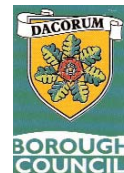


BOVINGDON



Urban Design Assessment



urban
practitioners



MAKING PLACES MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

Up until the end of the 18th century, the transport of materials to inland areas like Hertfordshire was difficult and costly. Consequently builders used the sources they had to hand; flint, straw, timber and clay. The characteristic qualities of the Dacorum area owe much to the survival of such traditional materials. They have however been supplemented by many more recent materials, brought in from outside the region.

Stone

Hertfordshire has no significant source of quality freestone, being mostly reliant on chalk and its associated material, flint. Chalkstone (also known as clunch) of adequate strength for walls has long been quarried at Totternhoe near Dunstable. Its blocks have been used to construct churches or other important buildings, often in combination with flint.

Also to be found within the masonry of some buildings, including garden walls, is Hertfordshire 'pudding-stone' an unusual local stone of glacial origin, comprising rounded pebbles bound within in a flinty cement.

By the 19th century, imported limestones such as Bath stone or Portland were being employed, either for dressings or full construction and largely supplanted the use of flint.

Timber

Timber-framing and weatherboarding were common up to the 18th century, when brick became much more



Once thatch ceased to be widely used, hand made plain clay peg tiles were the universal roofing material.



Vertical tile hanging was originally used to protect timber frames but later assumed a largely decorative role.

KEY ISSUES

MPI: MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

MPIA

Bovingdon consultation participants preferred traditional materials and responded most strongly to the traditional scalloped clay tile.

MPIB

Bovingdon consultation participants disliked the machine made buff brickwork with concrete tiling frequently used in later developments.

MPI C

There are many examples of recent residential developments with low-quality and non-local materials.

MPI D

The paving in Bovingdon village centre- almost entirely asphalt - detracts from the village centre's character.



Stained weatherboarding used to decorative effect in a modern home.



The contemporary use of scalloped tile clashes with surrounding materials.

MAKING PLACES MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

common. Oak and elm were the preferred materials for the structural members. Church spires are usually formed in wood and clad in copper, shingle or lead to form the characteristic Hertfordshire 'spikes'. Timber frames were infilled with wattle and daub or lath and plaster panels; sometimes they were later replaced by brick.

The timber frames were almost always hidden from view - sometimes behind weatherboarding or tiles, more usually behind a protective coat of lime plaster. The East Anglian tradition of decorative plasterwork known as pargetting reaches into Hertfordshire.

Later, the classical revival resulted in the use of rendered and painted surfaces in imitation of ashlar stonework.

Window joinery was almost always softwood, well seasoned and painted, but in some early buildings oak, elm or ash may have been used for the frames.

Brickmaking

Brickmaking was in evidence from 15th century and had become the accepted building material by the Tudor period. Local beds were used to source the clay but with improved transport, bricks were imported from further afield. In the early 19th century there was a vogue for using yellow and white bricks, often made from gault clay, in imitation of stone. In the Victorian era machine-made bricks and tiles became prevalent and coloured decorative patterns like diaper work were used to great effect. The area maintains its brick and tilemaking tradition with Bovingdon Brickworks, to the west of the village.

Roofing materials

At one time thatch would have been the universal roof covering, using long straw rather than the more durable water reed that has been adopted in recent years. Thatch is however now rare in Dacorum's towns, being mainly confined to farm buildings or other rural locations.

Roof tiles were first made by the Romans but their manufacture fell out of use and was only revived during the medieval period. Until the 20th century the tiles used were normally hand pressed and made in clay, but since the 1920s machine made concrete and clay tiles have become common. Interlocking tiles, in imitation of Mediterranean or Roman tiles, are frequently to be found in postwar housing. Church roofs, if not in tile, were in lead sheet until slates became common.

An alternative to tile would have been cedar or oak shingles (wooden tiles). Most commonly, however, slate was imported in large quantities, especially from North Wales, and was almost universal for large or industrial buildings.



Local brickwork was sometimes limewashed or painted.



Vestiges of Bovingdon's timber-framed tradition survive in the village centre.



Machine made brick and plastic windows are now commonplace.



Bovingdon grew rapidly in the 20th century, employing materials from outside the immediate locality.

MAKING PLACES MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

Recent attempts to re-create Victorian or Tudor styles were unpopular with many of the consultation participants, drawing comments such as 'kitsch' and 'vulgar'.

Paving materials

The paving in Bovingdon is predominantly asphalt, including both street and pavement surfaces. There are only a few select instances of unique paving within the village, such as in front of the library (top far right).



The paving in Bovingdon is predominantly asphalt.



There are few instances of unique paving within Bovingdon. One such area is in front of the library.

MAKING PLACES

LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

The listed buildings in Bovingdon are spread throughout the village, with the greatest density occurring around the intersection of Church Lane and the High Street. The Well, in the middle of this junction, marks the historical centre of the village. The church is a significant building, dating from the 13th century. The churchyard is the second largest in the county. Other significant listed buildings include the Wheatsheaf and the Bell pubs as well as two distinctive residences on the west side of the High Street.

