

CHARACTER AREA 1: TATTENHOE

Location

The Tattenhoe grid square in Milton Keynes is located approximately 1.5km to the north of the Site and is 4.5km to the south east of the centre of Milton Keynes.

The study area is located on the northern edge of the Tattenhoe grid square, adjacent to V2 Tattenhoe Street grid road and the Tattenhoe Valley Park.

Built Form

The Tattenhoe grid square was developed in the 1990s and in the most part, can be characterised as being typical of suburban development of this time. Vehicular movement through the grid square is facilitated by a spine road/primary route which extends from a junction with Tattenhoe Street to the north of the study area, through the centre of the residential neighbourhood, to a junction with Snellsall Street to the south. Vehicular access to dwellings which do not front the spine road/primary route is provided from other secondary residential streets which connect with the spine road/primary route, and from multiple cul-de-sac's and shared driveways. This street layout limits vehicular permeability through the neighbourhood and focuses vehicular movement to the spine road/primary route. As a result, the cul-de-sacs and residential streets lack vitality through activity, but conversely have a quiet, relaxed residential character.

Residential properties are set out in a series of perimeter blocks. Some of these blocks have development which extends into the centre of the block with dwellings set around cul-de-sac's. This arrangement means that most dwellings face the street or overlook communal open spaces, with the backs of properties and private open spaces unexposed to the street frontage. Most dwellings have on-plot parking, with private drives that have space to accommodate more than one vehicle. Most dwellings also have private garages.

The central spine road is lined with trees and has generous grass verges, meaning that dwellings are set well back from the street. In general, properties have large front gardens with lawns. Boundaries are defined by low hedgerows and shrubbery.

Edge Character

Edges to the existing built form within the study area are defined by the Tattenhoe Valley Park to the east, Tattenhoe Street to the north and Howe Park Wood to the west.



Residential development is well insulated from the impact of Tattenhoe Street, with dwellings set well back from a landscape buffer which extends along the southern side of the road.

Residential properties back onto the street in this location and front onto Highveer Croft, a quiet cul-de-sac which connects to the pedestrian and cycle routes leading to the Tattenhoe Valley Park. Whilst this edge arrangement provides a comfortable residential environment for properties which front Highveer Croft, it provides a poor relationship with Tattenhoe Street, and the landscape buffer and pedestrian routes within this space. However, it should be noted that this arrangement is consistent with the design principles of grid roads in Milton Keynes.

The Tattenhoe Valley Park is located on the south eastern edge of the study area. The relationship between Tattenhoe Valley Park and residential dwellings which line this edge is good, as dwellings overlook the open space in most places. Landscaping and tree planting provides a soft development edge and attractive residential aspect.

Howe Park Wood, an area of ancient semi-natural woodland located to the northern edge of the study area, is formally designated as a SSSI by Natural England. The relationship between the urban area of the study area and Howe Park Wood is poor. Separation between buildings and the southern edge of the wood is inconsistent along the northern edge of the study area. In places (for example adjacent to Stolford Rise), houses are built only 10 metres from the edge of the woodland, making the relationship between the woodland, dwellings and the pedestrian/cycle route within this space seem awkward, constrained, and detrimental to the setting of the SSSI. In other places, separation between dwellings and the wood is less constrained, providing a more appropriate setting for this protected landscape feature.



Figure Ground Diagram

Open Space and Green Infrastructure

Outdoor sports facilities, indoor community sports facilities and other important public open spaces are located within a green corridor which permeates through the centre of the study area. Giles Brook Primary School is located on the southern edge of the study area adjacent to Snelshall Street, but relates well to the central open spaces and sports facilities.

Tattenhoe Valley Park is an excellent north east/south west green corridor through the centre of the grid square. However, connections from the north west to south east of the grid square are less prominent.

The lack of a green corridor to connect Howe Park Wood and Tattenhoe Valley Park through the study area, using pedestrian and cycle routes, is a missed opportunity. Although this route is possible, the alignment of Stolford Rise and Sharkham Court is such that the legibility of this route is limited.



