



LUC

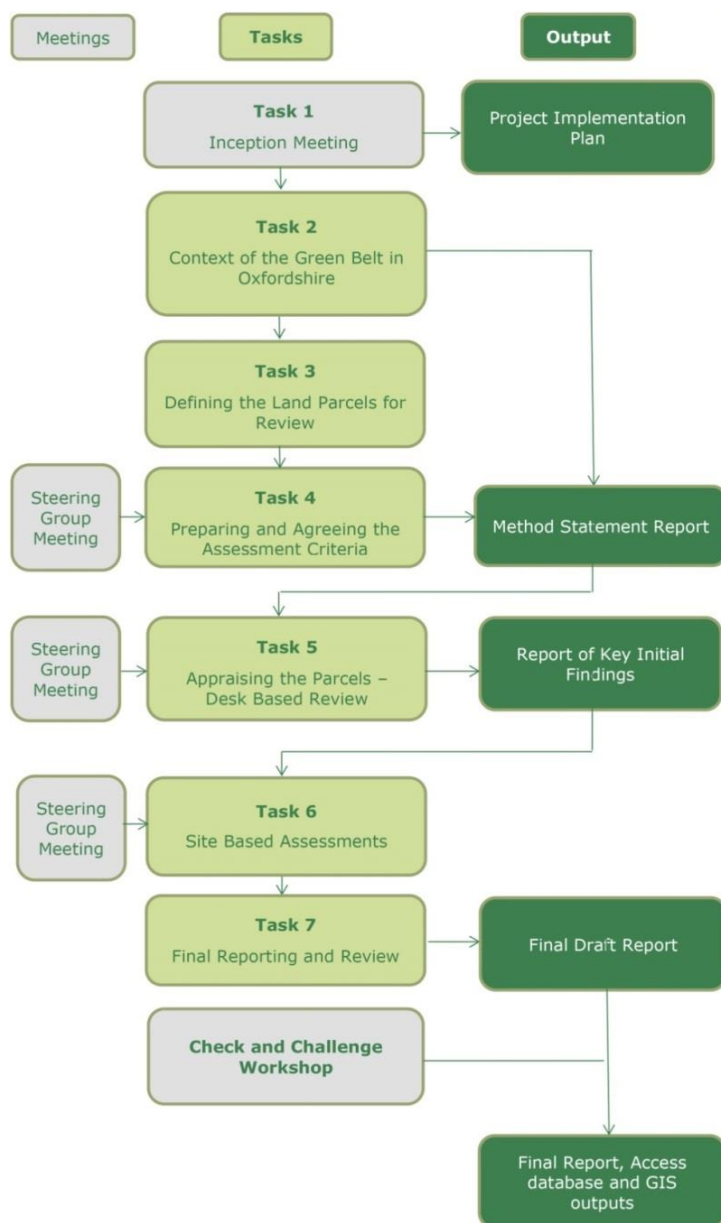
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# **Oxford Green Belt Study**

Final Report  
Prepared by LUC  
October 2015

## 3 Methodology

- 3.1 There is no definitive national guidance on how to undertake Green Belt studies. Documents prepared by the Planning Officers Society (POS)<sup>10</sup> and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS)<sup>11</sup> provide a useful discussion of some of the key issues associated with assessing Green Belt and reviewing/revising Green Belt boundaries.
- 3.2 The key points from these documents and from Inspectors' decisions were reflected in the methodology employed here. **Figure 3.1** provides a summary of the overall method of approach, which is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.



**Figure 3.1 – Methodological Flow Diagram**

<sup>10</sup> Approach to Review of the Green Belt, Planning Officers Society.

<sup>11</sup> Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt, Planning Advisor Service (2015).



## Project inception

- 3.3 The core LUC project team and the Oxfordshire Councils' Steering Group met on Tuesday May 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 to finalise the project scope, objectives and work plan, including agreeing key meeting and reporting dates. Discussions began on the methodology for identifying the land parcels and broad areas and on the detailed criteria for assessment. A list of required GIS data and other information was provided by LUC to the local authorities and arrangements were made for its collation and transfer. Council officers provided an update on the progress of the other Green Belt studies being undertaken in the County and the key issues of relevance to this study.
- 3.4 Following the inception meeting, a meeting note and project implementation plan, setting out the agreed methodology and key deliverable dates, were prepared and circulated to the Steering Group for approval.

## Review of study context and background

- 3.5 To inform the development of the assessment methodology, most notably the detailed criteria for assessment of the parcels and broad areas against the Green Belt purposes, a review of relevant contextual information relating to the history and evolution of the Oxford Green Belt was undertaken. A summary of this context and background to the study is provided in **Chapter 2** of this report.

## Defining the land parcels for review

- 3.6 Given the overall size of the Green Belt, it was necessary to divide it into appropriate parcels for assessment. Parcels were defined using GIS maps (based on Ordnance Survey and Mastermap), local proposals maps and aerial images. No maximum or minimum sizes were used for the land parcels. The aim was to define parcels that contain land of the same or very similar land use or character, bounded by recognisable features including:
- **Natural features;** for example, substantial watercourses and water bodies.
  - **Man-made features;** for example, motorways, A and B roads and railway lines, and established infrastructure and utilities such as sewage treatment works.
- 3.7 Parcels were defined independently from the previous or ongoing Green Belt studies in Oxfordshire. This ensured independent, comprehensive, and consistent approach. The Inspector's Report to Leeds City Council noted that Green Belt studies should be "*fair, comprehensive and consistent with the Core Strategy's aim of directing development to the most sustainable locations*". *Green Belt reviews should be 'comprehensive' rather than 'selective'*.<sup>12</sup> All of the Green Belt was therefore divided into parcels.
- 3.8 Two distinct types were identified:
- **Smaller parcels** adjacent to Oxford City and the inset settlements<sup>13</sup>. Identifying land parcels at the edge of the Green Belt is important as it is these areas which are most likely to be considered for either retention or removal from the Green Belt.
  - **Broad areas** which represent the main 'body' of the Green Belt, rather than land at the edges of Oxford City and the inset settlements enclosed by the Green Belt. It was agreed with the Steering Group, that smaller parcels would be identified around the 'inset settlements' as identified in the relevant Local Plans. Smaller parcels were not identified around settlements 'washed over' by Green Belt; however, commentary considering these settlements in relation to the Green Belt purposes is provided in the assessment of the broad areas.

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<sup>12</sup> Inspector's report (A Thickett) to Leeds City Council (September 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Including Berinsfield which is proposed to be inset and the Green Belt land to the east of Eynsham which sits outside the Green Belt.

- 3.9 **Table 3.1** lists the inset settlements in the study area agreed by the Steering Group to be appropriate for 'parcelling'.

**Table 3.1 – Inset settlements**

<b>Cherwell District</b>
Begbroke, Kidlington (including Oxford Spires Business Park), Yarnton
<b>Oxford City Council</b>
Oxford (including urban villages and settlements within Oxford (e.g. Summertown, Marston & Northway, West Oxford, East Oxford, Rose Hill, Littlemore, Grandpont, New Hinksey etc.))
<b>South Oxfordshire District</b>
Berinsfield, Wheatley (including Littleworth)
<b>Vale of White Horse District</b>
Abingdon-on-Thames, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley, Wooton, Appleton
<b>West Oxfordshire District</b>
Eynsham*

\* Eynsham is not an 'inset' settlement as it lies adjacent to the edge of the Green Belt. However it was agreed by the Steering Group that the land within the Green Belt (adjacent to the settlement) should be assessed in detail.

