

3.2 INFRASTRUCTURE

This section of the Design Code provides information on, and design guidance for the landscape infrastructure and public realm. The principal purpose of this section is to set out the overarching landscape strategy for the whole development and explain and illustrate the landscape infrastructure that will provide a framework for the development areas. The landscape infrastructure will be implemented by the lead developer.

In section 4.0 of this document landscape coding for each of the character areas is provided.

This section also provides guidance on the protection of existing trees and hedgerows, new planting, children's play spaces, biodiversity and wildlife, and the management, maintenance and phasing of the open space.



The rural character of the site should be retained in areas of public open space.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The site, which extends over 190 hectares, is currently a mixture of arable and pasture farmland. Although the site is influenced to varying degrees by urban elements such as the south western edge of Bicester and the A41 dual carriageway, the site is currently extensively rural in character. A key aim of the landscape strategy is to retain the rural characteristics within the development.

The geology of the site has a marked influence on landform, drainage and landscape character. Running in a south west to north east alignment across the site is a band of underlying limestone cornbash. To the east of this limestone belt is the Otmoor Basin comprising Oxford Clays overlain by alluvial deposits.

Hedgerows line the majority of the site perimeter, which combine with surrounding woodland, hedgerows and copses to restrict the number of views in and out of the site. Within the site vegetation cover is more fragmented. Individual hedgerows within the site are mostly poor quality, with only a few in good health. However, when taken as a whole and in combination with the four copses, they provide an important landscape structure subdividing the site.

Published documents that have informed the landscape strategy include:

- Cherwell District Landscape Assessment, November 1995.
- Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS).
- Cherwell Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
- Recreation and Amenity Open Space Provision 2004.

The site lies within two landscape character areas: namely, the 'Wooded Estatelands' and 'Clay Vale' (refer to the OWLS assessment (owls@oxfordshire.gov.uk). All landscape proposals should be cognitive of the landscape characteristics and objectives set out for these character areas.

The landscape strategy has a series of overarching design objectives. These are to:

- Ensure that development is successfully integrated into the landscape, being both sensitive and responsive to landscape character and its setting.
- Provide a comprehensive network of green spaces linked by a non-vehicular movement network.
- Retain the alignment of the two existing public rights of way that currently cross the site.
- Protect and enhance the existing vegetation on site, including the hedgerows, copses and individual trees of value.
- Retain the existing watercourse and ditches as positive features within areas of open space.
- Be responsive to, and make use of, variations in topography, in particular the intimate valley east of Whitelands Farm and forming the edge to Whitelands character area.
- Protect the setting of Chesterton including the conservation area and listed buildings.

- Aid legibility by creating vistas to and views of existing features such as Whitelands Farm and Bicester church.
- Retain the rural character of the site by using extensively native plant species.
- Create a landscape that maximises the potential for biodiversity and wildlife.
- Create a development that encourages healthy living.
- Include planting and landscape features that contribute to sustainability and the achievement of Code for Sustainable Homes standards
- Ensure public areas are safe and attractive spaces, clearly distinct from private areas.
- Ensure that a landscape management regime is established that will deliver a major new landscape and recreational asset for future generations.

All Reserved Matters submissions should ensure these key objectives are achieved.



Nature conservation and biodiversity is a central component of the landscape strategy.

Photo 1 Example of brook in public park: Fordingbridge

Photo 2 Recreation ground with natural landscape edge: Kirtlington

3.2 continued:
Infrastructure

Landscape framework

For the landscape infrastructure, a series of landscape framework plans have been produced. These demonstrate how existing vegetation and new planting, the pedestrian and cycle routes, watercourses and swales, public open space including parks, greenways, urban squares, children's play spaces and pocket parks all combine to create a strong and interlocking landscape structure.

Together these elements combine to create the landscape framework – figure 3.3

Bletchington

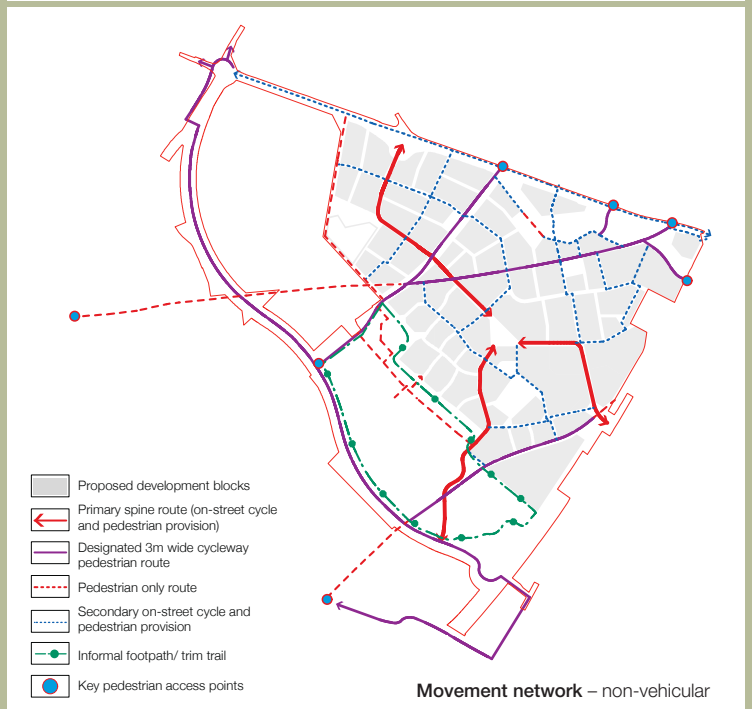
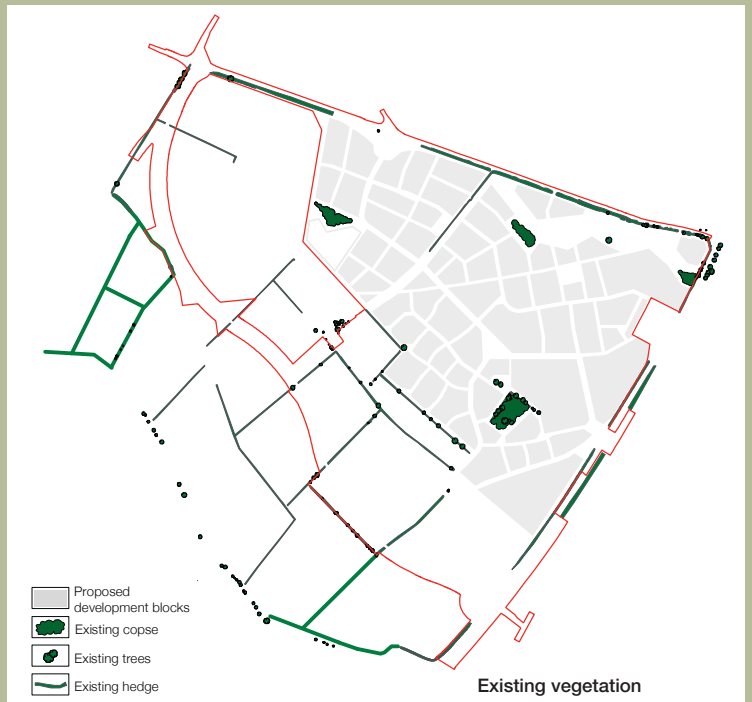


Figure 3.2 Landscape elements
Mandatory elements are noted on Figure 3.3.



Note: 5m high lighting columns will be required along all designated 3m wide cycleway / pedestrian routes. Spacing of columns and lighting levels will be determined at reserved matters stage to take account of ambient lighting from adjacent housing.