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locality

# Congleton

Design Guidelines & Design Codes

**Draft report**  
**April 2023**

Delivering a better world

## Quality information

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## Revision History

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| 5         | 24.04.2023 | Signed off report     | Joe Greenhalgh | Graduate Urban Designer | n/a               | n/a                    |

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Introduction

01

# 1. Introduction

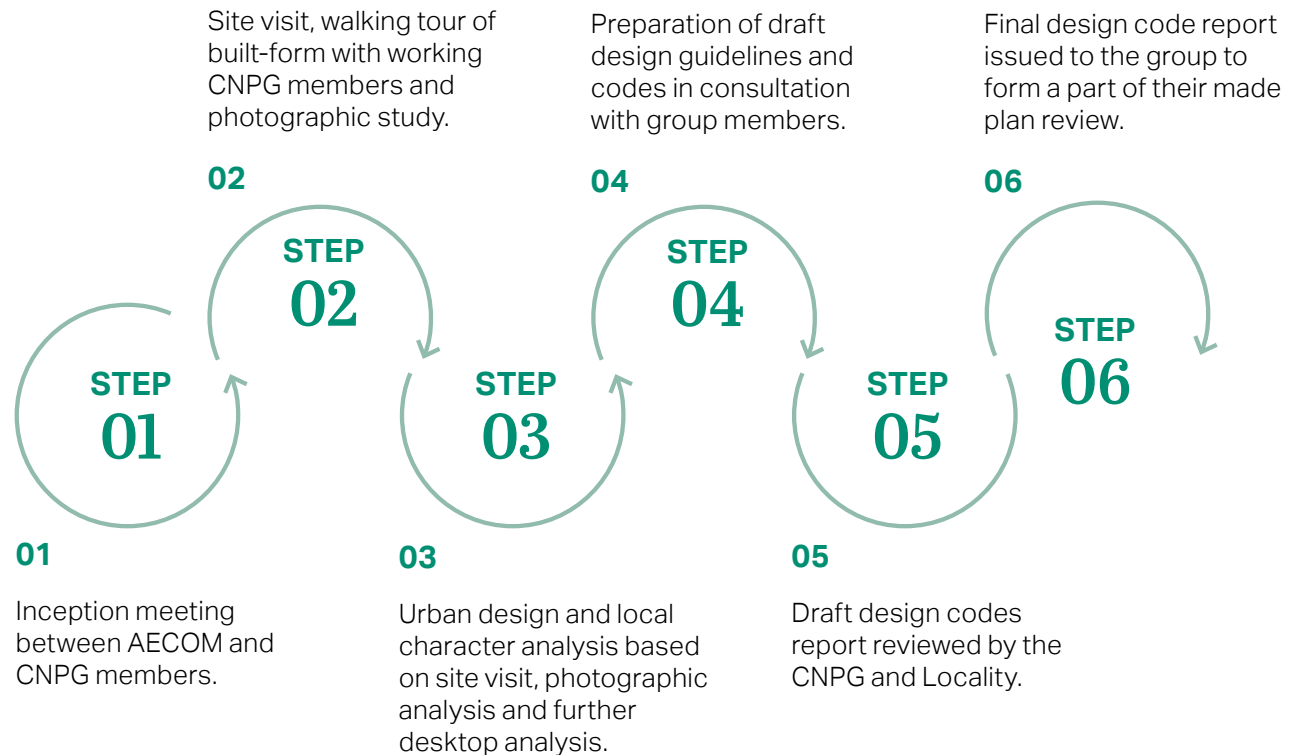
The Congleton Neighbourhood Plan Group (CNPG) were allocated AECOM's support by Locality to establish a design guide with a number of design codes to influence the character and design of new development within the Neighbourhood area.

The design guidance seeks to help unlock the development potential of the area by providing important design principles and clarity for future development in and around Congleton. The CNPG requested a particular focus on revitalising Congleton Town Centre as well as providing guidance on its expanding residential suburbs.

This design code document covers the whole plan area. The guidance and design codes are underpinned by a baseline assessment of the character across Congleton, as well as the rural landscape to the east of the Neighbourhood area.

## 1.1 Aims

- To positively influence the character and design of new development within the Neighbourhood area.
- To produce a detailed appraisal of the Neighbourhood areas urban and landscape context.
- To identify the character and opportunities of Congleton Town Centre and its surrounding suburbs.
- Provide design guidance and codes to support context-sensitive development and proposals.



## 1.2 Objectives

The following objectives will help to achieve the overarching aims set out on the previous page.

- Review of planning policy and landscape character studies covering the Neighbourhood area
- Detailed character analysis of Congleton's built form, inclusive of both historic and more recent development
- Design guidance and codes covering the whole Neighbourhood area
- Design guidance and codes specifically focusing on Congleton Town Centre and suburban residential development

## 1.3 Study area

Congleton is a large town and Civil Parish located in the far east of Cheshire where it shares a boundary with the neighbouring county of Staffordshire. The Neighbourhood area has a population of 30,015 as of the 2021 Census.

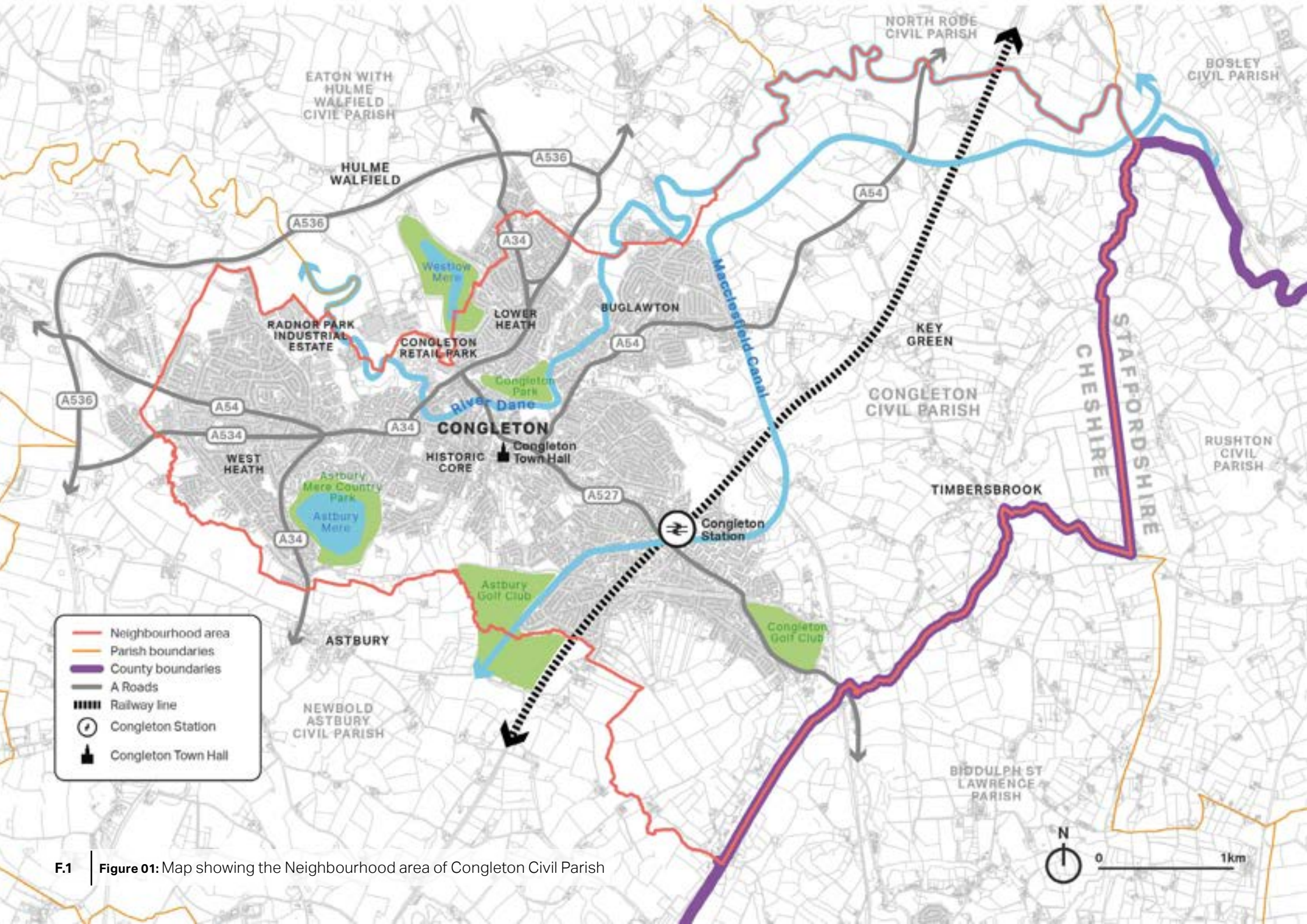
As its name suggests, the Neighbourhood area is dominated by the historic market town of Congleton which is located to the west. Congleton has a definitive 'historic core' which centres around the 19th century Congleton Town Hall.

The eastern half of the Neighbourhood area is more rural in character and is host to the small village of Timbersbrook and multiple farms. Timbersbrook is a small village composed of a handful of houses enveloped by open farmland.

The area is also strategically located to the west of the Peak District National Park as well as between two regional economic centres; Manchester and Birmingham. Both of are readily accessible from Congleton Station or via road. The area is well-connected to several A roads providing cross-county and national connectivity.

As well as the urban form of Congleton, the wider Neighbourhood area has a strong green character. This is reflected by the area's large green spaces such as Congleton Park, Astbury Mere, and Congleton Golf Club, as well as the natural open landscape of the Neighbourhood areas eastern half. The River Dane and Macclesfield Canal also flow through the area, running along the north and east of Congleton respectively.

This Design Code document seeks to respond to the historic market town and green character of the Neighbourhood area, as well as focusing on future development within Congleton Town Centre and its expanding suburbs.



F.1 | Figure 01: Map showing the Neighbourhood area of Congleton Civil Parish

## 1.4 Who should use the guide and codes

The Design Code should be a valuable tool in securing context driven, high-quality development in the Neighbourhood area. It will be used in different ways by different actors in the planning and development process, as summarised in the table.

A valuable way the guidance and codes can be used is as part of a process of co-design and involvement that further understands, and takes account of, local preferences and expectations of design quality. In this way they can usefully facilitate conversations on key issues, helping to align expectations and achieve an informed and balanced approach. A Design Code alone will not automatically secure optimum design outcomes but should help to prevent many of the worst. They can also help to raise standards and overall design quality.

| Potential users                                 | How they will use the design guidelines                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Applicants, developers, &amp; landowners</b> | As a guide to community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought.       |
| <b>Local Planning Authority</b>                 | As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications.<br><br>The Design Guidelines should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions. |
| <b>Town Council or Neighbourhood Plan Group</b> | As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the Design Guidelines are complied with.                                                                                       |
| <b>Community groups &amp; Local Residents</b>   | As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications.                                                                                                |
| <b>Statutory consultees</b>                     | As a reference point when commenting on planning applications.                                                                                                                                    |

**Table 01:** Potential users of the guidance and codes

## 1.5 Planning policy and design guidance

There are several national and local planning policy and guidance documents that have been referred to in the development of this design guide and the codes featured in it. This section highlights recent government initiatives such as the National Design Guide and Homes England adoption of Building For a Healthy Life.

### 1.5.1 National Planning Policy & Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's overarching economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. The policies within the NPPF apply to the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and act as a framework against which decisions are made on planning applications.

The parts of the NPPF which are of particular relevance to this Design Code are:

- **Part 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres** - this section directly relates to the future development of Congleton. The section stipulates the need for revitalising town centres via sustainable growth and diversifying beyond the traditional offering of retail.
- **Part 12: Achieving well-designed places** - this section stresses the creation of high-quality buildings and places as being fundamental to what

the planning and development process should achieve. It sets out a number of principles that planning policies and decisions should consider, in ensuring future development is well-designed and focused on quality.

- **Part 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment** - this section stipulates the value of heritage assets and how planning proposals should actively seek to conserve and enhance them. It includes a number of themes to consider during the planning stages, including local identity, character, and culture.

The NPPF notes that 'development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes'.



## 2021 - National Model Design Code DLUHC

This report provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on 10 characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide:

Context, Identity, Built Form, Movement, Nature, Public Spaces, Uses, Homes & Buildings, Resources and Lifespan.

This guide should be used as an overarching reference for new development where topics are not covered in local guidance.



## 2020 - Building for a Healthy Life

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the new name for Building for Life, the government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. The new name reflects the key role that the built environment has in promoting wellbeing.

The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities to assess the quality of proposed schemes, as well as useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.

## 1.5.2 Local Planning Policy & Guidance

Congleton is a town and civil parish in the Cheshire East Borough of Cheshire. The locality is under the jurisdiction of two tiers of local government; Cheshire East Council and Congleton Town Council. The following planning and design documents were reviewed to understand the policy context under which this document has been produced. These include key documents such as the area's Local Plan, Conservation Area (CA) Appraisals, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), and the Congleton and Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessments (LCA<sup>1</sup>).

### SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

|                                                                                     |                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Authority-wide                  |
|  | Supplementary Planning Document |
|  | Within Neighbourhood area       |

|                                                  |               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010 - 2030    | July 2017     |
| Site Allocations & Development Policies Document | December 2022 |
| Cheshire East LCA <sup>1</sup>                   | May 2018      |
| Cheshire East Design Guide SPD                   | May 2017      |
| Local List of Historic Buildings SPD             | October 2010  |
| Princess Street Area Development Brief SPD       | March 2009    |
| Affordable Housing & Mixed Communities SPD       | April 2006    |
| Sustainable Development SPD                      | April 2005    |
| Macclesfield Canal CA Appraisal                  | January 2009  |
| Moody Street (Congleton) CA Appraisal            | July 2010     |
| West Street (Congleton) CA Appraisal             | July 2010     |
| Congleton LCA <sup>1</sup>                       | March 2020    |

## Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010 - 2030

This document makes up the first part of the Local Plan in supporting the council's priority of employment-led growth. The Local Plan Strategy (LPS) sets out the overall vision and planning strategy for development in the borough and contains policies to ensure that new development addresses the economic, environmental, and social needs of the area. The plan has been developed to support the generation of jobs focused around key growth areas such as Crewe High Growth City, the M6 Corridor, and the North Cheshire Science Corridor. The strategy also includes a provision for extended employment sites in the borough's large towns, such as Congleton.

### SADPD

The SADPD forms the second part of the council's Local Plan, providing detailed planning policies and site allocations to support the strategic policies and sites contained in the LPS, which was adopted in July 2017. The document includes several policies relevant to this design code report including:

*Policy GEN 1 Design principles*

*Policy HER 1 Heritage assets*

*Policy HER 3 Conservation areas*

*Policy RET 2 Planning for retail needs*

*Policy RET 4 Shop fronts and security*

*Policy RET 7 Supporting the vitality of town and retail centres*

*Policy RET 8 Residential accommodation in the town centre*

*Policy RET 9 Environmental improvements, public realm and design in town centres*

Of the sites allocations stipulated in the document only one falls within the Congleton Neighbourhood area:

*Site CNG 1 Land off Alexandria Way*

### Cheshire East LCA<sup>1</sup>

The document provides an objective description of the landscape across Cheshire East, as well as providing a management strategy. The LCA<sup>1</sup> provides an evidence base to inform policies and proposals in the area. The document categorises different landscape types based off key characteristics such as topography, land use, field pattern, and views.

## Cheshire East Design Guide SPD

This SPD provides borough specific residential design guidance with a specific focus on larger scale housing proposals. Its aim is to influence the development process from its early stages, in ensuring that high-quality residential development is achieved across the borough. The guide will be used to support Cheshire East in rejecting poor quality residential design that does not meet the high standards now required by the authority. The document is in two volumes with the first setting out the unique characteristics of Cheshire East and how developers and designers should respond to such. Volume two provides specific guidance on aspects of residential design in making attractive proposals that will positively impact its surroundings.

### Local List of Historic Buildings SPD

This document encourages the retention and conservation of historically significant buildings that are not nationally recognised. Cheshire East has compiled the list of buildings based on their reflection of local distinctiveness, identity, and historic value. The list includes 24 locally listed buildings and structures within the Neighbourhood area including churches, chapels, cottages, and public houses.

### Princess Street Area Development Brief SPD

This document was prepared in response of the former Congleton Local Plan which identified the need to enhance the town's competitive position as a retail and visitor destination, improve pedestrian circulation, and provide new public infrastructure. The Princess Street area had been identified as an area of focus for regeneration within the town centre. The brief includes an assessment of the area's ability to accommodate new development as well as design principles on creating a vibrant quarter composed of well-designed new builds alongside conserved buildings and public spaces, within the Princess Street area.

### Affordable Housing & Mixed Communities SPD

Originally adopted by the former Congleton Borough Council, this SPD includes guidance relating to the provision of all forms of affordable housing. It sets out a definition of affordable housing as well as the specific site requirements and development considerations for such development. As well as affordable development the document stipulates the importance of achieving mixed and balanced communities whereby the requirements of specific groups are all met. The document is in response to Congleton's need to rebalance its housing provision (both market and social

sectors) by ensuring it can offer a variety of house types and tenures for its growing and diverse population.

### Sustainable Development SPD

Originally produced to be applied alongside the Congleton Local Plan, this document provides guidance on achieving sustainable development throughout Congleton. It offers guidance on protecting the town's environmental assets, sustainable design and layout, environmental protection and water issues, as well as advice on the use of sustainable materials and site practices.

### Macclesfield Canal CA Appraisal

⋮

### Moody Street (Congleton) CA Appraisal

⋮

### West Street (Congleton) CA Appraisal

There are four CAs in the Neighbourhood area but only three CA appraisals. Each CA appraisal document outlines the key characteristics of the area along with a rationale for its designation. They provide substantiated justifications for the designation via a detailed appraisal. They also include management proposals and general guidance on how each areas historic assets can be conserved.

### Congleton LCA<sup>1</sup>

The Congleton LCA<sup>1</sup> is intended as an evidence base to inform the policies and proposals of the emerging Congleton Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore to be used alongside the preceding planning documents, as well as this design code, in the determination of planning applications, as well as being used as a reference for local initiatives affecting the Neighbourhood areas landscape. The Congleton LCA<sup>1</sup> adds to the existing authority-wide LCA<sup>1</sup> study (Cheshire East LCA<sup>1</sup>) carried out by Cheshire East Council. The report identifies specific landscape types and areas, each detailing the variety of landscape features that distinguish each area within the Neighbourhood area from the next.

## 1.6 Site visits and engagement

A meeting at Congleton Town Hall took place on 09-08-22 between consultants (AECOM) and the Chief Officer of Congleton Town Council, David McGifford, and their Planning Consultant. This was followed by a guided walkover of the Town Centre and surrounding areas. A drive around areas of the wider Neighbourhood area (i.e. residential suburbs and landscape) was also conducted by consultants to appraise local character and key features informing its sense of place.

The exercise provided valuable insight into the area's pertinent design issues and opportunities, as well the overall context for which the evidence-base of the Neighbourhood Plan will reflect. Town centre revitalisation, heritage, as well as the quality and scale of residential development were the prevailing topics of the site visit and engagement process.



**F.2**  
**Figure 02:** Consultants met with the Chief Officer of Congleton Town Council at Congleton Town Hall during the engagement stages of the design codes production.

**Neighbourhood Context**

02

Congleton

Bus Station

Library

ation/Town Hall

Information

op Shop/Toilets

## 2. Neighbourhood Context

**This chapter outlines the planning constraints, landscape character, built heritage and context of the Neighbourhood area.**

### 2.1 Designations

The following designations are of great importance when considering development constraints within the Neighbourhood area.

When proposing development nearby to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Cheshire East Council should liaise with Natural England for advice on how impacts might be avoided or mitigated. Consultations should be sent to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk). If you are a developer, consultant or member of the public preparing to submit a planning application, Natural England can be consulted for pre-application advice on how impacts might be avoided or mitigated. See the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website for further information on pre-application discretionary advice service.

#### 2.1.1 Madams Wood (SSSI)

The 9 hectare area is designated due to its ash *Fraxinus excelsior* - wych elm *Ulmus glabra* clough woodland. The adjacent area of unimproved grassland also contains an extensive flush that is rich in sedges *Carex*. The woodland is situated to the north east of Congleton between the River Dane and Macclesfield Canal.

