

# Whittlesford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan



**24 January 2024**

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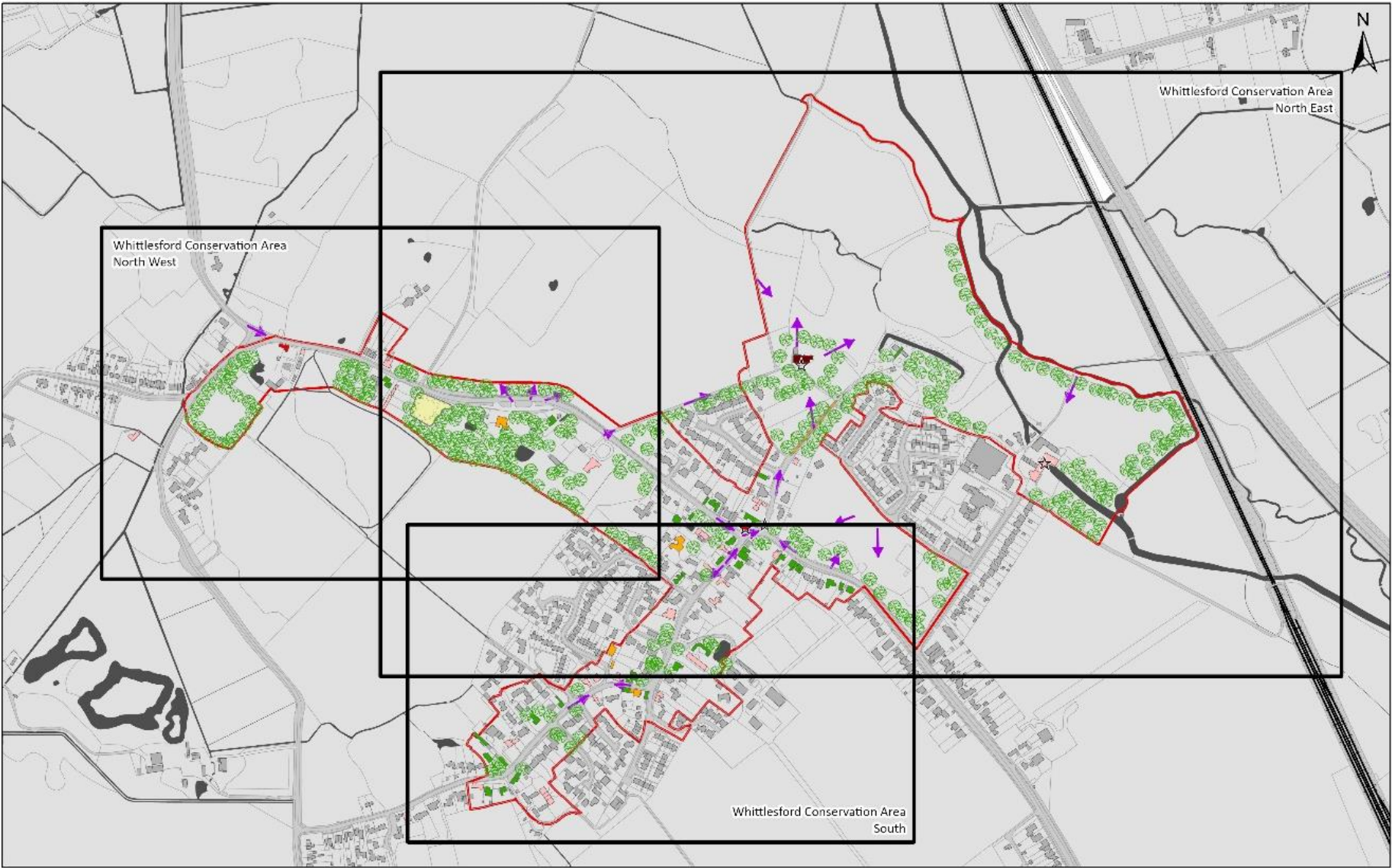
# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Conservation Areas are defined as ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.
- 1.2 This document sets out the special architectural and historic interest of Whittlesford Conservation Area and aims to fulfil the District Council’s duty to ‘draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement’ of its conservation areas as required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 1.3 This document covers all the aspects set out by Historic England on conservation area appraisals and management plans, including an analysis of the special character of the conservation area and recommended actions for the management of the area in order to preserve and enhance its character.
- 1.4 Whittlesford Conservation Area was designated on 21 January 1972 focused on the High Street and West End. Substantial extensions to the area were designated on 11 November 1993 to include an area towards the river encompassing the church and mill, also extending west along North Road. The current review has included further boundary changes which are included on the maps and summarised in section 7.

