BUCKDEN LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL



Understand the present. Act for the future.

Buckden Landscape Appraisal
was commissioned by
Buckden Parish Council
with support from
Cambridgeshire Rural Action.

Landscape Architect: **Robin Taylor BA(Hons) DipLA.**

1995

Figure 1: Buckden Parish.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

BUCKDEN LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL



SUMMARY

CHARACTER ZONES: DESCRIPTION

Buckden Parish (excluding the village itself) can be divided into six Character Zones: Riverside, Gravel pits, Village Edge, A1, Agricultural, and Local Roads.

The Zones have the following characteristics:

RIVERSIDE ZONE

1. Small-scaled, intimate landscape.
2. Mature, free-growing hedges.
3. Trees breaking the skyline to link the horizontal elements of land and sky.

GRAVEL PITS ZONE

A. WORKING PITS
1. Ever-changing scene of low mounds and excavations.
2. Vegetaion at periphery of sites only.
3. Long and wide views.

B. FORMER PITS
1. Large water bodies. Definite edges.
2. Long and wide views.
3. Visually immature landscape.
4. Few specimen trees.

VILLAGE EDGE ZONE

1. Definite, straight edges.
2. Housing areas that are inward-looking.
3. Repitition in building style and form.
4. Mixed boundary styles.
5. Wide views with little surprise.

A1 ZONE

1. Large-scale, linear feature.
2. Low, linear vegetation.
3. Lack of variety in vegetation.
4. Mixture of roadside fixtures.

CONTENTS

PAGE

4 SUMMARY

8 1. INTRODUCTION

- Why is a landscape appraisal important?
- Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines.
- The Aims of the Buckden Landscape Appraisal.
- Method of study.

10 2. CHARACTER ZONES

- What are the Character Zones?

12 **Character Zone One: Riverside**
- Description
- Analysis

16 **Character Zone Two: Gravel Pits**
- Description
- Analysis

20 **Character Zone Three: Village Edge**
- Description
- Analysis

25 **Character Zone Four: A1**
- Description
- Analysis

30 **Character Zone Five: Agricultural**
- Description
- Analysis

36. **Character Zone Six: Local Roads**
- Description
- Analysis

PAGE

39 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHARACTER ZONES

40 **Character Zone One: Riverside**

42 **Character Zone Two: Gravel Pits**

44 **Character Zone Three: Village Edge**

46 **Character Zona Four: A1**

48 **Character Zone Five: Agricultural**

50 **Character Zone Six: Local Roads**

52 4. SPECIFIC FEATURES RECOMMENDED FOR PROTECTION / CONSERVATION

58. 5. PROCESSES AND FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE THE LANDSCAPE OF THE PARISH

62. 6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

64. 7. CONCLUSION

- General considerations before implementing work to the landscape of the Parish.

AGRICULTURAL ZONE

1. Large-scale,exposed landscape.
2. Gentle, undulating landform. Low horizons.
3. Linear vegetation.
4. Inbalance of scale between landform and vegetation.
5. Mature trees in hedgerows and small copses.

LOCAL ROADS ZONE

1. Low hedges.
2. Small copses to punctuate routes.

CHARACTER ZONES: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures of landscape design and management are proposed for the Character Zones:

RIVERSIDE ZONE

1. Ensure succession of specimen trees.
2. Revitalise existing hedgerows.
3. Plant new trees in key locations.
4. Undertake selective clearance of vegetation.

GRAVEL PITS ZONE

A. WORKING PITS
1. Protect existing vegetation.
2. Increase scale of existing vegetation.
3. Create new plantations.

B. FORMER PITS
1. Create diversity at edge of lakes.
2. Plant specimen trees to break the skyline.
3. Create new plantations.
4. Decide a landscape strategy for future developments.

VILLAGE EDGE ZONE

1. Break-up long views.
2. Encourage coherent boundary treatments.
3. Plant specimen trees.
4. Influence design of new development.

A1 ZONE

1. Plant blocks of vegetation to counter linear feature.
2. Replant central reservation.
3. Exploit redundant land.
4. Introduce variety in vegetation.
5. Rationalise road features.

AGRICULTURAL ZONE

1. Bulk-up existing vegetation.
2. Ensure succession of specimen trees.
3. Create new plantations.
4. Define limits of land units.

LOCAL ROADS

1. Increase height of hedgerows.
2. New vegetation to punctuate routes.

It is proposed that the following landscape features be afforded special protection:
1. The Spinney at the "Valley".
2. Vegetation alongside Diddington Brook.
3. Former gravel pits.
4. Hedgerow at Brampton Road.
5. Former railway.
6. Roadside hedge at Mill Road.
7. Copse at Stirtloe.
8. Fields behind Taylor's Lane

INFLUENCES ON LANDSCAPE QUALITY

Many factors have been identified as possible influences on the landscape quality of the parish. Residential development, although not a priority of the local plan, could emphasise the present failings of the village edge. Pressure for development could come from further afield if, as predicted, the Huntingdon/Cambridge area becomes an "arc of prosperity". New crops and agricultural methods could change the traditional perception of the countryside. The most immediate threat, though, is the proposed A1(M) motorway. This could impose unsympathetic landforms and create a new limit to the built area of the Parish.

FURTHER STUDY

Further studies are proposed. These would research vegetation character, village character and footpath usage.

BUCKDEN LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

1. INTRODUCTION

This study considers the landscape of the Parish of Buckden. Principally it is concerned with the visual and spatial qualities, as a parallel initiative, The Buckden Wildlife Survey, will provide evidence of the ecological situation.

WHY IS A LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL IMPORTANT?

When considering the aesthetics of a rural landscape it is often difficult to be objective, especially if resident there. Many people cite loss of hedgerows, demise of trees, and developments such as housing as negative factors. But is this fair?

It is valuable to have analytical information to understand why certain landscapes are successful whilst others are not. From this, assessment can be made to determine the importance of the various features that constitute the landscape , and how certain developments and processes can affect it.

By study of the existing situation, the landscape can be classified into character zones. The good and bad characteristics can be identified for each of these.

This information can be used constructively in many ways. For example to:

1. Plan for the future development of the Parish.

2. Suggest what form developments should take.

3. Support or reject proposals for development.

4. Aid the argument for either conservation, or removal of certain features.

5. Give importance to features that are difficult to value.

Most importantly, the information can be used to form guidelines for landscape design and management that will help promote local distinctiveness, by encouraging the local character to be understood and enhanced.

"CAMBRIDGESHIRE LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES"

"Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines" is an award-winning publication that considers the county as a whole. This appraisal is deliberately in the same mould, but aims to be a complementary document, by adding the detail that the county study was not able to do under its broad remit.

THE AIMS OF THE BUCKDEN LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

1. To assess the landscape of the Parish and attempt to define what characterises Buckden.

2. To determine the processes shaping the Parish and their influence on landscape quality.

3. To identify where protection and conservation may be appropriate.

4. To suggest where enhancement might occur, and what form this might take.

5. To make recommendations for further study.

METHOD OF STUDY

During February and March 1994, the landscape of the Parish was surveyed from all publicly accessible areas. All views and features were photographed, sketched and analytical notes were taken on site. To this primary data, detailed descriptions and notes were added, and this information was catalogued against the land use areas of the Parish. The resultant master schedule of data enabled the characteristics for each zone of the Parish to be summarised.

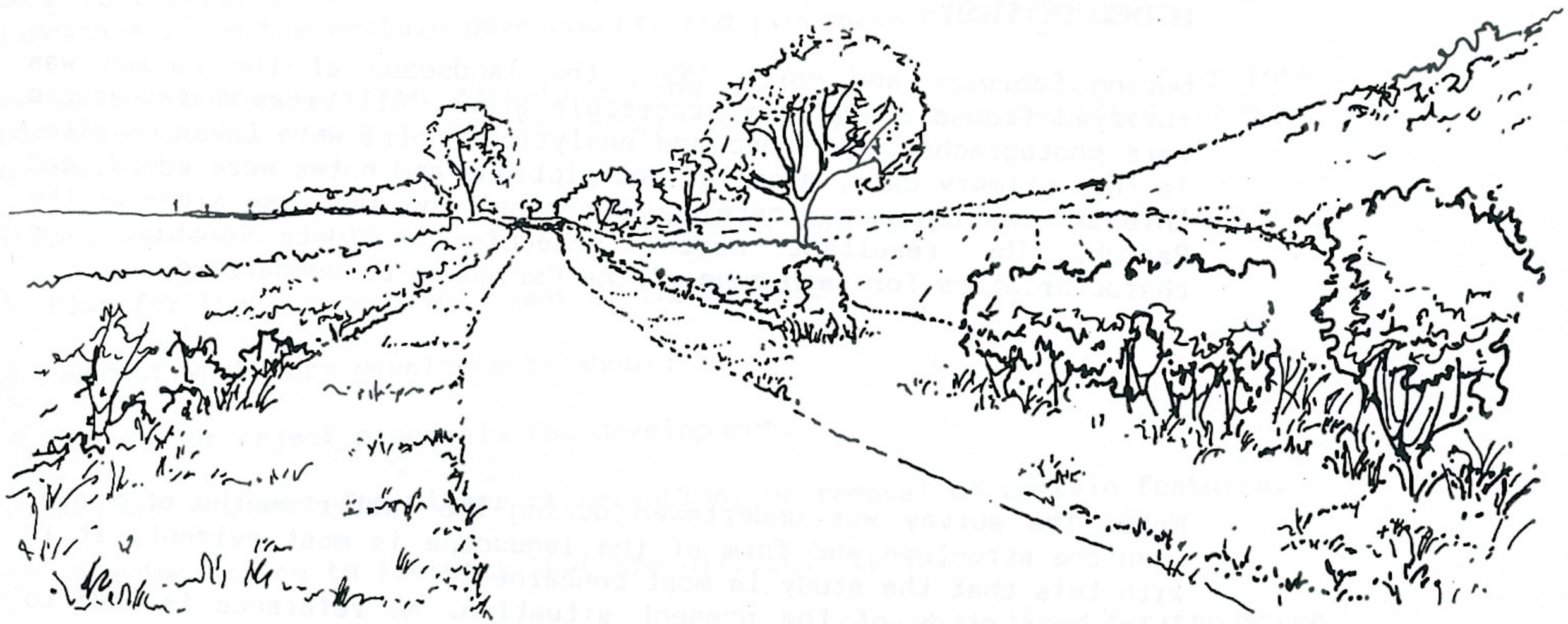
Note: The survey was undertaken during the latter months of winter when the structure and form of the landscape is most evident. It is with this that the study is most concerned.
This is a study of the present situation. No reference is made to historical patterns, as it seeks to identify a way forward for the landscape.

2. CHARACTER ZONES

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTER ZONES?

"Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines" divides the whole county into nine character areas. Buckden is situated at the boundary between two of these, namely the "Western Claylands" and the "Ouse Valley".

Study at a local scale has enabled detail to be added to these - identifying six zones (excluding the village itself) within the Parish boundary. These are: Riverside, Gravel Pits, Village Edge, A1, Agricultural, and Local Roads.



Grafham Road at Railway Bridge.



Figure 2: The Character Areas of Buckden Parish.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

CHARACTER ZONE ONE: RIVERSIDE

DESCRIPTION

The land around the slight meanders of the River Ouse is an arrangement of small-scale fields and hedgerows. The hedges are mature and free-growing, with many fine trees breaking the skyline. At Offord Mill there is a concentration of trees.

Some trees are dying, and stretches of hedgerow are becoming thin.

From the riverside path there are views across to the open fields of Offord Parish. Often this path is sheltered by the mature hedges, whilst single trees occur occasionally along the river bank (figure 3).

The topography is flat, with vertical definition given only by the vegetation.



Figure 3: "The Ouse Valley Way". Riverside trees define the path limit and give foreground interest. Human scale and shelter are granted by the mature hedge, whilst the open views across the river provide a variety of space.



