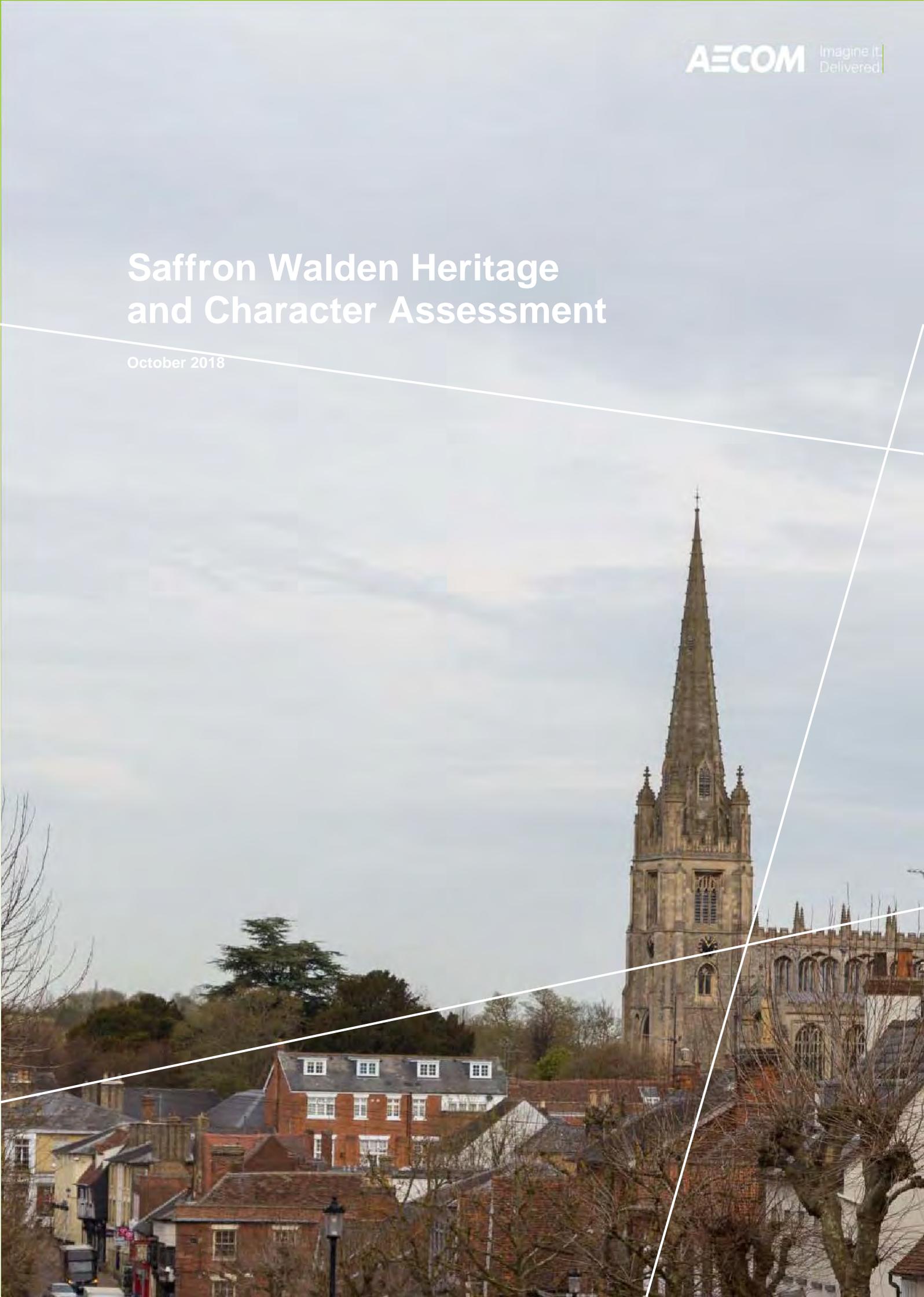


Saffron Walden Heritage and Character Assessment

October 2018



Quality information

Prepared by

Ela Michaluk

Graduate Landscape Architect,
AECOM

Katerina Koukouthaki

Built Heritage Consultant,
AECOM

Checked by

Tom Beck

Senior Landscape Architect, AECOM

Approved by

Jon Rooney

Technical Director, AECOM

Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position

Prepared for:

Locality and the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan Group

Prepared by:

AECOM Infrastructure and Environment UK Limited
1 Wellbrook Court
Girton
Cambridge
CB3 0NA
UK

T: +44 1223 488 000
aecom.com

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1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the history and character of the civil parish of Saffron Walden, centred on the town of Saffron Walden within the Uttlesford District of Essex. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan Group and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through desk study and fieldwork. The boundary for the neighbourhood plan coincides with that of the parish of Saffron.

Landscape is a broad, collective term that encompasses natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It is defined by the European Landscape Convention as “... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” Landscape character assessment is used to describe and articulate what is special and distinctive about a particular place. The principles of landscape character assessment apply to all types of landscape, including urban townscape. It is used to identify recognisable patterns of elements or characteristics that make one place different from another. This report is focussed on the character of the urban townscape and its rural landscape context.

The information generated through the process of characterisation can be used as evidence to support the planning and design process. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies based on an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics (MHCLG, 2018). In doing so, policies can ensure that development responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

2. Approach

The approach of this study follows well-established character assessment techniques. The detailed desk study and fieldwork carried out to inform this assessment underpins the classification and description of character areas and broadly follows the process set out in an “*Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*” (Natural England, 2014). This approach has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood planning process and draws on further best practice guidance including:

- Townscape Character Assessment, TIN 05/17 (Landscape Institute, 2017);
- Historic Environment: Good Practice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, 2017);
- Character and identity Townscape and heritage appraisals in housing market renewal areas (Historic England and CABE 2008); and Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010);
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010); and
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (Historic England 2004).

Historic England, previously English Heritage has issued a number of guidance and best practice notes covering a range of issues in relation to the conservation and management of historic places and heritage assets all of which are available on the Historic England website (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/>).

