

# OLD WESTON VILLAGE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT and LANDSCAPE STUDY



11 October 2021

## CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Overview of Old Weston Parish and Village.....	4
Landscape setting of the Parish of Old Weston.....	6
Historic development of Old Weston village and the surrounding area.....	12
Old Weston Buildings.....	18
Flora and Fauna, ecology and ambiance.....	24
Old Weston Parish Character Areas Overview.....	27
Character Area 1 – Old Weston Main Street.....	28
Character Area 2 – Old Weston, Brington Road.....	30
Character Area 3 – St Swithin’s Church and surroundings.....	32
Character Area 4 - The rural farmlands around the village.....	34
Character Area 5 – Area of the parish inside RAF Molesworth Base Perimeter Fence.....	36
Important views of Old Weston Village from outside Character Areas 1 and 2.....	38
Summary.....	42
References.....	44

## **Introduction to the Village Character Assessment**

This Character Assessment has been prepared by the Old Weston Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (delegated by the Parish Council). The overall purpose of the assessment is to inform the compilation of the Neighbourhood Plan and to provide the Parish Council and others with a more detailed understanding of the character and composition of the natural and built environment, with a particular emphasis upon those features that may need to be conserved, enhanced or reflected in new development. It is hoped that this document will raise awareness of what makes Old Weston special. It should also inform strategic land use decisions such as the allocation of land for housing or other development proposals.

The working group was assisted by Huntingdonshire District Council and has made use of guidelines published by Planning Aid England, a town planning advisory organisation that is part of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

In addition to the built character, a more general appraisal has been undertaken of the landscape within which the village sits. While it's not a detailed "Landscape Character Appraisal" it does identify landform and important features including views, woodland, water courses and hedgerows across the parish.

The division of the parish into character areas is discussed in more detail later in this document. However, five main character areas have been defined.

Over a period of a few months after the relaxation of the Covid-19 pandemic movement restrictions in the Spring of 2021, members of the working group assessed the entire parish by walking the roads and footpaths using the Planning Aid guidelines template that covers:

- Topography;
- Land Uses;
- Layout;
- Roads, streets and routes;
- Spaces;
- Buildings;
- Landmarks;
- Green and natural features;
- Streetscape; and
- Views

This information was collected to produce the character assessment tables for each area that form the basis for the content of this document.

Where maps are present in this document, and copyright is not individually acknowledged, those maps are based on maps supplied by the Ordnance Survey. None of the maps are reproduced to scale.

## Overview of Old Weston Parish and Village

Old Weston Parish (see map figure 1) and within it, the village of Old Weston lie about nine miles west north-west of Huntingdon (Huntingdonshire) and about six miles east of Thrapston in the neighbouring county of Northamptonshire. The Parish lies on part of the north west Huntingdonshire clayland plateau which has been eroded into an undulating landscape. The village is situated in a shallow valley descending southwards from the plateau to the course of Cock Brook, the main water course through the parish, which flows eastwards to the river Great Ouse.

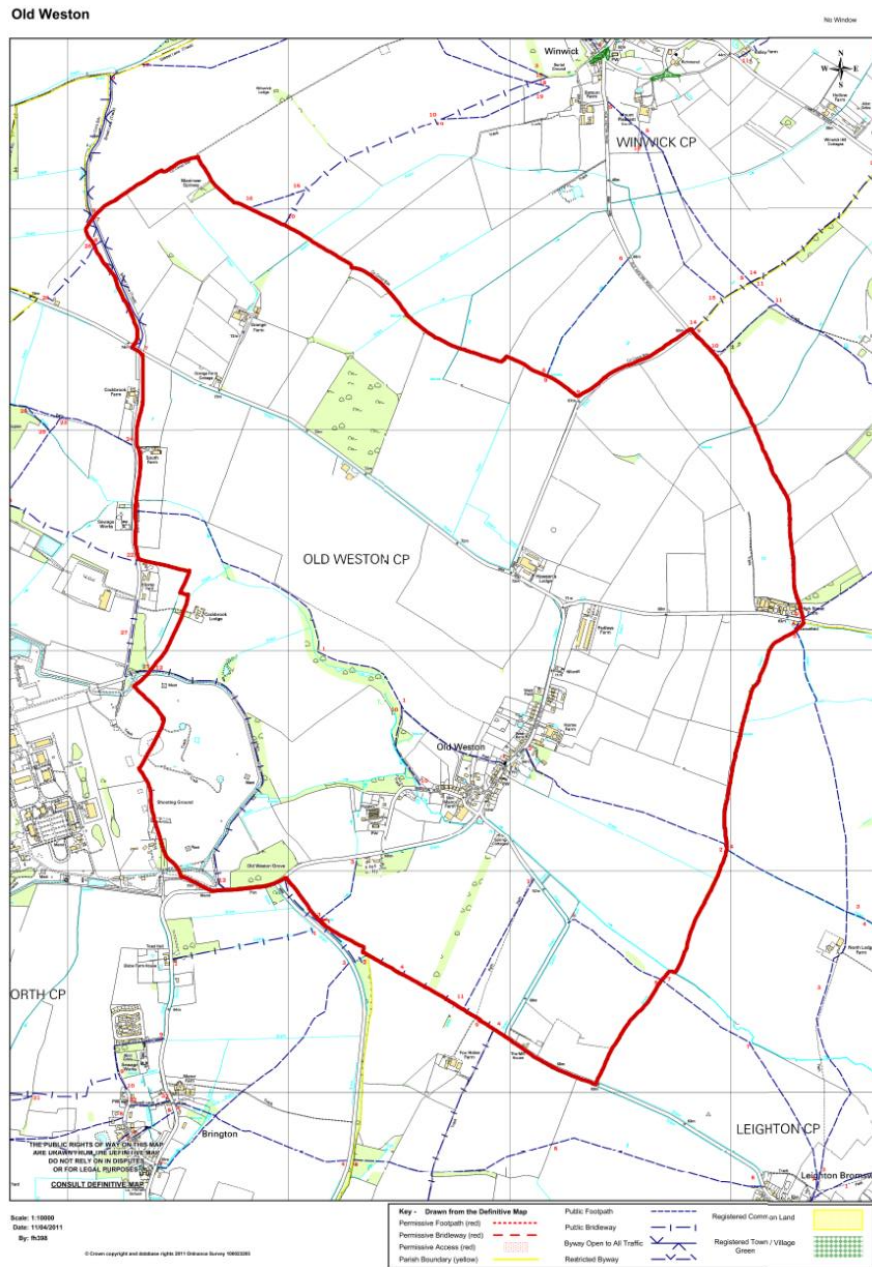


Figure 1 Shows Old Weston Neighbourhood Plan area, the boundary for which coincides with the Parish boundary

The built-up area of Old Weston village (see map figure 2) extends for approximately 800 metres along both sides of the B660 leading northwards towards the village of Winwick (Main Street) and the original course of the main road leading to Brington (Brington Road). The church, though, is set apart from the village.



Figure 2 Shows built up area of Old Weston in relation to St Swithin's Church

There are scattered farm buildings and isolated houses around the parish and approximately 34 Hectares (84 acres) of the fenced interior of the military base (RAF Molesworth) lie within the parish boundary.

# Landscape setting of the Parish of Old Weston

## Geology and geomorphology

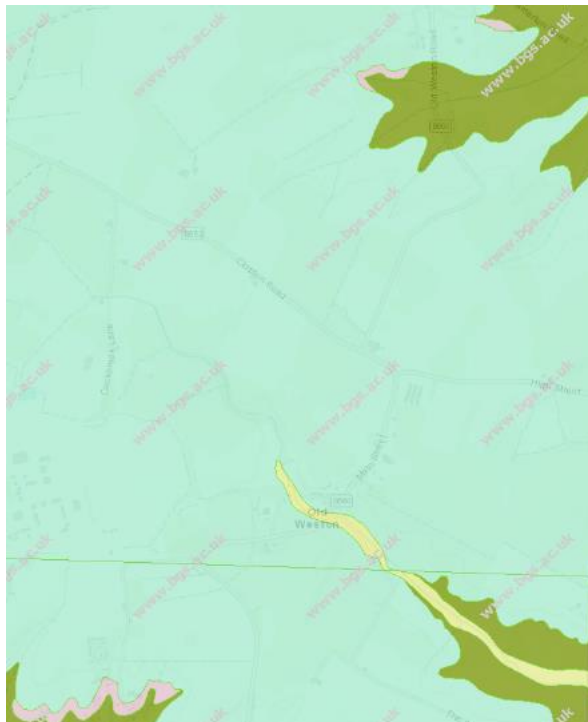
The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Township Assessment; June 2007 (ref.1) divides Huntingdonshire into a number of distinct character areas. The Parish of Old Weston falls entirely within the area which is described as the “Northern Wolds”. Neighbouring Huntingdonshire parishes including Brington & Molesworth, Leighton and Winwick as well as Clopton in Northamptonshire all fall comfortably within this description. The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Township Assessment; June 2007 can usefully be referred-to at this point. However, there is some useful additional local detail which has been garnered during the desktop study.

The first processes which have shaped the local landform are the underlying geology and erosion. The Parish of Old Weston is shown on the Geological mapping produced by the British Geological Survey (BGS). This is reproduced below in figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3 Superficial and bedrock geology Superimposed on satellite imagery

(Contain British Geological Survey materials © UKRI 2021)



Superficial deposits

- ALLUVIUM - CLAY AND SILT
- ALLUVIUM - CLAY, SILT, SAND AND GRAVEL
- QADBY MEMBER - DIAMICTON
- GLACIOFLUVIAL DEPOSITS, MID PLEISTOCENE - SAND AND GRAVEL
- RIVER TERRACE DEPOSITS, 1 - SAND AND GRAVEL

Bedrock geology

- KELLAWAYS CLAY MEMBER - MUDSTONE
- KELLAWAYS SAND MEMBER - SANDSTONE AND SILTSTONE, INTERBEDDED
- OXFORD CLAY FORMATION - MUDSTONE

Figure 4 Superficial and bedrock geology - image to reflect key colours

The superficial formation under most of the area is glacial till (also known as diamicton, and depicted on the mapping as "Oadby member"). Locally, this seems to be mainly stony and sometimes sandy clay. The exception is the area along some of the course of Cock Brook where the exposure is described as Alluvium: silty clay with gravel lenses in the immediate vicinity of the brook. To the north and south of the brook on the extreme eastern side of Old Weston Parish, the underlying Oxford clay formation – mudstone (also described as Peterborough mudstones) have been exposed over an area which increases in north-south width towards the east. There are no buildings sited on either the Alluvium or the Oxford clay – formation - mudstone within Old Weston Parish.

The surface geology is characteristic of a landscape which was mainly formed during and subsequent to the period when ice last covered this part of Britain which was some 450,000 years ago. The glacial till (boulder clay) was deposited as and when the ice melted.

The overall shape or topography of the landscape (see map figure 5 overleaf) is one of a plateau which reaches a height of approximately 74 metres above mean sea level on Clopton Road in the north west of the Parish. This has been eroded over thousands of years by small streams to form the prominent valleys which dissect the plateau. At the eastern side of Old Weston Parish, Cock Brook has reached a depth of approximately 45-50 metres above mean sea level. Interestingly, this suggests, where the beds underlying the glacial till have been exposed, that the overall depth of the glacial till in the Parish may be only little more than 20 metres.