Figure 4: The extent of the Riverside Zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

ANALYSIS

The landscape of the river and its immediate environs is an intimate zone within the Parish (figure 5). Many of the fields are prone to flooding, so few are used for arable crops. The lack of a need for practical shapes and sizes of fields to accommodate machinery has spared vegetation. This adds to the feeling of intimacy. At some points along the river, the view is channelled and becomes corridor-like (figure 6).



Figure 5: Looking towards Offord Mill. The vegetation creates an intimate scene

There is relief from this intimacy however. For example when long views of Offord Parish are afforded across the river from the "Ouse Valley Way". Here, the presence of specimen trees helps to give foreground interest and scale, whilst seemingly "linking" the horizontal elements of river, land and sky.

The flat nature of the zone, coupled with the strong framework of trees and hedges results in a landscape that is composed mainly of foreground and middle-distance elements. Because of this, there is little reference to the village.
Generally, this is a strong landscape with a solid framework of vegetation.



Figure 6: Meander of the River Ouse, looking towards Buckden Village. The vegetation is useful as it channels the view, which is punctuated by the hedges running against the horizon.

CHARACTER ZONE TWO: GRAVEL PITS



Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

Figure 7: The extent of the Gravel Pits Zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

DESCRIPTION

The flat Gravel Pits Zone can be sub-divided into two; the areas worked at present, and the former pits that have since taken on different functions.

At current workings, the form of fields usually expected is replaced by excavations. Low mounds of topsoil and excavate are found both within and on the periphery of these. Vegetation exists only at the edge of these sites (figure 8).
Where work has ceased, the natural groundwater supply has filled the pits. These now form large bodies of still water within a landscape that is principally one of fields and vegetation. The edges of these lakes are sudden and definite.

In both the vegetation is gappy and sparse. Hedgelines, which are a legacy of the former agricultural land use, are no longer continuous. Although these hedges no longer have a role to play in agiculture, they are still maintained at a low height. Elsewhere, more substantial hedges (such as the one along Mill Road) have been drastically reduced. Recent planting is still in its infancy, and there are few mature specimen trees.

Views down to the riverside are limited, but there are wide and long views up to the ridge where the village proper begins.



Figure 8: Gravel workings from the junction of Leaden's Lane with Stirtloe Lane. The thin and gappy hedgerows afford long views across the site. The impact may be perceived to be greater as cars approach this at a slow speed

ANALYSIS

The legacy of the extraction of gravel is a landscape that is visually "busier" than other local scenes (figure 9). Many activities compete in a relatively small area. As work continues on present pits, there is a constant process of change as material is moved off-site and new deposits excavated. At the former sites, leisure activities prevail. Watersports and the "Watermark" development have encroached. Around the edge of the zone, activities such as farming continue.

The bodies of water are of a scale and form that would not usually be found in such a situation. Their form has not aided the succession of vegetation to take place, especially round the edges, which remain regular and sterile (figure 10). There tends to be a sudden transition between the water and the land.

Most of the vegetation remains from the previous use of the land, namely agriculture. Lines of gappy hedges, and the low quantity of mature trees, results in this landscape lacking any sense of maturity.

As the ground rises up to the village, the view becomes increasingly wide. The village itself appears only as a thin line of buildings on the horizon. Little vertical variation exists to punctuate this, so the view has no focus.

The Gravel Pits zone is significant as long views across it are afforded from both Buckden village and the high land of Offord Parish.

The gravel pits are a busy landscape, not only because of the activities within them, but because there is a lack of any substantial landscape features of quality to provide coherence. The zone is visually immature.



Figure 9: Buckden village viewed from the "Watermark" development. The landscape is "busy". The low, gappy hedges and lack of foreground trees results in the landscape having a strong horizontal emphasis.



Figure 10: From the "Watermark" development looking in the direction of the landfill site. The lakes formed by the gravel workings have definite edges, and there is little evidence of succession of vegetation. This is a young landscape with few mature trees.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map
with the permission of The Controller
of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

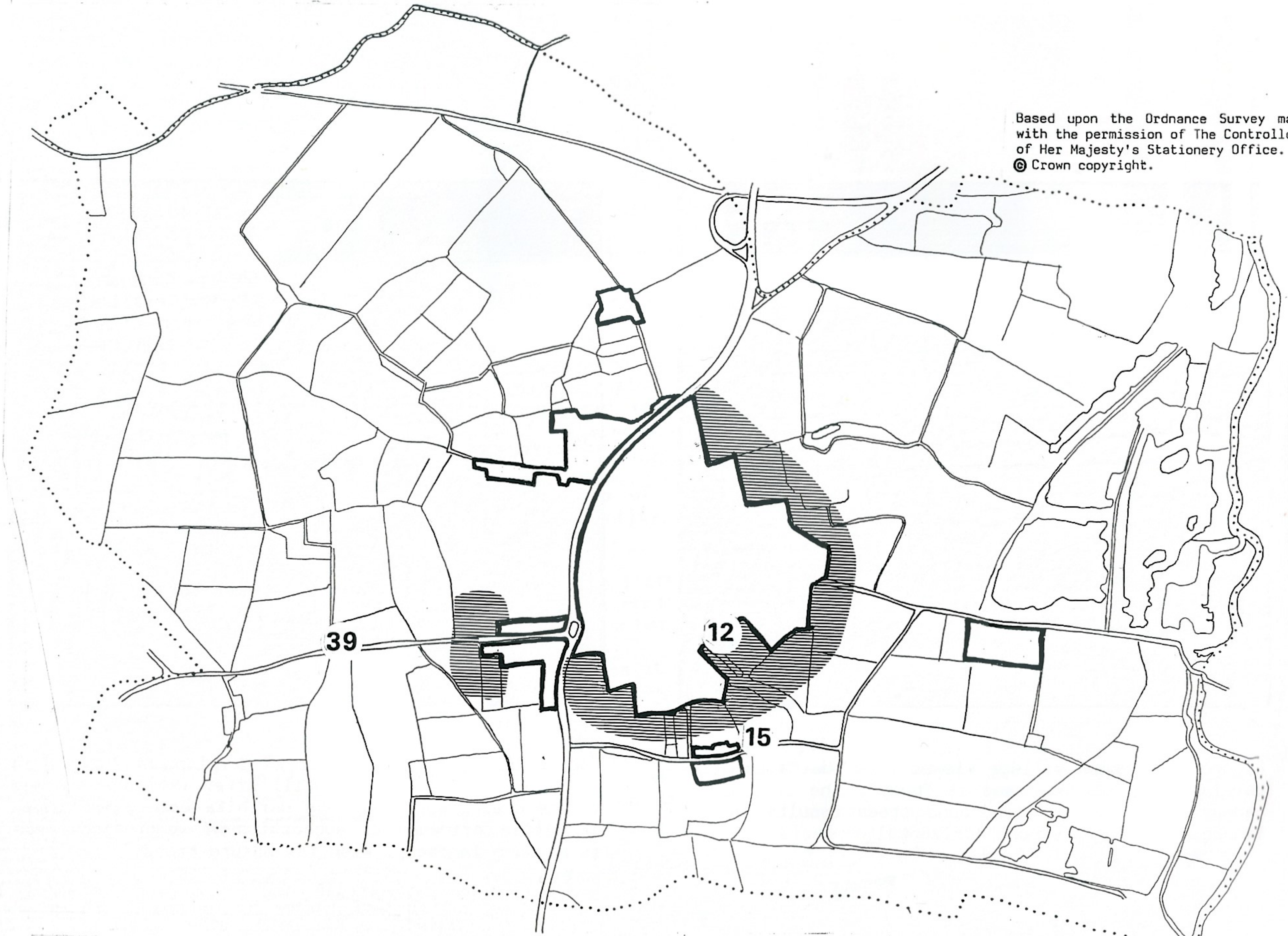


Figure 11: The extent of the Village edge zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

DESCRIPTION

In general, the areas of the village that meet the surrounding countryside are the new housing estates built in the last 25 years.

The buildings are orientated to be inward-looking. The rear of the plots butt on to the land behind them, creating straight lines.

There is repitition of size, style and spacing in the buildings (figure 12). Boundary treatments are a mixture of native and exotic plant species and various fences and walls. There are few mature trees directly along the village edge. Few hedgerows meet the village perpendicularly, and those that do tend to run alongside the roads.

Long stretches of the village edge can be seen from the roads and paths. These views tend not to be interrupted in the foreground by trees or other vegetative elements.



Figure 12: The rear of propeties at Vineyard Way viewed from the tennis courts. This view is typical of the regularity of buildings along the village edge, there are no significant trees in the gardens.

ANALYSIS

The residential areas on the edge of Buckden have created a hard limit to the village.

By facing inwards, there is little relationship with the surrounding land of the Parish. The straight lines, coupled with the repitition of building style and layout, form a wall-like boundary to the village. This discourages a gentle transition between the built area of the Parish and the other zones.

Often the space occupied by the estates can be attributed to the former field pattern of the site. Where the fields on the unbuilt side of the village edge have changed in layout, reference to the landscape has been lost and the village has been left "exposed",for example at Springfield Close (figure 13).

The eclectic nature of the garden boundaries has created visual confusion, and this has resulted in the village being further alienated from the countryside.

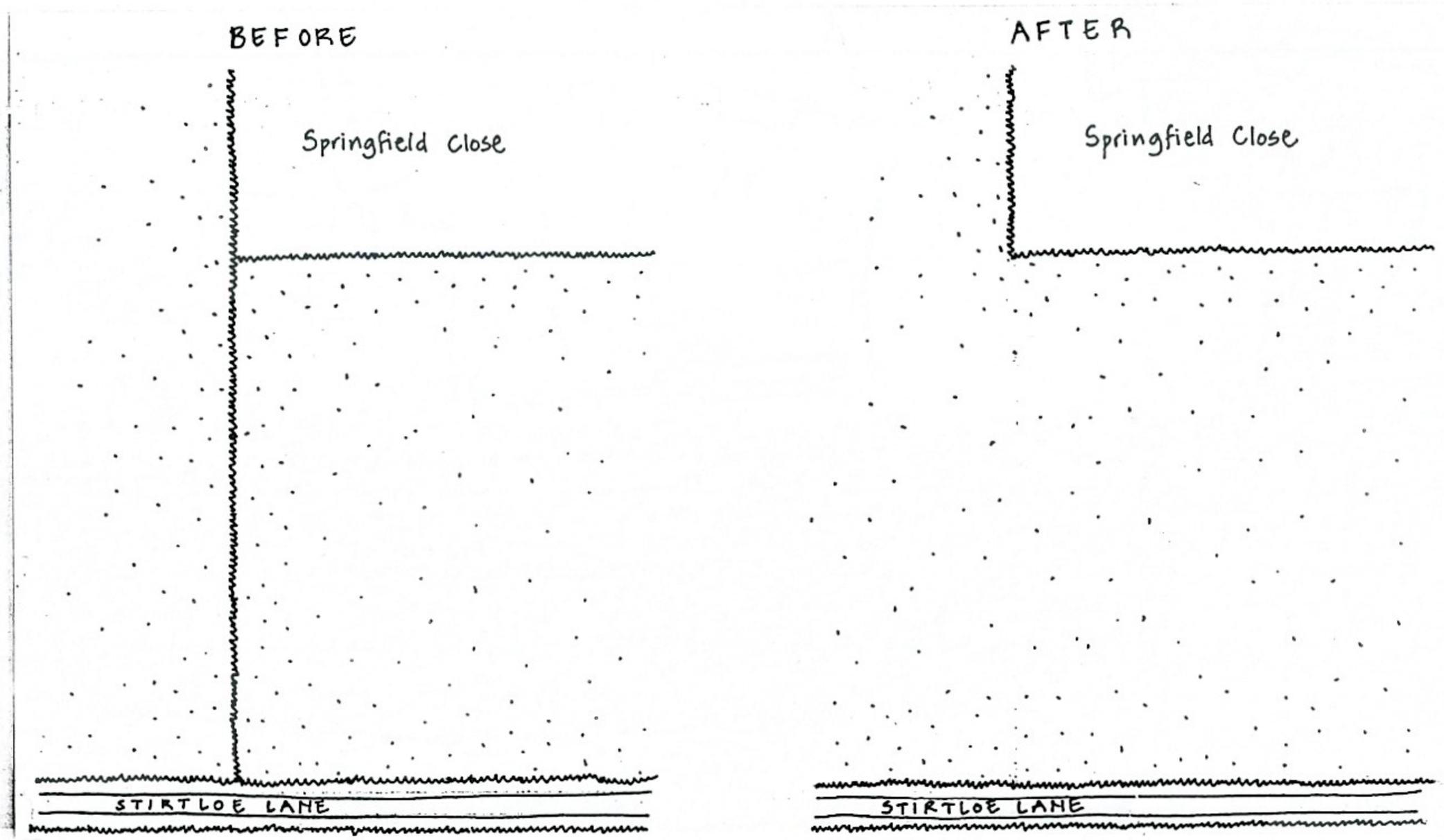


Figure 13: Arrangement of land at Springfield Close. The removal of the hedge has left the corner of the estate exposed.

