

finding the spatial character of a place

16.06.2025

Tom Sykes

Common Works

Architects for Communities

**finding
the spatial
character
of a place**

01 – building a brief

01 – building a brief
02 – analyse a place

- 01 – building a brief**
- 02 – analyse a place**
- 03 – using the analysis**

**so what are we
going to do?**

PART 1

**building the brief
and
gathering the information**

Where to find info?

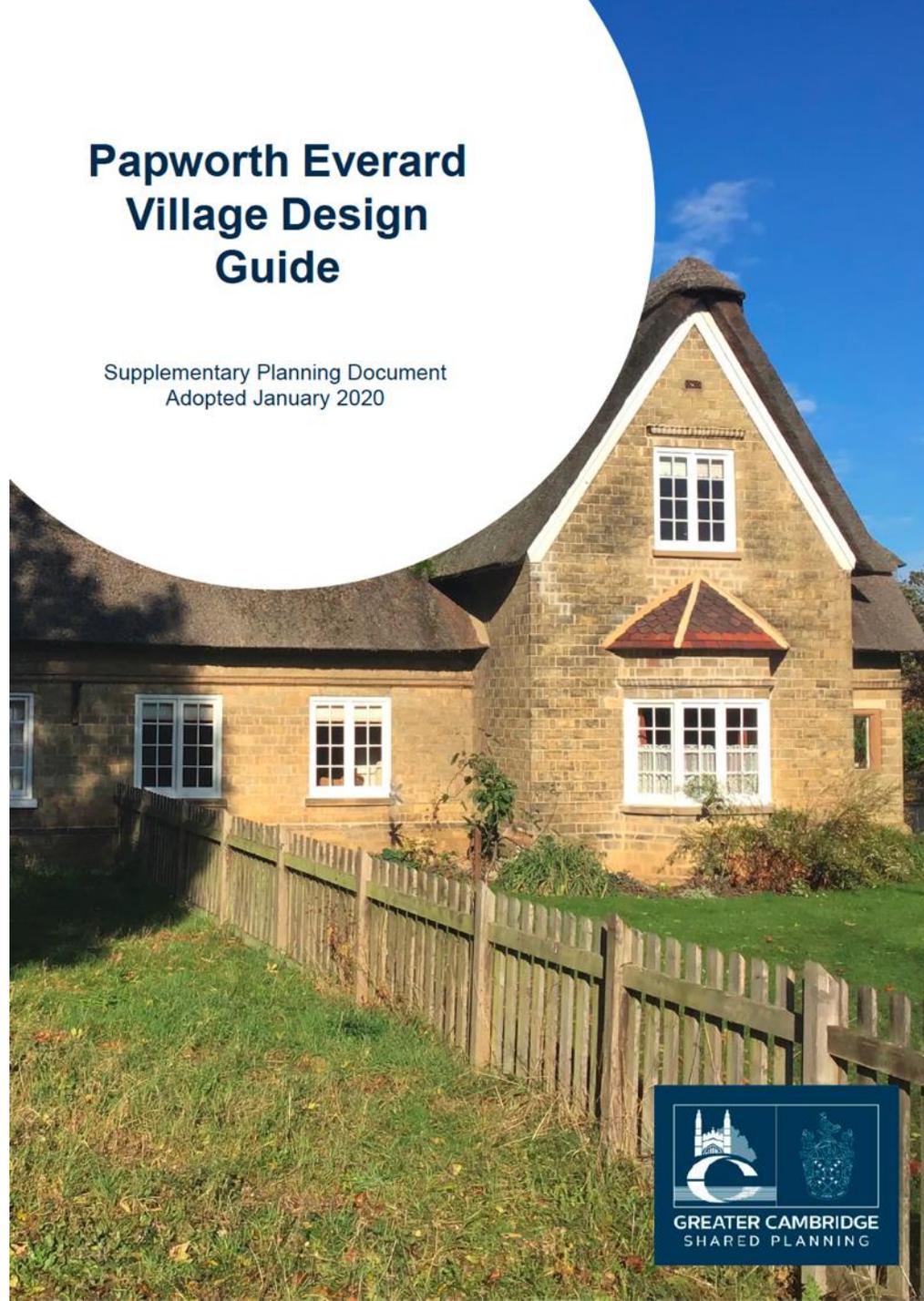
Who to work with?

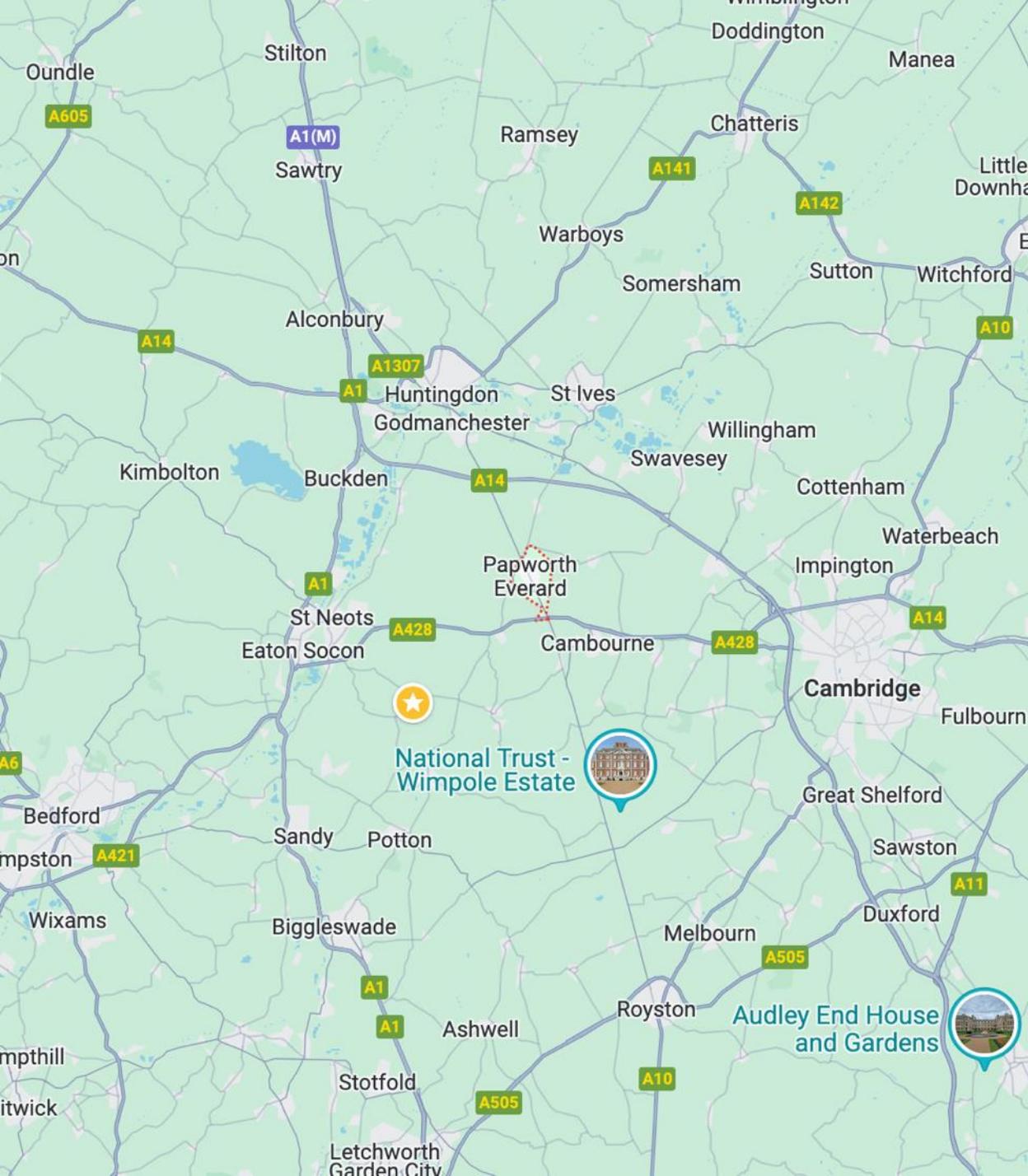
Local communities?

