2

Kidlington

Kidlington is an enlarged village, located in the Clay Vale of Otmoor, between the attractive green corridors of the River Cherwell and Oxford Canal. Kidlington emerged as a dispersed group of medieval hamlets focused on and around St Mary's Church and the Town Green in the east and Kidlington Green to the west. The remaining historic streets are built predominantly of Cotswold limestone with some later red brick buildings.

With the arrival of the canal in the eighteenth century and the railway in the nineteenth century, the settlement began to expand westwards. Rapid growth came in the twentieth century in response to Oxford's population pressure. Ribbon development of semi-detached and bungalow properties along Oxford to

Banbury Road and on large plots around the Moors was followed by the development of a 'Garden City' to the south led by the District Council and later on the growth of cul-de-sac based estates which limit east-west connectivity.

Unlike Banbury and Bicester, Kidlington does not have a medieval or Victorian civic centre. The village centre dates mainly from the late-twentieth century and relates poorly in character and scale to the pockets of remaining historic residential streets, some which are now designated as Conservation Areas.

Future development within Kidlington should look to strengthen the character of the village, and create a distinctive heart to the settlement in the village centre.
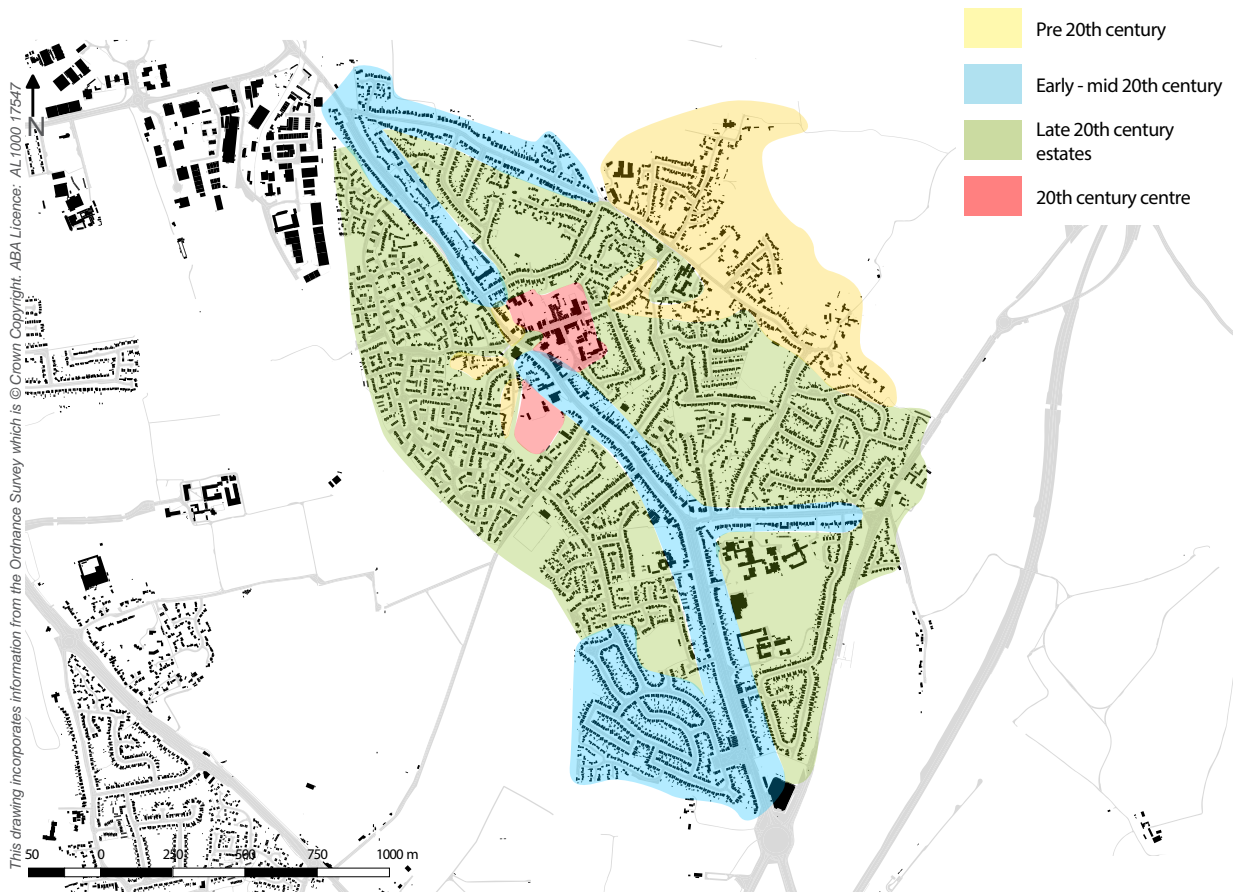

