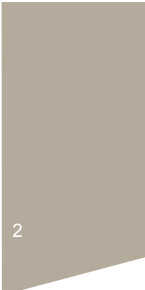




Four examples of poor connections in residential areas



The inner areas of Bicester have a series of well-connected streets, providing a wide variety of movement choices. The more recent suburban expansion however consists of cul-de-sac dominated estates, which can often frustrate movement choices. Again, the new quarter needs to learn from these differences and adopt a positive approach to its street patterns.

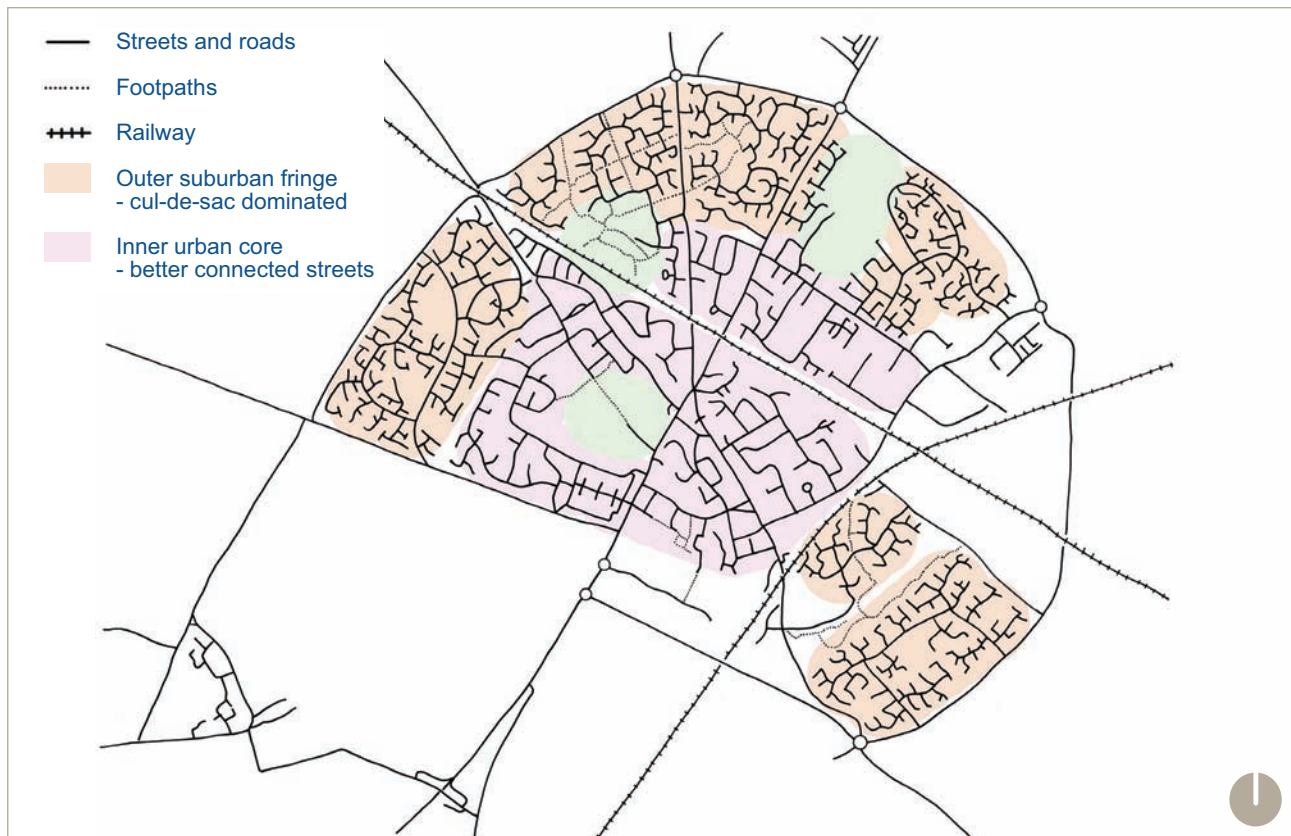


Figure 2.5 Access and movement





Bicester has a wide variety of open space (examples are shown to the left). The proposal needs to provide high quality areas of new open space that complement these. Analysis has shown that while there is a good supply of informal open space, there is a deficiency in formal sports pitches in the town. This shortfall can be addressed through the development at south-west Bicester.