**What would a good
outcome look like?**

Papworth Everard Village Design Guide

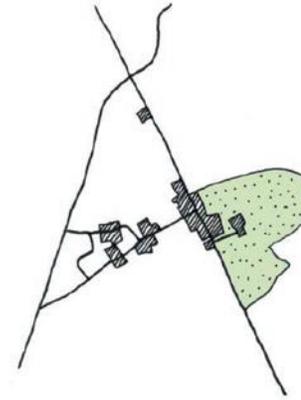
Supplementary Planning Document
Adopted January 2020



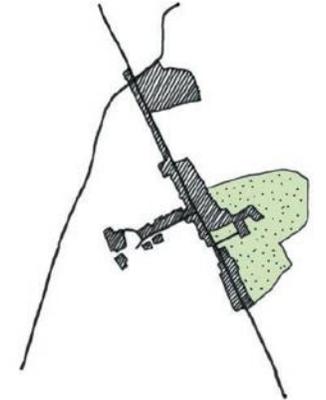


Aerial photograph of Papworth Everard with the parish boundary highlighted.

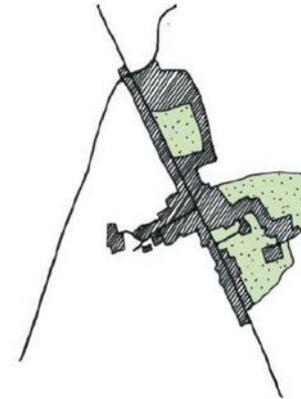
Fig.1 Historic Maps



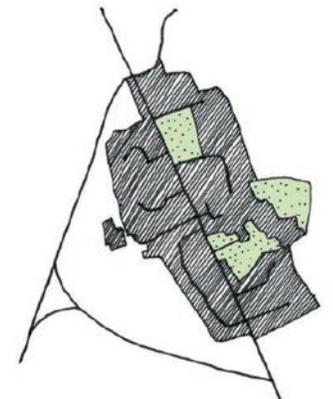
c1850
Village growth primarily to the west around medieval settlement at St. Peter's church but also in the form of worker's cottages for Papworth Hall, built early c19 in grounds along Ermine Street.



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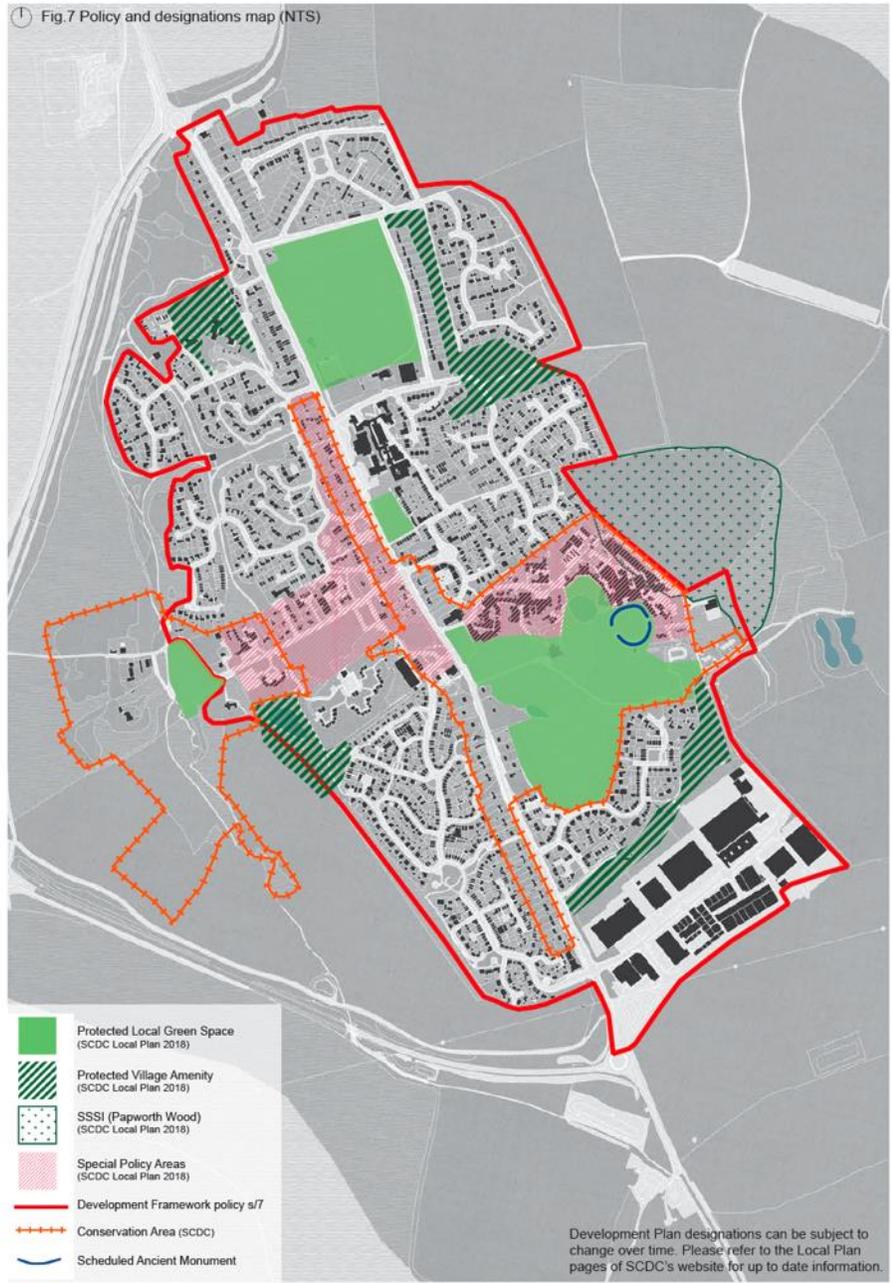


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Further housing development along Ermine Street, mostly by Village Settlement, and expansion (in multiple phases) of the Settlement premises, latterly as an NHS hospital in former Settlement wards.



c2015
Significant post-Settlement residential development, redevelopment of much Settlement industrial land for housing and mixed use, employment uses in a business park to the south. Ermine Street superseded as key vehicular route by ring-road.

