



Towcester

2.6 Context Appraisal: Towcester

2.6.1 Introduction

Towcester is a small town located to the south of the County of Northamptonshire, with a population of 8,856 according to the Census 2001. The name is derived from the Latin for 'Camp on the (River) Tove'. The town is the administrative headquarters of the South Northamptonshire District Council.

Towcester lies at a distance of 21 km to the south east from Daventry, 18 km to the south west from Northampton, and 21 km to the north west from Milton Keynes. Within its surroundings there are a series of small villages including Greens Norton, Tiffield, Shutlanger, Alderton, Paulerspury, Pury End and Bradden.

Towcester is located to the south of the cross roads of the A5 and A43. Once an important Roman town, it is the oldest town in the County. It developed around Watling Street (A5), the Roman road linking Dover to Chester. The River Tove, running to the north of Towcester on a west-east axis, dictates the land form of the surrounding area of the County.

Due to land and ownership constraints, Towcester grew southwards and westwards thereby giving the town a distinct asymmetrical shape with its Town Centre located on the eastern fringe of the settlement.

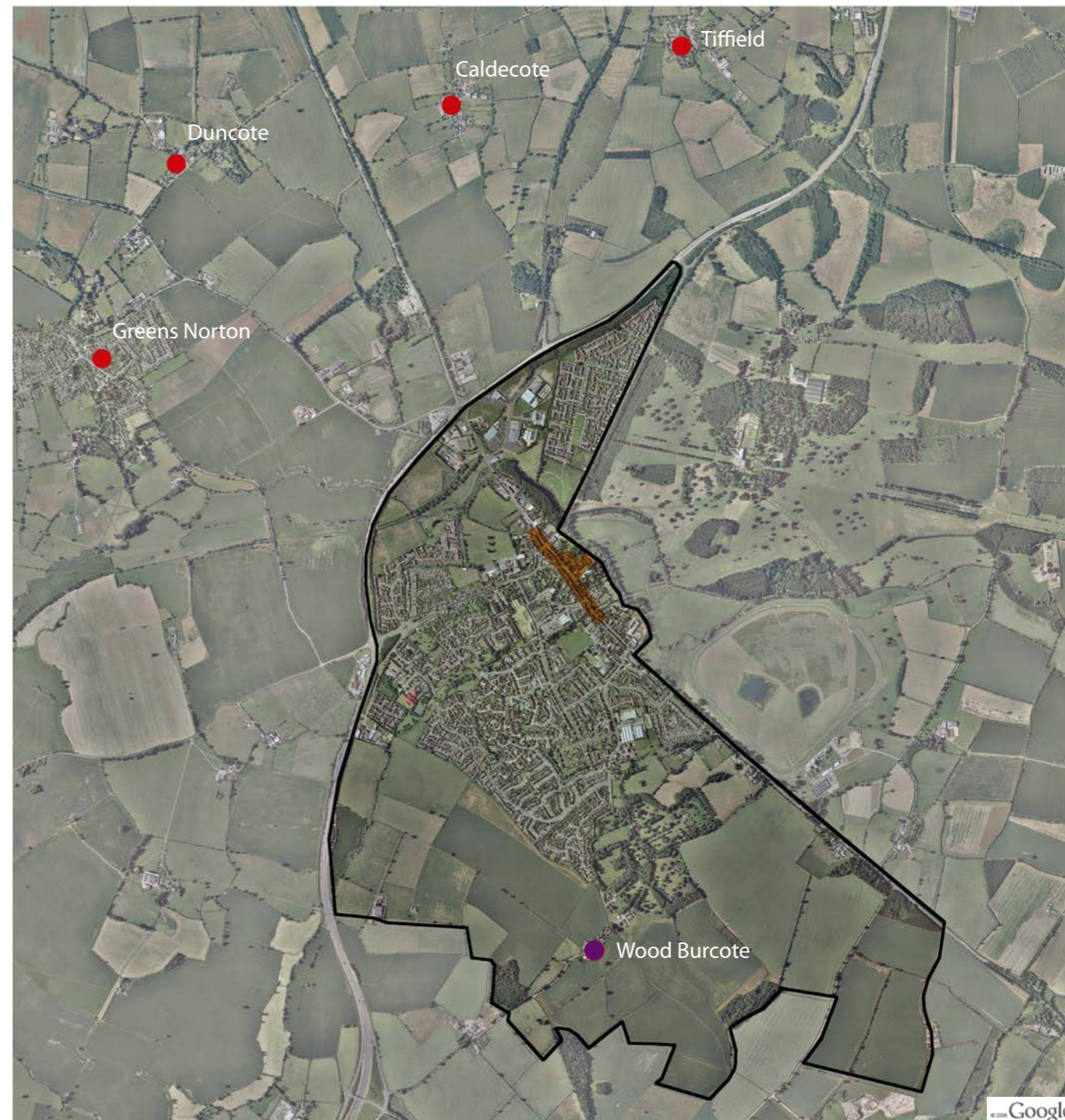


Figure 128: Aerial image of Towcester and its surrounding villages

- WNDK Boundary
- TownCentre
- Villages
- Hamlets

Figure 129: Birds eye view of Towcester High Street

2.6.2 Towcester Transport Network

Towcester is located just off the A5 and the A43. The crossing of these roads provides it with good road accessibility and connectivity with its surroundings. The A43 connects Towcester to Northampton and links to the M1, to Milton Keynes, Birmingham and London. It also provides connections to the M40 southwards which leads to Oxford.

Brackley Road and Watling Street are the principle roads into the Town Centre. Watling Street (A5) currently suffers from considerable congestion due to the high number of lorries and HGV vehicles that pass through its narrow street. Brackley Road provides east-west connections through the town with tertiary streets that branch off and interconnect through residential areas.

For public transport, Towcester is well served by three bus routes which pass through its Town Centre. These provide a regular service to Northampton (3 buses hourly) and hourly services to Milton Keynes and Brackley. Despite these connections, there is a heavy reliance on the private vehicle for commuting within and around Towcester.

The pedestrian network is generally good due to the small scale of the town. However, permeability decreases considerably in the housing estates towards the southwest of Towcester. A range of public walkways and bridleways connect to the surrounding countryside. Some of these follow on the path of old roman routes. The path following Silverstone Brook provides direct connections to the immediate surroundings. There is also a good network of on and off carriageway cycle routes.

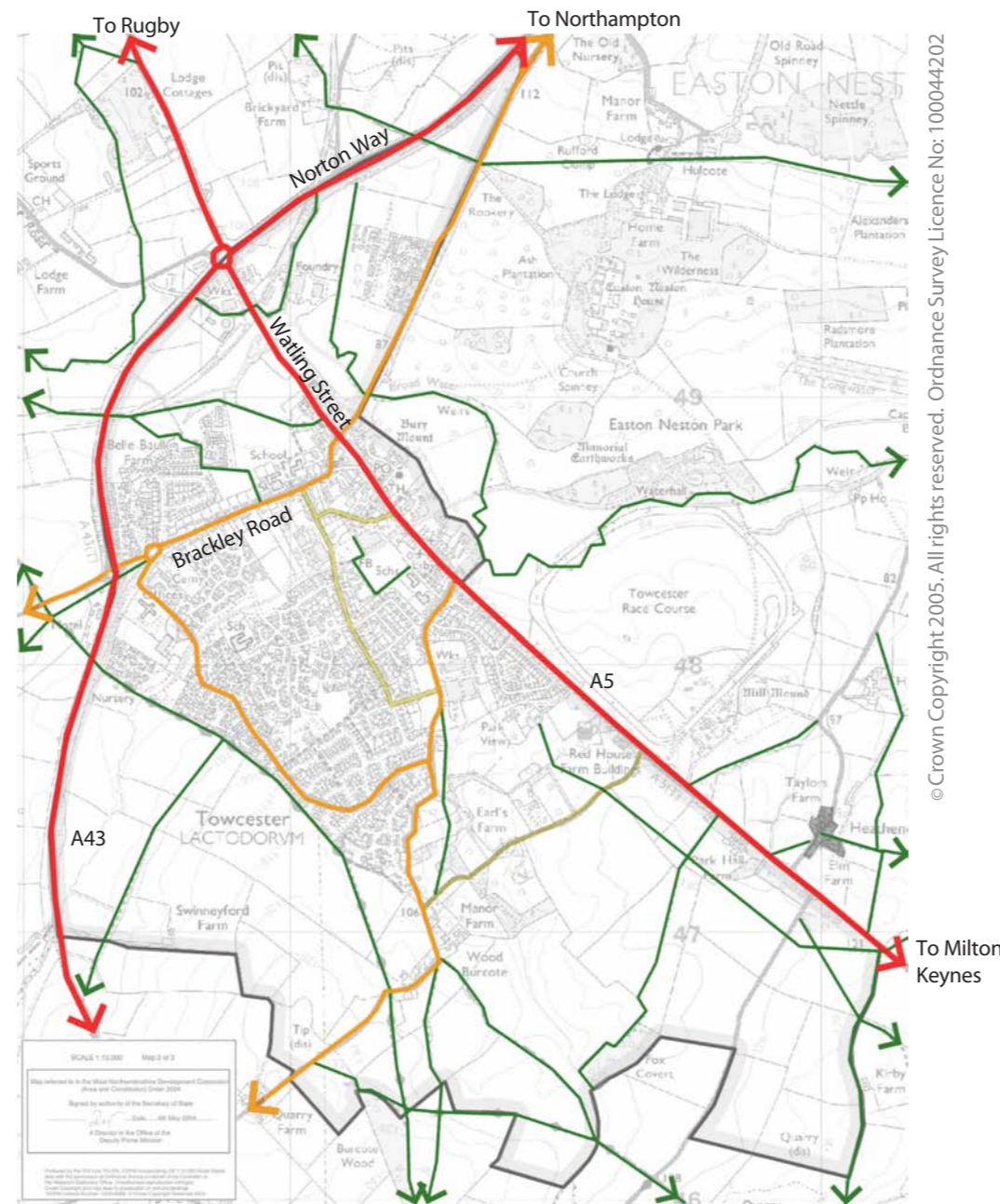


Figure 130: Movement routes within Towcester

- WNDK Boundary
- ↔ Primary Route
- ↔ Secondary Route
- ↔ Pedestrian Public Access Routes

