

An important 'natural' area which was once the commercial hub of the city.

Coe Fen and Sheep's Green formed part of the commercial area of the town where up to three watermills once stood. The land between the artificially raised banks of the watercourses was prone to flooding and was therefore only really suitable for grazing - sheep on Sheep's Green

(west of River Cam) and cows on Coe (cow) Fen (east of River Cam). By the C19 the Fen was mire and it was partly drained to avoid disease in the town. The land remains today as a semi-natural space and is an important part of the setting of the core area.



View across Coe Fen / Sheep's Green

SIGNIFICANCE • VERY HIGH

General Overview

The Fen and Green are important thoroughfares for cyclists and pedestrians, particularly between the city centre and Newnham, and part of the pathway along the river out towards Grantchester runs through the space. In summer, the space becomes a very important recreational area with people relaxing on Laundress Green or punting on the river. The bustle around the Silver Street bridge, punting stations and the public houses is a key feature of the space, particularly in the summer.

Cows are still grazed on the Fen, whilst the semi-natural spaces are important ecologically and, away from the busier areas, the river is fished. The space serves a wider role in the central townscape by providing a contrast to the bustle of the nearby city streets. The prospect of cattle grazing in the shadow of college and town buildings is virtually unique.



Crusoe Bridge



View north along river



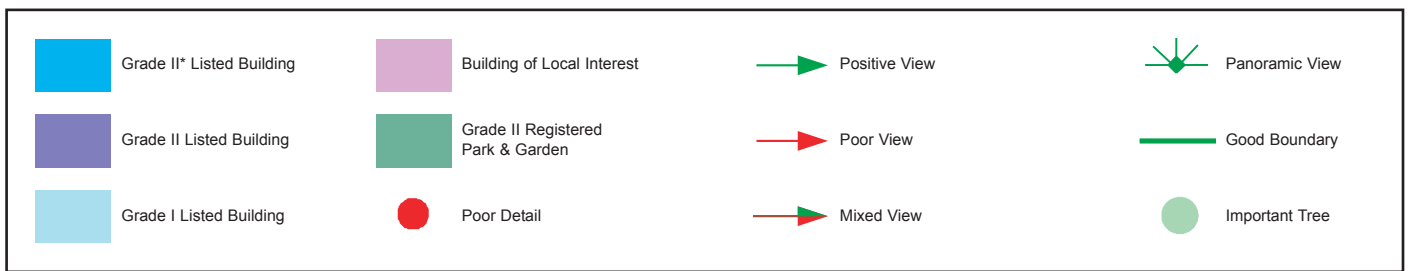
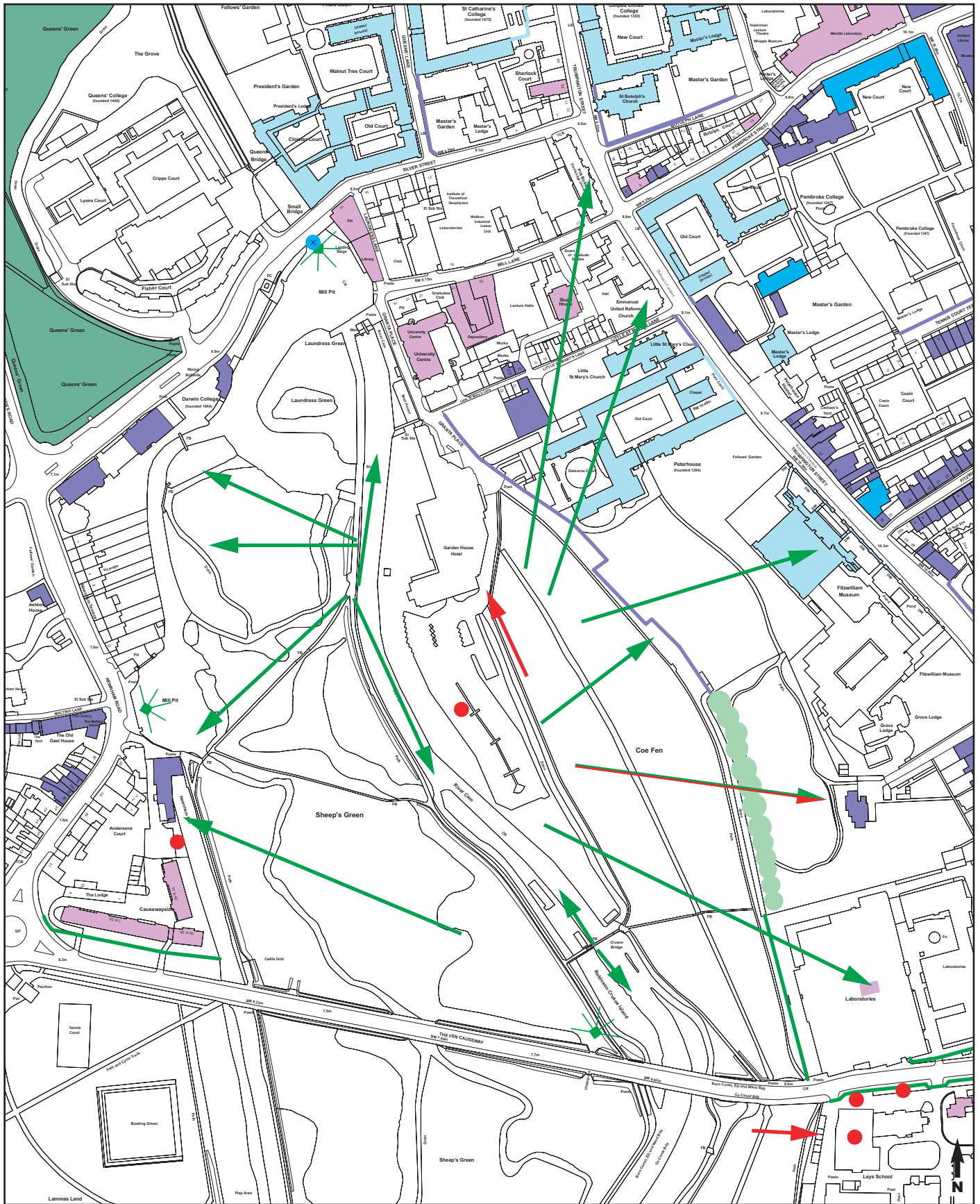
Gates