This study provides an independent, objective and fact based assessment of the character of Saffron Walden and the surrounding landscape. Character assessment work carried out by the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan group has been reviewed to inform this Heritage and Character Assessment. The group identified a number of character areas covering parts of the town and assessed these in relation to topography, land use, layout and roads and routes, spaces, buildings, landmarks, green and natural features, streetscape, views, locally important heritage, detracting elements and opportunities for development, for the following areas:

- Ashdon Road;
- Cromwell Road;
- Little Walden Road;
- North east of town: Sheds Land and Goddard Way Estates;

- Thaxted Road;
- Radwinter Road; and
- Walden School and The Avenue.

Copies of these documents are provided in Appendix D.

3. Public consultation

Members of the local community and local interest groups were invited to share their knowledge and experience of the history and character of the area through a workshop conducted on 15 May 2018. The observations made have been used to inform the study.

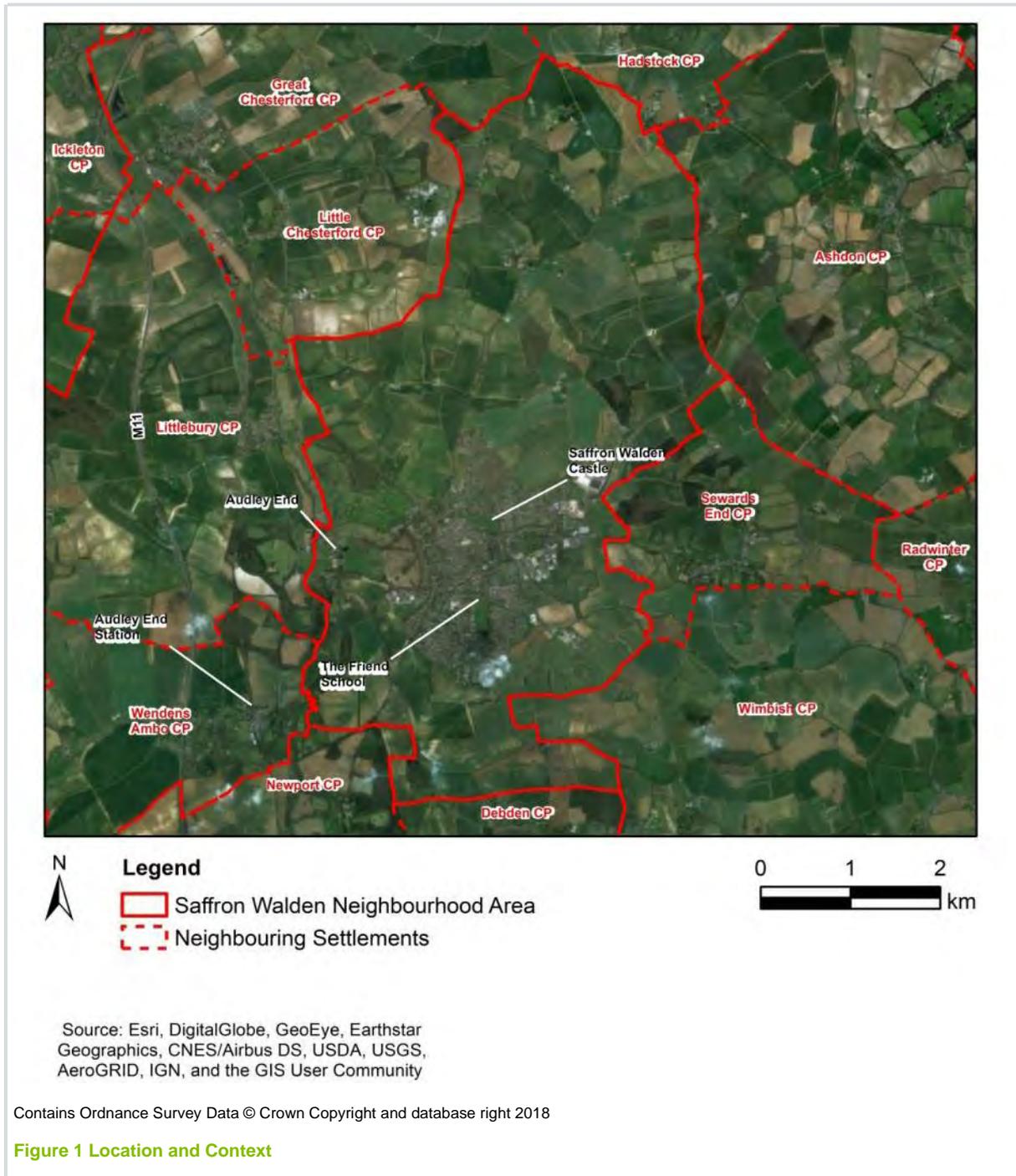
A number of key considerations emerged from the consultation, which have informed the preparation of the study. These are summarised below:

- The town lies in a bowl surrounded by several hills, which makes the landscape setting of Saffron Walden landscape distinct from the flatter landscape to the north and to the south.
- The town benefited from generous donations from Quakers and other philanthropists who gave money and land to the town to build institutions such as the hospital, library, school and Bridge End Gardens. Their generosity had a very positive impact on the quality of life in the town;
- Local societies have an influence on the trends and growth of artistic movements in Saffron Walden;
- Audley End House and Gardens contribute to the character of the parish because of the strong historical and cultural associations with the town;
- Saffron Walden is a nice place to live. Attendees of the workshop have noticed the town is being settled with young families working in London. Often modern developments have a reduced number of footpaths and shortcuts creating a reduced sense of unity often resulting in an increase in “locked gate” developments;
- A mosaic of different building styles in the town centre display a number of characteristics of Saffron Walden including; pargetting (decorative plastering applied to the building façades), a range of roof tops and styles, some buildings have flint detail. The preserved medieval street pattern and variety of rooftops distinctive to Saffron Walden are not present in new developments. These elements are sensitive to change;
- A large number of arcades with variety of columns, pillars; memorials, walls, handrails in a variety of materials make a great contribution to the character of Saffron Walden;
- The Common, Cemetery and Bridge End Gardens are exceptionally valuable sources of green space for the town and are sensitive to change;
- Location of the town in the valley amongst the surrounding hills creates distinctive views at the gateways towards St. Mary’s Church Spire and Water Tower and Friends School and the former Walden School roofline. In the town there are glimpses of the surrounding hills which contribute to the character of the landscape forming the context of Saffron Walden. Concerns were raised over the threat to views of the church spire potentially disappearing as a result of new development in surrounding streets. The group highlighted that views of these landmarks are sensitive to change;
- Views towards the outskirts of the town are also considered important, reinforcing the rural setting of Saffron Walden;
- The historic town centre is located in the north-western part of the town. The growth in the town is limited to the west by historic Audley End House and Gardens to the west. Therefore, modern development is found primarily in the south and east;
- Recent development off Debden Road near the Water Tower is recognised as a good example of modern development;
- Overflying aeroplanes are disturbing, especially in the night;
- Congestion was recognised as a source of pollution and cause of damage to the valuable historic buildings. Soot accumulating on the walls is affecting the colours and materials, also lorries are physically damaging buildings close to narrow streets;
- A lack of direct, paved and lit footpaths to the railway station and regular public transport from the town centre to Audley End House and Gardens are relevant issues;
- There are some narrow pavements which are not accessible for the disabled;
- Market square could be more vibrant during the evening, it would encourage interaction between old and new residents of the town;

