

# Leverington

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal

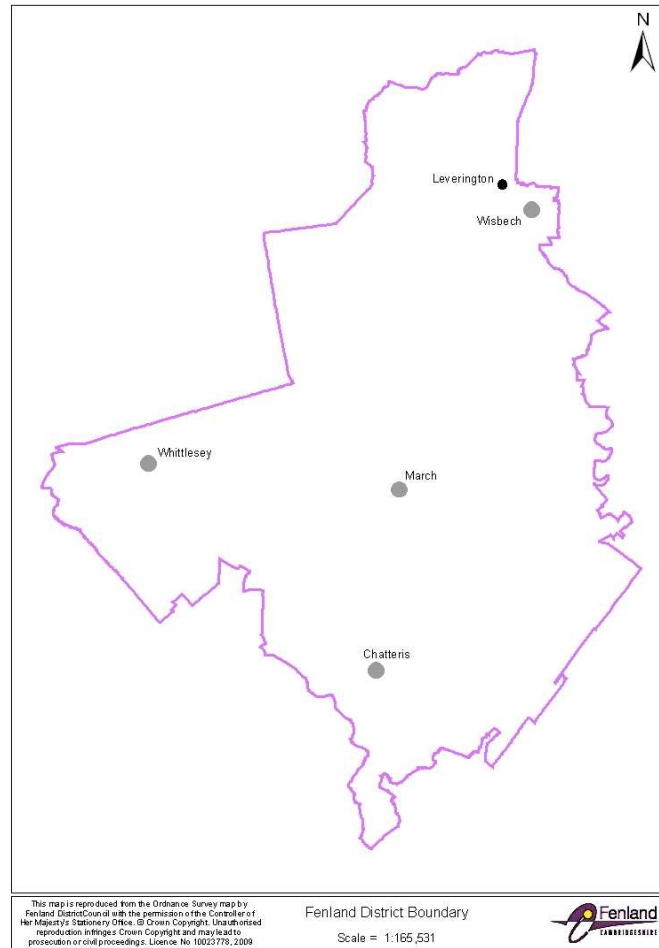
October 2011



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION



The Parish of Leverington is a rural settlement within the District of Fenland, lying one and a half miles to the North West of Wisbech. It extends westwards into the Fen to include Gorefield and Parson Drove, and is bounded to the west by the River Nene. 'Leverington' seems to derive from the Angles, who invaded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, after the Romans departed. The word "ing" means family and "ton" a homestead or farm. The name may imply the village was an offshoot of the *Leafere* family.

Leverington village has developed into two areas divided by an open tract of land. The northern half, which has expanded to the north and west along Gorefield Road, contains the historic core and is centred on the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>C Church of St Leonard's. The southern area is more linear in nature, hugging the river along the length of Dowgate Road.

The 1993 Leverington Conservation Area boundary has been reassessed and the results are documented within this updated appraisal.

Significant sources of information used in the compilation of this document are given in the Bibliography on p.42.

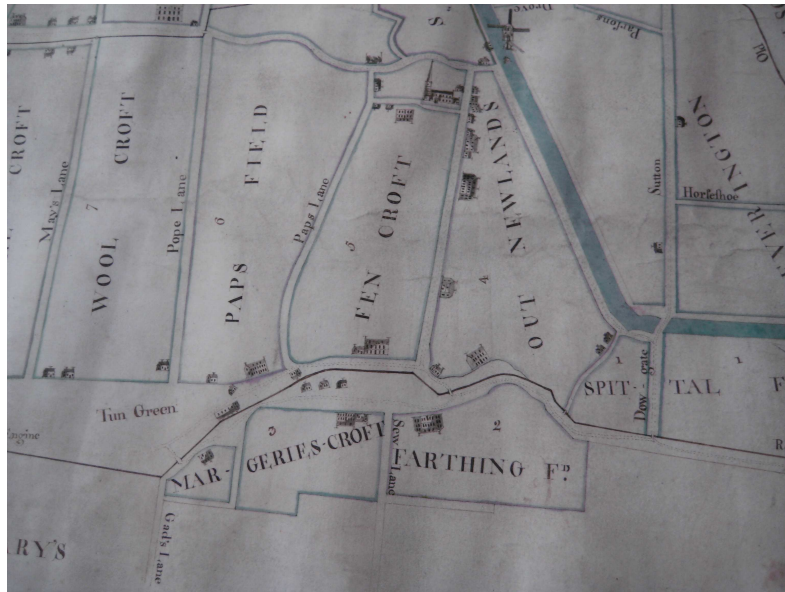
## **2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Fenland District Council is required to 'draw up and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement' of areas that it considers worthy of protection because of their historical merit. The Act also places a duty on the Council to formulate proposals for their conservation. Once adopted, this document will become a 'material consideration' in all planning decisions within the Conservation Area and also for areas outside its boundary that might affect the Conservation Area's setting.

Conservation Area designation removes the following 'permitted development rights' for which Planning Permission will therefore be required:

- Various types of building cladding.
- The insertion of dormer windows.
- The installation of satellite dishes on walls, roofs or chimneys fronting a highway.
- Extensions.
- The lopping, topping or removal of trees.

### 3.0 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEVERINGTON



ABOVE: 18<sup>th</sup> century maps, showing the sparsely populated village.

In ancient times, the area now known as Leverington would have been swampland. The population was sparse and lived by fishing and fowling on the ridged area of land around the present day Church of St Leonard.

