



# West Northamptonshire Villages

## 2.7 Context Appraisal: West Northamptonshire Villages

### 2.7.1 Introduction

This section of the context appraisal extends beyond the urban centres of Northampton, Daventry and Towcester to focus on some of the villages that are scattered in the surrounding landscape in proximity to the three towns and located within the WNDC's UDA boundary. It begins by considering the two main types of West Northamptonshire rural settlements, further to which, it highlights key generic characteristics of these settlements. For the purpose of this study, a few villages have been chosen as case studies to represent the two settlement types.

The Current Landscape Character Assessment provides a good level of information on the character of the villages and their environs. It states that despite the influences caused by the urban expansion of the towns and by further road infrastructure, the wider landscape is considered a tranquil, rural area famed for its productive farmland and attractive villages.

These villages form an intrinsic part of the surrounding landscape. Their character is dictated by either the gently undulating or flatter landscapes. The villages were historically positioned as a natural response to the landscape. As the Current Landscape Character Assessment states, *'contrasting geological formations underpin the landscape structure of the County and dictate the principal land form elements. Although Northamptonshire's geology is hidden beneath a landscape of fields, valleys and gentle hills, its mellow stone buildings are indicative of the diversity and wealth of its solid rock formations with the patterns of local building intrinsically linked with the underlying geology'*.

- West Northamptonshire Boundary ●
- Urban Areas ●
- Villages ●
- Daventry District Council ●
- Northampton Borough Council ●
- South Northamptonshire District Council ●
- Wellingborough Borough Council ●
- Kettering Borough Council ●
- East Northamptonshire Borough Council ●
- Corby Borough Council ●