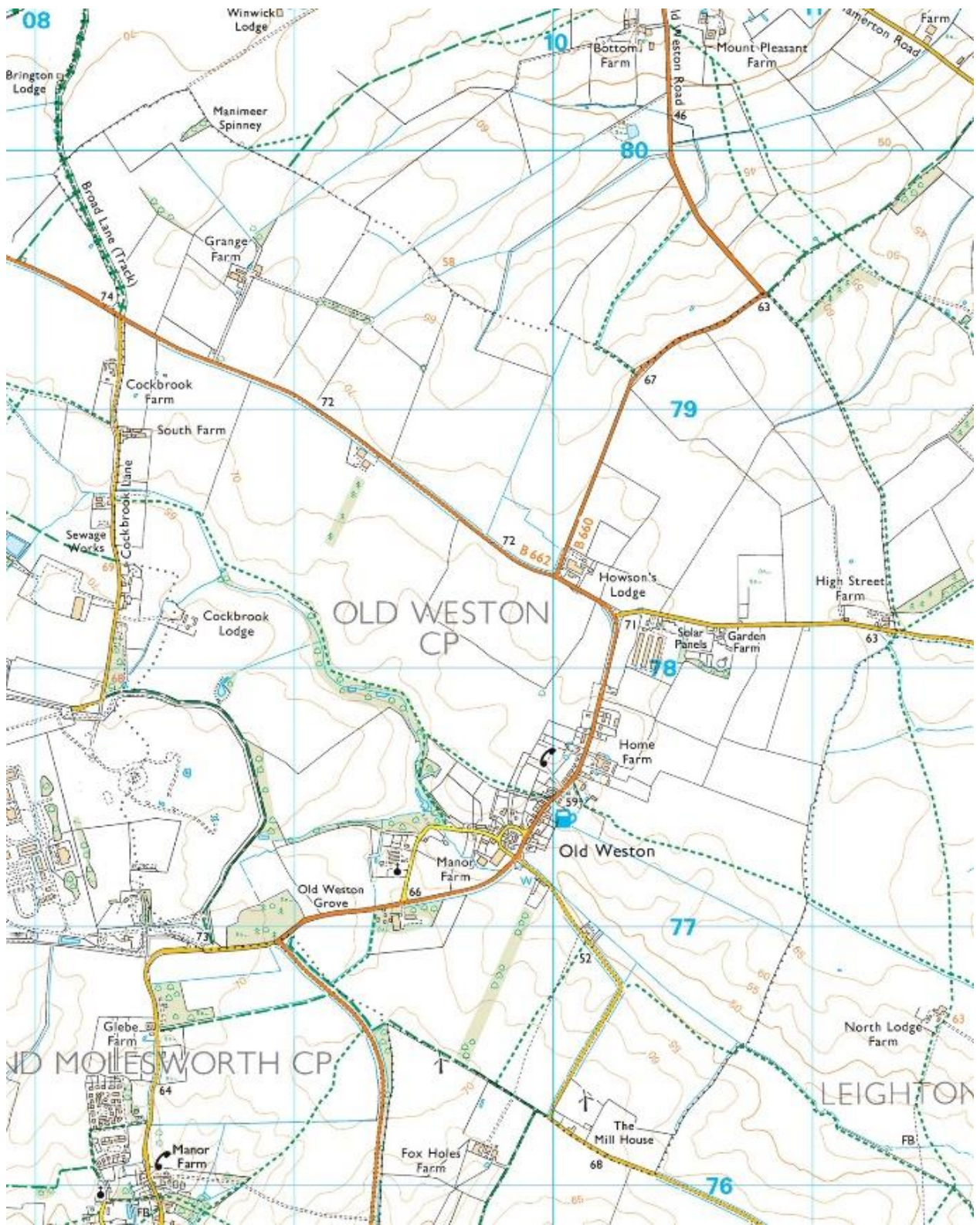


Figure 5 Extract from Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map showing contours (not to scale).



## Land use

The soil coverage resulting from the underlying superficial geology is heavy clay. The agricultural land falls into three classifications (see map figure 6): grade 2, grade 3 and non-agricultural; the last category describing the area mostly enclosed inside the boundary fence to the military base at RAF Molesworth and some adjoining areas which were formerly part of the airbase.

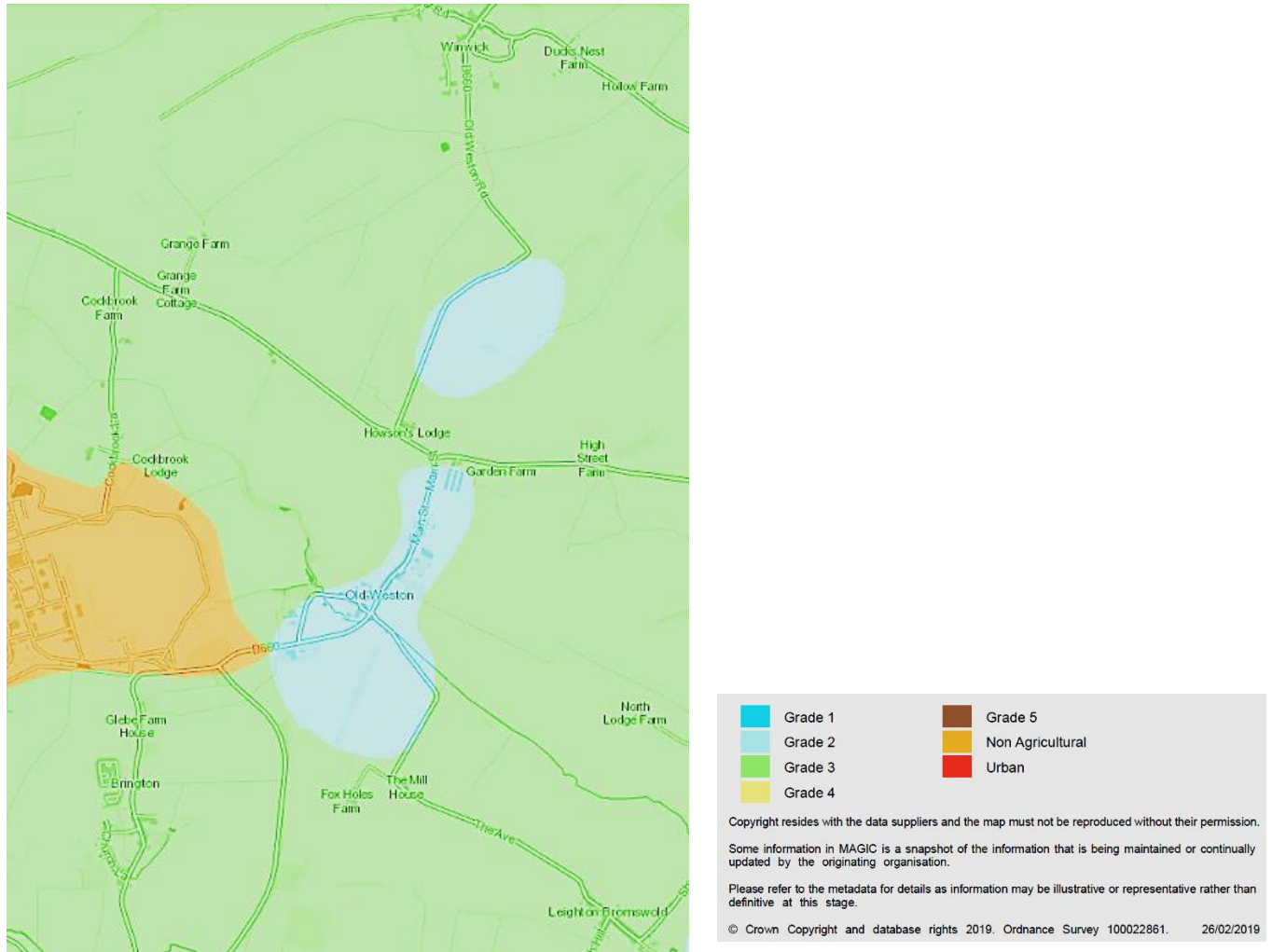
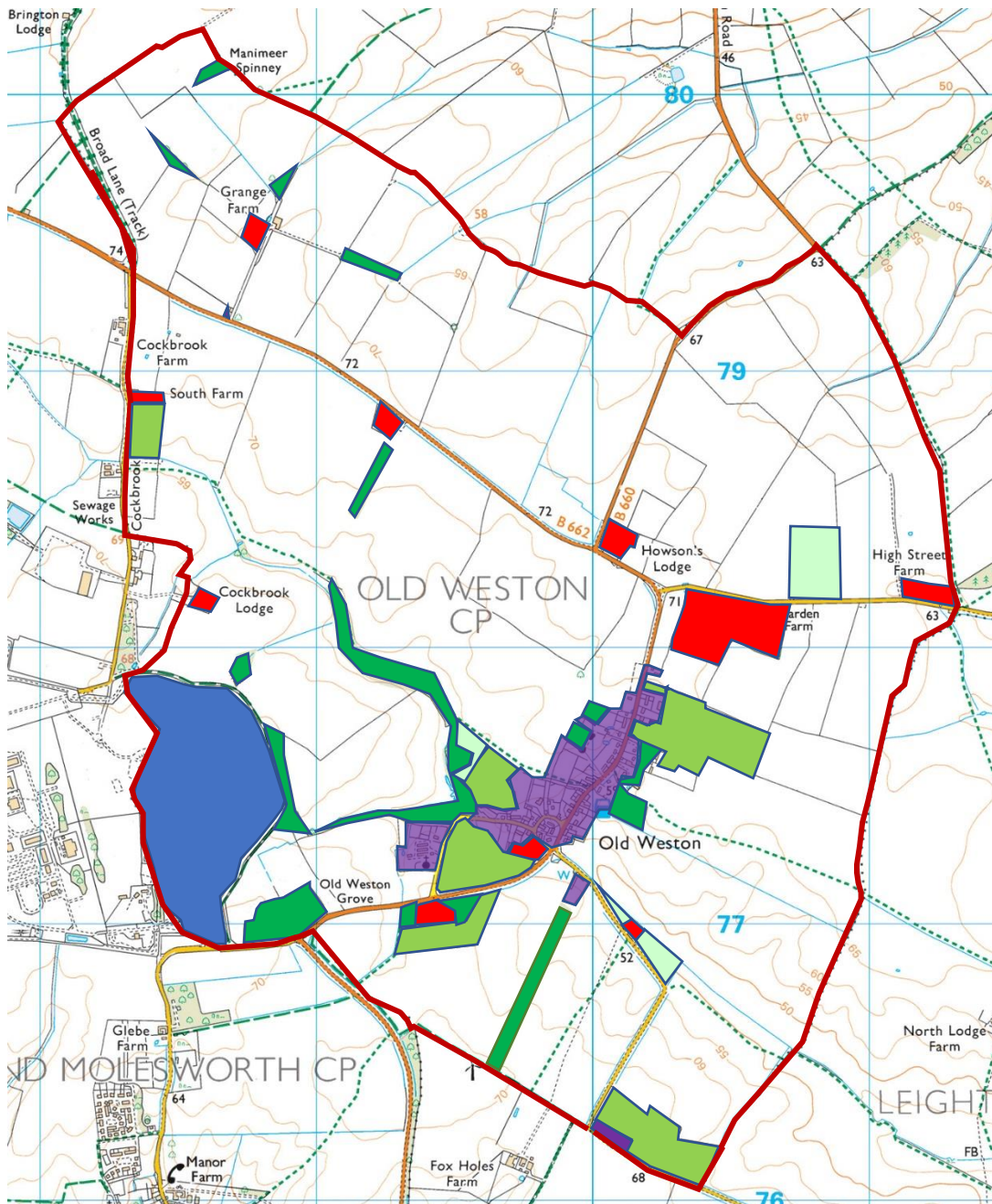


Figure 6 Old Weston Land Classification (from: [publications.naturalengland.org.uk](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk))

Areas which have been built-upon, whether they are houses (with adjoining or separate outbuildings) or agricultural buildings have been constructed on land which has not been separately classified except as grade 2 or grade 3. The land outside the built-on areas falls (see figure 7) into three main categories: cultivated land, pasture-land (including horse paddocks) and woodland. Most ancient field boundaries have been lost, most probably during the period between 1960 and 1980 when it was common for small fields to be enlarged by the removal of hedgerows. There are relatively few mature standing trees in the landscape and similarly few hedgerow trees. There are no woodlands described as ancient woodland. Old Weston Grove appears to be the oldest wood in the parish, appearing on an Ordnance Survey map dating from 1835. However, there are significant areas of newer woodland where trees have been planted in the last twenty to forty years.



