

Cambridgeshire Green infrastructure Strategy Appendix 7 Green Infrastructure Gateways

Note: To be revised and clarified.

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This appendix identifies the baseline datasets and relevant policies for Green Infrastructure Gateways, which are important components of Green Infrastructure in Cambridgeshire. These are drawn together to identify the general and spatial issues that relate to this Theme. Conclusions are then made about how the issues can be mapped and overlaid to highlight the opportunities that exist for the Green Infrastructure Gateways Theme.

This map of Green Infrastructure Gateways opportunities was combined with the other six Themes, as well as other important issues and assets in Cambridgeshire, to inform and develop the Strategic Network of Green Infrastructure.

1 Definition¹

Green Infrastructure Gateway sites are areas that introduce people to the countryside through accessible, safe and functional landscape resources and encourage the use of other resources through links with circular routes, trails and public rights of way (PRoW).

Gateway sites should be located in transitional locations (e.g. the urban-fringe or rural locations between centres of population) where they can act as stepping stones connecting people with more rural landscapes or open countryside. Gateways should provide amenities to encourage use, and information about each site should be made available as widely as possible through on-site provision and other media.

Gateways therefore:

- Offer balance between recreational need, nature conservation and access to the countryside
- Develop or further the concept of a 'connected landscape'
- Provide appropriate locations for outdoor activity that facilitate easy movement between urban and rural areas
- Enable people to move between rural locations by means of publicly accessible routes
- Enable the establishment and creation of 'outward' looking spaces that facilitate the use of the countryside by people who live in urban areas¹
- Promote, protect and where appropriate enhance the historic environment to attract visitors and long-term funding
- Can be seen as entrances to a wider landscape
- Facilitate community involvement in the development and objectives of spaces to encourage a longer-term use of the landscape

¹ The Countryside Agency however notes in the Countryside in and Around Towns documentation that gateways can be either a) a bridge to the countryside or b) a gateway to the town. Also, in terms of master planning gateway appears to be used predominately as a moniker to encapsulate moving inward and towards a location. Thus, gateways appear to act as entrances to a specific location (e.g. discussions of gateways in Soham masterplan). Consequently, there is a need to be very careful with the wording and definition of a gateway to avoid confusion.

Main functions of gateways

'Gateway' sites have a number of complementary functions, many of which are discussed frequently in Green Infrastructure research. Gateway sites can:

- Facilitate use of the landscape for leisure, recreation and health
- Provide easier access to existing sites of interest
- Provide high quality amenities that meet the needs of local populations (access, connectivity and facilities)
- Promote, protect and where possible enhance the value of ecological, historic and social resources and locations
- Develop a stepping stone landscape or landscape mosaic that provides a tiered network of sites for users (urban parks, gateway sites, landscape scale sites)
- Provide an integrated approach to urban – urban-fringe – rural GI or open spaces site development that values these resources in each location
- Enable rural-to-rural access to resources via gateway sites
- Promote economic investment by encouraging more outdoor lifestyles and activities (investment into local services and amenities – shops, transport, leisure facilities)
- Encourage a greater use of the landscape to facilitate better health (extensive economic benefits of such a process to the NHS in terms of lowering costs of primary and tertiary health care)

Thames Gateway:

The Thames Gateway is a sub-regional example where 'gateways' have been used to facilitate a larger landscape scale programme of capital infrastructure development. Working within the proposed Green Grid for the South-East and estuary area, Communities and Local Government and the London Development Agency identified five themes that gateways should be developed alongside:

These five transformational themes are; a) Thames Gateway (TG) waterfront, b) TG heritage, c) TG corridors, d) TG squares and e) TG landscapes

North-East of England:

The North-East Community Forests identifies countryside gateway sites in and around Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland, County Durham, Darlington-Stockton-Hartlepool and Teeside. The 37 sites identified as part of the project are located in close proximity to an urban area and provide key links between urban and rural areas.

The North-East Community Forests Partnership (NECF) has facilitated urban-fringe and brown field redevelopment with a view of increasing the ecological and social value of these areas. Examples of such sites include: the Rising Sun Country Park, Herrington Country Park and Wynyard Woodland Park.

The promotion of gateway sites focuses predominately on introducing people to an accessible, safe and functional landscape that then encourages them to further explore the countryside using PRoW and other accessible routes.

Figure 7.1 Examples of 'Gateways' in use

Gateway examples from Cambridgeshire

Anglesey Abbey

Anglesey Abbey is an example of a gateway site between Cambridge and Wicken Fen. It provides a connective route between the City and the countryside. Anglesey Abbey also provides recreational and environmental assets that attract people to it and it is accessible by public transport or bicycle. It can, however, also be accessed by car. It facilitates additional movement to the wider countryside by foot, horse or bicycle due to the Public Rights of Way and cycle path network of the area.

Northstowe

At a larger scale Northstowe could be viewed as a future gateway site. Northstowe is located between Cambridge and the Ouse Valley and could aid the movement of people from Cambridge, the northwest urban expansions and from Northstowe itself into the wider countryside/Ouse Valley. Northstowe could therefore act as a hub linking with the wider countryside through Public Rights of Way, the Guided Busway and cycleways and through the Green Infrastructure provision within the new settlement.

The Fens

Smaller locations within the Fens could act as more localised gateways that provide access to a series of walks or activities such as nature reserves or long distance trails. These smaller sites could provide the essential access links between larger and more popular sites and aid the creation of a wider network of gateways.

