

# Thriplow & Heathfield

Neighbourhood Masterplan

August 2022

## Quality information

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## Revision History

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1	220317	Review completed draft	James Dee	Principal Landscape Architect
0	220312	Research, site visit, drawings	Bob Marshall	Graduate Landscape Architect

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# 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.

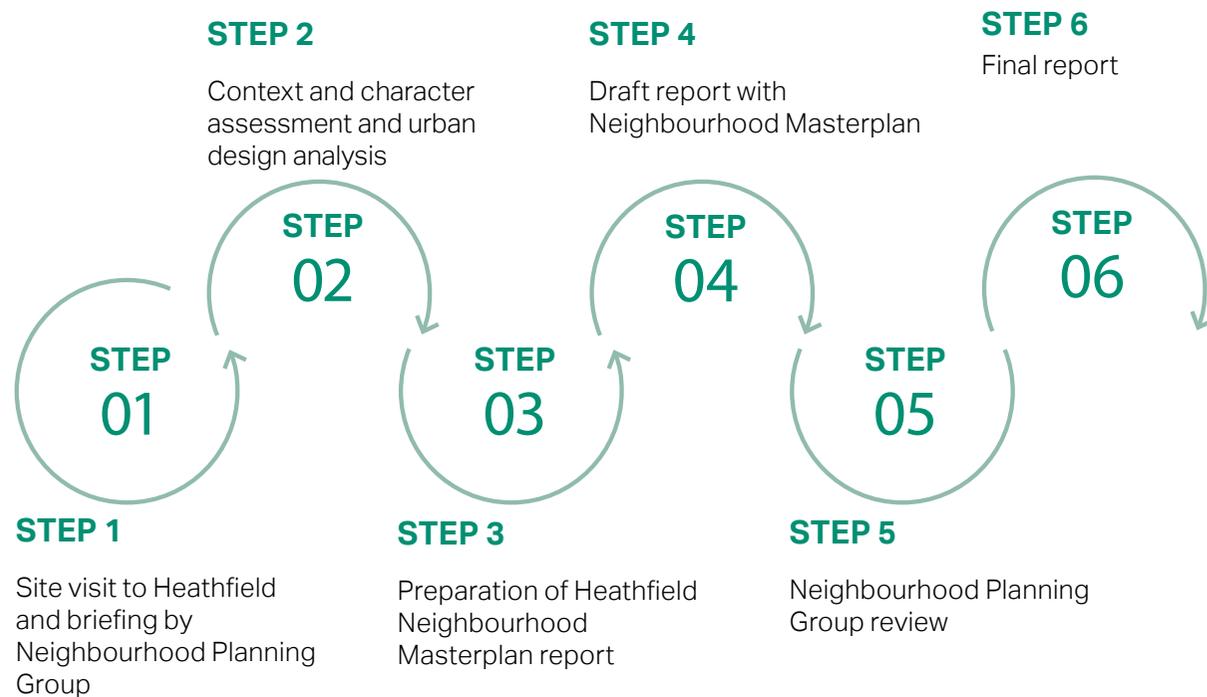
## 1.1 Objectives

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.

#### 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.



Figure 01: Greater Cambridge Local Plan topic papers

### 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)**

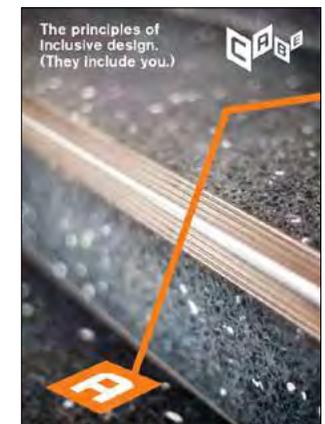
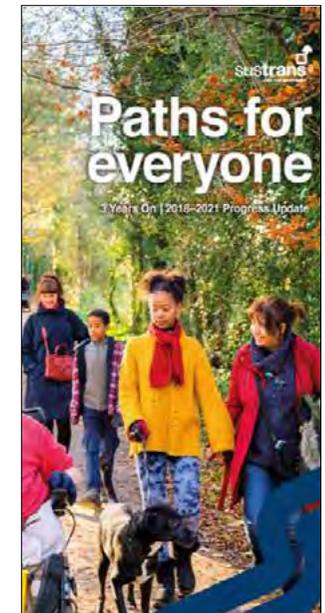
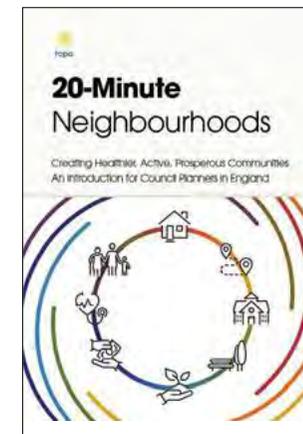
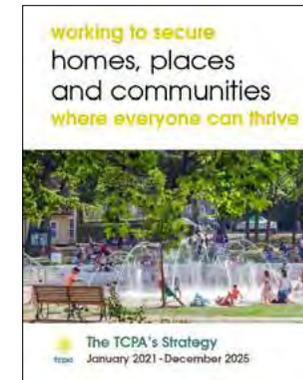
This report discusses best practice for parking allocation as well as considering why historic approaches are not fit for purpose. Strategies should be considered to retrofit Heathfield areas as opportunity arises.

#### **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.





F.2

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 | <b>29*</b> |
| 2. Community spirit                    | <b>19*</b> |
| 3. Good location for transport links   | <b>10*</b> |
| 4. Safety                              | <b>5*</b>  |
| 5. Affordable                          | <b>3*</b>  |

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

### Q3 Three most important improvements to Heathfield:

- |                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| 1. Amenities                | <b>39*</b> |
| 2. Car parking issues       | <b>30*</b> |
| 3. Emergency vehicle access | <b>24*</b> |
| 4. Front entrance           | <b>20*</b> |

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| 5. A505 environment, footpaths, verges, maintenance | <b>16*</b> |
| 6. Design and management of open space              | <b>14*</b> |
| 7. Adopting road systems                            | <b>11*</b> |
| 8. Verge maintenance (within Heathfield)            | <b>9*</b>  |
| 9. Changing road systems                            | <b>7*</b>  |
| 10. Industrial unit environmental issues            | <b>5*</b>  |
| 11. Speeding traffic                                | <b>2*</b>  |

\* number of residents

## 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.

F.3

## HEATHFIELD ENHANCEMENT

### Heathfield

The site

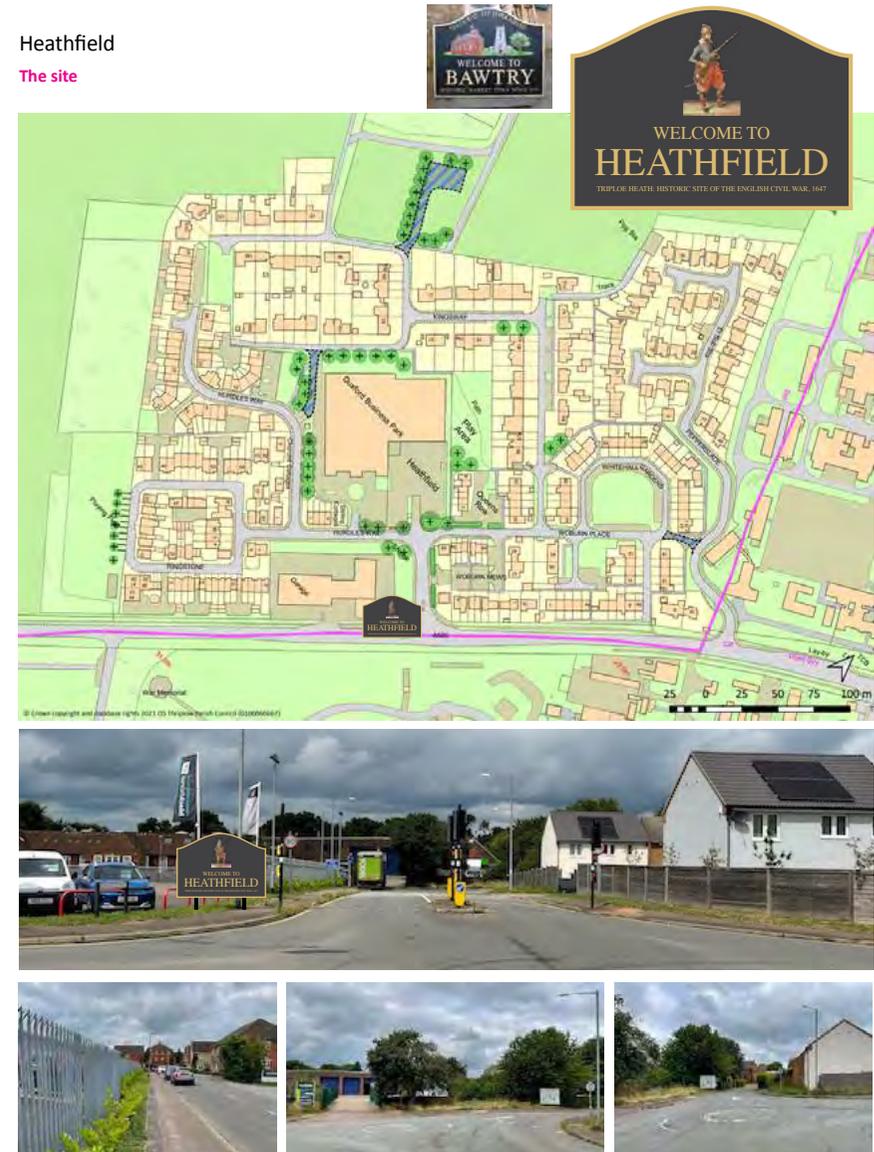


Figure 03: Extract from Community Parish Consultation Update Nov 2021

A photograph of a rural landscape with tall grasses and trees, overlaid with a teal circle containing text. The scene is captured in autumn, with trees showing some yellow and orange foliage. In the foreground, there are two large, grey, rectangular concrete structures, possibly utility boxes or manholes, partially obscured by the grass and the teal circle. The sky is a pale, overcast blue.

