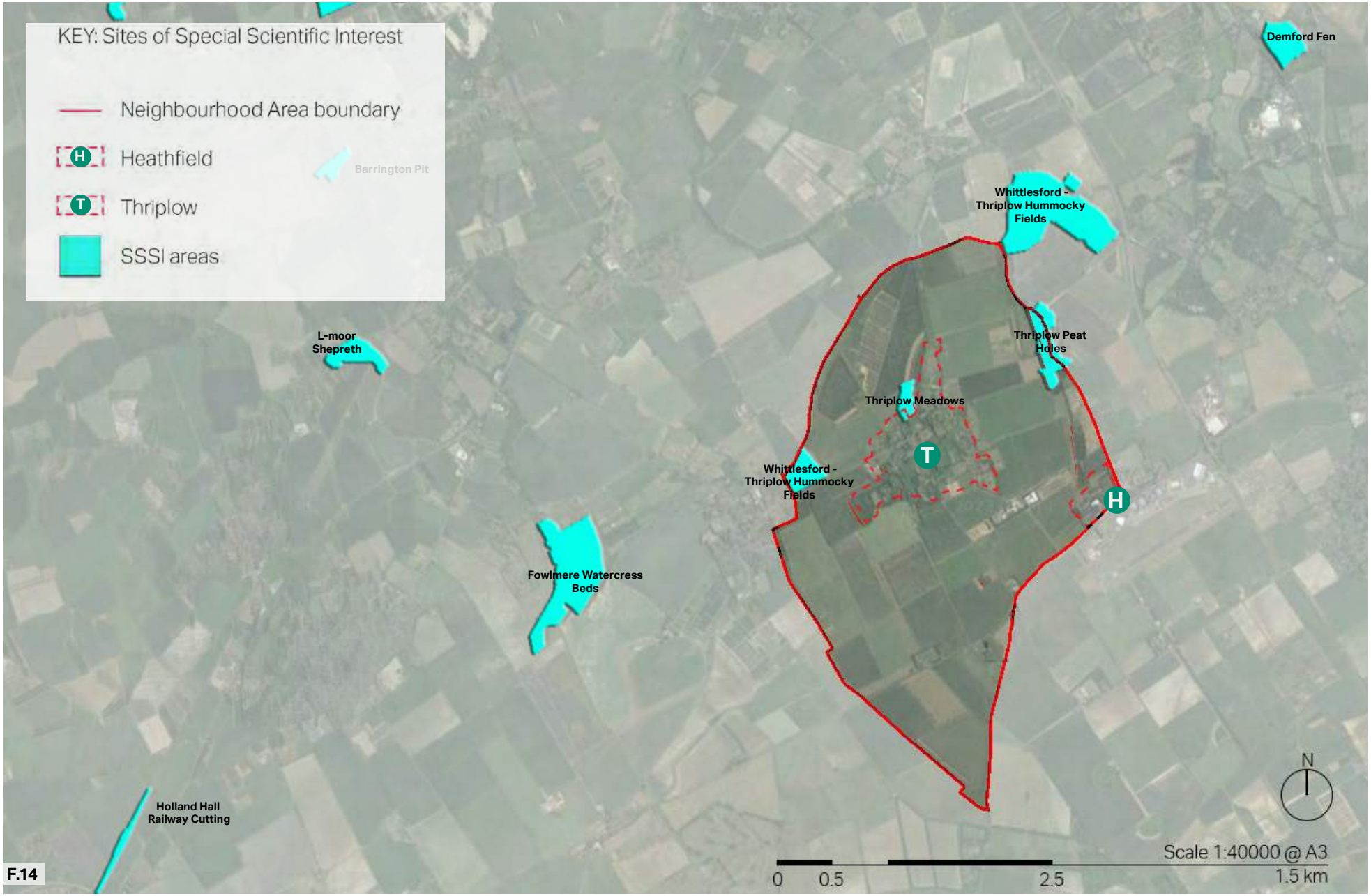


Figure 14: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - SSSI environmental designation areas.

