



STATION ROAD, HOOK NORTON, OXFORDSHIRE
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL FOR PROPOSED HOUSING

on behalf of
Nursery Ground Ltd

HDA ref: 723.1/cm v1
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Mike Gilbert Planning Ltd (acting on behalf of the applicant, Nursery Ground Ltd) instructed Hankinson Duckett Associates in August 2014 to carry out a landscape and visual appraisal to support an outline planning application for the proposed development of up to 48 dwellings on land to the north of Station Road, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 This report will describe the baseline conditions at the site and its surroundings, assess any likely significant landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, describe any mitigation measures required to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects and the likely residual landscape and visual effects after these measures have been employed.
- 1.3 The HDA methodology used in this assessment is based upon '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment*' (Ref 1) and is included at Appendix A.

2 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

2.1 Location (Plan HDA 1)

- 2.1.1 Hook Norton is situated 10 miles (16km) to the south-west of Banbury and 4.2 miles (7.2km) to the north-east of Chipping Norton, and forms one of the most westerly parishes of Cherwell District. The parish has a population of just over 2,000 residents (2011 census). The 2.264 hectare application site is located on the north-east edge of Hook Norton village on the northern side of Station Road. The site is bound to the west by a belt of trees along an elevated track, beyond which lies housing at Ironstone Hollow. To the south side of Station Road, the site lies opposite a new housing development on the former Stanton Engineering Works (The Grange, planning ref: 12/00472/F), though this area was formerly the location of the train station, with the dismantled Banbury-Cheltenham railway line being on an elevated, treed embankment to the east of the application site. A belt of trees forms the northern boundary, whereas the eastern boundary is undefined, with land to the east continuing the arable use of the site.

2.2 Topography (Plan HDA 2)

- 2.2.1 The site lies at the eastern end of a spur of land at levels between 154m and 150m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). To the north-east and south of the site lie incised valleys, forming tributaries of the River Swere, which flows to the south of Hook Norton. Only the valley to the north-east (falling to below 140m AOD) is visible from the site. The land rises steeply on the north side of this valley, up Council Hill, to a maximum of 195m AOD, where the ridgeline is topped with the road between Milcombe and Whichford. The centre of Hook Norton lies to the south-west of the site on rising ground, with the parish church of St Peter's forming a prominent landmark on land at 160m AOD.

2.2.2 The site occupies the upper slopes of a localised valley and gently falls towards its north-east corner. The site has, however, been quarried for ironstone in the past and the restored site is now at least 2m below surrounding natural ground levels, particularly on the western and northern boundaries of the site.

2.3 Land Use and Site Landscape Features (Plan HDA 3)

2.3.1 The site is currently in agricultural use, with the adjacent land uses being residential properties to the west of the site at Ironstone Hollow, to the south-west on Austin’s Way and to the south, the older property of Railway House behind which is being constructed the new housing development of The Grange on the elevated embankment of the former railway line. The arable field of the site extends eastwards as far as the treed embankment of the former railway line. Land use to the north of the site is pasture, occupying the flank slopes of the valley.

2.3.2 The immediate boundaries of the site are defined on three sides by woodland belts of trees, though only one tree on the southern boundary, along the frontage with Station Road, is within the red line boundary. Most of the trees along the southern boundary are on highway land, and they assist in screening views of the open countryside to the north from the road. The tree belts along the western and northern site boundaries are on elevated land, about 2m higher than levels on the application site. In this elevated position, these trees provide significant screening of the site, particularly in the summer months.

2.3.3 The species of trees around the site are generally native (refer to the Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment report, October 2014) and these species will form the basis of the species list to be used in the landscape proposals where appropriate.

2.3.4 Table 1 below schedules those landscape features on and in the vicinity of the site and their sensitivity to change or removal. As described in the methodology (Appendix A), sensitivity of landscape features relates largely to their quality and their ability to be re-created.

Table 1: Landscape Features – Baseline

Feature	Condition/Character/Value at time of Survey	Relation to Devt *	Sensitivity
Agricultural land	2.264ha of arable crops.	W	Medium/Low
Woodland belts of trees to western and northern boundaries of site	Mixed deciduous woodland, some formerly coppiced, no higher than Category B value (refer to Arboriculture report). Valuable screening function and feature contributes to landscape character of the site. The trees currently appear to be unmanaged.	P	Medium

Feature	Condition/Character/Value at time of Survey	Relation to Devt *	Sensitivity
Treed frontage to Station Road	Intermittent line of mature deciduous trees, mainly on the highway verge and of Category B. The trees thin out to scrub towards its eastern end.	P	Medium/Low

*Note: Relationship to development: W – within site; P – on perimeter; A – adjacent to site (< 5m); O – off site. A feature located >30m from the development, i.e. outside the site is categorised as being less sensitive than the same feature within the site.

2.3.5 In summary, the site consists of medium/low sensitivity agricultural land, with the best features, though only of medium sensitivity, being the woodland belts of trees, off-site, along the western and northern boundaries.

2.3.6 **Open Space Baseline:** There is currently no public open space on the site. The closest public open space to the site lies to its west, in the south-west corner of the Ironstone Hollow housing development. There is no equipped play space in this area, only grassland for informal play. The existing rights of way network is shown on Plan HDA 3 and HDA 6. No public footpaths cross the site, though two public rights of way lie in close proximity of the site, with another undesignated track running parallel to the western boundary of the site (refer to Paragraphs 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 below).

2.4 Published Landscape Character Assessments

2.4.1 **National Character:** The site is located within National Character Area 107: Cotswolds (Ref 2). Although this character area covers a broad geographic area from Bath in the south-west to Bicester and Brackley in the north-east, the landscape around Hook Norton is fairly typical of the Cotswolds, the key characteristics of which are described as:

- *Defined by its underlying geology; a dramatic scarp rising above adjacent lowlands with steep combs, scarp foot villages and beech woodlands.*
- *Rolling, open, high wold plateaux moulded by physical and human influences, with arable and large blocks of woodland, divided up by small, narrow valleys.*
- *Incised landscapes with deep wide valleys.*
- *Flat, open dip slope landscape with extensive arable farmland.*
- *Prominent outliers within the lowlands.*
- *Honey-coloured Cotswold stone in walls, houses and churches.*
- *Attractive stone villages with a unity of design and materials.*

2.4.2 **County Character:** The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS, Ref 3) places the site within the ‘Rolling Village Pastures’ Landscape Type, which “covers the rolling pastoral landscapes in the north of the county around Swalcliffe, Hook Norton and South Newington” (Plan HDA 4). The landscape type is characterised by “a distinctive landform of small rounded hills and narrow valleys. Unspoilt ironstone villages, with a

strong vernacular character, form part of the tranquil countryside". The key landscape characteristics of the area include:

- *A strongly undulating landform of rounded hills and small valleys.*
- *Small to medium-sized fields with mixed land uses, but predominantly pasture.*
- *Densely scattered hedgerow trees.*
- *Well-defined nucleated villages with little dispersal into the wider countryside.*

2.4.3 The site lies within Local Character Area D 'Hook Norton' (CW/34), which is described as follows:

"The area has a mixed pattern of farming, with both arable and grassland. Fields are small regularly shaped and enclosed by a prominent network of tall hawthorn and blackthorn hedges. The hedges tend to be much lower where arable farming is dominant. There are a number of ash and oak hedgerow trees, particularly where there is pasture, as well a few small ash and willow plantations".

2.4.4 The landscape strategy for this landscape type is to "*conserve the unspoilt character of the ironstone villages and surrounding countryside. Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.*" Extracts from the OWLS relating to 'Rolling Village Pastures' are included at Appendix B.

2.4.5 **District Character:** In the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (Ref 4), the site lies in the south-west corner of the 'Ironstone Hills and Valleys' landscape character area which covers the extent of Plan HDA 4. Extracts from the report are included at Appendix C. The area is described as follows:

"The main distinguishing features are its extremely complex topography and the style of vernacular buildings which is unique to the Banbury region. The unspoilt ironstone villages and tranquil countryside are remote and isolated, particularly towards the west of the character area".

2.4.6 The area immediately to the north and south of Hook Norton, including the site, lies in Landscape Type R4a which is described as a landscape "*made up from a strongly undulating complex of farmed hills and valleys*". The enhancement strategy section of the District study suggests 'Conservation' for the area. One of the intervention measures suggested is:

"Development should only be permitted if it is sensitively sited and the scale, size, materials, and character of the scheme are designed to blend in to the area, as is the case with much of the high quality infill housing found in many of the district's villages. Care needs to be taken, however, that the characteristic spatial structure of villages is not too greatly changed".

2.4.7 In June 1998, Cherwell District Council produced its 'Countryside Design Summary' (Ref 5) which has the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The SPG divides the district into four distinct areas, with the urban area of Hook Norton lying within the 'Ironstone Downs' character area, which covers the entire northern half of the district

to the west of the Cherwell Valley. In the Character Analysis section of Settlements, the following points are of note:

- *Villages are generally only prominent where the valleys are open and wide....Elsewhere village location and topography means that many villages are not visible over long distances. Churches located near the highest point of the village provide a landmark in the wider countryside;*
- *Despite a lack of woodland in the wider landscape, trees and hedgerows are often important features in street scenes and in views of villages in their landscape setting.*

2.4.8 The Landscape, Settlements and Buildings sections of the SPG each have a section on 'Implications for New Development'. The following comments are those most of relevance to the application site, though extracts from the report have been included at Appendix D:

- *Trees and hedges should be retained to conserve the small-scale character of much of the landscape. Where new planting is required to help integrate new development into the landscape, this should reflect local landscape structure and character;*
- *All forms of development need to be sited with care in order to avoid locations where development would be either, prominent, visually intrusive, out of character or would harm a feature or site, which is important to the character of the area;*
- *New development should respect the existing setting of each particular village. Landscape constraints are very important in this part of Cherwell District and most proposals, which would have a prominent visual impact on the wider countryside, will not be acceptable;*
- *The creation of new public space, which is an integral part of new development, can help maintain the rural character of the villages;*
- *Ironstone is the only appropriate building material for domestic properties in many village locations.....;*
- *The mix of terraced and detached houses should reflect the existing character of individual villages. Houses should face streets. Large front gardens will not normally be appropriate. Ironstone walls should be used for enclosure where they will be visible from the public domain.*

2.4.9 In 1988, the historic core of Hook Norton was designated a Conservation Area, and though the site does not lie within its boundaries, being 150m to its south-west, the characteristics of the Conservation Area have been taken into consideration in this appraisal, as they have been utilised to guide the layout and scale of the proposals. There is no inter-visibility between the site and the Conservation Area due to intervening housing on Ironstone Hollow and Austin's Way. The Conservation Area Appraisal report (Ref 6) does not identify any viewpoints from outside the Conservation Area looking back to the village that are important for retention. Despite this, it is considered that views of the church tower from the surrounding countryside should not be obscured by proposed development.

2.5 Local Landscape Character Areas

2.5.1 The published landscape character assessments described above place Hook Norton in broad character areas covering large geographic areas, with only the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (Ref 4) providing a finer grain of analysis, dividing the 'Ironstone Hills and Valleys' character area into smaller landscape types (based primarily on topographical variation). This appraisal has identified that more local variations are apparent, with the main divisions in landscape character at the local level being derived from topography and land use, such that areas of relatively homogeneous character can be determined. The site and its immediate surroundings have therefore been divided into three local landscape character areas; the Farmland Plateau, the River Valley and Hook Norton Village.

2.5.2 The application proposals have the potential to affect these defined local landscape character areas by changing the land use of one arable field to housing. Table 2 below summarises the characteristics of the District and Local character areas, together with an assessment of their sensitivity to potential development at the site.