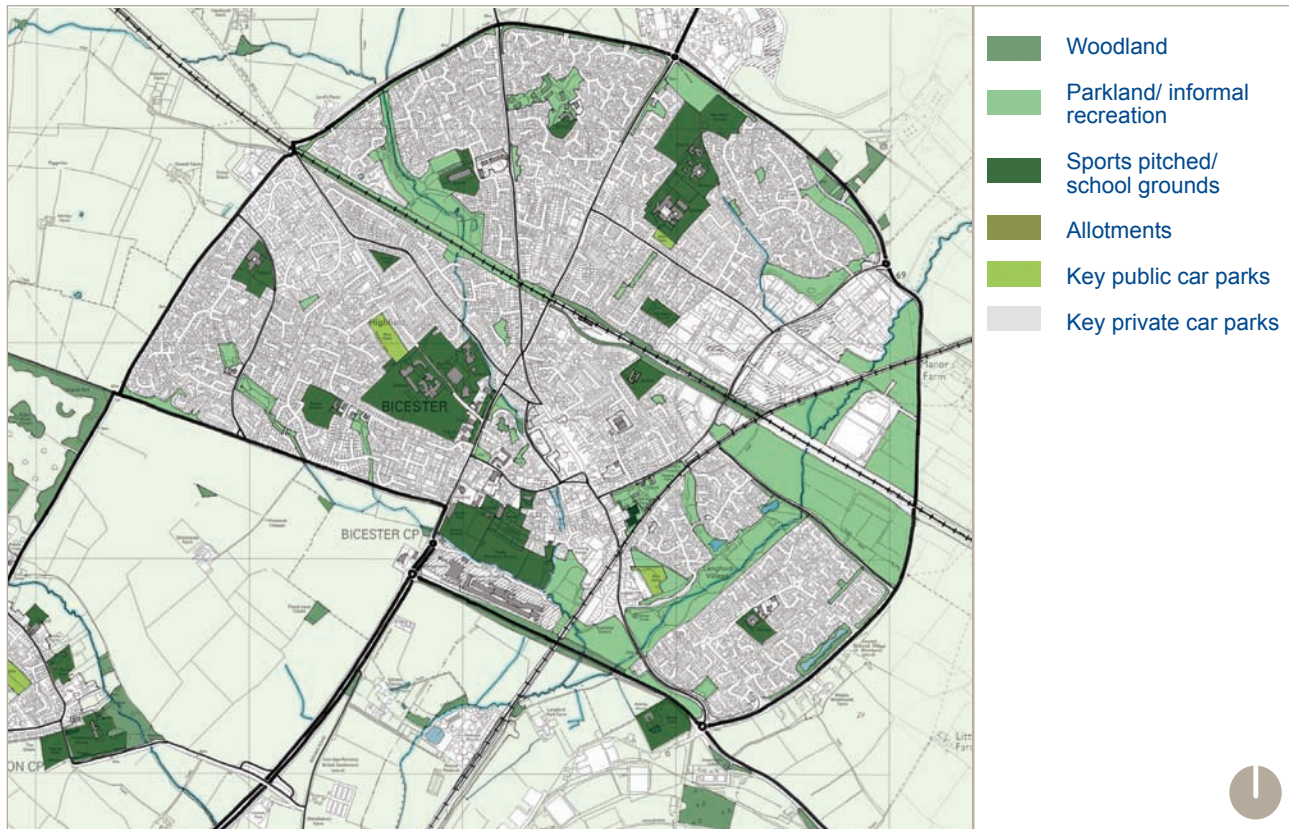
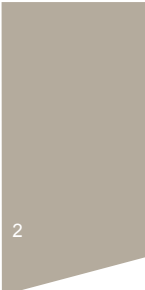
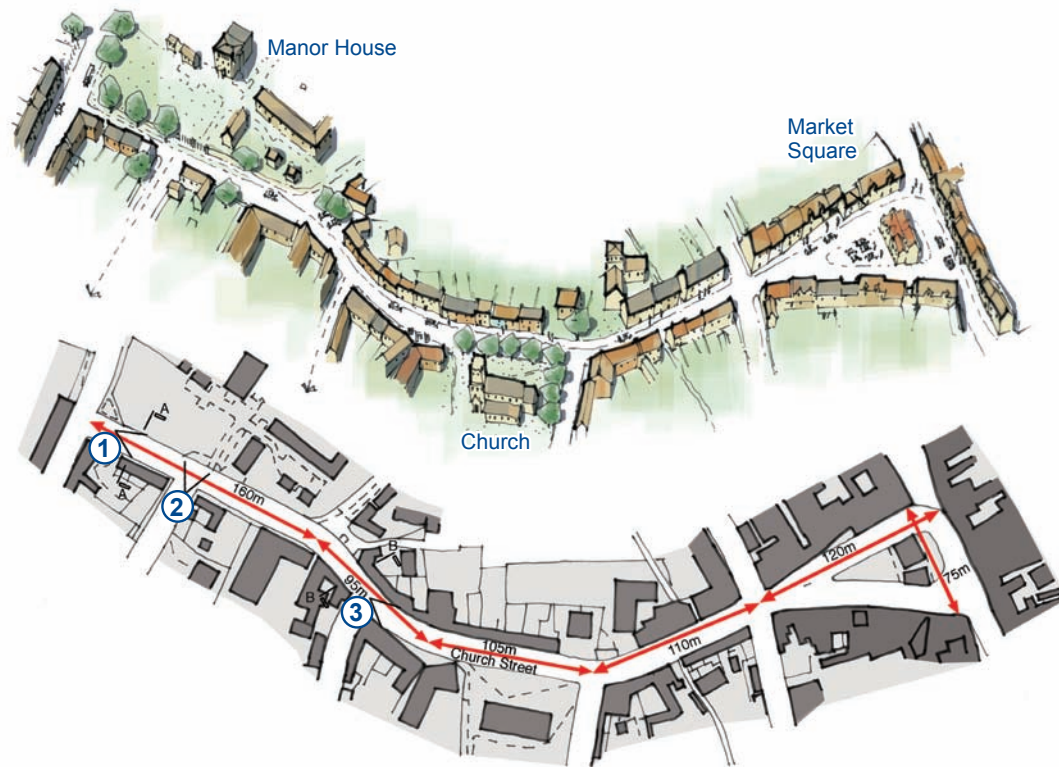


