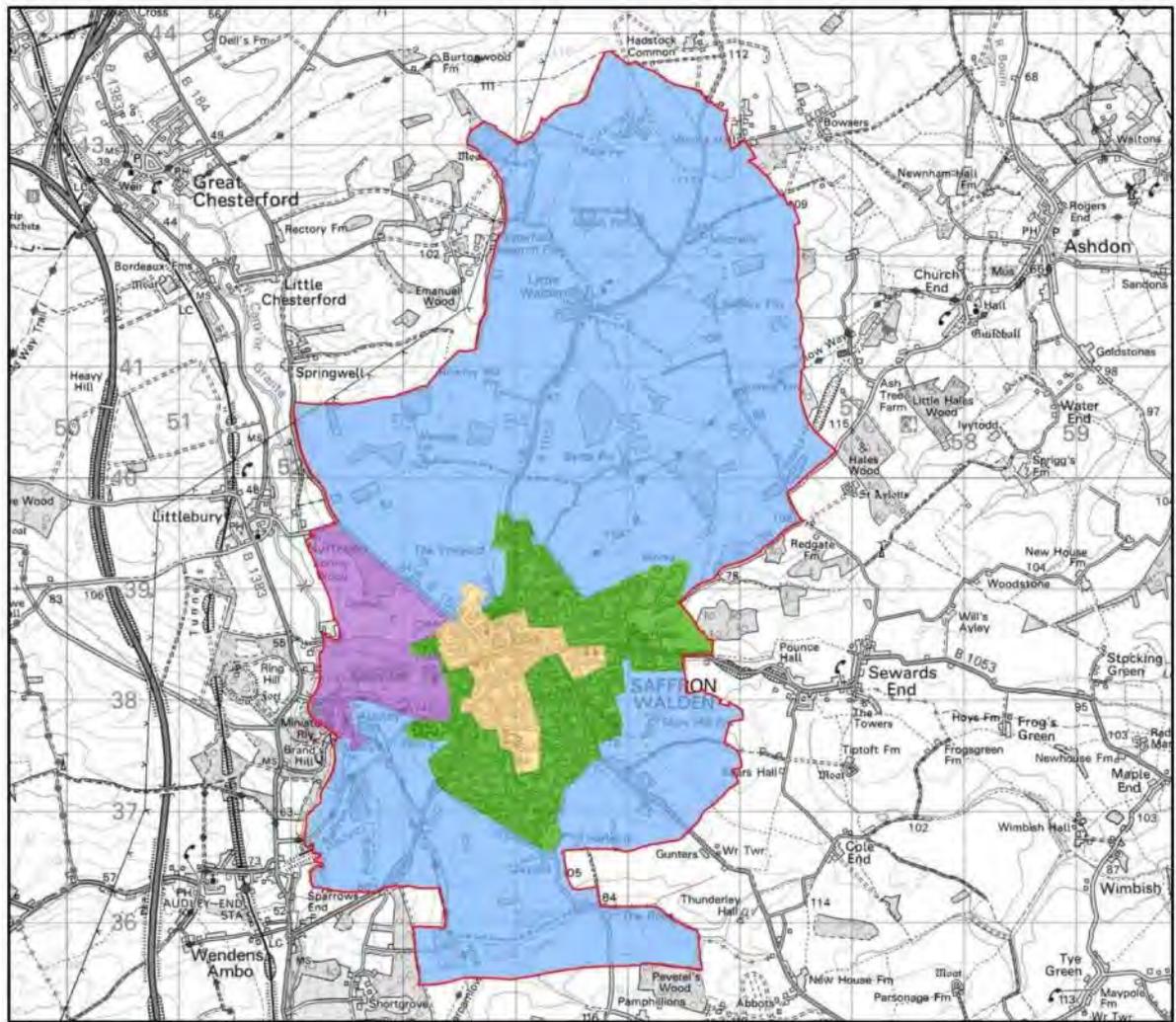


5. Character Assessment

5.1 Character Area Profiles

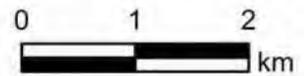
The results of the desk study and fieldwork have been analysed and five distinct character areas have been identified, as shown in Figure 3. These have been informed by the following:

- Historical development - including street pattern, land use, conservation areas and heritage assets;
- Movement - including physical boundaries such as railway lines, roads, rivers and gateways, nodes and linkages;
- Urban structure and built development - including density and building height, enclosure, architectural style and detailing;
- Land use and levels of activity;
- Green space and public realm - including those with planning policy and statutory protection, and how this relates to buildings and spaces; and
- Views and their contribution to an understanding of character, including the identification of landmarks.



Legend

- Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Area
- Character Area**
- LCA 1 - Town Centre
- LCA 2 - Residential Neighbourhoods
- LCA 3 - Rural Landscape
- LCA 4 - Historic Landscape



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Figure 2 Landscape Character Area Overview

5.2 Character Area 01: Town Centre

5.2.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of Character Area 01: Town Centre are as follows:

- The Market square is surrounded by a range of diverse historical frontages facing onto mediaeval streets, maintaining the historical street pattern and character.
- The historical road layout radiates from the centre of Saffron Walden to rural edge of the parish. Within the town these routes are connected by a fine network of smaller roads in a grid formation.
- Properties with rear garden walls frame views up and down the streets.
- A diversity of architectural styles and street layout document the historic development of the town.
- A mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses. Scale is generally small and numerous buildings have distinctive architectural details such as overhanging first floor, timber framed with render and pargetting.
- Historic roofscape with chimneys of different sizes and design.
- Public institutions including schools, a museum, a library the town hall, and St. Mary's Church are features which contribute to the character.
- The undulating land which surrounds the town enables long distance views towards the prominent landmarks of St. Mary's Church spire and Water Tower.
- "The Common" is a distinctive open space in the Town Centre with a turf-cut maze. Smaller public green spaces like Bridge End Gardens, St. Mary's Churchyard, Walden Castle Hill and the recreation ground next to the Friends (Walden) school contribute to in the verdant character of the town.
- Pollarded trees line many streets, including London Plane and Lime trees along Castle Street, and London Plane trees along the High Street on the approach to the town centre from the south.

Parts of the Radwinter Road and Walden School and the Avenue character areas defined by the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Planning group, which are set out in Appendix D, cover this area.



Natural Factors

5.2.2 Topography and hydrology

The Town Centre lies at the bottom of the valley defined by the River Cam and River Slade. It is surrounded by five hills, located outside the area, which create a distinctive bowl which the town sits within. The River Slade runs along the northern edge of the town centre, approximately following Little Walden Road. A second Slade, the Kings Slade, follows the Radwinter Road. It is a narrow watercourse, flowing in a culvert through the Town Centre mostly underground and not visible. The River Slade is seasonal and appears to be generally dry in the Town Centre as visible from Chaters Hill.

St. Mary's Church is located at the highest point in the area at approximately 70m AOD and, being open, has strong visual connections with the rest of the town. The lowest part of the area, found within the Swan Meadow Car Park on the north-western corner of the town, is at a height of approximately 50m AOD. From this point, the land rises up towards the east and this is evident in the streets leading towards the market square. The underlying topography strongly contributes to the character of Town Centre, visible in the arrangement of buildings and varied roofline. Narrow streets, such as Market Row, and concealed alleyways around the market square are steep and many buildings are accessed by flights of stone steps.

Cultural and Social Factors

5.2.3 Movement and connectivity

The market square is the point within the town centre adjacent to where routes leading in from surrounding towns and villages converge. The network of main roads had largely been established by the 11th century and has not changed since this period. The road network in the town centre can be divided into two main parts. The first part connects the market square, Castle, St. Mary's Church and The Common.

Smaller roads in the area are often narrow and as a consequence several streets are only one way.

Vehicular access to the market square is only available on non-market days. Bollards and metal fences are put up on market days to enable safe use of the square for market traders and shoppers.

A strong network of pedestrian routes crosses the Town Centre, providing good levels of permeability. Pedestrianised routes from the market square to surrounding areas include a series of narrow passages and concealed alleyways through buildings, which are not readily apparent. Arcades set within the façade of buildings around the market square connect with the alleyways creating attractive and interesting pedestrian routes away from the road.

