

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

GREEN BELT REVIEW



View from Hurst Hill west over Green Belt to north of Appleton

FINAL PHASE 2 REPORT

February 2014

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SECTION I

SCOPE OF THE GREEN BELT REVIEW

- I.1 The Vale includes part of the Oxford Green Belt within the north of the district. The principal purpose of the Green Belt review was to assess the extent to which the land meets the five purposes of the Green Belt as stated in paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- I.2 The findings of the review will not be considered in isolation. As a technical piece of work it will be used in conjunction with other evidence to inform future planning policy in the Vale.
- I.3 The Green Belt review was undertaken in two stages, which are outlined below:

Stage 1: identification of land parcels and assessment of land parcels on the edge of settlements

Stage 2: assessment of land parcels not covered in stage 1, assessment of opportunities to enhance beneficial use of the Green Belt, assessment of potential 'inset' settlements and review of the Green Belt boundary to examine whether it should be extended.

SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE REVIEW

- 2.1 Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd, supported by Terra Firma Consultancy, was appointed in September 2013 by Vale of White Horse District Council to prepare a Green Belt Review as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The aims of the Review are:
1. To review the land within the Green Belt against the five purposes of the Green Belt as outlined in paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
 2. To make an assessment of opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt as outlined in paragraph 81 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
 3. To review land on the edge of the Green Belt to ascertain if the designation should be extended
 4. To assess whether any of the washed over villages should be included as an inset village.
- 2.2 The Review has been based on a need to review the role of the edge of settlements in contribution to five purposes of the Green Belt in the light of the original designation which set the 'inner' boundaries very tightly around the villages with no land for them to grow (see Section 4). Little land was excluded to safeguard for future development needs. However within this context, this Review will examine the extent to which the land on the edge of settlement satisfies the five purposes, with a presumption that no land should be excluded unless overwhelming circumstances prevail.
- 2.3 The Review was undertaken in two phases to inform the Council's identification of potential contingency sites for housing in the light of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014. The Phase I Green Belt Review Report was submitted in October 2013 as an initial assessment to identify lands parcels within the Green Belt and as an initial assessment of the edge of the settlements within each land parcel against the five purposes of the Green Belt. The Phase I Report has been updated and incorporated into the Final Draft Report.
- 2.4 Table I below sets out the criteria adopted by the Council:

Table I: Assessment criteria

Criterion	Explanation
1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;	Large built up area refers to Oxford. Land parcel should be assessed for extent to which it protects against contiguous development with Oxford city and it prevents another settlement being absorbed into Oxford.
2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;	For this criterion, the 'town' that should be considered is Abingdon on Thames in the first instance, but also other settlements currently inset to the Green Belt, which are Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton. Though most of these are villages rather than towns, the Vale would not wish to allow these settlements to merge.
3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;	This should look at the proximity of the land to existing settlements and the extent to which the land is contained by physical barriers such as roads, railways, watercourses etc. It should also give an overview of the landscape character of the land parcel and the extent to which it impacts on the open countryside.
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and	This criterion refers specifically to the setting and special character of Oxford city and the impact of the land parcel upon

	that and should include any long distance views. It should include particular reference to the original designation of the Green Belt and the extent to which there have been any changes in circumstance.
5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	The use of previously developed land where available before Greenfield land is a principle the council follows across the district. Therefore it is assumed that all areas of the Green Belt contribute to this principle equally and does not need to be considered specifically as part of this review.

2.5 The Review seeks to fulfil the following objectives:

1. A comprehensive review of the whole of the Vale of White Horse Green Belt;
2. A comprehensive test of all of the Green Belt against the five purposes; and
3. A review of the contribution of each land parcel and its edge of settlement to the Green Belt.

2.6 The Review has been undertaken in the context that it may be necessary to release land for development in the light of new housing need and the Review aims to distinguish the relative value of different parts of the Green Belt on the edge of settlements. This has been undertaken by assessing each land parcel and the edge of settlements within each land parcel against the five criteria; by seeking to identify whether this land makes a greater or lesser contribution to the Green Belt when taking into account the reasons for the designation (as set out in Section 5 of this Report); and by assessing the current level of urban influence on the land and its connectivity with the wider Green Belt.

2.7 The Review was undertaken independently of the Council's internal appraisals and other evidence base work. The Green Belt Review does not seek to balance Green Belt purposes with other sustainability objectives or to make recommendations for the exclusion of areas of the Green Belt. It provides advice to the Council of the extent to which the land parcels are more or less essential to meeting the purposes and local objectives of the Green Belt. It is the role of the Council to undertake the task of deleting or adding areas of land from the existing Green belt when considering and presenting changes to the Local Plan.

2.8 This Phase 2 Review Report includes:

- the final assessment of the edge of settlements and the land parcels as a whole;
- a high level assessment of the opportunities to enhance beneficial use of the Green Belt;
- A review of the washed over settlements; and
- a review of the Green Belt boundary to examine whether it should be extended to the west of Abingdon.

SECTION 3

STUDY AREA

- 3.1 The Oxford Green Belt surrounds Oxford City with the Green Belt divided into four local authority areas: Oxford City, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire, Cherwell District and West Oxfordshire. The Green Belt within Vale of White Horse extends to the west and south-west of the City within the north-western part of the District as shown in Figure 1. The Green Belt within the Vale of White Horse is mainly contiguous with Oxford City Green Belt and South Oxfordshire Green Belt (and also West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District) but for two very short stretches it adjoins the Oxford settlement boundary. This is shown in Figure 1.
- 3.2 Figure 1 shows the sub-division of the Vale of White Horse Green Belt into eleven land parcels. The rationale for these sub-divisions is set out in Section 7. The Council also identified an additional area of Study to the west of Abingdon which might be considered as an extension to the existing Green Belt. This area was also sub-divided into two land parcels, as shown in Figure 1, and subjected to the same criteria as the existing Green Belt. In addition the Study examined whether additional villages within the Green Belt should be shown as inset settlements within the Green Belt.
- 3.3 Figure 1 shows:
- the boundary of the Oxford Great Belt west and south-west of the City in the Vale, and within Oxford City, and the contiguous Green Belt in West Oxfordshire, Cherwell District and South Oxfordshire adjacent to the Vale of White Horse;
 - the land parcels; and
 - the main settlements excluded from the Green Belt and their settlement boundaries, together with the hamlet settlement pattern

Figure 2 shows the topography of the Green Belt

Figure 3 shows the River Thames and its tributaries and the flood zones

Figure 4 shows the OWLS landscape types within the Green Belt

Figure 5 shows the land parcel edge of settlements, the potential locations for a revision of boundaries (indicative only) and potential new inset settlements

SECTION 4

METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The principle purpose of the Review is to assess the current boundaries of the Oxford Green Belt in the Vale. Primarily this required an assessment against the five purposes of the Green Belt but also included an assessment of the openness of the land and the contribution to the openness and special qualities of the Oxford Green Belt which form the background to the designation (see Section 5). The following additional factors were also taken into account in assessing the open character of land parcels and the land on the edge of settlements against the five purposes of the Green Belt:

A Urbanisation:

The Review includes an assessment of the extent that the Green Belt land on the edge of settlement has been significantly affected by urbanising land uses since designation. This might include:

- A substantial increase in the mass and scale of adjacent urbanising built form within the settlement
- Visual exposure of the adjacent urbanising built form and its influence on the land in the Green Belt
- Significant increased containment by urbanising built form
- Incremental erosion of the open character of the land on the edge of settlement (so that it appears as part of the settlement)
- Presence of Previously Developed Land (PDL)
- High degree of severance from the adjacent Green Belt

B Settlement pattern:

At present, in some cases, the Green Belt extends well into a settlement and part of the land may serve little of the Green Belt purposes. In such a case a logical 'rounding off' of the settlement might be achieved without harm to the function of the remaining Green Belt in the area. This approach would apply only where development was not contrary to other aspects of NPPF, in keeping with the character of the settlement in question and would not result in harm to the open character of the adjoining Green Belt.

Mitigation

- 4.2 It may be argued that any adverse impact of removing land from the Green Belt (leading to development on that land) can be mitigated by appropriate landscape measures. The potential to provide landscape mitigation and / or Green Infrastructure should not be regarded as justification for development in the Green Belt or for the exclusion of land from the Green Belt. The key consideration is to what extent the land in its current state meets the five purposes of the Green Belt, is open in character and contributes to the wider openness of the Green Belt.
- 4.3 The review of the Green Belt followed a staged process as set out below.

STAGE 1: SUBDIVIDE GREEN BELT INTO LAND PARCELS



STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT OF EDGE OF SETTLEMENT WITHIN LAND PARCELS AGAINST FIVE GREEN BELT PURPOSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



STAGE 3: ASSESSMENT OF WHOLE LAND PARCELS AGAINST FIVE GREEN BELT PURPOSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS



STAGE 4: ASSESSMENT OF ADDITIONAL LAND FOR INCLUSION IN AN EXTENSION TO THE GREEN BELT AND RECOMMENDATIONS



STAGE 5: ASSESSEMENT OF SMALL VILLAGES WITHIN THE GREEN BELT AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR INCLUSION AS INSET SETTLEMENTS WITHIN THE GREEN BELT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 5

HISTORY OF THE GREEN BELT DESIGNATION

General

- 5.1 Green Belts were made possible by the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 but until the mid fifties, the only formal proposals were in London. Then in April 1955, the Minister of Housing and Local Government urged other local authorities to consider establishing Green Belts. Guidelines were set out in Circular 42/55, published in August 1955, giving three reasons for establishing Green Belts. These were:
- a) to check growth of a large and built-up area
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; or
 - c) to preserve the special character of a town

The Oxford Green Belt was designated, primarily for reason c).

- 5.2 The setting up of the Oxford Green Belt in 1956 was not a sudden decision; there had long been debate about restriction of the further growth of Oxford. The three principal local authorities in drawing up the Green Belt were Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and Berkshire County Council. At the time, the part of the Green Belt now in the Vale district was within Berkshire County Council's jurisdiction. The three authorities submitted a sketch plan of the Green Belt to the minister in March 1956 and in the November were invited to submit formal proposals.
- 5.3 When the Green Belt proposals were sent forward by the local authorities in 1956, eight villages plus the new settlement of Berinsfield were designated as centres for population expansion ('inset village') intended to absorb overspill population from the city as well as accommodating their own natural increase. In the Vale, these were Kennington, Cumnor, Wootton, Radley and Appleton.
- 5.4 The examination of the Green Belt proposals was in 1961 but it was not until 1975 that the Green Belt was formally approved. The belt was set at between 4 and 6 miles wide and was divided into an outer area of 'approved' Green Belt and an inner 'interim' area. The main purpose of this was to allow a review of village boundaries to enable them to expand, to be decided through Local Plans.
- 5.5 In 1974 the area now known as the Vale of White Horse was transferred from Berkshire County to Oxfordshire County. The first Structure Plan for Oxfordshire was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in February 1979. The main objective of the Plan was to protect Oxfordshire's agricultural, historical and natural resources. In particular, the Plan proposed that the growth of the City of Oxford should be restrained and that most new housing and employment development should be steered to four 'country towns', Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney.
- 5.6 The County Council began alterations to the Structure Plan in 1984. The County were seeking to maintain restraint of development around Oxford with development focussed at the four 'country towns'. However it became clear that there was substantial pressure from other organisations to establish a new strategy. Despite this pressure, the Secretary of State accepted

the need to restrain development, and acknowledged that in Oxfordshire, environmental constraints were real and significant. The decision letter accompanying the notice of approval made clear that the Secretary of State recognised the need to conserve and protect the unique character of Oxford and its setting in its natural environment. Specifically in relation to new house-building he stated that the growth of the City should not continue indefinitely, and that “there is now only very limited scope for further development in and around Oxford”.¹

- 5.7 Final approval of the alterations to the Structure Plan was announced by the Secretary of State on 15 April 1987. This included provision for the inner boundaries of the inner Green Belt to be decided through Local Plans.

Description of the area

- 5.8 The original designation of the Oxford Green Belt was to prevent the city from extending further into the countryside. The role of the Green Belt within the surrounding districts was to preserve the rural setting of the city. The Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan, adopted March 1991 stated that following about the Vale’s area of the Green Belt:

“It is an area of distinctive character. From Newbridge the upper Thames takes a great sweep northwards by Swinford and Godstow before passing through Oxford and southwards to Kennington and Radley; within this huge arc in the river’s course west of Oxford can be found a landscape of wooded hills and small valleys rising from the watermeadows. Here it is the country made famous in Matthew Arnold’s ‘Scholar Gipsy’ – Wytham Hill, Boars Hill, Cumnor, Bagley Wood, Bablock Hythe, the Chilswell Valley. The hills, the woods and the villages have seen many changes – in the Victorian age as well as in our century – but much of their attractive quality remains, and they still form the essential backdrop to the dreaming spires of Oxford”.²

- 5.9 This was the context in which the boundaries of the Green Belt were set in the Vale.

Boundaries around villages

- 5.10 The Vale began work on establishing the ‘inner’ Green Belt boundary through its ‘Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan’. When drafting the plan, the most recent Circular was taken into account: Circular 14/84 ‘Green Belts’. This established important principles governing the preparation of Green Belt policies and proposals and their roles in Local Plans, which were as follows:
- (i) Green Belt policy is intended to check further growth of a large built-up area; to prevent neighbouring towns from merging; or to preserve the special character of a town.
 - (ii) There must continue to be a general presumption against inappropriate development in Green Belts.
 - (iii) An essential characteristic of Green Belts should be their permanence, and their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. To this end boundaries defined in earlier approved development plans should be altered only exceptionally, and where new boundaries are to be drawn, for example in areas previously referred to as ‘Interim Green Belt’, Planning Authorities should seek to establish boundaries that will last. Land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open for the purposes of the Green Belt should not be included

¹ Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan, Vale of White Horse District Council, adopted March 1991

² Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan, Vale of White Horse District Council, adopted March 1991

otherwise there is a risk that encroachment on the Green Belt may have to be allowed in order to accommodate future development. While making provision for development in general conformity with the Structure Plan, Planning Authorities should satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the period covered by the Structure Plan. In some cases this will mean safeguarding land between the urban area and the Green Belt which may be required to meet longer term development needs.

- 5.11 It stated in the Local Plan that the proposed boundaries around the villages had been worked up through analysis of the general characteristics of the area surrounding Oxford and the degree to which change should be permitted. It was decided that the boundaries should be drawn tightly around the existing built up areas to reflect one of the prime purposes of the Green Belt, which is to prevent the spread of urban development and to reflect the Secretary of State's comments in approving the Structure Plan (that Oxford should not be allowed to expand indefinitely).
- 5.12 The Local Plans had the ability to allocate safeguarded land between the built up area and the Green Belt so that was available for future expansion of the settlement. However, the boundaries shown in the Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan adopted in March 1991, which set the 'inner' boundaries were drawn very tightly around the villages with no land for them to grow. Some land to the north and south of Botley was safeguarded for further expansion but otherwise it was envisaged that any infill development within the built up area would provide opportunities for "limited expansion" envisaged by the County Council. This was because the Council considered that sufficient new building was taking place to enable it to meet the Structure Plan targets so no further land was needed for allocation.
- 5.13 The Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan recognised that the Government suggested Local Plans look beyond their plan period in order to be satisfied that the boundaries would not need to be reviewed at the end of the plan period to accommodate further growth. However it was stated in the plan that "In the particular circumstances of the Oxford Green Belt, only a few small parcels of land in the Vale's part of the Interim Green Belt are available to meet longer term development needs. In most places boundaries need to be drawn tightly around existing development, or areas which are proposed for development during the lifetime of the Local Plan." The reasons for this decision were as follows:
- a. The Structure Plan contains no guidance beyond 1996; however, it is unlikely that the policy of restraint around Oxford with development focussed at the four 'country towns' will change.
 - b. A reasonable division of growth across the districts and the city council will result in limited requirement for each area.
 - c. Experience shows that a significant proportion of future development would take place within the built-up areas.
 - d. A substantial number of houses are to be provided in this plan period, which will leave few sites to provide for future needs. The council is therefore likely to seek to limit provision for new housing, favouring a period of consolidation during which the effects of previous growth can be absorbed.³

- 5.14 In his report, the Inspector agreed with the council, stating that:

"Although the proposals of this Local Plan in defining the boundaries of the Green Belt are certainly very restrictive I consider that the strictest control over the extension of the built-up areas into the surrounding

³ Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan, Vale of White Horse District Council, adopted March 1991

countryside is essential if the setting of Oxford is to be preserved. Although this Local Plan area is, of course, but a limited part of that setting it does, in my opinion, relate to a particularly important and vulnerable area comprising the high ground to the west of the City and the water meadows between the two which are a vital component in that landscape. In general, therefore, I endorse the main lines of the Plan's proposals for the Green Belt and will proceed to examine the precise boundaries in the context of several objection sites.”⁴

- 5.15 Subsequent Local Plans have not reviewed the boundaries of the Green Belt and they remain as they were set out in the Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan adopted in 1991. In subsequent plans, the district housing needs were considered as a whole and not split in to separate plans as they previously had been. The District Council met its housing need through development of non Green Belt land.

Boundaries around settlements

- 5.16 The Inspector (of the Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan adopted in 1991) then addressed objections relating to the particular sites that were raised through representations to the Local Plan. There are no maps available showing the exact extent of the sites referred to but the comments can be generally applied to the settlements.

Botley

- 5.17 There were several sites put forward by objectors for exclusion from the Green Belt in the Botley area. The Inspector noted that the basic question underlying the definition of the Green Belt boundary in this locality is whether Botley is, according to the Council, a separate settlement or, according to the objectors, a neighbourhood or suburb of Oxford. He concluded in favour of the Council, stating:

“Although the process of development westwards along Botley Road renders the distinction progressively less clear, and although it is certainly not reinforced by the very extensive commercial development complex in the Seacourt Towers area, I consider that coalescence is not yet complete and that Botley is still a recognisably separate settlement.

Wootton

- 5.18 A 10 acre site to the south-east extremity of the built up area of Wootton was objected to for inclusion in the Green Belt. The Council strongly opposed to excluding the site from the Green Belt because its development would mean the coalescence of Wootton and Whitecross and eventual coalescence with Abingdon itself. The Inspector unreservedly supported the Council in seeking to maintain “the important and already narrow gap between the built up areas of Wootton and Whitecross.” He stated that the southern boundary of Wootton is clearly defined at The Pound and not the garage/filling station at the Lamborough Hill/Honeybottom Lane crossroads as suggested by the objectors. He shared the Council’s view that the extension of Wootton further to the south east would be highly likely to result in its progressive coalescence with Whitecross and Abingdon.

⁴ Oxford Fringe & Green Belt Local Plan Public Inquiry into Objections Inspector’s Report and Recommendations, October 1990

Radley

- 5.19 The objection site was some 2ha at the rear of existing dwelling houses in Foxborough Road and partly at the rear of houses in White's Lane. Objectors stated that the northern boundary of the site would form a clearly-defined and satisfactory physical boundary and that development on the site would not conflict with the aims and objectives of the Green Belt. The council agreed that the northern hedgerow could be considered as an alternative if additional housing land were needed, which it was not. Further, in the opinion of the council the development of the site would conflict with the principles of the Green Belt as the gap between Abingdon and Radley is particularly vulnerable to the possibility of coalescence. The Inspector stated:

"I accept that development on the objection site would not, in itself, encroach into the narrow gap which separates 2 communities but it would represent a very real encroachment of the built up area of Radley into the open countryside. So vulnerable is the position of Radley in its context that I consider the Council to be correct in seeking to exercise extremely strict control over its outward expansion to protect, what is, at present its rural setting."

Abingdon

- 5.20 A statutory Town Map was first produced for Abingdon following publication of the Berkshire County Development Plan in 1953. A review of the Town Map was approved in 1967. After the transfer of Abingdon to Oxfordshire the Council initiated the process of making a new town plan, which was the Abingdon Local Plan adopted July 1983.
- 5.21 The Green Belt boundary around Abingdon was set through the 2 ½" Inset Map approved by the Abingdon Borough, Rural District and Berkshire County Councils as it had been the subject of a public inquiry, and the Secretary of State's decision letter made no reference whatever to modifying the boundaries of the Green Belt within the Inset Maps.
- 5.22 The plan recognised that Abingdon is physically constrained, in the same way that subsequent Local Plans have noted. The 1983 plan notes in relation to the north and north-east of the town, that "land is least constrained but even there, as the Structure Plan acknowledges, development would affect high quality agricultural land, make further incursion into the Green Belt and threaten the valuable tract of open land between Abingdon and Radley. The gap of open countryside between Abingdon and Radley is considered by the District Council to be very important and must be firmly maintained. Any possibility of unrestrained extension of the built-up area towards Lodge Hill must also be resolutely avoided – as with Oxford, it is important to protect the rising ground which forms the landscape rim of the town."⁵
- 5.23 The boundary for Abingdon was drawn around the settlement and included an area of safeguarded land to allow for future housing development. However, the Local Plan did not make provision for the full Structure Plan housing allocation for Abingdon.
- 5.24 No information is available on how the Green Belt boundary for Abingdon was decided.