Table 2: **Landscape Character - Baseline**

County & District Landscape Character Areas	Local Landscape Character Areas	Characteristics	Relationship with Site	Sensitivity
Rolling Village Pastures (Ref 3) Ironstone Hills and Valleys (Ref 4) Ironstone Downs (Ref 5)	Farmland Plateau	Open rounded higher ground of ridge encompassing predominantly arable land uses. Urban-edge influence where this area abuts the northern and western edge of housing in Hook Norton Village, which also occupies the ridgeline.	Site lies within this LLCA which extends predominantly to the north of the village.	Medium
	River Valley	Formed from three tributaries of the upper reaches of the River Swere, with pastoral land uses lying within enclosed narrow valleys with little urban influence except from southern edge of housing in Hook Norton Village, which also occupies the valley at Down End.	Wrapping around southern and eastern edge of village with the valley to the north-east being that part of this area closest to the site.	Medium
	Hook Norton Village	Residential rural settlement with historic core designated as Conservation Area. Located largely on ridge but with Valley influencing character on southern edge of village. CA would be of higher sensitivity to change.	Abuts the western and southern edges of the village.	High/ Medium

3 EXISTING VISIBILITY

3.1 Introduction (Plan HDA 5 and Photo Sheets)

3.1.1 This section addresses the extent and character of views of the site at the time of the survey (August 2014). Potential receptors, including users of public rights of way and roads and residents of nearby properties, are identified, with their existing visibility being assessed from publically accessible viewpoints. Properties have not been accessed to determine the private views from residences. Potential receptors, together with their

sensitivity to the proposed development, are scheduled in Table 3 and summarized in the text below.

3.2 Views from Rights of Way (Public Views)

3.2.1 Two public rights of way lie in close proximity to the site: Footpath 253/19 and Footpath 253/21. Footpath 253/19 (forming part of the long distance trail of D'Arcy Dalton Way) cuts through the housing development of Ironstone Hollow to the west of the site (Photo 1) and passes within 15m of the north-west corner of the site. There are no views of the site from this path due to intervening vegetation. From the northern end of this footpath, near Nill Cottages, there are elevated views towards Hook Norton. From this vantage point there are views of the eastern edge of the site (Railway House is visible on Photos 2 and 3), but at over 1km distance, these views are not considered to be significant. Footpath 253/21 runs parallel to the northern boundary of the site (Photo 4) before heading in a north-easterly direction across the valley to ascend Council Hill. In the valley bottom, views of the site are restricted, but as the path rises up Council Hill, views back to the site become more open (Photos 5 to 8).

3.2.2 Oxfordshire County Council has also confirmed the existence of an undesignated path running parallel to the western boundary of the site. From its elevated position, glimpsed views into the site are possible between the trees along this track (Photo 9). No paths cross the site, though the potential exists to provide connections onto the local network from the site. Although the two public rights of way (Footpaths 253/19 and 253/21) provide links out to the wider countryside, this is generally to the north-east of the village, which tends to make any circular routes back to the village into extensive walks. This is likely to limit the use of these paths, though given the wear on the ground, they appeared to be well used.

3.2.3 The importance of public rights of way in providing vantage points for views into the village is recognised in the Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan (Ref 7 – page 9), which states:

“Maintenance of unspoilt rural views is an inherent part of landscape quality, particularly from Public Rights of Way, to and from ridgelines and hillsides and other frequently used viewpoints. Views of countryside generally, and particular views to and from hills were identified as most important in the Neighbourhood Plan Survey”.

3.2.4 Station Road offers the only other public viewpoint of the site, with gaps in the vegetation along its frontage allowing open or partial views into the site for users of this road and for the residents of the established and incomplete properties on the south side of Station Road (Photo 10). Station Road provides the most direct route from the village to Banbury, and as such is well used by motorists. In contrast, the number of pedestrians walking along the site's frontage is likely to be low, with limited destinations to the east of

the village, and the risks perceived from fast moving cars (the speed limit changes between the 30mph limit of the village and the national speed limit at a point coinciding with the south-east corner of the site). There is also the lack of a footway or verge where the former railway crossed Station Road (Photo 12). The number of pedestrians likely to experience views into the site from Station Road is estimated to be low.

3.3 Views from the Residential Properties (Private Views)

3.3.1 In the past, Railway House formed the extent of development along Station Road on this eastern entry point to the village (Photo 11). The transition between the 30mph limit of the village and the national speed limit beyond the village is marked with signage and gate features. This is also the point at which street lighting finishes, thus the site is already affected by the urbanising influences of the village. With the construction of housing at The Grange, this approach to the village will be more built up, and as the houses are elevated, they will be visually prominent when approaching the village along Station Road (Photo 13), though those set back around the site entrance are likely to be partially screened behind trees.

3.3.2 Views into the site from Railway House and the incomplete houses at The Grange range from open to partial, depending on the degree of screening afforded by the roadside vegetation along Station Road. There are no views of the site from properties on Austin's Way as these are at a lower level than the site, with Station Road positioned on the intervening elevated land. No views into the site are possible from Ironstone Hollow as these houses are separated from the site by the undesignated path on an embankment, topped with a dense belt of trees. There is likely to be only glimpsed views from upper storeys of these properties into the site in winter.

3.4 Summary

3.4.1 In general, the site is visually well contained as it has extensive existing vegetation to three of its four boundaries. The belts of trees on the western and northern site boundaries restrict views of the site from these directions; however, gaps in the vegetation along the frontage with Station Road allow views into the site for users of this road and for the residents of the established and new properties on the south side of Station Road. To the east of the site, the dismantled railway on top of a treed embankment forms the extent of the site's visual envelope; therefore the most open aspect towards the site is from the rising ground on the opposite side of the valley to the north-east. Only one footpath occupies this view corridor thus the number of visual receptors likely to experience this view of the site is estimated to be low.

Table 3: Existing Visibility

Ref No	Receptor Name	Distance	Description of View (s) (extent, appearance, context)	Sensitivity
Public Rights of Way and Roads (Public Views)				
	Footpath 253/19	15m	No views of site for users of this path as it passes through the housing development of Ironstone Hollow or further to the north, where intervening vegetation screens the site from views.	Medium
	Footpath 253/21	2m	Glimpsed elevated views into site through trees adjacent to this track where it lies parallel to the site's northern boundary, though these views would become partial in winter. As the path crosses the valley floor, views into the site are restricted by topography and trees along the watercourse, but as the path rises up Council Hill, views back to the site become more open.	High
	Undesignated track along western boundary	2m	Glimpsed elevated views into site through trees adjacent to this track, though these views would become partial in winter.	High
	Station Road – pedestrians	5m	Open or partial views into the site through gaps in roadside vegetation. Sensitivity affected by proximity to Station Road as visual amenity already affected by traffic.	Medium
	Station Road – motorists	5m	Open or partial, though transient views into the site through gaps in roadside vegetation.	Low
Residential Properties (Private Views)				
1	Railway House, Station Road	15m	Close-range, open views across Station Road of arable field of site, though parts of the site frontage are lined by trees on the highway verge which partially screen the site. Sensitivity affected by proximity to Station Road as visual amenity already affected by traffic.	Medium
2	The Grange (former Stanton Engineering Works site)	30m	The extent of visibility of the site has been judged from the plan layout as construction is currently ongoing. Only those properties on the northern edge of the development would have views into the site and these are likely to be limited to partial views due to intermittent screening vegetation along the Station Road frontage. Sensitivity has been reduced as future residents would have prior knowledge of potential development on the site prior to purchase.	Medium/Low
3	Austin's Way to south of Station Road	30m	No views of site as these properties are set on former quarried land and therefore are set at a much lower level than Station Road, as well as being screened by boundary hedgerows.	Medium/Low
4	Ironstone Hollow to north of Station Road	10m	Views into the site are limited to glimpses in the winter from first floor windows due to elevated nature of intervening track and screening effect of vegetation.	Medium/Low
5	Railway Bridge House, Station Road (business premise - Photo 14)	60m	Oblique, glimpsed views along Station Road towards site curtailed by former bridge abutments and vegetation along roadside.	Low

4 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

4.1 Planning Policy Documents

4.1.1 Planning policies identify issues, particularly in relation to designation and policy objectives, that need to be considered in the landscape and visual appraisal. The planning policy documents most relevant for this assessment are:

- *National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)* (Ref 8);
- *Cherwell Local Plan* (Ref 9, 1996);
- *Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011* (Ref 10, 2004);
- *Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031* (Ref 11, 2014);
- *Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version* (Ref 7).

4.2 National Policy

4.2.1 The 'Framework' (Ref 8) sets the context for local authorities' revised development plan policies. The Framework sets out the government's vision for the achievement of sustainable development and identifies three strands to policy guidance – social, economic and environmental – the latter seeking to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

4.2.2. Insofar as issues of landscape designations and design arise in relation to the application site, the following sections of the Framework are relevant. Section 11 addresses 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Paragraph 109 states:

"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes....."*

4.2.3 Section 7 of the Framework provides detailed policy on the issue of 'Requiring good design'. The most relevant guidance for the application site is Paragraphs 58 and 61, the full wording of which is included at Appendix E.

4.3 District Policy (Plan HDA6)

4.3.1 Cherwell District Council is working on a replacement to the Cherwell Local Plan (Ref 9) which was adopted in 1996. Although the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan (Ref 10) was approved in 2004 as interim planning policy for decision making purposes, it was never submitted for examination nor formally adopted. The Submission Cherwell Local Plan (Ref 11) was submitted for examination in January 2014, however, that process was suspended for six months because the plan did not meet the District's objectively assessed housing need. Proposed Modifications to the Submission Local Plan to address this issue have recently been the subject of public consultation. The Local Plan examination is anticipated to resume in December 2014, with formal adoption of the Local Plan not expected until mid-2015 at the earliest. In addition, Hook Norton Parish

Council submitted the Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version to the Council in July 2014 (Ref 7) and public consultation has been carried out during September and October 2014.

4.3.2 The site does not lie within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (which lies over 3 km to the west of the site); however, it is located with an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) as defined by saved **Policy C13** of the 1996 Cherwell Local Plan (Ref 9) which states:

“The Ironstone Downs, the Cherwell Valley, the Thames Valley, North Ploughley, Muswell Hill and Otmoor are designated as AHLVs within which the Council will seek to conserve and enhance the environment”.

4.3.3 In the supporting text to **Policy C13**, paragraph 9.26 states:

“As with development within the AONB, careful control of the scale and type of development will be required to protect the character of the AHLVs, and particular attention will need to be paid to siting and design”.

4.3.4 In a recent appeal decision (Ref 12), it was considered that as *“the emerging Local Plan does not intend to take forward the AHLV designations and guidance in the Framework, which expects development plans to give protection to landscapes commensurate with their status through criteria based policies, Local Plan Policy C13 is inconsistent with the Framework and as such attracts reduced weight”.*

4.3.5 **Policy C7** of the 1996 Local Plan is of relevance to this appraisal and states *“Development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape”.* In a recent appeal decision (Ref 12), it was considered that this policy is not inconsistent with the Framework. Saved **Policy C28** and **Policy C30** seek to achieve high standards of development and therefore are of relevance to this appraisal, being generally consistent with the objectives of the Framework. The full wording of these policies is included at Appendix E.

4.3.6 The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (Ref 10) is not part of the development plan, but it has been approved as interim planning policy for development control purposes. Policies of relevance to this appraisal include **Policy EN34**, **Policy D1** and **Policy D3**, the full wording of which has been included at Appendix E.

4.3.7 The Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Ref 11) is yet to be adopted, though it contains policies regarding landscape protection and enhancement, green boundaries to growth and the character of the built and historic environment. These policies have been considered, but are likely to be given limited weight given the stage of the Local Plan. Those policies of relevance to this appraisal include **Policy ESD 13**, **Policy ESD 15** and **Policy ESD 16**, the full wording of which has been included at Appendix E.

5 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Description of the Proposals (Plan HDA 7)

- 5.1.1 The development proposals (as shown on the Illustrative Site Plan prepared by Anderson Orr Dwg No 14045-P01) are in outline for up to 48 high-quality 2-storey dwellings with access from Station Road (a matter for detailed consideration) at the south-west corner of the site. The development would use a cul-de-sac layout to reflect the type of development at Ironstone Hollow, Austin's Way and The Grange. In terms of their scale and massing, the proposed houses would be consistent with many in the village. Visualisations have been provided (Anderson Orr Dwg No 14045- V01 and V02) to give an indication that the development would create an appropriate sense of place for future residents.
- 5.1.2 The proposals have evolved as part of an iterative design process to mitigate potential adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. The new housing would be set within the green infrastructure of the existing trees retained along the southern, western and northern boundaries, together with proposals for an extensive belt of new tree and shrub planting incorporating public open space and a play area along the eastern site boundary.
- 5.1.3 An area of public open space would also be created adjacent to the proposed site access where the marked change in levels between Station Road and the site would result in some re-grading of levels in this south-west corner of the site. The position of the proposed access in relation to the site's frontage with Station Road has been determined to avoid conflict with the access into the new housing development of The Grange on the south side of Station Road and to allow for sufficient sightlines beyond the bridge abutment to the former railway bridge to the east of the site.
- 5.1.4 In Cherwell's Planning Obligations Draft SPD (Ref 13, July 2011), Table 5 on '*Local standards of provision – outdoor recreation*' states that green space should be provided at the standard of 2.3ha per 1,000 rural population and play space needs to be provided at a standard of 0.78ha per 1,000 population. For 48 houses at an average household size of 2.43, this equates to 0.269ha of green space and 0.091ha of play space. In the Cherwell Submission Local Plan 2006-2031 (Ref 11, January 2014), Policy BSC11 (pages 62-65) Table 8 on '*Local standards of provision – outdoor recreation*' states that green space should be provided at the standard of 2.74ha per 1,000 rural population and play space needs to be provided at a standard of 0.78ha per 1,000 population. For 48 houses at an average household size of 2.43, this equates to 0.32ha of green space and 0.091ha of play space.