Figure 2.5 Kidlington

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Legend:
- Pre 20th century
- Early - mid 20th century
- Late 20th century estates
- 20th century centre

Scale: 50 0 250 500 750 1000 m

Key characteristics include:
- Small pockets of historic development
- 20th century centre which lacks character and consistency
- Many of the suburbs have been guided by Garden Suburb principles, with tree-lined avenue and stretches of terrace or semi-detached properties

Kidlington village centre (top), low rise ribbon development on Oxford Road (bottom)

Franklin Close (top), The Moors (middle), typical Garden City housing (bottom)

2.3 Countryside Character Areas

2

The character of the district varies from north to south, with ironstone to the north and limestone to the south. There are more subtle distinctions which are described in the Council's Countryside Design Summary, CDC (1998).

This classifies the District into four geographic character areas reflecting the influence of landscape and geology (figure 2.6):

• The Cherwell Valley
• The Iron Stone Downs
• The Ploughley Limestone Plateau
• The Clay Vale of Otmoor

A summary of the distinctive characteristics of each area is provided in table 2.1. The Countryside Design Summary notes that variation occurs at the more local level, from village to village, street to street and building to building, but each area displays an overall character which distinguishes it from the others.

Cherwell Valley

Ironstone Downs
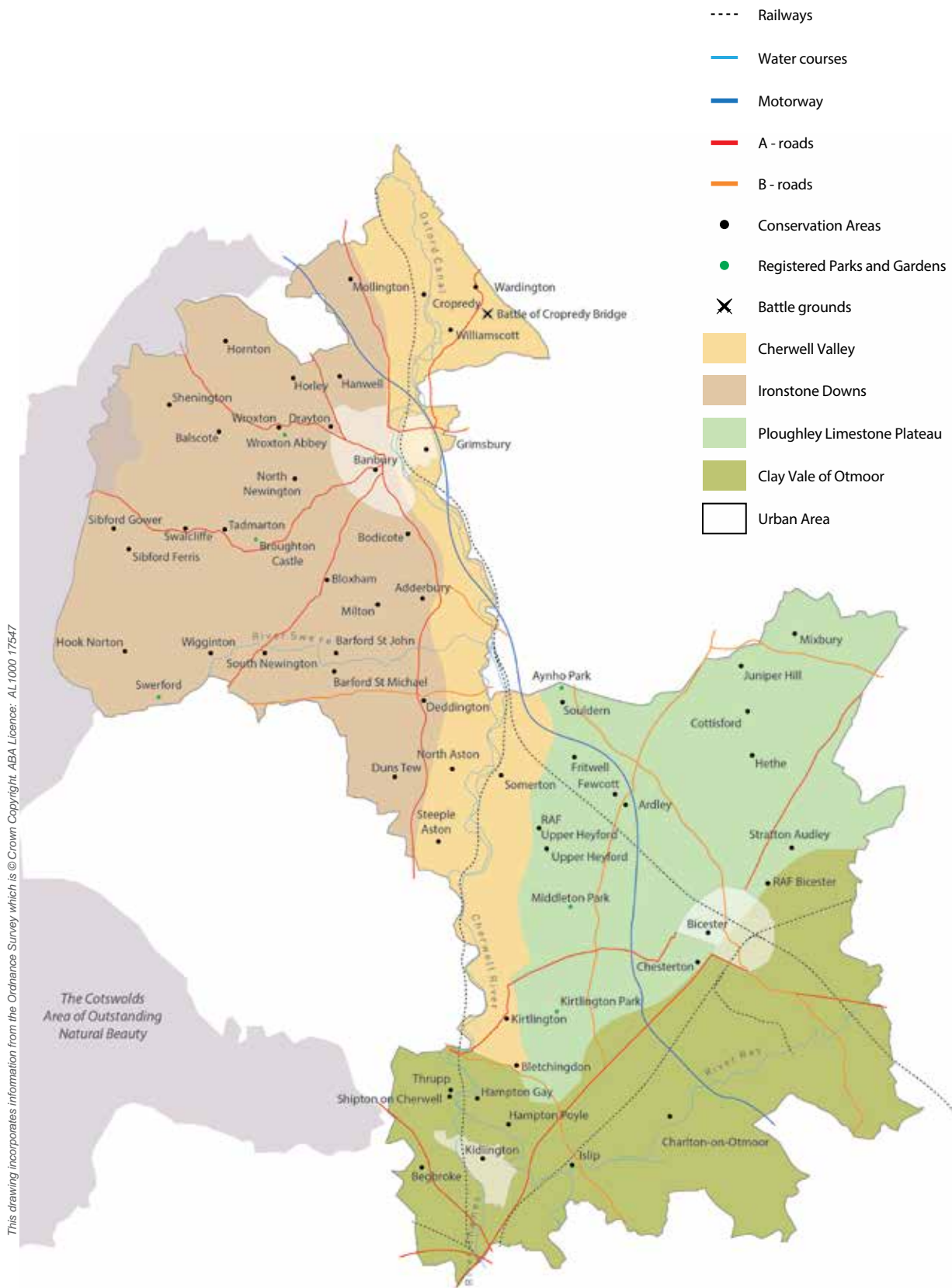

Ploughly Limestone Plateau

Clay Vale of Otmoor

Figure 2.6 Cherwell District countryside character areas
and heritage assets

The north and central valley

2

	Cherwell Valley	Ironstone Downs
Location	Runs north-south across the District following the River Cherwell.	Northern half of the District to the west of the Cherwell Valley.
