

Land off Echo Hill,
Royston

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

June 2025



Produced on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd by



Iceni Projects

Design & Landscape Team

Land off Echo Hill, Royston

June 2025

Author: CS, CW, MP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed development on Land off Echo Hill, Royston, will deliver approximately 84 new homes alongside 5.96 hectares of green infrastructure, including walking and leisure routes, and associated amenities. The homes will be sensitively integrated within a network of connected and accessible green spaces, featuring an area of amenity grassland on higher topography in the centre of the Site, allowing long views over the development looking north towards Cambridgeshire. Proposals also include green and blue infrastructure corridors with wildflower meadows and structural landscaping surrounding the development.

This Design and Access Statement reviews the Site and its surrounding context to ensure a well-informed and appropriate design approach. It includes a Development Framework Plan, an Illustrative Masterplan, and supporting diagrams to guide and inform future Reserved Matters submissions.



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01

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared by Iceni Projects on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd (Gladman) for a proposed residential development on Land off Echo Hill, Royston, as part of a planning application.

The application is in outline with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 84 dwellings and associated open space and infrastructure. Access is proposed via the property at 24 Echo Hill which also forms part of the application Site, and which will be demolished to create the access.

The Site lies within the administrative area of North Herts Council, to the south-west of Cambridge, which is located approximately twelve miles away.

The Site measures 8.97 hectares (ha) and is located at the southern edge of Royston. The Site comprises two rectangular field parcels and is bound to the north and east by existing residential development, as well as the property at 24 Echo Hill.

Document Structure

This Design and Access Statement addresses key aspects of the proposed development on Land off Echo Hill, including use, amount, access, scale, landscape, and character.

The document is structured into the following seven sections:

- + **01. Introduction:** An overview of the application and the purpose of this document, including the vision for the Site.
- + **02. Policy Overview:** An outline of the relevant planning context and guidance, highlighting key policies and that support the proposals set out in this Design and Access Statement.
- + **03. Wider Context:** An introduction to the Site's location and its broader setting, in terms of landscape, connectivity and local character.
- + **04. Site Analysis:** An in-depth assessment of the Site's characteristics, opportunities, constraints, and key influencing factors.
- + **05. Design Evolution:** A summary of the design development process, incorporating Site analysis and feedback from consultations to establish a clear and robust design rationale through a set of design principles.
- + **06. Design Development:** A detailed presentation of the design approach, illustrated through framework plans and a conceptual vision for the proposed neighbourhood.
- + **07. Conclusion:** A summary of the development proposals and the strategy for delivering the scheme at Land off Echo Hill.



1.2 VISION

The Site aspires to be a thoughtfully designed, sustainable development that harmoniously blends with the natural and townscape character of Royston. At its heart, the Masterplan will promote well-being through an accessible green landscape that is both adaptive and regenerative, ensuring a vibrant and enduring new community.

The proposed development emphasises three key principles: Distinctiveness, Integration, and Connectivity.

Distinctive:

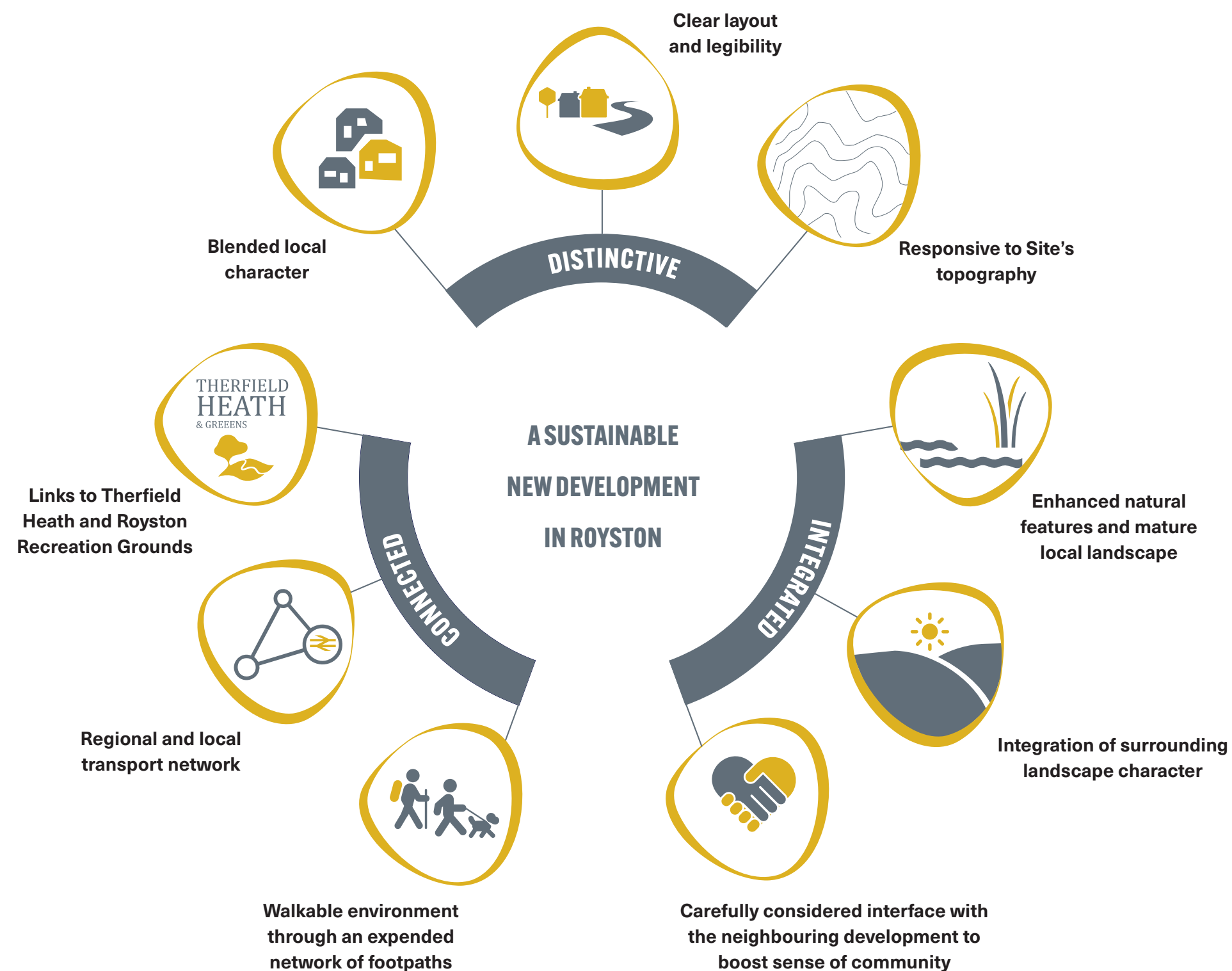
- + Embracing and reflecting the rich local character of Royston.
- + Designed with a clear and accessible layout.
- + Responsive to the Site's topography, its edge-of-settlement setting and surrounding properties.

Integrated:

- + In harmony with the mature natural features of the local landscape.
- + Aligned and connected with the Therfield Heath and North Herts countryside character.
- + Strengthening connections with the Royston community and fostering a sense of belonging.

Connected:

- + Well-integrated into regional and local transport networks.
- + Enriched by an expanded network of leisure walking routes connected to the Public Rights of Way (PRoW).
- + Promoting links to Therfield Heath, Royston Recreation Grounds, and supporting an active lifestyle.



POLICY OVERVIEW



2.1 NATIONAL POLICY OVERVIEW

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out clear expectations for the planning and development process, emphasising the delivery of well-designed, beautiful, and sustainable places. It provides guidance ensuring that rural developments are well-integrated with the local context while addressing contemporary environmental and social needs.