- Intense traffic should be restricted with speed limits, weight limits and bollards where applicable, to make these routes safer and more attractive for cyclists and pedestrians; and
- Residents are concerned about the rural isolation of nearby villages, the lack of convenience stores in some neighbourhoods and the busy car parks in the town centre.

4. Context

This section of the report describes the location and context of Saffron Walden and summarises current planning policies which are relevant to the study.



4.1 Location

Saffron Walden is a market town, located 19km (12 miles) north of Bishop's Stortford, 29km (18 miles) south of Cambridge, as shown in Figure 1. According to the Census, Saffron Walden had a population of 14,313 in 2011, but is now estimated to be in excess of 17,500.

The town is surrounded by open countryside and historic parkland and farmland and is located towards the southern end of the parish. As a consequence, the parish boundaries are irregular, following the natural lines of fields to the north, east and south and the River Cam to the west.

Although the M11, which connects London to the south with Cambridge to the north, is located only 3km to the west of the town, access to the motorway and trunk road network is poor. The nearest junctions on the M11 are J9a at Stump Cross and J8 at Bishop Stortford to travel south and J10 at Duxford to travel north.

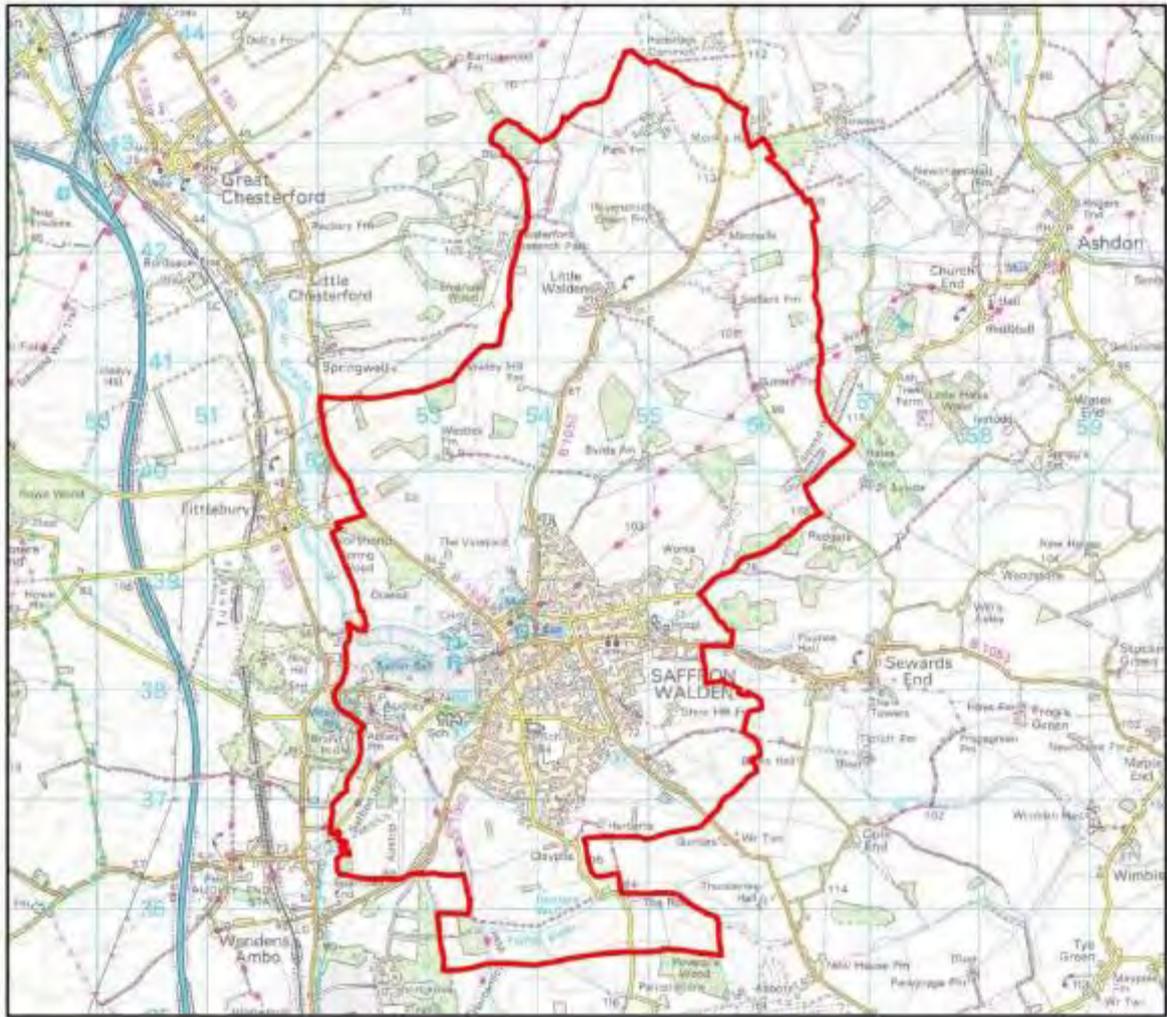
However, Saffron Walden is well connected with the local road network. Seven primary roads lead into the town from surrounding settlements, converging within the town centre. As a consequence, local traffic must pass through the town in order to cross it. These routes form several important gateways from the surrounding countryside:

- The B184 from Cambridge via Chesterford to the north, which becomes the High Street through the town centre;
- The B1052 from the village of Linton to the north, which enters the town via Castle Hill;
- Ashdon Road from the village of Ashdon to the east, which enters the town passing the Common;
- Radwinter Road, which connects a number of small villages and hamlets to the east, including Swards End, and runs parallel to Ashdon Road on the approach to the town centre;
- Thaxted Road from Thaxted via Howlett End to the south east, joining Radwinter Road close to Saffron Walden Cemetery;
- Debden Road, from Debden to the south, connecting with London Road just south of the town centre; and
- The B1052 from Bishop's Stortford via Newport to the south, which joins London Road on the approach to the town centre, where it joins the B184 to become the High Street.

