

Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Plan 2014 - 2031 Part 2. Design Statement



**Great Coxwell Parish Council
November 2014**

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Sections 1 to 4



Introduction
Boundaries of the Area
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Area and Landscape Setting



Introduction

Why a Neighbourhood Design Statement?

1.1 This Neighbourhood Design Statement is the first to be written for the parish of Great Coxwell. It forms part of Great Coxwell's Neighbourhood Plan and is designed to support the Plan's vision for Great Coxwell by providing detailed planning policies arising from the evidence base for the Plan and a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Great Coxwell village. The Neighbourhood Design Statement is intended to be a useful and influential document, providing guidance for those wishing to carry out works in the parish.

What is a Neighbourhood Design Statement?

1.2 The Statement describes the parish of Great Coxwell as it is today and highlights the qualities which are valued by those who visit and live in the parish.

1.3 It sets down the character and qualities of the area to be retained and enhanced so that local knowledge and perceptions may contribute to the continuation of the high quality of its environment.

1.4 This is to ensure that further development and change is not prevented but is based on an understanding of the past and present which have contributed to the qualities of the parish, and that new schemes will add positively to its future.

1.5 The sources for this Design Statement are included in Appendix E of the Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Plan, 2031, coupled with studies of the house styles, building materials, hedgerows, wildflowers, etc., carried out locally.

Who is it for?

1.6 The neighbourhood will change with new housing developments but also with the smaller adjustments to homes, open spaces, and streets that may alter the appearance and texture of the area. Some of these changes will not be subject to planning control.

1.7 The statement is therefore for the use of: Statutory bodies such as The Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Water; Planners, Developers, Architects, Builders, Designers and Engineers; Local Community Groups; Residents of Great Coxwell and Residents and users of the surrounding area.