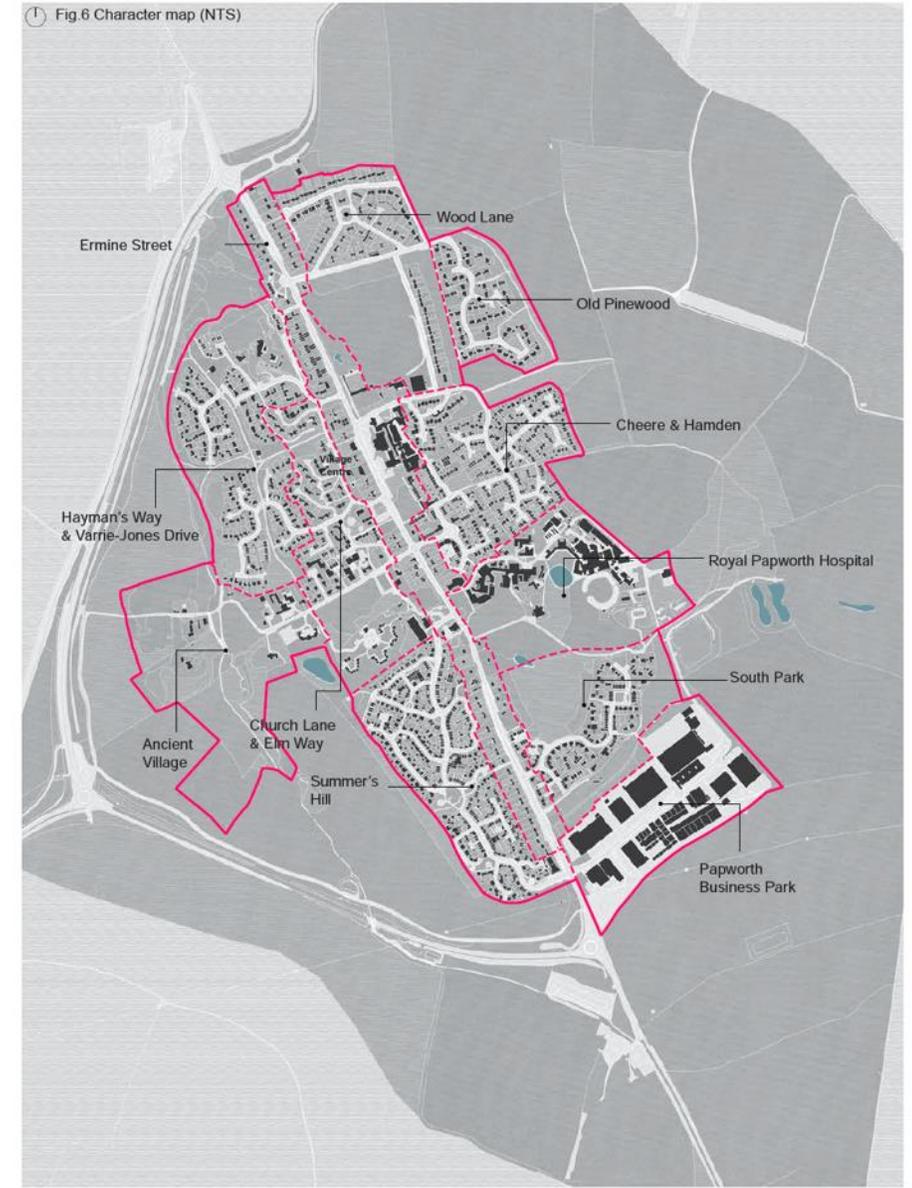
Fig.7 Policy and designations map (NTS)



4. Village Character

On the following pages, character area of the village are identified and guidance offered.

Fig.6 Character map (NTS)



5.1 New development should preserve and enhance existing key views, and create new views, out into the countryside, or into existing green spaces, wherever possible. (See Figs. 8 and 9 for example layouts, and Fig. 10 for key views).

5.2 Developments should be such that views down and across streets are not dominated by car parking, with off-street parking set well back from the public realm.

5.3 New green spaces between developments are to be welcomed, but must be well-designed, taking into account views, use, amenity, and good connections (see Chapter 6).

5.4 Proposals should illustrate how proposed green spaces will be seen and accessed from the wider village.

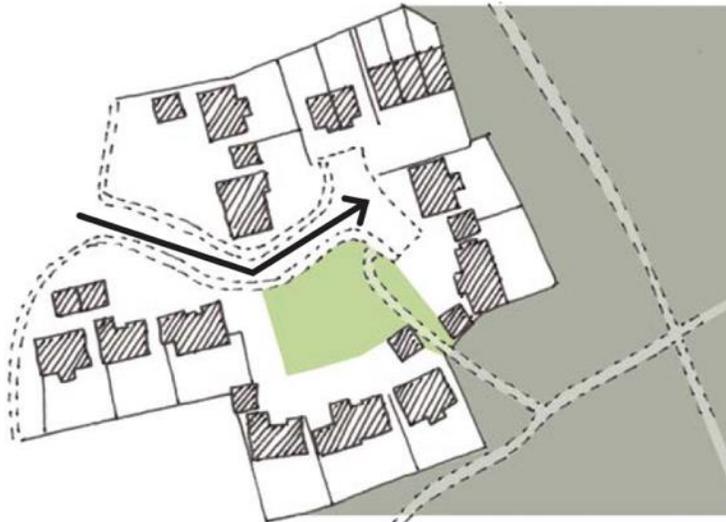


Fig.8
Example of residential development blocking views and legible connections to surrounding countryside

