

Northampton

2.4 Context Appraisal: Northampton

2.4.1 Introduction

Northampton is a large market town and a local government Borough in the East Midlands region of England. It is also the County town of Northamptonshire. It is the third largest town in the Country that does not have official city status. The population of Northampton was recorded at 194,458 by the 2001 Census.

The historic centre of Northampton is located centrally within the urban area and still serves as the primary centre for the town. It is supported by a number of local centres that are dotted around the town.

Northampton is surrounded by a number of villages, including Great Brington, Church Brampton and Boughton.

The boundary of the urban area of Northampton is fairly clear as it essentially follows the UDC boundary. As mentioned previously, the population of Northampton has increased greatly since the 1960s, largely due to planned expansion under the Commission for New Towns.

Much of Northampton's housing expansion has taken place to the east of the town with developments such as the 1970's eastern district estates built mainly for the London overspill population. Recently, expansion continued on the western outskirts at Upton and to the south at Grange Park.

In light of Northampton's growth forecast as part of the wider West Northamptonshire growth agenda, the Northampton Context Appraisal attempts to capture the essence of the town, the key features which should be reflected and responded to in future development to make sure that the expansion is in keeping with the existing context.

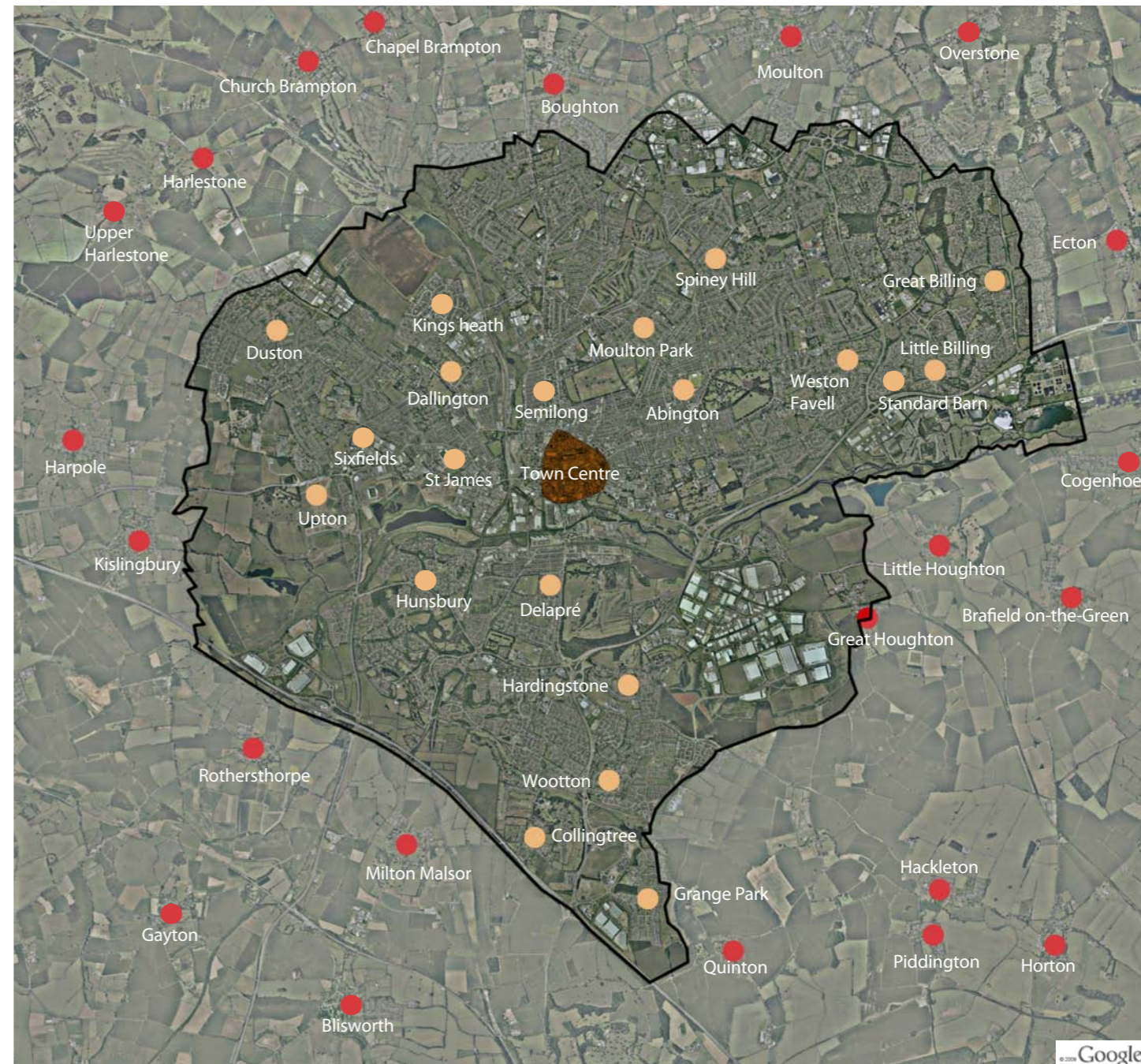


Figure 15: Aerial image of Northampton highlighting its polycentric structure with its centrally located Town Centre, local centres and surrounding villages

- WND Boundary
- Town Centre
- Neighbourhood Centres
- Villages

Figure 14: Aerial image of Northampton Town Centre

2.4.2 Northampton Transport Network

Northampton has a radial network of main roads which connects the Town Centre to its inner ring road and the surrounding Countryside. These routes are well used by vehicles moving within the town. Northampton's location on the M1 means it is well connected by road to London and towns to the north of England.

Northampton has a relatively high modal share of private vehicles within the Town Centre, with a majority of commutes to work. A limited number of journeys are undertaken by public transport. As existing, the town does not demonstrate a sustainable movement pattern.

The town has an intricate bus network, however, the routes are largely radial, resulting in indirect cross town journeys. Passengers often have to travel to the centre and change buses to travel out again. Public perception of the bus system is that it is poor and therefore only has a limited usage.

Within the Town Centre, walking and cycling routes are generally good, as the medieval street layout is permeable; this supports walking and creates a pleasant pedestrian environment. Additionally, the high quality and active frontages within the Town Centre create interest. Outside of the centre, mainly in areas developed in the late 20th Century, streets tend to be dominated by vehicular traffic and because conditions for walking are not as good, fewer people tend to walk.

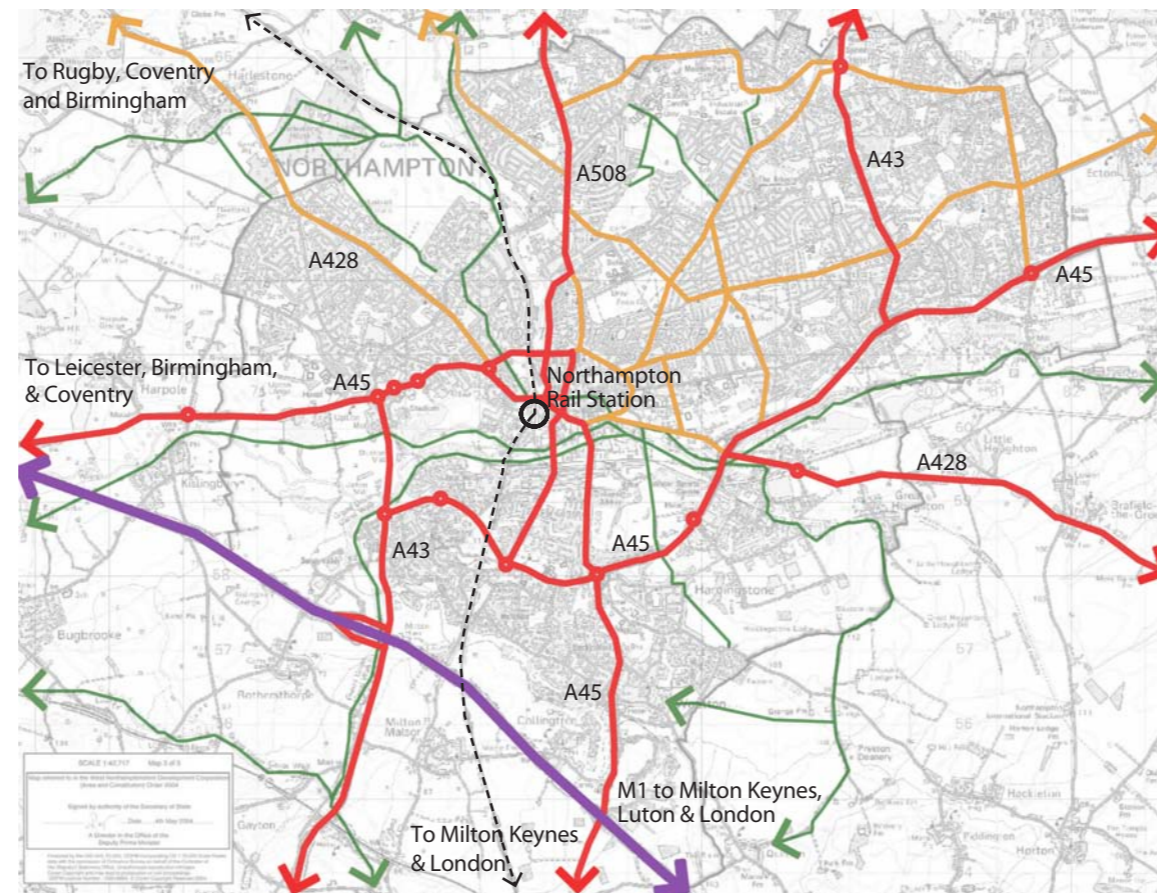


Figure 16: Movement routes within Northampton

- Motorway
- Primary Route
- Secondary Route
- Pedestrian Public Access Route

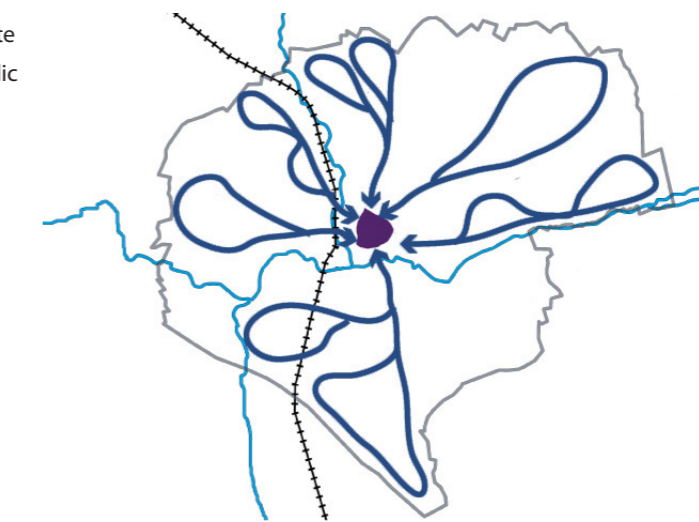


Figure 17: Public transport – Radial pattern of bus routes hinders cross town movement

Northampton Movement

- Radial road network leads towards Town Centre
- Radial bus network does not aid cross town journeys and so is poorly used
- Inner ring road to divert traffic from Centre
- Good walking and cycling conditions in Centre and in Victorian areas
- Outside of inner ring, public realm tends to be vehicle dominated and conditions for walking and cycling are poor
- Current movement patterns are not sustainable

2.4.3 Historical Growth of Northampton

Northampton was a village founded in Saxon Times and known as Hamm tun, or well-watered meadow. At the time of the Domesday Book, Northampton was already a large fortified settlement with a population of around 1,500. Through the middle ages, Northampton held a weekly market in the Market Square that still exists today. The wool industry was the main economic driver for the town. Its legacy exists to this day through the names of streets including Mercers Row, The Drapery and Woolmonger Street.

On 20 September 1675, a fire burned down nearly half of Northampton. As with London, the rebuilding of Northampton created a town which possessed buildings of higher quality architecture than its predecessor.

In the 17th century, Northampton became noted for its shoe making industry, which slowly overtook the wool industry in importance. By the early 19th century, one in three men in Northampton were employed in this industry. Rising to one in two by the second half of the century. The dominance of a single industry made the town vulnerable as the industry declined the 1920s and 30s. This occurred in conjunction with Country-wide industrial decline and led to a stagnation in the economy and population of the town through the first half of the 20th century until 1965 when it was designated as a 'New Town' as part of the New Town Movement.

