

“The infrastructure hints at the potential for the wider area to be stitched together and for the Appeal Site to become a key stepping stone for change in the wider context.”

3.0 / Site & Context

In this section, I will establish the Appeal Site, the wider ownership of the Appellant, and the North Cambridge context of the Site. I will outline briefly its history as brownfield land, and its relevant relationships to its neighbours as have been considered by the Appellant and discussed with the Planning Authority. The Chapter will conclude with an overview of the evolving AAP context over the last few years, its current status and previous iterations of masterplans for the Appeal Site.

3.1 / Site Location

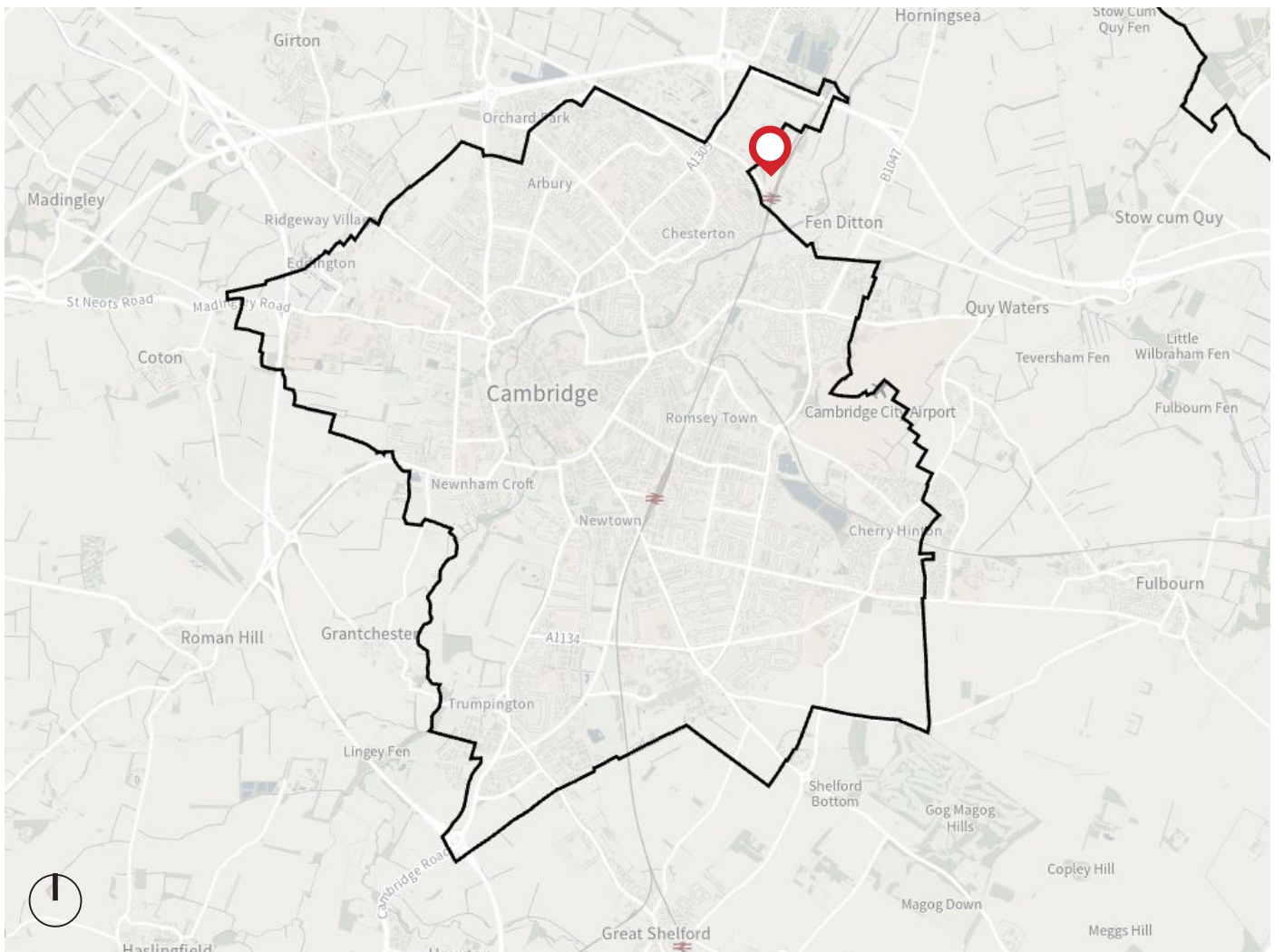


Fig. 28 Appeal Site Location Within Wider Cambridge

- 3.1.1 The city of Cambridge is known for its world-renowned university and has become a hub for the technology and life sciences industries. This is due to several factors, the presence of the university and its research facilities, a favourable business environment and access to funding. The city has a thriving startup ecosystem and attracts significant investment in technology and life sciences companies. This has resulted in the creation of numerous jobs and opportunities in these sectors, contributing to the city's economic growth.
- 3.1.2 The Appeal Site is situated on the northern part of the city of Cambridge, in an area primarily characterised by light industrial and commercial development, with a traveller community to the east and allotments and residential development to the west. It is located approximately 2.5 miles from the city centre.
- 3.1.4 The Appeal Site benefits from excellent connectivity to the broader city of Cambridge and beyond. It is situated on the Fen Line and is located next to the recently constructed Cambridge North Station, which facilitates regular train services to destinations such as King's Lynn, Ely, and London King's Cross. The site is well-served by several bus routes, including the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, which provides a direct link to the city centre of Cambridge and other nearby towns and villages. The site is located in close proximity to the A14, a major east-west highway in the UK.
- 3.1.5 The Appeal Site is part of the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP), which has recognized the site's potential for redevelopment to create a new city district for Cambridge. It represents one of the last remaining urban brownfield sites for development within the city centre which can provide space for new growth without requiring expansion into the city's green belt.
- 3.1.6 Compared to other sites along the perimeter fringe of Cambridge, which are generally facing into the green belt, the Appeal Site has retained a distinctly urban character. This is due to the remaining and clear visible presence of the Railway Works, as well as the very active industrial/ urban context. The works undertaken in the last 10 years have further strengthened the very urban character of the site, through the highway design of Milton Avenue, the hard nature of Cambridge Square, the height and presence of the surrounding buildings and the function of the site as a transport node and junction in the bus, cycle and train network of Cambridge.