⁵ Abingdon Local Plan, Vale of White Horse District Council, July 1983

Southern boundary

- 5.25 The southern boundary of the Green Belt was determined by Berkshire County Council through the submission to the Secretary of State, agreed in 1975. This boundary has remained largely unchanged since then though it was reviewed in the Rural Areas Local Plan draft for consultation, February 1984. The Council took the opportunity to confirm long-standing policies regarding the detailed interpretation of the boundary in the vicinity of Tubney, and to include a small additional parcel of land adjacent to Abingdon and north of Marcham Road so as to align the boundary with that already defined in the adopted Abingdon Local Plan.
- 5.26 There is no information available on how the southern boundary was decided upon.
- 5.27 In the Inspector's Report and Recommendations for the Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan, October 1990, the Inspector addressed a comment in relation to the southern boundary submitted by Fyfield and Tubney Parish Council. The Parish Council argued that the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of the parish should be redrawn to take in the whole of its administrative area rather than its north-eastern corner.
- 5.28 The council responded that the outer boundary for the Green Belt was set in 1975 and has remained substantially unchanged for fifteen years. Secondly, it is not the only parish divided by the boundary and if a review of this boundary were to take place it would necessitate a comprehensive review. To do this at the time would have created administrative difficulties as the area was included in a separate plan (the Rural Areas Local Plan).
- 5.29 The Inspector stated that although he could see that there may eventually be a case for a comprehensive reconciliation of the Green Belt, Local Plan and Parish boundaries, he did not think this was the right time to take such a drastic step.

SECTION 6

PURPOSES OF THE OXFORD GREEN BELT

National Planning Policy Framework March 2012

- 6.1 The Review has been undertaken in conformance with policy and guidance set out in the NPPF, which states:

“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence. (Paragraph 79)

- 6.2 Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (Paragraph 80).

- 6.3 These five statutory purposes of the Green Belt form the basis for the primary appraisal criteria set out in this report.

- 6.4 Further important elements of policy and guidance in the NPPF cover (1) the intended permanence of the Green Belt; (2) the need to take account of sustainable patterns of development; (3) the advice that the Green Belt should only be altered in exceptional circumstances; and (4) that positive planning should be made for use of land in the Green Belt. These points are considered here. Other elements of NPPF policy will also apply where appropriate.

Permanence of Green Belts

- 6.5 The NPPF states that the permanence of Green Belts is an essential characteristic (paragraph 79) and advises that, *“once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period”* (paragraph 83). The Oxford Green Belt has remained predominantly intact since it was approved in 1975. As set out in the NPPF, production of the new Local Plan 2031 Part 1 is the appropriate time to consider whether exceptional circumstances have arisen that warrant alterations to the general extent of the Green Belt. If this is found to be the case, the Council should consider alterations with a very long timescale in mind to limit the risk of ad hoc alterations being required during and beyond the Local Plan period.

Sustainable patterns of development

- 6.6 NPPF policy intimates that protection of the Green Belt must be balanced with other sustainable development considerations during the preparation of the Local Plan: *“When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and*

villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary” (paragraph 84). The Green Belt Review therefore forms only part of the evidence base, alongside the Sustainability Appraisal, that must be considered by the Council.

Defining boundaries

- 6.7 NPPF policy states that the Green Belt boundaries should ‘*not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open*’ and should be clearly defined ‘*using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent*’. The review of Green Belt boundaries requires local authorities to ‘*satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period*’.

Settlements in the Green Belt

- 6.8 NPPF recognises that the Green Belt may wash over small village settlements. As part of the review the local authority may consider whether the open character of a village contributes to the openness of the Green Belt and therefore should be included in the Green Belt. The village should be excluded from the Green Belt if this is not the case, and the character of the village can be protected by other means such as conservation area or normal development management policies. (Paragraph 86)

Promoting positive use of the Green Belt

- 6.9 Once Green Belts are defined, Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as “*looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land*” (paragraph 81).

Additional Guidance

- 6.10 Since the publication of NPPF in March 2012 little further guidance has been issued to advise local authorities when undertaking a review of the Green Belt. The Green Belt Standard Note SN/SC/934 to Members of Parliament 14 January 2013 is therefore particularly useful. The All Party Parliamentary Group under Chris Shelton will be reporting shortly on their findings on the Green Belt.

Green Belt Standard Note SN/SC/934 to Members of Parliament 14 January 2013

- 6.11 The following is an extract from this Note to Members:

The Government has not announced any proposals to change the law in relation to protection of the green belt. In a written ministerial statement of 6 September 2012, however, it encouraged local councils to use existing laws to review and tailor the extent of green belt land in their local areas. As an incentive to use these powers, councils who review green belt land in their local plans will have their local plan examination process prioritised:

The Green Belt is an important protection against urban sprawl, providing a 'green lung' around towns and cities. The Coalition Agreement commits the Government to safeguarding Green Belt and other environmental designations, which they have been in the new National Planning Policy Framework.

As has always been the case, councils can review local designations to promote growth. We encourage councils to use the flexibilities set out in the National Planning Policy Framework to tailor the extent of

Green Belt land in their areas to reflect local circumstances. Where Green Belt is considered in reviewing or drawing up Local Plans, we will support councils to move quickly through the process by prioritising their Local Plan examinations. There is considerable previously developed land in many Green Belt areas, which could be put to more productive use. We encourage Councils to make best use of this land, whilst protecting the openness of the Green Belt in line with the requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The distance between settlements which is needed to ensure that the Green Belt meets its purposes is not defined and depends on local circumstances.

- 6.12 As set out in Section 5, the designation of the Oxford Green Belt took into account local landscape characteristics and the historic importance of Oxford City. These are particular to the Oxford Green Belt and included the need to protect key views of the iconic skyline of Oxford's spires.
- 6.13 In addition to the five main purposes of the Green Belt, the following criteria have been considered under this Review.
1. Preservation of the rural landscape setting of historic Oxford;
 2. The retention of the identity of Botley as a separate settlement in the light of its very close proximity to Oxford City;
 3. Impact on the Green Belt as a result of the risk of settlements merging with adjacent hamlets and small villages washed over by the Green Belt;
 4. Containment within the landscape bounded by the loop of the River Thames from Newbridge in the west to Culham in the east;
 5. Contribution to the key characteristics of the Oxford Green Belt west of Oxford (Vale of White Horse): River Thames, water meadows, hills and small valleys, wooded hillsides, small pasture fields;
 6. Protection of rising hillsides which form the landscape rim in close proximity to settlements;
 7. Contribution by vale landscapes to the balance of river landscape, wooded hills interconnected: and
 8. The acknowledgement that the Green Belt was drawn tightly around the settlements (the inner boundaries).

SECTION 7

DEFINITION OF GREEN BELT INTO LAND PARCELS

Selection of land parcels

- 7.1 The first stage of the Study required the identification of suitable land parcels to form the basis of the assessment. Other similar studies have turned to existing sub-divisions of the local authority area which have already been adopted for the Local Plan process. Others have used district or borough landscape character assessments which are sufficiently refined to provide a sound basis for the Green Belt land parcels. Neither classification was available to inform this Study.
- 7.2 A number of potential options were considered as the basis of the assessment: parish boundaries; proposals maps inset boundaries; linear landmarks such as roads, railways, rivers and main streams, and significant tracks; a grid system; ward boundaries; and OWLS landscape types. No other available data sets provided potential sub-divisions to the area.
- 7.3 It was felt important that the boundaries should meet certain criteria. They should:
- be readily identifiable on the ground;
 - be compatible with changes in the character of the landscape, in particular taking into account changes in topography and landform, woodland cover, and general openness of the landscape;
 - reflect perceptions of the local landscape and settlement pattern;
 - be small enough to provide a meaningful local assessment;
 - be large enough to reflect the high level of assessment required of the Study.
- 7.4 For the above reasons the Proposals Map inset boundaries and Grid lines were rejected as they bore no relation to features on the ground. The ward and parish boundaries are well recognised by the local community and have cultural significance but similarly do not adequately reflect the landscape pattern on the ground.
- 7.5 The OWLS landscape types were examined in some detail. The landscape types are well established and based on sound landscape and ecological evidence. However the boundaries of the OWLS landscape types often follow contour lines which are not discernible on the ground. However it was felt that these landscape types should still be used to guide the sub-division of the Green Belt. Although the detailed character of the landscape is not a material factor in the designation of the Green Belt, the landscape types do reflect changes in topography and vegetation cover which in turn have a role to play in meeting the purposes of the Green Belt. The landscape types also reflect the changes across the Green Belt in the settlement pattern and relation to the wider landscape.
- 7.6 A close examination was undertaken of the landscape types, the pattern of settlement in the Green Belt (the large built up area of Oxford; the neighbouring towns and larger villages of Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton; the scatter pattern of hamlets; and the hinterland between the main settlements), and the linear networks of roads, major tracks, rivers and main streams and railway lines. This led to the conclusion that the sub-division into land parcels should follow linear boundaries which are readily visible on the ground but contain landscapes of a well defined character.
- 7.7 This methodology has led to the definition of eleven land parcels in the existing Green Belt and a further 2 in the additional area under review to the west of Abingdon.

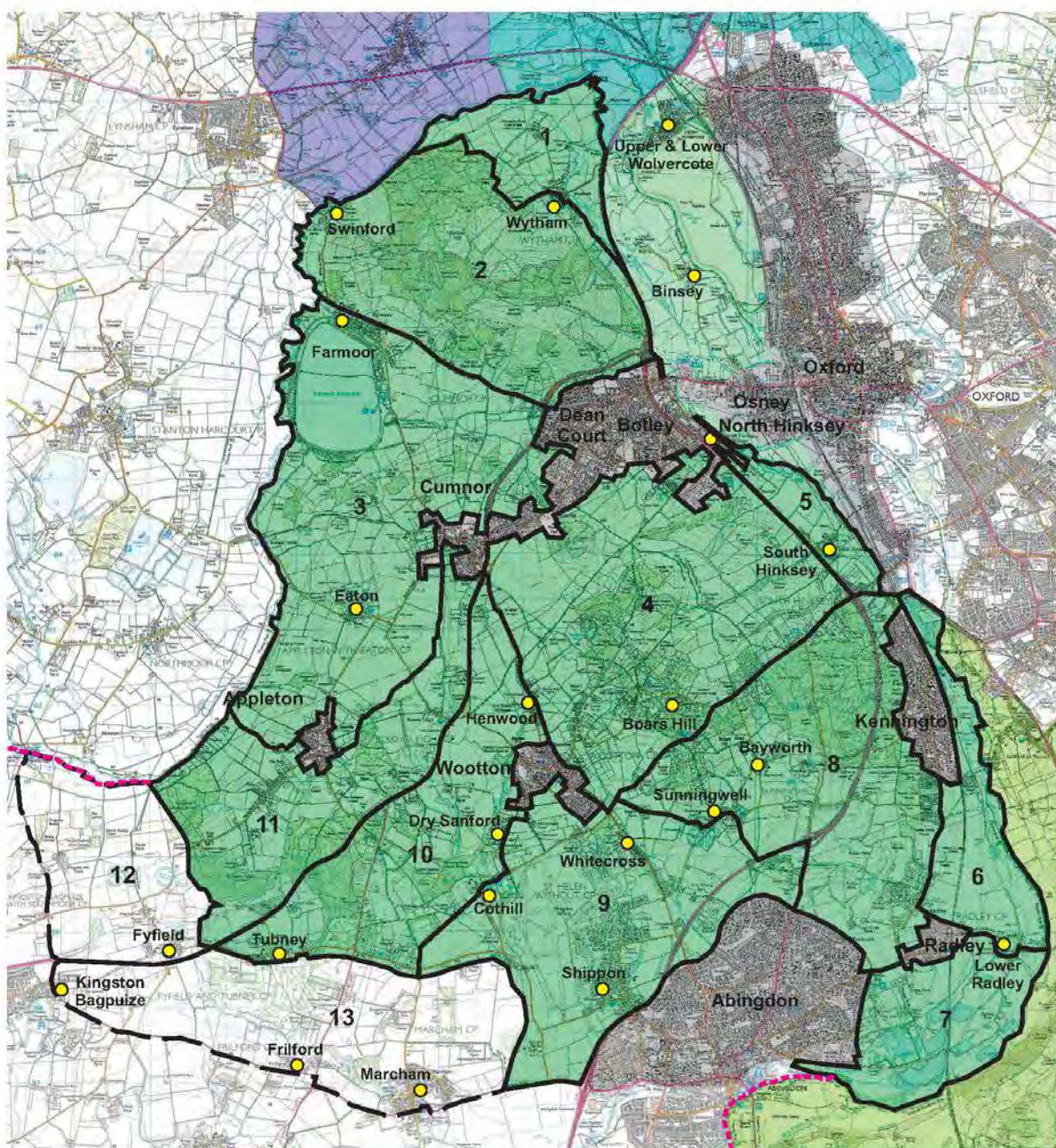


Figure 1: Vale of White Horse Oxford Green Belt Review Study Area showing Land Parcels 1 to 13 and Settlements

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KEY

	Settlement		Land parcel boundary
	Green belt - Vale of White Horse		Hamlet Settlement
	Green belt - Oxford City Council		Extent of Vale of White Horse beyond the Green Belt
	Green belt - South Oxfordshire District Council		
	Green belt - Cherwell District Council		
	Green belt - West Oxfordshire District Council		

SECTION 8

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL QUALITIES OF THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE WITHIN THE GREEN BELT

- 8.1 The review of the history of the Green Belt in Section 5 identifies a number of key characteristics of the open countryside west of Oxford that were considered essential components of the Green Belt and its purposes.
- 8.2 The land within the Green Belt remains open in character (with those exceptions where exceptional circumstances have prevailed). In addition to those key characteristics already identified in Section 5, it is evident from our review of the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study 2004 and our site visits that there are additional components of the Green Belt countryside that contribute to the overall value of the countryside in maintaining the setting of Oxford and separate identity of the neighbouring settlements within Oxford's hinterland.
- 8.3 These special qualities are:
- Containment within the landscape bounded by the loop of the River Thames from Newbridge in the west to Culham in the east;
 - River Thames and its water meadows;
 - Prominent series of hills and small valleys encircling Oxford;
 - Wooded hills and hillsides;
 - Lowland river terraces between the river floodplain and wooded hills;
 - Small pasture fields contained by woodland;
 - Contribution of vale landscapes to the balance of interconnected river landscapes and wooded hills; and
 - Traditional village pattern.
- 8.4 A number of existing elements contribute to the vulnerability of the Green Belt to further erosion:
- Existing inter-visibility between some settlements;
 - Perception of urban sprawl out of Oxford and into Botley;
 - Openness of the immediate riparian landscape adjoining Oxford;
 - Presence of smaller hamlets and ribbon development along the roads connecting the settlements which reduce the built form gap between the settlements;
 - Influence of major infrastructure particularly roads and pylons;
 - Increase in mass and scale of modern development within settlements, in particular in more urban areas, which are more highly visible from a wider area; and
 - Loss of tree cover and hedgerows in some landscapes (most notably the arable landscapes).
- 8.5 Our analysis of the contribution of the land parcels to these special qualities is set out below:

Table 2

Land Parcel	Location	Character	Key characteristics of importance to designation
1	Wytham and the Thames landscape corridor	River meadows and open terrace between the River Thames and Wytham Hill	Water meadows (continue to east into Port Meadow) River Thames (continues south into Oxford Green Belt) River gravel terrace between riparian landscape and wooded hills Small fields under pasture between woodland blocks Views to Oxford
2	Wytham Hill	Wooded hillside with vale setting to south	Water meadows River Thames Part of range of hills west of Oxford Steep sided isolated hill Large interlocking blocks of woodland Small fields under pasture between woodland blocks Vale landscape associated with River Thames Wytham village Views to Oxford
3	Farmoor and Eaton	Open vale farmland / river corridor	River Thames Water meadows River gravel terrace Vale landscape associated with River Thames Small fields under pasture between woodland blocks Eaton village
4	Boars Hill north	Wooded hillside	Large blocks of woodland Prominent hills and rolling occasionally steep sided landform Small pasture fields Vale landscape setting to wooded hills Boars Hill village Views to Oxford
5	Hinksey Villages floodplain	River meadows / ridge edge	River Thames tributaries Water meadows Wooded edge North and South Hinksey villages Views to Oxford
6	Kennington and Radley floodplain	River meadows and terraces / ridge edge	River Thames Water meadows River gravel terrace Rising wooded hillsides Lower Radley village Views to south Oxford
7	Radley / Abingdon floodplain	River meadows and terraces	River Thames River gravel terrace Vale landscape setting to the river and rising wooded hillsides at Nuneham Courtney in South Oxfordshire

Land Parcel	Location	Character	Key characteristics of importance to designation
8	Foxborough Hill and Radley Wood	Wooded and parkland hillside	Part of range of hills west of Oxford Large blocks of woodland Prominent hills and rolling occasionally steep sided landform Small pasture fields Vale landscape setting to wooded hills Sunningwell and Bayworth villages
9	Shippon and the airfield	Rolling farmland / airfield	Small pasture fields Shippon, Whitecross and Cothill villages Vale landscape setting to Abingdon
10	Dry Sandford / Tubney	Wooded ridge	Wooded hillsides Small fields under pasture between woodland blocks Dry Sandford, Henwood and Tubney villages Sandford Brook and its wooded landscape corridor
11	South Appleton	Wooded farmland	River Thames Water meadows Wooded hillsides Small fields under pasture between woodland blocks Bessels Leigh village

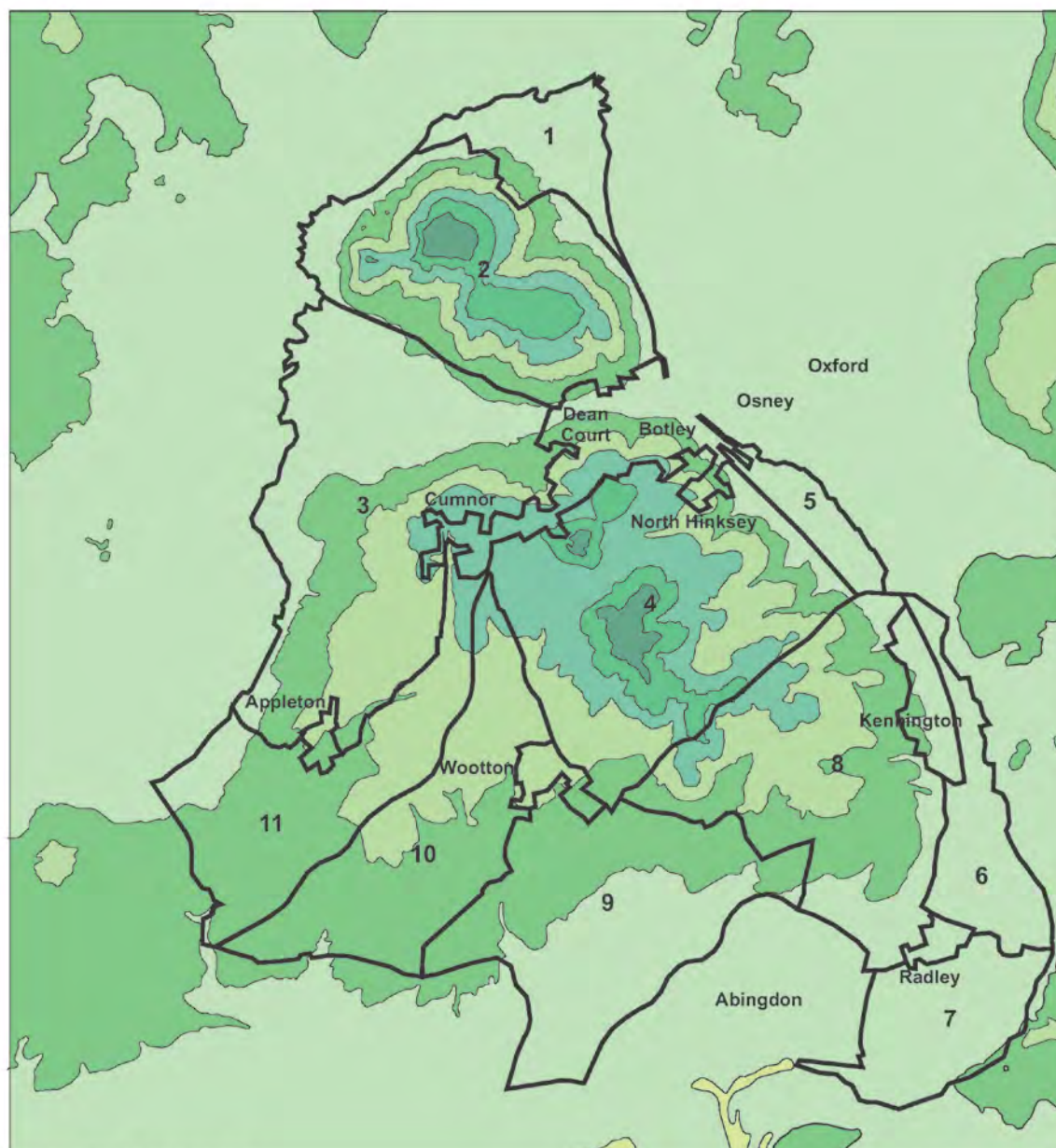


Figure 2: Topography

KEY:



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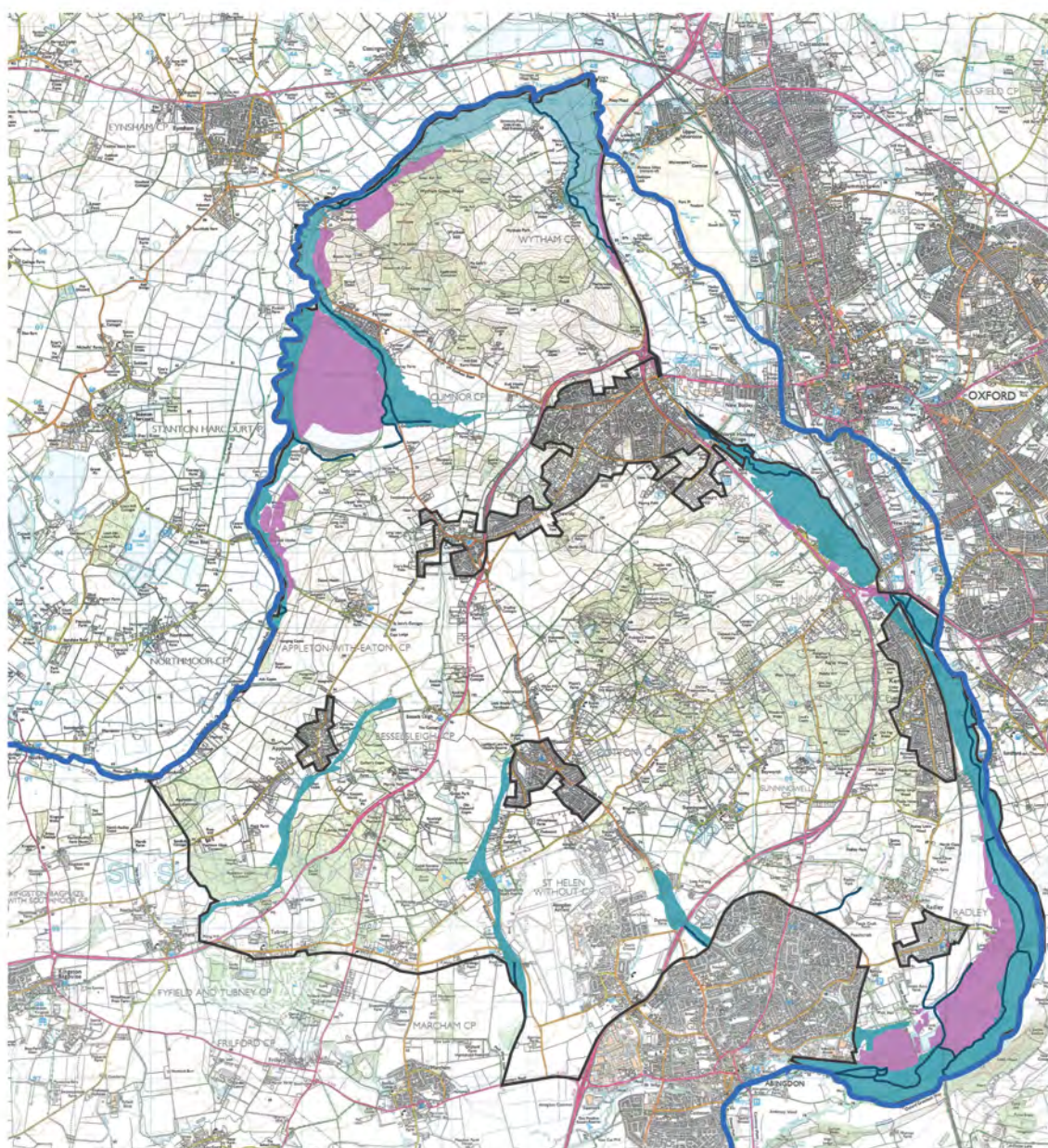


Figure 3: River Thames and Flood Zones

KEY

— River Thames Tributaries — Green Belt Boundary

— River Thames

Flood Zone 2: 1% to 0.1% annual probability of fluvial flooding, or 0.5% to 0.1% annual probability of tidal flooding in any year

Flood Zone 3: 1% or greater annual probability of fluvial flooding or a 0.5% or greater annual probability of tidal flooding

Source: Environment Agency, *Flood Map and Historic Flood Map - Guidance*, v1 June 2009

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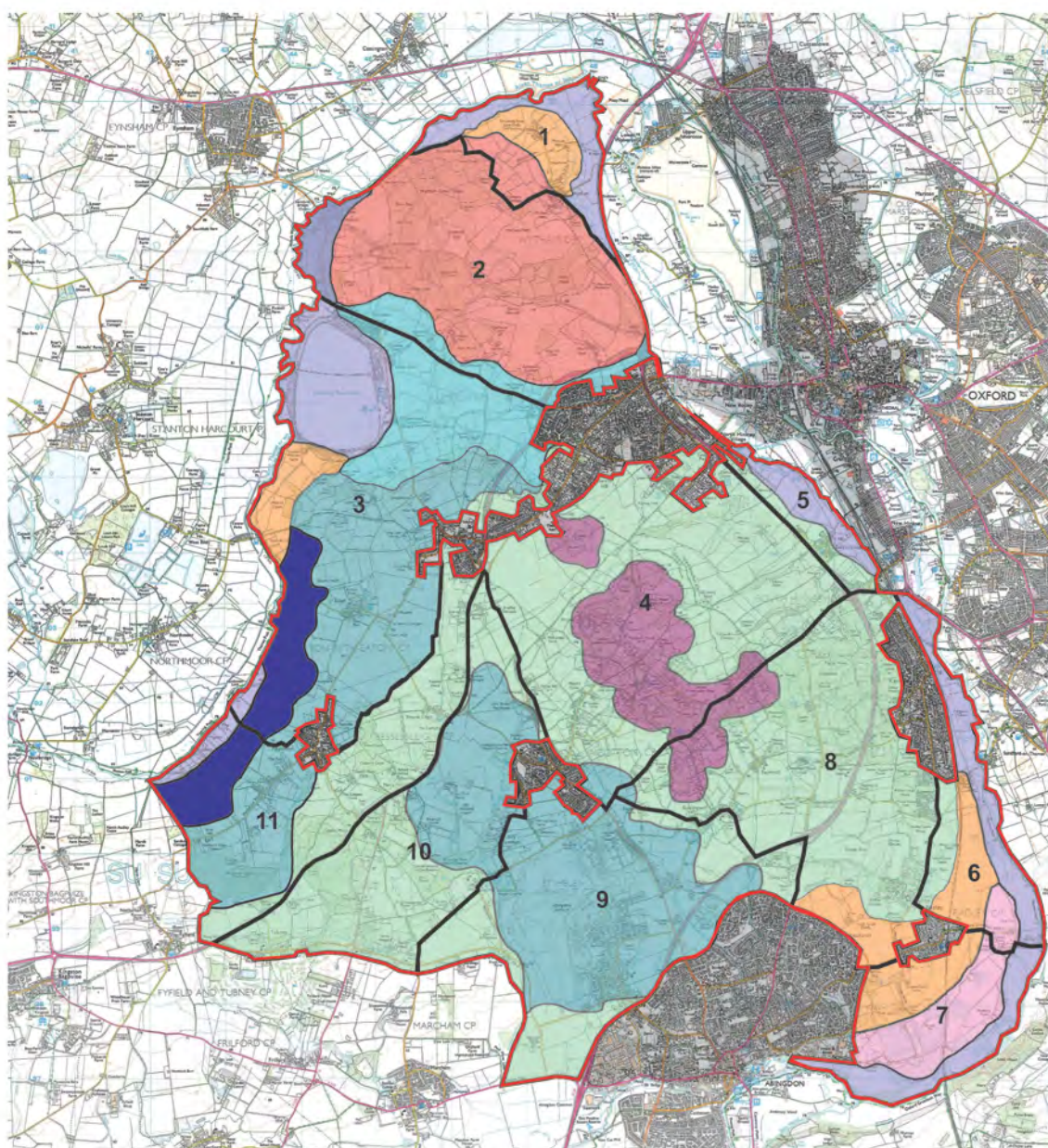


Figure 4: Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) Landscape Character Areas

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KEY

	Settlement		Terrace Farmland		Green Belt Boundary
	Alluvial Lowland		Upper Thames Vale		Land Parcel Boundary
	Midvale Ridge		Vale Farmland		
	River Meadowlands		Wooded Downlands		
	Rolling Farmland		Wooded Hills		

SECTION 9

ASSESSMENT OF SETTLEMENT EDGE CHARACTERISTICS BY LAND PARCEL

- 9.1 The following section sets out the assessment of the inner edge of the Land Parcels where they abut the main settlements of Oxford City, Abingdon, Appleford, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley, and Wootton.

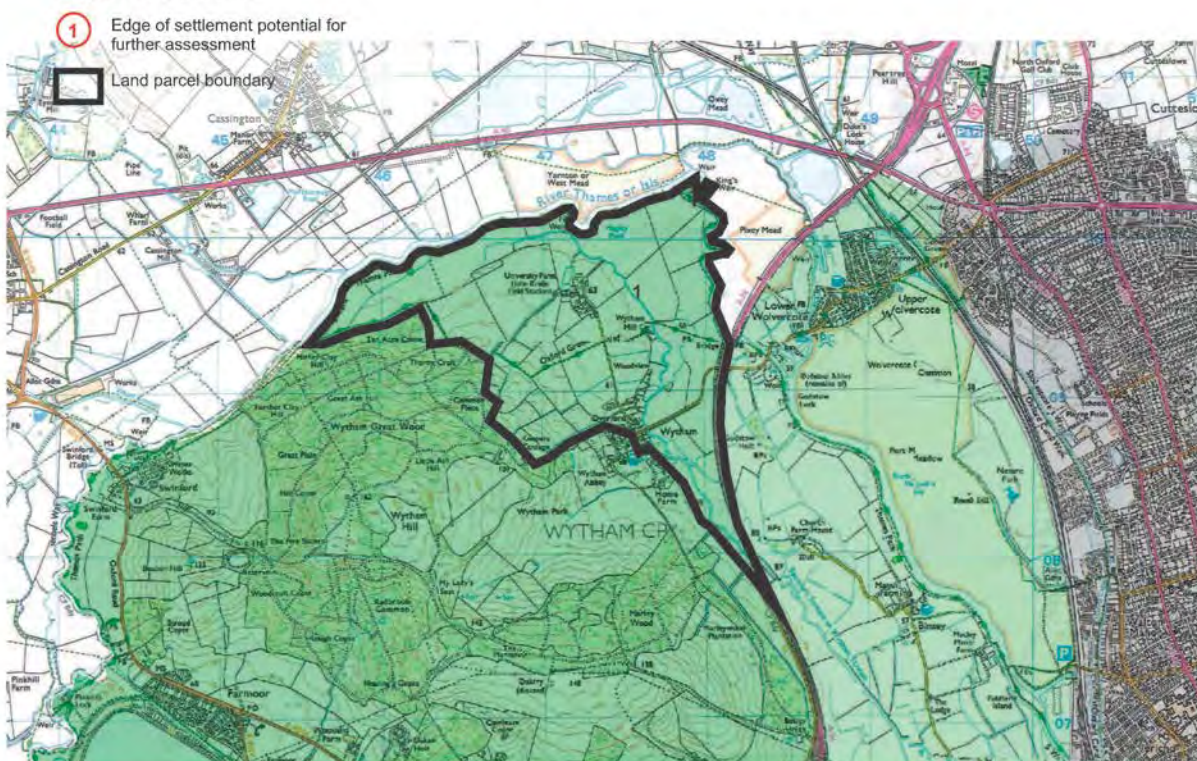
Table 3: Edge of Settlement by Land Parcel

Land Parcel	Location	Edge of settlement
1	Wytham and the Thames landscape corridor	Oxford (in conjunction with Oxford City Green Belt)
2	Wytham Hill	Botley Oxford (small part in conjunction with Oxford City Green Belt)
3	Farmoor and Eaton	Botley Cumnor Appleton
4	Boars Hill north	Cumnor Botley Wootton
5	South Hinksey floodplain	Oxford (in conjunction with Oxford City Green Belt) Botley (small part)
6	Kennington and Radley floodplain	Oxford (in conjunction with Oxford City Green Belt) Kennington Radley
7	Radley / Abingdon floodplain	Radley Abingdon
8	Foxborough Hill and Radley Wood	Abingdon Radley Kennington Oxford (small part)
9	Shippon and the airfield	Abingdon Wootton
10	Dry Sandford / Tubney	Wootton Cumnor (small part)
11	South Appleton	Appleton Cumnor (small part)

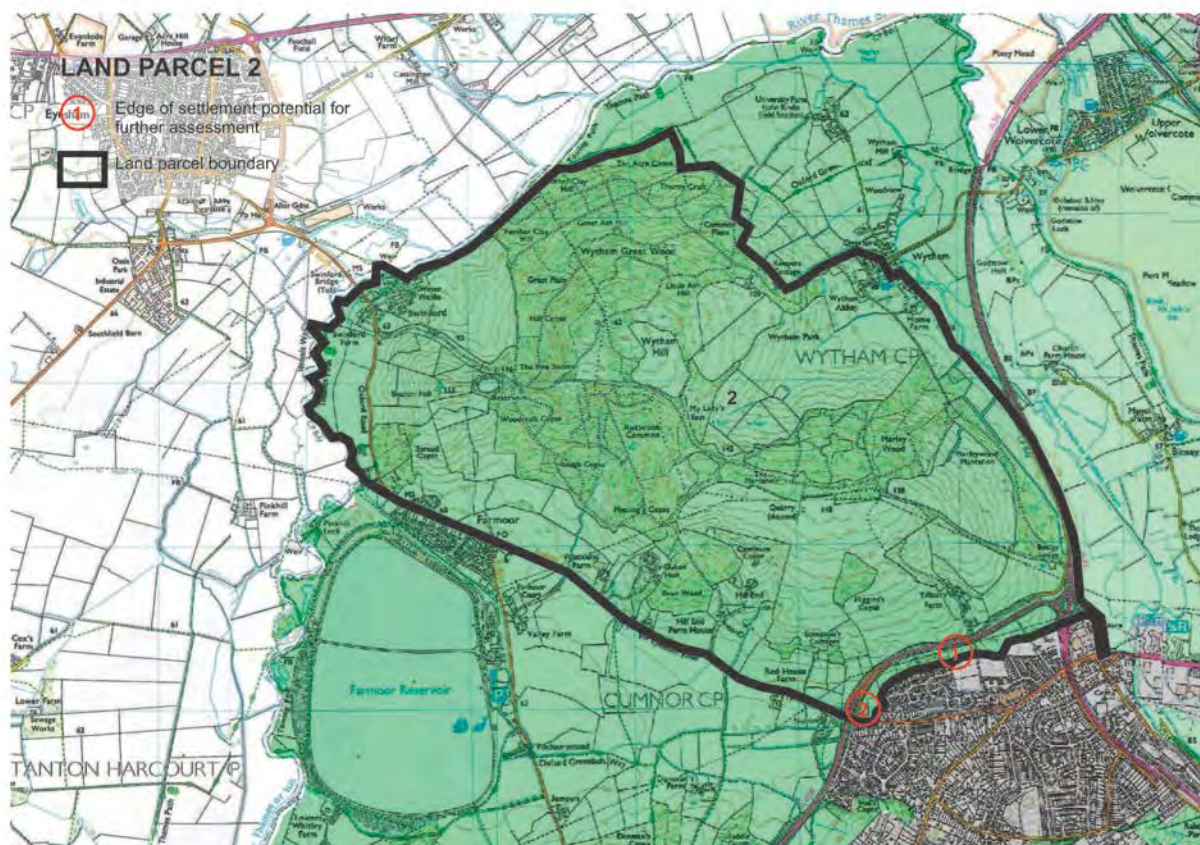
ASSESSMENT OF SETTLEMENT EDGE CHARACTERISTICS

PI: Wytham and the Thames landscape corridor

LAND PARCEL 1



- A. Settlement edge of Oxford:** Separated from settlement by Oxford City Green Belt

P2: Wytham Hill

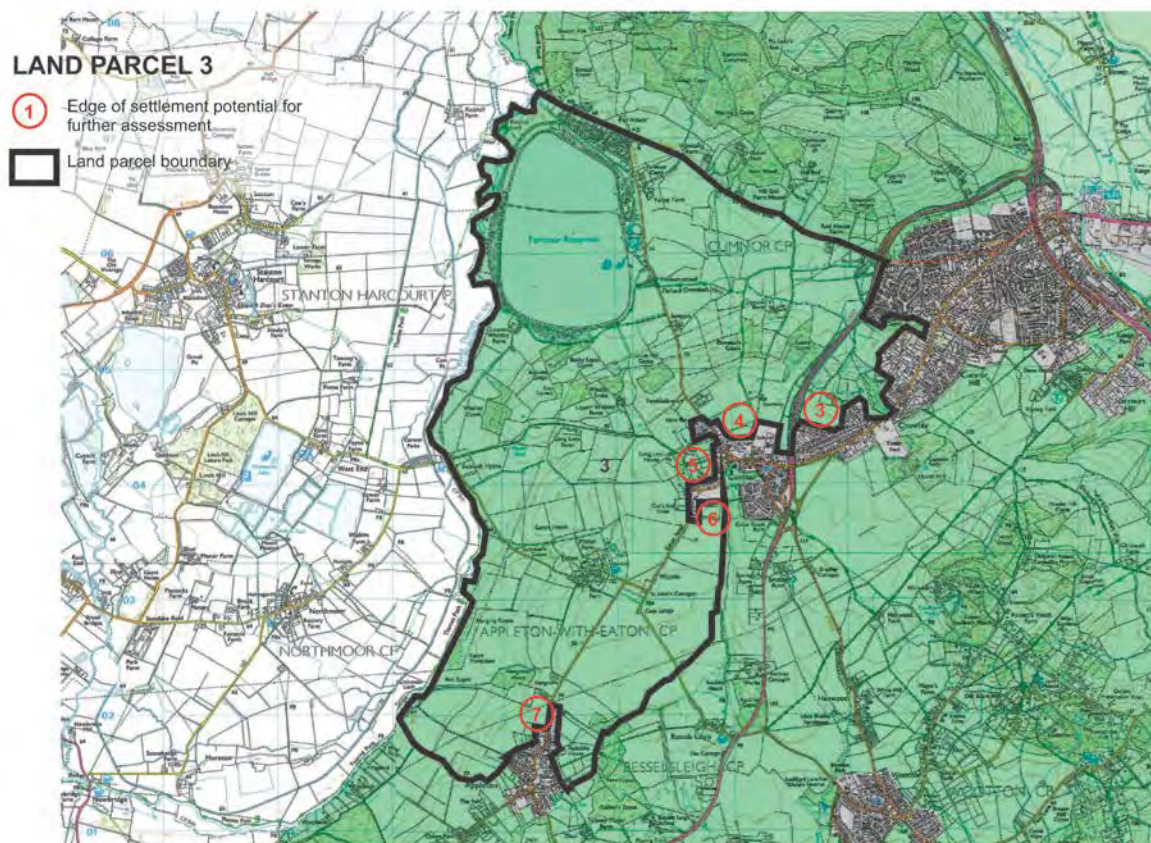
A. Settlement edge of Oxford: Separated from settlement by Oxford City Green Belt

B. Settlement edge of Botley: Land lying between Botley and A420:

Description	An open narrow strip of land in shallow valley on undulating ground between Wytham Hill to the north and high ground at Botley to the south, comprising open fields in the east and woodland to the west. Separated from wider landscape by A420 and A34.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Separated from settlement by Oxford City Green Belt
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The Green Belt in Oxford City to the east of P2 provides separation between the two settlements, This land is not directly between the two settlements of Oxford and Botley If Oxford City were to expand into its Green Belt, development on this inner edge would increase the perception of merging at this point
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development on this land could be contained by the A420 but parts of the narrow strip between Botley and the A420 are on rising open ground

	which merges into the open flanks of Wytham Hill or are wooded. Areas which are better contained by the existing settlement, which are less a part of the wider countryside and which do not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The land does not form part of the watermeadows, River Thames and open wooded hills that are key characteristics of the landscape setting to Oxford
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for development at Botley means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in encouraging the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the villages and neighbouring Oxford.