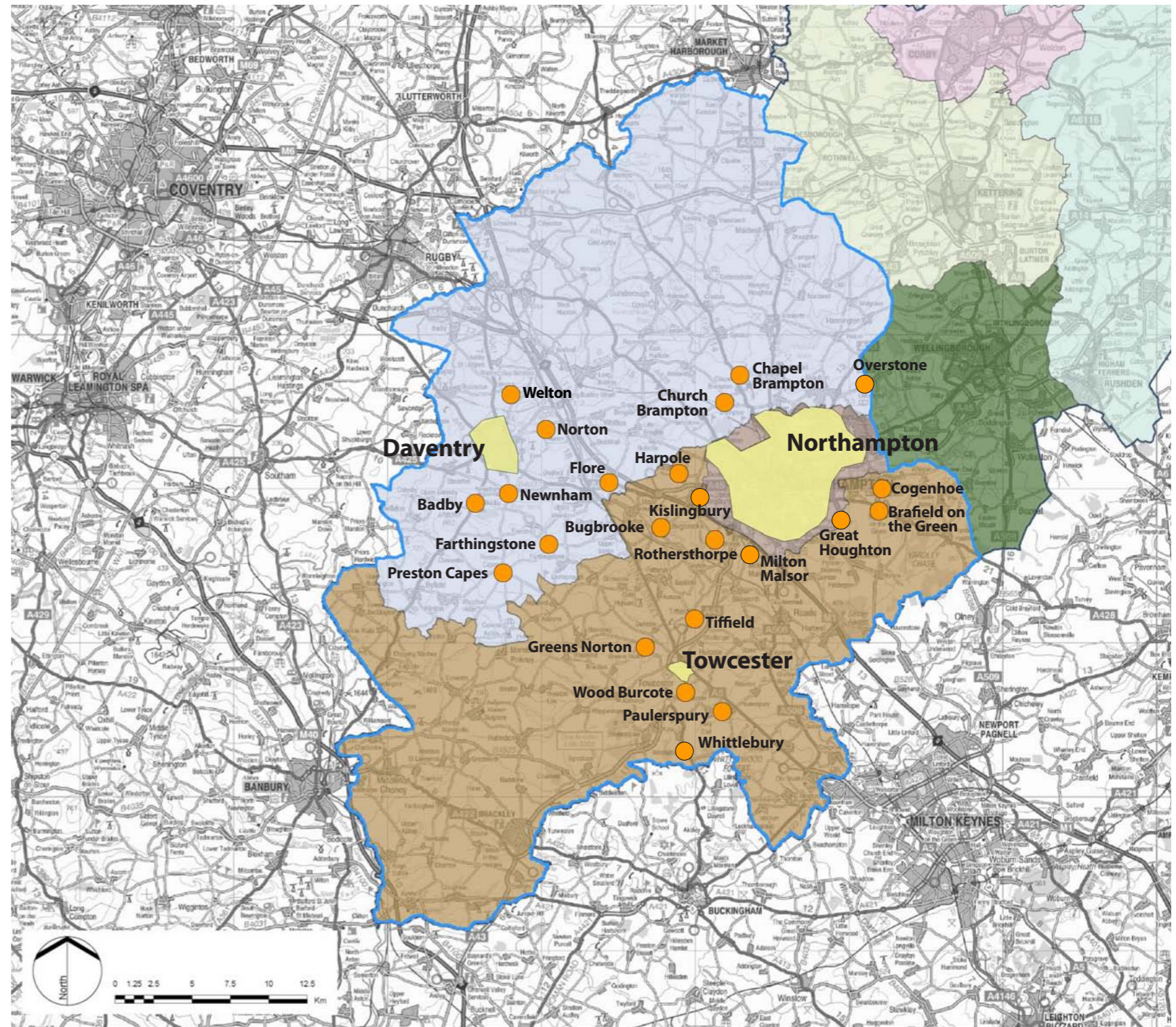


Figure 175: Location of villages surrounding the three principal West Northamptonshire towns.

The photograph to the left illustrates the combination of mature landscape, planting, local materials, public realm features and built form, all of which collectively contribute to formulating the unique identity of the villages of West Northamptonshire

The following information is sourced from the Current Landscape Character Assessment (see source below) and provides a good insight into the origin and development of these villages and their resulting character, particularly stressing their relationship with the natural landscape and geological formation.

- *The built environment is evocative, ranging from the charm of the many picturesque villages and historic small towns to the individual houses and churches with prominent spires and mansions.*
- *In Northamptonshire, vernacular buildings have a direct relationship to the area in which they occur and mirror the relative scarcity or availability of particular building materials as well as the subtle differences of, for example, local geological formations.*
- *In towns and villages in rural Northamptonshire prior to the industrial revolution, vernacular architecture predominated. Vernacular buildings were erected largely independent of current fashion and represented part of a long standing tradition passed on from generation to generation evolving gradually in order to keep pace with changing needs.*
- *Northamptonshire is fortunate amongst other midland counties in having a rich diversity of building materials derived from underlying Jurassic rocks. These range from fossil rich limestones, to sandstones and warm coloured ironstone.*
- *In much of the central part of Northamptonshire, the ironstone and the brown sandstones within the iron rich Northampton Sand Formation have yielded wide sources of building stone.*
- *The majority of surviving vernacular buildings date to the late medieval period. At this time there was an upsurge in domestic building and rebuilding and as in the Cotswolds, almost every village on the Jurassic belt had its own stone pit. As a result, the geological framework of the County is expressed in the buildings and the older buildings often appear to be part of the landscape in which they are situated.*
- *Areas within easy reach of two contrasting rock types have often utilised both sources, with the contrast between different stone materials achieving striking architectural effects.*



Figure 176: Map of central Northants dating from 1906, which shows the scattering of rural settlements in the landscape. It also gives an indication of the origins of the linear and circular plan form

Source: Pg 23,24, Northamptonshire's Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite. Current Landscape Character Assessment. Evolution of the Landscape - Human Influences. 2.9 - Building and Settlements, 2.91 - Vernacular Buildings. & 2.9.2 - Settlements.

The character assessment continues to highlight the lack of contextual response that post war urban and suburban development has demonstrated, it states:

*'With an ever increasing departure from vernacular styles and the use of natural locally procured materials in favour of standard designs and materials, typically red brick faciers and tile roofs. This has the effect of making new developments appear divorced from their surrounding landscape and diminishing the contribution buildings can have on landscape character and local distinctiveness'*.

### Settlement Pattern

The rural settlements of the region depict a strong pattern borne out of a response to the topographical and landscape nature of



A distinct Northamptonshire ironstone house, depicting characteristic features, fronting a street.



The church in Boughton remains a key landmark for the rural settlements with its tower rising higher than the surrounding buildings. This is why Northamptonshire is often called the County of 'Spires and Squires'

the surrounding land. Historically, the church was one of the first buildings in the settlement to be built in stone and as the focus of the community offered an opportunity to express the wealth or prestige of a local benefactor through elaborate architectural detailing or sheer scale. The rolling nature of the Northamptonshire landscape and the siting of settlements on hill crests and ridges increases the visibility of settlements from a wide area of the surrounding landscape. Church spires are often key landmark features offering striking accents and orientation points.

Scattered around Northamptonshire's countryside are charming, mostly stone-built villages with ancient churches and traditional architecture. Bordered by the County's 2,000 miles of footpaths,



Buildings provide strong definition to the street



The characteristic Northamptonshire countryside with its rolling hills and valleys

many are also located close to areas of outstanding natural beauty. These villages are typically found in the areas that circumnavigate towns and other built-up urban areas.

