

London Oxford Airport

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

with Assessment of Impact on the Visual Openness of the Green Belt

Revision A

February 2023

colvin&
moggridge

Filkins, Lechlade,
Gloucestershire, GL73JQ
t +44 (0)1367 860225
e filkins@colmog.co.uk
www.colmog.co.uk

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	4
2. Assessment Methodology	4
3. Baseline Description	
3.1 Existing site	7
3.2 Landscape Character	10
3.3 Topography	12
3.4 Landscape Designations	13
3.5 Historic Landscape Context	14
4. The Proposals	16
5. Relevant Planning Policies	18
6. Assessment of Impacts	
6.1 Assessment of Landscape Impacts	20
6.2 Assessment of Visual Impacts	21
7. Residual Effects and Significance	33
8. Landscape Enhancement	33
9. Conclusion	33
10. Appendix A: Assessment of impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt	34

1. Introduction

Colvin and Moggridge were commissioned by London Oxford Airport to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed development of aviation-related research units and development accommodation.

This report is structured as follows:

- Assessment Methodology (Section 2).
- Baseline description, which provides a brief account of the existing site and an overview of landscape character, topography, relevant designations and historic landscape context (Section 3).
- Project description and design, which provides written and drawn information about the development proposals that are subject to assessment (Section 4).
- Description of the relevant planning policies affecting the site (Section 5).
- Systematic assessment and description of potential impacts upon the landscape and visual amenity, prediction of their magnitude and assessment of their significance (Section 6).
- Description of landscape enhancement proposals offered alongside the main design (Section 7).
- Assessment of the likely residual effects on the landscape and visual amenity after mitigation and their significance (Section 8).
- Summary conclusion of findings (Section 9).

In addition, Colvin and Moggridge were asked to consider the impact of the proposals upon the visual openness of the Green Belt. A short report, distinct from the assessment of general visual impact, is included as Appendix A.

2. Assessment Methodology

This assessment is based on the following best practice guidance:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition, Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) herein referred to as 'LI/IEMA Guidance', and
- Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/2011, 2011).

The LI/IEMA Guidance makes the following distinction between landscape and visual impacts:

".. landscape impacts and visual impacts are separate, but related. Landscape impacts are changes in the fabric, character and quality of the landscape. Visual impacts relate solely to changes in available views of the landscape, and the effects of those changes on people. Landscape and visual impacts do not necessarily coincide."

Impacts can be beneficial as well as adverse.

The purpose of the LVIA is to assess the significance of the proposed change. Assessments are not absolute, but based on value judgements.

The significance of the effects of a development on the landscape and visual resource are based upon the predicted potential impact in relation to the existing baseline conditions. It is therefore important to understand both the receiving environment and the nature of the change or impact.

The consideration of 'receptors' includes:

- The level at which the affected receptor is important in policy terms (international, national, regional or local).
- The sensitivity of the receptor to the type of change or development proposed. The methodology takes account of the effects of seasonal changes on landscape sensitivity by considering views of the landscape in winter.

The consideration of the change or impact includes:

- Direct and indirect (secondary) effects.

- Magnitude or size of the change predicted.
- Geographical extent of the area which the change will influence.
- Duration of the effect and its reversibility/degree of permanence.

When assessing the impacts of the development proposals, the LI/IEMA Guidelines recommend the development of 'thresholds of significance'. In order to do this, each of the following factors are graded: landscape quality (highest to poorest), landscape sensitivity (high to low), receptor sensitivity (high to low) and magnitude of change resulting from the development proposals (high to negligible). The sensitivity and magnitude findings can then be entered in a significance scoring grid (see page 6).

Assessing the significance of landscape and visual impacts relies upon common sense, experience and reasoned judgement, supported by substantiated evidence. An assessor may, for example, consider changes of a relatively low magnitude to be significant if they relate to a highly sensitive (or 'important' or 'vulnerable') landscape or visual resource.

The LI/IEMA Guidance advises that "Every project will require its own set of criteria and thresholds, tailored to suit local conditions and circumstances." Accordingly, a number of criteria have been developed for this project in relation to landscape quality and sensitivity, visual sensitivity and magnitude of change. These are set out on the following pages.

Landscape Quality

Highest Quality Landscape	Includes the most aesthetically attractive landscape. Areas of particular natural beauty perceived as special in a regional or national context. Nationally designated land such as National Parks, AONBs etc.
Very Attractive Landscape	Areas include historic and designated landscape and diverse, seminatural or farmed landscape with natural features. Normally abundant woodland cover together with a high distribution of trees, hedgerows and shrubs, streams, brooks and other naturalized unpolluted water corridors may be present. Several local landscape designations may apply, including Conservation Areas, and some historical or cultural sites may be present.
Good Quality Landscape	Countryside with some variety in farmland cover. Settlements and villages with pockets of open space and public recreation areas. There is a reasonable distribution of semi-natural vegetation, trees and shrub cover and the overall view of the area is pleasant. Local landscape designations of cultural and historic value may be present.
Ordinary Quality Landscape	Typical open agricultural land where attractive features are offset by detractors. Some strategic planning is evident but development is primarily functional including housing estates, business parks or urban fringe land uses. Not particularly aesthetically attractive, but with more value than a poor quality landscape. Land may be within a Green Belt or have a local landscape designation.
Poor Quality Landscape	Includes detractors such as powerlines, industrial derelict or inappropriate built forms with no aesthetic value or evidence of strategic planning. There is lack of mature vegetation cover and no landscape designations apply. Intensively farmed landscape, which has lost most of its features.

Landscape Sensitivity

High	A landscape of strong positive characteristics, maintained in a good condition or one that is particularly valued for its scenic quality; the character of the landscape, existing land use, landscape features, pattern and scale are intolerant of change and offer few opportunities for successful mitigation or landscape enhancement; and the landscape may be a good example of a locally scarce landscape type.
Medium	A landscape that exhibits some strong characteristics but may have been slightly degraded or one that is moderately valued despite its alteration, perhaps a locally important landscape; the character of the landscape, land use, pattern and scale offers some opportunities for successful mitigation and landscape enhancement; and the landscape may be a poor example of a locally scarce landscape type or a good example of a locally abundant landscape type.
Low	A landscape of few positive characteristics, poor condition or one that is not particularly valued for its scenic quality; the character of the landscape, existing land use, pattern and scale are tolerant of change and offer substantial opportunities for successful mitigation and landscape enhancement; and the landscape may be a poor example of a locally abundant landscape type.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

High	Occupiers of residential properties and users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape.
Medium	Users of outdoor recreational facilities including people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation other than an appreciation of the landscape and temporary or transient users such as caravan parks and holiday cottages.
Low	People at their place of work and people travelling through or past the affected landscape in cars or other modes of transport.

Magnitude of Change (landscape and visual)

High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements, characteristics or views of the existing conditions. Introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic of the existing character and view.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more elements, features, characteristic or views of the existing conditions. Introduction of elements that will be prominent but not necessarily considered to be substantially uncharacteristic of the existing character and views.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features, characteristics or views of the existing conditions. Introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the existing landscape and views.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features, characteristics or views of the existing conditions. Introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding existing landscape and views. Approximating the 'no change' situation.
None	No perceptible impact upon the landscape or views, or short-term temporary impacts during construction only.

The site is considered to be within a landscape of poor quality due to industrial dereliction and the low aesthetic value of surrounding buildings. The interior of the site is in very poor condition with few positive characteristics and reads as a derelict site within developed land; it is therefore considered to be lowest sensitivity and very tolerant to change. Both the landscape and visual effects have been assessed on the basis of this categorisation.

When determining the magnitude of change and significance of the landscape or visual effect of the proposals the following thresholds, i.e. combinations of sensitivity and magnitude have been used as a starting point, consistent with LI/IEMA Guidance. Where adjustments have been considered necessary to accurately reflect the effects, the reasons for doing so have been explained in the individual viewpoint text.

Significance Scoring

MAGNITUDE: High	Moderate	Major	Major
MAGNITUDE: Medium	Minor	Moderate	Major
MAGNITUDE: Low	Minor	Minor	Moderate
MAGNITUDE: Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
MAGNITUDE: None	None	None	None
	SENSITIVITY: Low	SENSITIVITY: Medium	SENSITIVITY: High

3. Baseline Description

3.1 Existing Site

London Oxford Airport is located in Kidlington, approximately 3 miles north of Oxford city centre, in the Cherwell District Council administrative area and within the Oxford Green Belt. The airport provides a wide range of aviation-related services as well as general and business flight facilities, including engineering, design and refurbishment, training, flight crew provision, management and charter support services.

London Oxford Airport (LOA) covers approximately 600 acres on a pentagonal plot. It is bordered by the A4260 Banbury Road in the east, The Straight Mile in the north, and the A4095 Upper Campsfield and A44 Woodstock Roads to the west (see Figure 1). Access to the airport is via Langford Lane, in the south.

The majority of the airport landholding is given over to grassland and agriculture, but a developed core of approximately 60 acres is located in the south-east of the site and accommodates the airport terminal, administrative buildings, hangars and other associated facilities.

The focus of this study is a corner plot within the developed core at the junction between Langford Lane and The Boulevard (see Figure 1). The eastern part of the site is dominated by the remains of a demolished 1960's building, Langford Hall, and temporary parking; the western half of the site is developed with hangars and other buildings which are of no or limited architectural merit. The whole site is currently within the Green Belt. Mature trees flank the eastern boundary along The Boulevard and a mature hedge runs along Langford Lane to the south. However, a number of trees on the north-eastern boundary and within the site have been heavily pollarded to discourage bird nesting.

