

Employment Areas

A wide-angle photograph of a modern campus. In the foreground, a concrete walkway leads to a pond. The pond's surface is calm, reflecting the sky and the buildings in the background. To the left of the pond, there are several bright yellow daffodils in full bloom. The middle ground features several large, multi-story brick buildings with dark roofs and numerous windows. Some buildings have a distinctive architectural style with a flat top section. The background shows more campus buildings and trees under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall atmosphere is clean, modern, and well-maintained.

2.9 Context Appraisal: Employment Areas

2.9.1 Introduction

West Northamptonshire plays an important regional role due to its strategic and accessible location. Easy access through the road network has resulted in economic growth, particularly in the sector of storage and distribution. This has created vast areas of employment premises particularly in Northampton and to some extent in Daventry and Towcester. These areas in part include warehouses that provide storage facilities serving the DIRFT network.

This section of the Manual provides a context appraisal of the employment types, both historical and modern, analysing the positive and negatives aspects of each type. The following case studies selected illustrate the different types of employment buildings, from inner city integrated employment buildings to out of or edge of town zoned industrial centres or business parks found within the Northamptonshire region. Although there is a general lack of good design for large scale zoned employment areas, there are some good local precedents that might be used as exemplars for future developments. These good local examples have been supplemented by a range of European exemplars that will help to develop a knowledge and expertise of high quality employment development.

2.9.2 Four typologies of employment areas

Broadly the employment areas can be distinguished as belonging to four different typologies. These typologies reflect different periods and economic activities in West Northamptonshire and are a response to their requirements. The way in which these buildings are designed also impacts on their surroundings and some relate better than others to the local urban grain.

The photograph to the left depicts the Lakes Business Park as an example of modern employment use, which is set within landscaped surroundings

Historic Typology Victorian factories



Shoe factory in Northampton's Victorian fringe

Modern Typologies Purpose-built office blocks and business parks



Office building in Drayton Fields employment area, to the north of Daventry



Building for office and, sometimes, service uses

Distribution and manufacturing buildings



Servicing functions and entrance adjoining each other



Aligned buildings with no active frontage in Daventry

Mixed use purpose-built buildings



Mixed use building in Daventry



Mixed use building in Northampton

The typologies are:

Historic typology:

- Victorian factories

Modern typologies:

- Purpose-built office blocks and business parks
- Distribution and manufacturing buildings
- Mixed use purpose-built buildings

2.9.3 Victorian Factories

The shoe making industry in Northampton has had an important influence and legacy on the town’s economy and urban character. This activity can be traced back to the 16th Century and gradually grew in importance to reach its peak in the Victorian era. Employment buildings dating from the Victorian period are exemplified by the shoe factories in Northampton. They are located within the Victorian residential areas of the town.

These factories are characterised by their larger massing and are typically found at the junction of two rows of Victorian terraces, thereby contributing to the legibility of the area. Some factories extend over a larger surface area as they include an internal or back courtyard. Although of a larger scale, Northampton’s shoe factories are well integrated into the surrounding urban grain and constitute a good precedent for live-work typologies.

Factory Conversion

Most factories have been successfully converted either into offices or residential units. In the process of conversion, some of the building details, such as fenestration or industrial features have been altered to comply with contemporary or new use requirements. Sometimes, an additional floor has been built to increase the surface use. Generally, these changes have been carried out effectively without impinging on the intrinsic character and townscape value of those buildings. The durability and good integration of these buildings in the urban environment constitute an exemplar for future developments.



Figure 229: Aerial image of Hood Street, Northampton



Shoe factory on Hood Street, in Northampton

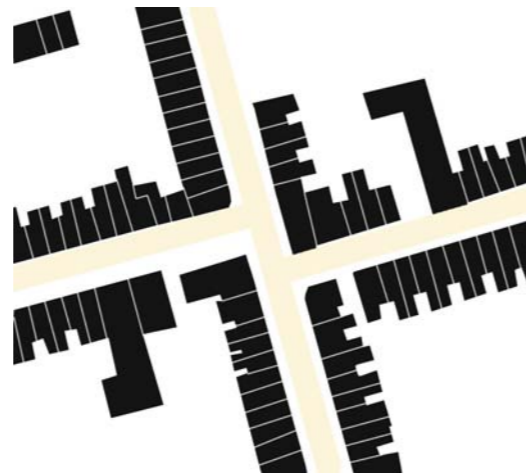


Figure 230: Figure ground highlighting the massing of the factories within Victorian terraced streets



Converted shoe factory in Northampton with additional storey to the left

Assessment of Victorian factories as a typology

Assets	Weaknesses
Legible public realm with direct routes and factories acting as landmark buildings	Location within residential areas impeding certain activities from taking place within this typology
High quality townscape with a built form that is responsive to the street layout	Limited size of factories also impeding certain activities from taking place within these premises
Continuous frontages with frequent fenestrations	
Building frontages respond to views down the streets, ensuring a good level of surveillance	
High quality architecture which can accommodate different uses (industrial, office, residential)	
Building elevations and streetscape in response to human scale	
Clear street hierarchy and typology	

This table provides an assessment of the Victorian factories as a typology for working premises and how they interact with and impact their surroundings

Townscape



Elevation



Corner Details



Fenestration



Details



Local Case-Study

Mobbs Miller House, Christ Church Road

This Grade II listed building is located in the heart of the Victorian fringe of Northampton, in a residential area to the south west of Abington Park. The building dates from the Georgian period when it was erected as a shoe factory, a function which it fulfilled well into the 20th century. In the 1980s, sole manufacturing was discontinued here and replaced by other types of uses.

Today the building has been successfully converted and accommodates several businesses. These include a mix of commercial uses, mainly translated in office use and light industrial activities.

The site of Mobbs Miller House has a footprint of approximately 1.1 hectare. It includes the old shoe factory, which has a footprint of approximately 6,625 m², and a car park and loading area to its south, with a surface of approximately 4,445 m².