Key Design Parameters for Rural Developments:

- + **Functionality and Quality:** Developments must be designed to function well throughout their lifespan and contribute positively to the rural area's character, economy, and community. Proposals should enhance the local quality of life by creating spaces that are resilient and adaptable to changing needs.
- + **Visual Attractiveness:** Rural developments should be visually appealing, integrating with their natural surroundings. Thoughtful architectural design, careful layout, and strategic landscaping are essential to ensuring that new developments respect and enhance the rural aesthetic.
- + **Contextual Design:** Developments must respond to the distinct character and history of the rural area. This includes preserving and reinforcing the sense of place through materials, building forms, and layouts that are sympathetic to the local environment, heritage, and traditions.
- + **Efficient Use of Land:** Developments should make optimal use of available land, ensuring a balanced approach to housing, employment, and community facilities. The NPPF encourages creating mixed-use developments that support local economies and reduce the need for travel, especially in rural areas where accessibility may be limited.
- + **Safe, Inclusive, and Healthy Environments:** It is vital to create environments that are inclusive and accessible for all, promoting community cohesion, health, and well-being. This includes ensuring that developments are accessible by sustainable transport options, where possible, and offer spaces for social interaction and community activities.
- + **Green Infrastructure:** The NPPF highlights the importance of green infrastructure in rural areas, including tree-lined streets, the preservation of existing trees, and the creation of new

green spaces. New developments should integrate sustainable landscaping and long-term tree maintenance to enhance biodiversity and resilience against climate change.

- + **Design Quality Tools:** The use of design codes, workshops, and frameworks like "Building for a Healthy Life" is encouraged to ensure that developments align with high design standards. These tools help ensure that rural development is well-planned and contributes positively to both the local community and the environment.
- + **Promoting Excellence:** The NPPF emphasises the need to reject poorly designed developments and supports the approval of high-quality, innovative proposals. In rural settings, this means that designs must not only respond to local needs but also contribute to sustainability goals and environmental stewardship.

Climate-Conscious Development:

Section 14 of the NPPF reinforces the need for climate-conscious development, emphasising proactive measures to reduce carbon emissions, increase energy efficiency, and build resilience to long-term environmental challenges. In rural areas, this includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices, reducing transport emissions, and supporting renewable energy installations that respect the rural landscape.

National Design Guide (2021)

The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places. The fundamental principles for good design are that is:

- + Fit for purpose
- + Durable
- + Brings delight
- + It is relatively straightforward to define
- + Can identify uses and users
- + It can assess the quality of detail, materials, construction, and its potential flexibility



2.1 NATIONAL POLICY OVERVIEW

Paragraph 20 identifies the components for places, other than buildings, being:

- + The context for places and buildings.
- + Hard and soft landscape.
- + Physical infrastructure.
- + Social infrastructure.

Paragraph 36 introduces the ten characteristics of a well-designed place. These are:

- + Context – Respect and enhance the local setting, heritage, and culture.
- + Identity – Create distinctive, attractive places that reflect local character.
- + Built Form – Promote coherent, compact development with appropriate building types.
- + Movement – Ensure ease of movement through connected, accessible routes for all transport modes.
- + Nature – Integrate high-quality green spaces, support biodiversity, and manage water effectively.
- + Public Spaces – Design inclusive, safe, and sociable public areas.
- + Uses – Provide a mix of uses, tenures, and housing types to support inclusivity.
- + Homes and Buildings – Ensure they are functional, sustainable, and contribute positively to their surroundings.
- + Resources – Use energy and materials efficiently, and build for resilience.
- + Lifespan – Design places to be durable, adaptable, and well-maintained over time.

► **Building for A Healthy Life (2020)**

Building for Healthy Life (BHL) is a design framework aimed at creating places that support the wellbeing of people and nature. Developed in partnership with Homes England, NHS England, and NHS Improvement, it functions as a Design Code to guide the creation of high-quality new and expanding neighbourhoods.

BHL is structured around 12 key considerations grouped under three themes:

Integrated Neighbourhoods:

- + Natural Connections: Ensure developments are well-integrated with their surroundings, avoiding isolation.
- + Walking, Cycling & Public Transport: Enable short trips via sustainable modes to boost health, reduce emissions, and ease congestion.
- + Facilities & Services: Provide accessible local amenities to support daily life.
Homes for Everyone: Deliver a diverse mix of housing that meets local needs.

Distinctive Places:

- + Making the Most of What's There: Design in response to local context.
- + Memorable Character: Create distinctive, memorable environments.
- + Well-Defined Streets & Spaces: Develop enclosed, people-friendly streets and public spaces.
- + Legibility: Design features that make navigation easy and intuitive.

Streets for All:

- + Healthy Streets: Prioritise people as well as vehicles to support vibrant public life.
- + Cycle & Car Parking: Encourage active travel with well-planned infrastructure while accommodating cars sensitively.
- + Green & Blue Infrastructure: Incorporate features like ponds and rills to support biodiversity and wellbeing.
- + Back of Pavement, Front of Home: Use thoughtful frontages to define space, add character, and support community interaction.



14 INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS	38 DISTINCTIVE PLACES	62 STREETS FOR ALL
Natural connections	Making the most of what's there	Healthy streets
Walking, cycling and public transport	A memorable character	Cycle and car parking
Facilities and services	Well defined streets and spaces	Green and blue infrastructure
Homes for everyone	Easy to find your way around	Back of pavement, front of home

2.1 NATIONAL POLICY OVERVIEW

Manual for Streets (2007)

The Manual for Streets (2007) sets out principles for creating well-designed residential streets that prioritise people, sustainability, and community well-being. Key design principles include:

- + Place-making: Streets should be designed as public spaces that enhance the sense of place and community identity, rather than simply serving as conduits for vehicles.
- + People-first Approach: Prioritise the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users over those of motor vehicles. Streets should be safe, accessible, and welcoming for all.
- + Integration with the Environment: Design streets that respect and enhance the local natural and built environment, fostering sustainability through biodiversity, water management, and reduced carbon emissions.
- + Connected Networks: Streets should promote connectivity within the neighbourhood and to surrounding areas, supporting efficient and walkable layouts that encourage active travel.
- + High-Quality Design: Focus on aesthetics, durability, and functionality, ensuring that streets contribute positively to the character and visual quality of the area.
- + Flexibility in Design Standards: Move away from rigid design standards to allow context-sensitive solutions tailored to the unique needs and character of each location.
- + Shared Spaces: Encourage the use of shared spaces to reduce dominance of vehicles, lower traffic speeds, and create inclusive, multi-functional areas for diverse activities.

The guidance advocates for streets that balance mobility needs with social and environmental priorities, creating spaces that foster community interaction and sustainable living.

Secured by Design Homes Guide (2024)

The Secured by Design (SBD) Homes Guide 2024 provides strategies to improve residential security through thoughtful design and accredited security products. Its key principles include:

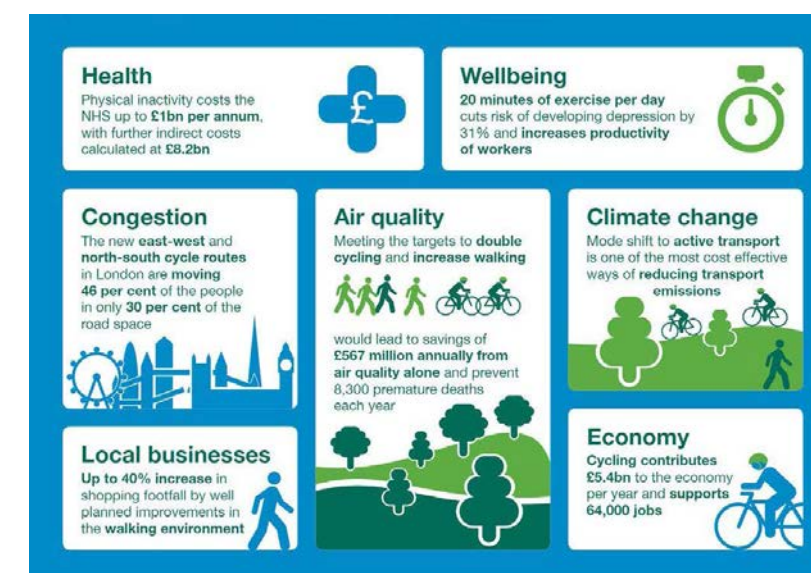
- + Natural Surveillance: Maximise visibility of shared spaces to deter crime.
- + Access Control: Secure private areas with gates, boundaries, and controlled entry.