In addition, two secondary but important routes connect Audley End to the town centre via Audley End Road and Wenden Road from the west, although one is reserved for cyclists in one direction. The historic core of Saffron Walden is located towards the north-western corner of the town and is defined by a series of small, busy roads. These connect to the market square at the heart of the town and main node of the parish. These roads narrow through the town centre largely following the original mediaeval street plan.

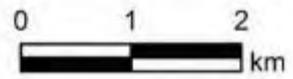
Audley End railway station, which serves the town, is located 3.5km (2.2 miles) from the centre in the small village of Wendens Ambo, just outside the parish boundary. It provides a direct service between Stansted Airport, London Liverpool Street, Cambridge and Birmingham. Stansted Airport, which is a major employer in the area, is located 20km (13 miles) south of Saffron Walden.

The parish has a network of public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways, byways and recreational routes. The public rights of way network is particularly well distributed across the countryside in the northern part of the parish, including sections of the Saffron Trail and Harcamlow Way.



Legend

 Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Area



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Figure 2 Study Area Location

4.2 Natural Factors

4.2.1 Geology and soils

The underlying geology of an area is often largely hidden from view but has a strong influence on its character, having been shaped by natural processes including erosion and sedimentation over millions of years. These processes help to define the landform, soils, vegetation, drainage and building materials which are common in the area.

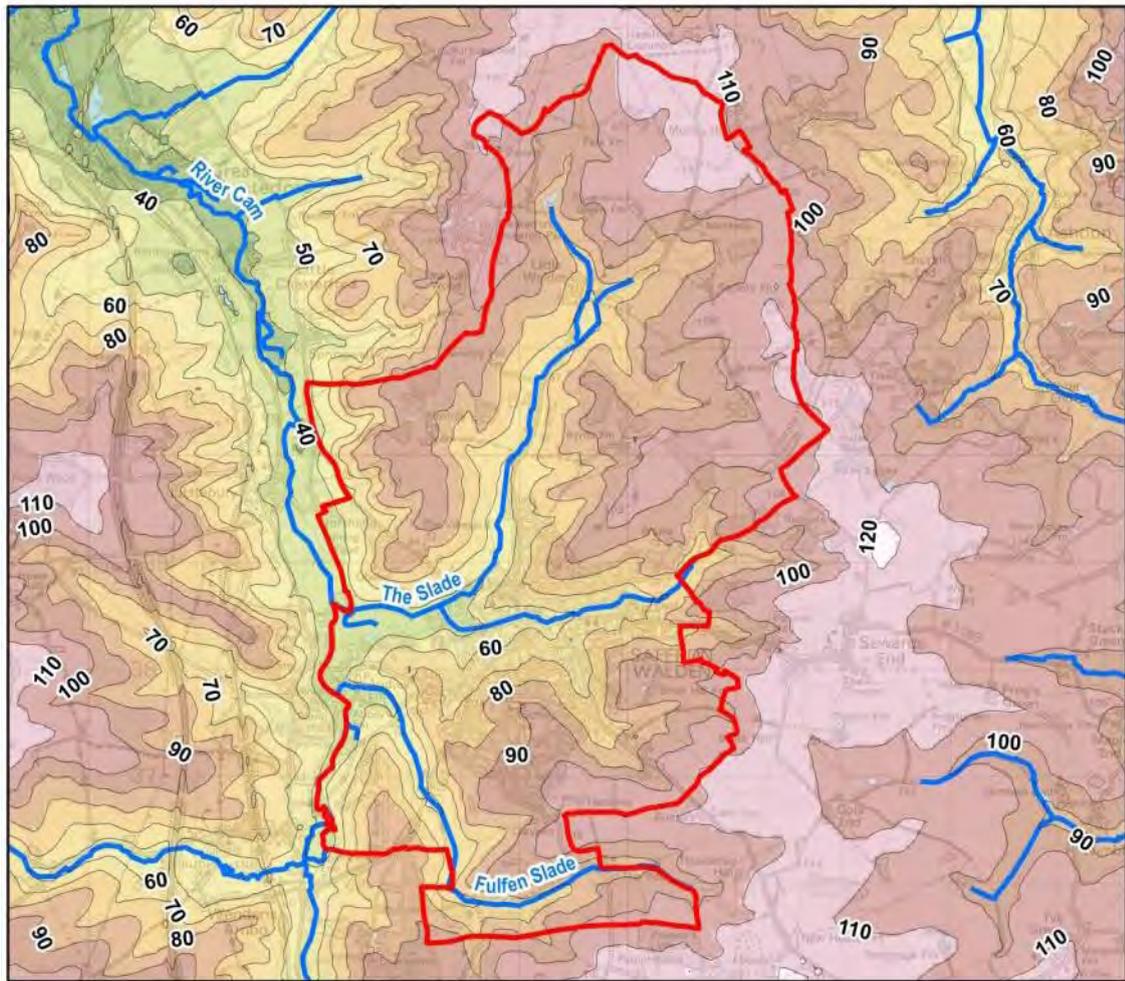
The sedimentary bedrock underlying the area is chalk, which was formed approximately 84 to 94 million years ago in the southern part of parish and 66 to 100 million years ago in the northern part of parish. At this time the local environment was dominated by warm seas and these sedimentary rocks are shallow-marine in origin. This geology has strongly influenced the evolution and character of Saffron Walden and the surrounding landscape.

Soil within the parish is varied, comprising three principal types. Along the River Cam, loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater predominate. On the outskirts of Saffron Walden stretch freely draining lime-rich loamy soils, well suited to spring and autumn-sown cereals and other crops including grass. Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, suited to autumn sown crops and grass but shortage of soil moisture can restrict yield away from the town.