Towcester Strategic Movement

- Good vehicular connectivity with area because of location just off the A43 and A5 junction
- Main roads into the Town Centre are Brackley Road and Watling Street
- Regular bus service to Northampton and Milton Keynes
- Heavy reliance on private vehicles
- Good pedestrian network and permeability in Town Centre
- Decreased permeability in the housing estates towards the south west of Towcester
- Range of public walkways and bridleways connecting to the surrounding countryside

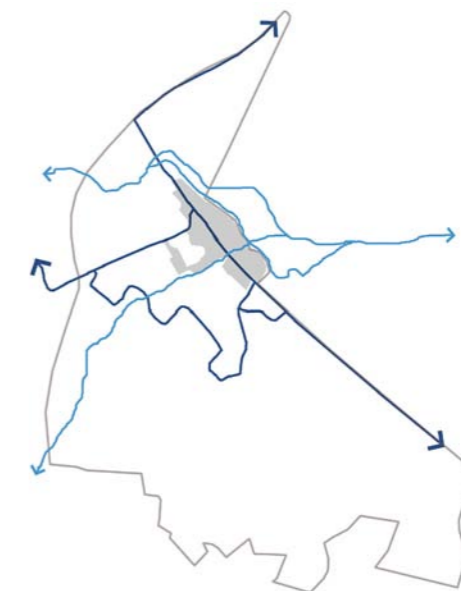


Figure 131: Bus routes within Towcester

2.6.3 Historic Development of Towcester

The origins of Towcester date back to the Middle Stone Age. However, it was not until Roman times that the town became established. When Watling Street was constructed it was part of the old Roman route. During this time the town was protected by a wall with strategically located brick towers. Unfortunately nothing remains today of the wall or the original town it contained.

The Romans departed in the 5th century. The Town was subsequently occupied by the Saxons, followed by the Danes in the 8th century when Watling Street became the frontier between the kingdoms of Wessex and Danelaw. Following the fortification of the Town by Edward the Elder in 914, the Normans built a moat and bailey castle, now known as Bury Mount.

Like Daventry, it flourished as a coaching town during the 18th and early 19th centuries until the building of the rail network that was relatively short-lived. The section of the Stratford-Upon-Avon & Midland Junction Railway was opened in 1866 and once touched the counties of Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. In an attempt to survive, the line was later named 'The Shakespeare Route' to benefit from the Stratford tourist trade. Towcester, once a main station on the line, was closed in 1958, the same year the M1 was built.

Land constraints caused by the presence of a private estate located to the northeast of the Town Centre led to the asymmetrical growth of the town towards the south and west. The town further expanded in the 1960s with suburban estates being built to the southwest of the centre.

Recently, further development has occurred to the north of the town with a housing estate located off the A43. Despite its growth, Towcester has retained its character as a small town.

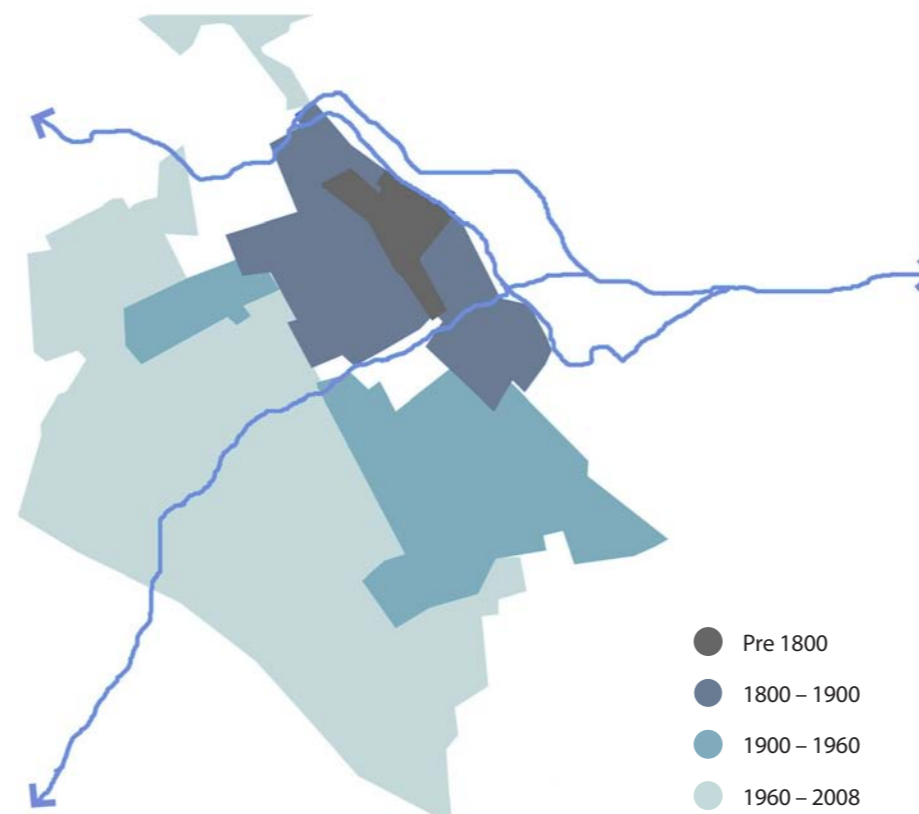


Figure 132: Historic growth of Towcester

Towcester Historic Growth

- The town of Towcester is the oldest in Northamptonshire
- In Roman times Towcester was established as the garrison town. It was then taken over by the Saxons and Danes
- After flourishing as a coaching town in the 18th and early 19th centuries, growth was halted by the rail network bypassing the town
- Growth resumed in the mid to late 20th century, fuelled by the construction of the M1 in 1958 and the construction of suburban estates in the 1960s
- Land constraints to the northeast of Towcester resulted in asymmetrical geographical growth to the southwest
- A large part of the town comprises of late 20th century suburbs

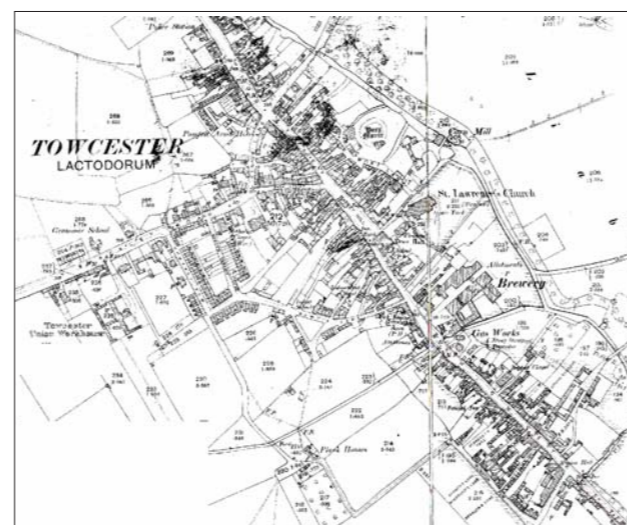


Figure 133: Historical Plan of the High Street dating 1883



Figure 134: Historic photo of Watling Street, the Towcester High Street



Figure 135: Historical photo of the Market Square

2.6.4 Typology of Landscape & Open Spaces within Towcester

Towcester lies within the landscape character area of the Northampton Vales, surrounded by rolling pastoral countryside.

The town is surrounded by a number of key open spaces in its immediate vicinity such as the Towcester Race Course as well as Jackson Stops Estate and Easton Neston Estate, both of which are privately owned. It also benefits from a number of footpaths and bridleways that connect it with the surrounding countryside. Many of these are flanked by ancient hedgerows that contribute to the character of the overall surrounding landscape and emphasise the rolling quality of the hills.

Towcester benefits from a linear typology of green spaces, one that cuts east-west along Silverstone Brook and another located northeast of the High Street. This north-eastern linear green space runs adjacent to the River Tove and contains the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bury Mount. Since this nationally important space is fairly under used and could benefit from its proximity to the High Street, it is now the subject of regeneration proposals to include it as part of an extension of the Town Centre.

