

South Norfolk Council

South Norfolk
Local Landscape Designations Review

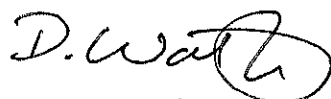
Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks

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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a circular flourish.

Dominic Watkins

Position

Director

Date

28th September 2012

Revision

FINAL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 South Norfolk Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a desk based review of potential local landscape designations (LDDs) proposed for the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). Based on the recommendations of this study¹, the Council re-commissioned CBA to undertake further more detailed work to validate, and where necessary update, the boundaries of the LDDs.

1.1.2 This report examines the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks that are proposed between the following settlements.

- Wymondham and Hethersett.
- Hethersett and Cringleford.
- Easton and Costessey.

1.1.3 The extents of the potential Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks are as proposed in the Consultation Draft Site Specific Policies and Allocations DPD².

1.1.4 The Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area and the Norwich Bypass Landscape Protection Zone LDDs are considered as separate reports.

1.2 Study Objectives

1.2.1 In line with the Brief, the objectives of this study are:

- To justify each of the proposed Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks in terms of their function.
- To clearly define and justify the precise boundaries/extents of each proposed Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks, only including land that can clearly be demonstrated to achieve the aims of the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks policy.
- To identify any necessary changes to the existing boundaries/extents of the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks.

¹ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review (June 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

² South Norfolk Local Development Framework – Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document and Long Stratton & Wymondham Area Action Plans: 2nd Public Consultation (Regulation 25), 29th August -18th November 2011 (South Norfolk Council)

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The Government's current planning policies on different aspects of land use planning in England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework³ (NPPF). The NPPF came into effect on 27th March 2012, replacing previously published planning policy statements and guidance in England.

2.1.2 In contrast to the more prescriptive approach to LLDs set out in previous Government policy (PPS7), the NPPF does not rule out that locally valued landscapes may be identified and protected through designation by local planning authorities. The key requirements of the NPPF for local planning authorities to consider in relation to landscape protection policies are:

- The Government recognises that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be protected for its own sake.
- The Government recognises that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced commensurate with their status.
- Local planning authorities should set criteria-based landscape protection policies.
- Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to the protection of green infrastructure networks.
- Local planning authorities should give great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Local planning authorities should base landscape policies on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence.
- Landscape character assessments should be integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and landscape sensitivity assessments should be prepared for major expansion areas.

³ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, March 2012)

2.2 Joint Core Strategy

2.2.1 In March 2011, a Joint Core Strategy⁴ was adopted for the Councils of South Norfolk, Norwich City and Broadland. The key requirements of the adopted Joint Core Strategy in relation to landscape protection policies within South Norfolk's DPDs are:

- DPDs should seek to retain the locally distinctive character of rural areas in accordance with the JCS's spatial vision.
- DPDs should seek to protect 'key landscapes of acknowledged regional or local importance' in order to comply with a core planning objective of the JCS.
- The JCS requires that DPDs should safeguard and enhance environmental 'assets of local importance' (including landscape and historic landscape character, countryside and rural character and the setting of Norwich, towns and villages and the Broads).
- DPDs should recognise that assets of local importance are valuable in their own right, and in combination provide a significant resource for the JCS area.
- DPDs should maintain strategic gaps between Wymondham, Hethersett and Cringleford in relation to planning of major new/expanded communities.
- DPDs should protect the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area.
- DPDs should protect the landscape setting of the Broads.

2.3 Summary

2.3.1 Taking into account the NPPF's requirements and the absence of specific guidance or accepted practice, it is generally acknowledged that local planning authorities seeking to include LLD policies in their local plans should:

- Make a specific case for the LLDs based on factors unique to its area (relating to the particular characteristics of the landscape and its development pressures).
- Show that the boundaries of areas to be designated as LLD can be defended using a clear methodology based on a robust Landscape Character Assessment undertaken in accordance with best practice.

⁴ Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (Adopted March 2011)

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The methodology for justifying and, where necessary, recommending amendments to the boundaries and extents of each Strategic Gap/Important Break involved desk-based studies, field survey work and boundary reviews as described below⁵.

3.2 Desk-Based Studies

- 3.2.1 This stage involved a review of the existing landscape context for each Strategic Gap/Important Break, including:

- Local topography, drainage, vegetation and settlement patterns;
- Opportunities for access and movement, including public rights of way and permissive bridleways; and
- Existing landscape character areas, as defined in Volume 2 of the 2001 South Norfolk Landscape Assessment.

- 3.2.2 A review of OS maps, aerial photographs and residential planning applications consented since 2001 (both built and unimplemented) was undertaken to help establish existing landscape conditions and to inform landscape baseline mapping. The mapping of consented residential developments provided by the Council was restricted to 10 units and above. Recreational developments of any significant size (e.g. grounds of a potential new rugby club) were also mapped. All known Local Plan 'Preferred Options' Development Site Allocations' were also mapped to identify future development pressures and potential changes in the landscape.

3.3 Field Survey Work

- 3.3.1 Field survey work was undertaken in September 2012 to establish existing landscape and visual conditions, including verification of the relevant parts of the existing South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment. The survey was restricted to publically accessible places (roads, public rights of way, etc) and was carried out at a time of year when vegetation was in leaf. A set of landscape and visual appraisal photographs taken at this time was used to assist in the appraisal of the functions, boundaries and extents of each proposed Strategic Gap/Important Break.

⁵ In line with Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Agency)

- 3.3.2 The survey involved a landscape and visual appraisal of the land both within each Strategic Gap/Important Break and in their immediate environs. This included identification of land uses, vegetation, settlement form, physical features marking existing gap/break boundaries, views, inter-visibility (i.e. visibility between settlements), intra-visibility (i.e. the ability to see settlement edges on both sides of a gap from a single point) and landscape character.

3.4 Review of the Strategic Gap/Important Breaks

- 3.4.1 In addition to reviewing the appropriateness of the three proposed Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks in the Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document⁶, consideration is also given as to whether or not other areas of open countryside within the District should be included as Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks based on an appraisal of factors such as size of settlements, distance between settlements and development pressures.
- 3.4.2 The two basic purposes of a strategic gap designation, as identified by CBA through a review of the findings of previous Local Plan and planning appeal inquiries, are as follows:
- to protect the setting and separate identity of settlements, and avoid coalescence; and
 - to retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of the land.
- 3.4.3 CBA have used these two basic purposes to identify whether or not it is appropriate in planning terms to designate an area as a Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks, i.e. does an area of land (1) help avoid coalescence, thereby protecting the setting and separate identity of settlements, and (2) help maintain the openness of the land, thereby retaining the existing settlement pattern.
- 3.4.4 The findings from the desk-based studies and field work have been used to (1) appraise and justify the contribution that the land within each Strategic Gap/Important Break makes to the openness of these gaps and the avoidance of settlement coalescence, (2) identify any potential amendments that may be necessary to the precise extents and boundaries of each Strategic Gap/Important Break, only including land that can clearly demonstrated to achieve the aims of the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks policy.
- 3.4.5 The following factors have been have been adopted, in accordance with the findings of previous Local Plan and planning appeal inquiries, to inform the appraisal of Strategic Gap/Important Break openness:

⁶ Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document of the South Norfolk Local Development Framework, 3rd Public Consultation (Regulation 18), 3 September - 26 October 2012

- Landscape context.
- Topography and drainage.
- Vegetation.
- Land uses.
- Access and movement (public rights of way etc).
- Visual characteristics, including inter-visibility and intra-visibility.
- Sense of leaving, or departing from, a settlement.

3.4.6 The appraisals also included consideration of the important components and qualities of each Strategic Gap/Important Break, including factors that contribute to rural character, the openness of each Strategic Gap/Important Break and the prevention of settlement coalescence.

3.4.7 Consideration was also given to the existing boundaries of each Strategic Gap/Important Break to determine whether they are appropriate in terms of including only the land that is strictly necessary to fulfil the essential purpose of a Strategic Gap/Important Break gap (i.e. visual and physical separation between settlements), and whether they follow easily identifiable and logical features resulting in a defensible boundaries.

4.0 WYMONDHAM - HETHERSETT STRATEGIC GAP/IMPORTANT BREAK

4.1 Landscape Context

- 4.1.1 The gap/break between Wymondham and Hethersett (**Figure 4.1**) is approx. 2-2.5km long, 1-1.5km wide and is located in a predominantly rural area southwest of Norwich. The B1172 passes through the centre of the gap/break and the A11 passes along its southern boundary.
- 4.1.2 The gap/break landscape has been appraised below at both district and local level. The appraisal makes reference to various landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix A**), the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 4.2**.
- 4.1.3 The gap/break lies within the D1 Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland Landscape Character Area (LCA), as defined by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment⁷. Key characteristics of this LCA include:
- *“A settled landscape with large, edge-of-plateau towns (including market towns and those of more modern origin) and villages plus smaller, nucleated settlements which are dispersed across the plateau.”*
 - *“Large expanse of flat landform with little variation over long distances with strong open horizons – the archetypal ‘Norfolk’ landscape of popular imagination.”*
 - *Large scale open arable fields including sugarbeet, cereal and oilseed rape monocultures creating simple, often monotonous, character.”*
 - *“Long views from plateau edge, including to Norwich from the northern plateau edge.*
 - *“Poor hedgerows generally, which accentuates the openness of the landscape. The resulting wide verges beside roads often contain attractive wildflowers. Some mature hedgerow trees are found, particularly beside roads, which are a distinctive feature. Areas of more intact hedgerow network sometimes occur around settlements.”*
 - *“Sparsely wooded but with occasional woodland blocks, sometimes associated with former parkland areas, creating a more wooded character and wooded horizons in parts of this generally open landscape.”*
- 4.1.4 The landscape character assessment identifies *“Very important strategic break(s) between Wymondham-Hethersett-Cringleford and Norwich”* as one of the significant landscape assets of this LCA.

⁷ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, Volume 2, Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (Land Use Consultants, June 2001)

- 4.1.5 In terms of the principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this LCA, the landscape character assessment identifies, amongst other things, the potential for *“settlement coalescence, particularly associated with the vulnerable A11 corridor or B1172 between Wymondham and Hethersett.”*
- 4.1.6 The landscape character assessment states that the overall strategy for this LCA is to *“maintain its open agricultural landscape character, with its distinct pattern of concentrated settlement on the plateau edge with more dispersed nucleated villages and isolated farm buildings across the plateau top.”*
- 4.1.7 The landscape character assessment also identifies various development considerations, including:
- *“maintain the nucleated clustered character of the settlements and limit edge sprawl out into the adjacent landscape; well-planned infill and edge development may be acceptable”;*
 - *“maintain strategic gaps between settlements, and in particular prevent further growth of Wymondham and/or Hethersett which would lead to coalescence of settlement along the A11 leading to the merger of Wymondham/Hethersett or Hethersett/Norwich.”*

4.2 Topography and Drainage

- 4.2.1 The local landscape is flat to gently rolling with levels varying approximately between 45 and 51m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 4.2.2 Land on the south-western edge of the gap/break at Wymondham lies at approximately 45m AOD whilst land on the north-eastern edge of the gap/break at Hethersett lies at approximately 48m AOD. There are localised high points located south of the A11 that rise above the 50m AOD contours.