- Woodland /wooded areas
- Grass – grazing, hay or silage
- Paddocks
- Area of mainly rough grazing within RAF Molesworth base
- Residential, private houses, outbuildings and gardens and the Church
- Commercial, horticultural and agricultural buildings
- Old Weston Parish Boundary (Neighbourhood Plan area). Unshaded areas within this boundary are used for arable crops including oil seed rape, wheat and barley.

Figure 7 Map showing principal land uses in Old Weston Parish. Note: this map shows the character and current visual assessment of the usage of land, not any legal definition of land use.

In addition to the areas of woodland, there are a few trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), all of which are within the village. However, the mapping and associated information on the Huntingdonshire District Council website (reproduced below in figure 8) is insufficient to identify all of the trees concerned. Huntingdonshire District Council can provide additional details if required.

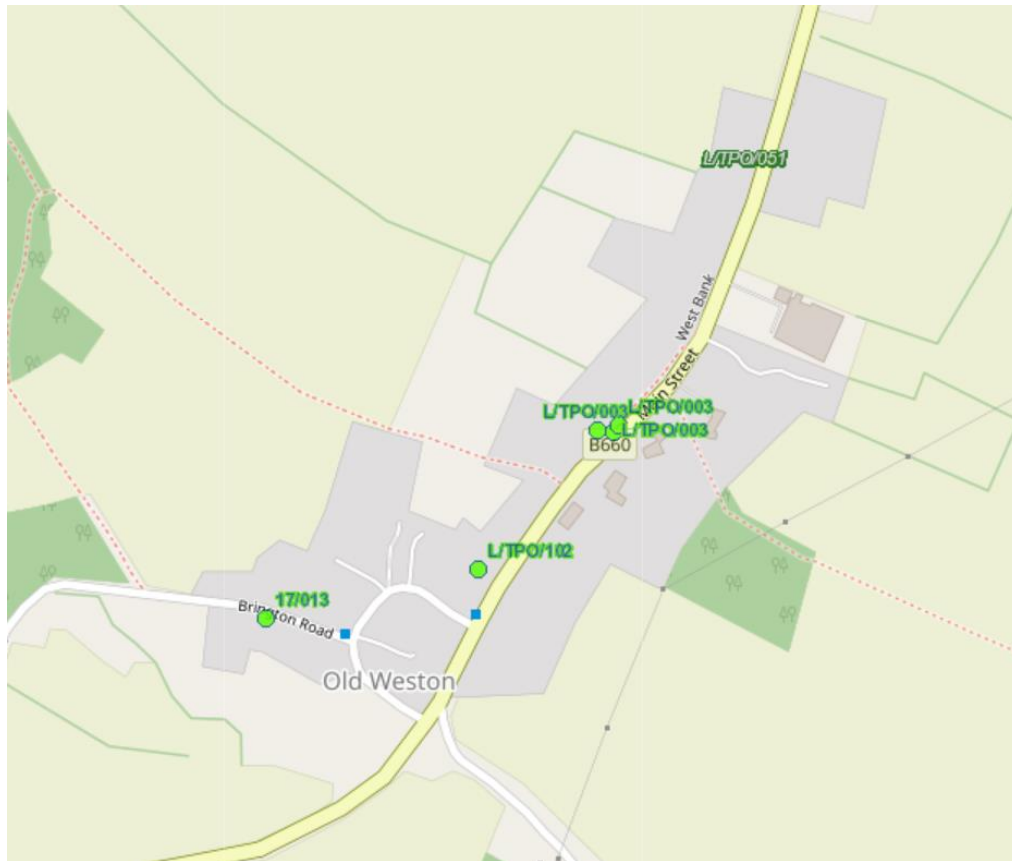


Figure 8 Old Weston Village Tree Preservation Orders (from [Tree Preservation - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://Tree Preservation - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk))

There are other noteworthy trees around the village and the parish including a characterful, but heavily pruned willow in the meadow between The Willows and the now demolished Home Farm House at the north end of the village and the Yew Tree at Manor Farm House. There are other significant large trees, but whilst they have an undoubted positive effect on the character of their surroundings, some perhaps unfortunately are perceived to lack merit on the basis of their species (conifers) or because they are Ash trees (*Fraxinus Excelsior*) which are anyway threatened by Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*).

## Historic development of Old Weston village and the surrounding area

The earliest evidence of human occupation of the area encompassed by the Parish of Old Weston dates to Roman times. The remains of Roman villas and artefacts were found when the gas pipeline was laid in 1997, and remains of a Roman settlement were found during drainage works on land near Cockbrook Lane (Ref. 2). Ordnance survey maps also show the alignment of a Roman road which runs east – west at the northern end of the village, albeit that these suggest a gap between the B660 and the junction of Roman Road with Warren Lane (at the extreme eastern end of the parish of Titchmarsh) (Grid REF TL067788). LIDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) imaging of the area and particularly of the portion missing from the Ordnance Survey mapping shows a linear feature which appears to fill some parts of the gap (see figures 9 and 10). The Roman Road was named “Via Devana” by Charles Mason, of Trinity College Cambridge, sometime during his tenure there in the early to mid-eighteenth century (Ref 4). The road ran from Colchester to Chester (Deva) via Cambridge, Huntingdon and Leicester.

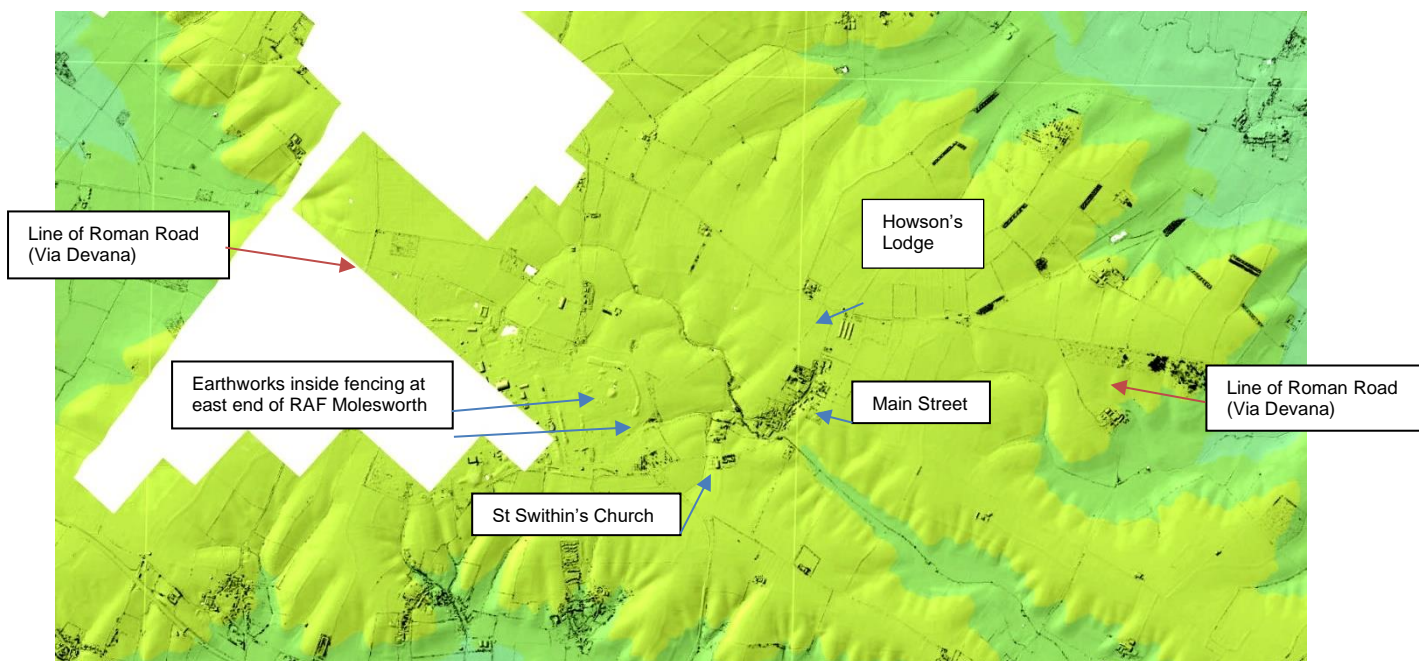


Figure 9 LIDAR image of Old Weston (from <https://www.lidarfinder.com/>)

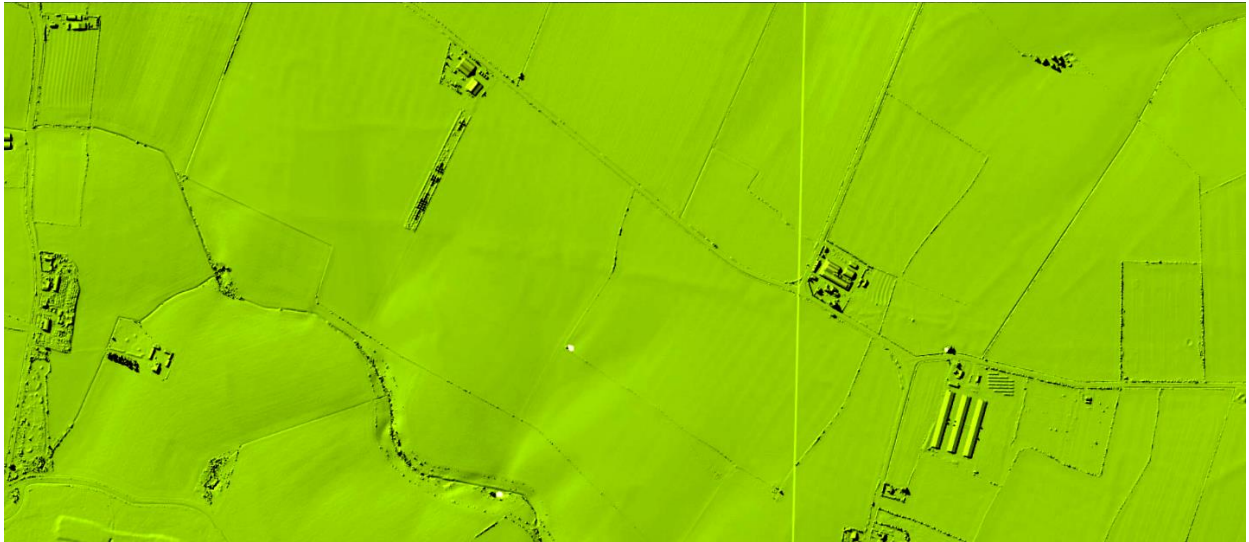


Figure 10 Lidar image – enlarged area showing faint raised feature corresponding with the Roman Road alignment. Cock Brook Lane in the west and Garden Farm to the east (from <https://www.lidarfinder.com/>).

There is a gap in the known history of the area between the end of the Roman Occupation in (407AD) and the Domesday Survey of 1086. It is understood that England was “invaded” by Anglo-Saxons during this period. There are suggestions in the literature that the invaders used the Roman road network, although it is argued that this may not have been easy because of the lack of maintenance, particularly the loss of bridges and the encroachment of vegetation. Nevertheless, it seems probable that the area of Old Weston parish was occupied throughout the period after the Romans departed. It is thought that the heavy clay soils would have deterred ploughing and therefore extensive arable cultivation. The absence of evidence of habitation may have been due to the buildings being constructed of timber rather than masonry material.

The history of the parish is dealt with in two documents (References 2 and 3). The second of these (which should be consulted for detail) describes Old Weston as a: “somewhat scattered village which stands mainly on the north side of the stream, but the church is detached from the village and is on the south-west side of it. The village is said to have extended south of the church but was burnt down, and the record of a brief exists at Leighton Bromswold for the fire at Old Weston on 28 February 1701.” No visible traces of this part of the village now exist.

Some of the original settlement pattern may have stemmed from the track network. Main Street (the B660) follows a shallow valley southwards from the Via Devana. It is possible that Main Street followed this valley because the gradient was less severe than a route which followed the higher ground to the east or the west. Easy gradients for ascent were once important for cart haulage. It is also possible that homes and other buildings were built on the slightly higher ground either side of this road in the valley bottom so that drainage was rendered easily. Old Maps of Old Weston show that the main route southwards through the village towards Brington proceeded up Brington Road, over the Cock Brook and past the Church. Interestingly, much of the present alignment of Leighton Road does not appear.