View to United Reformed Church



Wall detail



Landscape Elements

- > Relatively open with sporadic, over-mature trees.
- > Significant groups of trees along boundaries and River Cam.
- > Old river channels mark position of modified watercourses which served the mills.
- > Cattle graze freely on land within yards of the busy city streets.
- > Angularity of buildings along east side contrasts sharply with soft boundaries.
- > High wall of Peterhouse with college buildings and Fitzwilliam Museum behind gives impression of walled town and is one of best vistas in city.
- > West and north boundaries formed by buildings glimpsed through trees.
- > River canalised between Silver Street bridge and Crusoe Bridge; more natural banks southwards from Crusoe Bridge.
- > Remains of one watermill at northern entrance to space.



Chimney, rear of Newnham Mill

Landscape Enhancement

The main opportunities would be to mitigate some of the less attractive features found particularly on the boundaries of the spaces.

Planting could soften the less attractive buildings and car parks.

The colour of bridges and the design and materials of paths, signs, bins and bollards should all be carefully considered.

Increasing the amount of interpretation material could help more people appreciate the quality of the space and its history.

In addition to the traditional management of the area, e.g. pollarding willows, etc., the retention of the over mature and decaying trees for their wildlife benefit needs to be carefully balanced with the need to ensure public safety is not jeopardised.

NB For further details on this area please refer to Cambridge City Council's 'Coe Fen and Sheep's Green Conservation Plan' (2001).

Archaeology / Historic Topography

Anticipated deposit depth varies between <0.50m and 1.50m.

Potential for prehistory is low

Potential for Roman is low

Potential for medieval is moderate

The land here was probably too wet to attract settlement in prehistoric or Roman times, but proximity to the river led to its use from at least Saxon times as a site for milling. Two mills (Kings and Bishops) were eventually located by the millpond, only being demolished in 1929. The third, Newnham Mill, still stands as a restaurant.

Feature / Structure	Age	Notes
Crusoe Bridge	1898-9	steel construction with timber deck, supported on 4 cast-iron columns
William Stone Building	1963-64	Grade II Listed residential building by Sir Leslie Martin & Colin St John Wilson. Buff brick, copper cladding, flat roof, 8 storeys
west boundary wall of The Grove	C16 or earlier	approximately 300yds long, stone & rubble built, later additions & patched with brickwork. Includes an old water gate
Engineering Laboratories' Old Boiler House & chimney	early C20	Building of Local Interest. Brick construction
gates of the Engineering Laboratories facing Coe Fen	early C20	Grade II Listed cast-iron gates. Red brick piers, stone caps, lead classical urns