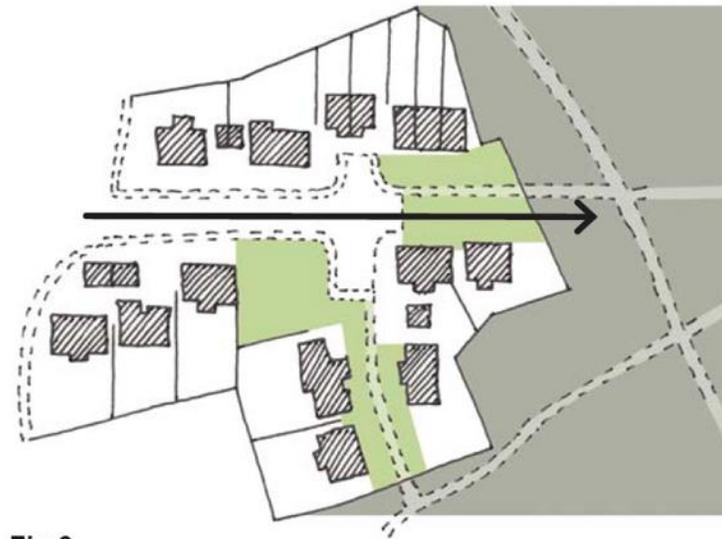


Fig.9
The same site remodelled to provide views and legible connections



6. Landscape-led design: connections

The village has an unusually extensive network of off-road routes, both within the village and into the landscape. These are highly valued by the community as they increase the sense of being in nature and provide safe, biodiverse routes away from road networks. The 'school walk' (Figs 11 & 12) is an example of development providing substantial green spaces and connections within its design, and also includes a well-used playground, demonstrating the value of siting social infrastructure on such routes.

In the spirit of the Village Settlement, many of these off-road routes are typically highly accessible; following clear routes, made at generous widths and of appropriate materials, though some recent developments have less successful networks in terms of their clarity and width. Some routes on the edge of the village that are not appropriate for tarmac can become muddy or boggy, and the community supports the use of woodchip to improve their usability.

6.1 The pedestrian, cycle and equestrian network within the village should be enhanced or added to wherever possible, including upgrading footpaths to bridleways and adding further safe crossings.

6.2 Paths should be as accessible as possible. Within developments and on routes intended for heavy pedestrian use (e.g. which might be used to reach school) this means wide (2m) tarmac or paved paths.

6.3 Proposals for new or enhanced off-road routes should show how they integrate with the wider village network and how they enhance it.



Fig.11 [The 'school walk path' provides] a safe route to school.' (off Hayman's Way, see map right)



'you can be off-road in seconds – fully surrounded by woodland... (behind Baron's Way)



Example of inadequate pedestrian routes in recent development. (Cromwell Crescent)

7. Landscape-led design: biodiversity

The village's distinct form currently provides migratory routes and habitats for wildlife, notably hedgehogs. These often align with the village's network of paths and off-road routes (see Chapter 6), providing a highly-valued chance for the community to feel 'in nature' and in contact with a biodiverse environment.

Key routes within the village are usually framed by mature trees and hedges, even in the heart of the village.

The village's pattern of development means that a 'wild' feeling, provided by soft, informal green spaces, wildlife and mature trees, can be felt often throughout the village, even at its very heart. This is a distinctive quality. Hedges, often large, provide many of the village's boundary treatments and these also enhance the sense of being in nature.

7.1 Existing trees and hedges should be protected. New dwellings should be built such that they do not interfere with the health or growth of existing trees and hedges.

7.2 Landscape designs should include native species (see Figure 14), mature or semi-mature, to ensure that new planting quickly feels part of the wider village network.

7.3 Landscape designs and planting schemes should respond to the 'wild-feeling' currently present within the village, in a manner that supports greater diversity of wildlife and is not costly to maintain. Hedges and ditches in the village provide a precedent for this approach.

7.4 Boundary, threshold and path treatments throughout the village should be designed to support and enhance this characteristic. Open fences and hedgerows, where appropriate in privacy and security terms, support wildlife routes.



'Mature trees of great biodiversity value (totes valuable).'
(Wood Lane)



'It's almost like the woodland extends out into the village.'
(Wood Lane)



'Wildlife accessible fencing.'



'Rural-style ditches. Very practical, as the village gets waterlogged. Great biodiversity...'

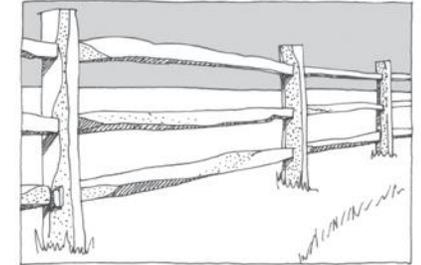
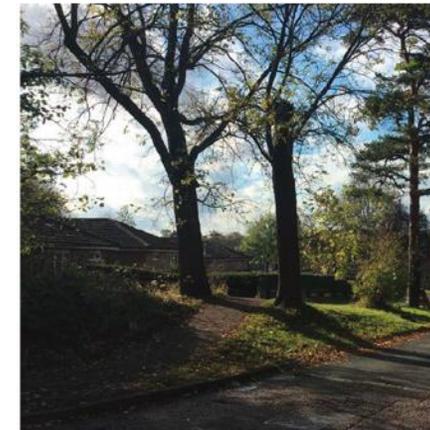


Fig. 13 Example of open fencing that preserves wildlife routes



Trees

Beautiful examples of mature native species occur throughout the village and key vehicular routes are particularly well provided with tree cover, this is a distinctive quality of the village. Villagers have a preference for hawthorn, beech, hornbeam, oak, cedar and scots pine.

Scots pine trees line key routes in the village on occasion, for example along Ermine Street and Wood Lane. It is therefore considered a particularly appropriate species for these and other existing or new key routes.

Fig. 14 Preferred tree and hedge species in relation to local precedent



Hedgerows

Hedgerows and soft boundary treatments are characteristic of the village. Any native species are welcomed by villagers though hawthorn is particularly welcome. Care should be taken when planting hawthorn close to paths as the thorns can be an issue for wheelchairs and children's bicycles - a narrow grass border between path and hedgerow (as above) is a solution for this.

8. The Royal Papworth Hospital Site

The future of the Royal Papworth Hospital site is a key concern for the community, with the hospital vacating and uncertainty about the site's future use.

Local Plan (2018) policy for the Royal Papworth site (Special Policy Area E/6) prioritises healthcare uses, with a sequential approach to other use classes. New housing and/or redevelopment for housing are not permitted, however 'conversion of existing buildings of character for residential use may exceptionally be permitted where it would be the most appropriate use of the buildings and recreate the character of the original Papworth Hospital buildings fronting the historic landscaped parkland setting of Papworth Hall.' This guidance should be read in relation to the Local Plan, and Conservation Area Appraisal.