4.3 Vegetation

- 4.3.1 Vegetation within the gap/break is dominated by arable fields and small blocks of woodland (**Figure 4.3**). Fields sizes are generally large to medium in scale. Field boundaries are generally defined by trimmed hedgerows and some hedgerows have been removed for field enlargement. There are few hedgerow trees. There are several small blocks of woodland scattered across the western and southern parts of the gap/break, including The Wong, a linear block of woodland associated with former parkland. The A11 is lined by a dense tree/shrub belt.

4.4 Land Uses

- 4.4.1 The principal land use in the gap break is arable agriculture. The fields, hedgerows and woodland blocks all contribute to the setting and separate identities of the adjacent settlements and provide an essential contribution to the purpose and effectiveness of the gap in terms of conserving openness and preventing settlement coalescence.

4.5 Access and Movement

- 4.5.1 A network of footpath and bridleway routes has been developed in the local landscape to connect communities and to provide recreational access to the local countryside. Some of these pass through the gap/break (see **Figure 4.2**) and these comprise:

- a Public Footpath 26, which connects the B1172 with Melton Road further to the north; and
- a permissive bridleway that passes along the B1172; and
- a permissive bridleway that connects the B1172 with Melton Road in the form of a circular route.

4.6 Visual Characteristics

- 4.6.1 This section provides a description of the visual context of the gap/break, with reference made to an accompanying set of landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix A**) that have been taken to illustrate views of the gap/break landscape site from public viewing viewpoints. These include public rights of way, permissive bridleways and roads that either pass through or are located close to the gap/break. The locations of the photographic viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 4.2**.

- 4.6.2 **Photograph A**, taken from Public Footpath 26 on the northern edge of the gap/break, illustrates a view looking south towards the B1172 and the far western parts of the gap/break. Any new built development in the foreground field would detract from the openness of this gap/break and the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape that may be appreciated by recreational footpath users. This footpath is the only public right of way within the gap and is the closest recreational route available for residents on the eastern side of Wymondham. Housing development associated with the approved 'Carpenter's Barn' residential planning application would be located on the far side of the tree/shrub belt that encloses the southern boundary of this field.

- 4.6.3 **Photograph B**, taken from the central section of Public Footpath 26, illustrates a view towards recently constructed housing on 'Land North of Norwich Common' on the far side of the

tree/shrub belt that encloses the southern field boundary. Housing development associated with the approved 'Carpenter's Barn' residential planning application would be located within this foreground field.

- 4.6.4 **Photograph C**, taken from the northern edge of the B1172, illustrates an eastward view along the road and a glimpsed southward view through a gap in the hedgerow to fields on the southern side the road and the tree/shrub belt along the northern edge of the A11. Sporadic views of farmland may be obtained between clusters of roadside properties on the southern side the B1172 in the far western part of the gap/break, thereby imparting a rural character to outward views from the road. This farmland forms part of a continuous belt of agricultural land between the existing built-up edges of Wymondham and Hethersett. The strong sense of openness and rural character of this land south of the B1172 may also be appreciated by users of the A11 as a result of various open and filtered views across the southern boundary of the gap/break. Planning approval has been granted for the Elm Farm Business Park on a site located 600m further to the east of this viewpoint. This business park was identified as one of the preferred options for employment provision in the Wymondham Area Action Plan⁸, which also identified that the development would act as a gateway to the town on the westward approach along the B1172.
- 4.6.5 **Photographs D and E**, taken from Spink Lane, illustrate clusters of buildings along this north-south orientated lane on the western edge of the gap. These residential properties have a close visual and physical connection with other properties within the Wymondham built-up area and their rear garden boundaries provide an appropriate western boundary for the gap/break. The block of trees and scrub located between these two clusters provides an important contribution to the rural character of the gap/break.
- 4.6.6 **Photograph F**, taken from the southern edge of the B1172, illustrates a view of the pasture fields on the eastern side of the recently constructed housing on 'Land North of Norwich Common'. Planning permission has been granted for the development of land to the immediate north of these fields in order to provide new facilities for the Wymondham Rugby Club, including a large car park on the south-eastern edge of the existing group of buildings at 'Carpenter's Barn'. Housing associated with the 'Carpenter's Barn' housing allocation would be visible to the rear and side of the existing 'Carpenter's Barn' buildings.
- 4.6.7 **Photograph G**, taken from a location on the permissive bridleway near the south-western end of The Wong, illustrates a view looking southwest towards the far western parts of the gap/break. Housing development associated with the approved 'Carpenter's Barn' residential

⁸ South Norfolk Council Wymondham Area Action Plan Preferred Options – Site Selection for Housing and Employment

planning application would be located on the far side of the hedgerow in the central part of this photograph. Any new built development in the foreground field, or in the field on the far side of this skyline hedgerow, would detract from the openness of this gap/break and the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape that may be appreciated by recreational bridleway users.

- 4.6.8 **Photograph H**, taken from a location on the permissive bridleway approx. 180m further to the southeast than **Photograph G**, illustrates a view looking east towards the far eastern parts of the gap/break. Glimpsed views of housing on the western edge of Hethersett may be seen over the tops of intervening trees and hedgerows. Views of a water tower within the village may also be seen from nearby sections of bridleway. Any new built development in the central or far eastern parts of the gap/break would detract from gap/break openness and the strongly rural and open character of the gap/break landscape that may be appreciated by recreational bridleway users. It is also likely that any new built development located in the field between the 'Carpenter's Barn' site and The Wong would be seen in glimpsed westward views from this bridleway, thereby introducing a component of 'intra-visibility' to the gap/break (i.e. the ability to see both settlement edges from a single point).
- 4.6.9 **Photograph I**, taken from a section of permissive bridleway that leads from Melton Road to Wong Farm, illustrates a southward view towards Wymondham. Glimpsed views of the recently constructed housing on 'Land North of Norwich Common' may be seen against the skyline in this predominantly rural view. Housing associated with the approved 'Carpenter's Barn' residential planning application is also likely to be seen against the skyline upon implementation of this planning permission. Any new built development in the gap/break further to the north or northeast of the 'Carpenter's Barn' site is also likely to be seen in glimpsed views from both this bridleway and nearby sections of Melton Road, with resultant erosion of gap/break openness and rural character.
- 4.6.10 **Photograph J**, taken from the southern edge of the B1172 near the B1172/New Road junction on the western edge of Hethersett, illustrates a westward view along the road, a glimpsed southward view to fields on the southern side the road and a glimpsed view of housing on the northern side of the road. The land within the gap/break on both sides of the road provides an important contribution to the openness of the gap/break and any new built development on this land would detract from this openness and the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape that may be appreciated by road users.
- 4.6.11 The openness and rural character of the land south of the B1172 may also be appreciated by users of New Road who may obtain glimpsed views of the gap/break landscape from sections of this road.

4.7 Sense of Leaving/Departing from a Settlement

- 4.7.1 In terms of appreciating the openness of the gap, it is important that (1) there is a visual break when travelling from Wymondham to Hethersett and (2) it is perceived, as far as possible, in the travellers' minds that they are leaving one settlement and passing through open countryside before arriving in another settlement. The approved Elm Farm Business Park development is likely to act as a new gateway to the town on the westward approach along the B1172. In northward views from the B1172, people may appreciate that they are leaving Wymondham and entering the countryside within the gap/break once they have passed this employment site.
- 4.7.2 The sporadic views of farmland obtained between clusters of roadside properties on the southern side the B1172 impart a rural character to outward views from the road and, in the far western part of the gap/break, a strong sense of leaving Wymondham when heading east along the B1172.
- 4.7.3 Housing near the B1172/New Road junction on the western edge of Hethersett (see **Photograph J**) also provides a clear point at which people may appreciate that they are leaving or entering either the settlement or the gap/break.

4.8 Review of the Strategic Gap/Important Break

- 4.8.1 **Figure 4.1** illustrates the locations and extents of (1) residential development sites that have been approved since 2001, and (2) proposed Local Plan Strategic Allocations⁹. There is clearly pressure on the gap/break landscape in this context. The above landscape and visual appraisal also confirms that there is a clear justification for the Wymondham-Hethersett Strategic Gap/Important Break in terms of avoiding settlement coalescence and conserving the openness of the gap/break.
- 4.8.2 The currently proposed gap/break boundaries, as defined in the evolving South Norfolk Local Development Framework¹⁰, are generally appropriate. However, it is recommended that some boundary amendments be made, as described below and illustrated on **Figure 4.4**, so that the boundaries reflect clearly identifiable features on the ground.
- 4.8.3 The southern gap/break boundary along the edge of the A11 is appropriate, reflecting the important contribution that the belt of agricultural land between the A11 and the B1172

⁹ Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document of the South Norfolk Local Development Framework, 3rd Public Consultation (Regulation 18), 3 September - 26 October 2012

¹⁰ Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document of the South Norfolk Local Development Framework, 3rd Public Consultation (Regulation 18), 3 September - 26 October 2012

provides to gap/break openness and the open, rural character of the local landscape, as perceived by users of both roads.

- 4.8.4 The section of western gap/break boundary south of the B1172 is broadly appropriate as (1) the clusters of buildings along Spink Lane have a close visual and physical connection with other properties within the Wymondham built-up area, and (2) the block of trees and scrub located between these two building clusters provides an important contribution to the rural character of the gap/break. However, a minor amendment is recommended (see Reference A on **Figure 4.4**) to align the gap/break boundary more precisely with rear garden property boundaries.
- 4.8.5 As the Elm Farm Business Park is likely to act as a new gateway to the town on the westward approach along the B1172, it is recommended that the existing gap/break boundary should be relocated eastwards to the exclude this business park from the gap/break. The adjacent line of residential properties on the northern side of the road would consequently also be excluded from the gap/break (see Reference B on **Figure 4.4**)
- 4.8.6 The section of gap/break boundary in the vicinity of the substantially complete 'Land North of Norwich Common' development and the approved 'Carpenter's Barn' development should also be relocated eastwards to the exclude these housing sites from the gap/break, with the amended gap/break boundary corresponding with the eastern boundaries of these sites (see Reference C on **Figure 4.4**). The Wymondham Rugby Club development proposals east of the 'Carpenter's Barn' site do not warrant any gap/break boundary amendments on account of the general openness associated with such an outdoor sports facility.
- 4.8.7 Land located further to the north and northeast of the 'Carpenter's Barn' housing site provides, as identified above, an important contribution to gap/break openness and the open, rural character of the local landscape. The success of the existing gap/break relates, in large part, to the fact that there is no inter-visibility (the ability to see one edge from another) or intra-visibility (the ability to see both edges from a single point) associated with the gap/break. It is likely that any new built development on land located north or east of the 'Carpenter's Barn' site would be seen in glimpsed views from the section of permissive bridleway located south of The Wong, thereby introducing a component of 'intra-visibility' to the gap/break and resultant reduction in gap/break openness. It would also result in a component of development "sprawl" as any such development would extend the limits of existing built development associated with the north-eastern protrusion of Wymondham (including the 'Carpenter's Barn' site) further into the rural landscape that provides the setting for Wymondham. It is therefore recommended that this land is retained within the gap/break although minor boundary amendments are also recommended so that the gap/break boundary is aligned more precisely with clearly

identifiable landscape features such as on the ground. These boundary amendments would enlarge the gap/break in one area (see Reference D on **Figure 4.4**).

