



Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan

2016 – 2031

Appendices



blewburyneighbourhoodplan.org

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**Blewbury
Neighbourhood
Development
Plan**

Appendix A: Drainage, Sewer Overflows and Groundwater Flooding in Blewbury



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Appendix A: Drainage, Sewer Overflows and Groundwater Flooding in Blewbury

Dr. Gwyn Rees

In recent years, parts of Blewbury have suffered sewer overflows and groundwater flooding during periods of wet weather. There is concern that further housing development in the village could exacerbate the problem. In this appendix we explore why such problems occur and consider the planning policy guidance that might be needed in the Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan to ensure the situation does not worsen.

Sewer overflow occurs when raw, untreated sewage (wastewater) brims over from the manholes and gullies of the sewerage network to flood land, gardens, roads, paths and, in the worst cases, people's houses. Such untreated sewage is not only unpleasant to see and smell but it also can pose a threat to human health and the environment.

Overflows occur most commonly during heavy rainfall (storm) events or after periods of prolonged rainfall. They are usually caused by large volumes of surface water or groundwater entering the sewerage system and exceeding the system's capacity to cope. Sewer overflows can also happen when there is a blockage of the sewer, for example, due to a pipe collapsing or a build-up of debris (e.g. congealed fat, oil or food, wet-wipes, sanitary towels, tampons), or a malfunction at the sewage pumping station.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1: Sewer overflows in January 2014 in: (a) Berry Lane, and (b) a newer part of the village, caused by a fatberg some distance down the network

There have been many sewerage overflow incidents in Blewbury over the years. A recent example of a sewer overflow event was in January 2014, along Berry Lane (Figure 1a). This happened during one of the wettest Januarys on record and was likely the consequence of the sewage pumping station at Mockbeggars Farm being unable to cope rapidly enough with the increasing volumes of water that were infiltrating the network. This caused such a build-up (of water) that upstream sewers began to overflow. Coincidentally, another sewerage overflow incident happened the same month in a newer part of the village, this time caused by a blockage of the sewer. Compounded by the high volume of storm water infiltrating the system, the sewer soon overflowed and several gardens were flooded with untreated sewage (Figure 1b). Tankers and sandbags were deployed by Thames Water to prevent the houses from flooding, until the blockage – a 'fatberg' the size of a football – was located and removed.

Groundwater flooding happens when groundwater appears at the surface and begins to inundate properties. Groundwater flooding occurs regularly in Blewbury due to the village's

location at the foot of the north-facing escarpment of the North Wessex Downs¹, which results in a relatively shallow water table in most parts of the village.

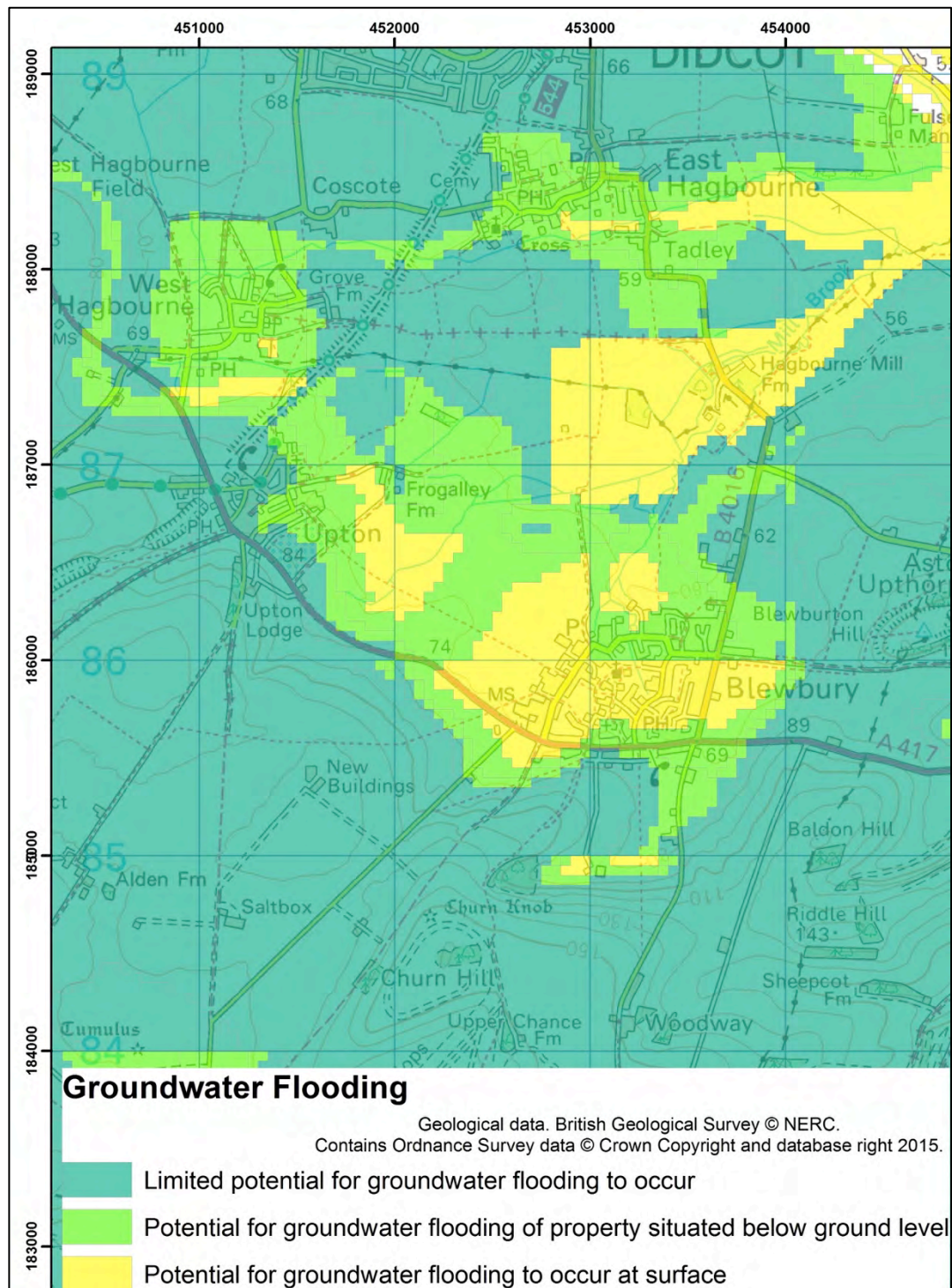


Figure 2: Susceptibility to groundwater flooding in Blewbury (courtesy of British Geological Survey)

The British Geological Survey's 'Susceptibility to Groundwater Flooding' map² shows that much of the village is at risk from groundwater flooding (**Error! Reference source not found.**). The high groundwater levels mean that groundwater infiltrates the sewerage

¹ 'Geology and Water Resources', by W.M. Edmunds, in 'A View from the Hill', pp.14-17, edited by Peter Cockrell and Shirley Kay. Blewbury Village Society, 2006.

² 'Susceptibility to Groundwater Flooding' map, British Geological Survey, August 2006.

network more frequently, and this is considered to add significantly to the village's sewer overflow problems. Such infiltration is usually via cracks in the pipes and junctions that make up the sewerage network. Although a certain rate of groundwater inflow is assumed in sewerage design, the situation is likely to be worse in Blewbury because the swelling and shrinkage of the chalk and clay, upon which the village sits, typically cause more cracks and fissures in sewers.

The relatively shallow water table also limits how much rainwater soaks into the soil, which, even after unexceptional rainfall events, can result in surface-water (pluvial) flooding in parts of the village (Figure 3). Despite the problems they cause, these natural hydrogeological conditions give rise to the many brooks and streams that emerge within the village, are valued by residents and visitors alike, and add considerably to the village's unique character and charm³.

These local flooding concerns must be given high priority in the design of any new development in the village, with measures incorporated to ensure existing problems are not made worse.

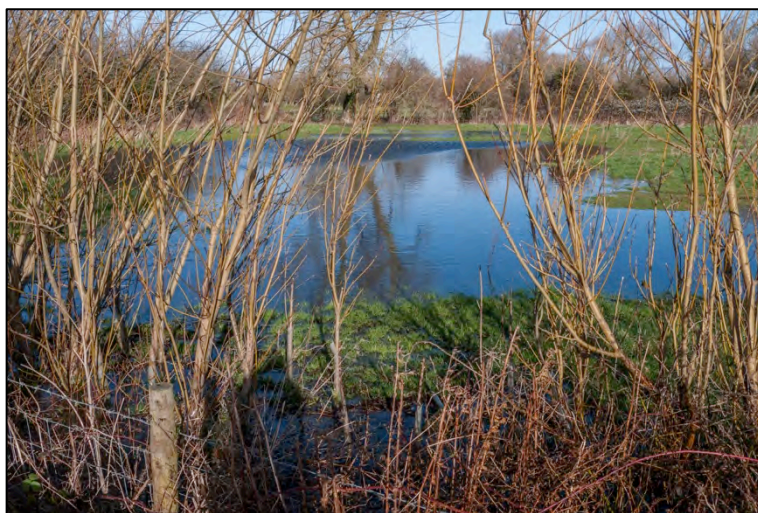


Figure 3: Groundwater flooding at the site of the proposed 30-home Chailey House development in February 2014

In December 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government stated that '*as part of the Government's continuing commitment to protect people and property from flood risk*', they have an expectation that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) '*will be provided in new developments*' and that they '*expect local planning policies and decisions on planning applications relating to major development – i.e. developments of 10 dwellings or more – ... to ensure that sustainable drainage systems for the management of run-off are put in place, unless demonstrated to be inappropriate*'⁴. The statement also suggests that '*Local Planning Authorities consult with Local Flood Authorities and satisfy themselves that schemes are robust and appropriately maintained*'⁵. SuDS are a natural approach to managing drainage. They work by slowing and holding back the water that runs off from a site to allow water to soak into the ground, to be evaporated from surface water, or lost (transpired) from

³ 'A Blewbury Life – Derek Smith's memories of the village in the twentieth century', by Derek Smith, edited by Judith Cartwright, June 2006, p.56.

⁴ Sustainable drainage systems: Written statement – HCWS161. Department for Communities and Local Government. Statement made by Mr Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, 18 December 2014.

⁵ Ministerial statement on SuDS – SuDS and planning, SUSDRAIN, Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA), December 2014.

vegetation⁶. SuDS techniques include: green roofs, soakaways, permeable surfaces, infiltration trenches and filter strips, swales (shallow drainage channels), detention basins, and purpose-built ponds and wetlands. Developers are encouraged to use SuDS in the design of new developments in and around Blewbury. However, they should be aware that some SuDS techniques (e.g. soakaways) are not appropriate in all parts of the village, due to the shallow groundwater, limited drainage capacity and low topographic relief, and be prepared to consider suitable alternatives.

According to the UK Groundwater Forum⁷ *'a number of considerations ... need to be taken into account when designing ground-draining systems. First is the ease with which stormwater will infiltrate the ground. This is not only dependent on the nature of the topsoil (clay/sand/silt), but also what lies beneath. The permeability of those underlying deposits will dictate whether or not the ground is likely to accept the anticipated quantity of stormwater. In some systems where the infiltration capacity is constrained, excess water may be stored for delayed infiltration or allowed to overflow to drainage networks. The infiltration rate must be considered in conjunction with the water table elevation, which for most schemes should be at least 1m below the base of the SuDS scheme.'* Recently updated guidance in CIRIA's 'The SuDS manual'⁸, similarly recommends that *'there should be a minimum depth of 1m of unsaturated aquifer material between the base of any infiltration system and the maximum likely groundwater level (taking account of potential shifts in groundwater level resulting from extended periods of wet weather). Evidence from groundwater records may demonstrate maximum groundwater levels, but where there is any uncertainty, appropriate groundwater monitoring should be undertaken ... Ground investigation should establish the typical maximum upper level of the saturated layer of an unconfined aquifer. 'Typical' in this context would be a representative winter water table level.'*

Thames Water, who are responsible for water supply and wastewater disposal in the village, further recommends⁹ developers *'demonstrate that there is adequate wastewater and water supply capacity both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing or new users. It may be necessary for developers to fund studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing wastewater and water infrastructure'*. Developers clearly must work with Thames Water to make sure the sewerage infrastructure is able to cope with the extra volumes of wastewater their new developments will generate. This may involve increasing in-line storage capacity of the sewerage network (e.g. by installing larger pipes) and/or increasing the pump flow rates of the downstream pumping station.

Whilst appropriate design and planning should prevent new developments from making things worse, arguably, developers cannot reasonably be expected to resolve the village's pre-existing issues. However, if a new development requires an upgrade of the sewerage infrastructure, then the opportunity should be taken by Thames Water to increase capacity sufficiently to resolve the wider village problems. Further mitigation measures should also be considered, such as the retrofitting of soakaways to suitable properties and the relining or refitting of ageing sewers and pipes. At the time of writing (January 2016), Thames Water are in the process of developing a new drainage strategy for Didcot and the surrounding area including Blewbury; it is anticipated the strategy will include recommendations for alleviating many of the problems outlined above.

⁶ Delivering SuDS, SUSDRAIN, Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA).

⁷ UK Groundwater Forum – Surface Water Flooding: Sustainable drainage to the ground. www.groundwateruk.org, accessed 13 Aug. 2015

⁸ 'The SuDS Manual'. CIRIA C753. ISBN:978-0-86017-760-9. Published by CIRIA, London, November 2015, 968pp.

⁹ Personal communication from Thames Water



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Appendix B: Housing Needs Survey

This appendix consists of two parts. The first part presents full details of all the fixed-format questions asked together with the replies for each question, based on the 467 returned questionnaires. The second part is a summary of the free-form answers to the two open-ended questions: Q26 (258 responses) and Q30 (220 responses).



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Blewbury Housing Needs Survey 2014

Marked Up Questionnaire

Total number of responses = 467

Counting on your opinions

In completing this questionnaire you should try to answer on behalf of your household - do include your family members, lodgers or other residents and ask for their views on individual questions if applicable. You'll also find a separate section to complete if you or someone in your household is likely to need a new home in Blewbury within the foreseeable future.

All of your answers will be treated as strictly confidential and there is no need to supply your name. The report we produce will not contain information that can be traced back to any one individual or household.

While we would like you to answer all questions, some can be skipped if you would prefer. Everything you tell us will help to ensure local views are accurately recorded for the purpose of the Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan.

Part One

Firstly, some questions about your household - your answers will help to build a picture of the types of housing in Blewbury and who is living here.

Q1 Do you currently live in Blewbury? (Please tick one box only).
Yes 461 (100%) No 0 (0%)

Q2 Are you the head or joint-head of the household? (Please tick one box only).
Yes 457 (100%) No 1 (0%)

Please note that this survey is intended only for people that are the head or joint-head of the household and who currently live in Blewbury. If this doesn't apply to you then please pass this questionnaire to the head or joint-head of the household that resides at the address the survey was delivered to.

Q3 How long have you / your household lived in Blewbury? Please choose the category that best fits. (Please tick one box only).
One year or less 32 (7%) Between eight and ten years 41 (9%)
Between two and four years 60 (13%) Eleven or more years 289 (63%)
Between five and seven years 39 (8%)

Q4 How many people are there in your household, that is, all people that permanently reside at this address in Blewbury? (Please tick one box only).
One 131 (28%) Three 54 (12%) Five 23 (5%) Seven 0 (0%)
Two 185 (40%) Four 60 (13%) Six 7 (2%) Eight or more 0 (0%)

Q5 Which of the following best describes the tenure of your home? (Please tick one box only).

Owner-occupied (paying mortgage)	143 (31%)
Owner-occupied (no mortgage)	247 (54%)
Shared ownership (i.e. part rented from Housing Association)	3 (1%)
Living rent free	2 (0%)
Privately rented.....	20 (4%)
Housing Association / Council rented.....	38 (8%)
Tied to employment	2 (0%)

Q6 Which of the following best describes the type of property you live in? (Please tick one box only).

Detached house of more than one storey	162 (35%)
Semi-detached house of more than one storey	96 (21%)
Terraced house of more than one storey	48 (10%)
Flat / maisonette / bedsit	8 (2%)
Detached bungalow	60 (13%)
Semi-detached bungalow.....	18 (4%)
Terraced bungalow	39 (8%)
Caravan / mobile home / park home.....	25 (5%)
Other.....	4 (1%)

Q7 How many bedrooms are in your current home? (Please tick one box only).

Bedsit.....	2 (0%)	Two bedrooms	104 (23%)	Four bedrooms .	110 (24%)
One bedroom	32 (7%)	Three bedrooms .	160 (35%)	Five or more	52 (11%)

Q8 Which of the following age categories do you yourself belong to? (Please tick one box only).

16 - 24.....	4 (1%)	45 - 64	170 (37%)	75 - 84.....	85 (19%)
25 - 44.....	72 (16%)	65 - 74	107 (23%)	85+	21 (5%)

Q9 How many children aged under 16 live in your household? (Please tick one box only).

None	348 (77%)	Two	42 (9%)	Four.....	0 (0%)
One	52 (11%)	Three.....	11 (2%)	Five or more	0 (0%)

Q10 Which activity best describes what people aged over 16 living in your household are doing at present? (Please tick one box per column for each person aged over 16).

In full time employment	In part time employment	Self employed	Training scheme	Permanently sick/disabled	Home-maker	Retired	Student living at home full time	Student living at home for part of the year
238 (29%)	97 (12%)	86 (11%)	1 (0%)	16 (2%)	44 (5%)	266 (33%)	33 (4%)	28 (3%)

Q11 How many motorised vehicles in total are owned by all the people living at your address? (Please tick one appropriate box only).

1	173 (40%)	3	44 (10%)	5	4 (1%)
2	194 (45%)	4	10 (2%)	6 or more.....	6 (1%)

Your answers to the following four questions will help to assess housing affordability in Blewbury - and, as a reminder, this survey is entirely confidential and anonymous. The data will be entered and processed by an independent third party in accordance with Market Research Society (MRS) guidelines.

Q12 If you own your home in Blewbury, what is its approximate current value? (Skip if does not apply).

Less than £100,000	11 (3%)	£250,001 - £300,000.....	41 (11%)
£100,000 - £150,000	24 (6%)	£300,001 - £400,000.....	73 (20%)
£150,001 - £200,000	15 (4%)	£400,001 - £600,000.....	82 (22%)
£200,001 - £250,000	24 (6%)	More than £600,000	104 (28%)

Q13 How much rent / mortgage does your household pay for this home in Blewbury per calendar month? (Please write how much in the box or skip if does not apply).

Less than £400	28 (18%)	£801 - £1,000	29 (18%)
£401 - £600	33 (21%)	More than £1,000.....	41 (26%)
£601 - £800	26 (17%)		

Q14 What is the total annual income of your household, before tax but not including benefits? (Please write the amount in the box).

Less than £15,000	38 (13%)	£55,001 - £65,000.....	19 (7%)
£15,001 - £25,000	34 (12%)	£65,001 - £75,000.....	29 (10%)
£25,001 - £35,000	31 (11%)	£75,001 - £100,000.....	34 (12%)
£35,001 - £45,000	31 (11%)	More than £100,000	42 (15%)
£45,001 - £55,000	26 (9%)		

Q15 Are you, or is someone in your household, on the Vale of White Horse District Housing Register? (Please tick one box only).

Yes - me	34 (8%)	Yes - someone in my household	12 (3%)	No.....	376 (89%)
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Part Two

Below are some questions about your household's housing needs - your answers will help to identify priorities for housing in Blewbury.

Q16 How likely are you to move home in the foreseeable future? (Please tick one box only).

	Very likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't know / Not Applicable
I am likely to move	25 (6%)	60 (13%)	128 (28%)	203 (45%)	37 (8%)
Someone else in my household, but not me, is likely to move	22 (10%)	33 (14%)	29 (13%)	85 (37%)	61 (27%)

Q17 How many people in your household are likely to need a new or different home now or in the next five years? (Please tick one box only).

None	303 (69%)	Two	45 (10%)	Four.....	5 (1%)
One	64 (15%)	Three	14 (3%)	Five or more	7 (2%)

- Q18 If you or someone in your household intend to move in the foreseeable future, is this likely to be... (Please tick one box only, skip if question does not apply).**
 Within Blewbury..... 69 (40%) Outside Blewbury 102 (60%)
 If outside Blewbury, please state where: 55 mentions
- Q19 If you or someone in your household wish to move but cannot, which if any of the following reasons are preventing this? You can skip this question if no one intends to move. (Please tick all boxes that apply).**
 Unable to afford to buy housing 46 (58%) Family reasons 7 (9%)
 Unable to afford to rent housing 19 (24%) Lack of social housing..... 11 (14%)
 Lack of education choices where I wish to move..... 0 (0%) Lack of private rented properties 4 (5%)
 Lack of suitable housing to meet needs 29 (37%) Other reasons..... 10 (13%)
 Unable to afford the costs of moving..... 10 (13%)
 If other reasons, please state these here: 8 comments
- Q20 Has anyone previously in your household moved away from Blewbury in the last five years? (Please tick one box only).**
 Yes 58 (14%) No (Go to Q25)..... 367 (86%)
- Q21 If yes, people in your household have moved away from Blewbury in the last five years, please indicate how many have done so. (Please tick one box only).**
 One person..... 29 (51%) Three people 3 (5%) Five people 1 (2%)
 Two people..... 21 (37%) Four people..... 3 (5%)
- Q22 How long ago did each person leave? (Please tick one box, per column, as appropriate).**

Left in the last year	Left between 1 and 2 years ago	Left between 2 and 3 years ago	Left between 3 and 4 years ago	Left between 4 and 5 years ago
16 (17%)	17 (18%)	15 (16%)	19 (20%)	28 (29%)
- Q23 Why did each person leave? (Please tick as many boxes, per column, as appropriate).**

Employment	Further or higher education	Lack of affordable housing to buy	Lack of affordable housing to rent	Lack of suitable housing	Family reasons	Other
32 (34%)	19 (20%)	7 (7%)	10 (11%)	0 (0%)	12 (13%)	14 (15%)
- Q24 Of those people previously in your household that have moved away in the last five years, how many would consider returning to Blewbury if there was suitable housing available? (Please tick one box only).**
 None 34 (58%) Two 7 (12%) Four..... 1 (2%)
 One 14 (24%) Three..... 2 (3%) Five or more 1 (2%)

Q25 Thinking about people who need housing and have genuine links to Blewbury, how likely are you to be in principle in favour of...? (Please tick one box on each row).

	Very likely	Quite likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Don't know
New housing to buy	96 (25%)	138 (36%)	61 (16%)	72 (19%)	19 (5%)
New housing to rent at market rates	67 (18%)	116 (31%)	67 (18%)	99 (27%)	23 (6%)
New affordable rented housing provided by a Housing Association	96 (25%)	112 (29%)	59 (16%)	96 (25%)	17 (4%)
A new mixed development of market housing and affordable rented housing	81 (21%)	114 (30%)	56 (15%)	111 (29%)	21 (5%)
New shared ownership housing	78 (21%)	100 (27%)	54 (14%)	106 (28%)	38 (10%)
New housing for over 55s	89 (23%)	107 (28%)	74 (19%)	86 (23%)	26 (7%)
New sheltered housing for older people (assisted living)	110 (29%)	135 (35%)	44 (11%)	71 (18%)	24 (6%)

Q26 Please write your thoughts on your responses to the above question, together with any other comments on housing needs in Blewbury now and in the future, in the box below.

250 comments

Part Three

Now some more general questions about facilities and services in Blewbury - your answers will help to identify priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan. Do involve other family members in answering these if you can.

Q27 How strongly do you agree with each of the following statements about Blewbury? (Please tick one box on each line).

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
I value the sense of community in the village	333 (74%)	84 (19%)	24 (5%)	2 (0%)	5 (1%)	3 (1%)
Blewbury has a socially mixed community	175 (39%)	159 (36%)	57 (13%)	40 (9%)	5 (1%)	9 (2%)
We have a good choice of shops and services	24 (5%)	69 (15%)	49 (11%)	149 (33%)	154 (34%)	2 (0%)
I like that there isn't street lighting in Blewbury	278 (61%)	45 (10%)	47 (10%)	30 (7%)	49 (11%)	5 (1%)
The waterways and footpaths make the village distinctive	384 (85%)	52 (12%)	10 (2%)	3 (1%)	1 (0%)	2 (0%)
The green spaces inside the village are important to me	400 (88%)	34 (7%)	14 (3%)	3 (1%)	0 (0%)	3 (1%)
The landscape immediately surrounding the village is important to me	386 (85%)	44 (10%)	19 (4%)	2 (0%)	1 (0%)	2 (0%)

Q28 How strongly do you agree with each of the following statements about village infrastructure? (Please tick one box on each line).

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
Improvement to drainage / sewer infrastructure is a top priority	274 (61%)	87 (19%)	62 (14%)	10 (2%)	0 (0%)	15 (3%)
More parking or sites for vehicle parking are required	146 (33%)	124 (28%)	96 (22%)	42 (9%)	28 (6%)	7 (2%)
Bus services need to be improved / increased	109 (24%)	147 (33%)	135 (30%)	18 (4%)	7 (2%)	32 (7%)

Q29 How strongly do you agree with each of the following statements about where any new housing might be located? (Please tick one box on each line).

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Don't know
Any new housing should be on sites around the edges of the village	114 (26%)	128 (29%)	66 (15%)	36 (8%)	88 (20%)	8 (2%)
Any new housing should be on sites inside the village	26 (6%)	73 (17%)	73 (17%)	64 (15%)	177 (42%)	8 (2%)

Q30 Please write in any additional ideas, suggestions or concerns you want to raise below:-

221 comments

Part Four

The following section is only for households that are likely to need a new or different home in Blewbury. This could be for the whole household, or for one or more individual members that need their own home in Blewbury. If this section does not apply to you or anyone in your household, please answer 'No' to the first question and then skip to the end.

Q31 Are you, or is someone in your household, likely to need to move to a new or different home in Blewbury in the foreseeable future? (Please tick one box only).

Yes 83 (20%) No (tick and skip to end)..... 331 (80%)

Q32 What type of home would you or a member of your household need? (Please tick all boxes that apply).