Community priorities are that development of the site should respect its history as a healthcare pioneer, should reflect the architectural legacy of the Settlement, and should allow and improve access to, and use of, the landscapes around Papworth Hall. Since the establishment of the Village Settlement at Papworth Hall, the grounds (formerly private parkland) have been used as a de facto public park and are a designated Local Green Space. Papworth Hall is currently leased to the Royal Papworth Hospital; this will also end with the departure of the hospital, and the community hopes for cultural or leisure uses for the building.



Fig. 16 Early c20 settlement/hospital recovery huts, which provided tuberculosis sufferers with fresh air. Such huts were sited within the current Royal Papworth site and a replica of them stands close to the duck pond. (Photo: Royal Papworth NHS Trust)

8.1 The public use of Papworth Hall's grounds should be continued and supported, and opportunities to enhance its connection to adjacent areas of the village should be taken, through new pedestrian and/or cycle connections across the hospital site. (Fig.18)

8.2 All buildings on the site deemed to make a positive contribution in the Papworth Everard Conservation Area Appraisal should be retained and an appropriate use found for them.

8.3 Conversion of the two original settlement ward buildings should include a reinstatement where possible of their original openable facades and terraces in order to reinstate their original architectural character and to present active frontages to the landscape.

8.4 Any conversion for residential use of these buildings should include good quality private amenity.



Fig. 17 Early c20 settlement/hospital buildings: 'the wards all had access to open space and fresh air. Part of the holistic treatment was rest and recuperation. 'What can the hospital leave behind? What legacy?' (Photo: Papworth Trust)

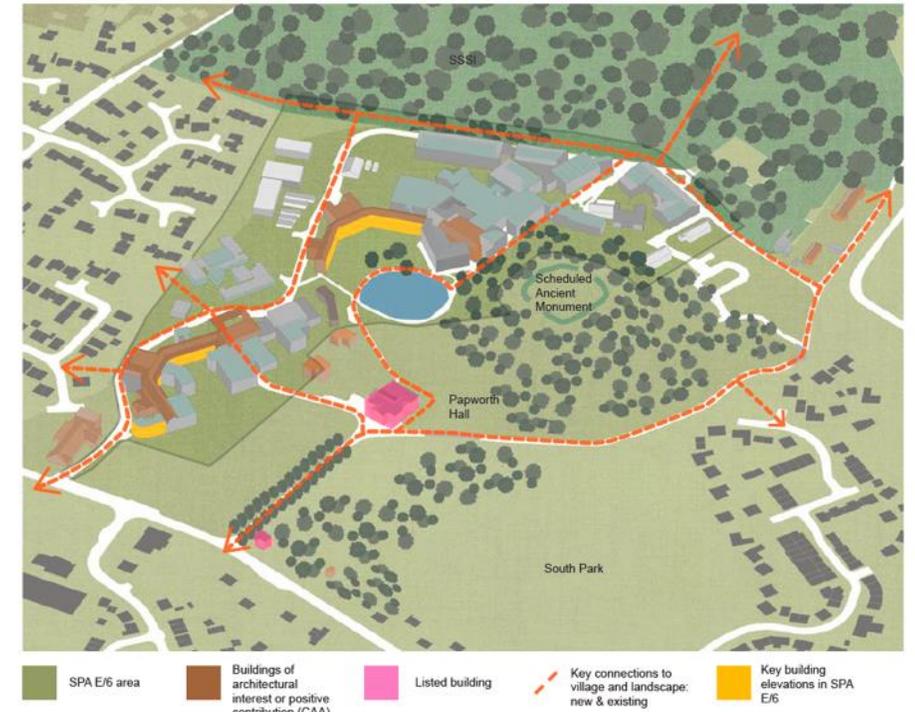


Fig 15. Design principles for the Royal Papworth Hospital Site (NTS)

Development Plan designations can be subject to change over time. Please refer to the Local Plan pages of SCDC's website for up to date information.

9. Design of new homes

Ermine Street and Chapel Lane (Ancient Village character area) contain many mid-19th century semi-detached dwellings with an 'H-plan' (see figs. 19 and 25). Versions of the 'H-plan house', in cream brick or stone, are typical of the village and are the predominant local style of estate cottage prior to the establishment of the settlement.

Elsewhere, materials vary quite widely across the village and in relation to both periods of development and to distinct character areas, but buff brick is by far the most predominant colour for masonry buildings and most distinctive of the village

9.1 Choice of materials for new dwellings should respond to the character and materials of the village context for which the development is proposed. See chapter 4 and figs. 20 and 21.

9.2 The form, appearance and materiality of the 'H-plan' house (figs. 19 and 25) is distinctive to Papworth Everard and therefore a particularly appropriate housing typology for development in the village.

9.3 Uses of the H-house typology should be used to reinforce the distinctive character of primary routes such as Ermine Street and Church Lane.

9.4 Fronts of dwellings should be designed such that the need to provide off-street parking (so as not to dominate the street with cars, see figs. 22 and 23) does not compromise the biodiversity and self expression potential of front gardens.

9.5 Green and planted pedestrian ways and routes, well-connected with the rest of the village, can be used to organise new housing and integrate with the village.



Figure 20. Regardless of period or building type, buff brick is by far the most predominant colour for masonry buildings. Some recent developments have successfully merged with older neighbours through use of this material.



Figure 21. The original wards of the Royal Papworth are constructed in a distinctive red brick. Reproducing this material and detailing is desirable within the Royal Papworth Hospital character area.

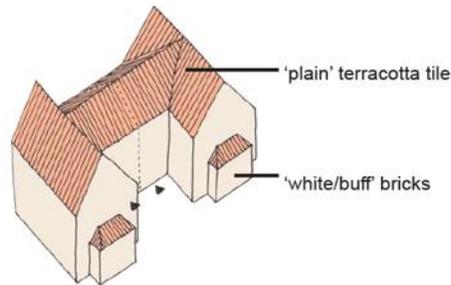


Fig. 19 analysis of typical 'H-plan' house in the village



Figure 22. Summer's Hill is criticised for a layout that allows cars to dominate the streetscape. Ideally cars should be incorporated sensitively within dwelling curtilage in such a way that they do not dominate. Soft boundaries such as hedges are used in Papworth Everard to soften impacts at the boundary line.



Figure 23. Front gardens and hardstandings in recent developments tend to mean that the front of a dwelling is dominated by parked cars, with area of planting very much secondary.



Figure 24. In Church Lane & Elm Way, typically single-storey dwellings face on to a series of pedestrian ways, car courts and passages. This is one version of a pedestrian focussed-design which appears throughout Papworth and which is accessible and pedestrian-friendly. New versions of this would be welcomed in new developments.



