

**VOLUME 2**



landscape architecture ■ urban design  
expert witness ■ environmental planning

17 Upper Grosvenor Road  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent TN1 2DU  
Tel 01892 527828  
Fax 01892 510619

Email [dha@dha-landscape.co.uk](mailto:dha@dha-landscape.co.uk)  
[www.dha-landscape.co.uk](http://www.dha-landscape.co.uk)

**APPENDICES, PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHS  
relating to the evidence**

of

**DAVID HUSKISSON, Dip LA, CMLI**

relating to

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS**

on behalf of

**CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Planning Appeal by CALA Homes (Midlands) Ltd**

**against the decision of Cherwell District Council  
to refuse**

**Outline planning permission for  
up to 200 residential units, access, amenity space and new village shop / hall  
on**

**Land at Fringford Road, Caversfield, Bicester, Oxfordshire**

**PUBLIC LOCAL INQUIRY  
Commencing 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**LOCAL AUTHORITY REF: 13/01056/OUT  
PINS REF: APP/C3105/A/13/2208385**

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## CONTENTS

### Volume 2

#### Appendix 1 Methodology

Table 1	Landscape Receptor Value
Table 2	Landscape Susceptibility
Table 3	Magnitude of Landscape Effects - Thresholds
Table 4	Visual Receptor Sensitivity
Table 5	Magnitude of Visual Effects - Thresholds
Table 6	Significance of Effects for Landscape or Visual Effects.

#### Appendix 2 Landscape Character - Extracts of various studies

#### Appendix 3 Extracts from Bicester Green Buffer Final Report Sept 2013.

#### Figures:

DH1 Location and Context

DH2 Aerial View and Photograph Locations

DH3 Access

Photosheets 1 - 3

## **APPENDIX 1**

<b>Table 1</b>	Landscape Receptor Value
<b>Table 2</b>	Landscape Susceptibility
<b>Table 3</b>	Magnitude of Landscape Effects - Thresholds
<b>Table 4</b>	Visual Receptor Sensitivity
<b>Table 5</b>	Magnitude of Visual Effects - Thresholds
<b>Table 6</b>	Significance of Effects Thresholds - Landscape or Visual Effects.

**TABLE 1** *Landscape Receptor Value*

LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE RECEPTOR VALUE	RANK
<p>EG: important components or particularly distinctive positive character and may be susceptible to relatively small changes. Usually all National Parks / AONB's and some areas with County / District notations and some Conservation Areas and settings of some Listed Buildings. May also be undesignated land. Probably limited minor detracting features. Landscape components may be nationally rare whilst locally abundant or locally rare but nationally abundant. Landscape condition likely to be fair to good or good.</p>	<p><b>Exceptional</b></p> <p>↕</p> <p><b>High Value</b></p>
<p>EG: an area of moderately positive characteristics and possibly reasonably tolerant of changes, occasionally parts of AONB's, Conservation Areas and settings of some Listed Buildings, usually County / District notations, and with few detracting features. May also be undesignated land. Landscape components not rare either nationally or locally. Landscape condition likely to be fair.</p>	<p>↕</p> <p><b>Medium (Good) Value</b></p>
<p>EG: A relatively unimportant area, weak landscape structure or character, the nature of which is potentially tolerant of substantial change and probably has frequent detracting features. Usually undesignated land. Landscape components common nationally and locally. Landscape condition likely to be fair to poor.</p>	<p>↕</p> <p><b>Low (Ordinary) Value</b></p>
<p>EG: A degraded landscape structure, characteristic landscape patterns and combinations of landform and landcover are masked by land use. Landscape components common nationally and locally. Landscape condition likely to be poor.</p>	<p>↕</p> <p><b>Poor Value</b></p>

**TABLE 2 - Landscape Susceptibility**

TYPICAL EVALUATION CRITERIA	SUSCEPTIBILITY
<p>A landscape, including topographic form, features and visual attributes, that would be unlikely to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences including such issues such as being out of scale and out of character. Effective, in character, mitigation would be difficult to achieve, would be very unlikely to enhance.</p>	<p><b>High</b></p>
<p>A landscape, including topographic form, features and visual attributes, that would be reasonably able to accommodate the specific proposed development without negative consequences including such issues such as in scale and character which and would not therefore be wholly out of character. Effective, in character, mitigation would be possible, but results may take time to be effective and exceptionally might give rise to an element of enhancement.</p>	<p><b>Medium</b></p>
<p>A landscape, including topographic form, features and visual attributes, that would be likely to be able to accommodate the specific proposed development with not more than very minor negative consequences including such issues such as being in scale and character which and would therefore not be out of character. If required, effective, in character, mitigation would be readily achievable and could enhance.</p>	<p><b>Low</b></p>

**TABLE 3** *Magnitude of Landscape Effects - Thresholds*

MAGNITUDE OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS (Day 1)	RANK
EG: Total loss or major alteration to key elements / features characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the wider receiving landscape.	<b>High Adverse</b>
	↕
EG: Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that may be prominent and may be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the wider receiving landscape.	<b>Medium Adverse</b>
	↕
EG: Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the wider receiving landscape.	<b>Low Adverse</b>
	↕
EG: Very minor loss of or alteration to one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.	<b>Minimal / No change</b>
	↕
EG: Very minor introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.	<b>Low Beneficial</b>
	↕
EG: Moderate introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.	<b>Medium Beneficial</b>
	↕
EG: Substantial introduction of one or more key elements / features / characteristics of the baseline i.e. predevelopment landscape and /or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic with the surrounding landscape.	<b>High Beneficial</b>

**TABLE 4** *Visual Receptor Sensitivity*

TYPICAL VISUAL RECEPTOR	RANGE OF RANKING	RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY ADOPTED IN ASSESSMENT
EG: some residential properties, most rural public rights of way in sensitive locations, views from moving vehicles, <u>all where view can be considered to be a primary feature / main aspect.</u>	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b> - People on public rights of way or permissive routes, open access land etc., whose interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and views. Includes pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists on Hampers Lane. Residents at home.
	↕	
EG: some residential properties, some recreational facilities, some rural and semi rural public rights of way, views from commercial premises or from moving vehicles, <u>all where view is occasional / glimpsed / secondary feature.</u>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b> - Vehicle travellers on Hampers Lane
	↕	
EG: places of work, some suburban/ urban residential properties, some rural and most urban public rights of way, most sports facilities, views from moving vehicles, <u>where view is glimpsed / infrequent or adjacent features already detract or largely obscure.</u>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b> - People at their place of work.

**TABLE 5** *Magnitude of Visual Effect - Thresholds*

RANK	MAGNITUDE OF VISUAL EFFECT (Day 1)
High ↑ ↓	EG: the majority of viewers affected / major change(s) in open direct close view or notable change in more distant view. Could be either adverse or beneficial.
Medium ↑ ↓	EG: many viewers affected / moderate change(s) in view, could be some fragmentation of view or sequence of views. Could be either adverse or beneficial.
Low ↑ ↓	EG: few viewers affected / minor change(s) in view or very small changes in wide scale /panoramic view or oblique / fragmented views etc. Could be either adverse or beneficial or possibly neutral.
No/ Minimal	EG: few viewers affected / change(s) in view barely discernible. Could be either adverse or beneficial but usually neutral.

**TABLE 6** *Significance of Effects Thresholds – Landscape or Visual effects*

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT	LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY OR VISUAL SENSITIVITY		
	Low	Medium	High
High	Moderate Effect	Moderate / Substantial Effect	Substantial Effect
Medium	Slight / Moderate Effect	Moderate Effect	Moderate / Substantial Effect
Low	Minimal / Slight Effect	Slight Effect	Moderate Effect
No / Minimal Change	No Effect	No / Minimal Effect	No / Minimal / Slight Effect

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Substantial adverse or beneficial effect</b> - where the proposal would cause a very significant deterioration or improvement in the landscape resource or visual appearance . <u>Could be a determining issue in its own right.</u></li> <li>▪ <b>Moderate adverse or beneficial effect</b> - where the proposal would cause a noticeable and clear deterioration or improvement in the landscape resource or visual appearance. <u>Could be a determining issue, especially where combined with other similar rankings.</u></li> <li>▪ <b>Slight adverse or beneficial effect</b> - where the proposal would cause a perceptible but small deterioration or improvement in the landscape resource or visual appearance. <u>Unlikely to be a determining issue.</u></li> <li>▪ <b>Minimal adverse or beneficial effect</b> - where the proposal would cause a barely perceptible deterioration or improvement in the landscape resource or visual appearance. <u>Can be regarded as "de minimis" or "not material" and may thus be regarded as neutral.</u></li> </ul>
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## **APPENDIX 2**

- Section 1** Extracts from the online:  
Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study, 2004.
- Section 2** Extracts from:  
Cherwell District Landscape Assessment for Cherwell District Council  
by Cobham Resource Consultants, 1995.
- Section 3** Extracts from:  
Countryside Design Summary  
by Development and Property Services, June 1998.

## Landscape Types:

### Wooded Estatelands



#### 19. WOODED ESTATELANDS

##### Regional Character Areas

Cotswolds, Northamptonshire Uplands, Midvale Ridge and Upper Thames Vale.

##### Location

The landscape type includes parklands at the eastern end of the Cotswolds, ranging from the area around Blenheim Park, Steeple Barton, Middleton Park and as far as Shelswell Park to the north of Bicester. Further south it includes Eynsham Hall Park and Bladon Heath Wood and it also covers the majority of the wooded and parkland areas in the undulating landscape of the Corallian Ridge.

##### Overview

A wooded estate landscape characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character.

##### Key Characteristics

- 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.

##### Geology and landform

The geology of the landscape type varies according to the locality. Much of the landscape across the Cotswold area is underlain by a mix of Cornbrash and Great Oolite limestone. The geology in the area around Bicester and further south is dominated by Oxford Clay, whilst the landscape across the Corallian Ridge is underlain by Corallian beds, which are a mix of sands and sandy limestones.

The landform is generally rolling, ranging from gently rolling to undulating. Across the



Corallian Ridge the landform is strongly undulating, and is steeply sloping in places resulting in small valleys. At the junction of the Corallian beds and the clay vale, springlines emerge and small streams flow through the valleys.

### **Land use and vegetation**

The landscape has a mix of land uses but is largely dominated by arable farming. On the steeper slopes there is some semi-improved grassland, as well as pockets of calcareous grassland, acid grassland and gorse. This is a well-wooded landscape with large, prominent blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland often located on the steeper slopes. In addition, there is a significant number of smaller, mainly mixed plantations that are scattered throughout much of the area and this adds to the overall sense of enclosure. Dense corridors of willows and poplars, and belts of semi-natural woodland bordering the valley streams are other locally prominent features.

### **Cultural pattern**

The field pattern is generally characterised by a geometric pattern of medium to large-sized fields, with arable cropping in the larger fields. A less regular pattern of enclosure is associated with the strongly undulating landform across the Corallian Ridge close to places like Faringdon, Cumnor and Boar's Hill and around Beckley and Shotover Country Park. Fields are generally enclosed by woodland, as well as thorn and elm hedges. There are also a number of species-rich hedges bordering roads and close to woods. Although there are only a few mature oak and ash hedgerow trees, they still contribute to the wooded character of the landscape. They are more obvious in the vicinity of ancient woodland and quite sparse where arable cropping is dominant. Views are generally filtered through trees and framed by woodland blocks. Large parklands with their distinctive country houses, extensive woodland and ornamental lakes at Blenheim, Middleton, Eynsham Hall and Buscot are also very typical of this landscape type and underline its estate character.

The settlement pattern is characterised by small settlements as well as scattered farmhouses in the wider countryside. The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and this is reinforced by features such as stone walls. The most widely used building materials are limestone, stone and clay tiles. There are also limestone houses with thatched roofs at Fyfield, Tubney, Hatford, Beckley and Stanton St. John. Stone with bricks around the widows is characteristic in villages such as Sunningwell, Cumnor and South Hinksey. Red bricks with clay tiles can be seen at Nuneham Courtenay, timber framed houses with thatched roofs at Horton-cum-Studley and ironstone houses at Duns Tew.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

This landscape type is associated with parklands and their associated estatelands. It has a wide range of both locally important and priority habitats.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Predominantly medium to very high bioscores.
- Priority and important habitats include ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedgerows with trees, unimproved grassland, fen, reedswamp and species-rich ponds and watercourses.

### **General Description**

This is a very large landscape type occupying around 11.2% of the rural county. It includes a large part of the Midvale Ridge and a significant part of the Cotswolds character area. It is a diverse area and supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. Within the Midvale Ridge and on the corallian limestone there are many substantial blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Stanton Great, Brasenose and Waterperry Woods to the east of Oxford. To the west of Oxford, around Frilford, there are significant areas of acid grassland, heath and calcareous fen. There are also areas of limestone grassland within Chilswell Valley to the west of the City and in the Cotswolds near Fawler and Charlbury. The many

parklands support a wide range of habitats including mature and veteran trees, species-rich lakes and semi-improved grassland, with Blenheim probably being the best example. In addition, there are smaller areas of neutral and wet grassland and reedswamp. There are also a number of important geological sites including Stratton Audley and Shellingford quarries.

## **LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS**

### **A. Blenheim Park (CW/29)**

#### **Landscape character**

The field pattern is dominated by large-scale arable fields and some grass fields around Combe. Woodland cover is prominent throughout the landscape, with large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations. The woods of the Ditchley estate consist mainly of ash, beech and some hazel coppice, whilst the woodland at Blenheim is mainly ash and oak, with a substantial number of conifers. Parklands are very characteristic in this area, including the picturesque landscapes at Blenheim and Ditchley. Mature hedgerow trees are also thinly scattered throughout and they are mainly oak, ash, beech and some sycamore. Fields are enclosed by woodland and thorn hedges. Roadside hedges are often species-rich and gappy, and internal field hedges are fragmented and lost in places.

#### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 128/H

This area supports locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including Out Wood which is just under 20 ha in size. Species-rich hedgerows are found throughout the area particularly in association with the ancient woods. Blenheim Park with its veteran trees, lakes and woodlands is particularly important. There are small surviving patches of limestone grassland along the Saltway near Ditchley and in the parish of Fawler. An important geological site is located near Charlbury.

