

Report on study tour of large scale developments by Ipswich Northern Fringe Community Steering Panel - October & November 2012



Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Feedback from panel members on developments**
- 3. Panel discussion on lessons learnt from study tour**
- 4. Selection of photos of the various developments**

1. Introduction

1.1 The Ipswich Northern Fringe Community Steering Panel agreed that it would be useful to visit a variety of large scale developments from different eras to evaluate how well they had matured in terms of place-making and character, in order to extract lessons that might be applied to new development at the Northern Fringe.

1.2 With assistance from David Lock Associates (DLA) and ATLAS, the itinerary below was developed in response to the following elements:

- Developments from different eras that had been based on a garden suburb principle
- Developments that incorporated a district or local centre plus community facilities
- Developments that had strong community governance
- Local developments of significant scale

1.3 Itinerary:-

1st October 2012

- DLA offices, Milton Keynes for introduction to the developments
- Visits to following developments in Milton Keynes:
 - Shenley Church
 - Great Holm
 - Woolstone
 - Loughton
 - Oxley Park
 - Brooklands
 - Drive past Oakgrove School
- Presentation on Hampton development at Peterborough at DLA offices
- Meeting with parish clerk of Cambourne Parish Council and tour around Cambourne

13th November 2013

- Ravenswood

1.4 Panel members were asked to bring cameras to record good and bad elements, and were also asked to record thoughts on various place-making aspects of the schemes visited.

1.5 This report, prepared by ATLAS, sets out the feedback received from different panel members in response to the developments visited and the subsequent discussion on lessons from them that could be applied to the Northern Fringe development at the November meeting of the Panel.

2. Feedback from panel members on developments visited

2.1 Five members of the panel provided written comments on the schemes they visited. This is set out below to provide a flavour of different perspectives of the places visited.

2.2 Milton Keynes

<p>Barry Reeve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It consists of a number of discrete, almost self sufficient, developments covering a very large area. It has a number of main dual carriageway roads providing access to the individual developments. Local interconnection (pedestrian and cycle) between the areas is provided by a series of 'red routes' crossing the main roads by underpasses. Overall, it so does not equate very well with the Northern Fringe. Is the NF going to have a pedestrian/cycle crossing on Westerfield Road to connect the central and eastern areas? • Great Holme is essentially an upmarket area with some low density (10 ph), attractive housing. • Loughton again consists of mainly large detached and some terrace housing. The school has a special on-site drop off and pick up point to avoid school runs parking on the main road. There is lots of green space and there is a Local Centre, but it's not that close. • Shenley Church End has a population of around 3K and has a large local centre, which is more like what we would term a district centre. It also has a pub/hotel. • Oxley Pk is a fairly new development with much higher density and much less green space than other areas. It currently has a small shopping centre and there is a lot of road side parking. It very much has an urban feel to it, rather than garden suburb and overall is not very attractive. Landscape has not yet had time to become established. • The new housing in Woolstone has been integrated into what was previously a very small hamlet with one or two thatched cottages and lots of green space, which improves the overall appearance. There is an old established pub, but I didn't see any shops. The courtyard design of new housing looks attractive and fits in well. I think it has its own Parish Council. • Brooklands is very much in its infancy. It looks very stark. Housing mainly looks to be a mix of semis and terrace. There doesn't seem to be any garages but a special layby appears to have been built in the road network to accommodate parking. It has an attractive looking Primary School.
<p>Rod Brooks</p>	<p>Clear Sense of Place?</p> <p>Milton Keynes had a clear sense of place characterised by lots of open green spaces, tree lined roads, ponds, safe walkways and cycle paths. It contained a number of distinct districts/villages each with a distinct centre some containing only a few shops but others rather more, including cafés, restaurants, fast food outlets, pubs and community facilities. The main centre appeared to have lots of shops that were easily accessible and also a number of major employment sites. One nice aspect was the relative ease facilities could be reached by walking and cycling. Relatively wide shallow gradient underpasses allowed the whole site to become interconnected through walking and cycling with clear visibility through the underpasses offering a feeling of space and safety.</p> <p>On the whole I was pleasantly surprised by Milton Keynes and in many ways it surpassed my expectations but there were some areas I found awful notably the newer higher density developments of Oxley Park & Brooklands.</p>

Great Holm: nice open spaces, varied architecture, on-plot parking, Central school, support for people with learning difficulties, café and bakery

Loughton; old village integrated in with the new. Tree lined roads with generous open spaces. Hedges and walls on boundaries to properties. Lots of shrubs. Equestrian centre and bridle path add to village feel. Range of community facilities including a school, church and football field. Varied architecture with relatively low housing density.