3.2 / Conservation Areas

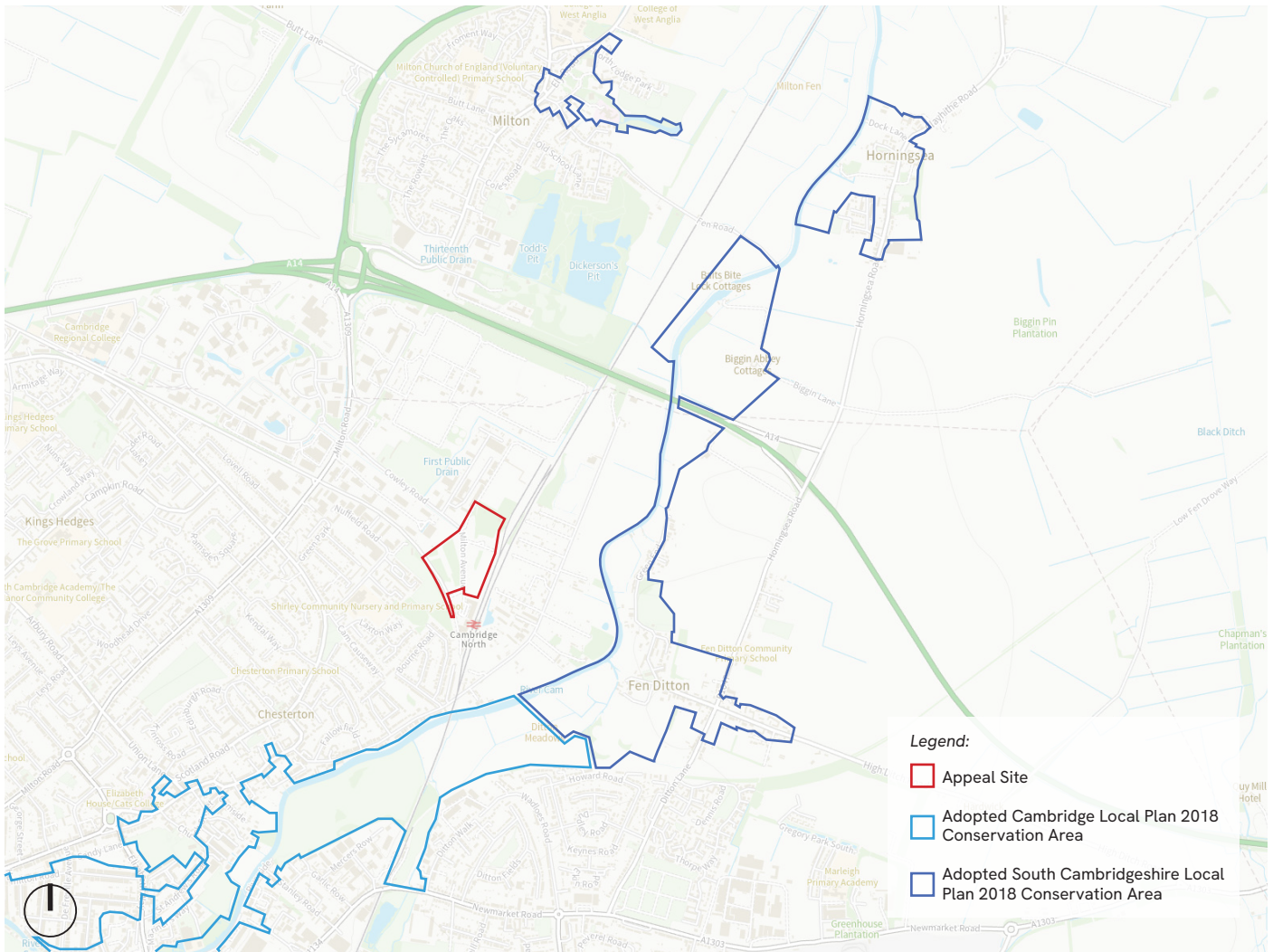


Fig. 29 Conservation areas plan

- 3.2.1 The Appeal Site is located in an area without any designated conservation areas in the immediate vicinity. However, there are several conservation areas across different administrative boundaries located within proximity to the site. To the south of the Appeal Site lies the Cambridge City Conservation Area, which covers the historic core of the city. The Cambridge City Conservation Area includes the Stourbridge Common and Ditton Meadows which are located in close proximity to the site in the south. This conservation area is formally set out in the adopted Cambridge City Local Plan, 2018 in accordance with policy 61.
- 3.2.2 The South Cambridgeshire administrative boundary encompasses various conservation areas as delineated in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2018, in line with policy NH/14, and situated in proximity to the Appeal Site. Specifically, these areas comprise Fen Ditton, Baits Bite Lock, and Horingsea to the east, as well as Milton to the north.
- 3.2.3 The Baits Bite Lock Conservation Area is located to the east of the Appeal Site. Watermeadows with drains and flat fenland now in agricultural use characterise the open countryside that comprises much of the Conservation Area. The River Cam and the trees that line its banks divide the area in half and form the boundary between Fen Ditton and Milton. (Baits Bite Lock Conservation Area Draft Council Policy Ref: DCV0040)

- 3.2.4 The Fen Ditton Conservation Area located east of the site as well is an essentially linear village which has resulted in a very narrow, serpentine form with an almost complete absence of backland development, the only exceptions being a few modern houses. The village has two distinct character areas - Green End (the site of the original settlement) which stretched along the river between The Biggin and the church, and the expanded Medieval village which runs from High Ditch Road to the church. (Fen Ditton Conservation Area Draft Council Policy Ref DCV0029)
- 3.2.5 To the north-east of the Appeal Site lies the Horingsea Conservation Area. It is a small village with buildings mostly arranged alongside the Fen Ditton to Waterbeach Road, together with two narrower ancient lanes leading down to the river to the west. The southern part of the village has cottages and public houses, many at right angles to the road with boundary fences, railings and long walls. The character changes at the northern end of the village where fine gault brick walls surrounding the large farms define the road to the west, with farm buildings and fences lining the road to the east. In many places large mature trees behind the walls enclose views and allow only glimpsed views of the substantial farmhouses and groups of buildings. (Horingsea Conservation Area Draft Council Policy Ref: DCV0030)