The site is surrounded by airport buildings to the north and west, by office buildings in attractive mature landscape settings to the east and by recent tech park development on the opposite side of Langford Lane in the south. The airport are keen to redevelop this corner plot for aviation-related research and development accommodation.



Demolished Langford Hall



Aerial view (credit: Google maps)



Airport gateway



Neighbouring industrial buildings along Langford Lane



Looking south-west across the site from the existing entrance north of The Boulevard



Looking south-west into the site from the neighbouring Elsevier car park



Looking north-west into the site

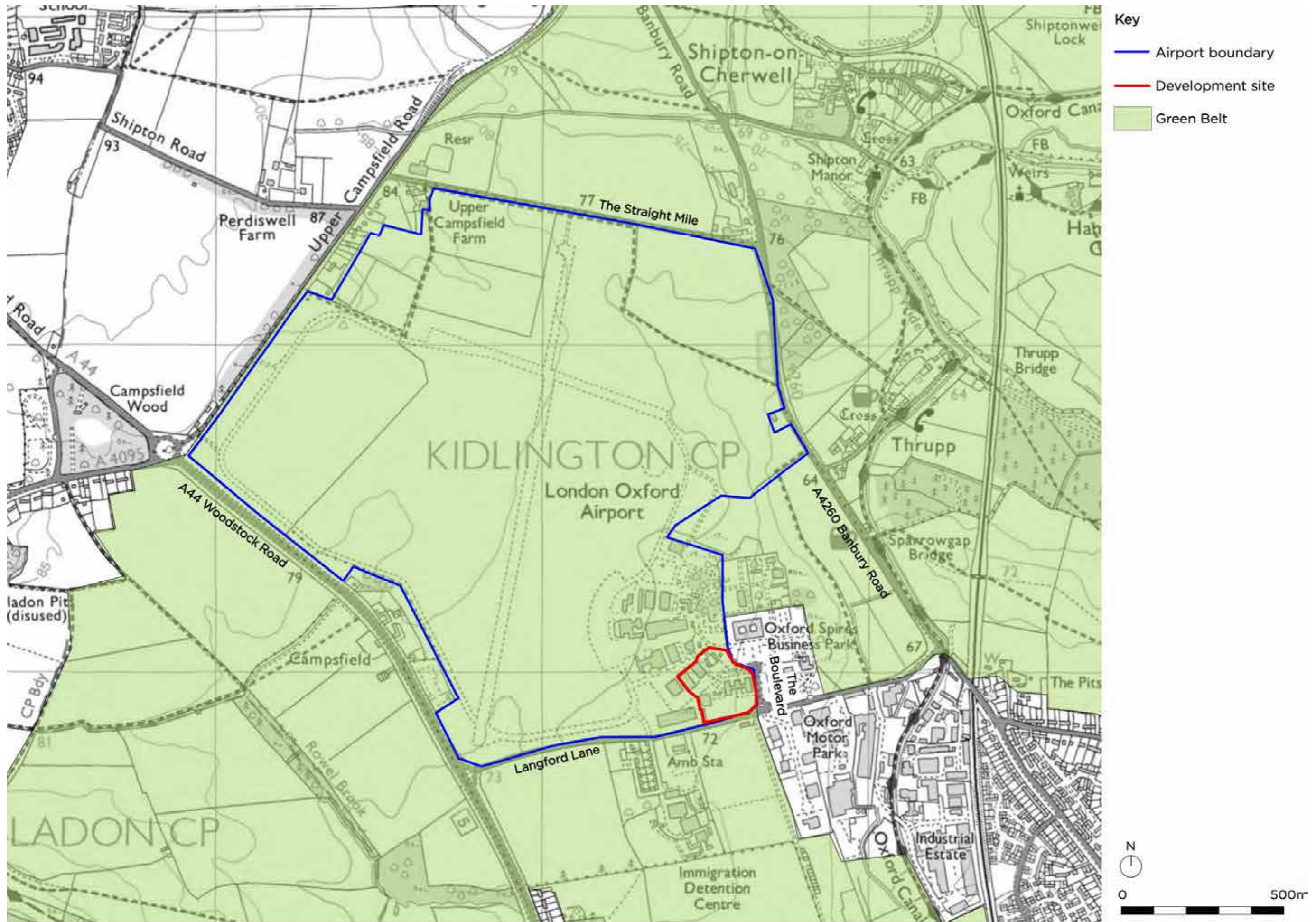


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

3.2 Landscape Character

National Landscape Character Areas

London Oxford Airport lies within National Character Area 108: The Upper Thames Clay Vales, as defined by Natural England (see Figure 2).

The Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA is a broad band of open, gently undulating lowland farmland on predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site falls within the NCA, along with around 5,000 ha of the North Wessex Downs

AONB and smaller areas of the Chilterns AONB and the Cotswolds AONB. There are contrasting landscapes, including enclosed pastures of the clay lands with wet valleys, mixed farming, hedges, hedge trees and field trees and more settled, open, arable lands. Mature field oaks give a parkland feel in many places.

Regional Landscape Character Types

The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study identifies 24 different Landscape Character Types within the County. The development site falls within Landscape Character Type 4: Estate Farmlands (see Figure 3).

As a landscape type, Estate Farmlands are characterised by:

- 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.

Whilst the wider airport landholding exhibits some regularly-shaped, hedged fields where compatible with airport uses, none of these characteristics are evident at the development site or its immediate setting which is characterised by hangars and industrial development.

Relevant landscape strategy guidelines to safeguard and enhance the Estate Farmlands landscape type include:

- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering where necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Priority should be given to safeguarding and maintaining existing species-rich hedges through coppicing, layering and replanting where necessary with shrub species such as blackthorn, field maple, dogwood and spindle.
- Minimise the potential visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.

The biodiversity strategy guidelines for this landscape type seek to safeguard and enhance priority and locally important habitats; and to promote agri-environment schemes to benefit biodiversity in general, with protected species and farmland birds in particular.

Cherwell District Council Landscape Assessment

At local level, the 2017 Cherwell Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies the site as being within the Lower Cherwell Floodplain character area (see Figure 4) and Landscape Type T4 Airfields (operational and disused).

Lower Cherwell Floodplain is located to the south of Cherwell District where the River Cherwell joins the River Ray and River Thames in an open valley.

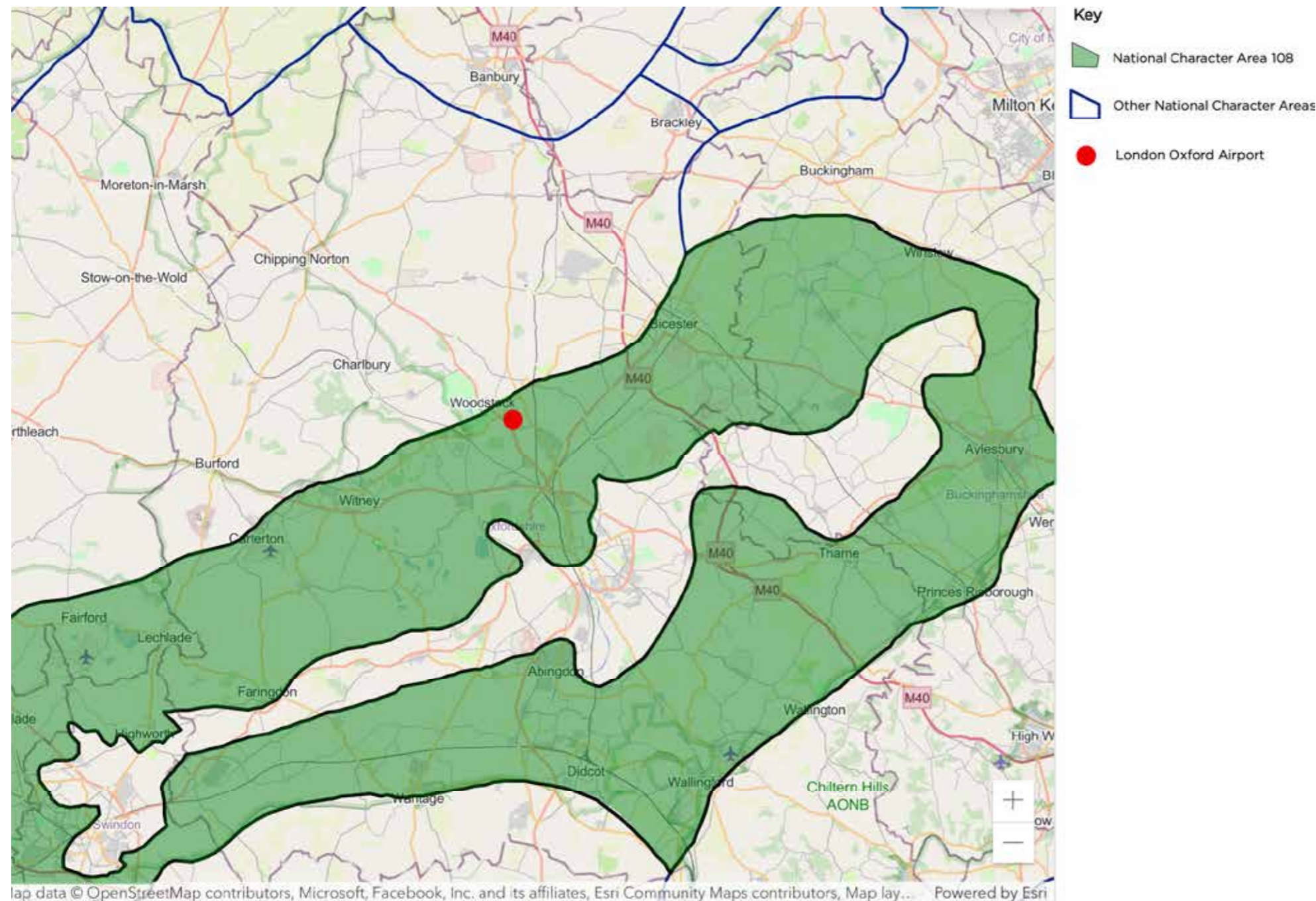


Figure 2: Natural England's map showing National Character Area 108

The Cherwell landscape is described as:
 ‘...predominantly agricultural and therefore retains a rural character but pockets of transitional landscape occur within this rural fabric (eg airfields).
 The main determinants of character within the transitional landscape are land use and, in particular the dominance of urban influences.’

