

## **Appendix 12**

### **Heritage Impact Assessment**

#### **Part 3**

**West Oxfordshire Local Plan Allocations Landscape and Heritage Advice dated October 2017  
prepared in support of West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan Examination**



West Oxfordshire District Council

**West Oxfordshire Local Plan Allocations  
Landscape and Heritage Advice**

October 2017

West Oxfordshire District Council

## West Oxfordshire Local Plan Allocations Landscape and Heritage Advice

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Croft', is written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Croft

Position

Director

Date

18 October 2017

Revision

Final V2

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background to study**

1.1.1 Proposed modifications to the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 were published in November 2016 with examination hearing sessions held in May and July 2017. During the hearings West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) agreed to commission additional landscape and heritage advice in relation to seven proposed site allocations.

1.1.2 WODC subsequently commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) in August 2017 to provide the additional landscape and heritage advice in relation to the seven proposed site allocations.

### **1.2 Proposed Site Allocations**

1.2.1 The required landscape and heritage advice relates to seven of the fifteen non-strategic allocations put forward in the draft Local Plan modifications. The seven sites are listed below together with the number of homes the Council has indicatively suggested could be accommodated on each site:

- Land north of Jefferson's Piece, Charlbury (40 homes);
- Land east of Burford (85 homes);
- Land south of Milton Road, Shipton under Wychwood (44 homes);
- Land north of Woodstock Road, Stonesfield (50 homes);
- Land east of Woodstock (300 homes);
- Land north of Hill Rise, Woodstock (120 homes); and
- Land north of Banbury Road, Woodstock (250 homes).

1.2.2 The need for additional landscape and heritage advice arose from the particular circumstances of each site in relation to potential issues associated with a range of designations including the Blenheim World Heritage Site, Cotswolds AONB, conservation areas and listed buildings; and standard landscape and visual considerations. Whilst the District Council has taken account of these issues/constraints in assessing the sites through its Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA 2016) the Council acknowledged during the examination hearings that additional, independent landscape and heritage advice would be beneficial.

### **1.3 Status of this report**

- 1.3.1 This report is intended to provide supporting evidence for the Local Plan. Its conclusions and recommendations address potential landscape and heritage matters only; other factors such as transport, access, ecology are not addressed by this report and may remain as considerations for WODC depending on site circumstances. The recommendations relating to dwelling numbers, site layout and extent of development described in the text and shown on the opportunities and constraints plans are illustrative only and represent only one potential approach to providing development on the sites in a manner that addresses the various issues identified through the landscape and heritage appraisal.
- 1.3.2 The appraisals have drawn on a range of evidential material including baseline material such as viewpoint photographs provided in applicants' documentation. The report provides an impartial and independent view of the heritage and landscape issues associated with the seven identified sites. Its recommendations and conclusions are non-binding and are intended to inform decisions relating to the sites alongside other planning matters and expert opinion.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Overview**

- 2.1.1 The seven proposed allocation sites have been subject to a broad assessment using a combination of desk based analysis of existing material, GIS analysis of data and site visits from publically accessible locations in September 2017.
- 2.1.2 The landscape and heritage appraisals have been undertaken in accordance with current guidance, national planning policy and, where relevant, international conventions and guidance.
- 2.1.3 The conclusions regarding each site in relation to development capacity and mitigation requirements are presented individually, with the landscape and visual considerations and heritage separately before being brought together to provide a unified view for each site. Where appropriate in combination issues have been identified and addressed.
- 2.1.4 The following sets out the approach to the landscape and heritage appraisals.

### **2.2 Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

- 2.2.1 The purpose of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal is to provide a preliminary high-level appraisal of the development potential of the Sites in landscape and visual capacity terms. The Landscape and Visual Appraisal was undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013).
- 2.2.2 Initial work included a review of relevant background information including:
- West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment;
  - Conservation Area Appraisals / Village Design Statements;
  - Aerial photographs;
  - 1:25,000 / 1:10,000 OS mapping;
  - Designated wildlife sites;
  - Baseline information, such as viewpoint photographs and historic background material, contained in existing site appraisals;
  - Green Infrastructure for Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire reports; and
  - Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, Landscape Character Assessment, Strategy and Guidelines.

2.2.3 The appraisal involved the following key tasks:

- Developing a high-level understanding of the historical development of the landscape around the allocation sites;
- Identifying existing landscape features within and around the allocation sites and the connectivity between features and the wider area;
- Appraising the character of the allocation sites and their environs and any distinctive characteristics/qualities;
- Assessing the topography and land cover of the allocation sites and environs and its influence on views into and out of the sites;
- Assessing the value, condition and sensitivity of the allocation site's distinctive landscape characteristics/qualities to change;
- Identifying potential landscape enhancement and green infrastructure improvement opportunities that could be integrated into any future development process;
- Identifying key issues and constraints.

#### **Cotswolds AONB**

2.2.4 In relation to the four sites within the Cotswolds AONB (Land north of Jefferson's Piece, Charlbury, Land east of Burford, Land south of Milton Road, Shipton under Wychwood and Land north of Woodstock Road, Stonesfield) particular attention is given to potential issues relating to the AONB.

2.2.5 The Cotswolds AONB Landscape Management Plan 2013-2018 plan identifies eight principal landscape elements that occur across the AONB and which either singly or in combination contributes to the unique character and quality of the AONB. These are:-

- Dry stone walls
- Ancient semi-natural woodland and veteran trees
- Permanent pasture including unimproved calcareous grassland
- Archaeological sites and monuments and their settings and remnant historical landscapes
- Vernacular stone buildings and their settings
- Settlement patterns and their relationship to landscape
- Parkland and historic designed landscape
- Hedges

2.2.6 Related to the above landscape elements, ten special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB that are important to conserving and enhancing landscape character are identified. These are:-



1. Mix of pasture, arable cultivation and woodland, with subtle differences in the balance between the elements from one part of the AONB to another.
2. Well drained, thin, shallow calcareous soils which are easily worked, suitable for growing cereals and oil seeds.
3. Large estates with long term and sustained, positive management.
4. Large commons along the crest of the scarp.
5. Well maintained and sensitively managed farmland boundaries and farm buildings, including traditional barns and stone walls.
6. Ancient woodland, especially beech is a particularly distinctive and important feature of the scarp and enclosed limestone valleys.
7. Parkland, including wood pasture, often associated with large estates.
8. Veteran and potential veteran trees.
9. Significant degree of retention of important habitats and species, including yew and beech woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, rivers and pond, hedgerow and traditional orchard habitats.
10. Market towns, estate villages and houses set within a historic landscape of field systems, commons and drove roads.

2.2.7 Of those special qualities listed above 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were identified as being of particular relevance to the allocation sites, and were therefore considered as part of judgements about landscape sensitivity to development.

2.2.8 In addition, key landscape issues identified in respect of conserving and enhancing AONB landscape, and of relevance to the objectives of this study are as follows:-

- *It is important to protect the scenic beauty of the escarpment and other skylines from inappropriate developments*
- *The AONB contains a significant degree of important habitats many of which are in decline*
- *Tranquillity is under threat due to noise, light, and traffic*
- *The character of the landscape can be affected by numerous small incremental changes, not all of which can be controlled by planning legislation or other controls*

2.2.9 In the context of the above, the appraisals for the four sites in the AONB included a concise assessment of which, if any, of the key character elements, special qualities are present, the issues that may arise, and the degree to which development of the allocation site could affect these, or whether there is potential for them be conserved/enhanced, as a result of any development.

## 2.3 Heritage Appraisal

2.3.1 The heritage appraisal looked at all seven sites in relation to potential issues associated with designated heritage assets including conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens. The three Woodstock sites (Land east of Woodstock, Land north of Hill Rise and Land north of Banbury Road) were also examined in terms of potential issues relating to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS).

2.3.2 The following sets out the approach taken in relation to these issues.

### **Blenheim Palace WHS**

2.3.3 The approach to assessing potential issues was based on the most relevant guidance documents namely:

- Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans (2015);
- Historic England's Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2015); and
- ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties (2011).

2.3.4 The methodology involved the following key tasks:

- Summarising the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS;
- Summarising the setting of the site and the contribution setting makes to its OUV;
- Discussing the role of the allocation sites in relation to the setting of the WHS; and
- Assessing key development issues and constraints.

2.3.5 Throughout the process particular attention was paid to the 2017 Management Plan for the WHS and the Council's other adopted guidance.

### **Designated Heritage Assets (Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Historic Parks and Gardens)**

2.3.6 The methodology was informed by Historic England guidance including:

- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans (2015);

- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (2015);
- Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (2016); and
- Advice Note 3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans (2015).

2.3.7 Based on this guidance the following process was adopted for each site, including the three Woodstock sites:

- Identify the assets that may be affected by the proposed development;
- Briefly describe their key characteristics and significance;
- Briefly describe their setting and how this contributes to their significance;
- Describe how the proposed development site relates to the asset's character and / or setting;
- Assess key development issues and constraints.

2.3.8 The results of the above are reported individually for each allocation site.

## **2.4 Development Review**

2.4.1 Following completion of the landscape and heritage analysis each site was reviewed to identify the suitability of the site for development and, if suitable, recommendations in relation to how development could be accommodated including the potential number of dwellings. This stage integrated landscape and heritage advice.

2.4.2 In terms of recommended dwelling numbers, a standard assumption of 30 dwellings per hectare was used as a starting point. However, the nature of the sites and the need for landscape mitigation and open space to mitigate potential impacts would indicate that the design of development would generally lead to lower densities when calculated across the entire allocation site. The recommendations are however indicative only based on landscape and heritage considerations and should not be taken as an absolute.

## **3.0 LAND NORTH OF JEFFERSON'S PIECE, CHARLBURY**

### **3.1 Description**

3.1.1 The Site is a 1.76ha field on the northern edge of the modern extent of Charlbury. The residential edge of Charlbury forms the southwestern edge of the site, with scattered properties with larger gardens to the east and north east. To the west is a pasture field. The Site lies within the Cotswolds AONB and the Charlbury Conservation Area.

### **3.2 Landscape Appraisal**

#### **Landscape Character Context**

3.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles;<sup>1</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study;<sup>2</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas;<sup>3,4</sup> and
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Management Plan 2013-2018 (see Section 2.2).

#### **National Character Areas**

3.2.2 The Site is located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.

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<sup>1</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>2</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>3</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

<sup>4</sup> Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

### County/District Character Areas

3.2.3 The Site is located within Landscape Type 19: Wooded Estatelands. Key characteristics include:

- *Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.*
- *Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.*
- *Large parklands and mansion houses.*
- *A regularly shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.*
- *Small villages with strong vernacular character.*

3.2.4 Immediately to the north-west of the Site, the Landscape Type changes to Landscape Type 14: Settled Ancient Pastures. Key characteristics include:

- *Rolling landform with minor valleys and streams.*
- *Dense hedgerow trees and a range of woodland types.*
- *Small, irregularly shaped fields enclosed by tall, thick hedges.*
- *A dispersed settlement pattern of villages, hamlets and farmsteads.*

### West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

3.2.5 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 6: Lower Evenlode Valley and Landscape Character Type Semi-Enclosed Limestone Wolds (large-scale). The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope;*
- *Land use dominated by intensive arable cultivation with only occasional pasture;*
- *Generally large-scale fields with rectilinear boundaries formed by drystone walls and low hawthorn hedges with occasional trees, typical of later enclosures;*

- *Some visual containment provided by large blocks and belts of woodland creating a semi-enclosed character;*
- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and a somewhat impoverished 'upland' character;*
- *Ash, hazel, field maple etc. conspicuous in hedgerows;*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky;*
- *Moderate inter-visibility.*

### **Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment**

3.2.6 The Site is located within LCA 16: Broad Floodplain Valley [16B: Lower Evenlode Valley]. Key characteristics are as follows:

- *Intimate, small scale settled and relatively busy landscape, contrasting with more remote areas of High Wold.*
- *Well-defined broad valley profile of open flat, floodplain, river terraces and gentle convex slopes.*
- *River floodplain features such as meanders, water meadows, ponds, old river channels and islands.*
- *Floodplain and riverside trees including pollarded willows.*
- *Wooded bluffs and areas of species rich grassland on areas of steep landform.*
- *River corridor marked by main transport routes through the valley.*
- *Valley sides cloaked in improved pasture and arable land form a back drop to the valley floor landscapes.*
- *Land use within valley floor and floodplain dominated by pasture although some extensive areas of arable land on areas less prone to flooding.*
- *Fields defined by hedgerows and some stone walls although the robust framework is eroded by hedgerow loss and the use of post and wire fences.*
- *River channel habitats including standing water important to a diverse range of flora and fauna.*
- *Prolific archaeological remains likely to be hidden by fluvial and human activity.*
- *Linear settlements often located at ancient bridging points established in the Saxon or medieval period.*
- *Historic character of villages evident in their distinctive layout, building styles and use of Cotswolds limestone.*

## Site Landscape Context

### Landform and Land Use

- 3.2.7 As illustrated on **Figure 3.1**, the site is a small field, of roughly rectangular shape, situated in an undulating landscape at the north-eastern edge of the town of Charlbury. Levels within the Site range from 130m in the western corner to 140m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the east, sloping down fairly gently from northeast to southwest.
- 3.2.8 The valley of the River Evenlode, encompasses, on its eastern valley side, a large proportion of the current built up area of Charlbury and the town lies to the southwest of the Site. In addition, the land rises up very gentle slopes north eastwards from the Site, to 160m (AOD). A steep sided tributary valley (Clarke's Bottom) comprised of mostly rough pasture adjoins Hundley Way which also forms the north-western boundary of the site.
- 3.2.9 The Site comprises rough pasture, with some small areas of scrub. It sits within a wider agricultural landscape, of predominantly arable fields, which has a partially enclosed character due to the presence of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, tree belts and small blocks of woodland. There are also some pockets of prominent residential land uses to the east and north east.

### Settlement Pattern and Access

- 3.2.10 The settlement pattern/edge at the south-western boundary is characterised by mainly modern, 1 and 2 storey height residential developments of terraced/semi-detached houses. There are also a few dispersed historic cottages/modern detached houses lying outside the built-up edge of Charlbury, set in large garden plots, to the east and north east of the site.
- 3.2.11 The existing site access is formed by the unsurfaced track of Hundley Way. Minor, urban estate roads serve the existing development to the south, while small, rural lanes and tracks, lined by hedgerows link to the more, dispersed settlement.
- 3.2.12 There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the Site. Hundley Way, on its western boundary is a public bridleway. 700m to the south and south west, the Oxfordshire Way promoted route passes through Charlbury, and the Wychwood Way promoted route passes 1.6km to the northeast. There are a number of other stretches of public footpath within and beyond the adjacent built-up area of Charlbury, including a bridleway along the track to the north of Ticknell Piece Road.

## Vegetation

- 3.2.13 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality, with frequent hedgerow trees. Woodlands are a mix of conifer plantation and broadleaved woodland, with some areas of young trees.

## Local Character

- 3.2.14 The character of the site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments (national, county and district level), namely the rolling farmland, with some degree of visual containment by blocks and belts of woodland, and also fields defined by hedgerows/stone walls. The villages, despite some modern edge/infill have a strong historic character and use of limestone is a unifying presence as a building material and locally distinctive.
- 3.2.15 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is a single field parcel, without any dramatic changes in topography.

## Visual Baseline

- 3.2.16 Locally, views into the Site, from the south, are restricted by existing built development, but views are possible from a few overlooking private properties, such as those on the north-eastern side of Jefferson's Piece. In addition, a small number of very close, glimpsed views of the Site are possible from the Hundley Way bridleway. However, the existing north-western hedgerow boundary of the Site is relatively thin and gappy and therefore it is likely there is greater visibility into the Site in winter. Some middle distance, glimpsed views of the Site are also possible from the B4022 Banbury Hill (a key approach route to the town) and from an adjoining permissive path, as well as from other public rights of way (located on the higher ground in the vicinity of this road). It is likely that, as is the case with Hundley Way above, there may be more visibility of the Site in winter.
- 3.2.17 Some more distant views of the north-western boundary of the Site are also possible from higher ground, as seen from the B4437 looking north east and from several viewpoints along Catsham Lane, looking north eastwards across the Evenlode valley. The effects of distance, and the fact that the Site is only discernible as part of a much wider panorama suggest a reduced visual sensitivity for the Site although this is likely to increase in winter and a cautious approach has been taken.



- 3.2.18 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline landscape characteristics of the Site, and its potential visibility. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 3.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.2.19 Photograph JP3 is located along/within the boundaries of the site to demonstrate the landscape characteristics/extent of views within the site.
- 3.2.20 Photographs JP1-2 and JP4-6 demonstrate the potential visibility of the site as follows:
- JP2 is a close view taken from a permissive path on Banbury Hill, looking south east towards the site and demonstrates both a direct open view into the southern part of the site and more filtered view through the existing vegetation in summer.
  - JP1 and JP4 are middle distance views taken from Banbury Hill and from a public footpath looking east, upwards towards the site and demonstrate visual screening by existing vegetation in summer but the potential for this to be less effective in winter.
  - JP5 is a long distance, panoramic, and elevated view taken from Catsham Lane, looking east towards the site. This demonstrates visual screening by existing vegetation in summer, but again the potential for greater visibility in winter.
  - JP6 is another long distance panoramic and elevated view taken from the B4437 looking northeast towards the Site (seen above the existing hedge in the foreground). This demonstrates visual screening by existing vegetation in summer, but similar to the viewpoints above, the potential for greater visibility in winter.
- 3.2.21 The visual appraisal demonstrates that the extent/degree of views into the Site are influenced by topography, existing built development and vegetation, and/or a combination of these. However, the visibility of the Site is likely to be greater in winter compared with summer, whether seen from close, middle distance or distant viewpoints. The spread of these viewpoints is indicative of a fairly extensive visual envelope.

### **Summary**

- 3.2.22 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and the local context can be summarised as follows:
- The site comprises a gently sloping rough pasture field, situated on the edge of the town of Charlbury;

- Mostly rural character, but some very localised intrusion is caused by unsoftened built form on the south west boundary of the site;
- Trees, hedgerows and woodlands are distinctive boundary features on three sides and these, in turn, connect with other off-site hedgerows in the wider rural landscape;
- The site features/characteristics make a partial contribution to the wider landscape setting of the town, which is distinctive for its mostly well treed backdrop that contains/ integrates and softens historic/modern built development located on a valley side landform;
- Existing adjacent development is small scale, two or one storeys height only;
- The site has a fairly visually prominent and somewhat elevated location, and it lies close to one of the key approach routes into the town, along Banbury Hill road. It is considered to be of medium-high visual sensitivity;

### **Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities**

3.2.23 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are set out within **Figure 3.3**.