2.6 Landscape typologies

In addition to the SSSI's shown in the previous page, there are Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Priority Habitats that form a rich variety of landscape typologies within the regional area. These are generally fragmented with limited habitat connectivity.

There is opportunity to:

1. Supplement and enhance typologies with planting to increase green corridors - particularly the deciduous woodland within and on the boundary of Heathfield.
2. Provide greater public access to the RSPB Fowlmere allowing residents of Heathfield important connection to the local wildlife.

Figure 15: Deciduous woodland on the northern boundary of Heathfield could be enhanced with additional planting to create an important habitat connection to the surrounding countryside.

Figure 16: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area. - Special Protection Areas and Priority Habitats.

2.7 External connections and views

Heathfield's location next to the Imperial War Museum (IWM), Duxford offers views to historic and modern buildings and landscape alike. Residents leaving Heathfield along Heathfield Way are met by the imposing Grade II* Listed, Norman Foster American Air Museum (1).

The Pepperslade residential area is afforded exclusive views, towards the east, of the numerous Grade II listed buildings located on the northern site of the IWM (2, 3).

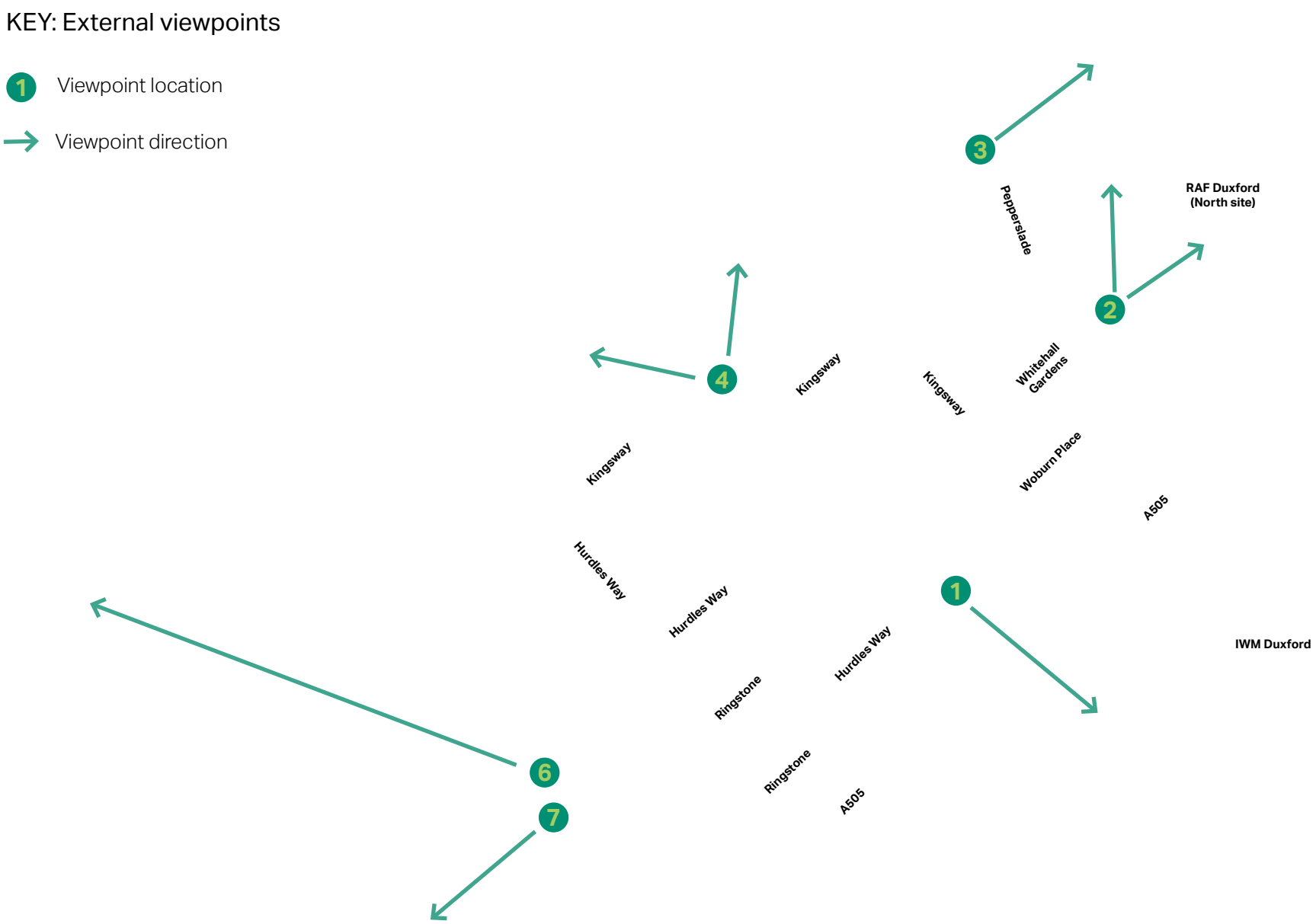
Views of Duxford extend into the sky with premier views of the many airshows and fly passes.