## Preparing and agreeing the assessment criteria

- 3.10 A key part of the method involved the development of an assessment framework based on the five purposes of Green Belts set out in the NPPF. A draft set of assessment criteria was drawn-up based on LUC's extensive experience of undertaking Green Belt reviews, information collated on the context and background of the Oxford Green Belt (see **Chapter 2**) and good practice elsewhere.
- 3.11 Through discussion with the Steering Group, the criteria were refined to ensure that the judgements reflected the context and priorities for Oxfordshire, whilst remaining true to the five purposes of the Green Belt. Green Belt studies should be clear "*how the assessment of 'importance to Green Belt' has been derived*" from assessments against the individual purposes of Green Belt.<sup>14</sup>
- 3.12 **Table 3.2** summarises out the final criteria used to assess the relative performance of the Green Belt parcels and broad areas and the ratings applied to each criterion. This is followed by a description of the rationale for the assessment criteria adopted.
- 3.13 For Green Belt Purposes 1-4, **Table 3.2** sets out:
- The **key settlements** considered relevant for the assessment of the purposes (not all of the settlements listed in Table 3.1 are considered to be large built-up areas (under P1), towns (under P2) or historic towns (under P3)).
  - The **key issue(s)** considered.
  - The assessment criteria used.

<sup>14</sup> Inspectors' Letter (L Graham) to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils (May 2015).

- The **ratings** that were applied to each criterion, as follows.

<b>High</b>	Parcel performs well.
<b>Medium</b>	Parcel performs moderately well.
<b>Low</b>	Parcel performs weakly.
<b>No Contribution</b>	Parcel makes no, or a negligible contribution.

- **General comments** on the assessment method. This provides further detail about how each criterion / rating was interpreted. This helped ensure consistency was achieved throughout the assessment of the land parcels.

3.14 The Table also includes a summary of the approach used in relation to Purpose 5. Purpose 5 focuses on assisting urban regeneration through the recycling of derelict and other urban land. This study does not include a parcel by parcel assessment of Purpose 5, as it is not possible to distinguish the extent to which each Green Belt parcels delivers against this purpose. Discussions with the project Steering Group did not identify any evidence available that would enable such an assessment to be undertaken.

**Table 3.2 – Detailed criteria used to assess the Green Belt within the smaller land parcels adjacent to Oxford City and the inset settlements**

A) NPPF Green Belt Purposes		B) Relevant Settlements	C) Issue(s) for consideration		D) Criteria	E) Ratings		F) Comments on assessment
1	To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	The large built up area is considered to be Oxford, Botley, Kennington and Wolvercote	a	Protection of open land from urban sprawl.	Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?	High	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel contains no or very limited urban sprawl (in the form of ribbon or non-compact development) and has a strong sense of openness.	Urban sprawl is the spread of urban areas into the neighbouring countryside. This could be in the form of ribbon development or non-compact development which doesn't relate well to the existing urban area.  Key issue – the extent to which urban sprawl has already occurred and whether the land is open or not. Parcels which have already been compromised by urban sprawl, as a result of urbanising influences, may play a weaker role than those where the Green Belt is more open in character. However it is acknowledged that parcels which have been significantly affected by urban sprawl could be considered to play a valuable in preventing further sprawl.  Development means any built structure.
						Medium	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel contains limited urban sprawl (in the form of ribbon or non-compact development) and has a relatively strong sense of openness.	
						Low	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel already contains urban sprawl (in the form of ribbon or non-compact development) compromising the sense of openness.	
						N/C	Land parcel makes no, or a negligible contribution to preventing urban sprawl – i.e. not adjacent to urban area.	
			b		Does the parcel protect open land from the <b>potential</b> for urban sprawl to occur?	High	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel has a high potential for urban sprawl to occur.	The features that that are considered relevant to the assessment of <b>potential</b> include:
						Medium	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel has moderate potential for urban sprawl to occur.	

A) NPPF Green Belt Purposes		B) Relevant Settlements	C) Issue(s) for consideration	D) Criteria	E) Ratings		F) Comments on assessment
					Low	Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel has low potential for urban sprawl to occur.	<p><b>Significant and durable boundary features</b> - Readily recognisable and permanent features are used to define the borders of Green Belt parcels. The presence of features which contain development and prevent urban sprawl can, in certain limited locations, reduce the potential role of a Green Belt parcel in performing this purpose. The significance of a boundary in preventing urban sprawl is judged based on its relative proximity to the existing urban edge of a settlement and its nature. Only motorways, dual carriageways, railway lines and rivers which have not been breached within the relevant land parcel, or close by, are considered to constitute a very significant and durable boundary that may prevent urban sprawl.</p> <p><b>The nature of the settlement form</b> - An urban edge that is uneven, rather than 'rounded off', is more vulnerable to urban sprawl.</p> <p><b>Presence of roads</b> - the presence of roads (apart from motorways and dual carriageways) provides greater opportunities for urban sprawl to occur, because of the potential for ribbon development and the wider access they provide. Where such roads exist, the Green Belt is considered to play a strong role in preventing urban sprawl. These roads are distinct from those considered as boundary features as they will not form part of the existing settlement edge.</p>
					N/C	Land parcel is not adjacent to urban area and therefore makes no, or a negligible contribution to preventing urban sprawl.	

A) NPPF Green Belt Purposes		B) Relevant Settlements	C) Issue(s) for consideration		D) Criteria	E) Ratings		F) Comments on assessment
2	To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	<b>Vale of White Horse</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Abingdon on Thames</li><li>Botley</li><li>Cumnor</li><li>Kennington</li><li>Radley</li><li>Wooton</li><li>Appleton</li></ul> <b>West Oxfordshire</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Eynsham</li></ul> <b>Oxford City</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Oxford (including urban villages and settlements within Oxford)</li></ul> <b>Cherwell</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kidlington (including Oxford Spires Business Park)</li><li>Begbroke</li><li>Yarnton</li></ul> <b>South Oxfordshire</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Wheatley (including Littleworth)</li><li>Berinsfield</li></ul>	a	Reduction in visual or physical gaps between settlements.	Does the parcel prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between neighbouring settlements?	<b>High</b>	The parcel plays an essential role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would cause visual or physical coalescence or substantially reduce the gap.	This purpose seeks to prevent settlements from merging to form larger settlements. The PAS guidance states that distance alone should not be used to assess the extent to which the Green Belt prevents neighbouring towns from merging into one another. Two key elements have therefore being used – the extent of the actual or perceived visual and physical gap.
						<b>Medium</b>	The parcel plays some role in preventing the reduction of the visual or physical distances between settlements. Loss of openness would, or would be perceived as, reducing gap between settlements.	
						<b>Low</b>	The parcel plays a very limited role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would not be perceived as reducing gap between settlements.	
						<b>N/C</b>	Land parcel makes no, or a negligible contribution to preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements.	