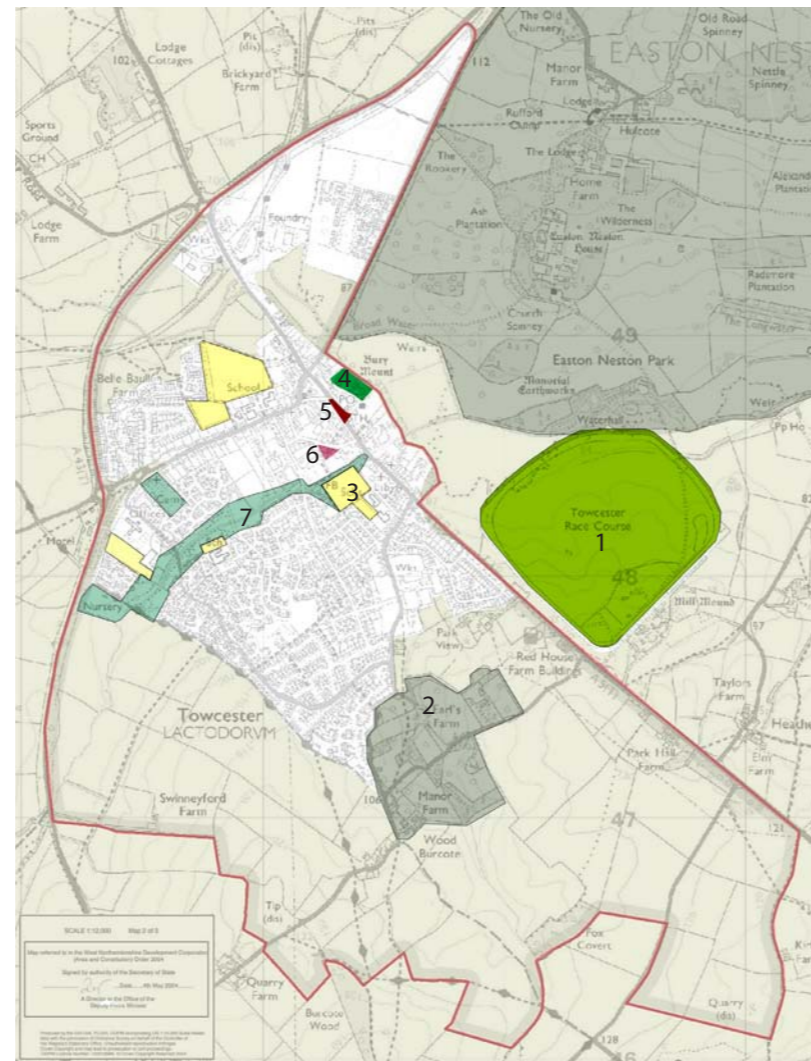


Figure 136: Open Space and Landscape Character Type

Towcester Landscape

- The landscape is characterised by rolling pastoral countryside, typical of Northampton Vales
- The Town is surrounded by key open spaces such as the Towcester Race Course, Jackson Stops Estate and Easton Neston Estate. The Estates are both privately owned
- It benefits from footpaths and bridleways that connect with the countryside
- Lack of recreational open space
- Linear typology of green spaces, along the Silverstone Brook and River Tove
- Under use of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Bury Mount which is the subject of regeneration proposals



Recreational green space



Linear green space along Silverstone Brook



Rolling hills are characteristic of this area

Principle Public Open Space Types within Towcester

Name	Length approx (m)	Width approx (m)	Area approx (ha)	General Shape	Function
1. Racecourse / Easton Neston Park	800	775	60	Rectangular	Historic Parklands and Gardens
2. Jackson Stops Estate	600	450	27	Irregular	Private
3. Recreational Ground	150	100	1.5	Rectangular	Local playing fields
4. Bury Mount Park	80	50	0.40	Irregular	Scheduled Ancient Monument
5. Market Square	85	25	0.21	Rectangular	Townsquare
6. Village Green	40	20	0.08	Triangular	Local park
7. Green Corridor/ Linear Park	-	11 to 100	-	Linear	Green corridor

2.6.5 Topography of Towcester

The settlement is surrounded by rolling hills and pastoral land. In keeping with the historic pattern of local settlements, Towcester lies within a low lying section of the Northamptonshire Vales, within the valleys of two rivers, the River Tove and the Silverstone Brook. Both of these mark the low points within the wider topography of the area around Towcester.

River Tove flows to the north and east, marking the edge of the Town Centre whilst Silverstone Brook cuts across the south section of the Town. From these two valleys, the land rises to a high point located further south of the town. The rolling hills are further emphasised by hedgerows that mark the field boundaries. High points along the southern and western edges of the town offer views over the surrounding countryside. Towcester racecourse is also located on a high point and offers wide views towards the north and west.



Hedgerows that mark field boundaries further emphasise the rolling hills within the surrounding countryside

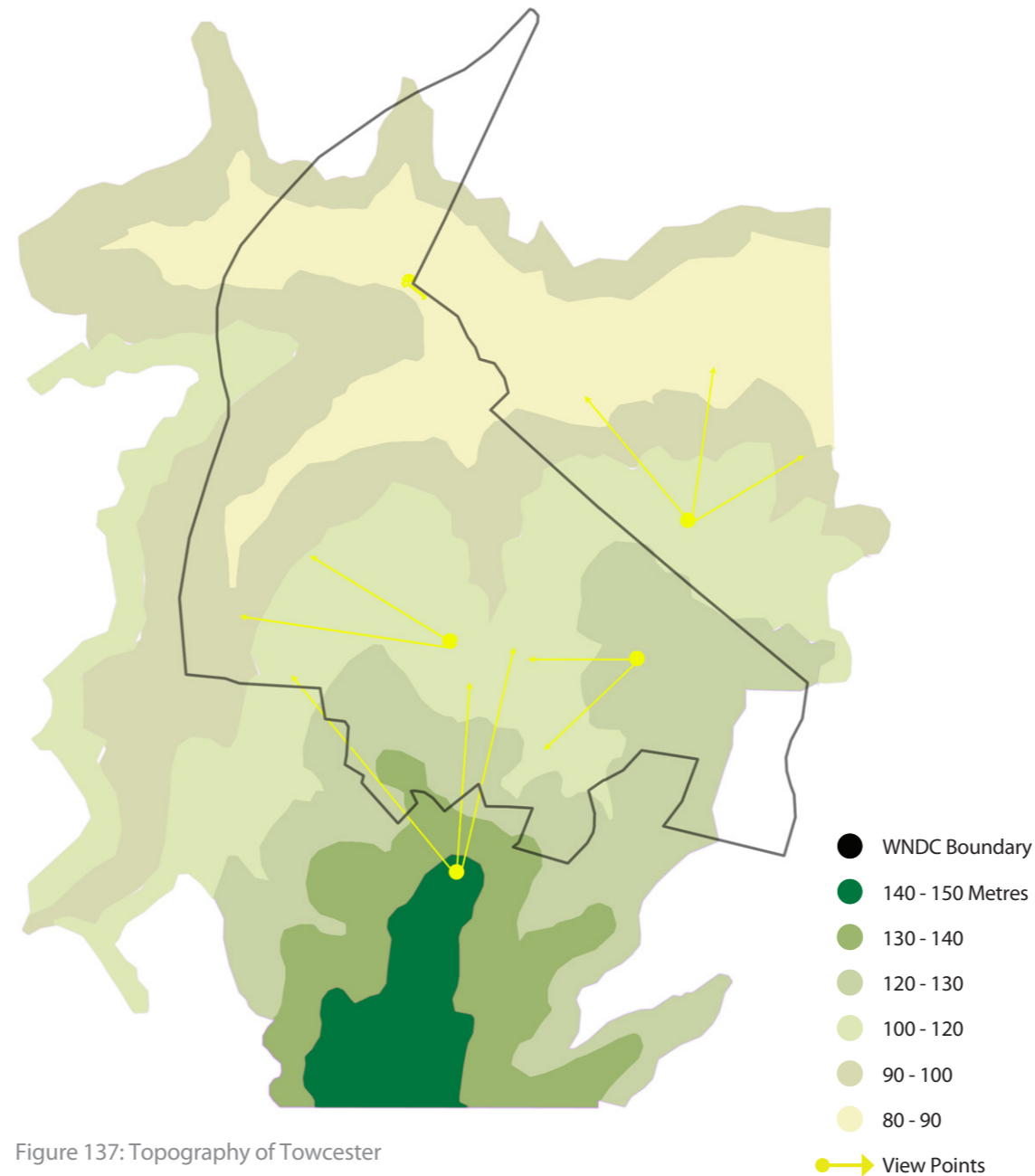


Figure 137: Topography of Towcester

Towcester Topography

- Towcester lies within a low lying section of the Northamptonshire Vales, within the valley bottoms of the River Tove and Silverstone Brook
- The settlement is surrounded by rolling hills and pastoral land
- The land rises to a high point further south of the town, offering views over the countryside
- The rolling hills are emphasised by hedgerows that mark the field boundaries

