

Committee: Executive
Date: Monday 11 May 2009
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

Membership

Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)	Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)	
Councillor Norman Bolster	Councillor Kieron Mallon	Councillor Nicholas Turner
Councillor Michael Gibbard	Councillor Nigel Morris	
Councillor James Macnamara	Councillor D M Pickford	

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest that they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

The Chairman to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. **Urgent Business**

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

5. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 4)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2009.

6. **Forward Plan** (Pages 5 - 14)

6.35 pm

Report of Leader of the Council

Summary

To review the Leader's Forward Plan of the key decisions which will be taken by the Executive over the next four months.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Resolve to note the Leader's Forward Plan for the next four months.

Strategy and Policy

7. **Overview & Scrutiny report: Rural Affordable Housing** (Pages 15 - 126) **6.40 pm**

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Summary

To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites.

Cllr Donaldson, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, will attend the meeting to present the report.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Note the work of the Task and Finish Group scrutiny review into rural affordable housing and exception sites as detailed in Appendix 1a;
- 2) Agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding rural affordable housing and exception sites as detailed in Appendix 1a.

8. **Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan** (Pages 127 - 134)

7.10 pm

Report of Head of Urban and Rural Services

Summary

To explain key changes in biodiversity legislation, policy and issues since the publication of the Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan 2005-2010 (BAP). To consider the production of a revised and updated Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Note the key changes in biodiversity legislation, policy and issues since the publication of the current Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 2) Approve the production of a revised and updated Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan which works towards a rich and diverse local natural where wildlife is conserved and the benefits of nature are available to everyone.

9. Kidlington Conservation Areas: Responses to Draft Appraisal and Designation of Conservations Areas at Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf - Approval of Final Appraisal (Pages 135 - 226) 7.20 pm

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing.

Summary

Local Authorities have a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review Conservation Areas from time to time.

Recommendation

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Resolve, under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to approve the Kidlington Conservation Areas appraisal, to extend the boundaries of Church Street, High Street and The Rookery Conservation Areas, and to designate Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf Conservation Areas with immediate effect.

10. Cottisford Conservation Area Appraisal: Consideration of Responses to Consultation Draft and Approval of Final Appraisal (Pages 227 - 262) 7.25 pm

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing Policy

Summary

Local Authorities have a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review Conservation Areas from time to time.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Resolve, under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to approve the Cottisford Conservation Area appraisal and to extend the boundary with immediate effect

11. **Parsons Street Pedestrianisation** (Pages 263 - 267)

7.30 pm

Report of Head of Economic Development and Estates

Summary

To confirm modifications to the revised draft Parsons Street/Market Place traffic regulation Order (TRO), Banbury and to progress amendments to the traffic regulations Orders for High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row, Banbury and Sheep Street, Bicester.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Agree that the Bridge Street, Market Place, Cornhill and Parsons Street Traffic regulation Order, as modified on 2 March 2009, be made
- 2) Agree that the Council enter into a revised agency agreement with OCC, authorising the Council to make the TRO as modified, and to promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury TRO, and the Sheep Street Bicester TRO, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent
- 3) Agree that the Council enter into an Agreement with OCC under s278 of the Highways Act 1980, authorising the Council to undertake the works for Parsons Street/Market Place, Bridge Street and Church Walk/Church Lane
- 4) Promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury traffic regulation orders, and the Sheep Street Bicester traffic regulation order, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent

Value for Money and Performance

12. **Corporate Procurement Progress Report** (Pages 268 - 293)

7.40 pm

** Appendix 4 to follow **

Report of the Strategic Director Customer Service and Resources

Summary

To provide an update of progress made to date in respect of the Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities approved by the Executive on 3 March 2008.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Note the progress made to date in respect of the Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities

- 2) Note the progress in respect of the establishment of the centralised procurement function

Urgent Business

13. Urgent Business

Any other items which the Chairman has decided is urgent.

(Meeting scheduled to close at 7.55 pm)

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221587 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item. The definition of personal and prejudicial interests is set out in Part 5 Section A of the constitution. The Democratic Support Officer will have a copy available for inspection at all meetings.

Personal Interest: Members must declare the interest but may stay in the room, debate and vote on the issue.

Prejudicial Interest: Member must withdraw from the meeting room and should inform the Chairman accordingly.

With the exception of the some very specific circumstances, a Member with a personal interest also has a prejudicial interest if it is one which a Member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact James Doble, Legal and Democratic Services james.doble@cherwell-dc.gov.uk (01295) 221587

Mary Harpley
Chief Executive

Published on Thursday 30 April 2009

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 5

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 27 April 2009 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)

Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Michael Gibbard
Councillor James Macnamara
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nigel Morris
Councillor D M Pickford
Councillor Nicholas Turner

Also present: Councillor P A O'Sullivan

Apologies for absence: Councillor G A Reynolds

Officers: Mary Harpley, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
Ian Davies, Strategic Director - Environment and Community
John Hoad, Strategic Director - Planning, Housing and Economy
Mike Carroll, Head of Improvement
Liz Howlett, Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer
Gillian Greaves, Head of Housing Services
Grahame Helm, Head of Safer Communities & Community Development
David Marriott, Head of Economic Developments & Estates
Paul Marston-Weston, Head of Recreation & Health
Jo Smith, Communications Manager
James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager

Resolutions

225 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

226 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

227 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

228 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2009 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

229 **Cherwell's Housing Strategy for Older People**

The Head of Housing Services submitted a report to approve the draft housing strategy for older people to enable full public consultation to be undertaken.

Resolved

That the draft Cherwell Housing Strategy for Older People be approved so that full public consultation can be undertaken in line with proposals in the draft strategy.

Reasons - The demographic and strategic drivers show the importance of delivering the strategy at this time. The strategy will go through a thorough consultation process allowing further shaping of the recommendations.

Options

The following options have been identified:

Option One	To approve the draft strategy to allow the consultation programme to begin.
Option Two	To approve the draft strategy with amendments.
Option Three	Not to approve the draft strategy. This would involve a rescheduling of the consultation programme.

230 **Sports Centres Modernisation and Woodgreen Leisure Centre Pool Refurbishment**

The Strategic Director Environment and Community submitted a report to provide the Executive with an update on the Sports Centres Modernisation project and refurbishment of Woodgreen Leisure Centre Outdoor Pool.

Resolved

- 1) That the current position and progress to date be noted.
- 2) That the arrangements for the reopening events for Bicester Leisure Centre and Kidlington and Gosford Leisure Centre be noted.

Reasons - The sports centre modernisation programme and refurbishment of Woodgreen Leisure Centre Outdoor Pool are priorities for the Council. The schemes have made excellent progress with only minor delays to date and remain on programme and within budget.

231 **Equalities and Diversity - Update and Review**

The Head of Safer Communities and Community Development submitted a report providing a review and update of the Council's progress against the Equality Standard for Local Government. The report also summarised the changes to the process, reviewed action planning for further development of the Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and requested that the Executive agree to formally appoint an elected member as the Council's Community Cohesion Champion.

Resolved

- 1) That the achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government consistent with the approved commitment in the Corporate Plan be noted
- 2) That the Council seek accreditation as soon as possible and that if possible funding be found from within existing budgets or if this is not possible a supplementary estimate be brought forward to the Executive.
- 3) That having expressed an interest in the role, Councillor Ahmed be appointed the Council's Community Cohesion Champion.

Reasons – To consider formal accreditation under the Equality Standard for Local Government and to appoint a Community Cohesion Champion, whose role includes equality and diversity leadership, will demonstrate the Council's commitment as an employer, in the delivery of its services and in its community leadership role, to promoting equal life chances for all.

232 **Asset Management Plan**

The Head of Economic Development and Estates submitted a report to seek approval for the Council's Asset Management Plan for 2009/2010.

Resolved

- 1) That the areas of land on the Council's former housing estates used for amenity, parking purposes, and public open space be appropriated at nil value, so that they are formally held for those purposes.
- 2) That the Asset Management Plan for 2009/10 be adopted

Reasons - The Asset Management Plan sets out information relating to the Council's property holdings, and how they relate to service priorities, governance and administrative arrangements, and plans affecting these properties. It is important that Members are satisfied that the Council is using these resources efficiently and effectively to deliver services.

233 **2009/2010 Corporate Improvement Plan**

The Chief Executive and Head of Improvement submitted a report that presented the proposed 2009/2010 Corporate Improvement Plan.

Resolved

That the 2009/2010 Corporate Improvement Plan be agreed

Reasons - The Council has transformed many aspects of its performance in recent years and this has been underpinned by the focus brought to improvement by the Corporate Improvement Plan. The actions contained in the 2009/2010 Corporate Improvement Plan build on the achievements of previous years, continue to lay the foundations for sustained improvement into the future, and take into account the need to respond to the impact of the economic recession.

Options

The following option has been identified.

Option One	To agree the organisational priorities for improvement and the content of the 2008/2009 Corporate Improvement Plan as set out in the report.
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234 Review of Organisational Restructure

The Chief Executive submitted a report that presented an update of the outcomes to date of the 2007/2008 restructure of the Council.

Resolved

- 1) That the audited position of the financial contribution as at 31 March 2008 and the further contribution of the phased implementation be noted
- 2) That a further report of the audited cumulative position as at 31 March 2009 be requested

Reasons - The restructure has made a significant contribution to the overall reduction in organisational costs over the last 3 years. The financial position will improve further as a result of savings secured in the financial year 2008/2009. Further financial benefits are to come in the current (2009/2010) financial year and the last tranche of additional savings expected to contribute a full year effect in 2010/11. In addition, the Council is committed to removing a further £1m in cost from the organisation in the 2010/2011 budget, some of which will come from further changes to the structure of the organisation.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Executive

Forward Plan

11 May 2009

Report of Leader of the Council

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the Forward Plan of the key Executive decisions which will be taken over the next four months. These are the key decisions of which the Council's Executive is currently aware.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To resolve to note the Forward Plan for the next four months.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Forward Plan is updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis. As this takes place, the programme is adjusted with further key decisions being added and others rescheduled or removed. The covering introductory note identifies the Members of the Executive by name and title, as required by the Regulations.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 is a schedule of changes to the Forward Plan since the last publication and the plan itself.

Proposals

- 1.3 The proposal is to note the Forward Plan as attached.

Conclusion

- 1.4 Acceptance of these recommendations creates a Forward Plan for the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2000.

Background Information

- 2.1 The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 require that a forward plan be prepared by the Leader of the Council. The Forward Plan sets out the planned key Executive decisions which will be taken on behalf of the Council over the next four months.
- 2.2 The definition of what constitutes a key Executive decision can be found in Article 13 of the Council's Constitution which has guided the compilation of the attached Forward Plan. In particular, determination of whether a decision is "key" has been assessed with regard to its financial significance, the impact on local people and the degree of discretion that can be exercised. The content of the Forward Plan is prescribed in the Regulations and reflected in the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution.
- 2.3 The Forward Plan has to be updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis, and a new forward plan produced at least 14 days prior to the first day on which it comes into effect. Any outstanding matters from the previous plan will be rolled forward into latest plan.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan. Acceptance of these recommendations creates a Forward Plan for the Council as required by the Local Government Act 2000.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- Option One** To adopt the recommendation. The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan. The only options concern its contents.
- Option Two** To propose amendments to the Forward Plan.

Consultations

All Chief Officers The plan has been updated in light of responses received.

Implications

- Financial:** None arising directly from this report.
Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Chief Accountant 01295 221564
- Legal:** The Council must by law publish a Forward Plan.
Comments checked by James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager 01295 221587
- Risk Management:** Risk assessment - No significant risk implications have

been identified in connection with this report other than the consequences of not complying with the legal requirement to publish a Forward Plan. Each report to the Executive on the items in the Forward Plan will carry its own risk assessment.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Chief Accountant
01295 221564

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

The Forward Plan provides a framework for consideration of Council policies over the next four months.

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Barry Wood
Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Forward Plan
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	James Doble, Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
Contact Information	01295 221587 james.doble@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Forward Plan Summary

June 2009 to September 2009

Cherwell District Council

Summary of the Forward Plan

This summary of the Forward Plan, (produced by officers on behalf of the Leader of the Council) sets out the key Executive decisions which will be taken at Cherwell District Council over the next four months. These are the key decisions of which the Council's Executive is currently aware. The Forward Plan will be updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis. As this takes place, the programme will be adjusted: further key decisions may be added, or anticipated ones may be rescheduled or removed. The summary shows the decisions programmed to be taken during each month. A likely date of decision is shown, but it is possible that a decision may be rescheduled to a later month. The full Forward Plan, including the latest position on prospective decisions is available on the council website at www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk, using the link to Council meetings.

This summary sets out the key decisions by month and says whether they will be taken by the Full Executive or by one of its individual Members, or portfolio holders as they are known (see below for details of the membership of the Executive). While

key decisions may be taken by officers exercising authority delegated by the Executive, it is the Council's intention that this will very much be the exception.

Key decisions are those which are financially significant (in terms of spending or savings) for the service or function concerned or which will have a significant impact on communities, usually in two or more wards in the District. For the purposes of compiling its Forward Plan the Council has decided that a decision will be financially significant

- if it is equivalent in value to more than 10% of the annual gross budget for the unit concerned or £50,000 whichever is the lesser. If the figure is below £50,000 regard will be had to the impact on communities in deciding whether the decision is key.
- If it involves an individual capital projects with a value greater than £250,000.

In assessing impact on local people (including businesses and organisations) the following factors will be borne in mind:

- The number of users of the service in the wards affected
- Whether the impact will be short term or will last for a number of years, or be permanent.
- The nature of the impact on communities in terms of economic, social and environmental well-being.

For a decision to be key there must be a significant degree of discretion to be exercised by the decision-maker.

The Forward Plan lists documents which are currently available to decision makers. Generally these are also available to the public but some may have restrictions on the information given in them. Copies of public documents listed may be obtained on request from

James Doble,
Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager
Cherwell District Council,
Bodicote House,
Bodicote,
Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 4AA (e-mail: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk).

There will be a copying charge for each document. Comments on the matters for decision may be made to the relevant contact officer up to the date of the meeting, unless otherwise specified in the consultation details.

Cherwell District Council – Executive Members

<u>Portfolio</u>	<u>Member</u>
Communications and Public Relations (with Special Responsibility for Climate Change)	Councillor Mallon
Community, Health and Environment	Councillor Reynolds
Customer Service and ICT	Councillor Turner
Economic Development and Estates	Councillor Bolster
Organisational Development and Improvement	Councillor Miss Pickford
Planning and Housing	Councillor Gibbard
Policy and Community Planning	Councillor Wood
Resources	Councillor Macnamara
Urban and Rural Services	Councillor Morris

Cherwell District Council Forward Plan

Key decisions to be taken by the full Executive

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
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Likely date of decision: June 2009

<p>Definition of Waste and Collections from Charities To consider the Council's position with regards to the definition of waste and collections from charities.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Environment	Ed Potter Tel: 01295 221902	None.
<p>Investment Strategy To consider the outcome and recommendations of the independent review of the investment strategy.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Resources	Karen Curtin Tel: 01295 221551	None.
<p>Performance Management Framework Year End Report To consider the Performance Management Framework Year End Report</p>		Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development and Improvement	Mike Carroll Tel: 01295 227959	None.
<p>Places of Worship in our Communities To consider the role of places of worship in the community.</p>		Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning	Ian Davies Tel: 01295 221698	None.
<p>Banbury Market Future Management To consider options for the future management and direction for Banbury market.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Urban and Rural Services	Chris Rothwell Tel: 01295 221712	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
Earmarked Capital Reserves for Affordable Housing To consider expenditure of the affordable housing capital reserves.	None. None.	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Fiona Brown, Gillian Greaves Tel: 01295 221659, Tel: 01295 221654	None.

Likely date of decision: July 2009

Banbury Cultural Quarter To consider proposals for the development of a cultural quarter.		Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Environment	Ian Davies Tel: 01295 221698	None.
A sustainable community strategy for Cherwell To consider an update regarding the progress of the new sustainable community strategy for Cherwell. To endorse the next steps of the project.	The strategy will be subject to extensive consultation with members, partners and the public.	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Community Planning	Claire Taylor Tel: 01295 221563	None.
Eco Town - Government Decisions and Implications To consider matters arising from the Government decision regarding proposed Eco Towns and any resulting implications for the District.		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Philip Clarke Tel: 01295 221840	None.
Bicester Hospital To consider a progress report on Bicester Hospital.		Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Environment	Ian Davies Tel: 01295 221698	None.

Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
VFM Review of Insurance To consider the outcomes of the Value for Money Review of insurance.		Portfolio Holder for Resources	Neil Lawrence Tel: 01295 221801	None.
Economic Development Strategy Review To consider the Economic Development Strategy for the District		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	David Marriott Tel: 01295 221603	None.
Banbury Residents Parking Scheme To consider proposals for the scheme.		Portfolio Holder for Urban and Rural Services	Chris Rothwell Tel: 01295 221712	None.
Local Development Framework Next Steps To consider the next steps with regard to creating a Local Development Framework		Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing	Philip Clarke Tel: 01295 221840	None.
Accommodation Review To consider and review Phase 1. To consider the proposals for Phase 2.		Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development and Improvement	Julie Evans Tel: 01295 221595	None.

Likely date of decision: August 2009

Market Square, Bicester - Environmental Improvement To consider options with regard to the environmental improvement of Market Square, Bicester.		Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates	David Marriott Tel: 01295 221603	None.
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Subject for Decision	External Consultees/ method of consultation	Executive Portfolio	Contact Officer(s)	Documents submitted to decision-maker
Likely date of decision: September 2009				
<p>Pitt Review into Summer 2007 Floods - Further Implications following the Government's Response to the Report Recommendations</p> <p>To consider further implications arising from the Government's response to the Pitt Report.</p>		Portfolio Holder for Community, Health and Environment	Tony Brummell Tel: 01295 221524	None.
<p>Phone Access and Telephony Review</p> <p>To consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposal and associated business case and plan for a single customer contact number or small suite of numbers • Revised procurement practice in respect of telephony with associated reduction in costs • Plan for upgrade for main telephone switch and decommissioning of satellite switches • A clear product catalogue for telephony services to the Council 		Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development and Improvement	Pat Simpson Tel: 01295 227069	None.

Executive

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

11 May 2009

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the report and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review into rural affordable housing and exception sites.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) to note the work of the Task and Finish Group scrutiny review into rural affordable housing and exception sites as detailed in Appendix 1a;
- (2) to agree the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding rural affordable housing and exception sites as detailed in Appendix 1a.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee concluded its review into rural affordable housing and exception sites at their meeting on 7 April 2009. Their findings, conclusions and recommendations are set out in the main body of the report (Appendix 1a). However, because of the complexity of the subject matter the Committee have, on this occasion, published a second volume of the key supporting documents (Appendix 1b).
- 1.2 In December 2008 the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing invited the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the Council's policy and procedures for the delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites. The topic had been raised at the Parish Liaison meeting in November 2008 by a number of Parish Councils who were concerned and frustrated by their experience of the process.

- 1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to focus their review on the following issues:
- Customer satisfaction with the process
 - The service offering (performance, costs etc)
 - The partnership interface with the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council and the lead Registered Social Landlord (Green Square Group - previously Oxford Citizens Housing Association)
 - The implications for future planning policy (the Local Development Framework - LDF)
- 1.4 The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder, Planning and Housing have agreed to attend the Parish Liaison meeting on 17 June 2009 to provide feedback on the scrutiny outcomes and the Executive response.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

Option One To accept some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations.

Option Two To reject some or all of the overview and scrutiny recommendations.

Consultations

See Appendix 1 for details

Implications

(Financial, Legal and Risk and other implications e.g. Equalities, Human Resources, Data Quality and Environmental where relevant)

Financial: There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Denise Westlake, Service Accountant 01295 221559

Legal: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Risk Management: There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All rural wards

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity
An Accessible, Value for Money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1a	Report: Rural affordable housing and exception sites
Appendix 1b	Appendices: Rural affordable housing and exception sites
Background Papers	
Report Author	Catherine Phythian, Scrutiny Officer
Contact Information	01295 221587 Catherine.phythian@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE



**Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites
Volume 1**

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

April 2009

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr John Donaldson

Cllr Ken Atack

Cllr Rick Atkinson

Cllr Nick Cotter

Cllr Tony Ilott

Cllr Nick Mawer

Cllr Alistair Milne Home

Cllr Dan Sames

Cllr Les Sibley

Cllr Chris Smithson

Cllr Lawrie Stratford

Cllr Trevor Stevens

Acknowledgements

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to thank the following for providing information and evidence to the Group either in person or by written response.

- Councillor Braithwaite and Mrs Jordan, South Newington Parish Council
- Councillors Preston, Coley and McKinley, Steeple Aston Parish Council
- Councillors Lane and Hobbs, Barford St Michael and Barford St John Parish Council
- Other Parish Councils who responded to the request for comments
- Mr Harvey Pitt, Development Manager, Green Square Group (previously Oxford Citizens Housing Association)
- Ms Nicola Ball, Rural Housing Enabler, Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council
- Mr Roger Freeman, local builder
- Mr Jameson Bridgwater, Head of Development Control & Major Developments
- Mr Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader
- Mr David Peckford, Senior Planning Officer
- Mrs Gillian Greaves, Head of Housing Services
- Mr Martyn Swann, Strategic Housing Manager
- Ms Fiona Brown, Strategic Housing Officer

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Appendices: See separate volume	
Ref	Title of document
A	Glossary of terms
B	Scrutiny Scoping Document
C	Parish Council Replies
D	Background Briefing Documents
	D 1: Rural Exception Site Leaflet
	D 2: Rural Affordable Housing Process Map
	D 3: Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership Diagram
	D 4: Cherwell District Council Rural Housing Completions
	D 5: Overview and Scrutiny Letter to Parish Councils
	D 6: Roles and Responsibilities for Members of Cherwell's Delivery Improvement Group
	D 7: Performance – Rural Housing Delivery Since 2004
E	Rural Exception Site Policy
F	Independent Review Report of Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership
G	Range of Policies to be Considered in Housing Proposals
H	Allocation Scheme

1 Executive Summary

"This [rural affordable housing] is done to us, not for us"¹

The provision of a new housing development in any community is always an emotive issue. This is never more so than when the development in question is for social or affordable housing in a rural setting. This is an important matter for any parish and inevitably opinions can become polarised and strong emotion will be displayed.

So in undertaking this scrutiny review we have tried to focus on the principles and policies of the overall process and not become too embroiled in the detail of individual schemes. In reviewing the evidence before us we have tried to stick to the facts and to address the general themes and issues that have emerged.

Primarily our review has focused on the initial stages of the process, and the challenges and frustrations of identifying and delivering the land on which to develop rural affordable housing units. The Committee touched only briefly on the sensitive issue of the housing allocations policy.

There has been one common theme underpinning all of what we have seen and heard: the desire for a closer working relationship between the District Council and its partners and the parishes seeking rural affordable housing.

Put simply the parishes would like to be fully involved and they want to see quicker results, a willingness on the part of the District Council to take a more flexible line, improved communications and new homes for local residents at the heart of their community.

We hope that as a result of our work on this scrutiny review those parishes who engage in the search for rural affordable housing in the future will find it a simpler, swifter, inclusive and ultimately successful process. Time will tell – but to be sure we will be tracking the progress of one or two new schemes and we will be contacting all the Parish Councils again to find out if they have seen a difference.

Cllr John Donaldson
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

¹ Steeple Aston Parish Council, March 2009

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That Cherwell District Council should encourage a more pro-active approach to rural affordable housing and exception sites and that the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing be invited to fully investigate all opportunities for the provision of rural affordable housing through the Local Development Framework. This should include a review of the relevant policies for the location of general rural affordable housing (including the potential to generate opportunities for some integral affordable provision), and of the criteria against which exception sites are assessed.

Recommendation 2

That Cherwell District Council should encourage an open and transparent approach to communications associated with the delivery of rural affordable housing and exception sites.

Recommendation 3

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorses and recommends the proposed Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan to the Executive.

Recommendation 4

That the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing should be asked to present the conclusions of this scrutiny review and the Executive/Council response at the Parish Liaison meeting in June 2009.

Recommendation 5

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should monitor progress against each of the above recommendations and review the situation, initially in September 2009.

3 Introduction

Objectives of the review

In December 2008 the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing invited the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the Council's policy and procedures for the delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites. The topic had been raised at the Parish Liaison meeting in November 2008 by a number of Parish Councils who were concerned and frustrated by their experience of the process.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to focus their review on the following issues:

- Customer satisfaction with the process
- The service offering (performance, costs etc)
- The partnership interface with the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council and the lead Registered Social Landlord (Green Square Group - previously Oxford Citizens Housing Association)
- The implications for future planning policy (the Local Development Framework - LDF)

Gathering the evidence

The review was conducted on a committee basis as the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt that this approach was more appropriate than a Task & Finish Group study. The Committee met in January 2009 for an initial briefing and to review specific case studies and background documents. This was followed by a "witness" session to gather evidence in March 2009.

In December 2008 the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wrote to all Parish Councils in the district asking for their views and inviting them to comment on their experience of the Council's approach to rural affordable housing and exception sites. The Committee received 17 responses.

The Committee invited representatives from three of the Parish Councils to give evidence at a committee meeting on 10 March 2009:

- South Newington Parish Council
- Steeple Aston Parish Council
- Barford St Michael and Barford St John Parish Council

The Committee also invited a local property developer and representatives from the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council and Green Square Group (previously Oxford Citizens Housing Association) to give evidence.

Appendix C contains details of the Parish Council responses and other background briefing documents are included in Appendix D.

4 Context

Rural Exception sites should be small, solely for affordable housing and on land within or adjoining existing small rural communities which would not otherwise be released for general market housing. The affordable housing provided on such sites should meet local needs in perpetuity.²

Since the early 1990s, national and local government has recognised the importance of having adequate housing provision in rural areas to meet the needs of local people and contribute to the survival of rural communities and services. All local planning authorities were encouraged to develop policies to assist the provision of affordable housing in rural areas where there was a genuine shortage of existing or new affordable homes for local people. Current national government policy is contained in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) which was published in 1996.

Existing local planning policies

The main method of providing affordable rural housing has been through the “exceptions” site method noted above. It is however noted that the allocation of general housing development to rural areas can be of a scale sufficient to generate a proportion of affordable provision.

The Cherwell District Council planning policies for Rural Exception Sites are Policy H6 in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996) and Policy H8 in the non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan (2011). These policies, detailed at Appendix E, are based on national planning policy guidance.³ In summary they allow for small-scale, affordable housing development within or immediately adjacent to villages provided that it:

- meets a specific and identified local housing need that cannot be met elsewhere
- is supported by a local housing need survey
- is economically viable
- must comply with other policies e.g. those which seek to protect the countryside, highway safety, conservation areas and achieve good design
- restricts occupancy to meet local needs in perpetuity

² Rural Exception Policy, Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites, A Practical Guide for Parish Councils, Landowners and People in Housing Need, Nov 2006, Cherwell District Council

³ Planning Policy Guidance (PPPG) 3 and Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3)

Corporate priorities

Secure more affordable housing...

"Increase choice, care and social housing provision through the flexible design, funding, planning and co-operation between agencies"⁴

Theme 5 of the Cherwell District Council Community Plan, written in 2005/06, addresses the need for affordable housing in the district, sets a very ambitious target for affordable homes and identifies a number of specific actions. However, it does not make any direct reference or set a specific target relating to the need to deliver affordable units in rural areas.

The Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2005 - 2011 (written at roughly the same time as the Community Plan) has two actions relating to the specific provision of rural housing. These are 1) to complete at least four housing needs surveys in rural areas each year and to bring forward two rural affordable housing schemes; and 2) to review the rural affordable housing site thresholds for rural housing as part of the Local Development Framework.

More recently, the Cherwell District Council Rural Strategy 2009 – 2014 (Theme C: Provide Village Homes and Secure Village Infrastructure) further recognises housing as a corporate priority. This includes the provision of rural affordable housing as part of the Council's enablement of general affordable housing delivery.

Rural Strategy 2009 – 2014

Theme C: Provide Village Homes & Secure Village Infrastructure

Objective 9 – Provide Good Quality, Affordable Rural Homes

- Aim: 9.1: Secure housing growth that meets Government targets and the needs of the District through an appropriate mix of market and affordable housing
- Action: Increase the number of affordable village homes available to people with a local connection
- Measure/Target: Review rural exceptions delivery and report to Parish liaison meeting during 2009. Further actions to follow in subsequent years.

Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership

Cherwell District Council works in partnership to deliver its housing commitments. The Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP) was established in 2003 to tackle the shortage of affordable housing in the county. It brings together the four district councils, four Housing Associations, the Oxford Rural Communities Council (ORCC) and locally based construction contractor and consultants. During the Committee's work it soon became apparent that the partnerships widely recognised as an

⁴ Cherwell Community Plan, Action Plan 2006 – 2011, Theme 5

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

example of good practice – and this is an important context for the Committee's conclusions.

The partnership was set up to run to 2009 with a target to achieve 500 affordable housing units across the county. This has proved to be ambitious. It is estimated that by September 2009 some 310 affordable housing units will be confirmed as deliverable across the county.

Rural Affordable Housing Results		
Year	Number of Completions	
	Rural completions total	Rural completions through ORHP
04/05	3	3
05/06	0	0
06/07	16	8
07/08	51	31
08/09	24	0
Total	94	42

On behalf of the ORHP, the Oxford Rural Communities Council employs two Rural Housing Enablers (RHE's) who provide independent advice and are critical to the delivery of the housing projects. One RHE provides dedicated support to Cherwell and West Oxfordshire; the other to the Vale and South Oxfordshire. Their role is to assist the parish in undertaking the housing needs survey and to liaise with District Council's planning and housing teams and the relevant housing associations. The RHE plays a pivotal role and will stay involved in the project from the outset until completion.

In early 2008 government funding supporting the RHEs was withdrawn. The ORHP partners elected to continue to provide funding for the RHEs equivalent to 3 days per week per district. The need for local replacement of national funding has been a significant issue to tackle in maintaining the capacity of the partnership and it should be recognised that this is an example of continued commitment to deliver a good service in Oxfordshire.

Independent review of ORHP

There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement in partnership working. At the beginning of 2008 the Leicester Business School was commissioned to undertake a critical friend review of the ORHP. The key findings and conclusions of the review were that the original target of 500 new homes between 2004 -2009 was too optimistic; that rural affordable housing should be more strongly prioritised through the Local Area Agreement; that the profile of the work of the ORHP should be raised; the links with landowners and planners strengthened; and a database on available land should be developed and landowners encouraged to consider making land available. The findings of the review are set out in more detail at Appendix F. This has now become the basis of an Oxfordshire wide

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

action plan to renew and improve the ORHP after its first five years of operation and Cherwell is contributing to this plan.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

In mid 2008, (as a response to the growing pressures to deliver rural affordable housing and changes in the partnership funding position), the Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder had commissioned some officer work on a Cherwell improvement plan for rural affordable housing performance within the district. It was the launch of this improvement initiative, in the form of a new promotional DVD, that led to parish feedback and the suggestion of the scrutiny review. The draft improvement plan formed part of the initial evidence base for this scrutiny review and the Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder asked the Committee to suggest any further refinements and recommend an improvement plan to the Executive following their review. As the scrutiny review progressed the Committee identified a number of practical actions and suggestions that have been incorporated in the latest version of the improvement plan (Annex 1). It is intended that this will be implemented alongside the improvements to the ORHP as a whole.

Financial Assessment

It is difficult to estimate the full costs of Cherwell District Council's work to enable the delivery of rural affordable housing. This is because the input of most of the District Council staff is part of a wider, "normal" role (e.g. planning and housing policy, development control and housing funding advice and liaison) and they do not keep specific records of the time spent directly on rural affordable housing.

However, as part of the evidence base for this scrutiny review the Strategic Director, Planning, Housing and Economy prepared the following indicative annual cost breakdown:

Cost of "grant" funding ORCC enabling team for work in the Cherwell District	£12,000
Housing staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">policy development / advice, funding advice / liaison and needs assessment (based on 30% time of one staff member plus support)	£15,000
Housing needs research <ul style="list-style-type: none">based on 10% officer time, plus support	£5,000
Planning and Affordable Housing Policy staff <ul style="list-style-type: none">planning policy development /advice (based on 20% time of one staff member)	£7,000
Planning (Development Control and Major Developments) <ul style="list-style-type: none">site assessments (based on 20% time of one staff member. Needs to be a senior post due to complexity and political sensitivity of cases.)	£12,000
Total	£51,000

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

It should be recognised that costs will vary dramatically from year to year depending on how many initiatives or schemes are active. This breakdown is for the “enabling” costs only. Once a live rural affordable housing project is created, the Housing Association partner assumes responsibility and all costs (from planning application to build) are attributed to the capital scheme. At this point Cherwell District Council support becomes part of normal planning and housing business processes and is not costed individually.

The funding support for ORCC noted above is roughly double that provided pre 2008/09; this is to compensate for the withdrawal of the central Government grant from DEFRA.

5 Evidence

Communications

"We feel that the difference between rural exception sites and affordable housing needs to be clearer."

"We believe that clarity, good communications and acknowledgement of and respect for the Parish's role... would help to promote successful outcomes."

Overall the process was good and a satisfactory outcome obtained because of local involvement."⁵

All of the written and verbal responses from the Parish Councils made some reference to the importance of good communications to the success of the rural affordable housing process. The Parish Councils shared a common frustration about the length of time it took for the District Council and the partner organisations to respond on particular stages of the process. Also highlighted was the lack of information being passed on to Parish Councils, particularly with regard to issues which involved third parties such as the Highways Authority or other parts of Oxfordshire County Council.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan:

1. April 2009: issue quarterly progress reports to all active parishes.
2. Sept 2009: produce bi-annual report on District wide delivery on all rural affordable housing projects.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of maintaining the interest and commitment of the Parish Council, parish residents and potential landowners to the scheme through regular communication and direct involvement. They felt that if the Parish Council was not sufficiently involved in the rural affordable housing process then their detailed knowledge of the parish was not always utilised to best effect.

The Committee agreed with the Parish Councils suggestion that the literature and supporting documentation about the rural affordable housing process could be shortened and simplified. There was potential confusion with regard to the terminology used in the documents. Often parishioners are against rural exception sites as they did not realise the developments would be only for local people/people with a local connection, and could include the provision of starter homes for young families and retirement properties for older residents wishing to downsize.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan:

- August 2009: Update Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites, a Practical Guide for Parish Councils, Landowners and People in Housing Need.
- Develop further communication material and update website information.

⁵ Extracts from the written responses from Parish Councils.

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

"... would suggest that a dedicated planner to look at rural exception sites might be beneficial to the Council."

The case studies revealed and officers acknowledged that in the past there had been resource constraints within the District Council, particularly in the planning team, which had contributed to the slow response times regarding site appraisals.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan:

- In January 2009 the Cherwell District Council allocated a specialist planning officer to work exclusively on rural exception site appraisals.

A common Parish Council suggestion for a process improvement was the appointment of a single point of contact for each Parish at the start of the process. The Committee supported this suggestion but noted that this was in fact the role that the Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) fulfilled. However, given that funding cuts had reduced the level of support provided by the RHE to three days per week, they suggested that there would be benefit in identifying a lead contact from the Planning and Housing teams from the outset to aid communication.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan:

- Appoint a designated planning and housing contact at start of process, to complement the Rural Housing Enabler.

Planning Policy

Some of the most vociferous comments received from Parish Councils concerned the apparently inflexible and inconsistent application of planning policies by Cherwell District Council planning officers in rural exception site appraisals.

The Committee recognised that this would always be a controversial aspect of the rural exception site process as it inherently involved the consideration of sites which would not normally be released for housing development. Such site appraisals involve the professional judgement of officers who must consider and weigh-up all the relevant planning policies and other material considerations. Each case needs to be considered on its merits. Inevitably there would be occasions when the decision would not meet with the expectations of the Parish Council or individual parish residents.

The Committee acknowledged the possible misconception amongst parishes that a "rural exception site" was exempt from all planning policies. In fact the local and national policies make it clear that the only exception is to consider the possibility of a local needs driven affordable housing development. The policies clearly state that the proposed exception site must comply with other

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

policies such as those which relate to highway safety or environment agency conditions. A list of the applicable policies is set out at Appendix H.

In discussion with the Committee the Planning officers acknowledged that there was now a national move to encourage a greater flexibility in the application of general planning policies to exception sites. It was also noted that it would ultimately be the Council's Planning Committee that would need to make the sometimes difficult decisions about the balance between housing need and rural environmental change. There were often opposing representations from local residents on such issues. Some parishes would not wish to support schemes because of local environmental objections.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) provided an opportunity to review policies on both general rural housing allocations (which can be of a scale that justifies a requirement for a proportion of affordable provision) and rural exceptions. It will be possible to reconsider the criteria against which the proposals are assessed. This could provide parishes and landowners with more certainty on the types of location that might be acceptable, could help focus the search for potential sites, and could allow for some additional flexibility in releasing land in the interests of adopting a "positive and pro-active" approach to providing affordable housing in rural communities.

Such a policy review would also present the District Council with an opportunity to define more clearly the role it wished to see for rural exception site policy in meeting corporate objectives for increasing the delivery of affordable housing.

The Committee noted that the officers and councillors were currently working on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy document due for adoption in 2010. This would be the appropriate vehicle for a thorough review of the planning policy for rural exception sites, building on the evidence and findings of this scrutiny review.

Land availability and site identification

"The main problem has been identifying a suitable site that would be available."

"The biggest problem has been in obtaining land."

"We feel that improved incentives to landlords could improve the situation."

From the outset of the review the Committee were advised that the major stumbling block to the delivery of a successful exception site rural affordable housing scheme was the identification and release of suitable land.

A number of the Parish Councils felt that the only realistic chance of getting land for rural affordable housing was from the District Council, philanthropic organisations or charities and not from private landowners. Finding a match between a suitable site and a willing landowner was cited as the fundamental

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

challenge in the process by the Housing Association representatives. It was generally agreed that it was easier to obtain land from public organisations with a strategic commitment to rural affordable housing than from private landowners.

The Committee learnt that in many cases the land identified for a rural affordable housing exception site had been in family ownership for many generations and there was no pressure to sell. In addition the prospect of realising the “hope value” (that eventually a site might be accepted for open market development) had a more direct and immediate impact on reducing the availability of suitable land in the district. This scenario had become more pronounced with the production of the Local Development Framework, as many landowners were believed to be hedging their bets and waiting to see if their land might be adopted for market rate development in the Local Development Framework.

The Committee noted the work that the OHRP was doing to develop a better understanding of the land holdings throughout the District which might be suitable as rural exception sites.

Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

- Ensure information about possible rural exception sites is collated as part of Local Development Framework
- Review publically owned land in Cherwell
- Continue to build relationships with Oxford Colleges, Duchy of Cornwall and other landowners to promote affordable housing

Exceptions sites

Planning Policy Statement 3 makes it clear that local planning authorities are expected to be active housing enablers, and where it is inappropriate to allocate land for development in or close to an existing settlement then seeking out exceptions sites is the alternative way forward. It is important to clarify that the Government has no intention of allowing market housing to be built on rural exception sites as this would undermine their very purpose. However, we think that now is the time to show a degree of flexibility to encourage and incentivise landowners to come forward to provide land for rural exception sites. We are therefore going to set up a practitioners' Working Group which will examine the Review's proposals for landowners to have nomination rights for affordable housing units or retaining an interest in their land.⁶

The Committee believe that the real problem in the delivery of rural affordable housing will always be finding landowners willing to release land for exceptions site development. The Committee reflected on the scope and advisability of offering “incentives” to landowners to release suitable land. They recognised the need to safeguard the “affordability” element of a rural affordable housing exception site and that this might not always be compatible with the commercial desires of a landowner.

⁶ Government response to the Matthew Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and Economy

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Their conclusions were in keeping with those expressed in the Government's response to the Matthew Taylor Review of Rural Affordable Housing and Economy, and they agreed that this should be kept under review until further guidance and details of new initiatives became available.

Housing Allocations Policy

"The Parish Council would like to have more input regarding the allocation of affordable housing."

"We would like assurances from the District Council that the Parish Council's recommendations on occupancy would be respected."

The Committee concentrated its work on the initial stages of the rural affordable housing process as this was what generated the most comments and complaints. However, a few Parish Councils did raise concerns about the final stages of the process when the housing allocations are made. Perhaps not surprisingly the Parish Councils expressed a desire to have some input into or control over that sensitive and confidential exercise.

The Committee agreed that although the Parish Council views should be considered ultimately the decision on housing allocation must be based on the professional judgement of the officers applying the agreed and published allocation scheme (Appendix H).

The Committee felt that the situation might be eased if the rural affordable housing guidance documentation could contain a more explicit explanation of the initial housing allocation criteria and also set out the perpetuity rules that would apply.

6 Conclusion

In providing for affordable housing in rural communities, where opportunities for delivering affordable housing tend to be more limited, the aim should be to deliver high quality housing that contributes to the creation and maintenance of sustainable rural communities in market towns and villages. *This requires planning at local and regional level adopting a positive and pro-active approach which is informed by evidence, with clear targets for the delivery of rural affordable housing.* Where viable and practical, Local Planning Authorities should consider allocating and releasing sites solely for affordable housing, including using a Rural Exception Site Policy. This enables small sites to be used, specifically for affordable housing in small rural communities that would not normally be used for housing because, for example, they are subject to policies of restraint.⁷

This scrutiny review has given the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, some of whom had only a passing knowledge of planning and housing policy and services, a valuable insight into the complexities of delivering rural affordable housing on exception sites. This lack of prior knowledge proved helpful in so far as it obliged the Committee to take a lay person approach and insist that the officers and experts present the information in simple terms. In that regard their initial introduction to the process was not dissimilar to that of a Parish Council embarking on the process.

The recommendations and much of the body of this report focus on the practicalities of delivering a successful rural affordable housing programme. The emphasis is on what actions the District Council officers and its partners can do to improve the process.

However, there is another group of people who can make a valuable contribution. The local ward councillors for Cherwell's rural parishes can also play a part in bridging the communication gap. On the one hand they can present and promote the needs of the parish and at the same time they should be able to explain the District Council's position to their constituents. The Rural Housing Improvement Plan proposes holding a councillor event to give support to ward councillors in this role.

Similarly there is a role for the Executive and Chief Executive and other senior managers to promote the importance of rural affordable housing and the difficulties in identifying suitable land, especially in their interactions with county wide organisations.

All of which suggests that there is scope for this Council to give rural affordable housing greater recognition within and to adopt a positive and pro-active approach and set with clear targets for delivery.

⁷ Planning policy statement 3 (PPS3) Housing

ANNEX 1: Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

Action	Desired outcome	By When	Progress/Completed
Communication			
<i>“this is something that is done to us, not for us”</i>			
Produce an annual report detailing progress made throughout the District (schemes delivered /units on site/ housing needs survey undertaken/case studies etc)	Raises profile and builds confidence in Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership locally	1st production Sept 2009	
Issue quarterly reports to all active parishes and District Ward Councillor to update on progress	Parish and Ward Councillor kept informed of progress and obstacles	From Apr 2009 onwards	
Single point of contact for the Parish to be identified at the start of the process – additionally a designated housing and planning contact to be assigned to the parish	Improved communications	Apr 2009	
Increased promotion of activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> through Local Development Framework newsletter Cherwell link 	Greater awareness of rural affordable housing issues	Throughout 2009-10	
Improve Cherwell District Council website content	Greater awareness and information sharing	Apr 2009	
Ensure parish plan process fully encompasses affordable housing	Affordable housing gains priority in Parish Plans	Achieved	Parish Councils are being encouraged to undertake a housing needs survey alongside parish plan questionnaires
Produce DVD to explain the benefits of affordable housing to villages	Increased interest in Affordable Housing	Achieved	
Update rural affordable housing booklet and other documents ~ with clarification of definitions and distinction between rural affordable housing and exception sites	Increased interest and better understanding of rural affordable housing	Documents produced by August 2009	

ANNEX 1: Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

Investigate if scrutiny can undertake a review of rural housing and exception sites	Addresses Parish Council concerns and District Councillors more aware of rural housing issues	Achieved	
Raise the profile of rural housing issues with District Councillors	Increased commitment from elected members supported by increased knowledge	June 2009 Throughout 2009 -10	
Raise rural affordable housing issues with parishes at all available opportunities			
Working Smarter <i>“would suggest that a dedicated planner to look at rural exception sites might be beneficial to the Council.”</i>			
Put together a Service Level Agreement/Protocol for all Delivery Implementation Group members about role/tasks and timeframes for these-this should include ensuring appraised sites are ranked in order of preference	Sites progressed in a timely fashion	Achieved	Roles and responsibilities of group members re-clarified in January and service standards produced for publication in new booklet
Planning to identify additional staffing resources to carry out site appraisals	Improved response times	Achieved	Specialist officer designated to undertake this work in Jan 09 for 6-9 months and then work to be shared between 3 Senior Planners
Cherwell District Council to identify targets for delivery of rural affordable housing	Greater priority and scrutiny of rural affordable housing delivery	To be confirmed	Being considered as part of the proposals to bring forward the Local Development Framework. Working with Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership to establish new targets for 2009 onwards.
Site identification <i>“The biggest problem has been in obtaining land.”</i>			
Use the planning system to proactively identify possibilities for exception sites	A supply of possible rural exception sites is gathered	In line with Local Development Framework	Initial trawl of identified sites provided Jan 2009.

ANNEX 1: Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

	for targeting land owners where local need is demonstrated	timescales	
Investigate other rural exception sites policies, keep abreast of government changes and consider revisions to rural exception sites as part of Local Development Framework	A policy framework that enables the delivery of rural affordable housing	In line with Local Development Framework timescales	Local Development Framework not yet at detailed policy making stage. Emerging housing need evidence, further Local Development Framework work on village policy and best practice elsewhere will inform review of rural exception site policy.
Review of publicly owned land within Cherwell	May identify land that could be targeted	Apr 2009	Consider sites through the site identification process
Continue to build relationships with Colleges/Duchy of Cornwall and other landowners where land owned by them may be suitable	Release of suitable land	On going	Work currently being undertaken by Sanctuary with Duchy at Weston on the Green and will use this as opportunity to discuss any other possible sites. Approaching Corpus Christi college as part of site identification at Lower Heyford. If not successful consider a higher level strategic approach.
Discuss with parishes other options for providing affordable housing other than new build – acquisitions, empty homes?	Small amounts of affordable secured where no land available	On going	Rural Housing Enabler following up through usual engagement with Parish Councils so this option can be considered. Revise housing needs survey documents to remind respondents this might be another option Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership could take forward.

ANNEX 1: Rural Affordable Housing Improvement Plan

<p>Ensure housing needs survey carried out as part of a rolling programme in order to evidence need for rural exception sites. Need to ensure Cherwell District Council can resource this. Surveys will run alongside site identification work to allow good targeting of resources</p>	<p>Council will have up to date info to justify need for rural affordable housing</p>	<p>2009/10</p>	<p>Need to look at where this approach may be needed – if a site opportunity exists or where there is likely to be high need (e.g. larger settlements).</p>
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List of Appendices

Ref	Title of document
A	Glossary of terms
B	Scrutiny Scoping Document
C	Parish Council Replies
D	Background Briefing Documents
	D 1: Rural Exception Site Leaflet
	D 2: Rural Affordable Housing Process Map
	D 3: Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership Diagram
	D 4: Cherwell District Council Rural Housing Completions
	D 5: Overview and Scrutiny Letter to Parish Councils
	D 6: Roles and Responsibilities for Members of Cherwell's Delivery Improvement Group
	D 7: Performance – Rural Housing Delivery Since 2004
E	Rural Exception Site Policy
F	Independent Review Report of Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership
G	Range of Policies to be Considered in Housing Proposals
H	Allocation Scheme

Glossary of terms

CCH	Charter Community Housing
CDC	Cherwell District Council
DIG	Development Implementation Group
DMU	De Montfort University
HCA	Homes & Community Agency
HNS	Housing Needs Survey
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LBS	Leicester Business School
LDF	Local Development Framework
OCHA	Oxfordshire Community Housing Association
ORHP	Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership
ORCC	Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
OSC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
PC	Parish Council
POB	Planning Obligations Board
RES	Rural Exception Sites
RHE	Rural Housing Enabler
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SLA	Service Level Agreement

Planning the scrutiny review

(Use this form to plan the work of a Task & Finish Group)

RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING & EXCEPTION SITES

<p>Purpose of Review Specify exactly what the Scrutiny Review should achieve and refer where possible to VFM issues of service cost, service performance and/or customer satisfaction.</p>	<p>To review the Council's policy and procedures for Affordable Housing and Rural Exception Sites with particular reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • customer satisfaction with the process • the current service offering (performance, costs etc) • the partnership/interface with ORCC/OCHA • the implications for the Local Development Framework (LDF)
<p>Outcomes What will demonstrate that this Scrutiny Review has been a success</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch of revised CDC procedures 2. Identification of possible improvements/changes to the countywide housing partnership 3. Identification of policy issues relating to LDF. 4. Improved customer satisfaction ratings with the process (measure via Parish Liaison meeting?) 5. Improved understanding of issues by CDC councillors
<p>Methodology/ Approach What types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee review not T&FG • Officer briefing and Q&A sessions • Desk top research of best practice models • Consultation: letter requesting comments from Parish Councils • Witness sessions with Parish Councils, Officers, Partners
<p>Target body for Recommendations Executive, Council, Other/Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder • Executive • possibly partners (ORCC and other agencies)
<p>Key dates Identify key meeting dates and any deadlines for reports or decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec 2008 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ officers collate briefing material ○ letter to parish councils seeking comments • 13 Jan 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ initial briefing meeting to OSC • 10 Mar 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OSC Q&A witness session • 7 Apr 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ report to OSC • May 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ recommendations to Executive (& others) • 17 June 2009 Parish Liaison Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presentation on outcomes
<p>Risks Identify any weaknesses and barriers to success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of / constraints on CDC resources • false expectations from Parish Councils • lack of buy in from partner organisations
<p>Witnesses/ Experts/ Site Visits Who, why and when</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CDC Planning & Housing officers • Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership • Some Cherwell Parish Councils • Officers/members from best practice authorities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from other partners
<p>Publicity & Media Do we need to publicise the review to encourage community involvement? what sort of media coverage do we want? Fliers, leaflets, radio broadcast, press-release, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will this review be subject to a press embargo? No CDC press contact: Jo Smith Spokesperson for Scrutiny Review: TO BE CONFIRMED
<p>Resources & Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> specialist staff external support consultation research 	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning & Housing officers ORCC & OCHA Parish Councils

<p>Completed by: Catherine Phythian & John Hoad</p>	
<p>Cleared by: Cllr Gibbard & Cllr Donaldson</p>	<p>Date: December 2008</p>
<p>Approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee:</p>	<p>Date: 13 January 2009</p>



Scrutiny of Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Parish Council replies

Updated on 4 March 2009

Parish Council	Date reply	Aware of the Council Rural Affordable Housing	Do you understand the policy /process?	Aspects of the policy /process that need further explanation	Affordable Housing in your parish	Have you tried to get affordable housing in your parish	Anticipate a future need for affordable housing in your parish	What has been your experience of the policy /process?	What do you think contributed to a satisfactory outcome?	What do you think were the main problems that you encountered	What aspects of the policy /process can be improved? And How?	What do you think the Council and its partners could do differently	What do you think that Parish Councils could do differently	General Comments
Adderbury Parish Council	06/02/09													see attached
Ambrosden Parish Council														see attached
Ardley Parish Council														see attached
Arncliffe Parish Council														see attached
Barford St John & St Michael Parish Council	05/02/09													see attached
Begbroke Parish Council														see attached
Blackthorn Parish Council	29/01/09													see attached
Blethingdon Parish Council	04/01/09													see attached
Bloxham Parish Council														see attached
Bodicote Parish Council	03/02/09													see attached
Bourton Parish Council														see attached
Broughton Parish Council														see attached
Bucknell Parish Council														see attached
Caversfield Parish Council														see attached
Charton-on-Otmoor Parish Council	22/01/09													Nil response
Claydon with Clattercote Parish Council														Nil response
Cropredy Parish Council	13/01/09	Yes	Yes		No	No	Yes							This Parish Council is conscious of a need for Affordable Housing but, to date, we have not been able to identify a suitable site.
Deddington Parish Council														

Launton Parish Council	06/02/09																			
Lower Heyford Parish Council	16/01/09	Yes	Yes	No	No	currently in process	Yes	Difficulty in acquiring land from Landowners	N/A	Getting land from Landowners	None	Quicker communication	Be more receptive to the concept							
Merton Parish Council																				
Middleton Stoney Parish Council																				
Milcombe Parish Council																				
Milton Parish Meeting																				
Mixbury Parish Meeting																				
Mollington Parish Council																				
Newton Purcell & Shelswell Parish Meeting																				
North Aston Parish Meeting																				
North Aston Parish Meeting																				
North Newington Parish Council																				
Piddington Parish Council																				
Shenington with Alkerton Parish Council																				
Shipton-on-Cherwell & Thrupp Parish Council																				
Shurford Parish Council	22/01/09	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Don't know	N/A	N/A	N/A										

see attached

**CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO
RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND EXCEPTION SITES**

Adderbury Parish Council would like to respond as follows:

The Parish Council would like to have more input regarding the allocation of affordable housing.

It would be preferable for the housing associations responsible for affordable housing to liaise with Parish Councils from the beginning.

The Parish Council would ask that local residents be given first consideration regarding affordable housing.

At the moment allocation of affordable housing seems to be decided and discussed with Cherwell District Council, even for exception sites, and not with the Parish Council.

The Parish Council would request that housing associations and Cherwell District Council consult with the Parish Council regularly.

If you require clarification on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact Pam Haynes, Clerk to Adderbury Parish Council.

6.2.09

From: Angela Jones [a.jones315@btinternet.com]

Sent: 17 February 2009 08:43

To: Catherine Phythian

Subject: Scrutiny Review into Rural Affordable Housing

AMBROSDEN PARISH COUNCIL

Reference letter dated 17 December 2008

I must apologise for the lateness of this response, an administrative error. I hope there is still time for the Council's response to be taken into consideration:

The Parish Council are aware of the Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites policy/process but it is not a policy that has been studied in depth but would be should the need arise.

Ambrosden Parish has a small number of Affordable Housing properties in the village, these have been built as part of new developments and not as part of a Parish Council initiative. Due to the high proportion of MOD & farm land in the village it is highly unlikely that Ambrosden could offer any land for development. Parish Councillor's attend the Liaison meetings and will continue to do so.

Hope this helps.

Angela Jones

Clerk to

Ambrosden Parish Council

**Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into Rural Affordable Housing
and Exception Sites.**

Response from Barford St Michael and Barford St John Quality Parish Council

Barford St Michael and St John Parish Council are committed to exploring all avenues to obtain exception site housing in the villages. Affordable housing is not appropriate for this parish and all responses here relate to exception site housing.

1. *Are you aware of the Council's Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Site policy / process?*

We are aware that a policy/process exists. There are no details on the CDC web site and no reference to the fact that information can be found on the ORCC web site. This site does make it clear as to what the process is but not the council's policy on this matter. The ORCC Rural Housing Enabler has attended one of our Parish Council meetings and outlined the process

2. *Do you understand the policy / process?*

Whilst we understand the theoretical process, reality seems to be very different, bureaucratic delays and lack of co-operation abound at every corner.

3. *Are there any aspects of the policy / process that need further explanation?*

Yes – how to make it work in practise.

4. *Do you have affordable housing in your parish?*

No – neither affordable or exception site housing.

5. *Have you tried to get affordable housing in your parish?*

We have tried for several years to get exception site housing in our parish without success.

6. *Do you anticipate a future need for affordable housing in your parish?*

We have carried out two housing needs surveys and demonstrated a clear need for affordable housing. The surveys showed a need for 7 to 8 houses and we believe that four should be built.

7. *What has been your experience of the policy / process?*

Carrying out the survey was straightforward, helped by the ORCC Rural Housing Enabler. There was an excellent response from village residents and others with strong village connections and a strong need was demonstrated. However it has been suggested that we carry out another survey. We consider this to be a waste of money and counter productive. We will lose the respect of village residents if we continually ask them to complete surveys and there is no satisfactory outcome.

Once the need had been clearly identified the process became increasingly frustrating. The ORCC Rural Housing Officer appeared to have no real power to help find a site and was of little help in liaising between CDC and the Parish Council to resolve difficulties. There also appears to be a major funding issue and she has only 1½ days per week for this work resulting in long delays. There was a 10 month delay between the Rural Housing Officer attending our council and her response in spite of several 'chasing' letters.

We identified a potential site in Barford St John but this was rejected by the planning department. We strongly disputed the arguments used to reject the site particularly in view that the same arguments could be applied to recent developments in Barford St John which had been readily granted planning permission. The only response was to repeat the same arguments over and over again. A meeting was arranged between the Parish

Council, the planning officer and several members of CDC. The planning officer maintained his stance but other council members appeared to accept our arguments. However nothing materialised.

Of the sites identified as potential sites for exception site housing we were disappointed by the attitudes of the planners. Sites that we think considered eminently suitable were rejected while others of dubious value were considered acceptable. No discussion between the planning department and the Parish Council is encouraged.

8. *What do you think contributed to a satisfactory outcome?*

Nothing – there has been no satisfactory outcome!

9. *What do you think were the main problems that you encountered?*

The biggest problem is in obtaining land. In this the Rural Housing Officer has no power to help other than to contact landowners on our behalf. Landowners are offered a low price for exception site land, little more than agricultural value. With the pressure to build houses few people are willing to let land go for such a low price when there is always the possibility that they may, at some stage, obtain permission for ‘normal’ housing and be able to sell the land for a vastly greater sum than they would get for an exception site. A reasonable solution would be to develop a scheme with a mixture of exception site and full price housing on the same site. This way the landowner would receive a reasonable return for his land and the village would obtain low cost housing. We have just this situation in The Barfords. Sites where much trumpeted schemes have been developed have been on land owned by the council, so readily available, or, as in Bletchington, the Duchy of Cornwall.

Another major problem is the attitude of the planning department. We have found them to be obstructive, inconsistent and unwilling to discuss matters. They do not acknowledge that Parish Councillors live in the village and therefore have an intimate knowledge of site locations.

Slow responses from the ORCC Rural Housing Officer have not helped.

10. *What aspects of the policy / process could be improved? And how?*

Paying attention to the issues raised in question 9 and listening to the Parish Council. Potential applicants for exception site housing must be registered on the District Council's Housing Register. We believe it would be more appropriate if potential applicants details were to be kept on a separate exception site register or annotated on the list held at CDC if deemed necessary on grounds of confidentiality.

11. *What do you think the Council and its partners could do differently?*

See answer to question 10.

Stop wasting money on DVD presentations that present a biased view of the process with the aim of presenting the Council in a good light when the reality is totally different.

12. *What do you think that Parish Councils could do differently?*

We have pursued the building of exception site housing for many years now, suggested sites, actually found a site and have involved CDC. We raised the matter at the last CDC liaison meeting and are pleased that, at last, our concerns are being taken seriously. We think there is very little else we could have done.

Summarising Barford St Michael and St John Quality Parish Council has been frustrated by the lack of co-operation from Cherwell District Council in pursuing exception site housing in our parish. We feel CDC do not understand the realities of the situation and pay lip service to the problem rather than addressing the difficulties head on so that a satisfactory outcome can be achieved.

John Donaldson
Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

29th January 2009

Dear Mr Donaldson

I am representing the parish of Blackthorn in Cherwell, in response to your letter of 17th December 2008 concerning Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites.

As a Parish Council, we are aware of the District Council's policy on Rural Affordable Housing and Exception sites and we continue to reference it when appropriate. However, Blackthorn is a hamlet with no facilities and although relatively close to Bicester and the larger villages of Ambroseden and Launton, there are no cycling or footpath links to these villages and a very infrequent bus service to Bicester. Consequently, this creates a dependence on the use of a private car which for obvious reasons the younger generation or the less affluent can ill-afford. This makes it an unpopular location for such housing needs.

In June/July 2006, the Parish Council commissioned a Housing Needs survey through the ORCC who proved efficient and thorough. Whilst, this is obviously some time ago, the key factors and characteristics of Blackthorn have not changed in the intervening time so the obstacles will remain the same today. The outcome of the survey was to highlight such a minimal need that could be served by affordable housing, that it was felt untenable to pursue the process. Whilst conducting the survey, ORCC identified a handful of potentially appropriate sites, none of which, on further investigation with CDC Planning Department, proved unsuitable.

The process stalled at this point but the Parish Council minuted the intention to review the situation in the future. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, it is probable that until the facilities within Blackthorn are improved and our transport (bus, cycling or footpath) links with Bicester and nearby villages are developed that the isolated location will prove to be an insurmountable obstacle.

Whilst perhaps not as comprehensive a response as you were hoping for, this is our limited experience in the matter which we hope will be of value.

Yours sincerely

Morag Trilk
Councillor, Blackthorn Parish Council

BLETCHINGDON PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr C E Lane.

Tel: 01869 350257

Clerk: Mrs G Bickley
Kenwood
Oxford Road,
Bletchington,
Kidlington,
Oxford. OX5 3BS.

Tel: 01869 350359
Fax/Ansa: 01869 351606
e-mail: bletchpc@btinternet.com

4th February, 2009

Catherine Phythian,
Scrutiny Officer,
Member's Room,
Cherwell District Council,
Bodicote House,
Bodicote, Banbury,
Oxon. OX15 4AA



Dear Madam,

Re: Scrutiny Review into Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

With reference to you letter dated 17 December, 2008, my Parish Council responds as follows:-

- The Parish Council is aware of and does understand the policy/process regarding the above. It does not feel that any aspects need further explanation.
- We have carried out two affordable housing schemes - one with the Rural Housing Trust and one with OCHA. However, there is still a need for more affordable housing in the parish.
- Overall the process was good and a satisfactory outcome was obtained because of local involvement. During both schemes, especially the first, there was frequent liaison between the Parish Council and the Housing Trust.
- The main problem we experienced, mainly with the second scheme, was getting matters sorted with the Planning Officers before work could commence.
- The policy/process could be improved by having better liaison between the District and Parish Councils - especially regarding the location of sites.

Yours faithfully,

G Bickley

Clerk to the Parish Council

BODICOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs V J Russell
Clerk to the Council

Tel. No.: 01295-256884

Mr J Donaldson
Chairman, Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

26 The Rydes
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4EJ

3 February 2009

Dear Mr Donaldson

Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2008.

We are certainly aware of the policy/process and had a presentation from the ORCC on this issue a few years ago.

However, now that the District Council has approved a large-scale housing development at Bodicote-Bankside - the vast majority of which is in our Parish - we feel very strongly that some affordable housing for Bodicote should be included in this development, as it would be if these fields had been considered as a Rural Exception Site.

As you may know, we are extremely angry that this site was put forward and considered as an urban extension of Banbury, when most of it is in Bodicote Parish. As such, it is against the District Council's own policies to consider this site for large-scale housing development. We feel the least the Council can do is allocate some affordable housing for Bodicote village. However, we understand it will only be dealt with by means of the usual waiting list, which will be comprised mainly of people from other areas, who will take precedence over Bodicote people.

We would be grateful if you would see if it is possible to allocate, say, 8-12 units solely for people with links to or family in Bodicote.

Yours sincerely

Valerie J Russell (Mrs)
Clerk to the Council

Duns Tew Parish Council

Mrs Sue Lee – Parish Clerk
19 Bradshaw Close
Steeple Aston
BICESTER
OX25 4SA

01869 347652

sue@steeple.eclipse.co.uk

9 January 2009

Dear Mr Donaldson

Scrutiny Review – Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Duns Tew Parish Council discussed this matter at their meeting last night and has the following comments –

- The Parish Council is aware of the process but not aware of CDC's policy.
- They do not feel that the process/policy is well understood and feel that there is confusion with regard to the terms Affordable Housing and Rural Exception Sites. This can often result in parishioners being against rural exception sites as they are not aware that they are only for local people/people with a local connection.
- There is no affordable housing in the parish at present however the parish council is currently arranging a meeting with Nicola Ball to discuss carrying out a rural housing needs survey.
- A future need is anticipated both for starter homes for young families but also for older residents looking to downsize.
- The Council has no experience of the policy/process to date.
- With regard to what could be done differently it is largely a matter of how details of the policy etc are communicated and the use of jargon which can be confusing. A longer session at the next Parish Liaison meeting would be helpful with some real examples - a parish with a rural exception site on land that has been bought and a parish with affordable housing to highlight the difference and to give details of how it was for them going through the process.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Parish Council.

Yours sincerely

Sue Lee

Parish Clerk

GOSFORD AND WATER EATON PARISH COUNCIL

132 Cromwell Way
Gosford
Kidlington
Oxon
OX5 2LJ



Tel/fax: 01865 374236

21 January 2009

To : CDC Members Room (Cllr John Donaldson)

For attn. of Catherine Phythian

Dear Cllr John Donaldson

**CDC SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING &
EXCEPTION SITES**

Thank you for your letter dated 17 December 2008.

The Council considered the questions you raised and reply as follows :

Yes we are aware of the policy/ process and understand them.

We attended the CDC LDP working party liaison meetings and have affordable housing being built in this Parish.

The Council might be prepared to look at some further but limited amount of affordable housing in the Parish, provided there was a need and justification identified.