Detached House.....	40 (48%)	Detached bungalow.....	19 (23%)
Semi-detached house.....	35 (42%)	Semi-detached bungalow	17 (20%)
Terraced house	26 (31%)	Terraced bungalow.....	5 (6%)
Flat.....	12 (14%)	Sheltered housing for older people	16 (19%)

Q33 What sort of tenure is likely to apply to this new or different house? You can choose more than one option if you are unsure. (Please tick all that apply).

Owner-occupied (paying mortgage)	42 (51%)
Owner-occupied (no mortgage)	33 (40%)
Shared ownership (e.g. part rented from Housing Association).....	19 (23%)
Living rent free	1 (1%)
Privately rented.....	10 (12%)
Housing Association / Council rented.....	16 (20%)
Tied to employment	1 (1%)

Q34 How many bedrooms would the new home need to have? (Please tick one box only).

One	7 (8%)	Three.....	32 (39%)	Five or more	5 (6%)
Two	31 (37%)	Four.....	8 (10%)		

- Q35 How many people would live in this new or different home in Blewbury? (Please tick one box only).**
- | | | | | | |
|------------|----------|------------|----------|---------------------|--------|
| One | 20 (24%) | Four..... | 13 (16%) | Seven..... | 0 (0%) |
| Two | 35 (42%) | Five | 5 (6%) | Eight or more | 1 (1%) |
| Three..... | 9 (11%) | Six | 0 (0%) | | |
- Q36 Please indicate the age group of each person who would live in the property. (Including carers if support would be needed to live independently). (Please tick one box per column, per person as appropriate).**
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Aged from birth to 15 years old | Aged between 16-24 | Aged between 25 and 44 | Aged between 45 and 64 | Aged between 65 and 74 | Aged 75 and over |
| 43 (23%) | 26 (14%) | 55 (29%) | 24 (13%) | 28 (15%) | 14 (7%) |
- Q37 Why would this new or different home be needed? (Please tick all that apply).**
- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| Change in family circumstances | 11 (14%) | To be near work | 5 (7%) |
| Need a bigger home | 22 (29%) | Unable to afford a mortgage..... | 5 (7%) |
| Need a smaller home | 17 (22%) | Unable to afford rent | 1 (1%) |
| Special access needs | 4 (5%) | Want to start a first home..... | 20 (26%) |
| Tenure is insecure | 4 (5%) | Other reasons..... | 9 (12%) |
| To be near family..... | 11 (14%) | | |
- If other reasons please state these here: 8 mentions
- Q38 Would you, or the people in your household looking to move, prefer to live in a brand new or an existing property in Blewbury? (Please tick one box only).**
- | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
| Brand new property | 13 (16%) | Existing property. | 24 (30%) | No preference..... | 44 (54%) |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|
- Q39 Are there any special circumstances that might affect the type of housing that you or a member of your household would need? (Please tick all that apply).**
- | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------------------------|---------|
| No - none in particular | 66 (83%) | Need for supported housing... | 8 (10%) |
| Limited mobility / need for accessibility | 5 (6%) | Other special factors..... | 1 (1%) |
- If other special factors, please state these here: 0 comments
- Q40 Please indicate how much you, or the member(s) of your household looking to move, could likely afford to pay per month, either in rent or as a mortgage payment? (This information is strictly confidential and anonymous, please tick one box only).**
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|------------------|--------|
| £0 - £250..... | 4 (6%) | £1,001 - £1,500.. | 12 (18%) | More than £2,500 | 2 (3%) |
| £250 - £500 | 20 (31%) | £1,501 - £2,000.. | 4 (6%) | | |
| £501 - £1,000 | 20 (31%) | £2,001 - £2,500.. | 3 (5%) | | |
- Q41 If you, or those in your household looking to move, might be interested in a shared ownership property (part owned by a Housing Association), how much could you afford to put down as a deposit? You can skip this question if you are unlikely to be interested in a shared ownership property (your response is strictly confidential and anonymous, please tick one box only).**
- | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Less than £5,000 | 11 (34%) | £10,001 - £20,000..... | 6 (19%) |
| £5,000 - £10,000 | 5 (16%) | More than £20,000 | 10 (31%) |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. A volunteer will collect the questionnaire in a sealed envelope from your house directly, or you can take it to the counter at Blewbury Post Office if you would prefer.



Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan

Housing Needs Survey: Free-form comments

This is a summary of open-ended comments made in response to questions in the survey. There were **467 forms returned in total**.

It is not easy to summarise the hundreds of comments made in a quantitative way. They ranged from very brief comments to short essays, but we'll try to give a flavour because the comments add a lot to the fixed-format questions.

Q19a – If someone in your household wishes to move but cannot, which of any of the following reasons are preventing this. Responses stating 'other' (non-listed) reasons included:

- Buying in a nearby village because no houses in Blewbury are affordable and suitable
- Need an affordable bungalow in Blewbury due to illness
- Lack of suitable downsizing options
- Family housing in Blewbury not affordable on average income

Q26 – Please write your thoughts on your responses together with any other comments on housing needs in Blewbury now and in the future.

There were **258 responses to this question**. The main themes were:

- Affordability – to upsize/downsize, and for young people and families/young returners to the village
- Concerns about village infrastructure
- No large developments
- Modest developments of 2–3 bedrooms in small clusters, sympathetic to the scale and character of the village, and opposition to larger new-builds
- Mixed developments
- No further development at all
- Infill versus non-infill? – balance of views, but favouring non-infill
- Blewbury returners versus non Blewburyians? – balance of views
- Mixed demographic
- Elderly/nursing care

Q30 – Please write in any additional ideas, suggestions or concerns you want to raise.

There were **220 responses to this question**.

A very significant proportion of residents are concerned about the **village infrastructure**. Sewerage and drainage are very frequently mentioned, as well as public transport, proximity to school (primary and pre-school), shopping and medical facilities. Other utilities (water, internet) and poorly maintained roads were also mentioned by some as being of concern.

Many are worried that any **large-scale development** (such as the proposal for land west of Woodway Road) would overwhelm the already stretched infrastructure, and question the wisdom of locating development in an area with poor infrastructure.

A notable portion, approximately 10–15%, said explicitly that they are **opposed to any further development at all** in the village.

There is nearly universal and strongly expressed **opposition to any development to the south of the A417**, and many mentioned the proposal for land west of Woodway Road in

particular (there was just one comment in support of this proposal). The scale and location are broadly considered to be completely inappropriate.

Limited support for **infill development** was expressed, but often with the caveats that (a) any particular site must be appropriate as existing green spaces within the village are highly valued, and (b) cramming too many houses into small plots is unacceptable (several comments mentioned the Dallas site on Westbrook Street as an example).

Where expressed, support for housing tends to favour **small-scale sites on the edge of the village**. Some suggest explicitly that housing should be spread over **several** smaller sites rather than one big site. The strongest support for such development is to the north. Some residents, but fewer, consider that development to the west could be appropriate. Relatively few mention east of the village as being suitable.

The need for **affordable housing** is mentioned very frequently, both on its own and in a variety of contexts.

Many comments favour **smaller houses** rather than large ones. Some mention the need for these to be well designed, with adequate storage space and parking areas.

Support for new housing is often in the context of people with a **local connection**, though there is also opposition to this requirement.

Housing suitable for the **elderly** (some of it sheltered) is desired.

A significant minority mention that **new development should be well considered** and relate well to the existing character of the village. For example, relatively low density, more traditional materials, less hardstanding. Development should not have an 'urban' feel. Bridus Mead and Grahame Close are mentioned as positive examples of the types of development that would be appropriate.

The **landscape character** of the village is considered to be of very high importance – particularly the relationship to the downs and Blewburton Hill.

There is concern about **garage/shop** – the poor range of goods and whether it will stay open.

Increasing traffic, especially if there are large developments, is a concern. On-street parking is also a problem in some places.

The **sense of community** within Blewbury is highly valued, and many are very protective of this. Therefore, it is important for any new developments to be integrated into the village so that they form part of the wider community.



**Blewbury
Neighbourhood
Development
Plan**

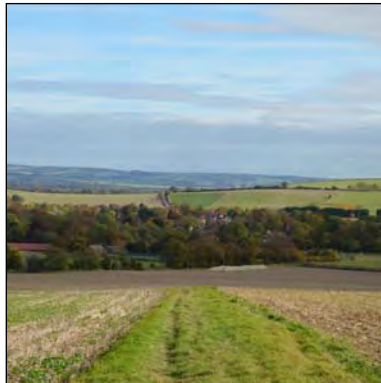
Appendix C: Landscape Character Assessment

This appendix presents the full text of the Landscape Character Assessment carried out for the Parish Council. The main body of the report is followed by an appendix with more details of the landscape capacity analysis, a set of relevant maps and then a set of photographs of the parish. A very long appendix to the report, “Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study” by Oxfordshire County Council has been omitted.



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Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment for Blewbury Parish Council



**Issue 7
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hankinson duckett associates

† 01491 838175 † 01491 838997 e consult@hda-enviro.co.uk w www.hda-enviro.co.uk
The Stables, Howbery Park, Benson Lane, Wallingford, Oxfordshire, OX10 8BA

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- HDA 3 Local designations
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- HDA 5 Parish Character Areas
- HDA 6 Landscape capacity
- HDA 7 Village internal space assessment

Photographs

Appendix 1 – Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study – Landscape character types and Local landscape character areas within Blewbury Parish. OMITTED.

Appendix 2 – Analysis of Landscape Capacity

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape Character Assessment has been commissioned by Blewbury Parish Council to inform the preparation of the Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan. The Brief for the assessment seeks to assess the landscape character of Blewbury Parish landscape and to determine its local landscape character, identifying key characteristics and sensitivities, both in terms of character and visibility. The report also seeks to set out landscape capacity and development guidelines, should development sites come forward in the future.
- 1.2 This Landscape Character Assessment is based on current good practice and recognised methodology. It identifies character areas within the Parish, which have been assessed so as to define the character of the Parish and setting to the village and determine its sensitivity to, and capacity for, development.
- 1.3 Natural England describes landscape character as the landscape features which make an area unique. It is defined as "a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements, be it natural (soil, landform) and/or human (for example settlement and development) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another "(Ref 1).
- 1.4 The report divides the landscape into areas of common landscape character, listing the key landscape characteristics and landscape and visual sensitivities of each area. This analysis will highlight areas of the Parish which are sensitive and of low landscape capacity where future development would be inappropriate. Landscape sensitivity and value may not be completely uniform across an entire character area and therefore the capacity across a character area may vary slightly. This is commented on in Section 5 where particularly relevant.

2. Background

2.1 Desk study

2.1.1 A comprehensive desk-top assessment of the local area was undertaken to form the basis of the assessment and assist in identifying the Parish landscape character areas. Desk study data considered includes:

- Geology and soils;
- Topography;
- Land use (based on aerial photography);
- Regional landscape character areas;
- District landscape character and capacity assessments;
- Historic landscape characterisation;
- Development Plan designations including local landscape, nature conservation, and heritage designation;
- Key public rights of way (e.g. long distance footpaths) and notable view points;
- Areas at risk of flooding.

2.1.2 The data was analysed and set out in working plans, tables, figures and text, and used to review the existing landscape character assessments and provisionally subdivide the County/District character areas into draft landscape character areas appropriate to the Parish scale. The outer boundary of these character areas in turn formed a draft study area boundary.

2.2 Field Assessment

2.2.1 The assessment is underpinned by field assessments carried out during October and November 2014 by an experienced Senior Landscape Architect, overseen and reviewed by the Project Director.

2.2.2 Field assessment involved travelling extensively throughout Blewbury Parish and the immediate surroundings, with extra focus on the relationship between the village and the surrounding AONB landscape including the influences of the downs escarpment and Blewburton Hill. This involved recording variations in landscape character including (list is not exhaustive): local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, condition of landscape elements (trees, hedges etc.), streams/ditches, character of the built edge of settlements, intervisibility between settlements, local landmarks and visual detractors, relationship with the AONB and key views. A working photographic record was produced to support the survey work.

3 Blewbury Parish Landscape Structure Analysis

3.1 The aim of landscape structure analysis is to identify the main elements which contribute to the character, structure and setting of the settlement and the AONB. This section includes an evaluation of the existing Landscape Character Context (section 3.2, Plan HDA1 and Appendix 1) and the local landscape context of the Parish, (section 3.3) which looks at the settlement of Blewbury in detail and sets out our initial analysis of the area (Plans HDA 2 – 4).

3.2 Landscape Character Context

There are national, regional and district scale landscape character assessments that cover the landscape within and around Blewbury Parish. The national scale assessment has not been analysed for this assessment, as more detailed data is available.

3.2.1 The North Wessex Downs AONB

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers the whole of Blewbury Parish (see plan HDA 3). This is an important consideration when assessing the landscape character of the area, along with the landscape sensitivity and subsequent capacity of the Parish. The North Wessex Downs AONB integrated landscape character assessment (Ref 2) identifies two character areas which cover Blewbury Parish. These are: Character Area 1D: Blewbury Downs, which lies to the south of the village but includes Blewburton Hill to the east, and Character Area 5D: Moreton Plain, which includes the majority of the village and lower lying land to the north of the A417 London Road. Key characteristics of each character area are listed below.

Character Area 1D: Blewbury Downs

- Middle and Upper Chalk with overlying drift deposits of Clay-with-Flint.
- Elevated rolling downland with round or flat-topped hills intersected by dry valleys.
- Northern edge formed by a steep, deeply convoluted scarp, allowing long views out to the north.
- Large scale, open landscape dominated by arable farmland with sparse woodland cover on the tops. There are numerous equestrian centres and gallops.
- Settlement includes large villages set within dry valleys.
- Heritage features include Bronze Age barrows located on the scarp edge, along with an Iron Age hillfort at Blewburton Hill and a folly on Churn Hill.
- Numerous rights of way run through the character area including The Ridgeway national trail.

Character Area 5D: Moreton Plain

- A transitional landscape between the high downs and the Thames Floodplain, with a geology of Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand within Blewbury Parish.
- A large, open, expansive landscape with views of the strong ridges and skylines of the downs and downland outliers. The chimneys of Didcot power station are also present in many views.
- Dominated by large arable fields with a weak or absent hedgerow structure.
- Large spring line villages including Blewbury and Aston Tirrold are located at the base of the scarp to the south of the character area.
- There are many attractive vernacular buildings, with materials including red brick, thatch and weatherboard.

3.2.2

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

OWLS is the current landscape character assessment for Oxfordshire (2004 – Ref 3). The following landscape character types are found within Blewbury Parish: Alluvial Lowlands, Terrace Farmland, Rolling Farmland, Chalk Downland and Slopes and Wooded Downlands. The areas for these character types are shown on plan HDA 1 and the full descriptions are appended to this report within Appendix 1. Each landscape type is broken down into local character areas. Key characteristics of each type and subsequent local character area are listed below:

Alluvial Lowlands – character area WH/5 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

- Medium sized arable fields with some semi-improved pasture adjacent to Mill Brook.
- Fields enclosed by ditches and Hawthorn hedges with mature hedgerow trees, although many hedges are gappy and fragmented.
- Tree lined watercourses with species including Willow, Ash and Poplar.
- Flat landscape of lowland river valleys.
- Alluvial soils.
- Sparsely settled.
- Landscape strategy: *'maintain the tranquil nature of the landscape and promote the restoration and enhancement of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree lined watercourses'*

Terrace Farmlands – character area WH/30 Poultry Farm

- Large, open arable fields.
- Fields generally lack enclosure, although there are some Hawthorn hedgerows – particularly along roads – and some fields are divided by shelterbelts of Poplar.
- Clumps of Lime, Beech and Sycamore located along roads and around farms.
- Associated with deposits of terrace sand gravels.

- Landscape strategy: *'strengthen and enhance the pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree lined watercourses'*

Rolling Farmland – character area WD/6 Blewbury

- Large-sized arable fields, with a few surviving areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland.
- Prominent rolling landform and distant views from hillsides and the surrounding low-lying vale.
- Fields enclosed by Hawthorn and Elm hedges, often fragmented, with occasional Ash and Elm trees.
- Linear tree plantations with a mix of tree sizes and species.
- Watercourses lined with Willow Ash, Poplar and linear strips of semi-natural woodland.
- Geology is a mix of Gault Clay and Upper Greensand
- Landscape strategy: *'conserve and enhance the surviving pattern of woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses. Minimise the impact of built development through appropriate location, choice of building materials, and the use of locally characteristic tree and shrub species.'*

Chalk Downland and Slopes – character area WD/9 Upton Downland

- Large scale and intensively farmed arable landscape with a rolling topography.
- General absence of woodland features, which gives a very open character.
- Only landscape features are trees around farm buildings and fragmented Hawthorn hedges along tracks and roads
- Geology of Lower and Middle chalk.
- Sparsely settled, with isolated farmsteads
- Landscape strategy: *'Conserve overall pattern of open downland and beech plantations and encourage arable reversion to grassland particularly along the escarpment and in association with features of archaeological importance.'*

Wooded Downlands– character area WD/10 Blewbury Downs

- Downland landscape with rounded hills, steep slopes and narrow valleys.
- Wooded landscape with a range of small mixed and broadleaf plantations with larger blocks of ancient woodland on the steeper slopes.
- Arable farming dominates with frequent horse gallops consisting of semi-improved grassland and some sheep grazed pastureland. There are some areas of unimproved chalk grassland interspersed with scrub on steep valley sides, generally to the east of the character area.
- Geology of dominated by Middle chalk.
- Sparsely settled, with scattered farms, barns and stables.

- Landscape strategy: *'Conserve the mosaic of open downland, woodland and sparse settlement.'*

3.3 Blewbury village and the local landscape context (see plans HDA 2 - 5)

- 3.3.1 Blewbury Parish is located in the Vale of White Horse District in Oxfordshire, approximately 12 miles south of Oxford and approximately 16 miles north-west of Reading. The Parish is centred around the settlement of Blewbury, a springline village, located at the foot of the Berkshire Downs, on the A417 London Road. The Parish boundary extends north to Mill Brook, east to the top of Blewburton Hill, south to the Berkshire Circular Route at the top of the downs and extending along the top of the south-facing slope at the top of the Compton Downs. The Parish extends west to the edge of Upton village (See plans HDA 2 and 4). The nearest villages are Upton, to the west, East Hagbourne to the north-west, South Moreton to the north-east and Aston Tirrold to the east. The high ground of the downs to the south are devoid of settlement – other than occasional farmsteads. Didcot is the nearest town, located approximately 4 miles to the north of Blewbury and accessed via the B4016, a road which runs north up the eastern boundary of the village.
- 3.3.2 The topography of the Parish is split between the open, flat lowland to the north and the dramatic north-facing escarpment, which lies to the immediate south of the village. Blewburton Hill lies to the east of the village and is a continuation of the steep chalk slopes that extend out from the downs escarpment (see plan HDA 2). With the exception of the centre of the village and the more contained landscape to the north of the village adjacent to Mill Stream, the entire Parish is visually dominated by the downs and Blewburton Hill. The dramatic changes in topography allow panoramic views, both of and from the elevated landform. Springs occur within the village and drain north in small streams and ditches, to Mill Brook. The landform and drainage of the Parish are an integral part of the local landscape character and provide a unique sense of place.
- 3.3.3 The North Wessex Downs AONB covers the entire Parish (see plan HDA 3). This is a national designation with policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework that protects the landscape within the AONB for its landscape and scenic beauty. Any development within the Parish would need to demonstrate that it is in the public interest and would not harm the character or appearance of the AONB.
- 3.3.4 Blewbury Parish has a number of heritage assets including two scheduled monuments and the historic core of the village itself, much of which is designated as a conservation area. The remnants of the Iron Age hillfort is clearly visible at Blewburton Hill, which is designated as a Scheduled Monument and is a prominent local landmark. The folly on Churn Hill is also a Scheduled Monument. The Conservation Area covers the majority of

the village and contains 59 listed buildings, which showcase a range of styles and reflect different time periods. Only two listed buildings are located outside the Conservation Area and both of these are located adjacent to the Conservation Area, within the village envelope. The Church of St Michael dates back to Norman times and the pattern of roads and paths through the village date back to the Saxon period. In addition to the buildings, the cob walls and waterways within the village have historic value and are locally distinctive.

- 3.3.5 The village has a number of local amenities including a doctor's surgery, primary school, church, village hall, playgroup, post office, convenience store, greengrocers, hairdressers, pubs and a plant nursery and greengrocer with an on-site café. The recreation ground and allotments also provide outdoor facilities for village residents.
- 3.3.6 The land use within the Parish is predominantly arable agriculture, with some grazed pasture to the immediate north and south-east of the village. These fields in pasture are generally horse paddocks and are smaller scale than the arable fields, which are large, open and expansive (plan HDA 4). Horse riding and livery and the horse racing industry are significant contributors to the established character and land use of the area. The arable agriculture is intensive, which has led to the large field sizes with few boundaries. Where boundaries do exist these are generally hawthorn hedgerows. Tree cover is limited to the watercourses and hedgerows (particularly to the north), shelterbelts around farmstead and blocks of woodland on the downs. Within the village and its immediate surroundings there are some traditional orchards, which are a BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority habitat. There are no rivers within the Parish, but there are numerous minor watercourses including streams, field drains and ponds, originating with the springs in the village itself. Water is a significant feature within the village and has shaped the settlement pattern, routes and open spaces within the village. To the south-west of the village there is a cemetery and a recreation ground, which includes pitches, tennis courts, an equipped play area and Tickers Folly – an informal recreation space. To the north-east of the village there is an area of allotments, to the north of Winterbrook Farm.
- 3.3.7 Numerous public rights of way cross the Parish allowing public access and enjoyment of the AONB landscape. The St Birinus Pilgrimage walk is a historic route that runs from Churn Hill in the south, through the village and east to South Moreton. The footpaths to the east, west and south-west of the village are open and afford long views. The footpaths to the south, which lead up the escarpment are often sunken and enclosed by hedgerows, however at the summit of the slopes, there are gaps in the vegetation that allow panoramic views to the north, which extend as far as The Chilterns and include views of Didcot and Wittenham Clumps. Some of the most significant views are possible from the chalk pit, located on the escarpment adjacent to footpath 14, which is a local landmark. Seating has

been installed to the south of the chalk pits to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the views from this location. Key views have been shown on plan HDA 4. The rights of way within the village and to the south of the village are associated with the vegetated watercourses and are much more intimate and enclosed in character.

3.4 Blewbury Parish– Key Elements

- **Water:** Blewbury is a spring-line village. The water source is the reason why it became settled. The pattern of the village is set by the network of waterbodies that wind through it.
- **Heritage:** There is a considerable amount of historic interest, both within the village as part of the built form and present in the surrounding landscape, as identified in the two scheduled monuments designated on Churn Hill and Blewburton Hill. The built heritage is reflected in the local vernacular and the materials used in construction including brick, thatch and plain clay tiles.
- **Location and character:** The village is nestled at the foot of the Berkshire Downs, which form an impressive setting to the south of the village. The open landscapes to the east and west of the village allow an appreciation of the downs escarpment and of the historic Blewburton Hill, which reflect the AONB designation that sweeps over the whole Parish. The character of the landscape within the village itself is a key contributor to the 'sense of place' of the village.
- **Views:** Due to the open nature of the landscape and the dramatic changes in topography, there are important views from the village out to the surrounding landscape and impressive views from the surrounding landscape, to which the village contributes.
- **Nucleated and compact settlement pattern** largely contained by a mature landscape structure.

4. Parish Landscape Character Areas: analysis, capacity appraisal and photographs

4.1 Landscape characterization

4.1.1 Drawing on the initial desk study, landscape structure analysis and the field assessment, the study divides the landscape into Parish scale landscape character areas of specific landscape character. Blewbury Parish has been divided into 11 Local Landscape Character Areas. These have been shown and listed on plan HDA 6.

4.2 Analysis of Parish scale Landscape Character Areas

4.2.1 The characteristics of each Parish-scale landscape character area is analysed against criteria identified in Topic Paper 6 of the Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, along with identification of any designations, and consideration of the historic landscape characterisation of the area. This information forms the basis for the landscape sensitivity and landscape value assessments.

4.2.2 A detailed methodology for the analysis can be found in Appendix 2. The landscape value, sensitivity and capacity assessments of each Parish scale character area are found in Appendix 2 and are summarised below.

4.2.3 The following is a list of the Parish landscape character areas identified within Blewbury Parish.

- 1 Blewbury Escarpment**
- 2 Blewbury and Upton Escarpment**
- 3 Blewbury and Upton Plain**
- 4 Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture**
- 5 Blewburton Farmland Slopes**
- 6 Mill Stream Pasture**
- 7 Winterbrook Farmstead**
- 8 Eastfield Farmstead**
- 9 Blewbury Southern Pasture**
- 10 Churn Hill Downland**
- 11 Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland**

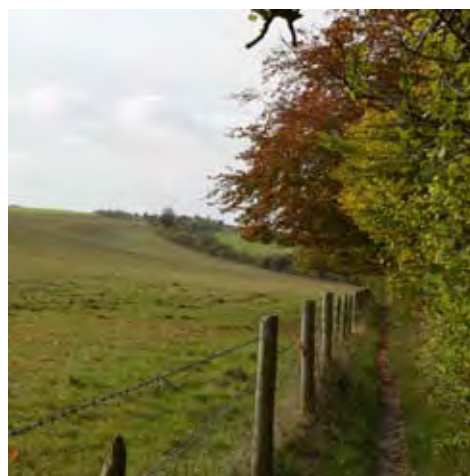
For each character area there will be a description of landscape character, the key issues facing the character area, a breakdown of landscape and visual sensitivity, the landscape value of the area and the resulting landscape capacity.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
1 Blewbury Escarpment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Area of Open Access Land within character area - Public Rights of Way run across character area including St Birinus pilgrimage walk - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south of Blewbury Village. • Convoluted and complex north-facing scarp face of Blewbury Downs. • A mixture of medium and large scale arable and pasture fields, which are open and exposed. Some have boundary hedges. • Numerous rights of way, often located between field boundaries and are generally enclosed by vegetation. Many are sunken lanes marking historic routes. Rights of way are well used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders and are an important recreational resource. • Gaps in the vegetation along the rights of way allow extensive panoramic views over Blewbury, extending as far as the Chilterns to the north and east. • Geology of middle and upper chalk. • Two roads are located along the eastern and western boundaries of the character area. These are rural lanes and are enclosed by vegetation. • There is no settlement within the character area. • The Character Area includes the Chalk Pit, a locally important landmark. • A rural landscape that is attractive, tranquil and has key viewpoints which overlook the AONB landscape. • Detached from settlement. The northern boundary is adjacent to Tickers Folly, part of the recreation ground, and a wooded paddock. • The escarpment forms the southern setting to Blewbury and shapes the skyline that is visible from the settlement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of chalk grassland and hedgerow cover. Retain and protect existing areas of pasture, particularly chalk grassland habitat. • Vulnerability to large scale development. Tall structures would be visually intrusive and would disrupt the existing skyline. • Conservation of existing views • Retain strong skylines and clear ridges • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape • Improve management of existing woodland and plant new woodland blocks using characteristic species. • Improve management of hedgerows and vegetation lining roads / paths. • Protect the Chalk Pit as a feature of local importance. 	Sensitivity = Major Landscape Value = Major Capacity = Negligible

Parish character area



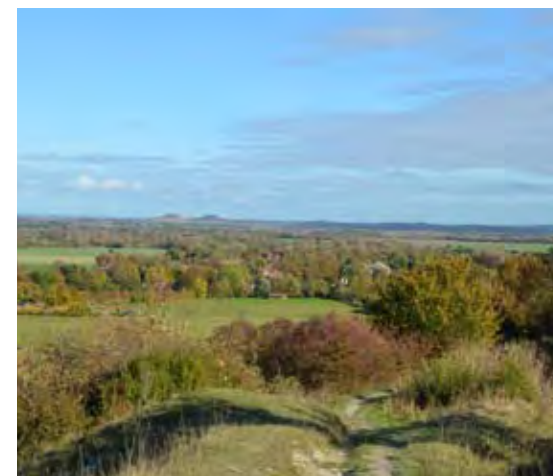
Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Scarp face.



