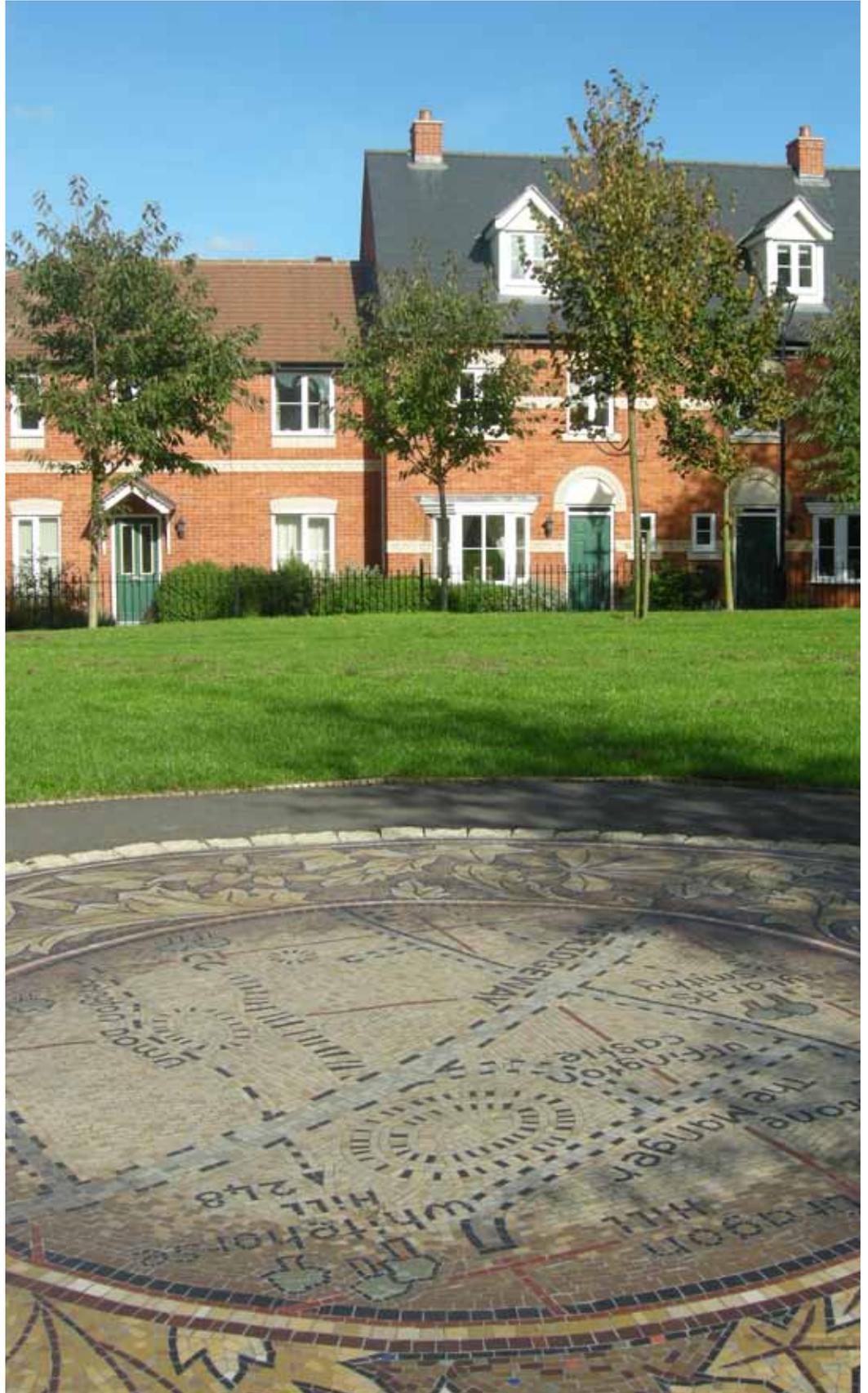




**Vale  
of White Horse**

*District Council*



# RESIDENTIAL DESIGN GUIDE

December 2009

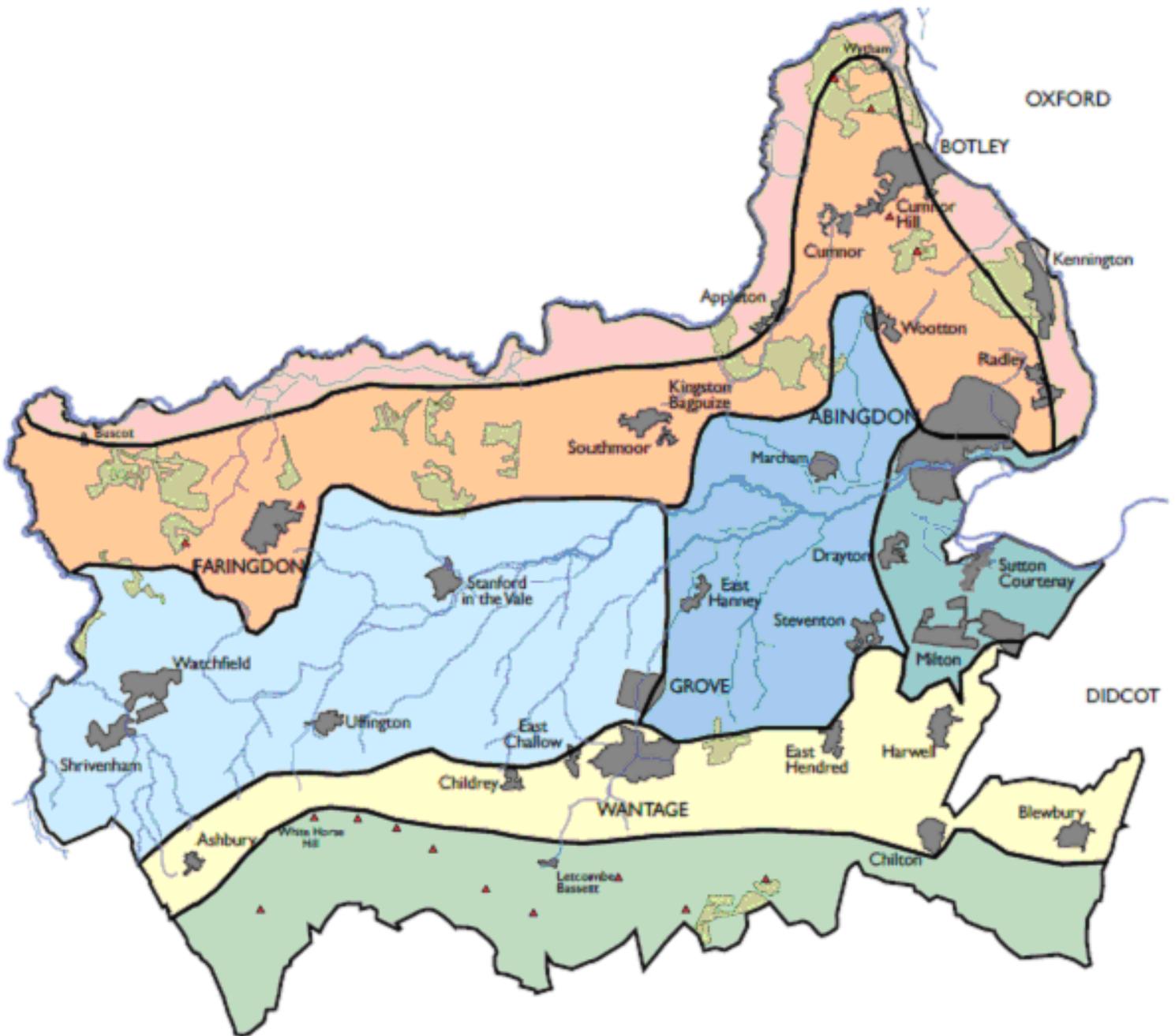
# 2 Character of the Vale



# 2.1 Geology

A study of the geology of the District can help to understand why towns and villages appear the way they are today. Geology can dictate where a settlement is located, its size and the main building materials. Image 14 below illustrates how the District is subdivided into distinct geological areas.