The only two open vistas on the edge of the settlement are from the Kingsway looking north across unmanaged grassland towards a wooded backdrop (4). and from the western vegetated boundary, looking across open fields (6,7).

Figure 17: The Grade II* Listed American Air Museum from Heathfield Way

Figure 18: The Grade II Listed Airmen's barracks and station sick quarters.

Figure 19: Glimpsed views of Grade II Listed buildings within the IWM northern site from Pepperslade.



F.20

Figure 20: Viewpoints - external views of the surrounding areas from Heathfield.

Connectivity between Heathfield and Thriplow is best achieved using the existing footpath and bridleway which link the two settlements. Enhancement of this route would be beneficial for residents using this as a sustainable travel option to the primary school at Thriplow. Improving the accessibility of this route could reduce car travel and issues with school drop off creating conjestion in Thriplow.

Incidental interventions such as planting daffodils (*Narcissi spp.*) and using planting to improve wayfinding could enhance community cohesion and increased the route usage. There is an opportunity to engage with the principles in Sustrans - *Paths for everyone* report to facilitate this.

Figure 21: Views towards Manor Farm.

Figure 22: Views from the public footpath linking to Thriplow.

2.8 Internal connections and views

Within Heathfield there are numerous important views that offer wayfinding and opportunities for enhancement.

From the main vehicular access point to Heathfield there are vistas in both easterly and westerly directions. The corridor view along Hurdles Way (A) is truncated with a feature landmark building although the experience is diminished slightly by parking issues.

The view along Woburn Place (B) is more confused, with the narrow gap in the wall closing off the street scene. Increasing the gap in the wall would offer interest and visual connection to the Listed buildings beyond.

The entrance to Pepperslade (C) offers views of large street trees to either side creating a sense of maturity to the space that is physically open whilst offering perceived enclosure.

Natural views from Heathfield Open Space (D) are well integrated into the existing landscape features.

Figure 23: The feature building at the end of Hurdles Way provides wayfinding and enhances the street view.

Figure 24: Opening the gap in the wall would create an extended view along Woburn Place and enhance the street view.