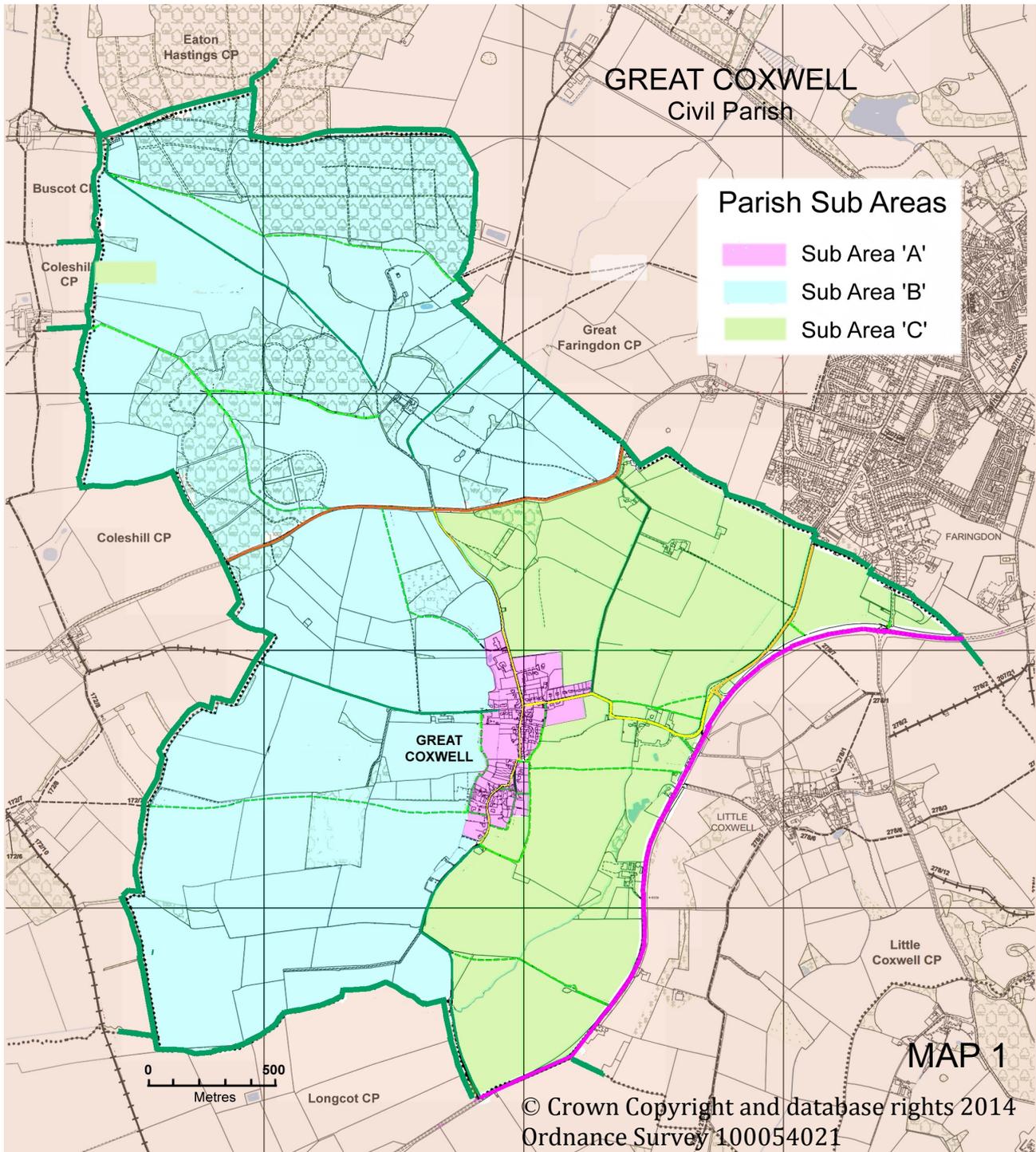
How to use it

1.8 Statements in plain text are a narrative of the characteristics of the environment to be found in Great Coxwell.

1.9 When new developments or alterations are considered in this area, plans should be sympathetic to the existing conditions described.

1.10 Sections printed in green relate to items that provide guidance to be used when considering planning applications and in other decisions affecting the parish. Many of these Policies reflect the saved policies in the Vale of White Horse District Development Plan 2031. The National Planning Policy (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance provide the national planning context.

1.11 Design that is based on the principles of urban planning is not appropriate in the rural environment of Great Coxwell Parish.



The Sub Areas shown in the map reflect the segmentation of the parish for the purposes of the Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Plan.

Boundaries of the Area

2.1 The Area is defined as the area of Great Coxwell Parish within its parish boundaries. This area received Area Designation for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan in 2013.

2.2 The parish is bounded by the A420 carriageway and the parish of Little Coxwell on the east, and by the parishes of Greater Faringdon on the north, Buscot, Eaton Hastings and Coleshill on the west, and Longcot on the south.

History

3.1 Badbury Clump. The hill fort known as Badbury Clump is Great Coxwell's earliest monument. In the centre of the parish at its highest point, it was created to oversee and protect a landscape of scattered Early/Mid Iron Age homesteads, at least one of which was situated at the ancient southern end of the village where Iron Age pottery has been found. The western Vale of the White Horse, the western end of the Berkshire Downs, upper Thames Valley and the Cotswolds can be seen from the fort, into which cattle and other livestock would have been driven in times of threat. The National Trust owns and manages Badbury Clump and the ancient woodland surrounding it to the south-west and north-west, with public access, information and footpaths.

3.2 The Cock Well. Great and Little Coxwell are mentioned separately in Domesday and had become divided by Late Saxon times, but in earlier Saxon times must have formed two parts of one manor called after the spring, probably one of the county's many holy wells, still to be seen south of Little Coxwell. The origin of the name is obscure and possibly British.

3.3 The Stream and Holloway. A (nameless) stream, a tributary of the River Cole, runs south from Badbury Clump. Where the hill slope flattens the village grew up on the east side of this stream. Parallel to it an ancient hollow way, still well-preserved, gave access by foot to the early village.

3.4 St Giles Church. The situation of the church of St Giles, on an outcrop of the Corallian ridge overlooking the western Vale and the Downs, suggests an early use of the site; perhaps there was an earlier, timber church here. The present church was built in the late 12th century and is little changed.

3.5 Earliest village and East Field. The (nameless) village street, the only village thoroughfare before modern times, narrows and curves around the Corallian outcrop below the church. This is the oldest preserved part of the village, with a village pump on a tiny green in front of one of the houses (please see the map opposite of Great Coxwell village, showing the boundary of the Conservation Area).

3.6 Great Barn and Court House. The Great Barn at the north end of the village is a Grade One listed scheduled monument of national importance. It was built in the 13th century to store the grain belonging to a thriving 13th-century estate that once supported Beaulieu Abbey in Hampshire. Many of the villagers would have worked in the grange's fields for the Cistercian monks.