**Neighbourhood Area  
Context**

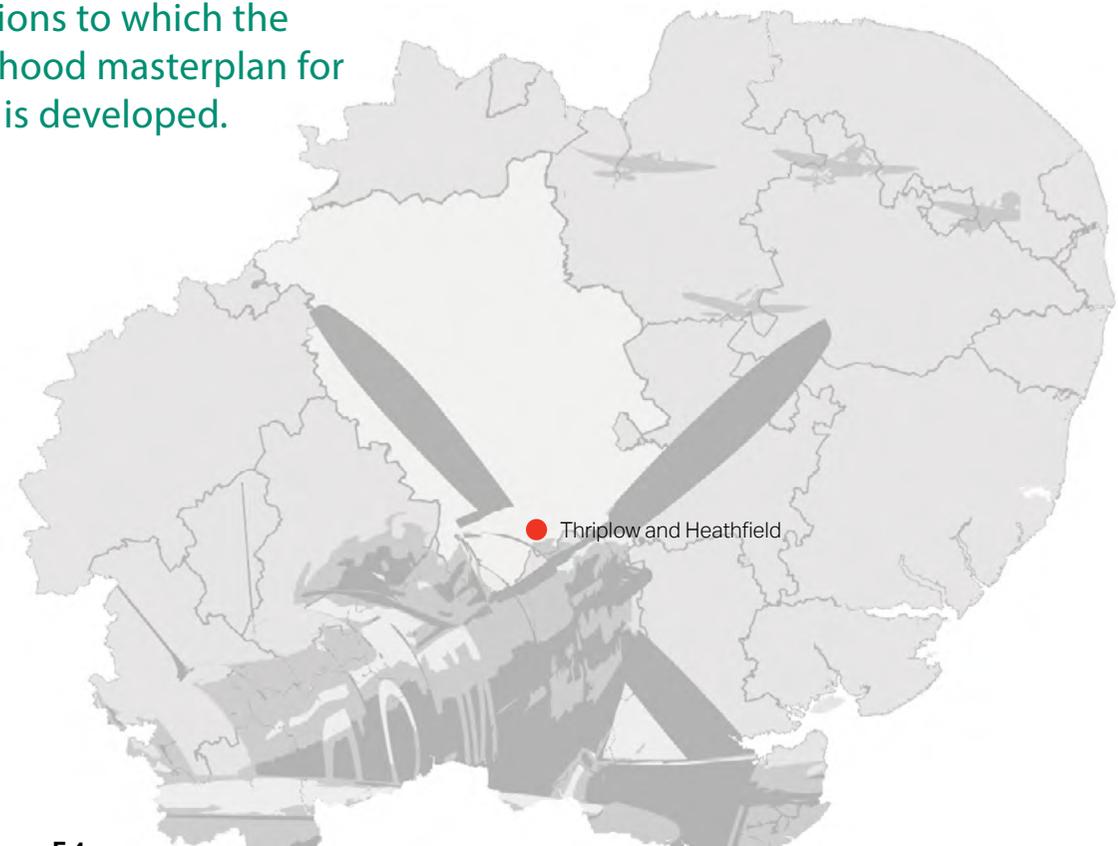
**02**

## 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.

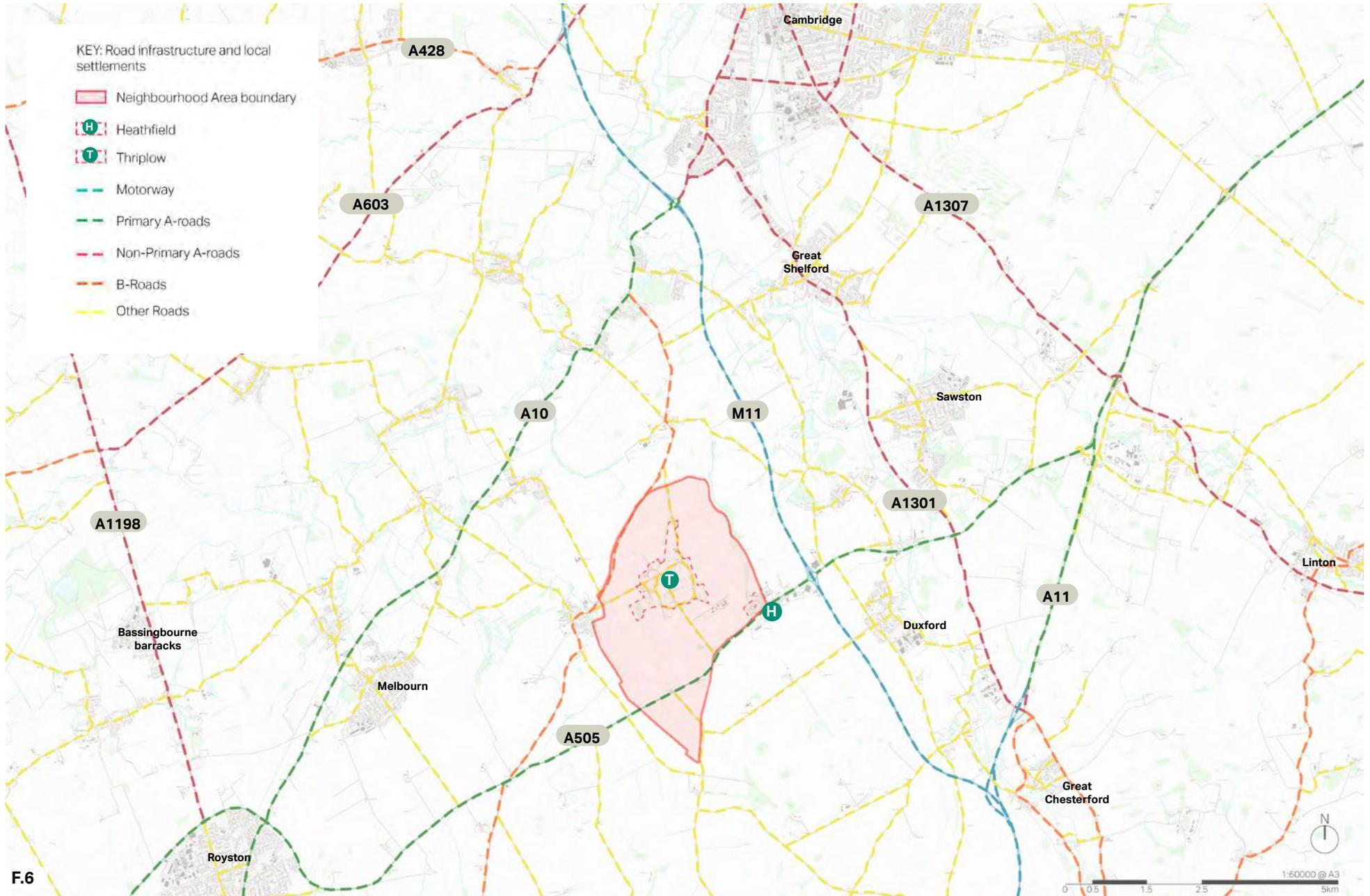
Heathfield commands a prime location, approximately 12 km from the centre of Cambridge, and within easy access to the neighbouring counties of Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Suffolk. The immediate connectivity to the A505 provides good transport to major arterial roads such as the M11, A1(M),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



F.5

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



F.6

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.