Enclosed and sunken right of way.



Panoramic views.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
2 Blewbury and Upton Escarpment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Public Right of Way runs across character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south-west of Blewbury Village, between Blewbury and Upton. • North-facing scarp face of Blewbury Downs located on middle and lower Chalk. • A large scale open and exposed arable landscape with few boundary features or vegetation. • A public right of way allows access up the scarp face, which has panoramic views to the north and east. • There is no settlement within the character area, although New Buildings is visible to the immediate south-west of the area. • A simple and dramatic rural landscape that is open and expansive, with high intervisibility with the wider AONB landscape. The openness of the landscape draws attention to the rounded scarp face, which is the defining feature of the character area. • Detached from settlement but lies adjacent to recreation ground and cemetery. • The rounded hilltop of the character area makes up part of the setting to Blewbury and shapes the skyline that is visible from the settlement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in further loss of hedgerow cover. • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Vulnerability to large scale development. Tall structures would be visually intrusive and would disrupt the existing skyline. • Conservation of existing views • Retain strong skylines and clear ridges • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape 	Sensitivity = Major Landscape Value = Substantial Capacity = Negligible

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



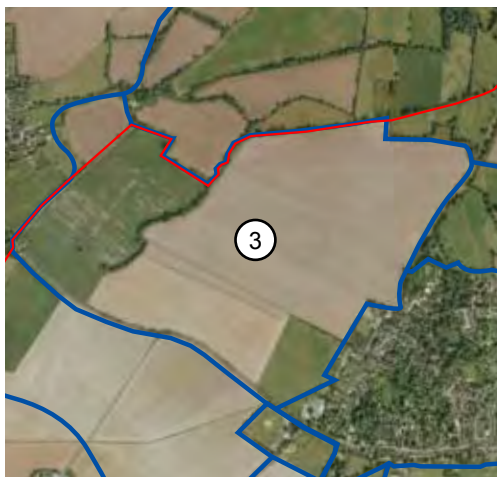
Escarpment forms skyline.



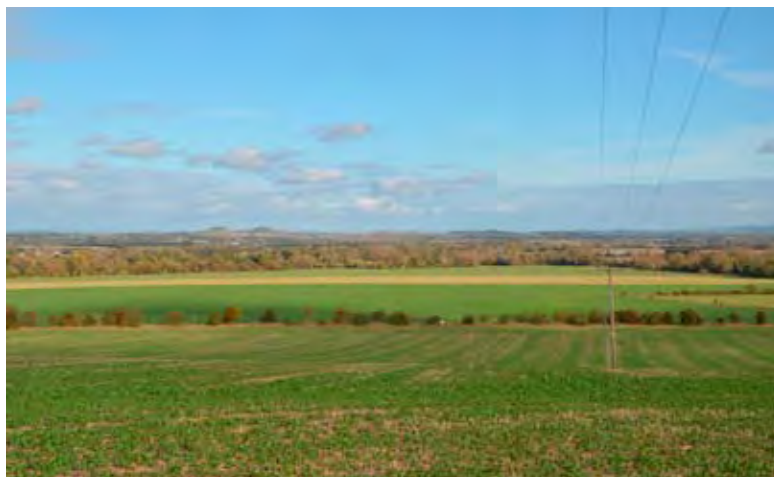
Panoramic views across Blewbury to Blewburton Hill.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
3 Blewbury and Upton Plain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Public Rights of Way run across character area, including Coffin Way, between Blewbury and Upton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the west of Blewbury Village, between Blewbury and Upton. • An almost flat landscape with a gentle north-facing slope. The topography is in direct contrast to the escarpment to the south. • A large scale open and exposed arable landscape with few boundary features or vegetation. • Two public rights of way cross the character area, one of which is Coffin Way, which links Blewbury and Upton. • There are panoramic views contained by the rising ground of the Downs to the south and east, including Blewburton Hill to the east. Wittenham Clumps can be seen in the distance to the north. The Downs form an impressive sweeping skyline to the character area. • There is no settlement within the character area, although the western edge of Blewbury is visible, along with distant views of Didcot. • An open and expansive rural landscape, with panoramic views contained at the edges by landform. • The character area abuts the western edge of Blewbury and provides a stark and open contrast to the intimate character of the settlement. The settlement edge is softened by vegetation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of hedgerow cover. • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Pressure for new village expansion. Potential associated impact on adjacent landscape character, village character and local vernacular. • Conservation of existing views 	Sensitivity = Substantial Landscape Value = Substantial Capacity = Negligible / Low

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Flat and open landscape.



The Downs form Skyline. Soft edge to Blewbury.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
4 Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The land within the Parish is part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Public Rights of Way run across character area - Pocket of ancient woodland to north of Blewbury Mill - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the north-west of Blewbury Village. • A flat and rural alluvial landscape, laced with water courses including streams and ditches. • A much more contained landscape than the land to the south, with hedgerows, copses of trees and tree lined waterways. • Small - medium scale arable and pasture fields. Fields are generally regular, however the pattern is often disrupted by the more sinuous nature of the streams that flow through the landscape. • Two public rights of way cross the character area and Blewbury Road forms the north-eastern boundary of the character area. • Settlement is restricted to Frogalley Farm and Blewbury Mill. • A rural and much more intimate landscape than character areas to the south of Blewbury. • Distant from settlement of Blewbury, with a strong rural context and no relationship with the settlement edge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Retain and enhance tree lined watercourses with new planting and improved maintenance • Retain existing pasture and promote conversion of arable to pasture along watercourses • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape • Improve management of existing woodland and plant new woodland blocks using characteristic species 	<p>Sensitivity = Major</p> <p>Landscape Value = Substantial</p> <p>Capacity = Negligible</p>

Parish character area



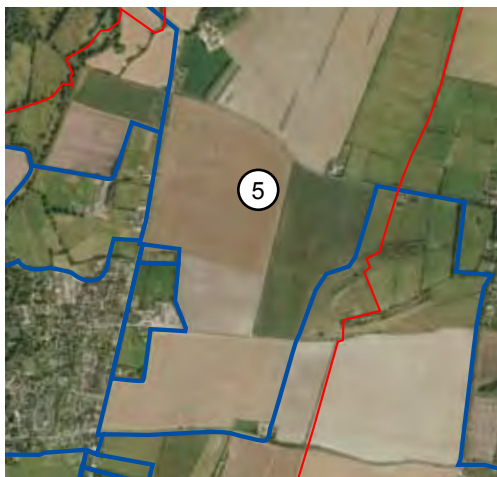
Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Well treed landscape. Hedgerow boundaries are characteristic.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
5 Blewburton Farmland Slopes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Part of setting to Scheduled Monument - Public Rights of Way run across character area, including part of St Birinus Walk - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland at Sheencroft Farm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the east of Blewbury Village on the footslopes of Blewburton Hill. • The land is located on a west facing slope adjacent to the village, changing to a north facing slope to the north of Hagbourne Road. • An open, large scale and largely arable landscape with few boundary features or vegetation. • High intervisibility with local roads, including the B4016 Bessels Way and Hagbourne Road. Properties to either side of Winterbrook farm have intervisibility with the character area. • A number public rights of way cross the character area, one of which is part of St Birinus Walk. • Views are dominated by Blewburton Hill, a hill fort and Scheduled Monument located to the east of the character area. Blewburton Hill is a distinctive local landmark. • Isolated farmsteads form the only settlement within the character area, although the western boundary of the character area runs along the eastern edge of Blewbury Village. Where the character area abuts the settlement of Blewbury, it forms the foreground to views of Blewburton Hill from the village. • The character area has a contrasting character to the intimate character of the settlement. There is a strong settlement edge following the line of Bessels Way, to the immediate west of the character area. • A transitional landscape between the low lying village and the high ground of Blewburton Hill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of hedgerow cover. • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Vulnerable to development. Tall structures would be visually intrusive and would disrupt the existing skyline. • Preserve and protect setting to Blewburton Hill. • Conservation of existing views from Blewbury village to Blewburton Hill, by preserving the open nature of the landscape. 	<p>Sensitivity = Substantial</p> <p>Landscape Value = Substantial</p> <p>Capacity = Negligible / Low</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Open and expansive landscape.



Transitional landscape between village and Blewburton Hill.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
6 Mill Stream Pasture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland at The Old Mill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the immediate north of Blewbury Village. • A flat and rural alluvial landscape, divided by streams and ditches. Mill Stream forms the western edge of the character area. • A small scale and intimate landscape, with hedgerows and tree lined waterways. • Small - medium scale pasture fields. The fields to the north-east are regular, whereas the fields to the south-west have more sinuous boundaries and a higher degree of enclosure. Land uses include an equestrian centre (a common and characteristic land use in the local area) and a kennels. • There is intervisibility between the character area and the northern edge of Blewbury. The character area is also visible from the B4016 Bessels Way and Blewburton Hill. • The settlement edge is more convoluted than the edges to the east and north and is softened by intervening vegetation, although some properties are clearly visible. Parts of the character provide a pastoral setting to the village, however the buildings of the kennels and equestrian centre are visible to the north, which disrupt the rural context of the character area. • An outline planning permission exists on one of the fields to the north of the village, but this has yet to be constructed. • Two public rights of way cross the character area, which have varying degrees of enclosure. • A rural and intimate landscape, with some influences from the edge of the village settlement. • Abuts north-western edge of Conservation Area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Pressure for new housing development. Potential associated impact on adjacent landscape character, village character and local vernacular. • Retain and enhance tree lined watercourses with new planting and improved maintenance • Retain existing pasture and promote conversion of arable to pasture along watercourses • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape 	<p>Sensitivity = Moderate</p> <p>Landscape Value = Substantial</p> <p>Capacity = Low</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



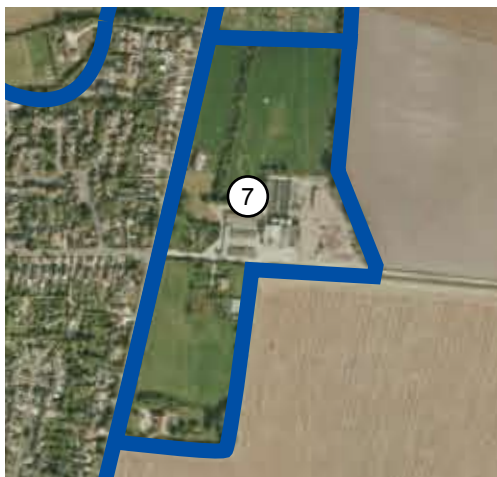
Vegetation provides enclosure.



Used as horse pasture.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
7 Winterbrook Farmstead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Public Right of Way runs across character area - BAP priority habitat: Traditional orchards within Farmstead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A farmstead located to the east of Blewbury Village on the footslopes of Blewburton Hill. • The character area comprises farm cottages, a single dwelling and farmhouse along with agricultural buildings including some large barns. The farmstead is associated with small, regular pasture fields, used for rearing sheep and orchards. • Linear shelterbelts of trees have been planted around the farmstead, which provide shelter and enclosure. The landscape is more enclosed than the arable land to the east and more associated with the village than the wider landscape. • High intervisibility with the B4016 Bessels Way. • A public right of way crosses the character area, which is part of St Birinus Walk. • A transitional landscape between the settlement edge and the open and exposed landscape to the east. • The farmstead is a complex, small scale and relatively contained landscape, with views of the large outbuildings contained by shelterbelts. These shelterbelts also provide a soft edge to the eastern edge of Blewbury when viewed from Blewburton Hill Scheduled Monument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain integrity of Farmstead and avoid fragmentation. • Retain and maintain shelterbelts that screen views of large agricultural buildings and / machinery. • Retain, protect and enhance priority Orchard BAP habitats. • Pressure for new housing development. Potential associated impact on adjacent landscape character, village character and local vernacular. • Retain existing pasture and avoid intensification of farmstead and conversion to arable crops. • Encourage diversity of crops and habitat within the farmstead. 	<p>Sensitivity = Substantial</p> <p>Landscape Value = Moderate</p> <p>Capacity = Low</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Approach to farmstead.



Farmstead seen from Blewburton Hill.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
8 Eastfield Farmstead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - BAP priority habitat: Traditional orchard within Farmstead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A farmstead enclosed by tall evergreen hedges, located to the south-east of Blewbury. • The character area comprises outbuildings and tracks, an orchard and four small rectilinear pasture fields. • High leylandii hedges have been planted around the farmstead, which provide shelter and enclosure. The landscape is flatter and much more enclosed than the downland landscape to the south and east. • The leylandii are inconsistent with the wider landscape and do not contribute to the downland character of the area. • The farmstead is disconnected from the village and forms no part of the settlement edge. The farmstead is a discrete character type within the wider downland character area. • The farm contributes to the mosaic of land-uses within the downland landscape and is strongly related to Downland Farm, within character area 9. • Orchards are BAP priority habitat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to replace leylandii hedges over time, with shelterbelts / hedges that are native and characteristic of the local area. • Maintain integrity of Farmstead and avoid fragmentation. • Retain and maintain vegetation that screens views of agricultural buildings and / machinery. • Retain, protect and enhance priority Orchard BAP habitats. • Retain existing pasture and avoid intensification of farmstead and conversion to arable crops. • Encourage diversity of crops and habitat within the farmstead. 	<p>Sensitivity = Substantial</p> <p>Landscape Value = Moderate</p> <p>Capacity = Low</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



High hedges screen views into farmstead.



Orchard visible within farmstead.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
9 Blewbury Southern Pasture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Part of setting to Conservation Area - A Public Right of Way runs across character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south of Blewbury Village on the footslopes of the Downs northern escarpment. • The landform is gently sloping, with slopes orientated towards the convoluted edge of the northern escarpment of Blewbury Downs. The slopes are more prominent to the western side of the character area. • The character area comprises numerous horse paddocks with one arable field. The landscape is open with little boundary vegetation or landscape features. The large scale fields are intersected with paddock fencing and while these fences change the size of the fields, the intervisibility between paddocks and lack of features, retains the feeling of a large scale landscape. • The character area abuts the well defined northern edge of settlement and contrasts with the intimate character of the settlement. The settlement edge is softened by vegetation to the west, but is more open to view in the east. • There is a degree of intervisibility with the southern extent of the Conservation Area of Blewbury Village. The character area is also prominent in the views from the top of the escarpment to the south, east and west. • Views are dominated by the northern escarpment of Blewbury Downs, which surround the character area on three sides. • One property and Downside Farm are the only settlement within the character area, although the village edge is visible to the immediate north. • A transitional landscape between the low lying village and the high ground of Blewbury Downs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of chalk grassland and hedgerow cover. Retain and protect existing areas of pasture, particularly chalk grassland habitat. • Poor quality / fragmented hedgerows with loss of hedgerow trees. Opportunity to enhance hedgerows and improve hedgerow management. • Pressure for new housing development. Potential associated impact on adjacent landscape character, village character and local vernacular. • Conservation of existing views from Blewbury village to the Downs Escarpment, by preserving the open nature of the landscape. • Protect the setting to Blewbury Conservation Area. 	<p>Sensitivity = Substantial</p> <p>Landscape Value = Substantial</p> <p>Capacity = Negligible / Low</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Looking across the character area from high ground



Landscape has a strong association with horses.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
10 Churn Hill Downland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Scheduled Monument at Churn Knob - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland at Churn Hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural downland landscape at the southern edge of the parish, typified by the rounded hilltops of the downs, including Churn Hill. • Consists of large scale arable fields, broken up by blocks of woodland and horse gallops. • Some panoramic views from the top of the hills, although views are generally less dramatic than those available on the escarpment. • Geology of middle and upper chalk • Settlement consists of isolated farmsteads accessed by enclosed rural lanes. Roads and rights of way are enclosed by hedgerows and vegetation. • Footpaths and bridleways are common. Many are sunken lanes marking historic routes. Rights of way are well used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders and are an important recreational resource. • The Character Area includes Churn Knob, a folly designated as a Scheduled Monument. • Distant from settlement of Blewbury, with a strong rural context and no relationship with the settlement edge. • A rural landscape that is attractive, tranquil and typifies the downland character of this part of the AONB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of chalk grassland and hedgerow cover. Retain and protect existing areas of pasture, particularly chalk grassland habitat. • Vulnerability to large scale development. Tall structures would be visually intrusive and would disrupt the existing skyline. • Conservation of existing views • Retain strong skylines and clear ridges • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape • Improve management of existing woodland and plant new woodland blocks using characteristic species • Preserve and protect existing archaeological sites including the Scheduled Monument at Churn Hill 	<p>Sensitivity = Major</p> <p>Landscape Value = Major</p> <p>Capacity = Negligible</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Rounded hilltops and large open fields.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Landscape analysis	Key issues and management prescriptions	Capacity Summary (see Appendix 2 for analysis)
11 Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of the North Wessex Downs AONB - Blewburton Hill Scheduled monument - Areas of open Access Land at Blewburton Hill and Lid's Down - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland. Numerous small copses are located across the character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downland landscape, with a geology of middle and upper chalk, to the to the south-east of Blewbury Parish. • Consists of the north facing escarpment of the Blewbury Downs, rounded hilltops (including Baldon Hill and Riddle Hill) and a steep-sided, narrow valley (Lid's Down), caught between two convoluted slopes of the escarpment. • A large, open arable landscape, broken up by blocks of trees, pasture valleys and occasional hedgerow boundaries • Blewburton Hill, a hill fort and Scheduled Monument, is located within the character area. Blewburton Hill is a distinctive local landmark and has an area of Open Access, which has panoramic views from the summit. • Isolated farmsteads form the only settlement within the character area and the only major road is the A417, which crosses the character area on the shoulder of Baldon Hill, providing a impressive entrance into the parish from the east. • Distant from settlement of Blewbury, with a strong rural context and no relationship with the settlement edge. • Blewburton Hill and the south-eastern escarpment form an impressive setting to the eastern edge of Blewbury and shapes the skyline that is visible from the settlement. • An attractive rural landscape, characterised by its dramatic changes in landform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural intensification resulting in a loss of chalk grassland and hedgerow cover. Retain and protect existing areas of pasture, particularly chalk grassland habitat. • Vulnerability to large scale development. Tall structures would be visually intrusive and would disrupt the existing skyline. • Conservation of existing views • Retain strong skylines and clear ridges • Maintain the tranquil character of the landscape • Improve management of existing woodland and plant new woodland blocks using characteristic species • Preserve and protect existing archaeological sites, particularly Blewburton Hill Scheduled Monument. 	<p>Sensitivity = Major</p> <p>Landscape Value = Major</p> <p>Capacity = Negligible</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



5. Summary

- 5.1 Landscape capacity is defined as the extent to which the landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on landscape character, reflecting the inherent sensitivity and value of the landscape. A landscape of high sensitivity or value therefore has a low landscape capacity.
- 5.2 In order to assess the sensitivity of the Blewbury Parish character areas to development, assumptions have been made as to the likely built form of any new development areas. It has been assumed that buildings would generally be a maximum of 2 storeys in height. There would be open space provision and a landscape framework with tree planting of appropriate scale, building on an existing landscape framework which could achieve a good fit in the landscape and form a logical extension to the village, in keeping with the existing settlement pattern.
- 5.3 Sensitivity and value ratings range from Major, Substantial, Moderate, Slight to Negligible. Areas judged to have Major or Substantial sensitivity or value indicates that development would have significant detrimental effect on the character of the landscape. Development in these character areas should only be on a very small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or the wider landscape, and be consistent with Local Plan policy. The landscape sensitivity and landscape value tables, along with assessment criteria and scoring for each character area are shown in Appendix 2.
- 5.4 The landscape sensitivity of the Parish is generally very high, which accords with the AONB designation that covers the Parish. Of the 11 Parish character areas assessed, 5 have Major sensitivity (areas 1, 2, 4, 10 and 11), 5 have Substantial sensitivity (areas 3, 5, 7, 8 and 9) and area 6 has been assessed as having a moderate sensitivity. There are no character areas with Slight or Negligible landscape sensitivity.
- 5.5 The landscape value of the Parish is also high, with 3 areas (1, 10 and 11) being assessed as having Major landscape value, 6 areas (2-6 and 9) having Substantial landscape value and 2 areas (7 and 8) having Moderate landscape value.
- 5.6 The resultant landscape capacity is also listed in Appendix 2. Landscape capacity ratings range from Very High, High, Medium, Low and Negligible. A capacity rating of Medium or above identifies a landscape character area with the capacity for limited development, having regard for the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent local landscape character areas.

- 5.7 There are no Parish character areas with Very high, High or Medium landscape capacity, which means that there are no character areas with the capacity to accept large scale residential development, without significant harm to local landscape character and the AONB. There may be capacity within the village and around the settlement edge of the village for small scale residential additions, which would have significantly lower impacts on the character and appearance of the AONB than a large village extension. There is an existing planning permission for a large development of 30 dwellings to the north of the village, adjacent to Area 6 (Mill Stream Pasture). This existing permission should be developed before there is a commitment to further housing proposals or allocations.
- 5.8 Of the 11 Parish character areas assessed, 5 have a Negligible capacity for development (areas 1, 2, 4, 10 and 11), 3 have a Negligible / Low capacity (areas 3, 5, and 9) and the remaining three have Low capacity (areas 6-8). The areas with Negligible landscape capacity are divorced from settlement, are wholly rural and display many of the key characteristics of the AONB designation. There should be no development within these character areas, other than for the necessary requirements of agriculture (as set out in AONB policy).
- 5.9 The areas with Negligible / Low capacity (3, 5, and 9) are the open and expansive landscapes to the east, west and south of the village, which allow long views towards the downs. Development within these character areas should be avoided as development within these areas would be out of character with the openness of the landscape and the well-defined settlement edges to the village.
- 5.10 The three areas with Low landscape capacity have been identified which may indicate a limited capacity for small amounts of new development. These are:
- Area 6 – Mill Stream Pasture
 - Area 7 – Winterbrook Farmstead
 - Area 8 – Eastfield Farmstead
- 5.11 Area 6 (Mill Stream Pasture) is adjacent to the settlement edge of the village, has a high level of enclosure and a landscape character influenced by the buildings within the equestrian centre and kennels, which lie to the north. New development has in the recent past been permitted at Whites Orchard and off Bessels Way, to the south-east of the character area. The extant planning permission for 30 houses is located within the settlement boundary to the south of this character area.
- 5.12 The sensitivity and subsequent capacity of the Mill Stream Pasture character area is not consistent across the character area. A public right of way runs through the centre of the character area and the landscape to the west of the footpath is more sensitive to

development than the land to the east, by virtue of its proximity to the conservation area and Blewbury Manor and its curtilage (as a listed building).

- 5.12 Area 7, Winterbrook Farmstead, has is an intact and well managed farmstead landscape with a strong relationship to the village. The enclosed nature of the character area is in marked contrast to the surrounding open and expansive landscapes of Blewburton Hill and its lower slopes.
- 5.13 Area 8, Eastfields Farmstead, has been separated from the surrounding landscape by the dense leylandii hedge surrounding the farmstead on three sides which currently diminishes its landscape value. The leylandii hedge is an incongruous feature within the local landscape, but in all other respects the landscape character of the farm is consistent with Area 11 (Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland). Should the Leylandii hedge be removed or replaced with native hedgerows, the resultant change in character would be consistent with the landscape character of area 11, which would result in a higher sensitivity and negligible landscape capacity.
- 5.14 Eastfield farmstead is located at the foot of the downs detached distance from the settlement edge of the village. New development in this area would be inconsistent with the existing settlement pattern and would not result in a logical extension to the village.
- 5.15 The study has identified that the majority of the landscape surrounding Blewbury has substantial landscape sensitivity and high landscape value, consistent with its AONB status. It follows therefore that the landscapes have negligible or negligible to low landscape capacity for future development. The landscape surrounding the village is largely open, rural in character and exhibits many of the key characteristics of the wider AONB. Development in many of the adjacent landscape character areas would be inconsistent with the exiting settlement pattern of the village and would breach well defined settlement edges. There is the potential for some small scale development on the periphery of the settlement along the northern edge of the village where new development could be consistent with the existing settlement pattern and could form a logical extension to the village.