5.2.4 Land use

This character area includes the main focus of commercial activity and the location of many of the town's amenities, such as the Town Hall and library, in addition to an abundant array of shops and other commercial uses. It also serves as an important meeting place, serving not just the town but also the surrounding villages.

Buildings in proximity to four main roads include pubs, restaurants, cafés, shops and stalls during market day. The town centre is lively, particularly during market days on Tuesdays and Saturdays, when the roads in the market square are closed to vehicles and pedestrian activity is high. Due to its position above the town, bell ringing at St. Mary's Church is evident in the town centre on Tuesday evenings. Otherwise at night, there is relatively little activity in the streets and there can be a sense of isolation away from the main routes.



Tourist and visitor attractions, such as Saffron Walden Museum and Bridge End Gardens, are also located here. Residential use is less apparent but common in the town centre with houses on the streets just outside the main retail area, and with flats above shops.

5.2.5 Urban structure and built form

Throughout the main part of the town centre a wide range of buildings representing various styles and materials together to create a unique townscape. This makes the town centre interesting and diverse. The fine grain, scale and building line of the historic, plot-by-plot pattern of development, originating in the mediaeval period has largely been retained. Buildings up to three storeys front directly onto the streets and therefore front gardens are generally rare. The result is a dense townscape, but at a human scale. Typical for the area are buildings with overhanging first floors, which create space at street level but enclose the space above.

The town centre is rich in different historical architectural styles with examples of early timber framing, dating from the 15th century, along with Georgian and Victorian era buildings distributed across the area. This mosaic of buildings creates interesting streets and roofscapes, which contribute to the strong sense of place. This is emphasised by the sloping streets and the variety of clay peg tiled and slate roofs with a number of chimneys of different sizes and design.

The most common building materials include timber frame and red, yellow stock and gault brick. There are also examples of fully rendered elevations or infills to the exposed timber frames. Render is traditionally lime based and smooth and there are several examples of historic pargetting (decorative or waterproofing plastering applied on the buildings walls, typical in Essex). Façades are generally muted in colour, reflecting the palette of colours available historically. Whilst there is a variety of in architectural style, colours and materials, the scale and regular pattern of development creates a strong sense of unity.

There are examples of historic municipal buildings, which are individual in design, yet complement each other in scale and attention to detail. This contributes strongly to the sense of enclosure and place within the market square and includes a library, originally built as the town's Corn Exchange, and the Town Hall, which is prominent because of its decorative façade and jettied upper floors which extent above an arcade up to the edge of the street. This diversity of architectural styles gives a richness to the townscape. On the east side of the market square the building occupied by Barclays Bank is built from red brick in a gothic style. An elaborate portal and large windows with distinctive white stone dressings and ornamental details. Panelled doors are decorated with crocus flowers, apples and initials of Saffron Walden bankers Gibsons and Tuke. The roof is finished with a number of large chimneys.

Buildings lining the alleys and lanes are various in style but consistent in height. The ground floor commonly includes shop frontages and signs vary considerably. Some are original, restrained in design and in keeping with the historic character. Some shop fronts have been altered, with clashing colours and design. This detracts attention from architectural and historic qualities which characterise the town centre. A number of 'courtyards' set back from the street form a distinctive feature of Saffron Walden and contribute to its unique character.

Away from the market square and main streets, some of the houses have a front garden separated from the street by walls, which maintains the sense of enclosure. Walls are a characteristic element and flint, brick and lime mortar walls are visible on many streets.

5.2.6 Heritage assets

5.2.6.1 Heritage Assets

There are two scheduled monuments, one conservation area, two Registered Parks and Gardens and 302 listed buildings within this character area.

5.2.6.2 Scheduled Monuments

Bury Hill (SM, NHLE 1009307) comprises the site of a motte and bailey castle, located to the west of Castle Lane. The low motte includes the ruins of the keep to Walden Castle (Grade I, NHLE 1297737). To the west of the motte is the bailey. Its original size is defined by Castle Street, Museum Street and Church Street to the west, while to the east it followed the old road now under Castle Hill House. A series of excavations in the early 20th century confirmed the location of the castle ditch surrounding the bailey.

5.2.6.3 Listed buildings

The majority of listed buildings in Saffron Walden are concentrated within this character area and particularly within Saffron Walden Conservation Area, which contains over 300 listed buildings. Six buildings are listed as Grade I, 25 buildings are listed as Grade II* while the rest are of special interest and are listed as Grade II. The variety of designated listed buildings illustrates the history of the area from the Norman Conquest in the 11th century until the 20th century. It is common for a lot of these buildings to have been altered to adapt them to the changing taste of owners, popular architectural style of the time or in order to be converted into new uses and conform to economic necessities. In a lot of cases, these historic alterations have enhanced the historic and architectural interest of the individual building and positively contributed to the character of the conservation area.



The oldest structure in the town sits within this character area and comprises Walden Castle (Grade I, NHLE 1297737): the remnant of the castle's tower keep, dating from the late 11th or early 12th century. The number and quality of the surviving timber framed buildings dating from the medieval and early post medieval period represent the prosperity of the town at the time. There are four 14th century timber framed buildings and a further 28 examples dating from the 15th century, with numerous examples surviving from later dates. According to the Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project (2009), Saffron Walden has the finest surviving collection of timber framed buildings in Essex³.

Building materials on listed buildings include timber frame, brick, flint and limited use of stone. The walls are exposed or rendered. Architectural features of interest include jetties, pargetting and brackets that contribute to the distinctive appearance and character of the area. Modern materials are limited within the area and include examples of aluminium and uPVC window units that are mainly restricted to modern buildings.

5.2.6.4 Saffron Walden Conservation Area

Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals 2018 subdivides the conservation area into six character zones.

Zone 1 – North of Church Street and west of High Street: this area is dominated by the Grade I listed Church of St Mary the Virgin (Grade I, NHLE 1196237) dating from the 13th century with later alterations and repairs, constructed of a conglomeration of materials including ashlar, flint and field stones illustrating the long history of the structure; and the also Grade I Walden Castle (Grade I, NHLE 1297737) that dates from the late 11th or early 12th century and is constructed of flint and mortar core of walls. Another prominent building in this area is the Saffron Walden Museum (Grade II, NHLE 1025118), dating from the early 19th century, constructed of red brick, in Tudor style. The narrow streets and small alleys between the buildings leading to back gardens, as well as historic boundary walls contribute to the character and appearance of the street scene within the area and create a very strong sense of place. Bridge End Garden, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG, NHLE 1000238) is located in the northern part of the character area. The gardens date from the late 18th or early 19th century and are a good example of an early Victorian town garden. The gardens are divided by walls (partly listed grade II) or hedges into five main parts, each with a different character: the Dutch Garden, the Summerhouse Lawn, the Rose Garden, the Maze, and the Kitchen Garden.

Zone 2 – south of Church Street, in the middle of the conservation area: This area has numerous high quality listed buildings, most of them occupying the south side of Church Street, Market Hill, Market Square, King Street and Gold Street. Boundary treatments and especially boundary walls make a significant contribution to the street scenes in several locations, particularly along Audley Road and Fairycroft Road.

The market square is one of the most important historic places in the town. It is arranged around a Grade II Drinking Fountain (Grade II, NHLE 1196223) and is surrounded by a series of imposing buildings, including the Town Hall (Grade II, NHLE 1196219) that dates from 1761, constructed of red brick with a prominent porch that was added in 1879 with a ground floor arcade in stone and imitation timber framing above. Another prominent building facing onto the Market square is the Library, the former Corn Exchange (Grade II, NHLE 1297733), dating from the mid-19th century. This is a single storey building, built in Classical style, of rendered brickwork with banded ashlar lining. The main elevation, facing onto the Market square has an elaborate portico with a clock tower above. The eastern side of the Market square is dominated by the Barclays Bank building (Grade II*, NHLE 1297732) also dating from the 19th century, constructed of red brick with stone dressings and ornamental details in a combination of Elizabethan and Gothic style.

