

# Caldecote Village Design Guide

Supplementary Planning Document  
Adopted January 2020





Aerial photograph of Caldecote with the parish boundary highlighted.

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## Foreword

South Cambridgeshire is a district of diverse and distinctive villages, as well as being a high growth area. South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) wants new development to maintain and enhance the special character of our villages, and for communities to be at the heart of the planning process to help achieve this.

This is supported through our Local Plan which places good design at the heart of its vision for achieving sustainable growth:

### **Local Plan – Policy S/1: Vision**

South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.



In 2018, the Council was awarded funding from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to develop exemplar village design guidance, working in collaboration with village communities undergoing significant growth and change, in order to develop locally specific design guidance.

In line with our key objective of putting our customers at the centre of everything we do, we are delighted to have worked with representatives who live and work in these communities, to produce this exemplary design guidance to improve the quality of new developments in our villages.

We look forward to seeing a new generation of locally distinctive, high quality schemes that show the influence of this Village Design Guide.

**Cllr. Dr. Tumi Hawkins**  
**Lead Cabinet Member for Planning**

## Acknowledgements

The Caldecote Village Design Guide has been prepared by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service and DK-CM with Spacemakers and Europa, and developed in collaboration with the village community, through a process of active community participation and consultation.

SCDC is grateful to Philip Claridge for leading the village steering group for the Village Design Guide project and acting as community project champion.

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose and scope of this document

As a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the Caldecote Village Design Guide has been prepared to amplify and build on the requirements set out within policy **HQ/1: Design Principles** in the adopted 2018 Local Plan, as well as supporting the other policies within the Local Plan which relate to the built and natural character, and distinctiveness of South Cambridgeshire.

This Village Design Guide SPD:

- Supports South Cambridgeshire's policy that seeks to secure high quality design for all new developments, with a clear and positive contribution to the local and wider context.
- Describes the distinctive character of the village, and those aspects of its built and natural environment that the community most value
- Sets out clear design principles to guide future development proposals in and around the village of Caldecote.
- Is intended as a user-friendly tool for planners, developers, designers and community members.

The Caldecote Village Design Guide SPD forms a material consideration in determining planning applications for developments within the village.

## Who should use this document

The Caldecote Village Design Guide should be read by:

- Developers, property owners and their designers, in considering potential development proposals.
- Development management officers in assessing the suitability and determination of planning applications.
- Statutory and non-statutory consultees, including the parish council and members of the public, in commenting on planning applications.

The Village Design Guide should give confidence to all parties involved with the planning and design process, that they understand the essential character of the village, and how to respond to this appropriately through design. This will lead to better quality, more locally distinctive development that is welcomed by local residents and contributes positively to the sustainability of the village.

## 2. About Caldecote

Caldecote has a population of 1,737 (2011 census). The village has ancient origins, is mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) and parts of Caldecote Church date to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The original village at Caldecote grew around the church, but in the early twentieth century significant growth occurred to the north at Highfields, in the form of plotland-style residential smallholdings on former farmland. Subsequent development has also been mainly concentrated to the north of the village, in and around the Highfields plots, with the result a long linear village of varying character from north to south.

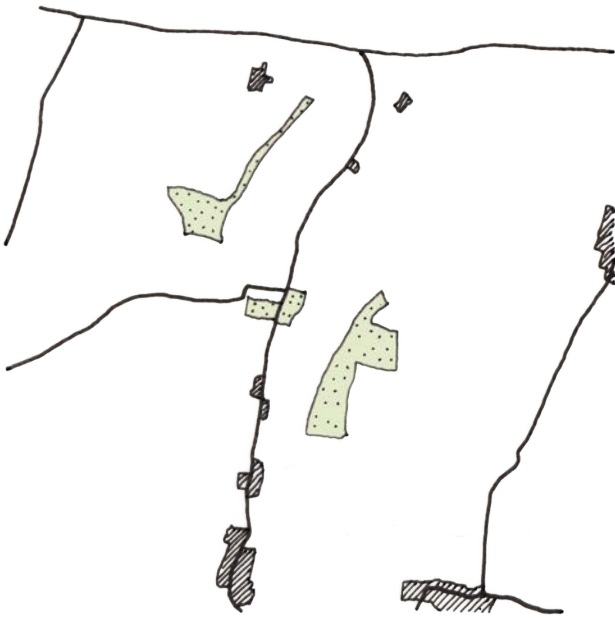
Caldecote has a Conservation Area (1988-, see Figure 6) centred upon Caldecote Church and taking in the ancient settlement. It also has a Parish Plan (published 2011) and in 2018 was assembling a Neighbourhood Forum for the purposes of making a Neighbourhood Plan. In 2015 the Caldecote Local History Group published 'The Book of Caldecote' which is a thorough and useful reference for the history and character of the village, produced locally.

The various phases of the village's development are outlined in the diagrams (fig.1) adjacent.

Caldecote adjoins the Bourn Airfield, a strategic development allocation within the SDCDC Local Plan 2018. The Bourn Airfield strategic site boundary overlaps Caldecote parish in the north-east corner of the parish. The Bourn Airfield New Village Supplementary Planning Document provides additional details and guidance relating to the delivery of a new village at Bourn Airfield.

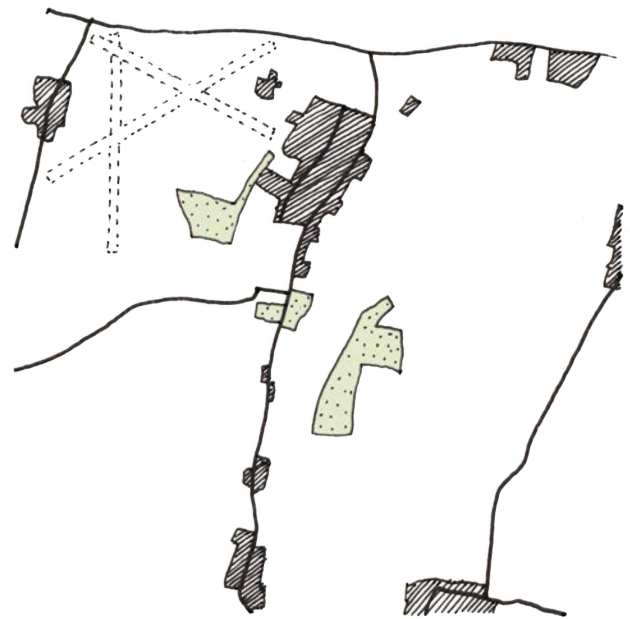


Fig.1 Historic Maps



**c1900**

Village growth around Caldecote Church to the south, primarily farm dwellings, labourers' cottages and associated structures.



