



**Hearing Statement  
Respondents Reference:**

**831779 & 877851**

**EXAMINATION INTO THE VALE OF WHITE  
HORSE LOCAL PLAN 2031 PART 1:  
STRATEGIC SITES AND POLICIES**

**Matter 8**

**Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and  
Oxford Fringe Sub-Area (CP8 – CP11  
and CP14)**

**January 2016**

## Introduction

1. This statement is submitted to the Examination into the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2011-2031: Part 1 on behalf of the below listed landowners.
2. This representation follows representations submitted in relation to Stage 1 of the Examination held in 2015; we trust that the Inspector will have regard to those comments where relevant to the issues now under examination.
3. This statement responds to the Inspector's questions in relation to Matter 8, it should however be read alongside previous submissions in relation to Stage 1 of the examination, and accompanying statements relating to other matters examined at this stage.
4. Represented landowners
  - Robert Graham Boyles
  - Geoffrey John Boyles
  - Jean Ellen Frances Boyles
  - Elizabeth Ann Boyles
  - Robert Gee
  - John-Michael Gee
  - Richard Venables
  - Tracie Palfreyman
  - Julie Van Onselen
  - Lisa Venables
  - John Rand
  - Denise Fletcher
  - Lucy Hick
  - Jonathan Kenwright

Word count: 1,424

**Matter 8 – Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area  
(CP8 – CP11 and CP14)**

*“Other than in connection with Green Belt issues (considered in Matter 5) are the Strategic Housing Allocations listed in policy CP8 soundly based and deliverable?”*

- (a) North of Abingdon-on-Thames (site 2)*
- (b) North-West of Abingdon-on-Thames (site 1)*
- (c) North-West of Radley (site 4)*
- (d) South of Kennington (site 3)*
- (e) South of East Hanney (site 6)*
- (f) East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor (site 7)*

5. We have made separate representations in relation to Green Belt issues and do not repeat them here. We do however have considerable doubt as to whether the proposed allocations in this sub-area are deliverable. Our principal concern arises due to the Council’s own failure to support development proposals in line with the plan.
  
6. The Council’s Planning Committee recently considered a planning application for development of an allocated site one of the allocated development sites within the sub-area. Planning application P15/V1616/FUL proposed the development of allocated land south of East Hanney (site 6). The proposed development was in line with the development proposed in the plan, including the number, mix and tenure of dwellings. Whilst the proposal was in line with the submitted development plan, as acknowledged by the Officers who recommended approval of the application, the Planning Committee refused planning permission.
  
7. The reluctance of the Council to support development proposals in line with those allocated in the development plan calls into question the deliverability of allocated strategic sites, particularly those in villages. A reluctance to support development of the scale proposed in the plan suggests there is merit in allocating smaller development sites in villages, below the arbitrary 200 unit threshold, which the Council and local communities may be more willing to support.

8. Whilst our main concern arising from the refusal of planning permission for an allocated development is in relation to the broad principle of deliverability of allocated strategic sites it is also relevant to consider the particular proposal. The decision notice of P15/V1616/FUL in East Hanney cites the harmful landscape impact of the proposed development on the countryside, and the excessive density of the proposed development in a village edge location. The allocated site bounds are finite; furthermore any increase in site size would likely give rise to greater landscape impact. With a finite site area it is unlikely the density of development could be reduced without reducing the number of dwellings on site. The refusal reasons from the Council demonstrate clear doubt as to whether the allocated development can be delivered on site 6. If the allocated development cannot be delivered additional homes must be delivered elsewhere within the sub-area.

*“8.2 Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for new housing?”*

9. We consider our clients' south of Cumnor is excellently placed to meet the identified need for new housing. This is particularly the case in view of its close proximity with key village facilities and sustainable transport links to Oxford.
10. The proposed plan pursues an arbitrary definition of 'strategic sites' which limits allocations to sites of more than 200 dwellings. The restriction of site allocations to an arbitrary site size inhibits opportunities for early delivery of new homes. This limitation is clearly demonstrated by housing presently being delivered in the district. The Vale of White Horse does not presently benefit from a five year supply of housing land and it is sites with an average capacity of less than 200 dwellings which have been able to be brought forward and to make up for the lack of land being delivered for housing. Information demonstrating this has previously been supplied as Appendix 1 to our Stage 1 representation.
11. The smaller sites have ensured a continuous supply of housing which has not been delivered by the larger sites. The plan should look to allocate smaller sites if the housing situation is to be addressed in a timely manner. Our clients' site can be sensitively developed with such a smaller development site in a sustainable location within the sub-area.

12. In view of the Council's reluctance to support large developments (i.e. 200+ units) in villages, as demonstrated by the recent refusal of planning application P15/V1616/FUL in East Hanney we consider that allocation of suitable smaller sites such as our clients is not only desirable, but necessary, if housing is to be delivered.
13. The our client's site is proposed to be excluded from the Green Belt. Although an 'island' of Green Belt is proposed for retention we consider this can also be removed without harm to the wider Green Belt in NPPF terms. The Council's SHLAA (HOU09) acknowledges that the site is developable having assessed the land as two parcels CUMN07 and CUMN08.
14. The suitability of the site for development is underlined by the fact that it was allocated by the Council for development in a previous draft of the Local Plan (Local Plan Part 1, Housing Delivery Update, February 2014), although it has since been omitted.
15. A key reason for the site's omission from the plan was concern as to the deliverability of development. A small parcel of land south of Appleton Road is in separate ownership, although the land was not fundamental to development it reduced the developable area of the site to below the 200 unit threshold applied by the Council to strategic sites.
16. We now represent all landowners, including the owner of the excluded land. We are instructed by all owners to seek allocation of the land for a high quality sustainable, development therefore removing any doubt as to the deliverability of the whole site.
17. Previously concerns have been raised as to the landscape impact of development of land referred to as 'south of Cumnor'. It is relevant to note that this term has been used in the assessment of various land areas as the plan has emerged. Where concern has been raised with regard to development of land 'south of Cumnor', including in the Oxford Green Belt Study (LUC, October 2015) it has been with regard to the development of a larger area of land south of the village, beyond the distinct tree belt to the southern edge of our clients' site.

18. A dedicated landscape assessment has now been undertaken for our clients' site and is attached to this representation as **Appendix 1**. The assessment confirms the site can be developed without landscape harm in terms of local and national policy.
19. The proposal site lies immediately adjacent to Cumnor, one of the District's more sustainable settlements categorised as a larger village under the Local Plan. Development of the site, immediately adjacent to the larger village would be in line with the plan's spatial strategy and Core Policy 4. The proximity and transport links to the city also mean the site has potential to contribute to meeting the housing needs of Oxford, which we consider should be addressed in this plan.
20. The site is within easy walking distance of key facilities including a public house, church, cricket club and bus stops for services to Oxford and Swindon. A utilities survey has been undertaken to show all necessary services can be provided to the site and is attached as **Appendix 2**. Surveys have also been undertaken to show that the site could be developed without detriment to highway safety. This information has previously been provided to the Council, for the avoidance of any doubt it is however attached as **Appendix 3** for completeness.
21. In summary we consider there is a need to allocate alternative development sites, particularly those below the Council's arbitrary 200 unit threshold if the plan is to deliver the required housing. Our clients' site is excellently located in relation to key facilities in the larger village and transport routes to larger centres and its allocation would be in line with policies and principles in the plan. The Council has previously endorsed the site as suitable for development with the information now supplied confirming homes can be delivered with all services and no detriment to the landscape or highway safety.

*"8.3 Are the identified and safeguarded Employment sites listed in policy CP8 soundly based and deliverable? Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for employment land"*

22. No comment

*“8.4 Are the policies relating to the following matters soundly based:*

*(a) Harcourt Hill Campus (CP9)*

*(b) Abingdon Shopping Centre and the Charter (CP10)*

*(c) Botley Central Area (CP11)*

*(d) Upper Thames Reservoir (CP14)*

23. No Comment

## APPENDIX 1



PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT,  
CUMNOR SOUTH LAND

**Landscape & Visual Analysis**

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## **CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>LANDSCAPE RELATED POLICY BACKGROUND</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>BASELINE ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>IMPACT ASSESSMENT &amp; VISUAL ANALYSIS</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>CHARACTER ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>56</b>

## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1	ASPECT LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT METHODOLOGY
APPENDIX 2	VISUAL ASSESSMENT
APPENDIX 3	NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 108 & 109
APPENDIX 4	OWLS: ROLLING FARMLAND
APPENDIX 5	OWLS: WOODED ESTATELANDS
APPENDIX 6	VOWH LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY 2014

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has been appointed by South Cumnor Landowners & Jonathan Kenwright to undertake a landscape and visual Analysis of the proposed residential development to land south of Cumnor.
- 1.2. A detailed appraisal of the surrounding study area has been undertaken using Ordnance Survey data, historical map data, local policy and published character assessments. This has informed the on-site field analysis to identify key viewpoints, analyse the landscape character and visual environment of the local area, and determine the extent and significance of any potential landscape and visual effects.
- 1.3. The assessment of effects has been derived from guidance provided within GLVIA3 (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3 Edition) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment in April 2013. The methodology is contained within Appendix 1 of this document.
- 1.4. This assessment should be read alongside the other supporting material which accompanies this application.

## 2. LANDSCAPE RELATED POLICY

### National Policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012)

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on the 27th March 2012, replacing the existing system of national planning policy guidance and statements. The document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The document places an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable growth whilst also protecting the environment.
- 2.2. The guidance sets out a number of core land-use planning principles in paragraph 17, which underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The core principles embrace good design and protect character, stating that planning should; ***“always seek to secure high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;”*** and ***“take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it”***.
- 2.3. The requirement for good design is further emphasised in paragraph 64 stating that ***“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”***
- 2.4. The NPPF has been of material consideration as part of our assessment of the site and its setting, and the proposals shall take on board the overall framework guidance and principles contained within the NPPF.

## **National Planning Policy Framework and the Setting of Heritage Assets**

- 2.5. Following the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework, the setting of a heritage asset is deemed to contribute to its significance. This is reflected in the NPPF's definition of significance:

*"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*

(NPPF Annex 2).

- 2.6. The National Planning Policy Framework defines the setting of a heritage asset as;

*"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."*

(NPPF Glossary)

## **Local Planning Policy**

### Vale of the White Horse District Council – Local Plan 2011 (Adopted July 2006)

- 2.7. Local planning policy is currently in a transitional phase with the New Local Plan 2031 scheduled to replace the 2011 Local Plan following formal adoption.
- 2.8. In the meantime saved policies of The Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2011 represent the local planning policy for the district until adoption of the new plan comes into effect.
- 2.9. Saved policies contained within the Local Plan that are considered to be of relevance include:
- Policy DC1 The Quality of New Development
  - Policy DC6 Landscaping
  - Policy HE1 & HE2 Conservation Area Boundary
  - Policy HE4 Development within Setting of Listed Building
  - Policy NE7 The North Vale Corallian Ridge
  - Policy GS2 & GS3 The Green Belt
  - Policy H11 Development in Larger Villages
  - Policy H15 Housing Densities
  - Policy H17 Affordable Housing
  - Policy H23 Open Space in New Housing Development
  - Policy L10 Safeguarding and Improving Public Rights of Way

### Policies of Particular Note

- 2.10. The Local Plan Map for Cumnor identifies the application site as being located within the following zones;

### Policy GS3 Green Belt

- 2.11. Whilst the application site lies within the Oxford Green Belt, a consultant report published in February 2014 by Kirkham Landscape Planning 'VOWHDC Green Belt Review Phase 3' recommends that a land parcel



relating to the application site referenced as Area 6 be released from the Green Belt designation and incorporated within the inset village boundary.

- 2.12. It is unclear whether the Council will adopt this recommended boundary amendment, however it should be noted that the revised Green Belt boundaries noted above have been included within the 'Local Plan 2031, Draft Adopted Policies Map, Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Sub Area, November 2014,' which has been submitted for consideration and will most likely form a component of Local Plan Part 2, work on which is to commence after adoption of Part 1.

#### Policy NE7 The North Vale Corallian Ridge

- 2.13. The Council has identified the Corallian limestone and sandstone ridge as an area requiring special care in assessing the visual impact of proposals for development;

*"Development which would harm the prevailing character and appearance of the North Vale Corallian Ridge will not be permitted unless there is an overriding need for the development and all steps will be taken to minimize the impact on the landscape."*

- 2.14. The North Vale Corallian Ridge does not appear to have been retained as a local landscape designation within the new emerging Local Plan.

#### Conservation Area Boundary

- 2.15. The north western section of the application lies outside but adjacent to part of the new Conservation Area Boundary for Cumnor. It should be noted that VOWHDC's interactive map showing the Local Plan Cumnor Proposal Map does not show the new extension to the CA Boundary as detailed in the adopted Cumnor Conservation Area Appraisal January 2011.

### Emerging Local Plan 2031: The Vale of the White Horse District Council

- 2.16. In March 2015 the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1 was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination.
- 2.17. Although not adopted the emerging policies contained within the draft local plan have been reviewed as part of this assessment. Emerging policies of particular relevance include;
- Core Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
  - Core Policy 3: Settlement Hierarchy;
  - Core Policy 8: Spatial Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area;
  - Core Policy 22: Housing Mix;
  - Core Policy 23: Housing Density;
  - Core Policy 24: Affordable Housing;
  - Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness;
  - Core Policy 39: The Historic Environment;
  - Core Policy 44: Landscape;
  - Core Policy 45: Green Infrastructure;

### Emerging Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area Policy

- 2.18. **Core Policy 8:** Spatial Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area sets out the strategic site allocations for housing in the area, which will be in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy.
- 2.19. **Core Policy 3:** Settlement Hierarchy classifies Cumnor as a 'Larger Village' within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area. The submitted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 submitted to the Inspectorate in March 2015 does not include any strategic allocation for residential development for Cumnor.
- 2.20. The Policy states that a substantial amount of new housing remains to be identified outside of the strategic allocations and will be allocated

through the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 or Neighbourhood Development Plans or delivered through the Development Management process.

- 2.21. **Core Policy 13:** The Oxford Green Belt. As noted within paragraph 2.12 the proposed amendments to the Green Belt that would affect the application site are recognised within the 'Local Plan 2031, Draft Adopted Policies Map, Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Sub Area, November 2014,' this is currently under examination and is yet to be formerly adopted. This shows the application site to be largely removed from the Green Belt, with the exception of the North West field parcel, which would be retained within the Green Belt.

SHLAA Strategic Sites and Policies Local Plan 2031 Part: Appendix 4  
(February 2014 Consultation Draft)

- 2.22. This study identifies and assesses potential sites for residential development in order to be included within the strategic housing allocation for the emerging local plan.
- 2.23. The application site has been included in this report under land parcels Cumnor 07 & 08 and both received the following positive assessment;

*"Suitable in principle but would require a Green Belt review to justify it coming forward for development."*

- 2.24. As already stated, a Green Belt review has indeed been undertaken by Kirkhams in February 2014 and their report recommended the land parcels relating to the application site should be released from the Green Belt designation.

Supplementary Planning Documents

The Vale of White Horse Design Guide (March 2015)

- 2.25. The Vale of White Horse Design Guide was adopted by the council in 2015 and forms an exemplary reference document for all sizes and

types of developments. Each section sets out the key principles and standards to ensure the delivery of a high quality design.

### **3. BASELINE ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1. Cumnor is a small village located 5km south west of Oxford city centre and approximately 2km south west of Botley, a residential suburb of Oxford.
- 3.2. Major transport infrastructure in the form of the A420 dual carriageway runs north-south directly west of the village, whilst the B4017 passes through the settlement as it traverses from north west to south east. Oxford Road crosses the A420 and traverses north east to Chawley and then Cumnor Hill some 2km away. The rural lane Appleton Road traverses southwards from the village linking to the nearby hamlet of Eaton and the village of Appleton some 3km to the south.
- 3.3. The application site itself lies to the south of the main core of the village which is defined by the distinctive character of the grade I listed Church Of St Michael.
- 3.4. Appleton Road plays an important role in the character of the site as indeed it traverses directly south from the village core before doglegging around the north western section of the site.
- 3.5. The application site comprises four main parcels of land, the north western, the central western (which itself is subdivided into two separate paddocks), the south western and the eastern land parcels.
- 3.6. The north western land parcel is bounded by the dogleg section of Appleton Road and boasts a distinctive linear belt of mature trees and associated understory as its boundary vegetation. To the north western corner of the dogleg lies a grade II listed large residential dwelling known as The Farm House, whose substantial grounds incorporate a tennis court adjacent the north western land parcel.
- 3.7. The western land parcels are bounded by a residential ribbon development which extends along the eastern carriageway of Appleton Road as it traverses south. As such the western site perimeter predominantly comprises garden boundary vegetation and dispersed

boundary trees. To the east of the north western land parcel lies an unmade track leading from Appleton Road and which traverses southwards across the application site, also serving as access to the Cumnor Cricket Club ground, which lies directly east of the track. Mature tree cover defines this track along both verges. Directly south of the cricket ground lies the application site's eastern land parcel, segregated from the cricket ground by two belts of mature trees forming a corridor along which traverses a public footpath, this path continuing westwards across the central western land parcel.

- 3.8. The eastern land parcel is bounded to the east by the latter day residential estate of Robsart Place, separated by a linear tract of public open space with the intervening boundary composed of hedgerow vegetation.
- 3.9. The southern site boundary to both the eastern and south western land parcels is strongly defined by another linear woodland structure, which separates the application site from the arable farmland to the south. To the south of the south western land parcel lies a long and narrow tract of land with remnants of vegetation resembling an orchard, possibly a small holding connected to the last residential property along Appleton Road.
- 3.10. The unmade track leading from Appleton Road is also a public footpath and continues to traverse across the site from north to south, forming a finger shaped open tract of land along the central and southern section of the site, separating the eastern and western land parcels. This open tract of land forms a major feature within the site and is devoid of a southern site boundary thereby forming a connection to the wider southern hinterland of the village.
- 3.11. The application site's land parcels are predominantly regular shaped medium sized paddocks of semi-improved grassland or meadow pasture, all enclosed by a strongly defined network of internal field hedgerows.

### **Settlement Pattern**

- 3.12. The historical maps illustrate the expansion and growth of Cumnor over the past 100 years. The land is largely characterised by agricultural fields, defined by established hedgerows throughout this time period.
- 3.13. The existing field pattern associated with the application site has remained the same since the 1870s with hedgerow enclosures prevalent within the surrounding landscape. Cut's End Farm was a prominent feature at the apex of the dogleg formed by Appleton Road, with the original road network already in place at this time.
- 3.14. Cumnor village is a nucleated settlement located a little further to the north east and which has remained largely the same over the years up until the 1960s.
- 3.15. Post war years saw an extensive expansion of the village to the east with a near coalescence with Chawley along Oxford Road. In the south west piecemeal development began to occur along Appleton Road to the north and west of the application site.
- 3.16. By the 1970s Appleton Road formed a continuous ribbon development of residential dwellings along the north and south section of its distinctive dogleg as the village expanded southwest.
- 3.17. Most noticeably however the village saw an extensive expansion to the south east with the construction of the residential estate comprising Robsart Place, The Winnyards and Forster Lane located west of Abingdon Road.
- 3.18. By the early 1980s saw the introduction of the road transport infrastructure of the A420 to the west of the village which formed a delineation between Cumnor and Chawley.
- 3.19. The present day shows the extent of the settlement to have remained largely unchanged except for small infills of latter day residential dwellings.

- 3.20. As can be seen from this settlement pattern, past precedence for new development has focused chiefly along the southern realms of the village.

### **Topography**

- 3.21. The north western land parcel can be considered to be relatively flat. However the remainder of the application site forms a gentle localized valley occupying both the east and west facing slopes.
- 3.22. Along the north western corner the site grades from 112m AOD to a low point of 111m AOD in the valley before ascending to 115m AOD in the north eastern corner, whilst in the south western corner it grades from 111m AOD to a valley basin of 109m AOD and rises again to 116m AOD in the south eastern corner.
- 3.23. A springline or drainage ditch runs north-south along the localised valley basin dissecting the western and eastern land parcels. This unnamed watercourse continues to flow southwards draining the low lying vale farmland and eventually flowing into the Thames south of Abingdon.
- 3.24. In the wider context, Cumnor occupies localised high ground within the North Vale Corallian Ridge with the highest point of 159m AOD on the summit of Hurst Hill some 1.5km eastwards, with Cumnor village itself lying along its lower western slopes. The low lying Thames Vale landscape surrounds this localized high ground.
- 3.25. The application site lies outside the Environmental Agency's flood risk zones 2 & 3.

### **Designation**

#### **Green Belt**

- 3.26. The application site lies within the Oxford Green Belt. However the area comprising the application has undergone a review in 2015 with a view to releasing the land parcels from the Green Belt status.



### Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 3.27. The Cotswolds AONB lies 11km to the north whilst the North Wessex Downs AONB is located 14.5km to the south of the application site.

### Heritage Assets

- 3.28. Cumnor Conservation Area boundary lies directly adjacent to the application site along the northern western site boundary.
- 3.29. There are no listed buildings within the site. However the following listed heritage assets are considered relevant to the site and setting;
- The Farm House grade II lies 80m from the north western land parcel site boundary, the garden boundary of this residential property lying directly adjacent to the site.
  - Cut's End Cottage grade II lies 80m to the west of the south western land parcel site boundary, along the western carriageway of Appleton Road.
  - Church Of St Michael grade I lies 300m north east of the application site's northern boundary, located within the main village core.

### Registered Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest

- 3.30. There are no RGPs located within a 5km radius of the application site.

### Ancient Scheduled Monuments

- 3.31. There are no scheduled monuments located within a 3km radius of the application site.

### Ancient Woodlands

- 3.32. There are no Ancient Woodlands located within a 1km radius of the application site.

### Tree Preservation Orders

- 3.33. A number of mature linear woodland structures which form strongly defined boundaries around the application site enjoy protection through grouped or woodland TPOs;

- G1 lies along the southern boundary of the eastern land parcel and comprises mainly sycamore;
- G2 lies along the Appleton Road forming the northern boundary of the north western land parcel, predominantly Poplar species;
- W1 lies along the boundary between the cricket ground and the eastern land parcel, comprising mixed broadleaf and conifer;
- W2 lies along the southern boundary of the south western land parcel and comprises mixed broadleaf.