- Zone 1 - Thames Valley and Corralian Ridge
    - Zone 1 A - Upper Thames Valley
    - Zone 1 B - Golden Ridge and Oxford Heights
  - Zone 2 - Clay Vale
    - Zone 2 A - Western Clay Vale
    - Zone 2 B - Central Clay Vale
    - Zone 2 C - Eastern Clay Vale
  - Zone 3 - Upper Greensand Ledge and Lower Chalk
  - Zone 4 - Upper and Middle Chalk Downs
-  Important Woodlands
  -  Significant Hilltops
  -  Rivers and Streams
  -  Settlements



14 Geological Zones in the Vale

# 2.1 Geology

## Zone 1: Thames Valley and Corallian Ridge

- Zone 1A: Upper Thames Valley.
- Zone 1B: Golden Ridge & Oxford Heights.

Zone 1A is the northernmost zone; it comprises the Oxford Clay beds of the Thames Valley, which run from Buscot in the west to Wytham in the east.

Zone 1B is the Corallian Ridge which is a remnant of a coral reef formed during the Jurassic period. The ridge is made up of limestone and sandstone. It stretches from Faringdon to Kennington and Radley. An area of Greensand is apparent around Frilford where heathland plants are evident.

## Zone 2: Clay Vale

- Zone 2A: Western Clay Vale.
- Zone 2B: Central Clay Vale.
- Zone 2C: Eastern Clay Vale.

Zone 2 is comprised of Kimmeridge and Gault Clays which originally would have been waterlogged marshy lands and thickly wooded areas. Settlements took shape on slightly higher ground as 'islands' which is denoted by the suffix 'ey', examples include Hanney and Goosey.



16 North of Coleshill



17 River Thames, Buscot



15 View of Oxford from Boars Hill

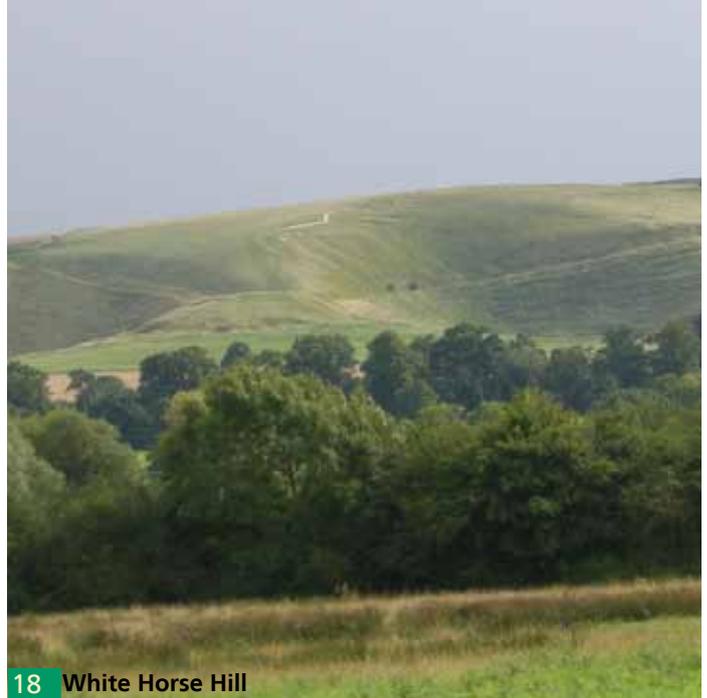
# 2.1 Geology

## Zone 3: Upper Greensand Ledge and Lower Chalk

Zone 3 is comprised of a larger area of Greensand with lower chalk towards the North Wessex Downs. This zone stretches from the western villages of Ashbury and Childrey through to Wantage, the Hendreds and as far as Blewbury in the east.

## Zone 4: Upper and Middle Chalk Downs

Zone 4 is the southern most zone, it comprises the Middle and Upper Chalk of the Downs. The Zone has relatively few settlements, except for farmsteads around the Ridgeway. The land is mainly used for grazing due to the poor soil conditions.