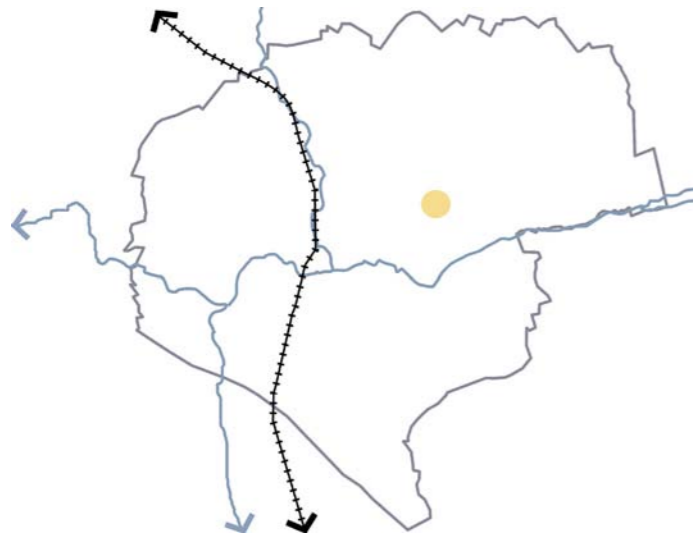


Figure 231: Drawing showing the location of the Mobbs Miller House within Northampton and in the context of the WNDK UDA boundary

Layout of the site

The building footprint forms a rough square, located at the intersection of Ardington Road and Christ Church Road. Its frontages face these two streets. The main entrance to the building is located on Christ Church Road and is recognisable by its grand portico in the centre of the facade. The building is also punctuated by several other entrances on both streets (three on Christ Church Road and four on Ardington Road), allowing businesses to operate independently from each other. The facades are also characterised by frequent fenestration on all storeys which provides natural surveillance.

Despite being built in the Georgian period and having a footprint of over a hectare, the building is well integrated into its Victorian surroundings, which are mainly terraced houses to the west and east and semi-detached houses to the north. This is due to its massing and height which do not exceed those of the houses, i.e. two storeys, except on parts of the elevation on Ardington Road. Moreover, the facade is visually broken down by protruding brick columns. This gives the building a strong sense of rhythm which echoes the rhythm of the terraced and semi-detached houses across the streets and complements the townscape.

The loading area is located at the rear along with the car park and can be accessed through a gate on Ardington Road and through a side street from Christ Church Road, only during the day. It is mostly visible from Ardington Road but its impact on the residential area is mitigated by landscaping while loading and light industrial activities are limited to certain hours during the day.



Strong frontage along Ardington Road



Elevation on Ardington Road, with an enhanced frontage highlighting secondary entrances and frequent fenestration



Main entrance onto Christ church Road, overlooking on-street parking



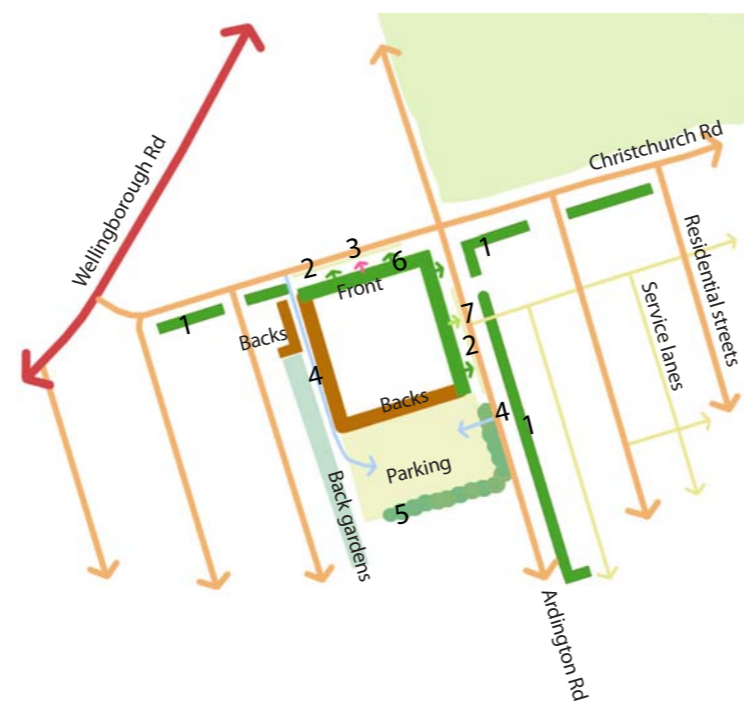
Entrance to parking and loading area from Ardington Road



Entrance to parking and loading area from Christ Church Road



Figure 232: Aerial image showing Mobbs Miller House, Northampton



- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Street frontage | Front of Building |
| 2 On-street parking | Back of Building |
| 3 Main entrance | Primary Route |
| 4 Access to service parking | Secondary Route |
| 5 Green buffer from parking | Tertiary Route |
| 6 Secondary entrances | |

Figure 233: Concept image showing the relationship of the shoe factory to its surroundings and within the movement hierarchy

Summary

- The shoe factories of Northampton exemplify the Victorian or historical typology of employment buildings
- They are characterised by their location at the junction of Victorian terraces and by their larger massing
- They are well integrated into the urban setting and have many assets, thereby constituting a good precedent for live-work units
- Most factories have been successfully converted into offices and/or residential units, with respect to the historical features and value of the buildings

Case-study

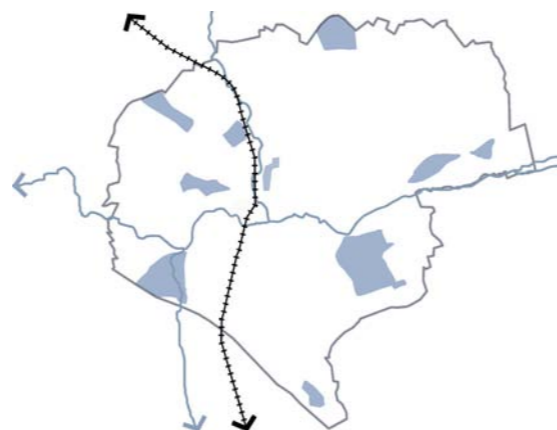
- This Grade II listed Georgian shoe factory combines a mix of uses, including commercial and light industrial
- It is characterised by its good integration within the residential area and townscape value as a landmark
- There are several entrances and frequent fenestration on both street frontages, enabling natural surveillance and active frontages
- The parking and loading areas to the rear of the building are accessible from both streets and mitigated by landscaping and the limitation of activities to day time

2.9.4 Modern Employment Areas and Typologies

Modern employment areas in West Northamptonshire have evolved from centrally located premises, incarnated by the Victorian factories, to large areas of employment concentrating several premises and generally located on the outer fringe of the three towns. These zoned employment areas and the buildings within them are dictated by the types of economic activities present in West Northamptonshire which is an important centre for storage and distribution.

They therefore tend to be functional and in that sense have the advantage of being fully adapted to the type(s) of activities carried out in the premises. Also, they are usually well connected to major roads into and out of the towns. However, this focus on functionality has detracted from the necessities of creating good places that work for both the logistic aspects and users' wellbeing.