### Public Right Of Ways

- 3.34. The following public footpaths traverse across or run adjacent to the application site;

- PROW FP184/12/10 runs north-south from Appleton Road adjacent and directly east of the north western development land parcel and also provides access to Cumnor Cricket Club. This unmade track is also registered as open access land/common land.
- The above footpath continues to traverse southwards dissecting the south western and eastern land parcels, this section of the public footpath is recorded as FP184/12/20 and continues in a southerly direction.
- PROW FP184/24/10 traverses west-east from Appleton Road and dissects the north western and south western

development land parcels before forming an intersection with FP184/12/10 & 20.

- PROW FP184/24/20 continues from the above intersection in an easterly direction traversing between the cricket ground and the eastern development land parcel passing through the adjacent residential estate and finally linking to Abingdon Road.

## **Local Designations**

### Historic Environment Record

- 3.35. A search of Oxfordshire County Council's HER reveals no records of local historical importance within the application site.

## **National Landscape Character**

### Countryside Agency - Countrywide Landscape Character Assessment

Within the Countryside Agency Character Map of England document, the application site lies within two NCA areas, NCA 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales and NCA 109: Midvale Range (the most southerly field within the western land parcel and the eastern land parcel).

- 3.36. The key characteristics of NCA 109: Midvale Range area are identified as:

- *“Low, irregular wooded limestone ridge giving way to a series of isolated steep-sided tabular hills in the east which rise from the surrounding clay vales.*
- *Contrast between the moderately elevated limestone hills and ridges and the surrounding low-lying clay vales.*
- *Drained mostly by small springs and streams which run into the Thames, Thame and Ock.*

- *Well wooded – a third of the woodland is designated ancient woodland.*
- *Mixed pastoral and arable landscape with large, geometric fields divided by hedges and regularly spaced hedgerow trees punctuated by blocks of woodland.*
- *Settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the hill tops and along the springline with low density of dispersed settlement.”*

3.37. The key characteristics of NCA 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales are stated as follows;

- *“Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography.*
- *The large river system of the River Thames drains the Vales, their headwaters flowing off the Cotswolds to the north or emitting from the springline along the Chilterns and Downs escarpments.*
- *Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows...*
- *Wet ground conditions and heavy clay soils discourage cultivation in many places, giving rise to livestock farming. Fields are regular and hedged... The Vale of White Horse is made distinct by large arable fields...*
- *Gravel extraction has left a legacy of geological exposures, numerous waterbodies...*
- *Brick and tile from local clays, timber and thatch are traditional building materials across the area...*

- *Settlement is sparse on flood plains, apart from at river crossings, where there can be large towns, such as Abingdon... Market towns and villages are strung along the springlines of the Chilterns and Downs."*

#### The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

3.38. At a more local level, Oxfordshire County Council have produced The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) which takes into account the Character Map of England but looks at the character at a more detailed level. The OWLS assessment identifies that the site is located within two separate landscape character types, with the springline that runs through the central spine of the site forming the boundary between the two zones;

- Rolling Farmland-relating to the western land parcels
- Wooded Estate lands-relating to the eastern land parcel

#### Rolling Farmland

3.39. Described as a landscape with a prominent rolling landform and distant views from hillsides across the surrounding low-lying vale. It is associated with large open arable fields and localised blocks of ancient woodland.

3.40. Key characteristics are stated as;

- Prominent rolling landform.
- Large, geometric arable fields enclosed by a weak hedgerow pattern.
- Thinly distributed hedgerow trees.
- Locally prominent blocks of ancient woodland.
- Small to medium-sized villages.

3.41. The OWL's assessment outlines the various pressures being exerted upon the landscape;

#### Forces for Change

- Intensive arable farming has resulted in the large-scale fragmentation and removal of hedges, particularly internal field boundaries. The remaining hedges tend to be low and intensively maintained.
- There is some impact from residential development in the villages. It consists mainly of moderate to large-scale new housing development, which is not always in keeping in with the traditional character of the villages. In places, there is extensive ribbon development.

#### Landscape Strategy

- 3.42. Conserve and enhance the surviving pattern of woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses. Minimise the impact of built development through appropriate location, choice of building materials, and the use of locally characteristic tree and shrub species.

#### Wooded Estate lands

- 3.43. This character type is described as a wooded estate landscape characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character.

- 3.44. Key characteristics are stated as;

- Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.
- Large parklands and mansion houses.
- A regularly-shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.
- Small villages with strong vernacular character.

- 3.45. The following extracts from the OWL's assessment are considered relevant;

- 3.46. *“The landform is generally rolling, ranging from gently rolling to undulating. Across the Corallian Ridge the landform is strongly undulating, and is steeply sloping in places resulting in small valleys. At the junction of the Corallian beds and the clay vale, springlines emerge and small streams flow through the valleys...”*
- 3.47. *The field pattern is generally characterised by a geometric pattern of medium to large-sized fields, with arable cropping in the larger fields. A less regular pattern of enclosure is associated with the strongly undulating landform across the Corallian Ridge close to places like Faringdon, Cumnor and Boar’s Hill and around Beckley and Shotover Country Park. Fields are generally enclosed by woodland, as well as thorn and elm hedges...Views are generally filtered through trees and framed by woodland blocks.”*

#### Forces for Change

- The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and there is generally a low impact from residential development, especially within the wider countryside. However, in some villages new residential development is out of character, even though it is contained within the village envelope. There is also sprawling development along some of the main roads, particularly the A420 and A338, although this is mitigated to some extent by woodland and mature garden trees.

#### Landscape Strategy

- 3.48. Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.

#### The North Vale Corallian Ridge

- 3.49. Cumnor lies along localised high ground within the North Vale Corallian Ridge, designated locally as a special landscape area. The Vale of

White Horse Local Plan Policy NE7 describes the North Vale Corallian Ridge as follows;

*“a striking landform with a steep north facing scarp slope separating the clay vale from the Thames valley. In the west the ridge has been dissected by streams, which have eroded steep slopes to hills such as Badbury Hill and Faringdon Folly. The ridge is characterised by woodland, including a significant proportion of ancient woodland, country houses designed to look out over the scarp, villages built of the local coral ragstone, and expansive views.”*

3.50. The VOWHDC Planning Advisory Note 2008 states;

*“The field study showed the great importance of long and wide views across the district. The Berkshire Downs, the clay vale and the Corallian ridge interact to produce the scenery of the Vale, much of which is characterised by expansiveness, spaciousness, openness, with wide skies and a feeling of peace and tranquility, and which is clearly vulnerable to the visual impact of any inappropriate development.”*

#### Vale Of White Horse Landscape Capacity Study 2014: Contingency Sites

3.51. The Council commissioned a Landscape Capacity Study to inform its SHLAA and provide an evidence base for its emerging strategic housing allocation policy. The land parcel has been recorded as South Cumnor Site LA22A Adjacent Cut's End.

3.52. The following are extracts from this study;

##### Medium Visual Sensitivity:

- Key views identified in Conservation Area Appraisal;
- Site enclosed by mature trees;
- Potential to mitigate development through new tree belt link.

##### High Landscape Sensitivity:

- Good landscape structure of mature trees and pasture;
- Landscape setting to Conservation Area and listed buildings;



- Quiet secluded and tranquil area free of detractors.

Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / High

Medium / High Wider Landscape Sensitivity:

- Separated from wider landscape to the south by tree belts;
- Closely associated with historic development of the field pattern around village.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity: Medium / High

Medium/High Landscape Value

- Setting of heritage assets;
- Within locally valued landscape North Vale Corallian Ridge policy NE7;

Landscape Capacity: Low

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- *“The site has the potential to be developed, but should include the provision of a major area of open space such as a village green to serve both the development and the village.*
- *Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of Cumnor by retaining the existing landscape pattern within LA22A and tree belts and hedgerows.*
- *Maintain open link between LA22 A and the open landscape to the south.*
- *Opportunities for access to the area are limited by the need to conserve the tree cover and the open landscape character of the tongue of open land which links with LA22B. The preferred access into this site is located down an existing track to the north of the site, as access is not possible from the east (which would be the preferred option). However the design of any access would need to minimise the harm to the character of the track and avoid loss of adjoining vegetation.*
- *Any access design to be in keeping with village character.*

## Description of Proposals

- 3.53. A draft illustrative scheme for the majority of the site has been produced and it has provided a useful tool to analyse the potential impacts of a development of the site. The scheme has not influenced the analysis of the landscape or its capacity to accommodate change but has assisted in our ability to analyse the impacts of such a development.
- 3.54. The scheme would seek to be visually attractive, respecting the context, form and type of existing built form and building styles evident within the local area. The VOWH Design Guide SPD would be used as a guiding principle along the iterative design process.
- 3.55. A review of the relevant landscape character assessments in conjunction with the findings of the visual impact analysis would inform some key design considerations and mitigation measures for the proposed development of the site for residential use.
- 3.56. In contrast to the Kirkham capacity study, this report considers that all of the land parcels within the application site can be developed, not including the finger shaped tract of open land. As such the site area is approximately 6.5 hectares less a nominal 30% for the provision of retaining existing landscape features and incorporation of access and services. Thus a net site area of 4.55 hectares is theoretically available at a considered density of 30 units /ha. this yielding 136 dwelling units as a ball park figure.
- 3.57. The scheme would include the provision of public open space and landscaping as well as a wide variety of housing:
- High quality homes of varying sizes, types and tenures.
  - Comprehensive Green infrastructure and Public Open Space.
- 3.58. There would be a medium density development of dwellings made up of a mixture of detached, semi-detached dwellings, and possibly terraced housing and apartment blocks. The scheme comprises a road layout

with priority areas of shared surfacing instilling a home zone character, a consolidated footpath arrangement and a comprehensive network of public open spaces. There will be accessible children's play facilities with good neighbourhood stewardship amenity.

### **Design Principals**

- 3.59. A number of design principles have influenced the development proposals for the site which include:
- 3.60. The retention and enhancement of the existing mature linear woodland structures associated with the site boundaries, including all hedgerow site boundaries.
- 3.61. Reinforcing site perimeter vegetation along key highway and residential adjacencies incorporating the planting of appropriate native trees to enhance key visual screening and amelioration.
- 3.62. The retention and successful management of the southern woodland structure in particular will be an important factor in providing not only strong visual screening but also a robust new development edge to the village at the rural-urban interface.
- 3.63. The retention and reinforcement of existing internal site field boundary hedgerows will be undertaken where feasible and appropriate to condition and quality, in order to promote local distinctiveness of the site and provide instant impact landscape features.
- 3.64. There will be some sections of hedgerow removal to accommodate access and services across the development site. However, field hedgerows will be generally reinforced with the gapping up of fragmented or lost sections.
- 3.65. New structural planting will be incorporated along the western boundaries of the application site adjacent the existing residential edges. This will be particularly important at the interface between the

north western land parcel and the listed grade II heritage asset of The Farm House, thereby providing a sensitive and robust buffer and visual screening between the development proposals and heritage asset (also the Conservation Area Boundary).

- 3.66. The proposals seek to achieve a high quality, sustainable development which reflects the scale, layout and pattern of the adjacent urban fabric and which is appropriate to its setting.
- 3.67. The scheme aims to be visually attractive, respecting the context, form and type of existing built form and building styles evident within the locality. The layout will ensure that the development has a sense of identity and is legible.
- 3.68. Shared surfacing will be incorporated within key nodes, junctions and public realm areas reinforcing the pedestrian priority over the car and instilling a rural character to the residential scheme.
- 3.69. The development proposals will reference the varying architectural styles and materials that characterise the local area, ensuring that the proposals respect and enhance the rural character of Cumnor.
- 3.70. Another key consideration to be addressed by the development proposals is the role of sustainable urban drainage system (SUD's). These attenuation basins will be strategically sited along the low lying valley basin to the central spine of the application site.
- 3.71. The attenuation basins will be integrated sensitively within the receiving landform and will be accompanied by appropriate structural planting in order to encourage wildlife. The basin will be naturalistically designed and framed by woodland blocks. This green infrastructure will form a new settlement edge to the distinctive gap in the southern boundary created by the 'finger' of open land, thus creating a sensitive diffused interface along the urban rural transition.
- 3.72. The provision of ecologically valuable corridors to existing vegetation structures through creation of species rich margins and woodland edges

will be a key GI component of the development proposals. This is particularly significant in the role of the retained field boundaries and indeed the central linear park through which the existing springline runs and the proposed siting of attenuation basins.

- 3.73. The main distinctive feature of the application site is the finger shaped open tract of land which connects to the southern hinterland. It is recommended that this feature is retained within the scheme as a central public open space.
- 3.74. This undeveloped zone would form a linear parkland setting and promote a village green character providing a neighbourhood focus to the surrounding communities serving both the western and eastern land parcels.
- 3.75. There is potential here to develop an enriched sense of place with groups of specimen trees framing attenuation basins which gravitate along the springline ditch, this watercourse itself potentially could be engineered as a swale feature. This green corridor will create a responsive user experience for the retained public footpath which can be diverted in order to weave in and around the swale and balancing pond features framed by riparian vegetation, with channelled longer distance views out to the south retained.
- 3.76. Dwelling units will be juxtaposed at jaunty angles to the street frontages providing a variety of front garden sizes, which along with the considered density instills a rural character to the development.
- 3.77. The layout of the development proposals will be organic in character with a sensitively juxtaposed mix of detached, semi-detached and possibly apartment blocks, which will sweep in and around the centrally located area of public open green space.
- 3.78. The main development access point is envisaged to be from off Appleton Road in the west, subject to the availability of the property directly adjacent to the public footpath FP184/24/10, which would see

the demolition of the built form along with the garden boundary coniferous trees.

- 3.79. A high quality landscaped verge incorporating a native formal hedge line and defined by groupings of specimen trees would also provide a green corridor for the retained public footpath.
- 3.80. The unmade track relating to FP184/12/10 which traverses north-south along the central spine of the site will form the secondary vehicular access, but more importantly would form the primary pedestrian access point and main link to the village core. This would be a more informal in character utilising the existing green infrastructure to instill a sense of local distinctiveness. The adjacent cricket ground would provide borrowed filtered views and indeed a borrowed 'character', imbuing a prestigious and rural ambience to this northern predominantly pedestrian gateway.
- 3.81. The two vehicular access points would meet at a junction approximately in the same position as the intersection of the existing public footpaths that traverse the site.
- 3.82. These vehicular access points will distribute into a main residential street composed of curvilinear arcs which will describe a pronounced loop serving all the various land parcels. A number of secondary access roads create a network of residential blocks which feed quieter residential closes and cul de sacs, thereby providing access to the enclaves or pockets of development formed within the retained internal hedgerow structures.
- 3.83. A series of smaller public open spaces located across the development and served by the footpath network, these provide informal play areas and 'breathing space' nodes for the development builtform.
- 3.84. A development set back is recommended to the north eastern section of the eastern land parcel. This is to provide visual amelioration to the development proposals during winter when the transparency of deciduous vegetative structures will allow a minor and partial view of

new builtform from the grade I Church Of St Michael located north east within the historic village core. This undeveloped zone will accommodate public open space incorporating groups of specimen tree planting and informal play opportunities. In addition it will provide an opportunity for an improved transient nodal space linking the existing public footpath FP184/24/20 with the neighbouring residential built up edge of Robsart Place.

- 3.85. Street tree planting within the residential areas and larger parkland tree planting within areas of proposed open space will break up the appearance of urban development and increase the level of tree cover generally within the site. Tree planting will also ameliorate neighbourhood parking areas and provide a domestic character to any proposed terraced blocks.
- 3.86. Planting of small trees to garden plots (where feasible and at appropriate distances from built form) to assist in providing a consistent tree canopy coverage across the site to instill a rural edge character and provide visual mitigation.

### **Pedestrian Links**

- 3.87. The development proposals should incorporate a strong network of pedestrian and cycle links which would be vital for the successful sustainability of the community. These links should seek to form direct and legible access to:
- Adjacent residential / neighbourhood areas.
  - Public transport facilities along Appleton Road and Abingdon Road.
  - Local key community service facilities.
  - Village primary school
  - Adjacent open spaces and recreational areas.
  - Local services within the village core.
  - Surrounding wider countryside such as linking into the existing PROW network accessing the amenity of the wider vale landscape and the promoted long distance route of The Thames Path.

- 3.88. The retention and improvement of the existing public footpaths that traverse the application site will be another important feature. The existing footpaths will be re-aligned where required to ensure minimal conflict with the proposed vehicular carriageways, with shared surfacing denoting pedestrian priority where crossings are inevitable.
- 3.89. The north-south public footpath would be improved in particular, with the unmade muddy track being upgraded to an appropriate and sensitive finish. The path layout would also be diverted to meander and weave through the proposed SUDs attenuation features associated with the central green corridor providing an improved user experience as it benefits from the absence of vehicular traffic within the new neighbourhood linear park. The footpath will eventually link up with the existing path network at the new settlement edge in the south, where access is possible to the wider countryside beyond.
- 3.90. Key green infrastructure proposals which form important mitigation measures are summarised as follows:
- The retention and reinforcement of existing landscape features, such as the mature tree belt structures providing the strongly defined site boundaries.
  - The retention where feasible of as much as possible of the internal site field hedgerow boundaries.
  - The incorporation of a new structural landscape buffer along the site's western boundary particularly adjacent the heritage asset of The Farm House.
  - The provision of a comprehensive green infrastructure incorporating a main central public open space promoting a village green character, a prestigious gateway setting, neighbourhood pocket parks, widespread street and garden tree planting along with amenity landscaped areas.



- Provision of a linear parkland forming a pedestrian green corridor route across the site and retaining a connection physically and visually to the countryside to the south.
- A development set back to the north eastern site realms to provide winter visual amelioration to the proposals from St Michael's Church.
- Provision of a primary vehicular access from the west (subject to land availability) and a secondary access from the north which will form a prestigious gateway pedestrian link to the village core.

3.91. Overall a sensitive and considered design approach will allow the development to sit comfortably within its setting without detriment to the localised landscape character, visual environment or the amenity of the neighbouring properties and the wider landscape setting.

#### **4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT & VISUAL ANALYSIS**

- 4.1. The visual impact of the proposals has been assessed and a number of photographs have been taken from key viewpoints from publicly accessible areas to illustrate the site and its setting. The visual analysis and viewpoint locations are included within Appendix 2. The key viewpoint photographs are intended to form representative views from publicly accessible viewpoints, and while not exhaustive are considered to provide an accurate overview of the site and its setting.

##### **Visual Assessment**

##### **Viewpoint 1**

- 4.2. Viewpoint 1 is a short distance view taken from Appleton Road at the start of public footpath FP184/24/10 and within Cumnor Conservation Area looking east towards the application site. A glimpsed view of the application site is available from the public footpath access and illustrates the degree of visual containment afforded to the site by existing vegetative structures and intervening builtform. The foreground comprises amenity grassland across which traverses the public footpath and flanked by mature ornamental coniferous species demarcating a fragmented garden boundary to an adjacent residential property.
- 4.3. To the left field of vision stands the garden boundary vegetation associated with the grade II listed property The Farm House. In the middle distance lies the pastoral landcover relating to the application site filtered through the fragmented character of its north western perimeter boundary. Adjacent a metal farm gate can be seen an internal field hedgerow structure which traverses east across the site. The open nature relating to the site's paddock character is seen framed by structural vegetation in the distance.
- 4.4. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 1, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public footpath and the rural lane of Appleton Road, both pedestrian and vehicular. It is also a representative viewpoint from the residential

receptors of Appleton Road who overlook the application site from the west. The combined sensitivity of these receptors is considered to be high.

- 4.5. The development proposals would be apparent when viewed from this location, resulting in a degree of change to that which exists at present. It is considered however, that this change can be accommodated.
- 4.6. The viewpoint illustrates a potential main access point into the proposed development subject to the availability of the property directly adjacent to the public footpath seen in the right field of vision, which would see the demolition of the built form along with the garden boundary coniferous trees which are presumed to be of low amenity value.
- 4.7. The immediate view would comprise the new access road traversing eastwards with a high quality landscaped verge incorporating a native formal hedge line and defined by groupings of specimen trees which will also provide a green corridor for the retained public footpath.
- 4.8. The mature tree cover defining the boundaries of the nearby cricket club and the Robsart Place estate will form the backdrop to the roofscape of these new dwellings, which combined with the retained internal field hedgerow structure, will help integrate the new built form into its receiving environment.
- 4.9. Mitigation proposals will include a high quality landscaped verge along the development access road including specimen street tree planting which will help to soften and break up the impact of the built form.
- 4.10. Green infrastructure will also include the retention of existing internal field hedgerows that will integrate the development into its surroundings and impart a rural ambience to the scheme.
- 4.11. In terms of the residential receptors of Appleton Road, views of the development will be seen within the context of the existing vegetation structures along their rear garden boundaries, which will substantially limit these views to those from upper storey rooms. GLVIA 3 guidance

places only limited weight to views from upper storey rooms, favouring views from those rooms occupied during daylight/waking hours. As such, only limited consideration has been given to the effect of the proposals on views from upper storey rooms. Within these views, the proposals would be seen within the context of the proposed green infrastructure and existing vegetative structures.

- 4.12. It should be noted that the views of the development from this viewpoint would be heavily glimpsed views only from Appleton Road and seen within the context of the existing residential ribbon development which extends along this rural lane towards Eaton. As such the scheme will not constitute an alien or uncharacteristic feature within the scene.
- 4.13. It is therefore considered that the proposals would result in a change of medium/low magnitude in year 1 falling to low magnitude in year 10, acting upon a high sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate in year 1 levelling off at low/moderate once tree planting proposals have matured.

## **Viewpoint 2**

- 4.14. Viewpoint 2 is a short distance view taken from along Appleton Road within the Cumnor Conservation Area looking east at the application site. The view illustrates the extent of visual containment afforded to the application site by existing vegetative structures associated with the northern site boundary. The rural lane of Appleton Road commands the foreground as it doglegs north to the village core, with contrasting verges evident along its carriageway. On its northern carriageway a footpath runs adjacent to ornamental garden boundary vegetation associated with residential properties of Appleton Road, whilst the southern carriageway is more informal in character defined by a narrow grass verge and a linear belt of native trees with an established understorey.
- 4.15. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 2, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public

footpath and the rural lane of Appleton Road, both pedestrian and vehicular. It is also a representative viewpoint from the residential receptors of Appleton Road who overlook the application site from the north. The combined sensitivity of these receptors is considered to be medium.