Similarly, part of the B660 from Howson's Lodge northwards is missing. Maps dating from 1960 to 1968 indicate that the steeper, faster road from Old Weston south westwards towards Brington was constructed during this time. The maps also show that a number of tracks have been completely lost, although a few are still visible, but not in general use today.



Figure 11 Section of Ordnance Survey map dating from 1835 (From National Library of Scotland website)

The economy of Old Weston was based on agriculture. There were also supporting businesses such as public houses, a blacksmith, a shop and the bakehouse, and communal buildings such as the Church, the former School, the Village Hall the former Methodist Chapel, and the former Oddfellows Hall. The settlement pattern would have been derived from this as well as perhaps the road and track network. Some understanding of the origin of the present settlement pattern can be gained from a study of old maps and an aerial photograph.



Figure 12 Ordnance survey six inch to one mile map of 1887 (From National Library of Scotland website)



Figure 13 Extract from Ordnance Survey six inch to one mile map published in 1902 (From National Library of Scotland website)



Figure 14 1945 RAF Aerial View (from Google Earth Pro)



Figure 15 Extract from Ordnance Survey six inch to one mile map published in 1952 (From National Library of Scotland website)



These old maps (and the 1945 aerial photograph) show that the boundary of the built-up area has changed little since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is apparent (especially when the most up to date maps are considered) that the density or the number of buildings has increased dramatically since 1945.

The Ordnance Survey six-inch map published in 1887 shows many of the buildings which still exist today. However, it is clear that during the evolution of the village since this time, many buildings have been demolished and replaced. Some of those original buildings were clearly agricultural (barns and stores etc) whilst some were likely to have been houses. We have not attempted to analyse this in detail, but it is clear that the character of the built environment has changed appreciably over the course of 135 years. Many of the older houses in the village can be identified and it is to be hoped that few if any more will be lost over the coming years. We have carried out some analysis of the changes that have occurred over the last seventy years by analysing the ages of the buildings in the village.

Strikingly, the 1945 aerial photograph shows how trees and hedges have been lost in the seventy-five years since the end of World War II. Some of the tree loss may have been due to the destruction caused by Dutch Elm disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*). However, it is almost certain that the majority of the hedges were removed in the pursuit of larger scale farming practices and cost savings. The LIDAR imaging is also useful since it clearly shows areas where ridge and furrow evidence of mediaeval ploughing practice have survived adjacent to Howson's Lodge and in the fields to the north east of Home Farm.

To some degree, the character of Old Weston was influenced by the use of the base at RAF Molesworth. After the second World War, the main east-west runway (07-25) was lengthened at its eastern end from 2000 to 3000 yards. It was used by various aircraft types including jets and naturally, Old Weston was under the flight path. However, it seems that flying activity had all but stopped by 1973. In 1980, the base was selected as one of two UK bases for Ground Launched Cruise Missiles armed with nuclear warheads, and the runways were removed. In 1988, following signature of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, nuclear missiles were removed. At times during the period between 1980 and 1987, anti-nuclear protests did have an effect on the residents of Old Weston.

## Old Weston Buildings

### Old Weston Village

An analysis has been carried out of the numbers of houses in the village itself, i.e., on Main Street and Brington Road. Houses have been allocated to a series of age ranges chosen according to knowledge, map and satellite image availability (see table 1) overleaf.

Table 1: Old Weston village housing age range analysis

Approx. age range	1999-2021	1945-1999	1885-1945	pre-1885	Total
Main Street West side	10	6	13	2	31
Main Street East side	9	9	0	6	24
Brington Road	10	6	0	7	23
Totals by age	29	21	13	15	78
Percentage of total by age	37%	27%	17%	19%	

The pub (The Swan) has been included  
Barn conversion (Granary Barn) has been included as pre-1885  
One house under construction to replace a recently demolished farmhouse, not included  
One residential property in Brington Road (included) was converted from a former school building.

There are a number of other significant non-residential buildings (not included in this table), including:

- St Swithin's Church
- The former Methodist Chapel
- Manor Farm grain stores and machinery sheds.
- The Village Hall.
- Sundry older outbuildings such as Grove Farm cart and implement barn, the bakehouse at Model Farm, the garage barn shared between The Paddocks and Highview and farm buildings at Granary Barn, Home Farm and The Poplars.

Over the years, buildings have been demolished and replaced with new buildings. Since 1999, seven buildings have been demolished and replaced on the same site with a total of twelve. It is known that prior to 1999, there have been a number of similar occurrences.

Some of the houses constructed in the last twenty years have emulated features of older nearby properties or have replicated the appearance of much older properties which they have replaced. Some houses have adopted a more nationally universal period style (for example sixties to eighties). A few much older houses have been substantially and detrimentally altered as part of an old and unregulated trend to

modernise and repair cheaply, often constrained by the prevailing economics of the market value of housing at the time.

A small number of buildings are not readily visible from either public roads or footpaths. Examples of these include Honeysuckle Lodge, The Paddocks and Highview.

### Listed buildings

Old Weston has a small number of listed buildings. These are illustrated below and their positions are indicated on the map (figure 16):



St Swithin's Church Grade II\*

Model Farm House  
Grade II



1622 Cottage Grade II

The Swan Public  
House Grade II



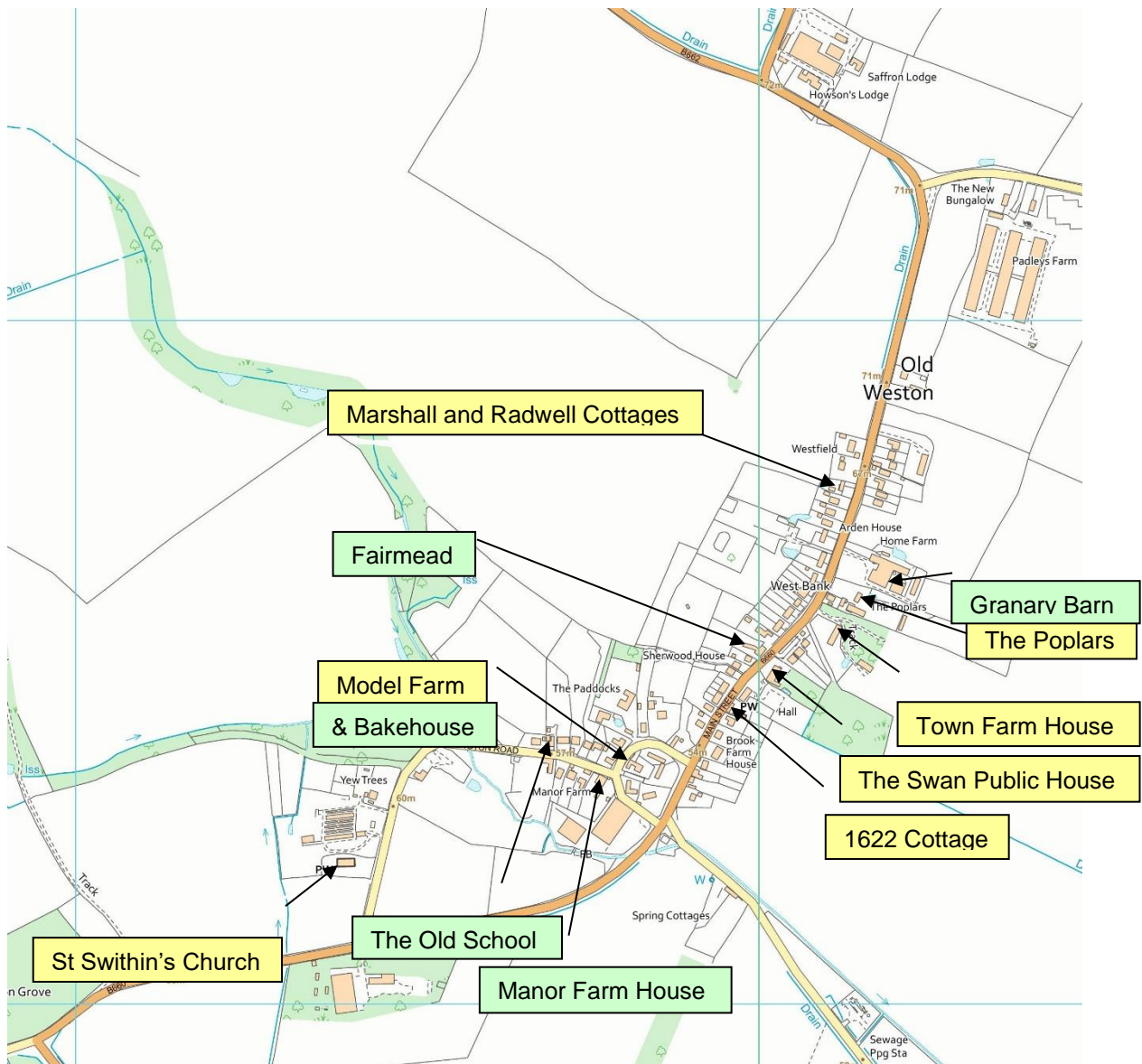


Dobbins Cottage  
(also known as  
Town Farm  
House) Grade II

The Poplars  
(originally known  
as Hospital Farm  
House) Grade II



Marshall and  
Radwell Cottages  
Grade II (listed  
separately)



Listed building  
 Other building of character



Figure 16 Old Weston listed buildings, and other buildings of character

### Other buildings of character

In addition to the listed buildings, a number of buildings have been identified which make a significant contribution to the character of the village. These include Manor Farm house (red brick façade and stone mullioned windows), the Old School House (traditional small Victorian School building), the bakehouse at Model Farm (a traditional brick-built building with clay pantile roof, which forms part of the history of life in the village), Fairmead (which was the village Post Office and shop) and Granary Barn (converted from a traditional long barn). A few more recently built houses with traditional exterior characteristics also contribute to the character of the village. One such example is Green Oak House where the brickwork is of a style which emulates Flemish Bond often found on older houses with solid brick walls (no

cavities). Another is Ash House where the green painted render with softened edges and corners suggests a rather older style. Towards the northern end of Main Street, three large detached houses between The Pantiles and Marshall & Radmere Cottages on the west side of Main Street have to a certain degree been given detailing (such as the windows and the brickwork) which emulates the older houses to the north and south.

Outside the village itself, there are a number of other buildings which have a unique and historical character. Those that can readily be seen from publicly accessible roads and byways include:

Spring Cottages  
Yew Trees (The Old Parsonage)  
Howson's Lodge  
Mill House  
High Street Farm

### **Conservation areas**

No parts of the parish are designated as conservation areas or areas of special landscape value. Having said this, the December 1995 Huntingdonshire Local Plan defined the Old Weston Village boundary, designated three frontages "for protection", and designated all of the land surrounding the village boundary as "area of best landscape" (Ref 5). These designations were downgraded or removed in later revisions to the plan and are not present in the current Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

## Flora, fauna, ecology and ambiance

Much of the following has been extracted from a survey of the Flora and Fauna of Old Weston provided to the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group.

The clay sub soils of Old Weston contain the first animal records for Old Weston and at least three species of fossils regularly turn up in gardens and ploughed fields:

- Belemnites: a fossil - bullet-shaped, hard, internal skeletons - of squid-like creatures.
- Bivalve mollusc Gryphea: a fossil better known by its common name 'devil's toenail'.
- Ammonites: the most widely known fossil, with the typically ribbed spiral-form shell.

More than half of the land in the parish is arable, hosting several species such as Hares and, in the winter, flocks of Lapwings and Golden Plover; however, pasture is now down to about 15% of the land. There are only about 11 acres of woodland; during the 1980s and 1990s there were several tree planting schemes to add to the existing woods, including Old Weston Grove. One remaining ridge and furrow field has a greater diversity of species because of the differing habitats; the ridge top is drier and has a slightly different flora than the furrow which frequently is boggy; this is where Lady's Smock is found, one of the host plants for the Orange-tip Butterfly.