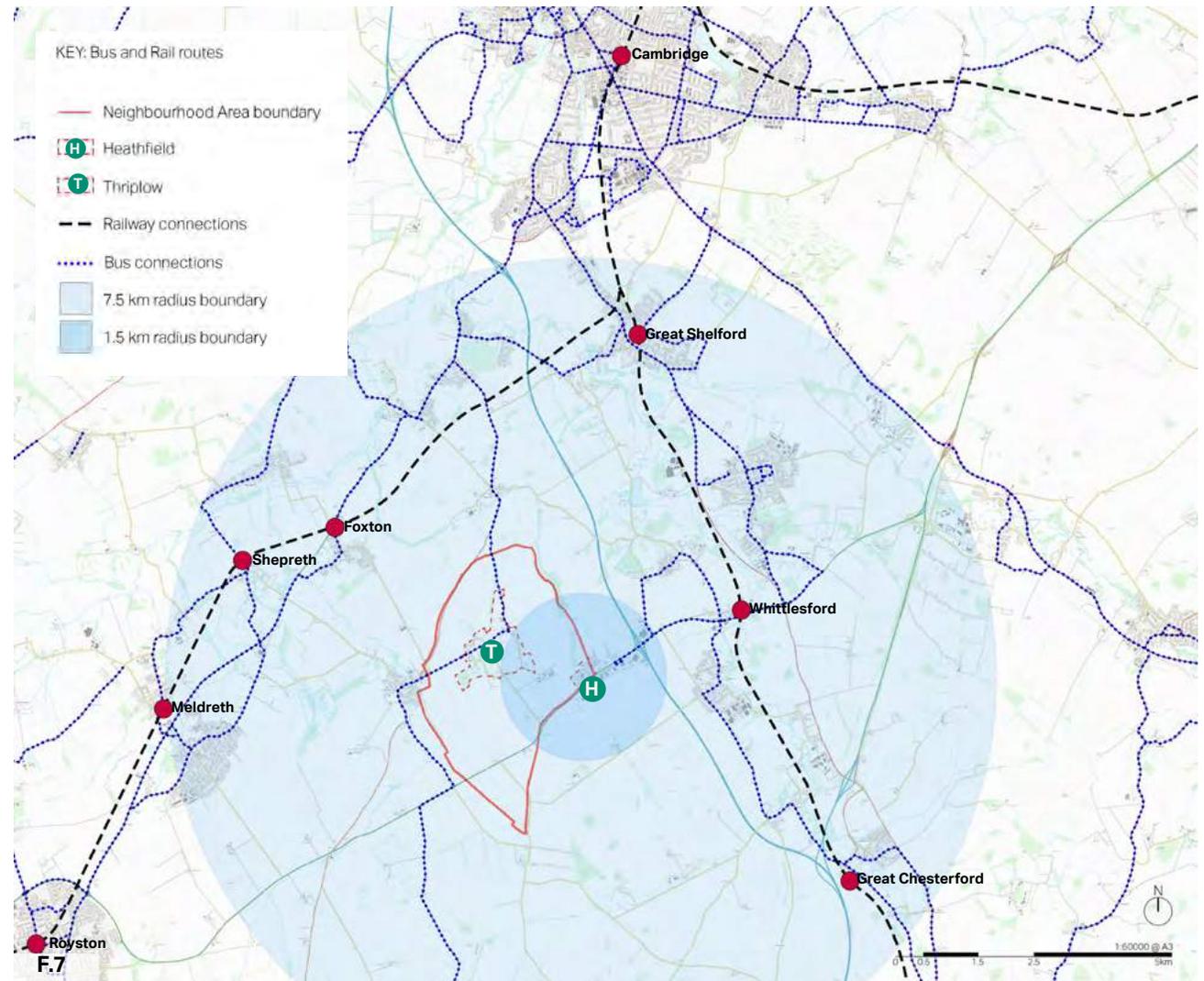


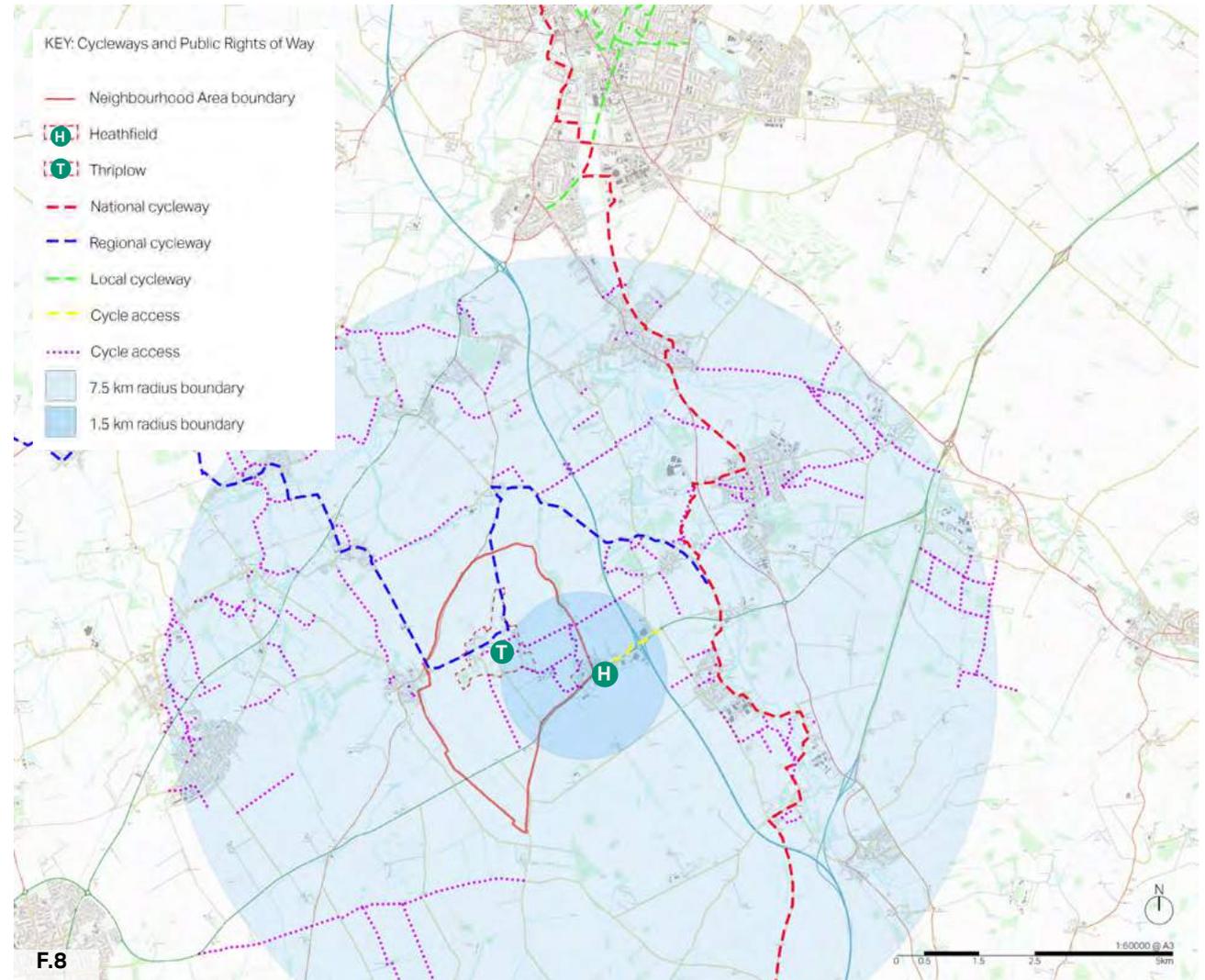
Figure 07: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - rail and bus connections.

## 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.



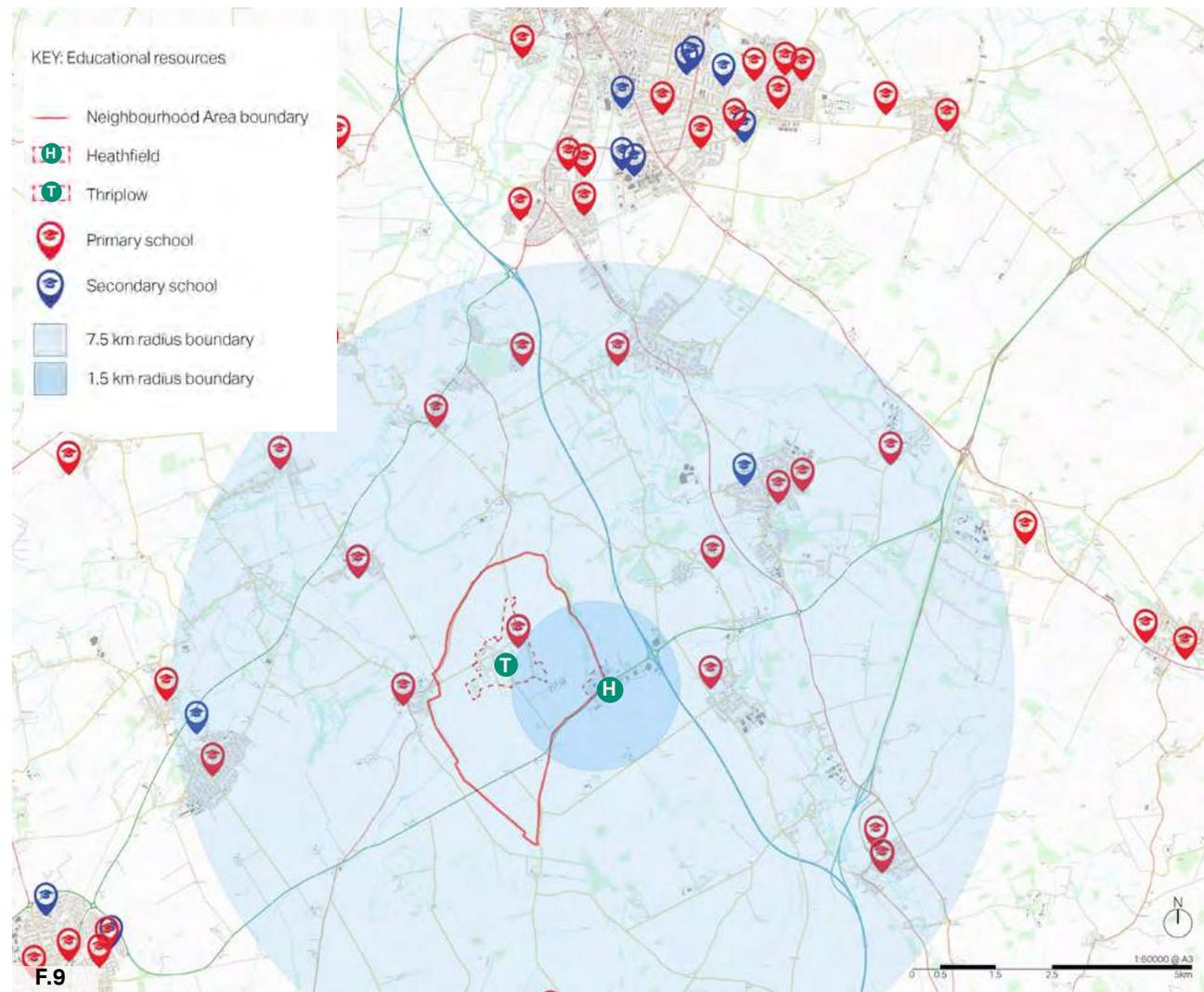
**Figure 08:** Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - pedestrian and cyclist connections.