Figure 2.6 Open space





Church Street varies in width, with a 'pinchpoint' before it opens up into the town square (left). The street is not always edged by buildings. Private gardens and a church yard enclose the street too, with walls and railings at the boundaries (right).

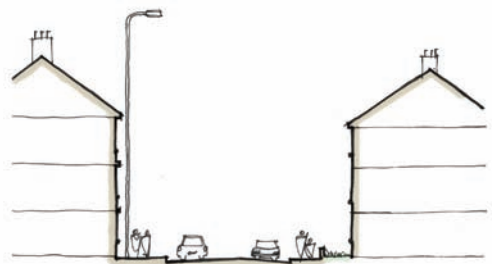
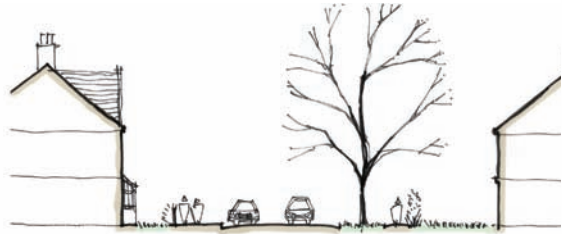


Church Street is one of the finest streets in Bicester, with a constantly changing alignment that creates a series of short views. Building fronts are close up against the street, with more significant buildings, such as the church and the Manor House, set further back to emphasise their importance. The street leads to Market Square, which is triangular in shape and edged with buildings. The new development can learn from this very successful part of town.



Figure 2.7 Analysis of Church Street





Queens Avenue varies in width, with a variety of edges, including buildings, walls and railings. Tree-planting is a significant feature, denoting the street as an important through route.

Kings End and Queens Avenue is the main through route in town, with the greatest traffic flows in the town centre. Despite this, the traffic tends to keep moving, even at rush hour, and pedestrians can cross the road easily due to the slow traffic speeds and the numerous dedicated crossing points. The street also feels safe for pedestrians as the majority of the street is overlooked by development.