KEY ISSUES

MP2: LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

MP2A

Establishing Bovingdon's historical character is challenged by wide dispersal of the listed buildings throughout the village.

MP2B

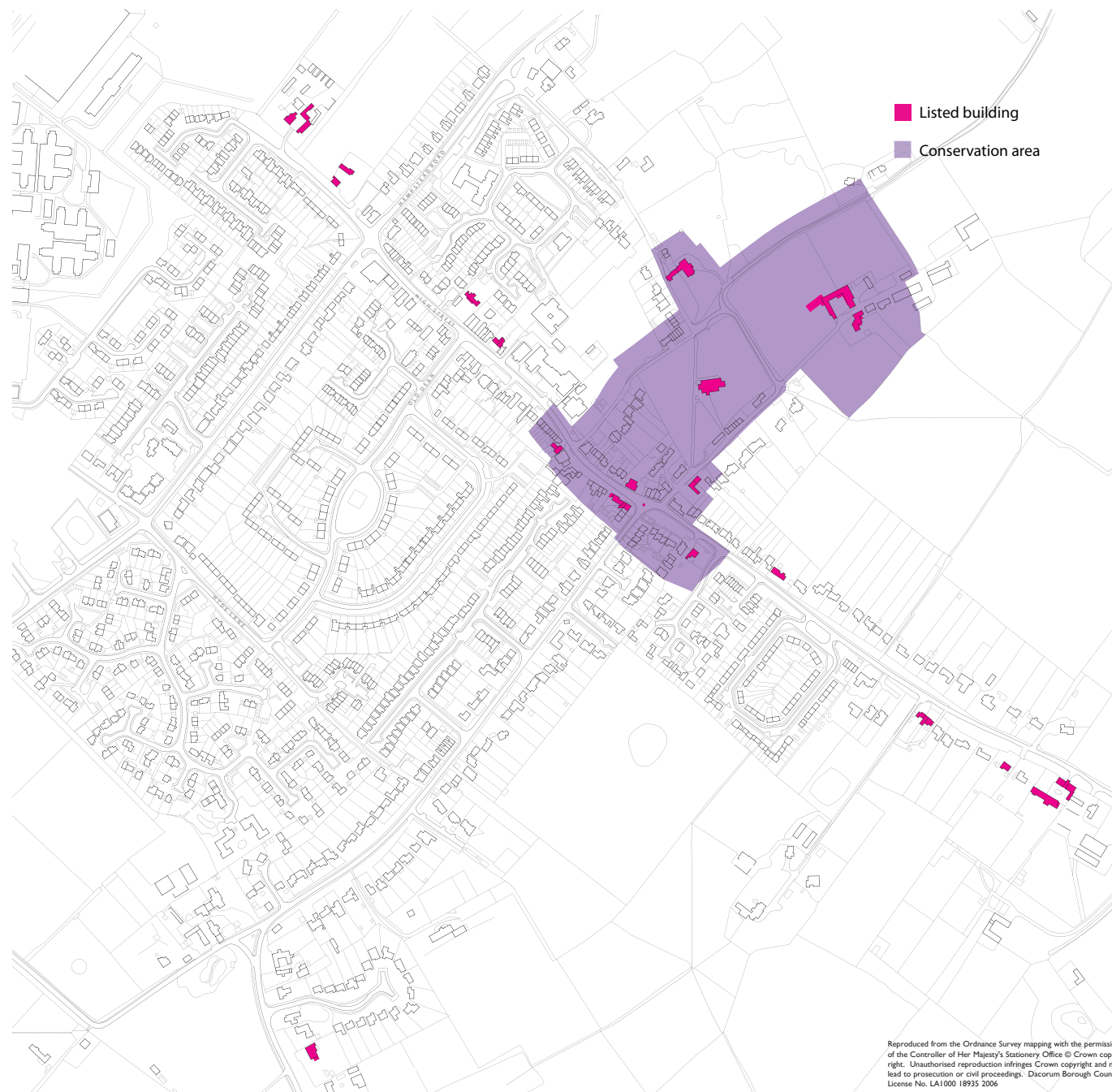
The Well, at the centre of the historic village, is often used for signposting and is surrounded by asphalt.

MP2C

The open space adjacent to the Well, known as 'The Docks' - formerly a small pond - is a neglected area within the Conservation Area.

MP2D

The churchyard is the second largest in the county and is historically significant.



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The village of Bovingdon has an array of listed buildings, including the parish church which dates to the medieval period. For the purposes of this study, we will consider how these listed buildings contribute to the greater urban design aspects of the village.

Lack of Adjacency

Bovingdon's listed buildings are not clustered tightly together on the High Street. This lack of adjacency creates a challenge in establishing the village's historic character. The parish church, dating to the 13th century is disconnected from this cluster of historical buildings.