With the construction of the sea defence known as 'Roman Bank', the threat of flooding lessened. As the land began to dry out, the settlement of Leverington developed. The wooden church, used as a place of refuge from

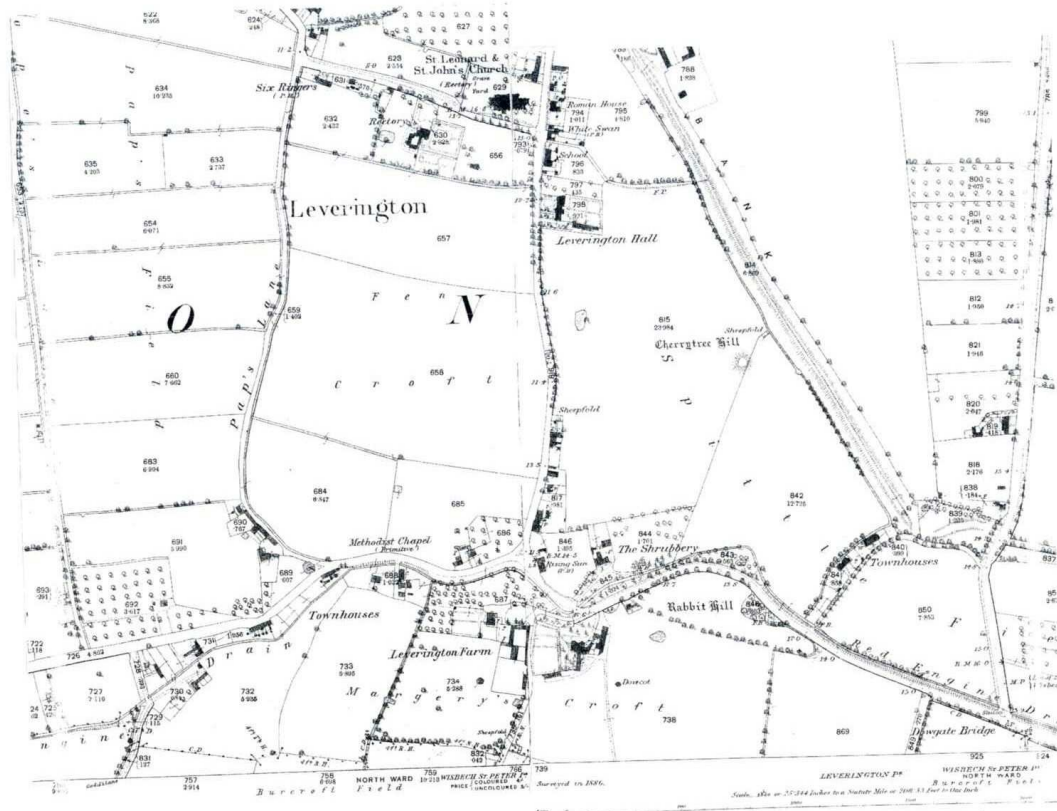
the floodwaters, but which was itself washed away many times, would have been one of the first buildings to have been rebuilt in stone.

Until the 1663 Bedford Level Drainage Act, sea-borne goods were brought right into the village along the various creeks. Trade would have made the inhabitants prosperous, many 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century houses were built as a result, a number of which still stand. The Act allowed low lying marshland between the Nene outfall and Roman Bank to be enclosed or divided up into approximately two acre parcels and allotted to the inhabitants.

There were two medieval manors in the ancient parish, one known as Richmond Hall in Gorefield and a second manor at Fitton End. Two lesser estates were Leverington Hall near the church - which would have been the principle house in the village - and Cross Hall, now known as Beachwood, the Grade II Listed dovecote of which survives.

The boundaries of the ancient parish remained the same until the Fen portion containing Parson Drove and the hamlet of Gorefield were separated for ecclesiastical and civil purposes.

A school was provided in 1789, earlier than in many parishes, by the Town Lands Charity, which also provided twenty free almshouses for the poor. The school was held in a building which later became the parish workhouse. It is thought that the almshouses may have been built on the site of 'St John the Baptist Hospital' in Little Dowgate, formerly Poor House Lane. By 1868 the hospital had been demolished but its name still survives in 'Spittle Field' that adjoins the road.



Leverington, 1880's

ABOVE: Leverington village in the 1880's

The present school was built in 1860. It possibly occupies the site of the Guildhall where the public business of the parish was carried out. The Guildhall was converted into tenements and used as almshouses for the poor until it was demolished.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the settlement pattern of Leverington changed with the suburban development of Wisbech and the arrival of the railway. A proliferation of smallholdings appeared beside the river along Dowgate Road and Leverington Common giving this portion of the village a distinctive linear style of development.

More recently, development pressures have meant that the open land within the settlement has been built upon eroding the historic integrity of the village. The 'style' of new build properties is too frequently at odds with the traditional styles of the area, leaving parts of the neighbourhood with a distinctly fragmented appearance.

#### **4.0 PRESENT DAY CONSERVATION AREA – SPECIAL INTEREST**

The construction of 'Roman Bank' was pivotal to the development of the settlement of Leverington. Sitting on a ridge hugging the inside of this ancient sea defence, the population felt confident enough to begin to settle permanently in the area in the knowledge that their labours would not disappear in the next floods.

Trade became an important source of income, with goods transported to and from the Nene along the many creeks that remained. The village prospered. Large houses were built on generous plots of land and the church was constructed on a ridge with one of the tallest, finest spires in the Fens. The Church of St Leonards is still a magnificent landmark, visible for miles across the flat fens.

As the marshland was drained, the fertile land was given over to orchards and soft fruit farming. Parts of the village and the surrounding area have retained this open landscape feel, linking the parish to its historical rural routes. The spaces within and between the buildings allow views through to the open countryside. The views to and from St Leonard's church and the 'Roman Bank' obtained along the public footpaths surrounding the village enforce the historical context of the settlement.

Whilst the historic northern core of the Conservation Area was developed around St Leonard's Church, White Engine Drain to the south set the linear pattern of development along Dowgate Road and Leverington Common. The houses along Little Dowgate to the east sit on the site of the earlier almshouses. The remainder of this area absorbed the overflow of workers from Wisbech as the market town evolved in the late 1800's.

There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (either within the Conservation Area or close by), 12 listed buildings and 12 Buildings of Local Interest within the proposed new Conservation Area boundary. Their locations are shown on the maps at the back of this document and are also catalogued in the Appendix on pages 33-36.

