

# NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

## ROYSTON



**Final Report**  
**September 2007**



urban  
practitioners





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# INTRODUCTION

The Royston Urban Design Assessment final report is structured into four sections.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The introductory section sets the context for the Urban Design Guidelines and the Urban Design Assessment by providing background information for some of the assessment criteria, an overview of the settlement's geographic and socioeconomic conditions, a review of the current policy context unique to Royston and an historical overview of the town.

## 2. URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Strategy Plan and Settlement Principles lays out broad principles in both planimetric and text form which characterise the four Urban Design zones and sets out principles for circulation, views and legibility.

The Urban Design zones section defines the areas associated with each Urban Design zone. The Royston Urban Design zones have been created on the basis of existing characteristics, reflecting the morphology, density and typologies of each area, and an understanding of how these areas should be viewed in light of any potential development or regeneration of the zone. The guidelines demonstrate the ideals for each zone in terms of such issues as building heights, setbacks, typology, morphology and densities.

Guidelines based on the assessment criteria have been created for each zone, followed by case studies for infill sites and larger sites.

## 3. URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

The Urban Design Assessment provides the baseline evidence and analysis which has shaped the strategy plan, settlement principles and urban design guidelines. The assessment follows the criteria described in the district-wide report. Please note that the maps contained within this report are not to scale. The Key Issues, Safeguards and Opportunities outlines the issues that emerged from the baseline evidence and analysis with potential steps to be taken to address them.

## 4. CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

The Consultation Workshop summary encapsulates the results of the Royston stakeholder workshop. Many of the stakeholder comments have been used as evidence in the urban design assessment.

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES and CASE STUDIES

The Urban Design Guidelines have been created on the basis of each Urban Design zone. The guidelines have been developed following the Urban Design Assessment criteria described in the borough-wide report, although circulation, views and legibility have been addressed under the settlement-wide principles.

## Urban Design Criteria

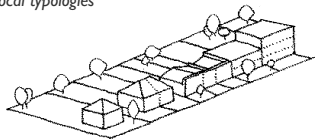
The following examples provide a summary of the urban design criteria used:

### Building types

Building types considered for Royston include:

- Bungalows
- Terraced housing
- Semi-detached housing
- Detached housing
- Two-storey block of flats
- Three-storey block of flats

### Local typologies



### Building heights

Building types considered for Royston includes:

- One-storey
- Two-storey
- Three-storey

### Density

Density is based on an amalgamation of a number of different elements including building typology, building height, spacing between buildings, setbacks and garden size:

- Low density generally refers to one and two storey detached houses, with large spaces between buildings, large setbacks and gardens;
- Medium density generally refers to two storey semi-detached houses with medium spaces between buildings and medium sized setbacks and gardens; and
- High density generally refers to two storey terraced houses and two, three and four storey blocks of flats, with small setbacks and small or communal gardens.

### Building lines

Building lines will be considered for each Urban Design zone generally in terms of:

- Large setback (6+ metres, depending on the building height)
- Medium setback (3 - 6 metres)
- Minimal setback (0 - 3 metres)

### Building orientation

Building orientation impacts urban design in terms of:

- Building orientation toward street front
- No particular building orientation

### Pattern of open spaces

As well as the pattern of public open spaces within the urban area, gardens have also been considered in terms of:

- Divided front gardens
- Shared front gardens
- Divided rear gardens (back-to-back with rear gardens)

The type of garden reflects on such concerns as the appearance of the streetscape, the privacy of the dwellings, quality of the wildlife habitat, the type of development, and the size of the development site.

### Parking

Parking options can be classified as:

- On-street parking
- On-site communal parking
- On-site individual parking

Decisions on the parking type relates to type of streets within the Urban Design zone (primary or secondary through streets, or cul-de-sacs)

### Case Studies

The case studies apply the various classifications of the guidelines to create a range of recommended possibilities for each Urban Design zone. Depending on the zone, case studies may suggest applying the following density conditions relative to the surrounding character:

- typical density - which works with the existing building typologies, building heights and setbacks;
- enhanced density - which considers a moderate increase in density looking at different typologies, building heights and setbacks; and
- increased density - which considers a significant increase in density looking at different typologies, building heights and setbacks. Increased density is generally only suggested where larger sites (discussed below) are available.

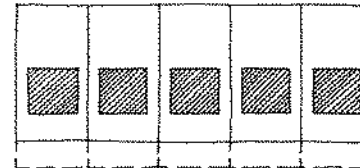
The case study drawings which follow each zone's guidelines are illustrative only, particularly as it regards car parking or amenity space.

The case studies dedicated to each zone are divided into two categories, infill and block sites. A block site is considered to be an site area greater than 0.35 hectares, with dimensions of no less than (approximately) 50 metres by 70 metres. Block sites, due to their size, have greater latitude to introduce new densities and characteristics into an urban design zone. Examples are shown to the right.

The determination of minimum block size has drawn

advice from the Urban Design Compendium, produced by Llwllyn-Davies for English Partnerships and The Housing Corporation in 2000.

### Infill samples



Detached housing, medium setback = approx. 30 dph

(Assumes 5m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 13m x 25m plot)

Detached housing, large setback = approx. 25 dph

(Assumes 10m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 13m x 30m plot)



Semi-detached housing, medium setback = 40 dph

(Assumes 3.5m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 9.5m x 25m plot)

Semi-detached housing, no setback = 50 dph

(Assumes no setback, 11.5m rear garden, 9.5m x 21.5m plot)



Two-storey terrace housing, medium setback = 60 dph

(Assumes 4m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

Two-storey terrace housing, no setback = 70 dph

(Assumes no setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

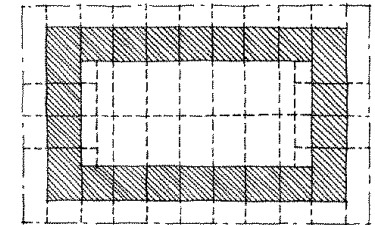
3/4-storey terraces with flats, medium setback = 100 dph

(Assumes 4m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

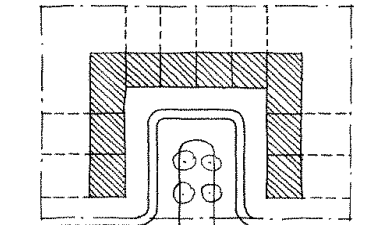
### Block samples

The block samples were designed on the basis of the minimum block size of 50x70 metres (0.35 ha).

### Minimum perimeter block



### Close development



## ROYSTON - TODAY

### Physical Location

Royston is located on the northern side of the East Anglian Heights. The town sits on the edge of the Cambridgeshire Plain to the north. The town of Cambridge lies 12 miles away.

### Transport Connections

Skirting Royston to the north, the A505 provides the main arterial route linking Royston with Baldock and Letchworth to the south east, and to the M11 and A11 in the north west. It can be accessed from three different directions, Old North Road to the north, Baldock Road to the West and Newmarket Road to the East. The A10 runs straight through Royston, coming from the south via Hertford and leading north west to Cambridge. The A1198 connects Royston with Huntingdon to the north east.

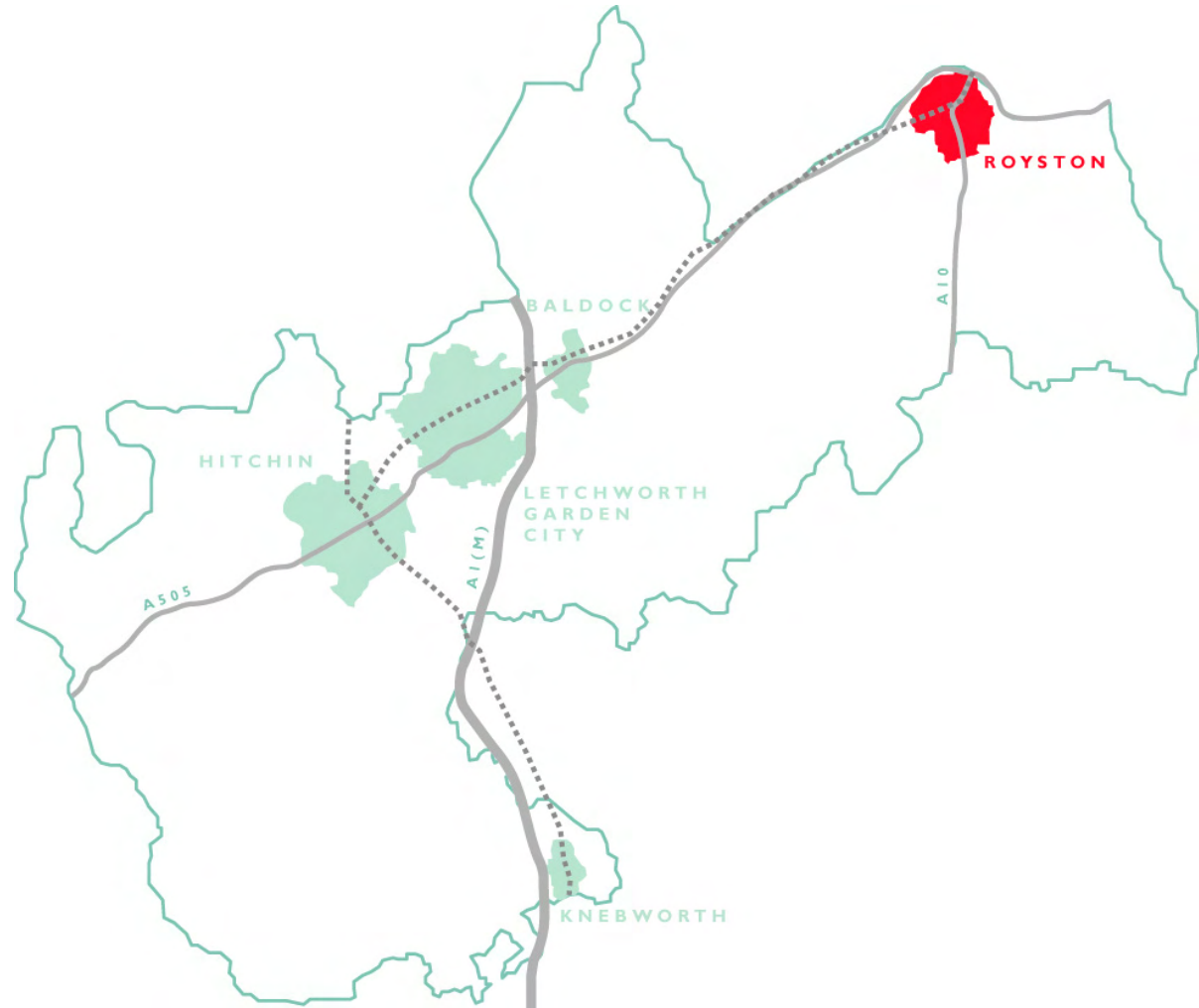
Royston Station is located 500 metres to the north of the town centre on Old North Road. Royston is 50 minutes from London by rail, with direct services roughly every half hour, and twenty minutes from Cambridge with two services per hour. Bus services cater for movement within the Royston and the locality, with services to Cambridge every 30 minutes.