- 4.16. The development proposals will be scarcely apparent when viewed from this location, resulting in a modicum degree of change to that which exists at present.
- 4.17. In summer months the density of the existing vegetative structures associated with the site's northern boundary will fully contain views of the development proposals.
- 4.18. In winter months, as depicted within the viewpoint, the deciduous nature of the intervening vegetation will allow an increased degree of transparency. There would be filtered and glimpsed views of predominantly upper storey elevations and roofscape associated with the northern development parcel. However, due to the prevailing density of the structural boundary vegetation these views would be visually recessive in nature and tree canopies will still command the skyline.
- 4.19. Mitigation proposals will include the reinforcement and gapping up of any weak sections of the northern boundary vegetation thereby enhancing the visual screening of the development.
- 4.20. In terms of the residential receptors of Appleton Road, views of the development will be seen within the context of the existing vegetation structures associated with garden boundaries and the site's northern belt of tree cover, which will substantially limit views from both lower and upper storey rooms. During summer months, development proposals will be contained by the layering of intervening vegetation. Any filtered and partial views available in the winter months will be recessive and seen within the context of the existing vegetative structures and indeed the surrounding and existing residential context.

- 4.21. It is therefore considered that the proposals would result in a change of low magnitude in year 1 falling to negligible magnitude in year 10, acting upon a medium sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate/minor in year 1 levelling off at minor once mitigation proposals have matured.

### **Viewpoint 3**

- 4.22. Viewpoint 3 is a short distance view taken from public footpath FP184/12/10 and the entrance to Cumnor Cricket Club, a track registered as common land / open access land, looking south at the application site. The viewpoint has been taken from within the boundary of the Cumnor Conservation Area.
- 4.23. The view illustrates the degree of visual containment afforded to the application site by existing vegetative structures associated with the north eastern site boundary. Appleton Road can be seen to the far right field of vision as it doglegs northwards to the village core, defined by a belt of mature tree cover and understorey which forms the northern site boundary. The scene comprises an unmade track traversing southwards, with access to the cricket club via a driveway on its left vergeside evidenced by the white timber rail detail. The track continues south and forms the main spine of the application site.
- 4.24. Dense mature tree cover in the form of both evergreen and deciduous tree species and established understorey vegetation associated with the site's northern field parcel defines the rough tracks western edge. Mature hedgerow vegetation along the track's eastern edge has contributed to an enclosed character where it joins onto the Appleton Road. The track opens up somewhat as you move in a southerly direction (into the site) from Appleton Road, due to the reduced vegetation cover along the cricket clubs western boundary, which is now defined by a chainlink fence and scrub vegetation.
- 4.25. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 3, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public footpath/open access land including patrons of the cricket club, and the

users of rural lane of Appleton Road. As such the combined sensitivity of these receptors is considered to be high.

- 4.26. The development proposals will be apparent when viewed from this location, resulting in a small degree of change to that which exists at present.
- 4.27. The immediate foreground view will be of one of the access points into the development, which combined with the existing green infrastructure, will provide an informal but high quality green corridor for the retained public footpath.
- 4.28. In the middle ground the new access road will form a junction with the other potential main access road traversing from the west (as described in Viewpoint 1), this junction being located at the end of the current unmade track visible in the photograph. Access to the cricket club will also be retained as existing.
- 4.29. The mature linear tree belts and existing field boundaries will be retained within the scheme and would provide an instant impact landscape enhancing the rural ambience of the scheme and indeed providing visual screening to built form.
- 4.30. Indeed the new built form of the development comprising the northern, eastern and western land parcels will not be evident from this viewpoint, being predominantly contained by intervening vegetative structures. However with the provision of an access road within the field hedgerow visible in the middleground, partial, oblique and filtered views would potentially be afforded of predominantly the upper storeys and roofscape of new dwellings associated with the eastern land parcel, which will be seen within the overall framework of existing green infrastructure.
- 4.31. During winter months visual transparency through the site boundary deciduous vegetation will increase. As such there will be filtered glimpsed views of built form associated with the northern land parcel but due to the density and layering of the vegetation these would be

recessive in nature and would be further reinforced by rear garden plot vegetation of new dwellings.

- 4.32. Mitigation proposals would include reinforcing any weak sections along the northern site perimeter, including the planting of new native trees and understorey species, which in time will further enhance visual screening to this section of the development.
- 4.33. The development proposals will be seen merged within the framework of existing green infrastructure and indeed with overall context of the existing residential edge of the Appleton Road.
- 4.34. It is therefore considered that the proposals would result in a change of medium/low magnitude in year 1 falling to low magnitude in year 10, acting upon a high sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate in year 1 levelling off at moderate/minor once mitigation and green infrastructure proposals have matured.

#### **Viewpoint 4**

- 4.35. Viewpoint 4 is taken within the application site at the intersection of public footpaths FP184/24/10 & FP184/12/10 looking in a south westerly direction. The view illustrates the cellular nature of the spatial character of the site with its series of paddocks contained by structural linear vegetation. The foreground comprises the finger of open land which defines the central spine of the site evidenced by the drainage ditch curving southwards adjacent the field hedgerow of the eastern land parcel.
- 4.36. In the right middleground are separate layers of vegetation, relating to the south western land parcel's field boundaries. A distinctive feature of the scene is the gap in the site's vegetation structure which affords longer distance views out to the south. This channeled view demonstrates the undulatory nature of the southern hinterland with arable farmland seen dropping away in the distance truncating views until the horizon comes back into view in the far distance, where the wooded higher ground of Tubney Wood defines the skyline.



- 4.37. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 4, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public footpaths whose sensitivity is considered to be high.
- 4.38. The development proposals will be apparent when viewed from this location, resulting in a noticeable degree of change to that which exists at present. It is considered however, that this change can be accommodated.
- 4.39. The immediate scene will be of a central undeveloped zone which would accommodate public open space incorporating a linear parkland setting with groups of specimen trees and attenuation features. This green infrastructure corridor creates the potential to for an enriched user experience. The retained public footpath could potentially be diverted to weave in and around the proposed landscape and SUDs features.
- 4.40. The new built form of the proposed development would be evident within the central western land parcel to the middle ground right field of vision. There will be partial views filtered through the internal field hedgerow boundary vegetation of predominantly upper rear elevations and roofscape of new dwellings.
- 4.41. In winter months there would be partial glimpsed views of built form relating to the south western land parcel evident to the central left middle ground, filtered through the retained internal tree cover adjacent to the central public open space.
- 4.42. Green infrastructure proposals will include a substantial level of tree cover throughout the scheme in the form of street and garden tree planting, in addition to specimen parkland tree planting.
- 4.43. It is therefore considered that the proposals will result in a change of medium magnitude in year 1 falling to low magnitude in year 10, acting upon a high sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be **moderate** in year 1 levelling off at **moderate/minor** once green infrastructure proposals have matured.

## **Viewpoint 5**

Viewpoint 5 is a mid distance view taken 275m away from along public footpath FP184/12/20 looking north towards the application site. The view illustrates the extent of visual containment afforded by established vegetative structures associated with the southern site boundary. The scene from the arable farmland to the south of the site also demonstrates the pronounced localized topography which forms a valley basin along the central spine of the site along which the course of the springline ditch runs southwards, the public footpath also running in parallel with it. The horizon line is defined in the middle ground by mature linear woodland structures which demarcates the southern site boundary, with the south western structure containing a substantial coniferous element. The central section of this woodland boundary is just discernible as a finger of open land which protrudes into and along the central spine of the site, and which is demarcated by separate layers of lower subordinate hedgerow internal field boundaries.

- 4.44. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 5, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public footpath whose sensitivity is considered to be high.
- 4.45. The development proposals will be apparent when viewed from this location, resulting in a degree of change to that which exists at present. It is considered however, that this change can be accommodated.
- 4.46. In winter months there will be glimpsed and partial views of roofscape and upper elevations relating to new built form from within both the south western and eastern development land parcels which border adjacent to the central open space. These partial views will be filtered through the internal field hedgerow boundaries and be seen as visually recessive within the scene. The finger of central open space will be retained as an undeveloped zone and will accommodate green infrastructure.

- 4.47. Overall these filtered views would appear as visually recessive within the scene due to the density, layering and species mix of this intervening and established structural vegetation. Furthermore their tree canopies will still command the skyline and ensure the development proposals are integrated within a well wooded receiving environment.
- 4.48. The existing green infrastructure including the centrally located internal field hedgerows will be retained within the scheme to visually mitigate the new builtform as well as promoting local distinctiveness.
- 4.49. In addition comprehensive green infrastructure proposals will include new street and garden tree planting in addition to the central parkland specimen tree groupings. These measures will in time help soften and ameliorate the expanse of development during winter months.
- 4.50.
- 4.51. In summer months green infrastructure will visually screen all but the occasional glimpse of new built form.
- 4.52. It is therefore considered that the proposals will result in a change of low magnitude in year 1 falling to negligible magnitude in year 10, acting upon a high sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate/minor in year 1 levelling off at minor once green infrastructure proposals have established.

### **Viewpoint 6**

- 4.53. Viewpoint 6 is a mid distance view taken 370m away along the verge side of Eaton Road to the south of Cumnor village looking north east towards the application site. The view illustrates the southern fringes of Cumnor settlement and the extent of visual containment afforded to the site from the south west by intervening structural vegetation. Within the foreground the rural lane of Eaton Road lined by generous verges and hedgerows is seen traversing north east towards Cumnor and leads onto Appleton Road after doglegging north where residential properties form a ribbon development leading to Cumnor village core. The vegetative cover here forms the skyline and is notably ornamental coniferous in character, typical of an urban garden treescape. To the

east of Eaton Road lies arable farmland and associated agricultural barn structures. The terrain forms a valley basin along public footpath FP184/12/20 which traverses through the centre of the southern site section alongside a springline ditch, with the land then rising in the east. In the distance there is a substantial layering of existing vegetative structures defining the skyline and which relates to the various application site boundaries, its internal field hedgerows and general urban tree cover associated with the wider context of Cumnor including the village Cricket Club and the residential estate of Robsart Place.

- 4.54. A glimpsed view of a residential property relating to the western section of Robsart Place is discernible on the higher ground seen between the gap in the southern boundary vegetation relating to the finger shaped tract of open land. To the fore of this residential property and lying along the lower valley slope is a paddock of grassland which relates to the site's eastern land parcel. The western section of the site is however contained in full by intervening vegetative structures.
- 4.55. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 6, the principle receptors are identified as users of the rural lane of Eaton and Appleton Roads, both pedestrian and vehicular, whose sensitivity is considered to be medium.
- 4.56. During the winter months partial transparent views will be afforded through the south western site boundary. These will be filtered and partial views of the south western development land parcel, predominantly the upper rear elevations and roofscape, which will be seen extending from behind the existing residential property along Appleton Road and descending the localised valley slope. Due to this low lying topography and the visual amelioration of the deciduous trees this section of the development will appear as visually recessive within the scene. In addition, the prevailing tree cover along the southern fringes of the village will retain the skyline.
- 4.57. The central gap within the southern site boundary vegetation would afford glimpsed and partial views of new built form relating to the south eastern land parcel subtly rising along the higher terrain. This new built

form would effectively be seen as predominantly replacing the existing Robsart Place residential property within the view, rather than seen as increasing the amount of built form. The roofscape of this new built form would be integrated within the prevailing urban tree cover evident along the higher terrain whose canopies would also retain the skyline.

- 4.58. The proposals will not constitute an alien or uncharacteristic feature within the scene given the presence of existing residential properties relating to the ribbon development along Appleton Road and the Robsart Place estate.
- 4.59. During summer months the development proposals will predominantly be contained by intervening existing vegetative structures, except for a minor glimpsed view of built form relating to the south eastern land parcel.
- 4.60. It is therefore considered that the proposals will result in a change of minor magnitude acting upon a medium sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be Minor.

#### **Viewpoint 7**

- 4.61. Viewpoint 7 is a mid distance view taken 130m away from the northern boundary of the Cumnor Cricket Club ground looking south towards the application site. The view illustrates the prevailing topography and the degree of visual containment afforded to the application site by existing vegetative structures along the cricket ground's southern perimeter boundary.
- 4.62. The scene is dominated by the cricket club and associated paraphernalia, with the ground seen sloping towards a localised valley basin to the west. The far left field of vision comprises existing residential properties associated with the latter day estate of Robsart Place. The background is formed by two linear belts of mature trees possessing significant ivy growth which substantially truncate views further south towards the application site. The first belt of trees relates to the cricket ground southern boundary whilst the second relates to the

northern boundary of the application site's eastern land parcel which lies adjacent, these linear vegetative structures creating a corridor along which public footpath FP184/24/20 traverses east-west in between.

- 4.63. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 7, the principle receptors are identified as patrons of the cricket ground, whose attention will be focused primarily on recreational activity. As such their sensitivity is considered to be medium.
- 4.64. The development proposals will be scarcely apparent when viewed from this location, being predominantly contained by the layering of intervening existing vegetative structures.
- 4.65. In summer months, proposals associated with the development's eastern land parcel will be predominantly contained by the intervening mature tree cover. However, there is a weak section of the tree belt right of centre of vision which has a number of decaying/dead trees and which will allow a filtered and partial views of new builtform. This view will afford just a glimpse view of new dwellings and will be seen as visually recessive merged within the surrounding framework of green infrastructure.
- 4.66. During winter months there will be more transparent views afforded of the proposals associated with the eastern land parcel. There will be partial and filtered views of the rear elevations of new dwellings extending down the prevailing slope beyond the deciduous tree boundary, however the tree canopies will still command the skyline.
- 4.67. Furthermore, green infrastructure associated with ornamental garden vegetation of rear garden plots of new dwellings will further ameliorate these filtered and partial views during winter. It should be noted however that during the winter months the cricket club will predominantly be vacated.
- 4.68. The proposals will be seen merged within the framework of existing green infrastructure and will be visually recessive within the scene. Furthermore, the built form will be perceived within the surrounding

residential context of Robsart Place and therefore will not constitute an uncharacteristic or alien feature.

- 4.69. Mitigation proposals will include reinforcing the weakened section of the linear tree belt along the eastern development parcel's northern site boundary, including the planting of new native trees and understorey species, which in time will visually screen the development in full from this viewpoint during summer months.
- 4.70. It is therefore considered that the proposals will result in a change of medium magnitude in year 1 falling to low magnitude in year 10, acting upon a medium sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate in year 1 levelling off at moderate/minor once green infrastructure and mitigation tree planting proposals have matured.

### **Viewpoint 8**

- 4.71. Viewpoint 8 is a mid distance view taken 270m away from the grounds of the grade I listed Church Of St Michael located within the Cumnor Conservation Area looking south west towards the application site. The view illustrates the truncation of long distance views from the Church due to a substantial layering of established vegetative structures and latter day residential properties. The foreground is dominated by undulating semi-improved grass paddock with sloping topography to the west with the residential property and garden fenceline within the Robsart estate prominent in the middle ground. Further to the right field of vision is a partial glimpse of the Cricket Club House filtered through the ground's boundary tree cover. Also evident adjacent is a filtered view of the cricket pitch itself, with a further layering of boundary vegetation evident to the south west beyond which lies the western development land parcels. The skyline is defined by the tall mature tree belt extending across the scene and which defines the southern boundary of the cricket ground and indeed the northern boundary of the eastern development land parcel.

- 4.72. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 8, the principle receptors are identified as users of the grade I listed Church whose sensitivity is considered to be high.
- 4.73. The development proposals will be scarcely apparent when viewed from this location, being predominantly contained by existing well established vegetative structures and intervening built form.
- 4.74. It should be noted that the deciduous nature of the linear vegetative structures allow filtered long distance views which would be fully contained during times of full foliage.
- 4.75. In summer months the development proposals will be fully contained from this viewpoint.
- 4.76. During winter months, as depicted within this viewpoint, the density and layering of intervening vegetative structures, combined with built form would predominantly contain views of the development proposals.
- 4.77. However, it is considered that a small section of the eastern development land parcel could be evident directly to the right of the existing Robsart Place property. This would be a filtered and partial view only with the intervening tree canopies still defining the skyline and upper elevations and roofscape being visually recessive through the deciduous tracery. The change within the scene would be a small component of built form merged within an overall well wooded environment. It will also be seen within the close proximity of the existing residential built up edge of Robsart Place.
- 4.78. A well considered design layout can reduce this minor impact by incorporating a small development set back within the land parcel's north eastern corner. This undeveloped zone will accommodate public open space, incorporating groups of tree planting. This measure would mitigate the minor visual impact during the winter months from this viewpoint, with the small extent of new roofscape receding in elevation due to the set back. It is considered the magnitude of change would be indiscernible to all intents and purposes. Alternatively mitigation planting



along the northern site boundary of this land parcel will in time increase the visual filtration effect of the existing green infrastructure, providing visual amelioration.

- 4.79. It should be noted that in the summer months there is no significance of effect to report.
- 4.80. During winter the proposals will result in a change of low-negligible magnitude in year 1 falling to negligible magnitude in year 10, acting upon a high sensitivity receptor. The significance of effect is considered to be moderate/minor in year 1 levelling off at minor once mitigation tree planting proposals have matured.
- 4.81. If mitigation measures involved the incorporation of a development set back as described above, it is considered that there would be negligible significance of effect from this viewpoint during winter.

#### **Viewpoint 9**

- 4.82. Viewpoint 9 is a mid distance view taken 250m away at the intersection of public footpaths FP184/26/10 & 20 within an area of public open space used as playing fields north of Appleton Road and looking south east towards the application site. The viewpoint has been taken from within the Cumnor Conservation Area, and can be considered to be a representative viewpoint from the grade II cottage 'Seldom Seen'. The view illustrates the extent of visual containment afforded by existing vegetative structures and intervening builtform relating to Appleton Road. Amenity grass cover can be seen in the foreground which is framed by mature woodland cover. A small pavilion structure associated with the playing fields is evident in the middle ground which is flanked on either side by residential dwellings and ornamental garden trees along the northern carriageway of Appleton Road. To the left of the residential property in white render prominent within the middle ground lies a substantial layering of woodland cover, beyond which lies the application site to the south of Appleton Road. The southern carriageway is defined by a vernacular stone wall just discernible and which relates to the boundary of the grade II The Farm House, within

whose property lies a substantial amount of ornamental garden trees many coniferous in nature.

- 4.83. In terms of the effect of the proposals when viewed within the context of viewpoint 9, the principle receptors are identified as users of the public footpath and public open space whose combined sensitivity is considered to be high.
- 4.84. The development proposals will not be apparent when viewed from this location, being contained in full by intervening existing vegetative structures and intervening built form. As can be seen from this winter scene, the density and species mix of the vegetation cover will provide visual containment throughout the winter months. Consequently, there is no significance of effect to report from this viewpoint.

Table summary of visual effects					
Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Nature of Effect	Magnitude of Change	Significance (Year 1)	Significance (Year 10)
<i>Viewpoint 1</i> – from start of PROW FP184/24/10 along Appleton Road looking east, within Cumnor CA	High	Direct, neutral	Medium-low	Moderate	Moderate/minor
<i>Viewpoint 2</i> –from Appleton Road looking east, within Cumnor CA	Medium	Direct, neutral	Low-negligible	Moderate / minor	Minor
<i>Viewpoint 3</i> –from PROW FP184/12/10 & Appleton Road jnctn to Cumnor Cricket Club looking south, within Cumnor CA	High	Direct, neutral	Medium-low	Moderate	Moderate/minor
<i>Viewpoint 4</i> – from PROW intersection FP184/24/10 & 184/12/10 within the site looking south west	High	Direct, neutral	Medium-low	Moderate	Moderate/minor
<i>Viewpoint 5</i> – from PROW FP184/12/20 looking north, range 275m	High	Direct, neutral	Low-negligible	Moderate/minor	Moderate / minor
<i>Viewpoint 6</i> – from Eaton Road vergeside looking north east, range 370m	Medium	Direct, neutral	Low	Moderate /minor	Minor
<i>Viewpoint 7</i> - from Cumnor Cricket Club ground north boundary looking south, range 130m	Medium	Direct, neutral	Medium-low	Moderate /minor	Minor
<i>Viewpoint 8</i> - from grounds of grade I listed Church Of St Michael looking south west, range 270m within Cumnor CA	High	Direct, neutral	Low-negligible to negligible (winter)	Moderate/minor (winter)	Minor (winter)
		N / A	None (summer)	None (summer)	None (summer)
<i>Viewpoint 9</i> - from PROW intersection FP184/26/20 & FP184/28/10 playing fields north of Appleton Rd looking south east, range 250m	High	N / A	None	None	None

### **Summary of Visual Effects**

- 4.85. The visual assessment has identified the following conclusions;
- 4.86. The application site is visually well contained due to prevailing topography, intervening builtform and established vegetative structures around its site boundaries and within its immediate setting. These substantially limit the visibility of the site to views from the immediate locality.
- 4.87. Specifically these views are afforded from the public footpaths which run adjacent or actually traverse the application site.
- 4.88. The built fabric of the settlement of Cumnor and associated urban tree cover provide an enclave of visual containment from the north, east and west.
- 4.89. In the wider context intervening built form, prevailing topography and offsite vegetation ensure that there is a natural visual envelope enjoyed by the site that mostly conceals it from all directions but from the south at medium range, the impact from here being partial and filtered views predominantly screened by mature tree belts forming the southern site boundary.
- 4.90. Given the localised high ground of Cumnor village within the surrounding low lying vale landscape, these strongly defined site boundaries are a key mitigating feature in visually screening the proposals from longer distance views.
- 4.91. This visual containment allows a small degree of transparent filtered views during the winter months but due to the density and species mix of intervening vegetative structures the development proposals will appear as visually recessive.
- 4.92. Where views are available, the new development will be seen within the overall context of the existing residential fringes of south Cumnor and as such the new built form will not be perceived as being out of place.