Of particular note are the three Grade I listed buildings on Church Street, nos. 25-27 Church Street (Grade I, NHLE 1196155), nos. 29-31 Church Street (Grade I, NHLE 1205611) and nos. 17 Market Hill (Grade I, NHLE 1196218), which were originally part of the historic Sun Inn. The buildings are timber-framed and date from mid-14th century with 16th century alterations while the impressive pargetting on the road frontage dates from the 17th century. The buildings were restored in the 19th century and make an important contribution to the historic street and the whole area.

Zone 3 – to the north-west of the High Street, west of Zone 1: The historic street pattern has survived in this area. The majority of listed buildings are located to the western side of High Street, mainly comprising buildings from the 16th, 18th and 19th centuries; the western side of Bridge Street, represented by buildings dating from the

³ <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1929&dp=0> , p. 9.

⁴ More details on the historic development and appearance of the garden can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000238>

15th and 18th centuries; and the northern end of Freshwell Street occupied mostly by 16th century buildings. Historic buildings at Myddlyton Place date from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries while buildings on Abbey Lane and Park Lane are mainly from the 19th century.

Similar to other areas within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, boundary walls also are distinctive here contributing to character and appearance of the area. Examples include the walls which line Abbey Lane and Park Lane, along with listed walls on the perimeter of Walden Place and Myddlyton Place.

The early history of the Bridge Street is illustrated by the number of Grade II* listed buildings as well as a Grade I listed building. The latter, a former Youth Hostel (Grade I, NHLE 1297805), dates from the early 16th century with later additions. The building is two storeys and occupies the corner of Bridge Street and Myddleton Place. It is timber-framed, plastered with exposed studs and is considered to have originally been a merchant's house with long storage range possibly for the storage of saffron or a guildhall. Alterations and additions to the original fabric suggest that the house was used as a malting in the early 18th century.

Zone 4 - The Common and Area South of East Street: This area is defined by The Common which is a Grade II RPG (Grade II, NHLE 1000741) and scheduled monument (SM, NHLE 1002194). The Maze is considered to date from the medieval period, however the earliest documentary evidence was recorded in 1699. It consists of a series of concentric circles cut into turf, surrounded by a low bank.

The majority of the listed buildings are located on the northern side of East Street including the Boys British School (Grade II, NHLE 1205768) and the former Police Station (Grade II, NHLE 1297748). Also of note is the cemetery to the south of the Radwinter Road, which is of considerable visual and historic importance being in part the 19th century cemetery. It is defined to the north by Grade II listed railings and gates (Grade II, NHLE 1025069) dating from 1857 and includes the Cemetery Chapel (Grade II, NHLE 1297741), also built in 1857 by George Prichett, constructed of Ragstone with ashlar dressings in Decorated Gothic style. New Road and Tanners Way were developed towards the end of the 19th or early 20th centuries.

Zone 5 - London Road and adjacent area: The area is dominated by the Old Walden Hospital that is now the Uttlesford District Council Offices (Grade II, NHLE 1280236). The buildings here date mainly from the 19th and early 20th century, illustrating the expansion of the historic town to the south at the time. The 1920's War Memorial (Grade II, NHLE 1297763) at the end of the High Street is one of the first listed structures on leaving the town centre. Walls are also a distinctive feature here contributing to the character of the area and creating a sense of place. Detached and semi-detached properties set within spacious grounds are common on the southernmost side of London Road while rows of cottages define the northernmost side of the road.

Zone 6 – The former Friends School, Mount Pleasant Road and West Road, southernmost part of the conservation area: The area is principally residential retaining most of its 19th century character. Dominant features within the area include the Walden School (originally Friends School) complex to the south and the Grade II listed Water Tower (Grade II, NHLE 1205709) dating from the early 20th century. The tower is constructed of red brick and, rising up to 28m high, is a dominant feature within the area.

There are only two statutory listed buildings here, however, there are a number of late 19th and early 20th century houses that retain most of their original features and are of considerable architectural and historic interest. As a group, they illustrate the expansion of the historic town at the time.

The northern side of Mount Pleasant Road is mainly occupied by attractive semi-detached villas including the Grade II listed nos. 9-10 Mount Pleasant (Grade II, NHLE 1196227), a pair of semi-detached villas in a Vernacular revival style, constructed of a selection of materials including red brick, partly faced in dressed random rubble with ashlar dressings. The front gable and part of the upper storey is covered with hanging Westmorland slate with some fishscale panels and courses. There is a wind-vane on the top of a polygonal turret.

More information can be found in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals available at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=1929andp=0> and on the council's website available at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/conservationareas>.

5.2.6.5 Locally listed buildings

The Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2018) has identified a series of buildings and features within the conservation area that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

The draft Local Heritage List is currently being compiled by the council and includes some additional buildings that are considered to be of some heritage interest. The criteria for the local list and nomination form can be found here: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/heritagelist>

5.2.7 Green space and public realm

A series of green spaces, ranging from public parks to secluded gardens are distributed across the area, mostly outside of the central commercial area. Whilst on plan these appear to be limited in extent compared to urban development, they form part of an important matrix of green infrastructure, which includes generous private gardens.

The Common is the largest contributor to public open space in the town and its size is comparable with the extents of the old town. It is located near The River Slade and is popular for picnics, games and entertainment. The Common is maintained as open grassland mostly surrounded by avenues of mature tall trees. It includes the largest publicly owned turf-cut maze in England and offers a diverse range of recreational activities. The Common creates a distinct break in the otherwise dense urban townscape. This important open space creates a contrast in scale and experience as the sense of exposure and openness is evident with a backdrop of a large open sky.



Saffron Walden Cemetery at Radwinter Road also offer similar experiences in contrast to the enclosed, confined urban fabric of the centre of Saffron Walden. The Cemetery, which was recently added to the Conservation Area, is approximately the same size as The Common but less exposed because of surrounding development. It contains a chapel in Gothic style and privately owned Peace Lodge, tombstones and two flint and brick capped boundary walls. A number of mature deciduous and coniferous trees are visible from Radwinter Road and Ashdon Road, and contribute to the character of the streetscape.

The former Friends School was developed by local Quaker, George Stacey Gibson. The building is set on the back of the plot and separated from the street by a brick wall and row of tall trees. A series of playing fields at the back and the side of the building are separated from surrounding development by fences and trees. Whilst it is not apparent from the street, the playing fields are more extensive than The Common and comprise the largest private green space in the town centre.

In addition to the large green spaces described above, secluded gardens with mature vegetation are common, occasionally visible behind continuous lines of buildings and walls. Some of these gardens, such as Bridge End

Garden and St. Mary's Churchyard, are open to the public. Other notable examples include Close Garden, Dorset House Garden and Jubilee Gardens, also open to the public.

Street trees, such as Lime and London Plane, are often pollarded, on Castle Street and High Street. Where present, these mature trees make a strong contribution to the colour and texture of streets.

5.2.8 Views

The undulating topography creates opportunities for a range of short and long distance views, including attractive views across rooftops within the town centre. The spire of St. Mary's Church is a particularly important landmark. The elevated position of the church means that it is visible from number of points across the town. Views at gateways and along the narrow streets are framed by buildings, where the church is often glimpsed. In contrast, views of the church are more open from the junction of High Street and Audley Road. These views help in orientation and wayfinding. Other views towards the church spire include key locations such as Borough Meadow, Walden Castle Hill, the Common, Bridge End Gardens and the streets leading from car parks into the town, for example Park Lane and East Street.



Views of the market square are limited by buildings facing onto the narrow streets, which contributes to a strong sense of arrival and sense of place within the square. Due to its location amongst development, views of Walden Castle are important.

5.2.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to historic built form, human scale of the town, use of local materials and distinctive building techniques, public green spaces, vistas, and connectivity.