- 4.8.8 The woodland and other mature trees associated with The Wong provide an important contribution to both the enclosure of views between Wymondham and Hethersett and to the wooded horizons that are a characteristic feature of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland LCA. The inclusion of this well-treed area within the gap/break is therefore appropriate although a minor gap/break boundary amendment is recommended (see Reference E on **Figure 4.4**) so that the boundary is aligned more precisely with the western edge of The Wong.
- 4.8.9 Amendments to the northern gap/break boundary are also recommended to the north of The Wong so that (1) the boundary is aligned more precisely with clearly identifiable landscape features such as on the ground, and (2) the gap/break includes two small copses around Wong Farm as these provide an important contribution to the wooded horizons that are a characteristic feature of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland LCA (see Reference F on **Figure 4.4**). Any significant new built development associated with the existing buildings at Wong Farm would erode the openness of the gap/break and would also be perceived as an extension to Hethersett in views from sections of the permissive bridleway network to the southwest.
- 4.8.10 The northern gap boundary east of Wong Farm passes through the centre of a field on a spur of high lying land near the western edge of Hethersett, i.e. it does not follow any readily definable physical features. Any significant new built development in this field would result in an erosion of gap/break openness and would be perceived as an extension to Hethersett in views from sections of the permissive bridleway network to the southwest. It is therefore recommended that the gap/break boundary is moved northwards to encompass the whole field and to align with the nearest field boundary hedgerows, which also lie on the same spur of high lying land (see Reference G on **Figure 4.4**).
- 4.8.11 The eastern gap/break boundary abuts either the edge of New Road or the boundaries of residential properties on the edge of Hethersett. This gap/break boundary is clearly defined and generally abrupt as it abuts open arable fields that are defined by trimmed hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. Any development alongside Hethersett in the far eastern parts of the gap/break would detract from the landscape setting of Hethersett and erode the essential rural character and openness of the gap/break landscape.
- 4.8.12 Although the section of eastern gap boundary south of the B1172 crosses a spur of high lying land, it does not follow any readily definable physical features. It is therefore recommended

that the gap/break boundary is moved eastwards to align with the nearest field boundary hedgerows, which lie either at similar or slightly lower levels (see Reference H on **Figure 4.4**).

5.0 HETHERSETT - CRINGLEFORD STRATEGIC GAP/IMPORTANT BREAK

5.1 Landscape Context

- 5.1.1 The gap/break between Hethersett and Cringleford (**Figure 5.1**) is approx. 2.5-3.5km long, 1.8-2.0km wide and is located in a predominantly rural area southwest of Norwich. The A11 and A47 roads pass through the southern and eastern parts of the gap/break respectively and a Park and Ride facility is located at the A11/A47 intersection. The B1172 passes through its central parts in an approximate east-west alignment. A network of unclassified roads radiate out from the B1172, including Colney Lane/Hethersett Lane which heads north-eastwards. The eastern gap/break boundary is approximately defined by Round House Way on the western edge of Cringleford. The London to Norwich Railway abuts the southern gap/break boundary.
- 5.1.2 The gap/break landscape has been appraised below at both district and local level. This appraisal makes reference to various landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix B**), the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 5.2**.
- 5.1.3 The gap/break lies within the C1: Yare Tributary Farmland With Parkland LCA, as defined by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment¹¹. Key characteristics of this LCA include:
- *Shelving landform with a gently undulating topography created by the presence of small tributary stream valleys cutting through the landscape providing a variety of open/more intimate landscape settings and long/framed views.*
 - *Peaceful farmland with small farm woodlands and intermittently wooded tributary valleys creating a quiet rural atmosphere.*
 - *Presence of large parkland estates, particularly associated directly with the tributary valleys. Estate railings, boundary fences, tree-lined avenues and traditional wooded parkland contribute to landscape character.*
 - *Sparsely settled landscape of small clusters of farmhouses, small villages and rural dwellings interspersed with large manorial buildings and halls.*
 - *A sense of impenetrability and remoteness despite the presence of major transportation corridors. The Norwich Southern Bypass and A11 Wymondham Road trisect the landscape and the area is also traversed by the main Norwich London railway line. These routes create corridors of movement and noise in this otherwise peaceful landscape. Elsewhere, there is an intricate network of narrow rural roads and lanes.*

¹¹ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, Volume 2, Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (Land Use Consultants, June 2001)

- *Arable and pastoral farmland of cereals and sugarbeet with more pastoral land uses within the immediate tributary valley corridor. Fields surrounded by sparse hedges and hedgerow trees, with occasional mature/veteran oaks forming a distinctive feature alongside the lanes.*
- *High number of large dwellings set in extensive grounds including characteristic large detached halls and manor houses, usually constructed of brick of high architectural quality associated with the parkland estates of Keswick, Intwood, Thickthorn and Colney. These are frequently screened by woodland, and therefore visible only at close range.*
- *Intermittent long views towards the City of Norwich.*
- *Presence of large institutional buildings including new hospital and areas of the Research Park at Colney.*

5.1.4 In terms of the principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this LCA, the landscape character assessment identifies, amongst other things:

- *proximity to Norwich and loss of rural farmland character through expansion of the urban edge of the City beyond the Yare Valley or development associated with the Southern Bypass/A11;*
- *particular vulnerability to loss of clarity of the rural/urban divide created by the Yare Valley;*
- *a gently shelving topography from the plateau and long views making this area especially sensitive to the location of any new development/infrastructure - and potential impact on views to the City; and*
- *suburbanisation of field and parkland boundaries.*

5.2 Topography and Drainage

5.2.1 The local landscape is shelving with a gently undulating topography with levels varying approximately between 10 and 45m AOD. Land on the western edge of the gap/break at Hethersett lies at approximately 45m AOD with small stream valleys descending to approximately 30m AOD. Land on the eastern edge of the gap/break at Cringleford lies at approximately 30m AOD at its highest with a small stream valleys descending to approximately 10m AOD.

5.3 Vegetation

5.3.1 Vegetation within the gap/break is dominated by a mixture of arable and pastoral fields, areas of parkland and small blocks of woodland that are typically located either at lower levels in the stream valleys (**Figure 5.3**) or in association with the historic parkland. Fields sizes are generally large to medium in scale but with clusters of smaller scale fields located near Hethersett. Field boundaries are generally defined by intermittent trimmed hedgerows and

there are few hedgerow trees. Field boundary hedgerows have been denuded in some places, particularly in the north-eastern parts of the gap. Robust tree/shrub belts are located alongside the A11, the A47 and Colney Lane/Hethersett Lane.

5.4 Land Uses

- 5.4.1 The principal land use in the gap break is arable agriculture. The fields, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland blocks all contribute to the setting and separate identities of the adjacent settlements and provide an essential contribution to the purpose and effectiveness of the gap in terms of conserving openness and preventing settlement coalescence.

5.5 Access and Movement

- 5.5.1 A network of public footpaths has been developed in and around the gap/break to connect communities and to provide recreational access to the local countryside (see **Figure 5.2**). These include:
- Suckling Lane (a byway open to all traffic), which passes through the far south-western part of the gap/break, connecting Station Lane with Ketteringham Lane;
 - Sections of public footpath originating near the Church of St. Remigius near the south-eastern edge of Hethersett;
 - The Upper Tas Valley Walk (a national trail), which connects the south-eastern edge of Hethersett with Suckling Lane before heading south out of the gap/break;
 - A public footpath along the northern edge of the London to Norwich railway;
 - A section of public footpath that heads south from the section of A11 located east of the A11/A47 intersection.

5.6 Visual Characteristics

- 5.6.1 This section provides a description of the visual context of the gap/break, with reference made to an accompanying set of landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix B**) that have been taken to illustrate views of the gap/break landscape site from public viewing viewpoints. These include public rights of way, permissive bridleways and roads that either pass through or are located close to the gap/break. The locations of the photographic viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 5.2**.
- 5.6.2 **Photograph A**, taken from Station Lane, illustrates a view looking north-eastwards to Hethersett Hall, Church Farm and the Church of St. Remigius in the far western part of the gap. The parkland associated with the late-Georgian mansion of Hethersett Hall includes blocks of

woodland and a tree belt that defines the western boundary of the gap/break. The well-treed B1172, which defines the southern edge of the settlement, encloses views towards Hethersett. This part of the gap/break provides an important contribution to openness between Hethersett and Cringleford. Any new built development on the upper parts of this stream valley would potentially detract from the openness of this part of the gap/break and the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape that may be appreciated by recreational footpath users (Upper Vas Valley Walk and other public rights of way) and users of both Station Road and the A11, which both pass through the gap.

- 5.6.3 **Photograph B** illustrates a view looking eastwards to Norwich from the eastern section of Suckling Lane. Distant views to Norwich are partly enclosed by an intervening group of trees at the far end of this foreground field. Any new built development on this elevated land would potentially detract from the openness of this part of the gap/break and from the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape. This sense of openness may be appreciated by recreational footpath users and by users of the A11 as they pass through the gap and on into the western parts of Cringleford.
- 5.6.4 **Photograph C** illustrates a view looking eastwards to the A11/A47 intersection and the visual clutter associated with its lighting columns, high voltage overhead powerline, petrol station and Park and Ride facility. These features sit in a predominantly rural landscape with a well-treed horizon. The rural landscape surrounding this transport 'hub' provides an important contribution to the openness of the gap/break as perceived by users of the A11, A47 and B1172 roads that pass through this part of the gap.
- 5.6.5 **Photograph D** illustrates the large-scale fields located north of the B1172 and west of the A47. The tree/shrub belt alongside the A47 forms part of a generally well-treed skyline. The Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital buildings may also be seen as skyline features on the right hand side of this photograph. Any new built development in this strongly rural landscape would potentially detract from the openness of this part of the gap/break, which may be appreciated by recreational footpath users and by users of both the B1172 and the A47.
- 5.6.6 **Photograph E**, looking eastwards from the Back Lane/Burnthouse Lane junction, illustrates the strongly rural landscape northeast of Hethersett and the robust tree/shrub belt alongside Colney Lane. This vegetation belt encloses views towards Norwich in a landscape that is otherwise characterised by the availability of long distance views.
- 5.6.7 **Photograph F** illustrates the tree/shrub belts and raised earth embankments along the edges of Colney Lane. These typically restrict outward views to the surrounding rural landscape in the north-western part of the gap/break.