From experiences there was concern that local well known families in neighbouring Kidlington seemed to be being excluded from affordable housing in this Parish, after family options in this Parish. However, would not be so happy for large towns to be included otherwise.

Under the process query about the complex use of awarding of the points system to families for housing allocation. There as a need to look at doing things differently into improving this process and allocation for rural families within say a radius away from sites.

I hope these comments are of some use.

Yours sincerely

Carl Smith

Clerk to the Council

From: Ken Porter [kenneth_i.porter@virgin.net]

Sent: 15 January 2009 23:30

To: Overview & Scrutiny

Subject: Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Dear Mr Donaldson

Further to your letter of 17 December 2008 we have given consideration to the questions you posed and would respond as follows:

We are aware of CDC's Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites policy/process

We fully understand the process

No

No we do not have AH in our parish

Yes - see below

See below

We have been attempting to have a development of Affordable Housing in the village for the past five and a half years and our experience has been one of increasing frustration. Our original choice of site was vetoed by OCC on the grounds of visibility on exiting [despite the fact that it is one of the easiest roads to exit in the whole of the village], we did not consider an alternative site suitable as it was next to the school and we believe it will be needed in the future if the school is to expand [but we made this clear from the outset]. We put forward a third site some two years ago and very little progress seems to be being made - the latest information we have is that arsenic contamination has been identified on the site and the partners are trying to see how this can be dealt with. So much time has now elapsed since the original housing needs survey that a further questionnaire will be necessary if we are to make any progress.

Ken Porter
Parish Clerk
Hook Norton Parish Council

HORNTON PARISH COUNCIL

Your letter dated 17 December 2008 refers. For ease I will respond to the questions in the same order as

We are aware of the policy / process

Yes, we understand it

No further explanation required

Not at present

Currently going through the process

Yes

Experience to date has been very good

The input of ORCC has been very good (initially James Alcock was particularly helpful and his replacement Nicola Ball has continued the process). The undertook initial surveys, looked at various sites, dealt with potential planning issues with CDC and arranged for a public meeting in the village. Harvey Pitt, Development Manager at OCHA has also been very helpful.

Main problems have been identifying a suitable site and making sure that potential affordable housing users register their interest. The process has slowed of late because of costs involved in developing the site where there is a steep slope at the rear. Richard Coulston of OCHA is providing regular updates.

We have occasionally had to chase for updates.

No direct contact with CDC Planners but presume that some flexibility has been shown as the site identified would not have obtained planning permission other than for affordable housing.

Communication to and from all parties is essential and Parish Councils need to push regularly for up to date information. Explanations should be obtained for the reasons for any decisions or problems re affordable housing.

I am happy to respond to any queries.

Alan Cater

Clerk to Hornton Parish Council

KIRTLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

*Mrs R M Powles
Clerk to Kirtlington Parish Council
West House
South Green
Kirtlington
Oxfordshire
OX5 3HJ
01869 350995*

16th January 2009

Cllr John Donaldson
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Oxfordshire OX15 4AA

Dear John,

Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Thank you for your letter of 17th December. The Parish Council discussed it at its meeting on Tuesday 13th January and agreed answers to your questions. We would like to stress that our answers refer to Exception Sites rather than any other kind of affordable housing.

- Yes, we are aware of the Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites policy.
- Yes, we understand the policy/process.
- No, there are no aspects of the policy/process that we feel need further explanation.
- No, we do not have affordable housing in the parish, in the sense of the provision of Exception Sites.
- Yes, the Parish Council has tried to get Exception Site provision in the village on two occasions.
- We cannot be certain that there would be a need as we feel it is inappropriate to ask this question of parishioners until we know that provision is possible. It is probable that there would be a need.
- Our experience has been unsatisfactory for various reasons.
- The main problem has been identifying a suitable site that would be available.
- We feel that improved incentives to landlords could improve the situation.
- We would like assurances from the District Council that the Parish Council's recommendations on occupancy would be respected.
- The Parish Council feels that it is powerless to act on its own.

The Parish Council would be interested in attending the meeting on 10th March and in sending representatives to the Parish Liaison Meeting on 17th June.

*Yours sincerely,
R M Powles*

Mrs R M Powles
Clerk

From: Sue Lee [sue@steeple.eclipse.co.uk]
Sent: 16 January 2009 11:13
To: Overview & Scrutiny
Subject: Lower Heyford Parish Council
Scrutiny Review of Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Lower Heyford Parish Council are aware of the process and policy relating to the above. They understand these but feel that the difference between rural exception sites and affordable housing needs to be clearer. There has been a recent scheme to try to get a RES in the parish and the feedback to CDC would be that this process was very slow with little communication between those involved. In particular they would highlight issues with lack of communication between housing and planning departments at CDC and would suggest that a dedicated planner to look at RES might be beneficial to the Council.

A need for rural exception housing has been identified in the parish but this need has not to date been met.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me

Sue Lee
Parish Clerk

SOUTH NEWINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

10 February 2009

Cllr John Donaldson
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
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Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

The Gables
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South Newington
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Oxfordshire
OX15 4JH

Tel/fax: 01295 722181
Mobile: 07967 738381

As email attachment

Dear Cllr Donaldson

Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into rural affordable housing and exception sites

Thank you for your letter of 17 December 2008. South Newington Parish Council (SNPC) are pleased that the scrutiny is taking place and hope that it will assist in achieving more rapid provision of affordable housing.

South Newington has been seeking a small amount of exceptional affordable housing for, I understand, some 15 years. There have been two initiatives by previous Parish Councils since 2000, both of which have not come to fruition because of administrative delays and difficulties in agreeing access to the proposed sites. The current Parish Council began to explore the possibility of obtaining some exceptional affordable housing in late 2007. I have discussed the two previous initiatives with the Parish Councillors who were involved and have drawn on their experience in forming the opinions expressed in this letter.

Answers to the scrutiny questions

For convenience I have tried to give the Parish Council's views and experiences as answers to the questions in your letter. In doing so I have tried to make a clear distinction between *policies* and *processes* because, as you will appreciate, they are very different things. Establishing good policies is largely a paper-based exercise. Putting them into practice requires the development and consistent management and monitoring of sound working procedures and practices, which may be more difficult.

The annex to this letter gives some information about population and housing in South Newington to provide context that may be useful to the scrutiny team.

Are you aware of the Council's Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites policy/process?

Policies - The Parish Council is aware of the policies set out in the Cherwell Housing Strategy 2005-2011, in the Draft Cherwell Rural Strategy 2009-2014, particularly Objective 9, and the Draft Local Development Framework (LDF).

There is a concern that the emerging policy in the LDF strictly to limit development in smaller villages may be at variance with the aim of providing affordable housing in these villages, even on an exception site basis. As parish councils have said repeatedly in LDF engagement meetings, this potential discrepancy can only be satisfactorily resolved by taking greater account of specific local circumstances and the views of local communities.

Processes – The publications such as ‘A Practical Guide for Parish Councils, Landowners and People in Housing Need’ clearly sets out the high level process that an affordable scheme should follow. However the experience of the current Parish Council, and the two previous councils that have attempted to obtain exceptional affordable housing in South Newington, suggests that there has been no clear process at the detailed level within Cherwell for facilitating the development of rural affordable housing or any joined up application of Cherwell’s policies between the different departments of the District Council.

Do you understand the policy/process?

The policy – Yes.

The process – The high level, theoretical process between the various agencies is understood but the practical, detailed processes (if they exist) within and between the agencies, including Cherwell, are not understood.

Are there any aspects of the policy/process that need further explanation?

The policies – Yes.

- How will Cherwell resolve the potential discrepancy between the emerging LDF policy of limiting development in smaller villages and the need for affordable housing in those villages?
- What is the role of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, in particular that of the Housing Enabler, how does the ORCC role differ from that of the Housing Enabler in Cherwell District Council, and how does either role add value that could not be achieved by an active Parish Council or local community group?

The processes – Yes.

- What are the detailed, practical processes, especially within Cherwell and between the various agencies? It would be helpful if Parish Councils considering an affordable housing project could be have the processes explained at an early stage of the project.

Do you have any affordable housing in your parish?

Yes – We understand that four two-bedroom bungalows and four three-bedroom houses are owned by Charter Housing. The bungalows and one of the houses were built in the late 1950s and the other houses in the 1920s. They are all ex-council houses.

Have you tried to get affordable housing in your parish?

Yes. The following activities have happened since 2000. The current Parish Council is told that there have been earlier attempts to obtain affordable housing, but we have not tried to verify this.

- In 2001-2003 the then Parish Council worked with The Rural Housing Trust until it was replaced with the current structure. A housing needs survey was carried out that showed a need for affordable housing. It is view of those members of the parish council who were involved that The Rural Housing Trust had greater expertise and vigour than the grouping of agencies that replaced it and that the limited village opposition to the proposed site, at the bottom of Sands Lane, South Newington, might have been overcome had the Trust remained the primary agency.
- In 2004 - 2006 an entirely different Parish Council carried out a new housing needs survey (June 2005) and sought to facilitate the building of four to six homes on a site owned by Cherwell behind St Peters Close, South Newington. The project was drawn out because of sustained obstruction from Cherwell officers and tardy activity by the ORCC Housing Enabler (who has since left) and Oxford Citizens Housing Association. As a result the householder who was key to access to the site withdrew his co-operation and the project had to be abandoned.
- In 2007 the current Parish Council, again with an entirely different membership from the previous council, consulted ORCC and was advised that the June 2005 housing needs survey could, in 2007, still be regarded as current. In early 2008 the Parish Council identified, with the help of the ORCC Housing Enabler, 10 potential building sites in the village. In February 2008 these were formally passed to ORCC to obtain an opinion on their acceptability in planning terms from Cherwell. No response was received, despite occasional enquiries by the Parish Council, until two weeks after the Cherwell Parish Liaison Meeting in November 2008. This project is now on hold until completion of the current Cherwell scrutiny review because we do not wish to raise expectations in the village or waste effort until we have a clear understanding of the new processes that may be implemented. We shall also now need to conduct a new housing needs survey.

Do you anticipate a future need for affordable housing in your parish?

The 2005 housing needs survey was completed by 32% of the 125 households in the parish and indicated a need for six affordable houses. It is thought that had confidential assistance with completing the survey form been available from an independent source, such as ORCC, a need for at least two more affordable houses might have been found. The Parish Council have no reason to believe that the need for affordable housing in the village has substantially diminished or that it will do so in the foreseeable future. However, to be certain we will have to conduct a further housing needs survey.

What has been your experience of the policy/process?

The policy – SNPC have no issue with Cherwell's policy aims for affordable housing. However, the policy of using multiple agencies to implement these aims does not seem to have been effective, at least in the case of exceptional rural affordable housing.

The process – The experience of the current and two previous Parish Councils has been very

poor since The Rural Housing Trust ceased to be involved. For example:

- The current Parish Council has suffered a lengthy delay in obtaining an opinion from the Cherwell Planning Department on 10 potential sites, effectively stalling the project for 12 months.
- The previous council encountered problems bordering on active obstruction from Cherwell planning officers and the then Housing Enabler and tardy responses for the then Housing Enabler in ORCC and officials from the Oxford Citizens Housing Association. From reading the file and discussing the matter with the parish councillors involved it is clear that at no time was any constructive thought or advice given by the paid staff involved in the process. All the impetus in the project was provided by the volunteer parish councillors, in the face of a largely negative attitude by Cherwell officers.

Overall there is strong evidence that the 'process' is failing to deliver the stated affordable housing policies of Cherwell on rural exception sites.

What contributed to a satisfactory outcome?

To date there has been a failure to build affordable housing in South Newington.

What do you think were the main problem that you encountered?

Those relating to the agencies in the process are outlined in previous answers. In summary they are:

- An apparent lack of ability in the Cherwell Planning Department's ability to coordinate the implementation of affordable housing policies on rural exceptions sites.
- An apparent lack of commitment by the Cherwell Planning Department and other officers to support the provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites.
- Unwillingness or inability of housing enablers and other paid officers in all the agencies involved to use constructive thought and proactive action to assist parish councils to overcome obstacles.
- Serious delays in responding to correspondence and enquiries causing projects to be unnecessarily extended, causing uncertainty in the parish, significant additional work for parish councillors, and offence to landowners. In at least one case the latter contributed to the failure of a project.
- Officials making comments, assumptions and judgements outside their remit or area of expertise which incorrectly influenced the actions or conclusions of other officials.
- Failure to appreciate that parish councillors are volunteers, usually with many other work and family commitments, who are rarely experts in housing provision or planning, and who are, in effect, looking for expert guidance from the paid officials charged with facilitating the provision of affordable housing. This leads to an apparent lack of service ethic amongst the staff involved.
- Failure to involve parish councillors in meetings.

What aspects of the policy/process could be improved? And how?

Neither any of the parish councillors consulted nor I have got close enough to the internal processes of the agencies involved to make detailed comments on specific parts of the

processes. In general terms we suggest that:

- Parish councils are given a more central role so that they can drive and monitor the process rather than being largely observers once the process has started. Parish councils and communities have the most direct interest in securing satisfactory outcomes and overcoming difficulties and are therefore more likely to set and maintain a good pace of activity.
- The overall process and its individual steps are examined and all non-added value steps and posts removed. (For example, do both the Cherwell and ORCC housing enablers add value or should only one agency provide this role?) This should simplify communications between agencies and with parish councils and speed up the process.
- Design a process that should be able to deliver the start of building within eighteen to twenty four months so that there is a reasonable chance of a project being completed in the four-year term of a parish council. This would provide an incentive to the parish council, reduce the risk of a change of policy or other hiatus at a change of council, and make it easier to maintain community interest.
- The objectives, responsibilities and boundaries of activity for all roles in the process should be clearly defined, publicised and adhered to. This should help to prevent, for example, planning officers commenting or making judgements without appropriate caveats on non-planning matters, such as the economic viability of a site, or housing association officials making assumptions about highways matters.
- All officials involved in the process should have appropriate professional knowledge and training for their roles and are monitored to ensure they have and maintain the personal and corporate motivation necessary to carry them out.
- Each parish affordable housing initiative, once established, should be treated as a project. Clear reporting procedures should be introduced so that district and parish councillors and the responsible managers in each agency are aware of overall progress against policy and progress on each individual project.
- All potential sites in a parish should be considered early in each project and ranked according to key factors such as availability, planning issues, economic viability, and community acceptance so that time and effort is not wasted on unviable sites.
- A communication strategy and plan is developed for each project to ensure that the support of the local community and other key stakeholders is gained and maintained.

What do you think the Council and its partners could do differently?

This is implicit in previous answers. In summary:

- streamline the processes;
- define the objectives and responsibilities of each role;
- choose and train well motivated, proactive staff;
- develop an effective project and overall reporting structure so the Cherwell and parish councillors and managers in other agencies can monitor progress;
- put parish councils at the centre of the process and increase their management role;
- treat parish councils as customers.

What do you think that Parish Councils could do differently?

We can only answer this from the experience of South Newington.

- Be opened minded about the site. Pursuing one site only from an early stage may result in a failed project and wasted effort.
- Be realistic about the likely timescale both within the council and with the community.
- Have a clear plan and stick to it.
- Have a communication strategy and plan to gain and maintain community and key stakeholder support.
- Explain and 'sell' the concept of exceptional affordable housing to dispel misconceptions about, for example, the design and quality of the houses or the people eligible to rent or part buy them.
- Be proactive in obtaining responses to the housing needs survey, including regular reminders and independent, confidential assistance with completing the form.
- If possible identify a champion and form a working group, including people outside the Parish Council, to plan and manage the project and to encourage community involvement.
- Obtain the active support of the local district councillor.

I hope these comments will be of assistance to you and the scrutiny team. As you will see I have not mentioned any individuals. While there have clearly been failings by some staff, we believe that the problems have been predominantly systemic.

I and, I am sure, previous parish councillors would be happy to discuss our experiences with the scrutiny team.

Yours sincerely

John Braithwaite
Chairman
South Newington Parish Council

Annex – South Newington Population and Housing Composition

South Newington has a population of just over 300. There are 125 houses plus two temporary dwellings in the parish, of which 115 are in the built-up area of the village. The remaining houses are scattering in the countryside around the village. People involved in farming or other land-based enterprises occupy the majority of these, including the two temporary dwellings.

There are only about 24 one or two bedroom houses in the village, including 10 bungalows that were built as social housing, of which four remain in the ownership of Charter Housing.

In addition there are eight three bedroom houses that were originally built as social housing. Six were built in the 1920s and two in the late 1950s. Four remain in the ownership of Charter Housing.

The majority of houses in the village, excluding the two categories above, would cost over £350,000.

The population make-up at the 2001 census is shown in the table below. At that time over half the population (54%) were over 45. The proportion has probably increased since. Within the village the majority adults either work in, or are retired from, profession occupations.

Category	Number of people	% of "All people"	Cum % of "All people" (Oldest first)
All people	302		
All males	154		
All females	148		
People aged 0-4	17	5.6	100.0
People aged 5-15	40	13.2	94.4
People aged 16-24	20	6.6	81.1
People aged 25-44	62	20.5	74.5
People aged 45-64	101	33.4	54.0
People aged 65-74	37	12.3	20.5
People aged 75 and over	25	8.3	8.3

Many of the older couples, now mostly retired, have brought up their families in the village. A number of their children would like to return to the village, or to move from their parents' home to independent accommodation in the village, but they are unable to do so because of the shortage and/or cost of suitable housing.

Scrutiny Review into Affordable Housing and Exception Sites Steeple Aston Parish Council Response.

Steeple Aston has already a development of 8 Affordable Housing units, completed on an Exception Site in 2003. We are at present hoping to develop a second site on a parcel of Exception land which has been approved by CDC Planning, Housing and Economy Dept.. Negotiations are ongoing at present. If this project is completed our Affordable Housing need in Steeple Aston should be satisfied for the foreseeable future.

To answer your questions:

We are aware of the Council's Rural Housing and Exception Sites policy and process. However we feel that it lacks clarity and may be difficult for a parish newly interested in affordable housing to navigate.

We believe that much closer contact and exchange of information between parishes and the several authorities involved in the process would be beneficial. We have had good help and support from Nicola Ball, ORCC throughout the initial Housing Needs Survey, and with site identification. At present however there appears to be a lack of impetus and information which is frustrating for the PC and for the residents who are naturally eager to see progress as they completed the Housing Needs Survey some months ago.

Parish Councils are very close to their parishes and, once supportive of a Housing initiative, could be much better used throughout the process. Their local knowledge is valuable and closer consultation with the parish would be beneficial to all parties.

There is a great deal of public confusion regarding the nature of Exception Sites and about the Allocation process. The CDC Allocations Scheme document is comprehensive, it runs to 20 pages, but may be difficult for an applicant to understand. It might be useful to produce guidance specifically for Exception Sites. Possibly it exists but we are not aware of any.

CDC is now partnered with other districts and organisations within the ORHP. OCHA was assigned to us as the preferred developer for our proposed site. The PC would have liked consultation on this.

Our existing site is managed by Sovereign which now appears to be an umbrella organisation including Vale. OCHA now appears to have become Greensquare. A certain amount of confusion inevitably exists as to what responsibility lies where, which is not improved by a lack of communication. In general it appears

that the parish and its Parish Council are not considered as significant partners within the process of developing an Affordable Housing site.

We believe that our original Shepherds Hill site had a satisfactory outcome and has been of great benefit to the village. During the process of its development we had a close working relationship with The Rural Housing Trust which was an excellent association, who worked closely with the parish. We achieved a sympathetic development which both architecturally and socially has been a success. The Parish Council contributed significantly and we believe very positively to the design process and were appreciated as supportive throughout the project. This close co-operation between the Rural Housing Trust, the developers, ourselves and also CDC's Landscape Services dept. was definitely instrumental in the success of the project.

The beginning of the process was swift and relatively easy as the site was owned by CDC who gave the land for the development. Later various difficulties arose with the Oxfordshire Highways Authority and the CDC Legal Department which were not resolved entirely until 2007. All these difficulties could have been resolved more quickly and satisfactorily if better communication between departments had existed. Possibly assigning a single officer to be a contact point and to have the responsibility of enabling the process from beginning would be beneficial.

A rural exception site within a village allows restriction of occupation to those who can demonstrate a strong local connection as well as fulfilling the District Council's criteria. This is of enormous importance and benefit to the village. However there appears to be confusion as to whether these local connections apply when a house swap is proposed. It is vital that its small number of affordable housing units is not lost to a village and to applicants who do have a strong local connection by the means of a house swap with applicants who may well wish to come to live within a village but cannot demonstrate strong local connections. This defeats the purpose of the policy and reduces the number of locals who may achieve vital housing within their own area.

Our Parish Council has sought through its relationships with the agencies involved in achieving affordable housing schemes to be helpful, efficient and proactive. We see it as an important part of our function to achieve affordable housing for our parishioners who are in need. We believe that clarity, good communications and acknowledgement of and respect for the Parish's role on the part of the other agencies involved would help to promote successful outcomes.

Margaret Mason - Chairman

From: Bob Jesson [r.jesson@btinternet.com]

Sent: 23 December 2008 09:57

To: Catherine Phythian

Subject: Rural Affordable Housing

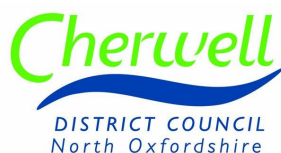
Dear M/s Phythian,

This responds to your letter regarding the scrutiny of CDC approach to Rural Housing. Wroxton Parish is made up of two villages. Wroxton and Balscote. In terms of classification Wroxton is a "B" village and Balscote a "C".

We approached the council to seek a study into 2 exceptional affordable houses on land already owned by a Housing Trust on the western edge of Balscote. It would have been necessary to add a small piece of land to accommodate two small bungalows for either a young couple or elderly. The local farmer was prepared to release a small plot to accommodate the build. We were required to survey the whole of the Parish when the need was clearly in Balscote and in any case Wroxton is 2.5 miles distant and no need was evident. We asked to be released from a total survey but were refused and decided that no real interest had been displayed by CDC, ORCC or any body connected. We decided in view of the lack of interest displayed we would shelve the idea.

Given the project is hardly massive but there have been several cases recently where young or old of the village would have benefited from a small build. An inflexible approach and a lack of interest in small village projects was our main complaint Mrs Patricia Jesson Wroxton & Balscote Parish Clerk

Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites



November 2006

**A Practical Guide for Parish Councils
Landowners and People in Housing Need**



Cherwell's first development of Affordable Homes on a Rural Exception Site completed in 1994 in Islip



Eight new Eco-friendly homes under construction in Fritwell - September 2006



Established Rural Exception Site Scheme in Deddington completed in 1999 comprising 23 homes

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Cherwell District Councils Partners

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Introduction

This practical guide explains how Cherwell District Council's Rural Exception Site Policy works and how it can be used to provide affordable housing to meet the needs of local people in rural communities.

Foreword by Cllr Pickford

In recent years, property prices in rural areas have spiralled out of the reach of the majority, notably affecting those entering on to the property ladder. This means that many local people are priced out of the housing market, and many people who work locally, and whose families have formed part of Cherwell's communities for generations are forced to live in towns and cities further away.

Rural parishes depend on new generations to preserve local schools, keep shops open, stimulate the local economy, and to work in key local services such as schools, hospitals, and emergency services. Even for parishes with few local services, new generations provide essential family and social ties for those people already living in the parish.

There is a way, however, to ensure that local people can stay in their community, and that is by building new affordable homes through Cherwell District Council's Rural Exception Site Policy. This means building on land on which planning policy would not normally permit development for open market sales. An 'exception' can be made through this policy for small groups of houses to be built by Housing Associations and offered first to local people to part buy or rent at discounted rates. The homes must also be sympathetically designed to fit in and enhance their surroundings. The process is only ever initiated, however, where a housing need has been demonstrated.



Councillor Debbie Pickford
Portfolio Holder for Housing at
Cherwell District Council

110 homes have already been built on Rural Exception Sites across the Cherwell District, and through our membership of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership, we hope to strengthen our relationship with the Housing Corporation to fund even more homes for local people. A Rural Housing Enabler post has also been part funded by the District Council to work with rural parishes, helping them through the complicated process of getting homes actually built.

Cherwell District Council is committed to providing affordable homes through this Exception Site Policy and to seeing a greater number of affordable homes built in the future. We cannot do this alone, however, and are dependent on Parish Councils and landowners coming forward to help identify a potential need in their parish. I hope this guide goes some way in explaining the process of developing affordable homes on Exception Sites, and that as many Parish Councils and landowners as possible contact the Rural Housing Enabler to facilitate this process in your parish.

Rural Exception Policy

The Background

Since the mid 1990s, what is now the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), has recognised the importance of having adequate housing provision in rural areas to meet the needs of local people and contribute to the delivery of sustainable communities. All Local Planning Authorities were advised to include a Rural Exception Site Policy in their Local Plans to assist the provision of affordable housing provision in rural areas where there is a genuine shortage of existing or new affordable homes becoming available for local people. Rural Exception sites should be small, solely for affordable housing and on land within or adjoining existing small rural communities which would not otherwise be released for general market housing. The affordable housing provided on such sites should meet local needs in perpetuity.

The District Council planning policies for Rural Exception Sites are Policy H6 in the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996) and Policy H8 in the non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan (2011).

Policy H8 says

Within or immediately adjacent to villages, planning permission may be granted for small-scale, low-cost housing development which is to help meet a specific and identified local housing need that cannot be satisfied elsewhere, provided that:

1. It can be demonstrated that the proposed development is economically viable in terms of its ability to meet the need identified
2. Secure arrangements are made to restrict the occupancy of the development to ensure that it continues to meet local needs in perpetuity.



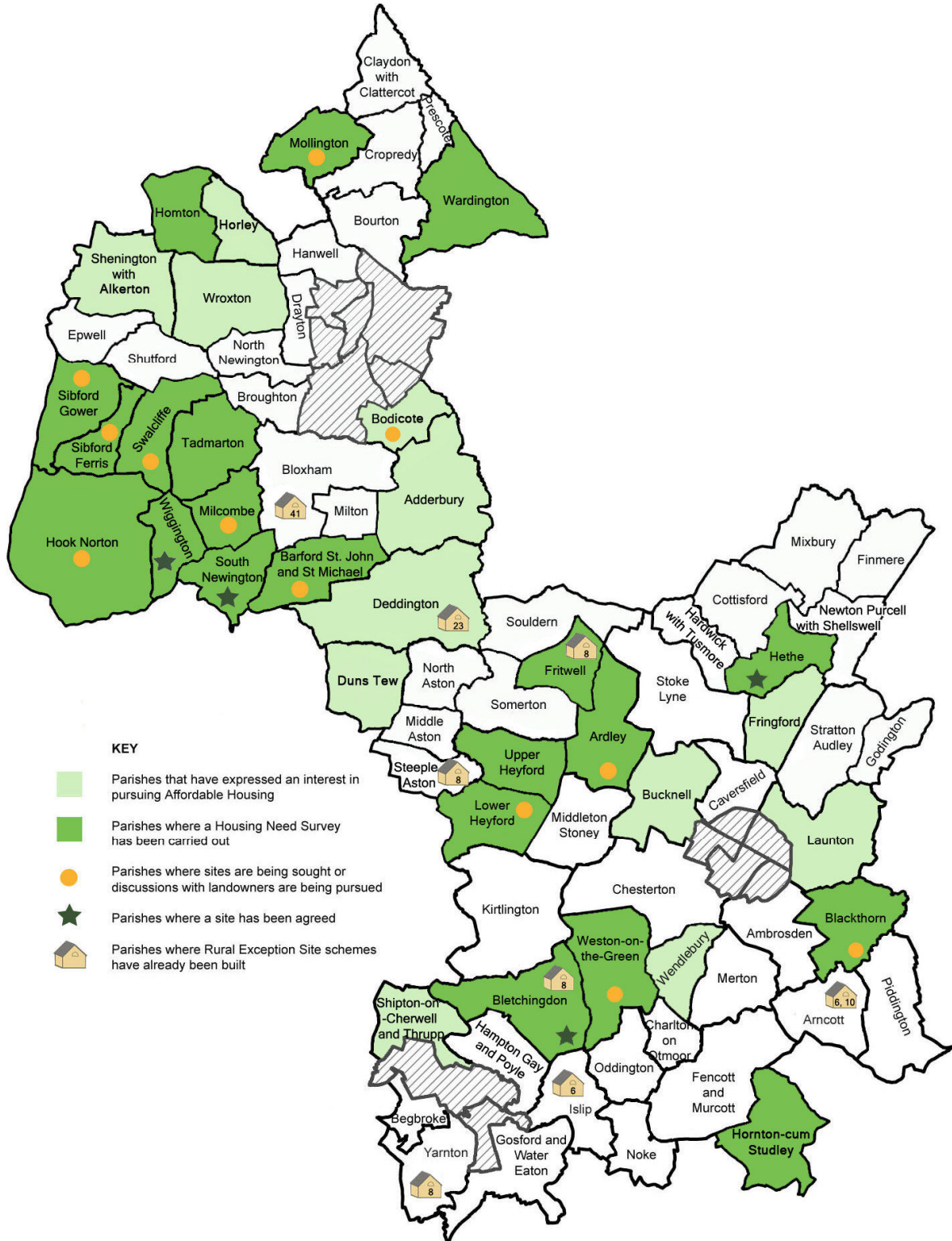
Islip 1994

While the policy allows exceptions to be made to the Council's strategic policies that restrict rural housing development, it will still be necessary in finding sites to comply with other policies in the plan, for instance, those that seek to protect the countryside and those relating to highway safety. Schemes should be small scale and reflect the character of the village.

What does Local mean?

In most cases, 'local' will include; current residence in the parish, previous periods of residence within the parish, local connections and family ties with the parish, and those in employment in the parish. This is normally secured through the Section 106 Agreement. This is a legal agreement entered into when planning permission is granted and which limits the occupancy of the homes for local people in perpetuity.

Progress on Rural Exception Site Schemes in the Cherwell District



A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing a Scheme

Contact the Rural Housing Enabler

The first stage in developing a rural affordable housing scheme is usually for a member of the Parish Council to contact the Rural Housing Enabler (see contacts at the back of this guide).

The Rural Housing Enabler is an employee of Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, and will be able to offer independent advice throughout the project.

The Rural Housing Enabler will assist the Parish Council in assessing the Housing Need within the community by carrying out a Housing Needs Survey.

Following the survey, the Rural Housing Enabler will advise the Parish Council how to take things forward should they wish to, and liaise on behalf of the community and Parish Council with all parties involved in the project such as Cherwell District Council and relevant Housing Associations.

The Rural Housing Enabler will stay involved in the project from the outset until the project is completed.

Assess the Need

Establishing the precise need for affordable housing is crucial for the District Council to designate individual sites as 'Exception Sites'.

The Rural Housing Enabler will assist the Parish in undertaking this Housing Needs Survey at no cost at all to the Parish Council. This survey is sent to every household in the parish, so as well as identifying the precise need for affordable housing, also asks the wider community for their views on this issue and determines whether there would be a support for a small scheme if a need was identified.

Need is 'means tested', but is also assessed against factors such as overcrowding, the state of repair of the existing home, homelessness, and the inability to afford the present accommodation. The 'need' can often be concealed from the Parish Council such as households who have already been forced to move away, households with older children living in the parental home, or households in tied or privately rented accommodation.

All applicants should have a clear and strong local connection with the parish.

Find a Site

It can be difficult to find a site which meets the requirements of Parish Council, Landowner Community, Housing Association, and which is also acceptable in Planning and Highway terms. Suggesting suitable sites is part of the Parish Council's role as they are more knowledgeable about the availability and ownership of land in the parish. The Parish Council may even own land themselves in the village...

It is important for the Parish Council or Rural Housing Enabler to discuss potential sites with the District Council at an early stage. This is because Exception Sites must still comply with other planning policies, for instance, those relating to highway safety, and those that seek to protect the countryside. Any development would also have to relate well in terms of size, character and location to the existing village and local environment.

As rural exception sites would not normally receive planning permission for development, the land is worth much less than 'prime site' development land. They are, however, valued higher than agricultural land so there is an incentive for landowners to release sites.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing a Scheme

Obtain Funding

Once a suitable site has been identified and agreed by all parties, including the landowner, the Housing Association who will ultimately be responsible for building and managing the homes, will then progress the feasibility of the site, including the instruction of architects and developers.

Whilst the lower cost of land helps to make the homes more affordable, other development costs remain resulting in the Housing Association needing to apply for funding from the Housing Corporation. This public subsidy covers part of the cost of a scheme with the remainder being covered by a loan taken out by the Housing Association. This is then repaid by income generated through the rental or part sale of the homes.

Under the framework of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP), individual Exception Site projects in Oxfordshire are given an additional boost of Government/Housing Corporation capital. In March 2004, the ORHP was successful in obtaining £6.1 million. In March 2006 the ORHP was successful in obtaining a further £5.1 million to provide a further 104 new homes in Oxfordshire over the next two years.

Obtain Planning Permission

Planning applications have to be made to Cherwell District Council. They do not necessarily have to be supported by the Parish Council, but it is common for them to jointly submit the application with the Housing Association. This is owing to the Parish Council usually having been the driving force behind the development from the outset.

The Rural Housing Enabler will consult with the District Council's Planning Officers on behalf of the Parish Council as early as possible to establish whether the proposed Exception Site is feasible and likely to be granted planning permission. The Housing Association will prepare a number of scheme layouts and designs for the Parish Council to choose from to ensure that the scheme meets the Parish Council's expectations.

Before granting planning permission, a legal agreement will be sought which restricts occupancy of a development to households meeting the local-needs criteria. Any proposals must be shown to be economically viable and capable of proper management by a Housing Association or charitable trust to ensure control over occupancy in perpetuity.

Long Term Control of Houses

The District Council, though no longer a housing provider, remains in control of all allocations of potential occupiers to affordable housing in the district. All potential occupiers must, therefore, be on Cherwell District Council's Housing Register or must qualify for inclusion even if it is the shared ownership option they would qualify for.

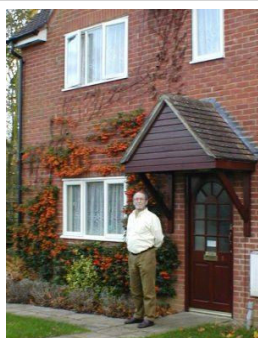
Owing to the legal agreement signed at the point of granting Planning Permission (the Section 106 Agreement), all houses on an Exception Site remain affordable in perpetuity for local people who would not otherwise be able to afford a home in their parish. In the scenario that there were no eligible households for an affordable home with a local connection, the District Council would seek applicants from the neighbouring parishes. These parishes would be agreed within the Section 106 Agreement.

There is no Right to Acquire new homes built by Housing Associations in parishes with populations less than 3000. In the case of shared-ownership, households are restricted to purchasing 80% of the house, so that the Housing Association can retain control over future occupancies.

Meet the Parishes

“Although I am employed in Oxford, my life is centred around this area. I run locally and I teach evening classes in this area. The emphasis is rather that I go “away” to work and return (quite relieved) each evening....”

Comment from a resident in South Newington



Keith Campbell had lived in a neighbouring village to Islip for many years and his children had attended the village primary school. After his divorce, and sale

of his family home, Keith had to find somewhere else for him and his son to live. Being on a single salary, he was not able to take on a mortgage for a house on the open market, especially not in his own village. On registering with Cherwell District Council, he was then offered a new shared-ownership house in Islip, which meant that he could remain in his local area.

Lynne Stacey, Clerk to Steeple Aston Parish Council... “The input of the parish at the design stage was very important - we suggested that a more affordable re-constituted stone could be used instead of expensive natural Cotswold stone, or the default option which had been a yellow brick, which we felt to be totally unsuitable. We also discussed window styles, paint colours and site lighting and achieved a better, more Oxfordshire style than that proposed by the architect”.

Des O’Sullivan, Tenant, Steeple Aston... “I was living with my parents in the village until I married and moved into this house. I had previously looked into getting a mortgage to take on my gran’s house after she passed away, but it would have meant me taking on 5 full time jobs to have been able to afford it. Everyone living here on the Close I’ve known all my life and grown up with. It’s a quiet place, very quiet and trouble free – I think it’s very important to be able to live in the place you’ve been born and brought up in”.

“It is important that a village is a lively place with a variety of families, age ranges and occupations. We already find it difficult in Hethe to get villagers motivated to contribute to village life, and losing village - bred youngsters would make this much worse”.

Comment from a resident in Hethe

“A development is urgently needed before the village contains only senior citizens”.

Comment from a resident in Wigginton



“The role of the Clerk is to liaise with the Housing Association and others on behalf of the Parish Council, arrange meetings, keep parishioners informed of progress in the Village News and attempt to pacify anxious and frustrated applicants! This obviously creates extra work - especially for the Clerk - but once the groundwork has been done, the Housing Association, takes over the brunt of the work

liaising with planning officers, owners of the site, the developer and the like”. **Mrs Bickley, Clerk to Bletchingdon Parish Council**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is really meant by 'Local Connection'?

In most cases, 'local' will include current residence in the parish, previous periods of residence within the parish, local connections and family ties with the parish, and those in employment in the parish. This is normally secured through the Section 106 Agreement. This is a legal agreement that is secured in the sale and planning permission of the land limiting the occupancy of the homes for local people in perpetuity.

It is also important to remember that all applicants must also qualify for the District Council's Housing Register i.e. have proof that they cannot access private property to buy or rent in that immediate area.

What happens when there are more households in need with a local connection than homes available?

The District Council assess all applicants to the Housing Register in terms of their housing need. A cascade clause would be implemented so that those who meet the above criteria and have the most points would be given priority.

What happens if in 10 years time, a house becomes available but no-one in the village is in housing need?

The District Council would consider applicants from neighbouring parishes as agreed in the Section 106 agreement. Only if no applicants could be identified as being in housing need from these parishes would applicants be sought from the wider district area.

Therefore, it is not possible to guarantee that local homes will only ever be occupied by people from the same village, but, local people will always be considered first.

What is the point of building new affordable homes for rent or shared ownership for local people, when the tenants will buy them at a discount and sell them onto incomers for profit?

All new housing on Rural Exception Sites is exempt from the Right to Acquire. The legal agreement in the sale and planning permission of the site states that these homes will be available for local people in perpetuity.

This is a pretty village and affordable rented housing would be an eyesore. Why should we have our village spoilt?

The Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership comprises Housing Associations and architects committed to designing new homes sympathetically so that they blend in with the local character of the village. Close liaison with Planning Officers from an early stage also ensures good design. Try visiting one of their recent schemes in another village – you will probably be surprised to see the quality of the homes.

Why can't the Parish Council decide who gets the new homes? They know local people better than the District Council.

The Parish Council will not know about all applicants on the Housing Register who may be eligible for a home in their village, and many applicants will not want to disclose personal circumstances to people they may know in their village. It is also important that Parish Councils do not risk being accused of favouritism or prejudice. The Parish Council has an important role, however, in initiating the Housing Needs Survey, and encouraging and assisting all those who may be in need to get onto the District Councils waiting list.

The Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership



Founded in September 2003, the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP) was established to maximise the opportunities for rural communities across Oxfordshire to benefit from new housing and to assist people who cannot afford to buy or rent from the open market.

The ORHP was originated by the four rural Oxfordshire District Councils. They selected a consortium, consisting of Housing Associations who currently provide affordable housing in Oxfordshire, to develop and manage the new homes. In the Cherwell District, the associated Housing Associations are Oxford Citizens Housing Association and Charter Community Housing.

Together with the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council and with funding support from the Housing Corporation, the main objective of the ORHP is to deliver 500 new affordable homes in villages with a population of less

than 3000 over 5 years. The ORHP has selected a locally based Contractor and Consultants including architects with an understanding and experience of developing in rural localities and who have demonstrated a commitment to working with local communities to deliver new sustainable homes.

For more information, visit www.orhp.org.uk

Aims of the Partnership

- To provide high quality affordable homes which meet the needs of the people in rural communities
- To contribute to the development of strategies affecting rural housing within Oxfordshire
- To involve local communities in all aspects of the development and management of new homes
- To develop locally distinctive designs that respect the character of the local environment and that are flexible to meet changing circumstances
- To seek innovation and increased efficiency in the development process
- To increase the range of households which can be helped by offering options for rent and low cost home ownership
- To facilitate access to local training and employment opportunities in construction

Cherwell's Partners

Oxford Citizens Housing Association

Oxford Citizens was established in 1866 to provide affordable housing for people living in Oxford and its suburbs.

Today it is a diverse and progressive organisation, providing high quality homes and services to over 2,800 households all over Oxfordshire. These include general rented, supported and sheltered homes, as well as shared ownership properties for people taking their first step on the property ladder.

They also work with Ealing Family Housing Association and four local district councils to run the Oxford Social Lettings Agency, which provides short-term temporary accommodation.

Community development and regeneration are key features of their work, and they are one of only fourteen Housing Associations with the 'Investors in Community' accreditation.

For more information, visit
www.ocha.org.uk

Charter Community Housing

Charter Community Housing was formed from the housing department of Cherwell District Council in March 2004, when council homes transferred to the new organisation following a ballot of tenants.

The majority of the former housing department's staff also transferred to Charter Community Housing and continue to run the service. They have been supplemented by several members of staff, all of whom bring experience in managing housing associations.

Charter Community Housing has recently developed 'The Charterists Tenants' Panel, made up of local tenants interested in the future of affordable housing in the District. This was as a result of its desire to work with its tenants and leaseholders to ensure the service it delivers and the homes and communities it supports are the best they could possibly be.

For more information, visit
www.cchousing.co.uk

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

ORCC is a registered charity founded in 1920, which brings together people who care about village life in Oxfordshire. ORCC works in partnership with all the District Councils, the County Council in Oxfordshire and has close links with a wide range of voluntary organisations and networks in the county.

ORCC believe that Oxfordshire's villages should be living, thriving, and inclusive communities with a mix of ages, incomes and occupations. Everyone in rural areas should have access to health, education, shops, local government services, information, and leisure facilities. ORCC aims to help improve the quality of life for all who live or work in villages, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

The two Rural Housing Enablers who are employed by ORCC work closely with their colleagues involved in the following areas: Village Shops, Rural Transport, Village Halls, Parish Action Plans, Village Newsletters, Community Groups, and Rural Policy. This background gives them a fuller appreciation and understanding of the villages they are assisting.

For more information, visit www.oxonrcc.org.uk

Further Information

If you would like to see a housing scheme developed for people in your village, please contact the Rural Housing Enabler:

James Alcock — Rural Housing Enabler

Email: james.alcock@oxonrcc.org.uk / Tel: 01865 883488

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Jericho Farm
Worton
Witney
Oxon OX29 4SZ
www.oxonrcc.org.uk



Your District Councillor may also have detailed knowledge of your area and the following Council Officers will be available to provide advice:

Mike Buxton - North Area Planning Officer

Email: mike.buxton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk / Tel: 01295 221811

Bob Duxbury - South Area Planning Officer

Email: bob.duxbury@cherwell-dc.gov.uk / Tel: 01295 221821

Gillian Greaves - Housing Services Manager

Email: gillian.greaves@cherwell-dc.gov.uk / Tel: 01295 221654

David Peckford - Senior Planning Officer

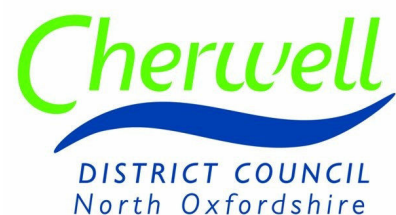
Email: david.peckford@cherwell-dc.gov.uk / Tel: 01295 221841

Allocation Team

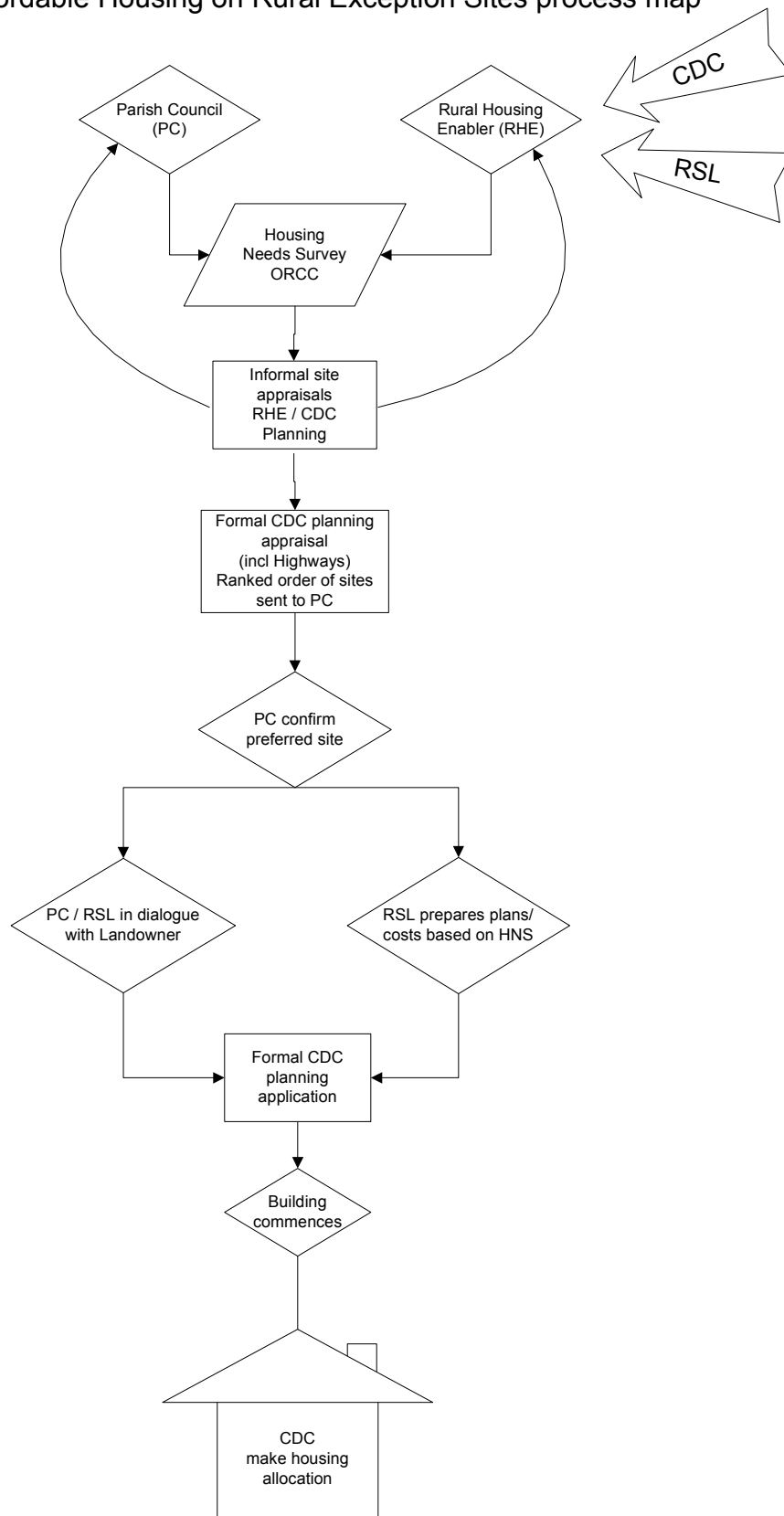
Email: Housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk / Tel: 01295 221809

Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

Tel: 01295 252535



Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites process map

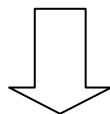


Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership

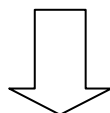
- Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (OHRP) is a sub group of the Oxfordshire Housing partnership but has its own separate membership
- ORHP formed in 2003/04 to tackle the shortage of affordable housing in Oxfordshire.
- It is a voluntary partnership involving the 4 rural District Councils, 4 partner associations (Registered Social Landlords), Oxford Rural Communities Council which employs 2 Rural Housing Enablers (RHEs), a construction contractor and an employees agent. A diagram setting out the structure of the OHRP is overleaf.
- It was set up to run to 2009 with a target to achieve 500 affordable housing units across the county.
- At mid 2008 it was on course to deliver 400 units by end of 08/09.
- Cherwell has delivered 42 units of rural housing through ORHP from 2004-08 (a further 22 are recorded as anticipated).
- ORHP has provided a clear process for delivering schemes with shared good practice and collaborative working.
- In early 2008 Government funding supporting the RHEs was withdrawn. The ORHP partners continued to provide their funding but this only pays for 3 days per week for each RHE.
- In early 2008 OHP commissioned De Montfort University to undertake a Critical Friend Review of the ORHP. The report has been published and ORHP is considering what should happen post 2009.

Affordable Housing Partnership Diagram

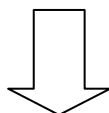
Oxfordshire Housing Partnership (OHP)



Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP)				
meets quarterly to monitor progress against targets and discuss strategic direction				
ORCC Leadbitter Simon Binks	Cherwell OCHA	West Oxon RSL	VWHDC RSL	SODC RSL



Delivery Group meets on site quarterly or as required to discuss progress with schemes across the county	Steering Group meets quarterly to oversee the work programme of the RHE	
District Councils	Cherwell	West Oxon
RSLs	OCHA	RSL
Leadbitter (Construction Company) Simon Binks (Employee Agent)	ORCC RHE	



Development Implementation Group (DIG)
Meets 6 weekly to monitor progress and agree actions
CDC planning policy officer
CDC development control officer
Housing officer
OCHA representative
ORCC RHE

Cherwell District Council Completions – Rural Housing

This is a table of all rural housing delivery since 2004. It includes units counted towards the ORHP target. We count S106 development if it has been brought forward with the aid of the RHE and other ORHP partners

Scheme Details	No of units	Tenure Mix	Completion date
Adderbury – S106 site	3	Rented	04/05
Fulwell Close, Fritwell - RES	8	5 rent, 3 shared ownership	Dec 06
Crab Tree Close, Bloxham - S106 site	8	5 rent 3 shared ownership	Jun 07
The Avenue, Bloxham - RSL controlled site	5	3 rent, 2 shared ownership	Nov 07
Henry Gepp Close, Adderbury – S106 site	6	4 rent, 2 SO	Nov 07
Springwell Close, Bletchingdon - RES	12	9 rent, 3 shared ownership	Dec 07
Totals	42		

Other rural delivery achieved outside of partnership

Scheme Details	No of units	Tenure Mix	Completion date
Willow Road Ambrosden – S106	8		Nov 06
Briar Furlong, Ambrosden – S106	18		Aug 07/Jan 09
Buchanan Road, Arncott - S106	8	Rent	Nov 07
Milton Road, Bloxham – S106	18		Dec 08
Totals	52		

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

Schemes in pipeline ORHP - all still pre planning but where we have at least initial landowner agreement

Scheme Details	No of units	Tenure Mix	Likely Completion date	Status
Weston on the Green - RES	10	?	2010	Pre planning but land owned predominantly by RSL/Duchy of Cornwall so can be secured
Hook Norton - RES	8	?	?	Landowner willing but price yet to be agreed-costly site to develop
Hornton - RES	4	?	?	Site owned by PC – some design/parking issues
Mollington - RES	4	?	?	Costly site to develop to achieve land value wanted
Totals	26			

Schemes in pipeline non ORHP

Scheme Details	No of units	Tenure Mix	Likely Completion date	Status
Milton Road, Bloxham -S106 site	4	Shared Ownership	May 09	On site
Gosford Farm, Gosford and Water Eaton - RES	36	18 rent, 18 shared ownership	Jun 09	On site
Gosway Fields, Kirtlington – S106 site	4	3 rent, 1 shared ownership	Dec 09	On site
Geenhill House, Adderbury - S106 site	15	10 rent, 5 shared ownership	Jun 09	On site
Little Bourton Service Station site – S106 site	6	4 rent, 2 shared ownership	May 09	On site
Buchanan Road, Arncott	4	Shared ownership	Mar 10	On site
Cassington Road, Yarnton	138	69 rent, 69 rent to homebuy	Apr 10 onwards	REM ¹ stage in planning
Totals	207			

¹ Reserved matters: this is when planning permission has been granted in principle (Outline), then the details are submitted i.e. design, roads, materials are approved as a second planning application (Reserved matters).

Members' Room



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Insert PC clerk details (Rural only)

*Bodicote House
Bodicote • Banbury
Oxfordshire • OX15 4AA
Telephone 01295 252535
Textphone 01295 221572
DX 24224 (Banbury)
<http://www.cherwell.gov.uk>*

Please ask for **Catherine Phythian** Our ref Your ref
Direct Dial **01295 221583** Fax **01295 270028** Email **Catherine.phythian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk**

17 December 2008

Dear

Cherwell District Council scrutiny review into Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites.

As Chairman of the Cherwell District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee I am writing to inform you that we will be conducting a scrutiny review into the Council's approach to rural affordable housing and exception sites. This is in response to the comments made at the recent Parish Liaison meeting and Councillor Wood's commitment to look into the matter.

Scrutiny is a councillor lead process intended to challenge and improve council services. As part of this review we will be considering case studies of previous schemes and interviewing the officers involved in the process. We will also be looking for examples of good practice from other local authorities and of course we need to gather evidence from those communities which have had direct experience of the process. So we would like to hear from your Parish Council and these are some of the questions we want to answer:

- Are you aware of the Council's Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites policy/process?
- Do you understand the policy/process?
- Are there any aspects of the policy/process that need further explanation?
- Do you have affordable housing in your parish?
- Have you tried to get affordable housing in your parish?
- Do you anticipate a future need for affordable housing in your parish?
- What has been your experience of the policy/process?
- What do you think contributed to a satisfactory outcome?



- What do you think were the main problems that you encountered?
- What aspects of the policy/process could be improved? And how?
- What do you think the Council and its partners could do differently?
- What do you think that Parish Councils could do differently?

You can submit your views and comments in writing to me or to the Scrutiny Officer, Catherine Phythian at the above address or by email to overviewandscrutiny@cherwell-dc.gov.uk. Alternatively you may pass your written comments to your local district councillor. It would help us if you could forward your response by 6 February 2009.

We are planning to consider this topic at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 March 2009 which will be open to the public. We intend to invite representatives from some of the parish councils to attend that meeting to discuss their experiences of the affordable housing and rural exception sites process. We will also be talking to Cherwell planning and housing officers, as well as representatives from our partner organisations at that meeting. If your parish council would like to participate in the discussion please indicate this when you submit your written comments. I expect the review to run for about 4 months from January to April/May 2009. We intend to present our conclusions to the next parish liaison meeting.

Finally I must point out that the date of the next Cherwell Parish Liaison meeting is **Wednesday 17 June 2009** and not Friday 12 June as stated in Chris Rothwell's letter of 1 December 2008.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John Donaldson
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Copies to: Cllr Wood
Cllr Gibbard
Overview & Scrutiny Committee members
Strategic Director/Officers

Roles and Responsibilities for Members of Cherwell Delivery Implementation Group (DIG)

Current Membership of Group

ORCC- Nicky Ball, Rural Housing Enabler; Greensquare Group , Harvey Pitt, Development Manager; CDC Housing- Fiona Brown, Strategic Housing Officer, CDC Development Control, Bob Duxbury, Development Control Team Leader; CDC Planning Policy, David Peckford, Senior Planning Officer.

Purpose of DIG

1. To identify opportunities for delivery of affordable housing on rural exception or other sites throughout the District
2. To understand housing needs and opportunities so that work can be properly targeted for greatest effect
3. To appraise sites which may be suitable and discount unsuitable sites
4. Try to unblock obstacles to delivery of sites
5. To monitor progress with site delivery and agree actions required to progress work

Frequency of Meetings and record keeping

Every 6 weeks. Minutes are kept in the form of a spreadsheet indicating progress in each Parish and any outstanding actions to be followed up

ORCC (RHE) will:

- In Conjunction with CDC Housing promote the work of ORHP to Parishes and other agencies
- Attend Parish Council meetings to offer ongoing advice and support and send active parishes regular updates on progress
- Liaise with Parish Councils and with Development Control on identification of possible sites likely to gain Planning Consent
- Carry out Housing Needs Surveys and produce reports
- Encourage close liaison with other services at ORCC to consider the impact of housing development through Parish Plan work etc.
- Work closely with the RSL as sites move into development to keep the Parish and the Community engaged and involved , sending quarterly updates to active Parishes

CDC (Housing) will:

- Assist RHE with or undertake Housing Needs Surveys where agreed

Appendix D 6

- Agree the housing requirements for each site in terms of size, type and tenure of units
- Draw up the nominations agreement for each site
- Ensure bids to HCA are supported within HCA timescales or make applications to the Council Executive for LA funding where required
- Ensure the Rural Housing Delivery Improvement Plan is delivered within the timescales specified on the plan
- Support the RHE with attendance at Parish Council meetings on request
- Work jointly with the RHE on marketing and information materials
- Work with the CDC allocations team to ensure smooth letting of the properties

CDC (Planning Policy) will:

- Check sites are acceptable in Planning Policy terms
- Work with CDC Housing to develop Rural Exception Site Policy as part of the LDF Delivery SPD
- As preferred site options work progresses help identify potential RES

CDC (Development Control) will:

- Assess suggested sites and rank these in order of most acceptable to Planning
- Support and advise the RHE generally on suitable sites
- Attend Parish Council meetings as requested to offer Planning advice
- Work closely with the RSL on scheme design prior to a Planning application being submitted
- Agree S106 requirements
- Process Planning Applications and recommend a Planning Decision to the Planning Committee

Greensquare (OCHA) will:

- Negotiate with landowners to purchase sites for development
- Liaise with CDC planners, strategic housing officer, Parish Council and wider local community on site design
- Attend PC meetings as required to update Parishes on progress
- Undertake financial appraisals and bid for HCA/ LA funding as required
- Monitor build progress and take handover
- Advertise completed units on CBL and let properties
- Arrange openings where needed
- Manage properties

Targets for service delivery

Target	Primary responsibility
Respond to all communication from Parish Councils by way of telephone, letter or e-mail within 10 working days	All
Complete Housing Needs Surveys reports within 12 weeks of survey forms being delivered	ORCC/CDC Housing
Carry out parish site walk and appraise sites, with response to Parish Council within 8 weeks of request	CDC – Development Control
Send quarterly updates to all parishes who have undertaken an HNS/ Site Appraisal until either a development is complete or until no further progress can be made	ORCC
Attend Parish Council meeting as required to discuss development issues ensuring Parish Council members and wider community are involved at each stage	All
Publish outcomes of ORHP work to all Parishes as part of an annual report	ORCC/CDC Housing

Performance – Rural Housing Delivery since 2004**Number of Rural Completions (total)**

Year	Number of Completions
04/05	3
05/06	0
06/07	16
07/08	51
08/09	24
Total	94

Number of Rural Completions (ORHP)

Year	Number of Completions
04/05	3
05/06	0
06/07	8
07/08	31
08/09	0
Total	42

SUMMARY OF RURAL EXCEPTION SITE POLICY

Policy H6 Cherwell Local Plan 1996

Policy H8 non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011

Allows for small-scale, low-cost housing development within or immediately adjacent to villages provided that:

- it meets a specific and identified local housing need
- need cannot be met elsewhere
- economically viable
- restricted occupancy to ensure meets local needs in perpetuity
- local housing need survey expected
- must comply with other policies e.g. those which seek to protect the countryside, highway safety, conservation areas and achieve good design

Different from affordable housing secured as a result of market housing schemes.

Criteria for assessing housing need:

- whether the proposed occupier is on or would qualify for inclusion on the Council's housing waiting list
- whether the proposed occupier is currently resident within the parish and needing separate accommodation
- place of employment (e.g. those who provide important local services and need to live closer to the community)
- local connections / family ties with the parish
- previous periods or residents within the parish

In some instances, 'local' housing need may consist of more than one parish. Local need might be accommodated in a neighbouring parish.

FULL TEXT OF RURAL EXCEPTION SITE POLICIES

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996

H6 WITHIN SETTLEMENTS IN THE OXFORD GREEN BELT AND WITHIN OR IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO RURAL SETTLEMENTS ELSEWHERE PLANNING PERMISSION MAY BE GRANTED FOR SMALL-SCALE LOW-COST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS TO HELP MEET A SPECIFIC AND IDENTIFIED LOCAL HOUSING NEED WHICH CANNOT BE SATISFIED ELSEWHERE, PROVIDED THAT:

(i) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS ECONOMICALLY VIABLE IN TERMS OF ITS ABILITY TO MEET THE NEED IDENTIFIED;

(ii) SECURE ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE TO RESTRICT THE OCCUPANCY OF THE DEVELOPMENT TO ENSURE THAT IT CONTINUES TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS IN THE LONG TERM;

(iii) THE PROPOSAL IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN.

2.27 "Planning Policy Guidance: Housing (PPG3)" advises that sites which would not normally be released for housing development can exceptionally be released for low-cost schemes if the planning authority is satisfied that there is a need for such housing and that arrangements will be made to reserve it for local people. The nature and extent of local need will be assessed in consultation with the respective Parish Council and the District Council's Housing Department, taking the following factors into account:

- (a) whether the proposed occupier is on or would qualify for the Council housing waiting list;
- (b) whether the proposed occupier is currently resident within the parish and needing separate accommodation;
- (c) place of employment; (e.g. those who provide important local services and need to live closer to the community)
- (d) local connections/family ties with the parish;
- (e) previous periods of residence within the parish.

2.28 In some instances the area within which needs will be considered "local" may consist of more than one parish. This would enable a local need in a parish where a suitable site is not available to be accommodated in a scheme in a neighbouring parish.

2.29 Before granting planning permission for such schemes, the Council will seek a legal agreement with the landowner/developer to restrict occupancy of a development to people meeting the local-needs

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

criteria. Any proposals must be shown to be economically viable, (see paragraph 2.24), and capable of proper management by a housing association or charitable trust to ensure long-term control over occupancy.

- 2.30 Schemes which result in a discounted initial purchase price only will not be considered acceptable. Cross-subsidy on mixed development on sites considered under policy H6 will not be acceptable. However proposals to cross-subsidise between general housing schemes on land allocated for housing and affordable housing on sites nearby which comply with policy H6 may be considered appropriate.
- 2.31 Schemes should be small-scale development reflecting the size and character of the village in which they are proposed. Whilst not wishing to discourage a limited number of housing schemes which will improve the choice of house types and tenure, the District Council also recognises the need to avoid prejudicing its other policies, and will therefore consider such schemes with extreme caution. It is recommended that any proposals are discussed with the Local Planning Authority at an early stage.
- 2.32 The housing provided under policy H6 will be regarded as being additional to that required by the Oxfordshire Structure Plan during the plan period and not part of the allocation.

FULL TEXT OF RURAL EXCEPTION SITE POLICIES

Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011

H8 WITHIN OR IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO VILLAGES, PLANNING PERMISSION MAY BE GRANTED FOR SMALL-SCALE LOW-COST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS TO HELP MEET A SPECIFIC AND IDENTIFIED LOCAL HOUSING NEED THAT CANNOT BE SATISFIED ELSEWHERE, PROVIDED THAT:

- (i) IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS ECONOMICALLY VIABLE IN TERMS OF ITS ABILITY TO MEET THE NEED IDENTIFIED;
- (ii) SECURE ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE TO RESTRICT THE OCCUPANCY OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT TO ENSURE THAT IT CONTINUES TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS IN PERPETUITY;

3.43 PPG3 advises that sites which would not otherwise be released for housing, including very limited development on land in or adjacent to villages in a green belt, may exceptionally be released for affordable housing schemes if the planning authority is satisfied that there is a need for such housing and that arrangements will be made to reserve it for local people in perpetuity. These are known as rural exception sites. The nature and extent of local need will be assessed in consultation with the respective parish council and the District Council's Housing Department. The Council will expect a local housing need survey to be prepared by the parish council. The assessment of housing need will take the following criteria into account:

- (i) whether the proposed occupier is on or would qualify for inclusion on the Council's housing waiting list;
- (ii) whether the proposed occupier is currently resident within the parish and needing separate accommodation;
- (iii) place of employment (e.g. those who provide important local services and need to live closer to the community);
- (iv) local connections/family ties with the parish;
- (v) previous periods of residence within the parish.

3.44 In some instances the area within which needs will be considered "local" may consist of more than one parish. This would enable a local need in a parish where a suitable site is not available to be accommodated in a scheme in a neighbouring parish.

3.45 In order to help prevent the coalescence of villages in the Oxford Green Belt, the Council will expect sites within Green Belt villages to be considered before sites that adjoin those villages. However, in considering sites within villages, development that would lead to a loss

Rural Affordable Housing and Exception Sites

of open space important to the character of those villages will not be acceptable.

- 3.46 Before granting planning permission for a scheme under this policy, the Council will seek a legal agreement with the landowner/developer to restrict occupancy of a development to people meeting the local-needs criteria. Any proposals must be shown to be economically viable and capable of proper management by a housing association or charitable trust to ensure control over occupancy in perpetuity.
- 3.47 Schemes under this policy that result in a discounted initial house purchase price only will not be considered acceptable. Nor will schemes that propose to provide any open market housing. However proposals to cross-subsidise between general housing schemes on land allocated for housing and affordable housing on sites nearby which comply with Policy H8 may be considered appropriate.
- 3.48 While the policy allows exceptions to be made to the Council's strategic policies that restrict rural housing development, it will still be necessary in finding suitable sites to comply with the other policies in the plan, for instance those that seek to protect the countryside and those relating to highway safety. Schemes should be small-scale and reflect the size and character of the village. It is recommended that any proposals are discussed with the Council at an early stage. The housing provided under Policy H8 will be regarded as being additional to that required by the Structure Plan during the plan period and not part of the allocation.