- A variety of architectural styles, materials and colours, but unified by consistent building lines, scale and tone;
- Surviving medieval street patterns, enclosed, narrow streets with distinctive overhanging first floors;
- The market square is defined by distinctive buildings and is a focus of activity, contributing to the historic character and vitality of the town;
- Walls as boundary treatments are distinctive features of the area;
- Varied historic roofscape resulting from variations in materials and roof pitches combined with the numerous chimneys of differing sizes and designs;
- Walden Castle is the oldest structure in the town and illustrates the early history of the town;
- The high number of timber framed buildings illustrate a period of prosperity of the town;
- Examples of pargetting on façades is quite common within the area and add to its distinctiveness;
- Except from the statutory protected buildings, there is a plethora of locally listed buildings and structures that are of historic interest and contribute to the character and appearance of the area.
- Trees contribute to the diversity and richness of the streetscape;
- Green spaces of historic and visual interest, including The Common, St. Mary's churchyard, Bridge End Gardens, Close Garden, Dorset House Garden and Jubilee Gardens, the green space around the Castle remains and the Museum, green space associated with Walden Place, the Friends School at Mount Pleasant Road;
- Public institutions and facilities provide a variety of public life and contribute to the vibrancy of the town as a local centre;
- Local road infrastructure and pedestrianised routes with characteristic shortcuts, alleyways and passages increase permeability and accessibility for pedestrians in particular; and
- Short and long distance views across the town and spire of St. Mary's Church.

5.2.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the loss of pedestrian routes, intrusive signs, and congestion.

- Accumulation of signs and different styles and colours of shop frontages not in-keeping with historic character of the place;
- The design of some shopfronts within the centre of the town. As commercial buildings change use they are susceptible to incremental change or damage. This can include the fitting of new signage and refitting of shop fronts;
- The one way system reduces legibility for vehicles;
- Roads from surrounding towns and villages converge in the town centre, causing congestion, particularly at peak times;
- Redevelopment of historic residential properties with large gardens for high density housing;
- Few activities on the streets and market square at night creating a sense of isolation;
- Congestion and pollution causing soot accumulation on the building façades and lorries physically damaging the buildings threaten the preservation of the historic built form;
- Parking in the Market square and The Common detracts from the historic appearance and character of the area; and
- Replacement of historic and traditional features, such as timber windows and doors with uPVC and other modern non-traditional building materials. This is quite common on historic buildings that are not statutory listed.

5.2.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to important buildings and historic qualities, views and green spaces.

- Visual connections with spire of St. Mary's Church and the surrounding countryside;
- Rear gardens that provide pockets of green space within the urban area;
- "The Common", which is the largest open space in the town centre;
- Historic street layout, fine grain of development and broadly consistent building height;
- Closing public institutions and selling land for new development; and
- A high proportion of historic buildings have been given statutory protection as designated heritage assets in recognition of their architectural and historic interest.

5.3 Character Area 02: Residential Neighbourhoods

5.3.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of Character Area 02: Residential Neighbourhoods are as follows:

- A clear distinction between the developed urban edge and surrounding countryside, emphasised by fences, trees and hedgerows;
- Undulating landform with levels dropping towards the town centre;
- Main roads cut through the Residential Neighbourhoods and converge in the town centre;
- Predominantly inter-war through to late 20th century residential housing estates with mostly semi-detached and terraced houses;
- Variety of architectural styles, materials and colours;
- Varied level of façade and building maintenance;
- Convoluted pattern of residential streets with numerous *cul-de-sacs*;
- Recent development with commercial areas and small industrial estates on the periphery, forming a crucial part of the local economy;
- Large institutions including schools and Saffron Walden Community Hospital;
- Heavy traffic, especially on main roads leading into the town centre;
- Distant views along main streets towards the town centre with spire of St. Mary's Church and Water Tower forming local landmarks;
- Little provision of public green space, with public realm mostly limited to pavements;
- The largest green spaces are playing fields associated with schools, which have limited access; and
- Remnants of the former Great Eastern Railway line cuts across the area.



All or parts of the following character areas defined by the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Planning group fall within Character Area 02. These are set out in Appendix D:

- Character Area 8;
- Ashdon Road;
- Cromwell Road;
- Little Walden Road;
- Radwinter Road;
- Thaxted Road; and
- Walden School and The Avenue.

Natural Factors

5.3.2 Topography and hydrology

Residential Neighbourhoods lie on the slopes of hills surrounding the centre of Saffron Walden. The undulating topography is incised by a number of valleys and generally falls from the east to the west. The highest point is located near Katherine Semar Junior School at approximately 105m AOD, and the lowest point near Saffron Walden Town Football Club at the height of approximately 50m AOD. This marked variation in topography gives rise to open views across the town, which are described further below. It is also responsible for the many steep streets, which create variation in building frontages and rooflines.

Two small watercourses that form valleys running from the north and east join to form the narrow River Slade east of Swan Meadow Car Park. The River Slade, which is commonly dry, mostly passes through a culvert, or is otherwise largely obscured by vegetation. It is occasionally visible above ground, for example near Hollyhock Road.

Cultural and Social Factors

5.3.3 Movement and connectivity

Seven primary roads lead into the town centre and cut through the Residential Neighbourhoods. Three of these roads form key gateways to Saffron Walden:

- B184 – Windmill Hill, from Cambridge to the north of Saffron Walden;
- B1052 – Little Walden Road, from Linton to the north;
- Thaxted Road from Thaxted via Howlett End to the south east, joining Radwinter Road close to Saffron Walden Cemetery;
- Radwinter Road – connecting small villages from the east with the town;

Secondary routes join perpendicular to main roads creating a network of smaller streets and finer grain. Residential streets follow a convoluted pattern with numerous twists and turns with many terminating in *cul-de-sacs*.

The line of the former Great Eastern Railway, which once connected Audley End to the west with Bartlow to the east is still recognisable in the central-eastern part of Saffron Walden. Where the line was in cutting, it reduces permeability, with only a handful of roads crossing it, such as South Road where the route is clearly visible. Elsewhere, such as at the Shire Hill trading estate, the line has been substantially built over.

The Residential Neighbourhoods are well connected with a network of public rights of way and alleyways. Housing developments are linked with passages behind buildings and between streets. Cycle routes are generally on roads.

5.3.4 Land use

Residential land use predominates and these areas are generally quiet. However, low flying aircraft approaching Stansted Airport are common and the noise can cause disturbance.

Other points where there are focusses of activity include leisure uses, churches and smaller schools. Leisure uses are more common in the north, including a number of recreation and community facilities such as Saffron Walden Town Football Club, allotments and Saffron Walden Golf Club. A small industrial estate, supermarkets, leisure centre, commercial centre and Saffron Walden Community Hospital are located on the eastern edge of the town. These, and schools such as Saffron Walden County High School, are key focusses of activity during working hours, particularly at the beginning and end of each day. A heavily secured Ministry of Defence Fuel Depot is located at the edge of the town in contrast to the rural landscape surrounding it.



5.3.5 Urban structure and built form

Residential estates expanded out to fill the spaces between the historical roads leading into the town centre. This has led to a clear distinction between the developed urban edge and the surrounding countryside, emphasised with fences, trees and hedgerows. Buildings are generally two storeys but occasionally up to three storeys. Plots tend to be small along very often narrow residential roads and most houses are set back from the street behind small front gardens. This gives sense of enclosure within the streets.

Architectural styles, materials and colours are diverse among the estates and are largely dictated by age, ranging from Victorian and Edwardian, through the late 20th century to contemporary architecture. Modern extensions to the front and rear are common. Victorian terraces and semi-detached houses tend to be the most elaborately decorated and commonly exhibit a range of architectural details, including terracotta string courses and cartouches, cast iron columns and delicate wooden porches.

Late 20th century houses are mostly rendered or red brick, many with concrete tiled roofs. The most common material is red or gault brick, timber frame, timber feather-edge weatherboarding and timber or plastic cladding, fully rendered elevations or infills. Colours are mostly muted with some examples of pink render, which is common in Essex. Brick and flint walls and railings occur less frequently than in the town centre.