### **B. North Aston (CW/51)**

#### **Landscape character**

The area is mainly characterised by large-scale arable fields and some improved grassland. Surviving acid grassland and gorse can be found close to Tackley Wood. Large blocks of ancient woodland, mixed plantations and small woods add variety to an otherwise intensively managed landscape. The composition of the woods is mainly oak and ash but, at places like Tackley Wood, they have been largely replanted with conifers. Thorn hedges are generally low and gappy, but are taller in the vicinity of Tackley Wood. Hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, some sycamore and occasional oak, are sparsely scattered particularly in the area around Tackley Wood. There are also some species-rich hedges in the southern part of the area. The parkland at Steeple Barton, with its mature trees, lakes and pasture, adds to the diversity of the landscape.

#### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 135/H

The area has a number of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands, such as Tackley Wood, some of which have been substantially replanted with conifers. Species-rich hedgerows with trees feature in the southern part of the area, and the parkland at Steeple Barton is important for its mature trees and lakes. There is some surviving acid grassland and gorse at Tackley Heath, but much of the common is dominated by bracken.

### **C. Middleton Stoney (CW/59, CW/58, UT/37)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field boundaries. Hedgerow trees such as ash, sycamore and occasionally oak are found in some roadside hedges, but they are sparser to the north where there is more intensive arable cropping. In parts there are dense corridors of willow and ash, belts of semi-natural woodland and poplar plantations bordering watercourses. Hedgerows vary from tall, thick species-rich hedges with shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood, hazel, field maple, spindle and wild privet through to low, gappy internal field hedges. Parklands are a prominent feature throughout and they include Middleton, Bignell and Tusmore Parks in the north and Kirtlington and Bletchington Parks in the south.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscores/biobands: 199/VH: 49/LM: 71/M

This combined local character area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has a number of important and priority habitats and these are largely associated with the broad limestone plateau to the east of the Cherwell valley. They include ancient semi-natural woodland such as Stoke Bushes and species-rich hedgerows with trees. Kirtlington and Middleton Parks with their associated trees, woodlands and lakes are also very important. There are surviving fragments of limestone grassland, but these are very small and often restricted to old quarries such as Ardley and Stratton Audley. These quarries are also of geological importance. A site noted for its calcareous fen falls partially within the area near Weston on the Green.

## **D. Hethe (BC/4)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has medium-sized geometrically-shaped fields and a mix of land uses dominated by arable farming. Occasionally, patches of gorse and unimproved grassland can be found, particularly close to woodland. The landscape is characterised by interlocking large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, mixed plantations and smaller deciduous and conifer plantations. The composition of the woods is ash, oak and some beech. Extensive areas of parkland are an integral part of the woodland complex at Shelswell Park. Many mature oak and ash hedgerow trees emphasize the strong wooded character of this area. Hedges consist mainly of hawthorn, elm and field maple and are generally in good condition, but become gappier where there is intensive arable farming.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 134/H

The area has several locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedgerows with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has parkland and its associated habitats of mature trees and lakes at Shelswell, ancient semi-natural woodland including Spilsmere Wood and some wet woodland. There is some surviving limestone grassland and scrub on the old disused railway to the north of the area.

## **E. Freeland (UT/24)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has medium-sized fields with a mix of land uses including some small pasture fields on the steep valley sides in the eastern part of the area. The landscape has a very strong wooded character, resulting from the large ancient semi-

semi-improved and occasionally unimproved acid grassland interspersed with gorse, particularly on some of the steeper slopes. Mature oak hedgerow trees are densely scattered throughout the area. Large blocks of ancient woodland are found on the steep slopes. Fields are enclosed by tall, very gappy hedges, with hawthorn, hazel and elm dominating.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 63/M

Locally important habitats include semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and some tree-lined watercourses. Waterperry Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland and there is some surviving acid grassland associated with part of the golf course near Horton-cum-Studley.

## **P. Nuneham Courtenay (CR/15)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is dominated by large geometrically-shaped arable fields. Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations are prominent throughout the area. There are a few hedgerow trees, but they are not a significant landscape feature. Fields are enclosed by woodland and gappy thorn hedges. The parkland surrounding Nuneham Park is dominated by arable farming.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 100/MH

A number of locally important habitats have been recorded in this area, including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, parkland and some acid grassland associated with the arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay.

## **FORCES FOR CHANGE**

- Overall, the hedges are in good condition but intensive agriculture has led to the fragmentation of field boundaries, particularly in areas dominated by arable farming. In such areas the hedges are very intensively maintained, fragmented, and in places removed altogether and replaced by fences.
- The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and there is generally a low impact from residential development, especially within the wider countryside. However, in some villages new residential development is out of character, even though it is contained within the village envelope. There is also sprawling development along some of the main roads, particularly the A420 and A338, although this is mitigated to some extent by woodland and mature garden trees.
- In very intensive areas of arable farming some of the new, large-scale barn complexes are visually intrusive.
- Some large-scale business parks using inappropriate building materials are also visually intrusive.
- There is a localised visual impact from operational quarries and partially restored landfill sites, particularly around places such as Stanford-in-the-Vale.
- The golf course next to the A420 close to Buckland is visually prominent. Frilford Heath golf course, by comparison, blends well with the surrounding countryside by integrating successfully with existing woodlands and heath.
- Overhead pylons are very intrusive in the more open areas where intensive arable farming predominates. This is evident in areas near Nuneham Park, Cumnor and Harcourt hills and to the north of Cuddesdon.
- In the flat, open area near Weston-on-the-Green, the large airfield is visually prominent, in spite of the dense screen planting.

### **Landscape Strategy**

**Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates,**

## woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.

### Guidelines

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Where appropriate, replace non-native conifer species with native species such as oak and ash. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle.
- Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, 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.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.

### Biodiversity Strategy

**Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are safeguarded, in favourable condition and management, and enhanced to satisfy the actions and targets identified within the relevant habitat and species action plans. Safeguard, maintain and enhance all locally important habitats in a way that is appropriate to the landscape character of the area. Promote agri-environment schemes, which will benefit biodiversity in general and protected species and farmland birds in particular.**

### Guidelines

- Parts of this landscape type support a range of important priority habitats including acid grassland, heath, limestone grassland and fen. The majority of these habitats are associated with sites that have been designated as sites of special scientific interest or county wildlife sites. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management. With S.S.S.I.s this can be achieved, where appropriate, through formal agreement between the landowner and English Nature. For county wildlife sites this can be promoted with advice from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the targeting of agri-environment schemes.
- The acid grassland, heath, fen and ponds at Frilford, including part of the golf course, are particularly important within the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they are in favourable condition and management.
- Within the valleys to the west of Oxford achieve a balance between species-rich limestone grassland and scrub. Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species-rich grassland by grazing, as exemplified by the work of Oxford City Council in Chilswell Valley. Opportunities for expanding this habitat include the establishment and management of field margins/buffer strips adjacent to existing limestone grassland habitat using native wildflower species appropriate to the area.
- Opportunities for extending the range of these habitats is feasible, particularly acid grassland, on suitable land adjacent to existing similar habitats across the Corallian ridge. Oxford City Council has been successfully restoring acid grassland and heath within Shotover Country Park, and the techniques applied here can be used on soils

with a similar fertility and acidity.

- Expansion of these habitats should be promoted through the use of agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland is an important and characteristic feature throughout the landscape type. A priority is to ensure that it is sustainably maintained so that it remains in favourable condition and management. A substantial amount has been replanted with conifers, and where practicable these should be replaced with native tree and shrub species appropriate to the landscape type.
- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of the landscape type. Priority should be given to safeguarding, maintaining and expanding this resource, particularly in those local character areas where they remain a significant feature.
- Parklands, and their associated habitats of woodlands, trees, lakes and grassland, make a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource of the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they remain in favourable condition and management.
- Tree-lined watercourses are a feature throughout the landscape type. They should be safeguarded and enhanced by planting species such as ash and willows, pollarding willows where appropriate, and establishing buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Opportunities for the establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland and medium to large-size deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in order to strengthen wildlife corridors and enhance the local landscape character.
- Promote the use of agri-environment schemes such as conservation headlands, overwintered stubbles and winter-sown crops to benefit farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers.
- Parts of the Corallian limestone ridge are notable for their rare arable weeds, and every opportunity should be sought to safeguard and expand this interest through the use of agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.

### **Key Recommendations**

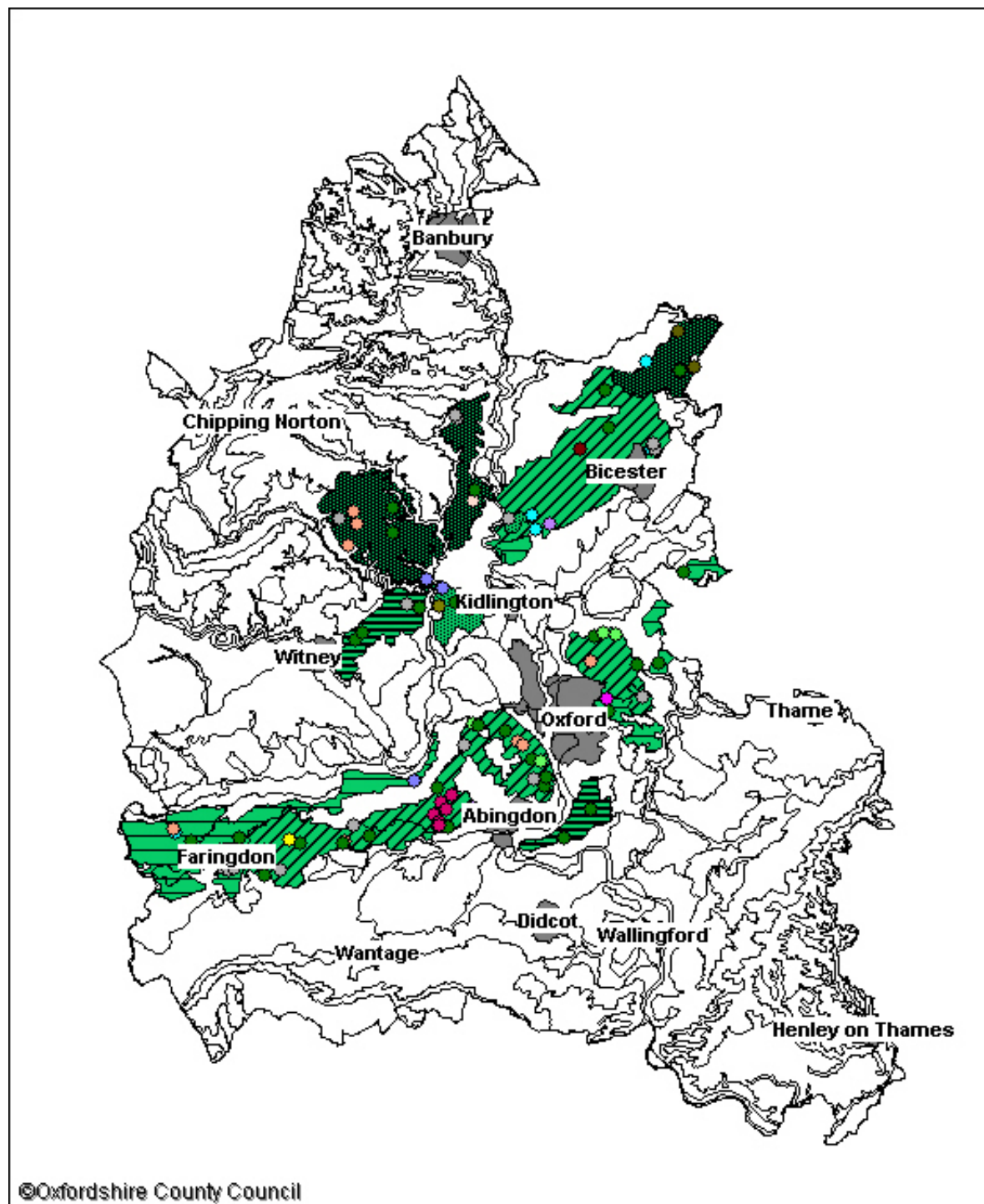
- **Safeguard and enhance landscape character of the ancient woodlands, parklands, species-rich hedgerow network and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all priority habitats are in favourable condition and management, and opportunities for expanding this resource should be promoted through agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral sites.**

## Landscape Types:

### Wooded Estatelands Map

The landscape description units in this map have been renamed using a nearby village or settlement to provide some local identity. These new units are referred to as local character areas.

Some local character areas may also include a number of coloured dots. These represent the various wildlife habitats associated with that area, which are described on the relevant parish pages. Each local character area also has some form of hatching, which highlights the [bioscore](#) or [bioband](#) for each area.