4.2.2 Topography and hydrology

The topography of the study area, which is a product of its underlying geology and hydrology, has had a strong influence on the character and setting of Saffron Walden. The majority of the land within the parish boundary lies above 70m Above Ordinance Datum (AOD), with the highest point at 110m AOD between Butlers Farm and Bright Wood. Gentle slopes influence the irregular pattern of fields and create panoramic views from higher ground. The town lies in a bowl surrounded by several hills, which makes the landscape setting of Saffron Walden landscape distinctive from the flatter landscape to the north and to the south.

The study area is dissected by numerous small rivers, which meander through the rural landscape. The main river, which forms part of the western edge of the parish is the River Cam, a section of which was engineered by Lancelot Capability Brown. This work started in 1763 to form a canal, changing into a meandering river, which is an important element of the Audley End Gardens to the west of the town. Three "Slades", which cross the parish, form tributaries of the River Cam. Two branches of the narrow River Slade converge in the town. The northern branch crosses the northern edge of the town and is susceptible to flooding, but watercourses are otherwise largely obscured by development within the urban area. The narrow Fulfen Slade river flows in the southern part of the parish and it is obscured by trees and hedges in the rural landscape.



Legend

Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Area

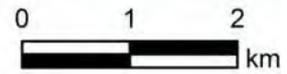
Contour

Watercourse

Surface Water

Elevation (m above ordnance datum)

- 20 - 30
- 30 - 40
- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60
- 60 - 70
- 70 - 80
- 80 - 90
- 90 - 100
- 100 - 110
- 110 - 120
- 120 - 130



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Figure 3 Topography and Hydrology

4.3 Planning Policy Context

4.3.1 National planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2018

The NPPF sets out that a key objective of the planning system is “to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”, which will be achieved through three overarching objectives including “an environmental objective- to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment...” (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018).

Part 12, Achieving well-designed places, states that “Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development”. Part 12 goes on to state: “policy and decisions should ensure that developments... are visually attractive... (and) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities). An understanding of history and heritage is therefore important in developing neighbourhood plans to explain how this should inform future development.

Part 16, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, states that “Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment... (taking) into account: ...the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place.”

Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance was reviewed, catalogued and published on the internet by the government in 2014 (MHCLG, 2018). The section on design includes guidance on promoting landscape character (Paragraph: 007Reference ID: 26-007-20140306). It states that “*development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development*” and that the “*successful integration of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective*”.

Paragraph 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306 states that it should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context.

4.3.2 Local planning policy

The Uttlesford Local Plan, 2005

Uttlesford Council is currently engaged in preparing a new Local Plan, which is at Regulation 19 stage. The current Local Plan was adopted in 2005 and contains a number of policies relevant to this assessment, which are summarised below:

- Policy ENV1 relates to development affecting Conservation Areas. It states that “*development will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the essential features of a Conservation Area.*”
- Policy ENV2 relates to development affecting Listed Buildings. It states that “*development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings*”.
- Section 5.4 of the Uttlesford Local Plan stresses the importance of managing pressures within conservation areas to protect and enhance the built environment and avoid inappropriate development.
- Policy ENV3 is a consideration when proposing development which may affect traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens.
- Policy ENV4 relates to Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance. It states that “*there will be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation in situ*” unless “*the need for the development outweighs the importance of the archaeology.*” It requires an archaeological field assessment is carried out where there are grounds for believing that sites, monuments or their settings would be affected.

- Policy ENV5 relates to Protection of Agricultural Land. It states that “*developers should seek to use areas of poorer quality except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.*”
- Policy ENV6 states that change of use of agricultural land to domestic garden “*is possible if the proposal does not result in a material change in the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.*”
- Policy ENV8 - Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation – requires new development to retain important landscape elements like hedgerows, larger semi-natural or ancient woodlands, green lanes and special verges.
- Policy ENV9 states that “*development proposals likely to harm significant local historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens and protected lanes will not be permitted.*” Policy S7 - Planning permission will only be given for development in the countryside which is appropriate to a rural area and its appearance protects or enhances the character within which it is set.
- Policy GEN2 stresses the importance of design compatible with “*the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings.*”
- Policy E2 relates to safeguarding Employment Land.
- Policy E5 states that re-use of rural buildings will be permitted if the development will protect or enhance the character of the countryside and sets out criteria for the re-use of rural buildings.
- Policy H5 states that the subdivision of dwellings will be *permitted* “*if the character of the area would not adversely be affected.*”
- Policy H6 - Conversion of Rural Buildings to Residential Use – sets out criteria for the design of dwellings where “*their historic, traditional or vernacular form enhances the character and appearance of the rural area.*”
- Policy LC1 states that “*development will not be permitted if it would involve the loss of sports fields or other open space for recreation, including allotments.*”
- Policy RS2 Town and Local Centres – sets out criteria of mixed- use development in the town centre which “*contributes to the diversity of retail and other commercial activity.*”
- Policy S7 states that planning permission for developments in the countryside are going to be granted only for developments which need to take place there or are appropriate to the rural area and the character of its setting.

This report is also informed by a number of other studies relevant to the local area as follows:

The Essex Design Guide, 2018

The Essex Design Guide is an interactive web-based design tool with ongoing updates. It includes a range of principles which help developers to apply architectural and design details in new development that are appropriate to the setting and context of the site. It includes new themes in relation to Ageing Population, Digital and Smart Technology, Health and Wellbeing, Active Design and Garden Communities.

Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals, 2018 and Audley End Conservation Area Appraisal and Draft Management Proposals, 2015

These documents provide details on the management of change within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, which covers the town centre and the Audley End Conservation Area. Both documents assess the present condition of important historic buildings and features and indicate where necessary works should take place.

4.4 Historical development

Archaeological evidence indicates that the area has been inhabited from at least the Neolithic period, became a small settlement during the Bronze and Iron Age periods and prospered during the Anglo-Saxon era.

The name Walden is believed to derive from the Old English ‘Weala-denu’, meaning the valley of Britons or serfs. The place name of Saffron Walden has changed over time from Waledana in the 11th century, Waldon in the 12th century, Walenden and Castlewauden in the 13th century, Saffornewalden and Safron Waldon in the 16th century.