The LCA acknowledges that:
 ‘airfields have a particular character dominated by expanses of often elevated, flat ground surrounded by security fences and their distinctive buildings and features.’

No specific priorities are listed for the Lower Cherwell Floodplain area.

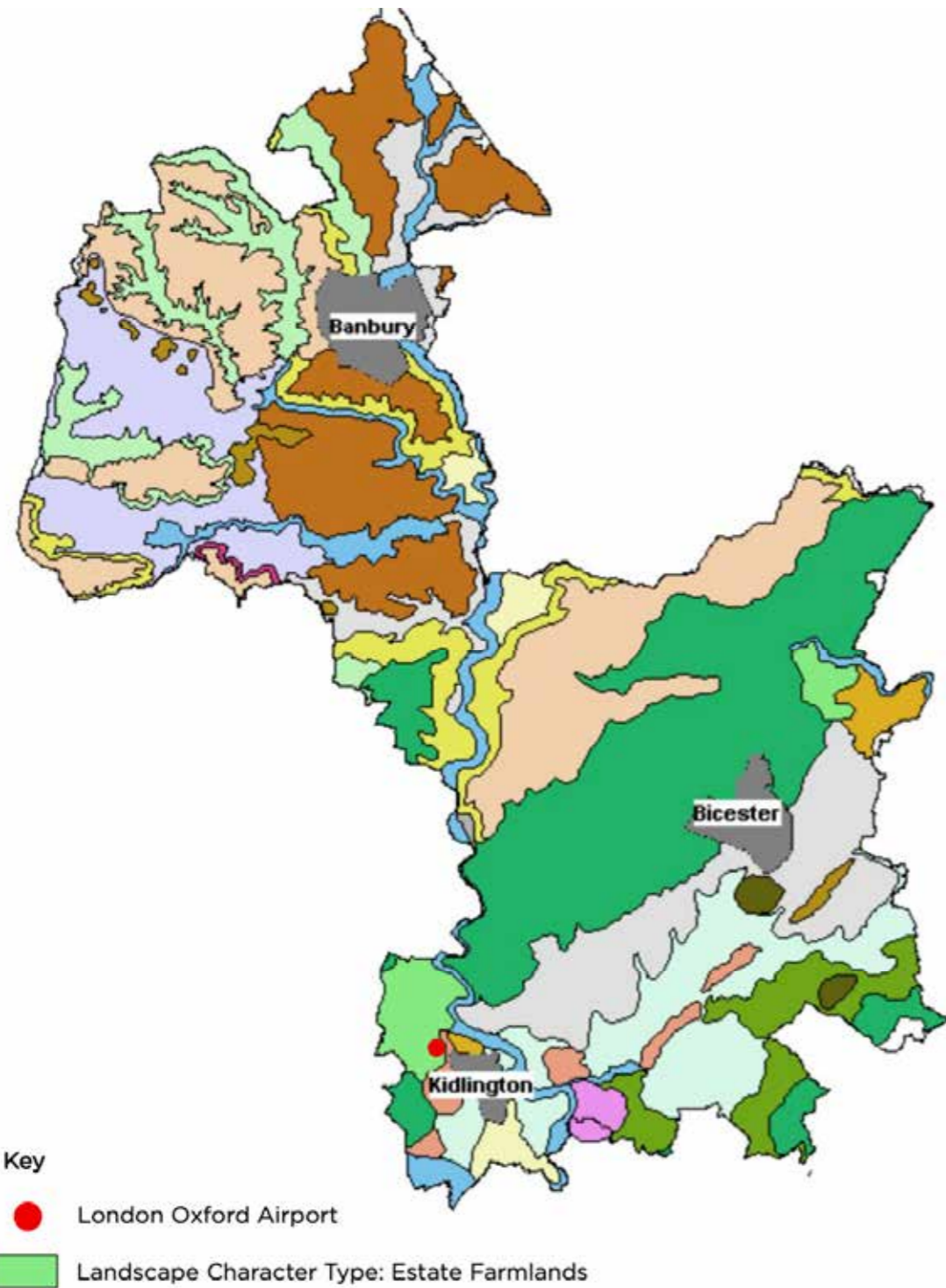


Figure 3: Oxford Wildlife and Landscape Study map of regional character areas

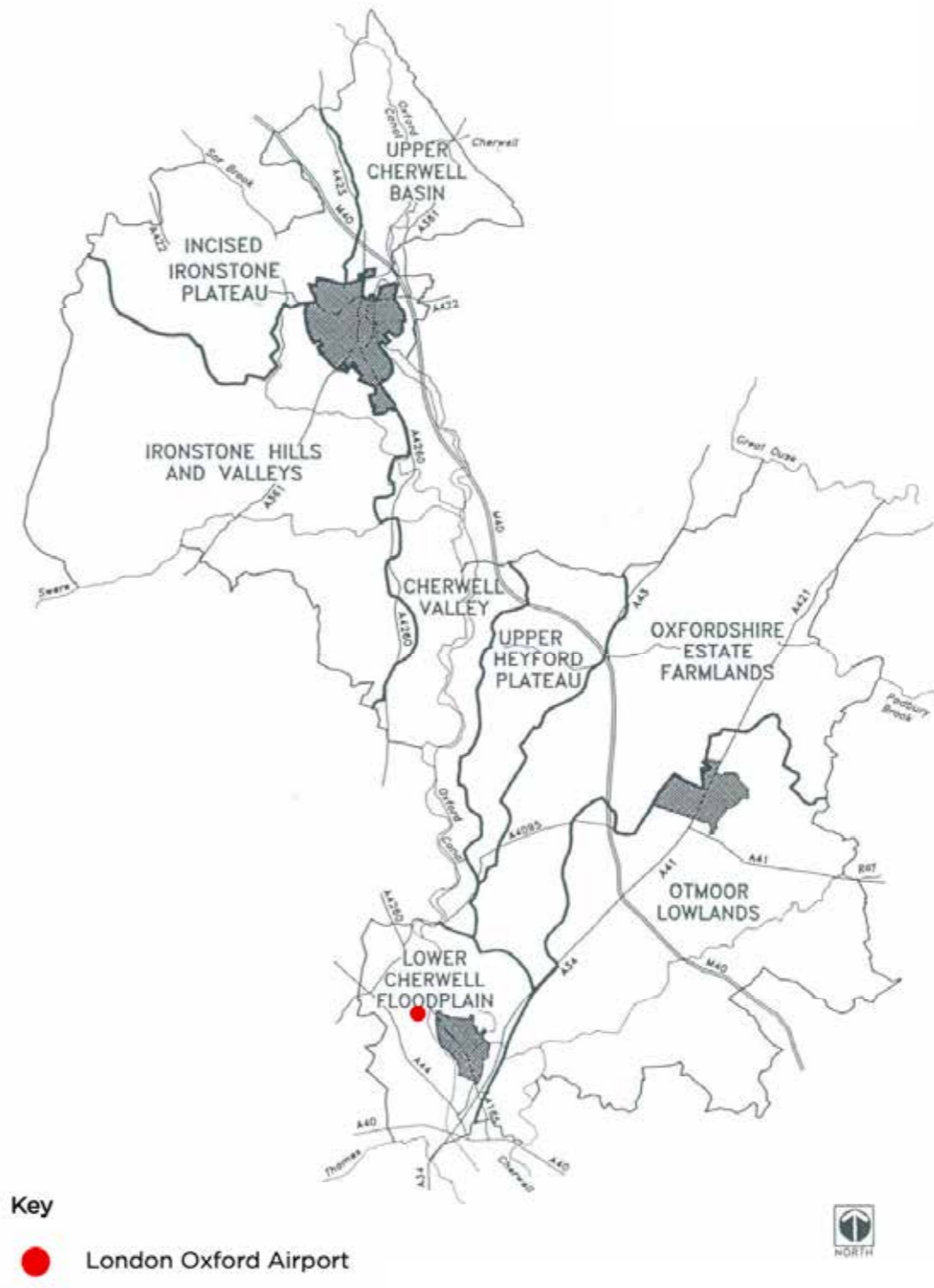


Figure 4: Cherwell District Council's map of local landscape character areas

3.3 Topography

Landform is not a significant feature of the airport; the development site itself is broadly level and there are no nearby areas of significantly elevated ground. Visibility is therefore determined by surrounding development rather than contours.