3.7 The adjacent 16th-century (possibly medieval) and later Court House may incorporate remains of the medieval grange. The Barn was loved by William Morris, who brought his guests to wonder at the structure, calling it 'unapproachable in its dignity'.

3.8 Radnor Estate. The Coleshill Estate was the seat of the Earls of Radnor from the 18th century. The Coleshill and Buscot estates (7000 acres, with 11 let farms and 850 acres of woodland) were left to the National Trust in 1956 at the death of Ernest Cook, the last owner. The entire western half of the parish belongs to this estate, is farmed organically, is inalienable and is under the National Trust's conservation management.

3.9 The Chapel and Chapel House. 18th-century listed Chapel House on the east side of the village street is a reminder of the Nonconformist Chapel that once stood to its north.



This map shows the village green spaces and important vistas of the surrounding countryside.

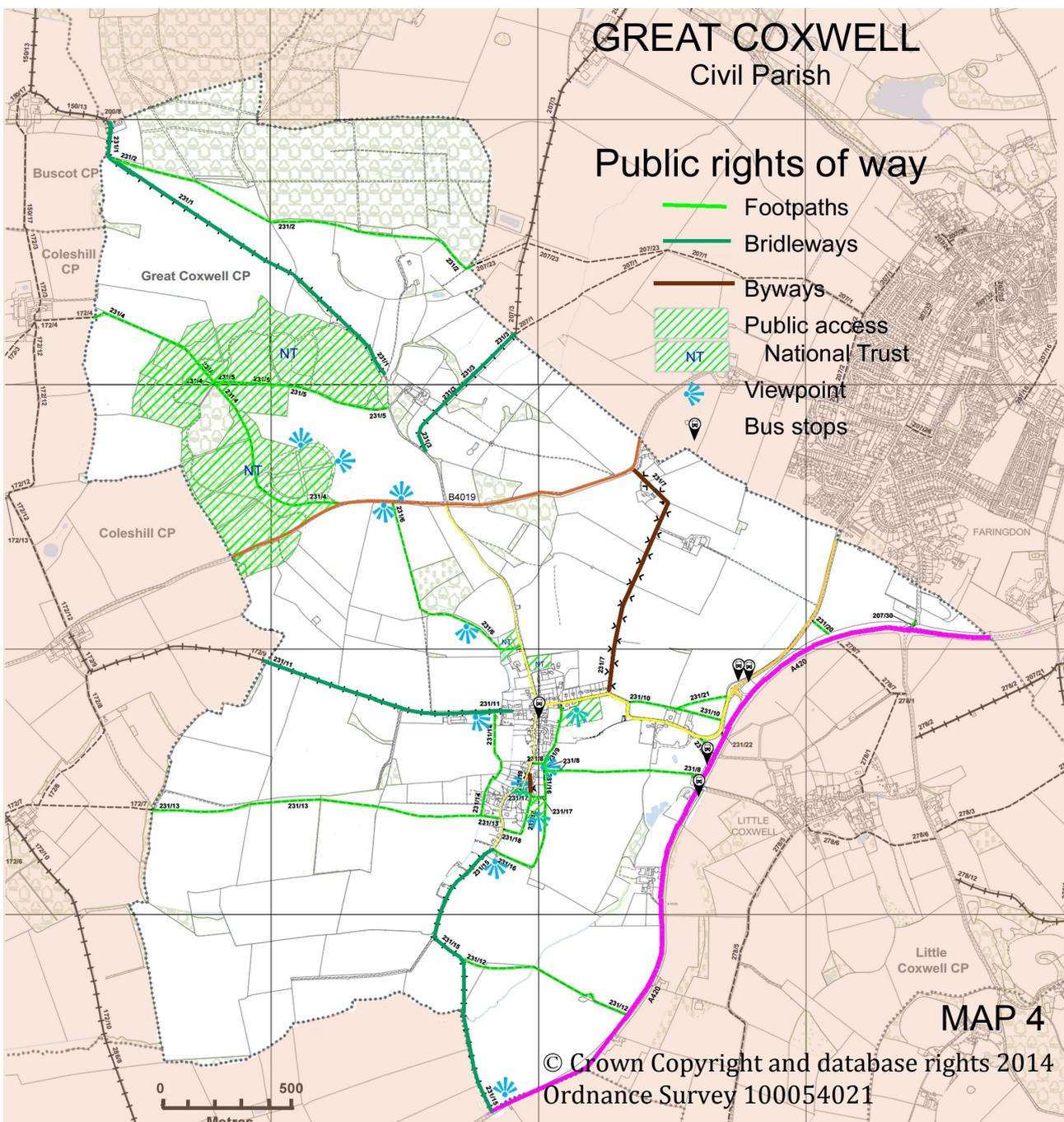
3.10 The Reading Room. The red-brick Reading Room of 1900 on the west side of the village street is one of several such survivals in Oxfordshire, small public buildings erected in villages by subscription or patronage (in this case donated by the Earl of Radnor) to provide a studious alternative to the public house for working men. It is the focus of village social life, hosting parish meetings, weekly coffee mornings, monthly village teas and lunches, WI meetings, children's workshops, parties, the Christmas Fair and the all-day village Café during Oxfordshire Art Weeks in May.