- 4.93. The retention and enhancement of the existing hedgerows and mature tree belt structures along the site's boundaries will maintain the character of the site setting, and ensure that the degree of separation and containment currently afforded to the site is maintained and enhanced where necessary.
- 4.94. The carefully considered development approach and the inclusion of a robust green infrastructure would help to further integrate the proposals into the fabric of the visual environment.
- 4.95. During summer months views of the development proposals will not be possible from the grade I Church Of St Michael located within the historic village core. A considered development set back within the north eastern corner of the application site would also mitigate a potential minor and partial view of proposed built form filtered through intervening winter deciduous tree cover.
- 4.96. The Cumnor Conservation Area including the grade II dwelling The Farm House at Cut's End is visually ameliorated from the development proposals by the substantial grounds of the listed property including ornamental garden vegetation including mature coniferous species and a tennis court along with its associated fence line. It is proposed that mitigation planting is incorporated along the western boundary with this listed property in order to provide a sensitive landscape buffer and achieve full visual screening to the setting of this heritage asset.
- 4.97. In addition the development proposals are sufficiently imperceptible in terms of distance from the setting of the two prevailing AONB designations, the Cotswolds and the North Wessex Downs.
- 4.98. Key views out of the site are available from the open tract of land within the central spine of the application site, where channelled views to the wider southern hinterland across rolling farmland are afforded, with the wooded high ground of Tubney Wood providing the horizon line in the far distance.

- 4.99. Overall and when applying professional judgement, it is considered that the development will generally have a significance of effect of moderate / minor upon the visual environment and that effects will be limited to the immediate setting of the site.

## **5. CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. Whilst the National Character Assessment and the District Landscape Character Assessment are useful in providing an overview of the landscape character of the wider setting of the application site, and while Aspect broadly agrees with this assessment, it is considered that they represent a broad-brush assessment which does not necessarily reflect the intricacies of the landscape character of the assessment site and its immediate setting.
- 5.2. As such Aspect has undertaken a more localised landscape character assessment of the application site and the surrounding landscape.
- 5.3. The site comprises a series of separate paddocks of meadow and semi-improved grassland, mostly given over to pasture. The predominant character of the application site lies in its cellular spatial network created by the mature field boundaries that provide a strong sense of enclosure. Generally the site character is overly dominated by the horizontal and vertical planes with little variation, apart from the voluminous display of meadow flora during summer months.
- 5.4. There is a rumble emanating from the A420 dual carriageway located some 500m to the east. In addition the user continues eastwards along the public footpath to arrive at the residential built up edge of the latter day estate Robsart Place which detracts from the sense of rurality of this sequential experience.
- 5.5. Indeed, the character of the site is heavily influenced by the close proximity of existing urban influences, not only the residential estate of Robsart Place but also the continuous line of ribbon development along Appleton Road.
- 5.6. The presence of these existing urban edges detracts from the tranquility and character of the site, promoting an urban fringe sub-character area, which relates more readily to the existing built up southern edge of Cumnor.

- 5.7. Although there is a reasonable degree of richness and sense of enclosure, the site itself is of relatively simple character, and indeed cannot be considered as being unique being that a similar character of paddock enclosures is evident to the north of Appleton Road. Overall the landscape sensitivity of the site is considered to be medium.
- 5.8. With regard to the effect of the proposals on the landscape character, it is considered that the development of the site in this location would not cause undue detrimental effects to the localised or wider character reviewed in the baseline assessment.
- 5.9. When considering the effect of the proposals on landscape character, it is acknowledged that there will inevitably be a loss of pastoral land to residential land use.
- 5.10. With regard to the National and Regional Character Areas, it is considered that the scale of the development will have a negligible significance of effect upon the landscape character.
- 5.11. Similarly at the district level, whilst green field land will be lost, this will be at a scale that can easily be accommodated by the surrounding landscape at the district level.
- 5.12. It has been shown that the landscape sensitivity of the site is medium and as such will be capable of accepting a degree of change that would not be regarded as being out of character within the overall quality and experience of the landscape.
- 5.13. The prominent existing site features that are considered major contributors of the site's landscape character will be retained within the scheme, these being the established tree belt boundaries, the internal field hedgerows and the finger shaped open tract of land. Thus they will provide a degree of local distinctiveness together with a time honoured element that will enhance the character of the new proposed residential landscape.



- 5.14. In addition this will be complemented by the provision of comprehensive green infrastructure across the scheme, not only the planting of street and garden trees but also the incorporation of a substantial network of public open spaces. Mitigation planting to reinforce site boundaries would also be sympathetic to the local character. These measures would combine to offset the loss of agricultural land and the sense of openness.
- 5.15. Although the introduction of residential land use will be prominent within the site, it is not considered uncharacteristic when set within the wider existing suburban/rural character of the Cumnor and its setting.
- 5.16. It is considered that the application site is disconnected from its wider surrounding landscape character, this being due to the residential built up edge along Appleton Road and Robsart Place which surrounds it to the west, north and eastern aspects. In addition the mature linear woodland structures along the southern site boundaries provide a visual disconnect. The topographic plateau upon which most of the application site lies also reinforces this disconnect to the south.
- 5.17. The special quality of the North Vale Coarallian Ridge has been described earlier in the baseline study. It can be confidently stated that its attributes of 'expansiveness, spaciousness, openness, with wide skies' are not in any way impeded due to the development proposals, given the retention of the application site's landscape features which mitigate any visual impact of the development. In addition, the cellular enclosure created by these pastoral paddocks do not naturally ally themselves to the special characteristics of this local landscape designation.
- 5.18. The baseline study also showed that the Green Belt land occupied by the application site is recommended for release from this designation. Indeed the *raison d'être* for the Green Belt is to protect the open countryside from the urban sprawl of Oxford and the coalescence with its satellite settlements. As such the land to the north of the village will be actively supporting this, but the application site in the south plays no part in this function. Naturally the green belt also protects the sense of

openness and prevents coalescence of smaller rural villages, however there is no imminent danger of this with either Eaton nor Appleton to the south of the village given the distances involved and scale of settlements.

- 5.19. In addition it can be seen that the development of the application site represents a logical and common sense approach to consolidating the village settlement boundary, closing off the disconnected enclave of land between the residential fringes in the south. It can in fact be considered as a large scale infill development. This would also follow past precedence in respect of the village expanding along its southern realms. However, the development proposals do not extend into the open countryside as indeed it does not encroach a notional line taken from the last property along the ribbon development of Appleton Road to the Robsart Place estate in the east. As such there is no significance of effect upon the sense of openness along the southern fringes of the settlement.
- 5.20. In respect of the effect upon the setting of the heritage assets and Conservation Area, one of the main reason for extending the CA boundary from the historical core of the village to abut the application site in the north west was to incorporate the listed grade II dwelling The Farm House. The intrinsic special quality of the setting of this heritage asset in part lies in the boundary stone wall feature along the street frontage with Appleton Road. There is no significance of effect upon the setting of the heritage asset as experienced from the Appleton Road frontage. The setting of the listed building south of Appleton Road is experienced by public footpath receptors within the application site. This listed property boasts extensive grounds which abut adjacent to the application site's north western land parcel.
- 5.21. This interface is heavily influenced by the presence of a tennis court along with its associated fenceline and garden vegetative structures including mature ornamental coniferous species. These portray a peri-urban character which detracts from the setting of the heritage asset itself. Mitigation proposals will include new structural planting along this garden boundary interface which will form a sensitive landscape buffer

and in time create a visual screen to the grounds or setting of the listed building. It should be noted that the building itself is fully contained by the intervening vegetative structures within its extensive grounds. Given these factors it is considered that there is no effect upon the setting of this heritage asset or indeed upon the Cumnor Conservation Area.

- 5.22. Whilst the intimate network of pastoral paddocks can be considered as part of the village setting from the south, given the retention of the landscape features as already stated there will be little impact upon how the transient receptor will experience the setting of the village. In regards to landscape character, there is a similar landscape of pastoral paddocks evident to the north of Appleton Road which forms the Leys Road character area in the Cumnor CA Appraisal. This landscape has been included within the CA boundary given its closer relationship with the historic village core and the key views available especially from the public footpaths which traverse across it. As such the application site is considered to be of lesser significance as indeed it too will have been included within the CA boundary extension.
- 5.23. There will naturally be a loss of amenity for public footpath users as a result of the development of the application site. However the east-west footpath traverses from residential fringe to residential estate and as such is heavily influenced by the urban fringe sub-character area.
- 5.24. The north-south footpath will however be much improved with an upgraded surface offering an enriched user experience through public open space which will promote a village green style linear park celebrating long distance views to the south.
- 5.25. Green infrastructure elements comprising attenuation basins framed by naturalistic landform and groups of sympathetic tree planting will form a new settlement edge to the southern site boundary, creating a sensitive diffused interface along the urban rural transition. The retention of the mature linear woodland structures will flank this central public open space to the west and east and will form a new and robust development edge to the southern fringes of the village.

- 5.26. This landscape and visual assessment considers that the application site represents an appropriate and logical addition to the village settlement that will not compromise the integrity of the surrounding open countryside.
- 5.27. In summary the proposals have sought to promote a sensitive and considered development approach, maintaining a level and layout of development which both respects and enhances the setting of the receiving environment and the localised context.
- 5.28. The proposals have incorporated a landscape led approach, with careful consideration given to the location of the proposed open space areas, the retention and enhancement of the existing boundary vegetation and new structure planting within the site. These features ensure that the proposals can be accommodated within this setting without detriment to the quality and character of the receiving environment.
- 5.29. Overall this site specific assessment offers a different perspective to the Landscape Capacity Study and considers the application site to have a high-medium capacity for change with a medium sensitivity in terms of landscape character. The magnitude of change is considered to be high providing a moderate / minor significance of effect upon landscape character.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1. The proposed development seeks to promote a sensitive and considered development, which relates to the existing settlement character of Cumnor. Consideration has been given to the scale and layout of the proposals, to the proposed landscape structure, and provision of open space seeking to promote a strong green infrastructure. Development proposals seek to retain and enhance the site's key existing green infrastructure assets in order to promote the site's character and distinctiveness. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated within its receiving environment without detriment to the setting of the village of Cumnor.

- 6.2. It is considered that the application site and receiving environment have the capacity to accommodate the proposals. The proposals will not result in significant harm to the landscape character or visual environment and, as such, it is considered that the proposed development can be successfully integrated in this location, is supportable from a landscape and visual perspective, and therefore meets the landscape requirements of both national and local planning policy.



APPENDIX 1  
ASPECT LANDSCAPE & VISUAL  
IMPACT METHODOLOGY

## **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

- 1.1. The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment have jointly published Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (2013) that gives guidance on carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), either as a standalone appraisal or part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This methodology takes on board the above guidance.
- 1.2. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and how the development will affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.
- 1.3. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. This process will identify and assess the potential effects of a development on the landscape resource and the visual environment.

### **1. Baseline study**

#### **Landscape**

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Outline the planning policy context, including any landscape designations.
- Establish the landscape baseline through a site visit and an assessment of published Landscape Character Assessments to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor), at community, local, national or international levels where appropriate.

#### **Visual**

- Define the scope of the assessment.
- Identify the extent of visual receptors within the study area, with the use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) where appropriate, and establish the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals.



## 2. Project description

The baseline study highlights clear opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The aspects of the scheme at each phase that will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape and visual amenity will need identifying. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design as a response to the local landscape and visual environment.

## 3. Description of Effects

The level of effect on both landscape and visual receptors should be identified in respect of the different components of the proposed development. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.

This will identify whether the effects are:

Adverse or Beneficial - beneficial effects would typically occur where a development could positively contribute to the landscape character or view. Neutral effects would include changes that neither add nor detract from the quality and character of an area or view. Adverse effects would typically occur where there is loss of landscape elements, or the proposal detracts from the landscape quality and character of an area or view.

Direct or Indirect – A direct effect will be one where a development will affect a view or the character of an area, either beneficially or adversely. An indirect effect will occur as a result of associated development i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.

Short, Medium or Long Term – this relates to the expected duration and magnitude of a development. Within this assessment the potential effects are assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 10, following completion of the development.

Reversible or Irreversible – can the resulting effect of a development be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.

#### 4. Significance of Effects (EIA only)

A final judgment on whether the effect is likely to be significant, as required by the Regulations. The summary should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative/ adverse effects. Mitigation measures need to be identified that may reduce the final judgement on the significance of any residual negative effects in the long term.

#### Assessing effects

##### ***Landscape Sensitivity***

- 1.4. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the susceptibility of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the value attached to different landscapes by society. The following table explains each threshold and the factors that make up the degree of sensitivity.

**Table 1: Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds**

Sensitivity	Definition
<b>High</b>	Landscape resource where there is a high susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of high value, have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, relatively intact and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets. Typical examples may be of National or County importance e.g. within the setting of National Parks, AONB's, Conservation Areas etc.
<b>Medium</b>	Landscape resource where there is a medium susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of medium value, good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or of cultural value locally. Typical examples may be designated for their value at District level.
<b>Low</b>	Landscape resource where there is a low susceptibility to change. Landscapes would be considered of low value, and contain evidence of previous landscape change.
<b>Negligible</b>	Landscape resource where there is little or no susceptibility to change. Typical landscapes are likely to be degraded, of weak landscape structure, intensive land uses, and require landscape restoration.

### ***Visual Sensitivity***

- 1.5. The sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change, and is categorised as high, medium, low or negligible. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity and also the value attached to particular views.

**Table 2: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>High</b>	Viewers on public rights of way whose prime focus is on the landscape around and are often very aware of its value. Occupiers of residential properties with primary views affected by the development. Examples include viewers within National landscape designations, users of National Trails, Long Distance Routes or Sustrans cycle routes, or within the setting of a listed building.
<b>Medium</b>	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views affected by the development, and users of rural lanes and roads. Examples include viewers within moderate quality landscapes, local recreation grounds, and outdoor pursuits.
<b>Low</b>	Viewers engaged in outdoor sport or recreation whose prime focus is on their activity, or those passing through the area on main transport routes whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape.
<b>Negligible</b>	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and not susceptible to changes in the surrounding landscape.

### ***Effect Magnitude***

- 1.6. The magnitude of change relates to the degree in which proposed development alters the fabric of the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

**Table 3: Magnitude of Change**

<b>Magnitude</b>	<b>Effect Definition</b>
<b>High</b>	Change resulting in a high degree of deterioration or improvement, or introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a

	landscape or view.
<b>Medium</b>	Change resulting in a moderate degree of deterioration or improvement, or constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
<b>Low</b>	Change resulting in a low degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view, or constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
<b>Negligible</b>	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of deterioration or improvement to a landscape or view.
<b>No Change</b>	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change due to being totally compatible with the local character or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

### ***Significance Threshold***

- 1.7. The magnitude of change is then considered against the sensitivity of the landscape resource as a receptor or the existing character of the panorama / view. In formulating the significance of effect, reasoned professional judgement is required which is explained within the assessment. This is carried out both in terms of the predicted effects on landscape character or on visual amenities. The significance thresholds are predicted as Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible and None, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects should be demonstrated at different stages (construction stage, operational stage year 0, and year 10).

**Table 4: Significance of Effect**

<b>Significance</b>	<b>Threshold Definition</b>
<b>Major</b>	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view, that has little or no ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
<b>Moderate</b>	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that may have the ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
<b>Minor</b>	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate

	change. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
<b>Negligible</b>	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view that has the ability to accommodate change.
<b>None</b>	It is also possible for a magnitude of change to occur that results in a neutral effect significance due to the change being compatible with local character or not visible.

- 1.8. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix will be used to determine the significance thresholds, through determining the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change.

**Table 5: Measuring Significance of Effect**

	Sensitivity of Receptors				
		<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negligible</b>
	<b>High</b>	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	<b>Medium</b>	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	<b>Low</b>	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	<b>Negligible</b>	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ None

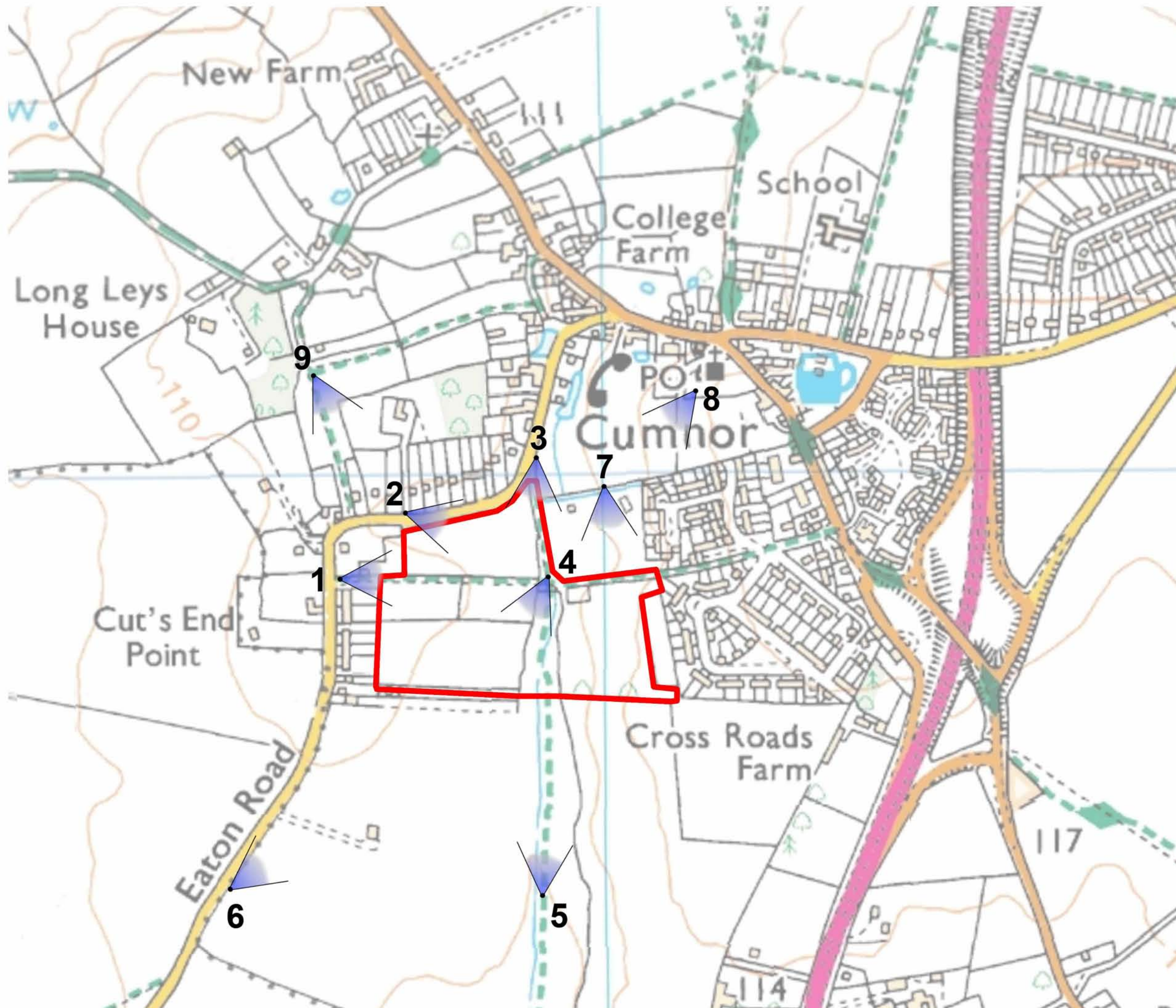
- 1.9. It should be noted that where there is no perceptible change in terms of the effect magnitude regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be none.
- 1.10. A written statement summarising the significance of effects is provided, assisted by the tables and matrices. The final judgement relies on professional judgement that is reasonable, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development in the final assessment.

### Assessing cumulative effects

- 1.11. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint and/or sequence of views. The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and what planning stage is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined should be included.

APPENDIX 2  
VISUAL ASSESSMENT





NOTES:  
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No Dimensions to be scaled from this drawing.