Although there are no areas of special scientific interest in Old Weston Grove, it has a ground flora which includes Bluebells and a few specimens of Early Purple Orchid, which are protected species. There are numerous fungi species, including *Gloeoporus dichrous*, which is a Red Data Book species. Several woodland bird species utilize Old Weston Grove such as Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, Treecreepers and Coal Tits.

Cockbrook stream can flood and also run dry, with only an occasional stagnant pond. Summer blooms of brown algae covering the plants and streambeds have increased in recent years, especially with low current flow, strongly suggesting eutrophication from run off; this is detrimental to any organisms living in the brook. Species recorded along the brook include Three-spine Stickleback, Stone Loach and, for two years, a shoal of Roach. An insect found in a large number in the stream is the caddisfly, *Agabus fuscipes*, whose cases are made from small stones which are abundant in areas of the stream free from fine sediment on the rocks.

Grass verges, ditches and hedges are important to wildlife, forming a continuous corridor allowing passage between sites for animals and plants.

Wildlife such as nesting birds, bats, reptiles and great crested newts are protected by law, including the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981; all can be seen or have been recorded in the local area.

Ecology study reports associated with recent planning applications have included surveys for mammals, bats, tree roosts, badgers, amphibians, reptiles and birds. Today, although many of the same species can be seen throughout the area, numbers have declined dramatically.



A number of ponds have been identified within the village, many of which appear to be relatively small and contained within existing properties; the historical records are of limited value. Some of the ponds have water of a poor quality; this may be attributed to poor maintenance, agricultural run-offs or a general decline in the environment and, thus, less protected when it comes to current and future developments. Great crested newts have been recorded within Old Weston, although a deteriorating biodiversity will reduce such presence.

The local woodland and open countryside support a wide range of wildlife, including badgers, bats, foxes, deer - mainly muntjak but also some roe deer in spinneys, lapwings, pheasants, owls, squirrels, (very rare) turtle doves, woodpeckers, buzzards and red kites. The occasional flash of colour of a kingfisher can be seen by the brook, along with a visiting white egret and a heron. Most recently, a white pheasant has been seen in and around the south-western area of the village. The Common Buzzard was first spotted in 2000 and, following a reintroduction programme in the 1990's, the first recording of a Red Kite, was in 2006; both species are now seen regularly on most days. The Marbled White butterfly was first recorded in 2006 and numbers have slowly increased to, in 2019, over 100 Marbled White butterflies being recorded. The White-letter Hairstreak Butterfly has also been recorded. The Dark Green Fritillary was first recorded in 2015 and is increasing in numbers; Old Weston is currently the only location in Huntingdonshire where this species is found. The following list is a sample of the large and sometimes unique biodiversity found in Old Weston (more information to be found in the report (Ref 5)).

- Birds. One hundred and forty-one (141) species
- Butterflies. Thirty (30) UK resident species, plus two migrant species,
- Caddisfly. Seventy-six (76) species
- Mammals. Twenty-five (25) species
- Moths. One thousand, one hundred and two (1102) species
- Plants. Three hundred and forty-nine (349) species
- Spiders. One hundred and eighty (180) species

From a noise perspective, the shape of the landscape and the location of the village being in a dip, separated from larger developments, far enough from the A14 and the lack of air traffic make the village a relatively quiet and tranquil place for villagers to enjoy the sound and sights of nature, indeed allows that nature to thrive in and around the village and parish.

The lack of streetlighting and generally subdued external residential lighting in the village, the dimmed lighting of Molesworth base and the lack of air traffic make the village a comparatively dark site compared to surroundings (see map figure 17). This has the advantages of not only supporting the night pollinating insects critical to farming and the biodiversity described above, but also the parish amenity of astronomical observing as the night skies are darker than surrounding areas.

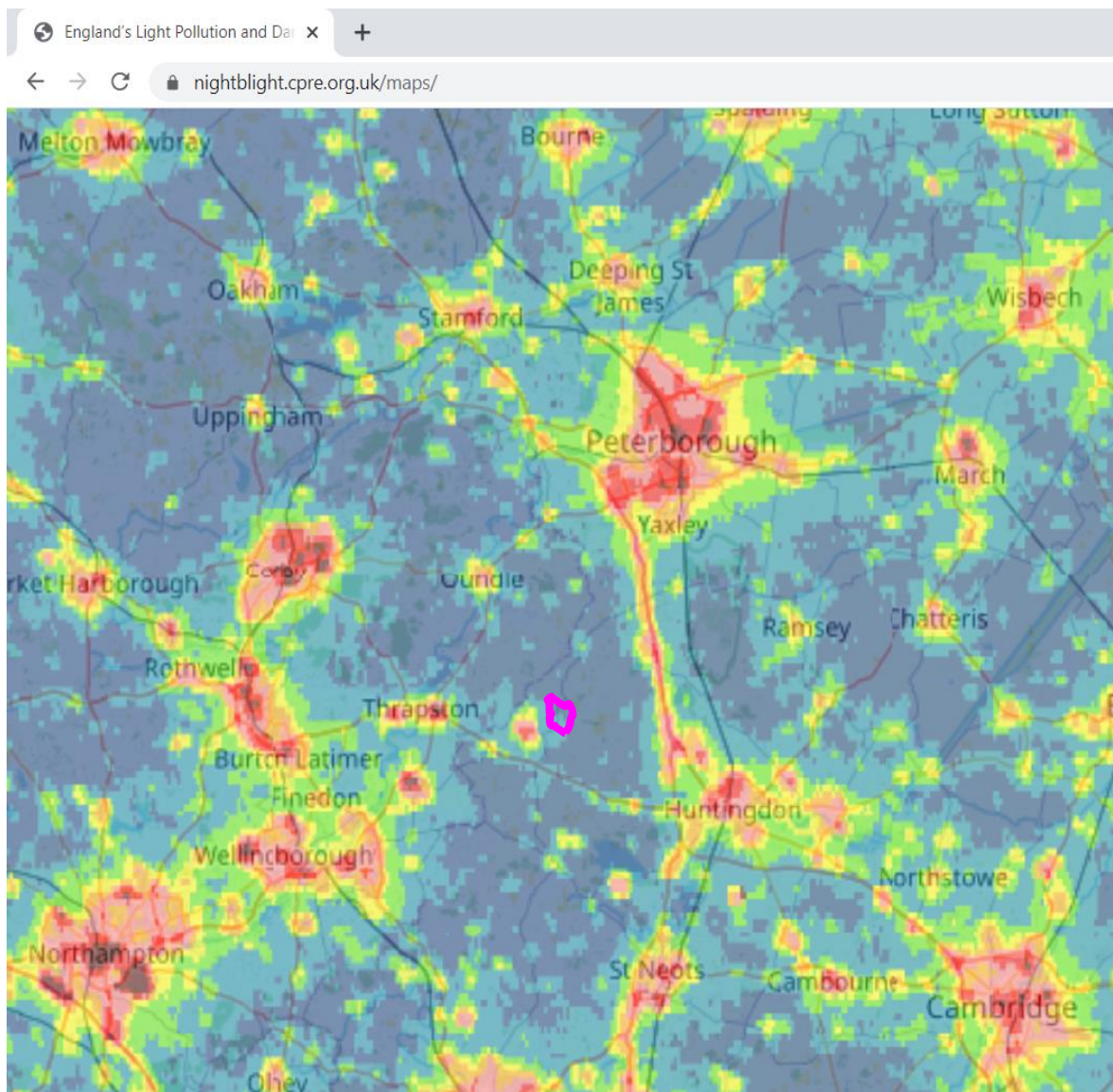


Figure 17 Map showing areas of light pollution and dark skies (from: [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](https://www.cpre.org.uk)). Old Weston parish is approximately encircled in pink) This map originates from Natural England data from 2016, since when the lighting at RAF Molesworth has been extensively modernised and upward scatter reduced.

One of the features that villagers enjoy is the way in which green spaces are connected to the streets – so the village is not a solid block of buildings: there are break points where cows and sheep can graze alongside the road, or crops can be seen between houses, again bringing the countryside into the village and providing connectivity for wildlife to exist and travel. Additionally, the Village Hall is associated with a play area and a recreation field, from which there are clear views southwards over agricultural land.

## Old Weston Parish Character Areas Overview

Broadly speaking, there are two distinct character types within the parish: the settlement and the surrounding agricultural lands. However, because the main village settlement and its church are separated by an area of agricultural land; indeed, the church stands isolated from inhabited (or used) buildings apart from the former rectory (Yew Trees), it is felt that the church (with both the views of it and from it) and the main village settlement should be treated separately. For ease and because there are some differences in appearance and character, the village has been split into “Main Street” and “Brington Road”. Another area of significant size is inaccessible and contained within the military base at RAF Molesworth. This land is classified as non-agricultural on the land classification map. Thus, in total, there are five main character areas defined and these are shown on the accompanying map. The surrounding countryside outwith the immediate vicinity of the village settlement and the church are largely agricultural. However, there are areas of relatively new woodland which are scattered around the parish and which also border and encroach into the settlement.

The field survey of the parish was undertaken by members of the working group during the spring and early summer of 2021. Many of the photographs used to support this part of the character assessment document were taken during this field survey. However, some were taken earlier in the year, and during the preceding years. These earlier photographs help to show the extent to which the presence and absence of tree leaf coverage, and the changing crop coverage of agricultural areas have an effect on the character of the area.