- **PROW network:** - No routes cross the site, but there is a well-used local network, close to and adjoining the site, which has connections to the long-distance promoted routes of the Oxfordshire Way and Wychwood Way, as well as to other available PROW routes to the town centre and to the wider local countryside. There is the potential to provide a direct footpath link with the Hundley Way bridleway.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** This is in mostly good condition and there would be the potential to reinforce, enhance and manage appropriately for visual screening/landscape integration purposes, and for biodiversity value.
- **Drystone walls:** The Hundley Way/site boundary wall is dilapidated/overgrown, in poor condition. There would be potential to restore this boundary and/or provide new sections of drystone walls within any development.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** There is an opportunity to create high quality accessible green space on the site, to diversify some of the existing semi-improved grassland, and to provide SuDS wetland habitat.
- **Tranquillity:** There is some sense of tranquillity, associated with some of the more rural qualities of the site, although intermittent traffic noise from Banbury Hill Rd is perceptible and the southern site boundary has a somewhat poor quality, abrupt urban edge.
- **AONB Character and Special Qualities:** Those features/qualities, and associated issues that are of relevance to the site/its context are conservation of hedgerows/protection of the wooded skyline, drystone walls, conserving the subtle mix of pasture and arable farmland.

(also see tranquillity above). A relatively small scale development is unlikely to have any significant impacts and/or there is the potential to conserve and enhance most of these in association with sensitively designed development.

- **Settlement pattern:** The low density, dispersed settlement pattern found to the north/north east of the site should be respected and opportunities explored in the design of the development layout to reflect this pattern, establishing a transition towards any more compact form/pattern moving southwards through the site.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** This is considered to be Medium-High taking account of the various landscape sensitivity factors identified above, although landscape sensitivity does vary a little across the site - higher in the northern/north western parts of the site, lower moving towards to the existing built edge.
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** Medium, but likely to be medium-high in winter. Retention reinforcement and appropriate management of the north-western hedgerow boundary would be essential to screening views of/softening built development.

## Conclusions

- 3.2.24 Overall, the landscape of the Site is considered to be of medium-high landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity. Some AONB characteristics and special qualities are present but it is not considered they would be likely to be unduly affected, as to preclude a small-scale development.
- 3.2.25 Taking the above into account it is concluded that a development of approximately 35-40 homes could be successfully accommodated on the site, ensuring that development of a dense/compact form/character is avoided closer to the northern and western boundaries, where a low density dispersed character would be more appropriate. Any greater dwelling numbers than these could make it more difficult to achieve an appropriate form/character or result in significant adverse impacts.
- 3.2.26 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Potential measures to be included in this regard include:
- Provide an additional c.10m width structure planted landscape buffer to reinforce the Hundley Road site boundary
  - Retain and manage all existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots (secured by S106 legal agreement), or otherwise demonstrate how these will be retained through developer covenants.

- Incorporate semi-natural green space, extending to the site frontage with Hundley Road
- Preferred main vehicular access to be via the existing development of Jefferson's Piece, avoiding the introduction of urban surfacing materials/street furniture on Hundley Road.
- Ensure two storey residential development, limited to a maximum c.8m roof ridge height and consider the potential for some, one and half storey, development.
- Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; and with reference to the *New Rural Form* (as illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006)).
- Front garden frontages to be defined by drystone walls and hedges.
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local AONB context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

### 3.3 Heritage Appraisal

#### Site Context

##### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 3.3.1 The Site is identified on the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>5</sup> as 'Piecemeal Enclosure', along with the land immediately to the south of Ditchley Road. There is a long linear field to the north-west of the Site classed as 'Reorganised Enclosure'- fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries. To the south-west of the Site is the town of Charlbury, identified as 'Urban – Town'. The Site is located on the very fringe of the settlement, adjacent to what were historically areas of local quarrying, seemingly for building stone.

##### Conservation Area

- 3.3.2 The small town of Charlbury and its immediate environs is covered by a conservation area. The Site is wholly within the conservation area. The conservation area includes the historic core of Charlbury, associated modern development and surrounding agricultural fields. The conservation area includes all roads within the town, including Church Street, Church Lane, Market Street, Sheep Street, Brown's Lane, Park Street and Dyer's Hill, along which much of the historic development occurred.

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<sup>5</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
October 2017

- 3.3.3 No adopted and agreed conservation area appraisal or management plan exists for the Charlbury Conservation Area. A conservation study from c. 1974 exists and has been utilised as part of the background information for this analysis.
- 3.3.4 The following examines, at a high level, the conservation area, providing information relevant to the assessment of the Site in the context of the conservation area. The Site's location some distance from the historic built core of the settlement means that only limited information on the historic buildings and streetscapes of Charlbury is provided.
- 3.3.5 Charlbury is a notable small historic market town with origins dating back to at least the Saxon period. The settlement is relatively substantial comprising a mix of highly distinctive and generally high quality historic areas, surrounded by later modern residential development to the northeast, east and southeast. The main street plan is the form of a 'T' with Church Street crossed by Market and Sheep Streets; with a "back lane" to the southeast. The street plan was fully established by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and is probably much earlier, most houses dating from this period or before lie facing on to these streets.<sup>6</sup>
- 3.3.6 The conservation area contains c. 111 Listed Buildings; predominantly 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin. The church is largely 14<sup>th</sup> Century although it dates back to 1094.<sup>7</sup> Many of the listed and unlisted historic buildings are clustered around the historic part of the town. The core of the historic built settlement retains much of its historic character, distinctive materials and varied streetscape. Within the historic centre of the town there is a consistent local vernacular of local stone rubble with stone slate roofs and timber lintels to doors and windows.
- 3.3.7 A small number of Listed Buildings are also clustered around Lee Place, a Grade II\* listed small country house dating to c.1640.<sup>8</sup> It is described as a "post-reformation dower house, built by the Lee family of Ditchley".<sup>9</sup>
- 3.3.8 The proposed allocation site is on the northeastern edge of the conservation area on land that has been in agricultural use since probably at least the medieval period. The site lies adjacent to areas historically used for quarrying, although there is no evidence that the site itself was quarried. Adjacent to the site to the north is a small group of historic vernacular buildings, probably of 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century in date and probably related to the quarrying. These buildings have a strongly rural setting and are separated from the modern suburban form to the south by the allocation site.

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<sup>6</sup> Charlbury Conservation Study 11 Oxfordshire County Council, Undated, likely 1970s

<sup>7</sup> Charlbury Conservation Study 11 Oxfordshire County Council, Undated, likely 1970s

<sup>8</sup> Historic England List Entry. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1284015>

<sup>9</sup> Charlbury Conservation Study 11 Oxfordshire County Council, Undated, likely 1970s

- 3.3.9 There is little if any relationship between the allocation site and the historic core of Charlbury. Historically, the Site lay outside of the fields immediately associated with the town (see Appendix 3) instead lying in outlying strip fields, later subject to piecemeal enclosure. The relationship with Charlbury is therefore limited to functional linkages relating to agricultural exploitation. The Site is also visually separated from the core of Charlbury by topography and distance; and now further separated by extensive modern development. In all, there is little linkage between the historically, architecturally, aesthetically and evidentially significant core of the conservation area and the Site.
- 3.3.10 The boundary of the conservation area encompasses large areas of modern development and fields to the east of the historic core; in fact it is unclear why the conservation area extends so far eastwards and northeastwards given the character of this area. It is recommended that consideration is given to a review of the boundary of the conservation area to reflect the actual architectural and historic interest of areas around the historic core of Charlbury.

#### **Listed Buildings**

- 3.3.11 The nearest Listed Building to the Site is Gate House (Grade II) which lies 315m south-west of the Site and is within the Conservation Area. It is a late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Toll House situated on a road junction. There is no visual connection between the Site and the Gate House. The road / track bordering the Site to the west pass the Gate House but are separated by a significant degree and there is no clear experiential relationship. The Site plays no role in the setting of the Listed Building.
- 3.3.12 The Conservation Area contains 111 Listed Buildings, which are Grade II listed, with the exception of the Church of St Mary (Grade I) and Lee Place (Grade II\*). The site is completely separated from other buildings by intervening vegetation, topography and development.

#### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

- 3.3.13 The Registered Park and Garden of Cornbury Park (Grade II\* Listed) cuts into the Conservation Area to the south-west of Lee Place. It is a 260ha park, at the centre of the medieval Royal Forest of Wychwood. Originating as a hunting lodge, it was erected by Henry I close to his principal lodge at Woodstock (qv Blenheim Palace).<sup>10</sup> Cornbury Park lies on the other side of the conservation area to the Site and is separated from it by approximately 1.5km. The site plays no significant role in the setting of Cornbury Park.

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<sup>10</sup> Historic England List Entry. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001092>  
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### **Scheduled Monuments**

3.3.14 There are no Scheduled Monuments within 1km of the Site.

### **Heritage issues and constraints**

3.3.15 Development of the Site would not affect the setting of any listed buildings or the setting of the Cornbury Park Registered Park and Garden.

3.3.16 Although the Site lies within a conservation area the rationale for the boundary of the conservation area to the east of Charlbury is uncertain given the generally modern suburban nature of the area and typical fields. The Site is not associated with the important historic core of Charlbury and makes no contribution to its significance as an important small market town. As such the development of the site would have a minimal impact on the significance, character or appearance of the conservation area, given the generally poor quality of the conservation area around the Site.

3.3.17 As mentioned, there are two unlisted historic buildings, probably late 18<sup>th</sup> century to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in date just north of the Site. These are notable vernacular buildings in a rural setting. The development of the Site would significantly degrade their setting, and this impact on non-designated assets needs to be taken into account.

3.3.18 Overall, the Site does not pose significant issues in relation to the historic environment even though it is situated in a conservation area. It is situated in a part of the conservation area whose character, appearance and significance has already been substantially degraded by modern development and whose inclusion in a conservation area is debatable. Consideration needs to be given to the setting of the non-designated buildings to the north of the Site in any future development.

## **4.0 LAND EAST OF BURFORD**

### **4.1 Description**

4.1.1 The Site is a 5.98ha arable field enclosed on three sides by the eastern edge of Burford, and with a large arable field to the east. The Site lies within the Cotswolds AONB and the Burford Conservation Area.

### **4.2 Landscape Appraisal**

#### **Landscape Character Context**

4.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>11</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>12</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>13,14</sup>
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Management Plan 2013-2018 (see Section 2.2)

#### **National Character Areas**

4.2.2 The Site is located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.

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<sup>11</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>12</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>13</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

<sup>14</sup> Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment, 2006



- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

### **County/District Character Areas**

4.2.3 The southern part of the Site is located within Landscape Type 4: Estate Farmlands. Key characteristics include:

- *Medium to large, regularly shaped, hedged fields.*
- *Small, geometric plantations and belts of trees.*
- *Large country houses set in ornamental parklands.*
- *Small estate villages and dispersed farmsteads.*

4.2.4 The northern part of the Site is located within Landscape Type 7: Farmland Slopes and Valley Sides. Key characteristics include:

- *Prominent slopes and valley sides interrupted by a number of small, narrow v-shaped valleys.*
- *Large arable fields on the gentler slopes, small pasture fields on the steeper slopes and steep-sided valleys.*
- *A well-defined pattern of tall hedges and hedgerow trees.*
- *Small woodland copses and belts on steep slopes and along watercourses in the minor valleys.*
- *Small unspoilt villages with rural character.*

### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

4.2.5 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 8: Upper Windrush Valley and Landscape Character Type Semi-Enclosed Valley-Side Farmland. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Distinctive, sloping, and typically convex valley-side landform*
- *Predominantly large-scale fields under arable cultivation but with occasional pasture*
- *Weak landscape structure and few hedges/trees*
- *Open, visually exposed landscape, prominent in views from within and across valley*
- *High intervisibility along valley sides*

#### **Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Areas**

4.2.6 The Site is located within LCA 16: Broad Floodplain Valley [16A: Lower Windrush Valley]. Key characteristics are as follows:

- *Intimate, small scale settled and relatively busy landscape, contrasting with more remote areas of High Wold.*
- *Well-defined broad valley profile of open flat floodplain, river terraces and gentle convex slopes.*
- *River floodplain features such as meanders, water meadows, ponds, old river channels and islands.*
- *Floodplain and riverside trees including pollarded willows.*
- *Wooded bluffs and areas of species rich grassland on areas of steep landform.*
- *River corridor marked by main transport routes through the valley.*
- *Valley sides cloaked in improved pasture and arable land form a back drop to the valley floor landscapes.*
- *Land use within valley floor and floodplain dominated by pasture although some extensive areas of arable land on areas less prone to flooding.*
- *Fields defined by hedgerows and some stone walls although the robust framework is eroded by hedgerow loss and the use of post and wire fences.*
- *River channel habitats including standing water important to a diverse range of flora and fauna.*
- *Prolific archaeological remains likely to be hidden by fluvial and human activity.*
- *Linear settlements often located at ancient bridging points established in the Saxon or medieval period.*
- *Historic character of villages evident in their distinctive layout, building styles and use of Cotswolds limestone.*

## Site Landscape Context

### Landform and Land Use

- 4.2.7 As illustrated on **Figure 4.1**, most of the Site area is a medium size arable field, with two smaller plots/ adjoining, one of rough grassland linked to Barns Lane, the other a combination of a heavily treed plot of land and a smaller portion of a much larger arable field. The arable field is situated in an elevated location in a largely undulating landscape. It is adjoined on three sides by the existing built up edge of Burford, although that on the north side is a notably soft one, with building roof ridge lines set down just below or lying at the same level of the site. The adjacent residential development of Frethern Close and Wysdom Way to the south and Orchard Rise to the north, includes both one and a half and two storey buildings.
- 4.2.8 Levels within the Site range from 135m in the southwestern corner to 109m AOD in the northeast, with the Site generally sloping down from southwest to northeast. However the medium sized arable field rises up more steeply from its northern boundary towards the middle of the Site, and then flattens out towards the southwest.
- 4.2.9 The distinctive floodplain of the River Windrush lies at a lower elevation, somewhat further to the north, below the historic valleyside development of the town and a relatively open arable farmland landscape extends to the east of the site.

### Settlement Pattern and Access

- 4.2.10 The adjacent settlement pattern to the site mostly comprises modern estate development, but with some older historic development along Witney Street to the north east.
- 4.2.11 The Site is accessed from Barns Lane in the west. There are a number of other residential roads adjacent to the Site, including Frethern Close and Wysdom Way to the south and Orchard Rise to the north.
- 4.2.12 There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the Site. There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in and around Burford, including a footpath along the southern edge of Fulbrook.

## Vegetation

- 4.2.13 The field boundaries of the site include hedgerows/hedgerow trees,. Along the eastern boundary, the existing vegetation is gappy and fragmented.
- 4.2.14 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality, with frequent hedgerow trees. There are also small blocks of woodland, a particularly prominent feature in the River Windrush Valley. Woodlands are predominantly broadleaved, though with some areas of conifer.

## Local Character

- 4.2.15 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the land use including both pasture and some extensive areas of arable land; the well-defined broad valley floodplain, river terraces and gentle convex slopes and small, unspoilt villages with rural character.
- 4.2.16 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is predominantly a single field parcel, with only a gradual slope. Its eastern side is more open and exposed as it faces out into open countryside rather than feeling enclosed by the existing settlement.

## Visual Baseline

- 4.2.17 From the Site itself, the combination of the elevated topography and the varied extent of existing adjoining, vegetation affords some very distinctive long views looking outwards into the AONB landscape ( albeit currently private ones), including those towards the historic, landmark spire of Burford Parish Church, the Windrush Valley, and the hills immediately to the north of the town.
- 4.2.18 Close to the Site, from the north, west and south views are mostly restricted by existing built development, with views possible only from the properties immediately adjacent and glimpsed views between buildings, such as those on the east side of Barns Lane, the south side of Orchard Rise and north side of Frethern Close and Wysdom Way.
- 4.2.19 There are notable long-distance views in which the whole Site or parts of it are very prominent, both from some locations to the north and east for example from Beech Grove Road; from Fulbrook and from the A424 looking south, as well as from PROWs and country lanes in the

Windrush Valley there are some views looking south west towards the site, on higher ground. The A40 looking northwest also provides opportunities for glimpsed views, along with the A361 heading towards Burford.

4.2.20 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 4.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 2.

4.2.21 Photographs EB1-EB10 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within/around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within/around the Site.

4.2.22 Photographs showing the potential visibility towards the Site:

- EB1 is a close, framed view looking into part of the western portion of the site from Barns |Lane.
- EB7 is a middle-distance view from Witney Street in which some parts of the site are visually prominent.
- EB8, 9 and 10 are distant views in which large parts of the site are very visually prominent.

4.2.23 The visual appraisal demonstrates that close views looking into the Site, apart from private properties immediately adjacent, are typically fairly limited due to a combination of topography, existing built development, and vegetation structure. However, the site is considered to be very visually prominent in some middle to long distance views by virtue of its elevated location.

### **Summary**

4.2.24 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and the wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Arable field on the edge of Burford, open to the wider arable landscape on its eastern boundary, with existing built development occurring on three sides;
- The vegetation structure around the site of hedgerows/hedgerow trees in places forms a cohesive boundary, but in other parts is gappy/fragmented;
- Attractive views available outwards from parts of the site to the landmark Parish church spire, to open rolling hills and parts of the Windrush valley; and

- A visually prominent site in some longer public views looking towards it, primarily due to its elevated position.

### **Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities**

4.2.25 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 4.3**:

- **PROW network:** On/close to the site there are very few PROWs except for a few disjointed sections within the town. There is the potential for some new footpath linkages with those to the north east of the site with potential in future to connect with a PROW in the Windrush valley, subject to land ownership issues.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** Potential to provide on the site itself to create some substantial new areas to assist with visual screening and for biodiversity value.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** Potential to create attractive accessible green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.
- **Tranquillity of the site/surrounds:** Some sense of tranquillity on the site because of rural landscape to the east but significant urban context/ noise from the A40.
- **Settlement pattern:** mainly modern pattern/form, medium density at the northern edge of the site, but some fairly substantial areas of low density in the town, except for low-medium density in the historic core.
- **AONB Character and Qualities:** Those are that are considered to be most important are distinctive views to and from the site. These could be selectively retained by avoiding development on parts of the site and enhancing the quality of parts of the edge.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of the above, overall landscape sensitivity is considered to be Medium-High.
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** Overall high, particularly in terms of long/middle distance from the wider countryside

### **Conclusions**

4.2.26 Overall the landscape of the East of Burford site is considered to be of medium-high landscape sensitivity and high visual sensitivity. Some AONB elements/characteristics and special qualities could be vulnerable to development but it is not considered that they would preclude it, subject to an appropriate character, form, density and design.

4.2.27 Taking the above into account it is concluded that in landscape and visual terms a development of approximately 70 homes could be accommodated on the site, ensuring that development is generally of low density with significant areas of green space provided in the central parts of the site and towards the southern and northern boundaries. Any greater dwelling numbers than these could make it more difficult to achieve an appropriate form/character or result in significant adverse impacts.