## 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.

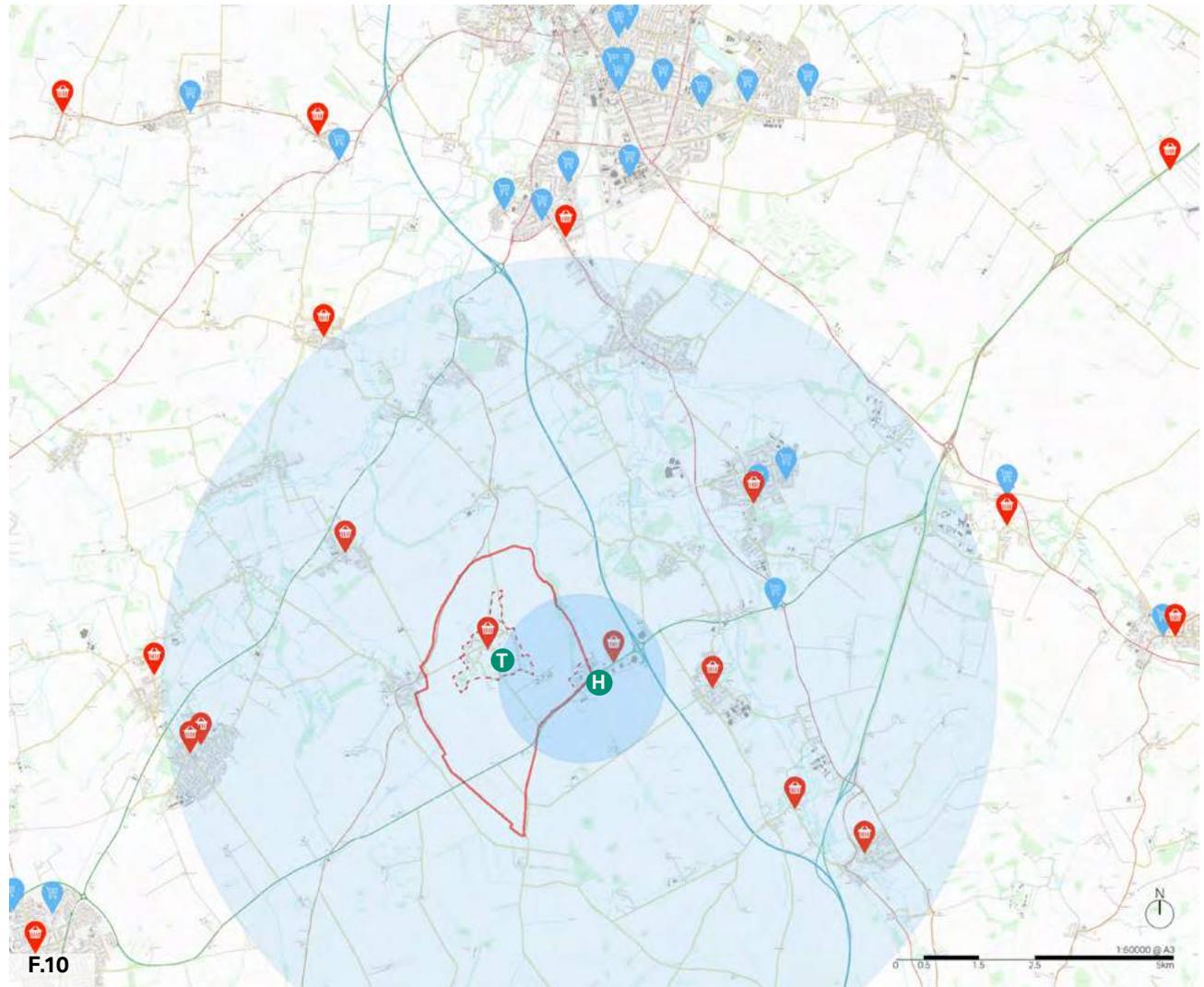
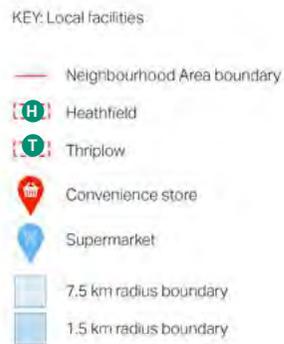


**Figure 09:** Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - educational resources.

## 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.



F.10

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



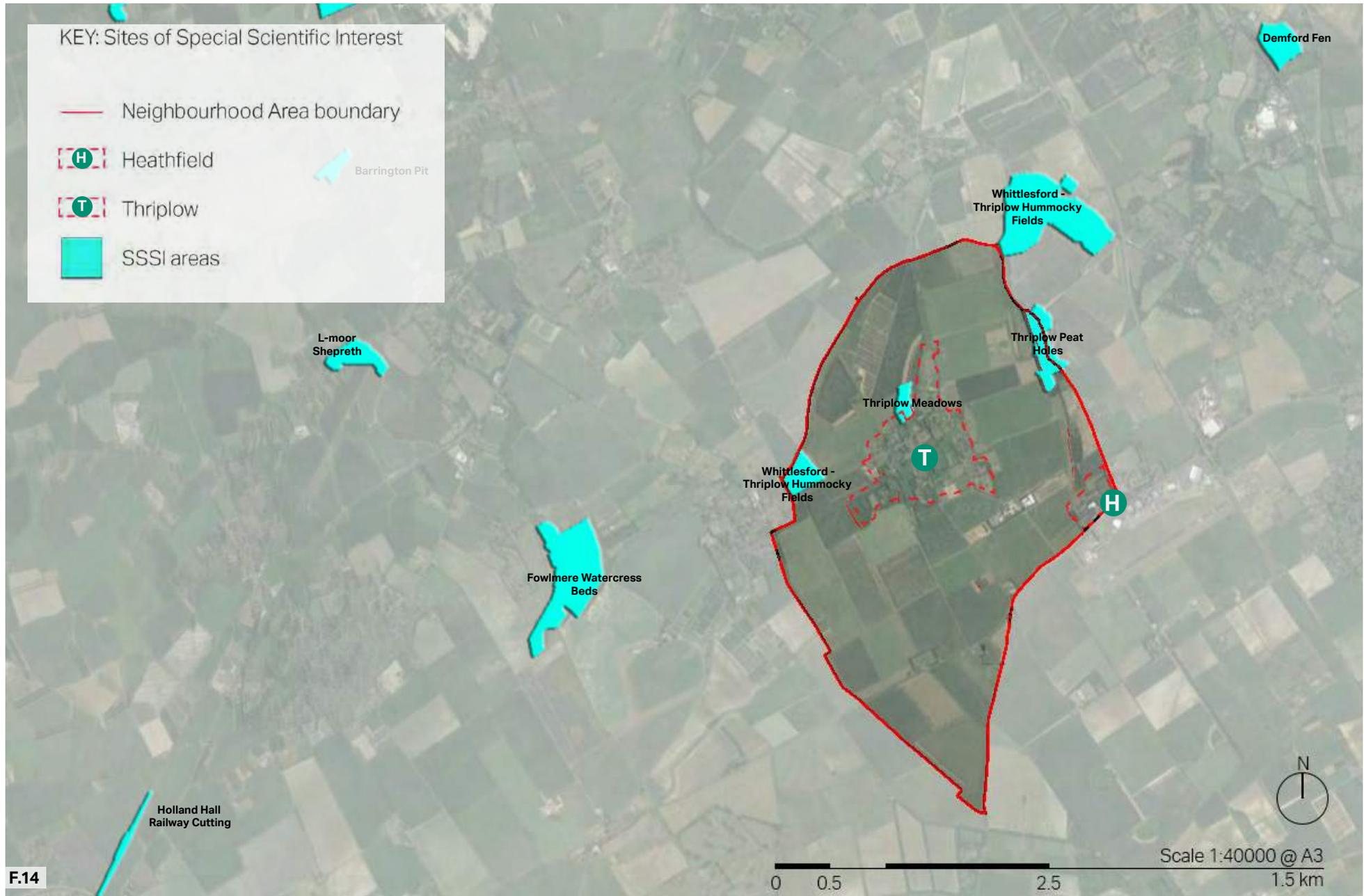
**F.11**  
**Figure 11:** Thriplow Meadows SSSI - rare low land habitat with wet areas featuring many uncommon plants such as *ragged robin*, *fleabane* and *purple loosestrife*.