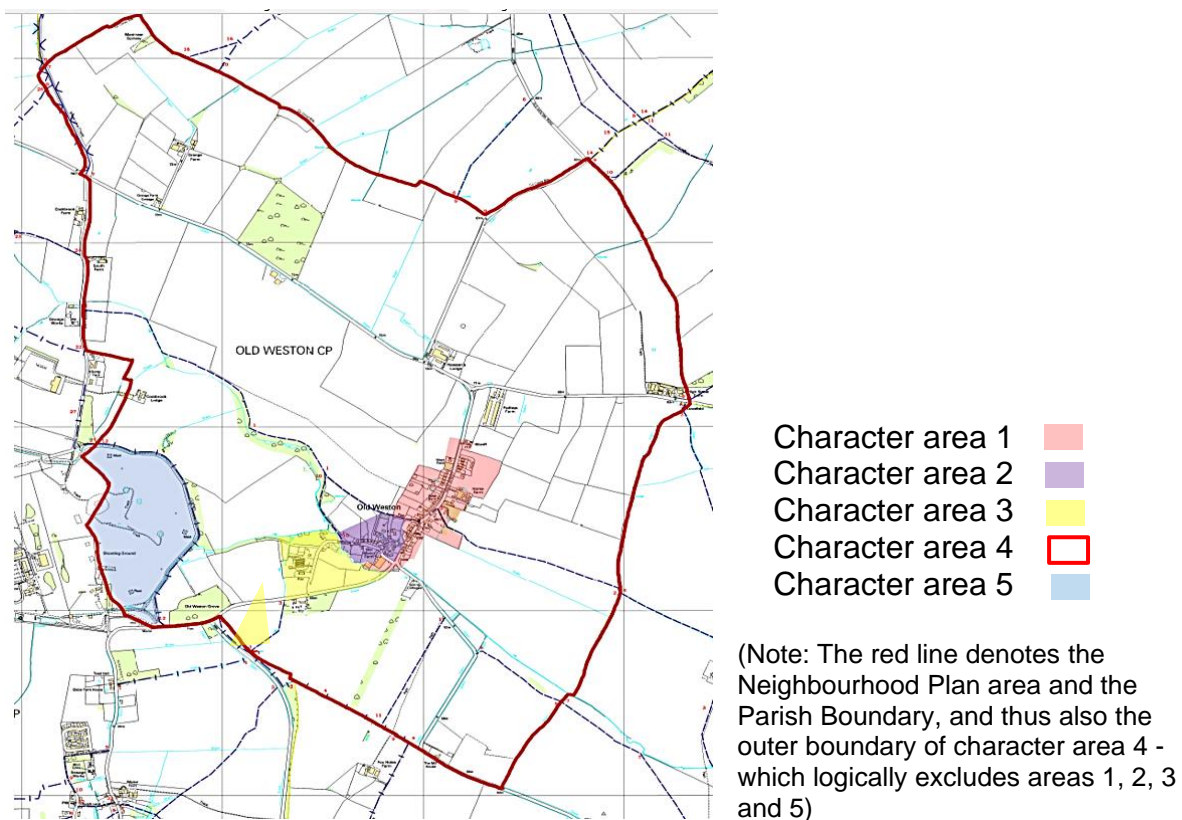
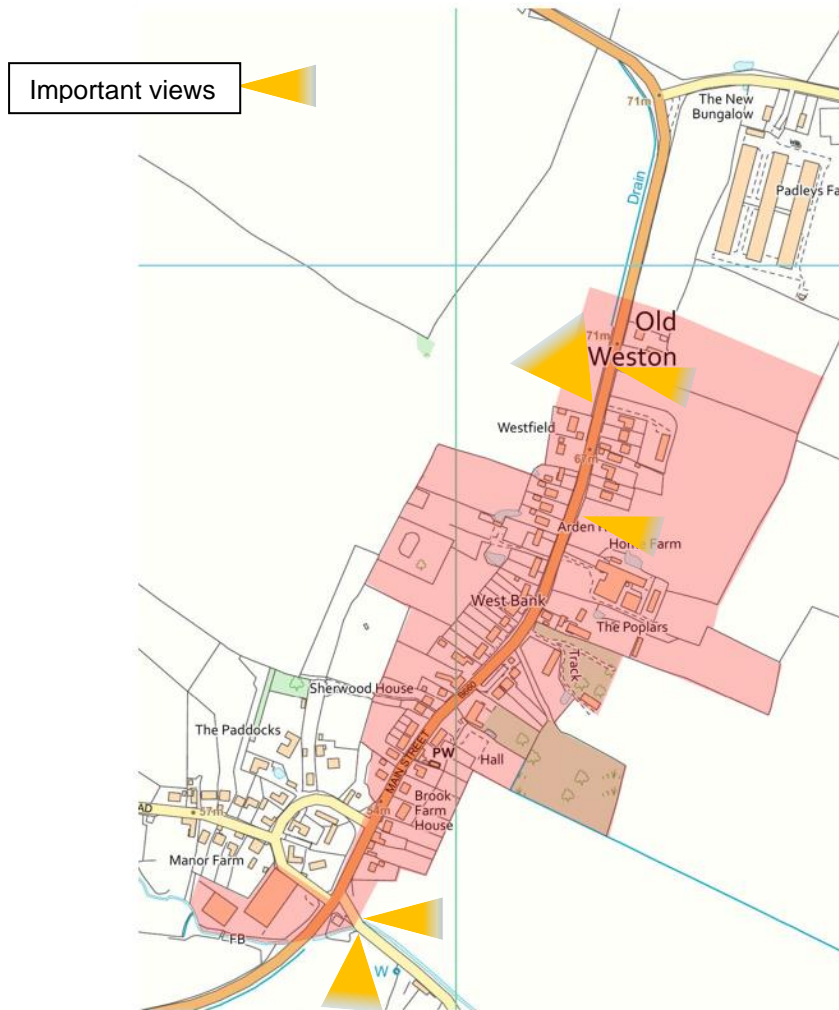


Figure 18 Old Weston Character Areas

## Character Area 1: Old Weston Main Street

Topography	Land Uses
<p>The main route through the village is the B660 and is known as Main Street. The road runs downhill from the plateau approximately NNE to SSW along a shallow valley leading to Cockbrook at the southern end. Either side of the street, land slopes upwards.</p>	<p>Mainly residential houses and gardens. Also, the pub, the village hall and some agricultural buildings. Agricultural land extends down to the road within the village in two places at the northern end. The road emerges into open agricultural land at the southern end opposite the Manor Farm buildings and at the northern end beyond the village 30 MPH limit.</p>
Layout	Roads, Streets, Routes
<p>Buildings are (with one exception) arranged linearly along both sides of the road. Almost all are uniformly set back from the road. The majority of the houses have driveway/ parking areas within their curtilages and garages; many have gates. Some of the older semi-detached properties on the west side of the road make use of a layby on the west side of the street, a parking area adjacent to the bungalows, the village hall car park or the roadside.</p>	<p>The road is good quality tarmac with grass verges and an asphalt pavement which runs down the west side within the area governed by a 30 MPH speed limit, with traffic calming pinch-points at the northern and southern ends and two automatic speed warning signs. At the southern end, south of the junction with Brington Road, the pavement crosses to the eastern side. At the northern end, there are large drainage ditches on both sides of the road. Two public footpaths run west and east from Main Street.</p>
Spaces	Buildings
<p>There is only one public space: the village hall car park, the children's play area and associated recreation ground on the east side near the village hall.</p> <p>There is a car park in front of the village pub (the Swan)</p>	<p>The breakdown of property types and ages can be seen in table 1, the aerial imagery and some of the photographs. Almost every building is basically cuboid with a pitched roof. There are no buildings with unusual architectural features or forms. Some of the semi-detached two storey houses on West Bank (former local authority houses) and the semi-detached bungalows are uniformly constructed of brick under tiled roofs. Otherwise, every house is unique in its appearance. The visible elements of external walls range from ancient timber frame infilled with wattle and daub or brickwork, through conventional brickwork (in a variety of styles both unpainted and painted) to render. Nearly every building has a pitched roof clad with slate or tiles of various styles. There is one thatched roof and the village hall has a sloping roof covered with felt. Listed buildings are described elsewhere.</p>
Landmarks	Green and Natural Features
<p>Distinctive willow tree in the field adjacent to Home Farm (field formerly used for grazing cattle). Listed buildings including the Pub and its sign. The Village Hall. Bus stop and village seat.</p>	<p>Boundary hedges; some tall some reduced height, occasional trees. Tall bank topped with a high hedge at the rear of the former Model Farm curtilage.</p>
Streetscape	Views
<p>Speed limit and automatic warning signs. White lines and painted 30MPH warnings on the road surface. Overhead electricity supply and telephone cables. No streetlights. Sewage pumping station a short distance along Leighton Road.</p>	<p>Views from street level to the sides of the road are limited in extent by buildings and the depression in which the road runs. At the north end of Main Street, there are expanding views across open countryside. Slightly south of this there are attractive views eastwards into agricultural land between the houses on Main Street. Some views along main street at the southern end are picturesquely curtailed by the curvature of the road. There is an open view eastward at the junction with Leighton Road. There may be extensive views towards open countryside from the backs of some of the properties on the Street.</p>

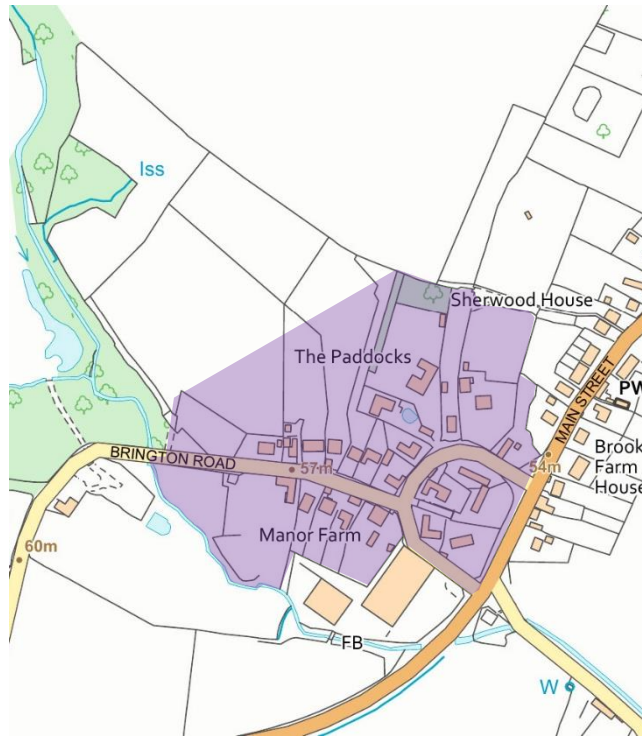
Figure 19 Old Weston Character Area 1 – Main Street



## Character Area 2: Brington Road

Topography	Land Uses
Gently sloping from north down to south. Initially, from its junction with Main Street, the road rises through a form of cutting and then proceeds generally westwards around a series of sharp curves, finally descending past the 30MPH limitation to the bridge over Cock Brook.	Mainly residential houses and gardens. At the western edge of the character area, there are large paddocks to the north, and woodland to the west and south.
Layout	Roads, Streets, Routes
Buildings are set out along both sides of the road. Most are linearly arranged with exclusive access driveways. However, The Paddocks and Highview share an access point as do Model Farm, Model View, Od Mead Barn and East Barn. Numbers 1&2 Manor Gardens also share a road access. Apart from Highview, all properties are linearly arranged with respect to Brington Road and Main Street. All houses have driveway/ parking areas within their curtilages and garages; many have gates.	The road is wide single track and surfaced with tarmac which is in poor condition in places. It is governed by a 30MPH speed limit. There are grass verges and an asphalt pavement which runs along the northern side as far as the last house: (Ashcroft) after which the national speed limit then applies. At the western end, beyond the speed limit signing, a public footpath runs westwards through woodland and merges with one originating on the west side of Main Street.
Spaces	Buildings
There are no public open spaces	The breakdown of property types and ages can be seen in table 1, mapping, aerial imagery and some of the photographs. Almost every building is basically cuboid with a pitched roof. There are no buildings with unusual architectural features or forms. Every house on Brington Road is detached; there are three single storey bungalows and five three storey houses (albeit that the uppermost storey of these is concealed within the roof pitch). All other houses are two-storey. Model Farm – the sole listed building, is characterised by its timber frame construction, and an unusually thick gable end wall of brick. A modern extension has been added to this house. All of the other houses have been conventionally constructed of brick or block (two have been painted), with tiled or slated roofs. Some walls have been clad in timber. There are older non-residential buildings including: the long cart barn at Grove Farm and the Bake House at Model Farm.
Landmarks	Green and Natural Features
Bus stop and village seat. The corner at Manor Farm (House) with a large Yew Tree, Model Farm and Grove Farm	Tall boundary hedges, some mature trees in gardens, one horse Chestnut protected by a TPO. Low lying garden with natural trees and hedges adjoining Cock Brook.
Streetscape	Views
A large proportion of the properties between Lancaster House and Ashcroft have walls of varying heights separating them from the road. Many have gated entrances; the entrances to five are controlled by high electrically operated gates. Some properties are completely screened from road level by trees and hedges. Speed limit signs. No streetlights. Overhead electricity supply and telephone cables.	Views from street level to the sides of the road are limited in extent by buildings and hedges. There may be extensive views towards open countryside from the parts of some of the properties on the Street.