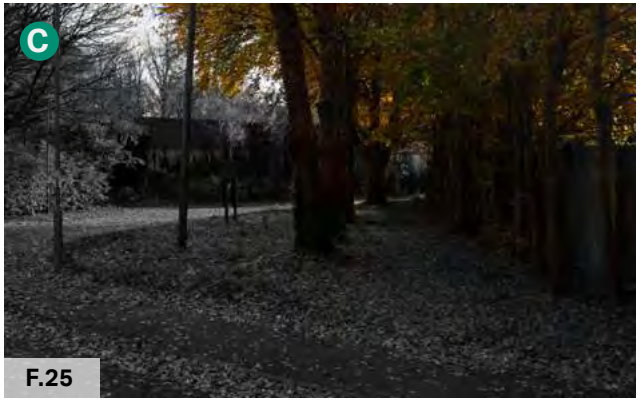
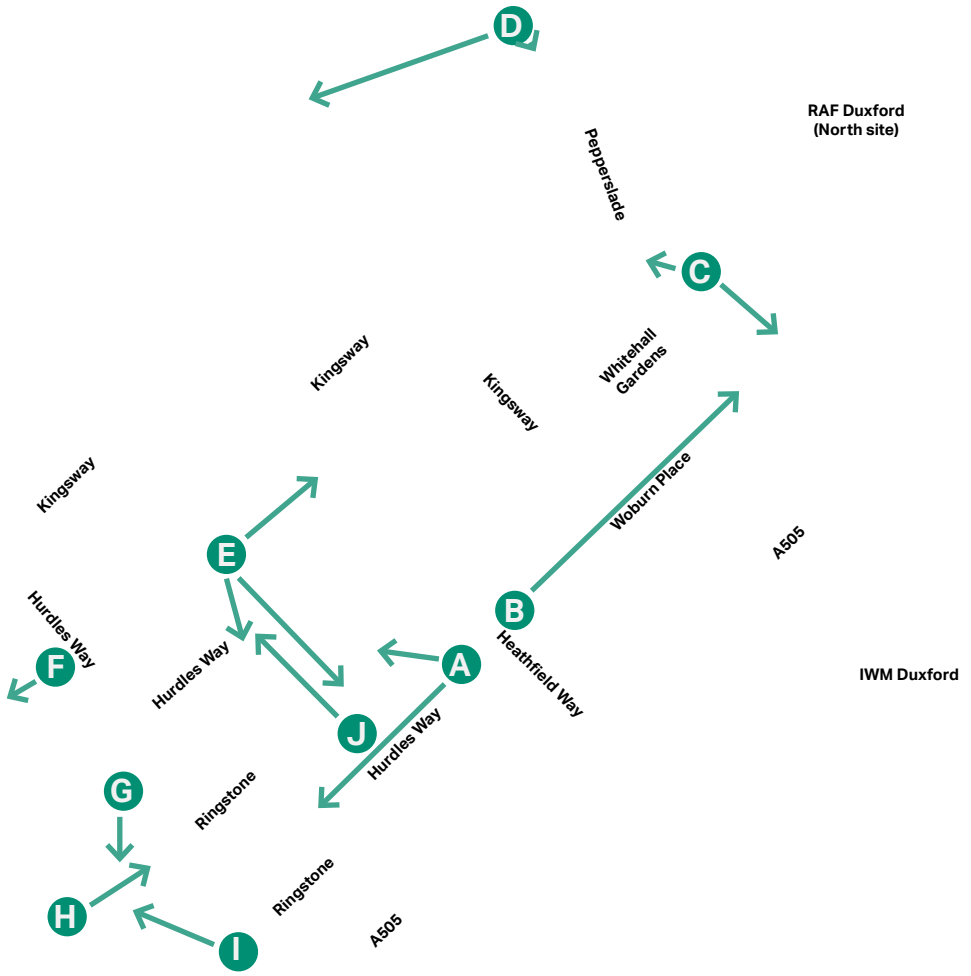


Figure 25: Regularly planted trees close off the distant views and define the intimate public space.

KEY: Internal viewpoints

A Viewpoint location

Viewpoint direction



F.26

Figure 26: Viewpoints - internal views within Heathfield.

A row of mature lime trees alongside the former Sergeant's Mess helps to differentiate the space between commercial and residential. The connection (E, J) offers an opportunity for creating enhanced social cohesion between two land uses.

Views to the deciduous woodland to the west of the Heathfield (F, G, I) offer the opportunity to create greater habitat connectivity to the surrounding countryside.

Visitors arriving from the public footpath walk (H) do so through a narrow gap in the thick vegetated boundary layer and are met with a view of the dwellings at Ringstone. Enhancement of this view could create a greater sense of arrival and visual connection to the wider landscape.