A) NPPF Green Belt Purposes		B) Relevant Settlements	C) Issue(s) for consideration	D) Criteria	E) Ratings		F) Comments on assessment
3	To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	Applies to the countryside around all settlements – i.e. all Green Belt parcels.	a	Significance of existing urbanising influences and sense of openness. <sup>15</sup>  Does the parcel have the characteristics of countryside and/or connect to land with the characteristics of countryside?  Has the parcel already been affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?	High	The land parcel contains the characteristics of countryside, has no or very little urbanising development, and is open.	Encroachment from urbanising influences is the intrusion / gradual advance of buildings and urbanised land beyond an acceptable or established limit.  Urbanising influences include any features that compromise 'openness', such as roads lined with street lighting and pavements, large areas of hard standing, floodlit sports fields, roads, pylons etc. They do not include development which is commonly found within the countryside, e.g. agricultural or forestry related development, isolated dwellings, historic schools and churches.  Countryside is land/scenery which is rural in character, i.e. a relatively open natural, semi-natural or farmed landscape.
					Medium	The land parcel contains the characteristics of countryside, has limited urbanising development, and is relatively open.	
					Low	Land parcel does not contain the characteristics and/or is not connected to land with the characteristics of countryside, or contains urbanising development that compromises openness.	
					N/C	Parcel makes no, or a negligible contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	

<sup>15</sup> The significance of existing urbanising influences has a direct influence over the relative openness of Green Belt parcels. We have therefore used the presence of urbanising influences as a proxy for assessing the degree of openness within the parcel.

A) NPPF Green Belt Purposes		B) Relevant Settlements	C) Issue(s) for consideration		D) Criteria	E) Ratings		F) Comments on assessment
4	To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	Oxford (including the urban villages and settlements within Oxford)	a	Significance of historical and/or visual setting to the historic town.	Does the parcel contribute to the setting and 'special character' of Oxford?	High	The parcel plays a major role in the setting of Oxford in terms of its physical extent and degree of visibility and/or its significant contribution to Oxford's special character.	Topographic mapping, Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) analysis and site visits were used to inform judgements regarding intervisibility between the historic core of Oxford and its open surroundings.  Landscape Character Assessments (District and County), Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans and other specific studies including (amongst others): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Assessment of the Oxford View Cones (Oxford City Council, Draft Report March 2014)</li><li>A Character Assessment of Oxford City in its Landscape Setting (LUC, 2002)</li><li>Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation</li></ul> were used to inform the assessment of the contribution of setting to 'special character'.
						Medium	The parcel plays a moderate role in the setting of Oxford in terms of its physical extent and degree of visibility and/or its contribution to Oxford's special character.	
						Low	The parcel plays a minor role as it lacks any significant visual relationship with Oxford, and is not visible in the context of views to it. It does however contribute in some way to the wider setting	
						N/C	Parcel makes no, or a negligible contribution – i.e. does not form part of the setting or contribute to the special character of Oxford.	
5	To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Green Belt has the potential to make a strategic contribution to urban regeneration by restricting the land available for development and encouraging developers to seek out and recycle derelict / urban sites. It is considered that it is not possible to distinguish the extent to which each Green Belt parcels delivers against this purpose and therefore the parcels have not been individually assessed against Purpose 5.						

## 4 Findings

### Presentation of findings

- 4.1 The main aim of the study was to provide a robust, transparent and clear understanding of how the land in the Oxford Green Belt performs against the purposes of the Green Belt. A total of 13 broad areas and 83 parcels of Green Belt land were defined in the Study area. A series of maps present the overall results of the assessment for the broad areas and smaller parcels for each of the assessed Green Belt purposes (i.e. Purposes 1-4) (**Figures 4.1 to 4.5**). **Appendices 1 and 2** contain all the assessment sheets for all broad areas and parcels, respectively. The assessment sheets contain the detailed judgements behind the ratings against each Green Belt purpose including any variations in the performance of a land parcel. **It is therefore essential that the detailed commentaries on the parcels (as set out in Appendices 1 and 2) are read alongside Figures 4.1-4.5 and/or Table 4.1 below.**
- 4.2 The information in these Figures and Appendices essentially fulfils the Study's overall aim. However, the Steering Group requested that the findings should be brought together in some way so that it is possible to see how parcels rate against each purpose. The findings are presented in **Tables 4.1 (Smaller Parcels)** and **4.2 (Broad Areas)**.
- 4.3 **Tables 4.1 and 4.2** do not present an aggregation of the parcels' and broad areas' ratings against all the purposes. Indeed, not all the parcels were assessed against all purposes and no weighting was applied to the purposes. As noted earlier, the NPPF does not require all the purposes of Green Belt to be met simultaneously and a High rating against any Green Belt purpose could be sufficient, on its own, to indicate an important contribution. Equally, even if an area of Green Belt scores highly against one or more purposes, the NPPF does not suggest that a review of its boundaries would not be appropriate, if exceptional circumstances were demonstrated.

**Table 4.1: Assessment ratings for smaller parcels**

Order	Unique Reference	Purpose 1 - Issue 1a	Purpose 1 - Issue 1b	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
1	AP1	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Low
2	AP2	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	N/C
3	AP3	N/C	N/C	Low	High	N/C
4	AP4	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	N/C
5	AP5	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	N/C
6	AP6	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	Low
7	AT1	N/C	N/C	Low	High	N/C
8	AT2	N/C	N/C	Medium	Low	N/C
9	AT3	N/C	N/C	Low	Low	Low
10	AT4	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	Low
11	AT5	N/C	N/C	High	Medium	Low
12	AT6	N/C	N/C	High	Medium	Low
13	AT7	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
14	BE1	N/C	N/C	High	Low	Low
15	BE2	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	Low
16	BF1	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
17	BF2	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low

Order	Unique Reference	Purpose 1 - Issue 1a	Purpose 1 - Issue 1b	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
18	BF3	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	Low
19	BF4	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
20	BF5	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
21	BF6	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C	N/C
22	BO1	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
23	BO2	High	High	High	High	High
24	BO3	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low
25	BO4	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium
26	BO5	Low	High	N/C	Low	Medium
27	BO6	High	High	High	Medium	Low
28	CU1	N/C	N/C	Low	High	Medium
29	CU2	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Low
30	CU3	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Low
31	ES1	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	Low
32	ES2	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	Medium
33	KE1	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High
34	KI1	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Medium
35	KI2	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
36	KI3	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Low
37	KI4	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	Low
38	KI5	N/C	N/C	High	Medium	Low
39	KI6	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
40	KI7	N/C	N/C	High	Medium	Medium
41	KI8	N/C	N/C	High	Low	N/C
42	KI9	N/C	N/C	Low	Medium	N/C
43	OX1	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
52	OX10	High	High	Medium	High	Medium
53	OX11	High	High	Medium	High	High
54	OX12	High	High	Low	High	High
55	OX13	Medium	High	High	Medium	Low
56	OX14	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
57	OX15	Medium	High	Low	Medium	Medium
58	OX16	Low	High	N/C	Medium	Low
59	OX17	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High
60	OX18	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
61	OX19	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
44	OX2	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
62	OX20	High	High	Medium	High	High
63	OX21	High	High	High	Medium	High
64	OX22	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
45	OX3	Medium	Medium	N/C	Medium	Medium
46	OX4	High	High	High	High	High
47	OX5	High	High	High	High	High
48	OX6	High	High	High	High	High