- + Defensible Space: Clearly define space ownership to promote resident responsibility.
- + Physical Security: Use doors, windows, and hardware that meet SBD standards.
- + Lighting: Ensure consistent, adequate lighting in communal and access areas.
- + Landscaping: Avoid obstructed views and hiding spots while keeping designs attractive.
- + Maintenance & Management: Maintain shared areas and security features to prevent decline.
- + Community Engagement: Involve residents in shaping and caring for their environment.

Cycle Infrastructure Design (2020)

The Cycle Infrastructure Design: Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) provides guidance for creating high-quality cycling infrastructure to support sustainable transport and active travel. Key principles include:

- + Core Design Principles: Ensure infrastructure is safe, comfortable, direct, and accessible for all users, including those with disabilities and varying cycling abilities.
- + Network Approach: Develop a connected network that integrates with public transport and supports both short and long journeys.
- + Inclusive Design: Accommodate a variety of cycle types, including cargo and adapted bikes.
- + Segregation from Motor Traffic: Create dedicated lanes to minimise vehicle conflicts and prioritise cyclist safety.
- + Crossings & Junctions: Design safe and intuitive crossings with features like protected junctions.
- + Safety and Comfort: Provide smooth, wide surfaces and minimise exposure to motor traffic.
- + Continuity: Maintain uninterrupted cycling routes for seamless travel.
- + Adaptability: Design infrastructure to evolve with growing cycling demand.
- + Integration: Facilitate easy transitions between cycling and other transport modes, with bike parking and bike-share schemes.
- + User Experience: Ensure environments are welcoming and convenient, encouraging cycling uptake.



2.2 LOCAL POLICY OVERVIEW

North Herts Local Plan (2011-2031)

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 outlines a clear strategy for delivering sustainable, well-designed development that respects local character and supports thriving communities.

Key principles include:

- + High-Quality Design: Development must be well-integrated with its surroundings, reflect local distinctiveness, and promote attractive, inclusive places.
- + Sustainable Communities: New schemes should support active travel (walking and cycling), reduce car dependency, and connect to existing infrastructure and facilities.
- + Environmental Responsibility: Proposals are expected to: a) Incorporate energy-efficient and water-saving measures, b) Address climate change and flood risk, c) Deliver biodiversity net gain and protect ecological networks
- + Masterplanning for Larger Sites: Strategic Sites must be comprehensively planned to ensure coherent layouts, timely infrastructure, and accessible green space.
- + Respect for Character and Heritage: Development must enhance local identity, preserve heritage assets, and respond sensitively to landscape context.
- + Support for Local Economies: Mixed-use and flexible development is encouraged to strengthen village and town centres.
- + Housing Delivery: A variety of housing types, including affordable homes, is required to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population.

Overall, the Plan promotes sustainable growth through thoughtful design, ensuring new development contributes positively to North Hertfordshire's built and natural environment.

Hertfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Guidance (2017)

Health and wellbeing refers to both physical and mental health in addition to social wellbeing. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. It is also determined by the strength of an individual's relationships and the way in which they function within their community. Whilst health and wellbeing is influenced by a number of factors (genetics, behaviour, access to healthcare), planning professionals or those involved in built development have a vital role in creating the environment in which we are born, grow, live, work and age in (UK Green Building Council, July 2016).

The purpose of the guide is to aid planning professionals, both local authorities and developers in the delivery of healthy developments and communities by increasing local capacity, knowledge of health and wellbeing and the relationship to spatial planning issues, setting out the key principles and aspirations of the Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Public Health department.

The document focuses on seven key areas:

- + Air Quality
- + Food and healthy Choices
- + Movement and Access
- + Neighbourhood Spaces
- + Housing and Development Design
- + Local Economy and Employment
- + Quality Open Space, Play and Recreation



2.2 LOCAL POLICY OVERVIEW

▶ North Hertfordshire Design SPD (2011)

This guide has been produced by NHDC to inspire, raise standards and influence the design of development to ensure that it respects and complements the existing built character and natural environment of the District. It seeks to rationalise and bring together all potential urban design policy in one place. It includes key guidance, such as:

- + Character (sense of place and history)
- + Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)
- + Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)
- + Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)
- + Legibility (ease of understanding)
- + Adaptability (ease of change)
- + Diversity (ease of choice)
- + Quality of Private Space (useability)
- + Sustainability (reducing carbon and increasing efficiency)

The Masterplan aligns with urban design policy to ensure the development respects and complements the surrounding built character and natural environment.

▶ Royston Urban Design Assessment (2007)

This document provides an urban design assessment of Royston and sets out guidelines for future development. The study identifies eight different Urban Design Zones including four Local Character areas, Employment Zone, Open Land and Local Amenities.

Furthermore, the document includes a series of principles that aim to foster a cohesive, accessible, and visually appealing urban environment, enhancing Royston's connectivity and promoting a pedestrian-friendly town centre.

- + The A10 should facilitate traffic flow while allowing easy pedestrian access near the town centre. Secondary roads will prioritise two-way traffic with calmed speeds, minimised on-street parking, and cycling lanes.
- + High Street and surrounding commercial areas are designated as pedestrian-priority zones, with expanded pavements and crossing points, especially at key intersections like Melbourn, Baldock, and Kneesworth Streets. Car parks on the outskirts will discourage through traffic in the centre.
- + Improved pedestrian and cycling routes across the railway and from outlying zones will enhance town-wide connectivity, particularly toward schools and northern areas like the station.
- + A reconfigured route between the town centre and the station will improve driver access, while new cycle routes along Melbourn Road and Old North Road will connect outlying areas with the centre.
- + A low-density boundary around Royston will transition into the countryside, protecting scenic views, especially from Therfield Heath, and preserving the prominence of St. John's Church as a landmark.
- + Enhancements to key gateways (e.g., Melbourn Street, London Road, and Old North Road near the railway) will strengthen entry points, promoting a cohesive town identity. Improved public spaces will integrate suburban areas with the historic centre.
- + The main access routes are designed to manage traffic efficiently, while scenic routes into the town will create attractive, accessible entryways for both residents and visitors.

The assessment has informed and contributed to the Site analysis and subsequent proposals developed for Royston.



03

WIDER CONTEXT

3.1 THE SITE

The Site is situated at the southern edge of the historic market town of Royston, adjacent to the rear gardens of residential properties on Echo Hill to the north, and Layston Park and Royse Grove to the east. To the west of Briary Lane, nearby built structures include Wicker Hall and Heath Farm.

Covering approximately 8.97 hectares, the Site primarily consists of arable land across two rectangular field parcels. The field parcels are separated by an internal hedgerow which bisects the Site in a north-south direction. The property at 24 Echo Hill falls within the Site boundary and is proposed to be demolished to facilitate site access.

The northern boundary is defined by a combination of timber post and rail fencing and hedgerow. To the west, the boundary is defined by a hedgerow along Briary Lane, which is in notably better condition to the south of the Site. The southern boundary is bordered by a hedgerow that runs along the public bridleway, extending around a reservoir and several outbuildings to the south-west. On the east, the boundary consists of a belt of trees and hedgerows to the north, transitioning to sections of hedgerow and fencing further south, where it adjoins the rear gardens of properties on Royse Grove.

Although tree cover within the Site is limited to the boundaries, the surrounding area features relatively dense vegetation, with tree belts and clusters situated within green corridors that cut through residential areas, as well as along the wooded scarp slopes and larger rear gardens of properties on Royse Grove.

Therfield Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a publically accessible area of chalk grassland, located approximately 70m north of the Site boundary. Facilities adjoining Therfield Heath include include Royston Heath Archery Club, Royston Golf Club, Royston Tennis Club, and Royston Rugby Club. Additional open space within the vicinity of the Site include Priory Memorial Gardens.



Fig.2: Site Location Plan

3.2 WIDER CONTEXT

The Site is located at the southern edge of Royston, within a 15-minute walk, cycle, or bus ride from a variety of local amenities and Royston Railway Station.