### Population

According to national census data, Royston had a population of 14,570 in 2001, half the size of neighbouring Hitchin or Letchworth.

### Social composition

Over half of the population are within the 25-59 age range, just under 15% are between 5 and 15, and 10% between 16 and 24. Age groups roughly reflect the district average, falling a percentage lower in the age groups 60 - 74 and 75+.



# LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

## Planning Policy Context

### INTRODUCTION:

Royston lies in a shallow bowl within the East Anglian Heights chalk escarpment, and is bounded by the Cambridgeshire Plain to the north. The Council regards the protection and enhancement of this unique setting as a priority for the town and the wider landscape.

Limited opportunities for major new development exist within the town, and new development would need to adhere to the established structure and character of the town.

There are also opportunities to better integrate the new development that rapidly emerged between 1964 and 1981 into the structure of the town.

The town centre retains a medieval pattern around the cross roads of Icknield Way and Ermine Street. The existence of many historic buildings within the traditional street pattern means that the centre is subject to a Conservation Area designation.

### LOCAL POLICY:

#### NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN NO.2 WITH ALTERATIONS, April 1996:

##### Royston's development limits:

Development needs within the town will be kept under review, and any proposals will be determined with reference to their likely impact on the local highway network.

##### Landscape and open space patterns in towns:

The principle features that justify the pattern in Royston are:

- The dominating slopes around the south of the town
- The surrounding relatively flat and featureless topography which continues into the north of the town and links with key landscaped areas and open spaces in the town
- The limits to development provided by the bypass to the north
- Views from high ground, from afar north of the town, or from the bypass and railway across the town, with some limited views along the main roads into the town centre.

##### Urban environment:

Specific areas for environmental improvements in the town are listed in the Local Plan.

##### Housing proposals:

Development in the town ranges from historic houses in the medieval town centre, to 1970s and 1980s estates on the peripheries of the town. The Local Plan identifies 15 residential areas outside the town centre,

each with their own residential character. These are identified on the proposals map. Proposals for new development should acknowledge these definitions.

##### Employment provision:

Employment opportunities in the town are concentrated in three main areas outside the town centre.

Proposal sites for new development are shown on the Proposals Map.

The environment within employment areas should be safeguarded and enhanced, ensuring it makes a full contribution to the overall environmental quality of the town, and minimising any environmental disadvantages.

##### Royston Town Centre:

The town centre is the main shopping location, hosts several social and cultural facilities, and is also a major employment area.

Growth in shopping space has not kept pace with the expansion in the town's population. The historic environment of the centre limits development opportunities, though there are relatively unattractive buildings that could be redeveloped to enhance both the retail offer and the wider urban environment. The Council believes that sensitive new development would realise valuable investment that would then make it easier to safeguard the historic environment.

The Council believes there is an urgent need to consolidate the town centre as an attractive shopping destination. This means that proposals for change of use away from retail use will be resisted, and where possible, new retail proposals will be supported. Other uses will also be considered, provided they add to the vibrancy of the town centre, and work within the historic environment.

The main shopping area is seen as High Street, routes through to Market Hill and Church Lane, Market Hill, Royston Cross, and Kneesworth Street. The Council supports the primacy of retail uses in these areas, though A3 food & drink uses will also be considered. Particular regard will be paid to any effects on pedestrian routes and the attractiveness of new proposals to shoppers.

Only retail uses will be allowed in the core of the town centre, with the main aim being to introduce more activity into the Market Hill/Fish Hill North area. However, much of the town centre falls outside of the defined main shopping area, and is therefore not subject to protective shopping policies.

A range of environmental improvements, aimed at enhancing the pedestrian environment, whilst easing service access to shops, are proposed throughout the town centre. These are detailed in the Local Plan. There are clear opportunities for planting on the two main

axes – at Baldock Street/Melbourn Street, and High Street/Kneesworth Street.



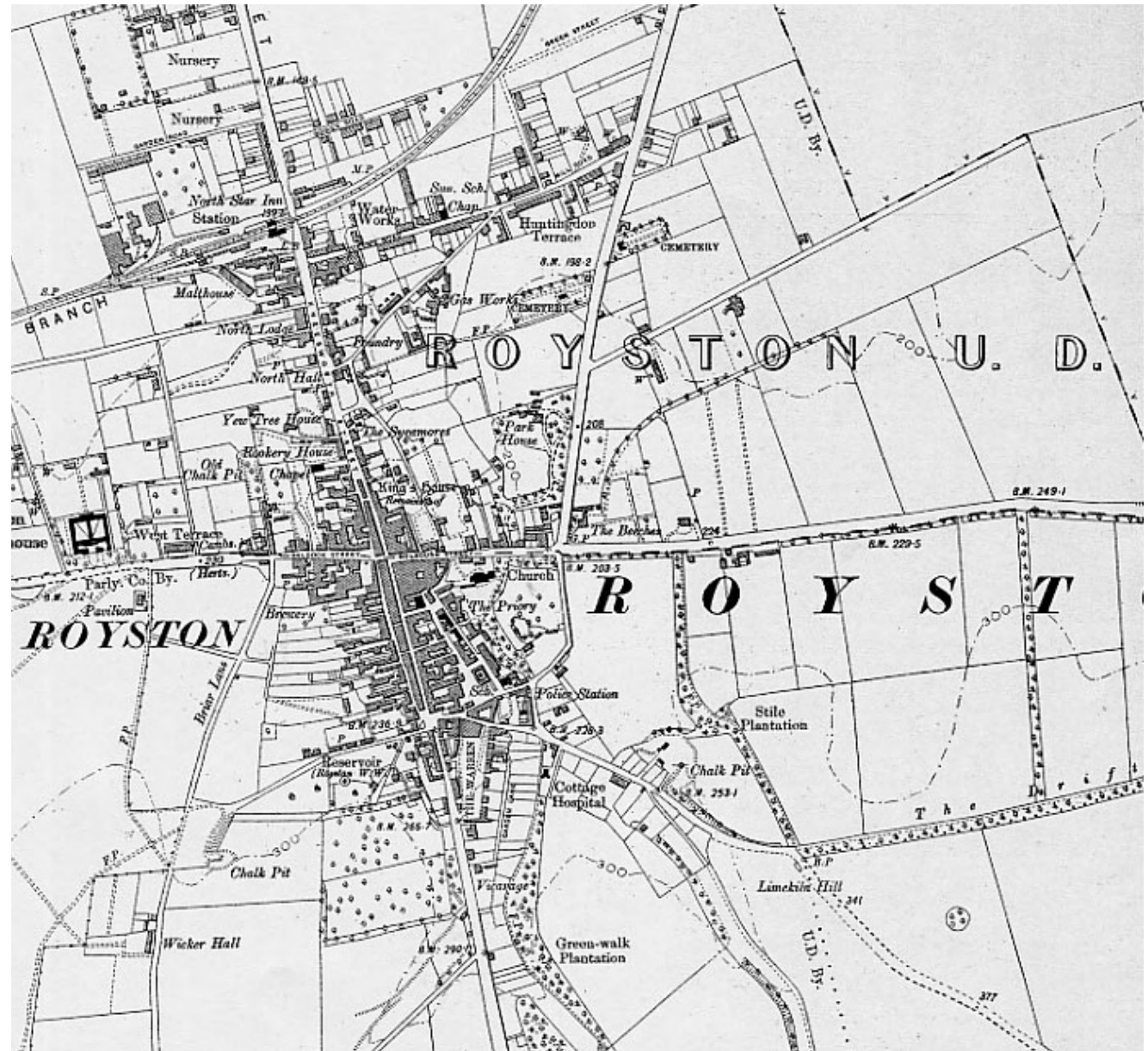
## ROYSTON - HISTORY

Royston is situated at the crossroads of two ancient routes: the pre-Roman Icknield Way and the Roman Ermine Street, running between London and York. Lack of evidence for a permanent Roman or Anglo Saxon settlement at the crossroads suggests that the town grew up around a monastery built on the site of the Priory Park, taking its name from the Countess of Norfolk, Roysia, who is said to have erected a stone cross at the crossing. The Church of the Augustinian Priory was founded in the second half of the 12th century and was converted to the parish church of St John the Baptist after the dissolution of the monasteries.

During the Middle Ages, a market town grew alongside the monastery, a popular stopping point both for pilgrims journeying up to St Albans and down to Canterbury, and for aristocrats and their entourages travelling between London and York. The market, selling agricultural products grown on the surrounding Cambridgeshire plains, originally sat in an open space between High Street/Kneesworth Street and Upper King Street/Lower King Street. Over time this area was filled in with permanent stalls, leaving the narrow streets visible in the town centre today. The town expanded considerably in the 15th and 16th centuries, gaining wealth from the sale of corn, and from a strong maltings industry. This wealth supported the town's continued success as a reputable stopping point for coaches, so that by the 17th century James I chose to stop there, at Priory House, and later converted two pubs into hunting lodges.

The maltings and coaching industries thrived in Royston into the nineteenth century, the latter declining due to the arrival of the Railway in 1850. A Gas and Water Company, founded in 1837 and 1859 respectively, brought further wealth to Royston during the nineteenth century. While the coaching and maltings industries concentrated growth in the historic town centre, the arrival of the railway half a kilometre down Ol North Road, focussed expansion on a new centre around the station. These two poles of development, the first based around the historic town centre and second adjacent to the railway station, has impacted the town's development over time. Rather than creating one clear centre, the two poles were separated by industrial sites which have been replaced by lower density and often impermeable residential infill developments.

Development and household expansion continued after the First World War, and at a greater pace in recent decades, rising from 6,000 in 1960 to over 14,000 today. Growth was located in fragmented sections around the two earlier centres, constrained in the south by the East Anglian Heights, and to the north by the construction of the A505.



Nineteenth century Royston, showing the station and the Historic High Density Zone emerging near it.

# URBAN DESIGN ZONES

## Urban Design Zones

For the purpose of this study, Royston was divided into four Urban Design Zones, grouping developments by period and use. The Employment Area, Designated Open Land and Local Amenities are studied as units, while the main four zones are treated in more depth and analysed issue by issue.

### Town Centre Zone

This zone covers the historic heart of Royston, structured around the historic crossing of Icknield Way and the Roman Road running north-south. It is a relatively dense zone, with narrow streets and close knit two storey houses. The age and architectural styles of the buildings give the zone a strong historic character.

### Historic High Density Zone

This zone encompasses a cluster of houses to the north of the town centre sitting around the railway to the west of the station. The housing stock is largely two storey Victorian, made of red and yellow brick. There is some later infill in the area, including bungalows.

### Low Density Mixed Residential Zone

This zone takes in groups of interwar and postwar developments which sit in clusters directly outside the town centre, and further out along Baldock Road, Old North Road and London Road. Houses are mostly semi-detached, with some detached, often with front lawns and gardens to the rear.

### Postwar suburban Zone

This zone includes single design 1960s, 1970s and 1980s estates, and high end 1990s developments. Some of the estates in the zone are orientated perpendicular to the road, but most developments are built around culs-de-sac.