Older streets, such as Debden Road, have undergone piecemeal development and this gives an impression of a diverse and often incoherent urban morphology. In modern estates there is a lack of continuity and consistency with historic street patterns and vernacular, with residential typologies often reflecting the generic approach to modern house building.

Good examples of modern developments built in the last 50 years include 'The Avenue' Housing Development in the proximity of the Water Tower on Debden Road, where the attention to architectural detailing, materials and colours are well considered.



Commercial buildings equivalent to approximately four storeys are set on large plots and are of a much larger scale and massing in comparison to the intimate scale of houses in neighbouring estates. Façades are blank mostly with metal cladding covering steel framed, concrete and brick structures, such as Shire Hill. Some of these commercial buildings are screened by vegetation or set back to the rear of the plot and are not therefore visible from the street.

5.3.6 Heritage assets

5.3.6.1 Heritage assets

There is one scheduled monument and 25 listed buildings in this character area. The listed buildings are mainly concentrated on Castle Street and fall within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area that was described in the previous character area.

5.3.6.2 Scheduled Monument

The Battle (or Repell) Ditches⁵ (SM, NHLE 1002179) is located to the western part of the town and comprises the surviving south-west corner of a large, rectangular circuit that enclosed the area where the medieval town used to extend.

5.3.6.3 Listed Buildings

The majority of the listed buildings in this area are located at the edge of the Town Centre and fall within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. The former Walden Community Hospital (Grade II, NHLE 1196235) is an exception. It stands to the north-west of the 19th century Saffron Walden Cemetery at Radwinter Road. The building, which was originally a union workhouse, was built in 1837 by James Clephan. It is an imposing building, mostly three storeys, arranged in a cruciform plan and constructed of yellow brick.

⁵ <http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/EE-SWW/cms/pdf/Battle%20Ditches.pdf>

5.3.6.4 Locally listed buildings

The draft Local Heritage List includes a series of buildings that fall within this character area. The following buildings are also considered to be of local interest and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area and should be considered for inclusion on the list. These are:

- **Dame Bradbury's School**, off Ashdon Road – the school has a long history that dates back to the 16th century and it was formerly the town's Grammar School. However, the current building replaced an earlier one and dates from the 19th century and is associated with the Gibson family. It is an imposing building, constructed of red brick with stone dressings in the Tudor Revival style.
- **Nos 68 and 70 Ashdon Road** - a pair of Georgian houses with a symmetrical stuccoed façade, two storeys with single storey porticos and a lower range to the west. The sash windows and decorative railings on the windows are of interest.
- **The Pound** – a roofless structure comprising walls mainly of red brick and flint that is of historic interest. It was used for rounding up stray animals.
- **No. 76 Little Walden Road** – two-storey building with a projecting two storeys gable, constructed of flint with red brick dressings.
- **Nos. 80-86 Little Walden Road** – row of cottages constructed of red brick. The cottage at the northern end is rendered. Most of the cottages have lintels above the ground floor windows and doors and the first floor windows are set under the eaves. They probably date from the late 19th or early 20th century and illustrate the rural character of the area at that time.
- **The Gate Public House, Thaxted Road** - a public house probably dating from the 19th century with later additions. The building is two storeys, constructed of brick and flint under a slate roof. There are traditional sashed windows on the ground floor and modern replacements above. The building has later additions to the rear and on the south side of the building.
- **Nos 16 – 24 Ashdon Road** – yellow brick terrace housing with red brick decorative details such as roundels at either end and diaper pattern and arches above doors and windows. uPVC windows detract from the historic appearance of the building, however the terrace has retained its consistency.
- **Mill Lane** - rows of cottages set against the road create a sense of enclosure. The cottages to the western side are constructed of flint with red brick dressings while the cottages to the eastern side are mainly constructed of brick.

5.3.7 Green space and public realm

The most significant green spaces are playing fields next to schools, the playing fields of Saffron Walden Town Football Club, Cricket Club and the Anglo American Playing Fields. A large contribution to private green space is Saffron Walden County High School south of Audley End Road. Distributed throughout the northern part of the area are a number of allotment gardens, forming integral parts of green infrastructure.

Residential street trees and vegetation in front and back gardens contribute to the variety of the streetscape. There are numerous examples of street tree planting and pockets of green space, such as sections of Pleasant Valley on the approach to the town from the south. Green spaces are very often associated with roads and junctions, such as junction of Little Walden Road and Catons Lane. Green verges and pavements give sense of openness to the primary routes.

5.3.8 Views

Due to the topography of the area, primary routes leading into the town are generally well connected visually with town centre and landmarks. There are also long distance, open views towards the town centre and glimpsed views of the countryside from the residential estate on Rylstone Way. The spire of St. Marys Church is particularly important in views from the north and east. In the southern part of the area, the Water Tower on Debden Road is a landmark, but is only generally visible in close proximity due to the density of surrounding development. Elsewhere, the narrow streets and dense development prevent open views towards the town centre.

5.3.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to openness of the streets and variety of land use.

- A clear distinction between the developed urban edge and surrounding countryside strengthened with fences, trees and hedgerows;

- Undulating land with landform dropping towards the town centre gives rise to a variety of street layouts and enables long distance views towards the town centre, particularly the spire of St. Mary's Church;
- Front and rear gardens contribute to the suburban character of the area and to the open and distinctive character of the streets;
- Glimpsed views of open countryside, particularly from the urban edge, as well as from the High Street in the town centre;
- Large green spaces associated with schools and leisure uses create breaks in the otherwise dense urban development;
- Street trees and garden vegetation play a significant role in the character of the street scene by creating a soft edge to the built development; and
- Dame Bradbury's School with its long history but also its imposing architecture and grounds with mature trees and green space contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

5.3.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified, which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to private roads, which affect connectivity and sense of community.

- High levels of traffic on primary routes deter cycling and create barriers for pedestrians;
- Very little green space in the southern part of the area;
- Loss of original boundary treatments and front gardens to the streets to provide off street parking;
- Some housing estates are built along private roads, restricting movement across the area;
- The proliferation of low quality modern materials on historic buildings, such as uPVC for windows, doors and rainwater goods, detract from the traditional appearance of the host buildings.

5.3.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to visual connections with town centre and other landmarks and distinctive character of open streets.

- Views towards the town centre from primary routes and views of the surrounding countryside from the urban edge;
- Well-vegetated gardens and boundaries;
- The significance of non-designated heritage assets (especially locally listed buildings), although not benefiting from statutory protection contribute to local distinctiveness and enrich the area;
- The preservation and enhancement of the special interest, including setting, of statutory listed buildings; and
- The setting of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

5.4 Character Area 03: Rural Landscape

5.4.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of the Rural Landscape character area are as follows:

- Rolling, open landscape with patches of Ancient Woodland;
- Arable land with sporadic farm buildings, single houses and small hamlets;
- Narrow valleys formed by small rivers, streams and ditches;
- Remnants of the General Headquarters Line in the south of area, which was historically a continuous anti-tank barrier;
- Historic airfield at Hadstock;
- Network of public rights of way across the countryside, especially in the north of area.



Natural Factors

5.4.2 Topography and hydrology

Rolling topography is characteristic for the rural landscape to the north and south of Saffron Walden. The northern part of character area is formed by the valley of the River Slade, which rises here. The Slade splits into two smaller watercourses flowing west and south. Both parts are generally obscured by dense vegetation and are not easily identifiable from the ground.

The slopes to the east cross the northern boundary of the parish, reaching approximately 110m AOD between Butlers Farm and Bright's Wood. The land slopes down towards the river reaching approximately 49m AOD at its lowest point. The western side between Home Farm and Chesterford Research Park reaches approximately 105m AOD.

The southern part of the area covers the western slopes of the valley of the River Cam, reaching approximately 110m AOD near the Herberts Farm. The meandering River Cam defines the western boundary of the rural landscape. A network of small streams and ditches cross the valley bottoms, feeding the two main rivers that run through Saffron Walden.

Cultural and Social Factors

5.4.3 Movement and connectivity

The road network in the rural landscape surrounding Saffron Walden is sparse, with most routes leading towards the town centre. A few smaller lanes and tracks provide access to farmland and hamlets, such as Little Walden and Audley End. This is because of the pattern of enclosure, with early enclosure to the South and late to the North.