5.1.5 In line with these standards, it is proposed to provide 0.321ha of green space on the site, plus a play area of 910m², and in addition to this, 0.412ha of tree planting would be provided along the eastern boundary. The play area would be located half way along the eastern boundary to ensure that it could be easily accessed from all properties and to allow for surveillance from adjacent pedestrian routes and properties.

5.1.6 In the pre-application response from Oxfordshire County Council Highways (Ref 14), it was suggested that “*provision should be made for some access within the north-eastern edge of the development to provide a connection onto Footpath 253/21*”. The provision of such a link onto the existing footpath network has been shown on the Illustrative Site Plan.

6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Assessment of Effects on Landscape Features

6.1.1 The landscape features to be retained or proposed on or in the vicinity of the site were scheduled at Table 1 (paragraph 2.3.4 above), and their sensitivity assessed. Table 4 below considers those features, judging the effects on those features of the proposed development and assessing the significance of those changes. The assessment also considers the significance of changes with the maturing of the landscape scheme, about 10 years after completion of the development.

6.1.2 The location for the proposed site access is constrained by the access into the new development of The Grange on the opposite side of Station Road and by the requirements for sightlines beyond the bridge abutment to the former railway bridge to the east of the site. The restrictions on the location of the proposed access result in it coinciding with the location of some of the larger trees on the Station Road frontage (though only Category B trees). The proposed access and associated earthworks would require the removal of two to three mature trees from the Station Road frontage and 25m length of associated scrub/hedgerow, however no other trees on the perimeter of the site would be affected by the proposed development.

6.1.3 The arable field of the site will be lost to the construction of the proposed development which would have Moderate Adverse significance of effect at the time of construction. As the site becomes assimilated into the fabric of the village, the effect of the loss of this field will reduce. Following completion, some 0.8ha of the former arable land would become open space, with a belt of native trees along the eastern site boundary. These new landscape features, on land currently identified as Medium/Low sensitivity, would provide a strong landscape structure for the new built development. New features would enhance retained existing features, strengthening local identity and creating rich habitats to benefit wildlife and biodiversity. The loss of trees during the construction of the site

access road would be balanced against this extensive new planting. Ten years after completion, tree planting throughout the development as required by conditions at reserved matters stage, would have grown and the increase in tree resource would more than compensate for the loss of trees at the construction phase. The addition of areas of quality public open space will therefore result in an overall Slight Beneficial effect in the long term.

6.2 Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

6.2.1 County, District and local landscape character areas are described above (paragraphs 2.4.2 to 2.4.4 for County, 2.4.5 to 2.4.8 for District, and section 2.5 for local character areas), and their sensitivity to the type of development proposed at the site assessed at Table 2 (after paragraph 2.5.2). Table 5 below assesses the likely effect of the proposed development on local landscape character and the differences arising with the maturing of the proposed planting scheme.

6.2.2 Given the site's local landscape characteristics (based upon reference to the published and local landscape character assessments), its position within the AHLV and the proximity on two sides of the site (to west and south) of housing, the site and its associated local character area have been assessed as having Medium sensitivity to change. It is inevitable that proposed built development on green-field sites will change the character of an area from rural to urban. Given the nature of the site, an arable field, the magnitude of change on landscape character has therefore been assessed as being High/Medium Adverse during construction. This represents a substantial change in the inherent character of the land, but effectively the proposed development would marginally extend the eastern edge of Hook Norton, with its settled characteristics encroaching into the countryside and as such the development would have a Moderate Adverse significance of effect on landscape character.

6.2.3 Initially, the new houses would be seen against the existing built development of The Grange and the belt of trees to the east of Ironstone Hollow, which presently forms the existing settlement edge, softening the interface between settlement and the land beyond. The proposed development would replicate this green, planted belt along its eastern edge to form a new village edge. In this respect, the development would not appear isolated or incongruous in the landscape, thus the effects on landscape character would not extend substantially beyond the immediate area in the long term.

Table 4: Landscape Features - Assessment

Feature	Sensitivity	Description of Proposed Changes	Magnitude of Effect		Significance of Effect	
			Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion	Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion
Agricultural land	Medium/Low	2.2ha of arable field lost to proposed development. 0.8ha of the site would become open space including a belt of trees along the eastern site boundary to assimilate the site into the countryside.	High Adverse	Medium Beneficial	Moderate Adverse	Slight Beneficial
Woodland belts of trees to western and northern boundaries of site	Medium	No effect. Although the majority of these trees are off-site, agreement will be sought with adjacent landowners to introduce some management to these trees.	None	Low Beneficial	Negligible	Slight Beneficial
Treed frontage to Station Road	Medium/Low	Removal of two to three mature trees and 25m length of associated scrub/hedgerow to accommodate construction of site access road, but majority of trees on this frontage would be retained. New planting throughout the site would compensate for small losses and add to overall tree resource of the village, with additional ecological benefits.	Low Adverse	Medium Beneficial	Slight Adverse	Slight Beneficial

Table 5: Landscape Character - Assessment

County & District Landscape Character Areas	Local Landscape Character Area	Sensitivity	Description of Proposed Changes	Magnitude of Effect		Significance of Effect	
				Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion	Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion
Rolling Village Pastures (Ref 3) Ironstone Hills and Valleys (Ref 4) Ironstone Downs (Ref 5)	Farmland Plateau	Medium	<p>Area of arable land on ridge lost to development. As construction activity would occur within this character area, there would be a localised effect of encroachment into the countryside, but this would be seen in the context of adjacent existing urban influences.</p> <p>Retained existing trees would be augmented by maturing planting across the site, adding to overall landscape resource of the area.</p>	High/Medium Adverse	Medium/ Low Beneficial	Moderate Adverse	Slight Beneficial
	River Valley	Medium	<p>Not directly affected as visibility of any building activity limited by lower levels within the valley, but where land rises then there is the potential for the distant influence of building activity.</p> <p>Maturing woodland belt along eastern boundary of site would limit influence of site on this character area.</p>	Low Adverse	Low Beneficial	Slight Adverse	Slight Beneficial
	Hook Norton Village	High/ Medium	<p>Obvious influence from proximity of building activity, but seen in context of existing urban influences. The proposed development would be within the same landscape character as the existing village. Built development of housing would be influenced by materials and architectural features in keeping with Hook Norton Village and would be softened by a comprehensive landscape structure.</p> <p>Maturing planting across the site would enhance the landscape resource and integrate built development into this character area.</p>	Medium/Low Adverse	Low Beneficial	Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Slight Beneficial

6.3 Visual Assessment

- 6.3.1 The visual assessment addresses the extent and character of the views of the proposed development and compares this with the scheme 10 years after completion. The visual assessment field work was carried out during summer, when views were restricted by vegetation. Table 6 provides a summary of the site assessment and should be read in conjunction with Table 3. Plan HDA 6 identifies the extent and degree of views at the worst case scenario, during construction.
- 6.3.2 Given the topography of the site and that three of the site's four boundaries have extensive belts of existing vegetation along them, views of the proposed development would be restricted, with the main viewpoint being from Footpath 253/21 on the flanks of Council Hill to the north-east of the site. During construction of the proposed development, the visual impact experienced by users of this public footpath within 1km of the site has been assessed as Substantial/Moderate Adverse, which would be a significant effect. In photographs taken from Footpath 253/21 (see Photos 5 to 8) to the north-east of the site, it is apparent that the proposed development would sit on lower ground than the rest of the village which, together with the elevated belt of trees on the western site boundary, would form a backdrop to the site, and certainly would be no more prominent as the new housing at The Grange. Existing site levels are, on average, 152m AOD, therefore, plus the height of a 2-storey property (varying between 7.8m and 8.9m above ground levels) the ridges would be between 159.8m AOD and 160.9m AOD. The ridge would therefore be lower than the land on which St Peter's Church is located, therefore views of this landmark would not be affected by the proposed development. The visual impact of the scheme from Footpath 253/21 would be partly mitigated in time by the introduction of a strong belt of trees along the eastern site boundary. Some residual impacts therefore would remain, such that the proposed development has been assessed as having a Moderate/Slight Adverse visual impact 10 years after completion.
- 6.3.3 Adverse impacts would also be experienced from Footpath 253/21 where it abuts the northern site boundary, from the undesignated track along the western site boundary and from Station Road immediately to the south of the site. In terms of views experienced by pedestrians along Station Road, whilst these would change with the loss of a couple of mature trees from the south-west corner of the site to accommodate the site access road, given the built-up nature of the area, the visual impact would be Moderate/Slight Adverse. The Station Road frontage would not appear incongruous or obtrusive in the existing street scene.
- 6.3.4 In conclusion, visual impacts for the site are largely confined to impacts in the immediate vicinity of the site and though some of those impacts are likely to be substantial, they are confined to a limited number of receptors.

Table 6: Visual Assessment

Ref No	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Effect of Proposed Development on View at Construction and 10 years after Completion	Magnitude of Effect		Significance of Effect	
				Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion	Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion
Public Rights of Way and Roads (Public Views)							
	Footpath 253/19	Medium	No views of site due to intervening vegetation.	None	None	Negligible	Negligible
	Footpath 253/21	High	Views from flanks of Council Hill to north-east of the site. Effects would be partly mitigated by belt of tree planting along eastern site boundary, but this would take time to mature. The planting will not have gain sufficient stature to match the height of the new houses so residual impacts would still be experienced 10 years after completion.	High/Medium Adverse	Medium/Low Adverse	Substantial/Moderate Adverse	Moderate/Slight Adverse
	Undesignated track along western boundary	High	Glimpsed views of construction activity on the site through trees adjacent to this track, but these views would increase to partial in winter, particularly if management works are introduced. Views of dwellings seen through existing trees, however potential garden planting would increasingly soften views over time as it matures, such that views would be similar to those of properties on Ironstone Hollow.	Medium Adverse	Low Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate/Slight Adverse
	Station Road – pedestrians	Medium	Loss of two to three mature trees from the south-west corner of the site to accommodate the site access road would open up views into the site at this point, but the remainder of site's frontage vegetation would be retained. Retained, existing trees on site frontage would be reinforced with additional planting within the development, which over time would reduce views of houses and seen in context of houses at The Grange.	Medium Adverse	Low Adverse	Moderate/Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse

Ref No	Receptor Name	Sensitivity	Effect of Proposed Development on View at Construction and 10 years after Completion	Magnitude of Effect		Significance of Effect	
				Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion	Worst case effect during construction	10 years after completion
	Station Road – motorists	Low	Open or partial, though transient views of construction activity on site, particularly of site access, where frontage trees would be lost. Additional planting would reinforce screening potential of trees along site frontage.	Medium/Low Adverse	Very Low Adverse	Slight Adverse/ Negligible	Negligible
Residential Properties (Private Views)							
1	Railway House, Station Road	Medium	Close range, open views across Station Road of construction activity, particularly of site access, where frontage trees would be lost. Additional trees along site frontage would reinforce screening potential of retained trees to reduce views from this property over time.	High/Medium Adverse	Low Adverse	Moderate/ Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
2	The Grange (former Stanton Engineering Works site)	Medium/ Low	Partial views of construction activity on the site from those elevated properties closest to Station Road. Additional trees along site frontage would reinforce screening potential of retained trees to reduce views from these properties over time.	Medium Adverse	Low Adverse	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse/ Negligible
3	Austin's Way to south of Station Road	Medium/ Low	No views of site due to being at lower level and screened by boundary hedgerows.	None	None	Negligible	Negligible
4	Ironstone Hollow to north of Station Road	Medium/ Low	Glimpsed views in winter from first floor windows of construction activity. Potential planting in gardens of new houses would soften views over time as it matures.	Medium Adverse	Very Low Adverse	Slight Adverse	Negligible
5	Railway Bridge House, Station Road (business premise)	Low	Oblique, glimpsed views of construction activity including loss of roadside trees. Additional planting to site frontage would reduce over time limited views from this business.	Medium/Low Adverse	Very Low Adverse	Slight Adverse/ Negligible	Negligible

7 ASSESSMENT AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

7.1 National Policy

7.1.1 This assessment has identified that the proposed housing development to the north of Station Road in Hook Norton will have some short term Moderate Adverse impacts on the landscape character of the site due to its change from rural to urban, and thus may be considered to have some conflict with **paragraph 58** of The Framework which states that development should “*respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials*”. However, the proposals have been designed to reflect the layout and scale of development in the local surroundings and would use materials from the local palette.