- 5.6.8 **Photograph G** illustrates a view looking north-eastwards from Round House Way towards a landscape of arable fields, hedgerows and associated field boundary trees. Any new built development in this strongly rural landscape would potentially detract from the openness of this part of the gap/break, which may be appreciated by users of both Round House Way and the A47.
- 5.6.9 **Photograph H** illustrates a view looking south-eastwards from Newmarket Road towards the A11/Round House Way junction, the well-treed western residential edges of Cringleford and agricultural fields located south of the A11/east of the A47. Any new built development in this part of the gap/break would potentially detract from the openness of this far eastern part of the gap/break, which may be appreciated by users of both the A11 and the A47. Any perceived reduction in openness would be heightened by a cumulative urbanising effect between any such new built development and the existing Park and Ride facility.

5.7 Sense of Leaving/Departing from a Settlement

- 5.7.1 In terms of appreciating the openness of the gap, it is important that (1) there is a visual break when travelling from Hethersett to Cringleford, and (2) it is perceived, as far as possible, in the travellers' minds that they are leaving one settlement and passing through open countryside before arriving in another settlement.
- 5.7.2 There is a fairly abrupt built-up edge to the eastern settlement boundary for Hethersett, which is defined on the northern side of the B1172 by a cluster of houses on the eastern side of Churchfields. The tree belts and woodland associated with historic parkland lie to the immediate east of this housing. The point at which people pass between the settlement and the gap/break is clearly defined on account of the strong contrast in landscape character terms between the two areas. At the far eastern part of the gap/break, housing on the northern edge of the A11 and the eastern edge of Round House Way junction also provides a clear point at which people may appreciate that they are leaving or entering either Cringleford or the gap/break.

5.8 Review of the Strategic Gap/Important Break

- 5.8.1 **Figure 5.1** illustrates the locations and extents of (1) residential development sites that have been approved since 2001, and (2) proposed Local Plan Strategic Allocations¹². There is clearly pressure on the gap/break landscape in this context. The above landscape and visual appraisal also confirms that there is a clear justification for the Hethersett-Cringleford Strategic

¹² Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document of the South Norfolk Local Development Framework, 3rd Public Consultation (Regulation 18), 3 September - 26 October 2012

Gap/Important Break in terms of avoiding settlement coalescence and conserving the openness of the gap/break.

- 5.8.2 The currently proposed gap/break boundaries, as defined in the evolving South Norfolk Local Development Framework¹³, are generally appropriate. However, it is recommended that some boundary amendments be made, as described below and illustrated on **Figure 5.4**, so that the boundaries reflect clearly identifiable features on the ground.
- 5.8.3 The southern gap/break boundary along the edge of the London-Norwich railway line is appropriate, reflecting the important contribution that the belt of agricultural land between the railway and A11 provides to gap/break openness and the open, rural character of the local landscape, as perceived by users of the railway, the A11 and the public footpath along the northern edge of the railway.
- 5.8.4 The section of eastern gap/break boundary south of the B1172 is generally appropriate as (1) the elevated land south-east of Hethersett Hall provides an important contribution to the openness and rural character of the gap/break, and (2) it is defined by the outer edge of a tree belt along the eastern side of Hethersett. However, a minor amendment is recommended (see Reference A on **Figure 5.4**) to align the gap/break boundary more precisely with a field boundary.
- 5.8.5 The gap/break boundary along the south-eastern edge of Hethersett generally follows the edge of the B1172. However, it veers southwards to adopt a crescent shaped alignment in the vicinity of the Church of St. Remigius, which lies at a relatively high elevation on the northern side a stream valley. Any new built development in the vicinity of the church would be visually prominent in rural views from Suckling Lane and Station Lane and would detract from gap/break openness. A minor amendment is therefore recommended (see Reference B on **Figure 5.4**) to align this part of the gap/break boundary with the B1172.
- 5.8.6 The robust tree/shrub belt along Colney Lane is a significant feature in the gap/break landscape and helps enclose views from one side of the gap to the other. It is recommended, in the absence of any inter-visibility issue, that some of the land located west of this tree/shrub belt should be removed from the gap/break. However, any new built development in the fields adjacent to the western edge of Colney Lane is likely to be seen in westwards views above this tree/shrub belt. It is therefore recommended that a corridor of fields on the western edge of the lane should be retained within the gap/break (see Reference C on **Figure 5.4**).

¹³ Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document of the South Norfolk Local Development Framework, 3rd Public Consultation (Regulation 18), 3 September - 26 October 2012

- 5.8.7 A minor amendment is recommended east of Colney Lane (see Reference D on **Figure 5.4**) to align this part of the gap/break boundary with recognisable field boundaries.
- 5.8.8 East of the A47, it is recommended again that the gap/break boundary follows field boundaries, including those along the edge of Colney Lane (see Reference E on **Figure 5.4**). Any new built development in the fields southwest of this lane would potentially detract from the openness of this part of the gap/break and from the strongly rural and open character of the local landscape. This sense of openness may be appreciated by users of the A47 as they pass through the eastern parts of the gap/break. It is also recommended that the gap/break boundary should follow the field boundaries that define the outer edge of the strategic housing allocation on the western edge of Cringleford (see Reference F on **Figure 5.4**).
- 5.8.9 Finally, there is one small plot of land just outside the settlement boundary on the southern edge of the A11 that provides no significant contribute to gap/break openness. It is in residential use, contains closely mown lawns, is enclosed by built development on three sides and is separated from the A11 by a mature shrub belt. There is also a strong contrast in landscape character terms between this plot and the agricultural field on its western edge. It is therefore recommended to exclude this plot from the gap/break (see Reference G on **Figure 5.4**).

6.0 EASTON - COSTESSEY STRATEGIC GAP/IMPORTANT BREAK

6.1 Landscape Context

- 6.1.1 The gap/break between Easton and Costessey (**Figure 6.1**) is approx. 2.6-3.0km long and 0.6-1.9km wide. An 'island' of retail and industrial buildings is located in the northern part of the gap/break, thereby creating a relatively small gap/breaks of 0.6-1.1km on the eastern edge of Easton and 0.45-0.9km on the western edge of Costessey.
- 6.1.2 The A47 and A1074 roads pass through the northern and eastern parts of the gap/break and a Park and Ride facility is located south of the A47/A1074 intersection. Several unclassified roads extend out from this intersection, including Long Lane, which heads southwards towards Bawburgh and Dereham Road, which passes along the northern edge of Easton.
- 6.1.3 The gap/break landscape has been appraised below at both district and local level. This appraisal makes reference to various landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix C**), the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 6.2**.
- 6.1.4 Most of the gap/break lies within the G1: Easton Fringe Farmland LCA whilst the far northern parts of the gap/break form part of the A3: Tud Rural River Valley LCA, as defined by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment¹⁴. Key characteristics of the G1: Easton Fringe Farmland LCA include:
- Undulating landscape sloping towards a distinct ridge top marking the boundary between the valleys of the Yare and Tud.
 - Sand and gravel geology which has led in the past to use of the land for mineral extraction resulting in areas of derelict and degraded landscape.
 - Highly developed ridge top with a strong urban fringe character including the presence of urban settlement, large retail superstores with their associated car parks plus a park and ride scheme.
 - Recreational uses including the presence of a golf course and the Royal Norfolk Showground.
 - Attractive and arable and pastoral farmland context, somewhat marginalised by the development, but retaining a strong rural character.
 - Absence of significant wooded areas.
 - Major transportation through-route and gateway into South Norfolk due to the presence of the Norwich Southern Bypass.

¹⁴ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, Volume 2, Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (Land Use Consultants, June 2001)

6.1.5 In terms of the principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this LCA, the landscape character assessment identifies, amongst other things:

- balance of developed area to rural context. Because of the highly developed character of much of this area further intrusion of built features upon the rural landscape may have significant effects upon the perceived quality;
- the need to consider the views from the surrounding landscape, which is highly sensitive to any development on or near the prominent ridge top within this area;
- the need to preserve good quality rural views from the ridge top to the surrounding countryside;
- 'gateway' location that emphasises the importance of this area in promoting a positive view of the South Norfolk landscape and entry to the City of Norwich;
- the need to preserve distinction and a clear identity between Norwich City and Easton and the other ridge top development.

6.1.6 Key characteristics of the A3: Tud Rural River Valley LCA include:

- Small intimate rural valley with confined valley form and restricted views, although more distant views are possible from the upper slopes.
- Presence of mineral working sites to exploit geological resources.
- Intricate sinuous topography accentuated by the wooded valley sides and relatively narrow open valley floor.
- Small-scale, very sparse settlement comprising occasional isolated farmsteads. The pastoral valley floor creates an important 'green' gap between the settlements of Costessey and New Costessey which extend onto the upper valley sides.
- Remote, very rural, character despite proximity to the City, as a result of extremely restricted access through the valley -with no roads or footpaths.
- Strongly wooded character with the presence of a mix of coniferous and deciduous large woodland blocks on the valley sides, plus long lines of poplar trees found in association with the river. Single trees and plantations of Scots pine are a distinctive feature.
- A wooded gateway to Norwich is created by the woodland present on the upper valley slopes. This is an important component of the landscape adjoining the Norwich Southern Bypass.
- Important views into the Tud valley from the Norwich Southern Bypass and views out of the area from the upper valley crest.

6.1.7 In terms of the principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this LCA, the landscape character assessment identifies, amongst other things:

- the need to conserve the remote rural character in the face of gradual incremental development which is impinging both visually and audibly on the valley;
- threat of 'suburbanisation' and coalescence with settlement extending down the valley sides plus imposition of large scale development associated with proximity to the A47;
- management of the woodland resource and maintenance of the sense of 'wooded rural gateway/threshold' from the Norwich Southern Bypass to the City;

6.2 Topography and Drainage

- 6.2.1 The central part of the gap/break comprises a ridge of undulating land between the valleys of the Yare (to the south) and Tud (to the north) with levels varying approximately between 30 and 50m AOD. This ridge descends southwards to between 15 and 30m AOD near the southern edge of the gap/break. The northern part of the gap/break is occupied by the upper valley sides of the Tud Valley, with levels also varying approximately between 15 and 30m AOD.

