Comberton

building on the past, planning for the future

Image identification

(left to right)

The Dovecot – grade 2 listed, Harvesting – Long Road, The Greenwich Meridian Line stone (Toft) *-also marking a tree planted by pupils from Meridian Primary School,* Horse in field to the south of the recreation ground, Lanner falcon (John Merk was to keep two lanner falcons and one retriever, trained to catch herons from Michaelmas (September 29th) to Candlemas (February 2nd) at the Kings costs) Fields to the south of Barton Road, Mr Hagger outside the corner shop Royal Inscription – St Mary's Church, Hillfield Road, The Causeway leading to St Mary's, Ancient trading token found in Comberton, Watts Wood, Hawks Farm – grade 2 Listed Comberton sign depicting the giving of Herrings, Meadowside – grade 2 listed

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bath block. Some of the finds can be seen at the Archaeological department at Cambridgeshire County Council. By the Norman Conquest (1066), Comberton was a Manor belonging to the Crown, with nine freemen.

Comberton is recorded as being in the **Wetherley Hundred.**
From Anglo-Saxon times to the 19th Century a 'hundred' was a unit of 'local government' common south of the river Tees. It was a sub-division of the shire, it corresponded to the 'wapentakes' of the Danelaw. It varied in size from area to area, hundreds may have originated from the grouping of a hundred 'hides', these emerged as administrative units in the 10th century. Hundred courts, which met every four weeks, had jurisdiction in cases relating to local issues and apportioned taxes.

When the Domesday Book was compiled the land a given village owned was measured in 'hides'. A 'hide' was reckoned to be 120 acres. The virgate was usually equal to a quarter of a hide.

This is the record from the Domesday Book →

Comberton is a lordship village of the King's. 2½ hides. Land for 5 ploughs. In lordship 2; a third possible. 7 villagers and 5 smallholders with 2 ploughs. Meadow for 2 ploughs. It pays 100s at face value; before 1066 it paid as much. This land was always in the King's revenue. With these 2 hides is ½ virgate which a Freeman holds who was not there before 1066. Value then 2s, now 12d. This man was under Earl Waltheof.

In Comberton 2 men hold 2 hides and 2 acres from Picot. Land for 4 ploughs. In lordship 2; 7 villagers with 11 smallholders have 2 ploughs. Meadow for 1 plough. The value is and was 60s; before 1066 £4. 7 Freemen of King edward's held 1 hide and 1 virgate of this land; they found 5 cartages and 3 escorts. 2 other Freemen had 3 virgates and could withdraw; one of them was Archbishop Stigand's man, the other Ear Waltheof's man.

William of Keynes holds 1½ virgates in Comberton. Land for 1 plough; but the plough is not there. Meadow for 1 plough; 1 villager. The value is and always was 10s. A man of Earl Waltheof's held this land; he could grant and sell. The Bishop of Bayeux delivered this land to William, but the men of the Hundred do not know for what reason.

Erchenger the baker holds 1 hide less 20 acres in Comberton from the King. Land for 2 ploughs. In lordship 1 plough; ½ hide less 20 acres. 4 villagers with 8 smallholders have 1 plough. 1 slave; meadow for 4 oxen. Value 30s; when acquired 20s; before 1066, 40s. 3 freemen held this land. One of them, the King's man, had 1 virgate and found ½ cartage; the second, Archbishop Stigand's man, had 1½ virgates; the third, Waltheof's man, had 1½ virgates; they could sell and withdraw.

The National School, the corner shop, the village maze, the Post Office, South Street

Geology and soil types
The village is very rich in different soils – four types to be precise. – Till, River gravels, Gault clay and Marly chalk.

Till
If we start at the north of the village at the corner where Branch Road turns into Green End, the soil is a mixture of chalky, sandy, and flinty clay. This is known as till and was dumped in the recent Quaternary period after the melt of the retreating ice cap at the end of the last ice age, approximately 12,000 years ago. The till lies on a deep layer of Gault clay. The clay holds water as evidenced by the moat in Green End. This region of till continues down Green End to about 150 yards north of the junction with West Street.

River gravels
At this point a second soil type is encountered. The soil becomes much stonier with lots of chalky gravel and flints. Just below the soil surface, the sub structure is packed chalk gravel and freely drained. The gravel continues down South Street to the point where the road begins to dip down to Tit Brook. This gravel bed also crosses the village starting from the college and going east along West Street almost to the junction with Long Road. This is one huge patch of gravel left by a braided river and technically known as the Third River Terrace (an old terrace). Braided rivers occur where there has been a large amount of rock erosion (chalk in this case) by river water (melt water from the ice cap); the gravel spoil is carried downstream and dumped on flat plains. There are remnants of this river terrace running from Toft through Comberton and Barton to Grantchester and then to Cambridge.

Gault clay
The damp ground at the bottom of South Street marks the third soil type – a sticky, less stony Gault Clay. Half way up the hill to the Church, the soil changes again to till, only to revert back to gault on the south side of Royston Lane just beyond the brow of the hill. This gault continues until it reaches a thin band of silt and chalky gravel where the Bourn Brook flows under the road at Fox's Bridge. This is known as the first or second (not clear which) River Terrace deposit and is the most recent.

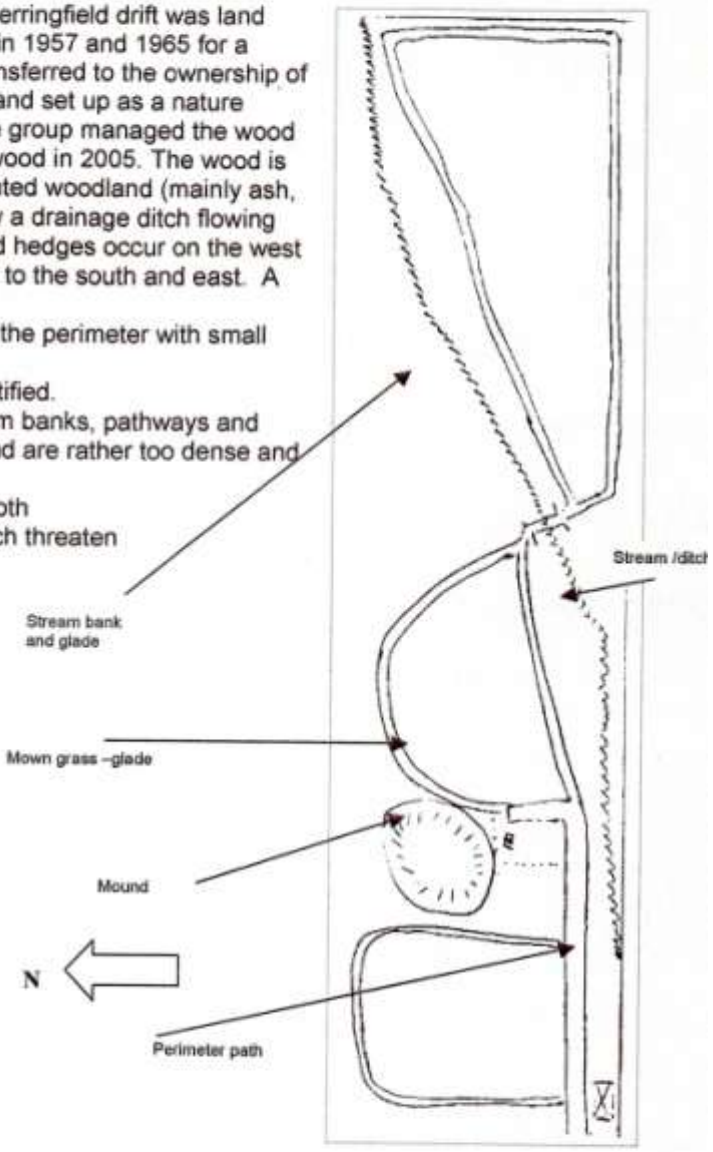
Marly chalk
At the Barton Road end of Comberton, east of Long Road, the soil changes again to a fourth type - a chalk formation known as West Melbury Marly Chalk. There used to be an old chalk pit behind the houses opposite Horizon Park. This chalk contains phosphatic nodules (coprolites) that were valuable as a fertilizer.