### Employment Area

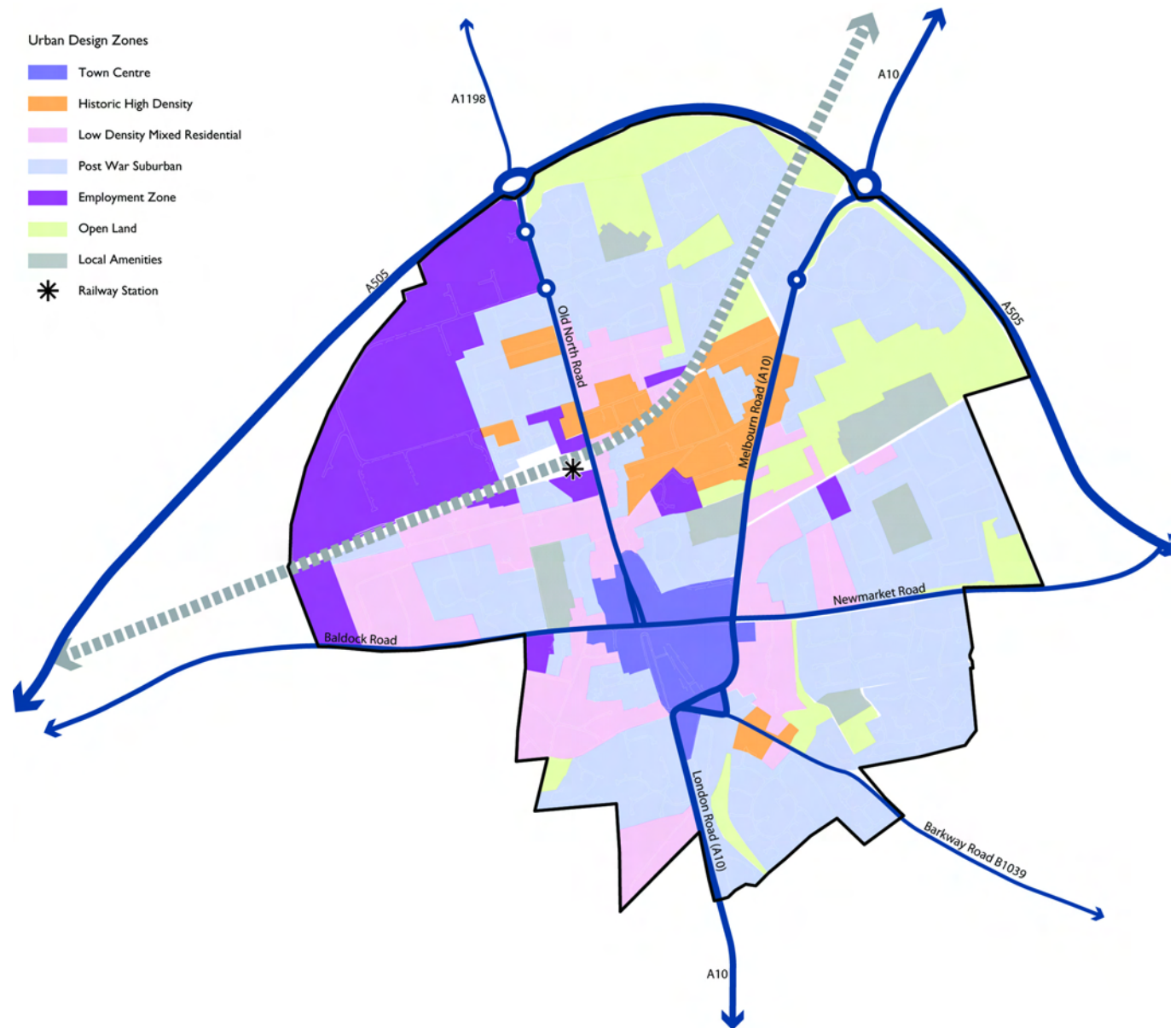
This area incorporates the light industry and warehouse development, the majority of which lies north of the railway and east of Old North Road plus some pockets outside of the Town Centre Zone.

### Open Land

Open Land includes small patches of publicly accessible land throughout Royston, with large sections to the north of the settlement, and east of Melbourn Road.

### Local Amenities

The local amenities are present in small areas of land dispersed throughout Royston, accommodating community facilities such as schools, leisure centres and health facilities.



The Urban Design Zones of Royston.

# STRATEGY PLAN and SETTLEMENT PRINCIPLES

## Urban Design Zones

A The Town Centre zone forms a significant shopping and service area for local residents along with some restaurants, cafés and high-end retail in a strong historical environment. The combination of historical buildings and open space makes this area appealing to visitors as well. There is significant room to continue to improve the quality of the environment and the retail offer through a focus on public realm improvements, a coordinated parking strategy and the potential redevelopment of key sites. Local landmark buildings, such as St John's Church and the Town Hall, and Priory Park could be better integrated into the town centre. The development on Melbourn Street which contains the Costcutter store and retail units extending back to Fish Hill currently create significant inactive frontage on Melbourn Street and impede views to the church from Fish Hill and the High Street. There are significant opportunities to improve Fish Hill to create strong new public space at its northern end, and to connect the High Street with Priory Park and St John's Church.



















B The Historic High Density zone contains groups of buildings and some streets united by uniform scale, building heights and period style including fine brick details. This should be emulated in any new buildings in the zone. The permeability of these streets create connectivity within the town and should be emulated.

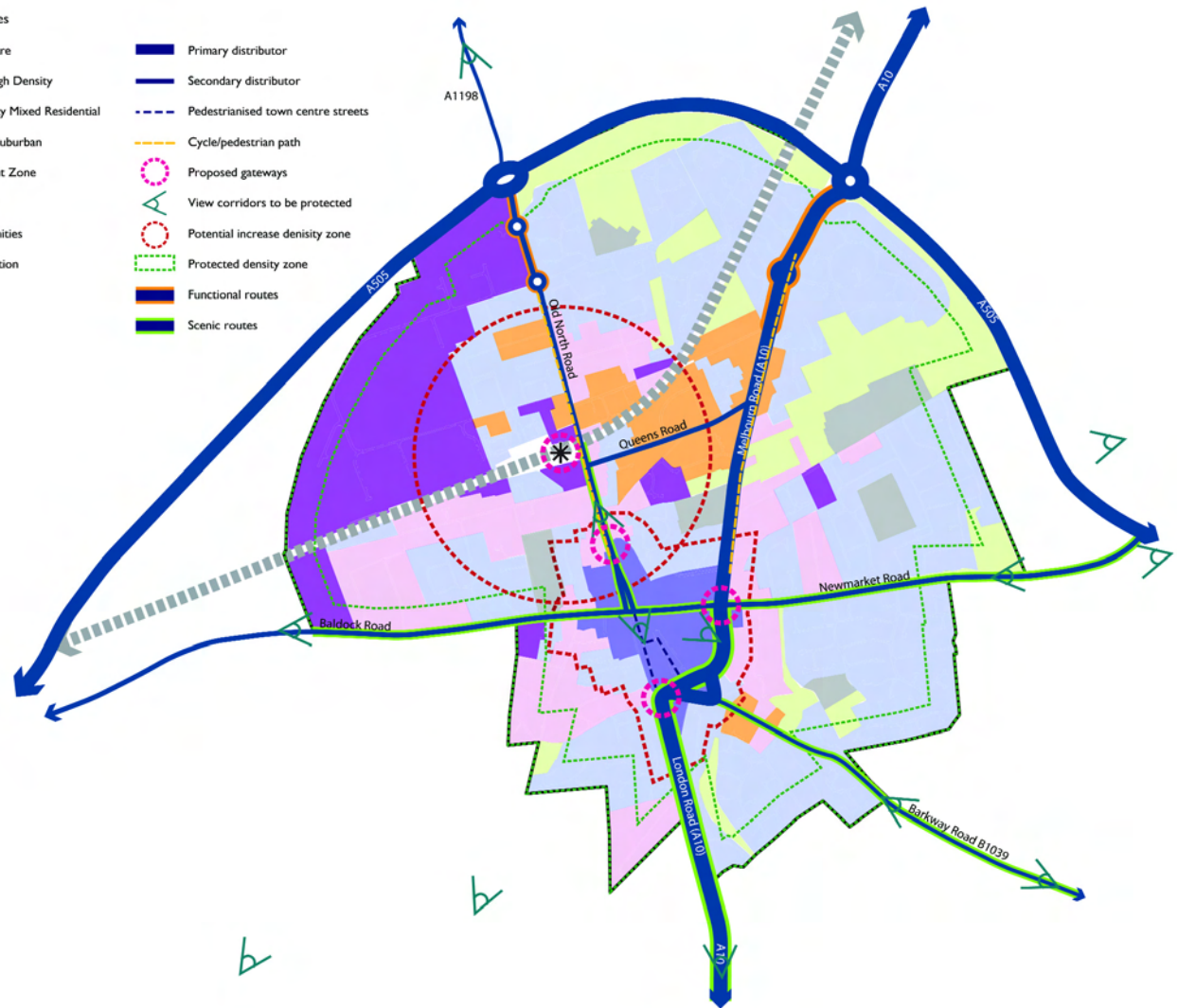
C The Low Density Mixed Use Residential zone contains a mixture of building types, densities and style, and would be most suited to increased densities and contemporary designs. Some areas of the zone consist entirely of inter-war housing, and have a coherent character as neighbourhoods. These areas should be preserved.

D The Post-war Suburban zone contains a range of developments including contemporary high-end housing and estates from the 1970s and 1980s. High densities should be followed where they exist already, and densities increased in lower density neighbourhoods at block level. There are currently many areas within this zone in which inactive frontage and back garden walls exist along streets. Active frontage with houses facing streets with open front gardens should be encouraged to increase a sense of security. Many of these developments employ cul-de-sac streets, often curtailing pedestrian and vehicular permeability.

E The Employment Area provides an important location for businesses. Its position within the town offers easy access from the A505 without creating major lorry or traffic impacts on the rest of the town. This access provision should continue to be provided. There is room for public realm improvements where possible. There may also be opportunities for incubator units and live-work units within the employment area near the station as well as within the town centre and in the residential area adjacent to the station.

## Urban Design Zones

- |                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Town Centre                   |  Primary distributor                |
|  Historic High Density         |  Secondary distributor              |
|  Low Density Mixed Residential |  Pedestrianised town centre streets |
|  Post War Suburban             |  Cycle/pedestrian path              |
|  Employment Zone               |  Proposed gateways                  |
|  Open Land                     |  View corridors to be protected     |
|  Local Amenities               |  Potential increase density zone    |
|  Railway Station               |  Protected density zone             |
|                                                                                                                 |  Functional routes                  |
|                                                                                                                 |  Scenic routes                      |



Settlement-wide principles for Royston.

## STRATEGY PLAN and SETTLEMENT PRINCIPLES

F Potential increased density zones: High densities should be accommodated around the town centre zone as the primary retail core of the settlement, and around the station as the most sustainable access point to the town. Densities should continue to be high within the town centre and could be increased around the perimeter of the Town Centre Zone as an opportunity to improve the cohesion of the town centre and outlying zones. Increased densities within a 500 metre radius around the station would encourage pedestrian transport links in new development, provide incubator business units with excellent transport links, and knit together the Employment Area and other three zones covered by the radius in terms of character.