As a result, some of the employment areas present a number of characteristics that cannot work as precedents. These include the neglect of the public realm and its poor legibility leading to areas that are unfriendly for pedestrians; poor access by public transport; poor connections to neighbouring facilities; the lack of amenities for local employees; and dominant car parks and sometimes servicing areas to the front of buildings, which considerably reduce natural surveillance and safety.



Northampton



Daventry



Towcester



Summary

- Large employment areas characterised by modern typologies tend to be located on the outer fringes of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester
- Apart from being adapted to specific types of activities and services, their urban features are generally poor, which prevents them from constituting an exemplar for future developments

General assessment of modern typologies of employment areas

Assets	Weaknesses
Built form adapted to specific types of activities and related services	Illegible public realm with no particular landmark or nodes
Generally located on the edges of urban areas, thereby limiting the encroachment on residential areas and town centre	Inexistent townscape quality with scattered built form that does not follow the street layout
	Large and discontinuous frontages
	Mostly poor architectural quality and not easily adaptable to other uses
	No response of building frontages to views down the streets, reducing considerably natural surveillance
	No response of building elevation or scale to human scale
	Confusing street hierarchy and typology
	Large surface level parking areas detract from quality of public realm in places
	Not always located in the most accessible areas
	Streetscape poorly maintained

This assessment of modern typologies of employment premises indicates that these buildings tend to interact poorly with their surroundings

Figure 234: The maps above highlight the general location of employment areas in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester in relation to WNDC's UDA boundary for each site.

2.9.5 Purpose-Built Office Blocks and Business Parks

Office buildings are characterised by their relatively minimal requirements and can therefore be situated in a variety of locations, whether at the heart of a town centre, within neighbouring areas or on the edges of the town. In West Northamptonshire, this is especially the case of Northampton, where office uses have been accommodated in various part of the town.

In the past decades, it has been common practice to situate purpose-built office buildings on the edges of the three towns in order to fulfill a variety of requirements, such as space, parking provision, or accessibility. Buildings used for a range of office functions are therefore found to be located within peripheral employment areas. They are usually purpose-built within existing employment areas or as part of a business park development. They thus vary in size and scale.

Office blocks usually provide generous fenestration and, depending on their position to the street, they provide a varying degree of active frontage and thus natural surveillance. However, this is sometimes compromised by the provision of parking spaces in-between the building and the street, therefore creating a rather large set-back.

Even so, there is generally more attention to the public realm around office blocks, and to its maintenance, than there is around industrial areas. Unlike the latter, purpose-built office blocks and business parks tend to be quite legible with a clear sense of arrival and circulation.



Figure 235: Aerial image of Pavillion Drive on the Brackmills Estate in Northampton



Figure 236: Figure ground showing functional and purpose-built block layout of the business park.



On street parking in Pavillion Drive helps to activate the street without dominating it.



The buildings in Pavillion Drive provide a degree of overlooking onto the street despite being setback behind trees and hedges.

General assessment of purpose-built office blocks and business parks as a typology

Assets	Weaknesses
Generally legible public realm with direct routes	Location in almost exclusively employment areas reduces the availability of other uses and activities
Usually well maintained public realm	Quality of townscape varies
Good use of landscaping to direct traffic, define car park areas and amenity spaces for users	Generally low quality of architecture which cannot accommodate easily changing uses
Continuous frontages with frequent fenestrations	Provision and quality of amenity space for users varies
Building frontages respond to views down the streets, ensuring a good level of surveillance	
Building elevations and streetscape usually in response to human scale	
Clear street hierarchy and typology	

This table provides an assessment of office blocks and business parks as a typology for working premises and their interface and impacts on their surroundings

Local Case-Study: The Lakes and Queensbridge, Bedford Road

The Lakes and Queensbridge is a business park which is centrally located within the WNDP boundary. It sits in the Nene Valley, just a mile away to the southeast of the town's historic centre. The site is well connected as it is located less than a mile away from the A45 which in turn leads to the M1.

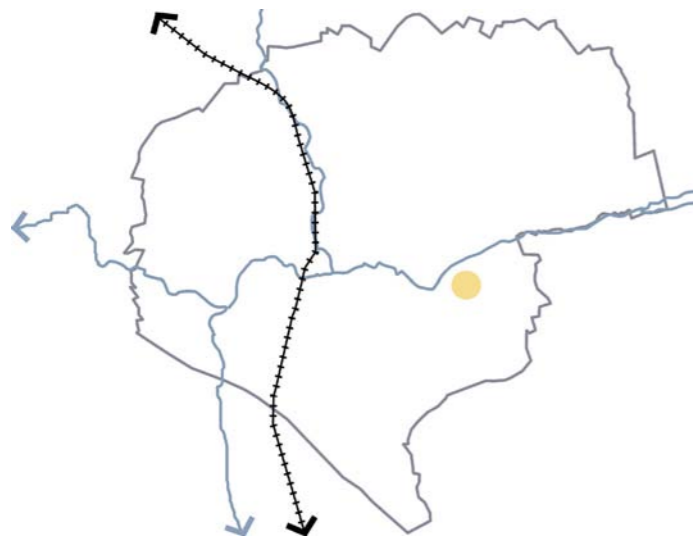


Figure 237: Drawing showing the location of The Lakes and Queensbridge business park in Northampton and in the context of WNDP's UDA boundary

The Lakes

The business park extends on both sides of Bedford Road. The eastern part of the development, called The Lakes, is defined by Bedford Road to the south, the Nene River to the west and open fields to the east. Its layout is articulated along a circular route which branches off into streets leading to the different buildings and their allocated car parks. The office blocks in this area are of a large scale and thus can accommodate large organisations. The buildings generally have a clearly recognisable main entrance and are characterised by generous fenestration on all sides.

The car parks tend to be equally large but are well overlooked by buildings and are made more legible through the use of different materials and of planting. There are covered bicycle stores for each building. Most of the stores are located near the main building entrance.

Landscaping is present throughout the development and can be classified into two broad types. There are formal landscaped areas which are located at the junction of streets and which intend to create a sense of arrival to office blocks. There are also informal areas which take advantage of the Nene River and which consist of a walking path along the river and of green areas consisting of grass, flowers and some shrub.



Overview of the eastern part of The Lakes business park and of the layout of car parks through changing materials and landscaping.



One of the main office blocks characterised by generous fenestration and formal landscape area which creates a setting and sense of arrival to the building.



Landscaping on the banks of the River Nene, providing a pleasant amenity space for users of the business park.

Queensbridge

The western part of the business park is called Queensbridge. It is located on the other side of Bedford Road. Its character differs from The Lakes in that it consists of smaller units which accommodate a variety of businesses and organisations. The units are clustered in small groups and aligned along a main street. Another distinctive feature is the fact that parking provisions are located right in front of buildings rather than in large car park areas. This strikes a balance between dominance of the car and good natural surveillance thereby avoiding large car park areas.