3.11 Great Coxwell Park. The Park was established ten years ago on the field to the south of Cherry Orchard. A large grassed open area bounded by hedges and trees, there are hard courts for basketball etc, a children's play area, picnic tables, wildflower areas, accessible paths and an information board.

Area and Landscape Setting

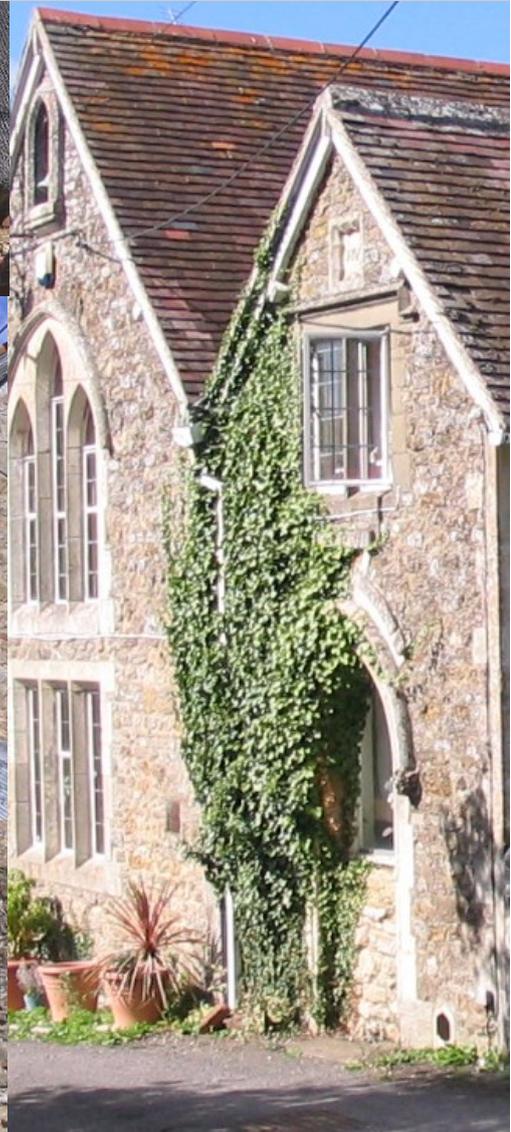
4.1 The parish and village of Great Coxwell straddle the mid-Vale Ridge of Corallian limestone, with a more elevated cap of greensand centrally on Badbury Clump (the same formation as on Folly Hill in Faringdon to the north-east). From the Clump the arable fields and pasture of the north, north-west and north-east portions of the parish descend towards the Thames Valley and Kelmscott to the north. To the south the ridge terminates with the church of St Giles situated on an elevated spur of the Corallian Ridge, with fields descending south and west to the western clay Vale.

4.2 Importantly, a large part of the village of Great Coxwell was designated as a Conservation Area in the 1980s (*map 3*).





**Section 5
Planning Policies**



Planning policies

Vistas

5.1 There are spectacular views (*maps 3 and 4*):

- of much of the parish to the north and south from the Ridge by the Clump and from the circular walk around the perimeter of the Clump especially to the north, east and south;
- of the ancient setting of village and church on its promontory from the southwest, where the A420 curves round the parish to the southeast, from above the Great Barn toward the Downs;
- of the Downs and White Horse from the churchyard looking across the east fields; down the winding village street, with houses huddled around the old green and the village pump;
- from Glebe House by the church;
- from the footpaths west of the village, with the village stream running through all the back gardens seen from the fields;
- from the Park south across the medieval village's East Field ('Siberia') towards the Downs;
- and from the field to the southwest of the village towards the Downs.