3.3 / Listed Buildings

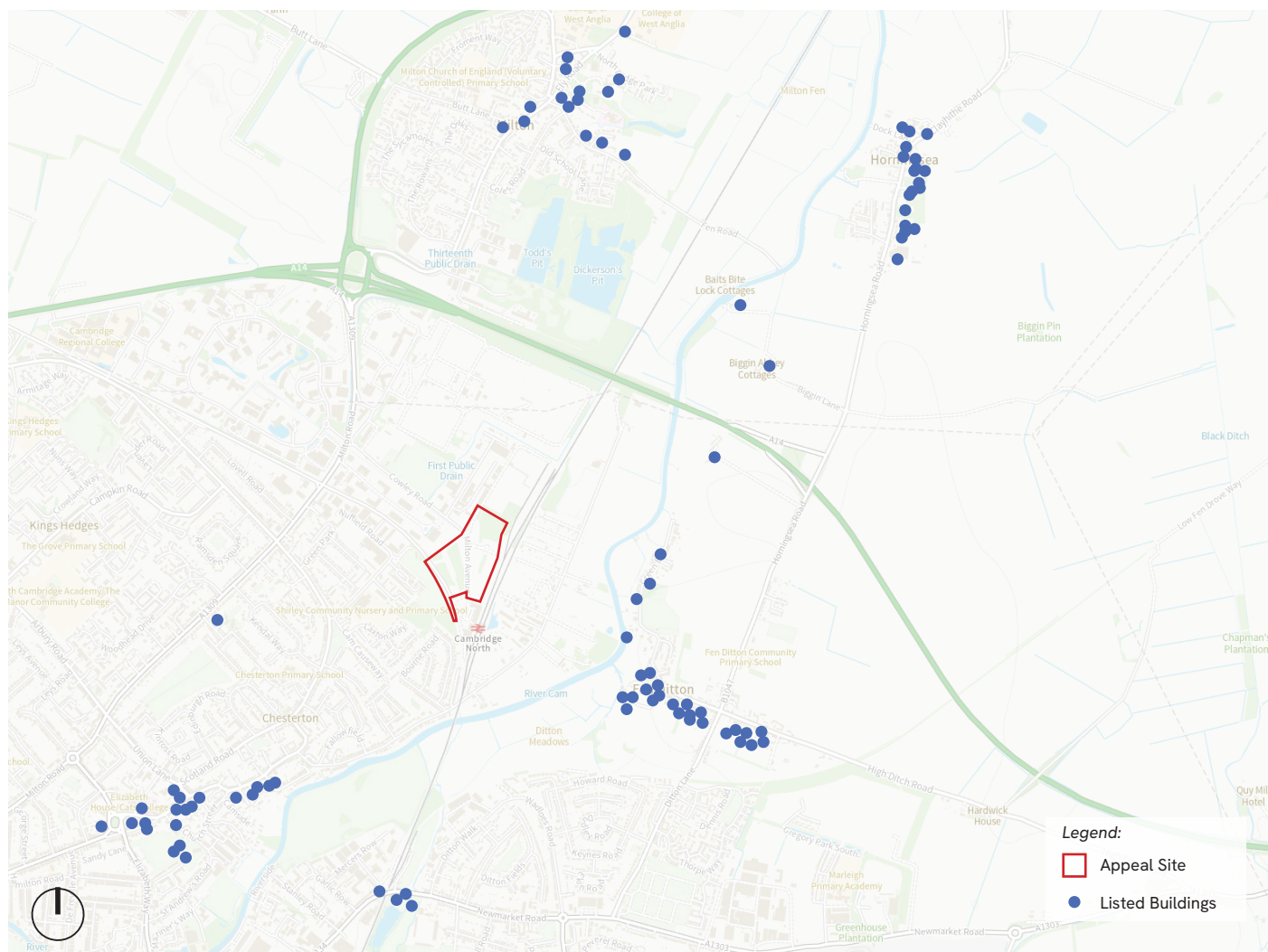


Fig. 30 Listed building plan

There are no scheduled monuments within the site. There are no listed buildings within the site. There are listed buildings in the population centres of Fen Ditton, Chesterton and Northern Cambridge, these are all at least 400m away from the site.