Soil types at Brook Cottage and at Costcutters

Woodland

While Comberton can't boast of a wood or a forest of any significance within the village, there is the belt of trees, called Comberton Plantation, which was established in the 19th Century, running along the eastern edge of Long Road. It is evident that the village once was well 'wooded', with the Harbour Avenue area being predominantly greengage and other fruit trees. The 'Spinney' on the Recreation ground, has remained.

Previously Watts Wood to the east of Herringfield drift was land belonging to the church. This was sold in 1957 and 1965 for a pumping station. The land was then transferred to the ownership of South Cambridgeshire District Council and set up as a nature reserve. Comberton Parish Council tree group managed the wood and the Parish Council purchased the wood in 2005. The wood is an area of about 2 ha. It comprises planted woodland (mainly ash, oak, field maple and cherry) bisected by a drainage ditch flowing diagonally south west to north east. Old hedges occur on the west and north, though the boundary is open to the south and east. A network
of paths provides public access around the perimeter with small tracks into the centre.
Five zones within the wood can be identified.
These are woodland, open glade, stream banks, pathways and boundary. Parts of the planted woodland are rather too dense and the glades and
stream bank show vigorous growth of both
perennial and herbaceous species, which threaten the stability of this habitat.



Plan of Watts Wood
Showing paths, ditches and mound

Watts wood with sleeper bridge over Tit brook

Hedgerows

Hedgerows provide safe corridors not only for small mammals but also for birds and bats to fly along. Territorial songbirds will use intermittent trees as song posts and feed from berries in hedges in the winter months. Hawthorn and blackthorn are major contributors to the hedgerows but analysis of other areas within the parish show the presence of hazel, field maple dogwood, damson, sloe and spindle.

Hedging in Long Road

As with woods and ponds, hedgerows need to be sympathetically managed. Creating an A shape (wider base narrower top) helps ensure that the bottom of the hedge does not die, leaving gaps which are suitable for ground nesting birds. It is also beneficial to encourage hawthorn planting within hedges as it is the largest nectar supplying plant in the UK, which provides food for various species of insects. Throughout the village there is evidence of ancient hedgerows (Barrons Way, Westlands, Barton road, South Street, Long Road, West Street) which probably would have been planted to coincide with the Enclosure Act (1845). It is essential that these are preserved and cared for.

Water features

The pond at the centre of the village

Water features in Comberton centre on the duckpond at the village crossroads, which like most of the water features in the village is mostly man-made. The village pond (originally referred to as the Horse pond for obvious reasons) was resurrected in 1953 as a Coronation Memorial. It was again restored in 1972 and again in 1996.

The pond is home to many ducks that are of wild origin, but the larger hidden moat up Green End boasts more genuine wildlife. A new pond in the grounds of Westfield Farm has a pair of islands that hosted a nesting greylag goose in its first year, but Canadian geese have since competed for its water rights. The comprehensive network of ditches are very important for flood prevention, and drain into three Brooks that traverse the village. Bin Brook and Tit Brook have been substantially modified to improve drainage and straighten their courses. Bourn Brook at the southern boundary of the Parish has far fewer nearby houses and has been less modified, which results in more fish and more wildlife as well as more flooding. Bourn Brook is home to moorhens and genuinely wild ducks, has a wide variety of fish from Dace to Pike, and both mink and otter have been seen there.

Drainage ditches fall into one of two categories, riparian and awarded. The vast majority of ditches in Comberton are riparian with only a couple being awarded to South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Tit Brook, awarded to SCDC

Who is a Riparian Owner

Under common law you are the riparian owner of any watercourse within or adjacent to the boundaries of your property. Where a watercourse is sited between two or more property boundaries each owner may be equally responsible.

Riparian Owner Responsibilities

A riparian owner responsibilities include the maintenance of the bank and bed of the section of watercourse, in order to avoid any obstruction of flow in the watercourse.

Riparian Owners and the Law

The responsibilities of a riparian owner are based on legislation. (The Public Health Act 1936, The Land Drainage Acts of 1991 & 1994, Water Resources Act 1991, National Rivers Authority (now the Environment Agency) Land Drainage Byelaws 1981.)

Awarded Watercourses

Comberton has a few watercourses whose care and maintenance has been awarded to the District Council. Awarded watercourses are Tit Brook, part of Swaynes lane ditches and the Barton Road.

In October 2001, after persistent and heavy rainfall, the village suffered major flooding. The awarded watercourse in Barton Road, could not cope!

Agri-environment schemes

Local farmers Mike Tebbit and Tim Scott are participating in the DEFRA funded Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to improve the biodiversity of their farms, which in turn has a knock effect on in the surrounding area.
There are many different habitat improvement options within the scheme, the most obvious are the grass strips (margins) seen around the outsides of fields. These can be sown with grasses and wild flowers or just be left to nature to get on with it (natural regeneration). These act as permanent grass cover, providing yearlong habitat for everything from tiny insects to large game birds. Also many miles of hedges have been planted, some alongside roads, and others within the fields themselves.
On some of the land the wildlife has been monitored, and since the schemes have been in place there has been a steady increase in both numbers and types of species
A Bumble Bee species until recently thought to be extinct has been found in Comberton. This is an example of the success of the scheme.
Part of the land adjacent to Westfield Farm is now in the ownership of the Countryside Restoration Trust.

Ox eye daisies

Planning guidance

1. New development should conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the Parish.

2. Native species of local provenance should be used for new and replacement planting in the wider landscape in order to restore and enhance the rural character of the Parish.

3. Individual trees, woodland and copses, hedgerows, ponds and existing field patterns help to form part of the landscape setting of the Parish and should be conserved and enhanced wherever possible.

4.The (re)planting, restoration and management of hedgerows is encouraged in order to improve the habitat for wildlife.

5. Increasing green spaces and corridors and biodiversity. Ensuring that developers include green areas and follow guidelines for Biodiversity

Patterns of development in the parish

Historical background

Comberton consisted of 4 fields. ***The West Field*** - Land to the west of the village including Birdlines Manor and the midsummer pasture; ***The North Field*** - Land from St Neots Road to North Brook; ***The Stallow*** (Stallan) Field -Land from the road to Cambridge to Bourn Brook including Midsummer Ground; and Clay Pit Hill in the NE and ***The Harborough Field*** -Land from Barton Road to North Brook (Bin Brook)

At the time of the Enclosure Act all the land in these fields was reallocated in blocks so that the farmers had all their property together. In doing this many of the old roads and paths became unnecessary and they were closed and new ones created. By the Act, Lammings Lane, which ran through the Vicarage meadow, was closed.