Streetscaping

The area around the Well at the junction of the High Street and Church Lane represents the greatest density of listed buildings. The surrounding built environment detracts from this area, due to such issues as heavily asphalted streets and pavement, missing fenceposts, and miscellaneous signage posted to the Well.

Open space

The churchyard is well-kept and is a significant site. The churchyard is accessible from Church Street. There is an open space adjacent to the Well which was the site of a pond. This area has the potential - with proper landscaping and perhaps appropriate signage - to enhance the gateway into the village.



The well, a picturesque timber structure with a cedar shingle roof, is the symbol of the village.



St. Lawrence Church, dating from 1235 is very substantial in relation to the size of the village.



The serpentine, undulating form of the centre of the village is its primary characteristic.



The open space adjacent to the well, known as 'The Docks' is a potential gateway into the village.

MAKING PLACES BUILDING HEIGHTS

The building height in Bovingdon village centre is predominantly two-storey with a few one-storey buildings as well. While the road remains narrow along the course of the High Street, the pavement widens considerably as one moves north along the High Street. Given the overall width of the street and pavement, the number of setbacks, and the different buildings style, the village High Street appears disjointed.

The general lack of topographical change prevents views of the church despite the low-rise nature of the High Street.

KEY ISSUES MP3: BUILDING HEIGHTS

MP3A

The High Street is primarily two-storey.

MP3B

The overall street width combined with the many setbacks and the low-rise nature of the buildings does not create a significant view corridor down the length of the High Street.



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MAKING PLACES DENSITY

Bovingdon's residential areas are predominantly two-storey, and much of the housing in Bovingdon is semi-detached. The linear streets have detached houses along them. There are few terraced houses in Bovingdon. The critical differences in density within Bovingdon are due to the way in which street patterns have affected plot sizes. The three major street types in Bovingdon are linear streets, curvilinear streets, and cul-de-sacs.

There is variation in density among the two-storey houses. The adjacent images show a sampling of these unit types. While they are all two-storey buildings, they represent conditions including on and off-street parking; shared front gardens, no front gardens, both front and rear gardens; and detached housing, semi-detached housing, and terraced duplexes. The examples include:

1. Detached house with private driveway and front and rear gardens,
2. Semi-detached housing with front and rear gardens and off-street parking,
3. Semi-detached house with private driveway and front and rear gardens, and
4. Semi-detached house with on-street parking, communal front garden and private rear garden.

The locations of each house and plot are shown on the following page.



1. Detached house with private driveway and front and rear garden located: Hamilton Mead.



2. Semi-detached house with front and rear gardens and off-street parking: Old Dean.

KEY ISSUES MP4: DENSITY

MP4A

Most of the houses in Bovingdon are semi-detached units.

MP4B

The density variation in Bovingdon is primarily due to different street patterns.

MP4C

The cul-de-sac street patterns in Bovingdon increase density and emphasise residential privacy.



3. Semi-detached with private driveway and front and rear gardens: Green Lane.



4. Semi detached house with on-street parking, communal front garden and private rear garden Hempstead Road.

Size and density comparisons

1. Total plot size: .0994 hectares (ha)

Unit per hectare: 10

(Total footprint area: 95 sqm)

2. Total plot size: .0529 ha

Unit per hectare: 18.9

(Total footprint area: 53.5 sqm)

3. Total plot size: .0306 ha

Unit per hectare: 33

(Total footprint area: 37 sqm)