#### 2.1.2 Dane-in-Shaw Pasture (SSSI)

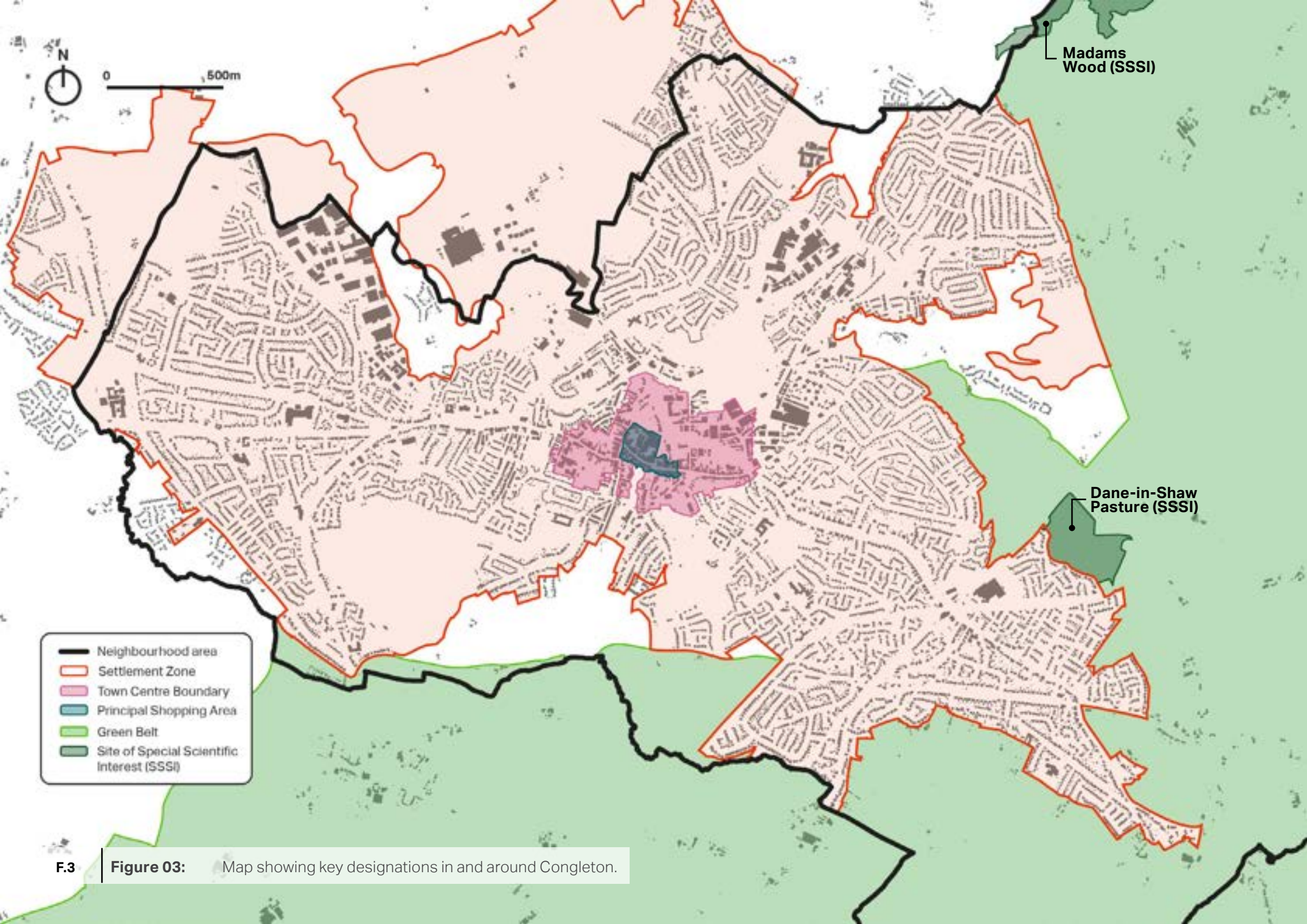
The 7.7 hectare area is designated due to it being the largest and most botanically diverse of flushed neutral grassland in all of lowland Cheshire. The area is an unimproved pasture lying in the valley of the Dane-in-Shaw Brook on the eastern outskirts of Congleton.

#### 2.1.3 Green Belt

Around half of the Neighbourhood area is within the Green Belt, essentially splitting the area into two halves. Congleton's Settlement Zone along with some surrounding spaces are the only areas free of the designation. The entire eastern side of the Neighbourhood area is Green Belt as well as the land to the south of Congleton.

#### 2.1.4 Settlement Zone, Town Centre Boundary, and Principal Shopping Area

The Settlement Zone, Town Centre Boundary, and Principal Shopping Area designations in Congleton originate from the Congleton Local Plan Saved Policies. While the Congleton Local Plan has expired, several of its policies are still relevant and are enforced as per the Congleton Local Plan Saved Policies document.



## 2.2 Heritage assets

As a historic market town, Congleton is host to a high number of heritage assets that are either nationally or locally listed. The Neighbourhood area's strong historic character is reflected by its four conservation areas (CA), three of which are in and around Congleton Town Centre, with the fourth stretching along the Macclesfield Canal which flows through the town's eastern suburbs.

Its heritage assets are a defining feature of the Neighbourhood area due to their reflection of local identity, distinctiveness, as well as the sense of pride they instill amongst the community. They contribute significantly to the town's place-making potential and present a strong foundation for further enhancement through the conservation of its built heritage.

### 2.2.1 Listed buildings

The Neighbourhood area has 133 Listed buildings (or structures) ranging from Grade I to Grade II Listings. Of these, there is a single Grade I Listed building, four that are Grade II\* Listed, and the remaining 128 that are Grade II Listed.

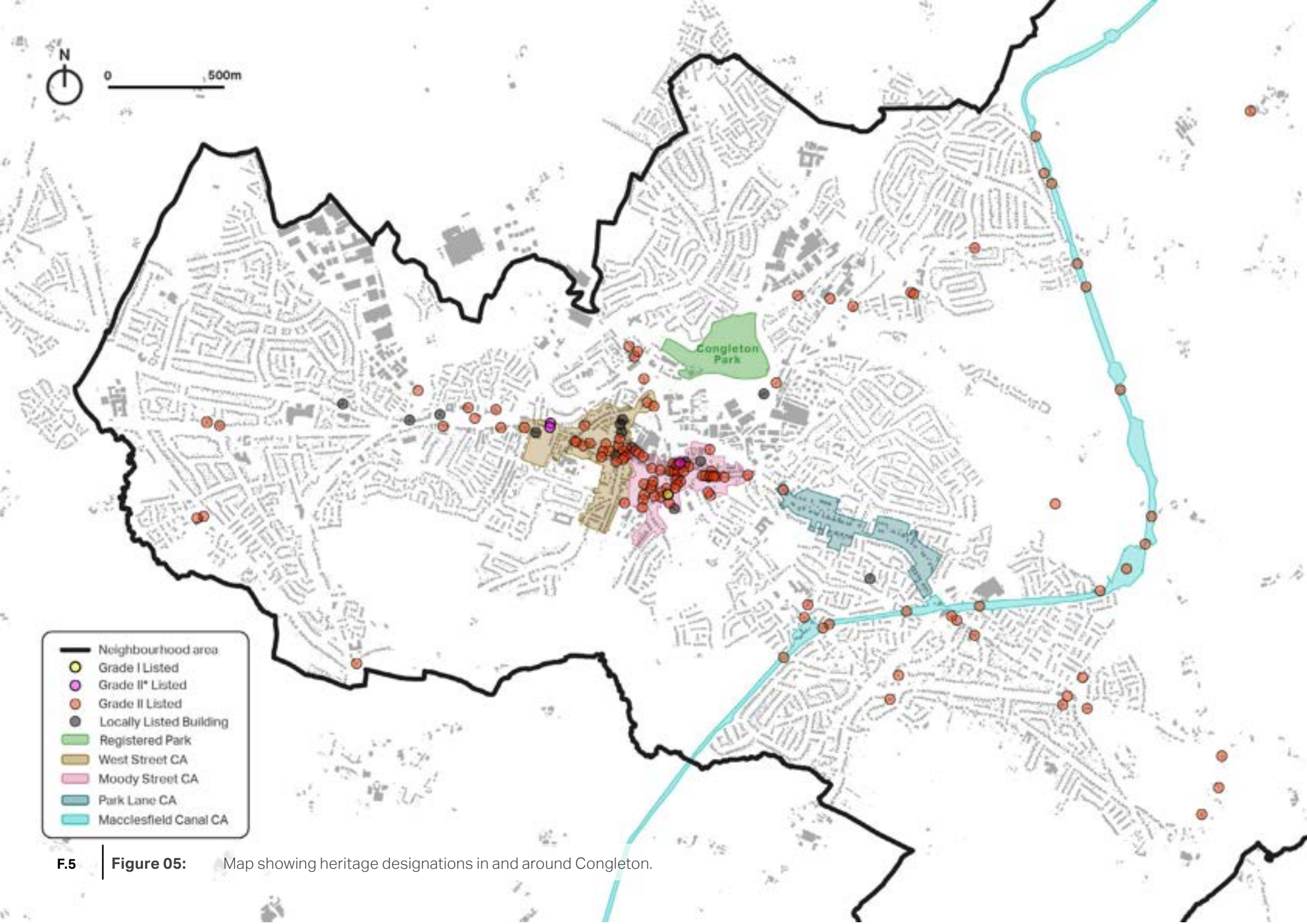
### 2.2.2 Locally Listed buildings

As per the Local List of Historic Buildings SPD produced by Cheshire East Council, there are 24 Locally Listed buildings within the Neighbourhood area. These vary in use and style but include historic public houses, several churches, dwellings, and a war memorial.



F.4

**Figure 04:** Grade II\* Listed Congleton Town Hall fronting High Street in the Moody Street CA



**F.5** | **Figure 05:** Map showing heritage designations in and around Congleton.

### 2.2.3 Conservation Areas (CA)

Both the size and historic character of Congleton are reflected by its four CAs. As Figure 05 on the previous page illustrates, the concentration of Listed buildings are at their highest within the CAs, particularly within the West Street CA and Moody Street CA, both of which are located within the historic market core of the town.

The four CAs are:

- West Street Conservation Area
- Moody Street Conservation Area
- Park Lane Conservation Area
- Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area

**Figure 06:** Historic streetscape of Lawton Street in the Moody Street CA

**Figure 07:** Congleton Cenotaph on Lawton Street commemorating over 600 local men and women

**Figure 08:** Statue of Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, a pioneering figure of the Women's Rights Movement





F.9



F.10



F.11



F.12

**Figure 09:** Historic streetscape along High Street with the Grade II\* Town Hall in the background

**Figure 10:** Grade II Listed The Counting House building along Swan Bank

**Figure 11:** Grade II Listed Bradshaw House fronting Lawton Street

**Figure 12:** Grade II Listed Ye Olde White Lion public house fronting High Street

## 2.3 Movement

Congleton is a large town strategically located between several large Northern cities. Congleton is the focus of the Neighbourhood area's movement as it is where the largest transport hubs such as Congleton Station and Congleton Bus Station are located, as well as where several primary roads intersect.

This contrasts with the lack of connectivity experienced within the eastern side of the Neighbourhood area, where there is a much lower population density. This directly reflects the open and rural character of the area in comparison to the urban town centre and extending suburbs of Congleton.

Despite its strategic position and strong road network, the Neighbourhood area's public transport provision is lacking due to an out-of-town railway station (1-mile from the town centre) and a bus station that operates only limited services.

### 2.3.1 Vehicular movement

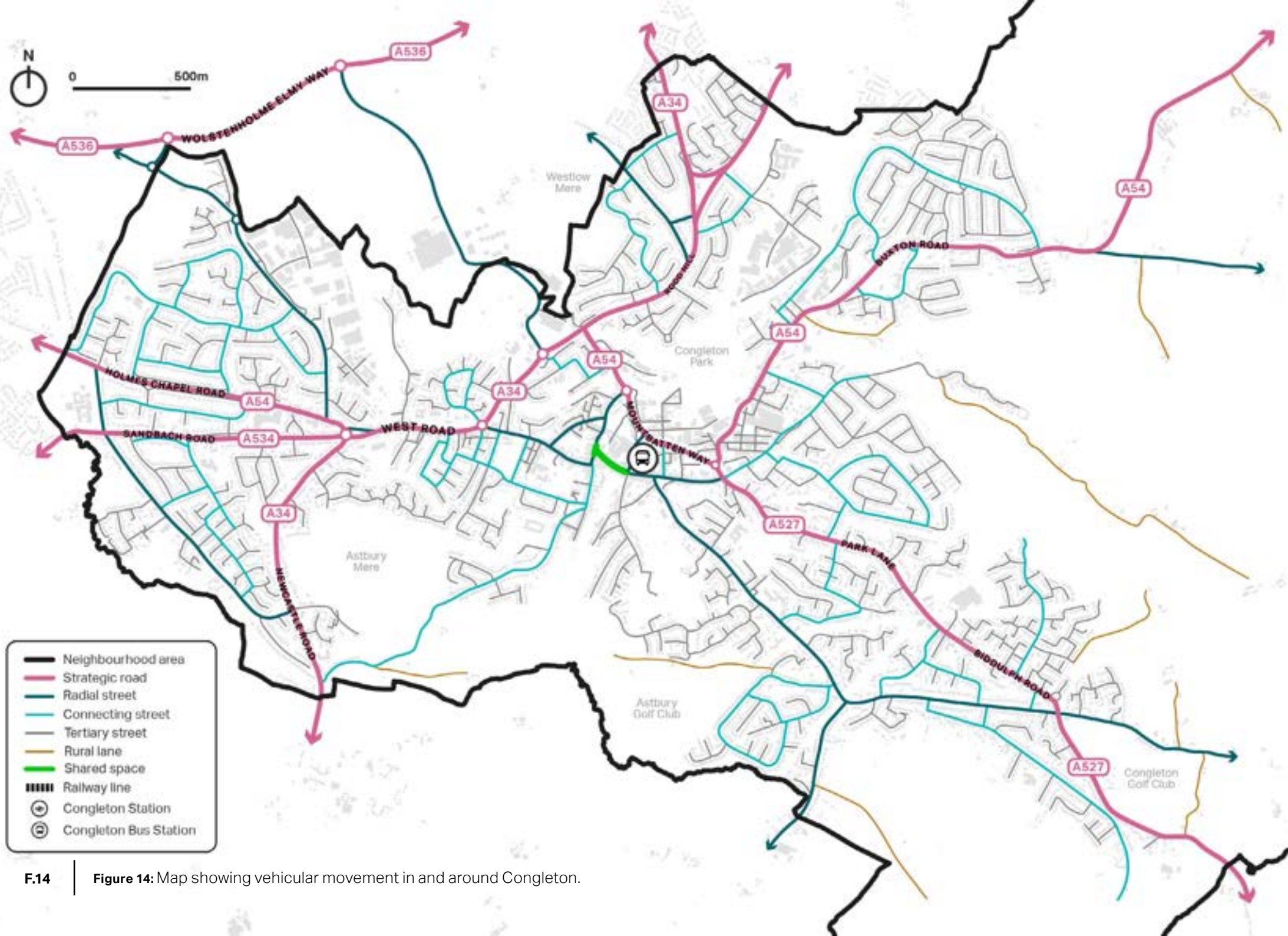
Strategic vehicular movement is made possible by the several A roads passing through and alongside the town. These include the A54, A534, A34, and A527. The recently completed Congleton Link Road (A536) also runs just outside of the Neighbourhood area to the north-west of Congleton. These routes provide Congleton with strategic connectivity to nearby towns such as Macclesfield and Crewe, as well as regional hubs such as Warrington, Stoke-on-Trent, Chester and Manchester.

In recent decades Congleton has grown via several large residential estates and urban extensions. Many of these are characterised by curvi-linear street patterns and cul-de-sacs which are typical of late 20th and early 21st century residential development. Vehicular movement within these estates can be confusing due to the lack of legibility caused by the expanse of homogeneous housing and dead-end cul-de-sacs which are an unfortunate feature throughout its outer suburbs.

The eastern side of the Neighbourhood area is host to several primary roads which cut through the open landscape. There are also several rural lanes providing connectivity to isolated farmsteads as well as the Neighbourhood area's secondary settlement of Timbersbrook. Timbersbrook is a small rural village surrounding an intersection of four rural lanes to the east of Congleton.



**Figure 13:** Mountbatten Way (A54) runs to the north of the Town Centre and is a significant barrier for pedestrian connectivity within Congleton



F.14 | Figure 14: Map showing vehicular movement in and around Congleton.

## 2.3.2 Street types (incl. examples)

### Shared space / Bridge Street



Congleton's most notable stretch of shared space is found within the Principal Shopping Area surrounding Bridge Street. The street is distinguished from surrounding roads by a change in material, additional signage, and the use of bollards at its westerly access.

#### Typical features:

- Pedestrian-oriented
- Busy pedestrian thoroughfares
- Found in urban areas surrounding retail and leisure uses
- Changes in surface / material which distinguish it from connecting roads

### Strategic road / Mountbatten Way (A54)



The Neighbourhood area is host to four strategic roads, all of which provide the core/spine of the area's vehicular network. Mountbatten Way (A54) in particular is a large dual carriageway running through Congleton Town Centre. The road connects to several other A roads and provides strategic connectivity to key settlements across the wider region.

#### Typical features:

- Busy and congested vehicular corridors
- Radiating in / out of settlements
- Provide strategic connectivity across districts and regions

### Radial street / Lawton Street



Radial streets are typically found around Congleton Town Centre, acting as mid-tier movement corridors between busier strategic roads and the more quiet connecting and tertiary streets. Lawton Street in central Congleton is a radial street and is fronted by retail and leisure. Other radial streets however are often fronted by residential use.

#### Typical features:

- Found within settlement centres as well radiating in / out of them
- Providing more localised connectivity throughout a settlement
- Often busy and congested vehicular corridors

### Connecting street / Kennet Drive



Typically found in residential suburbs where they provide connectivity across large residential estates. They often radiate from the busier radial streets and/or strategic roads before entering into a housing estate. They are therefore readily used by people who reside within the local area, and are therefore less busy and congested than radial streets.

#### Typical features:

- Found within residential suburbs
- Provide localised connectivity for residents within a certain neighbourhood
- Not readily used / congested
- Internal spine of estate road networks

### Tertiary street / Lilac Court



Tertiary streets are often small, quiet roads in enclosed residential or industrial areas. Lilac Court for example is a cul-de-sac development providing connectivity to only the handful of dwellings along the street. Congleton's several industrial estates are similar where streets only provide limited connections to several businesses.

#### Typical features:

- Found within residential suburbs or enclosed industrial areas
- Often cul-de-sacs or provide connectivity to only a small number of dwellings and/or businesses
- Quiet as only used by handful of users

### Rural lane / Weathercock Lane



Rural lanes in the Neighbourhood area are long, narrow, and winding routes that stretch out into the open countryside. For this reason, rural lanes are concentrated within the more rural, eastern portion of the Neighbourhood area. They provide connectivity to small settlements (i.e. Timbersbrook and Key Green), farmsteads, and isolated rural dwellings.

#### Typical features:

- Found within rural settings
- Often narrow, allowing one-way traffic
- Lack public realm or formal footpaths
- Lined by hedgerow and other green infrastructure (i.e. open fields, farmland)

### 2.3.3 Public transport

Congleton has a centrally located bus station on Market Street and a railway station on the eastern outskirts of the town centre just off Park Lane. Six services operate from the station providing connectivity between Congleton and the nearby towns of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Crewe, Macclesfield, and Alsager. Bus stops are frequently distributed throughout central Congleton as well along multiple connecting roads (i.e. primary and secondary roads) in its residential suburbs.

Congleton Station is a mainline railway station on the Stafford-Manchester branch of the West Coast Main Line. Preceding stations include Stoke-on-Trent and Kidsgrove and the following station is Macclesfield. The station is served by two platforms which are linked via a pedestrian footbridge. Other amenities include a car park and cycle storage. Hourly services run to Manchester Piccadilly (via Macclesfield) and Stoke-on-Trent during off-peak hours.