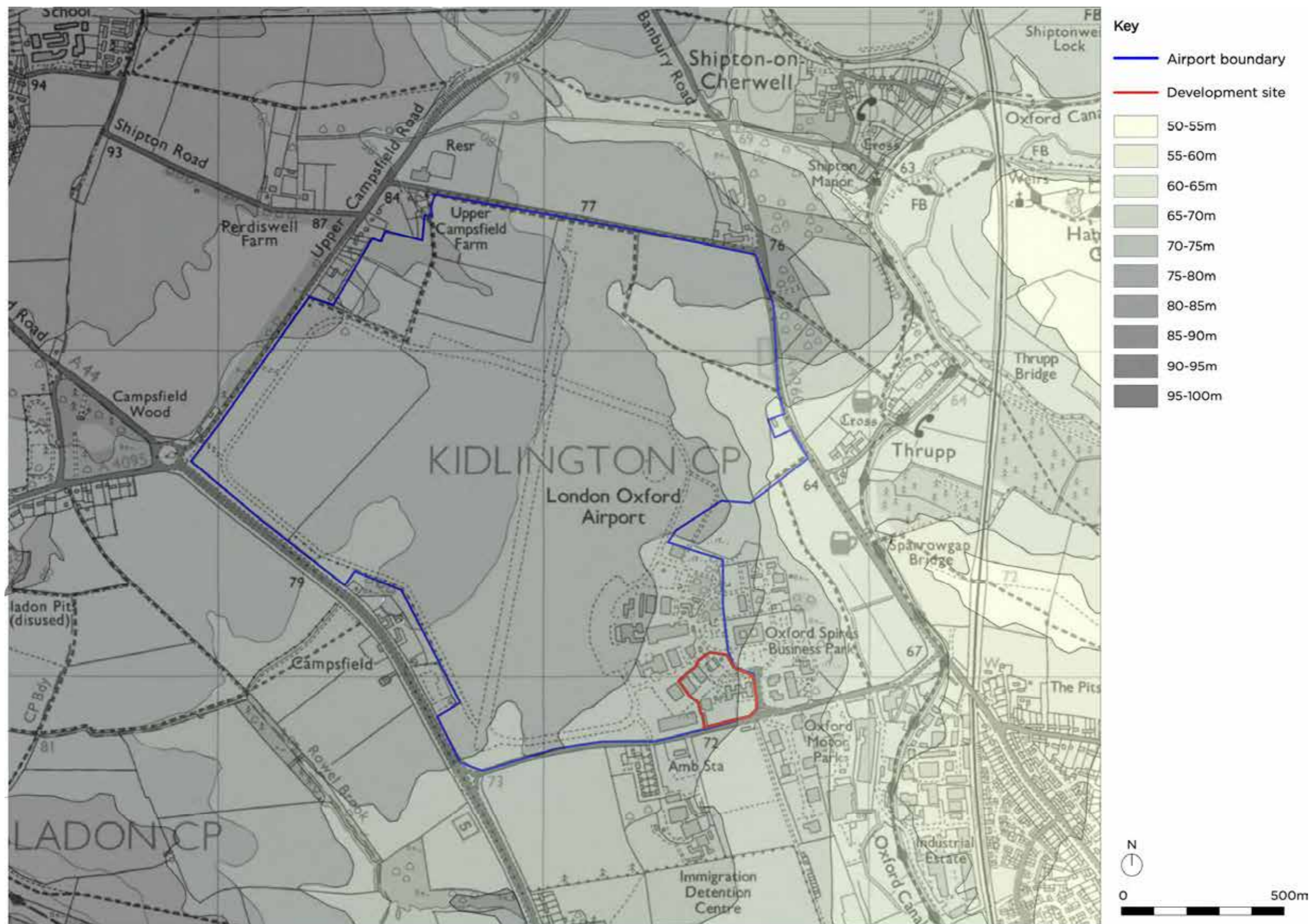


Figure 5: Topography

3.4 Landscape Designations

A desktop survey of landscape designations was carried out in order to determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the proposed development and to identify potential receptors for visual impact assessment.

Designations in the surrounding landscape were determined by consulting the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside website (MAGIC), Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, the Cherwell District Council and Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. The landscape designations affecting the site and surroundings are shown in Figure 6.

Local and Statutory Designations

Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest lie in relative proximity to the airport; Shipton-on-Cherwell and Whitehill Farm quarries 1.8km to the north, Blenheim Park 2.5km to the east and, the closest, Rushy Meadows 0.5km to the south.

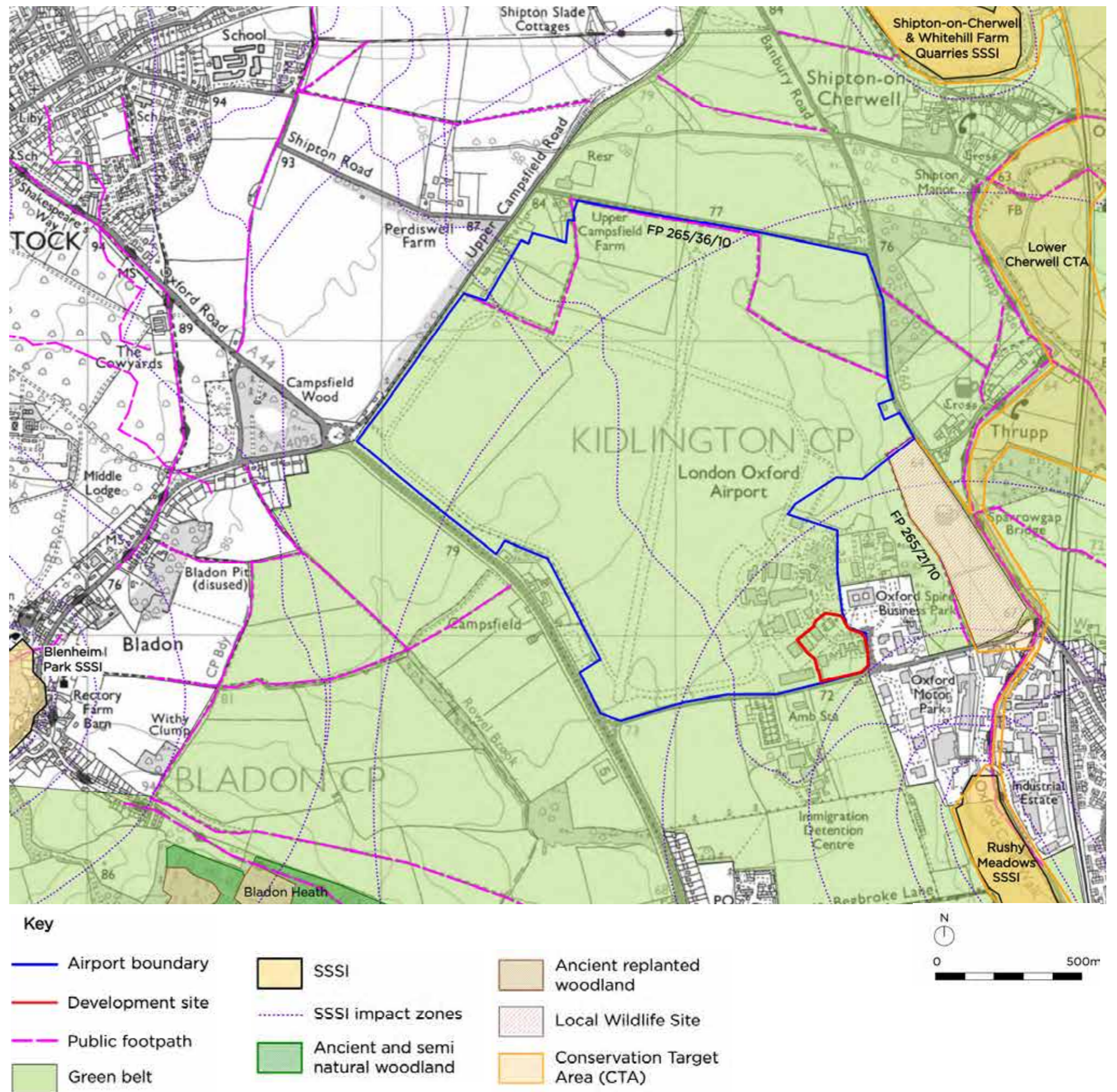
Rushy Meadows, a biological SSSI consisting of alluvial grasslands with a species-rich sward, is separated from the airport by the Oxford Motor Park industrial estate and recent development at Begbroke Science Park.

The Lower Cherwell Valley Conservation Target Area (CTA) lies to the east of the airport, approximately 0.3km from the development site. Whilst the CTA relates to a range of riverside habitats, it identifies restoration of lowland meadow as a key Biodiversity Action Plan target.

Several public rights of way including the Green Belt Way are located just outside the airport boundary with one footpath (FP265/36/10) crossing the north of the site.

Non-statutory Designations

The site lies within the Oxford Green Belt, see Section 5 for further detail.



3.5 Historic Landscape Context

The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation map and early OS maps show that the wider London Oxford Airport site was originally agricultural land.

During the late 18th Century, the area had an 'open field system' where several farmers held land in common, intermixed in narrow strips, with low or no separating boundaries.