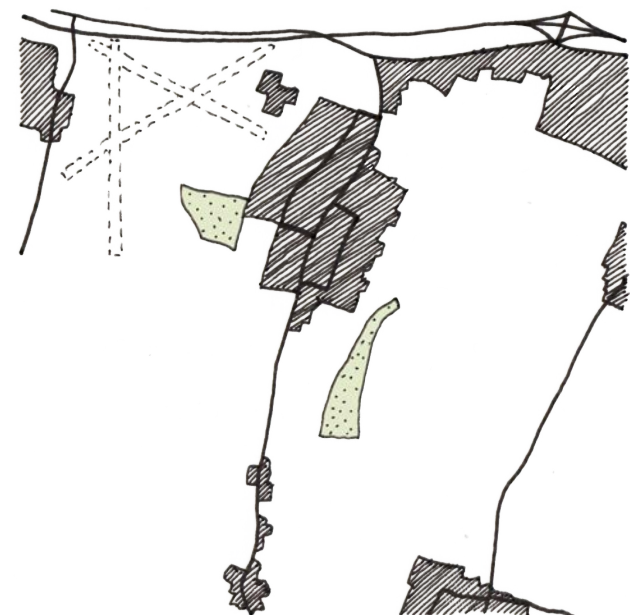
**c1950**

Significant 'plotland' style early c20 development at Highfields to the north on former agricultural land, Airfield has been built.



**c1990**

Further development to east of Highfields Road; densification of existing Highfields dwellings and new residential developments on vacant plots throughout Highfields.



**c2010**

Densification and consolidation of Highfields plots continues. New residential areas built at Highfields.

# 3. Community Input

**This Village Design Guide was made with the local community of Caldecote.**

Following an initial briefing from the village’s project champion, the consultant team organised a day-long workshop (10.11.2018) in the village to be attended by a group of villagers. The aim of the workshop was to collectively produce a fanzine’, *Caldecote Today and Tomorrow*, which would summarise the qualities and issues of the village as seen through by the villagers present. In the space of a day we toured the village led by villagers, captured key spaces and moments as photographs, and then worked to collectively edit the final fanzine to be finalised and printed at the end of the day. Captions for photographs were led by their original author with additional commentaries and opinions added where they existed.

The fanzine provides a multi-voiced and diverse portrait of the Caldecote community, and the themes discussed form the basis of this Village Design Guide. Following the workshop, themes were developed by DK-CM to be presented back to the villagers (26.11.2018) in an evening review session where the themes could be critiqued, expanded upon, removed or replaced.

Unless otherwise stated, all text in ‘quotes’, and all photographs, have been taken directly from the original zine, as a way of enriching the design guidance that forms the majority of this document. In some circumstances photographs by the consultant team, together with diagrams and maps, have been added.

The workshops, and the making of the fanzine, inevitably led to a wide range of valuable discussions and talking points, some of which do not fall within the remit of a Village Design Guide. As a record of the village’s opinions on key developmental issues, they have been recorded here with a view to their informing subsequent work, including that of the proposed Neighbourhood Forum.

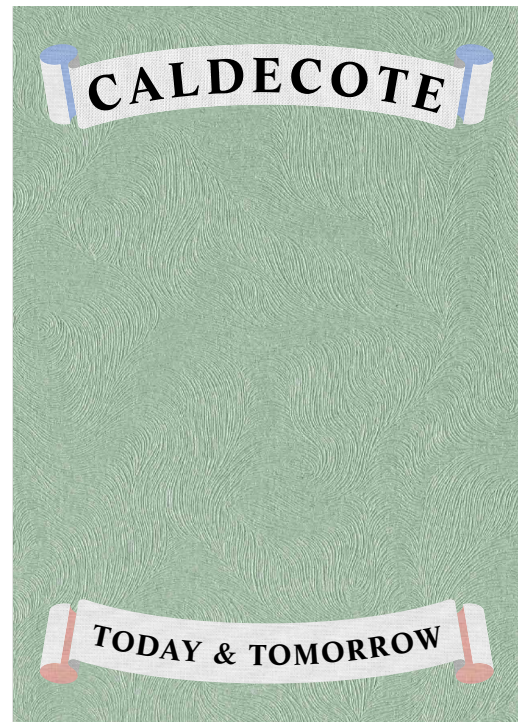


Fig.2 Fanzine cover

## **Community design priorities for the Village Design Guide**

- Protect, enhance and grow existing footpath, bridleway and cycle connections across the village, and improve roadside accessibility
- Ensure residential development within the village, including subdivision of large Highfields plots, is appropriate to the existing grain and character of the village
- Protect, enhance, repair and grow the village’s extant and historic flood alleviation network, as a piece of characteristic landscape design but also as a critical tool for flood alleviation
- Ensure that the relationship with the new settlement at Bourn Airfield is positive and allows good off-road connections whilst maintaining distinct settlements.



## Other priorities raised through the engagement process

- A strategic approach to flooding in the area, beyond individual developments  
The community would like to propose a more strategic, multi-stakeholder process of improving flood management and mitigation across the village and surrounding countryside.
- Pedestrian, bridleway and cycle connections to neighbouring settlements and to Cambridge  
Proposals include an extension of the Cambridge/Hardwick cyclepath to reach Caldecote and new off-road connections to Toft and to Cambourne. Interconnectivity between settlements is important to the community, and loss of connections should be resisted.
- Improvements to public transport accessibility  
Public transport links to the village are poor, and residents at the south end of the village find it difficult to access bus services from the north. Better public transport for the whole village is desired.
- Capturing incremental growth in ways that allows infrastructure to be improved  
The incremental densification of Highfields plots is not currently captured in order to improve infrastructure proportionately. If this development is to continue villagers would like a means of capturing or measuring the process such that infrastructural and public realm improvements can be better targeted.
- Homes for an aging population  
Villagers observe a lack of homes for the elderly, including retirement homes. Developments including such provision are particularly to be encouraged, particularly if providing communal and social facilities.
- More retail and social space within the village  
Existing provision tends to cater for the needs of particular groups, such that facilities for a greater diversity of community members are required. The Social Club, cafe, village hall and hairdressing salon are all valued but villagers would strongly welcome more social

spaces within the village.

- A Highfields Roads Charter  
Many of the roads in Highfields are privately owned by multiple owners which also makes 'public realm' improvement challenging. The community advocates a 'road charter' for owners to sign up to in order to provide a



Fig.3 Touring the village



Fig.4 Editorial meeting



Fig. 5 Editorial team of villagers with the final 'zine'

## 4. Village Character

Caldecote is formed of two distinct settlements within one parish. The first settlement, Caldecote, is of medieval origins and takes the form of scattered agricultural development centred upon Caldecote Church, at the southern end of today's parish.

The second settlement, Highfields, is situated at the northern end of the parish and was also mainly scattered agricultural development until the early 20th century, when its fields were divided into strips, new roads were created and plotland development on large smallholding plots occurred, initially using corrugated iron bungalows and former railway carriages. This development was popularly known as 'Tin Town' due to the nature of these original dwellings, most of which have been replaced with more conventional dwellings over time but with the result being a wide variety of dwellings of different styles and periods, though chiefly in the form of 1 or 1.5-storey chalets.

Through this process Highfields came to become the larger of the two settlements, a process consolidated in recent years by the development of land off Highfields Road into more conventional estates of housing in various phases. To the west of Highfields Road, this latter development has brought with it enhanced social provision in the form of a primary school, village hall, two retail premises and sports facilities.

On the following pages the character areas of the village are identified and summarised.