The lack of tall and mature trees along the village edge may be attributed to the fact that gardens have generally seen a reduction in size. Domestic plots are now unable to accommodate the proportions of mature trees, and as a consequence, houses have become the dominant vertical elements.

Perception of the village varies with the topography of the Parish. From the Offords, the village edge appears as a thin strip of buildings perched on the horizon. As a result of this, there is little indication of the extent of the settlement. Nearing the village, the rise of the land masks the buildings. A sense of arrival is created as the houses return to sight (figure 14).



Figure 14(a): From Mill Road towards the Village Edge. The larger shrubs are important as they prevent the view from being too wide. The road leads the eye up to the spire of St. Mary's Church, which acts as a focal point.

Figure 14(b): From the junction of Mill Road with Leaden's Lane looking towards the village edge. The village is masked by the topography, which is emphasised by the hedge. With no trees to break the skyline, the horizon is dominant.

From the west, the approach to the village is from higher ground. This contrasts with the approach from the Offords in the east as, although only the buildings in the foreground are in view, they do not lie across the landscape (as they do at Park Road) and there is a feeling that there is space in which the village can exist.

The most successful section of the edge of the village is at the point where Smith Drive meets the fields of Stirtloe. Here the arrangement of mixed housing styles, mature copse and hedgerows, sits comfortably within the landform (figure 15).

In the main, the village edge is a harsh zone, that discourages a gentle union between the built settlement of Buckden and the Parish in general.



Figure 15: Smith Drive and St. Mary's Church viewed from Stirtloe Lane.
There is a gentle transition between village and countryside.

CHARACTER ZONE FOUR: A1

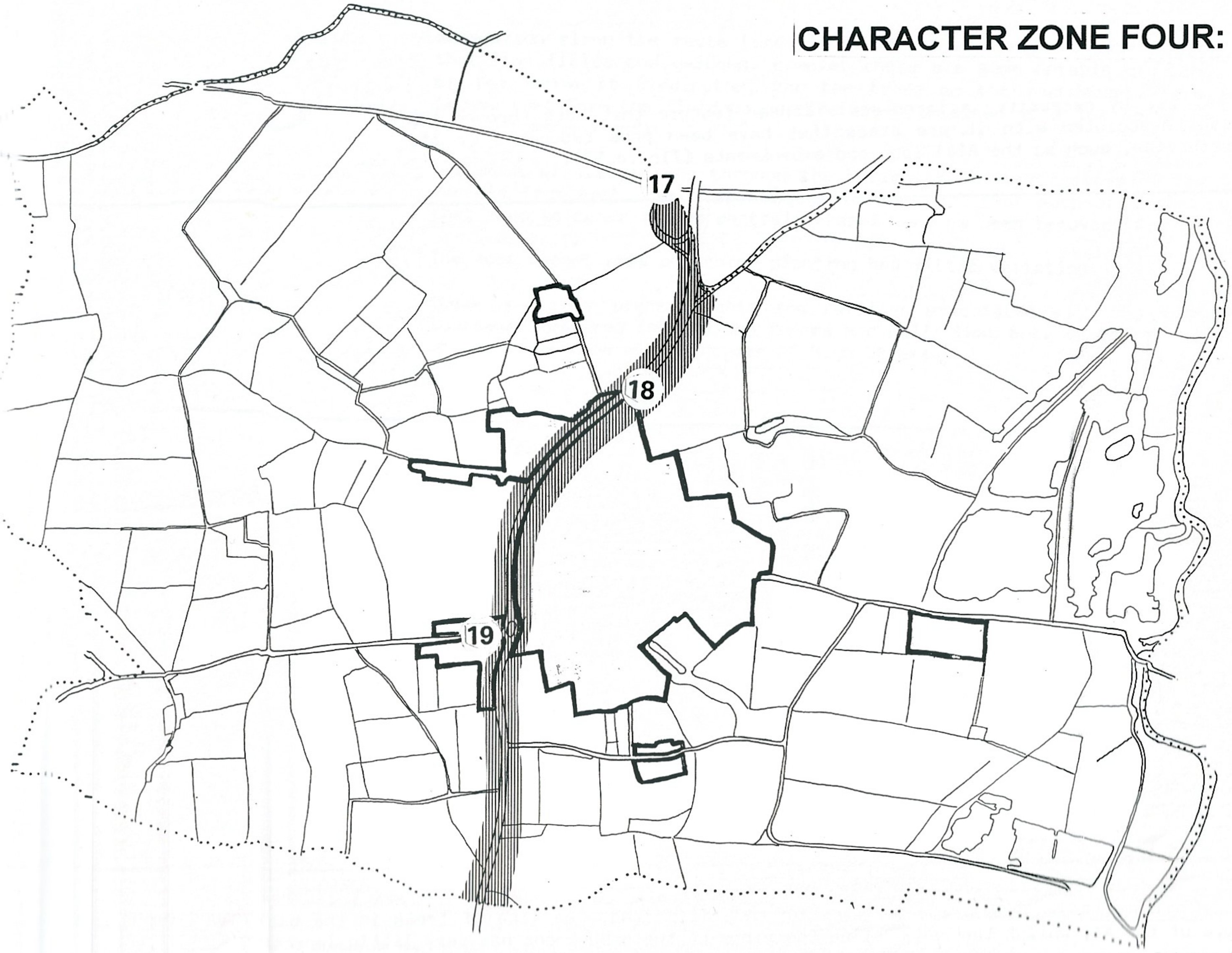


Figure 16: The extent of the A1 Zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright.

DESCRIPTION

The A1 is, by necessity, a large-scale linear feature that cuts through the Parish. Associated with it are areas that have been made redundant by its construction, such as the A141 loop and embankments (figure 17).



Figure 17: A141 "loop" and A1. An area of redundant land. The line of trees in the background emphasise the l nature of the A1, whilst the hedge along the ridge of the embankment has very little impact.

Vegetation along the route tends to be linear in form, for example the hedges that line fields and gardens. However there are some notable groupings, such as the woods at Diddington, and the trees on the roundabout. Many of the hedges that form the field boundaries are maintained at a low level, and some have become spasmodic.

For much of its passage through the Parish, both carriageways of the A1 are visible from each side. This is due to the fact that much of the vegetation that used to occur in the central reservation has been removed (figure 18).

The most recent tree and shrub planting has little variation.

There are many signs, lights and railings associated with the road. Other inorganic features include the fences and walls that butt up to the road as it meets the gardens of the houses of High Street.



Figure 18: The A1, looking south towards Hardwick Lane and Park Farm. The vegetation around the farm balances the scale of the fields, but this is not matched by the roadside hedges, which have no significance in the scene. The road is the dominant element, with both carriageways being clearly evident. To the north of the farm buildings, the land seems

ANALYSIS

The A1 is a dominant feature and has a major impact on the landscape of the Parish. Its purpose, by design, is to allow traffic as easy a passage through the Parish as possible. Because of this, the zone is experienced at speed, and any subtleties are not overly evident.

Areas such as the A141 loop have not been exploited to mitigate the visual impact of the road. Instead they have been left with neither function nor quality.

The linear nature of the road is exaggerated by the lines of vegetation that run alongside. The major exception is Diddington where the strong blocks of trees, that follow the course of the brook, punctuate the landform and run perpendicular to the road. The vegetation is of a scale that is suitable to the scale of the road.

The significance of the roadside hedges is affected by various factors. Where hedges have been maintained at a low height, the consequence is that there is little visual impact. The relationship with the landform is also important. When a hedge is raised up on an embankment, any inadequacies are on full display. Conversely, when the hedge lies down from the main level of the road, it has little visual effect.

Vegetation that remains in the central area between the two carriageways has the effect of halving the visual impact of the road. The presence of a vegetative barrier may also be beneficial as a safety device, reducing glare from headlights.

The planting that accompanied the construction of the road is now approaching maturity. However there is little variation in size, age, form or species. This creates a monotony in the scheme.

The plethora of signs and artefacts associated with the road, coupled with the boundaries of the gardens, results in sections of the A1 having an "urban" character. At some points, the assembled result is a feeling of clutter (figure 19).

The A1 zone is an area of rapid transition. The scale and quality of the landscape in the main does not acknowledge this, and the landscape picture is fragmented.



Figure 19: Buckden Roundabout. The signs and fixtures associated with the road create an urban feeling. Significant vegetation, such as that found on the roundabout, is an important factor in mitigating this.

CHARACTER ZONE FIVE: AGRICULTURAL



Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

Figure 20: The extent of the Agricultural Zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

DESCRIPTION

The agricultural landscape of the Parish generally comprises large-scale fields that cover a gently undulating landform. The low horizons are often straddled by the fields. There are, however, some instances where the land rises up above the line of sight.

Vegetation is present in linear forms as a rule, but there are some larger groupings especially around farm buildings and dwellings (figure 21). The hedges that are present are managed to be low in height, and many are no longer continuous (figure 22). The few mature trees that dot the landscape are found in these hedgelines, and these punctuate the skyline.

Many of the fields are bordered by drainage ditches, and these provide an aural quality in times of rain.

There are a few plots of redundant land. These are usually found at field corners and other inaccessible locations.



Figure 21: Farm buildings at Shooter's Hollow. Mature trees are important as they mitigate the impact of large structures.



Figure 22: Looking north from Diddington Brook at Shooter's Hollow. The gentle topography is accentuated to some extent by the hedges on the horizon.



Figure 23: Looking north from Mill Road. The scale of vegetation does not compliment the size of the fields.

ANALYSIS

The agricutural zone accounts for the greatest acreage of the Parish. In terms of land units, it is a large-scale landscape, but this is not reflected in the vegetative features (figure 23). The hedges are low and therefore are insignificant against the size of the fields they contain.

The topography, particularly the horizon and its relationship with the fields, is an important factor. Where fields straddle the horizon, there is an ambiguity inherent, as it is harder to ascertain their true size. These factors combine to create a feeling of exposure, and there is a lack of intimacy. However, where the horizon is above the line of sight, the view becomes localised and intimate (figure 24).

The large size of the fields dictates that the structure of vegetation present never has a role to play in all three of the basic elements of composition: foreground, middle-distance and background. As a result, the opportunity to affect the scale of the zone is lost.

Where hedges do exist, they have a useful visual role to play, as they accentuate the slight topography.

The agricultural zone is one that lacks intimacy. It has an uneven balance of scale that is detrimental to the landscape picture.