**Figure 15:** Congleton Station with its two platforms (1 and 2) connected via a pedestrian footbridge.

**Figure 16:** Congleton Bus Station on Market Street in Congleton Town Centre.

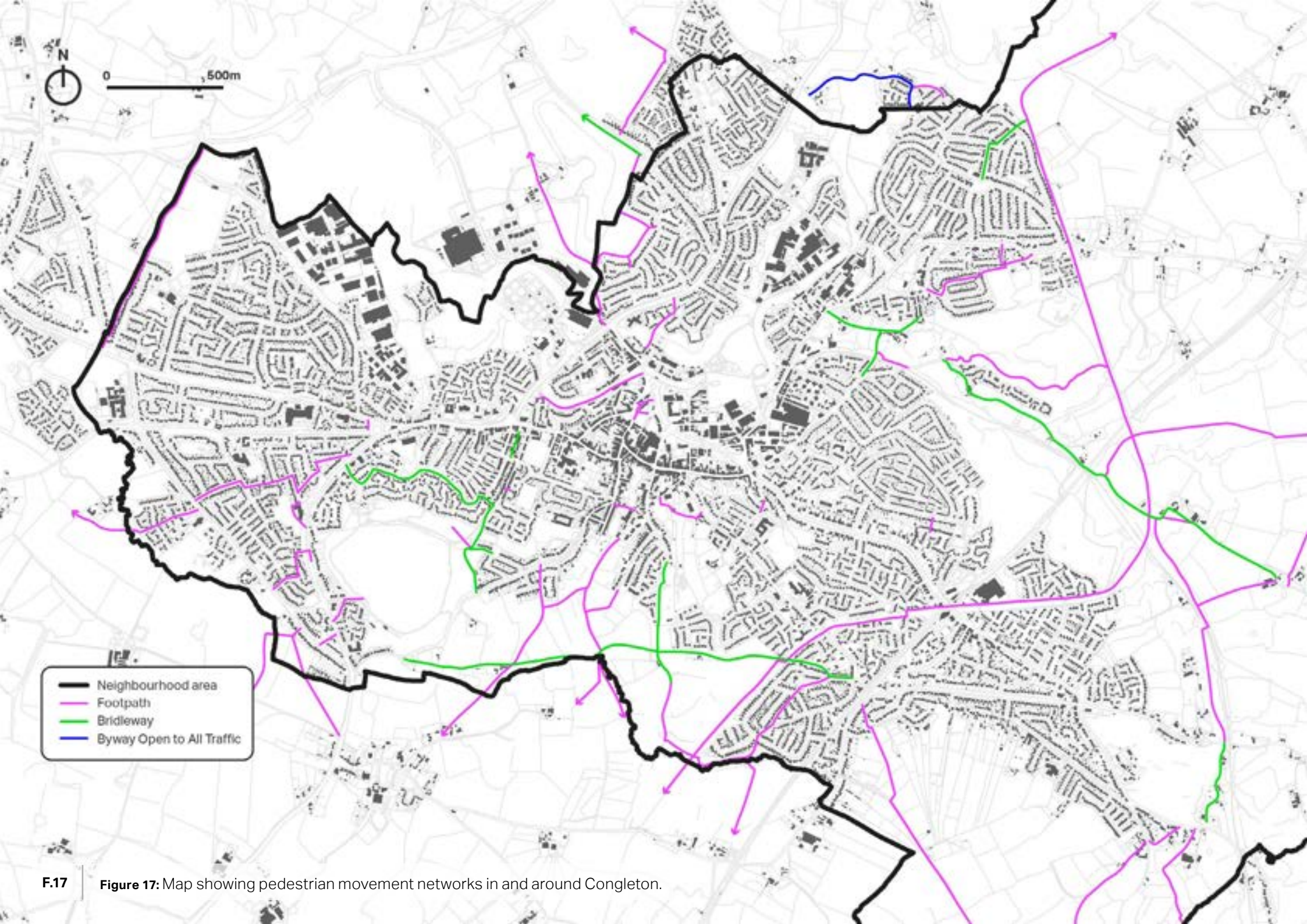


### 2.3.4 Pedestrian movement

Numerous Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the form of footpaths, bridleways, and byways open to all traffic (BOAT) are distributed throughout Congleton and beyond. Many of the routes provide pedestrian corridors to key green and blue spaces such as Astbury Mere, Astbury Golf Club, and the Macclesfield Canal. Several PROW routes extend into the open landscape to the east of Congleton, providing tranquil recreational footpaths away from Congleton.

The footpath along the Macclesfield Canal is the longest continuous stretch of footpath in the Neighbourhood area. It is a key recreational route providing the area with access to one of the Neighbourhood area's primary waterways. It is a popular route which should be respected by surrounding development.

There are also several small PROW routes providing pedestrian shortcuts within the town centre, as well as within several residential suburbs such as West Heath.



## 2.4 Open spaces

Congleton is host to an array of formal and informal open spaces. The adjacent plan illustrates the results of an open spaces survey conducted across Congleton. The adjacent plan categorises the spaces based off their specific types of use.

Notable open spaces in the Neighbourhood area are concentrated in and around Congleton such as Astbury Mere (C101) and the historic Congleton Park (C49a). Congleton Park is a major asset for the town and accommodates a variety of events throughout the year, as well as being host to a paddling pool which has been used by generations of children since the 1930s. The park holds Green Flag status and includes an ornamental garden, woodland, playground, and bowling area.

Astbury Mere, in the south west of Congleton, is a large country park surrounding a central lake. The park covers an area of 14 hectares, and the lake itself covers an area of 43 acres. As the adjacent plan illustrates, the Neighbourhood areas open spaces all vary in size and usability, each catering to a variety of users who come from outside, as well as within, the Neighbourhood area. Some types of open spaces surveyed include parks and gardens, green corridors, amenity greenspace, civic spaces, allotments, cemeteries, and outdoor sports facilities.

**Figure 18:** Astbury Mere

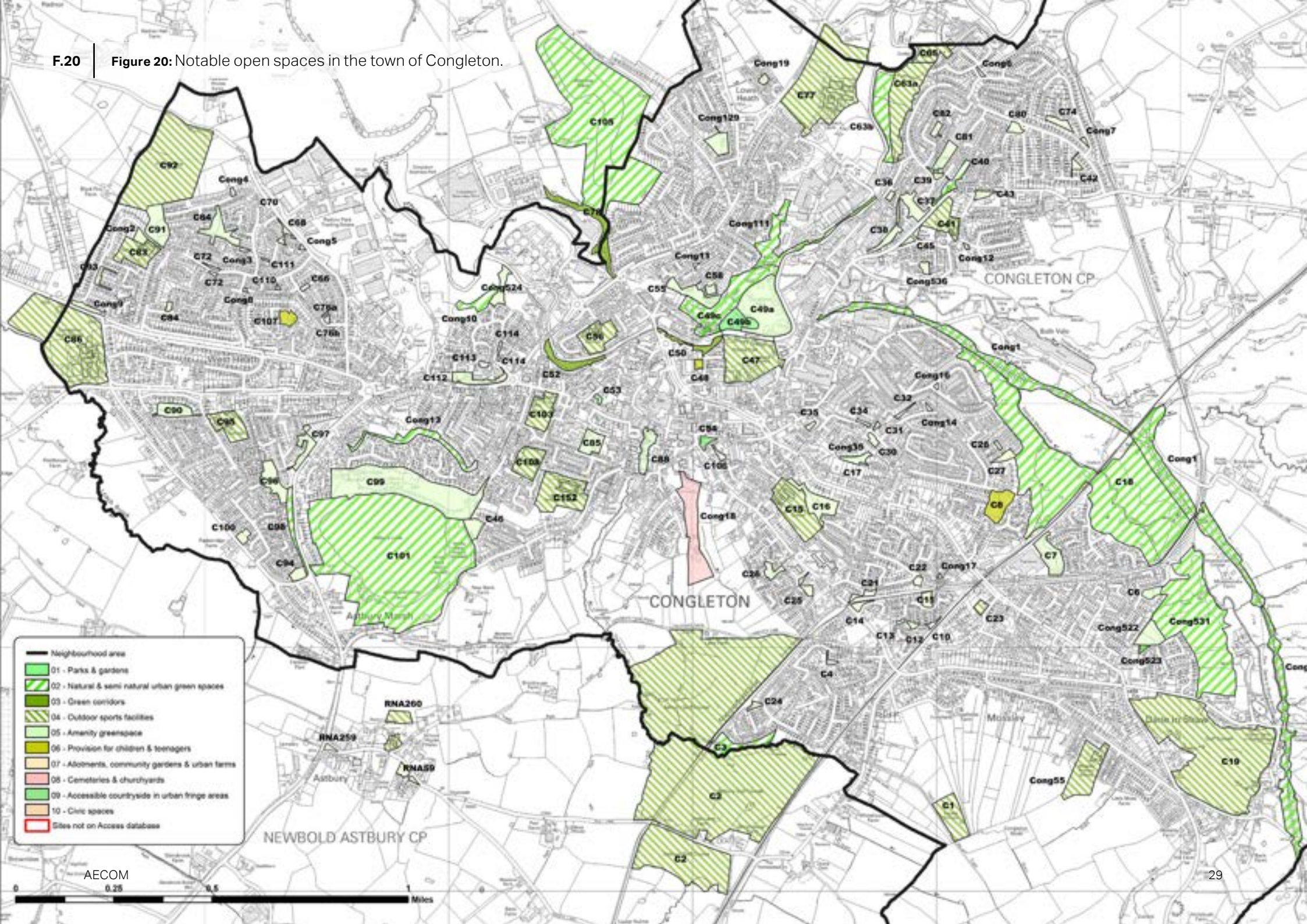
**Figure 19:** Congleton Park



**F.18**



**F.19**



## 2.5 Flood risk

As with any area with a main watercourse running through it, the risk posed by flood water is significant its immediate surroundings, as well as the several smaller watercourses (i.e. drains, brooks etc.) that radiate from it.

The River Dane flows to the north of Congleton Town Centre from east to west and is surrounded by both Flood Zone 2 and 3 designations (as per the Environment Agency). Several brooks, such as Loach Brook, Timbers Brook and the Dane-in-Shaw Brook, flow into the River Dane and are also immediately surrounded by narrow stretches of Flood Zones 2 and 3.

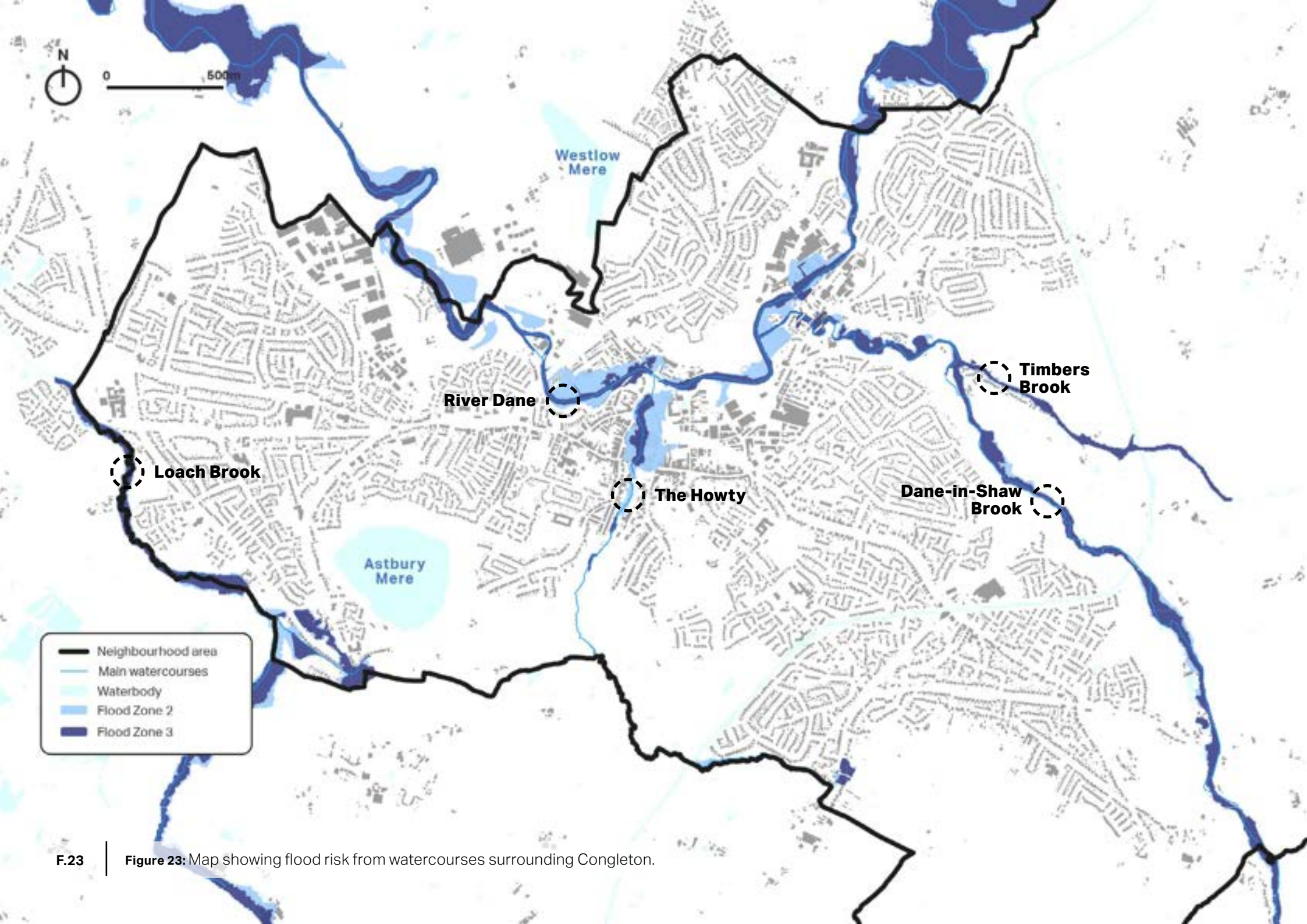
There are however several larger swathes of Flood Zone areas such as that to the north of The Hawty, which covers an area between Princess Street and Market Street in Congleton Town Centre. Other affected areas include the industrial estate off Eaton Bank and the residences along Belgrave Avenue.

Overall, the most affected areas are generally confined to the immediate surroundings of its several watercourses, particularly along the River Dane and The Howty around Congleton Town Centre, as well as a number of its residential suburbs (i.e. Buglawton) and employment areas (i.e. Eaton Bank Trading Estate). Most of the Neighbourhood area is free from significant flood risk.

**Figure 21:** The River Dane by Congleton Park

**Figure 22:** The Macclesfield Canal





## 2.6 Topography

The Neighbourhood area has a varied landform characterised by Congleton in the west which is relatively low-lying, which contrasts to the sharp incline of the hills along its eastern edge. The lowest point in the Neighbourhood area stands at circa 80m and is located to the west of the town centre along the riverbed of the River Dane.

Landform within Congleton itself is ranged between circa 80-115m, which slowly inclines from the River Dane in the west, to the ravine in the east of Congleton. The challenging terrain of the ravine, as well as the Flood Zone designations of its two brooks, have prevented the expansion of the town's eastern suburbs, with the exception of the large estate in the north-east (Buglawton area) of Congleton. Expansion to the north, south, and west are however continuing due to the less constrained landform.

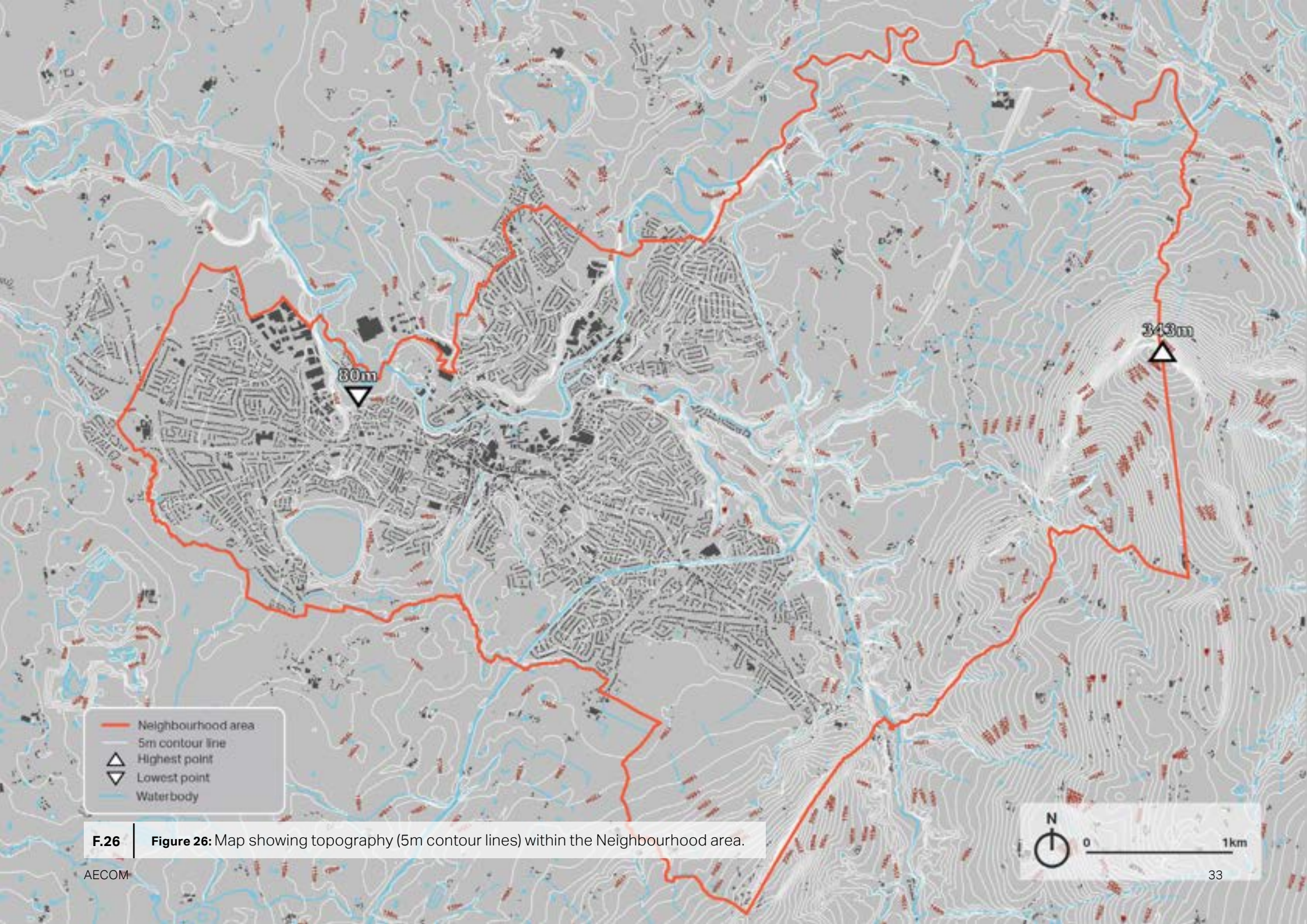
The Neighbourhood areas highest point stands at 343m at The Cloud (or Bosley Cloud), which is a prominent landscape feature on the boundary of the Neighbourhood area as well as the county borders of Cheshire and Staffordshire. The hill lies along the Mow Cop Ridge and is one of the highest in Cheshire. It is frequently visited by walkers using the 2.4-mile loop trail near Timbersbrook. The trail is also part of the 35-mile Gritstone Trail, a long-distance footpath which follows the most westerly hills of the Peak District. The summit of The Cloud affords extensive views of the surrounding Cheshire and Staffordshire landscapes.

Other key topographical features include the narrow ravine to the east of Congleton's residential suburbs. Both the Timbers Brook and Dane in Shaw Brook flow through the ravine. The small village of Timbersbrook is also located at the foot of The Cloud and its surrounding hills. As expected, much of the Neighbourhood areas development is concentrated within its low-lying land around the River Dane Valley in the west.

**Figure 24:** Dane River Valley from Colleymill Bridge

**Figure 25:** The Cloud viewable in the background from Weathercock Lane





**F.26** | **Figure 26:** Map showing topography (5m contour lines) within the Neighbourhood area.

## 2.7 Landscape character

The Neighbourhood area is set within the idyllic and largely rural county of Cheshire, in North West England. While the east of the Neighbourhood area is dominated by the urban form of Congleton, the west, by contrast, is characterised by a range of landscape features such as open farmland, woodland, and a linear ridge.

