3.0

WHAT MAKES A GREAT VILLAGE

3.1 The Ambition / Opportunity

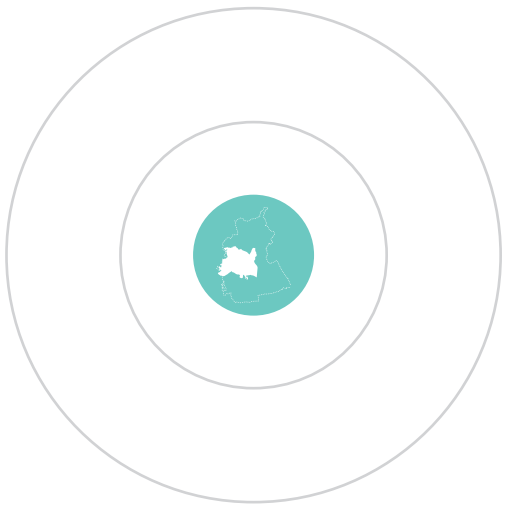
VISION

The Eastern Villages Framework creates a strong basis from which to develop a vision for the future communities to the east of Swindon.

The village expansion beyond the existing hard suburban edge of Swindon provides a major opportunity to embrace the distinctive assets of the wider rural landscape setting, and ensure they are utilised to create a strong sense of place.

With this in mind, the concept of the 'eastern villages' provides a useful starting point for the vision in that the there are a number of villages within the context of the Site that already have a distinctive character and sense of place, which are, indeed, where people aspire to live.

On this basis, our analysis has examined the question "what makes a great village," within the rural context of East Swindon. In addition, it was also considered necessary to explore this question within a national and international context on the basis that the existing villages of Swindon developed historically over time (and not all of this later expansion was positive); whereas there are successful national and international examples of villages being developed more recently. Moreover, many of these are heralded as best practice examples of good urban design and place making. The conclusions of the study therefore provide not only design cues for the proposals but also a useful checklist from which to test the proposals.



Local: contextually relevant

- Wanborough
- Broad Hinton
- Bourton
- Liddington
- Bishopstone

National: deliverable examples

- Newhall, Harlow
- Abode, Cambridge
- Accordia, Cambridge
- Tibby's Triangle, Southwold
- HAB Housing, The Triangle, Swindon
- Plockton, Scotland

European: greater selection, more established

- Almere, Netherlands
- BO01, Malmo, Sweden
- Ypenburg, The Hague, Netherlands
- Messestradt Reim, Munich, Germany

3.2 Local Townscape Study

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

A townscape analysis of the existing surrounding villages has been summarised on the following pages. This analysis provides the starting point of our study into “what makes a great village”. The study analysed the urban structure of Wanborough, Broad Hinton, Bourton, Liddington and Bishopstone as villages within a close proximity to the Site, and which have a positive relationship to the adjacent AONB.

The urban form of the villages was considered under the headings of:

- Local centre
- Development edge
- Road structure
- Boundary treatments
- Urban structure

Within these headings, common elements were noticed, including the use of a village green, green verges along main routes, a blended development edge, a lack of pedestrian routes forcing informal shared space and backland development. These common elements provide the beginnings of a physical analysis towards what makes a great village. The context and form of Wanborough and Bishopstone allowed them to emerge as key local precedence from which the vision could draw more heavily upon.