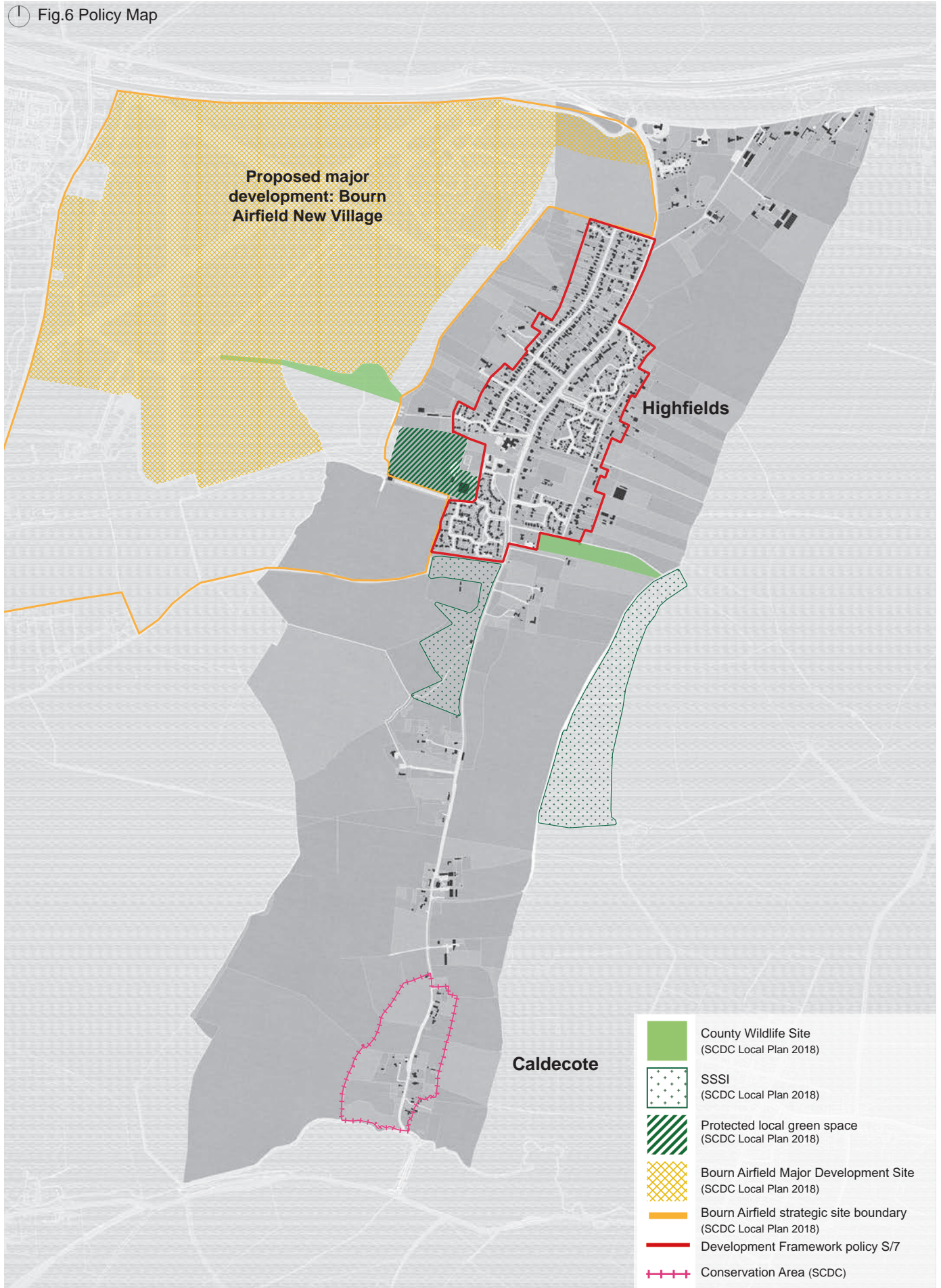


East Drive



Caldecote Church from the west

Fig.6 Policy Map



Development Plan designations can be subject to change over time. Please refer to the Local Plan pages of SCDC's website for up to date information.



**Caldecote** The original settlement, around Caldecote Church. Development is scattered; the landscape predominates and there is little sense of a built-up village. The church is the landmark, and development around it is mainly residential. Some buildings date from the village's agricultural heyday, others (for example the Meunier House, 1964) are more recent. The community feels that there is little scope for development here, though some dwellings are occasionally replaced with new ones on similar footprints, an issue when smaller dwellings are lost.



**Main Street Farms** Development is scattered and minimal along Main Street between 'ancient' Caldecote and Highfields to the north. Most buildings are agricultural in origin, whether barns, farmhouses or labourers' cottages, but some have been converted including for business use and this is welcomed in principle. Views can be had across the landscape looking both west and east, but views are more restricted by hedgerows to the west.



**Highfields Road & West Drive** Highfields fields began to develop as smallholdings in the early 20th century. Most of the original houses have subsequently been rebuilt and new ones added on some of the plots. Roads are privately owned, and the style of dwelling is varied, although chalet-style 1.5 storey dwellings of various kinds predominate and hedges & trees are prominent. This is the predominant character area of Caldecote and is considered a positive environment to learn from, notably its generous plots, planting and scale.



**Highfields East Drive** East Drive developed along the same lines as West Drive but, thanks to subsequent development, feels more secluded and separated from Highfields Road. Surviving plotland dwellings are on the eastern side of the road, with the rears of more recent housing estates (Clare and Blythe, below) to the west, with routes often informally cut through hedges. Dwellings are along similar lines to Highfields Road & West Drive and their plotsize, planting and scale are also deemed positive.



**Strymple & Furlong** Dating from 2001 and built on former agricultural land to the south of Highfields, this estate of curving 'cul-de-sac'-style roadways and dwellings of brick and render also hosts a number of crucial social elements of the village, including the primary school village hall, sports pavilion, playing fields and shops. Pedestrian permeability across the area is limited to the roadways but could benefit from connections into the landscape and neighbouring settlements to the west. The rendered dwellings weather less well than their brick neighbours.

