## EIA Quality Mark Case Study

### Waterbeach New Town East

**Key Issues:**

The site comprises 231ha of agricultural land located immediately to the north of the existing village of Waterbeach, within the flat fenland landscape. The site is predominately flat with a peninsula of slightly higher ground running between Waterbeach and Denny Abbey. Long range view to the north and east are possible within the site including views to Ely Cathedral.

The key environmental considerations for the development include:

- Traffic congestion along the A10;
- Historic setting of Denny Abbey and views of Ely Cathedral;
- Development within a predominately flat landscape;
- Recreational pressure on Wicken Fen and delivering a net gain in biodiversity;
- Surface water drainage within a flat landscape;
- Creating a sense of place within a predominately agricultural landscape.

**Purpose of the project:**

Waterbeach New Town East is a pioneer – a first for UK housing at this scale. It reimagines residential streets and what they can offer, moving away from prioritising cars in spaces around homes. The vision draws on the open, powerful and compelling landscape and patterns of the Fens to foster a strong sense of community based around a series of small neighbourhood steads. Each stead will comprise up to 400 homes; they will have their own character, landmarks and facilities. They will be fine-grained, nuanced and well-linked, but they will also connect to a bigger landscape and story.

**Description of the project:**

The 4,500-home development reimagines residential streets as sociable places that put people, not cars first. A series of small neighbourhoods, steads, will draw down on the stretched fenland landscape to create a series of intimate, convivial places with car pushed to the edge. Each will have their own character, landmarks and facilities. They will be fine-grained, nuanced and well linked that connect to a bigger landscape and story. The patterns of the surrounding fens will inspire the character of Waterbeach New Town. Linear causeways will be uncovered, and views framed. The subtle meander of an ancient Drove will connect the new town to a vast new fenland park in the north and a bustling new train station in the south.
# EIA Learning Outcomes

## Lessons learnt:

The key to success for this development was the early engagement and integration of the environmental team and the masterplanners. As highlighted above there were a number of environmental constraints which if considered individually would have constrained the design of the development. Instead these constraints were recognised as opportunities to create a place that delivered multiple benefits.

The historic setting of Denny Abbey allowed for the creation of a large fenland park that included the restoration of the former fenland landscape. This was judged to make a positive contribution to the setting of Denny Abbey, but it also allowed for the creation of large surface water drainage ponds. The ponds were designed to mimic the fenland habitat, with permanently wet features. The creation of this fenland habitat delivered a biodiversity net gain at the site and offered existing and future residents a place where they could experience the fenland landscape without having to travel to Wicken Fen which will help to relieve visitor pressure on this European designated site.

The high levels of traffic congestion on the A10 emphasised a clear need to minimise traffic generation arising from the development. The prioritisation of walking and cycling within the development was therefore paramount. The by way open to all traffic provided a great opportunity to retain this historic route within the development and create the spine of the walking and cycling network off of which the location of key destinations, such as schools, local centres and the Fenland Park were located. This structuring feature allowed for the views toward Ely Cathedral to be retained, while promoting healthier lifestyle options for the future residents.

The key lessons learnt from this project was that given the time and opportunity to interact with and influence the design, the environmental specialists can help shape and create a great sense of place.

## Lessons learnt continued:

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