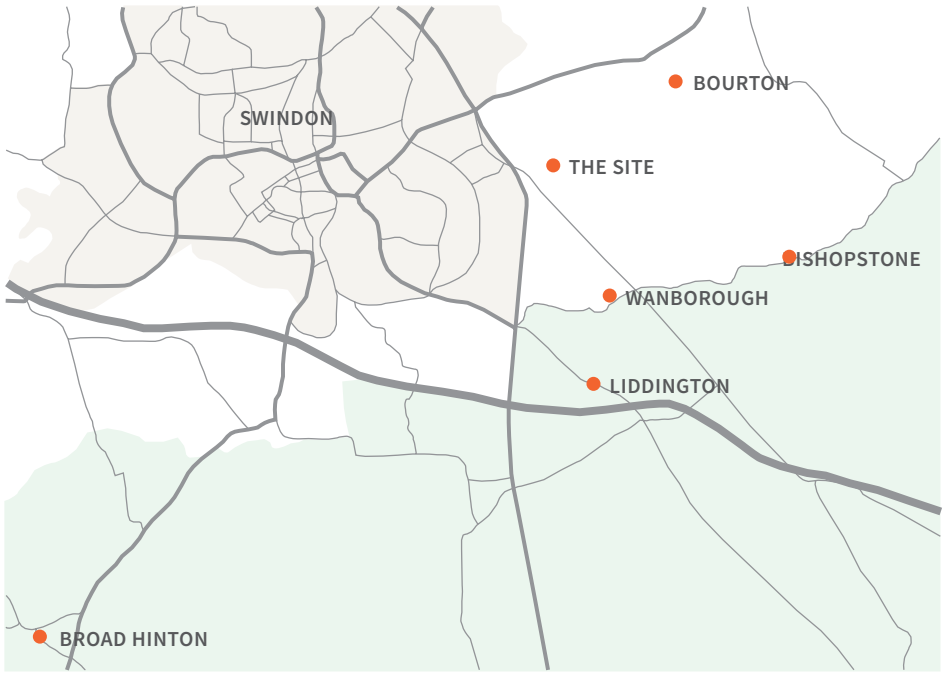


FIGURE 3.1 THE SURROUNDING VILLAGES

Broad Hinton

Located to the south of Swindon well within the AONB, Broad Hinton is a compact village of predominantly low density detached housing at a loose grain. A small local centre comprising of a post office, school and village hall sits at the junction between two historic routes. Green verges, manicured hedges and historic stone walls help create a rural character within the village. An organic development edge blends the settlement into the surrounding rural landscape.

Bourton

Due to its relationship with the Vale of the White Horse, Bourton displays a unique sense of place through the consistent use of local stone brick. A local centre at the heart of the village is predominantly defined by a school use bounding one side of the small village green with the historic road structure extending from this point. The rural characteristic is strengthened through the loose organic grain, wide street verges and informal shared space.

Liddington

Houses are arranged in a linear urban form, providing views across the valley from the ridge of the AONB. The development edge is blended by large organic plots, soft boundary treatments and landscaped verges where roads define the village edge. Only a pub and a post office define the local centre, with a local church located away from the main routes through the village.

3.3 Local Townscape Study

WANBOROUGH SUMMARY

The proximity between the Site and Wanborough legitimises the village to be analysed in more detail. Wanborough historically existed as two settlements, Upper and Lower Wanborough. Common land and woodland provided separation between the two, however this separation has largely been diminished by modern infill development between the villages. A portion of historic Wanborough has been retained by conservation areas at the heart of each village. It is this historic urban form that is most useful to analyse.

The split between Upper and Lower Wanborough provides a useful example of how our villages could coexist whilst each retaining a distinctive character. Its use of a village green, organic development edge, strong landscaped verges and backland development is also useful for consideration towards the vision for Lotmead's villages.

KEY

Development edge

FIGURE 3.2 THE URBAN STRUCTURE OF WANBOROUGH

KEY

Retained historic core

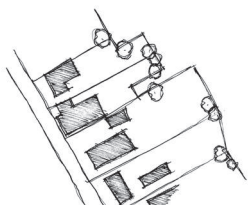
Woodland

Local centre:

The separation between Upper and Lower Wanborough allows it to have two local centres, each with their own character. Lower Wanborough's linear centre is characterised by the pubs along it, whilst Upper Wanborough's is defined by the village green at its core.

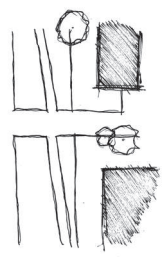
Development edge:

Historic organic development blends the development edge into the landscape setting. Rotten Row expresses solid edge to the settlement but allows housing to overlook the green space.



