

ADOPTED July 2008





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1 Introduction

The purpose of the conservation area appraisal is to define the special interest which warrants the designation of part of Northcourt as a conservation area. This includes the quality and distinctiveness of the place, derived from its character and appearance. The appraisal will lead to a better understanding of the area and what makes it the place it is today as well as provide the basis for positive management of the area in the future

Northcourt conservation area was designated on the 27th February 1978 primarily to protect the hamlet of Northcourt, its core of listed buildings, the spaces around them and important trees and views.

2 Planning policy framework

2.1 National

Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas and from time to time to review the boundaries. Such areas are defined as **areas of special architectural or historic interest**, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

The key government guidance on conservation areas is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) Planning and the Historic Environment, 1994.

2.2 Local

The District Council's Local Plan 2011, (adopted in July 2006) contains policies which seek to preserve or enhance

the special character of the Council's 52 conservation areas. The main policies which relate to the Northcourt conservation area are contained in Chapter 6 of the Local Plan.

2.3 The effects of conservation area designation

Conservation area designation is the means of recognising and protecting all the features that contribute towards the special character or appearance of the conservation area. Extra controls apply in conservation areas. These are given below.

Preservation and enhancement

Under planning legislation the District Council has a duty to 'pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'. This is mainly carried out through the development control process.

Control over demolition

Unlisted buildings, in groups or individually, can often contribute towards the character of a conservation area and the loss of these buildings can be detrimental. For this reason, conservation area consent is required for the substantial or total demolition of certain buildings exceeding 115 cubic metres. There are exceptions and therefore advice should be sought from the Council regarding the demolition of a building or structure such as a wall, within the conservation area. There is no fee to apply for conservation area consent and the procedure is similar to that for listed building consent. Application forms are available on request.

Control over trees

Within conservation areas trees are given special protection. Written application for consent must be









made to the District Council giving 6 weeks notice of intent to top, lop, or fell a tree over 75mm (3 inches) in diameter, measured at 1.5 metres above ground. This period of 6 weeks must be given for the Council to either approve the application or to serve a Tree Preservation Order. Certain trees are exempt such as dead, dying or dangerous trees and some fruit trees. Further clarification and advice can be obtained from the District Council's Arboricultural Officer.

Power to seek repair of unoccupied buildings in conservation areas

Special powers to serve an Urgent Works Notice are open to the District Council 'if it appears that the preservation of a building is important for maintaining the character or appearance of that area'

• Reduced permitted development rights

Some minor developments which do not require planning permission outside a conservation area will need permission in a conservation area, including for example the insertion of new dormers, roof extensions and cladding. The size and locations of extensions are also subject to stricter controls. Satellite dishes on a building may require consent, depending on their size and location



Planning permission

Planning applications in conservation areas should be accompanied by sufficient details to enable the impact of the proposed development on the character of the conservation area, to be assessed. This includes details of scale, massing, design and materials of buildings and their relationship to existing buildings and the impact on their setting. Design and Access Statements are needed for all planning applications within conservation areas.

New development in conservation areas

Conservation area legislation helps to ensure that the natural process of renewal and change in rural and urban areas is managed, to preserve and enhance the best of the past and allow for sympathetic new development. The District Council looks very carefully at the design of new development and has policies in the Local Plan which seek to carefully control changes in conservation areas. Where planning permission or conservation area consent is required, proposals are advertised on site and in the local press.

Repairs and maintenance

In conservation areas owners of buildings are encouraged to repair and maintain their properties without loss or damage to their character or integrity. Repairs should be considered as the preferred option, with replacement only where it would enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. Historically correct solutions should be adopted, using appropriate design, materials and construction methods to match the original.

Designation or alteration of conservation areas

Consultation is an important part of the designation

process. Local opinion is sought prior to the designation or alteration of conservation areas and suggestions and comments are welcomed. Notice of a newly designated or altered conservation area is publicised in the London Gazette, a local newspaper and registered in the Local Land Charges Register.]

3 Summary of special interest

Northcourt conservation area is an unexpected pocket of rural character within a built-up, suburban area.

Key characteristics include:

- Small size and enclosed nature
- Centered on the former grange of Abingdon Abbey
- Large areas of open space, including important remnants of the historic field system
- Rural nature of Northcourt Lane
- Ancient footpath links
- Contribution made by historic buildings
- Fine tree specimens
- Boundary walls of stone or brick, hedges and trees





4 Assessment of special interest

4.1 Location and setting

Northcourt is located approximately 1.5 kilometres north east of the centre of Abingdon predominantly between the A4183 Oxford Road to the east and Northcourt Road to the north. The River Stert runs north/south along the western edge of the conservation area boundary.