Figure 2.8 Analysis of Kings End/Queens Avenue





**The site and its immediate surroundings**

- 2.1.11 The site itself has several distinctive characteristics, all of which have influenced the final form and layout of the proposed development.
- 2.1.12 The site primarily consists of arable fields, divided by native hedgerows. The site falls gently from 82m AOD in the north-west to 65m AOD in the south-east. The southern section of the site falls more noticeably down to Gagle Brook. Following the profile of the brook, a 'shoulder of land' prevents views across the site from the valley bottom. The north-western part of the site is particularly open, the absence of vegetation allowing expansive views across the farmland.
- 2.1.13 The setting of Chesterton and its conservation area has been an important consideration in design of the proposals. Much of the conservation area is inward looking and its setting to the north is primarily defined by the woodland north of Chesterton Lodge and along Gagle Brook. To the west of the conservation area, views from the village across the site are more extensive and open. The landscape setting to the village is limited by a combination of topography, built form and vegetation.

- 2.1.14 In the centre of the site, Whitelands Farm is a prominent and positive landmark in the landscape. The farm's setting is important, in particular in views from the south and east where there is a fine vista to the front of the farmhouse. The combination of the view to the farmhouse, a localized valley and the hedgerow patterns make the fields immediately east of the farmhouse more intimate and attractive. The southern edge of the site is also enclosed in character with pleasant views of Gagle Brook.
- 2.1.15 For the most part, hedgerows are of poor quality, containing a limited number of species and often including large sections of dead elm. The combined effect of the hedgerows and the three copses, is to defuse views across the site. The network of hedgerows, trees and copses positively contribute to the landscape character of the site. The most significant copses is Foxey Leys Copse.
- 2.1.16 The majority of the site is used for arable farming and as a consequence its ecological interest is limited. Pingle Brook to the north is a positive landscape feature and of ecological interest and has potential to be a significant asset for the new quarter.

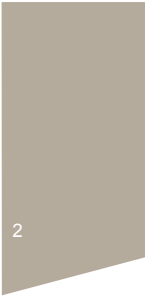


Figure 2.9 Site context





2.1.17 On the northern edge of the site, beyond the Middleton Stoney Road, is a predominately residential area, much of which is accessed from Shakespeare Drive. Many of the houses along this edge back onto the Middleton Stoney Road.

2.1.18 To the north-east of the site lies the town centre, with shops, offices, workshops, restaurants, pubs, hotels, churches and leisure uses, including a youth arts centre. Civic functions, such as the library, court rooms and the police station, are located on the western fringe of the town centre. To the south of the town centre, is the Bicester Village Retail Park (a factory-outlet centre) and a Tesco superstore. This is separated from the town by the Pingle recreation ground.

2.1.19 There are a variety of routes between the town centre and the site, including small lanes which are often pedestrian-only. The Piggy Lane route is the most direct link, leading to Church Street and the Market Square at the heart of Bicester.

2.1.20 To the west of the site lies Bignell Park, which has extensive mature tree cover within the grounds. This provides a backdrop to the western edge of the site. The Bignell Park Hotel, close to the Gagle Brook, marks the western edge of Chesterton village.

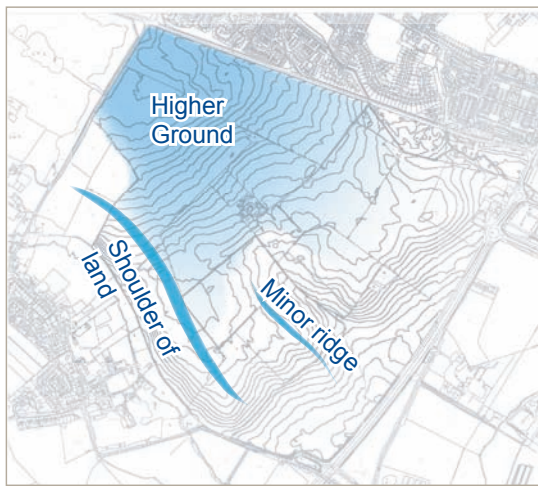
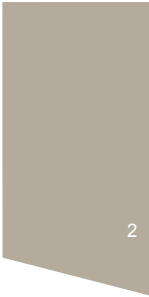


Figure 2.10 **Topography**





2.1.21 To the south of the site, beyond Gagle Brook, lies Chesterton village. The historic core of the village, including the church and pub, has been designated as a conservation area. The church tower is visible from Whitelands Farm.