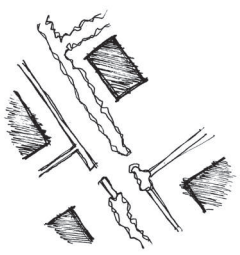
Road structure:

Verges of varying width along historic routes define the edge of the road structure. Paving is located within the verge where possible, however is lost along minor routes, forcing informal shared space.



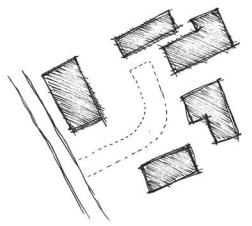
Boundary treatments:

A variation of boundary treatments separate private and public space across the village, as well as helping to define the rural character through the use of manicured hedges and stone walls.



Urban structure:

The historic layout is predominantly detached dwellings of a low density with a loose organic grain. These create variation along the streetscape. Backland development was noted, allowing higher densities to exist in localised areas.



BISHOPSTONE SUMMARY

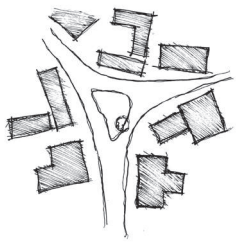
Due east of Wanborough, Bishopstone is a smaller village with a compact local centre located around a mill pond. The village has grown organically over time along the primary routes south, west and north out of the village. A small modern development is located on the western boundary of the village. The development is more sympathetic than the urban infill at Wanborough, with building typologies and urban form closely mimicking locally observed farmstead clusters where barn buildings and farmhouses are set around a central courtyard.

The Lotmead Villages will require a positive relationship with the AONB, and Bishopstone's location on the edge of the AONB provides a key example of how development could be integrated into the surrounding landscape context. Its key asset however is its relationship to water, which provides a focal point for the village, and creates interesting streetscapes across the settlement.

KEY

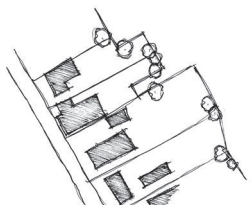
Greenspace corridor

Development edge



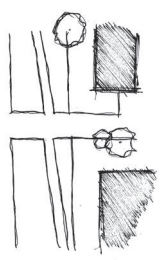
Local centre:

Local facilities including a school, pub, village centre and church are focussed around the mill pond at the heart of the village, providing an attractive local centre around which the community can gather.



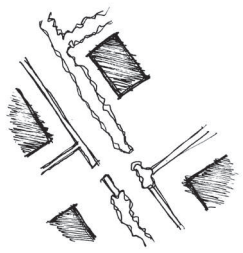
Development edge:

Organic development around the periphery of the settlement again blends the site into the sensitive landscape surroundings. Views are opened up towards the landscape along the primary routes.



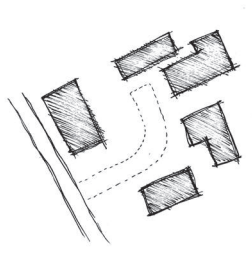
Road structure:

The familiar green verges and informal shared space that has been seen in the other studied villages is again present here, reinforcing the rural nature of the settlement.



Boundary treatments:

As well as hedgerows and stone walls, Bishopstone also displays no boundary treatment in some locations, instead relying on perceived thresholds to organise the streetscape.



Urban structure:

Water influences the urban structure across the village. Higher density development around the core is influenced strongly by the mill pond. Whilst lower density, looser grain development interacts with streams along secondary routes elsewhere in the village.

3.4 Wider precedent study

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

A wider precedence study has also been completed, providing high quality urban design and place making examples from the UK and Europe. These examples help to illustrate the vision of development, as well as grow the ambition of Lotmead's villages to deliver the full potential of the Site.

Within the UK context, the masterplan principles of the following projects have been evaluated:

- Newhall, Harlow
- Abode, Cambridge
- Accordia, Cambridge
- Tibby's Triangle, Southwold
- HAB Housing, The Triangle, Swindon
- Burnside, Plockton, Scotland

Within a European context, the masterplans of the following developments have also been considered:

- Almere, The Netherlands
- BO01, Malmo, Sweden
- Ypenburg, The Hauge, The Netherlands
- Messestadt Riem, Munich, Germany

These projects have been chosen for their design quality and place making merits. Each project displays a selection of design ideals which have been considered towards our understanding of "what makes a great village". Further details of all of these precedents can be found within the Townscape and Precedent Study in Appendix A.