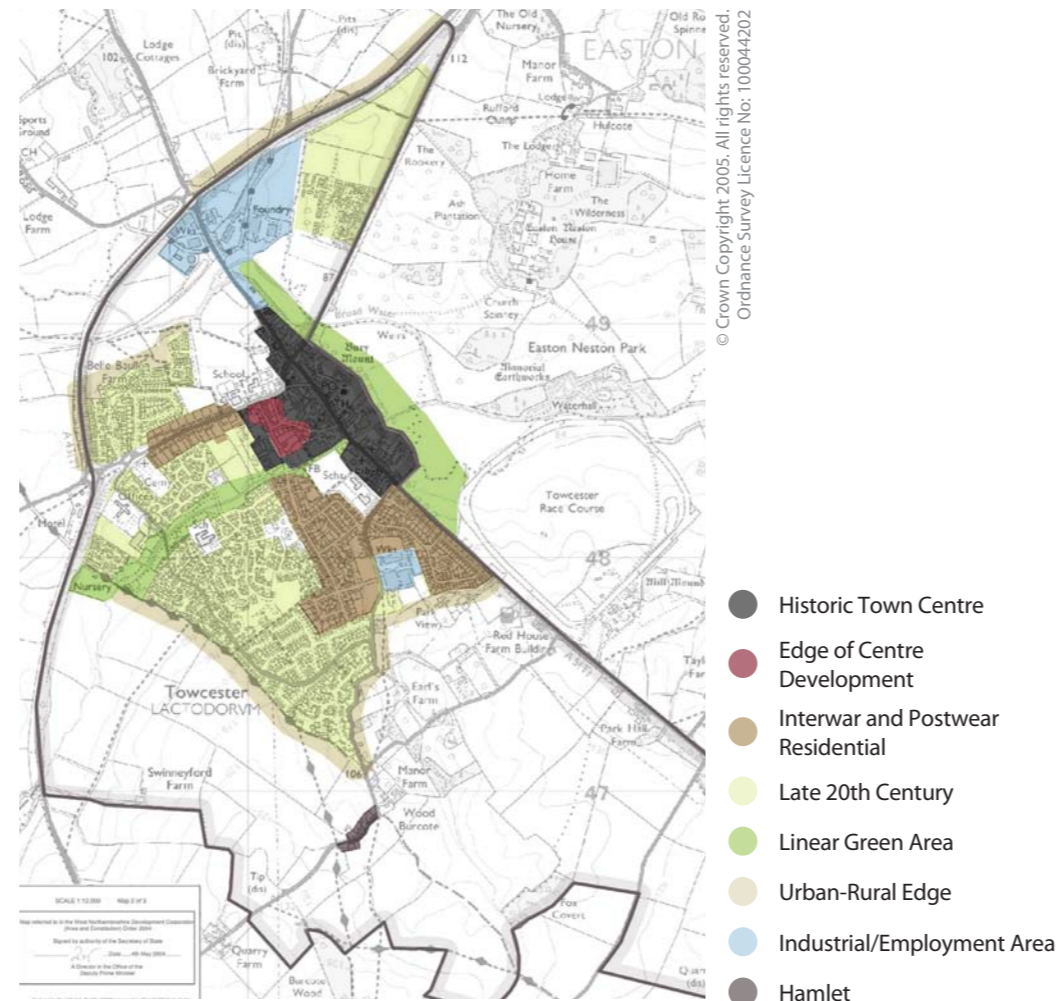
2.6.6 Character Areas and Land Uses of Towcester

As with Northampton and Daventry, the character areas of Towcester correspond to its historic layers of growth, each area standing as a testament to its time. The Town Centre, its key feature, is organically laid out with a linear High Street, high quality built form, townscape and architecture. Beyond lie areas of in fill where the character changes dramatically due to the predominance of parking spaces for the Centre.

A key differentiating factor of Towcester is its noticeable little amount of Victorian development caused by development stagnation during this period. Therefore the rings of growth beyond the High Street are taken up by areas characteristic of the interwar period. These are flanked by areas developed during the mid to late 20th Century expansion. Such areas are characterised by suburban housing set within wide streets often terminating in cul-de-sacs restricting permeability. Due to its substantial growth, the majority of Towcester falls within this type of area. More recent development has taken place to the north of the town where it has failed to integrate or benefit the town.

As with Northampton and Daventry, the 'transition' zones between Towcester's character areas tend to take on a character of their own or at times, are defined by a lack of character. At the periphery of the town, the nature of the urban-rural edge determines the typology of the town's boundaries. Edges are generally well defined, either by roads or by fences and boundaries.

Wood Burcote is a small hamlet to the south of Towcester. Despite being adjoined by urban areas, it retains its rural attributes. It is comprised essentially of a meandering rural lane flanked by detached cottages. The mature landscape and historic qualities of the cottages contribute to its identity and sense of place.



Land Uses

Towcester benefits from a range of local services and amenities. Retail facilities comprise convenience stores, and a Waitrose supermarket, as well as a Tesco superstore on the A5/A43 roundabout and a local centre on Buckingham Way. Other retail units include newsagents, butchers, estate agents, hardware and specialist stores. Most of these are concentrated on the High Street.

There are a number of play areas and open spaces within the Town, as well as other community facilities including three churches, a youth and community centre and a library.

All of these character areas exhibit key features that are detailed in the following pages.

Character Areas

- Towcester's character areas correspond to its historic layers of growth
- The linear Town Centre is a key feature
- Little amount of Victorian development is notable
- Areas beyond the High Street are characteristic of the interwar period
- Further are suburban cul-de-sac developments with restricted permeability, constituting the largest character area of the Town
- More recent development has taken place to the north of the Town
- 'Transition' zones between areas take on a character of their own or are defined by their lack of character
- The urban-rural edge of Towcester is mostly well defined either by roads or by fences and boundaries

2.5.7 Summary: Key Characteristics of Towcester as a Place

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

One: Strategic Location

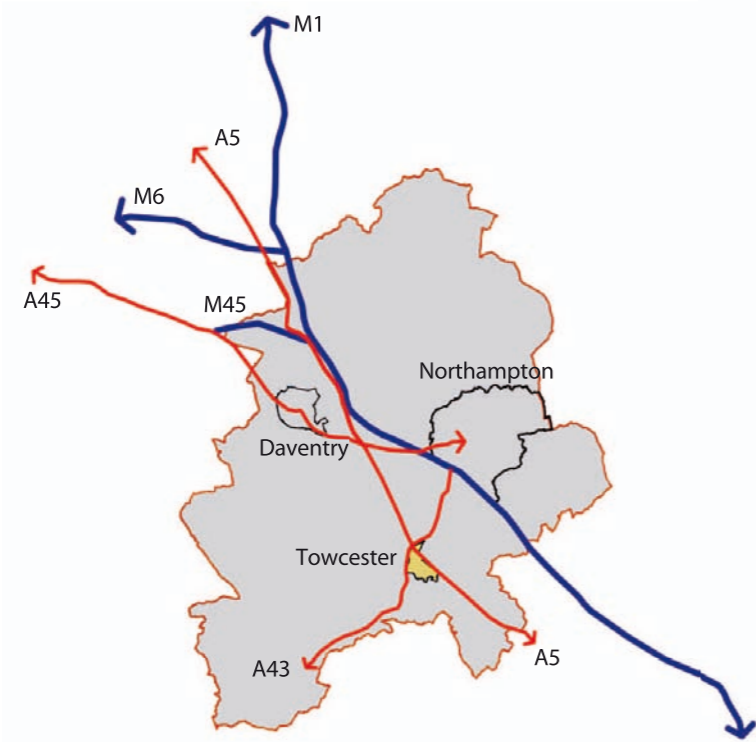


Figure 139

- Towcester is located off the crossings of the A5 and the A43 providing it with good connections to the M1 which leads to Milton Keynes, Birmingham and London and to the A43 leading to Northampton. It also provides connections to the M40 southwards towards Oxford.
- Towcester does not benefit from a rail station.

Two: Movement Network

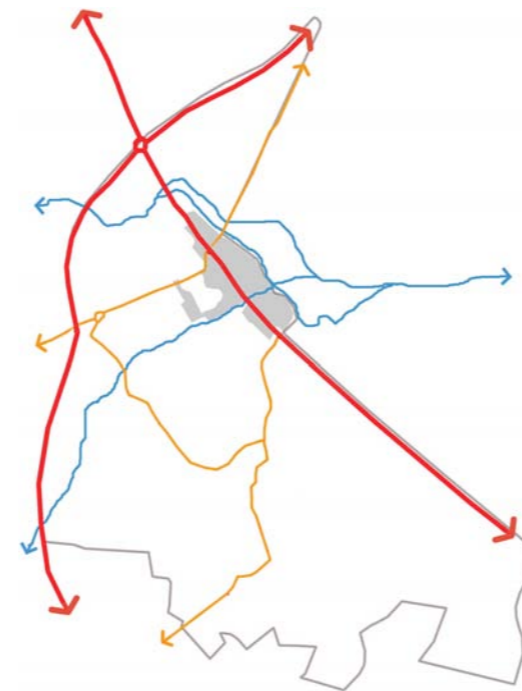


Figure 140

- Towcester's form is defined by its two main routes particularly its linear High Street at Watling Street, that forms a major route through the Town, thereby resulting in considerable congestion.
- Secondary and tertiary routes branch off the two main routes.

Three: Public Transport

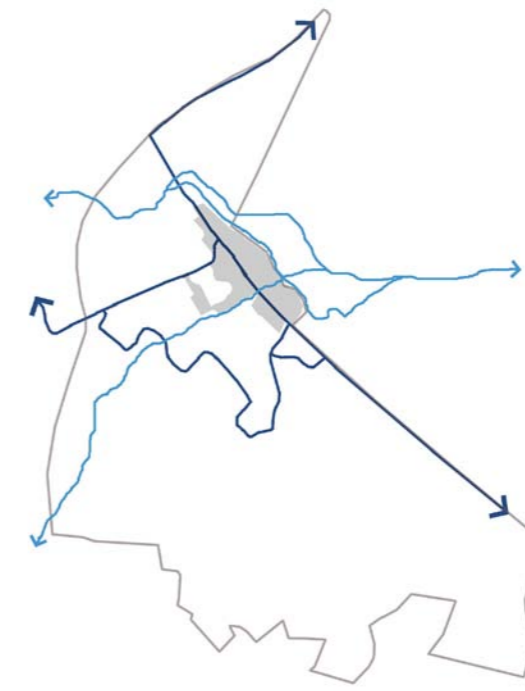


Figure 141

- Despite regular bus services between Towcester and neighbouring towns, the use of private vehicles is preferred, often causing congestion.