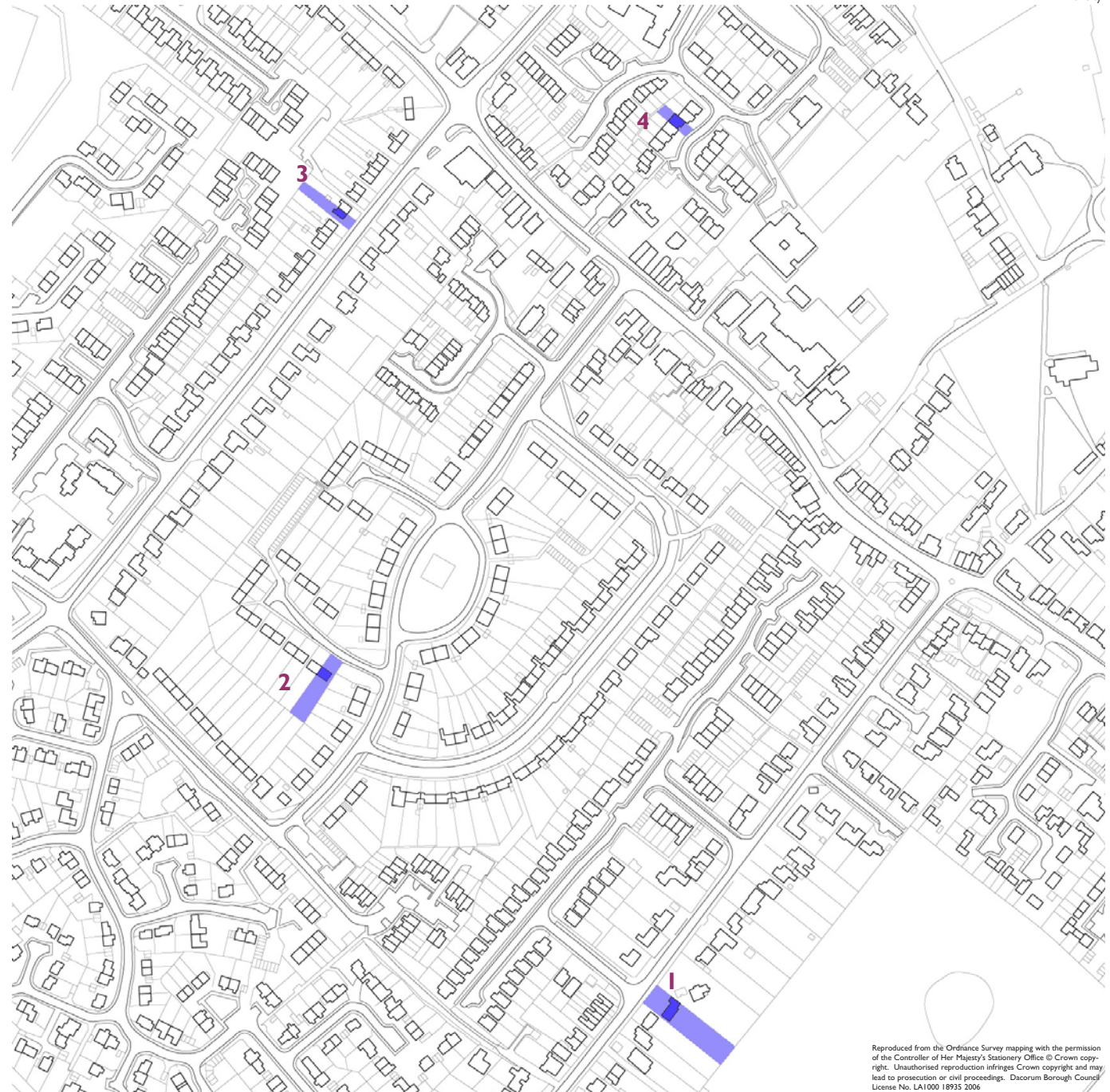
4. Total plot size: .0174 ha

Unit per hectare: 57

(Total footprint area: 33 sqm)

Relationship between street and housing plot

The nature of the street and street network will vary according to plot size. In Bovingdon's case plot sizes became smaller with the development of cul-de-sacs as cul-de-sacs are placed so close to one another. The cul-de-sacs reduce through movements and maximise privacy but actually have a minimal amount of private space per household.