CHARACTER AREA 2: NEWTON LONGVILLE

Location

Newton Longville is a village and civil parish located in Buckinghamshire Council. The built form of the village has developed around the crossroads of Whaddon Road/Stoke Road and Bletchley Road. Newton Longville is approximately 1km to the south east of the Site.

The study area is located to the south west of the central crossroads, and extends west from this point along Whaddon Road to its junction with Westbrook End.

To the south, the study area boundary extends to the southern boundary of residential properties which front onto Warners Road. The built form of Newton Longville has evolved through infilling and the periodic extension of the village envelope. As such, the study area includes a variety of residential development types which respond to the range of architectural and town planning ideas prevalent at the various times at which development has taken place.

Built Form

The crossroads of Whaddon Road/Stoke Road and Bletchley Road (located immediately north of the study area boundary) is the natural centre of the village. Development within the study area adjacent to the crossroads responds to the historic setting of the centre of the village, which is the location of a number of statutory listed buildings, including St Faith's Church (grade I listed). Development in this location is low density and set well away from historic buildings, providing generous open spaces and landscaped areas. Properties within the study area which front Bletchley Road are set well back from the street, and have large front gardens and long private driveways.

Development around the cul-de-sac's of Warners Road and Manor Road (to the west of the centre of the village) has a more urban character with a significantly higher density. Again, residential development set around Betty's Close and Cobb Hall Road differs in character to the residential areas to the west (as described above). This area has less orthogonal building lines, with houses set well back from the street, and with large grass verges separating the street and residential properties. There are open green spaces throughout, although these are low quality and do not have a good relationship with residential properties. The area has a wider variety of house types than the neighbourhoods further to the east.



The neighbourhoods within the study area have a poor relationship with each other. Physical connections and routes between them are limited as housing is set around cul-de-sac's. The few pedestrian and cycle routes that exist are not integrated into the built form, and have convoluted routes which pass between the back fences of properties, and in places pass through left over, unsurveyed green spaces.

Edge Character

Westbrook End forms the western edge of the study area. Residential properties within the study area on the eastern side of the road, and older properties on the western side of the road, are set a long way back from the street. Mature vegetation within the front gardens of the older properties to the west increases the sense of disconnection between the street and houses.

Large grass verges separate properties on the east of the road within the study area, from the street, and whilst this provides a safe environment for pedestrians, it does create a somewhat bleak, uneven street character. This character is also reflected along the northern edge of the study area along Whaddon Road, where properties are set well back from the pavement and built upon land raised up above the level of the street. This arrangement provides a poor relationship between the residential neighbourhoods within the study area and other properties which front Whaddon Road to the north.



Figure Ground Diagram

Open Space and Green Infrastructure

The study area has few open spaces. There is a green space at the centre of the loop formed by Betty's Close, although this has limited use, has no additional facilities, and as it is located at the end of a cul-de-sac, is poorly connected with the surrounding residential areas.



CHARACTER AREA 3: FAR BLETCHLEY

Location

The western neighbourhood of Far Bletchley (WNFB) is located at the western edge of the Milton Keynes administrative boundary, and immediately to the east of the Site. The WNFB is approximately 6.0km from the centre of Milton Keynes and the Site is immediately to the west.

Built Form

Residential areas within the study area and the wider WNFB were constructed in the late 1980s - early 1990s. The WNFB is an extension of earlier 1960s residential estate. The development at this location does not reflect the general built form of Milton Keynes, in that it is not contained within a grid square.

The WNFB and the residential development within the study area is typical of early 1990s suburban residential housing. Chepstow Drive is a central distributor road, providing a vehicular route from the older residential areas to the east, via St John's Road, through the centre of the study area to connect with Buckingham Road. Wincanton Hill provides a second connection to Buckingham Road from Chepstow Drive. In the most part, vehicular access to properties is provided by cul-de-sacs that connect to the central distributor road.