7.2 District Policy

Cherwell Local Plan 1996

7.2.1 The proposals present a conflict with **Policy C13** of the current Local Plan (Ref 9 and paragraphs 4.3.2 to 4.3.4 above) as there would be a short term Moderate Adverse impact on the character of the AHLVs. However, the scale of development would be limited and would be typical of other developments, existing and proposed, in Hook Norton. Attention to siting and design has been incorporated into the scheme’s design and can, if considered necessary, be further regulated by the imposition of conditions. However, given this policy’s proven inconsistency with The Framework, any conflict attracts reduced weight.

7.2.2 In a similar vein to **Policy C13**, the objectives of **Policy C7** seek to protect the topography and character of the landscape (paragraph 4.3.5 above), and as stated above, there would be a short term Moderate Adverse impact on the landscape character of the site and its surroundings. This assessment results from the substantial change in the inherent character of the site, from a rural field to urban houses, which inevitably results from a development of this type in a green-field location. However, this effect would be relatively localised, with minimal encroachment into the countryside and seen within the context of adjacent existing urban land uses. In addition, there would be no harm to the topography of the site, which has already been affected by quarrying in the past. With the addition of tree planting across the site, to augment the retained existing trees, the long term effects on the character of the landscape of the scheme would be Slight Beneficial. Therefore, any short-term conflict with **Policy C7** would be reduced in the long term, to be consistent with policy.

7.2.3 The proposals would also be consistent with **Policy 28** and **Policy 30** of the 1996 Local Plan (paragraph 4.3.5 above). In compliance with **Policy 28**, the layout, design and external appearance of the proposed development would be sympathetic to the character of its urban-edge context. A high standard development would be delivered, using

traditional local building materials. Similarly, to ensure compliance with **Policy C30**, the proposed development would be compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity.

Other District-Wide Policy

- 7.2.4 Given that the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 and the Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 have not been adopted as policy, and as such should attract little weight, an assessment of the proposed development against policies in these plans has not been carried out.

Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan

- 7.2.5 In the submission version of the Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan (Ref 7, page 18), in the section on the location of housing development, as would be expected, the majority of existing residents who responded to a questionnaire stated that “areas outside the current village extent” should “not (be) considered appropriate for housing”. However, the Plan goes on to state that “*the area between Ironstone Hollow and the old railway evoked a close split between respondents who thought it appropriate for housing and those who did not*”. The merits of the application site for housing are therefore recognised by many in the local community and an appropriate, sensitively designed scheme could persuade those as yet undecided.

8 SUMMARY

- 8.1 Mike Gilbert Planning Ltd (acting on behalf of the applicant, Nursery Ground Ltd) instructed Hankinson Duckett Associates to carry out a landscape and visual appraisal to support an outline planning application for up to 48 dwellings on land to the north of Station Road in Hook Norton.

- 8.2 The location of the proposed development, in conjunction with the design process, has produced a scheme that limits landscape and visual effects to the immediate surroundings. The proposed development would generate a population of about 117 people (based upon 2.43 people per dwelling), which would represent less than 6% increase in the overall population of Hook Norton and therefore would be in scale with the village’s incremental development in the past. The village identity of Hook Norton would be retained, together with the integrity of the surrounding rural landscape.

Effect of Changes on Landscape Features

- 8.3 Features of greatest landscape value, the off-site woodland belts of trees to the western and northern site boundaries, would be unaffected by the proposed development. The limited removal of two to three mature trees and 25m length of associated scrub/hedgerow, to accommodate construction of the site access road, have been

assessed as Slight Adverse, however, this effect will be reduced by the early implementation of significance areas of tree planting within the public open space and throughout the development. The proposed development would therefore result in a significant increase in tree cover which would more than compensate of the loss of trees from the site frontage. It is judged that the proposed development will have a Slight Beneficial effect on the site's landscape features overall.

Effect of Changes on Landscape Character

- 8.4 The extent of the area proposed for built development has arisen largely from landscape assessment – to limit the majority of effects to the local area and to relate development to the existing settlement of Hook Norton. The proposed development would represent a substantial change in the inherent character of the land, from rural to urban, and as such the development would have a Moderate Adverse significance of effect on landscape character. However, it would only marginally extend the eastern edge of Hook Norton and would be seen against the existing built development at The Grange and the belt of trees to the east of Ironstone Hollow. The proposed development would be set upon locally lower ground than its surroundings, and to ensure it is in keeping with the adjacent countryside, extensive planting would be included in the development. In the long term, the proposed development is likely to have a Slight Beneficial effect on the landscape character of the immediate area and would create a new green interface between urban and rural land uses.

Effects of Changes on Visual Amenity

- 8.5 The proposed dwellings would be located to the east of the existing settlement boundary. Open views of the proposed dwellings would largely be limited to residences within close proximity, to the south of the site (Railway House and properties at The Grange), and to mid-distance views from the footpath up Council Hill (Footpath 253/21) to the north-east of the site. Although these views would largely be seen in the context of the existing settlement of Hook Norton, views of an existing arable field would be replaced with views of proposed dwellings set within a landscape structure. The change in view from a number of locations would therefore be from rural to urban, but this would not be uncharacteristic of the local area. Views of proposed dwellings would reduce over time as the proposed planting matures. Overall, the visual changes arising from the proposed development 10 years after completion will, in the majority of cases, be Slight Adverse/Negligible, however, from two receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site, visual changes will remain Moderate/Slight Adverse, however these effects will reduce even further as planting matures.

Conclusions

- 8.6 The resultant development would be one that adds to the overall quality of the area. The proposals would establish a strong sense of place by responding to the local character and reflecting the identity of local surroundings through the use of a local palette of building and surfacing materials. The proposals would be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscape provision, thus improving the character and quality of the area. The potential to make the site accessible to the surrounding footpath network will be explored, with a link to Footpath 253/21 proposed at the north-east corner of the site as requested in Pre-Application response.
- 8.7 In conclusion, the proposed development would have a Moderate Adverse effect on the immediate landscape character of the site and at worse, a Substantial/Moderate Adverse effect on visual amenity experienced from a limited number of viewpoints along the footpath to the north-east of the site, and to a lesser degree, from footpaths to the west and south of the site. As such it is assessed that the proposals would have some conflict with the objectives of Local Plan Policies C7 and C13, but this needs to be balanced against the identified need for housing in the District.

REFERENCES

- Ref 1 Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management, 2002 and 2013, '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment*' (GLVIA2 and GLVIA3)
- Ref 2 The Countryside Agency (now Natural England), 1999, '*Countryside Character, Volume 7: South East and England*'
- Ref 3 Oxfordshire Country Council, 2005, '*Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study*'
- Ref 4 Cobham Resource Consultants for Cherwell District Council, November 1995, '*Cherwell District Landscape Assessment*'
- Ref 5 Cherwell District Council, June 1998, '*Countryside Design Summary SPG*'
- Ref 6 Hook Norton Parish Council, May 2007, '*Hook Norton Conservation Area Appraisal*'
- Ref 7 Hook Norton Parish Council, July 2014, '*Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version*'
- Ref 8 Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012, '*National Planning Policy Framework*'
- Ref 9 Cherwell Borough Council, adopted November 1996, '*Cherwell Local Plan*'
- Ref 10 Cherwell Borough Council, December 2004, '*Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011*'
- Ref 11 Cherwell Borough Council, January 2014 '*Submission Local Plan 2006-2031*'
- Ref 12 The Planning Inspectorate, 3 September 2014, '*Appeal Decision APP/C3105/A/14/2213263 Land off Banbury Road, Adderbury, Oxfordshire, OX17*'
- Ref 13 Cherwell District Council, July 2011 '*Planning Obligations Draft SPD*'
- Ref 14 Oxfordshire County Council, 28 March 2014, 'Pre-application response from OCC Highways

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APPENDIX A

HDA L&V Assessment Methodology

APPENDIX A

HDA L&V ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1 Guidance

1.1 The proposed development is not subject to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations (2011), which implement EC Directive 85/337/EEC as amended (97/11/EC).

1.2 The methodology used in preparing this statement is based on landscape and visual assessment that has been developed by HDA from guidance given in the following documents:

- The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, (2002 and 2013), "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment" (second and third editions); and
- Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and Scottish Natural Heritage (by Carys Swanwick and Land Use Consultants), (April 2002), "Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland".

1.3 The assessment of likely impacts is considered in two separate but inter-linked parts as follows:

- **Landscape** impacts relating to changes in the fabric, character and quality of the landscape. These could be direct impacts on specific landscape elements or features (such as loss of woodland or semi-improved grassland) or effects on landscape character and designated areas of landscape; and
- **Visual** impacts relating to specific changes in the character of available views and the effects of those changes on visual receptors (e.g. residents, users of public rights of way or recreational facilities). Visual impacts to the setting of cultural heritage features are also considered (e.g. scheduled monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas) as these interests are protected by planning policy.

2 Desk Study

2.1 A desk-study was undertaken to establish the physical components of the local landscape and to identify the boundaries of the study area. The following data sources were consulted:

- Ordnance Survey (OS) maps – (1:25,000 and 1:10,000) to identify local features relating to topography, field pattern/shape/size, drainage pattern, woodland cover, existing settlement pattern, rights of way networks, transport corridors and any important extant historic features.
- Vertical aerial photography – used to supplement the OS information.

This data informed the field survey by providing a basis for mapping landscape features and to indicate the likely visibility of the proposed development.

2.2 Topographical analysis was used to identify the extent of potential visibility of the site and the proposed development. The zone of theoretical visibility was identified through

mapping, together with potential visual receptors (VRs), for verification by field survey. The VRs include places with public access within the visual envelope; public rights of way¹, public open space, key vantage points, roads, etc. together with residential properties and workplaces.

2.3 The Countryside Character Initiative, together with local landscape character assessment, provided the county and district landscape character context.

2.4 The current landscape planning context for the site is provided by the development plan documents for Cherwell District Council.

3 Field Survey

3.1 A field survey of the site was carried out in August 2014. This involved walking the site and travelling through the study area as identified in the desk-study, to verify any variations in landscape character and the locations of visual receptors. The field survey also serves to understand the immediate setting of the proposed development, including the local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, position and condition of trees, hedgerows and stream courses.

3.2 Site visits were undertaken from publically accessible viewpoints around the site such as roads and public rights of way. Intervisibility analysis (projective mapping) was used to verify the zone of theoretical visibility and to evaluate the extent and nature of views from nearby properties (Properties were not visited as part of the study). A working photographic record of the visit was also made.

4 Landscape Baseline

4.1 The objective of the landscape baseline is first to schedule, describe, and where possible, quantify the landscape resource that potentially could be affected by the proposed development. Secondly, the sensitivity of the landscape to the proposed development is considered. For the purposes of assessment, the landscape resource is considered in two ways:

1. Existing landscape features in and immediately adjacent to the site are identified, quantified and their condition assessed; and
2. Local landscape character variation across the site and Study Area is described and evaluated.

4.2 A judgement is made as to the sensitivity of each unit of the landscape resource to the proposed development. Sensitivity is:

¹ Definitive rights of way maps,

“a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor”².

Evaluation of landscape sensitivity, in the context of this LVIA, arises out of a consideration of the relative resilience of identified landscape attributes (e.g., landscape features, units of landscape character).

- 4.3 The way that landscape responds to or is affected by proposed development is determined in part by the nature of that development. The sensitivity of the landscape will vary depending on the type, form, appearance, extent or scale, duration (temporary or permanent) and phasing of proposed development. Landscape effects are also dependent upon the “degree to which the proposals fit with existing character”³, or indeed the potential to design-out potential adverse effects. Outline information about the proposed development such as type and scale helps inform preliminary judgement about the relative sensitivity of the landscape.