To facilitate the construction of new homes, the Northampton Development Corporation was formed. These homes were to house the migrating population from London under a planned depopulation of the Capital city. As the town expanded, it subsumed some of its surrounding villages such as Dallington and Duston. Today, even though these function as local centres for the town, they retain their rural characteristics.

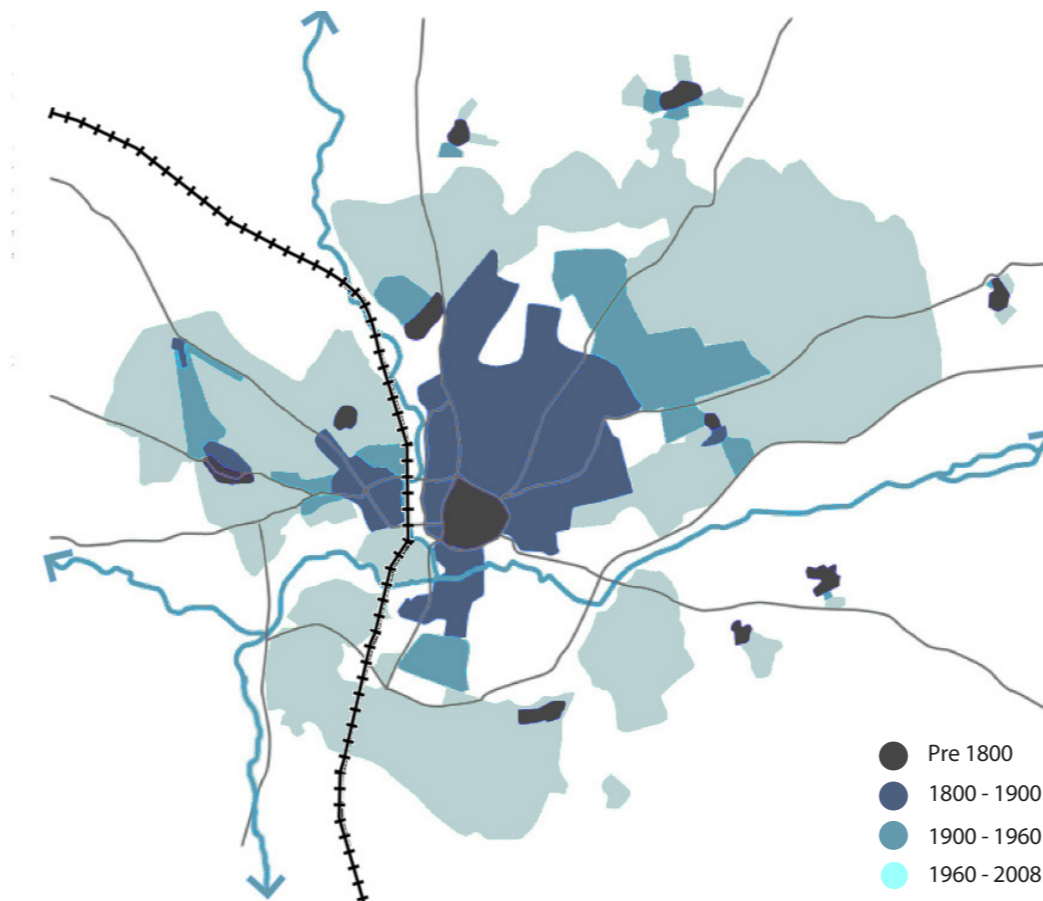


Figure 18: Historic growth of Northampton

Historic Growth

- Founded as a Saxon village
- Known in the middle ages for its market
- Grew rapidly in industrial times due to the success of its shoe industry
- After a period of decline in the early 20th century, the town expanded again in 1960s after gaining designation as New Town
- Growth subsumed surrounding villages into the urban area yet they retain their rural characteristics
- Town set for further growth through designation as Growth Point



Figure 19: Northampton 1610



Figure 20: Northampton Centre and surrounds 1884

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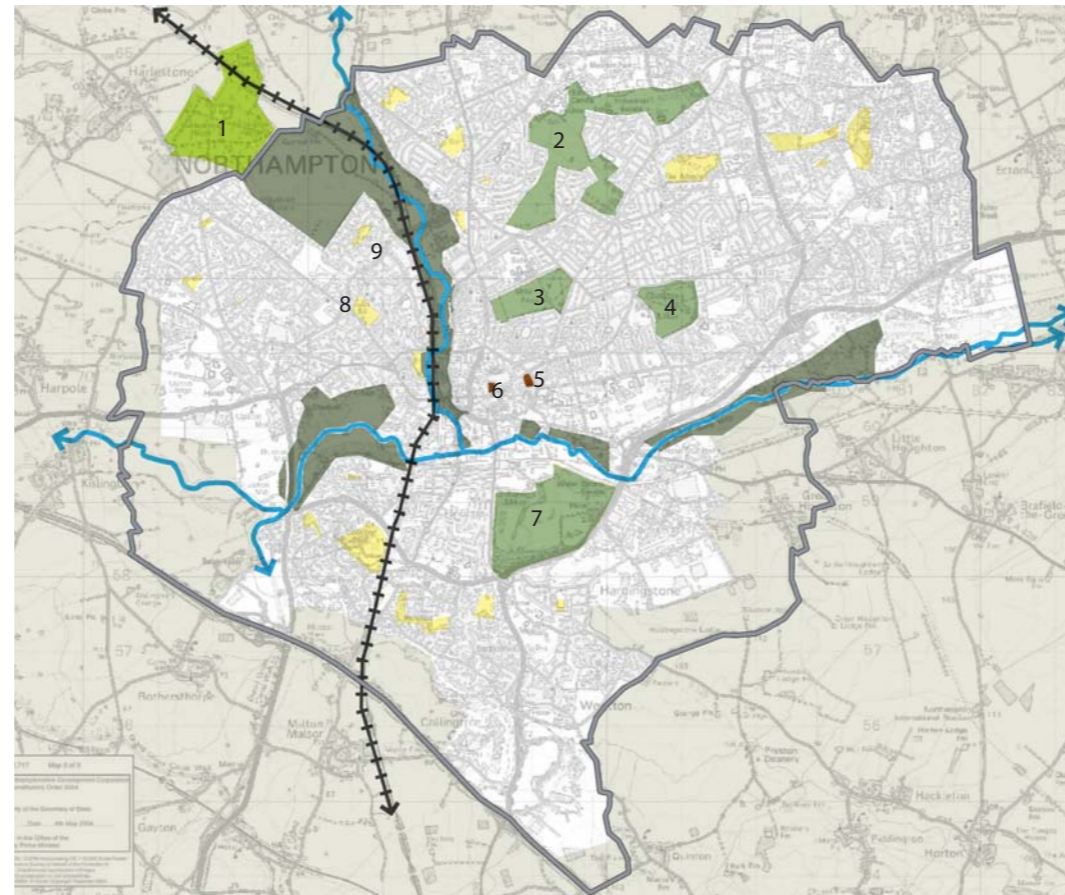
Figure 21: Northampton Town Centre 1999

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2.4.4 Typology of Landscape & Public Spaces within Northampton

Northampton is located within a wider area of characteristic landscape, but it also contains a number of landscaped areas, parks, brooks, and flood plains.

- Key spaces within the Town Centre are the Market and the Main Square. Typically the secondary spaces are in the form of church squares with a green that creates a setting for the church
- 19th century suburbs to the north and east of the town have larger formal open spaces such as Abington Park. Others including Kingsthorpe and Spinney Hill Parks are laid out as public parks in formal Victorian styles
- Areas around the river were historically home to industry due to the transportation of goods along the river. With the industrial decline, these areas have become linear open space corridors also serving as flood plains for the river
- There are a number of smaller parks and recreation grounds, such as St. James' Park, Beckett's Park, Far Cotton Recreation ground and The County Ground, also laid out in a formal style
- Around the town are larger open spaces that provide informal recreational areas
- Some of the new suburbs of Northampton retain small pockets of open space containing existing features such as woodland, brooks or valley bottom areas. These are important for the continuity of wildlife and biodiversity corridors
- The village centres retained within the historic growth of Northampton contain a number of smaller green spaces as village greens
- Other open spaces are linked with schools or serve as community facilities, allotments or local parks



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- Strategic Accessible Greenspace
 - Riverside Open Space
 - Heathland
- Local Accessible Greenspace
 - Large Parks
 - Local Park/Recreational Areas
- Other
 - Town Squares/Central Green Square
 - Rural Farmland

Figure 22: Landscape / Open Space Typology

Principle Public Spaces within Northampton

Name	Length (m) approx	Width (m) approx	Area (ha) approx	General Shape	Function
1. Harlestone Heath	1080	900	100	Irregular	Regional Woodlands
2. Bradlaugh Fields	-	-	60	Irregular	Metropolitan Park
3. Northampton Racecourse	1000	450	45	Irregular	Metropolitan Park
4. Abington Park	860	625	50	Irregular	Metropolitan Park
5. St. Giles Church Yard	85	90	0.90	Irregular	Central Green Square
6. Market Square	100	70	0.70	Triangular	Main Civic Square
7. Delapré Park and Abbey	1100	1000	202	Irregular	Metropolitan Park
8. Dallington Recreational Grounds	330	230	7.5	Rectangular	Local Playing Fields
9. Dallington Village Green	30	20	0.06	Triangular	Local Green Space
Brampton Arm, River Nene	-	100 to 300	-	Linear	Green corridor
River Nene	-	75 to 500	-	Linear	Green corridor

2.4.5 Topography of Northampton

The topography of Northampton is defined by the valley of the River Nene that cuts through the town marking its lowest point. Land then rises to the north and west. The Brampton Arm of the River Nene creates a valley running north to south through the town.

- There is a strong connection between the topography and the landscape. The wooded areas are often located along hill tops and the linear parks and open spaces straddle along the rivers
- The Town Centre is located at a low point, near the meeting point of two river valleys
- Residential neighbourhoods tend to be located on slopes and are characterised by church spires which serve as landmarks, as at Kingsthorpe
- More recent development has been located on ridgelines

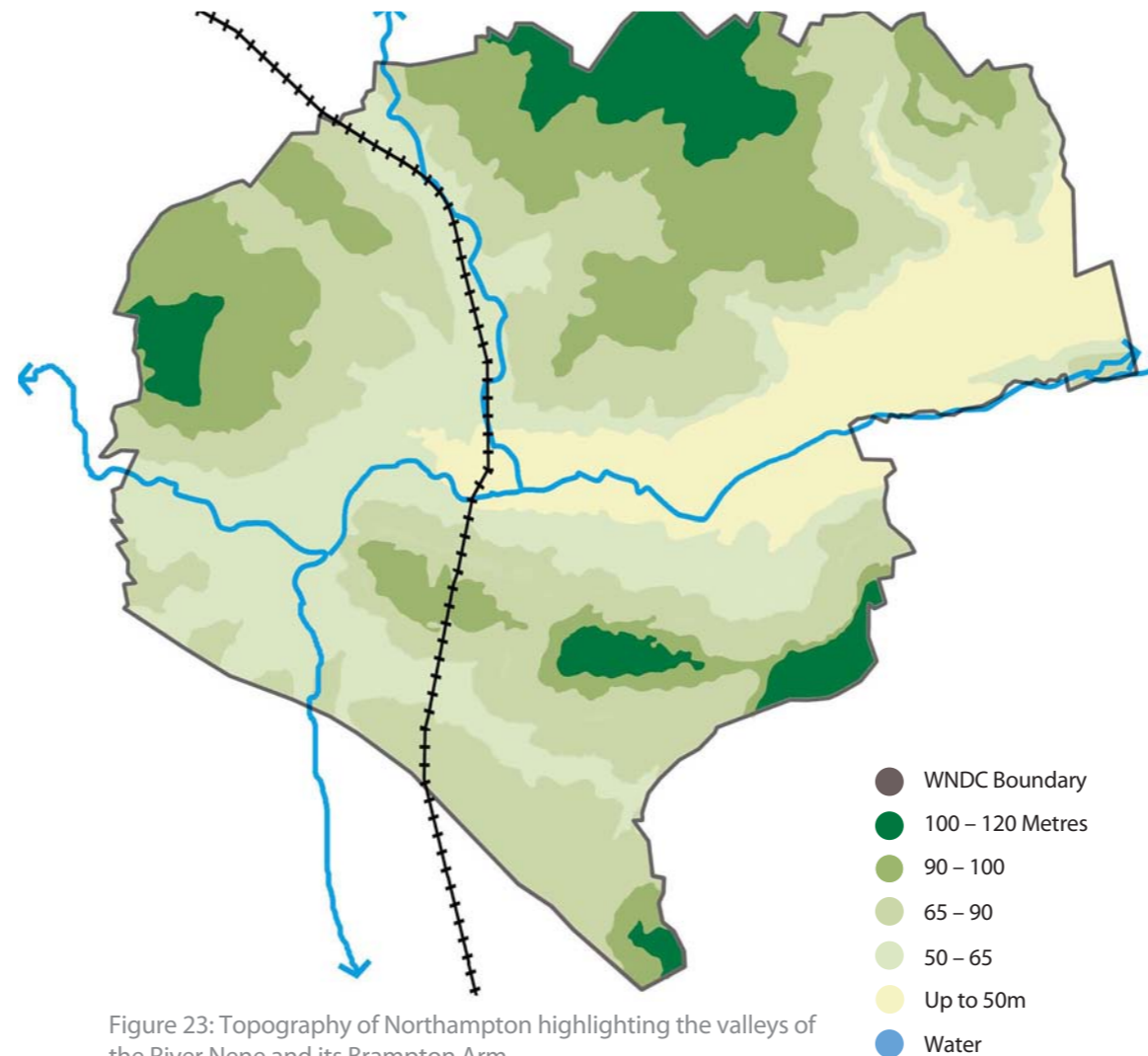


Figure 23: Topography of Northampton highlighting the valleys of the River Nene and its Brampton Arm