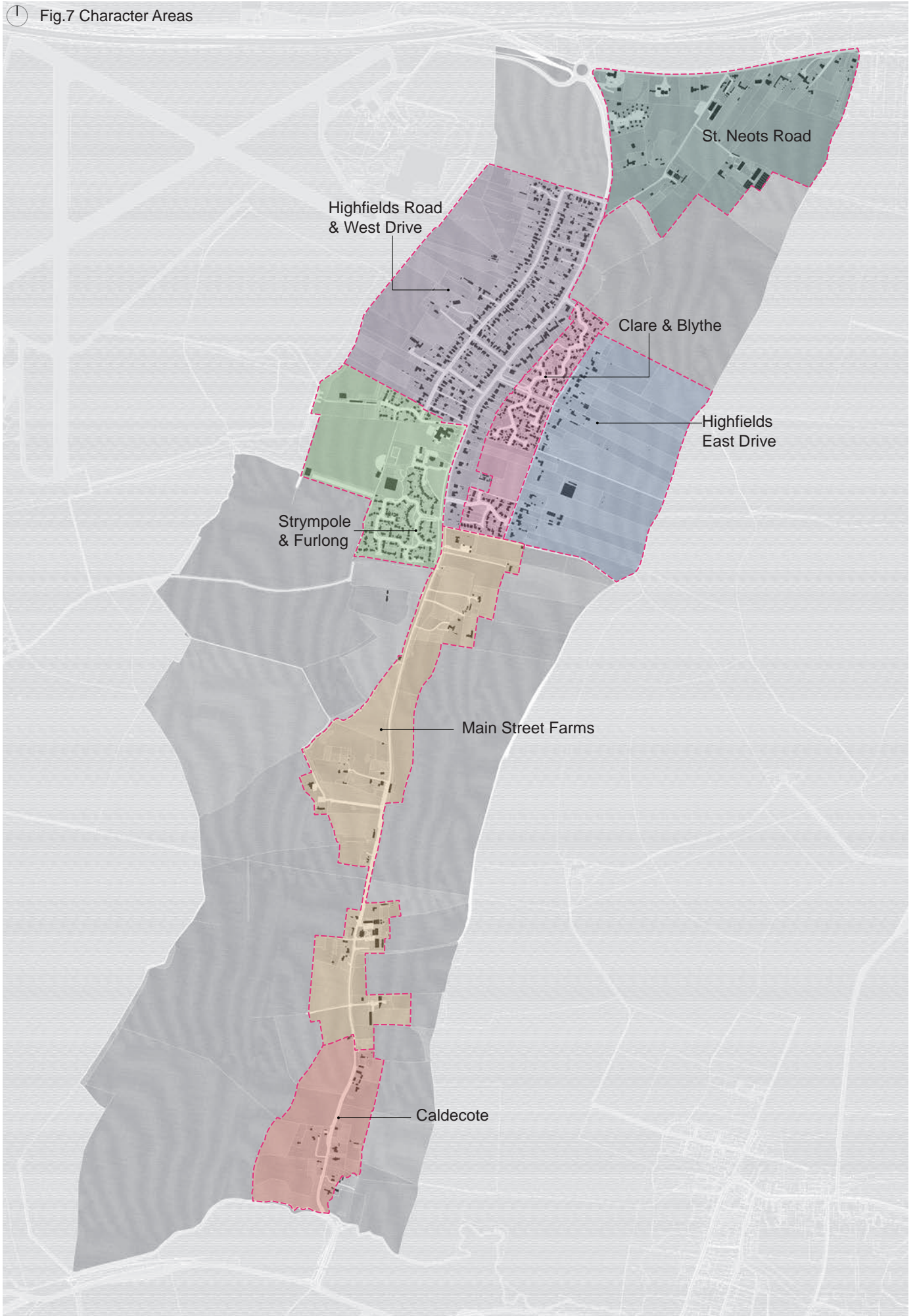


**Clare & Blythe** Also dating built in 2001 and also built on former agricultural land, situated between the main road of Highfields Road and the secluded 'plotland-style' dwellings of East Drive. Roads are similarly complex and are not through-roads, which means that the area can be disorientating, and there is no social provision, such that this area gets less pedestrian activity than Strymple & Furlong and feels more secluded. Housing tends to be of brick.



**St. Neots Road** A scattered, spaced-out area of development of various eras, including a petrol station with convenience store, a cattery and a number of residential dwellings, typically low-slung (1.5 storeys) but of highly variable character, with plot divisions dating back to a similar period to that of Highfields. Due to its position in relation to the other areas of the parish this area feels quite disconnected from most of Caldecote.

Fig.7 Character Areas



# 5. Routes

The village benefits from an extensive network of footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways. These are an important wildlife habitat, are key to the village's biodiversity, and connect the village to the surrounding countryside and to nearby settlements. These routes also provide important opportunities for physical activity and exercise. The village has a particularly successful safe path (Figs 8, 9, 10) which provides a protected route for pedestrians, particularly schoolchildren. In contrast, other paths and bridleways require users to walk on the road along the Highfields Road or Main Street as part of the route.

'You can hear a variety of birdsong here and all over the village. We must maintain the habitats of birds and other wildlife.'



Fig. 9 Highfields Road: 'There is no pathway here, where new housing is coming. Pedestrians have nowhere to go, which is particularly bad for buggies.'



Fig. 10 Furlong Way 'A path through the village. Heavily-used and extremely safe, particularly for children to walk, run, cycle. Lots of protection and separation from the road.'

5.1 Developments adjoining existing footpaths and bridleways should seek to make new connections of similar quality, or improve existing routes, to reinforce and extend the existing network.

5.2 New footpaths and bridleways must be accessible. Away from roads, wood chip has proven to be a good surface to ensure paths remain accessible in wet conditions. Alongside roads, tarmac is ideal, wide enough for wheelchair and buggy users to use comfortably and pass each other.

5.3 When new footpaths and bridleways run alongside busy roads within the village, the principles shown in Fig. 8 should be adopted, potentially omitting the ditch along minor roads or if it is not important for flood alleviation reasons. Hedges between path and road should not be

planted such that they obscure (or are likely to obscure) driver sight-lines and hedges should be of scale that feels safe in context, allowing path users to be visible to others.

5.4 Developments adjoining sections of Main Street and Highfields Road where pedestrians must currently walk on the road should provide safe pedestrian and bridleway routes alongside the road.

5.5 Good quality pedestrian and cyclist connections to the planned Major Development at Bourn Airfield are important (particularly at the key locations indicated on Fig. 11). Refer to the Bourn Airfield New Village Supplementary Planning Document for further details.

**Fig.8 The Caldecote Path** showing a typical section through the heavily-used and valued pedestrian route that runs parallel to some of Highfields Road.