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MAKING PLACES TOPOGRAPHY

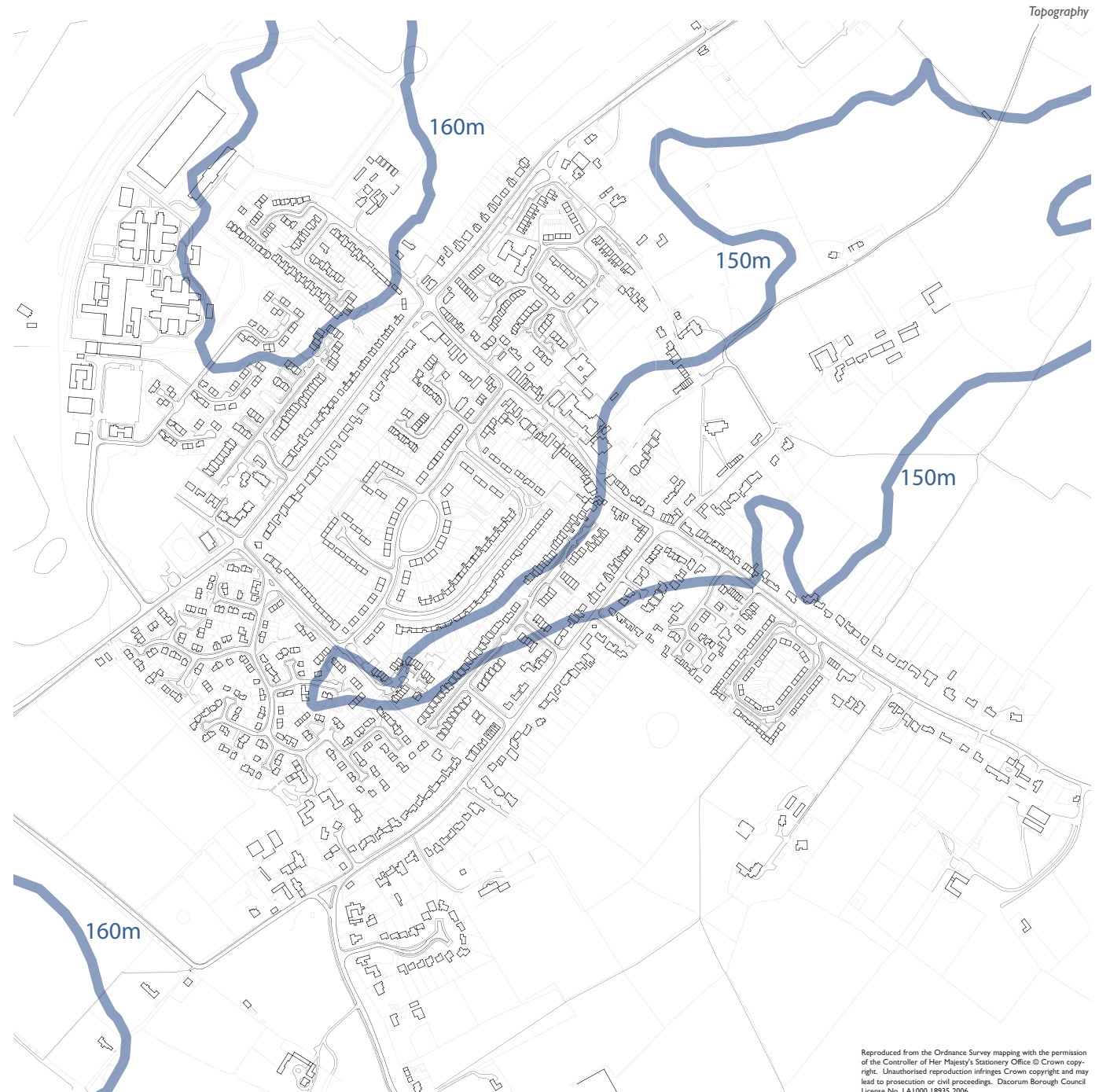
According to the Urban Nature Conservation Study, 'Bovingdon is situated on a large plateau area towards the southern end of the Chiltern dip slope'. As a result, there is little topographical change in Bovingdon. This feature is one of the reasons for the construction of the Bovingdon Airfield just outside of the village.

There is, however, a significant dip which occurs as Chipperfield Road heads into the High Street. The small shift combined with a slight curve in the road creates a significant view into the historical centre of Bovingdon.

KEY ISSUES MP5: TOPOGRAPHY

MP5A
Bovingdon's topography is almost entirely flat.

MP5B
There is an important dip in the High Street and Chipperfield Road as one enters the village from the south.



CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY

The morphology drawing shown at the right illustrates only the areas of built form. The drawing highlights a number of particular features with regards to the village centre, street pattern, building type and density.

Village centre

Whereas in most villages the High Street is immediately apparent from the morphology, Bovingdon's High Street is not immediately recognisable (1). The large civic buildings help reveal the location of the High Street (2), but the wide setbacks, the frequent gaps, and the presence of small residential homes on the High Street obscure its presence.

Street pattern

The street patterns in Bovingdon correlate closely to the character areas, showing a progression over time from linear streets (3) to curvilinear (4) to cul-de-sacs (5). Significantly, this pattern reveals a trend toward the development of residential enclaves with no through routes. The morphology drawing also reveals that Hyde Lane, once one of the linear streets, has been turned into a dead-end (6).

Building type and density

The creation of a large number of cul-de-sac developments in a small area has resulted in smaller plots than existed in the linear and curvilinear street patterns.



KEY ISSUES CEI:VILLAGE MORPHOLOGY

CEIA

The village centre is not immediately apparent due to the number of gaps, setbacks and residential units on the High Street.

CEIB

There has been a trend away from through streets toward cul-de-sac style developments.

CEIC

The more recent cul-de-sac developments yield smaller plot sizes with less well-articulated streets.

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS, AND GAPS

Building lines establish the way in which a series of building structures meet the street and pavement. A continuous building line facilitates a clear image of the street. Setbacks and gaps, while sometimes providing interesting features or key gathering spaces, can impact the clarity of the building line.

Irregular building line

The building lines drawing of Bovingdon village centre shows the degree of irregularity that affects the High Street. There are only very small segments of the High Street which create a degree of uniformity in the building line, but these areas are not strong enough to facilitate a cohesiveness over the length of the street.

Two focal points

The two areas that create a traditional building line are at either ends of the High Street (1), revealing the split that affects the village centre. Historically the village evolved from both ends, with the bigger centre based around the inns and parish church and a second growth area centred around Newhall Farm.

Significant gaps and setbacks

There are several gaps and setbacks, including courtyards in front of the civic buildings on the eastern side of the High Street (2), wide pavements along much of the western side (3), and open spaces in front of residential buildings at the northern end of the village centre (4).