In September 1850 a fire destroyed a large Tithe Barn at Rectory Manor (Farm) home of William Bonnet; approx £1500 property was destroyed. This fire was described as an act of incendiary and there is some evidence that the fire reached the North door of the church. Rectory Farm also was the home of the brewery and one can only suppose that this was in place at the time when the manor was occupied by the monks of Barnwell Priory.

Industrial and agricultural

In 1851, the village had a population of 548 and the majority were employed on the land. The village also had a shoemaker, butcher, baker, bricklayer, harness maker. But by 1916, the population had fallen to around 440. However, Comberton employed a boot repairer, carpenter, cow-keeper, butcher, cattle dealer, 4 publicans, 2 carriers, grocer, post mistress, beer retailer, sadler, miller, tailor, dressmaker, draper, blacksmith and a mineral water retailer. Coprolites were found in Comberton in considerable abundance, lying near the surface of the soil. Two medieval earthworks just east of Comberton village were systematically destroyed in the coprolite diggings. The first was on Jaggard's Farm, just south of Bin Brook, where the work took place in 1864. The second was in the field northeast of the crossroads. The old saying of '*where there's muck, there's brass*' was certainly true for the folk of Comberton that were involved with the mining. But their source of wealth was short lived.

Today few work on the land and there are just a couple of arable farms.

Harvesting adjacent to Royston Lane. (Radio telescope in the background)

Residential

Comberton currently has 2 developments that could be classed as estates, one at either end of the village. The Harbour Avenue estate (commonly called the Janes Estate after the builders) was built in the mid 1960s and the second Westlands estate (often called the Wales estate again after the builders) was built in the mid 1970s. Although they form the major part of the village's buildings and incorporate features of a more suburban style, they do not overwhelm the rest of the village or undermine its intrinsic rural character. There are several reasons for this. They are well located within the village framework. They lie off the main village road network and are served by cul-de-sacs, which give them an inward looking focus. Consequently, most of their impact on the village is limited to the point of access. This contrasts with most other development in the village, which is spread out along the main road network and serves to emphasise its presence and strengthen its contribution to the village character. The ample areas of public open space that were provided in some of the earlier developments further assist the integration of estate developments within the village. These areas, with their now maturing trees, complement the many greens that are a defining characteristic of the village.

A large executive style house replacing a modest bungalow in the conservation area. This type of re-development must be discouraged in future as it prevents a mixed community in the village.

Social and recreational

The skateboard park and the pavilion

The Recreation Ground could be perceived as one of the main areas of public open space and focus for the village. Edged on the southern boundary by listed trees, 'the rec', as it is known, has children's play equipment, a football pitch, cricket pitch, a skateboard park, youth shelter, pavilion and two hard surface tennis courts. The rec is an important open space and green lung; it is used for community events, informal play and competitive sport.

Planning guidance

6. Any development in Comberton should conserve and enhance views through sympathetic siting, design and landscaping.
7. The impact of the siting, design and layout of future tall development, (such as large buildings, prominent roofs and telecommunication masts) on the wider landscape of the parish should be shown to have been carefully considered by developers.
8. The setting, the trees, open spaces and groups of buildings combine to give distinctness to parts of the village (West Street, South Street, Barton Road, Green End and Swaynes Lane)
9. Encourage the continuation of a mixed community, incorporating a range of forms of development and ownership (flats, bungalows, small terrace, cottage style, etc) and not just 4/5 bedroom executive homes.

10. The setting of Comberton in the wider landscape should be conserved and enhanced by any future development, allowing the village to retain its own identity.

11. Any new development should respect the prevailing settlement pattern and character of its immediate neighbourhood and the village in general.

12. Landscaping should be considered as an integral part of any new development.

13. The 'green lungs' near the pond and the primary school, the Recreation Ground and the greens on the Harbour Avenue estate are highly valued as areas of open space by residents and must be conserved or enhanced by any new development.

14. New, large agricultural buildings, such as barns, should be sited and designed to reduce their apparent mass, and minimize their impact on the wider landscape by the appropriate use of landscaping, texture and appropriate materials

Building design

A detailed analysis of randomly selected photographs of houses taken during the Village Design Statement workshop was undertaken. Objective results obtained from the analysis have proved to be useful in describing the unique character of Comberton.

The Hogger Homes development on the former Stepney's garage site in West Street. An excellent example.

Any new development (including extensions and alterations) should take its cue from what already exists; however, the opportunity to be creative and innovative is available too. The scale of planned extensions to existing buildings should take account of the potential impact on the spaciousness of the area within which they are situated and on neighbours' access to light. Extensions and new-builds should not be allowed to protrude beyond a 45 degree line drawn from the nearest window of a neighboring property.

The Thornbury development adjacent to Herringfield Drift did not take its cue from what existed. It is hoped that it will eventually blend in. Any new development from now on must avoid this type of unsympathetic style.

Opportunities should be taken to learn from the past; what design works in a particular situation and what does not. Where possible extensions to older properties should mimic or blend in with the existing style rather than contrast it. The Village Design Statement is not meant to be prescriptive, it aims to provide guidelines, which can act as a springboard to creative design.

Originally a modest grade 2 listed Stockman's cottage now being extended. The extension now dominates and dwarfs the original cottage

Energy Conservation

The incorporation of energy efficiency measures in design and construction is particularly welcomed. Energy conservation is an important part of the design of future housing and of modifications to existing houses. Current building regulations demand high standards of insulation, glazing and draft proofing, so new housing needs no special emphasis here. In principle the same is true of house modification and extension, but where new windows match existing single-glazed windows in an older house, a compromise is acceptable to South Cambs planners whereby insulation must exceed building regulations elsewhere in the extension, to compensate. However, double-glazed windows can now be made to mimic almost all period single-glazed windows, and this will now be the preferred style for Comberton extensions. There is a specific difficulty in double glazing sash windows, but there are very few in Comberton. The difficulty does not apply to the more common East Anglian horizontal sliding-overlapping windows, as the extra weight of double glazing is not a problem, so again double glazing will now be the preferred style for Comberton house modifications involving these windows

Renewable or sustainable energy

Renewable or sustainable energy is heat or electricity from a source that is perpetual (wind, sunlight, waves) or can be replaced without modifying our environment (burning methane from compost, growing trees and burning them). In suburban environments such as Comberton, every unshaded south-facing roof could support solar water-heating panels, of which about 3 square metres will provide much of a household's hot water for much of the year. These should be encouraged everywhere including in conservation areas, except listed buildings. Natural solar heating via south-facing windows and roof lights should also be encouraged. Solar panels to generate electricity are less cost-effective, but should be encouraged in new builds or where a whole roof is being replaced - in fact the question should be asked why there is not a combination of solar-electric and solar-water panels on every new build with a south-facing roof? Wind generators are more problematic because of their size - 5 m diameter for 5 kW maximum and 1 kW mean power. They are to be welcomed in rural parts of Comberton, but wind generators in the village envelope need caution unless rather smaller.

Solar panels should be encouraged.

An example of a wind farm near Holmfirth, Yorkshire

In general, small-scale renewable energy projects should be encouraged throughout the Parish, not least because we might otherwise find a large-scale project thrust upon us by a higher Council with government targets to meet.

Roofs and Chimneys

In the core of the village there is a goodly collection of 16th and 17th Century lobby houses and possibly a few 13th or 14 century hall houses. A number have retained thatch or a mixture of thatch and pantile though some, possibly due to fire damage in the past, have slate tile. Period chimneys are few and far between, probably due to their being replaced through wear and tear. Interspersed there are the Victorian villas but very few dwellings from the late seventeenth through to the early nineteenth century.