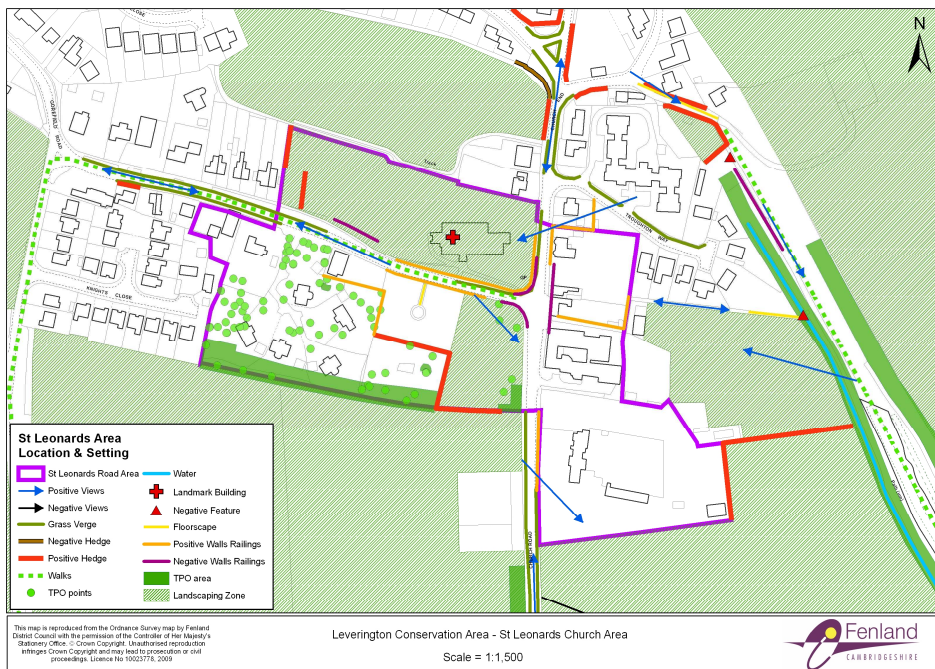
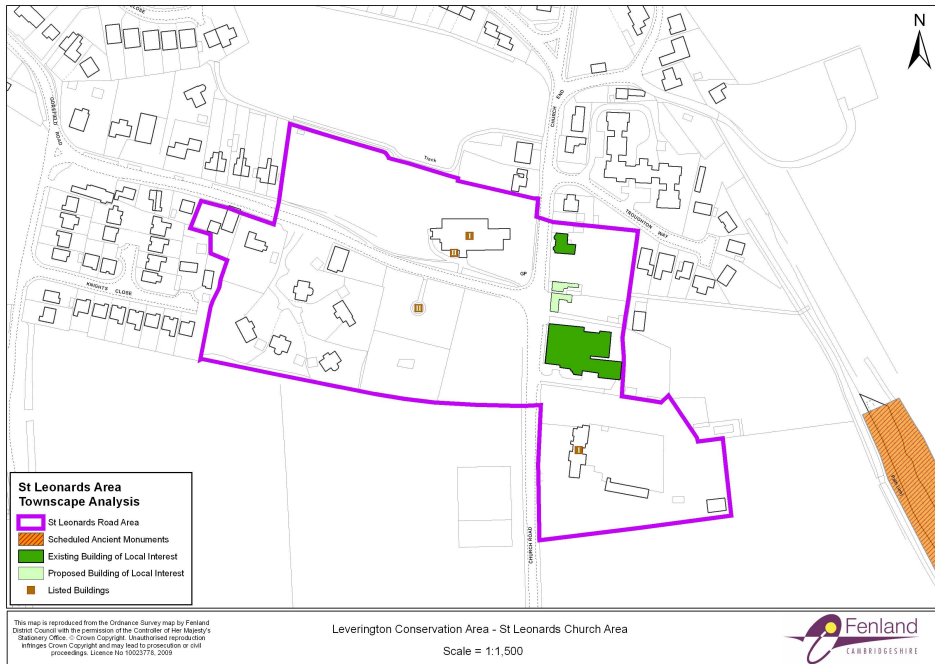
For clarity of explanation the revised Conservation Area boundary has been split into two areas:

- St Leonard's Church (to the North).
- Leverington Common and Dowgate Road (to the South).

The proposed new boundary incorporating (a) the small area of woodland to the North of 11-27, Dowgate Road; (b) the removal of No.6, Church Road and (c) the addition to the boundary South and East of Leverington Hall, is shown below:-







Looking North past the church, the open landscape appears vast and unending.



The recent development at Chapter Gardens, South West of St Leonard's church helps to maintain the open and sporadically developed character of the conservation area. This development of six large, modern detached houses, replace The Rectory (built c.1720's and which had also been known as 'The Chapter House' – demolished in 1993), which was one of Leverington's fine Grade II\* listed buildings. Only the curtilage-listed, tall red brick boundary wall remains.

At the Western junction of the conservation area, the eye is drawn along the length of Dowgate Road as it is narrowed by the curve of the roadside verges and the magnificent tree-lined approach to its junction with Church Road.

The property to the South of Gorefield Road - "Rosper", "No.43" and "Rose Cottage" - with their symmetrical chimneys and pleasantly proportioned facades indicate an older origin, albeit now much altered.

As the Church of St Leonard is approached, the mature trees on either side of the road plunge the area into dappled sunlight and partially conceal the historic core of the village from view, evoking a sense of mystery and timelessness.



Beyond the Village Hall, through the delicate cast iron railings to the South of Gorefield Road, can be seen the southern section of the cemetery with its Grade II listed, 1920s limestone war memorial.



Adjacent and South East of the cemetery is an area of open land. Across this and through the perimeter trees Leverington Hall can be glimpsed.



This fine, mellow bricked, Grade I listed building was constructed in the 1630's for the Swaine family, and is the principle house of the parish. Robert Swaine, the house's first occupant, became High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire in 1681.

A slightly recessed central block connecting two gables suggests an Elizabethan or Jacobean origin. Iron railings between brick piers topped with stone pineapples enclose the drive to the front.



Roman Bank and Cherry Tree Barrow can be seen across Spittle Field from the edge of Leverington Hall's southern boundary (below).