4.2.28 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Initial recommendations include:

- Provide a minimum c.15m width structure planted landscape buffer on the northern boundary and a minimum of c.30m structure planted landscape buffer on the eastern boundary to assist with visual screening of the site, and enhance biodiversity value.
- Ensure a generous view of Burford Church Spire from within the allocation site and ensure that the backdrop of hills to the north is maintained (see **Figure 4.3** and photograph EB2 and EB5).
- Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots (secured by S106 legal agreement), or otherwise demonstrate how these will be retained through developer covenants.
- Incorporate a large, cohesive area of semi-natural green space, in the visually prominent central parts of the site, also including provision for large size species trees to be planted to ensure the built development can be perceived, in the longer term, as having a strong, well treed, green backdrop, as is the case with older, historic parts of the town to the west.
- Avoid intrusive signage in the Windrush valley.
- Ensure mainly two storey residential development (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), with some one and a half storey development (maximum of c.6m roof ridge height towards the eastern and southern boundaries).
- Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; and with reference to the *New Rural Form* illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006).
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local AONB context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

## 4.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 4.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>15</sup> as being ‘Prairie/Amalgamated Enclosure’ - eight 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosures amalgamated into 5 larger enclosures in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Site is largely surrounded to the north, south, west and north-east by the edge of the modern extents of the town of Burford, identified as ‘Urban – Town’. To the south-east of the Site and south of the River Windrush is an area of Planned Enclosure, pre-18<sup>th</sup> Century rough ground that was enclosed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The wider area to the north of the River Windrush is identified as ‘Reorganised Enclosure’, fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries.

#### Conservation Area

- 4.3.2 The vast majority of the town of Burford, including its historic core, modern extensions and immediate environs, is encompassed by a conservation area. The Site is almost wholly within the conservation area, although a small section of the north-eastern part of the Site (c. 0.45ha) is outside. No adopted and agreed conservation area appraisal or management plan exists for the conservation area. A conservation study from c. 1974 exists and that has been utilised as part of the background information for this analysis.
- 4.3.3 The following provides, at a high level, information relevant to the assessment of the Site in the context of the conservation area. The Site’s location at the edge of the historic built core of Burford means that only limited information on its historic buildings and streetscapes is provided.
- 4.3.4 Burford is an important medieval market town with a distinctive character reflecting its topographic location on the hillslopes of the Windrush valley and the surviving concentrations of medieval and post-medieval buildings that line its principal streets. The town grew around an important river crossing (the “ford”) and its name “Burford” means defended settlement “burgh” by a ford. The town was in existence by the Anglo-Saxon period. The early settlement lay under what later become the medieval priory and then post-medieval country house of Burford Priory. This lies on the western side of the town, away from the proposed allocation Site.

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<sup>15</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
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- 4.3.5 The core of the town was founded after the Norman conquest and developed along High Street, Witney Street and Sheep Street. The town's layout reflects that of many medieval settlements with a "back street" ( Barns Lane/Pytts Lane) running parallel to the High Street. Additionally, there is a complex of development in the vicinity of the church to the south of Witney Street. The fundamental layout of the historic core of the town remains largely unaltered. The town has developed significantly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with notable urban extensions to the west along Sheep Street, East along Witney Street and to the southeast close to the A40. There has also been modern development to the south of the A40.
- 4.3.6 The town lies on the sides of Windrush valley, with a defined ridge to the south, now occupied by the A40. This topographic situation helps define the character of the town and the way in which the town is understood and experienced from the wider landscape.
- 4.3.7 The conservation area encompasses the historic core of Burford and contains 251 Listed Buildings; predominantly 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin but with a number of earlier buildings including medieval (e.g. The Bull Hotel and Bull Cottage, Cotswolds Arms Inn) and 16<sup>th</sup> Century (e.g. Providence House). There is also the grade I 12<sup>th</sup> century church and the Priory. The church is a particularly notable building with its spire being a local landmark in views along the Windrush valley. It is also a frequent feature of views from the elevated ground to the north.
- 4.3.8 Many of the historic buildings are located along High Street, Sheep Street and Witney Street, with a cluster also found around the church and The Priory, in the north of the conservation area. The end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw a flourishing coaching trade coming through the town, which sat on one of the important Oxford to Gloucester routes.<sup>16</sup> Within the historic core of the town there is a consistent local vernacular of Cotswolds stone facades and stone slate roofs. The buildings within the historic core are generally similar in height and scale but vary in detail. There is a tendency for the slightly grander buildings to be either side of the junctions of Sheep Street and Witney Street.<sup>17</sup>
- 4.3.9 The conservation area boundary includes extensive areas of the Windrush valley floodplains and the Priory with its associated landscapes. It also includes areas of former fields to the east and west of the High Street. These areas were historically associated with the town. Many of these areas have now been subject to modern development, including the former fields to the north and south of the proposed allocation site. The character of the remaining areas of fields is largely denuded with historic field patterns being replaced by modern open fields.

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<sup>16</sup> Burford Conservation Study 8. Oxfordshire County Council , Undated, likely 1970s

<sup>17</sup> Burford Conservation Study 8. Oxfordshire County Council, Undated, likely 1970s

- 4.3.10 The areas of modern development east of Barns Lane, south of Witney Street and south of Sheep Street are of mixed quality and it is unclear as to why the Conservation Area encompasses them given their very limited architectural or historic interest. Similarly the development around the junction with the A40 to the south of the town is of very limited quality and makes no positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
- 4.3.11 The setting of the conservation area is largely rural in character. To the north the elevated flanks of the Windrush valley provide a rural backdrop to views out of the conservation area. Importantly, they also provide distinctive views southwards to and over the conservation area. These views situate the town in its wider rural context and contribute to its setting. The ridgeline to the south of Burford (along which the modern A40 runs) provides a horizon line for many views from the north; as such it is an important visual element of these views and the setting of the conservation area. From the east there are views along the Windrush valley towards the town in which the church spire is an element, the views from the west are however more fragmented due to intervening vegetation.
- 4.3.12 From within the conservation area there are characteristic views along the High Street (up and down the hill) as well as more intimate views and a stronger sense of enclosure within the lower areas of the town on the edge of the Windrush and around the church.
- 4.3.13 Overall, the current rural setting of the conservation area makes a notable contribution to its character and appearance, but this has been altered to a significant degree by modern development in proximity to the historic core of the town which has separated the historic core from its rural hinterland.

#### Listed Buildings

- 4.3.14 The nearest Listed Buildings to the Site lie less than 100m to the north in Witney Street with others nearby on Swan Lane. The main concentrations of listed buildings lie to the west and northwest around the High Street and Witney Street. The Conservation Area includes 251 Listed Buildings overall. As noted in the 1970s *“The prosperity which allowed the town the luxury of such fine architecture derived as much from its position on the coaching route from London to the west, which encouraged the expansion of saddle making, the hotel trade and brewing, as from its older wool manufacturing industries and its market trade”*.<sup>18</sup>
- 4.3.15 The listed buildings are predominantly Grade II listed, with the exception of the Church of St John The Baptist and The Priory (a mansion house on the site of a small Augustinian Hospital),

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<sup>18</sup> Burford Conservation Study 8. Oxfordshire County Council, Undated, likely 1970s  
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which are both Grade I, and 32 Grade II\* listed, including properties such as The House of Simon, Wysdomes, The Highway Hotel, The Tolsey, The Bull Hotel, Calendars, Red Lion House, The Former George Inn, Old George Yard, The Great Almshouses, The Old Rectory, Burford Grammar School, Riverside House, Symon Wysdom's House and the Bridge over the River Windrush.

- 4.3.16 The listed buildings closest to the site are all grade II listed, and include The Cottage on Swan Lane, a Late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century altered property; The Lodge on Pytts Lane, an early 18<sup>th</sup> century house, or large cottage including a former barn to south; a Gazebo, dated to c.1700, south east of 115, High St.; and the Friends Meeting House, a Quaker Meeting House dating to 1709 on Pytts Lane. To the north of the Site along Witney Road, there are a series of (also grade II listed) properties, including (those nearest to the Site) Burford Baptist Church dating to 1804, Tudor Cottage, a modernized 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage; Tannery Cottage and Chapman's Piece, two, probably 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages attached to the former Tannery (not listed) and The Mill Coach House and Attached Mounting Block, a, probably mid-19<sup>th</sup> century former mill stables, now converted to a house. They are separated from the Site by extensive modern development and their settings predominately relate to their local streetscape. The Site makes no notable contribution to their setting.
- 4.3.17 The Grade I listed church is an important building in the town and its spire is a locally prominent landmark. Views from the north and east featuring the church spire are an aspect of the setting of the church. The proposed Site appears in the backdrop and side foreground of some of these views and hence forms part of the setting of the Church. There are also views of the spire from the Site.
- 4.3.18 The main concentrations of listed buildings lie along High Street, Witney Street and Sheep Lane. These setting of these buildings are generally characterised by their relationships with the local street scene and other related historic buildings, and in some cases distant views from the neighbouring street featuring the buildings with the rural backdrop to the south. These long views out of the conservation area are an important aspect of its character and setting and of some individual buildings within the area. The proposed allocation site is separated from the buildings by a combination of topography and intervening historic and modern development. The proposed allocation site features in views of the settlement from the north, but this is more a consideration in relation to the setting of the conservation area rather than individual buildings within it.

## Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

- 4.3.19 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within 1km of the Site.

## Scheduled Monuments

- 4.3.20 1.5km to the east of the Site is the Medieval settlement of Widford (east of Manor Farm) Scheduled Monument. The monument includes the known surviving extent of the buried and earthwork remains of the medieval settlement of Widford as well as an earlier Romano-British bath house located toward the eastern side of the settlement, beneath St Oswald's Church.<sup>19</sup>

## Heritage issues and constraints

- 4.3.21 The Site lies within the Burford Conservation Area and any development would therefore affect the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Site is not however located within the historic built core of the conservation area, instead it lies in what were outlying fields beyond the old back lane of the town. The topography of the town and intervening historic and modern built development effectively screens the proposed allocation site from the historic built core of the conservation area. The land occupied by the Site is of limited historic interest and its character has been much altered by the surrounding modern development.
- 4.3.22 The Site does however make a contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area through its role in views featuring the conservation area from the north and east. In these views the Site is visually prominent and its open and undeveloped character is a feature of the conservation area's character and is a notable element of the rural setting of the historic core of the conservation area. The modern housing to the south of the Site is a clear feature in views from the north, as is the housing below the Site to the north and the newly constructed development to the east. Development of the proposed allocation Site could infill these elements creating a more urban / suburban character for this part of the conservation area and the setting of the historic core of the town.
- 4.3.23 Additionally, in views from the east and north the Site forms a feature in views of the grade I listed church's spire. Development would alter the character of these views reducing the rural nature of the church's setting and potentially interrupting views of the spire.
- 4.3.24 In relation to other listed buildings the development of the Site would have no significant impact on their settings.

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<sup>19</sup> Historic England List Entry. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1020970>  
October 2017

4.3.25 Overall, the visual prominence of the Site in longer distance views from the north and east provides the greatest constraint in historic environment terms. These views are a notable aspect of the conservation area's setting and the setting of the grade I listed church. Development of the Site could have an adverse impact on these views, altering the character of the conservation area and the setting of its historic core and the church. The Site is however away from the core of the conservation area and is of limited historical value in its own right. It also lies away from the main historic and modern approaches to the town and is already flanked by modern development.

4.3.26 In this context, development of the Site for residential uses would probably not result in substantial harm to the significance, setting, character or appearance of the conservation area or church; but it would result in some harm. The scale of harm is not considered sufficient to entirely rule out the allocation of the Site for residential development but design based mitigation would be required to address this potential harm. In historic environment terms key measures that could be considered include:

- Ensuring development does not reinforce or further exaggerate the harsh skyline to the south of the Site caused by existing modern development;
- Ensuring that development retains a degree of openness on the Site;
- Ensuring that access to the Site does not extend the perception of urbanisation to the east;
- Restricting building heights to 1.5 / 2 storeys; and
- Implementing a landscape design scheme to reduce the visual prominence of new built development.

## 5.0 LAND SOUTH OF MILTON ROAD, SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD

### 5.1 Description

5.1.1 The Site is a 3.33ha pasture field on the western edge of Shipton-under-Wychwood. North west of the Site is a small area of commercial buildings, a primary school lies to the north, to the south, a mosaic of arable and pasture fields; to the east, Wychwood Business Centre, a small industrial estate; and to the west, a narrow band of fields and the residential edge of Milton-under-Wychwood. The Site lies within the Cotswolds AONB and the Shipton-under-Wychwood Conservation Area.

### 5.2 Landscape Appraisal

#### Landscape Character Context

5.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>20</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>21</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>22,23</sup>
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Management Plan 2013-2018 (see Section 2.2)

#### National Character Areas

5.2.2 The Site is located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.

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<sup>20</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>21</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>22</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

<sup>23</sup> Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

#### **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)**

5.2.3 The Site is located within Landscape Type 21: Wooded Farmland. Key characteristics include:

- *Large blocks of ancient woodland and a large number of plantations.*
- *A varied field pattern of arable land and pasture enclosed by woodland and hedges.*
- *Species rich hedgerows with many hedgerow trees.*
- *Dispersed settlement pattern with settlements and scattered farms.*

#### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

5.2.4 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 5: Upper Evenlode Valley and Landscape Character Type Semi-Enclosed Clay Wolds (large-scale). The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, softly rolling farmland underlain by Lower Lias Clays and glacial deposits*
- *Productive farmland predominantly under intensive arable cultivation*
- *Generally large-scale fields with rectilinear boundaries formed by some walls but mainly by hawthorn hedges, typical of later enclosures*
- *Some visual containment provided by blocks and belts of woodland*
- *Oak dominant in hedgerows and woods*
- *Moderate inter-visibility*

#### **Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Areas**

5.2.5 The Site is located within LCA 17B: Vale of Moreton. Key characteristics include:

- *Extensive pastoral vale defined by the Farmed Slopes with flat or gently undulating land fringed by distinctive shallow slopes.*
- *Generally human scale intimate landscape, but with intermittent open character and expansive views in some areas where vegetation cover is minimal, and from areas of raised landform.*
- *Extensive drift deposits mask underlying solid geology.*
- *Productive and verdant landscape of lush improved and semi-improved pastures.*
- *Network of hedgerows of varying height and quality with intermittent hedgerow trees and occasional stone walls.*
- *Areas of wet meadow and species rich grassland bordering river channels.*
- *Limited woodland cover including ancient woodland.*
- *Sparse settlement pattern.*

## **Site Landscape Context**

### **Landform and Land Use**

- 5.2.6 As illustrated on **Figure 5.1**, the Site is a pasture field situated in a gently undulating landscape on the western edge of Shipton-under-Wychwood, with the valley of the River Evenlode to the north and rising land to the south. Levels within the Site range from 103m in the western corner to 109m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the east, with the site generally sloping from east to west.
- 5.2.7 This predominantly arable landscape has a fairly enclosed appearance due to the presence of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, tree belts and small blocks of woodland, which results in the perception of a largely wooded skyline. Other land uses immediately adjacent to the site include business/commercial premises and a school and associated playing fields.

### **Settlement Pattern and Access**

- 5.2.8 The Site lies on the western edge of Shipton-under-Wychwood, and approximately 150m from the eastern edge of Milton-under-Wychwood. The adjacent settlement pattern largely comprises 1 and 2 storey residential buildings, and business/commercial units in the adjacent Wychwood Business Centre (to the east) and service station (to the northwest). Abutting the Site's northern boundary is a school, with a number of buildings and a playing field.
- 5.2.9 The Site is accessed from Milton Road in the north. On its eastern edge there is a private road which provides access to Wychwood Business Centre.



- 5.2.10 There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the Site. 500m to the south and southeast, Dog Kennel Lane has a public footpath along its length. The Oxfordshire Way promoted route passes 600m to the east of the Site, then heading in a northwesterly direction away from the Site. There are a number of other short stretches of public footpath within and beyond the adjacent built-up areas. The Wychwood Wild Garden, a community owned and publically accessible garden lies approximately 150m to the south of the Site. Further south, beyond Dog Kennel Lane, Diggers Wood is an area of publicly accessible Woodland Trust Land.

### **Vegetation**

- 5.2.11 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality, with frequent hedgerow trees. Woodlands are predominantly broadleaved, though with some areas of conifer, and some young trees, such as at Diggers Wood.

### **Local Character**

- 5.2.12 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the land use dominated by intensive arable cultivation, the Site being one of the smaller fields closer to the settlement still under pasture. The Site also demonstrates visual containment provided by blocks and belts of woodland, which is consistent with local character.
- 5.2.13 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is predominantly a single field parcel, without any dramatic changes in topography.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 5.2.14 Locally, views into the Site from the north along Milton Road (and the Oxfordshire Way) are generally restricted by the built environment and existing vegetation, although the north-east of the Site is visible heading west at the entrance to the industrial estate, with this being only partially screened by an existing Birch tree and beech hedging. Views into the Site from this location will be more apparent during winter.
- 5.2.15 Views from the south into the Site are possible from the Dog Kennel Lane PROW which runs east-west to the south of the Site although these views are filtered slightly by existing vegetation. Glimpsed views of the site are possible from the main avenue of trees within the grounds of Shipton Court, where there are breaks in the vegetation. The industrial unit to the east of the Site is already a somewhat incongruous feature in these views. There are also

filtered views of the Site from the footpath from Upper Milton to Milton-under-Wychwood, to the north-east.

- 5.2.16 Some longer distance views are possible from the A361 near to Pyrton Farm and from the A361 heading towards Shipton Down although the site is barely discernible with the view obscured by numerous hedgerows and small blocks of woodland.
- 5.2.17 Immediately south of Milton-under-Wychwood there may be some limited, glimpsed views of the site in winter from public footpaths but in summer the intervening vegetation obscures views.
- 5.2.18 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 5.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.
- 5.2.19 Photographs SUW1-7 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within/around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within/around the Site.
- 5.2.20 Photographs demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:
- SUW1 is a middle-distance view looking in the direction of the site but shows there is unlikely to be any visibility, except possibly in winter.
  - SUW2, 3, 4 – These are close, very restricted, views of the site from Milton Lane, although there is likely to be some greater visibility in winter.
  - SUW5, 6 and 7- These are middle-long distance views looking towards the site from Shipton Court Registered Park and Garden and from Dog Kennel Lane PRoW. These are restricted framed views. There may be slightly greater visibility in winter.
- 5.2.21 The visual appraisal demonstrates that close views of the Site from lanes / PRoW network are very limited in public views and only available from a few middle distance/long distance viewpoints due to a combination of topography, the built environment, and vegetation structure.