This section of the Manual provides an analysis of the Northamptonshire villages with a focus on their settlement form and key characteristics in particular.

In general, the Northamptonshire villages depict two types of settlement form, Linear form and Circular form.



Houses fronting onto a green with pedestrian access via a lane



A single tree providing focus onto a green verge. Such planting also helps to give definition to the public space

## 2.7.2 Settlement Form: Linear

Linear villages tend to spread along a route with the main street that passes through the settlement acting as a focal area.

The central route through the village probably pre-dates the village itself, with the settlement evolving at some way-station or historic feature and then developing along this route. Often it is only a single street with houses on either side of the road.

Later development or expansion to these settlements would usually result in a series of secondary streets branching off the main street. These secondary streets do not necessarily connect with each other. Hence the overall form retains its linear shape.

The centre of such a village would be highlighted by a widening of the main street to accommodate a village green or a green verge.

The six examples of Great Houghton, Overstone, Farthingstone, Norton, Tiffield and Whittlebury exemplify the linear form of this typology of settlement.

As is typical for many of the villages of West Northamptonshire, the six case-studies are located in varying degrees of proximity to the three main towns. Great Houghton is situated southeast of Northampton. The proximity to the facilities and jobs of the Town makes it a commuter village. Parts of the village that branch off the main High Street are more suburban in character than rural.

Overstone lies northeast of Northampton. It is a small settlement essentially spread across one main street. An additional secondary street branches off into a loop with one point of access. The village is contained and bound by Overstone Park located to the east of the settlement.

Villages around Northampton



Figure 177: Plan form of Great Houghton

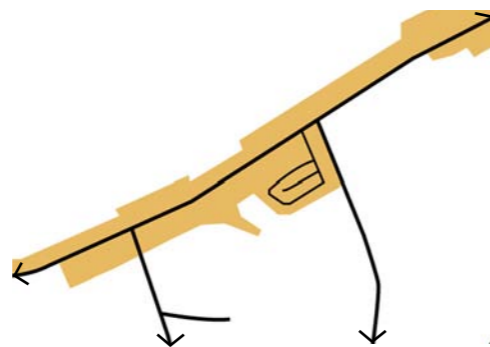


Figure 179: Plan of Overstone showing its linear form that spreads across the main street