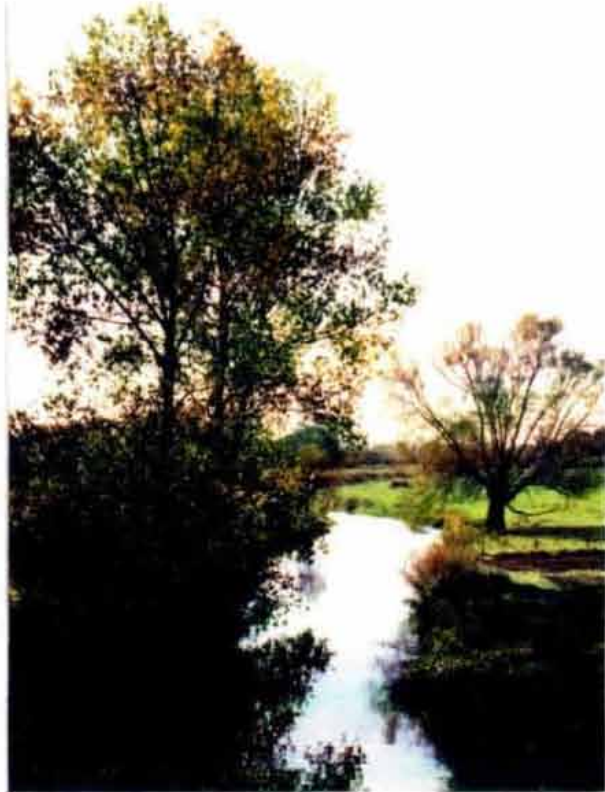
## Biobands

-  Very High
-  High
-  Medium/High
-  Medium
-  Low/Medium
-  Low

## Wildlife Sites

-  Lowland meadow
-  Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
-  Lowland dry acid grassland
-  Rock exposures
-  Lowland calcareous grassland
-  Aquatic
-  Swamp
-  Scrub
-  Bracken
-  Fen
-  Semi-improved acid grassland
-  Coniferous plantation
-  Lowland wood pastures and parkland
-  Arable





CHERWELL DISTRICT  
LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

FOR

CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

BY

COBHAM RESOURCE CONSULTANTS  
AVALON HOUSE  
MARCHAM ROAD  
ABINGON  
OXON  
OX14 1UG

NOVEMBER 1995

7292

# CONTENTS

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	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
• Background to the Study	1
• Approach and Methodology	2
<b>2 THE CHERWELL LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>5</b>
• Introduction	5
• Physical Influences	5
• Human Influences	7
• Landscape Features	10
• Variations in Landscape Character	14
<b>3 THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS</b>	<b>19</b>
• Introduction	19
• Upper Cherwell Basin	19
• Cherwell Valley	20
• Lower Cherwell Floodplain	23
• Ironstone Hills and Valleys	25
• Incised Ironstone Plateau	27
• Upper Heyford Plateau	29
• Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands	30
• Otmoor Lowlands	32
<b>4 EVALUATION AND GUIDELINES</b>	<b>36</b>
• Introduction	36
• Conservation Landscapes	37
• Repair Landscapes	38
• Restoration Landscapes	39
• Reconstruction Landscapes	40

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX 1:** References

**APPENDIX 2:** Description of landscape types

## FIGURES

---

- Figure 1:** The Study Area
- Figure 2:** Simplified Geology
- Figure 3:** Landform and Drainage
- Figure 4:** Landscape Features
- Figure 5:** Landscape Character Areas
- Figure 6:** Landscape Types
- Figure 7:** Upper Cherwell Basin
- Figure 8:** Cherwell Valley
- Figure 9:** Lower Cherwell Floodplain
- Figure 10:** Ironstone Hills and Valleys
- Figure 11:** Incised Ironstone Plateau
- Figure 12:** Upper Heyford
- Figure 13:** Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands
- Figure 14:** Otmoor Lowlands
- Figure 15:** Enhancement Strategy

## **PHOTOGRAPHIC SHEETS**

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- No. 1:** Landscape Features
- No. 2:** Landscape Character Areas-1
- No. 3:** Landscape Character Areas-2
- No. 4:** Landscape Types (R1a-R3a)
- No. 5:** Landscape Types 2 (R4a-R6b)
- No. 6:** Landscape Types 3 (T1-T5)

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- 1.1 Cobham Resource Consultants were commissioned in October 1994 to prepare a landscape assessment for the Cherwell District of North Oxfordshire. The study is intended to contribute to an increased understanding of the landscape resources of the District and to be used by the District Council as the basis for the development of a consistent, coordinated approach to planning policy, development control, landscape management/conservation, recreation and tourism. It should also be of interest and use to others involved in land-use planning or land management within the area.
- 1.2 The high quality of the district's landscape is presently reflected in the large areas which are covered by various types of landscape designation (Figure 1). A small part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - a designation of national recognition - lies within the north-west corner of the district and six Areas of High Landscape Value (AHLV) have been identified in the Cherwell Local Plan [1], in accordance with County Structure Plan advice. The Local Plan recognises the special environmental qualities of these areas and seeks to conserve and enhance them through careful control of the scale, nature, siting and design of development. The policies within the Plan also seek to protect the large number of important Historic Parks and Gardens with which the district is blessed, and the inclusion of the Cherwell Valley as part of the Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) is a further indication of the commitment to conserve and enhance the district's valued landscapes.
- 1.3 There is a growing recognition, however, that although these 'quality' landscapes are perhaps of the most obvious scenic value, **all** of the district's landscapes are (at least potentially) of value to someone and all have a contribution to make to the attractiveness of the district as a whole. Consequently, the District Council have recognised the need to supplement the traditional reliance upon the conservation of special landscapes by efforts to enhance the beauty of other areas through renewal and recreation. This comprehensive landscape assessment is the means by which the character and distinctive features of the countryside may be highlighted and priorities for landscape conservation and enhancement identified.
- 1.4 The brief also specifically included the requirement to identify differences in quality and condition within the landscape (so that conservation and enhancement initiatives can be effectively targeted) and special features in the landscape which make a particular contribution to its landscape, historic and amenity value.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.5 Landscape assessment, as a tool for identifying and describing the character of our landscapes, is increasingly recognised as an important first step in conserving and enhancing them. Over recent years, there has been a general trend away from quantitative systems of landscape evaluation towards an approach based on understanding the intrinsic character of a locality and its distinctive features. This approach - which has now become part of established practice - allows land-use planning and management to respond to the local landscape 'vernacular' [2,3].
- 1.6 The approach recognises that the character of the landscape relies closely on its physiography, its history and land management in addition to its scenic or visual dimension. Hence, other factors which may influence the ways in which landscape is experienced and valued, such as ecology, history and culture, should be examined although they are not in themselves to be the subject of detailed discussion.
- 1.7 Advice on principles and methods of landscape assessment was first published by the Countryside Commission in 1987 [2] but since then many assessments have been carried out and the approach has been developed and refined. New guidance, prepared by CRC on behalf of the Countryside Commission, has recently been published which builds on the earlier advice but brings it up-to-date [3]. Our approach to the Cherwell assessment is based closely upon this guidance, as well as upon our extensive practical experience of landscape assessment work. Essentially, the assessment relies upon a mix of subjective and objective judgement, used in a systematic and iterative way.
- 1.8 The main steps in the assessment process are:
- defining the purpose of the assessment
  - preliminary survey
  - desk study
  - field survey
  - analysis
  - presentation of results
- 1.9 The **purpose** of the assessment determines the detailed method to be used and the scale at which the assessment is to be presented. In this case, the assessment is intended to increase understanding of the landscape resources of the district as a whole, to assist with policy formulation and development control, and also to assist with the targeting of resources for enhancement and management. Both of these purposes require the assessment to be pitched at a level of detail which lies somewhere between the broad-brush and the field-by-field assessment.

- 1.10 Initially, a rapid **preliminary survey** of the district was undertaken to familiarise the study team with its overall character and range of landscape variation. In the course of this initial survey, a range of different **types** of landscape was observed and compiled into a list which formed the basis of a recording system for use during the field survey. Each detailed category of landscape was given a reference code which could be used to provide a 'shorthand' description of landscape character when annotating field survey plans.
- 1.11 The **desk study** involved the collation of a wide range of existing information from which some of the key formative influences on landscape character could be deduced. A 1:50,000 overlay mapping exercise was undertaken, analysing geology, landform and drainage, landcover, woodland/parkland and sites of ecological and historical importance within the district. Air photographs and various books, plans and reports were also examined in order to build upon our understanding of the landscape resource. Consideration was also given to other studies of landscape character within neighbouring areas, such as those undertaken for the Cotswolds AONB [4] and for Northamptonshire [5]. On the basis of this analysis, a preliminary characterisation of the landscape was made, dividing the district into broad areas of common character, termed **Landscape Character Areas**.
- 1.12 The purpose of the **field survey** was to confirm or refine the boundaries of the preliminary Landscape Character Areas and to identify and record the range of variation in landscape character within them (ie. into local landscape types). It also allowed the recording of emotional responses to the landscape, of features critical to its character and quality and of its sensitivity to change.
- 1.13 The field survey involved travelling extensively throughout the study area, recording detailed variations in landscape character and key features onto 1:25,000 base maps using the annotations derived from the preliminary survey. Field survey forms, supported by a photographic record, were completed at representative locations to provide further information on the positive and negative attributes of the landscape and its ability to absorb change.
- 1.14 **Analysis** of desk and field information, and discussions within the study team and with the District Council, helped to confirm the boundaries of the Landscape Character Areas, to refine the classification of Landscape Types and to determine ideas and priorities for landscape conservation, restoration and enhancement in different parts of the district. The results of the assessment are **presented** in this report, supported by appropriate illustrations.

**pattern (R2a)**, although fields of arable land tend to run into one another with no visual or physical interruption. Within this large-scale landscape are the steeper slopes associated with village settlement, where smaller fields and mixed farming are local features.

- 3.62 The **Airfield (T4)** at Upper Heyford dominates the whole of this character area. On the plateau top are the runways, with associated landing lights and security fences, while barracks, offices, warehouses and hangars sprawl across the landscape to the south. Both buildings and airfield are surrounded by high wire security fences.
- 3.63 The base is now disused and deserted, but features such as the water towers are still very visible across the Cherwell valley. Associated street lighting and security lighting is particularly visible over long distances at night.

### **Special features**

- 3.64 This sparse area of high ground is crossed by two ancient parallel routeways. The line of the Portway is followed by the minor road from Kirtlington which runs along the edge of the Cherwell Valley to Upper Heyford and continues northwards as a footpath towards Souldern. The other more visible feature is variously known as Aves Ditch, Ash Bank and Wattle Bank. It is most obvious as a ditch and bank running across the countryside between Middleton Stoney and Caulcott, and its line can be traced considerably further south, although much of it has been levelled. The bank had a dual function as a Roman boundary dyke and as an embanked road and has formed estate and parish boundaries since Saxon times.
- 3.65 An SSSI falling into this character areas is associated with a more recent linear feature, the railway cutting at Ardley. Here a herb-rich limestone grassland sward has developed on the steep banks of the railway cutting, where the wide range of typical species includes bee orchid *Ophrys apifera*, green-winged orchid *Orchis morio* and blue fleabane *Erigeron acer*. The cutting has particularly large populations of butterfly species which are uncommon in Oxfordshire, supporting a large colony of Small Blue, Brown Argus, Dark Green Fritillary, Green Hairstreak and Duke of Burgundy butterflies, as well as the nationally uncommon Wood White butterfly.

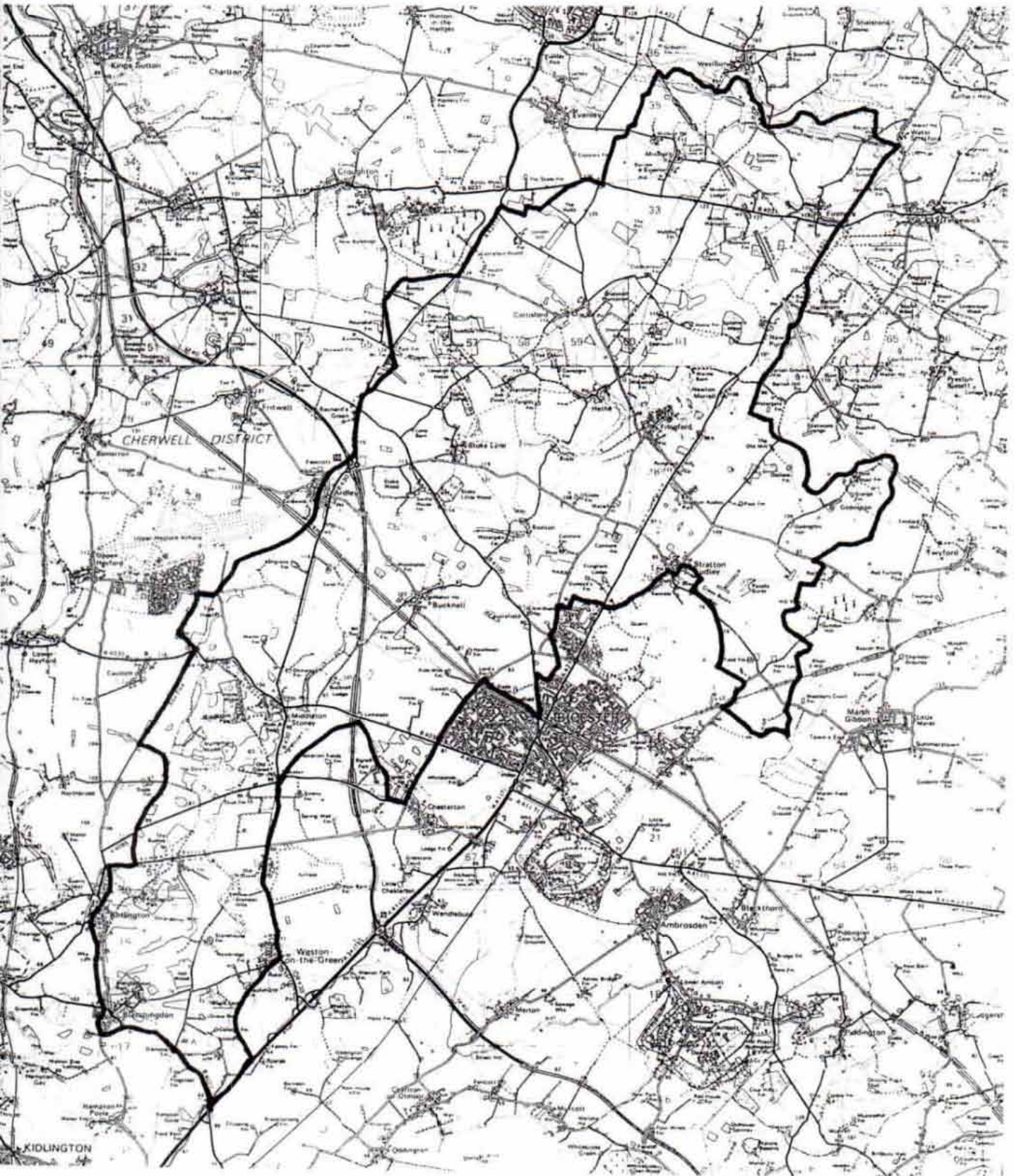
## **OXFORDSHIRE ESTATE FARMLANDS**

- 3.67 South east of the Upper Heyford Plateau, the limestone dips into a series of gentle undulations. This area runs from Bletchingdon on the edge of the Cherwell Valley in the south, around to the north of Bicester and up to the county boundary with Northamptonshire. It is characterised primarily by the extensive remains of eighteenth century parklands and estate farmland



Figure 13

# OXFORDSHIRE ESTATE FARMLANDS



SCALE 1:100,000

which lies in a band across Oxfordshire and continues into Northamptonshire, which was favoured by the gentry since it was within easy travelling distance from London.