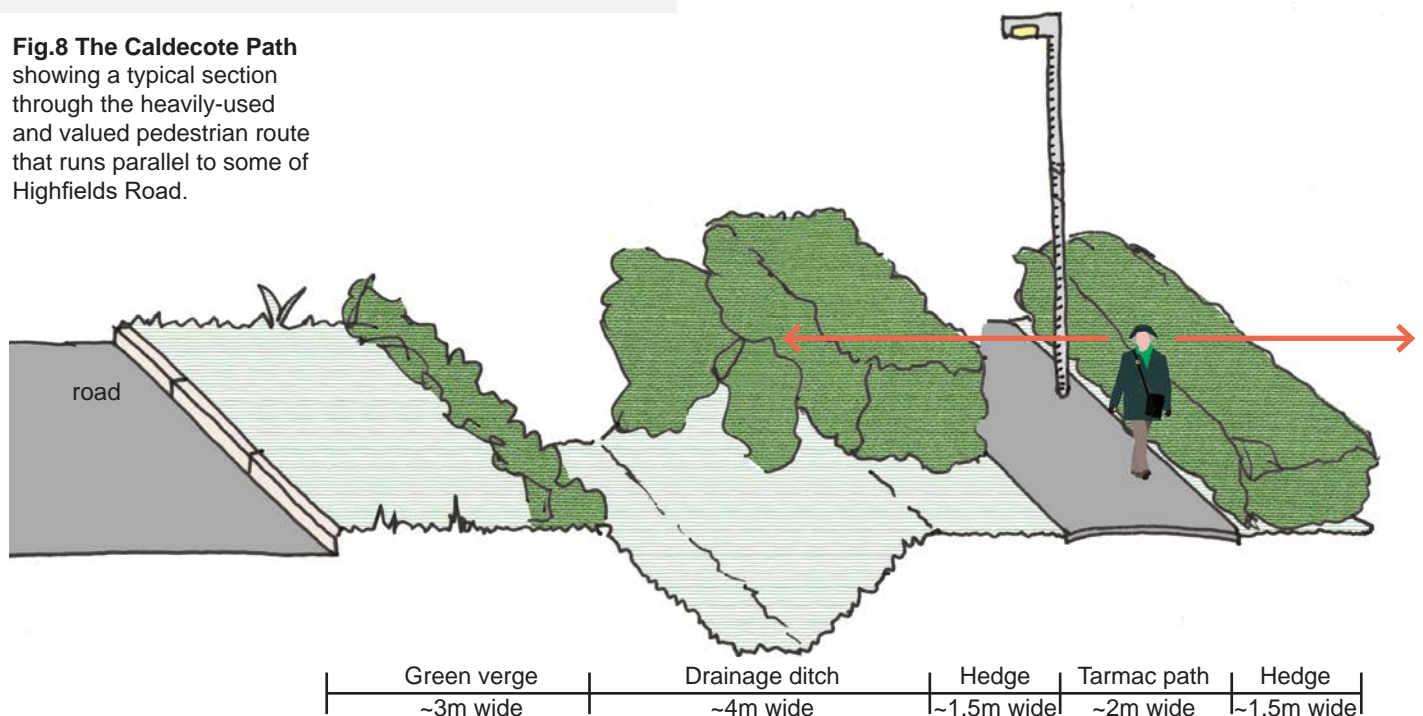
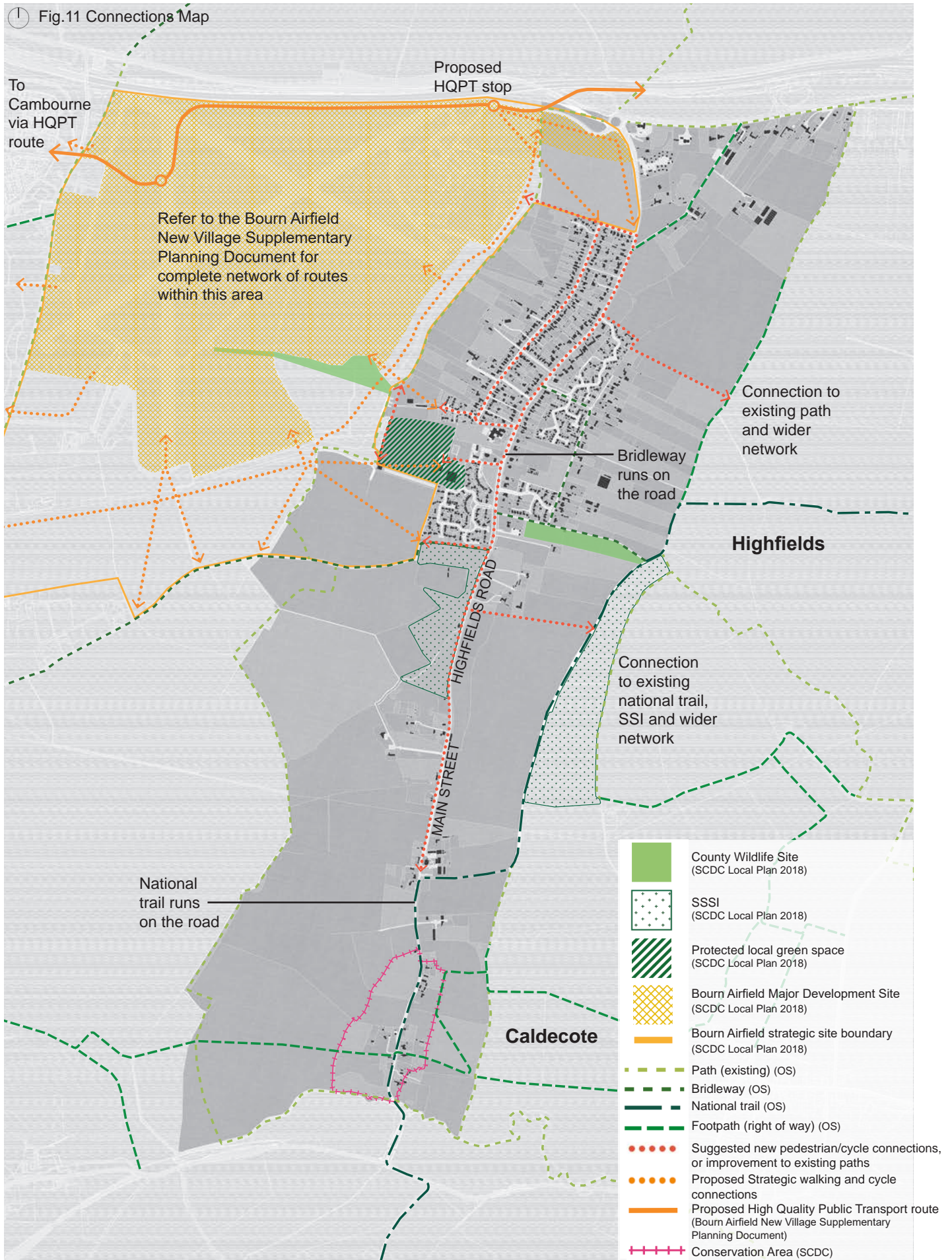


Fig.11 Connections Map



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## 6. Integrating new development

Since the Highfields smallholdings were set out, more recent development (1980-) has departed from this pattern and scale in favour of more conventional 2- or 3-storey homes along curving, cul-de-sac roads, departing from the established character of the village. Elsewhere in the village, smaller residential buildings have in recent years been knocked through to create larger dwellings, and rows of dwellings have been replaced by single dwellings.

The Highfields development pattern (on both sides of the main road) originating in large linear strips divided from the original agricultural fields, with linear roads set between and a cross-route every few houses. The informal nature of development means that sometimes there is no footpath and roads can be poorly maintained, but in many cases the result is wide roadways with generous pavements, green landscape buffers in front of dwellings and a strong landscape quality thanks to extensive front gardens and predominantly low-slung dwellings, often lower than surrounding trees and shrubs.

6.1 New development should reflect the characteristic height and scale of the village – typically 1.5 or 2 storeys. This is particularly important where adjacent to existing dwellings, roads and paths where taller buildings would change the distinctive visual character of the village.

6.3 New residential developments should integrate with the original Highfields development pattern wherever possible, including linear street layout, green edging to the highway in front of houses, and mature planting.

6.4 New development should reflect the distinctive pattern of Highfields where off-street parking and generous front gardens mean that cars do not dominate the appearance of roads and building frontages.

6.5 Timber or brick are characteristic external materials in the village, render should be avoided. See fig. 14 adjacent.



Fig. 12 A typical Highfields streetscape.