4.2 General character and plan form

Formerly an outlying rural hamlet, Northcourt has been encapsulated by the urban expansion of Abingdon northwards. The plan of the settlement evolved from a cluster of monastic barns and farm houses, which were linked by various footpaths and roads to Abingdon. The conservation area is centred on the historic core of the early settlement, contained within a small rectangle of land bisected by Northcourt Lane. This core area retains a rural feel with important open spaces particularly to the south of the former Abingdon Abbey monastic barn and surrounding Northcourt House. Northcourt Lane is a signicant feature, still retaining its rural ambience, due to its narrow, winding character, grass verges and lack of roadside kerbs or traffic management meaures.

Whilst the early buildings are loosely grouped, modern development tends to be of small estates to the north of Tatham Road and infill plots with larger buildings to the south of Northcourt Road. The courtyard of barns centred on Christ Church and adjacent areas of housing contrast with the large open space comprising the pavilions and playing fields of Abingdon United Football and Social Club on the east.

4.3 Landscape setting

The landscape is flat due to the underlying geology, being situated within a belt of Kimmeridge clay overlain by recent gravel deposits which runs from Shrivenham to Abingdon and Radley.

5 Historic development and archaeology

5.1 The origins and historic development of the area

From earliest times Northcourt has been associated with Abingdon Abbey to which it was an outlying grange or farm. The 13th century monastic barn, now much altered, has been converted to a Church. Northcourt formed part of the manor of Barton from the 12th century until the Dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. Barton Farm (from the Old English bere or baer meaning barley; beretun or baertun meaning granary farm) lay to the south of Northcourt on the banks of the River Thames, just outside Abingdon town centre. Rebellious townsmen burnt the abbots' houses at Barton and Northcourt in 1327. In 1547 Northcourt was granted to John Lyon, an alderman of London and passed to various family members and their heirs. In 1707 the manor was sold to Sir John Stonehouse of Radley and from this date followed the descent of the manor of Radley, passing from the Stonehouse family into the possession of the Bowyers.

Map evidence shows that the rectangular shape of the historic core of Northcourt has remained the same since the time of the Enclosure Award Map of 1841. (Map 1) The settlement is shown located in the arm of land formed by the intersection of the Oxford and Northcourt Roads.

Northcourt Lane links the main buildings of the hamlet to a secondary access to Oxford Road to the south. The first edition OS Map of 1875 shows the first accurate representation of the settlement. (Map 2) By this time a lane, now called Northcourt Walk, is shown running from Northcourt Lane, passing to the west of Joy Mount, to the Oxford Road with a further continuation of the lane running parallel to the Oxford Road, past the workhouse towards Vineyard Farm. A further OS Map of 1932 - 1942 shows how Northcourt changed and evolved by the mid- 20th century. (Map 3) An historic boundary stone marking the two parishes of St Helens and St Peters is reputed to survive in the grounds of The Old Farmhouse.

Northcourt is noted for its association with two well known local men: Admiral Bowyer of Radley and the local artist William Teulon Blandford Fletcher 1858-1936. The latter painted a view of the Old Tithe Barn in 1918, from his garden at Northcourt Lodge, which is reputed to have stood at the corner of Oxford Road and Northcourt Lane.



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5.2 Archaeology

There are no scheduled ancient monuments within the conservation area. The potential archaeological interest of the area has yet to be evaluated. Site specific advice can be obtained from the County Archaeologist. Joy Mount is reputed to have been the home of the Sisters of Mercy.

6 Spatial analysis (Map 4)

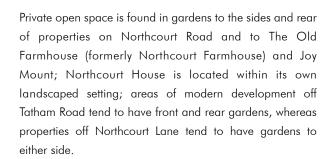
6.1 The character and inter-relationship of spaces within the area

Northcourt Road has a distinctive linear character with the building line of houses and walls close to the roadside. On the north the building line is broken by accesses to individual properties and to housing estates beyond and on the south, by accesses to the football ground and to the Christ Church barn complex. The linear nature of Northcourt Road contrasts with the curving form of Northcourt Lane and Tatham Road. Northcourt Lane has a rural character, being narrow in width with areas of grass verge, with the building line of houses and walls close to the road in the north/south section and with modern houses set back from the road in the east/west section. On the north side of Tatham Road modern housing developments are accessed off private driveways.