## 2. Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.1 Following survey work, a draft conservation area appraisal for Whittlesford was published on the Joint Planning Service website from 6 September to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Notification of this was sent by email to the parish council and the elected members representing Whittlesford on SCDC. Separate notification was sent by post to all the addresses in land recommended for addition to the conservation area. All these parties were invited to respond to the draft through an online survey.
- 2.2 The consultation elicited fourteen responses. After careful consideration and a report to the planning portfolio holder, it was decided to continue with the majority of the draft amendments as well as make further changes to the conservation area as summarised on page 24.

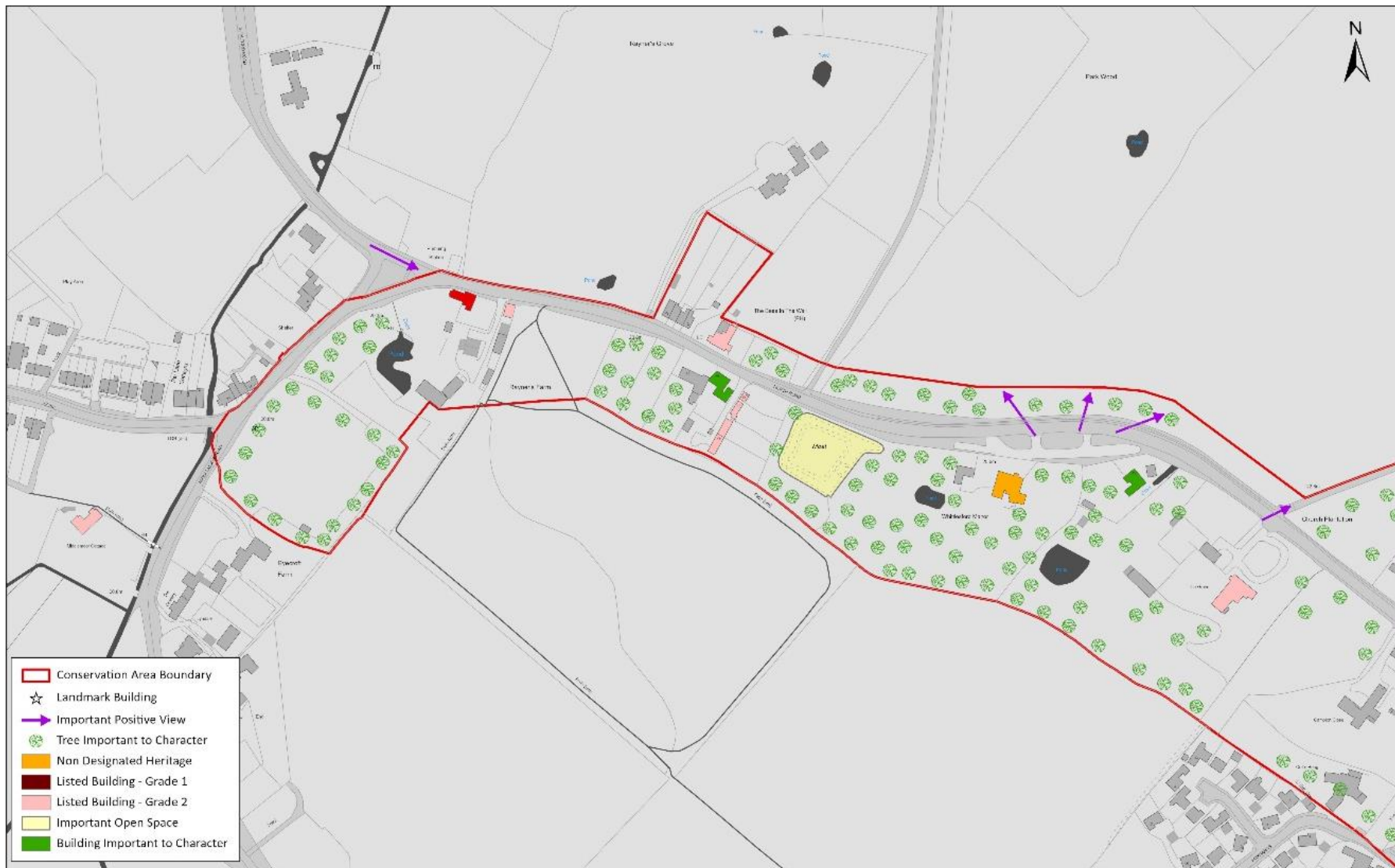
Below: Whittlesford Conservation Area map - key