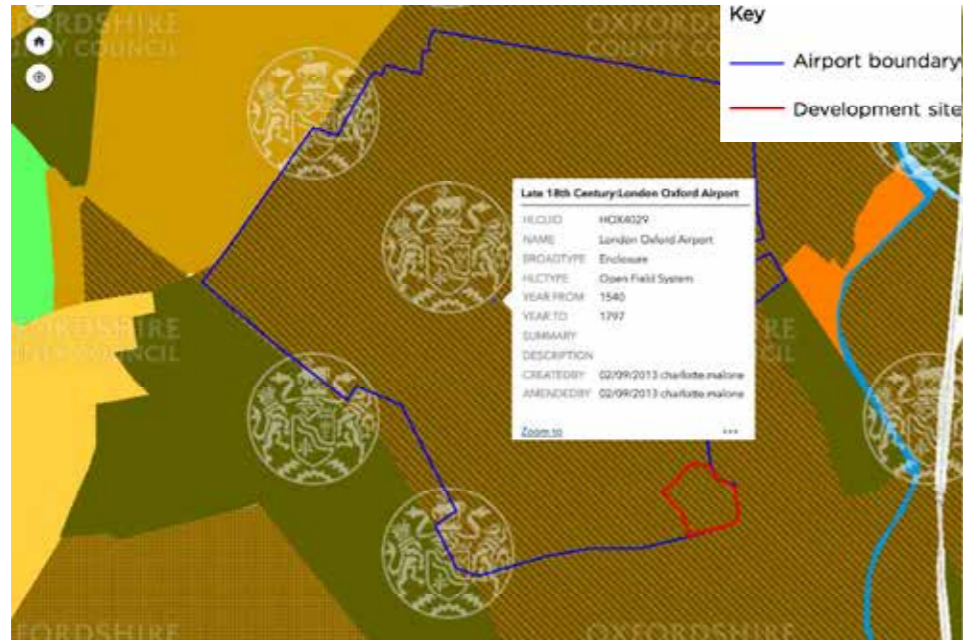


Figure 7: Extract from the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project interactive map

Over the next century, fields were amalgamated to create large areas more suited to modern farming requirements and techniques.

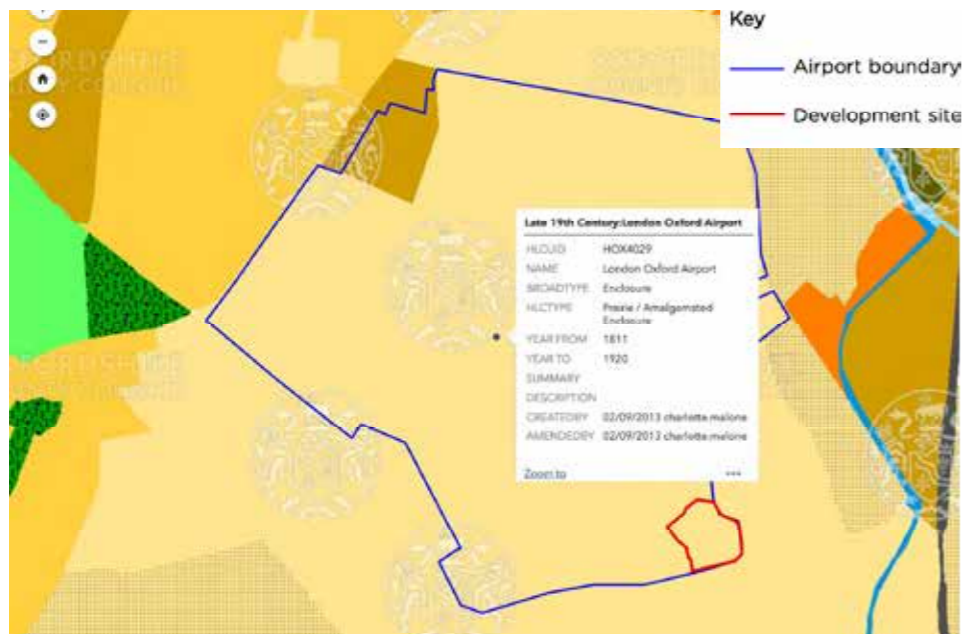


Figure 8: Extract from the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project interactive map

In 1935, the plot was bought by Oxford City Council from the Blenheim estate and two farmers, and established as a municipal airport.

It was requisitioned by the RAF in 1939 and re-named RAF Kidlington. By the mid forties, there were a greater number of hangars and buildings than can be seen today.



Figure 9: Aerial photos of the airport in the early 1940s

After the war, the airfield passed into private ownership. The grass runway was replaced by asphalt in 1975 and, in the 1990s, 15 acres was sold for development. This land now forms the Spires Business Park and lies directly east of the proposal site.

In the post-war period, the airport became a centre for aviation education, charter and maintenance.



1900 OS Map

Figure 10: Historic OS maps



1936 OS Map with additions in 1947



1952 OS Map

4. Proposals

The development proposal seeks to demolish the remaining buildings on site and replace these with five new research and development blocks and their supporting ancillary structures.

The massing and industrial style of the proposed buildings is similar to those elsewhere within the airport and on adjoining business and science parks (see Figure 11).

Vehicular access to the development will be via an existing entrance off The Boulevard. New pedestrian and cycle paths are proposed from Langford Lane and The Boulevard to encourage sustainable travel to the site. As part of the gateway to the airport, the masterplan incorporates a more open, inviting entrance mirroring that of the Thames Valley Police HQ on the opposite side.

At present, the site is largely derelict with little soft landscaping. The proposal will create green spaces across the site with a centralised courtyard and community hub that can be accessed by both on-site employees and those working nearby. Realignment of the end of the existing roadside hedge will enable the creation of a green gateway space on Langford Lane, mirroring the arrangement to the east of The Boulevard. This will improve the sense of arrival at the airport and encourage access onto the site with a new pedestrian and cycle link.

Large areas of wildflower meadow will be introduced to attract insects, and shrubs and small trees planted to give green relief against the buildings. Native field hedging is proposed around parking areas to visually obscure vehicles, and to add enclosure to communal spaces.

The site is part of the working airport and it is necessary to reduce the risk of bird strikes. Historically, some of the boundary trees on The Boulevard were heavily pruned to address this concern, losing their natural shape and undermining the distinctive avenue character of The Boulevard. Whilst tree planting within the development site is carefully designed to deter nesting birds, it is anticipated that these damaged boundary trees will be replaced as part of a landscape enhancement package (see Section 8).



Figure 11: Spratley Architect's visualisations of the proposal



Figure 12: Landscape Masterplan

5. Relevant Planning Policies

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) is the adopted local plan for the District.

Green Belt

The development site is within the Green Belt (see Figure 6 - boundaries reflect those in Cherwell's Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need, September 2020).

Policy ESD 14 states:

The Oxford Green Belt boundaries within Cherwell District will be maintained in order to:

- Preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford
- Check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl
- Prevent the coalescence of settlements
- Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with government guidance contained in the NPPF and NPPG. Development within the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains the Green Belt's openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities. Proposals for residential development will also be assessed against Policies Villages 1 and Villages 3.

A small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of Langford Lane, Kidlington and Begbroke Science Park will be undertaken as part of the Local Plan Part 2, in order to accommodate employment needs (see Policy Kidlington 1). Further small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary will only be undertaken where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

Section B.259 states:

'A recent Employment Land Review (2012) identified a need for additional employment land in the Kidlington area. It is not anticipated that this land can be accommodated on sites outside of the Green Belt.

Therefore, exceptional circumstances are considered to exist to justify a small scale local review of the Green Belt to meet employment needs (see 'Policy Kidlington 1: Accommodating High Value Employment Needs')

Policy Kidlington 1 undertakes to accommodate High Value Employment

Needs via a local review of the Green Belt in two locations (see Figure 13)

- (A) Langford Lane /Oxford Technology Park/ London Oxford Airport
- (B) Begbroke Science Park

Key site specific design and place shaping principles:

- Design for buildings that create a gateway with a strong sense of arrival including when arriving from the airport
- A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan should accompany any development proposals which should show how public transport

links to the area will be improved

- A well designed approach to the urban edge, which achieves a successful transition between town and country environments
- Development that respects the landscape setting of the site
- A comprehensive landscaping scheme to enhance the setting of buildings onsite and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape
- Public art will need to be provided for
- A development that preserves and enhances biodiversity, with the enhancement, restoration or creation of wildlife corridors
- A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to