There are two key areas of open space within the conservation area: the football playing fields and the crescent shaped wedge of land between areas of modern development off Tatham Road. These areas are important remnants of the historic field system once surrounding the hamlet. The open space off Tatham Road provides an important buffer zone between areas of infill development and can be glimpsed at various points over fences and through gaps in hedge planting.











6.2 Key views and vistas (Map 4)

Key views are obtained looking east and west up Northcourt Road, from within the football playing fields and from Northcourt Road looking south down Northcourt Lane. Panoramic views of the backs of houses and the majority of buildings within the historic core may be obtained from the playing fields.

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Elsewhere there are glimpses and partial views over walls and between buildings of the historic core from Tatham Road, Brookside, Clevelands, Northcourt Road and Oxford Road.

7 Character analysis

7.1 Definition of character areas (Map 5)

There are 3 distinct character areas: the historic core of the early settlement, areas of 20th and 21st century development and areas of open space.

The areas of open space have been referred to in section 6 above.

Only brief mention needs to be made of the character of 20th century and recent development in so far as it relates to the wider setting of the historic core of the conservation area. In general, modern development is of a scale and form which respects the vernacular scale of the historic core buildings. Larger detached properties in spacious plots are located adjacent to the larger plots containing historic buildings, whereas areas of small housing estates are located either side of the buffer zone of open space to the north of Tatham Road, with further continuously developed land outside and within the setting of the conservation area to the south.

The character of the historic core of the conservation area consists of houses and farmhouses located on road frontages to Northcourt Road and Northcourt Lane, the courtyard of barns formerly associated with Abingdon Abbey

and the individual properties including Northcourt House and Joy Mount. Northcourt House and Joy Mount are both set back some distance from Northcourt Lane; the former within its own landscape setting complete with fine tree specimens, the latter in close proximity to Northcourt Walk footpath.

7.2 Activity and prevailing or former uses and their influence on the plan form and buildings

The early settlement at Northcourt evolved from a cluster of farm buildings and cottages. As Abingdon expanded northwards, the outlying rural hamlet has become a suburb of the town. The barn complex has now been put to community use for Christ Church and the land to the east taken up by another community use for Abingdon United Football and Social Club. There are other community buildings such as shops, a public house and schools/colleges within the conservation area or nearby.

7.3 The qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the area, description of dominant architectural styles, prevalent types of buildings and periods of buildings

There are 13 listed buildings in the conservation area. (Map 4)

These include Northcourt House and Tatham House, Northcourt Lane, No 49 (The Old House) Northcourt Road, Wall to No 49, Nos 14 and 16 Northcourt Road, No 18 Northcourt Road, No 20 and left hand section of the Spread Eagle Public House, the main premises of the Spread Eagle Public House, The Old Farmhouse, Christ Church (former







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Tithe Barn), former barn at The Old Farmhouse and Joy Mount, Northcourt Walk.

The majority of listed buildings in the conservation area typify the rural vernacular from the medieval period onwards, with steeply pitched gabled roofs, narrow span and 2 storey height. The earliest known building is the former tithe barn which dates from circa 1270. This is an imposing 6 bay structure with a wagon porch on the north elevation, constructed in squared coursed limestone, with limestone quoins and clay tile roof on the front and stone slate on the wagon porch. The former barn to The Old Farmhouse noted of ancient origin, is much repaired and altered. The other houses and farm houses are noted as of 17th century origin. These are typically constructed in limestone rubble or brick, which is sometimes painted or rendered, under clay tile or Welsh slate roofs. Northcourt House is stylistically different from the other listed buildings, being of classical design and square plan with a later extension. It was constructed in 1805 for Henry Knapp and his wife Anne.

7.4 Unlisted buildings: buildings of local interest and those which detract

Nos 55 and 57 Northcourt Road form a visual stop on the north west boundary of the conservation area. Although altered these buildings are of circa 1800 and make a positive contribution to the streetscape. The barn ranges either side of the former barn to The Old Farmhouse also make a positive contribution to the streetscape, in terms of their scale and massing. In Northcourt Lane, Wall Cottage, makes a positive contribution to the streetscape, as does Orchard House, a sympathetically designed recently







constructed house. The latter blends in well with the established local vernacular, in terms of scale, form and materials and is constructed in brick with clay tile roof. Buildings which detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area include Christ Church Lower Suite, the dilapidated, prefabricated Christ Church nursery building to the east of the former tithe barn and the concrete store/shed on the playing fields, to the north west of the pavilion. Large areas of poorly maintained hardstanding associated with community use also detract, as do concrete bollards and large, visible areas of public parking.