Figure 20 Old Weston Character Area 2 – Brington Road

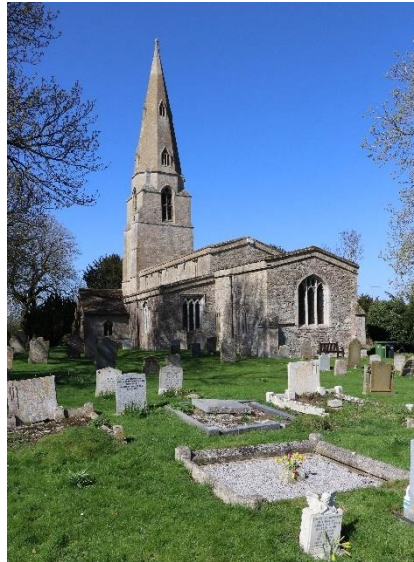
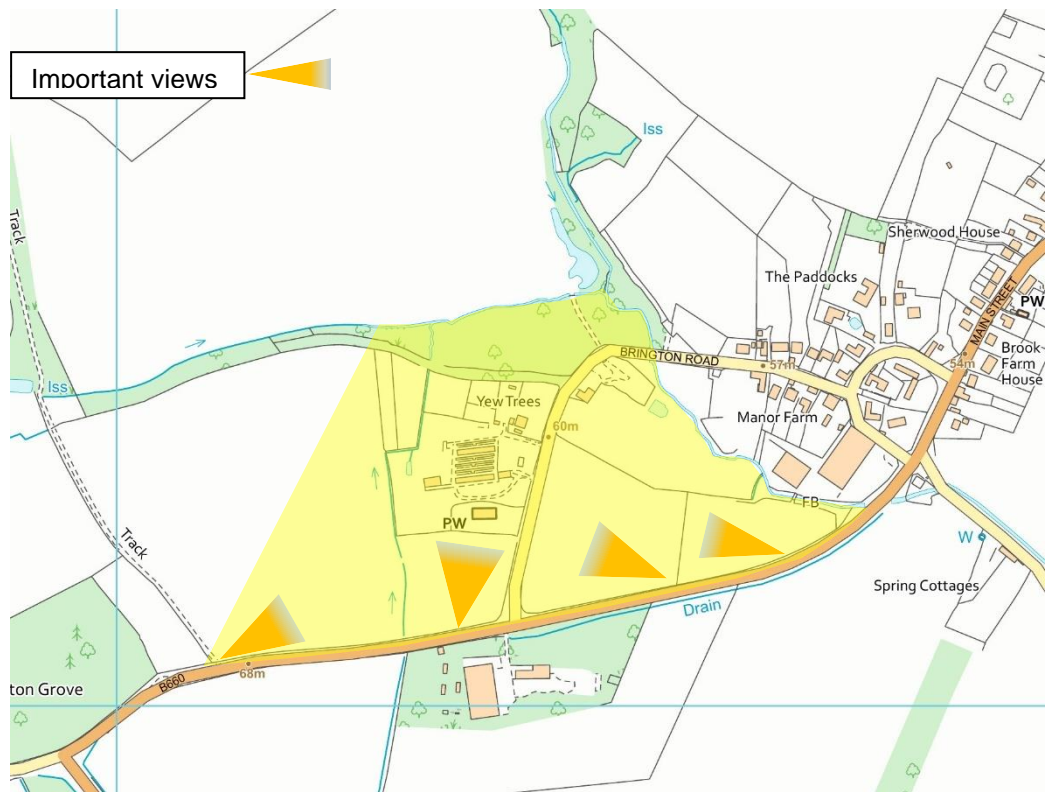


## Character Area 3: St Swithin's Church and surroundings

Topography	Land Uses
Generally, gently sloping eastwards down to the course of Cock Brook, and northwards into a tributary valley to Cock Brook.	Agricultural to the east and south. Woodland surrounding modern agricultural buildings comprising "The Old Camp". Derelict former pig farm between the Church and Yew Trees (the former Parsonage) has been sold for redevelopment, with permission for two large new houses. Woodland to the north of Yew Trees. The agricultural land between the B660, part of the loop formed by Brington Road and Cock Brook is used for hay or silage and has been used for cattle grazing. The land to the south and west of the church is used for cereal crops.
Layout	Roads, Streets, Routes
The Church of St Swithin's stands in the centre of this area on Brington Road. Brington Road meets the B660 next to the Old Camp.	Brington road is wide single track and surfaced with tarmac which is in poor condition in places. The B660 is a fast wide road surfaced with tarmac and chippings. Both roads are governed by the national (60MPH) speed limit. There are grass verges and boundaries are delineated by post and wire fencing where present. The Church is bounded on the roadside by a low wall with gates. A public footpath leads from the south side of the B660 to the bridleway which adjoins the south western boundary of the parish.
Spaces	Buildings
There are no public access open spaces, although the Churchyard is open to visitors. St Swithin's Church stands prominently at the centre of this character area. The impression is of a large, wide-open space views and vistas both into the area and out from it towards the village, the north and the east.	St Swithin's Church. Constructed of random stone (rubble) pointed with lime mortar, bordered at the external corners with dressed stonework. Stone clad spire. Dressed stone windows framing. Terne coated stainless steel and lead roof. Yew Tress – the former Parsonage. A substantial Victorian House brick built under a slated roof with many original period features.
Landmarks	Green and Natural Features
St Swithin's Church. Grade II* listed. The earliest part dates from the 12 <sup>th</sup> Century. Partly surrounded by Horse Chestnut trees.	Mature woodland to the north and south. Mature and picturesque hedges. Large trees in field edges and hedges. Other more recently planted trees on the roadsides.
Streetscape	Views
Road and street signs around the junction of Brington Road with the B660. High voltage power lines serving two pole mounted transformers; one on the roadside in Brington Road and one in the field opposite Yew Trees. Other low voltage power lines and telephone lines. No streetlights. Recently planted roadside trees.	Long distance and sweeping views of St Swithin's Church from the B660 and Brington Road. These views are impressive, uninterrupted (except for some of the roadside tree planting) and quite unusual for a historic, and picturesque church such as this. The views from the Church, particularly eastwards towards the village are also stunning, noteworthy and very photogenic. In the summer, the village is substantially concealed behind mature leaf bearing trees, which contrasts strikingly with the winter/early spring view.



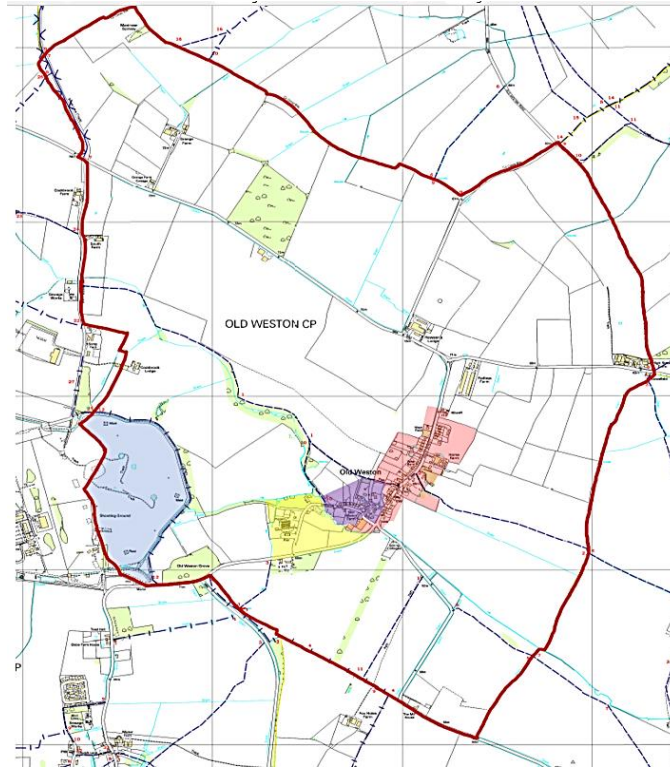
Figure 21 Old Weston Character Area 3 – St Swithin’s Church and surroundings



## Character Area 4: The rural farmlands around the village

Topography	Land Uses
<p>Old Weston Parish is situated within the area of north west Huntingdonshire known as the Northern Wolds. The topography is a plateau dissected by shallow valleys brought about by water erosion. The deepest valley contains Cock Brook and there are a number of tributary valleys which flow towards this, some of which are essentially now dry. To the north of the B662 which runs along the top of the northern ridge, the drainage flows generally towards Alconbury Brook.</p>	<p>Agricultural – arable, wheat, barley, oilseed rape and other mainly cereal crops. Woodland – a few areas of relatively recently planted deciduous woodland. Large hedgerows.</p>
Layout	Roads, Streets, Routes
<p>Very large fields established by the destruction of hedgerow boundaries to smaller fields. Now mainly bounded by roads, ditches and hedgerows and some relatively recently planted woodland.</p>	<p>The parish is served by the B660 which runs from the south to the north, from Brinton and Catworth to Winwick, the B662 from Clopton (Northamptonshire) which meets the B660 at Howson's Lodge farm and other minor roads, the most important two of which are High Street (leading to Alconbury Weston) which runs close to the Course of the former Roman Road (Via Devana) and Leighton Road which runs to the neighbouring village of Leighton Bromswold. There are also a number of public footpaths and bridleways which form very popular walking routes around the Parish.</p>
Spaces	Buildings
<p>No public open spaces, but the public have traffic free-access to wide areas of peaceful, quiet, open countryside with long vistas and many opportunities to observe and hear wildlife. With the exception of the B660, High Street and the B662 at peak commuting times, the roads provide opportunities for cycling and running for residents and many people from the wider area.</p>	<p>Within the character area, there are few buildings. These are as follows: <u>Working (or formerly working) Farms:</u> Grange Farm, Howson's Lodge, Garden Farm, High Street Farm, Cockbrook Farm, Farm buildings on south side of Clopton Road, South Farm Villa. <u>Isolated houses:</u> Grange Cottage, Saffron Lodge, The New Bungalow (High Street), 1&amp;2 Spring Cottages, The Mill House.</p>
Landmarks	Green and Natural Features
<p>St Swithin's Church, visible from many parts of the parish. Foxholes Farm wind turbine situated just inside a neighbouring parish on the southern edge but quite widely visible. Very tall conifer at Howson's Lodge Farm.</p>	<p>Hedges, woodland, roadside trees. No isolated trees. Cock Brook.</p>
Streetscape	Views
<p>Most of the roads through the parish are bounded by hedgerows and/or trees and wide grass verges. Most of these hedges appear old and established. Most of the trees have been relatively recently planted. Usual street and road signage. No streetlighting or other artificial lighting. Low and high voltage powerlines, telephone lines.</p>	<p>There are extensive long-distance views across the parish, and into and across neighbouring parishes. Some vantage points provide views of up to fifteen miles. Strikingly, the village of Old Weston is largely well hidden from most publicly accessible roads, bridleways and footpaths, particularly when the trees and hedgerows are in full leaf.</p>

Figure 22 Old Weston Character Area 4 – The rural farmlands around the village (i.e., excludes shaded areas - character areas 1, 2, 3 & 5)



## Character Area 5: Area of the parish inside RAF Molesworth Base Perimeter Fence

Topography	Land Uses
<p>The area is located on top of the Huntingdon Northern Wolds plateau.</p> <p>As far as can be seen the ground is uneven having been reclaimed from part of the formerly active flying base.</p> <p>LIDAR imagery shows that a broken earth berm has been created along the inside of the boundary fence.</p>	<p>The land forms part of the extreme eastern end of the base and as such part was covered with concrete and/or asphalt forming the end of the main east-west runway (07-25) and nearby hard standings. Satellite images show that all of the hardened areas have now been removed. The present appearance is of very rough uneven ground covered with grass and other vegetation and grazed by sheep.</p>
Layout	Roads, Streets, Routes
<p>There are two perimeter fences between which is a tarmac roadway. Outside the outer fence, there is a hardened track which appears to comprise degraded tarmac, bounded by flush concrete kerbstones into which are fitted reflective cat's-eyes. This track is a public right of way designated as a bridleway.</p>	<p>Base perimeter road patrolled by base security personnel. No lighting. Some CCTV cameras.</p>
Spaces	Buildings
<p>The public space is the width of the bridleway. There is open ground to the east effectively described in Character area 4.</p>	<p>None.</p>
Landmarks	Green and Natural Features
<p>Security Fence.</p> <p>St Swithin's Church is visible beyond woodland to the east from certain points along the bridleway.</p>	<p>Woodland, some self-seeded bushes within the base perimeter.</p>
Streetscape	Views
<p>Security signage, the welded mesh security fencing topped with razor wire.</p>	<p>Views into the base very limited by the raised earth berm and the slightly undulating and rough nature of the terrain close to the perimeter fencing.</p> <p>Views away from the fencing towards the north and east are of farmland and woodland are extensive and open, but curtailed by the distant woodland adjacent to Cock Brook.</p>

Figure 23 Old Weston Character Area 5 – Area of the parish inside RAF Molesworth Base Perimeter Fence



Images show the outer base perimeter fence, but for security reasons, not the area inside the fence.