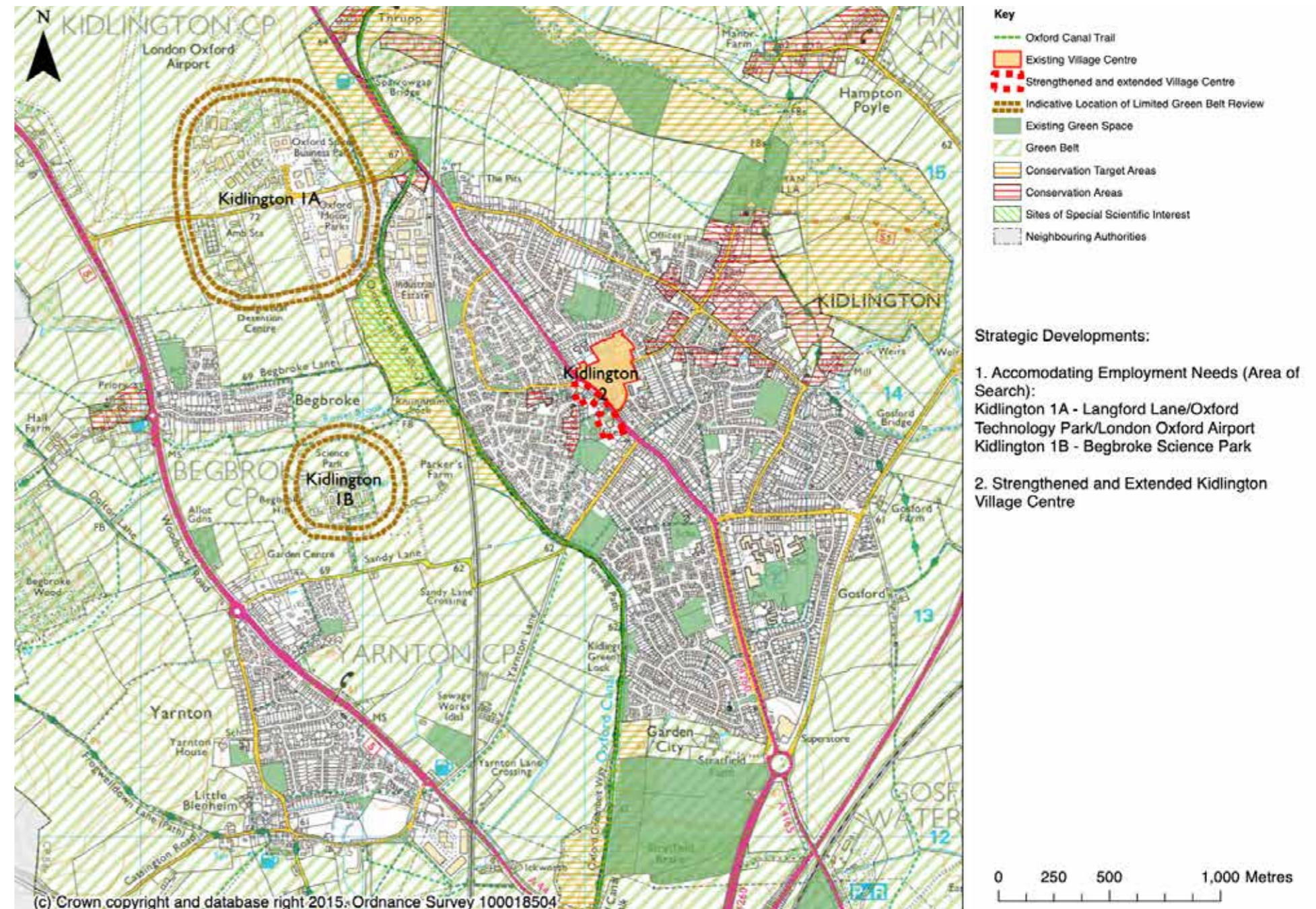


Figure 13: Extract from Cherwell Local Plan Part 1: Key policies map Kidlington

layout, architecture, materials and colourings to create a Technology Park for high value employment uses

- The height of buildings to reflect the scale of existing employment development in the vicinity
- Provision for sustainable drainage, including SuDS, in accordance with Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and taking account of the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Demonstration of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including exemplary demonstration of compliance with the requirements of policies ESD 1 - 5
- An assessment of whether the site contains best and most versatile agricultural land, including a detailed survey where necessary
- A soil management plan may be required to be submitted with planning applications to ensure that soils will be retained onsite and used where possible.

Landscape Character

Policy ESD 13 states:

Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.

Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside
- Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography
- Be inconsistent with local character
- Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity
- Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or
- Harm the historic value of the landscape.

6. Assessment of Impacts

6.1 Assessment of Landscape Impacts

The landscape around London Oxford Airport conforms to the key characteristic set out for the Lower Cherwell Floodplain in the Cherwell District Council Landscape Character Assessment, being predominantly agricultural in character.

The wider airport landholding comprises farmed land in the north and more developed land in the south; it is described with the Lower Cherwell Floodplain LCA as a transitional landscape with specific airport characteristics including security fences and hangars.

The development site itself does not conform fully to this 'transitional landscape' description. Although it is surrounded by typical airport buildings and part of the site contains hangars, the predominant character is of industrial dereliction with sparse vegetation, partially demolished buildings and hardstanding where buildings had previously stood. The site has a history of piecemeal development and incremental change and is currently being used for temporary car parking. Notwithstanding that part of the site is included within the Oxford Green Belt at present, the site is assessed to be a **poor quality** landscape with a weak, indistinct character.

Sensitivity of the site

With the exception of the eastern tree-lined boundary along The Boulevard and one large mature Lime in the west, the site has few positive

characteristics and is in very poor condition due to previous development and subsequent demolition. As part of a working airport and surrounded by airport or industrial development of similar scale on all sides, it has no scenic quality or value. Sensitivity to change has therefore been assessed as **low**.

Temporary landscape effects during construction

The period of construction is estimated at between 12-18 months, during which time building activity on site would increase traffic in the surrounding area.

A full construction plan is not yet available, but it is assumed that access for construction would be via the existing entrance, with operations confined to the site. Storage could be accommodated within the existing buildings and the majority of this working area is already surfaced. The boundary trees and hedge would be protected with fencing and the site itself would be secured with fencing.

The magnitude of change during construction is therefore considered to be medium, and, using the matrix on page 6, the significance of temporary impacts arising from construction is therefore assessed as **minor, adverse**.

Magnitude of change in operation

The proposals represent the removal of two large hangars, one mid-size industrial building and a number of smaller ancillary buildings and their replacement with five new research and development units. These will be

at a scale similar to surrounding developments, but located closer to the external boundary than the existing hangars. Whilst the building footprint will increase in relation to existing buildings, the land affected comprises rubble or hard standing from demolished buildings and associated parking.

To enable the development, 5no. individual trees and all or part of 9no. tree groups (totalling 76no. individuals) will be removed across the site. Of these, 1no. tree is classed as condition category B, 73no. trees are category C and 2no. trees are classed as category U. A further 38m of Leylandii hedge and 20m of field hedge will also be removed.

The existing entrance from The Boulevard will provide the main vehicular access whilst new pedestrian and cycle routes will be created.

New landscaping will bring green spaces, higher quality surfaces and an amenity hub creating an improved working environment to be shared with the wider community.

The proposals will extend the positive existing character of the adjoining Spires Business Park by creating an open, inviting area at the gateway to the airport.

Landscape proposals seek to increase biodiversity within the constraints imposed by the operational safety of the airport. To this end, 40no. small ornamental trees and 920m of new native hedging will be planted throughout the site. 0.3ha of wildflower meadow replaces demolition rubble and other existing hardstanding on the eastern side of the site.

Summary of Level of Effects - Landscape Impact

Below is an assessment of the likely impact of the proposed development on landscape character during construction and operation.

Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Significance of impact	Nature of impact	Duration	Permanence
Construction					
Low	Medium Operations would create additional traffic	Minor	Adverse Indirect	Short-term (12-18 months)	Temporary
Operation					
Low	Medium	Minor	Positive Direct Positive impact is generated through attractive planned amenity space, increased greenspace, introduction of wildflower meadow and native hedging, higher quality surfaces and materials and removal of detracting features.	Long-term	Permanent

Whilst it is accepted that the new buildings on site will be prominent, they are in keeping with the landscape character of the airport and surrounding land uses as set out in the Cherwell District Council LCA. Magnitude of change is therefore considered to be **medium**.

Level of effects in operation

Using the scoring table on page 6 of this report, a **low** sensitivity combined with a magnitude of change of **medium**, results in an impact of **minor significance**. Given the existing condition of the site, the proposals represent a significant improvement in landscape quality and amenity, and are therefore considered to be **positive** in nature. A summary showing the difference in the nature of the impact between the construction and operation phases is provided in the table on the previous page.

Mitigation

It is accepted practice that where assessment has identified elements of the proposal to have moderate or greater than moderate impacts on the landscape, mitigation measures are described. No mitigation is required where impacts are considered to be less than moderate or where proposals are considered to have a positive impact. The landscape impacts identified here are considered to be minor adverse during the construction phase and minor positive in operation, so mitigation is not required.

However, the applicant is keen to ensure that the site makes a stronger positive contribution to wider landscape character than at present. A landscape enhancement proposal is therefore described in section 8; this is in addition to the main landscape scheme and is not considered in the assessment of landscape impacts.

6.2 Assessment of Visual Impacts

The location of viewpoints assessed is shown on an aerial map (Figure 14). Viewpoints were selected according to likely site visibility, drawing primarily on topography, and the location of sensitive receptors such as users of public rights of way and publicly-accessible land.

The remainder of this chapter sets out an assessment of visual impact at each viewpoint, but two general points are made below.

Temporary visual impacts during construction

The period of construction is estimated at between 12-18 months, during which time there would be a number of temporary negative impacts on landscape appearance.

Most of these impacts would arise on the site itself. They are likely to be conspicuous in short-range views for example, site fencing and hoardings, scaffolding, all-weather building coverings and machinery. They are anticipated to have a minor negative impact only, benefitting from the screening effect of existing trees on The Boulevard and existing hedging on Langford Lane. Storage of excavated site spoil may be prominent in close views for a short period but is comparable to existing views of demolition rubble. Taller detractors, such as cranes and building coverings, may be visible from distant viewpoints but are likely to be of shorter duration and negligible negative impact.

In addition to on-site detractors, the construction period will generate additional traffic on Langford Lane and The Boulevard. This would have a negative visual impact from viewpoints along the roads but the scale of the impact is expected to be negligible given the already-busy nature of Langford Lane.

Mitigation

As before, it is accepted practice that where assessment has identified elements of the proposal to have moderate or greater than moderate impacts on the landscape, mitigation measures are described. No mitigation is required where impacts are considered to be less than moderate or where proposals are considered to have a positive impact.

However, the applicant intends to undertake landscape enhancement measures, which are described in section 8. These are in addition to the main landscape proposals and are not considered in the assessment of visual impacts.