Royston lies on the border of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The town is well-connected and plays an important role in the local economy, offering a range of services and amenities, including schools, local businesses (such as supermarkets, cafes, and pubs), leisure facilities, GP surgeries, and transport options, including a bus station and a railway station. Royston is also accessible by road, with the A10 running through its centre.

The A10 links Royston with towns to the north east, including Royston's nearby larger neighbour, Cambridge, while the A505 connect Royston with other villages and towns, including Baldock and Ashwell to the west. Cambridge is a 20-minute drive away, while London can be reached by train from Royston Railway Station in 40 minutes, with trains to King's Cross every 30 minutes during the day.

Royston is also located near to Therfield to the west, and the village of Barley to the east, with recreational areas nearby, offering an attractive combination of urban and rural living.

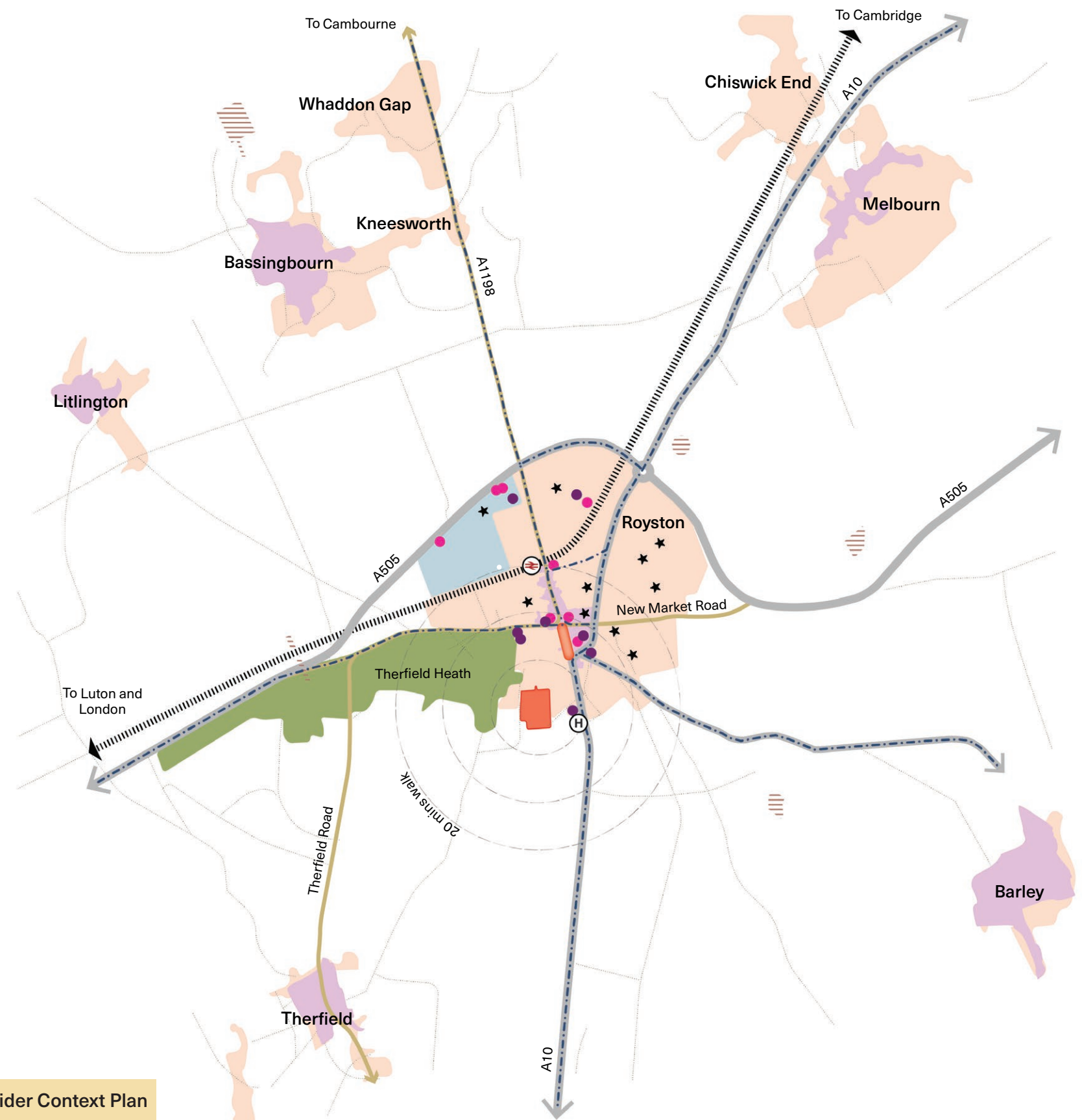
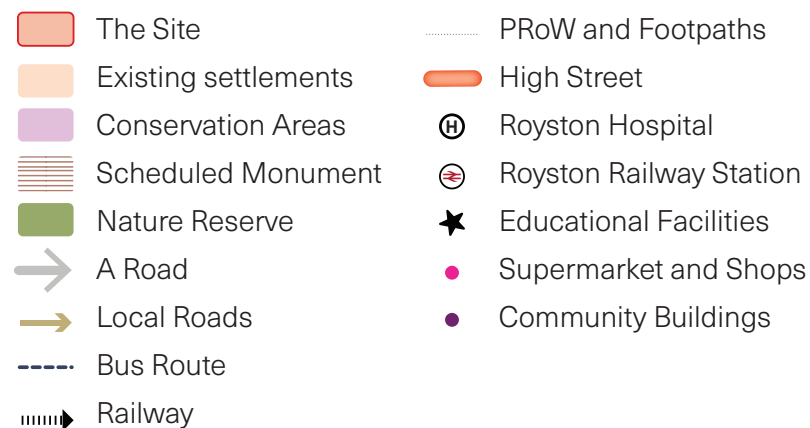


Fig.3: Wider Context Plan

3.3 DESIGNATIONS AND WIDER LANDSCAPE

The Site lies near Therfield Heath, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), and Scheduled Monument, located 70 meters to the north and 120 meters to the west. This area is ecologically important, providing chalk grassland and biodiversity-rich landscapes open to the public.

The surrounding landscape is part of the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA 87), characterised by rolling chalk hills, arable fields, and scattered woodlands. The Scarp Slopes South of Royston (LCA 228) features prominent views, open fields, and a rural, undeveloped character.

Nearby heritage assets include several Scheduled Monuments, such as the Therfield Heath Bowl Barrows and the Royston Cave. The town's Conservation Area and several listed buildings contribute to the area's historic interest, with the closest being approximately 270 meters to the east.

The Site is also well-connected to recreational routes like the Icknield Way and Hertfordshire Way, both of which pass through the landscape and provide valuable access to the region's heritage and natural beauty.

In this context, there is an opportunity for new development to be sensitively integrated with these designations through thoughtful and sustainable design. By respecting the surrounding Therfield Heath, Scheduled Monuments, and Royston Conservation Area, the proposal can complement the local community and the wider environment. Incorporating green infrastructure and public footways will enhance the local environment, promote connectivity, and ensure the development aligns with the area's natural and cultural heritage.