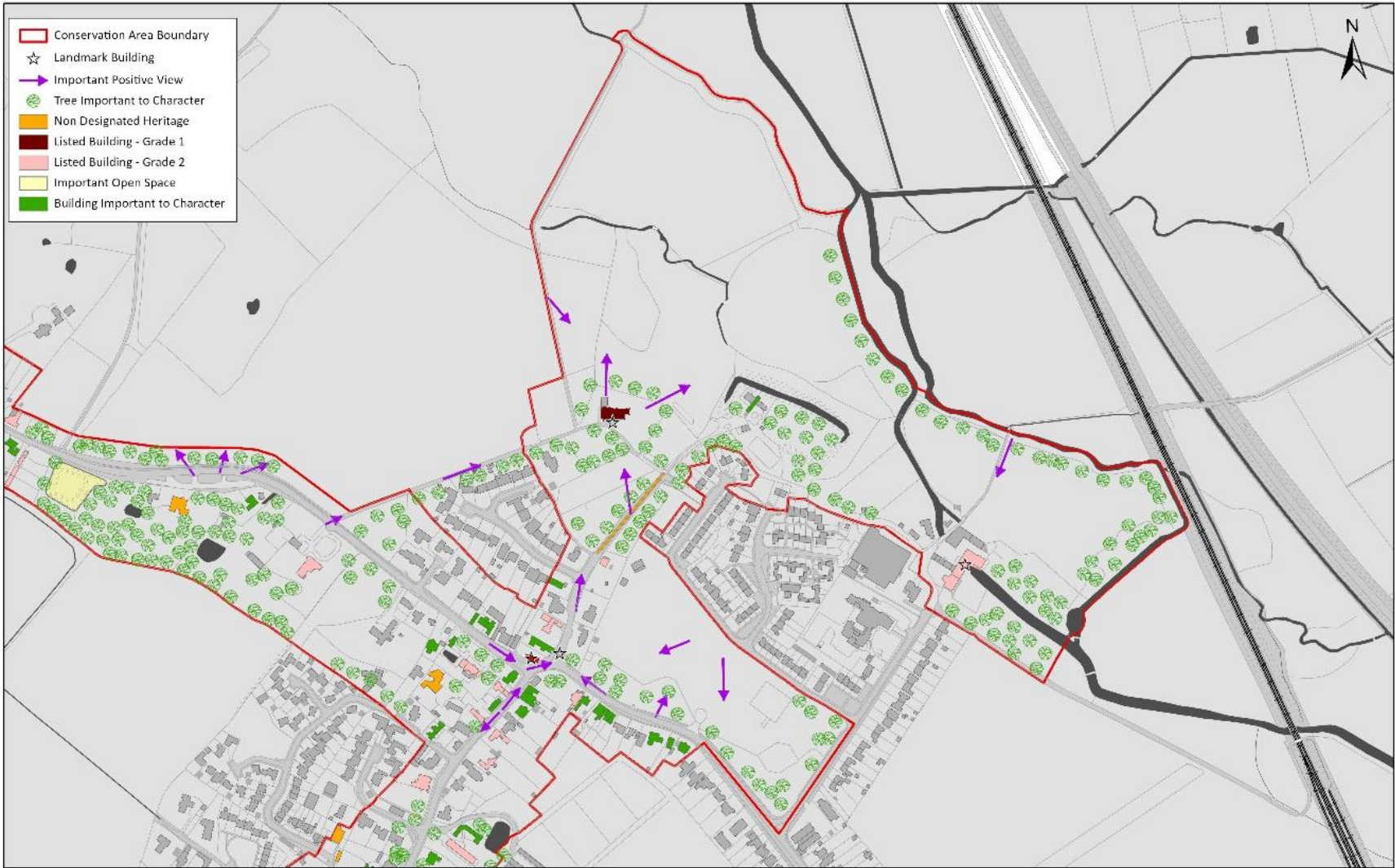
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Below: Whittlesford Conservation Area north-western section