Landscape	To the north, a wide rolling valley dissecting the Ironstone Downs with a flat floor which floods seasonally. The valley narrows south of Banbury across limestone beds then flattens out over the Clay Vale. The Oxford Canal, Banbury to Oxford Railway and M40 are significant features of the valley floor.	An upland plateau-like landscape of mixed farmland, incised by very steep and often narrow valleys in the north. The land rises to the west forming an upland ridge with extensive views. The south has steeply sided, convoluted valleys with narrow valley floors and rolling, rounded hill lines. The Ironstone Downs consists of marlstone rock beds overlying middle and lower lias clays.
Settlement patterns	Settlements are mostly located on the valley slopes and have agricultural origins. Some have been influenced by the canal and railway. Linear settlement form is most common reflecting growth along a main movement route. Others are nucleated around road junctions. Village streets are mainly open in character with a variety of open spaces.	Numerous small, closely spaced settlements of agricultural origin, with larger villages located to the south. Villages are positioned in valley locations either on the valley sides, at the head of the valley or on the brow of the hill. Villages are generally only visually prominent where the valleys are open and wide. Villages have linear or nucleated forms or enclose areas of open land.
Buildings	Mainly two storey terraced or detached cottages, facing the streets and close to the kerb or behind stone walls. Steeply pitched roofs. Front gardens are uncommon.	Mainly two storey terraced and detached houses, the majority of which face the street. Roof pitches are steep with brick stacks on the ridge line. Buildings are often located at the back of pavement or set back behind ironstone walls. Trees and hedgerows are important features of the streetscene.
Materials	Ironstone from Clifton northwards, limestone to the south. Some villages have a mixture. Welsh slate and engineering brick also evident. Dark toned plain slate and tile roofs or thatch.	Ironstone walling except at Duns Tew where limestone predominates. Early nineteenth century brick buildings in villages close to Banbury. Thatch and stone slate roofs, often replaced with plain dark grey slates, tiles and Welsh slate.