### Circulation

G The primary distributor, the A10, should facilitate through traffic, but should not serve as a barrier to pedestrians when it is adjacent to the town centre. Connections to Priory Park and the town centre should be made as permeable as possible.

H The secondary distributor roads should facilitate through traffic, ensuring that two-way traffic is prioritised over on-street parking, with street design to ensure calmed traffic, and efforts made to include cycling routes.

I The main commercial streets within the town centre should be considered as an activity zone which prioritises the High Street uses, such as generous pavements and pedestrian crossings, over through traffic. The intersection of Melbourn, Baldock and Kneesworth Streets in particular should aim to facilitate pedestrian and cycle crossings. Through traffic should be discouraged through the provision of easily accessible car parks at the town centre edges.

J Additional pedestrian and cycle access routes over the railway could improve pedestrian permeability throughout the settlement, with a particular concern noted for challenges accessing Roysia Middle School. Pedestrian links between the outlying zones and the town centre would improve the overall connectivity and cohesion of the settlement, and this would require sensitive public realm treatments to Melbourn Street, Baldock Road and the A10. Improved cycle routes could be created along Melbourn Road and Old North Road, encouraging cycle connectivity between the centre and the outlying zones to the north, including the station area.

K A reconfiguration of traffic routes from the town centre to the railway station could create more direct links for drivers and address the impermeability caused by the use of cul-de-sacs.

### Views

L The perimeter of the settlement should be seen as an area of protected densities in order to create a low-density boundary between the settlement and the surrounding countryside as a means of maintaining views into the town. Lower densities in the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone along Green Drift and Mackerel Hall should be protected, as they lend these neighbourhoods a spacious feel and distinct character.

M Views from Therfield Heath should be protected, ensuring that the pre-eminence of St John's Church as a landmark remains undisturbed. Views along Baldock Road, Newmarket Road and Kneesworth Street are also important, offering visual connectivity between the centre and the outskirts. These should be enhanced with public realm improvements.

N The view on the London Road into the town centre from the south should be protected and improved through addressing the signage on this road and view corridors into the High Street.

### Legibility

O Royston as a whole suffers from a lack of cohesion, which is partly the result of the town's historic development. Much of the post-war infill development has created suburban areas which are directly adjacent to an historic town centre. Consideration for public realm treatments and new developments should strive to integrate the residential areas with the town centre, focusing on permeability and access by walking.

P Gateways are very important in Royston, and four gateways should receive particular attention: the Melbourn Street gateway into the Town Centre Zone, making use of the Town Hall; the London Road gateway could be enhanced, offering views directly into Royston's historic High Street; the gateway to the settlement at the railway station on Old North Road; the gateway to the historic centre formed by the intersection of Kneesworth Street and Old North Road. The gateway at the Melbourn Street roundabout would serve as an important transition point between the surrounding residential areas and the town centre, as would the gateway on Baldock Road, at its intersection with Princes Mews.

The main access routes into the town should be given careful design attention:

Functional Routes: The primary functional routes into Royston would run from the A505 into the north of the town along the northern ends of Melbourn Road and Old North Road, in order that vehicular traffic cause the least disruption to pedestrian and cycle movement within the centre.

N Scenic Routes: These routes have been defined as the

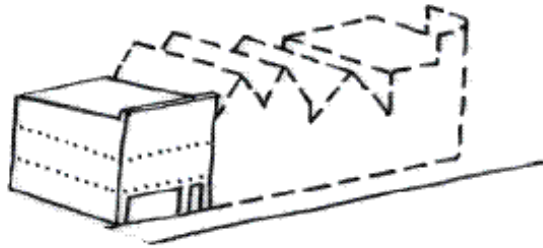
access roads into the town, including Baldock Road, London Road, Barkway Road and Melbourn Street/Newmarket Road. This should also include Old North Road from the railway station into the town centre, which should serve as an important gateway link for visitors and residents.

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE

	Criteria		Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The town centre contains town houses, as well as larger coach houses, inns and hotels. These are terraced and built as continuous frontages reaching the pavement along High Street/Kneesworth Street and Lower/Upper Kings Street, while Melbourn Street and the northern end of Kneesworth Street are lined with detached buildings. The typology in the immediate centre should be terraced frontages, while detached buildings may be appropriate north of Lower King Street where existing buildings are mostly detached.	19	
	Materials / architectural styles	The historic architecture in the town centre zone is one of Royston's main assets and includes styles from the 16th through to 19th centuries. The zone is dominated by modest timberframe cottages, some with painted brick render, plus a few rather more grand Georgian and Victorian buildings. Development should be sympathetic to the largely domestic scale and appearance of the town centre, match the quality of existing stock and use similar materials.	21	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	The Conservation Area, recently reviewed in 2007, covers the Town Centre zone entirely, safeguarding Royston's medieval layouts and plots, several Grade I listed buildings, and a number of buildings of local interest. This is therefore a sensitive area for new architecture, and an area where public realm quality is more noticeable. Public realm improvements should be maintained and cover the whole of the Conservation Area. Fish Hill and Market Hill are particular opportunity areas for this.	23-24	
	Building heights and massing	Two-storeys are most common, with the occasional three-storey building, reflecting Royston's generally domestic scale. Consistent building heights are a pleasing feature of Royston, which can be viewed from several directions along the ridge encircling Royston to the south. Two and three storeys are appropriate to the town centre, so long as taller buildings do not obscure or compete with St John's Church which is the town's predominant landmark and symbolises Royston's identity as a market town. Careful consideration should be given to future developments similar to those recently built at Princes Mews to ensure that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not adversely affected.	25	7-8
	Density	High densities are suitable within the town centre, and could accommodate a mix of uses, with retail at ground floor level and residential above ground.	26	10-11
	Topography	Buildings should fit in with the existing townscape which brings out Royston's local topography and gives buildings higher up the slopes views over those lower down.	27	13
Continuity and enclosure	Town Morphology	Royston's morphology reveals a fragmented urban structure which reduces the cohesiveness of the town as a whole. Connectivity between the zones should be improved, and the transition between zones made smoother with gradual change in terms of style and density. Where the opportunity arises, views of St John's church should be opened up.	28	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	The continuous frontages which line many of the streets in the town centre create very strong building lines. New buildings should maintain continuous frontages where appropriate. Market Hill's frontage lacks clarity due to the car parking along its length.	30	15-16
	Building orientation	Frontages should be directed towards the street, and blank walls modified where the opportunity arises. Fish Hill and Market Hill could benefit from this, as could the Supermarket fronting Melbourn Street.	32	18-19
	Pavements	The use of high quality pavements in the town centre matches the quality of the architecture in the zone. Pavements and cobbled surfaces should be maintained, and the high quality paving extended to Fish Hill and Market Hill as part of public realm improvements to the area.	33	21-22
	Open space	Priory Park is an excellent open space at the heart of Royston and its south eastern boundary could be made more permeable to pedestrians travelling from within the town centre and across Melbourn Street and Priory Park Road. Planting of trees would enhance Melbourn Street.	34-35	24-25
Making connections	Land use	Royston's retail offer is weak, with one supermarket in the town centre and a number of small convenience and comparison shops. Royston's economy could be strengthened with increased quality retail, while the town centre zone would be suited to further residential development as well. Demand for incubator units in Hertfordshire as a whole could be satisfied in Royston's town centre, and zoning should be investigated as a way of achieving this.	37	
	Circulation, demand and linkages	Pedestrian circulation around the town centre is easy thanks to the diverse linkages which permeate the historic layout. Pedestrian linkages into the zone should be enhanced, particularly along Market Hill and into Priory Park.	39	27-28
	Parking	Car parking demand should be assessed and plans made to consolidate parking more effectively. Some current parking space could be considered for opportunity sites. The Fish Hill car park could be a top priority for new public space.	41	30-31
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	Streetscape elements in the town centre should match the quality of the built environment, and should be maintained.	42	33-35
	Security	CCTV coverage is good throughout the town centre on the whole. Blindspots should be noted, and measures taken to address problems, either with increased coverage or better lighting.	44	37

## CASE STUDIES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE - INFILL SITES

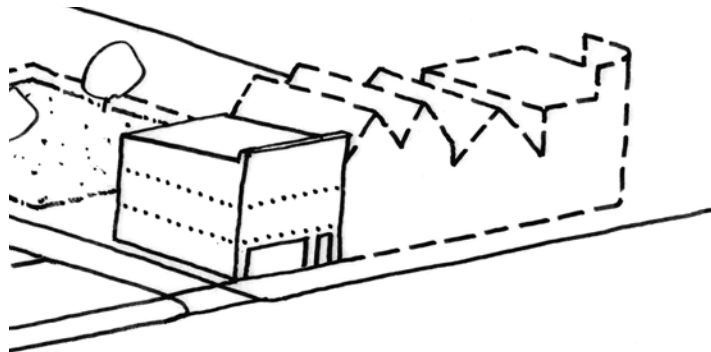
This page considers the typical typology of the Town Centre Zone.



CASE STUDY TCI:Typical density

*This case study shows a three-storey infill building with no setback. This approach could apply to any area within the town centre. It is assumed that car parking would occur on-street or in nearby existing car parks.*

## CASE STUDIES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE - BLOCK SITES



CASE STUDY TCI:Typical density

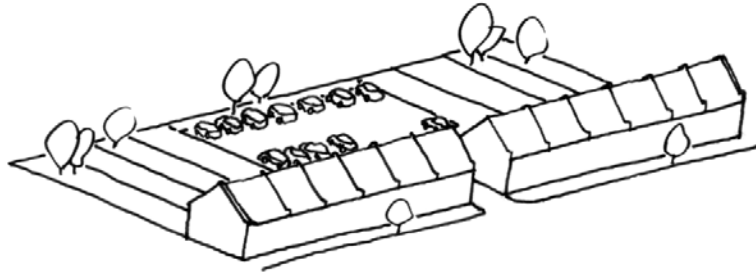
*This case study shows a three-storey building frontage. New blocks should match typical dimensions, including the demarcation of plots within blocks.*