Landscape, Open Space

- Market and Main Square are the main open spaces in the Centre. Church squares with a green constitute secondary spaces
- Larger formal open spaces of the 19th century located in areas to the north and east of Centre
- Industrial decline transformed areas along the river into linear open spaces also serving as flood plains
- Smaller parks and recreation grounds laid out in a formal style
- Larger open spaces in periphery serving as informal recreational areas
- Importance of suburban pockets of open space for wildlife and biodiversity
- Other open spaces serving as community facilities

Topography

- Topography of Northampton is defined by the valley of the River Nene
- Strong connection between topography and landscape
- Town Centre located at a low point
- Neighbourhoods tend to be located on slopes
- Recent development located on ridge lines

2.4.6 Character Areas and Land Uses of Northampton

The different areas of Northampton are synonymous with the layers of development of the Town. These layers create varied character areas that are a statement of their time. Centrally located, the Town Centre is the strongest anchor of the settlement. It is defined by its medieval layout and high quality architecture characterised by ironstone and brick which reinforce the city's civic role. Buildings are generally between two to four storeys high, with some landmark buildings reaching up to six storeys. The Town Centre is surrounded by areas of residential development anchored by local centres. During its growth, Northampton agglomerated with a number of its surrounding villages, such as Dallington and Duston. Nowadays these serve as local centres to the town and retain their historic rural characteristics. They also add to the overall polycentric structure of the town.

These residential rings reflect the town's historic growth. The areas around the centre are essentially Victorian in character. These are adjoined by pockets of interwar development. A considerable area of Northampton is taken up by the planned expansion of the 1960s to later 20th century. More recent development has occurred on the edges of the town in areas such as Upton and St. Crispins.

Northampton's river valleys, with its green corridors, are another important attribute of the town.

When two character areas border each other, they form spaces that can be categorized as transition areas. At times, the transition between the two areas of distinct character is smooth but often, these in-between areas comprise of left-over or in-fill spaces. The interface of Northampton's urban areas with its rural surroundings is another form of a transition. Unfortunately due to the nature of Northampton's expansion, many of its urban edges are made of housing estates that look inward and turn away from the green surroundings.

All of these character areas exhibit key features that have been highlighted in greater detail in pages that follow.

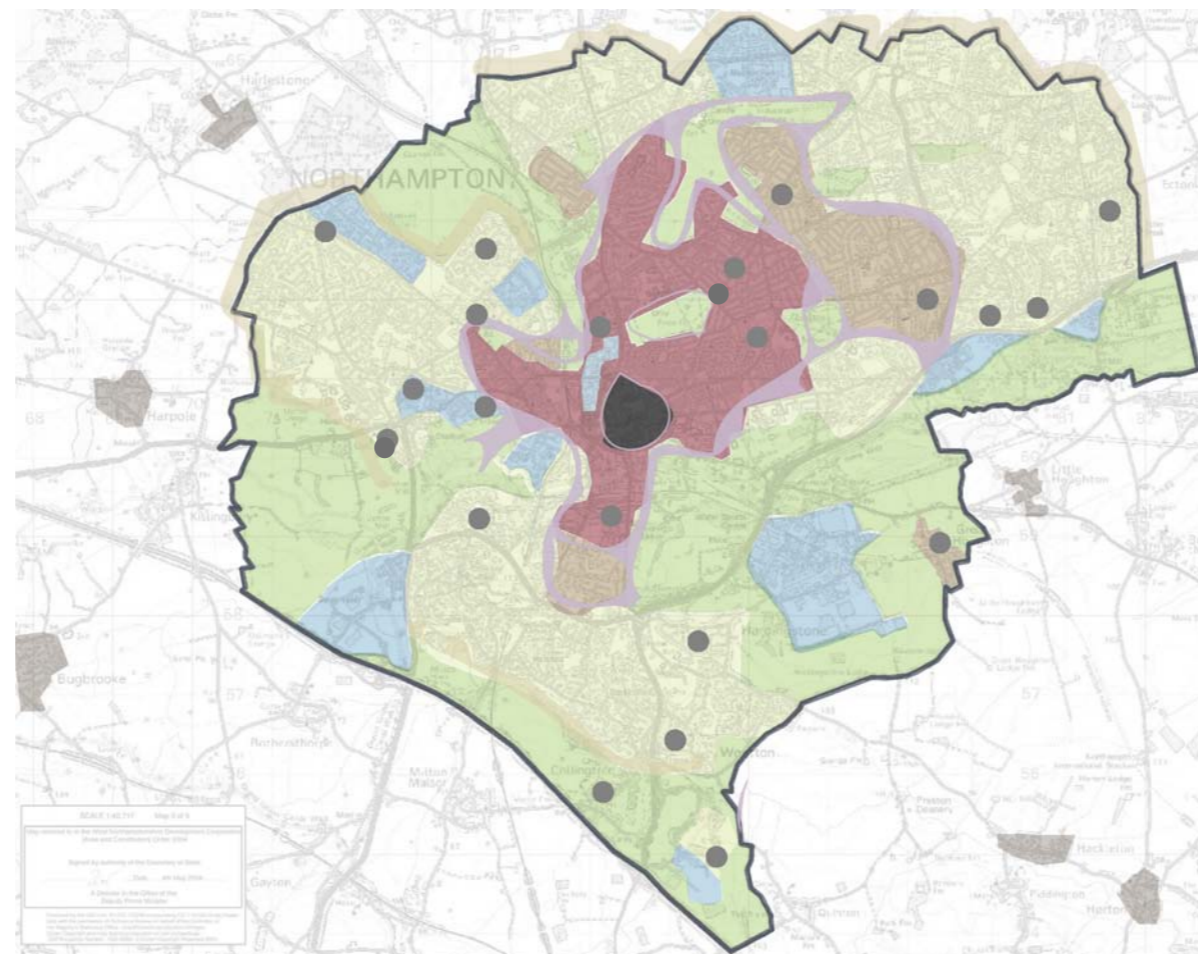


Figure 24: Character areas of Northampton

- Town Centre
- Victorian
- Interwar
- Late 20th Century and Recent Development
- Employment/Industry
- Urban/Rural Edge
- Green Space/Rural farmland
- Local and Village Centres
- Transition Areas
- Surrounding Villages

Character Areas

- Character areas are synonymous with the layers of historical growth of the town
- The town has a polycentric urban structure with a centrally located Town Centre
- The Town Centre is surrounded by rings of residential development with their local centres, some still retaining their historical rural characteristics
- Recent development taking place at the edge of the town
- Transition areas in the town tend to be left over or in-fill space
- General tendency for urban areas at the edge of the town to turn away from the rural surroundings

2.4.7 Summary: Key Characteristics of Northampton

The following diagrams provide a short summary of the key characteristics of the Town.

One: Strategic Location

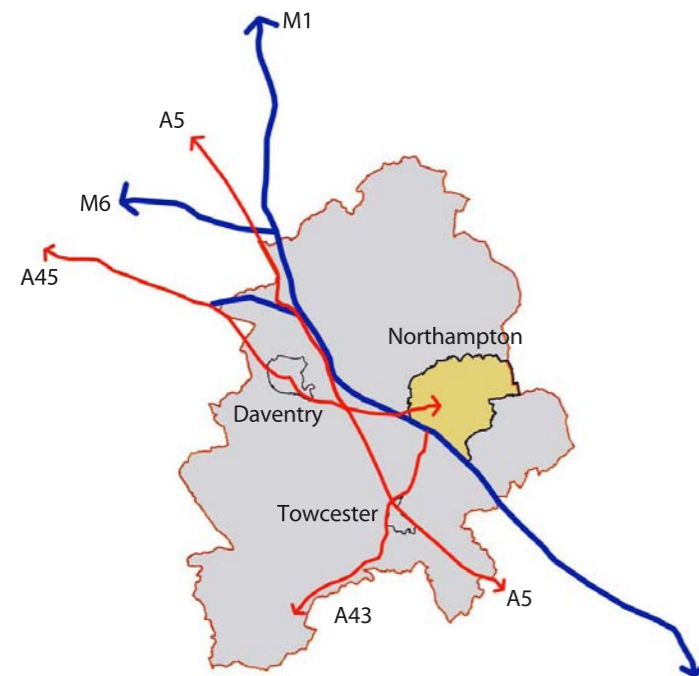


Figure 25

- Strategic position within the regional transport network
- Location just off the M1 and major rail lines going through town
- Good connections with London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes.

Two: Movement Network

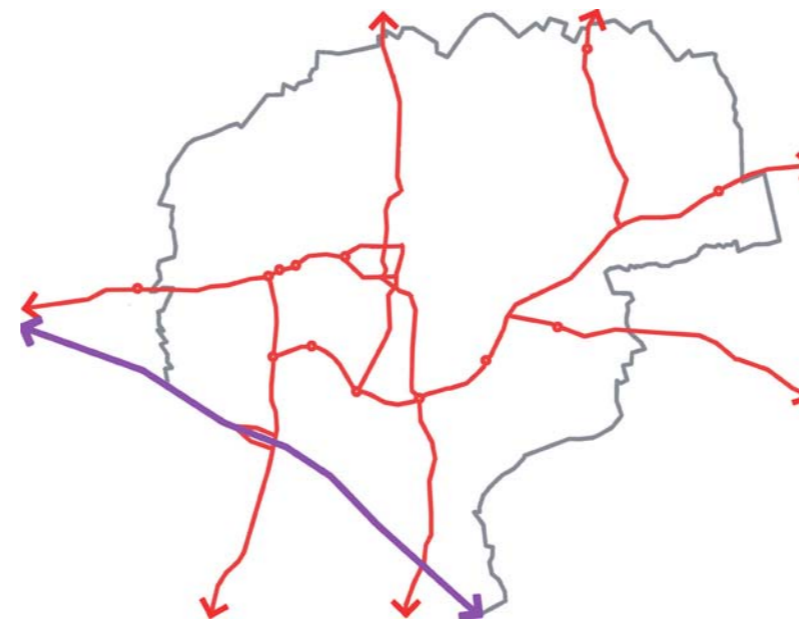


Figure 26

- Radial road network creating strong links with surroundings but poor cross town connections
- Southern inner ring road diverting traffic from the centre
- Planned northern extension to relieve congestion on main junctions.