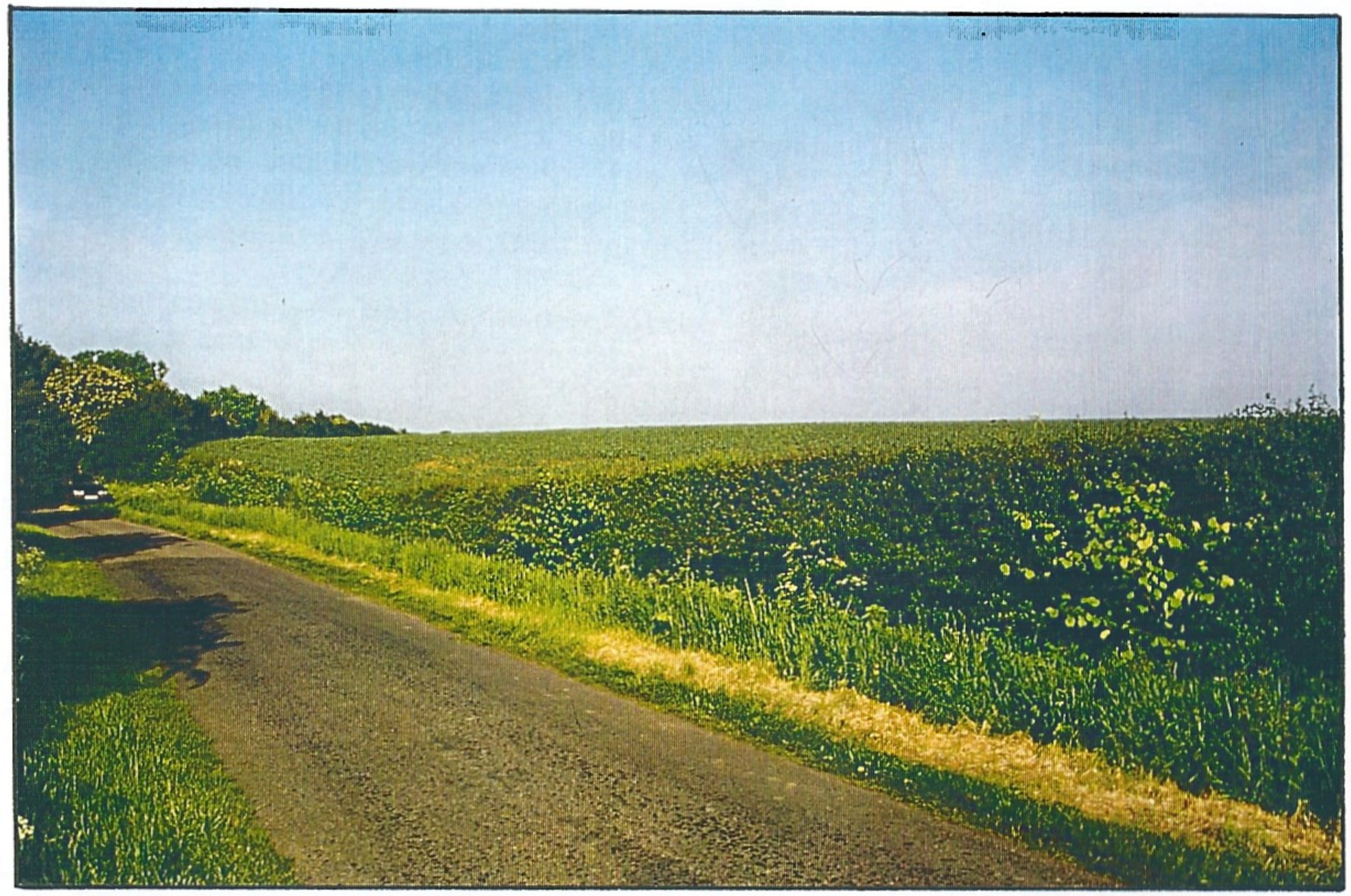
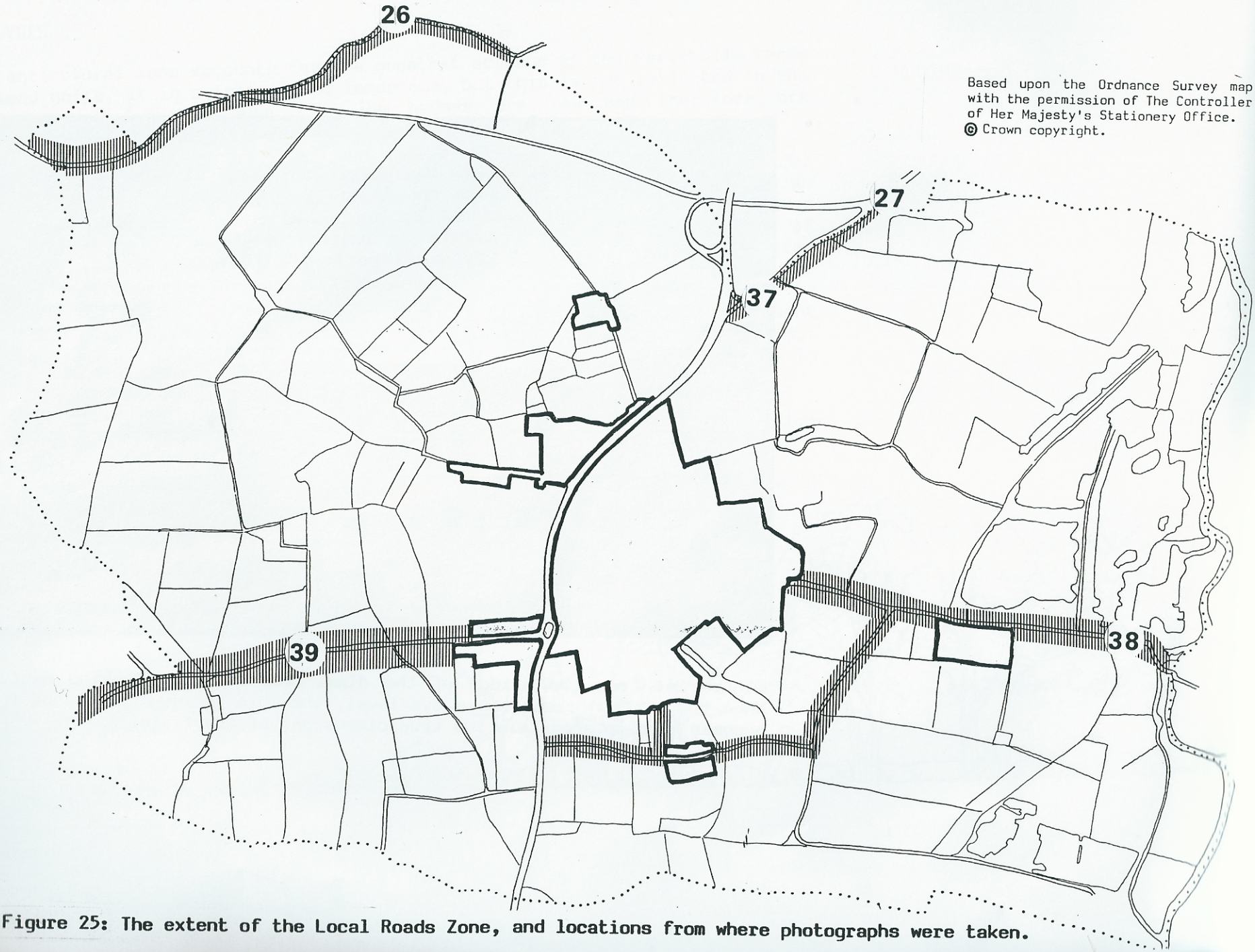


Figure 24: From the bridge of the dismantled railway, looking east. When the horizon rises above eye-level, the view becomes local and it becomes hard to ascertain the true dimensions of the field.

CHARACTER ZONE SIX: LOCAL ROADS



Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

Figure 25: The extent of the Local Roads Zone, and locations from where photographs were taken.

DESCRIPTION

For much of their length, the local roads are flanked by hedges that are maintained at a low to medium height. There are long views across these to the other zones of the Parish. Occasionally these views are interrupted by small copses that punctuate the roadside (figure 26), but there are few specimen mature trees in the hedges themselves.

The routes of the roads are often accompanied by lines of telgraph poles and other utility features.

ANALYSIS

At their best the local roads have a varied complement of vegetation that emphasises their form, whilst giving foreground interest, creating mystery, and focusing on significant views.

At worst they are exposed thoroughfares that are granted little shelter or form by vegetation.

Despite a general rationalisation of hedges within the Parish, those that run alongside the roads tend to remain. This is so because their removal would not enable the size or shape of the fields to change. The impact that these have varies with the immediate landform. For example, at points where the hedge is lower than the road, the perceived height is less and the impact of it is reduced.

The lack of foreground elements results in there being little mystery in the landscape, as long views are common (figure 27).

The landscape potential of the local roadscape has not been fully realised.



Figure 26: Grafham Road, looking east from Brampton Wood. Small copses are valuable landscape features as they "punctuate" the landscape of the roads.



Figure 27: A141 looking south towards the entrance to gravel pits and the A1.
Due to the topography, the horizon at this point is dominant. The dotted vegetation along this does little to mitig
the scale of the field. The foreground trees will be important to counter the dominance of the field. The mature he
is significant as it encloses the scene.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CHARACTER ZONES

Analysis of the existing landscape quality in the Character Zones has suggested the following recommendations.

The proposals do not aim to link actions with specific landscape features or locations. They are intended, however, to be accepted as design and management guidelines that present a concept for the overall landscape development of the Parish.



Hedge laying at Brampton Wood.

CHARACTER ZONE TWO: GRAVEL PITS

A. WORKING PITS

PROTECT EXISTING VEGETATION

At current workings, care should be taken to safeguard as much of the existing vegetation as possible, particularly mature trees. To avoid a piecemeal landscape, emphasis should be given to the protection of plant groupings.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Where the vegetation is managed in the same way as it was done before gravel extraction, it should be allowed to grow freely and informally instead. Suitable tree specimens could be coppiced to promote vigorous new growth.

UNDERTAKE NEW PLANTING

Where practical, new plantations should be designed to create bold shapes across the landscape. These should be planned to form controlled views that focus on certain features and prevent wide, limitless panoramas.

B. FORMER PITS

Once gravel extraction has ceased, care should be taken to ensure that the resultant landform and water bodies are exploited fully to benefit and enhance the local landscape and ecology.

DEVELOP THE EDGES OF THE LAKES

Particular attention should be given to the junction between land and water. These areas should be designed, established and/or managed in order to promote a diversity in both profile and vegetation type.

CREATE VERTICAL EMPHASIS

By the encouragement of both single mature trees and vegetation groupings, elements would be provided that would facilitate a visual "link" between the distinct horizontal bands that occur in this zone. These would also reduce the dominance of the houses on the ridge at the village edge whilst helping to focus the view. Special protection should be afforded to specimens that already fulfil this function.

UNDERTAKE NEW PLANTING

Sparse and isolated groups of trees and shrubs should be linked via new planting to achieve coherent tracts of vegetation. These would offset the scale of the water bodies by providing features of comparable scale.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

If further extraction were to be allowed, it would be prudent for all parties involved to develop a strategy of advanced landscape development that would serve to mitigate the impact of such works.

Young landscape with few mature trees

Hedges relate to former land use.

Dotted planting structure.

Wide, open landscape.
Uncontrolled views.

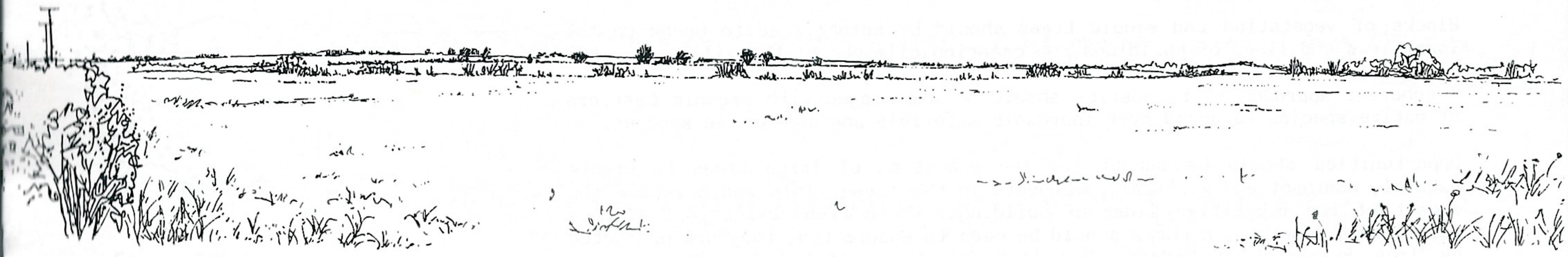


Figure 29(a): Typical Gravel Pits Zone scene - existing.