In 1785, the open land on the other side of Church Road, on which the playing fields are now found, belonged to Leverington Hall. Today they are in separate ownership but the view between the avenues of Poplar Trees to the open fen beyond enforces the strong link that Leverington retains with its historical rural past.



Adjacent to Leverington Hall is the village school. Despite the modern glazing style, the red-bricked structure is highlighted as being a 'Building of Local Interest' (BLI). It sits tightly against the pavement edge, the brickwork detailing to the window openings and the varied pitched slate roof give interest to its mass. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, a town hall existed on the site of the current school.



North of the school, forming the focal point at the end of Gorefield Road are another two Buildings of Local Interest; Rose Cottage (No.2, Church End), constructed from a pretty Cambridgeshire soft-pink brick; and the red bricked (probably 18thC) former pub (once called The White Swan), now No.1; with its deep sash windows and the ornamental brick banding between ground and first floor. Both properties are built on the pavement's edge, at right angles to the road. Both houses have lost some historic interest with the addition of concrete roof tiles and plastic guttering, but remain attractive period buildings.



No.3, Church Road, known as Roman House, is the last in this row of Buildings of Local Interest, and is probably Victorian. This house is positioned where the road widens (below).



It sits slightly back from the pavement edge with a low-level brick wall, enclosing a small front garden and complimenting that of the churchyard opposite. The house retains its traditional slate roof and timber sash windows. Even the original glass is evident in the rippled effect given from the panes.

The historic red brick boundary wall to the rear can be seen in the pictures below:



No. 1, Church End sits directly opposite St Leonard's Church, a Grade I listed building, with a magnificent spire, visible for miles, and constructed from local



Barnack stone. The church has 12<sup>th</sup> century origins, but predominantly dates from the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The surrounding churchyard has been cleared of gravestones to the North and East but the remainder contains the base of a Grade II listed medieval stone cross. Many interesting memorials to local people still exist, which serve as important records of Leverington's social history.



For the most part, a low level brick wall encloses the churchyard...



...parts of which retain historic graffiti.



The land to the north of the churchyard remains undeveloped, buffering St Leonard's from the 1950's bungalows along Perry Road. However, most of what historically were open fields has now been developed, such as the housing at Troughton Way, erected in the 1970's.



#### **5.11 Materials and Details:**

Around the area surrounding St Leonard's Church, the period buildings are predominantly constructed in brick; the majority with a redder northern Cambridgeshire brick, but with a few using a pinker southern style brick. The majority of the older roofs are clad in traditional natural slate.

There are several vernacular details characteristic to this area of Leverington. For example:



This original brick chimney has retained its 19thC pots. 'Dragons Tooth' eaves detailing and 'rubbed brick' lintel arches with 'Flemish Bond' course brickwork have been used. The plastic guttering and the plastic window in a widened opening detract from the historic detailing.



Ornamental string courses between the floor levels and stone lintels to the timber sash windows add interest.

## 5.12 Potential Enhancement Opportunities

1. A more traditional design of railing to this church entrance would enhance the area. The steps, re-faced in stone, leading down from Gorefield Road to both the Eastern section of the cemetery and to St Leonard's church would enhance the setting of the listed buildings.



2. While understated, the boundary treatment (below) could be improved. To unify the approach to the historic core, the cast iron railings to the cemetery side could be replicated here. Alternatively, a traditional estate style of railing would be an understated visual improvement.



3. The cast iron railings to the cemetery side (below – probably Late 19<sup>th</sup>C) are rusting and in a poor state of repair. Rust treatment and repainting would ensure their longevity.



4. Sections of the low-level boundary wall to the churchyard could benefit from repointing in lime. Where the coping stone is absent or moulded in concrete its replacement in stone to match the historic original would greatly enhance the setting of the church.

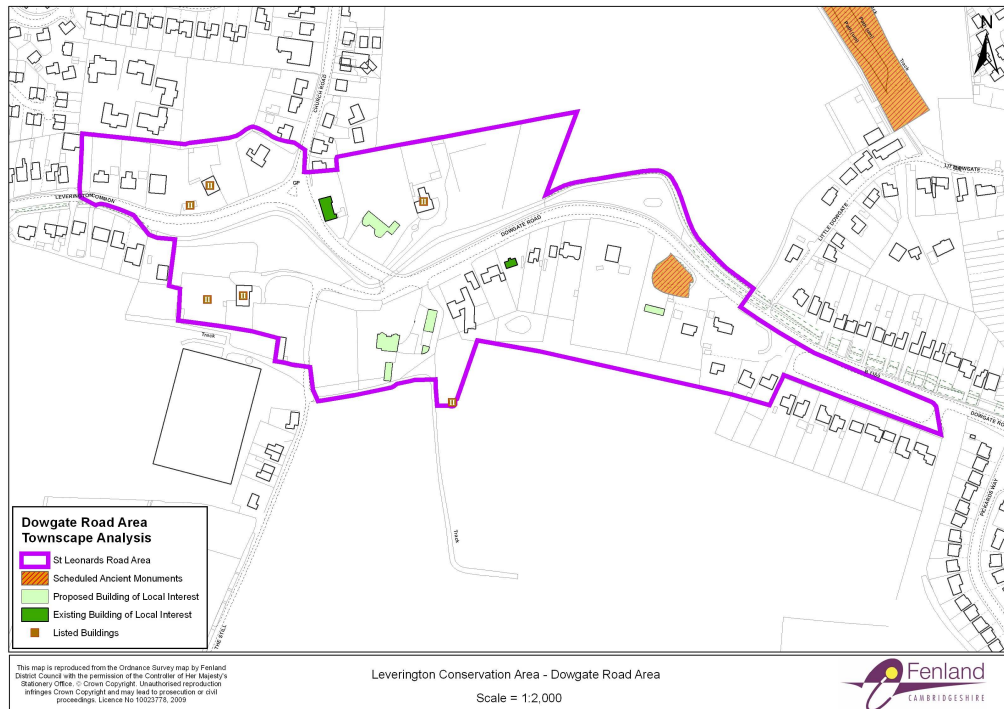


5. The standard Highway Agency railings at the Church Road/Gorefield Road junction detract from the historic integrity of the area. Replacement in a more sympathetic style and material would significantly improve the area's appearance.