## Summary

5.2.22 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Pasture field, located between the built up edges of the villages of Shipton-under-Wychwood and Milton-under-Wychwood, adjoining a school.
- Some industrial/commercial buildings also lie close to the site.
- Rural Landscape context to the south and north provided by small woodlands and other hedgerowed fields

## Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities

5.2.23 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 5.3**:

- **PROW network:** A dense, well used network within approx. 500m of the site. However no PROWs on/or very close to the site. There might be potential for some new footpath linkages to the existing network, subject to land ownership issues.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** This is in mostly moderate/good condition near the site but with the potential to reinforce/manage those on site.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** There is the potential to create a small, accessible green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.
- **Tranquillity:** The site/surrounds show a few rural qualities, although a fairly busy lane adjoins the north-west corner of the site.
- **Settlement pattern:** nearby development has a relatively low density, rural pattern except for the business park and small industrial units at the northern boundaries of the site. So there is potential for a transition in the density and character of the development across the site but it would be important to ensure that no visual perception of coalescence between Shipton UW and Milton UW would be created.
- **AONB landscape characteristics/qualities:** Those that are relevant to the site are relatively few apart from hedgerows and rough pasture is common in the area relative to arable farmland landscapes and there is potential for conservation, and enhancement of hedgerows.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of relevant factors above the site is considered to have a medium landscape sensitivity.

- **Potential visibility into the Site:** This is considered to be low-medium, although there could be greater visibility in winter.

## Conclusion

- 5.2.24 Overall the landscape of the south of Milton Road site is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and low-medium visual sensitivity. A few AONB elements/characteristics and special qualities here could be vulnerable to development but it is not considered that they would preclude it, subject to an appropriate character, form, density and design.
- 5.2.25 Taking the above into account it is concluded that in terms of landscape and visual issues a development of approximately 40 – 45 homes could be successfully accommodated on the Site, ensuring that development is generally of low density. Any greater dwelling numbers than these could make it more difficult to achieve an appropriate form/character or result in significant adverse impacts.
- 5.2.26 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Initial recommendations include:
- Strengthen the school hedgerow boundary with a minimum of c.10m width structure planted buffer.
  - Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots (secured by S106 legal agreement), or otherwise demonstrate how these will be retained through developer covenants.
  - Incorporate a small area of semi-natural green space.
  - Vehicular access from Milton Rd, ensuring replacement hedge planting behind visibility splays
  - Ensure residential development is restricted to two storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), taking the opportunity to include some one and a half storey (maximum of c.6m ridge height) development towards the southern boundary of the site.
  - Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; and with reference to the *New Rural Form* illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006).
  - Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local AONB context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

## 5.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 5.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>24</sup> as being ‘Reorganised Enclosure’- fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries. The south western boundary is defined by The Liffs, which provides water for the gardens of Shipton Court.<sup>25</sup> To the south-west is an area of ‘Planned Enclosure’, to the north-west an area identified as ‘Piecemeal Enclosure’ leading towards the ‘Rural Village’ of Milton-under-Wychwood. The Site is bounded to the east by Wychwood Business Centre, classed as ‘Industry - Industrial Estate’ and to the north by ‘Civil Provision – Educational Facility’ - Wychwood Church of England School. These are relatively common forms of historic landscape type and of limited value in their own right as representative examples.

#### Conservation Areas

- 5.3.2 The majority of the village of Shipton-under-Wychwood and its immediate rural hinterland is covered by a conservation area, and the Site itself is wholly within the conservation area. The southern and southwestern boundary of the Site forms part of the boundary of the conservation area. No conservation area appraisal or management plan exists. The following briefly describes the character and significance of the conservation area with an emphasis on understanding the aspects that may be affected by the proposed allocation.
- 5.3.3 The conservation area encompasses the historic core of Shipton-under-Wychwood including its immediately associated former historic field systems. The conservation area includes the High Street, Church Street, Mawles Lane, Plum Lane, Ascott Road and Milton Road. The historic settlement has strong links to the medieval royal Wychwood forest, although it was not the primary seat of nobility during that period. The settlement is broadly linear and nucleated in form, with the main cluster of historic settlement running along High Street. A secondary cluster exists at the road junction of High Street and Milton Road. The linearity of the settlement has been maintained to an extent during its evolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 5.3.4 Much of the historic development occurred along the High Street, around Shipton Court and around the church. Areas of more modern infill have occurred along Milton Road, particularly

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<sup>24</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017

<sup>25</sup> Proposed Housing Development, Milton Road, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Oxford Archaeology, August 2016  
October 2017

to the south, where a Local Authority housing estate was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, together with a Business Park (Wychwood Business Centre) and in the very north of the conservation area, near to Shipton Station. This modern development, and areas of infill in other parts of the village, has created a mixed urban environment of historic buildings and more recent housing and commercial development. However, in terms of historic buildings in the conservation area there is a consistent local vernacular of stone walls, with limestone and slate and stone slate the primary building materials.

- 5.3.5 The Conservation Area contains 55 Listed Buildings; predominantly 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin, and with a 13<sup>th</sup> century church and medieval hostelry (Shaven Crown Hotel). Many of these buildings are clustered around Shipton Court (c.1603)<sup>26</sup>, the High Street and the church.
- 5.3.6 When the conservation area was designated there was clearly an intent to include areas of immediately associated historic rural landscape within the conservation area as these contribute to its special architectural or historic interest and its overall character and appearance. These areas around the built core of the conservation area include former and current fields, designed landscapes (two registered park and gardens) and outlying farmsteads. They provide a distinctive historic rural context for the village and are closely related to its historical functions and daily life. As such they have historic interest and make an aesthetic contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.3.7 Beyond its boundaries, the conservation area is situated within a wider rural landscape of arable fields and areas of pasture stretching across elevated ground above and along the Evenlode valley. There are fragments of the former Wychwood within that landscape. This largely undeveloped rural landscape is a key element of the setting of the conservation area.

### Listed Buildings

- 5.3.8 The nearest listed building to the Site lies on the eastern edge of the village of Milton-under-Wychwood which is outside the Shipton-under-Wychwood Conservation Area. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century Malt House (Grade II Listed) is 220m to the north-west of the Site's boundary. There is a small cluster of 6 Listed Buildings along Green Lane and Shipton Road in Milton-under-Wychwood. These buildings are largely late post-medieval in date and closely related to the Milton Road. Their settings are essentially localised in nature and focussed on their immediate relationships with other historic buildings, the main road and their associated gardens / fields to the north and south. The local area also contains a number of modern buildings, including a service station which, with local vegetation, restricts views towards the Site.

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<sup>26</sup> Historic England List Entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1052592>  
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- 5.3.9 The listed buildings within Shipton-under-Wychwood are all Grade II listed apart from The Church of St Mary (Grade I) and Shipton Court, Shaven Crown Hotel, The New House (with surrounding pool and garden), Morgan Bale Tomb, The Old Prebendal and Tithe Barn which are Grade II\* listed. The buildings are closely related to the historic development of the village. Their settings are predominately local, focussed on their immediate streetscape. The Site lies at some distance from any of the listed buildings in Shipton-under-Wychwood and is separated from them by extensive development and vegetation.

### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

- 5.3.10 The Shipton Court Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II Listed) lies 150m to the south east of the Site. The gardens relate to a manor house built in c.1603 by the Lacey family; they date from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and contain within them a variety of features and plantings from these periods. Large scale restorations and alterations were carried out in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Part of the gardens is now the community owned Wychwood Wild Garden.
- 5.3.11 Much of the gardens have a distinctive wooded character due to 20<sup>th</sup> century forestry style planting. Within the wooded areas there are numerous features including an east-west lime walk, ornamental canals and ponds (aligned roughly north-south), areas of decorative planting and a number of designed walkways. Much of the structure of the current garden seems to relate to a major phase of design in the 1860s<sup>27</sup>.
- 5.3.12 The northern extent of the gardens faces towards the allocation site and there are views from the northern boundary of the site, near to the terminus of the ornamental canals, towards the Site and school area beyond.
- 5.3.13 The Japanese Garden at The New House is a Grade II\* listed Registered Park and Garden. It was laid out in 1964-65 by a small team of gardeners from Japan led by Mr Kasamoto and the Chinese-Russian painter Viacheslav Atroshenko (1935-1994).<sup>28</sup> It is situated on the eastern edge of Shipton-under-Wychwood and is separated from the Site by intervening modern development.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

- 5.3.14 There are no scheduled monuments within 1km of the Site.

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<sup>27</sup> See further details in 2016 Conservation Management Plan (<http://www.wychwoodwildgarden.org.uk/docs/cmp.pdf>)

<sup>28</sup> Historic England List Entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1408334>

## Heritage Issues and Constraints

- 5.3.15 The Site lies within the Shipton-under-Wychwood Conservation Area. Although the historic built core of the conservation area lies some distance from the Site, it is clear that when the conservation area was designated there was an intent to include areas of immediately associated historic rural landscape within the conservation area as these contribute to its special architectural or historic interest and its overall character and appearance.
- 5.3.16 Any residential development of the Site would not affect the character or appearance of the historic built core of Shipton-under Wychwood. Any development would however result in the loss of part of village's associated historic field systems. This would affect the historic interest of the conservation area and aspects of its overall character and appearance. This is a particular issue in the western part of the Site where it borders the stream. Historically, this stream valley marked the divide between Shipton-under-Wychwood and Milton-under-Wychwood and has remained largely undeveloped, bar historic mills. Although modern development e.g. the school and garage, has degraded the separation to a degree, the western part of the Site still forms an important space between the two settlements and as such contributes to the significance of the conservation area. Further development west of the School would degrade this historic separation. The area of the Site to the south and to the east of the school is slightly less sensitive in this regard and is bordered by modern commercial development and the school. It is also notable that much of the historical field and gardens along Milton Road have been subject to 20<sup>th</sup> century development and the character of this part of the conservation area is therefore more modern and developed.
- 5.3.17 Development within the Site would, as set out above, affect the rural character and appearance of the conservation area; especially to the west. This will need to be taken into account in weighing the balance for allocating the Site, particularly given the Council's statutory duty to give special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area (Section 72 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).
- 5.3.18 Additionally, development of the Site has the potential to affect the setting of the Shipton Court Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II Listed) to the south. The gardens were designed with ornamental canals / ponds leading towards the northern extent of the gardens. From the northern edge of the gardens there would be clear views towards any development on the Site, particularly in winter. Although these views are not a fundamental aspect of the garden's significance or aesthetic value, they still make some contribution. Any future development



would need to address these issues through sensitive design and setback from the southern boundary to ensure the largely rural context for the gardens is retained.

5.3.19 Overall, in historic environment terms, the allocation site is not without concern. There are issues with the potential loss of open rural fields which form a component of the conservation area's character and appearance, with encroachment into the streamside land that historically separated Shipton-under-Wychwood from Milton-under-Wychwood and with the setting of the Shipton Court Registered Historic Park and Garden. In this context it is recommended that while the Site may be capable of accommodating some development, there should be a reduction in the extent of built development in the western and southern parts of the site as shown in Figure 5.3. Design based mitigation is also recommended to address potential harm, key measures that could be considered include restricting building heights to 1.5 / 2 storeys to reduce visual prominence and implementing a landscape design scheme to restrict views of the Site from the south and west in particular.

## **6.0 LAND NORTH OF WOODSTOCK ROAD, STONESFIELD**

### **6.1 Description**

6.1.1 The Site is a 6.25ha arable field on the eastern edge of Stonesfield. It has residential development immediately to the west, Woodstock Road to the south, a recreation ground and North Farm to the north, and farmland to the east. The Site lies within the Cotswolds AONB.

### **6.2 Landscape Appraisal**

#### **Landscape Character Context**

6.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>29</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>30</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>31,32</sup>
- Cotswolds AONB Landscape Management Plan 2013-2018 (see Section 2.2)

#### **National Character Areas**

6.2.2 The Site is located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.

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<sup>29</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>30</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>31</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

<sup>32</sup> Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

#### **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)**

6.2.3 The Site is located within Landscape Type 19: Wooded Estate lands. Key characteristics include:

- Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.
- Large parklands and mansion houses.
- A regularly shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.
- Small villages with strong vernacular character.

#### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

6.2.4 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 6: Lower Evenlode Valley and Landscape Character Type Open Limestone Wolds. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope*
- *Typically large or very large fields, with rectilinear pattern of dry-stone walls (typical of later enclosures and often in poor condition) and weak hedgerows, with frequent gaps and very few trees*
- *Productive farmland predominantly under intensive arable cultivation*
- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and somewhat impoverished 'upland' character*
- *Very open and exposed character*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky and sweeping views across surrounding areas*
- *High inter-visibility*

## Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Areas

6.2.5 The Site is located within LCA 11 Dip-Slope Lowland 11B: Stonesfield Lowlands. Key characteristics are as follows:

- *'Broad area of gently sloping, undulating lowland with a predominantly south-easterly fall represents a transition between the landscapes of the High Wold Dip-Slope to the north and west and the low lying landscapes in the Thames basin to the south east.*
- *Lowland landform gently dissected by infrequent small watercourses flowing into the main rivers that cross the area, reinforcing the general grain of the topography.*
- *Strong and structured, productive farmland character, with an open character but smaller in scale than the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope.*
- *Well-managed, productive agricultural landscape of mixed arable and improved pasture, together with more limited areas of permanent pasture, mainly within the valley bottoms indicate a well-managed, productive agricultural landscape.*
- *Seasonal variations in colour and texture associated with mixed arable farming.*
- *Medium to large scale regular fields predominate, mainly enclosed by hedgerows, with hedgerow trees, together with some stone walls or post and wire fencing indicating strong similarities with the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope landscape to the north and west.*
- *Woodland cover limited to intermittent copses and shelterbelts within agricultural landscapes creates some wide expansive views. These are in contrast to more intimate landscapes with restricted views in the vicinity of large estate plantations.*
- *Limited areas of ancient woodland and species rich grassland indicates the impact of intensive farming.*
- *Settlement pattern of intermittent small nucleated villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads, together with occasional larger settlements, contribute to the strong rural character.*
- *Distinctive pattern of large estates and associated planned parkland landscape and woodland occurring throughout*
- *Dip-Slope Lowland makes an important contribution to the wider character of the landscape due to the influences of designed parkland and planned woodland planting which often form a backdrop to long distance views across the otherwise open landscape.*
- *Evidence of long period of occupation of the area.'*

## Site Landscape Context

### Landform and Land Use

- 6.2.6 As illustrated on **Figure 6.1**, the Site is an arable field situated in an undulating landscape on the eastern edge of Stonesfield, with higher land to the north, and the valley of the River Evenlode to the south. Levels within the Site range from 114m in the eastern corner to 122m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the west, with the site generally sloping down to the east and south.
- 6.2.7 This arable landscape has a predominantly open character due to the presence of intermittent low to medium height hedgerows as the most commonly occurring field boundary type, occasional hedgerow trees and tree belts, in combination with scattered small blocks of woodland.

### Settlement Pattern and Access

- 6.2.8 The Site lies on the eastern edge of Stonesfield. The adjacent settlement pattern largely comprises 1 and 2 storey residential buildings. Opposite the site to the south of the road is a new residential development at Charity Farm. Abutting the Site's northern boundary is a recreation ground.
- 6.2.9 The Site is accessed from Woodstock Road in the south. On its eastern edge is a track linking Woodstock Road to North Farm (and Farley Lane beyond).
- 6.2.10 There are no public rights of way (PRoW) within the Site. 150m to the north, there is a bridleway along Farley Lane which joins Woodstock road approximately 400m east of the Site. A number of promoted routes also lie within close proximity to the Site, with Shakespeare's Way passing along the edge of Kings Wood and Wootton Wood to the north east; the Wychwood Way passes from the north, through the western edge of Stonesfield, and then passes 500m from the Site's southern boundary heading eastward; and the Oxfordshire Way passes from the west, joining the Wychwood Way to pass 500m south of the site along the same route.

## **Vegetation**

- 6.2.11 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality. Woodland type is varied, with some broadleaved, some conifer, and some coppice. Smaller areas and belts of woodland are predominantly broadleaved.

## **Local Character**

- 6.2.12 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the productive, medium to large scale farmland predominantly under intensive arable cultivation, where regular fields predominate, mainly enclosed by hedgerows, with hedgerow trees, together with some stone walls or post and wire fencing. Settlement pattern contributes to the rural character.
- 6.2.13 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is a single field parcel, without any dramatic changes in topography, though it has a more open and exposed feel to the east away from the settlement edge.

## **Visual Baseline**

- 6.2.14 Locally, open views into the Site from the south along Woodstock Road are generally fairly unrestricted. Although the existing hedgerow allows partial screening, this is seasonal given it is mainly deciduous, and varies depending upon hedgerow management patterns. The Site is clearly visible when travelling along Woodstock Road in a south-westerly direction (for some distance given the relatively flat landform), with partial filtering from existing hedgerow vegetation. To the south-west of Limbeck Farm (on the north-western edge of Blenheim Great Park) the view of the Site is predominantly obscured by intervening vegetation. Gaps in the hedgerow along Farley Lane track would also result in the Site being visible, particularly in winter.
- 6.2.15 Further afield, it is possible that the roof line of any development on the Site could be visible above the existing vegetation on Stonesfield Riding to the north of the village, especially as the landform rises, as well as from the footpath between Newbarn Farm and Highfield Farm, to the north-west of Stonesfield.
- 6.2.16 Further to the south, the new housing development at Charity Farm would obstruct views of the Site from the Wychwood / Oxfordshire Way footpath to the south of Stonesfield but open views

are generally unrestricted from the eastern side of Stonesfield Roman Villa Scheduled Monument and from the Wychwood / Oxfordshire Way footpath (which follows the course of Akerman Street Roman road) to the north-east of Stonesfield Roman Villa, given the relatively flat landform and little intervening vegetation.

6.2.17 Views are possible from the B4437, especially to the north of Hill Barn, from the Shakespeare Way footpath north-west of Limbeck Farm and from the minor road to the north-west of East End (south of Stonesfield) though distance makes identifying the exact location of the Site challenging.

6.2.18 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 6.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.

6.2.19 Photographs ST1-6 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within/around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within/around the Site.

6.2.20 Photographs ST1-6 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:

- ST1-2 are close views taken from Farley Lane PRoW / Woodstock Road, at approx. 300mm west of the Site and demonstrate direct and glimpsed views of the Site.
- ST3 is a middle- distance view taken from the Oxfordshire Way, east of the Roman Villa site, in which part of the site is obscured by the Charity Farm development and part would be potentially visible.
- ST4-5 are very close views of the site demonstrating its visibility through gaps in the hedgerows/above the hedgerows
- ST6 is a distant view looking south towards the site in which the site is potentially visible above the hedgerows.

6.2.21 The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are typically fairly limited / possible due to a combination of topography, the built environment, and vegetation structure.

### **Summary**

6.2.22 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Arable field, bounded by existing two storey/ one and a half storey development on two sides, and on the other two by hedgerows.
- A relatively level landform.
- Rural Landscape context to the south and east provided by small woodlands and other hedgerowed fields.
- It is fairly visually prominent in close/middle distance views from the dense network of PROWs.
- There are distinctive views off site looking north towards the large house of North Farm.