KEY ISSUES

CE3: BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS, GAPS

CE2A

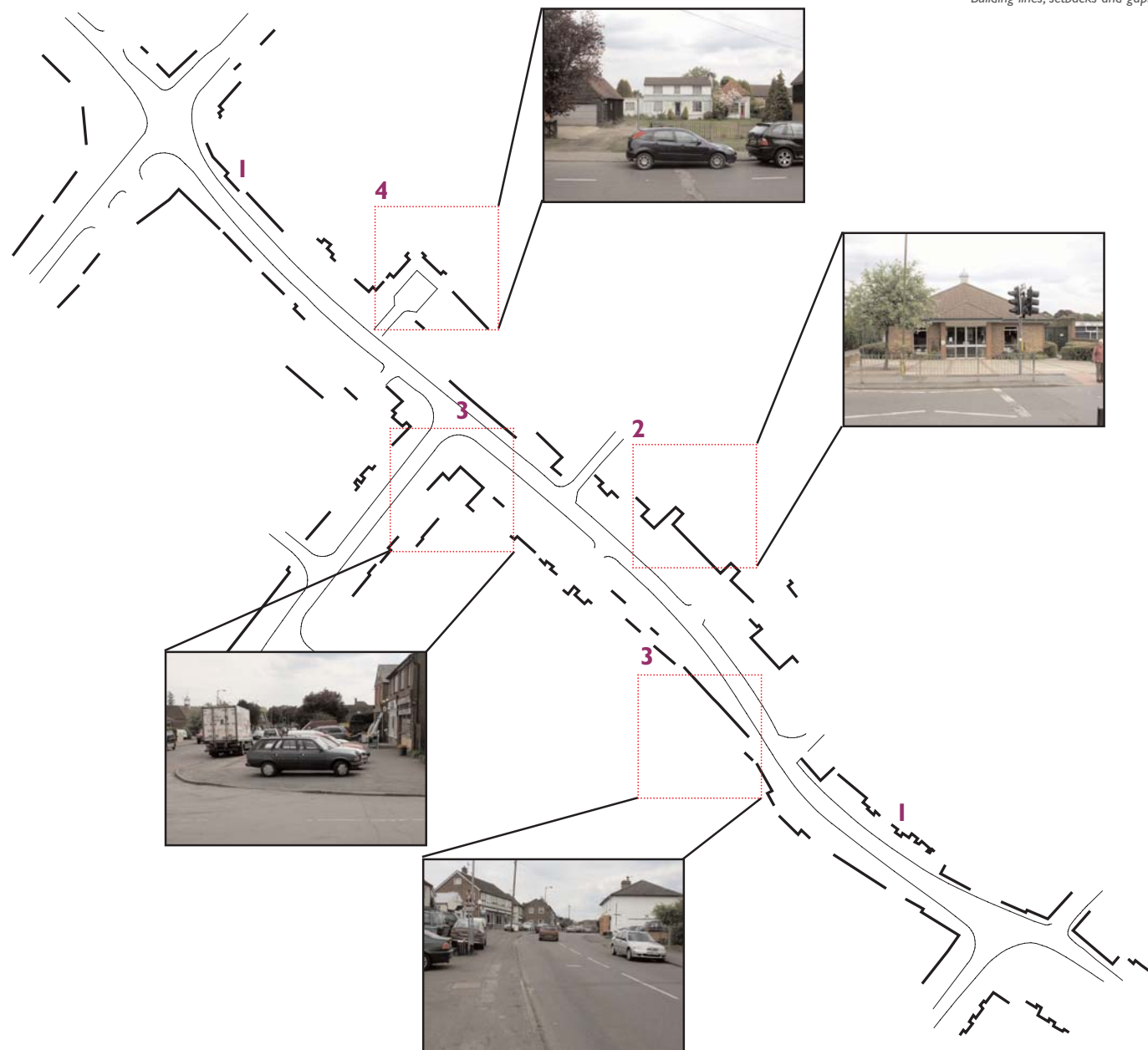
There is a high degree of building line irregularity along the High Street.

CE2B

The areas with uniform building lines are on both ends of the High Street, creating two different focal points to the High Street.

CE2C

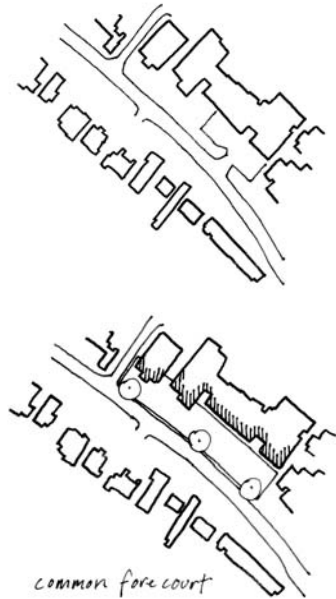
The many gaps and setbacks on the High Street detract from the village centre's cohesiveness.



CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE BUILDING ORIENTATION

Active building frontages can be a key factor in the success of a commercial street, providing both vitality and 'eyes on the street'. A site survey was conducted to establish which buildings fronted onto the High Street.