The south

	Ploughley Limestone Plateau	Clay Vale of Otmoor
Location	Central part of the District, east of the Cherwell Valley.	Southern part of the District.
Landscape	A number of exposed upland plateaux in the north and west dip gently into rolling undulations and shallow valleys to the southeast. There are extensive areas of woodland cover. White limestone in the north gives way to cornbrash further south, both of the great oolitic group.	A low lying clay vale which rises gently to the north and west, and sharply to the south to form the Oxford Heights. The land is waterlogged, although extensive drainage has enabled more than half of the land to become arable farmland. Otmoor is an important grassland habitat designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
Settlement patterns	Most villages are small and linear in form. They are not prominent in the landscape due to landform and woodland cover. A few villages have a formal unity of design which suggests they are planned estate villages e.g. Kirtlington.	Settlements are mostly located just above the level of the floodplain often on outcrops of cornbrash. Villages are small and generally linear in form. Some have an open, unstructured character with properties set back behind stone walls, gardens and hedges. Others have a tighter, urban structure.
Buildings	A mix of mostly two storey terraced and detached properties, with fairly steeply pitched roofs and brick chimney stacks on the roofline. Buildings face onto streets and public spaces, but larger properties may be set back some distance behind limestone walls. Iron railings are also used.	Mostly two storey detached, with groups of terraces in some villages. Steeply pitched roofs with chimneys on the rooflines. Buildings mainly face streets. Detached properties have a variety of forms and often set back at varying depths from the road producing an irregular street frontage.
Materials	Limestone rubble, coursed and thinly bedded. Red brick. Red and occasionally blue bricks are used for quoins and detailing in 19th century estate cottages. Thatch and stone slate roofs, many now replaced by local clay tile and welsh slate.	Limestone in most of the area. Red brick buildings and detailing also found. Ornamental and whitewashed brickwork is more common across this area. Roofs were traditionally thatched, now mostly replaced with plain dark toned slates and tiles and in some areas plain, red clay tiles.

2

Reference should also be made to the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study. http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk. This divides the District into 19 landscape types (see figure 2.7) which sit within Natural England's National Character Areas. Landscape and biodiversity guidance is provided for each.
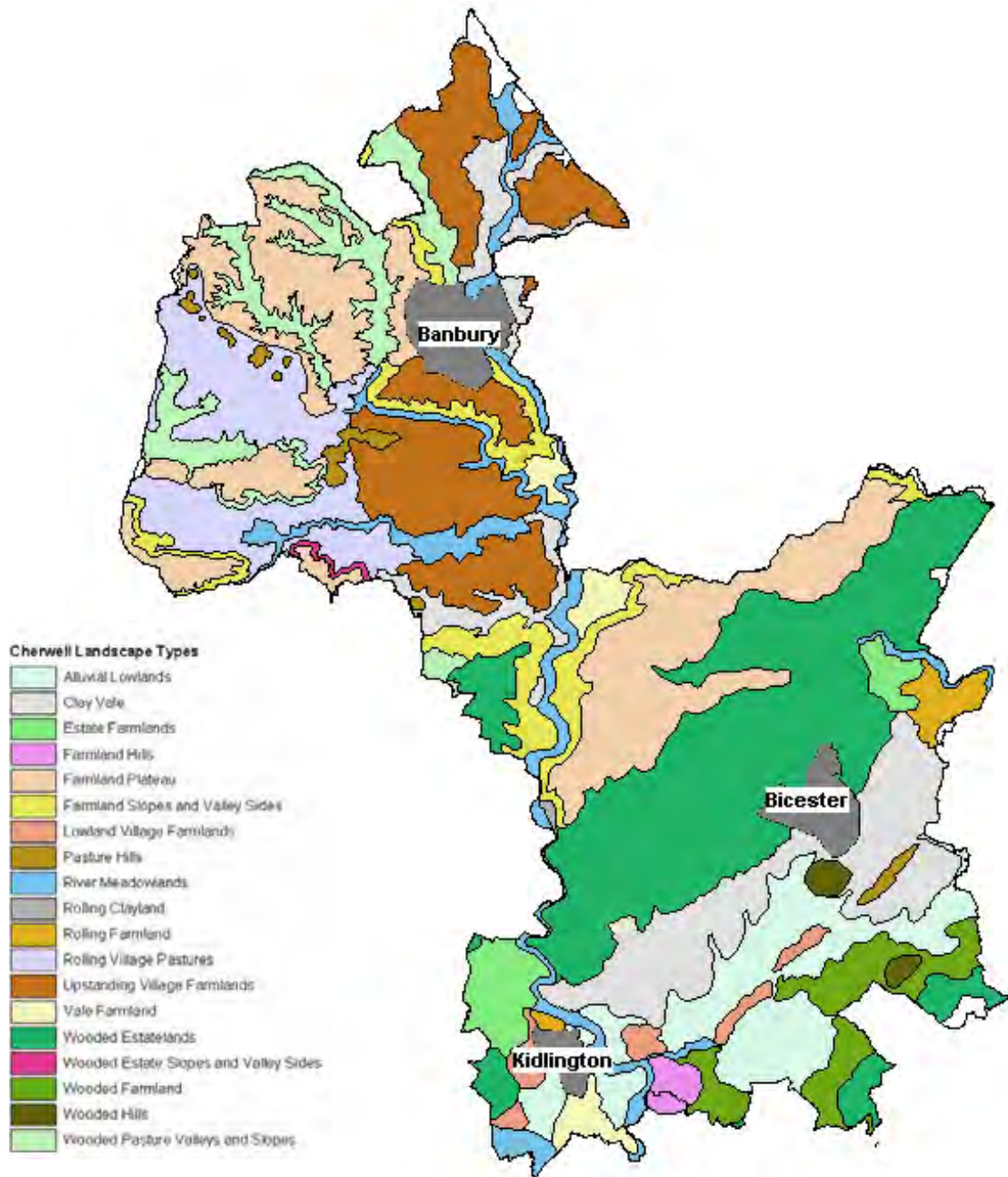