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



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



F.14

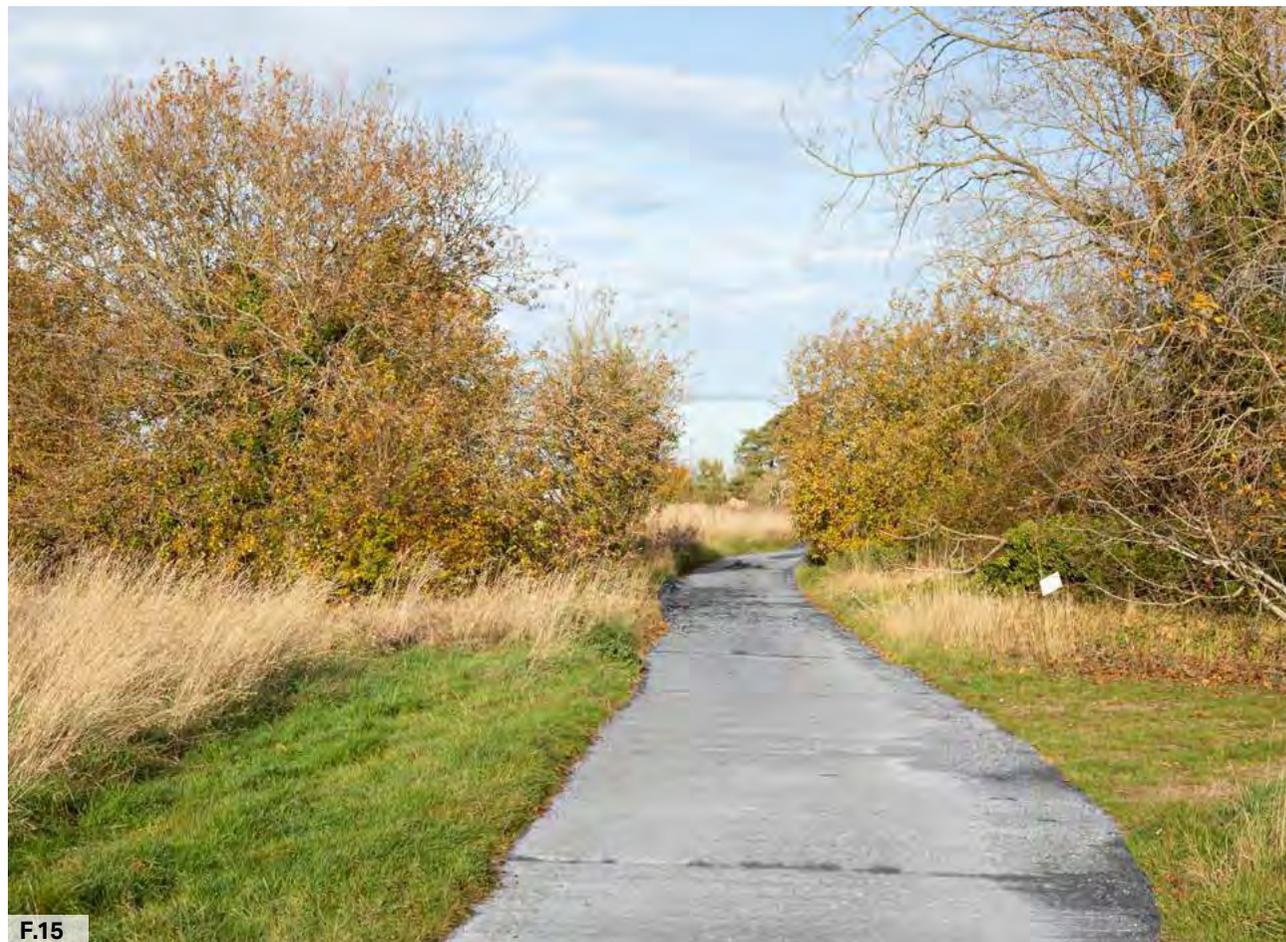
Figure 14: Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - SSSI environmental designation areas.

## 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.



F.15

**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.



**F.16**

**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 congestion 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.



F.22

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.



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

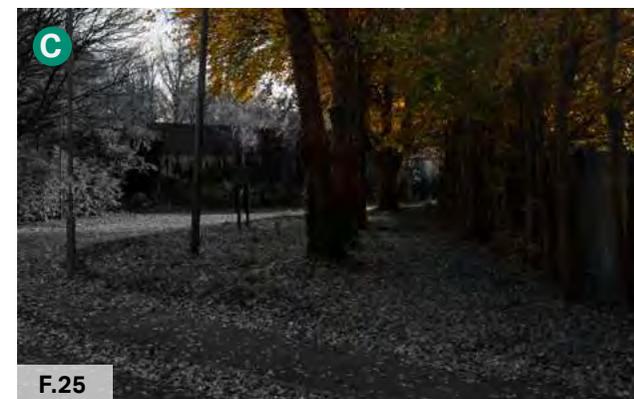
The view along Woburn Place (B) is more confused, with the narrow gap in the wall closing off the street scene. Increasing the gap in the wall would offer interest and visual connection to the Listed buildings beyond.

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 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.

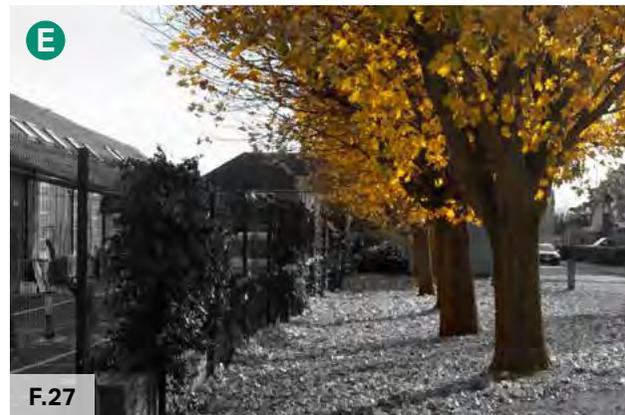


**F.26**  
**Figure 26:** Viewpoints - internal views within Heathfield.

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.



**Figure 31:** Existing meandering path through the communal green space creates a gentle transition between Hurdles Way and Kingsway.

## 2.9 Biodiversity and green space

Heathfield is well placed within the rural context of the neighborhood area. Therefore, most residents are within a five-minute walk of rural green space. Large areas of deciduous woodland are to the immediate north and west of Heathfield.



**Figure 32:** Signage along Kingsway highlighting local connectivity and biodiversity.

Generous areas of planting provide a natural transition from the built form of settlement edge to the wider surrounding landscape.

There is an opportunity to connect two areas of deciduous woodland to enhance this corridor. It is also possible to extend planting north to connect other isolated areas of vegetation.

Ringstone and Heathfield Open Space offer the largest green space by area at Heathfield. These sites have play and gym equipment but are otherwise predominantly open amenity grass. The biodiversity and recreational value of both green spaces could be improved with additional native planting and species-rich wildflower meadows.

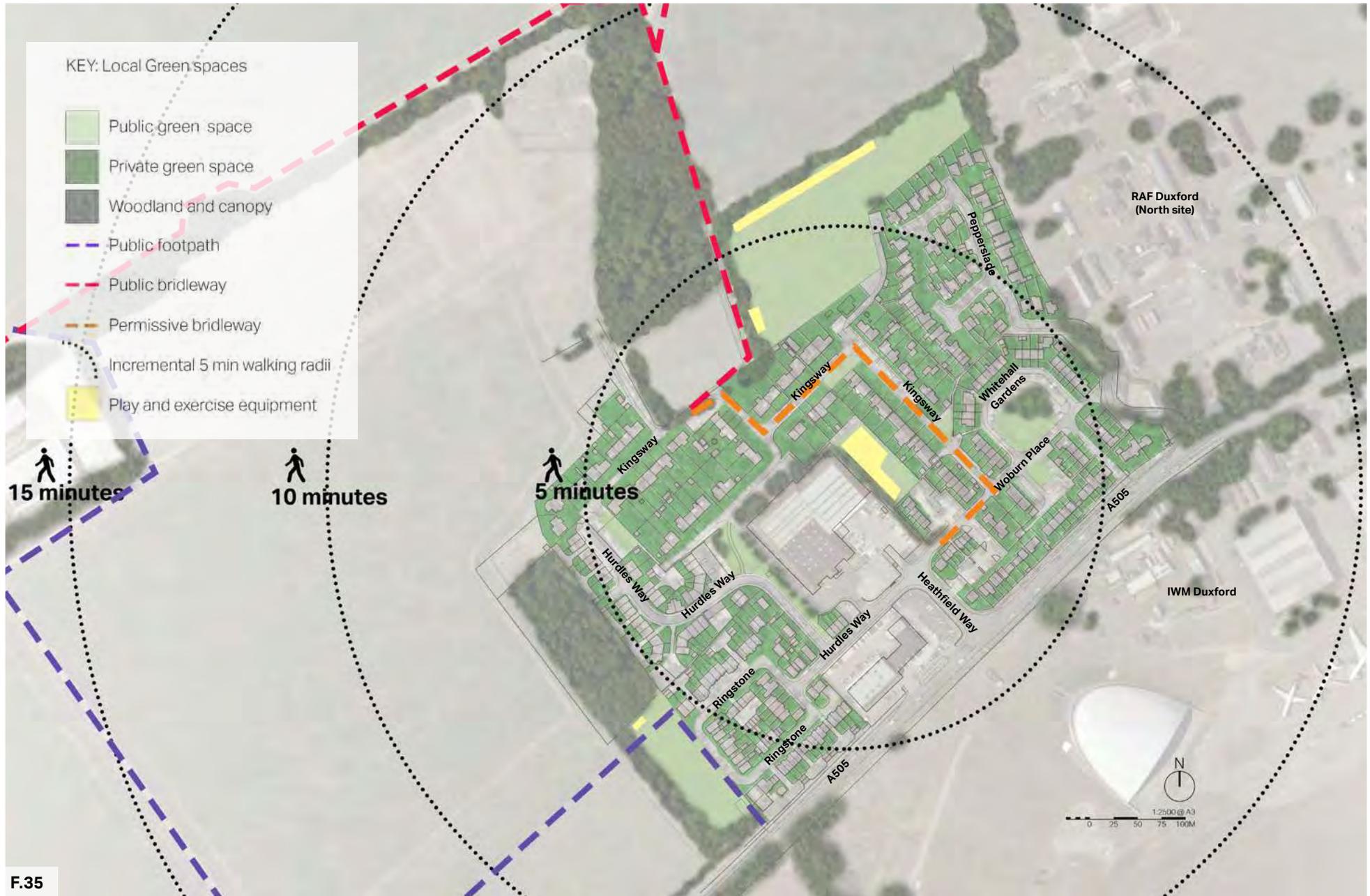
There are other numerous smaller green spaces within Heathfield that are highly valued. The HeART play area is the jewel on the crown, but other areas offer real opportunity for habitat connection. This could include 'greening' the roads with trees and planting to create a network of green corridors throughout Heathfield.