### 2.7.1 Cheshire East Landscape Character

There are four Landscape Character Types (LCT) identified by the Cheshire East LCA<sup>1</sup>, each with their component Landscape Character Area (LCA<sup>2</sup>) that fall within the Neighbourhood area. The relevance of these is to understand the influence on the identity of the parish and what is rooted in the place, e.g. local materials, and in particular, how it can help inform future development in and around Congleton, as well as within the open countryside.

#### 1. Lower Wooded Farmland (LCT 7) - Brereton Heath (LCA<sup>2</sup> 7e)

The Brereton Heath LCA<sup>2</sup> borders the southern and eastern edges of Congleton's urban area. The area is characterised by medium settlement density, a rural character (despite proximity to Congleton), high density coniferous and deciduous woodland, and a generally low-lying and gently rolling topography.

#### 2. Mossland (LCT 9) - Congleton Moss (LCA<sup>2</sup> 9c)

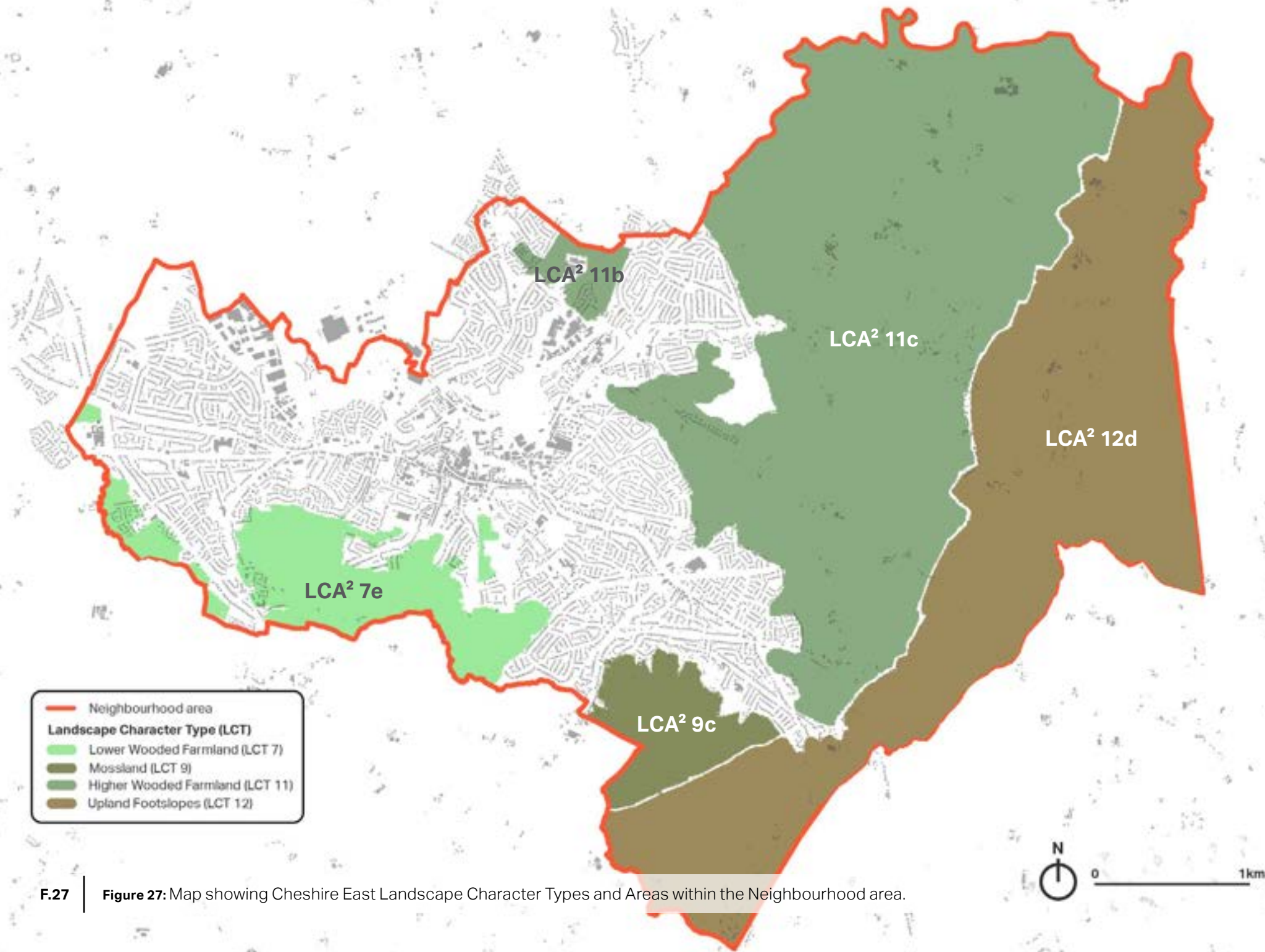
This LCT is small but distinctive due to its surviving fragments of peat bog, known locally as mosses. Congleton Moss is one of five mossland LCA<sup>2</sup>s identified across Cheshire East. Congleton Moss is located to the south of Congleton's urban area and is characterised by low-lying landform, ancient field patterns, peat bogs, and water-logged depressions. The area is an unappealing location for development for these reasons.

#### 3. Higher Wooded Farmland (LCT 11) - Gawsorth (LCA<sup>2</sup> 11b) and Buglawton (LCA<sup>2</sup> 11c)

As the largest landscape type within the Neighbourhood area, there are two separate component LCA<sup>2</sup>s: Buglawton and Gawsorth. The landscape is characterised by gently rolling and undulating landform, strong rural character, deciduous woodland, and traditional pasture for dairy farming as well as the arable cultivation for silage or feed crops such as cereals and maize.

#### 4. Upland Footslopes (LCT 12) - Mow Cop Ridge (LCA<sup>2</sup> 12d)

This landscape type is characterised by steep slopes and wooded stream valleys. The Mow Cop Ridge LCA<sup>2</sup> runs along the east of the Neighbourhood area, including Timbersbrook. The LCA<sup>2</sup> is identifiable by its linear ridge, ancient deciduous woodland, and its minor valleys and waterways. The ridge is a local vantagepoint where panoramic views can be enjoyed.



## 2.7.2 Congleton Landscape Character

As well as the landscape character features identified by the Cheshire East LCA<sup>1</sup>, there is a Congleton LCA<sup>1</sup> providing a more detailed appraisal of the Neighbourhood areas landscape character.

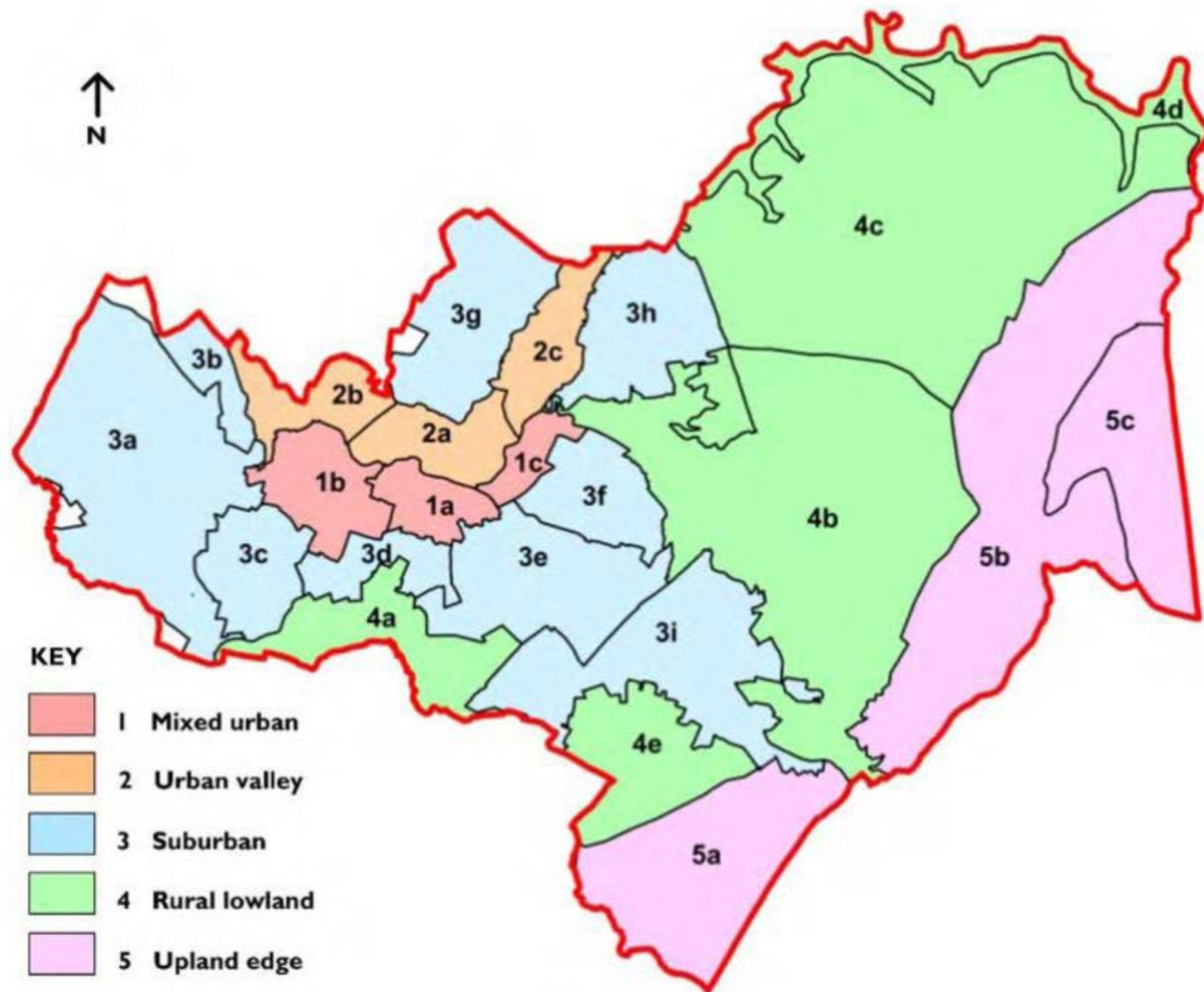
As the adjacent table and plan illustrate, the Neighbourhood area, much like the Cheshire East LCA<sup>1</sup>, has been separated into broader LCTs and then more detailed LCA<sup>2</sup>s. The LCTs include Mixed Urban, Urban Valley, Suburban, Rural Lowlands, and the Upland Edge. Each LCT generally describes, and are characterised by, overarching landscape features that dominate the given area. For example, the Suburban LCT is dominated by large residential estates to the east, north, and west of Congleton. By contrast, the Upland Edge is dominated by the Mow Cop Ridge and the steep hills surrounding The Cloud along the Neighbourhood areas eastern edge. Their component LCA<sup>2</sup>s are subsequently classified based on more detailed geological and geographical landscape variables.

F.28

Figure 28:

Names of the Neighbourhood areas local landscape character types and areas

| LCT No. | Landscape Character Types | LCA No. | Landscape Character Area                       |
|---------|---------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | Mixed Urban               | 1a      | Town Centre Historic Core                      |
|         |                           | 1b      | West Road                                      |
|         |                           | 1c      | Willow Street / Brook Street                   |
| 2       | Urban Valley              | 2a      | Dane Valley - Town Centre                      |
|         |                           | 2b      | Dane Valley - Congleton Business Park          |
|         |                           | 2c      | Dane Valley - Buglawton / Lower Heath          |
| 3       | Suburban                  | 3a      | West Heath                                     |
|         |                           | 3b      | West Heath Industrial Estates                  |
|         |                           | 3c      | Astbury Mere                                   |
|         |                           | 3d      | Waggs Road and Howey Hill                      |
|         |                           | 3e      | Park Lane/ Canal Road                          |
|         |                           | 3f      | Bromley Farm                                   |
|         |                           | 3g      | Lower Heath                                    |
|         |                           | 3h      | Buglawton                                      |
|         |                           | 3i      | Hightown / Mossley / Astbury Lane Ends         |
| 4       | Rural Lowlands            | 4a      | Priesty Fields, Howty Valley and Lamberts Lane |
|         |                           | 4b      | Dane-in-Shaw Brook and Timbers Brook           |
|         |                           | 4c      | Buglawton Hall                                 |
|         |                           | 4d      | Dane Valley - Congleton to Bosley              |
|         |                           | 4e      | Congleton Moss                                 |
| 5       | Upland Edge               | 5a      | Congleton Edge                                 |



**Townscape & Character**

**03**

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## 3. Townscape & character

**This section begins with analysis of Congleton's origins and historic development, followed by a detailed appraisal and characterisation of different zones within the Neighbourhood area.**

### 3.1 Settlement origins and growth

The first settlements in the Congleton Neighbourhood area were in Neolithic times, with archaeological pre-history finds telling us people lived here in both the Stone and Bronze Ages. Whilst there is little direct evidence of Roman occupation, recent archaeological finds indicate the romanisation of the local population. Congleton is also mentioned in the Domesday Book where it is listed as *Cogeltone: Bigot de Loges*, reflecting the town's ancient origins.

In the 13th century Congleton belonged to the de Lacy family with Henry de Lacy granting the town its first charter in 1272. This made it a free borough with the right to elect a mayor, an ale taster, a merchant guild, and behead known felons.

In 1451, the River Dane flooded destroying the town's bridge and half of its timber framed buildings. The town later rebuilt on higher ground, where the present day High Street is, and the river was straightened and diverted away from the town centre. Congleton soon regained its wealth from its textile industries. The first silk mill was built in 1752, and by 1771 this industry had restored the town's prosperity. Ribbon weaving began in the 1750s and cotton spinning in 1784. By the end of the 18th century there were numerous textile mills in the town. The Macclesfield Canal opened in 1831, and in 1848 the railway arrived.

Historically, Congleton has had the nickname of 'Beartown' due to its 17th century bear-baiting, a sport whereby a chained bear would be forced to fight another animal. Congleton once famously used the funds for a new bible for the replacement of one of its bears. Today, however, the bear represents a contemporary Congleton, reflecting the courage, stamina, and fun of the town and its people. The bear motif is frequently sighted around town, having been used most recently as part of the Congleton Bear Trail, a public art instillation spread throughout the town.



F.30

**Figure 30:** One of the many bears of the Congleton Bear Trail, a historic symbol of the town



F.31

**Figure 31:** Bridge Street in Congleton Town Centre

## 3.2 Settlement pattern

The following three historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps show how Congleton has grown between 1897 and 1965. The 1897 map shows much of what is now considered to be Congleton's historic core, where its oldest and most historically significant built form is concentrated. It also highlights a number of mills and other Victorian-era infrastructure such as railways and Congleton Park.

The 1936 map begins to show the development of large-scale residential housing estates, particularly to the north-east of the town centre below Buglawton.

The final map highlights the extensive growth of residential development between 1936 and 1965. The town's developed area has grown substantially, with development now reaching out as far as below Congleton Station, in the expanding suburbs of Hightown and Mossley. The figureground analysis on the next spread also illustrates Congleton's settlement pattern as of 2022.



1897 .....



1936 .....



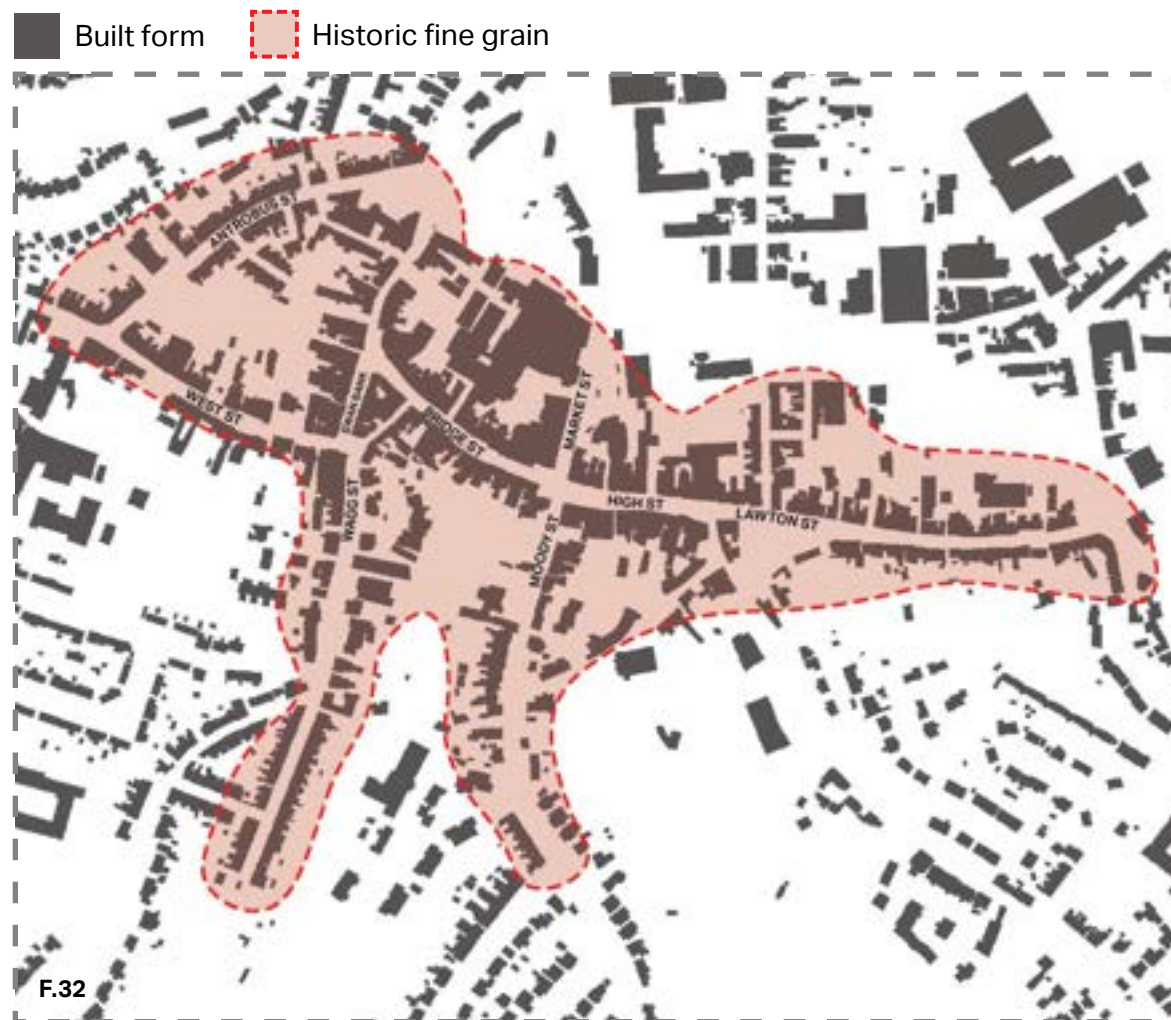
1965

### 3.2.1 Figureground

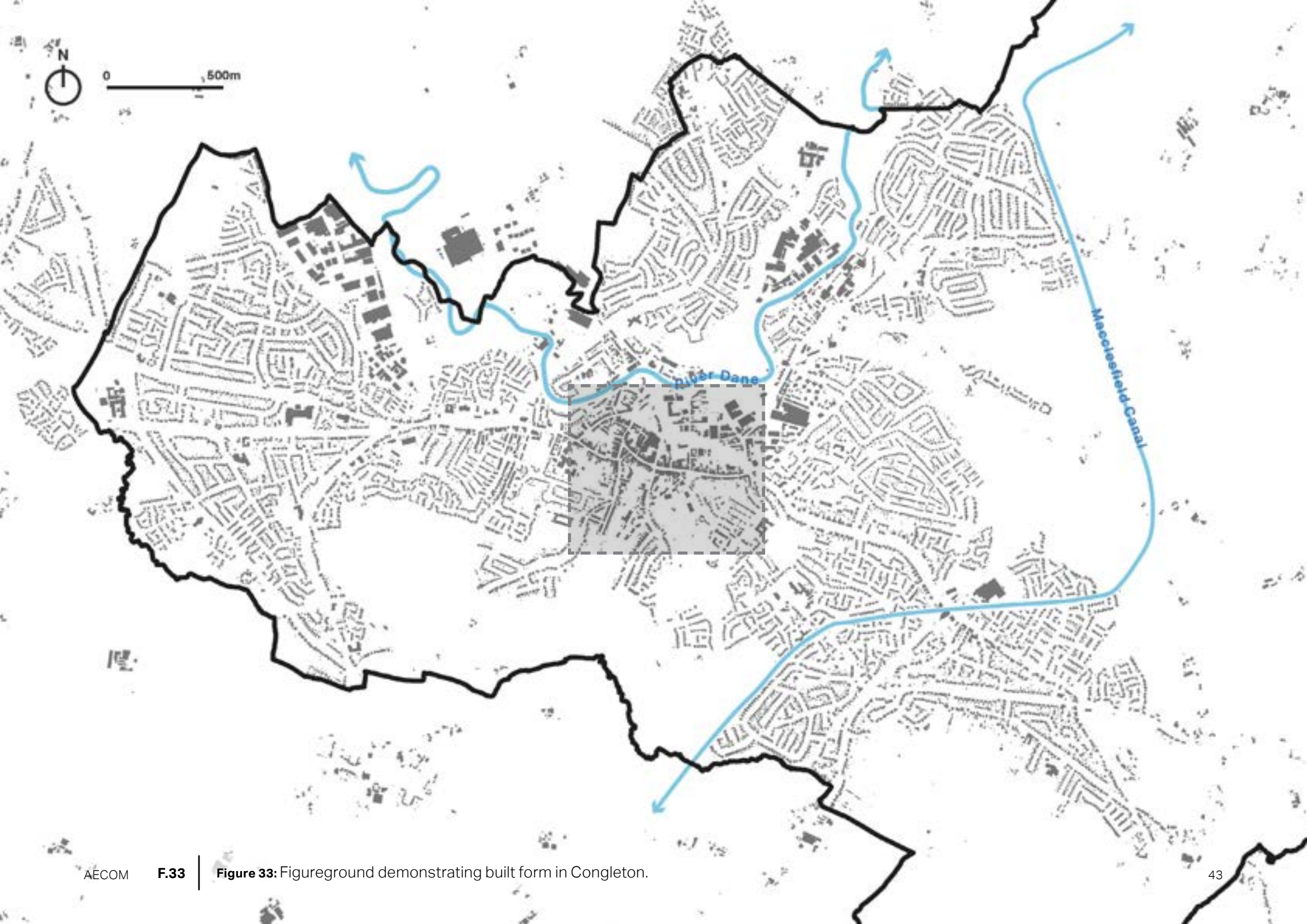
Figuregrounds not only reflect the volume of developed land, but also the history, growth, and development of settlements over time. Settlements often have historic cores where the very first buildings were constructed at the time of the settlements inception.

