

# Cholsey Parish Council



## Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan

# Landscape Character and Capacity Assessment

May 2017

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**Extract from:**

**SODC LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR SITES ON THE EDGE OF  
THE LARGER VILLAGES IN SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE**

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## Wessex Downs & Western Vale Fringes



## Landform and Landcover

Like the Eastern and Central Vale Fringes, this character area forms a transitional area between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay vale to the north. The southern most part of the area occupies part of the north-facing escarpment of the North Wessex (or Berkshire) Downs, part of the extensive cretaceous chalk belt of southern England. The area is characterised by typical chalk scenery of smoothly rounded open hills dissected by dry, and sometimes wooded, valleys and coombes. Parts of the area are overlain by clay with flints, the latter conspicuous in the soils and buildings of the area.

Around Didcot, a band of calcareous siltstones and sandy limestones of the Upper Greensand (or 'malmstone') forms the transition between the higher land of the downs and the lower-lying vale. These areas share characteristics of the chalk downland, with smoothly rounded landform and well-drained, 'chalky' and sometimes 'flinty' soils. Isolated outcrops of greensand and chalk form prominent rounded hills at Wittenham Clumps and Cholsey Hill, distinctive features within the flat vale landscape. Intensive arable farming is the predominant land use, with a sparse covering of trees and woodland, except on the steeper valley and hillsides of the downs and at Wittenham.

Below the chalk and malmstone hills, the remaining area is underlain by alluvium, forming typically flat, low-lying and 'wet' landscapes. Much of this has been extensively drained and is now also under intensive arable farming, with permanent pasture concentrated mainly within areas prone to flooding next to the River Thames

## Settlement and Buildings

Didcot is the largest settlement within the area, its growth from a small village being originally due to its location on the strategic rail network. With the arrival of the Great Western Railway in 1840 Didcot expanded significantly and has continued to grow throughout this century. The industrial estate and power station now link Didcot to Milton and the massive cooling towers are a distinctive and highly visible landmark across large parts of the flat clay vale and from the hills beyond.

Evidence of a long history of settlement is provided by various prehistoric earthworks and hillforts (eg. at Aston Upthorpe) which are scattered along the edge of the downs. Many of the surviving settlements have Saxon origins and are typically clustered along the foot of the downs, taking advantage of the water supply arising from springs at the junction of the chalk and clay (eg. the Astons and Cholsey). Others are located on isolated pockets of higher ground within the vale, such as Mackney, North and South Moreton and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell.

Many of the villages in the area have a typically nucleated form, with many attractive historic buildings. Thatch, red brick and weatherboard are characteristic of the older buildings, sometimes with knapped flint and weathered chalk in their walls. Traditional barns have a similar character. Some of these are associated with large horse-racing establishments which, along with the gallops, are distinctive features of the downs landscape.



## **Landscape and Visual Character**

Landscape character in this area is varied because of its mixed geology and relief, although some coherence and unity is provided by the containment of the lower-lying areas by smoothly rounded hills (see Figure 1). The main variations in landscape character have been identified as:

- the smoothly rounded downs and vale fringe landscapes of the chalk and malmstone hills
- the flat, low-lying floodplain landscapes to the west of Wallingford
- small areas of parkland and estate landscape between Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and the Thames
- a small pocket of amenity landscape associated with the golf course to the east of Didcot.

## **Downs and Vale Fringe Landscapes**

These landscapes include the smooth north facing flanks of the North Wessex Downs, that are heavily dissected by valleys and a series of outlying rounded hills of chalk or upper greensand, which fringe the downs to the west and east of Didcot and stand out as isolated landform features within the low-lying vale at Cholsey and Sinodun Hills (Wittenham Clumps).

## **Open Rolling Downs**

Key characteristics:

- smoothly rounded hills and downland flanks
- dominance of intensive arable cultivation with weak or absent hedgerow structure and large-scale field pattern
- distinctively 'grey' and flinty soils
- large-scale, open and denuded landscape
- rural character with few detracting influences
- open landscape results in high inter-visibility and extensive views

## **Semi-Enclosed Rolling Downs**

Key characteristics:

- smoothly rounded hills and downland flanks
- intimate dry valleys which dissect the chalk downs, typically with mixed woodland
- clothing the steep valley sides
- dominance of arable cultivation but with a comparatively strong landscape structure of hedges, trees and woods, providing visual enclosure and diversity
- distinctive clumps of woodland on prominent hilltops, such as Wittenham Clumps
- distinctively 'grey' and flinty soils
- rural character with few detracting influences
- extensive views from hilltops and downs across the vale to the north but inter-visibility restricted by woods and hedgerows

## **Floodplain Landscapes**

These form areas of low-lying landscape following the main stream courses which flow off the downs into the vale and River Thames. These very flat floodplain areas are interrupted by the isolated chalk and greensand hills which stand out prominently within the landscape. Most floodplain areas have been drained and cultivated, with only small areas of typical floodplain pasture landscape noted along parts of the Mill Brook near East Hagbourne and Wallingford.



Air photograph showing the rolling chalk landscape of the Wessex Downs with wooded valley sides and open arable downs.



Typically grey, flinty soils and smooth landform of the open, rolling downs above the vale near Didcot.

## **Flat Floodplain Pasture**

Key characteristics:

- flat, low-lying farmland, typically dominated by permanent pasture with a distinctively 'wet', riparian character
- prone to flooding with distinctive network of drainage ditches
- comparatively strong landscape structure with willows conspicuous along the riverside
- intimate and pastoral character
- generally low inter-visibility, although views along the valley may be possible in some more sparsely vegetated areas
- comparative inaccessibility creates a tranquil, remote character

## **Flat, Open Farmland**

Key characteristics:

- distinctively flat, low-lying farmland (below 50 metres AOD)
- large-scale rectilinear field pattern with distinctive network of drainage ditches
- weak landscape structure with few trees, low or gappy hedges, open ditches and fences
- comparative inaccessibility creates a rural and remote character
- open, denuded landscape results in high inter-visibility
- overhead power lines intrude in the very open landscape to the west of Cholsey

## **Flat Semi-Enclosed Farmland**

Key characteristics:

- as above but with stronger landscape structure and a semi-enclosed character
- scattered blocks of woodland between Didcot and South Moreton create some enclosure and diversity
- smaller-scale, irregular field pattern near Brightwell-cum-Sotwell create a more enclosed, intimate character
- predominantly rural, tranquil, remote or intimate character
- regular pattern of ditches and rural roads
- semi-enclosed character with moderate to low inter-visibility

## **Parkland and Estate Farmland**

Two areas of parkland and estate farmland are located on the eastern flanks of the isolated ridge of chalk at the Sinodun Hills, associated with the houses of Rush Court and the Sinodun Hills themselves.

Key characteristics:

- well-managed parkland character with formal features such as avenues and free-standing mature trees in pasture, clumps and blocks of woodland
- rural and unspoilt character
- generally enclosed character with strong landform, woodland and tree cover
- low inter-visibility

## Amenity Landscape

Key characteristics:

- rolling landform characteristic of the chalk and upper greensand geology
- typical golf course landscape of greens, fairways and roughs, with associated buildings and features
- generally weak landscape structure with immature tree planting, creating an open, exposed character
- intensively managed and sub-urban character
- lack of mature tree cover results in high inter-visibility

## Landscape Management Issues

Overall, the area retains a predominantly rural character with some particularly unspoilt and attractive areas of landscape which have retained a strong structure of woods, hedgerows and trees, being particularly rich, diverse and well-managed, and are of high scenic quality. These are mainly associated with the more heavily dissected, wooded and enclosed parts of the North Wessex Downs but they also include the distinctive chalk ridge of the Sinodun Hills, which supports the well-preserved hillfort, the prominent trees of 'Wittenham Clumps' and extensive woodland at Little Wittenham Wood and Long Wittenham Wood. Together, they form a distinctive and prominent landscape feature which is visible as a landmark over a wide area. Management to conserve and enhance these assets is the most appropriate strategy in these areas (see Figure 2).

Most of the remaining farmed landscape of the character area, while still rural and attractive, is showing some signs of decline in condition and quality. Principally this is the result of a general weakening of landscape structure through intensive arable farming, creating an open and denuded character. This exacerbates the intrusion of built development and roads (eg. around Didcot), and the network of overhead power lines which cut across the open farmland within the central part of the area. Other typical land management issues include intrusive land uses on the fringes of the main settlements, some of which is the result of 'hope value' arising from perceived future development potential of land on the urban fringes. Intervention to repair or, more typically, to restore diversity to the landscape and to reintroduce a stronger pattern and structure of field boundaries, belts of trees and blocks of woodland would be appropriate across these areas.

Key landscape enhancement priorities should be to:

- manage existing hilltop and valley-side woods on the Wessex Downs and Sinodun Hills to maximise their landscape and nature conservation value
- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- protect any remnant areas of chalk grassland and encourage conversion of arable land to permanent pasture where possible
- manage gallops to favour chalk grassland species
- maintain permanent pasture and riverside trees to reinforce the tranquil, pastoral character of the river floodplains

- encourage planting and pollarding of willows along ditches and watercourses and less intensive management of ditch systems to promote semi-natural aquatic and riparian vegetation
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- encourage the maintenance and restoration of parkland landscapes and features at RushCourt and Sinodun Hill
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside.

## Planning and development issues

Large-scale development of any kind will be inappropriate within open countryside areas. Any development associated with future expansion of the main urban centres of Didcot and Wallingford would require careful integration to minimise its impact on surrounding areas.

The ability of the landscape to accommodate development will depend upon:

- the potential impacts on distinctive landscape and settlement character
- the potential impacts on intrinsic landscape quality and valued features and the overall sensitivity of the landscape to change
- the visual sensitivity of the receiving landscape

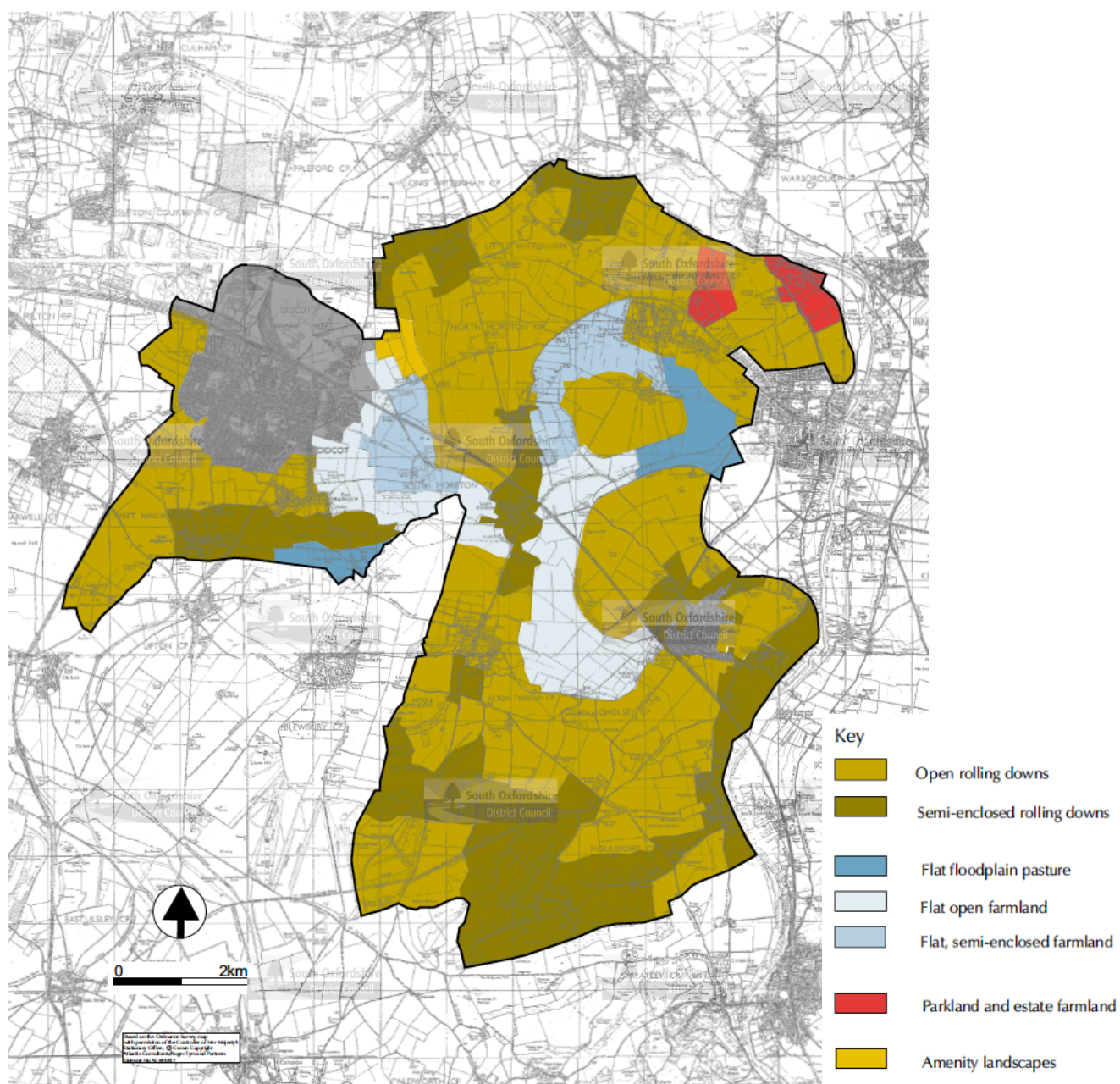
Tables 1 and 2 can be used as a guide to the potential suitability of development proposals within the Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes.