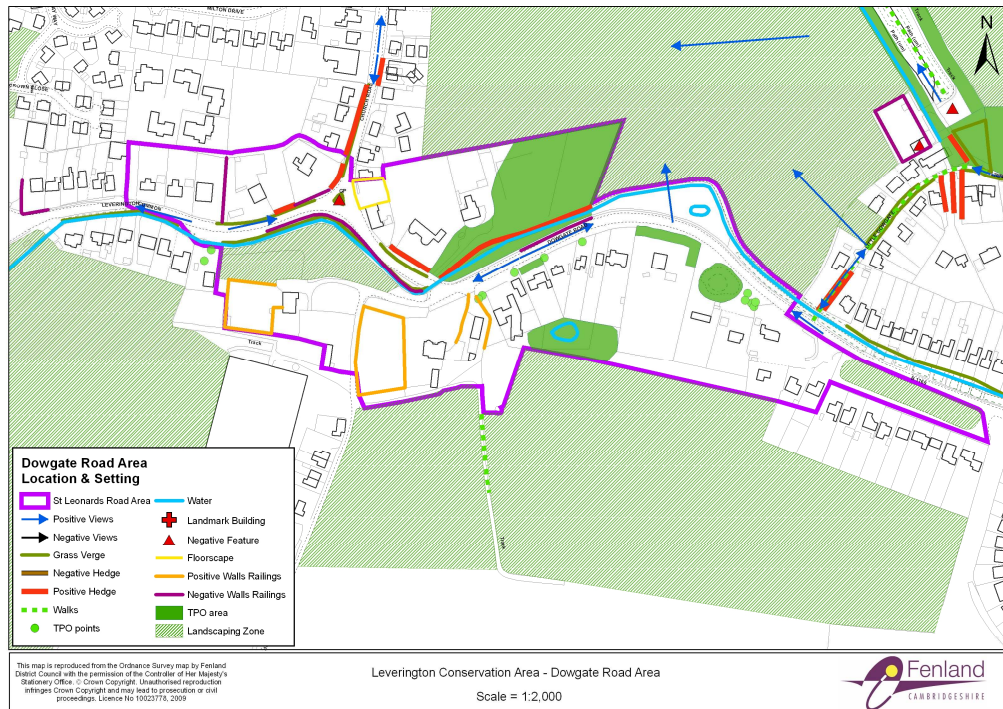


## 5.2 Dowgate Road area

The Southern half of the Conservation Area incorporates the Northern-most boundaries of Lancewood and Barleymead (No's.32 & 34), Dowgate Road, No.6 Church Road in the North East as far as No.16, Leverington Common in the North West. The Southern boundary of the area is formed South of the boundaries to the properties on the southern side of Dowgate Road (as below).



The historic development pattern in the southern half of the village has been determined by the curve of the 'White Engine Drain', the stream, which runs the length of Leverington Common and Dowgate Road.



Above: plan showing various significant features

The narrow stretch of semi-mature woodland to the South side of the B1169, Dowgate Road (below) and to the North of No's.11-25, Dowgate Road is an attractive rural feature, improving the character and appearance of this part of the Leverington conservation area. This strip of woodland also helps to mask the modern housing development on the South side of the road and provides an attractive tree-lined entrance point into Leverington.



A recent development of three large, two storey detached houses of varying styles and materials (below) dilutes the significance of the historic core of the village; their positioning, with gables gradually staggered towards the road edge does help to retain the visual prominence of Fencroft's Grade II listed coach house, however (shown in the distance, below).





The White Engine Drain (also known as “Little Ramper”) at one time so important to the development of the area has been culverted to allow the development of front gardens and to allow vehicular access to the bungalows just outside the southern boundary (below – showing views to the south side of Leverington Common). The river emerges parallel with Dowgate Road, and beside an attractive avenue of mature trees. The views of the Early 18<sup>th</sup> century Grade II Listed ‘The Grange’ appears at this point, set well back in its landscaped gardens.



Opposite The Grange sits Fencroft, a Grade II listed house built in the 1830’s to replace a much earlier building. The front boundary walls, piers and outbuildings of the earlier building can still be seen fronting Leverington Common. The land behind, running through the modern housing estate up to the school playing field adjacent to the existing primary school at Church End, was once in its ownership, some of which (immediately behind Fencroft –

between the two conservation area boundaries) is still apple orchard, although permission has been granted for one dwelling on this land.



The Rising Sun Inn, although not listed is recognised as a Building of Local Interest and forms an important focal point at the end of Leverington Common, sitting close to the pavement edge at the junctions of Leverington Common, Dowgate Road and Church Road. Historically, this would have been an important intersection, guaranteed to bring business from passing trade.



On the Western side of the 3-way junction between Dowgate Road, Leverington Common and Church Road is the well-maintained boundary hedgerow at 1, Church Road. Looking North West, glimpses of the orchard can be seen beyond.

Looking North along Church Road, the thatched roof and tumbled gable end parapets of the Grade II Listed Reed Cottage and Thatched Cottage can be seen (below, albeit beyond the Conservation area boundary).



Following the curve of the road on the Northern side, travelling East past the Rising Sun Inn, tall beech hedges conceal the Grade II Listed buildings at No's.34 and 32 Dowgate Road. Both these Early 18<sup>th</sup>/Early 19<sup>th</sup> century dwellings (respectively) occupy prominent positions within spacious wooded grounds, helping to maintain the rural aspect of the village.

On the Southern side of Dowgate Road is 'Beechwood' (shown below). Originally known as 'Crosse Hall', it was built by Thomas Crosse, who died there in 1633. Several racehorses are buried in the paddock, the grave of 'Alonzo' being marked by two pine trees. In 1892 a large amount of the original building was demolished and a new frontage constructed. The walled kitchen garden and some of the farm buildings may be as old as the original house. The 19<sup>th</sup> timber-framed sash windows (shown below) were unfortunately replaced in uPVC in September 2010.