Former farm building with 'Cambridge Buffs' pantiles.

Consequently roofs and chimneys are either thatch or Victorian or later replacements.

A new chimney on a grade 2 listed property in the conservation area. This is an example of good practice

Most brickwork is in Cambridge White but a smattering of Tudor red brick survives here and there in the occasional chimney. Further from the centre the scene is mostly mid 20th century ribbon development with nineteen fifties and sixties housing estates and the use of mass produced concrete tiling and London Brick Company stock.

Gutters, fascias, bargeboards and dripboards

Dripboards on a listed cottage

With the exception of a small number of properties, especially older buildings such as thatched cottages, all houses in Comberton have wooden barge boarding and soffits, and in the vast majority of cases these are painted white with just a handful of houses choosing alternatives such as black or wood-effect colours. While white will probably continue to be the colour of choice for the foreseeable future where wood is rotting it is being replaced not with new wood but with uPVC. This, however, may not be a permanent change in materials as wood preservation science improves this material could come back into favour.

The majority of water drainage off properties in Comberton is through roof guttering to drain pipes connected to the sewer rather than to ground soakaways, this latter method being employed almost exclusively on the estates at the two ends of the village. The only exceptions to this being where extensions have been built, these do tend to use small soakaways. If climate change reduces rainfall further so there is more need for gardeners to collect rain water on-site when it does fall and more residents become aware of the financial savings from the water company that can be made from not directing surface water to the sewers then soakaways may become the norm.

Windows

Horizontal sliding window in a Grade 2 listed cottage

A frequent window design in old houses in Comberton, common in various parts of East Anglia, is horizontally sliding windows. These are typically two windows each of several small panes, one window being fixed and the other sliding sideways to open. The normal sash windows that slide up and down are comparatively rare in the area. Other older windows are also multi-pane, and like the horizontal sliding windows the pane partitioning timbers are narrow to maximise the light throughput. Windows in some post-war houses in Comberton retain multi-pane designs, but many have been replaced with large-pane double glazed frames, often in UPVC.

Doors and porches

Front doors in Comberton, are predominantly manufactured from wood or uPVC. In the vast majority of cases they are characterised by small windows at the top of the door thus hiding the dwelling's internal rooms. In the case of the houses to the North of the Jane's estate this is in panes through which the house's hallway could be clearly seen. Although gaining in popularity porches remain the exception rather than the rule for properties. Where dwellings were built with porches in the past they are typically small with large glass panes, not double glazed, forming the door and walls and with a flat roof however where porches have been added to dwellings as an extension they are often larger, brick rather than glass, constructions with pitched roofs, being more of a room in themselves. A stark contrast to the doors fitted when the houses were originally built which consisted of two large glass panes.

Built environment and parking

Car parking issues in The Valley, frequently garages are not used for vehicles.

There are areas within the village where there is insufficient parking. The street scene must not be dominated by parked cars; they should be relegated to the side or rear of the development plot or located in small courts. It is important that garages are of sufficient size to accommodate a car together with some degree of storage, to avoid cars being displaced into the street. Individual garages or small areas of local car parking spaces should be provided (not garage blocks) behind or close to new dwellings, avoiding central garaging.

Parking facilities are viewed as public spaces that have cars in them at certain times, and should be created as attractive functional spaces, with planting used to avoid the street scene becoming dominated by the view of cars. The retention of existing trees, in combination with appropriate landscape materials and detailing, can create low key and attractive parking areas.

Boundary fences and hedges

Most properties have clear boundaries, although they do take a variety of forms:
More recently built estates tend to have open-plan gardens with greater homogeneity in the boundary materials, appropriate to the age and style of the properties. Hedges are not always practical due to their maintenance implications. Well-designed low walls and fences can be attractive.
Plot boundaries beside public roads, paths or scenic views should be defined by using natural features, native species hedging, low picket fencing or low weathered brick walls.

A low brick wall and hedging on the Janes Estate

Low post and rail fence at the entrance to a rural lane

The overall effect of passing through Comberton is one of greenness. This is achieved through the presence of field hedgerows and remnants of field hedgerows in property boundaries. There is a fair level of domestic planting too, most gardens have trees in them and this is combined with a predominance of evergreen hedges, Laurel, privet and leylandii. New hedge planting should be of native species to redress the imbalance of evergreen versus native/mixed species. Comberton has a number of trees that are locally significant.
Some of them have Tree Preservation Orders on them.

Drives

Driveways can be divided into three main groups for the vast majority of dwellings in Comberton. Group one would be a minority of larger houses built as separate dwellings rather than within an estate environment, away from the road. Typical examples of these can be seen in Green End where the drives are wide and long, capable of providing parking for many vehicles.

Group two is specific to the Jane's estate where a number of houses have no drive next to the property, instead residents are required to park in garage blocks and walk a short distance to their homes. Sadly the residents rarely consider this viable and so these areas are ignored in favour of on-street parking. Lastly, group 3, the majority of homes in Comberton are characterised by having short, maybe two car lengths, drives next to the dwelling. The fact that this forms the main drive type in Comberton is not surprising although what perhaps is somewhat unusual is the number of residents who choose to only park one car on the drive and leave their second vehicle on the road even if that means parking some distance from their house.

Comberton has a wide variety of surface for driveways, ranging from block paving, gravel and tarmac. A high proportion of driveways in the conservation area are gravel.

A fine example of a well preserved listed building, with gravel drive and fruit trees

Planning guidance

15. New development should reinforce the shape and form of the village by continuing to be designed in a parallel alignment to the road

16. Any new development should have due regard to the scale and siting of neighbouring properties and of any property it replaces (for example a bungalow to replace an bungalow or at most a 1.5 storey to replace a single storey)

17. Any new development, however small, should respect the prevailing design features of the parish. This does not mean that new or innovative designs will be rejected, indeed they would be welcomed but they should display a thorough understanding of the style, materials and vernacular of the area.

18. Extensions to existing buildings should use similar materials that match the original development and should be sympathetic in style, scale and proportion.

19. Modern roofs should try to incorporate a degree of complexity in their design through the use of hipped and half-hipped roofs.

20. Developers should give careful consideration to the position, size and detail of windows when designing roof conversions. Roof lights should where possible be situated to the rear or side of a property.

21. Guttering and down pipes should be discreet and appropriate to the design and age of the house.

22. When replacing existing period frames or panes in period windows, or when installing matching period frames in an extension to an old or listed building, serious consideration should be given to double glazing where it is possible within the confines of the frame. This is difficult because of the narrow pane partitioning timbers, but double glazing is important because it prevents condensation and so rotting of the frame, as well as reducing heat loss

23. New build houses should use wooden window and door frames rather than UPVC, for sustainability. Note that modern timber frames are long-lasting with excellent draught proofing. Windows should be multi-pane designs, unless the design of the rest of the building is ultra-modern so that large single-pane windows would be in keeping.

24. Extensions and modifications to modern houses in the conservation areas should use timber-framed multi-pane windows.

25. Doors that are appropriately designed for the age and style of the property, are encouraged.

26. Developers/householders should carefully consider the visual impact of the location and design of garages and other ancillary garden buildings on their surroundings and the wider street scene.