P3: Farmoor and Eaton



A. Settlement edge of Botley: Land west of Dean Court and Chawley

Description	Open land in two areas: one to the north which is west of the A420 and one to the south between the A420 and Chawley. The northern area is part of the open vale landscape which forms the setting of and links the wooded hills at Wytham and River Thames riparian landscape. The southern part is on the eastern end of the North Vale Corallian Ridge west of Botley and a small scale landscape with small irregular fields and woodland blocks which contribute to the setting of Chawley
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Although separated by the A420, the southern part contributes to the separation of Cumnor from Botley by retaining a substantial landscape buffer between the built form of Dean Court and Cumnor east of the A420.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The northern part is important as part of the wider Vale landscape and would lead to encroachment into the setting of Wytham Hill. The southern part contains areas typical of the special qualities of the Green Belt: small valleys and wooded areas, small areas of pasture between woodland. These have good links to the wider

	landscape of wooded hills (eg Hurst Hill). Areas which are better contained by the existing settlement, which are less a part of the wider countryside and which do not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The characteristics of this edge of settlement area are identified as important to the landscape setting and special landscape character of Oxford
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for development at Botley means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in encouraging the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the villages and neighbouring Oxford.

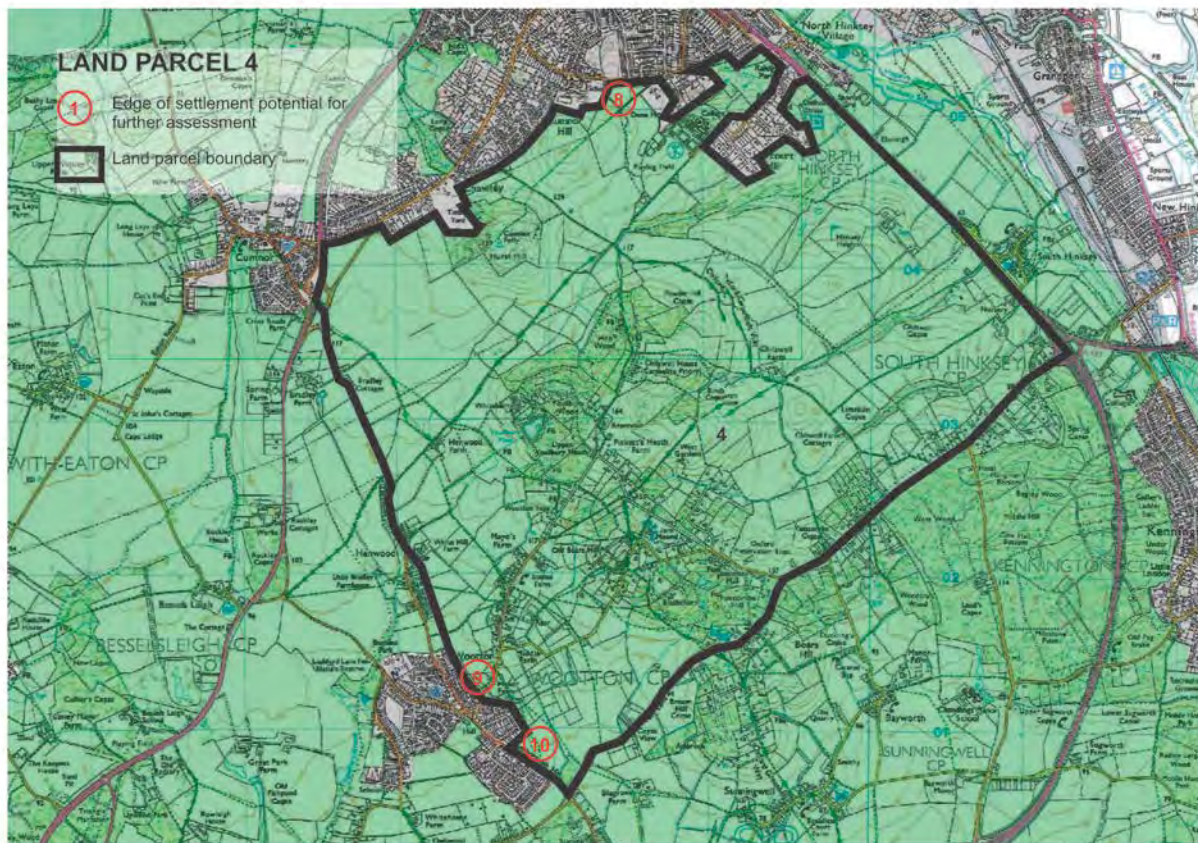
B. Settlement edge of Cumnor: Adjacent historic core

Description	Open land in two areas: one extending along the northern edge (linking to the edge of Botley) and one to the west of Cumnor south of the B4017 Tumbledown Road. The northern area is part of the wooded estates which extend south-east of Cumnor but the area has close links with the Vale to the north. The rural edge of the settlement is broken up by built form. The area to the west of Cumnor is a very small scale landscape of pasture, hedged field boundaries close to the Conservation Area.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	<p>Together with the southern part of the edge of settlement in P2, the northern area contributes to maintaining the separation of Cumnor and Botley by maintain an open landscape setting in the Vale north of Cumnor and Chawley.</p> <p>Cumnor is separated from Appleton by 2km of open land of which the western inner edge area forms a part. The hamlet of Eaton lies mid-way between these settlements. Major development would lead to the perception of merging but very small scale local development which did not extend the settlement footprint might be possible</p>
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<p>The northern area is important as part of the Vale landscape which forms a setting to and links Wytham Hill and the River Thames riparian landscape.</p> <p>The western part is important to the landscape setting of Cumnor and its conservation area.</p> <p>In both cases areas which are better contained by</p>

	the existing settlement, which are less a part of the wider countryside and which do not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Cumnor

C. Settlement edge of Appleton: Eaton road

Description	Open land within rolling farmland which extends between the River Thames riparian landscape fringed with wooded estatelands of the north Vale Corallian Ridge. Wooded edges and smaller fields to the settlement edge with open arable land beyond.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A. There is a sense of remoteness from Oxford 6km and more away
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Appleton is 2km from Cumnor with the hamlet of Eaton mid-way between the settlements. Major development would lead to the perception of merging but very small scale local development which did not extend the settlement footprint might be possible
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Appleton is the most remote of the villages from Oxford which lie within the Green Belt. The wooded edge of the settlement contributes to the landscape setting of the village and to its rural character. The small scale and the open, undeveloped character of the landscape around it contribute to the open character in the loop in the River Thames. Areas which are better contained by the existing settlement, which are less a part of the wider countryside and which do not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan. Very small scale development might be possible within the confines of the woodland and vegetation boundaries on the edge of the village.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Appleton

P4: Boars Hill north**A. Settlement edge of Botley: Land at Cumnor Hill**

Description	Open land in the wooded estatelands and farmland which extend over the hills including Hurst Hill, Cumnor Hill and Harcourt Hill. The wooded and open hillsides are important in containing Botley whilst the open arable land provides an important landscape setting to these assets.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Expansion of Botley is a concern as it is already almost joined up to Oxford. The area around Harcourt Hill is particularly vulnerable where the open hillside falls north-east overlooking Oxford. Further development southwards along the A34 would result in perception of the further expansion of Oxford. Any substantial housing site at Botley would have the effect of creating the perception of urban sprawl.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement edge links Botley to Cumnor. The area west of and including Hurst Hill is important to retaining the surviving separate identity of these two settlements. Wootton lies 2.8km to the south and is separated from Botley by Boars Hill. Blocks of woodland to the south of the settlement edge provide a local landscape buffer. Major development is unlikely to be possible given the

	need to retain the key landscape features (hillside and woodland) as open but smaller sites may be possible without harm to retaining the separate identity of Wootton and Botley.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The landscape features of this settlement edge are key features of the open countryside. Expansion of the edge of Botley would either encroach on the hillsides, the woodland or the open land between which is important in retaining the open landscape setting to these assets. An area which is better contained by the existing settlement, which is less a part of the wider countryside and which does not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The modern development at Botley has already to some extent undermined the setting to the historic town. The remaining open land and woodland cover is therefore important, especially as the settlement edge landscape has strong links with the wooded hills at Boars Hill in the centre of this land parcel
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for development at Botley means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in encouraging the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the villages and neighbouring Oxford.

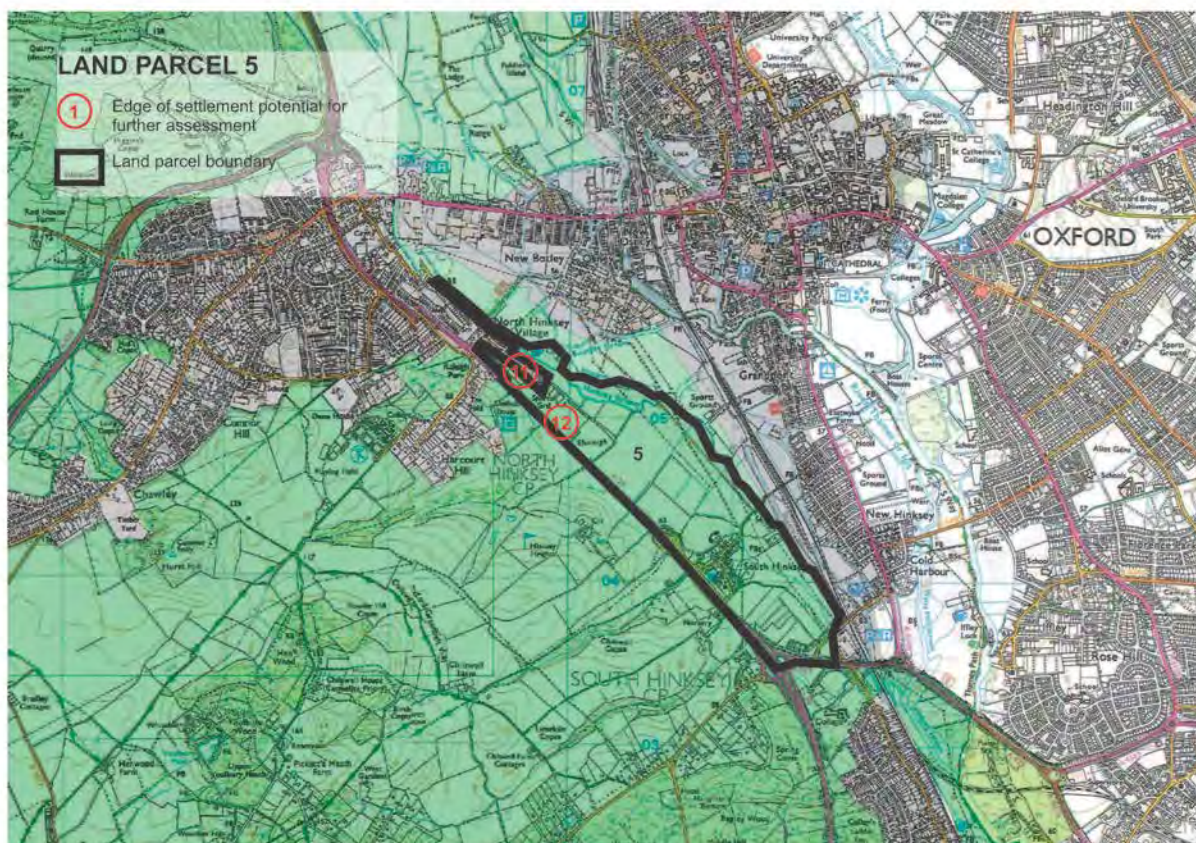
B. Settlement edge of Cumnor: Land east of A420

Description	A small stretch along the edge of Cumnor which includes open arable fields and highway infrastructure on the eastern edge of Cumnor. This landscape provides an important setting to Hurst Hill and has good links with the wider landscape to the south
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement edge links Cumnor to Botley. The area west of and including Hurst Hill is important to retaining the surviving separate identity of these two settlements. Wootton lies 2.8km to the south but the risk of merging is much greater along the B4017 corridor. The hamlet of Henwood lies between the settlements and expansion towards Henwood would substantially erode the gap here.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The balance of the open farmland and wooded hills, is a particular feature of the countryside on the edge of Cumnor and has a strong landscape character. The openness of the western edge is vulnerable to erosion by development.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	This settlement edge lies west of the area which makes an important contribution to the historic

	setting.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Cumnor

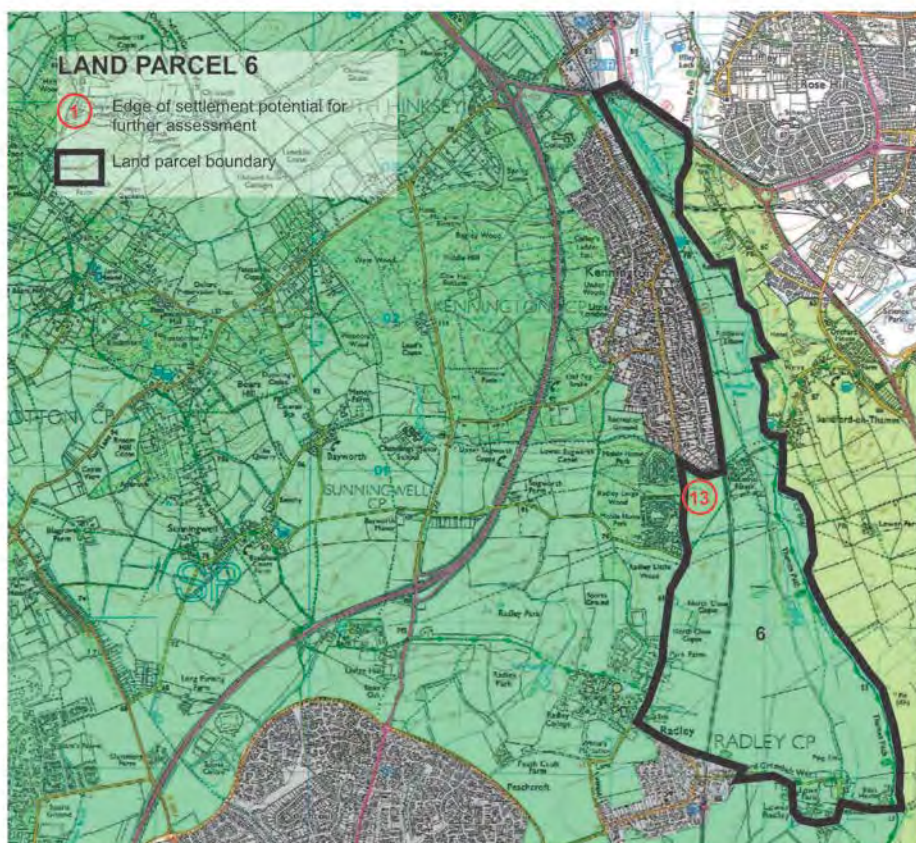
C. Settlement edge of Wootton: old Wootton

Description	The settlement edge at this point is a matrix of small fields (growing larger in the south) which flank the older settlement at Wootton and the lower slopes of Boars Hill. Many fields are under pasture. They contribute to the open gap between Wootton and Henwood. The section east of Lamborough Hill provides the best undisturbed rural separation of Wootton and Whitecross.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A This settlement edge is separated from the urban area by Boars Hill.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Cumnor and Botley are 2.8m away to the north. Major development northwards would lead to the merging of Wootton and Henwood with a knock on effect of the perception of merging Wootton with Cumnor and Botley. Some development east of Lamborough Hill and north of Fox Lane should not have the effect of merging Wootton with Whitecross and Abingdon to the south, provided a substantial open area is retained to allow open views to Boars Hill from Lamborough Hill.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development into the small scale pastoral landscape around old Wootton will erode the character of the local countryside unless it is well contained by both the settlement pattern and substantial mature landscape buffers. The southern part is less sensitive and more removed from Boars Hill. However any development at Lamborough Hill would require substantial woodland planting along the eastern edge and should not extend the settlement further east than at present. Areas which are better contained by the existing settlement, which are less a part of the wider countryside and which do not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	This settlement edge lies west of the area which makes an important contribution to the historic setting
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Wootton

P5: South Hinksey floodplain**A. Settlement edge of Oxford: North Hinksey Village**

Description	The settlement edge wraps around North Hinksey village and contains a number of small streams and water meadows to the east of the village and small areas of open land enclosed by woodland between the A34 and the village.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	The Green Belt here, together with the Oxford City Green Belt, is particularly important to preventing the spread of Oxford.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Oxford lies less than 500m from edge of Oxford and intervisibility is high. Development would lead to the merging of North Hinksey with Oxford.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Most of this inner edge is important as part of the riparian landscape which is key to the countryside character of the Green Belt. A small area of land between the village and the A34 which is better contained by the existing settlement, which is less a part of the wider countryside and which does not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The riparian landscape is a key part of the historic setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for expansion at Oxford City means that the protection of this highly valued part of the

	Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality
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P6: Kennington and Radley floodplain**A. Settlement edge of Oxford: West of Littlemore**

Description	A short section abuts Oxford next to the ring road and is a mix of riparian meadows and tree cover
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	The Green Belt here, together with the Oxford City Green Belt, is particularly important to preventing the spread of Oxford.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Oxford abuts the Green Belt and is only 300m from Kennington at this narrow point. Any development would lead to the merging of Kennington with Oxford.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The inner edge here is part of the continuity of riparian landscape south of Oxford. Development here would lead to encroachment into the open river landscape corridor
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The riparian landscape is a key part of the historic setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for expansion at Oxford City means that the protection of this highly valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality

B. Settlement edge of Kennington: East of Kennington

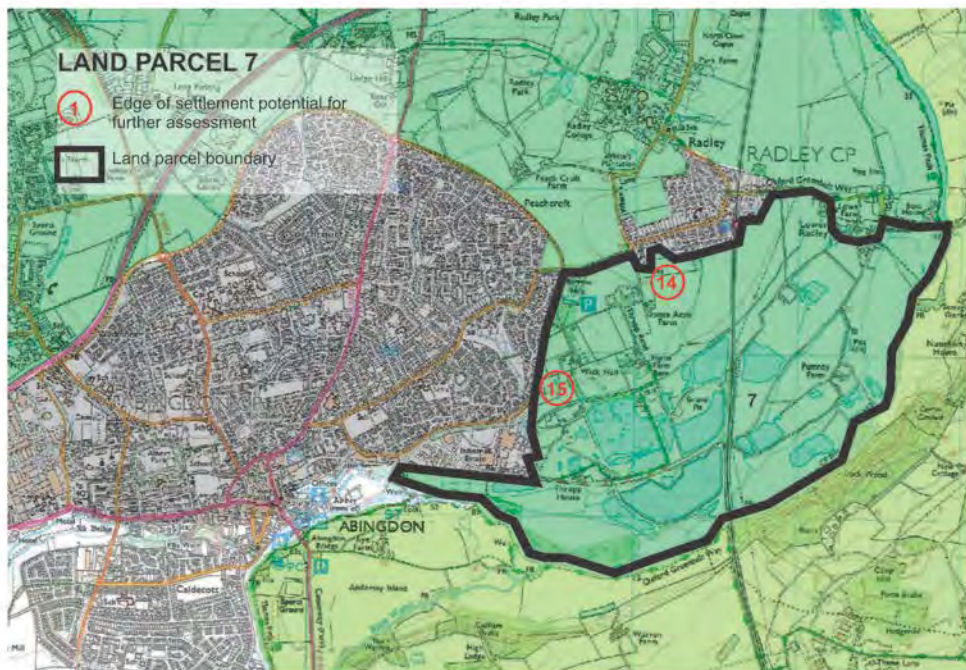
Description	The settlement edge is clearly defined by the
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	railway line beyond which lie the meadows which fringe the River Thames. On the southern edge of Kennington the landscape is typical of the vale landscape with open fields, in this case contained by tree cover close to the settlement.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	The Green Belt here, together with the Oxford City Green Belt, is particularly important to preventing the spread of Oxford.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The inner edge to Kennington next to the railway line is only 500m from Oxford. Development on this stretch of open land would lead to the merging of Oxford and Kennington. An area of land to the west of the railway line is less critical.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The riparian landscape is part of the continuity of riparian landscape east of Kennington. Development here would lead to encroachment into the open river landscape corridor. An area of land south of the village which is better contained by the existing settlement, which is less a part of the wider countryside and which does not have the special qualities of the Green Belt are identified on the above plan.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The riparian landscape is a key part of the historic setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Kennington

C. Settlement edge of Radley: North-east of Radley

Description	This is an area of mainly very large open fields extending down to the River Thames to the east. Close to Radley the area contains small fields of pasture in a wooded setting.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Kennington is 1.5km from Radley at this point. This area is important as an extensive largely open area separating the two villages.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The whole of this settlement edge contributes to the open countryside both visually and physically this removing the opportunity for even small scale development without encroaching on the wider countryside.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The riparian landscape is a key part of the historic setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Radley