Cherwell Landscape Types

- Alluvial Lowlands
- Clay Vale
- Estate Farmlands
- Farmland Hills
- Farmland Plateau
- Farmland Slopes and Valley Sides
- Lowland Village Farmlands
- Pasture Hills
- River Meadowlands
- Rolling Clayland
- Rolling Farmland
- Rolling Village Pastures
- Upstanding Village Farmlands
- Vale Farmland
- Wooded Estatelands
- Wooded Estate Slopes and Valley Sides
- Wooded Farmland
- Wooded Hills
- Wooded Pasture Valleys and Slopes

Figure 2.7 Cherwell landscape types (source: OWLS)

3

Understanding the characteristics of a site and its wider setting are fundamental to good masterplanning and design solutions.

This chapter explains the process of information gathering, analysis and synthesis leading to a clear understanding of site constraints and opportunities. This should be undertaken in the preparation for outline, full and reserved matters planning applications.

New development in Cherwell should promote:

- Meaningful analysis which is appropriate to the stage and nature of the project and positively informs the project brief and design process
- Designs which are responsive to local conditions, which fit naturally with the landscape and settlement pattern and are distinctive to Cherwell
- Engagement with the Council and local stakeholders during the analysis process

New development should avoid:

- The creation of 'anywhere places' which do not respond to local context
- Analysis which focuses on detail and fails to consider bigger picture issues
- A lack of engagement with Council Officers in the early stages of the design process
- Responding to the wrong context, for example: taking precedent from poor quality development.
- Failure to synthesise the information gathered that leads to a design that does not respond to the issues identified

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Please refer to the following chapters for supporting information:
- **Chapter 2:** For a summary of the District's distinctive characteristics and character areas
- **Chapter 4:** For details of how the site analysis should be interpreted in the masterplan and vision
- **Chapter 5-7:** For details of how site analysis should inform the detailed design of streets, plots and buildings
- **Chapter 8**: For guidance on sustainability considerations
- **Appendix A:** List of Conservation Areas within the District

Further reading:

- **Urban Design Compendium, 2007, English Partnerships**: Chapter 2 - Appreciating the Context for further detail on human, environmental and economic factors to consider in site analysis and their relationship to site feasibility testing and vision.

3.1 Understanding the site and its context

3

Analysis of the site and its context is a fundamental part of the design process. The aim is to understand and respond positively to the site's characteristics and the surrounding context to create a distinctive place rooted in the local environment.

Every site has a different social, economic and physical context and requires a bespoke design response. It is critical that the development context is understood at the very start of the design process to inform the design brief and commercial decisions relating to site selection. Not all sites will be appropriate for development and initial analysis and consultation with the council will be important in determining a site's suitability.