5 Landscape Features

- 5.1 Landscape features are identified on plans, together with information relating to their type, condition, character and value, and quantification (area/length/number). The potential for impact on each landscape feature is assessed using a combination of their relationship to the site/proposed development (e.g. within, on or adjacent to site boundary and for those outside the site, the distance from the boundary) and sensitivity.

- 5.2 Sensitivity of landscape features is closely allied to the ease with which that feature may be substituted or recreated. The sensitivity of site landscape features is evaluated using factors in the following checklist:

- Type of landscape feature (e.g. natural or man-made);
- Size/extent (e.g. covers a large or small area; individual or part of a group);
- Condition or quality of landscape feature (intact);
- Maturity (is feature well established or recent);
- Contribution feature makes to landscape character (e.g. distinct and recognisable pattern or limited influence);
- Rarity (rare or widespread in local and/or regional/national context);
- Recognised importance (e.g. designation either nationally or locally);
- Ease with which the feature may be substituted or recreated.

² Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd edition) 2013 glossary p158

³ Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (3rd edition) 2013 para 5.37 p88

6 Landscape Character

6.1 Landscape character areas (areas/types⁴) were identified on plan(s), and published descriptions and trends summarised. Where published documents create a hierarchy of landscape areas, this is stated and the scale most appropriate to the assessment is explained.

6.2 The assessment focuses on the landscape within which the site/proposed development is located. The character of a neighbouring character unit may be strongly influenced by the adjacent area, within which the site is located. This relationship may be dependent on the scale of assessment (size of landscape units), as well as landscape characteristics that affect intervisibility, e.g. topography, vegetation cover.

6.3 The degree to which the landscape character area can accommodate change arising from a particular development without detrimental effects on its character, i.e. sensitivity, varies with⁵:

- Existing land use (consistent or contrast with proposed development);
- The pattern and scale of the landscape (potential degree of contrast or integration of new features);
- Visual enclosure/openness (relative containment associated with vegetation cover and/or topography);
- Scope for proposed development to be designed (mitigated) in character with the existing landscape;
- Value placed on the landscape (including recognition of importance through designation, or local consensus);
- Condition (intactness from visual, functional and ecological perspectives⁶);
- Rarity;
- Area of land affected (proportion of or number of landscape type/character areas affected);
- Relationship to site/proposed development (within/adjacent to it; level of intervisibility); and
- Tranquillity and appropriateness of substitution of the characteristics affected.

7 Criteria for Evaluation of Sensitivity of Landscape Resource

7.1 It is represented as an expression of comparative sensitivity, based on a five-point scale: Very Low, Low, Medium, High and Very High as follows:

⁴ terminology varies in accordance with that used in published landscape character assessment, or as defined in HDA local assessment

⁵ adapted from Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2nd edition) 2002, para. 7.16, p87

⁶ The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002, para. 7.8 p53.

Sensitivity of Landscape Resource

Very High:	Nationally recognised landscape, e.g. National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. World Heritage Sites of international importance (if landscape reason for designation); Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and balanced combination of landform and land-cover; Appropriate management with distinctive features worthy of conservation; Sense of place (usually tranquil); No (or occasional) detracting features; Landscape not substitutable.
High:	Regionally or locally recognised landscape of particularly distinctive character, e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value; Recognisable landscape structure, characteristic patterns and combinations of landform and land-cover are still evident; Appropriate management, but potential scope for improvement; Some features worthy of conservation; Sense of place; Occasional detracting features; Very limited substitutability and susceptible to relatively small changes.
Medium:	Locally recognised, but undesignated, landscape of moderately valued characteristics. Just distinguishable landscape structure, with some characteristic patterns of landform and land-cover though often masked by mixed land use; Scope to improve management (e.g. of hedgerows); Frequent detracting features; Landscape resource reasonably tolerant to change.
Low:	Ordinary undesignated countryside; Weak landscape structure, without characteristic patterns of landform or land-cover; Limited management which is beginning to show signs of degradation; Abundance of detracting features; A relatively unimportant landscape, the nature of which is potentially tolerant to substantial change.
Very low:	Degraded to damaged/polluted or derelict landscape structure; Single land use dominates; Lack of or poor management/maintenance/intervention which has resulted in degradation; Presence of disturbed or derelict land requiring treatment; Extensive or dominant detracting features.

8 Visibility Baseline

8.1 The visual baseline serves to establish the type of Visual Receptor (VR), the extent and character of existing views, and the contribution that the assessment site makes to each view/local visual amenity. This usually correlates with the degree to which the site is visible from a VR. Where appropriate, the existence of temporary structures or features in the landscape that vary with the seasons and that may therefore affect visibility, such as deciduous vegetation, were noted in order to evaluate the worst case situation in the assessment. The initial appraisal is based on a grading of degrees of visibility, from not visible to fully open in close views. To indicate the degree of visibility of the site from any location, that continuum has been divided into four categories:

- **None:** no view (no part of the site or proposed development is discernible);

- **Glimpse:** only a minor area of the site or proposed development is discernible and/or the view is transient or at such a distance that it is difficult to perceive in the wider view, or sequence of views;
- **Partial:** the site or proposed development forms a relatively small proportion of a wider view. There are open views of part of the site or proposed development such that it is easily visible as part of the wider view;
- **Open:** there are open views of the site or proposed development such that it forms a substantial part (is a dominant element) of the overall view and affects its overall character and visual amenity; or the site or proposed development is the dominant feature of the view, to which other elements become subordinate and where the site/proposed development significantly affects or changes the character of the view.

8.2 The type of visual receptor (VR) affects sensitivity, as does the extent to which a view can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character and extent. The sensitivity of views/visual amenity within the zone of visual influence of the site/proposed development, is evaluated using factors in the following checklist⁷:

- Type of VR (e.g. recreation location where surrounding landscape important to activity, right of way, residential property, scenic road, motorway, employment premises etc.);
- Proportion of VR affected (i.e. % length of right of way from which view affected; principal room or first floor only of residential property affected);
- Character of view;
- Degree to which site/proposed development visible;
- Contribution site/proposed development makes to character of view;
- Nature of proposed development in context of view (consistent or contrasting);
- Distance between site and VR;
- Recognised importance of the landscape in which site and/or VR located;
- Number of viewers likely to be affected.

8.3 The evaluation of sensitivity, in relation to visual receptors, is included in baseline summary tables in the assessment text (together with description, quantification etc). Sensitivity has been represented as an expression of comparatives based on a five-point scale, with adjustment for professional judgement.

9 Summary of Landscape/Visual Baseline

9.1 The baseline survey identifies the landscape resource (landscape features and character) and visual receptors (VRs) likely to be affected by the proposed development, and then evaluates the sensitivity of each to the likely effects of the proposed development.

⁷ adapted from Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2nd edition) 2002, para. 7.31-33, p90

10 Landscape Impact Assessment Methodology

- 10.1 The landscape impact assessment addresses both direct and indirect impacts of the proposed development. Firstly, the direct effects of the development on the site itself are categorised, through an assessment of the magnitude of effect. The focus is on the loss or change to identified landscape features within or adjacent to the site, together with the creation of new landscape elements.
- 10.2 **Landscape character:** The effects on local landscape character that would result from the proposed development are assessed. The effect on site landscape character directly correlates with the impact on landscape features (extent and duration). The effect on landscape character in the environs of the site is dependent on a range of factors (sensitivity) and overlaps with the visual assessment because the extent to which the proposed development would be visible from the surrounding countryside may influence neighbouring character areas.
- 10.3 Changes to landscape character may be adverse, beneficial or neutral. The erosion of character equates to an adverse impact, whilst strengthening of characteristics is regarded as beneficial. The substitution of a landscape character area with another that is different but locally appropriate may be assessed as a neutral impact.
- 10.4 For the purposes of this assessment, 'magnitude of effect' on each landscape feature and landscape character area is classified using the categories listed below⁸:

⁸ Whilst potential effects may be adverse or beneficial, for simplicity, the following definitions use examples of adverse impact, bearing in mind that significant effects on landscape features, in the context of LVIA, usually equate with total or partial loss. Where effects are deemed to be beneficial this will be clearly stated in the assessment text

Magnitude of Change for Landscape Effects

High:	<p>Notable change in landscape characteristics over an extensive area;</p> <p>The proposals are the dominant feature and there is substantial damage (or major improvement) to key characteristics, features and elements that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are long term and irreversible.</p> <p>Effect on a landscape feature of designated importance that cannot be replaced; total loss of features that would be difficult to replace.</p> <p>Loss of (or substantial effect on) existing landscape character and its replacement with characteristics that are atypical of the character area.</p>
Medium:	<p>Moderate changes in localised area:</p> <p>The proposals form a visible and immediately apparent new feature that results in partial damage to (or addition of) key characteristics, elements and features that contribute to landscape, and/or the effects are medium to long term and largely irreversible.</p> <p>Total loss of feature that may be recreated over time; loss of small proportion of a feature that would be difficult to replace (e.g. mature woodland or historic species-rich hedgerow);</p> <p>A considerable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character appropriate to character area but different from adjoining areas);</p>
Low:	<p>Small change in any components;</p> <p>Some measurable change where the proposal constitutes a minor feature in the landscape and results in loss (or addition) of one (or maybe more) key characteristics, and/or the effects are short to medium term or could be irreversible.</p> <p>Total loss over sizeable area of a feature that can be recreated relatively easily (e.g. arable farmland); partial loss of feature that may be recreated over time, (e.g. young plantation/hedgerow); very minor loss of feature that would be difficult to recreate (e.g. woodland);</p> <p>A noticeable change to landscape character (proposed landscape character similar to existing landscape character of the area);</p>
Very low:	<p>Virtually imperceptible change of a temporary nature.</p> <p>The proposals result in very minor loss (or benefit) to the characteristics, features and elements that contribute to character, and/or effects are likely to be short term or could be reversible.</p> <p>Partial loss of feature that can be recreated relatively easily or which would regain its characteristics over time; minor or temporary effect on feature that can accommodate limited removal without noticeable change (e.g. gappy hedgerow);</p> <p>A barely perceptible change to landscape character;</p>

10.5 The impact of the proposed development on the local landscape (character) is described and illustrated. The degree of significance of the landscape impact of the development is a product of sensitivity and magnitude of effect.

11 Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

11.1 The degree of significance of visual impact is assessed at two levels:

- i) the significance of the impact on each individual VR;
- ii) the overall significance of the visual impact in the context of the zone of visual influence and the range of VRs as a whole.

11.2 In accord with the visual baseline, the degree of visibility of the proposed development from each VR is assessed based on the same four categories: No view; Glimpse; Partial view, Open view. The view as it would be both during construction and operation of the proposed development is described. A direct comparison of the descriptions of the view following development (or during construction) with that of the existing situation, together with degree of visibility, indicates the extent of the change to the view. The relationship between visual intrusion and extent of change to the view is dependent upon the character of the development in the context of the view and whether they are consistent or contrasting.

11.3 The scale or magnitude of visual change has been made with reference to the following (with reference to GLVIA, 2012, para 6.39):

- The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture; and
- The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.

11.4 The geographical extent of a visual effect will vary with different viewpoints and is likely to reflect:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and
- The extent of the area over which changes would be visible.

11.5 The magnitude of change can be classified as follows:

Magnitude of Change for Visual Effects

High:	<p>Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements considered to be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. The development would occupy most of the view (open or panoramic view) resulting in significant change in the existing view.</p> <p>The proposals would cause a significant deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would be a dominant and incongruous feature in the view).</p>
Medium:	<p>Partial loss of, or alteration to, (one or more) key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic to the baseline view. The development may affect a partial view of most of it, or viewers would have a clear view of only a small part of the development. Also refers to distant views in which the site forms a significant proportion of the wider view resulting in a noticeable change in the existing view;</p> <p>The proposals would cause a noticeable deterioration/improvement in the view. (If adverse, the proposals would form a visible and recognisable incongruous new element readily noticed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a recognisable improvement that could be noticed by a casual observer.)</p>
Low:	<p>Minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic of the baseline view. Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in a perceptible change in the existing views; and</p> <p>The proposals would cause a minor deterioration/improvement in the view. If adverse, the proposals would be a small incongruous element in the view that could be missed by a casual observer. If beneficial, the proposals would form a small improvement to the view that could be missed by a casual observer.</p>
Very low:	<p>Very minor loss of, or alteration to, one or more key elements of the baseline view, and/or introduction of elements that are not characteristic of the baseline view. Poor or difficult view of the development resulting in barely perceptible changed of a temporary nature. Approximating to the 'no change' situation, where the proposals overall would not form a noticeable deterioration or improvement in the view.</p>

12 Landscape and Visual Significance

12.1 The methodology is first to identify the sensitivity of the landscape features, local landscape character or the viewer and then the scale of change. From these the significance of the changes arising from the proposed development is assessed. At its simplest; sensitivity x scale of change = significance of effects, but modified by professional judgement.