**Figure 33:** Views of play equipment adjacent to the deciduous woodland at Ringstone playing field.



**Figure 34:** Expansive views across Heathfield Open Space from Pepperslade.



**F.35**

**Figure 35:** Thriplow and Heathfield Neighbourhood Area - green space, play and Public Rights of Way.

## 2.10 Historic settlement expansion

Heathfield was originally built as military housing and facilities for RAF Duxford (now Duxford Imperial War Museum). A large portion of the settlement, comprising Kingsway, Woburn Place and Whitehall Gardens was developed from 1925-1960 and subsequently sold to private individuals when no longer needed by the military.

Since the 1990's Heathfield has more than doubled, with three new private residential

developments, Pepperslade, Hurdles Way and Ringstone, built to the east and west of the settlement.

All properties within Heathfield, apart from Pepperslade, are accessed from Heathfield Way off the A505. Pepperslade has its own access point from the A505 to the east.

The expansion of Heathfield is evident in the different architectural styles and urban form of the development. This, along with the separate access point, contributes to a confused identity and legibility to the overall

settlement and is addressed within the neighbourhood masterplan proposal.



**F.36**

**Figure 36:** Historic expansion of Heathfield.

## 2.11 Building uses

Heathfield is predominantly residential, with the exception of the former Sergeant's Mess, now Duxford Business Park, and a car garage. These mixed use commercial units are a dominant feature within the settlement, both due to their central location (off Hurdles way and fronting directly onto the A505) and the scale and massing of the buildings.

Visually these premises are unsympathetic to the surrounding residential properties and main approach to the settlement. Some boundary planting is present, but could be enhanced to help create a green buffer and gentler transition between building the uses.

**KEY: Building uses**

- Residential
- Mixed use commercial



**F.37**

**Figure 37:** Heathfield building uses.

## 2.12 Contextual constraints and opportunities

From the contextual analysis of Heathfield, the following constraints and opportunities have been identified for consideration as part of the Neighbourhood Masterplan of Heathfield. These constraints and opportunities focus on external influences on the settlement and will enable the proposals to respond to the wider context, not just the settlement boundary in isolation.

### Constraints:

- Limited direct sustainable travel routes (cycling, rail and bus) connected to Heathfield, requiring residents to rely heavily on private transport to other settlements and facilities.
- No convenience shops within Heathfield, the nearest is the petrol station on the A505 with limited access via footpath adjacent to the busy A505.
- Fragmented areas of environmentally sensitive and protected habitats and

landscape within neighbourhood area.

- Views out of Heathfield towards the surrounding countryside and landmark buildings not to be obscured or unduly affected by the proposals.

### Opportunities:

- Create and enhance existing network of sustainable travel routes to improve direct and safe connections to Heathfield, for example:
  1. Existing bus stop with additional regular services to and from Heathfield.
  2. Safe cycle access along A505 linking to existing regional cycle route towards Whittlesford.
  3. Enhance existing public bridleway and footpaths linking to Thriplow and beyond.
- Provide additional pedestrian and cycle access to footpath along A505 and create an enhanced pedestrian /cycle experience to encourage sustainable

travel to petrol station convenience shop.

- Additional native planting along field boundaries and existing pedestrian and bridleway routes to enable stronger habitat connectivity within the surrounding countryside of Heathfield.
- Create a network of vegetated green corridors to Heathfield from the surrounding countryside encouraging human interaction with the natural environment.
- Open-up narrow and enclosed views from Heathfield to create a stronger visual connection to the surrounding countryside and landmark buildings.

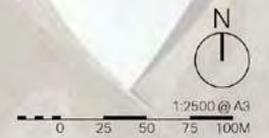
**KEY: Contextual site analysis**

-  Views opened up and framed
-  Enhanced sustainable transport access
-  Enhanced green links
-  Existing woodland and boundary vegetation enhanced to form green corridors
-  Private green space
-  Public green space



**F.38**

**Figure 38:** Contextual site analysis of Heathfield.



A photograph of a residential street in autumn. The scene is dominated by trees with bright yellow and orange leaves. A paved path curves through a green lawn on the right. In the background, a house with a grey roof is visible. A large teal circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text.

**Heathfield Local Character  
Areas**

**03**

### 3. Heathfield Local Character Areas

This section looks in more detail at the built form and urban grain of Heathfield, identifying a series of Local Character Areas within the settlement and analysing their defining characteristics.

The constraints and opportunities, including those identified as part of the previous contextual analysis section, inform an appropriate and achievable design response illustrated in the Neighbourhood Masterplan in section 4.

## 3.1 Heathfield Local Character Areas

Eight Local Character Areas (LCAs) have been identified within the settlement boundary of Heathfield. These character areas are focused on the built form but also include key landscape, environmental, infrastructure, and community features.

The following pages start with a brief description of the Local Character Area and some of its key features, before illustrating a series of constraints and opportunities of each area.

The Local Character Areas identified (see Figure 41) are:

- **LCA 1 - Heathfield Open Space**
- **LCA 2 - Kingsway**
- **LCA 3 - Whitehall Gardens and Woburn Place**
- **LCA 4 - Pepperslade**
- **LCA 5 - Mixed use commercial**
- **LCA 6 - Hurdles Way**
- **LCA 7 - Ringstone**
- **LCA 8 - Ringstone playing field and woodland**



**F.39**

**Figure 39:** Local Character Areas identified within Heathfield.

## 3.2 LCA 1 – Heathfield Open Space

Located on the northern edge of Heathfield, Heathfield Open Space is the largest area of green space within the settlement. Comprising predominantly short amenity grass with a well-established native tree and shrub boundary, it provides green connectivity to the wider rural landscape for both people and wildlife. This field has a good selection of play and outdoor gym equipment.

There is also a second, smaller field to the west which has been left to form a naturalised grassland meadow.

Situated away from the noise of the A505, the fields are accessible from multiple entrance points along Pepperslade and Kingsway. They are also linked to the Heathfield bridleway that provides sustainable travel opportunities to shared recreational, educational and worship facilities at Thriplow.



**F.40**

**Figure 40:** Play equipment at Heathfield Open Space.



**F.41**

**Figure 41:** Second smaller field comprising a naturalised grassland meadow.



**F.42**

**Figure 42:** Bridleway access from Heathfield to Thriplow. Paved by agreement between land owner and parish council as cycle path to Thriplow Primary School.



**F.43**

**Figure 43:** Continuous native shrub boundary with intermittent trees.

AECOM



**F.44**

**Figure 44:** Local Character Area 1 - Heathfield Open Space location plan.

## Constraints

- 1 Thick boundary vegetation screens surrounding views of the play and gym equipment and green space, limiting natural surveillance from dwellings.
- 2 Wide expanse of amenity grass with only one well-trodden pedestrian 'desire line' through the space.
- 3 Access points to open space are narrow and not immediately obvious discouraging inclusivity.
- 4 Access to the playing field favours the eastern part of Heathfield which may discourage users from the other areas and reduce community integration.
- 5 The dominant use of amenity grass is expensive to maintain and has a large carbon footprint associated with the regular mowing regime required.
- 6 Local community interaction with wider sustainable transport links and play equipment is limited to two information boards.



F.45

**Figure 45:** Thick boundary vegetation screens views of playing field from neighbouring residential properties.



F.46

**Figure 46:** Play equipment positioned to the edge of the field leaves large area of amenity grass and a single well-trodden but unclear pedestrian 'desire line' from east to west.



F.47

Figure 47: Dark and narrow access points to playing field from neighbouring residential Local Character Areas.



F.48

Figure 48: Information board provides limited community interaction and knowledge of the wider area.

**KEY: LCA 1 - Constraints**

-  Connectivity
-  Desire line
-  Lack of passive surveillance
-  Amenity grass
-  Woodland and canopy
-  Constraint feature identified in text



F.49

Figure 49: Local Character Area 1 - Heathfield Open Space constraints plan.