The average density of the study area is 22.9 dwellings per hectare (dph) reflecting the large number of detached dwellings on wide plots with generous back gardens. This character is particularly prevalent in Block 1 where densities within the study area are lowest.

The layout of the study area and the wider area of the WNFB limits vehicular permeability, reducing vitality and activity within residential areas. Conversely, the layout does provide quiet, comfortable residential streets.

The focus upon cul-de-sacs within the layout of residential areas provides a fragmented built form, with the backs of properties exposed to public areas and streets. This is particularly evident around Wincanton Hill, where a central area of public open space is fronted on three of its sides by the back fences of residential properties which face cul-de-sac's within the interior of adjacent blocks.

There is a small Neighbourhood Centre to the north of the study area, providing some local services and retail. The Neighbourhood Centre has a prominent position at the gateway to residential areas and is adjacent to Redway cycle routes and pedestrian routes.



Edge Character

The rear gardens of residential properties on the western edge of Far Bletchley form the western edge of the neighbourhood. The western edge of Far Bletchley is formed by St Clement's Drive. The relationship between the study area and the earlier 1960s development to the east of St Clement's Drive is very poor. The 1960s properties to the east of the study area provide an active frontage along St Clement's Drive, whilst the later development within the study area has no real interaction with the street, as the frontage is formed by the backs of properties, screened by a high hedgerow. This arrangement provides a degree of disconnection between the two neighbourhoods.

The southern edge of WNFB is formed by Chepstow Linear Park, which provides separation between residential areas to the north and the future East-West Railway lines to the south. The green buffer provided by the linear park provides an attractive landscaped edge to Far Bletchley, softening the impact of the built form beyond.

To the north of the study area, Buckingham Road provides the northern edge of the WNFB. In this location (as it does throughout

the neighbourhood), the residential layout (predominantly development fronting cul-de-sac's) internalises activity and street frontage to the interior of residential blocks, so that there are no properties fronting Buckingham Road. Although it could be considered that this arrangement limits the impact of road traffic on residential properties, it also provides a weak edge to the neighbourhood and limits physical connections with other residential areas to the north.

A green corridor which contains pedestrian and cycle routes alongside Wincanton Hill and Blaydon Close, provides an effective north-south connection between Chepstow Linear Park and Buckingham Road. East-west vehicular, cycle and pedestrian routes are however limited.



Figure Ground Diagram

Open Space and Green Infrastructure

In general, open spaces within the study area seem to be under-used, and rather than being an integral part of the residential layout, appear to be left over 'green spaces' and lacking surveillance from adjacent properties.



3.7 EXISTING SITE FEATURES

The Site has been divided into two parcels (A and B) for ease of description, as illustrated in Figure 3.7. Altogether, the Site extends to approximately 144.85 hectares and is predominantly in agricultural use as arable farmland. The Site lies over two sides of a gently sloping east-west ridge, along the top of which runs Weasel Lane. Area A lies north of Weasel Lane, and Area B lies south of Weasel Lane.

Area A is a broadly triangular area formed of approximately 13 small to medium, rectilinear agricultural fields, predominantly in arable use, that slope gently downwards in a northerly direction. These are separated by hedgerows of varying density and maturity, shallow drainage ditches, and some blocks of woodland. The northern boundary of Area A runs broadly along the private track that runs parallel to the A421 (Standing Way) and alongside the B4034. This track has gates and bollards at either end and is not publicly accessible.

Area A also includes the Bottledump Roundabout, part of the A421, and the Tattenhoe Roundabout. These are planted with trees of various species and other shrub planting typical of a highway area. New Leys Farmhouse (residential property) and its curtilage are indented into the northern boundary off the B4034. There is a high-voltage electricity line with large pylon towers located across Area A, in a south west to north east alignment.