- | | |
|--|--|
| The Site | Royston Conservation Area |
| Public Footpath | Scheduled Monument |
| B14 Bridleway | Therfield Heath SSSI |
| Byway | Local Nature Reserve |
| ▲ Grade I Listed Buildings | |
| ▲ Grade II Listed Buildings | |
| ▲ Grade II* Listed Buildings | |

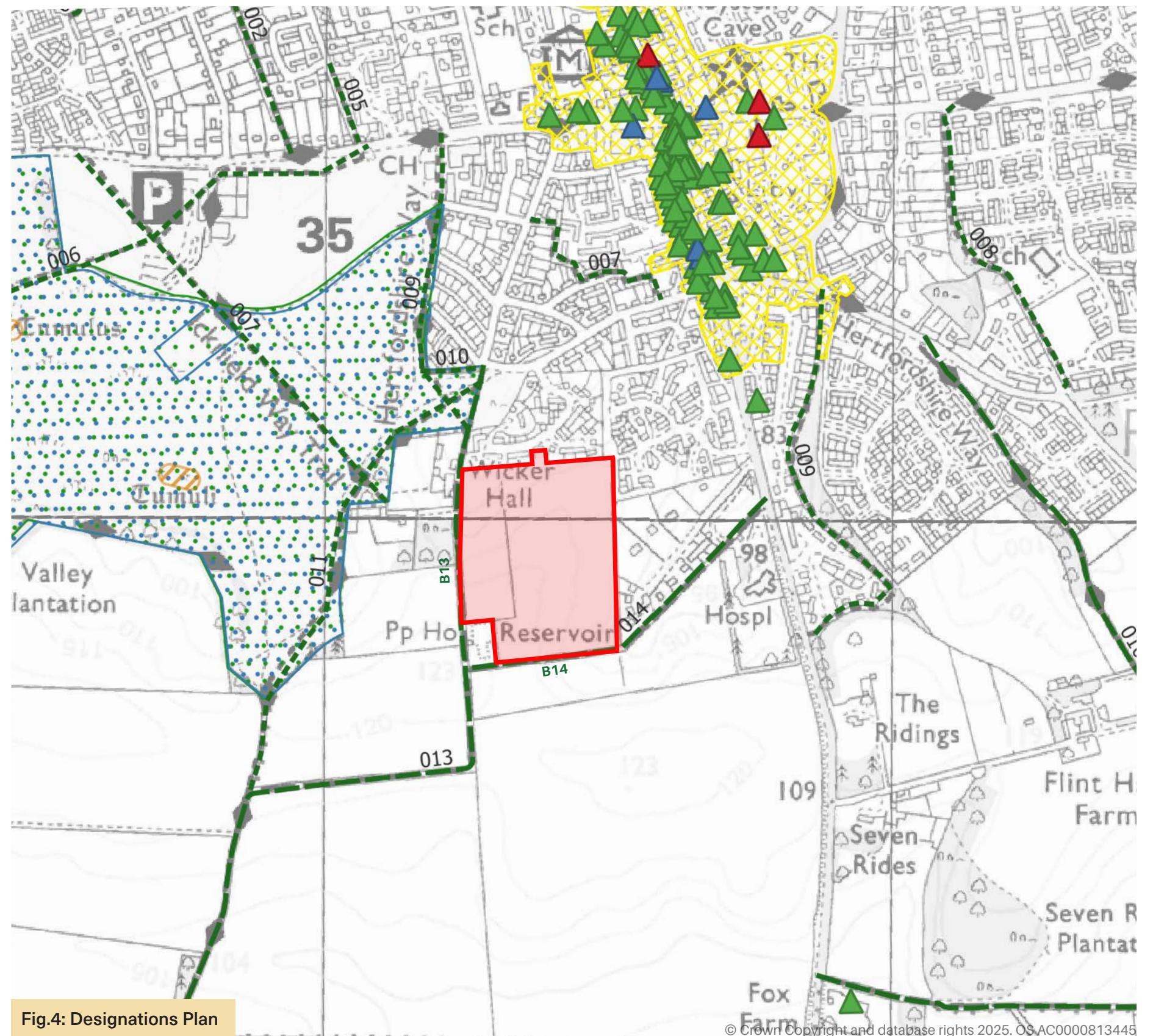


Fig.4: Designations Plan

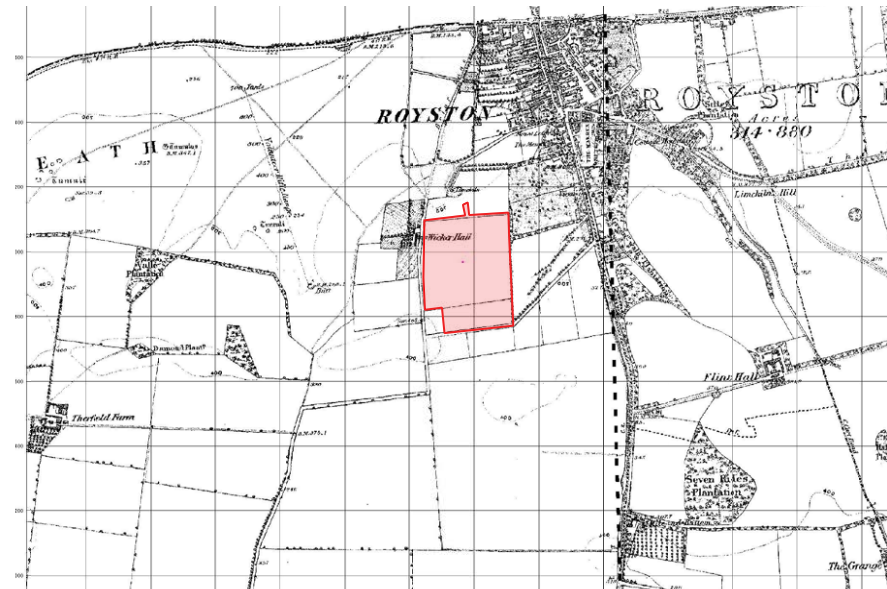
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3.4 HISTORIC URBAN FORM

Royston's development was shaped by its strategic position at the crossroads of two ancient routes, Ermine Street and the Icknield Way. Although evidence of settlement before the medieval period is limited, the town gained significance in the late 12th Century with the establishment of an Augustinian priory, which became a focal point for trade and religious activity. By the early 14th Century, the settlement had evolved into a prominent market town.

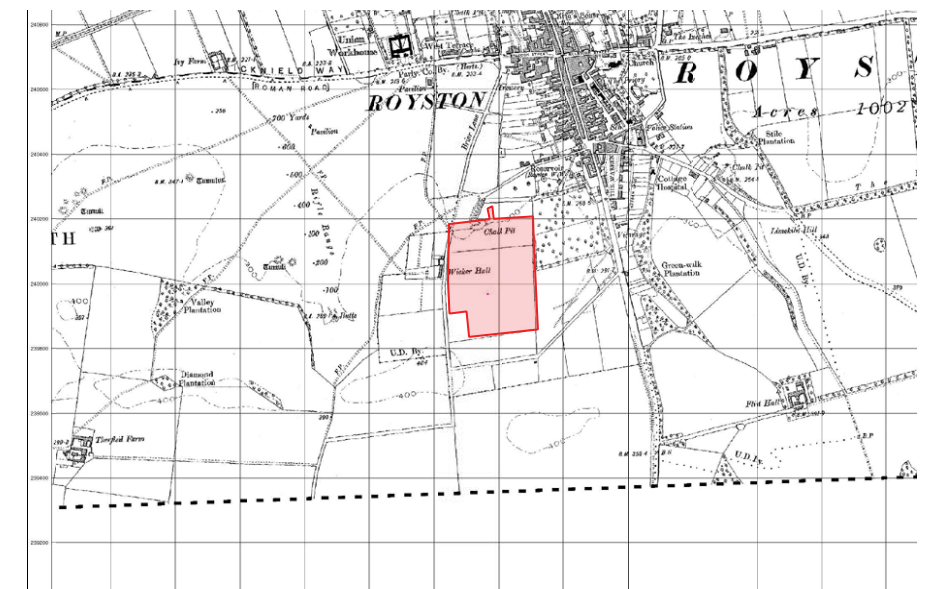
Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, Royston's economy was driven by markets, coaching industries, and the malt trade. Under King James I, it briefly became a royal hunting destination, spurring the construction of large houses. The town's position along the London-York route made it a critical stopping point for travelers, and inns flourished.

However, the arrival of the railway in 1850 led to a decline in coaching-related activities while triggering expansion around the station. Despite suburban growth from the late 20th Century onward, the town's medieval street layout remains evident, with its historical origins still reflected in its built environment.