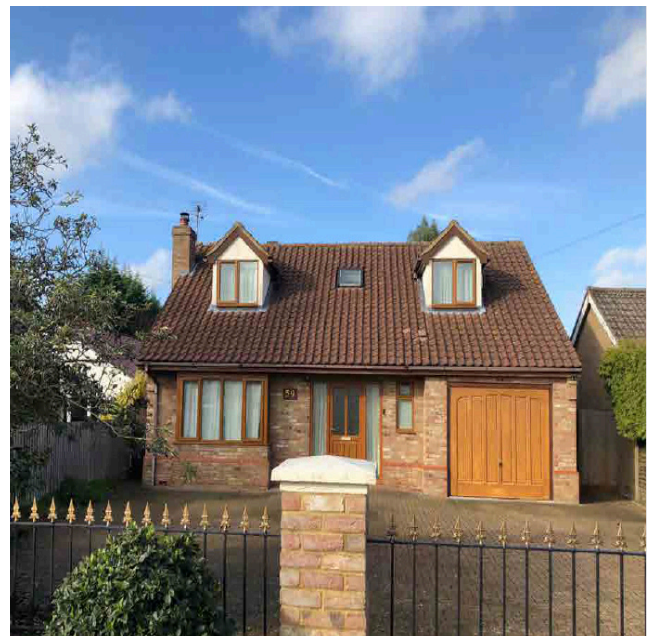


Fig.13 'Low 1.5 storey homes on West Drive. Characteristic of the village... Spacious, not crammed in, low-rise, off-road parking.'





Timber weatherboarding resonates with the history of Highfields, much of which was originally timber-framed.

‘An example of the sort of bungalows we’ve got. It’s good to keep roof levels low and not end up with three-storey overbearing buildings.’



A more ‘rustic’ approach to timber cladding used in Caldecote village. This resonates with the village’s agricultural character.



A recent housing development; the community has preference for brick over rendered dwellings as render tends to wear less well in this context.



Brick tends to be treated simply, without complicated detailing or patterns. Bricks in white, yellow, buff and red are used throughout.



Buff bricks and hung tiles on a chalet dormer on a mid c20 house. Chalet-style windows are commonplace in the village.

Fig.14 Sample of positive existing material treatments and details within the village.

# 7. Infill development at Highfields

Single-storey dwellings used to predominate in Highfields and the typical dwelling on the original plots continues to be 1 or 1.5-storey 'chalet-style' dwellings on large plots. The plots themselves are unusually deep and were intended to serve as agricultural smallholdings. Boundary treatments were typically hedges, sometimes augmented with lightweight, open fencing.

Highfields plots are slowly densifying through subdividing their plots to create new dwellings. This process allows for greater community continuity in the village as families can provide new homes for the next generation but should be designed to conform to the typical pattern of plot subdivision which is distinctive to the Highfields character area.

The following guidance points apply strictly to the large rectilinear plots of Highfields outlined in Fig. 16.



Development Plan designations can be subject to change over time. Please refer to the Local Plan pages of SCDC's website for up to date information.

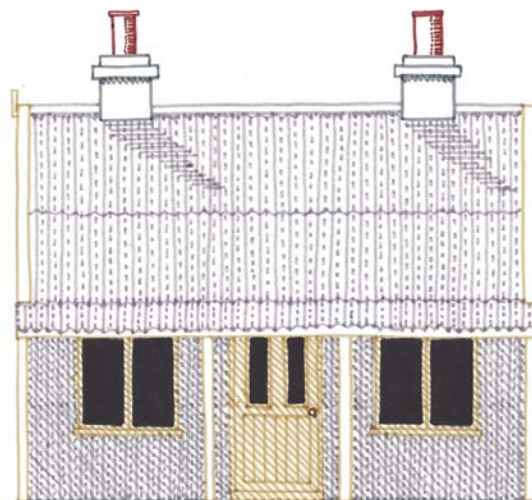


Fig. 15. Sketch of Ashlyn, an original 'tin town' dwelling built on a Highfields plot at the turn of the 20th century.

7.1 Subdivision of large original rectilinear Highfields plots to provide new dwellings is acceptable, but attention should be paid to providing good quality amenity, good quality access to all dwellings on the plot, privacy for existing and new dwellings, and soft hedgerow boundary treatments.

7.2 Subdivision of plots should take place crossways rather than lengthways; this makes it easier to preserve existing houses, retains the grain of the street and makes good use, where desired, of the deep plots.

7.3 New dwellings on subdivided plots should be subordinate to existing dwellings on the original plot. New dwellings may have the same overall number of storeys as the existing dwelling, but occupy a smaller footprint, and should 'read' as subordinate.

7.4 Boundary treatments between new and existing dwellings should be in the form of native hedging. Where hedge boundaries have been lost at the original dwelling, where possible they should be reinstated.

7.5 Vehicle access and new hardstandings should use a porous permeable material and build-up. Any new vehicle access should preserve and enhance existing drainage ditches and culverts.

7.6 Off-street parking should be provided for any new homes created through plot subdivision and infill and existing off-street parking provision should be preserved for the retained home.



Hedges forming boundaries between plots



Hedges forming boundary to street



Permeable vehicle access lined with grass



Hedging and open fencing at street boundary

Fig.17. Examples of Highfields plot character



Fig.18. A recent example of subdivision against the characteristic pattern of Highfields. 'The plot is very long and thin – they split it longways instead of crossways.'