0m 50m 100m 200m

Key:



Application Site Boundary



Viewpoint Location

REV	DATE	NOTE	DRAWN	CHK'D

**aspect** landscape planning

TITLE  
**Cumnor South Land  
Viewpoint Location Plan**

CLIENT  
**South Cumnor Landowners  
and Jonathan Kenwright**

SCALE 1:5,000	DATE DEC 2015	DRAWN JM	CHK'D AM
DRAWING NUMBER 5855 / VLP	REVISION		





**Viewpoint 1**



**Viewpoint 2**





**Viewpoint 3**

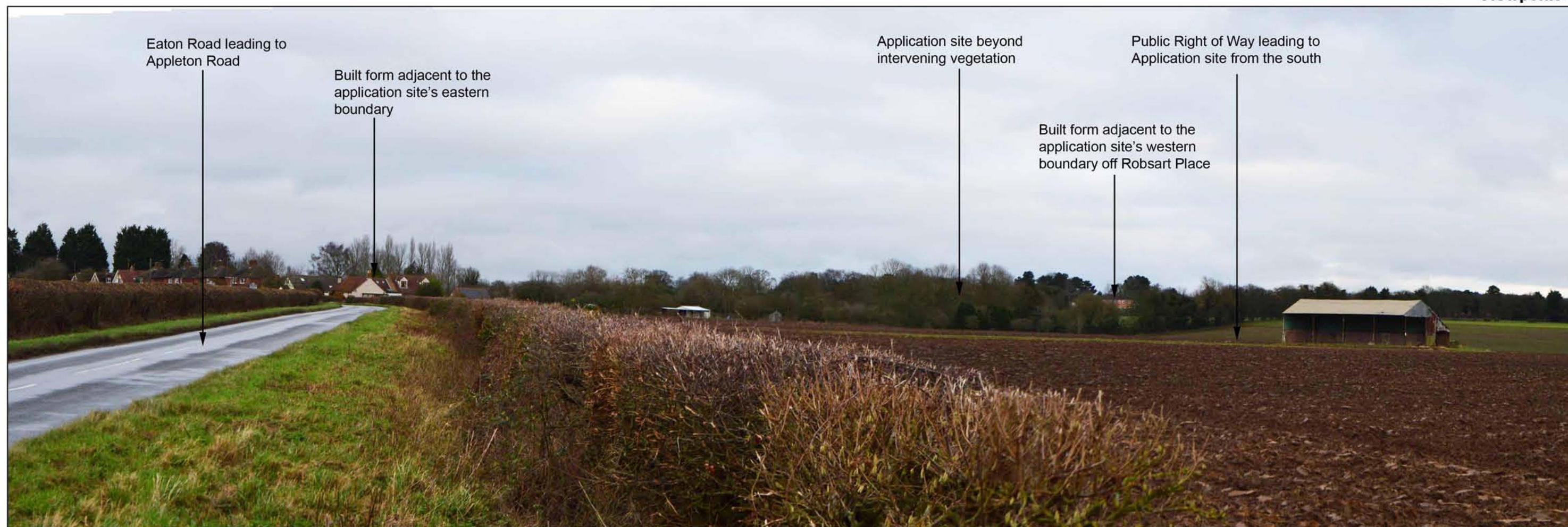


**Viewpoint 4**





**Viewpoint 5**



**Viewpoint 6**



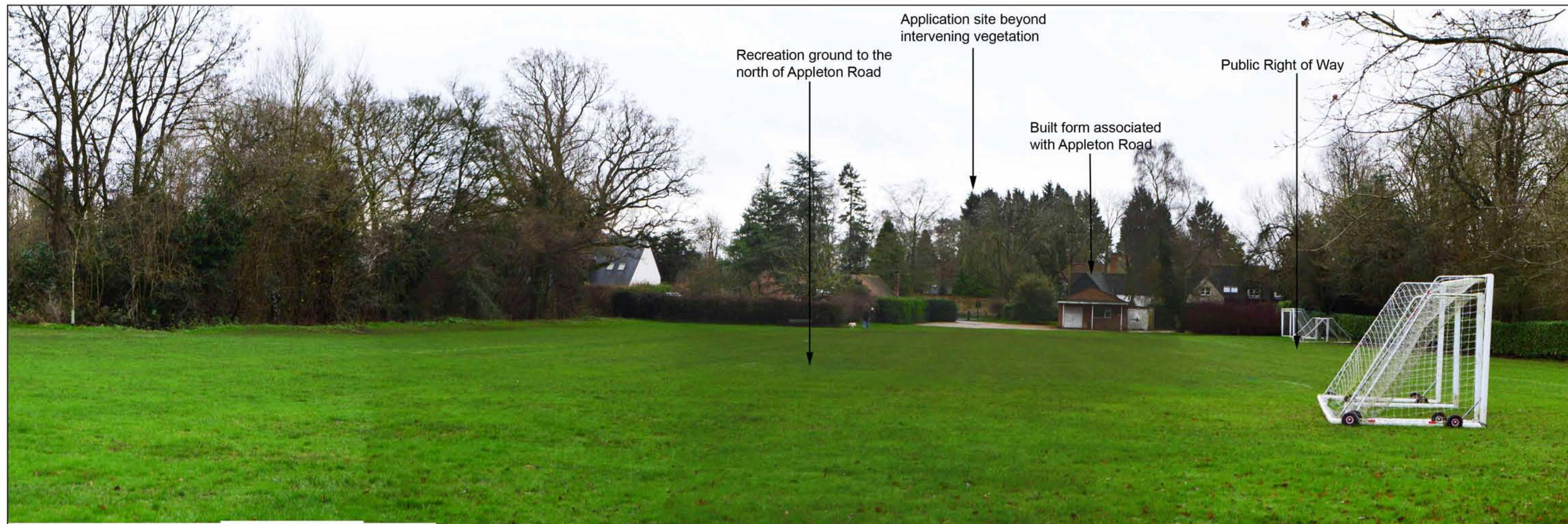


**Viewpoint 7**



**Viewpoint 8**





**Viewpoint 9**

APPENDIX 3  
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREAS  
108 & 109



# 108. Upper Thames Clay Vales

Supporting documents

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts  
and data

Landscape  
change

Analysis



[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



## Key characteristics

- Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography. The Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous clays and the wet valley bottoms give rise to enclosed pasture, contrasting with the more settled, open, arable lands of the gravel.
- The large river system of the River Thames drains the Vales, their headwaters flowing off the Cotswolds to the north or emitting from the springline along the Chilterns and Downs escarpments. Where mineral extraction takes place, pits naturally fill with water, and limestone gravels from the Cotswolds give rise to marl formation. There are a high number of nationally important geological sites.
- Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows and, particularly in the Aylesbury Vale and Cotswold Water Park, native black poplar.
- Wet ground conditions and heavy clay soils discourage cultivation in many places, giving rise to livestock farming. Fields are regular and hedged, except near the Cotswolds, where there can be stone walls. The Vale of White Horse is made distinct by large arable fields, and there are relict orchards on the Greensand.
- In the river corridors, grazed pasture dominates, with limited areas of historic wetland habitats including wet woodland, fen, reedbed and flood meadow. There are two areas of flood meadow designated for their importance at a European level as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are also rich and extensive ditch systems.
- Gravel extraction has left a legacy of geological exposures, numerous waterbodies and, at the Cotswold Water Park, a nationally important complex of marl lakes.
- Wetland habitat attracts regionally important numbers of birds including snipe, redshank, curlew and lapwing and wintering wildfowl such as pochard. Snake's head fritillary thrives in the internationally important meadows. The area also supports typical farmland wildlife such as brown hare, bats, barn owl, tree sparrow and skylark.
- Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, including its Capability Brown landscape, is the finest of many examples of historic parkland in this NCA. There are many heritage features, including nationally important survivals of ridge and furrow, Roman roads, deserted medieval villages and historic bridges.
- Brick and tile from local clays, timber and thatch are traditional building materials across the area, combined with limestone near the Cotswolds and occasional clunch and wichert near the Chilterns.
- Settlement is sparse on flood plains, apart from at river crossings, where there can be large towns, such as Abingdon. Aylesbury and Bicester are major urban centres, and the outer suburbs of Oxford and Swindon spread into this NCA. Market towns and villages are strung along the springlines of the Chilterns and Downs. Major routes include mainline rail, canals, a network of roads including the M40 and M4 and The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.



## Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Along the Thames and its tributaries, promote sustainable farming and best practice mineral working in order to conserve and restore semi-natural habitats, historic features, geodiversity, soil quality and soil carbon stores and also to regulate water flow in this area and downstream. Ensure conservation of Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation and North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation. Engage the public in river heritage and maintain traditional land management practices where appropriate.
- **SEO 2:** Manage farmland across the Upper Thames Clay Vales to produce food sustainably and to maintain sense of place. Taking a catchment approach, improve filtration of pollutants and regulation of water flow by realising a farmland habitat mosaic that incorporates strategic areas of wet grassland, reedbed, wet woodland and ponds as well as ditches and hedgerows.
- **SEO 3:** Ensure that heritage assets, especially characteristic features such as ridge and furrow, abandoned medieval villages, Roman roads, canals and historic parkland, including Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, are maintained in good condition. Integrate conservation of these features with sustainable food production and provide public access to key examples. Seek opportunities to restore the wider historic setting of a feature, particularly in relation to the historic Royal Hunting Forests of Bernwood, Braydon and Wychwood.
- **SEO 4:** Realise sustainable development that contributes positively to sense of place and built heritage. Ensure adequate greenspace in association with all development and most importantly in growing settlements such as Aylesbury and Swindon. Create and manage greenspace to provide benefits for biodiversity, floodwater management, filtration of pollutants, tranquillity and recreation, and secure strategic access routes between town and country.



Rural and urban areas are at high risk of flooding. There are opportunities to slow and store water run-off across the NCA.

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts  
and data

Landscape  
change

Analysis



[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



## Key characteristics

- Low, irregular wooded limestone ridge giving way to a series of isolated steep-sided tabular hills in the east which rise from the surrounding clay vales.
- Contrast between the moderately elevated limestone hills and ridges and the surrounding low-lying clay vales.
- Drained mostly by small springs and streams which run into the Thames, Thame and Ock.
- Well wooded – a third of the woodland is designated ancient woodland.
- Mixed pastoral and arable landscape with large, geometric fields divided by hedges and regularly spaced hedgerow trees punctuated by blocks of woodland.
- Fragmented but rare and important semi-natural habitats, including acid grassland, calcareous fens and flushes, wet woodland and calcareous grass heaths particularly around Frilford and Cothill.
- Evidence of previous land use such as iron-age and Romano-British settlements and ridge and furrow through to old quarries still visible in the landscape.
- Locally quarried limestone commonly used as building material for local houses.
- Settlement pattern of nucleated villages on the hill tops and along the springline with low density of dispersed settlement.
- Recreational opportunities include the Thames Path National Trail.



Southern damselfly at Cothill Fen SSSI, one of the many rare invertebrates found there.



## Summary

The Midvale Ridge National Character Area (NCA) is a band of low-lying limestone hills stretching east–west from the Vale of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire to Swindon. It is surrounded by the flat lands of the Oxfordshire clay vales, giving extensive views across the surrounding countryside. It is a predominantly agricultural area with a mixed arable/ pastoral farming landscape, cereals being the most important arable crop. The main towns are Swindon, at the western end, and Oxford, which lies across the centre of the area, but otherwise the settlement pattern is characterised by small nucleated villages along the top of the ridge and along the springline. The soils types are a mix of heavy rendzinas, stagnogleys and lighter sandy brown earths with small patches of sandy soils.

The area is significant for its geological sites and has been a focus for study since the 19th century. It has yielded fossils of international importance, including the holotypes for several ammonite species and several species of prehistoric sponges known only from the Faringdon area.

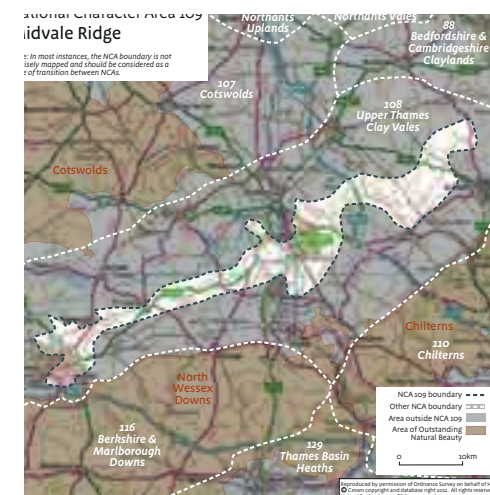
The unusual geology gives rise to habitats that are uncommon in the south of England, such as calcareous flushes and fens, calcareous heath and calcareous grassland. These in turn support a variety of rare plants and invertebrates. The narrowleaved marsh orchid, southern damselfly and many scarce wetland flies can be found in the wetlands while the heathland is home to several species of solitary bees. Although the NCA is small, it is also host to other key habitats such as lowland dry acid grassland and acid heath. One of the largest remaining populations of the snakeshead fritillary can be found in the area.

The NCA is notably more wooded in character than the surrounding Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA with about 9 per cent woodland coverage. To the north-

east of Oxford lies Shabbington Wood, the largest remnant of the former Royal Forest of Bernwood, which supports an important population of the nationally rare black hairstreak butterfly. Today, about a third of the woodland in the NCA is designated as ancient woodland.

Evidence of previous land use is still clearly visible across the area from iron-age and Romano-British settlements and nationally important examples of ridge and furrow to the remains of quarries. The continued expansion of Swindon and Oxford will present challenges for preserving the landscape character and biodiversity of the ridge but also opportunities for improving the provision of green infrastructure and access. The NCA is dependent for potable water on neighbouring areas such as the Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA<sup>4</sup> and it is expected that, with increasing population, demand will become more acute. Changes in agriculture and continued mineral extraction are also likely to intensify pressure on the area's soil, water and biodiversity resources.

There are many opportunities for recreation within Oxford itself, the Thames Path National Trail passes through the NCA and two national cycle routes cross the ridge. Some 29 per cent of the NCA is designated as greenbelt around the edge of Oxford.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

## Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

**SEO 1:** Maintain the historic environment and cultural character of the Midvale Ridge by ensuring that permitted development is well integrated to preserve local distinctiveness and sense of place and providing green space and recreational opportunities for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

**SEO 2:** Manage, enhance and expand the valuable semi-natural habitats of the Midvale Ridge such as fens, grassland and calcareous heathland to benefit biodiversity, prevent soil erosion, improve water regulation and quality, support pollinators and protect and enhance wildlife corridors.

**SEO 3:** Manage and enhance the woodland cover and expand areas of native broadleaved woodland to benefit landscape character and biodiversity, for carbon sequestration, to prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, supply renewable fuel and to provide access and recreation opportunities.

**SEO 4:** Maintain and enhance the National Character Area's internationally important geological heritage for the educational benefits it provides, its contribution to a sense of place and history and to increase recreational opportunities.



Old clay pits at Brill Common.

APPENDIX 4  
OWLS: ROLLING FARMLAND

## Landscape Types:

### Rolling Farmland



## 12. ROLLING FARMLAND

### Regional Character Areas

Buckinghamshire Vale, Upper Thames Vale, Midvale Ridge, Vale of White Horse, North Wessex Downs.

### Location

The landscape type is largely associated with the rolling landscapes of the Midvale Ridge, extending from Watchfield and Fernham to Appleton and Dry Sandford. It includes the lower slope of the ridge between Holton to Denton, and, in the Vale of White Horse, the more undulating areas to the east of Didcot. It also covers the rolling landscape at the foot of North Wessex Downs.

### Overview

A landscape with a prominent rolling landform and distant views from hillsides and across the surrounding low-lying vale. It is associated with large open arable fields and localised blocks of ancient woodland.

### Key characteristics

- Prominent rolling landform.
- Large, geometric arable fields enclosed by a weak hedgerow pattern.
- Thinly distributed hedgerow trees.
- Locally prominent blocks of ancient woodland.
- Small to medium-sized villages.

### Geology and landform

The underlying geology of the Midvale Ridge is a mix of corallian limestone and calcareous

sandstone. To the east of Didcot there is a mix of Gault Clay and Upper Greensand, marking the transition between the downs and the lower-lying vale. It is also characterised by free-drained soils associated with the corallian beds and chalk at the foot of North Wessex Downs. The northern parts of the landscape are underlain by Upper Lias Clay. Outcrops of limestone and sandstone give rise to a smooth, rolling landform which, in parts, is dissected by minor valleys emphasising its undulating nature.

### **Land use and vegetation**

This is a very intensively managed landscape dominated by arable cropping and some improved grassland. Semi-improved pasture occurs locally in areas around Dry Sandford and Holton, and there is some unimproved calcareous grassland on the steeper hillsides at the foot of North Wessex Downs, with Blewburton Hill being a good example. Another characteristic feature which is locally prominent on some of the steeper slopes is the medium to large-sized blocks of ancient woodland. In some areas there are scattered small to medium-sized deciduous plantations. In the very intensively cultivated areas within the Vale of White Horse, tree cover is largely confined to small tree clumps surrounding farmhouses.

In certain areas there are small streams and ditches lined by trees, strips of semi-natural woodland and pasture. They offer some intimacy in an otherwise open, intensively managed landscape. Good examples are Sandford and Pennyhooks Brooks, the ditches around Holton, the streams at Fernham, Appleton and parts of the North Wessex Downs.

### **Cultural pattern**

The field pattern is weak and dominated by large rectangular arable fields. Those fields which are managed as semi-improved grassland tend to be smaller. They are enclosed by low, species-poor hedges consisting mainly of hawthorn, blackthorn and elm. In some cases there is a scattering ash, oak and dead elm, particularly where hedges have been removed. In places the hedges are taller, thicker and support more trees, particularly along roadsides and adjacent to semi-improved grassland. Overall, the views are open, distant and on the higher ground there is a distinctive expansive character to the landscape. In other areas the landscape is much more enclosed and views are either filtered through hedgerow trees or framed by the rolling landform, high roadside hedges and woods.

The settlement pattern is characterised by small to medium-sized villages. Originally, many of these would have been nucleated in shape but, as a result of more recent expansion, they have become linear and sprawling, particularly at Appleton and Wootton. The settlement pattern is also characterised by small hamlets and sparsely scattered farmhouses. The density of housing is higher along parts of the Midvale Ridge, especially between Buckland and Eaton and around Dry Sandford. In a few of the smaller villages, such as Eaton, Buckland, Mackney and Fernham, and in the centre of some others, including Great Coxwell, Shrivenham and Denton, the vernacular character of the buildings is strong. It is quite prominent in most of the villages at the foot of North Wessex Downs, where the nucleated character of the settlements is also better preserved. These particular villages were originally located at the foot of the Downs to take advantage of the springlines emerging at the junction of the chalk and clay. The choice of building materials varies throughout the landscape type. Within the Midvale Ridge there is limestone, or limestone with bricks framing the windows, and thatched roofs or clay tiles. In the Vale of White Horse and North Wessex Downs it is mainly red bricks and clay tiles whereas the older houses are often bricks and timber frames with thatched roofs. In villages at the foot of the Downs some of the houses are built of clunch, a hard type of chalk.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

This rolling farmland landscape is dominated by large-scale arable farming, but still supports



a relatively wide range of locally important and priority habitats.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Bioscores are predominantly low-medium to medium, although in certain areas this rises to medium-high to high.
- Priority habitats include species-rich hedges, neutral and wet grassland, fen , reedswamp and species-rich watercourses.

### **General Description**

This relatively large landscape type occupies around 5.6% of the rural county. Although it is dominated by intensive arable farming, it still supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Ancient semi-natural woodland and parkland are other important habitats to be found. A number of priority habitats have been recorded including calcareous, neutral and wet grassland, reedswamp, fen and species-rich watercourses. The Midvale Ridge is notable for many of these priority habitats, and the area around Cothill is particularly important in this respect as it includes sites of international importance such as Cothill Fen.

## **LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS**

### **A. Godington Hall (BC/2)**

#### **Landscape character**

Medium-sized arable fields dominate the landscape and there is some semi-improved grassland. Fields are enclosed by low, well-managed hawthorn and blackthorn hedges. There are scattered oak, ash and willow trees and small copses surrounding farmhouses. There are also a number of scattered small deciduous woodlands dominated by oak and ash, as well as some mixed plantations and a medium-sized block of ancient woodland.

#### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/Bioband: 31/LM

This area supports a limited range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland and plantation, semi-improved grassland, scrub, and species-poor hedges with trees. There are no recorded priority habitats, but there is some ancient semi-natural woodland.

### **B. Kidlington (north) (UT/31)**

#### **Landscape character**

The area is characterised by a mixture of small-sized arable fields and some semi-improved grassland. They are enclosed by intact hawthorn hedges with ash trees. A dense corridor of hawthorn and ash fringes the Oxford canal. Woodland cover is limited to a poplar plantation and some hawthorn and ash scrub alongside the railway.

#### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 33/LM

This area supports a range of locally important habitats including plantation, scrub, semi-improved grassland, canal, and species-poor hedges with trees. There were no recorded priority habitats.

## **C. Watchfield (CR/1)**

### **Landscape character**

This area is dominated by large, rectangular arable fields. There are some smaller fields consisting of wet grassland bordering Pennyhooks Brook. Fields are generally enclosed by hawthorn and blackthorn hedges, and tree cover is limited to mature oak and sycamore in the hedges and a few scattered tree clumps. On some slopes there are surviving blocks of small to medium-sized ancient semi-natural woodland. Most of the field boundaries are low, and many internal field boundaries have either been removed or replaced by fences, thus creating an open landscape with distant views over to the Vale of White Horse.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/Bioband: 81/M

There are a number of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Within the area are a few scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland to the east of Watchfield and adjacent to the county boundary south of Coleshill Park. Recorded priority habitats include some wet grassland and fen adjacent to Pennyhooks Brook and some calcareous grassland and fen at Tuckmill Meadows. Both these relatively small and isolated sites are found along the Pennyhooks Brook valley.

## **D. Fernham (WH/25)**

### **Landscape character**

This area is characterised by medium-sized, regularly-shaped arable and improved grassland fields. They are enclosed by reasonably intact hawthorn and elm hedges, and in some of these there are mature oak and ash trees. Tree cover consists mainly of small blocks of deciduous and ancient semi-natural woodland, and a watercourse lined by ash and willow is a locally prominent feature.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 52/LM

This area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. No priority habitats were recorded, although there is some ancient semi-natural woodland north of the village.

## **E. Appleton (CR/7)**

### **Landscape character**

The area is dominated by large, geometric arable fields and some large fields of improved grassland. They are enclosed by hawthorn and elm hedges. Towards the north, where the land slopes steeply into the Upper Thames Vale, some of the fields with semi-improved grassland are bounded by small blocks of ancient woodland and overgrown hedges. Hedgerow trees of oak, ash and dead elm are thinly scattered throughout the area, and where hedges have been removed they are the only structural elements remaining in the landscape. They are denser along parish boundaries. Discrete large blocks of ancient woodland, such as Pusey Common Woodland and Appleton Upper Common, are locally prominent. Significant parts of these woods have been planted with conifers. Occasionally, small deciduous and mixed plantations add structure to an otherwise open landscape. There is also a dense corridor of willows and some oak bordering the stream at the eastern boundary of the area. The field pattern is generally in a poor condition, with hedges

frequently low, fragmented and in many places removed altogether. This results in a large-scale, open landscape with views which are confined locally by the large woods and rolling landform.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 74/M

This area has a range of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several significant blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Appleton Upper Common, which is around 50 ha and in favourable condition and management. There is also a small area of neutral grassland, which falls partially within the landscape type near Cumnor.

## **F. Dry Sandford (CR/8)**

### **Landscape character**

The area has large open arable fields to the west of Sandford Brook and smaller fields of semi-improved grassland to the east. The arable fields are enclosed by a fragmented pattern of low hawthorn and elm hedges with few hedgerow trees, resulting in an open landscape. Where grassland dominates, the hedges are often tall, thick and species-rich, with shrubs such as dogwood, spindle, wild privet and field maple, particularly along roadsides. Hedgerow trees are also more prominent in this area, and wet secondary woodland and calcareous fen next to Sandford Brook are a notable feature. To the south, the landscape is dominated by Abingdon airfield. There is a small patch of acid grassland at the edge of the airfield, and part of it is enclosed by species-rich hedges that include spindle, dogwood and wild privet.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 149/H

Although this area only supports a limited range of locally important habitats including semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses, it is particularly notable for its priority habitats. These include the calcareous fen, species-rich watercourses and ponds associated with Cothill Fen and Dry Sandford Pit, some of which are of international significance. There are also areas of wet woodland, some ancient semi-natural woodland and species-rich hedgerows with trees. A narrow strip of acid grassland survives along the road verge to the north of Abingdon airfield.

## **G. Horspath (CR/18)**

### **Landscape character**

Medium-sized arable fields dominate this area, but there is some semi-improved grassland and pony paddocks on the slopes. Fields are generally enclosed by relatively intact low hawthorn hedges, and there is also a large block of ancient woodland on the slope.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 57/LM

There is only a limited range of locally important habitats including semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges. The main features of interest are Brasenose Wood, which is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland, and a small patch of neutral grassland.