5.2 These views can be enjoyed from footpaths surrounding the village and leaving it to the north, west, south and east, as well as from its green spaces (the churchyard, the Park, and the fields to the east, west and north of the Barn).

5.3 Glimpses of these views can also be enjoyed from the village streets and lanes looking between the houses, and from many gardens.

Policy NDS1

Any development should have rooflines that do not impact adversely on the important vistas and glimpses (*map 3*).

These must be protected, particularly: panoramic or extensive views; glimpses between buildings and views towards and from the Great Barn.

Green Spaces

5.4 The parish is pre-eminently an area of green spaces. These are of two types: open grassed areas, and arable fields and pasture.

5.5 Open grassed areas are mainly in and around the village and in the eastern sector of the parish within easy walking distance of the village, and include:

- The Park, running along most of the south side of Cherry Orchard. This is a year-round outdoor resource, a field bordered by mature hedgerows with a children's play area and ball courts used by older children and teenagers, easily accessed by villagers on foot either from Cherry Orchard on the north or from Dark Lane, parallel to the main village street, on the west. It is popular with Faringdonians as well as being used by families with children from the farms outside the village, at

least one family making the journey by bicycle. The Park and its amenities are maintained by the community, the paths kept accessible for use by everyone. The Park is the only public outdoor open space in the village large enough for people to wander, play games or hold outdoor events in a natural environment.

- The open grassed area around the Great Barn includes a fishpond, probably of monastic origin, in meadowland, and grassy lawns on the other three sides of the Barn. Accessible to the public at all times, including the open shed on the opposite side of the drive, and parking spaces along the road for half a dozen cars by the low front stone wall (the Barn itself is open every day and night, while another smaller barn near the pond is normally locked but may be used by arrangement with the National Trust, the owner of the property). From beyond the pond a marked footpath with stile leads up the hill towards the Clump. This attractive open space is used frequently by visitors to the Barn for picnics, walks and resting, and as an outdoor adjunct to the Barn when there are concerts, parties or events inside. In recent years there have been a series of summertime musical events and celebrations which attracted villagers and visitors from further afield. Each Christmas period the Barn is open night and day for viewing a lit Nativity inside, and is the scene of a children's Christmas Eve carol service with a donkey procession.
- The Golf Course is a small but highly praised nine-hole course, open every day to paying customers, in a beautiful and well-maintained semi-natural environment with wetlands and water birds in the course. Wooded areas and streams with otter activity screen it from the A420. A public right of way through it gives the village direct pedestrian access to the bus-stop on the A420.
- The Riding Stables are situated in several fields along the north side of the road leading from Cherry Orchard out to the A420, and account for many of the horses and riders often to be encountered in the village, a much-loved feature.
- Land to the south of the village bordering the east bank of the stream. This series of small meadows, borders the pedestrian route and bridleway running south from the end of the village street, and is a haven for birds and wildlife.
- The parish allotments on the east side of the village street near the southern end of the village are managed by the parish council as small plots sub-let to local people.

5.6 Arable fields and pasture accessible by footpaths/bridleways surround the village and characterise the parish, making possible countryside walks in every direction. Notable are:

- 'Siberia', the large former East Field lying between the village and the Golf Course. This is farmed organically by the National Trust and is one of the best-loved local resorts for walking and dog walking, or just enjoying the poppies and the view of the Downs and White Horse.
- Pasture on the east side of the village street at the southern end of the village opposite Mory's and Horslees. A public right of way along the north side leads round behind the church and forms part of a complete circuit of the village; there is a wonderful view of the Uffington White Horse from this field.