## Important views of Old Weston from outside Character Areas 1 and 2

As part of the Character Appraisal, an assessment of important views was made from around the Neighbourhood Plan Area, including from public footpaths.

The location and routes of footpaths, bridleways and important views are identified below.

Photographs showing the important views within the Neighbourhood Plan Area are shown on the following pages.

In addition to these views, there are a number of important views from outside of the Neighbourhood Plan Area into Old Weston Parish and focal points within it.

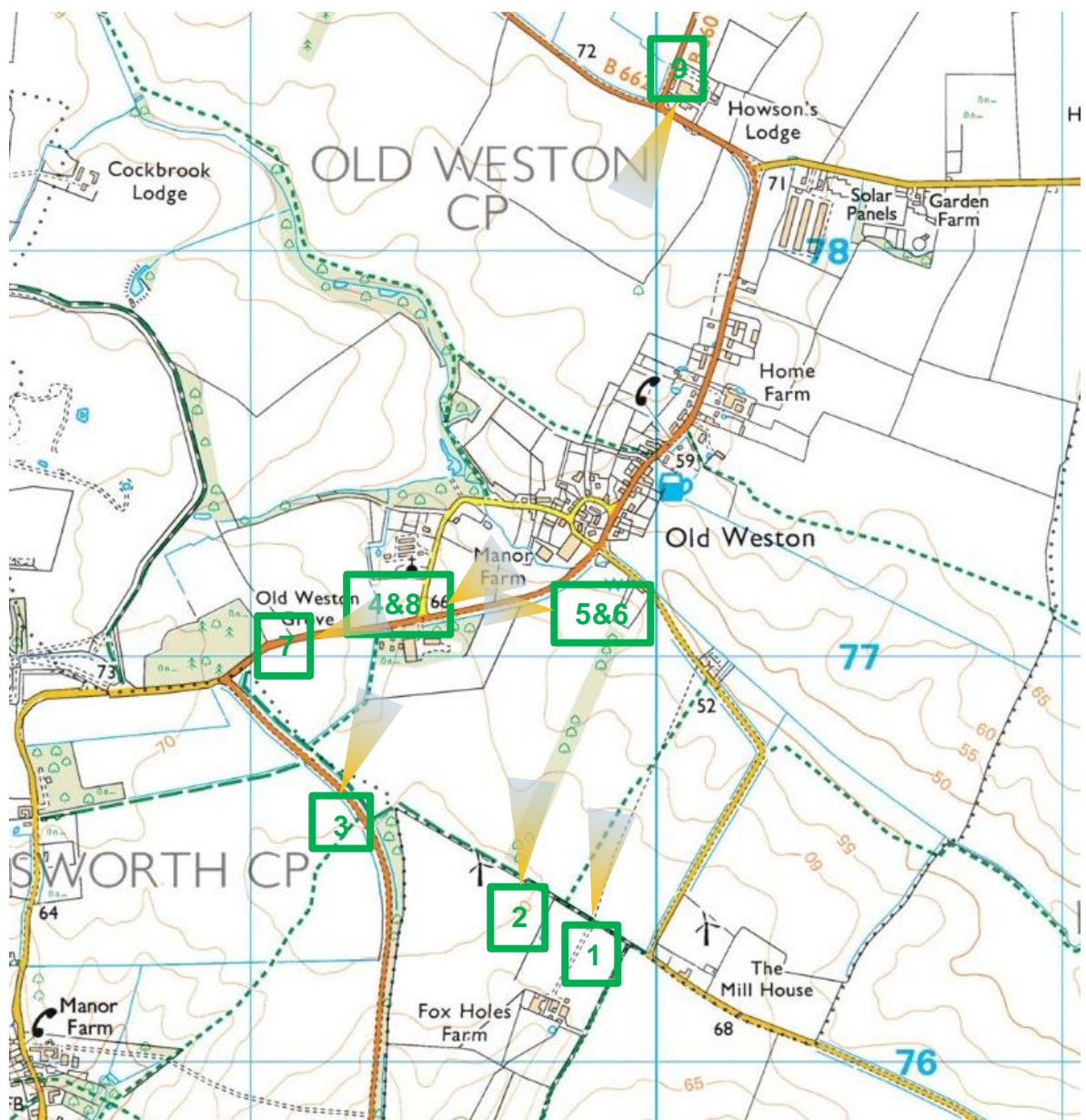


Figure 24 Important views



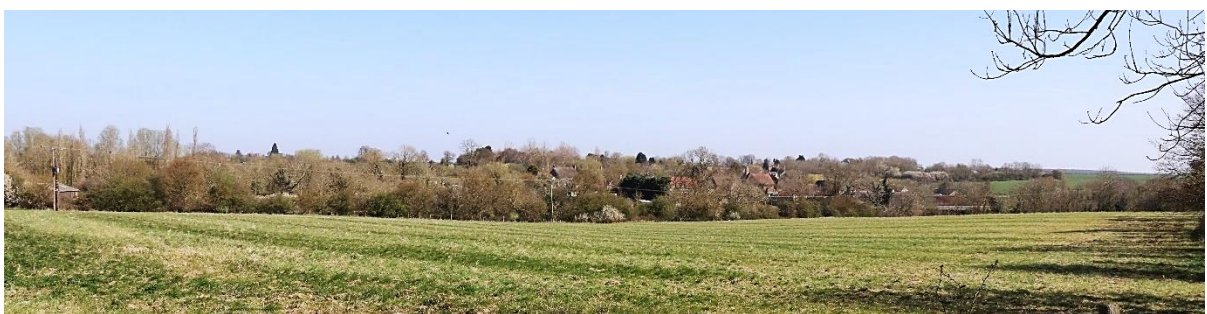
View from Point 1. Early Spring view, village buildings just visible



View from Point 2. Early Spring view



View from Point 3. Early Spring view



View from Point 4. Early Spring view



View from Point 4 in Autumn. Note how village buildings are substantially obscured by vegetation.



View from Point 5. Example of important views of St Swithin's Church from B660, leaving the village southwards.



View from Point 6. Similar view point to 5.



View from Point 7. Important view of St Swithin's Church from B660 travelling northwards towards village. These views continue to the entrance to Brington Road.





View from Point 8 (nearer church than Point 4; early spring).



View from Point 9. Important view of St Swithin's Church at approximately 1.3 km distance from the high ground on the B660 to the north of the village. The village of Old Weston is concealed by vegetation and by virtue of its lying on lower ground.

## Summary

Old Weston parish is a rural parish situated in the Northern Wolds of north west Huntingdonshire. The area is agricultural (mainly arable) with a few areas of relatively recently-planted woodland. It has one central village (Old Weston) and a number of scattered farms with dwellings and agricultural buildings. An area at the western edge of the parish is situated inside the security fence for RAF Molesworth, an American and NATO intelligence base. The Parish is bisected by a the B660 main road.

Old Weston village is a secluded village which is hidden from view on approach roads until arrival on the immediate outskirts (the present 30 mph limit signs). It is linear in form, that is to say it comprises (mainly habitable) buildings on both sides of Main Street (the B660) and Brington Road. There are very few houses which share a vehicular access to either Brington Road or Main Street or which are situated behind the main building lines. Main street follows the line of a shallow valley, rising north eastwards from Cock Brook which runs NW to SE along the southern edge of the village.

Almost every house in Old Weston village is unique in its appearance. The obvious exceptions to this are the bungalows and some of the semi-detached houses on Main Street, although there are detail differences between even these houses. Almost every building in Old Weston is basically cuboid with a pitched roof. There are no buildings with cylindrical or circular forms. The visible elements of external walls range from ancient timber frame infilled with wattle and daub or brickwork, through conventional brickwork (in a variety of styles both unpainted and painted), render, mock Tudor planking and timber weatherboard cladding. The exceptions to this are the church which has been constructed of random, largely undressed stone, and the former Manor Farm buildings which are clad with corrugated cement fibre sheeting. Nearly every building has a pitched roof clad with slate or tiles of various styles. There is one thatched roof and the village hall has a sloping roof covered with bitumen felt. There are also a number of flat-roofed outbuildings. Again, the exception is the church roof which is now clad partly with terne coated stainless steel and partly with lead. Overall, however, it must be said that the buildings of the village are largely consistent in appearance and character with one another; there are no Victorian or Georgian terraces or semis, no examples of Art Deco or Modern Minimalist or extensively glazed homes.

Some of the houses constructed in the last twenty years have emulated features of older nearby properties or have replicated the appearance of much older properties which they have replaced. This has ensured a uniformity and consistency of appearance as well as respect for some of the more historic aspects of the appearance and character of the village. However, some houses have adopted a more universal period style (for example sixties to eighties) with little or no respect for the surroundings. A few much older houses have been substantially and detrimentally altered as part of an old and unregulated trend to modernise and repair cheaply, often constrained by the prevailing economics of the market value of housing at the time.

Architecture of buildings from Victorian and pre-Victorian times would largely have been dictated by the local availability of materials, such as timber, mud (for wattle and daub), clay (for brick and tile making) and lime for mortar.

A feature valued by villagers is the way in which green space in the form of agricultural land enters into or immediately adjoins the streets and the publicly accessible amenity land associated with the village hall.

The layout of the village, the form of its buildings and the setting of the village and the church in rural countryside with productive fields, hedgerows (with trees) and areas of woodland give Old Weston its unique character. There are numerous villages situated in the Northern Wolds of North east Huntingdonshire and almost all are characterised by the presence of an ancient church, low-rise buildings a spacious pattern of development and a relatively limited mixture of building styles not greatly different from those to be found in Old Weston. Compared with some of these other villages however, Old Weston is uniquely and characteristically positioned where it cannot easily be seen from a distance from almost any direction. This is because it is screened by trees and vegetation and is confined to a valley so that the majority of buildings do not project above the northern wolds plateau level.

The Grade II\* listed St Swithin's Church is situated some distance from the present village (historical information suggests there may once have been dwellings to the south of the church). The church is clearly visible from the B660 both when travelling towards or away from the village. The view is even clearer in the winter when trees and hedges are devoid of leaves. Correspondingly, views from the church yard eastwards towards the village are uninterrupted by buildings. The view of the village from the church is partly obscured by trees and the positioning of the village in a valley.

Old Weston parish provides home to much biodiversity, some of which is rare regionally and nationally. This unusual home for our natural world is part of the character of the parish, and part of the amenity that the villagers and visitors value and enjoy: watching and listening to wildlife, observing the dark skies and enjoying the countryside peace. Some of that biodiversity and amenity is under stress as land use and habitats change.

## References

1. The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Township Assessment; June 2007  
(<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwirxajHo8vtAhVhmVwKHS8OB9wQFjAAegQIBhAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.huntingdonshire.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F1240%2FLandscape-guide.pdf&usq=AOvVaw0nAPnfskAx2Pc4dxJQQ7N5>)
2. The Evolution of an English Village: Old Weston (Published 2020; ISBN 978-1-5272-7678-9)
3. A History of the County of Huntingdon: Volume 3, ed. William Page, Granville Proby and S Inskip Ladds (London, 1936), pp. 116-119. British History Online  
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hunts/vol3/pp116-119>
4. Roman Roads in Britain by Thomas Codrington, London, 1903  
[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Periods/Roman/Topics/Engineering/roads/Britain/Texts/CODROM/4\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Periods/Roman/Topics/Engineering/roads/Britain/Texts/CODROM/4*.html)
5. Huntingdonshire Former Local Plan (1995) – Maps  
<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/1068/saved-policies-proposals-map-inset-plans-villages-g-to-p.pdf>  
(see: [Former Development Plan - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/1068/development-plan-1995-2011.pdf))
6. Report for Neighbourhood Planning Group by Kevin Royles “Nature - Fauna and Flora Overview”

## Additional Copyright acknowledgments

A number of the maps used in this document have used Ordnance Survey digital maps at 1:10000 and 1: 25000 scale Copyright 2021.

The BGS maps Contain British Geological Survey materials © UKRI 2021.

The sources of other maps and illustrations are acknowledged in the individual titles.

All photographs have been produced and edited (where appropriate) by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and the Parish Council.