Four: Pedestrian Movement



Figure 142

- The pedestrian network is generally good due to the small scale of Towcester. The High Street is within walking distance for much of the Town. It is only in areas further to the south west that permeability decreases due the increased number of cul-de-sacs and meandering routes that hinder connectivity.

Five: Landscape

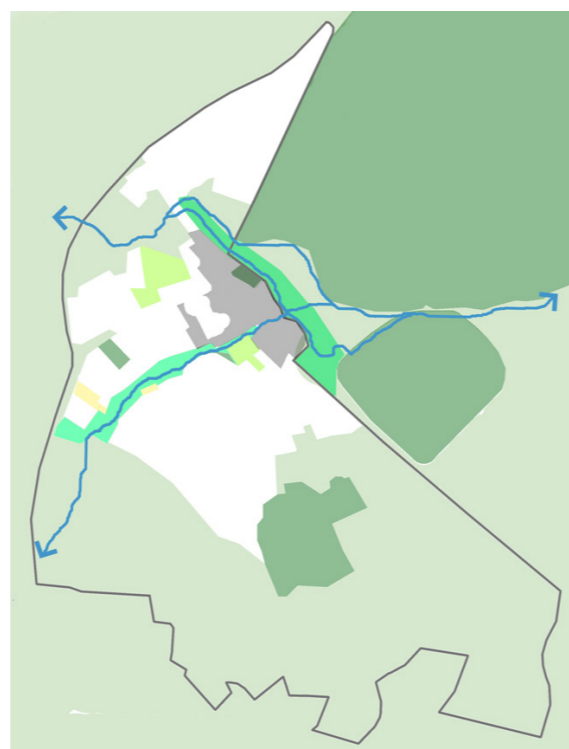


Figure 143

- The town is surrounded by large open spaces characterised by rolling hills and connected by footpaths.
- There is a shortage of recreational spaces as the town contains only one playing field.
- Towcester contains characteristic linear open spaces that follow the route of the two rivers that pass through the town.

Six: Topography

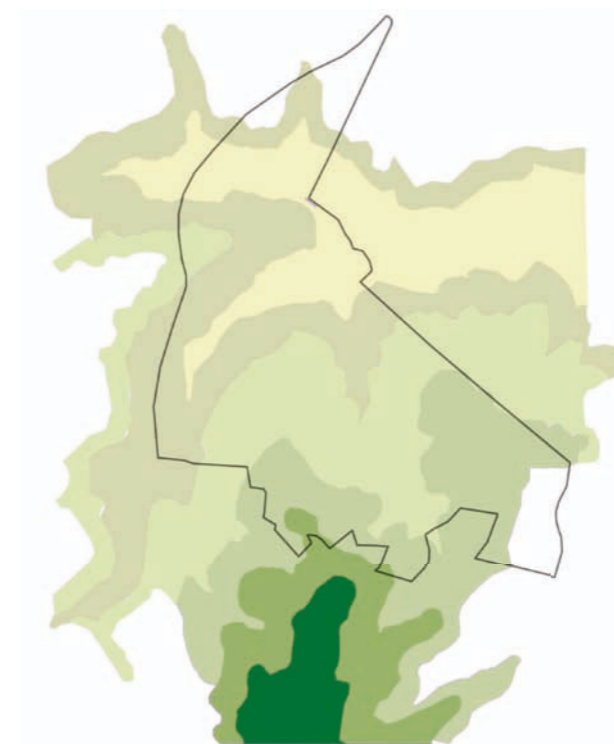


Figure 144

- Towcester is set in a low lying section of the Northamptonshire Vales, within the valley bottoms of the River Tove and the Silverstone Brook, marking the low points within the wider topography around Towcester.
- From these two valleys, the land rises to peak to the south of the town. High points along the southern and western edges offer views onto the surrounding countryside.

Seven: **History**

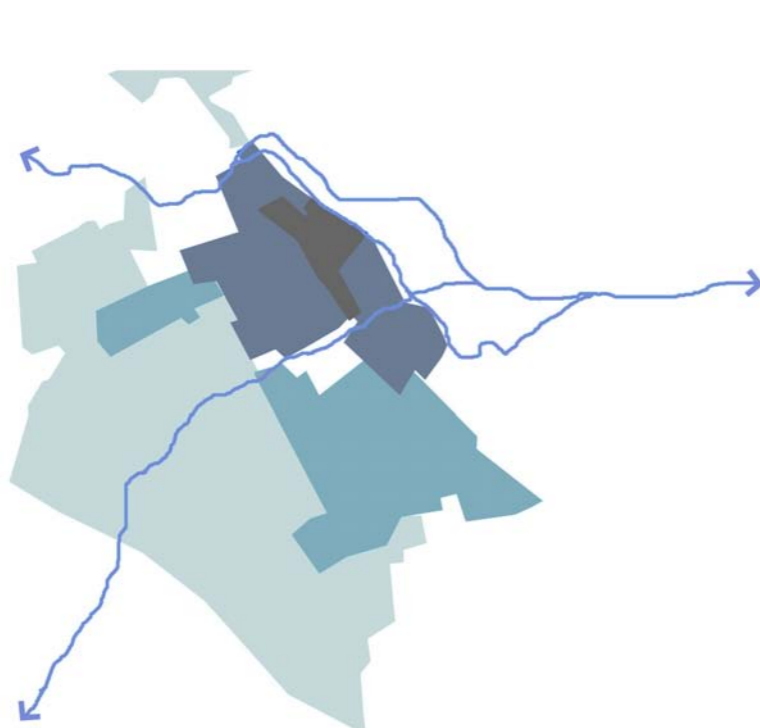


Figure 145

- The key character areas of Towcester are synonymous with the Town's historic layers of growth. Each area stands as a testament to its time.
- Towcester has grown asymmetrically due to constraints caused by the presence of a large estate to the northeast of the town.
- The Town grew substantially in the 1950s due to planned expansion.

Eight: **Urban-Rural Edges/Fringes**



Figure 146

- The majority of the Town sits within the wedge created by the A43 and the A5. These roads form boundaries to parts of the town.
- To the south, the rural urban edge is defined by back gardens and fencing with houses that turn away from the surroundings and restrict connectivity with the countryside.

Nine: **Character Areas**

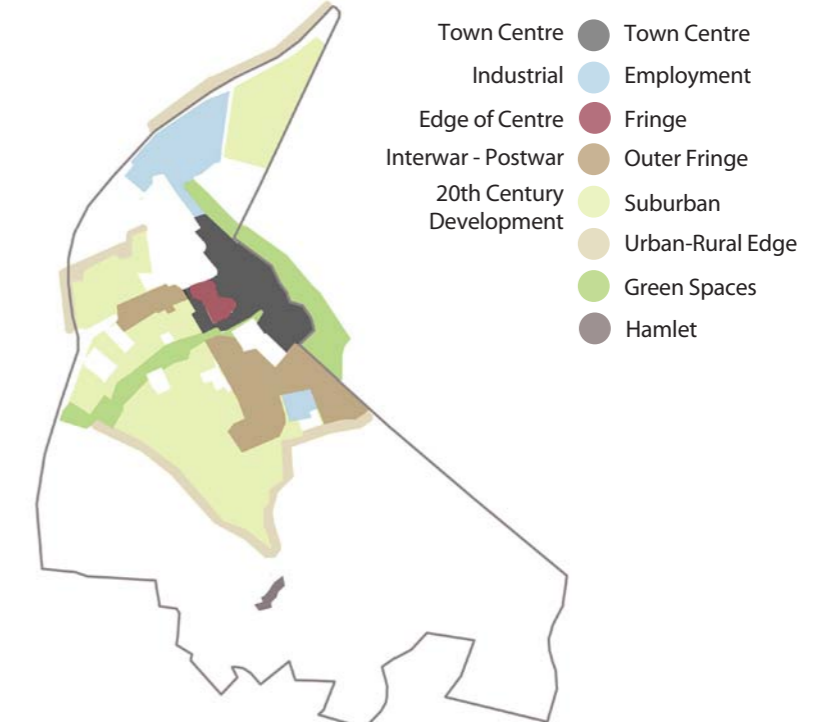


Figure 147

- Towcester has three key differentiating features. First, its historical Centre lies on the Town's edge. Second, there are little areas of Victorian areas given poor economic activity at that time. Finally, the largest part of the Town is taken up by areas developed since the mid-20th Century and which are poorly integrated with the rest of the Town.

The Urban Transect

- Towcester digresses from the typical model of an urban transect as its actual Town Centre does not lie within its geographical centre. It is an asymmetrical town. Its rings of growth radiate towards the south and southwest with only recent development occurring further to the north.