7: Radley / Abingdon floodplain

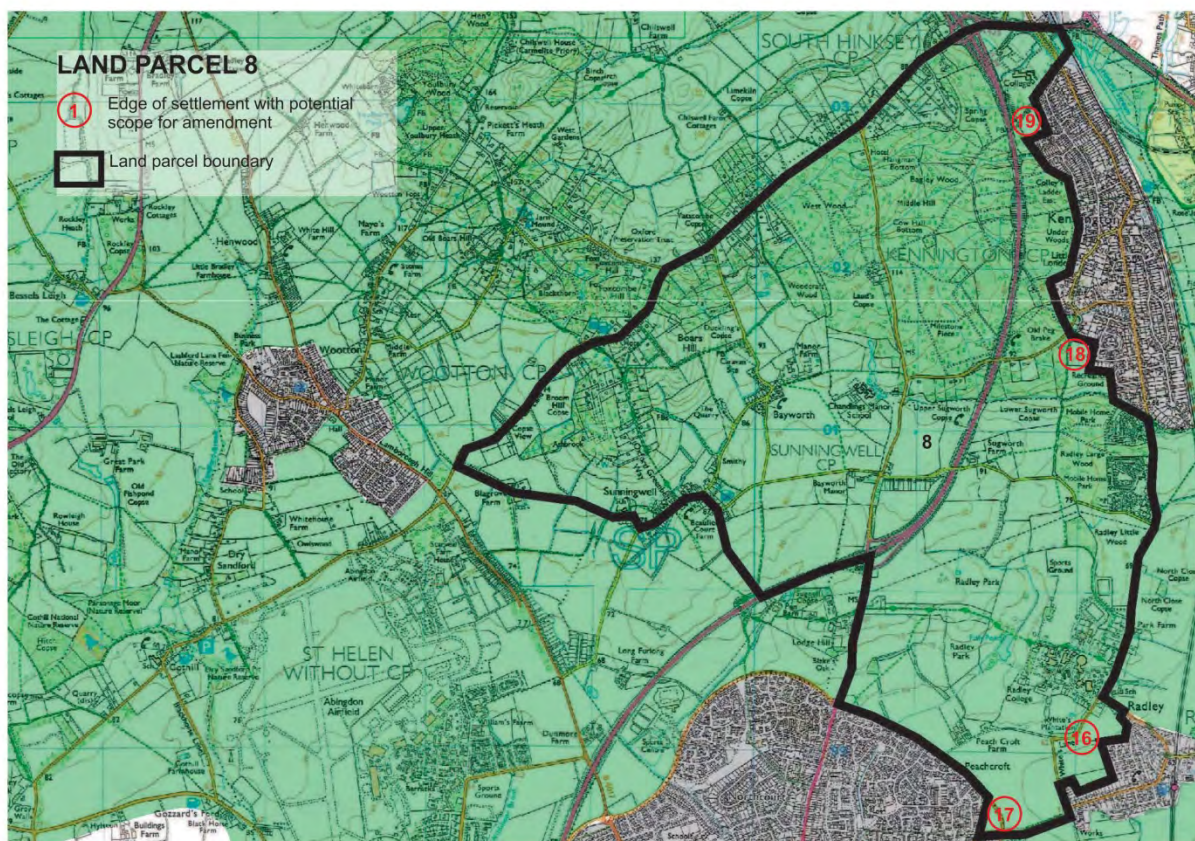


A. Settlement edge of Radley: South of Lower Radley

Description	Area of large open fields in the east and fragmented small fields in the west. Trupp lane playing fields (Radley Parish) are grassed and accessible to the public between Abingdon and Radley.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The greater part of this settlement edge is separated from Abingdon by the open landscape and tree cover around Wick Hall and Barrow Hills. The most westerly edge of Radley next to Radley Road is however important to maintaining the separate identity of these two settlements.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The settlement edge is part of a wider field pattern extending into the open Thames countryside. Some small enclosed areas relate better to the settlement.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Radley

B. Settlement edge of Abingdon: Wick Hall

Description	The settlement edge of Abingdon is sub-divided in to a mix of tree cover, open recreational land and small fields separated from the town by a hedge along the perimeter road.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The greater part of this settlement edge is separated from Radley by the open landscape and tree cover around Wick Hall and Barrow Hills. The eastern edge of Abingdon on Radley Road is however important to maintaining the separate identity of these two settlements. However further south the settlement edge relates more strongly to the town.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The landscape beyond the settlement edge has been badly affected by gravel workings although much is being restored. Despite the fragmentation of the settlement edge and the damage to the wider countryside, most of this settlement edge is important part of the River Thames landscape corridor
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for housing expansion at Abingdon means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the town.

P8: Foxborough Hill and Radley Wood**A. Settlement edge of Radley: Radley College**

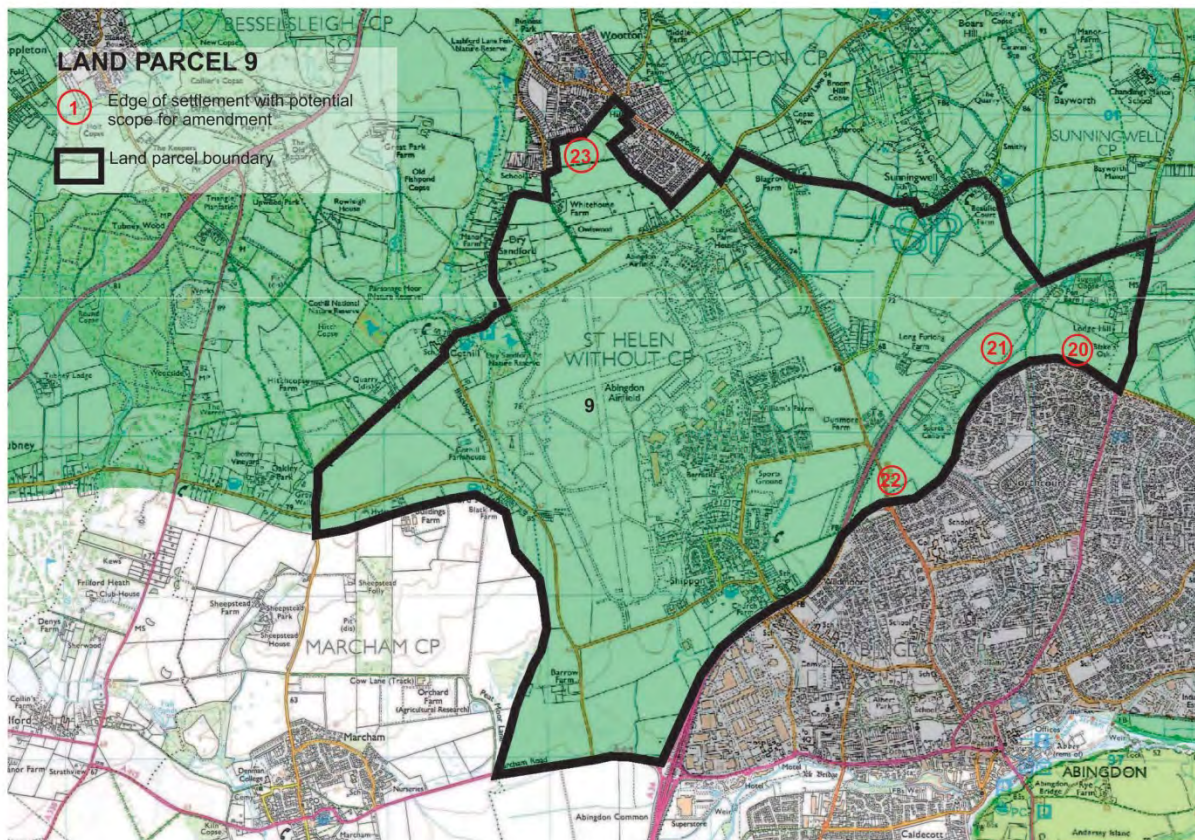
Description	The northern settlement edge comprises the buildings and grounds of Radley College set in the remains of parkland which extends westwards into the land parcel. To the south the settlement edge includes medium and large fields which extend to the west. The settlement edge is heavily influenced by the adjoining village.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement edge of Radley in general is important in maintaining the separation of Radley and Abingdon but the Radley edge east of White's Lane is already compromised by the exposed village built form.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	West of White Lane the settlement edge is part of the swathe of countryside that extends north-west up to Lodge Hill. The areas east of the lane are contained by the built form and make a lesser contribution to safeguarding the countryside
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Radley

B. Settlement edge of Abingdon: Radley Park

Description	The landscape north of the perimeter road is a mix of open fields and remnants of the historic parkland at Radley Park. Peachcroft Farm is used for rearing turkeys and geese and horticulture, with a small farm shop and farm buildings.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	This open landscape with long views is important in maintaining the separation of Abingdon from Radley. The openness of the area is important to the physical and visual containment of Abingdon
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The settlement edge is very much a part of the wider landscape which extends along the northern edge of Abingdon up to Lodge Hill. The perimeter road provides a clear change from built form to extensive open countryside. The small triangular open area next inside the perimeter road is heavily influenced by the adjoining built form
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for housing expansion at Abingdon means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the town.

C. Settlement edge of Kennington: Radley Large Wood

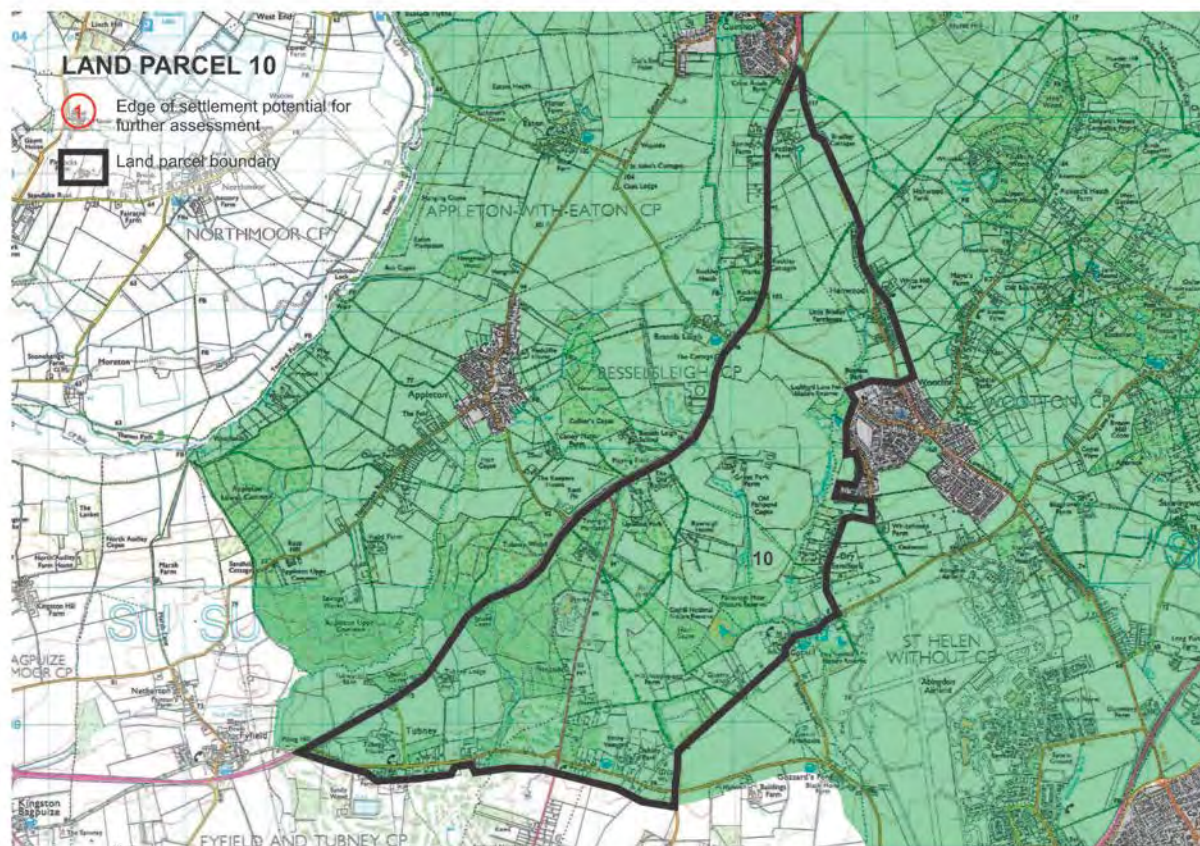
Description	The settlement edge is heavily wooded covering the lower slopes of Foxborough Hill. A few small open fields, two of which are in use as recreation grounds, lie between the woodland and the settlement edge
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	The proximity of Oxford to the east of Kennington means that the settlement edge even on the west side of the village makes an important contribution to the perception that Oxford has not spilled over west of the river at this point.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The western edge is so well contained by woodland that it makes little contribution to the separation of Kennington and Wootton or Abingdon
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The wooded edge is part of a wider swathe within the open countryside and vulnerable to erosion. The small open areas next to Kennington are heavily influenced by the adjoining built form
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The wooded hillsides to the west of Oxford and an important part of its historic setting.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Kennington

P9: Shippon and the airfield**A. Settlement edge of Wootton: Whitehouse Farm**

Description	The settlement edge is a series of small fields under pasture, divided by tree cover and distinctive hedgerows (bare at ground level).
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Settlement within Shippon and Whitecross has eroded the perception of open countryside between Wootton and Abingdon so that the rural settlement edge is important in maintaining the separation of Wootton and Abingdon. However where the edge is enclosed by the built form, this is less important.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The settlement edge contrasts with the landscape of the Airfield south of Honeycroft Lane. It includes the best of the open countryside between the settlements.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Wootton

B. Settlement edge of Abingdon: North of Wildmoor

Description	This is an extensive settlement edge heavily influenced by the A34 and the urban edge of Abingdon, although less so in the south, where the A34 contains the town. The edge is a pattern of medium sized fields with recreational uses on the edge of Abingdon and Shippon. Lines of trees follow the road network
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement at Shippon and Whitecross has eroded the perception of open countryside between Wootton and Abingdon so that the settlement edge west of the A34 is more important in maintaining the separation of Abingdon from Wootton. However east of the A34 the settlement edge is heavily influenced by modern urban uses and contained by the elevated A34 thus having a much lesser contribution to the sense of separation
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	West of the A34, the edge is part of the wider countryside which wraps around Shippon and the Airfield. East of the A34 the land makes little contribution to the perception of open countryside
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	The pressure for housing expansion at Abingdon means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the town.

P10: Dry Sandford / Tubney**A. Settlement edge of Cumnor: Land lying south of Cumnor east of A420**

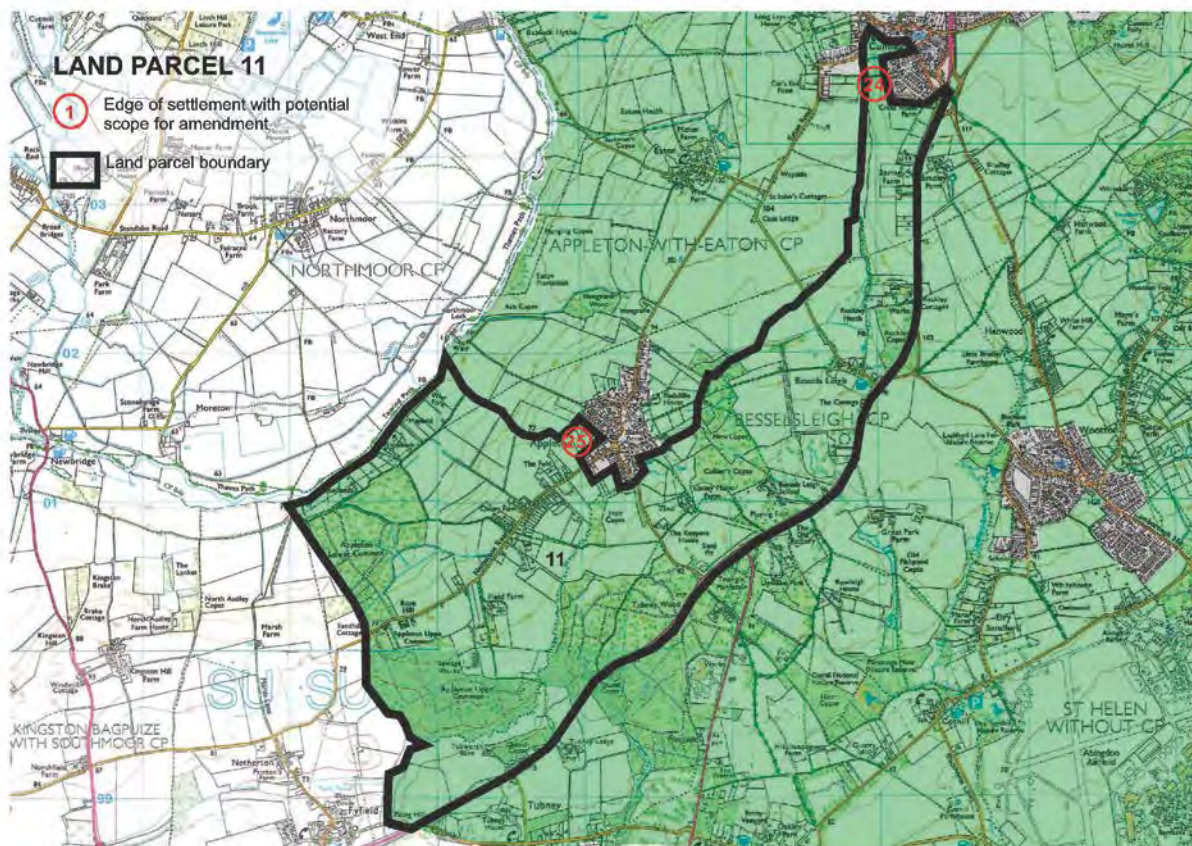
Description	Area of land heavily influenced by A420 and the junction infrastructure. Series of small to medium sized fields with woodland close to the village. Landscape features are important in containing Cumnor
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	There is a risk of sprawl from Oxford through to Botley, Cumnor and south along the A420 corridor. This area along the A420 south of Cumnor is important to checking the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford in this direction.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement edge flanks the road link to Henwood and onto Wootton. There is little scope for development right on the edge of the settlement. Away a little, down the B4017, there is a risk of the perception of Cumnor merging with Henwood, and hence to Wootton, 2.4km to the south-east.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The immediate settlement edge is part of the setting to Cumnor. The area south of the A420 junction is part of a very open landscape which is framed by prominent hills and wooded ridgelines which are important to the Green Belt.
To preserve the setting and special character of	The area lies behind Boars Hill which provides the

historic Oxford	immediate setting to historic Oxford. The settlement edge here at Cumnor makes little direct contribution to the setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Cumnor

B. Settlement edge of Wootton: Land lying to the west and north

Description	The area is within the vale rolling farmland. However the immediate western settlement edge is defined by the Sandford Brook and its wooded landscape corridor. These are important local landscape features. To the north a series of small to medium fields separate Wootton from Henwood, bounded to the west by the tree lined Sandford Brook
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The area sits in the open land between Wootton and Appleton 2.2km apart and Wootton and Cumnor 2.3m apart. Major development in the open land beyond the settlement edge to the west or north would have the effect of merging Wootton with the adjacent hamlets and consequent perception of merging with adjacent key villages
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Wootton has extended out from the centre to the north, east and south, extending its sphere of influence, although it stayed well contained by Sandford Brook along the west. The continued containment along the western boundary is important. To the north major development would encroach into open pastoral landscape between Sandford Brook and Boars Hill.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	The area lies behind Boars Hill which provides the immediate setting to historic Oxford. The settlement edge here at Wootton makes little direct contribution to the setting of Oxford.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Wootton

PII: South Appleton



A. Settlement edge of Cumnor: Land lying south of Cumnor east of stream

Description	Northern end of the wooded estatelands along the north Vale Corallian ridge south of Cumnor. Medium sized arable fields slightly fragmented by built form in large grounds especially along the A420.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	There is a risk of sprawl from Oxford through to Botley, Cumnor and south along the A420 corridor. This area along the A420 south of Cumnor is important to checking the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford in this direction. Away from the A420 corridor local small scale development may be possible.
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The line of the A420 leads towards Wootton which is 2.3km to the south-east. Major development in this direction would put at risk the merging of Cumnor and Wootton and the hamlet of Henwood to the north of Wootton. This area does not lie directly between Cumnor and Appleton to the south-west. However due south lies the hamlet of Bessels Leigh in the open triangle between Cumnor / Appleton / Wootton which is vulnerable to loss of its rural character due to the proximity of the three villages (2 to 2.2km

	apart) and the A420 down its centre
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The area lies on the edge of open countryside where the balance of vale with wooded estatelands on the higher ridge provides the rural setting to the villages of Cumnor, Appleton and Wootton in the remoter part of the Green Belt. This landscape has a close relationship with the wooded hills and river landscape which are key to the Green Belt. Major development would erode this function and lead to encroachment. Away from the A420 corridor local small scale development may be possible provided it is within the village confines.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Cumnor