7.5 Local details

Within the conservation area the predominant architectural styles are a mixture of vernacular and modern. Most buildings are of 2 storeys or less in height, whether old or modern. Most historic buildings within the conservation area have simple architectural details including painted timber casement windows and plank or panelled doors.

Northcourt House is an exception being classical in style with details including chequer-work brick walling, painted sash windows with brick heads, panelled doors, brick parapets with dentilled brick eaves cornices, and brick stacks. Tatham House also has sash windows and panelled doors, with evident but lower status similarities to Northcourt House.

Roofs are generally gabled. Instances of hipped roofs are found including at Northcourt House and in the modern development to the west of the Spread Eagle Public House. Flat roofs are found in modern buildings such as the Christ

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Church extension and the extension to the rear of the barns attached to the former barn to The Old Farmhouse.

Dentilled brick eaves cornices are found at The Old Farmhouse and Northcourt House.

Instances of lined render or stucco are found on No 14 Northcourt Road and of roughcast render on the front elevation of Old Farmhouse. The Spread Eagle Public House has a painted stone frontage with flat band.

7.6 Prevalent local building materials

Prevalent local walling materials include limestone rubble or red brick, or red and blue chequered brick as well as painted or rendered rubble or brick in the old buildings. Instances of weather-board are found including in the former barn to The Old Farmhouse and attached barn range.

Stone slate is little in evidence except on buildings such as on part of the former tithe barn. A few instances of Welsh slate are found in outbuildings off Northcourt Lane. The prevalent roofing material on older buildings is red clay tile. Modern buildings are generally constructed in red or dark red brick under red clay tile or concrete tile roofs.

Chimney stacks are predominantly of red brick, sometimes on stone bases such as evident in the exterior south gable end stack on The Old Farmhouse. A variety of materials are used in boundary treatments: Stone and brick walling dominates in Northcourt Road and Northcourt Lane. High limestone rubble walling is found attached to No 49, and around the garden area to The Old Farmhouse. High stone

walling with brick copings is found to the west of the Spread Eagle Public House, where modern development is discernible beyond.

Fragmentary remains of stone walls survive around the former tithe barn and former barn to The Old Farmhouse. Northcourt House has a fine red brick wall, which complements the classically inspired, 'polite' form of the house. It is constructed on a stone plinth with red brick copings and has associated brick gate piers with pyramidal stone caps. The wall is buttressed at intervals.

By contrast post and rail fencing with hedging and tree planting is found on the north side of Tatham Road, contributing to the quiet, rural ambience of this part of the conservation area.

Not all trees and walls are mentioned in the appraisal, but this doesn't mean that they don't contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

7.7 The contribution made by green/open space and its biodiversity value

To the north of Tatham Road the crescent shaped wedge of open field is an important buffer between areas of infill development. The sports ground of Abingdon United Football and Social Club forms an important area of open space surrounding the listed buildings once associated with Abingdon Abbey and maintains the sense of the former open plots forming the hamlet. Examples of important private open space are found in the grounds to Northcourt House, surrounding gardens and The Old Farmhouse.







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Trees and hedges contribute to the overall quality of the conservation area, softening boundary edges and the impact of areas of modern development. The conservation area contains many fine specimens of trees, notably in the grounds of Northcourt House and Tatham House. There are fine sycamores, an ash tree to the east of No 49 Northcourt Road and a walnut tree in the grounds of The Old Farmhouse and another in the grounds of Tatham House. Elswhere hedges and trees define boundaries including on the north side of Tatham Road and along the perimeter of the football playing field. These areas of green space, private gardens, hedges and trees provide important habitats for wildlife.

There are 3 Tree Preservation Orders within the conservation area. (Map 4) These relate to fine specimens of ash, lime, beech and chestnut to the north of Tatham Road.

7.8 Negative factors

There are few negative factors within the conservation area: The pavement in front of the former barn to The Old Farmhouse and adjacent barns on the south side of Northcourt Road is badly eroded; a section of concrete boundary wall and wire fencing to the south west of the former tithe barn detracts from the setting of the barn and the surrounding playing fields; the boundary hedge on the north side of Northcourt Lane near the junction with Oxford Road is overgrown with elder and has a generally unkempt appearance with gaps in the hedgerow.