2.6.8 Key Features of Towcester's Character Areas

Town Centre



Street Layout	Town Centre is located at the crossroads of two main routes. Secondary and tertiary streets branch off from main routes, providing a clear street hierarchy and good permeability
Structure	Organic with varied plot sizes. Built form clearly defines spaces
Frontages	5 to 10 metre, continuous frontages with high frequency of front doors, providing natural surveillance
Uses	Mixed use: residential, commercial, retail
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block with parking and servicing in courts
Density Range	Compact form with a range of 40 to 60 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 to 3 storeys, with key civic buildings forming landmarks of up to 5 storeys
Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations and focal points
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

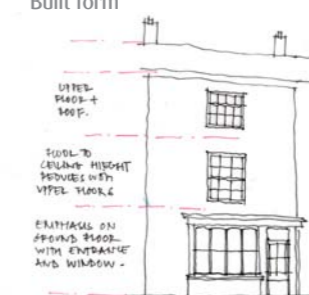
Grain



Streetscape



Built form



Fringe Development



Street Layout	Rectilinear grid street layout, providing good permeability
Structure	Formal urban structure with rectilinear defined perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 5-7 metre plot widths for terraced houses, larger for detached houses. Continuous and active frontage provide good natural surveillance
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with on street parking
Density Range	Approximately 15-25 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Legibility of the urban realm due to direct routes and sense of perspective at street junctions
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's fringe development can be considered as an exemplar as it creates a defined and coherent and permeable public realm with continuity of frontage





Interwar and Postwar / Outer

Street Layout	Rectilinear street layout with occasional cul de sacs, reducing permeability of the development
Structure	Informal with loose perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 15 metre plot widths. Frontages is regular although broken by gaps between semi-detached house
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage, or back streets. Parking tends to dominate front gardens, detracting from quality of streetscape
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 20 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Poor legibility of the public realm due to lack of recognisable landmarks and poor sense of enclosure and natural surveillance due to rather large streets and distance between buildings
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's interwar and postwar development has a number of weaknesses and should not be referenced as an exemplar for new developments

Grain



Streetscape



Built form



20th Century Development/ Suburban

Street Layout	Meandering street layout with cul de sacs, reducing permeability of the development
Structure	Informal with loose perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 15 metre plot widths. Frontages regularly broken by gaps between detached and semi-detached housing reducing the sense of enclosure and of natural surveillance
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage. Parking tends to dominate front gardens, detracting from quality of streetscape
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 20 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Poor legibility of the public realm due to lack of recognisable landmarks
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's suburban development has a number of weaknesses and is not considered best practice. Therefore it should not be referenced as an exemplar for new developments

Grain



Streetscape



Built form



Town Centre



- Defined by a tight urban grain with narrow plot sizes set up against each other
- Predominantly retail with additional mixed uses which generate activity throughout the day
- The buildings are generally terraced and rise to a height of 2 to 3 storeys
- The High Street has a linear form that opens onto the Market Square at the southern end. The widening of the High Street at the square currently serves as a car park
- Pedestrian alleyways lead off from the High Street towards the car parks to the rear. Many of these alleys contain small shops, providing surveillance and creating active frontages
- Typical frontage width is 7-10 m and the carriage width is typically 6.5 m
- Most buildings are Georgian or Victorian and of high architectural quality
- Strong sense of townscape as vistas end on prominent buildings
- Historic buildings are not constructed from ironstone. Generally timber and brick structures were used, with ironstone only used for key civic buildings
- Historic pitched roofs are visible from the street and were often tiled with red tiles or slate. Many red tiled roofs have grown thick layers of moss, which adds a further distinct element to roof lines
- Many of the buildings have windows on the ground floor that show a distinct typology. Windows are divided into several panes of glass. These provide a level of interest and add to the frontage of the building
- Another key characteristic are the bay windows located on the first floor of the buildings.

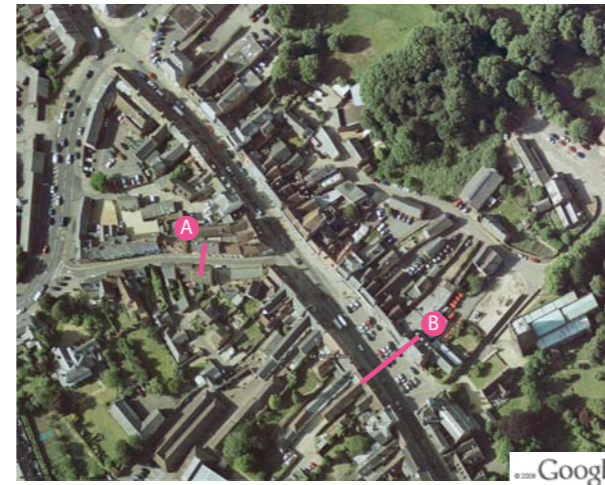


Figure 148: Aerial image of the southern part of Towcester's Town Centre



Figure 149: Figure ground of the Town Centre demonstrating its linear form, tight grain and defined edges

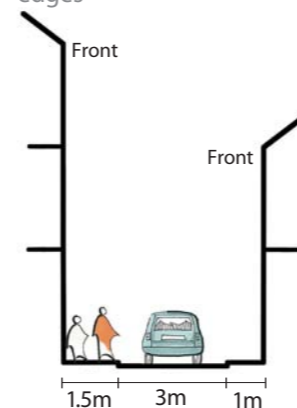


Figure 150: Section A through a narrow secondary street

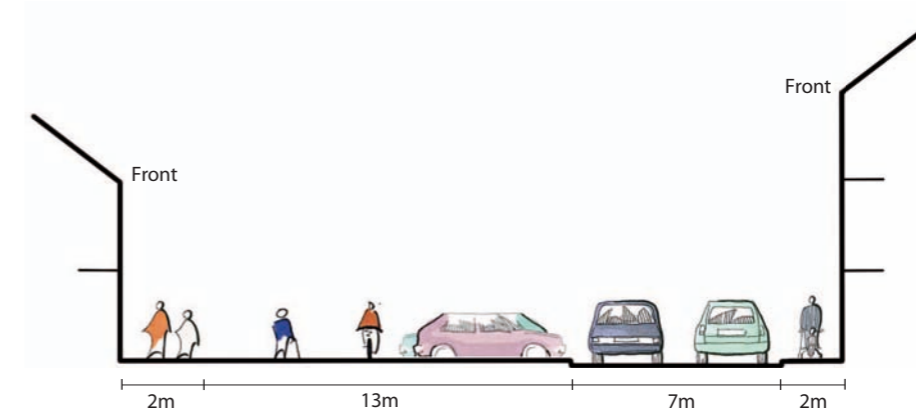


Figure 151: Section B cuts through Towcester's principle open space, the Market Square. The strategic location of the Town Hall gives a civic quality to the space

Assets	Weaknesses
Continuous active frontage along High Street	High Street dominated by heavy traffic, creating a poor walking environment
High quality townscape with clear landmarks and good legibility	Parking dominates streetscape in Market Square
Good surveillance with small plot widths and many front doors and windows	
Characteristic Northamptonshire architecture made from local materials	
Built form dictates layout	
Pedestrian scale of street	
Clear road hierarchy and street typology. Pedestrian alleyways enhance permeability	

Town Centre

Street Layout	Town Centre is located at the crossroads of two main routes. Secondary and tertiary streets branch off from main routes, providing a clear street hierarchy and good permeability
Structure	Organic with varied plot sizes. Built form clearly defines spaces
Frontages	5 to 10 metre, continuous frontages with high frequency of front doors, providing natural surveillance
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Townscape	Legible urban realm defined by landmarks in key locations and focal points
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

Townscape



Key landmarks



Sense of enclosure at the Market Square

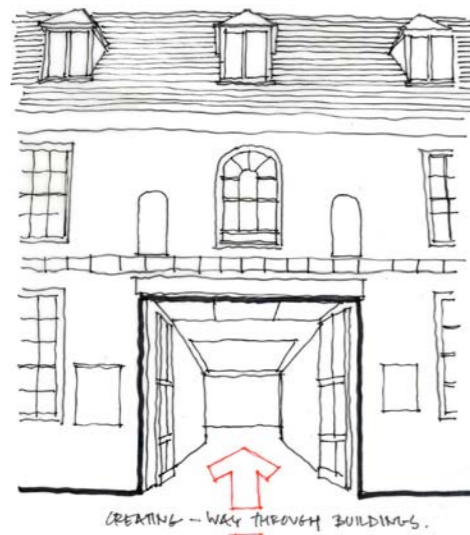


Figure 152: Elevation of a building on Towcester High Street highlighting the public pedestrian routes that cut through the building and enhance permeability to the Town Centre



Continuous frontage providing a good sense of enclosure



Figure 153: Sketch of the Market Square, highlighting the role of a landmark building in creating focus and definition to a space and contributing to its sense of place

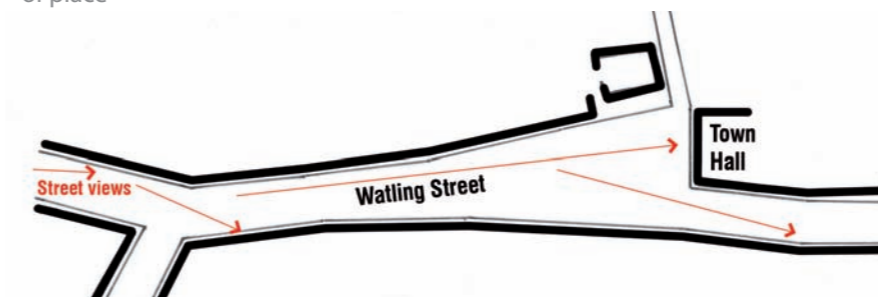


Figure 154: Part plan of Watling Street



Figure 155: Townscape quality of Towcester's Town Centre where building frontages respond to curve in the street