Figure 14: Viewpoint Location Plan

Viewpoint no. 1: Looking south from footpath 265/36/10 (Grid ref SP 47291 16364)



Key
— Development site
A vp Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A brief view ahead, obtained by users of public footpath 265/36/10, looking south south-east towards the development site from a distance of 1.3km. The receptor location is approximately 10m higher than the level of development site.

The image is taken where the footpath meets The Straight Mile and before it runs behind a tall enclosing hedge. There are open views towards the north side of the airport complex across arable fields with dividing hedgerows and hedgerow trees but the development site is not visible, being blocked by existing airport buildings.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
High Users of the PROW	None The site is screened by existing airport buildings and, if it were visible, would be seen against a backdrop of adjacent taller buildings.	None	N/A

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 2: Looking south-east from footpath 265/36/10 (Grid ref SP 46574 16039)



Key
— Development site  Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead, obtained by users of public footpath 265/36/10 looking south-east towards the development site from a distance of 1.3km. The receptor location is approximately 20m higher than the level of development site.

There are clear views across grassland towards the western side of the airport complex with little intervening vegetation. The development site is partially visible in the centre of the overall building cluster. Two existing buildings due for replacement can be seen behind another (retained) building; the majority of the development site lies to the rear, out of view.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
High Users of the PROW	None The site is only partially visible; that part which will be seen replaces existing buildings of a similar size and type and forms part of a coherent building cluster.	None	N/A

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 3: Looking east from A44 Woodstock Road (Grid ref SP 46658 14911)



Key
— Development site
A VP Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead and to the side, obtained by users of the busy A44 looking east towards the development site from a distance of 0.8km. The receptor location is approximately 10m higher than the level of development site.

There are open views across grassland towards the western side of the airport complex through perimeter fencing. The development site is partially visible within the overall building cluster. As before, two existing buildings due for replacement can be seen behind another (retained) building, and the majority of the development site lies to the rear, out of view.

Permanent Visual Impact

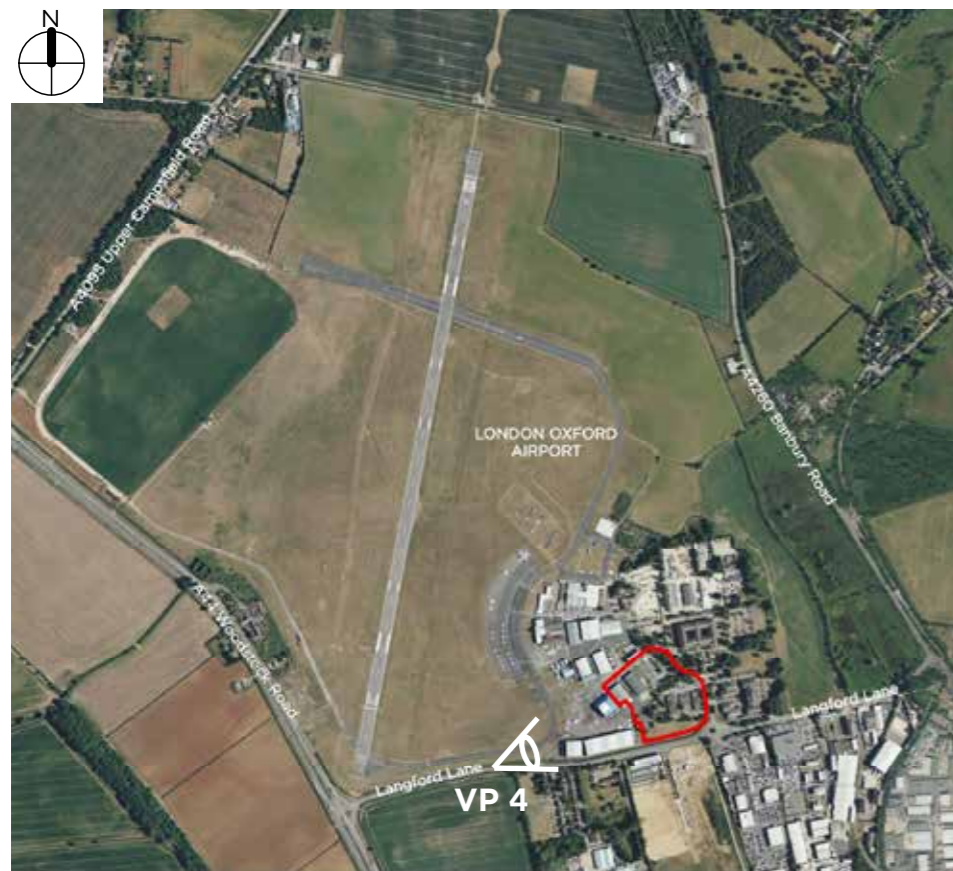
Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Users of the public highway, cycle path and pavement	None The site is only partially visible; that part which will be seen replaces existing buildings of a similar size and type and forms part of a coherent building cluster.	None	N/A

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 4: Looking east along Langford Lane (Grid ref SP 47167 14796)



Key
— Development site
 Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead, obtained by users of Langford Lane looking east towards the development site from a distance of 0.3km. The receptor location is approximately on a level with the development site.

There are views towards the western and southern edges of the site, seen over the top of the roadside hedge. The upper part of Block D would be visible on the left hand side between existing hangars and the edge of a second unit (Block C) would be seen obliquely to the right of the turquoise hangars at the edge of Langford Lane. The proposed buildings are of a similar scale and type to those already present, and would read as part of the existing building cluster; there would be a small extension of the cluster to the right hand side obscuring views towards existing trees. The majority of the development site remains out of view behind existing buildings.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Vehicle users on the public highway travelling through; not available to cyclists or pedestrians.	Negligible The site is only partially visible; that part which will be seen clearly would form part of a coherent building cluster. The existing cluster would be extended marginally on the right hand side but this is insignificant within the overall view.	Negligible	Negative

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 5: Looking east along Langford Lane from the bus stop (Grid ref SP 47357 14805)



Key
— Development site  VP Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead, obtained by users of the pavement or bus stop on Langford Lane looking east towards the development site from a distance of 0.2km. The receptor location is approximately on a level with the development site.

There is a view towards the southern edge of the site, seen over the top of the roadside hedge and with existing airport hangars in the foreground. The upper part of Block B would be visible above the hedge, between the existing hangars and the Thames Valley Police building, obscuring existing views to trees on The Boulevard. The proposed building is of a similar scale to the adjacent hangars but of more refined design and would read as part of the same cluster, but adding interest in the middle ground to what is at present an unattractive outlook dominated by the Volare hangars and highway. As before, the majority of the development site remains out of view.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Bus travellers or pedestrians moving through.	Low The site is only partially visible; the visible part would extend the existing airport cluster towards other nearby buildings, making no significant impact in the overall view but balancing the prominence of the existing hangars to some extent.	Minor	Positive

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 6: Looking north along Technology Drive (Grid ref SP 47563 14819)



Key
— Development site  Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead, obtained by users of the road or footpath looking north from Begbroke Science Park towards the development site at close range. The receptor location is approximately level with the development site.

There is an open view, framed between tall buildings and with assorted elements in the foreground, towards the existing roadside hedge on the north of Langford Lane, and beyond the hedge to an existing building proposed for replacement, an existing mature Lime and a number of heavily-pollarded trees. The roadside hedge and mature Lime are attractive features of the view, but overall, the site appears as an absence in an otherwise developed area. Part of Block C would be clearly visible behind the roadside hedge on the left hand side, but the pollarded trees would be removed, giving long views past Block C in the centre, towards Blocks D and E in the background.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists leaving the Science Park. Similar views will be available from the buildings.	Medium The centre of the view will be significantly changed by the addition of new buildings, but whilst prominent, these will be characteristic of the surrounding land- and streetscapes and will replace or conceal other less attractive existing features	Minor	Positive

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 7: Looking west from roundabout on Langford Lane (Grid ref SP 47672 14879)



Key
— Development site  Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead and to the side, obtained by users of the road and pavement at the roundabout on Langford Lane looking west towards the development site at close range. The receptor location is approximately level with the development site.

There is a clear open view towards the development site with Langford Lane in the foreground and the existing roadside hedge that forms the site boundary in the middle ground. Beyond the hedge, there are views to a number of airport hangars that adjoin the development site, which are partially screened by trees within the site. To the right hand side, there are views of other, heavily-pollarded trees within the site area. Whilst the outlook is pleasant generally, the site appears as an absence in an otherwise developed landscape. Blocks B and C would be clearly visible behind the roadside hedge, obscuring views to the adjacent hangars. On the right hand side, a change in the alignment of the existing hedge and a new green space would add depth to the foreground.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Users of the public highway, cyclists and pedestrians travelling west on Langford Lane.	High The view will be significantly changed by the addition of new buildings. Whilst prominent, these will be characteristic of the surrounding land- and streetscapes and will conceal other less attractive existing features	Moderate	Positive

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 8: Looking south-west from the roundabout north of The Boulevard (Grid ref SP 47656 15011)



Key
— Development site  Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view to the side or ahead, obtained by users of The Boulevard travelling north or those exiting the Elsevier (east) site, looking south-west towards the development site at close range. The receptor location is on the same level as the development site.