Villages around Daventry

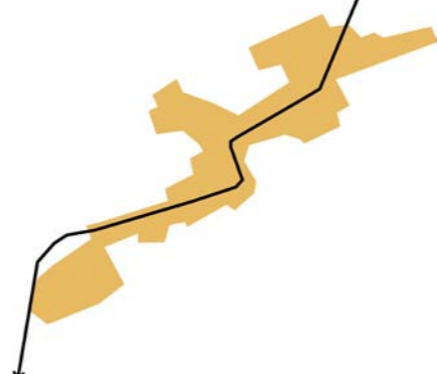


Figure 181: Farthingstone is another good example of the linear typology



Figure 178: Aerial image of Great Houghton

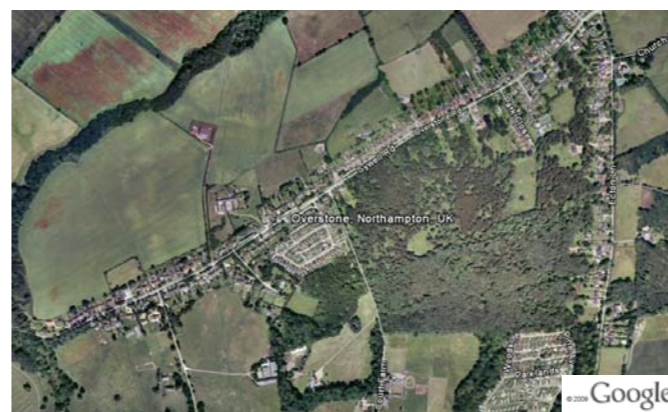


Figure 180: Aerial image of Overstone

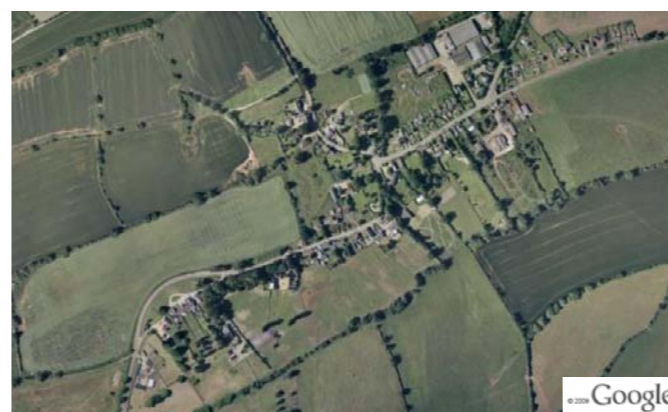


Figure 182: Aerial image of Farthingstone



Church creates a local landmark for the village



Defined line of thatched roofed houses provide definition to the street



Clustering of dwellings along main road through Farthingstone

Farthingstone is approximately equidistant from the south of Daventry and to the north of Towcester. It is a small settlement situated in-between the junction of three streets with a church overlooking the junction of the two streets.

Norton is located to the east of Daventry. Whilst it is a linear settlement, its form is fairly centered on the junction of two main streets. Secondary streets tend to branch off the main street and culminate into small cul-de-sacs.

Both Tiffield and Whittlebury are in proximity to Towcester, north and south of the Town respectively. Both villages have a distinct linear form with most of the built form extending along the main street.

### Summary: Linear Form

- Linear type settlements tend to spread along a route with the focus being the main street that passes through the settlement
- Settlements reveal a pattern of growth whereby secondary streets are formed and branch off the main one
- A characteristic feature of this settlement type is the widening of the main street to accommodate a village green or verge which sometimes highlights the centre of the village
- Whilst most of the villages exhibit a clear linear form, some of them can be somewhat centered around a junction of two main streets
- Most of the main streets are flanked by a single line of built form

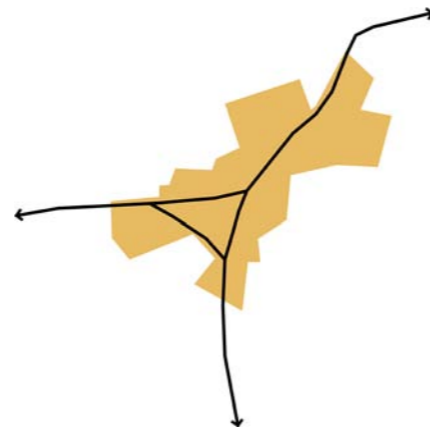


Figure 183: The plan of Norton illustrates its linear form that spreads across a junction and two streets

Villages around Towcester



Figure 185: Plan form of Tiffield



Figure 187: Plan form of Whittlebury



Figure 184: Aerial image of Norton



Terraced dwellings along main Norton route



Figure 186: Aerial image of Tiffield



Symmetrical facades front onto a village street



Figure 188: Aerial image of Whittlebury



Where buildings are set back from the road, hedges and vegetation provide definition to the road

### 2.7.3 Settlement Form: Circular

These villages depict a compact circular settlement plan. This type may have more than one main street with a focus at the junction of two streets. Secondary streets in this typology tend to branch off and connect with each other. This is particularly demonstrated in Kislingbury and Flore. The overall pattern of development thus takes on a round and compact form.

Preston Capes is another example where the form of the village was derived from it being built on the Oxford Lane, an ancient route which leads from Newnham and continues southwards.

The village centre would often be located at crossroads, marked by a village green which may be supported by a community hall, local pub, shop, post office or café.

The diagrams to the right indicate the circular forms of six villages: Kislingbury, Milton Malsor, Flore, Greens Norton and Paulerspury.

Kislingbury and Milton Malsor are located to the west and south of Northampton, respectively. Both of these exhibit the more compact centered form that comprises of a main street with a series of secondary streets that branch off in loops.

Flore is located in close proximity to Daventry. The village has a distinct form with the High Street that loops through the settlement. Most of the settlement lies to the south of the main street.



Figure 189: Plan of Kislingbury shows a form that is more rectangular than centered

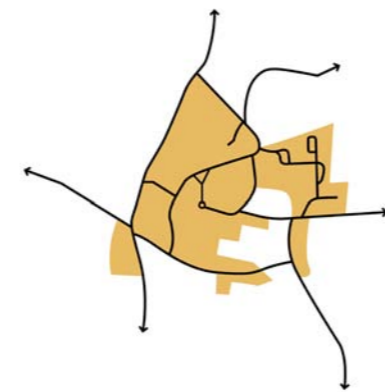


Figure 191: Plan of Milton Malsor showing a centered form



Figure 193: The plan form of Flore strongly indicates the village's growth on the junction of two key streets



Figure 190: Aerial image of Kislingbury



Figure 192: Aerial image of Milton Malsor



Figure 194: Aerial image of Flore



Village centre marked by a local public house



Well enclosed streets fronted by surrounding houses



Secondary street branching off the main road in Flore

Preston Capes is small village that lies to the south of Daventry. It has a unique and compact form as it spreads across two streets and is centered at the junction of the two.