A castle was established in the area in the late 11th or early 12th century and following the Norman Conquest, a settlement was established around it, founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville. The settlement was arranged around two parallel streets, Church Street and Castle Street, to the east of the present High Street. Originally, a market was held around the castle, however, as the town expanded, the market moved to the south, where the street pattern still represents the medieval market rows.

The town reached its first period of prosperity in the medieval period, approximately between 1400 and 1700, mainly due to the wool trade, similar to many towns in East Anglia. In the late medieval period, the town became the major English centre for the production of saffron crocus, which was used in food, medicine and also to produce dye. This period of prosperity led to the creation of the original medieval street pattern, which is still in evidence today.

The majority of the buildings which date from the 13th to 16th centuries are located principally on Castle Street and Church Street, but there are also historic buildings of this period located on High Street, Bridge Street, Market Hill, Freshwell Street and King Street. The medieval town therefore was focused on the area around the church prior to its later expansion to the south and east.



In the beginning of the 17th century, Audley End House (Grade I, NHLE 1196114) was built to the west of the town on the site of a former monastery, while extensive formal gardens were laid out within its grounds. The formal gardens were later landscaped by Lancelot "Capability" Brown.

4.4.1 Historic timeline

11th century

1066: Walden before 1066 was held by Ansgar who owned land throughout Essex. Following the Norman Conquest, a settlement was established around the castle founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville. The settlement was arranged around two parallel streets, Church Street and Castle Street, to the east of the present High Street.

1086: In 1086 the Domesday survey recorded 147 households in Walden so the 11th century population of the settlement was approximately 735 people, indicating a large settlement for the time.

Late 11th or early 12th century: Walden Castle (Grade I, NHLE 1297737) was built in the late 11th or early 12th century however it is not known who was responsible for its construction.

12th century

1125-1141: Following the death of Ansgar, his Essex land was passed to Geoffrey de Mandeville, first constable of the Tower of London.

1139: Geoffrey de Mandeville founded a Benedictine priory that became Walden Abbey in 1190, adjacent to the river Cam, at the site of the today's Audley End village.

1141: Geoffrey de Mandeville II was given permission to move the market from the neighbouring village of Newport to Saffron Walden in 1144, indicating a transfer of power and wealth. The market was probably located in Walden Castle's grounds.

13th century

1227-1240: Battle (or Repell) Ditches (SM, NHLE 1002179) were constructed between about 1227 and 1240, in order to delineate the boundaries of the town.

1230s: The Earls of Essex, de Bohuns, introduced a new plan of the town plan including some earlier elements. The new town plan included a grid system of streets, a new market square and a new church. The new street pattern and buildings can be seen in the town today.

1295: In 1295, the market expanded so as to include a Tuesday market. The establishment of the abbey and the granting of a new market had as a result the establishment of a small settlement in the nearby area. During this period of increasing prosperity, the town was often known as Chepyng Walden, meaning Market Walden.

14th and 15th centuries

14th century: By the end of the 14th century, the area around Castle Street and Church Street, the market area and the High Street were built-up while the rest of the area was still in agricultural use.

1400: During the late 14th and early 15th centuries, the prosperity of the town derived mainly from the wool trade. The local woolstaplers built their own guild hall, which was subsequently demolished in 1847 to be replaced by the Corn Exchange.

Late 15th century: Walden's prosperity and influence reached a peak in the 15th but at the end of the 15th century local trade increasingly suffered from tolls. Several leading townspeople including John Leche, vicar of the parish from 1489 to 1521 and his sister, Dame Joan Bradbury, decided to establish a new religious guild, to which the king could grant the tolls and other manorial rights. Subsequently, the king granted a licence which permitted the establishment of the Holy Trinity Guild.

16th century

1514: In 1514, King Henry VIII granted a new charter to the Guild of Holy Trinity, entitling the guild a series of rights including the right to hold a market. While today's market is held in the market square, the medieval market was mainly to the south of the square where part of the street pattern has survived and there are still signs of the medieval market with its rows, alleys and small passageways.

1522: An important accomplishment of the new guild, and especially Dame Johane Bradbury, was the re-establishment of the old school that had been recorded in Saffron Walden since least 1317. The school moved to a new building in Ashdon Road in 1881. During the Second World War, the school remained closed for at least six years but it was later reopened as a junior school and was renamed Dame Johane Bradbury's School.

1538: During the Reformation, Walden Abbey and its possessions were surrendered to the King, Henry VIII, who granted them to Sir Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor and former Speaker of the House of Commons, who converted the abbey buildings into a residence.

1578: Little Walden Park, in Little Walden was the hunting ground for the lords of the Walden Manor and one of 150 deer parks in medieval Essex. In 1578 the Saffron Walden Corporation spent two shillings 'for mendynge the way at Little Walden Park'. The park declined during the 16th century and lost most of its historic structures during the Second World War when an airfield was developed nearby (airfield outside the neighbourhood plan area). Lost buildings include a 16th century Little Walden Park mansion.

Late 16th century: The prefix of 'Saffron' was added to the name of the town following the increased production of saffron crocus in the area. The high price of the flower contributed to the prosperity of the town and its residents and subsequently to the construction of high quality and prestigious buildings constructed at the time. These include the timber framed buildings that date from that period as well as the parish Church of St Mary the Virgin (Grade I, NHLE 1196237) that were remodelled in the late 15th and early 16th century.

17th century

During the 17th century, the town was not as prosperous as in the previous centuries. The saffron industry declined followed by a fall in the population of 30%. During the Civil War, soldiers were frequently in Saffron Walden, and in 1647 General Fairfax made the town the headquarters of the New Model Army.

1603: After Audley's death, the property was passed to Thomas Howard, who became Earl of Suffolk in 1603 and started the construction of a mansion at Audley End.

c.1605-1614: Audley End House (Grade I, NHLE 1196114) was built between c.1605 and 1614, on the site of the Abbey of Walden, for Thomas Howard, first Earl of Suffolk. The house at the time had the form and scale of a royal palace. Extensive formal gardens were laid out by the Earl and his surveyor Bernard Janssen in 1614.

18th century

The late 18th and early 19th centuries were marked by rural unrest. Food riots took place in 1795 while in the 1830s the workhouse was burnt followed by Swing riots in the countryside. There were not many houses built at this time. Exceptions include the construction of the Town Hall (Grade II, NHLE 1196219) in 1761.