Scale of Gateway Developments

Further work is needed regarding the most appropriate scale for Gateway development sites in Cambridgeshire. Work in the North-East has proposed that smaller scale sites may promote better movement and use of the wider countryside because of the position of a site and its values for a given community. However, larger projects at a sub-regional scale (i.e. Thames Gateway / green grid) may be able to engage a larger (wider) population and encourage a greater engagement with the landscape.

The function of gateway sites, however, depends on the needs of the local population, the available resources on a site (and those which can be developed) and funding. Each site should therefore be appropriate to the location and there should be no restrictive criteria for identifying or developing a gateway site other than land availability, funding and meeting the needs of the local area. Consequently, a discussion should be made as to how 'local' a gateway site should be. This follows on from the requirement to meet local needs and provide appropriate resources to act as gateway sites. Gateway sites can also be classified as single sites or a string of smaller sites linked by an accessible corridor (riparian, disused railway or other), footpath or other recreational route

2 What this information tells us

Gateways can be seen to strengthen the development of a strategic Green Infrastructure network by providing locations that link strategic projects with areas of need and opportunity. Gateways can radiate from urban locations and increase the capacity for urban greenspaces to cope with an increased use or need for outdoor recreation associated with development. Gateways also provide key infrastructure to fill the gaps in a given network and join up Green Infrastructure resources at a strategic scale.

Gateways are determined by the location of green infrastructure destinations and existing Rights of Way and the distribution of the population across Cambridgeshire. Gateways should, therefore:

- Be accessible by sustainable modes of transport
- Be located in close proximity to population centres to discourage car travel.
- Demonstrate amenity value – e.g. activities for people to do.
- Offer connectivity – connect people to their intended destinations though signposting and provision of information.

Cultural Heritage Designations: Listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and known archaeological assets can have a role in providing specific Green Infrastructure Gateways or setting the wider context for Gateways in rural and urban locations. In particular publicly accessible registered parks and gardens have a significant role to play in providing Gateways. Figure 7.2 shows cultural heritage designations in Cambridgeshire.

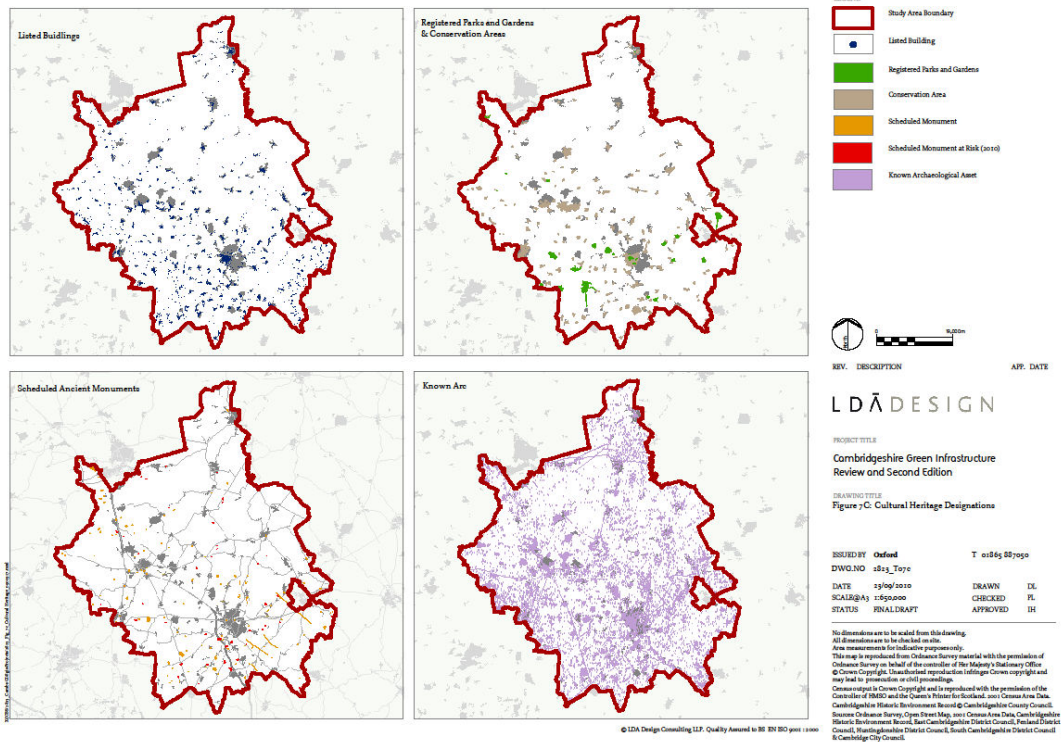


Figure 7.2 Cultural heritage designations in Cambridgeshire.

Principle River Channels and Navigations: Figure 7.3 shows the principal river channels in Cambridgeshire. Rivers and navigations have an important tourism and economic function. The large Cambridgeshire waterways network supports a substantial boating industry, with a range of boat charter businesses. The Nene provides a link into the British Waterways network at Northampton. They provide connections between settlements, the wider countryside and other destinations – both along the waterways themselves and also along adjacent rights of way, cycleways or other access routes. Waterways within settlements can be an attraction for other types of visitor, not just those using the rivers and navigations.