### **Landform and landcover**

- 3.68 This character area is situated upon White Limestone and Cornbrash, a bluish-grey limestone which contains shell debris and has a high clay content. Both bands trend south-west to north-eastwards, rising up to about 120m in the north in a series of gentle undulations.
- 3.69 A major watershed divides the area on an east-west alignment. Streams rising around Stratton Audley and Bucknell drain southwards into the River Ray and hence the Thames river system, while streams to the north of Fringford and Stoke Lyne join Padbury Brook and the Great Ouse river system, flowing eastwards to drain into the Wash.
- 3.70 This area is noticeably the better wooded than the rest of Cherwell District, with considerable plantations which are associated with extensive areas of parkland. Much of the land is in arable cultivation where the wooded character persists, with woodlands which divide and enclose the landscape on a large scale, there are also long views across rolling open fields where there are substantial breaks in tree cover.
- 3.71 Particularly towards the north of the area, woodland cover decreases and the countryside opens out. This is a typical English landscape scene of gently rolling hills clothed with a patchwork of fields punctuated by hedgerow trees and copses. In some areas this is disappearing, resulting in a more open landscape where only lines of trees remain to mark a previous field boundary.

### **Variations in landscape character**

- 3.72 Six distinct areas of **18th Century enclosed farmland (R6a)** survive within this character area, at Bletchingdon, Kirtlington, Middleton, Bignell, Tusmore and Shelswell. Many of them are still surrounded by their original limestone walls, containing a pastoral scene with scattered trees and small woods. The parklands incorporate many fine specimens of single trees, notably beech, oak and horse chestnut. However, in some areas the grazing land has been ploughed up, although often trees have been retained in game coverts.
- 3.73 Associated with these parklands, but not contained within the parkland walls, are areas of **estate farmlands (R6b)** which display estate farm characteristics such as metal railings, post and rail fences, and regular patterns of roadside avenue trees.
- 3.73 **Large scale arable farmland enclosed by woods and copses (R3a)** is found across this character area, where the landscape is structured on a

large scale by woodland belts. The fields tend to be large and open, without any boundary. Plantations are located in long strips along watercourses, roads or other natural boundaries.

- 3.74 To the north of Bicester the landscape opens out into a **rolling arable landscape with strong field pattern copses and trees (R2b)**. The patchwork of arable and pasture is given definition by well maintained hedges. Many of the hedges contain regularly spaced mature hedgerow oaks, some of which are in excellent health although substantial numbers are beginning to die back. Road verges are generous widths, and often have a ditch and hedge on either side.
- 3.75 Views over the rolling countryside are punctuated by numerous small copses and coverts, a well maintained asset in an area where hunting and shooting are still regular features of rural life. However, in places the structure of the landscape is disappearing as intensive arable use has resulted in the removal of field boundaries so that only lines of hedgerow trees remain.

### **Special features**

- 3.76 The most notable features of interest within this character area are the eighteenth century parklands. Several of those remaining, including Middleton Stoney and Kirtlington, have had more than one major phase of landscaping. The first phase of the layout of the eighteenth century park at Middleton was an avenue which ran through the small medieval deer park, which had originally been enclosed early in the thirteenth century. The extension to the layout continued into the nineteenth century, when the old manor house and a number of cottages were destroyed as part of the landscape scheme. The estate villages are found at Bletchingdon and Kirtlington, which likewise have a unity of design and detail, and a planned layout around village greens.
- 3.77 Kirtlington was originally planned to be in the formal style, but was finally landscaped by Capability Brown between 1751 and 1762. The park was considerably extended to cover an area of over 200 ha, including the site of a disused medieval hunting park. The belts of Scots Pine and the loosely grouped coppices around the park were to become hallmarks of Brown's later work. He is also known to have worked at Middleton Stoney and Kirtlington and considerably influenced the park at Bletchingdon [16, 18].

### **OTMOOR LOWLANDS**

- 3.79 At the south east of the district is another large character area, the Otmoor Lowlands. This is essentially a flat, wet, low lying landscape, but it displays considerable variation owing to particular landform features and built development. It stretches northwards to include Bicester's urban fringes, and to the south includes the edge of the Oxford Heights.

Figure 6

# LANDSCAPE TYPES

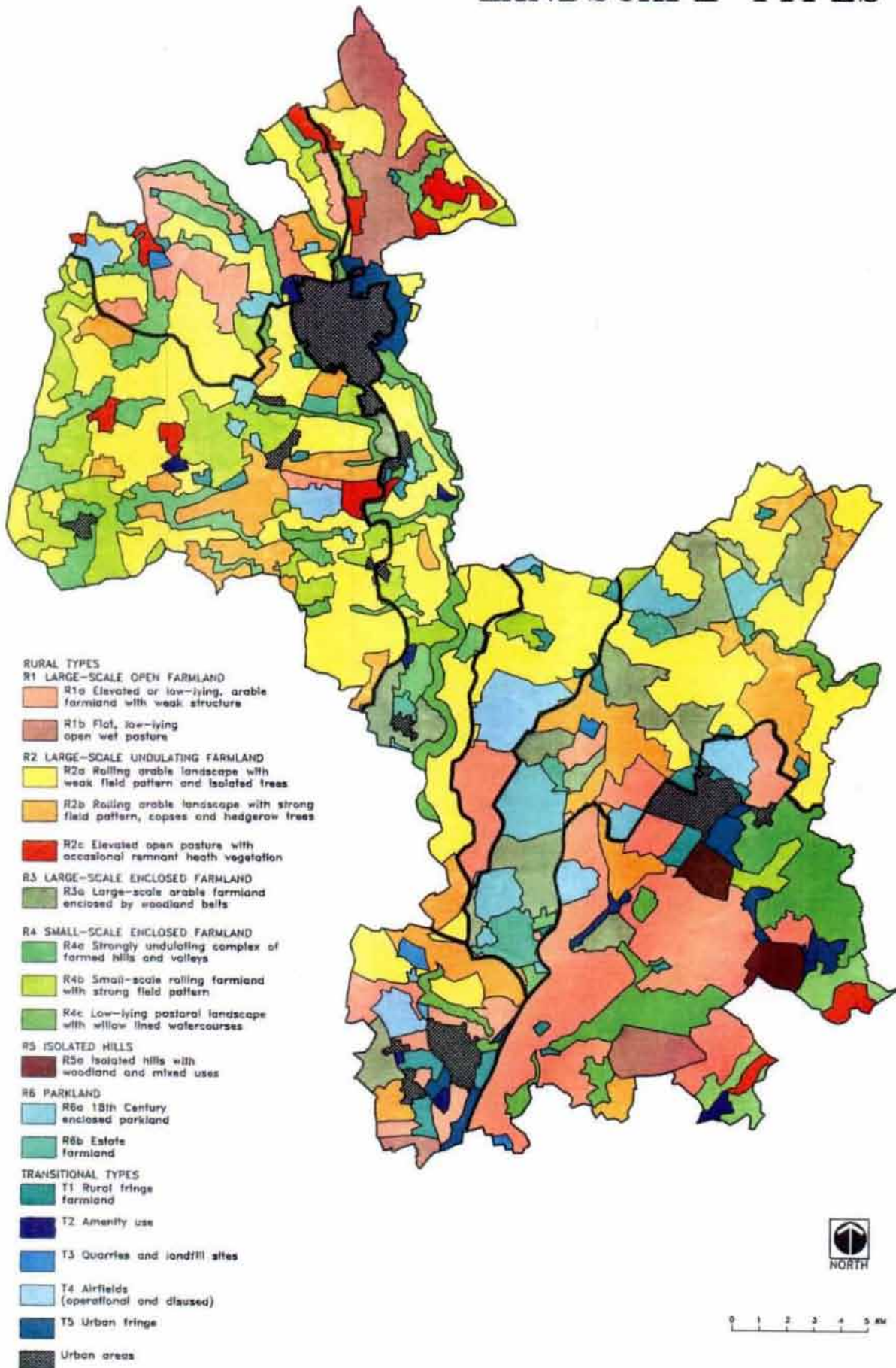
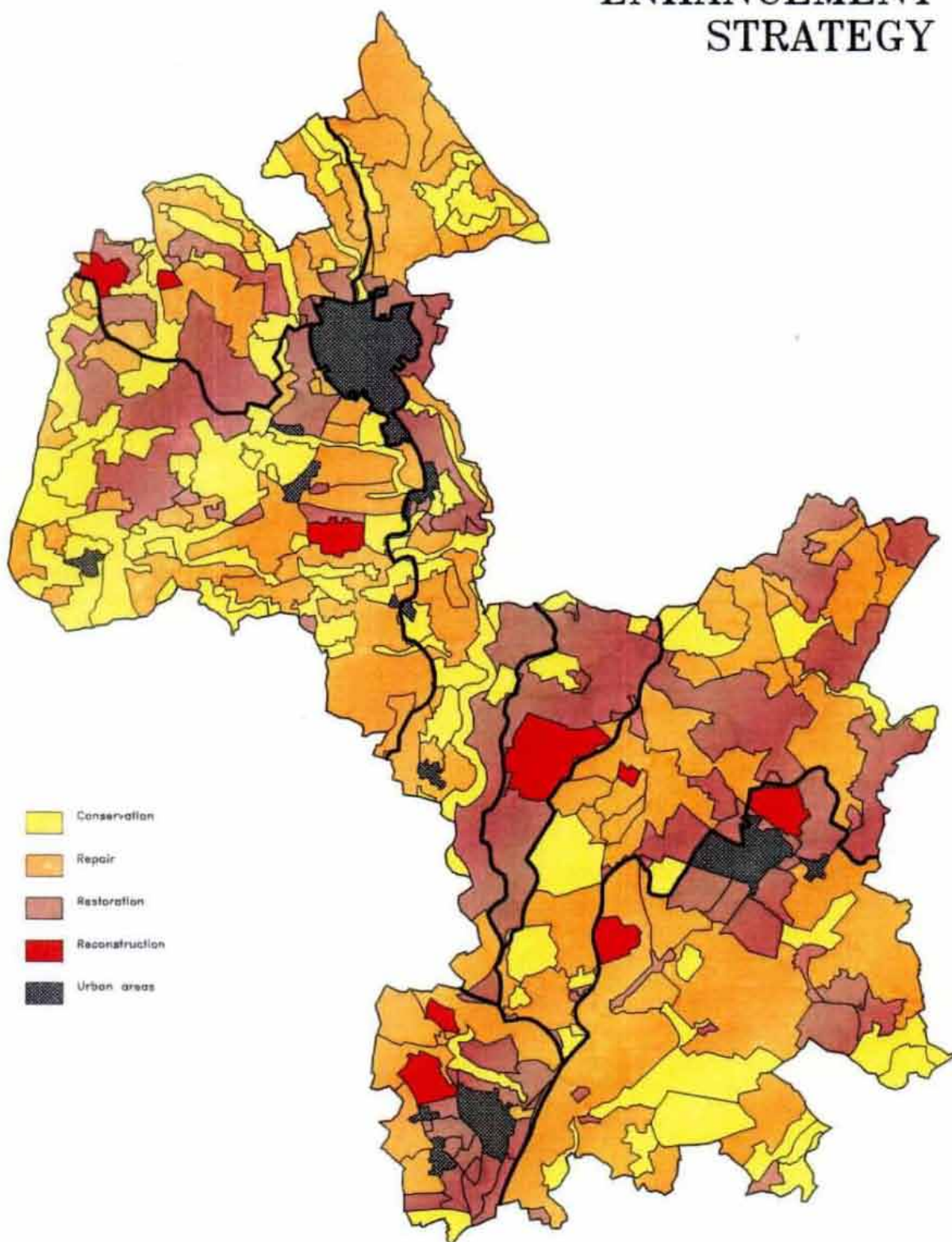


