

Appendix 3- Character Assessment

Bletchington and Hampton Gay and Poyle
Neighbourhood Development Plan

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Background

Objective

The Bletchingdon and Hampton Gay and Poyle Neighbourhood Plan (BHGNP) sets out policies for future development. The respective Parish Council and Meeting, supported by feedback from residents, is extremely keen to ensure that new development is 'in keeping' with well-loved village spaces.

This document has two aims:

- To collate the findings of a group of residents, which identified those features within the built environment that contribute to the unique and distinctive character of Bletchingdon and Hampton Gay and Poyle.
- To act as the primary resource for the separate Bletchingdon and Hampton Gay and Poyle Neighbourhood Plan Design Code.

Approach

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee identified volunteers to undertake assessment of the character areas.

This group was advised by BHGNP consultants Community First Oxfordshire (CFO). CFO held community briefing sessions and walkabouts, which introduced the Character Assessment process in combination with a 'Placecheck' approach, explored different areas of the village and facilitated discussion about the choice of character areas in relation to the patterns and layout of the built environment and its different build and design eras. This established a final list of **seven character areas**.

The volunteer character assessment group then undertook research of each character area using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. Using this primary research, CFO then drafted the analysis of each assessment area, with the content subsequently reviewed and refined by both the volunteer group and the Parish Council.

The following Conservation Area appraisals were key sources: **Bletchingdon Conservation Area Appraisal: 2008; Hampton Gay, Shipton-on-Cherwell and Thrupp Conservation Area Appraisal, 2007; and Hampton Poyle Conservation Area Appraisal, 2017).**

Following publication of the draft Character Assessment on the Bletchingdon Parish Council website and circulation via community contact lists in Hampton Gay and Poyle, feedback was also taken from the wider community.

Village Setting, History, and Development- Overview

Bletchington

Bletchington is a parish in the south of the Cherwell district council area. It has an area of 10.75km² (2654 acres) and extends approximately 5km east to west and to a maximum of 4km north to south. The parish is 12km north of the centre of Oxford and 5km north of Kidlington. To the west is Woodstock with the major centre of Bicester a 15-minute drive (13km) to the north east.

The bulk of the population live in the main area of the village which lies in the centre of the parish. There are also the outlying hamlets of Enslow to the west and Heathfield to the east. Approximately 90% of the area of the parish is rural and mainly used for arable agriculture but with some considerable woodland to the east. Bletchington Park, a privately-owned country estate with a substantial Palladium mansion lies in the centre of the village.

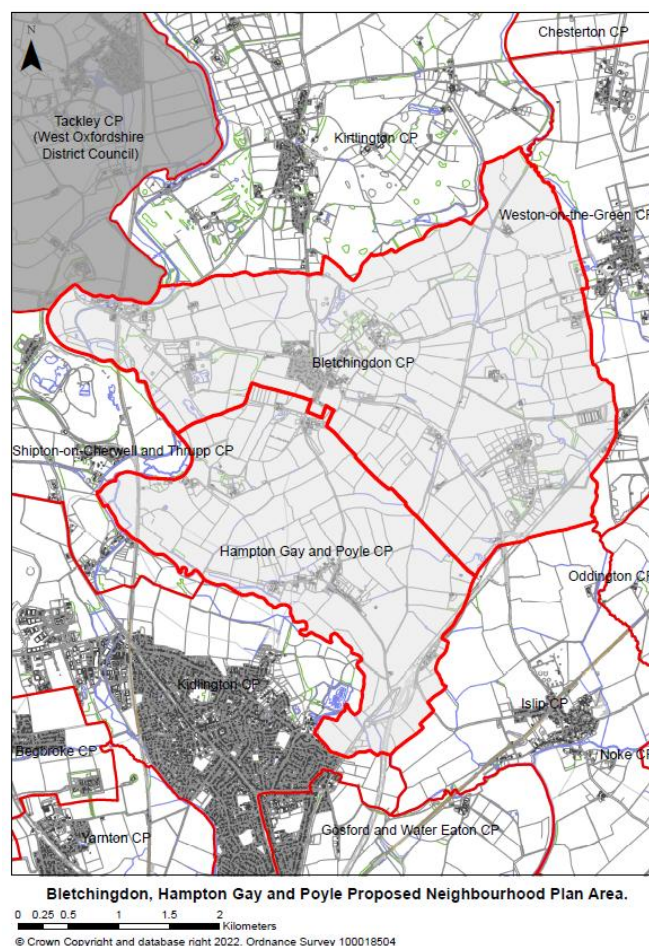


Figure 1 – left to right: Parishes of Bletchington, Hampton Gay and Hampton Poyle

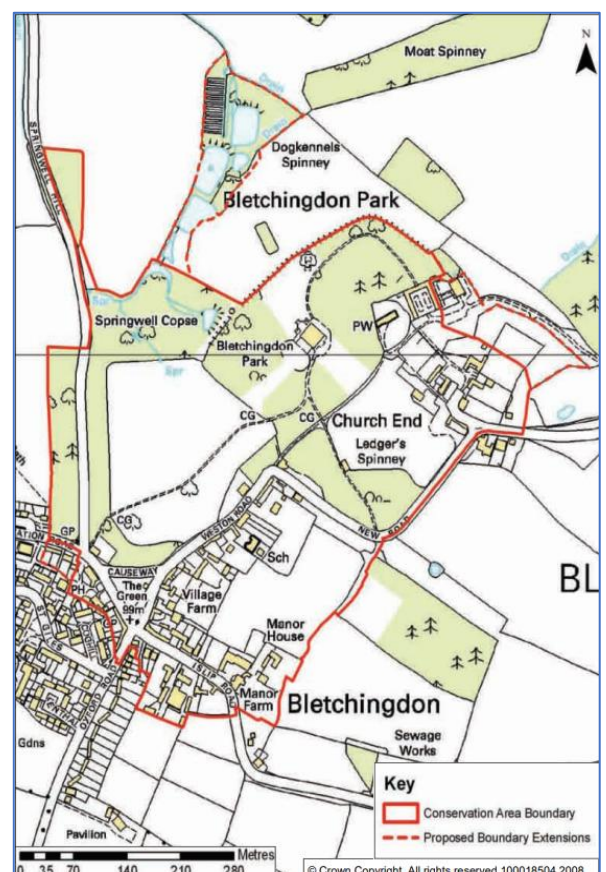


Figure 2 - Bletchington Conservation Area

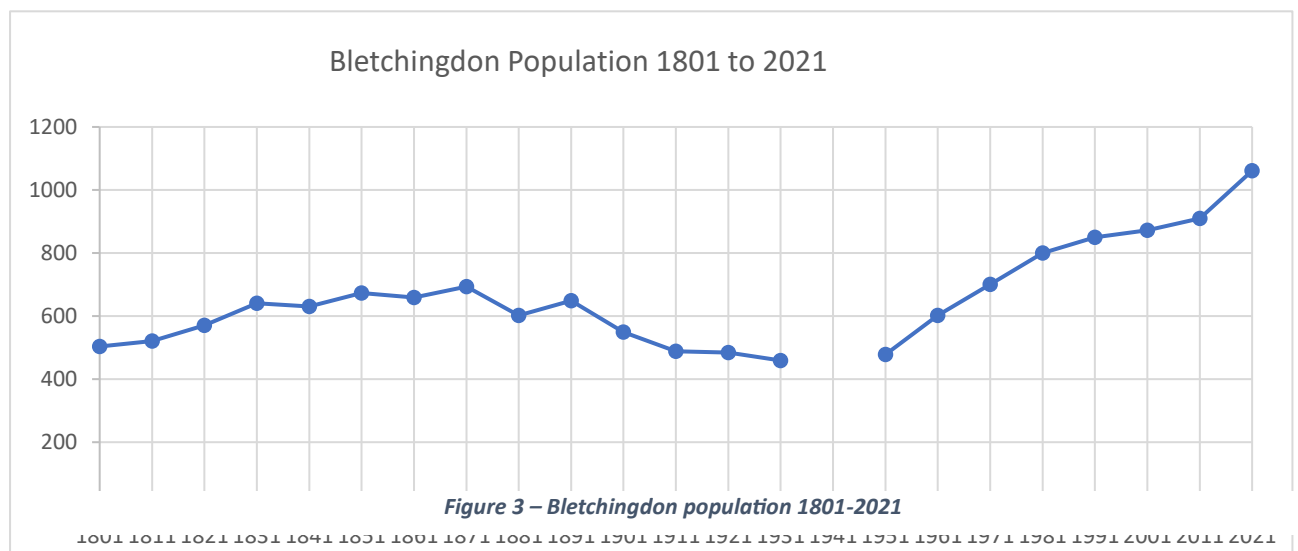
The 13th century church of St. Giles is at the northern end of the village area, which was once the main centre of the village. Today, the church and its immediate environs contain about 20 residential properties and are separated from the main part of the village by fields and a small woodland. The central area of the village contains a modern school, village hall and shop together with an 18th century public house (currently closed). There is also a nursery school, housed in the

original village school. There is a sports and social club to the south of the village and three designated play areas within the parish.

Heathfield, at the eastern end of the parish, contains a nursing home, around 20 homes and plans for a caravan site. There are also a number of small businesses. Enslow at the western edge of the parishes also has a number of homes and small businesses.

Historical context

The parish was probably first settled in mid first millennium around Enslow but the current village centre is featured in the Domesday book. A tithe map from the 18th century shows settlement roughly on the current pattern. The parish was enclosed early, much of it by 1625 and developed a pattern of farms and free labourers. The main road through the village was the main route from London to Worcester. The Oxford canal was completed in 1790 and the Oxford to Banbury railway line which runs along the Cherwell valley was completed in 1850 with a station at Enslow.



The population grew steadily during the 19th century reaching a maximum of over 700 by 1875 but thereafter declined with the onset of the agricultural depression. The decline continued until the Second World War and was marked by further declines in employment opportunities and by younger people leaving the area. By 1951 it was still less than it had been 150 years earlier. It was not to exceed the 1870's high point again until the 1970's.

The 1904 map of the village shows a limited amount of settlement within the central area and Enslow, but as the census returns show, dwellings scattered around the area. This pattern of settlement had existed for at least 100 years and was not to change significantly until sometime after the second world war with a greater concentration in the central area.



Figure 4 - Bletchington in 1904

Population growth was enabled after 1950 by housebuilding and improved communications which allowed people to easily work outside the village. Major housing developments were:

- 1930's Station Road
- 1950's Valentia Close, Oxford Road
- 1960's St. Giles, Coghill, Annesley Close, Islip Road
- 1970's Lenthall
- 2000's Springwell
- 2017-22 Duchy Field, Enslow, Heathfield

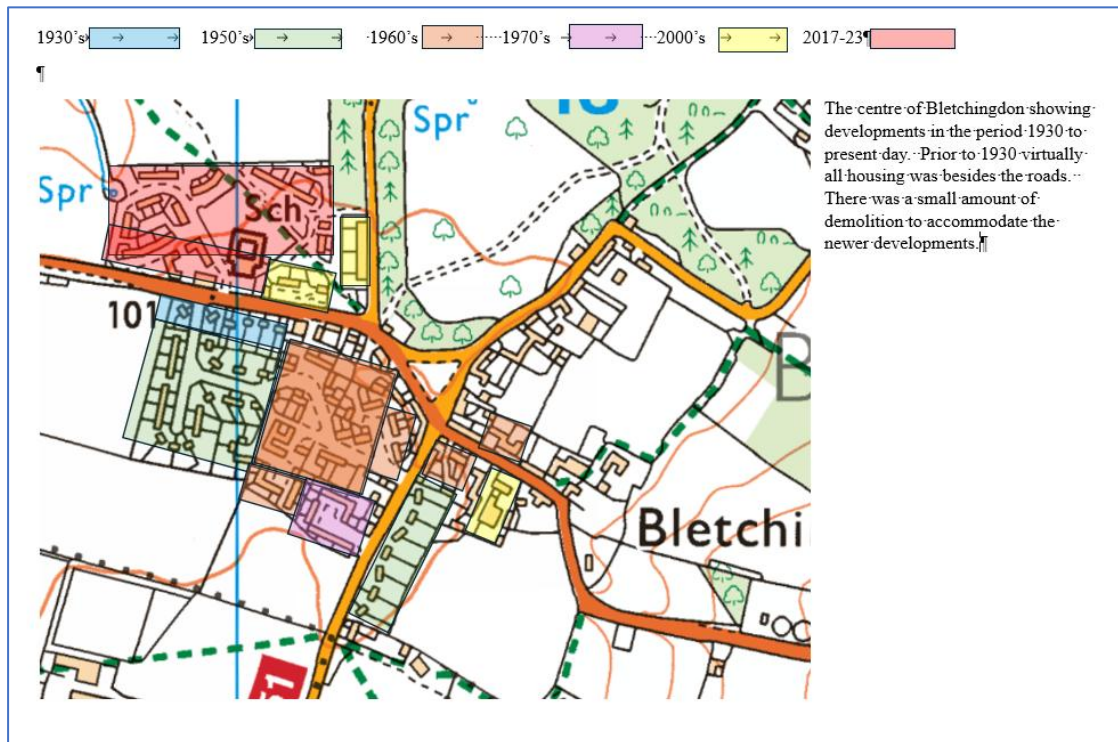


Figure 5 - development eras in central Bletchington

Hampton Gay and Poyle

The parishes of Hampton Gay and Hampton Poyle operated as separate units until 1931, when the civil parishes were merged. They are still, however, two ecclesiastical parishes.