3.4 / Site Context



Fig. 31 Surrounding Context

- 3.4.1 The immediate context of the Site consists of seven elements constructed since 2014 by the Appellant working in conjunction with development partners and the Local Authority.
- 3.4.2 Cambridge North Railway station, first proposed in 2003, opened in 2017. The 3 platform station is on the Fen Line. The station serves southbound fast services to Cambridge, Stansted Airport, London King's Cross and London Liverpool Street, and northbound services to Ely, King's Lynn and Norwich.
- 3.4.3 Cambridge Square, completed in 2017, located outside Cambridge North Railway Station. The station square provides a civic setting for the station and surrounding buildings, a drop off and pick up point for taxis, covered cycle facilities and bus stops that create an interchange between the station and the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.
- 3.4.4 Milton Avenue, a new highway with pedestrian and cycle lanes connecting Cambridge Square to Cowley Road.
- 3.4.5 The station surface carpark, a facility intended by Network Rail to provide parking capacity and rail connectivity outside Cambridge City Centre to reduce car traffic into the centre and provide an alternative location to park when taking a train from Cambridge to London.
- 3.4.6 Novotel Cambridge North, a new 4 star hotel located on Station Square, between Cambridge North Station and the existing at grade surface parking facility. The 6 storey high building containing 217 bedrooms opened in 2021.
- 3.4.7 One Cambridge Square, a new 7 storey office building containing 9,600sqm of floorspace, completing in Spring 2023.



Fig. 32 Cambridge North Station, Novotel



Fig. 33 Nuffield Road Allotments



Fig. 34 Bramblefields



Fig. 35 Cambridge Business Park



Fig. 36 Adjacent Residential Neighbourhood & Nuffield Road Industrial Estate



Fig. 37 Cambridge Science Park



Fig. 38 St John's Innovation Park



Fig. 39 Cambridge Golf Driving Range



Fig. 40 Waste Water Treatment Plant



Fig. 41 Industrial Estate



Fig. 42 Aggregate Works



Fig. 43 Sunningdale Caravan Park

3.4 / Site Context

- 3.4.8 A new Network Rail track-side service yard, utilising the existing level access point to the tracks is provided at this strategic rail location.
- 3.4.9 The wider context of the site consists of a heterogeneous industrial, employment and residential neighbourhood that has emerged over the last 50 years.
- 3.4.10 To the north of the Appeal Site is an aggregates railhead. The railhead operates via several rail sidings on site. The Appellant has engaged with the operator of the railhead extensively on redevelopment plans and eventual relocation.
- 3.4.11 North and North-west of the aggregates railhead is the Cambridge Sewage Treatment Works/ Waste water treatment plant. It is operated by Anglian Water and serves the wider Cambridge area. The plant is designed to treat wastewater from households and businesses, removing pollutants and harmful chemicals before discharging the treated water back into the River Cam. There are plans to relocate the Cambridge waste treatment plant to a site in Honey Hill. The proposed site is located on the eastern side of the A10 road. The relocation of the waste treatment plant to Honey Hill is still in its planning stages. The project is subject to further consultation and evaluation.
- 3.4.12 The north-west of the site encompasses the Cowley Road industrial estate, which houses a range of warehouses and offices, such as car dealerships, building material suppliers, and storage facilities.
- 3.4.13 To the west of the Appeal Site are several commercial parks located in close proximity. Directly adjacent to the west of the site is the Cambridge Business Park, while further west are the St John's Innovation Park and the Cambridge Science Park.
- 3.4.14 Cambridge Business Park consists of 12 office and technology buildings with a total area of 32,000 sqm. The tenants comprise a variety of international businesses from professional, technology, innovation, and Research & Development sectors. The Cambridge Science Park was established in 1970 by Trinity College. The Park encompasses 152 acres and hosts over 140 businesses with a diverse range of technologies and industries, ranging from small spin-outs from the University of Cambridge to large multinational corporations. St John's Innovation Park is a research and development cluster in a campus-style setting. The Park consists of a 21-acre plot of land, which has been wholly-owned by St John's College, Cambridge since 1534.
- 3.4.15 To the South-West, the site adjoins the Nuffield Road Allotments, located on the other side of the extension of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.
- 3.4.16 To the East, the site adjoins a continuous line of palisade fencing, enclosing the track sidings of the Aggregates Railhead, followed by the Network Rail tracks of the Fen Line. There are no public track crossings.
- 3.4.17 Beyond the track to the East lies Fen Road, an established Traveller community, including the Sunningdale Caravan Park, Constellation Park, Southgates, Grange Park Residencies, Sandy Park, The Laurels, Clearview, and the New Fields Caravan Park. This area is characterised by low-lying clusters of caravans and housing, interspersed with industrial estates.
- 3.4.18 Beyond the urban and industrial context of its surroundings, the Appeal Site is situated along the wider border of a valued landscape comprising of the surrounding greenbelt, the Baits Bite Lock and Fen Ditton Conservation areas as well as the river Cam, which forms part of the Cam River Valley to the east of the site.
- 3.4.19 In summary, the site is a prominent urban brown-field site, surrounded by a mix of uses. Its immediate surroundings are characterised largely by industrial and commercial developments, with infrastructure in the form of trainlines and roads providing transport connectivity but also urban severance. As a result, the site is at once an incredibly central site with strong urban characteristics, while also retaining a sense of isolation and of great potential yet to be unlocked.