Pedestrian permeability is good throughout Queensbridge as blocks are connected through the main street of the development but also through a secondary path linking the main entrances of blocks, to the back of the main street.

Landscape is less prominent within Queensbridge and limited to planting near the blocks' entrances. There is therefore less amenity space for users. Moreover although parking areas are broken into smaller areas, they tend to dominate the streetscape. Provisions for SUDS have been made to the eastern edge due to the presence of a brook. The trees on the other side of the brook, although in an unkept state, shield Queensbridge from the very large Brackmills Industrial Estate across from it.

Limits

Although the business park is accessible through various modes of transport, it seems that cycling and public transportation (there are three bus stops within The Lakes and one on Bedford Road) are not widely used in comparison with private cars. This suggests that other modes of transport could be better integrated

The business park is also focused on the sole provision of office premises. Except for some open space and a private tennis court, there is a noticeable absence of other uses. Mixed use, whether residential or office areas, generally enhances the use of the public realm and the quality of experience of a place. In addition, it reduces the need for users to make regular trips elsewhere.



Figure 238: Aerial image showing The Lakes and Queensbridge business park, Northampton.



Figure 239: Concept image showing the relationship of the business park to its surroundings and within the movement hierarchy.



Smaller car park areas where parking space is indicated through the change of materials.



Main entrance of buildings facing each other and interconnected throughout Queensbridge.

Summary: Purpose-Built Office Blocks and Business Parks

- Purpose-built office blocks tend to be located on the outer fringe of the three towns and are of small to medium scale
- They tend to have generous fenestration and can allow for natural surveillance
- Office blocks are often surrounded by large parking areas, which can create important set-backs from the street and dominate the public realm
- The legibility of the public realm is generally good and can be improved through an appropriate layout and elements such as landscaping and landmarks
- The public realm is generally maintained

Case-study

- The Lakes and Queensbridge business park is articulated along a main road from which secondary streets branch off to lead to the buildings and their allocated car parks
- The Lakes takes advantage of the River Nene to provide landscaped amenity space to its users
- Car park areas are well overlooked throughout the business park and are made legible through the use of different materials and landscaping in The Lakes and broken down into small areas in Queensbridge
- There is good pedestrian permeability in Queensbridge
- Private means of transport seem to predominate
- There is currently a lack of mixed use within the business park which limits the number and types of activities that take place there

2.9.6 Distribution & Manufacturing Buildings

These types of employment buildings reflect West Northamptonshire’s economic importance as a centre of distribution. They are particularly found in Daventry due to the presence of the Daventry International Rail-Freight Terminal. Often used for servicing and loading or alternatively, for manufacturing, they are traditionally characterised by their large scale and lack of architectural form and, in particular, minimal interface and frontage with the exterior.

In many older areas, the public realm tends to be poor. It generally lacks any sense of urban design and prioritises the use of motor vehicles, providing poor natural surveillance. At times, it can be neglected as a result of a limited types of activities and the use of heavy vehicles.



Figure 240: Aerial image of employment areas to the north of Daventry



Distribution premises to the south east of Towcester



Figure 241: Figure ground highlighting the scale of this typology



Manufacture and servicing premises in Daventry

General assessment of distribution and manufacturing buildings as a typology

Assets	Weaknesses
Location on the fringes of towns and concentration of industrial activities minimises hindrance of residents’ wellbeing	Location in almost exclusively employment areas reduces the availability of other uses and activities
Location of such premises also enables heavy traffic straight into and out of premises without going through the towns	Generally poor legibility of the public realm
	Generally poor maintenance of the public realm
	Poor or lack of quality of townscape
	Generally low quality of architecture which cannot accommodate changing uses
	Lack of amenity space for users

This table provides a quick assessment of the distribution and manufacturing building as a typology for working premises and the ways in which it interacts with and impacts its surroundings.

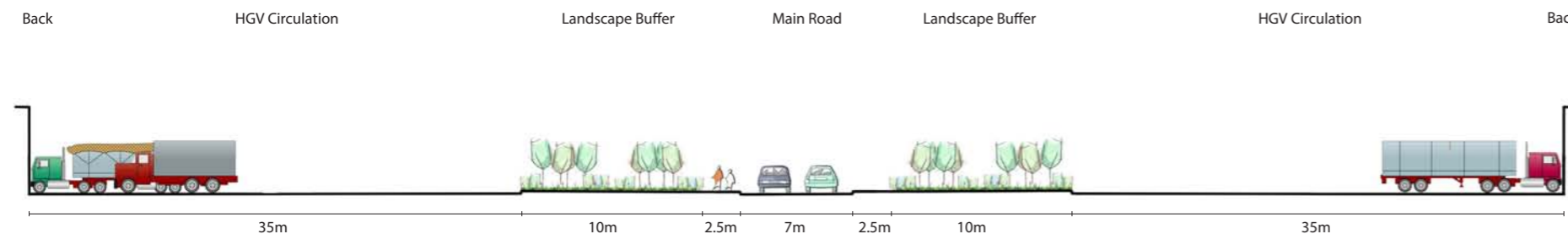


Figure 242: Section Line through Industrial Area

Local Case-Study: Sainsbury's Distribution Centre, Nectar Way (Prologis Park), Pineham

Located to the southwest of Northampton, the Sainsbury's Distribution Centre was granted planning permission in 2007 and has been recently completed. It sits on a 17.8 hectare site and consists of a large warehouse (58,687 sqm) for distribution activities, a recycling centre located to the west and a small office building which acts as a gateway into the development.

The site is defined by its access road which circles around the site, connecting to other sites. It includes a large parking area to the east which comprises a large bicycle shed and a motorbike shed, both of which are widely used. There are also two bus stops to the east of the site, both within easy reach of the main entrance and one connected to the parking.

As a result of the building's size and the flatness of the land, provision has been made to soften its impact through generous planting and landscaping all around the site. This, along with the on-site recycling centre, increases the sustainability credentials of the distribution centre.