2.1.22 The northern edge of Chesterton is characterised by domestic gardens and private lanes running downhill, towards Gagle Brook. Two public rights of way cross the site, connecting the village to Bicester town. The village has an attractive appearance and a sensitive relationship with the countryside.

2.1.23 Land to the east of the A41 is agricultural land but is identified (In the local plan?) for employment uses. The A41 (Aylesbury Road) forms the northern edge of this area and is elevated along much of this boundary. The eastern boundary is defined by the extent of the flood plain of the Pingle Brook. The water treatment works and garden centre form the south-eastern and southern boundaries to the site.



One of the mature hedgerows on the site

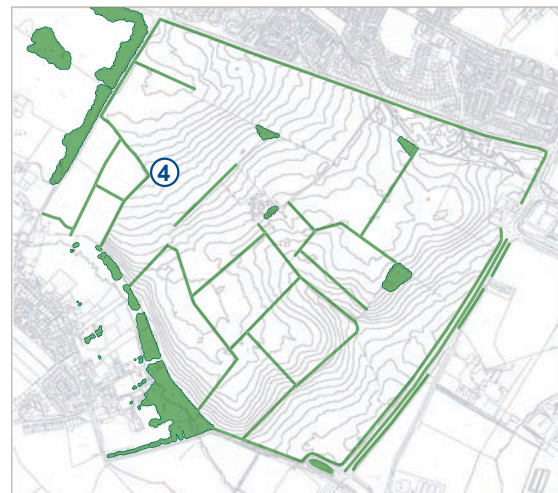


Figure 2.11 Vegetation

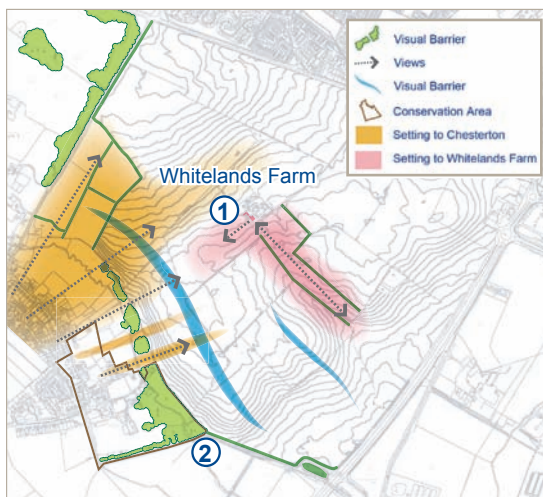


Figure 2.12 Setting

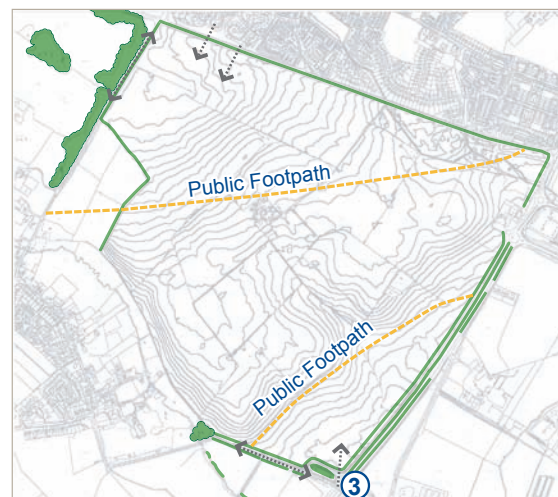


Figure 2.13 Public footpaths





### The wider context



**Figure 2.14 Village location plan, showing the villages looked at during the analysis work**

2.1.24 As well as understanding of the site in its context and learning from Bicester, nearby villages where also analysed. Widely regarded as having positive and attractive qualities, these villages have influenced the master plan to achieve a better edge between town and country. The lessons learned from the villages are described here.