Order	Unique Reference	Purpose 1 - Issue 1a	Purpose 1 - Issue 1b	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
49	OX7	Medium	High	Medium	Low	High
50	OX8	High	High	N/C	High	High
51	OX9	High	Medium	N/C	High	Medium
65	RA1	N/C	N/C	High	High	Medium
66	RA2	N/C	N/C	High	High	High
67	RA3	N/C	N/C	N/C	High	Medium
68	WH1	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Medium
69	WH2	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	N/C
70	WH3	N/C	N/C	N/C	Low	N/C
71	WH4	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	N/C
72	WH5	N/C	N/C	N/C	Medium	N/C
73	WH6	N/C	N/C	Low	High	Low
74	WH7	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Medium
75	WH8	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Low
76	WH9	N/C	N/C	High	Medium	Medium
77	WT1	N/C	N/C	Medium	Medium	Medium
78	WT2	N/C	N/C	Low	High	Medium
79	WT3	N/C	N/C	Low	High	N/C
80	WT4	N/C	N/C	Low	High	Low
81	YA1	N/C	N/C	High	High	Low
82	YA2	N/C	N/C	Medium	High	Low
83	YA3	N/C	N/C	Low	High	Medium

**Table 4.2: Assessment ratings for broad areas**

Order	Unique Reference	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4
1	Broad area 1	N/C	N/C	High	Low
2	Broad area 2	N/C	Low	High	High
3	Broad area 3	N/C	N/C	High	Low
4	Broad area 4	N/C	N/C	High	Low
5	Broad area 5	N/C	Medium	High	High
6	Broad area 6	N/C	Low	High	High
7	Broad area 7	N/C	N/C	High	Low
8	Broad area 8	N/C	Low	High	Low
9	Broad area 9	N/C	Low	High	High
10	Broad area 10	N/C	Medium	High	Low
11	Broad area 11	N/C	N/C	High	Medium
12	Broad area 12	N/C	Low	High	High
13	Broad area 13	N/C	Low	High	High

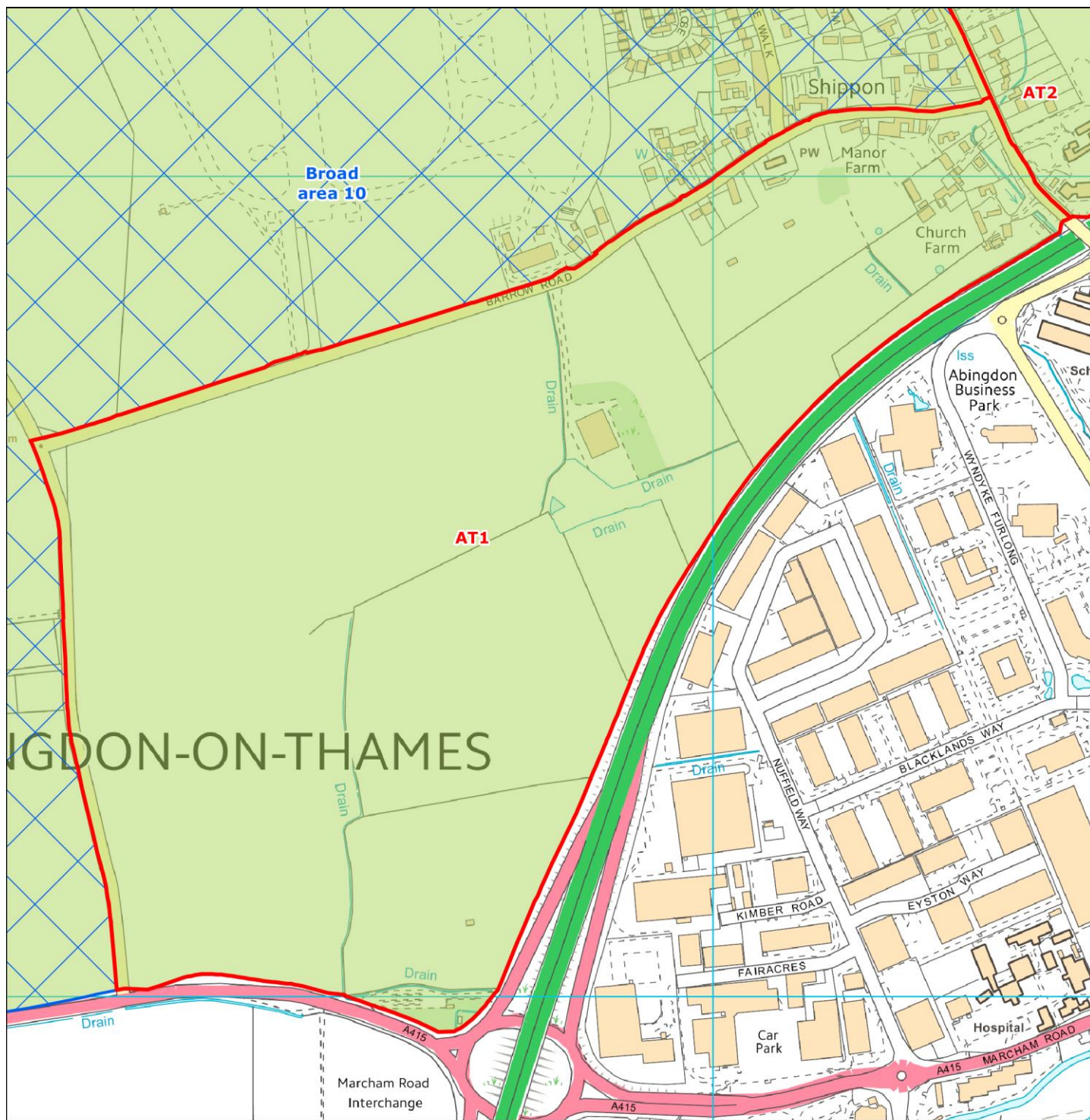
- 4.4 This chapter provides a summary of the findings. Further detail can be found in **Appendices 1 and 2**. References in the detailed assessments to variations of performance within a parcel/ broad area are informative rather than rigorous. No methodology was defined for dealing with such variation and more detailed analysis will be required if the Local Authorities intend to remove areas of land from the Green Belt.



Land Parcel Ref: AT1

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel



District boundary



Green belt parcel



Broad area



Green belt

0 0.15 km



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Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Other Authorities: N/A

Land Parcel Ref: AT1

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

## Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

### Issue 1a - Protection of open land from urban sprawl

Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel lies adjacent to Abingdon-on-Thames which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

### Issue 1b - Ability of boundaries / features to contain development and prevent urban sprawl

Does the parcel protect open land from the potential for urban sprawl to occur?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel lies adjacent to Abingdon-on-Thames which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

## Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

### Issue 2a - Reduction in visual or physical gaps between settlements

Does the parcel prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between neighbouring settlements?