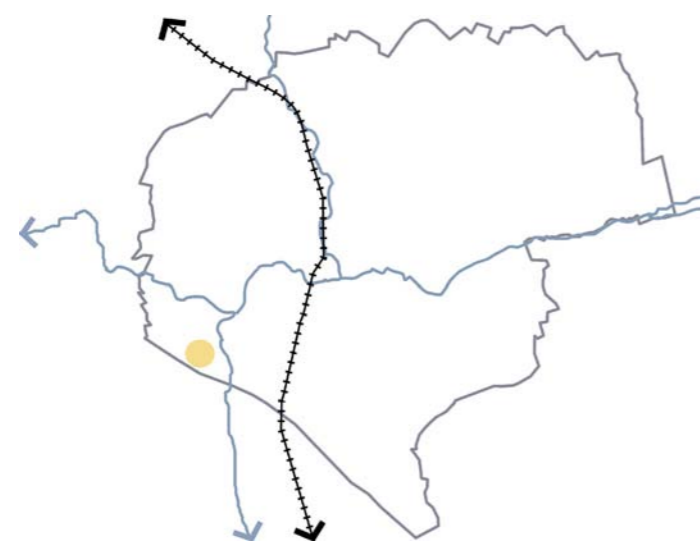


Figure 243: Drawing showing the location of Sainsbury's Distribution Centre in Northampton and in the context of WDC's UDA boundary



Figure 244: Aerial image of Sainsbury's Distribution Centre, Northampton

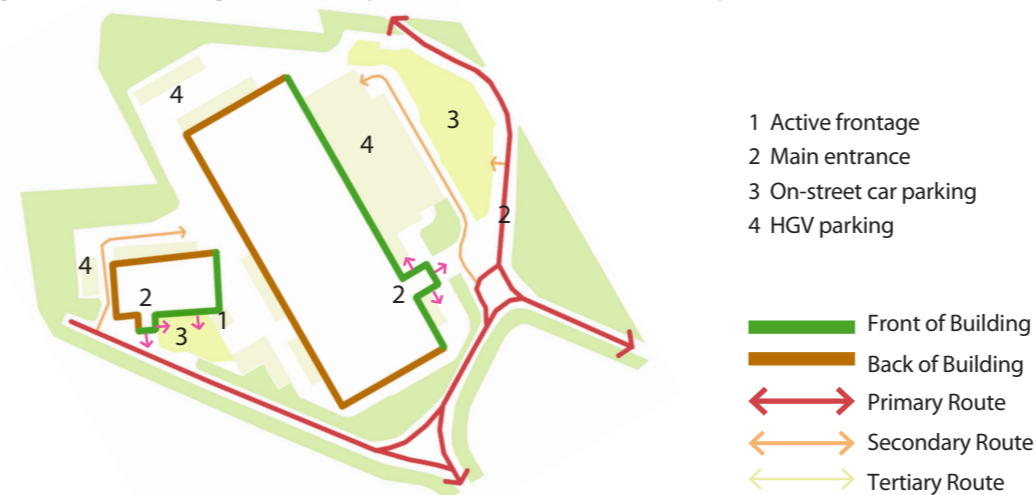


Figure 245: Concept image showing the relationship of the Distribution Centre to its surroundings and within the movement hierarchy



Location of the office unit to the front creating a sense of arrival to the site



Parking area in proximity of the office unit and including a store for bicycles and motorbikes

Summary: Distribution and Manufacturing Buildings

- Distribution and manufacturing buildings are widespread in West Northamptonshire, particularly in Daventry due to the location of the DIRFT
- Generally they are located at the edges of the towns
- Generally characterised by their large scale, nondescript architectural form and minimal interface with the public realm
- The public realm tends to be poor, prioritizing motor vehicles and providing poor natural surveillance

Case-study

- The Sainsbury's Distribution Centre was recently completed
- The site, defined by roads which circle it, is composed of a small office building and large loading and servicing areas
- The site is accessible through various means of transport, public or private (car, motorbike or bicycle)
- There is a sense of arrival to the centre due to the office building acting the focus to the premises
- The site is surrounded by planting, which will mitigate the impact of the site and will contribute to its sustainability credentials

2.9.7 Mixed Uses

The third typology of employment buildings combines industrial or servicing with office functions. These functions can be situated within the same building, with the office premises overlooking the public realm and the servicing ones to the back. This typology is prevalent in Northampton, Daventry and Towcester.

A less frequent type of mixed use comprises an office building and a warehouse adjoining each other within the same complex. This is the case at the GE/FANUC complex to the north of Towcester. This type of mixed use buildings are generally more legible and better laid out than large scale premises combining all functions. The office building tends to be built with brick or stone and is characterised by generous fenestration, whereas the distribution or manufacturing premises are made of less permanent material, with less fenestration and loading areas. Generally, this type of mixed-use buildings tends to have a better sense of arrival, some landscaping around the site and a better maintained and overlooked public realm.



Figure 246: Aerial image of the north of Towcester, where a cluster of mixed-use building and distribution buildings are located



The GE/FANUC building on Old Tiffeld Road (north of Towcester) adjacent to a shed-like structure and with large parking areas to the front and back



Figure 247 Figure ground highlighting the scale of this typology



Example of mixed use premises in Daventry

General assessment of mixed-uses developments as a typology

Assets	Weaknesses
Location on the fringes of towns avoids hindering the wellbeing of residents within the town or residential areas	Location in almost exclusively employment areas reduces the availability of other uses and activities
Location of such premises also enables heavy traffic straight into and out of premises without going through the towns	Poor quality of townscape
Generally good use of landscaping to define the site and within the development	Typology of building which cannot accommodate changing uses easily
Good legibility of the public realm	Provision and quality of amenity space for users varies
Good maintenance of the public realm	

This table provides an assessment of mixed-use developments as a typology for working premises and their interface with surrounding areas

Local Case-Study: Levi Strauss UK Ltd, Tithe Barn Way, Swan Valley

This development houses the headquarters of Levi Strauss Ltd in the UK. Sitting on its own plot to the west of Northampton, it consists of an office building to which are attached two servicing buildings. Although the latter have much larger footprints than the office building, the office building constitutes the landmark of the development due to its architecture, its blue glazing and prominent entrance. It therefore attracts the attention away from the cubic shed to the left. It also conceals the servicing building located behind it and whose presence is only suggested by lorries driving to the rear of the development.

The site is defined by landscaping throughout, which reduces its impact on the main street and leads the way into the development.

There is some amenity provision for employees, in the form of a seating area to the side of the office building and adjacent to a small green. The car park is located to the right of the office building and in front of the servicing building. As such, it is not sufficiently overlooked.