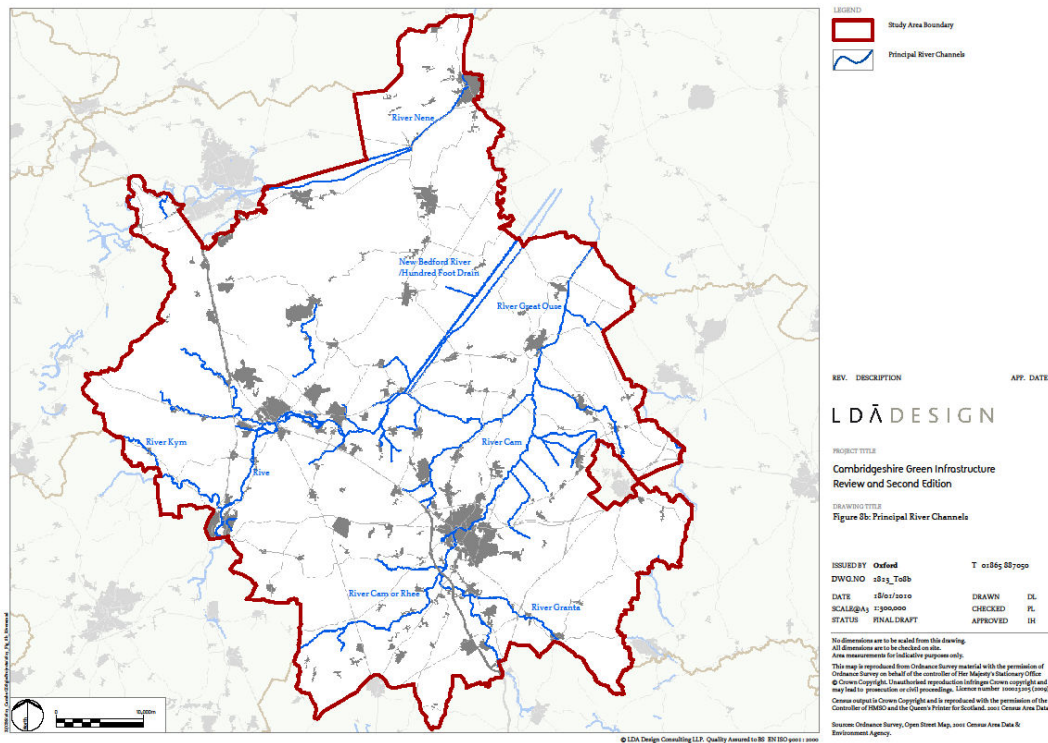


Figure 7.3 Principle river channels in Cambridgeshire

Rights of Way, Cycling Routes and Navigations: Figure 7.4 shows rights of way, cycling routes and navigations in Cambridgeshire. Long distance promoted routes (such as the Fen Rivers Way or the Ouse Valley Way) and National Cycle Network Routes can provide tourism and economic benefits as well as providing a strategic network for movement around the county. The Trans European route E2 follows the line of the Hereward Way, Fen Rivers Way and the Roman Road Link through Cambridgeshire.