As a historic market town, Congleton has a distinctive figureground at its core, where buildings are densely packed together in a fine grain formation. As you move further away from the core, spaces (or voids) between buildings begin to become larger, reflecting a decrease in density as you venture closer to the open landscape surrounding the town. The figureground also highlights the extent of Congleton's vast suburbs which have seen the town's population rapidly increase since the mid 20th century.

The figureground of the whole Neighbourhood area reflects the populous and urban character of Congleton in the west, in contrast to the sparsely populated and rural character of the east.



**Figure 32:** Figureground of Congleton's historic core.



### 3.2.2 Townscape character: Congleton

As an ancient market town Congleton has a distinctive and attractive townscape. The overarching features of its townscape are typically found along Congleton's most historic routes, such as:

- Bridge Street
- High Street
- Lawton Street
- Moody Street
- West Street
- Park Lane
- Moody Street
- Wagg Street

Despite the variations in character across Congleton and the wider Neighbourhood area, there are overarching characteristics common amongst its built form. This represents the town's local vernacular which is rooted in its built heritage and historic development.

| Factors                | Appearance characteristics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Building types</b>  | There a variety of housing types due to the size and historic development of the town. A mix of townhouse and terraced dwellings can be found closer to the town's centre, whereas more semi-detached and detached dwellings are common within its surrounding suburban areas.                          |
| <b>Building height</b> | Typically between 2 and 3 storeys in the town centre, and 1 and 2.5 storeys in the surrounding suburbs.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Materials</b>       | <b>Facades:</b> Red brick<br><b>Roofing:</b> Grey slate                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Boundaries</b>      | Red brick walls; limestone walls; hedgerow                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Setbacks</b>        | Dwellings exhibit a variety of setbacks dependent on their position in the town. Those within, or close to, the town centre have little to no setback, with setbacks generally increasing in size the further they are from the centre.                                                                 |
| <b>Roofscape</b>       | Gable-ends dominate the roofscape with the exception of several pockets of hip roof development. Side-facing gables are most common with the eaves generally in line with the street and the occasional front-facing gable. Several dwellings also exhibit dormers and projecting gable-ends.           |
| <b>Public realm</b>    | Hard surfaced public spaces concentrated within the town centre along Bridge Street and Bridestone Shopping Centre. War Memorial and Congleton Community Garden both with soft landscaping on Lawton Street. Larger soft landscaped spaces found outside of the town centre within residential suburbs. |



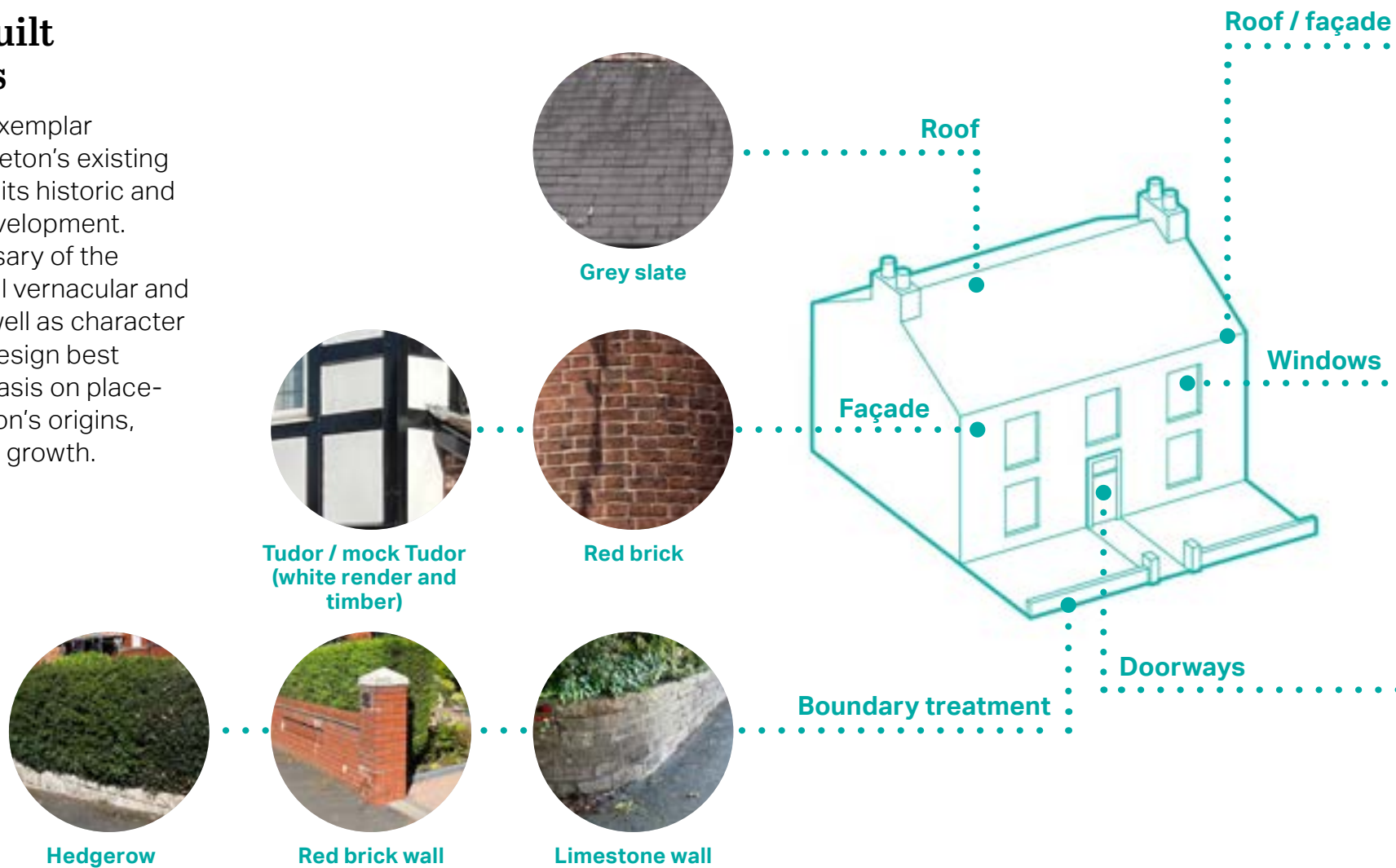
**Figure 34:** Congleton Town Hall fronting High Street in Congleton Town Centre

**Figure 35:** Typical materials and colour palette of Congleton's local vernacular along Park Lane

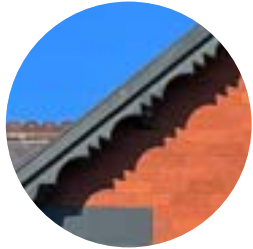
**Figure 36:** Congleton War Memorial fronting Lawton Street in Congleton Town Centre

### 3.3 Overarching built character features

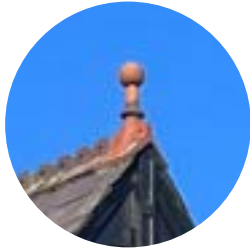
The following images are exemplar characteristics from Congleton’s existing built form, taken from both its historic and more recent residential development. This provides a visual glossary of the Neighbourhood area’s local vernacular and overall built character. As well as character the images demonstrate design best practice due to their emphasis on place-making, reflecting Congleton’s origins, heritage, and development growth.



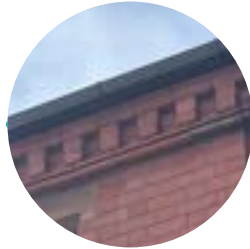
detailing



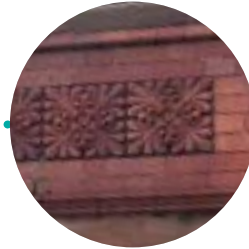
Timber barge  
boards



Wood / clay finials



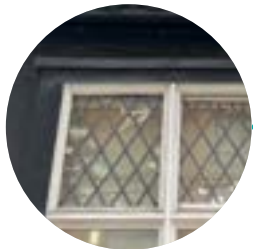
Brick cornice



Decorative  
brick work



Quoins



Timber frame leaded  
window



Timber frame sash  
window



Limestone  
mullions



Bay window



Decorative window  
surround



Timber panelled  
door



Fan light  
above door

## 3.4 Character Areas

The adjacent map illustrates the Neighbourhood area's character areas identified by this study based on an analysis of land use, landscape, infrastructure, heritage, and the overall built character, as well as other features. For the purpose of this Design Code report, the character areas are primarily based on the residential character identified within each area, to aid in the design of contextually responsive residential proposals in the future.

Any development site will require a different design response to set the tone for either infill or edge of settlement development. Future proposals should respond to the unique characteristics of each character area, while responding to the specific location and context of the site itself, as well as the the overarching characteristics of the wider Neighbourhood area.

### 1. Historic Town Centre

Congleton's historic town centre characterised by an array of heritage assets from a range of architectural periods.

### 2. Historic South

Largely residential area characterised by a largely Victorian-era housing stock stretching along the south of the town centre.

### 3. Park Lane Gateway

Large Victorian houses and mature tree canopies fronting Park Lane between the town centre and Congleton Station.

### 4. Infrastructure Corridor

Concentration of Congleton's community facilities, as well as Mountbatten Way, a busy dual carriageway bisecting the town.

### 5. Dane Industrial

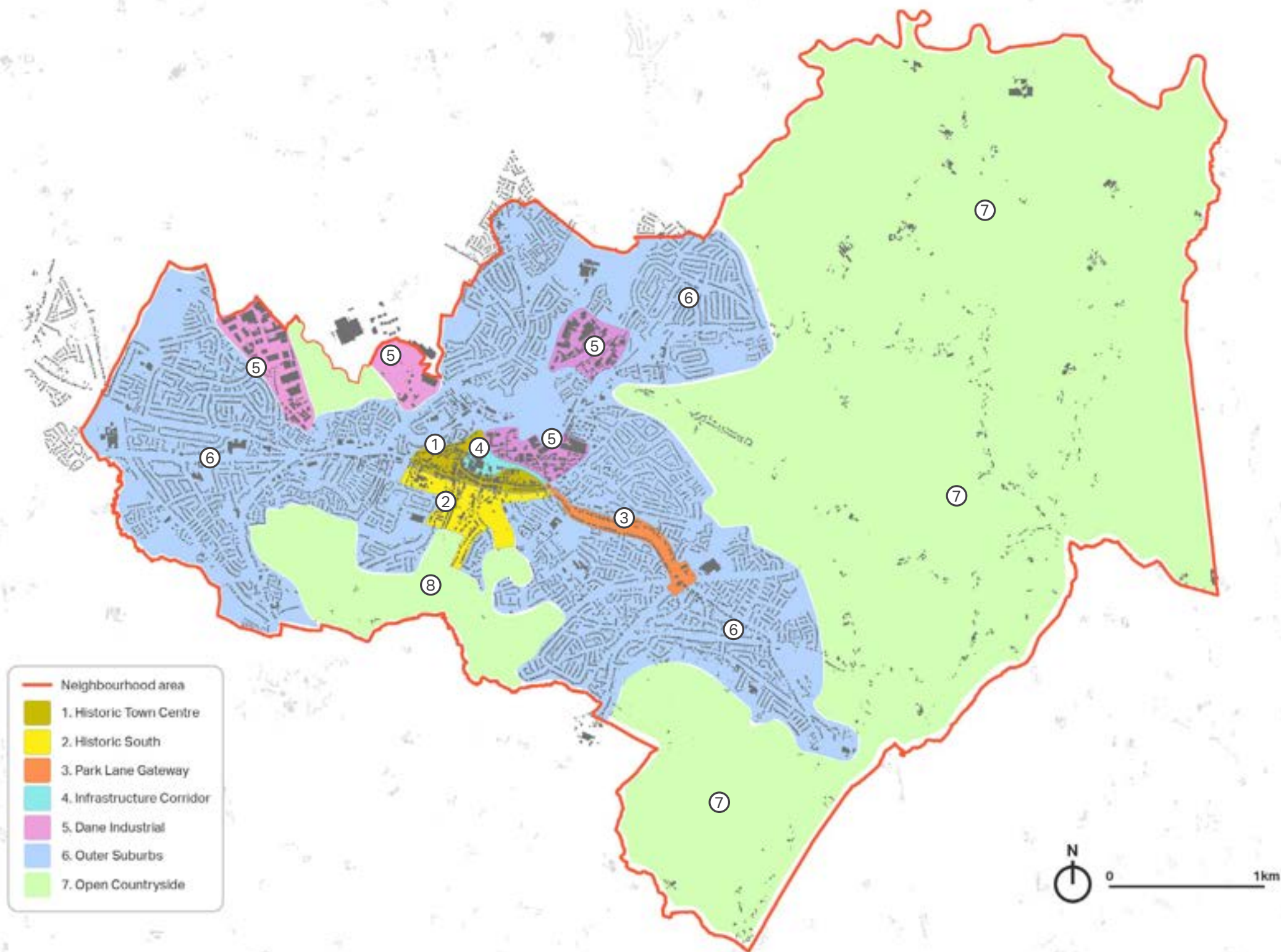
Spread across four sites along the River Dane, each area is host to large industrial/commercial premises.

### 6. Outer Suburbs

Suburban housing estates ranging from post-war to late 20th century, and to 21st century urban extensions.

### 7. Open Countryside

Covering the Neighbourhood area's open landscape, particularly to the east where built form is sporadic and rural.



# 1. Historic Town Centre

This area reflects Congleton's status as a historic market town, centring around a network of its most ancient streetscapes including Bridge Street, Mill Street, West Street, High Street, and Lawton Street. The Neighbourhood area's highest concentration of Listed buildings is found within this character area, including the Grade II\* Congleton Town Hall, one of the town's most notable landmarks.

## Key characteristics include:

- High concentration of Listed buildings and historic streetscapes (i.e. mostly Victorian-era architecture)
- Landmark heritage buildings such as Congleton Town Hall and the Lion Swan Hotel
- Strong commercial / retail building use along with residential accommodation typically found above ground-level
- High levels of activity, particularly along pedestrian and retail centric spaces such as Bridge Street and the Bridestone Shopping Centre

## Strengths

- Bridge Street's recent public realm improvements (i.e. shared space)
- Strong sense of place due to visual representation of civic pride (i.e. statues, heritage, flags etc.)
- High-quality heritage assets, many of which have been sensitively regenerated and maintained

## Weaknesses

- Multiple vacant business premises, particularly along Mill Street
- Some heritage assets not well maintained or sensitively restored
- Quality of some building frontages

## Opportunities

- To extend Bridge Street's shared space to surrounding streets (i.e. Swan Bank, Mill Street, Market Street)
- To convert/adapt vacant buildings into mixed-use or residential development
- To sensitively restore and activate the ground floor level's of the area's vacant heritage assets

## Threats

- Continuation in the decline of retail resulting in further vacant buildings and less footfall within the town centre
- Commercial frontages not respecting the area's historic character



**Figure 37:** Bridge Street - busy town centre high street fronted by active ground-level businesses

**Figure 38:** Traditional timber shop frontages fronting Lawton Street

**Figure 39:** Typical town centre building with ground-level activity and above ground-level accommodation

**Figure 40:** Lawton Street - fronted by an array of traditional timber frontages

## 2. Historic South

This area stretches along the south of the town centre and is largely characterised by historic dwellings, with the exception of several businesses mixed within. Most house types are Victorian terraces directly fronting the streetscape. There are also several larger historic buildings set throughout the area such as Chapel Brook House and St Peter's Church.

### Key characteristics include:

- Several Victorian streets lined with 2-storey red brick terraces
- Moody Street - 3-storey Georgian townhouses with colourful rendered facades
- Predominantly residential building use
- Dwellings either with small front gardens or directly fronting the street
- Narrow and enclosed streetscapes
- Mature tree canopies found within the larger plots

### Strengths

- Historic housing stock, many of which are well maintained
- Green character due to mature trees found within larger plots (i.e. Moody Street, Chapel Street)
- Strong boundary treatments along Moody Street and Howey Hill

### Opportunities

- To reinforce area's historic character by ensuring infill sites are developed in keeping with the area's heritage and overarching aesthetic
- To reference the style and scale of the area's Victorian and Georgian housing stock in future infill site proposals

### Weaknesses

- Narrow streets made even more enclosed by on-street car parking
- Several instances of poor quality infill development degrading area's historic character
- Poor quality infill development in places

### Threats

- Alterations or extensions to the area's built heritage that are not sensitive to it's character, or to that of adjacent plots



**Figure 41:** Nelson Street - typical Victorian terraced streetscape

**Figure 42:** Chapel Street - view up Chapel Street towards St Peter's Church

**Figure 43:** Howey Hill - Victorian terraces at the bottom of Howey Hill at the character area's edge

**Figure 44:** Colourful Georgian townhouses fronting onto Moody Street

### 3. Park Lane Gateway

This area centres around Park Lane, extending between Congleton Town Centre and Congleton Station. The area is one of Congleton's key gateway corridors due to the connectivity provided by both the railway station and A527 (Park Lane). There is a strong green and historic character due to the number of large Victorian dwellings set behind mature limestone and hedgerow boundary treatments.