The parish lies between Bletchington in the north and the river Cherwell to both the west and south. The eastern boundary is primarily the A34, formerly the A43(T). The bulk of the small population of Hampton Gay live in a cluster at the end of the side road which branches off from the Bletchington to Hampton Poyle Road. The population of Hampton Poyle primarily live alongside Bletchington Road, Oxford Road, or in Church Lane, a side road leading towards the church. Over 90% of the parish is rural, with open fields predominating. Where the parish abuts the river Cherwell, the fields are rough grazing, the rest primarily arable. There is only a small amount of wooded area.

Both parts of the parish are designated as conservation areas. In the case of Hampton Gay, this is part of a wider area covering Thrupp and Shipton-on-Cherwell ([appraised](#) by Cherwell District Council in 2007). In the case of the village itself, virtually all the housing is included along with the church and the ruined manor house.

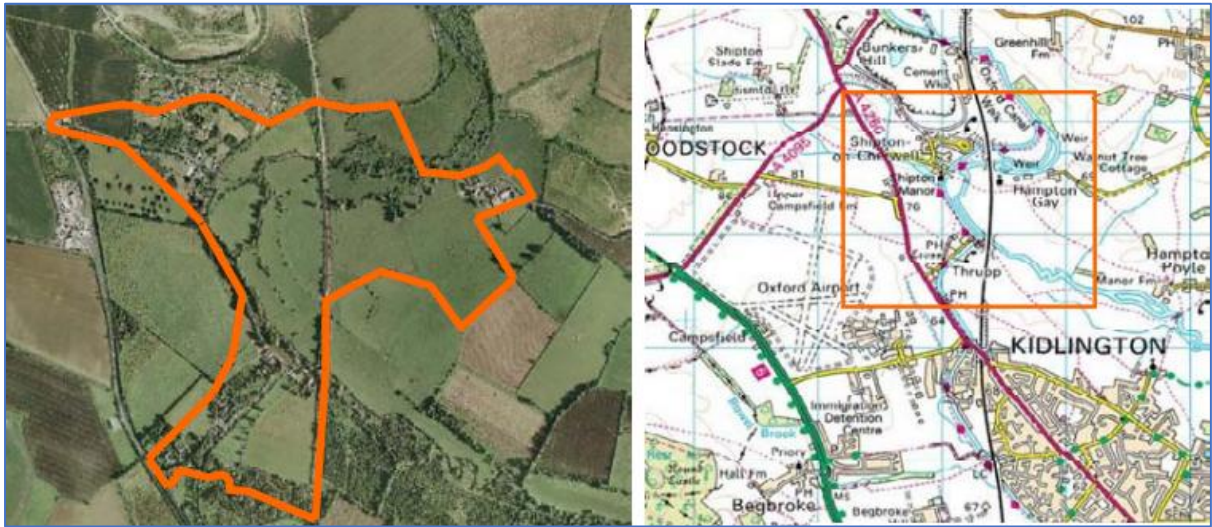


Figure 6 - Hampton Gay, Shipton and Thrupp Conservation Areas



Figure 7 - historic core of Hampton Gay in the wider conservation area

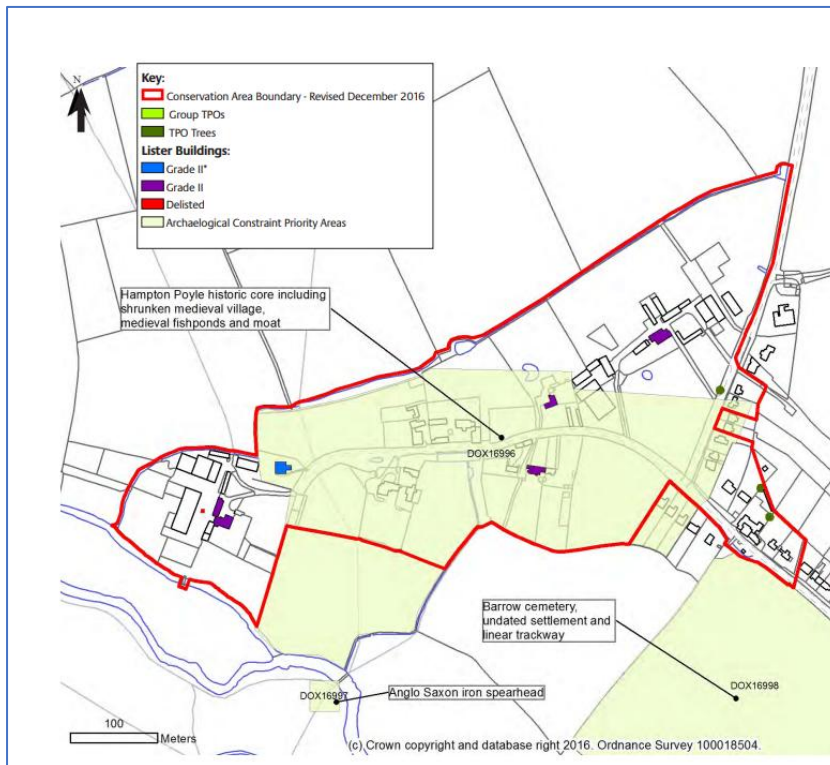


Figure 8 - Hampton Poyle conservation area

In the case of Hampton Poyle ([appraised](#) by Cherwell District Council in 2017), the designation includes all the buildings on Church Lane, together with the older houses along the Bletchington and Oxford Roads. Both of the villages lie wholly within the Oxford Green Belt.

Historical context

Hampton Gay is an ancient settlement with some evidence of Neolithic and Saxon occupation. In 1086 (the Domesday Book), there were two estates – one of about 300 acres and the

other of 200. The whole manor was held by the De Gay family. After the dissolution, the land was brought under the control of a single family until 1862 when debt forced a sale to Wadham College. The manor house was gutted by fire in 1887 and eventually sold by the college in 1928. Since then it has passed through a number of hands.

The Domesday Book also recorded a mill on the riverbank. In 1681, it was let as a paper mill and remained as such, except for a closure from 1865 to 1873 as a result of fire, until it finally closed in 1887. With its closure went most of the employment for the village. In 1851 there had been 17 houses but this number declined steadily from 1871 onwards. Until recently there were only 5 inhabited houses.

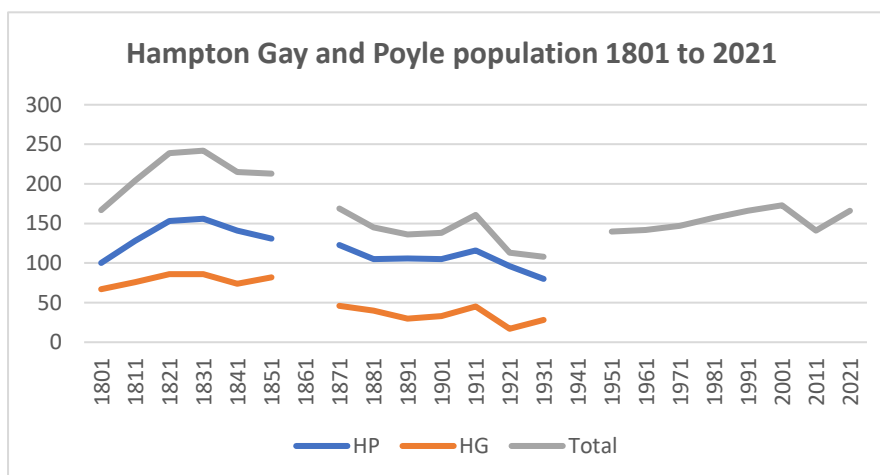


Figure 9 - Hampton Gay and Poyle population, 1801-2021

Hampton Poyle is also an ancient settlement including a possible Iron Age or Romano British settlement and a barrow cemetery. As a result, there is an NMR Monument area to the right of the Oxford Road and a number of areas of Archaeological Restraint, chiefly along Church Lane.

In 1086, there was a single manor of around 1,000 acres held by the King. It passed through various hands but in 1267 it passed to Walter de la Poyle. It remained in the family until the 15th century and then passed through various hands until it was sold to Arthur Annesley, of Bletchington in 1795. After the death of another Arthur Annesley, the 11th Earl of Valentia, the estate was broken up and sold to its tenants.

In medieval times, the village was along what is now Church Lane around close to what was a



Figure 10 - Hampton Gay and Poyle, 1904

strategic crossing of the Cherwell. There were a small number of farmhouses along the Bletchington Road by 1800 and by 1900 the Bell Inn had appeared. The remaining houses along Oxford and Bletchington Roads date from around the mid-20th century. The population had been, until relatively recent times, mainly agriculturally based but the decline in agricultural employment from the 1870's onwards has meant that the population makeup has changed dramatically and would now mainly be characterised as professional.

Character Assessment: Village Areas

Introduction

For the purposes of this report, the settlements were considered as being composed of seven areas, indicated on Figure 11 (below):

- **Area A - Bletchington: Conservation Area, Church End and Bletchington Park**
- **Area B - Bletchington: St. Giles and Oxford Road**
- **Area C - Bletchington: Sands Close and Duchy Fields**
- **Area D - Bletchington: Station Road and Enslow**
- **Area E - Bletchington: Heathfield**
- **Area F - Hampton Gay**
- **Area G- Hampton Poyle**

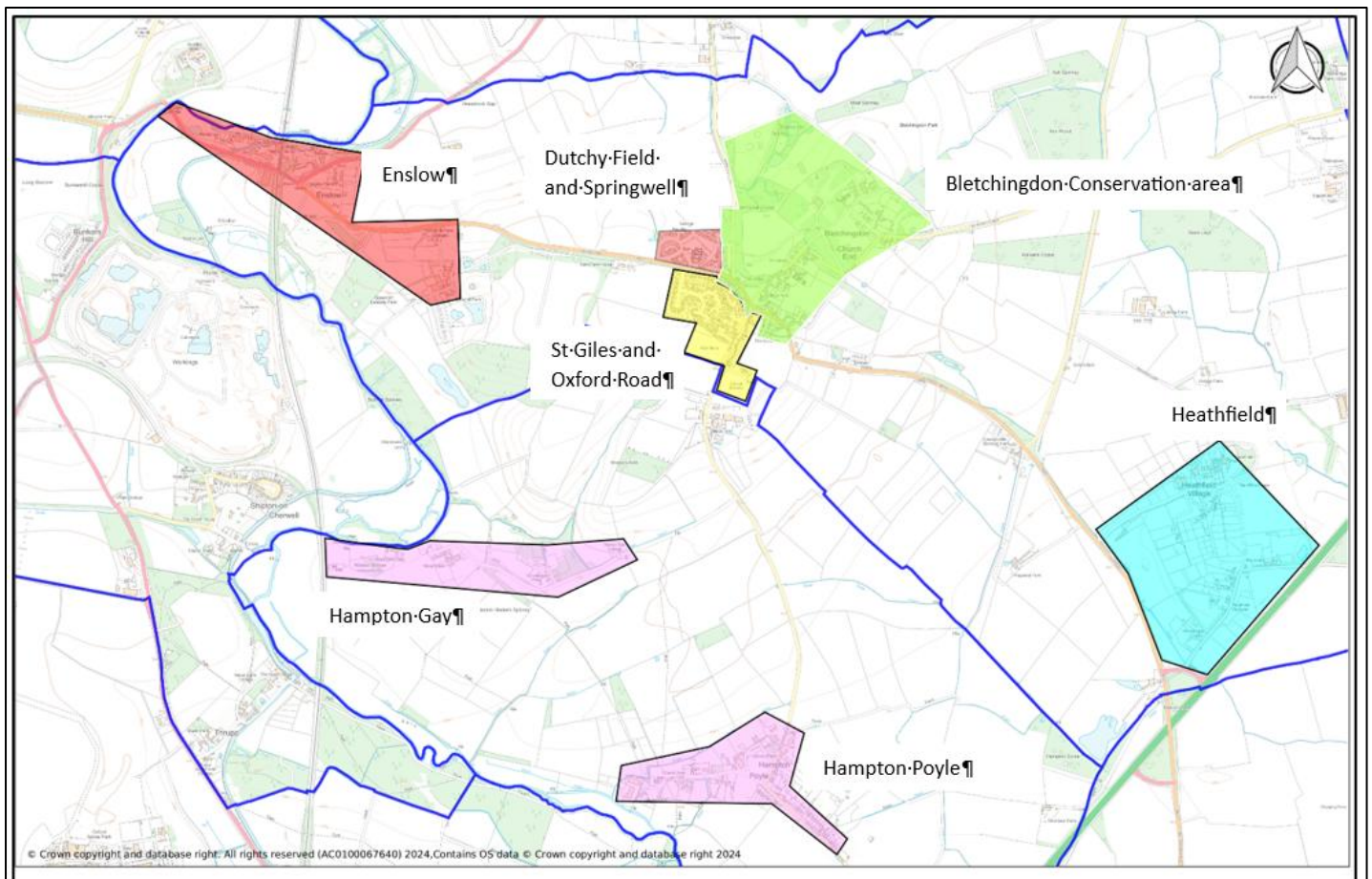


Figure 11 - overview map of Character Areas

Rationale for character areas

The Steering Group undertook a walkabout (with Neighbourhood Plan consultants Community First Oxfordshire) of Bletchington, Hampton Gay and Hampton Poyle.