Rating: Low

#### Notes:

The parcel is situated to the west of Abingdon, and is bordered by the A34 to the east, the A415 to the south and Shippon to the north. The parcel has a strong sense of openness and is a relatively flat area of land with views across it from the surrounding roads. The parcel is not in close proximity to any other settlements considered against this purpose, but 20th century development has closed the gap between Abingdon and Shippon so that only the presence of the A34 constitutes a gap between the two. Loss of openness in this parcel could cause more of a merging of the two settlements, which would have some impact in terms of the gap between an enlarged Abingdon and Wootton, but this is limited by the location of this parcel to the west of Abingdon, away from the B4017 (which provides a direct link between the two settlements).

Land Parcel Ref: AT1

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

### Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

#### Issue 3a - Significance of existing urbanising influences and sense of openness

Does the parcel have the characteristics of countryside and/or connect to land with the characteristics of countryside?

Has the parcel already been affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?

Rating: High

#### Notes:

The parcel is predominantly made-up of large irregular-shaped agricultural fields. The open fields have excellent views of the countryside to the south, west and north. As well as lying adjacent to the town of Abingdon-on-Thames, the parcel also contains a portion of the neighbouring village of Shippon in its northern corner. Here the parcel contains the village church (St Mary Magdalene), Church Farm and a few isolated dwellings on the edge of the village. In addition, the parcel contains a large barn in the centre of the parcel and an area of hardstanding used as a lorry stop in the southern corner of the parcel. The lorry stop in the southern corner of the parcel is the only urbanising influence on the countryside within the parcel; however, there are street lights along Faringdon Road at the north eastern edge of the parcel. Due to the small proportion of the parcel that the lorry stop covers, it is not considered to be a significant urbanising influence.

### Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

#### Issue 4a - Significance of historical and/or visual setting to the historic town

Does the parcel contribute to the setting and 'special character' of Oxford?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

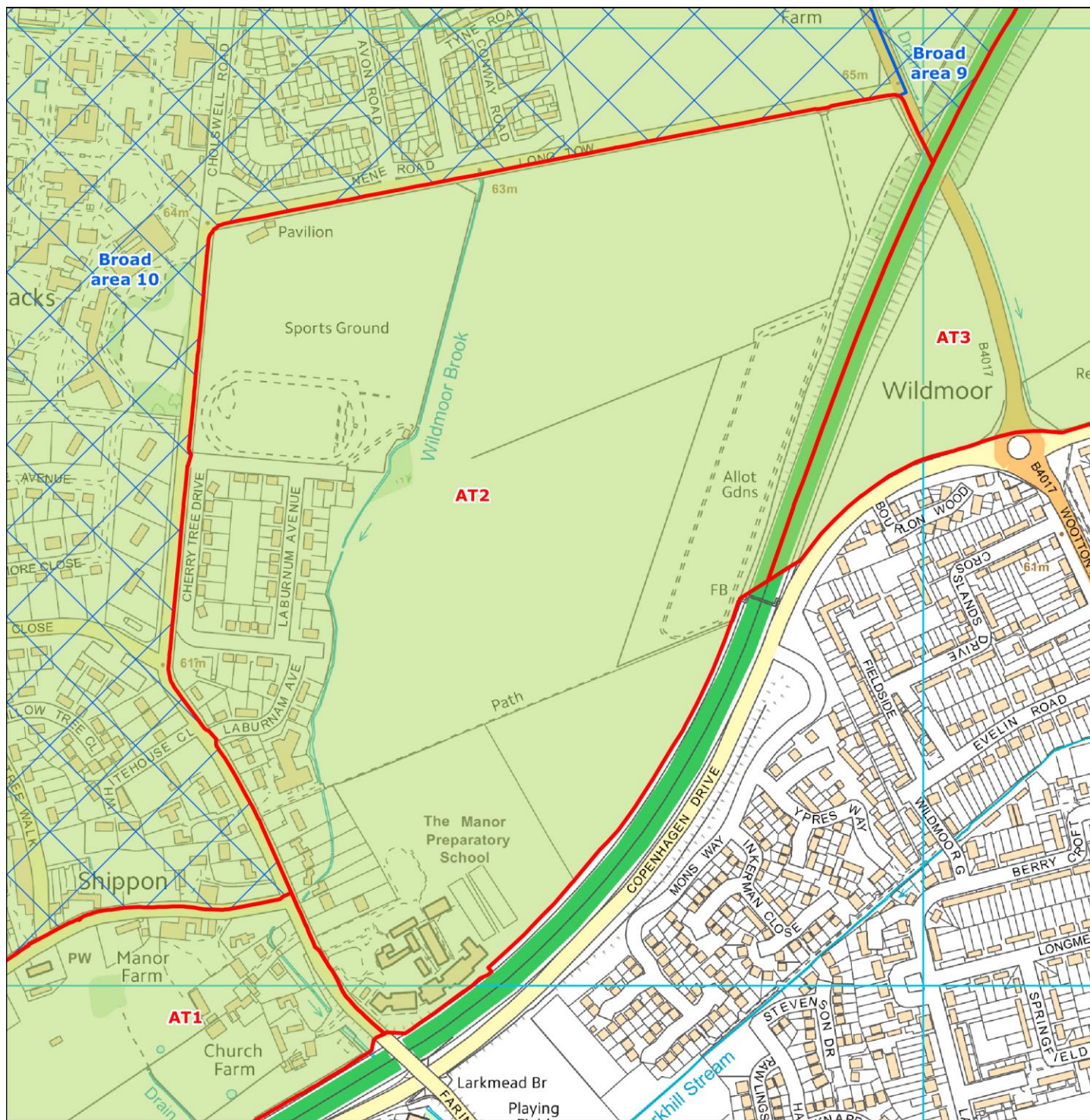
There is no visual relationship with Oxford and it makes little contribution to the rural character of Oxford's wider setting, being related more closely to Abingdon.



Land Parcel Ref: AT2

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel



--- District boundary     Green belt parcel     Broad area     Green belt    0 0.1 km    

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Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Other Authorities: N/A

Land Parcel Ref: AT2

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

## Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

### Issue 1a - Protection of open land from urban sprawl

Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel lies adjacent to Abingdon-on-Thames which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

### Issue 1b - Ability of boundaries / features to contain development and prevent urban sprawl

Does the parcel protect open land from the potential for urban sprawl to occur?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel lies adjacent to Abingdon-on-Thames which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

## Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

### Issue 2a - Reduction in visual or physical gaps between settlements

Does the parcel prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between neighbouring settlements?

Rating: Medium

#### Notes:

The parcel lies to the north/west of the A34 and to the east of Abingdon Airfield. The parcel is predominantly open with some development to the western side of the parcel which includes residential housing and Manor Preparatory School. The parcel is also relatively flat with views across it from the bordering roads (e.g. A34). 20th century development has closed the gap between Abingdon and Shippon so that only the presence of the A34 constitutes a gap between the two. Loss of openness in this parcel could cause more of a merging of the two settlements. Although Shippon is not considered against this Green Belt Purpose, closer association with Abingdon would in effect reduce the gap to Wootton, where linear development at Whitecross on the B4017 is already close to Shippon and to the edge of this parcel.