Greens Norton is located to the northwest of Towcester. It exhibits a true centered form located along the staggered junction of two streets.

Paulerspury lies to the south east of Towcester. It is a small settlement that, at the initial instance, appears linear but is actually centered along a junction of two streets. The centre is further highlighted by the village church and a green. The settlement then extends further in-between a looped street that connects onto the main one.

### Summary: Circular Form

- Circular type settlements may have more than one main street with a focus on the junction of two streets
- Secondary streets in this typology tend to branch off and connect with each other
- The village centre is usually located at a crossroads and is marked by a village green, community hall, local pub, shop, post office or café

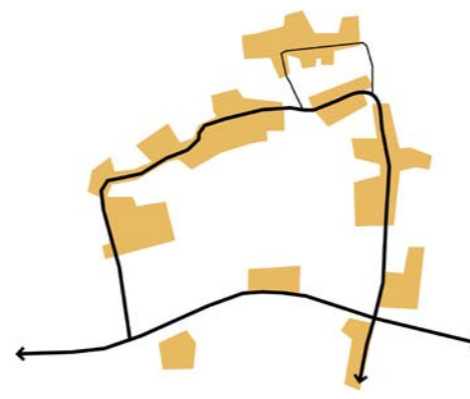


Figure 195: Plan form of Preston Capes



Figure 196: Aerial image of Preston Capes



Junction leading off the main road in Preston Capes

### Villages around Towcester

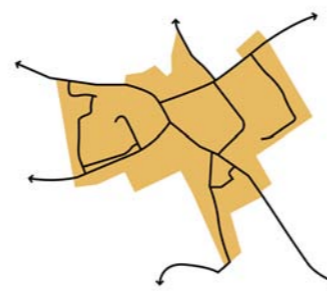


Figure 197: Plan form of Greens Norton



Figure 198: Aerial image of Greens Norton



Rural lanes closely defined by surrounding houses

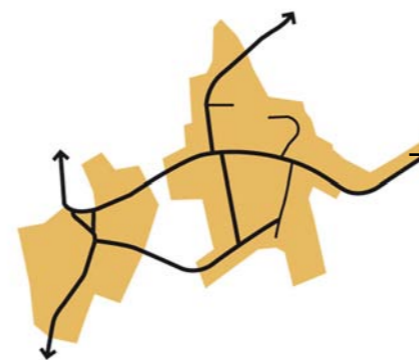


Figure 199: Plan form of Paulerspury



Figure 200: Aerial image of Paulerspury



Houses fronting onto the village green

## 2.7.4 Key Characteristics

The built form of West Northamptonshire villages reveals the following key characteristics :

- The settlement form depicts an organic layout with a diverse grain. Towards the centre of the settlement the grain may become compact and defined whilst it is loose and dispersed towards the edges.
- The built form reflects the organic nature of the layout.
- The overall sense of space within the settlement is defined and contained despite the dispersed built form. Ancillary elements such as mature landscape, boundary walls, gates and fences work to provide continuity and enclosure.
- The built form can be dispersed but continuity is maintained through boundary walls that extend from one building to another. These are often constructed with local materials and are a key feature of these settlements.
- Mature landscape and vegetation add to the overall enclosed quality of the public realm.
- Village greens are a typical feature of the rural settlements with a prominent tree acting as a local landmark.
- The village centre is often located at a crossroads, marked by a village green and surrounded by mixed uses such as a community hall, local pub, shop, post office or café. An easy commute to nearby towns has led to a tendency for villages to become dormitory settlements, unable to sustain many of the village facilities particularly the local shop and post office.
- Because of this, some villages now lack a mix of uses and a defined centre.
- Rural churches serve as the key landmark for the settlement, usually located on a high point with surrounding landscape acting as a setting for the building.
- Historic rural buildings are constructed with local materials such as ironstone and reveal high architectural value and quality.