Three: Public Transport

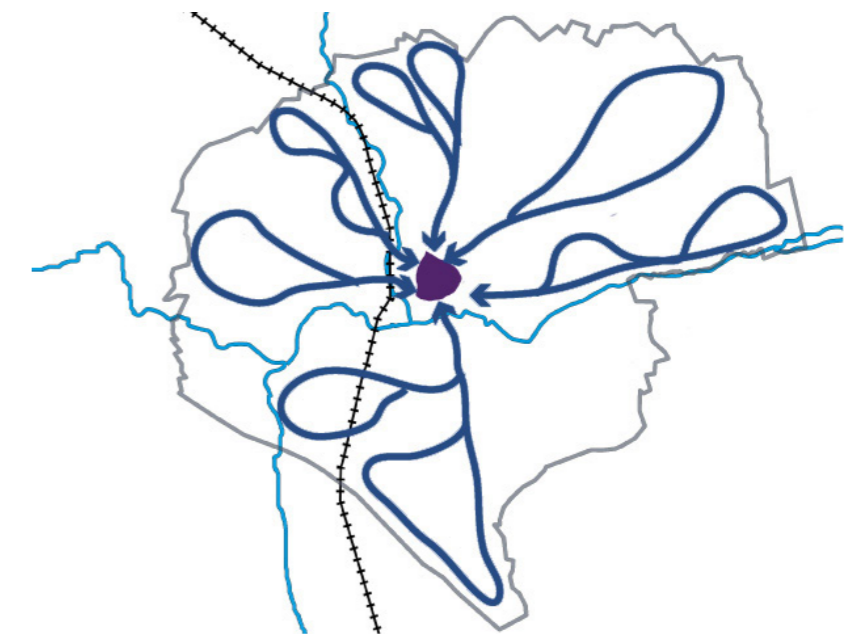


Figure 27

- Radial structure of public transport, hindering cross town movement
- Low usage of public transport and general reliance on private modes of transport.

Four: Pedestrian Movement

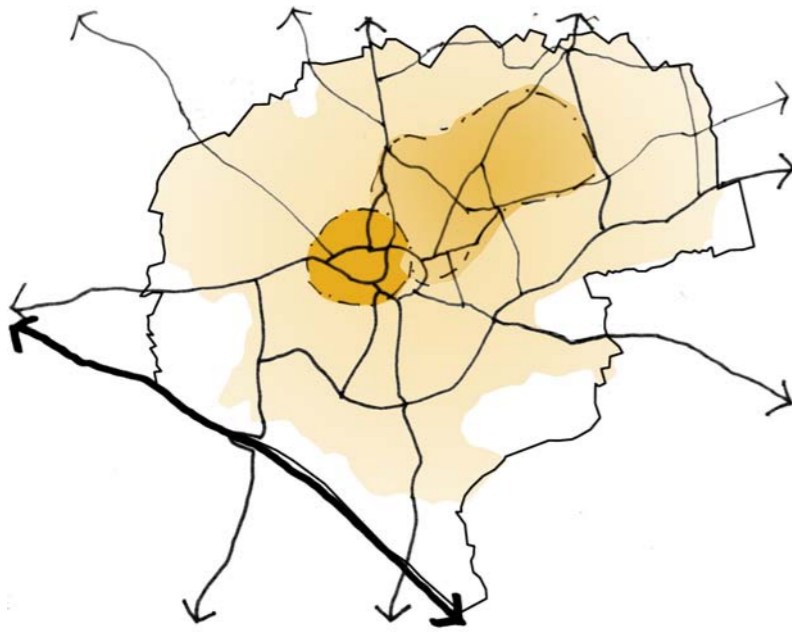


Figure 28

- Generally good walking and cycling conditions in the Town Centre and Victorian areas
- Poor permeability in the rest of the town discouraging walking
- Current movement patterns are not sustainable due to heavy reliance on private modes of transport resulting in areas of congestion.

Five: Landscape and Open Space

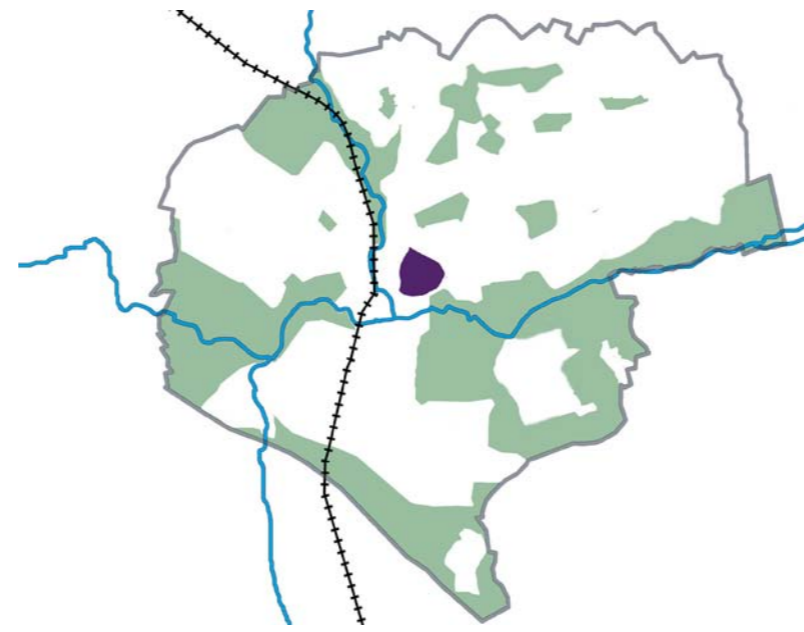


Figure 29

- Large parks and green spaces within the town
- Town surrounded by rural areas.

Six: Topography

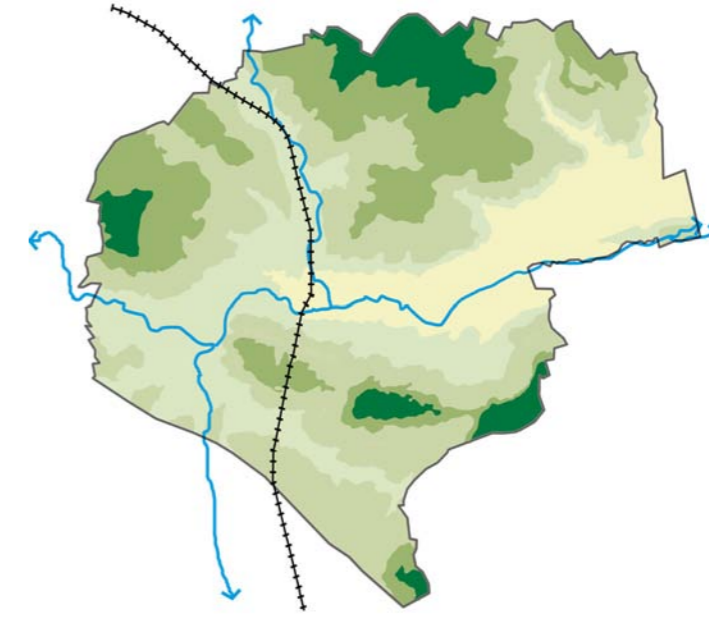


Figure 30

- Valleys defined by the River Nene and its Brampton Arm which meet at the Town Centre
- Topography rises to the north
- Residential areas tend to be located on slopes.

Seven: **History**



Figure 31

- Layers of growth creating areas characteristic of their time
- Distinct medieval core surrounded by Victorian residential areas
- Large scale planned expansion in the 1960's under the Commission for New Towns.

Eight: **Structure**

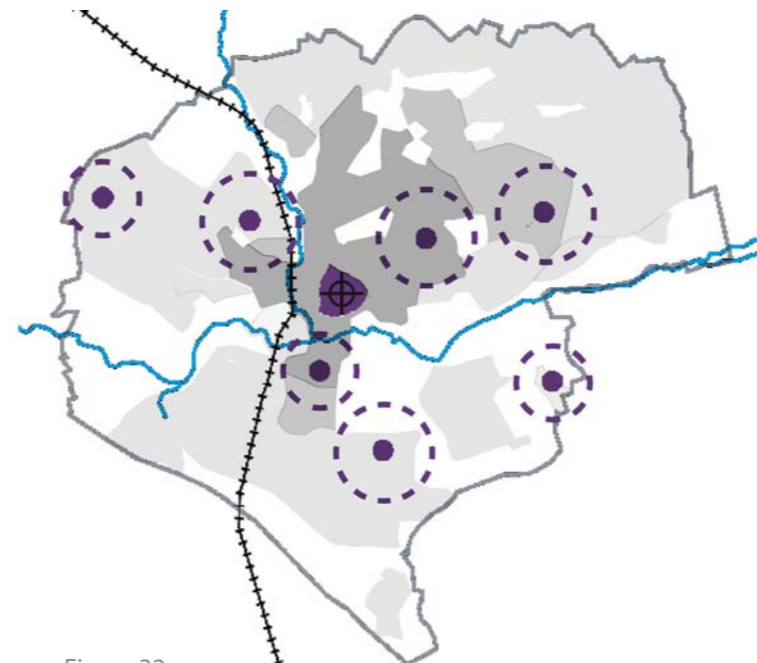


Figure 32

- Rings of residential development supported by a series of local centres with a centrally located Town Centre
- In suburbs, subsumed village centres characterised by tight grain and rural attributes.

Nine: **Character Areas**

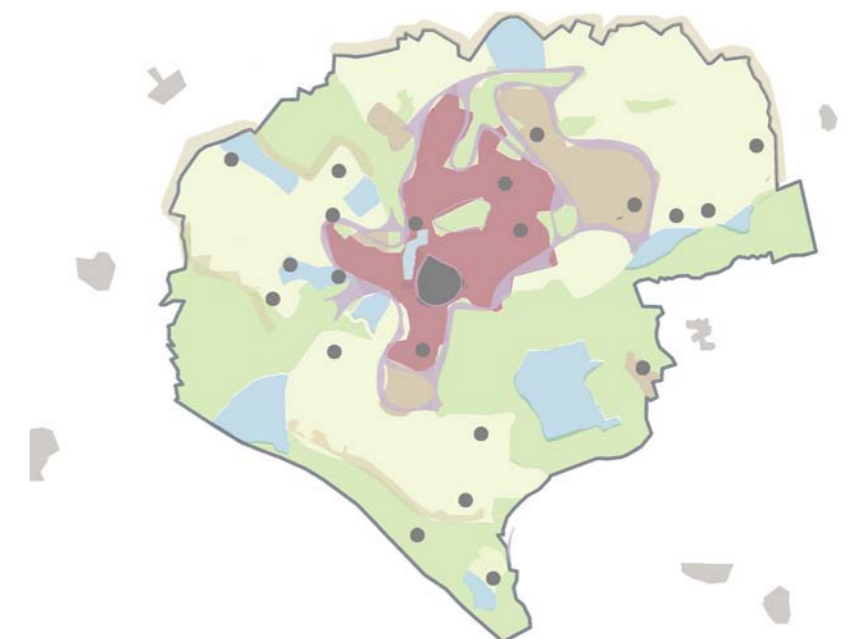


Figure 33

The character areas of Northampton form the rings of an urban transect:

Character Areas	Urban Transect
Village and Local Centres	● Town Centre
Victorian	● Fringe
Interwar & Postwar	● Outer Fringe
Late 20th C & Recent Development	● Suburban
	● Urban-Rural Edge
Industrial	● Employment
Transition Areas	●

2.4.8 Key Features of Northampton’s Character Areas

Town Centre



Street Layout	Tight grain with clear hierarchy of streets from primary roads to alleyways, providing good permeability
Structure	Organic with varied plot sizes
Frontages	5 to 10 metre, continuous frontages with high frequency of front doors and fenestration providing natural surveillance
Uses	Mixed use: residential, commercial, retail
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block with parking and servicing in courts
Density Range	Approximately 50 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 to 3 storeys with up to 6 storeys landmark
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations, focal points and vistas
Consideration as exemplar	The Town Centre has a number of assets and can be considered an exemplar for the development of new town and district centres. Its key features are essential contributing factors to the overall character of Northampton

Grain



Streetscape



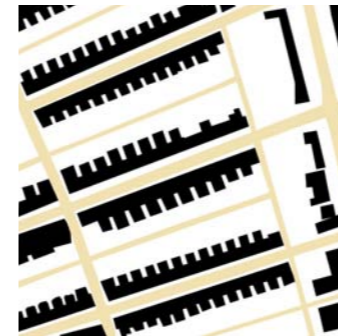
Built form



Victorian/Fringe



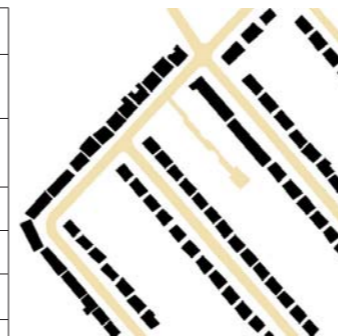
Street Layout	Rectilinear grid layout with clear street hierarchy, providing good permeability
Structure	Formal with strong sense of rhythm and regularity of features
Frontages	Approximately 5 - 7 metre plot widths for terraced housing resulting in continuous frontages. Frontages of commercial buildings vary from 7 to 15 metres. Active frontage throughout providing natural surveillance
Uses	Mixed use: residential and commercial
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking on street. Some commercial buildings have rear courts for 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 fringe development has a number of assets and can be considered as an exemplar for new fringe developments