3.5 / Site History

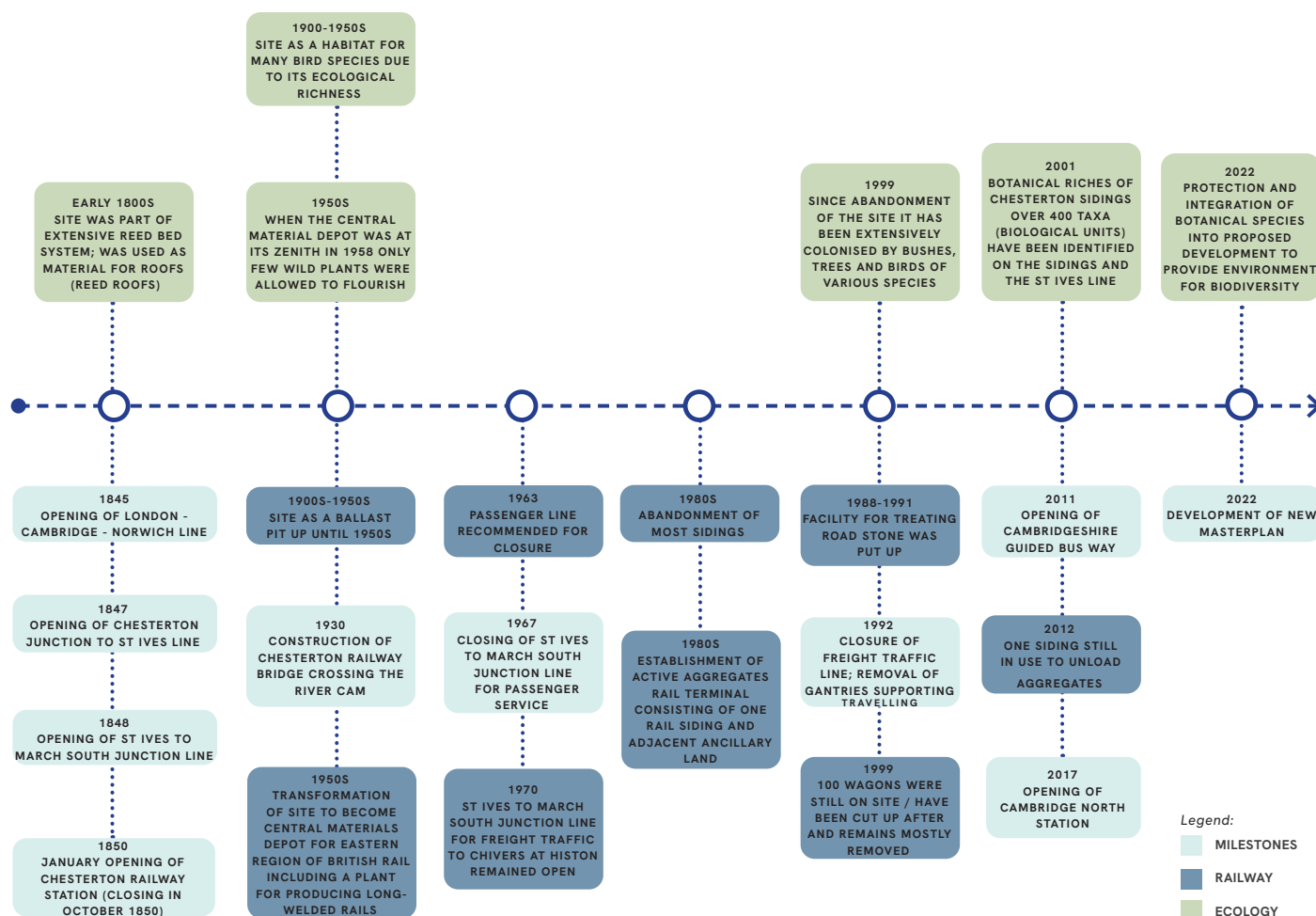


Fig. 44 Overview Site History

3.5.1 There is no Roman, Mediaeval or post-medieval archaeology recorded for the site. Prior to 1847, the site appears on historic maps as agricultural fields west of Fen Road, north of the settlement of Chesterton. The Inclosure Map of Chesterton (1840) shows the site divided into three arable fields (owned by Clare Hall, Trinity Hall, Wagstaff). This plan is the first drawing to show a watercourse marked as a 'public drain' bisecting the site, running on the south side of what is now Cowley Road. The construction of two train lines changes this context irrevocably. Since then, the Appeal Site is colloquially known as the Chesterton Sidings.

3.5.2 In 1847, the East Anglian Railway Company opened the Fen Line from Kings Cross to Cambridge and onwards past the Appeal Site to Kings Lynn. This train line has remained in operation since that time, and continues to form the eastern edge of the site.

3.5.3 In 1847, the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) opened the Wisbech, St Ives and Cambridge Junction Railway. Passenger service ran on this line between St Ives and Cambridge until 1970, and freight services until 