### **Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities**

6.2.23 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 6.3**:

- **PROW network:** A dense, well used network near to the site with easy linkages to it along rural lanes.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** This is in mostly moderate/good condition near the site but with the potential to reinforce/manage those on site.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** There is the potential to create an accessible green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.
- **Tranquillity:** The site/surrounds show some rural qualities, except Woodstock Road is quite a busy road which reduces a sense of tranquillity.
- **Settlement pattern:** Nearby development on the whole has a relatively low density, rural pattern except for medium density associated with some of the new developments. The existing northern edge is quite harsh, mostly unsoftened.
- **AONB landscape characteristics/qualities:** Those that are relevant to the site are relatively few, apart from hedgerows and some distinctive views outwards from the site.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of relevant factors above the site is considered to have a medium landscape sensitivity.
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** This is considered to be medium-high requiring some substantial structural hedgerow and woodland planting to assist with visual screening of any development



## Conclusion

- 6.2.24 Overall the landscape north of Woodstock Road site is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and medium-high visual sensitivity. A few AONB elements/characteristics and special qualities here could be vulnerable to development but it is not considered that they would preclude it, subject to an appropriate character, form, density and design.
- 6.2.25 Taking the above into account it is concluded that a development of approximately 50 homes could be successfully accommodated on the site, ensuring that development is generally of low density.
- 6.2.26 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Initial recommendations are:
- Strengthen all existing hedgerow boundaries with a minimum of c.10m width structure planting.
  - Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots (secured by S106 legal agreement), or otherwise demonstrate how these will be retained through developer covenants.
  - Incorporate a large area of semi-natural green space, of approx. 50-100m width including a woodland block, between the eastern boundary of the site and any development.
  - Vehicular access from Woodstock Road ensuring replacement hedge planting behind visibility splays.
  - Restrict residential development to 2 storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), taking the opportunity to include some 1.5 storey development towards the western boundary of the site.
  - Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; and with reference to the *New Rural Form* illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006).
  - Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local AONB context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

## 6.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 6.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>33</sup> as being 'Reorganised Enclosure' - fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries. To the south is an area of Planned Enclosure, to the west, the eastern edge of Stonesfield is identified as 'Rural – Village' and North Farm is identified as 'Rural-Farmstead'. The wider area comprises large swaths of 'Prairie/Amalgamated Enclosure' and 'Piecemeal Enclosure'. These are relatively common patterns of historic landscape types representing the relatively late evolution of the rural landscape.

#### Conservation Areas

- 6.3.2 The south-western part of Stonesfield is covered by a conservation area, approximately 160m from the western boundary of the Site. No current or recent conservation area appraisal or management plan exists for Stonesfield. The following provides a brief overview of the conservation area based on field observation and secondary source material. The analysis is proportionate to the likely scale of impact on the conservation area.
- 6.3.3 The conservation area encompasses the historic core of Stonesfield. The settlement grew up along the escarpment overlooking a side valley to the Evenlode valley system. The historic settlement pattern is one of dispersed groups of buildings situated along roads and clustered near junctions. This probably reflects the historical exploitation of the stone mines and quarries in the valleys to the west, southwest, south and southeast. The conservation area contains a number of listed buildings; predominantly late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin, and with a 13<sup>th</sup> century church (Grade II\*). Many of these buildings are clustered around the crossroads and the church. Within the area there is a consistent local style of stone walls and limestone and slate the primary building materials. The historic layout and form of the settlement has been altered by infill development but its irregular street pattern and historic built form, including the use of local mined stone for roofing, is still evident and highly characteristic of the area.
- 6.3.4 In terms of the setting of the conservation area, the important visual and historic relationships with the valley complex to the west, southwest, south and southeast survive to a substantial

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<sup>33</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
October 2017

degree. These provide aesthetic and visual linkages to its rural setting but also to its history as a mining settlement. To the north and east the historic core of the settlement, and hence the conservation area, has been separated from its wider rural landscape of later enclosed fields by mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century development. This modern development encloses the conservation area in this direction and, with the rising topography, visually separates it from the landscape to the east. The modern development also characterises the approaches towards the conservation area from the east. However the wider rural setting of the settlement is still an aspect of its character and relates to its historic significance as a historic rural mining and farming settlement.

### **Listed Buildings**

- 6.3.5 The nearest Listed Buildings to the Site lie within the Stonesfield Conservation Area, which includes 11 Listed Buildings, all within 1km of the Site (generally 300 to 600m from the site). These are Grade II listed, with the exception of the Church of St. James the Great, which has a Grade II\* Listing. Excepting the church, the buildings are all generally characteristic of late post-medieval vernacular rural building stock. They tend to use local building materials in a relatively homogenous manner. Their settings are local in nature, relating to the village environment in which they are situated.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

- 6.3.6 250m to the south of the Site is the Stonesfield Roman Villa Scheduled Monument. The monument occupies a distinctive location at the head of a small valley with rising ground to the north. The rural nature of the site's setting has been altered to a degree by modern development to the north which partially separates it from the allocation site although views towards the site are still possible.

### **Heritage Issues and Constraints**

- 6.3.7 The proposed allocation site lies outside of the Stonesfield Conservation Area and does not contain any designated heritage assets. Modern development to the west and local topography effectively screens the development site from the conservation area and the listed buildings in the area. Development to the south and sloping topography also largely separates the Site from the scheduled roman settlement. The development of the allocation site would not affect any significant visual relationships to or from the conservation area, listed buildings or scheduled monument.

- 6.3.8 The development of the Site would slightly alter the current rural setting of the conservation area through a reduction in associated fields to the east. It would also alter approaches to the conservation area from the east. These are however not significant changes to the setting of the conservation area.
- 6.3.9 Overall, the development of the proposed allocation site would not have a significant impact on the setting of the Stonesfield Conservation Area, the listed buildings in the conservation area or the scheduled monument to the south. Harm to the historic environment is therefore not a notable consideration for the potential allocation.

## 7.0 LAND EAST OF WOODSTOCK

### 7.1 Description

7.1.1 The Site is a 17ha arable field on the eastern edge of Woodstock. It has residential development immediately to the west, the A44 Oxford Road to the south, a playing field and school to the north, and farmland to the east. The Site lies immediately to the east of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS), and Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden.

### 7.2 Landscape Appraisal

#### Landscape Character Context

7.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>34</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>35</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>36,37</sup>

#### National Character Areas

7.2.2 The Site is predominantly located within NCA 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales. Key characteristics include:

- Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography. The Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous clays and the wet valley bottoms give rise to enclosed pasture, contrasting with the more settled, open, arable lands of the gravel.
- Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows.

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<sup>34</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015; National Character Area Profile: 108. Upper Thames Clay Vales. Natural England 2015

<sup>35</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>36</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

<sup>37</sup> Cherwell District Landscape Assessment, Cherwell District Council, 1995

- Wet ground conditions and heavy clay soils discourage cultivation in many places, giving rise to livestock farming. Fields are regular and hedged, except near the Cotswolds, where there can be stone walls.
- In the river corridors, grazed pasture dominates, with limited areas of historic wetland habitats including wet woodland, fen, reedbed and flood meadow. There are also rich and extensive ditch systems.
- Gravel extraction has left a legacy of geological exposures, numerous waterbodies and, at the Cotswolds Water Park, a nationally important complex of marl lakes.
- Wetland habitat attracts regionally important numbers of birds.
- Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, including its Capability Brown landscape, is the finest of many examples of historic parkland in this NCA. There are many heritage features, including nationally important survivals of ridge and furrow, Roman roads, deserted medieval villages and historic bridges.
- Brick and tile from local clays, timber and thatch are traditional building materials across the area, combined with limestone near the Cotswolds.
- Settlement is sparse on flood plains, apart from at river crossings, where there can be large towns, such as Abingdon. Aylesbury and Bicester are major urban centres, and the outer suburbs of Oxford and Swindon spread into this NCA. Market towns and villages are strung along the springlines of the Chilterns and Downs. Major routes include mainline rail, canals, a network of roads including the M40 and M4 and The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.

7.2.3 The site is also located partly within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.

- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

#### **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)**

7.2.4 The Site is located within Landscape Type Landscape Type 4: Estate Farmlands. Key characteristics include:

- *Medium to large, regularly shaped, hedged fields.*
- *Small, geometric plantations and belts of trees.*
- *Large country houses set in ornamental parklands.*
- *Small estate villages and dispersed farmsteads.*

#### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

7.2.5 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 4: Eastern Parks and Valleys and Landscape Character Type Semi-Enclosed Limestone Wolds (large-scale). The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope;*
- *Land use dominated by intensive arable cultivation with only occasional pasture;*
- *Generally large-scale fields with rectilinear boundaries formed by drystone walls and low hawthorn hedges with occasional trees, typical of later enclosures;*
- *Some visual containment provided by large blocks and belts of woodland creating a semi-enclosed character;*
- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and a somewhat impoverished 'upland' character;*
- *Ash, hazel, field maple etc. conspicuous in hedgerows;*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky;*
- *Moderate inter-visibility.*

7.2.6 Immediately to the south of the Site boundary, the Landscape Character Type changes to Parkland. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Formal, designed landscape and grounds surrounding large country houses*

- *Distinctive formal landscape features, including avenues, free standing mature trees in pasture, clumps and blocks of woodland, exotic tree species, formal structures and boundary features*
- *Planting and landscape character generally unrelated to surrounding areas*
- *Distinctively rural, picturesque and pastoral character*
- *Mature woodland and tree cover with typically enclosed character*
- *Low inter-visibility*

## **Cherwell District Landscape Assessment**

7.2.7 The Site lies on the edge of the district, and its immediate character context to the east can be identified in the Cherwell District Landscape Character Assessment. The Fields to the east fall within the Lower Cherwell Flood Plain Character Area and Large Scale Open Farmland – R1a Elevated or Low-lying Arable Farmland with Weak Structure Character Type. This is described as *‘separated from urban areas by lines of willows and outgrowing hawthorn hedges, which restrict long views. However, in many places hedges and tree cover is thin and lacks the visual strength to really provide structure and unity to the landscape.’*

## **Site Landscape Context**

### **Landform and Land Use**

7.2.8 As illustrated on **Figure 7.1**, the Site comprises 2 arable fields situated in a gently undulating landscape on the eastern edge of Woodstock, with land gradually falling towards the River Cherwell in the east, Woodstock and Blenheim Palace on slightly higher land to the west, and the River Glyme and a series of associated lakes beyond that to the west and south. Levels within the Site range from 94m in the northwest to 88m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the south, with the site generally sloping down to the southeast.

7.2.9 This arable landscape has a predominantly open character due to the presence of intermittent low to medium height hedgerows as the most commonly occurring field boundary type, occasional hedgerow trees and tree belts, in combination with scattered small blocks of woodland.

### **Settlement Pattern and Access**

7.2.10 The Site lies on the eastern edge of Woodstock, with the northern edge of the village of Bladon 400m to the south. The adjacent settlement pattern largely comprises 1 and 2 storey residential



buildings, with school buildings 200m to the north of the Site. There is a touring caravan park approximately 150m south of the Site, just within the Blenheim Palace WHS.

- 7.2.11 The Site is accessed from the A44 Oxford Road in the south and the smaller, Shipton Road in the north. There is also a track leading to an isolated property and associated outbuildings within the north-eastern edge of the Site.
- 7.2.12 There is a public footpath within the Site, along its southwestern edge. National Cycle Network Route 5 passes through Woodstock, and past the southern boundary of the Site along the A44. At the southwestern corner of the Site, Shakespeare's Way, a promoted route, runs from the south past the Site boundary, and northwest towards Blenheim Park. The Wychwood Way also lies 1.5km west of the Site, cutting through Blenheim Park. 200m to the north, a bridleway runs along the edge of the school, joining with a series of other public rights of way. There are number of other PRoW in the wider countryside and within the adjacent settlements of Woodstock and Bladon.

### **Vegetation**

- 7.2.13 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality with intermittent hedgerow trees. The landscape is not heavily wooded, but has some small blocks and belts of woodland. Woodland type is varied, predominantly broadleaved, with some areas of young trees and occasional blocks of conifer within more extensive woodlands, particularly to the southwest.

### **Local Character**

- 7.2.14 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the rolling farmland, predominantly arable, with some degree of visual containment, the result of some blocks and belts of woodland; with fields defined by hedgerows and some stone walls. The immediate context of the Site to the south demonstrates features typical of parkland, including formal landscape features such as avenues and free standing mature trees.
- 7.2.15 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is two similar field parcels, without any dramatic changes in topography. It has a more open and exposed feel to the east away from the settlement edge.

## Visual Baseline

- 7.2.16 Locally, views into the Site are generally fairly restricted. The existing high hedgerow with hedgerow trees provides some existing screening along the A44 in the south, allowing only occasional glimpsed views; although the predominantly deciduous nature of the hedge means that views will increase during the winter months.
- 7.2.17 Properties backing onto the Site, including those on Plane Tree Way, Flemings Road, Hedge End and Churchill Gate are likely to have views into the Site depending upon the varied nature of their back boundaries, some of which contain trees and high hedgerows. Views will however be possible from the public footpath that runs along the western edge of the Site between The Covert and the A44 Oxford Road. Glimpsed views may be possible from the public footpath within Blenheim Palace WHS that runs past The Cowyards (listed buildings), directly to the south of the Site.
- 7.2.18 From the north, it is possible that the roof line of any development would be visible above the existing vegetation when looking south from Shipton Road, near Marlborough School. Glimpsed views into the Site are also possible from the corner of Shipton Road at the northeast corner of the Site.
- 7.2.19 Further afield, landform would indicate that views may be possible from the public footpath near Field Barn (to the north of Old Woodstock), though distance and intervening settlement and vegetation may limit opportunities for views. From the east, opportunities for views are more limited due to the intervening belts and small blocks of woodland, and hedgerow trees.
- 7.2.20 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 7.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.
- 7.2.21 Photographs EW1-7 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PRoWs and lanes within / around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within/around the Site.
- 7.2.22 Photographs EW1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site from outside it:

- EW1 is taken from Shipton Road looking south towards the site with a school playing field in the foreground.
- EW2 is a glimpsed view taken from Shipton Road looking west into the site with existing housing visible on the western boundary of the site.
- EW5 is a close view taken from a PROW in the WHS of Blenheim Park looking north towards the site, demonstrating parkland tree belts obscure visibility towards the site.
- EW6 and 7 are close views taken from Oxford Road, demonstrating that existing hedgerows provide only partial screening, with visibility likely to be greater in winter.

7.2.23 The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are in part influenced by the existing vegetation structure/built development but it is likely there would be much less of a filtering/screening effect in winter.

### **Summary**

7.2.24 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Large arable fields, bounded by tall hedgerows and existing housing development and a school playing field on two sides.
- A relatively level landform
- A very important historic parkland context to the south provided by the World Heritage Site of Blenheim Palace, although it is physically separated from the WHS by a main road. A rural landscape context to the south.
- Views towards Blenheim Palace's very distinctive parkland landscape of parkland trees and tree belts are possible looking outwards from the southern part of the site above the hedgerow on its southern boundary.
- The character and quality of the site is influenced negatively by the existing development on the boundaries and the very busy A44.

### **Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities**

7.2.25 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 7.3**:

- **PROW network:** Only one PROW is on the site in its southwest corner which crosses the A44 to connect with a bridleway in Blenheim Park. There would be considerable potential to create a new footpath network within any large development on site.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** This is in mostly moderate/good condition near the site but there is the potential to substantially reinforce/enhance/manage those on site.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** There is the potential to create substantial areas of connected green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.
- **Tranquillity:** The site/surrounds to the east show some a few rural qualities further towards its eastern boundary with existing farmland but overall it is not considered to be tranquil considering the proximity of an existing busy road and existing urban development.
- **Settlement pattern:** Nearby urban development is of low-medium density with some dispersed settlement in the wider countryside. There is the opportunity to vary the settlement form/pattern across the site, with a transition from medium to low density moving eastwards and southwards through the site.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of relevant factors above the site is considered to have a medium landscape sensitivity.
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** This is considered to be overall medium, but medium-high nearer to the southern boundary along Woodstock Road requiring some substantial structural hedgerow and woodland planting to assist with visual screening of any development,

## Conclusion

- 7.2.26 Overall, the landscape associated with the East of Woodstock Road site is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and medium visual sensitivity. The setting of Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden is discussed separately in the Heritage Appraisal below.
- 7.2.27 Taking the above into account it is concluded that in landscape and visual terms a development of approximately 270 homes could be successfully accommodated on the site, ensuring that development is generally of low density.
- 7.2.28 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Initial recommendations include:
- Strengthen all existing hedgerow boundaries with a minimum of c.15m width structure planting except for that along Oxford Road which should be at least c.30m wide allowing

for woodland structure or large parkland tree planting. All to be provided as advance planting.

- Ensure a highway signage design is provided as an integral part of a planning application for the access, rather than by condition, to encourage a very sensitive approach to be taken.
- Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots secured by S106 legal agreement, separated from estate access roads by broad verges 5m width verges.
- Incorporate substantial areas of semi-natural green space and well- designed SuDS.
- Restrict residential development to mostly 2 storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), or 2.5 storeys (maximum c.9m roof ridge height), taking the opportunity to include some 1.5 storey development in the southern parts of the Site and towards the eastern boundary of the Ste.
- Design of development to be generally landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; but with reference to the *New Rural Form* illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006) in the eastern parts of the site and the new *Urban form of development* towards the west and north of the site.
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

## 7.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 7.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>38</sup> as being ‘Piecemeal Enclosure’ with piecemeal enclosure of rough ground in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. To the north and west are the edges of Woodstock, identified as ‘Urban – Town’ and ‘Civil Provision – Educational Facility’ (The Marlborough Church of England School). To the east is an area of ‘Prairie / Amalgamated Enclosure’ with an area of ‘Planned Enclosure’ to the north-east. To the south-west (across Oxford Road) is Blenheim Park, identified as ‘Ornamental-Parkland / Designed Landscape’.

#### Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site

- 7.3.2 The Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) encompasses the entirety of the internationally significant Blenheim Palace designed landscape, main house and ancillary

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<sup>38</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
October 2017

buildings. The WHS was inscribed in 1987, it is also a Grade I listed Registered Historic Park and Garden and the main house is a Grade I Listed buildings. There are a number of Grade I, II\* and II listed buildings in the WHS.

7.3.3 The site represents an outstanding example of a major English noble dwelling and marks a fundamental shift in English architecture, landscape design and the birth of the English Romantic Movement. It survives remarkably intact with an exceptional degree of authenticity and integrity. The designed landscape by Capability Brown is widely acknowledged to be one of, if not in fact, his finest works.