**Key characteristics include:**

- Single road fronted by large detached and semi-detached dwellings set within large plots
- Strong green character due to size of front gardens with dense landscaping naturally screening plots
- Limestone wall boundary treatments
- Busy gateway corridor due to Congleton Station and the A527 (Park Lane)
- Residential building use
- Mature tree canopies within front gardens along Park Lane

#### Strengths

- Historic housing stock, many of which are well maintained
- Strong green character due to high number of mature trees and hedgerow boundary treatments within front gardens
- High-quality boundary treatments (mix of limestone and hedgerow)

#### Opportunities

- To reinforce area's historic character by ensuring infill sites are developed in keeping with the area's heritage and overarching aesthetic
- To reference the style and scale of the area's Victorian housing stock in future infill site proposals
- To produce a stronger gateway and sense of arrival at Congleton Station

#### Weaknesses

- Park Lane is a busy and sometimes congested route with limited pedestrian crossing points
- Several instances of poor quality infill development degrading Park Lane's historic character

#### Threats

- Alterations or extensions to the area's built heritage that are not sensitive to its character, or to that of adjacent plots
- Large plots selling off land for backland development (i.e. impacting on the limestone and hedgerow frontages and overall character)



F.45



F.46



F.47



F.48

**Figure 45:** Park Lane's characteristic limestone and hedgerow boundary treatments

**Figure 46:** Victorian semi-detached dwellings set behind red brick walls boundaries and front gardens

**Figure 47:** Congleton Station access road adjoining Park Lane

**Figure 48:** Large detached dwelling setback far behind Park Lane via a winding private driveway and front garden

## 4. Infrastructure Corridor

This area is characterised by a high concentration of the town centre's amenity and infrastructure provision. It also centres around Mountbatten Way, a strategic road bisecting the town centre and providing connectivity to other strategic roads feeding into Congleton. Mid-late 20th century architecture dominates the area's streetscapes.

### Key characteristics include:

- Mountbatten Way - strategic vehicular corridor
- Typical mid-late 20th century retail spaces and architecture
- Bridestone Shopping Centre - retail hub with mix of large commercial and small independent businesses (e.g. the outdoor market)
- Civic and amenity buildings including supermarkets, library, police station, bus station, and shopping centre
- Hard landscaped pedestrianised open spaces and walkways

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and covered pedestrianised spaces (i.e. Bridestone Shopping Centre)</li> <li>• Town centre location</li> <li>• Strategically connected via Congleton Bus Station and Mountbatten Way</li> </ul>                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountbatten Way is a substantial barrier to [pedestrian] movement within the town centre</li> <li>• Generally unattractive buildings and public spaces</li> <li>• Underutilised and anti-social spaces, particularly within Bridestone Shopping Centre and Market Square</li> </ul> |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To soften the area's hard landscaping through planting and trees</li> <li>• To reconfigure Bridestone Shopping Centre (see Figure 49) into a more attractive and accessible space</li> <li>• To utilise the plot of land off Market Square (see Figure 51)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuation in the decline of retail resulting in further vacant buildings and less footfall within the area</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                            |



F.49



F.50



F.51



F.52

**Figure 49:** Bridestone Shopping Centre - fully pedestrianised area with undercover walkways and open spaces for market days

**Figure 50:** Mountbatten Way - where Congleton's strategic roads feed into

**Figure 51:** Congleton Police Station - fronting onto Market Square

**Figure 52:** Morrisons (Bridestone Shopping Centre) adjacent Congleton Bus Station on Market Street

## 5. Dane Industrial

This area is host to some of the Neighbourhood area's largest buildings, many used as industrial warehouses for manufacturing and/or storage, as well as commercial offices. The character area is spread across four separated sites, each extending along a stretch of the River Dane. The areas are key employment sites, with international and national, as well as local, businesses based within Dane Industrial.

### Key characteristics include:

- Predominantly industrial / commercial land use
- Very large building footprints due to warehouse / mill building types
- Small pockets of Victorian housing mixed amongst warehouses in the more historic areas (i.e. Buglawton and Worrall Street area)
- Mix of Victorian industrial areas, 20th century industrial estates, and a 21st century retail park

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Victorian housing and industrial heritage present within some areas</li><li>• Strategically located due to proximity to town centre and strategic road network</li></ul>                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor quality public realm and streetscape continuity</li><li>• Pockets of residential development mixed amongst industrial businesses</li><li>• Underutilised frontage / relationship with River Dane</li></ul> |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To incorporate a higher quality of public realm for the use of workers in the area (i.e. by utilising riverfront location)</li><li>• To enhance and/or reference Victorian heritage (i.e. Buglawton and Worrall Street area)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited active frontages and natural surveillance resulting in higher levels of crime or anti-social behaviour within the area</li></ul>                                                                        |



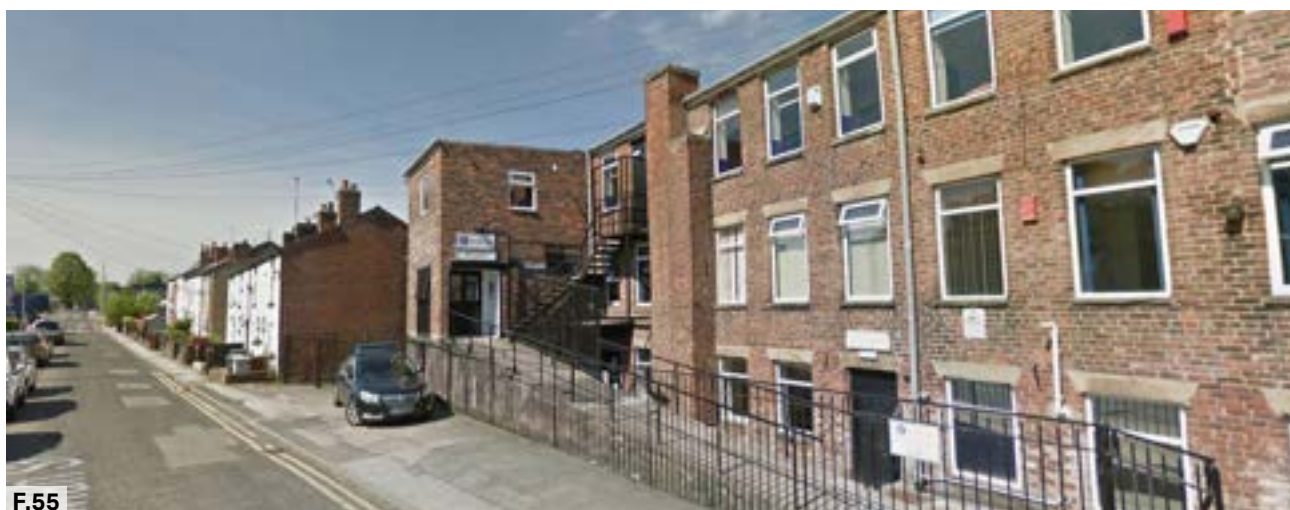
F.53



F.54



F.56



F.55

**Figure 53:** Eaton Bank Trading Estate - 20th century industrial estate with a range of unit sizes

**Figure 54:** Radnor Park Industrial Estate - typical 20th century industrial estate

**Figure 55:** Havannah Street (Buglawton) - mix of red brick industrial buildings and red brick terraces

**Figure 56:** Worrall Street - Mix of Victorian warehouses and more recent office developments

## 6. Outer Suburbs

The largest of the built character areas due to the extent of the Neighbourhood area's sprawling suburbs. The town's built area has grown massively between the post-war era and the present day, with suburban extensions continuing to extend outwards. This is evident where development now goes beyond the red line of the Neighbourhood area boundary. While the multiple estates have been built over the course of several decades, there is a general sense of homogeneity.

### Key characteristics include:

- Residential building use
- Large suburban housing estates dating from post-war to present day
- Predominantly semi-detached, detached, and bungalow housing types
- Vast masterplanned areas of homogeneous housing styles
- General lack of local distinctiveness in the style and character of built form

### Strengths

- Proximity to the open countryside which surrounds much of the area
- Generally spacious streetscapes with ample setbacks and on-plot parking

### Weaknesses

- Lots of cul-de-sac development stifling permeability
- Homogenous housing styles with little reference to local heritage
- Curvi-linear and cul-de-sac streets degrading legibility and wayfinding

### Opportunities

- To enhance Congleton's local vernacular by referencing its built heritage in new development
- To enhance permeability and legibility by providing onward connectivity from existing cul-de-sacs
- To enhance connectivity with the open countryside

### Threats

- Future development emulating or referencing existing poor quality precedent within the area
- Further surrounding Green Belt being released for development



F.57



F.58



F.59



F.60

**Figure 57:** Lilac Court - typical 21st century cul-de-sac development radiating from Park Lane

**Figure 58:** Linksway - typical suburban streetscape of detached homes with front gardens and driveways

**Figure 59:** Kennet Drive - late 20th century housing estate radiating from Park Lane

**Figure 60:** Ennerdale Drive - masterplanned curvilinear streetscape

## 7. Open Countryside

This area encompasses the Neighbourhood area's vast open landscape to the east, as well as several smaller pockets of landscape around Astbury Mere and Astbury Golf Club. The area includes only two settlements, the small village of Timbersbrook and the hamlet of Key Green. Development is limited to the sporadic distribution of isolated dwellings and rural businesses.

### Key characteristics include:

- Strong landscape character
- Sporadically distributed development served by a modest network of rural lanes
- Largely agricultural (arable and pasture) land use
- Timbersbrook (village) and Key Green (hamlet) are the only settlements
- The Cloud - prominent hill and vantage point upon the Mow Cop Ridge
- Astbury Mere - large water body and country park to the south of Congleton

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive limestone cottages and agricultural buildings sporadically distributed throughout</li> <li>• Long distance landscape views from elevated positions such as Timbersbrook and around the Mow Cop Ridge</li> </ul>                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor connectivity due to rural context</li> <li>• Nondescript character of several 20th century infill dwellings within Timbersbrook, degrading local vernacular</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                               |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sensitively convert derelict or underutilised heritage into dwellings or rural businesses</li> <li>• To extend and/or strengthen pedestrian and cycle networks in the area</li> <li>• To enhance wildlife corridors and local biodiversity through nature-based interventions (i.e. tree planting)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congleton's suburban development encroaching on the area's Green Belt designation</li> <li>• Congleton's settlement edge development poorly transitioning between the town and the area's landscape character</li> <li>• Coalescence of settlements between Congleton and surrounding villages such as Astbury</li> </ul> |



**Figure 61:** Weathercock Lane - row of historic limestone cottages in Timbersbrook

**Figure 62:** Crouch Lane - historic limestone cottage in Key Green

**Figure 63:** Weathercock Lane - view of The Cloud from Key Green

**Figure 64:** Under Rainow Road - view of surrounding landscape from Timbersbrook

A photograph of a two-story red brick Victorian house. The house features a prominent bay window on the left side, a central entrance with a blue door, and another window on the right. The roof is dark grey with several chimneys. A large green circle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text 'Design guidance & codes' and the number '04'. The house is surrounded by greenery, including a small tree on the right and various shrubs in the foreground.

**Design guidance & codes**

**04**

## 4. Design guidance & codes

**This section sets out the principles that will influence the design of potential new development and inform the retrofit of existing buildings in the Neighbourhood area, particularly within Congleton Town Centre and its suburbs.**

**Where possible, local images are used to exemplify the design guidelines and codes. Where these images are not available, best practice examples from elsewhere**

### 4.1 Introduction

This section provides guidance on the design of development, setting out expectations that relevant planning applications in the Neighbourhood area will be expected to address.

The guidelines developed in this section focus on Congleton's residential suburban areas and town centre environments. New housing development should not be viewed in isolation and mixed-uses are encouraged generally, particularly within Congleton Town Centre. The design and layout of development must respond to the context of the character area it falls within, as well as the wider urban pattern and landscape context outlined in this document.

The design codes and guidance set out in this section will provide that context and direction in relation to infill and edge of settlement development sites in particular. It will also provide detailed guidance on topics of local concern such as town centre vitality, large-scale development, heritage, and sustainable design.

Based on the understanding gained in the previous sections, this section will identify design codes for future developments to adhere to. The following design codes have been created to apply to the Neighbourhood area:

- **Code A:** Materials, detailing, and character
- **Code B:** Frontages and boundary treatments
- **Code C:** Designing for town centre vitality
- **Code D:** Infill development
- **Code E:** Large-scale development
- **Code F:** Landscape, views, and the settlement edge
- **Code G:** Sustainable design



## Materials, detailing, and character

### 4.2 Materials, detailing, and character

Creating a distinctive, attractive and vibrant place, in which to live, work and spend leisure time is important to the quality of life in Congleton. One design approach does not fit all. Congleton is also made up of different character areas (see section 3). Proposals can contribute, enhance, and further define the character of each area rather than simply emulating what already exists, particularly where existing precedent is of a low design quality.

Character Area 1 (Historic Town Centre), Character Area 2 (Historic South), and Character 3 (Park Lane Gateway) require the most design consideration due to their distinctive historic identities and heritage assets. The following design codes relate to the materials, detailing, and character of the Neighbourhood area:

**A1 - Architectural detailing:** Decorative brick, stone and wood detailing is encouraged to provide reference to Congleton's local vernacular. Such detailing should reference the Neighbourhood area's overarching built character features as outlined in section 3. These will vary depending on the character area in which a site lies and/or relates to.

**A2 - Reflecting local identity:** Uphold Congleton's identity by using traditional building materials that reflect its distinctive townscape. Refer to the overarching built character graphic in section 3 for further detail on specific local features.

**A3 - Contextual colourways:** Muted or darker tones of material are encouraged to minimise the visual impact of development. This should be considered within open areas (i.e. Character Area 7 - Open Countryside) where the visibility of development will be noticeable from the surrounding landscape or settlement edge. The choice of colour and finish is also an important design consideration in mitigating adverse visual impacts on Congleton's

townscape. Subtle or muted colours should be used to ensure cohesion with existing development or if in the Open Countryside.

**A4 - Avoiding overly complicated design:** Proposals should employ a simple and focused palette that responds to the streetscape and space in which it relates. Overly complicated and random mixes of materials and palettes should be avoided.

**A5 - Innovative materials and design:** Deviating from traditional materials and aesthetics should be considered where innovative design and sustainability is demonstrated. For example, innovative designs can be both be sustainable and enhance local character by using traditional materials and referencing local character with architectural detailing.

**A6 - Avoiding low quality precedent:** Existing and/or nearby examples of low quality design should not be referenced or replicated. Instead, proposals should refer to high-quality contextual features such as those illustrated in the overarching built character graphic in section 3.

**A7 - Character area response:** Proposals must respond to the character area with one of the following three approaches, considered in the following order;

- Harmonise – clearly respond to existing characteristics within the character area, street and site, including scale, form and appearance;
- Complement - doing something slightly different that adds to the overall character and quality in a way that is nonetheless fitting, for example, additional high quality materials but harmonising in scale, form and positioning; or
- Innovate – doing something of high design quality that is different but adds positively to the built-form and character and is considered an exemplar approach for others to follow. For example, develop innovative building form and use low embodied energy, high quality materials that add to the overall design quality, sustainability and richness of the area.

**A1 A2 A3 Town centre**



**Suburban**



**Figure 65:** Exemplar local vernacular and detailing (top images) in contrast to poor quality town centre commercial development (bottom left) and nondescript residential design (bottom right)



## Frontages and boundary treatments

### 4.3 Frontages and boundary treatments

Both frontages and boundary treatments significantly contribute to the character of a streetscape. They have a direct and strong relationship with the spaces they front, making their overall appeal an important design consideration within any proposal.

As a historic market town Congleton has a network of streets with buildings adorned with traditional timber frontages. Many of these buildings are small historic retail premises within the town centre. They have a distinct and attractive character and contribute significantly to Congleton's place-making and market town charm. Adhering to the following design codes will contribute to the enhancement, preservation, and creation of contextually responsive frontages and boundary treatments:

#### **B1 - Preserving traditional retail**

**frontages:** Traditional timber shop fronts should be preserved and enhanced to uphold the historic character of the town centre.

**B2 - Proportional retail frontages:** Shop fronts applied to historic buildings should always consider the full building elevation and reference the vertical and horizontal architectural elements to create a strong relationship between the shop front and the host building.

#### **B3 - Achieving contextual and modern**

**retail frontages:** Modern shop fronts are appropriate but should typically employ a 'less is more' approach to their design. Back-lit box signage will not be acceptable. Lettering should be clear and of a medium size to complement the fascia board, shop front and building. The colour, style, and materials used within shop frontages should be respectful of the host buildings character (particularly historic buildings).

**B4 - Retail setbacks:** Typically, buildings in the town centre are positioned up against the edge of the pavement (i.e. no setback).

**B5 - Residential setbacks:** Residential areas have buildings set back behind short front gardens. Residential setbacks should directly abut the pavement within the town centre, with setbacks then gradually increasing in size the further residential development is from the centre. This also depends on the surrounding context of the site, as historic plots may have unusually large setbacks/plots within some areas.

**B6 - Boundary walls:** Red brick or limestone boundary walls with brick / stone coping are seen across the town and are appropriate for future development.

**B7 - Boundary railings:** Metal railings are less frequently seen but may be suitable for front boundaries in combination with stone or brick walls as seen along Lawton Street.

**B8 - Car park boundaries:** Boundaries to car parks that are open to the street should include landscape buffers with tree planting to reduce the negative visual impact of cars.

**B1 B2 B3**

*Hanging baskets / plant boxes are encouraged to soften building frontages*

*Proportionate depth of signage not more than 1/4th of the total height of the shop front*

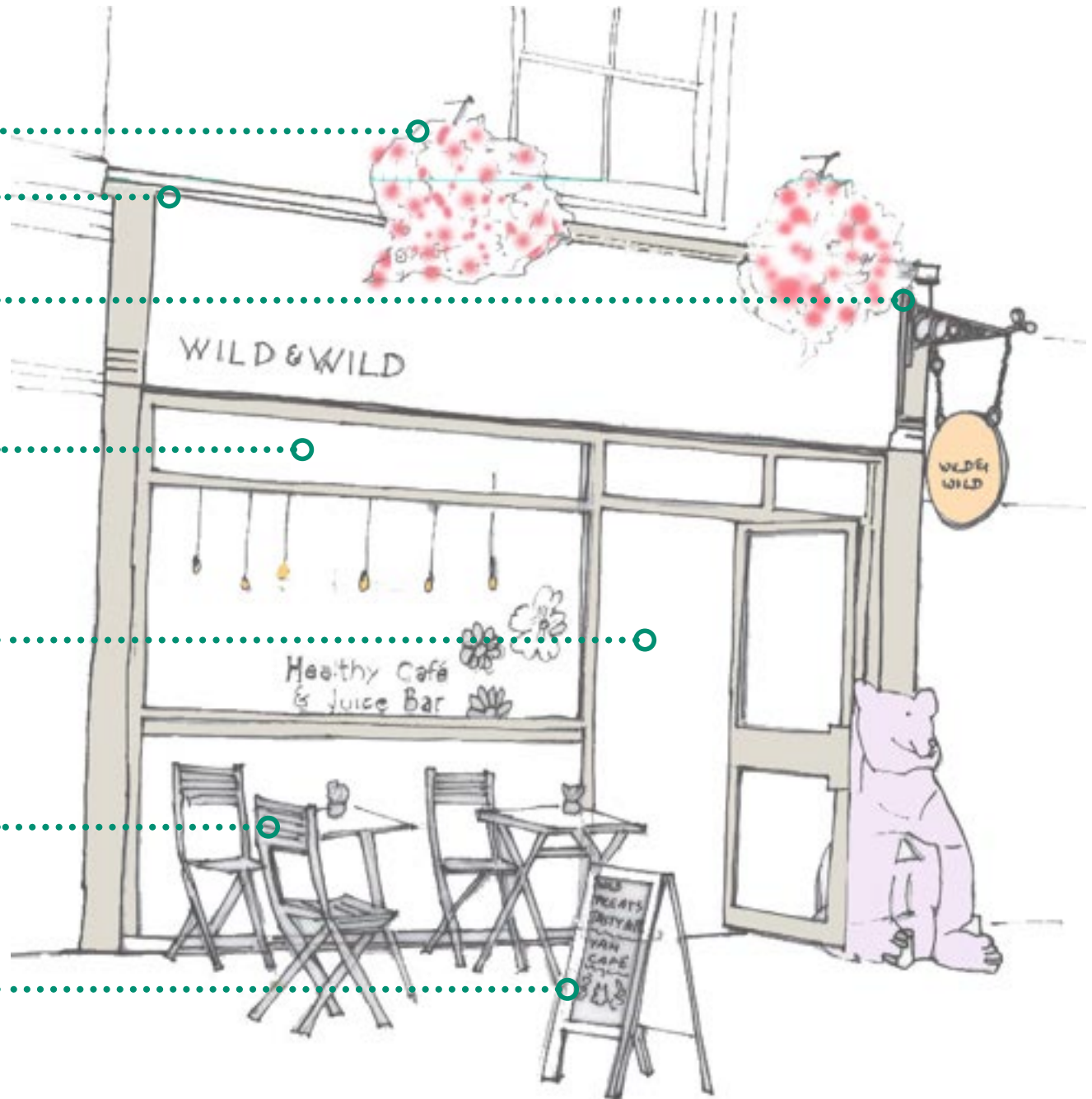
*Hanging signs are encouraged*

*Clear windows should account for 2/3rds of the shop front apart from window frames and mullions forming part of the vertical separation*

*Clear door access should account for at least 1/3rd of the shop front proportions. Provision of additional door access on wider shop fronts is acceptable*

*Outdoor seating and displays are acceptable where pavement widths are 2m or more, can accommodate them and do not hinder pedestrian movement*

*A-board signs are acceptable where pavement widths can accommodate them and do not hinder pedestrian movement*



B1 B2 B3



**Figure 66:** High-quality contemporary (top) and traditional (bottom) frontage treatments



**Figure 67:** Imposing and nondescript frontages degrade the character of the historic streetscape

B6 B7



**Figure 68:** Boundary treatments should consist of red brick walls, limestone walls, or wrought iron, as well as have a landscape element to soften the boundary



## Designing for town centre vitality

### 4.4 Designing for town centre vitality

Town centres are facing unprecedented challenges due to changing markets and trends resulting in the closure of many shops. Larger retail has been particularly affected, with many national brand retail units becoming vacant, leaving large voids in the high street and degrading the overall attractiveness of town centres.