6.3 Vegetation

- 6.3.1 Vegetation within the gap/break is dominated by arable fields and small blocks of woodland (**Figure 6.3**). There are large blocks of woodland on the sides of the Tud Valley and significant tree/shrub belts alongside sections of the A47. Close trimmed grassland and specimen trees may be found throughout the Royal Norfolk Showground in the central and southern parts of the gap/break. Tree belts and fairways may be found in the Norwich Family Golf Centre. Elsewhere, vegetation is dominated by arable fields, defined by hedgerows with highly variable condition.

6.4 Land Uses

- 6.4.1 Land uses in the southern and central parts of the gap/break are dominated by the Royal Norfolk Showground, the Norwich Family Golf Centre, one large area of mineral extraction and peripheral agriculture. Land uses in the northern parts of the gap/break are dominated by blocks of woodland, mineral extraction and agriculture. The A47 and A1074 roads pass through the northern and eastern parts of the gap/break and a Park and Ride facility is located south of the A47/A1074 intersection.

6.5 Access and Movement

- 6.5.1 There are no public rights of way or permissive bridleways in the gap/break. Access and movement is provided by the A47, the A1074, Long Lane and Dereham Road.

6.6 Visual Characteristics

- 6.6.1 This section provides a description of the visual context of the gap/break, with reference made to an accompanying set of landscape and visual appraisal photographs (**Appendix C**) that have been taken to illustrate views of the gap/break landscape site from public viewing viewpoints. The locations of the photographic viewpoints are illustrated on **Figure 6.2**.
- 6.6.2 **Photograph A**, looking north-westwards from a housing estate off Dr. Torrens Way, illustrates the agricultural land in the far eastern part of the gap/break. This land rises towards the top of the ridge in the northern and central parts of the gap/break, thereby restricting inter-visibility between Costessey and Easton.
- 6.6.3 **Photograph B**, taken from William Frost Way within the 'island' of retail and industrial development, illustrates a view looking north-eastwards towards the woodland that extends across much of the northern part of the gap/break.
- 6.6.4 **Photograph C** illustrates a view from Dereham Road looking westwards across the closely mown grass and mature specimen trees of the Royal Norfolk Showground. A hotel at the A47/A1074 intersection may be seen in the right hand side of the photograph.
- 6.6.5 **Photograph D** illustrates a view looking eastwards towards Costessey from a location on Dereham Road, approx. 100m north of the Park and Ride. The land rises to meet a ridge at Lodge Farm thereby enclosing views of existing built development on the western edge of Costessey. Woodland and tree belts along the northern and southern sides of the A1074 may be seen against the skyline.
- 6.6.6 **Photograph E** illustrates a view looking eastwards towards Costessey from the southern end of Long Lane. Views towards existing built development on the western edge of Costessey are enclosed by a hillspur that descends from the central ridge.
- 6.6.7 **Photograph F** illustrates a view looking eastwards from the western entrance to the Norwich Family Golf Centre. Views towards Costessey are enclosed by intervening landform, woodland and tree belts.
- 6.6.8 **Photograph G** illustrates a view from the entrance of Easton College looking northwards along Bawburgh Road, which defines the south-western boundary of the gap/break. Glimpsed views of agricultural sheds on the western edge of the gap/break may be seen between groups of roadside trees.

- 6.6.9 **Photograph H** illustrates a view looking southwards along Bawburgh Road from the southern edge of Easton. A glimpsed view may be obtained over the roadside hedgerow towards a small pasture field on the southern edge of the existing housing.
- 6.6.10 **Photograph I**, looking southwards from the northern entrance to the Norwich Family Golf Centre, illustrates some of the extensive areas of mown grassland and skyline trees within the Royal Norfolk Showground.
- 6.6.11 **Photograph J**, looking north-eastwards along Dereham Road, illustrates some of the mature individual trees that line the northern edge of the road, the pasture fields north of the road and the woodland on the northern edge of the A47.
- 6.6.12 **Photograph K**, looking eastwards, is taken from a location on Dereham Road close to the northern entrance to the Norwich Family Golf Centre. It illustrates a glimpsed view of housing on the eastern edge of Easton (south of Dereham Road) seen above intervening hedgerows.
- 6.6.13 **Photograph L**, looking eastwards is taken from a location on Dereham Road close to the Dereham Road/Bawburgh Road junction. It illustrates a glimpsed view of housing on the eastern edge of Easton (north of Dereham Road) and one of the fields between Dereham Road and the A47.

6.7 Sense of Leaving/Departing from a Settlement

- 6.7.1 In terms of appreciating the openness of the gap, it is important that (1) there is a visual break when travelling from Easton to Costessey, and (2) it is perceived, as far as possible, in the travellers' minds that they are leaving one settlement and passing through open countryside before arriving in another settlement.
- 6.7.2 There is a fairly abrupt built-up edge to the existing eastern settlement boundary for Easton, which is defined on the both sides of the Dereham Road by lines of houses of uniform size. Pasture fields abut the residential properties south of the road whilst a pasture field with a line of mature trees abuts the properties north of the road. The point at which people pass between the settlement and the gap/break is clearly defined on account of the strong, abrupt contrast in landscape character terms between the residential and agricultural areas. However, the housing allocations for the eastern side of Easton¹⁵ would extend eastwards on the northern side of Dereham Road to meet an area of consented commercial/industrial development on the western side the Longwater industrial/retail area. A housing allocation site is also located close

¹⁵ South Norfolk Local Plan Site Specific Allocations and Policies DPD Preferred Options Consultation (03-09-12 to 26-10-12)

to the southern side of Dereham Road. There would be on longer any meaningful sense of arrival/departure at the settlement edge as a result of these housing allocations between the eastern edge of Easton and the area of consented commercial/industrial development.

- 6.7.3 At the far eastern part of the gap/break, the existing sense of arrival and departure is not clear as (1) the A1074 is lined by trees both within the settlement and in the adjacent eastern part of the gap/break, (2) there are both housing and agricultural land uses located behind these tree belts in the strategic gap, and (3) there is a significant overlap between the Longwater industrial/retail area north of the A1074 and the Lodge Farm housing allocation¹⁶, which would extend eastwards on the southern side of the A1074 from the western side of Costessey to the southern side of the industrial/retail area. The resultant continuous belt of built development on one or more sides of the A1074 within the gap/break would remove any significant sense of arrival/departure between countryside and the built-up area.

6.8 Review of the Strategic Gap/Important Break

- 6.8.1 Pasture fields both to the north and south of Dereham Road in the far western part of the gap/break provides a contribution to gap/break openness and rural character, as perceived by road users. However, these fields have been allocated for housing as part of the Local Plan Preferred Options Strategic Allocations. The Longwater industrial/retail area would also extend westwards on the land between the Dereham Road and the A47. The western part of the gap/break would largely cease to provide a contribution to the two basic purposes of a strategic gap designation, i.e. avoidance of coalescence and maintaining the openness of land, with the development of this strategic housing allocation site and the area of consented commercial/industrial development on the western side the Longwater industrial/retail area.
- 6.8.2 The eastern part of the gap/break would also largely cease to provide a contribution to the two basic purposes of a strategic gap designation as the Lodge Farm housing allocation would result in a continuous belt of built development between the western edge of Costessey and the southern edge of the Longwater industrial/retail area.
- 6.8.3 Development of the strategic housing allocation sites in the east and in the west of the gap/break would result in physical and visual linkage of built development between the two settlements. They would compromise the level of gap/break openness to such a degree that the intervening land would no longer function as a strategic gap/important break. It is recommended, on the basis of the above, that the Easton-Costessey Strategic Gap/Important Break designation should not be included in the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document.

¹⁶ South Norfolk Local Plan Site Specific Allocations and Policies DPD Preferred Options Consultation (03-09-12 to 26-10-12)

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 General

- 7.1.1 The more detailed work undertaken in this study to validate the initial desk based review¹⁷ has concluded that there is a strong justification for retaining Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks between Wymondham and Hethersett and between Hethersett and Cringleford as per the preferred options for the Site Specific Policies & Allocations DPD. As demonstrated by the study, there is clear evidence of recent and future development pressures that could erode the openness of these gaps and lead to coalescence of the settlements.
- 7.1.2 In the case of the strategic gap/important break between Easton and Costessey, the study has concluded that the proposed strategic residential allocation sites between these settlements would compromise the level of gap/break openness to such a degree that the intervening land would no longer function as a strategic gap/important break. Consequently, it is recommended that the Easton-Costessey Strategic Gap/Important Break designation should not be included in the Site Specific Allocations and Policies DPD.
- 7.1.3 The study has also concluded that there is currently no justification for designating Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks to protect areas of open countryside between other settlements in the District.

7.2 Boundaries

- 7.2.1 This review has concluded that some amendments should be made to the boundaries of the following Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks, as it cannot be clearly demonstrated that all land within the gap/break is necessary to achieve the aims of the Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks policy, and not all boundaries follow clearly recognisable features on the ground. The recommended boundary changes are identified and mapped on the following figures:
- Wymondham - Hethersett Proposed Strategic Gap/Important Break Boundary (**Figure 4.4**).
 - Hethersett - Cringleford Proposed Strategic Gap/Important Break Boundary (**Figure 5.4**).

¹⁷ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review (June 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

7.3 Policy

7.3.1 Although there are subtle differences between the terms 'strategic gap' and 'important break', it is considered that they are broadly interchangeable. As the term 'Strategic Gap/Important Break' is somewhat confusing, it is recommended that the 'Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks' be referred to simply as 'Strategic Gaps' in the Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document to reflect the key purposes of (i) helping avoid coalescence, thereby protecting the setting and separate identity of settlements, and (ii) helping maintain the openness of the land, thereby retaining the existing settlement pattern.

7.3.2 In light of the above recommendations, the following changes (highlighted in ***bold italics***) to the suggested wording of the policy for inclusion in the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document is recommended:

'Development which would erode, or otherwise undermine the openness of the Strategic Gaps/~~Important Breaks~~, identified on the Proposals Map, between the development boundaries of the settlements listed below, will not be permitted.