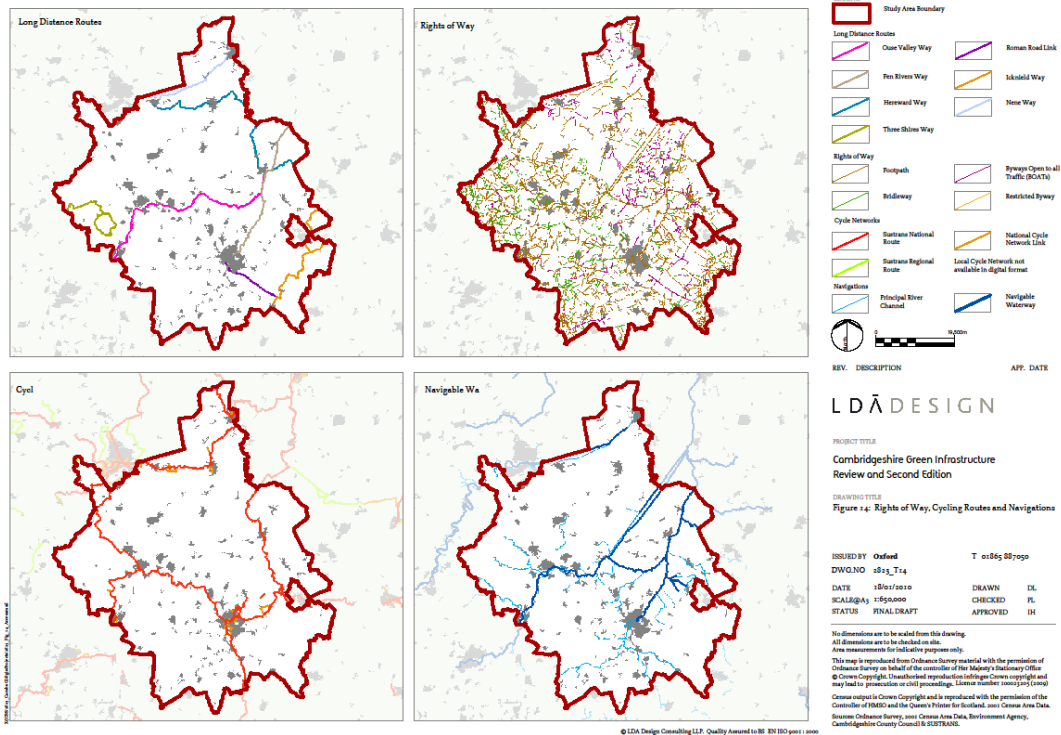


Figure 7.4 Rights of way, cycling routes and navigations

Countryside Access: Figure 7.5 shows Countryside access in Cambridgeshire. There is a variety of sites across the county that are publicly accessible. These include over twenty Woodland Trust reserves and several National Nature Reserves in Cambridgeshire. Many Wildlife Trust reserves are also open to the public. In addition there are several Country Parks including Milton and Hinchingsbrooke. The National Trust owns land at Wimpole, Anglesey Abbey, and Wicken Fen and Anglian Water offers Grafham Water. The RSPB runs reserves at Fowlmere, Fen Drayton Lakes and the Ouse Washes, where the Wildfowl Trust also operates. Wandlebury Country Park and Coton Countryside Reserve are run by Cambridge Past, Present and Future. In addition there are a range of County Farms access sites and countryside access is also provided by Environmental Stewardship schemes. Many of these are tourist attractions and/or are well used by local people.

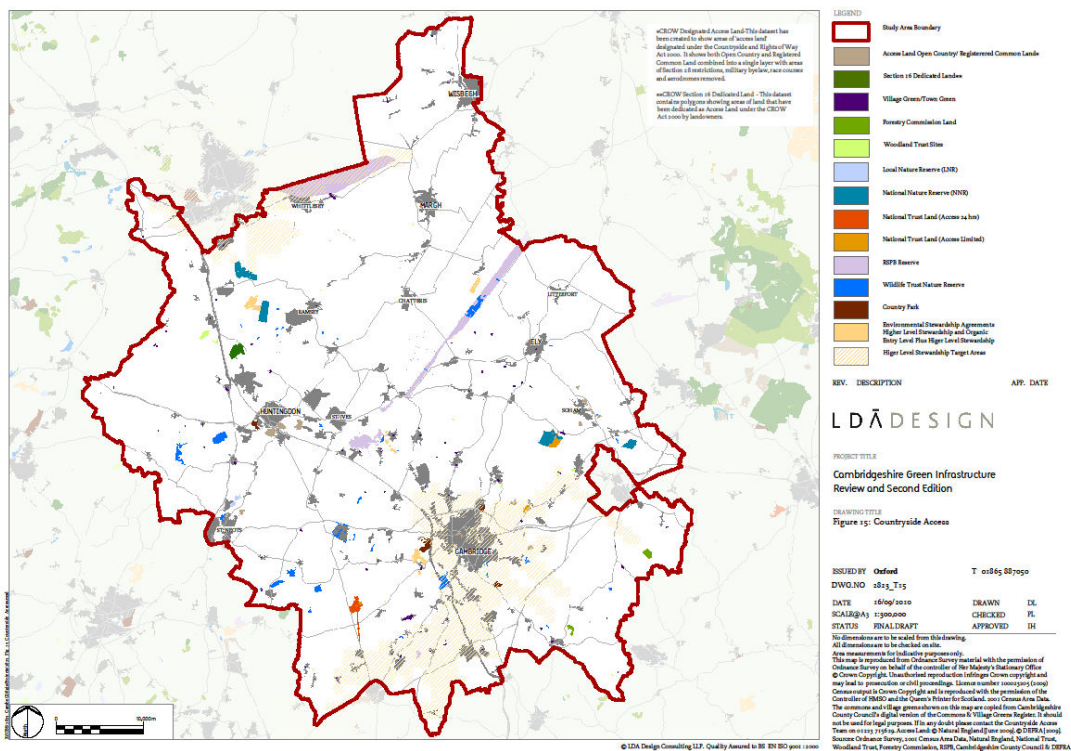


Figure 7.5 Countryside access in Cambridgeshire

Destinations: Over 100 strategic destinations were identified within Cambridgeshire, including commons, country parks, parks or gardens, museums, historic sites or features, wildlife centres, nature reserves and activity centres. Figure 7.6 shows these destinations. Key destinations are principally located in the south of the county, in and around the city of Cambridge. In the north of the county, destinations are less frequent, and consist mainly of historic sites or features and nature reserves; there are no county parks and very few strategic parks and gardens. As with the south of the county, destinations are principally located within or near to urban areas,

although there are a number of destinations, namely nature reserves that are more isolated and potentially less accessible.