Figure 248: Drawing showing the location of Levi Strauss Ltd's headquarters in Northampton and in the context of WNDC's UDA boundary



Figure 249: Aerial image of Levi Strauss Ltd's headquarters, Northampton



Figure 250: Concept image showing the relationship of the Levi Strauss Ltd Office Building to its surroundings and within the movement hierarchy



Landscaping marking the entry and leading the way within the development. Segregation of uses with lorries heading to the rear of the site



Overlooked amenity space for users

Summary : Mixed Uses

- Mixed use buildings accommodate office and manufacturing or distribution functions within the same premises
- The different functions are generally segregated; offices tend to overlook the street whilst other functions are located to the rear
- The public realm is often characterised by large parking areas and can include open space with minimal landscaping

Case-study

- The Levi Strauss Headquarters building provides a mix of office, storage and servicing uses
- The development is designed so that the office building constitutes the landmark and conceals and detracts attention from servicing premises, located to the side and the rear
- Landscaping defines the site's perimeter and shields it from the street. It also leads the way within the development
- There is some provision for amenity space for users
- Although located to the front of the development, the car park is not very well overlooked

2.9.8 European Best Practice Examples

This section identifies four exemplar employment case-studies of European significance. These cover a range of different typologies and scales, but focus on how larger scale employment buildings can be integrated into a mixed use environment. It highlights the design principles that achieve a high architectural standard and minimise the pitfalls of typical 'big-shed' development.

European Case-Study 1: Chiswick Park, London

The Chiswick Park Development in London is located just off the M4/A4 on the western approach to the capital, providing excellent transport links. Due to the London location, parking levels are not as high as elsewhere given the provision of bus stops within the site and proximity to a number of rail and tube stations.

This is a good example of a large purpose-built business park site located within a reasonably tight urban context and adjacent to other land uses, plus making good use of a site constrained by railway lines. Sustainability is at the top of the agenda both in terms of architecture and site layout. The design by Richard Stirk Harbour Architects arranges the square blocks in a necklace strung together by the perimeter street, looking into a central park. The high quality landscape provides both amenity value for employees and helps prevent flooding whilst mitigating the urban heat island effect.

Summary

Using landscaping effectively provides a setting for the buildings and SUDS to help achieve water neutrality across the site.

- Good connections to surrounding areas and to public transport, including bus terminus, rail stations and cycle routes
- High quality building design serving as a landmark development and attracting opportunity and investment
- Buildings with active frontages



Figure 251: Aerial view showing dense site layout and relationship to adjacent areas and public transport connections (site under construction)

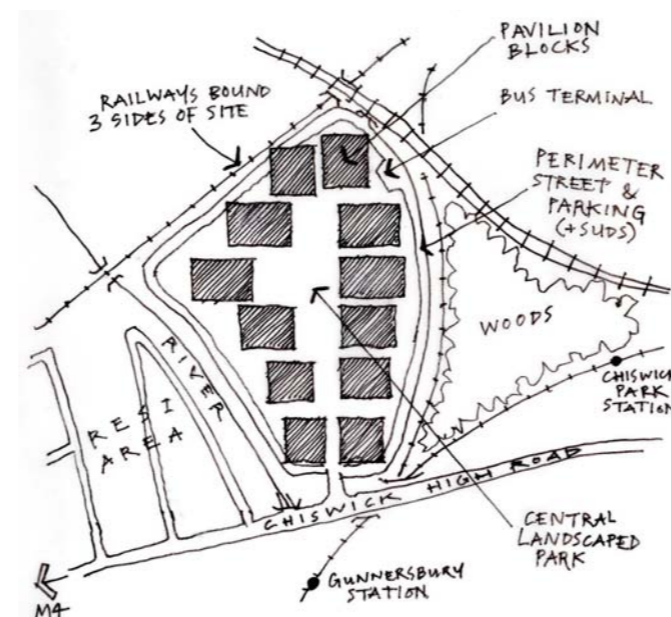


Figure 252: Key layout principles



Buildings work 'in the round' looking out in all directions across landscaped grounds and lakes. Source: CABE



Buildings respond to the street and outdoor spaces. External louvers and staircases animate the large glass facades. Source: CABE

European Case-Study 2:

Neu Oerlikon, Zurich, Switzerland

Neu Oerlikon is a new urban quarter in northern Zurich, extending from an existing transport hub. The brownfield masterplan site formerly had heavy industry uses. It now mixes residential apartment blocks, ground floor shops, offices and larger employment units, as well as a CHP station to provide energy for the development. The masterplan includes 5,000 bedspaces and 12,000 workspaces - mainly light-industrial and service industries.

The design of the new development follows the pattern of the previous industrial layout, but introduces green squares and landscaped routes throughout to soften the environment and reduce the amount of road infrastructure and tarmac that existed previously. The large blocks provide a high degree of flexibility and adaptability for different usages. Clear spans mean that spaces can be compartmentalised, or left open to accommodate larger premises. Generous floor to ceiling heights are also provided for this reason.

Five new squares and parks give the different areas of the development character and provide high quality spaces that can be used by residents and workers alike. Competition winning designs for these landscape schemes have been very successful and the whole development has been built over a mere 5 year period due to demand for the properties on offer.

Summary

- Large-scale industrial layouts can be made human in scale through intelligent use of landscaping and public spaces that are enclosed and well defined
- The courtyard typology is effective for providing commercial buildings
- Different and at times, conflicting land-uses can exist together provided there is an adequate buffer provided which could take the form of vegetation, landscaped space or built form
- Flexible buildings that can accommodate a range of different uses



Figure 253: Aerial view of the development

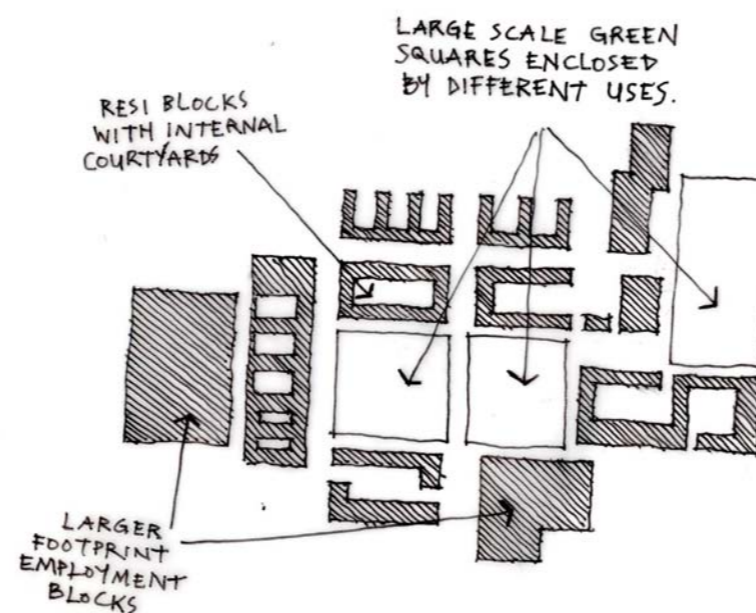


Figure 254: Key layout principles



Figure 255: The urban block layout is based on the previous layout of industrial buildings. Source: CABE



The mix of uses works well as residential and commercial buildings are located next to each other. Source: CABE



The park sits at the heart of the commercial area of the masterplan. The structure giving support to vines and creeper plants provides greenery and shade. Source: CABE

European Case-Study 3:

Hammarby Sjöstadt, Stockholm, Sweden

This 200 hectare development is a new city district on the edge of Stockholm, focussed around a large lake. As well as new housing, the development provides 200,000 sqm of commercial space and 10,000 jobs.