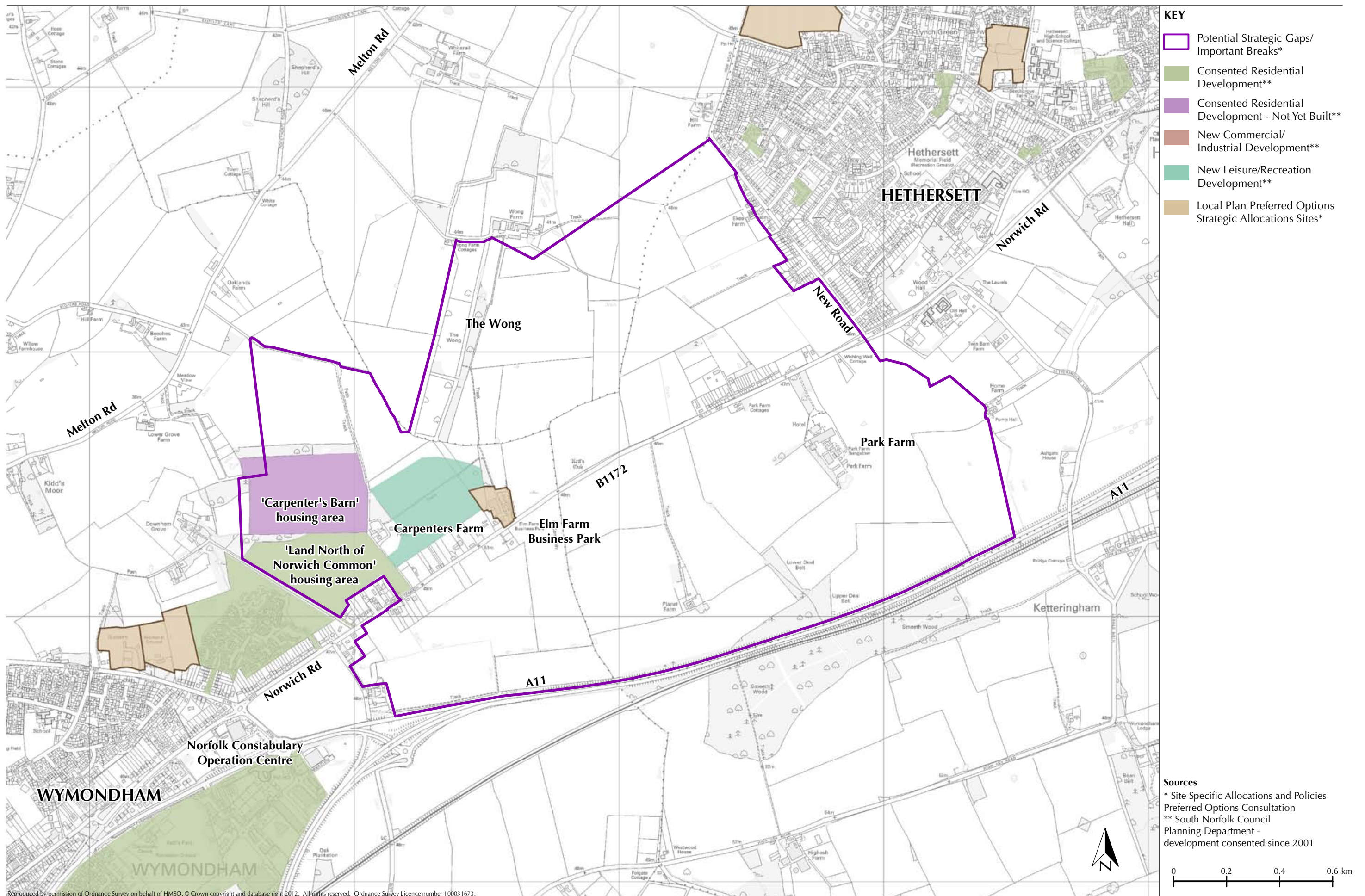
Wymondham - Hethersett

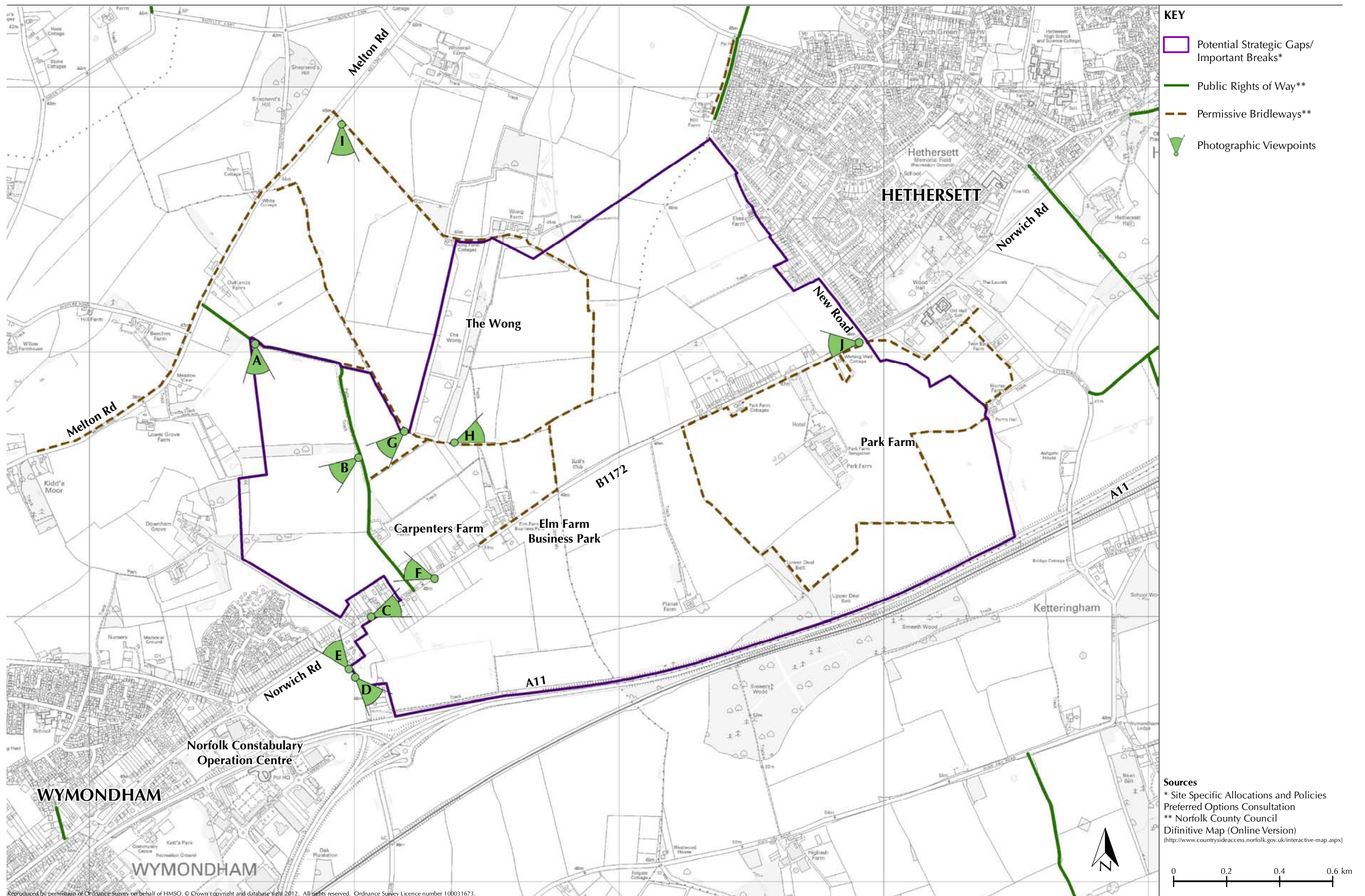
Hethersett – Cringleford.

~~***Easton – Costessey.***~~

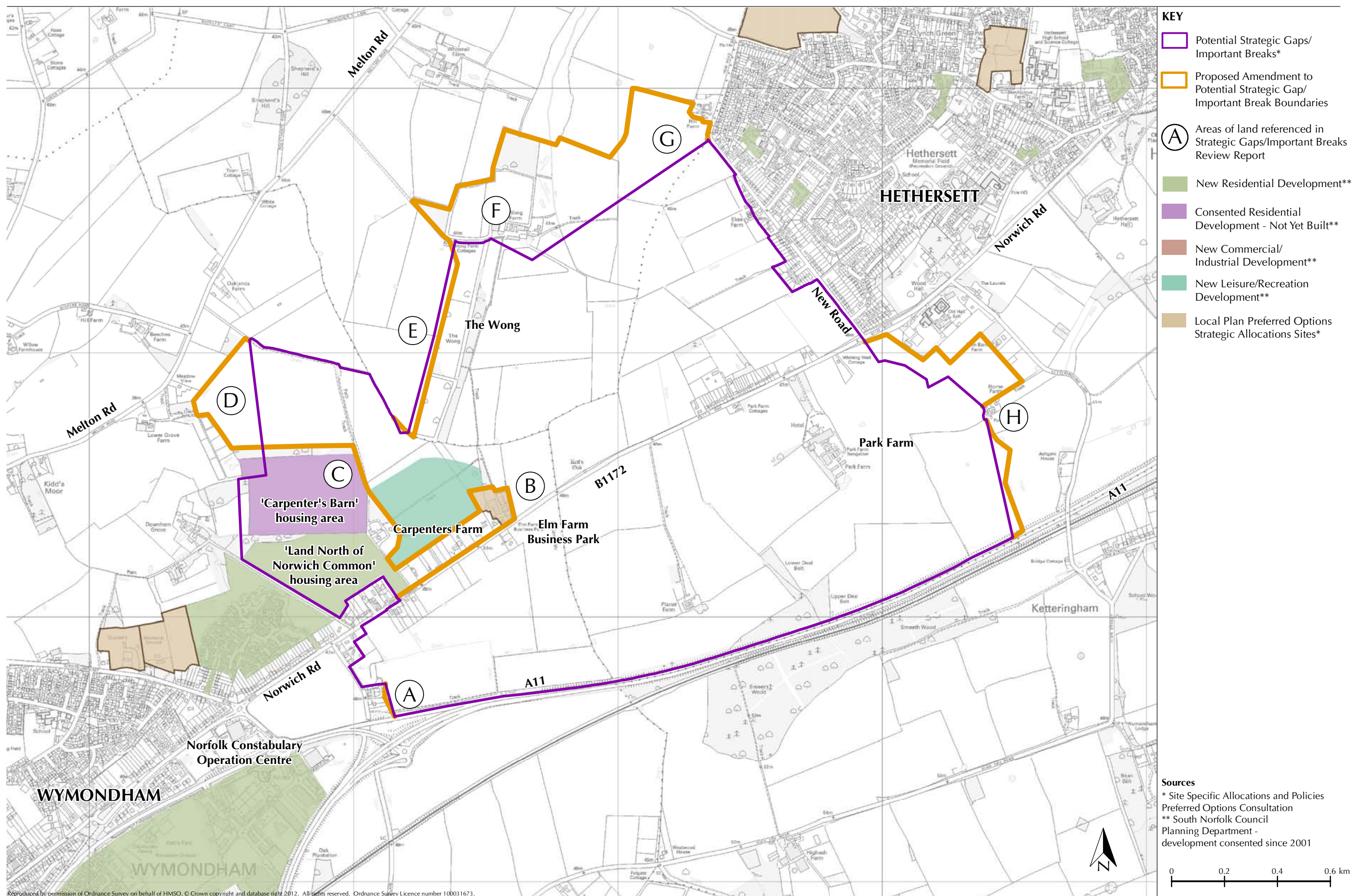
7.3.3 CBA considers that the evidence base provided by this report is sufficiently robust to justify the above policy going forward. This is in line with NPPF requirements, Joint Core Strategy objectives and also inspectors' advice on recent planning appeals for development sites in the Norwich Policy Area.