B. Settlement edge of Appleton: Land lying to the east and south of Appleton

Description	The edge lies within the rolling farmland of the Vale. A ribbon of development over 1 km along Netherton Road currently extends south-west from the settlement boundary, fragmenting this edge of the settlement. North of the road open fields lead west to the river; east of the road wooded blocks are typical of the wooded landscape north of Tubney. Long narrow fields with hedgerow boundaries define the settlement edge. East of Appleton the settlement edge is better defined with a mix of woodland and irregular fields (including the quarry at xx).
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	The settlement edge does not lie between Appleton and the neighbouring villages.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The countryside around Appleton is at risk from further encroachment. Beyond Appleton the landscape becomes increasingly remote from the urban influences of Oxford and the expansion of its hinterland settlements. This area is important in avoiding further encroachment into this rural landscape
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	N/A
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Appleton

SUMMARY OF 'INNER EDGE' OF SETTLEMENTS BY SETTLEMENT

Table 4:

Settlement	Essential to check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Essential to prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Essential to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Essential to preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Essential to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Scope for amendment of Vale of White Horse Green Belt inner edge *	Notes on inner edge which could be the subject of a more detailed review (see Land Parcel plans and Figure 5)
Oxford	YES Vale of White Horse Green Belt contributes, together with the Oxford City Green Belt, to this purpose The Vale of White Horse Green Belt, in a small section of P1 and P5, abuts the urban settlement	YES Oxford and Botley Oxford and Kennington	YES Safeguard the countryside within the landscape of river meadows, River Thames and its tributaries,	YES River and its meadows are important to the setting and special character	The pressure for expansion at Oxford City means that the protection of this highly valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality	None	N/A
Abingdon	NO	YES Wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Wootton and Radley Smaller areas within the influence of the settlement are less critical	YES IN PART Safeguard wooded hillsides particularly Lodge Hill and continuity of Vale landscapes	YES IN PART Wooded hillsides are important to the setting and special character	The pressure for housing expansion at Abingdon means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in maintaining the need to encourage the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the town.	Further review of inner edge within parcels P7, P8 and P9	P7 Note 15: The northern part of this edge is part of the narrow gap between Abingdon and Radley but the area around, and to the south of Wick Hall should be reviewed; P8 Note 17: A small triangle of land on the edge of Abingdon inside the perimeter road; P9 Notes 20 to 22: The

Settlement	Essential to check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Essential to prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Essential to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Essential to preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Essential to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Scope for amendment of Vale of White Horse Green Belt inner edge *	Notes on inner edge which could be the subject of a more detailed review (see Land Parcel plans and Figure 5)
							area between the A34 and urban edge;
Appleton	NO Separated by extensive areas of Green belt	IN PART Wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Cumnor Smaller areas within the influence of the settlement are less critical	LARGELY YES Safeguard river landscapes and contribution from wooded hillsides and the Vale to the open countryside	NO Landscape qualities are not key to the setting or special character	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Appleton	Further review of inner edge in parcel P3 and P11	P3 Note 7: Area contained by barns and westerly extent of Appleford; P11 Note 25: Area contained by Appleford to south-east and north-west;
Botley	YES High risk of absorbing Botley into Oxford in the absence of the Green Belt	YES Generally part of the wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Cumnor	IN PART Surrounding wooded hillsides and vales are important to the wider countryside Some smaller contained areas are less critical	YES Wooded hillsides and small pasture fields at Wytham and south of Botley are a key feature of the setting and special character	The pressure for development at Botley means that the protection of this valued part of the Green Belt plays an important role in encouraging the use of land of a lesser environmental quality in the villages and neighbouring Oxford.	Further review of inner edge in parcels P2(up to A420); P3; P4 ; and P5	P2 Notes 1 and 2: Parts of this edge do not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt; P3 Note3: Part of this edge does not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt; P4 Note 8: Part of this edge does not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt; P5 Note 11 and 12: Review edge of settlement along the A34
Cumnor	YES Risk of perception of urban	LARGELY YES Generally part of the	LARGELY YES Part of the Vale landscapes that	NO Landscape qualities are not	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in	Further review of small parcels of land in P3 and P11 are	P3 Notes 4 to 6: A number of small areas are contained by Cumnor on

Settlement	Essential to check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Essential to prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Essential to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Essential to preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Essential to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Scope for amendment of Vale of White Horse Green Belt inner edge *	Notes on inner edge which could be the subject of a more detailed review (see Land Parcel plans and Figure 5)
	expansion absorbing Botley and Cumnor	wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Botley, Wootton and Appleton Much smaller areas within the influence of the settlement are less critical	complement the river landscape corridors and wooded hillsides beyond the inner edge	key to the setting or special character	Cumnor	influenced by the built form in the inner edge north and south of Cumnor	at least two sides and are less part of the wider landscape; P11 Note 24: A small area closely related to the existing built form and enclosed by tree belts;
Kennington	YES High risk of absorbing Kennington into Oxford in the absence of the Green Belt	YES Generally part of the wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Oxford, Botley, and Radley Smaller areas within the influence of the settlement are less critical	MAINLY YES Part of the wooded hillside or river landscapes that form the continuity of countryside west of Oxford	YES Wooded hillsides and river landscape are important to the setting and special character	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Kennington	Further review of individual plots on the inner edge in parcels P6 and P8	P6 Note 13: Area of land contained on two sides by Kennington which does not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt; P8 Notes 18 and 19: Parts of this edge do not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt;
Radley	NO Separated by open landscapes	YES Generally part of the wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Kennington and Abingdon Smaller areas within the	YES Part of the wooded hillside or river landscapes that form the continuity of countryside west of Oxford	YES Wooded hillsides and river landscape are important to the setting and special character	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are few in Radley	Further review of inner edge in parcel P8 only	P8 Note 16: The southern part of this edge is part of the narrow gap between Abingdon and Radley. Area of land contained on two sides by Radley which has few of the essential characteristics

Settlement	Essential to check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	Essential to prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	Essential to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Essential to preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Essential to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Scope for amendment of Vale of White Horse Green Belt inner edge *	Notes on inner edge which could be the subject of a more detailed review (see Land Parcel plans and Figure 5)
		influence of the settlement are less critical					of the Green Belt;
Wootton	NO Separated by open landscapes	YES IN PART Generally part of the wider landscape essential in preventing perception of merging with Cumnor and Abingdon Smaller areas within the influence of the settlement are less critical	YES Part of the Vale landscape that inter-connects with the wooded hillsides	NO Landscape qualities are not key to the setting or special character	Opportunities for use of derelict or urban land are small in scale in Wootton	Further review of inner edge of parcels P4; and P9	P4 Notes 9 and 10: The gap between Wootton and the satellite settlements of Henwood and Whitecross are vulnerable to erosion. Areas which are contained by Wootton on two sides and which have much less of the essential characteristics of the Green Belt; P9 Note 23: Area of land contained on three sides by Wootton which does not have the essential characteristics of the Green Belt.

* It is recommended that although the landscape character, visual characteristics and settlement pattern found within these settlement inner edges have been examined in site visits these should be examined in greater detail to determine the contribution of individual plots to the purposes of the Green Belt. All of these areas recommended for further examination may be the subject of other constraints on development (environmental, access or social).

SECTION 10

ASSESSMENT OF LAND PARCELS: PURPOSES OF THE GREEN BELT

10.1 Phase 2 of the Study sought to analyse the extent to which the 11 Green Belt land parcels met the five purposes of the Green Belt. This is set out below in Table 5.

Table 5:

Land Parcel	Location	Adjacent Green Belt land	To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford (1)	To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other (2)	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (3)	To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford (4)	To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (5)
1	Wytham and the Thames landscape corridor	Oxford City River Thames / Port Meadow / Wolvercote / Binsey	In conjunction with Oxford City GB the land parcel checks unrestricted sprawl into the River Thames landscape corridor	N/A	The Land Parcel is an undeveloped and important part of the countryside defined by the River Thames, and its water meadows and terraces at the bend of the Thames as it negotiates the northern edge of Wytham Hill.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
2	Wytham Hill	Oxford City River Thames / Port Meadow / Seacourt Stream	In conjunction with Oxford City GB the land parcel checks unrestricted sprawl into the River Thames landscape corridor	The southern part in particular contributes significantly to the prevention of Botley and Oxford from merging visually	The Land Parcel is an undeveloped and important part of the series of wooded hills and hillsides that characterise the countryside west in the Vale west of Oxford. It also provides an open countryside link within the loop of the river Thames valley north-west of Oxford.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
3	Farmoor and Eaton	N/A	N/A	The eastern part in particular contributes significantly to preventing the merging of Botley and	The Land Parcel is largely undeveloped and is an important tract of open countryside blending steeper wooded hillsides	N/A	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever

Land Parcel	Location	Adjacent Green Belt land	To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford (1)	To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other (2)	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (3)	To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford (4)	To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (5)
				Cumnor; and slightly less so of Cumnor to Appleford	and valleys around north of Cumnor and Botley, with the flatter terraces of the River Thames and open plateau which make up the flatter vale landscapes.		possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
4	Boars Hill north	N/A	Together with P5 the land parcel prevents any potential sprawl around the A34	Together with P5 this land parcel is particularly important in preventing the merger of 4 settlements: Oxford, Botley, Wootton, Cumnor	The Land Parcel is a largely undeveloped and important part of the series of wooded hills, hillsides and valleys that characterise the countryside west in the Vale west of Oxford. Scattered development is well contained and integrated into the countryside.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
5	South Hinksey floodplain	Oxford City / River Thames tributaries	In conjunction with Oxford City GB the land parcel checks unrestricted sprawl into the River Thames landscape corridor	Together with P4 this land parcel is particularly important in preventing the merger of Oxford and, Botley	The Land Parcel is small but part of an important part of the countryside defined by the River Thames, its water meadows and terraces. It is more fragmented by existing development but therefore vulnerable to further deterioration from future encroachment.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
6	Kennington and Radley floodplain	South Oxfordshire / River Thames	In conjunction with South Oxfordshire GB the land parcel checks unrestricted	The northern part of the land parcel is important to preventing the merger of Kennington	The Land Parcel is an undeveloped and important part of the countryside defined by the River Thames, its	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development

Land Parcel	Location	Adjacent Green Belt land	To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford (1)	To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other (2)	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (3)	To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford (4)	To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (5)
			sprawl into the River Thames landscape corridor	with Oxford; and the southern part of merging Kennington with Radley	water meadows and terraces as it extends south towards Abingdon.	preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
7	Radley / Abingdon floodplain	South Oxfordshire / River Thames	N/A	The western part of this land parcel in particular is important in preventing Radley from merging with Abingdon	The Land Parcel is rather fragmented by development and has been damaged by past gravel workings. However it remains an important part of the countryside of River Thames and as setting to the wooded hills at Nuneham Courtney.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
8	Foxborough Hill and Radley Wood	N/A	Together with P5 and 6 the land parcel prevents any potential sprawl around the A34	The land parcel is important to preventing the merging of 4 settlements: Oxford, Kennington, Radley and Abingdon	The Land Parcel is a largely undeveloped and an important part of the series of wooded hills, hillsides and valleys that characterise the countryside west in the Vale west of Oxford. Scattered development is well contained and integrated into the countryside in the main.	The land parcel contains landscape features recognised as key to preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the reviewed Green Belt land parcel
9	Shippon and the airfield	N/A	N/A	Most of the land parcel is very important in preventing the merging of Wootton and Abingdon, although the land to the west makes a lower contribution	The Land Parcel is heavily influenced by development at Shippon, the airfield and Whitecross but also includes the very rural settlements at Dry Sandford, Gozzards Ford	N/A	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible and application of NPPF policy for the

Land Parcel	Location	Adjacent Green Belt land	To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford (1)	To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other (2)	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (3)	To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford (4)	To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (5)
					and Cothill. The remaining open countryside is vulnerable to erosion due to its openness and fragmentation.		reviewed Green Belt land parcel
10	Dry Sandford / Tubney	N/A	N/A	The northern part of this land parcel is particularly important to preventing the merging of Wootton and Cumnor; and together with P11 to the separation of Appleton and Wootton. The remainder to the south of Wootton does not have a key role in this respect	The Land Parcel is an undeveloped mix of open vale and wooded landscapes at the heart of the Green Belt.	N/A	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible.
11	South Appleton	N/A	N/A	Together with P3, the land parcel in the north contributes to preventing the merging of Appleton and Cumnor. Together with P10, it also contributes to preventing the merging of Appleton with Wootton. The land south of Appleton does not have a key role in this respect	The Land Parcel is a largely undeveloped mix of open vale and wooded landscapes and is part of the countryside along the River Thames. Scattered development is not always well integrated in the landscape but is rural in character.	N/A	YES. To be achieved through allocation of brownfield land for development wherever possible.

- 10.2 All of the eleven parcels met three or more of the purposes with those land parcels on the western side of the Green Belt playing a less significant role in checking the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford or preserving the setting and special character of historic Oxford.

SECTION 11

ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL LAND IN LAND PARCELS 12 AND 13

11.1.1 The Land Parcels have been assessed using the same methodology used for the Green Belt Land Parcels.

Green Belt special qualities

11.2 The special qualities of the Green Belt are set out in Section 8. Our analysis of the contribution of the two potential land parcels to the Green Belt is set out below:

Table 6:

Land Parcel	Location	Character	Key characteristics of importance to designation
12	Fyfield plain	Thames Vale	River Thames Water meadows River terrace Fyfield village
13	Frilford Heath / Marcham	Open ridge	None

11.3 It can be seen that Land Parcel 12 has many of the key characteristics of the Oxford Green Belt. In contrast Land Parcel 13 has none as it is defined by open lowland, heathland, and its flat plateau.

Inner edge characteristics

11.4 The Green Belt land parcels form open land outside of settlements that are excluded from the Green Belt. The inner edge of the Green Belt is currently under review to ensure that these inner edges are correctly drawn around the settlements. In this regard neither of the potential land parcels have inner edges as all of the villages are washed over and do not have settlement boundaries.

Assessment against the purposes of the Green Belt

Table 7:


Land Parcel	Location	Adjacent Green Belt land	To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	To prevent neighbouring towns (Oxford, Abingdon, Appleton, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley and Wootton) merging into each other	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land
12	Fyfield plain		NO	NO	Relevant to Kingston Bagpuize only	NO	NO
13	Frilford Heath / Marcham		NO	NO [Contributes to preventing the settlements of Abingdon and Marcham merging into each other]	Relevant to Kingston Bagpuize and Marcham only	NO	NO

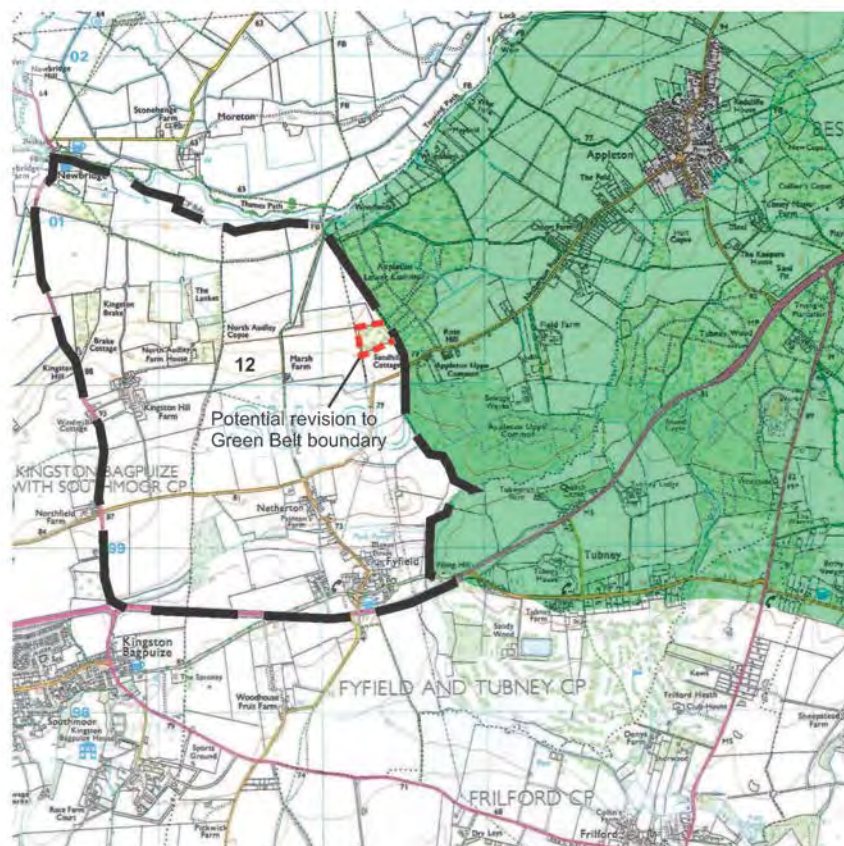
11.5 The above analysis shows that neither of these two land parcels meets the five purposes of the Oxford Green Belt. However as a final step the two parcels have been assessed against the following criteria to establish whether the existing Green Belt boundary should be extended into these two Land Parcels. The following criteria have been applied:

- Continuity with adjacent important Green Belt land
- Containment within the landscape bounded by the loop of the River Thames from Newbridge in the west to Culham in the east
- Contribution to the key characteristics of the Oxford Green Belt west of Oxford (Vale of White Horse): River Thames, water meadows, hills, wooded hillsides, small pasture fields
- Contribution to the balance of river landscape, wooded hills interconnected by vale landscapes
- Contribution to the separation between settlements which is needed to ensure that the Green Belt meets its purposes in the light of the reasons for the Oxford Green Belt designation: the nature of the open land between settlements (for example whether more or less open), and the pattern of smaller settlements between the main settlements (such as ribbon development along connecting roads).

11.6 Land Parcel 12

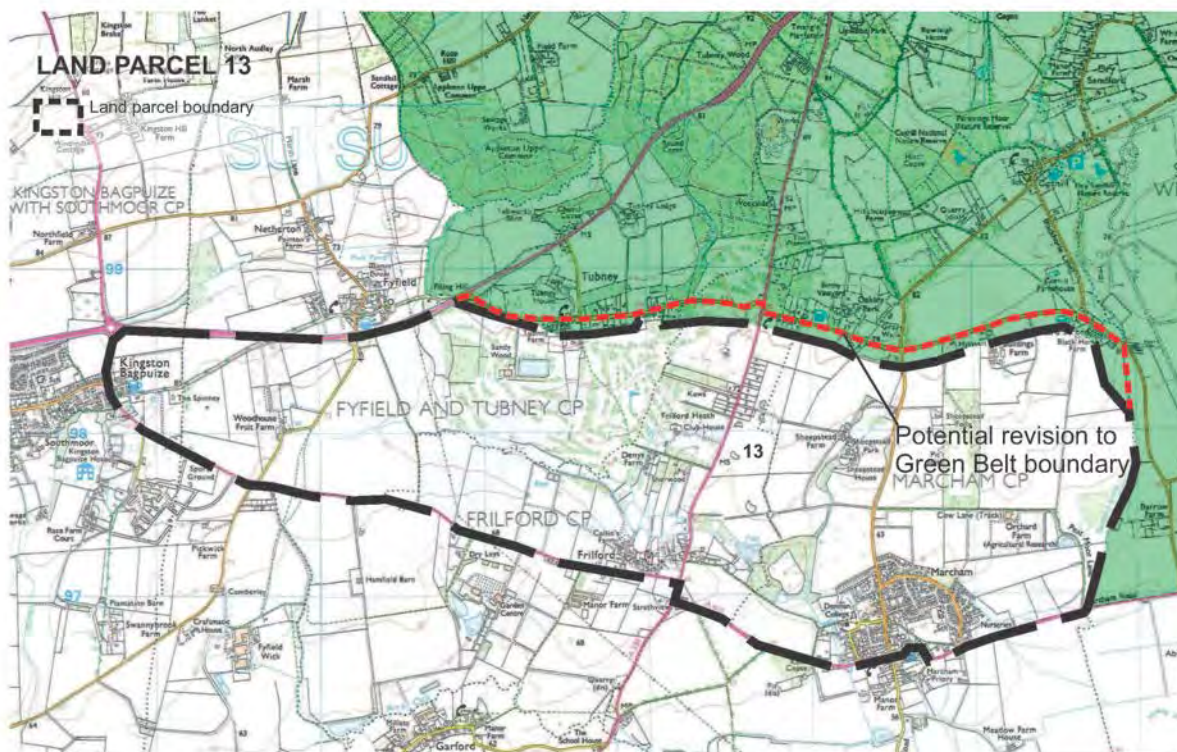
LAND PARCEL 12

 Land parcel boundary



- The Land Parcel is distinct from Land Parcel P11 to the east where a belt of linked large woodlands between the river in the north and Fyfield in the south separate the hinterland of Appleford from that to the west in P12. There is some continuity along the River Thames but the river and its water meadows are narrow at this point. There is little continuity with adjacent Green Belt land.
- P12 extends westwards of the narrow point in the loop of the River Thames between Newbridge and Culham which contains the Green Belt.
- P12 makes some contribution to the pattern of key characteristics but this is confined to its northern edge. It is not considered that P12 makes a significant contribution to the key characteristics of the Oxford Green Belt west of Oxford (Vale of White Horse): River Thames, water meadows, hills, wooded hillsides, small pasture fields
- P12 is dominated by the Vale landscape, and makes a contribution to the woodland setting of P11 and the river landscape.
- P12 does not make any contribution to maintaining the separation of the settlements west and south west of Oxford which are at risk of merging. It is therefore not important to include P12 to reinforce this purpose of the Oxford Green Belt.