1992. The tracks were lifted in the 1990s. The route was converted into the northern section of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, a bus rapid transit scheme which opened in 2011. The old track alignment forms the western edge of the site.

3.5 / Site History

1800s Arrival of Railway

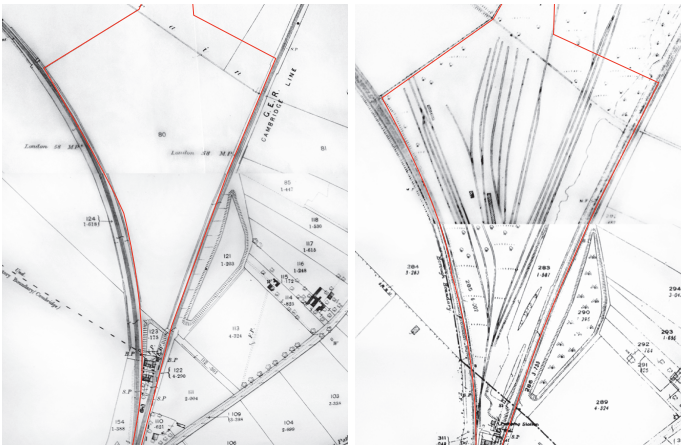


Fig. 45 Historic plans showing development of railway

1950s Long Welded Track Plant



Fig. 46 Aerial view of long welded track plant

3.5.4 The junction between these two tracks was called Chesterton Junction. The triangle of land between the St Ives branch and the Fen main line was used by British Rail and its predecessor for railway operations. The railway sidings were originally constructed sometime between 1880 and 1903, with extensions added to the site between 1927 and 1948. The sidings were embanked, and were depicted as such on an OS map from the period. The majority of the site was depicted as rough pasture, with marsh and trees situated on the eastern side. The map showed embankments of the two railway lines, with a public drain line running across the site, also embanked. The public drain appeared to stop short of the sidings, indicating a possible conversion at that point.