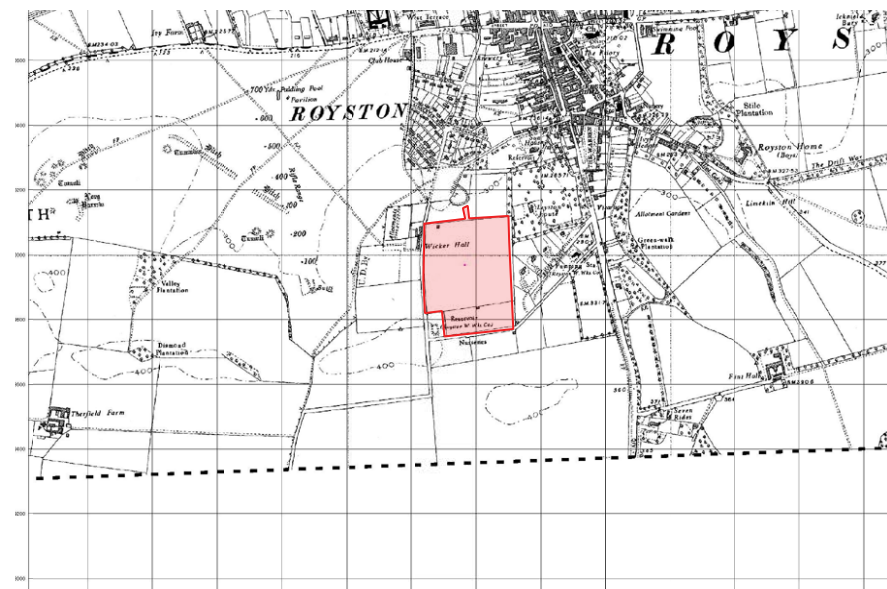
Historic Map 1882-1883

The town's historic core is evident in the first OS map from 1882, shaped by its strategic location at the intersection of two ancient routes: the Roman, Ermine Street and the prehistoric Icknield Way. The Site is shown as an open field adjacent to Briary Lane.



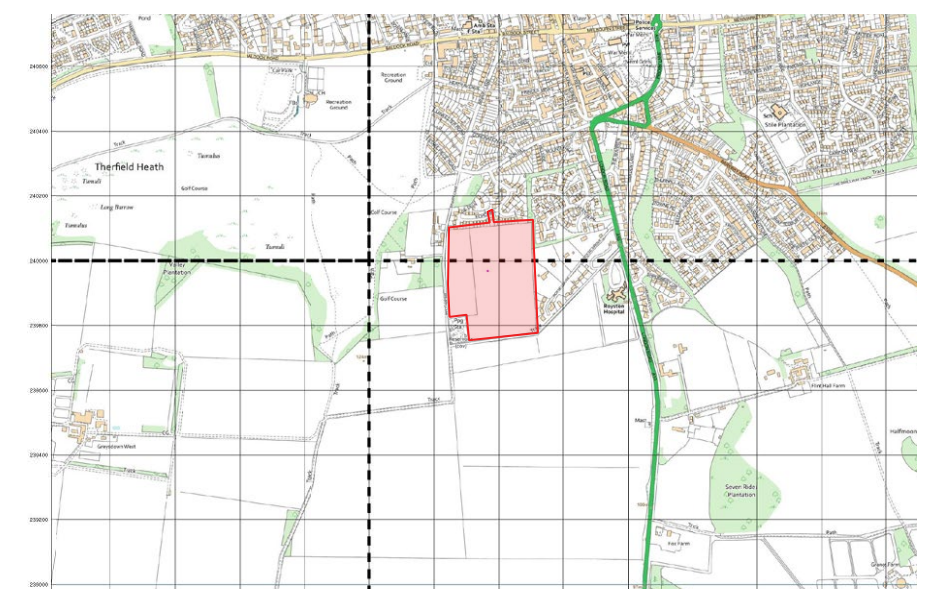
Historic Map 1903

The opening of the Hitchin, Royston and Cambridge Branch of the G.N. Railway in 1850 resulted in the decline of the village as a coaching stop on the route to London, but also served as a catalyst for the expansion of the town. The land immediately to the north of the Site is shown in use as a Lime Kiln in the 19th Century and then later as a Chalk Pit.



Historic Map 1950

By the early 20th Century a small reservoir had been constructed to the south west of the Site. The Site covers the former ownership of three open connected fields in use as allotments and small scale tenanted farmland. The fields were amalgamated into a single field during the mid 20th Century.



Current Map 2024

The late 20th Century has seen the urbanisation of the area to the north of the Site, the development of suburban estates within former field boundaries is legible in aerial views and forms a buffer area to the more historic town centre located to the north east.

04

SITE ANALYSIS

4.1 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL ASSESSMENT

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was undertaken in January and May 2025 to inform the proposed layout and planting of the scheme.

The assessment found that while higher parts of the Site offer open outward views, visibility within is more limited due to undulating topography, built form, and vegetation. The development will be visible from adjoining bridleways, nearby houses, and parts of Therfield Heath, but will integrate naturally within the context of the existing settlement.

The highest areas will remain open space, free from development, and will be strengthened with new woodland and tree planting to help assimilate the new homes into the landscape. The Site's character will transition from grassland fields to a residential development with associated open space and infrastructure. 24 Echo Hill will be replaced by an access street, altering its character. Most structural vegetation will be retained, enhanced through new planting, and managed for longevity. Only minor sections of hedgerow require removal for access and movement.

The proposed development includes new areas of native tree and thicket planting, wildflower meadows, and water-tolerant planting within Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Recreational walking routes, street trees, and amenity grassland will create opportunities for both passive and active recreation.

The Site is well related to the adjacent settlement, bordered by modern housing to the north and east, which also sits on the undulating ground. The development will continue the established pattern of residential growth on Royston's north-facing slopes. Due to the intervening topography and boundary features, there will be no material impact on the wider landscape to the south. The development forms a logical extension to the existing settlement and remains well-contained from the surrounding countryside.

While there will be some effect on views from Therfield Heath, these will be limited and seen within the context of the existing settlement. The proposal does not materially affect a valued landscape, and overall, there is no landscape or visual reason why the Site cannot be developed in line with the proposals.



Fig.5: View east towards Site from Briary Lane (PRoW Royston 013)



Fig.6: View north east towards Site from PRoW Royston 014



Fig.7: View south east towards Site from Therfield Heath

4.2 HERITAGE

Royston is a historic market town, with a rich cultural and architectural heritage. The town is home to several key heritage sites, including the Grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist and the Royston Cave, a unique 14th Century underground chamber with mysterious carvings. The town also contains numerous Grade II listed buildings that reflect its medieval and Georgian architectural history.

The Royston Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the town, which originated in the medieval period. Royston's townscape is characterised by a blend of medieval and Georgian architecture, with key landmarks situated around the town centre. To the west of the town lies Therfield Heath, which is rich in both natural and archaeological heritage.

The Site lies in the wider periphery of the town and Conservation Area, it does not directly contribute to the significance of the heritage assets. The heritage statement submitted with the application assesses the impact of the proposed development on the heritage assets of Royston.

- The Site
- Royston Conservation Area
- Parks and Open Space
- Therfield Heath
- Primary Street Network
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Royston Hospital