There is a small stream that runs through Area A, separating the three most westerly fields from the easterly ones, running from Whaddon Road in a northerly direction to the small block of woodland adjacent to the private track beside the A421. The south western boundary of Area A runs adjacent to Whaddon Road and is formed of a managed, dense hedgerow running alongside the road, with occasional gaps for farm access onto the fields. There are also occasional hedgerow trees occurring within this boundary. There is one agricultural building located within Area A, directly north east of Bletchley Leys Farm.

The south eastern boundary of Area A and north western boundary of Area B run along Weasel Lane, which is bound on either side by hedgerows of varying height and density. There are also occasional gaps allowing for farm access onto the fields in Areas A and B. The Leys Farmhouse, its outbuildings and curtilage are indented into the Site boundary off Whaddon Road, and are excluded from the Site. Sections of National Cycle Route 51 and the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk (Long Distance Walking Route) run along Weasel Lane.

Within Area A, along Weasel Lane, and the northern parts of Area B, the constant audible presence of traffic along the A421 and B4034 on the northern boundary of the Site, and to some degree the traffic along Whaddon Road, is noticeable and gives these areas more of an urban edge character. The western parts of Area B are also influenced by the audible presence of Whaddon Road. In contrast, Area B is influenced by the built areas of Bletchley and Newton Longville, but generally relates slightly more to the surrounding rural landscape than Area A.

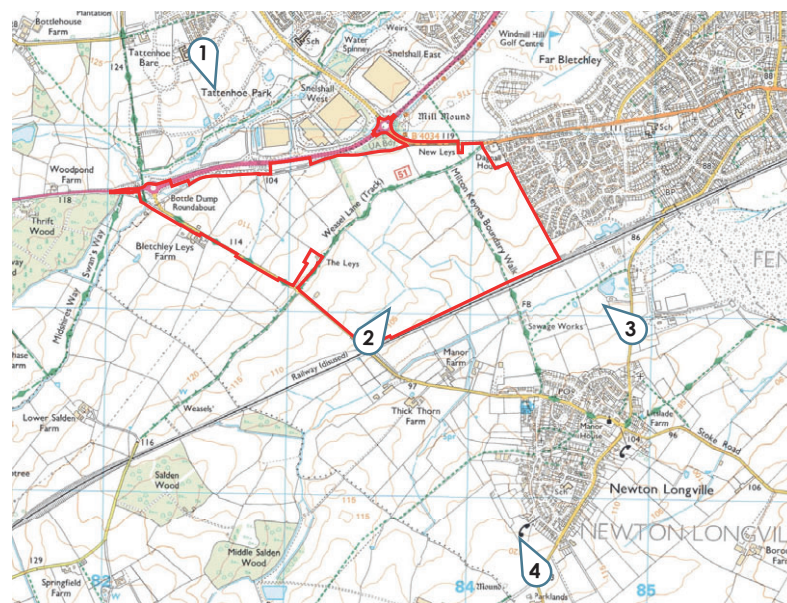


Figure 3.6: Photograph location points



Figure 3.7: Aerial photograph showing Site features

Area B is formed of five larger, irregular arable fields that slope down to the south to a low point where the disused railway runs in an east-west direction. These fields are divided by hedgerows of varying density, with gaps to allow for farm access, and with some larger hedgerow trees alongside some shallow ditches. The eastern boundary of Area B is defined by the rear garden boundaries of the adjacent residential properties which bound this part of the Site. A public footpath runs through the eastern third of Area B, running parallel to one of the hedgerows within the Site. The footpath forms part of the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk and leads to Newton Longville to the south.

There are two deeper ditches running along the field boundaries between the three most southerly fields in Area B, that are periodically wet. They run in a generally north to south direction towards the southern boundary of Area B.

The southern boundary of Area B is formed of dense trees, hedgerow and scrub vegetation that grow along the embankment of the disused railway. The western boundary of Area B runs adjacent to Whaddon Road and is formed of managed hedgerows with some hedgerow trees, with a denser area of tree and hedgerow vegetation located towards its southern end next to the bridge over the railway. There is a large farm building located north of Whaddon Road, south east of Weasel Lane, that is included in the Site boundary.