Shenley Church End: nice open spaces, lots of greenery including shrubs. Fairly large centre containing shops, a pub, medical centre and leisure centre. The shopping centre had a veranda that protected the customers from rain. Also a high school was present. Mixture of architecture styles with tree lined roads.

Oxley Park: On the positive side there was green space and an attractive pond system forming part of the Sustainable Urban Drainage scheme. It had a centre and a range of shops including a small Tesco store, fast food outlets and a dentist. Unfortunately it was modern, ugly, soulless and of relatively higher density than the rest of Milton Keynes. The central plaza was spoilt by having a sub-station in the middle. Parking was an issue – people had to park on the footpaths near the shops.

Woolstone: Very careful matching of the new development to an old village with the village green acting both as a heart and a separation of new from old. The architectural styles, courtyard design etc of 'the new' blended in very well with the old and there were even some new thatched properties. Nice green spaces with cricket green, playpark and links to the river/canal. It contained a school, leisure centre and pub with no retail outlets. Overall a very attractive village development with a clear character and heart.

Brooklands: a new development in progress close to the M1 motorway. Modern 3-storey housing, higher a density than the rest of Milton Keynes, no garages and wide streets offering on street parking. Trees were on the streets. It had a nice lake else I can only describe it as very unattractive and soulless.

Finding Way Around the Development

Probably fine once you know your way around. We got hopelessly lost going to David lock Associates in Central Milton Keynes and it took some time and phone calls to get there.

There appeared to be a main grid of streets and village locations helped to sub-divide the town. Finding your way around a village would be easy.

Car Parking

In the older more established locations this appear to work well but in Oxley Park there was a real issue at the village centre with parking on the **pavements. Also** Brooklands only offered on-road parking and I suspect this will become an issue once the houses are all sold.

Open Space and Greenness

Real sense of open space and greenness as you move around the whole of Milton Keynes.

Is the District Centre well-located & Designed

Although the villages had differing ranges of facilities, some quite basic, most appeared to be well located and providing a heart to their communities.

Other Comments

It was clear that the lower housing density developments were much more

	<p>successful in providing an attractive garden suburb environment and this needs to be given serious consideration by Ipswich Borough Council.</p> <p>To my eye the more traditional village style architectures for homes with a mix of courtyards and sizes of properties as typified by Woolstone provides a most attractive development. The more contemporary designs appeared ugly and were spoilt by the higher densities and I very much doubt whether time will be kind to them i.e. they will quickly date. Woolstone sets the architectural and spatial standards the Ipswich Northern Fringe should aspire too. If it aims for Oxley Park or Brooklands it would be great shame and a missed opportunity.</p> <p>It was difficult to spot affordable housing since the integration appeared quite successful.</p> <p>We need to learn the lessons of the successful underpasses for cycle and pathways deployed in Milton Keynes and should considered this for the Ipswich Northern Fringe, at least to integrate the two sites separated by the Westerfield Road. Grange Farm near Ipswich has also successfully used this approach and it is a smaller development than the proposed Ipswich Northern Fringe.</p> <p>Off road parking provides a much more attractive development.</p> <p>The green spaces were managed by a private company under a trust arrangement and the quality of the maintenance was excellent. It was remarked by a representative of David Lock Associates that such an arrangement is unaffected by the cutbacks often suffered by Councils who undertake similar obligations. An example of the latter was Cambourne, see below, where the maintenance was much poorer.</p> <p>Milton Keynes is growing and economically flourishing even in these difficult times and is attracting major new employers. It is also well connected being very close to an accessible motorway (M1) with an excellent train service to London taking approximately 45 minutes. The situation in Ipswich is rather different where housing growth will be unsupported by economic growth in the town and the access routes to predicted employment growth centres will be poor. In addition the train service to London takes at least 30 minutes longer.</p>
<p>Stewart Quantrill</p>	<p>Sense of place The early development of MK was a pleasant surprise to myself. Local centres with good carparking & pedestrian/cycle access. Good housing design & integration of countryside & green space, trees & landscaping. The later development was not impressive – too dense.</p> <p>Finding your way around I am sure if you were local, the access from one district to another would be easy with the major grid roads linking into local areas/estate roads. Good separation of cars & pedestrians. For ourselves as first-timers, it was not so easy to get our bearings.</p> <p>Carparking Appears to be adequate on the early areas but I am sure is insufficient on the new over-dense terraced & 3 story dwellings.</p> <p>Open space & greenness Very impressive on the early developments with ease of built up areas to countryside. Well landscaped greens & trees. Unlikely to be the same on new developments in respect of open space.</p>