	Sensitivity				
Magnitude	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
High	Major	Substantial	Moderate	Moderate/ Slight	Slight/ Negligible
Medium	Substantial	Moderate	Moderate/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Major significance: Impact of international/national significance and is important to the decision-making process;

Substantial significance: National/regional significance and could be a key decision-making issue; prominent changes to a sensitive view or substantial change or widespread loss of characteristic features in a sensitive landscape with little capacity for change;

Moderate significance: Effect of district/local significance and not likely to be a key decision-making issue; noticeable change to view or in an average, ordinary landscape with some capacity to accommodate development; in combination the cumulative impacts of visual receptors with a moderate significance would be more significant and a key decision making issue;

Slight significance: Effect of very local significance and unlikely to be of importance to the decision-making process; small scale or temporary changes to view or to a low sensitivity landscape with capacity to accommodate development;

Negligible significance: minimal effect and not significant to the decision-making process.

- 12.2 The professional judgement of experienced landscape assessors is used throughout the assessment. This may result in levels of significance that are greater or lesser than the application of the landscape and visual impact significance matrices, which are not a rigid formula.

APPENDIX B

Extracts from the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study
Rolling Village Pastures

Landscape Types:

Rolling Village Pastures



13. ROLLING VILLAGE PASTURES

Regional Character Areas

Northamptonshire Uplands, Cotswolds.

Location

This landscape type covers the rolling pastoral landscapes in the north of the county around Swalcliffe, Hook Norton and South Newington.

Overview

The landscape type is characterised by a distinctive landform of small rounded hills and narrow valleys. Unspoilt ironstone villages, with a strong vernacular character, form part of the tranquil countryside.

Key Characteristics

- A strongly undulating landform of rounded hills and small valleys.
- Small to medium-sized fields with mixed land uses, but predominantly pasture.
- Densely scattered hedgerow trees.
- Well-defined nucleated villages with little dispersal into the wider countryside.

Geology and landform

The geology of this area is quite complex, giving rise to a distinctive landform. The Middle Lias series, which consists of sands and clays, is exposed in this part of the county. It is overlain by the Marlstone Rock Bed, which is an iron-bearing limestone. The outcrop of the Middle Lias is broken by fault lines. From Hook Norton, these run in an east-west direction through Wigginton, South Newington and the Barfords. Faulting has also uplifted an area of Northampton Sand and White Limestone, of the Inferior and Great Oolite Groups respectively, around Tadmarton and the Sibfords.

As a result of the faults and the numerous small streams cutting through the landscape, the landform is shaped into steeply-sided, convoluted valleys with narrow valley bottoms surrounded by rolling, rounded hills. The steep slopes in the south form part of the Swere valley. The underlying geology gives rise to clay soils with a high iron content and a characteristic reddish-brown colour. Sandy soils occur in the vicinity of Tadmarton, Wigginton and Sibford Heaths although there is very little acid grassland and heathland habitat still surviving.

Land use and vegetation

Land uses are generally linked to the pattern of hills and valleys. The hill tops and gentler slopes are mainly in arable cultivation, whereas semi-improved and rough grassland interspersed by scrubby vegetation and gorse dominate the steeper hillsides. Pony grazing is also evident throughout the area. A characteristic feature is the medieval ridge and furrow pattern on the slopes, which is often clearly visible from a distance.

Small copses and mixed plantations of oak, ash, larch and Scots Pine are characteristic features on the hilltops and slopes. Crack willows, along with linear stretches of secondary woodland and scrub, border the streams and valley bottoms. Wet pasture lies adjacent to some watercourses.

Cultural pattern

The fields are generally medium-sized and regular in shape, but they are smaller and more irregular when associated with grazing land. Hedges are generally tall and dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn with occasional elm. Those surrounding arable land are more intensively maintained. Although there are no large woodlands, the dense mature hedgerow trees of oak and ash, particularly those bordering roads, create filtered views and give the impression of a well-wooded landscape.

The settlement pattern consists of small, well-defined nucleated villages and dispersed farmsteads. Hook Norton is the largest settlement. The vernacular character is strong in most villages, particularly in Epwell, Swalcliffe, Sibford Ferris, and Sibford Gower. The distinctive ironstone, used as a building material, gives rise to the characteristic warm reddish-brown buildings with stone or slate roof tiles. Sunken lanes connect villages and are a characteristic feature of this landscape type.

BIODIVERSITY

Overview

Much of the main biodiversity interest, where it survives, is associated with the steeper valley sides and valley bottoms. Semi-improved grassland and patches of scrub are typical of the former, whereas marshy and neutral grassland is more characteristic of the latter.

Key Characteristics

- Low-medium to medium-high bioscores/biobands.
- Priority habitats include calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland.

General Description

This landscape type occupies around 1.7% of the rural county. It supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, species-poor hedges with trees, semi-improved grassland and tree-lined watercourses along the valley bottoms. Broughton Park, with its associated mature trees, lake and semi-improved grassland, includes a number of locally important habitats. Priority habitats such as calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland still survive in localised areas including parts of the Swere valley. Calcareous grassland and scrub associated with parts of the disused railway at Hook Norton is also of interest. There are also patches of acid grassland found alongside gorse scrub on some of the steeper valley sides.

LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS

A. Sibford Gower (CW/39)

Landscape Character

The area has medium-sized fields with mainly semi-improved grassland and some arable cropping. The pasture is mainly used for pony grazing and dairy stock. On steeper slopes, the grassland is interspersed with scattered gorse. Fields are enclosed by a weak pattern of tall hawthorn hedges, many of which have been replaced by fences or removed altogether, particularly where arable farming is dominant. Mature hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, sycamore and some oak, are prominent throughout the area. They are sparser within field hedges and where arable farming dominates. There are a few mixed plantations with species such as ash, oak and Scots Pine.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 31/LM

This area supports only a limited range of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. There are no recorded priority habitats, but gorse scrub is a notable feature.

B. Epwell (NU/18)

Landscape Character

The area has a regular pattern of large arable fields to the east and smaller, semi-improved grass fields to the west including some ridge and furrow. There are a number of oak and ash hedgerow trees and a watercourse fringed by willows, some of them pollarded. A number of small woods are located on the hilltops, steep slopes and valley bottom.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 63/M

This area supports a slightly wider range of locally important habitats. As well as the usual plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges, there are tree-lined watercourses, wet woodland and ponds. Some acid grassland and gorse scrub can be found on some of the steeper slopes.

C. Tadmarton (NU/13)

Landscape Character

The area has a medium-scale, regular pattern of predominantly arable and semi-improved grass fields, some of which are used for pony grazing. Arable farming, mainly associated with the gentle rounded hills and grassland often mixed with scrub, is found on the lower valley slopes. Wet woodland, scrub and rough grassland are also characteristic of the valley bottoms. Hedges consist mainly of hawthorn, blackthorn and elm, and they tend to be in better condition along roadsides where there are also prominent hedgerow trees with species such as oak, ash and beech. There are a few hilltop mixed plantations.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 76/M

Apart from the usual locally important habitats such as plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges, there are other important habitats associated with Broughton Park including its species-rich lake and mature trees. There are also examples of wet woodland and wet, species-poor grassland and tree-lined watercourses.

D. Hook Norton (CW/34)

Landscape Character

The area has a mixed pattern of farming, with both arable and grassland. Fields are small, regularly-shaped and enclosed by a prominent network of tall hawthorn and blackthorn hedges. The hedges tend to be much lower where arable farming is dominant. There are a number of ash and oak hedgerow trees, particularly where there is pasture, as well as a few small ash and willow plantations.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 49/LM

This area supports locally important habitats such as plantations, semi-improved grassland bounded by species-poor hedges with trees. Its only priority habitat is a patch of surviving calcareous grassland.

E. Hook Norton (Southrop) (NU10)

Landscape Character

This area has a regular pattern of small to medium-sized fields which are mainly semi-improved pasture, some used as pony paddocks, and some arable land, particularly around Milcombe. Hedges are generally tall and in good condition, but are often much lower where arable farming dominates. On the minor valley slopes there are patches of rough grassland, a little bit of unimproved calcareous grassland mixed with scrub and blocks of semi-natural woodland with species such as ash, oak and field maple.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 116/MH

This part of the landscape type tends to score more highly because it supports a range of priority habitats including calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland found within parts of the Swere valley to the east of Hook Norton. Further along the same valley there is also some neutral grassland close to South Newington. Calcareous grassland can still be found along parts of the disused railway at Hook Norton. There is also quite a wide range of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, scrub and tree-lined watercourses.

F. Barford St. Michael (NU/5)

Landscape Character

The area is characterised by medium-sized fields with arable farming on the gentler slopes to the southwest of Barford St. Michael. There is some unimproved calcareous grassland and ridge and furrow is common and very prominent on the hill slopes. The hedges are generally tall, well-maintained and in good condition and those surrounding arable fields are lower and with fewer trees.

There are many hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, oak and willow, as well as ash and willow bordering some ditches along the valley bottoms. A few small poplar and mixed plantations add to the tree cover.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 73/M

Locally important habitats include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees, scrub and tree-lined watercourses. Other important habitats include parkland and its associated features such as mature trees and lakes. The

only recorded priority habitat is some surviving calcareous grassland near South Newington.

FORCES FOR CHANGE

- On the steeper slopes, where there is less arable cultivation, there remains an intact pattern of dense, thick hedges particularly bordering roads. However, where there is more intensively managed arable land the hedges tend to be low and gappy and the hedgerow trees much sparser. To the north of the landscape type many hedges have been removed and been replaced by fences.
- Development in the villages is mostly small scale, usually in character and contained within the existing settlement pattern. Minor exceptions to this can be found on the edge of Hook Norton and around Milcombe.
- All the stone quarries in the area have been restored back to agriculture although some of the associated conifer screen planting can be visually intrusive.

Landscape Strategy

Conserve the unspoilt character of the ironstone villages and surrounding countryside. Conserve and enhance the pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses.

Guidelines

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up existing gappy hedges and replacing fences 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 the surviving areas of permanent pasture, particularly remnants of ridge and furrow pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly along the valley sides and bottoms.
- Contain the size of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that are appropriate to this landscape type.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak, ash and field maple.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash, and where appropriate pollarding willows.

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.

Guidelines

- There is a range of priority habitats, including calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland, but these are largely associated with localised sites within parts of the Swere valley. There are also surviving patches of acid grassland and gorse on some of the steeper slopes.
- A number of these areas have been designated as county wildlife sites, which need to be safeguarded and the priority is to ensure that they are in favourable condition and management through suitable grazing and fertiliser regimes agreed with the landowner.

- Along the disused railway embankment at Hook Norton establish a balance between species-rich limestone grassland and scrub. Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species-rich grassland. 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.
- Parklands, including Broughton Park with its associated habitats of woodlands, trees, lakes and semi-improved grassland, make a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource of the landscape type and their structural and species diversity should be safeguarded and maintained.
- 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.
- Opportunities for the maintenance and establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland, wet grassland and small deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in order to strengthen wildlife corridors, particularly along the valley bottoms, and enhance the local landscape character.

Key Recommendations

- **Safeguard and enhance the landscape character of the hedgerow network, small woodlands and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all priority habitats are in favourable condition and management.**

APPENDIX C

Extract from the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment
Ironstone Hills and Valleys

- 3.32 North-east of Kidlington there is a Roman Villa site, including a well, which is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). The site of Hampton Gay Deserted Medieval Village is likewise designated and the earthworks are clearly visible. Buildings of interest include Yarnton Manor, a Grade II* listed building, originally dating from the early seventeenth century. The present garden at the Manor was recreated in the late 19th century following the lines of a much earlier seventeenth century layout, and part of the 10 hectare park was once an extensive deer park.