## **H. Denton to Holton (CR/16)**

### **Landscape character**

The landscape is dominated by medium to large-sized arable fields, particularly on the slopes around Denton and to the south of Cuddesdon. Around Holton there are some smaller fields of semi-improved grassland. Throughout the area the pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees adds coherence to the landscape. Hedgerow trees include oak, sycamore, willow and poplar. Around Holton there are more mature trees and the density is higher. This area is also more wooded in appearance. Holton Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland and there are a number of smaller deciduous plantations, mainly poplar or willow, and trees bordering watercourses. The hedges are generally low, gappy, and sometimes, in places such as Cuddesdon and Denton, removed altogether.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 66/M

The area supports locally important habitats such as deciduous plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Part of Holton Wood falls within the area and is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland. Adjacent to the wood there is some neutral grassland.

## **I. Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (WH/9)**

### **Landscape character**

This is a landscape of medium to large-sized arable and grass fields. They are enclosed by hawthorn, blackthorn and elm hedges with some oak and ash trees. Towards the north, where it slopes down to the River Thames and Little Wittenham, it has a more wooded appearance. There are small to medium-sized plantations, a semi-natural oak and ash woodland and a large block of ancient woodland. Most of the internal field hedges are fragmented, whereas the roadside hedges are intact, tall and thick. Views are framed by the woodlands and tall hedges.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 42/LM

A number of locally important habitats were recorded including plantations, deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland, and species-poor hedges with trees. There were no priority habitats, but Little Wittenham Wood, at just under 70 ha, is a significant block of ancient semi-natural woodland on the slope to the south of the River Thames.

## **J. Mackney (WH/8)**

### **Landscape character**

The hill is dominated by large-sized arable fields. It is an open landscape with few hedges. Tree cover is largely confined to small ornamental plantations surrounding farmhouses. At the foot of the hill there are reed-fringed ditches lined with poplars.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 33/LM

There are a few locally important habitats including species-poor hedges and tree-lined species-rich watercourses at the foot of the hill.

## **K. The Lees (WH/6)**

### **Landscape character**

Large-sized arable fields dominate the landscape. Hedges have been largely removed throughout most of the area resulting in an open, large-scale landscape. Tree cover is limited to distinctive groups of trees around farmhouses and farm buildings. There is a block of ancient semi-natural woodland, which stands out in this otherwise treeless landscape.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 35/LM

There is a limited range of habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations and some species-poor hedges with trees. There is also a linear strip of ancient semi-natural woodland to the west of Cholsey.

## **L. Blewbury (WD/6)**

### **Landscape character**

The landscape is dominated by large-sized arable fields. There are a few surviving areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland. Fields are enclosed by hawthorn and elm hedges with sparsely scattered ash and elm trees. Hedges are generally fragmented except where they border tracks. Throughout the area there are a number of different sized deciduous and mixed linear plantations. Many of the watercourses are lined by willow, ash, poplar and linear strips of semi-natural woodland. These add to the tree cover and create locally intimate landscapes.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 96/MH

This area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Priority habitats include small areas of calcareous grassland, less than 5 ha, on Blewburton and Lollington Hills. There are also tree-lined species-rich springlines draining off the chalk, including Ginge Brook and Letcombe Cress Beds.

## **FORCES FOR CHANGE**

- Intensive arable farming has resulted in the large-scale fragmentation and removal of hedges, particularly internal field boundaries. The remaining hedges tend to be low and intensively maintained.
- There is some impact from residential development in the villages. It consists mainly of moderate to large-scale new housing development, which is not always in keeping in with the traditional character of the villages. In places, there is extensive ribbon development.
- Some large agricultural buildings and barns are visually prominent, out of scale, poorly located and using inappropriate materials.
- Overhead power lines around Moulsoford and Horspath are visually intrusive in this open landscape.
- Abingdon airfield, with its associated depots and large-scale housing, has had a visual impact on the open rural landscape.
- Harwell laboratories, which cover a large area, is a very dominant feature and out of character with the surrounding open, farmed landscape of the North Wessex Downs.

### **Landscape strategy**

**Conserve and enhance the surviving pattern of woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses. Minimise the impact of built development through appropriate location, choice of building materials, and the use of locally characteristic tree and shrub species.**

## Guidelines

### Landscape Character

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Promote the sustainable management of existing ancient semi-natural woodland to safeguard its long-term survival.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This includes limestone or limestone and bricks and clay roof tiles in the Midvale Ridge, and red bricks and clay tiles in the Vale of White Horse and North Wessex Downs.

## Biodiversity Strategy

**Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are safeguarded, in favourable condition and management, and enhanced to satisfy the actions and targets identified within the relevant habitat and species action plans. Safeguard, maintain and enhance all locally important habitats in a way which is appropriate to the landscape character of the area. Promote agri-environment schemes which will benefit biodiversity in general and protected species and farmland birds in particular.**

## Guidelines

- Most of the unimproved calcareous grassland within the landscape type has a statutory or non-statutory wildlife designation. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management. With S.S.S.I.s this can be achieved, where appropriate, through formal agreement between the landowner and English Nature. For county wildlife sites this can be promoted with advice from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the targeting of agri-environment schemes. The aim should be to establish a balance between species-rich calcareous grassland and scrub. Opportunities for extending and linking this type of priority habitat are fairly limited as many of the existing sites are small and isolated. Opportunities for expanding this habitat include the establishment and management of field margins/buffer strips adjacent to existing calcareous grassland habitat using native wildflower species appropriate to the area.
- Cothill Fen, Dry Sandford Pit and Tuckmill Meadows support calcareous fen and species-rich watercourses and ponds. The former has been designated as a Special Area of Conservation and the last two are S.S.S.I.s and nature reserves owned and managed by the local wildlife trust. The priority is to ensure that they remain in favourable condition and management through formal agreement between the landowners and English Nature. Opportunities for successfully expanding this habitat type throughout the landscape type are limited, although it may be feasible to make improvements to the water catchment areas centred on Sandford and Pennyhooks Brooks to maintain and extend this rare calcareous fen habitat.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland is a significant feature throughout the landscape type. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management,

particularly those which have been designated S.S.S.I.s or county wildlife sites. Opportunities for linking these sites would be difficult because of their isolation, but it may be feasible to expand their size through woodland grant schemes using appropriate tree and shrub species.

- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of the landscape type. Priority should be given to safeguarding, maintaining and expanding this resource using appropriate tree and shrub species, particularly in those local character areas where they remain a significant feature.
- Tree-lined watercourses are a feature throughout the landscape type. They should be safeguarded and enhanced by planting species such as ash and willows, pollarding willows where appropriate, and establishing buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds.
- Opportunities for the establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland and small deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in order to strengthen wildlife corridors and enhance the local landscape character.
- Promote the use of agri-environment schemes such as conservation headlands, overwintered stubbles, and winter-sown crops to benefit farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers.

### **Key Recommendations**

- **Safeguard and enhance landscape character of the surviving hedgerow network, ancient semi-natural woodlands, species-rich hedgerows and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all priority habitats are in favourable condition and management and seek opportunities for extending and linking these habitats whenever appropriate and practicable.**

APPENDIX 5  
OWLS: WOODED ESTATELANDS



## Landscape Types:

### Wooded Estatelands



#### 19. WOODED ESTATELANDS

##### Regional Character Areas

Cotswolds, Northamptonshire Uplands, Midvale Ridge and Upper Thames Vale.

##### Location

The landscape type includes parklands at the eastern end of the Cotswolds, ranging from the area around Blenheim Park, Steeple Barton, Middleton Park and as far as Shelswell Park to the north of Bicester. Further south it includes Eynsham Hall Park and Bladon Heath Wood and it also covers the majority of the wooded and parkland areas in the undulating landscape of the Corallian Ridge.

##### Overview

A wooded estate landscape characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character.

##### Key Characteristics

- Rolling topography with localised steep slopes.
- Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes.
- Large parklands and mansion houses.
- A regularly-shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields.
- Small villages with strong vernacular character.

##### Geology and landform

The geology of the landscape type varies according to the locality. Much of the landscape

across the Cotswold area is underlain by a mix of Cornbrash and Great Oolite limestone. The geology in the area around Bicester and further south is dominated by Oxford Clay, whilst the landscape across the Corallian Ridge is underlain by Corallian beds, which are a mix of sands and sandy limestones.

The landform is generally rolling, ranging from gently rolling to undulating. Across the Corallian Ridge the landform is strongly undulating, and is steeply sloping in places resulting in small valleys. At the junction of the Corallian beds and the clay vale, springlines emerge and small streams flow through the valleys.

### **Land use and vegetation**

The landscape has a mix of land uses but is largely dominated by arable farming. On the steeper slopes there is some semi-improved grassland, as well as pockets of calcareous grassland, acid grassland and gorse. This is a well-wooded landscape with large, prominent blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland often located on the steeper slopes. In addition, there is a significant number of smaller, mainly mixed plantations that are scattered throughout much of the area and this adds to the overall sense of enclosure. Dense corridors of willows and poplars, and belts of semi-natural woodland bordering the valley streams are other locally prominent features.

### **Cultural pattern**

The field pattern is generally characterised by a geometric pattern of medium to large-sized fields, with arable cropping in the larger fields. A less regular pattern of enclosure is associated with the strongly undulating landform across the Corallian Ridge close to places like Faringdon, Cumnor and Boar's Hill and around Beckley and Shotover Country Park. Fields are generally enclosed by woodland, as well as thorn and elm hedges. There are also a number of species-rich hedges bordering roads and close to woods. Although there are only a few mature oak and ash hedgerow trees, they still contribute to the wooded character of the landscape. They are more obvious in the vicinity of ancient woodland and quite sparse where arable cropping is dominant. Views are generally filtered through trees and framed by woodland blocks. Large parklands with their distinctive country houses, extensive woodland and ornamental lakes at Blenheim, Middleton, Eynsham Hall and Buscot are also very typical of this landscape type and underline its estate character.

The settlement pattern is characterised by small settlements as well as scattered farmhouses in the wider countryside. The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and this is reinforced by features such as stone walls. The most widely used building materials are limestone, stone and clay tiles. There are also limestone houses with thatched roofs at Fyfield, Tubney, Hatford, Beckley and Stanton St. John. Stone with bricks around the windows is characteristic in villages such as Sunningwell, Cumnor and South Hinksey. Red bricks with clay tiles can be seen at Nuneham Courtenay, timber framed houses with thatched roofs at Horton-cum-Studley and ironstone houses at Duns Tew.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

### **Overview**

This landscape type is associated with parklands and their associated estate lands. It has a wide range of both locally important and priority habitats.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Predominantly medium to very high bioscores.
- Priority and important habitats include ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedgerows with trees, unimproved grassland, fen, reedswamp and species-rich ponds and watercourses.

## General Description

This is a very large landscape type occupying around 11.2% of the rural county. It includes a large part of the Midvale Ridge and a significant part of the Cotswolds character area. It is a diverse area and supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. Within the Midvale Ridge and on the corallian limestone there are many substantial blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Stanton Great, Brasenose and Waterperry Woods to the east of Oxford. To the west of Oxford, around Frilford, there are significant areas of acid grassland, heath and calcareous fen. There are also areas of limestone grassland within Chilswell Valley to the west of the City and in the Cotswolds near Fawler and Charlbury. The many parklands support a wide range of habitats including mature and veteran trees, species-rich lakes and semi-improved grassland, with Blenheim probably being the best example. In addition, there are smaller areas of neutral and wet grassland and reedswamp. There are also a number of important geological sites including Stratton Audley and Shellingford quarries.

## LOCAL CHARACTER AREAS

### A. Blenheim Park (CW/29)

#### Landscape character

The field pattern is dominated by large-scale arable fields and some grass fields around Combe. Woodland cover is prominent throughout the landscape, with large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations. The woods of the Ditchley estate consist mainly of ash, beech and some hazel coppice, whilst the woodland at Blenheim is mainly ash and oak, with a substantial number of conifers. Parklands are very characteristic in this area, including the picturesque landscapes at Blenheim and Ditchley. Mature hedgerow trees are also thinly scattered throughout and they are mainly oak, ash, beech and some sycamore. Fields are enclosed by woodland and thorn hedges. Roadside hedges are often species-rich and gappy, and internal field hedges are fragmented and lost in places.

#### Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: 128/H

This area supports locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including Out Wood which is just under 20 ha in size. Species-rich hedgerows are found throughout the area particularly in association with the ancient woods. Blenheim Park with its veteran trees, lakes and woodlands is particularly important. There are small surviving patches of limestone grassland along the Saltway near Ditchley and in the parish of Fawler. An important geological site is located near Charlbury.

### B. North Aston (CW/51)

#### Landscape character

The area is mainly characterised by large-scale arable fields and some improved grassland. Surviving acid grassland and gorse can be found close to Tackley Wood. Large blocks of ancient woodland, mixed plantations and small woods add variety to an otherwise intensively managed landscape. The composition of the woods is mainly oak and ash but, at places like Tackley Wood, they have been largely replanted with conifers. Thorn hedges are generally low and gappy, but are taller in the vicinity of Tackley Wood. Hedgerow trees, consisting mainly of ash, some sycamore and occasional oak, are sparsely scattered particularly in the area around Tackley Wood. There are also some species-rich hedges in the southern part of the area. The parkland at Steeple Barton, with its mature trees, lakes and pasture, adds to the diversity of the landscape.

## **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 135/H

The area has a number of locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub and species-poor hedges with trees. It also has a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands, such as Tackley Wood, some of which have been substantially replanted with conifers. Species-rich hedgerows with trees feature in the southern part of the area, and the parkland at Steeple Barton is important for its mature trees and lakes. There is some surviving acid grassland and gorse at Tackley Heath, but much of the common is dominated by bracken.

## **C. Middleton Stoney (CW/59, CW/58, UT/37)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is dominated by large arable fields and localised improved grassland. There are smaller grass fields around villages, particularly Bletchington and Kirtlington. Woodland is a strong landscape element, and large woodland blocks are associated with the parklands and estates. It is mainly ancient semi-natural woodland, with species such as ash, oak, hazel, and field maple, as well as mixed plantations. Throughout the landscape, there are belts of young mixed and coniferous plantations next to roadside hedges and they often function as field boundaries. Hedgerow trees such as ash, sycamore and occasionally oak are found in some roadside hedges, but they are sparser to the north where there is more intensive arable cropping. In parts there are dense corridors of willow and ash, belts of semi-natural woodland and poplar plantations bordering watercourses. Hedgerows vary from tall, thick species-rich hedges with shrubs such as wayfaring tree, dogwood, hazel, field maple, spindle and wild privet through to low, gappy internal field hedges. Parklands are a prominent feature throughout and they include Middleton, Bignell and Tusmore Parks in the north and Kirtlington and Bletchington Parks in the south.

## **Biodiversity**

Bioscores/biobands: 199/VH: 49/LM: 71/M

This combined local character area supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, scrub, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has a number of important and priority habitats and these are largely associated with the broad limestone plateau to the east of the Cherwell valley. They include ancient semi-natural woodland such as Stoke Bushes and species-rich hedgerows with trees. Kirtlington and Middleton Parks with their associated trees, woodlands and lakes are also very important. There are surviving fragments of limestone grassland, but these are very small and often restricted to old quarries such as Ardley and Stratton Audley. These quarries are also of geological importance. A site noted for its calcareous fen falls partially within the area near Weston on the Green.

## **D. Hethe (BC/4)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has medium-sized geometrically-shaped fields and a mix of land uses dominated by arable farming. Occasionally, patches of gorse and unimproved grassland can be found, particularly close to woodland. The landscape is characterised by interlocking large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, mixed plantations and smaller deciduous and conifer plantations. The composition of the woods is ash, oak and some beech. Extensive areas of parkland are an integral part of the woodland complex at Shelswell Park. Many mature oak and ash hedgerow trees emphasize the strong wooded character of this area. Hedges consist mainly of hawthorn, elm and field maple and are generally in good condition, but become gappier where there is intensive arable farming.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 134/H

The area has several locally important habitats including plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedgerows with trees and tree-lined watercourses. It also has parkland and its associated habitats of mature trees and lakes at Shelswell, ancient semi-natural woodland including Spilsmere Wood and some wet woodland. There is some surviving limestone grassland and scrub on the old disused railway to the north of the area.

**E. Freeland (UT/24)****Landscape Character**

The area has medium-sized fields with a mix of land uses including some small pasture fields on the steep valley sides in the eastern part of the area. The landscape has a very strong wooded character, resulting from the large ancient semi-natural woods and mixed plantations of ash, oak and conifers that are largely associated with the parklands at Eynsham Hall and Freeland. The mature oak and ash hedgerow trees reinforce this wooded character, although they are sparser to the south of Cogges Wood where arable farming dominates. The belts of semi-natural woodland associated with the valley sides and floor reinforce the intimacy of this pastoral landscape. Fields are enclosed by thorn hedges and woods, and the grass fields on the valley sides are bordered by watercourse trees and fences. Hedges are generally tall and in good condition, but are more intensively maintained and gappy where they enclose arable land.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 99/MH

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several significant blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Cogges and Pinsley Woods. Eynsham Hall Park with its mature trees and lakes is also important. A small area of neutral grassland near Freeland partially overlaps with an adjacent landscape type.

**F. Bladon (UT/27)****Landscape Character**

The area is characterised by a well-defined, large-scale, geometric pattern of arable fields enclosed by thorn and elm hedges. Large blocks of ancient woodland are locally prominent. Burleigh Wood has been largely replanted with conifers. There are a few hedgerow oak and ash trees, which are largely confined to roadside hedges. Overall, the hedges are low and in good condition, but some of the internal field hedges are gappy and intensively maintained.

**Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 31/LM

Locally important habitats include plantations and species-poor hedges with trees. The only other significant habitat is ancient semi-natural woodland including Burleigh Wood, but this has been largely replanted with conifers.

**G. Buscot Park (UT/1)****Landscape Character**

The area is characterised by a geometrically-shaped, large-scale field pattern dominated by

arable farming with some improved grassland. There are large blocks of ancient woodland which are part of the Buscot estate, and these are locally prominent features. Views are also interrupted by medium-sized, mixed plantations. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges which are fragmented in places. They are generally taller and thicker next to ditches and along parish boundaries. Mature ash and oak hedgerow trees are generally thinly scattered throughout, but are denser along ditches and parish boundaries. The parkland at Buscot, with its ornamental lakes and mature trees, is a significant landscape element in an otherwise intensively managed landscape.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 72/M

The area includes locally important habitats such as deciduous woodland, plantations, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. Badbury Forest is a substantial area of ancient semi-natural woodland, and the mature trees and lakes associated with Buscot park are also important.

## **H. Appleton Lower Common Wood (UT/15)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has medium and large-sized fields with a mix of land uses, although large arable fields dominate. Small, mainly deciduous plantations are dotted throughout the landscape and small to medium-sized blocks of ancient woodland with ash and some oak also contribute to the woodland cover. Fields are enclosed by woods, hawthorn and elm hedges. The hedges are generally in poor condition and fragmented in many places, particularly where they enclose arable fields. They are often taller where they surround pastureland. Hedgerow trees, mainly ash, dead elm and oak, are sparsely scattered throughout. They are denser where they border ditches, and comprise a mix of crack and shrub willow, dead elm, ash and oak.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 85/M

Locally important habitats include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands. Appleton Lower Common is an important wet ash-wych elm woodland south of the River Thames.

## **I. Faringdon (CR/2)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is dominated by medium to large-sized arable fields. On the steeper slopes there is some semi-improved pasture and some gorse nearer the top. Fields are generally enclosed by hedges, woods and narrow winding lanes. Large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland and different sized mixed plantations are characteristic. The main tree species in the plantations are elm, beech, oak, Scots pine and larch. Hedges are mainly thorn and elm, with a few oak trees. Most of the hedges are intact and well-maintained, but a few are quite low, particularly where they are associated with areas of arable farming. Parkland features, including mature trees, can be found around Faringdon House and St Mary's Priory.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 65/M

Locally important habitats include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. There is some ancient semi-natural woodland including

Coxwell Wood, which is around 50 ha in size, and some parkland habitat near Faringdon. An important geological site lies to the south of Faringdon.

## **J. Stanford in the Vale (CR/3)**

### **Landscape Character**

The landscape is characterised by a geometrically-shaped pattern of very large, open arable fields, and some improved grassland crossed by a network of straight roads. This is a very varied landscape of scattered, different sized mixed and deciduous plantations. There is also a large block of ancient woodland which has largely been replanted with conifers. A number of small copses, planted in field corners and around farmhouses, add to the woodland cover. Dense corridors of pollarded willows and linear strips of wet woodland bordering streams are also locally prominent features throughout. Fields are enclosed by hedges of hawthorn, elm and blackthorn. They are fragmented, low and, in many places, have been completely removed resulting a very open landscape. Hedges, with a few scattered trees, are more intact around the Pusey Estate. Distinctive parklands and their mixed plantations are part of the Pusey and Buckland estates. To the north of the village there is an existing limestone quarry and partially restored landfill site.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 167/VH

This area is very varied and supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. The former include deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands including sites such as Buckland Warren wood which has been largely replanted with conifers. A number of wet woodlands, such as Chinaman Copse and Newhouse Covert, border watercourses near Hatford and Longworth. Calcareous and marshy grassland is associated with Cherbury Camp near Charney Bassett, and there are scattered examples of acid grassland, wet grassland and reedswamp. The parklands at Pusey and Buckland, with their mature trees and lakes, also add to the overall diversity of the area.