Type of Public Space



Town Square



'Village' Green



Residential street



Alleyway

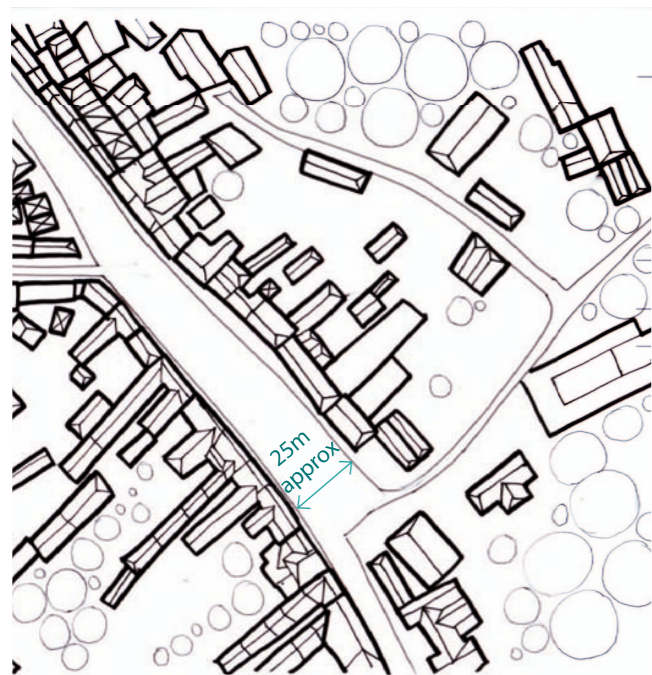


Figure 156: Part plan of the High Street highlighting the widening of the street to 25m, thereby forming the Market Square

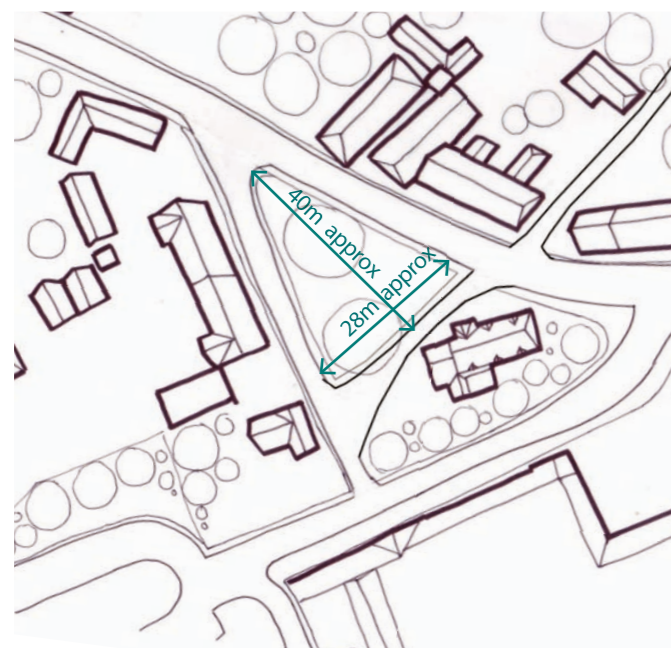


Figure 157: Plan of a public green space in Towcester, highlighting its dimensions that are in keeping with the scale of the space and its surrounding built form

Building Form



Church / Religious landmark



Vernacular building form housing commercial uses



Converter mill into office use



Vernacular residential form

Building Frontages



Figure 158: Typology of building elevations found on the Towcester High Street, highlighting their characteristic features

Public Realm Details



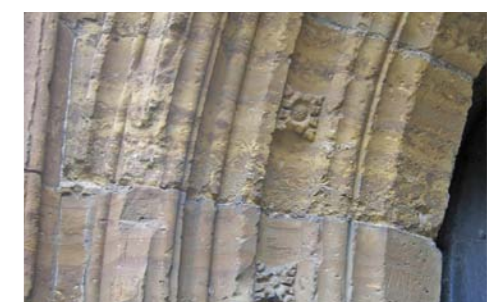
Boundary Wall Details



Fenestration



Materials



Victorian / Edge of Centre



- This character area is contained within four streets, located at the edge of Towcester’s Town Centre.
- The houses date from the Victorian period.
- The individual units are predominantly terraces (with a small dispersion of semi-detached houses) that form defined perimeter blocks.
- These are set back from the street and bordered by a hedge or fence along the pavement
- Houses are generally constructed of brick and stucco
- The houses are low rise, with massing of two storeys and a clear roof line punctured by chimney pots
- Despite the low massing, the streets have a good sense of enclosure
- Active frontages with a good level of natural surveillance onto the street
- Grid structure provides a good level of permeability and connectivity
- Narrow streets and permeable street layout lead to a good pedestrian environment.



Figure 159: Aerial image of a block dating from the Victorian period



Figure 160: Figure ground highlighting the perimeter structure of the block and its clear and defined edges

Assets	Weaknesses
Continuous active frontages	On street parking detracts from streetscape
On street parking allows for large private gardens to the rear	
Good surveillance	
Buildings reflect scale and grain of historic TownCentre	
Pedestrian friendly streets	
Clear street hierarchy	
Streetscape and buildings proportioned to a human scale	

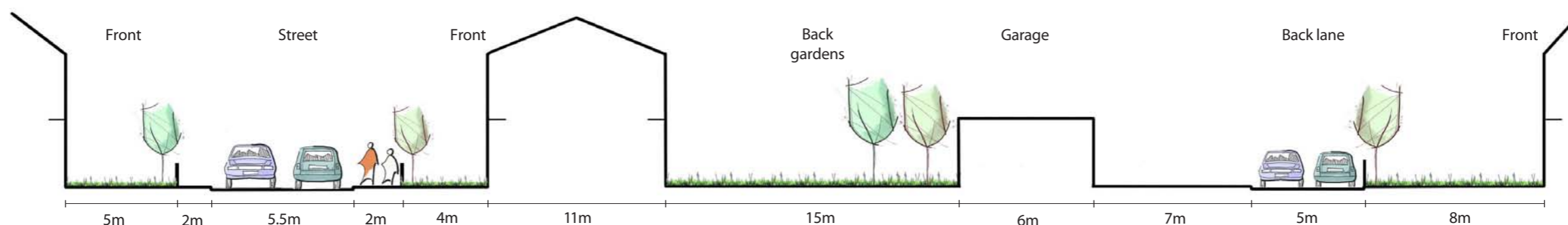


Figure 161: Section A cuts through the block and demonstrates the typology of on-street parking in the front with vehicular access through a lane, into garages located to the rear. Adjoining the garages is a row of front gardens providing a degree of surveillance onto the lane but locating fronts onto backs

Victorian / Edge of Centre

Street Layout	Grid street layout, providing good permeability
Structure	Formal urban structure with rectilinear defined perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 5-7 metre plot widths for terraced houses, larger for detached houses. Continuous and active frontage provides good natural surveillance
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with on street parking
Density Range	Approximately 15-25 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Legibility of the urban realm due to direct routes and sense of perspective at street junctions
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's fringe development can be considered as an exemplar as it creates a defined and coherent and permeable public realm with continuity of frontage

Streetscape



The terraces provide a defined edge and frontage to the street



Shared surface located between residential and linear green space



Streetscape defined by consistent massing and texture on building frontage.



Streetscape is enlivened by active frontages and continuity in fenestration.

Building Frontages



Architectural Details



Building Materials



Interwar & Postwar / Outer Fringe



- Interwar and postwar housing are located mainly to the south of the Town Centre
- The individual units are predominantly semi-detached and form defined perimeter blocks
- They are largely set back from the street with front gardens
- The houses are low rise, with massing of two storeys and a clear roof line
- The low massing, in relation with the width of the street, mainly adapted for motor vehicles, precludes the sense of enclosure throughout the character area
- Although frontages are fairly continuous, natural surveillance onto street is reduced by the poor sense of enclosure and large roads
- Permeability and connectivity is fairly good and only hindered by a few cul-de-sacs.



Figure 162: Aerial image of a block dating from the interwar and postwar periods



Figure 163: Figure ground highlighting the perimeter structure of the block as well as the significant setback from the street

Assets	Weaknesses
Continuous active frontages	On street parking detracts from streetscape
Large private gardens to the rear	Poor sense of enclosure due to front garden creating a set back from the street and disproportion of the street with the massing of the building
Good permeability	Some cul-de-sacs reducing permeability
	No clear street hierarchy and lack of recognisable landmarks resulting in poor legibility of the public realm



Interwar and Postwar / Outer Fringe

Street Layout	Rectilinear street layout with occasional cul de sacs, reducing permeability of the development
Structure	Informal with loose perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 15 metre plot widths. Frontages is regular although broken by gaps between semi-detached house
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage, or back streets. Parking tends to dominate front gardens, detracting from quality of streetscape
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 20 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Poor legibility of the public realm due to lack of recognisable landmarks and poor sense of enclosure and natural surveillance due to rather large streets and distance between buildings
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's interwar and postwar development has a number of weaknesses and should not be referenced as an exemplar for new developments

Streetscape



The streets lack a good sense of enclosure due to the low massing.



Semi detached housing does not provide for adequate continuity in the built form.



Interwar residential development set on a wide street.



Building Frontages



Architectural Details



Building Materials



20th Century Development/ Suburban



- A large area of the Town is taken up by the residential expansion of the mid to late 20th century. These areas are considerably different in character from the historic parts of the Town.
- They also include a recent development to the north of Towcester that follows a similar typology to the earlier suburbs.
- Predominantly detached homes of 1 and 2 storeys high.
- The overall layout is defined by a loose and scattered grain.
- Wide streets with broad pavements and a lack of street trees result in little or no sense of enclosure.
- There is a general lack of legibility in the built environment and little identifiable character.
- General connectivity is poor due to frequent cul-de-sacs.
- Whilst the generous setbacks create a sense of space, the overall environment is not pedestrian friendly as there is discontinuity in the built form with poor sense of enclosure. Much of the streetscape is dominated by garage doors and the spread of houses results in fewer front doors within a certain area.
- Housing has been developed in the form of estates that do not integrate well with the pre-existing fabric. Creating new connections with existing estates can be difficult due to overall lack of permeability.