Interwar and Postwar/ Outer Fringe



Street Layout	Rectilinear grid layout, providing permeability despite the undefined street hierarchy
Structure	Moderately formal with both variations in architectural features and sense of rhythm created by terraced housing
Frontages	Approximately 6 - 8 metre plot widths. Frontages are generally set back from street by small front gardens. Active frontages provide good natural surveillance over streets
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking on street
Density Range	Approximately 30 - 50 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 2.4 storeys. Buildings on main roads are often taller
Townscape	Poor legibility of the urban realm with little sense of increased massing towards key junctions and a lack of visual landmarks. However moderate formal structure and regularity of frontages contribute to good sense of enclosure and natural surveillance
Consideration as exemplar	Northampton’s interwar/outer fringe was developed originally as suburbs. These can be considered as an exemplar for new suburban developments

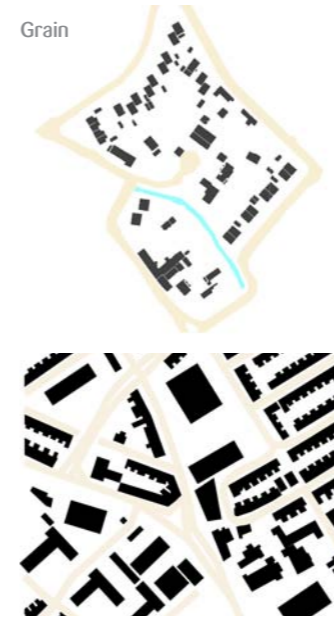




Village and Local Centres

Street Layout	Organic rural street layout with smaller streets leading off of a primary spine route
Structure	Informal structure with irregular building types and sizes
Frontages	The built form is interspersed with green space in village centres and plot sizes vary between 5 and 15 metres, which is characteristic of rural settlements
Uses	Mixed use: residential with some local facilities
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking either on street or in curtilage. Houses are often detached
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 25 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are predominantly 2 storeys within a range of 1 to 3 storeys, with a central landmark such as a church spire, rising higher
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations
Consideration as exemplar	Northampton's local centres have a number of assets. Their informal urban structure can provide a useful reference for new local centres, however, many have densities below 30 dwellings per hectare which would not be considered best practice

Grain



Streetscape



Built form



Late 20th Century Development/ Suburban

Street Layout	Northampton's suburban areas have varied street layouts. Some are loosely based on Radburn layouts, favouring vehicular traffic. While this form has a defined street hierarchy, streets are impermeable and not considered best practice
Structure	Largely informal with variations in architectural features, and a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached housing
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 15 metre plot widths. Later periods are characterised by detached housing, with frontages dominated by car parking and garages. Frontages are often set back from streets by gardens, and have infrequent front doors. Overall, these areas have poor surveillance and are not considered best practice
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 25 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 2 to 3 storeys. Buildings on main roads are sometimes taller
Townscape	Poor legibility of the public realm with little correlation between layout and built form
Consideration as exemplar	Generally Northampton's suburban development should not be considered as an exemplar

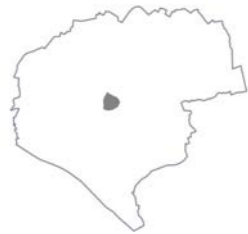


Recent Development/ Upton

Street Layout	Irregular street layout but with a clear street hierarchy, with primary street branching out onto secondary and tertiary ones
Structure	Largely informal with variations in architectural features, and a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached housing
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 12 metre plot widths. Frontages are continuous onto the street with frequent front doors, gardens in the back and parking in back courtyard. There is good surveillance of the public realm
Uses	Residential with mixed uses on main arteries
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage
Density Range	Approximately 45 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 2 to 4 storeys. Buildings on main roads are sometimes taller
Townscape	Good legibility of the public realm
Consideration as exemplar	Upton is considered best practice and can be used as an exemplar for new developments



Town Centre



- The compact Town Centre is articulated on the junction of two main streets, interconnected by secondary and tertiary streets and alleyways.
- The Main Square is formed at the junction of these two streets, marked by the main church, which serves as the key landmark for the town.
- The Market Square is located north of the Main Square. It is the largest of such squares in the Country.
- The Town Centre has a civic quality, deriving from the key landmarks within the centre. Its size functions well for the town.
- There is a clear hierarchy and typology of streets which are relatively narrow, thus well enclosed and overlooked.
- The built form is in keeping with the street and space hierarchies and typology with main buildings located on the main street.
- The Town Centre also has a clear space hierarchy. The market square is located along the main street with church squares located off secondary streets and building courts accessible through alleyways and tertiary streets.
- The church squares work as green spaces and provide a setting of mature vegetation for the church.
- There is a strong townscape with vistas and views terminated by key buildings and frontages.
- Continuity in building line provides consistency in frontage with a level of variety that creates interest.
- Narrow plot widths with frequent fenestrations provide active frontages and good levels of surveillance.
- Tertiary streets and interconnected pedestrian alleyways provide additional connectivity.
- Building heights vary from two to three storeys with higher massing on key buildings reaching up to six storeys.
- The centre has a good mix of uses with retail on ground floors and commercial or residential above.
- There is a clear division of public and private spaces.



Figure 34: Aerial image of the Town Centre



Figure 35: Figure ground of the Town Centre highlighting its tight grain

- Distinct architectural features add to the townscape and work in response to the urban layout. Street junctions are enhanced by corner details on buildings. At times, this helps to create an entrance at the corner or create a chamfer that overlooks the intersection of the streets.

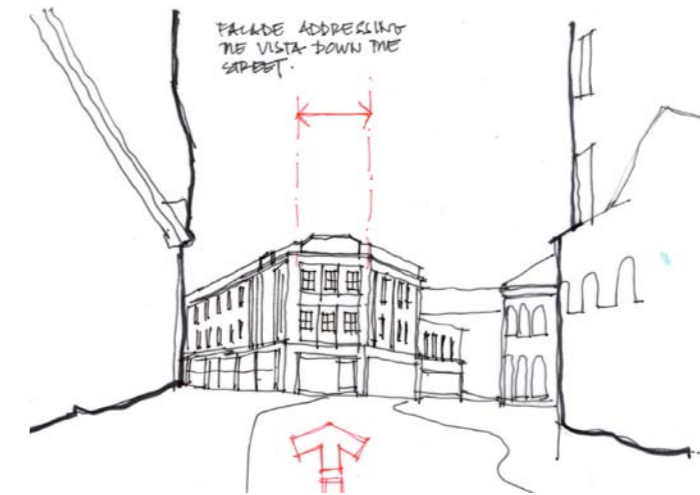


Figure 36: Building fronting view down street

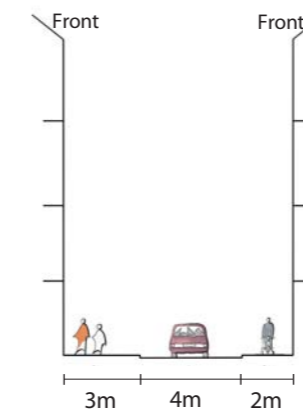


Figure 37: Section A cuts through a narrow alley

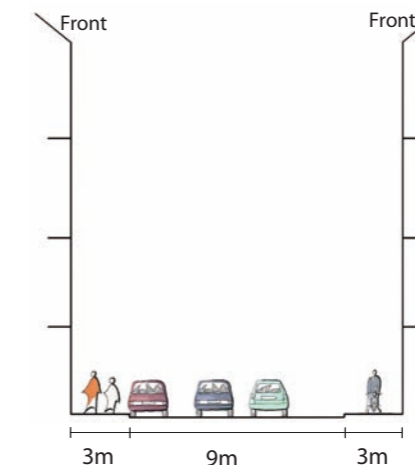


Figure 38: Section B cuts through a primary street

Assets	Weaknesses
Legible public realm with key landmark buildings and direct routes	Large surface level parking areas detract from quality of public realm in places
High quality townscape with a built form that is responsive to the street layout	Inner ring severs Town Centre from outer city
Continuous and narrow frontages with frequent fenestrations	Modern infill properties often detract from streetscene and townscape.
Good level of surveillance	
High quality architecture	
Building frontages respond to views down the streets	
Building elevations in response to human scale	
Clear street hierarchy and typology	
Streetscape and buildings proportioned to a human scale	

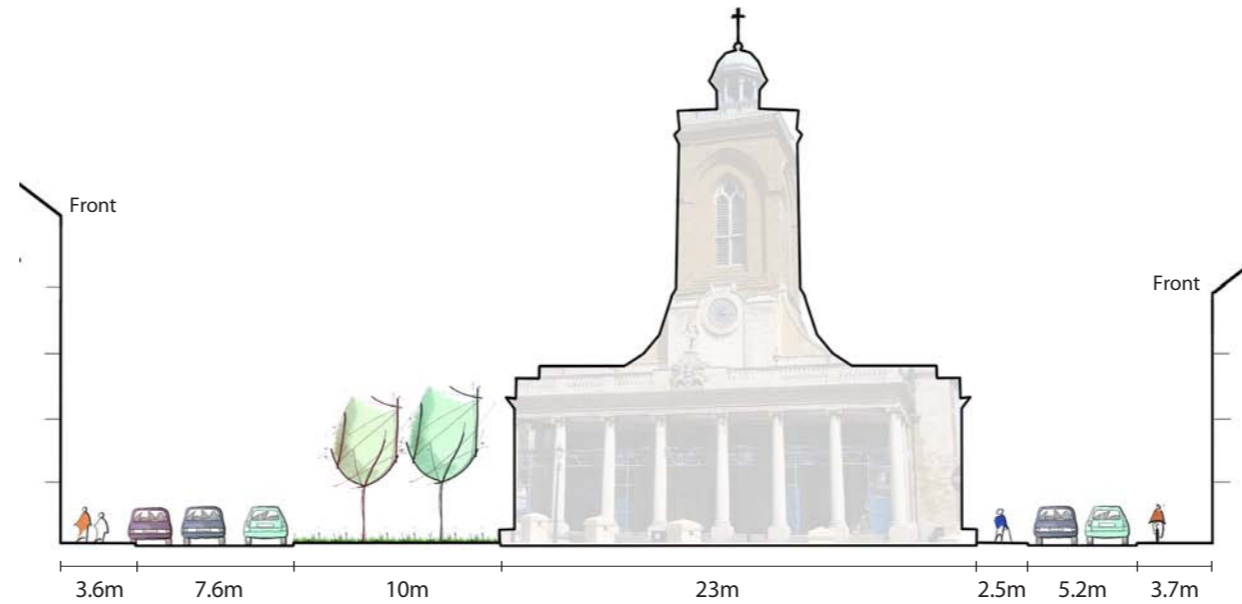


Figure 39: Section C cuts looking onto All Saints Church, demonstrating the civic nature of the space



Figure 40: Section D cuts through the Market Square



Town Centre

Street Layout	Tight grain with clear hierarchy of streets
Structure	Organic with varied plot sizes
Frontages	5 to 10 metre, continuous frontages with high frequency of front doors
Uses	Mixed use: residential, commercial, retail
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block with parking and servicing in courts
Density Range	Approximately 50 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 to 3 storeys with up to 6 storeys landmarks
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations
Consideration as exemplar	The Town Centre has a number of assets and can be considered an exemplar for the development of new town and district centres. Its key features are an essential contributing factor to the overall character of Northampton

Type of Public Space



Figure 41: The Market Square serves as the primary open space for the Town



Figure 42: The Town Centre contains secondary open spaces such as the Church Green

Street Typology



Primary street



Secondary street



Tertiary street: pedestrian alleyways



Market Square



Church Green



High Street



Neighbourhood park

Streetscape



The architectural style exhibits variety and yet retains an overall harmony



Narrow frontages with frequent fenestrations provide natural surveillance and sense of texture and verticality



Streets are developed against the slope



Buildings provide a good definition of the street and enhance its curve

Street Furniture



Bollards and kerbs define the vehicular track



Seating activate the public realm and enhance natural surveillance



Signage in keeping with the overall historic character

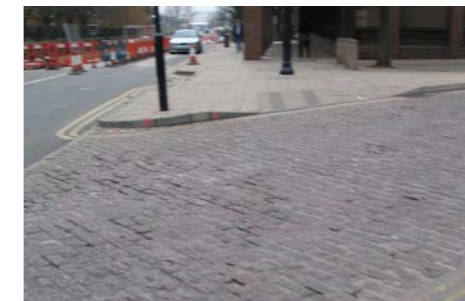


Lighting in keeping with character of the street and buildings

Public Realm Materials



Street material palette is used in a consistent way



Brick paving is used to enhance and highlight pedestrian priority



Further variety of paving texture and blockwork



Low curbs enhance pedestrian priority movements and naturally calm traffic

Townscape



Building frontages respond to the view down the street



Buildings provide a strong sense of enclosure to street and frame the view of the building



Building elevation responsive to view down alleyway



Building scale appropriate to the public space

Elevation Details



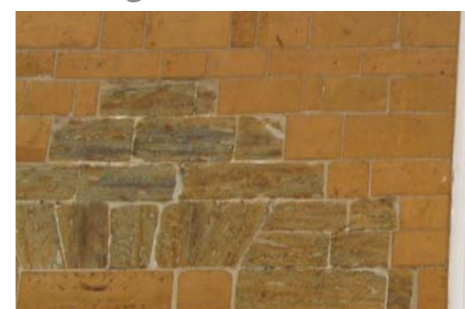
Corner Details



Fenestration



Building Materials





Claydon

HEAD RECRUITMENT

LITTER

Victorian



Northampton benefits from its wealth of Victorian neighbourhoods. These embody a well defined urban typology with perimeter blocks set within an interconnected rectilinear urban structure. Taller Victorian terraces, of four to five storeys, overlooking larger streets and open spaces or formal parks are also attributes of this character area.