Figure 25. Two different examples (on Church Lane and Ermine Street) of the distinctive H-plan housing that can be found in the village, and a diagram of their form and materials. 'This is the backbone style of the village.'

PART 2

analysing a place



PART 2

**analysing
a place**

Brightwell-cum-Sotwell



B R I G H T W E L L

S O T W E L L

D R E T O N

B R I G H T W E L L
(Detached S' 2)

Brightwell

Sotwell

Stalle End

Mackney

New Farm

Little London

Mackney Farm

Small Farm

Sotwell Barn

Stalle End House

Stalle End Barn

Brightwell Farm

Merced Cottages

Mannor Farm

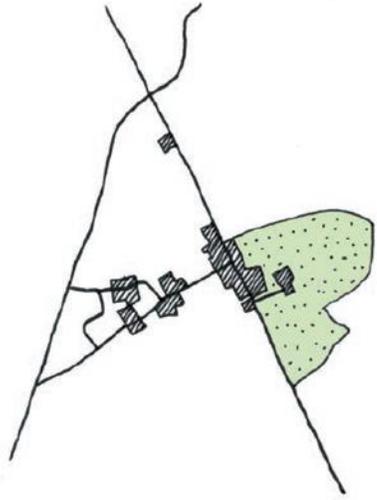
Red Hill

Stalle End Farm

Stalle End Farm

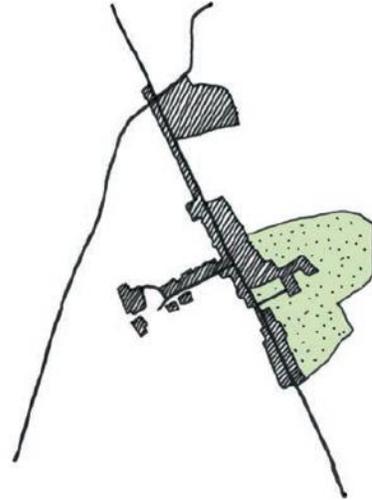


Fig.1 Historic Maps



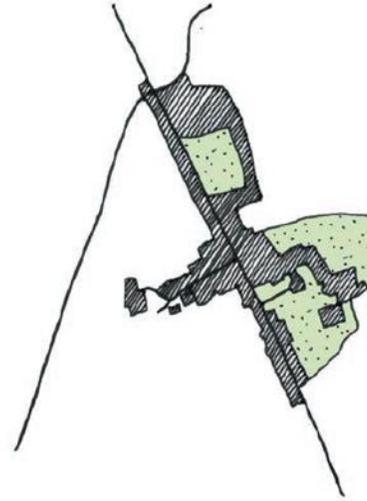
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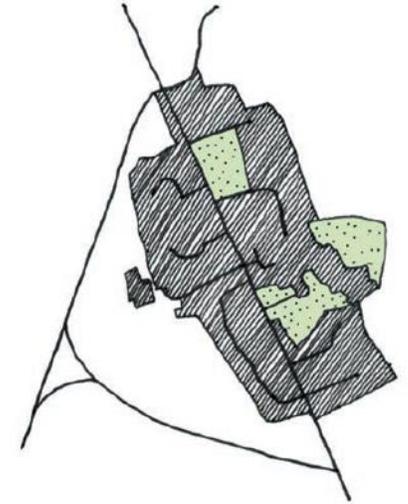
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Significant post-Settlement residential development, redevelopment of much Settlement industrial land for housing and mixed use, employment uses in a business park to the south. Ermine Street superseded as key vehicular route by ring-road.

Footpaths

Roads

Land parcels

Grain

Community assets

Guiding rules

Thoughts about the place

Shapes and patterns

Points of interest

Points of focus

PART 3

**using
this analysis**

What are the principles for spatial development here?

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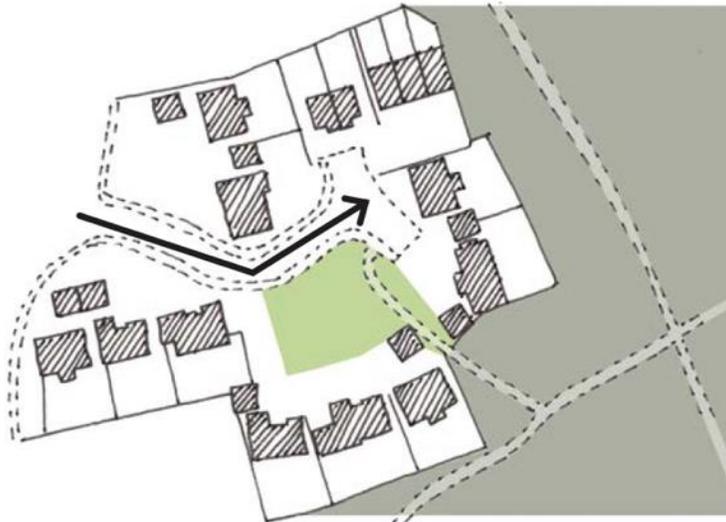