The track running between Beechwood's outbuildings and Cedar Lodge leads to outstanding views of the open fen, and an 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Grade II listed octagonal dovecote (below).



The dovecote's form is complemented in the central turret of the adjacent 'Cedar Lodge', a recently built dwelling (below).



At this point in Dowgate Road, the stream, again culverted passes beneath the road and travels along the Lancewood boundary, where it becomes the Red Engine Drain.



A grass verge follows the path along Dowgate Road. The houses on the southern side (excluding No.49, the 19<sup>th</sup>C tollhouse, below) are larger detached dwellings standing away from the road edge in plots proportionate to the dwellings' size and mostly hidden from view by the woodland avenue that predates the buildings.



On the bend before the Little Dowgate area is the tree-covered Rabbit Hill, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This hill appears to have been a Neolithic Round Barrow.



#### **5.21 Materials and Details:**

Within the Leverington Common and Dowgate Road area the historic buildings are predominantly brick construction, with a few interspersed rendered buildings. As with the St Leonard's area, the majority of the clay from which the red bricks have been fired is from northern Cambridgeshire, although a yellow Gault brick has also been used in this section of the village.

The majority of the older roofs are covered with a natural grey slate but many have clay pantile roofs and there is some thatch on older properties.

There are several vernacular details characteristic of this area of Leverington.

(BELOW) A 'rubbed' brick lintel over a timber, double hung sash window with uncommon "margin light" glazing. Expensive "Tuck" pointing has been incorporated to fool the eye and to make the mortar joints appear narrower than they are and to make the bricks appear of a more consistent size.



(BELOW) A 'tumbled' brick gable end. The bricks above eaves level are set in triangles so that the brick edges can be laid parallel to the pitch of the roof.



## 5.22 Potential Enhancement Opportunities

1. The sensitive replacement of the tall, close-boarded timber fencing to the Eastern boundary of No.12 Leverington Common would reinstate the more open views to Fencroft (below).



2. The replacement of the red-painted close boarded timber fence running along the front boundary of 'Stillwaters' with a hedgerow would soften the curve in the road at this point. Alternatively, a more natural colour scheme would help it blend into the background.





3. As with the historic core around the St Leonard's section of the conservation area, the noise of heavy traffic shatters the rural atmosphere of the village. 'Traffic calming' measures would reduce the noise impact within the conservation area.



4. The concrete post and metal rail fence along the Northern boundary of "The Grange" is starkly unsympathetic to its location. A design more in keeping with this rural area would improve the setting of this listed building and the railings' appearance in the conservation area.



5. The replacement of the metal fence (below) against the Southern boundary of "Lancewood" with a design similar to that highlighted above would greatly enhance the appearance of the conservation area.



## 6.0 APPENDICES

### 6.1 Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area

A Listed Building is a building of special architectural or historic interest; buildings may be listed Grade I, II\* or II. All listed buildings are statutorily protected and listed building consent is required for any works that would affect the building's character or appearance internally, externally or in the curtilage.

#### St Leonard's area:-

##### Grade I

- **Leverington Hall, Church Road (Listed Building ref:6/23, Listed 23.06.1952)**

Description: "A particularly fine house, c.1630, of original hall and north crossing plan with a crosswing added to the south in the early 18thC. Red brick, English bond to rear wall, with tiled roofs to front and stone slates to rear. Rebuilt gable ends to crosswing fronts, originally shaped, with tumbled end parapets to rear. Interior: Original moulded main beam to the hall. The panelling is early 18thC raised and fielded in two heights with moulded dado and cornice... Hall divided in Late 17<sup>th</sup> or Early 18thC and smaller room lined with bolection moulded panelling and a late 18thC fireplace surround. The main staircase is of four flights and two landings. Late 17thC closed string staircase with turned balusters, moulded rail and square newels... South crosswing ground floor room, formerly the kitchen, with large inglenook hearth and early 18thC tiled floor with black and white sets. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor room has reset c.1630 sunken panelling probably removed from the ground floor room when the crosswing was added. The house was probably built for Robert Swaine (d.1705.) (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Church of St Leonard, Gorefield Road (Listed Building ref:6/27, Listed 23.06.1952)**

Description: "Parish church. The lower stages of the tower and part of the south wall and arcading between chancel and south chapel and Mid 13thC, the South aisle and porch are 14thC. The 13thC nave was rebuilt in 15thC." (PART DESCRIPTION)

##### Grade II\*

There are no Grade II\* Listed buildings in Leverington.

## Grade II

- **Base of medieval stone cross (south porch of St Leonard's Church), Gorefield Road (Listed Building ref:6/28, Listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "Base of Medieval stone cross, originally at Fitton End, Newton."

- **War memorial in cemetery, Gorefield Road (Listed building ref: 6/34, Listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "World War 1 memorial, c.1920. Limestone. Cross with foliated ends on octagonal column with square base". (PART DESCRIPTION)

## **Dowgate Road area:-**

## Grade II

- **Thatched Cottage and Reed Cottage, Church Road (Listed building ref: 6/22, Listed 23.06.1952)**

Description: "House of Hall and Crosswing plan, probably early 17thC with late 17thC crosswing added to the North. Red brick, mainly English bond with moulded brick to upper edge of thickened ground floor wall. Thatched roof with tumbled gable and parapets and ridge stack at junction of hall and crosswing. Two storeys. Band to front gable end of crosswing, carried over window opening as drip mould." (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Dovecote, rear of Beechwood, Dowgate Road (Listed building ref: 6/24, listed 29.03.1978)**

Description: "Dovecote, 18thC. Octagonal. Rd brick with hipped roof of tiles now collapsed. Two storeys with band between storey and entry in West side. Inside the nesting boxes are intact."