## **K. Tubney (CR/6)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has a geometrically-shaped pattern of medium to large-sized fields with a mixture of arable cropping and semi-improved pasture. There are also large fields dominated by pig farming to the north of Marcham and there are some orchards around Fyfield. Acid grassland interspersed with heather and gorse is a significant feature at Frilford Heath Golf Course. Woodland cover is very prominent in this area and consists of large blocks of ancient woodland, including Tubney Wood, and a number of different sized mixed plantations. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges with a scattering of elm, oak, sycamore, poplar and willow. These become sparser where arable cropping is dominant. However, a much more prominent feature is the dense corridors of poplars and pollarded willows bordering streams and ditches. Hedges are generally tall and overgrown, but where they enclose arable land they are intensively maintained and in some cases removed altogether and replaced by fences. There are small parklands with semi-improved grassland and mature trees at Besselsleigh School, Sheepstead Park and Kingston Bagpuize House.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 172/VH

This area is notable for its range of locally important and priority habitats. The former include plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are significant areas of acid grassland and some heathland associated

with Frilford Heath Golf Course. Examples of calcareous fen can be found near Frilford, Cothill and Marcham. Frilford Heath is also notable for its species-rich ponds and areas of wet woodland. There are also blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland including Tubney Wood and parkland habitat is found at places such as Sheepstead Park and Kingston Bagpuize House.

## **L. Cumnor Hill (CR/9)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area has a mix of land uses including medium-sized, semi-improved grass fields and larger arable fields. There are remnants of calcareous grassland on the steeper slopes adjacent to the Thames floodplain. Woodland dominates the landscape, particularly towards the east where there are very large blocks of ancient woodland including Kennington and Radley woods. The minor valleys and small streams, bordered by belts of dense scrub and wet woodland, are distinctive features that add diversity to the landscape. The streams are often species-rich, with significant patches of reedswamp vegetation. Fields are enclosed by thorn and elm hedges, but there are also some species-rich hedges with shrubs such as dogwood, spindle and wayfaring tree close to the ancient woodland. Hedgerow trees of oak, ash and dead elm are also more prominent in the vicinity of ancient woodland, but are almost absent towards the west, where arable cropping predominates. Hedges are generally taller and in better condition in the eastern part of the area and are very low, fragmented or replaced by fences in the west.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 166/VH

Again, this area supports a wide range of locally important and priority habitats. There is deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, including Bagley and Radley Woods, and species-rich hedges with trees. A number of valleys, including Chilswell Valley, have been created by springlines draining the corallian ridge to the west of Oxford. These support a range of priority habitats such as calcareous grassland, fen, species-rich watercourses and wet woodland.

## **M. Stanton St. John (CR/20, CR/21)**

### **Landscape Character**

The landscape is characterised by medium-sized arable fields with smaller fields of semi-improved grassland mainly on the steep hillsides, along with remnants of calcareous grassland. This is a very diverse landscape where fields are enclosed by woods, prominent tall thorn and elm hedges and narrow winding lanes. Large blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland are strong landscape features, particularly on steeper slopes in the northern part of the area. Hedges are also tall, thick and species-rich in this area. Many mature oak, ash and sycamore hedgerow trees contribute to the enclosed wooded character. Hedges are lower, gappier and with fewer trees in the south where arable farming dominates. Another characteristic feature is the minor valleys and small streams bordered by willows, poplars, belts of semi-natural woodland and neutral grassland. The parkland at Shotover and Shotover House underlines the estate character of this area.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscores/biobands: 198/VH; 12/L

In this area there is a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are several large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, including



Stanton Great Wood, and species-rich hedges with trees. Examples of unimproved meadows can be found near Beckley and acid and calcareous grassland is associated with Sidling's Copse, a nature reserve owned and managed by the local wildlife trust.

## **N. Shotover (CR/17)**

### **Landscape Character**

This area lies predominantly outside the Country Park and is dominated by large arable fields with some smaller, semi-improved grassland fields on Shotover Hill. Patches of acid grassland and heathland occur within the Country Park. The landscape is characterised by interlocking blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland, which are particularly prominent on Shotover Hill. Parts of the area are remnants of the old Royal Forest of Shotover. Many field boundaries of thorn and elm have been removed, resulting in an open landscape. Some survive on Shotover Hill, where they are mixed with gorse and spindle. Hedgerow trees, mainly mature oak and ash, are mainly associated with the wooded area on Shotover Hill. Poplar shelterbelts sometimes border arable fields.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 79/M

Within this area there are a number of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland and species-poor hedges with trees. Combe Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland, and survives from the old Royal Forest of Shotover. Most of the important priority habitats can be found within the Country Park, including restored areas of acid grassland and heath.

## **O. Horton-cum-Studley (CR/23)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is characterised by a mix of land uses, including medium-sized fields with semi-improved and occasionally unimproved acid grassland interspersed with gorse, particularly on some of the steeper slopes. Mature oak hedgerow trees are densely scattered throughout the area. Large blocks of ancient woodland are found on the steep slopes. Fields are enclosed by tall, very gappy hedges, with hawthorn, hazel and elm dominating.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 63/M

Locally important habitats include semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and some tree-lined watercourses. Waterperry Wood is a large block of ancient semi-natural woodland and there is some surviving acid grassland associated with part of the golf course near Horton-cum-Studley.

## **P. Nuneham Courtenay (CR/15)**

### **Landscape Character**

The area is dominated by large geometrically-shaped arable fields. Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations are prominent throughout the area. There are a few hedgerow trees, but they are not a significant landscape feature. Fields are enclosed by woodland and gappy thorn hedges. The parkland surrounding Nuneham Park is dominated by arable farming.

### **Biodiversity**

Bioscore/bioband: 100/MH

A number of locally important habitats have been recorded in this area, including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland, parkland and some acid grassland associated with the arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay.

## FORCES FOR CHANGE

- Overall, the hedges are in good condition but intensive agriculture has led to the fragmentation of field boundaries, particularly in areas dominated by arable farming. In such areas the hedges are very intensively maintained, fragmented, and in places removed altogether and replaced by fences.
- The vernacular character is strong in most of the villages and there is generally a low impact from residential development, especially within the wider countryside. However, in some villages new residential development is out of character, even though it is contained within the village envelope. There is also sprawling development along some of the main roads, particularly the A420 and A338, although this is mitigated to some extent by woodland and mature garden trees.
- In very intensive areas of arable farming some of the new, large-scale barn complexes are visually intrusive.
- Some large-scale business parks using inappropriate building materials are also visually intrusive.
- There is a localised visual impact from operational quarries and partially restored landfill sites, particularly around places such as Stanford-in-the-Vale.
- The golf course next to the A420 close to Buckland is visually prominent. Frilford Heath golf course, by comparison, blends well with the surrounding countryside by integrating successfully with existing woodlands and heath.
- Overhead pylons are very intrusive in the more open areas where intensive arable farming predominates. This is evident in areas near Nuneham Park, Cumnor and Harcourt hills and to the north of Cuddesdon.
- In the flat, open area near Weston-on-the-Green, the large airfield is visually prominent, in spite of the dense screen planting.

## Landscape Strategy

**Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.**

### Guidelines

- Conserve and maintain semi-natural and ancient semi-natural woodland. Where appropriate, replace non-native conifer species with native species such as oak and ash. Promote the establishment and management of medium to large-scale deciduous and mixed plantations in areas where the landscape structure is particularly weak.
- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Conserve and sympathetically maintain species-rich hedgerows and, where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, wayfaring tree, dogwood and spindle.
- Conserve parklands and their associated landscape features such as stone walls, lakes, mature trees and woods.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly within parklands.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and

ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.

- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as quarries, landfill sites, airfields and large-scale development, such as new barns and industrial units, with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type.

## Biodiversity Strategy

**Ensure that all surviving priority habitats are safeguarded, in favourable condition and management, and enhanced to satisfy the actions and targets identified within the relevant habitat and species action plans. Safeguard, maintain and enhance all locally important habitats in a way that is appropriate to the landscape character of the area. Promote agri-environment schemes, which will benefit biodiversity in general and protected species and farmland birds in particular.**

## Guidelines

- Parts of this landscape type support a range of important priority habitats including acid grassland, heath, limestone grassland and fen. The majority of these habitats are associated with sites that have been designated as sites of special scientific interest or county wildlife sites. The priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management. With S.S.S.I.s this can be achieved, where appropriate, through formal agreement between the landowner and English Nature. For county wildlife sites this can be promoted with advice from organisations such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, and the targeting of agri-environment schemes.
- The acid grassland, heath, fen and ponds at Frilford, including part of the golf course, are particularly important within the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they are in favourable condition and management.
- Within the valleys to the west of Oxford achieve a balance between species-rich limestone grassland and scrub. Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species-rich grassland by grazing, as exemplified by the work of Oxford City Council in Chilswell Valley. Opportunities for expanding this habitat include the establishment and management of field margins/buffer strips adjacent to existing limestone grassland habitat using native wildflower species appropriate to the area.
- Opportunities for extending the range of these habitats is feasible, particularly acid grassland, on suitable land adjacent to existing similar habitats across the Corallian ridge. Oxford City Council has been successfully restoring acid grassland and heath within Shotover Country Park, and the techniques applied here can be used on soils with a similar fertility and acidity.
- Expansion of these habitats should be promoted through the use of agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.
- Ancient semi-natural woodland is an important and characteristic feature throughout the landscape type. A priority is to ensure that it is sustainably maintained so that it remains in favourable condition and management. A substantial amount has been replanted with conifers, and where practicable these should be replaced with native tree and shrub species appropriate to the landscape type.
- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of the landscape type. Priority should be given to safeguarding, maintaining and expanding this resource, particularly in those local character areas where they remain a significant feature.
- Parklands, and their associated habitats of woodlands, trees, lakes and grassland, make a significant contribution to the biodiversity resource of the landscape type and a priority must be to ensure that they remain in favourable condition and management.
- Tree-lined watercourses are a feature throughout the landscape type. They should be safeguarded and enhanced by planting species such as ash and willows, pollarding willows where appropriate, and establishing buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small

mammals, invertebrates and birds.

- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Opportunities for the establishment of other locally important habitats, such as semi-improved grassland and medium to large-size deciduous woodlands, should be promoted in order to strengthen wildlife corridors and enhance the local landscape character.
- Promote the use of agri-environment schemes such as conservation headlands, overwintered stubbles and winter-sown crops to benefit farmland birds such as skylarks and yellowhammers.
- Parts of the Corallian limestone ridge are notable for their rare arable weeds, and every opportunity should be sought to safeguard and expand this interest through the use of agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral workings.

### **Key Recommendations**

- **Safeguard and enhance landscape character of the ancient woodlands, parklands, species-rich hedgerow network and tree-lined watercourses.**
- **Ensure that all priority habitats are in favourable condition and management, and opportunities for expanding this resource should be promoted through agri-environment schemes and the restoration of mineral sites.**

APPENDIX 6  
VOWH LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY 2014

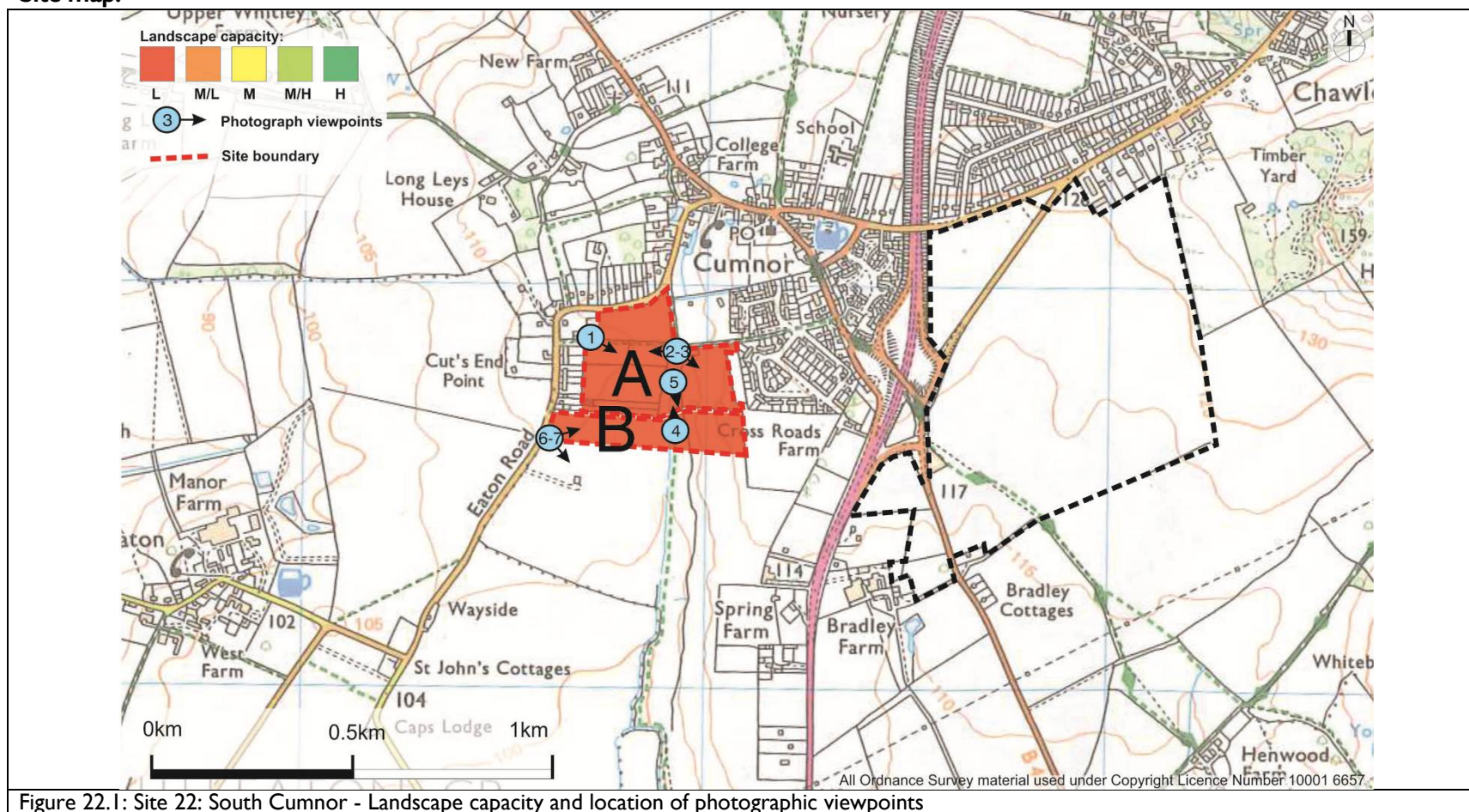
**Site 22: South Cumnor****Site map:**

Figure 22.1: Site 22: South Cumnor - Landscape capacity and location of photograph viewpoints

## Site 22 South Cumnor

The site lies in the **North Vale Corallian Ridge / OWLS LCT12 Rolling Farmland**.

### OWLS Landscape Strategy

**Conserve and enhance the surviving pattern of woodlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses. Minimise the impact of built development through appropriate location, choice of building materials, and the use of locally characteristic tree and shrub species.**

#### Guidelines

- Strengthen the field pattern by planting up gappy hedges using locally characteristic species such as hawthorn, and hedgerow trees such as oak and ash.
- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and where appropriate, pollarding willows.
- Promote the sustainable management of existing ancient semi-natural woodland to safeguard its long-term survival.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as oak and ash.
- Conserve the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses.
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development and that is appropriate to this landscape type. This includes limestone or limestone and bricks and clay roof tiles in the Midvale Ridge, and red bricks and clay tiles in the Vale of White Horse and North Wessex Downs.

#### Site description:

Site 22 South Cumnor is a Green field site of 11.7ha to the south of the village of Cumnor. The Site is divided into two distinct areas: Landscape Area 22A Adjacent Cut's End immediately south of the village centre and Landscape Area 22B Appleton Road to the south. The northern boundary of LA 22A Adjacent Cut's End follows Appleton road opposite modern housing excluded from Cumnor Conservation Area. The Conservation Area lies to the west and north-east of LA 22A and extends slightly into the site at these two points. To the north-east lies the Cricket Ground and to the east, separated by tree lines, lies a modern housing estate. The western boundary is defined by the garden boundaries of property on Appleton Road. The southern boundary is defined by two mature belts of trees with a small gap providing access to the arable fields to the south. This part of the site is divided into a



number of small pasture fields each enclosed by mature tree belts. Landscape Area 22B is a section of a much larger field extending south from LA 22A and has no boundary along its southern edge. To the west a low hedge separates LA 22B from Appleton Road.

**Key landscape planning factors:**

The whole of the Site is in the Green Belt. It lies within the North Vale Corallian Ridge and is subject to Local Plan 2011 saved policy NE7. LA 22A contributes to the landscape setting of the Conservation Area and Grade II listed building The Farmhouse at Cut's End and therefore is subject to Local Plan saved policies HE1, HE4 and NE7.

**I. LA22A Adjacent Cut's End**

This is an enclosed area of small fields under pasture closely related to the field pattern to the north of the village around Cumnor Conservation Area Character Area: Leys Road and contributing to the rural character of the village.

**Photographs:**







Photo 3: View from informal path off Cricket Ground into small field west of the housing estate north of Cross Roads Farm.



Photo 4: View of 'tongue' of open land extending into Site 22A.

**Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process**

1. **Medium Visual Sensitivity:**
  - Key views identified in Conservation Area Appraisal;
  - Site enclosed by mature trees;
  - Potential to mitigate development through new tree belt link.
2. **High Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Good landscape structure of mature trees and pasture;
  - Landscape setting to Conservation Area and listed buildings;
  - Quiet secluded and tranquil area free of detractors.
3. **Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium / High (combines 1 and 2)**
4. **Medium / High Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Separated from wider landscape to the south by tree belts;
  - Closely associated with historic development of the field pattern around village.

- 
5. **Overall Landscape Sensitivity:**      **Medium / High**    **(combines 3 and 4)**
6. **Medium/High Landscape Value**
- Setting of heritage assets;
  - Within locally valued landscape North Vale Corallian Ridge policy NE7;
7. **Landscape Capacity:**                      **Low**    **(combines 5 and 6)**

**Relationship of site to Cumnor**

- Close relationship contributing to the setting of the village

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- Separated from the wider open landscape
- Closely related to field pattern to north west of the village

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Loss of open field pattern
- Erosion of tree belt pattern
- Impact on landscape setting of Conservation Area and listed building The Farmhouse

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Loss of key views from the local footpath network identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal

**Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- Retains built form pattern to the south of the village core
- Small scale area of development would be in keeping with settlement

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure**

- Existing tree belt pattern provides good mitigation

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- The site has the potential to be developed, but should include the provision of a major area of open space such as a village green to serve both the development and the village.
- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of Cumnor by retaining the existing landscape pattern within LA22A and tree belts and hedgerows
- Maintain open link between LA22 A and the open landscape to the south
- Opportunities for access to the area are limited by the need to conserve the tree cover and the open landscape character of the tongue of open land which links with LA22B. The preferred access into this site is located down an existing track to the north of the site, as access is not possible from the east (which would be the preferred option). However the design of any access would need to minimise the harm to the character of the track and avoid loss of adjoining vegetation.
- Any access design to be in keeping with village character

### Potential capacity of site 22A

Although the landscape capacity is low, the enclosed field in the north-east has potential for development. The capacity of the site is determined by the need: (1) to retain the landscape setting of small areas of pasture and mature trees lines and hedgerows south of the village; (2) to conserve the landscape setting of the Conservation Area; and (3) to protect the landscape setting of the listed building The Farmhouse. The capacity of the reduced area will be determined a detailed landscape and visual impact respecting the distinctive character of Cumnor. Access to the site is however very constrained by the need to retain existing tree cover and the rural character of the central spine. The preferred access into this site is located down an existing track to the north of the site, as access is not possible from the east (which would be the preferred option). Figure 22.2 shows a point of access down the spine but would need to be carefully assessed to avoid loss of vegetation. On the basis of a nominal density of 25dph some 60 dwellings might be accommodated on site 22A.

### 2. LA22B Adjacent Appleton Road south

LA22B is an integral part of a much larger open arable field to the south of the village and hence the wider landscape beyond the village.

#### Photographs:



Photo 5: View from central footpath out through 'tongue' of open land to site 22B



Photo 6: View from Appleton Road across open arable field to mature tree belts along northern edge of site 22B.



Photo 7: View from Appleton Road across site 22B to wider landscape to the south.

**Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process**

- 1. Medium / High Visual Sensitivity:**
  - Open views from local footpaths and roads;
  - Skyline location;
  - Difficult to mitigate without a significant impact on the open character of the wider landscape.
- 2. Medium / Low Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Few landscape features and simple uniform character;
  - No aspects of cultural significance;
  - Tranquil area with no detractors.
- 3. Landscape Character Sensitivity:    **Medium (combines 1 and 2)****
- 4. High Wider Landscape Sensitivity:**
  - Site directly relates to the wider landscape separating Cumnor from the nearest hamlets;
  - Little connection with the adjacent settlement.

5. **Overall Landscape Sensitivity:** Medium / High (combines 3 and 4)

6. **Medium/High Landscape Value**

- Within locally valued landscape North Vale Corallian Ridge policy NE7;

7. **Landscape Capacity:** Low (combines 5 and 6)

**Relationship of site to Cumnor**

- LA22B has a poor relationship with the nucleated village

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- The site is an integral part of the wider open landscape which separates Cumnor from the nearest hamlets

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- Impact on the tree belts could be avoided
- Loss of open arable land

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- Loss of views of open skyline on south edge of Cumnor
- Loss of view over open countryside from south edge of village and key view in the Conservation Area Appraisal

**Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- Would extend settlement substantially to the south of its current southern limits along Eaton Road

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure**

- A substantial tree belt along the southern boundary would be needed which would not be in keeping with the immediate landscape pattern

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- The site 22B is not recommended for further consideration as a contingency site.



**Potential capacity of site 22B**

Development of any part of Site 22B would have an adverse impact on the settlement pattern, extending Cumnor well to the south. This is an open site with strong continuity with the wider landscape and therefore it is not recommended for further consideration.

**Total capacity of Site 22: South Cumnor :** A total of 65 dwellings are recommended at a nominal density of 25dph for this contingency site.