The development is intentionally 'urban' in its design despite being an edge of town location. A wide boulevard acts as an access spine to the development and is the hub for most commercial activity in the masterplan. This accommodates a range of business types within standard block sizes (based on the Stockholm city centre precedent) of 70x100m and occasional two-storey pavilion buildings.

The lower floors of nearly all buildings have been designed to be totally flexible so they are suitable for commercial, leisure or community uses. This creates a vibrant 'high street' character with activity during all parts of the day. Purpose-built commercial units providing for larger spaces/businesses are also included behind the high street in a zoned area, but still in close proximity to the high street amenities.

The high green credentials of the development also mean that district-wide renewable energy sources are available and water can be managed effectively to combat flooding or drought scenario.

Summary

Masterplans for new developments should provide flexibility within blocks to allow maximum variety of commercial usages

- To provide a very rich mix that creates highly sustainable, authentic and vibrant communities
- The High Street typology provides a simple, adaptable and historically effective means of delivering commercial uses



Figure 256: Aerial view of the site

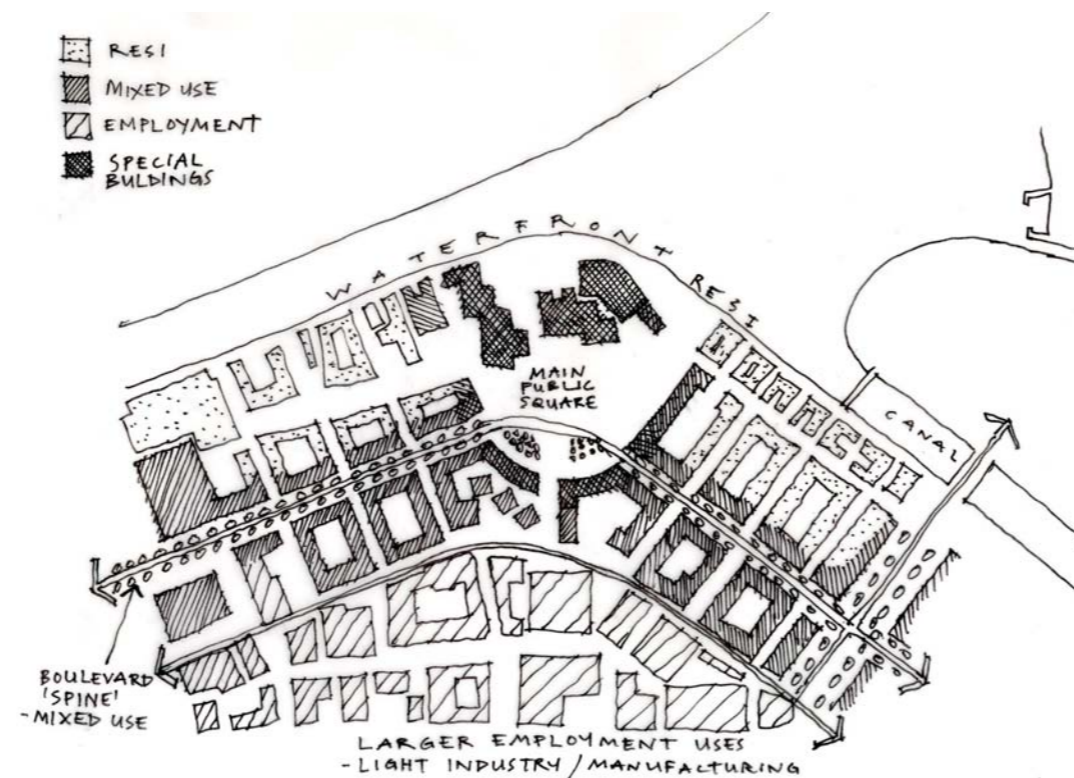


Figure 257: Key layout principles

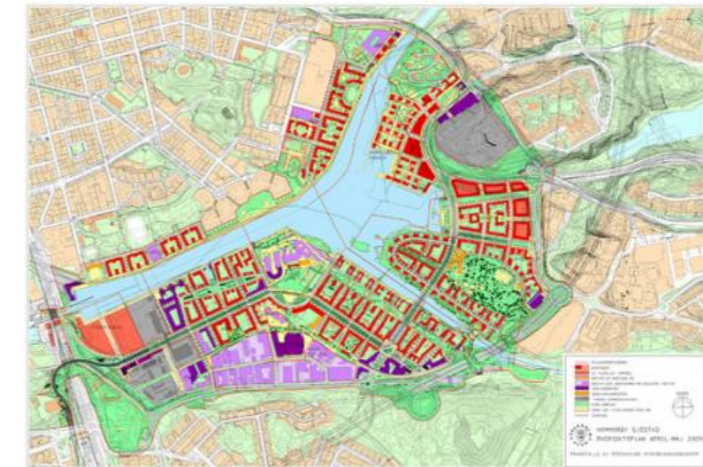


Figure 258: The masterplan. Source: CABE



The canal network forms an intrinsic part of the master plan. Source: CABE



Mixed use blocks line the wide urban boulevard. Source: CABE

European Case-Study 4:

BMW Building, Leipzig, Germany

The BMW plant in Leipzig is a good example of a large manufacturing building that sits within its landscape. The uncompromising design by Zaha Hadid Architects makes a bold statement about the purpose of the building and creates a landmark rather than disguising the function in a traditional building, or a dull grey box.

The sinuous forms give a dynamism to the building. Even the car park in front is conceived as part of the overall design, by creating a weaving shape that twists up to the sweeping facade of the building, providing a strong and cohesive visual impression when viewed from the road.

A building such as this needs a visionary client in order to deliver high design quality (especially due to investment required). However, some of the principles can be followed for more modest projects.