The buildings in the village centre have active frontages, with only a few exceptions. However, the building lines drawing has revealed that many of these active frontages are setback with car parking blocking them. The land use drawing will show that many of these frontages are, in fact, for residential uses. One example of a residential building that also turns its side to the High Street is shown opposite (1). The sketches below consider how several active frontages which are set back can be joined up to create a new civic space.



KEY ISSUES CE4: BUILDING ORIENTATION

CE3A
Most building frontages in the village centre are active.

CE3B
The active frontages are frequently blocked by small car parking areas.



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CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE DESIGNATED OPEN LAND

The village of Bovingdon is surrounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt. Walking paths into and throughout the Green Belt are popular and frequently used, particularly to the south and west.

There are only two designated areas of open land within the settlement, and those two spaces - the churchyard (1) and the school grounds (2) - are located on the eastern edge of Bovingdon. The Urban Nature Conservation Report has noted that Bovingdon is considerably deficient in both formal and informal leisure space. Bovingdon Green, which is outside the settlement area, represents accessible greenspace.

There are no Local Nature Reserves, and there are no Wildlife Sites within or adjacent to the settlement. The former Bovingdon Clay Pits are to be managed by the Boxmoor Trust in the near future, and should represent a nearby wildlife resource.

KEY ISSUES

CE5: DESIGNATED OPEN SPACES

CE5A

There are only two areas of designated open land in Bovingdon, which are located on the edge of the settlement.

CE5B

There are no Local Nature Reserves or Wildlife Sites within Bovingdon.



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MAKING CONNECTIONS LAND USE

The land use drawing of the Bovingdon village centre reveals a disjointed High Street along which A1 shops are spread throughout. Residential uses fragment the commercial and retail uses, and large institutional uses dominate the middle of the High Street.

There are more residential uses along the High Street than any other use. Shops are clustered at both the northern end of the High Street on the western side (1) and at the southern end of the High Street on the eastern side (2). The institutional uses in the middle of the High Street include a library, a primary school and a community hall (3). While these civic uses are all adjacent and setback from the High Street, there is no shared space between them. The setbacks of each space varies from a paved courtyard to a large hedgerow and a car park.

KEY ISSUES MCI: LAND USE

MCIA
A1 uses occur at disparate ends of the High Street.

MCIB
Residential uses fragment the commercial, retail and civic uses in the village centre.

MCIC
There are several civic uses bunched in the centre of the High Street but are uncoordinated with each other.



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MAKING CONNECTIONS CIRCULATION DEMAND AND LINKAGES

The circulation diagram to the right represents an analysis of existing circulation conditions with contributions made by local residents at the consultation event. Heavier lines denote heavier usage and thinner lines signify less frequent use.

The High Street is the most heavily used road in the village, simultaneously used for through traffic, local shopping traffic, and local residential home-to-destination journeys. Chesham Road is also a heavily trafficked road, with several consultation participants noting congestion that occurs during the Saturday market held on the former airfield site. It was also noted that buses cause considerable congestion due to the narrow width of the roads.

The circulation drawing reinforces the lack of circulation permeability in the village, particularly as newer developments have created dead-end streets and small cul-de-sacs. Hyde Lane, once a through street that completed the diamond-shaped street grid, has now been turned into a cul-de-sac. There is, however, a footpath that connects Hyde Lane to Green Lane.

The pedestrian path on the High Street shows that people generally do not walk the length of the High Street because of the fragmentation of the active land uses and difficult streetscape.

KEY ISSUES

MC2: CIRCULATION DEMAND AND LINKAGES

MC2A

The village lacks vehicular permeability, emphasising the importance of the residential enclaves.

MC2B

The village suffers from traffic congestion, particularly along the High Street and Chesham Road.

MC2C

Pedestrians generally do not walk the length of the High Street, using shops at one end or the other of the High Street.

MC2D

The High Street is an important pedestrian path for schoolchildren.



MAKING CONNECTIONS PARKING

Car parking is a significant concern in both the village centre and the residential areas.

Village Centre Parking

There appears to be no defined pedestrian space on the Bovingdon High Street, with cars and lorries parking on the pavement or parking directly in front of shops. Parking in front of shops results in vehicular-pedestrian conflicts when cars turn into the parking spaces. This lack of defined pedestrian space is exacerbated by the asphalted surface of the pavement which encourages cars to drive onto the pavement.

Residential Parking

The newer cul-de-sac developments tend to have parking at the end of the street or in driveways. The curvi-linear streets off of Old Dean often have cars parked on the pavements.



There is a lack of defined pedestrian space on Bovingdon High Street. This is made worse by the asphalted pavement surface.



There are a few planned off-street parking spaces, such as these shown above.

KEY ISSUES MC3: PARKING

MC3A

The pavements on the High Street are frequently blocked by cars and lorries.

MC3B

Shops generally have parking spaces in front of their frontages, resulting in vehicular-pedestrian conflicts when cars turn into the shops.