27. Property boundaries should be rural in character and content. Traditional styles of brickwork, hedging and fencing are preferable. Emphasis should be given to achieving a more cohesive effect, especially where boundaries are viewed from the road.

28. In the conservation area driveways are characterised by loose gravel materials. Future developments should try to match these, using bound natural materials.

The street scene

Footways

The majority of pavements within the village are black tarmac, with the exception of the pavement running through the sensory garden in Harbour Avenue, which is tarmac with rolled gravel.

The rolled gravel path and replica maze at the Sensory garden, Harbour Avenue

Tarmac path at the pond

Street furniture

Sign reproduction in excess

A variety of traffic signs are located along the road verges throughout the parish, there are also rural footpath signs. There are "Comberton Twinned with Le Vaudreuil" village name signs on Barton Road and West Street. The approaches to the village are currently overpopulated with road signage.
There is a need for approximately ¾ of the existing signs to be either removed or relocated to reduce the clutter

Street furniture grouped to reduce a cluttered appearance

Rustic bus shelter in West Street

Rustic bin and bench in Barton road

Planning guidance

29. Street furniture should be sited with sensitivity and grouped to reduce any visual clutter.

30. Ensure that road, street and directional signs are erected only where absolutely necessary, are as unobtrusive as possible and do not impede pedestrian flow.

31. Install paving, bus shelters, streetlights and other street furniture to respect the traditional and rural character of the village.

32. When new signs of any type are introduced, existing poles should be used where possible and opportunities should be taken to amalgamate signs.

Open Spaces

The spaces between, around and in front of buildings can be as important as the buildings themselves. Responses to the questionnaires, reflected in this Design Statement, showed unequivocally that the people of Comberton greatly value the village's open spaces and green lungs.

Looking South from Barton Road.

An aerial shot of Comberton showing the large areas of green space (edged in red) that must be preserved

Planning guidance

33. Retain and encourage informal open spaces in their natural state where they provide a visual public amenity and habitats for flora and fauna

34. Ensure that plans for development also provide open space for informal recreation, either on the site or in another part of the parish.

35 .Encourage the retention of all hedgerows, trees and copses for both ecological and scenic reasons, particularly in rural parts of the parish.

Street lighting and light pollution

Sodium lamps with photoelectric cells light the village envelope. These lamps have been housed in concrete. Gradually aluminium columns are replacing these. Recent installation of traffic calming measures has resulted in a new style of lamping, which has created light pollution. Another major cause of light pollution within the vicinity is the floodlighting at Comberton Leisure. These lights are clearly visible from all approaches to the village. Pressure must be placed on industries and organisations to adapt existing lighting to reduce light pollution.

Planning guidance

36. Ensure that when street, site and security lighting is needed or replaced, it is no brighter than needed for the purpose and that it is directed only to the area required without causing nuisance or pollution to the sky at night. Pre-existing lighting that conflicts with this requirement should be modified.

37. Street lighting is considered to be an urbanising feature in this rural location and its necessity should be very carefully considered before inclusion in any new development.

38. Any retail, industrial or security lighting should be carefully designed and sited so as not to increase light pollution.

Footpaths and Roads

The following public rights of way exist around the village. They referred to by their public footpath (FP), byway (BW) and bridleway (B) numbers.
Green End to Hardwick (FP4). This joins Hardwick's Millennium Footpath.
Long Road to Common Farm (FP1) and Starve Goose Plantation (B2).
Long Road to Coton (B3). Swaynes Lane to Barton Road (FP5). Swaynes Lane to The Drift (FP6). The Herringfield Drift to Fox's Bridge (BW7 and BW10). The Drift east to Lords Bridge (BW10 FP11).The Causeway to Comberton Church (FP8). End of Church Lane (BW12). Church Farm Cottages west to Toft (FP9).

Planning guidance

39. Require that new developments provide paths, sensitively lit where appropriate, which link with the existing network of interconnecting footpaths, roads, streets or passageways.

40. Retain and improve the existing footpaths and bridleway network throughout the parish.

41. When considering new footways, the character of the narrow winding lanes, Swaynes, Hines and Branch should be carefully considered and their rural nature must be preserved.

42. Where appropriate, new development should incorporate and signpost rights of way, which link into the existing network of public rights of way.

Wirescape

Most electrical distribution throughout the parish is by overhead lines. Modern housing estates such as Harbour Avenue and Barrons Way have power supplies that have been placed underground and wirescape does not exist; this is preferable. The conservation area, in particular, would benefit from the removal of unsightly wires and poles.

Planning guidance

43. In the interests of conserving and enhancing the rural nature of Comberton, all new cabling should, where possible, be laid underground.

44. When any upgrading or maintenance of existing cabling occurs, this replacement should be underground.

Public Art

Comberton contains a few examples of public art. There is the sundial on the wall at the entrance of the Meridian School, commemorating the silver Jubilee of the school, it has the added attraction of being by a local artist. The sensory garden situated on Harbour Avenue, commemorating the Queen's Golden Jubilee, provides an attractive place to sit on a sunny day, hopefully with a pleasing aroma. There is also a scale painted and stone replica of the turf maze that lies buried under the tarmac playground at the crossroads.

The memorial on the corner of Swaynes Lane and Barton Road

And then there is perhaps the most controversial addition...the memorial on the corner of Swaynes Lane and Barton Road. South Cambridgeshire District Council and Comberton Parish Council jointly funded this public art project. It was the result of public consultation and workshops involved schools and parishioners. Although rather stark when it first arrived, with the growth of the landscaping around it, it is now settling into its setting. This commemorates the lives of those who have lived in and served the community.

Public art in the village should be an expression of the village and its people, helping to enhance the surroundings in which we live. If at all possible, it would be nice to have a local connection, either through the artist or commemorating a village event or something in its history.

This is particularly true of the conservation area, where art should fit in harmoniously with whatever is there.

Commercial, industrial and village amenities

The Commercial centre in Green End

Despite giving the appearance of only the one shop in the village (a small supermarket with Post Office), Comberton has much more. We currently boast a Butcher, Antiques shop, Garden Design shop, Plant Nursery and part time Kebab stall, as well as a large empty shop awaiting redevelopment. Other traders and industrial developments are even more numerous, with several companies trading from the industrial estates at either end of the village (Horizon Park and Bennell Court), as well as a Coal merchant, Computer business, Garage, Solicitors' office, Accountant, Pub (of course), and even a Camp Site. The Village College hosts a variety of amenities that are open to the general public or available on a commercial basis, including a Building Society, Gym with specialist fitness training, 600-seat auditorium for music concerts and other events, and a Library.

Highfield Farm Touring site

Good Neighbours

Having a good neighbour makes life much better for everyone. This can be encouraged from the very beginning, which is the planning stage. It is therefore essential that a "Good Neighbour" clause be added to planning consents.

Green Belt (Policy GB1)

The Cambridge Green Belt is an established planning policy that seeks to prevent urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements with the aim of preserving the setting of the city.
The Parish has seen Policy GB1 and related Green Belt policies put into action when recent applications to convert green belt to residential land or to extend village framework boundary to produce residential land have failed.

Area of Best Landscape (Policy EN1)

Most of the Parish is an Area of Best Landscape and defined by Structure Plan Policy SP12/2 as the Clay plateau to the west of Cambridge. SCDC will not grant planning permission to developments that affect the Area of Best Landscape.