- The network of streets has a clear hierarchy with primary distributor streets and secondary or tertiary residential streets.
- There is an overall consistency of massing with most units rising to two storeys. Higher massing with units of three to four storeys is located on street corners.
- There is a clear distinction between the public and private realm.
- The housing type varies between terraces, semi-detached and detached units.

Victorian Terraces

- Terraced houses are characterised by direct frontage and access to the street. In most cases, there are no front gardens.
- Whilst the predominant use is residential, there is a historic tradition of Northamptonshire shoe factories being located at the corners of streets. These warehouses/factories are a distinct feature of the character area. With the industrial decline and the current need for housing, many of these industrial units have been converted into residential apartments.

Despite this change of use, this feature remains unique to Northampton in its distribution of employment within residential areas and in its creation of a distinct built form marking the end of homogenous terraces and adding to the overall legibility of the townscape.

- A distinctive feature of Victorian development of Northampton consists of terraced houses overlooking a park.
- The terraces demonstrate a strong sense of rhythm and repetition of building elements. The individual houses have narrow facades with frequent fenestration that adds to the active frontages and surveillance on the street.
- Continuity of frontage gives a good sense of enclosure onto the streets.
- Parking is generally on-street although it may be located to the rear of houses.



Figure 43: Aerial image of a Victorian neighbourhood



Figure 44: Figure ground plan highlighting the perimeter block structure of the Victorian neighbourhood

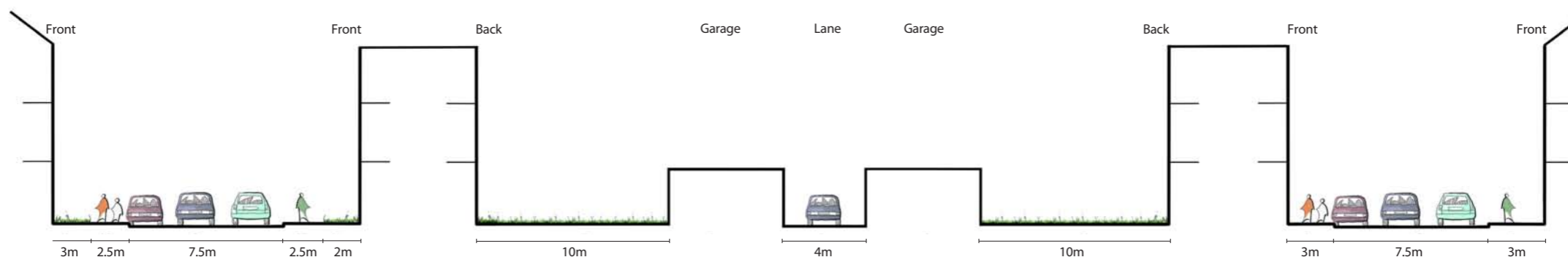


Figure 45: Section A cuts through the block and highlights its internal workings with a semi-private lane that provides access to garages, located to the back of the houses



These Victorian terraces exhibit a strong rhythm and continuity in building features. The variety of window and door details add interest



The terraces are set back from the street allowing for a small front yard and have bay windows on the ground floor



Terraced houses, set back from the street with brick boundary walls defining the buildings edge



Victorian shoe factories on street corners are a key feature and can work as precedents for a mix of uses

Victorian Detached & Semi-Detached

- In keeping with the terraces, the streets follow a rectilinear grid layout with an interconnected structure.
- Buildings tend to be in keeping with the street typology with larger villas located on main streets.
- In detached housing, the plot sizes are larger and houses are set within their plots.
- Houses either adjoin the pavement or are set back with small front gardens of 2 to 3 metres in depth defined by a front boundary. With the detached villas, the depth of front gardens may increase. This aids in creating a sound buffer if units are located along major arterial routes.



Figure 46: Aerial image of a Victorian neighbourhood with detached houses

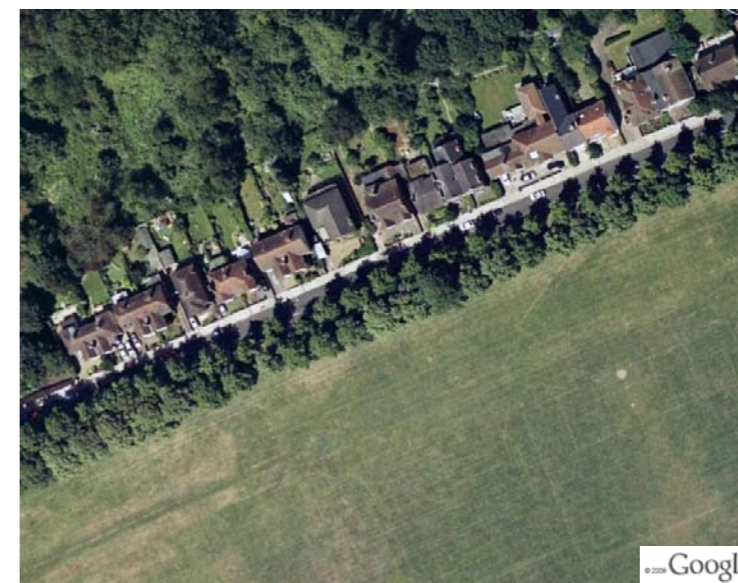


Figure 47: Aerial image of St George's Avenue that forms the edge between the row of Victorian detached and semi-detached houses and the park



Figure 48: Figure ground highlighting the tight frontage of the Victorian street

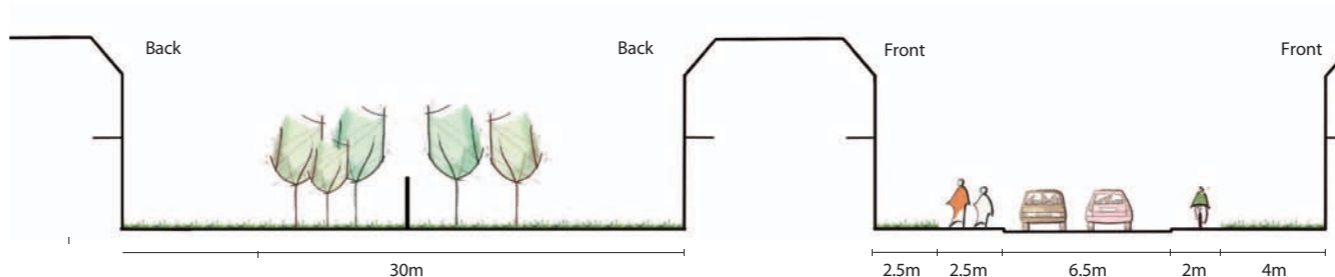


Figure 49: Section B

Assets	Weaknesses
Legible urban realm with key landmarks marking corner locations	Traffic calming is necessary as low straight street can encourage faster vehicular speeds
Continuous frontages provide a good level of surveillance	Parking tends to dominate streetscape
Key feature of employment located on street corners creating marker buildings and providing a mix of living and working	
Streets and buildings are in response to one another to create an overall whole	
Pedestrian friendly streets	
Clear street hierarchy	
On street parking provides well overlooked places to park	
Rectilinear grid layout provides good permeability	



Victorian detached house



Victorian semi-detached houses



Victorian/Fringe

Fringe

Street Layout	Rectilinear grid layout with clear street hierarchy
Structure	Formal with strong sense of rhythm and repetition of features
Frontages	Approximately 5 - 7 metre plot widths for terraced housing resulting in continuous frontages with good frequency of front doors. Frontages of commercial buildings vary from 7 to 15 metres
Uses	Mixed use: residential and commercial
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking on street. Some commercial buildings have rear yards for servicing
Density Range	Approximately 40 - 50 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights relate to road 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 fringe development has a number of assets and can be considered useful to refer to as an exemplar for new fringe developments

Street Types



The High Street is characterised by mixed use and two storey terraces



Residential street with two storey terraces



Residential street with three storey terraces



Residential street with employment at corner

Building Form



Arts & Crafts



Arts & Crafts



Victorian terraced houses



Art Deco



Art Deco



Art Deco



Arts & Crafts / Mock Tudor



Arts and Craft

Elevation Frontages



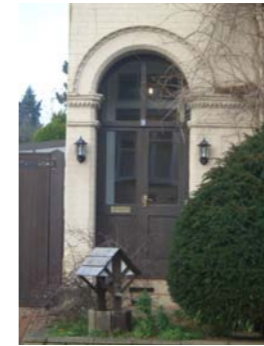
Corner Details



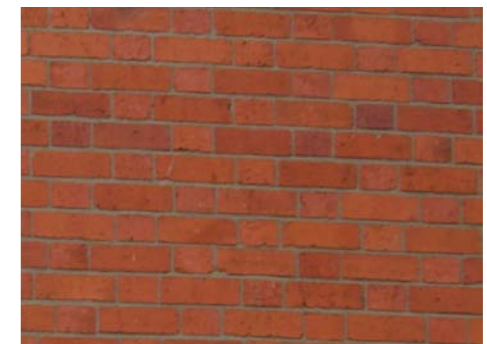
Windows



Doors



Building Materials



Interwar and Postwar/Outer Fringe



While interwar and new town development form a large proportion of the town, they are not unique to Northampton, and similar neighbourhoods can be found in many UK towns.