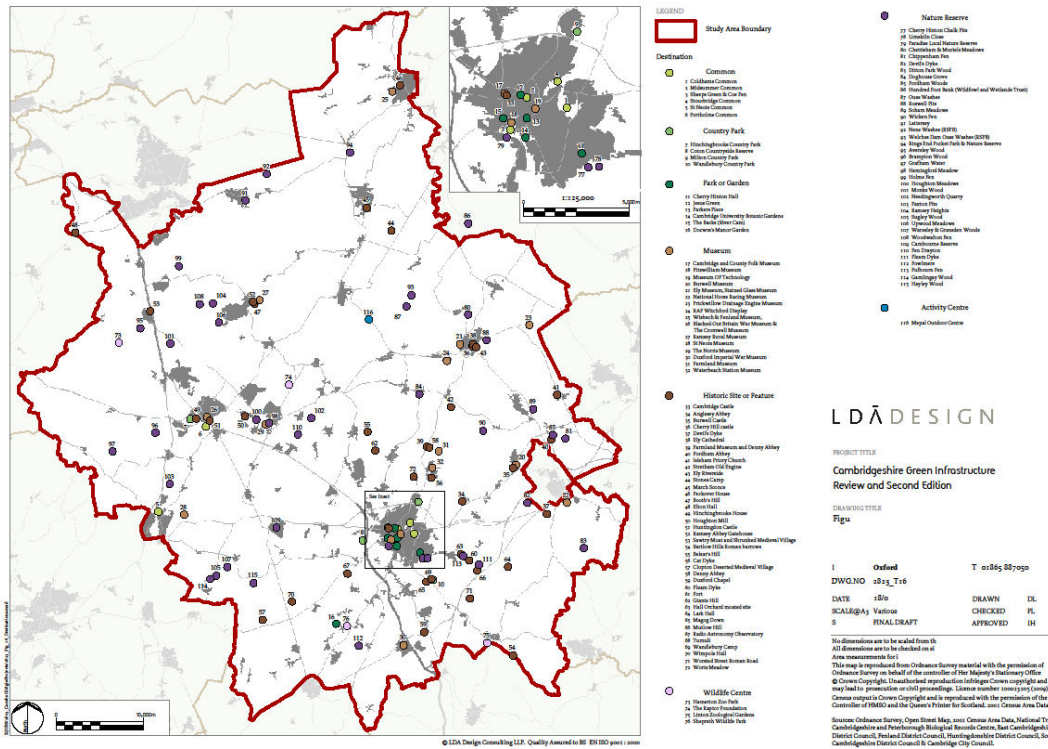


Figure 7.6 Green Infrastructure Destinations in Cambridgeshire.

Major Development: Major developments provide an opportunity to identify those areas of growth that may form new Green Infrastructure Gateways or that will enhance or develop existing Gateways. The diversity and rich urban fabric is a particularly positive feature of a large number of the county's principle towns and in particular in the historic core of settlements where a concentration of older properties can often be found. Also valued are urban green spaces, whether these constitute formal areas for sport and recreation, cemeteries, allotments or 'captured' countryside within the urban envelope, perhaps in the form of riverside flood meadows. Figure 7.7 shows the major housing and growth locations in Cambridgeshire.

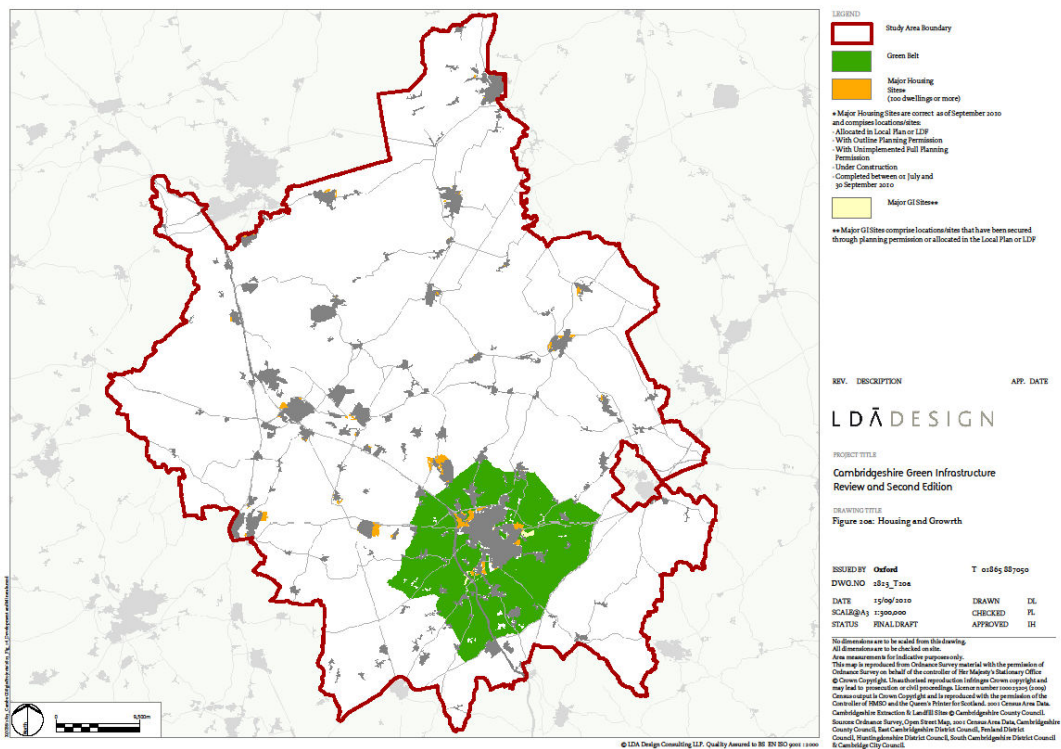


Figure 7.7 Major housing and growth locations in Cambridgeshire

Note: clearer map to be provided, particularly in respect of showing the proposed major developments and major Green Infrastructure

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure assets: Mapping all existing strategic Green Infrastructure sites and assets (including Public Rights of Way) can provide a context for the identification of Green Infrastructure Gateways and show how such Gateways link into the wider and more local network of Green Infrastructure. Figure 7.8 shows existing Strategic Green Infrastructure assets. (Note: This section will be checked to confirm whether all Green Infrastructure assets are included.)