The walk indicated distinctive sub-areas within Bletchington based upon historical development and identity as well as differences in form and layout. A “Place check” style exercise was undertaken, picking out particular characteristics. The fact that part of Bletchington has also been designated as a Conservation Area highlighted many heritage assets.

Beyond the main village of Bletchington, two other locations, Enslow and Heathfield, comprise small hamlets in the open countryside – these have distinctive identities and so were treated as separate sub-areas.

Hampton Gay and Hampton Poyle each comprise a separate sub-area. Both communities have a long history as agricultural settlements. However, Hampton Gay in particular has been much reduced since the nineteenth century and is far smaller than Hampton Poyle. Nevertheless, the hamlet continues and represents an almost uniquely isolated and tranquil place close to Oxford with a church, a derelict Manor House and a number of residents living in close proximity to the access lane. Parts of the parish has Conservation Area status.

All of these places have their own history and identity, meriting separate assessment of character as a result.

A summary of important community views in and from each character area is included in a separate section of this report.

Area A: Bletchingdon Conservation Area, Church End and Bletchingdon Park

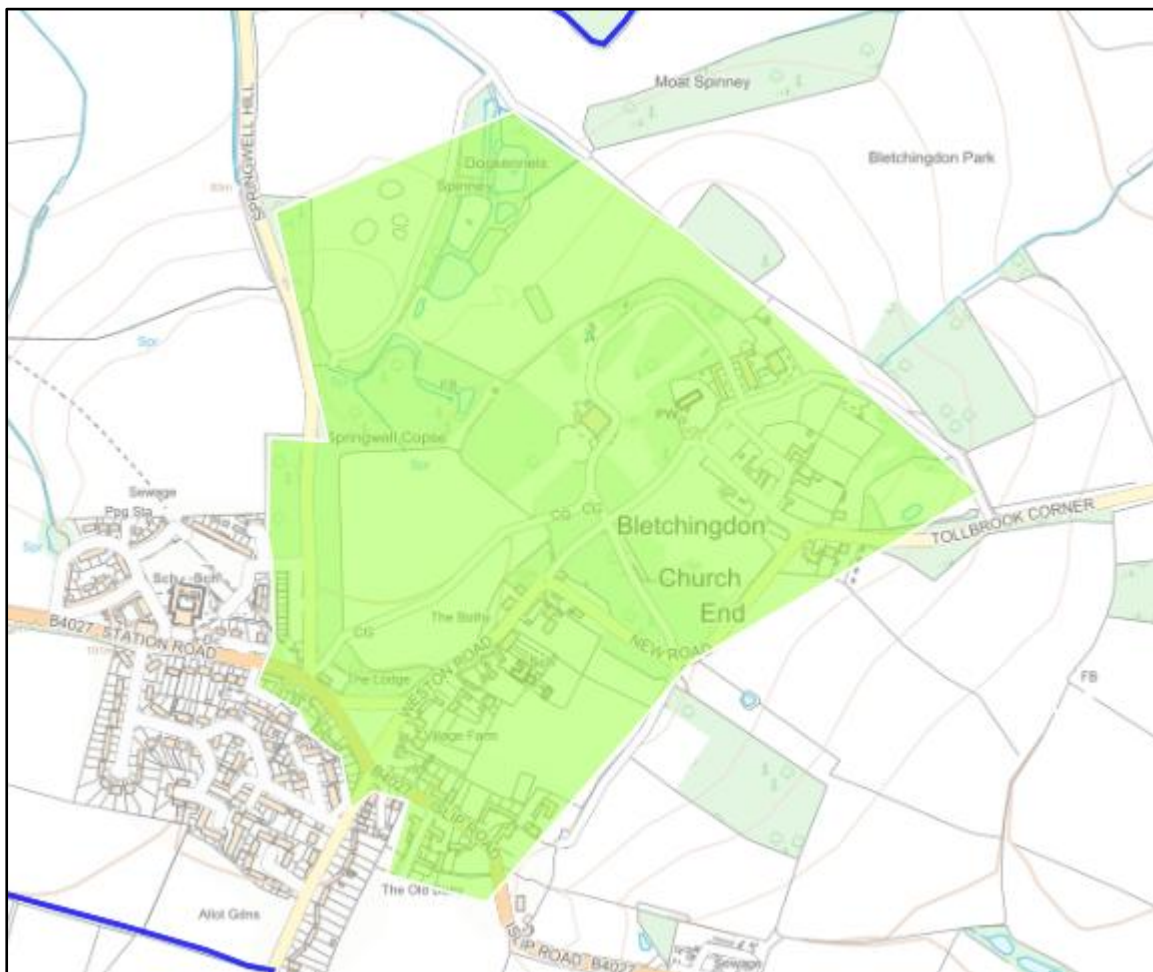


Figure 12 – Character Area A

Overview and value

This character area evokes an earlier time. Ignoring power lines, cars and street lighting, the historic village has been little changed over the last 100 years. This area is the heart of the village with The Green as the focal point. Weston Road is a favourite with walkers heading towards Church walk, the church and the wider landscape beyond – as such it has high communal value.

Despite the presence of traffic on the main B4027 running through the village and commuter traffic on side roads during peak times, the historic village still has a certain atmosphere which makes it an attractive to view, to walk around and most importantly in which to live – thus, it has high aesthetic value.

The high historical value of this area lies in a rich selection of listed buildings and buildings of historic interest which form a coherent pattern throughout the conservation area, with commonality of materials and styles.

Also, this is an example of a nucleated village with inward looking views towards the village green rather than expansive views out to surrounding countryside.

Housing/ building design and style

“The village is mainly residential, surrounding the triangular Green, with a former shop and a pub, both on The Green. The majority of the buildings are a mixture of detached and semi-detached, with The Row and Farmhouses Cottages the only terraces. There are several 17th and 18th century properties, interspersed with more modern bungalows. Many of these properties were originally farm buildings or shops, and still retain the features.

The village core is the intersection of five roads, focussing on The Green in the centre. Islip Road (B4027) to the south and Station Road to the west run through the village on the southern edge of The Green. Weston Road (formerly The Causeway) leaves The Green at the north east, and Oxford Road and Kirtlington Road lead to their respective urban centres to the north and south. The positioning of the manor and park has pushed the houses southwards to skirt the Park and radiate out from The Green.” (Cherwell District Council, *Bletchington Conservation Area Appraisal*: 2008, p. 26).



Figure 14 - Islip Road and the Row



Figure 13 - Islip Road, south

The village green is a triangular planted area which is a key feature of the village with stone properties on two sides of the triangle with the Blacks Head pub (currently closed indefinitely) to the north-west corner of the green and The Row which is a grade II listed group of 7 cottages curving round the South corner of the Green. Springwell Hill leads off the Green to the north which is flanked on one side by 21st century stone-built houses known as Springwell Close.

Weston Road (formerly The Causeway) leads off the green to the east flanked by a tall stone wall to Bletchington Park to the north with a wide grass verge and a series of Cotswold stone houses and cottages on the south side. Some of these properties are listed with large gardens. The road leads round to Church end via New Road in a narrow and winding road where there is a distinct rural gap between Bletchington and Church end.

Most roads within the historic village are tarmac with tarmac paths with the exception of Church Walk, which is a gravel path leading from Weston Road to the Church and a key route for walkers. Street lighting is utilitarian and minimal. Road kerbs are concrete, with the exception of the village green where grass meets tarmac. Parking on the village green has been prevented generally by the introduction of timber bollards.



Figure 15 - Springwell Close

There is little in the way of street furniture with some Victorian style benches on the village green. Means of enclosure is generally the frontages of the buildings while brick or stone walls provide privacy along Weston Road and Islip Road.

The general feel of the village conservation area is of a Historic Cotswolds stone village set around a Green, adjacent to Bletchington Park. The houses which edge the Park are 17th and 18th century and are all constructed of natural limestone rubble with slate or stone slate roofs. Some roofs that would have likely to have been thatched have been replaced with Cotswold coloured concrete plain tiles which tends to detract from the local vernacular style.

There is some terraced housing around the green with The Row and the more modern 21st century Springwell Close (Rural Exception Site for affordable housing). Most other properties are detached or semi-detached or randomly

clustered together but in relatively large plots. Some houses have had rear extensions in a mix of stone or render.

There are nearly 40 listed buildings in this part of the village, and a number of other significant buildings which give the village its character. Islip Road has many key original buildings which front the street including: Manor Farmhouse (early 17th century), Laurel Farmhouse (mid 18th century), Home Farmhouse (17th century), London House (18th century), and the Old Red Lion (late 16th century).

Weston Road has many key buildings some of which are listed, including Park Gate house (1735), The Malthouse (early 19th century) the Old Rectory (17th century), and Village Farmhouse (17th century). Bletchington Park has a number of significant buildings in the wider landscape including an icehouse, pump house and an ice well.



Figure 16 - Weston Road: wide verge and high wall

The scale and mass of buildings in the village is generally one, one and a half and two and a half storey buildings. Materials are generally Limestone Rubble with slate or stone slate roofs. Windows are generally painted timber.

Church End and Bletchingdon Park



Figure 17 - Church End

Church End is a separate hamlet developed around St Giles church. It consists of a series of stone cottages and houses around small, single-track lanes leading to the Church, which dates from the 13th century.

An appraisal in 2008 said “There are 3 distinct ‘street’ areas [in the Church End location]: the church yards, the courtyard, and the village street. The areas associated with the church are open and wide, and include the church yard, graveyard and car park. The car park is a later addition, however this can be seen on historic maps as an open space. The courtyard is a rectangular area around which the former farm buildings and larger

residences are arranged. The street leads from the junction of Church End and New Road towards the church, affording a good distant view of the church once the corner is turned beside Easter Cottage.

Park House, Court Yard House and Church End House are all two and a half storey buildings, while the other residences are all one and a half and two storey. The larger buildings dominate the courtyard area, an impression which is enhanced by the areas of grassed open space.

The chief building material is the coursed limestone rubble walling and stone tiling typical of the southern part of the Cherwell District. The church has ashlar dressings and stone slate roofing” (Cherwell District Council, *Bletchingdon Conservation Area Appraisal*: 2008, pp. 33-34).

There are relatively few buildings in the Bletchingdon Park area, the dominant building being the Palladian Villa, which dates back to 1782. “The house has two main storeys, with a cellar below ground and a late 18th century Mansard roof, creating a third storey. Extra height is achieved by the provision of chimneys ... Local limestone and ashlar has been used to create the property, and repairs over the years have been in appropriate matching stone” (ibid, p. 30).

The villa and its extensive parkland and ground takes up about two thirds of the conservation area but is generally now hidden from view. It is accessed via a gated lodge off the village Green. The current owner is undertaking extensive works to return the landscape to as it was when the house was built. Bletchingdon Park Stables, now under separate ownership to the Park, is a key landmark in its own right on the north east edge of the conservation area.



Figure 18 - Church End cottages

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

Islip Road is a narrow and sometimes busy road flanked by houses on both sides with a very narrow pinch point near Manor Farm house which is dangerous at peak times if large vehicles such as school buses and other vehicles meet one another.

On Weston Road, parked cars on opposing sides of the road create a bottleneck at peak pick up and drop off times due to the presence of a school Nursery on this road in the old school house.

Speeding through the village is a problem on the main B4027 and a 20mph speed restriction was implemented in 2023 which should help to keep speeds down but is still an ongoing problem.



Figure 19 - Islip Road pinch point

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The core of the historic village has a leafy feel mainly due to the tall deciduous trees around the village green and the mature trees bordering Weston Road in Bletchingdon Park. The Green is the largest public open space within the historic village. Bletchingdon Park which is set in an extensive landscape means that the predominance of the area is green.

Key vegetation that should be protected are the deciduous woods behind the Old Rectory along new Road, the wooded area to the north of the 21st century Springwell Close development and a strip of deciduous trees along the track to Manor Farm which is still within the conservation area.

The Green is a focal point of the village with views radiating out along roads in five directions with The Row forming a significant focal point from many directions. The Blacks Head pub also forms a key focal point when viewed from across The Green. Views are generally inward looking which is a key feature of the village rather than expansive views of surrounding countryside.

Weston Road with its distinctive tall stone wall to Bletchingdon Park on the north side and its wide verges is also a key streetscape. The view into the village from Station Road looking towards The Green is important. Views out from New Road to the wider landscape to the south east are significant. Once in Bletchingdon park, views to the wider landscape are impressive.



Figure 20 - trees to be maintained, Manor Farm footpath



Figure 21 - Black's Head Inn from the Green



Figure 22 - Weston Road from the Green



At Church End, there are distinct views to the south-east over open farmland. Originally on the north side of New Road there would have been open views of Bletchington Park via a Ha-Ha but this view has been blocked by a tall hedge within the park.