Figure 15

# ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

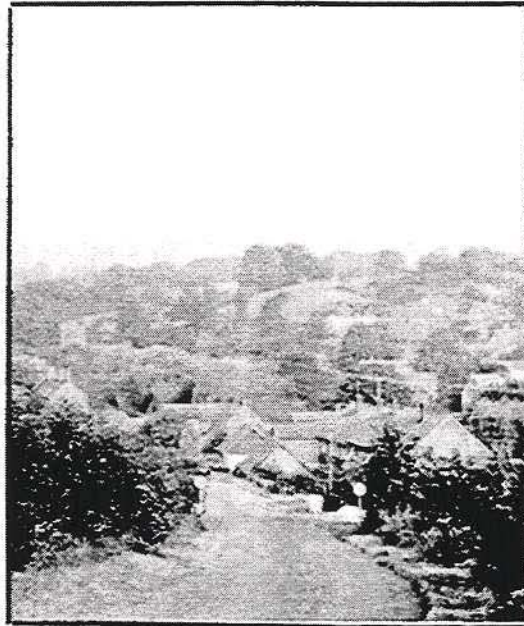


- Conservation
- Repair
- Restoration
- Reconstruction
- Urban areas



0 1 2 3 4 5 KM

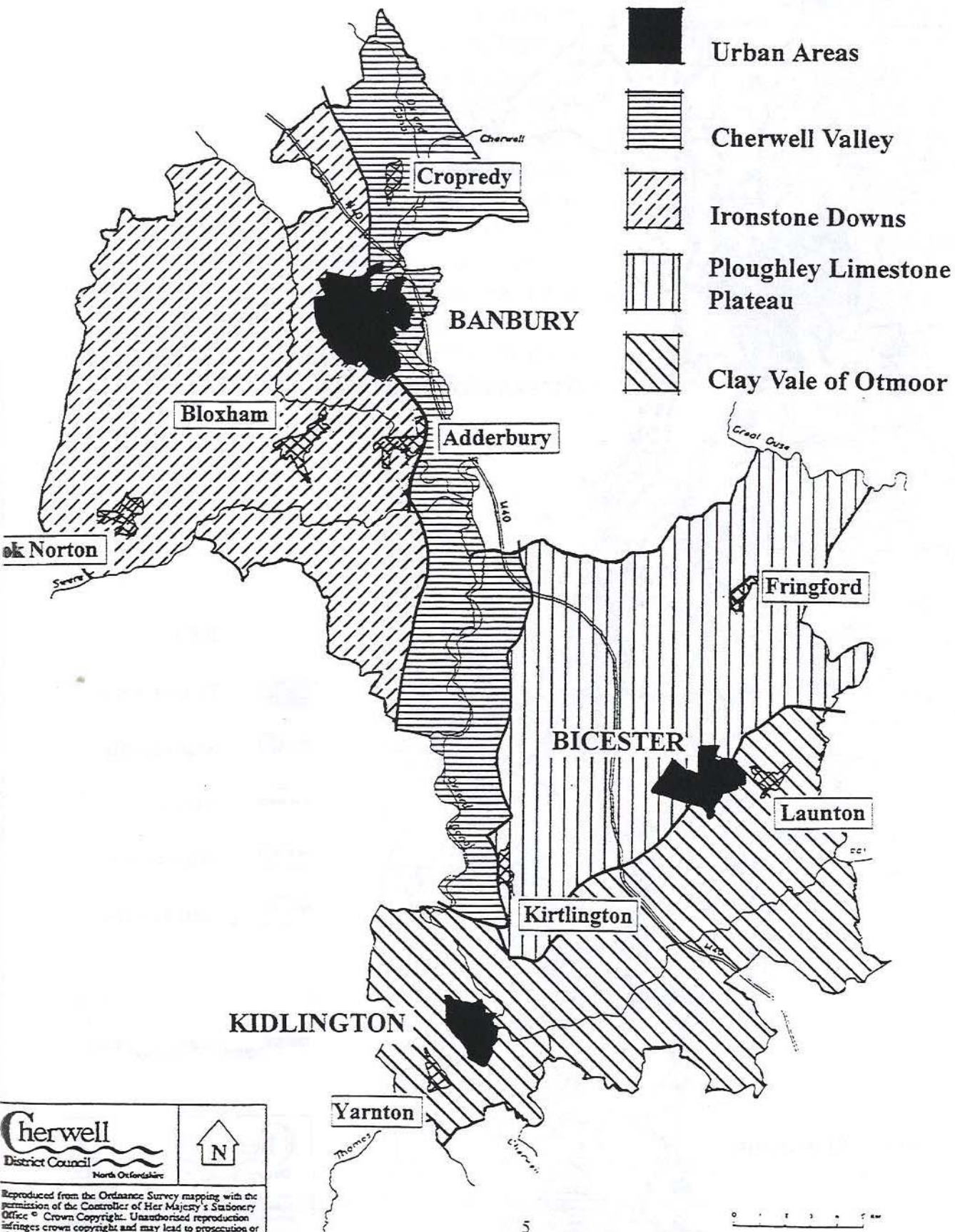
# *Countryside Design Summary*



*DEVELOPMENT AND  
PROPERTY SERVICES*

*JUNE 1998*

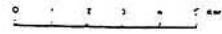
# COUNTRYSIDE CHARACTER AREAS



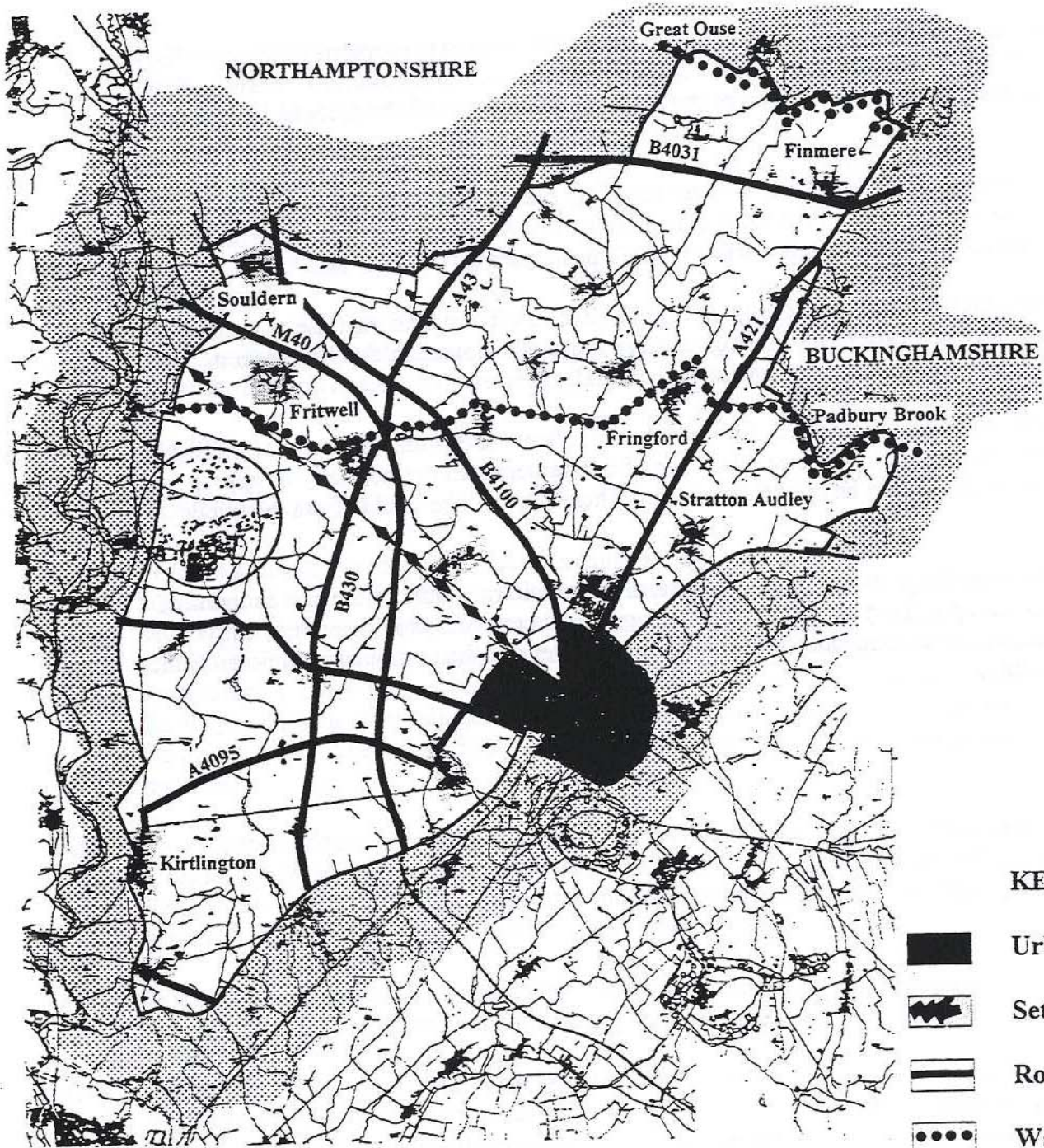
**Cherwell**  
District Council  
North Oxfordshire

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# PLOUGHLEY LIMESTONE PLATEAU



## KEY

-  Urban Area
  -  Settlements
  -  Roads
  -  Waterways
  -  Rail Routes
  -  Former RAF Base  
Upper Heyford
- 0 5Km
- 



**Cherwell**  
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North Oxfordshire



N

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Date:.....



## **SETTLEMENTS OF THE PLOUGHLEY LIMESTONE PLATEAU**

**Ardley  
Bainton  
Bletchington  
Bucknell  
Caulcott  
Caversfield  
Chesterton  
Cottisford  
Fewcott  
Finmere  
Fringford  
Fritwell  
Godington  
Hardwick  
Hethe  
Juniper Hill  
Kirtlington  
Little Chesterton  
Middleton Stoney  
Mixbury  
Newton Purcell  
Souldern  
Stoke Lyne  
Stratton Audley**

## **PLOUGHLEY LIMESTONE PLATEAU**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This character area covers the central part of the District to the east of the Cherwell Valley. White limestone in the north gives way to cornbrash further south, both of the great oolitic group. The land is highest in the north and west, where it forms a number of exposed plateaux at 130-140m, to the south the land gradually falls in altitude in a series of gentle undulations until the edge of the clay vale of Otmoor. In the central and northeastern part of this area the shallow valleys drain eastwards into the Anglian drainage basin. Elsewhere streams drain into the rivers of the Thames catchment area.

## **2. LANDSCAPE**

### **2.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

- (i) A number of exposed upland plateaux in the north and west dip gently into rolling undulations and shallow valleys to the Southeast.
- (ii) Extensive remains of 18th century parkland and estate farmland characterise the area. Six parklands survive containing woodland and pasture with fine specimens of single trees such as beech, oak, lime and horse chestnut, enclosed by limestone walls and groups of Corsican and Scots Pine. Adjacent to the parklands, farmland displays estate farm characteristics such as railings and avenues of trees.
- (iii) Woodland cover is comparatively extensive in some parts of this area, either as long plantation belts bordering streams or roads adjacent to arable farmland, or in association with historic parkland.
- (iv) Arable is the primary agricultural land use of the area. Scale varies from a patchwork of fields with well-defined hedgerows and copses, to large-scale fields on the well-drained loams of the open plateaux.
- (v) The former RAF airbase at Upper Heyford is a large and prominent feature situated on an exposed plateau in the west of the character area.
- (vi) Views are often broken by woodlands, e.g. Stoke Wood near Stoke Lyne. However, in places, gentle rises in the arable landscape can afford views for a couple of kilometres.
- (vii) A network of roads criss-cross the entire area, avoiding valleys, and often lined by walls and trees relating to the extensive areas of parkland.

### **2.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

- (i) Development should avoid exposed and prominent locations. The protection given by a valley location, existing buildings or woodland, should be used where this does not undermine the character of these existing landscape features.
- (ii) Development in historic parklands or within their setting must maintain or enhance the specific character, which defines this part of the District.

- (iii) Extensive areas of woodland may be appropriate in certain locations, e.g. in association with existing plantations and away from exposed plateau locations.

### **3. SETTLEMENTS**

#### **3.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

- (i) Most villages are small and are not prominent in the landscape over large distances due to landform and woodland cover.
- (ii) The majority of settlements have an agricultural origin. They have been established close to a permanent water source, within or adjacent to a small valley avoiding the highest land in the immediate area. The exception to this is Bletchington, which is situated on higher ground overlooking the Clay Vale of Otmoor.
- (iii) A new settlement at Upper Heyford to secure the restoration of the airbase should respect the scale and landscape setting of the surrounding villages. The new village should not extend onto the higher ground of the Heyford plateau itself, but sit adjacent to the small brook, which flows south, from the site, using the natural protection afforded by a valley location.
- (iv) A few villages have been planned or display details and a unity of design, which suggests that they are estate villages. For example Kirtlington is built around a series of formal village greens and Mixbury was almost entirely rebuilt in 1874.
- (v) Villages are mainly linear in form, even where they occur at the intersection of roads. Other villages exhibit a semi-dispersed form, although they are still distinct as settlements in the landscape.
- (vi) Village edges are open in places and in others enclosed by woodland and limestone walls associated with the parkland which fringes the settlements. Individual trees are important features within many villages.
- (vii) Village character varies considerably, sometimes within a settlement, as is the case at Fringford, as well as between villages. The villages are mainly open in character as a result of wide streets and open spaces. For example, estate villages have planned formal greens such as at Bletchington; other villages have properties set back some distance from the street behind walls such as parts of Fritwell; whilst others have buildings fronting informal verges as is characteristic of parts of Souldern.

#### **3.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

- (i) New development should reinforce the existing street pattern, which creates the basic village form. In linear villages, development should strengthen the dominant street scene and limit backland development. In villages with a semi-dispersed character, the creation of a more compact form through infilling may not be appropriate.
- (ii) New development proposals should reflect the character found in the immediate locality in terms of the relationship between buildings, open space and roads.

- (iii) In most locations it would be appropriate for small-scale development to be interspersed with public open space and woodland planting to integrate it into the landscape.

## **4. BUILDINGS**

### **4.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

- (i) The predominant building material for domestic properties is coursed thinly bedded limestone rubble. Most villages contain a mixture of terraced and detached properties. However, some display a dominance of terraced properties, such as Kirtlington, and some, such as at Chesterton, consist of mainly detached buildings.
- (ii) Red and occasionally blue bricks are used for quoins and detailing in 19th century estate cottages. There are a number of red brick buildings as well as many modern properties built from a variety of materials.
- (iii) Roofs were traditionally of thatch and stone slate. Many have been replaced by local clay tile and welsh slate and later by concrete tiles. Plain red clay tiles were introduced on many of the 19th century estate cottages in this area. Roofs are fairly steeply pitched with replacement brick chimney stacks on the roofline.
- (iv) A mixture of window types is evident including timber casements and timber sashes. They are mainly of a vertical alignment with wooden lintels.
- (v) Domestic buildings face onto streets and other public space, but their relationship varies markedly. Terraced properties often front streets or greens, but in some villages detached houses are set back some distance behind limestone walls. Enclosure is also by iron railings in some locations, such as in Kirtlington.
- (vi) Farmsteads and other buildings sit adjacent to the road network.

### **4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT**

- (i) The primary domestic building material should be limestone. Red brick will be acceptable for detailing in some locations. More extensive use of red brick and other materials will depend upon the individual locality and the character of the village.
- (ii) Roofing materials for houses should be stone or welsh slates and plain tiles. Plain red clay tiles will also be appropriate in some village locations. Profiled or interlocking tiles will not normally be acceptable. Steeply pitched roofs should remain predominant with any chimneys located on the ridge line.
- (iii) Openings should be vertically aligned and in proportion to the size of the property, taking the overall scale from historic buildings in the village.
- (iv) Building line and grouping should reflect the individual character of each village. In some villages a formal layout and building form is appropriate, whilst in others an informal approach is desirable. Limestone walls, railings and in some instances hedges will be appropriate means of enclosure.

- (v) New farm buildings should avoid exposed, open or prominent locations, and use the seclusion afforded by a valley location, as well as existing buildings and woodland.

## **APPENDIX 3**

Extracts from

Bicester Green Buffer Report, Final Report. LDA Design, September 2013.