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The main typologies in this zone are terraces and semi-detached houses. These should be repeated in new developments to enhance the cohesion of the zone.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	Despite later infill, the consistency of Victorian materials and style across the zone gives it a distinctive character. The use of similar materials such as red and yellow brick should be encouraged in this zone, along with the high level of detailing characteristic of these properties.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	The majority of houses in this zone are two storey; future development should follow this.	25	7-8
	Density	The Historic High Density Zone is of a medium to high density, particularly in terraced areas. The zone as a whole would be suited to high densities.	26	10-11
	Topography	The Historic High Density Zone in Royston is relatively flat.	27	13
Continuity and enclosure	Morphology	The growth of the zone around the railway to the north of the town centre has created two high density 'poles' within Royston. Links between the two should be enhanced to encourage the cohesion of the town.	28-29	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	Building lines are strong in the Historic High Density Zone, thanks to high densities. The short setback characteristic of Victorian properties should remain standard across the zone, with front gardens open to view. Gaps between buildings should be regular.	31	15-16
	Building orientation	Buildings should front the street to increase natural surveillance of the zone.	32	18-19
	Pavements	Pavements in the Historic High Density zone are often narrow, and roads can become congested with on-street parking. The provision of off-street parking areas could relieve this problem.	33	21-22
	Open Space	Access to open space from the Historic High Density Zone is not as easy as other zones, so pedestrian routes to open spaces should be enhanced. Planting within the zone can ease the hard landscaping which is found here.	34-35	24-25
Making connections	Circulation, demand and linkages	Traffic circulation within the zone can be hampered by parked cars. The railway creates a barrier directly through the zone, and opportunities should be sought to create additional routes across it. A transport plan should simplify access to the station by car.	37	
	Parking	Parking within the Historic High Density Zone is predominantly on-street, causing congestion to some streets. This problem should be tackled as part of a wider parking strategy within Royston, and communal parking areas could be one solution.	39	27-28
	Land use	Although this is largely a residential area, A1 and A3 uses could be encouraged immediately around the station as a sustainable access point into the settlement, and building on Royston's bipolar structure. Opportunities for incubator units in the Historic High Density Zone, and extending into the Employment Area, should be investigated in liaison with the Greater Cambridge Partnership.	41	30-31
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	Public streetscape elements are not a prominent feature of this zone, but front gardens are usually open to view, built with low walls or fences. This form of front garden enhances the otherwise hard landscaping of the zone considerably, and should be encouraged in new infill.	42	33-35
	Security	Security within this zone is enhanced by natural surveillance from high densities. Streets should be well maintained as a high quality public realm can discourage anti-social behaviour.	44	37

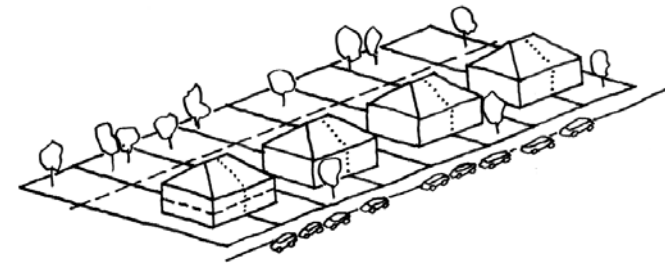
## CASE STUDIES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE - INFILL SITES

This case study considers typical typologies for the Historic High Density Zone.



CASE STUDY HHD1: Typical density

*This case study shows terraced housing characteristic of the Victorian streets such as Morton Street. Infill should repeat typical typologies, and amenity parking areas could address parking congestion in the zone.*

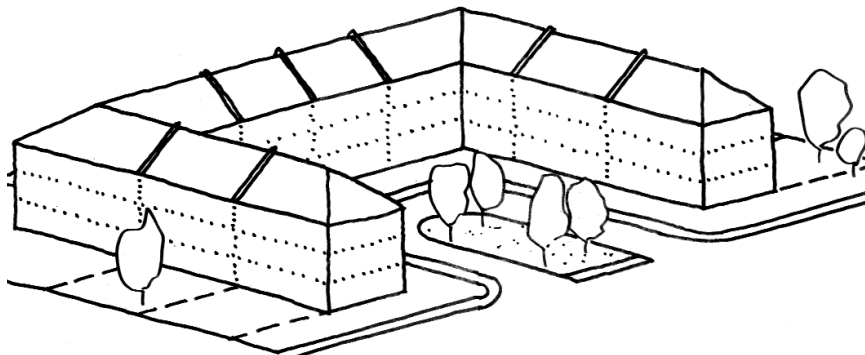


CASE STUDY HHD2: Typical density

*This case study shows semi-detached housing with medium setbacks and on-street parking, found on other streets of the zone. Infill should respect this.*

## CASE STUDIES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE - BLOCK SITES

This case study considers enhanced possibilities for block site development within or adjacent to the Historic High Density Zone.



CASE STUDY HHD2: Enhanced density

*This case study shows three-storey terrace perimeter blocks where car parking would occur off-street within the block. These would be suitable in this zone as residents would benefit from proximity to the station, and from being within walking distance of the town centre.*

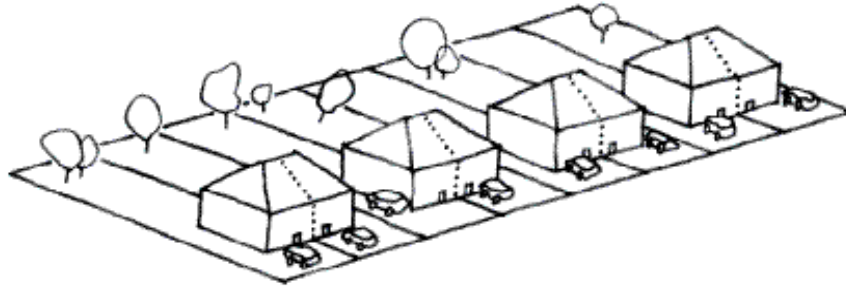


# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: LOW DENSITY MIXED RESIDENTIAL ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
<b>Making places</b>	Building types	In neighbourhoods which host a range of typologies, there is a degree of flexibility as to the typology of new developments. Infill in areas of predominantly inter-war semi-detached houses should respect the typology within its immediate context.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	Modern materials and styles could enhance areas where properties are of a mix of ages. Streets of inter-war houses have distinctive character through common materials and style. Infill should reflect existing materials and style, especially the level of brick detailing found here.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	Interwar neighbourhoods should remain two-storey. Building heights in mixed areas should follow predominant building heights in the immediate locality. Three storeys may be appropriate in some areas, so long as they do not adversely impact views across Royston's consistent skyline.	25	7-8
	Density	In mixed areas, lower density areas could accommodate higher densities.	26	10-11
	Topography	Building heights should complement views in Royston's local topography (see town centre text), which capitalises on the town's position in a 'bowl' landform.	27	13
<b>Continuity and enclosure</b>	Morphology	The straight and curvilinear layouts found in this zone should be protected and enhanced. Cul-de-sac infill developments should be avoided.	29	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	Consistent building lines along formal layouts should be retained, particularly in higher density areas. Setbacks should be small and gaps regular.	31	15-16
	Building Orientation	The fronts of buildings should be face the street with entrances facing onto it.	32	18-19
	Pavements	All new developments should have pavements along the roads. Grass verges should be retained and well-kept.	33	21-22
	Pattern of open space	Small green spaces in the zone should be protected and enhanced. Links with Therfield Heath should be protected. Planting in streets should be protected and enhanced, and rear gardens should back onto each other.	34-35	24-25
<b>Making connections</b>	Circulation, demand and linkages	The straight and curvilinear streets in the zone make for smooth through-flow and easy pedestrian access, and should be a model for future development.	38	
	Parking	Off-street parking should be encouraged along, with some on-street parking where road widths allow.	39	27-28
	Land use	The Lower-mixed residential zone is comprised almost entirely of residential land uses.	41	30-31
<b>Quality of the public realm</b>	Streetscape elements	Lower densities give this zone room for wide verges and mature trees. Front gardens should be open plan, so that low hedging may be encouraged.	42	33-35
	Security	Where appropriate, increased densities can enhance natural surveillance.	44	37

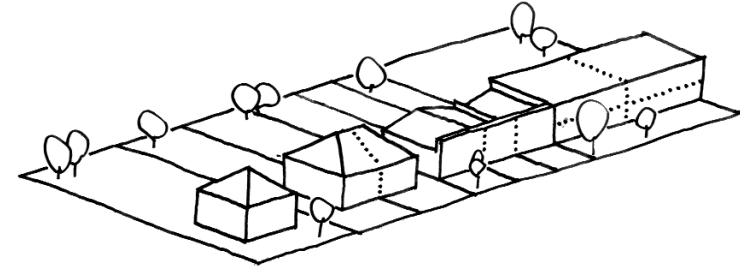
## CASE STUDIES: LOW DENSITY MIXED RESIDENTIAL ZONE - INFILL SITES

These case studies demonstrate the two typologies of the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone, and how densities within could be increased in the second of the two.



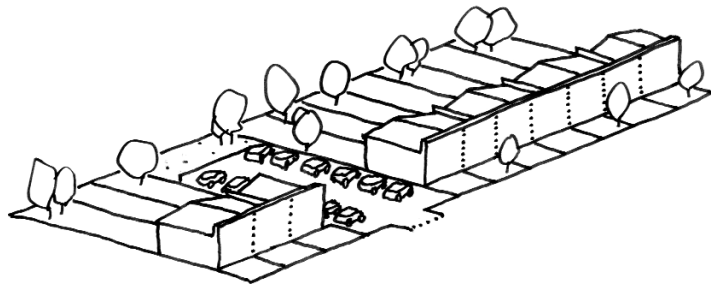
CASE STUDY LDMR1: Typical density

*This case study shows two-storey semi-detached housing. Infill in these areas should respect existing typology.*



CASE STUDY LDMR2: Typical density

*This case study shows a mixture of housing types, characteristic of some parts of the zone.*

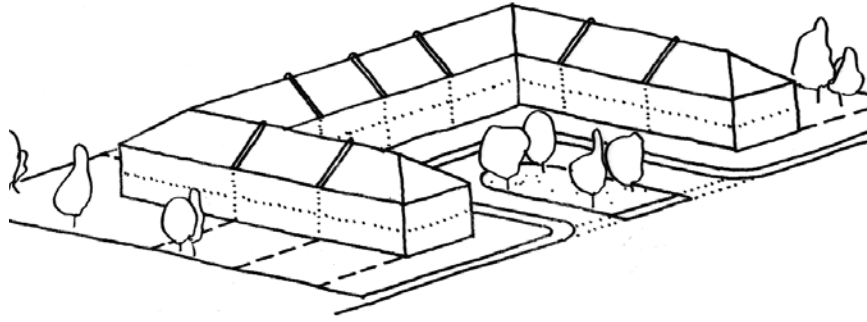


CASE STUDY LDMR2: Enhanced density

*This case study shows the extension of terraces into a previously lower density area. A communal parking area removes parking congestion from the street.*

## CASE STUDIES: LOW DENSITY MIXED RESIDENTIAL ZONE - BLOCK SITES

These case studies demonstrate the typical typologies of the Inter/prewar area, and how the densities within these areas could be increased.