UK PRECEDENTS

Newhall, Harlow

The masterplan for Newhall is based around creating a sustainable, healthy lifestyle for its residents. The plan includes a local centre which is walkable for all residents through generous green spaces and traffic calmed green streets. The phase 1 masterplan of 500 units is designed to have a permeable layout and pedestrian focused public realm to maximise high quality walking routes. The masterplan shown represents phase 1 of a wider masterplan of 2,800 units. The ethos of the local landowners was to create a community with genuine routes that would grow and flourish. This shaped their approach to delivery, with a phased release of land attracting a variety of architectural styles.

500
NEW UNITS
Phase 1 of 500 units as a distinctive neighbourhood

Abode, Cambridge

The masterplan for 444 new residential units at Abode, Cambridge can be defined through a change in form from the structured centre, towards the informal edge. This change in urban form is split into three unique characters which define the housing typology and streetscape in each of the areas. These characters are; the central courtyard, urban mews and green lanes. This character change allows neighbourhood distinctions to occur across one masterplan area.

Central Courtyard

Urban Mews

Green Lanes

The Accordia masterplan represents an innovative, high density development in the heart of Cambridge. The design looks to blend the boundary between public life and private life, by pioneering 'neighbourhoods in the streets'. The form is influenced by this, showing communal garden space and shared green routes in lieu of traditional garden space and road layout. The site's proximity to Cambridge city centre allowed a reduced car dominant approach to be explored, allowing for the pedestrian friendly streetscape to occur.

1.25
PARKING SPACES
Provided per dwelling to encourage sustainable travel

Tibby's Triangle, Southwold

This mixed use masterplan in the heart of Southwold locates housing around a new public square which includes shops, a cafe and a local weekly farmer's market to encourage a lively new neighbourhood. The square at the centre of the masterplan creates a focal point for the development, with the adjacent housing overlooking the space. Beyond the square, the layout of the streets and spaces directly responds to the surrounding local character, imitating small lanes and courtyard spaces.

87
DWELLINGS PER HECTARE
High density development

HAB Housing, The Triangle, Swindon

The HAB development focuses on facilitating a more sustainable and community focussed lifestyle. This is achieved through the use of three kitchen gardens located around the development, a village green at the centre of the site, fruit trees and an on-site car club. The central public realm encourages communal activities to take place, and the architecture ensures this space remains safe by utilising natural surveillance. This allows for local interaction within this space, strengthening the sense of community.