MC3C

Many of the residential areas have vehicles parked on the pavements.

MC3D

The newer cul-de-sac developments have car park areas at the end of the streets.



More modern cul-de-sac developments tend to have parking at the end of the street or in driveways.



The curvilinear streets of Old Dean often have cars parked on the pavements.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

Bovingdon's streetscape elements can perform several roles, from reaffirming the village's distinctiveness to facilitating improved High Street vitality and retail success to segregating traffic and pedestrians on the narrow High Street..

Signage

The top left image based on the medieval parish church, is one of the only signs which emphasise the uniqueness of Bovingdon. Many of the shopfront signs are rather bland in character, with a few stores having more distinctive signage. This observation was reinforced by consultation participants.

Streetlighting

The streetlighting on the High Street is a continuation of the highway lighting on Chipperfield Road. The existing lighting does little to slow the traffic or communicate the distinctive village qualities of Bovingdon.

Pavement treatment

Bovingdon faces a number of challenges to make the High Street more pedestrian-friendly. The image at the bottom far right, showing the traffic bollards in front of the school, is an effort to keep cars from parking and driving on the pavement. The smaller image of the library shows another type of bollard and a railing also designed to protect pedestrians. While the bollard placement establishes basic safety, softer design measures such as raising the kerb and changing the pavement material, could enhance the pedestrian environment.

KEY ISSUES

QPRI: STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

QPRIA

Consultation participants noted that there was a lack of distinctive signs in Bovingdon.

QPRIB

The highway lighting contributes to faster driving on the High Street and detracts from the village centre's character.

QPRIC

A soft design approach could enhance the pedestrian environment.



The village sign above, based on the medieval parish church, emphasises the uniqueness of Bovingdon.



Consultation participants found the mix of shopfront signage to be of generally bland character.



The streetlighting in the High Street is a continuation of the highway lighting on Chipperfield Road.



The bollards establish basic safety, however softer design measures such as raised kerbs or the use of different pavement material could enhance the pedestrian environment.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM NATURAL ELEMENTS

Bovingdon sits on a large plateau at a distance from the valleys which define much of Dacorum. As noted earlier, the village is lacking in designated open land within its boundary.

The existing open space within Bovingdon is owned privately by individuals or larger developments. There are street trees along many of the residential streets. The open spaces that are part of the private developments tend to be grasslands and landscaped in simple fashion as to minimise maintenance. The High Street has little greenery, with the exception of grassland spaces in front of some of the residences. There is a landscaping opportunity adjacent to the Well at the southern gateway to the village centre.

The churchyard, as noted earlier, is the second largest in the county and is well-maintained.



Some of the grassy area along the High Street in front of residences could contribute more to the public realm.



There is a landscaping opportunity adjacent to the well in the area known as 'The Docks'.

KEY ISSUES QPR2: NATURAL ELEMENTS

QPR2A
The privately-owned open space in the village centre and along the residential streets tend to be simply maintained grassy areas.

QPR2B
There is a landscaping opportunity site at the southern gateway to Bovingdon.



These lawns on the High Street are well kept.



The churchyard is well-maintained.

LEGIBILITY VIEWS, VISTAS, GATEWAYS

Given the flat nature of Bovingdon, there are few critical views within the village.

Views within Bovingdon

The two most significant views within Bovingdon are looking toward the Well from both the village centre and the southern approach to the village. The slight dip and turn in the road create important views that convey the village's historical character.

Views out to the countryside

Consultation participants noted views from the southern part of Bovingdon out into the Green Belt.

Views from the countryside into Bovingdon

There is a view of the church from Hempstead Road, seen travelling from the northeast.



KEY ISSUES

LE1: VIEWS, VISTAS AND GATEWAYS

LE1A

The flat nature of Bovingdon minimises the number of key views in the village.

LE1B

There is a key view at the southern gateway to the village centre, looking toward the Well.

LEGIBILITY

EDGES, PATHS, LANDMARKS AND CHARACTER AREAS

Village centre

The village centre has a fragmented nature, with the A1 uses appearing sporadically along the High Street interspersed between residential uses. The southern gateway to the village has the strongest appearance, noteworthy because of the change in topography and the cluster of listed buildings. The northern gateway, formed by the junction of the High Street with Chesham Road is not anchored by particularly noteworthy signage.

Open space

The only open spaces are along the northeastern edge of Bovingdon, at the opposite end of the village from the greatest residential concentration.

Connectivity

Pedestrian movement along the High Street is made difficult by cars blocking the pavements and turning in front of the pavement to reach the front of shops. Vehicular connectivity is restricted by the cul-de-sacs. The High Street, Green Lane and Chesham Road are the only significant through roads in the village.

KEY ISSUES

LE2: EDGES, PATHS, LANDMARKS AND CHARACTER AREAS

LE2A

The northern gateway to the village is not a distinctive entrypoint to the village.

LE2B

The High Street lacks coherence, due to the lack of cluster land uses and listed buildings.