	<p>District / local centres Seem well designed from our brief visit.</p> <p>Other comments The developments have the advantage of good local & motorway networks. This is something Ipswich Northern Fringe has not. Traffic will be a major problem which will not be resolved. Good planning & investment on infrastructure is clearly necessary.</p> <p>Overall, impressed with housing, trees, greenness, water with a good transition from town to countryside & good access between different areas via road underpasses</p>
Carole Jones	<p>Local Centres - Milton Keynes - Oxley Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly designed local centre: • Shops/flats above around 3 sides of a square – fine – but: • Sub-station in centre! • Unattractive sculpture • Poorly designed/insufficient parking • Tesco sold newspapers – so no place for a ‘corner shop’/paper-boys/girls <p>Other points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loughton, Milton Keynes: parents’ drop-off parking area doubled as netball/basketball pitch • Shenley End Milton Keynes: smaller shops threatened by expansion of Sainsbury’s supermarket; smaller shops hard to see under colonnade • Everywhere: streetscene improved by tree-planting • Size of supermarket has repercussions for diversity of shops in local/district centres – where they are situated and nearby • Public buildings like schools or the Cambourne business centre often more successfully designed than homes or shops.

2.3 Cambourne

Barry Reeve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambourne has a mix of market and affordable housing. There is some low density housing (10/ha) but the average density is 35/ha. About one third is green space with a country park which equates to current NF proposal. • Some parts of Cambourne have the affordable housing segregated from the others. The image difference is great and according to the councillor has a certain amount of stigma attached. Other areas have the affordable housing integrated into the market housing which seems to be the better option. I think the target affordable is about 30% and the total housing now is 3,500. • It is still being developed in Upper Cambourne - there are some 3 storey buildings and the density seems to be creeping higher. • It has a large, excellent Community Centre – 1500 houses were built before the centre could be started. • They formed a Parish Council through section 106 agreements, who are heavily involved in the way it’s developed. They have a precept of £300,000! • One of the main failures appears to be the way the local centre was developed. They allowed one of the big supermarket players to build a large store in the centre. This has prevented other independents from opening. Even a local market in the square is not permitted because of land ownership (ie the supermarket).
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<p>Rod Brooks</p>	<p>Clear Sense of Place? Cambourne has a clear sense of identity and place. Although it has 3 main local centres (Great Cambourne, Lower Cambourne and Upper Cambourne) together with a business park it does appear to be an integrated whole. It is spacious with lots of green spaces including a country park, sports fields, cricket pavilions, a gym, 4 primary schools and a nursery as well as having a major supermarket, small shops, fast food outlets and a café. Surprisingly for such a new and small development it also has a church, a library, police station, a fire station and an attractive community centre.</p> <p>Although we were unable to explore the country park due to time pressures we understand that it is popular with residents and well used. Interestingly the country park was surrounded on 3 sides by the development and a school rather than just being placed on an outer boundary as proposed for the Ipswich Northern Fringe.</p> <p>The business park was attractive being both very modern and high-tech. Clearly they had been able to attract high skilled and well-paid jobs to the site although it was mentioned they had been less able to attract lower skilled jobs.</p> <p>The architectures and densities were varied and the lower densities were clearly more attractive. Unfortunately the affordable housing was not well integrated and clearly visible by having different stained window frames so everyone knew where it was.</p> <p>Finding Way Around the Development Appeared easy</p> <p>Car Parking On the whole good but there were some very tiny rear gardens to accommodate on-plot parking. Reasonable parking around the retail centre.</p> <p>Open Space and Greenness Lots of open space and greenery. Although the local council prided themselves on owning the maintenance it did appear somewhat run down especially compared with Milton Keynes. The grass was rough and it didn't have the wealth of trees and shrubs of Milton Keynes and as a consequence appeared less successful in achieving a garden suburb feel.</p> <p>Is the District Centre well-located & Designed The district centre appeared well designed and well provided having a major supermarket, a cafe, 3 restaurants, fast food outlets and other independent shops. The central plaza was owned by Morrisons who placed restrictions on its use e.g. a market was not allowed.</p> <p>Other Comments Like Milton Keynes, it was clear that the lower housing density developments were much more successful in providing a more attractive garden suburb environment and this needs to be given serious consideration by Ipswich Borough Council.</p> <p>The integration of affordable housing with other housing had not been particularly successful mainly due to the co-location of relatively large numbers of affordable homes at one site and where they were more distributed nevertheless, they were easily identifiable through the type of window colouring. It is important to try to ensure affordable homes are less distinguishable from other homes.</p> <p>The overall maintenance of the green spaces was not up to standard and for</p>
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	<p>such a new development it appeared shabby in parts. This aspect needs to be carefully considered for the Ipswich Northern Fringe.</p> <p>Cambourne has the advantage of close proximity to and a good road to Cambridge with its flourishing economy of well-paid hi-tech jobs. It also has a thriving hi-tech business park. The wealth of the residents might explain why the development has so many facilities. The situation in Ipswich is rather different where housing growth will be unsupported by economic growth in the town and the access routes to predicted employment growth centres will be poor.</p> <p>If the Ipswich Northern Fringe has a central plaza in the district centre it is important to learn the lesson from Cambourne and ensure the control is in the hands of the council so that undue restriction are not placed on its use for the community.</p>
<p>Stewart Quantrill</p>	<p>Sense of place This is a basic dormitory town for Cambridge and not of the same character as MK. It is well connected to good road networks. Distinct lack of landscape & green areas. Very few trees.</p> <p>Finding your way round Very poor spider web of roads with minimal width creating difficult access for buses, etc.</p> <p>Carparking Car parking tends to be in cul-de-sacs to the rear of houses with rear access – generally overcrowded with second cars & refuse bins.</p> <p>Open space & greenness There is insufficient green space. The grass areas are rough & not very well maintained. Manhole cover project well above the surrounding grassed areas. Poor quality & few trees.</p> <p>District / local centres The local centre is dominated by a large Morrison’s supermarket. The local community centre appeared to be popular. The fencing around this area is poor with cheap galvanised chain link fencing to the boundary of the supermarket carpark.</p> <p>Other comments Good road links – not the case in Ipswich. Not good public transport. Poor building design including the housing - church is the exception. Not a garden suburb – disappointing.</p>
<p>Carole Jones</p>	<p>Cambourne local centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly designed layout: Dominated by enormous Morrisons – selling so much that there is little commercial opportunity for other outlets. Open area – bleak; no landscaping. Contract poorly drawn up – Morrisons controlled this space so no stalls, events, etc <p>Other points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everywhere: streetscene improved by tree-planting • Size of supermarket has repercussions for diversity of shops in local/district centres – where they are situated and nearby • Public buildings like schools or the Cambourne business centre often more successfully designed than homes or shops.