7.3.4 The Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS is summarised in the 2017 Management plan for the Site, as follows:

***Brief Synthesis***

*Blenheim Palace, in Oxfordshire, was designed by John Vanbrugh. The English nation presented the site to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, in recognition of his victory in 1704 over French and Bavarian troops, a victory which decided the future of the Empire and, in doing so, made him a figure of international importance. The Palace sits within a large walled landscape park, the structure by Vanbrugh overlaid by the designs of Lancelot "Capability" Brown from 1761 onwards.*

***Adoption of retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value***

*The design and building of the Palace between 1705 and 1722 represented the beginning of a new style of architecture and its landscaped Park, designed by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, is considered "a naturalistic Versailles". In tangible form, Blenheim is an outstanding example of the work of John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor, two of England's most notable architects. It represents a unique architectural achievement celebrating the triumph of the English armies over the French, and the Palace and its associated Park have exerted great influence on the English Romantic movement which was characterised by the eclecticism of its inspiration, its return to natural sources and its love of nature.*

*The original landscape set out by John Vanbrugh, who regulated the course of the River Glyme, was later modified by Lancelot "Capability" Brown who created two lakes, seen as one of the greatest examples of naturalistic landscape design. Blenheim Palace was built by the nation to honour one of its heroes John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, and is also closely associated with Sir Winston Churchill.*

**Criterion (ii):**

*By their refusal of the French models of classicism, the Palace and Park illustrate the beginnings of the English Romantic movement, which was characterised by the eclecticism of its inspiration, its return to national sources and its love of nature. The influence of Blenheim on the architecture and organisation of space in the 18th and 19th centuries was greatly felt both in England and abroad.*

**Criterion (iv):**

*Built by the nation to honour one of its heroes, Blenheim is, above all, the home of an English aristocrat, the 1st Duke of Marlborough, who was also Prince of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, as we are reminded in the decoration of the Great Drawing Room [the Saloon] by Louis Laguerre (1719-20). Like the World Heritage properties Residence of Wurzburg and the Castles of Augustusburg and Falkenlust in Bruhl, Blenheim is typical of 18th century European princely residences.*

**Integrity**

*The property is enclosed by an 18th century dry stone wall which defines its extent and maintains its physical integrity. Within the wall, the layout of the principal buildings remains unaltered since their construction, and the overall structure of the landscaped park layout remains largely as set out by Vanbrugh and Brown. The buildings and Park were laid out over an earlier Roman and medieval landscape, remnants of which are still visible through the Vanbrugh and Brown landscapes. Changes to the landscape and buildings by their owners have continued to the present day though these have not detracted from the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.*

*The Park contains important veteran trees. Disease and time have caused some loss of original tree specimens but these have been replanted with the same species where possible and appropriate. Because of climate change and the greater incidence of drought, adjustments have to be made to the mix of species used in conserving the park landscape.*

*The integrity of the property is well protected by its enclosing wall but important visual links do exist between the gates, the parkland buildings, buildings in the surrounding villages and landscape, and care needs to be taken to ensure these key visual links are protected.*

*Authenticity*

*The overall relationship between the Baroque Palace and its Park is still clearly in place and the Outstanding Universal Value of the property can be very readily understood despite the early 20th century changes to the landscape. The form and design of the Palace and Park*

*survive well and there is a high degree of survival of fabric and indeed original fittings and furnishings.*

7.3.5 Additionally a suite of seven attributes are identified in that plan to express the OUV of the site, these are:

- *Attribute 1. It remains the home of the same aristocratic family, the successive Dukes of Marlborough, for whom it was built.*
- *Attribute 2. It still contains the unique early 18th century architecture of the Palace and its associated assemblage of buildings together with an archive of original survey and building documentation*
- *Attribute 3. It is still set within the early 18th century grand Vanbrugh landscape overlaid by Lancelot Brown's masterpiece of English Landscape style design, internationally considered to be the 'English Versailles'.*
- *Attribute 4. The surviving special relationship between the important architectural elements and their landscape setting are an exceptional piece of design and, together are greater than the sum of their parts.*
- *Attribute 5. The UK has by far the greatest concentration of veteran trees in northern Europe and within High Park, which sits in the south-west section of Blenheim Park, is one of the finest areas of ancient oak-dominated woodland in the country. It is partially descended from the ancient Wychwood Forest, a 12th century deer park and an Anglo-Saxon chase.*
- *Attribute 6. The gardens and pleasure grounds which surround the Palace were partly designed by Lancelot Brown in the mid-18th century, and partly by the French landscape architect Achille Duchene at the start of the 20th century.*
- *Attribute 7. The park retains a complete, 18th century enclosing stone wall which protects its integrity, but views into and out of the site still provide key linkages between Blenheim Palace and the traditional English countryside and villages surrounding it.*

7.3.6 Change in the setting of a WHS that could affect its OUV is a matter of national and international concern. The 2017 Management for Blenheim Palace includes a detailed analysis of its setting ([Appendix 3](#) of that document), the management plan also includes a summary description in the main text and a series of policies regarding the management of change in the setting of the WHS. These are not repeated verbatim here and the relevant material can be found [here](#).

7.3.7 Section 5.02 of Appendix 3 of the Management Plan clarifies the relationship between setting and OUV. It states that:



*“The elements of Blenheim’s OUV (and the attributes which convey it) which the setting most directly relates to are:*

- The connection with the River Glyme - the management of this river as it runs through the setting of the WHS directly affects the character, ecological value and water quality of Lancelot Brown's lakes within the WHS;*
- The links with the much larger and ancient Wychwood Forest area;*
- The value of the boundary wall and plantations which mainly hide the park from outside views, but also form important woodland elements in the wider landscape;*
- The key visual linkages between Blenheim and its setting - to Bladon church in the south and from Old Woodstock to the Column of Victory in the east;*
- The character of the setting as traditional English countryside, dotted with picturesque villages mainly built using a uniform palette of materials.”*

7.3.8 Section 2.02 of the WHS Management Plan further states in relation to the site that *“The park at Blenheim Palace is a well-defined and contained landscape which, following the extensive parkland planting campaigns of the mid-18th and late 19th century which included enclosing boundary plantations, has a limited inter-visibility with its wider setting. However, the WHS stands at the core of an extensive private estate, which has - over the centuries - exerted huge influence over the character and appearance of the wider landscape, and neighbouring landowners. Located immediately to the east of Blenheim Palace, the town of Woodstock is divided by the narrow, shallow valley of the River Glyme with Old Woodstock occupying the gently rising ground to the north of the river and the new township, reportedly built to house the followers of the royal court in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, located on the southern valley sides and the level plateau above.”* This emphasises the enclosed nature of the WHS and limited visual relationships with the wider landscape; whilst also reinforcing the functional relationships with the wider rural landscape and the importance of the generally rural nature of the landscape in which Blenheim is experienced.

7.3.9 Section 5.04 of Appendix 3 identifies the key issues in relation to the management of setting, these were identified as:

- The conversion of significant areas of agricultural land for other purposes, or the large-scale loss of woodland would detract from the distinctiveness of the setting;*
- Tall developments on the skyline, or large-scale development (particularly those of a non-residential nature which tend to be bulkier and non-vernacular, for example industrial development; wind turbines; solar farms; etc.) could detrimentally influence the character of the adjoining rural areas;*

- *Increased levels of pollution and silt in, the river catchments feed into the WHS and affect the highly significant Lancelot Brown lakes;*
- *Views from the Palace to the rooftops and church spire of Bladon could be lost, reduced or impacted on;*
- *The historic physical, and occasionally glimpsed visual, connection with Woodstock could be lost or reduced;*
- *Development that results in the joining of one village settlement to another could result in the settlements losing their distinctive nature.*

7.3.10 Figure 5 of the Management Plan defines the key elements of the Park's setting and is included in Appendix 2 of this report.

7.3.11 In terms of the proposed allocation Site, the following is noted in relation to the Site and its relationship to the setting of the WHS as described above and in supporting documents.

7.3.12 The allocation site lies almost adjacent to the WHS, just east of the A44 Oxford Road. The allocation site faces towards the Cowyards, a listed group of buildings within the WHS. The boundary of the WHS where it faces towards the proposed Site has a reasonable internal shelterbelt that breaks up views towards the allocation site. The proposed allocation Site has a weak hedgerow boundary which partially filters views from the A44.

7.3.13 The Site rises from the A44 and is agricultural in nature. The Site does not lie on any identified view lines from the WHS. The Site essentially contributes in two ways to the setting of the WHS:

- Firstly, as an area of open agricultural land it contributes to the wider rural setting of the WHS i.e. its contribution to the *"character of the setting as traditional English countryside"*; and
- Secondly, its contribution to the rural character of approaches towards Blenheim from the south along the A44.

### **Conservation Areas**

7.3.14 The western side and parts of the north-western part of Woodstock are covered by a conservation area. The Site lies outside of the conservation area. No conservation area appraisal or management plan exists. The following briefly describes the character and significance of the conservation area with an emphasis on understanding the aspects that may be affected by the proposed allocation.

- 7.3.15 The Woodstock Conservation Area includes the historic core of New Woodstock including Oxford Street, the High Street, Market Street, Park Street, Park Lane and Rectory Lane, along which much of the historic development occurred; and the linear settlement of Old Woodstock to the north. New Woodstock is largely a medieval foundation and many of its buildings date from 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These include c. 166 Listed Buildings; predominantly 18<sup>th</sup> century in origin with a few early 17<sup>th</sup> century (examples including Ye Anciente House and the Post Office), a late 12<sup>th</sup> century church and the late 13<sup>th</sup> century Manor Farmhouse in Old Woodstock. Many of these buildings are clustered around High Street, Market Street, Oxford Street, Park Street and Park Lane which form the heart of the conservation area.
- 7.3.16 The New Woodstock area has a highly distinctive and well defined historic core arranged around the main road network. Old Woodstock is more linear in nature running up a steep hill from the River Glyme. The historic buildings across Woodstock utilise a cohesive palette of materials including dressed and coursed limestone walls and slate roofs. They tend to be 1.5 or 2 storey in height. Areas of modern infill have occurred within and close to the historic core and there have been substantial areas of modern urban extension to the east of New Woodstock, stretching up to Hensington. These link to smaller areas of modern suburban and commercial development further north which border Old Woodstock.
- 7.3.17 The Site lies east of the modern urban extensions to New Woodstock and plays no significant role in the setting of the Woodstock Conservation Area being separated from it by extensive areas of modern development.

### Listed Buildings

- 7.3.18 The nearest listed building to the Site lies within the Blenheim Palace WHS, 145m to the south-west (over Oxford Road). It is The Cowyard and Cowyards Cottage, farm buildings from c.1860. As described above the proposed allocation site lies across the A44 from the building complex and is partially screened from it by intervening vegetation. The complex was not designed to have views towards the Site and the Site makes only a partial contribution to the setting of the listed building through its rural agricultural character.
- 7.3.19 The Woodstock Conservation Area includes 166 Listed Buildings, predominantly within 1km of the Site. These are Grade II listed, with the exception of the Woodstock Gate (Grade I), formerly listed as Triumphal Arch, built 1723, Nicholas Hawksmoor and 7 Grade II\* Listed Buildings. The Site plays no role in their setting.

### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

- 7.3.20 The Blenheim Palace Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade I Listed) lies less than 20m to the south-west of the Site across Oxford Road, it is part of the Blenheim Palace WHS.
- 7.3.21 The proposed allocation site's relationship to the setting of the Registered Park and Garden is contiguous with that of the WHS, please see above.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

- 7.3.22 Less than 25m to the east of the Site is Blenheim Villa Scheduled Monument, a Roman villa and associated field system. This below ground monument's setting is related to its relationships with the local topography, open rural landscape and relationships to other archaeological remains of similar periods. The primary significance of the monument lies in its evidential value in what it can tell us, through analysis, about the Romano-British period of UK history. Its setting makes a limited contribution to its significance.

### **Heritage Issues and Constraints**

- 7.3.23 Development of the Site would not have an impact of note on the setting of the Woodstock Conservation Area or any of the listed buildings within the conservation area. It could however affect the setting of the Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Historic Park and Garden, the setting of the listed Cowyard buildings and the setting of the Blenheim Villa Scheduled Monument. These potential issues are discussed below.
- 7.3.24 In relation to the Blenheim Villa Scheduled Monument, development of the Site could significantly change the open rural character of the monument's setting, this would have only a limited impact on the significance of the asset given the limited contribution the setting of the asset makes to its significance. This is not considered to be a major issue for the allocation of the Site.
- 7.3.25 With the Cowyard listed buildings the issue is predominantly one of potential visibility and visual encroachment into their rural / parkland setting. The intervening vegetation between the complex and allocation site should reduce the risk of significant visual intrusion, but it is recommended that should development be promoted on the Site then significant additional planting should be included along the frontage with the A44 to minimise potential visual issues; this would also help reduce visual impacts on the setting of the Registered Historic Park and Garden / WHS.

- 7.3.26 In terms of the potential impact on the WHS and hence Registered Historic Park and Garden the development of the Site has the potential to notably alter the wider rural setting of the WHS and to affect the approach along the A44. At 17ha the Site is a substantial allocation and development of the Site in total would represent a significant encroachment into the rural setting of the WHS / Registered Park and Garden, assuming densities in the order of 30 units/ha total development would be c. 510 units. The proposed allocation of 300 homes would still result in a significant new development in the Site. The risk to the setting of the WHS is further exacerbated by potential cumulative / combined impacts associated with the two other allocation sites around Woodstock (see Section 10 below).
- 7.3.27 To address the potential risk it is recommended that the overall scale of the Site is reduced and / or a reduced capacity is allocated for the Site as this would reduce the loss of rural landscape and reduce potential impacts on the WHS and its OUV.
- 7.3.28 It is recommended that the focus for any future development should be in the northern part of the allocation Site i.e. away from the A44 and WHS. This would need to be accompanied by an appropriate landscaping scheme to reduce visual intrusion. This approach would leave a rural buffer alongside this part of the WHS reducing perceptions of encroachment into its rural setting.

## **8.0 LAND NORTH OF HILL RISE, WOODSTOCK**

### **8.1 Description**

8.1.1 The Site is a 10.23ha arable field on the northern edge of Woodstock. It has arable fields to the north, east and south east. The north westernmost edge of the Site lies adjacent to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS), and Grade I Registered Historic Park and Garden.

### **8.2 Landscape Appraisal**

#### **Landscape Character Context**

8.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>39</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>40</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>41</sup>

#### **National Character Areas**

8.2.2 The site is also located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.
- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War

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<sup>39</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>40</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>41</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.

- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

### **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)**

8.2.3 The Site is located within Landscape Type 19: Wooded Estatelands. Key characteristics include:

- *Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.*
- *Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.*
- *Large parklands and mansion houses.*
- *A regularly shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.*
- *Small villages with strong vernacular character.*

8.2.4 Immediately adjacent to the Site's western boundary, the Landscape Type changes to Landscape Type 24: Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes. Key characteristics include:

- *Steep sided valleys and slopes.*
- *Large, interlocking blocks of ancient and plantation woodland.*
- *Small pasture fields with localised unimproved grassland.*
- *Tall, thick hedges and densely scattered hedgerow trees.*
- *Small, intact villages and hamlets.*

### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

8.2.5 The site is located within the Landscape Character Area 4: Eastern Parks and Valleys and Landscape Character Type Open Limestone Wolds. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope*
- *Typically large or very large fields, with rectilinear pattern of dry-stone walls (typical of later enclosures and often in poor condition) and weak hedgerows, with frequent gaps and very few trees*
- *Productive farmland predominantly under intensive arable cultivation*

- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and somewhat impoverished 'upland' character*
- *Very open and exposed character*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky and sweeping views across surrounding areas*
- *High inter-visibility*

8.2.6 Immediately to the west of the Site boundary, the Landscape Character Type changes to Parkland. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Formal, designed landscape and grounds surrounding large country houses*
- *Distinctive formal landscape features, including avenues, free standing mature trees in pasture, clumps and blocks of woodland, exotic tree species, formal structures and boundary features*
- *Planting and landscape character generally unrelated to surrounding areas*
- *Distinctively rural, picturesque and pastoral character*
- *Mature woodland and tree cover with typically enclosed character*
- *Low inter-visibility*

## **Site Landscape Context**

### **Landform and Land Use**

8.2.7 As illustrated on **Figure 8.1**, the Site comprises arable fields situated in a gently undulating landscape on the northern edge of Woodstock, with land gradually falling in the direction of the River Glyme in the east, and into a small dry valley to the west. To the south, the River Glyme and a series of lakes associated with Blenheim Park are on lower lying land, with Woodstock, and parts of Blenheim Park on higher ground.

8.2.8 Levels within the Site range from 103m in the west to 94m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the east, with the site generally sloping down to the east.

8.2.9 The arable landscape has a predominantly open character due to the presence of intermittent low to medium height hedgerows as the most commonly occurring field boundary type, occasional hedgerow trees and tree belts, in combination with scattered small blocks of woodland.



### **Settlement Pattern and Access**

- 8.2.10 The Site lies on the northern edge of Woodstock. The adjacent settlement pattern largely comprises 1 and 2 storey residential buildings.
- 8.2.11 The Site is accessed from the A44 Manor Road in the west, and through the residential area to the south, via Rosamund Drive.
- 8.2.12 There is a public footpath within the Site, between Rosamund Drive and Field Barn to the north. National Cycle Network Route 5 passes through Woodstock, approximately 400m from the Site along Green Lane, which is also a public bridleway. The Wychwood Way and Shakespeare's Way promoted routes run through Blenheim Park, at the nearest point approximately 400m to the southwest. The Oxfordshire Way promoted route also lies 700m north of the Site, following the line of the Roman Road. There are number of other PRow in the wider countryside and within the adjacent settlement of Woodstock.

### **Vegetation**

- 8.2.13 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality with intermittent hedgerow trees. The landscape is not heavily wooded, but has some blocks and belts of woodland, particularly in the valley to the east of the Site. Woodland type is varied, predominantly broadleaved, with some areas of young trees and occasional blocks of conifer within more extensive woodlands, particularly to the west in Blenheim Park.

### **Local Character**

- 8.2.14 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the large scale rolling farmland, predominantly arable, with some dry-stone walls and weak hedgerows, with frequent gaps and few hedgerow trees. The character feels fairly open and exposed. The immediate context of the Site to the west demonstrates features typical of parkland, including formal landscape features such as avenues and free standing mature trees.
- 8.2.15 The Site is fairly homogenous as it is a single field parcel, without any dramatic changes in topography. It has a more open and exposed feel to the north away from the settlement edge and where the field boundary is thinner.