IRONSTONE HILLS AND VALLEYS

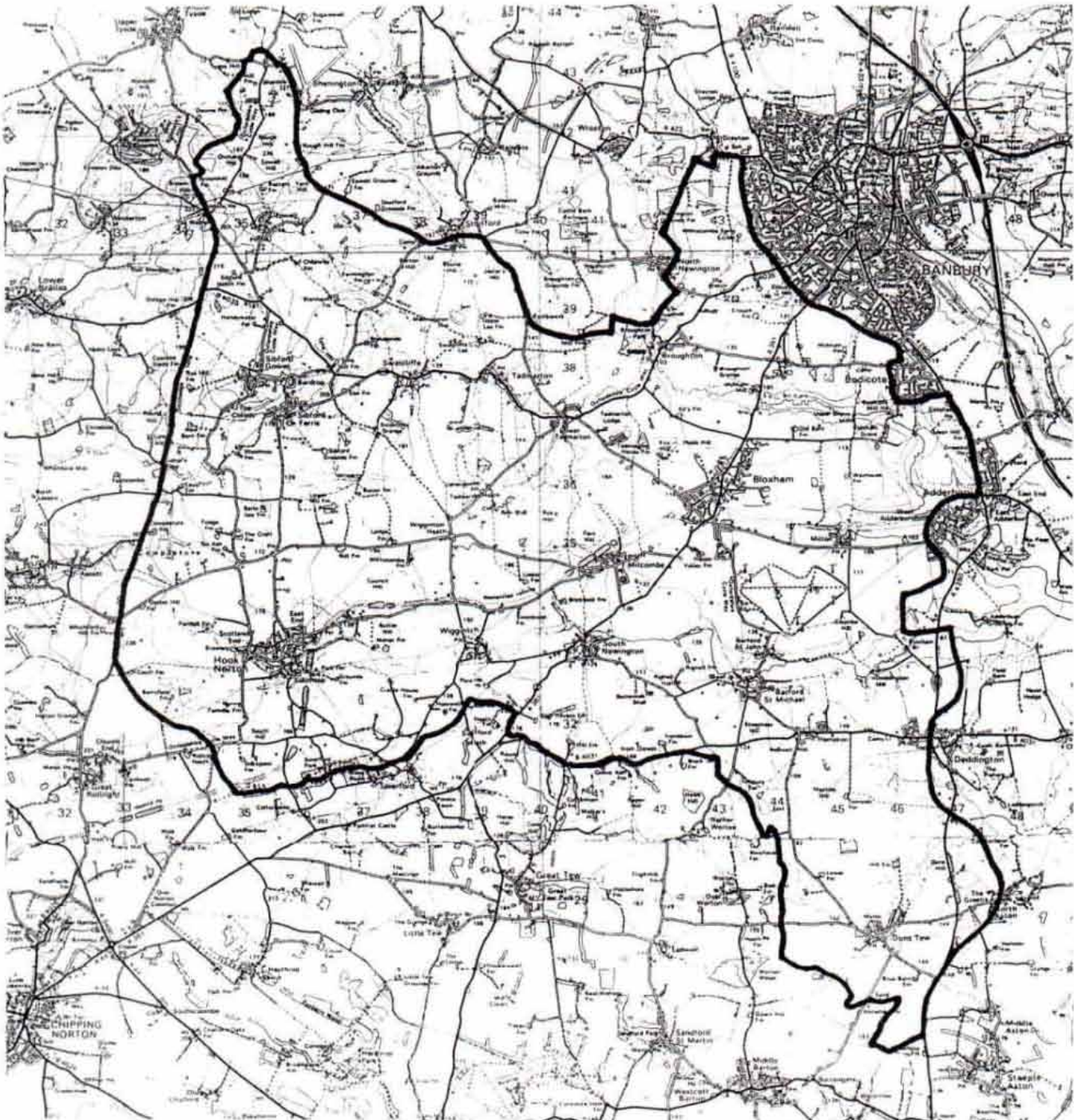
- 3.33 The Ironstone Hills and Valleys are found in the north west of the district, and is one of the larger character areas, extending from the Cherwell Valley to the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire county boundary. This is an upland area which forms part of the northern extent of the Cotswold Hills - indeed, the Cotswolds AONB extends over part of this character area at Epwell. The main distinguishing features are its extremely complex topography and the style of vernacular buildings which is unique to the Banbury region. The unspoilt ironstone villages and tranquil countryside are remote and isolated, particularly towards the west of the character area.

Landform and landcover

- 3.34 The geology of this area is faulted and fairly complex, which gives rise to a correspondingly complicated topography. Marlstone Rock Bed, an iron-bearing limestone with local sandy deposits, overlies the Middle and Lower Lias clays. This highly coloured Ironstone gives the character area its name. Faulting has uplifted an area of White Limestone and Northampton Sandstone, around Tadmerton and the Sibfords. A second line of faults lies along an east west line from Hook Norton, through Wigginton, South Newington and the Barfords.
- 3.35 Since the area is faulted and uplifted, and also cut through by numerous small streams, the landscape is divided into very steeply sided, convoluted valleys with narrow valley bottoms and rolling, rounded hill lines. Underlying geology has given rise to iron rich clay soils of a characteristic red colour, much of which is classed as grade 2 agricultural land.
- 3.36 Main drainage routes follow the fault lines. To the south, the River Swere flows eastwards along fault lines running into the Cherwell and subsequently draining to the south east, into the River Thames. The River Stour rises in the vicinity of Wigginton Heath. Joined by minor streams from the Sibfords, the Stour flows westwards into the Avon. Thus the hills form part of a major watershed which divides the drainage system of the Severn from that of the Thames. The watershed runs northwards through Epwell Hill and Shenlow Hill to Edge Hill and north-eastwards across the Burton Dassett Hills.

Figure 10

IRONSTONE HILLS AND VALLEYS



SCALE 1:100,000

- 3.37 Rolling hills with rich soils are considerable agricultural assets and much of this area is in arable cultivation, the main crops being winter cereals with potatoes and sugar beet. In some areas, medium and large arable fields are still surrounded by hedges and the boundaries marked by hedgerow trees. However, much of the higher land and gentler slopes now have a fairly open arable landscape, with local areas where clearance has been so extreme that even post and wire fences have not been retained to demarcate field boundaries.
- 3.38 However, the area is riddled with steep sided valleys and narrow valley floors with a pattern of smaller fields and mixed farming, predominantly permanent pasture. Many hedgerows are unmanaged and growing out, and road verges sometimes include narrow stands of trees, which gives a well-treed impression, although the area lacks larger woodlands. Streams in valley bottoms are locally marked with old willows with some pollarding, and with wet pasture.

Variations in landscape character

- 3.39 Many of the steeper slopes have resisted mechanised arable farming. Here, a pastoral scene of small grazing fields divided by hedgerows prevails on the steepest slopes dominating the scene, the landscape being made up from a **strongly undulating complex of farmed hills and valleys (R4a)**. Wherever the landform levels out slightly, the small fields can be ploughed and crops of winter cereals grown. The resulting landscape is an intricate blend of mixed farming, with small variations in scale and local land use being closely related to topography, a tightly knit **small scale rolling farmland with strong field pattern (R4b)**
- 3.40 Lanes and minor roads run straight along ridges wherever possible, dipping sharply down the valley sides to connect with villages. Hedgerows are mostly dense, well grown barriers, although where arable farming prevails they are closely trimmed. The practice of hedge laying is still continued locally as a means of maintaining a stockproof boundary. Many of the hedges contain mature hedgerow trees, the dominant species being oak and ash, with beech on the limestone outcrops. However, the hedges have an extremely high elm component, and where young trees are regenerating naturally, this is the dominant species.
- 3.41 Wherever the landform opens out sufficiently, intensive use is made of the rich, fertile soils. In these **rolling arable landscapes with weak field pattern (R2a)** fields are large, hedgerows are often weak and gappy, reinforced with fences, and in some places field boundaries have completely disappeared. In one extremely open landscape at Wigginton Heath, new hedges have been planted, bringing some division back into an otherwise 'green desert'. Banks which would have been topped with hedges still remain along roadsides.

- 3.42 In the highest and most exposed areas, where hill tops stand up above the already elevated land, there is **undulating elevated pasture with remnant heath (R2c)** where patches of gorse, bracken and scrubby heath vegetation break up the poor grasslands. These patches contribute considerably to the character of the area, serving as a reminder of its essentially upland heath nature.

Special features

- 3.43 Some of the district's oldest features, the distinctive line of Iron Age hill forts, which top the hills to the west of Banbury, are found in this character area. They include Tadmarton and Ilbury Camps and Madmarston Hill, where the earthworks are still highly visible, although a further three hill fort sites are known. The bivallate hillfort at Tadmarton is the most impressive, although it is now bisected by a road and absorbed into a golf course.
- 3.44 Broughton Castle is also of interest. Built in the early fourteenth century as a fortified manor house, it remains one of the finest and most complete medieval houses in the country. The eighteenth century park by John Davenport includes landscaped grounds with a moat, while the late nineteenth century gardens were laid out by Gertrude Jekyll. The later picturesque parkland at Swerford, which lies partly within Cherwell and partly within West Oxfordshire, was influenced by Loudon.
- 3.45 Sunken lanes are a particular feature of this area, with steep banks rising up on either side of the roads as they dip down the valley sides. Occasionally, these banks are reinforced by drystone walling, many of which are overgrown by hedgerow plants.

INCISED IRONSTONE PLATEAU

- 3.46 The Incised Ironstone Plateau is situated to the north of the Ironstone Hills and Valleys. Both areas have a number of common characteristics, but the plateau landform is substantially different. It is a far less complex, unfaulted, complete unit, divided by streams which create a simple landscape of ridges and valleys which extends around the north-west of Banbury.

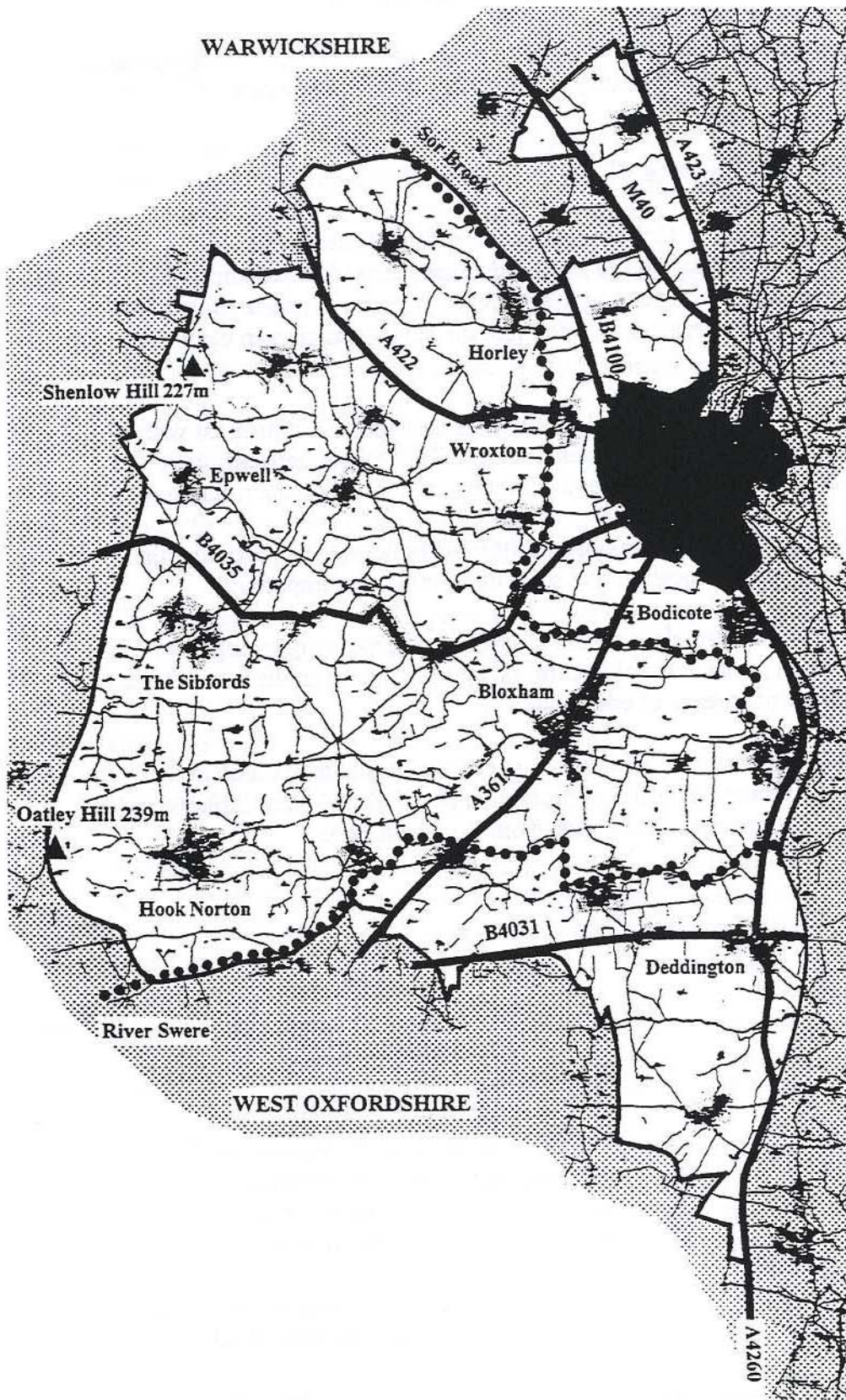
Landform and landcover

- 3.47 This area is geologically similar to the Ironstone Hills and Valleys with a layer of Marlstone Rock Bed overlying the Middle and Lower Lias clays. However, the area has a more straightforward topography, consisting of relatively high land forming a level or gently rolling plateau. West of Hornton and at Shenlow Hill the land rises to 200m, with gentle slopes falling eastwards towards Banbury. Tributaries of the Sor Brook have cut down through the plateau creating a series of roughly parallel valleys.