2.4 Ravenswood

<p>Carole Jones</p>	<p>Ravenswood local centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best designed – a square with parking inside • Best range of shops: • Two medium-sized supermarkets • Subway, 2 charity shops, vets, etc • Surgery & pub nearby • Parking reasonable but not generous • Shops need separate designated parking • Connections to pub/nearby surgery & houses not good • Not central to whole development – should it be? <p>Other points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everywhere: streetscene improved by tree-planting • Size of supermarket has repercussions for diversity of shops in local/district centres – where they are situated and nearby • Ravenswood streetscenes generally good: highlighted need for both repetition [groups of dwellings of similar design] and diversity [we saw streets/closes of both contemporary or traditional buildings] • Ravenswood: quality of architectural detailing often very well done. • Ravenswood: affordable housing pepper potted, generally very successfully • Ravenswood: public art excellent. Genuinely enhanced development. • Good play areas for all ages essential. Location important. [Ravenswood: huge semi-circular green underused.] • Public buildings like schools or the Cambourne business centre often more successfully designed than homes or shops.
<p>John Norman</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I made a return visit to Ravenswood early on Saturday morning (to check out on street parking): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were a lot of cars parked 'on street' (in phase 1 ie. Martinet Green and surrounding streets) but some spaces were available, - There were less 'white vans' than I expected (parked 'on street') and very few 'high vans' (High sided Transits and similar vans block light from residential front rooms when parked on the kerb - particularly in terraced streets) - By 7.30 am the staff of Lidl and other retail units had arrived and parked in 'the square' (neither the Co-op or Lidl open until 8.00 am). The same vehicles were still there later that same morning, occupying spaces that could have enjoyed multiple use from a number of different shoppers. • There are different colours of street light (from similar units) and different lighting columns in the different developments - a lack of uniformity. (and I would expect differences between the main road (bus route) and the smaller residential roads). • I am pleased to note the 'cyclist dismount' signs, previously every 50 yards along the cycle paths have been removed. There is a lack of other (unnecessary) road signs throughout the development - a noticeable lack of street clutter - great! • I like the differences that marked the different 'villages' within Ravenswood, and particularly liked the 'homezones' around Cranberry Square (etc.) • A lot of skilful thought and planning needs to go into the design of District Centres - such that they include (or by design exclude) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local shopping centre - primary school - nursery - pre school