Below: Whittlesford Conservation Area north-eastern section



## 3. History and development

### 3.1 Location and setting

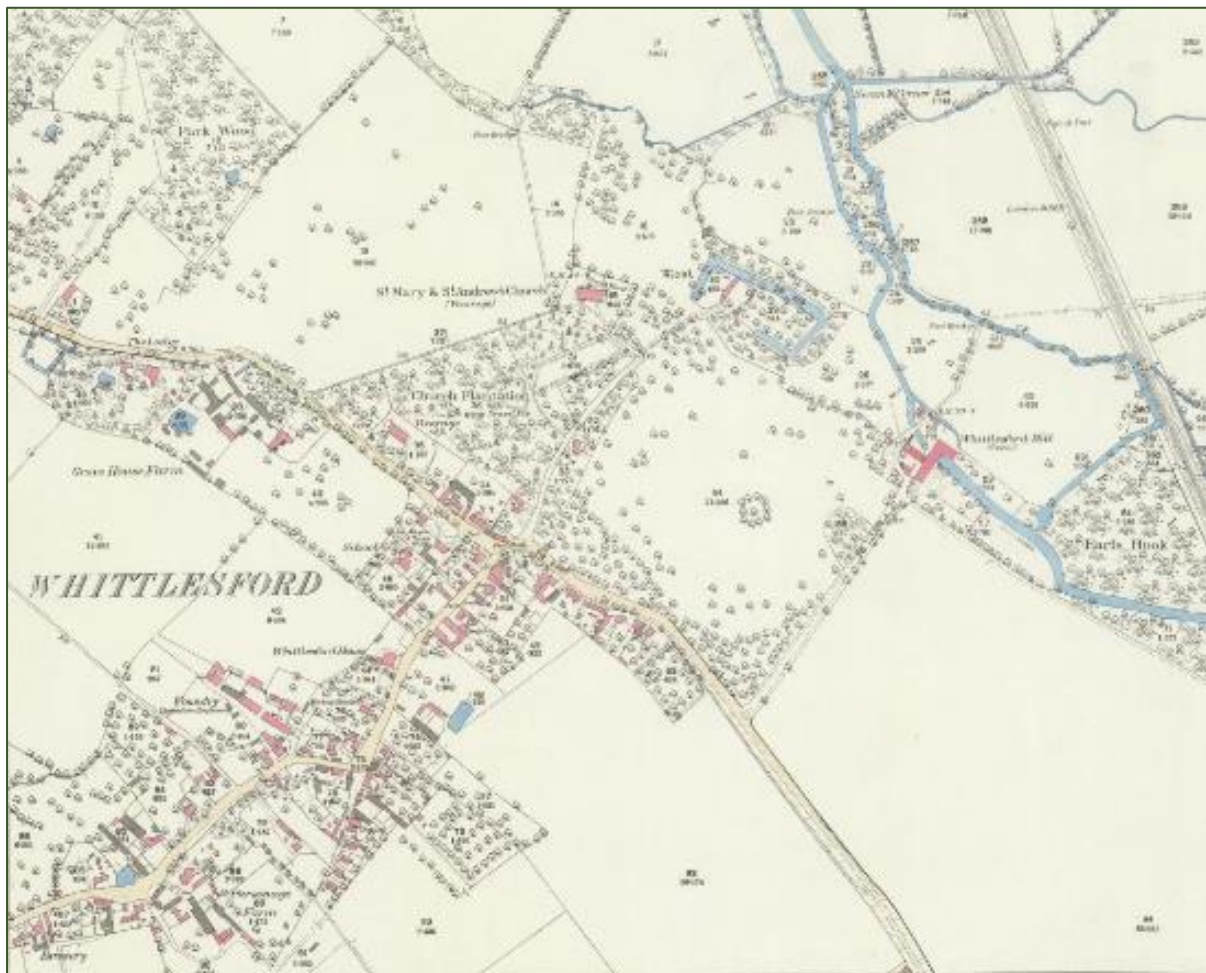
- 3.1.1 Whittlesford village and parish are situated approximately seven miles south of Cambridge on the west side of the River Cam. The Royston-Newmarket Road, a former branch of the Icknield Way, is to the south; to the east is the Cambridge Road and railway line; to the west is the M11.
- 3.1.2 The village is at the centre of the parish and is focused on the junction of the High Street and North Road which continues to Shelford in the north and Duxford in the south. Early development and modern infill extends from North Road to the church, mill and river, while extensive 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing lies either side of West End on what was historically scattered farmsteads.
- 3.1.3 The parish sits between 15 and 40 metres above sea level and is primarily built on chalk, with alluvium near the river and a gravel rise towards the north-west. The rural setting of the village is characterised by open pasture with areas of dense tree planting.

### 3.2 Historic development

- 3.2.1 The village's position just north of the Icknield Way, an ancient thoroughfare with pre-Roman origins, points to likely prehistoric settlement in the area. North of the village a multivallate hillfort, one of the largest in the region, would have dominated the landscape and been in use between the sixth century BC and mid-first century AD as a defensive settlement . Archaeological discoveries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reinterpreted in the early 2000s have demonstrated late-prehistoric and Roman settlement near the Chronicle Hills at the west of the parish.
- 3.2.2 Whittlesford is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Witlesford*, with the name's meaning said to be '*ford of a man called Wittel*', indicating an important river crossing nearby. At the time of the survey there were 33 residents, rising to 105 in 1279. A sub manor of Barnwell Abbey, Cambridge is known to have existed in the village in the medieval period, as seen today in the remains of a moated site west of Whittlesford Manor. The manor was leased to the Cheney family in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, later sublet to Baldwin de Freville from c.1333 to c.1350.