Figure 201: Aerial image showing the plan of Welton, a typical West Northamptonshire village



Architectural features and use of local materials add to the townscape quality and character of a village



Landscape details provide natural enclosure to street, while level changes are common due to slope



The typical house types within the rural settlements are terraces found within the centre, detached and semi-detached houses tend to be located toward the edges of the village



Strong sense of townscape, with changing views, denser housing and a strong sense of enclosure

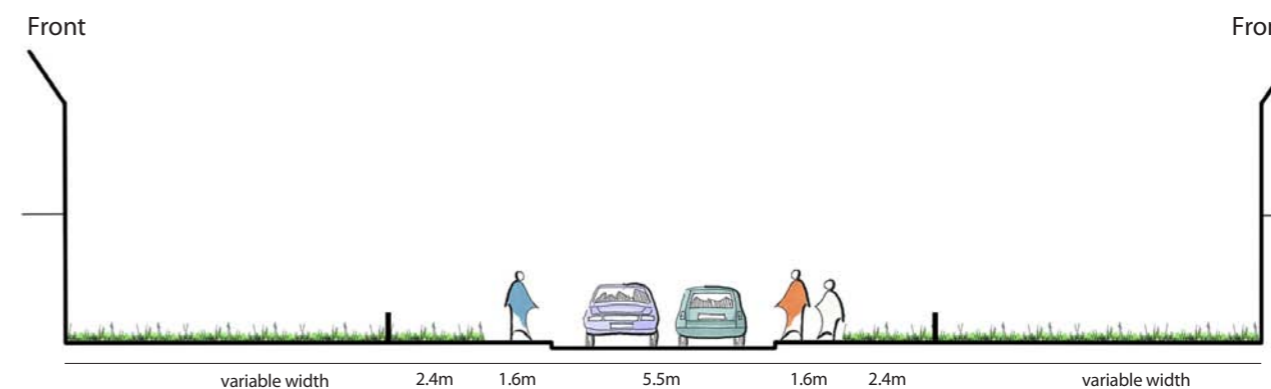


Figure 202: Section A cuts through a rural street in Welton demonstrating the set back of buildings from the road. Green verges, planting and landscape play an important role in defining the public realm



Figure 203: Section B cuts through a village green which is a typical feature of rural settlements. A prominent tree/s within the green form/s a local landmark and help/s to provide vertical definition to the horizontal space

Village Centre



Village centres often contain a public house, one of the few surviving village amenities

Village Amenities



A post office and a village store in Greens Norton

Village Green

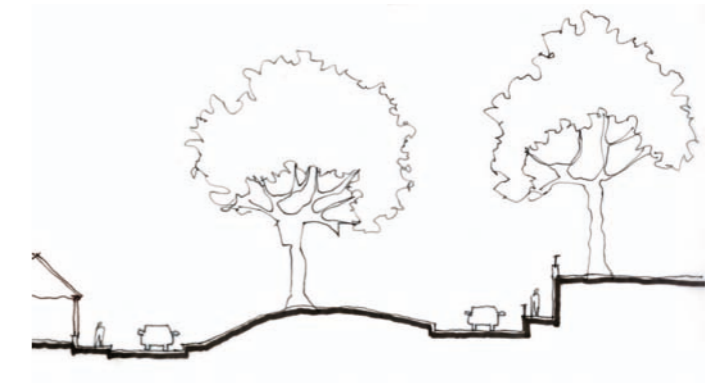


Figure 204: Indicative section through a green illustrating the role of planting in providing a sense of enclosure to streets



Key features in the landscape contribute to the identity of the rural settlement



Village stores in Overstone, set back from the street

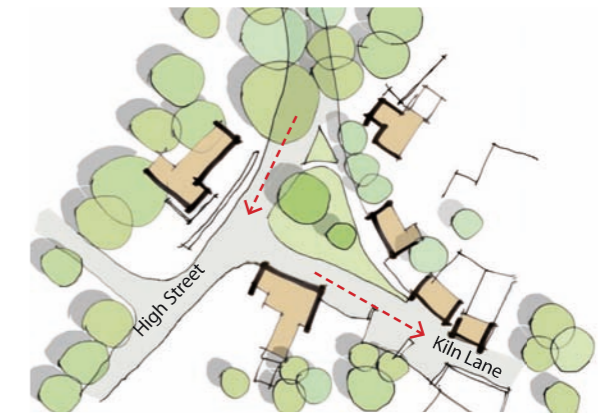


Figure 205: A open green located on an elevated outcrop at the junction of Kiln Lane and High Street in Welton