Land Parcel Ref: AT2

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

### Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

#### Issue 3a - Significance of existing urbanising influences and sense of openness

Does the parcel have the characteristics of countryside and/or connect to land with the characteristics of countryside?

Has the parcel already been affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?

Rating: Low

#### Notes:

The parcel is predominantly made-up of large regular-shaped agricultural fields and a large allotment at its eastern edge. The open fields have some views of the countryside to the west and north. However, it is bordered by the A34 to the east, including an elevated section crossing the B4017, and by the built-up areas of the village of Shippon to the north, west and south and as such it is considered the countryside within the parcel is relatively enclosed. As well as abutting the town of Abingdon-on-Thames, the parcel also contains a significant portion of the neighbouring village of Shippon along its western edge. Here the parcel contains a large outdoor sports ground in the north west corner, a large school with associated outdoor sports facilities (some of which are hardstanding) in the southern corner of the parcel and three residential streets complete with street lighting – Faringdon Road, Laburnum Avenue and Cherry Tree Drive. These urbanising influences compromise the openness of the countryside.

### Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

#### Issue 4a - Significance of historical and/or visual setting to the historic town

Does the parcel contribute to the setting and 'special character' of Oxford?

Rating: N/C

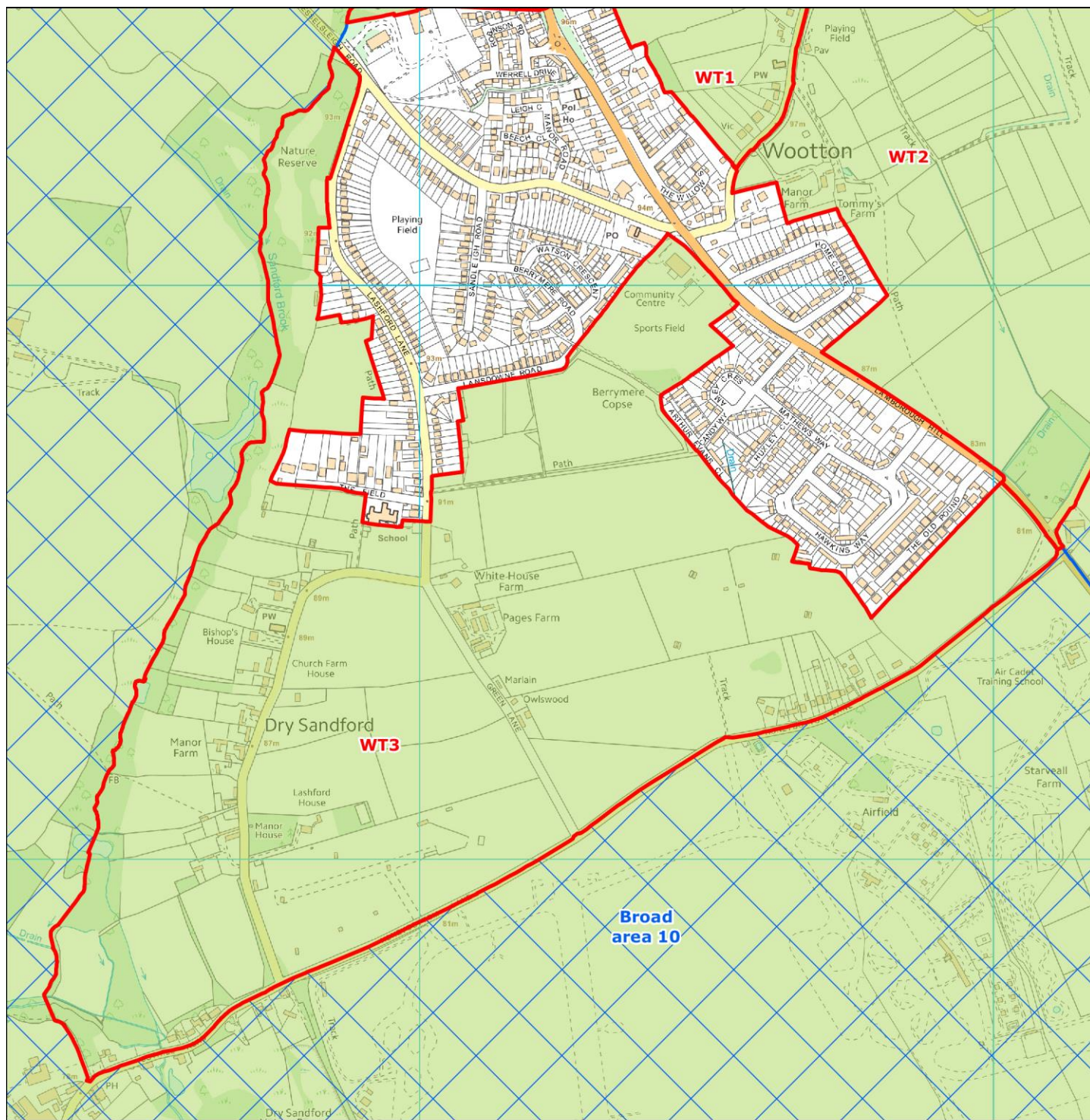
#### Notes:

There is no visual relationship with Oxford and little sense of being part of the city's wider rural surrounds, despite its proximity to the A34. In terms of setting the parcel is more associated with Abingdon.

Land Parcel Ref: WT3

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel



District boundary



Green belt parcel



Broad area



Green belt

0 0.2 km



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Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Other Authorities: N/A

Land Parcel Ref: WT3

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

## Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

### Issue 1a - Protection of open land from urban sprawl

Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel is adjacent to Wootton which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

### Issue 1b - Ability of boundaries / features to contain development and prevent urban sprawl

Does the parcel protect open land from the potential for urban sprawl to occur?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

The parcel is adjacent to Wootton which is not considered to be a large built up area. Therefore, the parcel is not considered to contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

## Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

### Issue 2a - Reduction in visual or physical gaps between settlements

Does the parcel prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between neighbouring settlements?

Rating: Low

#### Notes:

The parcel is located to the south and west of Wootton. The western boundary of the parcel is adjacent to Sandford Brook and the southern boundary is adjacent to Honeybottom Lane. The parcel has a strong sense of openness and is relatively flat. The western boundary is in relatively close proximity to Appleton, however due to the topography and vegetation between the settlements, views are screened. The southern boundary of the parcel is not much closer to Abingdon than the current settlement edge, and development along the B4017 is more likely to be perceived as narrowing the gap, but the presence of Abingdon Airfield and Shippon to the south does limit rural character in this direction so the parcel makes some contribution. The parcel plays a key role in preventing the merging of Wootton and Dry Sandford but Dry Sandford is not considered as a settlement under Purpose 2 for this study.

Land Parcel Ref: WT3

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Green belt parcel

### Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

#### Issue 3a - Significance of existing urbanising influences and sense of openness

Does the parcel have the characteristics of countryside and/or connect to land with the characteristics of countryside?

Has the parcel already been affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?