# BICESTER

## GREEN BUFFER REPORT

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2013



## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

Evidence Base for the Green Buffers around Bicester  
26<sup>th</sup> September 2013

<sup>A</sup> 17 Minster Precincts  
Peterborough PE1 1XX  
United Kingdom  
<sup>T</sup> +44 (0) 1733 310 471  
<sup>F</sup> +44 (0) 1733 553 661  
<sup>W</sup> [www.lda-design.co.uk](http://www.lda-design.co.uk)

LDA Design Consulting LLP  
Registered No: OC307725  
17 Minster Precincts, Peterborough PE1 1XX

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26th September 2013  
**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

## Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	I
1.1.	Scope of the Report and Structure .....	I
2.0	Policy Context .....	2
2.1.	National Planning Policy.....	2
2.2.	Local Planning Policy.....	3
3.0	Methodology.....	5
3.1.	Green Buffer Policy Review .....	5
3.2.	Stage One: Defining the Study Area .....	7
3.3.	Stage Two: Baseline Study.....	7
3.4.	Stage Three: Field Work.....	8
3.5.	Stage Four: Analysis and Green Buffer Proposals.....	9
4.0	Green Buffer Areas.....	10
4.1.	Green Buffer 1: Caversfield .....	10
4.2.	Green Buffer 2: Stratton Audley.....	12
4.3.	Green Buffer 3: Launton .....	14
4.4.	Green Buffer 4: Ambrosden .....	15
4.5.	Green Buffer 5: Wendlebury .....	17
4.6.	Green Buffer 6: Chesterton.....	19
4.7.	Green Buffer 7: Bignell Park.....	21
4.8.	Green Buffer 8: Bucknell .....	22
5.0	Conclusions.....	25
	Appendix 1. Bicester Study Area .....	1
	Appendix 2. Bicester Green Buffer .....	2
	Appendix 3. Response to Local Plan Representations .....	3

Version: 1.7  
 Version date: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
 Comment Final Report

*This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008.*

26th September 2013

## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

### **3.0 Methodology**

The purpose of the study is to provide a review of the Green Buffers as illustrated in The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission (August 2012) and accompanying Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5) to recommend a definitive Green Buffer to be defined for Bicester through the Local Plan process.

#### **3.1. Green Buffer Policy Review**

To allow the Green Buffer to be defined, an initial review of Green Buffer policy has been undertaken by LDA Design. Suggested changes to the wording of the draft policy contained within the emerging Local Plan have been provided by LDA Design following discussion with Cherwell District Council. Clear criteria have been defined to determine the purposes of a Green Buffer. These purposes and the suggested wording of the emerging policy are:

*'Green buffers as indicated on the Proposals Map will be maintained to:*

- *maintain Banbury and Bicester's distinctive identity and setting*
- *protect the separate identity and setting of neighbouring settlements which surround the two towns*
- *prevent coalescence and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements*
- *protect the identity and setting of landscape and historic features of value that are important to the identity and setting of the two towns*
- *protect important views'*

A Green Buffer policy will protect the distinctive identity and setting of Bicester and its surrounding settlements. Important historic routes and arrival points between and into settlements will also be protected, enhancing the sense of arrival and reinforcing the identity of the town as an ancient market centre. The distinction between Bicester and surrounding villages will be preserved, protecting important gaps between built form, preventing coalescence and maintaining the separate identity of settlements. The setting of other assets such as landscape and historical features will also be protected as part of the Green Buffer designation, retaining important views and visual links between settlement and the adjacent countryside.

The expanded purposes of the Green Buffer are outlined in further detail in the following section.

##### **3.1.1. Purposes of the Green Buffer**

#### **Maintain Banbury and Bicester's distinctive identity and setting**

The countryside around the town of Bicester provides attractive approaches to the town, creating a rural setting to the town. Whilst Bicester has been subject to rapid expansion since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the development of large infrastructure elements such as the M40 corridor, main line railway and its own ring road, beyond this the rural landscape remains largely intact and contains a number of small scattered settlements, often historic in character.

26th September 2013

### **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

The town itself is situated on the gently sloping landform created by the River Ray and its tributaries, which are located to the south east of the town. The landform creates very little enclosure to the town, with localised topographic features such as Graven Hill creating striking features in the relatively flat landform. Higher landform to the north and east offers viewpoints with panoramic views over Bicester and its surrounding landscape.

Given the openness of the surrounding landscape the town and its landscape setting are intimately interlinked. The rural setting of the town forms an integral part of its character which needs to be planned for positively as a central part of the decision-making process. The Green Buffer policy will allow the identity and setting of the town and the surrounding villages to be maintained.

#### **Protect the separate identity and setting of surrounding settlements**

As with the setting and identity of Bicester town itself, the setting of surrounding settlements is also integral to their character. The rural villages, often historic in character, are scattered throughout the surrounding landscape. These settlements are frequently located along the tributaries of the River Ray, with the relatively flat landform often creating a visual relationship with the edge of Bicester. Approaches to the villages also form an important part of their character and overall setting. The Green Buffer policy will allow the setting of these surrounding settlements to be protected.

#### **Prevent coalescence between the two towns and their surrounding settlements ensuring the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements are kept them free from built development that would harm the character of the Green Buffer**

Fundamental to the distinctive identity and setting of Bicester and its surrounding settlements is ensuring the town and villages do not merge. The areas of countryside, or gaps, between both the existing or planned edge of Bicester and the surrounding settlements are important in retaining the character and setting of the town and villages, creating a distinct approach and often a rural setting. The Green Buffer will prevent development extending beyond the settlements to such an extent that the identity of individual settlements is lost and development coalesces. The designation will also be essential to protect important gaps, preventing development which would harm its character.

#### **Protect valued features of landscape and historical importance and their settings**

Whilst many features of landscape and historical importance are protected through various designations, for example Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens, others remain without formal designation. However, such features are often recognised locally as important features contributing positivity to the character of the area and sense of place. The Green Buffer designation will afford such features protection. It will also enhance the protection already afforded to designated sites.

#### **Protect important views**

As a result of the topographical variations of the landscape surrounding Bicester, there is often a strong visual link between the edges of the town and surrounding countryside and settlements. Important views include views to and from Bicester over the surrounding countryside in which Bicester can be appreciated in its landscape setting. Often important views can contribute to the designated status of areas, such as Conservation Areas. However,

26th September 2013

**Bicester Green Buffer Report**

important views are not necessarily designated views alone, but those which contribute to the experience of a place and visually link Bicester and its surrounding landscape and settlements.

The Green Buffer will allow existing important views to be retained, therefore maintaining the important visual link between Bicester and the surrounding environment, and contributing to the qualities of the countryside and people’s enjoyment of it.

**3.1.2. Four Stages of Study and Recommendations**

Following the policy review and clear purposes being defined for the Green Buffer, the methodology for establishing the location and extent of Green Buffer around Bicester has been structured as follows. It involves four stages following on from the Policy Review.

- 1) Define Study Area
- 2) Baseline Survey
- 3) Field Work
- 4) Analysis and Green Buffer Proposals

**3.2. Stage One: Defining the Study Area**

The Study Area for the Green Buffer has been based on that defined for the Bicester Environmental Baseline Report (LDA Design, 2013)

The study area is influenced by the planned expansion proposals for the town as set out in the Submission Local Plan and on a combination of the topography and visibility of Bicester from within the surrounding landscape, physical features within the landscape such as roads and watercourses, the presence of surrounding settlements around the town and relevant environmental assets in the area.

This area is considered to represent the setting of Bicester in landscape terms, considering its context and immediate surrounding environment, the outlying villages and features of interest and taking account of the growth strategy as set out in the emerging Local Plan. The study area was refined using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyse terrain data and also by field observation.

The extent of the Study Area is illustrated on Figure 1.1.

**3.3. Stage Two: Baseline Study**

As part of the baseline study, an analysis of a wide range of environmental baseline information supplied by Cherwell District Council was carried out. The baseline information considered included:

- Topography and Hydrology
- Landscape Character (Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study and the Current Landscape Character Assessment: Strategic Framework Study, (2006), Northamptonshire County Council)
- Ecological Habitats and Biodiversity

26th September 2013

### **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

- Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
- Access and Amenity
- The geography of the area including outlying villages and features in the landscape which we judged have a relationship with Bicester due to physical proximity, historic or other connectivity, intervisibility or other factors.

From an initial site reconnaissance visit and analysis of baseline data and OS base mapping (1:25,000), a boundary was drafted illustrating the potential outer extent of the Green Buffer areas. When drafting the Green Buffers, continual reference has been made to the main purposes of the Green Buffers as defined within the policy. The boundaries have been clearly defined following identifiable and logical features on the ground.

When defining the extent of the Green Buffer consideration was given to the Strategic Development Sites identified on the Proposed Submission Proposals Map to ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting future housing needs. The Green Buffers have a key role in shaping the growth of Bicester and fulfilling the objectives for the overall vision for the town. As such, the Green Buffers have been defined to take account of potential longer term development needs, by ensuring that land is not included within a Green Buffer where it is unnecessary for Green Buffer purposes.

At the time of writing the Strategic Development Sites identified in the Submission Local Plan do not have approved masterplans. Any green infrastructure provision, or other areas of land which could perform a Green Buffer function within the Strategic Development Sites have not been included within the Green Buffer areas which we recommend. It is recommended that at an appropriate time in the future, and once the Strategic Development Sites have gained planning approval, that these areas of open land are appraised for potential inclusion within the Green Buffer policy area.

#### **3.4. Stage Three: Field Work**

The field work involved reviewing the land surrounding Bicester and surrounding settlements, considering the baseline data as outlined above and ensuring that land located within the Green Buffer fulfilled the policy requirements and purposes of a Green Buffer as outlined in 3.1 above. Land within a Green Buffer is required to contribute to the maintenance of Bicester's distinctive identity and setting, and protecting the setting and identity of surrounding settlements. Land has also been included within the Green Buffer to make certain that Bicester and the surrounding settlements do not coalesce, ensuring that the gaps between the town and surrounding villages are of a suitable scale to retain the separate identity of settlements and are kept free from built development that would harm the character of the Green Buffer. Field work further verified where a Green Buffer was required to protect the setting of valued features of landscape and historical importance, and their settings. Settings are defined as the surroundings in which heritage or landscape features are experienced in their local context, considering present and past relationships to the adjacent landscape.

Whilst undertaking the field work, the visual environment of Bicester and surrounding villages has been reviewed. When looking at the visual environment, consideration has been given to the levels of intervisibility between the town and the surrounding landscape and

26th September 2013

## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

settlements, and the importance of the arrival experience and approaches to Bicester and the villages.

The boundaries and extent of the Green Buffers have been verified as part of the field work, ensuring that land within the Green Buffers fulfils the policy criteria and that boundaries follow identifiable and logical features on the ground. Land was not included within a Green Buffer where it was not necessary for Green Buffer purposes.

### **3.5. Stage Four: Analysis and Green Buffer Proposals**

This stage of the study involved integrating the baseline desk studies, detailed site studies in the field and professional judgement to propose eight Green Buffer areas around Bicester. The areas have been digitised using GIS and are illustrated on Figure 1.2. Detailed descriptions for each area have been provided in Section 4 of this Study.

Regular contact was maintained with CDC Planners during the course of the work to ensure compliance with the emerging Local Plan strategy and to take advantage of their knowledge of the District and plans for Bicester.

26th September 2013

## **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

### **4.0 Green Buffer Areas**

Eight Green Buffers have been identified around Bicester, as illustrated on Figure 1.2. These eight areas are:

- Green Buffer 1: Caversfield
- Green Buffer 2: Stratton Audley
- Green Buffer 3: Launton
- Green Buffer 4: Ambrosden
- Green Buffer 5: Wendlebury
- Green Buffer 6: Chesterton
- Green Buffer 7: Bignell Park
- Green Buffer 8: Bucknell

A detailed description of each of the sections is provided below.

#### **4.1. Green Buffer 1: Caversfield**

The Caversfield Green Buffer is located on the northern edge of Bicester, between the former DLO Caversfield site, now being partially redeveloped as ‘The Garden Quarter’, and Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town. The northern boundary of the Green Buffer follows a tree belt and hedgerow associated with the historic extent of parkland at Caversfield House. The eastern boundary is defined by a minor road and the former DLO Caversfield site. To the south the A4095 along the northern edge of Bicester defines the boundary and the B4100 defines the western boundary. The Caversfield Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.3.

The main purposes of the Caversfield Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence and maintain a gap between development at the former DLO Caversfield site, Caversfield and the planned future edge of Bicester in the form of the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development
- Protect the setting of the historic hamlet of Caversfield and its associated area of parkland
- To assist with the protection of the setting of the residential area associated with the former Bicester Airfield as an historic feature and designated Conservation Area

At its narrowest, the existing gap between the development at the former DLO Caversfield site and the edge of the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1 (the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development) is approximately 300m. The southern edge of the former DLO Caversfield site is a maximum of approximately 300m from the existing edge of Bicester. The area of land extending between the former DLO Caversfield site and the edge of the Strategic Development Site at Bicester 1, and from the northern edge of Bicester to the northern extent of parkland historically associated with Caversfield House, has been defined as Green Buffer to maintain the gap between these existing and proposed areas of settlement. This will prevent their coalescence and maintain their separate identities.

26th September 2013

### **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

Caversfield as a settlement lies approximately 700m from the existing northern edge of Bicester and comprises Caversfield House, associated parkland, buildings and lodges and the 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* listed Church of St Lawrence, adjacent to the B4100. Home Farm is located on the opposite side of the B4100, within the Bicester 1 Strategic Development Site, and includes a Grade II listed farmhouse dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Caversfield has been included within the Green Buffer given its limited size and historical interest and value. Other than Caversfield, the farm at South Lodge and a short row of houses on Fringford Road the Caversfield Green Buffer is generally free from built development. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the setting and identity of Caversfield. It will also ensure that area of land that has historically been the parkland associated with Caversfield House remains free from built development.

The former DLO Caversfield site to the east of the Green Buffer was the living quarters associated with RAF Bicester. The pre World War II parts of the living quarters fall within the RAF Bicester Conservation Area, with many of the buildings also Listed. An important feature of the domestic areas of the Conservation Area is the spacious informal landscaped setting of grass and mature trees. The triangle of land between the southern edge of the former DLO Caversfield site and the existing edge of Bicester is described as “*critical in preserving the setting of the conservation area in views from the south and south west*” in the RAF Bicester Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2008). This triangle of land, as well as land to the north west of the Conservation Area, have been included within the Green Buffer designation to ensure that the setting of the Conservation Area is protected from built development and that the open, spacious nature of this part of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area is retained.