11.7 Land Parcel 13



- Land Parcel 13 is divided by A338 running north-south from the A420 in the north to Frilford in the south. West of the line there is contrast with P10 (to the north) with the landscape becoming larger in scale and heathlike in P13, although the heathlike landscape of the golf course at Tubney does extend in to P10. There is therefore some tenuous continuity this side with the adjacent important Green Belt land. East of the A338 the links with P10 are much stronger with the pattern of open flat vale continuing into P13. However this vale landscape is of importance to the Green Belt where it forms an integral part of the pattern of river landscapes, and wooded hillsides. This is not the case here. On balance P13 is considered to have no significant continuity with P10.
- P13 extends south-westwards of the narrow point in the loop of the River Thames between Newbridge and Culham which contains the Green Belt.
- P13 does not contain landscape features that make an important contribution to the key characteristics of the Oxford Green Belt west of Oxford (Vale of White Horse).
- P13 is dominated by the vale and heathland landscape which make little contribution to the balance of river landscape, wooded hills interconnected by vale landscapes.
- P13 does not make any contribution to maintaining the separation of the settlements west and south west of Oxford which are at risk of merging. It is therefore not important to include P13 to reinforce this purpose of the Oxford Green Belt.

Summary conclusion

- 11.8 In conclusion, neither P12 nor P13 are considered to meet the criteria needed to provide a case for expanding the Green Belt into these two areas.

Adjustment of the southern Green Belt boundary

- 11.9 Government guidance suggests that Green Belt boundaries should follow easily identifiable, and as permanent as possible, landscape features on the ground including roads, railway lines, tracks, rivers and streams. The southern boundary of the Green Belt has been reviewed carefully in the light of this guidance.
- 11.10 At present the boundary is in the main difficult to follow on the ground, or is marked by a hedgerow or line of trees which would be more vulnerable to loss. The exception to this is the line of the boundary along Sandford Brook from Marcham Road north to the eastern edge of Gozzards Ford which is clearly marked by the stream and a line of riverside vegetation; and the edge of a series of woodlands (Appleton Upper Common, Round Copse and Appleton Lower Common) west of Appleton. Elsewhere the boundary runs parallel with and to the south of the local road linking Gozzards Ford to Frilford and only for a short stretch follows any boundary line. It is recommended that the southern boundary of the Green Belt could be moved to run along this local road development given that the narrow sliver of land is not considered essential to meet the purposes of the Oxford Green Belt. Existing and emerging policies for the open countryside beyond the Green Belt should suffice to protect this area from inappropriate development.
- 11.11 However in one place the Green Belt boundary cuts through a section of woodland on the western edge of P11. It is recommended that the boundary could be revised here to include the small woodland projection into P12.
- 11.12 These potential changes are illustrated in the above plans for Land Parcels and I3.

SECTION 12

ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL VILLAGES FOR INCLUSION AS INSET SETTLEMENTS IN THE GREEN BELT

12.1 The NPPF encourages local authorities to include settlements within the Green Belt that have an open character which make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt (para 86). The Oxford Green Belt in the Vale already washes over a number of small settlements that make such a contribution and includes larger and more densely developed villages as inset settlements, the edges of which have been examined in this Study.

12.2 The following ‘washed over’ villages were considered for inclusion as inset villages. The test was to determine whether the character of the village was essentially open in nature and contributed to the openness of the adjoining open land within the Green Belt:

Bayworth	Shippon
Boars Hill	South Hinksey
Dry Sandford	Sunningwell
Eaton	Swinford
Farmoor	Whitecross
Henwood	Wytham

12.3 Table 8 below sets out the assessment of the above villages.

Table 8:

Village	Character	Contribution to openness	Recommendation	Land parcel
Bayworth	Small dispersed rural hamlet with built form broken up by open fields	Part of the wooded vale landscape east of Wootton	Continue to include within Green Belt	8
Boars Hill	Dispersed rural settlement with extensive woodland cover, large gardens and broken up by small fields	Part of the open wooded hilltop landscape	Continue to include within Green Belt	4
Dry Sandford	Small linear rural hamlet broken up by tree lines, very small fields and large gardens	Part of the vale landscape south of Wootton	Continue to include within Green Belt	10
Eaton	Small nuclear rural hamlet with large gardens	Part of the vale landscape north of Appleton	Continue to include within Green Belt	3
Farmoor	Estate development with medium sized gardens	Density and pattern of the settlement is in contrast with the open landscape around	Include as an inset settlement as shown in Figure 5. Precise boundaries to be determined in a more detailed study.	3
Henwood	Linear hamlet of ribbon development with long gardens	Although more densely developed, the settlement appears as	Continue to include within Green Belt. Intensification and expansion of the built	10

	backing onto countryside	part of the open landscape due its small size and limited built form away from the road	form would erode the fragile gap between Wootton and Cumnor and sense of openness	
Shippon	Medium sized village with a mix of MOD housing, estates, and properties with large gardens. Open grassed areas within settlement. Extensive tree cover	Contrasts with the surrounding open vale landscape but the open areas within the settlement merge with the wider landscape	Continue to include in the Green Belt. Intensification and expansion of the built form would erode the fragile gap between Wootton and Abingdon and sense of openness	9
South Hinksey	Small nucleated village with large proportion of open land in large gardens	Part of the river terrace landscape above the River Thames	Continue to include within Green Belt	5
Sunningwell	Small dispersed rural hamlet with built form broken up by open fields	Part of the wooded vale landscape east of Wootton	Continue to include within Green Belt	8
Swinford	Very small riverside hamlet with Water Works. Woodland, scrub, large gardens and small fields break up the built form	Part of the River Thames riparian landscape	Continue to include within Green Belt	2
Whitecross	Long linear uniform hamlet of ribbon development with medium rear gardens backing onto countryside	Contrasts with the surrounding open vale landscape.	Continue to include in the Green Belt. Intensification of the built form would erode the fragile gap between Wootton and Abingdon and sense of openness	9
Wytham	Small dispersed rural hamlet with extensive woodland, large gardens broken up by small fields	Part of the hillside landscape west of Oxford	Continue to include within Green Belt	2

Recommendations

- 12.4 The settlements of Farmoor, Shippon, Henwood and Whitecross are not noted for their open character and their built form is more suburban, contrasting with the open character of the adjoining landscape. However, with the exception of Farmoor, it is important to retain the current density, pattern, and scale of these settlements in order to prevent the perception of merging of adjacent settlements. In that respect they contribute, in their current form, to the openness of the Green Belt and it is therefore recommended that they remain washed over by the Green Belt. Farmoor is not important in this respect but nonetheless it is important to recognise the rural location and scale of this settlement and its contribution to maintaining the intrinsic character of the surrounding landscape. Should the village become an inset settlement, other development control policies should ensure that exclusion from the Green Belt does not give rise to inappropriate development in the village. The precise boundaries of the new inset area will need to be assessed.

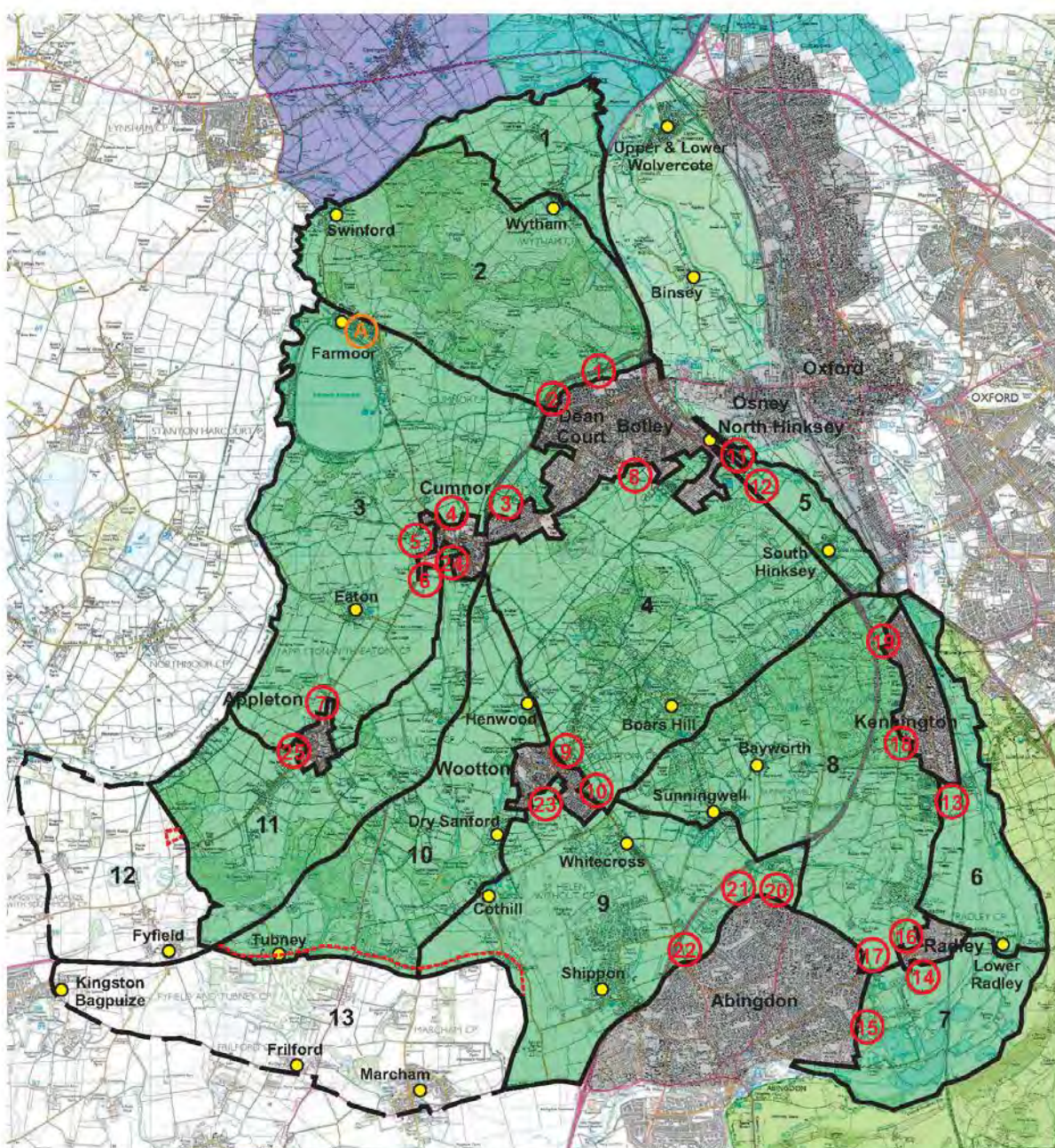


Figure 5: Inner Edge of Land Parcels and Potential Inset Settlement Recommended for Further Examination for Potential Exclusion from the Green Belt

KEY

	Settlement		Land parcel boundary
	Green belt - Vale of White Horse		Hamlet Settlement
	Green belt - Oxford City Council		Potential Revision to Green Belt Boundary
	Green belt - South Oxfordshire District Council		Edge of settlement with potential scope for amendment
	Green belt - Cherwell District Council		Proposed new 'Inset Settlement'
	Green belt - West Oxfordshire District Council		

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SECTION 13

ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THE BENEFICIAL USE OF THE GREEN BELT

13.1 This section makes a brief assessment of the opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt as outlined in paragraph 81 of the NPPF. These are to:

- provide opportunities for public access
- provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation
- retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity
- improve damaged and derelict land

13.2 The joint paper prepared by Natural England and the CPRE in 2010 sets out a vision for the future enhancement of the Green Belt for a greener future.

Green Belts: a greener future. A report by Natural England and the CPRE 2010

13.3 The following extract is from the Report's conclusions on findings of the study.

This report shows that Green Belt policy continues to be highly effective in terms of its principle purposes of preventing urban sprawl and maintaining a clear physical distinction between town and country. Alongside this, fresh evidence has been presented on the benefits which Green Belt land is delivering and how these relate to the ecosystem services they provide. For example, it reveals that Green Belt land has a greater proportion of woodland and a more concentrated range of public access opportunities than other parts of England.

The thinking of both Natural England and CPRE has converged around the benefit to the general public of having land free from built development near major urban areas which delivers multiple objectives and a range of ecosystem services. Green infrastructure is important to the successful functioning of urban areas and the relationship to rural areas around them. The Green Belts already make a huge contribution to green infrastructure. With new challenges presented by climate change, along with additional pressure for new housing in the future, the Green Belts and all urban fringe land surrounding towns and cities could take on an even more significant role in providing an environmental resource for England's population. A multifunctional approach to land use is essential to combine the range of activities – such as production of local food, educational visits, access for recreation and provision of sustainable energy – that can be integrated with each other, and across as much land at the same time as possible.

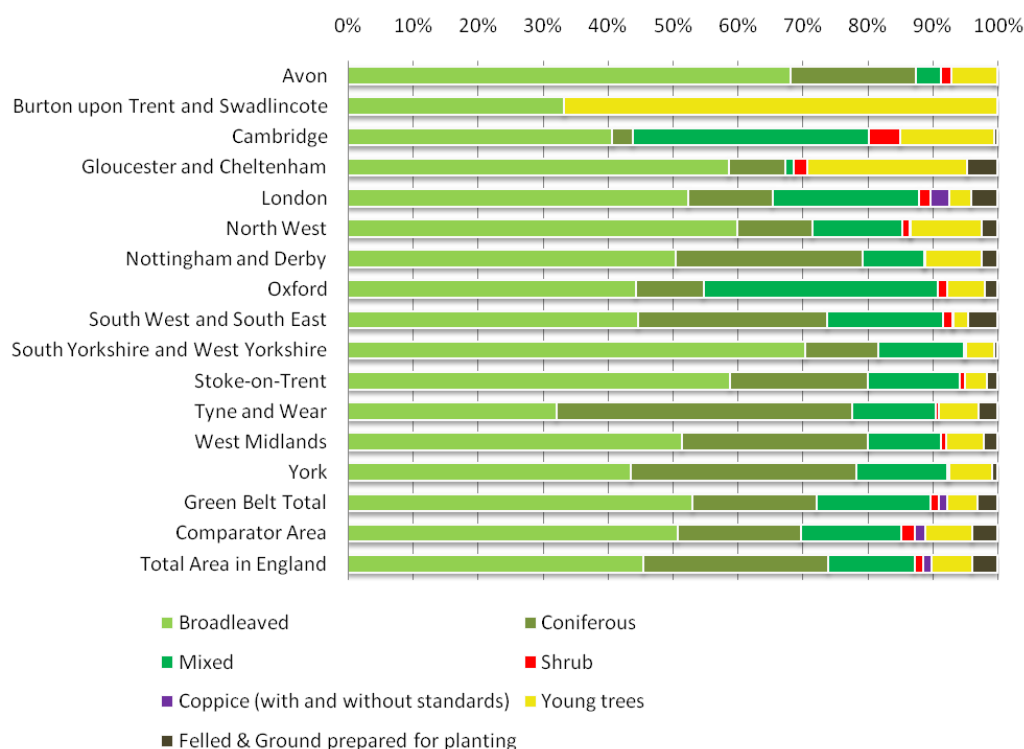
This report does not reach any conclusions about which pattern of settlement development might be most effective at meeting the challenge of climate change. It does recognise, however, that land designated as Green Belt is already making a significant contribution to the ecosystem services that are essential to help mitigate against and adapt to climate change. The Green Belts can help to improve connectivity between the areas designated for their environmental importance, urban green spaces and the wider countryside, to form ecological networks and green recreation networks. Space is needed to provide these benefits and services and to date the Green Belt has been very successful at making sure that has happened. It is important not to lose sight of this contribution to the environment and to England's people.

Land cover

13.4 The Report analyses the land cover of the Green Belts using Land Cover Map 2000 in Tables 1a and 1b. The Oxford Green Belt as a whole is composed of the following land cover types (with the Green Belt average and All England Total in brackets):

Arable and horticulture: 45% (35% / 37%)
Improved grassland: 22% (23% / 23%)
Semi-natural grassland: 13% (14% / 14%)
Mountain, heath and bog: 1% (3% / 4%)
Broad leaved / mixed woodland: 13% (14% / 8%)
Coniferous woodland: 1% (3% / 2%)
Built up areas and gardens: 5% (7% / 10%)
Standing open water: 1% (1% / 0%).

- 13.5 The above illustrates the above average cover under arable and horticultural land uses and the below average built up areas and gardens. The Oxford Green Belt is also typical of Green Belts with a higher than national average of broadleaved /mixed woodland.



- 13.6 Table 2 sets out the percentage of land within the Oxford Green Belt associated with 'extensive dwellings and associated non-agricultural grazing'. The percentage for Oxford (16.6%) is lower than the Green Belt average (22.9%). The All England total is by comparison 14.4%.

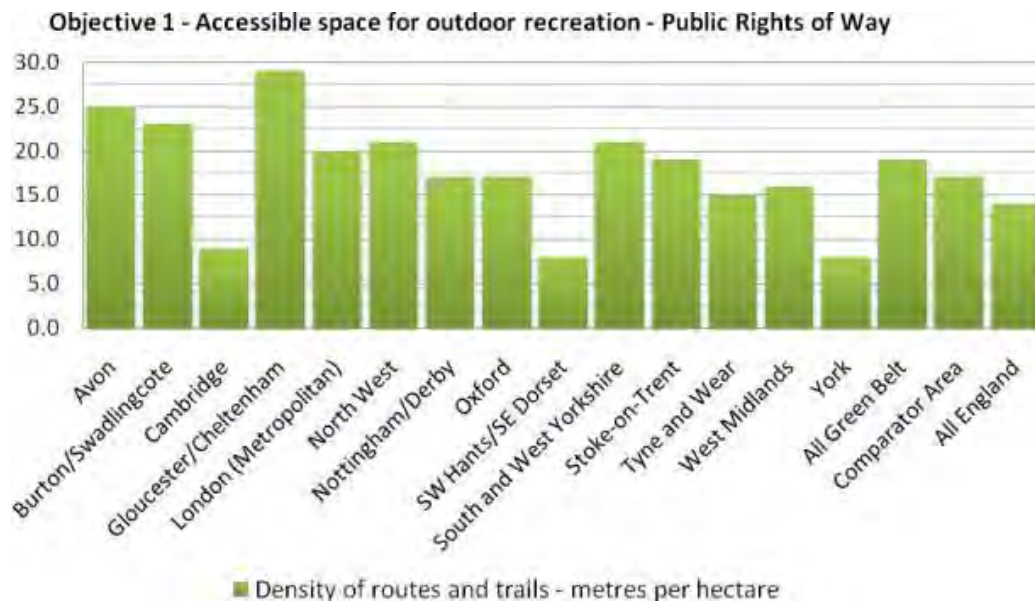
Recreation

- 13.7 Table 6 analyses recreational opportunities in the Green Belt. The following proportions are identified for Oxford Green Belt (with the Green Belt average and All England Total in brackets)

Within Country Parks: 0.3% (1.1% / 0.3%)
Within LNRs: 0% (0.7% / 0.3%)
Within Registered Parks and Gardens: 1.9% (2.4% / 1.3%)

- 13.8 The above illustrates a below average coverage of Country Parks, LNRs and Registered Parks and Gardens in the Oxford Green Belt compared to the average for Green Belts but a not untypical average for all England.