Figure 164 : Aerial image of a suburban recent development



Figure 165: Figure ground highlighting the loose and scattered grain

Assets	Weaknesses
Purpose-built premises which respond well to the type of businesses present in Towcester	Permeability is restricted due to the number of cul-de-sacs and blind frontages
	Large buildings that appear scattered with little sense of continuity in built form
	Buildings set back from street, providing little sense of enclosure
	Detached housing layout with wide setbacks, resulting in a poor sense of enclosure and surveillance
	Meandering engineered layout dictated by engineering requirements rather than the built form
	Homogenous buildings which do not reflect the regional character
	Streetscape is dominated by parking or in fill green areas hindering visual quality and lowering natural surveillance
	No provision for various modes of transport

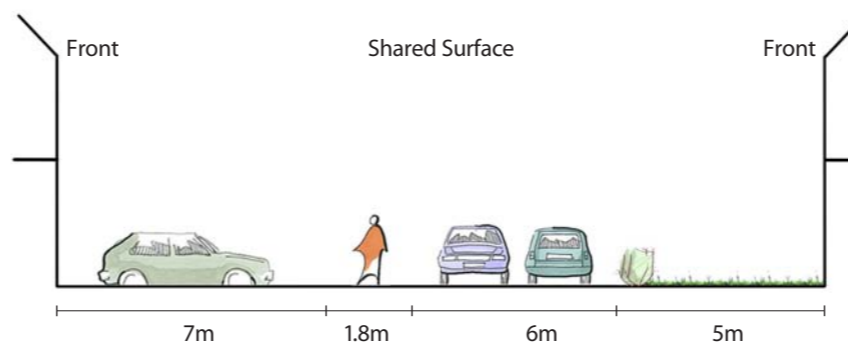


Figure 166: Section A

Suburban

Street Layout	Meandering street layout with cul de sacs, reducing permeability of the development
Structure	Informal with loose perimeter blocks
Frontages	Approximately 8 - 15 metre plot widths. Frontages regularly broken by gaps between detached and semi-detached housing reducing the sense of enclosure and of natural surveillance
Uses	Residential
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout with parking in curtilage. Parking tends to dominate front gardens, detracting from quality of streetscape
Density Range	Approximately 15 - 20 plots per hectare
Building Heights	Primarily 2 storey buildings
Townscape	Poor legibility of the public realm due to lack of recognisable landmarks
Consideration as exemplar	Towcester's suburban development has a number of weaknesses and is not considered best practice. Therefore it should not be referenced as an exemplar for new developments



The streets within the suburbs dating from the 1970s and 80s located to the south of the Town have generous setbacks which result in a poor sense of enclosure



Recent development to the south of Towcester has wide streets with generous setbacks along with a lack of landscape resulting in little sense of enclosure



Suburban development characterised by a generic house type that does not reflect or respond to the existing context



Parking located to the back of houses, with little natural surveillance

Transition Areas



- Areas of transition between defined character areas.
- Whilst at places areas of transition can take on their own character, the majority of these are of a non-descript character.
- At times, when two character areas abut each other or are located in quick succession, then an actual area of transition may not occur.

In Towcester, the areas of transition exist as follows:

- Transition is most evident in the areas between the High Street and the adjoining residential areas. Many such areas of transition are used as parking areas serving the Centre. They are defined by a lack of frontages as they are flanked by the backs of the buildings on the High Street.
- An area of transition is also created between River Tove, its green corridor and the High Street. This area takes on a character of its own with the back of the High Street on one side and the green edge of the River on the other.
- The transition between the areas of post war and late 20th Century development is characterised by reduced natural surveillance due to the thick hedges adjoining the pavement.

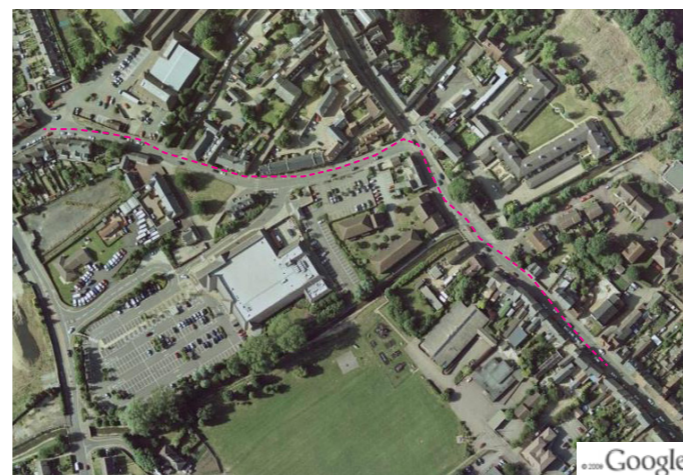


Figure 167: Aerial image showing an area of transition between the defined nature of the High Street to the in fill development of a superstore and the residential areas beyond



Transition areas between a recent development and the linear green along Silverstone Brook



Figure 168: Figure ground indicating the loose nature of the grain within the in fill areas, adjacent to the High Street



Transition areas between the historic areas of the High Street and more recent in fill development

Urban-Rural Edge



- The edge of the Town gains its significance from forming the boundary of the settlement. There are arrival or entry points where an approach into the built area is created.
- Edges of Towcester differ in their response to the rural surroundings.
- Best practice states that density and massing should reduce towards the edge of the settlement. Towcester differs from this, as its Town Centre is located along one edge of the settlement creates the highest density in that edge location. Towards the southwest, there is a clear legibility of centre and edge, defined by finer grain, a denser centre, and lower density edges.
- Along the A5, there are clear arrival points into the Town Centre and also along Brackley road, from the A43. There is also a clear sense of arrival into the Town.
- Many of the more recent residential developments in Towcester tend to turn away from the rural edge.
- Whilst the edge along Wood Burcote is active as houses overlook their rural surroundings, at places, views have been restricted due to banking of the rural edge.
- The rural surroundings of Towcester are defined by rolling pastoral hills.
- Footpath and bridleways connect the Town with its surrounding countryside. Some of these run along old Roman roads. Pedestrian pathways, forming a part of the linear green spaces, are very popular, particularly the one along the Silverstone Brook.



Figure 169: Aerial image of the urban-rural edge along the northern approach into Towcester



Figure 170: Aerial image of the urban-rural edge along the suburban areas to the south of the Town



Figure 171: Figure ground highlighting the nature of the urban-rural edge which is defined but inactive as the houses face away from the rural surroundings



Strong boundaries separating the back of houses with the rural surroundings



Buildings back off from the rural edge with hedges and a lane demarcating the boundary of the built areas



Buildings face onto the bank of the rural edge. The road and the bank create clear distinctions between the rural and the built surroundings

Hamlets: Wood Burcote



- Small settlement south of Towcester
- Buildings front directly onto road with little or no setback.
- Organic layout of buildings along a small country lane.
- Road is bordered by a hedgerow on one side and buildings on the other.
- Buildings front the road and their rural surroundings. At places, views are restricted due to a bank that creates a clear boundary between the hamlet and the countryside. It also helps to enclose the built form and reduced its impact on the surrounding countryside.
- Buildings have low massing, blending the built form into the surroundings.
- Wood Burcote is characterised by historic cottages set within a mature landscape.



Figure 172: Aerial image of the hamlet, Wood Burcote



Figure 173: Figure ground of the hamlet highlighting its linear and organic form

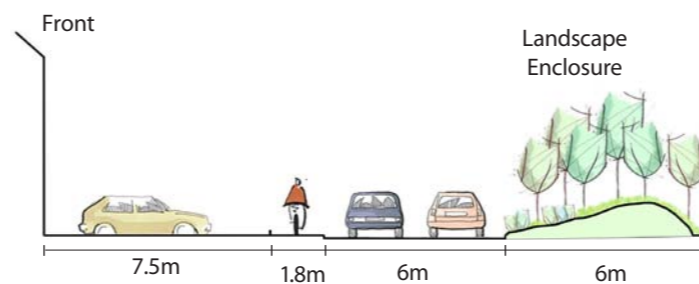


Figure 174: Section A

Assets	Weaknesses
Continuous active frontages	On street parking detracts from streetscape
On street parking allows for large private gardens to the back	
Good surveillance	
Pedestrian friendly streets	
Streetscape and buildings proportioned to a human scale	



Direct frontage onto lane from houses of Wood Burcote



The detached houses provide a strong edge to the lane

Hamlets

Street Layout	Meandering and defined
Structure	Organic and informal
Frontages	The built environment is a mix of terraced and detached houses. Continuity in frontages is largely maintained through ancillary elements such as boundary walls, fences, landscape etc
Uses	Largely residential, with some provision for agricultural uses to the rear of houses
Typical Block Layout	Perimeter block layout generally with on street parking
Density Range	
Building Heights	2 to 3 storeys high
Townscape	Townscape is formulated through a holistic play of built form and landscape. Key landscape features contribute to the overall streetscape
Consideration as exemplar	The consistency of massing and frontages, and the relationship between the buildings and landscape make Wood Burcote an exemplar for other village-like settlements or for developments at the edge of settlements

Streetscape



The main route passing through Wood Burcote



The main route through Wood Burcote takes the form of a country lane fronted by hedgerows and vegetation



Houses are set close to the edge of the road providing a clear definition to the road and the urban edge

Building Types



Linear terraced housing



Stepped housing on slope



Detached housing with garage plot

Architectural Details