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- medical centre- sufficient but not over dominant car parking which should include both short term (customers) and long term (staff) parking.- public house - which could use the same car park as the shops and the local centre should be a natural centre - for walking and cycling routes which provide interconnectivity between the central facilities listed above.• The primary school is a generator of traffic, cars, bikes and pedestrians and there must be sufficient provision to cope (ie to avoid cars parking on grass verges as at Ravenswood, to stop cars obstructing crossings, bus stops and residential property). Mums at the school gate require shelter, notice boards and seats - this is the very beginning of 'Community'
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3.0 Panel discussion on lessons learnt from study tours

3.1 At a meeting of the Community Steering Panel on 20th November, feedback from the study tour was discussed, and key learning points identified by the Panel. The learning points identified for application to the Northern Fringe development are listed below.

Character & design

3.2 Architecture is an important aspect of the character of the place and contributing to way-finding, e.g. the church at Cambourne is an architecturally distinctive building at a key node in the development. Green spaces and street trees must have space to grow and breathe and penetrate into residential areas if they are to truly contribute to a green character. A variety of different spaces with different characters is good and they need to be located and designed so that they will be well used over the course of the day.

3.3 Public art is important in contributing to character & is used to good effect at Ravenswood.

3.4 Civic spaces must be in public ownership or control to avoid circumstances like those encountered at Cambourne.

3.5 Providing sufficient car parking and managing it in a well-designed way is critical – some of the newer Milton Keynes developments were dominated by cars parked badly due to inadequate parking spaces. The car parking for the school at Great Holm in MK was good – it was on an area that was also used as a basketball court.

3.6 Providing suitable parking and secure storage for bicycles is also important – both at home & destinations.

Local & district centres

3.7 It's important to have civic space or public square at the heart of the centre. Ravenswood lacks such a space, and the space at Cambourne is not in public control and therefore limited in uses.

3.8 Centres should be pedestrian friendly in terms of access & getting around. The colonnade at Shenley End in MK was a good feature.

3.9 Having a variety of shops and businesses is important to the character of the centre, rather than on large supermarket.

3.10 It is important that the main centre is centrally located within the development and therefore easily accessible from all parts.

Other points

3.11 SUDs need to be designed and integrated into open spaces from the start – some good examples of this at Ravenswood.

3.12 Important to have more than one entrance/exit into a development in order to avoid congestion.

4.0 Selection of photos of the various developments taken by panel members

4.1 Milton Keynes

(Images & comments courtesy of Stewart Quantrill)



High quality pleasant areas with high spec landscaping trees and more trees



Town to Country with sympathetic ease



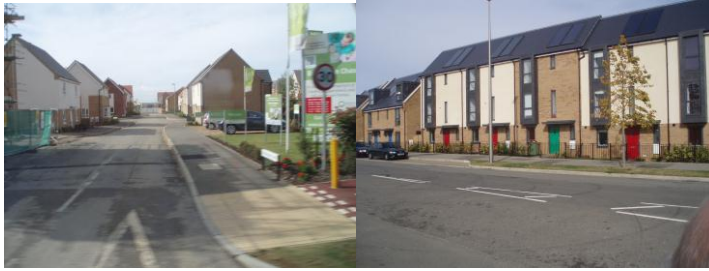
Local shopping centres with interesting architecture and layout although the more recent centre was rather non coherent – attractive Swales and Pond adjacent.



Pleasant housing (Woolstone)



Local village pub setting



The most recent developments were lacking quality – high density – not liked



Pleasant footpaths and cycle ways with wide safe underpasses to adjoining developments.

4.2 Cambourne

(Images & comments courtesy of Stewart Quantrill)



The general housing and open landscaped areas were not considered to be anywhere near the quality of Milton Keynes. The local Church, Sports Centre and Business Centre being the exception.