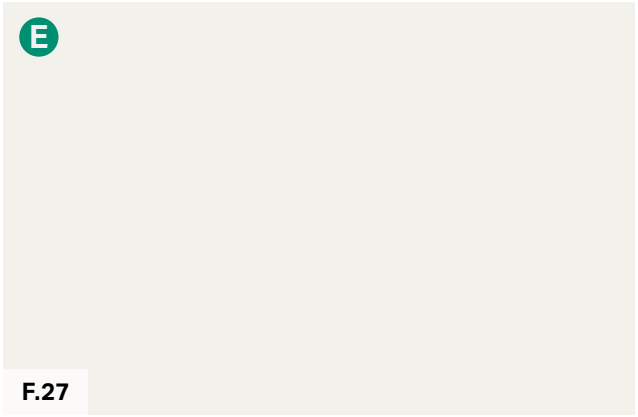


Figure 27: Mature trees regularly planted along Hurdles Way elegantly differentiate the residential and commercial areas.

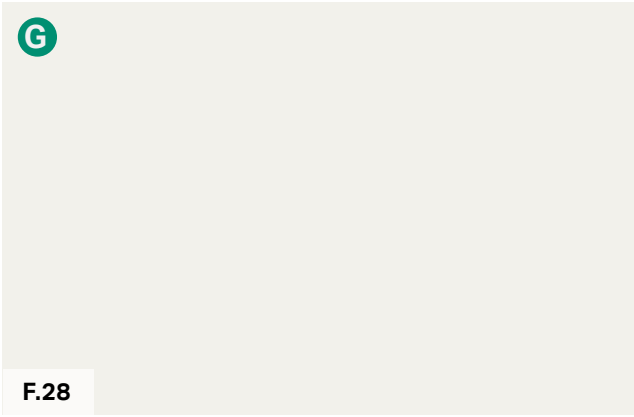


Figure 28: Open green space creates a sense of arrival to the playing field at Ringstone.

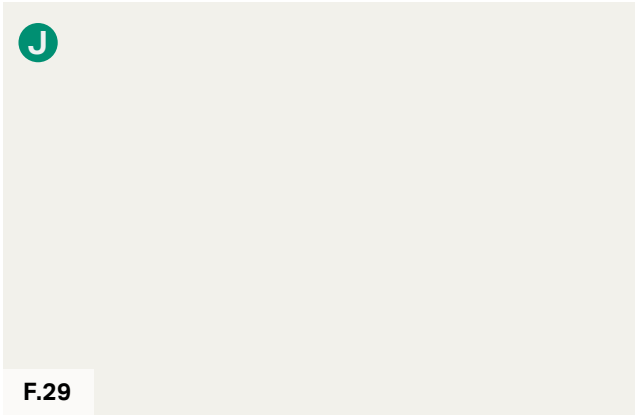


Figure 29: Vista of the communal green space links Hurdles Way and Kingsway.

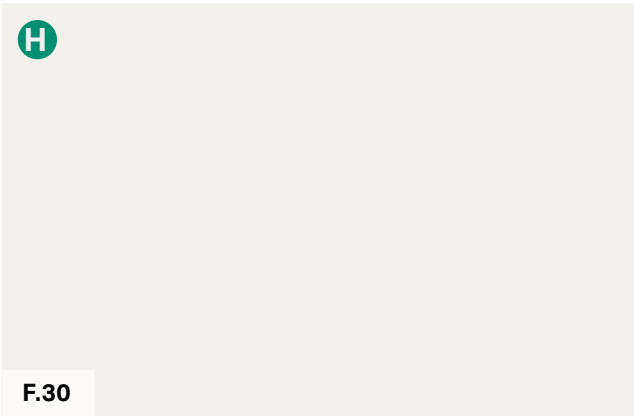


Figure 30: The arrival from the public footpath from Thriplow and Fowlmere.