There is a clear view into the site through a break in the tree line on The Boulevard, showing concrete planters in the foreground, the demolition site in the middle ground and existing airport hangars beyond the development site in the background, seen though heavily-pollarded trees on site. Whilst framed by vegetation, the site appears as a gap or absence in an otherwise developed landscape. The end of Block A would lie in the centre of the view, largely obscuring long views into the site.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Vehicle users, pedestrians and cyclists on The Boulevard and internal business park roads.	High The view will be significantly changed by the addition of new buildings. Whilst prominent, these features will be characteristic of the surrounding land- and streetscapes and will conceal other less attractive existing features	Moderate	Positive

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 9: Looking north-west from the northern entrance off The Boulevard (Grid ref SP 47535 15083)



Key
— Development site
A vp Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view ahead and to the side, obtained by users of the internal business park road looking north-west across the northern end of the development site at close range. The receptor location is approximately on a level with the development site.

There are clear views across and beyond the site towards existing buildings, with car parking and heavily-pollarded trees in the foreground. Airport buildings on the right hand side lie beyond the site and will be retained; the hangar on the left hand side would be replaced as part of the development. Proposed Block E would sit in the centre of this view and would dominate the foreground, replacing heavily-pollarded trees and car parking and obscuring views towards other retained buildings.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Users of the internal roads, pedestrians and cyclists visiting the development site, airport or Elsevier building.	High The view would be changed entirely by the addition of new buildings. Whilst very prominent, these would be characteristic of the surrounding land- and streetscapes and will conceal or replace other unattractive existing features	Moderate	Neutral

Mitigation - None required.

Viewpoint no. 10: Looking west from Langford Lane towards The Boulevard (Grid ref SP 47823 14916)



Key
 Development site  Viewpoint location/direction



Description of the receptor location and view

A view directly ahead, obtained by users of the road and pavement on Langford Lane looking west towards the development site from a distance of 0.2km. The receptor location is approximately on a level with the development site.

There is a strong structure of tree cover and hedging framing the road; when trees are in leaf, views of the southern edge of the development site would be screened entirely by existing vegetation on Langford Lane and The Boulevard so that no part of the development site would be visible. Glimpses of Block B may be visible through bare trees in winter, but would be insignificant in the overall scene.

Permanent Visual Impact

Sensitivity of visual receptor	Magnitude of change	Significance of effect	Nature
Low Users of the public highway, pedestrians and cyclists on Langford Lane.	None The site is well screened by mature trees and hedging, and is not visible.	None	N/A

Mitigation - None required.

7. Residual effects and significance

LI/IEMA Guidance makes a distinction between impacts during the design and development of the scheme and residual impacts after mitigation measures have been carried out. In this instance, no mitigation measures have been identified.

The tables below summarise the likely significance of impacts arising from the proposals.

Landscape Impacts

Significance of impacts	
CONSTRUCTION	OPERATION
Minor, adverse	Minor, positive

Overall, it is expected that beyond the construction period, the impacts on landscape fabric, quality and character will be minor and positive. No mitigation is therefore required. See section 8 for proposed landscape enhancement to support and extend positive landscape character.

Visual Impacts

Visual impacts during construction are described in 6.2; visual impacts in operation are set out below:

Significance of effects prior to mitigation	Number of viewpoints
None	4
Negligible	1 (negative)
Minor	2 (positive)
Moderate	3 (2 positive, 1 neutral)
Major	0

Beyond the construction period, the impacts of the proposals on landscape views are generally positive. Moderate impacts are positive or neutral and so no mitigation is required.

Landscape enhancement measures to replace and plant new trees in gaps along the eastern boundary would further soften views towards the buildings, see Section 8.

8. Landscape Enhancements

Notwithstanding their general operational concerns in relation to bird nesting, the applicant recognises that the distinctive mature tree-lined character of The Boulevard is key to both the quality and amenity of the airport, arrival experience and the wider landscape. Consequently, the applicant intends to replace 15no. heavily pollarded and unattractive trees on the north east boundary.

The existing Horse Chestnut trees have been pruned to deter bird nesting, resulting in an exaggerated, columnar appearance that is uncharacteristic of the wider Boulevard tree planting, unattractive and creates potential for structural problems in the long term. They would be removed and replaced with 16no. alternative broadleaf species of a smaller final mature height and wide-headed form to reinstate the avenue character along The Boulevard where this has been lost. Possible species for replanting include *Acer saccharinum* or *Acer platanoides*. Replacement trees would be planted as semi-mature specimen standards in order to balance immediate impact with a moderate watering requirement during establishment.

9. Conclusion

The proposal to replace the existing buildings and derelict site with new buildings appears to avoid significant negative impacts on the landscape successfully and to offer benefits to enhance the quality and value of the landscape fabric.

With the exception of the loss of a single good tree, disruption is restricted to landscape fabric that is of very low value or poor condition. Moreover, the proposals would remove some existing hard landscaping and return it to soft or permeable surfaces.

Proposals to install a central, landscaped courtyard would bring significant benefit by creating a space that can be used by employees both within the development and from surrounding businesses.

New tree and shrub planting and meadow proposals will increase biodiversity. Planned spaces will create a well-designed urban edge including a more attractive green gateway into the airport.

The visual impact of the proposals is restricted to short views and the resulting appearance would not be out of place given the context of the site with neighbouring developments being of similar scale and land use. Whilst the proposed buildings have a larger footprint than existing units, the scale, character and materials are high quality and typical of the immediate area.

Little visual impact is anticipated from public footpaths and far-reaching views since these are largely obstructed by existing airport buildings and other surrounding development.

In summary, the assessment finds that the proposal offers an opportunity to improve the landscape character, quality and value of a derelict industrial site and improve landscape views, with only short-term negative impacts during the construction phase.

Appendix A: Assessment of impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt

Introduction

This section is distinct from the main Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and looks specifically at Green Belt openness.

The whole of the development site lies within the Oxford Green Belt. Case law clarifies that the issue of openness in the Green Belt has both spatial and visual components, and that both should be considered when assessing whether or not a development might result in harm to the open nature of the Green Belt.

Methodology

Discussion of potential impacts on the spatial openness of the Green Belt is addressed in Avison Young's planning statement.

This chapter sets out to assess the magnitude and significance of any change to the visual openness of the Green Belt to establish whether the development would result in harm to openness or would allow the openness of the Green Belt to be preserved (ie. maintaining the no change situation).

It is therefore necessary to understand the site's current contribution to the visual openness of the Green Belt. At London Oxford Airport, this is best illustrated using a detailed aerial view and ground level site photographs to illustrate the nature and character of the site, and to show to what extent openness exists/open views are available at present. Spratley and Partner's visualisations are then used to assess the magnitude of change that would occur as a result of redevelopment. Whilst showing the site from a range of angles and heights, the visualisations provide a clearer indication of change across the whole site than individual building elevations.

The site at present

An aerial view of the site is included at Figure 15.

Following the demolition of Langford Hall, the majority of the site is level ground comprising macadam hard standing used for vehicular parking, or compacted demolition rubble. A number of buildings remain, including two large hangars at the north-west edge of the site and a smaller building at the west edge, now used as a gym. A collection of single storey cabins occupy part of the centre and west of the site.

A series of images follow at Figure 16. These are taken from the interior of the site, looking towards the site boundaries.

To the north-west and west, the site is enclosed by large airport buildings, including a number of hangars and the main operational centre. To the

north-east and east, the site is enclosed by the buildings of The Spires business park, softened in most locations by tree cover along The Boulevard. Finally, to the south, the site is enclosed by the tall buildings of the new technology park development on Langford Lane.

Consequently the development site, whilst largely unbuilt at present, is enclosed rather than open in character. There are no long views out of or

across the site in any direction (in particular, no north or westward views towards open land) and instead, all views across the site are terminated by existing built form.

The dominant landscape character is of dereliction, due to the presence of empty or run-down buildings and demolition waste. Whilst there are a significant number of trees on site, the heavily-pollarded canopies and



Figure 15: Aerial photograph (credit: Google maps)

poor condition of these reinforce the industrial character so that the land reads as 'brownfield', surrounded by well-established urban or airport development.

The site is therefore considered not to contribute to the visual openness of the Green Belt at present.

The Proposal

The development proposals are illustrated earlier in this document, at Figures 11 and 12, and comprise five building units positioned towards the outer edges of the site with associated parking. There is generous greenspace around the vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian entrances and a recreational courtyard space with an amenity hub building.

Whilst care has been taken to ensure that replacement buildings are positioned to maintain or encourage views into the site, particularly into soft landscaped areas from The Boulevard, these views would replicate the existing arrangement. As at present, medium range inward views would be terminated by built form around the perimeter of the plot. From other positions, inward views would be foreshortened by the presence of the new building units. Surrounding enclosure means that no new long views would be created from within the site towards the open Green Belt.

Conclusion

In terms of the visual consideration of Green Belt openness, the development site makes no appreciable contribution towards openness at present. The area is separated from the open Green Belt on all sides by existing enclosure and has a derelict, brownfield character. Both inward and outward views are terminated by built form.

The replacement buildings would represent an increase in the density of built form on site, but this would have no effect on the visual openness of the Green Belt. Some mid-range views would be maintained and improved, and others would be lost, but there are no views towards the open Green Belt at present and none would be created.

Whilst there would be a significant improvement in the character of mid-range inward views, there would be no effect upon the availability of long views and no loss of or alteration to existing openness and therefore no harm to the visual openness of the Green Belt. Overall, the redevelopment proposals would have no greater visual impact on openness in comparison to the existing development and are therefore considered to be fully compatible with preserving the openness of the Green Belt.



Looking west



Looking north west



Looking north (with eastern boundary tree avenue visible)

Figure 16: Panoramic views from the site



Looking north



Looking north east



Looking south