7.9 Neutral areas

Areas of 20th century development on the former plots and fields surrounding Nourthcourt House have a neutral impact on the conservation area, being generally simple in design and of small scale. Christ Church Hall and the Abingdon United Football and Social Club pavilion although of modernist design and utilitarian appearance, respectively also have a neutral impact. The impact of these buildings has been reduced by their location, high boundary walls or fences and tree screening or hedging.

7.10 General condition and buildings at risk

Buildings within the conservaton area are generally in good condition apart from buildings comprising the barn complex and associated modern buildings sited around the former monastic barn. The former barn to The Old Farmhouse and attached barns have slipped clay tiles and inappropriate hard cement pointing; the flat roofed Christ Church Hall and Christ Church Corner Suite have a run down, dilapidated appearance.

7.11 Problems, pressures and capacity for change (traffic, uncontrolled adverts etc)

Northcourt Road is a busy vehicular, pedestrian and cycle route, providing access between residential areas, shops, schools and colleges. Due to the narrowness of the street congestion may occur at peak times. Avoidance of the Boundary House traffic lights by re-routing via Northcourt Lane causes a heavy increase in traffic at peak times.

Northcourt has been subjected to pressure for infill development over recent years. New houses and housing estates have on the whole been sympathetically integrated

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within the conservation area, with careful control over the scale of buildings and materials used in construction. The main areas of undeveloped open space remain on the north side of Tatham Road, the grounds of Northcourt House and its immediate neighbours and the football playing field. It is important that these areas remain open as intrinsically important in their own right and to protect the setting of listed buildings and views of key historic buildings.

8 Boundary changes

There are 4 small boundary changes:

- Extension to the south and east of Longside
- Extension to include the garden area of Joy Mount
- Extension to include the south side of Northcourt Lane
- Extension to include the access drive and boundary to the east of The Old House

The conservation area boundary ran through a property named Longside built after the conservation area was first designated on a plot to the south west of Joy Mount. The boundary also cuts off a small piece of Joy Mount and its grounds. These anomalies are corrected and the element of historic core land within the boundary strengthened by minor extensions to include their respective garden areas. Both sides of Northcourt Lane from the Oxford Road access, are included within the boundary, as this section of lane has a special rural ambiance. This is consistent with the inclusion of the northern section of Northcourt Road within the conservation area boundary.

A further minor extension is made to square off the conservation area boundary to the east of The Old House, to include a yew and scyamore tree within the conservation area. These amendments rationalise the conservation area boundary. (Map 4)

9 Community involvement

Community involvement is an important integral part of the appraisal of a conservation area. Public consultation is undertaken via the Town Council and may also include consultation with local historical societies and other relevant bodies and individuals as well as by leaflet drops to individual properties within the conservation area. Views of the local community are taken into account in the preparation of conservation area appraisals and recommendations for the future management of the area. If it is agreed to change the conservation area boundary, notice is given in the local press and the altered conservation area boundary registered in the local land charges register.

10 Key Points: Future management of the Northcourt conservation area

The District Council can initiate improvements and control development in the conservation area. However, the success of conservation area designation will depend upon the co-operation and enthusiasm of residents and business owners to work with the Council in achieving common aims and objectives. These are listed below:

General

 Promote awareness of the special value of the conservation area and encourage all who live or work in the area to re-inforce the special character and appearance through works of preservation or enhancement

- Encourage statutory undertakers to retain, repair and re-instate historic street surfaces, grass verges and banks, street furniture, signage and lighting; reduce street clutter including wirescape and rationalise street furniture
- Encourage high quality, energy efficient design in new buildings or extensions, which aims to: fit in with the established 'grain' of the conservation area and be sympathetic in terms of scale, form, massing, plot ratio, design and materials. Design and Access Statements to assist this process
- Encourage the regular maintenance and repair of buildings in the conservation area. Seek to re-inforce the special quality of historic buildings through the use of traditional materials and construction techniques, including the use of lime mortars, plasters and renders, combed wheat reed or longstraw thatch and painted timber windows and doors
- Encourage regular tree/hedge management with re-planting where appropriate