Figure 23 - valley view from New Road

Noise, light, and smells

Minimal street lighting, relatively little shading from trees except around the Green, so natural light and dark according to the time of day and season of the year.

Main noise problem is light aircraft flying overhead doing training circuits from Kidlington Airport. There are little or no smells.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA A

- This area is focussed on the village green, the heart of the village and falls within the designated Conservation Area
- Church is very attractive ancient structure but not very visible from most of the settlement which is some distance and screened by Bletchington Park
- Nucleated compact village centre with limited views out to open countryside
- Cotswold stone village typical in the southern parts of Cherwell District
- There are over 40 Listed Buildings
- There are several groups of mature trees and small areas of woodland

- Church End is separated by a small section of countryside from the main village
- Buildings are constructed from coarse limestone rubble with slate or stone slate roofs: great degree of commonality in use of these materials
- The Green itself provides the setting for surrounding buildings and is the only green space: no recreational or sports uses in this locale but there is an old public house (closed) and the church; public house has large areas of land to the rear which has been used for events and is very much part of the village setting
- Presently some old housing fronting The Green is dilapidated and in need of refurbishment; this makes a major contribution to townscape and should be retained
- This area is a starting point for extensive walks into open fields
- No street lighting
- Narrow lanes - very rustic
- Sense of enclosure is strong, inward looking part of village formed by houses closely fronting lanes
- No evidence of new build but refurbishments are of high quality in keeping with character

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views through the village, hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials. Design of new development should therefore reflect density, a mix of dwelling types and other issues identified above in any planning statement. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area.

Area B: Bletchington – St. Giles and Oxford Road

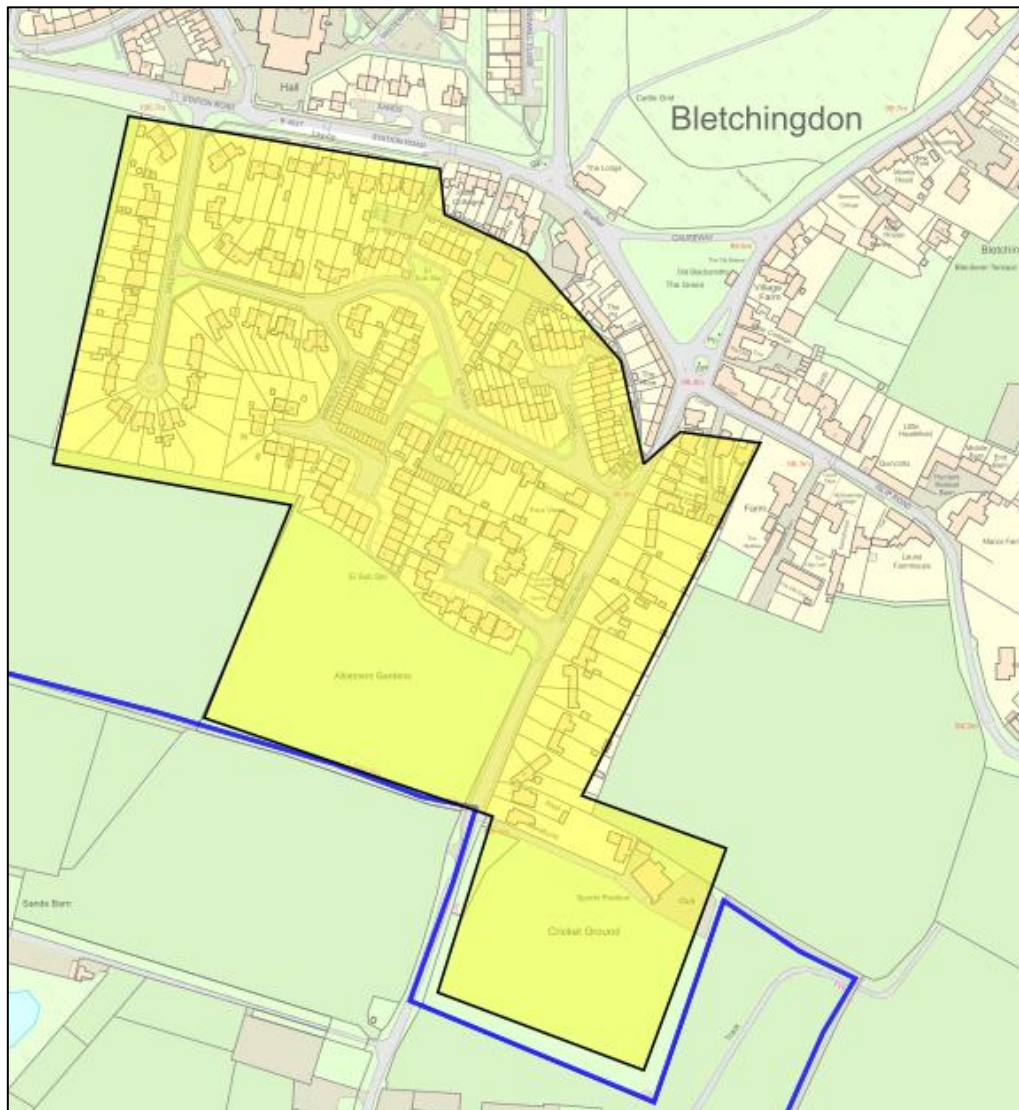


Figure 24 - Character Area B

Overview and value

The general feel of the area is very different from the historic village centre due to dense mass housing development layout of cul-de-sacs and loop roads and the car dominating the setting.

This creates a suburban feel. Houses are generally two-storey with some bungalows and some three-storey in a mix of terraces and semi-detached properties. Materials are a mix of brick, artificial stone, render and white weatherboarding. Over time there have been a series of small extensions and porch infills with limited scope for large extension.

There, therefore, a limited sense of historical or aesthetic value. However, these are tight-knit communities and the communal value is high.

Housing/ building design and style

This area consists of modern housing development from the following periods:

Station Road 1930's

Large semi-detached houses set back from the main road with deep plots to the rear. Materials and design are mainly rendered, two-storey houses with concrete tiled roofs, UPVC replacement windows. Four modern town houses (semi-detached three-storey) in stone and red tiled roofs were built in 2017 to replace an earlier village hall. A new village hall was built as part of the Duchy fields development opposite.



Figure 25 - Station Road

Valentia close, 1950's

Generally, semi-detached houses set back from the cul-de-sac road with deep plots backing onto open farmland. This is a leafy street with wide grass verges, the housing mainly rendered, two-storey houses with concrete tiled roofs, UPVC replacement windows. There is a mixture of porch extensions to frontages.



Figure 26 - Valentia Close

Oxford Road 1950's

Mainly semi-detached houses set at an angle in pairs set back from the road with large front gardens, some set over to parking, with large rear gardens backing onto fields. There are some Drystone walls

to frontage and material are design are generally brick and painted brick two-storey with concrete tiled roofs, timber and UPVC replacement windows.



Figure 27 - Oxford Road

St Giles, Coghill, 1960's

This is a very dense development of two-storey houses in terraces, stepped terraces, small plots, small front and rear gardens. Materials and design is a mixture of brick and artificial stone ground floor, upper floor rendered, concrete tile roofs with chimneys, and UPVC replacement windows.

Gardens are generally enclosed by fences, hedges and artificial stone walls. Tarmac roads and concrete kerbs. There is household detritus in some front gardens.



Figure 28 - St Giles



Figure 29 - Coghill

Annersley Close, 1960's



This is a very dense development of single-storey bungalows in semi-detached and stepped terraces some set well back from the cul-de-sac with open green spaces. There are also separate clustered single garage blocks. Materials are mainly brick with concrete tile roofs. There is on-street parking. A narrow footpath links to Lenthal.

Figure 30 - Annersley Close

Lenthal, 1970's

A cul-de-sac off Oxford Road with individual two-storey homes with linking single storey garages. Built in brick with panels of white weather boarding. The houses are set back from the road with small front and rear gardens some backing onto the allotments. Roads are tarmac with granite kerbs and off-street parking.

The area also includes very popular allotments run by the Bletchingdon Charity, which are well-used, loved locally, and to be protected at all costs. The area is surrounded by mature trees and grassland backing onto open farmland on two sides. There is a stone wall enclosure to Oxford Road.



Figure 31 - Lenthal



Figure 32 - allotments

Also in the area is the Sports and Social club – this is a well-used sports ground and club house with open views to countryside to the south east. There is, additionally, a well-used play area off Oxford Road, funded by money raised by villages. The green open space is used for recreation, events, and Bletchingdon cricket and football teams. The clubhouse is a single storey brick and concrete tile roof.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

Valentia Close, Oxford Road and Station Road have had some trees planted and would benefit from more. St. Giles and Coghill have some greenery but this is limited due to the density of housing.

There is limited public space but the area is close to the sports and social club, the allotments and the open country.

Houses on the periphery benefit from open country views but views are generally inward-looking street vistas.



Figure 33 - Sports and Social Club playground

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

While in some areas there is off-street parking, the streetscape in this area is generally dominated by cars. On-street parking is very overcrowded with a lot of parking on grass verges. Parking issues are exacerbated in some areas, where there are clusters or single-storey garages which are generally too small to accommodate modern cars.



Figure 35 - Annersley Close garages



Figure 34 - St Giles parking

Noise, light, and smells

There is limited street lighting. Some mature trees provide shade. There are no particular issues of smell and noise other than from low flying light aircraft from nearby Oxford Airport.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA B

- Layouts of more modern generally two storey housing but often mixed with bungalows, long gardens, garage blocks
- This area more suburban in character with dense mass housing with spacious open plan front gardens and culs de sac, no apartments
- More modern materials – painted brick/render buildings and tiled roofs
- Car dominated, especially on street parking in some roads, some garage blocks and private drives. Few drystone walls except on boundaries to main roads
- More green spaces including sports fields, allotments, equipped play
- Outward looking views to wider countryside
- Mature trees in some roads
- Less organic feel – i.e. less varied roofscapes, staggered building lines
- Limited street lighting

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views from this part of the village into the wider countryside. Hedges and treelines, grass verges and boundary walls, off street parking spaces and replacement of garage blocks where possible would improve outlook. Any infill or larger development should be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created

Area C: Bletchingdon – Sands Close and Duchy Fields



Figure 36 - Character Area C

Overview and value

This area consists of modern housing developments from the following periods: Sands Close 1990's; Bletchingdon Primary school 2015; Duchy Fields 2017-2022.

The spirit of place is high. The site is too young to have historical value but Duchy Fields is likely to be recognised for its distinct design features in the future. Any future housing in the village should take its lead from the design of these houses and move away from the standard box like structures of typical new housing elsewhere in the county. Duchy Fields is an example of a well-designed estate and is much admired by locals and visitors alike.

Communal value is likewise high. The heart of the area is the school, village hall, and shop. The school capacity is 120 and there are currently around 90 pupils at the school. The hall is well-used outside of school use for weddings, parties, events, meetings, fitness classes and band practice. The Coop is much valued by locals and passing trade alike.

Housing/ building design and style



Sands Close is a development eight houses in a semi-detached arrangement around a cul-de-sac.

The houses are simple two-storey rectangular buildings built of artificial stone block and concrete roof tiles with white painted timber windows and black plastic rainwater goods. Front gardens are tidy with off street parking and small rear gardens. The close is well cared for with tarmac roads and pavements.

Figure 37 - Sands Close

Duchy Fields is the newest housing development in the village on the north side of Station Road, built on a green field site outside the green belt. It consists of a combined primary school and village hall arranged around a courtyard with the hall opening up to the village plaza - a landscaped public space. There are a series of timber benches and picnic tables in the plaza. It is well used for village events. The school has its own fenced off playing field to the rear with use of a MUGA (Multi Use Games Area – open to the village at weekends). The school is well-designed in a traditional style with a distinctive very tall oak framed pitched roof to the hall.



Figure 38 - Duchy Fields

The housing wraps around the school in a series of quiet curving loop roads. The housing consists of 60 homes in a series of terraces each with their own distinct style but all using a coherent palette of high-quality materials. Parking is cleverly designed to the rear of properties or in rear garages, so the streets feel clean and open and car free. There are two entrances off the main road, one has a Co-Op on the corner and is very well used.

The other entrance also acts as the school vehicular entrance to the school and hall car park and opens up onto Sand Furlong which is a long terrace facing a small park and play area. Overall, the buildings and streetscape create a real sense of place.



Figure 39 - Duchy Fields

Streets are paved in porous block paving and conservation grade kerbs with resin bound tarmac and hoggin to footpaths. Enclosure is by Cotswold stone walls with toppler stones.

The site has been heavily planted (some trees are dying due to drought in 2022 but will have to be replaced by the developer). The overall impression is of a well-designed nicely landscaped, safe environment.

The design was heavily influenced by the Duchy of Cornwall and is very traditional. Detailing is meticulous with an emphasis on quality materials including natural Cotswold stone walling, heritage

metal casement windows, wide painted timber doors, Welsh slate and Red Clay plain tiles and cast aluminium traditional style gutters.

Tall chimneys, cast stone window and door surrounds, porch canopies, black metal fencing, and traditional metal streetlights add to the bespoke feel of the area. In particular, quirky features such as a circular first floor loggia to the flat above the shop and lead clad turrets add to the interest. Two of the larger free-standing houses on the site are designed in an arts and craft style with dormer windows and large overhanging towering roofs with special eaves support brackets. The houses are generally two and two and a half storeys high. It is essential that the design features are adhered to for any future alterations especially on the street scenes. There is limited scope for extensions in the design.