Bold structure of vegetation.

Areas of intimacey created.
Views through to horizon and village.

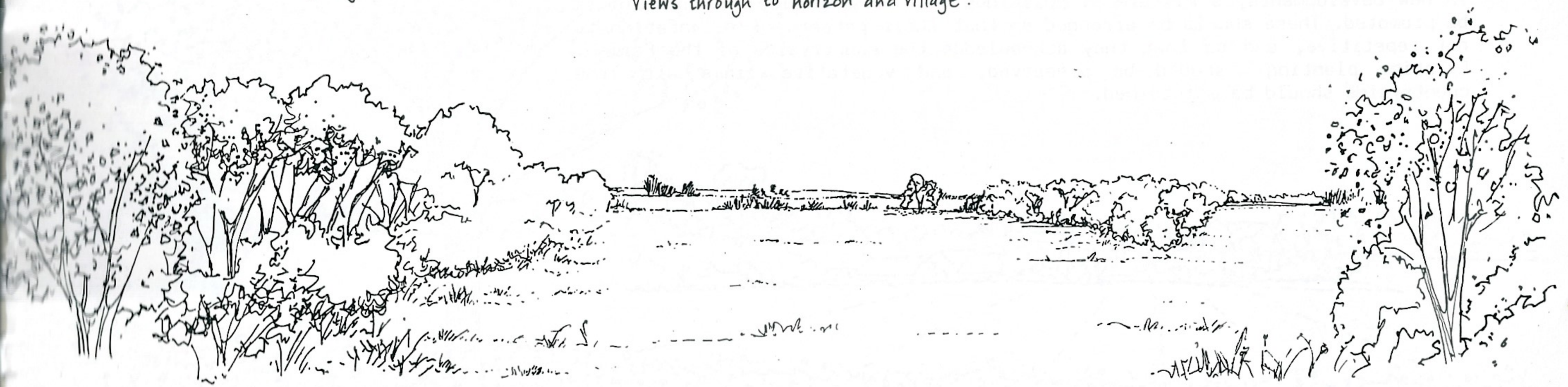


Figure 29(b): Typical Gravel Pits Zone scene - recommendations.

CHARACTER ZONE THREE: VILLAGE EDGE

MITIGATE THE EXISTING SITUATION

Blocks of vegetation and single trees should be established to break up the long views and lines of buildings, so creating glimpses of the village.

A coherent approach to boundaries should be encouraged with organic barriers of native species favoured over inorganic materials and non-native species.

Opportunities should be sought for the provision of large trees to create natural, dominant and vertical components in the scene. This would reduce the impact of the repetitive lines of buildings. Where trees exist that already fulfil this function, a check should be made to ensure that they are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. One fine Oak tree, felled in 1994, was an important element of the view of the village edge at Springfield Close. It had not enjoyed the protection of a TPO.

DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In new developments, a mixture of buildings that vary in size and form should be promoted. These should be arranged so that their pattern of orientation is not repetitive, and so that they acknowledge the countryside of the Parish. Existing planting should be preserved, and vegetative links with the countryside should be maintained.



Smith Drive from Stirtloe.

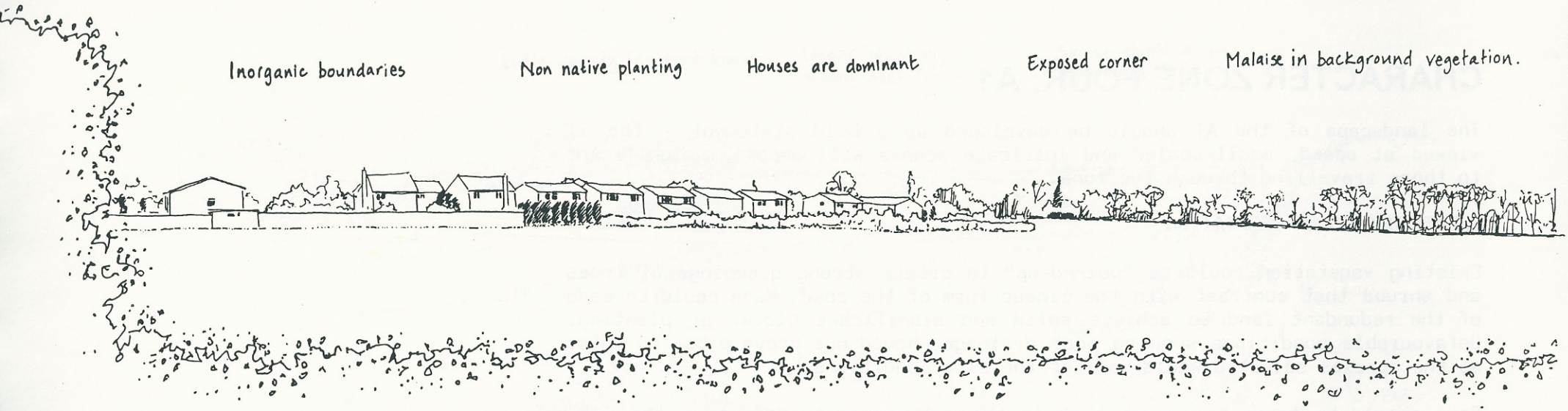


Figure 30(a): Typical Village Edge Zone scene - existing.

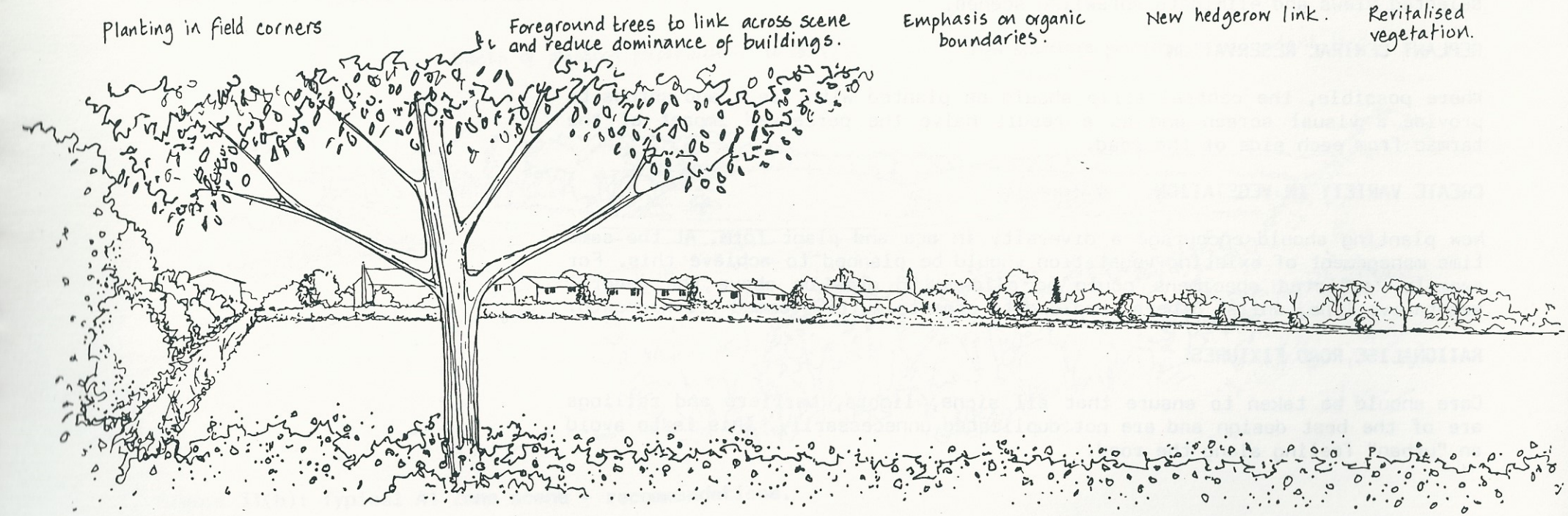


Figure 30(b): Typical Village Edge Zone scene - recommendations.

CHARACTER ZONE FOUR: A1

The landscape of the A1 should be developed as a bold statement - for if viewed at speed, small-scaled and intricate scenes will become insignificant to those travelling through the zone.

CREATE BLOCKS OF VEGETATION

Existing vegetation could be "bulked-up" to create strong groupings of trees and shrubs that contrast with the linear form of the road. Much could be made of the redundant land to achieve solid and significant blocks of planting. Unfavourable conditions such as poor drainage should not prove a bar to this, as the species selected would reflect the site conditions.

Care should be taken to ensure that in the enthusiasm to "plant-up the A1", reference to the village itself and other land areas is not lost. Careful positioning of planting groups and specimen trees should help to focus on selected views and eliminate sprawling scenes.

REPLANT CENTRAL RESERVATION

Where possible, the central strip should be planted with trees and shrubs to provide a visual screen and as a result halve the perceived impact of the tarmac from each side of the road.

CREATE VARIETY IN VEGETATION

New planting should encourage a diversity in age and plant form. At the same time management of existing vegetation should be planned to achieve this. For example, selected specimens could be allowed to grow up above the general vegetative line, whilst others coppiced to promote multi-stemmed fresh growth.

RATIONALISE ROAD FIXTURES

Care should be taken to ensure that all signs, lights, barriers and railings are of the best design and are not duplicated unnecessarily. This is to avoid an "urban" feeling along the road.

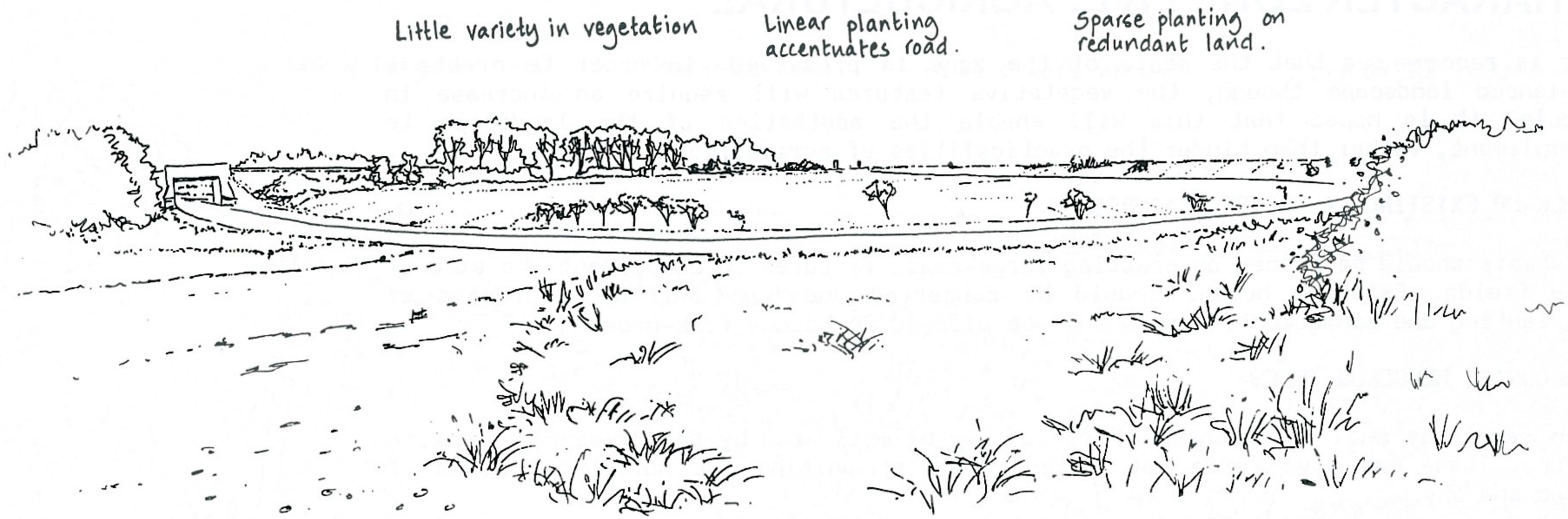


Figure 31(a): Typical A1 Zone scene - existing.