Specific

- Preserve the rural ambience of Northcourt Lane, with green verges and unkerbed road surface. Any proposals to introduce traffic calming measures which would prejudice this special character should be resisted
- Encourage the removal of unsightly concrete bollards within the Northcourt conservation area or its setting or their replacement with bollards of more sympathetic design and materials
- Encourage the removal of the unsightly, dilapidated concrete shed on the Abingdon United Football

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playing fields, which is located in close proximity to the former tithe barn

- Encourage the removal of the unsympathetic block wall and dilapidated fencing to the west of the former tithe barn
- Encourage the repair of the eroded pavement on the north side of the Northcourt Farm barn and adjacent barns together with the resurfacing of the tarmac courtyard to the south of these buildings
- Ensure that development proposals within the Christ Church barn complex and site are achieved with sensitivity respecting the grade II listed former monastic barn and other adjacent listed buildings and buildings of local note
- Encourage the regular repair and maintenance of the barns and buildings forming the Christ Church complex
- Encourage appropriate hedge and tree planting to screen and soften the expanses of open car parking around the Christ Church barn complex

11 References and useful information

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Hood, Nancy, William Teulon Blandford Fletcher 1858-1936, A Painter of Village Life, 1986

Vale of the White Horse District Council, Local Plan 2011, July 2006

English Heritage, Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals, 2006

English Heritage, Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas, 2006

Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG 15), 1994

Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16), 1990

12 Listed buildings

NORTHCOURT LANE

II Northcourt House and Tatham House

NORTHCOURT ROAD

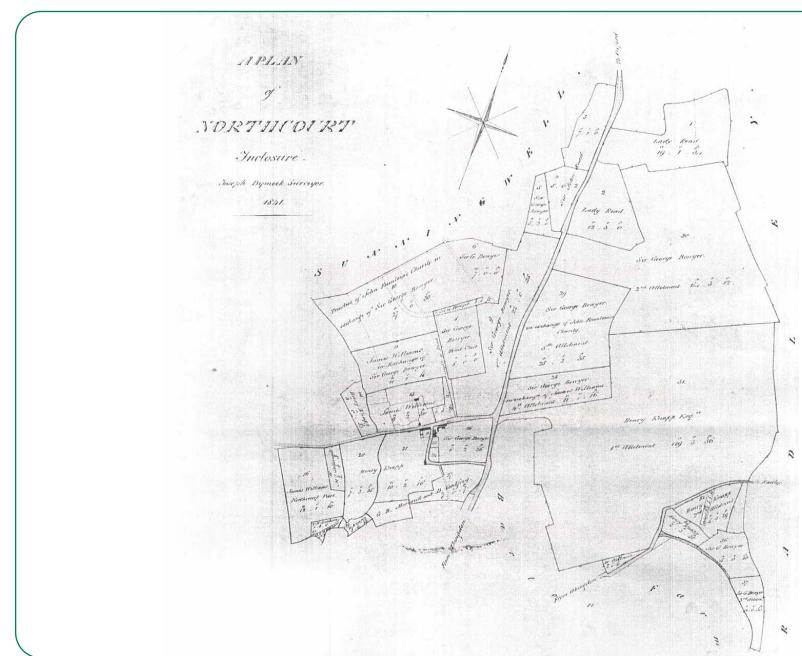
- II No. 49 (The Old House)
- II Wall to No. 49
- II Nos. 14 & 16
- II No. 18
- II No. 20 and left hand section of the Spread Eagle Public House
- II Main premises of the Spread Eagle Public House
- II Northcourt Farmhouse
- B Christ Church (formerly listed as Tithe Barn)
- II Former Barn at Northcourt Farmhouse (formerly listed as Barn 30 yards NNW)