The role of analysis is to:
• Establish where you should and shouldn't build within a site and within a settlement
• Establish important points of connectivity
• Identify site features requiring protection or enhancement
• Identify local townscape and landscape characteristics so that they can be reinforced through the development
• Understand Council, local stakeholder and statutory consultee requirements for the site
• Directly inform the brief for the masterplan and the design solution

Alongside a desk based review of existing documents, the Council will expect to see evidence of site visits and primary analysis of the site and the surrounding area. It is expected that the design team will engage with technical stakeholders including Council Planning Officers to agree the scope of analysis, gather information and discuss the appropriate design response.

It is expected that a robust analysis should be set out within the Design and Access Statement to explain how design decisions have been made.

The extent and breadth of analysis should be appropriate to the size and location of the site (see figure 3.1).

Site analysis should continue throughout the design process with an increasing level of detail as a scheme moves towards implementation.

For example in relation to townscape analysis:
Outline application: layout informed by an analysis of characteristic street patterns, block and building typologies and relationship to the street, alongside a general exploration of architectural form, character and detail.

Full or reserved matters application: detailed design informed by a detailed analysis of vernacular architecture, local building and public realm materials and details.

Small infill site

Large edge of town site

◯ Detailed analysis
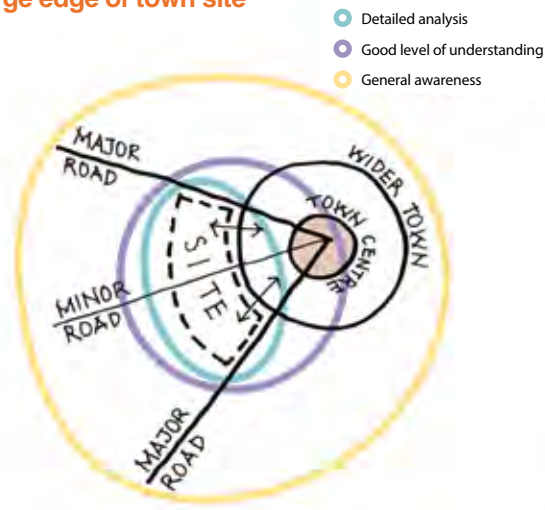◯ Good level of understanding
◯ General awareness

Figure 3.1 Indicative extent of analysis

The table below provides a list of typical topics which should be included in the analysis process, together with likely sources of information. This is not an exhaustive list and should be tailored to the specific site, but can be used as a starting point or aide mémoire. The list of 'Questions to address' provides guidance on how site analysis should be used to inform a synthesis of constraints and opportunities.

Questions in bold are of particular relevance to Full or Reserved Matters Applications.

Planning review and socio-economics	
Details	Planning history of the site Adjacent developments / proposals Relevant planning policy including housing, open space and other land use requirements Neighbourhood plans Demographic characteristics Access to services and facilities

Questions to address:	1. Is the principle of development acceptable in planning terms / is the site allocated in the Local Plan?
	2. Is the site located within a neighbourhood plan area?
	3. What is the most appropriate mix of uses on the site to meet community needs?
	   • housing mix?
	   • new facilities and services e.g. education, healthcare, employment, retail?
	   • open space?
	4. Are there adjacent sites which should be considered in a joined-up way?
	5. Who should be consulted during the design process and when (e.g. Parish Council, Neighbourhood Forum, adjacent landowners or statutory consultees)?
	6. How were previous schemes for the site received by the Council and local community?
	7. Can an appropriate scheme be developed given constraints, commercial and operational viability?

Sources of background information	CDC Office for National Statistics

Views and sightlines	
Details	Important views into and out of the site Landmarks
Questions to address:	8. Where are the key views into and out of the site that the scheme should preserve / enhance? 9. Are there sensitive visual receptors e.g. adjacent properties or heritage assets and how should the scheme respond to these?
Sources of background information	Site visits Conservation Area Appraisals