3.5.5 By the late 1950s, the entire site underwent significant transformation and became the Central Materials Depot for the Eastern Region of British Rail. A plant for producing long-welded rails was also established during this period, occupying the entire site now in the Appellant's control. Photos from the time show a vast array of materials and equipment that were housed at the depot, reflecting its crucial role in the transportation and storage of essential railway components. The site had its own internal 2 ft (610 mm) gauge train track system operated by Ruston and Hornsby diesel mechanical locomotives to move heavy loads.

1960/70s Track Development



Fig. 47 Approaching Chesterton junction from a St Ives line

3.5.6 In the 1960s and 1970s the site was in continuous heavy railway use, with older buildings being replaced with more sturdy brick structures. The sidings appear to have been in full use until 1989.

2000s Aggregate Works



Fig. 48 Existing site condition looking South-East

3.5.7 Since 1989, a large part of the site has fallen out of use. A limited part of the sidings have remained in use, now serving an aggregates railhead operated by Lafarge in the north of the site. Several brick buildings and others of less sturdy construction became vandalised, and since 2000, remaining wagons and parts of existing track were cut up on site, with the remains removed. The guided Busway opened in 2011, bringing some use to the western edge of the site. Oxford Archaeology concluded in 2012 that nothing of heritage value could be found on the site, and it was subsequently cleared of all remaining train tracks, buildings and emerging vegetation. All that remains of the 150 year old railway maintenance history of the site is a small Network Rail level track access point and maintenance yard north of the existing at grade surface parking facility.

3.6 / Appeal Site today



Fig. 49 Present Appeal Site Plan View

3.6.1 The site today is a brownfield site within the city limits of Cambridge, bound by the busway to the west and train tracks to the east, lacking distinguishing features. The uses on site today are limited to highway uses, mainly Milton Avenue, Cowley Road and the Station parking facility. The site is primarily defined by its context and by traces of its history, as set out in the preceding sections.

3.6.2 The part of the site south of Cowley Road offers little today by way of local character, but its context clearly marks the site as a place of opportunity and potential within the city of Cambridge. Its proximity to Cambridge North Station creates a constant footfall of pedestrians transferring from the train to the car and vice versa. The Novotel has opened to very good customer reviews and has achieved very high room utilisation in its first year of operation, providing a first sense of the site's potential as an emerging town centre for

the surrounding business parks and residential areas. The opening of the Chisholm Trail Cycle Bridge has led to a significant increase in cyclists using the site as part of their journey to and from the city centre.

3.6.3 The part of the site north of Cowley Road retains more of the character of the historic Chesterton Sidings and Industrial Use. The tarmac concrete batching plant to the west of the appeal Site, the Lafarge Aggregates Railhead located north of the Appeal Site, and, the surrounding Industrial Estates and Sewage works contribute to the sense of a busy site, in parts derelict and overgrown, in other parts busy with dusty, noisy and smelly uses.



Fig. 50 View arriving by train in Cambridge North Station



Fig. 51 Cambridge North Station



Fig. 52 Novotel Hotel



Fig. 53 View over Cambridge Square looking North



Fig. 54 Milton Avenue view looking North



Fig. 55 View along Cambridge Guided Busway



Fig. 56 South of current surface carpark



Fig. 57 View from Novotel along tracks looking South



Fig. 58 View from Milton Avenue looking South



Fig. 59 View towards NE from aggregate works service road

3.6.4 When approaching the site by car, train or cycle, there is at present no clear sense of place, but a sense of a place yet to come, with enormous potential. The new station, the scale of the new highways and cycleways, and the urban scale provided by the Novotel and One Milton Avenue development are a clear departure from the low-rise business parks along Cowley Road, the Caravans along Fen Road and the allotments to the west. The infrastructure constructed since 2014 speaks to a higher ambition in place making. It hints at the potential for the wider area to be stitched together and for the Appeal Site to become a key stepping stone for change in the wider context, to become a place that can be walked and explored as a neighbourhood, rather than the current sense of an area that feels disconnected, occupied by uncomplimentary uses and bisected by infrastructure.