Independent Review of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP)

<p>Author: Andrew Tucker, Strategic Director, West Oxfordshire District Council</p> <p>Tel: (01993) 861721</p> <p>Email: andrew.tucker@westoxon.gov.uk</p>	<p>AGENDA ITEM NO: 10</p>
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OHP administration contact:

Anita Hutchins
 PA to Strategic Director, Vale of White Horse District Council
 Abbey House, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 3JE:
 Email: anita.hutchins@whitehorsedc.gov.uk
 Tel: 01235 540377

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Members of the Partnership of the findings of the Independent Review of the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership (ORHP) carried out by the Leicester Business School.

2. Background

- 1.1 As part of the agreed Work Programme of the Land and Planning Group the Leicester Business School (LBS) were commissioned to undertake a critical friend style Review of the performance of the ORHP. The Review was carried out by Dr Tim Brown and his Team at De Montfort University from February – June 2008, though publication of the final report was delayed owing to the Team Leader experiencing some health problems.
- 2.2 The brief issued for the Review included:-
- An assessment of the effectiveness of the Partnership in delivering objectives and targets;
 - Looking at the processes and procedures associated with the operation of the Partnership and its capacity to overcome the challenges of delivering affordable housing in as cost effective way as possible;
 - Assessing the ability of the Partnership to overcome the particular difficulties of undertaking development of new affordable housing in rural areas;

- Identifying good practice and, most important successes to examine how the principles which these may establish can be consolidated to aid future delivery.

3.3 The research comprised of a desk top study of relevant documents, processes and procedures combined with in-depth interviews with a range of partners and stakeholders. This enabled the LBS Team to compile their report which is attached.

3. Summary of the Review Findings and Recommendations

Key findings and recommendations arising from the Review are summarised below:-

- (i) The innovative nature, quality of output, processes and learning culture of the ORHP were acknowledged by the Review Team as a good basis for moving forward.
- (ii) The original target of 500 new homes between 2004 and 2009 was aspirational and, with the benefit of hindsight, too optimistic. A more realistic target of completions per year should be agreed.
- (iii) More robust and sophisticated monitoring information is required to more effectively manage delivery and ensure value for money through appropriate benchmarking.
- (iv) Alternative ways of delivering affordable housing should be considered – eg use of empty properties/vacant floorspace and provision linked to other investment streams should be explored to ensure sustainability.
- (v) Affordable rural housing should be even more strongly prioritised through the Local Area Agreement.
- (vi) Understanding of the work of the ORHP amongst district council planners is variable and close working relationships need to be developed.
- (vii) The ORHP and the OHP itself should consider how best to ensure continued support for the role of rural housing enablers.
- (viii) Consideration should be given to the setting up of a small dedicated team to ensure that strategies and actions are developed and monitored.
- (ix) An improved data base on land available should be developed combined with a more targeted approach to encourage public and private owners to consider making land available.
- (x) The practice of involving local communities early in the process was found to be excellent and should be continued.

- (xi) Local communities should be made more aware of allocation and lettings issues to aid understanding.
- (xii) The potential of setting up a local delivery vehicle (LDV) to assist in bringing forward sites for affordable housing provision should be explored.

4. Conclusion and Way Forward

- 4.1 Generally the outcome of the review has been positive in endorsing the collaborative approach towards rural affordable housing which has been established through the ORHP. A range of recommendations have been made with which officers are broadly in agreement though some are likely to be of more immediate relevance than others in terms of strengthening the partnership approach. Priorities need to be established in responding to the report's recommendations.
- 4.2 Clearly there is a need to review the target for rural affordable housing and to strengthen the information available to manage delivery and ensure value for money. The profile of the work of the ORHP needs to be raised and the links with landowners/planners strengthened. Innovative approaches should continue to be explored and the rural housing enabling role needs to be reviewed and established on a more sustainable basis. This latter point is particularly pressing as we go into next year's budget making cycle. However other elements of the report e.g. utilisation of empty homes, is likely to be of less significance in Oxfordshire and is not something which should be pursued as a priority. Members may wish to express a view on which recommendations should be actioned as a priority.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that a small working group should be established by the Land and Planning Group, (to include appropriate representation from the Oxfordshire Rural Housing Partnership delivery group) which will consider the recommendations in more depth, and prioritise actions for improvement with associated targets/timescales. Progress will be reported back to Members at the next meeting.

Allocation Scheme

January 2008

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
OX15 4AA

Telephone: 01295 252535
Email: housing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Website: www.cherwell-dc.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

Councils are required by law to have policies and procedures in place for the letting of properties. This is called an “Allocation Scheme”. The Allocation Scheme explains Cherwell District Council’s Allocations Policy and provides a framework for assessing housing need, priority and determining who will be nominated to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) for re-housing.

A number of principles have guided the formation of the Allocation Scheme. Most important, is the need to treat all applicants fairly and to ensure compliance with the legal requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI), as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and in accordance with the Government’s accompanying Code of Guidance on Allocations issued in November 2002.

Amendments to the law are designed to give applicants greater choice, to ensure that reasonable preference is given to applicants in the greatest housing need and to create an Allocation Scheme, which can be easily understood by applicants. As such the main principles behind this proposed Allocation Scheme are to:

- comply with the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Housing Act 2004 and the Code of Guidance on Allocations
- be transparent and easily understood by applicants, staff, elected Members and partner organisations
- help prevent homelessness and support the Council’s homelessness strategy
- widen choice and be more accessible
- reflect local needs and encompass rural sensitivities
- make the most effective use of the housing stock
- respond to the circumstances of vulnerable individuals
- ensure equality of opportunity in accessing the Housing Register
- be easy to administer
- be fair and perceived as being fair, with increased customer satisfaction
- promote mobility
- be open and accountable
- help tackle low demand
- promote sustainable tenancies by ensuring adequate support is available for vulnerable people.

2. General overview

The Allocation Scheme sets out details of who can join the Council’s Housing Register and how priority will be decided between different applicants on that Register.

To summarise: Subject to an applicant fulfilling the eligibility requirements set out later in this document:

- a banding system will be used to order the priority of applicants;

- each applicant will be assessed for housing need and placed in a band appropriate to the severity of their housing need;
- applicants will be able to 'express an interest' for properties they are eligible for. This is known as Choice Based Lettings (CBL);
- applicants with a local connection will be given priority over those without local connections in the same band
- applicants will be considered for housing in date order within the band
- all applicants aged 16 and over will be eligible to be considered for the Housing Register
- the criteria for assessing housing need will be applied equally to all housing applicants
- applicants, who are in the process of being assessed, will not be placed in a band until the application has been fully processed and all relevant documentary proofs have been received.

3. Applying for accommodation

Subject to fulfilling the eligibility requirements set out later in this document anyone aged 16 or over is able to apply to Cherwell District Council for accommodation.

4. Application forms

Providing all relevant information is supplied when the application form is received, we aim to notify applicants of their banding within 20 working days from the date received in the office.

Applicants will be able to request an application form using any of the following methods:

- by telephone
- personal visit to the office
- by post
- by email
- download from our internet site.

Assisted completion of an application form will be available for the house bound and those who request help with the form's completion.

Applicants who have only partially completed their applications or have withheld information that has been reasonably requested will have their application suspended and be advised of this in writing within 20 working days from the date the application or the request for information was made.

5. Information and advice

The Council will provide appropriate advice and information:

- to those who make a housing application;
- on the contents of the Allocations Scheme and the housing options available.

The Council will publish a summary of its Allocation Scheme, which will be available free of charge

to any member of the public who requests it. It will also be available to download from our website.

The full Allocation Scheme will be available for inspection at Bodicote House, Banbury Town Centre office, Kidlington and Bicester. It will also be available to download from the website.

6. Right to Information

All applicants have the right to request information about how their application is likely to be treated under the Allocation Scheme and if and when accommodation is likely to be made available to them. Applicants also have the right, on request, to be informed of any facts about their case, which have been, or are likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation. A fee may be payable for viewing information held on file.

7. Confidentiality

Any information provided as part of the application process will be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with current data protection legislation. The Council's corporate statement on data protection will be printed in full within the housing application form.

8. Acceptance on to the housing register

The Homelessness Act 2002 states that an allocation can only be made to an eligible person and states the circumstances in which someone is ineligible. Since the Housing Register is used as the basis for making allocations, those persons who are ineligible for an allocation will not be allowed to join the Housing Register. These circumstances are covered in the following sections.

Immigration and Habitual Residence

The law states that the following persons are ineligible:-

- a person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 is ineligible unless s/he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State;
- certain persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control but have to be habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (CTA) in order to be eligible.

The above does not apply to persons who are already assured tenants of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council can decide that an applicant is to be treated as ineligible if it is satisfied that:-

- a person or member of the person's household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the person unsuitable to be a tenant; and
- in the circumstances at the time the application is considered the person is unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour.

There is a three stage test before we can use the power to exclude someone from the housing register. The stages are:

- Has the applicant or a member of the household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- Was the unacceptable behaviour enough to entitle the landlord to obtain a possession order?
- At the time of the application, is the tenant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of their

behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household?

Before arriving at a decision a full investigation will take place, reports will be requested and a Senior Officer (Head of Housing Services or Housing Needs Manager) will make the final decision.

Where the Council decides that a person is ineligible to come onto the Housing Register we will inform the applicant in writing of this decision and the reasons for it. Applicants will have the right to request a review of this decision.

An applicant treated as ineligible for the Housing Register can make a fresh application in the following circumstances:-

- the applicant's immigration status has changed, or
- the applicant can demonstrate good behaviour for at least 6 months from the date of the decision, supported by a satisfactory investigation into the cause of the unacceptable behaviour.

9. Reasonable preference criteria

In complying with the Housing Act 1996, as amended, reasonable preference must be given to the following applicants:-

- those who are homeless
- those who are owed a duty to secure or continue temporary accommodation under homelessness legislation i.e. those threatened with homelessness and in priority need, those intentionally homeless and in priority need and those who are not in priority need but who are occupying accommodation secured by the housing authority.
- those occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- those who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to a disability, and;
- those who need to move to a particular locality in the District, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

These priorities are reflected within the bandings. Within these categories, a local authority can give consideration to an applicant's relative priority and take into account the following:-

- any financial resources available to a person to meet their own housing costs (this could be either to purchase or to rent their own home);
- any behaviour of a person or member of that household which affects their suitability to be a tenant;
- any local connection (within the meaning of s199 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) which exists between the person and the District.

10. Applicant requirements

It is necessary to consider the individual requirements and circumstances, which apply to certain groups of applicants to ensure appropriate banding on the Housing Register. These details are set out below.

Registered Social Landlord Tenants

All tenants of RSL properties seeking re-housing will be registered as transfers. As such they will be expected to comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement. The RSL will be requested to confirm that the tenant has complied fully with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

If a term of an applicant's tenancy agreement has been broken, for example non-payment of rent, it will have to be remedied by the tenant before an offer of re-housing is made.

As part of our overall approach to give advice, pursue prevention of homelessness and consider all options, transfer applicants will also be encouraged to register for a mutual exchange.

Persons Under 18 Years

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years old will be assessed for supported accommodation where one or more of the following apply:

- accepted as homeless and in priority need under the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- over the age of 16 where a referral for assistance has been made by Social Services authorities under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989
- a young person who is deemed a relevant or eligible child under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

In each case, the Council will undertake a joint assessment with Social Services of the applicant's housing, care and support needs to ensure that adequate support is available.

Applicants aged 16 and 17 who do not meet the above criteria may be allowed to join the Housing Register, but will not be offered a tenancy without a guarantor.

Arrears of rent or mortgage

In order to receive an offer of accommodation, applicants will normally be expected to have no outstanding rent or mortgage arrears from their last settled accommodation. This applies to council, RSL and private sector tenants as well as owner occupiers.

To streamline the application process, references will be sought when applicants have been placed on the Housing Register. If the references indicate outstanding housing debt, applicants will be encouraged to discuss the situation with the Housing Services Team and their landlord at the earliest opportunity. If an offer of accommodation is to be made the applicant's up-to-date references will be obtained by telephone to ensure there has not been a change of circumstances that affects their application.

If an applicant has arrears their application will be suspended. We will write to them advising them of the decision giving the applicant 21 days to appeal.

The Council reserves the right not to suspend an application in exceptional circumstances.

Note: If accepted as statutorily homeless, applicants will not be assessed separately on the Housing Register in respect of rent/mortgage arrears which caused the applicant to apply for housing in the first place.

11. Local connection with Cherwell

Applicants who have a local connection with the District will be given preference over those without a local connection in the same band. Qualifying local connections are that the applicant must have:

- lived in the District for a continuous period of at least 6 months preceding the date of the offer of accommodation, or;
- permanent employment within the District, or;
- previously lived in the District for a period of at least 5 years, or;
- close relatives living in the District for a period of at least 5 years. Close relatives are defined as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren (including step relatives);

NB. Residence in the area not of a person's own choice, will not count towards any local connection i.e. if it is as a consequence of serving in the armed forces or being detained in prison.

Acceptance as statutorily homeless by Cherwell District Council will satisfy the above local connection criteria and enable the applicant to be banded.

12. Banding

The Council seeks to provide homes firstly for those in the greatest need. Priority, in terms of housing need, is determined by means of a banding policy based upon an applicant's housing and other relevant circumstances.

There will be four bandings:

- urgent
- high
- medium
- low.

If an applicant is awarded urgent band this must be authorised by a Senior Officer.

If an applicant is in the High or Medium band and satisfies two or more criteria in the same band, as detailed in the banding table set out in paragraph **35 on page 53**, they will be moved up to the next band.

All applicants will be advised of banding decisions in writing.

13. Banding reasons

A summary of banding reasons is set out in paragraph **35 on page 53**. Fuller descriptions are set out in the following paragraphs.

Severe harassment – Urgent Band

Applicants who complain they are suffering from harassment of any kind will have their circumstances fully investigated. As appropriate reports will be requested from:

- the police
- Social Services
- their landlord

Health, welfare or disability

Priority will only be given where it can be demonstrated that the condition or location of the applicant's accommodation is having a direct impact and that re-housing will improve the situation.

Where applicants indicate medical grounds for re-housing, an assessment will be carried out to determine the level of priority and the affect of the applicant's current housing upon their health. The medical assessment will be carried out by the Council's appointed Medical Advisor who will recommend the priority band of the applicant. Medical assessments include consideration of physical health, mental illness, learning difficulties and emotional distress. The current housing environment and its impact are also crucial to the assessment. It may be possible that following a medical assessment no medical priority is awarded.

Domestic violence – Urgent Band

Applicants who suffer domestic violence will have their circumstances fully investigated. If the outcome of the investigations is that the applicant has suffered domestic violence and in cases where a homeless application is not appropriate then consideration may be given to place them in the Urgent Band. Applicants who make a housing application from the local refuge will be assumed to have suffered such violence but still may be subject to further investigation. Reports will be requested from:

- the police
- Social Services
- Probation and other agencies as appropriate.

Exceptional circumstances – Urgent Band

In exceptional circumstances, if an applicant's circumstances are not adequately reflected by the bandings listed, a Senior Officer has the authority to determine the banding of the applicant according to their housing need.

Move on from supported accommodation – Urgent Band

Cherwell District Council, in partnership with a number of RSLs and other statutory and voluntary agencies, is committed to enabling vulnerable people to access supported housing projects according to their needs. We are also committed to enable such applicants to move out of these schemes when assessed as appropriate into independent accommodation through the allocation of suitable permanent social housing.

The Allocation Scheme seeks to provide a route for those vulnerable applicants to independent living via supported accommodation. For those in supported accommodation we will:

- treat any homeless duty as discharged when someone is placed in supported accommodation
- require a comprehensive report from the support worker and agency involved about the applicant's suitability to move on from their existing accommodation
- when deemed ready for 'move on' the applicant may be placed in the Urgent Band and will be made one reasonable offer.

If applicants leave supported accommodation without the backing of their support worker, their housing needs will be re-assessed and banded appropriately.

Non succession cases where inappropriately housed but have had long period of residency – Urgent Band

Such applicants will normally be brought to our attention by their RSL landlord. They may have lived in the property for at least 12 months but do not have a right to take over the tenancy. For example:

- a son or daughter left in a 3 bed room house following the death of their parents and they have no right to succeed to the tenancy because one succession has already occurred.

Such applicants will be placed in the urgent band subject to appropriate supporting paperwork.

Succession where move to alternative accommodation required – Urgent Band

From time to time someone is left in occupation of RSL property who is entitled to succeed to the tenancy but the property is not appropriate to the applicant's needs. For example a spouse left in occupation of a property adapted for the disabled but the spouse is not disabled. If the RSL request re-housing the applicant will be placed in Urgent Band as long as supporting paperwork is provided.

Management grounds - Urgent Band

Such grounds will apply to applicants who are tenants of the Council or RSLs. Circumstances may arise where a resident's need to move is immediate and remaining in the current home is impossible, unsafe or life threatening. This may generally arise from serious medical conditions or where a tenant is suffering violence or threats of violence. An applicant may be offered a transfer on grounds that are not covered within the Allocation Scheme. We would require a report to be supplied by the Council or RSL along with comprehensive supporting evidence.

Prohibition or demolition order – Urgent Band

If a statutory notice such as a prohibition or demolition order has been served on an applicant then subject to thorough investigation of their circumstances Urgent Band will be awarded.

Statutory overcrowding – Urgent Band

The rules on statutory overcrowding are under review by the Government. However, if it appears that an applicant is living in accommodation that may be statutorily overcrowded we will carry out a full investigation and if found to be so the applicant will be placed in the Urgent Band. We will follow Government guidelines and legislation to work out whether an applicant is living in statutorily overcrowded conditions or not.

Overcrowding – High Band

Each application will be assessed for overcrowding. The assessment will be based on factors such as:

- number of people on the application
- number of rooms available in the property and their best use
- age and sex of everyone on the application
- the relationship of each person to the other.

Under-occupation by 2 bedrooms – Urgent Band

So that larger accommodation can be made available for families on the Housing Register RSL tenants who under-occupy their properties by 2 bedrooms and are willing to move to a dwelling with 2 fewer bedrooms than they already occupy will be given Urgent Band.

Under-occupation by 1 bedroom – High Band

So that larger accommodation can be made available for families on the Housing Register RSL tenants who under-occupy their properties by 1 bedroom and are willing to move to a dwelling with 1 less bedroom than they already occupy will be given High Band.

Homelessness

The Homeless Code of Guidance recommends that where availability of suitable housing allows, secure settled (rather than temporary) accommodation is used to bring the main homeless duty to an end. For example by:

- offering accommodation under our allocation scheme, or;
- a qualifying offer of an assured short-hold tenancy from a private landlord

For all new homeless applicants threatened with homelessness every effort will be made to prevent homelessness by explaining and advising on all their housing options. Negotiations will also take place to see if they can stay in their present accommodation pending the outcome of investigations. Only if all avenues have been exhausted will the use of temporary accommodation be used.

Emergency homeless – Very occasionally circumstances will arise where an applicant's homelessness, combined with other factors such as domestic violence, harassment or vulnerability will warrant placement in the Urgent Band with a view to providing secure settled accommodation as quickly as possible. These cases will be referred to the Council's exception policy.

Homeless in priority need and duty accepted - If possible, and in accordance with the Code of Guidance, when a decision is made to accept a homeless duty, attempts will be made to secure an RSL tenancy so we can discharge our homeless duty or to arrange for a qualifying offer to be made thus avoiding the use of temporary accommodation. Where duty has been accepted the applicant will be placed in the High Band.

Homeless but not in priority need will be placed into the Medium Band. This may include those who indicate they have 'no fixed abode' and are 'sofa surfing'.

Homeless intentionally will be placed into the Low Band for the first 12 months from the date of decision. At the end of 12 months their housing circumstances will be re-assessed and if appropriate they will be awarded different banding.

Split families – High Band

From time to time applicants will notify us that they have to live in separate accommodation. Where this is known to be the case and following full investigation the application will be given High Band. To establish the facts home visits will be made. Reports will be requested from voluntary or statutory agencies if needed. Examples of split families include:

- Applicants with children where members of the household live at different addresses.
- Established couple who have lived together but for some reason can no longer live together.

Couples who have never lived together will be assessed at the accommodation that gives the best band for the applicant.

Lacking facilities – High Band

For the purposes of banding, lacking facilities is taken to mean that the applicant is lacking one or more of the following:

- inside WC
- bathroom or shower facilities
- kitchen facilities
- means of heating.

Insecure tenancies – High Band

An Insecure Tenancy will arise where a private sector landlord has commenced court possession proceedings against an applicant and a possession order (suspended or otherwise) has been granted. Such applicants will be placed in the High Band.

Sharing facilities – Medium Band

For the purposes of banding, sharing facilities is taken to mean that the applicant is sharing one or more of the following with those who are not on their housing application:-

- sharing kitchen, or;
- bathroom, or;
- wc.

Move to prevent hardship – Medium Band

Consideration will be given to those who need to move to a particular area in the District where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to the applicant or others. Consideration will be given to those who:

- give or receive care or support that is substantial and ongoing
- take up employment, education or training opportunity that is not available elsewhere and do not live within reasonable commuting distance of Cherwell.

Families in flats – Medium Band

Families in flats who are otherwise adequately housed will be awarded medium band.

Adequately housed – Low Band

A number of applicants may apply to come onto the Housing Register, who are already adequately housed. If their accommodation is suitable to their needs the applicant will be placed in the low band.

Adequate financial resources – Low Band

Some applicants will have sufficient financial resources to sort out their own housing requirements. This may be by renting in the private sector, trading down from a large property to a smaller property in the owner-occupied sector, purchasing shared ownership and so on. Such applicants will be placed in the Low Band.

Nil priority – Low band

A few applicants will apply for housing who do not fall into any of the reasonable priority categories laid down in legislation.

Owner occupiers and owners of property

Applicants, who own, or have a financial interest in residential accommodation (either freehold,

under mortgage, shared ownership or leasehold) in the UK, Europe or worldwide can apply to be included on the Housing Register. However, they will automatically be placed in the Low Band. If an assessment has to be made, for example on medical grounds, consideration will be given to the following:

- whether the applicant can sell their current home;
- the expected equity after the proposed sale of the property;
- the applicant's current financial circumstances and commitments;
- whether the applicant will be eligible for a mortgage;
- the supply of private rented accommodation suitable for the applicant's specific needs;
- whether the applicant's housing need can be met in the private sector, taking into consideration the cost of housing in and outside the District.

If applicants demonstrate a need for alternative accommodation and they have "insufficient resources" to secure that alternative accommodation they will be placed in the band appropriate to their housing need. If information is not supplied about resources applicants will be placed in the Low Band. If their circumstances change and the applicant is placed into a higher band then the applicant must supply information about their resources, otherwise their application may be suspended. It should be noted that a number of RSLs operating in Cherwell have charitable status and therefore seek to offer housing to those who have a low income or little capital. A need for alternative accommodation might include:-

- medical conditions;
- disability
- frailty
- serious disrepair
- possession action
- acute financial hardship.

14. Tied accommodation – Urgent Band

Applicants who live in tied accommodation and have to leave it through retirement, death of spouse, or ill health for example will be placed in the Urgent Band subject to a comprehensive report on their circumstances. Examples of applicants from tied accommodation include:

- school caretakers
- ministers of religion
- wardens in sheltered schemes
- agricultural workers
- armed forces personnel.

Agricultural workers

The Council will prioritise displaced agricultural workers for accommodation according to the

requirements of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976. In reaching a decision on whether an applicant is to be prioritised for housing on these grounds, the Council will need to be satisfied that:-

- the dwelling from which the agricultural worker is being displaced is needed to accommodate another agricultural worker;
- the farmer cannot provide suitable alternative accommodation for the displaced worker;
- the displaced worker needs re-housing in the interests of efficient agriculture.

The Council will take advice from the Agricultural Dwelling-House Advisory Committee (ADHAC) in all these respects.

Armed forces personnel

Armed Forces applicants with a local connection as defined in section 6 will be considered for housing once they can officially confirm a discharge date. An offer of accommodation will only be made within the **6 months** prior to their discharge date.

15. Key workers – Low Band

Government guidelines for definition of Key Workers have been laid down. These guidelines and Government initiatives for Key Workers may be extended in the future and details will be incorporated into the Allocation Scheme as and when this happens. The list set out below gives current examples of Key Workers and is not necessarily exhaustive.

- Qualified teachers
- Children's social workers
- Qualified nursery nurses in LEA nursery schools
- Local authority employed clinical staff
- Connexions Personal Advisors
- All clinical staff employed by the NHS except doctors and dentists
- Police officers and community support officers
- Prison officers and related grades
- Probation officers

Key Workers like other applicants may be living in circumstances of housing need such as overcrowded conditions, or lacking facilities. If so, their housing needs will be assessed and they will be placed in the appropriate band taking into account financial resources. Otherwise an assessment as Key Worker only will result in them being placed in the Low Band. In either set of circumstances, we will advise such applicants about their housing options which will include:

- Open Market HomeBuy
- New Build HomeBuy - shared-ownership of newly built properties
- 'Intermediate renting' where the rent is set at a level between that charged by social and private landlords
- Registration with the Zone Agent

16. Annual review of applications

In order to keep the Housing Register up to date all applications will be subject to an annual review in the month of the anniversary of their date of application. The review is intended to ensure the applicant still wishes to be considered for accommodation and that the most up to date information about their housing circumstances is held.

Applicants who fail to respond to either the review or reminder letter will have their application closed. If the applicant applies to be re-instated within the next 12 months we will agree to do so provided they have not otherwise become ineligible for acceptance onto the Housing Register in accordance with paragraph 8.

17. Removing applicants from the housing register

Applicants will be removed from the Housing Register if the applicant:

- is ineligible for housing
- requests their removal in writing
- fails to renew their application at the annual review
- fails to provide information requested to assess their application
- fails to respond to requests for information where the Council has stated that failure to respond will result in an assumption that the applicant no longer wishes to be on the Housing Register.

Applicants who are either ineligible or fail to provide information have a right to request a review of the decision to remove their name from the Housing Register. A request for a review must be made within 21 days from the date of the applicant being notified of the Council's decision.

18. Change of circumstances

Applicants must notify the Council of a change of circumstances, either by completing a new application form or a change of circumstances form. The Council will reassess their application based on the new circumstances. During the re-assessment the application will be suspended. Whilst the change of circumstances may affect the applicant's banding their date of application will not be affected.

The applicant's signature is normally required to verify any change in circumstance. When an applicant notifies us of a change of circumstance, the applicant must either complete and sign a 'change of circumstances form' or have a signed letter placed on file. Where the change of circumstances involves a move to a new address, the applicant will be required to complete a new application form.

N.B Where it is considered that an applicant has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, such as given up accommodation it was reasonable to expect them to occupy, their banding will be assessed as at their previous accommodation for a period of 12 months. The applicant will have a right to request a review of this decision.

19. Statement on choice

Cherwell District Council is fully committed to the principle of enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing accommodation in the social housing sector. We will seek to maximise customer choice whilst ensuring that those in the greatest housing need remain a priority for re-housing.

The Allocation Scheme intends to increase customer choice. It will:

- allow a broader range of applicants to be considered for accommodation
- give applicants an unlimited choice of areas within the District
- allow applicants to consider a broader range of properties
- seek to give all household types a more even chance of accessing accommodation
- ensure that all applicants for housing have the opportunity of 3 reasonable offers of accommodation. However, if an applicant in the Urgent Band refuses one reasonable offer of accommodation they will be re-assessed and placed into the appropriate band.
- allow eligible applicants to express an interest in properties within CBL.

The Government's 5 year housing plan, "Sustainable Communities - Homes for All" sets out the Government's agenda for improving choice for people who need help with their housing by:

- giving choice to those who need help about where they want to live
- finding options that are best for them, by giving information on opportunities for shared ownership, low cost home ownership, and social rented housing
- ending the situation in which social tenants have to accept the accommodation that is allocated to them on a "take it or leave it" basis
- encouraging choice-based lettings systems to operate sub-regionally or regionally
- encouraging the extension of choice-based lettings to cover low cost home ownership options and properties for rent from private landlords, as well as social housing.

20. Choice Based Lettings

As part of expanding choice for applicants we will introduce Choice Based Lettings at Cherwell District Council by January 2008.

- All empty properties will be advertised during a fortnightly cycle
- Applicants will express an interest in properties they are eligible for: – they will be able to do so for up to three properties in any advertising cycle.
- They will be able to express an interest on the internet, via a dedicated telephone line, by text, in person by calling at the office, or by proxy when the applicant gives permission to a friend, relative, support worker etc to express an interest on their behalf.
- When the advertising cycle is complete shortlists are created from those who have expressed an interest and sorted into priority order as defined in the Allocation Scheme.
- The applicant (normally at top of the list) is selected and a provisional offer made
- Unsuccessful applicants can find out why they were unsuccessful.

21. Choice of area

Applicants can choose as many areas as they wish from a list covering the whole of the District. There is no limit to the number of areas selected and where appropriate applicants can limit their choice to a specific street or location. However, CBL allows applicants to express an interest for any property they are eligible for at Cherwell District Council and in the sub-region this aspect of

choice is now not as important. We will still request the information as an aid to establish housing needs within the area.

22. Type and size of property offered

The Government's desire is to provide as much choice as possible to applicants on the Housing Register. Due to the limited amount of accommodation which becomes available it is necessary for the Council to ensure that offers are made of the size and type most appropriate to the applicant's needs and which make the most efficient use of the housing stock, whilst at the same time giving priority to those in the most need.

In the case of households (of any age) where there is a proven need for level access accommodation, the type and size of property offered could include a one or two- bedroom bungalow, ground floor flat or bed-sitter.

As a general rule, only applicants with a proven support need will be considered for sheltered accommodation. They will also need to meet the eligibility criteria specified by the provider and Supporting People.

Properties designed or adapted to wheelchair standard or with special facilities, will only be offered to applicants where a member of the household needs these facilities. However, where there are no such applicants on the Housing Register, the Council reserves the right to allocate such properties to applicants without any special need.

Priority for family housing is given to those households where all the family members will use the accommodation as their main residence. As such those with access to children for given periods such as weekends and/or school holidays will normally be considered for the size of accommodation to meet their immediate needs plus one additional bedroom only.

If someone in the household is expecting a child, the number of rooms will be calculated as if the child had been already born.

Very occasionally the size of an applicant's family means there isn't a property large enough to make the most suitable offer. In such instances the applicant will be asked if they will consider a smaller property where occupation will not contravene statutory overcrowding legislation.

The table provided at paragraph **36 on page 54** provides a guide to match property types and sizes to Cherwell District Council applicants for Cherwell properties. It is anticipated that this will provide sufficient flexibility to give reasonable choice to applicants and at the same time make best use of property stock. The choice of size and type of property may be constrained by the RSLs view of such matters. Where different viewpoints are expressed it will be essential to arrive at a consensus.

23. Rural Lettings Schemes

The Council is keen to take account of factors which would contribute to sustaining rural communities whilst ensuring that the Council continues to give due weight to the reasonable preference categories required by legislation.

To enable this, the Council will set a target for the proportion of lettings in villages to be let to applicants with a local connection with the village where the letting occurs.

On the initial letting of properties on new social housing developments which are not rural exception sites, a target of 50% of all lettings will be to applicants who have a local connection with the village and have been assessed as having at least a medium level of housing need. If there is no-one in the Medium Band or higher applicants who qualify from the Low Band will be considered.

On the re-letting of existing social housing properties in the villages at least one in three will be to

applicants who have a local connection and have been assessed as having at least a medium level of housing need.

Where applicants have a strong connection with a particular village, the Council will ask them to detail this on their application. This will enable them to be actively considered for any housing development, which takes place in areas where they hold such a connection, and to be considered under any established local letting policy.

Local connection with a specific village will be defined as:-

- living in the village for at least the previous five years; or
- having permanent employment in the village; or
- having at least ten years previous residence in the village if not currently residing there; or
- applicants over 60 or with a disability requiring support on medical grounds from relatives currently living in that village;
- having close relatives living in the village for a period of at least five years. Close relatives are defined as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren (including step relatives).

The above does not apply to rural exception sites where properties are let to local people only in accordance with the relevant planning agreement and in consultation with the specific Parish Council and Registered Social Landlord. These schemes fall outside the Council's Allocation Scheme and every endeavour is made to nominate those with a local connection.

24. Additional criteria for exception site properties

When affordable housing is built on rural exception sites, or planning obligations are attached to other affordable housing developments, there may be restrictions on the occupancy of these homes. These restrictions are intended to ensure that applicants with a strong local connection have first priority for nomination to the properties.

This means that they must meet the normal eligibility criteria for joining the Housing Register as well as having a strong local connection with the village where the homes with restrictions apply.

The same criteria will be used to define local connection as for Rural Lettings Schemes.

If there are insufficient applicants meeting these criteria, applicants meeting the local connection criteria for the immediately neighbouring villages will be considered. In this case, applicants whose local connection is closer to the new properties may be given precedence over those who are more distant.

If there are insufficient applicants meeting these criteria, applicants may be considered whose local connection is with any village in the District.

25. Local lettings plan

Housing Associations may, in exceptional circumstances, agree local lettings policies with the Council. Such policies should be for a defined period and for a defined and valid reason. All applicants who wish to be nominated for homes in the estate or area concerned must be advised of the local lettings policy.

Local letting plans may be used to address hard to let homes, to address social problems or to promote balanced and sustainable communities. Local lettings policies should only be applied after consultation with relevant stakeholders (for example, parish or town councils, the police, social services and other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies and local residents in the area of the proposed local lettings policy).

There must be evidence that a local lettings policy is needed, that its use is supported by the local community and that it is likely to address the problems identified. Local lettings policies should be reviewed regularly and should be relinquished as soon as the reason for them no longer applies.

26. Offers

The housing register is divided into general needs, transfers and homeless applicants.

The targets set out below will be used as a guideline for allocation purposes.

The table is a guide and will depend on the type of property that becomes available and its location. Therefore, the Head of Housing Services taking into account any existing nomination arrangements with our partner RSLs, will use delegated powers to alter the targets to respond to perceived needs and demands. These targets will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Transfers	30%
General needs	35%
Homeless	35%

When a local vacancy arises in the housing stock of one of the partners to the Housing Register the property will be identified with one of the categories above in order to meet the targets outlined. An offer will then be made to the applicant in the highest priority banding who has been waiting the longest and who is eligible for that property type. Where all things are equal an applicant with a local connection will be given priority over someone who does not have a local connection. This will constitute a reasonable offer.

Consideration for an allocation will therefore be given first to those in the Urgent Band in date order. If a suitable applicant is not found then the same process will be carried through the High, Medium, and Low Bands.

An allocation will not be made to the highest priority applicant if, in the opinion of the Council or the landlord of that property, such an allocation is inappropriate.

All applicants will normally receive up to three reasonable offers of accommodation. If an applicant refuses three reasonable offers of accommodation, their application may be deferred from the Housing Register for a period of twelve months. If it is determined that any offer made was unreasonable it will not count as a refusal against the applicant.

An applicant in the Urgent Band who refuses one reasonable offer will be re-assessed and placed in the most appropriate band. If the applicant is homeless and in the Urgent Band the Council will treat its homeless duty as discharged, re-assess their application and place them in the appropriate band.

27. The right to information

All applicants who apply for accommodation with the Council have the right to:-

- the availability of free advice and information
- request a summary of the Allocations Scheme
- free assistance in making applications
- examine the full Allocations Scheme

- request information that will enable them to assess how their application is to be treated
- request information, which will enable them to assess whether appropriate accommodation is likely to be made available, and if, so, when
- have information about their application kept confidential from any other member of the public.

28. Information about decisions

Applicants have the right to:-

- be notified in writing if it is decided that an applicant is ineligible because of the applicant's immigration status;
- be notified in writing if it is decided that an applicant is ineligible because of the applicant's unacceptable behaviour;
- be notified in writing of any decision not to give an applicant any preference under the policy because of unacceptable behaviour;
- the notification must give clear grounds for the decision, which must be based firmly on the relevant facts of the application;
- an applicant also has the right to request the Council to inform them of any decision about the facts of their case which has been taken into account in considering whether to allocate accommodation and to request a review of such a decision.

29. Review procedure

If an applicant considers their application has been incorrectly evaluated, or that an offer of housing was not reasonable, they may ask for a review.

A request for review must be made in writing within 21 days of the applicant being notified of the Council's decision. A longer period may be allowed if appropriate.

- When conducting the review, the Council will consider any representations, written or otherwise, made by the applicant or on the applicant's behalf and carry out the review on the basis of the known facts at the date of the review.
- If further information is required, the review period within which the decision should be made may be extended by agreement.
- A decision on a review must be made by someone not involved in the original decision and, if made by an officer, by someone who is senior to the person who took the original decision. This will normally be the Housing Needs Manager.
- If the applicant is still dissatisfied, a report will be prepared for consideration by the Head of Housing Services or Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy
- In the event of an applicant still remaining aggrieved, the next step to be considered is a complaint to the Chief Executive or to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- At each stage of the review procedure, the applicant must be advised in writing of the decision within 21 days and of any further avenues of appeal.
- Where it is decided to confirm the original decision on any issue against the interests of the applicant, the authority must also give its reasons.

- Finally if the applicant is still not satisfied with the outcome, the only course of action still open to the applicant is to seek a judicial review.

30. Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure that the Allocation Scheme fully meets the aims and objectives outlined in the Introduction, the Council intends to establish a system for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy. This will include the establishment of a number of performance indicators.

The outcomes of this monitoring and evaluation process will form the basis of any subsequent recommendations for policy review.

31. Councillor reports

Reports will be regularly submitted to the Housing Portfolio Holder giving an analysis of the Housing Register with relevant statistical information.

32. Policy review

Elected Members are responsible for determining the Allocation Scheme and for approving any changes recommended as part of a policy review. The Council is required to consult widely before adopting an Allocation Scheme for housing applicants or altering the existing policy to reflect a major policy change. This includes sending a copy of the proposed policy and or amendments to every RSL with whom the Council has a nominations agreement. A reasonable period will be allowed to ensure that those consulted have an opportunity to comment on the proposals. The Council will notify all applicants, within a reasonable period of time, of any significant change in the Allocation Scheme.

33. Equalities policy

Cherwell District Council operates an equality policy in housing and will abide by the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

This aims to ensure that no one is treated unfairly on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or age. The Council will treat everyone equally when considering him or her for housing.

If an applicant feels they have not been treated fairly or feels they have been discriminated against, they should contact Head of Housing Services, stating the grounds for their complaint.

34. Offences

It is an offence for anyone making an application to the Council to:-

- knowingly or recklessly give false information to the Council; or
- knowingly withhold information which the Council has reasonably required him/her to give in connection with the exercise of its function under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Housing Act 2004.

If the Council discovers an applicant has given false information or deliberately withheld required information we will consider legal action. A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (£5000).

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by Section 146 of the 1996 Act) enables a landlord to seek possession of a tenancy which it has granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

35. Cherwell District Council banding reasons

The banding reasons combined with the type of applicant determine the band of each applicant. If an applicant is assessed for the Urgent Band it must be approved by a Senior Officer.

Band	Housing	Transfer	Homeless
Urgent	Severe harassment Severe health Severe disability Domestic violence Exceptional circumstances Prohibition order Approved move on from supported housing Tied Accommodation including agricultural worker and Armed forces with discharge date Statutory overcrowding Non succession cases where inappropriately housed but have had long period of residency.	Severe harassment Severe health Severe disability Domestic violence Exceptional circumstances Statutory overcrowding Management grounds Under occupation by 2 bedrooms Succession where move to alternative accommodation required	Emergency homeless
High	Considerable health Considerable disability Split families Lacking facilities Insecure tenancy Overcrowding	Considerable health Considerable disability Overcrowding Under occupation by 1 bedroom	Homeless in priority need and not homeless intentionally
Medium	Moderate health Moderate disability Sharing facilities Families in flats Moving to prevent hardship including financial.	Moderate health Moderate disability Families in flats Moving to prevent hardship including financial.	Homeless but not in priority need
Low	Key Workers Adequately housed Sufficient financial resources to secure alternative or more appropriate accommodation Nil priority	Adequately housed Nil priority	Homeless Intentionally; review after 12 months

36. Cherwell District Council bedroom need

The table sets out the types of property applicants can apply for based on their family size.

Type and size of property	Household size
Bed-sit	Single person
1 bed flat	Single person or couple
2 bedroom flat	Single person, couple or household with up to 2 children
1 bedroom bungalow	Single person or couple
2 bedroom bungalow	Single person, couple or household with up to 2 children
2 bedroom maisonette	Single person, couple or household with up to 2 children.
3 bedroom maisonette	Household with up to 4 children.
2 bedroom house	Household with up to 2 children.
3 bedroom house	Household with up to 4 children
4 bedroom house	Household with 4 or more children
Sheltered studio	Single person
Sheltered 1 bed flat	Single person or couple
Sheltered 2 bed flat	Single person or couple
Sheltered 1 bed bungalow	Single person or couple
Sheltered 2 bed bungalow	Single person or couple

Range of policies to be considered in housing proposals (National and Local)

- Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (where appropriate)
- Protection of the countryside- landscape impact
- Highway safety-including visibility at junctions and alignment/width of access roads
- Protection of character and amenity of Conservation Areas (specific duty of the Council under the planning acts), and historic landscapes, parks and gardens
- Protection of the setting of listed buildings (further duty)
- Relationship to existing dwellings- protecting residential amenity
- Prevention of development in areas liable to flooding/ and ensuring no downstream effects from development i.e. flooding of others
- Consideration of archaeological impact
- Ecological impact- loss of trees and/or effect upon habitats
- Design/materials
- Sustainability-availability of public transport and other services
- Contaminated land issues
- Protection of public open spaces
- Protection of important trees and hedgerows
- Prevention of coalescence of settlements
- Respecting historic settlement patterns-preserving loose-knit settlement character or important undeveloped gaps

Executive

Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan

11 May 2009

Report of Head of Urban and Rural Services

Purpose of Report

To explain key changes in biodiversity legislation, policy and issues since the publication of the Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan 2005-2010 (BAP). To consider the production of a revised and updated Cherwell BAP.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Note the key changes in biodiversity legislation, policy and issues since the publication of the current Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan.
- (2) Approve the production of a revised and updated Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan which works towards a rich and diverse local natural where wildlife is conserved and the benefits of nature are available to everyone.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Biodiversity is the variety of life, including all plants, animals and their habitats. A healthy and stable natural environment is important to economic prosperity and the district's desirability as a place to live, work and visit. The Cherwell District covers almost 59,000 hectares of some of the most beautiful areas of Oxfordshire, with the Cherwell and Ray valleys being of particular interest from a biodiversity point of view.
- 1.2 The current Cherwell BAP covers the period 2005-2010 and identifies a set of actions needed to protect and enhance habitats and species that are particularly important in the district. As Cherwell District Council owns and manages less than 5% of the district, the funding of biodiversity partner organisations that can directly influence management of priority habitats and species has been key to the delivery of the BAP.

- 1.3 A revised and updated BAP for Cherwell is required to continue the focus of attention and resources on important habitats and species. It is also necessary because of new government requirements for local authorities with regard to biodiversity; and rapidly evolving issues such as climate change and the need to plan and build sustainably.

Proposals

- 1.4 The overall vision of a revised and updated BAP would be to work towards a rich and diverse natural environment, where wildlife is conserved and the benefits of nature are available to everyone.
- 1.5 The two main aims of a revised and updated BAP would be:
- To identify the actions needed to protect and enhance habitats and species that are most under threat and of greatest importance to biodiversity in Cherwell;
 - To integrate biodiversity into Council services in accordance with the requirements of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and other relevant legislation and policy.

Conclusion

- 1.6 The importance of protecting and improving Cherwell's natural environment is recognised in the Council's third strategic priority (a cleaner, greener Cherwell), under which there is a target "to achieve a measurable improvement in biodiversity". This is also recognised under several themes of the Cherwell Community Plan and both the Environmental and Rural Strategies.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 Cherwell Community Plan and Relevant Strategies

2.1.1 The current Community Plan includes the following themes, aims and actions relating to biodiversity:

- Theme 6 – Protect and enhance the local environment
Aim – Conserve and enhance the rural environment
Key Action – Support local projects that protect and enhance the interests of biodiversity and the character of the Cherwell countryside and raise awareness of these important issues
- Theme 8 – Rural perspective
Aim – Preserve the environmental character of Cherwell’s rural areas
Key Action – Develop and promote further nature conservation and biodiversity initiatives especially where public access and/or improved ecological understanding is achieved
- Theme 2 – Improve Health – improve mental health and well being.
Protecting and restoring the natural environment and providing easy access to it has clear benefits for the well being of the whole community.

2.1.2 The Cherwell Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate, published in 2008, includes actions relating to financial support for key biodiversity partnership organisations; and the integration of biodiversity into all environmental services in accordance with the NERC Act 2006.

2.1.3 The Cherwell Rural Strategy 2009-2014 includes aims under Theme E, Objective 13 (Protect and Enhance Biodiversity and the Natural Environment). These include working with biodiversity partner organisations to deliver the Cherwell BAP; supporting farmers, landowners and local communities to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Cherwell countryside; and supporting projects that reduce or mitigate the effects of climate change.

2.2 Partner Organisations and Key Achievements 2005 - 2009

2.2.1 The 2005-2010 BAP recognised that CDC resources for biodiversity were likely to remain limited, so delivery was focused through a small number of selected partner organisations, funded to deliver biodiversity action throughout the District. These organisations have been awarded annual grants in accordance with service level/funding agreements for the duration of the current BAP. The partner organisations and some of their key achievements are set out below:

- **Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF)**
Development and co-ordination of the Conservation Target Area Project. Conservation Target Areas are priority areas for conservation action which have been identified and mapped. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme and landfill tax grants are used as the funding mechanisms to deliver on the ground conservation work.

Provision of advice, support and training opportunities to local environment groups and Parish Councils.

- **Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)**
Local Authorities are key users of TVERC's data, particularly Planning Departments. Within the current Cherwell BAP, TVERC is charged with providing accessible understandable information to aid the planning constraints checking process and the targeting of conservation work. Regular species, site and habitat data provision to Council staff is made on an on-going and regular basis and training has been provided. TVERC is also playing a significant role in helping the Planning Policy Officers with the provision of biodiversity information for the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- **Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)**
(which hosts the Local Wildlife Sites Project)
Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) are the most important areas for wildlife outside of SSSIs. They include ancient woodland, wetlands, chalk and limestone grassland, hay meadows and pastures. There are 72 sites in Cherwell District and 25 proposed extensions or new sites. A large proportion of these sites are in private ownership. Local authorities are now required to report against the proportion of local sites in positive conservation management under National Indicator 197. The LWS project has all the information and expertise which is required to report back in accordance with this indicator. This will also provide the monitoring needed to report against the target to "achieve a measurable improvement in biodiversity" identified in the Corporate Plan.
- **Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)**
During 2007/08, FWAG carried out 13 CDC funded farm visits in the District giving advice on a total of 2,251 hectares of agricultural land. These advisory visits were split 50/50 between Conservation Target Areas and the wider countryside. Advice was given on Entry Level and Higher Level Environmental Stewardship as well as specific advice on BAP habitats and species including species-rich grassland management, farmland birds, breeding waders, hedgerow management, pond design and resource protection.
- **RSPB** (for the Otmoor Reserve and the Lapwing Landscapes Project)
The ongoing restoration work on the Otmoor Reserve is significantly increasing the amount of wet grassland, grazing marsh and reedbed in the District, all of which are priority habitats within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The main aim of this work is to support breeding wading birds and wintering waterfowl including lapwings and redshanks. The visitor route and bird hide on the Reserve are open all year round and provide opportunities for informal recreation and public enjoyment of the wildlife and landscape of Otmoor. Family events and school visits are held on a regular basis and 10 volunteers from the local community are trained each year to undertake habitat and species surveys. Lapwing Landscapes, a wetland restoration, research and monitoring programme, aims to double the breeding wader population of the Upper Thames Tributaries (UTT) area within 10 years.

- **Oxfordshire Woodland Project (OWP)**
OWP's main role is providing management advice to owners and managers of small, vulnerable woodlands and promote conservation, amenity and sustainable production benefits. It also plays an advisory role with regard to community woodlands and encourages the participation of local people in the management of local woodland. Two small copses in the District are now being successfully managed by community groups as a result of advice received from OWP, one of which is now being visited by children as part of the Forest Schools programme. It also continues to advise the community groups that manage Daeda's Wood in Deddington and Bowler's Copse in Wendlebury and has been working recently with Bicester Green Gym.
- **Warriner School Farm Trust**
The Farm employs a full time Education Coordinator who is available to show visiting groups round the farm and visit schools and interested groups. It is involved in helping to support the work of the Council's Young Persons' Recreation Development Officer by providing a farm based course during the summer vacation under the Positive Activities for Young People banner. It is also part of the 'Oxfordshire Kids on Farms' scheme, which contributes to the broader aims of the Cherwell Rural Strategy.. The Farm is managed in a sustainable manner and strives to improve the biodiversity within its boundaries. Much of the land is farmed organically and is also entered into Environmental Stewardship.

2.2.2 Other key biodiversity achievements since 2005 include:

- Appointment of a part time Council Ecology Officer providing expert advice to inform development control and planning policy (three year post funded by Planning Development Grant)
- Work with County Council ecology staff and BBOWT towards the production of a guidance document on standards for biodiversity within the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- Biodiversity and Planning Training Seminar held in October 2007 to update members, planners and landscape staff with regard to the NERC Act and the Conservation Target Area Project. Cherwell Countryside Forum held in February 2008 to provide similar information for Parish Councils and local groups.
- Improving management of Council owned/managed biodiversity sites as a result of a commissioned TVERC report (2008) – Broadfield Road, Yarnton; The Bretch (Giants Cave); Trow Pool near Bucknell; Wildmere Wood, Banbury; Kirtlington Quarry, Enslow Marsh Sedgebed.
- Enhancement of Council facilities – swift and bat boxes installed in the new Spiceball Sports Centre
- Swifts Conservation Project – the Council and the Kirtlington Wildlife and Conservation Society are working together to encourage local recording of swift nesting sites in the Cherwell District so that they are known when planning applications are made. Swifts are a local character species in the current Cherwell BAP.

- Statutory designation of Bure Park in Bicester as a Local Nature Reserve in July 2005 and establishment of a successful Green Gym based on the site.

2.3 **New Requirements and Planning Issues**

Since 2005 there have been a number of key changes in legislation and policy that affect biodiversity practice and these need to be included in a revised and updated Cherwell BAP.

2.3.1 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The NERC Act 2006 introduced a biodiversity duty for all public authorities. The duty requires public bodies to maximise opportunities for biodiversity through improvements to current services and to integrate biodiversity into all decision making. DEFRA advises that all local authorities should:

- Ensure that biodiversity and its benefits are integrated into policies, strategies and partnerships arrangements
- Protect and enhance biodiversity in forward planning and development control
- Protect and enhance biodiversity on their estate
- Enable access to biodiversity to help deliver a wide range of services such as community development, health and recreation

In the light of continuing change and threats to biodiversity, Government has published a revised list of priority habitats (2006) and species (2007). The new lists are now adopted under the NERC Act to guide decision makers in implementing the biodiversity duty. These need to be included in a revised and updated Cherwell BAP.

2.3.2 National Performance Indicators for Biodiversity and Climate Change

In 2007, biodiversity was introduced into the performance framework for local government. Performance Indicator 197 measures the proportion of local sites under active conservation management. The Council and other local authorities in Oxfordshire fund BBOWT on an annual basis to run the Local Wildlife Sites Project. It is this Project which offers management advice to Local Wildlife Site owners and, as a result, is able to collate all the information required to report back on the indicator.

Performance Indicator 188 is designed to measure progress in preparedness in assessing and addressing the risks and opportunities of a changing climate. There is an urgent need for plans to help wildlife adapt to changing conditions. These will be included in a revised and updated Cherwell BAP and will form part of the evidence base for reporting back on this indicator.

2.3.3 Planning Issues

There are many planning issues which increase the importance of biodiversity and need to be reflected in a revised and updated Cherwell BAP:

- Provision for biodiversity within the planning process has increased, exemplified by the new requirement to include biodiversity information in all planning applications
- Progress of the LDF: LDF policies need to reflect and seek to deliver local biodiversity priorities and objectives, and set targets to monitor progress
- Continuing proposals for new development make it essential for robust strategies that incorporate biodiversity priorities and objectives
- Fulfilment of other statutory and planning policy guidance requirements on local authorities for biodiversity such as protected species legislation and Planning Policy Statement 9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation). This statement emphasises not just the protection of habitats and species of importance but also the enhancement and restoration of sites of biodiversity value, together with new habitat creation.
- Protecting and restoring the natural environment and providing easy access to it has proven benefits for the wellbeing of the whole community and can contribute to the aims of achieving sustainable development.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Option One | Approve the drafting of a revised and updated Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan based on principles different or additional to those identified above. |
| Option Two | To not have a Biodiversity Action Plan once the current one has expired at the end of March 2010 |

Consultations

Informal consultation has taken place with the Council's partner organisations.

Implications

Financial: There are no financial effects arising directly from this report. Production of a new BAP will be contained within existing revenue budgets. Delivery of actions will require some on going grant aid support to partner organisations.

Comments checked by Karen Muir, Service Accountant
01295 221545

Legal: There are no issues arising from this report but there are many new areas of biodiversity legislation that need to be met in the delivery of council services.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686.

Risk Management: There are no significant risks to the Council arising from this report.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management & Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All

Corporate Plan Themes

The Cherwell BAP is a significant contributor to the Council's Clean and Green strategic priority but also contributes to varying degrees to the other three priorities.

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Nigel Morris
Portfolio Holder for Urban and Rural Services

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan 2005-2010	
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Executive

KIDLINGTON CONSERVATION AREAS: RESPONSES TO DRAFT APPRAISAL AND DESIGNATION OF CONSERVATION AREAS AT CROWN ROAD AND LANGFORD LANE WHARF: APPROVAL OF FINAL APPRAISAL

11 May 2009

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing Policy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Local Authorities have a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review Conservation Areas from time to time.

This report is public

A copy of the Appraisal document is circulated separately with the agenda

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To resolve, under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to approve the Kidlington Conservation Areas appraisal, to extend the boundaries of Church Street, High Street and The Rookery Conservation Areas, and to designate Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf Conservation Areas with immediate effect.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the comments received on the draft appraisal, on the proposed extensions to the existing Conservation Areas and on the proposed new designations. It indicates the amendments to the appraisal that are considered appropriate in response.

Proposals

- 1.1 To approve the Appraisal of Kidlington's Conservation Areas.
- 1.2 To extend the boundaries of the Church Street, High Street and The Rookery Conservation Areas and to designation two additional Conservation Areas at Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf.

Conclusion

- 1.3 To approve the Kidlington Conservation Areas appraisal, to extend the boundaries and make new designations with immediate effect.

Background Information

- 2.1 This report is in accordance with Paragraph 9.48 of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2001 and paragraph 9.89 of the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011, which state that the Council will from time to time propose new or review existing Conservation Areas.
- 2.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 does not require local planning authorities to undertake public consultation prior to designation but this Council considers it to be good practice. It does require Conservation Areas to be reviewed from time to time and for proposals for preservation and enhancement to be submitted to a public meeting.
- 2.3 Church Street Conservation Area was designated in 1974 to include the historic core of the village which remained south of the church, including the properties south of the former village green and Rectory Farm complex, together with an expanse of fields to the east of Church Street. The area was reviewed in 1991 and 1996.
- 2.4 High Street Conservation Area was designated in 1991 to include the 18th and 19th century 'suburb' quality dwellings on the north of the street, together with the more vernacular properties on School Road, all of which lined the former village green. The area was reviewed in 1996.
- 2.5 The Rookery Conservation Area was designated in 1991 to protect the historic enclave of late 18th and 19th century limestone properties with early 19th century plot boundaries, surrounded by modern development. The area was reviewed in 1996.
- 2.6 Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf are two additional areas of historic interest which have remained despite the growth of modern development around them. Crown Road marked the western boundary of the larger of the two village greens prior to Inclosure and the mix of vernacular and polite architecture has changed little over the past two centuries. Langford Lane Wharf is the junction of three forms of transportation (the Oxford Canal, the railway and road system) which aided the growth of the village after the 18th century. Requests from local people have led to the investigation of both of these areas with a view to designation as conservation areas.
- 2.7 Public consultation took place on the draft Conservation Areas Appraisal following consultation with, and the approval of, the portfolio holder on 23rd March 2009.
- 2.8 The appraisal was available to download from the Council's website and in hard copy from Bodicote House and available to view at Banbury library, Bicester Library, Kidlington Library, Exeter Hall and the Central Area Mobile Library.
- 2.9 A public exhibition was held in Exeter Hall, Kidlington, on the afternoon of 26th March followed by a presentation to the Annual Parish Council Meeting the same evening. Posters were put up in the village and leaflets were delivered

to every house within the proposed new designations and proposed extensions - over 100 in total. The event was well attended; 45 copies of the appraisal were made available for residents to take with them and questionnaires were available asking for comments on the appraisal, the conservation area boundary revisions and the new designations. The comments received are recorded in the sections following 3.3.

- 2.10 The appraisal comprises an outline of the development of the village, including its history, followed by an analysis of the established character of the conservation areas including their land use, settlement pattern, building types and styles, construction materials, features of special interest and means of enclosure. The homogenous character of the historic elements of the village is enhanced by the almost universal use of limestone and vernacular styling, with the more polite architecture reflecting Kidlington's rising status in the 19th century.
- 2.11 The appraisal also contains a Management Plan comprising proposals for preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Areas, justification for the boundaries of the Conservation Area and proposed amendments and the effects of Conservation Area designation.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The existing Conservation Areas cover the surviving historic elements of the village, concentrating on the area south of the Parish Church (Church Street), north of the commercial centre (High Street), and west of the former green/common (The Rookery). New designations are proposed to cover the area surrounding the canal wharf to the northeast of the former station (Langford Lane Wharf), and an additional area west of the former green/common (Crown Road). The area is defined by local materials used in traditional styles within a variety of vernacular and polite properties with differing expanses of vegetated plots. The appraisal concludes that there are additional areas that are also worthy of Conservation Area designation and that the boundaries be extended to include them. These are illustrated as indicated on the following figures in the Conservation Area Appraisal:
- 3.2 Extensions to existing Conservation Areas:
- Church Street (fig. 10)
 - The Moors: historic properties west of the Kings Arms public house to Thornbury House, including a small enclave of properties south of the road.
 - Mill Street: historic properties east of the current boundary, including the terrace of brick-built dwellings on the northern side of the road, and a terrace of limestone dwellings and the Six Bells public house on the south side of the road.
 - Mill Street: the terrace of small shops and a modern property with expansive garden and boundary wall at the eastern end of the road
 - The Fields: an area northeast of the church containing remnants of the former Scheduled Ancient Monument, believed to be Roman in origin.
 - High Street (fig. 15)
 - School Road: the continuation of the former village green boundary towards the southern section of Church Street Conservation Area. The properties are of comparable age and style to the remainder of School

Road, and designation would preserve the remaining properties which would once have overlooked the village green

- Green Road: a former polite dwelling which has been extended to form 4 properties, this building is comparable with the properties on School Road and High Street.

- The Rookery (fig. 17)
 - Lyne Road: the terrace of properties opposite the entrance to Chorefields and the two properties behind. These properties are contemporary with those within The Rookery and retain their historic frontages

3.3 New proposed designations:

- Crown Road (fig. 21)
 - properties on the western side of the road including Exeter House and the former Grove Farm complex. These properties once overlooked the larger village green/common and the road led to Grove Farm, which has 16th century origins.
- Langford Lane Wharf (fig. 25)
 - the wharf cottages north of the canal, the Wise Alderman public house and associated outbuildings. The vernacular appearance of these properties, together with their historic connections to the transportation system, is of interest both historically and architecturally.

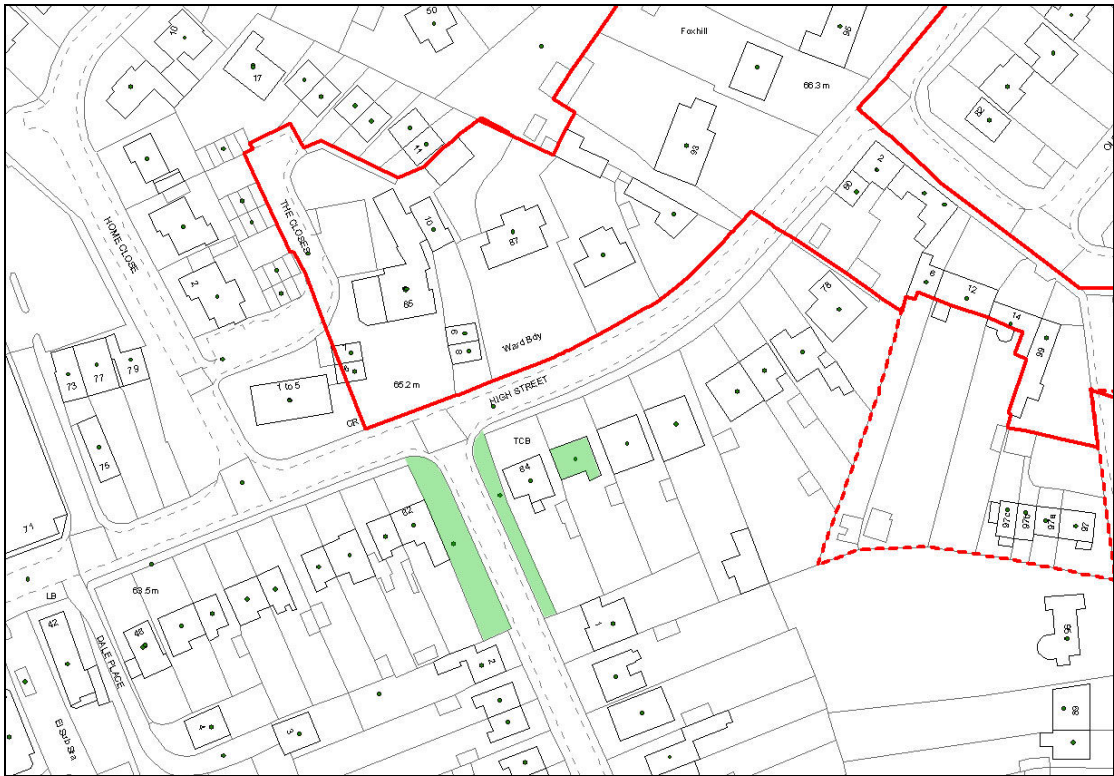
3.4 Areas proposed for exclusion:

- A small area of fields on the east of Church Street Conservation Area. The boundary is proposed to be brought in west in line with the existing public right of way due to a lack of historic or architectural interest
- Very minor adjustment to the boundary around The Rookery Conservation Area to exclude very small areas of 20th century development

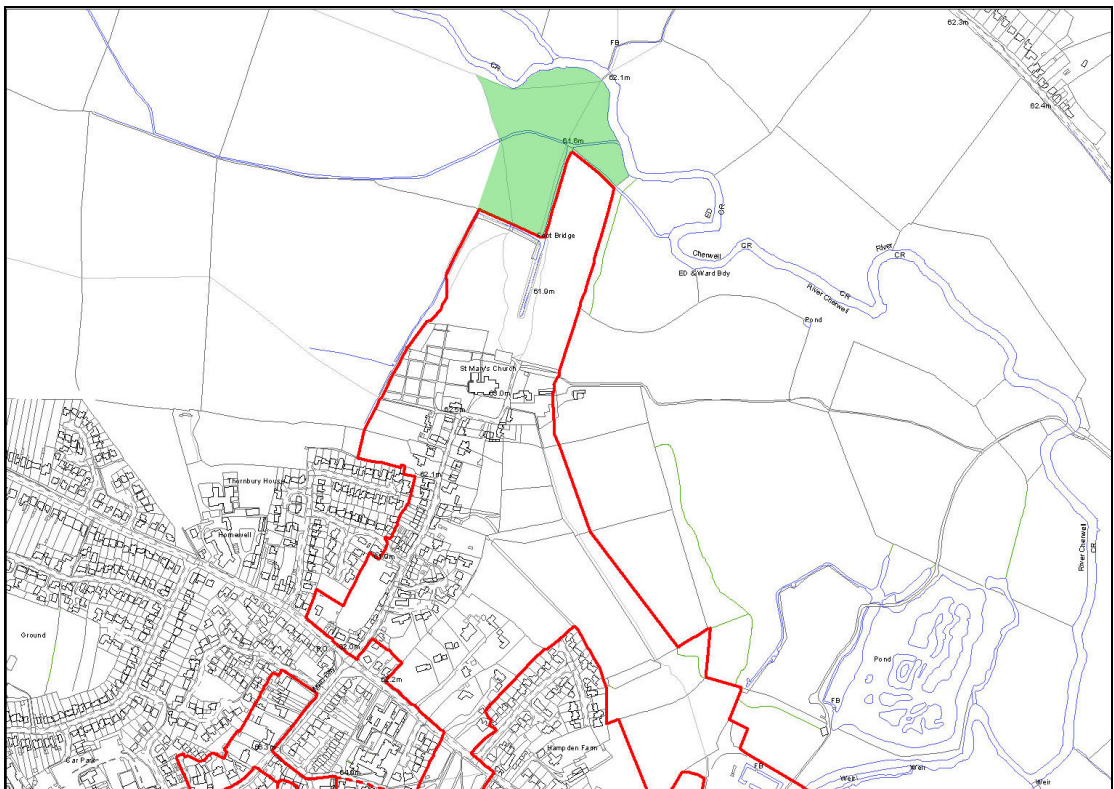
3.5 Feedback from the Public Meeting and Questionnaires

3.6 There was strong support for the proposed extensions from both the public meeting and the returned questionnaires. Suggestions for additional areas to be designated were:-

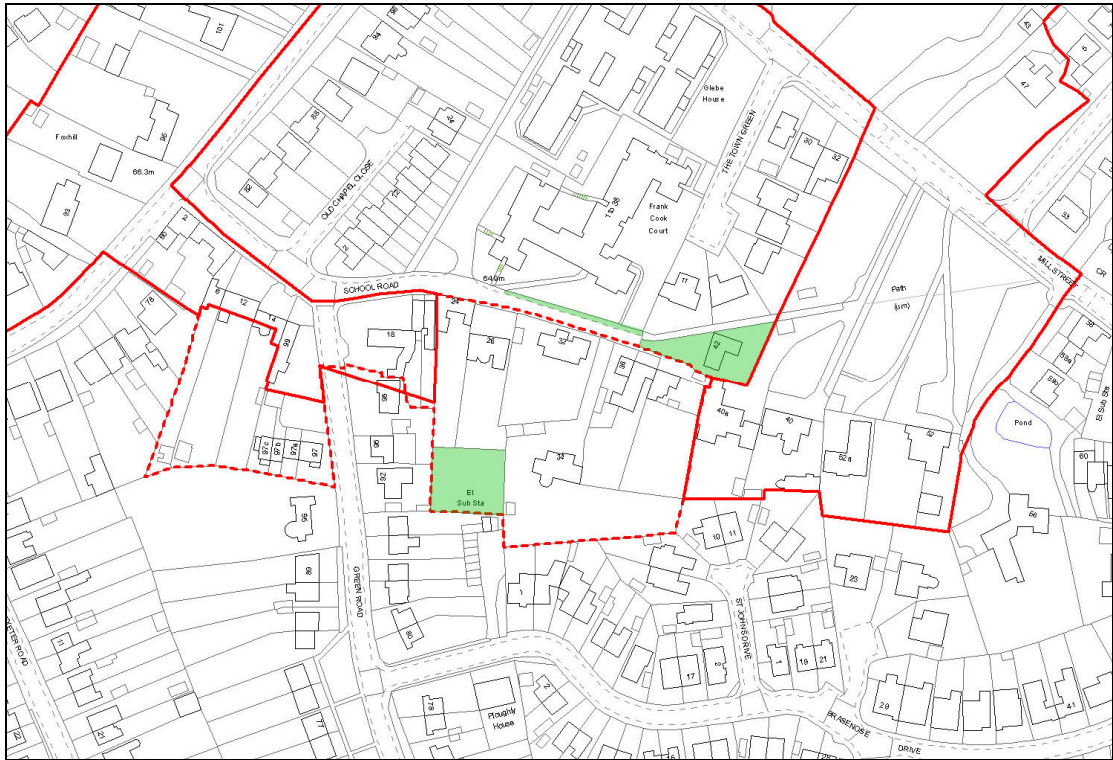
- 66 High Street and the areas of grass at the entrance to Exeter Road, on the grounds that it was part of the former village green and fruit orchards, and that 66 High Street is the sole remaining unchanged building of its type in the area: after consideration, officers concluded that there is no evidence from old maps that the village green extended this far and so the area does not have enough historic merit to justify its inclusion, and is also difficult to create a contiguous boundary with the remainder of High Street Conservation Area;



- the northern area of St Mary Fields up to the river: after consideration, officers concluded that, although of ecological interest, the area was not of intrinsic historic or architectural interest as required by PPG 15 and is in any case be afforded protection by virtue of constituting the setting of the Conservation Area, being located in the flood plain of the River Cherwell and being in the Oxford Green Belt



- the orchard to the rear of 24-28 School Road, 42 School Road, and the hedgerow opposite the proposed extension to School Road: the inclusion of the orchard can be supported and as it lies within historic plot and retains a fine limestone boundary wall. The inclusion of 42 School Road could not be supported, as the property sits on what would have been the open site of the village green, and is of later construction of no particular architectural or historic merit. The inclusion of the hedgerow could not be supported as it appears from documentary evidence that the village green was unenclosed and so it must be of later date.