## Visual Baseline

- 8.2.16 Locally, views into the Site are possible from the footpath which runs through the centre of the Site. The existing hedgerows provide screening along the A44 in the west, allowing only occasional glimpsed views; although the predominantly deciduous nature of the hedge makes it likely that opportunity for views will increase during the winter months. Properties backing onto the Site, including those on the eastern side of Hill Rise and northern side of Vanbrugh Close are likely to have views into the Site. Views will also be possible from the recreation ground just within the southern boundary of the Site.
- 8.2.17 Glimpsed views may be possible from higher ground within Blenheim Palace WHS to the west, but intervening vegetation and the existing properties on Hill Rise are likely to provide effective screening. From the north, views will be possible from further north on the public footpath that runs through the Site, and also from the Oxfordshire Way/Wychwood Way promoted route.
- 8.2.18 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 8.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.
- 8.2.19 Photographs HRW1-4 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within / around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within / around the Site.
- 8.2.20 Photographs HRW1-4 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:-
- HRW1 is taken from the A44 looking south east towards the site and demonstrating visibility above roadside hedgerows.
  - HRW2 is taken from the PROW that crosses the site looking south towards the historic core of Woodstock and Blenheim Palace with existing modern development in the foreground (high visibility of the arable farmland of the site)
  - HRW3 is taken from the PROW that crosses the site looking north (high visibility of the arable farmland of the site).
  - HRW4 is a middle distance view taken from the PROW near Field Barn looking south towards the site, demonstrating visual screening by a tree belt but potentially greater visibility in winter.

8.2.21 The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are in part influenced by the existing vegetation structure but it is likely there would be much less of a filtering / screening effect in winter.

### Summary

8.2.22 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Large arable fields, bounded by tall hedgerows and existing housing development and a school playing field on two sides.
- A gently undulating to flat landform.
- A very important historic parkland context to the west provided by the World Heritage Site of Blenheim Palace, although the site is physically separated from the WHS by a main road and the housing along Hill Rise.
- A rural landscape context to the east and north with modern development of the town of Woodstock to the south and west.
- Views towards Blenheim Palace's very distinctive parkland landscape of parkland trees and tree belts are possible looking outwards from the western, southern and central parts of the site above the hedgerows, as well as there being a distinctive view of the landmark Woodstock parish church tower in the south of the site.
- The character and quality of the site is influenced somewhat negatively by the existing development on the boundaries and the very busy A44.

### Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities

8.2.23 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 8.3**:

- **PROW network:** One PROW crosses the central part connecting northwards to Stratford Lane bridleway with the potential to enhance footpath linkages on the site in association with new development.
- **Hedgerow/Woodland structure:** This is in mostly moderate/good condition but with the potential to substantially reinforce/enhance/manage those on site.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** There is the potential to create substantial areas of connected green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.

- **Tranquillity:** The site/surrounds to the north show a few rural qualities. However overall it is not considered to be tranquil considering the proximity of an existing busy road and existing urban development.
- **Settlement pattern:** Nearby urban development is of low-medium density with some dispersed settlement in the wider countryside. There is the opportunity to vary the settlement form/pattern across the site, with a transition from medium to low density moving northwards and westwards through the site.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of relevant factors above the site is considered to have a medium landscape sensitivity.
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** This is considered to be overall medium-high.

## Conclusion

- 8.2.24 Overall the landscape associated with the Land North of Hill Rise Site is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and medium-high visual sensitivity. The setting of the Blenheim Palace WHS is discussed separately below.
- 8.2.25 Taking the above into account it is concluded that a development of approximately 120 homes could be successfully accommodated on the site, ensuring that development is generally of low density.
- 8.2.26 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Initial recommendations include:
- Strengthen all existing hedgerow boundaries with a minimum of c.15m width structure planting except for that along the A44 which should be at least c.30m wide allowing for woodland structure or large parkland tree planting. All to be provided as advance planting.
  - Vehicular access from the A44 ensuring there is sufficient space to plant large parkland trees around the junction without this being restricted/prevented by highway visibility considerations.
  - Ensure a highway signage design is provided as an integral part of a planning application for the access, rather than by condition, to encourage a very sensitive approach to be taken.
  - Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots secured by S106 legal agreement, separated from estate access roads by broad 5m width verges.
  - Incorporate substantial areas of semi-natural green space and well- designed SuDS.

- Retain selected views eastwards to the wider countryside, southwards to Woodstock Parish Church tower and westwards to Blenheim Park avoiding development in identified view cones.
- Restrict residential development to mostly 2 storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), or 2.5 storeys (maximum c.9m roof ridge height), taking the opportunity to include some 1.5 storey development towards the eastern boundary of the site.
- Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; and with reference to the *New Rural Form* illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2006) towards the eastern and northern boundaries and to the new *Urban form of development* towards the south of the site.
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

## 8.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 8.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC<sup>42</sup> as being 'Prairie / Amalgamated Enclosure'. To the south are the outer edges of Woodstock, being a housing estate north of Old Woodstock created in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, identified as 'Urban – Town'. To the west is the 'Ornamental Parkland / Designed Landscape' of Blenheim Park. To the east is an area of land identified as 'Piecemeal Enclosure', a small area of fields subdivided in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

#### Blenheim World Heritage Site and Registered Park and Garden

- 8.3.2 Background information on the Blenheim World Heritage Site and Registered Park and Garden is provided in Section 7.3 of this report and is not repeated here for brevity.
- 8.3.3 The proposed allocation site lies just east of the WHS and is mainly behind (when viewed from the WHS) a band of relatively modern development that flanks the main road. The boundary wall around the WHS, the shelter belt planting and intervening built form all mean that the proposed allocation site is visually screened from the WHS. Additionally, the Site does not lie on any identified views to and from the WHS / Registered Park and Garden.

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<sup>42</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
October 2017

### Woodstock Conservation Areas

- 8.3.4 Background information on the Woodstock Conservation Area can be found in Section 7.3.
- 8.3.5 The Site lies outside of the Woodstock Conservation Area and is visually separated from the Old Woodstock portion of the conservation area band of relatively modern development. The New Woodstock conservation area lies across the river valley and is largely visual separated from it by modern development, although the eastern portion of the Site where it moves onto the river valley slopes has the potential to be seen from locations within the conservation area. The Site does feature in views from the north towards the conservation area. Overall, it is not a significant component of the Woodstock Conservation Area's setting, but it does provide some rural context for the area and the slopes of the river valley are sensitive in terms of defining the setting of the town.

### Listed Buildings

- 8.3.6 Information on listed buildings can be found in Section 7.3.
- 8.3.7 The nearest listed building to the Site lies within the Old Woodstock part of the Conservation Area, 70m to the west, this being 118-124 Manor Road, an early 18<sup>th</sup> Century house, now four dwellings. The asset's setting primarily relates to the road frontage and local streetscape and it is visually separated from the allocation site by a band of modern development.

### Scheduled Monuments

- 8.3.8 900m to the north-east of the Site is the Rectangular Earthwork, Hensington Scheduled Monument.<sup>43</sup> A Roman villa is also recorded as a Scheduled Monument c.1.2km to the north-east of the Site near Sansom's Farm.<sup>44</sup> There are also several Scheduled Monuments within Blenheim Park including a Bowl Barrow 350m south-west of Furze Platt Farm, a section of the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch and a section of Akeman Street Roman road immediately south-east of North Lodge – these being c.1-1.2km to the north-west of the Site. The Site forms a distant element of the rural setting of the scheduled monuments to the northeast but is not a significant element of their setting.

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<sup>43</sup> Historic England List Entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006357>

<sup>44</sup> Historic England List Entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006346>

## Heritage Issues and Constraints

- 8.3.9 Development of the Site would not have a significant impact on the setting of the listed building at 118-124 Manor Road as it would be visually separated from the building and the building's setting is focussed on the local streetscape away from the Site.
- 8.3.10 In relation to the scheduled monuments the development of the Site could affect their wider rural setting but only to a limited degree.
- 8.3.11 The key issue in relation to the Site relates to its potential impact on the rural character and nature of the setting of the WHS and Registered Park and Garden. Although the Site is screened from the WHS and Registered Park and Garden the development of the Site still has the potential to alter the wider rural setting of the WHS.
- 8.3.12 In this context the relationship of the allocation site to the River Glyme is also of note. The eastern boundary of the Site extends down slope into the upper sides of the River Glyme valley. The river is an important element of the WHS's setting in both functional and character terms. Maintaining a degree of separation between the proposed allocation site and the river valley is therefore advantageous in this regard.
- 8.3.13 At c. 10ha the Site is a large allocation and development of the Site in total would represent a notable encroachment into the rural setting of the WHS / Registered Park and Garden, assuming densities in the order of 30 units/ha total development would be c. 300 units. This risk is further exacerbated by potential cumulative / combined impacts associated with the two other allocation sites around Woodstock (see Section 10 below).
- 8.3.14 The visual separation of the Site from the WHS reduces the risks associated with future development in terms of impact on the WHS and Registered Park and Garden. There are however a number of measures, in addition to landscape design mitigation measures, that could be taken to reduce risks further and also help address potential cumulative / combined impacts, these include:
- Ensuring development heights remain at or below 2 storeys to reduce visual presence and ensure that development does not emerge over the top of existing development to the west.
  - Ensuring that built development on the site is restricted in its geographical extent and scale to lessen the overall change to the rural character of the setting of the WHS. This could include:

- keeping development back from the eastern boundaries of the allocation site and hence away from the upper sides of the river valley, which would also address other identified issues; and
- ensuring that the northern part of the site where it joins the main road remains undeveloped to reduce perception of urbanisation.



## 9.0 LAND NORTH OF BANBURY ROAD, WOODSTOCK

### 9.1 Description

9.1.1 The Site is a 16.9ha group of 3 fields on the northern edge of Woodstock. It has residential development immediately to the south, and the Banbury Road forms the eastern and southeastern edge of the Site. To the west, it is bounded by Green, Lane, a narrow road which leads to the sewage works, and to the north is open arable farmland. The site has been divided into 3 parcels – A, B and C as illustrated in Figure 9.1.

### 9.2 Landscape Appraisal

#### Landscape Character Context

9.2.1 A review of the following published Landscape Character Assessment information has been undertaken to understand the Site's landscape character context:

- National Character Areas: Natural England's National Character Area Profiles<sup>45</sup>
- County Landscape Character Areas: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study<sup>46</sup>
- District Landscape Character Areas: <sup>47</sup>

#### National Character Areas

9.2.2 The Site is located within NCA 107: Cotswolds. Key characteristics include:

- Limestone geology has formed the scarp and dip slope of the landscape, which in turn has influenced drainage, soils, vegetation, land use and settlement.
- Dissected by river valleys.
- Arable farming dominates the high wold and dip slope while pasture prevails in river valleys.
- On the deeper soils and river valleys, hedgerows form the main field boundaries.
- Oak/ash woodlands are characteristic of the river valleys. Regular blocks of coniferous and mixed plantations are scattered across the open high wold and dip slope.

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<sup>45</sup> National Character Area Profile: 107. Cotswolds. Natural England 2015

<sup>46</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, 2004

<sup>47</sup> West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, 1998

- The majority of the principal rivers in the east flow south-eastwards forming the headwaters of the Thames.
- Rich history from Neolithic barrows, iron-age hill forts and Roman roads and villas to deserted medieval villages, grand country houses, cloth mills and Second World War airfields. The field patterns largely reflect both the medieval open field system, with fossilised areas of ridge and furrow, and later planned enclosures.
- Locally quarried limestone brings a harmony to the built environment of scattered villages and drystone walls, giving the area a strong sense of unity for which the Cotswolds are renowned.
- Parkland, gardens and historic designed landscapes are features particularly of the dip slope and broad lowland, such as Blenheim Palace.

#### **Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)**

9.2.3 The Site is located within Landscape Type Landscape Type 4: Estate Farmlands. Key characteristics include:

- *Medium to large, regularly shaped, hedged fields.*
- *Small, geometric plantations and belts of trees.*
- *Large country houses set in ornamental parklands.*
- *Small estate villages and dispersed farmsteads.*

9.2.4 Immediately adjacent to the Site's western boundary, the Landscape Type changes to Landscape Type 24: Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes. Key characteristics include:

- *Steep sided valleys and slopes.*
- *Large, interlocking blocks of ancient and plantation woodland.*
- *Small pasture fields with localised unimproved grassland.*
- *Tall, thick hedges and densely scattered hedgerow trees.*
- *Small, intact villages and hamlets.*

#### **West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**

9.2.5 The western part of the Site is located within the Landscape Character Area 4: Eastern Parks and Valleys and Landscape Character Type Open Limestone Wolds. The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope*

- *Typically large or very large fields, with rectilinear pattern of dry-stone walls (typical of later enclosures and often in poor condition) and weak hedgerows, with frequent gaps and very few trees*
- *Productive farmland predominantly under intensive arable cultivation*
- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and somewhat impoverished 'upland' character*
- *Very open and exposed character*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky and sweeping views across surrounding areas*
- *High inter-visibility*

9.2.6 The eastern part of the Site is located within Landscape Character Area 4: Eastern Parks and Valleys and the Landscape Character Type Semi-Enclosed Limestone Wolds (large-scale). The key characteristics of the landscape character type include:

- *Large-scale, smoothly rolling farmland occupying the limestone plateau and dip slope;*
- *Land use dominated by intensive arable cultivation with only occasional pasture;*
- *Generally large-scale fields with rectilinear boundaries formed by drystone walls and low hawthorn hedges with occasional trees, typical of later enclosures;*
- *Some visual containment provided by large blocks and belts of woodland creating a semi-enclosed character;*
- *Thin, well-drained calcareous soils and sparse natural vegetation cover and a somewhat impoverished 'upland' character;*
- *Ash, hazel, field maple etc. conspicuous in hedgerows;*
- *Distinctive elevated and expansive character in higher areas, with dominant sky;*
- *Moderate inter-visibility.*

## **Site Landscape Context**

### **Landform and Land Use**

9.2.7 As illustrated on **Figure 9.1**, the Site comprises 3 fields, one of which is pasture/scrub and two of which are arable, situated in a gently undulating landscape on the northern edge of Woodstock, with land gradually falling towards the River Cherwell in the east, Woodstock and Blenheim Palace on slightly higher land to the southwest, and the River Glyme and a series of associated lakes beyond that to the west and south. Levels within the Site range from 97m in the northeast to 80m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the west, with the Site generally sloping down to the west.

9.2.8 This arable landscape has a predominantly open character due to the presence of intermittent low to medium height hedgerows as the most commonly occurring field boundary type, occasional hedgerow trees and tree belts, in combination with scattered small blocks of woodland.

#### **Settlement Pattern and Access**

9.2.9 The Site lies on the northern edge of Woodstock. The adjacent settlement pattern largely comprises 1 and 2 storey residential buildings (some in use as office space), with a number of larger commercial/business buildings to the west of the Site on Green Lane. To the north west of the Site, a cemetery lies adjacent to the Site boundary. Approximately 250m to the north of the Site is a sewage works. The edge of the Woodstock Conservation Area lies approximately 180m to the southwest of the Site.

9.2.10 The Site is accessed from Banbury Road in the east and the smaller, Green Lane in the west.

9.2.11 There is a public footpath within the Site, running in a north easterly direction through the middle of the westernmost field. National Cycle Network Route 5 runs through Woodstock, and passes along the Site's western boundary on Green Lane. To the south and southwest of the Site, Shakespeare's Way, a promoted route, passes through Blenheim Park and along the A44, about 500m away at its closest point. The Wychwood Way also passes through Blenheim Park to the west. A public footpath also heads east from the south-eastern corner of the Site, joining a bridleway 200m away. There are number of other PRoW in the wider countryside and within the adjacent settlement of Woodstock.

#### **Vegetation**

9.2.12 The vegetation structure locally comprises hedgerows of varying height and quality with intermittent hedgerow trees. The landscape is not heavily wooded, but has some blocks and belts of woodland, particularly in the valley to the west of the Site. Woodland type is varied, predominantly broadleaved, with some areas of young trees and occasional blocks of conifer within more extensive woodlands, particularly to the west in Blenheim Park.

#### **Local Character**

9.2.13 The Site and its immediate context is broadly consistent with the features identified within the published landscape character assessments at national, county and district level, namely the

large scale rolling farmland, predominantly arable, dry-stone walls and hedgerows, with some hedgerow trees. The character feels fairly open and exposed.

- 9.2.14 The Site varies across its area, with the southernmost field of scrub/pasture having a closer relationship to the settlement and feeling less exposed, and a more open and exposed feel to the north away from the settlement edge and where the field boundaries are thinner.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 9.2.15 Locally, views into the Site are possible from Banbury Road, from the public footpath crossing the Site, and from Green Lane and its associated public bridleway in the west. Views will also be possible from properties backing onto the Site, including those on the north side of Banbury Road, Kerwood Close and the eastern side of Green Lane.
- 9.2.16 From the north, the Site is visible from the public footpath which runs between the Site and Banbury Road, as the ground level rises slightly to the north. From further afield, views are also possible from locations further north on Banbury Road, and from the public footpath near Field Barn (to the north of Old Woodstock), though distance and intervening settlement and vegetation may limit opportunities for views.
- 9.2.17 From the east, opportunities for views are more limited due to the intervening belts and small blocks of woodland, and hedgerow trees.
- 9.2.18 A selection of representative viewpoints is appended to this Appraisal, to record the existing baseline characteristics of the Site, and potential visibility of the Site. The locations of the viewpoints are identified within **Figure 9.2** and illustrative photographs can be found in Appendix 1.
- 9.2.19 Photographs BRW1-5 are located within and along the boundaries of the Site from PROWs and lanes within / around the Site, to demonstrate the landscape characteristics and extent of views within/around the Site.
- 9.2.20 Photographs BRW1-5 demonstrate the potential visibility towards the Site:
- BRW1 is taken from the PROW looking south west towards the Site demonstrating its high visibility with the historic core of Woodstock seen in the distance.
  - BRW2 is taken from Banbury Road looking west, a close view of the Site.

- BRW3 and 4 are taken from the PROW within the Site demonstrating a close view looking south-south-west towards the historic core of Woodstock and north-east into open countryside.
- BRW5 is taken from within the site looking west towards the Column of Victory in the WHS of Blenheim Park, demonstrating how the foreground of the view has been marred by incongruous industrial development.

9.2.21 The visual appraisal demonstrates that views into the Site are typically fairly limited / possible due to a combination of topography, the built environment, and vegetation structure.

### Summary

9.2.22 The key landscape and visual characteristics of the Site and its wider context can be summarised as follows:

- Mix of small pasture fields and large arable fields, bounded by hedgerows and existing housing development.
- A gently undulating landform rising northwards away from the existing settlement edge.
- A rural landscape context to the north with historic and modern development of the town of Woodstock to the south and west.
- Some views westwards towards Blenheim Palace's parkland landscape and the landmark Column of Victory but these have been intruded on/comprised by some incongruous industrial/infrastructure development.
- There is an important view from the public footpath looking southwest towards the historic core of Woodstock, the parish church tower, also with Blenheim Palace and parkland trees visible.
- The south west corner of the Site contributes positively to the landscape setting of the historic core of the town.

### Landscape Sensitivities / Constraints and Opportunities

9.2.23 Landscape sensitivities/constraints and opportunities for potential development of the site, taking into account planning policy context, published landscape character guidance and observations during the site visits are set out below and are illustrated within **Figure 9.3**:

- **PROW network**- One PROW crosses the middle of the western part of the site connecting to a bridleway in the south west corner of the site.