1
PARKING SPACES
Provided per dwelling to encourage sustainable travel

Burnside, Plockton, Scotland

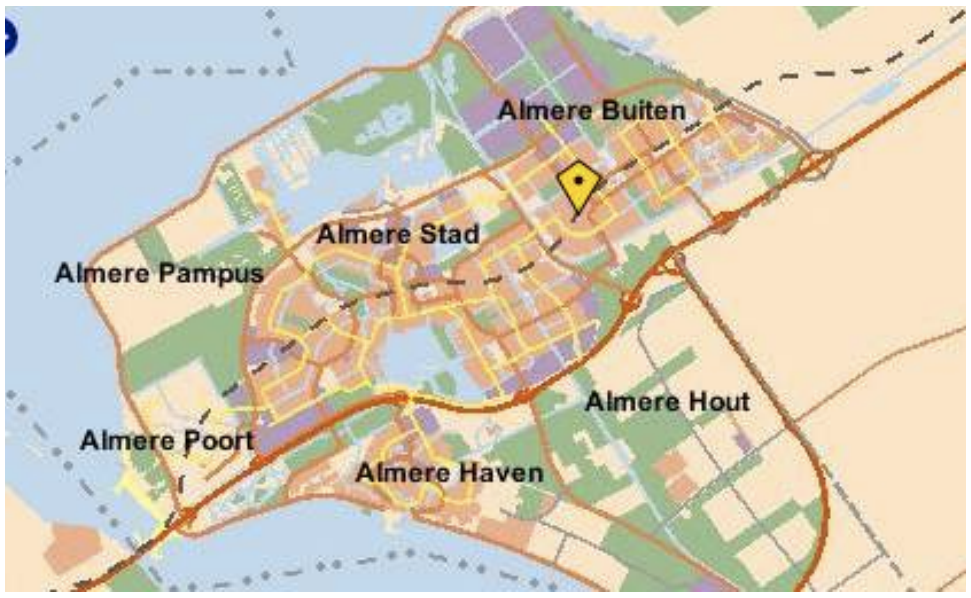
Plockton is an example of a high quality rural housing cluster, nestled in an Outstanding Conservation Area. Due to its context, the site required a high quality design response. Clusters of terraces or detached units have been developed to resemble locally observed barns and farmstead buildings. Steep roof pitches, wide development frontages and carefully selected local Highland materials contribute to a contemporary version of an ancient building typology. The layout includes shared space and informal planting and the development edge has been stepped down to ensure a minimal visual impact. Each of these design features have been considered to ensure the development will blend into the surrounding landscape context.

10
DWELLINGS PER HECTARE
Low density rural development

EUROPEAN PRECEDENTS

Almere, The Netherlands

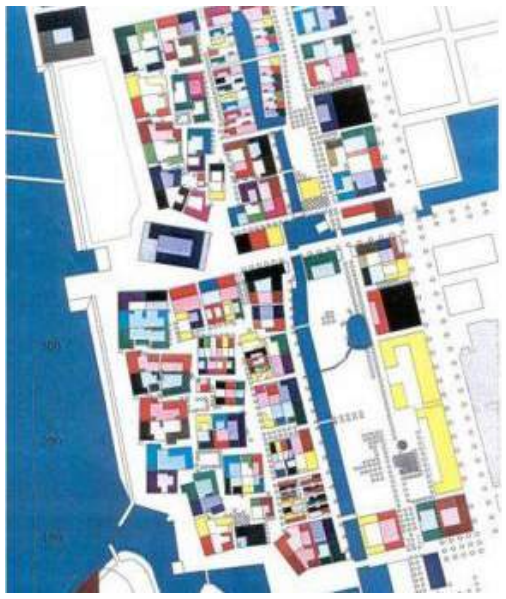
The new city of Almere in The Netherlands was designed as a 'non-traditional city' with influence from the UK garden city concept. The plan shows the city split into distinctive neighbourhoods, each with their own distinctive characteristics. These characteristics vary between the urban focussed centre of Almere Stad, to the village form of Almere Haven. Each of the neighbourhoods show clear structure and hierarchy, including local facilities which allow residents to travel sustainably to local amenities and to work. A hierarchy of green spaces also exists, with a strategic network of spaces between the neighbourhoods, down to local greens and watercourses.



BO01, Malmo, Sweden

BO01 is a sustainable mixed use development in Malmo, along former docklands in the city. The site's urban structure is distorted to account for environmental issues creating sheltered internal streets and spaces with high quality public realm. These spaces give priority to pedestrians and cyclists. The water is integrated into the site to provide recreational opportunities and an attractive setting for new development.

53%
OPEN SPACE
Including integrated landscaping and watercourses



Ypenburg, The Hague, The Netherlands

Ypenburg is a housing scheme on a former military airbase. The masterplan responded to a flood risk constraint through positive place-making elements including the use of water throughout the site. Like Almere, the masterplan has been broken down in to 5 different districts, where each district has their own identity and designed by different developers / architects in order to achieve diversity and variety.

37
DWELLINGS PER HECTARE
Average across the site

Messestadt Riem, Munich, Germany

Messestadt Riem is located on the grounds of the former Munich airport. The masterplan looks to integrate residential, employment and green infrastructure with one third of the site allocated to each, in accordance with Munich's planning objectives. The development has a sustainable focus, aiming to achieve this through a compact and mixed use design which incorporates a large amount of green space.