- 3.7 There were concerns raised over the lack of control within a conservation area. Stronger controls over the replacement of windows and doors were sought, as were the controls over signage and service providers being required to use sympathetic materials for re-instatement following works within a conservation area.
- 3.8 There were concerns raised over the detrimental visual effect caused by the amount of overhead wires within the Conservation Areas. Residents were advised that the District Council has no powers to enforce change in this area.
- 3.9 Those attending the exhibition were interested in the role of Conservation Areas as protection against inappropriate development, rather than to protect against all development.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward as this will enable the Council to publish the finalised version of the Appraisal which will then become a material consideration to be weighed against other considerations in the determining of planning applications within the Conservation Areas and their setting.

Option One	To approve and to publish the Conservation Area Appraisal including the proposed extension to the boundaries and designation of the new Conservation Areas at Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf
Option Two	To not extend the Conservation Areas nor to designate the two new Conservation Areas
Option Three	To make further changes to the Kidlington Conservation Areas Appraisal as members see fit

Consultations

Kidlington Parish Council	Endorsed the appraisal and recommended its adoption by the Executive. The Parish Council had earlier suggested the inclusion of the 'pocket park' at Langford Lane and was pleased to see that it had been added to the consultation draft.
Cllr Michael Gibbard	Made no formal representations; verbal support given throughout the consultation process
Cllr Maurice Billington Cllr Neil Prestidge Cllr Christopher Pack	Made no formal representations; verbal support was given at the public meeting and exhibition and at the earlier meeting with the parish council.
Local Residents	Comments are discussed in detail under headings 3.5 to 3.9 and in the table attached at Appendix 1
Richard Oram, County Council Archaeologist	Made no formal representations
English Heritage	<i>The extension of the existing conservation areas and the designation of Crown Road is supported; Langford Lane Wharf is not considered to be worthy of designation (see Appendix 1 for full details).</i>
British Waterways	Made no formal representations
Kidlington and District Historical Society	Informal support given; formal representations expected to be made following meeting on 21 st April and, if received, officers will provide a verbal update at the meeting.

Implications

Financial:	Financial effects - There are no financial implications arising from this report. The costs of preparing the Appraisal and the public consultation are met from the approved revenue budget and the Council does not operate any grant aid scheme that would be triggered by the Appraisal. Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Accountant 01295 221552
Legal:	The Council has a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to identify those parts of its area that are worthy of designation as a

conservation area and to designate them as such and to review them from time to time. The Council is complying with its statutory duty in this respect.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Assistant Solicitor 01295 221687

Risk Management:

The Conservation Area Appraisal proposes new areas for designation, it analyses the special character and appearance of the areas and sets out proposals for the management of the areas. Having been publicly consulted upon, the Appraisal will become a material consideration in the determining of planning applications within the designated areas and will be used by Inspectors in considering appeals. In failing to identify the special character or designate those areas as conservation areas, the Council could put at risk the character or appearance of the area.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

Kidlington North
Kidlington South

Corporate Plan Themes

Theme 6: Protect and enhance the local environment
Theme 8: Rural Focus
Theme 10: Focus on Cherwell's People

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Economy

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Kidlington Conservation Area Questionnaire Responses
Background Papers	
Report Author	Claire Sutton, Assistant Design & Conservation Officer
Contact Information	01295 221608 claire.sutton@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Questionnaire Response	Do you have any comments about the Conservation Area appraisal?	Do you agree with the boundaries of the Conservation Areas?	Comments acted upon?
1 Parish Council	An interesting report; entertaining presentation at the Annual meeting	Pleased to note that the pocket park on the corner of Langford Wharf had been added to the original draft of the Langford Lane site	
2 Kidlington & District Historical Society	Excellent consultation paper	Agree with the boundary changes on Green Road (High Street CA); would like appropriate viewing cones of St Mary's Spire to be retained; development within a CA should enhance and not detract from ambience; welcome the funding or provision of a building for a museum and/or storage facility for Historical Society	Views of church checked and identified as significant; provision for development to enhance already in appraisal; museum in village to be discussed with conservation team
3 English Heritage	It would be helpful when discussing views in the text if they could be numbered or otherwise identified and cross referenced to the visual analysis figures	I am not persuaded that the proposed Langford Lane Wharf CA is coherent and has special qualities that justify designation. Whilst I can appreciate that it has historic interest and is a part of the wider development of Kidlington, I have reservations about designating such a small section of canal and its associated buildings. The historic industrial and transport character of the area has not really survived and the changes to the character of the road network in particular from the 1875 OS map are telling.	The comments of English Heritage are noted and reported to the Executive. However the designation of Langford Lane Wharf was requested by residents, is supported by local people including the Parish Council, and is considered to be the only method open to the Council to protect the character and appearance of this area from inappropriate development since English Heritage declined to add the buildings to the statutory list.
4	It is a very thorough and interesting document. I would suggest a possible change to include views of the Old Rectory from the fields to the rear (photograph attached)	I am in favour of the inclusion of additional areas to the existing areas within Kidlington.	Views of Old Rectory site re-evaluated; photograph added to appraisal and views adjusted
5	A really excellent piece of work, full of interest and useful historical and architectural information, and a valuable work of reference in itself. More could be made of the fine limestone walls at the Old Rectory site. Historical error in description of the church relating to the pre-Domesday chapel		Views of Old Rectory site re-evaluated; appraisal updated to include details about limestone wall and historical facts relating to church checked
6	I have no comments	I agree according to the meeting and shown maps of the areas on 26 March at Exeter Hall	
7	Fully support the proposal to include rest of School Road	Include walled garden of no.28 School Road; include hedgerow opposite new area in School Road; include 42 School Road to join two conservation areas; extend Church Street north to include up to river	Walled garden included in part to condition of walls; hedgerow not included due to condition; 42 School Road not included due to structure's lack of historic interest; Church Street not extended north due to lack of historic or architectural interest, although ecological interest appreciated and supported
8	A lovely document. Well done!	Views into Church Street conservation area from fields need to be mentioned more; walls at Grove House and 49/51 Church Street to be identified as important	Views from fields into area re-evaluated and included; walls identified on maps as significant
9	Inaccurate description of 14 The Moors: extension to front is replacement of Victorian addition		Property re-evaluated and comments adjusted
10	Excellent	Expand High Street to include Exeter Road open spaces & 66 High Street	Comments appreciated; unable to make boundary contiguous to include suggested area; no historical justification for inclusion due to irradiation by later development



**Kidlington Conservation Areas
Draft Appraisal
May 2009**

Planning, Housing and Economy

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1. Introduction

'The major part of the town consists of some of the ugliest ribbon development in the county, with 1930s semi-detached houses of the most dismal kind for two or three miles along the Oxford-Banbury road. The old village is east of this.'

Nikolaus Pevsner 1974

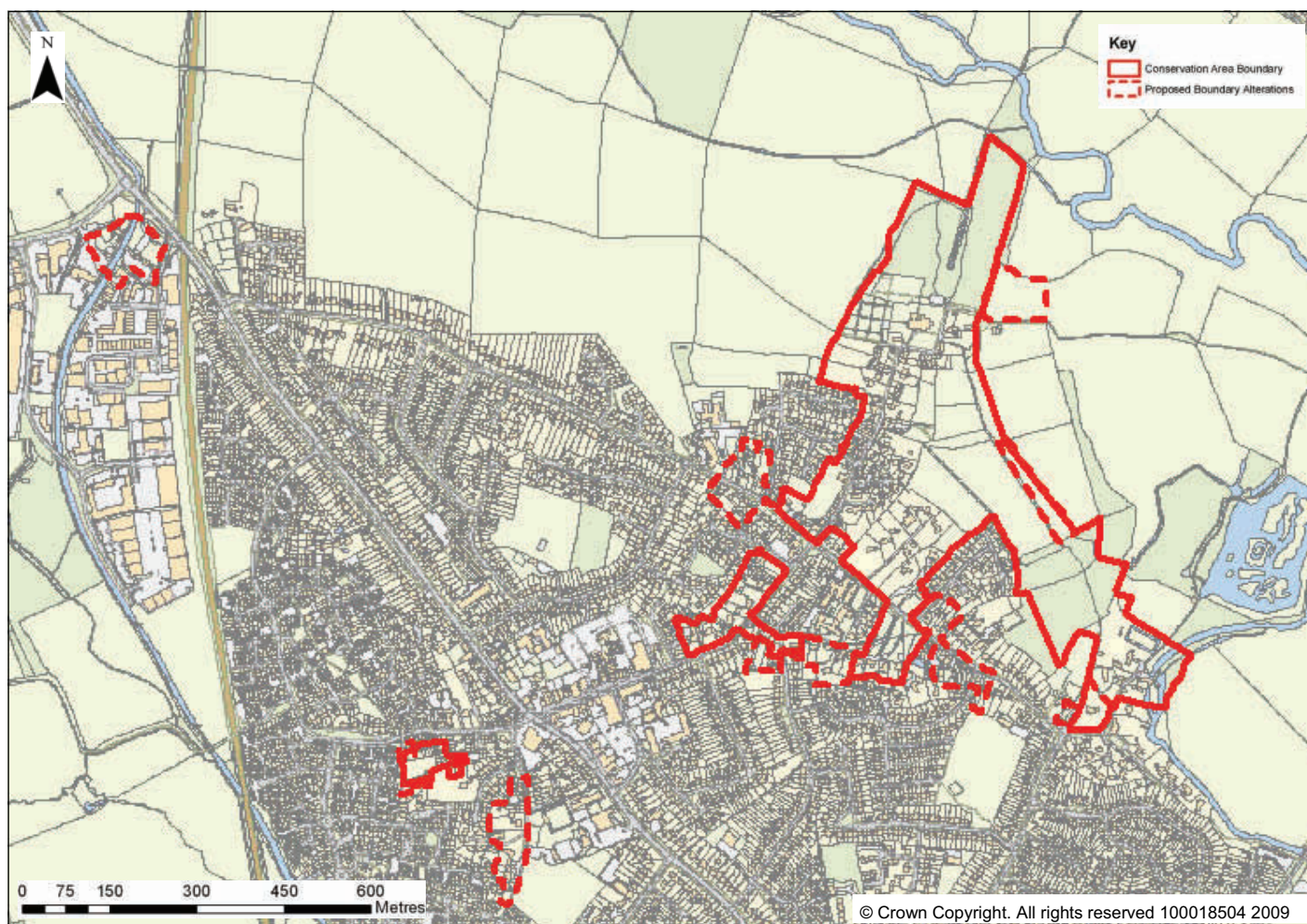


Fig. 1: Conservation Area Boundaries including proposed amendments and new designations

Kidlington makes a proud claim to be Britain's largest village and contains three existing Conservation Areas: Church Street, High Street and The Rookery. Originally a distinctly rural community, the village was extended to the west and south during the 20th century, and boasts a fine example of a 1930s Garden City to the south.

In acknowledgement of its special qualities, which need to be preserved and enhanced, this document is the first full appraisal of all three Conservation Areas following their designations in 1974 (Church Street) and 1991 (High Street and the Rookery) and their subsequent reviews in 1996, and proposes two additional designations of conservation areas at Crown Road and Langford Lane Wharf.

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1 Conservation Area Designation

2.1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides legislation for the protection of the nation's heritage of buildings and places of architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

2.1.2 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. However, it is the 1990 Act (Section 69) which places a duty upon local planning authorities of identifying areas of special architectural or historic interest through an appraisal process and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 56 in the Cherwell District.

2.1.3 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Act to consider boundary revisions to their Conservation Areas 'from time to time'.

2.1.4 This document is based on a standard recording format derived from advice contained in documents published by English Heritage (2005). The appraisal process enables the special character and appearance of Kidlington can continue to be identified; thereby ensuring that any future development preserves or enhances that identified special character.

2.1.5 This is a draft document which is subject to consultation and may be amended as a result. The final document will be put to the Council's Executive for approval and any new designation will have immediate effect. The approved document will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the Conservation Areas and their settings.



Figure 2: Topographical map

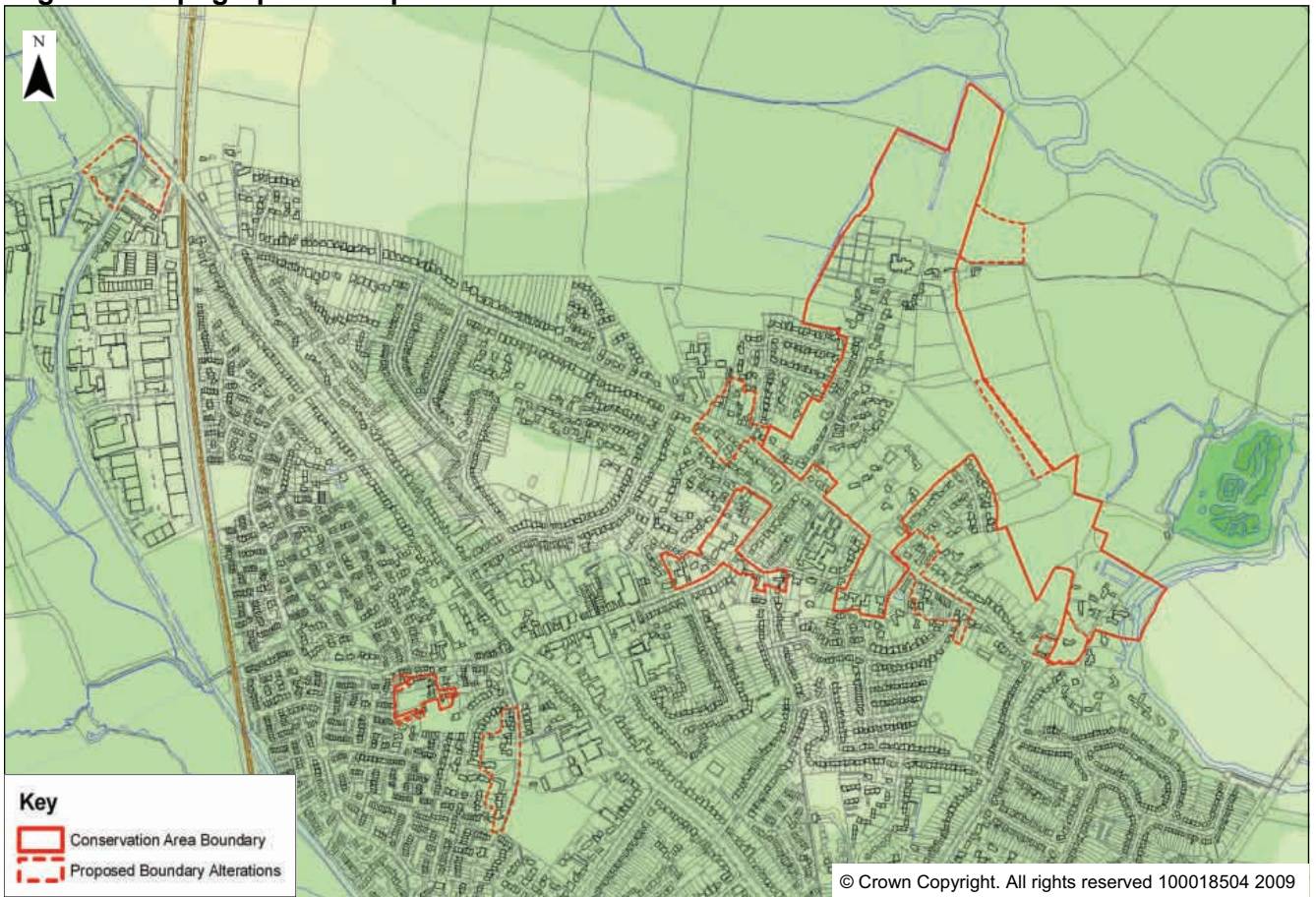
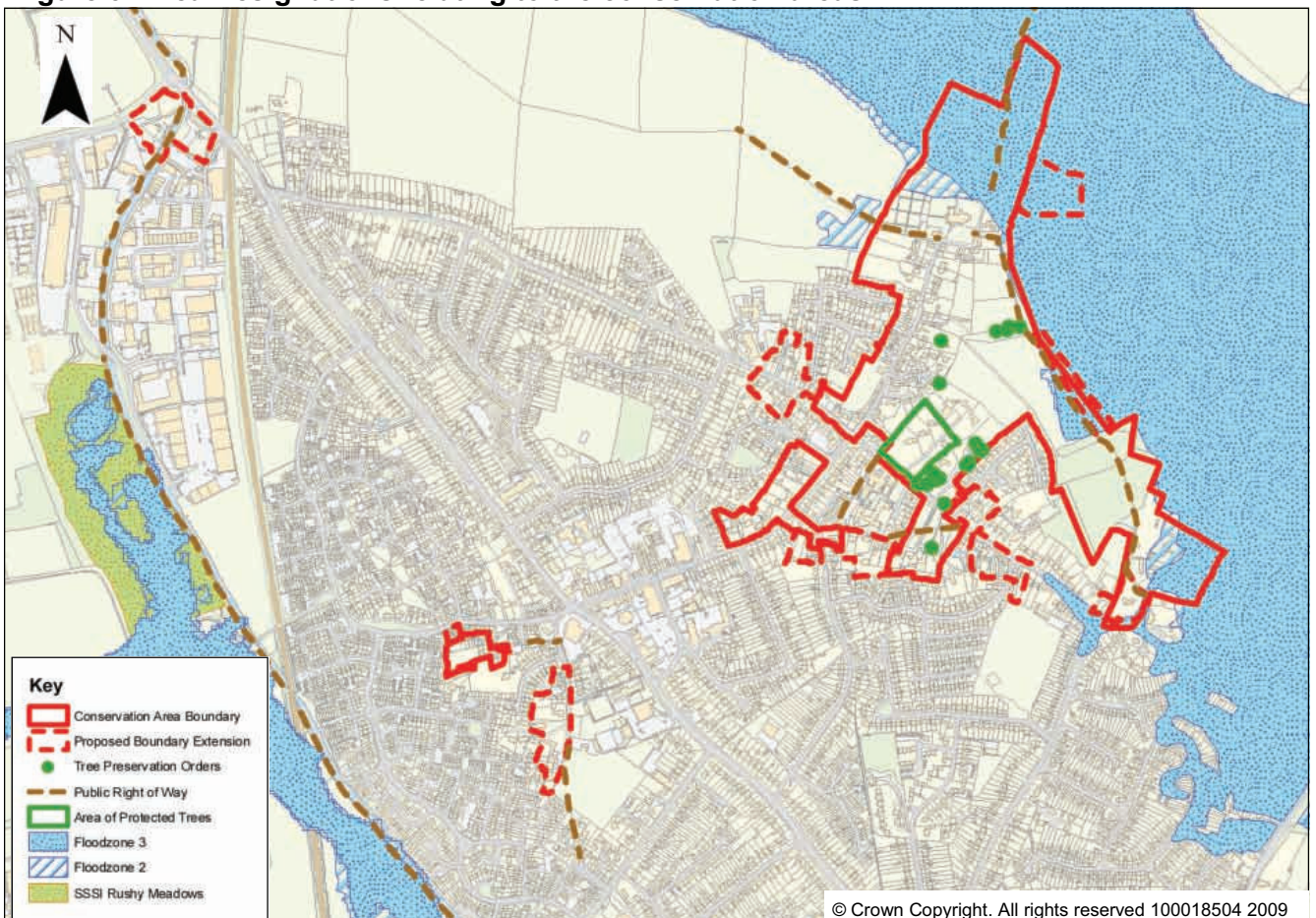


Figure 3: Area Designations relating to the conservation areas



3. Location and Topography

Kidlington parish lies between Oxford and Woodstock, and its dominant feature is the village of Kidlington, which grew up alongside a two mile stretch of road, now known as the A4260.

The land is relatively flat, lending itself well to the industrial developments of the Oxford Canal and Great Western Railway during the 18th/19th centuries. The village is surrounded by drained agricultural fields and smaller villages and has good connections to Oxford and Banbury, as well as being close to the A34.

The Kidlington meadows extend eastwards from the conservation area towards the River Cherwell and are recognised by OCC as an ecologically important area. The whole of this part of Kidlington is within the consultation area for the Rushy Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest to the west of the Oxford Canal. The meadows are generally very open with limited tree cover, and are an important breeding site and habitat for the endangered British water vole.

With the exception of the west end of the High Street and the limited development along Oxford Road at the junction of these two roads, the conservation area boundaries describe the extent of the village settlement towards the end of the 19th century.

There are three existing Conservation Areas centred on the historic parts of the village: Church Street which stretches south from the church; High Street, focussing on the northern historic area of the street; The Rookery, a small pocket of late 19th century housing to the west of Oxford Road.

A fourth Conservation Area is proposed at Crown Road to the west of Oxford Road, incorporating an area of 18th/19th century housing; the site of a former Manor which became an outlying farm and associated buildings.

A fifth Conservation Area is proposed at Langford Lane Wharf to the north of the main settlement, incorporating 18th century cottages and the Wise Alderman public house.



Fig 4: 2004 Aerial view of the village including the current and proposed Conservation Area boundaries

4. History of Kidlington

4.1 Origins

4.1.1 The village of Kidlington developed as a number of small, scattered settlements, of which the earliest and most important was around the church and medieval manor house.

4.1.2 The name Kidlington is of Anglo Saxon origin and means 'Cydel's settlement'. The archaeology within the parish is centred around the main village (see 4.4).

4.1.3 The most prominent feature prior to Inclosure in 1818 was the large green, which covered most of the township south of the Bicester Road. From the early 16th century Kidlington was consequently known as 'Kidlington on the Green'. A second small green was located at the junction of Church Street, Mill Street, High Street and The Moors.



Fig 5: Kidlington on the Green prior to Inclosure in 1818 © KDHS

4.2 Development & Population

4.2.1 The 1086 Domesday entry for Kidlington (known there as 'Chedelintone') mentions a mill and lists 40 unfree tenants and two servi (servants). The village was held by Robert d'Oilly along with Bicester, Water Eaton and Bletchington. Robert had taken over the Saxon manor with its church and mill, and had been instructed to build a castle in the city of

Oxford. The area of Gosford was once part of Kidlington, and was separated in 1142 when it was granted to the Hospitallers.

4.2.2 By 1301 the village population had risen to 22 free and 55 unfree tenants on the Manor. The village continued to grow despite being checked by the black death in 1349; an epidemic in 1593 and a fire in 1638. By 1622 some 96 houses were recorded and development had spread to Moor End.

4.2.3 The manor in Kidlington was passed in 1532 to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, by King Henry VIII, his brother-in-law, and later to Leonard Chamberlain and John Blundell in 1546 following Brandon's death. The likely site of this manor is west or south-west of the church on the site of Thornbury House. The medieval house was demolished and rebuilt in the 18th century.

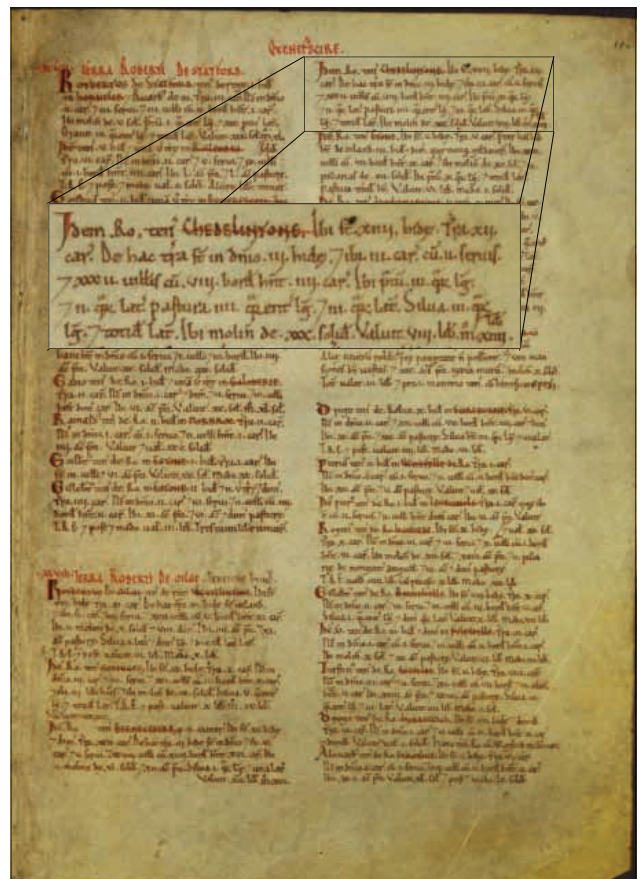


Fig. 6: Extract from Domesday showing the entry for Kidlington and its mill

4.2.4 Kidlington played an important part for both sides during the English Civil War; Royalist troops were stationed at Campsfield to the west of the village. Gosford Bridge, east of the mill, had a strategic role in the siege of Oxford in 1644, during which it was successfully defended by the Royalists. The local gentry mainly fought for the King.

4.2.5 In the 17th century Kidlington, in addition to the 3 manors (Bury, Bailey and Hampden), a number of substantial farmhouses were constructed, for example Hill Farm (87 High Street). Several properties in School Road date from this period including nos. 6-14, which in 1837 were sold as 'Five Cottages and the Old Poor House'. Number 14 was the Poor House, which had previously been a school.

4.2.6 From the latter part of the 18th century the village of Kidlington became something of a dormitory for Oxford, chosen by citizens who wanted a house within easy reach of the city. As a consequence several large houses were built fronting the two greens.

4.2.7 Famous residents of Kidlington include the architect of Blenheim Palace, Sir John Vanbrugh, who lived in Hampden Manor during the building phase of the palace, and designed and built his own water closet with personal fireplace in the front garden, which still stands today. More recent inhabitants include Thomas Beecham, the pill manufacturer; the philosopher Bertrand Russell; the federalist Lionel Curtis and the entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson.



Sir John Vanbrugh 1664-1726

4.3 Trade & Industry

4.3.1 The village relied on agriculture for its main source of employment and prior to Inclosure in 1818 shared a single set of open fields in Thrupp, making the two villages almost indiscernible from each other. The agriculture of the parish was arable, with several compact farms surrounding the main village. Some were dedicated to pastoral activities, including cattle and sheep, although the main crops grown were flax, wheat and barley.

4.3.2 This pastoral agriculture was mainly due to the large expanse of common ground south of the High Street. Prior to Inclosure, this was grazing land. In 1818, the land was offered to the Duke of Marlborough, making the Duke and Exeter College the largest landowners in the village. The College having previously acquired land and several properties from Sir William Petre in 1566 after he bought it from Queen Elizabeth I the previous year. The former common land was divided into fields and let to local farmers. The present residential buildings on the land did not appear until the late 1920s, when development spread along the Oxford Road.

4.3.3 The 19th century expansion of the village coincided with an improvement in transport links, begun by the building of the Oxford Canal, which opened in 1790. The canal provided employment for boat builders, coal merchants and bargees, and used the newly created basin wharf at Thrupp. During WWII the canal played an important part in servicing the air base, later to become Oxford Airport. The GWR from Oxford to Banbury opened in 1850 and was connected to the London/Birmingham railway in 1851. The station, constructed in 1855, was closed in 1964. Intended to serve the town of Woodstock rather than the small village of Kidlington, the yards were placed on the west of the line. The 18th century warehouse at Langford Lane was later converted into 19th century thatched cottages.



Fig. 7: Kidlington and the surrounding landscape before the railway (pre-1830s) - approximate conservation area boundaries

4.3.4 The economy of Kidlington changed during the 19th century from one based solely on agricultural and local trades, to one dominated by non-agricultural work. This is mirrored in the architecture of the village, which saw several 19th century brick terraces erected, and development which concentrated on the High Street, Lyne Road and Banbury Road areas (all outside the conservation areas).

4.3.5 Traditional crafts (which included a Flemish weaver in 1437) gave way to commerce facilitated by the arrival of the canal and the railway. For the non-professional class the largest employment opportunity after farming was domestic service, although it is likely that many of the servants worked in Oxford city.

Non-agricultural occupations increased during the 19th century as professionals and prosperous tradesmen settled in the village for convenient daily travel to Oxford. This included physicians, teachers and the deputy lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

4.3.6 Building programmes of the 20th century, consumed much of the available land. 1930s Kidlington saw an increase in poultry farming, and a popular fruit farm was situated in the north-west.

4.3.7 There was little local industry until after WWII, despite the increase in population and shops. In the 1930s and 50s, building was on the increase, and car dealerships and garages appeared. The Oxfordshire Farmers' Bacon Factory occupied a site opposite the station for 30 years, finally closing c.1960.



Kidlington Airfield in 1941 during the war efforts © Oxford Airport

4.3.8 The airport was initially opened as a landing ground in 1939 and requisitioned by the RAF in 1939/40. After the war a flying school was established and civil aviation began again in 1946. In the mid 1970s the airport employed nearly 500 ground staff and trained over 400 pilots for international airlines.

4.3.9 An industrial zone first mooted in 1938 was finally constructed in the 1950s. Various engineering and commercial factories were established, although several failed thrive. The area has since been re-established as a centre for car dealerships, the Oxford Motor Park.

4.3.10 The Oxford Zoological gardens was sited in Kidlington on the land surrounding Gosford Hill farmhouse, where the present Thames Valley Police station stands. Opened in 1931, the zoo housed a large collection of animals including polar bear cubs, a lion and an eleven-year-old elephant. After only a few years occupation, the zoo closed in 1937/8, and the buildings were taken over by the East Ham Grammar School.

4.3.11 The history of educational provision within Kidlington is unclear until the late 16th century, when a parishioner provided for his son to be educated at the local school for three years. It is known that a schoolhouse was built on the green in 1634, however this was converted into a townhouse by 1710, followed by a workhouse in 1754. During this time, educational charities were providing for schoolmasters, suggesting that although the school building may not have been kept, the tradition of education was still thriving. Smaller schools teaching a total of 116 children were recorded in 1815, and private boarding schools were becoming popular.

A National day and Sunday school was built in 1827/8 on Exeter College land in the centre of the village. Truancy was a constant battle for the teachers, and it was reported in 1868 that 25% of the pupils were habitually absent.

After a rebuild in 1871, the school became a county school in 1940, and continued in use until 1952 when the children were transferred to the new Kidlington Junior County school on the Bicester Road, now known as the Edward Feild school. The old school building was reused as a social centre, and burnt down in 1977.

4.4 Archaeology

4.4.1 While there is an abundance of written history about the parish and village following the Norman Invasion of the 11th century, direct evidence of former occupations is scarce. Within the Parish the indications of early occupation including a prehistoric ridgeway (running alongside the present A4260), tracks and flints, Roman coins, pottery and the sites of two Roman villas with crop marks and a well. The evidence however is scarce; the result of limited investigatory activity in the area.

The Roman villa site close to the church, with its associated fields was formerly a scheduled ancient monument; this classification has been removed due to erosion of the site and reappraisal, which suggests that it may have been merely a farm connected to the nearby villa at Campsfield.

4.4.2 There are two other unscheduled monuments in the parish; a dovecote and possible monastic complex sited adjacent to the church. A further archaeological site (of medieval fishponds and a possible moated cottage) was built upon in the 1990s just east of Parker's Farm, situated east of the Begbroke Science Park.



The undulations of the former scheduled monument can be seen in the fields east of the church

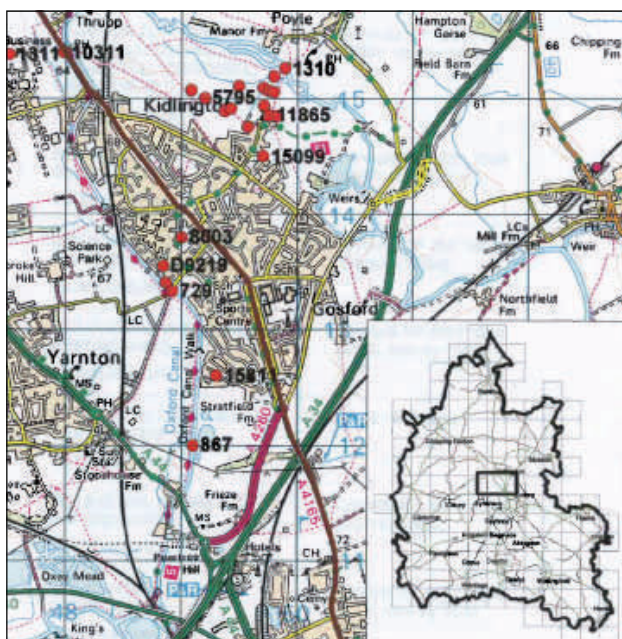
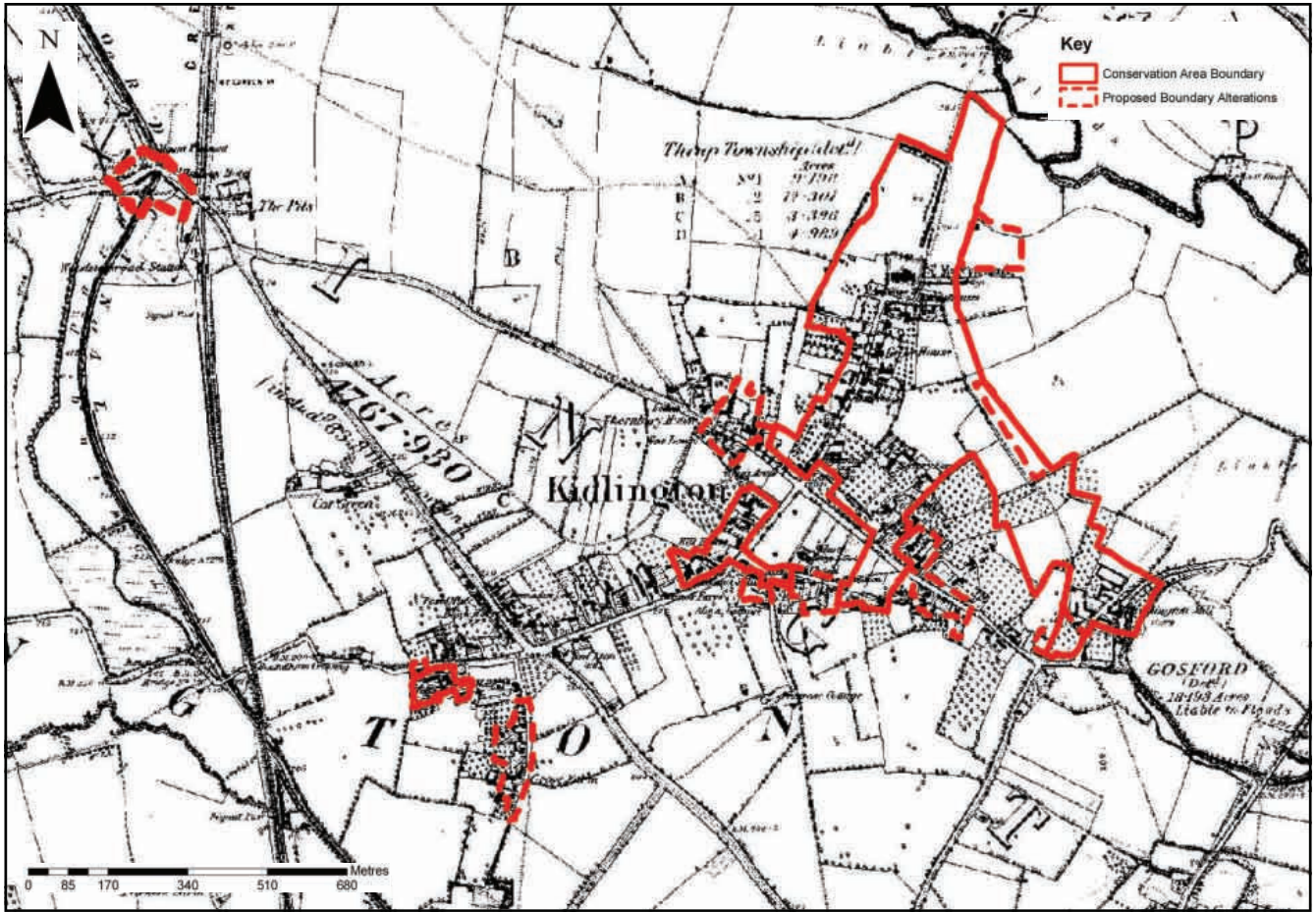


Fig. 8: Map showing archaeological finds within the Kidlington area © Oxfordshire County Council

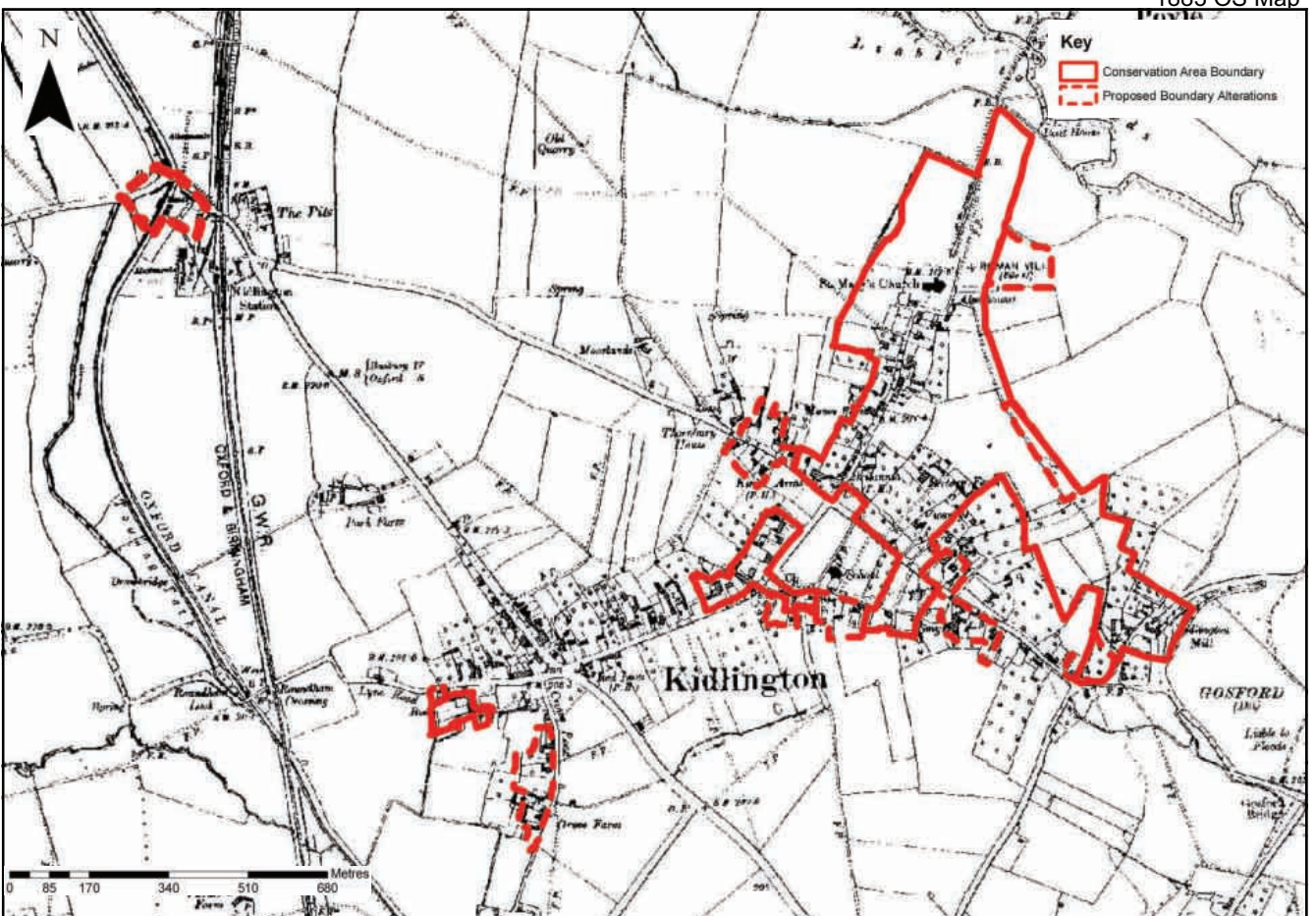
4.4.3 There have been numerous small finds found during watching briefs and by residents. These include Roman coins and early flint arrowheads, and a Roman urn found in a well near the church in 1840. Two Saxon spearheads found in the village are now on display in the Ashmolean Museum.

As can be seen from the map, the majority of finds is concentrated around the church. This indicates the importance and prominence of the site over the past 3000+ years.

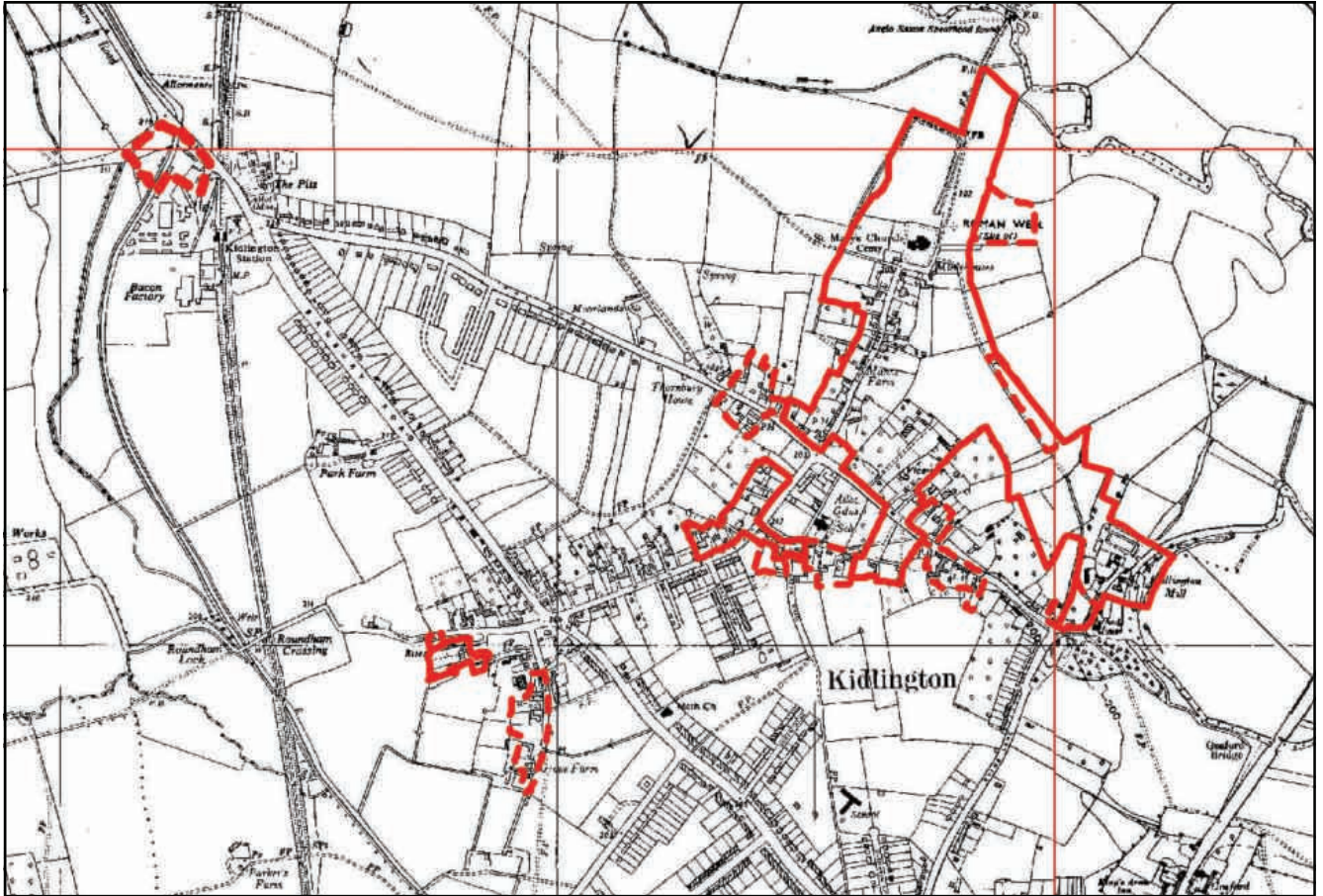
Fig. 9: Village development in Kidlington from 1883



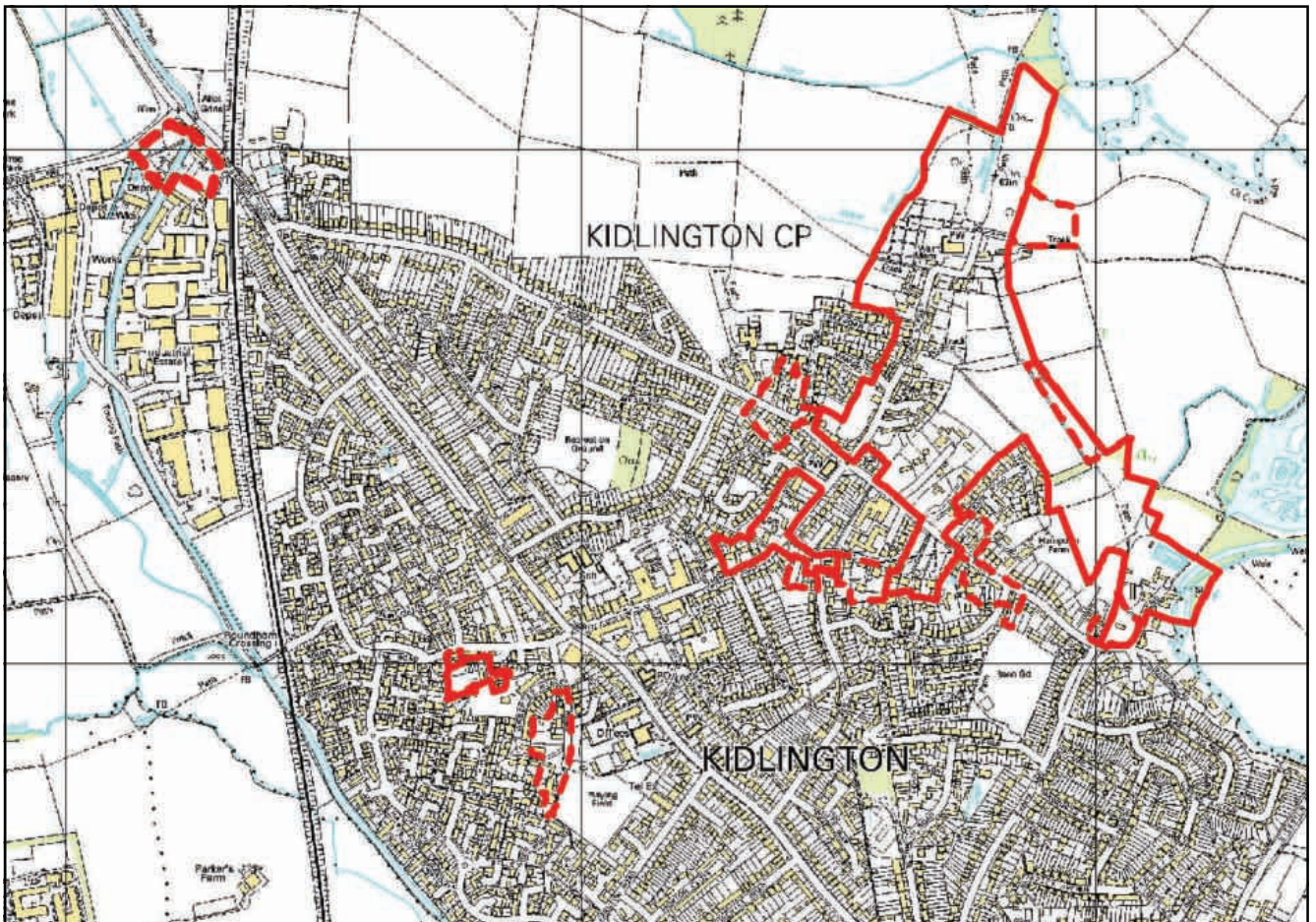
1883 OS Map



1914 OS Map



1955 OS Map



2008 OS Map

5. Church Street Conservation Area



Aerial photograph of Church Street Conservation Area 2004

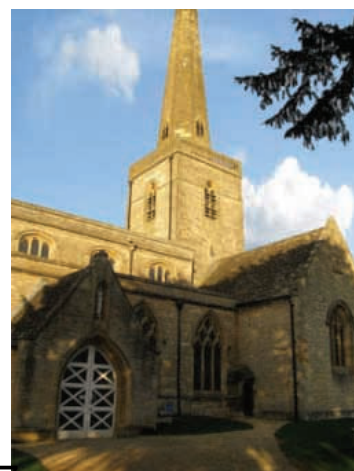
5.1 Church Street Conservation Area lies on the eastern fringe of Kidlington, the oldest part of the village. It is centred on Church Street, and includes parts of Mill Street, Mill End and the meadow land to the east of Mill Street between the Church of St Mary and Mill End.

Unusually the parish church is not located in the centre of the settlement but on its northern extremity, being the most northerly structure overlooking the water meadows of the River Cherwell.

The Conservation Area comprises two main focii: the parish church with the village street leading to it, and the Mill and associated buildings. These are separated by the intervening water meadows and pre-20th century development.

5.2 Listed Buildings within Church Street Conservation Area

There are several listed buildings within this conservation area. The majority are Grade II; their locations are given in figure 10.



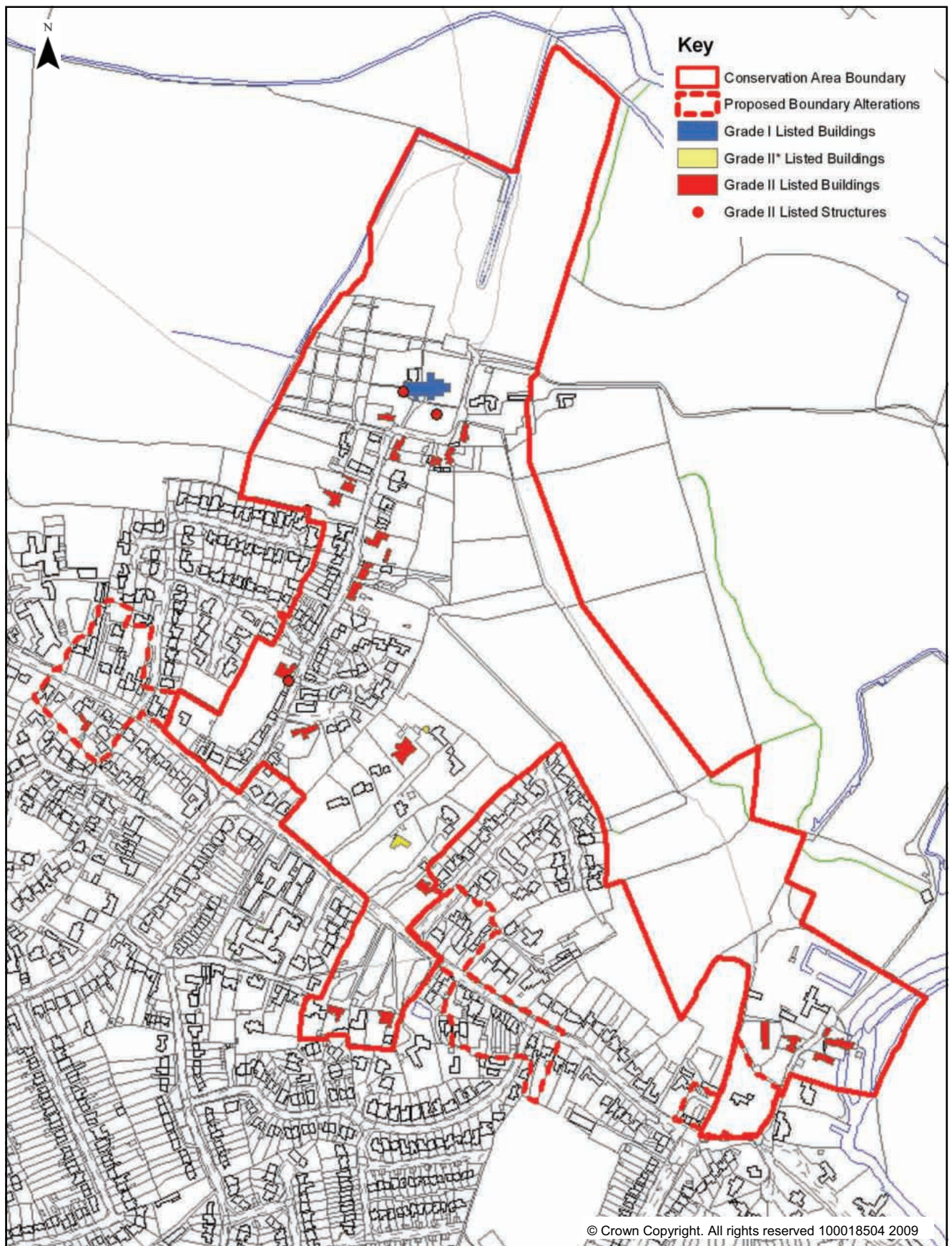
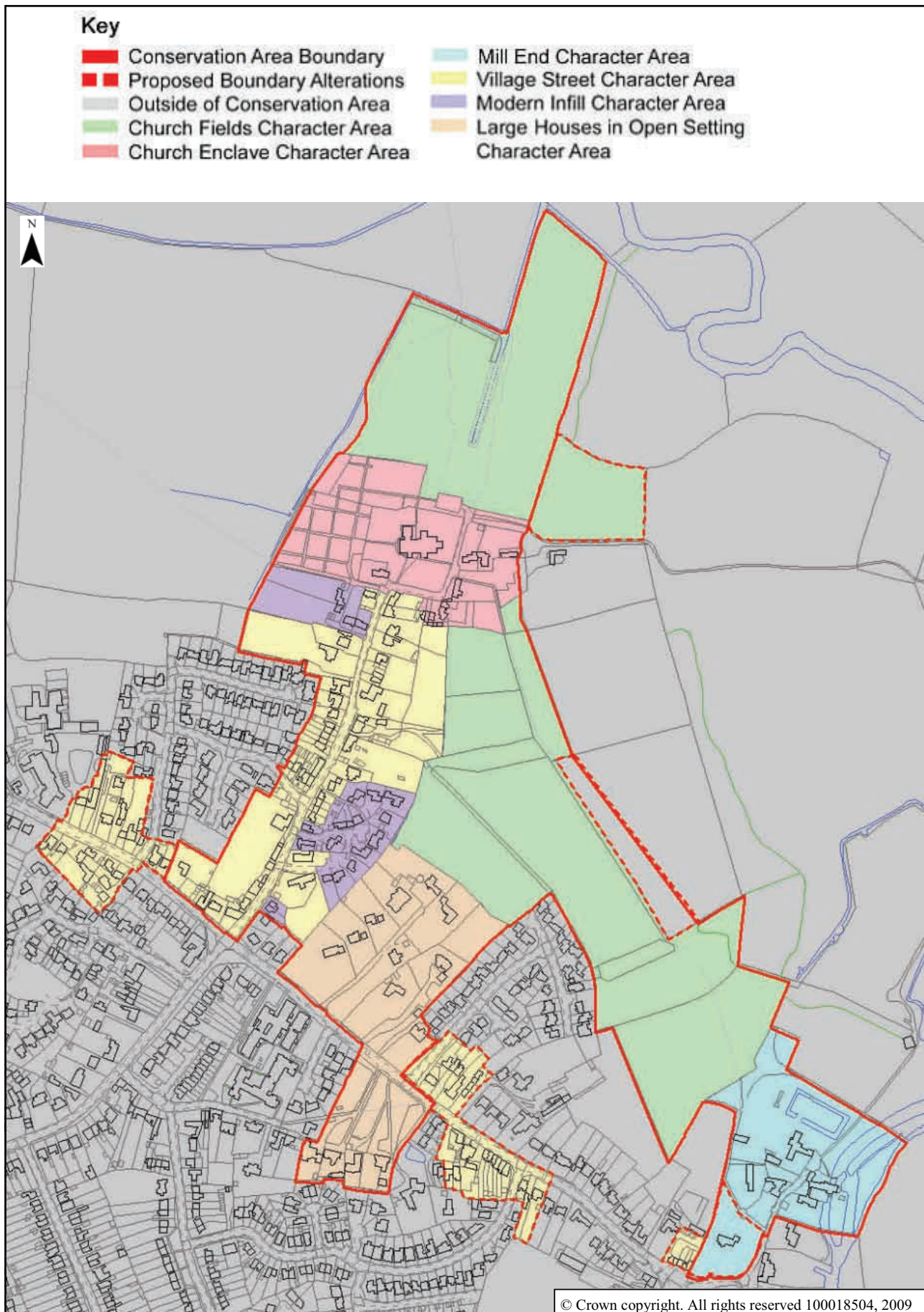


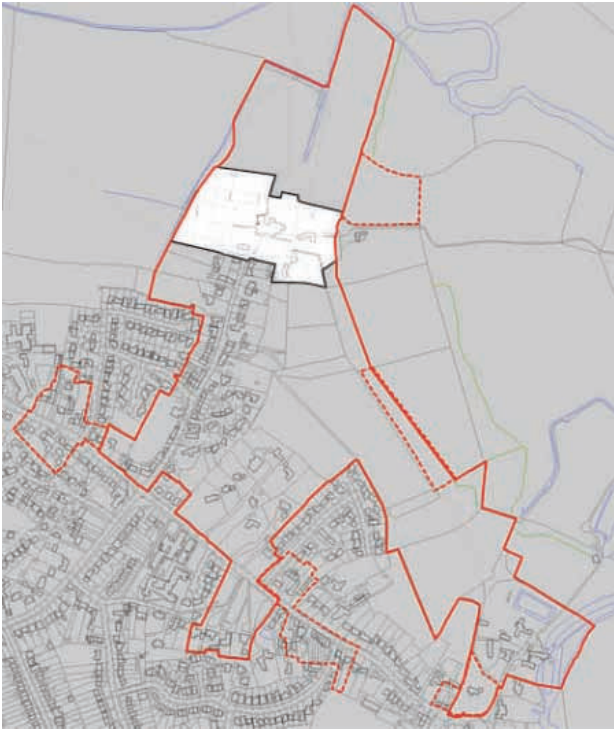
Fig. 10: Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area
For descriptions, see Appendix 2

Fig. 11: Character Areas within the Conservation Area



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5.7 Church Enclave Character Area



The 13th century Grade I Listed Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin is the focal point of this character area, located on the northern extremity of Kidlington, prominent in views from across the flood meadows of the River Cherwell. It is a real jewel and well hidden from most of the settlement.

5.7.1 Land Use

Ecclesiastical use dominates this area. The church occupies a central position within the enclosed church yard, with an extensive cemetery to the west, recently extending north into the open flood plain. 17th century almshouses, small cottages and a modern dwelling face the church yard on its south and east side. Unusually, associated ecclesiastical buildings such as the Old Vicarage and Old Rectory are located some distance from the Parish Church; nor is there a village hall or school room built close to the place of worship.

5.7.2 Street Pattern

Routes converge from all directions at the Parish Church, from the water meadows, east from The Mill and also from the villages along the aptly named Church Street, which terminates at the church. The road wraps tightly around the church yard wall, finally terminating in a car park between the church

and the water meadow that serves both churchgoers and walkers. The slender spire of St Mary's Church is a magnificent focal point from all directions. Even though Church Street has a slightly meandering building line, the spire is always visible, attractively framed by the Church Street frontages.



The west elevation of the church

5.7.3 Building age, type and style

The Church of St Mary the Virgin dates from around 1220 in cruciform form with central tower and no aisles, extended in the Perpendicular style. Its spire dates from about 1450 and is a distinct landmark within and without the village. Morton's Almshouses date from 1671, with a high quality extension added in 1953-4, replicating the local stone vernacular style.



Morton's Almshouses

Number 82-88 Church Street facing the south east corner of the church yard are two groups of semi-detached thatched vernacular cottages of the late 17th—early/mid 18th century, as is the property known as the Priests House. This property is much altered,

having originally been three cottages, two of which were demolished in the mid 20th century, and has recently been extended to abut the church yard once more.

There is also a semi-detached property of late 20th century construction immediately east of the church built on the former rope worker's site.

5.7.4 Scale and massing

The church, placed centrally within the original church yard, is a very significant feature, particularly its spire which rises to 51.8 metres. By contrast the handful of dwellings around the church yard consist of two sets of diminutive semi-detached vernacular cottages tucked into the south east corner, the low gabled almshouses with the adjacent 104 and 106 Church Street of recent construction modelled in similar scale and set at 90 degrees to the church yard, which minimises their impact. The Priests House, 65 Church Street, placed at the head of the Church Street vista close to the entrance of the church yard, is a remodelled and extended two storey building, formerly three cottages.



The Priest's House, 65 Church Street

5.7.5 Construction and materials

The Church of St Mary is constructed in limestone ashlar with fine detailing (moulding and fine window tracery) and the roof is stone slates. All other buildings are of limestone rubble with the traditional combed wheat reed or stone slate roofing. The almshouses have stone mullioned windows with iron-studded plank doors, the cottages simple casements under timber lintels and plank doors with canopied porches. The few subsidiary buildings in brick and tile add to the informal rural atmosphere.