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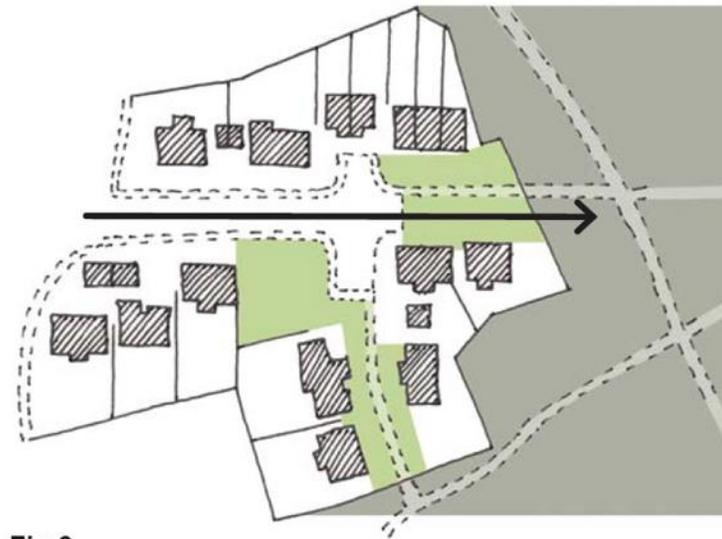
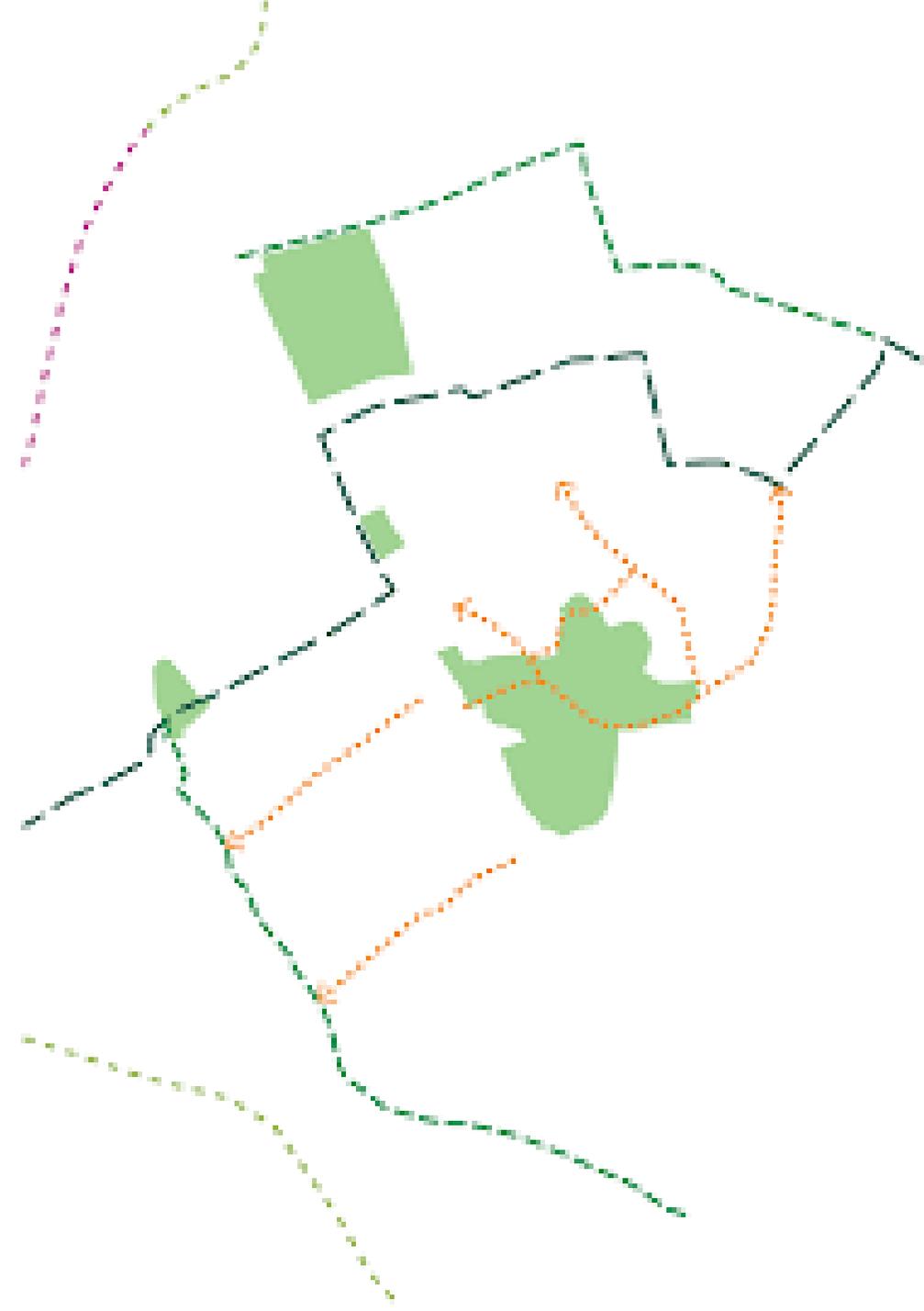


Fig.9
The same site remodelled to provide views and legible connections

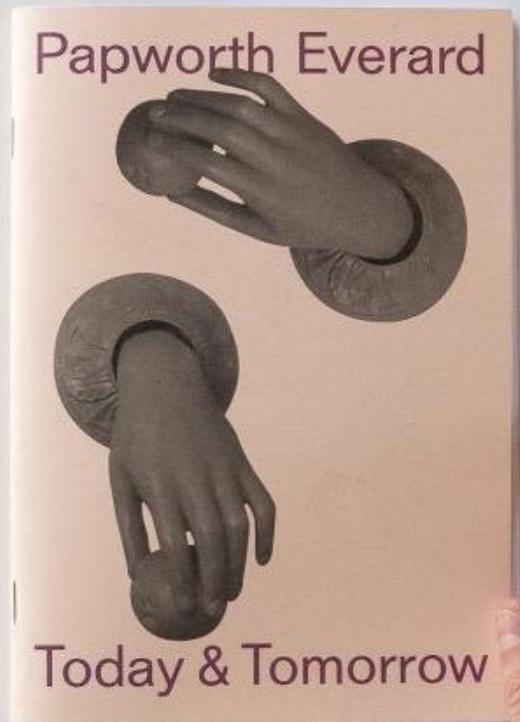


PART 4

**final thoughts on
creative techniques**







A house crushed in the corner of the village with two houses behind it. It just seems different. You'd expect to see this in the centre of Cambridge. It's not a village house or a village garden. The plot itself is very long and thin – they split it longways instead of crossways.



This represents all the drainage problems of the village. It's a tiny 4" pipe that drains all the surface water of the village. The surface water infrastructure of the village has all been built over. Ditches have been eroded and lost. There were ditches on both sides of the road. Also there's loads of rubbish in there very often.

work with young people to see
how they experience places



**crowdsource videos or photos
and host an exhibition**



A close-up photograph of a person's hands working on a craft project. The person is holding a piece of black paper with their left hand and using a pair of black-handled scissors with their right hand to cut it. The background is a colorful, out-of-focus workspace with various pieces of paper in shades of pink, yellow, green, and blue. A white marker is visible on the table in the foreground. The overall scene suggests a creative workshop or classroom environment.