Summary

- Careful design of car parking areas, clustered in small groups with landscaping or other features
- Landscaping can also be used creatively to screen service areas, create amenity areas and generally improve the site ecologically
- Bold and interesting facade treatments to reduce monotony
- Placement of office functions at the primary frontage to the site or street to concentrate activity in the public view
- Create large, inviting entrances that are in scale with the building, and improve overall legibility
- Situate service areas to the rear of building wherever possible, and segregate from pedestrian areas



Figure 259: Aerial View of the site

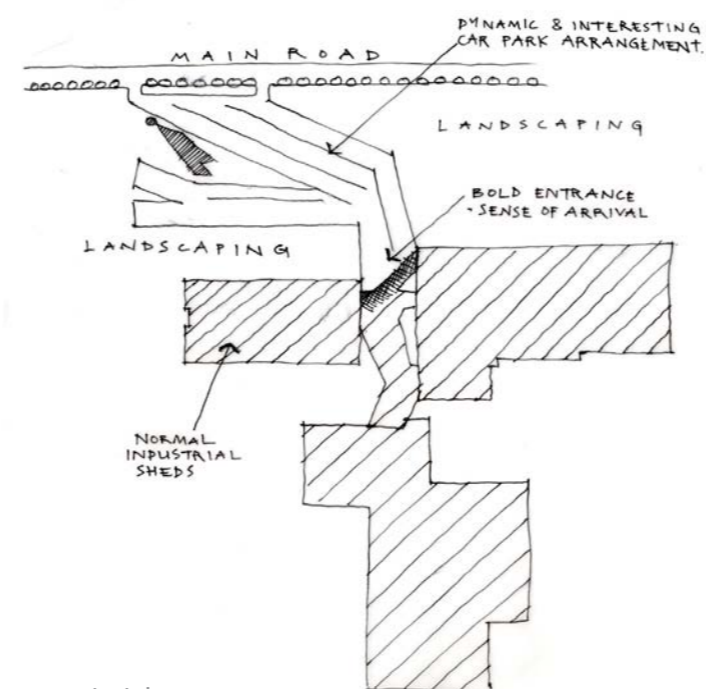


Figure 260: Key layout principles



View from road across water body and landscaped area providing a setting for the buildings. Source - www.arcspace.com



High quality architecture creates a distinct landmark. Source - www.arcspace.com



Well marked and inviting entrance. Source - www.arcspace.com



HAMILTON HOUSE

STOCKLEY ST



SUNSPORT
TOURS & TRAVEL

2.9.8 Summary

Due to its strategic location within the road network, West Northamptonshire has an important role as a centre of distribution and storage. Employment areas are as much a feature of the three towns as the other character areas.

There are four typologies of employment areas broadly categorised within historic and modern types. The historic form of the employment building is typified by the victorian shoe factory, as found in Northampton. While the modern form of the employment building takes on three further typologies; the office buildings and business parks; distribution and manufacturing buildings and warehouses; and mixed use buildings, found within West Northamptonshire.

Historic Form of Employment Areas

The shoe factories are mostly located in Northampton and were built along with residential areas during the Victorian period. Although they have much larger footprints than the surrounding terraced houses, they are well integrated with the urban fabric of those areas because their massing and height is in keeping with that of the overall neighbourhood. Generally located at the junction of two streets, they constitute local landmarks and contribute to the townscape.

This typology of employment area presents many assets and is considered an exemplar for new developments and the integration of employment uses in proximity with other uses, namely residential. In spite of the fact that they were purpose-built for industrial uses, Victorian factories are noteworthy because of the quality of the buildings and their capacity to be adapted to new and different uses. Most factories today are still in use, either as flats for residential use or as offices. Sometimes, as is the case with Mobbs Miller House, they contain a mix of uses, combining offices with light industrial activities. The latter take place without hindering the well being of local residents.

The photograph to the left is an example of a Victorian shoe factory on Stockley Street, Northampton

Modern Form of Employment Areas

Greater reliance on vehicular transport, an growing corporate culture coupled with an advancement in production, distribution and storage of goods has led to a marked change in the modern employment type. These have become more functional and are located within areas that are zoned and planned. Consequently, whether they are office buildings, business parks, manufacturing and distribution centres or mixed-used buildings, they are purposefully segregated from other uses within Northampton, Daventry or Towcester.

Moreover, the employment areas tend to focus on specific uses and activities and are planned and designed exclusively to their function and specific needs, often to the expense of good design and aesthetics. Yet this segregation from the main areas of a town helps to prevent residents from being adversely affected by heavy traffic, unfriendly premises and noise.

Whilst manufacturing, storage and distribution do require specific logistical facilities, there is potential for office uses to be more easily integrated within towns. They have the potential for making a positive contribution to the public realm and the urban experience through the mix of uses. This is especially the case with business parks which could accommodate a variety of uses, making better use of land and maintaining activity through the day.

Conclusion

A key challenge faced by West Northamptonshire today is the need to readdress the approach to the design and location of employment areas that have been concentrated towards the edges of towns. There is an urgency to achieve an integration of uses and to ensure a higher sustainability agenda for new developments with greater accessibility through different modes of transport. This can be achieved through a mixed-use and balanced approach to functionality, building design and the public realm. Integration of uses also provides flexibility for further expansion.

The individual assets identified within the typologies and related case studies should be carefully considered and used as exemplars if applicable and reflective of the context for the proposed new development.

Historic Form Employment Areas

Street Layout	Rectilinear grid layout with clear street hierarchy, providing good permeability
Structure	Formal with strong sense of rhythm and regularity of features
Frontages	Large plot widths for shoe factories with continuous frontages. Active frontage throughout providing natural surveillance
Uses	Mixed use: residential, commercial and sometimes light industrial
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking on street. Some commercial buildings have rear courts for parking and servicing
Density Range	Approximately 40 - 50 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights relate to street hierarchy with 4 storey residential buildings lining primary streets, 3 storey buildings on secondary streets, and 2 storey buildings on smaller residential streets. Taller commercial buildings of 4 to 6 storeys form landmarks in corner locations
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations
Consideration as exemplar	Northampton's historic employment areas can be considered as an exemplar for new developments

Modern Form Employment Areas

Street Layout	Highly engineered street layout designed for larger vehicles with large turning radii
Structure	Largely informal with major variations in plot widths and no sense of rhythm. Buildings tend to be large warehouses or office blocks with a lack of aesthetic architectural form or detailing
Frontages	Generally very wide plot sizes ranging from 15 to over 700 metres wide. Frontages are generally inactive, often with no windows or doors facing street, and with parking lots setting buildings away from street. No sense of enclosure or natural surveillance.
Uses	Primarily industrial and servicing uses
Typical Block Layout	Point block layouts with buildings in centre of block surrounded by parking and not landscaped green spaces
Density Range	Approximately 1 - 4 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 1 to 2 storeys
Townscape	No sense of townscape