5.7.6 Means of enclosure

The limestone churchyard wall and other low boundary walls have a unifying influence, containing the road around the church yard. The vernacular cottages are set some distance back from the road behind cottage gardens which rely on vegetation for enclosure.



Limestone boundary wall at the church

5.7.7 Trees, hedges and open spaces

The historic churchyard dominates this area, devoid of gravestones and roughly tended with wild flowers, its simplicity sets off the magnificent church. The church yard extension is, by contrast, busy with decorated grave stones and adorned with flowers. Two yew trees frame the gateway to the church yard, but otherwise there are surprisingly few trees in the church yard itself. To the west, north and east lie the vast open meadows of the River Cherwell.



Yew trees at church entrance

5.7.8 Features of special interest

- The recently restored spire is a landmark, particularly from across the Cherwell valley. Swifts nest in the tower during the summer. The flora in the church yard contributes to the rural character.
- The almshouses have date stones to commemorate their construction and refurbishment (1671 and 1953 respectively).
- The war memorial is located in a prominent position close to the church yard gateway at the head of Church Street



The War Memorial



Almshouses date stone 1671

5.7.9 Carriageways and footways

Church Street wraps around the churchyard and its lack of footways or kerbs very much contributes to the informal rural character. The road terminates at the car park, which is tarmacadum surfaced, and unsurfaced public rights of way fan out across the meadows, some part of the well-used Kidlington Circular Walk.

5.7.10 Threats

The car park to the north of the church caters for most of the needs of church goers but may need extension to avoid damage to Church Street from parking.

The vernacular cottages are small scale for contemporary requirements, but extensions would need to be very carefully handled to avoid dominating the original fabric.



82-84 Church Street

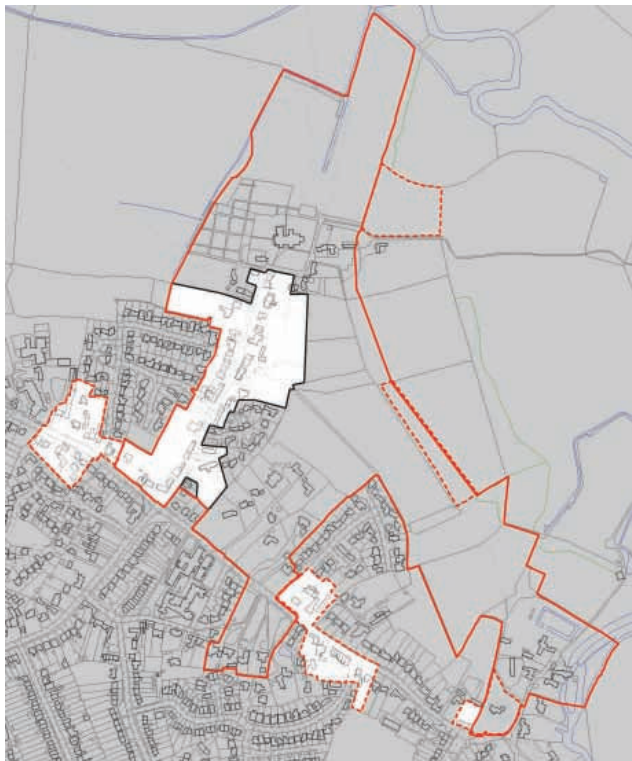
5.7.11 Key Views

- There are spectacular views across the water meadows towards the church spire, which can be seen against the flat horizon amongst and between layers of trees and hedgerows from all directions for many miles around and conversely, expansive vistas out of the church yard west, north and east over the flat landscape.
- The approach along Church Street enjoys views of the spire framed by building frontages for its entire length.



View northwest from the churchyard across open fields

5.8 Village Street Character Area



Successive OS Maps show that up until the latter part of the 20th century, the settlement pattern remained constant and housing density within the character area low, with many areas under orchard cultivation. Change occurred with the pressure for housing development, and the streets saw wholesale in-fill from the 1970s onwards.



Manor Farm, 17 Church Street

The roads now known as The Moors, Mill Street and Church Street were the arterial transport routes of their day, connecting the settlement of Kidlington north to the medieval field systems towards Thrupp, east to the mill and latterly north-west to the Langford Lane Wharf and coal depot. The importance of these roads has declined with the advent of the car, bringing the route of the old Roman Road (A4260) to prominence. This has left the northern historic fringes of Kidlington as something of a leafy backwater.

5.8.1 Land Use

This area is almost entirely residential today; historically this was not the case and as recently as World War II there was a thriving network of businesses along both Mill Street and Church Street. The Kings Arms and The Six Bells public houses and a small row of shops at the east end of Mill Street are the sole survivors of this.

Farms were also important to the area. One of the original manor houses, Bury House, was located on Church Street, although its exact position is unclear. Manor Farm functioned as a working farm until 1968 and was large by 19th century standard: cows were driven down from the paddock beside the church to the yard off Church Street, hence the former name, Cow Lane.

5.8.2 Street Pattern

The historic footpaths and transport links have given rise to the carriageways of today. The Moors (formerly Bury Moor Road) together with Mill Street ran across the north-eastern edge of the former Town or Village Green (see figure 5). The junction of these two roads was formerly known as Bateman's Corner, a popular recreation ground. Sadly, modern development swept the green away leaving just a small section on the south-side of Mill Street. The properties along School Road now define where the south edge of the green once was.

The main roads form a cross road at the junction of The Moors, Mill Street, High Street and Church Street. A number of subsidiary modern estate roads emanate from these historic routes, as well as a number of historic 'courtyards': nos. 29-33 The Moors and nos. 53-59 Church Street. The remnants of former farmyards can also be identified by the presence of both converted and derelict farm barns and outbuildings.

5.8.3 Building age, type and style

Buildings from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries are all to be found and can be readily identified from their architectural detailing.

The Moors and Mill Street have a mixture of housing types. The 18th and 19th century stone-built housing stock is represented by both polite and vernacular properties, the latter sometimes built as a short row or appended to the gable of an adjacent building. The 20th century in-fill buildings are mostly of yellow brick; however more recently constructed stone terraced housing is vernacular in style.



72 Church Street - a polite dwelling

On Church Street both polite and vernacular architecture is in evidence. At the south end of the lane more humble properties predominate, whereas larger houses occupy the northern part. In the Inclosure award of 1818, the larger properties on Church Street are classed as 'a house and homestead' i.e. farm with farm buildings. These mostly remain although most have lost their associated farmland.

Generally, both polite and vernacular architecture is represented in equal measure. This variation in building type and settlement pattern underpins the character and appearance of the character area. However, it is clear from both photographs and OS maps that wide-scale clearance of cottages and barns has been undertaken in the past, to the detriment of the integral historic character of the village street area.

5.8.4 Scale and massing

The majority of the properties on the Moors are set back from the carriageway, with the exception of The King's Arms public house. The properties therefore form a relatively coherent building line. The buildings, with the exception of the tightly knit yards where vernacular cottages appear jumbled together, are sited in generous plots. The impression of space that this layout creates is fundamental to the character of the area. Throughout the character area the buildings are mostly two storeys, the notable exceptions being the grander houses and some cottages with attic storeys.



Polite and vernacular: a direct comparison nos. 5 and 7 Church Street

The difference in scale between polite and vernacular architecture can be illustrated by comparing nos. 5 and 7 Church Street: although the two structures have the same eaves height, number 7 is an older vernacular property with 3 storeys, whereas the later polite number 5 has just two storeys. Inside, the ceiling heights reflect this later trend for more space and light.



20-22 The Moors: vernacular vs. polite

Church Street is similar to Mill Street in that there is a great variety of historic building types, although here the buildings appear segregated by social class. The humbler dwellings and former businesses located in the south of the street, the grander properties in isolated walled plots to the northern end of the lane. This is not an absolute rule, as terraces of dwellings are found in the northern section of the lane, not built to the roadside but set back within their own plots. Interestingly a number of the grander properties appear to have been deliberately constructed facing south (e.g. Manor Farm and Grove House) so that in the case of Grove House the road has to navigate its way around the side of the building.



Grove House, no. 60 Church Street

5.8.6 Means of enclosure

The Moors and Mill Street form a continuous leafy residential road. The buildings are generally set back, resulting in front boundary walls and hedges which define the edge of the public space. The front garden boundary walls are a pleasant mix of low stone walls, garden trees and other shrubby vegetation. What therefore greets the eye is a strong, visually pleasing boundary of vegetation. To the east end of Mill Street this changes with rows of vernacular stone cottages interspersed with detached houses defining the edge of the public space. In Church Street this variation is emphasised, with the strong building line defined by the buildings at the south end, but defined more by front walls and hedges at the north end towards the church.

5.8.7 Trees, hedges and open spaces

Due to the frontages of many properties being on or very close to the carriageway, there are few areas of greenery within the character area. The larger front gardens in The Moors and Mill Street allow for garden foliage to contribute more significantly to the 'leafy suburb' appearance of the streetscape. There are also a number of tall architectural trees which significantly contribute to the appearance of the streetscene.

5.8.8 Features of special interest

Nos. 74 and 76 Church Street have interesting carved wooden panels showing Renaissance influence in their porches, depicting a tree and head respectively. This is accompanied by a date stone (JAD 1776) at no. 76.



Porch and plaque at no. 76

Manor Farmhouse, no.17, has a particularly prominent Grade II stone archway entrance in classical style with segmental pediment.

Nos. 33A and 35 The Moors are unusual in that they were originally designed as tower houses. Although extended significantly in passing years, the square cores of these structures are still visible.

The shops at the southern end of Mill Street are a pleasing find in a residential area. The village was once dotted with small shops like these and it is good to find such a tradition still alive in Kidlington.

5.8.9 Carriageways and footways

The public highways and adjacent pavements are conventionally surfaced. This gives the area a very manicured and urban appearance, especially on The Moors and Mill Street where the building line is well set back from the road. Historic paving can be seen outside nos. 52-60 Church Street and there are granite setts in the entrance to Spindlers, which serves to mark the edge of the carriageway.



The main differences in these photographs are due to the advent of the car and modern technology: note the loss of the thatch on number 11 Church Street and the open fields to the east



1A Franklin Close—a barn under threat



Cables continue to mar views of historic buildings

5.8.10 Threats

- There were several derelict barns and outbuildings left behind in the recent development sweep. In particular the barn on the corner of Franklin's Close holds a significant position, and efforts should be made to rescue this building as a sign of the village's agricultural past. Only a barn or barn-like building would be appropriate for this site. Further north on Church Street, another small area behind no. 54 is ideal for rescue rather than clearance.
- Inappropriate in-fill, in terms of design, density and location, remain a constant threat to the appearance of the area. This includes the last vestiges of the Town Green which should be protected as open space.
- The location of satellite dishes and rooflights on the front elevations of buildings continues to have a degrading impact on the overall appearance of the area and the building to which they are attached.
- On street parking on Church Street remains a threat to the appearance of the area.

5.8.11 Key Views

- The key view is that of the spire of the Church of St Mary framed by the traditional houses along Church Street.
- Views along Mill Street and The Moors are visually pleasing, giving an impression of traditional vernacular architecture and trees. The bends in the road limit long-distance views, encouraging further exploration of the village.
- Sadly, all views are marred by the ubiquitous over-head cables that seem to be a feature of the settlement.



View down The Moors with Thornbury House in the distance © J. Kennedy



Trees soften the strong lines along Mill Street

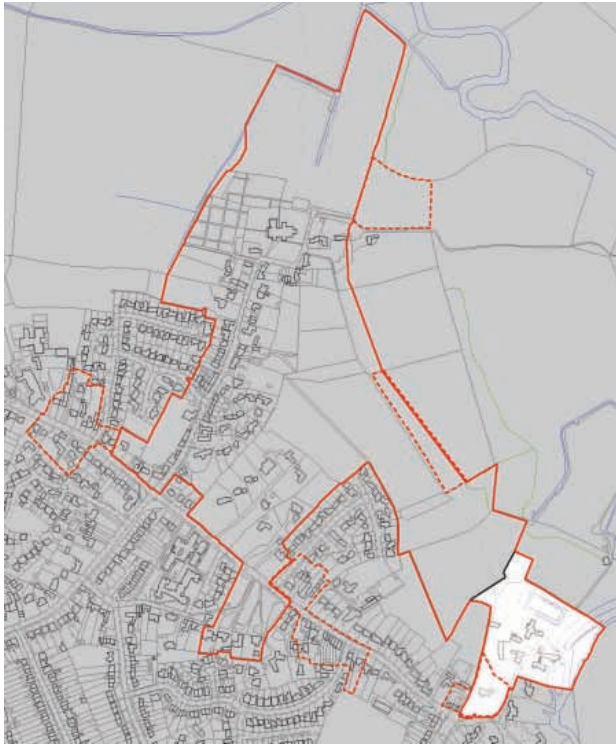


Marlborough Terrace: a hidden gem



Mill Street has been drastically altered since the 1930s to accommodate modern traffic © O. Gurney

5.9 Mill End Character Area



This area covers the properties surrounding the former mill and the associated ponds and river. The site has contained a mill since the 11th century and, although the property is now a dwelling, this continuation of use is an indication of how important the industry was to the developing village.

5.9.1 Land use

The area is now entirely residential with pockets of scrub land, pasture, ponds and river. The mill is no longer in active operation although the sluice gates are still used to regulate the flow of the River Cherwell through the area.

5.9.2 Building age, type and style

The five buildings within the area have a homogenous character, constructed between the 17th and 19th centuries, with later additions and alterations. The buildings are all two or two and a half storey, and are mainly set back from the carriageway, reducing their immediate impact. The exception is Mill House, which sits almost directly on the carriageway and provides a stunning entrance to the area, encouraging the eye to follow as it bends around the corner. The structures are functional and mainly vernacular, although there are a few grand touches, such as the projecting gables at Mill House.

5.9.3 Construction and materials

The universal use of limestone is a uniting factor in the area. The use of stone slate for roofing is the most prolific, although the Miller's House is notable for its surviving thatch. Wooden cladding can be seen at Mill End House on the eastern end and dormer; sitting comfortably with the dark wood of the windows. The area is free of modern plastic windows and recent alterations have generally been in sympathy with the properties.



The Miller's House c.1910: a wall now divides the garden from the front and has a later extension © J. Kennedy



Mill House with its boundary wall and projecting gable

5.9.4 Carriageways and footways

Mill End has preserved its rural character in part due to the lack of modern carriageway features. The exception is a speed bump, installed at the entrance to the area to act as a flood barrier. The open turning circle and passing places are often used as parking by residents. Although this is having the effect of eroding the grass verges, the lane continues to retain its countryside charm without the intrusion of modern kerbs and signs.

A public footpath (FP265/7) runs northwest to the west of Mill House. This historic route is mentioned in *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1534/5. The narrow pathway leads across the flood plain fields to St Mary's Church, emerging beside the almshouses, and is defined on its eastern side behind Mill House by a limestone wall.



The enclosed carriageway with rural verges emphasises the isolated location whilst retaining character

5.9.5 Means of enclosure, trees and green spaces

The boundary wall of Gowan Lea on Mill Street leads the eye into Mill End, creating a strong curving entrance to the area. Although the house is mid/late 20th century, the wall is an important feature within the character area, and the trees within the garden are a pleasant backdrop for the striking wall.

Mill End is dotted with trees and green verges, and the field of Mill House is a pleasing entrance to the more enclosed area around the mill. Each house has extensive gardens with several mature trees and hedges. The most striking is a large conifer hedge at Mill End House which allows privacy for the house beyond and a lush green backdrop for the houses.

High limestone walls provide a sense of enclosure which is countered by the open flood plains to the north. Combined with strong metal gates at the entrance to the Mill and Mill End House, this could be a forbidding and dominating factor on the area; however, the open lane to the south and the rear field garden of Mill House counteract this and balance the sense of enclosure.

The vegetation softens rather than overwhelms the limestone walls and helps the area to retain its rural charm.



The boundary wall at Gowan Lea is a striking landmark at both Mill End and on Mill Street



Mill End from the air - the public domain is tightly enclosed by limestone walls, whereas the aerial photo reveals very spacious plots beyond

5.9.6 Features of special interest

- The wheels are still in place at the mill and the sluice gates regulate the water flow, a practice which has continued for nearly 1000 years. The mill was used to generate electricity for The Miller's House during the early 20th century and a swathe of cables was previously hung between the buildings.
- There is a high proportion of statutory listings within the area which indicates their importance, both historically and architecturally, to the development of the village.
- The isolated location of the properties has preserved this rural enclave and prevented the influx of modern materials and adaptations. It is a charming encapsulation.



High water at the Mill

5.9.10 Threats

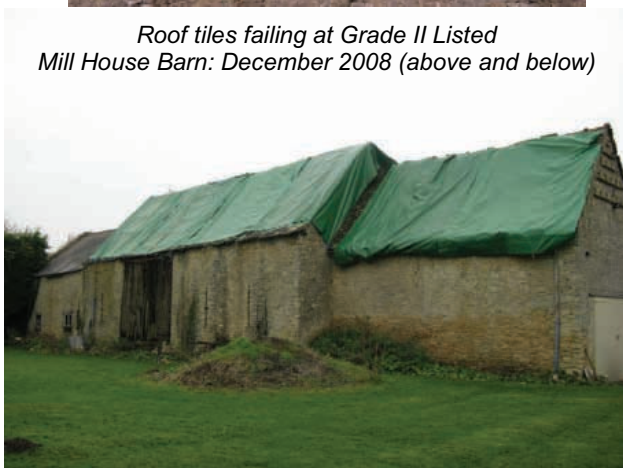
- Flooding is a serious threat to properties in Mill End. The floods of July 2007 breached the ground floors of the properties. Regular clearing of the river Cherwell can sometimes cause problems for the Mill as large pieces of debris are swept down river.
- The Grade II barn at Mill House is currently at risk. Action must be taken swiftly to prevent this building from falling irrevocably into disrepair.



The large private gardens are sometimes covered by flood water

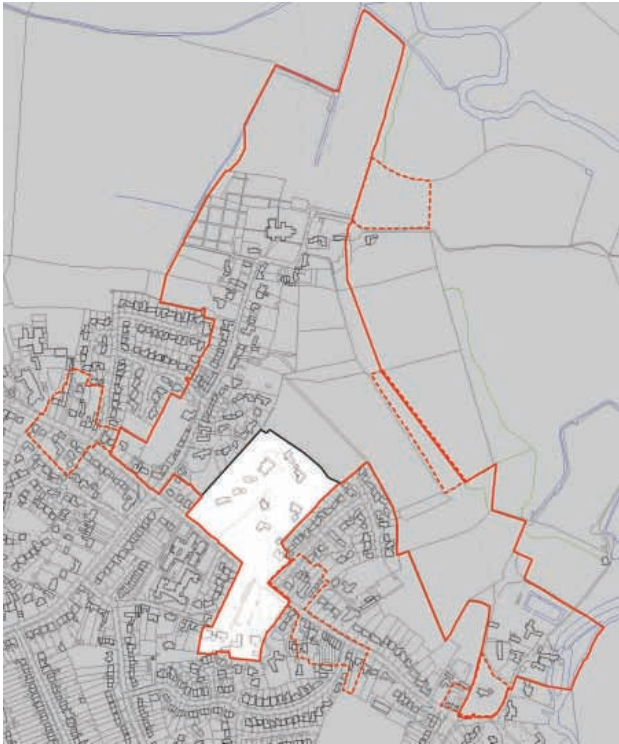


Roof tiles failing at Grade II Listed Mill House Barn: December 2008 (above and below)



The historic route leading to the church

5.10 Large Houses in Open Setting



Large residential properties in unusually spacious grounds with heavy tree cover. The area contains the last remnants of the former village green, which now survives as private gardens.

5.10.1 Land use and street pattern

Divided by Mill Street, this area comprises the remnants of the former green to the south and infilling of spacious heavily treed grounds to the north.

The former Rectory Farm complex on the northern side of Mill Street is accessed via a private drive, as is 40-52 Mill Street on the southern side.



Buildings are hidden from the main carriageway

5.10.2 Building age, type and style

The historic properties include the Old Rectory which is 16th century in origin, and former farmhouses from the late 17th to mid 18th centuries. The style is mainly 'Georgian', with grand frontages, while the Old Rectory and Old Vicarage reflect their earlier origins.

Interspersed with these historic dwellings are modern additions, including the conversions of the Rectory Stables, as well as some late 20th century dwellings. The newer properties are styled 'of their time'; detached with large garages and plenty of open space around them.



52 Mill Street: viewed from across the road with an extensive front garden

5.10.3 Scale and massing

The scale of the properties is significantly different to the vernacular cottages of Church Street, being much larger detached dwellings. They are predominantly two storey with few attic conversions. The exception is Rectory Stables, which is a one and a half storey conversion, having a minimal impact on its surroundings. The properties are set back from the carriageway, resulting in less of an immediate impact on the streetscene, and protecting the dwellings from the main road.

The principal buildings of the Old Vicarage and Old Rectory are hidden from view due to their positioning and the vegetation. The Old Vicarage would have had a prominent position on the edge of the former green, while the Old Rectory would have been visible as part of the farm complex across its southern pastures. Now the Old Rectory is entirely hidden, and the Old Vicarage can only be seen through tantalising glimpses from the main road.

5.10.4 Construction and materials

Despite the differing ages of the properties, the use of limestone coloured stone has a uniting effect, and together with the expansive grounds, allows the newer properties to blend well into the surroundings. The Old Vicarage and Old Rectory are limestone rubble with some use of ashlar on the windows and doorways, and the stone slate roofing spreads to the outbuildings and dovecote at the Old Rectory. Both have stone mullioned windows, and the drip moulding around the front door of the Old Rectory is an interesting feature within the area. The roof of Rectory Stables has been constructed to blend in using new stone slates, albeit set with dormers and rooflights.

The modern properties have concrete tiles and stone walling with double glazing and dormers. These do not sit unhappily with the older buildings, due to the expansive tree cover and spacious grounds.

5.10.5 Means of enclosure

Limestone walls are a feature of the older properties. The low wall around the Old Rectory contains the area of garden in front of the property, whereas to the rear, the 2metre wall allows privacy for the walled garden. This is echoed at no.47 Mill Street, which can be seen from the public highway.



The high wall behind no.47 Mill Street



The Old Rectory: Grade II Listed

The modern properties have a range of enclosures - a split rail wooden fence is seen at 19-21 Mill Street, and no. 31 relies on thick but low hedges for its boundary. A tunnel-effect is created by hedging along the main driveway through the area of the 19-39 Mill Street.

The edge of the former green is defined by low limestone walls, now covered in ivy and other vegetation. These are capped with rounded concrete and are in various states of repair.



Rectory Stables



Tunnel-like hedges and snatched views

5.10.6 Trees, hedges and open spaces

A small area of the former Town Green remains in front of 40-52 Mill Street. This is a key area of historical importance worthy of protection. Mature trees are grouped rather than scattered across the area, and therefore the area is open to views across to the largely 20th century development on the northern side of Mill Street.



The area of lawn in front of 54 Mill Street is an important open space

Both the area of former green and the private drive of 19-39 Mill Street provide the properties with extensive front gardens shielding the houses from the main carriageway. The groupings of mature trees within these spaces give a sense of enclosure, and all the trees within the grounds of nos. 19, 21, 23 and 31 are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. In addition to this, several of the trees within the grounds of The Old Vicarage and the Coach House are also covered by TPOs.



The Dovecote: Grade II Listed*

5.10.8 Features of special interest

- The circular dovecote at The Old Rectory (Grade II* Listed), survivor of the medieval farm
- The important remnants of the village green, key open spaces within the conservation area
- The properties have unusually spacious plots with mature vegetation. This is an important feature which should be protected

5.10.9 Carriageways and footways

The road is a main bus route and often subject to heavy traffic. The historic paving and footway has been replaced by modern tarmac and kerbing. Some use of granite setts can be seen beside 47 Mill Street. The carriageway has also been relocated within the 20th century to accommodate modern traffic along Mill Street & The Moors (by Thornbury House & by Petre Place). The driveway leading to the Old Rectory is rural in character with compressed gravel and no kerbing, and paving slabs have been inserted in the drive to The Old Rectory and Rectory Stables.

5.10.10 Threats

Modern development has virtually destroyed views of the village green and its surrounding prominent houses. The small remnant north of 40—52 Mill Street is vital to the streetscene and it is important to retain this area as undeveloped land.

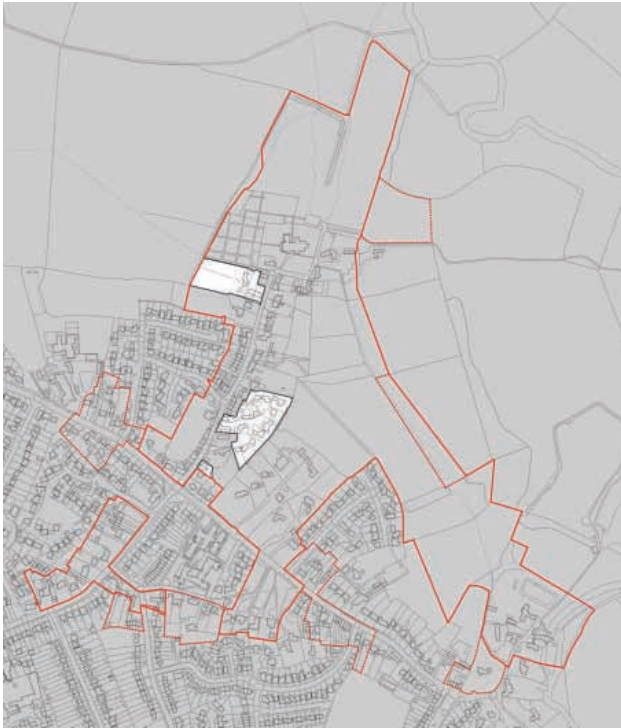
5.10.11 Key views

Due to the introverted nature of the properties, the only views of the areas are from within the private curtilages of the dwellings. However, there are views from the adjacent fields looking southwest back at the conservation area.



The dovecote viewed from the fields beyond © S. Daggitt

5.11 Modern Infill



Areas of post-1950 housing, in-filling gaps in Church Street.

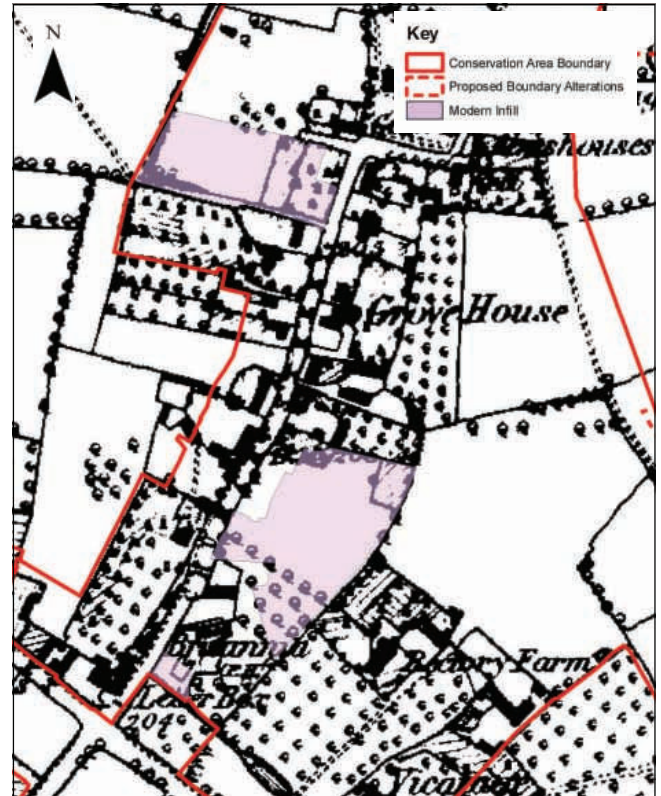


Fig 12: 1883 OS map - the location of relevant infill development

5.11.1 History

Gaps in the streetscene and former farming land have gradually been filled with 20th century development. Figure 12 shows how the land around Church Street was once covered in orchards and pasture - areas which are now housing.

The land on which numbers 53-59 Church Street and Church Cottage now stand was likely to have been the site of Bury House, a fortified property known of at the time of Inclosure. This property was demolished by 1877 and the site remained vacant until the 1950s. It was used as a scrap iron and junk dump belonging to no. 65, and when the scrap was removed to commence building works, 3ft thick pink colour-washed wall were found. It is possible that these were the remains of Bury House.



Franklin Close



1 Spindlers

5.11.2 53-59 Church Street

These unconventional properties are a very different international style to that of the earlier properties around them. Designed and built by eastern European A. Dexler in the early 1950s, these properties are constructed on concrete, steel frames and large areas of glazing for the new 'modern lifestyle', demanding better light and air, concealing the soil and rainwater pipes, and 'a closer contact with nature'.



57 and 59 Church Street: a radical new design seen in the 1950s without the later property of Church Cottage in front of them



53 and 55 Church Street



The entrance to Spindlers

5.11.2 Spindlers and Franklin Close

The new properties in Spindlers Close and Franklin Close are of a modern design and the use of limestone allows them to blend with the existing properties in the main street. The access is less intrusive than earlier development at Manor Way, and the use of granite setts at the entrance is appropriate.

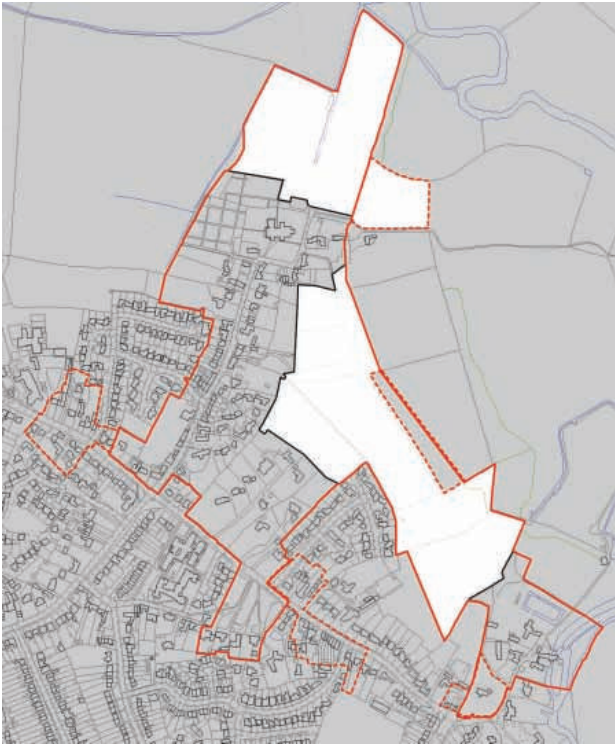
5.11.1 6-8 Church Street

Built in 2001, these are attempt to blend in with their surroundings by using sympathetic materials and styles. Limestone has been used for walling, and some buildings have reconstructed the casement-style windows which were common on the cottages of the 19th century.



6-8 Church Street: natural stone and vernacular detailing encourages mitigation

5.12 Church Fields Character Area



This area includes the former Scheduled Ancient Monument site, and the fields to the east of the Church Street Conservation Area. It is proposed to include a small section of field to the northeast containing further earthworks from the former monument, and to justify the boundary in line with the existing right of way.

5.12.1 Land Use

In the main, the large expanse of fields to the east of historic Kidlington is used as paddocks for grazing horses. The land to the north of the church appears as a carefully cultivated shrubby wilderness, with natural ponds and open areas divided into sections with young larch and hawthorn patches.



The pond north of the church



The church can be seen once again in its rural setting

5.12.2 Landscape

The area north of the church is known locally as St Mary's fields—a nature reserve maintained by the Parish Council. It is a wild area, providing nesting and feeding sites for large numbers of bird species, as well as deer and foxes. The fields have more of a relationship with the open landscape beyond than more enclosed area of the houses and church.



5.12.3 Trees and hedges

Four trees close to the public footpath, east of no. 52 Church Street, are covered by TPOs. The three limes and one wych elm are important landmarks along the footpath. The shrubby undergrowth of mosses provides vital nutrients for visiting wildlife, and the combination of larch, birch and hawthorn is a natural contrast to the open patches of heath-like grasses.



The rear of the properties on Mill Street and Church Street can clearly be seen from the public right of way



The footpath beside the Almshouses with its limestone wall and wire fencing

5.12.4 Threats

- The public right of way is an ideal place to see the rear of the properties on Church Street and Mill Street. The paddocks stretch right up to the high walls of the properties, and shows how easily inappropriate development to the rear can be detrimental to the conservation area. At present, the high walls and vegetation blends the line between fields and houses, and this symbiotic relationship should be protected.
- Telegraph poles march across the area, bringing an unwelcome touch of urban life to the wilderness.
- The area is prone to flooding, particularly during the winter and wet seasons.



Although thankfully smaller than their 1950s ancestors, telegraph poles still blight the openness of the area

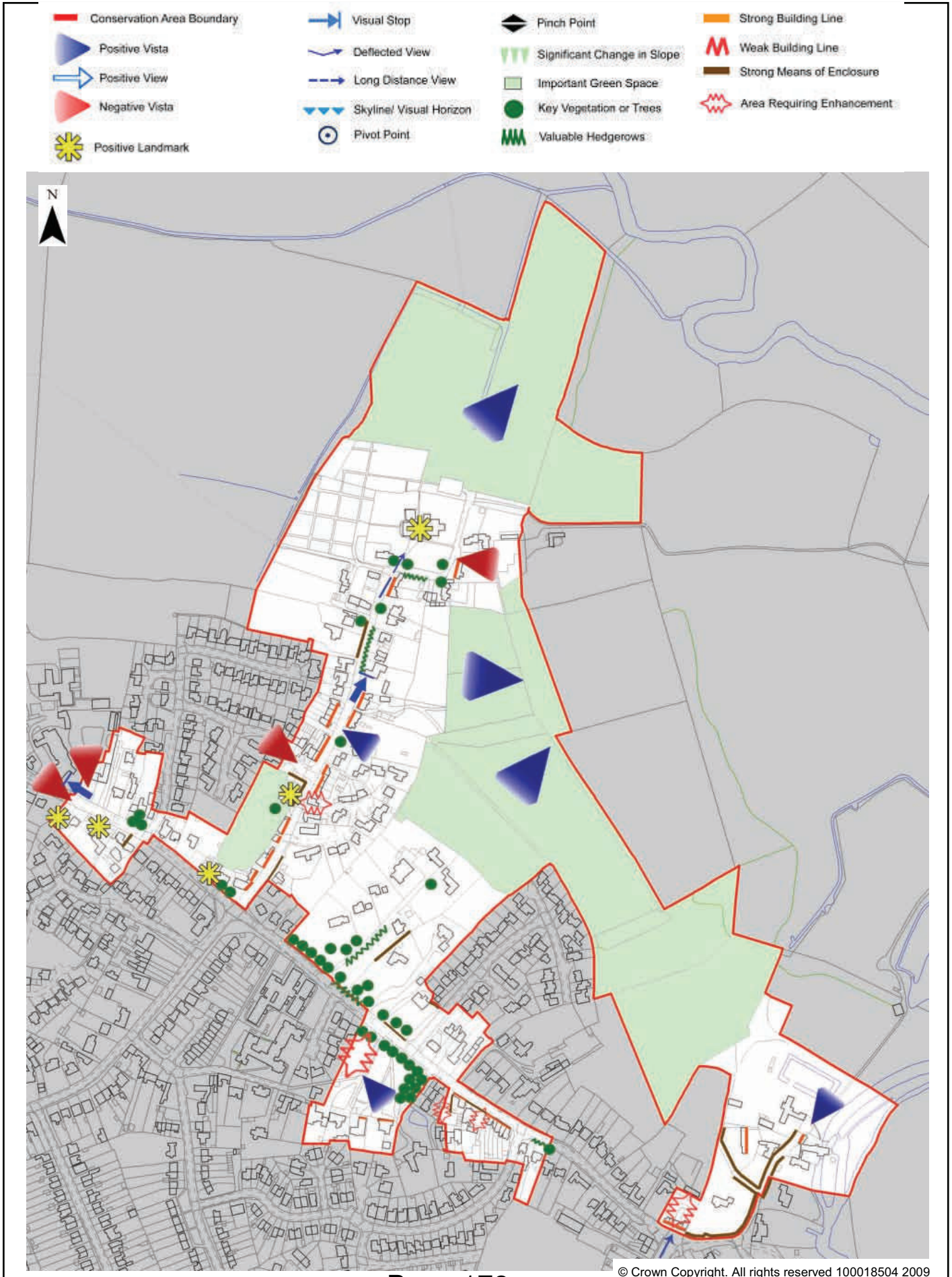


The field to be included contains earthworks from the Roman archaeology site



The open fields north of the Church, with the footpath to Hampton Poyle

Fig. 13: Visual Analysis



6. High Street Conservation Area

This Conservation Area includes properties built overlooking the former Town Green along its northwest and southwest sides.

It is proposed to extend the Conservation Area to include all the properties on School Road which enclosed the former green. These properties are comparable in age and style to the remaining smaller properties in the area. It is also proposed to include 97 School Road, a former detached house which has been extended to form four properties, in a similar fashion to the terrace of cottages at 107-115 High Street.

The Town Green was a central part of village life, providing an area of open space crossed by footpaths and containing a pond to the southeast.

6.1 Architectural History

The northern end of the High Street was a prime location for the smart villas which grew up as the area was developed in the late 18th century, imposing buildings on the landscape.

95 High Street is a prime example of the aspiration of property developers in the late 18th century. The building appears from the front to be a grand three storey 'Georgian' villa; upon closer inspection, the frontage is only one room deep and the older part of the property is evident at the rear. It is likely that the cost of building a new property was cut by



Fig 14: The former Town Green southeast of the High Street c.1830 © Kidlington & District Historical Society (with approximate High Street Conservation Area Boundary)

re-facing and re-modelling the front elevation while retaining the older core and rear of the property. Other properties such as Tower Hill (no. 101 High Street) also have historic elements evident at the rear.



95 High Street, only one room deep (left) with a grand front elevation (right)

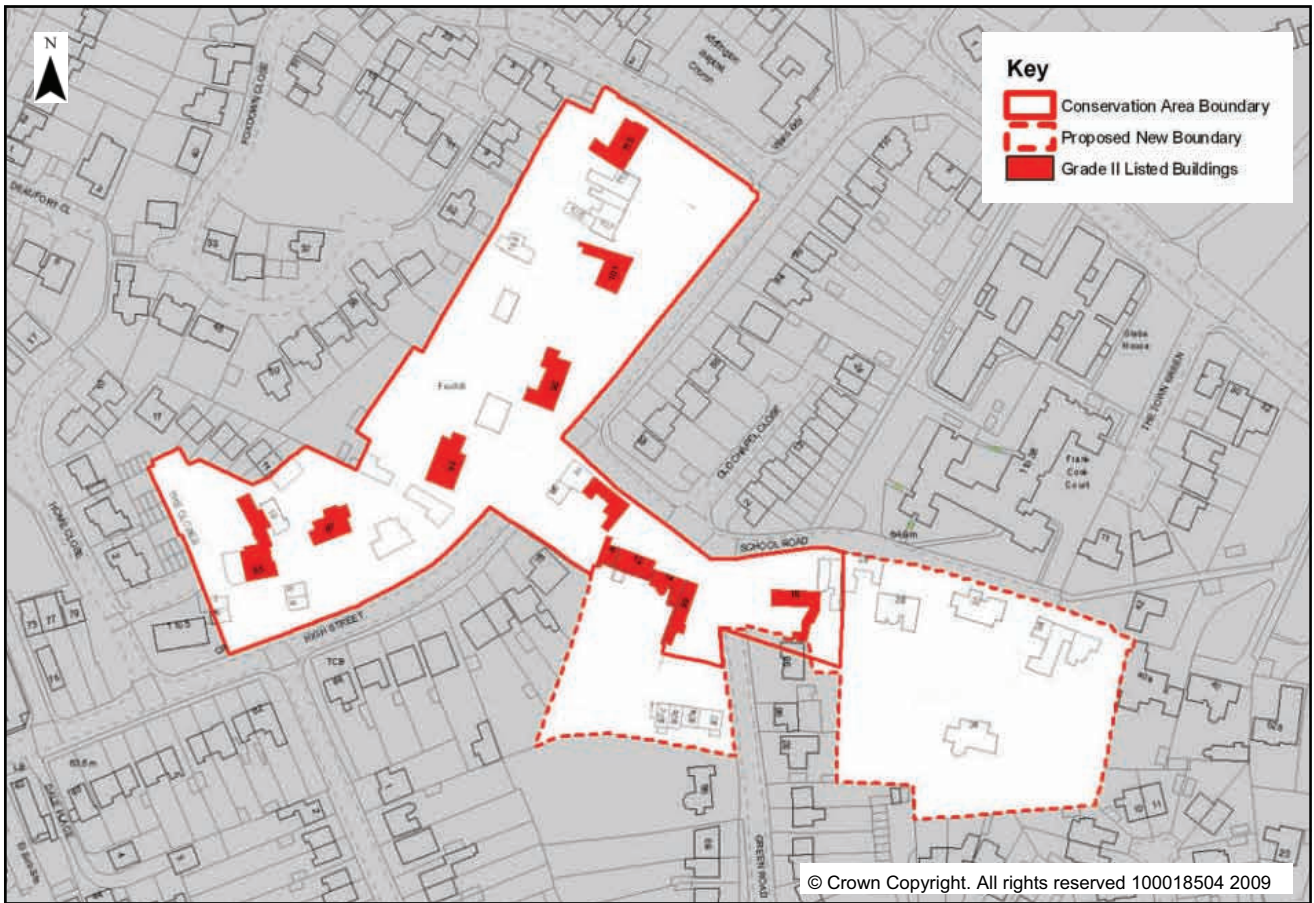


Fig 15: Listed Buildings within High Street Conservation Area. For descriptions see Appendix 2

Properties on School Road are smaller and more vernacular in style, compatible with the former use of no 14 as a workhouse and school room. A school was established on the green, opposite the Methodist Chapel, which was built in 1851 next to 14 School Road, the former workhouse. Allotments stretched on what was glebe land, cultivatable land belonging to the parish church.

The school closed in 1952, and after a fire in 1977 the building was demolished. The green was built upon soon after, creating Old Chapel Close and Frank Cook Court.



The Methodist Chapel on School Road in the early 20th century with no. 93 High Street visible in the distance © KDHS



The same view today with modern roadway and front gardens where the chapel once stood

6.2 Land Use

The area is now entirely in residential use, although the properties have had various uses in former years: a workhouse, shops, farms and a public house. Several of the properties in the High Street have collections of outbuildings which were originally used as farm buildings, for example at numbers 101 and 115 High Street. Those at 101 High Street have been converted to residential use; others are largely derelict but nevertheless contribute positively to the character of the conservation area.

6.3 Street Pattern

High Street runs northeast towards the parish Church of St Mary and was therefore an important route within the village. The western end of High Street, outside the conservation area is now the commercial centre of the settlement, close to its junction with the main north-south route to Oxford.

Prior to Inclosure, High Street was known as Kidlington Green Road, as it ran through the northern edge of the town green. It is also probable that the High Street was part of the route from Bletchington and Hampton Poyle. At this time School Road was the only road leading off High Street and skirted the south side of village green.

School Road originally defined the southern edge of the green, and buildings were only erected on its southern side. The school, built in 1851, broke this tradition, and the green was used as the playing fields for over a century.



Manor Court, 85 High Street

6.4 Building Age, type and style

There is a high proportion of statutorily listed buildings within the area, the majority of which date from the 19th century with earlier origins. Many of the properties on the north-west of High Street can be traced back to Inclosure in 1818. The oldest occupied site is at Home Close (no. 85), which has origins in the 16th century; the present building has been much altered and modern development has occurred in its grounds.

The former public house, The Old Dog (18 School Road) was one of Kidlington's first inns, the House of Jesus. The pub was run by monks for travellers in the middle ages, although the present building is likely to date from the 16th century. The pub became a dwelling in 1934, reducing the number of commercial buildings within the area.

Situated on the edge of the town green, the High Street was an ideal site for gentleman's residences which became popular in the 19th century. Conspicuous wealth has resulted in houses with fine 'Georgian' front elevations and large grounds, in contrast with the cottages and former workhouse on School Road. The remaining houses on School Road are Victorian in style, while retaining the vernacular proportions of earlier residences.



View south from the junction of High Street and School Road

The styles of the properties indicate their status; grand houses on the edge of the green. Although the area of open fields is now gone, the houses are a reminder of how grand their aspects once were. The individual styles vary, correlating with the architectural tastes of their time of construction, with the more humble terraces being constructed in the vernacular style, whilst the larger detached properties have either been gentrified or display classical features such as quoins, sash windows, and in the case of Hill House, a moulded cornice to a parapet.



The classical parapet features of no. 101 High Street

6.5 Scale & massing

Properties are generally two storeys, either detached or in short terraces. The difference in height between modern and older properties is illustrated in the additional property of Foxhill on the High Street. The newer building sits between the tall and imposing 97, and the more vernacular but still grand 93.



Foxhill between two large properties

6.6 Construction & materials

Properties are largely built of coursed limestone rubble, with ashlar used for detailing on some of the principal properties, e.g. Tower Hill which has ashlar quoins and dressings. Home Close (85 High Street) has an ashlar front and end stacks and a portico with moulded cornice and columns. Later additions and chimneys are often in brick. Roofing materials vary with an almost equal mix of stone slate, and Welsh slate, the latter found on properties of the 19th century. There are several examples of 20th century tiled roofs.

Doors vary, although there is a dominance of panelled doors, some with C20 materials. The C19 fanlights at nos. 85 and 101 High Street are an example of the opulence of the time. No. 4 School Road has a rare example of a plank door.

Timber lintels and casement windows are a feature of the smaller cottages. There are a few examples of 20th century replacement windows, for example 107-113 High Street. An illustration of the difficulty in replicating traditional fenestration in modern materials can be seen at 20-22 School Road, where the new windows of no. 24 can be compared with the older timber windows of no. 20.



Replacement and original windows at 22 and 20 School Road respectively

6.7 Means of enclosure

The main means of front enclosure are limestone rubble walls, mostly of about a metre in height with rounded mortar capping. Some of these front boundaries have been replaced in recent years, such as at 113 High Street, in unsympathetic materials (blue brick). Foxhill retains the existing strong enclosure line using high gates.

Several dwellings, most notably The Hill, Hill Farm House, and Hill Cottage are set behind high boundaries either formed by dense planting or limestone walls which preclude views. These give a sense of enclosure to the apex of the rise at the junction of High Street and School Road. The use of railings was popular on the grander buildings such as no. 85 High Street, and remnants of these can still be seen, such as at 28 School Road.



Wall and railings at 28 School Road

6.8 Trees, hedges & open spaces

Since the construction of Frank Cook Court, Glebe House and the properties at Chapel Close on the former green, vegetation is domestic and there is no definable open public space. The properties are set in generous front gardens, which once opened out onto the Town Green.

6.9 Features of special interest

- The rise of the road led to the area being known as The Hill. It is said that Tower Hill was so called due to the burning beacon which once stood there during the medieval period.
- The chamfered corner to the former shop at no. 2 School is a functional detail.



The strong building line and chamfered corner at 2 School Road

- Former workhouse at number 14: financially aided by the parish of Combe from its official establishment in 1735, the workhouse was later used for housing the poor until it was sold in 1836. Building land had been leased at the gravel pits on Moor End (The Moors) and the property was no longer needed. Shortly afterwards, it became a private dwelling.



The former workhouse, 14 School Road

6.10 Carriageways and footways

The junctions of High Street and School Road, and of School Road and Green Road, are key elements to the conservation area, creating defined lines within it. This junction is the highest part of the road, falling away to the north, south and east, with Hill House commanding a prominent position at the junction. This property would have been clearly visible across the green, marking the corner of the open space.

There are no examples of historic paving within the public areas, which are dominated by tarmac and concrete kerbing.

Outside The Old Dog, no. 18 School Road (a former public house), a remnant of rural verge survives. There is no footway along this section of the road, and although the grass verge is under threat from on-street parking, it is a reminder of how the road may have looked at the time of the green.



The junction of the High Street and School Road in the early 20th century showing 93 High Street to the right and 2 School Road as a shop © KDHS



6.11 Threats

- There are a number of examples of 20th century replacement windows and doors, which can erode the character of the conservation area.
- Due to the large plot size, there has been the temptation to infill with modern properties, as at no. 93 and Foxhill, and earlier at no. 85. Further development of this kind should be resisted to preserve the openness of the area.
- The railings at no. 93 are being pushed out by trees growing too close to the boundary wall, and wooden boarding is currently preventing these trees from blocking the pedestrian footway.
- The poor condition of the Grade II Listed 115 High Street and its former farm outbuildings, believed to have been vacant now for at least 30 years, are a cause for concern.

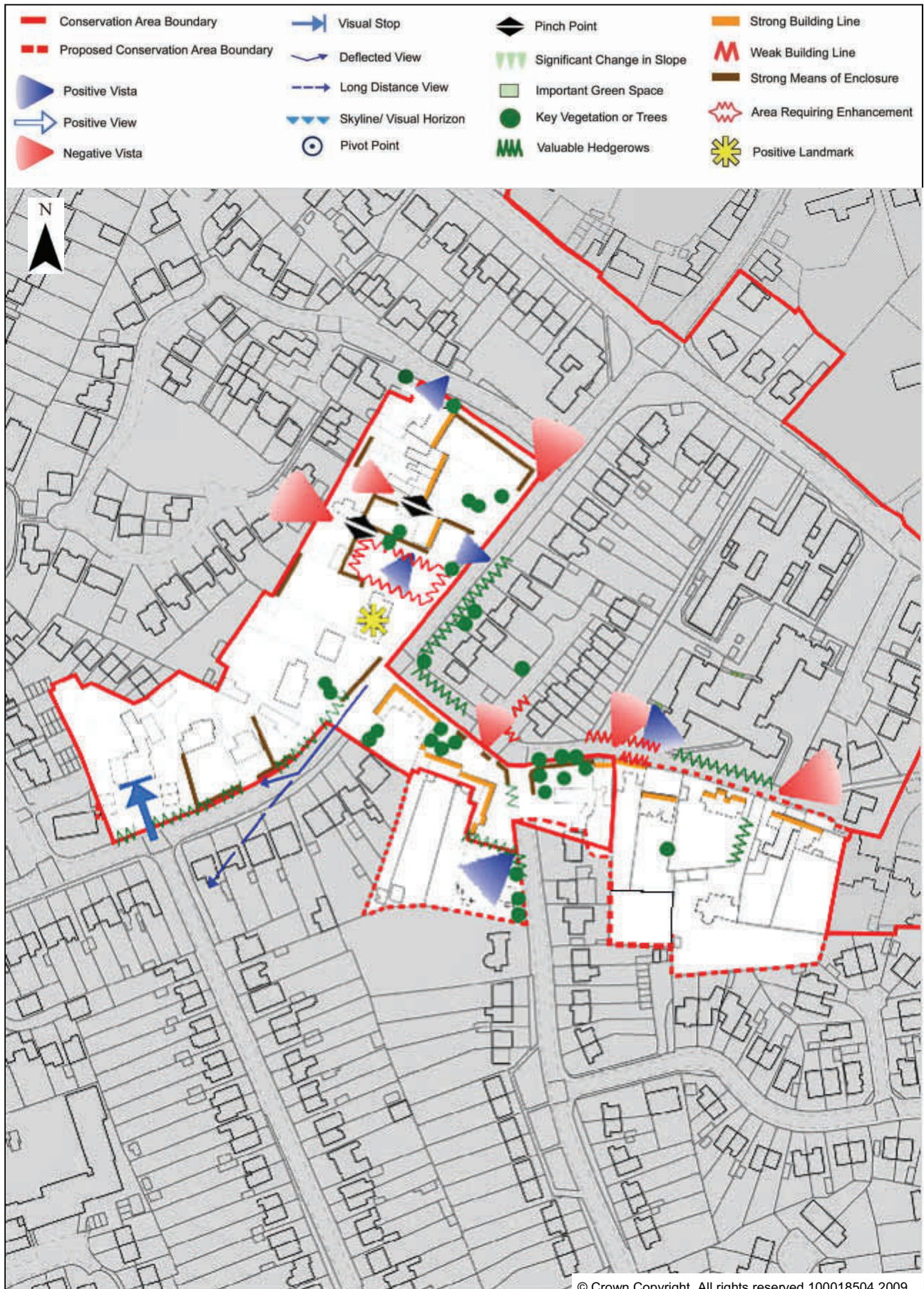


The outbuildings of 115 High Street



Rural verge outside 18 School Road

Fig. 16: Visual Analysis



7. The Rookery Conservation Area

This small conservation area focuses on a group of only eleven 19th century cottages that were probably built to accommodate workers at the grander properties north of Lyne Road. The introverted area is largely hidden from view and is now surrounded by 20th century development. It is proposed that the boundary be extended to include 8 additional dwellings of similar age along Lyne Road. The extension of the conservation area to encompass the Lyne Road frontage will link this conservation area to the settlement beyond and will help preserve or enhance the only remnants of this historic enclave that make a visual contribution to the wider settlement.



19th century terrace on Lyne Road—proposed for inclusion



Fig 17: The Rookery Conservation Area boundary



Fig 18: The Rookery 1883 with Conservation Area boundary imposed

7.2 Land use and street pattern

Lyne Road is part of the original east-west route through Kidlington, being an extension of High Street and Church Street, but continues west of Kidlington only as a footpath towards Begbroke Priory (this footpath can be seen on late 19th century OS maps). The Rookery itself is a small cul-de-sac off Lyne Road and its route appears to be unchanged from the earliest OS maps. The buildings are entirely residential and there is nothing to suggest any other former uses. Number 13-16 The Rookery effectively turn their backs on Lyne Road and are accessed from a shared path between the cottages and their gardens, adding to their intimacy.



41-43 Lyne Road - mid 19th century properties proposed for inclusion

7.3 Building age, type and style

The properties are all 19th century cottages. There are three sets of terraces, the ones on Lyne Road being set parallel to 13-16 The Rookery. These properties are shown on the 1883 OS map, surrounded by large gardens, accompanied by a well at the south of the area. The style is mainly vernacular, although this is contrasted with several classical embellishments on nos. 8-10, including sash windows.

Although several of the properties have been much altered, including modern windows and extensions, their 19th century origins are clearly visible both in plan and elevation. The homogenous character of the materials and vernacular styles makes it a charming addition to the village.

7.4 Scale and massing

The properties are two storeys in height with three terraces, two detached and two semi-detached houses. The eave height of nos. 8-10 is slightly higher, being of classical proportions. This modernisation of vernacular cottages using polite architectural features can be seen in other areas of the village, although it is most pronounced and visible at the Rookery.



The terrace of The Rookery can just be seen behind the garages on Lyne Road, showing how comparable the two terraces are

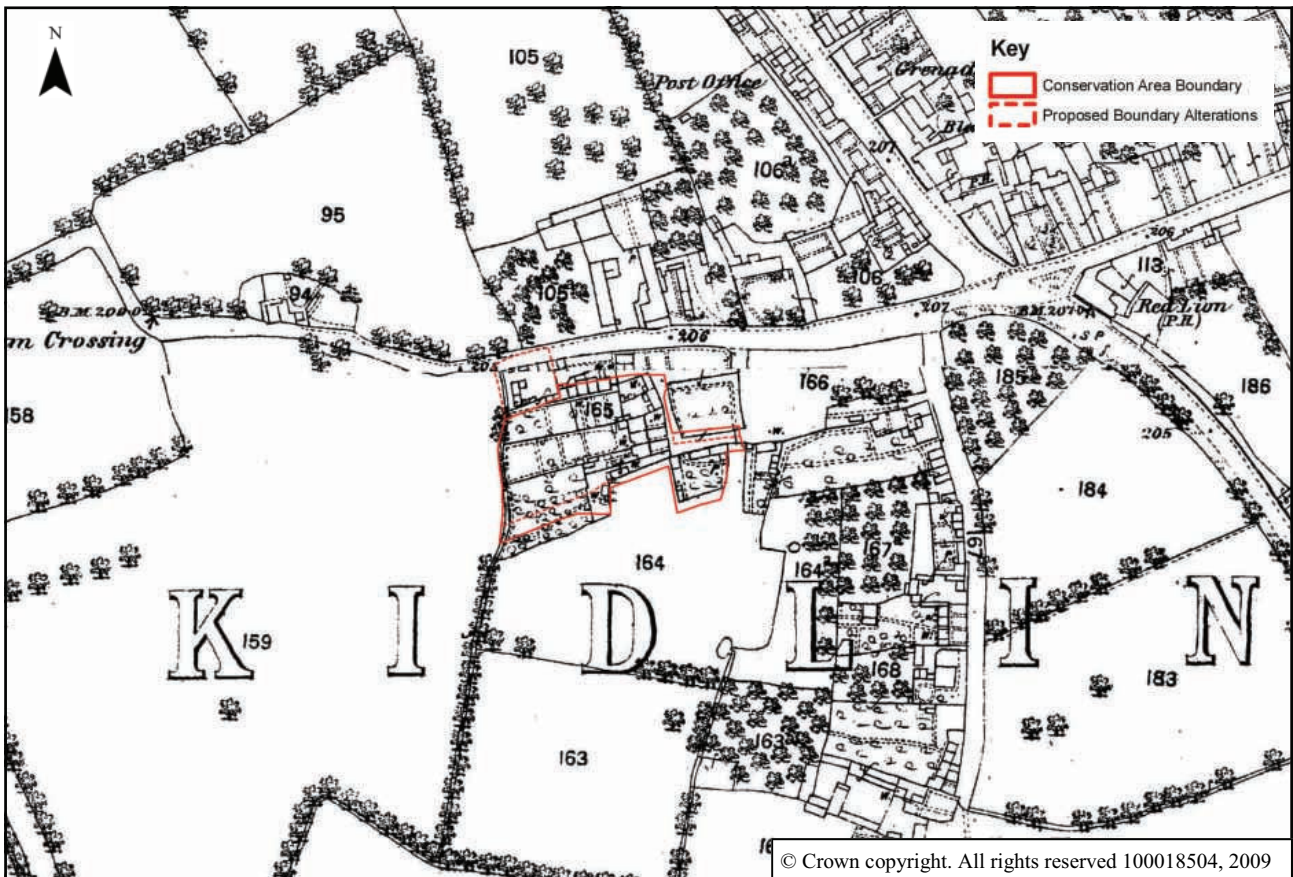


Fig. 19: The Rookery and surrounding area in 1875

7.5 Construction and materials

The buildings are principally of limestone rubble construction, the exception being number 6 which is rendered and likely to be of red brick underneath.

Roofs are predominantly Welsh slate, with nos. 11 and 12 both having concrete tiled roofs. The terrace on Lyne Road is fortunate to retain the majority of its stone slates.

Some windows and doors are 20th century replacements with some stone surrounds to the windows.

7.6 Means of enclosure

The majority of properties are situated directly onto the carriageway or footway, except for nos. 8-10, and the properties on Lyne Road which are slightly set back from the footway. Nos. 8-10 are retained by a low limestone rubble wall with mortar coping, contrasting with the high rear walls of nos. 5 and 12, at 2-3 metres height each.



The public right of way which runs behind the gardens of nos. 7-10 and 17 The Rookery



The garden of 13 The Rookery with the high stone boundary wall of no. 10 in the background



The terrace on Lyne Road during flooding which occurred regularly before main drainage in the 1950s (© J. Kennedy) and the same view today



7.8 Trees, hedges and open spaces

Despite having no tree preservation orders within it, this conservation area contains and borders some extensive rear gardens which contain individual and clusters of trees, orchards and mature hedges. The rear gardens of numbers 8-10 collectively extend to nearly 2000 square metres and contain some finely manicured borders. Other properties have small cottage gardens such as 13-16, which, despite being small and overlooked, are important open areas within this small conservation area. The strong and established plot boundaries are defined by the right of way to the west, which can be seen on the early OS maps of the area. The mature planting at nos. 5 and 6 The Rookery enforce the sense of enclosure, and the trees in the gardens of 8-10 form a pleasing backdrop for Lyne Road and the terrace of 13-17 The Rookery.



The Courtyard at 8-10 The Rookery

7.10 Carriageways and footways

The Rookery has no footway due to the tight winding effect of the roadway. The roadway is little more than a single car width in places, highlighting the rural characteristics of the area.



The tightly knit carriageway can cause parking difficulties which threaten the tranquillity of the area



Modern doors and windows can be replaced to enhance the properties and return their original charm

7.11 Threats

This delightful, quiet enclave has a low key charm in its unassuming scale and informal arrangements of small terraces, some with large gardens. This character is vulnerable to change from infill development within the plots, knocking two cottages into one to increase living accommodation and insensitive solutions to accommodate parked cars.

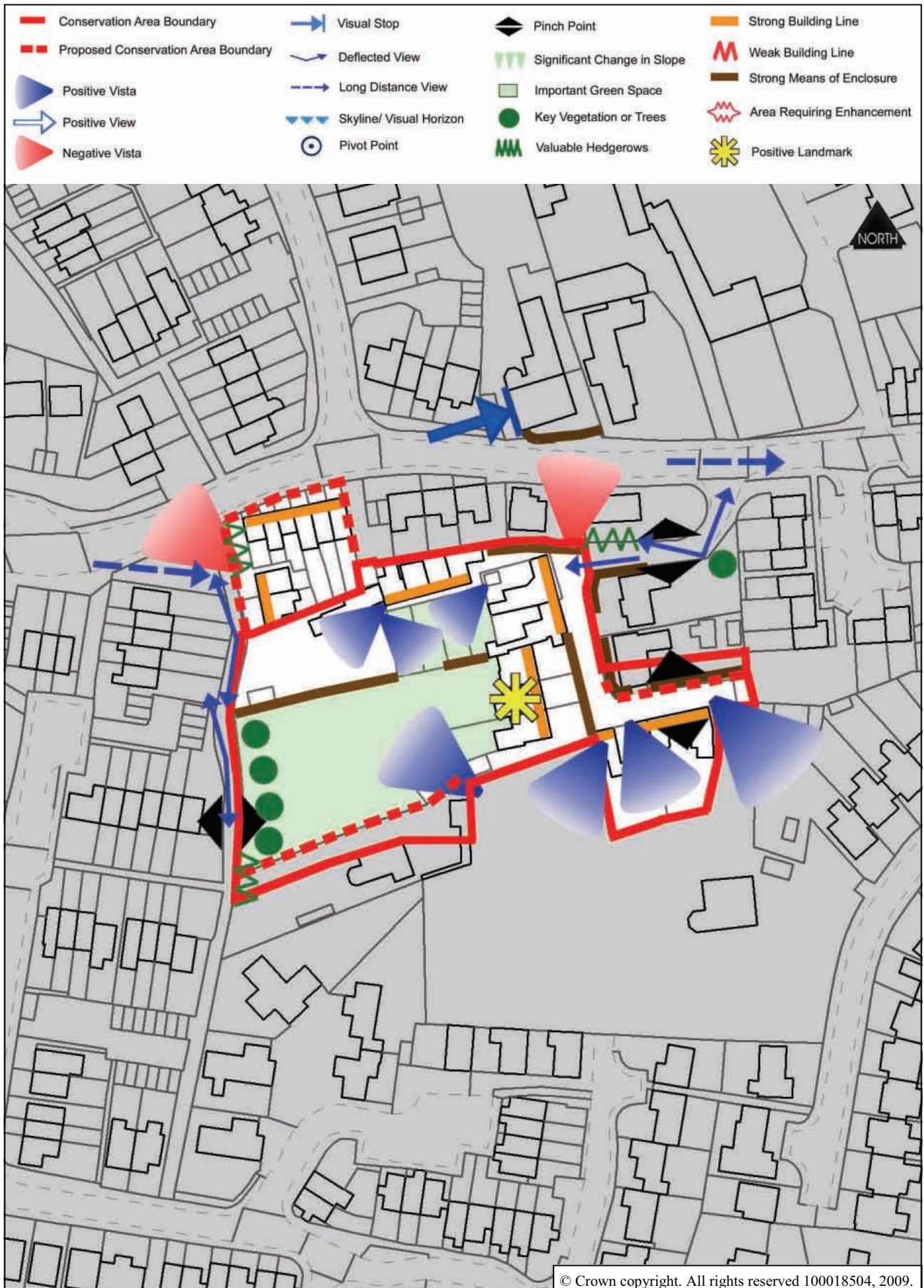
The appearance of Lyne Road properties has been altered by the insertion of inappropriate fenestration, but this is capable of reversal and the restoration of timber vertical sliding sash windows and the removal of render would do much to upgrade the properties.

Number 4 The Rookery to the south contains many mature trees which form the backdrop to the conservation area. Any intensification of this large plot, which would need to be accessed via Nurseries Road as access via The Rookery would need to ensure that the trees remained.

7.12 Key Views

- Views into the area are very restricted and this is a major part of its charm.
- Within the area vistas are short along the Rookery, contained by buildings, but wider views across private gardens are shared by residents.
- The Lyne Road terraces provide a minor landmark at a slight change in alignment amidst an otherwise suburban environment to the west.
- There are views easterly along Lyne Road of the busy trafficked road to the commercial centre of Kidlington.
- Within the conservation area, one is aware of the mature trees in the grounds of number 4 to the south, which add to its air of secrecy and introversion.