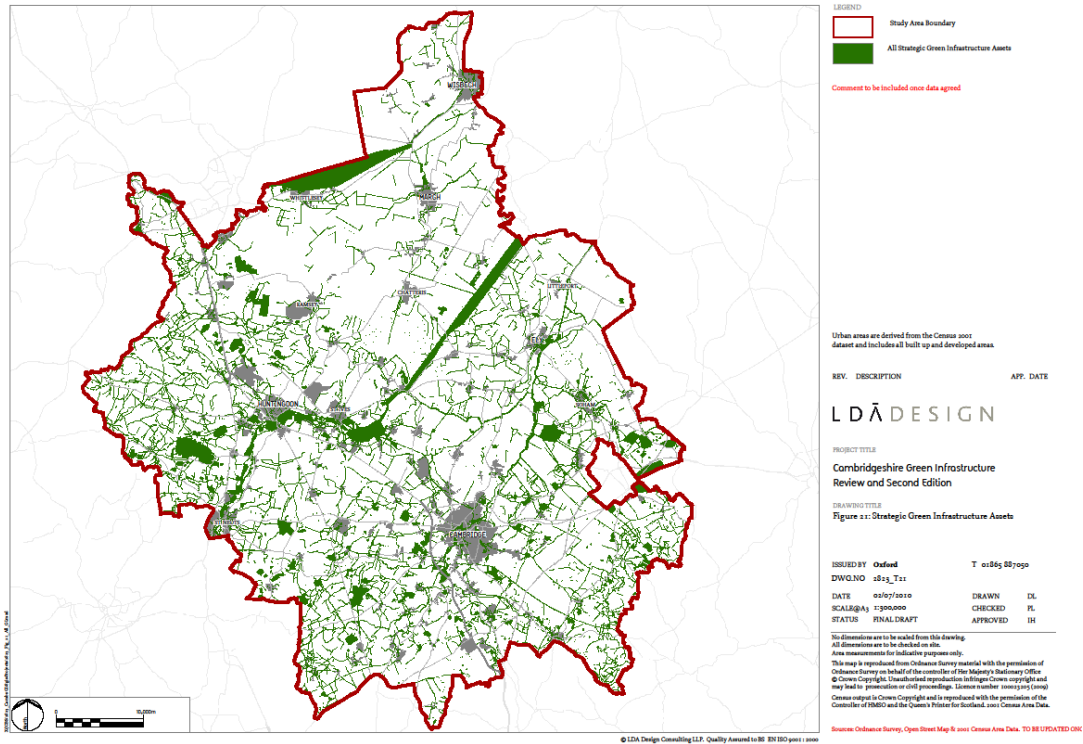


Figure 7.8 Strategic Green Infrastructure assets

The Gateways theme was developed by analysing key baseline datasets that related to Green Infrastructure gateways:

Existing Green Infrastructure Gateways according to the definition used in the Strategy.

Main urban centres located close to accessible nature conservation sites and countryside destinations.

Figures 7.9 and 7.10 show the outcome of this 'opportunity' analysis.