Group Village Status (Policy SE6 and SE7)

The Cambridgeshire structure plan (Policies SP3/3 and SP3/4) limits development of settlements, taking into account the physical and environmental capacity for growth; the availability for and capacity of community facilities, public transport and other infrastructure; the need to support the quality and vitality of community life. Although Comberton meets some of the criteria for being a Limited Rural Growth settlement, having good educational facilities and reasonable public transport, its Village Framework is very closely defined by Green Belt and so has very limited capacity for development. Based on these policies, Comberton has been defined as a Group Village. Within the physical framework of the built-up area, residential development will be restricted to groups of not more than 8 dwellings or infilling of individual properties. This is achieved through the use of undeveloped land; subdivision of an existing dwelling or use of non-residential buildings and the last of these can only be permitted if it does not result in loss of local employment. Industrial and commercial development can occur but only on a small scale.

Conservation Area (Polices EN42-54 and others)

Comberton's conservation area is mainly located around the cross roads of the village with an additional part around the Church of St Mary's. The District Council has a duty to preserve and enhance the conservation area, policy EN42. It also has a duty to re-appraise the existing conservation areas, policy EN43, including considering the appropriateness of the boundaries and development of guidelines to enhance the area.

Protected Village Amenity Area (Policy SE15)

There is an area within the village designated as a Protected Village Amenity Area with development of the area controlled by Policy SE15. The purpose of this policy is to identify land within Village Frameworks that is important to the amenity of the village and should be protected for their own sake and prevents any development on that land.

Important Countryside Frontages (Policy SE16)

The purpose of this policy is to maintain the countryside setting of settlements such as Comberton. It stresses the importance to the village street scene of open countryside that penetrates the settlement, giving important views out to countryside, which is itself excluded from the village framework. This policy can prevent any development, even that which may need to be located in the countryside, along those frontages.

Lords Bridge Radio Telescope Areas (Policy SP18/15)

Approximately half of the parish and the vast majority of the village are affected by this policy, which is designed to minimise interference to the equipment used at the Lords Bridge Research Centre. The policy defines a larger area, the Consultation Area, in which the risks to the research centre will be assessed. In the smaller area, the Restricted Area, industrial development is not permitted.

Planning guidance

45. With any substantial scale development (anything over 2) there should be the requirement to provide appropriate public art in consultation with the village or a commuted sum for the upkeep and enhancement of existing art in the village.

46. Planning informatives should contain a 'Good neighbour' condition - no work starting before 8:00am or finishing after 6pm, no work after 1pm on Saturdays, or on Sundays or Bank Holidays. No inconsiderate parking of workers vehicles or loud music being played throughout the working day. The site to be left clear, tidy and free of unnecessary detritus at the end of each day.

47. Important countryside frontages within the village must be protected and enhanced.

48. All protected village amenity areas identified within the Village Framework must be protected for their own sake and any development on that land must be prevented.

49. The Group Village status of Comberton must be protected and enforced. Within the physical framework of the built-up area, residential development must be restricted to groups of not more than 8 dwellings or infilling of individual properties.

50. The present conservation area should be increased to include listed buildings and important historical sites in Green End.

The village design working group would like to thank the following for their help and support:
South Cambridgeshire District Council, Planning and Conservation officers.
Cambridgeshire County Council, Dr Sue Oosthuizen, the County Records Office and finally the parishioners of Comberton, past and present!

Concluding remarks

The village has grown organically over the centuries and exhibits a wide mixture of housing types. The village itself will never be of the 'chocolate box' variety. Nevertheless, the aim of this Statement is to retain what is special about it and to enhance that particular quality through any new development that may occur. Innovative design solutions are welcomed where they respect the local design vernacular and materials. Comberton will continue to grow and evolve, and any improvements to its outward appearance, which result from this Village Design Statement, will be very welcome.

Aerial view showing part of the Parish of Comberton

Appendices

1. Listed buildings

What is a listed building?

A listed building is one that has been included in a register prepared by English Heritage. It may be listed because of its age, architectural interest, historical interest or group value.

Listed buildings are classified into three categories of importance and protection:

Grade 1	**Buildings of exceptional interest**
Grade 2*	**Particularly important buildings of more than special interest**
Grade 2	**Buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them**

What does listing include?

- the building itself (both internal and external)
- any object or structure fixed to the building
- any object or structure within the curtilage of the site/grounds which may affect the setting of the building. This may include modern buildings within the grounds of an older building.

Please note that there is no such thing as a partially-listed building. The whole building, including all elevations, roof, interiors, garden walls and so on is listed. This applies to all three categories

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is an area declared by the local authority as one which warrants special attention to preserve its social, historic or architectural character. Not all buildings within the area are necessarily listed, but consent to carry out works to them which may affect the character of the area may be necessary.

What is the effect of listing?

Any building awarded listing or conservation area status is subject to restrictions on what can and cannot be done to it. Any demolition or work which may affect the historic character of the building may require an application for consent from the local authority. Simply because a building is listed does not mean that applications will be refused. Some alterations or adaptations can be beneficial and may be encouraged.

What if consent is not obtained?

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act, 1990 makes it a criminal offence to demolish a listed building, or alter or extend it in any way that would affect its character, without prior consent. Penalties for failing to comply with the legislation may be a fine of up to £20,000 or a prison sentence of up to 2 years.

Why is listing so important?

Historic buildings are unique - once destroyed or damaged they can never genuinely be replaced. Owning a listed building represents a commitment to the nation's heritage in preserving it for future generations to appreciate.
It is essential that any listed building is maintained in a sympathetic and technically appropriate manner to ensure that it retains as much of its historic and architectural integrity as possible.

Typical examples of what should be avoided...(by no means an exhaustive list)

- Replacement of cast iron rainwater goods with Upvc
- Replacement of lead flat roofs with mineral felt
- Removal of timber panelling or original fireplaces
- Redecoration with modern paints
- Repairs to stonework with cement-based materials instead of lime
- Removal of ornate plaster ceilings and cornices
- Repointing of walls with cement-based mortar instead of lime mortar
- Replacement of lime render with cement-based materials
- Replacement of traditional clay tiles or natural slates with concrete tiles
- Replacement of traditional timber windows and doors with aluminium or Upvc

South Street

No. 1	Cross Farmhouse	Grade 2
No. 2	East Holme	Grade 2
No 3	Stables	Grade 2
No. 5	Pigeon House	Grade 2
No. 18	Horseshoe Cottage	Grade 2
No. 28	The Retreat	Grade 2
No. 43	Old Close Farm	Grade 2
No. 48 & 50	Birdlines Manor Farmhouse	Grade 2

Swaynes Lane

No. 2	Dormers	Grade 2
No. 4	The Cottage	Grade 2
No. 26	Meadowside	Grade 2
No. 40	Greenways	Grade 2
No. 41		Grade 2
No. 59	Brock Close	Grade 2
No. 61	Dove Cottage	Grade 2
No. 63 & 65		Grade 2
No. 69	Sunnyside	Grade 2

Brock Close & 63

West Street

No 2		Grade 2
No. 9	Morcott	Grade 2
No. 10	Thistledown	Grade 2
No. 13		Grade 2
No. 14, 16	Butchers cottage	Grade 2
No. 15 & 17	Oakdene	Grade 2
No. 18		Grade 2
No. 28 & 30		Grade 2
No. 38	Millyard	Grade 2
No. 39	Westview	Grade 2
No. 40	The Old Plough	Grade 2
No. 54	Oaklands	Grade 2
No. 57	Kentings Cottage	Grade 2