Fig. 20: Visual Analysis



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8. Crown Road Conservation Area

8.1 Crown Road is a remnant of historic Kidlington west of Oxford Road, now engulfed by 20th century suburban development. It is proposed to designate this small remaining area of historic and architectural interest as a conservation area to complete the celebration and protection of all five historic enclaves within the wider settlement.

8.2 It is difficult to envisage now, but, prior to Inclosure in 1818, a vast area of common land called Kidlington Green extended from the junction of Oxford Road and High Street down to the present site of the Garden City. Crown Road bordered its northwestern edge and so the properties of the time overlooked the green.

At the south of the proposed conservation area once stood a complex of buildings associated with Grove Farm. The main farmhouse and outbuildings are now difficult to discern as such, and have been converted into dwellings. A row of thatched cottages once stood along the road and burnt down in 1911. Previously they had been the Crown Inn, a public house first mentioned in 1625.

8.3 Land use

The area formerly comprised Grove Farm (likely to have been no. 54) and associated buildings. Other than the farm, Exeter House (no. 40) was once the village surgery and a scrap yard was located to the rear of 26 Crown Road until relatively recently, but otherwise the area was, and is now, entirely residential.

8.4 Street pattern

Crown Road is an historic lane that led from the junction of Oxford Road and High Street south westerly to Grove Farm, and then as a track through open countryside to what is now Yarnton Road where it crosses the Oxford Canal, and then on to Yarnton. Never a busy road, it is now a cul-de-sac, terminating at the former Grove Farm but continues as a well used public footpath connecting the recent housing to the south with the commercial centre and facilities at Exeter Hall. Recent developments at Judges Close to the east and Court Close to the west have been created off Crown Road but, as these are also culs-de-sac, the area remains inward looking and somewhat pleasingly isolated.

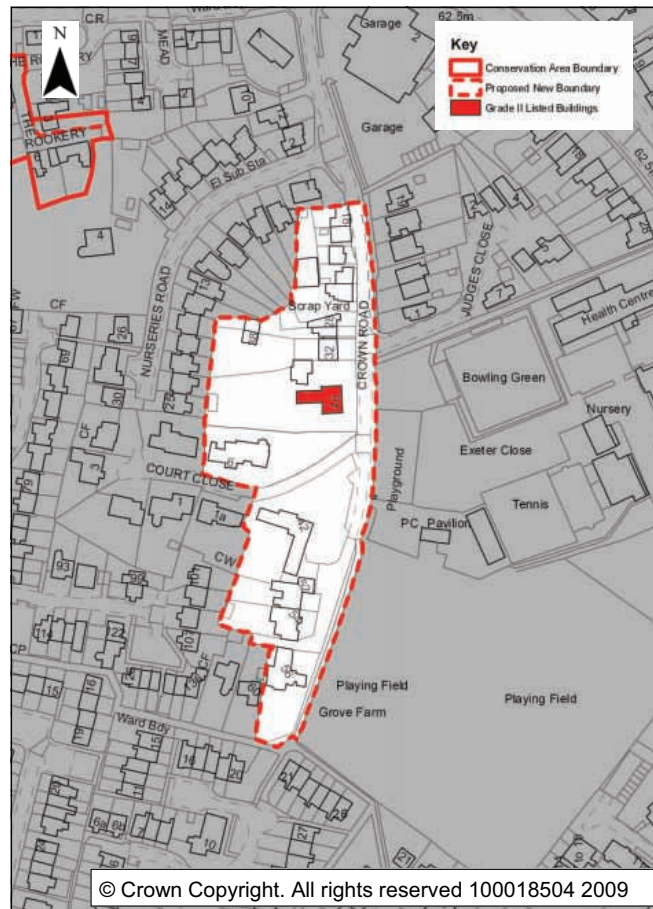


Fig. 21: Proposed conservation area boundary

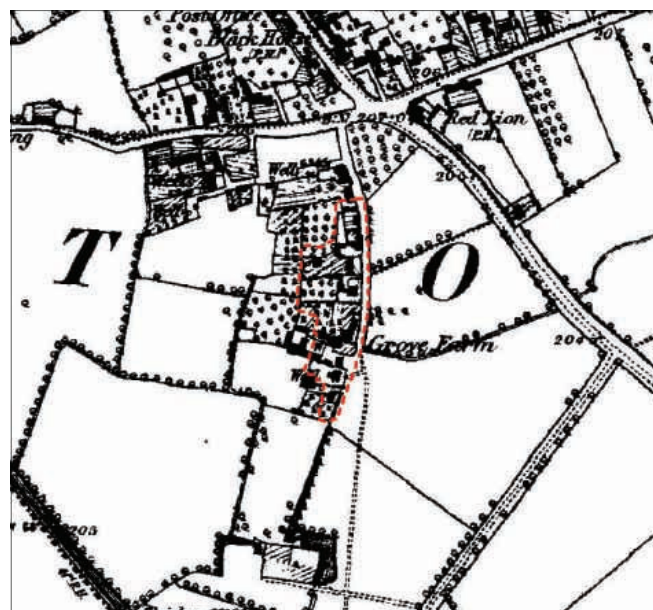


Fig. 22: 1883 OS map with proposed conservation area boundary imposed showing significance of the former Grove Farm complex

8.5 Building age, type & style

The majority of properties are evident on the 1883 OS map, although several have been altered in recent years. The late 18th century design of the cottages supports this, with humble features such as small windows and steeply pitched roofs.

Exeter House meanwhile has been altered to reflect the Georgian style of the early 19th century, incorporating a Mansard roof and large sash windows.



The Mansard roof at Exeter House

One of the oldest properties is the Courthouse, no.42, which incorporates features such as a square stair turret at the rear. This property has been subject to several alterations during the years, and it is unclear as to the exact age of the building. Features such as the stone mullioned windows and drip-moulded doorway on the northern wing suggest a date of the early 17th/18th century, whereas the wooden lintels and windows of the east wing suggest a late 18th/19th century build date. Certainly the two wings were constructed at different dates, as the roof clearly abuts the additional wing.



No. 42—The Court House



Difference in scale between nos. 40 and 32

8.6 Scale and massing

Most properties have been extended to the rear. The majority are of two storey construction, although both Exeter House and the Court House are of two and a half storeys. These two properties are dominant in the streetscene, although their impact is minimised due to the 20th century buildings and the playing field opposite, and the setting back of the Court House in particular.

8.7 Construction & materials

The majority of the houses are constructed from coursed limestone rubble. Ashlar is used on Exeter House and the Courthouse. Both of these properties also have stone slates, a feature which is lacking from the remainder of the properties, which have tiled roofs.

The smaller terraced cottages (28-32) and the semi-detached properties further north are likely to have been thatched in earlier times, however early 20th century photographs show them with stone slate roofs. The windows have wooden lintels, and fortunately one property retains wooden windows.



No 32 Crown Road

It is possible that the semi-detached properties at the north end of the proposed conservation area were increased in size since first construction, the evidence being possible 'join lines' on nos. 18 and 20. These buildings are more grand than the more southerly vernacular cottages, with higher ceiling heights and brick detailing around the windows and doors. These now have modern windows, although the smaller windows next to the doors suggest a more modest dwelling in former times.



18 Crown Road - a possible join can be seen between the windows

8.8 Means of enclosure

Low stone or brick boundary walls play a key role in the character of this conservation area. Previously the cottages all had similar stone walls and/or railings to define their own small area of front garden. While this is retained in several properties, some have already been removed to allow vital off-street parking. These walls continue to the rear, and are in various states of repair. The wall at the side/rear of no. 36 is in particular need of care.



Boundary wall to side of no. 36

The former Grove Farm buildings, now nos. 52-56, have been refurbished in recent years, and despite the modern windows, the work has attempted to work in sympathy with the surroundings. Stone detailing can be seen at the windows, as well as the divided floors in the classical style.



Nos. 52-56 Crown Road



*Grove Farm 1916 (possibly no.54 Crown Road)
© KDHS*

The curved wall at no. 42 leads into the junction with Court Close. This is a key boundary wall which makes a bold statement on the streetscene.



The curved wall of no. 42 at junction



Nos. 30 and 32 retain their stone boundary walls



Low limestone wall with railings and a picket fence outside nos. 26 and 24 in the early 20th century



Limestone walls continued from Exeter House to the smaller cottages

8.9 Trees, hedges and open spaces

There is a lack of public open space within the proposed conservation area, although there is a remnant of the former village green or common opposite, now the playing field. High conifer hedging along the entrance to Court Close provides screening and privacy for no. 42 and no. 6 Court Close.



Playing field opposite the proposed conservation area



The vegetation at no. 42

8.10 Features of special interest

Aside from the area being the historic remains of pre-expansion settlement, the most striking feature of note is the property now known as The Courthouse, with its two very different but united wings. This is a remarkable building in that it was formerly part of the Grove Farm complex, with extensive orchards to the rear. In the late 20th century a cul-de-sac of 7 dwellings was built in the former grounds and this is accessed via a low key access from Crown Road, which provides seclusion to the garden of number 8 Court Close.

The brick archway leading through the terrace of cottages to nos. 36 and 38 is an interesting and unusual detail which is not often seen in modern construction. These two cottages behind the front terrace can be glimpsed from Crown Road; a snatched view which is enhanced by the bright blue door of no. 38.



36-38 Crown Road: hidden gems behind the main terrace



The brick archway with a glimpsed view of the cottages beyond

8.11 Carriageways and footways

Crown Road is a road of two halves - the eastern side has modern highway engineering, with a wide footway, tarmac, concrete kerbs and painted lines, whereas the western side has no kerb or granite setts with a thin strip of gravel or mud with planting and no footway.



Two sides of the road: modern kerb and tarmac versus rural verge and gravel driveway

8.12 Threats

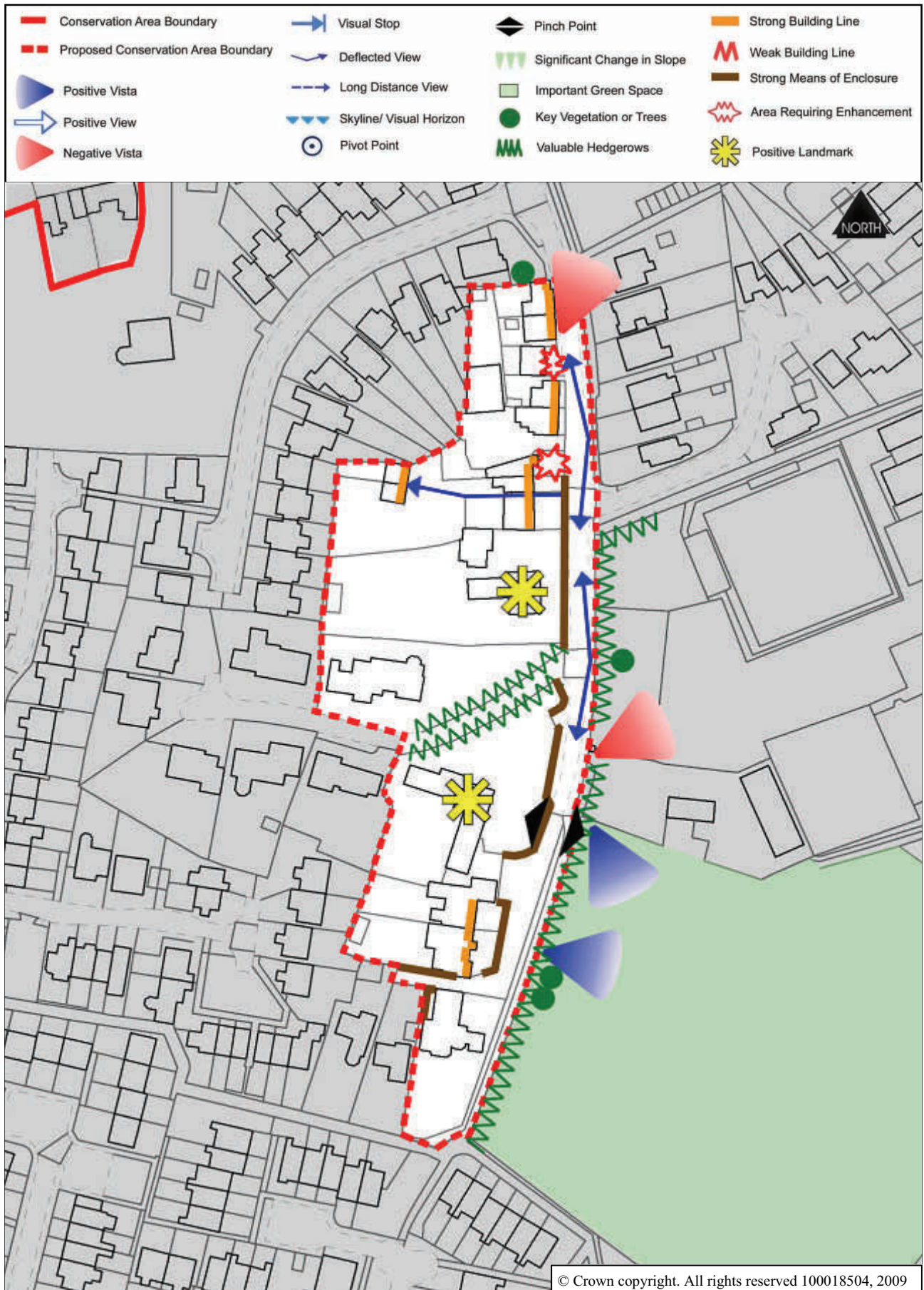
There is little off-street parking, especially for the more northern cottages. Retention of the historic boundaries is the ideal, although it is appreciated that the demolition of some walls has occurred in order to reduce on-street parking.

Incremental changes such as the addition of uPVC windows and the replacement of traditional doors with modern ones can make a difference in the streetscape, reducing its rural character. Reparations can be made to reverse these changes, and repair rather than replace faulty historic features is encouraged.



Repairs using traditional materials add to the aesthetic appeal of a property, as the new stone slates on the dormer at no. 42 show

Fig. 23 Visual Analysis



9.Langford Lane Wharf Conservation Area

9.1 This area, which now comprises the Langford Lane Cottages, the Wise Alderman public house and Langford Lane Wharf, is located on the Oxford Canal, north-west of Kidlington. It is the meeting place of the three developments in mass-transportation: the 18th century canal, the 19th century railway and the 20th century road system.

It is proposed to designate the site a conservation area in order to protect this historic corner of Kidlington, a reminder of the establishment and development of transport-driven commerce which revolutionised the village from the late 18th century onwards.

9.2 Land use and street pattern

When originally constructed the wharf and canal-side building were intended for commercial use. The site would have been busy with coal and other goods being unloaded and transported on. There is no street pattern as such since the buildings were constructed adjacent to the pre-existing highway.

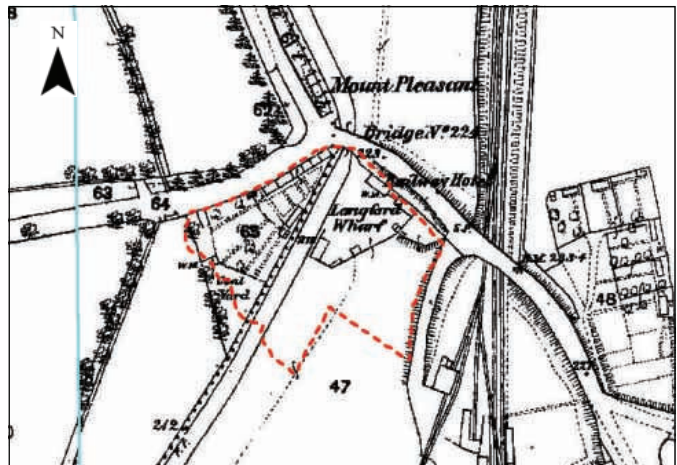
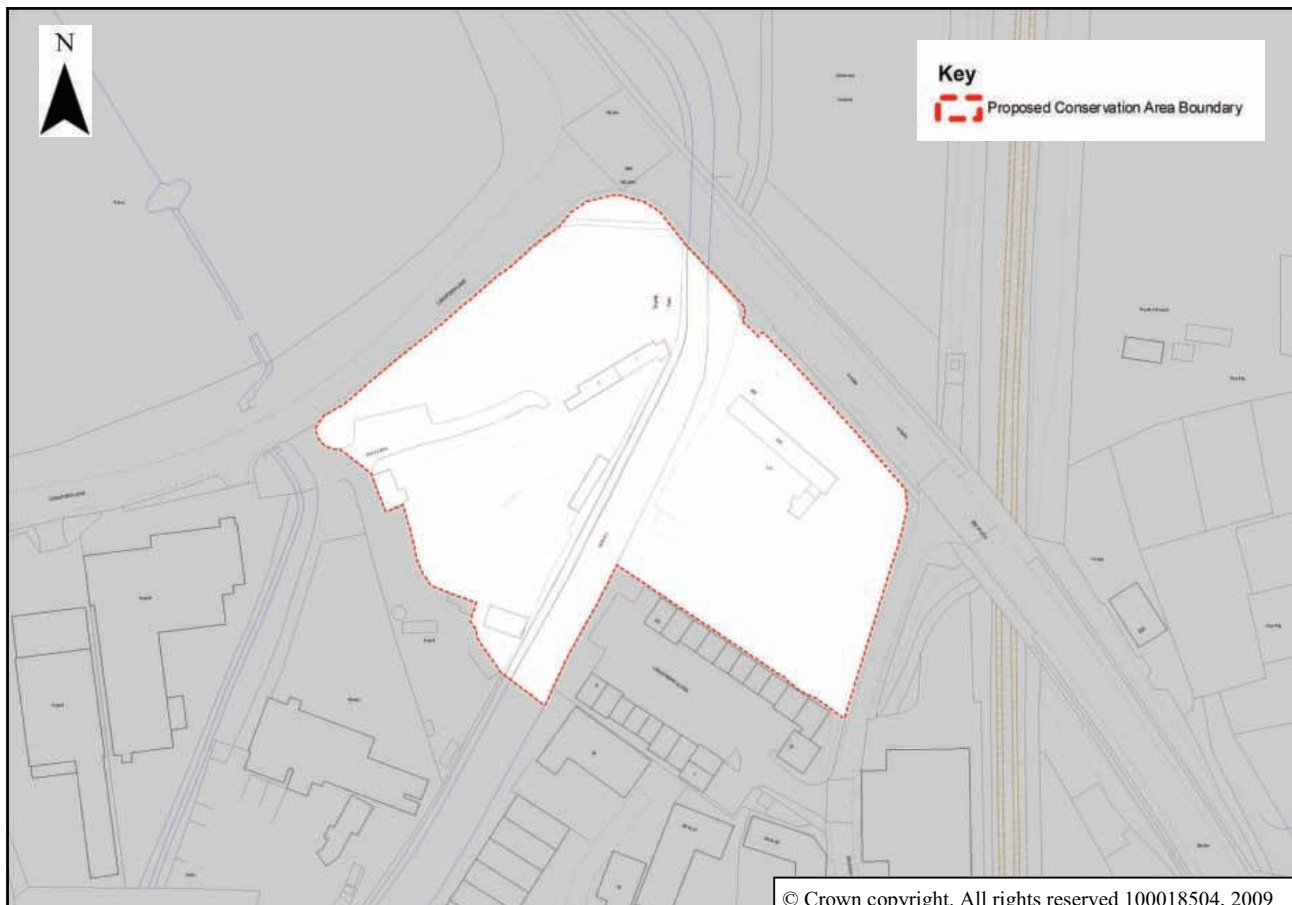


Fig. 24 1875 OS map with proposed Conservation Area boundary imposed

In modern times the cottages have become a domestic backwater, the ideal more than occasionally blighted by the dust from the concrete batching site next door. The Wise Alderman public house, which on the 19th century OS maps is labelled as the 'Railway Hotel', has remained in commercial use.



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9.3 Building age, type and style

The buildings are of late 18th century origin, contemporary with the canal building of 1790, built in the local vernacular, however the detailing of the cottages suggests a later mid-19th century date. They were in fact converted from a late 18th century commercial building (date of conversion unknown).

The uniform and regularly-spaced casement windows to the first floor give the row a superficial unity, as do the brick detail eaves course. The ground-floor doors and windows show greater variety.

The public house and barn, despite some 20th century additions, still clearly show their vernacular character.



The Wise Alderman public house

9.4 Scale and massing

Langford Lane Cottages now comprise a pair of two-storey dwellings. When originally converted, there were apparently six smaller cottages. Successive large scale Ordnance Survey maps strongly indicate that in the late 19th century the building was originally longer to the west by 7 or 8m than it was by 1922, and was gradually reduced from six to the present two houses. These alterations are, to some extent, reflected in the ground-floor openings and presumably also the interior in a considerable way.

The rear wall is blind, as are the two gables. These show that the roof had been raised, presumably in the early 20th century when a slate roof replaced the earlier thatch one.



The cottages shortly after the early 20th century fire which destroyed the thatched roof © KDHS



The cottages in the early 1980s © KDHS



The comparison photographs show that despite the loss of their thatch, the cottages have hardly changed in appearance over the past century

To the west end of the cottages is a single-storey brick outhouse with plain-tiled roof and chimney, probably mid 19th century. Presumably this was a wash house provided for the residents. To the south end of the cottages is a long, low mid 19th century brick range, again with plain tile roof, of unknown function. It apparently represents an enlargement and adaptation of an earlier stone building, presumably like the first phase of the cottages, and was a late 18th century commercial building. A brick building of similar character stands 120m south-west of the west end of the cottages at the entrance to the concrete batching site.



Brick outhouse: possible washhouse?

9.5 Construction and materials

The two cottages are built of coursed limestone rubble with a slate roof and four brick chimney stacks rising from the gable. The limestone warehouse from which they were converted has been altered with red brick additions, indicating that the conversions took place after the 1840s as this was the time when the use of local brick became more common.

The cottages were originally thatched but, due to fire damage, the roof was reconstructed and slate was used to recover the new roof during the First World War. The roof was raised at the time, and the window sills were replaced with concrete, details which detract from their rural character. The public house and barn are similarly constructed from local coursed limestone rubble; their construction and the original roof timbers (still extant in both buildings) identify these as 18th century buildings.

Little now remains of the wharf; a concaved 'parking bay' in the east bank of the canal and the low remains of derelict concrete block walls.

9.6 Means of enclosure

The canal is unenclosed but bounded by buildings on both banks. The cottages where they front onto the canal are protected by a low 1m-high red brick wall, punctuated with low wooden gates. The coal yard to the south of the cottages is indicated by the remains of a decrepit red brick wall in places and two red brick outbuildings on the south and north-west of the area. The public house is enclosed by modern wood fencing.



The picturesque form of transport from yester-year

9.7 Trees, hedges, verges, open spaces

There is no formal planting within the area; roadside land has been allowed to go to scrub thereby isolating the enclave from the ubiquitous and heavy passing traffic. The canal and associated towpath and grass verge provides both a focus and creates a sense of openness within the area.



The towpath was an essential element of canal boat travel

9.8 Carriageway, pavements, footpaths

The most picturesque and significant public thoroughfare is the canal and its associated towpath which runs north-south; the *raisin d'etre* for the area.

Evidence of the original roadways is still to be found. Both the warehouse and dwelling were built on the roadside of the original highway. The public house now has an interesting 'terrace' in its roadside garden, a platform which runs parallel to but lower than the current main road. The Langford Lane junction was re-aligned when the modern road bridge was installed and the original road is little more than a track around the back of the blind rear elevation of the cottages.



*Langford Lane & Banbury Road junction c. 1930s
© J.Kennedy and the same view today*



9.9 Features of special interest

Langford Lane Wharf remains in use as a mooring for canal boats. Although its buildings, notably the cottages, are hemmed in by the concrete batching site to one side and the main arterial road to the other, they remain an interesting and attractive group of buildings which act as a reminder of the commercial character of Langford Lane between the late 18th century and 20th century.

On the north-east corner of the cottages is a wooden post which was placed there to stop the towing ropes of the barges eating into the brickwork of the outhouse located at this point.



The cement works are a dominant feature of the landscape

9.10 Threats

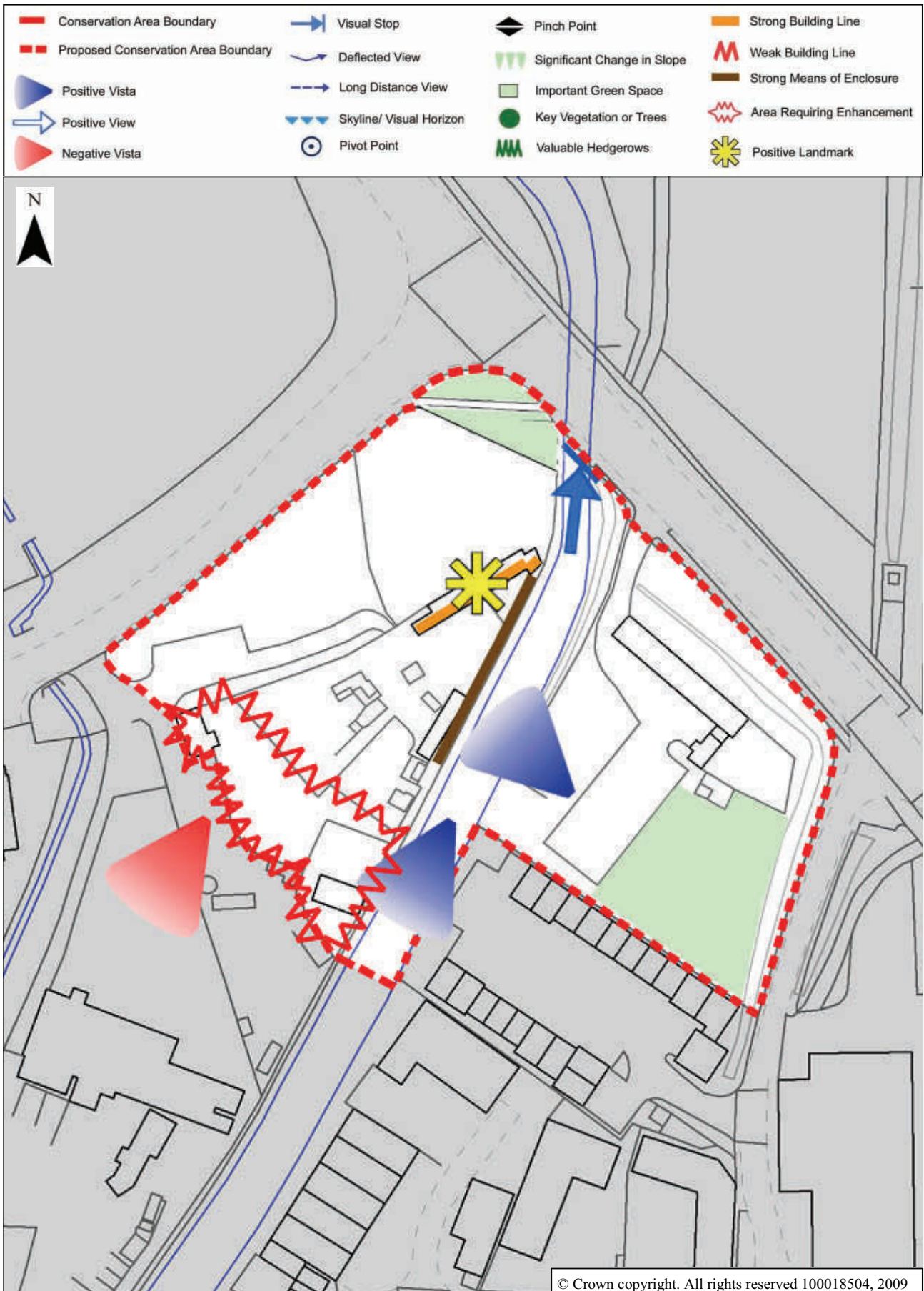
It is understood that British Waterways has aspirations to clear the west bank including the cement works & redevelop with office accommodation, extending business park to west. While the area does require some enhancement, it is not sure whether this would include the cottages in any way at the moment.

The Pocket Park was created by the Parish Council to protect the area from inappropriate off-street parking. This has worked remarkably well and provides a pleasant green space, albeit one which over looks the busy Langford Lane junction.

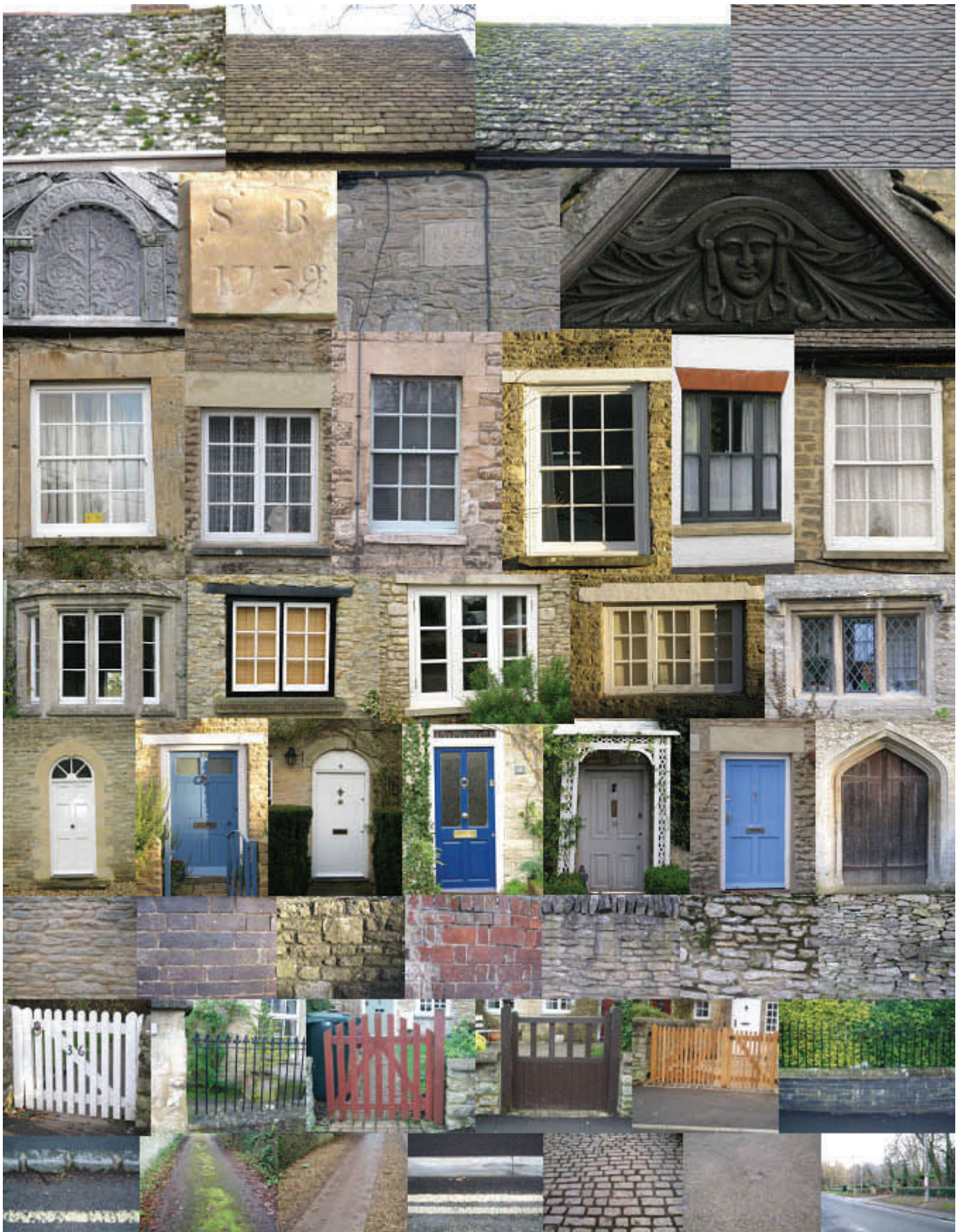


Panorama taking in the pub, canal, cement works and cottages—a curious mixture of old and new

Fig. 26: Visual Analysis



10. Details



11. Justification of Boundary

11.1 As part of the appraisal, the whole of Kidlington has been examined. Buildings such as Hamden Manor, Greystones Court (Lyne Road) and the playing field at Crown Road were all considered for inclusion. Both Hamden Manor and Greystones are statutory listed, which provides more protection than conservation area designation, while the playing field was not felt to have enough of a relationship with the historic elements of the village to merit inclusion.

11.2 For the avoidance of doubt, the boundary around each Conservation Area can be described as follows:

11.3 Church Street Conservation Area

The eastern boundary takes a route through the meadow land east of Mill Lane and Church Street following first the hedge of the paddock to the east of the church before adopting a more open route which follows the fence of the paddock towards Mill End. The boundary turns eastward and takes a staggered route around the older properties at Mill End, following the boundary of the copse east of Mill End House and the mill stream before turning westward to include The Mill and cross the road to follow a route along the footpath which passes Mill House. The boundary follows the wall of Gowan Lea to include the shops before turning northwards following field boundaries to exclude the largely 20th century development in Mill Street and Vicarage Road. The boundary proceeds south west behind these properties, turning eastwards behind 47 Mill Street and including Marborough Terrace and the listed properties of 63-69 Mill Street.



The boundary runs south east along Mill Street including the front walls of nos. 77-99 before crossing the road between nos. 94 and 96. Including the rear of nos. 94-64 Mill Street, the boundary runs west, excluding the new development at 58 Mill Street, to include what remains of the former green and includes the two older properties of Warsborough House and Hazelwood.

The boundary returns to Mill Street following its eastern edge until it meets the boundary of 5 Mill Street. It bends around to Church Street, excluding the late 20th century properties of 3-5 Mill Street and 4 Church Street. Here it crosses Church Street and follows The Moors along its northern edge, crossing the road between nos. 31 and 33A to encompass the rear boundaries of nos. 25-43. Here it crosses the road opposite the lane leading to the Builder's Yard. It includes the eastern properties to the rear of 32-34 Mill Street, following the rear boundaries of 28-18 The Moors. The boundary crosses St Mary's Close eastwards and follows the rear boundaries of properties on Church Street, including 2-4 Manor Way, curving west and north around the large plot at no. 49. The boundary follows the churchyard and St Mary's Fields, including the footbridge to the north, and turns south back towards the eastern boundary. Here it turns east to include a section of paddock which contain remnants of the former scheduled monument, before crossing an imaginary line in line with the rear of the lower paddocks. Here it turns west to rejoin the eastern boundary.



11.4 High Street Conservation Area

Starting at the junction of Foxdown Close and High Street, the boundary follows the rear gardens of 115-85 High Street southwest, incorporating the carriageway of The Closes and nos. 6 and 7 The Closes. The boundary follows the front boundary walls of nos. 85-91, crossing the road between 78 and 80 High Street. The boundary is extended to include the rear gardens of 6-14 School Road, together with the rear gardens of 97-97C Green Road. Turning north along Green Road, the boundary crosses to run between 18 School Road and 98 Green Road, and follows the rear gardens of 18-40 School Road. There is turns back to incorporate the front gardens of these properties until the junction of High Street and School Road. Here is crosses the road to include the front boundary walls of 95-115 High Street.



11.5 The Rookery Conservation Area

The eastern boundary follows the front boundary wall of 1 The Rookery, continuing around the wall of no. 3 and crossing southwards at the hedge and fence which marks the end of the cul-de-sac. The boundary takes in the rear gardens of nos. 5 and six and follows the southern boundary of the pathway which leads to the rear of no. 8. The proposed boundary change excludes the garden of no. 7, following the boundary of no. 8 west to the public right of way which runs behind the gardens. The boundary follows the right of way north to Lyne Road, taking in the front gardens of nos. 41 and 43. The boundary follows the front boundaries of nos. 39-29 Lyne Road and joins The Rookery again via the parking area east of 29 Lyne Road. The boundary follows the rear walls of

Nos. 16-13 The Rookery and, following the rear wall of 23 and 21 Lyne Road, joins the start of the boundary opposite the front wall of 1 The Rookery.

11.6 Crown Road Conservation Area

The eastern boundary follows the footway south along Crown Road from opposite no.18 Crown Road, incorporating the hedge which borders the playing field until the end of the road. Here the boundary turns westward and follows the boundary of no.56 Crown Road, incorporating the rear gardens of nos. 54-42 northwards. The boundary crosses Court Close between no 1A and 42 Crown Road, and follows the garden boundary of no.6 Court Close. The boundary then runs north, including the rear gardens of nos. 40-18 Crown Road, and the area formerly known as the Scrap Yard at no. 26 Crown Road, before turning east at 18 Crown Road.



11.7 Langford Lane Wharf Conservation Area

The proposed boundary starts at the entrance to Station Approach, following the hedge on the roadside, turning west behind the units of 10-20 Lakesmere Close. It follows the canal on the eastern side until crossing over at the northernmost point of the British Waterways Site. The boundary follows the northern edge of the depot, turning northeast along Langford Lane to include the Pocket Park at the north end of the canal site. The boundary crosses the canal on the bridge and runs along the front hedge of the Wise Alderman to rejoin the eastern boundary.

12. Management Plan

Policy Context

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas. In line with English Heritage guidance (2005b) Conservation Area Management Proposals are to be published as part of the process of area designation or review. Their aim is to provide guidance through policy statements to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

The main threat to the character and appearance of any Conservation Area is the potential for expansion. The Conservation Area appraisal attempts to define the special character and appearance of the settlement and its setting, its key views and vistas that should be protected. Kidlington has been growing steadily through the 20th century, and any further expansion needs to be carefully considered in relation to landscape, topography, vegetation and landscape character to prevent could put pressure on the surviving historic environment.

Another threat to the Conservation Area is the cumulative impact of numerous alterations, some quite small in themselves, to the traditional but unlisted buildings within the area. These changes include such works as the replacement of traditional window casements, usually with uPVC double-glazing, replacement of original doors, additions such as non-traditional porches and erection of satellite dishes on the front elevations of properties.

Such alterations to unlisted residential properties are for the most part permitted development and therefore do not require planning permission. Unauthorised alterations and additions are also a cause for concern and are often detrimental to the appearance of a property. Both unsympathetic permitted development and unauthorised development cumulatively result in the erosion of the historic character and appearance of the conservation area.

The aim of management proposals is not to prevent changes but to ensure that any such changes are both sympathetic to the individual property, sympathetic to the streetscape and overall enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The principal policies covering alterations and development of the historic built environment are given in Appendix 1.



Generic Guidance

The Council Will:

1. Not permit the use of UPVC double glazing in listed buildings and where unauthorised work is carried out enforcement action will be taken.



Modern materials which are sympathetic to the buildings are sometimes acceptable

2. Promote a policy of repair rather than replacement of traditional architectural details. Where repairs are not economically viable then the promotion of bespoke sympathetic replacement is encouraged. This is particularly the case for windows when sympathetic re-fenestration is important in preserving the appearance of the building in the design and materials.

3. Actively promote the use of traditional building and roofing materials in new building work, extensions and repair. It is vital the limestone remains the predominant building in the village.

4. Encourage owners of historic properties to replace inappropriate modern materials with the appropriate traditional materials, for example wood or metal casements. Materials such as uPVC and concrete tiles look out of place in a Conservation Area and their use is discouraged.

5. Expect the scale, massing, proportions and height of new buildings to reflect those of the existing built environment of the immediate context or of the wider Conservation Area context. Layouts, boundary treatments and landscaping schemes will also be expected to make clear visual reference to those traditionally found within the area.



Differences in scale can create an imbalance in the streetscene

6. Strive to ensure that the conversion of traditional buildings to alternative uses will be achieved with minimal intervention and without the destruction of original character. Features and equipment pertinent to the building's original function where they exist (e.g. grinding machinery, chutes and races in mills) should be retained as part of any conversion.

7. Promote the distinctiveness of the local thatching tradition. Historically thatch was a ubiquitous roofing material across the district. This prevalence has been reduced to small pockets of buildings. Local style and traditions in thatch are to be promoted to enhance the importance of the few thatched properties that remain. There are a number of thatched properties within Kidlington and these should be retained and maintained. When possible any block-cut ridges should be returned to the traditional plain flush ridges which are more appropriate to the area.



Thatching can emphasise an area's rural distinctiveness

8. Exercise a presumption against artificial cladding material, including render on the front elevations of buildings.

9. Encourage the location of solar panels on rear roof slopes or on outbuildings within rear gardens.

10. Require the location of satellite dishes on rear elevations or within rear gardens to prevent harm to the historic character and visual appearance of the area.



Incremental changes can have a huge effect on the historic appearance of the area

11. Discourage disfiguring alterations such as unsympathetic extensions, altering the dimensions of window opening and the removal of chimneys.

12. Investigate whether appropriate planning permissions or listed building consent has been obtained for an alteration. Unauthorised alterations to a listed building is a criminal offence and if necessary the council will enforce against this.

13. Promote traditional styles of pointing. The type of pointing in stone or brickwork is integral to the appearance of the wall or structure. It is therefore of great importance that only appropriate pointing is used in the repointing of stone or brickwork. Repointing work should be discrete to the point of being inseparable from the original. 'Ribbon' pointing and similar is considered a totally inappropriate style of pointing for this district.

14. Promote the use of lime mortar in the construction and repointing of stone and brickwork. This traditional building material is strongly advocated and its use is beneficial to traditional buildings. This is in contrast to hard cementaceous mortars often used in modern construction, which can accelerate the weathering of the local soft building stone.

15. Promote the use of sympathetic materials for garage doors. Vertical timber boarded side hung doors are preferable to metal or fibreglass versions which can have a negative impact on the street scene.

16. Actively promote the harmonisation of appearance within pairs of properties.

17. Generally encourage the good maintenance of properties including boundary walls.



Traditional materials should be used to repair boundary walls

18. Support new buildings on infill plots where this would enhance the character and appearance of the area, and encourage the replacement of buildings that do not currently make a positive contribution to the conservation area.



Well-designed and maintained modern properties can fit well beside older ones when sympathetic measures are taken

19. Create a dialogue with service providers to encourage underground power cables to reduce the visual pollution caused by the overhead lines and their supporting poles within the village.



Telegraph poles marching across the land can be detrimental to the conservation area: careful negotiation is required to prevent this

20. Encourage the sympathetic location of both amenity and private security lighting to limit light 'pollution'. Lighting within the village can have an adverse effect on the semi-rural character of the area. The material and design of the fittings and their position on the building should be carefully considered.

21. Promote the repair or replacement of lost or inappropriate boundary treatments with traditional walling or hedging in a style appropriate to the location.



Loss of traditional boundary treatments can create gaps in the historic streetscene

22. Promote the use of a suitable style of boundary for the position within the village, for example the use of simple post fencing for properties backing onto open ground and stone walls in the village centre.

23. Promote the retention of historic footpaths within the conservation area and work with bodies such as the Parish Council and Oxford County Council to prevent these being lost. The informality of these paths should be preserved and attempts to add hard surfaces or extensive signage should be resisted. The footpaths within this Conservation Area are key to the character of the landscape, some of them following ancient routes joining local villages.

Management and protection of important green spaces

The Council will:

1. Promote positive management of vegetation. Trees and hedges make an important contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area. Planting of exotic imports or inappropriate varieties, such as Leylandii, are to be strongly discouraged, as these trees grow fast and can alter or block important views as well being uncharacteristic of the area. The trees and hedges within and around Kidlington play a key role in the character of the Conservation Area, particularly in the setting of the village. Advance notice needs to be given to the Council of the intention to top, lop or fell trees over a certain girth within the conservation area. Several trees also have specific Tree Preservation Orders attached to them, particularly around the area of the former Rectory Farm complex on Mill Street.

2. Promote the sympathetic management of open areas within the Conservation Area such as allotments and the churchyard, but without over cultivation.



The well-maintained churchyard provides a pleasant setting for the Grade I Listed church

3. Seek to preserve the rural character of verges by working with the Highway Authority to avoid the insertion of inappropriate kerbing which would have an urbanising effect whilst seeking solutions that prevent harm to verges by parked cars.



Rural verges can help to retain character while not providing any harm to modern vehicular accesses

4. Encourage the retention and good maintenance of garden walls and boundary hedges.



Traditional boundary treatments and the retention off trees and open spaces is vital to maintaining rural characters

5. Resist development that would adversely affect the setting of the village by extending ribbon development or impinging further into the landscape of the western slopes

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14. Appendix 1

There are a number of policy documents which contain policies pertaining to the historic built environment. The main policies are summarised in this section. Other policies of a more general nature are also of some relevance, these are not listed here but can be found elsewhere in the specific documents mentioned below.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016

EN4 The fabric and setting of listed buildings including Blenheim Palace and Park, a World Heritage Site, will be preserved and the character or appearance of conservation areas and their settings will be preserved or enhanced. Other elements of the historic environment, including historic parks and gardens, battlefields and historic landscapes will also be protected from harmful development.

EN6 There will be a presumption in favour of preserving in situ nationally and internationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings. Development affecting other archaeological remains should include measures to secure their preservation in situ or where this is not feasible, their recording or removal to another site.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996

H5 Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the district council will negotiate with developers to secure an element of affordable housing in substantial new residential development schemes. The district council will need to be satisfied that such affordable housing:

- (i) is economically viable in terms of its ability to meet the need identified
- (ii) will be available to meet local needs long term through secure arrangements being made to restrict the occupancy of the development
- (iii) is compatible with the other policies in this plan.

H12 New housing in the rural areas of the district will be permitted within existing settlements in accordance with policies H13, H14 and H15. Schemes which meet a specific and identified local housing need will be permitted in accordance with policies H5 and H6.

H19 Proposals for the conversion of a rural building, whose form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings to a dwelling in a location beyond the built-up limits of a settlement will be favourably considered provided:

- (i) the building can be converted without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character;
- (ii) the proposal would not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building;
- (iii) the proposal would not harm the special character and interest of a building of architectural or historic significance;
- (iv) the proposal meets the requirements of the other policies in the plan.

H21 Within settlements the conversion of suitable buildings to dwellings will be favourably considered unless conversion to a residential use would be detrimental to the special character and interest of a building of architectural and historic significance. In all instances proposals will be subject to the other policies in this plan.

C18 In determining an application for listed building consent the council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The council will normally only approve internal and external alterations or extensions to a listed building which are minor and sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building.

C23 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

C27 Development proposals in villages will be expected to respect their historic settlement pattern.

C30 Design control will be exercised to ensure:

- (i) that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity;
- (ii) that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling (in cases where planning permission is required) is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene;
- (iii) that new housing development or any proposal for the extension (in cases where planning permission is required) or conversion of an existing dwelling provides standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the local planning authority.

Non-statutory Cherwell local plan 2011

EN34 the council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- (i) cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;
- (ii) cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;
- (iii) be inconsistent with local character;
- (iv) harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features;
- (v) harm the historic value of the landscape.

EN35 The Council will seek to retain woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, walls and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape as a result of their ecological, historic or amenity value. Proposals which would result in the loss of such features will not be permitted unless their loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures to the satisfaction of the council.

EN39 Development should preserve listed buildings, their features and settings, and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of designated conservation areas, as defined on the proposals map. Development that conflicts with these objectives will not be permitted.

EN40 In a conservation area or an area that makes an important contribution to its setting planning control will be exercised to ensure, *inter alia*, that the character or appearance of the area so designated is preserved or enhanced. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. A new development should understand and respect the sense of place and architectural language of the existing but should seek to avoid pastiche development except where this is shown to be clearly the most appropriate.

EN43 proposals that would result in the total or substantial demolition of a listed building, or any significant part of it, will not be permitted in the absence of clear and convincing evidence that the market testing set out in PPG15 paragraphs 3.16 to 3.19 has been thoroughly followed with no success.

EN45 Before determination of an application for planning permission requiring the alteration, extension or partial demolition of a listed building, applicants will be required to provide sufficient information to enable an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the structure, its setting or special features.

EN47 The Council will promote sustainability of the historic environment through conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage and its interpretation and presentation to the public. In particular it will:

- (i) seek to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments and other unscheduled sites of national and regional importance and their settings are permanently preserved;
- (ii) ensure that development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desk-top study, and where appropriate a field evaluation;
- (iii) not permit development that would adversely affect archaeological remains and their settings unless the applicant can demonstrate that the archaeological resource will be physically preserved in-situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals.

EN48 Development that would damage the character, appearance, setting or features of designed historic landscapes (parks and gardens) and battlefields will be refused.

EN51 In considering applications for advertisements in conservation areas the council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

15. Appendix 2 - Listed Buildings

Grade I Listed Buildings

1. Church of St Mary

Originally a 13th century (c.1220) cruciform church built on the foundations of an earlier structure, with a central tower and no aisles, the parish church of St Mary the Virgin is known for its fine medieval glass and woodwork. The present Church of St Mary replaced an earlier wooden church which existed in 1074, at the time when the area was included within the diocese of the new chapel of St George within Oxford Castle. The previous church was probably relatively simple when compared with the splendour of Norman churches.

The slender spire was added in approximately 1450 and is a key landmark from the surrounding fields. Locally it is known as 'Our Lady's Needle', and is difficult to see from the village itself, due to the church being located to the north-east of the village.

Repairs to the spire in 1907 included having the top 30 feet removed and reinstalled to make them safe. During this time, pieces of iron were fitted between the stones, which has led to problems with the metal expanding and 'blowing off' the stone above it. Existing mason's marks enabled the spire to be rebuilt exactly as it was removed.

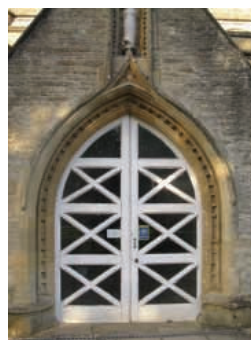
The tower contains a peal of 8 bells, the tenor bell weighing over 1 ton, and the earliest of which was cast in the early 18th century. Prior to 1837 the bells were rung at floor level, however now the ringing chamber can be reached via a staircase to first floor height.

The gravestones were levelled in 1954. The older part of the graveyard close to the church is more roughly tended, allowing wild flowers to flourish, in comparison with the modern area to the west, which is often adorned with fresh flowers.



Church of St Mary viewed from the northwest

The interior of the church has changed over the centuries, and now chairs have replaced the pews to make the congregation more comfortable during worship. The fine medieval wall paintings were discovered during restorations in 1892 and have now been carefully preserved.



The south and west doors showing very different styles



The Church viewed from the south

Grade II* Listed Buildings

2. The Old Vicarage

In addition to the Old Rectory, this building was supplied to allow a curate to administer to the spiritual needs of the parishioners in 1445. Following its donation to Exeter College in 1565, it was leased to various people, and is likely to have been used as a refuge for scholars from Oxford during times of plague. Little of the original building survives, although a room in the northern corner contains 14th century beams. The house was in a poor condition in the early 1800s, and was subsequently repaired and altered through the first half of the 19th century.



The Old Vicarage, 39 Mill Street

3. The Dovecote

Built of limestone rubble with a slate-roofed wooden lantern, the dovecote was mentioned in 1290/91.

The walls are 1.3 metres thick and contains 440 holes in 13 rows.

Dovecotes were introduced by the Normans to provide a valuable meat source in winter, as well as manure for land. This would have been a common feature for large houses and/or farms of the period.



*The Dovecote - Grade II**

Grade II Listed Buildings

Church Street Conservation Area

4. Chest Tomb early C19, limestone, moulded plinth and cornice; cyma-shaped top with iron ball finial. Commemorates Edward Nicholls, d.1810 and his family.

5. Group of 3 Chest Tombs Early C19 and mid C18. Limestone with decoration. Dedicated to William and Mary Hutt; Charles Row d. 1818 and a third dated 1761

6. 65 Church Street: former priest's house, and likely to have a core constructed at the same time as the church as housing for the architect. The appearance of the exterior is late C17 coursed limestone rubble with a gabled artificial stone slate roof.

7. 86-88 Church Street: two cottages, early/mid C18. Coursed limestone rubble, gabled thatch roof. Two storeys with attic. These properties unusually sit at right angles to the streetscene, making them an interesting contrast to the majority of Church Street.



86-88 Church Street

8. 78 Church Street

coursed limestone rubble, gabled stone slate roof with C20 tiles to rear. 2 storeys and attic, keyed flat stone arched over C20 two-light casements. Date plaque over door. Datestone SB/1739.

9. Morton's Almshouses

Built by Sir William Morton in 1671 in memory of his wife and children whose names are inscribed above the windows. Morton was a Royalist Commander and lived in Hampden Manor in Mill Street. The building was designed to house 'three old men and three old women', and were very basic but essential accommodation. The building was hardly changed for 300 years, although each house obtained a small cooking stove during the Victorian era. The well was still the principal supply of water until piped water was installed in 1940. A fourth set of rooms was added in 1953-4, and this has mellowed over time to be almost indistinguishable from the original building. The building was converted into four flats in 1984.



Morton's Almshouses, viewed from the churchyard

10. 82-84 Church Street: two cottages, late C17/early C18. Coursed limestone rubble, gabled thatch roof. Timber lintels over late C19 two-light casements with glazing bars.



82-84 Church Street

11. 74-76 Church Street:

Coursed limestone rubble with gabled stone slate roof; formerly two cottages, now one dwelling. 2 storeys with attic. Dated stone JD/1778. No. 76 has chamfered beams and an open fireplace with wood bressumer. The building is a delightful humble dwelling with many attractive features on its front elevation.



74-76 Church Street

12. 51 Church Street: early C19 with later extensions. Keyed flat stone arch over central French windows.

13. 49 Church Street: early C19, coursed limestone rubble, gabled artificial stone slate roof. Late C19 square bay windows on ground floor. Marks on gable wall suggest it was formerly a rebuilt barn.

14. Grove House, 60 Church Street: Former farmhouse. Late C17 with earlier wing to rear; coursed limestone rubble with gabled concrete tile roof. Attic has C17 butt-purlin roof. Listing includes attached C18 wall.



Grove House, 60 Church Street

15. 54-58 Church Street: Two houses, late C18. Coursed limestone rubble with gabled concrete tile roof. Outside, C18 and early C19 garden walls enclose the garden. A polite contrast to the humble vernacular dwellings.

16. Gateway south of 17 Church Street: Mid C18 with later graffiti of 1785. Limestone ashlar. Segmented pediment over keyed arched doorway. Wrought-iron gate with scrolled ironwork to top.

17. 52 Church Street: former farmhouse, C17, remodelled C19. Coursed limestone rubble, gabled concrete tile roof with stone slates to rear. 2 storeys, 2- and 3-light casements, C19 plank granary door on first floor.



52 Church Street

18. 17 Church Street: Former farmhouse, early C19 with C18 origins. Coursed limestone rubble with hipped Welsh slate roof. Interior of note with stone flag floors and panelled doors and shutters.



Manor Farmhouse, 17 Church Street

19. 1 Franklin Close: formerly listed as 16-18 Church Street, early 17th cent. and late 18th cent. Coursed limestone rubble, gabled thatched roof. The later extension has a stone slate roof.



1 Franklin Close

20. 29 The Moors: hidden away down a narrow lane off The Moors, this early 17th century cottage is vernacular coursed limestone rubble. One storey with attic, half-hipped thatch roof. Mid 19th cent plank door. A delightful hidden gem.



29 The Moors

21. The Old Rectory

Likely to have been built for the clergy of St Mary's Church, the Old Rectory was formerly known as Rectory Farm, a 'house and homestead' in the Inclosure awards of 1818. The Old Rectory was originally held by Osney Abbey and descended with the abbey's other parish land to Exeter College. The building is likely to be 16th century in origin, with several later additions, as it was leased in 1561 from Queen Elizabeth I, and later sold to Sir William Petre with the mill.

The building was repaired and joined by a dovecote in 1290-1, although the house had fallen into ruins by 1520. The developments throughout the centuries can be seen by the varied architecture and contemporary extensions completed by a succession of tenants and owners.

A grander property stood in 1687, comprising a hall with buttery, parlour and kitchen, with chambers above, as well as various larders and storehouses. The west wing of the property at this house still survives. 'Improvements' were completed by the Oxford brewer, William Hall, between 1811-13, and later works included rebuilding the hall and services ranges in a pastiche 16th-century style c.1840. Fine architectural features include the diagonal chimney stacks and 16th century stone mullioned windows.



The Old Rectory

22. 47 Mill Street: Former farmhouse. Mid C18 with early C19 bay to right. Course limestone rubble with gabled stone slate roof. 2 storeys with attic. Hipped stair turret to rear, 3 early C19 two-storey wings. Open fireplace with chamfered bressumer and panelled door to winder stairs.



47 Mill Street

23. 40 Mill Street: A former farmhouse whose owners were granted several plots of land after the Inclosure Act was passed. Late C17/ early C18 with a late C18 rear left wing, the house is comparable with 52 Mill Street.



40 Mill Street

24. Warsborough House, 52 Mill Street: Mid/late C18. A double fronted limestone rubble house with gabled stone slate roof. Two storey L-plan house with a service range to the rear. The house has a long gravelled drive through a paddock, part of the former Town Green, and was formerly part of a small-holding.



52 Mill Street

25. 63-69 Mill Street: Terrace of 3 mid-C18 cottages. Gabled Welsh slate roof, limestone rubble walling. Datestone 1728 on no. 69.



63-69 Mill Street

26. Bellhangers, 64 Mill Street: Late C17 cottage, coursed limestone rubble, gabled concrete tile roof. Stone chimney with projecting thatch stone. Timber lintel over late C17 ribbed door, late C19 gabled timber porch. Fireplace with bressumer.



Bellhangers, 64 Mill Street

27. Mill House: The house was built on a screens-passage plan in the late 17th century. Later additions to the rear followed in the 18th and 19th centuries, including the refurbishment of the parlour wing. Former farmhouse, now dwelling. Restored 1920-40. Early 20th century elm winder stairs.



Mill House, Mill End

28. Mill House Barns & outbuildings: late 17th cent barn, stable to left has J.S./1818, cowhouse to right has datestone J.S./1836. Dove-holes in left gable wall, 4-bay collar truss roof with butt purlins and oak plank threshing floor.



Mill House Barn

29. The Miller's House: Millhouse, now house. Late 16th cent with late 17th cent extension, roof raised 19th cent. Interior of interest with 18th cent panelling and fireplace.



The Miller's House

30. Kidlington Mill

A mill had been established by 1086 and was recorded in Domesday as being worth 30 shillings. This was increased in size and value after it was granted to Osney Abbey, and there was an associated fishery in the 13th century. In 1544, the mill was recorded as having 2 wheels, a sluice and weir, with a cottage and stables.

After the Dissolution the mill passed to Oxford cathedral, and then to Exeter College. It was subsequently let to a succession of millers from the 17th to 19th centuries. Repairs were made at the end of the 19th century. The mill fell out of use in 1918 and was sold in 1922. By 1981 the mill was converted into a private house, and included into the conservation area in 1991.

Both wheels are still in situ, and the sluice gates controlling the flow of the river through the mill are still in use to combat the ever present threat of flooding. The open flood plain to the southeast is currently preventing excessive flooding of the property, however the floods of July 2007 breached the ground floor of the house.



Kidlington Mill, now a dwelling

High Street Conservation Area

31. 115 High Street: late C18/early C19, former farmhouse. Coursed limestone rubble, rendered front & right. U plan with rear projecting wings, 2 storeys, 4-window range. The property has not been inhabited for more than 30 years and is suffering from neglect. Action must be taken to prevent its collapse.



115 High Street

32. Tower Hill, 101 High Street: 1820-30, coursed limestone rubble with ashlar quoins & dressings, 2 storeys with symmetrical 3-window range. The site is the highest part of High Street, once known as 'The Hill', and it is believed that a beacon was lit here during the Civil War. The rear of the property was once orchards, however now it is covered with modern development.



Tower Hill, 101 High Street

33. 95 High Street: former farmhouse, C.1760-70 with late C17 wing to rear left. The house and outbuildings were used to house up to 200 airmen during World War II. This unusual property had a prominent location overlooking the green, which accounts for a degree of façadism. The main frontage is only one room deep, allowing the illusion of a much grander property, while the rear reveals an older and lower property which has been carefully sculpted to appear new and ostentatious.



95 High Street

34. Hill House, 93 High Street: Late C18, coursed limestone rubble. 3 storeys, symmetrical 3-window range. Late C19 canted bay windows with moulded cornices and plate glass sashes. The house is partly hidden from the streetscene by large trees and a boarded fence, however the remaining railings behind the boards are delightful.



Hill House, 93 High Street

35. Hill Farm House, 87 High Street: Late C17, remodelled early C19, restored 1985. Elliptical stone arch-over C20 door. Stair turret with conical roof, open fireplace to centre.

36. 85 High Street: Late C17 to rear, early C19 to front. Coursed limestone rubble with ashlar front. Double-depth plan. Portico with moulded cornice & columns, C19 panelled door with fanlight. Modern development has occurred around and behind the property, which detracts somewhat from its grandeur.



Manor Court, 85 High Street

37. No.4 School Road: formerly two cottages. Early C19 with C18 cottage to left (former smithy). Gabled C19 plain tile roof.



4 School Road

38. Nos. 6 to 12 School Road: Two houses, C17 to left and early C19 to right. Variety of materials including coursed limestone rubble and brick. These buildings were hidden behind the former Methodist Chapel until its demolition, which accounts for their slightly set-back appearance from the road.

39. No. 14 School Road and 99 Green Road: The former workhouse and school. Remodelled in 1754. No. 99 is probably early C19. Coursed limestone rubble with gabled concrete tile roof. Strong hipped roof defines the corner of the road.

40. The Old Dog, No.18 School Road: former public house. Late C17 with likely C16 origins. Coursed limestone rubble with gabled C20 tile roof. Service bay with brick dressings to rear.



18 School Road

Proposed Crown Road Conservation Area

41. Exeter House, 40 Crown Road: Exeter House was the village surgery from 1931, therefore being a key building in the village's recent history. Built before the Inclosure Act of 1818, the house had a prominent location overlooking the larger of the two village greens. The house is constructed of coursed limestone rubble with a gabled Welsh slate roof. Ashlar was used in the construction of the stone chimney stacks which have been finished in brick. The bracketed flat stone door hood and keyed flat stone arch over is a key feature. The house is of two storeys with attic, hidden behind a later Mansard roof.



Exeter House

16. Appendix 3 - Significant Un-Listed Buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation areas

Church Street Conservation Area

1. 70 and 72 Church Street: semis, semi-Victorian gothic revival. Built in 19th century as pair of large semis for professionals.



72 Church Street

2. 5-15 Church Street: former Britannia pub and shops. A particularly fine brick terrace, brick semi-detached pair and detached stone property with stone window detailing. The Britannia Inn was built c.1863 as part of the growth in local business brought in by the strong connections with Oxford. The properties form a pleasing group at the entrance to Church Street, and their loss would be keenly felt.



5-9 Church Street

3. 14 The Moors: Red brick house which contrasts with the creamy limestone surrounding it. The modern extension to the front is a replacement for an earlier Edwardian structure; its presence is indicative of the building scheme which spread out from the old village during the 19th century.

4. 32-34 The Moors: interesting long frontage set back from the road. The low boundary wall is capped with black tiles, and the high walls which flank the sides of the plot are stone with



32-34 The Moors

5. Mill End House:

A house and garden has existed on the site since before 1267, when it was donated to Osney Abbey. It is likely that the house was used as a refuge for Brasenose College scholars during times of plague, and also for curates until the Vicarage was restored in the mid 1800s.

The house retains its 14th century Gothic windows and carved stone corbel, and the garden incorporates an earlier rectangular moted platform from a 16th or 17th century orchard.

Various extensions and alterations have been made to the property since the current owners arrived in 1984.



14 The Moors

6. 33a and 35 The Moors: 2 almost identical tower houses, later extended, however the prominent tower section can clearly be seen.



35 The Moors

7. 72-82 Mill Street:

These properties are not shown on the Inclosure Map and are likely to date from the 1820s. Four thatched cottages originally lay behind these, and were destroyed by fire in 1913.

8. 127-135 Mill Street: Mill Street shops: mentioned as a house & homestead in Inclosure maps. The hairdresser's was once a Non-Conformist Chapel. All were cottages before becoming shops.



Mill Street Shops

High Street Conservation Area

9. 107-113 High Street: terrace of cottages Sandwiched between Tower Hill and 115 High Street, the cottages have group value. They are of two storeys with limestone rubble construction under Welsh Slate roofs. Number 113 has keystone window surrounds and casement windows. Set back from the road, the long front gardens provide an attractive setting to the terrace.



107-111 High Street

10. 97-97C Green Road: another example of single older buildings which have been extended over time, this former single dwelling, known as Alma Cottage on C19 OS maps, has been converted and extended into a terrace of four town houses. This again would have been a prominent property near the green, and has similar Georgian characteristics to other large houses in the area.



97-97C Green Road

11. No. 2 School Road: built in 1870, this cottage was formerly the village Post Office, as well as becoming a shop in 1913 and library in later years. The cottage holds a significant position on the junction of School Road and High Street, and was designed to be viewed from both the northeast and northwest. It starts a strong building line which runs to the end of the road.



2 School Road

12. 36-40 School Road: terrace of cottages in the Georgian style. These cottages follow the southern line of the former green, meeting up with 40-52 Mill Street to the east. No. 38 has been renovated in recent years, and although access is now gained from the rear, the front door has been left in place.