Figure 40 - Duchy Fields



Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The site is generally flat and gently sloping to the north in places, so some terraces such as Dairy Crescent are stepped down the slope. The tree planting around the hall plaza, the school and Sand Furlong Play Area soften the built structures.

Planting around houses is generally well cared for but some areas need tending to. A series of vistas are created by the design of the site with focal points such as the village hall, the Co-op with its turret roof and the distinctive individual tower houses which form full stops to the end of the building lines or at corners. The roofscapes with their tall chimneys create interest when viewed from afar on the approach roads from Kidlington and Enslow.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

At Duchy Fields, curved terraces create interest while the public spaces of the park, playground and village plaza form meeting spaces. As a result of the roads not being a cut through, the development is relatively traffic free.

Noise, light, and smells

The tree planting around the plaza, the School and Sand Furlong play area will create shade as they mature depending on the time of day. There are no smell issues but there is some noise from light aircraft doing training circuits from nearby Oxford Airport.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA C

- This part of the village is characterised by more recent development, helping to sustain community infrastructure through new school, supermarket, MUGA play area and importantly a new Village Hall. Duchy has set a high threshold in design detail that others should follow
- Layouts of more modern housing but with great attention to design achieving a very traditional look, e.g. dormers, high stone boundary walls, different orientation and building lines, open porches and small windows
- Spaciousness in layout with views and a sense of openness, some drystone boundary walls to streets and lanes,
- Marked out surface parking spaces rather than garages, streets have detailed porous spec surfaces, kerb details etc; streetscape is varied with good sense of enclosure
- Design details in places resemble Dutch-style town houses with gables and steeply pitched roofs with tall chimneys
- Terraces of 2-2.5 storey homes using Cotswold stone, Welsh slate and other heritage styles materials
- Layout with no through traffic makes it more tranquil
- Views over open countryside, mature trees on periphery creating some extra privacy
- Limited street lighting, achieving “dark sky” in this part of the village

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views from this part of the village into the wider countryside. Spaciousness in design layout, use of materials and street-scene would need to reflect meticulous detailing of Duchy scheme. Car parking should be on street or discreetly sited ideally to minimise impact on street. No through traffic will permit safer use of streets.

Area D: Bletchington – Station Road and Enslow

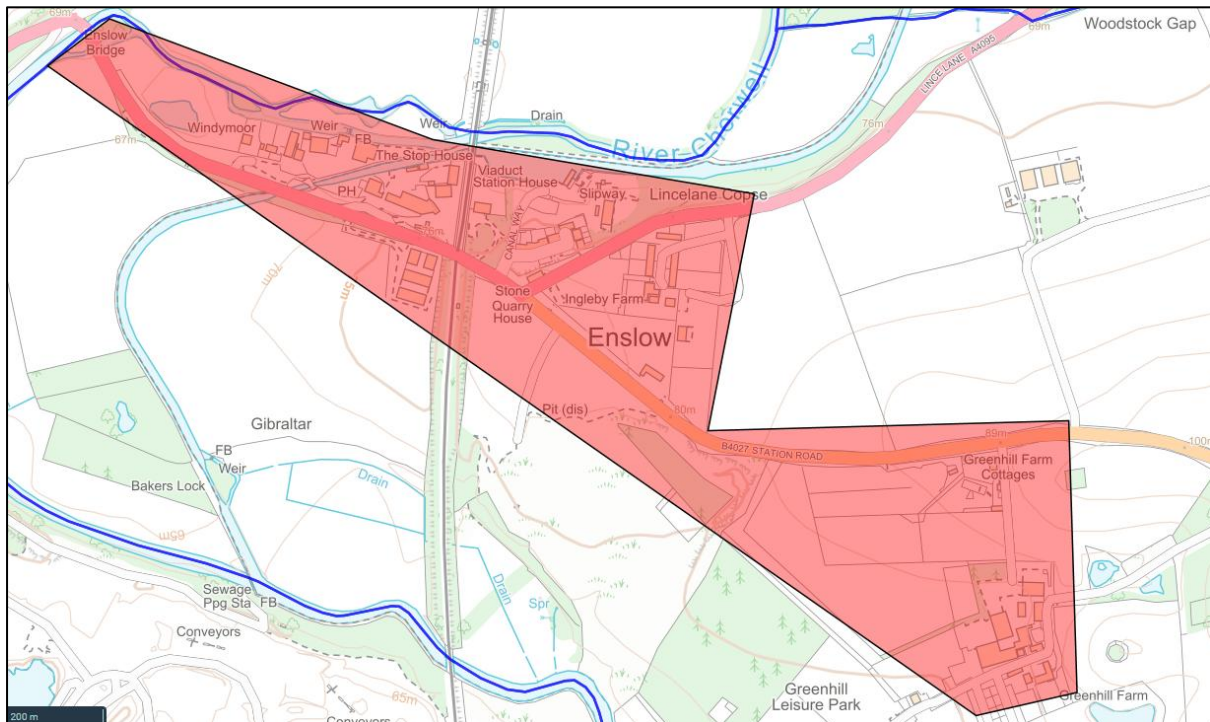


Figure 41 - Character Area D

Overview and value

Enslow is a small hamlet on the banks of the River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal. It lies some 1.5 miles to the west of Bletchington within the Parish of Bletchington where the medieval road linking London with Chipping Norton crossed the Cherwell. This road is now known as Station Road (B4027) and connects Enslow with Bletchington.



Figure 42 - Enslow Mill, 1881

Records show that on the most Westerly point of the Parish at the River Cherwell, there was a bridge there by the time that John Leland toured England in 1538–43. John Ogilby's Britannia Atlas of 1675 records a timber bridge that he called "Emley Bridg".

In 1718 the road was made into a turnpike, and at some stage the timber bridge was replaced with a stone one of pointed arches. In 1814 the stone bridge was widened on its downstream side to almost double its former width. In contrast with the older upstream side of the bridge, the 1814 arches are rounded.

Enslow had a water mill that was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086, and again in 1340 and in the 17th and 18th centuries.



Figure 43 - Enslow Bridge

The arrival of the Oxford Canal led to the building of a wharf and associated buildings in 1788. Early in the 19th century the Rock of Gibraltar public house was built to serve the trade on and around the wharf.

From 1845 the Oxford and Rugby Railway ran through the hamlet and in 1850 Bletchington railway station was built there. British Railways closed the station in 1964 but the line remains open as part of the Cherwell Valley Line.



Figure 44 - Bletchington Station, 1961

The unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of Enslow are in part its haphazard residential, commercial and industrial juxtaposition, evolved over time as the roads, railway and canal came into existence. But this does give it an untidy, cluttered personality on the north side of Station Road, whilst on the south side, this remains largely untouched and natural. The Canal and wharf appear to be the most distinctive elements that add positively to the spirit of the place.



Figure 45 - Smith's of Bletchington, a very longstanding local business

The wharf on the Canal built and created in 1788 has stayed in existence and continues to thrive today both as a place to permanently moor a boat, have a boat repaired or commission the building of a new boat.

Smith's of Bletchington have been in business in Enslow for over 100 years and continue to provide essential products, services and employment to the surrounding area. There are also some other smaller businesses hidden away and less visible that contribute to the historical value.

The communal value of Enslow centres mainly around the canal/ marina and those that work to support it and live on it. And when the Rock of Gibraltar was open, this too would have been a significant contributor.

There may also be some communal value to those in the community that have relied on employment from the businesses in Enslow either for themselves or through their family generations.

Two small housing developments have been built in recent years. Firstly, Ingleby Paddocks on the East side of the A4095, a development of some seven sizeable modern homes, originally with B1 home working conditions and Canal Close, just off Canal Way, off the B4027, a recent addition of fourteen modern homes, may also individually have communal value to those who now live there. However, with no amenities and limited access for pedestrians, both these sites are isolated.

Housing/ building design and style

Leaving Bletchington heading West on Station Road the Parish extends along the B4027 for approximately 1.25 miles/2km. The small Hamlet of Enslow lies on the western-most boundary.



Figure 46 - Enslow in relation to Bletchington

Enslow itself has less than 40 residential properties of various plot sizes, age and character, a similar number of permanent canal boat moorings and a wide variety of agricultural and commercial businesses giving the area a mixed use and 'chaotic' feel to the built elements.



Figure 47 - Station Road looking east towards Bletchington, entrance to Greenhill Leisure Park on the right

The stretch of the B4027 from Bletchington to Enslow hosts two recently built detached houses with associated barns (Sand Farm House and Underdown Farm), both built in and surrounded by open countryside, 2 semi-detached houses and a detached house known as Greenhill Farm Cottages situated in open countryside on a back entrance track to Greenhill Farm.



Figure 48 - looking west from Bletchington across and down to Enslow with Station Road (B4027) to the left..



Figure 49 - looking north off Station Road between Bletchington and Enslow upon newly created Underdown Farm



Figure 50 – looking west, adjacent to Station Road, at the barns and Sand Farm House beyond. Barns are currently let to small commercial businesses



Figure 51 – looking north west towards Enslow and down on the commercial buildings adjacent to the top and part of Greenhill Farm/ Leisure Park



Figure 52 – looking south east towards Oxford Airport and down on Greenhill Leisure Park

Within Enslow, to the East of the railway line there are 2 small housing developments with a couple of outlying older properties nearby and to the West of the railway line the industrial/commercial development which includes 3 flats and half a dozen adjacent houses.

Opposite the commercial buildings on the Southern side of Station Road lies the newly created Enslow Farm in open countryside.



Figure 53 - looking west to Ingleby Farm, adjacent to the relatively new Ingleby Paddocks development



Figure 54 - looking east along Station Road, showing how commercial and residential layout of Enslow sit side by side

The area covered in this character assessment contains three Grade II listed sites. These are the Canal Bridge at Enslow, The Rock of Gibraltar Public house and Greenhill Farmhouse

The Rock of Gibraltar public house is a late 18th Century building of squared and coursed limestone with ashlar dressings, gabled stone slate roof with old tile roof to rear wing, brick end and ridge stacks, and end stack to rear wing of stone finished in brick. It has stone lintels over 6-pane and 8-pane sashes plus hipped roof dormers.

Dating back to the 17th century, Greenhill Farmhouse is an attractive seven-bedroom farmhouse over three floors, principally limestone with a tiled roof. The farmhouse has period features including exposed brick, chamfered beams and plank doors. It forms an integral part of Greenhill Leisure Park. Extending to about 241.82 acres (97.87 hectares), Greenhill is a diversified farm. As well as the Grade II Listed farmhouse (with a one-bedroom annexe), there is a three-four-bedroom barn conversion, an extensive range of farm buildings, the leisure park with caravan/motorhome hard standings and camping, café, farm shop, additional retail premises, fishing lakes, arable, pasture and woodland.



Figure 55 - Grade II listed Greenhill Farmhouse



Figure 56 - the currently boarded up Rock of Gibraltar pub, viewed from Station Road

Walking along the tow path on the North bank looking back at Enslow the juxtaposed variations between canal boat living, The listed Rock of Gibraltar pub, residential flats and industrial/commercial buildings and space can be clearly seen. All sorts of materials have been used and there is clear evidence of chaotic alterations and additions. One interesting feature is the old Stop House, the old building that was used to collect tolls from passing freight boats. This is now occupied as an office by a property development company. the old Stop House, viewed from the north bank of the canal, looking south west



Figure 57 - the rear of the Rock of Gibraltar, the flats and commercial yard, taken from the north bank of the canal, looking south



Figure 58 - the old Stop House, viewed from the north bank of the canal, looking south west

On the South side of Station Road is the emerging Enslow Farm. This consists of a number of large block, steel and timber open agricultural sheds that stand alone adjacent to the railway line and flanked to the South and West by rolling pastureland. The sheds are approached up a sweeping track.



Figure 59 - looking south east from Station Road towards Enslow Farm, consisting of 5 large, open bay agricultural sheds

Standing alone on the corner of Station Road and the A4095 are a pair of semi-detached cottages



Figure 60 - Stone Quarry House on the B4027/A4095 junction, looking north down the A4095

known as Stone Quarry House and Hill Top Cottage (the site of a former cattery). These two cottages share the same slate roofline and stonework but differ in appearance due in the main to window sizes, form, casements, and lintels. Stone Quarry House is the larger of the two with a single-storey addition to the side, with a fenced perimeter, accessed off Station Road, whilst Hill Top Cottage, with its more traditional low stone wall, is accessed from the A4095. An interesting feature difference between the two are the angles of the chimneys, at 90 degrees to each other.

The newly created and named Canal Way, running parallel to Station House leads down to the Canal but just off to the East is the new development known as Canal Close, the site of a former office supplies company. A development of some 14 houses of mixed size and scale built of stone with slate roofs and wooden casement windows and wooden doors. Some of the properties display wooden cladding to the front and porches vary in style. The site is sloping and there is a small footpath running alongside the access road up on to Station Road. There is a small amount of street lighting and very little landscaping to the front of the properties and in the common areas of the Close but the amenity is shaded and protected from Station Road by established trees and hedges. A couple of the larger properties to the rear of the close overlook the boat yard and the canal.