In the northern part of the area roads tend to be wide with grass verges either side, with occasional pavements and laybys. In the southern part, roads are winding and narrow with no pavements or grass verges. Lanes are often slightly sunken, flanked by hedgerows, walls and small woodlands.



The network of public rights of way is well established. Footpaths, bridleways, byways and recreational routes pass through the rural parts in the north and providing access to the countryside. This network of routes links the villages and hamlets within the countryside with Saffron Walden.

5.4.4 Land use and land cover

Land use is primarily agricultural with mostly arable fields, often defined by mature hedgerow boundaries and a number of small blocks of Ancient Woodland. Fields tend to be large in size and irregular in shape. There are a few isolated farm complexes and the hamlet of Little Walden is the only settlement in the Parish. As a consequence, there is a strong sense of openness, isolation and remoteness from development within the rural landscape.

5.4.5 Settlement and built form

Farms and occasional single detached or semi-detached houses are distributed throughout the area. Farm complexes of farmhouses, barns and warehouses tend to be located on hilltops, away from main roads. Building materials and styles vary but farmhouses are generally modest in size and constructed in brick. Agricultural buildings are large and often metal clad.

Little Walden is a traditional estate hamlet with some limited modern development. Houses are set within large plots and are separated from the road by front gardens bounded by brick walls or wooden fences along Little Walden Road. Red brick, white rendered and hanging tile façades, clay tiled or occasionally slate roofs are particularly distinctive.



5.4.6 Heritage assets

There is one scheduled monument and 23 listed buildings dispersed across this character area. The listed buildings are all of special interest and listed Grade II, except for one of which is of more than special interest and is Grade II*listed.

5.4.6.1 Scheduled Monument

The moated site in Paddock Wood 560m north-east of Chesterford Park (SM, NHLE 1008558) is located in the northern part of this character area. It is defined by an irregular shaped moat with a central ditch that bisects the island and is thought to be a later feature on the site.

5.4.6.2 Listed Buildings

The only Grade II* listed building in this character area comprises Burntwood End (Grade II*, NHLE 1196099), located approximately 2km to the north-west of Little Walden. It is described as an early or mid-16th century timber framed house with 19th century additions.

There are six listed buildings in Little Walden. These include Harnser (Grade II, NHLE 1196103), a late 16th century timber framed and plastered house with 19th century alterations. The remaining five listed buildings are associated with Hall Farmhouse (Grade II, NHLE 1196100), dating from the early 19th century, constructed of red brick, creating a coherent group of buildings, in a prominent location by the southern entrance to the hamlet.

The rest of the listed buildings are mainly farmhouses or other farm buildings and cottages located within the countryside, illustrating the agricultural history of the area.

5.4.6.3 Locally listed buildings

- **Little Walden, nos. 4 and 5 Petts Lane**, constructed of red brick on the ground floor with timber framing and plaster above.
- **Little Walden, St John's Church** - Little Walden's 'Mission Chapel' (now St. John's Church) was built in 1893-4 by Edmund Birch Gibson who owned the land and work being carried out by his estate workers. The architect was Edward Burgess, built of brick with stone dressings. Prominent is the belfry surmounting the gable facing onto the Little Walden Road.

- **The Lodge, Little Walden Road** – constructed of brick with stone dressings with timber details on the gable facing onto Little Walden Road.

5.4.7 Green space and public realm

Green space within Little Walden is mostly limited to wide grass verges and private gardens which make a strong contribution to the estate character of Little Walden Road where it passes through the hamlet.

5.4.8 Views

The elevated primary roads and public rights of way which cross the hilltops in the northern part of the area provide opportunities to experience panoramic views towards Saffron Walden through gaps in hedgerows. Landmarks in such views include the Water Tower and spire of St. Mary's Church. The structures of the Ministry of Defence Fuel Depot are prominent in open views across the countryside in the south-eastern part of character area.



5.4.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the rural character of the area with a strong sense of openness and attractive views towards Saffron Walden.

- Sparsely populated, open landscape with small blocks of woodland, some of which is ancient in origin;
- Open views across the countryside towards the distinctive landmarks of Saffron Walden, particularly St. Mary's Church;
- Well connected by a network of public rights of way;
- Minor rivers and streams contribute to the biodiversity and green infrastructure of the area; and
- Surviving farmhouses, farm buildings and cottages illustrate the importance of agriculture to the prosperity of the area and many have been given statutory protection as designated heritage assets in recognition of their architectural and historic interest.

5.4.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management.

- Busy roads direct traffic towards the town centre.

5.4.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to elements of landscape and visual connections with Saffron Walden.

- Ancient Woodland is sensitive to further fragmentation;
- Open views across the countryside towards Saffron Walden and distinctive landmarks, such as St. Mary's church;
- Well-vegetated corridors of rivers and streams;
- The pressure of mainly residential and commercial expansion on the urban edge of Saffron Walden on neighbouring agricultural land;
- The significance of non-designated heritage assets, although not benefiting from statutory protection contribute with designated heritage assets to local distinctiveness and enrich the area;
- The preservation and enhancement of the special interest, including setting, of the scheduled monument and statutory listed buildings.

5.5 Character Area 04: Historic Landscape

5.5.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of Historic Landscape are as follows:

- Historic 18th century “Capability Brown” designed parkland associated with Audley End House, which is designated as a Scheduled Monument and a Registered Park and Garden;
- The village of Audley End; distinctive parkland estate housing associated with Audley End House;
- Saffron Walden Golf Club is a large open space on the edge of the town;
- Audley End Miniature Railway, set within a woodland landscape, is a popular attraction in the local area;
- Brick walls, which form the boundaries of the Audley End Estate, line many of the roads and lanes across the area; and
- Remnants of the General Headquarters Line, an historically continuous anti-tank barrier, evidenced by pill boxes.



Natural Factors

5.5.2 Topography and hydrology

The valley sides and floodplains of the River Cam, The Slade and Fulfen Slade define this area. The intricate topography here creates a unique setting for Audley End House and Gardens located in the valley bottom and enclosed by wooded hills which separate it from Saffron Walden to the east. The floodplain of the River Cam is the lowest point in the area and lies at approximately 49m AOD. Saffron Walden Golf Club is located on the slope of Windmill Hill, which falls south from 80m AOD to 50m AOD towards the River Slade.

A dam on the River Cam within the grounds of Audley End House forms an attractive lake with engineered banks, which are visible from the B183 to the west on the western boundary of the parish. On its approaches the river is enclosed by trees which define its outline within the mixture of pasture and plantation woodlands in the valley. To the south of the Adam Bridge the river follows its natural, meandering course. The Slade and Fulfen Slade are tributaries of the River Cam. The Slade flows between the golf course and Audley End House. The Fulfen Slade flows west and joins the River Cam to the south from Audley End Road.

Cultural and Social Factors

5.5.3 Movement and connectivity

Two roads cross the area. New Pond Lane, which comes off of Windmill Hill (B184) on the approach to Saffron Walden from the north, terminating at Saffron Walden Golf Club. Audley End Road links Saffron Walden to the east to the Audley End House, traversing the higher ground between the two. As a consequence, there is a distinct sense of arrival within the historic landscape on descending the hill towards Audley End House. Key focusses of activity in the historic landscape, such as Audley End House, Audley End Miniature Railway and Saffron Walden Golf Club are connected by public rights of way and Abbey Lane, joining with the town centre and the surrounding countryside.

5.5.4 Land use

The extensive estate which surrounds Audley End House and Gardens is the predominant land use in the area, extending to approximately 36 hectares. The adjacent Audley End Miniature Railway is under separate ownership and attracts approximately 100,000 visitors per year. The elevated ground and the historic parkland create a natural edge to the western side of Saffron Walden, restricting the growth of the town in this direction. Audley End House and Gardens is a popular tourist destination in the region. In 2013 it attracted over 143,000 visitors putting pressure on local roads at peak times.