set up a workshop on 'design' skills, like drawing or sketching



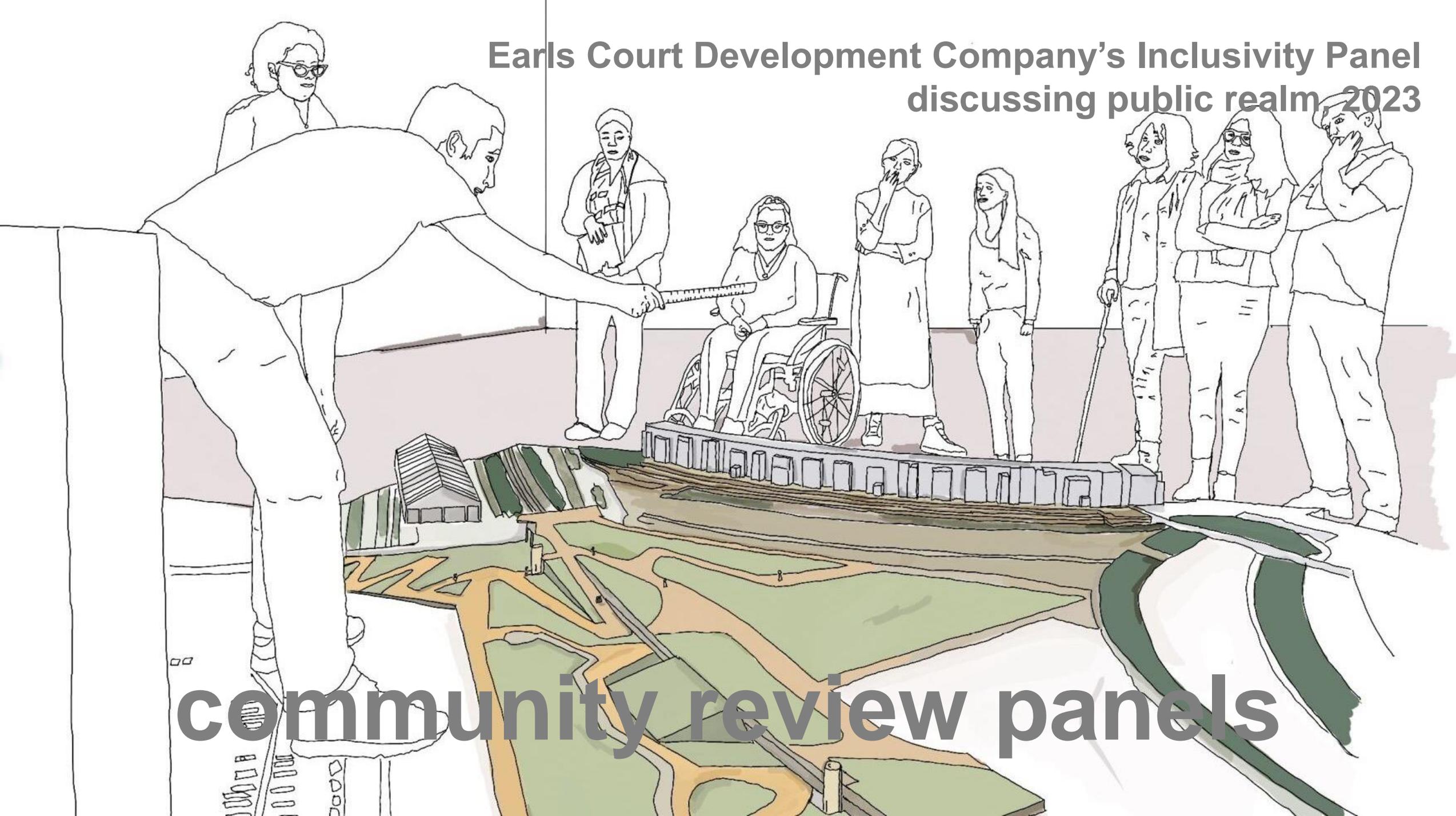
a local history walk



a street art wall

Street art workshops, sponsored by the council, by
Lee Kirby, James Watts and Zed in the Clouds
Stroud, 2023-4

Earls Court Development Company's Inclusivity Panel
discussing public realm 2023



community review panels



Verity-Jane Keefe's Mobile Museum for Barking & Dagenham, repurposing a mobile library truck
2016

mobile museums

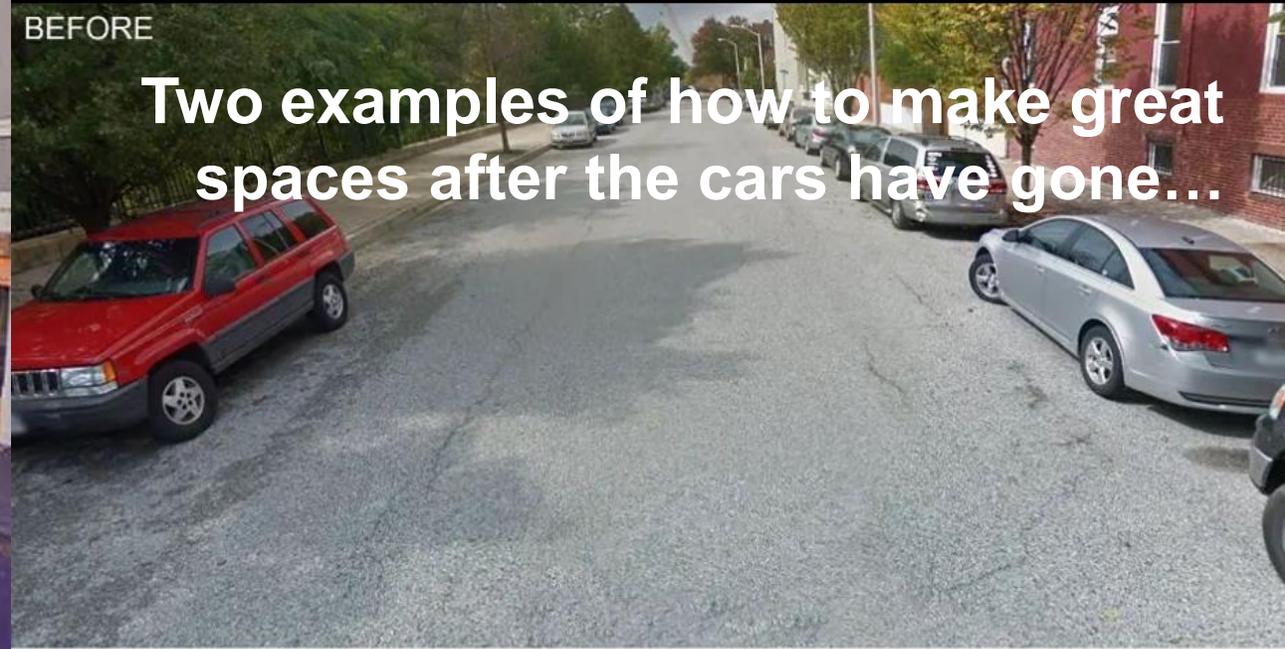
Funding and land provided by the parish council to support sustainable waste management (Extended Studio x Brimscombe & Thrupp Community Composters)



a community composting site



BEFORE



BEFORE

Two examples of how to make great spaces after the cars have gone...



AFTER

low traffic neighbourhoods



AFTER

Cwmaman Woodland Sculpture Trail
Timber sculptures commissioned to
commemorate the role of the coal
industry as part of a woodland walk

a sculpture trail



Architecture 00's engagement hub for Willesden Green's library redevelopment



library lab – engagement hub



personal

**personal
creative**

personal
creative
enjoyable

**personal
creative
enjoyable
with space to share**

personal

creative

enjoyable

with space to share

and the right people to draw out

interesting answers and collate

them into meaningful outputs

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visit the website