As per the commitment by Cheshire East Council as well as various Congleton stakeholders to help high streets and town centres, the following design codes are aimed at facilitating Congleton's revitalisation. They focus on three key areas; town centre access, public realm improvements, and high street activity.

For further information on Congleton's town centre vitality plans, please refer to the *Congleton Town Centre Vitality Plan* report.

#### Town centre access

Congleton's heritage and amenities make it an attractive place for both locals and tourists. Improving legibility and permeability within, and to, the town centre will enhance Congleton's attraction and competitiveness as a key service centre within Cheshire. Design codes for enhancing town centre access include:

**C1 - Transit gateways:** Foster a sense of arrival at Congleton's transport gateways by providing attractive and legible public spaces. Congleton Station, Congleton Bus Station, and Mountbatten Way could all benefit from a greater visual and attractive connection to the town centre by incorporating planting, architectural detailing, and public realm improvements.

**C2 - Footpath and cycle infrastructure:** Enhance existing pedestrian and cycle networks by 'filling in the gaps' between cycle lanes, footpaths, and shared spaces. Also provide appropriate infrastructure such as street furniture and cycle parking in safe and strategically located positions in the town centre.

**C3 - Pedestrian permeability:** Enhance pedestrian connections to the town centre by including more pedestrian crossings, widening pavements, and providing more shared spaces at key junctures and gateways. Mountbatten Way in particular is a major barrier to movement and would benefit from more pedestrian-centric design interventions.

**C4 - Mobility hubs:** Encourage sustainable town centre travel through the provision of multi-modal transport hubs. This can be achieved by clustering electric vehicle (EV) charging points, car parks, public transport, and cycle parking all within close proximity to one another.

**C5 - Public buildings:** Public buildings (i.e. Congleton Library and Congleton Town Hall) should stand out in the streetscape and have well-designed entrance/exit points that are accessible to all kinds of users. They should also be physically and visually connected with the wider townscape via high-quality public realm, key views, well-defined entrances, and distinctive facades treatments.

## Public realm improvements

Building on Congleton's recently successful public realm improvements on Bridge Street, the town centre should continue to upgrade its public realm. Design codes for public realm improvements include:

**C6 - Green streets and spaces:** Include street trees and planting within the town centre's public realm. Particular areas in need of greening are the Bridestone Shopping Centres. This can be achieved by shop front hanging baskets/boxes and street trees/planters, as well as more innovative planting installations such as plant walls.

### C7 - Invoking a sense of place:

Incorporate public art (i.e. murals, statues) and visual references of local identity (i.e. heritage signs and community symbols/motifs), within streetscapes. For example, by utilising the 'blank' facades of Morrisons and the former B&M store, as well as several others within the Bridestone Shopping Centre.

**C8 - Riverside activity:** Brownfield sites along the River Dane should make use of their riverfront locations. Buildings should provide a mix of ground-level activity (see C12 - Active frontages) oriented towards the river and pedestrian-centric spaces such as footpaths and linear riverside parks.

**C9 - Extending shared spaces:** Extend the town centre's shared / people-centric spaces such as Bridge Street to adjoining streets and spaces (i.e. Mill Street, Market Square, Market Street, High Street, Lawton Street). This will foster a more attractive, inclusive, and safe town centre.

**C10 - Surfacing:** The retail streets in the town centre should have a consistent paving scheme which ties the town centre together. New paving schemes should be holistically designed to avoid fragmentation of the public realm. Areas that are surfaced with sett paving or other natural stone paving in the town centre should be protected to retain Congleton's historic market town character. Development should be designed around these heritage features.

C6

C7



F.69

**Figure 69:** Utilising blank walls within the town centre will contribute to a vibrant and attractive townscape



**Figure 70:** High-quality shared spaces along Bridge Street in Congleton Town Centre

1. Bunting adorned with local motifs contributing to Bridge Street's sense of place
2. Hanging baskets
3. Street trees and planters
4. Clear separation between dwell / rest areas and walking spaces due to change in surface



**Figure 71:** Change in level along Bridge Street made accessible with tactile paving and railings

1. Railings to assist users in moving between different levels in the street
2. Tactile paving to alert users of a change in level
3. High-quality surfacing referencing the hues of the streetscapes historic buildings



**Figure 72:** Poor-quality surfacing along Market Street with imposing material colours and lack of planting

1. Overly imposing colours scheme of pedestrian crossing
2. Lack of planting softening the hard landscaping of the area
3. Poor-quality red surfacing

## High street activity

In response to shifts in high street trends and subsequent vacancy rates, the following design codes aim to aid Congleton's high street revitalisation. Design codes for high street activity include:

**C11 - Active frontages:** Proposals within the town centre should provide ground-floor active uses such as retail, restaurants, cafes, and bars. This will activate the space to the front of businesses as well as provide natural surveillance over the street. For specific design codes on frontages refer to Design Code B: Frontages and boundary treatments.

**C12 - Mix of uses:** Create a sustainable town centre by providing a diverse mix of uses. Provide a mix of business units to accommodate a range of building uses of various sizes. Consider smaller ground-floor units within the town centre due to shifts in high street trends. When converting existing buildings (i.e. old retail developments) consider splitting the buildings into a collection of smaller units to cater for small-medium sizes businesses.

## C13 - Converting existing buildings:

Consider the following when converting existing buildings within the town centre:

- **Access** - a clear and well-defined entrance that fronts the street and is accessible to all user types
- **Landscaping** - provide planting in outdoor public spaces as well as within frontages to provide screening as well as softening the facade.
- **Extensions** - extensions should be proportionate and subordinate to the original building
- **Character** - refer to Design Code A: Materials, detailing, and character for specific codes on character
- **Overlook** - enhance natural surveillance by orienting buildings to overlook public spaces

C11

C12



F.73

**Figure 73:** Active ground-level frontages along Bridge Street bringing vibrancy to Congleton Town Centre

C14



**Figure 74:** Riverside Mill - contextually responsive conversion of old mill into commercial spaces



**Figure 75:** The Silk Mills - historic mill sensitively converted into a residential apartment building with balconies, new windows, and undercroft parking provided for residents



## Infill development

### 4.5 Infill development

Infill development is smaller scale development (generally fewer than 10 homes) within an existing urban/developed context (i.e. all character areas apart from Character Area 7 - Open Countryside). This type of development commonly consists of three main types:

- Gap site development within a street frontage
- Backland development
- Site redevelopment (for example, replacement of existing building/s)

The overarching aim of these design codes is to promote context sensitive infill housing of a high quality, including affordable housing within the Neighbourhood area. This should help reinforce local character and in the 'completion' of streetscapes, as well as the sustainable growth of Congleton.

**D1 - Scale and massing:** Building scale and massing should be in keeping with the prevailing development pattern and not be overbearing on existing properties or deprive them of light, including over-looking or over-shadowing of both windows and amenity space.

**D2 - Enclosure:** Building scale and position on plot should help to define and enclose the space within the street corridor or square to an appropriate degree based on the existing street section (building to building) and level of enclosure (ratio of street width to building height).

**D3 - Fenestration (window pattern):** The positioning of windows should be in keeping with the predominant positive buildings character on the street or harmonise with adjacent buildings of good character.

**D4 - Access:** Building entrances should address the street with a main access and main frontage. Corner buildings should address both streets with frontages but the main entrance could be on either subject to access requirements.

**D5 - Building height:** Buildings heights should vary from 1.5 – 2.5 storeys depending on adjacent plots. A variable eaves line and ridgeline is allowed to create interest but variation between adjacent buildings should be a maximum of 0.5 storeys in general.

**D6 - Refuse and cycle storage:** Access for bin and cycle storage should be provided with stores being integrated within plot boundaries. Ginnels / alleyways should be considered for terraced buildings with 4 or more units in order to allow access to the rear of properties for cycle and bin storage.

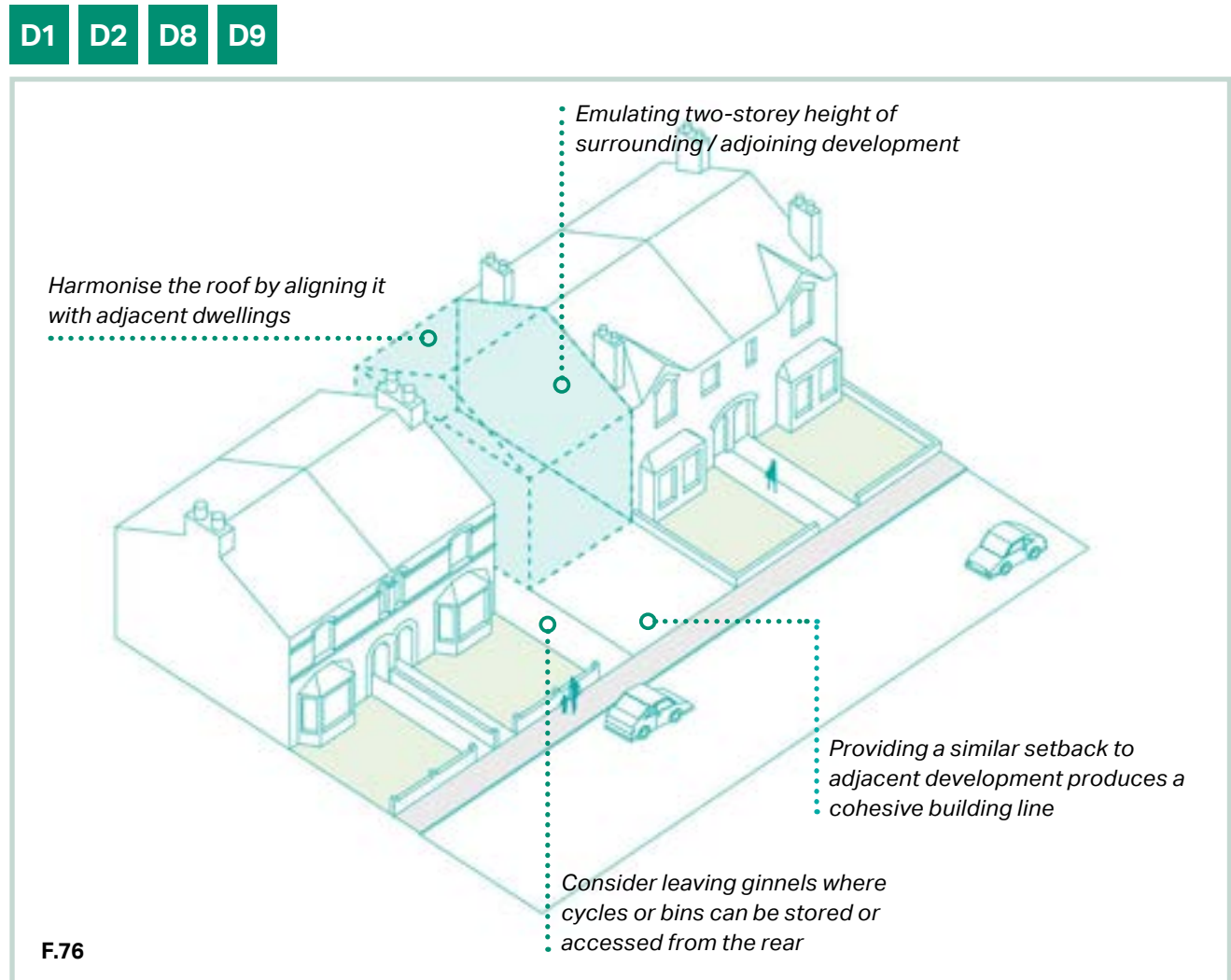
**D7 - Parking provision:** Parking should be integrated on plot where possible with parking spaces set behind the building line, generally to the side of plot being preferable. For narrow dwellings it is preferred to retain a small front garden with a boundary wall as opposed to an open hard surface parking space. Where parking is required to the front of the plot it should be afforded sufficient space and utilise hedgerows to screen cars laterally from the street.

## D8 - Proportionate backland

**development:** In the event of backland development, proposals should ensure the density, scale, and appearance reflect its immediate context (i.e. the original dwelling). Backland developments should not be larger in height, massing, or scale than the existing dwelling. The privacy, integrity, and amenity of the existing dwelling must be protected from that proposed on the 'backland'. Only on exceptionally large plots would it be deemed acceptable for any backland proposal to be larger or vary in character to that of the original dwelling.

## D9 - Access and spacing within backland

**development:** Backland development must avoid tandem development by ensuring appropriate spacing, access, and the overall configuration does not adversely affect the amenity of the original (or surrounding) dwelling/dwellings. Backland access should minimise the removal or alteration of existing boundary treatments (i.e. red brick and limestone walls) within the original plot where feasible.



**Figure 76:** Contextual infill development diagram



## Large-scale development

### 4.6 Large-scale development

In light of major residential development applications and forecast population growth, it will be a priority to ensure larger-scale development is of high-quality, responding to the overarching character and identity of the Neighbourhood area.

Congleton's built area has grown substantially in recent decades, in part due to large-scale residential developments. This is highlighted further in section 3 with Character Area 5 (Outer Suburbs), which identifies large areas of suburban residential development. Given the proportional impact such developments will have on the character of both the built and natural landscape, specific design codes are required to ensure major development proposals, within or outside settlement boundaries, are contextually responsive.

**E1 - Streetscape character:** The character of all streets providing access or frontage to the development must have a suitable design response. Dwellings should be facing the street but may be set behind green verges, hedgerow, or trees for screening or ecology purposes.

**E2 - Sustainable networks:** Designated pedestrian/cycle routes should form the basis for the movement network, around which vehicle traffic can be managed. Pedestrian and cycle networks should be prioritised across proposals. Footways/cycleways should generally be provided on both sides of the street, with one-sided only appropriate at the settlement edge.

**E3 - Street hierarchy:** A simple hierarchy of characterful streets should be provided, suitable to the context of the development. Refer to the street types analysis in section 2 for further detail on street hierarchies.

**E4 - Street trees:** New streets should include trees set within adequate verges alongside the carriageway, within plots, or in open spaces.

**E5 - Settlement coalescence:** Large-scale development has the ability to bridge or diminish the gaps between settlements. This must be avoided by ensuring proposals maintain a clearly defined gap (i.e. green / landscape gap) between Congleton and surrounding settlements.

**E6 - Primary street boundaries:** Where developments relate to primary streets within Congleton, red brick or limestone wall boundaries should define the site boundary (in conjunction with hedgerow/planting).

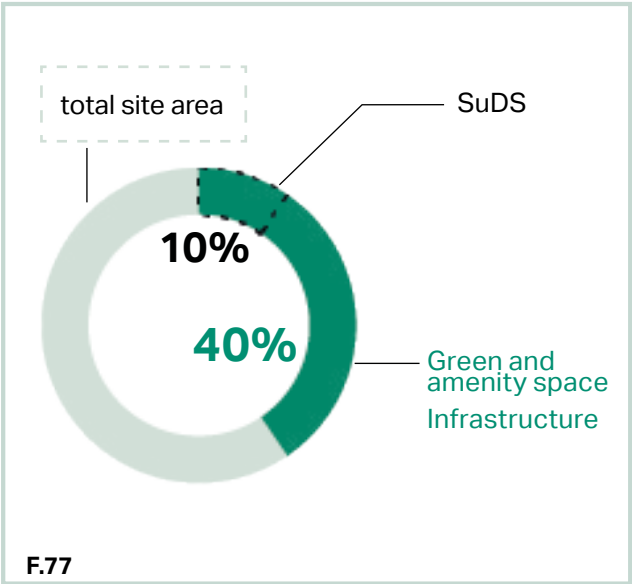
**E7 - Building heights:** Building heights should usually vary between 1.5 and 2.5 storeys dependent on the context of the site. A variable eaves line and ridgeline is allowed to create interest but variation between adjacent buildings should be a maximum of 0.5 storeys in general.

**E8 - Housing mix:** Masterplan proposals must provide a housing mix that responds to the local demand for specific housing types and tenures, including a percentage of affordable housing in line with the Local Plan. Affordable housing must be integrated amongst market housing.

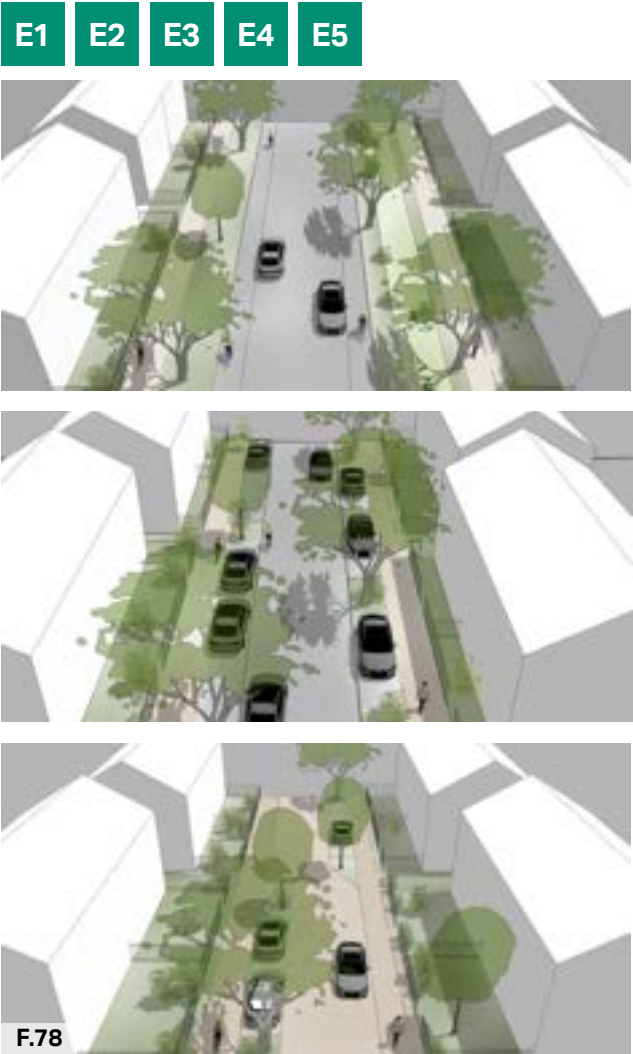
**E9 - Green infrastructure:** Circa 40% of the site should be retained as green infrastructure for enhancing local biodiversity and providing recreational/amenity space for residents. 10% of the site may also be required for SuDS or attenuation features dependent on drainage character of the site.

E2

E9



**Figure 77:** Indicative green space proportion to consider for biodiversity net-gain and amenity space for residents



**Figure 78:** Indicative street hierarchy models

**Primary Street**

- Street trees and grass verges
- Cycle lanes
- Street-building enclosure ratio: 4:1
- No on-street parking
- Smaller building setbacks (1-4 metres)
- Street facing dwellings

**Secondary Street**

- Street trees and grass verges
- Grass verges
- Street-building enclosure ratio: 3:1
- Inset bay parking
- Medium building setbacks (5-9 metres)
- Street facing dwellings

**Tertiary Street**

- Street trees and grass verges
- Street-building enclosure ratio: 2:1
- Inset bay parking and on-plot parking
- Larger building setbacks (10-15 metres)
- Street facing dwellings

## Exemplar masterplan: Marmalade Lane

Marmalade Lane is a multi-award winning and sustainably-led co-housing development in Cambridge. The scheme includes 42 homes, made up of a mix of terraces and small-scale apartment buildings.