- 3.2.3 The church was first recorded in 1217 and had been established prior to the Manor. Following periods of renewal in the medieval period, Jesus College assumed patronage in 1558 with ex-fellows regularly appointed to the clergy thereafter. The church's dedication to St Andrew began in the Middle Ages, with the addition of St Mary after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Non-conformity in the village was given prominence when Baptist Ebenezer Hollick took on the manor and mill, with his memorial notably standing outside the churchyard.
- 3.2.4 A steady rise in the population in the subsequent centuries was sustained by the expansion of farming, as demonstrated by the number of surviving historic farmhouses and ancillary buildings across the village, and the establishment of small-scale industry such as milling in Whittlesford and Sawston.

*Below: Whittlesford: Ordnance Survey Six-inch Series 1886*  
Reproduced from the [National Library of Scotland](#)



- 3.2.5 Until 1810 when the land around the village was fully enclosed, there were large areas of common land cultivated by long-established practices and traditions. Other sources of employment in the area were the Sawston paper mill and Maynard's Works established in 1834 to produce agricultural implements. The location of the works is perpetuated by the street name Maynards and fragments of the Victorian buildings.
- 3.2.6 The convenience of the village for commuters was accelerated by the addition of the station in 1845, with further significant road infrastructure upgrades in the vicinity through the 20<sup>th</sup> century adding to its convenience on Cambridge and London routes. The Cambridge Green Belt was established in the 1970s to include the majority of Whittlesford Parish outside the Development Framework area, thereby establishing the protected rural setting of the village and conservation area.

## **4. Character**

### **4.1 Summary description**

- 4.1.1 Whittlesford's long history is demonstrated by the age and variety of its historic buildings, with focal points at the church, mill and guildhall, but also in the preserved cottages and farmhouses spreading out to the south and west.
- 4.1.2 At the edges of the village and within the conservation area, generous open spaces and an abundance of trees provide an important and established rural village character, while elsewhere different phases of infill development have resulted in a largely 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century residential character.

### **4.2 Key characteristics**

- Medieval church, adjacent moated manor site and former mill, indicating the historic focus of the village with strong links to the river and agricultural settlement.
- A historically linear village with properties arranged either side of the principal thoroughfares running east/west and north/south.
- More densely arranged historic and modern houses along the High Street; medium and large houses, conversions and infill in larger plots towards village edges.
- A spacious and green character provided by formal and natural open spaces, as well as the green belt setting.

*Below: Modestly scaled vernacular cottages in the centre of the village*

*Distinctive glazing patterns, vernacular materials and sympathetic boundaries on Church Lane*



## 4.3 Architectural characteristics

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Scale and form</b>      | The majority of buildings are 1.5 or 2 storeys tall with traditional dormers to many. Outbuildings, garages and occasional bungalows of 1 storey.                                                     |
| <b>Walls</b>               | Predominantly red brick or render in pale, neutral shades. Horizontal timber cladding to outbuildings. Examples of pale Cambridgeshire brick, timber framing and flint.                               |
| <b>Roofs</b>               | Predominantly of traditional natural materials including clay plain or pantile, grey Welsh slate, long straw thatch. Gabled or hipped. Traditional dormers with pitched tile roofs in some locations. |
| <b>Windows</b>             | Box sash windows with small Georgian or larger Victorian panes. Numerous side-hung casements or horizontal sliding 'Yorkshire' sashes. The vast majority of windows are in timber, painted white.     |
| <b>Boundary treatments</b> | Traditional boundaries include red brick walls, clipped hedges, picket fences, post and rail hedges.                                                                                                  |