Land within the Caversfield Green Buffer is a patchwork of arable land, grazing land and grassland/private gardens associated with Caversfield House. Woodland cover within this section of Green Buffer is relatively high, particularly around Caversfield House. However, hedgerows are less frequent in this vicinity. Limited public access into the Caversfield Green Buffer, combined with the woodland cover, limit views towards the edge of Bicester from within the Green Buffer. However there are relatively open views from the northern edge of Bicester, along the A4095, into the southern area of the Green Buffer. There is also intervisibility between the former DLO Caversfield site and the existing northern edge of Bicester. This intervisibility will be maintained through the Green Buffer designation.

#### *Future Review of the Caversfield Green Buffer Boundary*

Located to the west of the Caversfield Green Buffer is the Strategic Housing Sites at Bicester 1, the proposed North-west Bicester Eco-town development. Whilst there is currently no approved masterplan available for this site, the preamble to Policy Bicester 1: North West Bicester Eco-town, within the emerging Local Plan, indicates that a masterplan will be required for the site. At an appropriate time in the future, the boundary of the Green Buffer will require review to examine whether any green infrastructure provision or other areas of land which perform a Green Buffer function should be included within the Caversfield Green Buffer.

Green infrastructure provision on the eastern edge of the north-west Bicester Eco-town could fulfil the criteria for inclusion within the Buffer and perform an important role ensuring a distinct gap is retained between the future edge of Bicester and both Caversfield and the former DLO Caversfield site. This would ensure that the settlements do not coalesce and



26th September 2013

### **Bicester Green Buffer Report**

protect the setting of the historic hamlet of Caversfield. Such green infrastructure provision should be examined as part of the Eco-town masterplanning process.

#### **4.2. Green Buffer 2: Stratton Audley**

The Stratton Audley Green Buffer is located to the north east of Bicester, between the former RAF Bicester site, also known as Strategic Development Site Bicester 8, and the village of Stratton Audley. It also wraps around the south eastern edge of the Airfield. The north western boundary of the Green Buffer follows the A4421. The north eastern boundary is aligned with Stoke Lyne Road to the north west of Stratton Audley, Launton Road to the south east of the village and the south western edges of the village itself. To the south east Langford Brook and its associated vegetation defines the boundary of the Green Buffer and to the south west the boundary is defined by the perimeter fence and associated vegetation of Bicester Airfield. The Stratton Audley Green Buffer is illustrated on Figure 1.4.

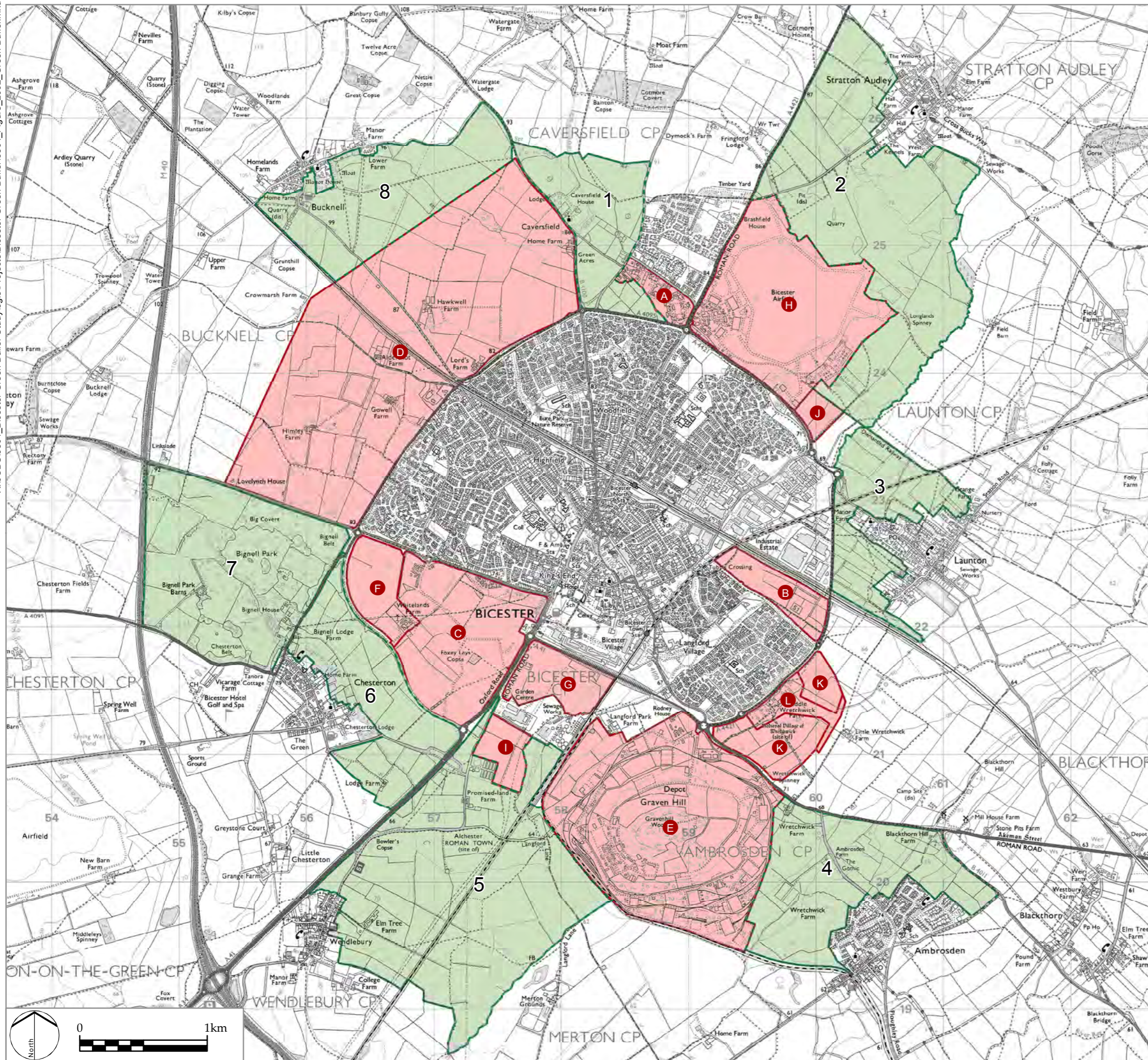
The main purposes of the Stratton Audley Green Buffer are to:

- Prevent coalescence of and provide a gap between the village of Stratton Audley and the north eastern edge of Bicester
- To help protect the setting of Stratton Audley as a historic village and designated Conservation Area in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- To help protect the setting of Bicester Airfield as an historic feature and designated Conservation Area in the vicinity of the Green Buffer
- Protect the character of the historic arrival experience to Stratton Audley village from the south, east and west
- Protect important views over a rural landscape between Stratton Audley and Bicester, in particular across Bicester Airfield

The village of Stratton Audley lies approximately 2km from the existing edge of Bicester at its closest point and approximately 800m from the edge of the Strategic Development Site at RAF Bicester (Bicester 8). The area of land between the village and the airfield, extending from the A4421 to Langford Brook, has been defined as Green Buffer to ensure the development does not extend beyond the existing edge of Bicester and RAF Bicester, thereby preventing coalescence of the settlements.

The area of land that has been defined as the Stratton Audley Green Buffer is generally free from built development, with the exception of West Farm Barns and a property called Old Byre located on Launton Road to the south east of Stratton Audley. The Green Buffer policy will ensure that this area is kept free from built development which would be harmful to the role of the gap. It will also ensure that development does not occur beyond the airfield that would encroach on the setting of Stratton Audley.

The village of Stratton Audley itself has medieval origins, with the moated remains of the medieval castle of the Audley family, a Scheduled Monument, located to the south east of the village. The name of the village is derived from 'street', due to its location close to the Roman road from Alchester to Towcester, and from the Audley family who held the manor from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St Mary and St Edburga at the core of the village is Grade I listed, with a number of Grade II monuments and gravestones within its grounds. There are also a number of Grade II listed properties, dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, within the core of



- LEGEND**
- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
    - A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
    - B: Gavray Drive (Approved)
    - C: South-West Bicester Phase 1 (Approved)
    - D: Bicester 1
    - E: Bicester 2
    - F: Bicester 3
    - G: Bicester 4
    - H: Bicester 8
    - I: Bicester 10
    - J: Bicester 11
    - K: Bicester 12
    - L: Bicester 12 - Proposed New Green Space
  - Proposed Bicester Green Buffer
    - 1: Caversfield Green Buffer
    - 2: Stratton Audley Green Buffer
    - 3: Launton Green Buffer
    - 4: Ambrosden Green Buffer
    - 5: Wendlebury Green Buffer
    - 6: Chesterton Green Buffer
    - 7: Bignell Park Green Buffer
    - 8: Bucknell Green Buffer

Rev A Green Buffer added to northwest of Launton 11.09.13

# LDĀ DESIGN

PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

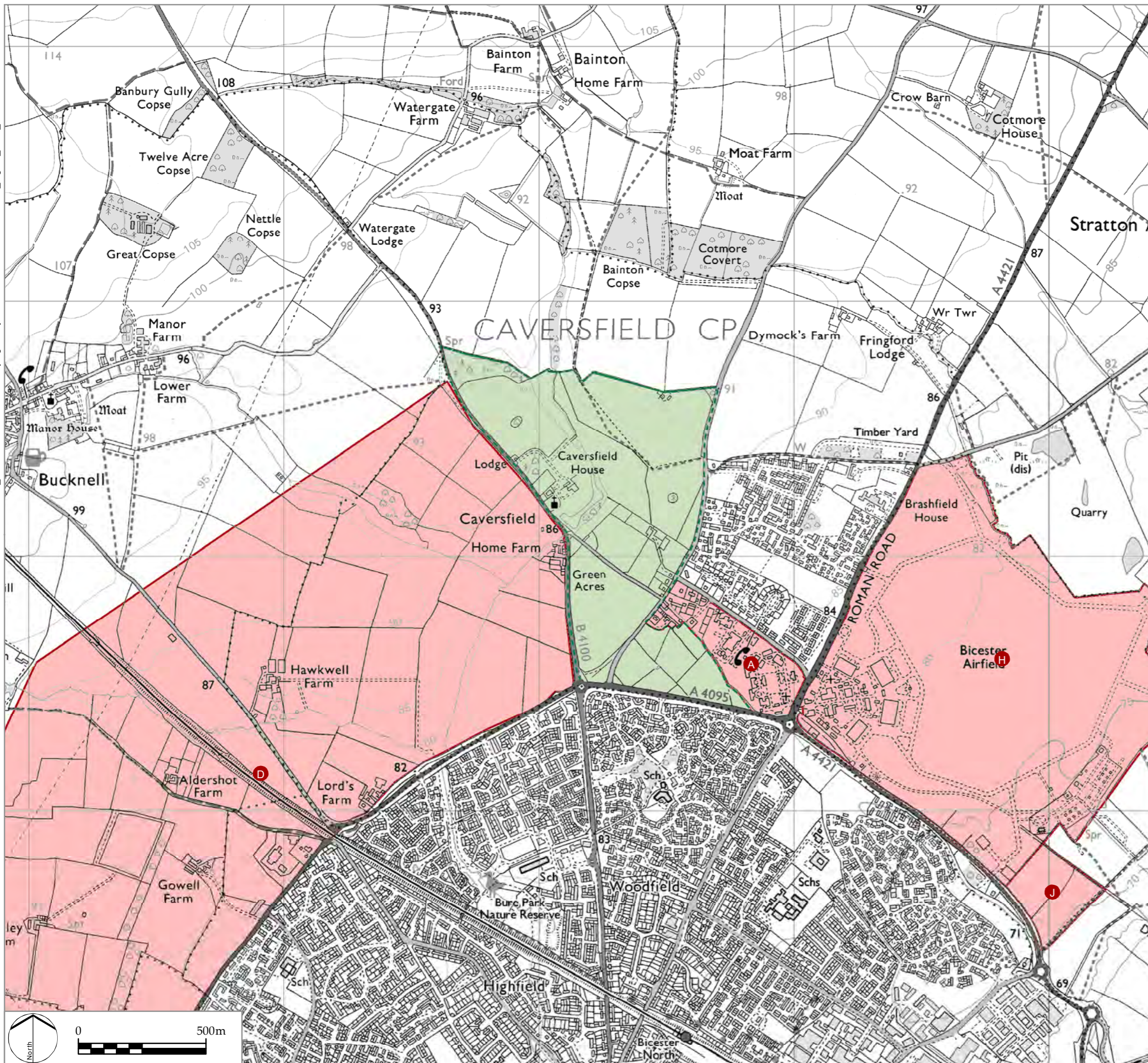
DRAWING TITLE  
Figure 1.2  
Bicester Green Buffers

ISSUED BY	Oxford	T: 01865 887 050
DATE	11 Sept 2013	DRAWN AN
SCALE @A3	1:30,000	CHECKED RK
STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

**DWG. NO. 3504\_2002**

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All dimensions are to be checked on site.  
Area measurements for indicative purposes only.  
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Sources: Ordnance Survey...