## Opportunities

- A** A community hub / sport pavilion with all weather and year-round facilities would foster interaction with local residents through sports, craft, and leisure.
- B** Defined footpaths providing inclusive access for all user groups to key features within the playing field and the surrounding Local Character Areas.
- C** Retain existing play and fitness equipment and mark-out defined sport pitch for organised community sports.
- D** Existing vegetated boundaries could be expanded with additional native planting to connect fragmented habitats and form green corridors into Heathfield from the surrounding countryside.
- E** Species-rich wildflower meadow with informally mown footpaths will break-up the expanse of amenity grass, reducing mowing regimes, annual management costs and the carbon footprint whilst increasing biodiversity.
- F** Open-up access points providing good passive surveillance and wayfinding to entrances and exits.
- G** Existing scrub undergrowth to field boundaries could be enhanced with log piles, hibernacula, bee hotels and other wildlife habitat features with information boards. This would increase biodiversity within a set aside wildlife area whilst engaging the community.



**F.50**

**Figure 50:** Example of meandering informal paths leading from a housing development in Cambridge, positioned to align with natural desire lines.



F.51

Figure 51: Example of species-rich wildflower meadow with mown paths reducing management requirements and increasing biodiversity.



F.52

Figure 52: Example of log piles providing a habitat for local wildlife and an interesting amenity feature.

KEY: LCA 1 - Opportunities

-  Woodland and canopy
-  Species-rich wildflower meadow
-  Defined footpaths
-  Community hub / sports pavilion
-  Existing gym and play facilities
-  Mown football pitch
-  Green space
-  Extended green corridors
-  Opportunity feature identified in text



F.53

Figure 53: Local Character Area 1 - Heathfield Open Space opportunities plan.

### 3.3 LCA 2 – Kingsway

Kingsway is the connecting spine within Heathfield, linking 5 of the 8 Landscape Character Areas. To the south east, it joins Worburn Place and to the north west, the road splits in two, ending in cul-de-sacs with pedestrian access to the Hurdles Way (Landscape Character Area 6) .

The entrance to Kingsway is the most congested part of the road with space at premium for infrastructure facilities such as bin storage and parking. Continuing north, property frontages open-up albeit with parking spaces dominating the street scene. Towards the end of the cul-de-sacs, the road is quieter and less cluttered. More definition to the front garden boundaries and staggered set-backs of properties from the street creates a less regimented and more secluded feel within these areas.

Properties within Kingsway are of the same era and type; either two-storey semi-detached or a series of small terraces with active elevations generally fronting onto the street.

Kingsway is also the home of the HeART play space. An excellent but well-hidden, amenity feature for the community. Access to the equipped play space is gained via two dark, narrow and unwelcoming footpaths to the north and south linked by a paved footpath meandering through the play space.

In addition to the play space there are numerous pockets of incidental green space that residents have adopted, to differing degrees, as communal areas. As a result of street parking, timber bollards have been installed as a defensible boundary to ensure the spaces are used as recreational facilities. Some of these have seating and planting.



**F.54**

**Figure 54:** South east end of Kingsway is cluttered with ad-hoc verge parking and other functional needs e.g. bins.



**F.55**

**Figure 55:** Two-storey terrace and semi-detached houses generally front on the street scape and incidental green space.



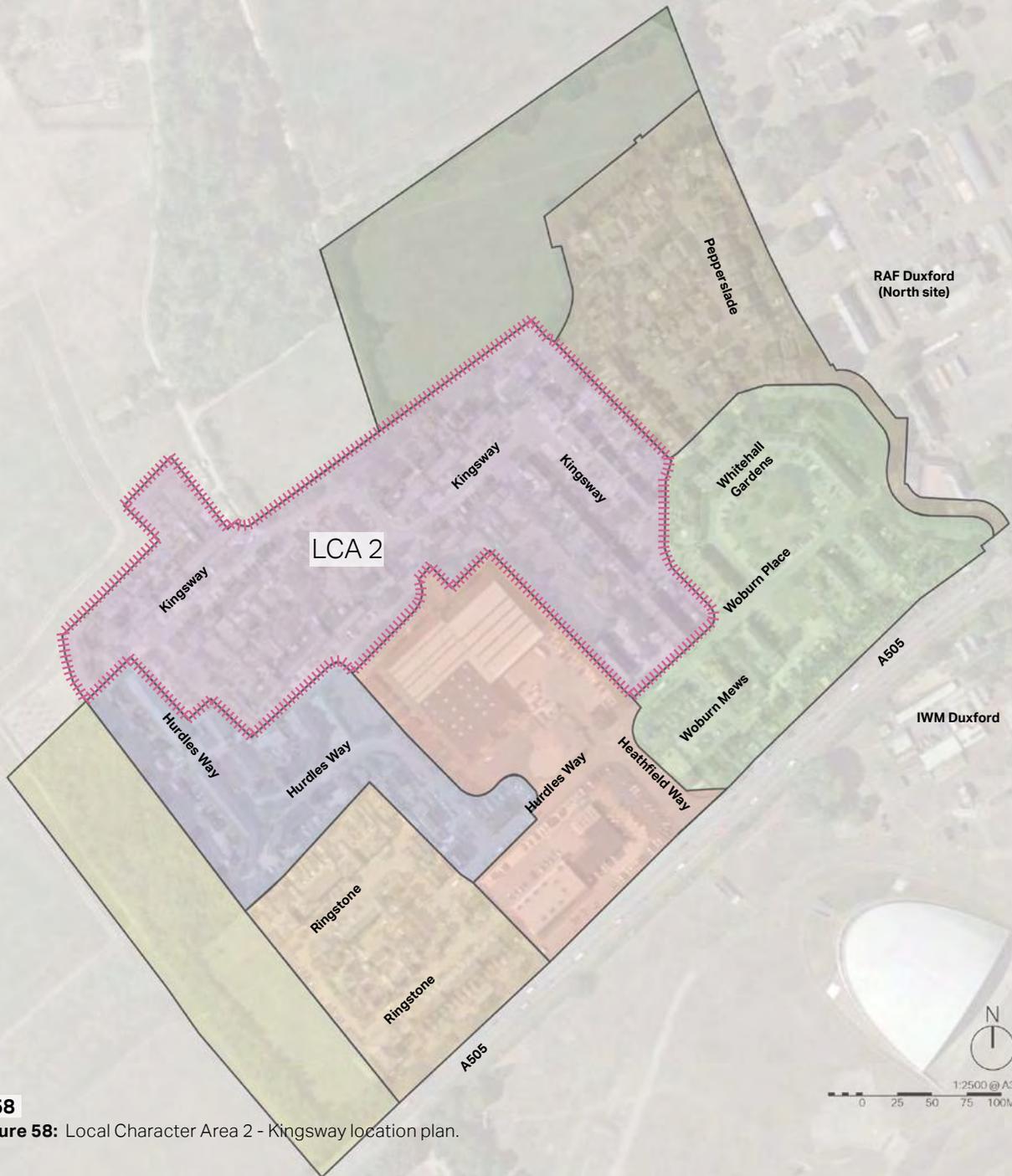
**F.56**

**Figure 56:** HeART is a well-equipped play area to the centre of Kingsway Local Character Area.



**F.57**

**Figure 57:** Incidental green space throughout Kingsway are generally protected from parking by timber bollards.



**F.58**

**Figure 58:** Local Character Area 2 - Kingsway location plan.

## Constraints

- 1 The road has become congested due to parking and the need for utilities such as bin storage.
- 2 Two main entrances to the HeART play area are narrow and not immediately obvious. Residential and mixed use/commercial rear boundaries adjoin the play space limiting natural surveillance.
- 3 Unclear access points to Heathfield Open Space discourages use and sense of community ownership.
- 4 Boundary treatment to western green space between Kingsway and Hurdles Way gives the space a sense of isolation without an apparent exit.
- 5 Parking congestion at both cul-de-sacs limit emergency vehicular access.
- 6 On-street parking adds to the visual clutter of the street scape and impedes the movement of pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7 Incidental green spaces throughout Kingsway could be enhanced to increase biodiversity and amenity value.



F.59

**Figure 59:** Congested street scape dominated with parking creates a visual and physical barrier to the footpaths located between the parking and front gardens.



F.60

**Figure 60:** Unclear and unwelcoming access to the HeART play space is narrow, dark and unwelcoming.



F.61

Figure 61: Unsympathetic boundary treatments and narrow / obscured access points discourages use of green space.