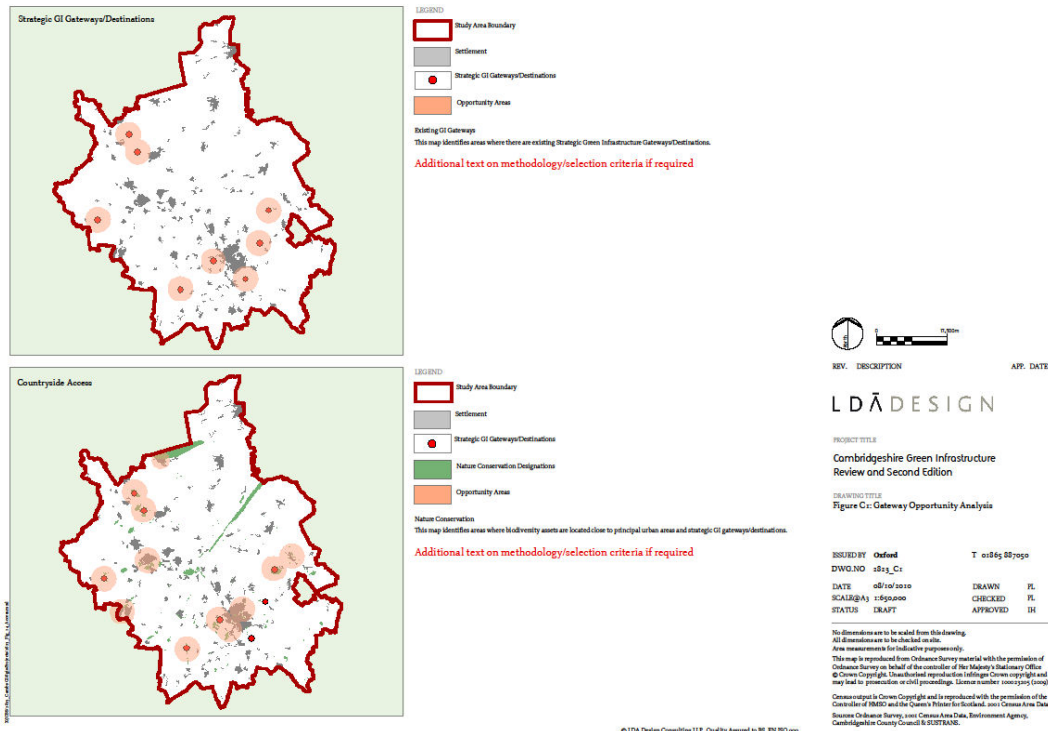


Figure 7.9 Gateway opportunity analysis

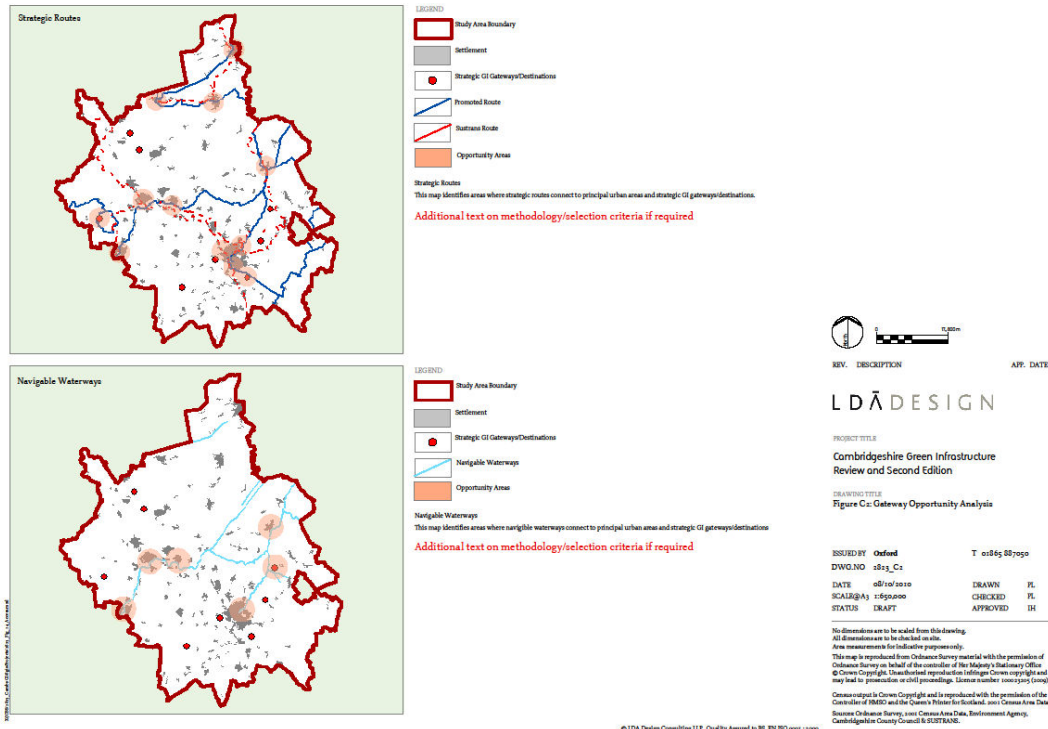


Figure 7.10 Gateway opportunity analysis

In addition, areas where strategic promoted Rights of Way routes, National Cycle Network and navigable waterways connect to principle urban areas or existing gateways were mapped. This analysis is shown in Figure 7.11.