- The L-shaped field on which horses are pastured, surrounding the Park to the south and east, with borders of mature hedges and trees. This field is an important natural link between 'Siberia' and the Park, both of which would be degraded were it to be built on.
- Steeds Farm. For many generations this farm north and north-east of the village has formed a green buffer between the village and developing Faringdon, and several public rights of way between Great Coxwell and Faringdon cross it. The farm comprises a number of fields, of which the most significant open areas from the parish's viewpoint are the field directly opposite the Great Barn, the retention of which as a natural open space is essential to the appropriate setting of the Barn, a medieval monument of national importance; the fields bounded by the former field on the north, Cherry Orchard on the south and Gypsy Lane on the east, without which open spaces the rural setting of the northeast sector of the village would be lost; and the field bounded by Oakfield to the south and Gypsy Lane to the west, plus the field adjacent to it to the east, without both of which the riding stables, an important rural feature of Great Coxwell as well as an important local business, would not be viable (please see Great Coxwell's Neighbourhood Plan document, Map 4 on page 10).
- All the farmland owned and managed by the National Trust, to the west of the village and comprising the whole western side of the parish. Much of this land is organically farmed and includes public amenities such as footpaths, bridleways and walks.

Policy NDS2

Open grassed areas presently enjoyed for recreation and for people to meet together should be retained and the rural character of their borders and settings retained and strengthened.

Wooded Areas and Trees

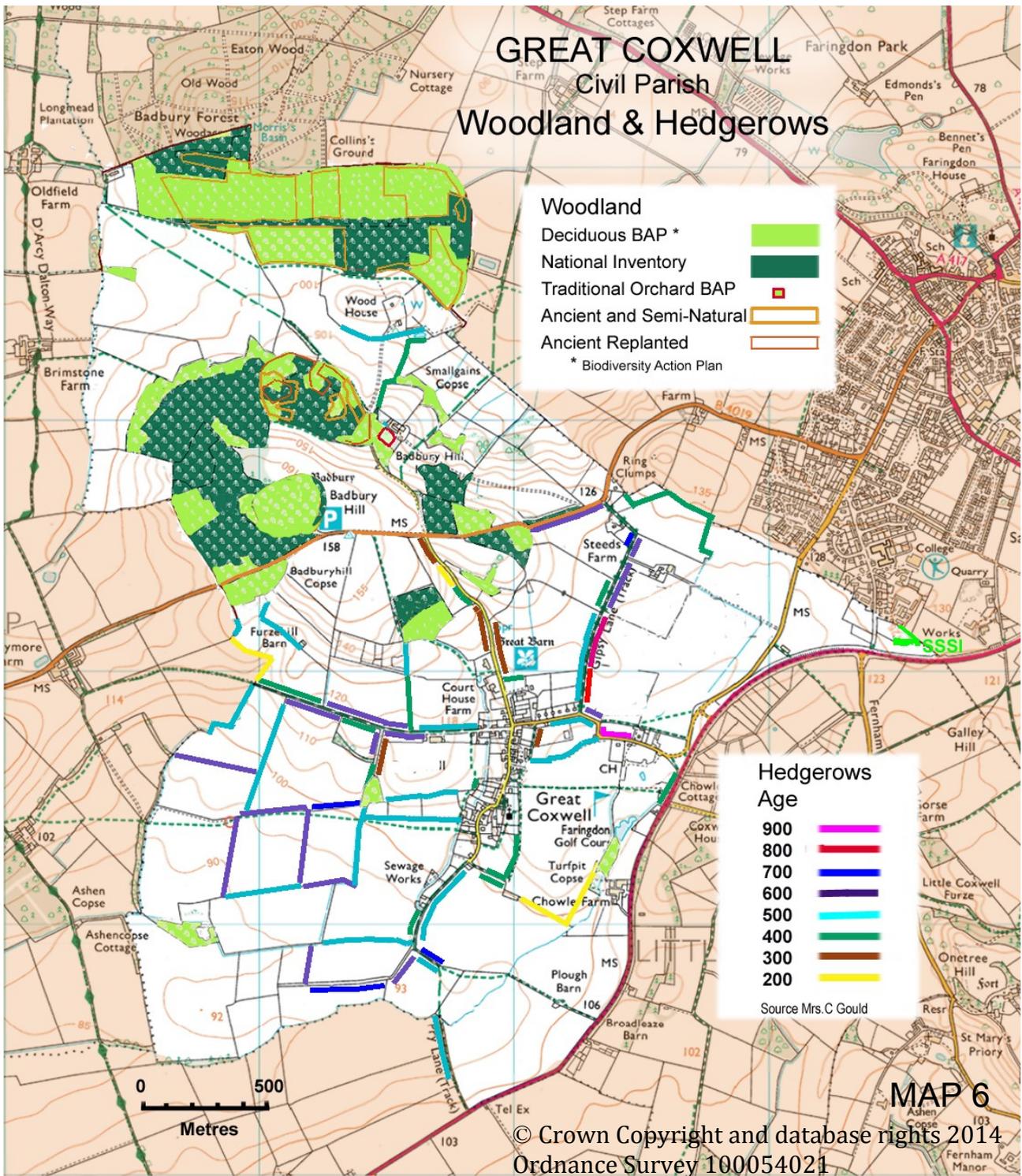
5.7 Wooded areas are an essential part of the neighbourhood, embedded historically in its rural economy and in its present-day farm management, enhancing the visual appeal of the parish, and providing visual privacy, a natural weather break and alleviating flooding and run-off. The extensive tree cover visible from all the vantage points depicted is recognised as contributing strongly to the ecology and landscape value of the parish.