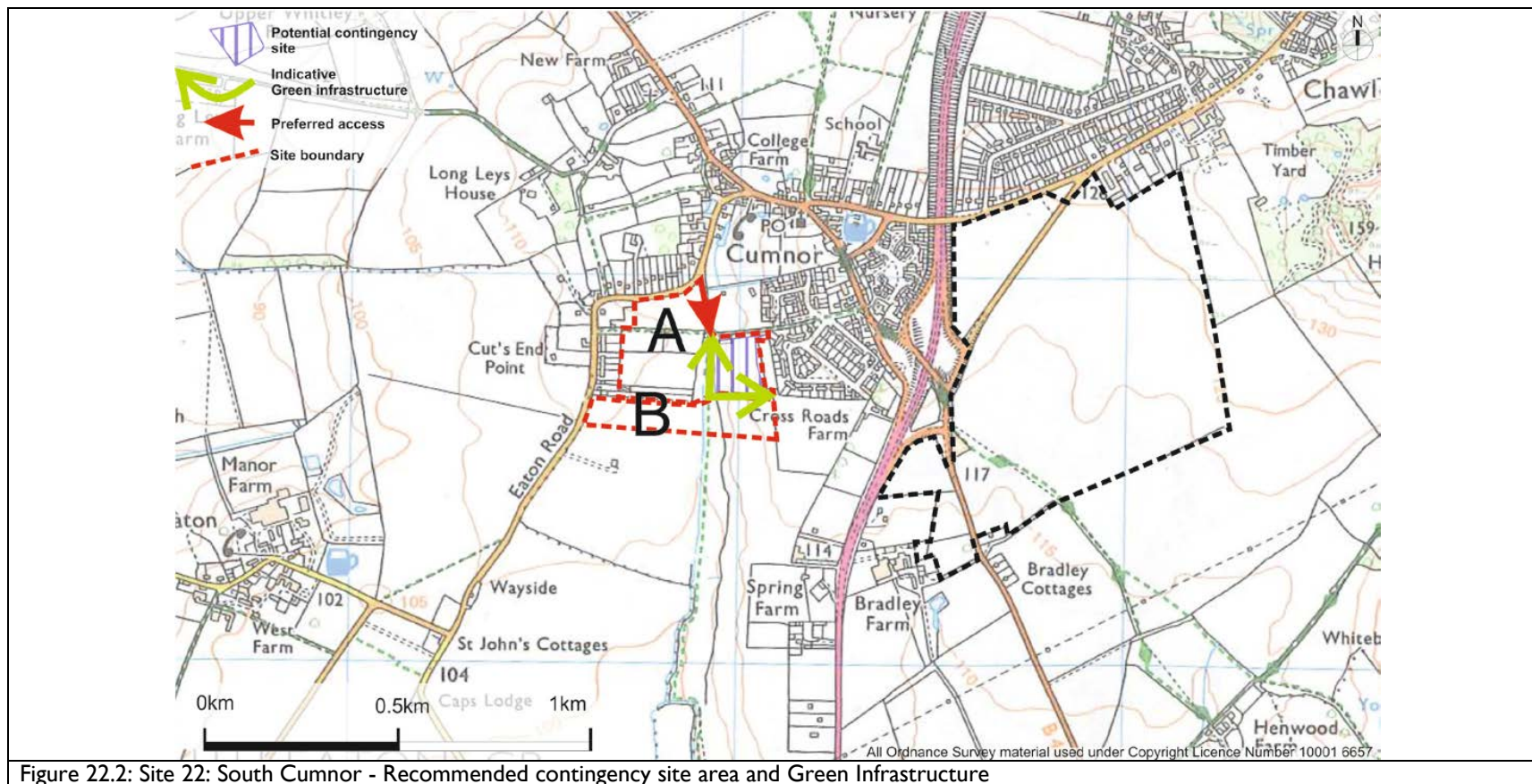


Figure 22.2: Site 22: South Cumnor - Recommended contingency site area and Green Infrastructure

landscape planning • ecology • arboriculture

aspect

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## **APPENDIX 2**

# CUMNOR SOUTH

Summary of Proposed  
200 unit site allocation  
Utilities Enquiries:-

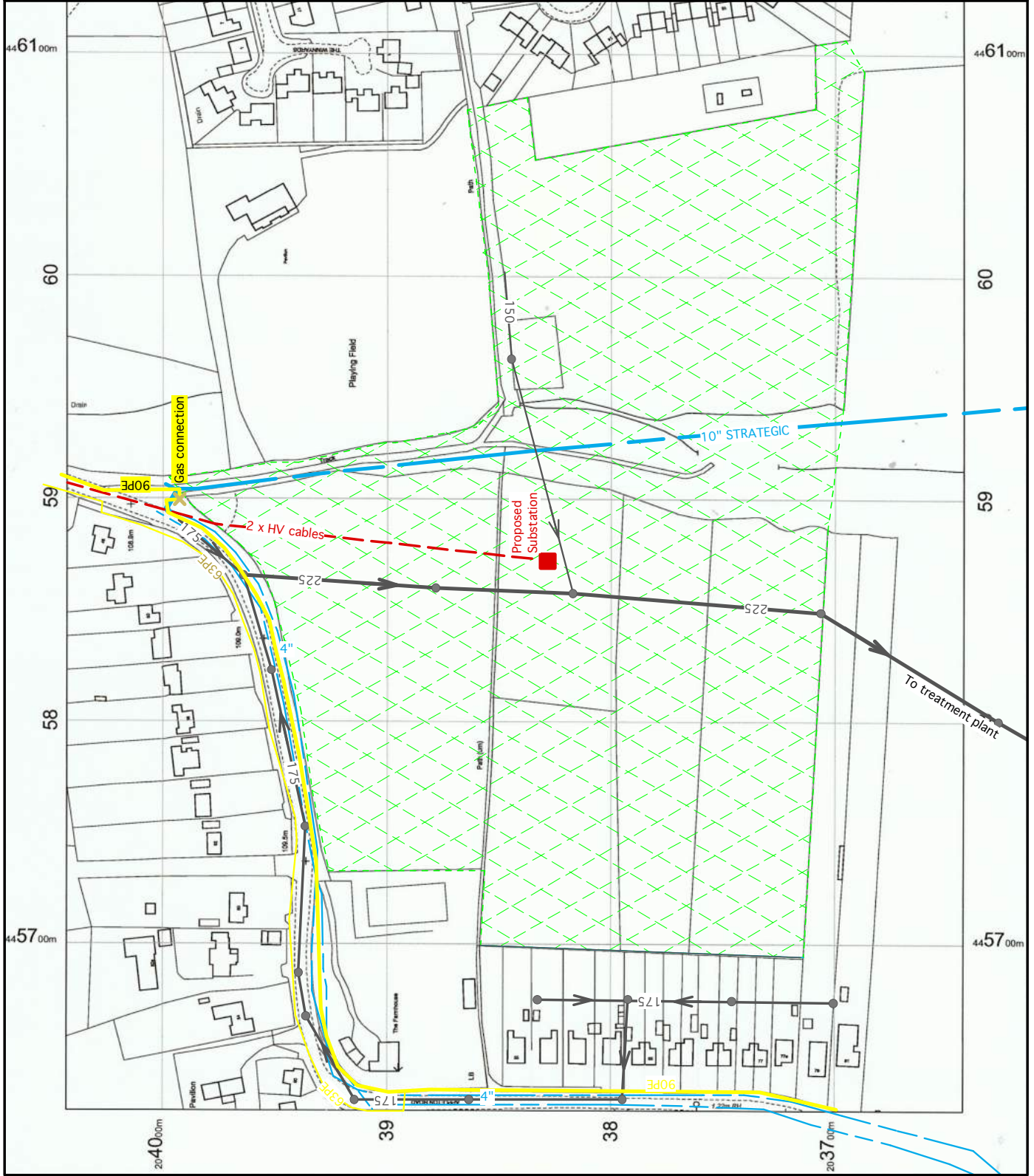
**SITE AREA**  
X X X X X X X X X X

**WATER**  
Strategic water main passes  
through site, ample capacity

**SEWER**  
Main sewer passes through site  
a period flow assessment would  
be required to check for any  
asset reinforcements to system.

**GAS**  
Connection available from  
Appleton Road via 90mm service  
to support a 1733 KWh load

**ELECTRIC**  
Mains available from Appleton Rd  
via 2 HV cables to serve site  
substation as proposed.



## APPENDIX 3

mode

transport planning

Magdalen Centre  
Robert Robinson Avenue  
Oxford  
OX4 4GA 01865 784 644 info@modetransport.co.uk**modetransport.co.uk**F.A.O. Nik Lyzba,  
JPPC,  
Hinksey Hill,  
Oxford,  
OX1 5BD

18/12/2014

Dear Nik,

**Land at Appleton Road, Cumnor Village, Oxfordshire.****Highway Appraisal and Technical Report.**

I refer to the above site and proposal for a development scheme of up to 150 residential dwellings with access arrangements and appropriate parking in accordance with standards both by Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council. I have visited and appraised the site in terms of its sustainability and accessibility in terms of transport and also had a meeting and discussions with the Highway Officer for the County Council:-

The proposed site lies on the classified unnumbered road Appleton Road which leads from Cumnor village to Appleton. Cumnor which is classed as a large village within the Local Plan is approximately 3 miles south west of Oxford just off the main A420 Oxford to Swindon road. Amongst facilities and services within the village include two public houses, the Bear and Ragged Staff and the Vine and also the Cumnor village stores and post office which sells many provisions, the Cumnor Church of England Primary School and pre-school.

The site and potential vehicular access is to be situated on Appleton Road and is approximately 78m from the bend in the carriageway of Appleton Road towards the village of Cumnor. In the other direction to the south the distance from the proposed site to the extremity of the village where the 30mph signs are evident is approximately 168m. The carriageway width of Appleton Road at this location is approximately 5.4m. There is a footway

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mode transport limited

Registered in England &amp; Wales: 8136200 Director: David Frisby

Registered address: Cornwall Buildings, 45 Newhall Street, Birmingham, B3 3QR

on the same side of the carriageway of Appleton Road of width 1.85 although its it intermittent in width further towards the village and on the other side of the road is a verge of width 1.75m. The site also as a definitive public right of way that links from Appleton Road to Kenilworth road in an eastern direction and is the number 184/24. There is also another right of way that goes in a north to south direction and is the number 184/12. This gives the proposed site potential good links in terms of sustainability and accessibility and creates easy access to other parts of this village.

Appleton Road has a speed restriction of 30mph and slow markings are evident on the carriageway with street lighting also provided where the existing dwellings are located. There are no parking restrictions on this part of Appleton Road.

The site at present is mainly fields and shrub land and has an existing vehicular access to Appleton Road to the Northern end which serves the cricket ground and the fields, but this is an unmade access road and is a private un-adopted lane and however is part of the development site. There are trees and a hedgerow fronting on to Appleton Road and a number of properties at its southern end. Access could be gained to the proposed site from this unmade track but in highway terms an access is best served from the southern end of Appleton Road as described in later paragraphs.

On to Appleton Road at its southern end where an access will be proposed there is an agricultural field gate of width 3.8m with dropped kerbs of width 6.1m. The frontage at this particular point including the adjoining bungalow, part of the development site, is 19.1m in total. At this point there is also as stated the public right of way .

All car parking will be in accordance with the parking standards and dimensions for both the District Council and the County Council as agreed with the Highway Authority.

There are good public transport facilities nearby and within good walking distance of the site. There are bus stops on Appleton Road outside the public house, The Bear and Ragged Staff approximately 385m from the site in a northern and north-eastern direction where the service 63 and 66 operates. This bus stop caters for both directions. This service operates between Oxford and Swindon by Thames Travel from the 14<sup>th</sup> of December and operates on a frequency of around 5 to 6 times a day during the weekday Monday to Friday and also on Saturday. This stop is just outside the recommended walking distance of 400m.

Further bus stops are situated on Abingdon Road and pedestrian links could be established from the proposed site via the Park and Kenilworth road, which is approximately 370m away from the furthest part of this site. These services include the number X30, 4 and 4B and serves between Oxford and Wantage and operates on a frequency of around the 30 minutes

on Monday to Friday, Saturdays every 40 minutes and on Sundays every hour. This service is operated by Stagecoach.

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation document 'Planning for Public Transport in Developments' suggests that new development should be so located and recommended that public transport trips involve a walking distance of no greater than 400m to the nearest bus stop.

With respect to the above services the proposal is in line with this recommendation and the bus service number provides an excellent opportunity for travel to both Oxford City Centre, Wantage and Swindon which are major employment destinations. This also offers onward travel by train via Oxford Station with First Great Western and other service companies.

With regard to accidents on this stretch of Appleton Road there have been no reported injury related accidents within the last 5 years.

I have been asked to look at the access issues and sightline requirements for this proposal including its suitability in terms of sustainability and accessibility for the amount of residential units proposed.

Any proposed access to the site should and will comply with the all the latest standards and as can be seen from the attached access drawing:-

The design of sightlines at junctions and access points is discussed in detail in the document "MANUAL FOR STREETS" 1 and 2. This guide is also meant to compliment local street design guidance produced by local authorities-

Sightlines at the junction of a proposed access at the location of Appleton Road will necessitate the removal of a dwelling and will be obscured slightly by the adjoining hedgerows which will be removed in order to achieve the sightlines as described in the document Manual for Streets 1 and 2 and later in this report.( see attached drawing)

Traditionally sightlines had been constructed with an emphasis on ensuring motorists had wide splays and generous sightlines so that they could react to hazards ahead of them in plenty of time, based on the speed of road and to ensure that they were at least adequate and usually more than adequate



It is now accepted this encourages higher speeds because motorists feel comfortable with the speed that they are driving at, especially in residential areas.

So reducing visibility and using alignments which encourage motorists to drive more slowly should not only maintain or improve on current safety levels but also help create places which are good for social activity and where movement by means other than the car is encouraged.

Therefore stopping distances have been revised and are shown within Table 7.1 of the new 'Manual for Streets' where the recommended design stopping sight distance for vehicle speeds of 30mph are 43m.

The speed restriction on Appleton Road is 30mph and therefore the appropriate sightlines here based on the stopping distance of vehicles at 30mph is 43m in both directions and this distance has been agreed with the Highway Authority.

To enable drivers emerging from a minor road or access to see and be seen by drivers proceeding along the major road, unobstructed visibility is needed

An 'x' dimension of 2.4m is considered suitable at this location which is to be used in most built-up areas such as this private access road. The sightline requirements can be further improved to meet the standards laid down as shown by removing the some of the adjoining hedgerow and bushes and setting it back along the sightline edge.

The sightline requirements for this type of access onto a classified unnumbered road as described above, of 2.4m (x) by 43m (y,) can be met satisfactorily. The height of any obstruction within these sightlines does not exceed 0.60m.

This access is therefore in accordance with Government advice and can be met and has the agreement of the Highway Authority.

Any access road to the proposed development will be designed in accordance with both Manual for Streets 1 and 2 and the Oxfordshire County Council Residential New Roads Design Guide and will be approximately 5.5m wide at the access point with Appleton Road. A footway will be provided at the access point on both sides of the proposed access road and appropriate radii will also be designed at 6.0m. - see attached the indicative drawing showing what could be achieved at this proposed access with Appleton Road. (2.4m x 43m Vis splay and indicative access design).

A further access could also be considered for cyclists and pedestrians from the other access point on to Appleton Road as stated in previous paragraphs and if required could also serve as an emergency access to the site.

In my experience this type of access and road conforms to all the latest guidelines and government guidance for this type of road serving a development of up to 150 residential dwellings.

Given the relative numbers of a residential development on this site the size of the development of around up to 150 residential units it is considered unlikely that it will generate enough trips to create a severe impact on Appleton Road or the new junction on this road. Furthermore the likely traffic impact in terms of trip generation on to the proposed access to the site are not sufficient to create any concerns.

Nevertheless a broad - brush assessment of the trip generation likely to be generated to and from the site has been undertaken using the TRICS database. This will provide a robust assessment of the impact of any proposed development on to Appleton Road an in particular Cumnor Village.

A range of sites have been selected from the database to reflect the type and location of the proposed dwellings. The trip rate used applies to a total of 14 comparable sites for a mix of affordable and private dwellings (both dwellings and flats) and up to and between 16 and 200 dwellings with the surveys undertaken over a period of 18 days.

The AM peak hour trip rate is 0.334 per dwelling and for 150 dwellings will be 50 trips both ways. This equates to a vehicles every 1 minute or so. In the evening peak hour at a rate of 0.362 per dwelling will be 54 trips which equates to a vehicle every 1 minute. Over the 12hour day the trip rate per dwelling is around 3.342 trips which equates to 500 vehicle movements.

However when analysing this during the 12 hour day, this equates to around 41 vehicle movements in the hour.

Given the trip rates the effect on the adjoining Appleton Road is not likely to cause any highway safety issues against the background of traffic on the main road.

As stated previously I have met and had discussions with the Highway Officer of the County Council Highway Authority regarding the possibility of development on the site and in terms of access arrangements, sightlines and the sustainability and accessibility of the site in terms of a 150 unit residential development, there are no highway safety or capacity objections.

Furthermore the suggestions that vision splays of 2.4 x 43m, for an access for this amount of development on to this type of road conforms to the Manual for Streets guidance and standards and should therefore be possible.

In technical terms therefore the proposed site for residential development for up to 150 units complies with the access and highway standards.

Footway improvements and a package of traffic management measures maybe required in terms of infrastructure in order to satisfy the Highway Authority and these could be investigated further when planning permission is sought. Proper links could be established through the development to serve with the rest of the village by improving the rights of way to include cycle links with good surveillance and safety from this part of Appleton Road to Abingdon Road and will be a benefit to future residents and also to existing residents of this part of Cumnor Village.



The key findings from this Technical report to support the allocation of housing are therefore summarized in the following paragraphs:-

The development proposal for up to 150 residential dwellings off Appleton Road in Cumnor with a new access conforms to all the latest guidance from Manual for Streets.

The proposed development site can be considered to be a sustainable form of development as it is within the village of Cumnor and close to existing bus services providing links both to Oxford, Wantage and Swindon. Good pedestrian and cycle links could be established from the proposed site to follow the network of public footpaths and link in with public transport accessibility and stops on Kenilworth Road, Abingdon Road and the Glebe.

An assessment has been undertaken of the likely traffic generation using the TRICS database and indicates that the proposed numbers of trip are unlikely to cause any harm to the adjoining Appleton Road and to be well within the capacity of any new junction and the surrounding road network.

The report provides a robust assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on to the local highway network. Access to the development has been demonstrated will be a via a new access off Appleton Road within an area of 30mph and all sightlines comply with current standards.

I trust this is of assistance and should you require further information or any additional clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

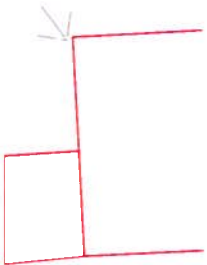
Yours Sincerely,

Huw

**Huw Vaughan Jones**  
**Technical Director**

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: [huwjones@modetransport.co.uk](mailto:huwjones@modetransport.co.uk)

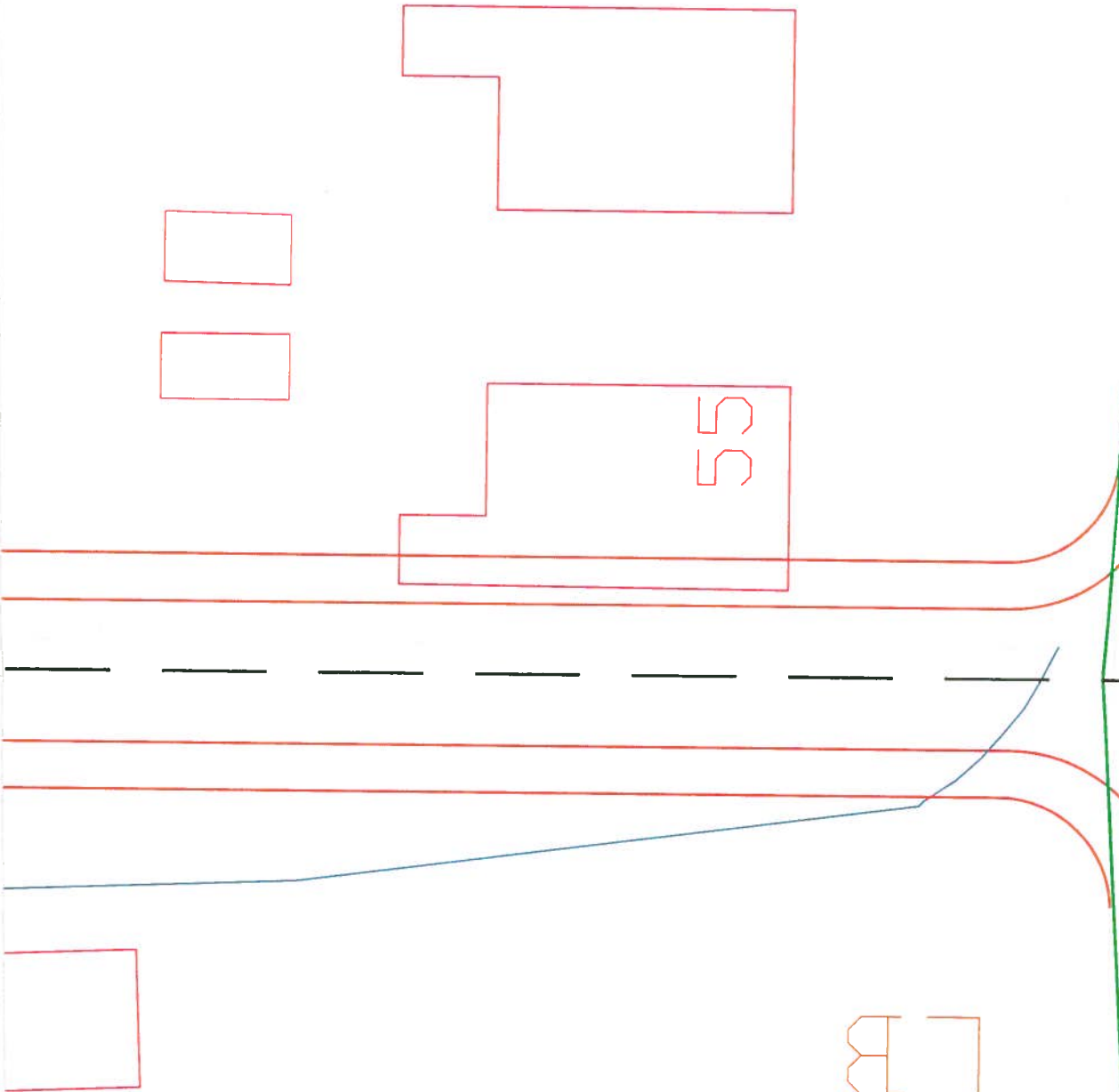


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Cut 5' 2.4m x 43m Vis splay  
End Cottage

2.4m x 43m Vis splay  
2.4m x 43m Vis splay



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