3

	Townscape character
Details	Settlement evolution and pattern Relevant District Character Area Local street and building characteristics Land use mix Site edge conditions Conservation Areas Heritage assets Archaeology
Questions to address:	10. What District Character Area is the site located within and what are the key characteristics of landscape and townscape? 11. Does the site or context contain designated and/or non-designated heritage or townscape assets (e.g. Conservation Area, listed building, locally listed building designations) or is it within the setting of any such assets? How can the significance, special interest, character and appearance of these assets be conserved or enhanced?" 12. Where should development be located within the site to respect the natural limits of the settlement and its historic pattern? 13. Where is the site located within the overall hierarchy of the settlement e.g. centre, edge, standalone? 14. What are the conditions at the edge of the site and how should the scheme respond e.g. housing backing/fronting, open space, woodland, other uses? **15. How might the scheme reflect locally distinctive relationships between buildings and the public realm e.g. extent of frontage, angle of buildings to the street, boundary treatments?** **16. How might the scheme reflect locally distinctive building forms, groupings, heights, rooflines and architectural details, wall and surface materials?**
Sources of background information	Historic maps CDC Countryside Design Statement Conservation Area Appraisals OCC Historic Environment Record Historic England register of listed buildings CDC for local listings Site visits / surveys

	Landscape and topography
Details	Ecology and Habitat designations Mature trees, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and hedgerows Treebelts and woodlands Watercourses Topography and geology Public open space provision within the settlement
Questions to address:	17. Does the site or context contain protected or important landscapes, habitats or species? How can these be preserved and enhanced? 18. Is there a natural limit to the settlement defined by landscape / topography? 19. How should the scheme work with and make the most topography and existing landscape features e.g. hedgerows, green corridors, high-points, mature trees on and adjacent to the site?
Sources of background information	CDC Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) MAGIC website (www.magic.gov.uk) Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) website Natural England British Geological Survey website Ordnance Survey maps Site ecology/ arboricultural surveys Site visits

3

	Movement network
Details	Planned transport works Potential access points into the site Distance to public facilities, shops, services and employment uses Existing movement routes through the site and in the surrounding settlement: streets hierarchy, footpaths, bridleways, informal and historic routes Future desire lines Public transport routes and stops Car parking requirements
Questions to address:	20. Where can access and connection to the wider network be gained? 21. Are there capacity constraints in the local highway network which limit the quantum of development or will require new highways infrastructure? 22. How might the scheme layout respond to existing and future desire lines e.g. to local shops, schools, open space? 23. Are there existing movement routes (roads, footpath, cycle routes etc) which should be retained? 24. How can the scheme connect into the surrounding street and footpath/cycleway network? 25. How does the site relate to existing public transport routes? Is there an opportunity to route these through the site? 26. What is the appropriate amount and arrangement of car and cycle parking within the scheme?
Sources of background information	CDC Local Transport Plan (OCC) Other OCC guidance e.g. parking standards Ordnance Survey maps Public transport operators websites Site visits

	Physical constraints
Details	Flooding – fluvial and surface Noise Smell Utilities corridors Contamination Archaeology Microclimate
Questions to address:	27. Are there existing buildings on the site? 28. Do the site levels present any access and construction issues? 29. Does the site have access to utilities; are there utilities constraints e.g. easements? 30. Are there ditches, ponds and water courses running through the site? 31. Is the site at risk of fluvial or surface water flooding? 32. What is the appropriate sustainable drainage response to the topography / geology of the site? 33. Does contamination within the site constrain development? 34. Does the site suffer from noise pollution which constrains development or requires mitigation? 35. Are there any smells / air pollution issues which need to be mitigated? 36. Are there any earthworks / archaeological constraints that need to be investigated / surveyed? 37. Are there any microclimate issues that need to be considered in relation to wind, overshadowing etc.?
Sources of background information	Environment Agency CDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Statutory undertakers Utility providers Site survey

3.2 Opportunities and constraints

Analysis should be sifted and synthesised to draw out the key constraints and opportunities and inform the brief for the masterplan.

The site analysis process should be broad and layered, fed by multiple sources of information (see figure 3.2). Following information gathering and initial analysis, the issues and details which are important for the scheme are drawn out.

The key findings of the analysis process should be communicated in an opportunities and constraints plan.

This should:
• Overlay key physical constraints and areas unsuitable for built development
• Identify key features of the site and context
• Identify opportunities for reinforcing existing features as part of a green infrastructure strategy
• Identify site access opportunities and connections to the surrounding movement network
• Identify initial design opportunities in response to site conditions including the potential extent of development

The project brief should be refined in light of the opportunities and constraints analysis, which forms a robust foundation for the masterplan.

Figure 3.2 Site analysis process