6. Village internal space assessment

6.1 Blewbury Village character

(see plan HDA 7)

- 6.1.1 This section focusses on the evaluation of the local landscape context of the village, which looks at the open spaces within the village settlement boundary in order to assess which spaces contribute highly to the open space character of the village and which spaces could be improved. For the most part, private gardens have not been included as part of the assessment. While it is recognised that many properties within the village have extensive gardens, which contribute to the character of the village, this document focusses on the key public and private spaces / gardens which define the internal character of the village. Plan HDA 7 identifies the open spaces that have been assessed within the village, shows which areas are public and private and gives an indication which open spaces are visible from publicly accessible viewpoints. Open spaces that are accessible to the public, or are visible from public rights of way are likely to have a higher contribution to the perceived open space character of the village.
- 6.1.2 The village is a compact and nucleated settlement located on the springline at the foot of the Berkshire Downs. Blewbury Conservation Area covers the majority of the village and contains 59 listed buildings, including St Michael's Church. In addition to the buildings, the cob walls (some of which are listed) and waterways within the village have historic value.
- 6.1.3 The public rights of way within the village are generally enclosed by walls, vegetation or fenced boundaries, opening out at 'The Cleve' (one of the waterways), the 'Playclose' public open space, the churchyard and along Watts Lane and Church End, where there is privately owned open space visible adjacent to the footpath.
- 6.1.4 The character of the landscape within the village settlement boundary is markedly different from the surrounding landscape as it is small scale, intimate and has close associations with the waterways that run through the village. Water is a significant feature within the village and has shaped the settlement pattern, routes and open spaces within the village. The village also has significant tree cover with areas of woodland and orchard, along with tree belts lining watercourses and hedgerow boundaries. Both the vegetation and the frequent stone or cob walls (another key feature of the village) provide the intimacy and feeling of enclosure that pervades the village. The large gardens and frequency of open space, within the conservation area in particular, reinforces the rural character of the village. The eastern edge of the village is higher density development with smaller gardens and fewer areas of open space.
- 6.1.5 For the purposes of this assessment, the open space within the village has been subdivided into categories. These reflect the land use of the open space and the land ownership, both of which are important factors to consider when assessing the contribution

that the open space makes to the village landscape as a whole. The list of categories includes:

- Recreation areas - the recreation ground to the south-west of the village, along with the school playing fields and play area have been categorised as recreation areas.
- Allotments – located to the north-east of the village.
- Public open space used by the village - Three areas have been identified as public open space used by the village. These include the 'Playclose' an area of informal open space within the heart of the village, the churchyard and a triangle of open space (The Pound) on the corner of South Street, which contains trees, pathways and seating. This area provides a pedestrian gateway to the village and links to the 'Playclose' and 'The Cleve', one of the village water features.
- Incidental open space with public access – These include remaining areas of informal public open space within the village, including areas of amenity space associated with some of the newer housing developments, which are important to adjacent residents but are less accessible to the rest of the village. The category also includes some of the significant roadside verges, which enhance the rural character of the village.
- Public open space with potential for improvement – One area of public open space has been identified that is under-utilised or has the potential to be improved in landscape terms. This is a small pocket of open space at the end of 'Eastfields'.
- Private open space / gardens used on occasion by the village – Which includes the amphitheatre within one of the private residences and the gardens of Ashbrook House. These garden spaces are within Conservation Area, and so are subject to the constraints of these, and in the case of Ashbrook House, listed buildings policies. The garden spaces have been enjoyed by the village residents with the permission of the landowner.
- Private open land / gardens with open views from publicly accessible viewpoints that contribute to the character of the village – These constitute small fields, areas of woodland or areas of private open space or gardens. They include the field and gardens to the north of 'The Cleve', four areas adjacent to the 'Playclose', an area of woodland adjacent to the church, a tract of land opposite the church on Church End, Fields and woodland lining Watts Lane, the large open garden space of Lowmans off South Street and a walled area on the corner of Church Road and South Street. Only areas of private open space, that have been assessed as visible from publicly accessible viewpoints (e.g. footpaths, roads or open space) have been included. HDA have also identified spaces that are currently unmanaged (the tract of land opposite the church on Church End and a square of land to the south-west of the school playing fields).

6.1.6 Important walls within the village have also been identified, as these are a distinctive feature within the village. These include the listed cob walls and stone walls that have been identified within Blewbury Parish Plan 2004 (Ref 4).

6.2 Landscape guidelines for future development

6.2.1 Should any of the internal spaces within the village come forward for development, due consideration should be given to the effect that development would have on the overall character of the village.

6.2.2 The majority of open spaces within the village lie within the Conservation Area, which is protected through local planning policy. Any proposed development would need to preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As discussed earlier in the report, the waterways, incidental open spaces and feature walls are an intrinsic part of the special character of the Conservation Area. As a result, the primary open spaces and routes are particularly sensitive to new development, and should be preserved. Any new development within the village should consider their relationship to the open spaces, waterways and routes within the village, should maintain the green and leafy character of the village and should respect the context of their location within the village. Consideration should also be given to the scale, form and massing of built development, along with the materials to be used.

6.2.3 Development proposed within the village but outside the conservation area would still need to consider the setting to the Conservation Area and the contribution that the proposals could make to the overall character of the village.

7 References

- Ref 1 - Countryside Agency (now Natural England)/SNH (April 2002), '*Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland*'
- Ref 2 - North Wessex Downs AONB Board (2002); '*North Wessex Downs AONB: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment*'
- Ref 3 - Oxfordshire County Council (2004), '*Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study*'.
- Ref 4 - Blewbury Parish Council (2004); '*Blewbury Parish Plan*'

Appendix 2 – Analysis of Landscape Capacity

Analysis of Parish scale Landscape Character Areas

The characteristics of each Parish scale landscape character area is analysed against criteria identified in Topic Paper 6 of the Countryside Agency's landscape Character Assessment Guidance, along with identification of any designations, gap policy, and consideration of the historic landscape characterisation of the area. This information is then fed into the landscape sensitivity and landscape value assessments.

Landscape Sensitivity

LCA	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness and condition)	Visual contribution to the distinctive setting to settlement	Inconsistency with existing village / settlement form / pattern	Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape	Sensitivity	Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity
	low high				1-4 Negligible 5-8 Slight 9-12 Moderate 13-16 Substantial 17-20 Major	
	4 8 12 16 20					

Landscape Value

LCA	Landscape Designation	Other Designation (nature conservation, heritage, flooding, amenity, including flood zone)	Contribution to setting of village / settlement	Special cultural/ historic associations	Perceptual aspects (eg. scenic beauty, views, tranquillity, wildness)	Landscape Value	Final Assessment Landscape Value
	low high					1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major	
	5 10 15 20 25						

In order to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to development, assumptions have been made as to the likely built form of any new development areas. It has been assumed that buildings would be 2 storeys in height. There would be open space provision and a landscape framework with tree planting of appropriate scale, area and design to ensure that the development achieves a good fit in the landscape.

Sensitivity and value ratings range from Major, Substantial, Moderate, Slight and Negligible. Areas judged to have Major or Substantial sensitivity or value indicates that development would have significant detrimental effect on the character of the landscape. Development in these character areas should only be on a very small scale and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting to settlement or the wider landscape.

Table 1 Landscape Sensitivity

No	Landscape Character Area	Inherent Landscape Qualities (intactness ¹ and condition) low high					Visual contribution to the distinctive setting to settlement					Inconsistency with existing village / settlement form / pattern					Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape					Sensitivity 1-4 Negligible 5-8 Slight 9-12 Moderate 13-16 Substantial 17-20 Major 4 8 12 16 20					Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity
1	Blewbury Escarpment	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	19 Major
2	Blewbury and Upton Escarpment	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	18 Major
3	Blewbury and Upton Plain	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X		14 Substantial
4	Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	17 Major
5	Blewburton Farmland Slopes	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X		15 Substantial
6	Mill Stream Pasture	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X					X			12 Moderate
7	Winterbrook Farmstead	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X						X		13 Substantial
8	Eastfield Farmstead	X	X	X			X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X		13 Substantial
9	Blewbury Southern Pasture	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X		14 Substantial
10	Churn Hill Downland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	19 Major
11	Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	20 Major

¹ “ from visual, functional and ecological perspectives” p53 The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage ‘Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002

Table 2 Landscape Value

No	Landscape Character Area	Landscape Designation					Other Designation (open access land, nature conservation, BAP, heritage, flooding, amenity, Conservation area)	Contribution to setting of village / settlement / outstanding assets					Special cultural/historic associations	Perceptual aspects (eg. scenic beauty, views, tranquillity, wildness)					Landscape Value 1-5 Negligible 6-10 Slight 11-15 Moderate 16-20 Substantial 21-25 Major 5 10 15 20 25					Final Assessment Landscape Value
		low			high																			
1	Blewbury Escarpment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X						23 Major
2	Blewbury and Upton Escarpment	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X	X								X	17 Substantial
3	Blewbury and Upton Plain	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X	X				X	X	X	X		16 Substantial
4	Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X					X	X	X	X		15 Substantial
5	Blewburton Farmland Slopes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X				X	X	X	X		20 Substantial
6	Mill Stream Pasture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X				X	X	X			18 Substantial
7	Winterbrook Farmstead	X	X	X	X	X	X						X						X	X				12 Moderate
8	Eastfield Farmstead	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X						X	X				13 Moderate
9	Blewbury Southern Pasture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X				X	X	X			18 Substantial
10	Churn Hill Downland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		23 Major
11	Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	25 Major

Combining Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value to give Landscape Capacity

The landscape sensitivity and landscape value ratings are combined to give an overall assessment relating to landscape capacity. Landscape capacity is defined as the extent to which the landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on landscape character, reflecting the inherent sensitivity and value of the landscape. A landscape of high sensitivity or value therefore has a low landscape capacity:

		<i>Landscape Value</i>				
		Major	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
<i>Landscape Sensitivity</i>	Major	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / medium
	Substantial	Negligible	Negligible / low	Low	Low / Medium	Medium
	Moderate	Negligible / Low	Low	Medium	Medium / high	High / medium
	Slight	Low	Low / medium	Medium /high	High	High / Very high/
	Negligible	Low / medium	Medium	High / medium	High / Very high/	Very high

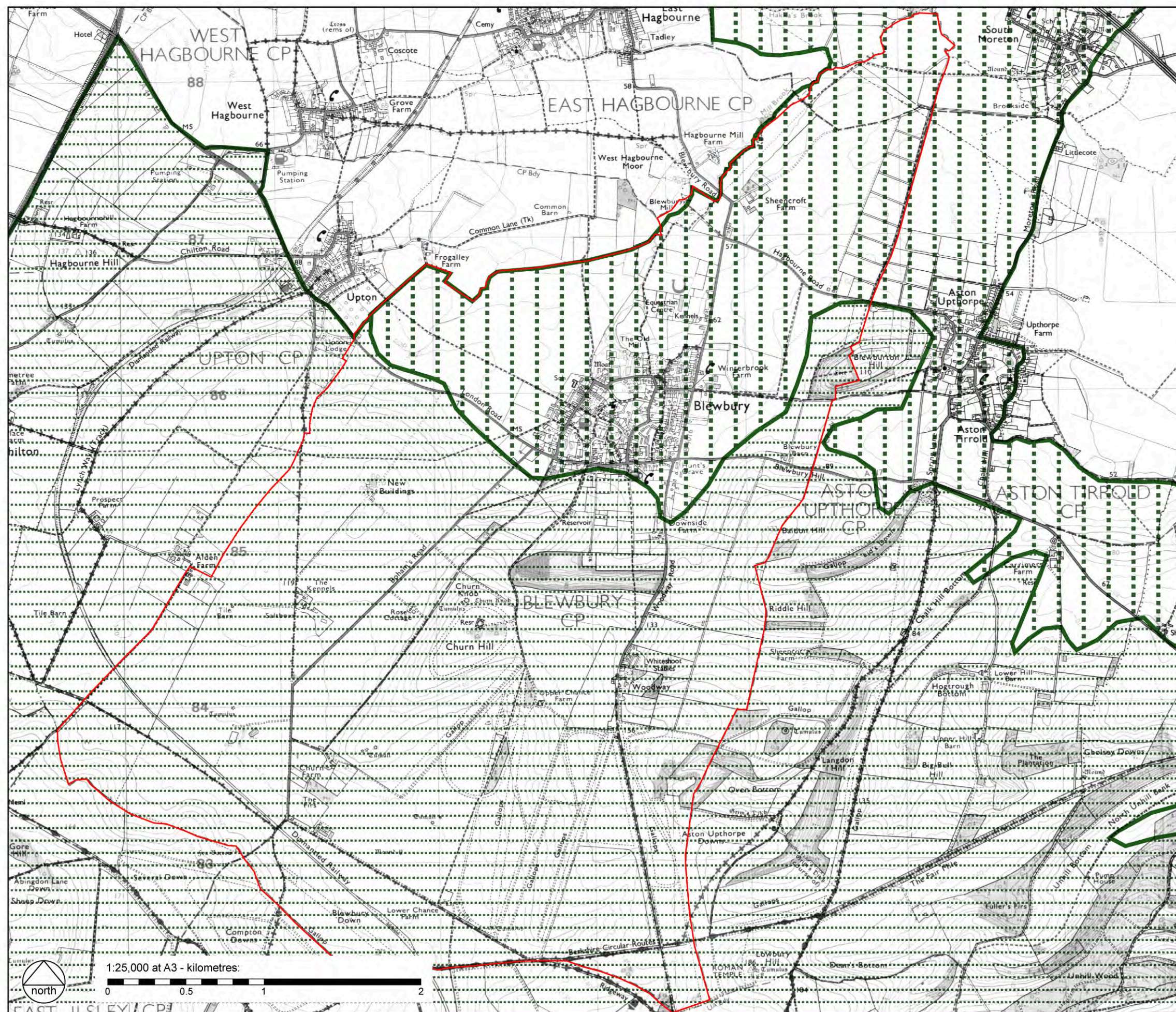
Landscape capacity ratings range from Very High, High, Medium, Low and Negligible. A capacity rating of Medium, in relation to a village settlement, identifies a landscape character area with the capacity for limited development, of up to 30 dwellings, having regard for the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent local landscape character areas. A capacity rating of Low identifies a landscape character area with a very limited capacity for development, with a potential for up to 10 dwellings, where the setting and form of the existing settlement would be maintained. Negligible capacity would not accommodate new development and re-use of existing buildings would need to be compatible with the character of the surrounding landscape and land use.

The landscape value, sensitivity and capacity assessments of each Parish scale character area are summarised in tabulated form in Table 3 below. Landscape sensitivity and value may not be completely uniform across an entire character area and therefore the capacity across a character area may vary slightly. This is commented on in Section 5 of the report, where particularly relevant.

A final assessment of each character area is then undertaken to assess the landscape capacity in relation to the overall settlement pattern and morphology of the village to ascertain whether development would form a logical extension to the village, consistent with the existing settlement pattern.

Table 3 Landscape Capacity

No	Landscape Character Area	Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Value	Landscape Capacity
01	Blewbury Escarpment	Major	Major	Negligible
02	Blewbury and Upton Escarpment	Major	Substantial	Negligible
03	Blewbury and Upton Plain	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
04	Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture	Major	Substantial	Negligible
05	Blewburton Farmland Slopes	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
06	Mill Stream Pasture	Moderate	Substantial	Low
07	Winterbrook Farmstead	Substantial	Moderate	Low
08	Eastfield Farmstead	Substantial	Moderate	Low
09	Blewbury Southern Pasture	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible / Low
10	Churn Hill Downland	Major	Major	Negligible
11	Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland	Major	Major	Negligible



KEY

 Parish boundary

North Wessex Downs AONB Character Areas
(March 2002)

 Character Area 1D: Blewbury Downs

 Character Area 5D: Moreton Plain

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council
PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan
TITLE:
North Wessex Downs AONB Character Areas
SCALE AT A3:
1:25,000
DATE:
November 2014

737.1 / 03

HDA 1

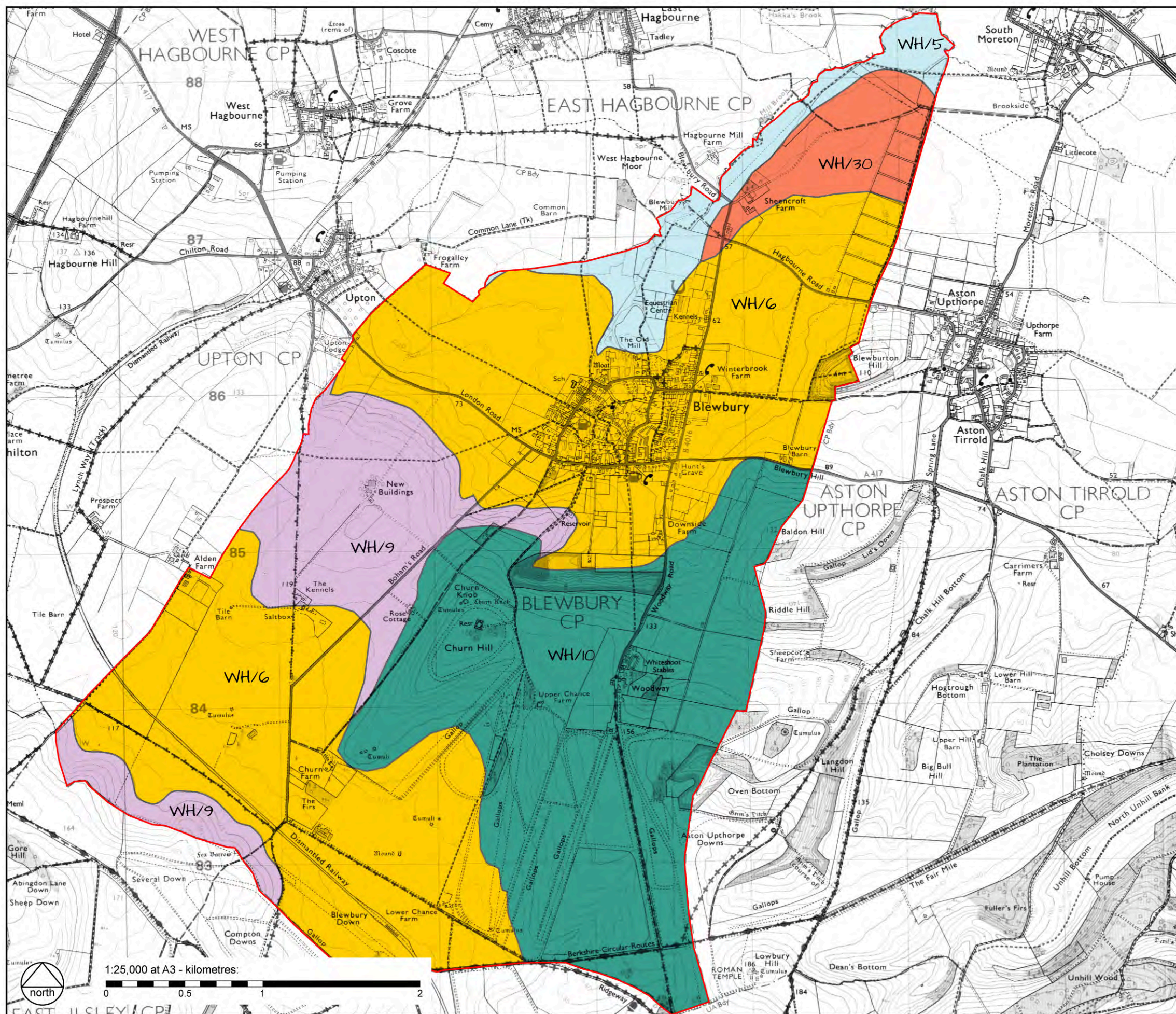
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Masterplanning
Ecology





KEY

Parish boundary

OWLS (2004) Character types and Local Character Areas for Blewbury Parish

- Alluvial Lowlands:
WH/5 Brightwell-cum-Sotwell
- Terrace Farmland:
WH/30 Poultry
- Rolling farmland:
WH/6 Blewbury
- Chalk Downland and Slopes:
WH/9 Upton Downland
- Wooded Downlands:
WH/10 Blewbury Downs

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council

PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan

TITLE:
OWLS Character types and Character Areas

SCALE AT A3:
1:25,000

DATE:
November 2014

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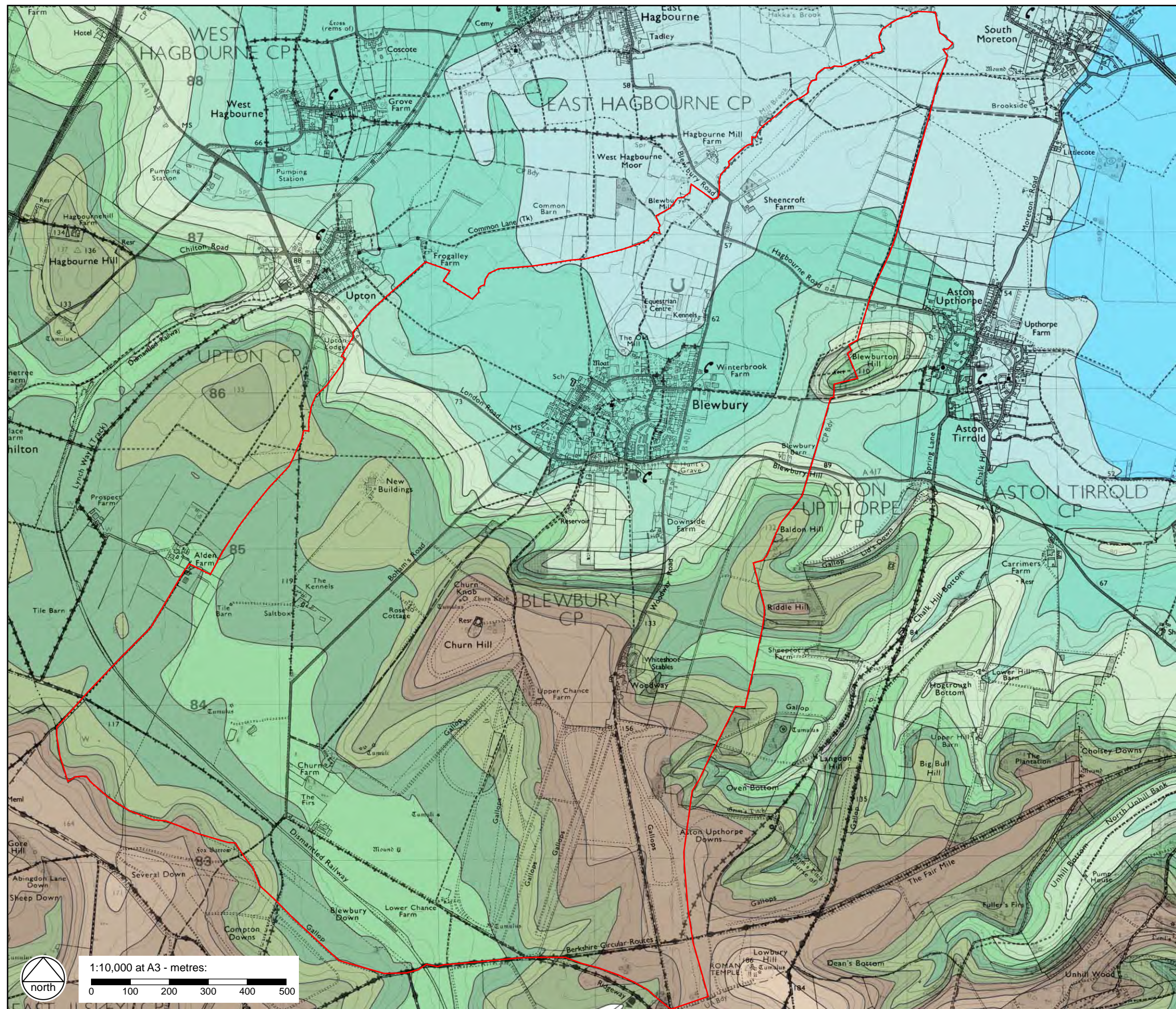
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Ecology





KEY

Parish boundary

Contour levels



CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council
PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan
TITLE:
Topography

SCALE AT A3:
1:25,000

DATE:
October 2014

737.1 / 01

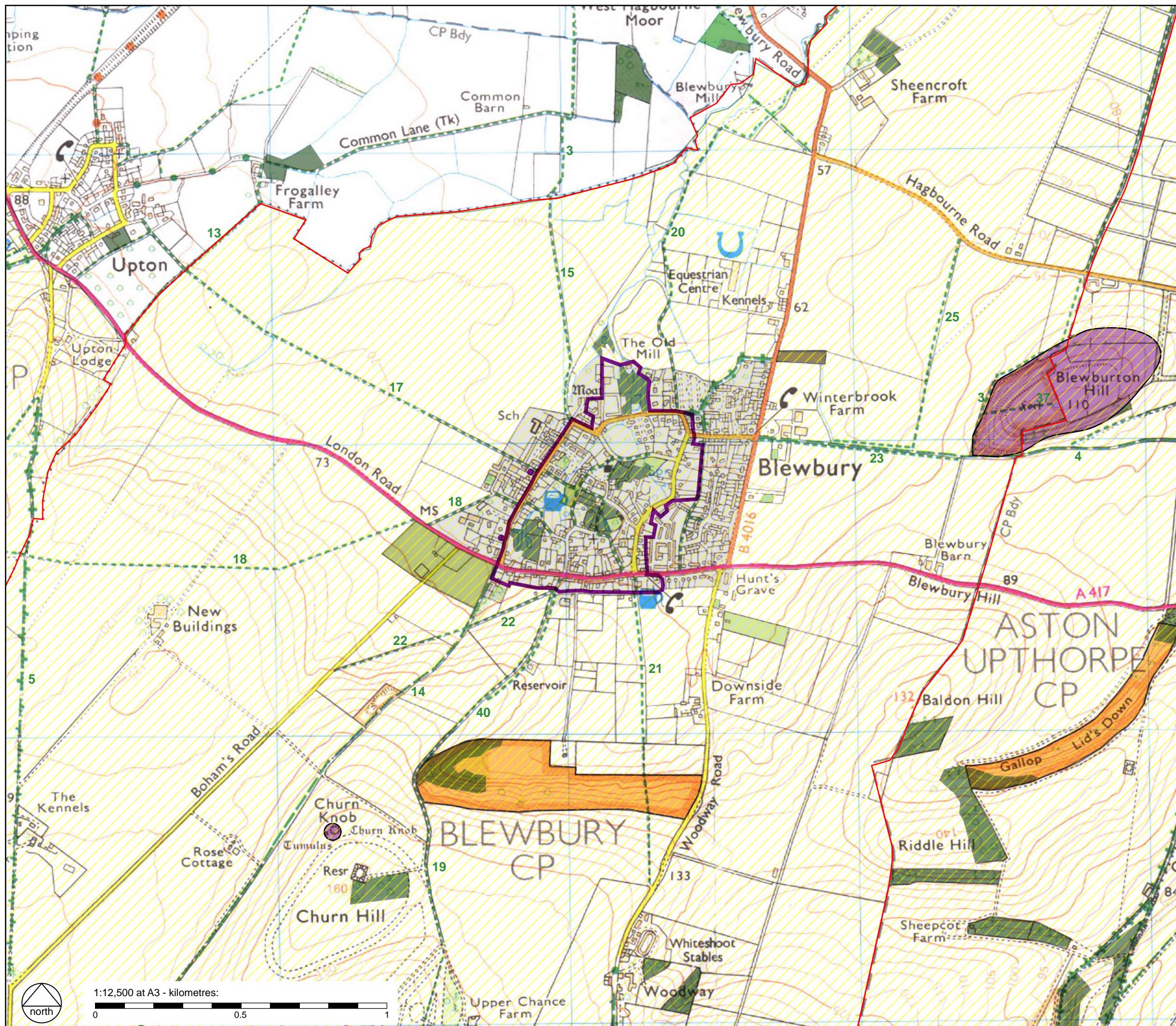
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KEY