Figure 61 - Canal Close off Canal Way



Figure 62 - Ingleby Paddocks with Ingleby Farm House in the background

Ingleby Paddocks, built on the land to the West of Ingleby Farm and previously the site of a dog kennels, originally sold with B1 conditions (some properties have successfully exiting that condition in recent years) is an isolated community within Enslow. Built with stone, tiled roofs and timber windows and doors. It sits adjacent to the A4095 and the block paved driveway is the only means of access as there are no footpaths anywhere around the development. The houses and gardens are well manicured with ample off street parking making the development visually pleasing.

The Old Station house is still present, dating back to 1850, as a residential home having undergone various additions and alterations including an outdoor swimming pool. The railway divides the house and the cement works.



Figure 63 - the Old Station House



Figure 64 - the layout of the approach to Smith's of Bletchingdon

Set back from Station Road, fronting the turn in and driveway to Smiths yard there are a few additional properties including a brick bungalow and a pair of semi-detached houses rendered with mock Tudor style detail above the first-floor bay windows under a tiled roof. Adjacent to this lies Smith's of Bletchingdon that consists of a modern office building, commercial buildings for haulage repairs and a detached house.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The arrival of the Oxford Canal led to the building of a wharf and associated buildings in 1788. Early in the 19th century the Rock of Gibraltar public house was built to serve the trade on and around the wharf. This has led to the juxtaposition of a residential, commercial, and industrial landscape colliding and existing haphazardly. There's an eclectic mix of colours, materials and textures within the landscape at Enslow like nowhere else in the Parish.

The River Cherwell is prone to flooding on the Parish boundary and often the fields around it are seen waterlogged.

The area is very fertile, established, and green, mostly grassland or grazing with some arable further up towards Bletchingdon. Public spaces are mostly limited in this area to the canal itself, the towpath of the canal and a limited footpath over the private land at Greenhill Farm.

The land to the West of Bletchingdon down to Enslow is largely open countryside both to the North and the South. This stretch of Station Road is tree and hedge lined with established growth, giving minor glimpses of the land beyond, save for the open entrance to Underdown Farm which gives far reaching views to the north and up to Kirtlington in the north east. Approaching Bletchingdon out of Enslow is a series of twisting, climbing bends followed by a long straight that brings Bletchingdon nicely into focus on the approach. There is no footpath or road lighting on this stretch and the only man-made feature of note is the new Cotswold Stone wall entrance to Greenhill Leisure Park.

Coming into Enslow from Bletchingdon the views across the open rolling countryside open up to the left (south) briefly before the railway bridge and the imposing farm buildings of Enslow Farm, whilst on the right (north), the variation in houses and commercial buildings is prevalent. A focal point but not an appealing one past the A4095 (Bicester) junction and over the railway heading West is the wide turn off area to access some of the commercial units, flats, and The Rock of Gibraltar pub, currently boarded up and dilapidated. Ahead of this lies the intersection with the canal, with glimpses of the narrow boat moorings, Smith's of Bletchingdon head office and lorry yard, and then the river Cherwell and the old bridge with views to the North of the flood plains, large white satellite communications ground station dishes to the North-West and in the distant North, the railway line and the red brick bridge that carry it in part.

The only pavement stretch on the B4027 joins Canal Way with the entrance to the cement factory yard, a distance of some 120 metres, with a black railing fixed to the railway bridge and pavement along the length of the bridge arch.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

The B4027 is a busy road intersecting in Enslow with the A4095 (Bicester) and bringing traffic through Enslow heading to and from the A34 and M40 via Bletchingdon. These can get especially busy in the mornings, late afternoon and early evening. This will have a noise and polluting impact on the area.

Noise, light, and smells

There is little apart from the sloping nature of the landscape from Enslow to Bletchingdon and the established road lined tree and hedge scape to impact the lightness or darkness of the area naturally, however, the presence of commercial buildings will undoubtedly cast shadows throughout sunny daylight hours. Only Smith's of Bletchingdon has works yard lighting but this appears to have no impact on the area.

The cement works (the former coal yard) adjacent to the railway line on the North side of the B4207 at Enslow produces air born particles and dust on a daily basis and the lorry movements in and out of this site and Smiths of Bletchingdon a little further West along the B4207 will have a contributing impact to noise and pollution levels. There are routing agreements in place which are designed to stop any form of haulage from these businesses travelling East and through Bletchingdon.

The railway line itself which connects Oxford and beyond in the South and Banbury and beyond in the North has daily trains travelling at high speed roughly every 20 minutes in each direction. Nearby Oxford Airport, a busy light commercial and training airport, frequently uses airspace directly over Enslow for take-off and landing approaches of aeroplanes and helicopters.

The active nearby quarry that sits adjacent to the Parish boundary to the South-West could well be making a detrimental contribution to air quality, as a result of the earth moving activity.

In colder weather, the moored canal barges will burn coal and wood and this can be seen and smelled in the vicinity. Other commercial businesses in Enslow will have vehicle movements, use power tools, machinery and equipment that at low levels may likely have a contributing impact.



Figure 65 - the cement works



Figure 66 - Smith's of Bletchingdon

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA D

- Enslow has a unique and historic character as the crossing point on the old London to Worcester Road. Here road, canal, river and railway are all in close proximity
- There are a mix of uses from leisure craft and canal boat moorings and associated repairing and boat building activities, residential, industrial and agricultural buildings as might befit its history
- Generally, Enslow should be seen as a small scale, self-contained community within the countryside. Some limited new two storey housing has been built using Cotswold stone Welsh slate and other traditional materials. It is a very accessible place but its lack of services means it is car dependent. The railway is still very much in use but the station long since removed.
- The uses are all in proximity to each other forming a compact settlement but there is also a lot of green space close to the homes and in parts extensive views over countryside towards Kirtlington and Bletchingdon. Biodiversity in this area of the parish is quite extensive.
- There is limited street lighting achieving a dark sky effect in this locality

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid impacting the compact nature of the settlement or damaging views from this part of the village into the wider countryside.

Area E: Bletchington – Heathfield

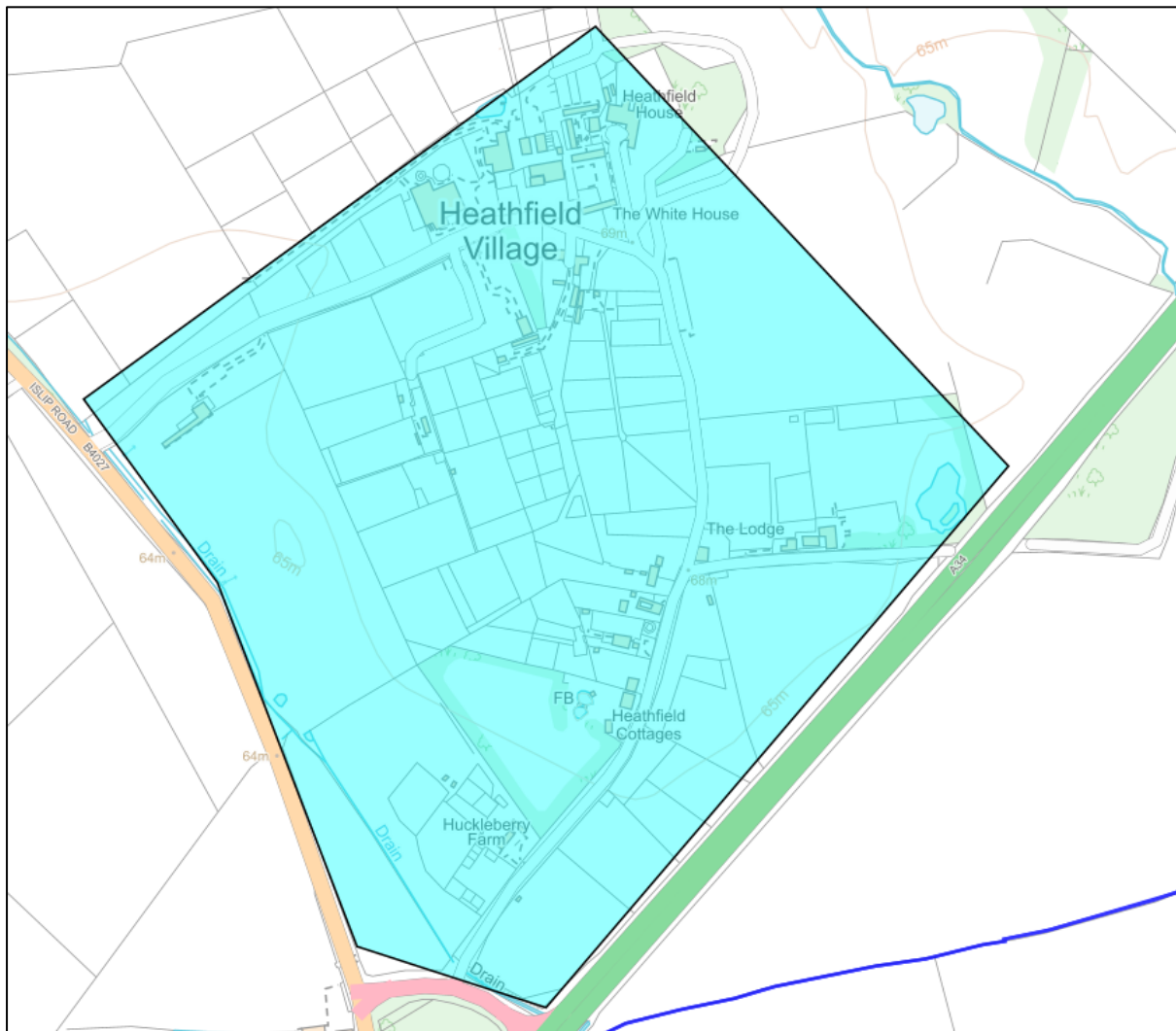


Figure 67 - Character Area E

Overview and value

Heathfield is a hamlet lying to roughly 2.25km the south east of Bletchington. To the south east lies the A34 and to the south west the B4027. The settlement is accessible from the bridleway on the B4027 and the slip road to the A34. Historically it was an area of common land used for rough grazing that was only brought into more modern use in the early 19th century.

Until the 1960's there was little or no building development and a small but fluctuating community. Outside of the remaining house and farm buildings human activity is shown by former businesses and mainly equestrian buildings.

There is little that can be found that would enable people to draw a positive sensory and intellectual stimulation from the area. With the demise of the Oxfordshire Inn there is no sense of focus in the settlement. This may change with the ongoing development of Heathfield Park.

Housing/ building design and style

Older buildings

Some of the original buildings still remain, albeit in considerably modified form. Heathfield House is now a care home and has been extended and modified, but clearly still retains some of the original features.



There does not appear to be any documentary evidence of what the original house looked like or any of its features, however contemporary images do give some impression of what it might have been like.

Figure 68 - Heathfield House

The original location of the farm is probably now occupied by more modern buildings, situated quite close to the main house. Immediately to the right of the farm buildings above is an interesting structure that is marked on an old map as a pump house and may well therefore have been part of the original farm.



Figure 69 - farm building



Figure 70 - Pump House



Figure 71 - old stable block

Facing onto the buildings, though about 30m apart is what is clearly the old stable block. The rear view has retained the vertical slits that suggest a hay loft on the first floor. The clock tower is similar to other old stable blocks in the area. Now known as Walkers Barn, this had been part of the Oxfordshire Inn (see below) and is now flats.

To the south of Heathfield House is the Lodge.



This has clearly been extended and modernised but also retains enough of its original features to indicate its purpose.

An entrance pier can be seen to the left of the building and there is another on the other side of the road.

The site is now an extensive dog kennels.

Figure 72 - the Lodge, now dog kennels

Adjacent to the Lodge are a pair of houses that were probably the original cottages. They are referred to as such on the map. They have clearly been added to and modernised.



Figure 73 - houses adjacent to the Lodge

Newer developments

The remainder of the housing in the settlement has clearly been built in the last 50 years.

Meadow Walk which runs from the old pump house, past the barn leads to a development of modern housing: there are eight houses within this block, the ones at the far end enjoying views over open countryside.



Figure 74 - modern housing block



Figure 75 - staff accommodation for Heathfield house

Staff accommodation for Heathfield House exists in four rather unappealing houses on the opposite of the road around to site to the pump house. The remaining houses in Heathfield are on the track from the Lodge to the A34 slip road. There are six of these of various ages and types.

Other buildings

There are other buildings scattered around the site, mostly barns and looseboxes, reflecting the equestrian slant to the area.



Figure 76 - barns and looseboxes

Former and current businesses/ enterprises



Figure 77 - former Oxfordshire Inn

What remains of the Oxfordshire Inn - built in the 1980's, this was a 28-bed hotel with function room, restaurant and bar. It closed in 2016. Some inaccessible buildings remain to the rear and part of the site was redeveloped with the houses shown above.

Sited at the entrance to the settlement from the B4027 is a golf driving range. This is now abandoned.



Figure 78 - abandoned golf driving range

A new enterprise, called Heathfield Park, is a development of “luxury lodges” intended as short term lets. It is planned that there will be 151 of these.