Figure 31(b): Typical A1 Zone scene - recommendations.

CHARACTER ZONE FIVE: AGRICULTURAL

It is recommended that the scale of the zone is preserved. In order to create a balanced landscape though, the vegetative features will require an increase in scale. It is hoped that this will enable the aesthetics of the landscape to complement, rather than hinder the practicalities of agriculture.

BULK-UP EXISTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Emphasis should be placed on creating large-scale features to complement the size of the fields. Existing hedges should be conserved and bulked-up by a process of replanting and management. Some should be allowed to become free-growing.

ENCOURAGE HEDGEROW TREES

The seemingly endless expanses of fields may be mitigated by the presence of mature trees. These can give foreground interest whilst uniting the horizontal bands of land and sky.

Existing trees need to be preserved, whilst young specimens are encouraged to grow up. Where this is not possible, new trees should be planted.

COMPLEMENT EXISTING FEATURES WITH VEGETATION

Opportunities should be sought to develop vegetation that complements current land use. For example, along lanes and bridleways where there is a break in the fields, planting could be concentrated. An excellent example of this is the former railway line that runs through the parish. This forms a strong landscape feature.

Where vegetative features help to accentuate the landform, they should be conserved and developed. Scope should be identified for further emphasis of the topography.

UTILISE REDUNDANT LAND

There may be areas of redundant land that can be devoted to the development of woodland/copse groups. These should be planned so that they do not stand in isolation, but link up with the other hedges and woods to create a network of habitats.

GIVE INDICATION OF SCALE

Where fields straddle the horizon, care should be given to making a suggestion of the fields' limits. This could be achieved by the use of single trees or hedgerows. Visual checks should operate to avoid the area being perceived as limitless, but these should not obliterate any long distance views to other parishes.

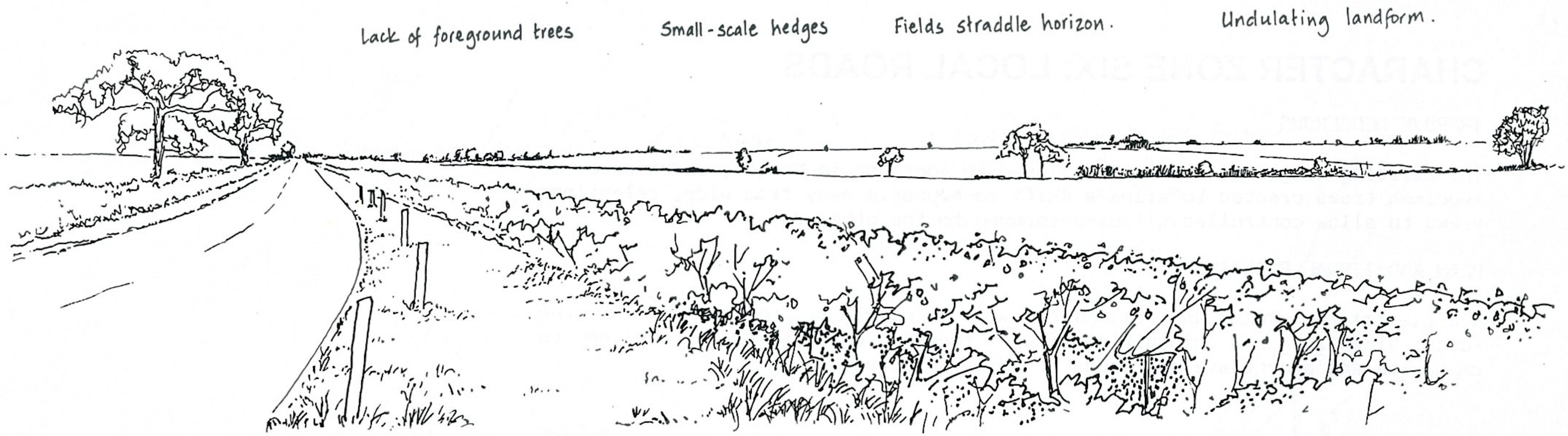


Figure 32(a): Typical Agricultural Zone scene - existing.

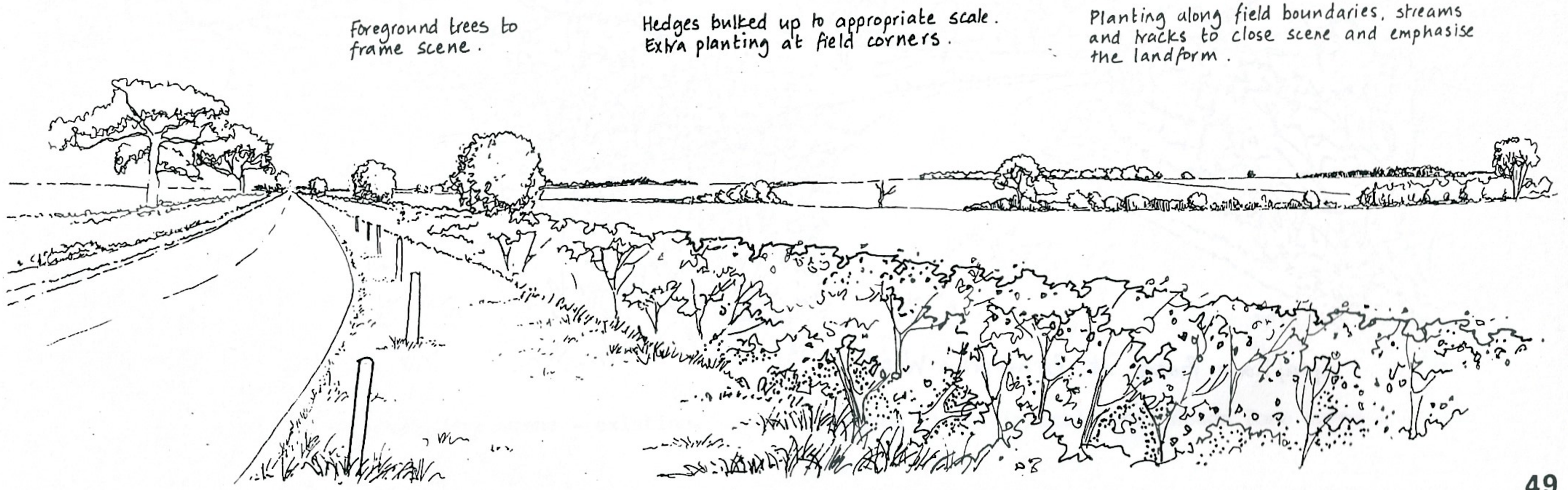


Figure 32(b): Typical Agricultural Zone scene - recommendations.

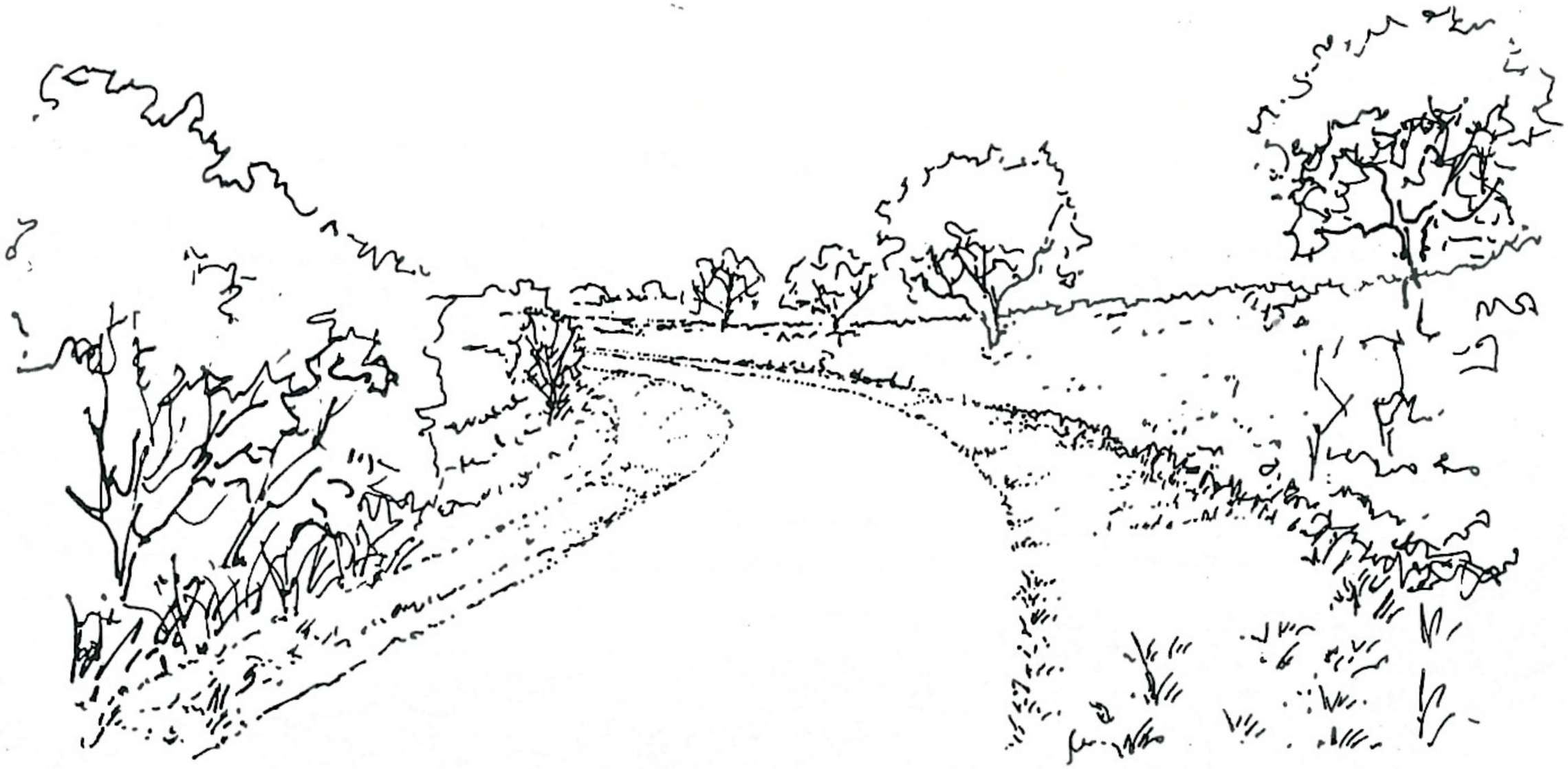
CHARACTER ZONE SIX: LOCAL ROADS

IMPROVE HEDGEROWS

The existing hedgerows should be allowed to increase in height, and avenues of specimen trees created to allow a shift in emphasis away from wide, relentless views to allow controlled glimpses through to the other zones.

PLAN ADDITIONAL PLANTING

New plantations should be planned to: work against the linear nature of the roads; block long and uninspiring views - focusing on features instead; and to emphasise and accentuate any bends or idiosyncracies.



Grafham Road at Brampton Wood.



Figure 33(a): Typical Local Roads Zone scene - existing.