- Interconnected street pattern
- Typically larger blocks than earlier Victorian development
- Regularly sized plots but with a slightly coarser grain than the Victorian development
- Predominately semi-detached housing
- Houses set back from street by small gardens
- Some areas include art deco buildings



Figure 50: Aerial image of a inter war neighbourhood

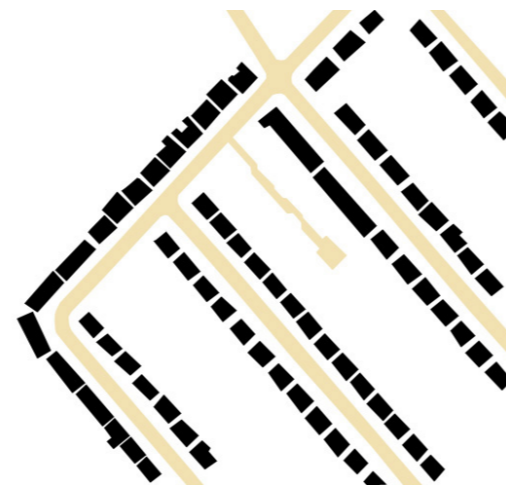


Figure 51: Figure ground highlighting the rectilinear structure of the inter war neighbourhood

Assets	Weaknesses
Continuous frontages	Long straight blocks can encourage higher speed levels for vehicles
Semi permeable street layout	Parking tends to dominate streetscape
Variation in building details along street, while still formulating a holistic streetscape	
Large private gardens	

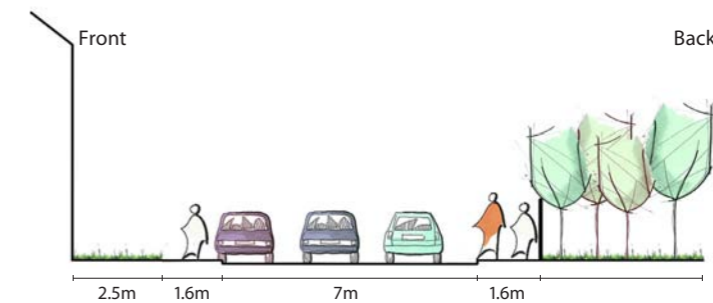


Figure 52: Section A

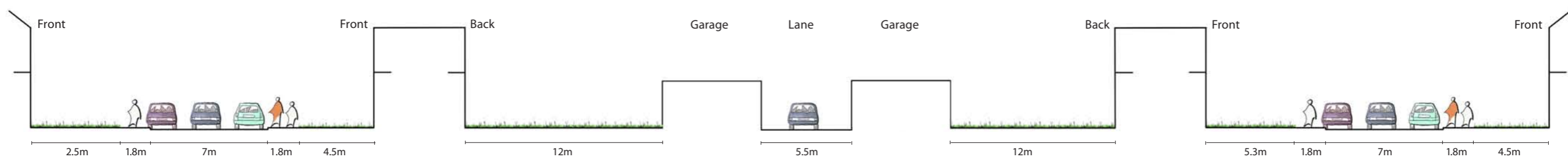


Figure 53: Section B cuts through the block demonstrating its internal layout where a semi-private lane provides access to rear garages

Mid to Late 20th Century Suburbs



A considerable amount of Northampton is taken up by housing estates built in the post-war years through to the late 20th century. These differ from earlier types particularly due to their layouts which are dictated by cul-de-sacs and a low density of development. One example of a post-war estate, an award winning development in its time, is the Kings Heath Estate located in north-west Northampton. Such estates are based on a plan led layout. Estates built towards the end of the 20th Century exhibit layouts with disconnected streets that meander.

- The street layout is not permeable, with frequent streets that terminate into cul-de-sacs
- The division between the public and private realm is not clear
- The predominantly detached housing with large front gardens provide little or no sense of enclosure to the adjoining street
- The garages and driveway parkings tend to dominate street
- Larger plot sizes with fewer front doors lend to a poorer sense of natural surveillance onto streets
- Wide residential streets designed to accommodate cars
- Due to low density, local facilities are dispersed and thereby not within walkable distances to all neighbourhoods, which leads to a general reliance on private vehicles
- Many of the more recent residential developments are of a standardized built form, resulting in the sense of non-place as they do not relate to a specific context. There is no sense of a response to street typology or hierarchy nor to a relationship between the built form and layout, as standard housing is applied across the development leading to non-descript and illegible places.



Figure 54: Aerial image of a suburban neighbourhood



Figure 55: Figure ground of a suburban neighbourhood highlighting the nature of the layout with streets that terminate in cul de sacs hindering permeability

Assets	Weaknesses
Some provision of private garden space provided	Street layout have frequent cul-de-sacs thereby reducing connectivity and permeability
	Buildings set back from street, providing little sense of enclosure
	Detached housing layout with front gardens, resulting in poorer sense of surveillance
	Meandering, illegible road layout
	Homogenous built form
	Much of the garden space is taken up by rear parking courts



Streets tend to be fairly wide and the carriageway winds its way through the housing but is not defined by it.

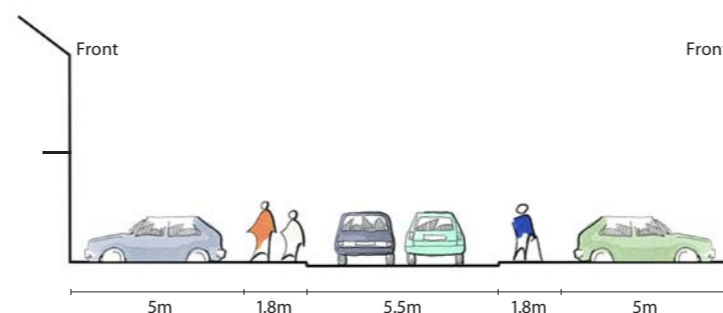


Figure 56: Section A

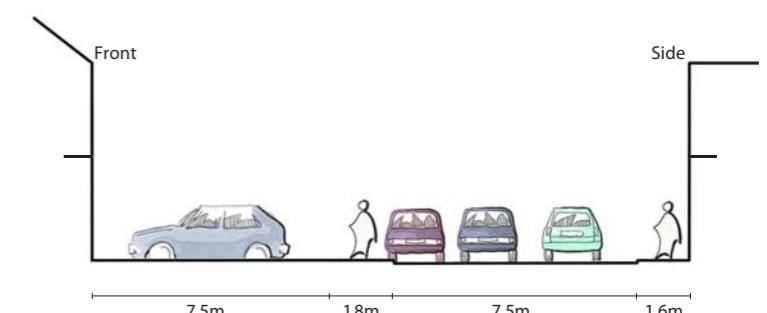


Figure 57: Section B

Village & Local Centres



Northampton is characterised by a polycentric structure. The primary Town Centre is surrounded by a collection of smaller centres. Some of these were historic villages that were subsumed into Northampton as it grew. These local and village centres have supported the growth of the town by relieving pressure from its main centre. They now hold an important function, providing local facilities within walking distance for many residents. They can be classified into two types: the historic village centre and the urban local centre.

Village Centres

- Despite being surrounded by urban development, these centres have retained their rural characteristics. Dallington is a good example as it contains a village green and houses built with the traditional ironstone.
- Village centres have an organic layout with meandering streets defined by the surrounding built form and landscape.
- The grain tends to be dispersed and varied. Buildings are spaced in an irregular pattern along meandering streets providing for an ever-changing viewpoint.
- Despite the dispersed grain, the public realm is well defined by an integration of the built form, landscape and mature vegetation.
- Continuity in the built form is retained through boundary walls that span across buildings. These are often constructed with local materials.
- The carriageway tends to be narrow with frequent bends and changes in alignment which serve as a natural traffic calmer.

- There is a clear hierarchy of streets. A primary connector binds secondary and tertiary streets branching off to reach individual houses.
- The topography adds to the character and street pattern. Key buildings such as the local church tend to be located on higher ground and other buildings are frequently located above the road level.
- The village green may be located at the junction of two or more streets. It is defined by the surrounding streets and marked by collection of trees.
- Northampton's village centres tend to contain a small mix of uses, generally comprising a pub, a community centre and a few shops serving local needs.

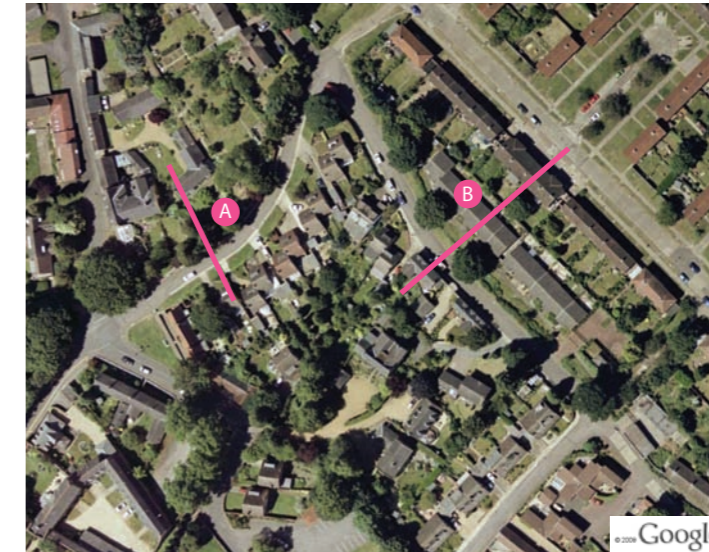


Figure 58: Aerial image of a part of the Dallington Village Centre



Figure 59: The plan demonstrates the rural nature of the village centre with buildings set back from the road by landscape greens and planting

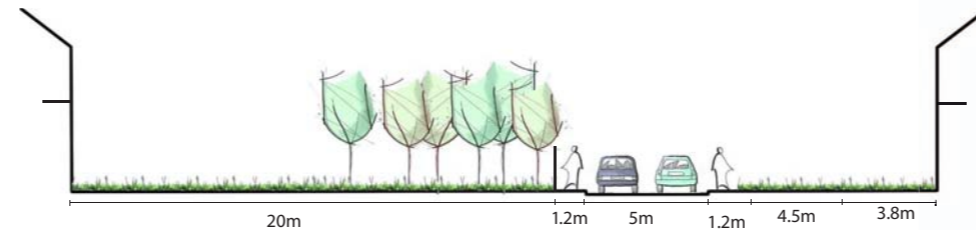


Figure 60: Section A



Figure 61: Figure ground demonstrating the organic layout of the village centre

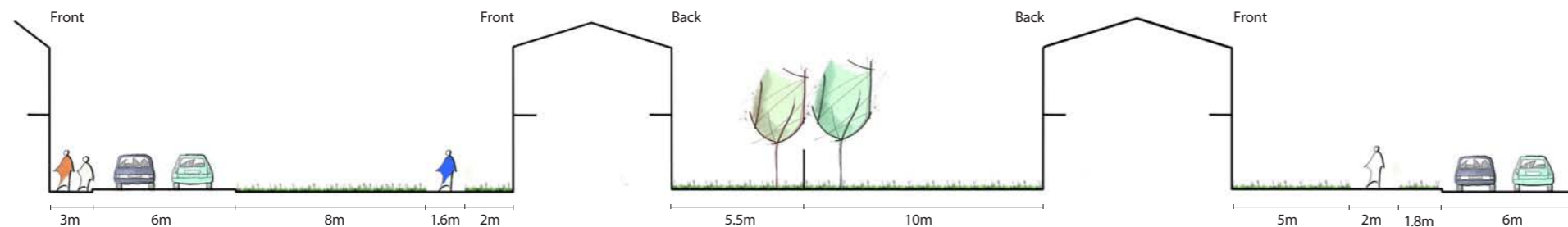


Figure 62: Section B

Local Centres

- Along with its rural centres, Northampton has a number of urban local centres. These help to provide facilities for surrounding neighbourhoods.
- These centres are essentially urban in character. They may also retain a relatively high degree of density in the built form.
- They adopt the linear form of a local high street with a mix of uses, from retail and commercial on the ground floor to commercial and residential on upper floors.
- The high street is well defined with a continuity of active frontages and a consistent massing of two storeys.
- Parking is on street with service access to the shops.
- The local centres tend to reflect the character of their surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Local centres tend to be located on or along key routes through the town for example St James local centre is located on the junction of Weedon and Harlestone Roads which are important arteries for the town.
- In comparison to the village centres, local centres are larger in size and contain a greater range of amenities and facilities. The more recent ones may accommodate uses that require increased floor areas and have higher service needs such as superstores, cinemas, leisure centres etc.