19th century

Following a period of decline and unrest, the town started to prosper again in the 19th century. At the time there was a growth of the malting and brewing industries while farming continued to be a big part of the economy of the area. Saffron Walden became a major centre of the Essex malt industry at the time. The Gibsons, a wealthy family of bankers and brewers in Saffron Walden, left their mark on the town as we see it today. George Stacey Gibson was the Mayor of Saffron Walden between 1875 and 1877. They were Quakers and philanthropists responsible for numerous public buildings and structures mainly in the Market Square and south of the centre. These include:

1834: The rebuilding of the almshouses in Abbey Lane (Grade II, NHLE 1196107), financed by Wyatt George Gibson, the father of George Stacey Gibson.

1840: Bridge End Gardens (Grade II*, NHLE 1000238) were created around 1840 by Francis Gibson, Wyatt's brother.

1845: Audley End train station opened in 1845.

1848: In 1848, Wyatt George Gibson laid the foundation stone for the Corn Exchange in 1848 (now the library) (Grade II, NHLE 1297733).

1862: In 1862, an ornamental drinking fountain (Grade II NHLE 1196223) was constructed by J Bentley (Westminster Cathedral) to commemorate the marriage of Edward, Prince of Wales. The fountain was purchased by George Stacey Gibson and exhibited at the Imperial Exhibition. It now stands in the middle of the Market square.

1865: When Wyatt George Gibson died in 1862, he left a sum of £5,000 for the purpose of building a hospital for the town of Saffron Walden. Old Saffron Hospital¹ (now Uttlesford District Council's offices) (Grade II, NHLE 1280236) was built in 1865. This is an imposing building, set back from London Road, constructed of red brick with white brick and stone dressings.

1865: Saffron Walden railway station opened in 1865 and closed in 1964². The station building has been retained and converted into houses. The building, which is located on the corner of Station Road and Jordan Close, is two storeys, constructed of yellow brick with two projecting wings surmounted with gables. The embankments were removed.

1870s: George Stacey Gibson offered a site in Saffron Walden for the establishment of the Friends School, now School of Walden. The school was designed by the architect Edward Burgess in Tudor style.

1871: The population of Saffron Walden was 5,718.

1879: The Town Hall (Grade II, NHLE 1196219) at Market square was constructed in 1761 however it was extensively remodelled and extended in 1879 including the addition of its prominent porch. The remodelling was financed by George Stacey Gibson.

20th century

Early 20th century: The agricultural depression of the early 20th century had a further impact on the declining population resulting in more villagers moving away from the land and increasing difficulties for the owners of large estates.

1939-1945: Audley End house and parkland were requisitioned by the army for most of the war until 1948 when they were put up for sale. They were eventually purchased for the nation and passed into the care of the Ministry of Works.

During the 20th century, large modern housing developments took place around the historic town centre. There was also some infill development in the town centre.

4.5 Heritage Assets - General Introduction

4.5.1 Listed Buildings

Buildings on the statutory list are considered nationally important and are protected by law. Uttlesford District has approximately 3,500 listed buildings, which represent the best of the district's buildings of historical or architectural interest. Uttlesford District Council has prepared information and guidance on listed buildings. Further information can be found on the Council's website under 'Listed Buildings' <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/listedbuildings>. Listed buildings within Saffron Walden are identified and described for each of the character areas defined in this report.

4.5.2 Conservation Areas

Councils have the power to designate as conservation areas, "*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*".

Designation gives control over the demolition of buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.

Conservation areas have special protection under the law except from the normal planning controls.

¹ <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords/details.asp?id=2640>

² More information can be found here http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/saffron_walden/.

There are 35 conservation areas in Uttlesford District. Three of these are located either wholly or partly within the neighbourhood plan area. See Uttlesford District Council Local Plan evidence background for map.

Uttlesford District Council has prepared information on both conservation areas. Further information can be found on the council's website under 'Conservation Area Appraisals – guide' <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/caa>. General information on the council's conservation areas including advice on works in a conservation area can be found under 'Conservation Areas' <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/conservationareas>.

4.5.3 Local Lists

A locally listed heritage asset is a building, structure or designed space which is deemed to be of local architectural or historic interest and is included in the local heritage list drawn up by the Council. It is a local designation and completely separate from national listing which is undertaken by the Government.

Local lists play an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment, as part of the wider range of designation. They enable the significance of any building or site on the list (in its own right and as a contributor to the local planning authority's wider strategic planning objectives), to be better taken into account in planning applications affecting the building, site or its setting.

Whilst local listing provides no additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application

Uttlesford District Council has prepared a draft local list that can be found here: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=8105andp=0>. The council has identified 59 non-designated heritage assets within Saffron Walden, each asset comprising one or more buildings.

Further information on locally listed buildings can be found on the council's website including the criteria for identifying and managing local non-designated heritage assets <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/heritagelist>.

4.5.4 Heritage at risk

Uttlesford District Council maintains a Register of Listed Buildings at Risk. The Buildings at Risk Register includes details of heritage sites known to be at risk 'through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so'. The Register for Uttlesford District Council has identified approximately 20 heritage sites at risk in the District, six of which fall within the neighbourhood plan area. These comprise five Grade II and one Grade II* listed buildings:

- 2 Bridge Street, Saffron Walden (Grade II, NHLE 1281158) – the building dates from the mid-19th century. It is in a fair condition, however it misses render to elevations and lack of maintenance to windows;
- 10-12 Bridge Street, Saffron Walden (Grade II, NHLE 1297806) – the building dates from the 16th century with later additions. It is in a fair condition however render is missing on elevations and lacks of maintenance to windows;
- 31 Castle Street, Saffron Walden (Grade II, NHLE 1196138) – the building dates from the 18th century with later additions and alterations. It is in a fair condition however, render is missing in the rear elevation leaving the timber frame exposed. In addition, a lintel is missing above the rear, ground floor window and a doorframe is missing from the rear door;
- 4 High Street, Saffron Walden (Grade II, NHLE 1196183) – the building dates from the late 14th and late 15th century and is in a poor condition. The roof and render have been identified as defective allowing water ingress;
- 12, Market Hill, Saffron Walden (Grade II*, NHLE 1196216) – the building dates from the 16th century timber framed building with a 19th century rear addition and alterations including the insertion of a shopfront. The building is in poor condition and lack of maintenance has resulted in deterioration of the rear elevation and ranges. The roof to the rear is inadequately protected with a tarpaulin however works are planned to save this building; and
- Gas Works, 2 Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden (Grade II, NHLE 1196243) – the pair of buildings date from the early 19th century. They are in a poor condition with render missing and the roof in need for repair.