Village centre in Norton containing a pub and a few shops



A village store in Little Houghton with a stall spill out onto the street



Examples of a local green; with a row of houses over looking the space

- Towards the centre of the village, the buildings are set along the footpath edge with a minimal setback. In such cases, front doors open immediately onto the footpath and directly address the street.
- Setbacks vary along streets away from the centre where buildings are set back from the footpath and street edge. In such cases, the street edge is often defined by a boundary wall, vegetation or hedge lines. At times, the set back is taken by front gardens, in curtilage car parking spaces or an open green.
- The character of streets also varies within settlements. Some streets are compact and enclosed, tightly defined by the surrounding built form while others can be wide with generous setbacks. In such cases, the streets are usually well defined by the surrounding landscape, trees, boundary walls and hedges.
- Massing within the rural settlements is fairly homogenous with buildings that are generally two storeys. Despite this consistency in massing, there is a greater variety in rooflines that creates interest in elevation.
- Higher massing is at times provided by the surrounding landscape where trees rise far above the built form, creating enclosure and providing focus.
- Whilst most streets are lined by houses that are accessed off that street, at times, a house may be set back from the street and accessed off a small lane that branches off the main street. This tends to be a fairly common feature as it successfully utilises space contained at the back of houses.
- There is a tendency for rural houses to address the adjoining street by a side wall whilst the front entrance faces onto a side court.
- Many of the new built additions within rural settlements seem to take on a more suburban character. It is important to clearly understand and distinguish between rural and suburban character as traditional West Northamptonshire villages exhibit a distinct rural character.

### Rural character



Landscape in the form of vegetation, trees, boundary and retaining walls, plays an important role in defining the rural character of a Tiffield



A single tree set within a green provides focus and creates a landmark in Great Houghton



Strong and tight built form is evident in Milton Malsor and contributes to the overall identity of the rural settlement

### Street character



A well defined and enclosed street in Kilingsbury where the church provides for an end to the vista



An enclosed street in Milton Malsor with buildings that provide a defined edge to the street



A street in Great Houghton where landscape, vegetation and trees come together to provide enclosure and definition to the street

### Massing



Variation in massing in Greens Norton provides interest and creates focus



Even a homogenous massing of two storeys can create a variation in roof line such as this row of houses in Greens Norton



Even when the massing is low, trees in Greens Norton help to create focus, adding vertical elements to balance the horizontality of the built form

### Setbacks



Row of houses along a street in Overstone that exhibit a minimal setback



A landscape bank with boundary walls provides a setback between the buildings and the road in Greens Norton



A street in Tiffield with a variety of set backs. In the foreground, the building fronts directly onto the street while at the background, an open green provides a setback to a row of houses

### Building Layout



Example of a house type in Wood Burcote. The primary frontage of the building faces away from the street with access to the building off a side court. Active frontages are still provided as windows face the street



A similar house layout in Greens Norton with access to the building from a side entrance whilst the main frontage faces the street



Characteristic features include this gateway formed of an over sailing roof, which allows access to a rear court also used for parking



A house in Tiffield which is accessed through a side court. A gable wall faces onto the street

### Sample Building Types



Village church as a landmark



Pub and shop located at village centre



Village pub located along main road



Coach Inn typology

### Sample House Types



Terraced housing along main route



Variety of building styles and materials used for terraced housing



Semi-detached housing



Post-war modern housing

### Landscape Details



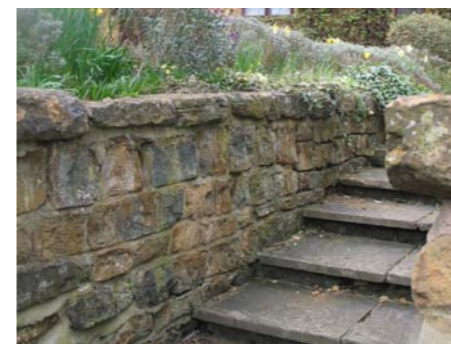
Landscape providing enclosure to the road



Landscape adding distinct character to setting



Landscape defining public / private space



Landscape enforcing boundary wall

### Sample Boundary Treatment



Village road enclosure



Property edge boundary



Elevated green edge



Material differentiation identifies public / private area for dwelling

Public Realm Features



Street signage



Gateway to church grounds



Bus shelter



Village pub sign signifying centre



Public telephone facilities



Defining landmark



Village wooden bench

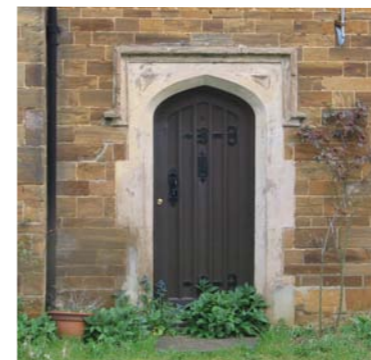


The Cross strengthens the identity of the village, by creating a marker in the public realm.