18 White Horse Hill



19 View south from Kingston Lisle



20 View north of Watchfield

# 2.2 Character

Although geology has a very strong influence on the character of a settlement, other factors such as local traditions, history and technology can also influence the evolution and appearance of a settlement. Image 21 below divides the Vale into separate character zones, taking into account geology, landscape and a physical assessment of individual settlements in each zone.

The following sections provide an overview of the character of each of the zones.

It should be noted that the individual character of the five largest settlements in the District, Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Wantage and Grove, is more varied because of their size and history. These settlements do not therefore fit comfortably into the individual character zones and, therefore, they are described separately.

## Zone 1 - Thames Valley and Corralian Ridge

- Zone 1 A - Golden Ridge and Wooded Estate Villages
- Zone 1 B - Eastern Thames

## Zone 2 - Clay Vale

- Zone 2 A - Western Vale Villages
- Zone 2 B - Central Alluvial Island villages
- Zone 2 C - Lowland Villages

## Zone 3 - Rolling Farmland Villages

- Zone 4 - Chalk Villages
- Zone 5 - Upper Chalk Downs

- Significant Hilltops
- Rivers and Streams
- Settlements



21 Character Zones in the Vale

## 2.2 Character

### Zone 1: Thames Valley and Corallian Ridge

Zone 1 covers approximately one third of the land area of the Vale. The area follows the path of the River Thames, which bounds the District to the north and east. Here, the landscape is a mixture of water meadows and pasture on slightly higher ground.

To the south is the Corallian or Golden Ridge, a higher area of land along the crest of which lie various settlements.

The zone contains many areas of deciduous woodland, including some ancient woodlands, particularly along the Corallian Ridge and in the north-eastern corner of the Vale.

In the east, the proximity to Oxford allowed for a wide variety of building materials to be transported into the District. In the west, until the railway connected into Faringdon, materials were restricted to those that were available locally. This meant less influence by external factors and fashions in favour of traditional materials such as limestone, stone slates and thatch.

Zone 1 is subdivided into two separate sub-zones to the east and the west of the Vale. These sub-zones are appraised below:

- Zone 1A - Corallian Ridge and Wooded Estate Villages
- Zone 1B - Eastern Thames



22 North Hinksey



23 River Thames, Abingdon



24 Buckland



25 Estate Cottages, Coleshill



26 Cumnor Hill

## 2.2 Character

### Zone 1A: Corallian Ridge & Wooded Estate Villages

#### Landscape Character

The northernmost part of the Vale abuts the River Thames and contains soft Oxford Clays covered by gravels and alluvium.

The landscape combines a diverse mix of water meadows, small woodlands, pasture, with willows along the river banks and hedgerows.

The Corallian Ridge runs the length of the District and beyond in either direction. In the west the ridge, also known as the Golden Ridge, is bisected by streams, which have formed steep slopes. In the Faringdon area, this is evident in the form of Badbury Hill and Faringdon Folly Hill.

Much of the ridge is characterised by woodland, including a significant area of ancient woodland.

#### Built Environment Character

The majority of the settlements are set back from the river on higher ground along the ridge line. Settlements here are often based around country estates and large manor houses with gardens designed to look out over the north-facing scarp.

Settlements are typically limestone villages built of locally sourced, hard Corallian Ragstone, and their elevated position often provides spectacular expansive views.

#### Zone 1A

Appleton	Kingston Bagpuize
Buckland	Little Coxwell
Buscot	Littleworth
Coleshill	Longworth
Cumnor	Pusey
Faringdon	Shrivenham
Farmoor	Southmoor
Fyfield	Sunningwell
Great Coxwell	Tubney
Hinton Waldrist	Watchfield
	Wytham



27 View north from Faringdon



28 Buckland House



29 Pusey



30 Wytham



31 Cumnor

# 2.2 Character

## Zone 1A: Palette of Materials

The defining building features include limestone, which helps create the distinctive character of the area. Steep pitched roofs, narrow gables and dormer windows are typical of the area.