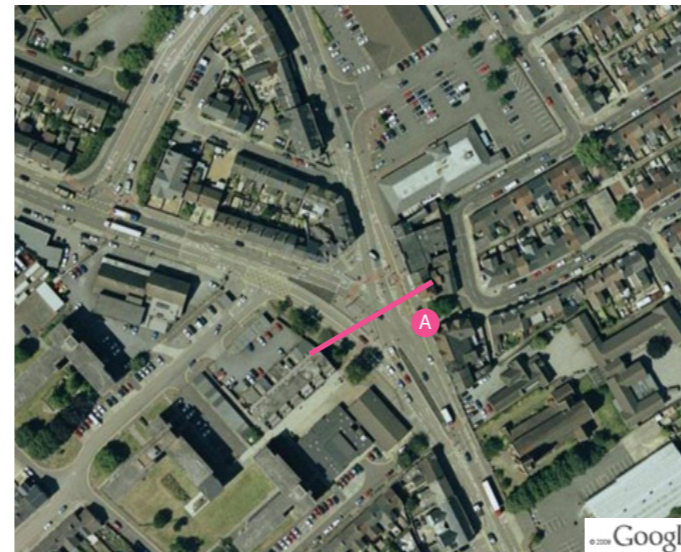


Figure 63: Aerial image of the Local Centre at St James



Figure 64: Figure ground of the local centre at St James illustrating the space at the meeting of the two main streets

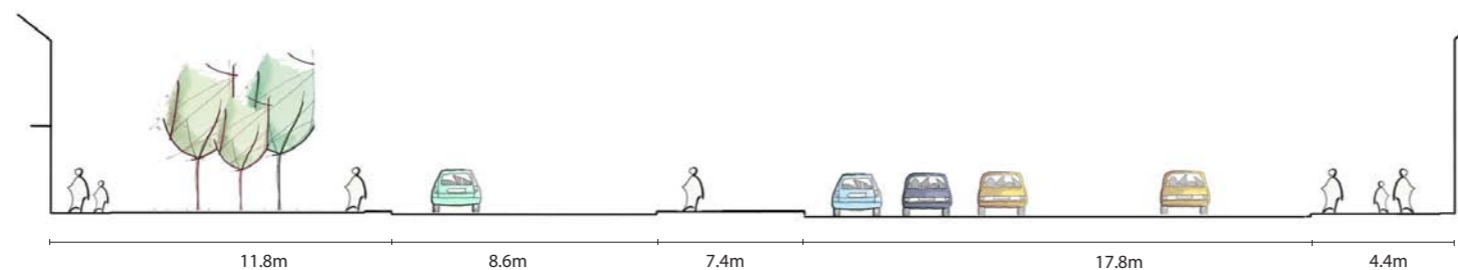


Figure 65: Section A

Assets	Weaknesses
Local centres have a linear form of a High Street with a mix of uses	As local centres tend to be located on major routes through the town and these can be heavily trafficked
Both local and village centres depict a legible urban form with landmark building (church or community hall or pub) and key public space defining centre of neighbourhood	Historic organic form in village centre sometimes, does not provide good surveillance due to set back from road
Both local and village centres provide local amenities within walking distance of neighbourhoods	Some local centres can be too urban and lack a balance of landscape intervention.
Village centres depict a good use of homogenous local materials, adding to the distinct character of place	



Local centre at St James marked by a local church



Local centre at St James

Village Centres

Village Centres

Street Layout	Organic street layout with smaller streets leading off from a primary spine route
Structure	Informal structure with irregular building types and sizes.
Frontages	Built form is dispersed with green space and planting with plot sizes that vary between 5 and 15 metres.
Uses	Mixed use: residential with some local facilities
Typical Block Layout	Rough perimeter block layout with parking either on street or in curtilage. Houses are often detached.
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 25 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights have a predominance of 2 storeys but can range from 1 to 3 storeys with a central landmark, such as a church spire, rising higher
Townscape	Legible and characteristically rural public realm defined by landmarks in key locations
Consideration as exemplar	Northampton's village centres still retain many of their rural characteristics despite the urban surroundings. The predominance of landscape and planting contribute to the unique identity of these centres.

Street Types



Main movement route enclosed by boundary walls and landscaping



Residential street with local pub



Residential street



Street with view terminating on St Mary The Virgin Church in Dallington

Public Space Types



The grounds of St Mary The Virgin Church in Dallington



Village Green



Front lawns provide a set back from the road



Open green space along building front

Building Details & Frontages



Public Realm Details



Local Centres

Local Centres

Street Layout	Dominated by the main High Street with secondary residential streets branching off the main street.
Structure	Fairly formal structure with rectangularly shaped blocks
Frontages	Defined and active frontages
Uses	Mixed use at the High Street with some historic employment uses dispersed within residential streets though many have changed to residential use.
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with on street parking
Density Range	Approximately 30-35 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights have a predominance of 2 storeys ranging up to 4-5 storeys
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations
Consideration as exemplar	Northampton's local centres have a number of assets. Their formal structure can provide a useful reference for new local centres, however, their density ranges should be reviewed for the need to maintain local facilities.

Street Types



Wootton Local Centre



The church serves as a landmark for the High Street



Local centre with active frontages looking onto a major street



Local centre at Grange Park

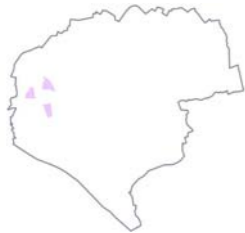
Building Details & Frontages



Public Realm Details



Recent Developments: Upton



Upton is a recent and on-going addition to Northampton’s suburban developments. It differs from its contemporaries as it delivers a place that is reminiscent of Northampton and yet suitable for contemporary living.

Its built form has elements that reflect identifiable features from the Northampton vernacular. Within its perimeter block layout, it accommodates parking in rear courts, accessed through ground floor gateway openings in the buildings. Its streets are wide with SUDS located in the middle, providing sustainable drainage and landscape features which tend to be quite absent from many new developments.

Key Upton characteristics are:

- Prominent buildings on corners
- Landmarks to improve legibility
- Mix of building heights and massing providing for a changing roof line
- Reference to the industrial tradition of Northampton’s shoe factories
- Taller buildings face and enclose wider streets, demonstrating a relationship within street hierarchy and massing
- Narrow plot widths with frequent fenestrations that directly address the public realm, creating active frontages and providing surveillance
- Clear demarcation between public and private space
- Strong frontage onto green space
- Local materials, including Northampton ironstone, used on some buildings
- Arches providing vehicular access to inner courtyards
- Sustainable urban drainage provided within streets with added landscape value
- New buildings under construction with high sustainable credentials.



Built form is defined and clearly demarcates the public and private areas



Figure 66: Figure ground highlights the defined perimeter block structure at Upton



Entry through archway to communal rear courts

Assets	Weaknesses
Legible street layout	Smaller back gardens
Clear road hierarchy and street typology	Street scene is dominated by on street parking
Change in building form in corner locations improve legibility	
Strong frontage onto street and spaces with a good level of natural surveillance.	
Streets with a good sense of enclosure. Wide streets flanked by taller buildings	
High density in a suburban location	
Strong frontage at the periphery creating a clear edge to development	



Figure 67: The Masterplan for Upton demonstrates the rectilinear layout of streets

Suburban: Upton

Street Layout	Irregular street layout but with a clear street hierarchy, with primary street branching out onto secondary and tertiary ones
Structure	Largely informal with variations in architectural features, and a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached housing
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 12 metre plot widths. Frontages are continuous onto the street with frequent front doors, gardens in the back and parking in back courtyard. There is good surveillance of the public realm
Uses	Residential with mixed uses on main arteries
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage
Density Range	Approximately 45 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 2 to 4 storeys. Buildings on main roads are sometimes taller
Townscape	Good legibility of the public realm
Consideration as exemplar	Upton is considered best practice and can be used as an exemplar for new developments

Type of Public Space



Communal green space



SUDS incorporated into a street



Shared surface street



Public green

Building Form



Vernacular form housing



Contemporary architectural form



Corner edge treatment to residential block



Semi-detached residential housing

Frontage Detail



Public Realm Details



Transition Areas



- Transition areas are zones located in-between different character areas. At times, they may take on a character of their own. Typically they tend to be left-over spaces or infill pockets.
- Often public spaces may function as areas of transition whereby different character areas may abut the corners of those spaces.
- In this regard, streets can also work as areas of transition whereby each side of the street may fall within a different character area. This results in a streetscape that benefits from a juxtaposition of the two surrounding character areas, although this is only possible if the two adjoining character areas do not pose a conflict to each other.
- In Northampton, transition zones occur between the Town Centre and Victorian areas in its immediate vicinity. These zones are characterised by the radial road infrastructure that circumnavigates the centre.



Figure 68: Aerial image of a transition between employment and residential areas



Figure 69: The figure ground demonstrates the strong edge between the two areas



Green public space providing a transition zone between character areas



A pedestrian lane in-between two character areas



Transition zones can lack character as undefined spaces, sometimes used for parking as in this case



A further example of a transition area where car-parking is the end result use

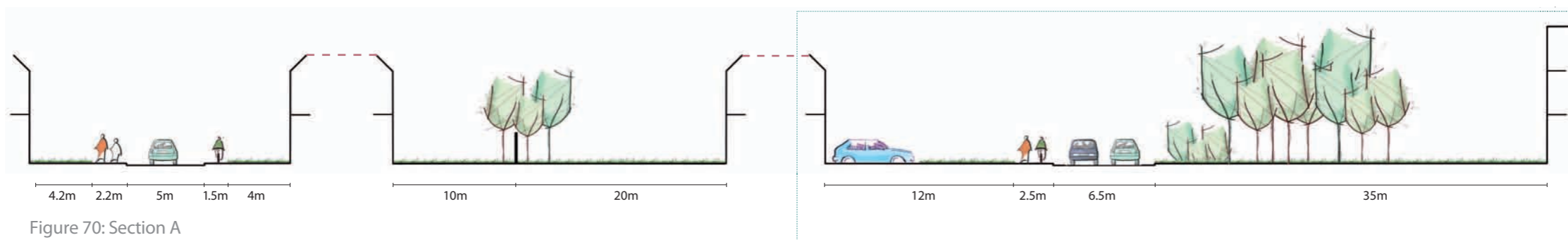


Figure 70: Section A

Transition area between residential and employment

Urban-Rural Edges



Urban-rural edges define the boundary between a town and the rural area surrounding it. The way they are designed impacts the quality of development. In most places especially to the north of the town, Northampton has a fairly clear urban edge, largely following the UDC boundary.

The urban-rural edge of the town is varied in its typology:

- To the north west, the edge to Kings Heath is well marked with a fence.
- To the south, the Kings Heath houses tend to turn away from the edge, facing inwards. Streets end in cul-de-sacs by the boundary fence. The rural edge is characterised by a wide field that rises to the north and dips towards Harlestone Heath. To the north of the field, an area is criss-crossed by bikers tracks.
- In other places, the urban-rural edge is marked by a natural boundary, characterised by a stream and mature vegetation.
- In recent developments like Upton, the edge is designed in a defined way as there is a road separating the fields from the houses. This treatment is also characterised by a greater permeability given the lack of fences and active frontage due to the regular fenestration on buildings' facades.

Section A illustrates how suburban developments create an inactive and broken edge to the rural surroundings. Section B highlights that even when the houses face the surroundings, they are well set back from the edge.



Figure 71: Aerial image of the edge between the urban areas and the surrounding rural countryside



Figure 72: Figure ground



The boundary at Kings Heath is clearly defined by a fence and the buildings tend to face away from the edge



Front facing houses do not look onto the rural edge



Some residential dwellings are orientated inwards, creating an inactive interface with the Countryside



Development at Upton creates a defined and active edge to the rural surroundings

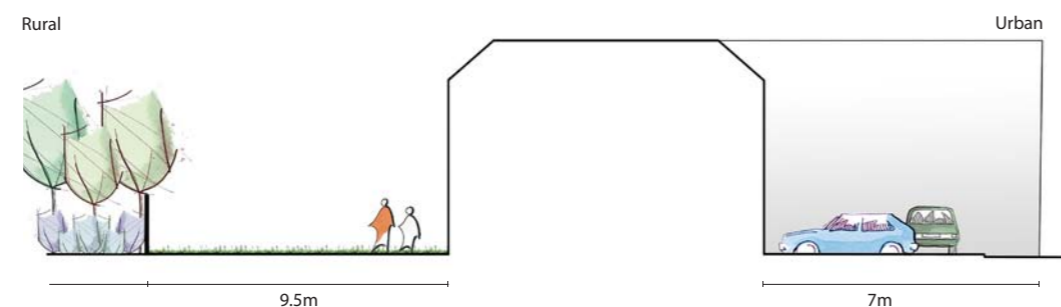


Figure 73: Section A

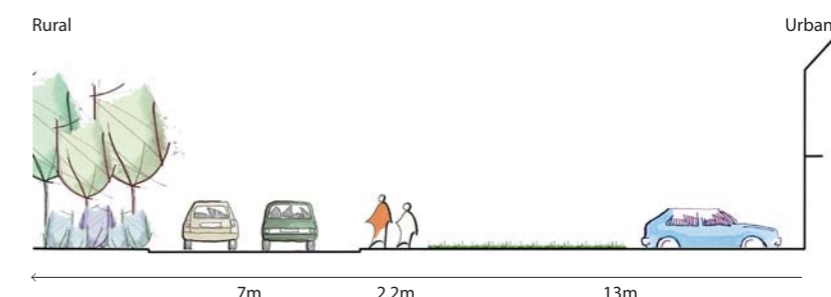


Figure 74: Section B