- 13.9 The Study identifies a good density of public rights of way in the Oxford Green Belt as shown in the graph below:

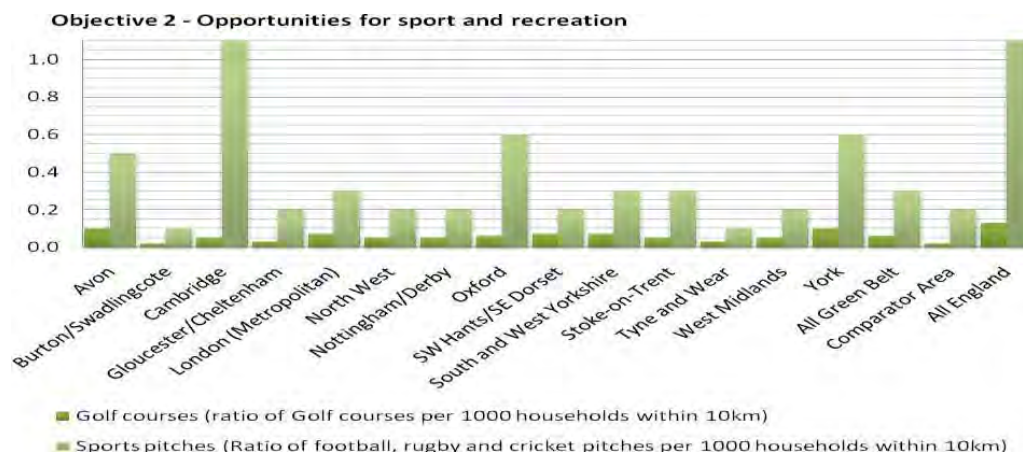


- 13.10 The Oxford Green Belt Way which crosses the part within the Vale is identified as an example of good practice.

Spearheaded by a local CPRE volunteer, the Oxford Green Belt Way was designed to encourage people to enjoy the countryside in the Green Belt around the city as well as to raise the profile of CPRE and its local campaigns. The Trail was opened to celebrate the Oxford CPRE Branch 75th Anniversary and 50 years of Green Belt.

A good rights of way network exists around Oxford, but there was no published map giving a dedicated walking route in the Green Belt around Oxford. The route was planned so that the starting and finishing point of each of the 9 stages making up the 50 mile circular route coincided with a regular bus service, making the route easily accessible by public transport.

- 13.11 Opportunities for sport and recreation were also found to be good in the Oxford Green Belt:



Landscape

- 13.12 The Study draws on the results of the Natural England Countryside Quality Counts project to gain an understanding of the quality of the landscape. This interestingly comes to the conclusion

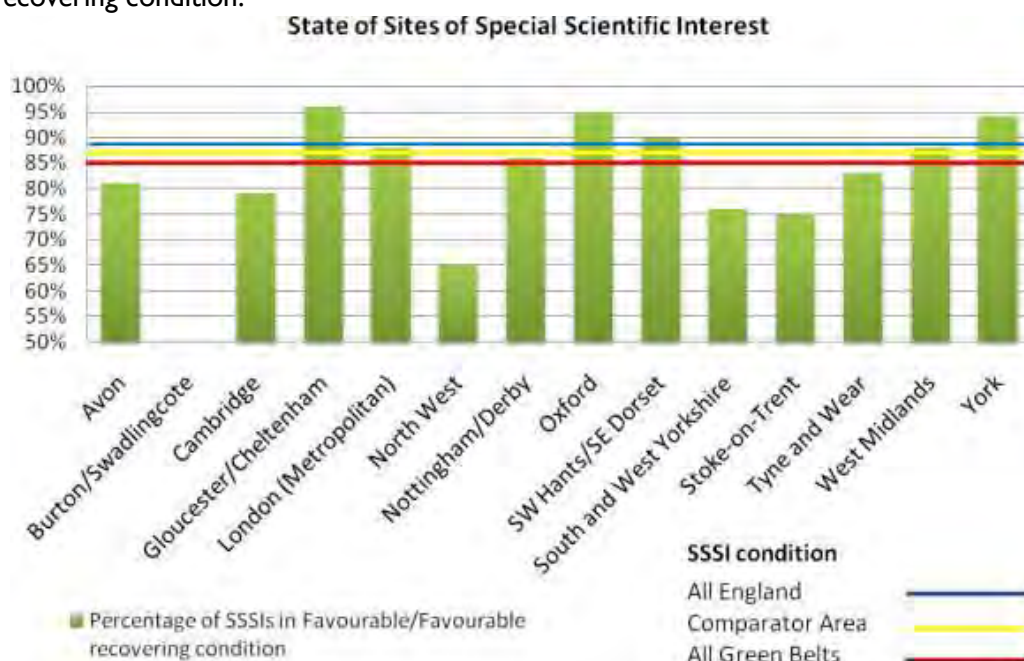
that 99% of the Oxford Green Belt is maintaining its dominant landscape character (Figure 17) and is better than most other Green Belts in the country.

Management Strategies for Green Belts, produced through the planning process, provide a means to identify potential funding opportunities for landscape improvement and to establish programmes.

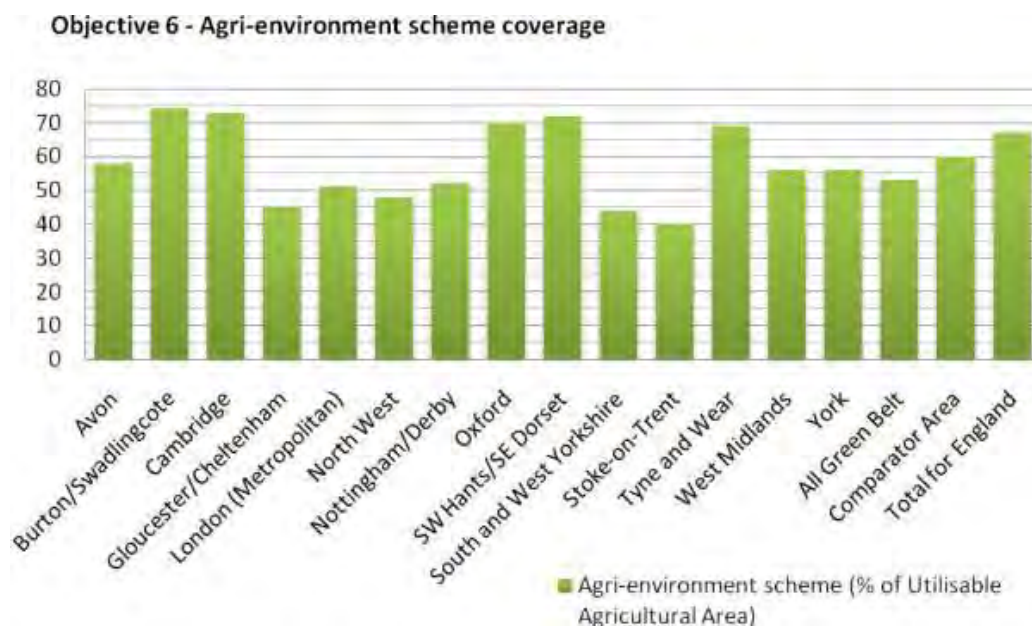
- 13.13 The Study recommends a holistic set of sustainable objectives for the Green Belt based on land use objectives and more contemporary principles such as ecosystem services, climate change and Green Infrastructure. It also advocates the benefits of a strategic approach to managing the Green Belt.
- 13.14 The perception of the Green Belt as being of a poorer quality is common: *Despite evidence that many of the Green Belt areas have considerable areas of natural beauty and landscapes which are maintained or enhancing, there remains a perception that damaged, derelict or vacant land is a common feature of Green Belt. As demonstrated above, Green Belt land is under more pressure for development than the wider countryside but a significant proportion retains its predominantly rural character – more than the area considered neglected.*
- 13.15 In conclusion: *A significant proportion of Green Belt land retains a rural and open character, but a significant proportion is diverging from its established character and action is required to prevent this land from falling into neglect in the future. Regeneration schemes such as Community Forests have helped to enhance more extensive areas of neglected land within both Green Belt and other urban fringe areas but there is more to do. A landscape scale approach is required to deliver this along with a successful business model for funding regeneration and landscape enhancement. A more detailed investigation of landscape quality in Green Belt and urban fringe areas is needed through use of landscape character assessment and tranquillity mapping, to understand which locations need improvement.*

Bio-diversity

- 13.16 The Study analyses of the health of the bio-diversity resource in the Green Belts. Figure 18 illustrates that a high percentage of SSSIs in the Oxford Green Belt are in favourable or recovering condition.



- 13.18 Further work needs to be done to investigate the health of bio-diversity resources at the level of the Vale.
- 13.19 The Oxford Green Belt also fares well in comparison with other Green Belts on the percentage of land covered by Environmental Stewardship Schemes:



Summary and conclusions

13.20 The above shows that the Oxford Green Belt as whole is already engaged in opportunities for the beneficial use of the Green Belt in recreational, ecological, landscape terms. The proximity to large numbers of people however places greater emphasis on the need to enhance the opportunities within the Vale's area of the Green Belt.

13.21 The Study comes to the following conclusions:

The land around our towns and cities is continually facing a range of challenges and conflicting land use priorities. Decisions involve weighing up a number of social, economic and environmental factors and include questions about the number of houses needed, the distribution of infrastructure, facilities and services; the amount of open space desirable to provide healthy lifestyles and quality of life; protection of important habitats, landscapes and historic features; and the provision of jobs and schools. With the passing of the Climate Change Act 2008, and a new overall statutory purpose for spatial planning to address climate change, this is an important factor to add to the list.

Green Belt policy has provided a framework for making some of these decisions around those towns and cities with the planning designation in place. It is a simple framework that assumes that urban areas need open space and breathing spaces around them – for that to happen, the form and size of urban areas should be contained. If not, urban development would sprawl and settlements would become too big and lose their historic character. The policy has defended against this successfully.

But there are new challenges in the 21st century, and new expectations. England's population has grown, and is projected to continue to grow. It is recognised that people benefit from having access to green spaces within a short distance from where they live. Quality places they can visit without driving or a long journey by public transport to get there will be in greater demand. Outdoor spaces that not only provide opportunities for exercise, relaxation or social activity, but which also provide a broad range of environmental benefits and ecosystem services. To tackle these challenges and expectations on England's finite area of land a multi-functional approach, combining different land uses in the same space, is required to plan and manage Green Belt.

POTENTIAL WITHIN THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE OXFORD GREEN BELT

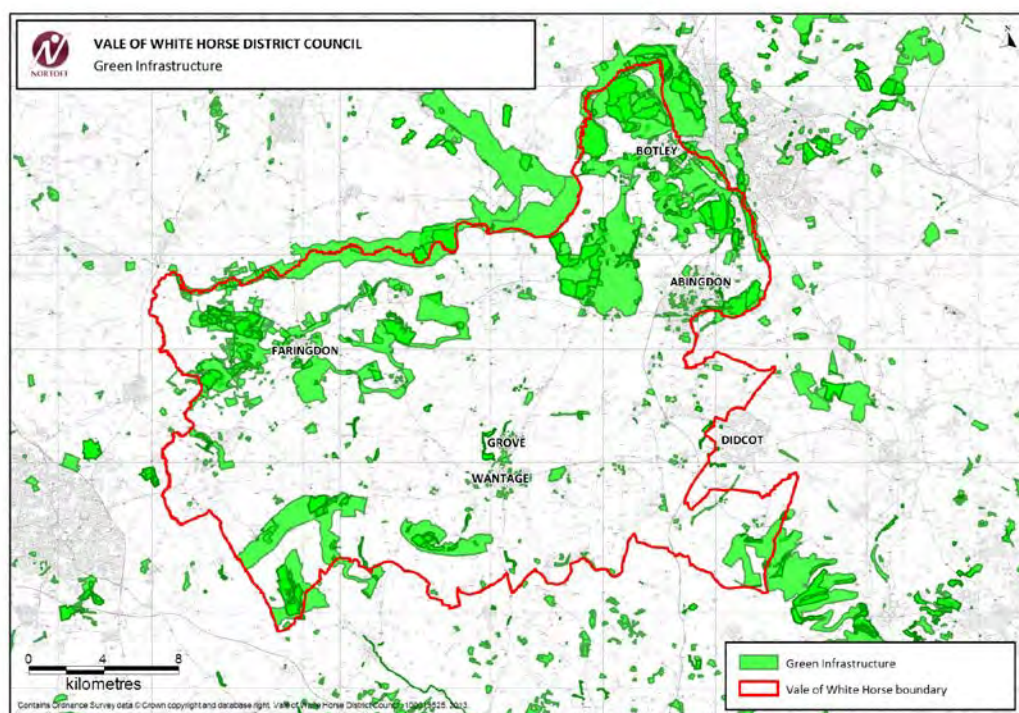
Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006 – 2014

13.22 The Rights of Way Improvement Plan sets out the County's ambitions for improvement of the public rights of way in Oxfordshire and is now integrated into the third Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2030. The vision for this Rights of Way Improvement Plan is:

To improve the existing public rights of way network for all users and would-be users, and improve the extent, use and understanding of the network, so that public rights of way fulfil their role as a vital part of life in the County.

To realise this vision we need to see the following aims achieved:

- 1. Public rights of way are protected and well maintained*
- 2. A better joined-up network that meets the needs and demands of users whilst accommodating the interests of land managers, the natural environment and our cultural heritage*
- 3. A public rights of way network which enables access for all*

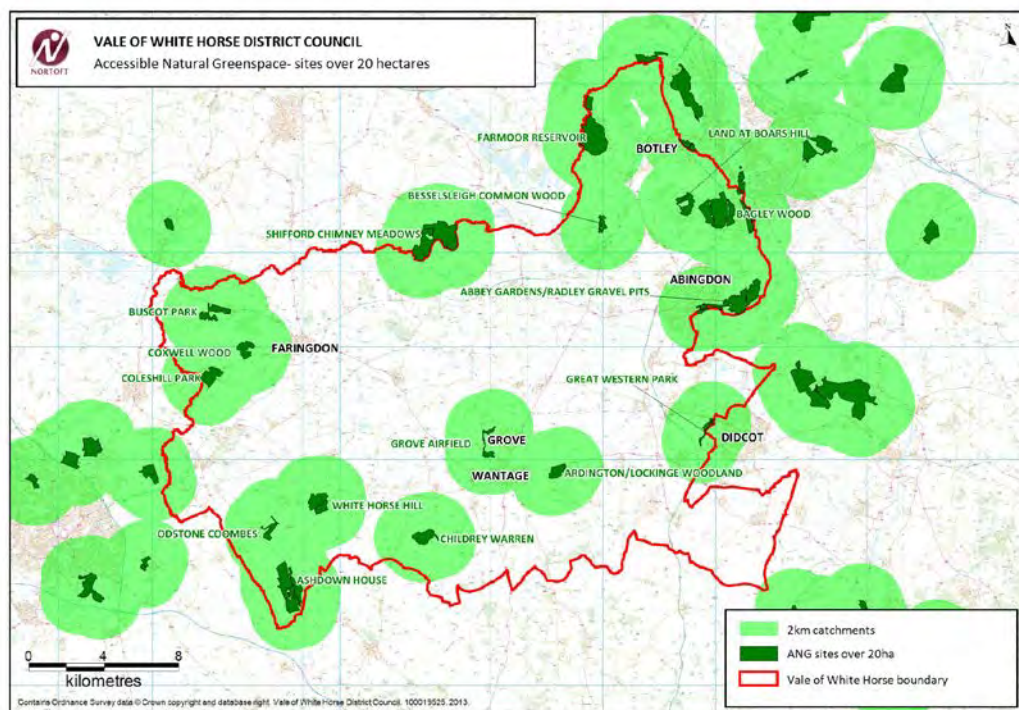


13.27 Figure 3 lists such sites of which the following are located in the Green Belt:

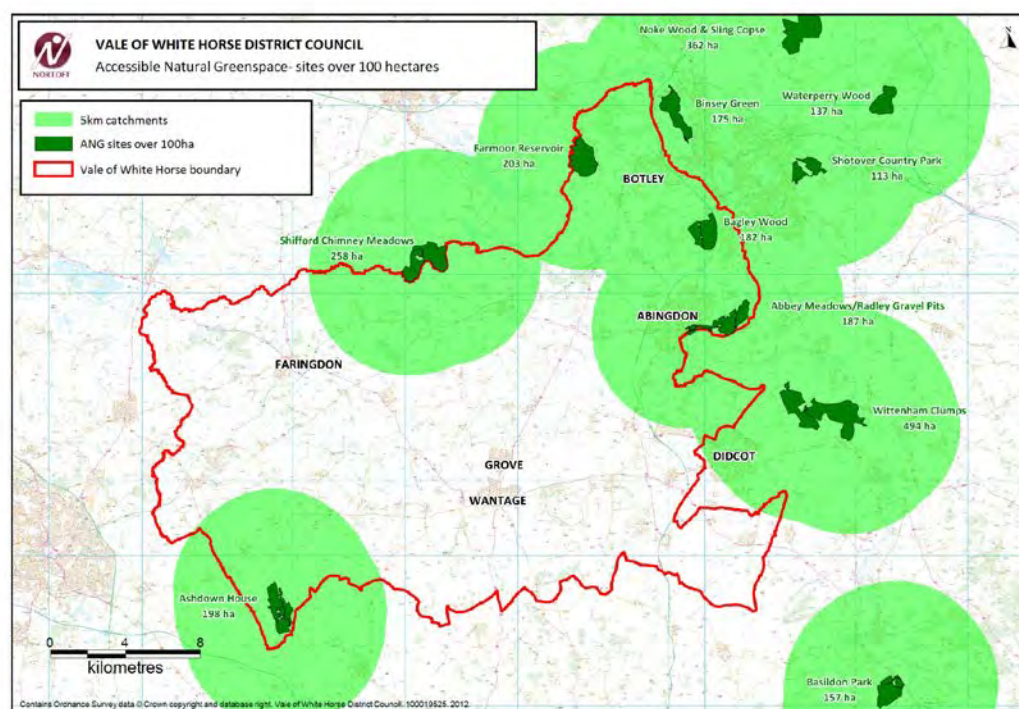
Bagley Wood 1 and 2
Besselsleigh Common Wood
Farmoor reservoir

Land at Boars Hill
Radley Gravel pits

- 13.28 Figure 4 shows that the Green Belt has a good level of accessible natural greenspace in sites over 20ha.s within 2km of the settlements except for north-west of Abingdon.



- 13.29 Figure 5 shows that the Green Belt has a good level of accessible natural greenspace in sites over 100ha.s within 5km of the settlements.



- 13.30 Tables 3 and 4 show that the principle deficit in available accessible natural greenspace for Abingdon, Botley, Kennington, Radley is the lack of large sites over 500ha. within 5km of these settlements. Cumnor and Wootton have a local partial deficit of smaller sites within 2km.
- 13.31 The Audit concludes that the development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy should be a future priority for the Vale and the need to identify the wider GI provision and opportunities for developing the GI network and corridors. It is also set out to identify potential sites which could become part of the natural green network, opportunities to link green spaces, and to help to underpin contributions from developers as part of the CIL process.

Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 13.32 Work on an Oxfordshire wide Green Infrastructure Strategy has been started by Oxfordshire County Council but was not available to inform this Green Belt Review. Preliminary data from the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard ANGSt evidence for the County, which assesses the existing resources, comes to some early conclusions:
1. Oxfordshire has a shortage of readily accessible Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) such as country parks and Forestry Commission sites to serve large centres of population
 2. Many large sites are historic parks and gardens which have restricted access to the public
 3. Promotion of strategic sites, in particular those not in public ownership, is often limited
 4. There is a potential conflict between access and ecological objectives on ANG
- 13.33 The Oxfordshire wide Green Infrastructure Strategy when it is published will help to guide future opportunities and policies for Green Infrastructure in the Oxford Green Belt.

Recommendations

- 13.34 The above brief analysis shows that the Oxford Green Belt within the Vale of White Horse is fairly well served by good recreational and ecological assets but that there is scope for improvement. Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council both have Plans in place to maintain and enhance the quantity, quality and spread of these assets. By the very nature of the Green Belt, it serves a high population within major cities and towns, expanded settlements, and scattered villages. The Green Belt therefore is particularly important as a local Green Infrastructure resource for a large part of the population of the Vale and its neighbouring Oxford. It is recommended that a Green Belt wide plan for the maintenance and improvement of Green Infrastructure within the Green Belt is seriously considered as part of the future stages of the Green Belt Review. The following recommendations are based on advice from Natural England and Oxfordshire County Council's work on Green Infrastructure and Green Belts.
- 13.35 The following are recommended for the Oxford Green Belt in the Vale:
- Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Green Belt;
 - Integrated approach to understanding the landscape character; visual qualities; heritage assets and historic landscape; recreation, sport and access provision; and bio-diversity of the Vale;
 - A multifunctional approach to land use;
 - Opportunities for net gains in Green Infrastructure to the community through offsetting (such as bio-diversity offsetting);
 - Creation of green and public access networks linking existing resources;
 - Improved promotion of existing resources;

- Shared use and management of existing resources;
- Landscape and bio-diversity enhancement measures;
- Higher levels of provision of public open space as part of development proposals in areas adjacent to the Green Belt;
- Close working with local communities;
- Promoting benefits of Green Infrastructure for health;
- Restoration of derelict and damaged land in the Green Belt.

I3.36 Much of the land within the Green Belt is within private, charitable or institutional ownership where improvements to the Green Infrastructure can be achieved through negotiation and new opportunities when they arise.

APPENDIX A

Bibliography

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Vale of White Horse Emerging Local Plan 2029

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