36-40 School Road

Proposed Crown Road Conservation Area
13. The Courthouse, No. 42 Crown Road: part of the Grove Farm complex, stone slates, stone built. Wood painted lintels, 2 dormers, stone.



No. 42 Crown Road: The Court House

Acknowledgments

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Contact Details

This document has been produced as part of the District Council's ongoing programme of conservation area appraisals. The Council is seeking comments on the content and proposed boundary alterations.

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Executive

COTTISFORD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL: CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION DRAFT AND APPROVAL OF FINAL APPRAISAL

11 May 2009

Report of Head of Planning and Affordable Housing Policy

PURPOSE OF REPORT

Local Authorities have a duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review Conservation Areas from time to time.

This report is public

A copy of the Appraisal document is circulated separately with the agenda

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- 1) To resolve, under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to approve the Cottisford Conservation Area appraisal and to extend the boundary with immediate effect

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the comments received on the draft appraisal and the proposed extension to the Conservation Area and indicates the amendments that are considered appropriate in response.

Proposals

- 1.1 To approve the Cottisford Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 1.2 To extend the boundary of the Conservation Area to include Cottisford Pond to the east, the paddock to the rear of Hethe Road Cottages and the barn to the north west of Cottisford House.

Conclusion

- 1.3 To approve the Cottisford Conservation Area appraisal and to extend the boundary with immediate effect.

Background Information

- 2.1 This report is in accordance with Paragraph 9.48 of the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2001 and paragraph 9.89 of the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011, which state that the Council will from time to time propose new or review existing Conservation Areas.
- 2.2 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, does not require local planning authorities to undertake public consultation prior to designation but this Council considers it to be good practice. It does require Conservation Areas to be reviewed from time to time and for proposals for preservation and enhancement to be submitted to a public meeting.
- 2.3 Cottisford Conservation Area was first designated in 1980; this is the first review of the boundary since its designation.
- 2.4 Public consultation took place on the draft Conservation Area Appraisal following consultation with, and the approval of, the ward member on 30th March.
- 2.5 The appraisal, a questionnaire and pre-paid envelope was posted to every house in Cottisford. The appraisal was also available to download from the Council's website and in hard copy on request from Bodicote House.
- 2.6 A public exhibition was held in St Mary's Church, Cottisford from 6-7pm on 2nd April followed by a public meeting that evening from 7-8pm. Posters were put up in Juniper Hill and Cottisford. The event was attended by approx. 14 people and questionnaires were available asking for comments on the appraisal and the conservation area boundary. The comments received are recorded in the sections following 3.2.
- 2.6 The appraisal comprises an outline of the development of the village, including its history and literary connections, followed by an analysis of the established character of the village including its land use, settlement pattern, building types and style, construction materials, features of special interest and means of enclosure.
- 2.7 The appraisal also contains a Management Plan comprising proposals for preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area, justification for the Conservation Area boundary and the effects of Conservation Area designation.
- 2.8 The document proposed an extension of the Conservation Area to include the paddock to the rear of Hethe Road Cottages. The paddock was once 6 allotments, one associated with each cottage, and each forming an extension to a series of carefully designed outbuildings. The relationship between these cottages and the paddock was felt to represent an important element of Cottisford's social history and the extension was proposed at the public exhibition. Further proposed additions were suggested at the public meeting (see 3.5)

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Feedback from the Public Meeting and Questionnaires
- 3.2 Villagers present at the public meeting were concerned about the impact of speeding on Cottisford. Although traffic is not heavy, rat running results in the erosion of grass verges and speeding through the settlement. It was generally felt that bollards would urbanise the area. Larger speed signs would not comply with highway regulations for repeater signs. Signs partially obscured by hedging could be uncovered. Speeding outside Kennel Cottages was also raised in the returned questionnaires. Although the County Council is responsible for speed restrictions and signage, further discussions with the Parish Council will ascertain whether Cottisford would be a suitable location for this Council's mobile speed indicator.
- 3.3 There was concern about the future use of the Lower Hethe Poultry Farm site should it become redundant lest it be developed for housing or offices generating more traffic through Cottisford. Cottisford is a Category 3 settlement and therefore any development beyond house extensions is unlikely to be approved.
- 3.4 Suggestions of areas for enhancement within the village focused on the electricity transformer station adjacent to St Fergus. It was suggested that planting on the southern and eastern boundaries of the site would reduce the impact on views from the footpaths to the south and that this should be specifically mentioned in the document.
- 3.5 In addition to the proposed inclusion of the paddock to the rear of Hethe Road Cottages (which was well received) four other areas were proposed.

The field between Lake View and the grounds of Cottisford House:- This was not felt to be of sufficient historic or archaeological importance to justify its inclusion.

Lower Heath Farm and poultry houses:- This was suggested with the assumption that being within the Conservation Area would prevent development on the site. Conservation Area extensions should not be used as a tool to prevent development and the area has no historical justification for inclusion.

Cottisford Pond:- Although the pond has little visual connection with the village it is a much used amenity which has a historical association with the settlement. It features on the 1797 Davis Map of the village and is mentioned in Flora Thompson's book 'Larkrise to Candleford'. The trees that surround the pond are a visual amenity and including this area would help to protect them against removal in the future. The sluice of Cottisford Pond is already included within the boundary and it is proposed to include the rest of the pond within the boundary.

Barn to the north west of Cottisford House:- The boundary of Cottisford House grounds has been altered since the maps used in the appraisal were produced. It is proposed that the Conservation Area is changed to reflect this altered boundary line and include the barn that now lies within the grounds of Cottisford House. Although the barn is in a poor state of repair it appears to be of some historic interest and is within the curtilage of

Cottisford House. The rationalisation of the boundary to make it more legible on the ground would be an appropriate addition to the conservation area.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward as this will enable the Council to publish the finalised version of the Appraisal which will then become a material consideration to be weighed against other considerations in the determining of planning applications within the Conservation Area and its setting.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Option One | To approve and to publish the Conservation Area Appraisal including the proposed extension to the boundary |
| Option Two | To not extend the Conservation Area |
| Option Three | To make further changes to the Cottisford Conservation Area Appraisal as members see fit |

Consultations

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Cllr Gibbard | Made no formal representations |
| The Parish Council | Made positive verbal comments |
| Cllr Wood | Made no formal representations |
| Local Residents | Comments are discussed in detail under headings 3.2 to 3.4 |

Implications

Financial: Financial effects - There are no financial implications arising from this report. The costs of preparing the Appraisal and the public consultation are met from the approved revenue budget and the Council does not operate any grant aid scheme that would be triggered by the Appraisal.

Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Accountant 01295 221552

Legal: The Council has a legal duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to review Conservation Areas from time to time. The Council is not legally required to consult but has undertaken a thorough consultation and the extension to the Conservation Area is broadly supported by the local community.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Assistant Solicitor 01295 221687

Risk Management: The Conservation Area Appraisal analyses the special character and appearance of the designated area and sets out proposals for the management of the area.

Having been publicly consulted upon, the Appraisal will become a material consideration in the determining of planning applications within the designated area and will be used by Inspectors in considering appeals.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

Fringford

Corporate Plan Themes

Theme 6: Protect and enhance the local environment
Theme 8: Rural Focus
Theme 10: Focus on Cherwell's People

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Michael Gibbard
Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Economy

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
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Cottisford Conservation Area Appraisal

May 2009

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1. Introduction

Cottisford has a Saxon origin and retains architectural indications of a wealthy Medieval past but unusually never expanded to the extent of surrounding settlements. This could be due in part to the appearance of Juniper Hill as a subsidiary settlement to the north in the 18th century. Cottisford as a settlement originated at the western end of the current village. Houses around the parish church were cleared by the owner of Cottisford House in the 19th century and the centre of the village shifted to the east end. Several small groups of houses joined the old school at this end of the village in the 20th century but there has been little modern infill. The village was designated a Conservation Area in 1980 in acknowledgement of its special qualities which need to be preserved and enhanced. This document is the first full appraisal of the village following its designation.

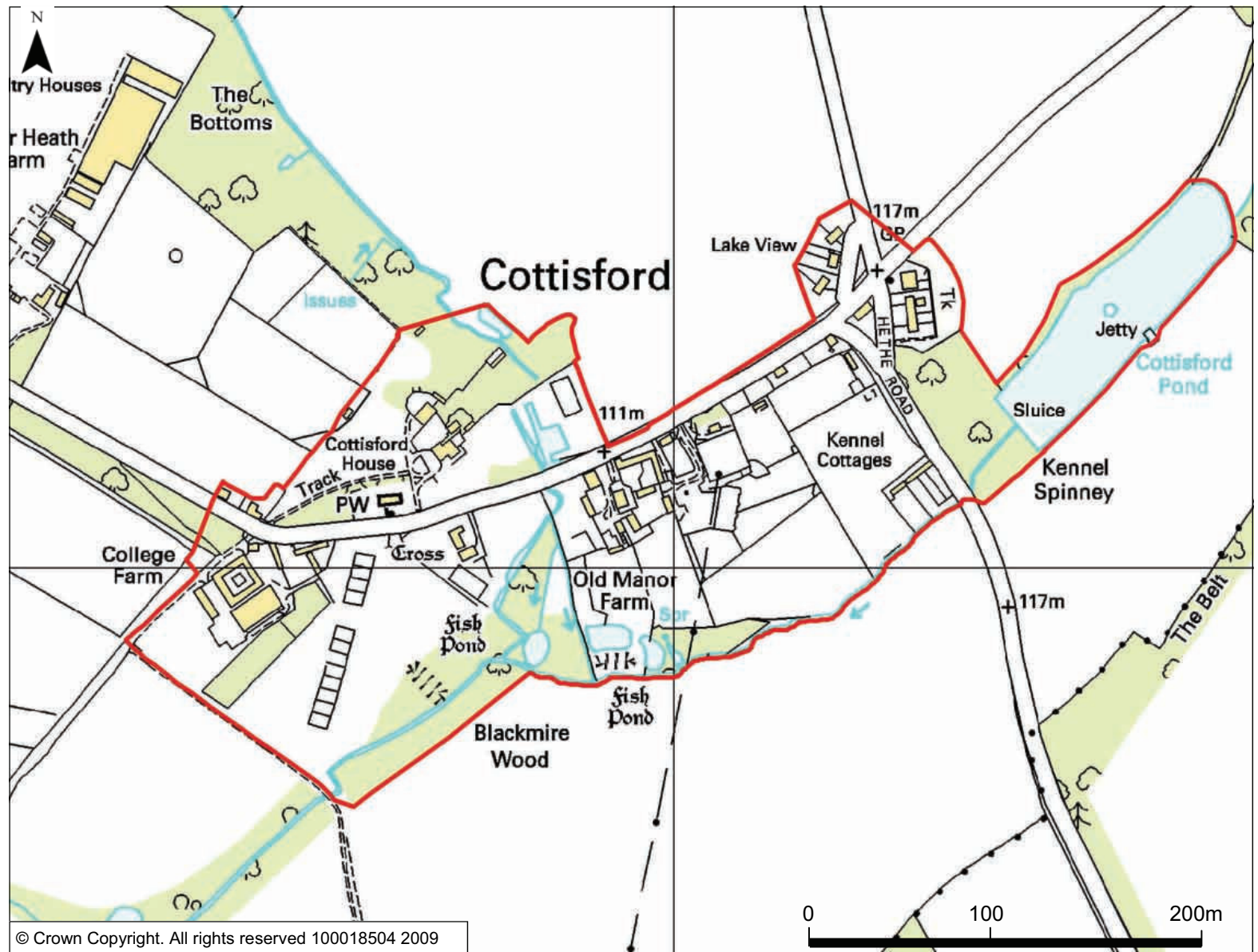


Fig. 1: Conservation Area Boundary

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1 Conservation Area Designation

2.1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides legislation for the protection of the nation's heritage of buildings and places of architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

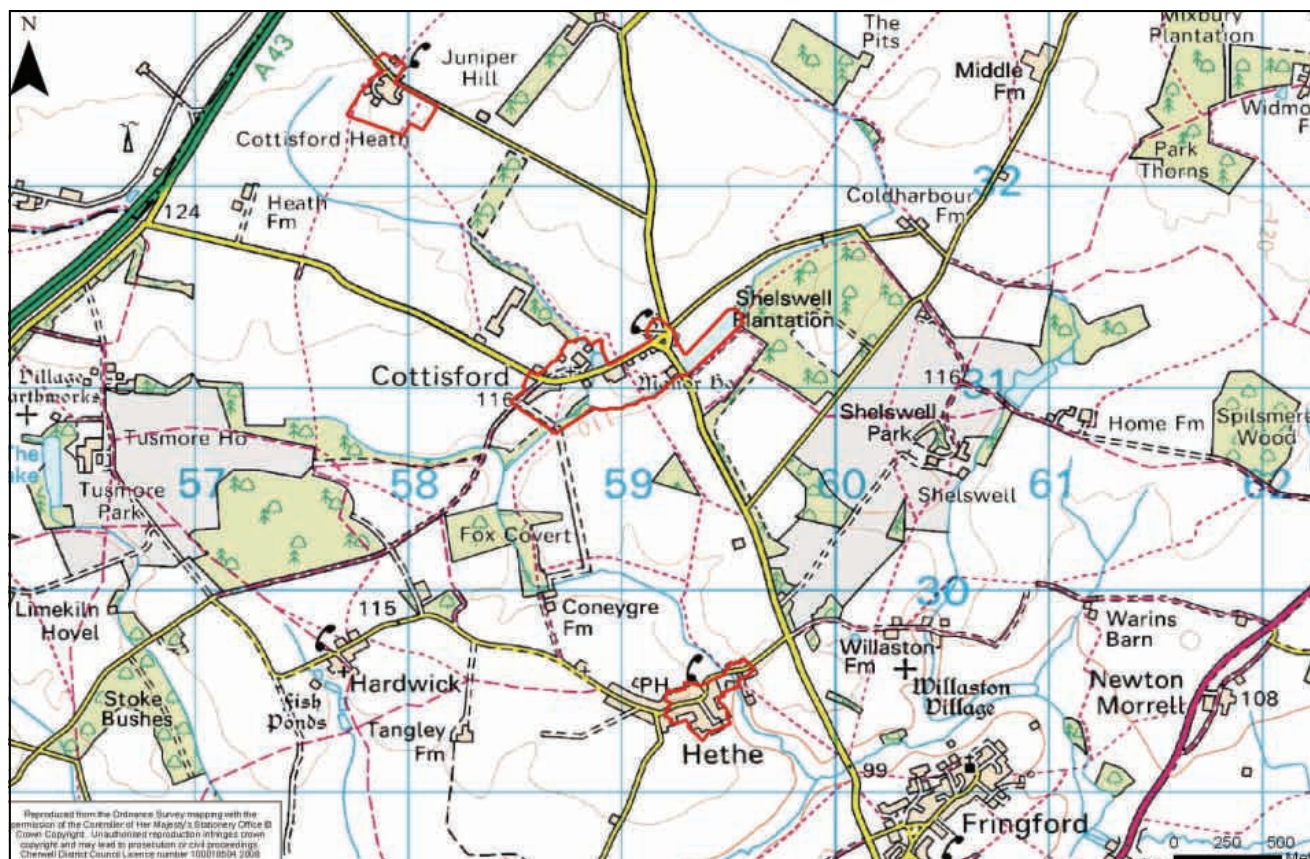
2.1.2 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 which places a duty upon local planning authorities to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest through an appraisal process and to designate them as Conservation Areas. Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 56 in Cherwell District.

2.1.3 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Act to consider boundary revisions to their Conservation Areas 'from time to time'. The boundary of Cottisford Conservation Area was designated in 1980. This document is the first appraisal of the Conservation Area and has extended the boundary to the rear of Hethe Road Cottages, rationalised the boundary to the rear of Cottisford House and included Cottisford Pond to the east.

2.1.4 This document is based on a standard recording format derived from advice contained in documents published by English Heritage (2005). The special character and appearance of Cottisford is identified in the appraisal process, thereby ensuring that any future development preserves or enhances that identified special character.

2.1.5 This appraisal has been the subject of public consultation and was adopted by the Council on the 11th May 2009. The document will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the conservation area and its setting.

Fig 2: Location Plan



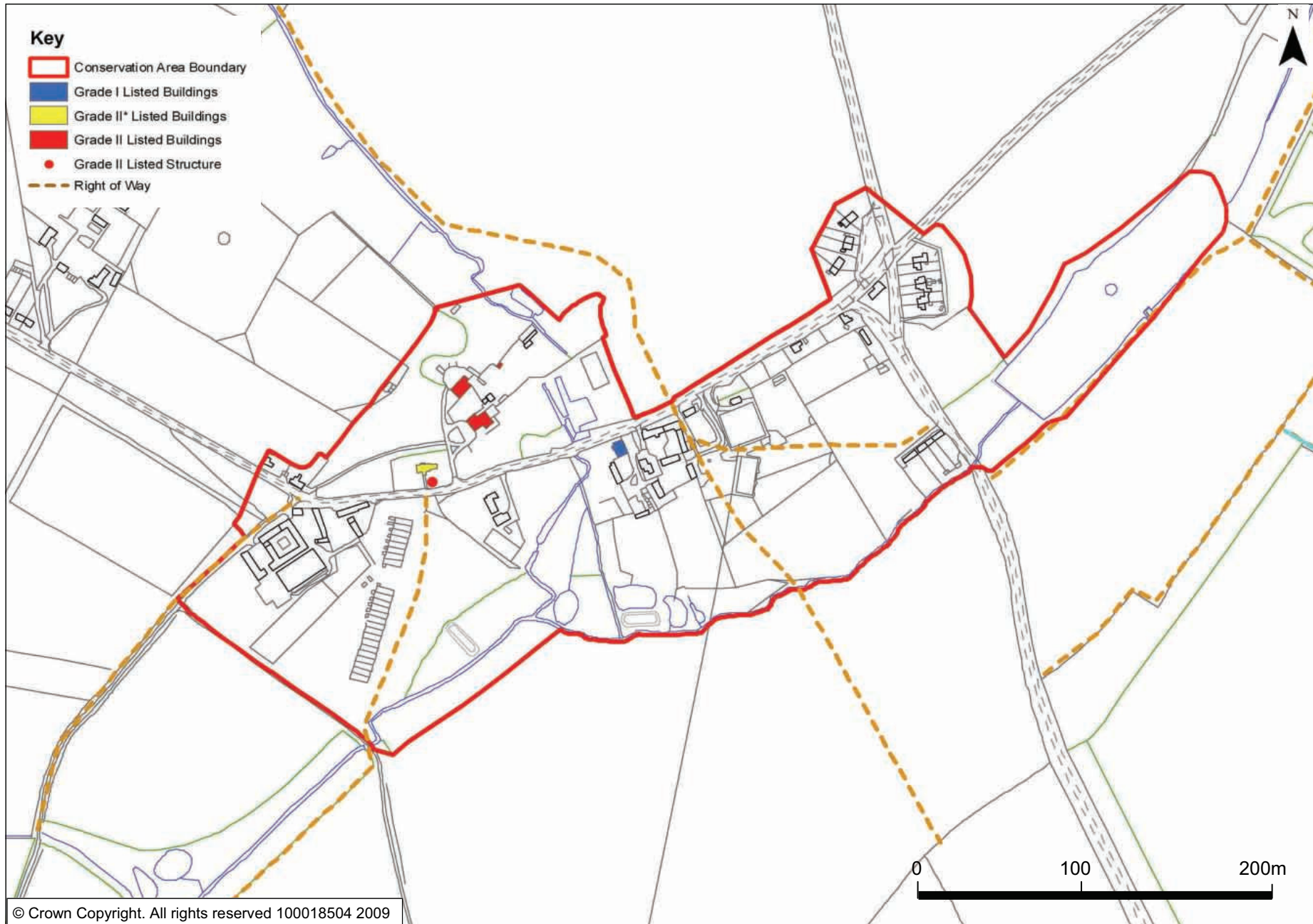


Fig. 3: Designations

3. Location and Topography

Figure 4: Geological map

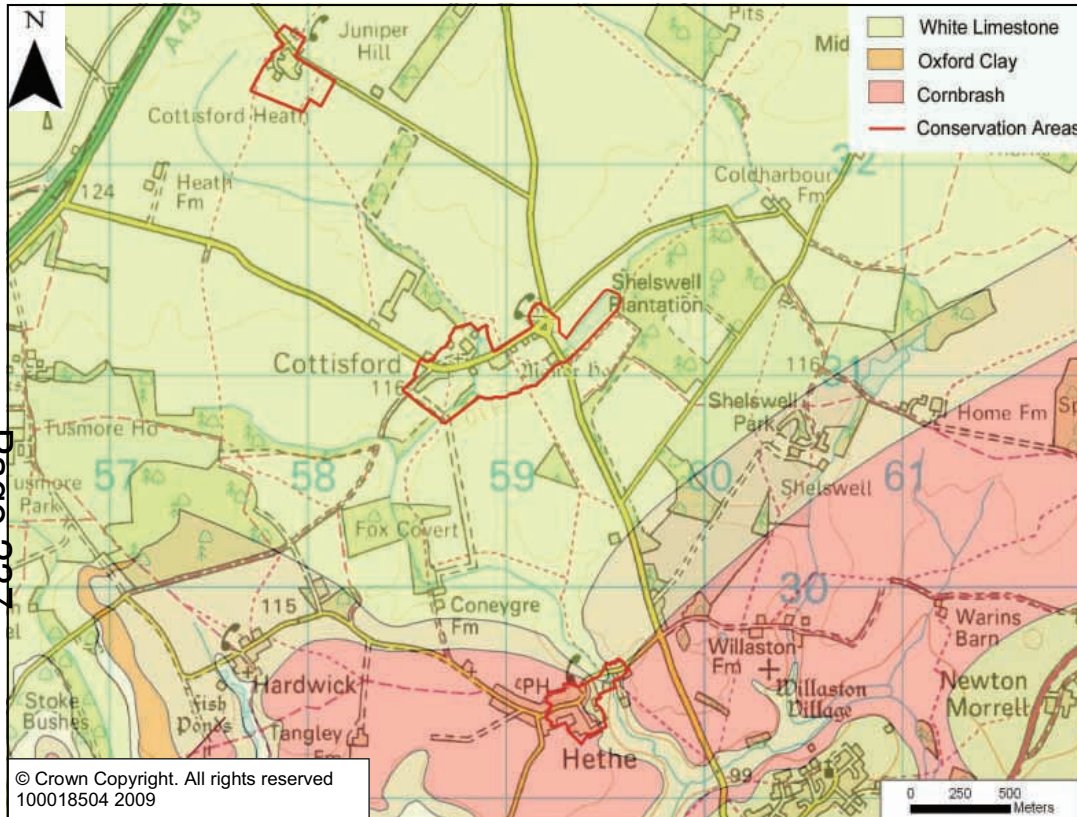
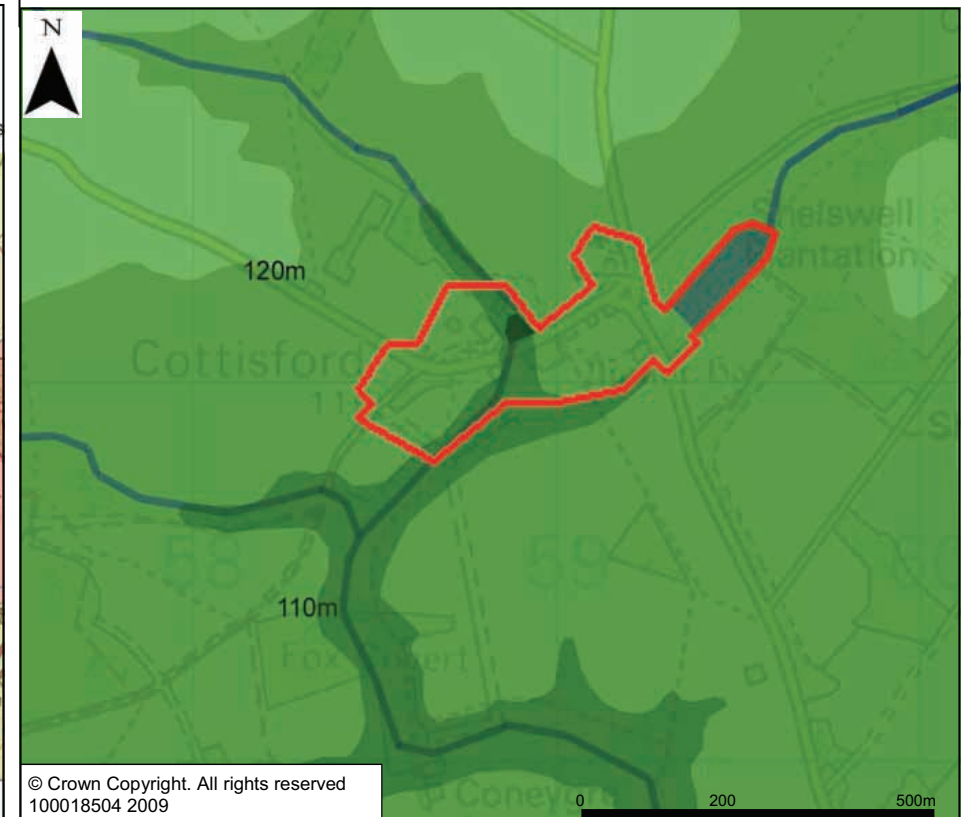


Figure 5: Topographical map



Cottisford sits approximately six miles (9.7Km) north of Bicester and four miles (6.4Km) south of Brackley on an area of high ground close to the Northamptonshire border.

The two original settlements lie either side of the Crowell stream, a tributary of the Padbury Brook, which joins the River Great Ouse east of Buckingham.

The topography around Cottisford is relatively flat sloping downhill to a shallow valley south of the village.

Cottisford lies within the Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands area as defined in the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (Cobham Resource Consultants, 1995). This area is notable for its rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern, copses and trees.

The watercourses are marked by scrubland and in some places managed woodlands of poplars. Larger fields have developed to the south and north east with the removal of hedgerows while smaller enclosures are retained to the west of Cottisford House. The watercourses have been dammed to form small ponds and a lake to the east reminiscent of the medieval fish ponds associated with the Old Manor Farm.

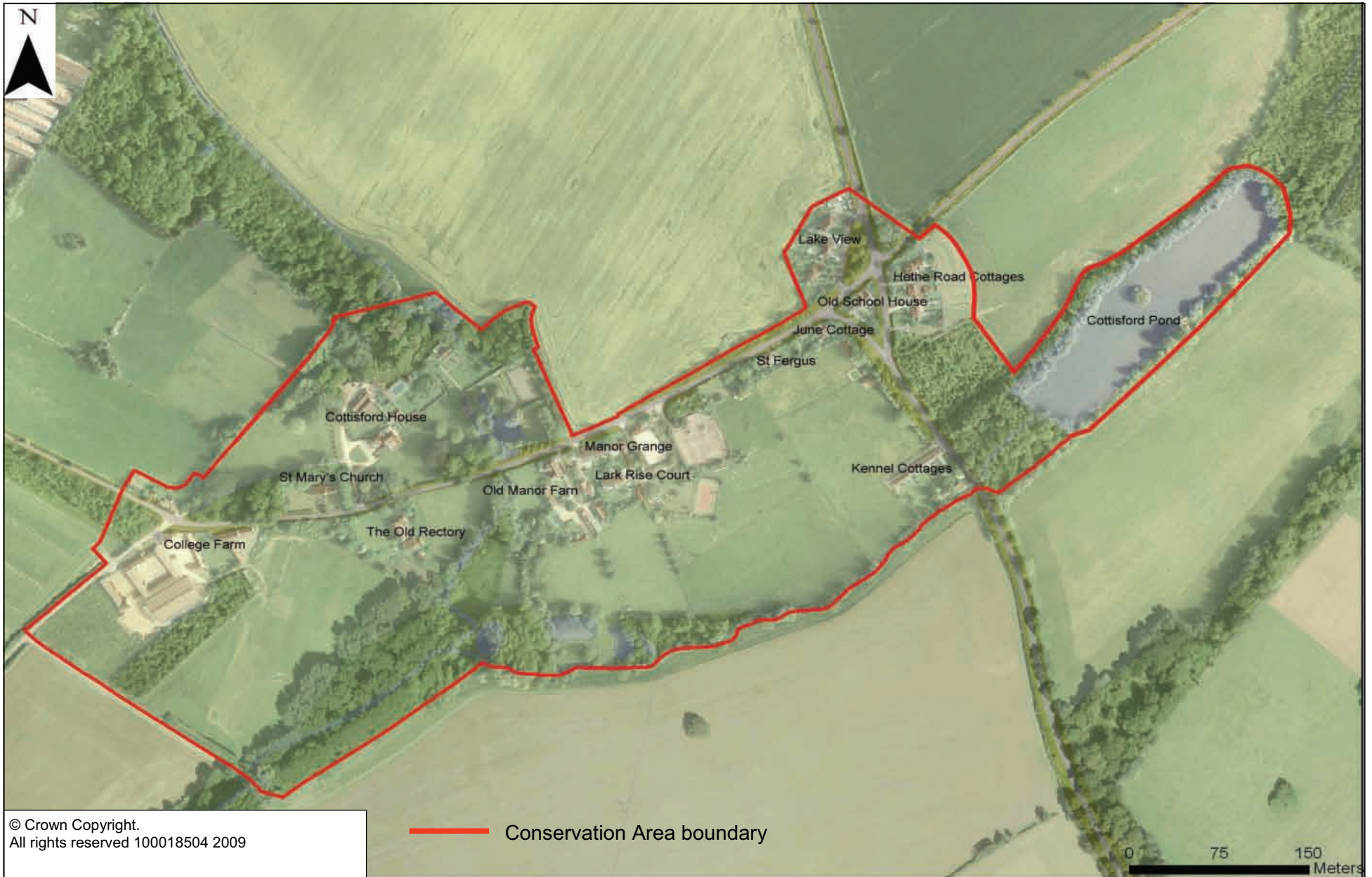


Fig 6: Aerial view of the village including the Conservation Area boundary

4. History of Cottisford

4.1 Archaeology

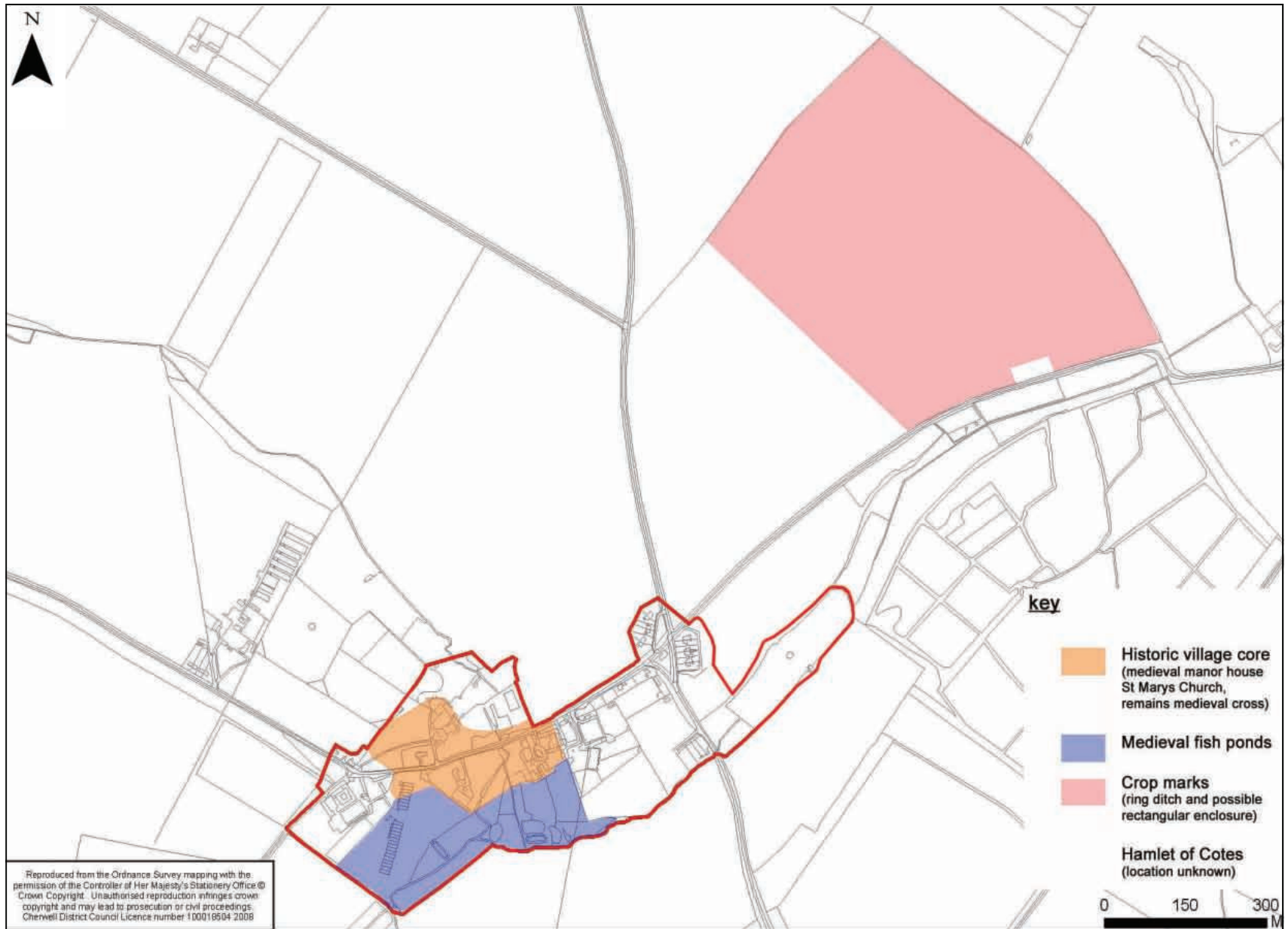


Fig 7: Archaeological map

4.2 Origins

Cottisford lies at a fording point of the Crowell stream. The name Cotts-ford loosely translates as cottages by the ford. However 13th century charters named the village 'Wolfheysford' or 'Urfesford'.

4.3 Development

The hearth tax returns of 1665 show that there were three substantial houses in the village, the Rectory with 4 hearths and two dwellings with 6 and 7 hearths (likely to be the Old Manor House and Cottisford House). 18th century records of the settlement by Sir John Peshall describe the village as 'lying in the form of a street from e(ast) to w(est)' and the Davis map of 1797 show this clearly. The 1797 map shows a lane and houses between the two. These were removed by the landscaping of Cottisford House by William Turner in the 1820s. New homes were created for the displaced villagers further along the existing village street. The relocation of whole villages was common to enable the creation of pleasure grounds for the ruling classes in this period. The area where the cottages once stood was planted with trees which are still growing on site today. A visitor in 1825 records that the churchyard was closed in by cottages on three sides and that there was a road (which was later closed by Turner) that used to run southwards Hethe. The old village lay mostly west of the ford (which was probably near Cottisford House pond) where the Rectory and College Farm can still be seen while on the east is Old Manor Farm, a medieval house of some importance.

The village expanded in the 18th and early 19th century—records of 1738 show the settlement as 12 cottages, Cottisford House and a farmhouse. The 19th century saw the development of Juniper Hill, a hamlet originating as a squatter's settlement to the north-west as well as an expansion of Cottisford to the east. The linear nature of the village is still apparent today with the church and Cottisford House lying north of the road and six semi-detached 19th century cottages alongside the Hethe Road at the eastern end. Between 1946 and the present day only 6 semi-detached council houses have been built in the village.



Old Manor Farm in 1970

Fig 8: Figure ground plan



Cottisford in 1887 in black and 2008 in grey, showing the limited growth of the settlement over this period of time.

Field names as recorded in the 13th century include Widemor, Mareweye, Nordmoresende, Cotesthorn and Eylesbrech which give an idea of the wild heath and fen nature of the landscape in this period. At this time there was a small hamlet recorded as 'Cote' in the vicinity of the village but its exact position along with the settlement itself has been lost.

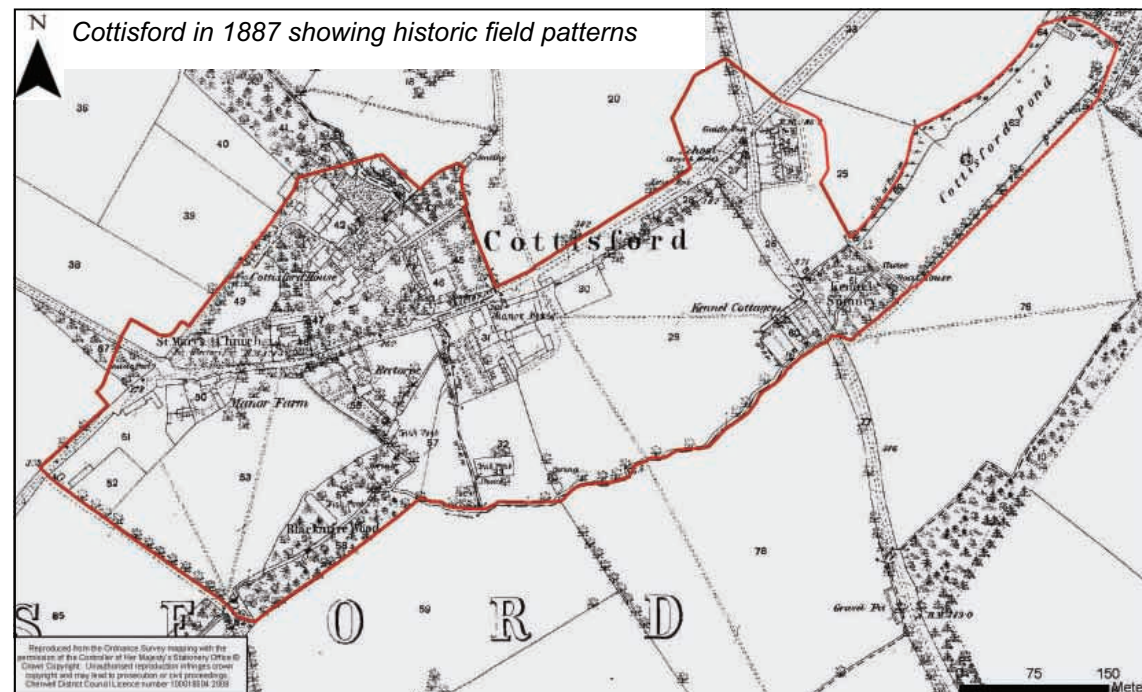
The ancient manor at Cottisford was assessed as having 6 hides and 40 virgates (roughly 30 acres) in the Domesday Book. This rose to 48 virgates under cultivation by 1245. The manor had various customs for the local virgaters including the need for licenses to marry off their daughters and fines to be paid when marrying a widow. These have all been preserved in the court rolls. The prosperity of Cottisford was at its height at the end of the 13th century declining significantly in the 14th century. A notable gap in manor accounts between 1343 and 1360 is likely to be the result of the disarray caused by the Black Death, which is also probably the cause of the disappearance of the hamlet of Cote.



Threshing machine and traction engine nr Fringford

The field system, in the absence of any pre-enclosure maps, cannot be satisfactorily made out, the current landscape being almost entirely a result of the 18th century inclosures. Before 1854 the farming practice in the area had been very conservative. William Fermor and Martha Eyre attempted to secure inclosure in 1761 and the matter was raised again in parliament in 1777 and 1809 by Eton's tenant Revd Greenhill, Rector of Fringford. In 1848 an act was finally obtained but the award was not made until 1854. At this time Eton College had around 30 acres of plantation and wood and the manor house estate covered around 865 acres.

The poor rate in Cottisford, as elsewhere in the country, rose rapidly in the late 18th century. The 19th century poor kept their cattle on the heath and had the right to cut furze and brushwood. It was the last quarter of this century that Flora Thompson recorded in detail in her autobiographical novels published in the 1940s. The majority of Cottisford inhabitants were farmers or agricultural labourers with numbers increasing significantly in the 19th century. A 1676 census records 46 adults in the parish while total numbers had increased to 263 by 1851 and 327 in 1871. However the introduction of mechanised agriculture saw a rapid decline with only 175 inhabitants recorded in 1901 and 150 in 1911.



In 1808 Cottisford had a small school supported by subscriptions which taught 12 children but it had closed by 1815. A Sunday school was established in 1819 with 30 pupils but it was not until 1856 that a National School was established with the help of Eton College on a plot set aside by the inclosure award of 1854. The school was closed in 1920 and reopened as a Council school a few years later but numbers were low with only 22 pupils in 1954 and it finally closed in 1968.



The Old School when it was first converted

Nonconformity in Cottisford has never been particularly strong. In the late 16th century the manor lessees the Arden family were fined as Catholic recusants. A Methodist meeting house was opened in 1844 in Juniper Hill. There were few members but it survived into the 1880's as recorded by Flora Thompson.

The village Church of St Mary has fluctuated between a state of near ruin and good repair during its history. A poor living in the middle ages, when it was worth only £2, its value rose to £66 in 1611. A gift of £200 in 1723 from Queen Anne and a further sum from the Dean of St Paul's came just 5 years after the church was described as very much out of repair and '*very nastily kept by reason of holes and a pigeon house as the west end*' (Rawlinson 1718) The 1861 restoration of St Mary's was paid for by private subscription.



The remains of the Medieval cross in the churchyard



Cottisford Church by G. Scaldwell, 1835-45 (from Alfred Beesley's History of Banbury Vol 6 pg 178)



St Mary's Church today

The parish has long been noted for the quality of its hunting and Mr Fermor's hounds pictured in a painting by Ben Marshall (1767-1865) were later known as the Bicester Hunt. The end of the hunting season saw annual horse races in the parish in the early 19th century, although the exact location of these is unclear.

5. Architectural History

Cottisford has two houses of particular interest; the Old Manor Farm (Grade I) which dates from the 14th century and Cottisford House (Grade II) which incorporates an earlier 16th century manor, which itself stood on the site of a much earlier grange. The current building dates from 1707 but was largely rebuilt following a serious fire in March 1929.

A 1325 indenture describes a grange on the site of Cottisford House containing a hall, chamber, kitchen and granary—a building of substantial size for the period. The property passed to Eton College in the mid 15th century and a new house was built at the end of the 16th century for the college tenants. Few records remain of its appearance but it was variously designated as a mansion house and manor house. The present Cottisford House was built by Laurence Lord (an Eton tenant) in the early 18th century and features attic dormers in a hipped roof, ashlar quoins, a broken pediment over the south door and a modillioned (ornamental bracket supports) eaves-cornice. The house was restored and altered in the 19th century by William Turner. The garden contains remnants of a large 17th century brick dovecote which is listed in its own right. The structure rests on limestone piers, the spaces between which were infilled in the 20th century. The 18th century stable and coach house to the north west of Cottisford house is also listed and retains its original stalls and carriage doors.



Old Manor Farm

Old Manor Farm is noted in Pevsner as of particular interest in representing the medieval manorial plan and is architecturally related to the stone defensive keeps or donjons of the Norman Castle. The oldest section of Old Manor Farm consists of two compartments, possibly a first floor hall and solar with two smaller projecting blocks. There is also a later 16th century wing to the south. Almost all the windows have been modernised but two 15th century trefoil-headed windows remain in the north wall of the solar and in the north gable a attic window dating from 1200 can be seen, although this is unlikely to be its original position. The north-west projection of the house contains a garde-robe accessible from the solar, a rare detail in a house of this date and in the north gable 16th century roof timbers remain visible. The building is built of the local limestone rubble with a Welsh slate roof. The interior has been much modernised but a 16th century fireplace remains on the ground floor.



The Granary of Cottisford House & Cottisford House

The village also contains the grade II* listed Church of St Mary. The building dates from the 13th century but has 14th century and later alterations. Major restoration took place in 1861 under the auspices of Charles Harrison, which included insertion of tracery in the square-headed windows. The church is constructed of squared coursed limestone and limestone rubble with a steeply pitched tile roof. A relatively small church, it consists of chancel, nave and south porch. The interior displays 19th century pews, piscina and font. The churchyard also contains the base and a fragment of the shaft of a medieval cross which is listed grade II.



St Mary's Church

6. Character Areas

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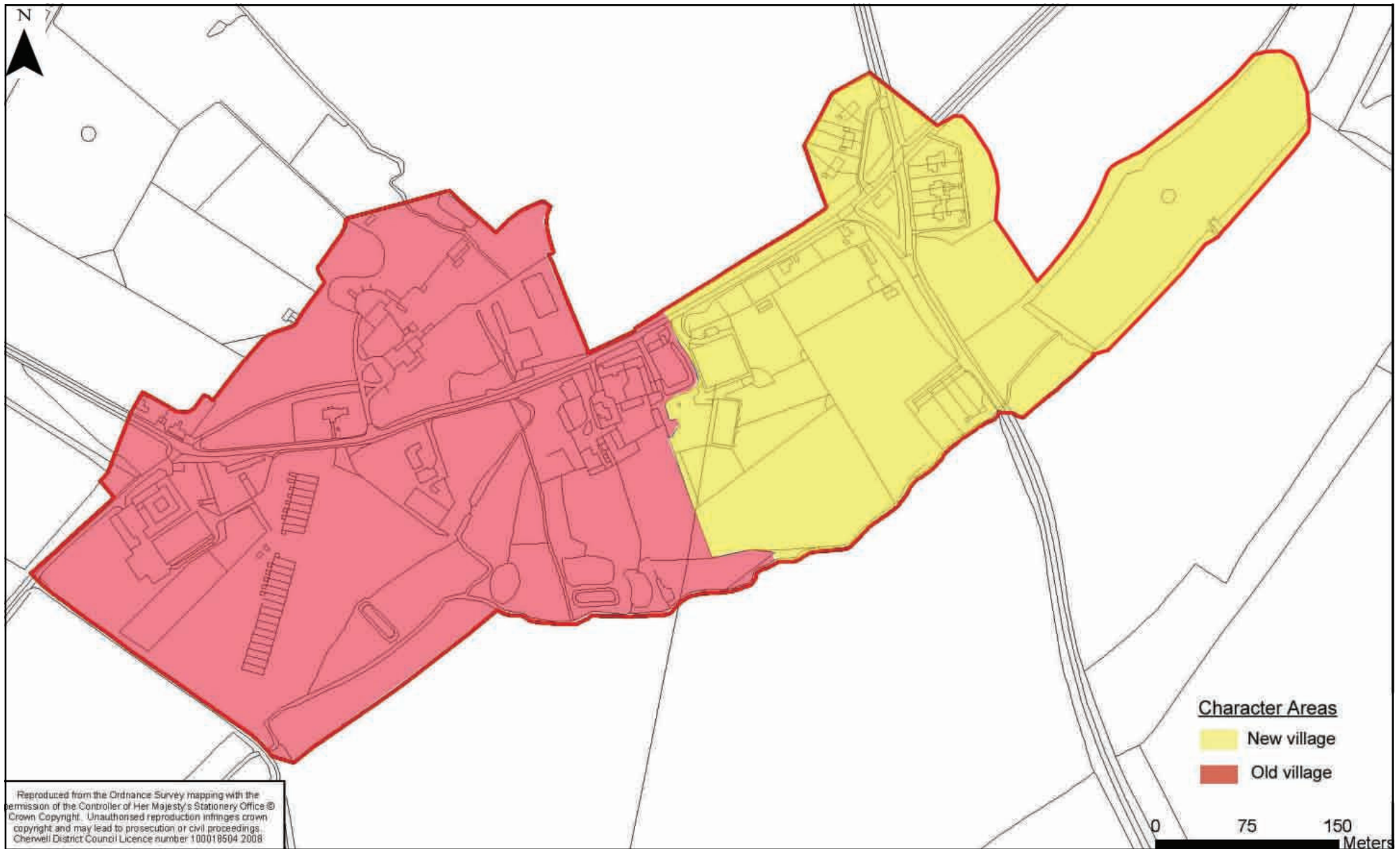


Figure 9: Character area map

6.1 The Old Village

6.1.1 Land use

This area contains the Church, Cottisford House, the former rectory, former and remaining farm buildings and cottages. The buildings are now almost entirely residential with the exception of St. Mary's Church and the buildings associated with College Farm which are still in agricultural use. Cottisford House retains a number of significant outbuildings such as the dovecote.

6.1.2 Street pattern, footpaths, means of enclosure

This character area contains one main street which gently curves through the village. The main means of enclosure are low limestone walls with some simple post and rail fencing.

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There are no footways in this character area and the road is unmarked. Apart from the granite setts around the entrance to Cottisford House and along the frontage of College Farm there are no kerbs. There is some erosion of the grass verges outside the church. A footpath, which is likely to be the route of the closed road, runs south to Hethe from opposite the church.

6.1.3 Trees, hedges and open spaces

Mature trees play an important role in the character of this area. Beeches line the driveway to Cottisford House from the west and also flank the churchyard. Further to the east varying heights of Yew hedging shield Old Manor Farm, Old Rectory and Church from the road. Grass verges are an important characteristic of the area and help to retain the rural feel of the village. The open space between properties emphasises the rural character with agricultural land interspersed with building groups which remain functionally and visually discrete.



Looking west showing the two main forms of enclosure



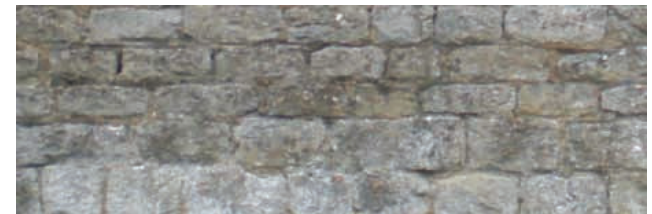
Looking east, showing mature hedges acting as screening



College Farm, vernacular style and limestone construction

6.1.4 Building age, type, style and materials

Buildings date from the Medieval period, (St Mary's Church and Old Manor Farm) through to the 20th century (Lodge Cottage and West Cottage). The Old Rectory, Cottisford House, College Farm and Manor Grange are 18th-19th century. Despite this the buildings display a cohesive character due to the use of only two main building materials—limestone and red brick. Coursed limestone rubble is used in most building with ashlar used on Cottisford House and on parts of the Church. Some buildings use varying sizes of limestone blocks in their construction, for example the barn to the west of Manor Grange seen below.



Hand made brick can be seen on The Old Rectory whereas The Lodge has machine made brick with less visible variation in colour. The roofing materials are also similar with the majority being red clay plain tile or Welsh slate. The rural vernacular style dominates with some estate influences on the College Farm buildings to the west which are owned by the Tusmore Estate. Fenestration is mainly simple wooden casements with the larger buildings having sliding sashes typical of the 18th and 19th century.

6.1.5 Scale and massing

The larger buildings within this area are detached and set back from the road within their own grounds (often with smaller outbuildings). This creates a dispersed ground plan at this end of the village. The old manor grange has been converted to residential use and a number of small dwellings have formed a conglomeration around the rear of the grange. Collectively known as Lark Rise Court these are accessed from the rear, confusing public and private space and presenting an inactive frontage to the road. With the exception of Old Manor Farm and Cottisford House, which are three storey buildings, the properties within this character area are two storey in height.



Lark Rise Court

6.1.6 Features of special interest

- The ancient church, the Old Manor Farm, Cottisford House and their associated outbuildings are of significant architectural interest.

- The history of Cottisford is typical of many in the 18th and 19th century but is preserved by virtue of its halted development. The complete relocation of village housing away from the main manor house was common in this period but later expansion has often made this element of history unclear by infilling gaps between manor house and relocated dwellings but here the legibility of the settlement growth has been maintained.
- One of the things that makes Cottisford so special is that the gaps between dwellings have been carefully maintained in a way that is historically appropriate. The paddocks between The Old Rectory and The Old Manor Farm retain the rural feel while Cottisford House's landscaped grounds contribute to the street scene without being over manicured.
- Water plays an important role in this character area with the stream still occasionally covering the road at the old fording point outside Cottisford House when flooded. The stream runs past the Old Manor Farm and down to a series of ponds to the south where evidence remains of the Medieval fish ponds.
- The social history of Cottisford (Fordlow) as described by Flora Thompson in her trilogy 'Lark Rise to Candleford' adds an extra dimension to our understanding of the village.

6.1.7 Views

The meandering road and rising land to the east creates a series of aesthetically pleasing views as you move through the village. The church in particular is picturesque and the man-made pond by Cottisford House adds an extra element of charm to the street scene. The open land to the north and south create breaks in the enclosed gardens of the larger houses and allow views down into the gently sloping valley and back towards their private elevations. From the north west there are views from the grounds of Cottisford House towards the industrial style sheds of the poultry farm of Lower Heath Farm.



The southern entrance to Cottisford House



View of the pond with the bridge as focal point

6.1.8 Threats

- Cottisford retains a narrow unmarked main street without footways and with generous grass verges, which is key to the rural character of the settlement. The poor visibility does help to discourage speeding, however some cars do cut through this area at speed and traffic avoiding them results in the erosion of these grass verges.
- Expansion of Lower Heath Farm's poultry houses could threaten the character and appearance of the Conservation Area due its close proximity.
- Infilling between distinct groups of buildings would harm our ability to 'read' the historical development of the village.
- Conversion of former farm houses and associated farm yard buildings to non agricultural use inevitably changes their character and can look over manicured. Unsympathetic changes to unlisted buildings which play a major role in the appearance of the street scene, such as College Farm, can potentially be a threat to the character of the conservation area.
- Domestication of the agricultural landscape through incursion of gardens and tennis courts into open land could threaten the rural feel of the settlement.
- The current owners of Cottisford House have respected the rural character of the village with sympathetic and limited interventions to ensure privacy. Elaborate security and privacy measures such as automatic gates, lighting and fencing would be highly detrimental to the character of the area.



Erosion to grass verges looking east towards College Farm



Manor Grange illustrates some of the problems of barn conversion



Agricultural land can become domesticated

6.2 The New Village

6.2.1 Land use

The buildings within this area of the settlement are now entirely residential but did once include the village school which is now converted.

6.2.2 Street pattern, footpaths, means of enclosure

In this area of the village the buildings address the highway rather than being located centrally within a plot. The buildings form a cluster around the crossing of roads with the Old School standing on the central triangle. The exception to this is the Kennel Cottages to the south east which stand apart from the rest of the village at 90° to the Hethe Road. The only footways within this area are found on one side of Lake View; these are surfaced with tarmac but have granite kerbs. The only concrete kerbs within the settlement are found on corners round the Old School and at the entrance to the electricity transformer station. The main form of enclosure is hedging and palisade or post and rail fencing although some low limestone walls are also used. An unsurfaced footpath cuts through Cottisford next to Stone Barn running north to Juniper Hill and south to Hethe with a branch veering east towards Kennel Cottages.



Concrete kerbs outside the electricity substation



Lake View, gardens enclosed by hedges and fencing

6.2.3 Trees, hedges and open spaces

The topography of the land is particularly apparent in this area of the village. The small scale fields in the valley falling south to the stream contrasts with the flat open modern agricultural landscape to the north. A break in the enclosed frontages creates a sense of openness and contributes to the rural character of the area. Trees and hedging also play an important role, with shrub along the stream, hedging around the houses to the east and more mature woodland to the south east of the Conservation Area. Despite the amount of greenery the impact of vegetation on character is less than in the Old Village area. Behind Hethe Cottages is land that is now a paddock but was once divided into 6 allotments which had a direct relationship with the houses and their individual cultivation needs. Lake View has a small triangle of open land around which the properties form a rough crescent.

6.2.4 Building age, type, style and materials

June Cottage and St Fergus appear to be examples of early labourers cottages possibly dating from the 18th century with later alterations. Hethe Cottages can be dated more exactly with the help of a Datestone on the gable ends reading 1869. Similarly history records that The Old School building was constructed in 1856 and was converted into a private house in the 1970s. Little of the original fabric of the school now remains. Kennel Cottages were divided into 5 dwellings in 1857 and are located on the site of the former kennels. A remnant of the kennels is visible as a red brick wall between Popes House (which is rendered) and number 3. The Lake View buildings were erected in the 20th century and are typical of Council Housing of this period with hipped roofs and uniform appearance. Render and pebble-dash are the predominant materials of the modern houses while coursed limestone rubble is found on the older buildings. Red handmade brick is used as detailing on Hethe Cottages. Concrete tile, red clay tile and Welsh slate are the roofing materials within this area. Windows within this area are mostly simple timber casements although there are some examples of Upvc. Almost all of the buildings within this area have been extended, some more appropriately than others.



Distinctive Tusmore Estate detailing of Hethe Cottages

6.2.5 Scale and massing

The buildings within this area are smaller and closer together than those in the Old Village character area and represent several phases of house building for the village residents. Kennel Cottages are slightly set apart to the south of the village and appear higher than their two storeys due to the nature of the topography. The 19th century Hethe Cottages and the 20th century Lake View houses are examples of the housing philosophy of their time. The majority of houses in this area are two storey, and unusually, semi-detached.

6.2.6 Features of special interest

The Old School Building although much altered in the 20th century, has a social history interest as the school which Flora Thompson attended and which is described in her books. The domestic architecture of the Hethe Road Cottages is interesting as a reflection of social history and day-to-day living in the 19th century. Numbers 3 & 4 retain their original outbuildings of a shed with built in copper, privy and pig-sty which are divided from an allotment by a back access lane.



Outbuildings of number 4 Hethe Road Cottages

6.2.7 Views

The lake to the east of the village is visible from the rear of Hethe Cottages but does not appear to have a direct relationship with the settlement. Views across it are picturesque in the summer although recent thinning of the surrounding trees and raising of the water level have given it a harsher appearance. Footpaths crossing the open land to the south provide expansive vistas while to the north there are views out of the village towards the surrounding settlements. The electricity transformer station is surrounded by hedging but is still visible from the main road.

The converted Old School building



View north from the valley bottom



6.2.8 Threats

- Part of the character of this area is provided by the uniformity of Hethe Cottages, Lake View and Kennel Cottages within the 3 groups. Modern extensions to these houses unbalance the planned symmetry and also dominate the original structure.
- The demolition of the outbuildings associated with some of the Hethe Road Cottages has resulted in a jumble of sheds and extensions which have less aesthetic appeal than the original structures.
- The route between Brackley and Fringford runs through the eastern end of Cottisford and traffic, although not constant, has a tendency to speed. This appears to be a particular problem for the occupiers of Kennel Cottages where the vehicular egress has limited visibility and overtaking has caused verge erosion.
- Any expansion of the electricity transformer station would threaten the rural character of the settlement. Screening of the existing transformer station with hedging on its southern and eastern boundaries would be a significant enhancement.



- Key**
- Conservation Area Boundary
 - ▲ Positive Vista
 - Positive View
 - ▲ Negative View
 - ↘ Deflected View
 - Visual Stop
 - Important Green Space
 - Key Vegetation or Trees
 - ▨ Valuable Hedgerows
 - ▨ Significant Change in Slope
 - Pivot Point
 - ◆ Pinch Point
 - ✱ Positive Landmark
 - Positive Building Frontage
 - Characteristic Boundary Wall
 - ◼ Important Corner/ Gateway
 - ✱ Area Requiring Enhancement

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Fig 10: Visual Analysis

Fig 11: Unlisted building that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area



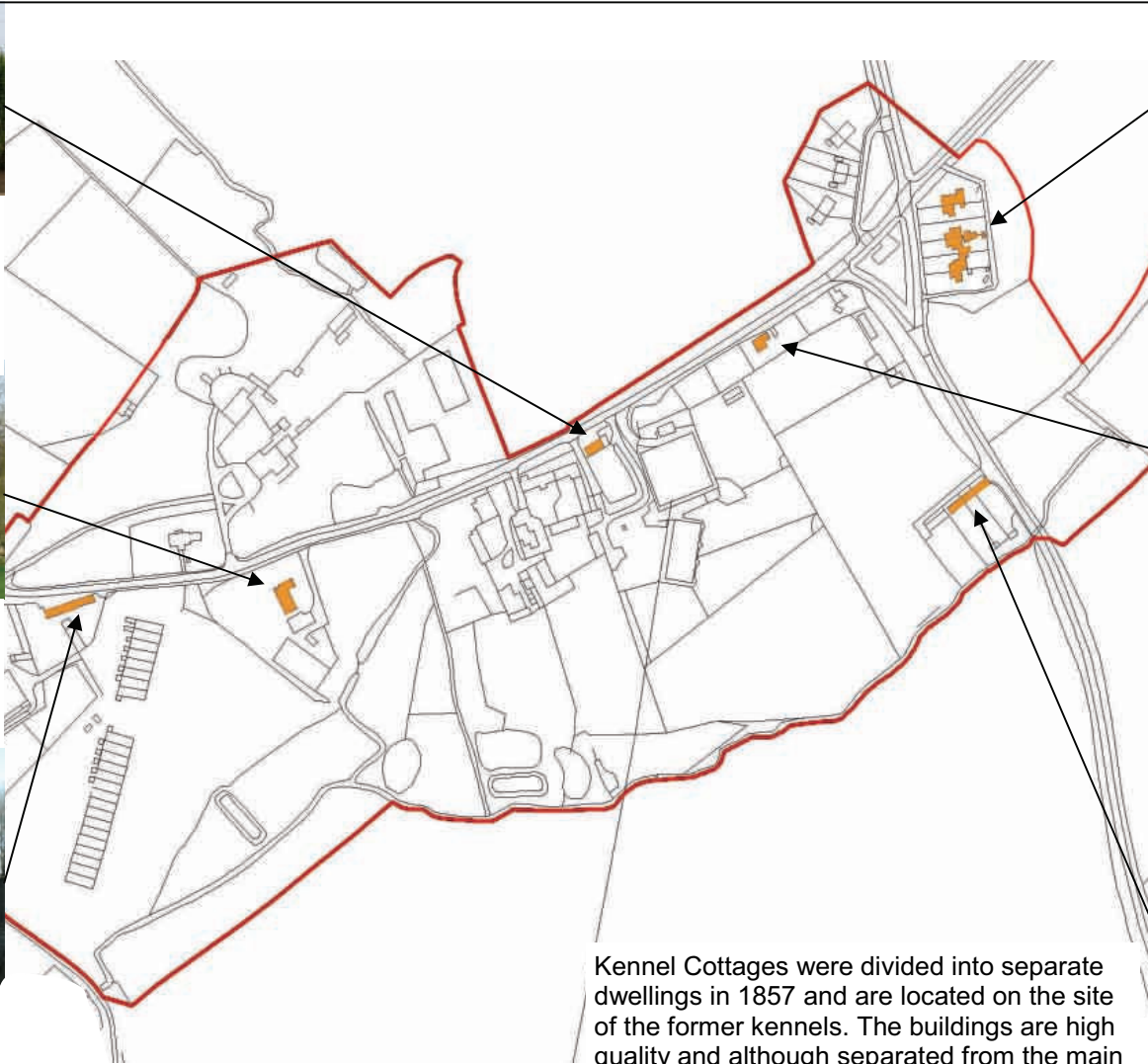
A barn once associated with Old Manor Farm, likely to be 19th century or earlier it plays an important role in the agricultural character of the village.



The Old Rectory is mentioned in Flora Thompson's books and is an impressive 19th century limestone and brick building.



Typical vernacular farmhouse which has been largely rebuilt following a fire in the late 20th century, College Farmhouse plays an important role in the street-scape.



This row of cottages in Hethe Road were built by the Hardwick Estate in 1869. A good example of estate architecture they were designed to be self-sufficient with outbuildings and allotment included in the layout.



St Fergus appears to date from the 19th century but may have earlier origins as labourers cottages. One of the few small village houses remaining it makes a positive contribution to the streetscene.



Kennel Cottages were divided into separate dwellings in 1857 and are located on the site of the former kennels. The buildings are high quality and although separated from the main village represent an important element of its history and contribute to the character of the Conservation Area.