### Walls:

- Random, uncoursed rubble, local corallian limestone with a variety of bed widths and colours.
- Ashlar limestone dressings.
- Coursed stone appears on later dwellings.
- Colour washed lime render often covers stone beneath.
- Berkshire orange brick - usually on smaller Victorian dwellings or on Georgian properties.
- Decorative brickwork - often blue or buff for chimneys, quoins, doors and window detailing.
- Timber frame with render or brick infill panels.
- Weatherboard is restricted to conversions from agricultural or cottage industry uses.

### Roofs:

There are three roofing materials that are equally dominant:

- Stone slates.
- Thatch was traditionally locally sourced long or wheat straw with flush ridges.
- Orange plain clay tiles.
- Blue slates.

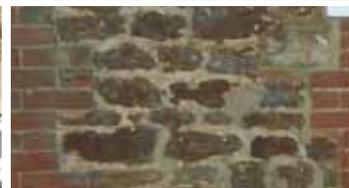
### Windows & Doors:

- Timber sash and casement windows and iron leaded casement windows.
- Timber doors.

### Timber Finishes:

- The paint colour palette is narrow, with white or similar pale colours. Estate colours in villages such as Buscot and Coleshill.
- Tar and pitch on barns and exposed timber frames.
- Untreated oak.
- For more see information see appendix D.

## Walls



32 A variety of shades of coursed and uncoursed limestone



33 Colour washed Render

34 Berkshire orange brick with blue headers



35 Natural and stained weatherboard - traditional and modern

## Roofs



36 Stone slates

37 Blue slate



38 Typical thatched roof with dormer

39 Local orange plain clay tiles

## Timber Finishes



40 White painted timber windows

41 Buscot estate paint colours

# 2.2 Character

## Zone 1A Settlements with distinct character

### Faringdon

The larger settlements in the Vale have individual characteristics which do not always accord with the character zone in which they are located. Whilst Faringdon is influenced by the character of Zone 1, it has developed its individual character because of its history, location and size.

Faringdon is the largest settlement in Zone 1A, and has panoramic views across the Thames Valley from its perch on the Golden Ridge.

There is a relatively broad spectrum of building materials influenced by the arrival of the canal and railway, including brick, stone and limewashed and painted renders. The predominant roofing materials are blue and stone slates.



44 Berkshire orange brick



45 Painted render



46 Coursed limestone



47 Slate



48 Traditional Georgian colours



49 Traditional heritage colours



# 2.2 Character

## Zone 1B: The Eastern Thames

### Landscape Character

The eastern Thames and Oxford Heights area differs from the area to the west primarily due to its proximity to Oxford. It is a much more developed area, where better transport links have led to the availability of a wider range of building materials.

### Built Environment Character

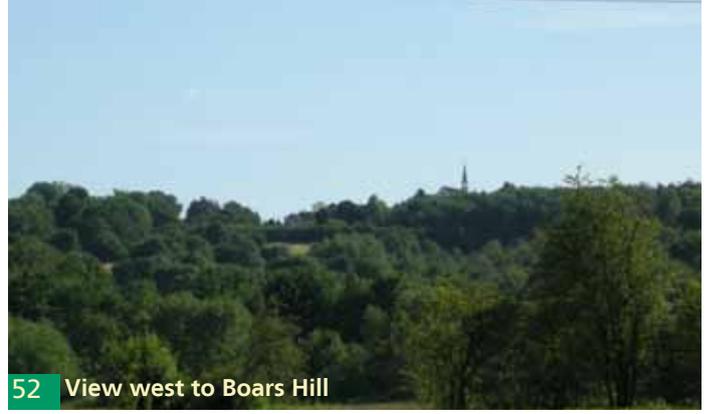
Many of the settlements in Zone 1B are situated in low lying areas in close proximity to the River Thames.

One of the largest settlements in the zone is Botley, which sits on the edge of Oxford. The topography rises up from the Thames at Cumnor Hill, from where there are expansive views to the north.

Abingdon is the largest town in the District, but still retains its character as a historic market town.

#### Zone 1B:

- Abingdon (north of River Ock)
- Boars Hill
- Botley
- Cumnor Hill
- Foxcombe Hill
- North Hinksey
- Kennington
- Radley
- Wootton



52 View west to Boars Hill



53 River Thames



54 North Hinksey



55 Boars Hill



56 North Hinksey