## 4.4 Spatial characteristics

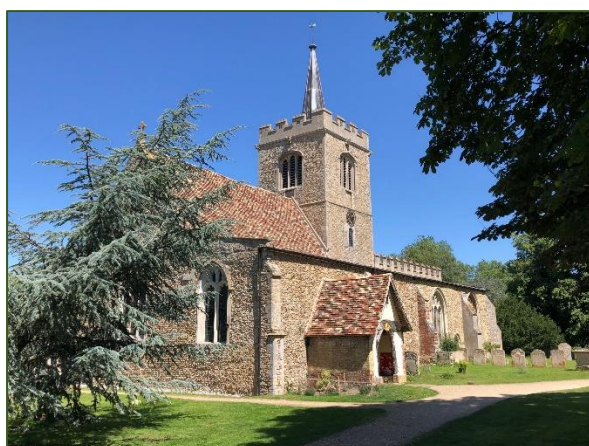
- 4.4.1 The village has its historical focus of development and activity at the junction of the High Street and North Road, with a second junction between Church Lane and Duxford Road immediately to the east. The war memorial provides another important focal point. Around these junctions, the movement between river, church, manor and the wider road network has led to the densest area of development. The Guildhall is an important landmark facing towards the 'spine' of the High Street, but also a key focus of views from east and west due to its forward position and attractive end elevations. The High Street has several properties tightly clustered and built up to the back of the footway, although gaps between houses are also important to local character.
- 4.4.2 The gentle kink in the High Street towards its southern end; the westward curve onto West End and the irregular arrangement of the numerous historic buildings results in surprising and attractive townscape views. Although the character is more suburban away from the High Street, there are a series of striking older properties that are a reminder of the more open and agricultural origins of this part of the village. Adjoining West End are a series of small infill developments largely of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mostly excluded from the conservation area, that generally do not detract from the area's character but dilute original settlement pattern. An example of this, Maynards, which is on the site of the former Maynards Works, demonstrates that the dispersed rural character was already changing from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.4.3 Church Lane has a notably more intimate character than other parts of the village, with a strong sense of enclosure resulting from its relative narrowness, established front boundaries of brick or hedge, and the number of trees. Despite the extensive modern development east and west of the street, Church Lane retains the character of a rural lane leading out of the village to the church, river and countryside.
- 4.4.4 Entering the village along North Road, the character is almost entirely open and rural to the north, with broad views across fields to the church and tree belt beside the river. To the south, the set back of large-detached houses within private well-screened grounds means that they have minimal street presence. Notable exceptions are Rayners Farmhouse and the Bees in the Wall Public House, which were historically well outside the village core.
- 4.4.5 The area to the east of the historic village core includes a run of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century houses and cottages along Duxford Road, as well as large areas of dispersed modern housing. Here, The Lawn (also known as The Lawn Field or the recreation ground), is the main focal point and provides a large open green space with a multitude of imposing mature trees. The character on the

eastern side of the village and conservation area is therefore generally more formal and urban than the historic centre and western edges.

## 4.5 Key views and landmarks

- 4.5.1 There are a number of important landmark buildings within the conservation area, including the church, mill, war memorial and guildhall. These appear in a variety of informal views and often appear as part of wider townscape views that include other historic buildings, trees, and landscape features. The varied townscape and rural setting allows for views which are both broad and open as well as enclosed and intimate.
- 4.5.2 Key views and landmark buildings are identified on the conservation area map, and examples are illustrated below. The views identified are not an exhaustive list and a variety of other views exist which contribute positively to the character of the area or the setting of individual buildings.

*Below: Whittlesford Conservation Area: landmark buildings and views*



## 4.6 Landscape and open spaces

- 4.6.1 Open spaces, trees and hedges make an essential contribution the conservation area's character and appearance.
- 4.6.2 The village has an attractive rural setting, with extensive open space at the edges included within the conservation area boundary. This is primarily north of the village beyond the church, old manor house site and mill, providing an important setting for these heritage assets as far as the river and railway.
- 4.6.3 The churchyard and The Lawn are substantial, publicly accessible green spaces which create a generous and open feel at two key parts of the village. Views through and across these spaces are varied and attractive. There are smaller yet also important green spaces set amidst the village, such as wide grass verges on West End.
- 4.6.4 Trees are an essential characteristic of the conservation area, both within the village and at its edges. Many have the additional protection of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO), both within the conservation area boundary and beyond. The general location of valuable trees and tree groups are marked on the map in order to provide a general impression rather than a detailed inventory. TPO locations can be viewed on the council's planning map. Important woodland belts, plantation areas, smaller groups and individual trees are recognised as of particular importance, including:
- Trees and woodland either side of North Road on the approach to the village from the west. Many of these are within private gardens on the south side of the road.
  - Trees on the old manor house site and east of the Hamilton Kerr Institute, linking to a band of trees along the riverbank.
  - Mature specimen trees towards the south side and edges of The Lawn.
- 4.6.5 In addition to the larger open spaces and tree groups summarised above, the conservation area's private gardens and trees within them contribute greatly to its character. These tend to be larger plots on North Road, although the trees and greenery in smaller private gardens combines to equal effect on all streets in the area. Furthermore, many boundary hedges contribute positively to the sense of enclosure and greenery where they are an appropriate species and sensibly maintained. Native species and less-formal gardening approaches contribute to the village's rural character as well as having wider ecological benefits.