More information including full report on the listed buildings at risk can found on the council's website <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/bar>.

4.5.5 Article 4 Directions

Article 4 directions remove or restrict permitted development rights. This means that developments that do not normally require planning permission may now do so. On 11th January 2018, it was agreed to support the principle of an Article 4 Direction order on selected structures on the Local Heritage List

4.6 Cultural associations

The history of growing and trading Saffron is of particular relevance to Saffron Walden, which took its name from the spice. Saffron (*Crocus sativus*) was valuable in medicine, perfume production and source of yellow dye and trading the world's most expensive spice brought wealth and prosperity to the citizens of the town. This is evident in the size and rich architectural quality of many of the houses and municipal buildings in the town. The official crest of Saffron Walden Town is the crocus flower, surrounded by the castle walls. The crest decorates buildings in the town, both historical and modern.

The market is one of the main weekly events, held every Saturday and Tuesday and draws local people and visitors into the town. Other attractions in the town include Walden Castle, Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Saffron Walden Museum, the Maze and Bridge End Gardens.



The Fry Public Art Gallery was opened in 1987. It houses an impressive number of paintings, prints, illustrations, wallpapers and decorative designs by artists of the 20th century and the present day who have local connections.

Audley End House and Gardens, which began as an abbey, later became the residence of Lord Braybrooke and his dependants. It was a destination of many important historical figures, and a number of great designers, such as 'Capability' Brown and Robert Adam have left their mark on the landscape. The Audley End House and Gardens, which is under management of English Heritage, and the town of Saffron Walden, are popular with tourists. It is an important cultural centre where organised concerts and other events are held.

The late Lord Braybrooke went to Wales during World War II, where he developed his interest in railways. When he came back to Audley End he finished education and started working on miniature railway. It was opened on 16th May, 1964 by famous raising driver Sir Stirling Moss. The railway passes through mature woodland, two tunnels and crosses the River Cam and Fulfen Slade. It is a tourist attraction, especially for families.

Quakers have a long history in Saffron Walden. As philanthropists they have been influential in many areas of life and pioneers of social welfare, education, mental health, social housing etc. For example, George Stacey Gibson

was a banker and botanist who gave money and land to build a hospital in the town. Local Quakers funded the railway line which once passed through the town, a library, the college, two schools, Bridge End Gardens and the drinking fountain in the market square.

4.7 Landscape designations

Statutory and non-statutory landscape designations have been reviewed to determine the levels of protection currently given to the landscape within the study area, including:

- Ancient Woodlands including Replanted Woodland;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Conservation Areas;
- Protected open space of environmental value including playing fields and informal recreation;
- Scheduled monuments;
- Statutory List of Buildings of special Architectural or Historic Interest.

These are referred to as relevant within the character area descriptions below.

4.8 Existing Landscape Character Assessment

Existing character assessments have been reviewed to provide some context to this more detailed assessment. The study area falls mainly within National Character Area (NCA) 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (Natural England, 2014) and partially in NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk (Natural England, 2014). NCAs are broad but provide some context to the character of the study area.

Natural England defines key characteristics as “*those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place*” that would result in significant consequences for the current character if they were changed or lost. As a result, they form important evidence to support the development of planning and management policies and a reference point against which to monitor change. The key characteristics of NCA 86 area which are of particular relevance to this assessment are:

- Undulating chalky boulder clay plateaus give many of the soils a calcareous character, which also influences the character of the semi-natural vegetation cover;
- Topography of gentle slopes is dissected by numerous river valleys. Watercourses wind slowly across flood plains, supporting wet, fen-type habitats and grazing marsh;
- The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. Ancient woodlands and large often ancient hedgerows form wooded skylines;
- Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources; and
- A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area’s archetypal lowland English countryside.

The key characteristics of NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk area, which are of particular relevance to this assessment, are:

- Settlement is focused in small towns and in villages. There are a number of expanding commuter villages located generally within the valleys.
- The chalk aquifer is abstracted for water to supply Cambridge and its surroundings and also support flows of springs and chalk streams. Chalk rivers are distinctive; and
- Remnant chalk grassland, including road verges, supports chalkland flora.

Other characteristics described in the document are similar to characteristics listed in LCA 86.

At a local level, the study area falls mostly within landscape character areas (LCA) defined in the Landscape Character of Uttlesford District (Uttlesford District Council. p269-340). These comprise A1 Cam River Valley LCA

with a part to the east within the B1 Ashdon Farmland Plateau LCA, and with a part to the south within the B7 Debden Farmland Plateau.

The key characteristics of LCA A1 Cam River Valley are:

- *Rolling, open landscape of chalky boulder clay with wide views from higher ground.*
- *Well vegetated riverbanks with shrubs, trees and water meadows along the winding narrow river corridor.*
- *Low hedges and few trees mainly in small copses.*
- *Dispersed settlements on valley sides connected by busy B roads.*
- *Attractive panoramic views of towns and villages from higher ground. The distinctive spire of Saffron Walden's church can be seen from many directions.*
- *Audley End – an outstanding Jacobean manor set in its eighteenth century Capability Brown landscape park is a distinctive area of local character.*
- *Intimate scale of villages and towns contrasts with large-scale modern agriculture.*
- *This character area is dominated by widespread arable agriculture surrounding settlements.*
- *Colour-washed thatched or mellow red brick houses are found throughout the valley which enhance its visually rich heritage, and there are some outstanding old barns.*

The key characteristics of Landscape Character Area B1 Ashdon Farmland Plateau relevant to the study area:

- *Ancient landscape with subtle qualities*
- *Irregular field pattern follows topography.*

The key characteristics of Landscape Character Area B7 Debden Farmland Plateau relevant to the study area are:

- *Dense woodland patches or copses, many of them ancient, provide structure in the landscape (consistent with NCA).*