Some general conclusions are that:

- the unspoilt, rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements
- any new development on the fringes of Didcot and Wallingford should avoid visually exposed areas and prominent skylines, and be well-integrated within new landscape frameworks, which provide a strong edge to the built area, to minimise its wider impact on the landscape



Landscape Types Figure 1



Enhancement Strategy Figure 2

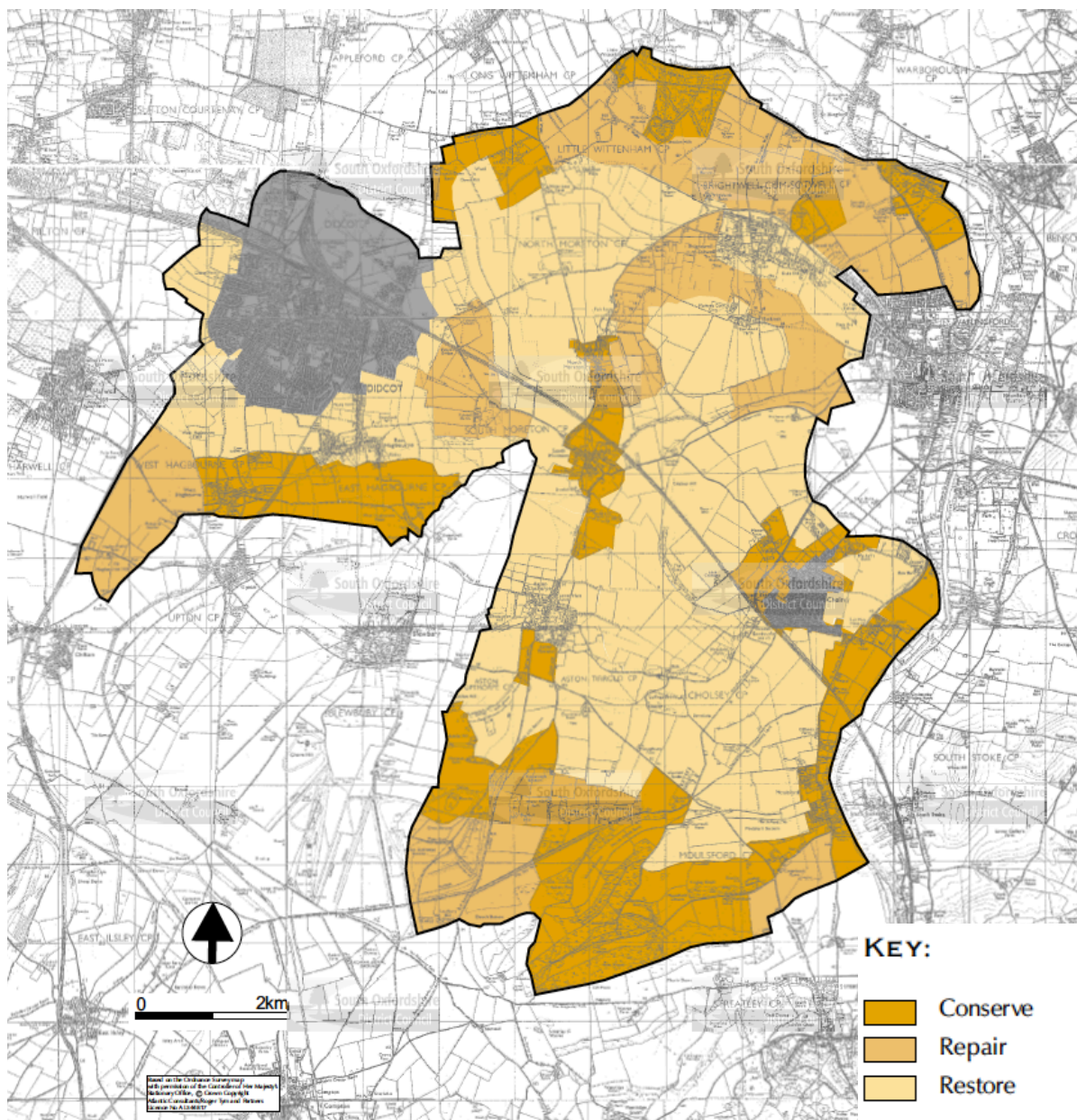


Table 1: Landscape & Settlement Character

Key:

- Typical characteristic
- ◆ Occasional characteristic

		Flat floodplain pasture	Flat, open farmland	Flat, semi-enclosed farmland	Parkland and estate farmland	Open rolling downs	Semi-enclosed rolling downs	Amenity landscape
<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER</b>								
<b>Scale</b>	large		●	●		●	●	
	medium	●			●			●
	small							
<b>Diversity</b>	complex				●			
	moderate	●		●			●	●
	simple		●			●		
<b>Structure</b>	strong	●		◆	●			
	medium	◆		●			●	●
	weak		●			●		
<b>Enclosure</b>	open		●			●		
	semi-enclosed	●		●			●	●
	enclosed/intimate				●			
<b>Boundaries</b>	straight	●	●	●		●	●	●
	sinuous				●			
	stone walls							
	hedges	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	hedgerow trees	●		●	●		●	●
	estate boundaries				●			
<b>SETTLEMENT/BUILDING CHARACTER</b>								
<b>Location</b>	hilltop							●
	ridgetop							
	hillside				●	●	●	
	valley side							
	valley floor		●	●				
<b>Size</b>	individual dwellings		●	●	●	●	●	●
	hamlets					●	●	
	small village			●				
	large village					●		
	town					●		
<b>Pattern</b>	dispersed			●		●	●	
	concentrated							
<b>Form</b>	nucleated					●	●	
	linear			●		◆		
<b>Materials</b>	stone (chalk)			◆	◆	◆	◆	
	brick			●	●	●	●	
	flint			●	●	●	●	
	cob							
	timber frame/weatherboard			●	●	●	●	
	tiles			●	●	●	●	
	thatch			●	●	●	●	
	slate			◆	◆	◆	◆	



Table 2: Landscape quality & Sensitivity

		Flat floodplain pasture	Flat, open farmland	Flat, semi-enclosed farmland	Parkland and estate farmland	Open rolling downs	Semi-enclosed rolling downs	Amenity landscape
Key								
● Typical characteristic								
♦ Occasional characteristic								
LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND SENSITIVITY								
Scenic quality	high	♦			●	♦	●	
	medium	●	●	●		●		
	low							●
Sense of place	strong	●			●		●	
	medium			●				
	weak		●			●		●
Intrusive influences	uncommon	●			●		●	
	occasional		●	●		●		●
	frequent							
Other heritage values (eg. Historic Park or Garden, SSSI, Conservation Area etc.)	uncommon	●	●		●			●
	occasional			●		●	●	
	frequent							
Visual sensitivity	high		●			●		●
	medium	●		●			●	
	low				●			
Sensitivity to change	high	●			●		●	
	moderate		●	●		●		
	low							●
Management strategy	conserve	♦			●		●	
	repair	●		●		●		
	restore		●			●		●
	reconstruct							

Notes on landscape quality and sensitivity:

Scenic quality of floodplain pasture to south of Didcot enhanced by proximity to Wessex Downs.

Scenic quality of open rolling downs to south of Didcot and at Wittenham Clumps influenced by strong landform and adjacent landscapes

# Methodology

## Reporting Units

The South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment identifies local landscape areas within South Oxfordshire. In the first instance the field surveys confirmed that the 2003 local landscape character areas generally reflected physical and visual changes of character within the landscape. As a result these local landscape character areas have been incorporated into the Study.

Many of the site options lie wholly within one local landscape character area and in these cases one report has been produced for the whole of the site. However, elsewhere the site option is subdivided into the one or more local landscape areas in which case the site area has been divided up into sub-areas (for example Goring GOR 11 is subdivided into 2 sub areas).

## Basis of methodology

The methodology and assessment criteria used for this assessment are detailed below. Sources of data are identified in Appendix B of this Report.

The key texts on which methodology is based are the Scottish Natural Heritage and The Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment (2002) and subsequent Topic Paper 6 Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity (2006) as well as the Landscape Institute / IEMA Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013) (GLVIA).

As in current best practice, sensitivity should be assessed against a specific change, and for this study a development scenario based on a nominal density of 25 residential dwellings per hectare, including the provision of open space serving the development with dwellings of two or three storeys, has been assumed for each site as a guide against which sensitivity has been assessed.

Best practice guidance also recognises that a landscape with a high sensitivity does not automatically mean that landscape has a low capacity for change, but that 'capacity is all a question of the interaction between the sensitivity of the landscape, the type and amount of change and the way that the landscape is valued' (Topic Paper 6, 2006, p12). The sites have been assessed with the development scenario above in mind.

Recommendations and comments have been added regarding the appropriate development of particular sites and to ensure raised awareness of potential unacceptable adverse effects on landscape character.

Proposals for any development would need to include appropriate, detailed and specialist input into siting, layout and design, and a full landscape and visual impact assessment should accompany a specific planning application relating to any site. Other studies including ecology, archaeology, arboriculture, traffic and soils may also be required to accompany specific proposals.

Details of the landscape and visual attributes for each site and an assessment of landscape and visual sensitivity (based on desk top studies and field surveys) are to be found on the Record Sheets in Appendix A. A summary of the landscape sensitivity, value and capacity for each site, or subareas of each site, follows in individual Reports.

## Assessment Process

The assessment methodology is a staged process. Landscape attributes (Table 3), and visual attributes (Table 4), are considered separately in accordance with the guidance in GLVIA. These attributes are used to identify the intrinsic landscape and visual sensitivity (Stages 1 and 2) of the site, or its sub-areas, on a scale of 5 levels from low to high as set out under the Matrix 1 and 2 below. Then the landscape and visual sensitivity of the site, or its sub-area, are merged to identify the landscape character sensitivity (Stage 3) as set out under Matrix 3 below.

The Study goes on to classify the sensitivity of the site in its wider context (Stage 4) into five categories. Then in Stage 5 the landscape character sensitivity is combined with the wider sensitivity as set out in Matrix 4 to identify the overall landscape sensitivity (Stage 5).

The landscape value (Stage 6) of each site, or sub-area, is assessed separately on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Table 5 below. Finally the overall landscape character sensitivity is merged with the landscape value on a scale of 5 levels to give an assessment of landscape capacity (Stage 7) on a scale of 5 levels as set out under Matrix 5 below. This 'bottom up' process is tested against the five criteria for landscape capacity (Stage 7) based on professional judgement and an overall full understanding of the sites.

### Stage 1: Determination of Visual Sensitivity

This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each site, or sub-division.

The assessment considers the types of views, the nature of the viewers and the potential to mitigate visual impact on the identified viewpoints. The more viewpoints, the more exposed the site, the greater the sensitivity of the viewers (based on GLVIA) and the greater difficulties in screen planting to mitigate the impact without harm to the landscape and visual attributes of the site, the higher the sensitivity. As a final test all the sites were reviewed to assess the relative visual sensitivity of the sites and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way. At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the site, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

General visibility	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Population	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Mitigation	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Overall Visual Sensivity	3-4 = low; 5-7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High				

#### Matrix 1: Visual Sensitivity

Table 3: Notes on Visual Sensitivity Assessment

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
<b>General Visibility</b>	Sequenced and exposed views toward site	Fleeting and limited views
	Most of site area visible	Little of site area visible
	Site is a key focus in available wider views	Site is an incidental part of wider views
	Site includes prominent and key landmarks	No landmarks present
	Important vistas or panoramas in/out of area	Unimportant or no vistas
<b>Population</b>	Prominent skyline	Not part of skyline
	Large extent or range of key sensitive receptors	Lack of sensitive receptors
	Large number of people see site	Few can see site
	Key view from a sensitive receptor	Views of site are unimportant
	Site is part of valued view	Site does not form a part of a valued view
<b>Mitigation</b>	Site in key views to/across/out of town	Not part of setting of settlement view
	Mitigation not very feasible	Mitigation possible
	Mitigation would interrupt key views	Would not obscure key views
	Mitigation would damage local character	Mitigation would not harm local character

## Stage 2: Determination of Landscape Sensitivity

This assessment is set out in the Record Sheets and Reports for each site or sub-division.

The assessment considers the natural physical factors which make up the landscape character of the site, the cultural and built form aspects and the perceptual features. The greater the incidence of landscape interest and diversity, historically important features and cultural associations, and the greater the levels of access and perceptions of tranquillity and strong landscape pattern, the greater the sensitivity. As a final test all the sites were reviewed to assess the relative landscape sensitivity of the sites and ensure that professional judgements have been consistent along the way.

At this stage each level has been given a score from low = 1 to high = 5 and the scores are added up. Total scores for the site, or sub areas, are grouped as shown.

Matrix 2: Landscape Sensitivity

General visibility	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Population	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Mitigation	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Overall Visual Sensitivity	3-4 = low; 5-7 = Med/low; 8-10 = Med; 11-13 = Med/high; 14-15 = High				

Table 4: Notes on Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
Natural	Native woodland	Plantation
	Significant tree/groups	Insignificant/young trees
	Strong hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees	Weak structure and no trees
	Species rich grassland	Arable field
	Significant water feature(s)	No water feature(s)
	Varied landform and distinctive feature of the area	Uniform landform and lack of topographical features
	Pronounced geology	Lack of geological features
	Soils significantly contribute to landscape features	Soils are not an important feature
	Complex and vulnerable landcover	Simple robust landcover
	Presence of other significant vegetation cover	Absence of other significant vegetation
	Presence of valued wildlife habitats	Absence of valued wildlife habitats
	Significant wetland habitats and meadows	Poor water logged areas
	Presence of common land	No common land
	Presence of good heathland	Lost heathland
Cultural	Distinctive good quality boundary features	Generic or poor boundary features
	Evidence of surviving part of an historic landscape	No evidence
	Complex historic landscape pattern with good time depth	Simple modern landscape
	Evidence of historic park	No evidence
	Important to setting or in a Conservation Area	No relationship
	Includes a Scheduled Ancient Monument or important to setting	No relationship
	Locally distinctive built form and pattern	Generic built form
	Important to setting of a listed building	No relationship
	Distinctive strong settlement pattern	Generic or eroded pattern
	Locally significant private gardens	Poorly maintained gardens erode the character
	Evidence of visible social cultural associations	Lack of social cultural associations
Perceptual	Quiet area	Noisy area
	Absence of intrusive elements	Intrusive elements present
	Dark skies	High levels of light pollution
	Open exposed landscape	Enclosed visually contained landscape
	Unified landscape with strong landscape pattern	Fragmented/'bitty' or featureless landscape
	Well used area or appreciated by the public	Inaccessible by public
	Important rights of way	None present
	Well used and valued open air recreational facilities	None present
	Open access land	None present

### Stage 3: Determination of Landscape Character Sensitivity

The landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity are combined, as shown in Matrix 3, to give the landscape character sensitivity. The results of the assessment are set out in the Reports for each site or sub-division.

<b>VISUAL SENSITIVITY</b>	High	M	M/H	M/H	H	H
	Med/High	M/L	M	M/H	M/H	H
	Medium	M/L	M/L	M	M/H	M/H
	Med/Low	L	M/L	M/L	M	M/H
	Low	L	L	M/L	M/L	M
		Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY</b>						

Matrix 3: Landscape character sensitivity

### Stage 4: Determination of Wider Sensitivity

#### The Contribution of the Strategic Site to the Wider Landscape and Settlement Edge Pattern

Stages 1 to 3 have led to a comprehensive assessment of the intrinsic landscape sensitivity of the individual sites. However the sensitivity of each site to development is also affected by its importance, and contribution to the adjacent wider rural landscape and the influence of, and pattern of uses within, the settlement edge. The relative wider sensitivity of each site is assessed as follows:

Low wider sensitivity – The site is heavily influenced by the built form of the adjacent urban settlement and not an important part of the adjacent wider landscape.

Medium/low wider sensitivity – The site is heavily influenced by urban fringe uses and has views of the some parts of the adjacent urban settlement but shares some of the characteristics of the adjacent wider landscape.

Medium wider sensitivity – The site is partly influenced by urban fringe uses but shares many of the characteristics of the wider landscape, with good physical and visual links to the wider landscape.

Medium/high wider sensitivity – The site has strong physical and visual links to the wider landscape and these outweigh any minor impacts from the adjacent urban settlement.

High wider sensitivity – The site is an important part of the wider landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links. The nearby settlement has little impact on the site. The results of the assessment are set out in the reports for each site or sub-division.

## Stage 5: Determination of Overall Landscape Sensitivity

The overall landscape sensitivity is determined by combining the landscape character sensitivity with the wider sensitivity as shown in Matrix 4.

The results of the assessment are set out in the Report Sheets for each site or sub-division.

Matrix 4: Overall landscape sensitivity

<b>LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SENSITIVITY</b>	High	H	H	M/H	M/H	M
	Med/High	H	M/H	M/H	M	M/L
	Medium	M/H	M/H	M	M/L	M/L
	Med/Low	M/H	M	M	M/L	M/L
	Low	M	M	M/L	M/L	L
		High	Med/High	Medium	Med/Low	Low
<b>WIDER SENSITIVITY</b>						

## Stage 6: Determination of Landscape Value

The model for this work follows GLVIA 2013.

Table 5 - LANDSCAPE VALUE CRITERIA

Value	Typical criteria	Typical scale	Typical examples
<b>High</b>	Very High importance (or quality) and rarity. No or limited potential for substitution	International	World Heritage Site SAC
<b>Medium/high</b>	High importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	National	National Park/ AONB SSSI EH Register of Parks and Gardens Grade I and II* listed buildings and their settings National recreational route or area e.g. Thames Path/Open Access
<b>Medium</b>	Medium importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	Regional	Setting of AONB / National Park Local landscape designation Landscape value identified in the Local Plan SINC/Conservation Areas and their setting Grade II listed buildings and their setting Local Wildlife sites Regional recreational route/area e.g. Chiltern Way
<b>Medium/low</b>	Local importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	Local	Undesignated but value expressed through publications such as Village Design Statements Local buildings of historic interest and their settings Local recreational facilities of landscape value
<b>Low</b>	Low importance (or quality) or rarity		Area of little value and identified for improvement

Designations:

The location of the site within a designated area, or the presence of a designated area within the site, is an important measure of the value society gives to the landscape of the site.

These include landscape, historic and ecological designations and recreational routes at a national/international level, regional or district level, or at the local level.

Local Associations:

These are included as far as possible using available data. In addition to the more formal designations above, sites may sometimes have special scenic value, associations or meanings to the local community and therefore make a contribution to the value of the local landscape. This has been assessed through a review of readily available evidence of community value. Further research may be required as part of any detailed landscape and visual impact assessment.

## Stage 7: Determination of Landscape Capacity

Landscape capacity is the ability, or otherwise, of the sites to accommodate a certain amount of development. The landscape capacity is determined by combining the overall landscape sensitivity with the landscape value as shown in Matrix 5. The results of the assessment are set out in the Report Sheets for each site or sub-division.

Matrix 5 Landscape Capacity and change gridlines

OVERALL LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	High	M	M/L	L	L	L
	Med/High	M/H	M	M/L	L	L
	Medium	H	M/H	M	M/L	L
	Med/Low	H	H	M/H	M	M/L
	Low	H	H	H	M/H	M
		Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High
LANDSCAPE VALUE						

The results from the matrix are subsequently tested against the following classifications for each level of landscape capacity, building on classifications used by the authors of this Report for other capacity studies.

Low capacity – The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional, very small scale development may be possible, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

Medium/low capacity – A low amount of development can be accommodated only in limited situations, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

Medium capacity - The landscape could be able to accommodate areas of new development in some parts, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. There are landscape and visual constraints and therefore the key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced.



Medium/high capacity – The area is able to accommodate larger amounts of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas. Certain landscape and visual features in the area may require protection.

High capacity – Much of the area is able to accommodate significant areas of development, providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and the character and the sensitivity of adjacent landscape character areas.

## **Stage 8: Determination of Landscape Capacity within the Site and Green Infrastructure**

Each site report contains an overall plan showing the landscape capacity classification of the site at the beginning of the site report; and an overall plan showing the extent of the site recommended for further consideration as a site, the recommended location and extent of Green Infrastructure and the preferred access point at the end of the site report. The capacity figures are to be treated as indicative, and the actual capacity of each site will be determined by more detailed assessment of the site.

Each site is examined in detail to determine the potential area for development in the light of the landscape capacity and landscape and visual constraints on the site. In some cases the whole site will be ruled out for development. In others the whole site will be included as a potential site, subject to the provision of Green Infrastructure. However in many cases we recommend a 'reduced area' which identifies a part of the site that could be considered further as a potential site subject to the provision of Green Infrastructure. The 'reduced area' is that part of the site that could be developed whilst conserving (and potentially in some cases indirectly enhancing) the key landscape and visual characteristics of the site and its landscape setting; and whilst conserving and reinforcing the influence of the underlying landscape on the settlement pattern of the adjacent town or village. The policy constraints affecting sites within the AONB and the Greenbelt have also been taken into account.

For each site recommended to go forward for further consideration, we have indicated the approximate location and extent of strategic site Green Infrastructure outside of the development area or reduced development area of each site (indicated on the recommendation Figures as a bold green line) in addition to any on site landscape boundary provision (indicated on the recommendation Figures as thin green line) and internal landscape provision. This is designed to retain and enhance key landscape features and link open space into the adjoining Green Infrastructure provision. It should be regarded as additional to the provision of open space to serve the needs of the development and future residential amenity. However it should also be integral to the landscape masterplan for these sites and the delivery of Green Infrastructure to serve the existing and future community.

Where the whole or a part of the site is recommended for further consideration, we have indicated a preferred access point to the site in order to minimise the landscape and visual impact.

The location and design of the access must be considered through the landscape and visual impact assessment process to ensure that the highway junction and access in to the site is in keeping with the character of the area and that proper regard is given to the landscape and visual impact of new highway infrastructure on the rural character and settlement edge of the approaches to the larger villages.

The capacity of each site is based on a nominal density of 25 dph for the site or reduced area and excludes the area annotated for Green Infrastructure. The capacity figure does include land to be set aside for open space or landscape treatment such as boundary tree belts.

The reports identify the main landscape and visual considerations to be taken into account in the siting and design of any development. The blue hatched areas in the Recommendation Figures are indicative and do not suggest that development would be acceptable right up to the boundary. The precise location of development within the site would be determined by more detailed assessment.

The Study does not include recommendations for the phasing of development. However, if phased development is proposed, phasing should include proposals for the design and implementation of phased landscape provision including adjoining Green Infrastructure, open space, and landscape treatment. This principle also applies if adjoining sites are developed sequentially or consecutively.

It is important to note that this Study does NOT recommend the development of all the potential sites around each settlement. The object of the Study is to identify those sites which have the potential to be more suitable for housing from which South Oxfordshire District Council can select those sites it wishes to include to meet demand within the Local Plan period up to 2031.

The Study has not assessed the cumulative impact of a number of sites at any one settlement as this is most appropriately undertaken at a later stage in the process. The Study does not recommend any sites where the development of one site would preclude the development of another but in some cases has recommended that one site be developed as an extension to the one adjoining.

### **Study Constraints:**

1. The sites have been assessed from publicly accessible viewpoints including the local road network, public rights of way, public open space and other publicly owned land. Permission was provided by the owners to visit the site in two cases where public views were inadequate to assess the site: Views from private houses and from private land are noted where obvious, but were not visited. This has not resulted in any significant constraint on the assessment.
2. Site photographs included in this study are representative of key views of the site.
3. Views from the surrounding countryside or urban areas have been assessed by noting inter-visibility from within or adjacent to the site, but the Study does not include an assessment of the potential zone of visual influence of any development on each site.

4. The majority of study fieldwork was undertaken in January to March 2014, with winter vegetation.
5. For all sites, a nominal density of 25 dph has been applied.
6. Time limitations have meant that no public consultation has taken place during the Study.
7. The Study examines the relative capacity of undeveloped sites in the study area, with the exception of Cholsey CHOL1 (part) and CHOL8.
8. Due to lack of detail on the GIS OS base map, this study reproduces the site boundaries using 1:25,000 OS maps as bases for increased clarity for presentation purposes only. Site boundaries have been redrawn over the 1:25,000 OS maps using GIS information provided by SODC as a guide but for absolute accuracy reference should be made to original GIS data.

Site no.	Settlement	Designations Landscape Strategy	Relationship with the Wider Landscape	Visual Prominence	Relationship with Settlement Pattern	Recommendations – subject to detailed review	Proceed to Phase 2
CHOL1	Cholsey	Repair	Open rolling downs. Largely separated from wider landscape	Visually enclosed to large extent	Settlement to west and south	May be some potential for housing	YES
CHOL2	Cholsey	Setting of North Wessex Downs AONB Restore	Open rolling downs Landscape pattern extends northeast. Partly contained by strong tree belt. Close proximity to AONB	Visually enclosed except from views from settlement edge	Lies between new housing at Fairmile Hospital and village. Settlement on 3 sides	May be some potential for housing in scale with settlement size and pattern subject to assessment of impact on the adjacent AONB	YES
CHOL3	Cholsey	Restore	Open rolling downs with links with CHOL2 landscape to north	Locally visually exposed	Settlement to 3 sides	May be some potential for housing	YES

CHOL4	Cholsey	North Wessex Downs AONB Restore	Semi-enclosed rolling downs of higher landscape quality. Strong links with wider AONB landscape	Strong visual links with wider AONB	Beyond southern edge of village	Significant landscape and visual concerns. Likely adverse impact on the AONB	NO
CHOL7	Cholsey	Restore	Part of wider arable landscape extending east of the village	Not visually prominent	Separated from settlement in part by CHOL1 and gardens. Western part of site would not extend settlement beyond edge of built form	May be some potential for housing subject to substantial landscape buffer to eastern edge	YES
CHOL8	Cholsey	Conserve	Limited relationship	Not visually prominent but local landmark	Farm buildings on edge of settlement close to other small groups	May be some potential for housing	YES

## Site: Cholsey CHOL1

Site map:

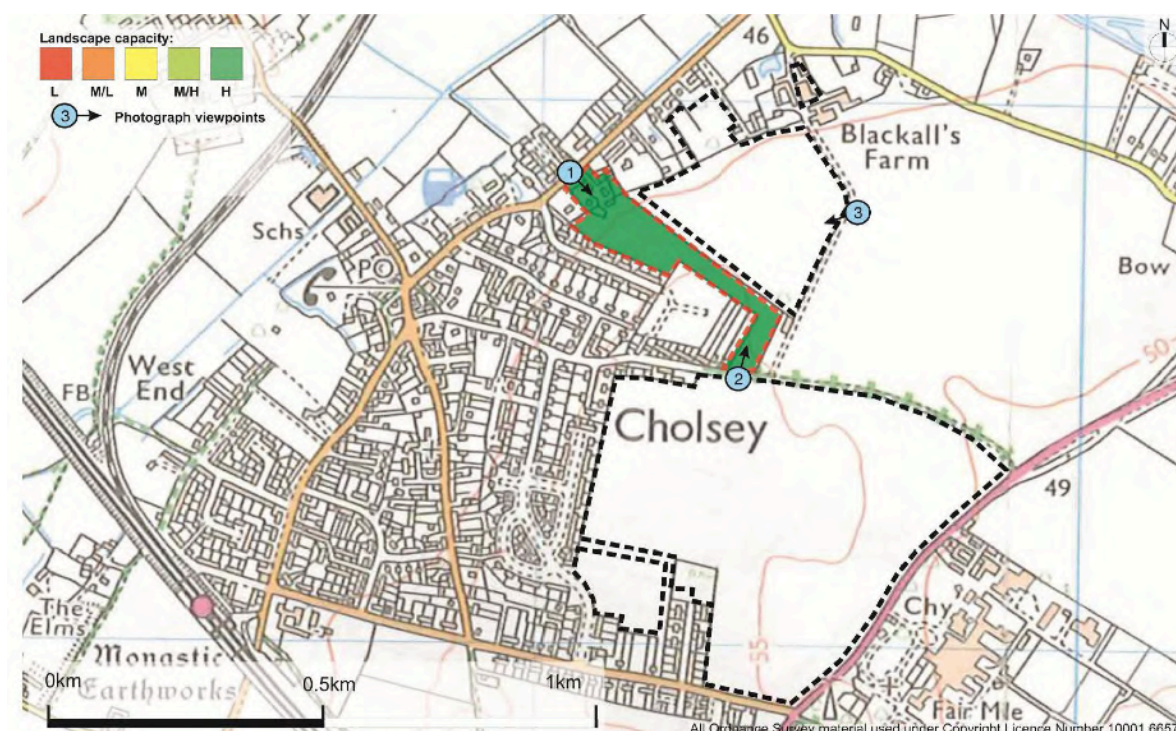


Figure CHOL1.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment:

The site lies within LCA 7 Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes/LCT Semi-enclosed rolling downs for which the key requirements are:

- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting
- within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside. The unspoilt rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements

## **AONB Guidelines and Special Qualities**

The North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Area 5D Moreton Plain lies some 500m from the southern and northern boundaries of CHOL1 and hence the site has the potential to affect the character of this area. Moreton Plain is a transitional landscape between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay Vale to the north. Consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the AONB boundary on both the character of the AONB and in views from the higher ground. Key management requirements of relevance are to conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character of the Moreton Plain, which provides a transition between the chalk uplands and the clay vale.

The Chilterns AONB lies 1km to the east of CHOL1 with views to Cholsey from the elevated A4074 Port Way area. The descent of hills down from higher ground to the Thames (east of Cholsey) is a key feature of the Chilterns. The following policies apply: D6: Where new housing development is proposed this should only be permitted if its scale, massing and density reflect the local context and have regard to the special qualities of the AONB; and D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

### **Site Description:**

CHOL1 is a mainly green field site with a well-used farmstead adjacent to Wallingford Road, together comprising 3.2 ha. Most of the site is under pasture with an area of agricultural buildings currently in use as a riding school adjacent to Wallingford Road. The north-west boundary is a short stretch of Wallingford Road defined by fencing and a hedge. The north-east boundary is bounded by trees, shrubs and hedgerows beyond which lie the houses on Wallingford Road and allotments. This boundary continues as a gappy hedge and then a tree belt along the edge of open fields (CHOL7). The south-east boundary is defined by a tall conifer hedge which separates the site from the veterinary premises. To the south-west lies an area of low rise housing bounded by a neat hedge.

### **Key Landscape Planning Factors:**

CHOL1 is not within either of the AONBs but sits between 0.5 and 1km of the North Wessex Downs to the west and Chilterns to the south, although in both cases the existing built form in Cholsey separates the two.



Photographs:



Photo 1: Frontage of riding school on Wallingford Road



Photo 2: View from Ilges Lane into south-east leg of the site with conifer hedge to the veterinary premises to the right



Photo 3: View west from track between Ilges Lane and Blackall's Farm over site to settlement edge and views of NWD AONB in the distance

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/Low**

- some views from adjacent roads and tracks
- well used by the local community
- landscape mitigation would be in keeping and enhance the settlement edge

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- mix of pasture and agricultural buildings
- low cultural and historical interest
- enclosed village edge

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium/Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/Low**

- existing riding stables, adjacent housing and veterinary premises heavily influence the site
- character of site contrasts with adjacent open fields
- site is not typical of the LCA 7 semi enclosed rolling downs landscape type

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

**6. Landscape Value: Medium/Low**

- no documented value found for the site
- consideration given to location between two AONBs

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



### **Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- site is part brownfield and has a frontage onto one of the main village roads (Wallingford Road)
- enclosed by housing and other buildings on 3 sides
- very short gardens along Rothwells Close

### **Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- separated from the wider open rolling down by tree lines
- not typical of the LCA 7 semi-enclosed rolling downs landscape type

### **Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- loss of pasture

### **Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- localised visual impact on minor road and track

### **Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- no adverse impact on settlement pattern
- relates well to existing built form

### **Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- no significant views from either AONB have been found
- a tall roofscape may be visible from either AONB which only lie 0.5 to 1km away

### **Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure - including those identified in the South Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (SOGIS)**

- additional tree planting on the boundaries would enhance the settlement edge

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

- a reduced area of the site is considered suitable for housing as shown on Figure CHOL 1.2
- provide tree planting along the north-east boundary to continue from the existing
- provide Green infrastructure in narrow part of the site between two development areas as shown in Figure CHOL 1.2
- native planting to Ilges Lane to retain semi-rural character
- retain other vegetation on the boundaries and ensure the site entrances are in keeping with the character of the village
- preferred access is from Wallingford Road to help retain the semi-rural character of the east end of Ilges Lane

### **Potential capacity of site**

It is recommended that a reduced area of the site be considered further for housing. The impact of housing could be mitigated through additional tree planting along the north-eastern boundary and to Ilges Lane to retain and enhance the semi-rural character of the edge of the village.

A swathe of Green Infrastructure should be provided to the rear of the allotments between the two developable areas. The preferred access is from Wallingford Road, whilst retaining the hedged character of the entrance. At a nominal density of 25 dph, 70 dwellings might be accommodated on site CHOL1.

A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site. The shape of the site and village character may lead to lower numbers being more appropriate.

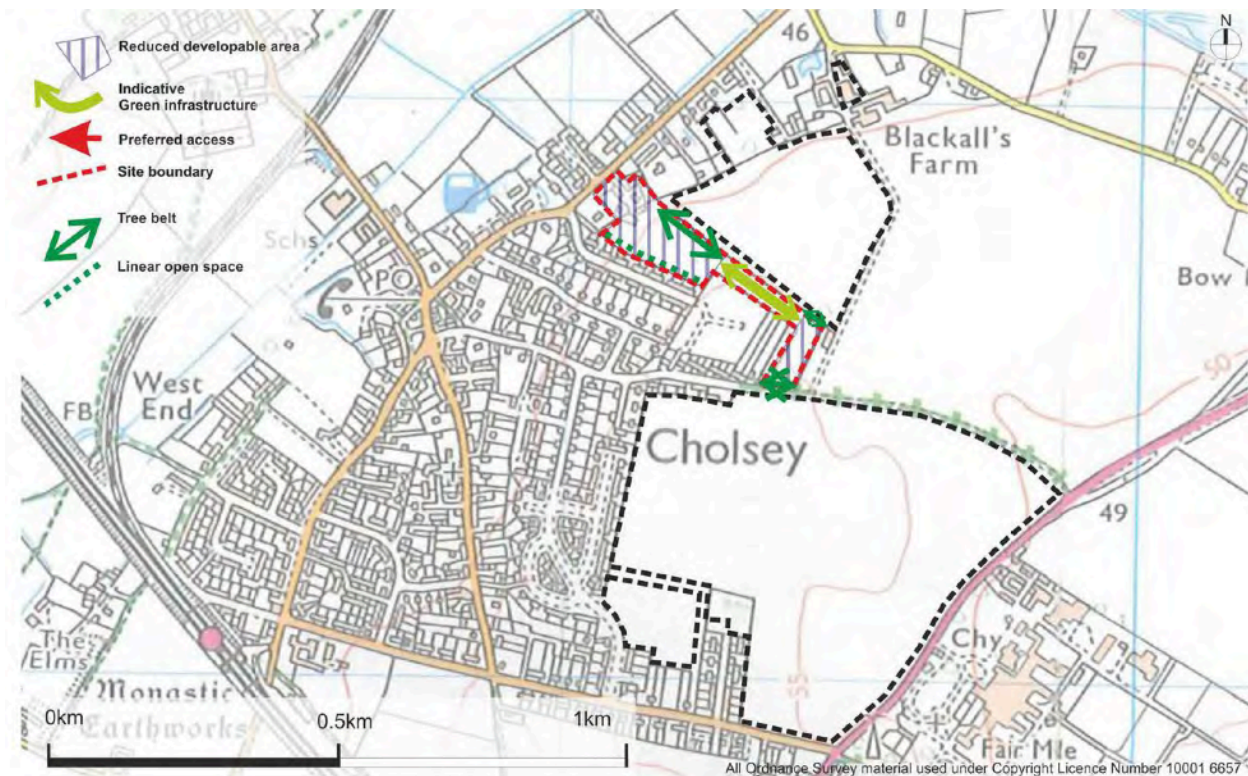


Figure CHOL 1.2: Recommended site area and Green Infrastructure

## Site: Cholsey CHOL2

Site map:

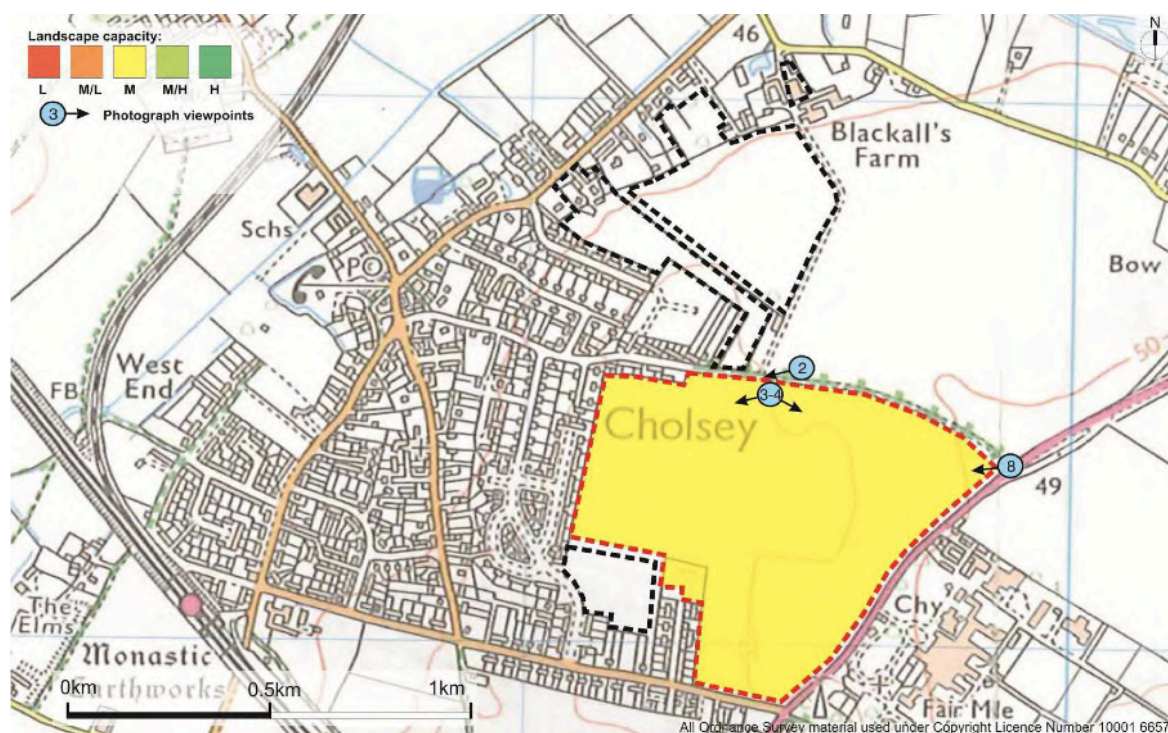


Figure CHOL 2.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment:

The site lies within LCA 7 Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes/LCT open rolling downs for which the key requirements are:

- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting
- within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside the unspoilt, rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements

## **AONB Guidelines and Special Qualities**

The North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Area 5D Moreton Plain lies some 50m from the southern boundary of CHOL2 and hence the site has the potential to affect the character of this area. Moreton Plain is a transitional landscape between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay vale to the north. Consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the AONB boundary on both the character of the AONB and in views from the higher ground. Key management requirements of relevance are to conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character of the Moreton Plain, which provides a transition between the chalk uplands and the clay vale.

The Chilterns AONB lies 0.75km to the east of CHOL2. There are exposed views to Cholsey and the site from the elevated A4074 Port Way area. The descent of hills down from higher ground to the Thames (east of Cholsey) is a key feature of the Chilterns. The following policies apply: D6: Where new housing development is proposed this should only be permitted if its scale, massing and density reflect the local context and have regard to the special qualities of the AONB; and D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

### **Site Description:**

CHOL2 is a large open field of 29 ha. The site is almost wholly in arable use with a very small area of pasture at the end of Charles Road. A 15m mixed belt of semi-mature trees runs along the northern boundary with a public right of way leading from Ilges Lane to the north. West of these trees the site is open along Ilges Lane with an access leading to a Veterinary practice and adjoining business, set within a large single building north of the site. Further west along Ilges Lane the site borders a row of houses fronting Ilges Lane with back gardens onto the site. To the west of the site lie the houses off Lapwing Lane; and to the south-west a new development is under construction off Celsea Place. Older houses flank Weedon Close and Charles Road to the south. For a short stretch the site abuts Papist Way, separated from the road by a dense mature hedge. The eastern boundary of the site follows Reading Road, separated by a further semi-mature 20m wide deciduous tree belt. The site lies above the Thames Valley floor to the east, rising from 49m AOD in the north-east to 55m to 60m AOD in the south-west forming a dome shape with a flatter area in the west.

Although the site has village built form around it, there is an absence of detracting features on the site. It is not heavily influenced by the busy Reading Road due to screening, nor the main railway line which runs to the south and west. There are no footpaths across the site. The path to the north connects Ilges Lane to Reading Road. Recent archaeological excavations on CHOL3 (approved for development under appeal) have found a Roman villa. These finds are not likely to affect the capacity of CHOL2.

### **Site Context:**

The Chilterns AONB lie 800m to the east of the site and site abuts the North Wessex Downs AONB to the west along the western boundary of Papist Way at its closest point. Existing houses form the edge of the North Wessex Downs AONB on Papist Way with open fields on rising ground to the west beyond Cholsey. To the east the Thames river floor runs at around 45m AOD beyond which the land rises up to the undulating lower Chilterns AONB hills to the east at around

90m AOD. The valley floor is fairly well wooded with hedgerows which limit the views from lower ground. This contrasts with the distinctive openness of the large scale arable of the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns landscape to the west and east which is visible from the site, with a back cloth of wooded higher ground beyond. To the north-west of Cholsey the field pattern is smaller and mostly arable with some pasture on a flatter landscape as far as Aston Tirrold, before rising steeply to the prominent North Wessex downs AONB hills above Blewbury and Streatley, visible from the site.

The site lies between the main settlement of Cholsey to the west, north-west and south and the now established housing development at Fairmile Hospital. The landscape pattern of large open arable fields bounded by treelines and hedgerows continues to the north-east, beyond the footpath and Reading Road. The Fairmile Hospital development frontage to Reading Road

### **Views to and from the site:**

The site is visible at close quarters from Ilges Lane and from a large number of private residential properties that back on to the site. There are glimpsed views through the trees from the footpath along the northern boundary and from Reading Road; and through a gap in the hedge along Papist Way. Views from Celsea Place will be obstructed by the new development at CHOL3 (now under construction). There are no open views from the Thames Path or lower ground along the Thames valley due to layers of vegetation but there are brief glimpses of existing houses Cholsey through the vegetation along Reading Road in winter. The veterinary building is visible on the skyline but the site is screened by tree cover. Views from the Fairmile Hospital development are limited by tree cover.

However there are open views from the A4074 Port Way and a footpath leading west from a high point at 90m AOD within the Chilterns AONB. At this point the Chilterns are very open, with panoramic views over Cholsey to the North Wessex Downs AONB. The site is clearly visible falling down the slope, with the settlement forming the lower horizon below the North Wessex Downs. The most exposed part of the site is the northern two thirds as far as the trees along Reading Road and the footpath. The views are particularly attractive and relatively free of development. Cholsey sits on the lower slopes of the North Wessex Downs hills above the Thames, with the Fairmile development being the most prominent built form element. These open slopes mitigate the effect of the settlement built form at Cholsey on the open rural character of these views.

Views of the site from the North Wessex Downs AONB are largely screened by the houses on Papist Way. Some of these houses in the AONB will have a view of development on the site. More elevated views in the open landscape of the AONB may have views of roofs beyond the existing buildings.

Due to the openness of the site there are extensive views across to both AONBs. Views west have a foreground view of the built form in the village, but views east are very rural in character, with the Fairmile development largely hidden by layers of trees either side of Reading Road.

### **2014 recommendations**

As can be seen in Appendix A, the site has a medium capacity for development. The developable area was limited to just over half of the site to include the land between the existing development on Ilges Lane and north of Papist Way. The reasons for this are set out in Appendix A. Green

Infrastructure was recommended for the rest of the site, leaving a generous open frontage to Reading Road and Papist Way.

## **Key Landscape Character Attributes**

The site itself is of little intrinsic landscape value; although the semi-mature tree belts have established well, and are a future landscape resource and contribute to screening the site (less so in winter). The open rolling downs character of the site is typical of the area and a special quality of this part of the adjacent North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONB. The most significant aspect is this open landform which is appreciated from next to the site and from the Chilterns AONB in particular. The 2014 Landscape Capacity Study recommended a developable area (see Figure CHOL2.2) which enabled retention of an open rolling landscape setting to the village and the Fairmile Development as well as the perimeter landscape features. This would link into the open landscape to the north beyond the footpath. Similarly it would complement and enhance the open space frontage of the Fairmile development, retaining the character of Reading Road. The development of CHOL3 will not materially change the character of the settlement edge.

## **Key visual attributes**

The site is very open and as a result there are both views out from the site and from the surrounding area into the site. The key viewpoints are as follows:

1. Most of the site is exposed to a stretch of Port Way and the adjacent footpath leading west;
2. Open views of the whole site from Ilges Lane to the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONBs;
3. Filtered views from the footpath linking Ilges Lane to Reading Road;
4. Filtered views from Reading Road with one open gap in the north-eastern corner of the site;
5. Partial views from some locations on Caps Lane;
6. Some views from a gap in the hedgerow along Papist Way and from the end of Charles Road;
7. Views from Westfield Road and the high ground at Lollingdon Hill where the built form will be visible beyond the houses on Papist Way
8. Views from higher ground between Papist Way and the railway line where the built form will be visible beyond the houses on Papist Way
9. Several houses have views to the site

## **Review overview**

Within this context, the 2014 Landscape Capacity Study recommended a developable area (see Figure CHOL2.2) which would have had a visual effect on these houses, views from Charles Road and Ilges Lane. The limit of developable area in 2014 enabled the built form to be set well away from the other visual receptors including the footpath, Reading Road, Caps Lane, and Papist Way. It retained the built form on the higher ground where it would visually relate to the existing settlement, allowing a substantial area of open rolling hillside to the east to be retained and thus protecting the views from the Chilterns AONB and maintaining an open gap between Cholsey and the Fairmile development, in particular the listed buildings. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that the mass and scale of any development on the site is not visually intrusive in the elevated views from the North Wessex Downs AONB. These are important factors which should be considered in determining whether more development could be accommodated than that shown on Figure CHOL2.2.



The whole site is very large and would represent a sizeable extension to the village which would not be in keeping with the current size of the village, or the scale of its settlement pattern. Several other smaller sites have been put forward already. Allocation of the whole, or the greater part of the site, would result in a significant cumulative effect on the landscape setting of Cholsey. It would also join the Fairmile development with the remaining settlement. Although there may be some non-landscape merits in this, the cumulative effect on the landscape character of Cholsey, creating a large modern extension of a similar size to the traditional village, would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and the village. In contrast, the impact of the Fairmile development on Cholsey is mitigated considerably by the tree cover along Reading Road and the considerable open space frontage.

An extension of the built form over the whole site whilst widening and thickening the landscape buffers to the footpath, Ilges Lane and Reading Road to improve screening would still result in a visual impact on views from the Chilterns and the loss of views eastward to the hills. However some minor extension of the built form as shown in Figure CHOL2.2A could be accommodated without substantive harm for the following reasons:

1. It would result in a connection between the traditional village envelope and Fairmile development whilst avoiding the loss of an open landscape setting to the village;
2. It would retain the majority of the most exposed open setting to the village linking into the open land to the north;
3. It would largely retain the rural setting to the Ilges Lane/Reading Road footpath and allow for views out to the Chilterns AONB from the end of Ilges Lane;
4. It would retain the character of Reading Road flanked by open land;
5. It would limit the visual impact on Caps Lane, Reading Road and the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONB and allow for substantive planting as part of the open space to mitigate the impact.

## Potential for mitigation

The boundary tree belts and hedgerows can be substantially retained. These can be reinforced with new planting but any planting should avoid closing down views of the open space from the footpath (with the loss of its rural setting to both sides); and from Reading Road (with the loss of its rural setting to the west). The site should itself be broken up by substantive tree planting and open space; and planting used to soften the exposed resulting built form southern and western edge, creating a defensible natural woodland edge to the village linked into the existing tree belts. This approach should retain the sense of openness on the lower slopes of the site, and the benefit that brings in landscape terms in retaining part of the open rolling downs setting to the village and the North Wessex Downs AONB; and visual terms in mitigating the harm in views from the Chilterns AONB.

## Recommendations

A slight amendment as shown in Figure CHOL2.2A would slightly increase the capacity of the site without resulting in substantive harm, subject to the above landscape constraints and mitigation. It is recommended that the revised 'reduced area' of the site (15ha) as shown in Figure CHOL be considered further for housing. The reduced area is still designed to reflect the settlement pattern on the plateau above 55m AOD and the shape of the contours; to reduce the scale of the impact of the development on the village. It would also enable the creation of a substantive open space/

landscape buffer which would help mitigate the impact on views from the AONBs and to complement the open space on the opposite side of the A329 within the Fairmile hospital development. This larger area should link into an extension of the native tree planting along the northern boundary up to Ilges Lane. This exposed site would also benefit from the provision of generous open space, tree planting and gardens within the development area to respect and protect the rural character of the village and break up views of the built form from the AONBs. For example the development should be broken up with Green Infrastructure corridors linking into the main areas of open space. The above overall approach should comply with the guidance for Cholsey within the South and Vale Green Infrastructure Strategy Final Draft September 2017 [page 122]: *Create and maintain new accessible natural greenspaces to meet the needs of the communities in planned new developments to the east and north-west the village, for example to provide a green corridor between the village and the Thames, alongside rights of way and incorporating existing features such as hedgerows and trees.* The preferred access in landscape terms is shown from Papist Way just west of the junction with Reading Road in order to retain the tree belt on Reading Road which contributes to protecting the landscape setting of the Fairmile parkland character and the rural approach to Chinnor village. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

### **Key Landscape Planning Factors:**

CHOL2 is not within either of the AONBs but falls within the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the immediate south of the site and the Chilterns AONB to the east of the river Thames.

Photographs:

Photo 1: View over site from north-east corner next to the A329 Reading Road with houses in Cholsey on the horizon

Photo 4: View south-east across the site to the trees along Reading Road in the middle distance with the Chilterns hills on the skyline







Photo 2: View from footpath leading east from Ilges Lane to the site left of Ilges Lane



Photo 3: View across the site to the south-west to the North Wessex Downs hills



Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

#### **1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- long distance views from the Chilterns AONB
- some local views including from the North Wessex Downs west of Papist Way
- screening by semi-mature tree belts and dense hedgerow on main local roads
- well used roads used by the local community and visitors
- potential for significant area of Green Infrastructure
- loss of openness

#### **2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/Low**

- arable land
- no cultural or historic interest
- relatively quiet and dark landscape
- open unified downland

#### **3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium/Low (combines 1 and 2)**

#### **4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/High**

- site is typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type which extends to north-east and south-west of the site
- some separation as a result of linear tree belts and the settlement

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

## **6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- setting of Chilterns AONB

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

### **Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- housing forms the skyline to the site
- site is located between two areas of estate housing at Queens Road and the Fairmile Hospital
- much of the site is on the Cholsey plateau
- narrow gardens to Lapwing Way
- relationship with adjacent wider countryside
- separated from the wider open rolling down by tree lines
- typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type
- part of the open hillside landscape

### **Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- loss of small area of pasture
- loss of openness

### **Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- loss of open views across the site
- increase in visual impact of Cholsey on the downs in views from the Chilterns AONB

### **Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- a very large site which is out of scale with the settlement pattern
- relates well to existing built form in the village and Fairmile Hospital
- whole site would extend the built form away from the village plateau and down the open slopes

### **Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- a major extension within CHOL2 would have a significant impact on the views from the Chilterns AONB but these are mainly from A329
- localised impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB in an area already affected by the village built form
- a tall roofscape would be highly visible
- need to provide substantial provision of Green Infrastructure to integrate the development into the landscape and avoid increasing the visual exposure of the village Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure - including those identified in the South Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (SOGIS)
- provide major area of Green Infrastructure to integrate the development in to the landscape and complement the open space within the Fairmile Hospital
- green infrastructure to be designed to relieve pressure for active recreation on the adjoining Chilterns and to link into the footpath network
- provide native tree planting to soften settlement edge and views from the settlement





## Site: Cholsey CHOL3

Site map:

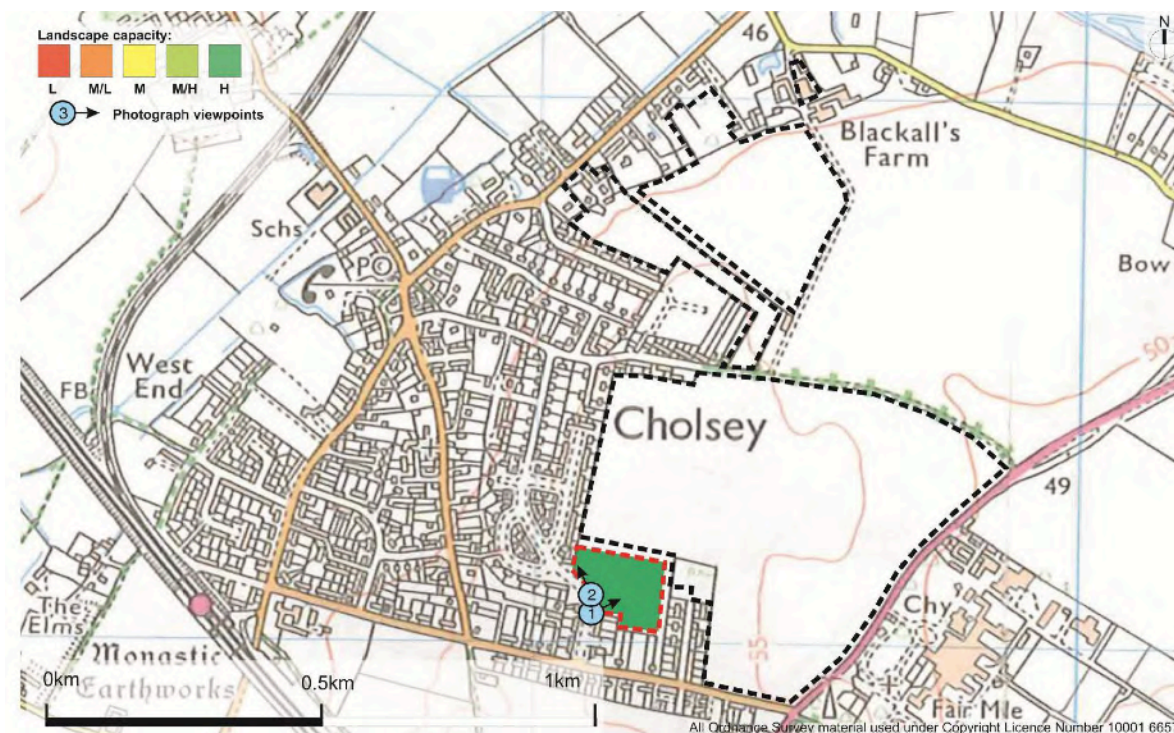


Figure CHOL 3.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment:

The site lies within LCA 7 Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes/LCT open rolling downs for which the key requirements are:

- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside the unspoilt, rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements

## AONB Guidelines and Special Qualities

The North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Area 5D Moreton Plain lies some 100m from the southern boundary of CHOL3 and hence the site has the potential to affect the character of this area. Moreton Plain is a transitional landscape between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay Vale to the north. Consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the AONB boundary on both the character of the AONB and in views from the higher ground. Key management requirements of relevance are to conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character of the Moreton Plain, which provides a transition between the chalk uplands and the clay Vale.

The Chilterns AONB lies 750m to the east of CHOL3 with views to Cholsey from the elevated A4074 Port Way area. The descent of hills down from higher ground to the Thames (east of Cholsey) is a key feature of the Chilterns. The following policies apply: D6: Where new housing development is proposed this should only be permitted if its scale, massing and density reflect the local context and have regard to the special qualities of the AONB; and D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

### Site Description:

CHOL 3 is an open field of 2.5ha. The site is wholly in use as rough grassland. The northern boundary is open beyond which lie the open fields of CHOL2. The west, south and east of the site is contained by housing in Lapwing Way, Celsea Place, Weedon Close and Charles Road respectively, with a small area of pasture within CHOL2 at the end of Charles Road. These boundaries include hedges and fences. The boundary with Celsea Place is open and defined by a post and rail fence.

### Key Landscape Planning Factors:

CHOL3 is not within either of the AONBs but falls within the visual setting of the Chilterns AONB to the immediate south of the site and further to the east of the river Thames.



Photographs:

Photo 1:

View from Celsea Place north-east over the site with the Chiltern Hills on the horizon



Photo 2:  
View Celsea Place north-west to the  
settlement edge

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/Low**

- some oblique long distance views from the Chilterns AONB
- few local views
- potential for tree and hedgerow planting
- loss of openness

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Low**

- simple featureless arable land
- no cultural or historic interest
- affected by village lighting
- open unified landscape

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Low (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- site is typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type which extends to north-east and south-west of the site
- some separation as a result of containment by the settlement

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

**6. Landscape Value: Medium/Low**

- takes into account inter-visibility with the Chilterns AONB

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

**Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- housing contains the site on 3 sides
- site is on the Cholsey plateau
- narrow gardens to Lapwing Way



**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type
- no separation from open fields of CHOL 2

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- none

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- loss of open views across the site
- potential increase in visual impact of Cholsey on the downs in views from the Chilterns AONB

**Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- relates well to existing built form
- limits extent of developable area to Cholsey plateau

**Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- potential views from the Chilterns AONB but mainly from A329
- a tall roofscape would be highly visible
- need to provide tree buffers and other vegetation to soften edge of settlement

**Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure - including those identified in the South Oxfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (SOGIS)**

- provide native tree planting to soften settlement edge and views from the settlement

**Conclusion and recommendations**

- the site would be suitable for development on landscape and visual grounds
- tree planting along Celsea Place and the rear gardens to Lapwing Way
- provide a landscape corridor which includes hedgerows with hedgerow trees continues along the boundary of CHOL 2 and CHOL 3
- preferred access is from Celsea Place. This should be designed to avoid direct views down Celsea Place into the housing and to enable tree planting in key views

**Potential capacity of site**

It is recommended that the whole of the site as shown in Figure CHOL 2.2 be considered further for housing. It is recommended that a landscape corridor which includes hedgerows with hedgerow trees continues along the boundary of CHOL2 and CHOL3 if CHOL2 is does not come forward for housing.

Further tree planting should be carried out along Celsea Place, particularly at the end of the vista down Celsea Place. The preferred access is shown from Celsea Place as shown in Figure CHOL 3.2. At a nominal density of 25 dph, up to 60 dwellings might be accommodated on site CHOL2. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

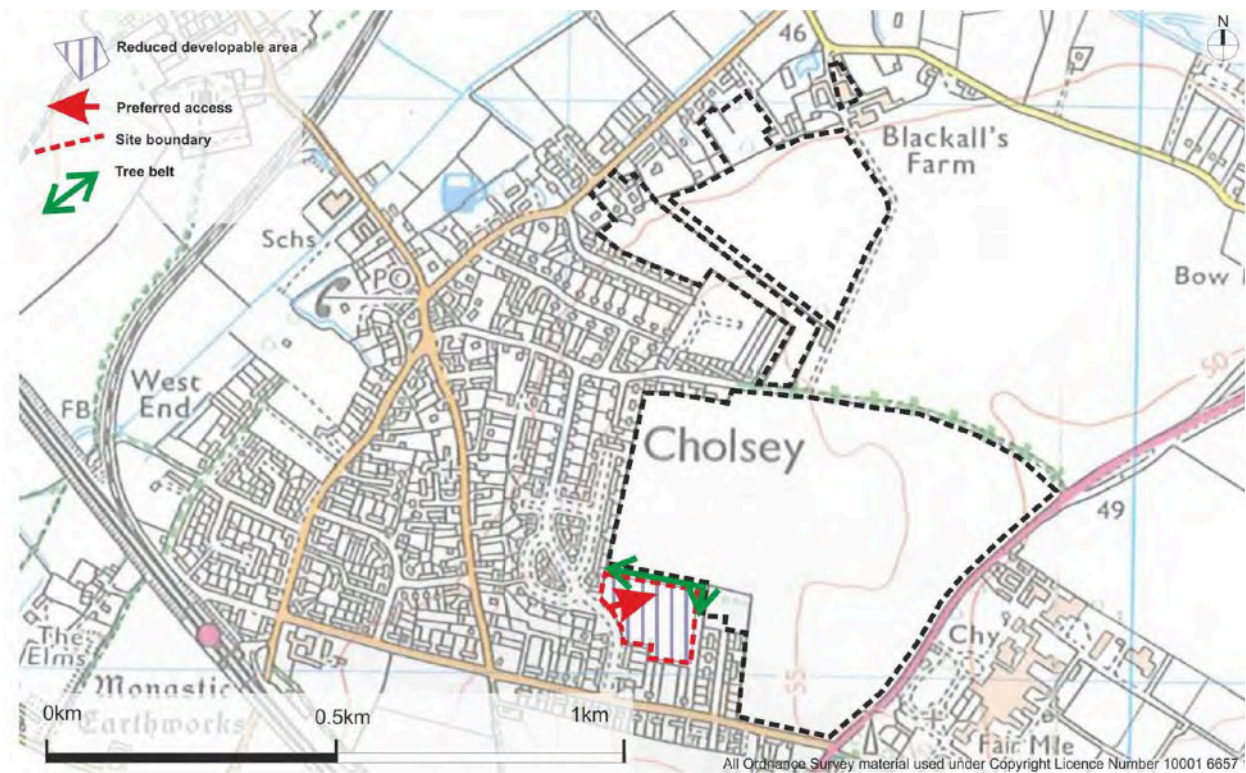


Figure CHOL 3.2: Recommended site area and Green Infrastructure

## Site: Cholsey CHOL5

Site map:

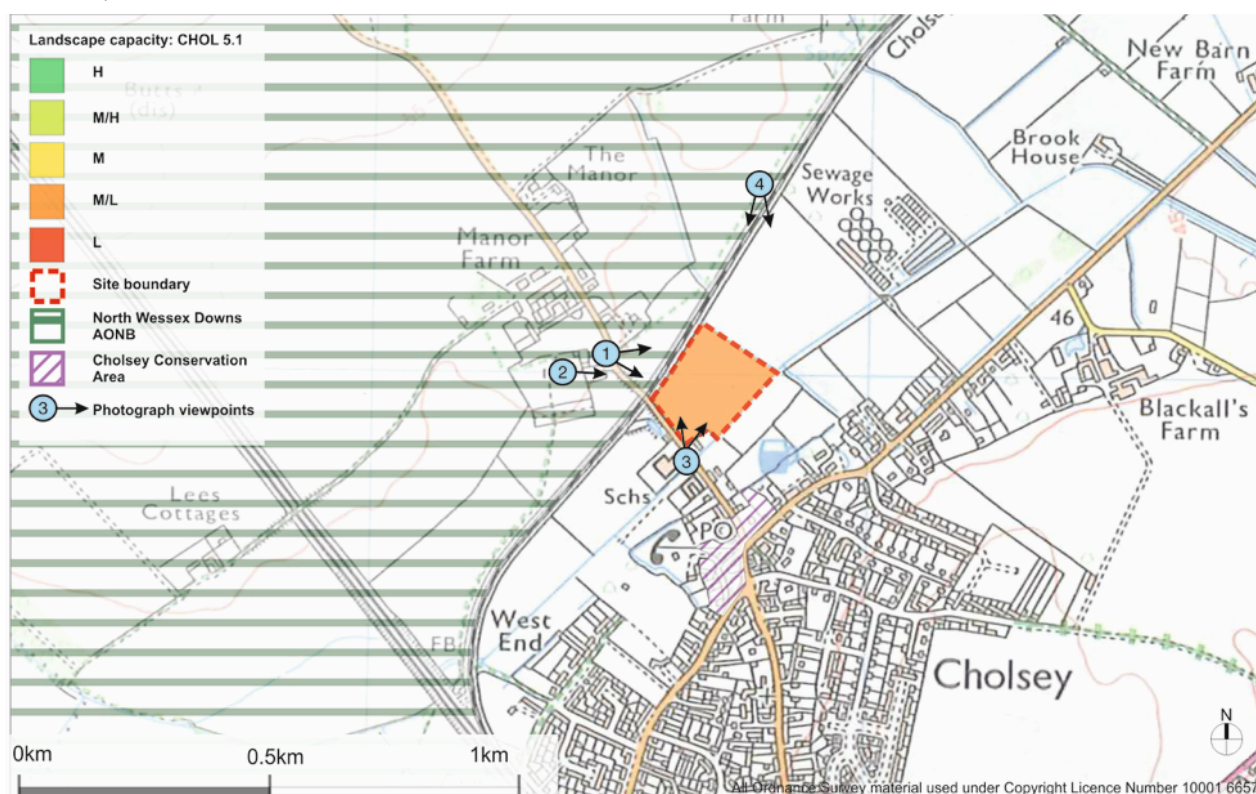


Figure CHOL 5.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

Site description:

CHOL 5 is a single field of 3.4ha in size and under pasture in agricultural use. It is bounded by a mature tree line with hedgerow species along its south-eastern boundary which forms a strong established landscape feature on the edge of the village. The southern corner the site is open to the curtilages of a pair of Victorian cottages which are in turn separated from the village by the above tree belt. The south-western boundary runs along Church Road separated by a line of trees and hedgerow except for a point of access next to the Victorian cottages at 8 Church Road. The north-west boundary follows the Cholsey and Wallingford heritage railway line with a new hedge along its length. The north-east boundary to the adjacent field is defined by a low and more gappy hedge with a one hedgerow tree.

Key landscape planning factors:

CHOL 5 lies within the setting of the adjacent North Wessex Downs AONB north-west boundary of the railway line.



Photographs:



Photo 1: View from the AONB and the beginning of Dame Agatha Christie Trail where it meets Church Road looking south-east over the site in the middle ground



Photo 2: View from St Mary's Churchyard by entrance gate with site in the centre ground with the Chiltern hills on the horizon in the distance



Photo 3: View from existing access next to 8 Church Road looking north over the site



Photo 4: View from Dame Agatha Christie Trail and the AONB looking south-west to the site in the middle ground. Cholsey and Wallingford heritage railway line in the foreground

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

### **1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/High**

- open views from AONB
- views from listed buildings and their settings
- open view from heritage railway line
- views from popular routes including the Cholsey and Wallingford heritage railway and Dame Agatha Christie Trail
- landscape planting may mitigate the visual intrusion in time but could also obscure views to and from the AONB

### **2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- agricultural pasture
- well established hedgerows, with trees in particular separating the site from the main part of the village
- part of the series of small pasture fields which surround the village and are typical of the semi-enclosed rolling downs rural character
- within wider rural setting of listed buildings
- relatively tranquil except for local traffic. Train trips only at weekend and bank holidays
- contributes to rural character of Manor Farm and Parish Church of St Mary group of buildings

### **3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium/High (combines 1 and 2)**

### **4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/High**

- strong landscape and visual links to the surrounding landscape and the AONB
- minor influence of the adjacent school and pair of cottages

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

### **6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- immediate setting of the AONB
- wider setting of several listed buildings

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

### **Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- the site adjoins the school and a pair of cottages in Cholsey
- the site is separated from the remainder of the village by a strong mature established tree and hedge line
- the site forms part of the rural setting of the separate historic rural group of buildings at Manor Farm and the Parish Church of St Mary

### **Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- strong visual links with the AONB to the north-west
- shares common landscape characteristics with the semi-enclosed area of the AONB
- part of the pattern of smaller semi-enclosed areas of pasture which form the northern rural setting of Cholsey

### **Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- loss of pasture
- urbanisation of setting of boundary vegetation
- loss of open landscape character important to the setting of the AONB and the separate historic rural group of buildings at Manor Farm and the Parish Church of St Mary

### **Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- visual impact on the setting of AONB and listed buildings
- visual impact on Dame Agatha Christie Trail in its final approach to Agatha Christie's grave at the Parish Church of St Mary
- visual impact on travellers on the heritage railway

### **Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- development would result in extensive expansion of modern Cholsey north-west of its current well-defined boundary
- perception of merging the very distinct separate historic rural group of buildings at Manor Farm and the Parish Church of St Mary with the modern development

### **Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- erosion of the rural semi-enclosed pastoral setting to the AONB
- development would impact on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB and also result in the loss of long distant views to the Chiltern AONB from particularly sensitive receptors (the church and trail)

### **Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure**

- additional tree planting on the north-western boundary could help screen the development but also result in the loss of open views over the site to the AONB hills

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Although the landscape capacity is found to be medium / low, it is not recommended that any of this site is allocated for development. Even a small area of modern housing would affect both landscape and visual sensitive receptors and would result in harm to the natural beauty and special qualities of the immediate setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB and to the rural ambiance of the separate historic rural group of buildings at Manor Farm and the Parish Church of St Mary



## Site: Cholsey CHOL6

Site map:

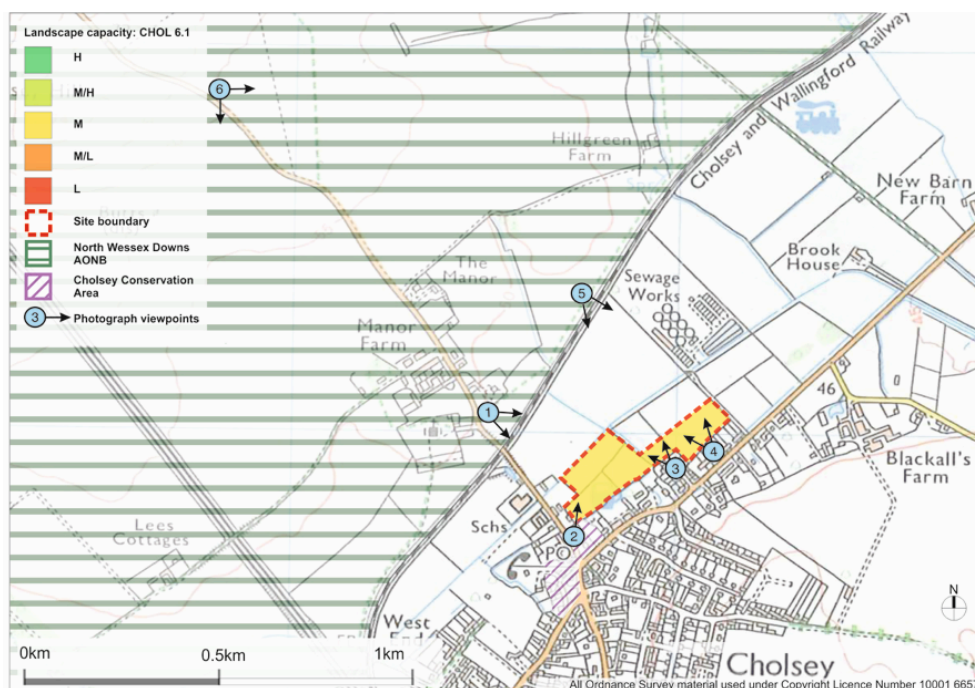


Figure CHOL 6.1: – Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### Site description:

CHOL 6 is a series of small fields under pasture totalling approx. 4.9 ha in size. These run roughly west to east to the immediate north of the houses along Wallingford Road and to the east of some houses in Church Road. The western part is more enclosed and is sub-divided into three fields to the south of CHOL 5, separated by a strong established mature tree and hedge line along a stream. These three fields are bounded by mature tree lines and hedgerows with hedgerow trees. The eastern part is the southern section of two fields used for sheep grazing, separated by the remains of a hedgerow. This area is more open with no boundary feature along its northern boundary. The southern edge of CHOL 6 abuts the rear gardens of the houses on Wallingford Road and Church Road and for a short stretch abuts the Conservation Area north of 1 Wallingford Road. These rear garden boundaries are a mix of trees and shrubs and fences. Access to see into the site is limited but possible from residential properties (one visited) and the short spurs leading off Wallingford Road. Open fields, of a similar character along the northern edge of the village, extend to the east of the site and west beyond the school grounds. The eastern boundary abuts the track to the sewerage farm and is defined by a hedgerow.

### Key landscape planning factors:

CHOL 6 forms the immediate setting of a short stretch of the Conservation Area and is also within the wider setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB to the north.

Photographs:



Photo 1: View from beginning of Dame Agatha Christie Trail adjacent to Church Road looking across CHOL 5 to the trees and hedgeline north of the western part of the site



Photo 2: View from private house (with permission of the owner) over the south-western part of the site



Photo 3: View over the centre of the site (western part) from the end of Goldfinch Lane





Photo 4: View from track between houses on Wallingford Road looking over eastern part of the site. Houses in Goldfinch Lane to the left of picture



Photo 5: View from Dame Agatha Christie Trail looking south to hedgeline north of the site in the distance and to the settlement edge south of the site. Sewerage farm to the left of the photograph



Photo 6: View from the higher ground of Church Road within the AONB looking to the site just north of the settlement. Chiltern AONB hills on the skyline. The buildings at The Manor and Manor Farm are closest to the view

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

**1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- views from the wider landscape and AONB – partly filtered and screened by tree and hedgerows (more open in the eastern part where the village is more visible)
- local views from adjacent residential properties including two listed buildings and part of the Conservation Area
- generally visually enclosed by existing houses and mature vegetation
- views from popular routes including the Cholsey and Wallingford heritage railway and Dame Agatha Christie Trail
- potential for screen planting in keeping with the landscape character and vegetation pattern

**2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- strong landscape pattern of small pasture fields divided and enclosed by mature hedgerows and tree lines
- part of series of small fields forming the wider setting of the Conservation Area
- landscape setting of two listed buildings
- relatively quiet as set back from the road network
- adjacent existing houses are more exposed in the eastern part of the site

**3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)**

**4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- the eastern part of the site is quite heavily influenced by the adjacent houses
- the western part is separated from the village by a mature tree line
- both areas share the key characteristics of the rural semi-enclosed rolling downs landscape which forms the hinterland to the village
- some visual separation from the wider landscape as a result of linear tree belts and hedgerows

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

**6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- setting of the Conservation Area and two listed buildings
- within wider landscape and visual setting of the AONB

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

**Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- site backs onto houses (including listed buildings) along Wallingford Road to the south and Church Road to the west
- the site forms part of the pastoral setting to the village
- trees and hedgerows around and within the site are important to containing and screening the village and maintaining its townscape/landscape character

### **Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- the site forms part of the series of small enclosed pasture fields which are typical of the semi-enclosed rolling downs which extend into the AONB
- the site forms the landscape interface between the open rolling downs within the AONB and the village itself

### **Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- loss of valued pastureland
- loss or risk of damage to important mature trees
- loss of part of the small scale pasture landscape with hedged boundaries which contains the village
- urbanisation of the landscape setting of the listed buildings and a small part of the Conservation Area

### **Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- visual intrusion in views from the AONB, Dame Agatha Christie Trail and Cholsey and Wallingford heritage railway line, especially from development on the eastern part of the site
- impact on the views from the listed buildings and their curtilages
- loss of layers of screening provided by boundary and internal tree and hedgelines

### **Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- development could be extensive backland development in part of the village mainly characterised by a linear built form
- development could merge the village with the sewerage farm
- risk of over expansion beyond the current village envelope

### **Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- provided the mature tree belts and hedgerows are retained and enhanced along the northern boundaries of the site, development on the site should not result in a significant change to the setting of the AONB
- the built form of any development should be typical of the adjacent housing to prevent any urbanisation of the setting of the AONB
- there would be a need to provide substantial provision of Green Infrastructure to retain important on site features, to integrate the development into the landscape and avoid increasing the visual exposure of the village

### **Conclusion and Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure**

A 'reduced area' as shown in Figure CHOL 6.2 could be suitable for some development on landscape and visual grounds provided the following green infrastructure is protected, enhanced and included as part of the open space provision:

- conserve and enhance the remaining small pasture fields in and to the north of the site to secure retention of the pastoral setting to the village
- the north-western field has the potential to provide informal open space and sustainable drainage system (SUDS) designed to reflect the rural character of the area
- additional open space in the most south-westerly part of the site would contribute to retaining the landscape setting of the Conservation Area and the listed buildings
- retain all healthy tree cover around and within the site

- retain all hedgerows within the boundaries and internal hedgerows as far as possible
- layout to reflect the existing pattern of separate parcels of land
- retain and protect the immediate pasture setting to the listed buildings and Conservation Area
- layers of new tree belts to be provided as shown in Figure CHOL6.2 to reinforce the treed edge of the village
- a landscape buffer of native trees and under-storey planting to be included east of the track to the sewerage farm to provide a strong landscape edge to the village and screen the sewerage farm
- major area of Green Infrastructure to serve this part of the village to the north-west of the reduced developable area as shown in Figure 6.2 to contribute to the objectives of the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Cholsey

### Potential capacity of site

It is recommended that the 'reduced area' of the site approx. 2.6 ha as shown in Figure CHOL 6.2 be considered further for housing. The reduced area has been designed to reflect the settlement pattern; to reduce the scale of the impact of the development on the village; and to minimise the visual impact on the North Wessex Downs AONB, the Conservation Area and the listed buildings. It would also enable the creation of a substantive open space/landscape buffer which would help mitigate the impact on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB. The development should be broken up with Green Infrastructure corridors which retain the internal hedgelines and internal tree cover. The preferred access, from a landscape point of view, is shown on Figure CHOL6.2 from Goldfinch Lane. A secondary access off Church Road may also be feasible provided the tree cover is fully protected. At a nominal density of 25 dph, 65 dwellings might be accommodated on site CHOL 6. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

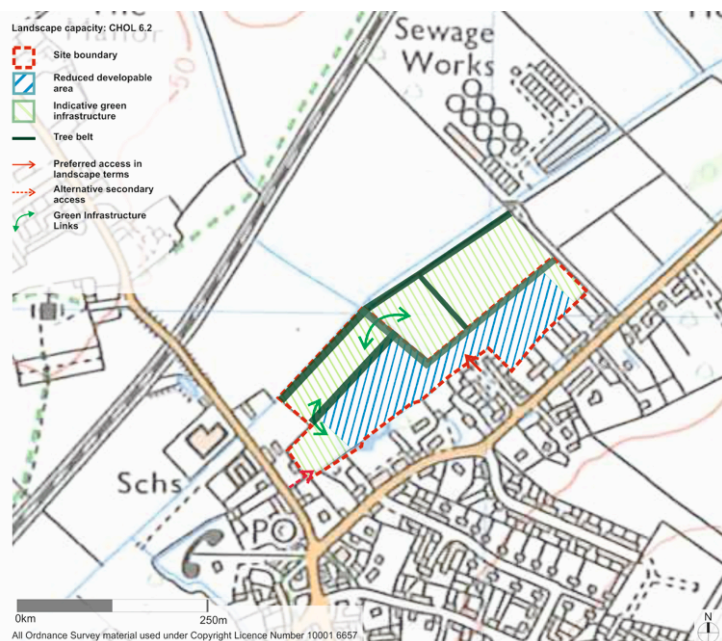


Figure CHOL 6.2: Recommended site area and Green Infrastructure



## Site: Cholsey CHOL7

Site map:

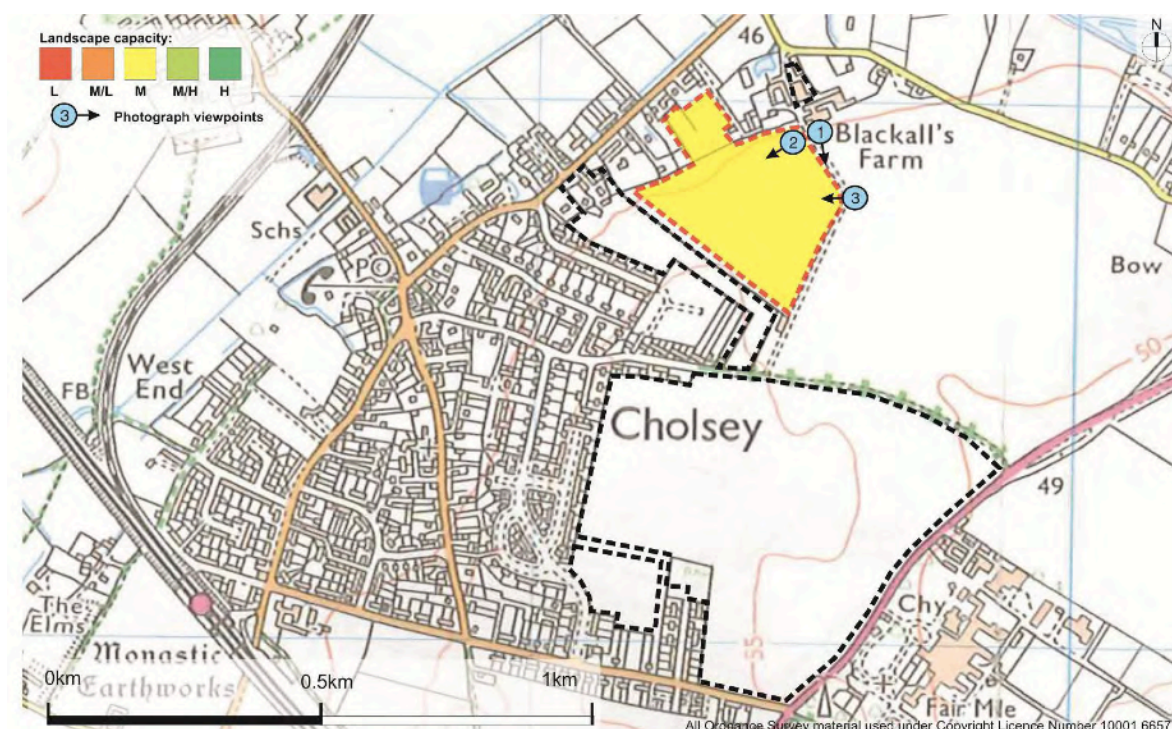


Figure CHOL 7.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment:

The site lies within LCA 7 Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes/LCT open rolling downs for which the key requirements are:

- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting
- within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside the unspoilt, rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements

## **AONB Guidelines and Special Qualities**

The North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Area 5D Moreton Plain lies some 500m from the northern boundary of CHOL7 and hence the site has the potential to affect the character of this area. Moreton Plain is a transitional landscape between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay Vale to the north. Consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the AONB boundary on both the character of the AONB and in views from the higher ground. Key management requirements of relevance are to conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character of the Moreton Plain, which provides a transition between the chalk uplands and the clay vale.

The Chilterns AONB lies 1km to the east of CHOL7 with views to Cholsey from the elevated A4074 Port Way area. The descent of hills down from higher ground to the Thames (east of Cholsey) is a key feature of the Chilterns. The following policies apply: D6: Where new housing development is proposed this should only be permitted if its scale, massing and density reflect the local context and have regard to the special qualities of the AONB; and D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

### **Site Description:**

CHOL 7 is a considerably smaller open field of 8.8 ha. The site is largely in arable use with a small area of woodland scrub extending north-west towards Wallingford Road between houses along this road (Natural or Semi-Natural Greenspace); an orchard in the north-west corner; and a nature reserve which runs along the southern edge of the houses on Wallingford Road. These areas are separated from the arable land by a hedgerow. The eastern and south-eastern boundaries of CHOL7 are defined by a concrete private track (well used for walking by the local community) leading from Blackalls Farm to Ilges Lane. This track is open to the arable land on the site but separated from the open landscape to the east by a well maintained hedge linking Blackall's Farm and Ilges Lane. The south-western boundary is shared with CHOL1 and includes a prominent short belt of mature trees at the southern end and an open boundary to the remainder. CHOL1 is included as a potential allocated housing site in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

The site lies above the Thames Valley floor to the east, on land gently sloping to the north-east from 55m AOD on the south of the site falling to 50m along the north-western boundary forming a flatter area close to the village before the land outside of the site drops away to the river Thames.

The site has village built form to the north, south and west, but there is an absence of detracting features on the site. There are no footpaths across the site.

### **Site context:**

The north-eastern part of the site adjoins the farm sheds of Blackalls Farm and Blackalls Farmhouse, a Grade II listed building. The grounds of the Grade II listed Red Cow Cottage and The Willows also abut the north-western boundary of the site.

The Chilterns AONB lies 1300m to the east of the site and the North Wessex Downs AONB 700m to the west. To the east the Thames river floor runs at around 45m AOD beyond which the land rises up to the undulating lower Chilterns AONB hills to the east at around 90m AOD. The valley

floor is fairly well wooded with hedgerows which limit the views from lower ground. This contrasts with the distinctive openness of the large scale arable Chilterns landscape to the east, with a back cloth of wooded higher ground beyond.

Much of the site shares the characteristics of the open arable rolling downs but it is separated from the wider open landscape by the hedgerow to the eastern boundary. The small areas of orchard, pasture and woodland scrub are an important part of the village edge matrix whilst the open land contributes to the open setting of the village. However the site is contained on three sides by the existing village built form. Only a small part of this site extends further east than the existing built form on Ilges Lane and Wallingford Road.

Caps Lane lies to the north-east but this retains a rural character with a few houses interspersed with open land.

## **Views to and from the site**

CHOL7 is visible from residential properties around the site with views over the site to the Chilterns hills. From Caps Lane there are views over the hedgerow to the mature trees on the southern boundary and the village houses. Views from Reading Road are limited by the landform, distance and vegetation along Reading Road. Views from Wallingford Road are screened by the houses and tree cover; and from Ilges Lane by the existing built form. The listed properties can be seen from the site but most views to the Chilterns AONB are screened by the hedgerow. Views to the North Wessex Downs AONB are largely screened by surrounding housing and vegetation.

However there are open views from the A4074 Port Way and a footpath leading west from a high point at 90m AOD. At this point the Chilterns are very open, with panoramic views over Cholsey to the North Wessex Downs AONB. The site is visible on the upper ground, with the settlement forming the horizon behind. The views are particularly attractive and relatively free of development. Cholsey sits on the lower slopes of the North Wessex Downs hills above the Thames, with the Fairmile development being the most prominent built form element.

## **2014 recommendations**

As can be seen in Appendix B, the site also has a medium capacity for development. The developable area was limited to less than half of the site to closely relate to the proposed allocation of CHOL1; to avoid development on the orchard, nature reserve or woodland scrub area; to protect the setting of the listed buildings; and to leave an area of open land on the eastern most exposed part of the site. The reasons for this are set out in Appendix B. Green Infrastructure was recommended beyond the recommended developable area.

## **Key landscape character attributes**

The site is more diverse than CHOL2 and includes specific areas that should be protected in their own right: the orchard, nature reserve and the area of woodland scrub. This more or less excludes the north-western part of the site. Further protection of the rural landscape setting of the three listed buildings and of the rural character of Caps Lane is also important requiring a landscape buffer to the north and eastern boundaries. The openness of the site however makes a lesser contribution to the open setting of the village than CHOL2. With the potential development of CHOL1, the settlement edge would become slightly more prominent in this location.

## Key visual attributes

The key viewpoints are as follows:

1. The site is exposed to a stretch of Port Way and the adjacent footpath leading west;
2. Open views from Caps Lane;
3. Views from the footpath linking Ilges Lane to Reading Road;
4. Several houses have views to the site.

Within this context, the 2014 Landscape Capacity Study recommended a developable area (see Figure CHOL7.2) which would have had a visual effect on these houses but reduced the impact on the other sensitive visual receptors. The limit of developable area in 2014 retained the built form on the higher ground where it would visually relate to the existing settlement, whilst protecting the key landscape receptors.

## Review overview

The site is much smaller than CHOL2 and would provide for an area of development which would be commensurate with the village pattern. However the north-western part of the site should remain undeveloped to protect the existing village landscape and the setting of historic assets. As an alternative to retaining an area of open land to the east, the eastern boundary could be reinforced with woodland belt planting. The open eastern rolling down setting of the village will be maintained by retention of the land to the east down to the Reading Road and across to Caps Lane as agricultural land.

## Potential for mitigation

The boundary tree belts and hedgerows can be substantially retained. The value of tree lines on the higher plateau in mitigating the impact of the settlement on the wider countryside is demonstrated by the tree line north of the Veterinary complex. This feature could be extended along the eastern boundary to soften and then screen the development at CHOL7, the existing settlement and potential development at CHOL1. Hedgerow tree planting is recommended along the existing hedgerow with a 15m belt of native large trees such as oak or wild cherry to the west of the track. Housing should be set back from this belt to create a soft open space edge.

## Recommendations

A slight amendment as shown in Figure CHOL7.7A would increase the capacity of the site without resulting in substantive harm, subject to the above landscape constraints and mitigation.

It is recommended that the revised 'reduced area' of the site (3.6ha) as shown in Figure CHOL7.2A be considered further for housing. The reduced area is still designed to retain the new nature reserve and area of pasture and scrub and to create a substantive landscape buffer to views from the Chilterns AONB. This edge of settlement site would benefit from lower densities to enable the provision of generous open space, tree planting and gardens within the development area and a sizeable area of open space on the eastern edge to respect and protect the rural character of the settlement along Wallingford Road and Caps Lane. The preferred access is from CHOL1. Access through CHOL8 would affect the semi-rural character of Blackall's Farm and its setting. An alternative access from Wallingford Road through the area of pasture and scrub would have an adverse impact on this landscape asset and urbanise this section of Wallingford Road. A

full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

### **Key Landscape Planning Factors:**

CHOL7 is not within either of the AONBs but falls within the settings of the Chilterns AONB to the south and further to the east of the site; and the North Wessex Downs AONB to the west of the site. It also forms part of the wider setting of the Grade II listed Blackall's Farm.

Photographs:



Photo 1: View from track between Blackall's Farm and Ilges Lane looking south-east with the site to the right of the track



Photo 2: View from track between Blackall's Farm and Ilges Lane looking north-west over the site to the hedged off xx and properties along Wallingford Road





Photo 3: View from track between Blackall's Farm and Ilges Lane looking west over the site to the centre of Cholsey with the hills of the North Wessex Downs beyond

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

#### **1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium**

- long distance views from the Chilterns AONB
- some local views
- screening by dense hedgerow along track and tree cover along northern boundary
- potential for tree and woodland planting
- loss of openness

#### **2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- arable land
- land in use as new nature reserve and as pasture/scrub
- landscape setting to Grade II listed building
- relatively quiet and dark landscape
- open unified downland

#### **3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium (combines 1 and 2)**

#### **4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- site is typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type which extends to north-east and south-west of the site
- some separation as a result of well-maintained hedgerow separating the site from the wider landscape
- adjacent settlement is softened by tree planting although more exposed edge to the west is visible across the site

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

#### **6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- setting of Chilterns AONB
- setting of listed building

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



**Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- housing forms the skyline to the site
- site relates well to the lower density and semi-rural part of Cholsey at the east end of Wallingford Road
- western part is more heavily influenced by the exposed edge of the village

**Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- some separation from the wider open rolling down by the neat well maintained hedgerow
- typical of the LCA 7 open rolling downs landscape type
- part of the open hillside landscape

**Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- loss of area of pasture and scrub
- loss of new nature reserve
- loss of openness along the hillside
- loss of open setting to the listed building

**Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- loss of open views across the site
- increase in visual impact of Cholsey on the downs in views from the Chilterns AONB Potential impact on key settlement characteristics
- western part of the site relates well to existing built form
- potential to erode the semi-rural character of the east end of Wallingford Road
- whole site would extend the built form away from the village plateau and down the open slopes

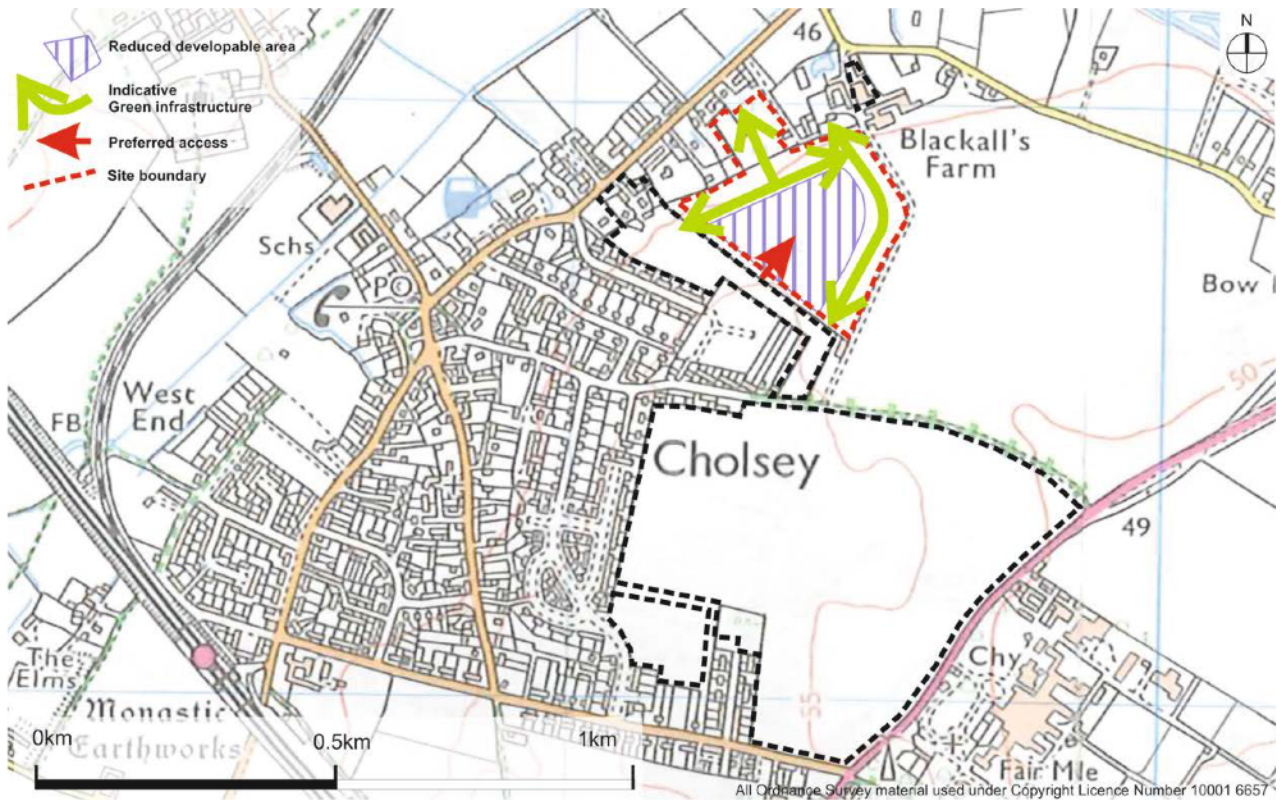


Figure CHOL 7.2: Recommended site area and Green Infrastructure

## Site: Cholsey CHOL8

Site map:

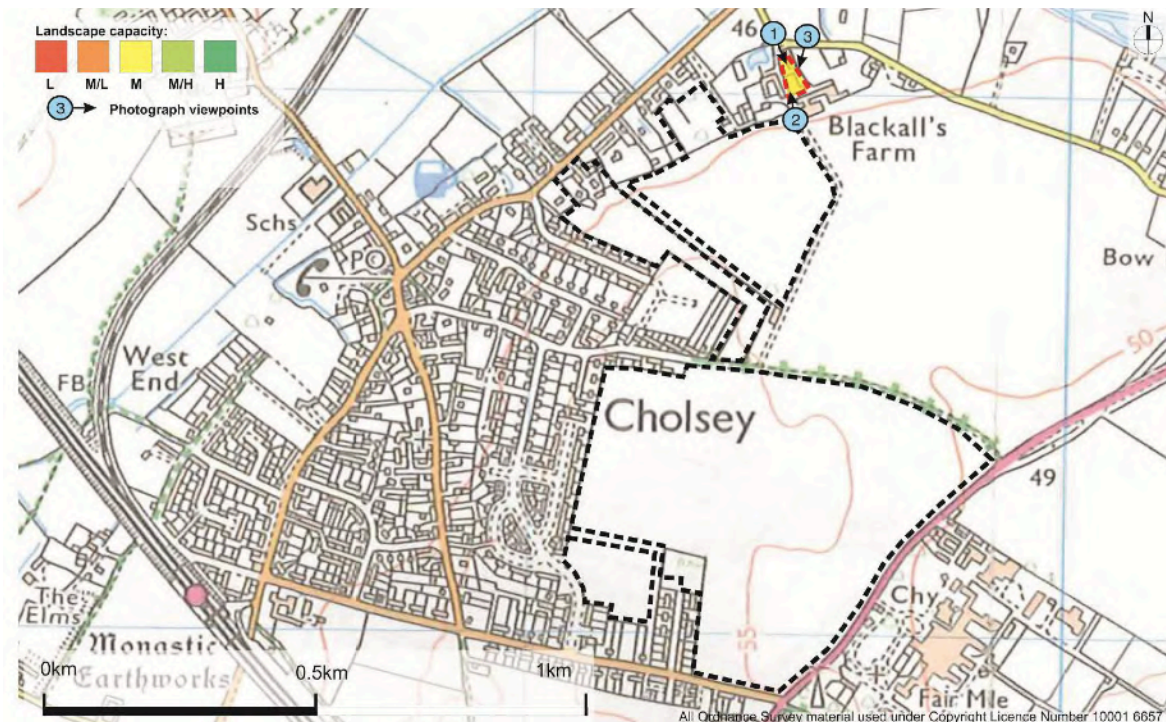


Figure CHOL 8.1: Landscape capacity and location of photographic viewpoints

### South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment:

The site lies within LCA 7 Wessex Downs and Western Vale Fringes/LCT Semi-enclosed rolling downs for which the key requirements are:

- retain important open views from the chalk downland and greensand hills but encourage some replacement of hedgerows and woodland planting within the 'open rolling downs' landscapes (to replicate the semi-wooded patchwork character of other downland areas)
- encourage better maintenance of field boundaries and discourage further hedgerow removal and replacement by fencing
- improve landscape structure and land management on the fringes of built areas and along main roads to mitigate adverse impacts on the surrounding countryside the unspoilt, rural landscapes of the Wessex Downs, Sinodun Hills, floodplain pastures and parkland/estate landscapes are particularly sensitive to change and therefore less able to accommodate new development
- development within visually exposed landscapes such as the denuded arable downs and the open flat farmland of the floodplain, will be highly prominent
- landscapes with strong landform and a mature structure of woods and hedgerows may be more able to absorb small-scale development, as long as it is in character with the locality, carefully sited and well-integrated
- landscapes on the fringes of settlements are particularly vulnerable to change and special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape 'edges' to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside and to prevent the coalescence of settlements

## AONB Guidelines and Special Qualities

The North Wessex Downs AONB Landscape Character Area 5D Moreton Plain lies some 500m from the northern boundary of CHOL8 and hence the site has the potential to affect the character of this area. Moreton Plain is a transitional landscape between the chalk uplands to the south and the clay vale to the north. Consideration should be given to the impact of new development on the AONB boundary on both the character of the AONB and in views from the higher ground. Key management requirements of relevance are to conserve and enhance the rural agricultural character of the Moreton Plain, which provides a transition between the chalk uplands and the clay vale.

The Chilterns AONB lies 1km to the east of CHOL1 with views to Cholsey from the elevated A4074 Port Way area. The descent of hills down from higher ground to the Thames (east of Cholsey) is a key feature of the Chilterns. The following policies apply: D6: Where new housing development is proposed this should only be permitted if its scale, massing and density reflect the local context and have regard to the special qualities of the AONB; and D9: Full account should be taken of the likely impacts of developments on the setting of the AONB.

### Site description:

CHOL8 is an agricultural site of old barns comprising 0.48 ha. The site includes some barns used for storage and hardstandings.

### Key Landscape Planning Factors:

CHOL8 is not within either of the AONBs but sits between 1.0 and 1.5km of the North Wessex Downs to the west and Chilterns to the south. It is separated from the Chilterns by the existing built form of the village but the North Wessex Downs lie beyond a landscape of open and semi-open rolling downs. Blackall's Farm, a Grade II listed building, lies to the immediate west of the site.

Photographs:



Photo 1: Buildings facing onto bend in Caps Lane





Photo 2: View of site from track adjacent to Blackhall's Farm (to the left)



Photo 3: View from north-west on Caps Lane showing barns and line of willow

Please refer to section 3 methodology of the assessment process

#### **1. Visual Sensitivity: Medium/Low**

- some views from adjacent roads and tracks
- well used by the local community
- landscape mitigation would be in keeping and enhance the settlement edge

#### **2. Landscape Sensitivity: Medium**

- agricultural buildings
- good historical interest and surviving historic line of trees
- enclosed site
- adjacent intrusive modern silage barn
- dark edge of village

#### **3. Landscape Character Sensitivity: Medium/Low (combines 1 and 2)**

#### **4. Wider Landscape Sensitivity: Medium/High**

- good rural character to the built form on site and adjacent
- although contrasts with character of adjacent down field pattern, the setting of the site is typical of the surviving historic pattern along Caps Lane



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

- setting of adjacent Grade II listed building
- consideration given to location between two AONBs

## **6. Landscape Value: Medium**

- setting of Chilterns AONB

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

### **Relationship of site to Cholsey**

- site is brownfield
- site fronts onto a rural lane at the extreme end of the village
- adjacent buildings are large properties with large grounds and a semi-rural character

### **Relationship with adjacent wider countryside**

- typical of historic pattern along Caps Lane
- contrast with open downs
- low inter-visibility with the surrounding landscape

### **Potential impact on key landscape characteristics**

- none

### **Potential impact on key visual characteristics**

- localised visual impact on minor road and track

### **Potential impact on key settlement characteristics**

- care needed to be taken that any development does not 'urbanise' this part of Cholsey

### **Potential impact on the setting of the AONBs**

- a tall roofscape may be visible from either AONB which only lie 1.0 to 1.5km away

### **Landscape mitigation and contribution to green infrastructure - including those identified in the South Oxfordshire Green infrastructure Strategy (SOGIS)**

- additional tree planting on the boundaries would help integrate development

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

- the whole site is considered suitable for housing subject to major constraints
- protection and enhancement of the setting of the Grade II listed Blackall's Farm
- retention and enhancement of the historic line of trees
- retention of the semi-rural character of this edge of Cholsey
- retain other vegetation on the boundaries and ensure the site entrances are in keeping with the character of the village and local landscape
- preferred access is from Caps Lane and should be designed to retain the rural character of the lane

### Potential capacity of site

It is recommended that the whole of the site be considered further for housing. The impact of housing should be mitigated through very careful design to complement the Grade II listed building and ancillary buildings at Blackall's Farm. Additional tree planting along the north-eastern boundary and to the south-east boundary with the open fields would be required to retain and enhance the historic rural character of the edge of the village.

The preferred access is from Caps Lane, whilst retaining the rural and historic character of the entrance. At a nominal density of 25 dph, 15 dwellings might be accommodated on site CHOL 8. However given the above constraints, a much lower number is likely to be appropriate. A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final capacity of the site.

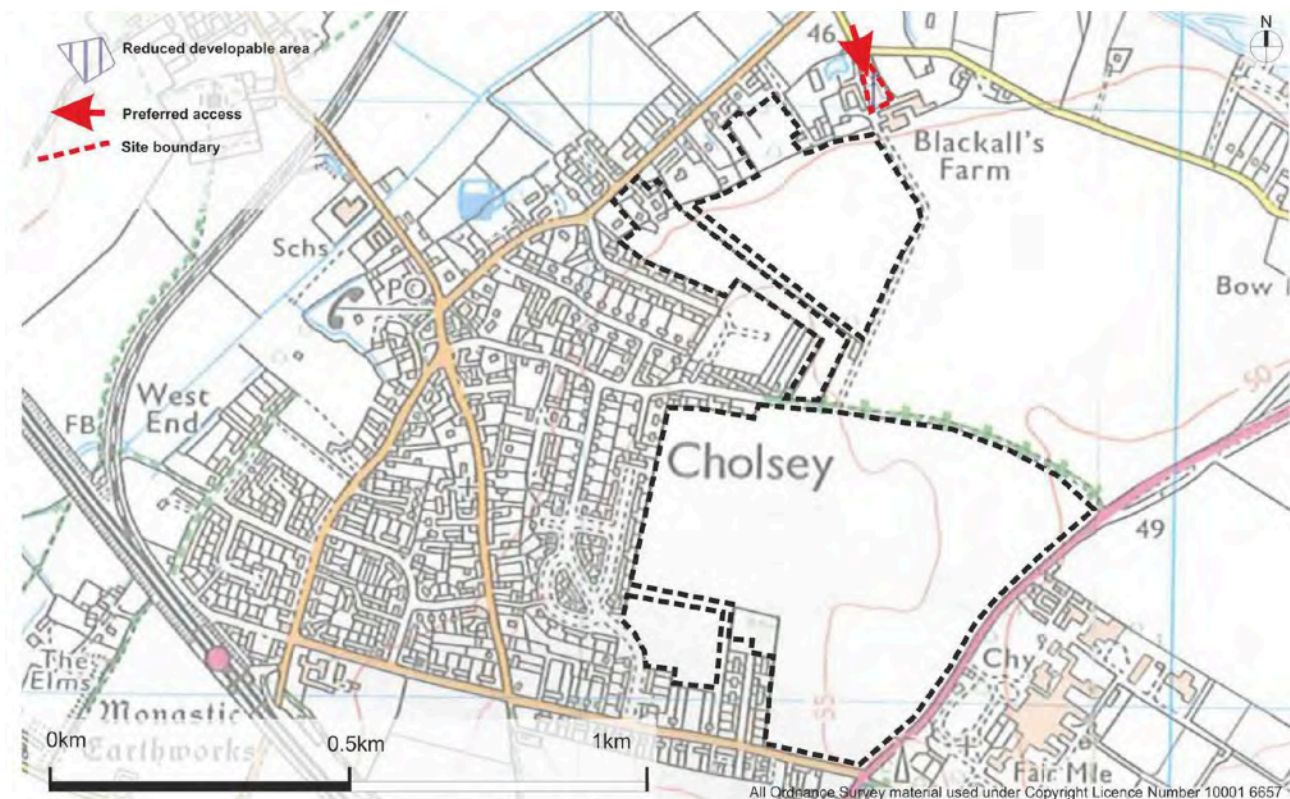


Figure CHOL 8.2: Recommended site area and Green Infrastructure

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If you wish to raise any queries regarding this document or what it includes, please contact the Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan Team using the details below:

Email: [info@cholsey-plan.com](mailto:info@cholsey-plan.com)

Phone: 01491 652255 (Cholsey Parish Council)

If you would like to make a complaint please write to:

The Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan Team

Cholsey Parish Council, 31 Station Road, Cholsey, Wallingford OX10 9PT