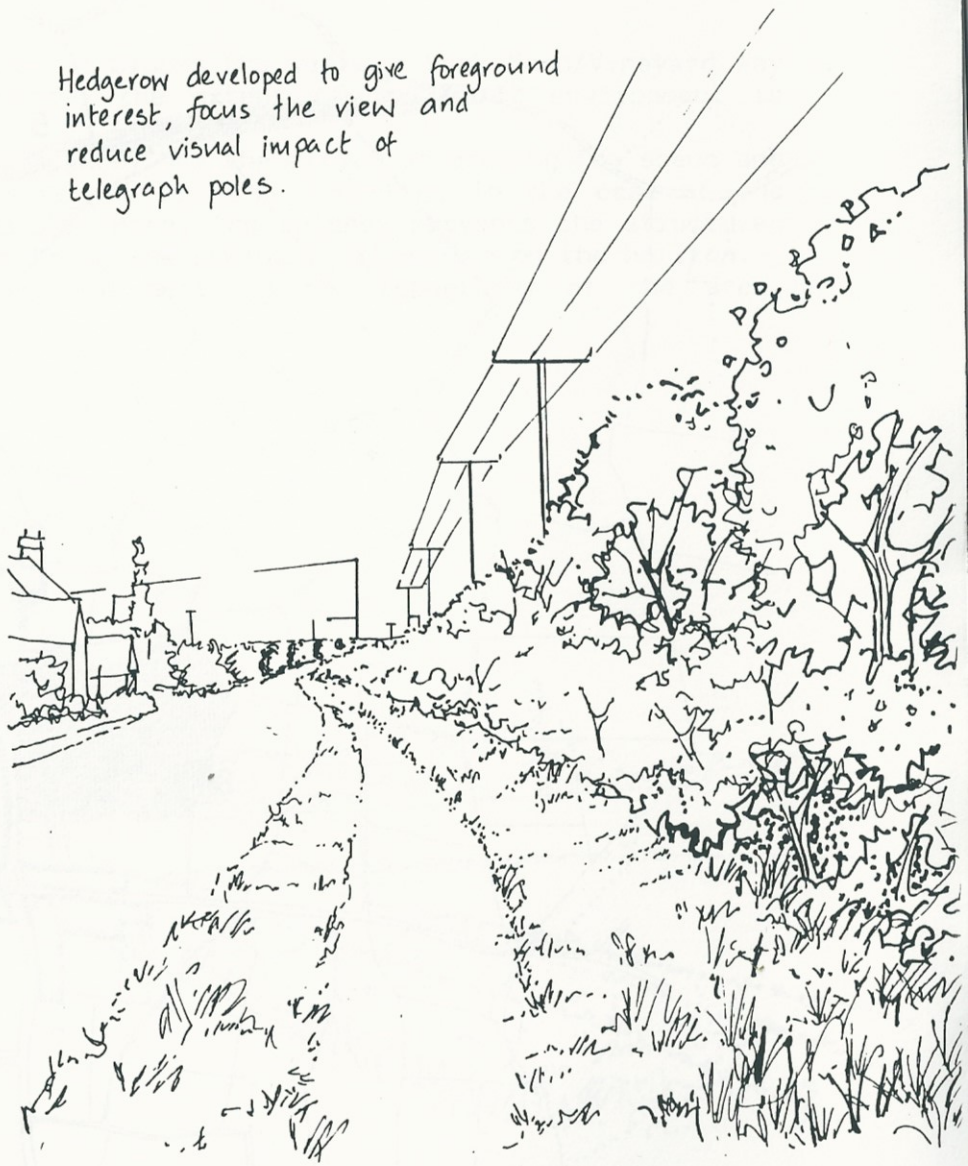
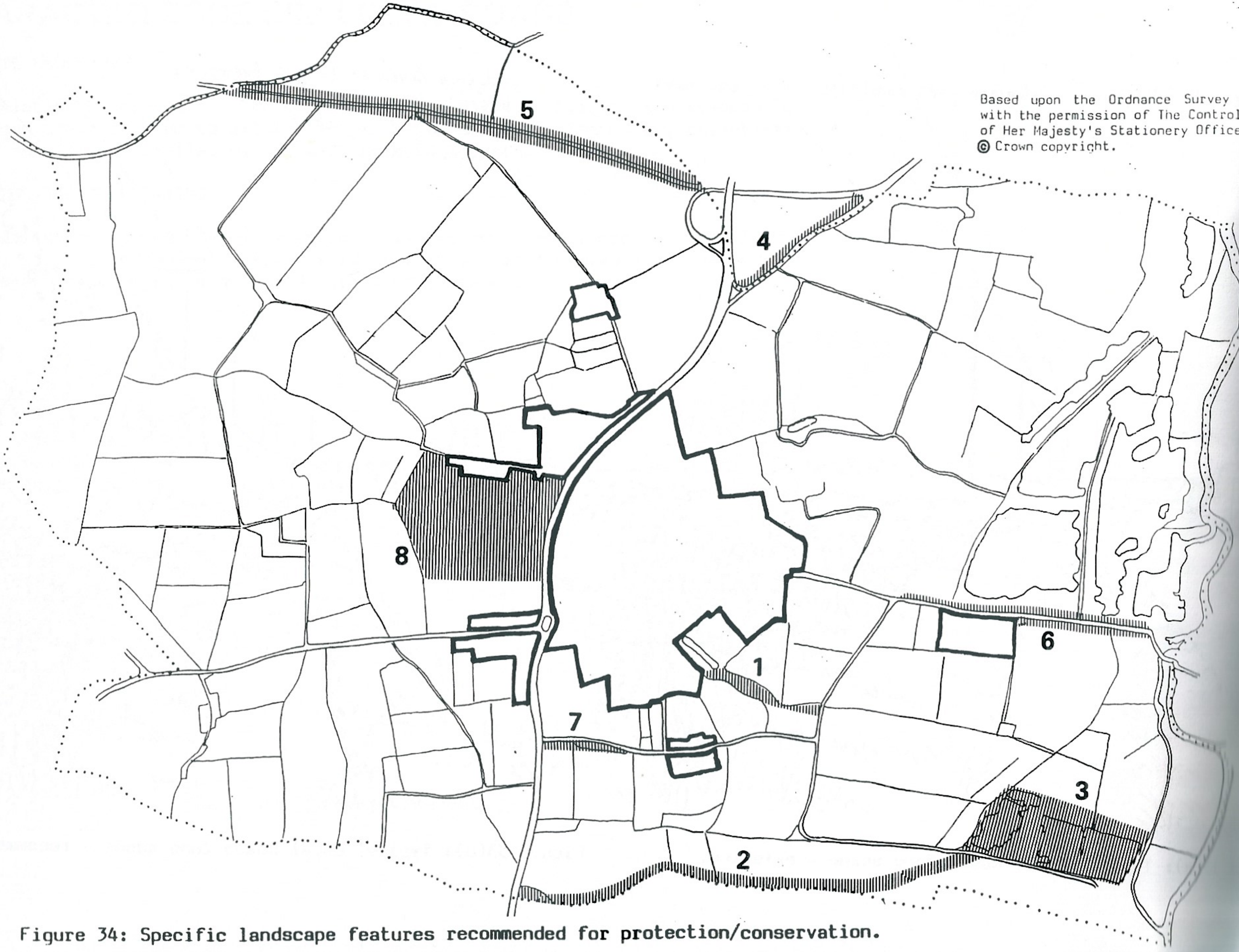


Figure 33(b): Typical Local Roads Zone scene - recommendations.

4. SPECIFIC FEATURES RECOMMENDED FOR PROTECTION / CONSERVATION



Based upon the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
© Crown copyright.

Figure 34: Specific landscape features recommended for protection/conservation.

1. SPINNEY AT THE "VALLEY"

This wooded area is important as it blocks the view of Park Road/Vineyard Way from Stirtloe. As a consequence, the extent of the built environment is perceived to be less.
Viewed from any direction, the spinney has the effect of closing the scene and providing a background. This is particularly important in the case of the sewage treatment works (figure 35). Here, the spinney prevents the structures associated with the works from being the dominant silhouette on the horizon.
The spinney is also important in defining the topography of the area. (Figure 36).

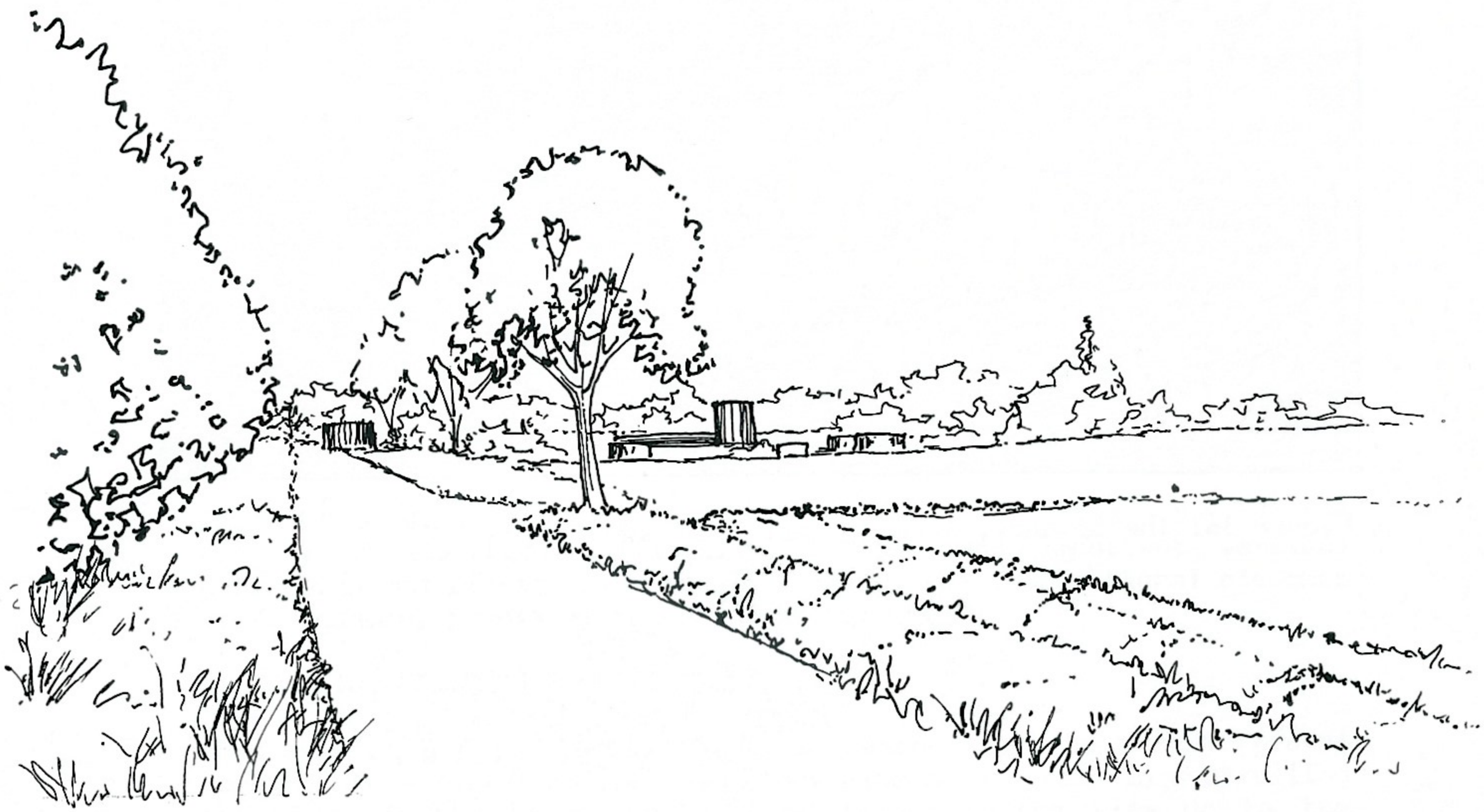


Figure 35: Sewage treatment works at Leaden's Lane.
The vegetation at Stirtloe is important as it provides a background for these structures.



Figure 36: The Spinney, looking east from Smith Drive.

2. VEGETATION ALONG DIDDINGTON BROOK

This vegetation forms a strong perpendicular axis which counters the linear impact of the A1. It also accentuates the slight undulations of the landform.
For much of its length the brook defines the Parish boundary, therefore the trees and shrubs associated with it are an important visual indicator of this.
This landscape feature is an important middle-distance element in the views from Stirtloe.

3. FORMER GRAVEL PITS

This is an excellent example of how a former gravel pit can be vegetated to form a feature that is now accepted as part of the natural landscape. It is an important highlight of the intimate Riverside zone.

4. HEDGEROW AT BRAMPTON ROAD

Although only small, this grouping of trees and shrubs illustrates how the careful positioning of vegetation can mitigate the impact of the A1. The height of the hedge is sufficient to break across the skyline and make it the dominant feature of the scene (figure 37).