Rating: High

#### Notes:

The parcel is predominantly made-up of linear agricultural fields lined by trees. In between the gaps in the woodland there are views of the countryside to the south and east of the parcel. There is a greater concentration of woodland along the western edge of the parcel which follows Sanford Brook. The wooded floodplain of this watercourse is also designated as the Cothill Fen SSSI. Wootton Hall and associated outdoor sports pitches (some of which are flood lit) are located in the northern tip of the parcel, where adjacent bungalows on Landsdowne Road and Lashford Lane also affect rural character. A farm sits in the centre of the parcel. The small hamlet of Dry Sandford lies in the western half of the parcel along Church Lane. The village is very rural in character containing a church (St Helens Church) and a number of large detached dwellings. Similarly, along Honeybottom Lane in the eastern corner of the parcel is a line of dwellings. The northern part of the parcel would rate 'medium' in isolation, but the majority of the parcel rates as 'high'.

### Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

#### Issue 4a - Significance of historical and/or visual setting to the historic town

Does the parcel contribute to the setting and 'special character' of Oxford?

Rating: N/C

#### Notes:

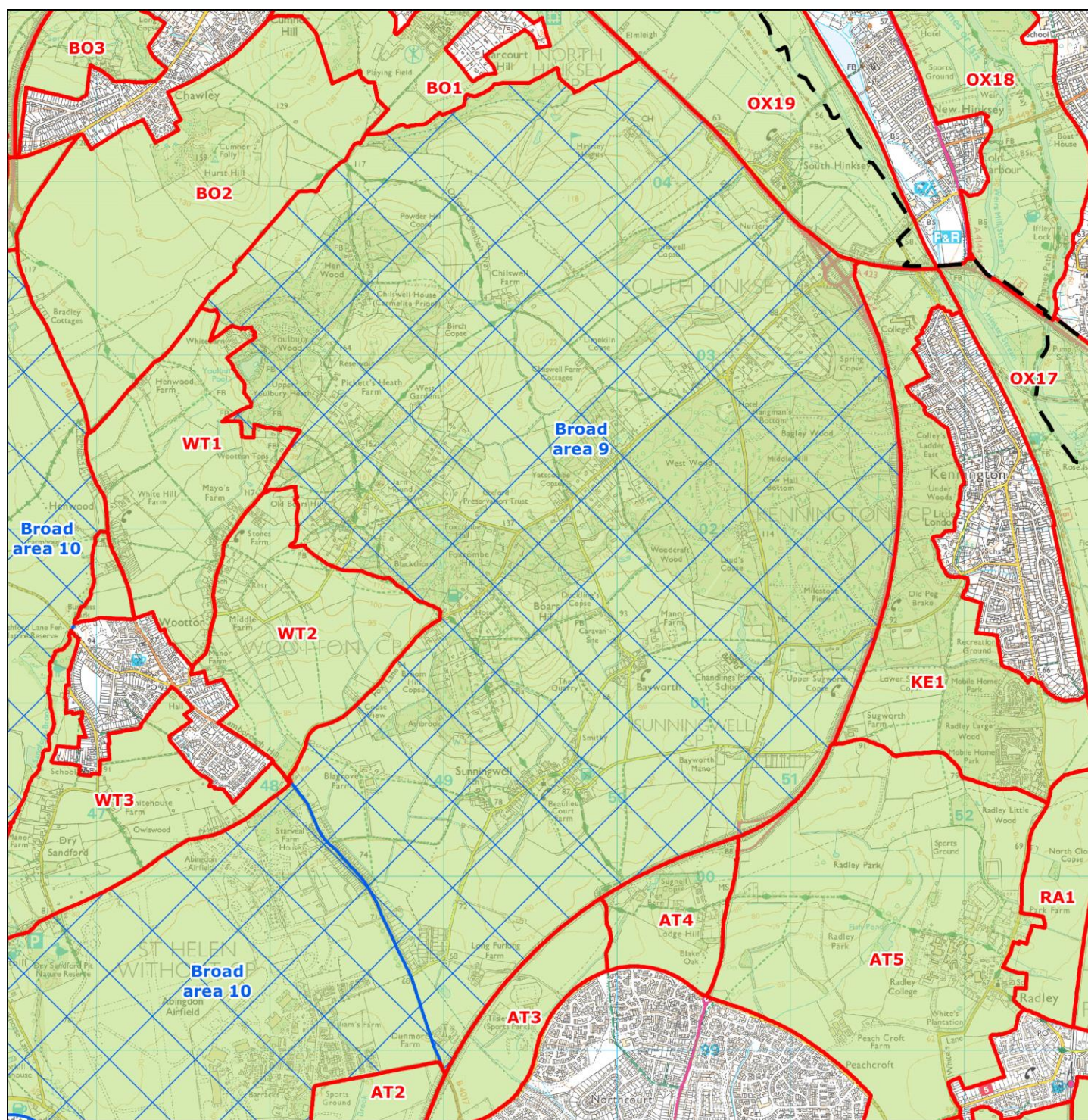
Very gently sloping farmland, with treed field boundaries. Its location relative to Wootton, Abindgon Airfield and Dry Sandford means that it is somewhat detached from the landscape that forms Oxford's more immediate setting.



Land Parcel Ref: Broad area 9

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Broad area



District boundary



Green belt parcel



Broad area



Green belt

0 0.75 km



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Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Other Authorities: N/A



Land Parcel Ref: Broad area 9

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Broad area

**Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**

Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?

Rating: N/C

The broad area does not lie adjacent to a large built-up area.

**Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or into neighbouring smaller settlements**

Does the Broad Area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between the following settlements; Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley, Wooton, Appleton, Eynsham, Oxford (including urban villages and settlements within Oxford), Kidlington (including Oxford Spire Business Park), Begbroke, Yarnton, Wheatley (including Littleworth) and Berinsfield?

Rating: Low

The Broad Area is surrounded by the settlements of Oxford, Kennington, Abingdon, Wootton and Botley, which are all relatively distant from one another. The broad area plays a minor role in preventing the reduction of the physical gap between the settlements. The broad area includes smaller villages to the south, including Sunningwell and Bayworth, which are in close proximity to one another and Wootton to the west but are not assessed against this Purpose. The land between these villages and Wootton is relatively open with views between the settlements. Therefore the broad area also plays a role in preventing the reduction of the physical and visual gap between these settlements.

**Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

Does the Broad Area have the characteristics of countryside or has it been significantly affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?

Rating: High

The broad area contains a several small, linear rural settlements made-up of large detached residential dwellings in wooded settings. Open agricultural fields with views of the surrounding countryside sit in between the pockets of woodland. There are no significant urbanising influences within the Broad Area which represent significant encroachment of the countryside.

**Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

Does the Broad Area contribute to the setting and special character of Oxford?

Rating: High

The Broad area contains a number of linear, dispersed settlements in wooded settings. The higher east-facing slopes are important as a green backdrop to views from high points in Oxford centre, and in views from high ground to the east of the City (e.g. Elsfield). The presence of trees dominate over built development with some distinctive ornamental planting (e.g. Scots pine) but this doesn't detract from impression of a rural setting.

The Broad Area includes some locations with key views: Jarn Mound and the Oxford Preservation Trust monument at Boars Hill (to which open foreground slopes make an important contribution) and the A34 at Hinksey Hill. A number of rights of way from the City also pass through this area.