Figure 79 - Heathfield Park lodges

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The area is flat and, in many places, open and exposed. Particularly to the north there are views of open countryside.



Figure 80 - road from the Lodge to the A34 slip road

The road leading from the Lodge to the A34 slip road however is a pleasant country lane.

Interestingly the interests of the first owner are still being followed and much of the open space is divided up into paddocks.

This area is relatively low lying and in the past has been subject to flooding. The land slopes gently down to Gallos brook in the north east and a ditch alongside the B4027 and it is a reasonable assumption that heavy rain could easily cause flooding from both of these sources.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

Most of the site is within less than 500m of the A34 trunk road and the sound of the almost continuous traffic dominates the whole area, particularly if the wind is from the South or East.

Noise, light, and smells

Other than traffic noise, there are few other encroachments. No particular smells are noted and light pollution is low.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA E

- Heathfield is a hamlet which has grown organically from its original farmstead and a few houses with lots of green space comprising paddocks, gardens. It is very tranquil and some of the main uses today are the care home, private residences and short let chalet developments
- This area is located in a rather isolated area with no bus services. It is very car dependent as a result

- There are no services in terms of community infrastructure so it is rather an unsustainable location
- No streetlighting
- Narrow, unmade private roads
- Sense of enclosure is strong, houses fronting lanes are inward-looking
- No evidence of new build but refurbishments are of high quality in keeping with character

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views, hedges and spaces, the characteristic alley ways between buildings, use natural materials and a mix of dwelling types and address all of the bullet points above in any planning statement. Any infill development should be limited in number to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area.

Area F: Hampton Gay

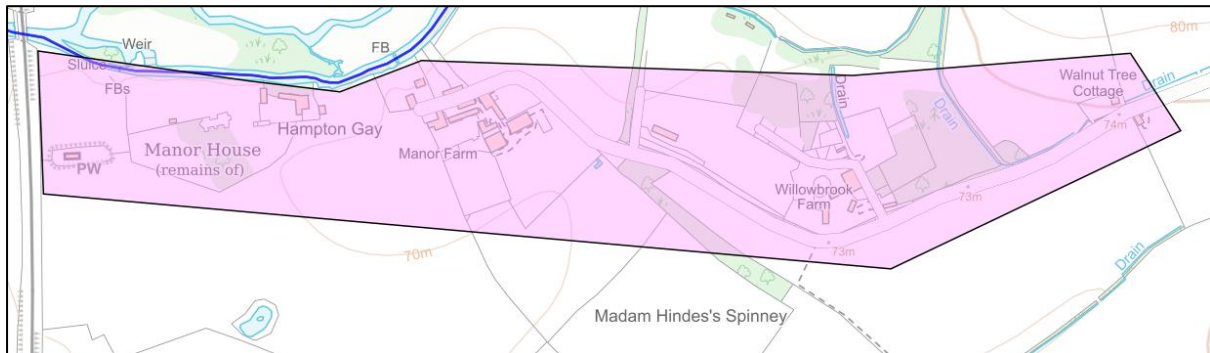


Figure 81 - Character Area F

Overview and value

Hampton Gay is a small rural community with only eight dwellings plus associated farm and other buildings. The character of this area is based around its historic landscape. What remains of Hampton Gay - the open fields containing earthworks, the small hamlet, ruined house and mill - illustrate the ongoing depopulation of this manor estate throughout the medieval and modern periods (Cherwell District Council, *Hampton Gay, Shipton-on-Cherwell and Thrupp Conservation Area Appraisal*: 2007, p. 16).

Visitors often remark that Hampton Gay is a special place. Although less than 20 minutes by car from the centre of Oxford, traffic permitting, it has a very rural feel and a sense of isolation from a busy world.

The prosperity of the village used to rest on the large Manor House, occupied by the Barry family, agriculture and a paper mill (it is believed that the first mill on the site was built after the millstream was cut hundreds of years ago). In mid to late-Victorian times all this changed. The Manor House burned down in a fire, although as noted its ruins remain. Due to its wealth the Barry family had several properties and simply abandoned the Manor House after the fire. The paper mill burned down some years later. These changes mean that the village's past has little or no connection to the present, except in terms of the buildings in place both now and then.

The footpaths regularly attract walkers who endorse such views in social media postings. The church, shown on the map above and separate from the rest of the village, is small but one group of choristers regularly practices in it because of what they term very good acoustics.

In terms of communal value, there is not much to say here other than the church, which only holds services in the summer due to muddy and difficult access in winter, the Carol Service excepted, tends to be one unifying feature of village life.

Housing/ building design and style

The land use in Hampton Gay is residential with the exception of St Giles Church and Manor Farm. Only 7 inhabitable houses now stand in Hampton Gay hamlet which has declined in number from a healthy medieval settlement.

‘The only access is along a lane branching from Bletchingdon Road which runs to a dead end outside Manor Farm. St Giles Church has a medieval core but was rebuilt in 1767 and restored in 1860. Its church yard is surrounded by 17th century walls. Manor Farmhouse is early 17th century and retains large 17th century gate piers with mounded entablature surmounted by a ball finial. The ruins of Hampton Gay Manor date from the late 16th century and are scheduled as an ancient monument. The dwellings are all two storeys high¹ and clustered together to the east of the Manor ruins and the location of the deserted settlement’ (ibid).

Across Hampton Gay, there are four different areas with large spaces, primarily fields, between them. There is no formal planning of gaps, they emerge from when and how the buildings were first developed.



Figure 82 - Hampton Gay village areas

- Area 1 – one dwelling
- Area 2 – c. two dwellings
- Area 3 – four dwellings
- Area 4 – one dwelling

The Hampton Gay church is some 400 yards from the rest of the village, across a field. Parts of the field are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and it cannot be ploughed, only grazed, as underneath the soil are remains of village houses. The houses were probably poorly built and were probably abandoned in medieval times. There are various undulations in the field but it is difficult to discern any particular street pattern.

Most buildings appear to date from Elizabethan to early Victorian, although most have had extension work. All buildings are detached apart from a terraced cottage row, two units, in area 3. Buildings in areas 1 and 3 front lane, 2 and 4 are further back. Area 2 has a modern eco building but the design traditional and there are a number of other farm buildings on this area. Area 4 has two recently converted and adjoining old barns. Most extension work has been sympathetic to original designs, using mainly local stone. In Area 2, one building is a form of straw and mud walls but painted. Given the gaps between the areas, the buildings do not dominate the landscape, which is primarily rural and agricultural.

¹ It should be noted that Manor Farm was and is actually three-storeys and the new Paper House is one-storey.



Figure 83 - street in Hampton Gay



Figure 85 - Manor Cottage

The Manor Farm, in area 3, is a substantial building that has one part that has been dated back to late-medieval times although it was mainly built in the 17th century. It has a gabled front of three bays, original clustered chimney stacks and a Stonesfield slate roof. A wing was added to the house in the 19th century and a more modern extension is now nearing completion. The farm that supported the Manor House is today around 200 acres. It was and is a mixture of arable and livestock farming.



Figure 84 – farmhouse at Hampton Gay

As noted, the church is separate from the rest of the village. Records show that Hampton Gay had a parish church by 1074 and other records document 13th century features, but in 1767–72 the Rev. Thomas Hindes, a member of the family that then owned the manor, had the church completely rebuilt and only the lowest courses of stonework remain of the medieval structure. The rebuilding was heavily criticised at the time and later. More alterations took place in Victorian times - since then the wooden porch was burnt by vandals in the 1970s and was replaced in 2017.

There are remains of two other buildings, both near Area 4. One is the old Manor House - the Barry family, to whom there is a monument in the church, built the manor house in the 16th century. It has an E-shaped plan with gabled wings and a battlemented central porch. In 1887 it was gutted by fire and has never been restored. It is a Grade II listed building and a scheduled monument - early in the 21st century English Heritage placed the manor house ruins on its register of historic buildings at risk, listing its priority as "A" and its condition as "very bad". More recently, under new ownership, it is being stabilised through grants from English Heritage and others.

The other ruin is what is left of a paper mill that used to be a source of employment in the village; that too burnt down in the late-Victorian period and little is now left.

Most of the buildings in the village, including the ruined Manor House, were built using local stone rather than brick. The stone is a greyish colour rather than the ironstone found further north in the county. More modern extensions have generally been clad in the same type of stone.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The dwelling in area 1 has poor quality water supply from line extending from Bletchingdon. Areas 2, 3 and 4 are all on wells. All properties have septic tanks. There is no gas supply, all houses are on oil or electric heating.

There are many trees in the landscape, both in verges and in longer views. As the land is primarily agricultural, there are relatively few flowers, most plants, trees or shrubs, grasses and wildflowers are in verges or crops in fields. All land is private apart from the roadway, some footpaths, two linking Hampton Poyle and Bletchingdon and another from Hampton Gay going to the towpath on the Oxford canal. The millstream to the River Cherwell to the north has little or no flooding as the land is higher on the inhabited south and west side of the millstream and there is a floodplain to its north.

Areas 1 and 2 have good views, mainly across adjacent fields to south. Area 4 also has good views, mainly in an arc southeast to southwest, again mainly adjacent fields. Views to southwest in this area are spoiled by the roof of a very large helicopter hanger at Kidlington Airport that protrudes above the tree line (this was built after the local Council rejected plans but won on appeal to the Secretary of State).

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

The lane to Hampton Gay from the Bletchingdon to Hampton Poyle road is narrow, tarmaced with repairs and winding, with three very sharp bends; it passes by areas 1 to 3 and ends in a field; area 4 is down a path in that field. Hedges are the primary means of enclosure, with some fencing, although neither in the field before area 4.

There is little street furniture. There are footpath signs in the lane and at the top of lane there is a sign opposite pointing down to Hampton Gay, and a separate sign warning against dumping.

Passing on lane is problematic and heavy vehicles create difficulty, especially on the bends. There are some passing areas, in others both vehicles have to mount grass verges. Lane use is primarily for residential traffic, also some working traffic (building works in progress) and visitors to area 2 and 3 for farm shops and some leisure activities.

Walkers also use the lane - there is no footpath beside it, although one footpath crosses it, another ends in it and a third goes from the end of the lane across fields to the canal towpath.

Noise, light, and smells

There is no street lighting and relatively little shading from trees, so the light is natural and the skies dark, according to the time of day and season of the year.

The main noise problem is light aircraft flying overhead, believed to be contrary to regulations, from Kidlington Airport. There is limited noise from main roads depending on wind direction and time of day and little or no smells, except when farmers are applying manure to fields.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA F

- Hampton Gay is an ancient hamlet which has actually diminished over time to the extent its church now stands in isolation from the rest of the hamlet

- Some older structures, including a paper mill and Manor House, have been derelict for many years due to decay and destruction and without employment the number of residents has declined.
- The access to the hamlet is a single land that gradually tapers out but it reaches the hamlet which now comprises a number of residential properties
- The sense of enclosure is strong
- No evidence of new build but work is ongoing on refurbishments of high quality and in keeping with character
- The surrounding landscape is of great historic value

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views, hedges and spaces, the characteristic layout and extent of buildings, use of natural materials and mix of dwelling types. Any infill development will be of necessity limited in scale to avoid a significant change in the overall character of the area.

Area G: Hampton Poyle

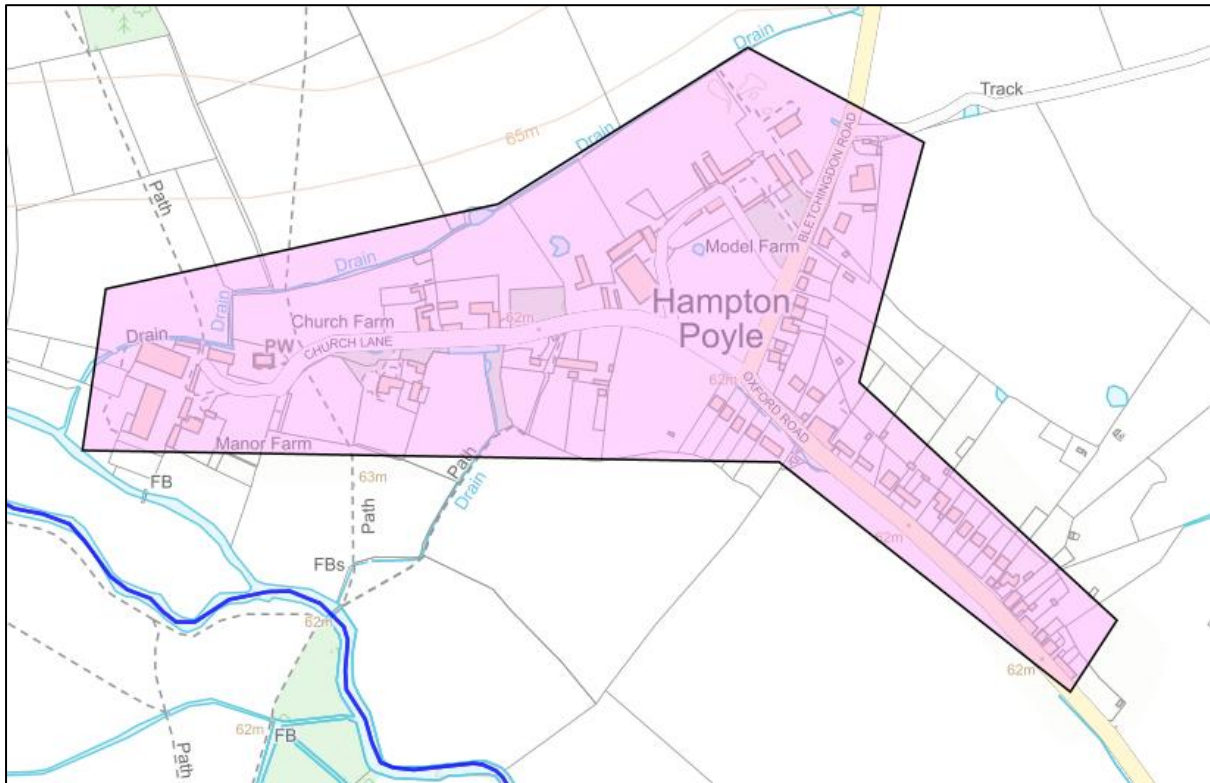


Figure 86 - Character Area G

Overview and value

Hampton Poyle is a small rural community with about 50 dwellings plus associated farms and other buildings. There are two distinct areas to the village as shown on figure 31:

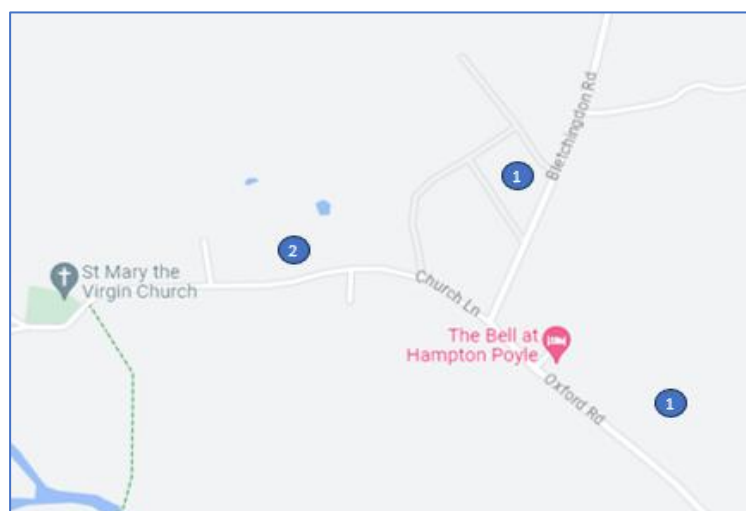


Figure 87 - Hampton Poyle village areas

- Area 1 – ribbon development along the Bletchington and Oxford Roads
- Area 2 – the historic core – including the conservation area – along Church Lane

Hampton Poyle has seen growth and decline over many centuries. Its current size is probably the largest in its history. It changed hands as an agricultural estate several times. In the Tudor era, two wealthy families, the Dormers and the Crokes, were responsible for several of the dwellings in Church Lane. Later, the estate changed hands several times, ending up in the ownership of the Annesley family in 1795. It passed through several generations until the death of Arthur Annesley, 11th Viscount Valentia, in 1927. The Annesley estate at Hampton Poyle was broken up and sold to its tenants in 1929.

The connection of Hampton Poyle to its past largely rests in the old buildings in Church Lane. In terms of communal value, the Oxford and Bletchingdon roads are pleasant and the pavements offer opportunities for residents to stop and chat to each other. Although the public house is also a restaurant and a boutique hotel, it has deliberately created a pub space for those not dining and this is often used by residents.

Housing/ building design and style



Figure 88 - entry to Hampton Poyle from the south, Oxford Road

Area 1 comprises what are essentially ribbon development houses along the east side of Bletchingdon Road and the north side of Oxford Road, with [four] houses on the south side of Oxford Road near to the junction with Bletchingdon Road. There are very few spaces between the houses but open space on most of the south side of Oxford Road. The houses on Bletchingdon Road face hedges and trees that mask one of the farms in the village. If there were gaps between the houses on both roads, they were filled as the ribbon development was completed.

Both roads in Area 1 are relatively straight and are tarmacked. There is a pavement along one side of each road, the same side as the houses; this is in relatively good repair on the Oxford Road, much less so on the Bletchingdon Road, where the pavement ceases before the last two houses heading north.

For the houses, the primary means of enclosure is fences and hedges. There is a ditch and a cursory hedge on the south side of the Oxford Road. Two of the houses at the end of Bletchingdon Road to the north, those without a footpath outside, have relatively high brick walls. There is some street furniture, such as bus stops. There are entry signs, with white painted short fencing, at both ends of the village on the Oxford and Bletchingdon Roads.

The buildings in Area 1 exhibit a variety of styles. They appear to have been built from late Victorian times up to the present although one or two cottages may be older. There is no consistent style or use of materials; brick, stone, pebbledash, wood cladding and paint over brickwork are seen in different properties. The roofs also show a variety of different types of tiles. Whilst the buildings do not dominate the landscape, they do fill all of one side of each road. Most of the buildings are somewhat set back, some with quite long drives, although most are much shorter; some of the cottages have frontage almost onto the road.



Figure 89 - houses along Bletchington Road

Area 2 covers the historic core and Conservation Area and Church Lane, which leads to the church and one of the farms: 'The buildings in the Conservation Area are very much rooted in the vernacular style of the district, with oolitic limestone walls and chimneys with brick additions. Not all of the original roof coverings have survived, all the thatch in the village has now gone and a number of Stonesfield slate roofs have been replaced in heavier concrete tiles. A number of the buildings now have Welsh slate and there are also roofs of clay tiles on some outbuildings, others are either roofless or have corrugated iron and asbestos cement' (*Hampton Poyle Character Assessment*, Cherwell District Council: 2017, p. 24).

In Area 2, the plot sizes are generally larger than in Area 1 and the buildings much older. Whilst there are buildings on both sides of Church Lane, these are intermittent and there are a number of gaps between them, including boundaries of two fields. Church Lane has various mild bends and is tarmacked, but there is no pavement, only grass verges.



Figure 90 – houses along Church Lane

As with Area 1, the primary means of enclosure is hedges and fences, but some dwellings abut the road and others have stone walls. There is a wall around the churchyard towards the north-western end of the land. There is very little street furniture.

The houses in Area 2 are generally much older and have been built primarily with local stone, grey in colour, although extensions and additions show some brickwork. Several of the buildings in Church Lane date from the 16th and early 17th centuries. Among the oldest is the former Rectory - it is partly an early 16th-century building, but the main block dates from about 1802.

Manor Farm, the successor to the mansion house called Hampton Poyle Place, dates from about 1625, except for its early 19th-century windows. It is L-shaped in plan, has two stories with attics, and is built of local limestone with a stone band at the first floor on the south. The Old Manor House is 17th century and was probably built when one of two wealthy families owned the village, the



Figure 91 - St Mary's Church

Dormer or Croke families. Poyle Court was built around the same time; it retains its L-shaped plan and has two ancient stone stacks on each end gable, but was refronted in about 1800, when a battlemented parapet and wooden casements in 'gothic' style with square stone frames were inserted. Other houses on the lane are not quite so old, but are largely built in older styles with local stone.

St Mary's Church, towards the north-western end of Church Lane, was begun in the 13th century and extended in the 14th century. It was then subject to restoration twice in the Victorian period.

In medieval times one of the sources of employment in the village was a mill, but this was burnt down in 1771 and no trace remains.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views



Figure 92 - left to right: Village Green, Church Lane, and The Bell at Hampton Poyle



Figure 93 - view of fields west of Oxford Road, towards Kidlington

All the houses in the village are served by water, gas and electricity. There are a number of trees that provide shade and a pleasant setting. There are relatively new planted borders. The land is very flat and there are problems of flooding at high rainfall, particularly in Bletchingdon Road where the road drainage is not adequate.

Views to the south from the Oxford Road show level farmland and trees in the distance. Views to the west of Bletchingdon Road are limited by hedges and trees. Views along Church Lane are mixed - there are some through the gaps in the built environment and these again show farmland and trees.



Figure 94 - views from Church Lane, north towards Hampton Gay (left) and south towards Kidlington (right)

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

In Area 1, the roads are both wide enough to allow cars to pass each other. There is some informal traffic control outside the public house, the Bell, due to cars parking on the road, its car park being insufficient. The roads are used to access the village and to reach its only non-residential buildings, the public house and the two farmyards. The village is close to the A34 and if that is blocked the two roads can become very busy with traffic avoiding whatever is the blockage. Otherwise, traffic is constant but relatively light, with more cars during rush hours.

In Area 2, Church Lane is relatively narrow and cars passing each other is difficult. It is effectively a cul de sac so sees little change in traffic levels across the day.

Noise, light, and smells

There is no street lighting and relatively little shading from trees, so the light is natural and dark, according to the time of day and season of the year.

There are three principal noise problems. The first is traffic noise from the Bletchington and Oxford roads; as noted earlier traffic is light but persistent and can be a problem if the A34 is blocked. The second is light aircraft flying overhead, believed contrary to regulations, from Kidlington Airport. The third is traffic noise from the A34, which passes quite close to the village to the east.

There are Little or no smells, except when farmers are applying manure to fields.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA G

- Hampton Poyle is an old village which comprises a Conservation Area in one sub area (Church Lane) which runs along the stream
- The access to the village is via good main roads and mostly ribbon development in form with housing fronting these main roads in a linear form and on one side only in the main; mostly these are detached or semi-detached especially in the older parts of the village but there are some very old cottages of Cotswold stone and slate roofs
- Properties are varied in age and style and also in use of materials- there are many stone built houses with slate roofs around the village and there is a public house The Bell, still operating

- Much of the housing is on one side of the road only fronting fields and open countryside
- The sense of enclosure is stronger in the Conservation Area
- No evidence of new build but work is ongoing on refurbishments of high quality and in keeping with character
- The surrounding landscape is of great historic value, there is no street lighting

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging views, hedges and spaces, the characteristic layout and extent of buildings, use of natural materials and mix of dwelling types. Any infill development will be of necessity limited in scale to avoid a significant change in the overall character of the area.

Key Community Views

The surrounding landscape is integral to quality of life. Connections to the surrounding countryside are extremely important for local residents. Views from and to Bletchington are a key aspect of the rural setting, with many of significant value.



Figure 95 – Key Views

Figure 87 shows these key views, which are grouped by Character Assessment Area:

DESCRIPTION OF VIEW	CHARACTER AREA
1. View from footpath looking over Cherwell valley towards Woodstock	Area D
2. View from allotments to the Cherwell Valley	Area B
3. View from Oxford Road to Oxford	Area B
4. View from recreation ground east towards the Chilterns	Area B
5. View from New Road over fields south east towards the Chilterns	Area A
6. View looking from footpath looking north over Kirtlington	Area C

Local Green Spaces

Open and green spaces are important aspects of Bletchington and Hampton Gay and Poyle character.

The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. The National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023 (para 106) sets out the qualifying criteria for Local Green Space Designation. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a LGS policy which allocates the following area as Local Green Spaces:

- LGS1: Hodgeman's Spinney

For more detail, see BHGNP Neighbourhood Plan Policy CE6 – Local Green Spaces.

Dark green. Green spaces defined by Cherwell Local plan 2011-31. No spaces were designated in Hampton Gay and Poyle.

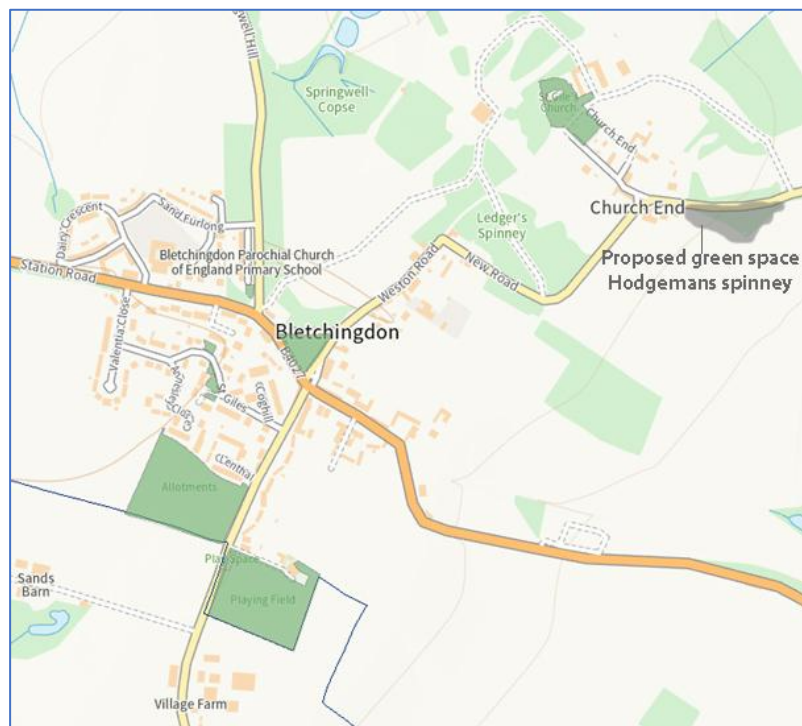


Figure 96 – Local Green Space