NORTHCOURT WALK

I Joy Mount House

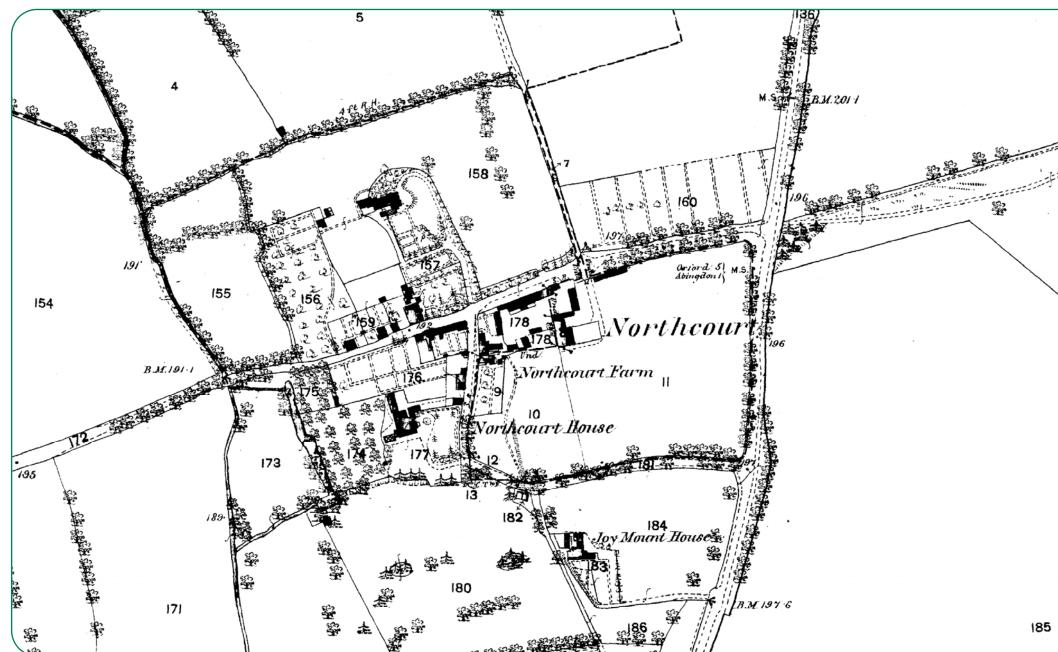
Map 1 - Enclosure Award Map 1841





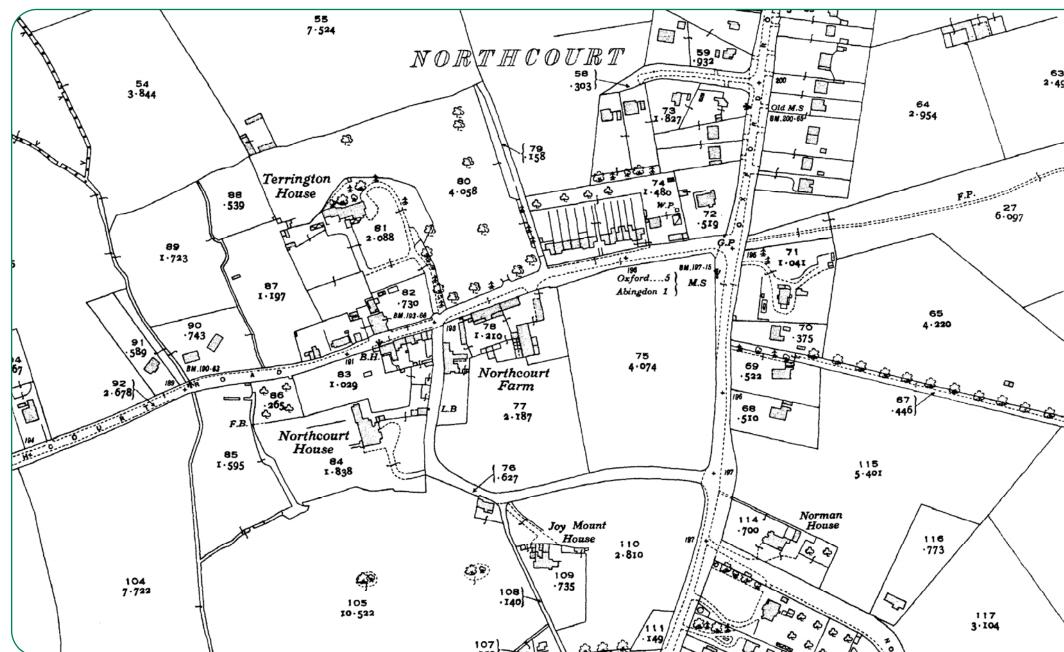
Map 2 - First Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1875