5.8 Those wooded areas enjoyed throughout the year by significant numbers of people from the parish and beyond include:

- Badbury Clump, and its environs immediately to the west and north. The Clump, the site of an Early/Mid Iron Age hillfort whose circular interior, ditches and main entry are still easily detectable, became a beech plantation in the 18th century. The Bluebell carpet under the beech trees is specially mentioned in the National Trust's publicity and elsewhere and is visited nationally. The land where it falls away dramatically to the west and north is heavily forested comprising areas of ancient woodland (Map 6). The Clump and surrounding woodland are closely managed by the National Trust, which encourages visitors on foot by providing a large accessible car park and a network of footpaths, and visitors on bikes by

providing cycle routes.

- Wooded areas fringing the Golf Course and Riding Stables. These contain desirable wildlife, hedgerow fruits in season, provide shelter for the horses, privacy and windbreaks for the golfers and streams for otters.



5.9 Wooded areas that are enjoyed by users of parish footpaths are:

- Other large areas of woodland to north and west of the Clump (map 6) (Coxwell Wood, Oak Wood, Rowleaze Wood).

- Numerous other smaller copses and mature hedgerows as well as named smaller woodlands to the east (eg Smallgains Copse) and to the west (Fern Copse); small areas of woods and trees are an integral part of the farmscape in the west of the parish and are enjoyed on all three of the walking routes between Great Coxwell and Coleshill.

5.10 Wooded areas that can be enjoyed in or near the village include:

- Woods east of Hollow Way and south of the B4019. The rural character of the route across the parish from Faringdon and of the 'back' entry to Great Coxwell village would be degraded/lost were these woods to be lost to development.
- Wooded area opposite Court House. Because of its proximity to the Great Barn, this small field was purchased by the National Trust in 1991. It has been planted with native species and is accessible to pedestrians.
- Wooded areas fringing the fields and pastures, the disused former village road entry, the Golf Course and presently derelict dwelling houses along the western side of the A420 road present and safeguard the rural character of the parish. As one enters the parish of Great Coxwell from the north-east, the beauty of the landscape as seen from the A420 roadside would be greatly degraded and the existing high standard breached were these wooded areas to disappear.

St Giles Churchyard

5.11 The churchyard surrounding St Giles church forms an important open space for wildlife. The original (closed) churchyard is bounded by Corallian limestone walls on four sides, and the new churchyard extension to the south by hedgerows on three sides. The ecological survey of the eastern portion of the new churchyard (updating a management plan written in 2000) should guide the future management of this and other public green spaces in the Parish.

Policy NDS3

Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in loss or deterioration of the wooded areas throughout the parish unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in the location clearly outweigh the loss. This is to ensure continuity in the appearance and use of the historic landscape, to provide shelter for farm animals and horses, to afford a wind break and prevent flooding and run-off, to provide framed vistas, enhance the appearance of the neighbourhood and support ecological diversity.

Where new development is proposed, landscape schemes should include appropriate native tree and shrub species. Very fast-growing non-native species (eg *Leylandii*) should not be grown on small sites or in the proximity of a property boundary as they will quickly block out neighbours' light and outlook and spoil vistas. Substantial redevelopment of private property should, where feasible, be required to retain existing planting, or where not possible, to provide substitute planting equivalent in tree number and area covered.