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**LEGEND**

- Cherwell Submission Local Plan (August 2012) Proposed Allocated Sites
- A: DLO Caversfield (Approved)
- D: Bicester 1
- H: Bicester 8
- J: Bicester 11
- Caversfield Green Buffer

# LD A DESIGN

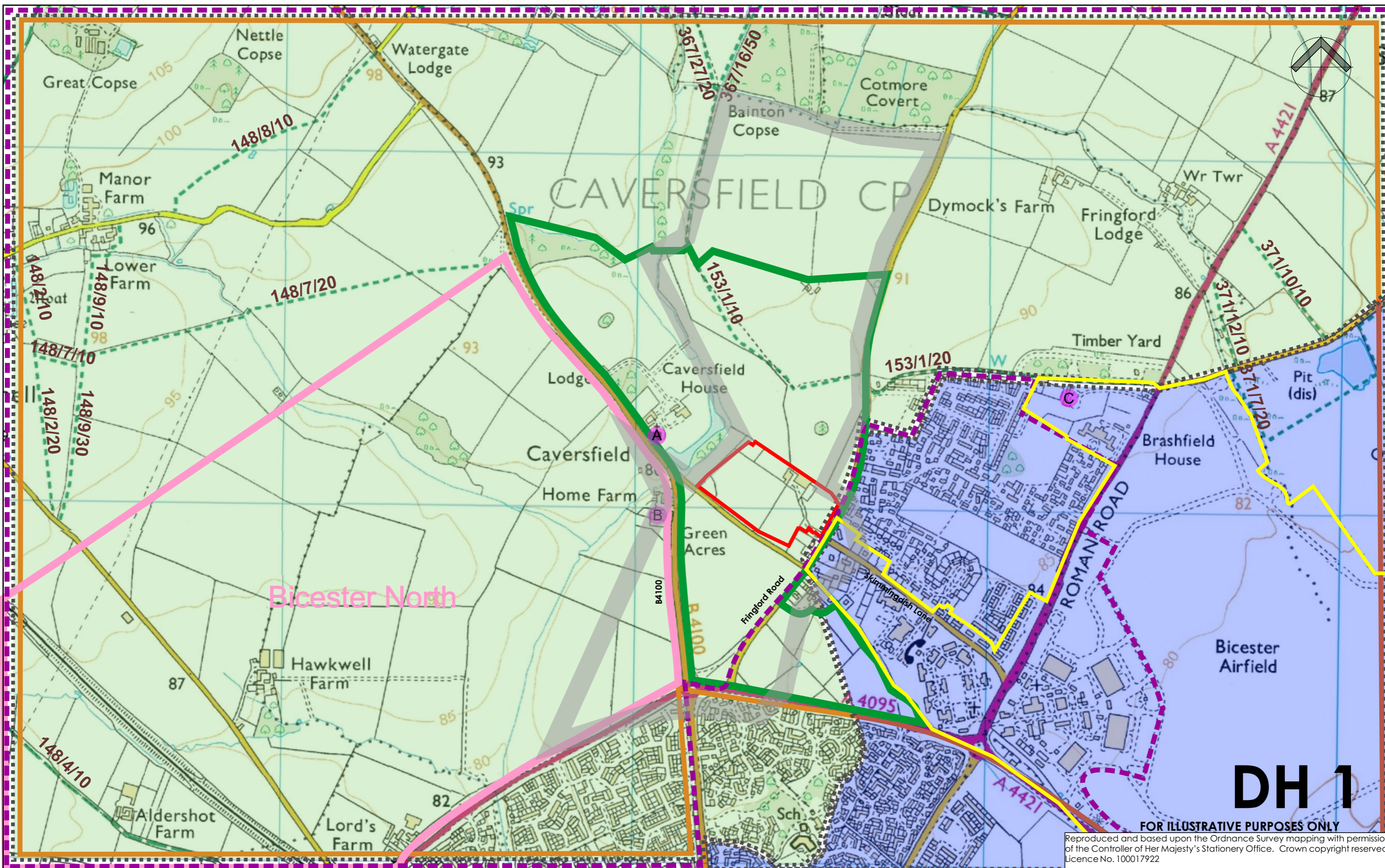
PROJECT TITLE  
BICESTER GREEN BUFFER REPORT

DRAWING TITLE  
Figure 1.3  
Caversfield Green Buffer

ISSUED BY	Oxford	T: 01865 887 050
DATE	1 Feb 2013	DRAWN AN
SCALE @A3	1:15,000	CHECKED RK
STATUS	Final	APPROVED RT

**DWG. NO. 3504\_2003**

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Sources: Ordnance Survey...












**david huskisson associates**








landscape architecture ■ urban design  
expert witness ■ environmental planning

17 Upper Grosvenor Road  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN11 2DU  
Tel 01892 527828  
Fax 01892 510619

Email dha@dha-landscape.co.uk  
www.dha-landscape.co.uk

	Appeal site boundary		Church of St Laurence II*		148/8/10 Public rights of Way Numbers
	Primary Visual Envelope		Home Farmhouse Grade II		
	Proposed Green Buffer		Brashfield House Brashfield Lodge Grade II		
			RAF Bicester Conservation Area Listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments in CA not mapped		

National Character Areas not mapped

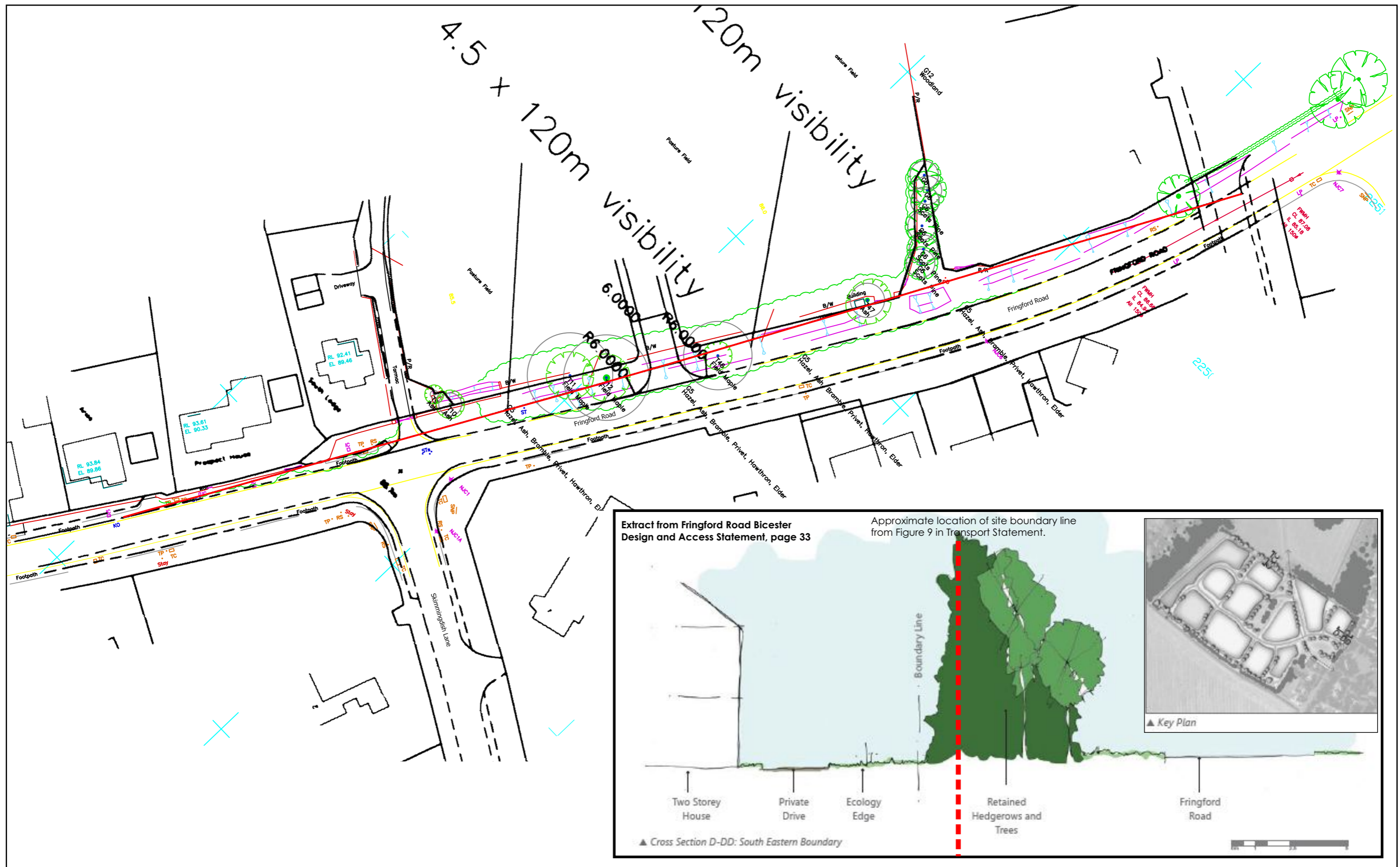
-  Oxfordshire Countryside and Wildlife Study, 2004
-  Wooded Estatelands Landscape type - Middleton Stoney Landscape Character Area
-  CDC Countryside Design Summary 1998
-  Ploughley Limestone Plateau Landscape Character Area
-  Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995
-  Oxfordshire Estate Farmlands Landscape Character Area
-  Otmoor Lowlands Landscape Character Area

**Project:** Land at Fringford Road, Caversfield

**Title:** Location and Context

Date:	Project No: 689	Drawn: Init....	Chkd: Init....	Appd:
Scale: 1:10,000	Dwg No: DH 1			Rev:







1.1 View east from junction of B4100. Attractive rural approach to Caversfield.



1.2 View at south western corner of appeal site. Strong rural character evident. Caversfield screened.



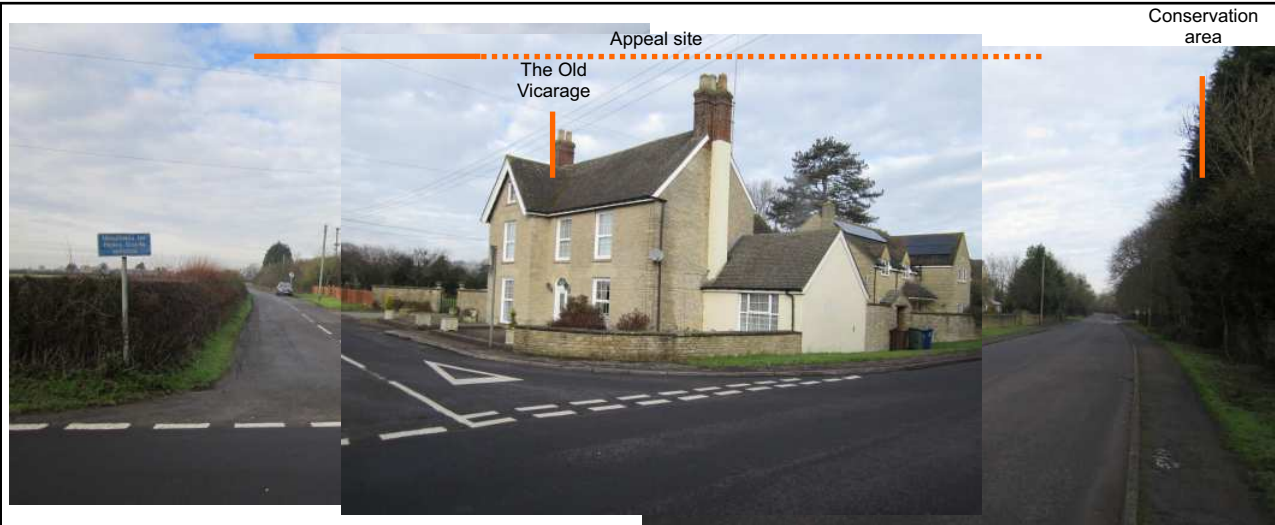
1.3 More open view from south western corner of appeal site. Caversfield screened by South Lodge farmstead. Open countryside noted beyond site.



1.4 View north, showing existing site entrance. Despite suburbanising gate, overall rural character largely intact. Latest proposed access details would retain existing access as footway / cycleway and emergency vehicular access, the details of which are unclear.



1.5 View north on Fringford Road, showing approach to village gateway. Latest proposed access plan would widen existing footpath to provide shared footpath / cycleway which appears to potentially conflict with hedge retention.



2.1 View north west along unnamed road from junction with Fringford Road, opposite Bricknells Farm. Latest access plan would introduce "build outs" at the junction.



2.2 Appeal site looking west from Skimmingdish Lane, in conservation area. Open view into appeal site and Fringford Road corridor urbanised with signalised pedestrian crossing etc.



2.3 View into conservation area from Fringford Road looking east along Skimmingdish Lane.



2.4 Fringford Road corridor, looking generally west in vicinity of proposed new access. Vegetation in hedge would be largely removed. Open view into site. Latest access plan would widen corridor, introduce signalised pedestrian crossing, pedestrian refuge island, bus stop and bus shelter with additional footway at site frontage.



2.5 Views from Fringford Road opposite north eastern corner of appeal site. Vegetation in verge will be largely removed. Open view into site. Latest access plan would have additional effects as described for view 2.4

Eastern boundary  
Photographs taken January 2014

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 17 Upper Grosvenor Road  
 Tunbridge Wells  
 Kent  
 TN1 2DU  
 Tel 01892 527828  
 Fax 01892 510619  
 Email dha@dha-landscape.co.uk  
 www.dha-landscape.co.uk  
 landscape architecture ■ urban design  
 expert witness ■ environmental planning

**Project:** Land at Fringford Road, Caversfield

**Title:** Photosheet 2

Date: February 2014	Project No: 689	Drawn:	Chkd:	Appd:
Scale: NTS	Dwg No: 689 Photosheet 2	Rev:		





3.1 Open northern boundary



3.2 Shows view south west from footpath 153/1 north of site. Wholly rural scene with intervisibility afforded across appeal site.



3.3 Show view south west from footpath 153/1 north of site. Wholly rural scene with intervisibility afforded across appeal site.



3.4 View south east from footpath 153/1, 500 m distant.



3.5 View north from Fringford Road on approach to Caversfield. Development would be seen through above intervening hedgerows. Refer to view 1.5 for comments on latest access plan.



3.6 View north from Fringford Road on approach to Caversfield. Development would be seen above intervening hedgerows. Latest access plan would introduce "build outs" by The Old Vicarage.



3.7 View north from B4100 near Greenacres. Appeal site allows intervisibility to north giving sense of scale and depth to landscape.



3.8 View north west from near Home Farm. Appeal site prominent in a seemingly skylined position.

**On Site Views**

Photographs taken January 2014

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david huskisson associates

landscape architecture ■ urban design  
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17 Upper Grosvenor Road  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN1 2DU  
Tel 01892 527828  
Fax 01892 510619  
Email dha@dha-landscape.co.uk  
www.dha-landscape.co.uk

**Project:** Land at Fringford Road, Caversfield

**Title:** Photosheet 3

Date: February 2014	Project No: 689	Drawn:	Chkd:	Appd:
Scale: NTS	Dwg No: 689 Photosheet 3			Rev: