Bletchingdon Conservation Area Appraisal
July 2008

Planning, Housing and Economy
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1. Introduction

Bletchingdon is a manorial nucleated village developing south of the estate of Bletchingdon Park. The historic properties date from the 17th/18th centuries, and skirt the estate wall and church. The village green is a key element to the village and the focal point of the historic settlement.

In acknowledgement of its special qualities which need to be preserved and enhanced, this document is the first full appraisal of the village following its designation in 1980 and review in 1991.
2. Planning Policy context

2.1 Conservation area designation

2.1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides legislation for the protection of the nation’s heritage of buildings and places of architectural and historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

2.1.2 Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. However, it is the 1990 Act (Section 69) which places a duty upon local planning authorities of identifying areas of special architectural or historic interest through an appraisal process and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 54 in Cherwell District.

2.1.3 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Act to consider boundary revisions to their Conservation Areas ‘from time to time’.

2.1.4 This document is based on a standard recording format derived from advice contained in documents published by English Heritage (2005). The appraisal process enables the special character and appearance of Bletchingdon can continue to be identified; thereby ensuring that any future development preserves or enhances that identified special character.

2.1.5 This draft appraisal was the subject of public consultation and when adopted by the Council, became a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the conservation area and its setting.
Figure 2: Area Designations
3. Location and Topography

Bletchingdon lies roughly midway between Oxford and Bicester in the middle of the parish. The historic village lies around and east of the village green, whereas the 20th/21st century developments are to the southwest. The name Bletchingdon is likely to originate in the Anglo Saxon ‘Blecci’s Hill’, suggesting that an important tribal leader named Blecci was once based in this area. The village is situated on an area of relatively high land with the fields falling away around it. As a result, the village is relatively free from flooding, although this is a bigger problem in the surrounding fields. The surrounding area is fields and parkland, with woodland within the manorial park. The only area of public woodland, Blackleys wood, lies within the east of the parish.

Fig 4: Aerial view of the village including the Conservation Area boundary (excluding recent development on Springwell Close)
4. History of Bletchingdon

4.1 Origins

4.1.1 There is little to indicate a strong settlement at Bletchingdon during the pre-Conquest era. The village is surrounded by fertile pasture and arable land, and the parishes five farms still exist in their 18th century positions. The majority of the archaeology found within the parish is post-medieval (see 4.4) and relates to the industrial and trade activities of the parish.

The medieval manor, known now as Bletchingdon Park, was the dominant force within the parish through the centuries, and the successive owners have each cast their mark upon the village.

4.2 Development and Population

4.2.1 The first written record of the village appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, known there as ‘Blicestone’. At this time, the manor was in the possession of Gilbert of Robert d’Oilly, and was an estate assessed at 8 hides (500-900 acres). The manor has links to Bucknell through the d’Amory family, who lived at both manors in the 12th century. Roger Damory, the manor’s owner in the early 14th century, was married to Elizabeth de Clare, the foundress of Clare College, Cambridge. The manor was passed to the Pouré family in the late 14th century. The manor was part sold, and then repossessed to Sir John Lenthall in the 1620s, and leased to Sir Thomas Coghill in the 1630s. The Coghill family were in possession of the manor until it was sold to the Earl of Anglesey in 1716.

The Angleseys had been the chief landowners in the parish since 1666 when Arthur Annesley, the 3rd Earl of Anglesey, had bought Bletchingdon House and estate from Charles, Duke of Richmond. The latter had acquired them in 1661 through a marriage settlement with his wife Margaret, the widow of William Lewes. The Annesley family was Irish in origin, and had obtained land and money through the suppression of the native Irish for Cromwell. Lord Anglesey had been created earl in 1661 and had held many important political posts before his death in 1686.

Fig 5: Domesday Book entry mentioning Bletchingdon and its watermill

Arthur Annesley
1st Earl of Anglesey 1614-1668
The sale of Bletchingdon Park to the Honourable William Astor in 1948 brought the inhabitation by the Angleseys to an end. The 12th Viscount Valentia died the following year and the titles passed to relatives in Ireland, where the title had originated.

4.2.2 Pouré's Manor is likely to have been on or near the site of the present Bletchingdon Park. There is little evidence of this medieval manor, which was first recorded in 1322, although it is thought to have been sited on the 19th century pleasure gardens, now the field northeast of Ledgers Spinney. During the 16th century it was described as 'lying on the village street', however this may refer to the extensions of the park at this time. The manor played its part in the Civil War, being fortified and garrisoned by 200 men in 1643, indicating how substantial the house was at this time. The house was surrendered to Cromwell in 1644 without putting up a fight and sustaining little significant damage. It is likely that Cromwell himself spent some time within the manor.

Oliver Cromwell 1599-1658
Lord Protector of England

4.2.3 Information about local trades is scarce, although records show that a miller, stonemason, carpenters and blacksmiths. An increase in population during the early 18th century is partly attributed to the stone and marble quarries nearby. The Compton Census of 1676 recorded 160 adults; by 1750 this had grown to 355 due to immigration from neighbouring villages. An increase in prosperity is indicated through the number of families that could afford to keep servants (11 out of 75). By 1795 the population of 524 included several professions including butchers, bakers, tailors and shoemakers, in addition to the farms skirting the village.

Census data shows these trades still in existence during the 19th century, with a large proportion of the residents employed in the quarries, farms and in domestic service.

4.2.4 During the extensions to the park in the 16th century, the northern row of houses along the green was demolished. None of the original 16th century houses on the Green have survived; the existing houses are all 17th or 18th century in origin. There are maps to suggest that the two sections of the village, the Green and Church End, were once connected by smallholdings along a road, which after the enclosures became the public footway which now splits the land of the Park.

4.2.5 The old almshouses, situated behind The Row on Oxford Road, were originally bequeathed by Leonard Pouré of the manor in 1621, and later rebuilt on the 'Poor's Land' south of the Green in 1792. The original houses were one room structures with a large four-house-width open schoolroom above which was accessed by an external stair. The later houses were grander in style, with four rooms over two floors. It is likely that Border and Columbine Cottage just outside the Conservation Area on Oxford Road are the remnants of these almshouses. The remainder of the site has been built on by later developers. The almshouses were still in use during the mid 20th century, as the buildings are labelled as such on the 1955-61 OS map, showing how recent the development along Oxford Road and south of the Green has been.

4.2.6 The architect Christopher Wren (1632-1723) married his childhood neighbour Faith Coghill, daughter of Sir Thomas Coghill, owner of Bletchingdon Park, in 1669. His first son Christopher was raised by the Coghills in Oxfordshire following Faith's early death from smallpox. With a strong family connection to the village, Wren's brother-in-law William Holder was rector of St Giles and Wren lived with him in the Old Rectory for a short time. It is believed that Wren was first introduced to arithmetic and geometry at this time by Holder. William Holder was a noted scholar in his own right, and invented a method to allow deaf mutes to speak.
Figure 6: Map of Bletchingdon 1900-06 with Conservation Area boundary imposed
4.3 Trade and Industrial History

4.3.1 The land surrounding the village at the time of Domesday was a combination of rough pasture and cultivated plough-land. The land was divided between the two estates of Gilbert d'Amory and Alwi the sheriff, both of which were cultivated by serfs—Gilbert's by five and Alwi's by two. In addition there were 9 villeins (villani) and 7 bordars and a miller, the watermill worth 7s. 6d. already in existence. The village was therefore inhabited by 17 peasant families, plus the serfs. This way of life had changed from serfdom to tenants by the late 13th century, and the d'Amory manor had 6 paying tenants—a striking difference to the years before.

4.3.2 The tax assessments of the early 14th century show that the village was not particularly prosperous, paying less in tax than Weston or Kirtlington. The high profits from sheep-grazing in the 15th century explain the sudden increase in tax amounts paid by the village, with 37 contributors, 4 of whom were men of substantial means.

4.3.3 The main Worcester-London road ran through the village, bypassing Oxford, during 16th - 18th century (now known as the Islip Road or B4027). The village became another ‘stopping-point’ on the way through to London, or as it had been to the nearest market town of Islip in earlier centuries. During the mid 19th century however, the arrival of the canal, railway line and the improvements to additional roads meant that trades associated with such long-distance travel began to decline.

The village declined in population to a low of 478 by the census of 1951. A building programme was started in the early 20th century, spreading the village along the Oxford Road and between 1945-54, an estate of 58 council Houses was built just off the B4207, including Valentia Close. With a population of 872 by the 2001 census, the majority of employed residents work outside the village, with only the primary school and pub providing real village employment. The small village shop and post office located next to the Old Red Lion Inn on the eastern side of The Green closed recently.

4.3.4 The Oxfordshire Agrarian Uprising of 1596 was an event of national importance, and one in which Bletchingdon played a key role. Enclosures had begun in the Tudor period as the general population declined. Open farmland was enclosed by landowners who had no workers to support the previously cultivated farmland. There was a demand for English wool for foreign export and landowners were keen to move towards sheep-farming, which ensured a greater profit.

In Bletchingdon, there was an added impact on the mill at the western end of the parish, which had relied on the agricultural labour of the parishioners, and reduced the amount of grain production to feed the poorer members of society. Paperwork discovered from the parliamentary body ‘Star Chamber’ (1487-1641) shows that Bletchingdon was chosen by some of the rebels as a meeting point due to its radiating road layout. This would have enabled people to move quickly towards the village from various areas of the country.

Two men which featured in the uprising were John & William Horne, who both lived in Bletchingdon. Both were living at the time of Francis Power of Bletchingdon Park, who had continued the steady enclosure of land. The need to enclose the land had not arisen from a lack of working population—far from it, the village population was steadily increasing.

Landlessness was contributing to the growing food shortages which two years of bad harvests had created, with the prospect of another to follow. Gradually, the common land was taken from the parishioners, and continued until the final enclosure of 1622. Other areas of land were added to Bletchingdon Park in the 19th century, but there is no evidence to suggest that these were areas of common land.
4.3.5 The first reference to an ‘ale-house’ is in 1616, and it is known that The Angel and Crown existed in the 1670s. The village had a total of three public houses at its height. The present pub, the Black’s Head Inn, is an 18th century construction, however it is not named as one of three pubs in the village in 1793, which were the Red Lion, the Swan, and the Green Man. The earliest of these is likely to be the Red Lion, which is now a dwelling.

4.3.6 The railway and canal wharf were situated 3 miles west from the main village, in the hamlet of Enslow. The Oxford Canal Line, now run by First Great Western. The station was closed in 1964; an industrial estate now occupies Bletchingdon station site and the site of the former yard is now used for storage. The station master’s house is still standing behind a line of trees dividing it from the line.
4.4 Archaeology

Three main sites of archaeological interest are noted within Bletchingdon parish: the historic village, the Oxford Canal, and a post-medieval watermill.

In the 1860s a series of bones were found in the 163 million year old limestone quarries near Bletchingdon Station, at Enslow Bridge. They are believed to be juveniles and infants of the species *Cetiosaurus*, a quadrapedal sauropod approximately 59 feet (18 metres) long. Further fossils of this species have also been found at nearby Woodeaton further south. These bones, found by a watchmaker, Mr Chapman, are on display in the Oxford Natural History Museum. These would have been of great interest to the geologist William Buckland, who lived 4 miles away in Islip, but were unfortunately discovered just after his death in 1856.

Pre-conquest occupation is suggested by the name of the village, and the finding of a late 6th/early 7th century brooch in 2003 within the parish. The brooch, a high status dress-fastener, made of gilt and set with garnet, suggests a family of considerable standing and wealth was either resident in the area or used it as a roadway to other destinations.
5. Architectural History

5.1 The Church of St Giles

The earliest evidence for a church at Bletchingdon is in 1074—a grant of tithes made by Robert d’Oilly. The church historically lay within the Park although it is now independent, and access can be gained via a footpath over which the residents have had a right of way since 1795. Although being a significant building within the village, its position at the edge of the Park away from the main residential areas, together with mature vegetation, hides the church from view.

The south porch and sundial — dating from the late 17th century

The oldest section of the present church is the 13th century chancel, although the majority of the building is 15th century with later restorations and additions. Traces of earlier work can be seen in a blocked window on the north side of the chancel and in a fragment of Romanesque carving built into the south wall. The belfry is topped by a small 15th century turret with a pyramid roof and a weather vane. The date above the south porch sundial is 1695, placing this area as part of the 17th century additions noted by Pevsner.

The top of the Church tower showing its gargoyles and weather vane

Heavy restoration was undertaken in 1878 by Charles Buckeridge, who added the north aisle. Lord Valentia of Bletchingdon Park donated a large proportion of the cost of the 19th century restoration, and the family were to aid the church again in 1928, when Lord Valentia’s son installed electric light in the building.

The church has a peal of six bells, all dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, and a Sanctus bell, and there are several memorials to the Annesley family, both inside and outside the church.
The striking, and surviving virtually as originally built, Bletchingdon Park House

The Palladian villa was, according to Pevsner, a virtual rebuild of the medieval manor which stood before it. The house was built 1782 by the architect James Lewis for Arthur Annesley, Earl of Anglesey. It is a simple rectangular design which strikes an impressive pose on the landscape, despite being hidden from the rest of the village due to its position and strong vegetation. A good view of the house can be seen from nearby Kirtlington golf course, showing how the property dominated the landscape, set high above the valley below.

The present house is built of ashlar, and is of a square and compact design. Two storeys sit above a rusticated basement, and a pedimented entrance portico supported by Corinthian columns is approached from the south by a semicircular flight of steps.

A Mansard roof was inserted in the 1790s to create an additional floor, however this appears to have been one of very few alterations to the fabric of the building. The present house is remarkably unchanged from its original form, and has been spared the usual Victorian ‘restorations’ of the 19th century. Historians have suggested that this implies the owners were relatively poor, and put more money into maintaining a lifestyle rather than remodelling their house.

The house remains in private occupation, and the present owner has given talks to local residents on its history. Due to the public footpaths, the house can be seen relatively close-up, and the recent successful restoration efforts are clearly visible. The view from New Road has been partly obscured now by the planting of birch trees above the ha-ha. While this no doubt will afford greater privacy for the owners, it will have an impact on the way the house is viewed from a distance.

The grounds have been sympathetically landscaped to complement the property. The present owner has spent much time and effort reinstating and managing the woodland sections and individual trees. There are four Tree Preservation Orders within the park, and many trees are over 100 years old.

The garden on the eastern elevation including the classical dog kennel from 1950s
5.3 Bletchingdon Village

The houses which edge the Park and the Green are 17th and 18th century in style, all constructed of natural limestone rubble with slate or stone-slate roofing.

The Row is a group of 7 Grade II listed cottages curving around the corner of The Green and down Oxford Road. Originally built in 1794 as thirteen cottages, these were condemned in 1952 by the local housing authority. They were saved from demolition by public support and donations, and were converted into seven cottages at a cost of £9000.

The Old Rectory is one of the larger 17th century properties to survive. In 1634 it consisted of hall, parlour and buttery with chambers above, kitchen, larder, and dairy. It was repaired throughout the 17th century, and in 1752, the present south-west front with its casement windows and slate roof was added. Further extensive repairs were carried out in 1788; these were perhaps mainly internal improvements, as the rector's bill of £146 was mostly for the carpenter's work.

The Pit & Tooley's Cottage are both mentioned in census data through the 19th century. The name for Pitts Cottage may have arisen from the area behind it, the so-called 'Poor Land'. The Tooley family were prominent in the early 19th century as manual workers. Both cottages are good examples of unlisted properties which have a positive impact on the conservation area.

The Post Office Stores is another unfortunate example of local businesses failing in rural villages. The connected property, Little Lime Tree, is currently undergoing some refurbishment due to flooding, and features some unusual detailing. The front door is very large and sunk below the road level, and the window to the adjoining cottage is an angled bay. These different features make it a striking addition to The Green.

The rear of the Old Rectory viewed from the public footpath at the east of the conservation area

The two cottages seen from the main road

The Post Office Stores (right, now closed) and Little Lime Tree situated next to the Old Red Lion
Bletchingdon Parochial Church of England School (situated behind the residential properties on the Weston Road) was built in 1870 on land acquired by local charities, and for a time was supported by these beneficiaries. The school numbers swelled to 120 pupils, and in 1928 the school was reorganised, transferring the senior pupils to Kirtlington. The school has continued as a primary school, and today teaches approximately 50-60 pupils, many of whom go on to The Marlborough School at Woodstock.

The Bothy was once part of the Bletchingdon Park estate, and has recently been bought back and re-inserted into the estate by the current owner. Sold off in the mid 20th century, this early 19th century property lies on the western side of Weston Road and may possibly have been one of two properties built to mark the new boundary of the park, which caused the road known as The Causeway to become a public footpath.

The Lodge—a significant addition to the village streetscene, this mid 19th century building lies at the entrance to Bletchingdon Park. Built chiefly of coursed limestone rubble with ashlar quoins, the arched windows have ashlar detailing which signifies its importance as the entranceway to the park. The Lodge is curtilage Grade II listed due to its association with the Park.

Other properties having a positive impact on the Conservation Area include:
- Corner Cottage
- Rose Bank, 11 Islip Road
- 1-3 Church End
- Park View Cottage
- Park House
- The Coach House
Fig 9. Conservation Area map showing buildings mentioned in text
6. Listed Buildings within the conservation area
(all Grade II unless otherwise specified)

The Church

1. Church of St Giles—Grade I listed, mid 13th century chancel with later additions. Restored 1878 by Charles Buckeridge from plans of 1869.

2. Chest tomb—commemorates Edward Payne, died 1758. Limestone, plain with chamfered edge to lid.

3. Group of 3 chest tombs—commemorates 3 members of Annesley family, mid/late 18th century, limestone.


5. Headstone—dated 1681. Limestone. Scrolls top with rosettes to scrolls and cherub’s head to centre; festoons flank inscription.

Church End


Oxford Road

7. 1-7 The Row—Row of 13 cottages, now 7 cottages. Datestone WAL/1794; restored in 1954. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled artificial stone slate roof; brick ridge and end stacks.
Islip Road


10. Barleythorpe Cottage—curtilage listed due to association with Laurel Farmhouse, formerly within farm curtilage.

11. Barleythorpe Barn—curtilage listed due to association with Laurel Farmhouse, formerly within farm curtilage.


14. Old Red Lion—former pub. Late C16; remodelled and eaves raised in late C17; mid C18 rear extension. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled stone slate roof, with concrete tiles to rear. Mid C18 extension and alterations probably followed purchase of inn by John Cox in 1764.

15. Quincotts—Mid/late C18; remodelled in 1950s. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled concrete tile roof; C20 brick end and ridge stacks.


The Green


18. Glendale—Late C17/early C18. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled concrete tile roof; brick end stack.

19. The Black’s Head Pub—formerly two houses. Late C17, with late C18 building to left and early C19 extension to right. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled stone slate roofs, with Welsh slate to parts of rear.
Weston Road

20. Monk’s Head—Early C18. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled concrete tile roof; stop-chamfered bressumer over open fireplace to right, half-blocked by C19 bread oven and with early C18 spice cupboard door.

21. Palmer’s & Justice’s Cottages—Late C18/early C19. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled artificial stone slate roof; stone end stacks.

22. Park Gate House—1735 graffiti date to rear. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled stone slate roof; brick right end stack and left end stack to front of stone finished in brick. Stair-turret to rear.

23. Squirrel’s Drey—formerly forge, now converted for use as a shop. Mid C18, Coursed limestone rubble; concrete tile roof, hipped to left and gabled with C19 brick end stack to right.


25. The Old Rectory—C17 with later additions. Coursed limestone rubble with ashlar quoins and dressings; gabled Welsh slate roof; moulded stone ashlar end stacks; key-stone over door inscribed P/B (Philip Brown)/1752.


27. Village Farmhouse—Early C17 to left bay; mostly late C17. Coursed limestone rubble; gabled concrete tile roof.
Bletchingdon Park


29. Icehouse—Date 1819 inscribed over inner door, Squared and coursed limestone walls to tunnel in front of inner door to icehouse, which is of brick with domed roof.


32. Ice well—Early C19. Circular plan. Limestone ashlar walls and domed roof. Front has stepped stone walls meeting and forming flat arch over entrance which has a semi-circular head and reveals recessed far door now missing. Side walls have small circular windows with moulded stone surrounds. Interior walls lined in ashlar with moulded stone cornice. Stone steps lead down to water level.

33. Ice House—Early C19. Squared coursed limestone walls to entrance tunnel in front of doorway to icehouse which is of brick with a domed roof.
Figure 10: Listed Buildings in the Conservation Area
7. Historic Village Character Area

7.1 Land Use

The village is mainly residential, surrounding the triangular Green, with a former shop and a pub, both on The Green. In the past, this area had working farms, another pub, and more houses along the north side of The Green. These were demolished in the 16th century, and the distinctive banded wall of the Park now skirts the edge where these houses once stood. The Green and the Old Rectory stand on the highest points of the conservation area, although due to the vegetation and enclosures, this is difficult to discern. The church tower can be seen through the trees looking along Weston Road, however this is a rare view from the main village, due to the position of the church within Bletchingdon Park.

7.2 Street Pattern

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, runs 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.

7.3 Building age, type and style

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 which relay this history. The Old Rectory, Squirrel’s Drey and Home Farm are good examples of 17th century properties. The remaining historic properties are 18th century. The Old Red Lion was closed as a pub in 1951, and was converted into residential properties. Home Farm was listed as a posting-house, ‘The Swan’, in the 18th century.

7.4 Scale and massing

Manor Farm, Home Farm and The Old Rectory are all two and a half storey properties from the mid/late 17th century, with the remaining pub, the Blacks Head Inn of a similar scale with later additions. The majority of the residences are one and a half or two storey, with a few 20th century bungalows interspersed. The Blacks Head Inn is a popular public house, which although large in scale, is set back from the road and so does not impose upon the village streetscene.
7.5 Construction and materials

The buildings are predominantly constructed of the coursed or rubble limestone typical of the locality, and some of the more striking historic buildings also include limestone ashlar detailing, such as the Old Coach House. Most houses are roofed with stone slates, and stacks are new brick built. There are some later infill houses within the proposed boundary extension on Islip Road which are built with modern bricks and uPVC windows.

The Old Coach House: typical on-street frontage

7.6 Means of enclosure

The frontages of the buildings create a strong building line on The Green, while brick or stone walls provide privacy for the buildings on Islip Road and Weston Road, as well as a strong continuous building line. The Old Rectory is set well back from the road behind the Old Coach House, and has a strong wall with railings to connect it with the street while being separate.

The Old Rectory

7.7 Trees, hedges, open spaces

The Green is at the heart of the Historic Village area and is the largest public open space within the village. Lined by 8 large chestnut trees, the area provides valuable public space. Due to their imposing scale, the loss of these trees would be detrimental to the village, and therefore should be protected for their contribution to the streetscene.

There is a holly tree in the front grounds of Holly Tree Cottage which is the only tree within this character area subject to a tree preservation order (see Fig. 2). The majority of trees within this area are located behind garden walls, and soften the edges of the roadways. A wide verge along Weston Road has a young cherry tree on it which provides a flush of colour to contrast with the Park boundary wall behind it.

7.8 Features of special interest

- The views are contained within the area emphasising how important the vegetation is to the open plan yet contained feeling of the historic village core.
- The unlisted buildings of The Corner House, The Lodge, and The Coach House make a positive contribution to the area, providing focal points and character.
- The terrace of four Farm Cottages is an unusual shape and an apparently urban addition to this rural community which characterises a growing population in the late 19th century.
- The boundary wall of Bletchingdon Park is a strong barrier between the village and the vegetation and Lodge behind the wall.
- The Lodge is a passing point between the village and park, allowing glimpses into the land beyond while separating the two.
- The Green is an integral part of the historic village, providing key open space and a meeting point of intersecting roads.
7.9 Carriageways and footways

The roads are covered with tarmac and are pitted with repairs from over the years. Footways are edged with standard kerbing. The roadways are wide for the main, with a twisting and dangerous pinch-point at the southern end of Islip Road between Laurel Farmhouse and Manor Farm. The large volume of traffic through the village is slowed considerably by this sudden entrance/exit to the village. The wide verge and footpath on the western side of Weston Road provide a sheltered walkway for pedestrians as the building frontages prevent this on the opposite side.

7.10 Threats

- Despite road improvements to the north of Oxford, the centre of the village is still subject to an unfortunately high volume of through traffic, including large school coaches and articulated lorries travelling through the village daily. The pinch point on Islip Road has a minor traffic calming effect, and speed bumps have been inserted at the entrance and exit of the village along Islip Road in an effort to slow the traffic further. A weight restriction would significantly help alleviate the problem, as currently the volume of heavy traffic detracts greatly from the tranquillity that this rural settlement would otherwise enjoy.

- There are increasing examples of the use of non-traditional materials such as uPVC windows and concrete tiles on unlisted buildings. This has a cumulative effect of downgrading the streetscape. Timber is strongly recommended as a more sustainable and economically viable choice for windows.

- The Blacks Head Inn advertises to catch local and passing trade; however this advertising should be kept as sympathetic as possible to ensure that no harm is caused to the appearance of the area.

7.11 Key Views

- The eye is drawn to the grass and chestnut trees lining the centre of The Green.

- Views from the south of The Green deflect into unseen roads and lead the walker to investigate around the next corner.

- The inward looking historic village differs from other character areas which have either glimpses or expansive views of the surrounding valley and countryside. The contained views mean that certain buildings become landmarks as one moves through the village.

- From outside the conservation area, driving into the village from the west, the eye is drawn to The Lodge at the entrance to the Park, with the open space and trees of The Green behind, and the terrace of Farm Cottages to the south, framing The Green in the centre. This paints a pleasing entrance to the village.
Figure 12: Historic Village Character Area
Visual Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Positive Vista</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Area Boundary</td>
<td>Strong Building Line</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed Boundary Extensions</td>
<td>Characteristic Boundary Wall</td>
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<td>Pinch Point</td>
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<td>Key Vegetation or Trees</td>
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<td>Positive View</td>
<td>Visual Stop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8. Bletchingdon Park Character Area

8.1 Land Use

Bletchingdon Park has been in private ownership since the medieval period, with a brief period as a language college in the 20th century. The current land is typical estate parkland—open swathes of grass with areas of woodland skirting the edges of lawns. Two icehouses, a pump house and a rectangular ‘temple’ are within the grounds, together with a sophisticated and elaborate dog kennel. A popular hunt used to cross the land until the mid 20th century, although this kennel was only constructed in the 1950s for the domestic animals of the house.

8.2 Building age, type and style

There are relatively few buildings in the character area. The main and most obvious is the house, a 17th century Palladian villa. Constructed from the remains of the medieval manor, this house was once a horseshoe shape, which was remodelled by James Lewis to become a rectangular block. This design has hardly changed over the centuries of different owners, and still retains much of its original design.

Four listed structures sit within the area—all related to the house’s grand past. Despite their locations being marked on maps, the icehouses and ice-well are more difficult to locate at ground level, as they are sunk into the ground to facilitate the freezing process. Lined with stone, these structures were designed to allow the owner and their guests to enjoy luxuries such as ice cream and sorbet well into the summer months. The pump-house was built in the Victorian era and connected to the sewer system in the woods to the north west of the house. This served both the main house and the stables.

In addition to this are more modern structures necessary for the tending of the grounds, all of which are well screened by mature vegetation. A 20th century swimming pool with a mock temple shelter sits in the grounds, currently unused, and this is an area of improvement highlighted by the present owner.

8.3 Scale and massing

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. Bletchingdon Park at one time had 30 hearths, making it the largest payee of the hearth tax in the 18th century. The scale is not excessive, as the extensive grounds, carved stonework and sympathetic landscaping does much to often the appearance of the rectangular structure.

8.4 Construction and materials

Local limestone and ashlar has been used to create the property, and repairs over the years have been in appropriate matching stone. The large sash windows are timber framed and single glazed. The semi-circular steps appear to be either made of or veneered in concrete.

The icehouse adjacent to Springwell Road

The east front garden with swimming pool in the distance (left)
8.5 Means of enclosure

A public footpath splits the estate grounds between the corner of Weston and New Roads, and the Church and stables. This is fenced off from the park using black metal railings and thick hedging, which is not oppressive. Within the grounds, enclosures are subtle and follow traditional methods such as low hedging and stone walling.

8.6 Trees, hedges, open spaces

The ha-ha overlooking New Road beside Ledger’s Spinney indicates that the field to the north west was once used for sheep—and/or cattle-grazing, to prevent the animals leaving the estate without spoiling the view across the valley with a fence or line of trees. The western and southern lines of the park are edged with tall deciduous trees, including oak, chestnut and lime. Some of the trees are over 100 years old, and provide shade and a woodland rather than parkland atmosphere in some areas of the park. Where the grass is kept long, cow parsley, bluebells and other wild flowers flourish.

8.7 Features of special interest

- The previous use of the park as grazing for animals, suggested by the ha-ha and cattlegrid, continues today as sheep are used to keep the grass of the 'pleasure gardens' short (the south-west field).
- The public footpath running through the park is indicative of its previous role as a road from the Green to the church. It also implies that the original entrance to the house was from the south rather than the west as, in the 17th century when it was constructed, it is unlikely that the main house would have been positioned very far from the roadway.

8.8 Carriageways and footways

The public footpath splitting the estate is surfaced with dark gravel and enclosed with tall vegetation. The main driveway is over one mile long and is surfaced with compressed gravel. The pathways within the estate are loose gravel, and wind between the mature trees. The drive affords good views of the open parkland at the entrance to the estate.
8.9 Key Views

Views of the park are minimal. Whereas the house was originally built as a testament to the owner’s status in the parish, it is now a private home and views are restricted to reflect this use. Views can still be afforded from the valley around, such as from Kirtlington Golf Course, and views across the south west field across the valley can be seen from the public footpath.
9. Church End Character Area

9.1 Land Use

This area includes the church, graveyard and Church End, a village street with a previous farm and associated Park cottages. Previously a working farmstead, the outbuildings of Park House have now been converted into residences. The Walled Garden of the farm estate, which used to house a swimming pool, has now been restored by the owner of Bletchingdon Park. There is an area of open grass in a courtyard around which several houses are arranged, and a gravelled car park outside the church. The area between the graveyard and courtyard was previously a cinderyard, however it now contains a garage block for the residents of Church End.

9.2 Street Pattern

There are 3 distinct 'street' areas within this character area: the church yards, the court yard, and the village street.

The areas associated with the church are open and wide, and include the church yard, grave yard 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.

9.3 Building age, type and style

The church of St Giles dates from the 13th century but was heavily restored in the 19th century. These earlier elements remain, such as the chancel, but the majority of the church is an example of 19th century restoration. The rest of the buildings within this character area are associated with the previous farm. The main farmhouse (Park House) and outbuildings are 17th century with later additions and in a local vernacular style. The historic farmstead layout remains fairly intact despite the conversion, and on maps the kitchen and walled garden can be seen to have originally been part of the farm estate. The area contains three listed buildings, Easter Cottage and 5 & 6 Church End, a gabled cottage dating from the early-mid 17th century with attached former agricultural buildings. No 6 is a converted barn and retains the larger doorways necessary for agricultural vehicles.

9.4 Scale and massing

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 church is set some distance from these buildings and is screened from view by mature vegetation. It therefore has little impact on the smaller buildings, despite being a much taller structure.

The church and car park north of Church End

Park View Cottage
9.5 Construction and materials

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. Other buildings have concrete lintels and tiling, some with wooden single glazed windows, and an assortment of 20th century additions.

9.6 Means of enclosure

The main forms of enclosure are low stone walls topped with concrete capping, sometimes covered with a layer of moss. This rural walling is in keeping with the area and provides a good view of the properties while maintaining an open feeling to the area. The 3 properties on the eastern end of Church End use their frontages for enclosure, and when combined with the high walling of Park House, this creates a tunnel effect which opens into the church and courtyard area.

9.7 Trees, hedges, open spaces

There are a number of mature broadleaved trees in this area, particularly around the churchyard and to the south west of Church End. In the main, hedges are not a feature in this area as the main form of enclosure is walling. The exception to this is a large conifer hedge beside Easter Cottage, which encloses the short walk from Easter Cottage to Park View Cottage. With the large area of open space between the houses and the church, this area retains a very rural feel.

9.8 Features of special interest

The Park House courtyard complex retains its farm layout and the outbuildings have been neatly converted without compromising their integrity. The names of the buildings suggest that, at one time, the houses along Church End were all estate buildings, either cottages or agricultural storage. It shows the strong influence that the medieval manor and Georgian mansion had on the area, and how its presence continues to have an impact today.

9.9 Carriageways and footways

Loose and compressed gravel are key features within this area. The car park and paths in the churchyard use this rural surfacing, whereas the remainder of Church End has more modern tarmacadam. The courtyard complex is the most practical rural solution—tarmac with compressed gravel overlaid to give a more aesthetically pleasing yet hard-wearing surface.
9.10 Threats

Any increase in the vehicular use of the church car park might lead to the presumed need for tarmac to replace the current gravel. This change would urbanize the area and be detrimental to its rural character. The area behind 1-3 Church End, the old cinderyard, has an important function in providing much needed space for parking for the houses in front. It also complements the space provided by the graveyard, and therefore should be retained as an area of useful space.

9.11 Key Views

Although the church cannot be seen well from other parts of the village, here in its rural setting it is complimented by mature vegetation and a lack of vehicular access, which would lessen its appeal. The short views from Easter Cottage across Park View Cottage, and from there to the Church can be 'picture postcard' in appearance. There is a view from the north of the public footpath across the Park's southern fields, showing how close the open valley is to the village.

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**Figure 14:**

Church End Character Area Visual Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
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<td>Key Vegetation or Trees</td>
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10. Park Stables Character Area

10.1 Land Use

The former use of this area remains in its layout and structure. Formerly the paddocks, stables and exercise yards for the horses of Bletchingdon Park, this area has now become residential and landscaped gardens.

The impressive southern gateway

10.2 Building age, type and style

The main stables were constructed in 1782 to match the main house designed by James Lewis, and are now Grade II Listed. The building was partly converted to residential before its listing in 1988. The stables are arranged in a courtyard formation, with buildings enclosing 3 sides of yard and wall to south side. The style is Georgian, with large expanses of glass on the ground floor were the stable doors once were.

A large garage has been added to the eastern side of the stables, constructed of stone and more modern materials. This is a stark contrast to the elegant Georgian design of the stables and is an area which could benefit from more sympathetic treatment.

The much needed, unsympathetic garaging

10.3 Scale and massing

The stables are two storey, with smaller windows on the first floor. An additional single storey has been added to the eastern side to provide a pool and additional accommodation for the apartments there. The garaging is single storey with a large pedimented roof.

10.4 Construction and materials

The main building and adjoining walls are limestone ashlar with a hipped Welsh slate roof and brick ridge stacks. The elegant Georgian style is prevalent, and the conversion has for the main been sympathetic. The windows are mainly single glazed and timber framed, retaining the previous style.

10.5 Means of enclosure

The limestone walls connected to the stables are also Grade II Listed, and have retained their shape and design. The walls are 1.5-1.8m in height (5-6ft) and are topped with limestone coping. In other areas, the main fencing is open wooden boards, often lined with hawthorn hedging.

Walled garden area to the south of the stables
10.6 Trees, hedges, open spaces

Trees play an important role in isolating this complex. Large conifers stand on the grass in front of the entrance, and more conifer hedges screen the stables from the graveyard and walled garden area. Although these are far enough away from the main development not to have an overshadowing effect, their presence dominates the horizon. This helps to emphasize the separate character of the area.

The courtyard is gravelled with lines of grass either side, protecting the historic viewpoint and allowing pedestrian and vehicular access to the rear of the properties.

10.7 Features of special interest

The stables no longer retain their former use, which is evident through the replacement of the stable doors with front doors, however some details remain which convey the building’s history. The high archway to allow carriages through the centre has been kept, as has at least one set of stone steps to allow easy mounting of the horses. The conversion has been conducted in such a way to retain as much historic fabric as possible.

10.8 Carriageways and footways

The main surfacing is gravel, which with careful maintenance is kept to the carriageway. Although difficult to walk on, this does retain the rural feel without urbanization. The roadway to the garage and main road is black tarmac, which works well with the modern garage, but contrasts with the rural elegance of the main building. There is a connection to the village via the public footpath through the park, however the main form of access for residents is vehicular.

10.9 Threats

Conversions are often a way of saving a building from disuse, however the process must be managed sympathetically to ensure the survival of historic detail. Further development or extension, particularly vertical extension of the stables would be detrimental to its historic appearance.

Although a public footpath runs along the south wall of the complex, there is a distinct feeling of separatism and isolation about these properties, enhanced by the private road access. The stables were once the working hub of the park—the garages of their day. The public right of way leading from the church to the open fields is currently maintaining the pedestrian link to the village, which should stay protected.
10.10 Key Views

Spectacular views can be seen north east across the surrounding valley from the private road. Due to the public footpath, many more people can appreciate this view, which is enhanced by the high standard of landscape maintenance. The stables provide a key landmark from the church, and fortunately the garage is hidden from view as one walks east from the church to the valley beyond.
11. Important Open Space Character Area

11.1 Land Use
This area contains no buildings or enclosures but is two large open areas on either side of the conservation area: one with trees, one as rough paddock containing horses.

11.2 Means of enclosure
The large paddock is enclosed with open boarded fencing, in need of maintenance in some places. Shrubby hedging is still evident, although this requires some work to make it stock-proof. Barbed wire fills in the gaps between the hedges and fences. A wooden stile in the south eastern corner allows walkers access to the public footpath along the conservation area boundary. On Springhill Road, the wooded area is lined with tall young birches which will eventually enclose the area with vegetation.

11.3 Trees, hedges, open spaces
There is a variety of tree species across the areas. The older trees are native woodland species such as chestnut and oak, whereas the recently planted areas have fast-growing species such as birch and conifer. The paddock grass is kept short by grazing of horses. This area can get boggy in the winter or wet weather.

11.4 Carriageways and footways
The eastern paddock is skirted by a public footpath, which is well used and surfaced in compressed dark gravel. Informal footpaths and bridleways lead off this path, however these are not in regular use. Springwell Road runs in front of the eastern area, which prevents it being in constant use by the public due to the speeds of traffic, despite the 30mph speed limit.

11.5 Features of special interest
Both areas are true greenfield sites, with no recorded archaeology, and appearing as open fields on historic maps. It is important to continue this and retain the valuable space for the use of the general public as both paddock and an area of retained woodland.

11.6 Threats

• The recent housing development on Springhill Close was built on a rural exception site, which by definition must be outside the normal realms of the village’s development. This has led to a departure from the present development pattern on the south western side of Station Road, however it has now become reminiscent of the previous village of the 13th century, set around the three corners of The Green.

• The hedgerows within this area provide important shelter for wildlife and any removal would be a threat to the species variety.

• The open nature of these areas is important in retaining the rural feel of Bletchingdon. They provide a wealth of species variety and a contrast to the ‘built-up’ areas of housing across the remainder of the village, both historic and new.

The replanted area north of the affordable housing development on Springhill Road
11.7 Key Views

Although access is restricted to the wooded area on Springwell Road, good views can be seen over to Kirtlington and Weston on the Green across the fields behind the houses. The footpath beside the paddock area has spectacular views across the open valley.

Figure 16: Important Open Space
Character Area Visual Analysis
12. Later Development Character Area

12.1 Land Use
This area is entirely residential with parking and gardens.

12.2 Building age, type and style
The new development on Springwell Close is a terrace with communal front gardens, designated play area and parking. This area highlights the difference between the housing projects of the ages, from the 17th/18th century to the present day, and how the needs of people are considered by architects in different times, particularly the growing need for rented accommodation today. The area can also be contrasted to the developments outside the conservation area in Valentia and Annesley Close.

12.3 Scale and massing
Springwell Close was designed as all two and a half storey with some larger rear extensions at the rear. These houses, although set back, were designed to be seen and therefore cast a striking impression on the corner of the road.

12.4 Construction and materials
The properties on Springwell Close were constructed in reconstituted stone bricks with red tile roofing. Although not entirely sympathetic to the local materials, these will mellow over time, as has the earlier housing scheme to the west on Sands Close, which was built in the mid 1990s. The windows are double glazed, however painted timber has been chosen to reduce the impact on the conservation area.

12.5 Means of enclosure
The playground of Springwell Close on the junction of Springwell and Station Roads is shielded from traffic by thick hedges behind metal fencing. The remainder of the area is very open at the front, and there is no boundary demarcation or front garden. The rear gardens are enclosed by close boarded wooden fencing which will mellow over time. A stone wall was retained at the front of the development, and a hedge and young birches have been planted to screen the cars from the road. Although the shrubbery is at present only juvenile, it is designed to shield the properties from the road, and more vegetation may be required to enable the development to integrate more fully with the village.
12.6 Trees, hedges, open spaces

The houses have little in the way of vegetation at present, however young trees and shrubs have been planted in the gardens and on the boundaries. These will eventually provide much needed landscaping for the area.

12.7 Carriageways and footways

The main roads are tarmac, dotted with repairs and worn white lines. There is no pavement immediately in front of the although the development is connected to the main roads beside the playground. The development gives priority to vehicular access rather than pedestrian, despite the retention of access to the public footpath across the corner of the site.

12.8 Threats

- Springwell Close was a rural exception site for affordable housing, and the choice of the present site was contentious. Further development to the north and west in the village should be discouraged, as these areas are traditionally agricultural, not residential.
13. Details
14. Historic Photographs

The Green 1910-1940

Islip Road 1910-1940

The Lodge 1920-1940

Post Office 1860-1922

The Old Smilhy 1920-1940

Stables entrance 1910-1940

Park House and Easter Cottage, Church End 1920-1940

1-3 Church End 1910-1940

The Row 1860-1922

Home Farm 1920-1940

South towards Oxford Road 1860-1922
15. Management Plan

15.1 Policy context

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of its Conservation Areas. In line with English Heritage guidance (2005b) Conservation Area Management Proposals are to be published as part of the process of area designation or review. Their aim is to provide guidance through policy statements to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Area. There is no one main threat to the character and appearance of Bletchingdon Conservation Area but a number of issues that are leading to the erosion rural character and open space. There is the impact of the proximity of new housing which is having an effect on the village, however there are also numerous incremental changes within the village that are just as damaging to the character. There are areas within the village where numerous alterations to the traditional but unlisted buildings have started to erode the rural nature of the village. The additions of hard surfacing, security lighting and satellite dishes are just a few of the features that can be detrimental to the village character. Unsympathetic infill housing is also a problem, although because of the strong building line throughout the majority of the village this is less of an issue than in other district. The fields around Bletchingdon have many well-used paths and are key to views into and out of the village. It is important that the setting of the Conservation Area as well as the setting of unlisted buildings making a positive contribution are protected.

In terms of the buildings within Bletchingdon some alterations which may seem quite small in themselves, for example the replacement of traditional window casements. Such alterations to unlisted residential properties are for the most part permitted development (with the exception of satellite dishes) and therefore do not require planning permission. Unauthorised alterations and additions are also a cause for concern and are often detrimental to the appearance of a property. Both unsympathetic permitted development and unauthorised development cumulatively result in the erosion of the historic character and rural appearance of the Conservation Area. The aim of management proposals is not to prevent changes but to ensure that any such changes are both sympathetic to the individual property, sympathetic to the streetscape and overall enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The principal policies covering alterations and development of the historic built environment are given in Appendix 1.
Generic Guidance

The Council Will:
1 Promote a policy of repair rather than replacement of traditional architectural details. Where repairs are not economically viable then the promotion of bespoke sympathetic replacement should be encouraged. This is particularly the case for windows where sympathetic refenestration is important in preserving the appearance of the building.

2 Actively promote the use of traditional building and roofing materials and techniques in new building work, extensions and repair.

3 Encourage owners of historic properties wherever possible to replace inappropriate modern with the appropriate traditional materials. Materials such as uPVC and concrete tiles look out of place in a conservation area and their use is discouraged.

4 Expect the scale, massing, proportions and height of new buildings to reflect those of the existing built environment, of the immediate context or of the wider conservation area context. Layouts, boundary treatments and landscaping schemes will also be expected to make clear visual reference to those traditionally found within in the area.

5 Strive to ensure that the conversion of traditional buildings to alternative uses will be achieved with minimal intervention and without the destruction of original character. Features and equipment pertinent to the building’s original function where they exist should be retained as part of any conversion. This is relevant in the case of any rural outbuilding, maltings or public house that might be converted in the future.

Enhancement and management of the public realm

The Council Will:

1 Encourage a general level of good maintenance of properties.

2 Investigate whether appropriate planning permission or listed building consent has been obtained for an alteration. Unauthorised alterations to a listed building is a criminal offence and if necessary the council will enforce this.

3 Require the location of satellite dishes and solar panels on rear elevations or within rear gardens to prevent visual pollution and damage to the character of the area.

4 Exercise a presumption against artificial cladding material, including render on the front elevations of older buildings.

5 Promote tradition styles of pointing. The type of pointing in stone or brickwork is integral to the appearance of the wall or structure. It is therefore of great importance that only appropriate pointing is used in the re-pointing of stone or brickwork. Re-pointing work should be discrete to the point of being inseparable from the original. ‘Ribbon’ pointing and similar is considered a totally inappropriate style of pointing for this district.

6 Promote the use of lime mortar in the construction and re-pointing of stone and brickwork. This is a traditional building material and its use is of benefit to traditional buildings. This is in contrast to hard cementaceous mortars often used in modern construction, which can accelerate the weathering of the local limestone.

An example of inappropriate windows
7 Promote the use of sympathetic materials for garage doors. Vertical timber boarded side hung doors are preferable to metal or fibre-glass versions which can have a negative impact on the street scene.

8 Encourage on unlisted buildings the location of solar panels on rear roof slopes or on outbuildings within rear gardens rather than on the front elevation.

9 Actively promote the harmonisation of appearance within the individual terraces or pairs of properties.

10 Encourage the reinstating of traditional features of the villages such as stiles and pumps.

11 Discourage disfiguring alterations such as unsympathetic extensions and altering the dimensions of window openings.

12 Support occasional new buildings on infill plots that are sympathetic to the intrinsic character of the area in terms of scale, design and materials. There are existing areas of open land in and around the Conservation Area that should be protected from any future development that would adversely affect the character of the village, such as the areas of open fields to the south east, north and north west. It is essential that the historic and rural nature of the area is not overwhelmed.

13 Create a dialogue with other authorities and agencies to rationalise any street furniture and ensure it is in keeping with the character of the area.

14 Create a dialogue with service providers to encourage underground power cables to reduce the visual pollution caused by the overhead lines and their supporting poles within the villages.

15 Promote a design solution that enables wheeled refuse bins to be discretely screened within gardens.

16 Encourage the sympathetic location of both amenity and private security lighting to limit light pollution. Lighting within the village can have an adverse effect on the rural character of the conservation area. The material and design of fittings and their position on the building should be carefully considered.

17 Promote the repair or replacement of lost or inappropriate boundary treatments with traditional walling or fences in a style appropriate to the location. Dry stone walls in particular should be retained and the traditional methods of construction encouraged.

18 Promote the enclosure of rear access to plots where the boundary walls have been demolished.

19 Promote the use of a suitable style of boundary for the position within the village.

20 Promote the retention of historic footpaths within the village and work with bodies such as the Parish Council to prevent these being lost. The informality of these paths should be preserved and attempts to add hard surfaces or signage should be resisted. The footpaths around Bletchingdon, in particular those which skirt the edge of the conservation area to the east, are key to maintaining the village’s rural character.
Management and protection of important green spaces
The Council Will:

1 Encourage the retention of front gardens and boundary hedges.

2 Promote the retention of significant open spaces and field systems in and around the village. The open fields around Bletchingdon are key to the character of the area because they create a rural and historic feel to the settlement.

3 Promote positive management of vegetation. Trees and hedges make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Planting of exotic imports or inappropriate varieties, such as Leylandii, are to be strongly discouraged, these trees grow fast and can alter or block important views as well being uncharacteristic of the area. Trees over a certain size within the area boundary are protected from unauthorised felling by virtue of their location within a Conservation Area, this is a particularly important protection because only a few trees within Bletchingdon are currently subject to Tree Preservation Orders.

4 Preserve the character and appearance of open spaces within the Conservation Area. Urban features such as roadside kerbing should be avoided.

5 Promote the retention of grass verges within the village.

6 Promote the retention of hedgerows in the conservation area and its setting as wildlife habitats and encourage the preservation and enhancement of the species variety.

7 Promote work to enhance the ecological value of the conservation area setting.

8 Encourage community involvement in maintaining and enhancing the conservation area and its setting.
16. Proposed Conservation Area Boundary Revisions and Justifications

16.1 The original designation and 1991 review covers most of the village, with the exception of the 20th century development to the south and west. There is justification for the inclusion of these identified key areas that are of historical interest and have a strong visual relationship with the Conservation Area, and the Council is seeking opinions of interested parties on this matter. The extensions are also intended to rationalise the boundary.

The boundary extension includes:

1. The terrace of four Home Farm Cottages on Station Road
2. The pond system north of Bletchingdon Park.
3. The fields north of Church End.

Fig. 17: Areas proposed for inclusion in Conservation Area
16.2 The four late-19th century terraced cottages are unusual in that they appear to be a very urban addition to this rural location. The additional rear second storey flat-roof extension gives the cottages a curious profile, and the terrace is highly prominent upon entry to the village. The row can be seen on earlier maps of the village from the 19th century, and some early photographs show them to each have a front dormer attic window. At present these cottages have been subjected to the minimum of alterations which could harm their exterior appearance, and apart from the porches on nos. 3 and 4, are relatively free from front additions.

It is unlikely that these cottages were for the workers at Home Farm, as that building was listed as a posting house in the 18th century. It is more likely that they were built for farm workers and named after a landmark building in the village.

These cottages are part of the historic village, and show the encroachment of habitation towards the former station at Enslow. They are symptomatic of the need for additional housing in the 19th century, while spearheading the south westerly extension of the village.

16.3 The pond system to the north west of Bletchingdon Park is proposed for inclusion due to its historic interest. Within the present boundary lies a crescent shaped pond which is believed to be a remnant of the Medieval Manor fishponds.

The more northern ponds have appeared on maps for the past two centuries, and the most northern of these was a Victorian invention to provide sewers for both the main house and stables. The listed pump house in the grounds is connected to these ponds. It shows an important step in the development of technology at the park, and how a more natural solution to the problem of waste disposal can be sought and found.
16.4 The proposed extension north of Church End is part of the historic curtilage of Park Farm (now Park House). The 1900-06 OS map shows a series of three fields and associated woodland, together with what appears to be a paddock connected to Bletchingdon Park stables to the north west. The current boundary line cuts through this historic curtilage, which is currently open land and garaging for the residents of the Stables. This inclusion would also seek to rationalise the boundary by including the remainder of the Stables complex which currently lies next to but outside the area. By designating this land as part of the conservation area, the Council acknowledge its contribution to the village’s historic farm curtilage.

16.5 An important element to any conservation area is not just its listed buildings, prominent structures and character areas; it also includes its open spaces. The areas between the buildings and roads are often as historic as the buildings themselves, and have usually existed for a longer period of time. By bringing these two areas of open space, together with the farm cottages, into the conservation area, the Council will be keeping the historic boundaries in tact while rationalising the boundary for the enhancement of the conservation area.
Figure 18: Existing Conservation Area Boundary
Figure 19: Proposed Conservation Area Boundary
17. Bibliography


The Character of Conservation Areas – RTPI 1993

18. Appendix

There are a number of policy documents which contain policies pertaining to the historic built environment. The main policies are summarised in this section. Other policies of a more general nature are also of some relevance, these are not listed here but can be found elsewhere in the specific documents mentioned below.

Oxfordshire structure plan 2016

EN4 The fabric and setting of listed buildings including Blenheim Palace and Park, a World Heritage Site, will be preserved and the character or appearance of conservation areas and their settings will be preserved or enhanced. Other elements of the historic environment, including historic parks and gardens, battlefields and historic landscapes will also be protected from harmful development.

EN6 There will be a presumption in favour of preserving in situ nationally and internationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings. Development affecting other archaeological remains should include measures to secure their preservation in situ or where this is not feasible, their recording or removal to another site.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996

H5 Where there is a demonstrable lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, the district council will negotiate with developers to secure an element of affordable housing in substantial new residential development schemes. The district council will need to be satisfied that such affordable housing:
(i) is economically viable in terms of its ability to meet the need identified
(ii) will be available to meet local needs long term through secure arrangements being made to restrict the occupancy of the development
(iii) is compatible with the other policies in this plan.

H12 New housing in the rural areas of the district will be permitted within existing settlements in accordance with policies H13, H14 and H15. Schemes which meet a specific and identified local housing need will be permitted in accordance with policies H5 and H6.

H19 Proposals for the conversion of a rural building, whose form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings to a dwelling in a location beyond the built-up limits of a settlement will be favourably considered provided:
(i) the building can be converted without major rebuilding or extension and without inappropriate alteration to its form and character;
(ii) the proposal would not cause significant harm to the character of the countryside or the immediate setting of the building;
(iii) the proposal would not harm the special character and interest of a building of architectural or historic significance;
(iv) the proposal meets the requirements of the other policies in the plan.

H21 Within settlements the conversion of suitable buildings to dwellings will be favourably considered unless conversion to a residential use would be detrimental to the special character and interest of a building of architectural and historic significance. In all instances proposals will be subject to the other policies in this plan.

C18 In determining an application for listed building consent the council will have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The council will normally only approve internal and external alterations or extensions to a listed building which are minor and sympathetic to the architectural and historic character of the building.
There will be a presumption in favour of retaining buildings, walls, trees or other features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Development proposals in villages will be expected to respect their historic settlement pattern.

Design control will be exercised to ensure:
(i) that new housing development is compatible with the appearance, character, layout, scale and density of existing dwellings in the vicinity;
(ii) that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling (in cases where planning permission is required) is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene;
(iii) that new housing development or any proposal for the extension (in cases where planning permission is required) or conversion of an existing dwelling provides standards of amenity and privacy acceptable to the local planning authority.

The Council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:
(i) cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;
(ii) cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;
(iii) be inconsistent with local character;
(iv) harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features;
(v) harm the historic value of the landscape.

The Council will seek to retain woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, walls and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape as a result of their ecological, historic or amenity value. Proposals which would result in the loss of such features will not be permitted unless their loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures to the satisfaction of the council.

Development proposals that would result in the total or substantial demolition of a listed building, or any significant part of it, will not be permitted in the absence of clear and convincing evidence that the market testing set out in ppg15 paragraphs 3.16 to 3.19 has been thoroughly followed with no success.

Before determination of an application for planning permission requiring the alteration, extension or partial demolition of a listed building, applicants will required to provide sufficient information to enable an assessment of the likely impact of the proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the structure, its setting or special features.
EN47 The Council will promote sustainability of the historic environment through conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage and its interpretation and presentation to the public. In particular it will:

(i) seek to ensure that scheduled ancient monuments and other unscheduled sites of national and regional importance and their settings are permanently preserved;
(ii) ensure that development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desk-top study, and where appropriate a field evaluation;
(iii) not permit development that would adversely affect archaeological remains and their settings unless the applicant can demonstrate that the archaeological resource will be physically preserved in-situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals.

EN48 Development that would damage the character, appearance, setting or features of designed historic landscapes (parks and gardens) and battlefields will be refused.

EN51 In considering applications for advertisements in conservation areas the council will pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

Acknowledgments

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