CASE STUDY LDMR2: Enhanced density

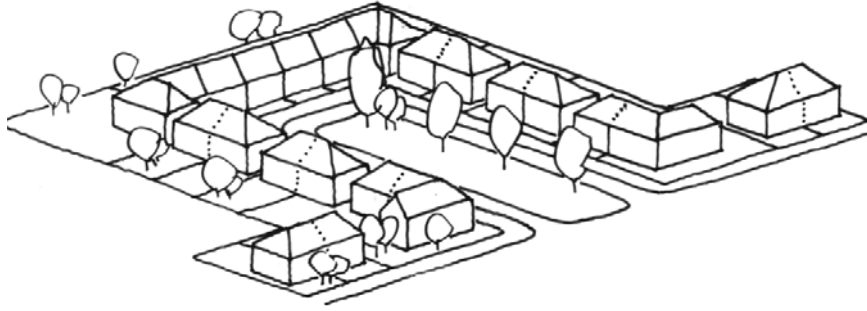
*This case study shows a two-storey close which could replace a mixed density block. The crescent could accommodate parking, in order to keep the access road free.*

# URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: POST-WAR SUBURBAN ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
<b>Making places</b>	Building types	Several different groups of building types create distinct character areas across the zone: to the north east high density terraces and detached houses, to the west, an area of low density bungalows, and further south two storey houses and terraced estates. Existing typologies should be followed to retain neighbourhood character, although lower density areas could accommodate higher densities at block scale.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	Materials and styles vary with the age and quality of stock. Recent development in the north east of Royston uses yellow and red brick, while developments from the 1970s and 1980s to the south use brown brick with timber and tile cladding.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	Building heights are mostly two storey, bringing out Royston's gentle gradients to the south and south west. These should be adhered to.	25	7-8
	Density	Densities range across the zone - medium to high in the north, low to the west and medium to the south. Higher densities would be suitable to the north of the zone, and south of Newmarket Road.	26	10-11
	Topography	The southern end of the zone provides views across Royston, sitting at the edge of the East Anglian Heights. The gentle undulations of the terrain here comprise a distinctive feature of the area.	27	13
<b>Continuity and enclosure</b>	Morphology	Much contemporary and earlier 1970s development is based around isolated cul-de-sacs. The use of through streets is encouraged over the development of cul-de-sacs.	29	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	Informal layouts create weak building lines, irregular setbacks and inactive frontages. Any new residential development should strive to create continuous active street frontages with houses addressing corner plots.	31	15-16
	Building orientation	The fronts of buildings should face the street, with entrances providing direct access onto the pavement. Many of the current developments have garden walls backing onto streets.	32	18-19
	Pavements	Wide pavements are preferable, being in character with many neighbourhoods in the zone, and encouraging pedestrian movement. Wide pavements allow space for streetscape enhancements, including greening with trees and shrubs.	33	21-22
	Pattern of open space	There are green spaces and small amenity greens throughout the zone, which should be protected and maintained. Planting and greening should be enhanced in streetscapes where it is not already a feature.	34-36	24-25
<b>Making connections</b>	Circulation, demand and linkages	Cul-de-sac development in the zone creates traffic flow and access in the area, and future development should favour easily navigable street layouts. There are pedestrian connections throughout the zone, but they do not provide the most direct routes; existing pedestrian routes should be enhanced and well signposted, and new developments should incorporate generous pedestrian paths which offer direct and sustainable routes towards the town centre.	39-40	
	Parking	Off-street parking should be encouraged.	39-40	27-28
	Land use	This zone is almost entirely residential.	41	30-31
<b>Quality of the public realm</b>	Streetscape elements	Wide verges and planting should be retained and maintained. New developments should incorporate space for these elements within the streetscape.	42	33-35
	Security	New developments should front onto the road to promote natural surveillance.	44	37

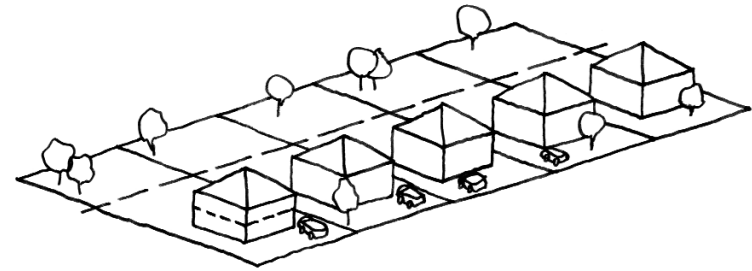
## CASE STUDIES: POST-WAR SUBURBAN ZONE - INFILL SITES

This page considers the typical typologies of the Postwar estates.



CASE STUDY PWS1: Typical density

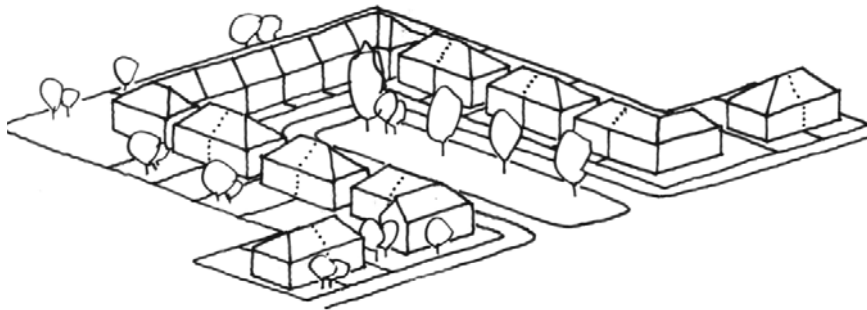
*This case study represents the two-storey high density mixture of detached and semi-detached houses found in the contemporary developments around Fieldfare Way.*



CASE STUDY PWS2: Typical density

*This case study shows low density detached building, characteristic of much of the 1970s development in the zone.*

## CASE STUDIES: POST-WAR SUBURBAN ZONE - BLOCK SITES



CASE STUDY PWS3: Enhanced Density

*This case study shows two storey semi-detached and terraced houses which could be accommodated in lower density parts of the zone. Semi detached houses smooth the transition between low density detached and high density detached and terraced houses.*

## MAKING PLACES BUILDING TYPES

### Town Centre

The town centre's main feature is the continuous frontage of close-knit houses which runs along King Street, High Street, Baldock Street and the lower end of Kneesworth Street. Melbourn Street contains detached buildings, including key landmarks such as the town hall, the police station, the Banyers Hotel, and the Manor House Social Club. Market Hill and Fish Hill contain a variety of building types, including clusters of terraced houses, detached houses, a block of flats (Kennedy Court), a library, a courtyard (the Corn Exchange) and a shopping arcade.



1. The continuous frontage along High Street.



2. Detached buildings along Melbourn Street.

### KEY ISSUES

#### MPI: BUILDING TYPES

##### MPIA

Royston contains a variety of differing building types which, in groups, contribute to the character of their area.

##### MPIB

The historic terracing in the centre of town contrasts with the outer zones which have a wide variety of building types.



3. The Corn Exchange, with its internal courtyard.



4. Red brick Victorian terraces.

## MAKING PLACES BUILDING TYPES

**Historic High Density Zone**  
This zone contains two to three-storey detached, semi-detached and terraced housing.

**Mixed Residential Zone**  
A variety of housing types are found in this zone: a large proportion are 1920s, 1930s and 1950s housing, but the zone contains buildings from as recently as the 1990s. Housing types vary - flats, semi-detached, detached houses and bungalows.

**Post-war Suburban Zone**  
This is made up of 1970s and 1980s residential estates containing terraced units, chalet bungalows, flats and detached houses. The zone also contains high end detached houses from the last decade, such as Fieldfare Way in the north east of Royston.



5. A Victorian street with a variety of housing types, and showing recent infill in the Historic High Density Zone.



6. A street with inter-war, semi-detached housing.



7. A block of flats in the Post-war Suburban Zone.



8. A high density 1990s terrace on Maple Way in the Post-war Suburban Zone.

## MAKING PLACES

### MATERIALS / ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Architectural style is one of the main features which differentiates the Urban Design Zones. Materials and built form create neighbourhoods of character by revealing the age groups of buildings.

#### Town Centre

The town centre contains architectural styles and materials from the 16th to 20th century, conveying age and dignity to them as a group. Timberframe and plaster, brick, brick render and wood cladding are common. Roofs are mostly red or brown plain tiled. Styles include Georgian, Victorian civic, Victorian Gothic, as well as examples of styles from the 1960s – 1990s. This latter group has mostly been designed to fit in with the historic fabric of the town by retaining existing facade proportions along the High Street, and through the use of red brick.

There are some exceptions, however; the shops along the southern end of the High Street, for example, are stylistically conspicuous for their flat roofs in an area characterised by similarly pitched gables. Market Hill is also dominated by the 1990s library, with its heavy lines and large, overhanging lead roof.



1. Finely decorated red brick Neogothic on High Street.



3. The strong character of the library, formed by its large grey roof and heavy lines.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### MP2A

The town centre contains a variety of styles, but also a degree of coherence through common building materials and a broadly uniform scale.

##### MP2B

The age-gap between the town centre and the outer zones accentuates a feeling of separation between the two.

##### MP2C

There are a number of modern buildings which break from the existing historical styles with different degrees of success.



3. This modern building shows a break in style in the square at the bottom of Fish Hill.



4. Recent developments such as this one on Fish Hill attempt to reflect historic styles and materials in the town centre.



## MAKING PLACES

### MATERIALS / ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

**Historic High Density Zone**  
The majority of houses within the Historic High Density Zone are Victorian (with some later infill), built of red, yellow and brown brick, and feature quality detailing such as decorated window ledges and stone corning. Houses often have steeply pitched roofs and bay windows.

**Low Density Mixed Residential Zone**  
The Mixed Residential Zone contains a mix of housing much of it from the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s with some later developments. Inter-war housing characteristically consists of individually designed units of brick with render. Houses in the Sun Hill/Briars Lane area have tile or timber cladding. Details include recessed, curved porches, timberframe clad gables, square bay windows and canopies over doorways.

**Post-war Suburban Zone**  
Low-end housing from the 1970s and 1980s often have shallow, pitched, concrete tiled roofs. Many developments are comprised of single-design units, using brown or pale brick with wood, plastic or tile cladding to upper storeys and flat dormer windows. The high end developments around the north east of Royston are mostly of pale or rich red brick. Houses have pitched roofs with gabled windows, some with curved clay tiles. Details include brick detailed architraves and window frames, sloping canopied windows, and wooden porch canopies.



5. Victorian yellow brick housing, with red brick bay windows and decorated porch on Morton Street, (Historic High Density Zone).



6. Fine brick detailing on a Victorian window in the Historic High Density Zone.



7. Inter-war brick detached house with curved porch, timberframe rendered gable and bay window, neighbouring a post-war house in Green Drift (Low Density Mixed Residential Zone).



8. Single-design units in the Post-war Suburban Zone, using brown brick, wood cladding, roofed with concrete tiles.

## MAKING PLACES

### LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

#### Town Centre

Royston Town Centre was designated a Conservation Area in 1969 and encompasses a considerable proportion of the Town Centre Zone. A review of the Conservation Area and a Register of Local Buildings of Local Interest was approved by North Herts District Council on 27th March 2007. The Conservation Area status recognises and protects a number of locally and architecturally significant buildings, as well as Royston's medieval layout.

These include Grade A listed Church of St John the Baptist (12th century), Grade I listed 14 and 18 Melbourn Street, 19 Baldock Street, 23 Kneesworth Street, as well as many others listed Grade II. In addition, the Royston has 32 buildings of local interest.

The Conservation Area preserves Royston's medieval layout and narrow 'burgage' plots which give the market town its intimate character. The narrow lanes, elegant brick facades and timbered houses of the High Street reveal the town's past importance and combine to make an attractive town centre.