- **Lancewood, 32 Dowgate Road (Listed Building ref: 6/25, Listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "House. Early 19thC. Brown brick with broad mortar courses and tuck pointing. Slate roof with end stacks. L-plan. Two storeys and attics. (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **The Grange (aka Peppermint Hall), Dowgate Road (Listed building ref: 6/121, listed 15.04.1991)**

Description: "House, now subdivided into tenements. Circa Early 18thC, remodelled in c.1830-40 and extended in c.Mid 19thC. Flemish bond gault brick South front range and English bond red brick at rear. Low pitched hipped slate roofs with deep eaves. Brick axial and end stacks. Interior: Most of the joinery is intact (only front range inspected). (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Walled garden and gate piers, west and south west of The Grange, Dowgate Road (Listed building ref: 6/122, listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "Garden walls and gate piers. Circa Early 18thC. Red brick in garden wall bond. Forms boundary to square-plan garden immediately West and South West of the Grange. Section of the wall has brick paddleback coping. (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Coach House and Stables to the west of Fencroft, Leverington Common (Listed building ref: 6/38, listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "Coach house and stables, c.1830. Red brick, English bond with later interlocking tile roof. Tumbled gable ends. Two storeys. External staircase of wood to West gable end. (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Fencroft, Coach House and Stables, Leverington Common (North side) (Listed building ref: 6/37, listed 31.10.1983)**

Description: "House, c.1830. Brown brick with gauged red brick arches to window arches. Slate roof and end stacks. Two storeys. Range of three recessed, 16 pane hung sashes. Adjoining flanking wall terminating in piers with stone cornice and ball finials, possibly earlier and reused. (PART DESCRIPTION)

- **Hallcroft and outbuildings, Ringers Lane (Listed building ref: 6/43, listed 31.10.1983) NB: Outside conservation area boundary.**

Description: "House, late 18thC. Brown brick with parapetted roof now of cement tiles. End stacks. L-plan. Two storeys. (PART DESCRIPTION)

## **6.2 Buildings of Local Interest within the Conservation Area**

Buildings of Local Interest make an important contribution to the character and appearance of an area and although not listed are considered as worthy of retention.

### **St Leonard's area**

- 1 Church End (including wall and outbuildings to rear)
- Rose Cottage, 2, Church End
- Primary School, 104, Church Road

### **Dowgate Road area**

- The Rising Sun Inn (Including post box), Dowgate Road
- Barleymede, No 34 Dowgate Road
- Beechwood and its outbuildings, Dowgate Road
- No 49 Dowgate Road

## **6.3 Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

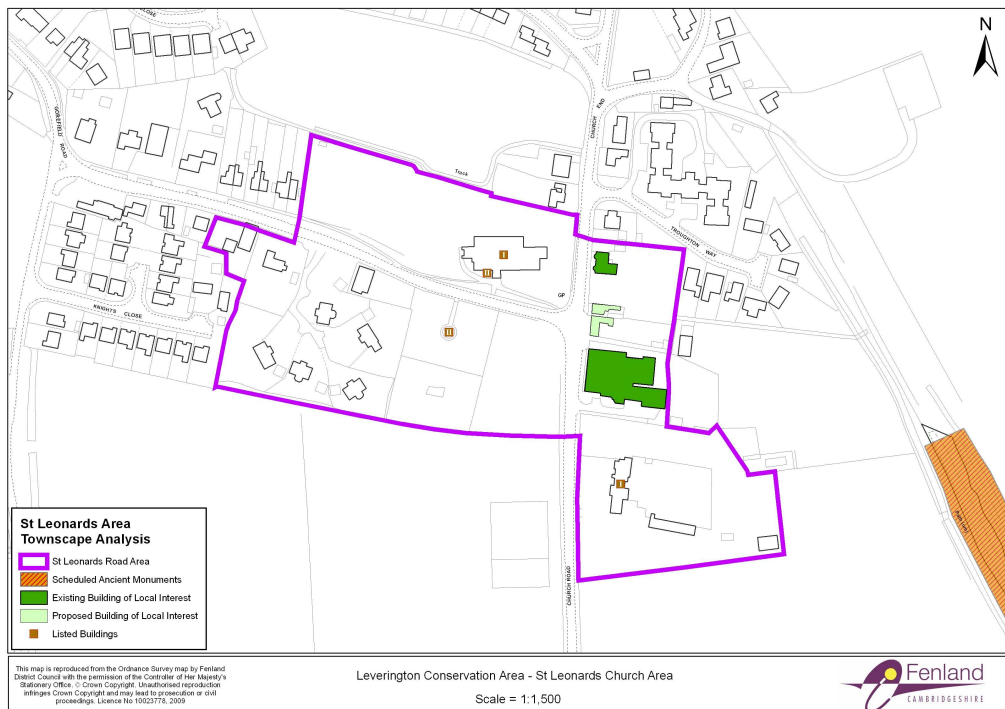
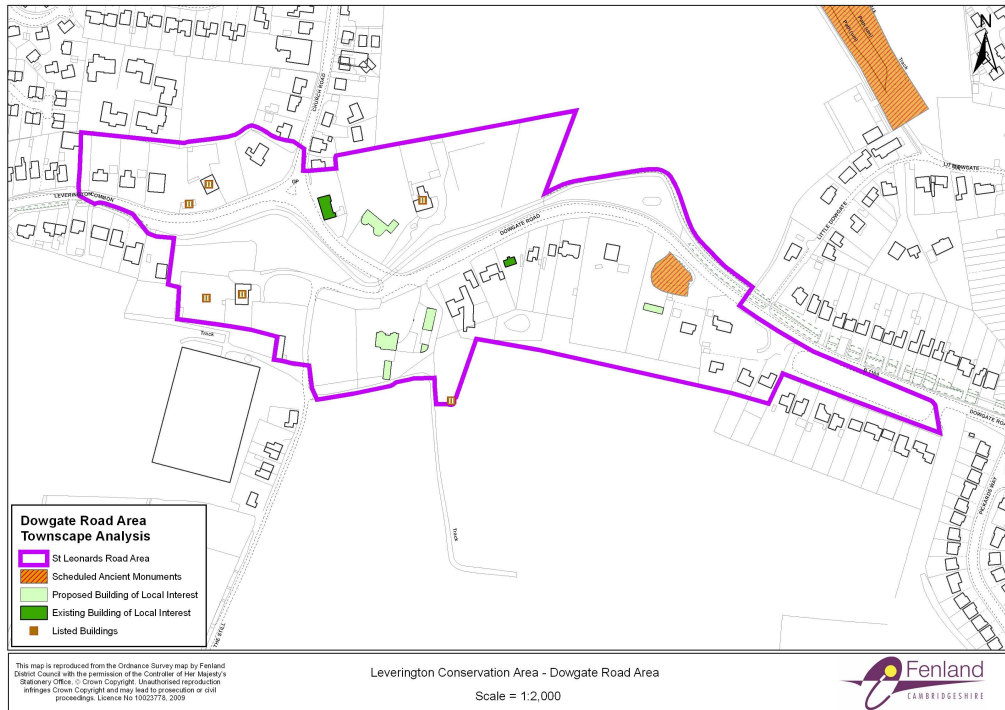
Sites identified as being of 'national importance' are given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. This is a separate system of control to that which protects listed buildings. The