APPENDIX D

Extract from Cherwell Countryside Design Summary
Ironstone Downs

IRONSTONE DOWNS



KEY

-  Urban Area
-  Settlements
-  Roads
-  Waterways



Cherwell
District Council
North Oxfordshire



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Date:

SETTLEMENTS OF THE IRONSTONE DOWNS

**Adderbury
Alkerton
Balscote
Barford St John
Barford St Michael
Bloxham
Bodicote
Broughton
Burdrop
Deddington
Drayton
Duns Tew
Epwell
Hanwell
Hook Norton
Horley
Hornton
Lower Tadmarton
Milcombe
Milton
Mollington
North Newington
Shenington
Shutford
Sibford Ferris
Sibford Gower
South Newington
Swalcliffe
Upper Tadmarton
Wigginton
Wroxton**

IRONSTONE DOWNS

I. INTRODUCTION

The character area covers the entire northern half of the district to the west of the Cherwell Valley. It also forms part of a larger region, which is fairly homogenous in terms of its geology and architecture, covering parts of Warwickshire, Northamptonshire and West Oxfordshire. The Ironstone Downs consist of marlstone rock beds overlying middle and lower lias clays, except where outcrops of white limestone and Northampton sands have been exposed by uplift. The southern half of this area is divided into steeply sided, convoluted valleys with narrow valley floors and rolling, rounded hill lines. The marlstone is less faulted in the northern half, producing an upland plateau-like landscape incised by very steep and often narrow valleys. The majority of this character area drains into the River Cherwell, except for a small area around the Sibfords, which drains west into the River Stour.

2. LANDSCAPE

2.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- (i) The Ironstone Downs is a strongly undulating landscape, which rises to the west forming an upland ridge on the western boundary of the district, over 200m in altitude in part. In places, such as Oatley Hill at 239m, this ridge provides extensive views over much of the western part of this character area.
- (ii) Steeply sided, narrow valleys containing small brooks dissect the area, being more defined in the north where they cut through a gently rolling plateau. To the south, however, rounded hills often extend straight from the valley sides. Quarrying has had a considerable impact on the landscape with some reclaimed fields several metres below the natural level of the land.
- (iii) Mixed farmland is characteristic of this area. Where the land is gently sloping, large-scale intensive arable farmland predominates. Elsewhere on steeper slopes, small scale grazing land exists with strong patterns of mixed thorn hedgerows containing hedgerow trees such as Oak, Ash, Sycamore and occasional Beech. Remnant heath vegetation also exists on some of the higher ground.
- (iv) There are very few extensive areas of woodland. Those that exist are either associated with historic parkland located in the east of the area, or with poor quality soils, especially in association with watercourses and the brow of hills.
- (v) This area contains both exposed large-scale arable landscapes and intimate small-scale valleys under pasture. Views from upland locations often encompass both types.
- (vi) Roads generally cross the higher ground and traverse valleys, but rarely follow them. Occasionally the roads are raised above the level of the landscape where extensive quarrying has taken place in adjacent fields. Roads are sunken where they cross steep valley slopes.

2.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

- (i) New roads or access ways should cause minimal disturbance to valley floors, e.g., by careful alignment, the formation of cuttings, planting of hedgerows and other treatment sympathetic to the landscape.

- (ii) Trees and hedges should be retained to conserve the small-scale character of much of the landscape. Where new planting is required to help integrate new development into the landscape, this should reflect local landscape structure and character.
- (iii) All forms of development need to be sited with care in order to avoid locations where development would be either, prominent, visually intrusive, out of character or would harm a feature or site, which is important to the character of the area.

3. SETTLEMENTS

3.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- (i) A large number of closely spaced settlements of an agricultural origin have developed as a result of the soil fertility and water supply. The majority of villages are small in scale, with the exception of Adderbury, Bloxham, Bodicote, Deddington and Hook Norton, all of which act as local service centres and are located in the southern half of this area. Villages are positioned in valley locations, either on the valley sides, e.g. South Newington, at the head of a valley, e.g. Wroxton; or near the top of the valley on the brow of the hill, eg. Hempton.
- (ii) Villages are generally only prominent where the valleys are open and wide, e.g. the Barfords in the Swere valley. Elsewhere village location and topography means that many villages are not visible over long distances. Churches located near the highest point of the village provide a landmark in the wider countryside.
- (iii) Villages have developed as distinct nucleated features in the landscape, with little development other than farms in the wider countryside. Over time, development has produced a variety of village forms depending on the location of villages in relation to roads. Where only one road exists the villages are generally linear in form, e.g. Tadmarton, however as many of the villages are located at the junction of roads, compact forms have developed over time, e.g. Balscote. The layouts of roads sometimes enclose areas of undeveloped land, which contributes to the character of the village, e.g. Wigginton. At the head of the valleys, the topography actually limits development and therefore helps to shape the form of the village, e.g. Hornton.
- (iv) Despite a lack of woodland in the wider landscape, trees and hedgerows are often important features in street scenes and in views of villages in their landscape setting.
- (v) Village character varies both within a settlement and from village to village. Terraced properties and high ironstone walls set close to narrow lanes create a sense of enclosure, e.g. parts of Bloxham, whilst small informal verges and small greens create space, e.g. Shenington.

3.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

- (i) New development should respect the existing setting of each particular village. Landscape constraints are very important in this part of Cherwell District and most proposals, which would have a prominent visual impact on the wider countryside, will not be acceptable.

- (ii) The scale, location and layout of new development should carefully relate to the historic form of each particular village.
- (iii) Open space, which forms an important part of the character of the village, should remain undeveloped.
- (iv) The creation of new public space, which is an integral part of new development, can help maintain the rural character of the villages.

4. BUILDINGS

4.1 CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- (i) There is a strong consistency in the vernacular architecture of this area. Two storey terraced and detached houses built of ironstone is characteristic. Although the ironstone walling shows considerable variation in character, the most frequently used is small roughly squared rubble laid in courses of unequal depth. Duns Tew is the exception, where limestone predominates. Early 19th century brick buildings are largely found in villages close to Banbury, although other villages on railway lines, such as Hook Norton, were influenced by the introduction of new materials. 20th century development displays a large variety of materials.
- (ii) The traditional roofing material of the area is thatch and stone slate. A large number of roofs have subsequently been replaced with plain dark grey slates, tiles and Welsh slate. Red clay or concrete tiles have been used in some modern developments. Roof pitches are generally steep with brick stacks on the ridge line.
- (iii) Window types in ironstone cottages are a mix of stone mullioned, timber casement and timber sash, with horizontal alignment being the traditional pattern.
- (iv) The majority of domestic buildings face the streets with the occasional house positioned at right angles to the road. Houses are either located adjacent to the streets, often with no pavement, or set back a few metres, sometimes enclosed by low ironstone walls. High ironstone walls often enclose large important buildings and open space. This relationship forms well defined streets.
- (v) Farmsteads and farm buildings are dispersed throughout the Ironstone Downs, some close to roads, many at the end of access tracks, away from the main through routes. As a result, these farms either appear set into the hillside or are concealed out of sight.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

- (i) Ironstone is the only appropriate building material for domestic properties in many village locations. The appropriateness of other materials will need to be carefully considered and

will depend on the exact location of the proposal. Limestone will be acceptable in Duns Tew.

- (ii) The dominant roof type should be slates and plain tiles of subdued colours appropriate to their locality and thatch. Profiled or interlocking tiles will not normally be acceptable. Roofs should be steeply pitched and chimneys positioned on the ridge line.
- (iii) Domestic building form and design should be simple, without elaborate use of porches or dormers. The proportions of openings are important in maintaining this simple form. Timber casement or sash windows should normally be used.
- (iv) The mix of terraced and detached houses should reflect the existing character of individual villages. Houses should face streets. Large front gardens will not normally be appropriate. Ironstone walls should be used for enclosure where they will be visible from the public domain.
- (v) New farm buildings should reflect the rural and agricultural nature of the area in terms of scale and design. They should be sited with great care to avoid prominent or sensitive locations and be accompanied by new planting to integrate them as quickly as possible into their setting.

APPENDIX E

Landscape Planning Policies

APPENDIX E

LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICIES

1 National Planning Policy Framework

1.1 Paragraph 58

Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- Respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

1.2 Paragraph 61

Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

2 Cherwell Local Plan 1996

2.1 Policy C28

Control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. In sensitive areas such as Conservation Areas, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Landscape Value, development will be required to be of a high standard and the use of traditional local building materials will normally be required.

2.2 Policy C30

Design control will be exercised to ensure: i) that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity.

3 Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011

3.1 Policy EN34 - Landscape Character

The Council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- i) Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;
- ii) Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;
- iii) Be inconsistent with local character;
- iv) Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features;
- v) Harm the historic value of the landscape.

3.2 Policy D1 – Urban Design Objectives

Proposals for development will be permitted, subject to compatibility with other policies in the plan, provided that they demonstrate:

- i) Local distinctiveness in built development and landscape;
- ii) Continuity and enclosure, where consistent with local character, through building lines that front onto and clearly define the public realm;
- iii) Public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe and uncluttered;
- iv) Permeability through ease of movement for pedestrians, particularly disabled people, and cyclists in preference to vehicles;
- v) Legibility through recognisable routes, junctions and landmarks to help people find their way around;
- vi) Adaptability through building types that enables their use for different purposes over time;
- vii) Diversity through inclusion of a mix of compatible land uses.

3.3 Policy D3 – Local Distinctiveness

Proposals for development that reflects or interprets the locally distinctive character of the site and its context, will be permitted provided that they:

- i) Respect the site's landform and natural features;
- ii) Are well integrated into the landscape setting;
- iii) Reflect the traditional pattern of the arrangement of street blocks, plots and their buildings and spaces;
- iv) Include the retention and enhancement of existing open spaces and undeveloped gaps of local importance that contribute positively in visual terms to the public realm although in private ownership;
- v) Relate well to the local palette of building and surfacing materials;

- vi) Relate well to the local architectural styles and the local palette of elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors;
- vii) Respect the scale, proportion, massing and height of adjoining buildings and the streetscene;
- viii) Do not interfere with valued views, vistas and landmarks.

4 Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2031

4.1 Policy ESD 13 - Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

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

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

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

Development proposals should have regard to the information and advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS), and be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate.

4.2 Policy ESD 15 - Green Boundaries to Growth (first part)

Proposals for development on the edge of the built up area must be carefully designed and landscaped to soften the built edge of the development and assimilate it into the landscape by providing green infrastructure that will positively contribute to the rural setting of the towns. Existing important views of designated or attractive landscape features will need to be taken into account. Proposals will also be considered against the requirements of Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement.

4.3 Policy ESD 16 - The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where

development is in the vicinity of any of the district's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.

New development proposals should:

- Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions;
- Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions;
- Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity;
- Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting;
- Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged;
- Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation;
- Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages;
- Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette;
- Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features;
- Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed;
- Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space;
- Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation;
- Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation;

- Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout;
- Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1-5 on climate change and renewable energy);
- Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality;
- Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.

The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Development Management DPD.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design and Access Statement. CLG Circular 01/06 sets out the matters to be covered and further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site.