Fenestration



Doors/Gateway



Materials



Brick



Sandstone



Ironstone



Ironstone



## 2.7.5 Summary

The following is a summary of the key characteristics of the West Northamptonshire villages and the surrounding countryside:

- Despite influences caused by the urban expansion of the towns with road infrastructure, the wider landscape of West Northamptonshire is considered a tranquil, rural area famed for its productive farmland and attractive villages.
- The villages are typically found in the areas that circumnavigate towns and other built-up urban areas.
- The villages form an intrinsic part of the surrounding landscape and their character is dictated by either the gently undulating or flatter landscapes.
- The rural buildings are indicative of the diversity and wealth of Northamptonshire’s hidden geology as the patterns of local building are intrinsically linked with the underlying geology.

### Settlement Pattern

- The rural settlements of the region reveal a strong pattern borne out of a response to the topography and nature of the surrounding land.
- The rolling nature of the West Northamptonshire landscape and the siting of settlements on hill crests and ridges increases the visibility of settlements from a wide area of the surrounding landscape.
- Historically, the church was one of the first buildings in the settlement to be built in stone and as the focus of the community.
- Church spires are often key landmark features offering striking accents and orientation points.
- In general, the West Northamptonshire villages depict two types of settlement forms:

#### Linear Settlement Form

Linear type settlements tend to spread along a route with the focus being the main street that passes through the settlement.

The photograph to the left illustrates a compact village core defined by a small row of terraced houses

Settlements depict a pattern of growth whereby secondary streets are formed and branch off the main one.

The characteristic feature of this settlement type is the widening of the main street to accommodate a village green or landscape verge which at times highlights the centre of the village.

#### Circular Settlement Form

Circular type settlements are compact, centered and may have more than one main street. The centre of the settlement may focus on the junction of two such streets.

Secondary streets in this typology tend to branch off and connect with each other.

The village centre is usually located at a crossroads and is marked by a village green with a mix of uses such as community hall, local pub, shop, post office or café.

Following are the key characteristics of the rural settlement and built form:

- The character of the built form is reflective of the organic layout and diverse grain.
- The overall sense of space within the settlement is defined and contained particularly within the centre of villages where the built form can be tight fronting onto narrow, enclosed streets.
- Ancillary elements such as mature landscape, boundary walls, gates and fences work to provide continuity and enclosure.
- Built form can be dispersed but continuity is maintained through boundary walls that extend across buildings. These are often constructed with local materials.
- Mature landscape and vegetation enrich the quality of the public realm. Mature trees provide focus and verticality.
- Village greens are a typical feature with a prominent tree or a cluster of trees that may function as a local landmark.
- The village centre is often located at a crossroads, marked by a village green which may be surrounded by a mix of uses.
- Villages are increasingly becoming dormitory settlements and are unable to sustain the mix of uses within their centres.
- Whilst massing is fairly consistent, rooflines vary, creating interest and texture.

## Key Features of Village Settlements

### Rural Settlements

Street Layout	Responsive to topography, meandering and defined.
Structure	Informal and compact.
Frontages	Buildings can be terraced in the core of the village and tend to be detached towards the edges of the settlement. Continuity in frontages is retained through ancillary elements such as boundary walls, fences, landscape etc.
Uses	Primarily residential with a mix of uses in the centre.
Typical Block Layout	Dispersed and informal block layouts.
Density Range	15-20 dph and can rise to 30dph in some villages or within the centre.
Building Heights	Building heights are generally 1 to 2 storeys with a few 3 storey buildings.
Townscape	Townscape is formulated through a collective play of built form and landscape. Key landscape features contribute to the overall streetscape as much as landmark buildings. Churches tend to be located on a high point and their spires function as clear markers for the settlements. Trees located on village green contribute to creating a vertical marker for the space as much as the buildings that contain it. Mature landscape is a strong contributing factor to the overall identity. Tall trees add verticality to the prevalent horizontal built form.
Consideration as exemplar	West Northamptonshire villages have a defined and strong identity borne from the use of local materials and a vernacular building type set within a mature landscape. These can be considered as exemplar for other rural village like settlements or for developments at the edge of settlements.

### Assets

### Weaknesses

Compact core of development at centre, lowering towards edge.	Low density cannot support local amenities and public transport.
Streets may meander but are legible and provide efficient routes between places.	Requires reliance on private means of transport due to an inadequate public transport system.
Strong sense of identity borne of a mix of built form and mature landscape.	The villages have increasingly become dormitory settlements and are not able to sustain local amenities therefore these are no longer available in walking distances from houses.
Strong identifiable vernacular architecture.	
Buildings in core abut pavements, providing good sense of enclosure.	