Millyard

Barton Road

No. 8		Grade 2
No 16	Hawks Farmhouse	Grade 2
No 21	Cambridge Lane Farmhouse	Grade 2
No. 36	Woottens Farmhouse	Grade 2

The Causeway /Church Lane

Church Farmhouse and barns		Grade 2
Glebe Cottage		Grade 2 *
The Cottage		Grade 2
Church of St Mary		Grade 1

Green End

No. 19	The Manor House	Grade 2
No. 22	Apple Cottage	Grade 2
No. 51	Manor Farmhouse	Grade 2

Glebe Cottage

Hines Lane

No. 2	Ponders House	Grade 2
No. 12		Grade 2

South Lane

No. 1	Horseshoe Cottage	Grade 2

2. Planting

Comberton is a developed urban area within a distinct rural environment. This can be preserved and enhanced if planting schemes are sympathetic and inappropriate species avoided. Most of the soils in the village are derived from chalky boulder clay so that rhododendrons and similar acid loving plants should be avoided unless extensive peat beds are prepared. The climate of eastern England also precludes many less hardy plants, though a number of frost sensitive species can be cultivated with care or protection.

Gardens and hedges

The wide range of plants available in garden centres provides unparalleled diversity, so that people can develop almost any ideas and plans they may have for their gardens.

When planning any planting scheme, it is important to consider the surroundings and the framework around which you will develop your ideas. Avoid plants which are inappropriate; for example: poisonous such as laburnum, tall trees which will eventually obscure your garden or obstruct you neighbour's light (even silver birch will grow to over 15 metres high), produce very dense canopies, drop leaves into ponds or are invasive such as Russian vine, which might cover well an old shed, but which is almost impossible to manage and eradicate when it has outgrown its site. Smaller cultivars of many ornamental trees and shrubs would be the preferred choice, all else being equal. Large trees are more suited to parks and extensive gardens than most gardens in Comberton.

Many excellent hedging plants are available without the need to use laurel, privet or Leylandii. Hedges may need to be trimmed at least once a year to keep them tidy. Trimming is simplest if height and breadth are controlled so that cutting can be done from ground level. Strictly speaking no hedges should exceed 2 metres in height, or be allowed to grow over public footpaths.

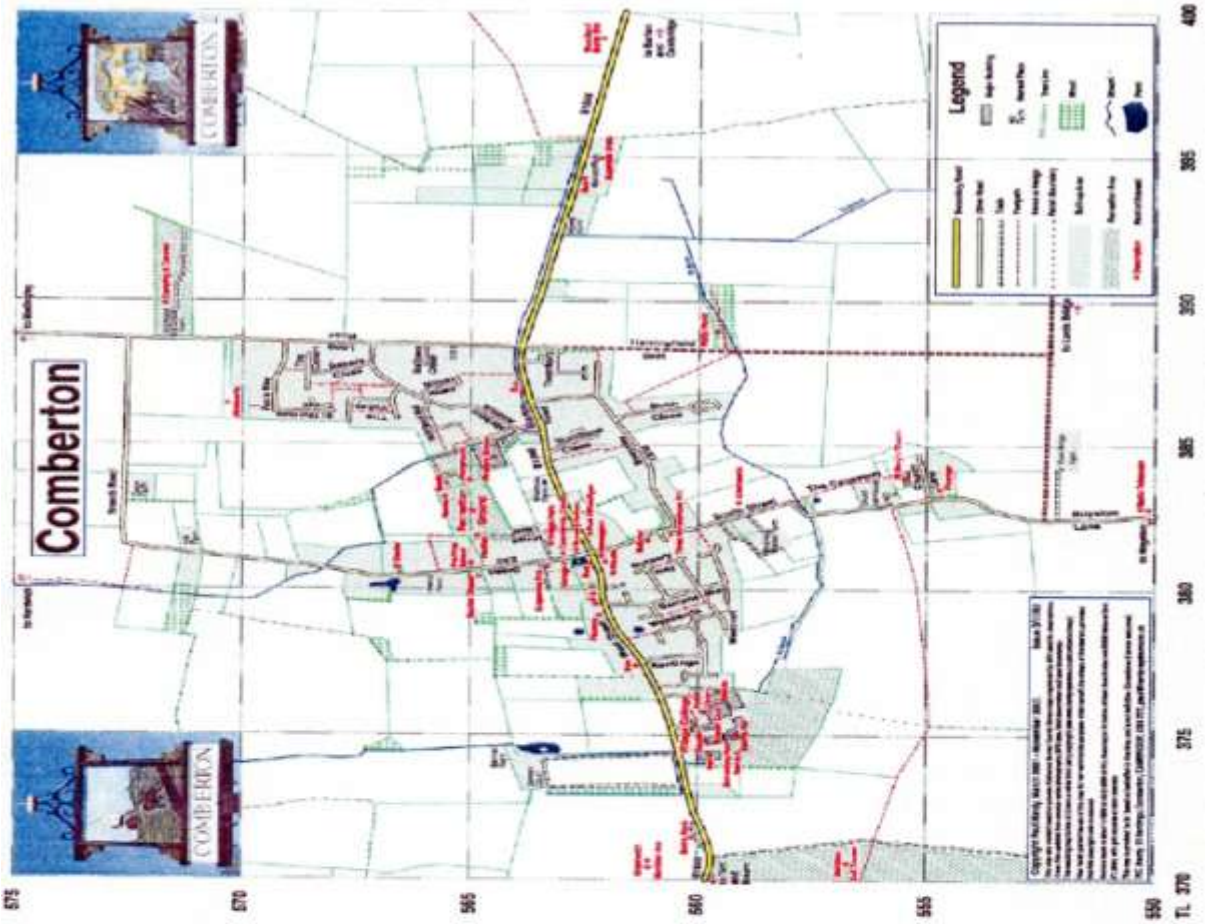
Ponds are useful for creating biodiversity in the garden, but they present a serious risk to small children.

Public open spaces

The Parish Council does consider the opportunities for small scale ornamental plantings as and when appropriate. In general native species or their varieties are preferred simply because they encourage local biodiversity. The aim is to cut most hedges biennially to maximise benefits to wildlife.