Parish boundary

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Local Heritage

Conservation Area (includes listed buildings)

Scheduled Monument

Listed building outside of conservation area

Nature designations

Ancient semi natural woodland

Traditional orchard BAP Priority habitat

Deciduous woodland BAP Priority habitat

Public rights of way

Recreation areas

Allotments

Open access land

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council
PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood plan
TITLE:
Local designations

SCALE AT A3:
1:12,500

DATE:
November 2014

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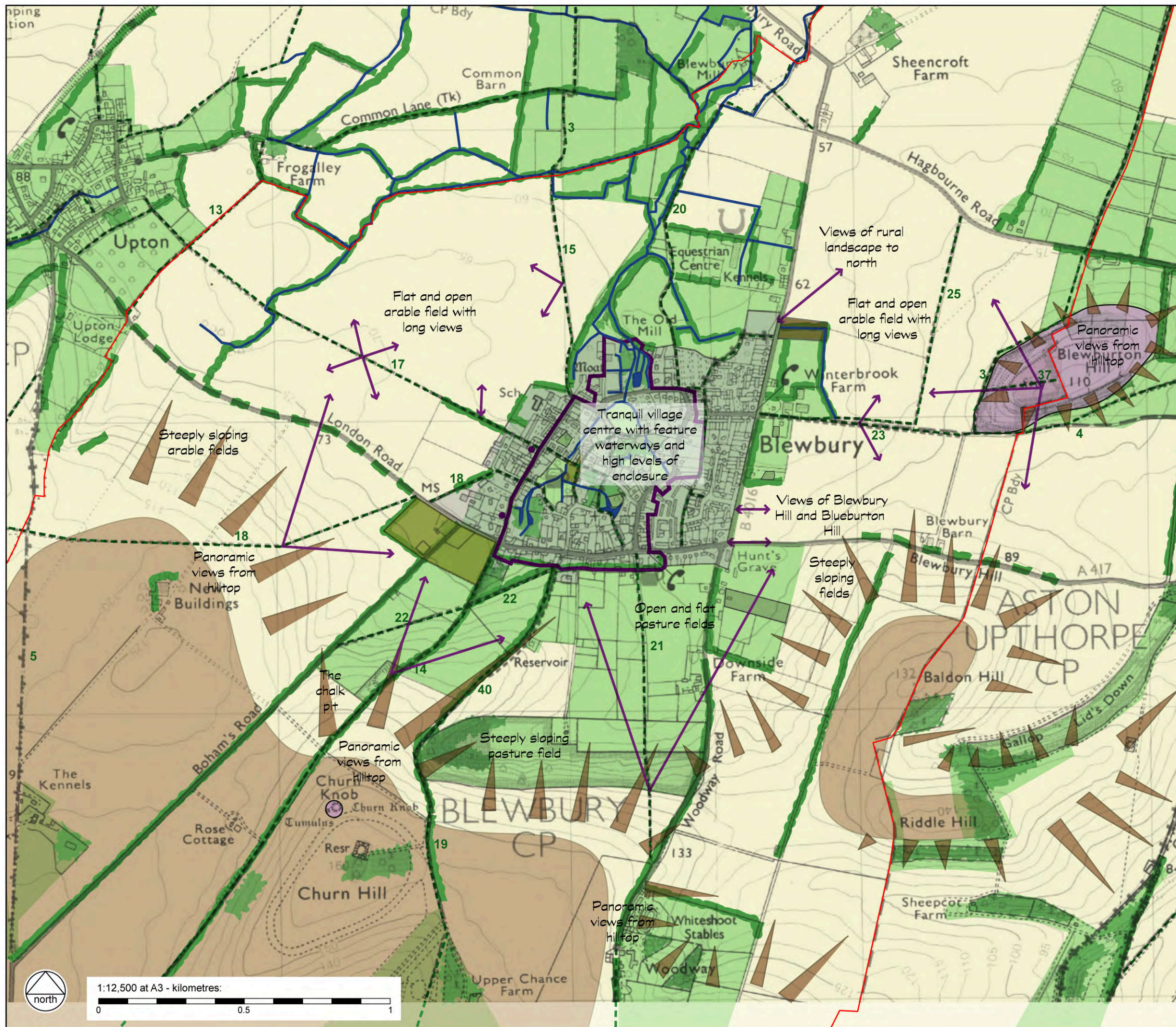
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KEY

- Parish boundary
- Conservation Area (includes listed buildings)
- Scheduled Monument
- Publicly accessible and locally important views
- Public rights of way
- Watercourses
- Slopes
- Rounded downland hilltops

Land use

- Recreation areas
- Allotments
- Traditional orchard BAP Priority habitat
- Areas of woodland and tree lines
- Arable field
- Pasture field

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council

PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood plan

TITLE:
Parish landscape assessment

SCALE AT A3:
1:12,500

DATE:
November 2014

737.1/ 04 **HDA 4**

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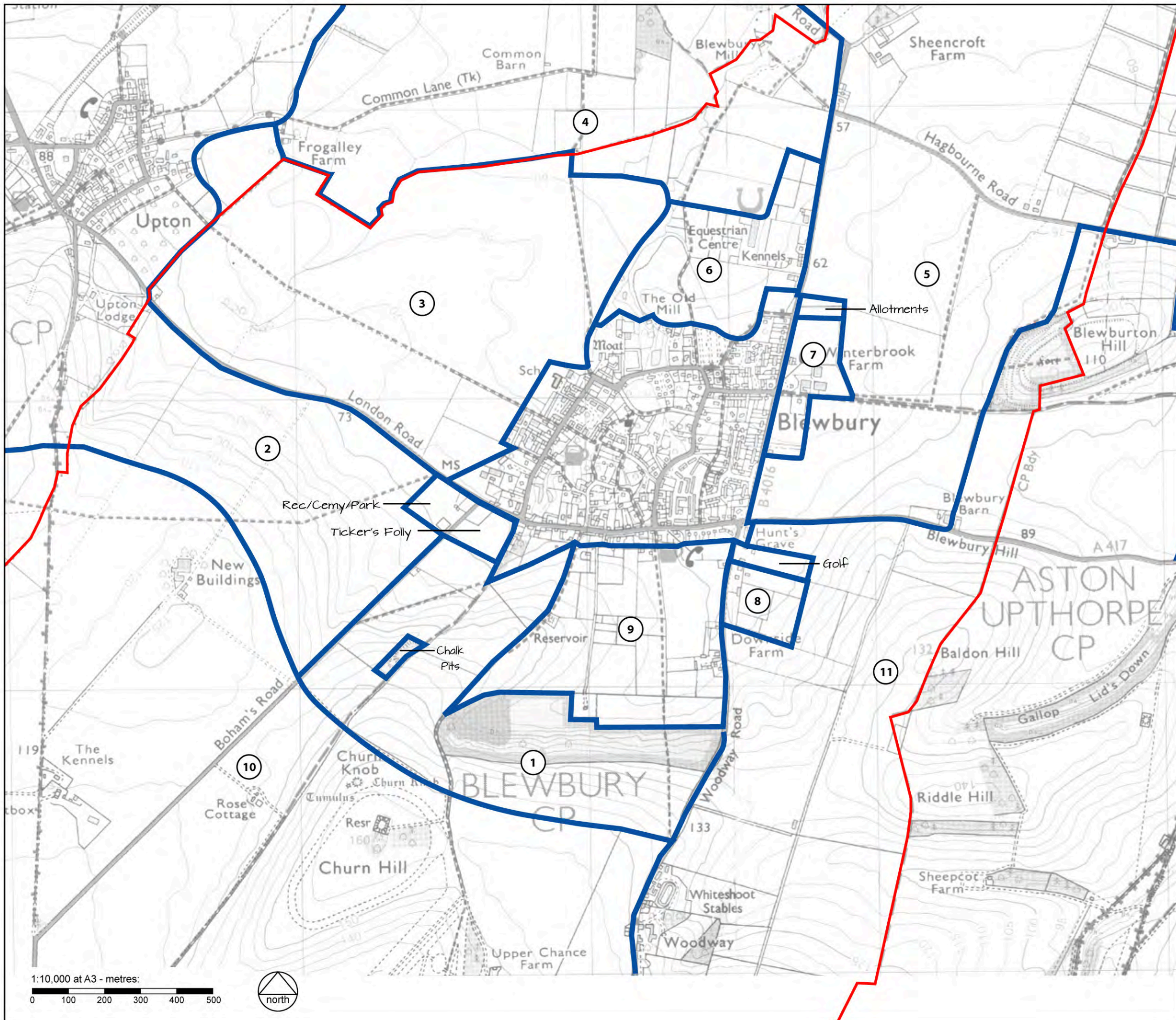
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Ecology

hda



1:12,500 at A3 - kilometres:

0 0.5 1

north



KEY

-  Parish boundary
-  Character area boundary

Character areas:

- 1 - Blewbury Escarpment
- 2 - Blewbury and Upton Escarpment
- 3 - Blewbury and Upton Plain
- 4 - Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture
- 5 - Blewburton Farmland Slopes
- 6 - Mill Stream Pasture
- 7 - Winterbrook Farmstead
- 8 - Eastfield Farmstead
- 9 - Blewbury Southern Pasture
- 10 - Churn Hill Downland
- 11 - Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council
PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood plan
TITLE:
Parish Character Areas
SCALE AT A3:
1:12,500
DATE:
November 2014

737.1/ 05

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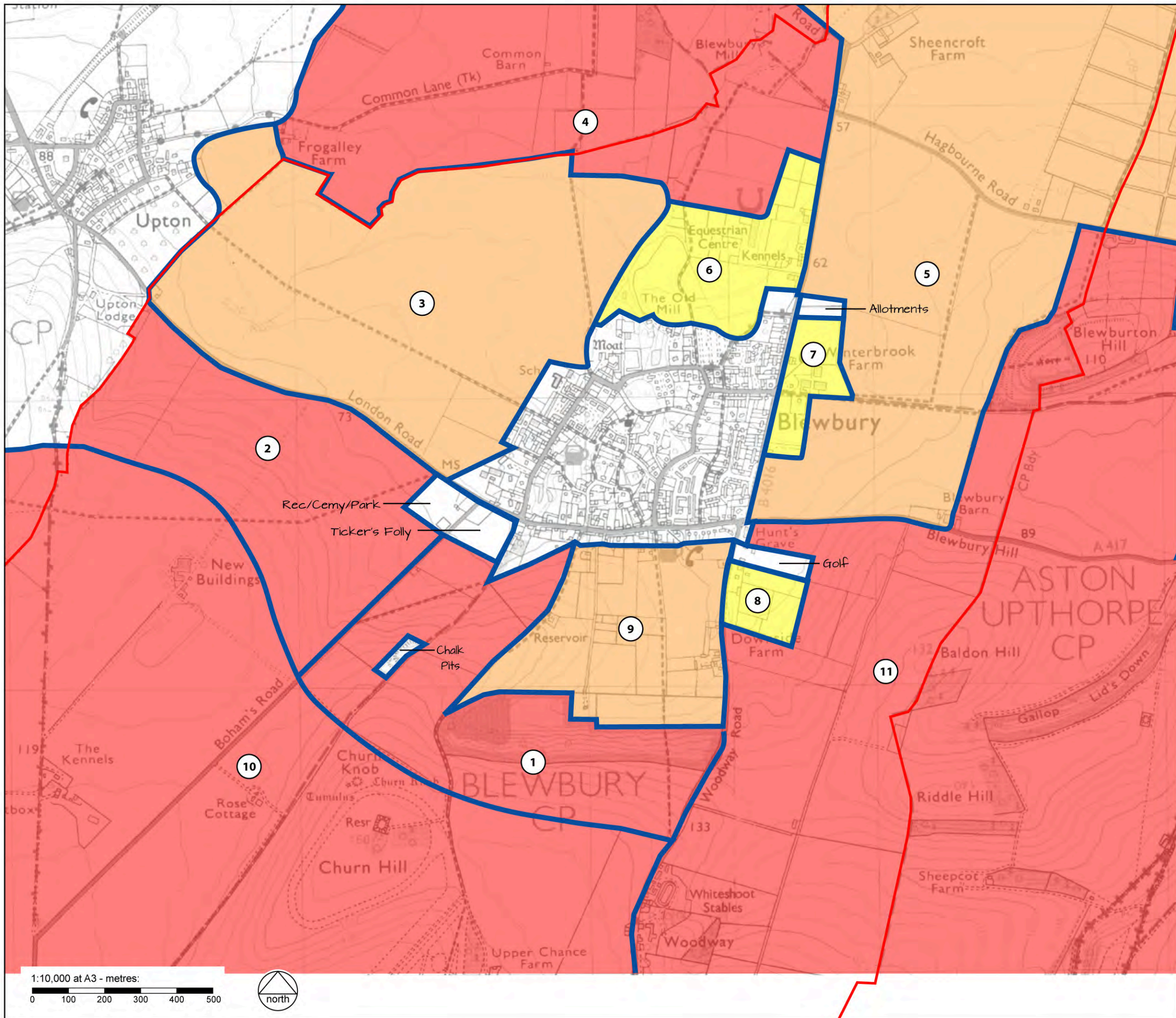
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1:10,000 at A3 - metres:

0 100 200 300 400 500





KEY

- Parish boundary
- Character area boundary

Character areas:

- 1 - Blewbury Escarpment
- 2 - Blewbury and Upton Escarpment
- 3 - Blewbury and Upton Plain
- 4 - Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture
- 5 - Blewburton Farmland Slopes
- 6 - Mill Stream Pasture
- 7 - Winterbrook Farmstead
- 8 - Eastfield Farmstead
- 9 - Blewbury Southern Pasture
- 10 - Churn Hill Downland
- 11 - Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland

Landscape Capacity

- Medium / High
- Medium
- Low / Medium
- Low
- Negligible / Low
- Negligible

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council
PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood plan
TITLE:
Parish Character Areas - Landscape capacity
SCALE AT A3:
1:12,500
DATE:
January 2015

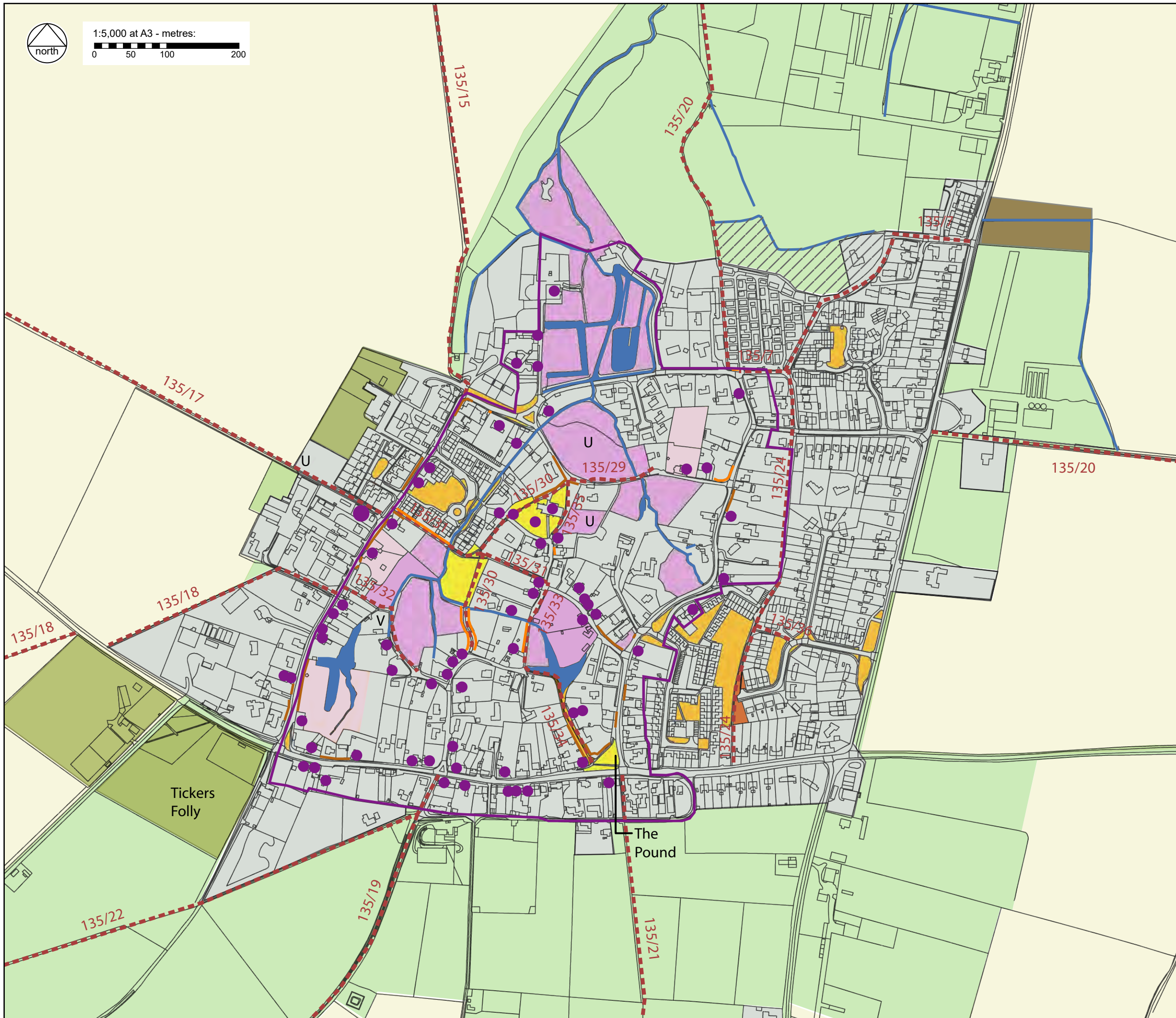
737.1/ 12

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KEY

- Conservation Area (includes listed buildings)
- Listed building
- Public rights of way
- Watercourses
- Important walls - cob walls or stone walls
- Important walls - brick walls
- Outline planning permission granted for new housing
- Public open space used by village
- Incidental open space with public access
- Public open space with potential for improvement
- Private open space / gardens on occasion used by the village
- Private open land / gardens with open views from publicly accessible viewpoints that contribute to the landscape character of the village
- Recreation areas
- Allotments
- Arable field
- Pasture field
- U Unmanaged

NOTE: Many private gardens contribute to the character of the village, however this plan focusses on the key public and private spaces / gardens which define the internal character of the village.

CLIENT:
Blewbury Parish Council

PROJECT:
Blewbury Neighbourhood plan

TITLE:
Village internal space assessment

SCALE AT A3:
1:5000

DATE:
October 2016

737.1/ 10D **HDA 7**

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Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan

Parish Character Areas - Supporting Photographs

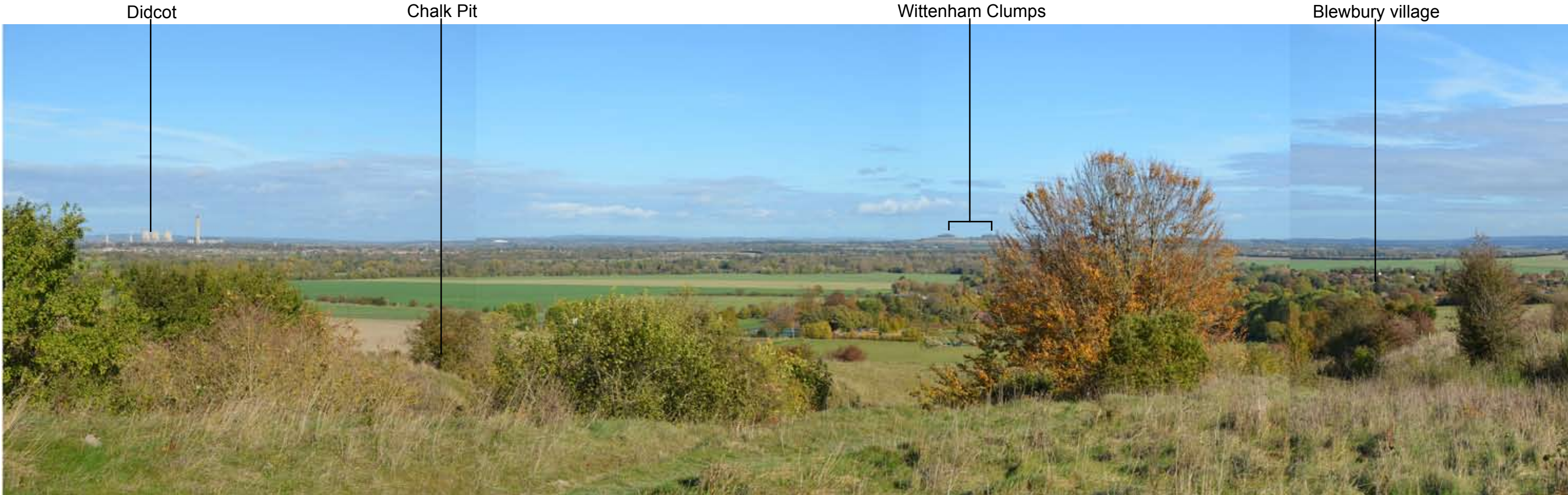
For

Blewbury Parish Council

By

Hankinson Duckett Associates

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 1



View from seating area to the south of the Chalk Pit



View from the northern edge of the Chalk Pit

Blewburton Hill



Chilterns



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 1



Looking north from the top of the escarpment on footpath 21

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 2



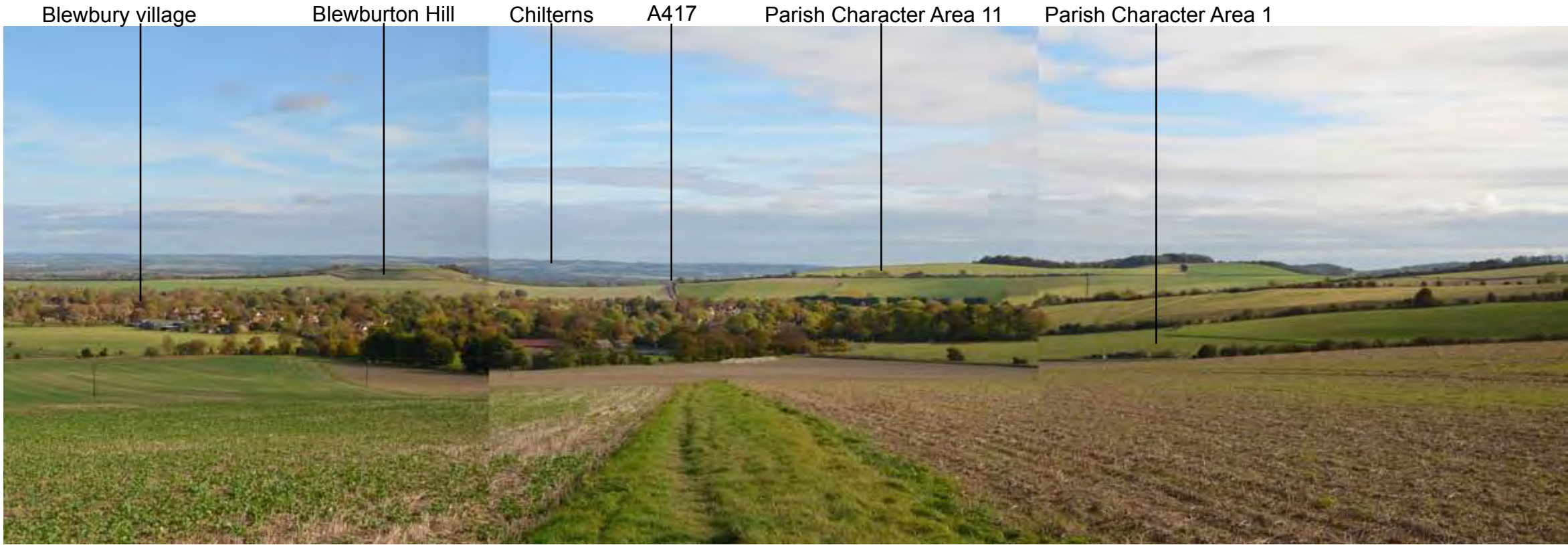
Panoramic views from the top of footpath 18

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 1



Looking south up the scarp face from footpath 22

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 2 - continued



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 3



Looking north from the western edge of the village, on footpath 17

Parish Character Area 1

Parish Character Area 2



Looking south and west from the middle of footpath 17 - the Downs form the skyline to the south

Western edge of village

School



Footpath 17

Upton



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 3



Looking south and west from the south-western edge of the village

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 5



View east from the south-eastern corner of the village, on Bessels Way

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 4



Looking south and east from Blewbury Road, to the north of the village

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 5 continued

Parish Character Area 11



Parish Character Area 8



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 5



View south-west from Bessels Way at the south-western edge of the village

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 5



View north-west from Bessels Way at the north-western edge of the village



Allotments



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 6



Looking north through a gap in the vegetation on footpath 7, a public byway

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 6



Looking north-west from footpath 20, to the north of the village



Footpath 20



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 9



View north-east from footpath 40, to the south of the village

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 9



Looking north at the Blewbury village from footpath 21, to the north of the village

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 9



Looking south at the Downs escarpment from footpath 21, to the north of the village



PARISH CHARACTER AREA 10



Looking north-east from the southern end of Boham's Road

PARISH CHARACTER AREA 11



View from the top of Blewburton Hill



Parish Character Area 6

Parish Character Area 5

Parish Character Area 4

Didcot





**Blewbury
Neighbourhood
Development
Plan**

Appendix D: Village Character Assessment

This appendix presents of the full text of the Village Character Assessment carried out for the Parish Council.