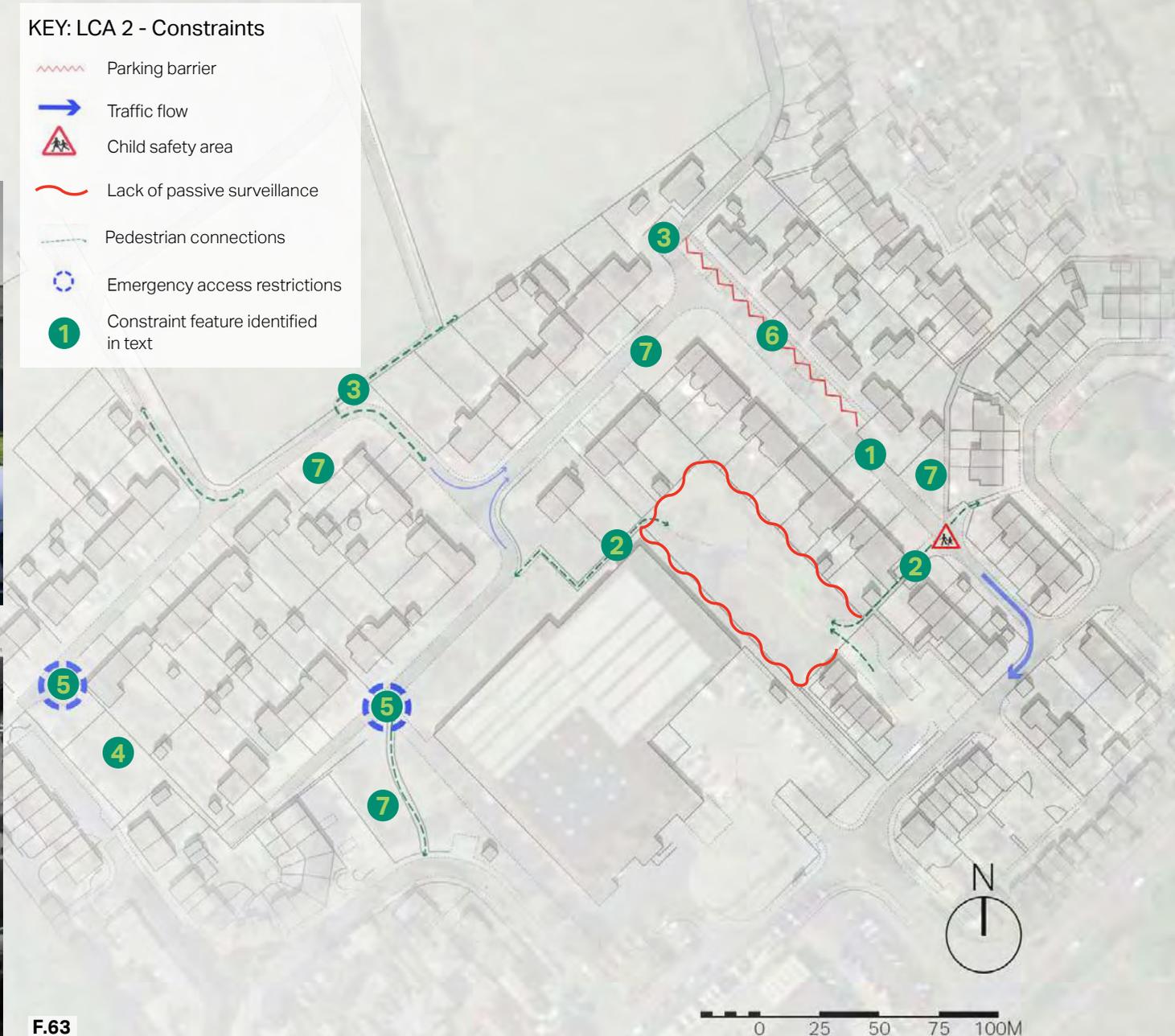


F.62

Figure 62: Isolated green spaces are found throughout Kingsway.

KEY: LCA 2 - Constraints

-  Parking barrier
-  Traffic flow
-  Child safety area
-  Lack of passive surveillance
-  Pedestrian connections
-  Emergency access restrictions
-  Constraint feature identified in text



F.63

Figure 63: Local Character Area 2 - Kingsway constraints plan.

## Opportunities

- A** Include additional sympathetic traffic calming measures to increase road user awareness for children entering the HeART play space and create a more welcoming eastern approach for users of the play area.
- B** Activate western green space with visually open boundary treatments such as a low hedge, clear access points and a defined footpath to create an inviting recreational area and improved connectivity between Kingsway and Hurdles Way Local Character Areas.
- C** Plant trees to improve wayfinding of Kingsway, create defined parking bays as well as enhancing green corridors connecting to the surrounding countryside.
- D** Visually open-up access points and signpost to Heathfield Open Space and HeART play space to raise community awareness and increase use.
- E** Provide an emergency access only route through green space to Hurdles Way allowing emergency access but deterring a potential circular 'rat run' for other vehicular traffic.
- F** Use incidental green space to create a network of 'pocket parks', each with its own character and theme.



**F.64**

**Figure 64:** Example of creative street calming in Cambridge; personalised bollards by residents made into a play feature.



**F.65**

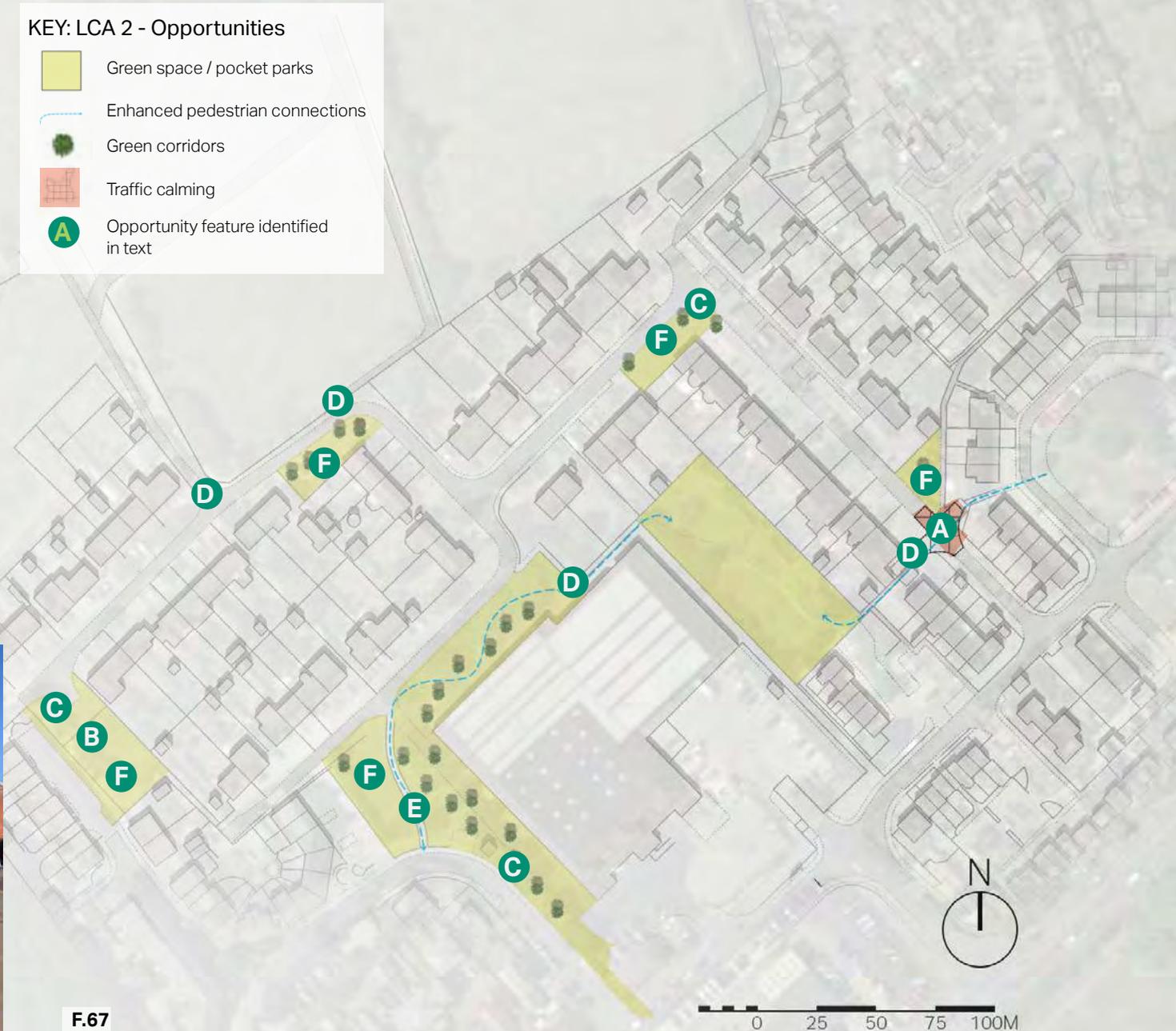
**Figure 65:** Example of tree planting in verges to help to create green corridors and restrict unauthorised parking.

**KEY: LCA 2 - Opportunities**

-  Green space / pocket parks
-  Enhanced pedestrian connections
-  Green corridors
-  Traffic calming
-  Opportunity feature identified in text



**F.66**  
**Figure 66:** Example of a 'pocket park' with seating and art installations activating a space and creating a visual reference point.



**F.67**  
**Figure 67:** Local Character Area 2 - Kingsway opportunities plan.

### 3.4 LCA 3– Whitehall Gardens and Woburn Place

Based around the historic married quarters for the non-commissioned RAF Duxford staff, this Local Character Area primarily consists of 1940s semi-detached and terraced properties. The properties are positioned around a central green space and smaller secondary green space to the south. They both have the potential for great community cohesion as a meeting place, however they are dominated by surrounding parking.

Woburn Place creates a long vista enabling visual connection to the eastern side of Heathfield. A narrow gap in the wall, to the east, allows pedestrian access between Pepperslade and the wider Heathfield. The wall interrupts an extended view onto the Grade II Listed buildings in the adjacent Northern site of Duxford IWM.

The later addition of dwellings at Woburn Mews form a closely knit group of properties that are insular in their aspect

due to the close proximity of the settlement entrance, the A505 and the mixed use commercial Local Character Area . Two additional properties, located to the south west corner of the Local Character Area, are isolated from other properties with access only from the busy entrance of the A505 / Heathfield Way junction.



F.68

**Figure 68:** Large central green space slightly elevated from the adjacent residential parking and street scape.



F.69

**Figure 69:** Under used, smaller, secondary green space restricts unauthorised parking with timber bollards.