Further information

Guidance and advice on plantings can be obtained from many sources, including local garden centres and the Royal Horticultural Society. Their website (http://www.rhs.org.uk/) contains information on topics of interest to gardeners and a special area to aid plant selection for specific uses, parts of which are open to non members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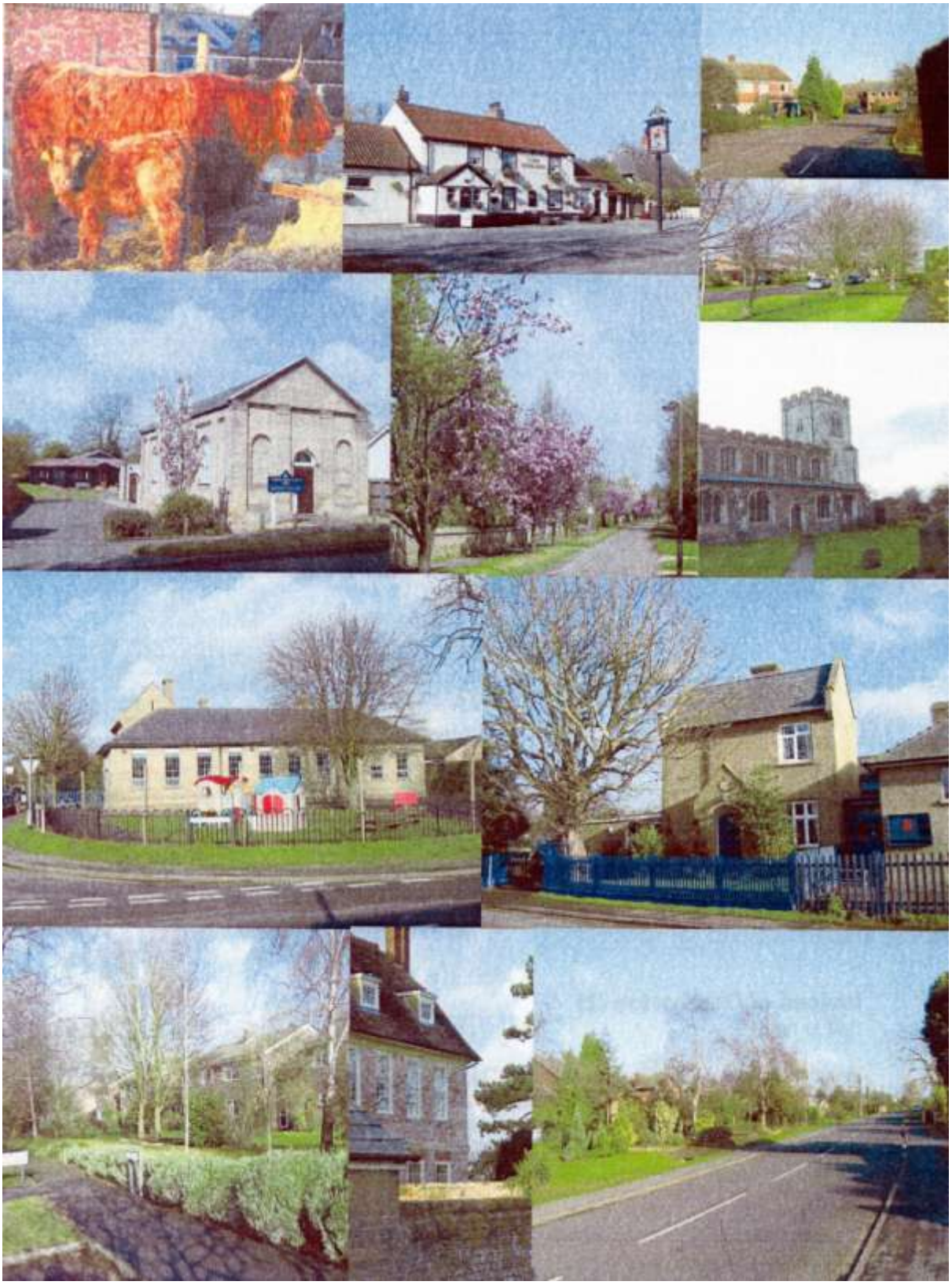
Images of Comberton
(left to right)

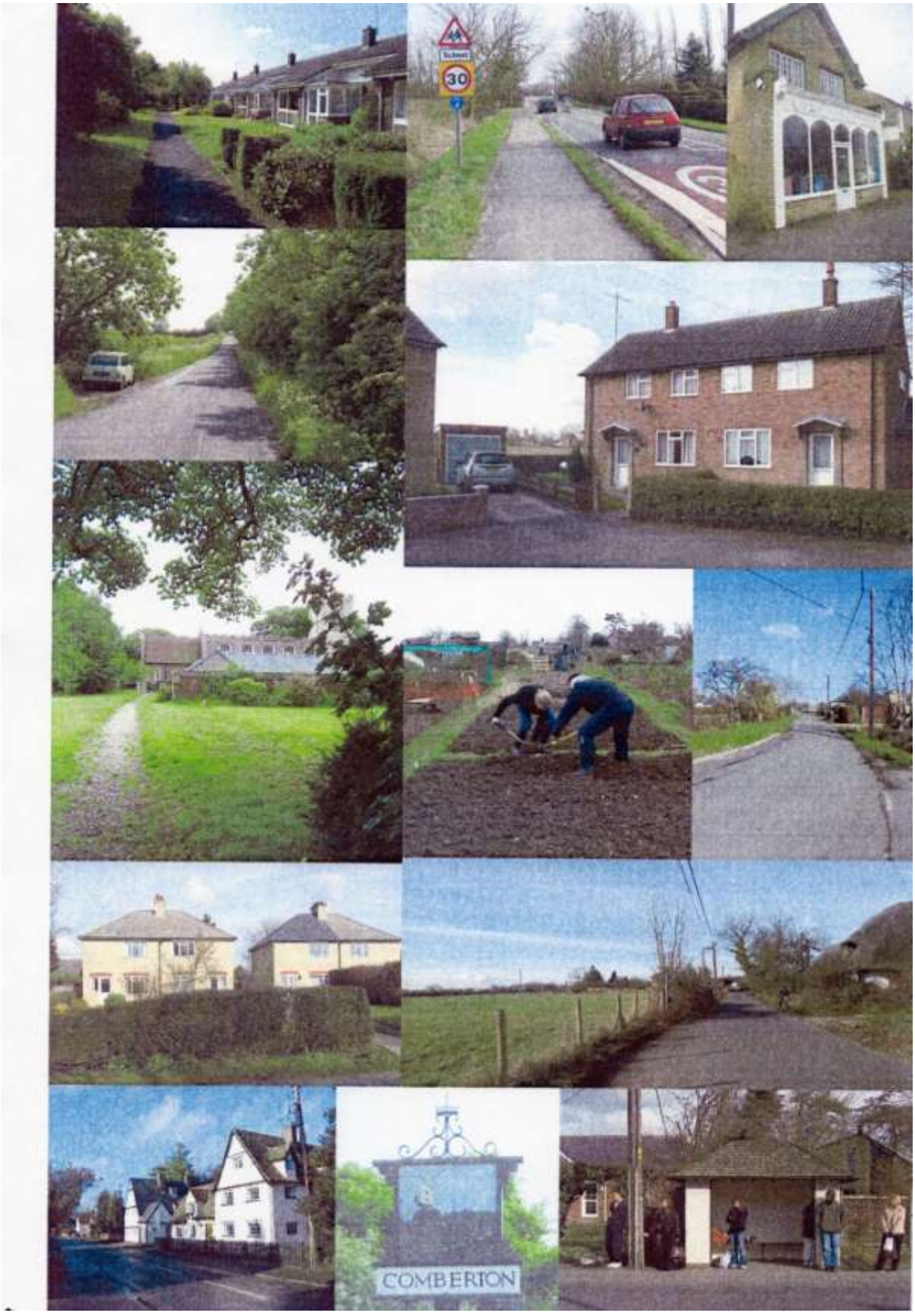
Highland cattle, The 3 Horseshoes. Harbour Avenue, Kentings, The Baptist Church, Green End, St Mary's Church, The Playgroup, the Old School house, Barrons Way, Church Farmhouse, Barton Road



Images of Comberton (2)

(left to right)

Westlands, West Street traffic calming, Garden design shop, branch road, Bush close, St Mary's Church, Shepherds allotments, Swaynes Lane looking north, Swaynes Lane, Swaynes Lane looking west, West Street, Comberton Sign, Barton Road bus stop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