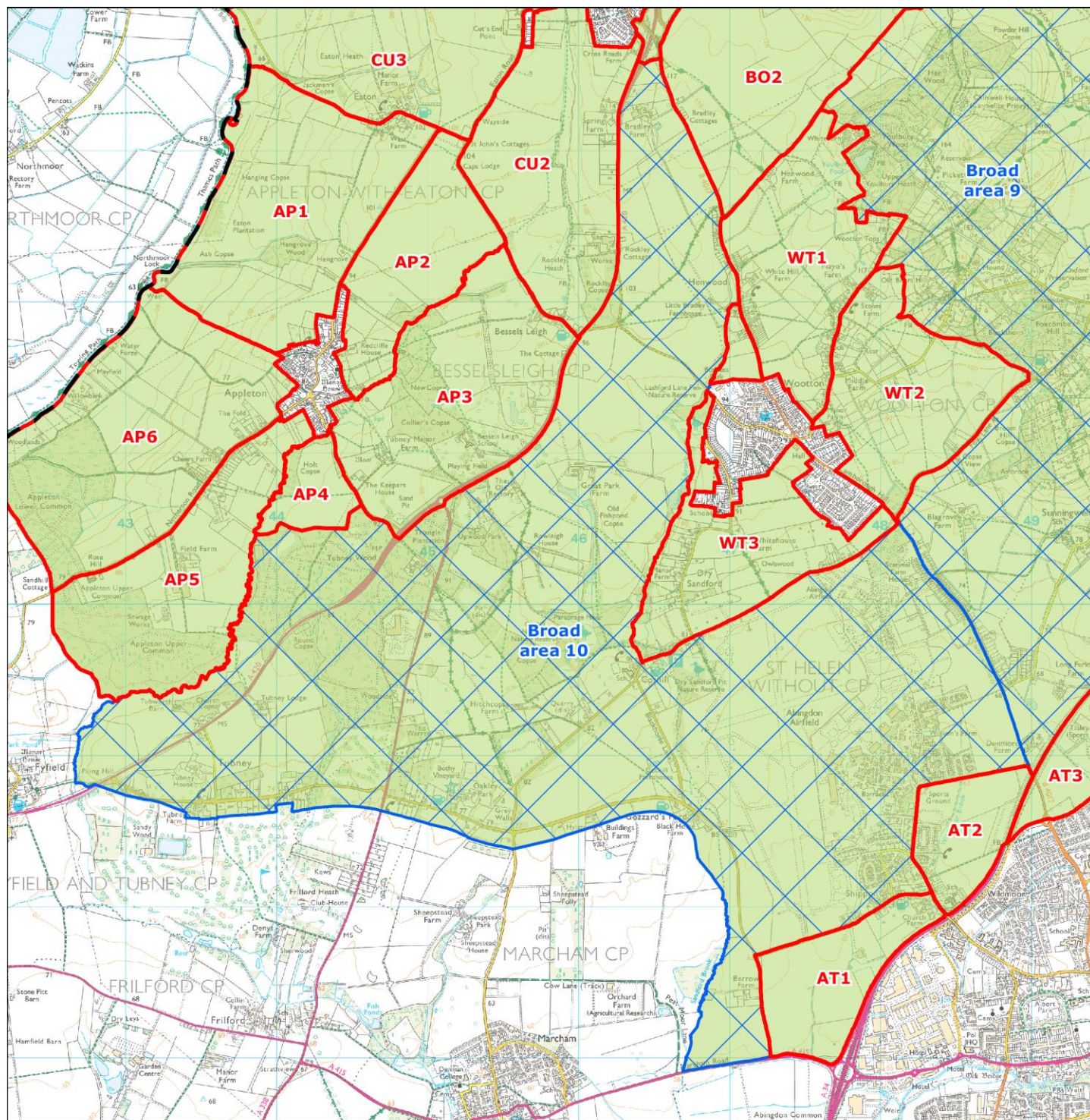
There is no visual relationship between land to west of hilltops and Oxford, but open slopes up to wooded high ground contribute to the perception of Oxford's historic rural setting on approach, including from the A34.



Land Parcel Ref: Broad area 10

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Broad area



District boundary



Green belt parcel



Broad area



Green belt



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Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Other Authorities: N/A



Land Parcel Ref: Broad area 10

Main Authority: Vale of White Horse

Parcel Type: Broad area

#### **Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**

Does the parcel exhibit evidence of urban sprawl and consequent loss of openness?

Rating: N/C

The broad area does not lie adjacent to a large built-up area. Therefore, the broad area is not considered to make a contribution to purpose 1.

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#### **Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or into neighbouring smaller settlements**

Does the Broad Area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between the following settlements; Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Cumnor, Kennington, Radley, Wooton, Appleton, Eynsham, Oxford (including urban villages and settlements within Oxford), Kidlington (including Oxford Spire Business Park), Begbroke, Yarnton, Wheatley (including Littleworth) and Berinsfield?

Rating: Medium

The northern portion of the Broad Area is surrounded by the settlements of Cumnor, Appleton and Wootton. While the south eastern portion of the Broad Area is situated between Abingdon and Wootton.

The Broad Area also includes Shippon in the south eastern corner which is in relatively close proximity to Abingdon and Wootton. The land between these settlements is open and relatively flat with views between the settlements. Therefore the Green Belt plays a role in preventing the reduction of the physical and visual gap between these settlements.

The settlement of Tubney, not assessed against this Purpose, is located on the southernmost boundary of the Broad Area and is relatively distant from other settlements with rising topography to the north separating it from settlements such as Appleton. The broad area plays a limited role in preventing the reduction of the physical and visual gap between these settlements.

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#### **Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

Does the Broad Area have the characteristics of countryside or has it been significantly affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?

Rating: High

The broad area contains four villages – Shippon, Dry Sandford, Cothill and Tubney. Dry Sandford, Cothill and Tubney are rural in character; however Shippon and the neighbouring Abingdon Airfield are urban in character and represent significant urbanising influences on the Green Belt within the eastern portion of the parcel. Indeed, the airfield contains several large hangars, two runways and some significant areas of hardstanding. In addition to this, there is a large facility (Oxford Instruments) in Tubney Woods. The influence of this urbanising feature on the surrounding Green Belt is significantly reduced by its location in the wood. Other significant features within the broad area include Frilford Heath, Ponds and Fens SSSI and the large wood of Tubney Wood, including ancient woodlands. The rest of the broad area is made-up of open agricultural fields with open views of the surrounding countryside.

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#### **Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

Does the Broad Area contribute to the setting and special character of Oxford?

Rating: Low

Gently undulating landform, generally falling in a southerly direction, bisected by several shallow stream valleys. Well wooded to the south-west, with smaller fields, and more open and arable to the north towards Cumnor. The lower, flatter south-east area is occupied by Abingdon Airfield. There are no visual links with Oxford, and there is little sense this area having any connection to the city through its landscape character. However, the hills that form the western side of the ring around Oxford are more evident from the open, arable landscape in the north, including from the A420 approaching Cumnor and Botley, and this makes a contribution to the perception of the wider rural setting of Oxford.