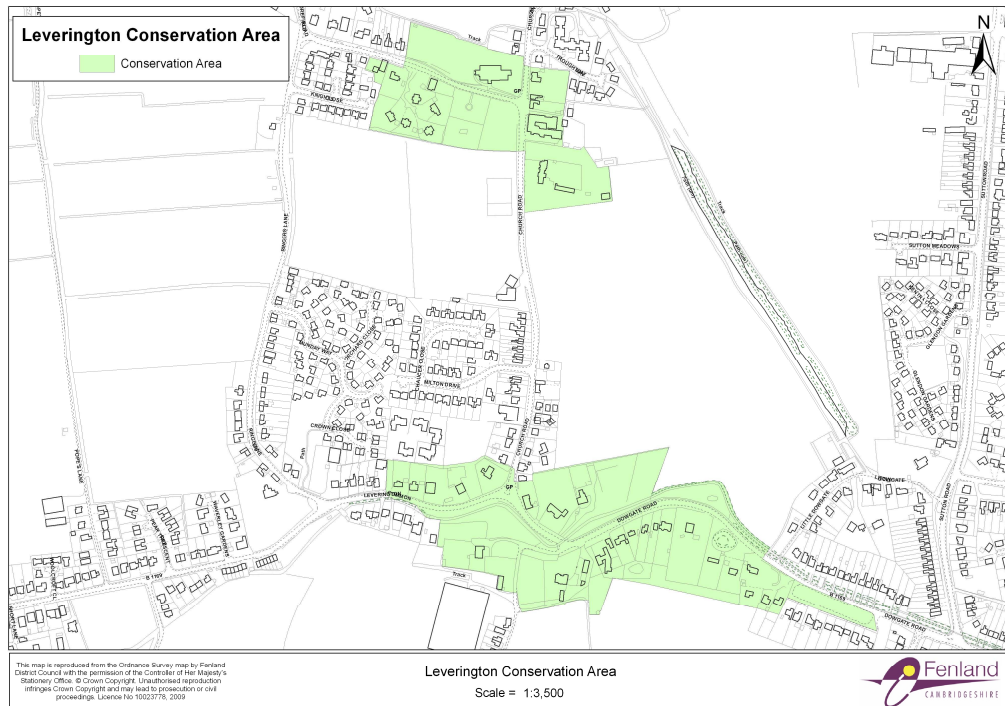
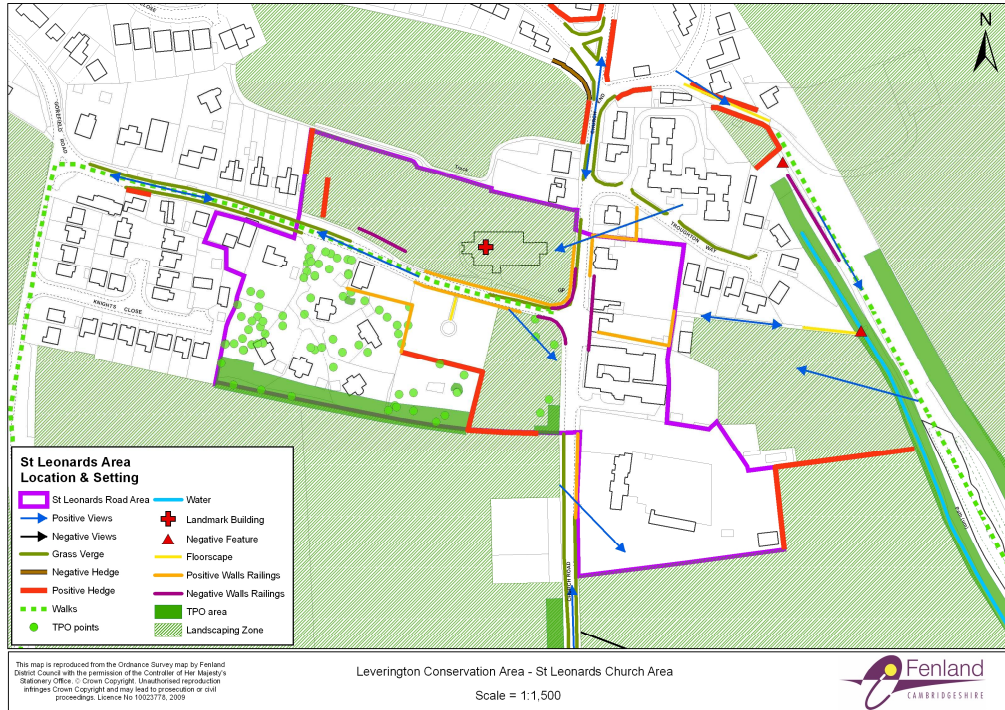
preservation of a Scheduled Ancient Monument is given priority over other land uses.

There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Leverington:

- Roman Bank,
- Cherrytree Hill Round Barrow
- Rabbit Hill Round Barrow

## 6.4 Maps







## **7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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