## 4.7 Archaeology

- 4.7.1 East Anglia was highly valued in Roman times because of the rich soils for farming and the other resources the land yielded, including fish, wildfowl and reeds. The Romans invested heavily in development and major roads were laid across the fens, including Akeman Street (now the A11) which passes to the east of Whittlesford. The existence of villas rather than the Roman farmsteads, camps and small settlements established in the north around the fens indicates that this area was farmed by wealthy private individuals rather than the occupying troops themselves.
- 4.7.2 The historical and archaeological significance of Whittlesford is demonstrated by the existence of a scheduled ancient monument within its boundary: the moated site west of Whittlesford Manor on North Road. Outside the conservation area, the scheduled Roman settlement of Chronicle Hills and Borough Hill hillfort further indicate the parish's rich history.
- 4.7.3 The area to the north and east of the church has been subject to archaeological excavation which revealed the possible presence of a Saxon settlement, with ditches, artefacts, pottery and coins uncovered. Nearby, Church Meadow is known to be an area where food was distributed to the poor, and now provides an important setting for the church.
- 4.7.4 Coinage has been discovered on area known as 'The Park' between North Road and Footpath 1, suggesting historic activity in a prominent location near the cemetery.
- 4.7.5 West End was the site of the village's market in the Middle Ages, granted a charter by King John. The character of wide verges near the pond near Markings Farm are a reminder of this former use.
- 4.7.6 Moat House retains in its gardens remains of the former moat understood to have 13<sup>th</sup> century origins, altered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later the site of a smallpox hospital.
- 4.7.7 Features of archaeological interest are generally recorded on the County Historic Environment Record and are subject to local and national policies for their preservation and protection.

## **5. Management, enhancement, and new development**

### **5.1 General advice to protect and enhance the character of the conservation area**

- 5.1.1 Guidance to promote enhancement of the conservation area is provided in the Council's District Design Guide SPD and in the Development in Conservation Areas SPD. These two documents were adopted by the Council to support previously adopted Development Plan Documents that have now been superseded by the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. The two documents are still material considerations when making planning decisions, with the weight in decision making to be determined on a case by case basis having regard to consistency with national planning guidance and the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018. Bearing in mind this proviso, new development should have due regard to the two SPD documents, which are available on the Council's website.
- 5.1.2 Sustaining the character of the conservation area into the future will depend on proper management of the existing heritage assets, on care in the design of new development, including alterations and additions to existing buildings, and on taking opportunities for enhancement.

### **5.2 New development**

- 5.2.1 Beyond domestic extensions, proposals for new development in the conservation area are likely to be either for the subdivision of existing large plots, or for the replacement of existing houses by new ones. Any such new development should:
- Follow existing building lines and plot layouts where these are an important local characteristic.
  - Adhere to the scale of existing development, which is generally only one and a half or two storeys.
  - Contribute to the strongly sylvan quality of parts of the conservation area, by retaining existing trees and hedgerows and planting new large trees and hedgerows.
  - Replicate the characteristic street frontages of the conservation area, using walls, traditional low timber fences (picket or post and rail), or hedges.

- Avoid designs and layouts which erode the visual character found in each distinct part of the conservation area.
- Ensure micro-renewable technologies such as solar panels and air source heat pumps are integrated discreetly.

5.2.3 Detailed design and materials selection in new development should take the opportunity to enhance the character of the area. There is no clear template for new development in terms of materials or massing, but the scale, proportions, positioning, orientation, boundary treatments and landscaping of the existing buildings provide pointers which will help to avoid harm. Restrained material palettes for new buildings and the use of high-quality materials and high-level craft in their application will also help to enhance the character of the conservation area.

## 5.3 Trees

5.3.1 Long-term management of trees is essential to the character of the conservation area. Such management needs to both ensure the continued welfare of the existing trees and plan for enhancement and replenishment. The replacement of existing forest-scale trees by smaller species should be resisted, and appropriate new planting of larger tree species and hedges in new development, on existing plots, and on highway land should be encouraged.

*Below:* Trees in private gardens and the public realm on North Road

Trees and hedges on West End



## 5.4 Enhancement

5.4.1 The table below sets out detracting elements and opportunities for enhancement in the conservation area.

| Opportunities for enhancement | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Management proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hardstanding                  | Gardens, enclosed by traditional boundary treatments, in front of houses are an important characteristic of the conservation area. Further extensive paving of the present front garden areas could erode the village character of the conservation area. | New hard-surfaced car parking in front of and alongside buildings facing the street should be carefully designed. Schemes which include new trees and traditional boundaries along the street frontage are positive, and should be encouraged, but even behind such a screen, large unsoftened areas of paved car parking space should be discouraged. |
| Highway engineering           | Outside the central part of the village, highway engineering is minimal and appropriate to the rural character. Green verges are an important feature.                                                                                                    | Encourage the retention of this engineering approach, especially if new footway crossings are created. Discourage further urbanisation of the street surfaces.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Boundary treatments           | Boundary treatments, especially on the street frontage, are especially important to the conservation area. Native hedges are particularly important, but there are brick walls and simple timber railed fences which also contribute positively.          | Resist planning applications for inappropriate boundary treatments such as close-boarded fences or unduly ornate railings, or the removal of existing positive boundaries. Where permission is not required for removals, encourage retention by informal communication.                                                                               |
| Trees                         | Trees are of immense importance to the character of the conservation area. The trees are located in                                                                                                                                                       | Ensure conservation area controls over tree works are used to protect existing trees, and encourage succession planting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | both public and private spaces.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Windows                    | There has been widespread replacement of older windows in the conservation area, and few instances of such change significantly harming the character of the area. Nonetheless, the traditional, and in some cases intricate glazing patterns are a positive feature of the conservation area. | Promote guidance on traditional windows, outlining their positive contribution to the character of a conservation area. When planning permission is required, the loss of traditional windows should be resisted, and the use of suitable modern windows supported where appropriate. Historic England guidance is extensive, e.g.: <a href="https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/">https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/traditional-windows-care-repair-upgrading/</a> |
| Extensions and alterations | Many buildings in the conservation area have been extended. Further proposals of this sort can be expected. The installation of solar panels, heat pumps and other green technology is commonplace                                                                                             | Alterations to buildings in the conservation area, whether those buildings are identified as making a positive contribution or not, should respond carefully both to the original character of the existing building and that of the conservation area as a whole. Alterations which sensitively improve the energy performance of buildings, enhance poor design, or restore elements of original character to buildings should be encouraged.                                                                                                           |
| Signage and lighting       | Most existing signage in the conservation area is muted, and of traditional design. There are few commercial premises in the conservation area, and the pressure for new signage is likely to be minimal                                                                                       | Nonetheless, retention of existing traditional signs should be encouraged, and the introduction of any brash or assertively modern signage and lighting resisted.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