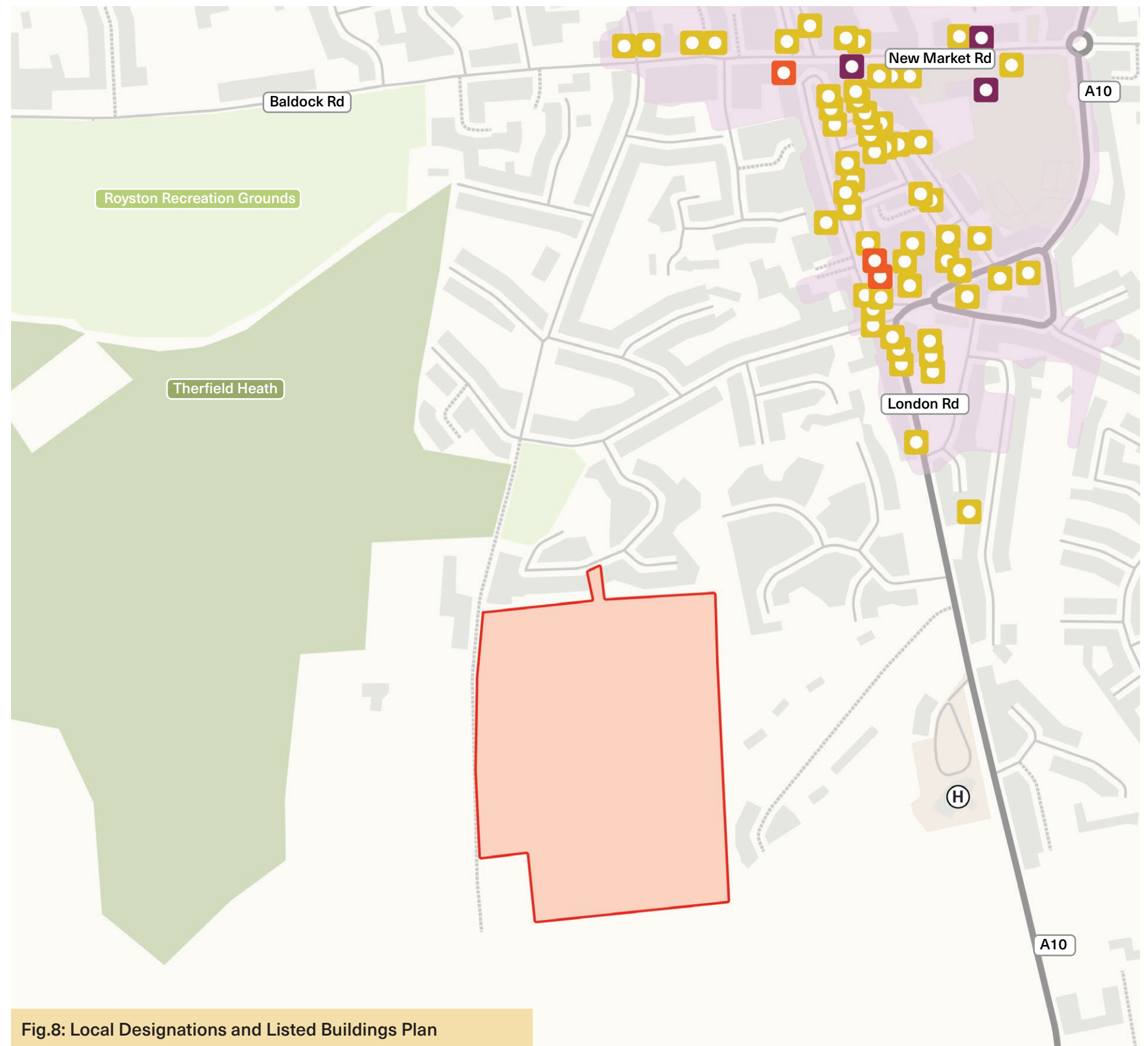


Fig.8: Local Designations and Listed Buildings Plan

4.3 LOCAL CHARACTER

The North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment (September 2007) divides Royston into four key Urban Design Zones based on development periods and land uses, along with additional areas for employment, open spaces, and community amenities:

Town Centre Zone

This area forms the historic core of Royston, centered around the ancient intersection of Icknield Way and the Roman road running north-south. It is characterised by a dense urban fabric, featuring narrow streets and closely built two-storey houses. The varied architectural styles and building ages contribute to the zone's distinctive historic charm.

Historic High-Density Zone

Situated north of the town centre, this zone clusters around the railway to the west of the station. Housing is predominantly Victorian, constructed from red and yellow brick, with some later infill developments, including bungalows.

Low-Density Mixed Residential Zone

This zone encompasses interwar and postwar housing developments, arranged in clusters outside the town centre and extending along Baldock Road, Old North Road, and London Road. Houses are mainly semi-detached, with some detached properties, often featuring front lawns and rear gardens.

Postwar Suburban Zone

This zone includes estates built during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, as well as upscale developments from the 1990s. While some estates are oriented perpendicular to the roads, most follow a cul-de-sac layout, reflecting suburban planning trends of the time.

Additional Areas

- + Employment Area - This area consists of light industrial and warehouse developments, primarily situated north of the railway and east of Old North Road, with additional pockets found outside the Town Centre Zone.
- + Open Land - Open land includes small publicly accessible green areas scattered throughout Royston, with larger sections located to the north of the settlement and east of Melbourn Road.
- + Local Amenities - These areas are dispersed across Royston, providing essential community facilities such as schools, leisure centers, and healthcare services.

Since the 2007 North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment, there have been several changes and developments in Royston that could be considered for an updated urban design review:

- + Population Growth: Royston's population has continued to grow beyond 14,570, as noted in 2001. New housing developments have emerged to meet rising demand.
- + New Housing Developments: Modern residential estates have been built, particularly on the town's periphery, reflecting contemporary planning trends and addressing housing shortages.
- + Infrastructure Improvements: Potential enhancements in transportation infrastructure, supporting both commuters and local travel.
- + Economic Development: Growth in employment zones, particularly in light industry, retail, and service sectors, to support Royston's expanding population.
- + Sustainability and Green Spaces: An increased focus on sustainability may have resulted in new public green spaces, improved pedestrian pathways, and efforts to protect open land.
- + Community Facilities: Expansion or development of schools, healthcare facilities, and leisure centres to serve the growing population and evolving community needs.