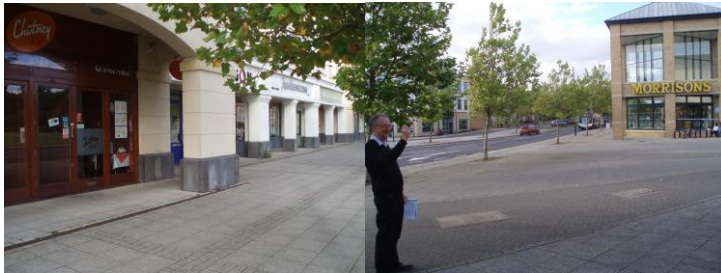
Some housing rear access to rear gardens for car parking and garages tended to be blocked by bins and other parked cars



Scruffy green open spaces with rough grass and lack of trees (photos 6,9,10 & 13)



Cheap chainlink fencing at local centre car park.



The local shopping area was pleasant although there was doubt about the proportion of the "Morrison" Super Market.



Rare pleasant areas

4.3 Ravenswood

(Images & comments courtesy of Stewart Quantrill)



The overall areas were pleasant with good mixed architecture. The Green was massive and some said too large with dwelling space density at a premium.



Good use of former Aircraft buildings



Very attractive landscaped "Swales" areas.



Pleasant housing overlooking landscaped play areas but spoilt by a lack of suitable Waste Bin storage at rear of properties.



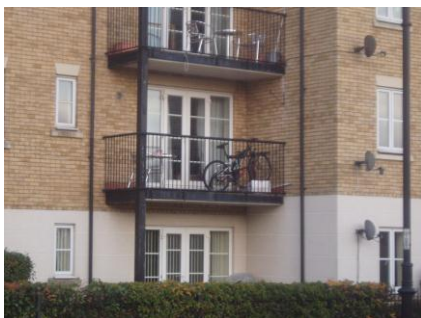
Some areas have a lack of individual car parking bays /garages.



Pleasant housing courtyard with insufficient parking for the number of units – difficult to maintain hard landscaping



Poor design consideration to the grass verge outside the school with inevitable results. Parking could be within School playground as Milton Keynes?



Insufficient secure lockups for Cycles etc resulting in balcony eyesores.



The local shopping centre was functional but lacked character compared to MK centres.

Overall good housing design and main road connections but housing considered to be too high a density for the Northern Fringe.

4.4 Design lessons from Ravenswood (Photos & comments courtesy of Phil Sweet)



Incidental landscaping

Traditional architecture with a contemporary twist





An intimate home zone



A well designed parking court



The community school



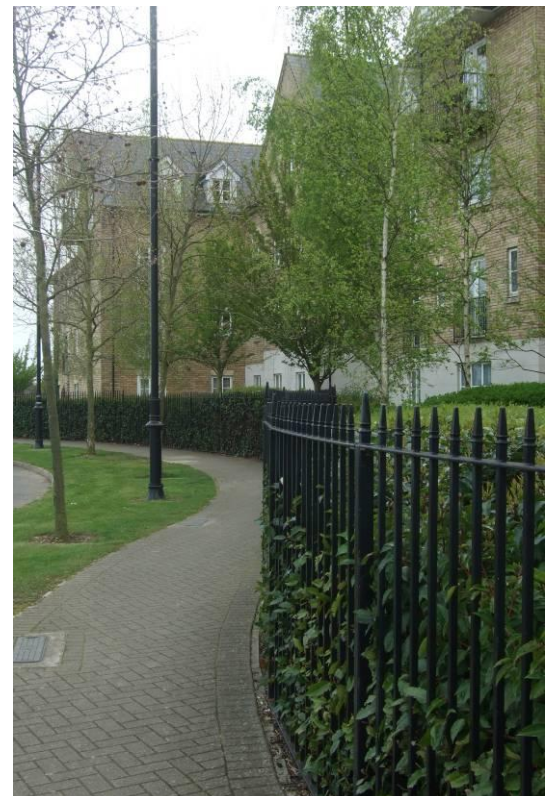
Building/street
interface – secure but
green



Boulevard / Swale



Boulevard / Swale





Main spine road –
traffic calming with
good detailing and
landscaping



Cycle route alongside road



Boulevard plus green front gardens



Incidental paving / planting details are important



Varied architecture, incidental planting, curved shared surface street all make for good townscape