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Blewbury Village Character Assessment



Dorian ATA Crone BA, BArch, DipTP, RIBA, MRTPI, IHBC and
Dr Kathryn Davies BA (Hons), MA, DPhil (Oxon), Dip TP, MRTPI, IHBC

November 2015

NOTE

This Village Character Assessment sits alongside the Landscape Assessment and the two should be read together. The latter considers landscape aspects of the village only and this assessment gives a heritage perspective. It looks at the archaeology and history embodied in different elements of the village, its aesthetic characteristics and how people value these. It may, therefore, lead to different conclusions from the Landscape Assessment, hence the need to consider the two together.

CONTENTS

1. Summary of village character
2. Introduction
3. Methodology
3. Context
4. Character areas:
 - i. Inner Area
 - ii. Westbrook Street
 - iii. Church End/Berry Lane
 - iv. Development to the east of the village
 - v. London Road and Pilgrim's Way
 - vi. South Street
5. Conclusions
6. Recommendations
7. References
- Appendix – Note on the authors

1. Summary of village character

The old core of the village has a unique character derived from its ancient layout, its network of informal, winding lanes and footpaths, and lack of vehicular traffic. Few villages are as quiet and dark as the centre of this settlement. The lack of highway engineering and street lighting are major contributing factors. The ancient church and churchyard are found at its centre, see Fig. 1, with traditional buildings surrounding it, including the old school and almshouses. Buildings of all types and sizes ranging over a 500 year period are found on ancient plots of various sizes, some very large, and still containing the remnants of the old orchards which covered the entire village during the 19th century. As a result of the village's location on the spring line, several watercourses flow across the village before joining together to form the Mill Brook to the north, and there is a large body of water, the Cleve, in the heart of the village. The juxtaposition of tightly grouped historic buildings with open plots of orchards, gardens or unmanaged land and enclosed spaces create an extraordinarily attractive environment. In some places the paths appear to be in deep countryside and in others the views are of picturesque village scenes.



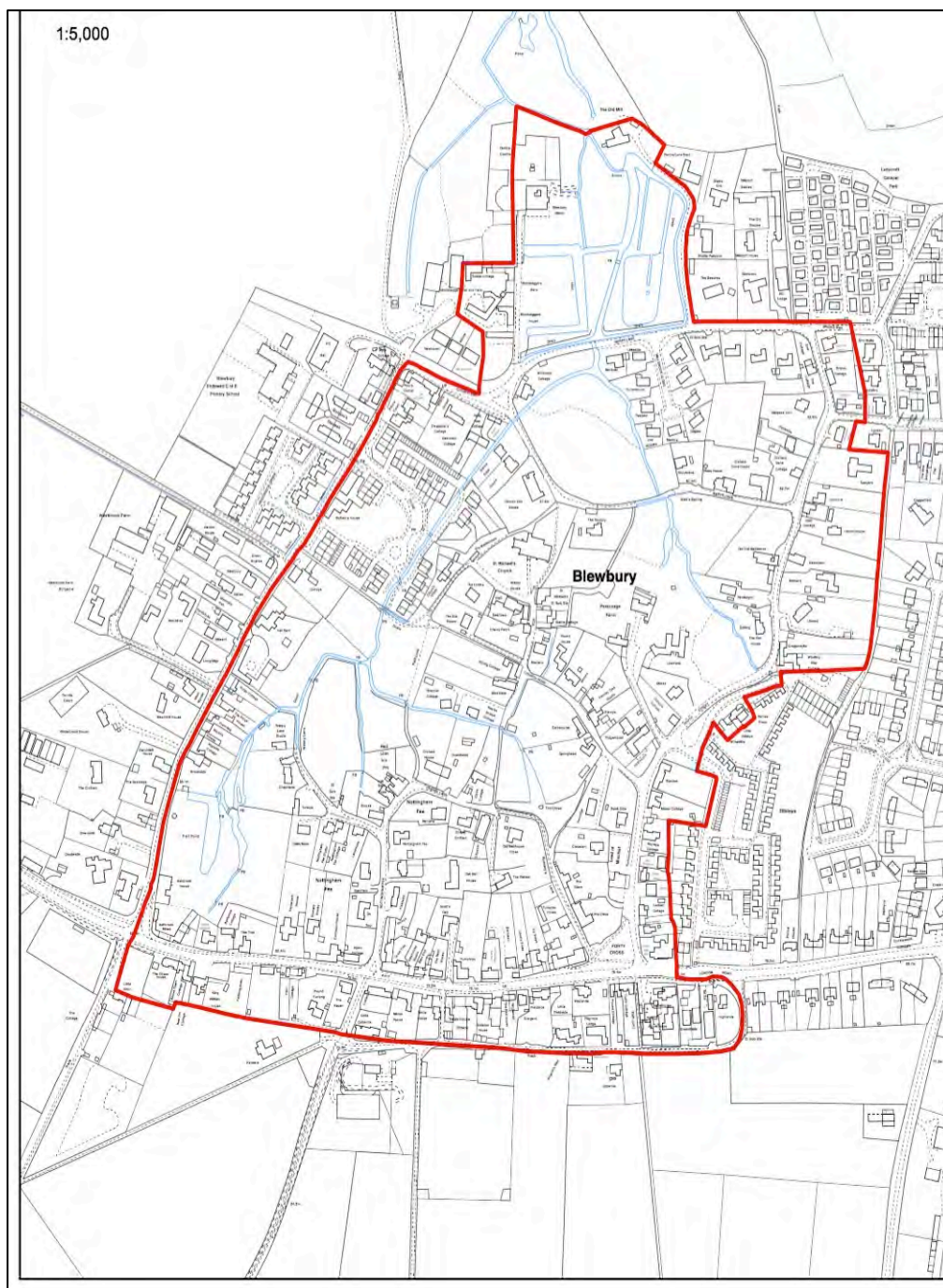
Fig. 1: St. Michael's Churchyard

The ring of roads surrounding the core, Westbrook Street, Church End/Berry Lane, South St and London Road, all take vehicular traffic, though only London Road has through traffic. Apart from the latter, these roads are quiet village lanes, used only by local traffic. A mix of historic and modern buildings front onto the streets of a similar range of dates, types, size and materials to those found in the core of the village. Many are set back within their plots and screened from the road by mature hedges and trees, enhancing the prevailing rural character. Narrow footpaths and lanes off these roads offer glimpsed views of open countryside, the former open fields of the village. London Road is inevitably different in character because it carries through traffic, though this is by no means heavily congested. Many traditional buildings front onto the road, mostly near the highway's

edge. This reflects the former commercial former functions of these buildings, and they retain a strong village character. Again, narrow paths lead off the road, either into the core of the village or up onto Pilgrim's Way – which runs parallel to the south – and then on to the Downs.

Markedly different is the character of the area to the east between the old village and Bessel's Way, the B4016 leading to Didcot. This is almost entirely 20th century residential houses, along with some very recent additions. The houses themselves are not especially locally distinctive, though the range in styles, scale and date gives interesting variety. The layout, particularly of some recent development, is reminiscent of the rest of the village in its informality and its open spaces. This area also shares with the rest of the village the lack of intrusive highway engineering and street lighting.

Map 1: Blewbury Conservation Area boundary



2. Introduction

This character assessment has been produced as part of the evidence base for the Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan. Underpinning this is the understanding that the village must change to stay vital and sustainable. In managing this change it is crucial to ensure that the story of the village is not lost. This story is contained within the built form of the village and its surrounding land; its layout and open spaces; its natural features and archaeology; its fields, lanes and road network connecting it to its wider context. Planning policies for the village should, therefore, seek to enhance the understanding of this story i.e. the significance of the historic environment. This relates not just to the visual qualities of the village but also how people value it, including historical and archaeological dimensions of the buildings and spaces in the village which help in understanding its development.

The assessment is focused on the conservation area but also takes in the surrounding land of the parish, both developed and undeveloped, as this is inextricably linked to the conservation area. The Blewbury Conservation Area covers the old core of the village. It was declared in 1970 and amended in 1990; see Map 1. It contains 64 listed buildings, with a further 5 just outside the boundary. These are all grade II apart from the Church of St. Michael which is grade I. There is no existing published character assessment or management plan of the conservation area. Within the parish but outside the conservation area are several scheduled ancient monuments, including the Iron Age camp and fort at Blewburton Hill and Bronze Age barrows on the Downs.

Because of the complexity of the natural and man-made features this exercise provides an overview of the character. The lack of uniformity means that generalisations are inappropriate. Any sites proposed for development should have a further, more detailed, assessment of significance to ensure that no harm to the historic environment would result from development.

3. Methodology

A visual assessment was carried out over six visits in November 2015. Documentary work was undertaken in the Berkshire Record Office where published and primary sources were researched. Material published by the Blewbury Local History Group has been used and information has been obtained from discussions with local people. A detailed photographic record was made to supplement the survey.

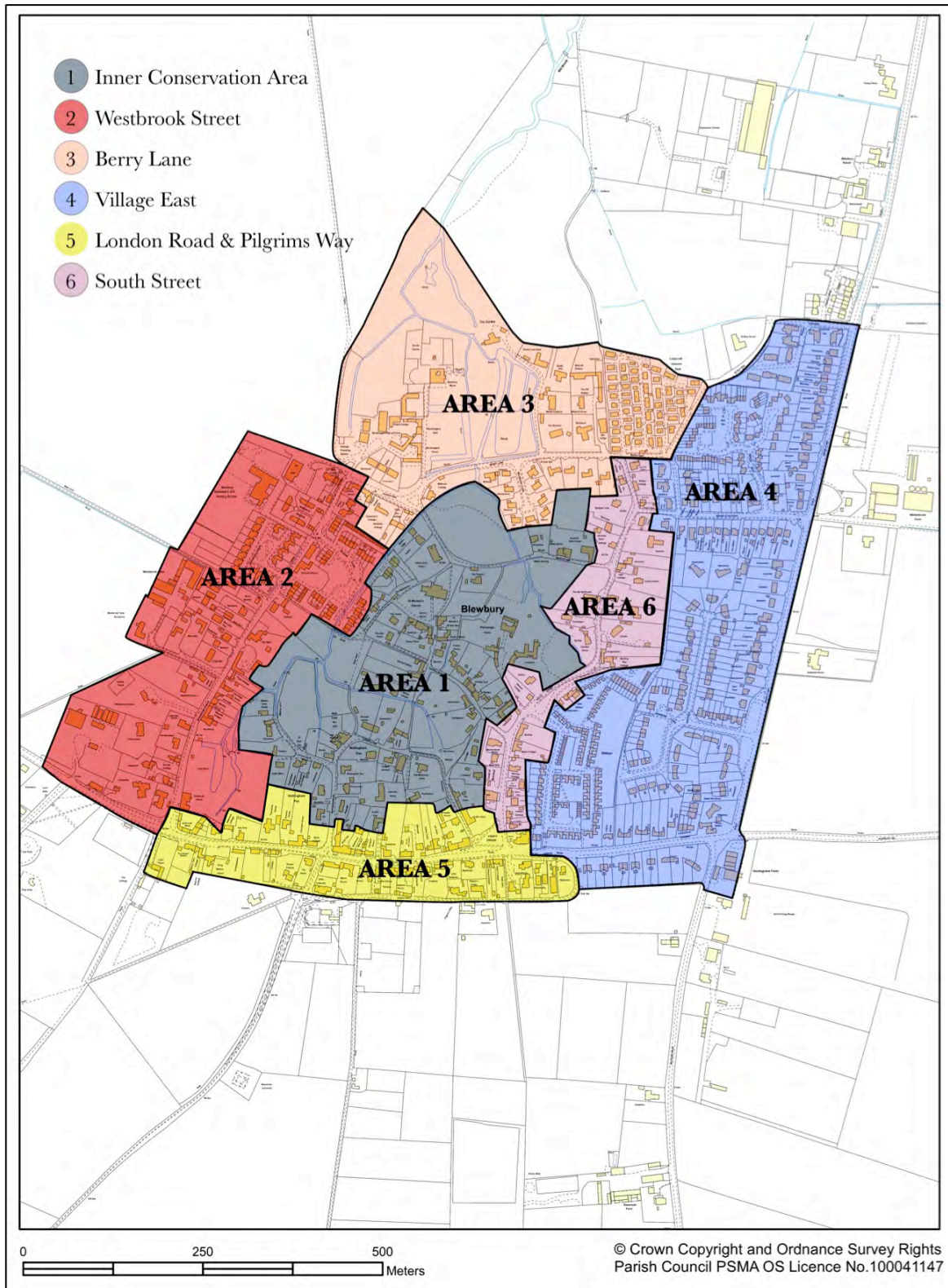
The built-up area of the village has been divided into six areas for the purposes of this analysis; see Map 2. There is some overlapping of characteristics between the areas and some variation within areas. There is generally no clear boundary between them. This analysis covers all of the conservation area and developed land to the west, north and east up to the village boundary. Land beyond the village boundary is also considered as this provides the context for the development of the village and is an integral part of it, both historically and currently.

All of the areas were surveyed using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. This looks at all the elements making a contribution to the village character, positive and negative, and assesses the value of each. This includes spaces, buildings, views, greenery and landscape features, and intangible qualities such as light and dark, noise and smell.

The significance of each area is articulated in accordance with English Heritage's *Conservation Principles*.¹ The values which make up the significance are summarised at the end of each section. The conclusion gives an overall summary and includes recommendations for protecting and enhancing this significance.

¹ English Heritage, *Conservation Principles*, 2008

Map 2: Village Character Areas



4. Context

4.1. Location

The village of Blewbury lies just south of Didcot at the foot of the Berkshire Downs. It is one of a number of villages which developed on the spring line and water is a major feature in the village. To the north are the flat lands of the clay vale and to the south are the chalk Downs. The A417 London Road connecting Reading and Wantage runs along the southern end of the village. The eastern edge of the village is bounded by the B4016 Bessel's Way, which leads north to Didcot via the village of East Hagbourne. To the south this becomes a track leading up onto the Downs.

Blewburton Hill just to the east of the village stands out in the clay vale as an island of chalk upland and is the site of an Iron Age hill fort. There are panoramic views over the Downs, the Chilterns and the Thames Valley. The entire parish lies with the North Wessex Downs AONB.

4.2. Historical development

This section deals with the historical development of the village insofar as it is expressed in the built form of the village today. The purpose is to understand the significance of the different elements that make up the historic context of the village, i.e. its archaeological and historical value. This account is based principally on documents in the Berkshire Record Office including the Enclosure Award 1805, the Tithe Award 1848, and the Ordnance Survey map series; published material on the village, an unpublished report by the Architectural History Practice Ltd. (AHP) on a timber-framed house in the village called Chapmans; census material online and discussions with local residents².

There is little published on the early development of the village itself, with archaeological investigations focusing on Blewburton Hill and the Downs. Here there is plenty of evidence of early settlement, including Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows and the Iron Age hill fort on Blewburton Hill. There is limited evidence on the settlement by the Anglo-Saxons, though a settlement on the site of the present village is thought to have been in existence by 500–600 AD. Anglo-Saxon burials have been found on Blewburton Hill. Other evidence of Anglo-Saxon development is thought to be in the lines of the thatched cob walls which criss-cross the village, though there is nothing to substantiate this; see Fig. 2. That said, the network of watercourses which run through the village determined its initial layout. The springs would have been the original reason for settling here and the expanse of water of the Cleve has considerable historical significance. However, much of the land around the water courses would be damp and boggy, especially in winter, so the paths connecting the most important elements of the village would probably always have been confined to the dry land. These ancient tracks, some of them bounded by cob walls with thatched or tiled 'tops' still dominate the layout of the village.

² Peter Saunders and Audrey Long, members of the Blewbury Local History Group.



Fig. 2: Cob walls defining ancient pathway

A recent archaeological investigation within the conservation area has revealed the foundations of an Anglo-Saxon house on the Ashbook House site. Odd finds elsewhere in the area suggest that the heart of the village may have been inhabited from the Neolithic period and that therefore there is considerable archaeological potential within the village.

The 7th century missionary St. Birinus is thought to have passed through this area on his way to Dorchester, preaching on Churn Knob just to the south of the village. The earliest documentary evidence is a 10th century charter which refers to lands in the parish which were subsequently given to Abingdon Abbey, and it is likely that a church was in existence in the village by this time or shortly after.

The Domesday Book records a sizeable settlement here, with 89 households, a church and four mills; the population has been estimated at around 400. This would have been an extraordinarily large settlement for the time, a fact which reinforces the claim for a substantial Anglo-Saxon settlement here. The extent of the early medieval village could well have been broadly similar to that of the 19th century. The land was divided into three holdings, or manors, the exact areas of which are detailed in the 1805 Enclosure Award. Manorial records over the centuries tell the story of the village, and evidence for these manors is still expressed on the ground in the village today.

The earliest building in the village is the church, dating from the 11th century, which, together with the land and all the tithes in the parish formed the Predendal Manor. The small tithes, i.e. wool, lambs, sheep, were set aside for the chaplain in the late 13th century together with land for a house and curtilage next to the cemetery, thus establishing the vicarage. Although the present (former) vicarage dates from the late 19th century, the site may well be the original one. The estate of the Prebendal Manor was leased out to provide an income and the manor house was based on Parsonage Farm,

although there is no evidence of the old house now. The manor was held briefly by Thomas Cromwell until his execution in 1540, and soon after the prebend was extinguished and the land acquired by the Bishop of Salisbury.

The Great Manor, known as The Manor of Blewbury, covered the main part of the parish and is most likely to have always been based on the current Manor House. It belonged originally to the king but was granted to the abbots of Reading, who held it until the Dissolution after which it reverted to the king. Usually held by an absentee landlord of high status, the lease of the manor was a highly lucrative asset. Land within the manor was held by a number of copyholders and freeholders and many of the house plots are still identifiable. The property belonging to the manor was sold in the early 20th century. The moat of the original Manor still survives, as do other interesting water features around the site.

The third manor holding, Nottingham Fee, is located either side of Watery Lane, with Hall Barn (on Westbrook Street) as the manor house. This is sited on a large plot backing onto the watercourse and is an interesting, multiphase building. Also situated in Westbrook Street is Ashbrook House, which must also have been an early high-status house based on the evidence of its plot size and the presence of fishponds, which could be the remnant of a moated medieval site. It is here that the foundations of an Anglo-Saxon house have been discovered.

An early 19th century description of the settlement records:

The village is very ill built, the roads bad, and the enclosures constructed of mud, thatched on the top, give the whole a very mean appearance; indeed, the want of trees and hedgerows, so common in the neighbouring parishes, with the great extent of open downs, afford no inducement to strangers to settle here³ (Northeast, 2007).

Early photographs confirm the openness of the village in contrast to the mature trees and hedges which are such a feature of the village today. In the early 19th century the condition of roads between Blewbury and its neighbouring villages and towns were generally poor. The road from Streatley to Harwell was improved when a turnpike trust for repairing and maintaining the road was established in 1803. This linked with existing turnpikes between Reading and Wantage in 1804, and allowed a regular coach service to pass through the village along the London Road. In 1826 the coach from London to Wantage travelled through Blewbury three times a week. Various local services to Abingdon, Wallingford and Didcot were provided by wagons. The number of village merchants, innkeepers and hostlers in the village increased in response to the new trade.

The 1801 census records Blewbury's population as 553, not much greater than the 11th century population of an estimated 400. Census returns show that in 1841, when around 650 people lived in the village, Blewbury was home to 11 farmers, seven blacksmiths, five wheelwrights, four carpenters, three publicans, three shoemakers, two grocers and various other professions including bricklayers, tailors, millers, drapers and glaziers⁴. Evidence for some of these is contained in the buildings they occupied.

³ Northeast, 2007, p.30

⁴ *ibid*, p.32

The area's coaching trade was curtailed by the arrival of the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol, completed in 1841. It reached Didcot in June 1840. Although there was no station at Blewbury, the proximity of the new connection helped to alter the socio-economic makeup of the village.

In 1871 the village population was 659; the census that year records that Blewbury had 16 farmers, 121 agricultural labourers, 12 shepherds, two millers, four blacksmiths, seven carpenters, three wheelwrights, two cordwainers, a harness maker, four boot and shoemakers, three boot binders, five publicans, two grooms, two basket makers, a chair maker, a maltster, two needleworkers, a watercress grower, a glazier, two teachers and various grocers, drapers and other shopkeepers. By the latter part of the 19th century, nearly all the buildings fronting London Road were in some form of commercial use and this can still be read in many of the buildings today.

The population was 746 in 1881, swelled by workers constructing the northern section of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Junction Railway. Finished in 1882, it ran through Blewbury parish with a halt at Upton, just west of Blewbury. It closed in 1962.

By the end of the 19th century Blewbury had attracted a small colony of artists, partly because the area provided peace for artistic endeavour but also was close enough to London to court commissions. Among those who settled in Blewbury were the painters Blandford Fletcher (1866–1936), T.F.M. Sheard (1866–1921), Rowland Holyoake (1880–1924), Sir Luke Fildes (1843–1918) and Sir William Nicholson (1872–1949). The village was also home to several notable writers during the first half of the twentieth century, including Nicholson's partner Marguerite Steen (1894–1975), Kenneth Grahame (1859–1932), Barbara Euphan Todd (1890–1976) and Dick Francis (1920–2010).⁵

With a population of 545 in 1901, the occupation of Blewbury's early 20th century inhabitants remained almost entirely agricultural. Farms were mainly arable, and cherry orchards and watercress beds skirted the village.

Blewbury's population increased from the mid-20th century, partly due to post-war employment opportunities at the nearby Harwell Atomic Energy Research Establishment and in Didcot, whose large power station was completed in 1968. The area also attracted London commuters. In 1971 the population was 1,455. The village was part of Berkshire until 1974. By 2001 there were 1,650 people living in Blewbury, some of whom were accommodated in new houses built around the edges of the old settlement. Evidence for economic activity is no longer primarily expressed in buildings, as several businesses today are run from home offices.⁶

4.3. History on the ground

One of the defining characteristics of the village is the number of plots of open land, or closes, within the heart of the village; see Fig. 3. Understanding the development and use of these helps in assessing their significance.

⁵ Architectural History Practice, report on Chapmans

⁶ *ibid.*

In common with most villages in the area, the economy was based on mixed farming with cereal crops in the open fields and the Downs used for common pasture. The smaller irregular-shaped enclosures within the village would have provided produce for the householder. These are referred to in the 1805 Enclosure Award as 'Old Enclosures' suggesting these may date back to at least the 16th century. The large regular-shaped fields that surround the village are typical of the later Parliamentary enclosures.

The barns and granaries within the village, some dating back to 17th century, give an indication of the extent of corn grown. Documentary sources provide evidence of the type of cereal crops, typically wheat, oats and barley, and these would have been grown on the two open fields, West Field and East Field. The open land of Church Moor provided 'grass' for the church and the charterholders⁷ in the village. The remaining open plots were invariably part of the house and tenement, and would have been used to provide produce for the household and some surplus for market.

What is striking about the 19th century maps of the village is the extent of orchards; see maps 4 and 5. Nearly all the small plots of land within the village, and a few on the edge of the village, appear to have been orchards. Documentation on the type of trees grown is limited. Certainly there were apple trees, and cherries are recorded here as well as in the neighbouring village of Harwell. Harwell cherries were being sold in Abingdon in the 1610s and the tithe record in 1772 includes apples, pears, cherries and walnuts.⁸



Fig. 3: Open land within the core of the village

In the tithe award of 1848 there are references to 50 orchards. These are generally on these small plots of land, usually combined with house and garden. There is reference to the orchards being also used for pasture. It appears that the orchards expanded in the

⁷ Freeholders of land who enjoyed special privileges, Northeast, 2007, p.14

⁸ Northeast, 2007 p.24

mid-18th century as there are disputes recorded relating to who should have the tithes dating from this period. The great tithes, i.e. corn crops and hay, went to the rector whilst the small tithes such as wool, lambs, chickens and fruit went to the vicar. In the mid 18th century there seems to have been a move from corn to fruit, thereby increasing the tithe for the vicar and decreasing that for the rector. Further evidence for the dating of orchards comes from John Wesley's account of his visit in 1746 in which he describes Blewbury's springs in use to feed watercress beds and where the water-table was also 'high enough to keep orchards green in time of drought' (*quoted by Beckinsale, 1972*)⁹. There is other documentary evidence for an orchard in Blewbury in 1762¹⁰. Some ancient apple trees can still be found in the village today.

Conditions for farming seem always to have been favourable, and this is reflected in the size and wealth of the houses by the 17th century, which can be worked out from the hearth-tax returns. In 1664 53 houses were liable for tax and 22 exempt because of poverty. Nearly half of these had three or more hearths, indicating that these were certainly not the houses of the poor. Three houses had six or more hearths, including Ashbrook House which had ten. These must have been large wealthy houses. It would be possible to work out which some of these are from records and building surveys.

Early Non-conformism is represented by the evidence of the Quaker Meeting House, which appears on the 1805 Enclosure Award Map (see Map 4) but it had disappeared by the time of the 1848 Tithe Map, (Map 5). This was located in the north-west corner of the village and a stone now records the approximate site of this and the associated Quaker burial ground, though there is no other evidence of this. In the 19th century there was a Baptist Chapel and a Primitive Methodist Chapel, as well as the Wesleyan Chapel (the former Methodist Church of more recent times).

4.4. Layout

The story of the village is also legible in the lanes and tracks from the village centre to the surrounding land. Enclosing the centre of the village is a ring of larger tracks; these are now the vehicular roads of the village but none cross the centre of the village. Instead a network of smaller paths criss-crosses the centre of the village with tracks leading out to Blewburton Hill, to the open fields where there was daily work to be done and up to the downs, where sheep and cattle were grazed. This layout remains clearly visible today

4.5. Views

The Downs and Blewburton Hill offer magnificent long-distance views over the vale; see Fig. 4. Didcot Power Station rising above the flat plain dominates views to the north and west. The village is barely read in these views. It appears mostly as a patch of woodland, because of the amount of mature tree growth and also, significantly, because of the modest scale of buildings within the village. Even the modern developments are minimally visible, the most intrusive being White's Orchard and Cossicle Mead when seen from Blewburton Hill.