5. FORMER RAILWAY LINE

This is a strong landscape feature that illustrates some of the history of the Parish. Visually, it provides important vertical definition and is important in all three of the compositional elements of foreground, middle-distance and background.

6. ROADSIDE HEDGE AT MILL ROAD

When kept at a suitable height, these hedges mask the current gravel workings from view from the road. They also have a role in controlling the wide views to either side, and focussing the view up to the village (figure 38).

2. VEGETATION ALONG DIDDINGTON BROOK

This vegetation forms a strong perpendicular axis which counters the linear impact of the A1. It also accentuates the slight undulations of the landform.
For much of its length the brook defines the Parish boundary, therefore the trees and shrubs associated with it are an important visual indicator of this.
This landscape feature is an important middle-distance element in the views from Stirtloe.

3. FORMER GRAVEL PITS

This is an excellent example of how a former gravel pit can be vegetated to form a feature that is now accepted as part of the natural landscape. It is an important highlight of the intimate Riverside zone.

4. HEDGEROW AT BRAMPTON ROAD

Although only small, this grouping of trees and shrubs illustrates how the careful positioning of vegetation can mitigate the impact of the A1. The height of the hedge is sufficient to break across the skyline and make it the dominant feature of the scene (figure 37).

5. FORMER RAILWAY LINE

This is a strong landscape feature that illustrates some of the history of the Parish. Visually, it provides important vertical definition and is important in all three of the compositional elements of foreground, middle-distance and background.

6. ROADSIDE HEDGE AT MILL ROAD

When kept at a suitable height, these hedges mask the current gravel workings from view from the road. They also have a role in controlling the wide views to either side, and focussing the view up to the village (figure 38).



Figure 37: Loking northwest along the A141 towards Brampton Parish. This illustrates two different roadside planting styles. The solid hedgerow provides enclosure, whilst the line of trees creates a feeling of space and allows views through to other zones.



Figure 38: Roadside hedge at Mill Road, looking west towards Buckden Village.

7. COPSE AT STIRTLOE

Like the vegetation at Diddington, this feature counters the line of the A1 and provides shelter and a setting for Stirtloe Lane.

8. FIELDS BEHIND TAYLOR'S LANE

These fields are an important open space along the route of the A1. The fine mature trees lend a solid, timeless feeling to a zone of transition and change.

9. GENERAL

As the topography of the Parish is slight, it should be recognised that the vegetative features have an important role in defining the landform. Hedges and trees that accentuate the landform should be afforded special care.

There is a dearth of foreground interest in much of the Parish, and any features that frame, control or block views should be valued.



5. PROCESSES AND FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE THE LANDSCAPE OF THE PARISH

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

In the Deposit Plan (1990) Huntingdonshire District Council states that there are no plans for the village to grow beyond its existing boundaries as Buckden is designated a "limited rural growth village". Stirtloe is to remain as a separate hamlet. Some infill development may be allowed, but only if it does not set a precedent for further development.

Where development is allowed, and if future policy were to take a different approach, care should be taken in the design to ensure that it addresses the issues such as orientation, boundary treatments and vertical scale.

CHANGING AGRICULTURAL PATTERNS

New crops and uses for agricultural land are constantly being sought, and these could change the character of the Parish. As an example, the pattern of sowing and harvesting within one season may give way to a long-term regime of willow plantations for fuel production.



THE "ARC OF PROSPERITY"

In a recent report, the Henley Centre describes the area between Huntingdon and Cambridge as a zone of potential boom and prosperity. If this prediction is correct, then the rapid development may place great pressure on villages such as Buckden to provide more residential areas and social facilities. An unprecedented demand for greenfield sites may ensue.

A1 UPGRADING

The Highways Agency has concluded that a completely new route is required for the proposed A1(M) Motorway from Biggleswade to Brampton. This would pass through Buckden Parish.

It can be seen from the changes to the A1 at Brampton, that such road building can impose substantial new landforms that do not complement the underlying topography. A more sympathetic engineering solution should be encouraged in Buckden Parish.

It has been stated in this study that the agricultural zone is fundamentally large-scale, and should be maintained as such. The A1(M) would offer an opportunity to increase the scale of vegetation in the zone by the careful marriage of new planting (essential to mitigate the pollution and visual impact asssocited with the road) with existing landscape features.

The likelihood that the road will create a new limit to the built environment of the Parish is high. Planners may be put under pressure to allow develpoment up to it. This has been the case in Huntingdon between Hartford/Oxmoor and the Northern by-pass (A141). In the case of Buckden, this would result in areas described by the Structure Plan (Written Statement 1989) as best landscape being disturbed (figure 39).

Road construction requires vast quantities of raw materials, especially aggregates. The gravel deposits along the Ouse have long played a part in meeting the demand, and may be called upon to provide for the A1(M). A proliferation of gravel pits would ensure that the road would have an impact far beyond the line of its route.

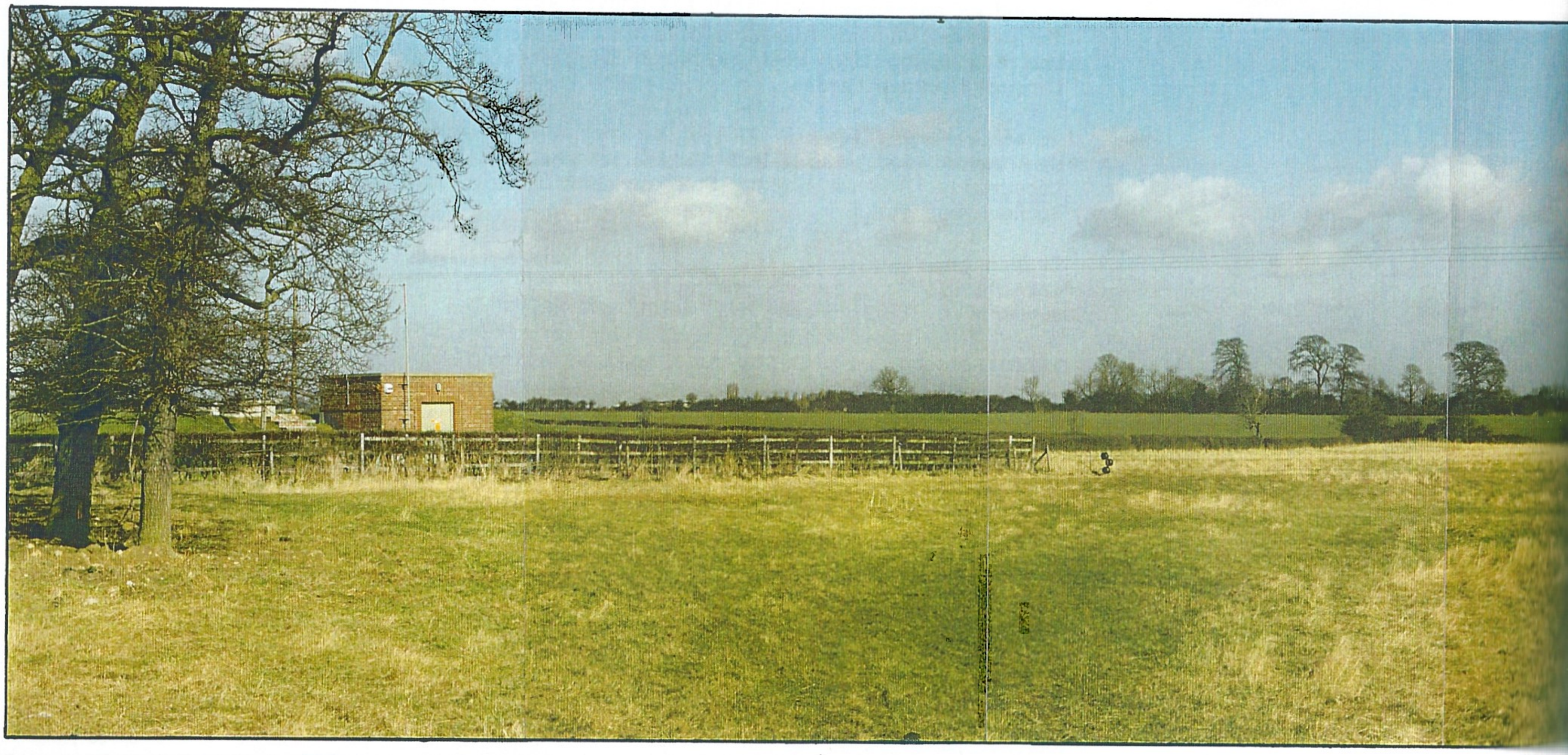


Figure 39: Perry Road, looking east from Buckden Wood junction towards Buckden Village. This scene illustrates how the need for a practical situation does not preclude a quality landscape. The varied vegetation is of an appropriate scale, and the view of the Palace and St. Mary's Church gives the scene a sense of place. The hedgerow trees mitigate the impact of the telegraph poles.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

USAGE SURVEY OF FOOTPATHS AND ROADS

It would be useful to have information that identifies the usage of the Parish's network of paths and roads. It may be the case that one footpath is used twice as often as another. A fair conclusion would be that the landscape of the first is enjoyed by twice as many, therefore is more important.
Opinions could be sought from both within and without the Parish boundary.
Once the favoured routes have been identified, the respondents could be asked to indicate the landscape features/qualities enjoyed most/least on that route.
Once collated on a masterplan, the results could be used to prioritise action.

VEGETATION CHARACTER SURVEY

In order to promote local distinctiveness, it is important to have information on both the species of plants present and the ratios in which they occur. For example, if it was recorded that a hedge contained Hawthorn, Elder and Dog Rose, it may be concluded that these occurred in equal quantities. The true picture may be that Hawthorn is the most dominant of the three.
It is important to have a percentage breakdown for each vegetative grouping, so that if replanting is needed, or similar habitats are to be created, then this can be achieved with accuracy.

Further questions need to be asked to allow a "portrait" of the vegetation to be obtained. These would identify whether plants are single or multi-stemmed, at what spacing they are, how the vegetation is managed, and what function it has.

STUDY OF THE VILLAGE CHARACTER

A similar study should be undertaken to identify the character zones of the built environment of the Parish. Such research would probably identify a further six zones. The results would be expected to identify: whether there is a specific Buckden "style"; spacings appropriate to the village; and the quality of open space. (Figure 40).









Figure 40: Study the village character.

7. CONCLUSION

The landscape of Buckden Parish, excluding the village itself, can be classified into six zones. The character of each is different, and they vary in scale and quality. However there are general points:

1. The landform is gentle and the resultant long and wide views emphasise weaknesses in the landscape.

2. The vegetation is an important element of the landscape. The structure of trees and hedges punctuates the views and creates some areas of intimacy and shelter. Single trees are a useful tool in countering the horizontal nature of the land and compensate for any lack of height variation in the topography. Trees help to link across the individual elements in each scene.

3. Typically there is a lack of foreground. Hedges that have been maintained at a low height do little to focus views or lead the eye through to other landscape features.

4. There has been a decline in vegetation in places: hedges are stumpy, outgrown or removed; trees stand in isolation.

5. "Good" landscape does exist within the Parish. From the west there are fine views across fields with mature trees and strong hedges to St. Mary's Church and the Palace. To the south, the area around Stirtloe House, although close to the A1, mitigates the impact of the road by way of a good structure of foreground, middle-distance and background vegetation. Finally, along the Riverside, the intimate landscape of hedgerows, fields and water has many superior qualities.

The landscape of Buckden Parish has great potential. The framework exists for a bold structure to link between the different zones to create a coherent landscape picture.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE IMPLEMENTING WORK TO THE LANDSCAPE OF THE PARISH

1. Study the form of the land and decide how best to complement it.

2. Survey the views and determine how to control and focus them.

3. Decide on a function for the landscape features and manage them accordingly.

4. Seek opportunities for the creation of links between areas of differing land use.

5. Be inspired by local character. Utilise the species, patterns and styles that occur locally.

6. Consider each landscape element, not in isolation, but as part of a whole.

7. Adopt a long term vision. Remember, landscapes improve with maturity.