3.5 The Key Ingredients

From the local, UK and European precedents, key physical design features were noticed across projects. These features have been used to draw together key 'ingredients' to be used towards defining "what makes a great village".

A prominent design feature from the townscape study was the importance of a local centre within the villages. This focal point was often defined by a village green and surrounded by a cluster of local facilities. Focal points were also common in the precedent study. Newhall, Tibby's Triangle and HAB all included a form of focal point and Almere based its design around multiple foci.

A walkable neighbourhood was a key design feature of the local villages and precedents, in order to facilitate a sustainable environment. Connections to existing centres followed this also, ensuring neighbourhoods connected to each other and existing centres, preventing isolated communities. Meeting this criteria allows for sustainable design choices, such as limiting car dominance as in Accordia, HAB and the European examples.

Another noted design feature was the importance of blending the settlement boundary into the landscape context. This was particularly important for the local village's relationship with the adjacent AONB, as well as an important feature for the majority of precedence.

Creating distinctions between neighbourhoods emerged as another design feature, particularly common in the European examples. This allows developments to relate directly to the surrounding context and creates interest through identity differences.

Finally a sustainable design theme ran throughout the precedents.

In the case of the Lotmead Farm Villages, we envisage working closely with locally based national companies such as Intel to investigate ways of incorporating new technologies into our villages. Swindon's ambition for growth industries and innovation also makes this an ideal place to house professional workers from these industries. Housing would be of a high quality and offer variety through a mix of housing types, including:

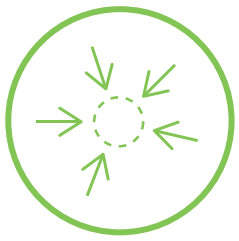
- National house builder
- Distinctive local / regional housing developer
- Self build and bespoke / architecturally designed homes.

The precedents display a range of settlement and neighbourhood sizes. These are determined by a number of factors including: site features, walkability, local facilities and transport networks. The Lotmead Farm Villages are made up of 2 separate villages, each comprising approximately 1,250 homes, with densities appropriate to support local centre facilities and transport services, and neighbourhoods based on 5 minute walkability, consistent with our research.

TABLE 1 - KEY INGREDIENTS CASE STUDIES

	FOCAL POINT	WALKABLE	CONNECT TO EXISTING CENTRES	LANDSCAPE CONTEXT	NEIGHBOURHOOD DISTINCTIONS	INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE DESIGN
LOCAL						
Wanborough	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Broad Hinton	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bourton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Liddington	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bishopstone	✓	✓	✓	✓		
UK						
Newhall, Harlow	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Abode, Cambridge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accordia, Cambridge		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tibby's Triangle, Southwold	✓	✓	✓		✓	
HAB, The Triangle, Swindon	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Plockton, Scotland		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
EUROPEAN						
Almere, Netherlands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BO01, Malmo, Sweden	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ypenburg, Netherlands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Messestradt Reim, Munich, Germany	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

THE KEY INGREDIENTS FOR “WHAT MAKES A GREAT VILLAGE”

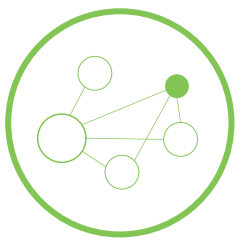


A focal point for activity

Appropriate to the size of the village, providing local shops, services and community facilities or space for outdoor recreation.

A walkable (and cycle friendly) network of streets

With plenty of route options and a clear street hierarchy and legible pedestrian routes through the village.



Connections to existing settlement

Routes linking the new village to the wider area, including public transport connections to the nearest major centre.

Draw influences from the landscape context

Creating a natural development edge which has a positive relationship with surrounding landscape, and continues soft landscape throughout the development.

Neighbourhood distinctions

Applying a palette of materials to create a distinct sense of place, drawing on the positive aspects of local character. Variation in typologies, scale and density provide interest and identity.

Innovative, sustainable design

Avoiding the bland and ordinary and incorporating sustainable technologies where possible to support sustainable living and help the environment.