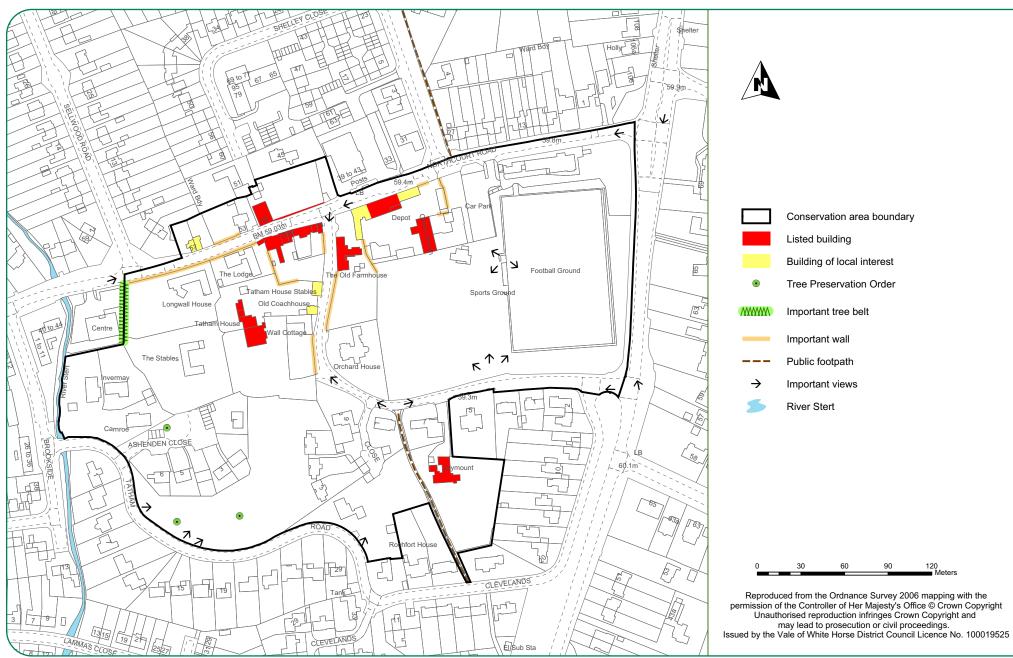
Map 3 - Ordnance Survey Map 1932 - 1942





Map 4 - Northcourt Conservation Area

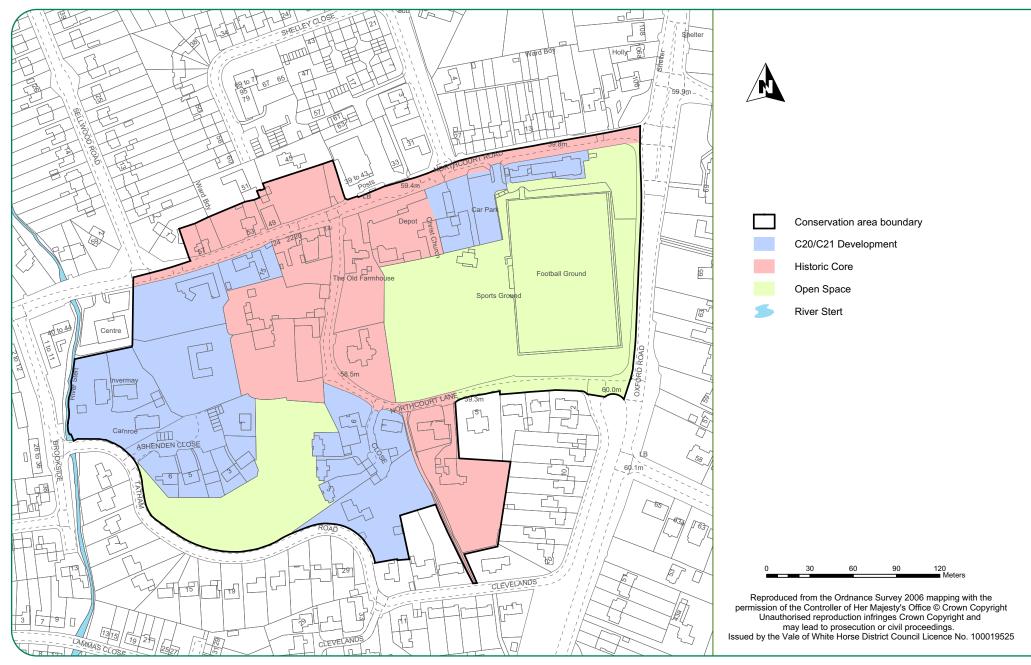




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Map 5 - Northcourt Conservation Area: Character Areas







For further information and advice on Northcourt Conservation Area Appraisal please contact: Vale of White Horse District Council, Environmental Planning and Conservation, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3JE. Tel 01235 520202 or by e-mail on caa@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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