⁹ Quoted in Architectural History Practice report on Chapmans

¹⁰ Berkshire Record Office, D/ESTE/8



Fig. 4: View from Blewburton Hill towards the Wittenham Clumps

Within the village are many picturesque views, mostly short-distance views, which are closed by buildings, winding paths and vegetation. There are a few glimpsed views of the church rising above houses when viewed from Westbrook Street and Church Road. Unfolding views along narrow paths and lanes are characteristic of the core of the area and the outer roads. The latter also provide glimpsed views of open countryside.

Map 3: Rocque's Map of 1761



Source Cockerell and Kay, 2006

Berkshire Record Office

Map 5: 1848 Tithe map



NB - North is at the bottom

Berkshire Record Office

5. Character Areas

5.1. Area 1 – Inner Conservation Area

Within the ring of vehicular roads around the village lies its historic core, all of it lying within the conservation area. This has a magical quality, completely free from through traffic, criss-crossed instead by a network of enticing paths which run alongside and across the numerous watercourses and the Cleve. In places these are bounded by ancient thatched or tiled cob walls, giving a strong sense of enclosure. These lead on to views of wider open spaces within the heart of the village. The extremely attractive natural environment, at times appearing as deep countryside, directly adjoins the equally attractive built environment. The contrast presented by this juxtaposition enhances the characteristics of each, the more so because it is unexpected. There are tight clusters of traditional buildings, many listed, giving one view of the village, and detached houses, apparently randomly sited, in large plots giving a completely different view of the built environment. Mature trees and hedges, small grassy fields, unmanaged plots and cottage gardens make a very positive contribution to the rural setting.

A notable feature which has a major contribution to the special character of the area is the lack of highway engineering. Although most houses can be accessed by car, access lanes are informal, without any edging and not complying with modern standards. This, and the lack of street lighting, create the sense of a bygone age.

There are no long-distance views from within the core of the village. The enclosure of the village limits views to the near or middle distance. In terms of important historic views, the whole area is comprised of these. There are important views down narrow winding lanes; along watercourses; over the Cleve (see Fig. 5); across open spaces of former orchards and closes; of the Church from the churchyard and from further afield peeping above the houses; of idyllic cottages and houses set off by traditional cottage gardens. Important views are legion. They are not just aesthetically pleasing, they also express the history of the village and are highly valued by local residents.

There is a sense of timelessness and antiquity. The only way across the centre of the village is by foot and there is no street lighting, giving a feeling of what it would have been like in previous centuries. That said, there are many modern houses, but these have mostly respected the layout of the village, and mature vegetation on boundaries helps to integrate them. Vehicular access is possible along the lanes that lead into but not through the centre. The lanes and tracks are informally surfaced and there is very little tarmac. Gravel and grass predominate with attractive blue-brick paving by the church.

The layout of this part of the village is essentially the same as that appearing on Rocque's map of 1761 (see Map 3), where dense clusters of houses are interspersed with large open plots. These are likely to have been the garden plots of the houses and the small pastures and orchards referred to above. The ubiquitous water courses must have rendered some parcels of land too wet to develop but good for vegetation. The lack of uniformity is a strong and attractive characteristic; some houses are grouped together fronting a lane, such as those at the end of Church Road, but the majority are set back from the path or centred on a plot. For the most part, house plots are large and some are very large such as Orchard Dene, Carramores and Parsonage Farm. Plot boundaries are defined in a variety of ways, including ancient cob walls, brick walls, mature hedging and

railings. In some places the boundary is not defined, such as the Schoolhouse. Openness to public view is a key characteristic (see Fig. 6).

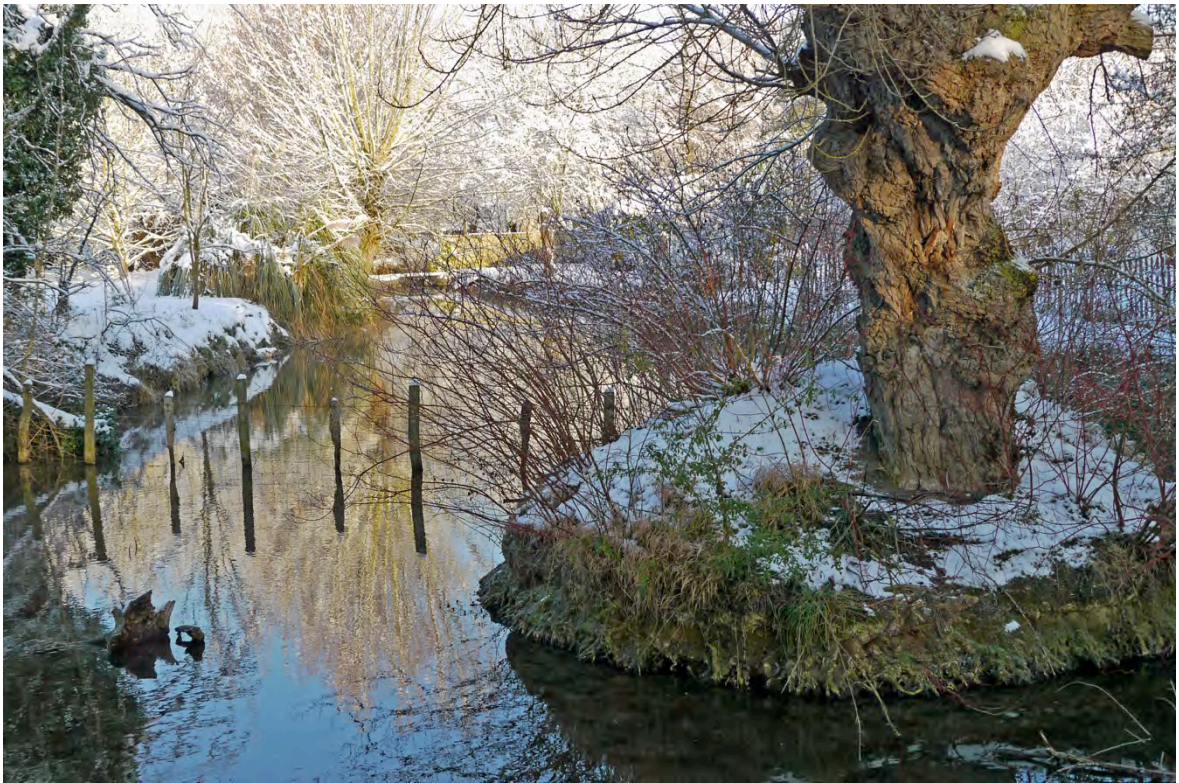


Fig. 5: View across the Cleve

Buildings are mostly residential or ancillary buildings, with old farm buildings also being quite well represented and providing evidence of the farming past, e.g. Chapmans Barn and the granary on Rumsey's Lane. Some old apple trees survive as a reminder of the historic orchards. There are many historic buildings within the heart of the village of varying sizes, type and date. The oldest building is the Church, dating from the 11th century with medieval additions and some late Victorian work.



Fig. 6: No. 1 Almshouse with frontage open to the footpath

The next oldest buildings are the timber-framed houses, of which there are many examples including Laurences , Stocks, Carpenter's and Blue Haze (see Fig. 7), which all probably date from the 16th century, and Chapmans, Orchard Dene and Nottingham Fee dating from the 17th century. Earlier timber-framed houses tend to have larger panels with later ones having small square panels. Stocks, which has a cruck frame, is likely to be one of the earliest houses in the village. Originally these would have had wattle and daub infill, which would have been limewashed for additional protection. Many have now been replaced with brick infill panels and some are rendered. Timber-framed barns dating from this period are usually weatherboarded, a treatment which continued into the 18th century. Roofs would all originally have been thatched, but some are now covered in plain clay tiles. The steep pitch and the deep overhang, both features needed to shed water away from the wattle and daub walls, make the thatched roofs a very visually dominant element (see Fig 21).

These early timber-framed houses are all substantial, of two or more units and generally two storeys high. They are characterised by a fairly low eaves level and usually massive chimney stacks, sometimes of decorative brickwork. They would have been the homes of better-off husbandmen or yeoman and possibly aspiring gentry. They were not the homes of the poor.

The 18th century saw the widespread use of brick, a much more fashionable material at the time (see Fig. 8). Its use continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries and it is still the most widely used building material today. It was used for buildings of every status, as evidenced by the modest almshouse built in 1738. Timber framing was still used into the 18th century but usually for inferior buildings or internal walls, e.g. in the Schoolhouse, dating from 1709. Many earlier houses were re-faced in brick to bring them up-to-date, their proportions being the clue to their earlier origins, e.g. the Red Lion public house. Plain clay tiles replaced thatch as the favoured roofing material until the coming of the railways made slate a cheap alternative. The most prominent 19th century building in the inner area is the Methodist Church.



Fig. 7: Blue Haze, dating from the 16th century



Fig. 8: The Schoolhouse, demonstrating an early use of brick

Twentieth century buildings have generally respected traditional forms and material. The huge variation in building types, dates and materials means that further variety adds to the visual interest of the area. What unifies the development in the area and helps it to integrate well into its context is the respect for open spaces, plot sizes, informal layout and siting of houses, retention of mature boundary hedges and informal access roads. The lack of highway engineering is a crucial factor in the retention of the village's character.

Whilst much original detailing survives, most houses have had some details altered. In particular, windows and doors date from all periods. Replacements are mostly sensitive and appropriate. Buildings and also the public paths and tracks are generally well maintained.

The area is extraordinarily peaceful. There is no traffic noise, just the sound of water, never far away, and birdsong.

There are very few negative or detrimental features in this part of the village. Some elements of new building stand out and therefore could have been designed to fit their context better. Solar panels are always visually intrusive when placed on prominent roof slopes, presenting a dilemma for people endeavouring to be more sustainable. A minor point relates to signs on the Church and pre-school building. These are probably required for health and safety reasons but are unfortunately intrusive.

There is little scope for car parking and what there is inevitably detracts from the strong character of a pre-motor vehicle era.

5.1.1. Summary of significance

Evidential value – based on the extensive documentation of the village and evidence of archaeological investigations; watercourses; the layout of the roads and paths; the surviving archaic closes and plot boundaries, and the large number of unrecorded historic buildings – **high evidential value**.

Historical value – this lies in the many multiphase buildings whose alterations and extensions reflect the changing needs and circumstances of the owners. The range of types, sizes and building materials indicate how building technology and fashions have changed over time. The size and type of farm buildings tells the story of farming over the centuries and workshops indicate the range of trades within the area. The watercourses and enclosed lanes illustrate the way of life in the village over the centuries. The origin of the open plots or closes is not fully understood. Although they appear in records dating back to the 18th century, they are likely to be much earlier. They have played an important part in the day-to-day life of the village, as a major source of additional income.

The association of several prominent national figures and extensive documentary sources covering the area add additional value. These are collected and summarised by Northeast¹¹ and so are not repeated here. This also includes local people who figure in the village's history.

The illustrative and associational values combine to give – **high historical value**

Aesthetic value – derives from the layout of the lanes and lies in the considerable number of traditional buildings of varying dates, types and styles including modern building. The watercourses through the village and the Cleve and its associated vegetation are of paramount importance. Contrasts between built form and open countryside; between enclosed spaces and open plots; between dark-shaded tree-covered paths and light open tracks contribute to this aesthetic value and there are some key views which encapsulate this. Mature trees and hedges in both public and private realm have high value as do private gardens, many of which are highly visible and attractively planted as old cottage gardens – **high aesthetic value**

Communal value – derived from that fact that the tracks through the village are in constant use and much loved by local people. The Playclose is a site of public recreation and many private but highly visible gardens also have communal value because of the contribution they make to the appearance of the area. Orchard Dene is the site of an open-air theatre which has annual productions – **high communal value**

5.2. Area 2 – Westbrook Street

This area covers developed land both sides of Westbrook Street and includes the 20th century developments of Grahame Close, Westbrook Green and Boham's Cottages. The eastern side of the street contains most of the historic buildings and lies within the conservation area, though the plots fronting the street on the west are certainly historic, even if not all the buildings are.

¹¹ Northeast, 2007 pp 47-80

It has the air of an informal village street, lined on both sides with houses. Some of these, mostly the historic ones, are on the highway edge; others are set back from the road. The narrow street carries local traffic and has limited footways; in places there are only grass verges. Building plots are of varying sizes and there is a mix of historic and modern buildings along the street. The treatment of plot boundaries varies, with fences, brick walls and hedges being most common; some plots are open to the highway. Mature trees and hedges are dominant elements in the streetscape and give a definite rural character.

By far the largest plot is that of Ashbrook House, an old farmhouse dating from the mid-18th century but on a much earlier developed plot. The surviving fishponds suggest this was the site of a medieval house and it is here that the foundations of an Anglo-Saxon house have been found¹². The archaeological potential of this site is very high.

Another large plot with an interesting history is Hall Barn, the Manor House for the manor of Nottingham Fee; see Fig. 9. Again, there is likely to be significant archaeology in the grounds; this will date back to the medieval period, if not earlier. The house itself dates from the mid-17th century and has an extraordinary late 17th century re-fronting in brick with giant Doric pilasters. This would have been a highly fashionable display of taste for the period.



Fig. 9: Hall Barn, the manor house of Nottingham Fee, showing giant Doric pilasters to the main range

Other traditional buildings are a mix of dates, size and materials similar to those of the inner conservation area, including Green Bushes, a 16th century timber-framed house; Forge House, a 17th century timber-framed house marked on the early OS maps as a smithy; Boham's House Barn, an 18th century weather-boarded barn; Curtoys, which is a

¹² As described in an interview with Audrey Long

pleasingly symmetrical early 19th century house (see Fig. 10); and Fron Deg, a modest house from the same period.



Fig. 10: Curtoys – early 19th century symmetrical design

Leading off the street are a number of 20th century housing developments, the largest being Grahame Close (see Fig. 11), named after Kenneth Grahame, the author of *Wind in the Willows*, who lived in Boham's House from 1910–24. Although this is a much denser development than is commonly found in the historic centre of the village, and the houses are not of outstanding design, it integrates well into the village scene. The interesting layout, informal open spaces and mature trees are similar in character to the closes in the centre of the village, which lies immediately to the east and south. The small estate of Boham's Cottages also fits well into the village scene, with houses of traditional form and design; it also shares the characteristic of not having direct vehicular access. Westbrook Green is quite different in character, with some striking monopitch roofs and stark white painted brickwork.

Long views gradually unfolding along the street reveal a rich variety of buildings, partly screened by mature hedges and trees. At the northern end the view is closed by the large mature horse chestnut at the junction with Church End. There are glimpsed views to the west between building plots of open flat countryside beyond which was once the West Field before enclosure. Ancient lanes lead out westwards from the village, giving wide open views of the surrounding flat countryside. The village boundary has been extended here to accommodate some backland development which generally gives a soft edge to the village.

To the east are the narrow enclosed lanes leading into the core of the village. In places there are glimpsed views of the church tower.



Fig. 11: Grahame Close, showing the informal layout and open space

As with the centre of the village, public and private green spaces make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Mature trees and boundary hedges line the street and traditional cottage gardens, open to public view, provide an additional, very attractive, element to the streetscape.

Although the street carries traffic, much of the time it is quiet and peaceful, especially along the side lanes. The sounds of birds and smell of plants and flowers enrich the environment.

At the north end of the street, a lane turns off to the west, leading into a car park serving the village hall, post office, school and playground.

There are few negative features in this area. The unrelieved expanse of tarmac forming the car parking area around the village hall, post office and school is unattractive, though this is not a prominent feature within the village. The flat-roofed extension to the village hall including the post office is architecturally poor. That said, the facilities provided are a valuable asset to the village.

5.2.1. Summary of significance

Evidential value – derives from the layout of the roads and paths; plot boundaries, open spaces and buildings. The sites of Ashbrook House and Hall Barn are likely to hold evidence of early medieval settlement – **high evidential value**

Historical value – illustrative value is similar to the inner area above. Value lies in the many multiphase buildings; the range of types, sizes and building materials and the size

and type of farm buildings. The association of Kenneth Grahame with Boham's House is also of historical value – **high historical value**

Aesthetic value – derives from the variety of building types and styles including some very attractive historic buildings with picturesque settings; hedges, trees and attractive cottage gardens all contribute further – **high aesthetic value**

Communal Value – most of the area forms part of the everyday environment of local people and is much valued. The extent to which this contributes to heritage significance is, however, limited. The village hall/school complex and associated car park have poor aesthetic value but one of the highest communal values – **medium communal value**

5.3. Area 3 – Berry Lane

This area lacks unity and is comprised of three sub-areas, one ancient and two modern. The common feature is their access off Church End/Berry Lane. The boundary of the conservation area includes the sites of the Manor House and Old Mill, and land to the south of Berry Lane.

Occupying the north-west corner of the village is the group of buildings comprising Mockbeggars Hall, the Manor House and the Old Mill. These are part of the medieval village though there may have been earlier settlement here. The watercourses running through the village join together here to form the Mill Brook, which flows off to the north. The mill is sited here and there is a complex network of water features relating to this. The mill is likely to be on the site of one of the mills mentioned in the Domesday Book though the current building, much altered, appears to date from the 18th century. Another water feature is the remnants of a moat, forming three sides of a rectangle, which is likely to have been the site of the medieval manor. The present Manor House, dating from the 17th century, lies to the north of this. To the west, encircling Mockbeggars Hall is another watercourse. The Enclosure Map of 1805 shows a group of buildings here (see Map 4), some of which must be the farm buildings relating to the Manor House. However, the name Mockbeggars Hall (meaning a house where no hospitality was given) is archaic, suggesting that there may have been an earlier house on the site. This is currently a working farm with a large, two-storey office/accommodation block in the centre, fairly well-screened from public view. Fronting on to Church End, now occupied by an interesting group of traditional buildings, was the site of the Primitive Methodist Chapel.

The rest of this area was not developed for housing until the 20th century. There are detached houses in large plots on both sides of Berry Lane, including the bungalows on Millbrook Close and a self-contained area of mobile homes on Ladycroft Park.

The juxtaposition of contrasting elements which characterise much of the village is evident along the road here. The narrow road along Westbrook Street opens out at Church End to form a small green with mature trees, with attractive historic buildings addressing the space. This is a strong element in the streetscape (see Fig. 12). The openness continues along Berry Lane with mature hedges and trees lining the road. Berry Lane has no footway, only informal grass verges. The stream running alongside the road and expanse of water extending towards the mill, populated by ducks reinforces its rural character.



Fig. 12: Berry Lane, showing the open space by Millbrook Cottage

Buildings are generally not prominent in views, being well-screened from the highway by trees and hedges. The group of buildings on the medieval site around the Manor House is hidden away from public view.

Traditional buildings have the similar characteristics to those already described, including 16th and 17th century timber-framed buildings such as Carpenter's, 18th and 19th century brick houses such as Millbrook Cottage, and a range of modern building styles and materials. Many modern buildings are bungalows or of one-and-a-half storeys. Millbrook Close has a typical close layout which has nothing locally distinctive about it, but it is visually low-key and therefore readily assimilated into the streetscape. Ladycroft Park is even more discreet in terms of visual impact. It is well-screened from the road and forms a self-contained area of well-kept homes, totally alien in terms of local character but single storey and unobtrusive (see Fig. 13).

Although hidden away, the farm buildings of the Manor House, dating predominantly from the 18th century are important evidence of farming practices in the past. Most are listed and they include cow houses, stabling, attached workers accommodation and shelter sheds.

The 20th century developments tell the story of the growth of the village after the war, providing a range of house types and sizes and therefore attracting a cross-section of population to support the vitality of the village.

Views are closed by the winding road and mature vegetation. There are glimpsed views through the hedges and trees of the Manor House site of open garden areas and water, and closed but enticing views along the track to the Old Mill. The parking area by the village hall and the footpath leading out of the village to the north have open views over

the former West Field. This path leads past the site of the former Quaker Meeting House, shown on the 1805 Enclosure map but gone by 1848. There is a stone marking the way to where the Quaker burial ground is thought to lie (see Fig 14).



Fig. 13: Ladycroft Park showing visually low-key housing



Fig. 14: Stone marking the site of the Quaker Meeting House and burial ground

There are few negative features in this area. Some modern house designs have a neutral impact on character but, in general, sensitive scale, siting, screening and landscaping mitigate any negative elements. The farmstead of Mockbeggars Hall has a number of utilitarian buildings, which is to be expected on a farm. The litter bin on the green in front of Millbrook Cottage could be more sensitively sited and/or designed.

5.3.1. Summary of significance

Evidential value – the water complex around the Manor House, Mockbeggars Hall and the mill suggests this area has high archaeological potential. This is backed up by documentary evidence for this as the centre of the Great Manor. Some history of Non-conformism is contained in the sites of the Primitive Methodist Chapel and the Quaker Meeting House – **high evidential value**

Historical value – the Manor complex illustrates the nature and scale of farming and changes in practice over time. The range of traditional buildings individually and collectively illustrate changing building technology and the wealth and status of the population over time. They illustrate changing economic activity supporting the village and its population, and the detailed records in Northeast (2007) expand on this – **high historical value**

Aesthetic value – lies in the retention of the rural character along the street with its mature trees and hedges, stream and pond alongside the road. The intimate green space in front of Millbrook Cottage fronted by picturesque traditional buildings is particularly attractive – **high aesthetic value**

Communal value – with the significant exception of the Manor and Old Mill complex, most of the area is accessible to the public and used on a daily basis by local people. The extent to which this contributes to heritage significance is limited – **medium communal value**

5.4. Area 4 – Development to the east of the village

The land between Bridus Way/South Street and Bessel's Way was completely undeveloped until the 1930s, at which point some houses were built on Bessel's Way and East Fields. The built area was expanded and infilled, so that now all the land here is developed for housing, at much higher densities than is generally found in the rest of the village. However, these are not without character.

Only the west side of Bessel's Way is developed. Apart from Winterbrook Farm, which is late 19th century, a large house to its south and a couple of houses to its north, the east side is open countryside with a patch of allotments (see Fig. 15). There are views out towards Blewburton Hill, a scheduled ancient monument, and an ancient track leads from the village, via Bessel's Lea Road, across Bessel's Way, past the farm and up the hill. This is a popular walk for locals and visitors. Views to the south from Bessel's Way are open and include attractive views of the Downs. Within the estate developments, however, views are limited.

Plot sizes vary, with some quite large and some, especially at Dibleys, very small. The layout of some development is irregular, incorporating public open space in line with the character of the core of the village (see Fig. 16). However, most are regularly set out, and more typical of standard estate layouts. Houses are set back from the highway with front gardens and longer rear gardens. Scale varies from very modest single-storey bungalows to large two-and-a-half storey dwellings. The latter are wider than traditional homes and stand out in views of the village from Blewburton Hill.



Fig. 15: Allotments to the east of Bessel's Way



Fig. 16: Dibleys, showing low-rise development around informal open space

What is strikingly different here is the amount of traffic, with Bessel's Way having through traffic, even though it is only a B road. The noise and activity associated with this gives it a markedly different character to most of the rest of the village, the exception here being London Road. Related to this, and also in contrast to much of the rest of the village, are the tarmac roads and proper footways but, crucially, no street lighting. Apart from a section of Dibleys, there is direct vehicular access to all houses in accordance with modern standards and car parking to go with it. Dibleys was developed in the 1960s to provide housing for people over 55 years old and it was later extended.

There is much less public open space in this character area. The grassed areas in Eastfields seem left-over rather than designed spaces and, other than providing a grassed setting to the houses, they have very little function. The open space of Bridus Mead, by contrast, is surrounded by houses and contributes to the character of the development, reflecting the predominant character of the heart of the village. Dibleys, mentioned above, is an extraordinary development in many ways and is built around a number of small open spaces. It also has a rather unattractive parking court. The original development comprises small-scale, single-storey housing tightly packed around garden spaces. The layout creates interesting, intimate spaces and is very attractive. Although it has its own strong character, it echoes the character prevailing in the historic part of the village.

All development in this area is residential, apart from the former filling station occupying a key location at the junction with London Road. This prominent corner marks the entrance to the village on the approach from the east. Although it now serves as a local shop, providing a much-needed facility, its appearance has a negative impact on the street scene.

The cement-rendered pair of semi-detached houses on the east side of Bessel's Way intrude into otherwise open views of countryside. Whilst their scale and form is appropriate, their siting is at odds with the rest of the area, and materials and detailing are utilitarian. Otherwise there are no significant negative elements. The scale, in terms of height and width, of the houses on White's Orchard appear noticeably bigger than those traditionally found in the village and this has a slightly a negative impact on views from Blewburton Hill (see Fig. 17). Solar thermal panels on prominent roof slopes of Cossicle Mead are visually intrusive.

5.4.1. Summary of significance

Evidential value – there is some evidential value in this as part of the East Field and in the track running through part of the village to Blewburton Hill – **low evidential value**

Historical value – in some places plot boundaries dating back to the 1805 Enclosure Award have been respected, indicating how individual plots, sold separately for development, have determined the form of development. This is respectful of the setting of the conservation area though of limited historical value – **low historical value**

Aesthetic value – this lies in the appropriate nature of the development for its location, and there are some interesting examples of 20th century development, e.g. Greenlea and Dibleys – **low aesthetic value**

Communal value – this again is limited. Much of the space is private, as are the buildings. The tracks leading into and out of the village are well-used, and the garden areas of Dibleys have communal value for residents – **low communal value**



Fig. 17: Cossicle Mead, showing visually intrusive solar thermal panels

5.5. Area 5 – London Road and Pilgrim's Way

London Road, the A417, which follows the line of the ancient track of Icknield Way, is the main road between Reading and Wantage and has always been the principal route through the village. It was turnpiked in 1804, which greatly increased commercial traffic. Whilst current traffic is not continuous, traffic noise and, in the dark, car headlights are dominating characteristics.



Fig. 18: Pilgrim's Way

In complete contrast is Pilgrim's Way, a quiet back lane running parallel to London Road behind properties on the south side of the road (see Fig 18). This is an unmade country lane, bounded on the north side with hedges and mature trees and with some backland development, which fronts onto the lane. On the south side, agricultural fencing separates the lane from open countryside in most parts, allowing open views up to the Downs. The farmland is used for grazing, mostly for horses, and there are a number of stables and ancillary buildings servicing the land. Three narrow tracks, almost hidden, link this back lane with the main road. They also line up with other lanes across London Road connecting the village to the grazing lands of the Downs. Pilgrim's Way is the southern boundary of the conservation area.