Saffron Walden Golf Club is situated between the Audley End House and Windmill Hill Road. Audley End Village, which comprises a small hamlet, also lies to the south of Audley End House. This includes the historic complex of St Mark's College, which lies to the south of Fulden Slade.

5.5.5 Landscape structure and built form

This is a largely designed landscape of parkland and formal gardens associated with Audley End House. The substantial Jacobean house has a unique, open setting, surrounded by formal lawns to the front and gardens to the north and rear. A range of other buildings associated with the house include the service area, stables, barns and lodges. Further away is spreading open parkland with several landmarks, such as 'Lady Portsmouth's Column', Temple of Concord, and Temple of Victory. Tall and imposing brick walls are a common and distinctive feature to the estate and line many of the roads surrounding the park, such as Audley End Road. Some walls, such as those on the approach to Audley End village contain substantial sections of worked flint.



Development in the wider landscape has largely retained its original layout. The red brick Abbey Farm House and Lion House are set back from Audley End Road behind verges and formal lawns. Further down the estate road leading south off Audley End Road is a range of almshouses built in the early 17th century. These cottages and other buildings within Audley End village are unified by their small scale architectural style and detailing. The white-washed estate cottages line the edges of the narrow street running down towards St Mark's College. Other distinctive architectural features of the estate cottages include black painted window and door surrounds. Intimate scale, muted colours and traditional materials reflect their historical character. Red brick and plain white render are common to estate buildings and roofs are typically clay tiled.

5.5.6 Heritage assets

There are two scheduled monuments, one Registered Park and Garden (RPG), one conservation area and 23 listed buildings within this character area.

5.5.6.1 Scheduled Monument

Within the Audley End RPG there is a Grade II* Commemorative column (Grade II*, NHLE 1196117) in gratitude to Elizabeth, Countess of Portsmouth to the north-east of the house. The area around the column is also designated as a scheduled monument (SM, NHLE 1002165). The column is approx. 17m high, erected in 1774 by Sir John Griffin. The column was probably designed by Robert Adam in 1763 to be placed within the newly landscaped park at the time, designed by Capability Brown. The asset comprises a Tuscan column constructed of fine limestone, set on the top of a tall oolitic limestone rectangular base and surmounted by an egg-shaped urn.

5.5.6.2 Audley End House and village

Audley End is a Grade I listed RPG (Grade I, NHLE 10003120) that extends to the west of the town of Saffron Walden. Most of the RPG falls within the neighbourhood plan area and includes part of the Audley End Mansion Scheduled Monument, Audley End Conservation Area and a series of listed buildings and structures associated with the Audley End house and park, as shown on Figure 8.

Audley End House (Grade I, NHLE 1196114) is part of a country house of a palatial size and form that was built between 1605 and 1614 for Thomas Howard. The house was built on the site of the 12th century Priory of Walden and originally the house and surrounding landscape comprised the greater Audley End estate that used to be approximately 4,047 hectares. The house was refurbished and reduced in size in 1721 by Sir John Vanburgh. It was subsequently remodelled in the 1770's by Robert Adam for Sir John Griffin and in the 19th century for the second, third and fourth Lord Braybrookes. The building is three storeys, faced with ashlar and is arranged in a U shaped plan, built in Jacobean style. The park now covers an area of approximately 36 hectares including Audley End House and the immediate parkland. The park is surrounded by a number of irregular fields of ancient origin, probably of medieval or earlier date, interspersed with areas of former common fields.

An early 17th century brick wall (Grade II*, NHLE 1204384) defines the southern boundary of the park from the outskirts of Saffron Walden up to the Lion Lodge (Grade II, NHLE 1204361) and Lion Gate (Grade II*, NHLE 1204373) where they are replaced with more formal iron railings (Grade II, NHLE 1297798).

The landscape of the park mainly survives from the 18th century when Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was assigned with redesigning the old formal gardens. The River Cam runs through the park, to a north-west direction, approximately 200m to the west of the Audley End House (Grade I, NHLE 1196114). Two Grade I listed bridges, Tea Bridge (NHLE 1297800) to the north-west and Adam Bridge (NHLE 1196115) south-west of Audley House provide crossing points over the River Cam. They were both constructed by Robert Adam in the 18th century and are of high historic and architectural interest.

The majority of the listed buildings within the park, in this character area, are structures or outbuildings associated with the principal Audley End House. However, a few structures commemorating the history of the site during the Second World War also survive including a Second World War pillbox and bridge defences. Although there are busy roads crossing the area, the sense of tranquillity of the park has been retained.

The buildings in Audley End village are of contrasting scale and size to the Jacobean mansion in the park. The village includes the Grade I St Mark's College (Grade I, NHLE 1196246), originally known as Abbey Farm and Almshouses, built by Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, in the 17th century, at the same time with Audley End House. The Almshouses were used for estate workers until the mid-20th century, when they were restored and used to house retired clergymen. The buildings are single storey and one and a half storeys, constructed of red

brick, arranged in a double rectangular courtyard plan. To the north of St Mark's College extends the Village Street flanked by white washed cottages set against the road creating a strong sense of place. The cottages on the western side (Grade II*, NHLE 1196245) are one and a half storey, timber framed and plastered with considerable areas of early basket and combed pargetting. The houses date from the 16th and 17th centuries, however, they were extensively restored in the 18th century, retaining some of the original elements.

The eastern side of the village street is occupied by two groups of buildings; nos.1-7 Village Street (Grade II*, NHLE 1196244) and nos. 9-15 Village Street (Grade II, NHLE 1297744). The buildings in the first group date from the 16th to the 19th centuries and include similar timber framed buildings which have been plastered, mirroring the cottages on the western side of the street. However, there are a few variations here and some red brick buildings. Of note is the Post Office (part of no.1 Village Street), it is single storey, constructed of red brick and was once the village school. The buildings in the second group date from the 18th and 19th century with later additions. There are some matching plastered timber-framed buildings here; however no. 9 is the most distinctive 19th century building. It is of flint cobble with red brick banding under a slate roof.

Three imposing listed buildings are located to the north-west of the Village Street on the main road with the most prominent being Abbey House (Grade II, NHLE 1196111). This building dates probably from the early 17th century but it was substantially enlarged in 1969-70. It is of timber-framed construction however, it is now almost entirely clad in red brick.

More information can be found in the Audley End Conservation Area Appraisal available at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4376andp=0> and on the council's website available at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/conservationareas>. Additional information can also be found on the Historic England website available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000312>.

5.5.6.3 Locally listed buildings

The Audley Conservation Area Appraisal 2013 has identified a series of buildings and features within the conservation area that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

5.5.7 Green space and public realm

The Audley House and Gardens are exceptionally high quality and its extensive grounds are available to visitors for a fee. The combination of historic buildings and structures, mature and well maintained vegetation and water contribute to a very strong sense of place. Audley End Park, which extends from the western edge of Saffron Walden, is accessible to the public via footpaths leading south from Abbey Lane. It comprises large areas of open grassland, woodland, parkland trees and water meadows within the valley.

Saffron Walden golf course, whilst a modern introduction, plays an important role in keeping the landscape to the west of Saffron Walden open. Its location on the side of a hill means that it is exposed to the south but to the north is separated from Windmill Hill Road by a tall brick wall.

5.5.8 Views

The open landscape provides opportunities for long distance views. Key views of Audley End House include those from Audley End and London Road, Adam Bridge and Saffron Walden golf course. A well-wooded backdrop is common to views of the front of the house from the west, taking in the widened River Cam with bridges, cricket ground and the Temple of Victory on the side of the old Ring Hill. The view from the Adam Bridge is distinctive and has been presented in paintings and photographs by artists through the years. From the northern part of the park there are open views towards the golf course with the 'Lady Portsmouth's Column' a distinctive landmark.



Whilst the town is not readily visible from Audley End, there are occasional views of the spire of St. Mary's Church in Saffron Walden.

5.5.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the historic character of the parkland.