Although the Conservation Area is almost entirely situated in the Town Centre Zone, the Post-war Suburban Zone contains 17th, 18th and 19th century houses situated at the northern end of Garden Lane and along London Road.



1. The Church of St John the Baptist (Grade A listed), offering fine examples from several periods: a 13th century nave, 16th century tower and 19th century chancel.



2. The Conservation Area status preserves the medieval layout of Royston and its narrow 'burgage' plots which give the town its intimate character.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### MP2: LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

###### MP3A

Royston's possesses an attractive town centre with a number of listed buildings and buildings of local interest.

###### MP3B

The medieval lanes and alleys have survived well in the town centre over the last centuries and the town centre's layout and plot size are worth preserving in the future.

###### MP3C

Key listed buildings such as the church and the Town Hall do not serve as landmarks as strongly as they could do.





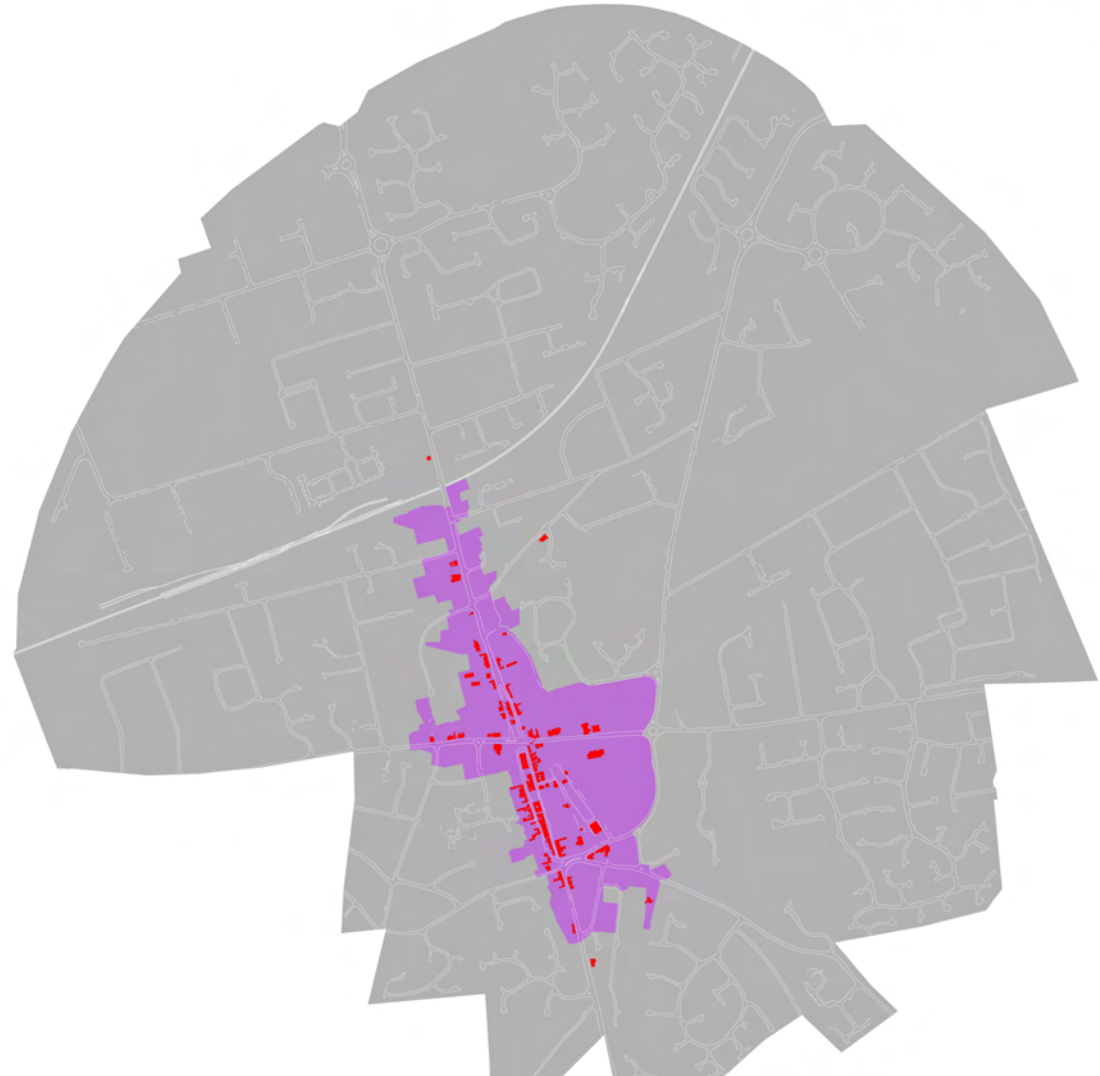
3. The finely proportioned and subtly pedimented classical render at 18 Melbourn Street (Grade I listed).



4. Built in 1855, the Town Hall is listed on the register of Buildings of Local Interest (BLI), illustrating important aspects of Royston's social and educational development.

MAKING PLACES  
**LISTED BUILDINGS AND  
CONSERVATION AREAS**

-  Listed building
-  Conservation area



*Royston's Conservation Area.*

## MAKING PLACES

### BUILDING HEIGHTS AND MASSING

#### Town Centre

The majority of buildings within the town centre are of two storeys, occasionally three. The area offers a pleasingly coherent gabled roofscape, particularly along Upper King Street and High Street, where the buildings draw out the gentle slope of the streets. Within the town centre, the common two-storey building height retains the church's prominence within Royston, and its role within the skyline as a symbol for Royston's character as a medieval market town.

Regular massing in the centre adds to its coherence, although some recent buildings such as the library and the west side of Fish Hill square do not fit in with surrounding proportions.

#### Historic High Density Zone

Houses in this zone are mostly two storeys, with some small groups of three-storey buildings. Dormers and sloping roofs often lead the eye between roof heights. Some of the new infill includes bungalows.

#### Low Density Mixed Residential

Although this zone is mostly two-storey housing, there is a variety of building heights - bungalows and three-storey houses, among the more recently built houses.

#### Post-war Suburban

Two storey developments are common in both the low end 1960s, 1970s and 1980s housing, and the high end contemporary developments. There is much bungalow development south of Garden Walk.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### MP3: BUILDING HEIGHTS

###### MP4A

Uniform heights along High Street are one of its main assets.

###### MP4B

The majority of buildings in Royston are two-storey, creating a feeling of unity between centre and periphery.

###### MP4C

The impact of additional storeys is often lessened using rooflines to guide the eye between buildings.

###### MP4D

The Church tower is significantly taller than any other building in the town centre and is a local landmark.



1. Uniform building heights trace the gentle rise of Kings Street



2. Even building heights in the Historic High Density Zone.



3. Two-storey building heights in the Low Density Mixed residential Zone.



4. Even two-storey roof heights in a recent development.

## MAKING PLACES DENSITY

### Town Centre

The Town Centre is comprised of units of similar, high density within the High Street area with more varied densities around Fish Hill.

### Historic High Density Zone

Medium-high density Victorian terraces comprise the majority of the zone. Density is reduced in some areas by lower density infill.

### Low Density Mixed Residential Zone

This zone contains a mixture of densities. Areas containing Victorian and inter-war properties are of a medium density with detached and semi-detached houses set apart in small-medium sized gardens, with lower density houses and bungalows as infill.

### Post-war Suburban Zone

In Fieldfare Way, recent developments are relatively compact, with detached houses at high densities. 1970s developments are of a lower density, particularly between Garden Walk and Newmarket Road, and of a medium density when laid out as terraces in spacious green areas.



1. Narrow plots of land have historically given rise to high densities in the town centre, a characteristic continued into the recent developments pictured above on the right side of the photograph.



2. High densities in the Historic High Density Zone, reduced by lower density infill.

### KEY ISSUES MP5: DENSITY

#### MP5A

The two cores of Royston - the Town Centre Zone and Historic High Density Zone are largely of a high density.

#### MP5B

The Low Density Mixed Residential and Post-war Suburban Zones are mostly of a medium-low density, except with some high densities in the recent developments around Fieldfare Way.



3. A high density Victorian detached house sits alongside lower density bungalows in the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone.



4. High densities in the new Fieldfare Way estate.

## MAKING PLACES TOPOGRAPHY

Royston's topography has been a key factor in its evolution as a town. It was built at the crossing of a north-south Roman road and Icknield Way, which, in this locality, follows the ridge of the East Anglian Heights. The local area is therefore gently undulating, a feature which adds hugely to the character of the town, particularly within the historic town centre, with its high density and narrow plots.

Although the wider area is formed within a bowl of the East Anglian Heights, the town centre itself is relatively flat, with a slight gradient leading downhill from Market Hill to The Cross.

The growth of Royston to the south of the town centre has historically been constrained by the steeper gradient there, although the area has seen some Post-war Suburban and Mixed Residential Development on the north-facing slope forming a crescent around the town centre between New Market Road and London Road, including steep slopes around Roys Grove.

The bowl flattens out to the north of Baldock road, also hosting low density mixed residential and post-war suburban development. The remaining areas to the north of the town centre are gently undulating.