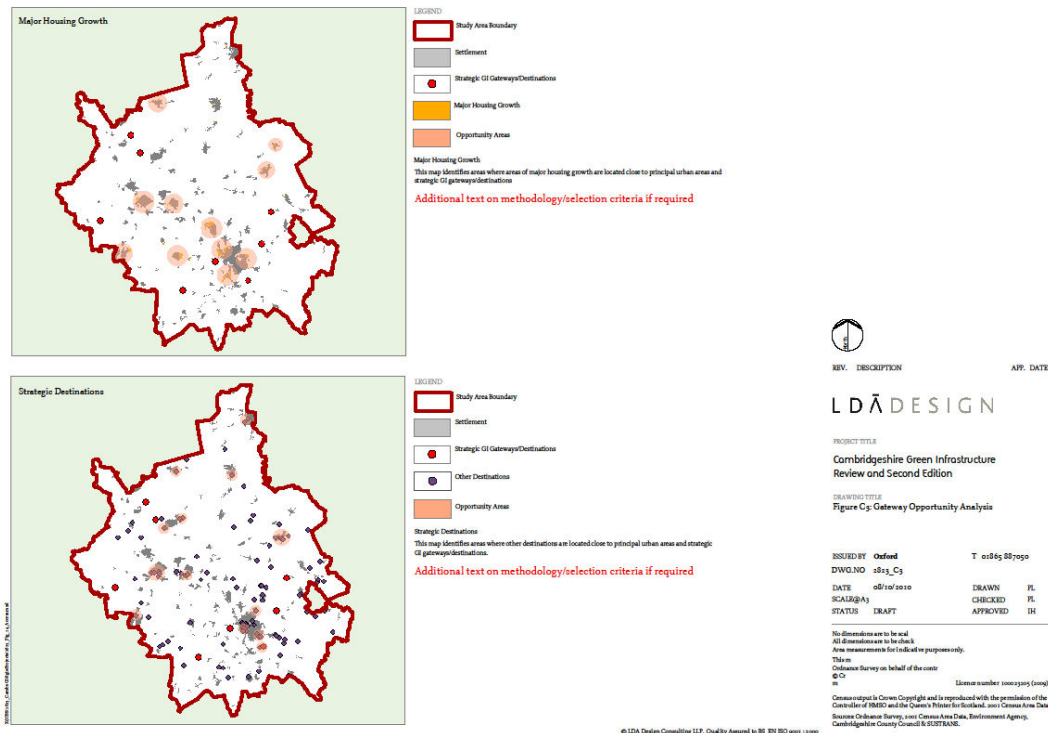


Figure 7.11 Gateway opportunity analysis

Areas of major housing growth including new settlements and those located close to main urban centres were then considered, alongside clusters of strategic destinations (such as heritage sites, cultural sites or nature conservation destinations) located close to main urban centres. In bringing these together on a single map, areas of concentration could be identified – the darker the highlighted area the more opportunity there is for Green Infrastructure Gateways to support Green Infrastructure. Figure 7.12 shows the outcome of this combined Gateway opportunity analysis.

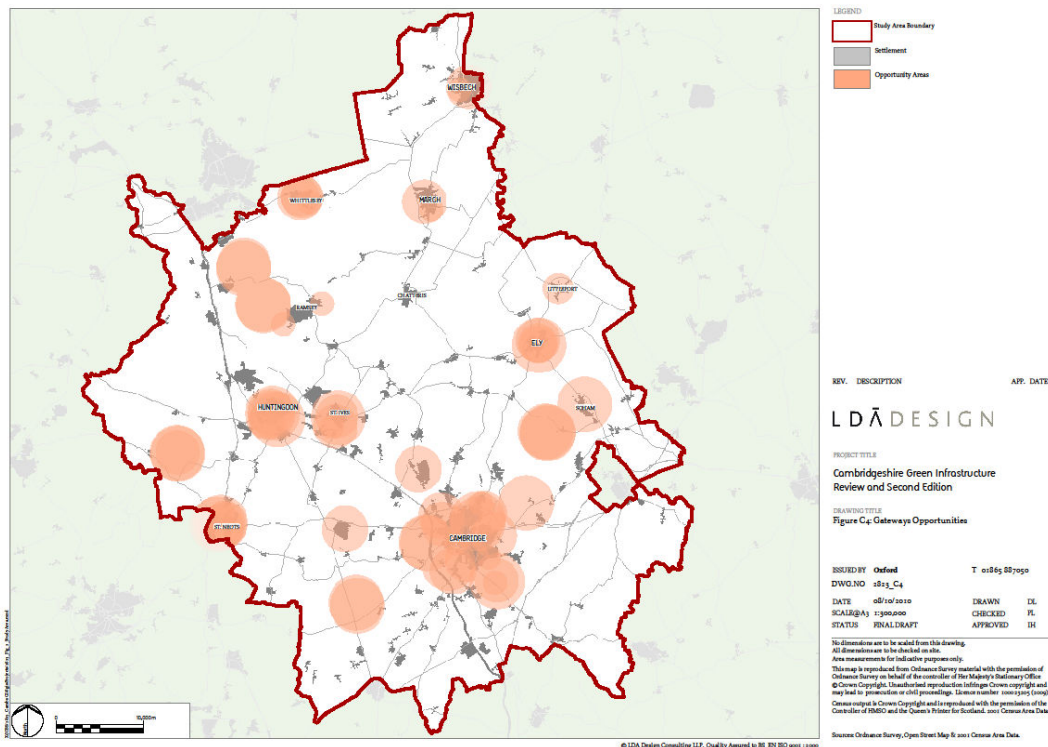


Figure 7.12 Combined Gateway opportunities

3 Issues and Opportunities

The key issues for Green Infrastructure Gateways relate to the variety of functions and purposes that Gateways can provide, and access to sustainable funding and land for gateway sites.

Green Infrastructure Gateways offer numerous opportunities to enhance and support existing Green Infrastructure and open up new Green Infrastructure resources in Cambridgeshire. Gateways introduce people to the countryside through publicly accessible routes, safe parks and visitor attractions and act as urban-to-rural and rural-to-rural stepping stones to other Green Infrastructure such as circular routes, trails and public rights of way.

Gateways also promote economic growth and investment and tourism. By encouraging outdoor lifestyles and activities, local services and amenities such as shops, cafes, transport and leisure facilities may be developed to support visitor needs.

Gateways can impact positively on the health and wellbeing in Cambridgeshire, which can have positive economic benefits. By facilitating people's access to green spaces, Gateways encourage outdoor activity which is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. A healthy population is economically beneficial as it lowers the costs of primary and tertiary health care.

Long-term funding for Green Infrastructure may be encouraged by Gateways, as visitor numbers rise and landscapes and Green Infrastructure resources are enhanced to meet demand. Similarly, Gateways can promote, protect and enhance Cambridgeshire's historic environments.

By enhancing access to Green Infrastructure resources, Gateways facilitate greater community involvement in their development. This can help to encourage a sense of community ownership and longer-term use of the landscape. Community involvement can also help to attract funding for Green Infrastructure projects.

New developments in Cambridgeshire offer further opportunities for the delivery of Gateways and Green Infrastructure. Whilst limited land availability, high land values and uncertain access to funding constrain the development of new Gateways and Green Infrastructure destinations, the planned new developments offer opportunities to provide land for new Gateway sites and Green Infrastructure resources.

ⁱ **Reference documents**

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