- **Hedgerows:** These are mostly in moderate condition but with the potential to substantially reinforce/enhance/manage those on site. There is also significant potential to provide new boundary hedgerows together with woodland structure planting to create a future defensible boundary in the currently very open landscape on the section of the northern boundary that is aligned with existing power lines.
- **Other Green Infrastructure:** -There is the potential to create connected green space, with creation of wildflower meadow/ provision of SuDS wetland/ponds habitat.
- **Tranquillity** The site/surrounds to the north show a few rural qualities. However overall it is not considered to be tranquil, considering the proximity offsite of an existing intrusive sewage works, an incongruous industrial facility, mobile phone masts, as well as power lines crossing the site.
- **Settlement pattern:** Nearby urban development is of low-medium density, with some dispersed settlement further to the northwest in the wider countryside. There is the opportunity to vary the settlement form/pattern across the site, with a transition from medium to low density moving northwards through the site.
- **Landscape sensitivity to development:** Taking account of relevant factors above the site is considered to have a medium landscape sensitivity except for the southwest corner which is considered to be medium-high (i.e. Parcel A).
- **Potential visibility into the Site:** This is considered to be overall high taking account of the openness of the landscape.

## Conclusion

9.2.24 Overall, the landscape associated with the north of Banbury Road site is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity, except in the south west corner where it is medium-high. Visual sensitivity is high overall. The valuable contribution of the southwest part of the site (in Parcel A) to the landscape setting of the historic core of the town means that very careful consideration needs to be given to whether it is appropriate to develop this area and the extent/siting of any built form as well the character, form, density and design of new development.

9.2.25 In addition, from a landscape perspective, it is considered that Parcels C and B are less sensitive, with, subject to appropriate mitigation, a greater capacity to accommodate residential development. This reflects the fact that new development would be contained within existing field boundaries, as well as perceived largely against the background of more recent/modern development. However, Parcel A is more sensitive with an overall lesser capacity to accommodate development, reflecting the more important role this parcel provides in the landscape setting of the town. Furthermore, this parcel has the disadvantage that it would

require a completely new landscape buffer, given that arguably power lines do not provide an existing defensible boundary.

9.2.26 Taking the above into account it is concluded that a development of approximately 220 homes could be successfully accommodated on the Site, ensuring that is overall of low density.

9.2.27 Appropriate mitigation should be developed in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal. Detailed recommendations are:-

- Strengthen all existing hedgerow boundaries with a minimum of c.15m width structure planting except for that along the north western boundary which should be a minimum of c.30m width woodland planting. All to be provided as advance planting.
- Vehicular access from Banbury Road softened by generous structure planting.
- Ensure a highway signage design is provided as an integral part of a planning application for the access, rather than by condition, to encourage a very sensitive approach to be taken.
- Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots secured by S106 legal agreement or developer covenants.
- Incorporate substantial areas of semi-natural green space and well- designed SuDS.
- Retain a selected, framed view looking towards Woodstock Parish Church tower and adjoining historic buildings avoiding development in the identified view cone (see Figure 9.3).
- Restrict residential development to mostly 2 storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height), or 2.5 storeys (maximum c.9m roof ridge height), taking the opportunity to include some 1.5 storey development along the northern boundary of the site.
- Design of development to be landscape dominated in accordance with the design principles/considerations set out in the 2017 Design Guide, Section II, Development and Context; but with reference to the new *Urban form of development* towards the south of the site and the new *Rural form of development* towards the northern boundaries (as illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2006).
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.



## 9.3 Heritage Appraisal

### Site Context

#### Historical Development of the Landscape

- 9.3.1 The Site is identified in the Oxfordshire HLC48 as being 'Prairie / Amalgamated Enclosure' and the area immediately to the east of Banbury Road (and east of the Site) is similar. To the south is the hamlet of Hensington, now part of Woodstock with the hamlet having become indistinct from the larger town due to the expansion of the latter eastwards in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the west is a 'Commercial Business Park', 'Woodland – Plantation' (20<sup>th</sup> century broadleaf) and 'Civic Amenities – Sewerage Treatment Works' to the north-west.

#### Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and Registered Park and Garden

- 9.3.2 Background information on the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) and Registered Park and Garden is provided in Section 7.3 of this report and is not repeated here for brevity.
- 9.3.3 The Site lies between 0.63km and 1.33km from the boundary of the WHS and Registered Park and Garden. As such it is not immediately connected with the WHS. However, the Site does have a relationship with the setting of the WHS.
- 9.3.4 Firstly, it contributes to the overall rural landscape setting of the WHS, an aspect of its setting that has been identified in the management plan as contributing to its OUV. The distance from the WHS and the visual separation due to intervening built form, does however reduce that contribution when compared to the other two allocation sites around Woodstock (see Sections 7.3 and 8.3).
- 9.3.5 Secondly, the Site lies in a view cone identified in the setting study for the WHS and shown on the Figure 5 from the Management Plan (see Appendix 2). This cone is described on the figure as an *"Important view from Oxford Street, Woodstock towards the Column of Victory in the park, and from the east side of the Grand Avenue near the Column, back towards that part of Woodstock immediately beyond the park boundary. The wider extent of the shaded cone represents the area that contributes to the general setting, so any tall structures here could significantly impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site as evidenced by the existing*

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<sup>48</sup> Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, Oxfordshire County Council, July 2017  
October 2017

*overhead cables.*" The Site therefore has degree of inherent sensitivity in relation to the setting of the WHS, in particular Parcel A.

### **Conservation Areas**

- 9.3.6 Information on the Woodstock Conservation Area can be found in Section 7.3.
- 9.3.7 Parcels A and B lies approximately 200m from the conservation area, Parcel C lies further away. The Site is physically separated from the conservation area by extensive modern development.
- 9.3.8 There are views from the elevated parts of the Site, mainly in Parcel A, down over the conservation area with the Blenheim Palace WHS landscape beyond. This includes glimpses of the church tower. Parcel A occupies a gentle hill slope overlooking the valley below and hence has a greater degree of visibility over the conservation area. The hillslope on which parcel A sits also forms back of the rural backdrop for the conservation area. The views towards the conservation area and the rural backdrop form part of its setting. They also contribute to the setting of the churches in the town as these are notable visual elements rising above the local tree cover and built form in the valley floor. Parcels B and C are less visually connected, with Parcel C being the most separated.

### **Listed Buildings**

- 9.3.9 The nearest Listed Buildings to the Site lie on the Banbury Road. There is a group of grade II farm buildings including farmhouse and associated barns and stables at number 7 Banbury Road and a farmhouse with attached barn range at number 21-23 Banbury Road further east. All of the buildings have been converted for residential or commercial use. The street has also been subject to a degree of modern development in the late 20<sup>th</sup> / early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It still retains its historic linear character
- 9.3.10 The Site forms a key part of the rural setting of the listed buildings. Parcel B was seemingly directly connected with the listed farm complex at number 7, forming its immediate fields and orchards. It continues to provide a clear contribution to the setting of these assets in terms of providing an aesthetically appropriate setting for them, retaining a functional legibility and a historical linkage to past uses. Parcel C formed part of the wider fields associated with numbers 21-23, but was less intimately linked to them.

9.3.11 Information on listed buildings in the Woodstock Conservation Area can be found in Section 7.3. The Site is separated from the conservation area and its listed buildings by a swathe of modern development and consequently does not make a significant contribution to the setting of individual buildings. However, as discussed above in relation to the conservation area the site, and Parcel A in particular, makes a contribution to the setting of the church and forms part of the rural backdrop for the town.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

9.3.12 630m to the north / north-east of the Site is the Rectangular Earthwork, Hensington Scheduled Monument.<sup>49</sup> The allocation site plays a limited role in the wider rural setting of the monument.

### **Heritage issues and constraints**

9.3.13 The Site raises a number of issues relating to the Woodstock Conservation Area, Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden, and listed buildings along Banbury Road. These issues are discussed below in relation to the potential development of the three Parcels A, B and C.

9.3.14 All three parcels lie in the broad view cone identified in the WHS Management Plan. Standard height residential development on Parcels B and C is unlikely to affect the view cone in either direction. However, development on Parcel A has the potential to affect the general backdrop of views from the WHS, views to the WHS as well as affecting the backdrop to the conservation area. In this context Parcel A is considered to be a sensitive location in terms of development in the setting of the WHS, Park and Garden and conservation area. Potential access solutions may also exacerbate issues with Parcel A.

9.3.15 Parcel B forms a key component of the setting of a group of listed farm buildings on Banbury Road. It encompasses the former orchards and the complex's immediately associated paddocks / fields. Although the agricultural buildings have all been converted for new uses, the functional and aesthetic relationships remain. The development of Parcel B for residential uses could therefore significantly degrade the setting of the Grade II listed buildings, an issue that requires very careful consideration e.g. through the use of an appropriate landscape buffer (see paragraph 9.3.18 below) Any harm would need to be balanced against potential public benefits of housing were development to proceed.

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<sup>49</sup> Historic England List Entry: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1006357>  
October 2017

- 9.3.16 Development of Parcel C would not have a significant impact in relation to the conservation area or WHS. It would affect the setting of the listed complex of farm buildings at 21-23 Banbury Road but to a lesser degree than the development of Parcel B would affect the listed buildings at 7 Banbury Road. The impact would still need to be balanced against the public benefits of new housing.
- 9.3.17 Parcel C is the least sensitive of the three Parcels in historic environment terms. At c.6ha it could accommodate c. 180 houses at 30 units / hectare. Given that this is close to the initial indicated target of 250 units for this allocation site, it is recommended that development is focussed on Parcel C. Any development in Parcel C would still need to respond to the setting of the listed building at 21-23 Banbury Road.
- 9.3.18 Should development come forward for Parcel B, significant attention would need to be paid to the setting of 7 Banbury Road. A substantial landscape buffer is recommended between the buildings and any future development as indicated on Figure 9.3 and Appendix 4. One possible option would be to confine development to the northern part of the development site utilising the historic field pattern to create a landscape division between the listed buildings and the development (see Appendix 4). Historically the area left undeveloped operated as orchards and some form of communal green space may be a viable option for this area. This approach would deliver approximately 2ha of development land. In addition, to the landscape buffer, care would have to be taken with implementing a landscape design to integrate the development into the setting of the listed buildings. It would also be important to ensure that access does not come from the southeast as this would further affect the setting of the buildings.
- 9.3.19 Given the sensitivities associated with Parcel A and the potential development opportunities in Parcel B and C, it is not recommended that Parcel A is considered for built development. Should built development be proposed this would need to be pulled back from the hillslopes leading towards Woodstock and focussed on the flatter ground closer to Parcels B and C.

## **10.0 POTENTIAL CUMULATIVE / IN-COMBINATION ISSUES**

### **10.1 Introduction**

10.1.1 There are two potential designations where cumulative / in combination issues may occur: the Cotswolds AONB and Blenheim Palace WHS. These are briefly discussed below:

### **10.2 Cotswolds AONB**

10.2.1 The four allocation sites in the AONB are all small in scale and closely related to existing development. They are situated in different settlements spread across the AONB and as such would not have a combined impact on any one part of the AONB of an impact of any scale across the AONB as a whole. Combined / cumulative impacts are therefore not considered to be an issue in relation to the AONB.

### **10.3 Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden**

10.3.1 The three Woodstock allocation sites could all affect the setting of the Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden to differing degrees (see Sections 7.3, 8.3 and 9.3). Together they pose a more significant issue in terms of their potential in-combination impact on the wider rural setting of the WHS (see Section 7.3 for a discussion as to how the setting of the WHS contributes to its OUV).

10.3.2 The development of the entire area of all three sites would constitute a significant change to the rural landscape setting of the WHS. The partial built development of the Sites, as advocated in this document, would still result in a change in the rural setting but to a less significant degree. It is unclear however where the tipping point would occur i.e. at what point combinations of development would begin to significantly erode the rural character of the WHS's setting and hence adversely affect its OUV.

10.3.3 The current WHS Management Plan and Setting Study provides some background information but was not designed to assess the capacity of the setting of the WHS to accommodate change, rather they highlight issues that needed to be considered.

10.3.4 In terms of the allocations sites that pose the greatest in-combination risks, it is our view that the Land East of Woodstock and Parcel A of the Land North of Banbury Road (without alteration or mitigation) are the least best performing allocation sites in relation to the Blenheim Palace WHS. It should be noted however that the "Land East of Woodstock" site would

perform better if the area to the south and closest to the WHS was not subject to built development (as per recommendation).

- 10.3.5 The Land north of Hill Rise is the next best performing, with Parcels B and C of the Land north of Banbury Road the best performing in relation to the WHS.

## 11.0 CONCLUSIONS

### 11.1 Site Specific Conclusions and Recommendations

11.1.1 This section draws together the high level findings of the landscape appraisal and heritage appraisals for each allocation site and highlights conclusions and recommendations regarding their potential development.

#### **Land North of Jefferson's Piece, Charlbury**

11.1.2 Both the landscape and heritage appraisal identified that the Site is potentially suitable for development of c.35 - 40 residential units with some local constraints. While there is a degree of sensitivity with some aspects of the Site's landscape and visual context and the setting of non-designated historic buildings to the north, Section 3 includes a number of recommendations to address these sensitivities.

#### **Land East of Burford**

11.1.3 The proposed site occupies a prominent location to the east of Burford. The landscape and heritage appraisals identified a number of sensitivities particularly relating to its visual prominence in views across the AONB and towards Burford, with its conservation area and prominent listed church. While these sensitivities should not entirely rule out development it is recommended that the quantum of proposed development is reduced from c. 85 units to c. 70 units and that a number of other measures are implemented (see Section 4), these include:

- Implementing mitigation in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal;
- Ensuring development does not reinforce or further exaggerate the harsh skyline to the south of the Site caused by existing modern development;
- Ensuring that access to the Site does not extend the perception of urbanisation to the east of the Site;
- Restricting building heights to 1.5 / 2 storeys;
- Providing landscape buffers on the northern boundary and eastern boundary, with consideration of a buffer on the southern boundary;
- Ensure a generous view of Burford Church Spire from within the allocation site and ensure that the backdrop of hills to the north is maintained;

- Incorporate a large, cohesive area of semi-natural green space, in the visually prominent central parts of the site; and
- Include provision for large size species trees to be planted to ensure the built development can be perceived, in the longer term, as having a strong, well treed, green backdrop.

#### **Land South of Milton Road, Shipton-Under-Wychwood**

11.1.4 The proposed Site was considered to be largely suitable for development up to c. 40-45 homes, with some sensitivities relating to the landscape, conservation area and Registered Park and Garden. Key issues relate to the separation between Shipton-Under-Wychwood and Milton-Under-Wychwood along the stream valley and potential impacts on the setting of the Shipton Court Registered Park and Garden. In addition to the landscape design mitigation measures set out in Section 5 it is also recommended that built development is avoided in the western part of the site and restricted at the southern boundary.

#### **Land North of Woodstock Road, Stonesfield**

11.1.5 The landscape and heritage appraisal identified that the Site is potentially suitable for development of c. 50 residential units with some landscape sensitivities. Section 6 includes a number of recommendations to address these sensitivities.

#### **Land East of Woodstock**

11.1.6 This large site has slightly differing landscape and heritage sensitivity considerations. In landscape and visual terms it is considered that the site has the potential to accommodate development in the order of 270 units, with appropriate mitigation. In heritage terms there are potential issues with impacts on the wider rural setting of the WHS, particularly in combination with other sites around Woodstock, and the southern portion of the Site closest to the WHS has particular constraints in terms of the setting of the WHS. Reducing the quantum of built development on the site to around 270 units and focussing this on the northern part of the Site would leave a rural buffer alongside this part of the WHS reducing perceptions of encroachment into its rural setting.

11.1.7 It is therefore recommended that development is focussed in the northern half of the site with an overall reduced capacity for the Site to reduce the loss of rural landscape and reduce potential impacts on the WHS and its OUV.



11.1.8 In addition landscape mitigation measures would be required. The following identifies these taking into account the recommended balance between landscape and heritage considerations, they therefore differ slightly from those set out in Section 7:

- Appropriate mitigation in accordance with published landscape character guidelines, design guides, planning policy and the opportunities and constraints identified in the appraisal;
- Strengthen all existing hedgerow boundaries with a minimum of c.15m width structure planting except for that along Oxford Road which should be at least c.30m wide allowing for woodland structure or large parkland tree planting. All to be provided as advance planting.
- Ensure a highway signage design is provided as an integral part of a planning application for the access, rather than by condition, to encourage a very sensitive approach to be taken.
- Restrict residential development to mostly 2 storeys (maximum c.8m roof ridge height).
- Retain and manage existing site boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees outside of private garden plots secured by S106 legal agreement, separated from estate access roads by broad verges 5m width verges.
- Incorporate substantial areas of semi-natural green space and well- designed SuDS.
- Design of development to be generally in accordance with either the new *Urban form of development* towards the west and north of the site or the new *Rural form of development* towards the southern and eastern boundaries (as both illustrated in West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2006).
- Ensure predominantly local limestone building materials, a planting palette appropriate to local context, and that any lighting is of a cut off lantern type.

11.1.9 Potential cumulative issues in relation to the WHS are discussed in Section 10. The Land East of Woodstock is considered to present the greatest cumulative impact issues, along with Parcel A of the Land North of Banbury Road.

#### **Land North of Hill Rise, Woodstock**

11.1.10 The landscape and heritage appraisal identified that the Site is potentially suitable for development of c. 120 residential units. There are a limited number of sensitivities and a number of measures have been identified in Section 8 to address these. These include slightly reducing the extent of built development to the east to maintain separation between development and the slopes of the River Glyme valley and ensuring that development is set back from the A44 and hence the WHS.

11.1.11 Potential cumulative issues in relation to the WHS are discussed in Section 10. The Land North of Hill Rise Site is considered to present the least issues, along with Parcel C of the Land of Banbury Road.

#### **Land North of Banbury Road, Woodstock**

11.1.12 The Site contains three parcels, A, B and C, all of which have differing landscape and heritage sensitivities.

11.1.13 Parcel A is the most sensitive of the three due to its location on the hillslope above Woodstock and within a view cone from Blenheim Palace WHS. Given its sensitivities it is recommended that it is not taken forward as an allocation site.

11.1.14 Parcel B has particular sensitivities in relation to the setting of a group of listed buildings on Banbury Road. While it would be preferable to leave the parcel undeveloped, it may be possible to develop part of the parcel and retain a suitable setting for the buildings. This would enable the development of c. 2ha of land. Further mitigation would be required, as set out in Section 9.

11.1.15 Parcel C is the least sensitive of the three parcels in landscape and heritage terms, and it is recommended that development in the overall Site is focussed on Parcel C. There are some landscape and heritage sensitivities but these should be addressable through the mitigation and requirements set out in Section 9.

11.1.16 Potential cumulative issues in relation to the WHS are discussed in Section 10. Parcel A is considered to present the greatest cumulative impact issues, along with The Land East of Woodstock. Parcel B would present limited cumulative issues and Parcel C, along with the Land North of Hill Rise would present the least issues.