Marmalade Lane is largely laid out in terraces creating attractive, people-friendly streets to the front, with private gardens set behind. Car parking has also been kept to the periphery, with bins in communal stores, conserving external space for the recreational use of residents.

While the homes are contemporary in style, they pay homage to the local vernacular by referencing traditional Cambridge townhouses and low-rise apartments. The development also includes extensive shared facilities, such as a large communal garden, and a central car-free space along Marmalade Lane.

Marmalade Lane exhibits both well-established and innovative design principles including:

- Respecting surrounding heritage by using local materials and referencing local architectural styles and housing typologies
- Incorporating sustainable energy sources such as heat pumps and solar panels
- Using contextual and durable materials in both façades and roofs of the homes, as well as in the hard surfacing of public realm
- Providing open public spaces for everyone within the development to mutually enjoy
- Incorporating green spaces within individual plots as well as within communal spaces



**Figure 79:** Marmalade Lane - the central car-free community space within the development (*Image: TOWN, David Butler*)

The Marmalade Lane development provides an ambition for what could be achieved within the Congleton Neighbourhood area particularly in areas closer to the town centre where density can be maximised. The design principles of Marmalade Lane can be applied to Congleton alongside the analysis of the built character and context identified in this report (Sections 1-3).

Through adhering to urban design principles and by mobilising the appropriate stakeholders, such as local developers and community groups, the Neighbourhood area should be able to see larger-scale development that either reflects or parallels the high quality of Marmalade Lane.

For further information on the Marmalade Lane development please visit their dedicated website at:

<https://ml.qwirx.com/#home>



**Figure 80:** Mix of public and private spaces including private gardens as well as communal spaces (*Image: TOWN, David Butler*)



**Figure 81:** High-quality materials used on façades, within window / window frames, and doorways (*Image: TOWN, David Butler*)



**Figure 82:** Refuse and heat pumps contextually screened by using the same materials used on the façade of buildings (*Image: TOWN, David Butler*)



## Landscape, views, and the settlement edge

### 4.7 Landscape, views, and the settlement edge

Congleton's built environment is predominantly located to the west of the Neighbourhood area. By contrast, the eastern half has a strong landscape character, as outlined by Character Area 7 - Open Countryside.

The following design codes are in response to the extent of the Neighbourhood area's landscape character (Character Area 7 - Open Countryside) and suburban development (Character Area 6 - Outer Suburbs). The contrast in character between both areas requires a sensitive and considered design response.

Both the townscape and landscape features of the Neighbourhood provide a series of key views. Such views should be protected from within and outside of Congleton's built area.

#### **F1 - Sensitive peripheral development:**

Integrate development sensitively with the surrounding landscape, particularly on the periphery of Congleton's built area (i.e. between Character Area 6 - Outer Suburbs and Character Area 7 - Open Countryside). Lower building heights and smaller scale development would be most appropriate for peripheral locations such as these.

#### **F2 - Protecting views at the settlement edge:**

Proposals on the settlement edge should be unobstructive of key views looking both inwards and outwards of the settlement. Views of the Neighbourhood area's landscape and built form are a locally defining feature that contribute to the legibility and way-finding of the area.

#### **F3 - Transitioning between town and landscape:**

Proposals that include buildings of lower heights (i.e. 1 - 1.5 storeys) should be considered in areas with key view and landscape sensitivities. Proposals on the settlement edge should be configured to produce a harmonious transition between both the surrounding landscape and the built form of the settlement. This can be

achieved via a mixture of lower height development and using natural screening (i.e. hedgerows, tree cover, green roofs etc.) to mitigate a development's visual impact.

#### **F4 - Protecting and creating views:**

Buildings should be oriented to maintain existing key views or to create new views/vistas to contribute to local way-finding. Views of both landmark buildings within Congleton's townscape (i.e. Congleton Town Hall) as well as landscape features (i.e. The Cloud) should be utilised to promote legibility across the Neighbourhood area. Such views also contribute to the character and overall attractiveness of the area, and should therefore be considered within proposals.

#### **F5 - Screening development in Character Area 7 - Open Countryside:**

Proposals should be positioned behind natural screening (i.e. trees, planting) to avoid obstruction of views into the surrounding landscape. Additional screening should be incorporated into any given proposal where existing planting is not sufficient in screening the development.

## F6 - Visual impact of agricultural development in Character Area 7 - Open Countryside:

Agricultural development in the Open Countryside should refrain from using materials and colours that contrast with the surrounding landscape. Muted and contextual colour palettes should be used to reduce the visual impact of development on the landscape.

## F7 - Settlement edge gateways:

Congleton has a number of gateways primarily located along its strategic roads (i.e. Biddulph Road, Newcastle Road, Manchester Road, Macclesfield Road, Sandbach Road, Buxton Road, and Holmes Chapel Road) and junctions (i.e. strategic road intersections), many of which are located at the settlement edge where open landscape abuts Congleton's built area. Gateways into Congleton should maintain a sense of visual prominence by fostering a sense of arrival. This can be achieved through the use of landmark features, utilising key views/vistas, large setbacks, and public realm.

F1 F2 F3

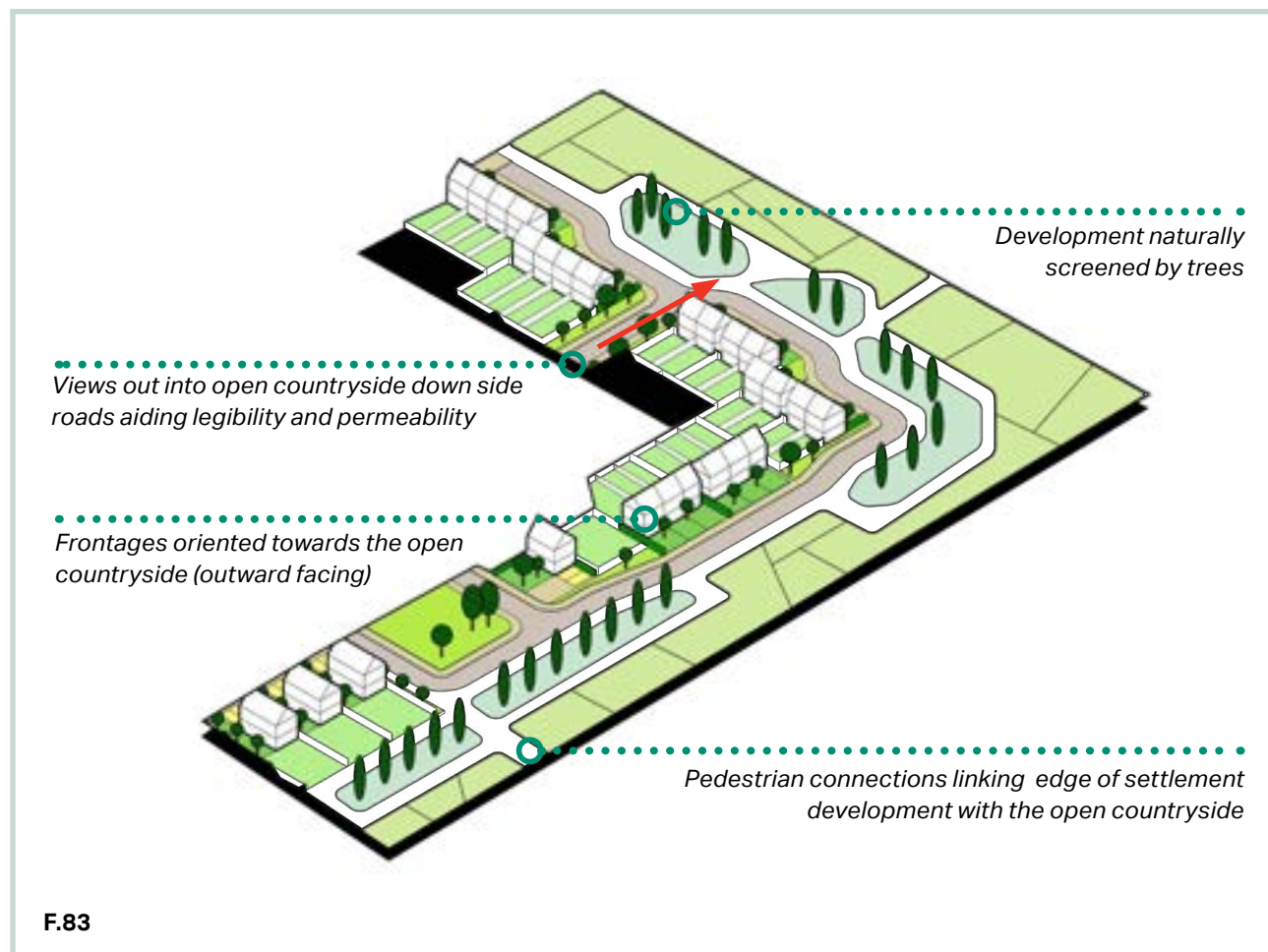


Figure 83: Landscape sensitive edge of settlement development diagram



## Sustainable design

### 4.8 Sustainable design

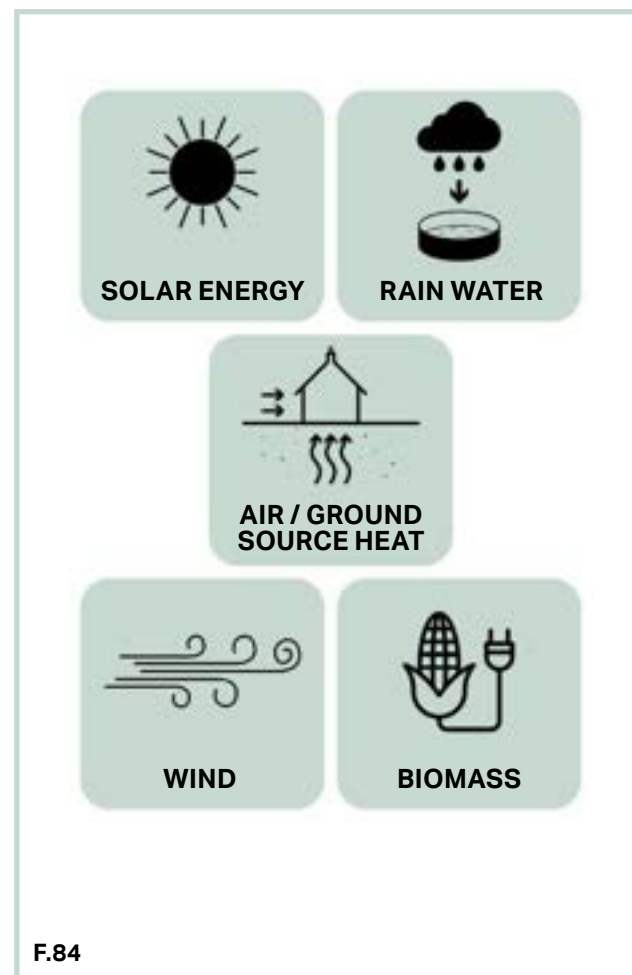
Climate change has created the need to decrease our carbon footprint by providing innovative solutions to transportation (electrification) and the energy use of buildings. These codes are, therefore, in response to the Climate Emergency facing the world. Every locality has a part to play in decarbonising and moving towards achieving net-zero. This can be achieved by incorporating innovative design features and techniques into both new and existing developments.

Sustainable design incorporates innovative practices at all scales of design to minimise a developments carbon footprint, whilst future proofing homes, settlements and natural environments. Reducing use of imported natural resources whilst increasing utilisation of local resources and sustainable natural resources can help to achieve this.

**G1 - Resilience to climate change:** All new development should work to moderate extremes of temperature, wind, humidity, local flooding and pollution within the Neighbourhood area by:

- Avoid siting homes in high risk flood areas and mitigate increased risk of storms/flooding with sustainable drainage systems. These reduce the amount and rate at which surface water reaches sewers/watercourses. The most sustainable option is collecting this water for reuse, for example in a water butt or rainwater harvesting system.
- Plant trees as part of major development for habitat, fuel and sustainable building materials.
- Ecosystems cannot adapt as fast as the climate is changing leading to loss of biodiversity. Protecting and enhancing the Neighbourhood area's watercourses and green infrastructure can combat this. Aim to increase ecology through biodiversity net-gain (BNG) on major development sites.

G1 G2



**Figure 84:** F2 - Key alternative natural energy sources

## G2 – Assessing alternative energy

**sources:** Key considerations in the assessment of alternative energy sources may include:

- Optimise solar orientation of streets and buildings. Aim to orient buildings within 30' of south (both main fenestration and roof plane) for solar gain, solar energy (solar panels) and natural daylighting
- Ground conditions to accommodate loops for ground source heat and space for air source heat pump units
- Links to local estates for sustainable coppicing, harvesting or recycling of biomass fuels
- Local wind speed and direction for micro-generation wind turbines

**G3 – Electric Vehicle charging:** Current transition to electric vehicle technology and ownership comes with related issues that must be addressed by new development. Design issues to address for EV charging at the home include:

- Convenient on plot parking and charging points close to homes
- Potential to incorporate charging points under cover within car ports and garages
- Still need to integrate car parking sensitively within the streetscene. For example, parking set behind the building line or front of plot spaces lined with native hedgerow planting
- Need to consider visitor parking / charging needs
- Potential for providing secure, serviced communal parking areas for higher density homes
- Existing on-street parking areas and feasibility to provide EV charging infrastructure not linked to the home

G3



**Figure 85:** Home EV charging point hidden out of view at the rear / side elevation of a building

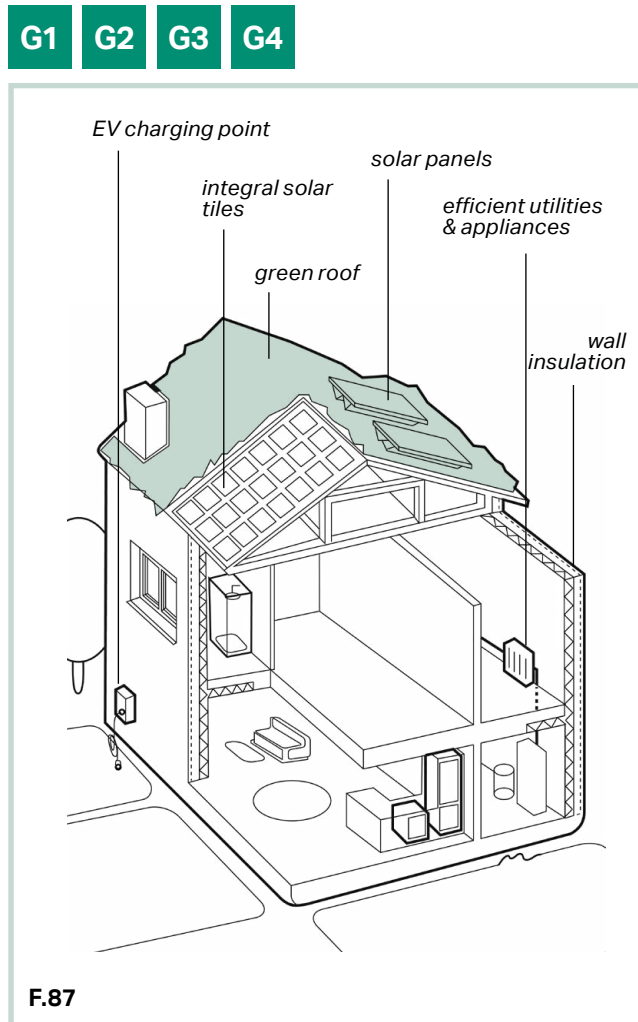


**Figure 86:** Public EV charging station naturally screened by planting

#### G4 - Energy efficiency measures

**towards Net-Zero carbon:** By default, new development should adopt a fabric first approach in line with the government's emerging Future Homes Standard, to attain higher standards of insulation and energy conservation.

- Reducing energy demand further by employing passive design principles for homes is desirable and can make some forms of development more acceptable to the community (window orientation, solar gain, solar shading, increased insulation, ventilation with heat-recovery);
- Maximise on-site renewable energy generation (solar, ground source, air source and wind driven);
- Consider building form and thermal efficiency: point-block/ terraced / semi-detached / detached all have different energy efficiency profiles. This must be balanced with local design preference and character considerations to ease acceptance for development.



**Figure 87:** Cut-through diagram of an energy efficient home and its features



**Figure 88:** Air source heat pump unit hidden out of view at the rear / side elevation of a building



**Figure 89:** Air source heat pump housing covers the unit and harmonises with the building aesthetic



Checklist

05

# 1

## General design guidelines for new development:

- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
- Reinforce or enhance the established settlement character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views;
- Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
- Positively integrate energy efficient technologies;
- Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours;
- Ensure that places are designed with management, maintenance and the upkeep of utilities in mind; and
- Seek to implement passive environmental design principles by, firstly, considering how the site layout can optimise beneficial solar gain and reduce energy demands (e.g. insulation), before specification of energy efficient building services and finally incorporate renewable energy sources.

## 2

### Street grid and layout:

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern; are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

## 3

### Local green spaces, views & character:

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- Can trees be used to provide natural shading from unwanted solar gain? I.e. deciduous trees can limit solar gains in summer, while maximising them in winter.
- Has the proposal been considered within its wider physical context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?

### 3 (continued)

#### Local green spaces, views & character:

- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how this will be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?
- Is there opportunity to increase the local area biodiversity?
- Can green space be used for natural flood prevention e.g. permeable landscaping, swales etc.?
- Can water bodies be used to provide evaporative cooling?
- Is there space to consider a ground source heat pump array, either horizontal ground loop or borehole (if excavation is required)?

### 4

#### Gateway and access features:

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between settlements?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

### 5

#### Buildings layout and grouping:

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the villagescape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

## 5 (continued)

### Buildings layout and grouping:

- Subject to topography and the clustering of existing buildings, are new buildings oriented to incorporate passive solar design principles, with, for example, one of the main glazed elevations within 30° due south, whilst also minimising overheating risk?
- Can buildings with complementary energy profiles be clustered together such that a communal low carbon energy source could be used to supply multiple buildings that might require energy at different times of day or night? This is to reduce peak loads. And/or can waste heat from one building be extracted to provide cooling to that building as well as heat to another building?

## 6

### Building line and boundary treatment:

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

## 7

### Building heights and roof-line:

- What are the characteristics of the roof-line?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Will the roof structure be capable of supporting a photovoltaic or solar thermal array either now, or in the future?
- Will the inclusion of roof mounted renewable technologies be an issue from a visual or planning perspective? If so, can they be screened from view, being careful not to cause over shading?

# 8

## Household extensions:

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, and does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extensions, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?
- Does the extension offer the opportunity to retrofit energy efficiency measures to the existing building?
- Can any materials be re-used in-situ to reduce waste and embodied carbon?

# 9

## Building materials & surface treatment:

- What is the distinctive material in the area?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local materials?
- Does the proposal use high-quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Does the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Are recycled materials, or those with high recycled content proposed?

## 9 (continued)

### Building materials & surface treatment:

- Has the embodied carbon of the materials been considered and are there options which can reduce the embodied carbon of the design? For example, wood structures and concrete alternatives.
- Can the proposed materials be locally and/or responsibly sourced? E.g. FSC timber, or certified under BES 6001, ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems?

## 10

### Car parking:

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Have the needs of wheelchair users been considered?
- Can electric vehicle charging points be provided?
- Can secure cycle storage be provided at an individual building level or through a central/ communal facility where appropriate?
- If covered car ports or cycle storage is included, can it incorporate roof mounted photovoltaic panels or a bio-diverse roof in its design?

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AECOM is the world's trusted infrastructure consulting firm, delivering professional services throughout the project lifecycle — from planning, design and engineering to program and construction management. On projects spanning transportation, buildings, water, new energy and the environment, our public- and private-sector clients trust us to solve their most complex challenges. Our teams are driven by a common purpose to deliver a better world through our unrivalled technical expertise and innovation, a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to environmental, social and governance priorities. AECOM is a *Fortune 500* firm and its Professional Services business had revenue of \$13.2 billion in fiscal year 2020. See how we are delivering sustainable legacies for generations to come at [aecom.com](https://aecom.com) and [@AECOM](https://twitter.com/AECOM).