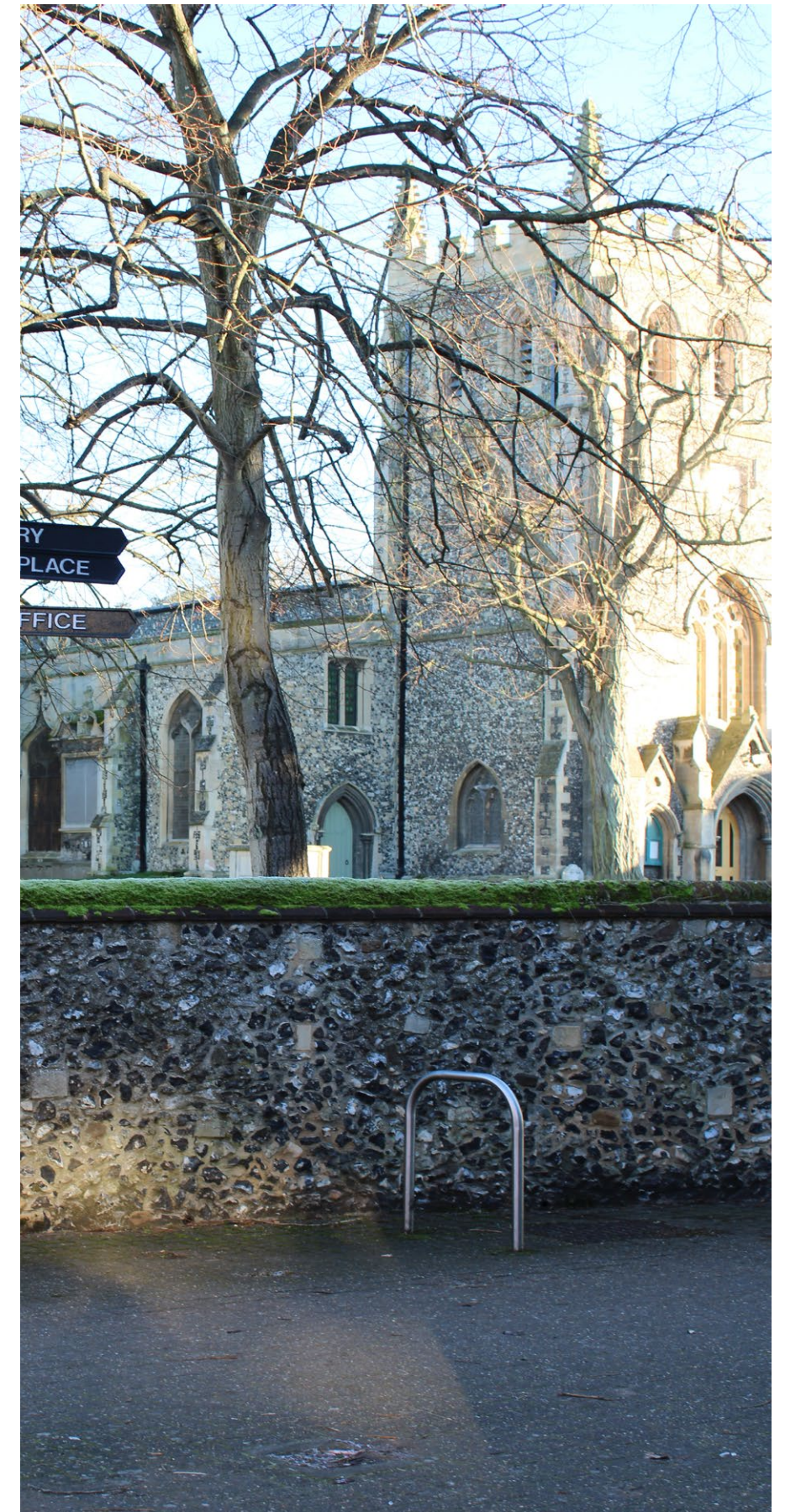


Fig.9: Royston Parish Church



Fig.10: Properties along the northern Site boundary



Fig.14: Hedgerows bound the Site



Fig.11: Rich heritage setting of Royston town centre



Fig.13: Chalk grassland near the Site



Fig.12: Royston High Street

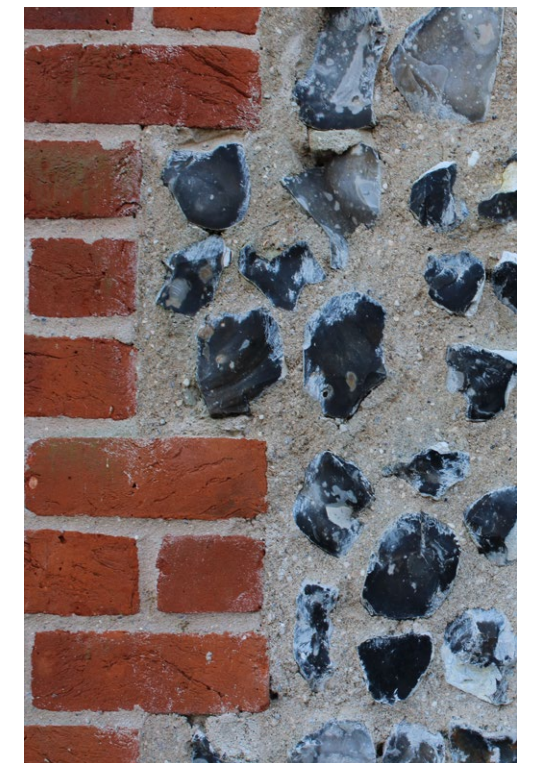


Fig.15: Red brick and flint stone

4.4 TOPOGRAPHY & FLOOD RISK

Royston lies within a shallow bowl of the East Anglian Heights chalk escarpment, which slopes down towards the lower-lying Cambridgeshire Plain to the north. The town centre and areas to the north of Baldock Road sit on relatively flat grounds, at elevations between 55-75m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).

The southern edge of the town features more steeply sloping terrain, with the escarpment rising to a high point of approximately 123m AOD. Residential development extends up the north-facing slope, forming a crescent around the town. Existing residential areas adjacent to the Site, including Echo Hill, Layston Park, and Royse Grove, are situated between 94m and 105m AOD, while developments to the east of the A10 at Mill Hill and Wortham Road extend to or beyond 110m AOD.

The Site is located on the north-facing slopes at the southern edge of Royston. The land within the Site slopes down from a high point of approximately 120m AOD in the south west corner to lower points of around 94m AOD along the northern boundary and 101m AOD along the eastern boundary. The gradient noticeably steepens towards the northern and eastern boundaries of the Site, contributing to the Site's distinct topography and its integration with the surrounding landscape.

The Site is located within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of flooding. There is no surface water flood risk on-site.

-  The Site
-  Parks and Open Space
-  Therfield Heath
-  Surface Water Flooding
-  Topography Contours (10m)
-  Primary Street Network
-  Royston Hospital

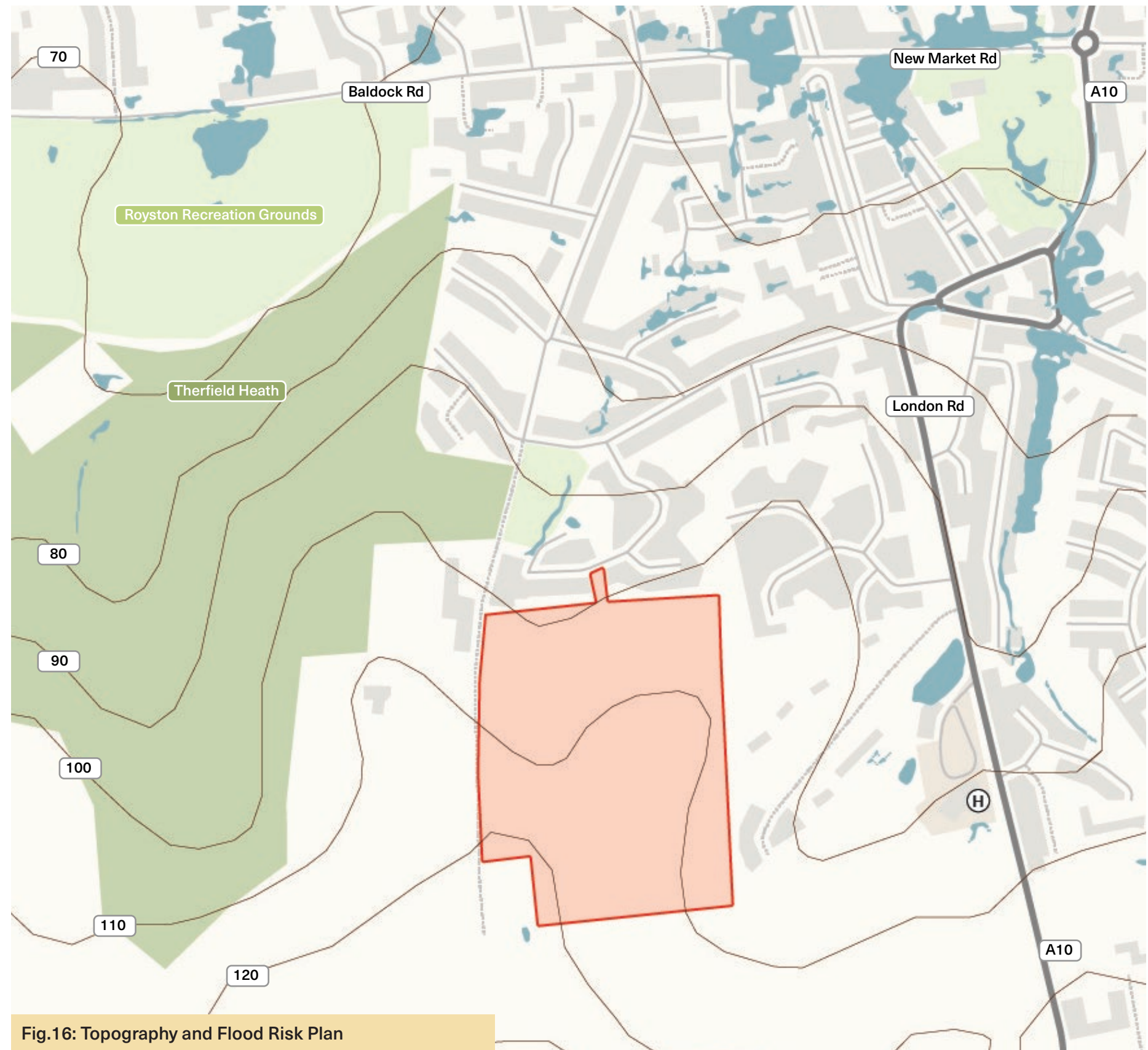


Fig.16: Topography and Flood Risk Plan