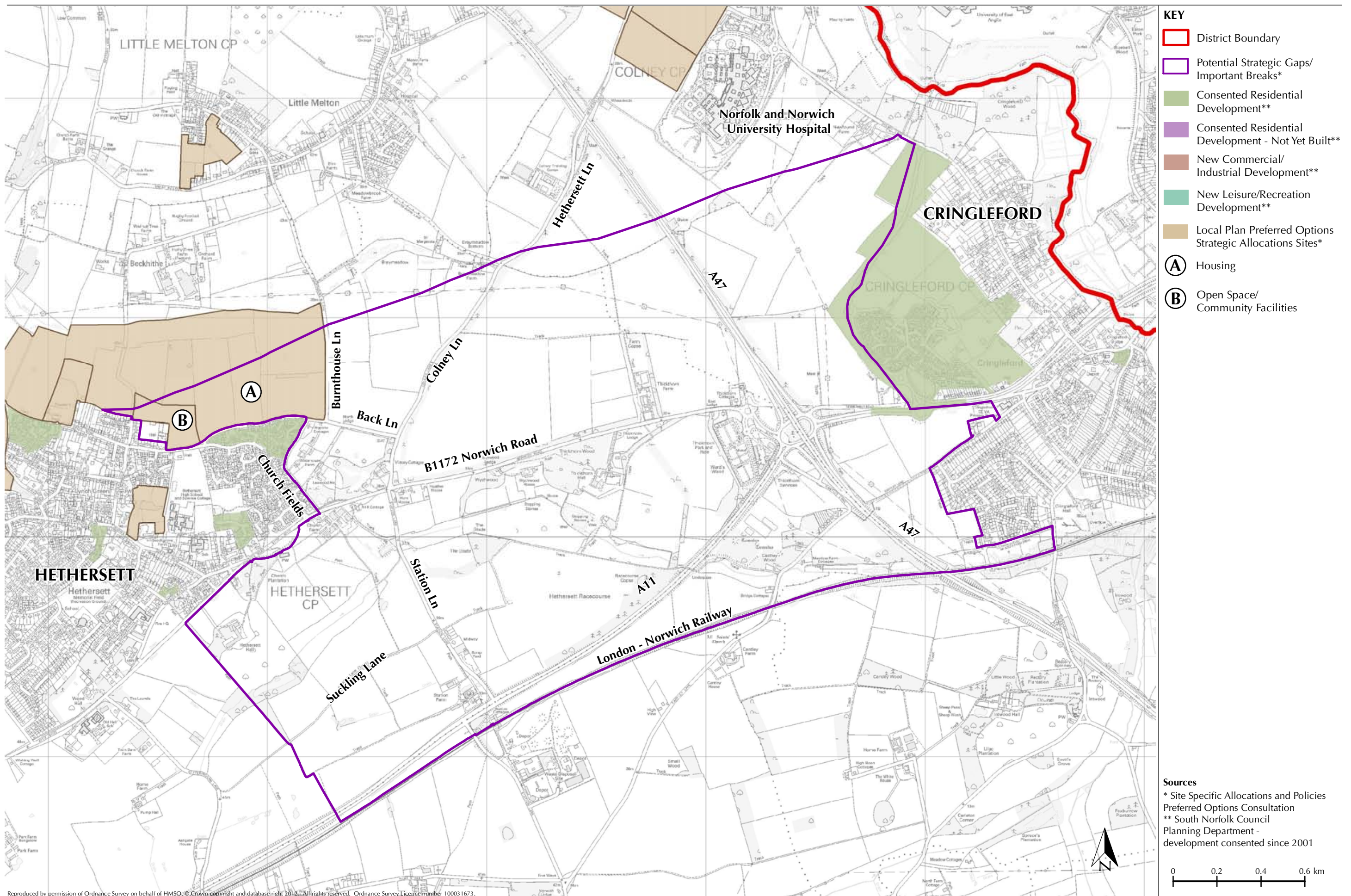
FIGURES

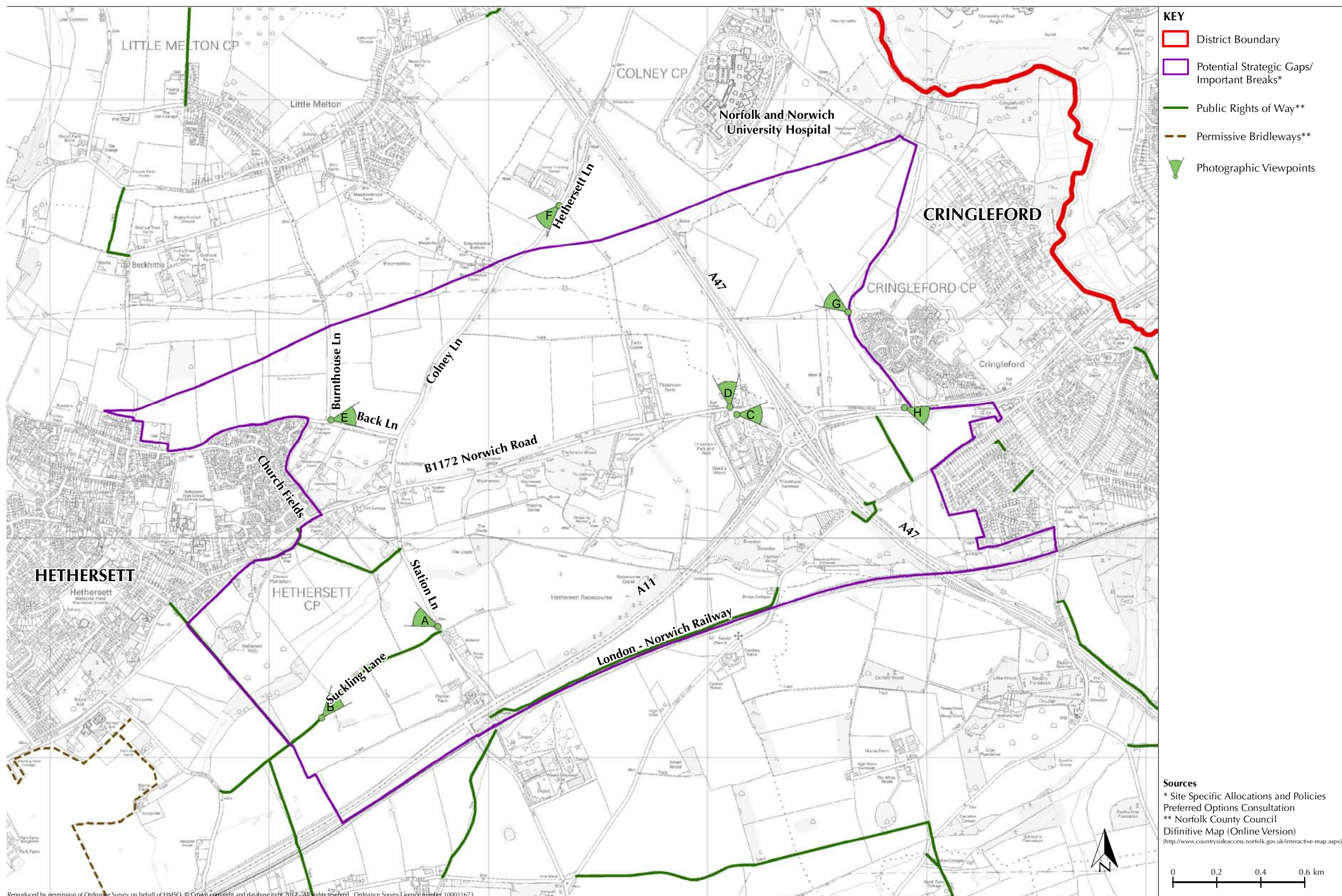




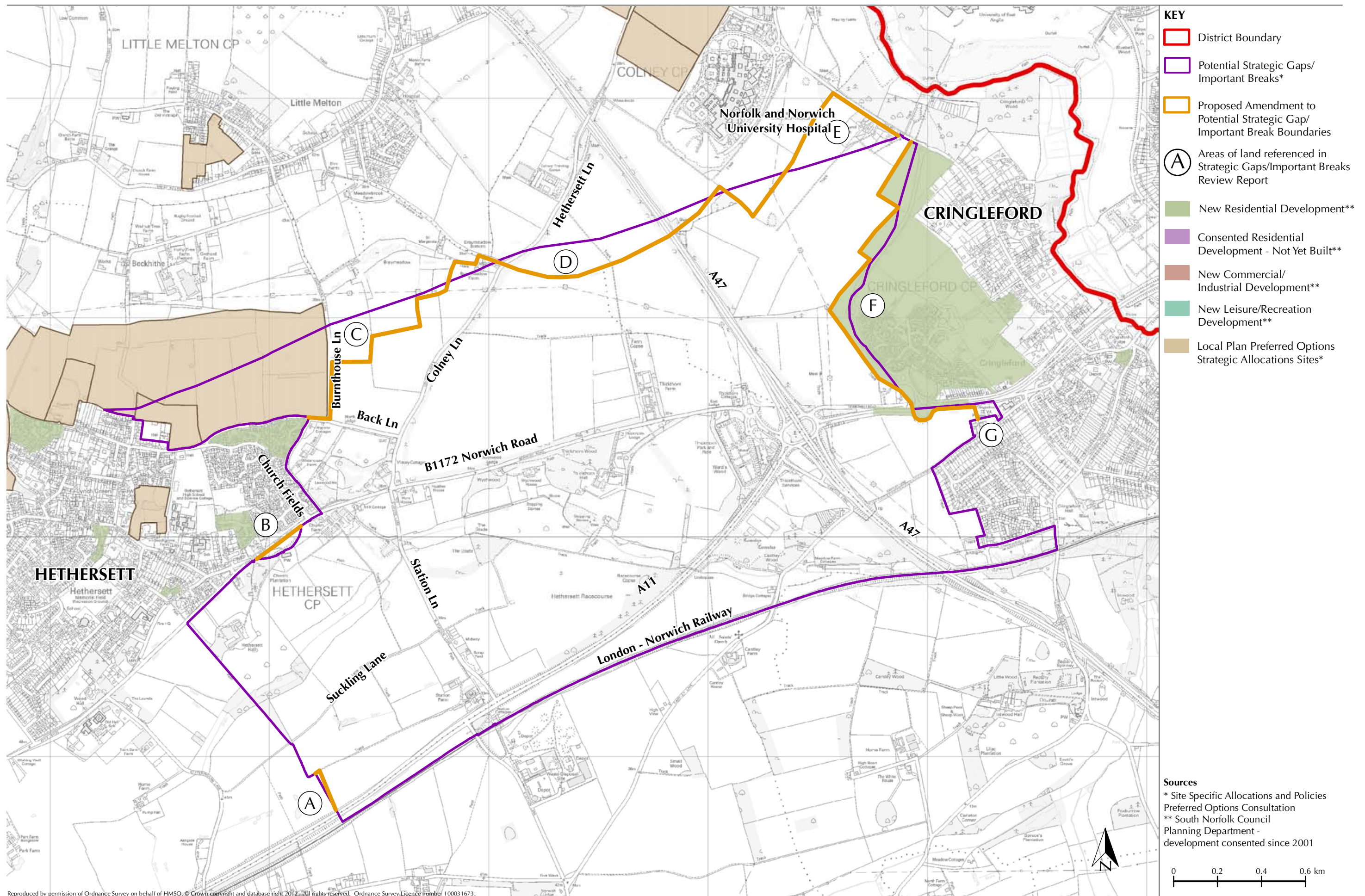


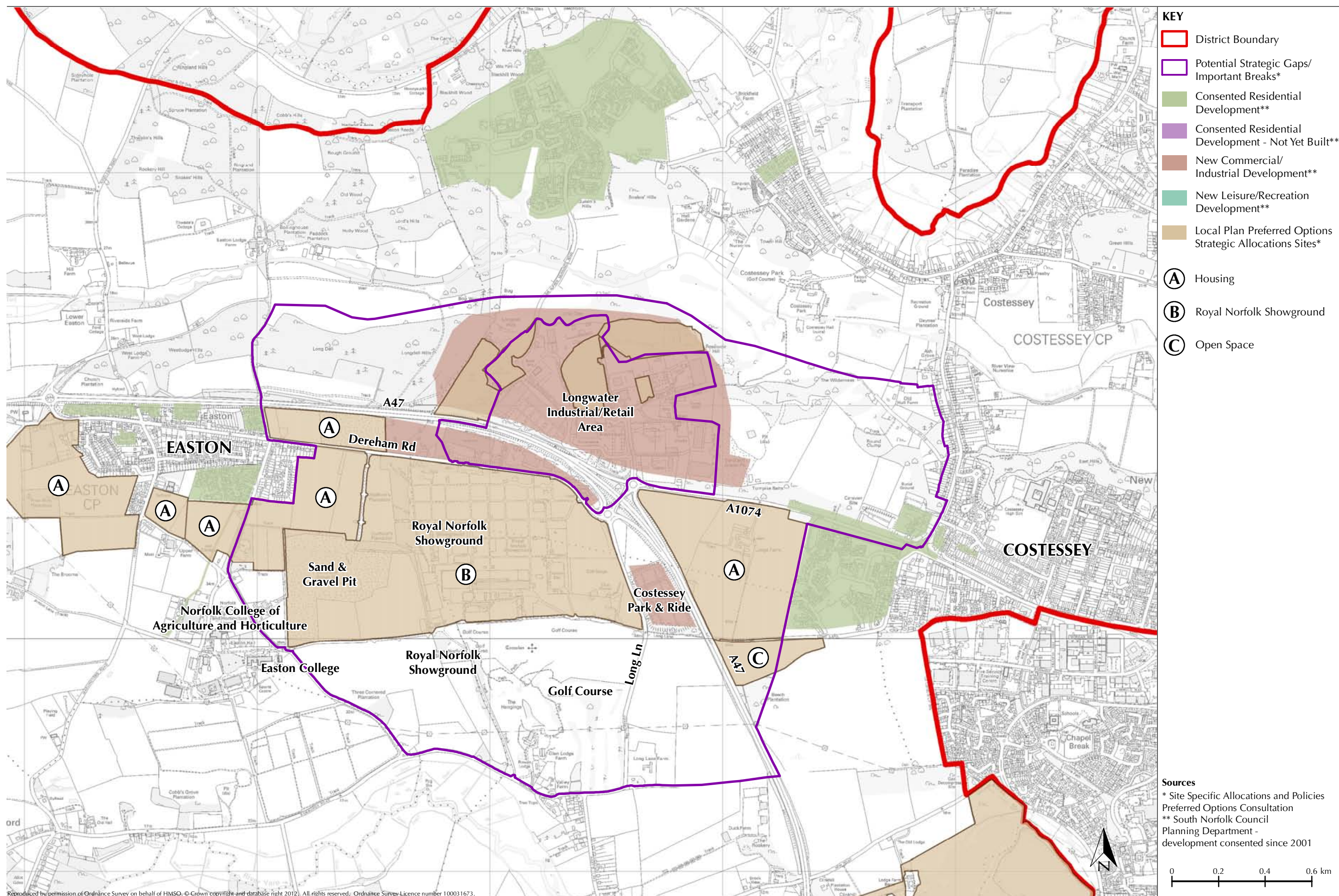


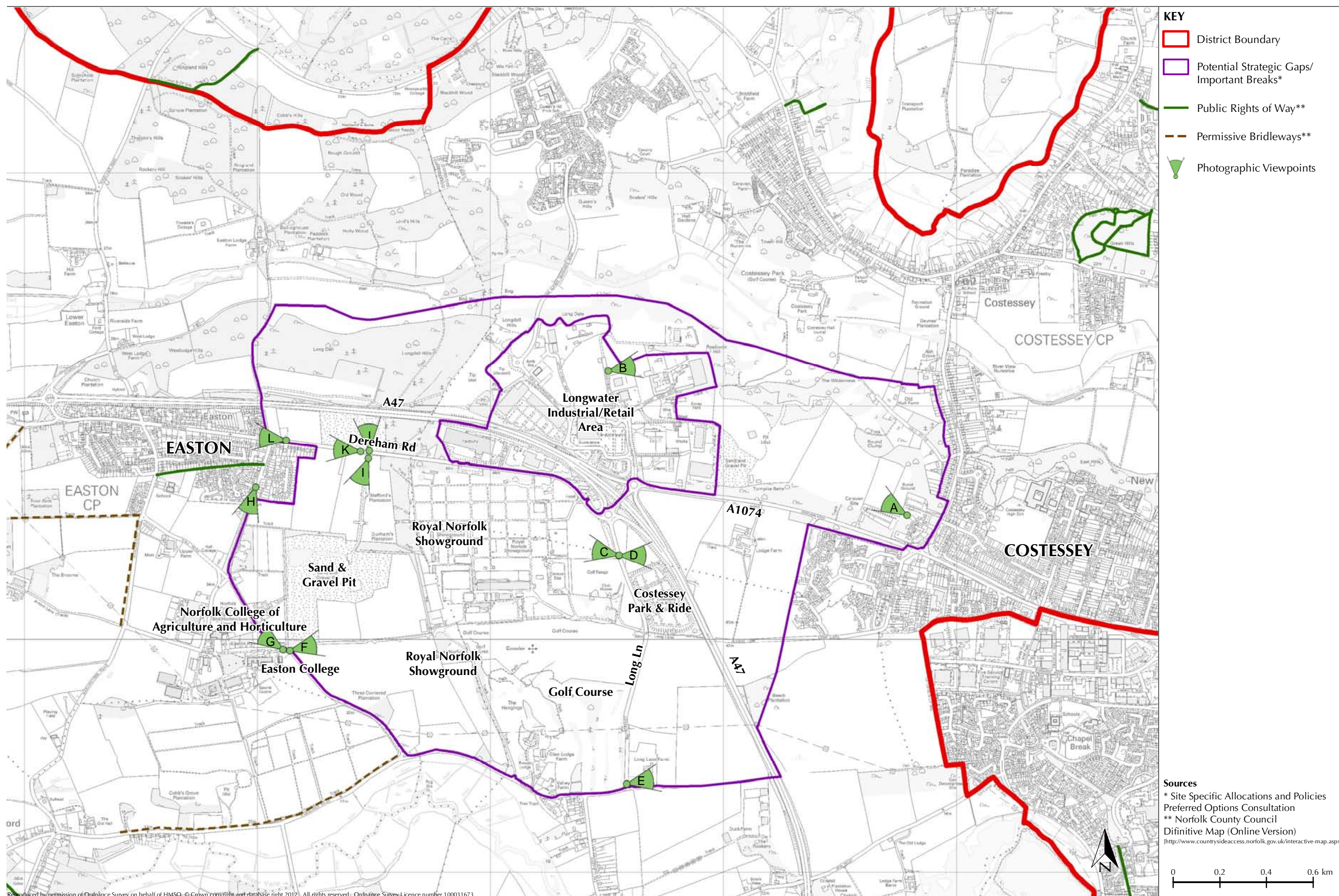














APPENDIX A



Photograph A: View looking south towards Wymondham from northern section of Public Footpath 26



Photograph B: View towards 'Land North of Norwich Common' development from central section of Public Footpath 26



Photograph C: View looking eastwards from northern edge of B1172



Photograph D: View looking north along Spink Lane



Photograph E: View looking south along Spink Lane



Photograph F: View looking northwest from southern edge of B1172



Photograph G: View looking southwest from permissive bridleway south-west of The Wong



Photograph H: View looking northwest from permissive bridleway south-east of The Wong



Photograph I: Southward view towards Wymondham from permissive bridleway between Melton Road and Wong Farm



Photograph J: Westward view along B1172 from B1172/New Road junction

APPENDIX B



Photograph A: View from Station Lane looking north-eastwards to Hethersett Hall and Church Farm



Photograph B: View looking eastwards to Norwich from eastern section of Suckling Lane



Photograph C: View looking eastwards from B1172 to A11/A47 intersection



Photograph D: View looking northwards from B1172



Photograph E: View looking eastwards from Back Lane/Burnthouse Lane junction



Photograph F: View looking westwards from Burnthouse Lane



Photograph G: View looking north-eastwards from Round House Way



Photograph H: View looking south-eastwards from Newmarket Road

APPENDIX C



Photograph A: View looking north-westwards from a housing estate at Dr. Torrens Way.



Photograph B: View looking north-eastwards from William Frost Way.



Photograph C: View from Dereham Road looking westwards across the Royal Norfolk Showground



Photograph D: View from Dereham Road looking eastwards towards Costessey



Photograph E: View looking eastwards towards Costessey from the southern end of Long Lane



Photograph F: View looking eastwards from the western entrance to the Norwich Family Golf Centre



Photograph G: View from the entrance of Easton College looking northwards along Bawburgh Road



Photograph H: View looking southwards along Bawburgh Road near the southern edge of Easton



Photograph I: View looking southwards from the northern entrance to the Norwich Family Golf Centre



Photograph J: View looking north-eastwards from Dereham Road



Photograph K: View looking eastwards along Dereham Road



Photograph L: View looking eastwards from Dereham Road



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