- Exceptionally high quality, intact historic parkland, delineated by tall brick and brick walls, with groups of large, mature trees in the open designated landscape, largely free of intrusive modern built form and infrastructure;
- Formal and semi-formal landscape design;
- Distinctive historic views, largely unaltered;
- The parkland forms a distinct western edge to Saffron Walden;
- Village Street with its attractive estate cottages which line the narrow road creating a strong sense of place and history;
- The contrasting scale of the properties in the village and the grand scale of Audley End House;
- Important trees in the village that contribute to the character and appearance of the area. Examples include the trees surrounding St Mark's, trees behind Abbey House and Lion House providing a green backdrop to these properties setting them in scale to the overall streetscene;
- Hedgerows delineating the boundaries of the village play an important role in making a smooth transition from built environment to open countryside; and
- Important trees within the park, including those surrounding Audley End House, which screen the property from the water meadows within the valley of the River Cam the Slade.

5.5.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to accessibility.

- Access to Audley End House and Gardens, Audley End Railway and Saffron Walden Golf Club is restricted to paying visitors, apart from on designated public rights of way;
- Visitor parking impacts on visual amenity, particularly during holidays or when events are being held; and
- Poor public transport connections with the town centre.

5.5.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to historic buildings and views:

- Formal, historic character of the Audley End Gardens;
- Sensitive views from B1383 London Road and Audley End Road towards Audley End House;
- Long distance views towards Audley End House, 'Lady Portsmouth's Column', 'Temple of Victory on the side of the Old Ring Hill and Temple of Concord; and
- Historic and traditional features, such as timber windows and doors are susceptible to replacement with modern materials not in keeping with the historic fabric.

6. Managing Change

The character of the landscape described above is the result of a range of interactions between natural and human processes. This evolution is supported by the section on historical development, which describes how the structure and character of the area have changed over time. Together this provides a baseline against which change can be monitored and managed.

The evolution of the landscape will continue and therefore the management of change is essential to ensure that sustainable social, environmental and economic outcomes are achieved.

Saffron Walden is an attractive place to live and development pressure is high. Infill development is likely to continue and there may also be some limited opportunities to extend the development beyond the existing urban edge. Proposals for such development should be subject to a thorough assessment of landscape character and views, drawing and building upon the information contained in this report.

6.1 Character management principles

In order to address the issues highlighted above, principles for managing change in this area should focus on sustaining, reinforcing or enhancing those aspects which contribute to distinctive character of Saffron Walden and the surrounding landscape. The following principles should be considered when defining policies with respect to heritage and character:

6.1.1 Character Area 01: Town Centre

- New development should respect the intimate scale and historic layout of existing buildings and streets;
- New development should not restrict views towards landmarks, such as spire of St. Mary's Church, Water Tower and other important buildings in the town. Key views as identified in the conservation area appraisal should be retained;
- Open spaces in the town should be protected;
- Shopfronts and signs should complement the existing materials and tones of the historic character of the area;
- Historical architectural details should be retained and conserved in alterations to existing buildings;
- Encourage the evening time economy, particularly around the market square to enhance sense of community;
- New development in the town centre should respect existing built form and street layout and provide the necessary infrastructure;
- Existing pedestrian routes should be retained and enhanced;
- Boundaries, such as brick walls, that contribute to the special character of the area should be retained;
- Trees that contribute to the character and appearance of the area should be retained;
- Those buildings and features that have been identified as positively contributing to the character of the area, such as locally listed buildings, should be retained;
- Enhancement opportunities that are identified in conservation area appraisals should be encouraged (See Part 2 of the Management Proposals of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal) for Management proposals in order to preserve and where possible enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Buildings that are included on the council's at risk register should be repaired to a high standard;
- Paragraph 1.80 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal identifies key features and characteristics of the conservation area that should be taken into consideration in order to inform alterations and new development within the conservation area; and
- Article 4 directions applied to individual properties could be an appropriate measure to restrict permitted development rights and prevent incremental change which may negatively impact upon the character and appearance of the area. More information can be found at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/hpg/historic-environment/article4directions>.

6.1.2 Character Area 02: Residential Neighbourhoods

- New development should be consistent in scale with existing development, reflecting the positive aspects of the character area;
- Front gardens, grass verges and walls should be retained and enhanced;
- New development should maintain existing views towards key landmarks in the town centre, such as St. Mary's Church and the surrounding countryside;
- New development on existing green space should be resisted, unless it can be demonstrated that the openness of the green space will be retained and its quality, accessibility and value will be enhanced;
- New development should be complemented with dedicated well-designed public green spaces;
- Part of the area falls within the setting of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area and new development should preserve and enhance its setting; and
- Road traffic should be controlled to encourage walking and cycling with speed and weight limits considered on primary routes through the residential neighbourhoods.

6.1.3 Character Area 03: Rural Landscape

- Large scale development is not likely to be appropriate in the rural landscape. New development should be small scale and enhance the character of the area;
- New development should not restrict open views towards the countryside and the town;
- Any new development within Little Walden should respect the existing pattern, scale and proportions of existing development within the settlement;
- Ancient woodland should be retained and protected; and
- Heritage assets and their setting should be preserved and where possible enhanced.

6.1.4 Character Area 04: Historic Landscape

- New development should respect the high quality architecture, historic context of the area and make reference to the vernacular style and materials;
- New development should not interfere with historic views;
- Public transport links between the town centre and Audley End should be enhanced;
- Those buildings and features that have been identified within the Audley End Conservation Area Appraisal as positively contributing to the character of the area should be retained; and
- Trees and hedgerows that contribute to the character and appearance of the area should be retained.

7. Next steps and sources of further information

In addition to policy protection, this assessment has identified projects or initiatives which could be financed through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) contributions, or if the project is not eligible for these mechanisms, through other means of funding or delivery. CIL is a tool for local authorities to levy contributions from developers to help deliver infrastructure projects which benefit the local community – for more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>.

Section 106 agreements are site-specific and put in place to make it possible to approve a planning application that might not otherwise be acceptable in planning terms – for example, the provision of new green space. It is recommended to seek advice from the Local Planning Authority on what types of project can be funded through CIL and S106.

Projects and initiatives identified as having the potential to be brought forward by CIL, S106 or other means include:

- Promote cycling and walking and improve public transport options to reduce congestion in the town centre and through the residential neighbourhoods;
- Invest in improvements to key public green spaces, such as the Common, to increase the range and quality of facilities and access from the town centre; and
- Identify opportunities to open up sections of the River Slade where it passes through the town centre in a culvert, to improve the ecology and amenity of the river and its contribution to the character and quality of the town.

This study is intended to provide evidence to support the development of policies with respect to heritage and character for the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan. As such, it does not provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of individual buildings, streets or spaces to the character of the area. It should be considered in preparing or responding to consultation responses, in site options assessments and the evidence base of the Uttlesford Local Plan.

Other work which would strengthen the evidence base and provide a basis to monitor and manage future change includes:

- Prepare a design guide setting out general policies and design principles for new development in keeping with local character, supplementing the Essex Design Guide to help maintain and enhance the historic pattern of buildings and streets;
- Carry out an Environmental Colour Assessment to develop a palette of colours appropriate for use in materials and finishes to new development;
- Develop a shop fronts strategy, setting out principles and standards required to maintain and enhance the character and quality of the commercial areas of the town; and
- Carry out an audit of existing trees in the public realm, including street trees and trees in green spaces. Use this to develop a strategy for the future conservation and replacement of trees, considering the impacts of climate change and biosecurity.

A wealth of further information and support is available to assist Saffron Walden in applying the principles set out in this assessment. The Locality website is a useful starting point and is updated regularly. Current guidance which may be of interest includes:

- Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/>
- Good design in Neighbourhood Planning: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/good-design-neighbourhood-planning/>

Further technical support is also available to priority neighbourhood planning groups and forums through Locality, funded by MHCLG. The other packages of support currently available are:

- Setting up a Neighbourhood Planning Group (in unparished areas only)
- Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)

- Site Options and Assessment
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Evidence Base and Policy Development
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Masterplanning
- Design including Design Codes
- Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)
- Plan Health check Review

Further information is available in the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Guidance Notes produced by Locality:
<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/>.

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