At the junction of London Road and South Street the road widens out into a small attractive green space, the Pound (see Fig. 19). This acts as a focal point for this part of the village and it is a major pedestrian crossroads, both currently and historically. It is an attractive sitting area with a number of specimen trees, including a mature beech tree in the centre.

In common with other areas of the village, London Road is characterised by a variety of building types, of a wide date range and an interesting mix of materials, styles and plot sizes. The eastern end has 20th century development which has more in common with Area 4. However, unlike the rest of the conservation area, most of the buildings on London Road front directly onto the highway, often right up to the pavement edge. This was prime commercial frontage, especially after the road was turnpiked, which accounts for the almost continuous built-up frontage. There are far fewer gaps between buildings. Whilst most buildings are now in residential use, at the end of the 19th century nearly all the building along London Road were in some form of commercial use, either as shops, public houses, workshops or lodging houses (see Fig. 20). Evidence of former use remains in some of the buildings, such as Treble House Terrace and Cottrills. Some farm buildings survive, indicating the predominant economic activity of the past such as the brick and weather-boarded granary at Granary House and Great Tree Farm Barn (see Fig. 21).



Fig. 19: Public open space of the former pond



Fig. 20: Former commercial property at Treble House Terrace, London Road



Fig. 21: Great Tree Farm Barn, London Road

Buildings are generally one to two storeys high, with many having one-and-a-half storeys expressed in dormers. The range of materials typical for the village is timber-framing with brick or rendered infill panels; flint and/or brick, sometimes painted or rendered; and thatched, tiled or slate roofs. The timber-framed buildings include those with large panels and small, square panels. Also, there is some close-studding at Corrydon House, dating from the late 16th century (see Fig. 22). This is confined to the front elevation of the main range and jettied cross-wing; it was intended for display and indicates high status. The side elevation, less visible, is of small square panelling. Several houses of 17th century origin, or earlier, have been updated with alterations or additions in the 18th century, such as Yew Tree House. Some of the terraced houses date from the 18th century and Humfreys, a very fine, symmetrical brick house dates from around 1800.

Much original detailing survives from all periods including railings, as at Treble House Terrace, windows of all dates, and doors and porches such as that at Turnpike House.

On Pilgrim's Way there are a number of modern houses built in various styles behind the London Road properties. These are fairly discreet, screened by mature hedging which helps to retain the feel of a country lane. The unmade road and lack of highway engineering contributes considerably to its character.



Fig. 22: Corrydon House, London Road showing the higher-status close studding on the front elevation with small square panelling to the side elevation

At either end of London Road are views of open countryside, but in the middle section views are closed by development either side and by the winding road. The tracks leading off either side have short views, inviting further exploration.

Traffic noise has a negative impact on the otherwise peaceful village, but this is inevitable. A reduction in vehicle speeds would reduce this impact. On Pilgrim's Way, electric fencing associated with horse grazing can be untidy, but again this is part of the rural scene.

5.5.1. Summary of significance

Evidential Value – derives from the ancient tracks of Icknield Way, and Pilgrim's Way and routes linking the village centre to the Downs as part of the medieval farming system. An archaeological investigation on London Road found evidence of Neolithic occupation – **high evidential value**

Historical value – the buildings fronting London Road reflect the changing status of this main route and the commercial growth of the village, and have similar value to the traditional buildings already described. Displays of status and fashion are evident in a

number of buildings. The original function, size, materials and detailing of individual buildings all contribute to this story – **high historical value**

Aesthetic value – derives from the range of building types, dates, styles materials and detailing, and the attractive public open space of the Pound. Pilgrim's Way has a different but equally attractive aesthetic – **high aesthetic value**

Communal value – nearly all the area is open to public view and it is a well-used part of the village. The former Pound provides a public sitting area. Paths crossing the area are very well used for recreation leading to walks on the Downs – **high communal value**

5.6. Area 6 – South Street

This area covers the buildings fronting onto the trafficked route around the east of the village, interestingly called South Street. The whole area falls within the conservation area, with the boundary running along the rear of the properties on the east side of the street. It was pretty well-settled by the time of Rocque's map of 1761 and, as with the rest of the historic village, it has probably been settled in a similar form for over a thousand years. The winding tarmac road retains the character of a village street. It has no footway, just informal verges. There are lanes leading off either side connecting the centre of the village to the developments to the east and Bessel's Way.

Many houses have fences and hedges as a boundary to the street and there is a section of ancient cob wall. As with other areas, some frontages are open to the highway. Plot sizes vary. The historic buildings nearer to London Road have smaller plots, with houses sited close to the highway edge. Those to the north end are generally larger. Plot boundaries follow almost exactly the plot boundaries shown on the 1805 Enclosure Award. Although the street is quite narrow, it widens out in a number of places as at the junctions with Church Road and with Dibleys, where there is a small green. Just opposite this is an open garden area, the former orchard of Parsonage Farm, the site of the manor house for the Prebendal Manor, which still has an ancient apple tree in the garden; see Fig. 23.

There is a mix of historic and modern houses, the latter fitting in well, in part because they respect the historic plot boundaries and many have mature landscaping which contributes to the rural character. The historic houses have the same mix of dates, types, styles, materials and detailing as found elsewhere in the conservation area. The one exception is Manor Cottage which is partly constructed in clunch (see Fig. 24). Most are of one-and-a-half or two storeys.



Fig. 23: Old apple tree in the grounds of Parsonage Farm



Fig. 24: Manor Cottage, constructed of chalk block or clunch

Evidence of commercial activity includes the former tea shop at Lantern Cottage (Fig. 25) and a former public house, the Load of Mischief. Borlase used to be a gallery, associated with the community of artists who settled here during the 20th century, and on the land opposite is a workshop.

This area shares many characteristics with Westbrook Street and Berry Lane, i.e. its informal village street character, with attractive unfolding views down the winding lanes, always closed by the next bend and mature vegetation. It carries only local village traffic

and is therefore mostly free from traffic noise, which can only really be heard near London Road.

There are no marked negative features.



Fig. 25: Lantern Cottage, on left, showing evidence of former tea shop.

5.6.1. Summary of significance

Evidential value – this is derived from the road and path layout, plot boundaries and multiphase buildings – **high evidential value**

Historical value – in common with other parts of the old village, its history can be read in the layout, including spaces, and the original function, size, materials and detailing of individual buildings. Associational value lies in its connection with the artists who settled here in the 20th century – **high historical value**

Aesthetic value – derives from the attractive rural character of the village street, determined by its layout, buildings and views – **high aesthetic value**

Communal value – it is highly accessible and views experienced within the village street are much-valued locally, though contribution to heritage significance is limited – **medium communal value**

6. Conclusions

The character of a village can be very difficult to pin down, as it is much more than its physical attributes. It is the intangible qualities that make it what it is, giving it life and spirit. These develop over centuries as a result of the interaction of human activity and the land. This character assessment has therefore focused on the heritage significance of the village and sought to take into account all the factors that have given rise to the village as it is today. That said, the complexity of the village and richness of its history mean that this is only an overview.

There was already a sizeable village here in the 10th century when it was referred to as 'this venerable village' and this is substantiated by the Domesday record. Given the constraints of topography, watercourses and boggy land, it is likely that the Anglo-Saxon village occupied the core of the current village and there is some archaeological evidence to support this. The whole of this area has, therefore, considerable potential to yield more information about the early development of the village.

The layout of the village, its church and manors, and considerable number of historic buildings, supplemented by extensive documentation, take up the story from there. The agricultural development of the village can be read in conjunction with the surrounding landscape, the former open fields and grazing on the Downs. Farm buildings can give an indication of the nature and amount of crops grown and the type and number of animals kept. Watercourses and the mills supplement this story. Early maps and documents indicate the contribution of orchards to the economy, illustrated on the ground today by some ancient apple trees in the open spaces within the core of the village. The survival of these open spaces or closes is one of the defining characteristics of the village.

The buildings, as a whole and individually, further illustrate the development of the village. Changing technology is demonstrated in building materials, as timber framing gives way to brick, and thatch is increasingly replaced by plain clay tiles and later with slate. Larger window openings became popular as a result of improved technology for producing glass, which became much cheaper and more readily available. Other detailing reflects changing fashions, which is where the human dimension is most clearly expressed. Buildings have for centuries been a vehicle for the display of status. This can be seen in Corrydon House on London Road, where the more expensive, and therefore high status, close-studding is confined to the most visible elevation (see Fig. 22). It can be seen in the charmingly clumsy addition of giant Doric pilasters to Hall Barn (Fig. 9), giving that all-important nod in the direction of classical architecture that was essential for reinforcing status. And it can be seen in the re-fronting of timber-framed buildings with brick, the much more fashionable material of the 18th century, indicating to neighbours and visitors that the house is up-to-date. There are many more examples. Research on individual buildings will contribute considerably to this story.

Buildings also clearly express their function and where this has changed. Evidence of former shops can be seen in Treble House Terrace and Cottrills (Fig. 26) along London Road and in Lantern Cottage on South Street. Several workshops survive and more detailed recording of these may contribute to an understanding of the trades carried out there.



Fig. 26: Cottrills, showing evidence of former commercial use

Whilst there are attractive panoramic views from the Downs and Blewburton Hill, the principal aesthetic of the village itself lies in the cumulative value of the myriad picturesque snapshots from throughout the village. These are of individual buildings; clusters of buildings; open spaces; enclosed spaces; public spaces and private spaces; natural vegetation and cottage gardens; watercourses; glimpsed views down footpaths and lanes; open views to the fields surrounding the village. The scene changes at every turn. The quality and variety in the built and natural environment combine to create an extraordinarily attractive village.

Whilst the historic core has the highest aesthetic value, many characteristics of the modern developments are locally distinctive and attractive. Some negative features have been identified within the village but these are far outweighed by the positive ones and there is opportunity to enhance some of these to mitigate their negative impact.

Communal values are often difficult to articulate and the village is no exception here. What is clear is that the character of the historic village is much cherished by local residents. Much of the village is open to public access and public view. The paths, lanes and public open spaces across the village are in daily use; the buildings, including the church are part of that experience and the sense of history embodied in the village is experienced on a daily basis.

7. Recommendations

7.1. Open Spaces and views

These have not been accorded any rating in terms of status or quality as their value is multifaceted and complex. This account has sought to identify some of the factors which must be considered in attempting to assess their significance. It is not easy, therefore, to rank them, nor necessarily desirable. They embody values not always readily articulated or understood but which are nevertheless important and which should be enhanced.

Any proposed development that might have an impact on these open spaces or the views, throughout the village, should not be considered until a full assessment of the impact of the proposal on all aspects of its significance has been satisfactorily completed.

7.2. Historic buildings

Although there are 71 listed buildings in the village, there are many more buildings of interest which contribute to the character of the village and which should be considered as non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of the NPPF. These should be identified by the community in conjunction with the local authority and included on a local list. Policies to protect and enhance the significance of these should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan

The statutory list for the village is limited and more buildings are possibly worthy of statutory designation. List descriptions are cursory. Few interiors have been surveyed and it is here that there is the potential to discover much more about the history of the village and the inhabitants of the past. Heritage statements submitted with listed buildings applications have demonstrated that it would be a valuable exercise to survey the interiors of the historic buildings. As the early infrastructure of the village survives along with so many interesting buildings and extensive documentary records, Historic England might be approached about undertaking a fuller survey with a view to updating the designations.

7.3. Key features to consider for any new development.

- Retain and enhance open areas and views in the old core of the village
- Respect historic plot boundaries
- Accept informal road layouts and no streetlights rather than adopting standard highway solutions
- Green spaces respecting traditional layout
- Respect traditional building plots, scale, form and materials including techniques and detailing
- Recommend to local authority to undertake a conservation area appraisal, based on this report, a management plan and, potentially, an Article 4 direction
- Retain views within the village as well as out of and into the village.
- Identify opportunities to enhance the significance of the village
- Consider extending the conservation area boundary to include Mockbeggar's Hall and Farm
- Identify opportunities to improve the appearance of current negative features

8. References

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Appendix: Note on the authors

Dorian A T A Crone, BA, BArch, DipTP, RIBA, MRTPI, IHBC has been a Chartered Architect and Chartered Town Planner for over 30 years. He has also been a member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation for 25 years. Dorian is a committee member of The Institute of Historic Building Conservation, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), ICOMOS UK . He has also been a court member of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Architects and a Trustee of The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust.

Dorian has worked for over 30 years as Historic Buildings and Areas Inspector with English Heritage, now Heritage England, responsible for providing advice to all the London Boroughs and both the City Councils. Dorian has also worked as a consultant and expert witness for over 20 years advising a wide variety of clients on heritage and design matters involving development work, alterations, extensions and new build projects associated with listed buildings and conservation areas in design and heritage sensitive locations.

He is a panel member of both the London Borough of Islington Design Review Panel and the John Betjeman Design Award . Dorian has also been a panel member of the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition Architectural Awards and the Philip Webb Award along with a number other public sector and commercial design award. He has recently been appointed by CABI as a Built Environment Expert to sit on design review panels.

Dr Kathryn Elizabeth Davies, BA, MA, DPhil (Oxon), Dip TP, MRTPI, IHBC – Heritage Consultant has been a Chartered Town Planner and qualified in conservation for over 25 years. She is a founder member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation and is currently Vice-Chair.

Kathryn sits on the Planning Panel for The Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society and The Oxford Preservation Trust. She is a member of The Oxfordshire Building Record and sits on the committee of The Oxfordshire Local History Association.

She has over 35 years' experience working in planning and conservation in local authorities in Burnley, North Shropshire and South Oxfordshire, for Historic England (formerly English Heritage) as a Historic Buildings Inspector, Team Leader and as the Principal Historic Places Adviser - South East Region. She has recently been appointed by CABI as a Built Environment Expert to sit on design review panels.

Her work has inevitably covered the whole range of historic environment issues, but her specialism is in vernacular buildings. Of particular relevance is work on rural Buildings At Risk and engaging the public in understanding significance and characterisation. She has also lectured widely on conservation and her specific area of research, secular wall paintings, on which she has published a book and a number of papers.

APPENDIX 1 OXFORD CHARACTER ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

DETAILED CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This character assessment toolkit is designed to help you examine the character of areas, buildings and places in areas of Oxford to identify the features that contribute to their distinctiveness, interest and amenity. It also provides opportunities to identify features or issues that detract from the character of areas, spaces and buildings.

How the toolkit will be used

The historic environment makes an important contribution to the character of the city as a distinctive, interesting and special place. The buildings, spaces, associations and history that combine to create places mean different things to different people. The toolkit should help people to analyse the character of areas, spaces and buildings in a structured way. This should help to identify, define and understand the significance and value of different features of the environment that contribute to its character and distinctiveness.

While there is an accepted need for change to occur within many places in the city, proposals for change should be measured against their existing significance to ensure that their present values are not eroded. This should help to ensure that change enhances and sustains the value of the historic environment to the city for ourselves and future generations. The evidence and understanding provided by the process will enable management of change in an effective and positive manner.



What makes up character?

Elements of character include both the uses of an area and its physical features, such as styles of building, construction materials, architectural details or green landscape features. Others elements of character may be more emotional or personal perceptions of a place, such as historical or cultural associations with a place or building. Others may be relatively ephemeral or transitory, such as the smells and sounds associated with particular activities, which may occur only at certain times of the day or year. The features, listed in the Survey Sheets below, are common components of character, but the list is not exhaustive.



HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

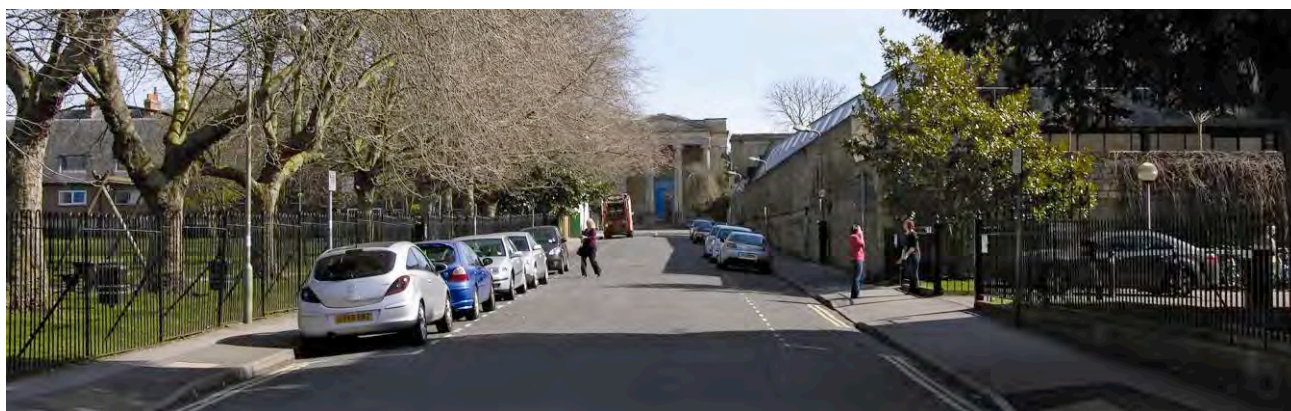
Undertaking your character assessment

In undertaking your assessment it is important to visit the area/building/space to complete a visual survey. In pilot studies, people have found they prefer to take photos and make brief notes whilst in the area, giving them time to examining the surroundings. They then make more detailed notes on the questionnaire, once they have completed the survey. Although there is no prescribed method for carrying out an assessment, the following structure may be helpful:

- It works best on a street by street basis. If you wish to assess a larger area it will be worth surveying each street individually and putting together an overall picture after all the surveys are finished.
- Take an initial walk around your survey area. Use this opportunity to note your initial thoughts/perceptions of the area and assign a score (see below) to the broad character features.
- Taking photographs is strongly recommended as they can illustrate and visually explain any comments you make on the questionnaire. They are also useful to look back over after you have completed the survey.
- Annotating a street plan/map is also a useful way to explain certain features e.g. direction of views, location of key buildings, spaces, etc.
- Make comments using the explanation of terms to prompt your thoughts.
- Give a score to each feature based on your opinion of its negative or positive contribution to the space.
- It is also worth noting how the building/space/area being assessed relates to its wider context e.g. how a building sits within a street or a street within an area. The setting and interrelationships between the single element, such as a building, and the wider context, such as the street, are just as important as the quality of the buildings themselves.

The tool kit is divided into a series of themed questionnaires that will prompt you to consider the contribution of different features that might contribute to the character of the area/building/space. The features listed are the main components of character but the list is not exhaustive. Depending upon the asset being assessed e.g. a building, street, space etc, not every feature in the list may be relevant and a comment should be entered only where applicable.

Each feature requires a brief comment of how you feel it contributes to the character and value of the area. The option is provided to assign a numerical score to reflect your perception of the significance of each feature to the character of the asset. The 'scores' given may vary from one individual to another. However, trends will be seen when comparing different surveys of the same asset.



Initial Reaction to an Area

The initial reaction is a summary of what you see and feel when you first enter the area being assessed.

Survey

In the main body of the toolkit, the character features outlined in the 'Initial Reaction' section are broken down into individual questionnaires. These prompt a finer level of analysis of each of the broader character themes. Again, not every feature in the list may be relevant and a comment and a numerical value should be entered only where applicable.

Final Reaction

This prompts a reassessment of your initial reactions. It allows you to see if your perception of the asset's character has changed as a result of the in-depth study. Try placing the nine character groups in an order of preference, with '1' being the feature you feel the most important contribution to its character and '9' the least.

Spirit of Place

This is an open question allowing you to articulate what you feel about the place and how it influences all your senses

Need more help?

A guidance document is available to view on the Character Assessment Toolkit Website. This includes explanations of some of the terms used in the questionnaires and some prompts to help you think about the contribution of different types of features to the character of the area. If you feel there is an additional feature, feel free to make a note of that separately in the comments box at the end of the questionnaire. Not every feature in the list may be relevant and you need only enter a comment where you feel it is applicable.

A visual study may only take you so far in understanding what is special about an area. By researching its history you may develop a better understanding of how the buildings and spaces reflect its evolution and its unique character. You may wish to focus this research on how the physical characteristics reflect the process of its development, such as the formal design of a landscape, the functional and artistic elements of a building that reflect its use, or the social and economic processes that have influenced the evolution of a settlement. The Character Assessment Toolkit website includes a Research Area with tips and links to help you get started with your research. Some of the information may be readily accessible as online resources, whilst others may require visiting the local studies library, record office or other archives.

Assigning numerical values to features

Assigning a numerical value or score provides a mechanism for analysing and interpreting results over a wider area. Without scoring consistent interpretation and evaluation of text and written comments can be difficult

- +1 to +5: Positive features that add to the character or special nature of an area. This ranges from +1, slightly adds to the character, to +5, that significantly adds to the character.
- 0: Neutral features that are neutral. They neither detract nor add from/to the character of the area.
- -5 to -1: Negative features that detract/take away from the area. This ranges from -5, significantly detract, to -1, slightly detract.

Further Research

SURVEY DETAILS

STREET/BUILDING/ AREA NAME	
DATE	
TIME	
WEATHER	

1: INITIAL REACTION: What do you first see as making the most important contribution to the character of the area? Is the area's character defined by the public or private spaces, groups of buildings or particular views, the presence of particular materials or its trees and greenery? Do these reflect particular aspects of the area's history? Are less tangible features, such as the activity, noises and smells of the area significant? Please provide a few brief reasons for your choices.

FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
SPACES		
BUILDINGS		
VIEWS		
LIGHT/DARK		
SURFACES		
GREENERY & LANDSCAPE		
USES AND ACTIVITY		
NOISES AND SMELLS		
GENERAL COMMENTS		

2: SPACES: A 'space' is normally the gap between buildings and other features. They may be formally designed or develop informally over time. They may be enclosed by surrounding buildings, trees and foliage, have structure created by the alignment and spacing of surrounding buildings or property boundaries, and be narrow or wide and open. The character of areas can depend on their uses and vibrancy, as well as the choice of paving, kerbs, seating, telephone or post boxes or the presence of formal planting or other greenery.

FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
FORMAL / INFORMAL SPACES		
GAPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS		
MEANS OF ENCLOSURE		
BUILDING PLOTS		
WIDE/OPEN SPACES		
NARROW / ENCLOSED SPACES		
WINDING / STRAIGHT SPACES		
RELATIONSHIP OF THE SPACE TO BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES		
USES AND ACTIVITY		
PAVING MATERIALS		
STREET FURNITURE		
IMPACT OF VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC		
USABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SPACE		

3.0 BUILDINGS: Do buildings make an important contribution to the character of the area and if so what features are significant to their contribution? Do buildings reflect an important period in the area's history and is this reflected in their past or current use? Do buildings share a uniform scale and size, or is there a high degree of variation that is visually attractive? Are the buildings very old or do they form a single development with shared or similar architectural detailing? Do styles of windows, doors or other features add to the visual interest of the buildings, reflect their origins and use, or form part of a designed scheme? What condition are the buildings in? Have changes increased or reduced their interest, or have they lost important features?

FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
CONTRIBUTION OF BUILDINGS TO THE SPACE		
SIZE/SCALE		
AGE		
MATERIALS		
WINDOWS		
DOORS		
ROOFS / CHIMNEYS / GABLES		
USES (PAST AND PRESENT)		
CAN YOU TELL IF A BUILDING HAS BEEN ALTERED?		
CONDITION		

4.0 VIEWS: Are there views of interest and distinction? Is a view well known because of a historical event, painting, prose or poetry, or is it popular with local residents as a part of a public place? Are views glimpsed through gaps between buildings, channelled by lines of trees or buildings, or open and expansive? Does the shape of a street create a series of views, or is a single viewing point particularly important? What features of the view contribute to its interest? Does a landmark, such as a building or group of trees, form a focal point? Does the view include an attractive frontage or roofscape? Is the view urban or rural in character? Do background features like the city's rural setting contribute to the view's attractiveness?

FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
HISTORIC / POPULAR VIEWS		
FORM OF VIEW: SHORT OR LONG, UNFOLDING, GLIMPSED, CHANNELLED OR WIDE AND OPEN		
FOCAL POINTS		
STREETSCAPE		
ROOFSCAPE		
URBAN/RURAL VIEWS		
VIEWS OUT OF THE SPACE		

5.0 LANDSCAPE: What landscape features contribute to the area's character and how do they affect it? Do hedgerows or grass verges create a rural feel or do street trees provide a leafy suburban character. What hard surfaces are present, are they attractively designed or do they use materials that are out of keeping with the area? Does their maintenance affect their contribution? Is a river or canal a significant feature in the area? Does it have scenic or wildlife value?		
FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
LEAFY AND/OR GREEN IMAGE		
HARD URBAN LANDSCAPE		
PUBLIC/PRIVATE GREENERY		
DOES WATER FORM A KEY FEATURE OF THE AREA		
TOPOGRAPHY		

6.0 AMBIENCE: Many less tangible features, such as activity, changes in light during the day, shadows and reflections affect reaction to an area. How does the area change between day and night? Do dark corners or alleyways feel unsafe at night time? What smells and noises are you aware of and is the area busy or tranquil? What affect, if any, does vehicle traffic have on character?		
FEATURE	COMMENTS	VALUE -5 TO +5
ACTIVITIES		
LEVEL OF ACTIVITY		
TRAFFIC		
DARK, SHADY, LIGHT, AIRY		
DAY AND NIGHT		
SMELLS		
NOISES		

7.0: FINAL REACTION: Take a moment to consider the notes and scores that you made, in your initial reactions survey sheet and the subsequent pages. Are there any features that you would now rate as having a greater positive or negative value, or are there particular aspects of these features that you would highlight as having a high significance to the character of the area? Try ranking the features in order of their relative importance in forming the area's character and appearance.

RANK IN ORDER OF CONTRIBUTION BETWEEN 1 (HIGH) AND 9 (LOW)

FEATURE	EXAMPLE	YOUR HIERARCHY
BUILDINGS	1	
SPACES	5	
LONG/SHORT VIEWS	2	
LIGHT/DARK	4	
SURFACES	3	
GREENERY & LANDSCAPE FEATURES	6	
NOISE, SMELL AND TRAFFIC	7	

8.0 SPIRIT OF PLACE: Having undertaken the survey and scoring now try to sum up the character of the area in a few brief sentences, picking out the most significant positive and negative features of its character and appearance.