Below: modern development and unsympathetic boundary treatments

Imposing historic wall to the old walled garden (NDHA)



## 6. Heritage assets and positive structures

### 6.1 Designated heritage assets

- 6.1.1 There are around 25 listed buildings in the conservation area, ranging from the grade I listed parish church, grade II\* listed guildhall, and a number of grade II listed houses from different periods. There are also two scheduled ancient monuments.
- 6.1.2 Each designated building or structure is identified on the Conservation Area map, and full details of their listing can be found on the [Historic England website](#).

### 6.2 Non designated heritage assets

- 6.2.1 A number of buildings or structures in the conservation area have also been identified which, although not nationally listed or designated, are of local importance. This could be due to their architectural and/ or historic interest, their landmark status, communal function, association to locally important individuals or families or a combination of these.
- 6.2.2 These properties have been identified on the conservation area maps for information purposes and to ensure that they are given due regard in any related planning applications. It is also recommended that they be formally assessed as non-designated heritage assets by the council; and considered for inclusion on the [Cambridgeshire Local Heritage List](#).
- 6.2.3 Non-designated heritage assets identified through the assessment and consultation process are:
- 31 North Road
  - The Old School House, Old School Lane
  - The red brick wall of the former walled garden, Church Lane
  - The Gatehouse, Maynards
  - 43-49 Maynards
  - 1 West End

## 6.3 Positive buildings and structures

- 6.3.1 In addition to the above, there are also a number of buildings or structures which are not nationally designated and are unlikely to meet the criteria for consideration as a non-designated heritage asset, but nonetheless do contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation areas.
- 6.3.2 These buildings or structures make a valuable contribution and should be viewed as key elements of the overall character and significance of the relevant conservation area. Alterations to, or the loss of, these assets can have a lasting impact on the special character of the area in which they lie. These structures have been identified as positive buildings on the conservation area maps.

Below: Grade II listed Georgian house on High Street

Unlisted building of local importance on North Road



## 7. Boundary changes

7.1.1 Boundary changes undertaken through the assessment and consultation process are listed below and shown on the maps above. Additions and deletions from the boundary were based on an assessment against criteria in the Historic England guidance.

7.1.2 Additions to the conservation area:

- The largest addition is The Lawn which is an expanse of public open space with numerous important mature trees and attractive views.
- The addition of Nos.6-22 (even) Duxford Road which are a group of mainly traditional, attractive houses which overlook The Lawn.
- A small extension to include 43-49 Maynards, one of the two remaining Fragments of the former Maynards factory.
- A small extension to cover all of 25 High Street and its gardens, which is currently partly included.
- Small additions on and near Vicarage Lane to regularise the boundary.

7.1.3 Deletions from the conservation area:

- A deletion to regularise the boundary on Whiskins, removing Nos. 1, 2, 3, part of No.4 and part of No.8. The houses are modern and not of value to the conservation area.
- Small deletions on and near Vicarage Lane to regularise the boundary.
- Deletion of Nos. 2-24 Church Close which is a modern estate out of character with the conservation area.
- Deletion of 35-45 (odd) The Lawn and 42-44 (even) Butts Green.

Below: Final conservation area boundary map



## 8. References

|                                       |                                                      |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| South Cambridgeshire District Council | South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018                 |
| South Cambridgeshire District Council | District Design Guide SPD 2010                       |
| South Cambridgeshire District Council | Development Affecting Conservation Areas<br>SPD 2009 |

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