7. Boundary Justification

Boundary alterations

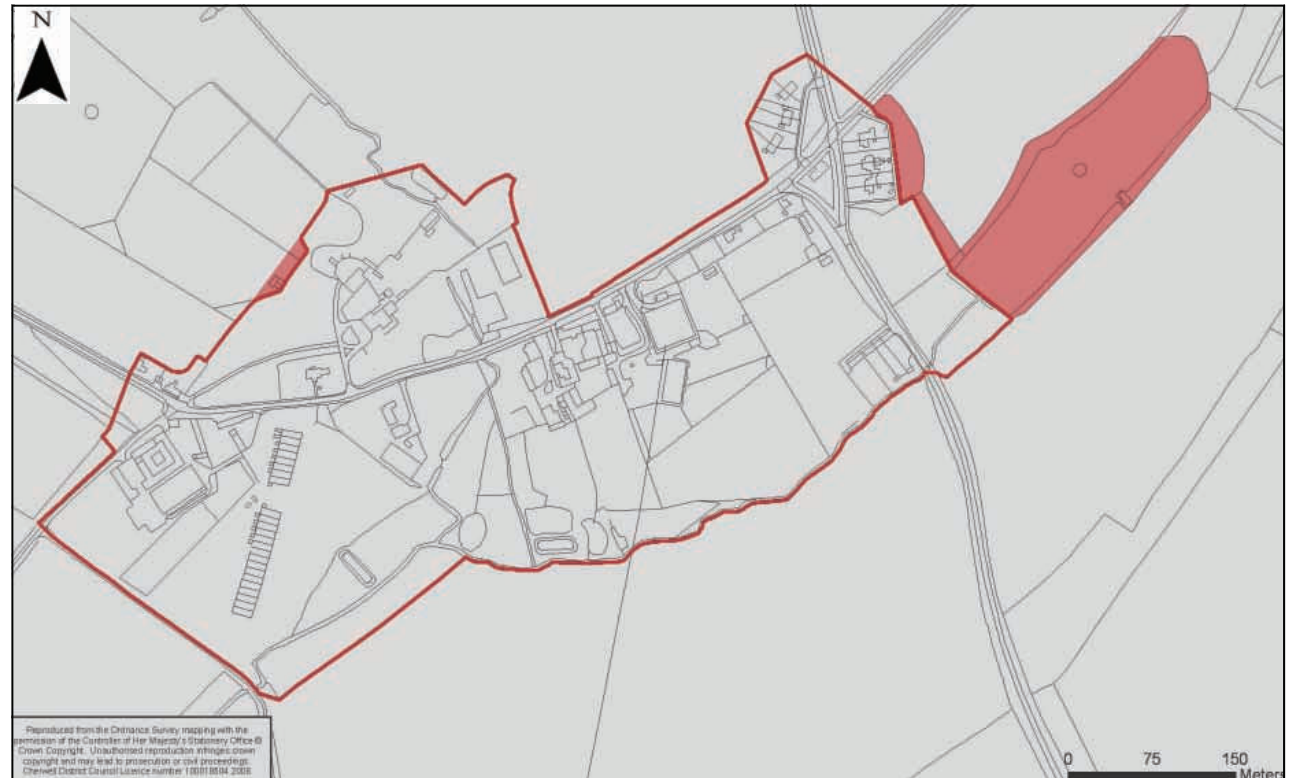
As a result of public consultation three changes were made to the 1980 conservation area boundary. To the west the boundary was rationalised to include a stone barn at the rear of Cottisford House which was felt to be of historical importance to the village. An area of paddock to the rear of Hethe Road Cottages was also included. When built in 1869 each of the Hethe Road cottages were designed to encourage self-sufficiency. The cottages were built in the estate style with each pair of semi-detached properties sharing a set of semi-detached outbuildings. Each house had a shed, outdoor privy and pig sty as well as a detached strip of land divided by a lane to the rear. The rural domestic juxtaposition is still legible and two cottages retain their full set of outbuildings. It is proposed that the boundary be amended to include the small area of paddock (which used to contain the detached gardens) to the rear of the cottages because of its close relationship with the existing buildings (in particular the pigsties of no's 3 & 4) which had not been appreciated when the original boundary line was drawn in the 1980s. The third alteration is the addition of Cottisford Pond which despite being hidden from most viewpoints in the village has historical and social associations with Cottisford. The pond is referred to in Flora Thompson's book 'Lark Rise' as 'pond piece', it features on the 1797 David Map and is likely to have much earlier Medieval origins.

Current boundary

The boundary follows the stream running from Kennel Cottages to College Farm at the south side of the settlement, it then runs adjacent to College Farm's out buildings along the restricted byway to and around The Lodge and West Cottage. The boundary then follows the edge of Cottisford House gardens to the north including the stone barn to the north west of the main house.

The boundary then crosses the stream before returning south to the main road opposite Manor Grange and the entrance to Dovecote House. The boundary then follows the main road to the east, circumnavigates the rear gardens of Lake View Cottages, crosses to Hethe Road Cottages and follows the edge of the paddock to the rear. From here the boundary runs around the edge of Cottisford Pond including the jetty and a thin band of land around the water before returning to the main road opposite Kennel Cottages.

Fig 12: Conservation Area boundary with new additions highlighted



8. Materials and details

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9. Management Plan

Policy context

The 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its conservation areas. In line with English Heritage guidance (2005b) Conservation Area Management Proposals are to be published as part of the process of area designation or review. Their aim is to provide guidance through policy statements to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area.

However small incremental changes such as out of character extensions, obvious satellite dishes and uPVC windows should be guarded against as cumulatively they can damage the overall appearance of the settlement.

The aim of management proposals is not to prevent changes but to ensure that any such changes are sympathetic to the individual property, sympathetic to the streetscape and overall enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The principal policies covering alterations and development of the historic built environment are given in Appendix 1.

Eastern entrance to Cottisford House



▲ Looking west past Manor Grange
▼ Looking east towards Kennel Cottages from footpath



Cottisford is a very small and dispersed settlement which retains a rural character despite its relative proximity to the A43. Little new development has taken place within the last century. Threats that would normally be associated with Conservation Areas are not so relevant here. Cottisford is a well kept village and the individual attention of each resident to their own property has ensured that the character has generally survived successfully.

Generic Guidance

The Council Will:

1. Promote a policy of repair rather than replacement of traditional architectural details. Where repairs are not economically viable then the promotion of bespoke sympathetic replacement is encouraged. This is particularly the case for windows when sympathetic re-fenestration is important in preserving the appearance of the building in the design and materials.
2. Discourage the use of uPVC windows in historic properties. The use of uPVC in listed buildings will not be permitted and where unauthorised work is carried out enforcement action will be taken.
3. Actively promote the use of traditional building and roofing materials in new extensions and repair. The use of local limestone and red brick is encouraged.
4. Encourage owners of historic properties, not just those that are listed, to replace inappropriate modern with the appropriate traditional materials, for example wood casements.



Render on one of Hethe Cottages could be detrimental to the character of the entire row.

5. Exercise a presumption against artificial cladding material. Render can be an acceptable treatment, but this is dependent on the building history and design. The ill considered use of render within the Conservation Area could be highly detrimental to the character and appearance of the settlement.
6. Encourage the sympathetic location of solar panels on inconspicuous roof slopes or on outbuildings.
7. Require the location of satellite dishes in inconspicuous sites to prevent harm to the historic character and visual appearance of the area.

8. Encourage the retention of traditional outbuildings and their sympathetic re-use. This is particularly relevant to the buildings to the rear of 3 and 4 Hethe Cottages which are an important remnant of the village past.
9. Discourage disfiguring alterations such as unsympathetic extensions, altering the dimensions of window openings and the removal of chimneys.
10. Investigate whether appropriate planning permission or listed building consent has been obtained for an alteration. Unauthorised alterations, internal or external, to a listed building are a criminal offence and where unauthorised work is carried out enforcement action will be taken.
11. Promote traditional styles of pointing. The type of pointing in stone or brickwork is integral to the appearance of the wall or structure. It is therefore of great importance that only appropriate pointing is used in the repointing of stone or brickwork. Repointing work should be discrete to the point of being inseparable from the original. 'Ribbon' pointing (where mortar is left standing proud of the stonework) and similar is considered a totally inappropriate style of pointing for this district.

- 12. Promote the use of lime mortar in the construction and repointing of stone and brickwork. This traditional building material is strongly advocated and its use is beneficial to traditional buildings. This is in contrast to hard cementaceous mortars often used in modern construction, which can accelerate the weathering of the local limestone.
- 13. Promote the use of sympathetic materials for garage doors. Vertical timber boarded side hung doors are preferable to metal or fibreglass versions which can have a negative impact on the rural setting.
- 14. Generally encourage the good maintenance of properties including boundary walls.
- 15. Support alterations to buildings where this would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 16. Create a dialogue with service providers to encourage underground power cables to reduce the visual pollution caused by the overhead lines and their supporting poles within the settlement.

- 17. Encourage the sympathetic location of both amenity and private security lighting to limit light 'pollution'. Excessive lighting within the settlement can have an adverse effect on the very rural character of the area. The material and design of the fittings and their position on the building should be carefully considered.
- 18. Promote the repair or replacement of lost or inappropriate boundary treatments with traditional walling or hedging in a style or species appropriate to the location.
- 19. Promote the use of a suitable style of boundary for the position within the village, for example the use of simple post fencing for properties backing onto open ground.



▲ *Post and rail fencing around paddock opposite Cottisford House*

- 20. Promote the retention of historic footpaths within and around the conservation area and work with bodies such as the Parish Meeting and Oxford County Council to prevent these being lost. The informality of these paths should be preserved and attempts to add hard surfaces or extensive signage should be resisted. In particular the links between Juniper Hill and Cottisford, which are mentioned by Flora Thompson in her books, are key to ensuring that the setting of the village remains evocative of its fascinating past.



▲ *Footpath towards Juniper Hill*

Management and protection of important green spaces

The Council will:

1. Promote positive management of vegetation. Trees and hedges make an important contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area. Planting of exotic imports or inappropriate varieties, such as Leylandii, are to be strongly discouraged, as these trees grow fast and can alter or block important views as well as being uncharacteristic of the area. The trees and hedges within Cottisford play a key role in the character of the Conservation Area, with smaller scale vegetation in the new village contrasting with the more mature trees around the Church. The law on tree works within a Conservation Area is often misunderstood and therefore a fuller description of the controls is given on page 26.
2. Promote the sympathetic management of open areas within the Conservation Area. In Cottisford the open land between clusters of buildings is historically and visually important to the conservation area.
3. Seek to preserve the rural character of verges by working with the Highway Authority to avoid the insertion of inappropriate kerbing which would have an urbanising effect whilst seeking solutions that prevent harm to verges by parked cars and passing vehicles.
4. Encourage the retention and good maintenance of garden walls, garden fences and boundary hedges.
5. Resist development that would adversely affect the setting of the village. Further development within the village or in the surrounding area is unlikely because of its status as Category 3 and because of the detrimental impact that development is likely to have on the rural setting and characteristic dispersed pattern of Cottisford.

Land to the rear of Hethe Cottages



Cherwell District Council designated Cottisford a Conservation Area in 1980 in recognition of the settlement's special architectural and historic interest, which should be preserved and enhanced.

The area was designated under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The effects of designation are explained briefly below.

1. Cherwell District Council, as the local planning authority, will exercise a particular care to ensure that change, when it occurs, will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.
2. All planning applications for development which would affect the character or appearance of the area must be advertised in the local press and site notices must be posted so that the maximum opportunity for comment is given to the public before a decision is reached.
3. Cherwell District Council, as the local planning authority, will require planning applications in the Conservation Area to be accompanied by sufficient detail to enable the impact of the proposed development on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area to be assessed. This may include details of scale, massing, design and materials of buildings and their relationship to existing buildings.
4. Procedures pertaining to listed buildings remain essentially unaltered as listed building consent takes precedence over Conservation Area consent. Therefore all works of alteration, demolition or extension to a listed building require listed building consent.
5. Scheduled ancient monuments are exempt from Conservation Area control and scheduled monument consent for proposed works must be sought from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
6. Conservation Area consent is required from the local planning authority for the demolition or substantial demolition of buildings in excess of 115 cubic meters and enclosures over a certain height within the Conservation Area. Exceptions to this rule are those laid down in section 75 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Exceptions mainly relate to small buildings within the curtilage of a dwelling; gates, walls, fences and other enclosures below the specified height; temporary buildings; certain agricultural and industrial buildings; and buildings required to be demolished under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, The Housing Act 1985 or the Pastoral Measure 1983. Roof extensions, including all dormer windows, and external cladding require Conservation Area consent.
7. The Council requires advance notification of the intention to fell, top or lop trees over a certain size within the designated area.
 - The legislation only covers trees with a trunk diameter of over 75mm measured at a height of 1.5m.
 - Certain trees, such as fruit trees in orchards are excluded.
 - The legislation allows for up to 2 years work to be catered for in a single Notification. Where work to a small wooded area is required this procedure would allow for a single approval of a programme or scheme of works for a group of trees. This would avoid the need for multiple applications.
 - The internal Council procedure has recently been stream lined, with the introduction of a simplified form and with the Street Scene and Landscape Service handling the notification direct to speed up the response rate.
 - The vast majority of such applications are approved. In 2008 only 4 TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders) were served as a result of 216 advance notices.
 - There are no exceptions or abbreviated procedures available in law to avoid the need to Notify the Council of intended works to such trees.

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11. Appendix

There are a number of policy documents which contain policies pertaining to the historic built environment. The main policies are summarised in this section. Other policies of a more general nature are also of some relevance, these are not listed here but can be found elsewhere in the specific documents mentioned below.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016

EN4 The fabric and setting of listed buildings including Blenheim Palace and Park, a World Heritage Site, will be preserved and the character or appearance of conservation areas and their settings will be preserved or enhanced. Other elements of the historic environment, including historic parks and gardens, battlefields and historic landscapes will also be protected from harmful development.

EN6 There will be a presumption in favour of preserving in situ nationally and internationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings. Development affecting other archaeological remains should include measures to secure their preservation in situ or where this is not feasible, their recording or removal to another site.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996

H5 Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the district council will negotiate with developers to secure an element of affordable housing in substantial new residential development schemes. The district council will need to be satisfied that such affordable housing:

- (i) is economically viable in terms of its ability to meet the need identified
- (ii) will be available to meet local needs long term through secure arrangements being made to restrict the occupancy of the development
- (iii) is compatible with the other policies in this plan.

H12 New housing in the rural areas of the district will be permitted within existing settlements in accordance with policies H13, H14 and H15. Schemes which meet a specific and identified local housing need will be permitted in accordance with policies H5 and H6.

H19 Proposals for the conversion of a rural building, whose form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings to a dwelling in a location beyond the built-up limits of a settlement will be favourably considered provided:

- (i) the building can be converted without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character;

- (ii) the proposal would not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building;
- (iii) the proposal would not harm the special character and interest of a building of architectural or historic significance;
- (iv) the proposal meets the requirements of the other policies in the plan.

H21 Within settlements the conversion of suitable buildings to dwellings will be favourably considered unless conversion to a residential use would be detrimental to the special character and interest of a building of architectural and historic significance. In all instances proposals will be subject to the other policies in this plan.

C18 In determining an application for listed building consent the council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The council will normally only approve internal and external alterations or extensions to a listed building which are minor and sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building.

C23 There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

C27 Development proposals in villages will be expected to respect their historic settlement pattern.

C30 Design control will be exercised to ensure:

- (i) that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity;
- (ii) that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling (in cases where planning permission is required) is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene;
- (iii) that new housing development or any proposal for the extension (in cases where planning permission is required) or conversion of an existing dwelling provides standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the local planning authority.

Non-statutory Cherwell local plan 2011

EN34 the council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- (i) cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;
- (ii) cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;
- (iii) be inconsistent with local character;
- (iv) harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features;
- (v) harm the historic value of the landscape.

EN35 The Council will seek to retain woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, walls and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape as a result of their ecological, historic or amenity value. Proposals which would result in the loss of such features will not be permitted unless their loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures to the satisfaction of the council.

EN39 Development should preserve listed buildings, their features and settings, and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of designated conservation areas, as defined on the proposals map. Development that conflicts with these objectives will not be permitted.

EN40 In a conservation area or an area that makes an important contribution to its setting planning control will be exercised to ensure, *inter alia*, that the character or appearance of the area so designated is preserved or enhanced. There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area. A new development should understand and respect the sense of place and architectural language of the existing but should seek to avoid pastiche development except where this is shown to be clearly the most appropriate.

EN43 proposals that would result in the total or substantial demolition of a listed building, or any significant part of it, will not be permitted in the absence of clear and convincing evidence that the market testing set out in ppg15 paragraphs 3.16 to 3.19 has been thoroughly followed with no success.

EN45 Before determination of an application for planning permission requiring the alteration, extension or partial demolition of a listed building, applicants will be required to provide sufficient information to enable an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the structure, its setting or special features.

EN47 The Council will promote sustainability of the historic environment through conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage and its interpretation and presentation to the public. In particular it will:

(i) seek to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments and other unscheduled sites of national and regional importance and their settings are permanently preserved;

(ii) ensure that development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desk-top study, and where appropriate a field evaluation;

(iii) not permit development that would adversely affect archaeological remains and their settings unless the applicant can demonstrate that the archaeological resource will be physically preserved in-situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals.

EN48 Development that would damage the character, appearance, setting or features of designed historic landscapes (parks and gardens) and battlefields will be refused.

EN51 In considering applications for advertisements in conservation areas the council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Ted and Joan Flaxman and to Margaret Allen for their help with local details and history.

Thanks are also due to those who attended the public meeting and who gave feedback on the draft appraisal.

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Executive

PARSONS STREET PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER

11 May 2009

Report of Head of Economic Development and Estates

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To confirm modifications to the revised draft Parsons Street/Market Place traffic regulation Order (TRO), Banbury and to progress amendments to the traffic regulations Orders for High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row, Banbury and Sheep Street, Bicester.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) Agree that the Bridge Street, Market Place, Cornhill and Parsons Street Traffic regulation Order, as modified on 2 March 2009, be made.
- 2) Agree that the Council enter into a revised agency agreement with OCC, authorising the Council to make the TRO as modified, and to promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury TRO, and the Sheep Street Bicester TRO, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent.
- 3) Agree that the Council enter into an Agreement with OCC under s278 of the Highways Act 1980, authorising the Council to undertake the works for Parsons Street/Market Place, Bridge Street and Church Walk/Church Lane.
- 4) Promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury TRO, and the Sheep Street Bicester TRO, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Executive on 2 March 2009 resolved to modify the draft traffic regulation Order following the Inspector's Report in January 2009. Subsequently the modified Order was advertised and went out for 3 weeks of consultation, ending on 2 April 2009.
- 1.2 There was one verbal objection to the modifications. This was from Mr Davies at the Thai Garden restaurant in Parsons Street, regarding the deletion of the evening core period.
- 1.3 This report sets out the objection received, and indicates why it is recommended that the order be made as currently modified on 2 March.
- 1.4 The Council's existing agency granted by OCC relates only to the original draft order, and consequently a revised agency is required in order to make the modified order, and to make orders amending the other orders referred to, in order that they may be consistent so far as the provisions relating to exemption certificates are concerned.
- 1.5 The report also seeks approval to enter into an s278 Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council authorising the implementation of the physical works to be carried out on the highway in all the above affected areas.

Proposals

- 1.6 That the Bridge Street, Market Place, Cornhill and Parsons Street Traffic regulation Order, as modified on 2 March 2009, be made.
- 1.7 That the Council enter into a revised agency agreement with OCC, authorising the Council to make the TRO as modified, and to promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury TRO, and the Sheep Street Bicester TRO, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent.
- 1.8 That the Council enter into an Agreement with OCC under s278 of the Highways Act 1980, authorising the Council to undertake the works for Parsons Street/Market Place, Bridge Street and Church Walk/Church Lane.
- 1.9 To promote amendments to the existing High Street, Broad Street and Butchers Row Banbury TRO, and the Sheep Street Bicester TRO, in order to ensure that the arrangements for the issue of exemption certificates are consistent.

Conclusion

- 1.10 Whilst there has been one objection to the modifications to the draft traffic regulation Order it is not seen as sufficient enough to outweigh the making of the TRO as modified. Although the Council originally resolved to include an evening core period when Parsons Street would be closed to traffic, in order to reflect the high percentage of evening economy businesses in the area, the inspector has recommended that this be omitted from the order. If the Council were not minded to accept the Inspector's recommendations, and wished to

proceed with the order including the evening core period, it would be necessary to seek the consent of the Secretary of State. He is likely to be concerned by any refusal to accept the Inspector's recommendations. The Inspector's view was that the implementation of the day time core period, the physical works to the street, and the no parking at any time provisions will be sufficient to create the improvements sought during the evening period. It is proposed therefore that the deletion of the evening core period be implemented, and in the event that the Council's objectives are not achieved, it will be possible to seek an amending order to introduce the secondary evening core period at a later date.

- 1.11 In order for the traffic regulation Order for Bridge Street, Market Place, Cornhill and Parsons Street to be implemented by Cherwell District Council an agency agreement is required with Oxfordshire County Council. In order for the physical works to be carried out to the highway an s278 is required with Oxfordshire County Council. This report seeks the authority of the Executive to enter into these agreements.
- 1.12 In order for the TRO in Parsons Street to take effect it also has to be accepted by Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council that Market Place car park will provide a circulation route for vehicles who have parked on the highway on Market Place and Bridge Street.
- 1.13 In order to facilitate the pedestrianisation works, parts of market place car park will need to be closed in a staggered approach.
- 1.14 In order to provide a space for the contractors' huts, a part of the southern section of North Bar car park will be closed for the duration of the pedestrianisation works.
- 1.15 Once the works have been completed and a new car park layout created any necessary amendments to the market place vehicle parks Order will be made.

Background Information

- 2.1 Full details of the proposals were set out in my report to the Executive dated 2 March 2009.
- 2.2 It is proposed that tenders for the works be sought in April 2009 through to May 2009 so that a start can be made on site in early July 2009. The detailed programme for the works will not be finalised until a contractor is in place, following consultation with occupiers for premises in the affected streets, which is ongoing.

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 Whilst there has been one objection to the modifications to the draft traffic regulation Order for Parsons Street/Market Place Banbury, it is not seen as introducing any issues which have not been considered already.
- 3.2 The agency agreement with the County Council is required in order to make the new traffic regulation Order with modifications and to amend the existing Orders. A s278 Agreement is required in addition, as the agency agreement does not extend to carrying out the works on the highway.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | Make the Traffic Regulation Order with modifications as presented to the Executive on 2 March 2009. Agree the agency agreement with the County and revisions to the existing traffic regulation orders in Banbury and Bicester and to enter into the s278 agreement with OCC. |
| Option Two | In light of the one objection, reject the earlier Inspector's recommendations, and ask the Secretary of State to make the Parsons Street order as originally drafted. |

Consultations

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Mr Davies | There was one objection received to the statutory and public consultation undertaken from the 12 March to the 2 April 2009. This was from Mr Davies from the Thai Garden Restaurant on Parsons Street, with regard to the deletion of the evening core period. He felt that the evening core period was required to keep Parsons Street safe and useable by pedestrians in the evening. He was also concerned that the lack of the evening core period may also mean that there will not be any outside seating for restaurants, bars and pubs available |
|------------------|--|

Implications

Financial: The matters set out in this report do not affect the capital budget of £2m set aside for this project. Under the s278 Agreement costs agreed at £4000 will be payable to OCC, but these costs can be contained within the capital approved.

Comments checked by Eric Meadows, Service Accountant 01295 221552

Legal: Should the Council choose not to accept the Inspector's recommendations, it is unlikely that the consent of the Secretary of State would be obtained unless valid grounds could be shown for not doing so. There would also be the risk of an application for judicial review being made by the objectors. The existing agency granted by OCC does not permit the making of the amended Order, or the proposed amending orders required for the other street mentioned in the report.

Comments checked by Malcolm Saunders, Senior Legal Assistant 01295 221692

Risk Management: Should the Council choose not to accept the Inspector's recommendations, there is a significant risk that the requirement to secure the consent of the Secretary of State will lead to delay to the project.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

Wards Affected

All wards in Banbury

Corporate Plan Themes

A District of Opportunity

Executive Portfolio

Councillor Norman Bolster
Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Estates

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
None	
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Executive

Corporate Procurement Progress Report

11 May 2009

Report of the Strategic Director Customer Services and Resources

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update of progress made to date in respect of the Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities approved by the Executive on 3 March 2008.

This report is public

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To note the progress made to date in respect of the Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities;
- (2) To note the progress in respect of the establishment of the centralised procurement function.

Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 Following the previous report to the Executive in September 2008, the Corporate Procurement Team have further developed best practice via a suite of templates with accompanying guidelines to meet the Council's procurement needs from simple invitation to quote exercises to complex OJEU projects, involving partnership working with other Local Authorities and a range of public sector partners, including the PCT and Thames Valley Police.
- 1.2 The key role of the Council's procurement function is to work in co-operation with departments to ensure value for money (right time, place, quantity, quality and price) procurement practice – from options appraisal right through to the completion of the contract life cycle - is being exercised by departments and support them as necessary to promote best practice in line with the Corporate Procurement Procedure Rules. Essential to the success of these objectives is the rigorous monitoring of an audit and compliance plan to enable contracts to be established for relevant aspects of the business and recorded on the corporate contracts register.

- 1.3 Progress to date has resulted in a large number of qualitative contracts over a short period of time both at corporate, where it has been necessary to engage stakeholders across the Council taking account of varying needs, and a service specific, covering the majority of services across the Council, level, demonstrating value for money in terms of cashable savings, improved terms, focused and effective service level agreements, SMART key performance indicators and a contract management protocol that reaps additional savings beyond the bottom line figures recorded through the tender process.
- 1.4 The attached Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities to 31st March 2009 report – Appendix 1 – with the accompanying Corporate Procurement Cashable Savings – Appendix 2 - and the Procurement and Contract Management self-assessment document – Appendix 3 – provide details of key wins to date, from the highly successful collaborative Internal Audit and Recruitment and Advertising tenders (Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council respectively) to the service specific achievements, such as the Vehicle Spare Parts tender, which other authorities are now expressing an interest in joining. The key thing is that no matter what the size of the procurement undertaken the savings (anywhere from 5% to 40%), terms and management processes put in place are securing benefits for the Council for years to come.
- 1.5 The Procurement team has continued to undertake both project by project and generic training, with workshops completed for Environmental Services and advice delivered to a wide range of officers from Planning, House and Economy to Communications. The key focus has been on forward planning and options appraisals in advance of projects with procurement's success in managing key projects leading to closer involvement with the Value for Money review programme.

Proposals

- 1.6 In the report we request the Executive to note the progress to date in delivering our overall procurement objectives agreed by the Executive in March 2008. In particular, the items to note are:
- A suite of effective and easy-to-use templates – some of which are being shared with other Local Authority partners – which is resulting in a vast improvement in compliant, best practice processes;
 - Continued development and establishment of Purchase Cards;
 - Effective use and sharing – both internally and externally – of the Contracts Register;
 - An innovative approach to procurement whereby we are currently undertaking the provision of a polyclinic in Banbury and expressing an interest in the re-provision of the Bicester Community Hospital;
 - Strategic procurement practices whereby a single contract can release savings in terms of a competitive reduction in costs, early payment discounts, a restriction of the application of annual price increases and retrospective discounts for extending contracts to other public sector partners.
- 1.7 The following aspects are continuing to provide benefits and will be further enhanced by the rollout of a comprehensive training programme:

- Contract Compliance, to ensure 90% of the Council's expenditure is on-contract, therefore increasing Value for Money;
- Rationalisation of the number of suppliers;
- Ensuring effective use of Corporate Contracts;
- Proactive liaison with small local businesses via supplier workshops, meet the buyer events and the forthcoming email circular which will include a feedback questionnaire, asking suppliers' views on the introduction of a Procurement newsletter and a micro site for the sharing of information.

Conclusion

- 1.7 The report demonstrates that the 2008/09 Corporate Procurement Programme targets have been exceeded and taken to the next level, not only in terms of cashable savings with the target of £200,000 having been exceeded by some 70% at £339,555 for the year, but also in terms of qualitative and strategically grounded procedures and protocols that are seeing best practice embedded across the Council. The Corporate Procurement team also have a clear plan for the way forward with SMART objectives set to further develop the function in 2009/10 – as detailed within the Draft Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities for 2009/10 (Appendix 4).

Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options

- 3.1 The purpose of the report is to demonstrate progress made to date against the Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities agreed by the Executive in March 2008. From the information provided the Executive can make an overall judgement about the progress made in achieving the corporate procurement objectives and identify aspects where action is required to improve performance.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Option One | To review current progress made to date and consider any actions arising. |
| Option Two | To approve or reject the draft Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities for the first 6 months of 2009/10. |

Consultations – Not applicable

Implications

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Financial: | <p>Financial Effects: There are no adverse financial effects on the Council by continuing with the Procurement Programme of Activities.</p> <p>Efficiency Savings: Based on the current level of savings achieved to date, it is envisaged the overall procurement savings target will be achieved.</p> <p>Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Interim Head of Finance, 01295 221551.</p> |
| Legal: | Legal work very closely with procurement to ensure that |

our processes are compliant and not open to challenge

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer 01295 221686

Risk Management:

If the Council fails to continue to support the implementation of the programme of activities in respect of procurement, there is a risk efficiency savings will not be achieved. A number of the actions relate to developing good practice for the commissioning of goods and services, by implementing sophisticated procurement practices as well as using market intelligence the Council will be able to fully demonstrate it has strategies in place to consistently secure value for money.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer, 01295 221566

Wards Affected

None directly.

Corporate Plan Themes

An Accessible, Value for Money Council

Executive Portfolio

Councillor James Macnamara - Portfolio Holder for Resources

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	<i>Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities for 2008/09</i>
Appendix 2	<i>Corporate Procurement Cashable Savings for 2008/09</i>
Appendix 3	<i>Procurement and Contract Management Self-Assessment Report for 2008/09</i>
Appendix 4	<i>Draft Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities for 2009/10 - TO FOLLOW</i>
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Viv Hichens, Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager 01295 753747 Viv.Hichens@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Contact Information	01295 221551 Karen.Curtin@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

1. Overall Objective - Implementation and establishment of Purchase Cards (P-Cards) within the Council. The use of Purchase cards can reduce invoice handling and transactional costs and increase expenditure contract as well as improving management information flow.

	Activity	Commencement	Completion	Action/ Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
1.	Ensure implementation of Purchase Cards (P-Cards) are rolled out corporately	May 2008	Onward going	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager	<p>A total of 27 cards are currently in use.</p> <p>The administration has proved relatively smooth to date with the Purchasing Officer chasing up on missing receipts.</p> <p>Usage levels are being monitored with ongoing analysis of the exact savings to the Council per transaction.</p> <p>We have also reaped the additional benefits of being able to reduce resources applied to creditors processing and increase that allocated to credit control. Our performance in credit control is significantly improved as a result with real term collection rates in excess of our target. Our staff and suppliers benefit from improved payment arrangements and convenience as a result.</p>	Monthly workshops have proved effective in answering queries and ensuring effective financial control.		Transactions undertaken between June 2008 and April 2009 have saved the Council over £22000 based upon the baseline figures of it costing £50 per transaction for the traditional PO and invoice route compared to only £13 per transaction for the P-Card route.

Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities to 31st March 2009

Apendix 1

					For example our housing team is equipped with Purchase cards enabling speedy procurement of emergency accommodation.			
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2. Overall Objective – Establishment of comprehensive contracts register which captures all contractual spend over £10,000k. This will provide the Council with a detailed picture of spending profile across the Council.

	Activity	Commencement	Completion	Action/Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
	A comprehensive contracts register capturing all of the Council's contractual relationships	April 2008	October 2008	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager	The contracts register undergoes a comprehensive monthly review with new contracts being added as and when they are implemented.	Contract register is now separated into easy reference Common Procurement Vocabulary categories. Procedure for updating has been overhauled to ensure all updates are captured with potential new contracts being tracked from inception to ensure all contracts going forwarded are recorded. An outward facing version was made available on the website at the beginning of October with updates carried out as and when new contracts are added. The Register is also being loaded onto the South East Business Portal with local suppliers encouraged to register (free of charge) to see opportunities across the South East. Interest in the contracts register can be monitored with	By tracking contracts up for extension, Procurement are able to prompt the Project Officers to arrange contract review meetings where contractors are encouraged to fix prices for a further year rather than face the contract being put out to tender. In 09/10 this exercise should release at least £35k of savings.	

Corporate Procurement Programme of Activities to 31st March 2009

Appendix 1

						information on whether this results in the companies going directly to Cherwell's website (link provided within South East Business Portal).	
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3. Overall Objective – Contract Compliance. To ensure that 90% of the Council's expenditure is on-contract. This will reduce the commercial risk to the authority, further increase value for money and ensure improved service levels.

	Activity	Commencement	Completion	Action/ Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
3.	<p>Identification of 'On' and 'Off' contract spend. Robust enforcement of contract compliance throughout the Council.</p> <p>Ensure the majority of spend is under contract using the Council's terms and conditions.</p> <p>Identify existing contracts (where the Council's terms and conditions are not applied) and undertake an audit to ensure the Council is not at risk and has the ability to terminate.</p>	May 2008	December 2008	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager		<p>A recent exercise saw the distribution of a list of more than 200 suppliers with whom more than £10k was spent in 2007/08, but for whom there was no record on the contracts register. This has both identified contracts that are not in place and off contract expenditure.</p> <p>Off contract expenditure has been identified and followed-up in areas such as stationery and agency contracts. Procurement are now working with Finance over accelerator reports and direct liaison with Creditors.</p> <p>Property Expenditure is subject to a further review with the aim of presenting options to the Exec in May with the aim of going to market with 5 to 6 lots to cover everything apart from cleaning and security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit tender has resulted in £110,000 savings via a successful partnering exercise with Oxford City Council. • £45,330 saved on Agency Staff Contract. • Purchase Cards - £22,607 • Advertising - £20,000 • ICT - £20000 saved via OGC Buying Solutions contracts. • Vehicle spare parts £7,000 • Cherwell Link 	

						(though these will be listed as future options) in March 09 with the intention of having contract(s) in place by September 09.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution - £8,000 Glass Recycling – £2,565 saving where no contract was previously in place, with total savings over 2 years amounting to £7000. Purchase of 3 refuse vehicles via ESPO contract £2,100 Biodiesel re-let under better terms - £500 p.a. 	
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4. Overall Objective – The rationalisation in the number of suppliers. This will reduce costs for the Council and create further market tension. In Year One focus on the top ten spend areas and reduce them down from 117 to 30 suppliers.

	Activity	Commencement	Completion	Action/Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
4.	Where categories are over supplied – look at rationalisation and consolidation	June 2008	January 2009	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager	A comprehensive and detailed mapping process to be undertaken. Dialogue with individual departments to be undertaken Analysis of spend data – identification of efficiency savings with top spend categories shared with surrounding districts.	Top 10 suppliers' data shared with MKOB Procurement Group, with a view to identifying some collaboration opportunities. Forward Work Plans are now also being shared on a bi-monthly basis with any new tender information emailed around the group for sharing of information and lessons learnt.		

					<p>Collaboration undertaken in areas such as Advertising, Internal Audit and Vehicle Spare Parts. Currently working with Oxford City Council on print framework with an eye to expanding this to design to support the in-house designer. Also looking at Dry Recycling, Waste Management Software system and Insurance for forthcoming year.</p> <p>Further research being undertaken to ensure that the rationalisation target does not exclude local businesses with a view to working on frameworks that realise savings while also allowing local Small and Medium Enterprises to tender for work with the Council – good example of this in practice is the print framework where the decision was taken not to join County’s tender due to using e-tendering and unwillingness to create specification that pointed towards best VfM solution being supplied locally.</p> <p>Procurement Forward Plan for 2009/10 has identified further consolidation opportunities with</p>		
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						framework agreements in progress for Civil Engineering Projects and Consultancy work across Planning, Housing and Community Planning.		
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5. Overall Objective - Improving Terms - To ensure existing and new contractual terms are beneficial to the Council
 In Year One focus on the top ten suppliers and secure improvement to the existing terms. In particular the top three suppliers as a priority.

	Activity	Commence-ment	Completion	Action/ Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
5.	Develop existing arrangements, payment discounts, new methods of delivering services, further volume discounts, discounts for consolidation of invoices. Ensure no inflation rate is included within contracts unless justified and agreed by the Council.	July 2008	February 2009	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager	Negotiate with suppliers where opportunities for efficiencies are identified. Dialogue with individual departments to be undertaken.	Initial work to date mainly in respect of Environmental Services, has enabled significant savings to be identified / achieved. The savings detailed opposite are as a result of: ➤ consolidation of invoices (based on £50 per invoice as per Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply guidance) ➤ new arrangements ➤ non application of contractual inflation ➤ use of OGC ➤ changes in technology In addition to the savings already identified work is in progress in respect of the following areas: ➤ £6,000 saving per "temp to perm" change made because Champion do not	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1% reduction on Champion contract using consolidated invoice - £9,550 pa • savings on insurance premiums 08/09 - £35,614 • Cutts Brothers did not increase their prices for inflation in March 08 - £6,000 • new arrangements for supply and cleaning of overalls at depot - £522 • removal of printers/converting to MFD's – savings on cartridge use, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce number of Frenco invoices at Depot from 457 to 52 pa - £20,250 • reduce number of Cherwell Office Supplies invoices to 12 - £4,750 • reduce number of Greenhams invoices to 12 pa - £33,650 • Brake Brothers consolidated invoices - £18,150

					<p>charge for this. A total of 10 temps have transferred to date in 2008.</p> <p>➤ Savings by switching calls to mobiles using technology to route calls</p> <p>Work has already commenced in respect of Early Payment Discounts, with a standard statement for all future contracts included in all I.T.T's (invitations to tender)</p> <p>Future contracts to contain clause concerning fixed prices for 1st year followed by RPI minus 1% minimum saving year on year.</p>	<p>power and paper - £20,000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> finishing equipment supplied for MFD's free by Canon (12x£1295) plus write off of outstanding contracts (£3800) = £19,350. The energy audit contract did not release further savings as anticipated due to effective contract monitoring by Council Officers. We have, however, identified the potential for limiting price increases in energy bills with the renewal of contracts in October 2009. Sustainable Community Strategy contract came in £3400 under budget. 	
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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock Condition Survey contract came in £7000 under budget. • Car Lease contract should achieve minimum of £200 saving per car – 30 cars in current fleet. • Cherwell Link Distribution contract being re-let with estimated saving of £8k p.a. 	
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6. Overall Objective – Ensure the effective use of corporate contracts

	Activity	Commencement	Completion	Action/Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
6.	Ensure corporate contracts/framework agreements are in place for departments to use efficiently and effectively.	August 2008	March 2009	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager		<p>Corporate Contracts now in place for PAT, furniture, water.</p> <p>Corporate Contracts implementation preparation under way for: Property (5 to 6 lots), clothing, protective clothing, cleaning materials, couriers, and washroom services.</p>		

	<p>Ensure corporate contracts are used by departments and effective.</p> <p>Evaluate and review the effectiveness of the staff agency agreement with Champion</p>					<p>Appraising whether any value for money contracts available with public sector buying consortiums. This is now the first port of call for all procurement and is something all officers are being encouraged to do. Contracts identified for use to date - CCTV Upgrade, Car Lease and several ICT contracts.</p> <p>Recent push on use of Agency Staff contract where annual savings of £45,330 have been identified just for use of discounts, temp to perm fee exemptions and consolidated invoices. Agency contract continues to realise savings for basic hourly rates, discounts for staff employed more than 10 weeks and temp to perm fee exemptions. A recent benchmarking exercise demonstrated that some temporary to permanent posts with other agencies would have cost CDC £25,000.</p> <p>Further savings with stationery contract being investigated with aim to increase use of core supplies.</p>		
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7. Overall Objective – Encouragement of small local businesses to trade with the authority in order to assist in the regenerating the local economy								
	Activity	Commence ment	Completion	Action/ Responsible	Comments	Summary of Activity to Date	Achieved/Expected Savings	
							Cashable	Non Cashable
7.	Enable local businesses to trade with the Council and retain existing contracts with the Council. The use of the Council's website will assist in attracting local businesses to tender for Council work	September 2008	December 2009	Corporate Strategic Procurement Manager	<p>To develop a web portal page on the Council's existing website giving details of contracting opportunities.</p> <p>Negotiate and initiate dialogue with existing local suppliers with the view of improving efficiencies and savings</p>	<p>Selling to the Council web pages launched in October with information on how to tender for work with the Council provided along with adverts of tender opportunities and the contracts register – together with links to other free use public sector opportunities – Supply2Gov and the South East Business Portal.</p> <p>Local business liaison working group has been convened with work being undertaken to identify the base data and partnership opportunities ahead of putting in place initiatives such as a procurement newsletter. Through this forum the Council has agreed favourable payment terms of 14 days for SMEs.</p> <p>The first two Supplier Workshops have gone very well – one held in conjunction with Oxford City Council.</p>		

						<p>Very successful Meet the Buyer event held in partnership with Oxford City Council with more than 100 companies being seen by the Cherwell team and details recorded for dissemination and follow-up.</p> <p>Scheduled to email questionnaire to businesses within district in June 2009 with hope of hosting a meet the buyer event & emailing out the first procurement newsletter by end July 2009.</p>		
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Procurement Cashable Savings Achieved 2008/09

Appendix 2

Service Area	Contract Description	Procurement Officer	Expected Savings in 1st Year
Human Resources	Champion Recruitment - Temp to Perm	Ken Fowler	£35,780
Human Resources	Consolidated Invoices - Champion	Ken Fowler	£9,550
Finance	Insurance premiums	Ken Fowler	£35,143
Environmental Services	Cutts Bros	Ken Fowler	£6,000
Environmental Services	Supply & Cleaning of overalls at Depot	Ken Fowler	£522
ICT	Removal of printers and converting to MFD's	Ken Fowler	£20,000
ICT	Write off of outstanding Canon contracts	Ken Fowler	£19,350
ICT	IT Equipment	Ken Fowler	£20,000
Environmental Services	3 Refuse Vehicles	Ken Fowler	£2,100
Community Planning	Sustainable Community Strategy	Viv Hichens	£3,500
Housing Services	Stock Condition Survey	Viv Hichens	£7,000
Environmental Services	Glass	Ken Fowler	£2,550
Environmental Services	Bio-diesel	Viv Hichens	£500
Business Services	PAT Testing	Angie Long	£1,953
Environmental Services	Vehicle Spare Parts	Ken Fowler	£7,000
Human Resources	Recruitment & Selection	Viv Hichens	£20,000
Human Resources	Lease Cars	Ken Fowler	£3,000
Finance	Internal Audit	Viv Hichens	£110,000
Procurement	Water Machines	Angie Long	£3,000
Procurement	Purchase Cards	Angie Long	£22,607
Communications	Cherwell Link Distribution	Viv Hichens	£8,000
Procurement	Supply & Maintenance of Office Furniture	Angie Long	£2,000
			£339,555

Procurement and Contract Management 2008/09

Introduction

Cherwell is exploiting the benefits of contemporary procurement practice and has approved annual investment circa £200k in additional procurement capacity in the current financial year. The approach is innovative and the team itself operate under an “invest to save” initiative, with annual targets ensuring the operation is “self funding” and providing additional returns. Success is already evident. The approach has secured savings of £309k in 2008/9 which is a return of 255% on the actual in-year expenditure initial investment of £121k. These savings are, of course cumulative and the 2009/10 target requires a further £313k. The savings secured to date result in the team being self funding for the future with the savings increasing year on year.

We are proud of the outcomes secured to date which include:

- Reduction in net expenditure circa £440k pa by 2009/10
- Direct benefit to local tax payers
- Improved opportunities for local suppliers and SMEs to trade with the Council
- Improved contract management, ensuring effective performance management and improved service delivery
- Greater collaboration, both with other Local Authorities, within and beyond county boundaries, and across public sector boundaries including other statutory bodies such as the PCT. This is providing direct financial benefits to all tax payers and access to a greater range of services and inter-organisational learning opportunities for all parties.

Improving our processes

Our improvement in procurement was recognised by the Audit Commission in our Use of Resources assessment for 2007/2008 with a move from a 2 to a 3 in KLOE 5. This in turn informed our CPA corporate assessment report (March 2009), which identified that good arrangements were in place, that our procurement strategy links to our medium term financial strategy, and that significant savings were already being made as a result of the investment.

A new framework and suite of governance and procedural arrangements were agreed prior to 2008/09. A specialised Corporate Procurement Team has been formed during 2008/09 headed by an experienced strategic procurement manager. We agreed our 12-month Procurement Programme of Activities in March 2008 and the financial returns to date have exceeded the original targets across the board securing gains 55% above budget.

Comprehensive Procurement Procedure Rules have been introduced along with a dedicated intranet site offering guidance and information for staff and managers. An interactive procurement guide will be launched during April 2009.

Our Capital Investment Delivery Group has been re-focused to meet our changing needs by evaluating/providing peer challenge to new capital bids for submission to CMT/Executive and ensuring financial effects are fully explored and projected benefits appraised. The role of our Extended Management Team has been clarified with all taking an active role in directorate weightings of initial capital bids.

Clear Vision of Expected Outcomes

Our corporate plan target for 2008/2009 was to secure £210,000 in efficiency savings of which £160,000 were targeted as savings in the way the Council procures goods and services. This was exceeded during the year.

Our overall approach has 3 components each with separate but clearly understood and tangible outcomes.

1) Innovative and open approach to contemporary procurement practices.

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This has involved a range of tender options ranging from complex specifications and combined construction and long term service provision, such as our £27million sports centre modernisation programme to more contemporary solution focussed exercises involving the use of design and build solutions such as our one stop shops and accommodation review. In the current year the team has delivered support and advice for 28 tenders with a combined value circa £8m.

We recognise the importance of utilising external expertise when needed with specialist consultants engaged for the sports centres. We have participated in collaborative arrangements with other districts using a variety of mechanisms such as consortium arrangements (OGC, CBC, EPSPO and YPO), partnership working (Internal Audit with Oxford City Council) and services commissioned via initial specification input from another council (Glass Recycling). We have also provided procurement services for partners such as the PCT.

Our communication processes are key and we actively seek to engage staff members and local suppliers to ensure we improve our approach, promote awareness and understanding and make it easier for SMEs to trade with the Council. Our dedicated 'Selling to the Council' website pages give a clear, accessible explanation of our procurement process (<http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3633>), with a downloadable guide giving contact information. We are also inviting feedback from current and potential suppliers via our forthcoming email circular that will invite companies to complete an online questionnaire on their experience of working with the public sector.

We have utilised our procurement expertise to drive changes and improvements to both internal and external services. For example, the introduction of the PayPoint networks externally and internally, the introduction of our electronic Purchase cards. The Purchase card programme has been rolled out during the course of the year and has secured savings of circa £22k as a result of reduced processing costs. We have also reaped the additional benefits of being able to reduce resources applied to creditors processing and increase that allocated to credit control. Our performance in credit control is significantly improved as a result with real term collection rates in excess of our target. Our staff and suppliers benefit from improved payment arrangements and convenience as a result. For example our housing team is equipped with Purchase cards enabling speedy procurement of emergency accommodation.

Successful joint procurement activities have been undertaken for Internal Audit (Oxford City and Kidlington Parish Council, see case studies), Recruitment and Advertising (County and all districts) and Vehicle Spare Parts (Cherwell implemented contract and Oxford City Council now seeking to participate). The Council are now pro-actively contacting Town and Parish Councils to understand their procurement needs and open up existing contracts for their use.

Currently we are working with South Oxfordshire and Oxford City Council on the Sustainable Procurement Flexible Framework and with other districts on a waste management software procurement exercise. We are also seeking a wider buy-in on an Engineering Services Framework contract currently being put out to tender. We have also expressed an interest in the re-provision of Bicester Community Hospital by submitting a PQQ for the Competitive Dialogue procedure being undertaken by the PCT.

In addition during 2008/09, we have analysed our spend profile, reduced the level of off-contract expenditure, rationalised the number of suppliers used, negotiated more beneficial contractual terms and implemented new and improved services such as PayPoint.

Progress against these objectives has been monitored by the Executive at its September 2008 meeting. We have a strong commitment to develop the local economy and have signed up to the Small Business Friendly Concordat. We also have a strong focus on sustainable procurement in our activities and will be developing this in 2009 with the rollout of Sustainable Procurement

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training and appointment of champions in key services that will move the Council from Level 1 on the Sustainable Procurement Strategy Flexible Framework to Level 3 by April 2010.

2 Effective and Contemporary Contract Management

The Council's approach to its contract management has changed and improved markedly since the new corporate procurement team was established. Since then, a number of important contract management principles have been adopted as standard practice. These are:

- Contract management requirements are now considered at all stages of the procurement process from the initial options appraisal, to the writing of an effective specification, the drawing up of the evaluation criteria and the final market testing.
- A shift in emphasis to the contract management stage in addition to the procurement stage where value for money and sustainability in delivering specific outcomes are key components in the contract set up and management thereafter.
- A requirement of contractors to provide their own quality management systems and processes which explicitly meet the Council's specification outputs thereby ensuring there is clarity and consistency in contract expectation.

A Procurement Forward Plan ensures adequate Procurement Resources are secured at the outset of a project and facilitate a planned approach to the entire procurement process, resulting in a robust contract management methodology. A contracts register is in place which is both internal and external facing. Internally, all officers involved in procurement can see what contracts are in place and can assess whether their service requirements can benefit from them. The external facing benefits are even greater: as all existing and potential future contracts of greater than £10,000 lifetime value are included, the Council is in a position to forward plan its onward going procurement, take a strategic overview, receive feedback from suppliers and the market and be able to offer its partners the opportunity for improved value for money through contract collaboration.

Our procurement team now supports service managers beyond the procurement process for the duration of the contract itself. Even for a simple re-tendering process contract meetings are put in the manager's diary on a monthly basis for the first three months after the contract is let and thereafter on a quarterly basis, with meetings being minuted.

Our improved contract management has delivered improved outcomes in relation to:

Performance management – for example turning around poorly performing suppliers of recruitment and advertising services, our costs are lower, our response to advertisements is improved (see case study) our vacancies are filled more effectively and our services protected as a result.

Reduced Costs – we have secured savings relating to current contracts, successfully renegotiating unfavourable annual price increases in the light of the currently suppressed RPI/CPI indices.

Improved Capacity in contract management – our management team now has access to internal support and expertise in all aspects on contract management.

We have successfully embedded procurement best practice: working alongside stakeholders, drawing up a suite of templates to use, including a contract management SLA and KPI outline. We have developed improved options appraisal techniques and as a result have achieved improved competence in specification writing and improved evaluation criteria which, in turn, will lead to improved SLAs and KPIs for contract monitoring purposes.

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3 Strategic Procurement – changing the shape of our organisation

Reviewing Service Competitiveness, improving Value for Money and Service Performance

We continue to review delivery of our services as part of our Value for Money Review Programme and we are currently focussing on the value for money achieved from key support services having already reviewed a number of front line service areas. The approach to reviewing support services considers the three dynamics of performance, cost and customer satisfaction for each service independently. We are examining services individually (ICT, Legal services, Finance) as well as part of an overall 'basket' of services that may be able to be delivered in different ways (shared service, outsourcing, partnership approach). We have timetabled the review programme so that the outcome of these reviews can feed into the 2010/11 budget process and the work programme for the procurement team.

The review programme is also looking at the procurement of services, such as insurance and utilities, to ensure that these overhead costs deliver best value for the current and future shape of the organisation.

A number of reviews have already taken place and Internal Audit has already been externalised as a result, (see case study attached) property services is currently underway and Revenues and Benefits will follow shortly.

We recognise the need for additional capacity in relation to the client/contract management function and planning is already underway to accommodate this within our structure.

Receptiveness to new ideas where innovation is an explicit contract requirement is reflected in the evaluation criteria weighting for all tenders. This recognises that the experience of contractors through market testing processes can provide innovative and value for money contract solutions that take the Council forward in its improvement cycle.

Our new medium term financial strategy identifies a number of tools for savings and requires ALL managers to consider alternative mechanisms for service delivery as part of our annual service and financial planning process.

Maintaining service delivery during transitional phases of externalisation is a key challenge, we have succeeded in this area with an innovative application of specially negotiated flexible "sling contracts", providing levels of support that can be ramped up or down to meet organisational needs. This enables recruitment freezes during transition offsetting associated adverse impacts on cost base and staff morale.

Extensive Involvement in Commissioning

We are engaging with communities more actively in the design of our services. Our One Stop Shops were designed with user involvement, particularly the disabled community, and made extensive use of our customer intelligence. We have used our Equality Impact Assessments and established an Equality and Access Advisory Panel to improve the quality of Council's services by providing members of the community the opportunity to talk to service managers about access to the services they provide. For example, our Choice Based Letting system has been developed to include text based bidding for families with limited access to the internet. Another example was the commissioning of our Sustainable Communities Strategy, where the LSP commissioned and the Council facilitated the project with a representative from the business community sitting on the evaluation panel and being given a genuine say in the final award decision.

Our Knowing our Communities project will provide us with an analysis of the key needs and issues facing a number of communities within the district using the SWAN model (requirements in terms of community support, wants, abilities and needs) during 2009, and will provide solid evidence for us to use in our Sustainable Communities Strategy for the development of any new services.

Understanding the Supply Market

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We have developed a Local Business Liaison Group to provide direction and facilitate action for the Council's proactive engagement with local businesses with a particular focus on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). We have held supplier workshops to explain the procurement process to businesses that have previously done little work with the public sector. An e-database of local businesses suppliers has been created which is being used to send out an email circular to advise businesses of how we plan to liaise more effectively with them and to invite them to complete an online questionnaire to provide suggestions as to how we might improve on our current strategies. The responses received to the online questionnaire will inform our plans to launch a quarterly Procurement Newsletter via email and our preparations for the Meet the Buyer events we have held in partnership with Oxford City Council and the scheduled local events in Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington to be held from early July onwards.

We are active participants in the MKOB Procurement Partnership, ensuring that all new contracts are offered as frameworks that others can opt to join.

Evaluation of Procurement Options

A procurement forward plan has been developed to ensure our procurement team become involved sufficiently in advance of plans to procure or commission to ensure that full options appraisals take place. Stakeholder questionnaires are used to gain the key operational needs for each service in helping determine a range of procurement options. Options appraisals influenced the choices made for the procurement of Sustainable Community Planning Consultancy, CCTV upgrade (resulted in the use of two existing contracts with Thames Valley Police and OGC via mini tenders, saving us expense and time on our own tenders), Vehicle Spare Parts (developing a strategic approach involving base savings, early payment savings and RPI freeze savings).

Supporting Evidence

1. Corporate Procurement, Executive Report (3 March 2008)
2. Comprehensive Procurement Procedure Rules
3. Capital Investment Delivery Group (CIDG) Supporting Information briefing note
4. Corporate Procurement Progress Report, Executive Report (15 September 2008)
5. Draft Access to Services Strategy (March 2009)
6. Project Mandate; Knowing our Communities
7. Procurement Forward Plan, 2009 to 2010
8. Stakeholder Questionnaires: waste management software and audio system replacement
9. 2009/10 Corporate Improvement Plan (Including VFM Review Programme), draft Executive Report (6 April 2009)

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The following are some key procurement and contract management case studies which demonstrate the three-fold approach we have adopted to procurement within the Council

1 An Innovative and open approach to contemporary procurement practices

The case studies in this category reflect how our approach to procurement and contract management has evolved from using a detailed specification of requirements for exacting contract management (sports centre management) into using a more open, output-based approach that encourages innovation that allows the market to provide the most appropriate solution (accommodation improvements).

Case Study – Sports Centre Management

Contract value: £700,000 per annum plus £27m capital

Contractor: Parkwood

Description: The contract commenced in April 2008 to design, build, operate and maintain three sports centres. It involves the combination of the largest capital construction contract (£27m) and the longest service contract (25 years) let by the Council. It has a two year construction period during which there is an interim services phase followed by a 25 year full service contract. It also delivers services for local schools on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

The contract is run using the Prince 2 methodology. Due to its scale and complexity, the contract has a Project Board which meets monthly for decision making purposes and provides 6 monthly monitoring reports to the Council's Executive. The Board is supported by a Project Team which uses external consultants and professional advisors for specific elements of the contract.

There are monthly client meetings between Cherwell Leisure Ltd (the special purpose vehicle set up for the contract), Kier Moss (the construction contractor), Parkwood (the leisure operator) and the Council dealing with all construction issues and separate monthly leisure operator's meetings dealing with all operational, compliance, performance management and help desk aspects of the contract. All unresolved or significant cost issues are referred to Project Board for decisions.

Prior to committing to the contract, the Executive considered regular reports on affordability and value for money. One of the main drivers for the contract was to invest capital and operate in a manner which provides better facilities and recreation opportunities with increased customer satisfaction at a lower annual cost to the Council. A reduced revenue cost of £745,000 will be delivered in 2009/10 following the completion of two of the three facilities in June 2009 and the third in January 2010. It is against the affordability envelope and value for money position agreed by the Council that the contract is being managed.

As a key part and prior to commitment to the contract, the Executive considered all aspects and specifically future contract, project and partnership management functions. These aspects were a key feature in terms of resource allocation and personnel functions in the Council wide re-structure process being undertaken at that time. Contract sustainability was considered in terms of periodic benchmark reviews and the use of whole life costing.

The key document is the Project Agreement but it is the Output Specification which contains statements of the Council's requirements for the service and is the document which forms the basis on which the contractor is assessed and payments made. In essence, it establishes the performance criteria that the contractor is required to deliver via the construction programme and throughout the contract period and against which it will be monitored.

The Council engaged the 4Ps to undertake relevant Gateway Reviews on the procurement process which also included elements of contract management. In addition, annual reviews were

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held with Gordon Westley (The Audit Commission leisure contract specialist) and the local District Audit Manager to review the procurement process and contract management. The outcomes from both these review processes were fed into the Council's decision making processes about procurement and contract management.

In addition to the contractor consortium, a key partner in this contract is Oxfordshire County Council. Extensive work has been undertaken with the County Council and local schools to explore the best means of delivering the facilities required and their access to them both physically and time wise. Similarly, throughout the procurement and contract process, considerable dialogue and communication has been undertaken with sports centre users whose feedback has influenced facilities and designs.

Outcomes

The innovative and flexible approach adopted by the Council to the project's affordability, means that in spite of spending £29m capital, it will deliver a £100k net annual revenue saving for at least the first five years of the contract.

The contract works have been carried out while the facilities remain open, ensuring a continuity of public service.

The project will see the delivery of top quality, modern leisure facilities intended to address the consistent average or below customer satisfaction levels. The most recent informal customer feedback has been positive as demonstrated by the 2008 increase in customer satisfaction to 63%. This along with user numbers, are expected to increase further when all facilities have been completed and are fully open.

The new facilities provide every resident the opportunity to lead a healthy active lifestyle. Tenpin Bowling and increased swimming capacity in modern leisure environments will be provided in addition to improvements to existing facilities which will benefit both the general public and local schools through new joint use agreements.

Case Study – Accommodation Improvements - Bodicote House

Contract value: £1,010,900

Contractor: Paragon

Description: In line with our business re organisation and with the implementation of a One Stop Shop, we entered into a 9 month design and build contract enabling Bodicote House to be made into an "open plan" environment.

The Procurement Manager assisted the business in completing a tender exercise where Paragon Interiors were awarded the contract. Due the short timescales and the issue that the building was "live" with staff located in the building during the conversion, strict project management principles were put in place to ensure the contract was delivered on time and on budget with no loss of Council service while the build took place.

A rigid project structure was set up with a project board consisting of the Chief Executive, Director of Customer Services and Resources, 2 Councillors, Head of HR, Communications Manager, Head of Property Services and the Project Manager. This board meets on a monthly basis to discuss full project progress including change management. A monthly board pack is produced by the project manager where all project information is discussed including the risk and issue log.

To feed into the board, the project team (site project manager from Paragon and project manager from Cherwell) meet on a daily basis ensuring that the key milestones are achieved and the relevant quality standards met.

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A fortnightly project meeting between Cherwell and Paragon also goes ahead where all aspects of the project build are discussed. Issues which exceed the strict tolerances of time and cost are escalated to the project board for a decision.

The contract has delivered in terms of time and budget.

Outcomes

- Minimal disruption to staff during a substantial programme of works on site, enabling 'business as usual' to continue.
- A high degree of environmental improvements as part of the works: 80% recycling of materials on site during works, more efficient lighting and better access to natural light, better circulation of air for ventilation, and better levels of occupancy.
- Co-location of previously separate teams on one site, improving access to services for customers.
- The consequent release of two previously occupied buildings for partnership occupancy arrangements – providing income generation opportunities, contributing around 20% to our 2009/10 public promise to reduce our net cost of services by £1million.

One of the released buildings is already subject to contract arrangements with the PCT for a GP led health centre. This will be delivered in partnership with the council: funded, project managed and maintained by us. This will lead to reduced council overheads, a reduced council tax burden to local residents and increased access to healthcare services for local residents as part of our Safe and Health strategic priority.

2 Effective and Contemporary Contract Management

The two case studies below demonstrate how we have reviewed existing contractual arrangements to ensure they comply with our procurement guidelines, but also deliver real improvements to service delivery and value for money.

<h3>Case Study – Glass Recycling</h3>

Contract value: £80,000 per annum

Contractor: Thamesdown Recycling

Description: The former contract was extended over a number of years due to the increased tonnages being generated from an evolving and uncertain glass recycling service. Because of the uncertainty about the nature of the future service requirement and the rolling on of the contract, we were not complying fully with our own procurement rules having used the same glass recycling contractor for a number of years with no exposure to the market.

A service level agreement was developed by the Procurement team in discussion with the recycling manager, which was used for an OJEU open tender process. The SLA was developed into a set of key performance indicators for the recycling manager to monitor, with the procurement team supporting contract management by diarising review meetings with the successful contractor.

A key aspect of this procurement exercise was how we worked with Oxford City Council to benefit from their greater experience in this area. The City Council provided input into the Specification in particular and the tender exercise was undertaken by the Council's Procurement team. This demonstrates our effective use of partnership in procurement.

Outcomes

The outcome of this has been a more responsive service providing increased flexibility and better management information at no increased cost. This in turn will assist in maintaining the trend of continuous improvement in glass recycling tonnages and customer satisfaction with the Council's

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70 community located recycling banks which residents have told us is a high priority service for them.

Case Study – Recruitment and Advertising

Contract value: £280,000 per annum

Contractor: Tribal succeeded by Barkers

Description: The current contract, a framework agreement tendered by the Oxfordshire County Council and drawn down upon by the Council in 2007, proved to be cause for genuine concern from a performance management view in September 2008. The Strategic Corporate Procurement Manager worked closely with the HR team to turn around the service levels, introducing an SLA where one had not previously existed, agreeing SMART KPIs that could be tracked on a regular basis and implementing procedures that clarified the responsibilities for both employer and supplier.

The work undertaken by Procurement and HR fed into the re-tendering exercise undertaken with Oxfordshire County Council and provided a more focused and output focused specification based upon effective contract management methodology. As a result the contract management structure was already in place when the new contractor, Barkers, was appointed in March 2009.

This has given the Council and the new supplier a workable structure around which to agree the contract management process, with an SLA, KPIs and a clear procedural methodology in place ahead of the new contract start date of 1st April 2009.

Outcomes

This exercise has allowed the Procurement team to go out to areas of the Council who were not previously using the corporate contract – partly due to issues with performance management – confidently with a clear and workable solution for corporate needs for all types of public notice and advertising, meaning that the scope and effectiveness of the contract has been extended beyond its original focus on Recruitment Advertising. Better value is now achieved through the new contract, and satisfaction with the arrangements has improved.

3 Strategic Procurement – changing the shape of our organisation

The following case studies show how we are using our procurement in a strategic way to achieve our longer term goals and shape the future delivery of services so that they have lower overheads and deliver better outcomes.

Case Study – Internal Audit

Contract value: £121k

Contractor: PriceWaterhouseCooper

Description: The council had operated a traditional internal audit service which focused on largely process-based audits. Costs were very high due to the large number of audit days used each year (twice the number as the average authority). Despite this level of attention, the Council experienced a significant number of errors in its financial reports, had additional audit fees imposed by the Audit Commission because of less reliance on Internal Audit work, and external audit charges were increased by the Commission for extra work needed to gain assurance on the Council's systems of control. Satisfaction with the service amongst senior managers was poor and the quality of audit reports was questionable.

As part of a value for money review different delivery options were explored: retaining the service in its current format, working with another council using a shared management resource, joining a

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local consortium where staff are 'pooled' and managed by a single council, and a wholly outsourced approach. A decision by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee saw the service tendered (in conjunction with Oxford City Council) with the contract won by PWC. To ensure that continuity of service was maintained an interim contract was let with PWC for the transition period to the contract start date of 1 April 2009.

The new service has two contract managers; one in each authority. The Annual Audit plan will be more focused on the strategic risks to the authority than on process-based audits, which has led to a significant reduction in the number of days used.

Outcomes

The contract sum has enabled the council to make savings of £110,000 per annum, largely helped by the collaborative nature of the procurement. The nature of the contract will allow for other authorities to benefit from the service should they choose to join and provide further savings to all partners based upon retrospective discounts for increased draw down on the framework.

The use of PWC gives the council access to a wide pool of expertise and the benefits of using one of the 'big five' national audit companies. The strategic focus of the service allows a more flexible approach, focused on areas of corporate priority.

The Council now fully complies with the CIPFA code of practice, providing greater degrees of assurance to management, members and the public

Case Study – Property Maintenance

Description: Concerns regarding the comparative high cost of maintaining council buildings led to a value for money review of the Property Service, which confirmed that the Council spends considerably more than average on its property maintenance compared to other District Councils, although its buildings are in very good condition. At the same time the council has performed poorly over a number of years in improving disabled access to council buildings. A detailed specification-based approach to individual contracts within the service has not delivered real benefits for building occupants (for example, lift maintenance contracts ensure attendance on site within 4 hours, but not that the lifts will be repaired in good time).

Members are clear that the maintenance of buildings, while important for service delivery, is not considered core business for the council and that the service should be market tested to see if real improvements in service delivery and cost can be achieved through using external facilities management expertise.

An exercise is currently in hand to decide on the best way to approach the market with the existing service divided into 'lots' that will attract a good range of tenderers, but also allow the service to be delivered through one supplier. A key aspect of this will be in determining a successful approach to the contract monitoring function to ensure that appropriate expertise is in place, while an output-based specification will seek to ensure that the market determines the best approach to ensure outcomes are delivered in the most effective way

Outcomes

Although it is too early to judge the success of the market testing exercise, interest in tendering for the work has been expressed by a number of major facilities management companies.

A mixed solution approach has provided a range of options. Some elements lend themselves well to collaborative solutions as part of the existing County framework contracts, other elements are more suited to a tender process utilising a performance based specification.