### KEY ISSUES MP5: TOPOGRAPHY

#### MP6A

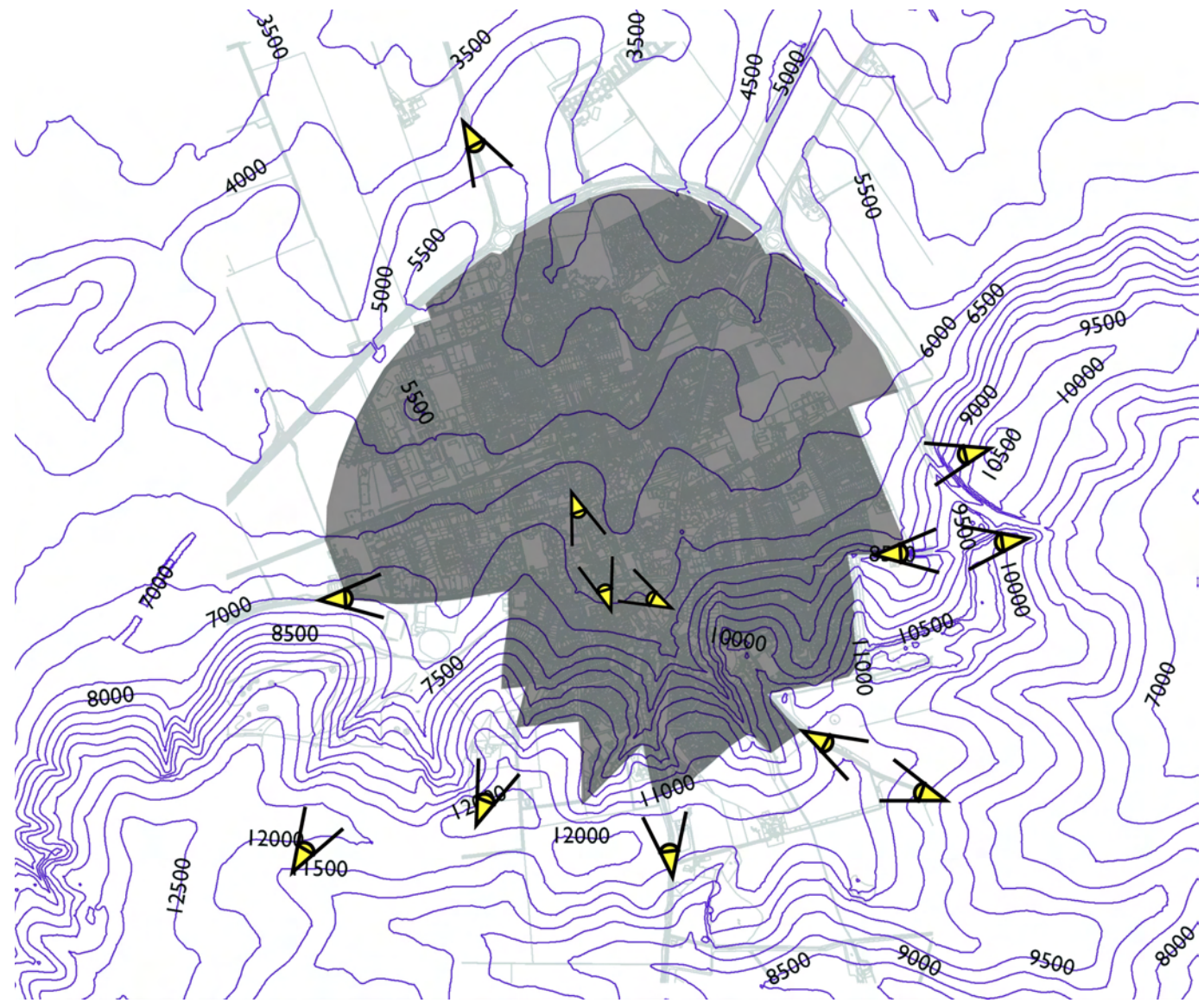
Royston's development and morphological evolution are a direct result of the area's topography.

#### MP6B

The town's topography is a major part of its character and has been expressed through building heights.

#### MP6C

The local topography helps to create a key gateway into Royston from London Road which should be protected and enhanced.



Royston's topography (in centimetres) shows the dramatic topography in the south of Royston flattening out to the north.

## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE TOWN MORPHOLOGY

### The Town Centre

The town centre street pattern is a remnant of Royston's historic function as a junction between two trade routes, the Roman Ermine Street, linking London to York, and the pre-historic Icknield Way. Its medieval street pattern relates to the development of a market around the crossing. This pattern remained unchanged during later centuries as growth stayed concentrated around the north-south route, where accommodation was provided for travellers from London to Cambridge, York and Edinburgh. Growth associated with the arrival of the railway in 1850 left the town centre unchanged as the station was located some way to the north of the centre. The open space is the legacy of the Royston Monastery which held the site as its gardens until 1534. (For more detail, see Conservation Area Review, NHDC, March 2007)

Royston's town centre is linear, having developed along the north-south route up from London. However, with the development of permanent dwellings and the division of the central space north of London Road, the town centre is much more permeable to pedestrians than to traffic. The morphology clearly highlights how views of St John's Church have been ignored, particularly from Fish Hill.

### Historic High Density Zone

This zone grew along the railway line north-eastwards, and is bordered by Melbourn Road heading south.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### CE1: TOWN MORPHOLOGY

###### CE1A

The town's morphology is clearly visible in Royston's urban structure.

###### CE1B

The morphology shows an uneasy transition between the town centre and the surrounding zones.

###### CE1C

Royston's infill development as shown in the morphology drawing limits the town's overall sense of coherence.

###### CE1D

Car parks create major gaps at the south eastern end of the town centre, eroding its cohesiveness.

###### CE1E

Newer developments have blocked views of St John's Church.



*Town centre morphology.*

## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE TOWN MORPHOLOGY

Royston has therefore developed along a bipolar axis, with growth concentrated in the town centre around the historic crossing, and, to the north, a 19th century high density residential core situated to the east of the station.

**Low Density Mixed Residential Zone**  
Development after the Victorian period grew around the two existing poles in two fragmented, but broadly concentric circles, this zone lying around the town centre just south of Melbourn/Baldock road, and spreading out east of Kneesworth street onto the southern side of the railway line.

**Post-war Suburban Zone**  
Sections of this zone are generally found further out from the town centre than Low Density Mixed Residential areas, with larger sections lying in semi-circle around the eastern half of the settlement.

Development is confined in the north by the A505, and in the south by the slopes of the East Anglian Heights. The post-war industrial area is found in between the railway and A505 to the north-west of the town, with two broad strips of open space within the residential areas of the north-east of the town.



*Urban morphology of Royston.*



## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

### BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS AND GAPS

Building lines establish the way in which a series of building structures meet the street and pavement. A continuous building line facilitates a clear image of the street, creating a 'street wall' and block perimeter. Setbacks and gaps, while sometimes providing interesting features or key gathering spaces, can impact the clarity of this street wall.

#### The Town Centre

High density in the town centre is translated into strong building lines along Kneesworth Street, King Street and High Street in a continuous street frontage, with almost no setbacks, and only very narrow intersecting streets such as George Lane and Angel Pavement.

Market Hill, by contrast, which grew later as a secondary trading location, is more fragmented, with detached buildings, varying plot sizes, and large setbacks and openings.

There are two enclosed spaces which could be characterised as squares. The first is located at the bottom of Fish Hill and Market Hill, currently used as a car park. The second, located at the top of Market Hill, is of a similar size, but feels much larger and more open, due to the width of Market Hill, and as the area is bordered to the south by the Market Hill main road.



1. Intersecting streets in the historic centre are narrow, minimising gaps between frontages.



2. This post-war infill on High Street respects the continuous 'street wall' which creates such a clear image of this street.

#### KEY ISSUES

##### CE2: BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS, GAPS

###### CE2A

Royston's town centre has very strong building lines due to its medieval plots, particularly on High Street and Upper King Street.

###### CE2B

Outside of the town centre, building lines are weaker due to significant setbacks. These setbacks are often accompanied by car parking and limit pedestrian activity.

###### CE2C

Strong building lines are found in the historic high density zone and higher density parts of the post-war suburban zone. They are weaker in lower density post-war developments and very weak where informal cul-de-sacs are used.



3. Varying plot sizes and building types along Market Hill detract from its strong building lines.



4. A wide and scruffy service alley brings a feeling of neglect into Fish Hill.

## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

### BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS AND GAPS

**Historic High Density Zone**  
Outside the town centre building lines and frontages vary, buildings in the Historic High Density Zone are sited along straight and gently curving streets. Despite a variety of building types, they form relatively strong building lines as gaps between them are often narrow, designed for pedestrian access to the side.

**Low Density Mixed Residential Zone**  
Two types of layout are discernible in the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone. In the first type, buildings are laid out on a grid pattern, as at Green Drift, the Sun Hill/Briary Lane area and Garden Walk/Serby Avenue. Houses, many of them semi-detached developments, have wide, but regular gaps. The second type of layout, found around the rest of the zone, is houses laid out informally, or staggered around a cul-de-sac.

**Post-war Suburban Zone**  
The cul-de-sac is very common in the Post-war Suburban Zone, along with terraced estates. The recent development in the north-east of Royston has a wall surrounding it, creating a blank building line on the street, although within the development building lines are strong due to higher densities. However, curved streets, staggered building lines and cul-de-sac give rise to building lines sitting at varying angles, and a feeling of disorder.



5. A fairly strong building line traces the curve of this street, despite regular gaps between buildings.



6. Wide but regular gaps at Serby Avenue.



7. Housing laid out at right-angles around a cul-de-sac in the Post-war Suburban Zone.



8. Higher densities lead to strong building lines in this 1990s development in Fieldfare Way, but in some places the street layout detracts from this through the use of curved streets and cul-de-sac.

## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE BUILDING ORIENTATION

Active building frontages can be a key factor in the success of a commercial street, providing both vitality and 'eyes on the street'.

### Town Centre

The High Street consists entirely of active frontages, creating a vibrant and welcoming area along the High Street. Examples of inactive street frontages are to be found on Melbourn Road, as well as along Fish Hill.

### Historic High Density Zone

Although many buildings face their streets, their front gardens also impact the character of the street. In this zone, low hedges and fences are most common, allowing residents to view the street.

### Low Density Mixed Residential Zone

Garden frontages vary widely, from open plan to low brick walls to high hedges. However, lower densities within this zone allow for larger front gardens. Activity within these spaces can therefore be more common, enhancing the vitality and security of the street.

### Post-war Suburban Zone

Some of the post-war estates are orientated as self-contained units, sitting perpendicular to main roads, serviced by pedestrian access. Many estates consist of individual units sitting in curves around a cul-de-sacs. Both designs create large sections of inactive street frontages.



1. Active and inviting street frontages in the town centre.



2. Low brick walls in the Historic High Density Zone create semi-active frontages.

## KEY ISSUES

### CE3: BUILDING ORIENTATION

#### CE3A

The High Street consists entirely of active frontages, creating a strong and vibrant High Street.

#### CE3B

Inactive frontages detract from the character of Fish Hill, and the facade of the supermarket on Melbourn Street is an eye sore, particularly as the buildings opposite provide such a contrast.

#### CE3C

Blank walls on streets in the town centre and in the outer zones, particularly the Post-war Suburban Zone create security issues and discourage pedestrian movement.



3. High timber fences create a blank wall in the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone.



4. Inactive street frontages due to walling and hedging in a post-war estate.

## CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE PAVEMENTS

### Town Centre

Pavements are narrow to non-existent down the narrow medieval streets such as King Street and the southern tip of Kneesworth Street. The High Street has high quality York stone paving, and was resurfaced in the early 1990s. It is partly pedestrianised, using brick surfacing and bollards to demarcate the separation between traffic and pedestrians. Several of the alleyways running across High Street display historic cobbled surfaces. The pavements at Fish Hill and Market Hill have not benefited from the town centre resurfacing programme and are dominated by car parking.

### Historic High Density Zone

Pavements are made of asphalt with concrete kerbing. They tend to be narrower than those in the more outlying zones, due to narrower streets with a range of lower and higher quality treatments.

### Low Density Mixed Use Zone

Pavements sizes vary, with older streets tending to have narrower pavements.

### Post-war Suburban Zones

Pavements tend to be wide. Quality is, on the whole, good, although their use by pedestrians is discouraged in areas where they run adjacent to blank walls.



1. Cobbled side streets are a special feature of Royston and should be maintained.



2. Narrow pavements in the Historic High Density Zone.

### KEY ISSUES CE4: PAVEMENTS

#### CE4A

Paving is of a different material and higher quality in the town centre than in the suburbs.

#### CE4B

Pavements on Market Hill should be emphasised to maximise the potential of this part of the town centre.



3. The separation of pavements from the road with a grassy verge can create a 'rural' feel as long as the verges are well-maintained.



4. Patchy paving in the post-war suburban Zone, on the outskirts of town.