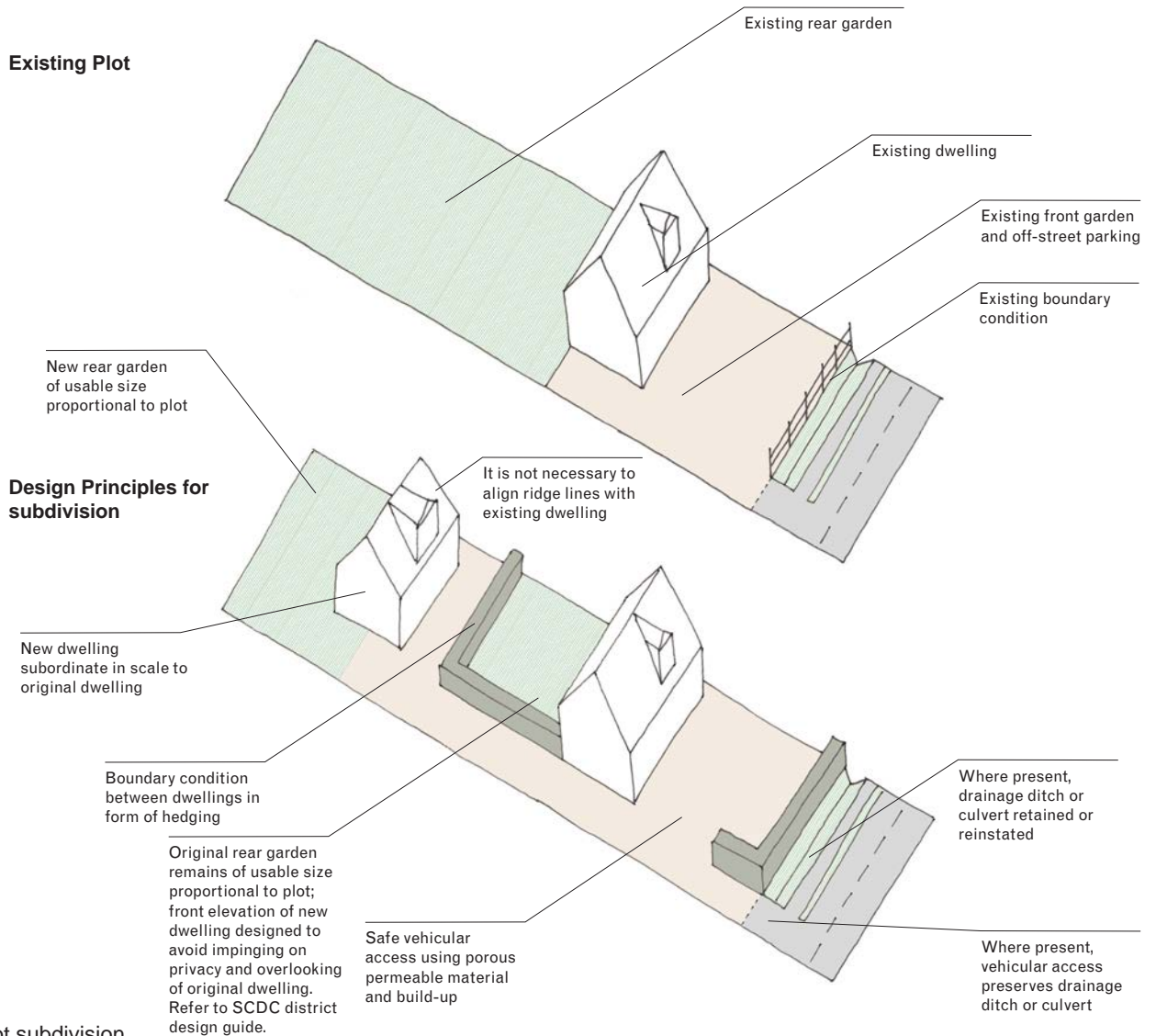


Fig. 19: Plot subdivision

# 8. Drainage and ditches

**Flooding is a key issue in Caldecote, particularly at Highfields where the land surrounding the village is clay and slopes toward the village. A significant flood event in 2014 left many existing dwellings uninhabitable, and Climate Change will increase the risk of flooding in the future. The village has a network of drainage ditches which historically have alleviated such issues and form part of the character of the village; there is evidence that this network was previously more extensive and complete. The drainage ditches, where still visible and maintained, are an attractive landscape buffer, historically between road and dwelling, with access to dwellings typically happening across 'bridges' of varying design across culverted ditches. The edges of the ditches are green and are thriving sites of biodiversity**

**Boundaries between the original Highfields plots are typically hedges and hedgerows often run parallel to ditches. These create an overwhelmingly green character to the settlement which should be preserved and enhanced in new developments.**

8.1 Maintaining the character of the village's ditch network, flood alleviation systems should be considered as visually appealing green infrastructure, as contributors to the village's biodiversity, and as useful buffers, such as between paths and the street.

8.2 Ditches should be used wherever possible to break up the scale of larger developments and provide green routes and sight-lines.

8.3 Flood attenuation measures should be additional to, and not the same as, public amenity such as village greens, such that public amenity remains usable.

8.4 Reflecting the green boundaries traditionally used at plot boundaries, new development next to existing plots should provide a landscape buffer to them, made up of ditches and/or hedges, thereby providing an attractive and biodiverse buffer between plots.

8.5 Development on sites with existing drainage ditches on-site, whether functional or not, should allow for the refurbishment or recreation of such ditches, to reinforce and restore the distinctive character of the village and improve the flow of surface water.

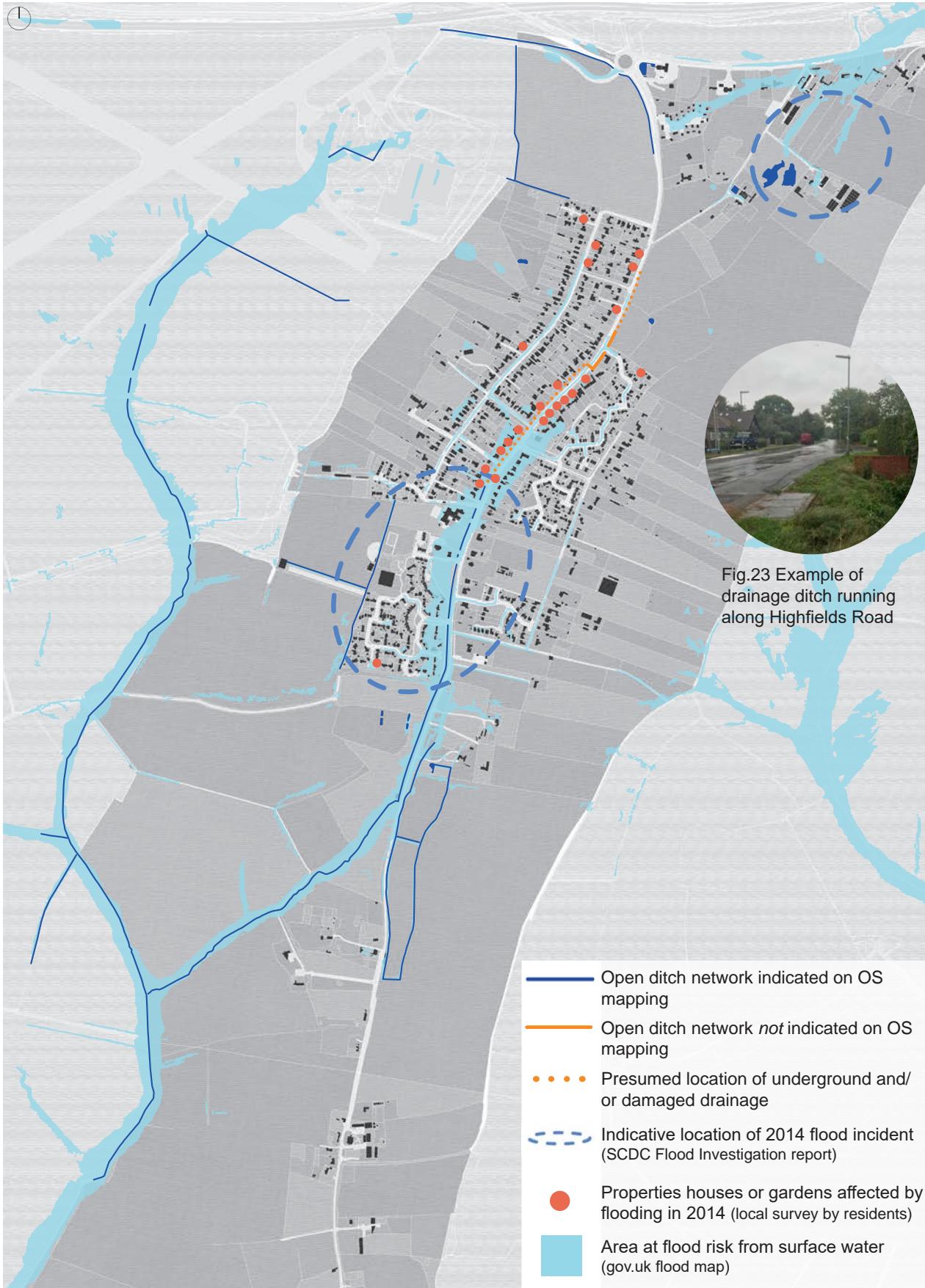


Fig.20 'This represents all the drainage problems of the village. It's a tiny 4" pipe that drains all the surface water from the north of the village. The surface water infrastructure of the village has all been built over. Ditches have been eroded and lost. There were ditches on both sides of the road. Also there's loads of rubbish in there very often.'