#### *Bletchington*

- A limited range of materials and a restricted palette of colours
- Parkland and recreation spaces form the transitional areas between the development edge and agricultural land and open countryside
- The limited range of building types, which is restricted to two and two and a half storeys, to create a strong sense of unity

#### *Caulcott*

- The use of one to two and a half-storeyed buildings with breaks in sight lines along the main road creates an intimate scale and sense of informality
- The breaks in the sight lines allow for views out to the wider countryside

#### *Chesterton*

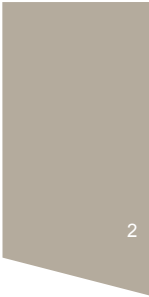
- Gaps in the built form open up views out to the wider countryside
- The village green is located around key movement corridor
- The use of predominantly two, two and a half and three storey buildings creates an intimate scale and a sense of informality
- A general uniformity of materials and colours

#### *Kirtlington*

- A sequence of 'village greens' located along a key movement corridor and focused around important junctions
- A curving street pattern with short sightlines and varying widths with mainly two, two and half and three-storey buildings to create an intimate scale and sense of informality
- Again, parkland and recreation spaces for the transitional areas between the development edge and agricultural land

2.1.25 These villages provide a series of important principles showing how an approach to built form, spaces, landscape and transport can produce attractive and successful living environments. They provide clues to the way in which the development at Whitelands Farm can be arranged to create an attractive extension to Bicester.

2.1.26 Whitelands Farm presents an opportunity to create a new edge on the south-west side of the town, one that can make the transition from an urban to a rural environment more successfully than other recent extensions to Bicester.







*Bletchington*

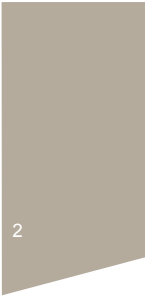


Open space analysis



OS map extract

- Woodland
- Built Form
- Parkland/ Informal recreation space
- Block Form
- Open space/ Formal recreation
- Water course



2



Understanding the relationship between the landscape and the village



Bletchington has a very attractive village green. This triangular space has two busy sides and one quiet side. This detail has helped inform the design of public spaces for south west Bicester



A harmonious edge between built form and landscape.



The village green is a combination of buildings, stone walls and trees that define the space.



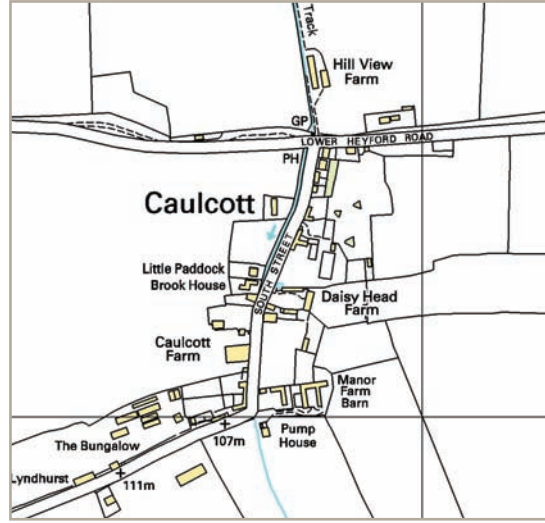
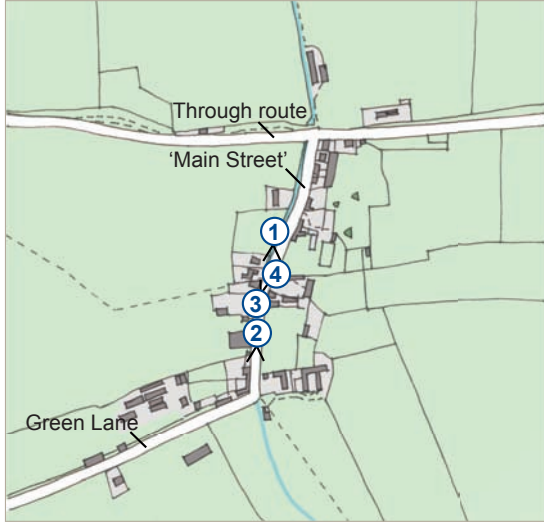
The manor house set in parkland creates a focal point in the distance.

**Figure 2.15 Analysis of the village of Bletchington**





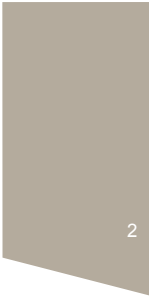
*Caulcott*



Open space analysis

OS map extract

- Woodland
- Built Form
- Parkland/ Informal recreation space
- Block Form
- Open space/ Formal recreation
- Water course



Intimate scale due to short sight lines and building scale.



View of open countryside from the main street.



Open water course running alongside the main street.



Balancing pond as part of a sustainable drainage system.

**Figure 2.16 Analysis of the village of Caulcott**