Fig.21 Example of an attractive rural SUDS system within a larger new development. The typical Caldecote ditch is deeper than this example and its banks are greener.

Fig.22 Ditch/drainage network and flood risk



## 9. Village edges

For much of its boundary, Caldecote has substantial green buffers between itself and other settlements, thanks in part to the agricultural history of the village. Some of these fields were divided up in the early twentieth century to form the smallholdings of Highfields. As a result the parish boundary is often formed of these smaller plots, and the community is concerned that additional green buffers, to ensure access to countryside & wildlife and to preserve gaps between settlements, are provided, outside these boundaries.

The SCDC Local Plan proposes a new village of approximately 3,500 homes at Bourn Airfield, adjacent to Caldecote. The community feels that development adjacent to the village, such as at Bourn Airfield, should feel distinct from Caldecote so as to preserve the identity of the existing village, however good quality pedestrian and cyclist connections and landscapes between the existing and new settlements are also important, particularly ones that allow good access to public transport.

Many of the public spaces of Caldecote are bordered by high hedgerows but there are also valued opportunities throughout the village to look out at landscape, including from established footpaths and off-road routes. Some of these are indicated on the map adjacent.



Fig.24 'The sports field. At the moment there's a path on one side. It would be nice to do a circular loop, including for dog walkers. Issues of encroachment on the west side here of the Bourn Airfield development.'

9.1 Opportunities should be taken to provide and/or support new pedestrian and cycle connections between the settlements, particularly in relation to existing routes and to enhance the use of and quality of the sports field (see Fig. 26 adjacent).

9.2 To enhance the sports fields, the community would like to see a circular walking/running route around the existing sports field as well as connections to the new village, integrating leisure provision with any new routes.

9.3 The overlap between Caldecote parish and the Bourn Airfield masterplan at the A428 roundabout should be treated as a chance to create a strategic green landscape area between the settlements.

9.4 Pedestrian routes into new adjacent settlements are welcomed but should have a rural character, feeling 'between' the villages. (See Fig. 25)

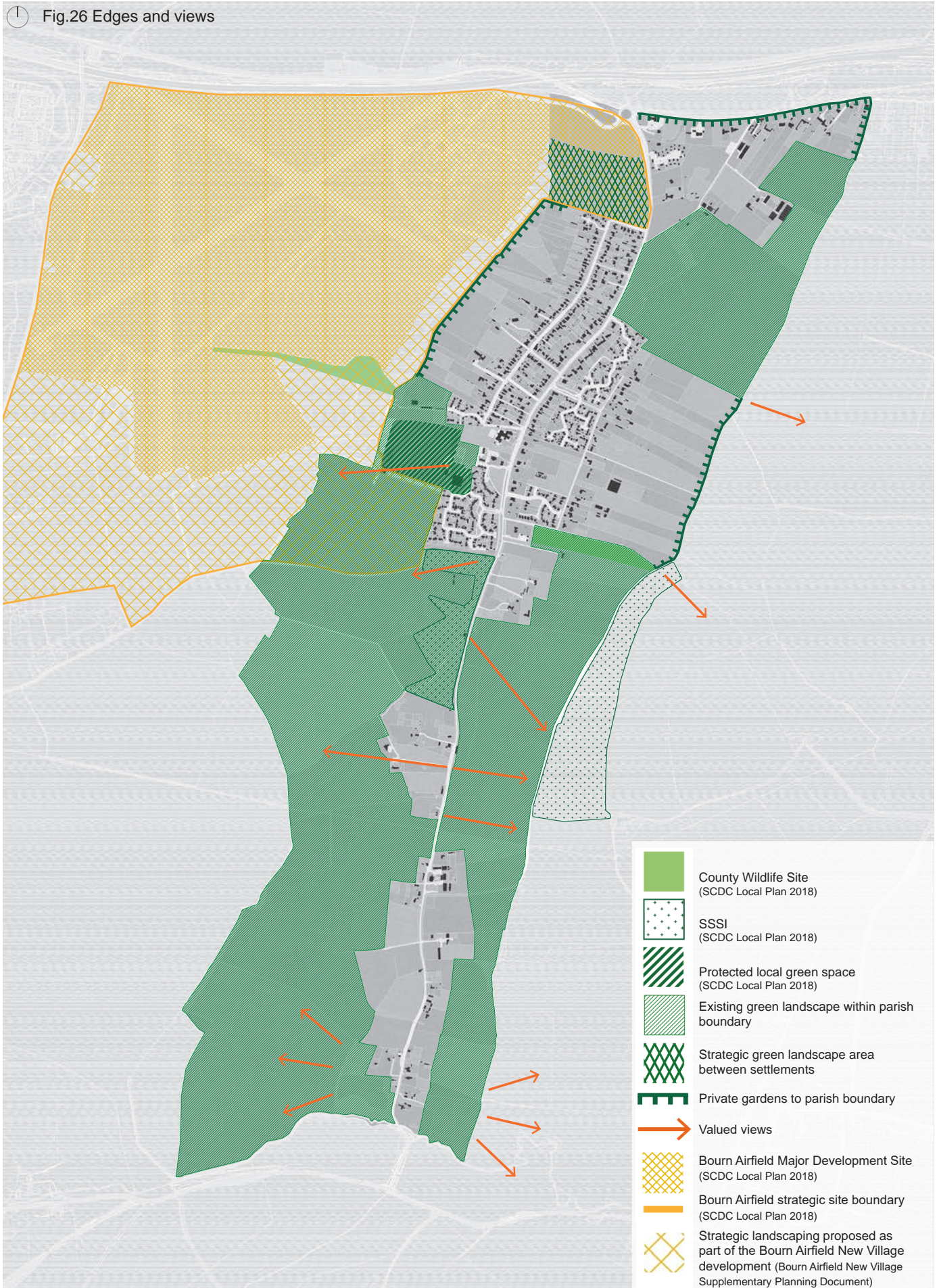
9.5 Any green buffer in locations where private plots abut the parish boundary (see Fig. 26 adjacent) should be an area of woodland or planted landscape in its own right, rather than relying on the rear gardens of Highfields to achieve this landscape separation.

9.6 Valued views, including those set out on Fig. 26, should be preserved.



Fig.25 'One of my favourite things is that you can step out of the village into the countryside.'

Fig.26 Edges and views



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County Wildlife Sites were obtained from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Office (CPERC). As the material shown on this layer does not go through an external consultation process, the data is as was at Draft Local Plan Submission July 2013. The most up to date County Wildlife Site Data can be obtained by contacting CPERC at <https://www.cperc.org.uk>

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SHARED PLANNING

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