Linear Spaces: footpaths, carriageway edges and verges

5.12 The streets in the village are characterised by soft banks and verges, intermittently mown. A low narrow footpath running along the west side of the village street from the crossroads southwards to Morys has almost as informal a look and feel as the grass verges opposite; it allows larger vehicles eg council waste collection vehicles to get through when cars are parked on the road. Another footpath runs from the crossing east down the north side of Cherry Orchard to the turn in the road, and two similar ones, one on each side, run a short distance north from the crossing.

5.13 The only street lighting is within the modern Laurels estate; this is subdued. There is minimal street furniture. The streets have very low levels of traffic and provide major access routes for pedestrians and cyclists. A special character and sense of place of the village is the use made of the streets as social areas, strengthening the sense of community. More pedestrians than cars use the main village street, which is like a wide pathway – a place where people casually chat, where children play and ride their bikes, where older people move at their own pace and where dogs are walked. These characteristics are much valued by both residents and visitors.

5.14 Two of the four streets leading from the crossing end in bridleways: well used footpaths connect the different parts of the village (the village can be circumnavigated by footpath (*map 3*)) and lead outwards into the parish in all directions forming a network of parish pedestrian routes.

5.15 The main footpaths in use around and from the village are:

- Paths circumnavigating the village from the main village crossing: starting at the crossing, turn south to the right of Kestrels on Cherry Orchard, down Dark Lane along the back/east side of the houses on the main village street. Behind the church the path turns west along the southern boundary of Spicer's and out to the road; north up the road turning left south of Pear Tree Cottage and Farm, crossing the stream into the west field then north over a stile onto a public right-of-way through Pear Tree Close and adjacent paddocks, over another stile then walking north along the back/east side of the houses on the main village street, now along the west bank of the village stream. The path leaves the stream to turn west then north around Puddle House and Orchard Cottage, out to Puddleduck Lane and thence return to the main village crossing.
- Path from the pond behind the Great Barn up to the B4019, skirting first a field (on the spring-line, where the village stream probably arises feeding the pond), then up past a copse (possibly the site of medieval quarrying for the Great Barn, as suggested by landscape archaeologist James Bond), and out through fields to the road opposite Badbury Clump.
- Path (Gypsy Lane – a byway) from the east end of Cherry Orchard north towards Faringdon via the Highworth Road (B4019).
- Path leading eastwards from the east end of Cherry Orchard, running behind the riding stables towards the Great Coxwell bus-stop at the roundabout off the A420.
- Path to Little Coxwell leading east from the main village street between Hillside and Wayside, crossing 'Siberia' and the Golf Course to the A420 (where the bus request stops for Oxford, with shelter, and Swindon, are the nearest from the

centre of the village).

- Path (a bridleway) to the south from the southern end of the main village street out to the A420 towards Longcot, also branching to the east as a footpath only, past the Plough Barn to Broadleaze Barn on the A420).
- Path to Coleshill via Ashen Copse Farm leading directly west across the village stream by Pear Tree Farmhouse.
- Path (a bridleway) leading west from the end of Puddleduck Lane to Coleshill via Colleymore Farm (formerly the main route to Highworth from Faringdon via Great Coxwell).
- The main remaining footpaths cover the parish to the north, north east and north west of Badbury Clump, several linking Badbury Hill Farm with farms in neighbouring parishes:
- Path from the car park at Badbury Clump skirting the clump along the south and west sides then heading downhill through Coxwell Wood to Brimstone Farm to meet the north-south D'Arcy Dalton Way in Coleshill parish.
- Path branching right off this path along the edge of Coxwell Wood to Badbury Hill House.
- Bridleway running northwest from Badbury Hill House to Oldfield Farm and Rowleaze Cottages in the northwest corner of the parish, beyond which it joins D'Arcy Dalton Way.
- Bridleway from Badbury Hill House, south side running north east to Step Farm on the A417.

5.16 A study of 1982 identified over thirty ancient hedges in the parish, the ages of which were estimated to be between 200 and 900 years old on the basis of species present (*map 6*). A recent re-walk again noted these hedgerows.

Policy NDS4

Development proposals will be supported where they are in accord with the following principles:

Soft green verges are part of the rural village's special character and should be retained. They should not be formalised or significantly interrupted other than by appropriate and sympathetic surfacing.

Material used for road verges should be grass or gravel with existing footpaths kept to the present height and width.

Street lighting should be avoided to continue to enjoy moonlight and starlight. Street furniture should be kept to a minimum. Where street furniture is being replaced or introduced, traditional designs should be used to maintain the character and appearance of

the Conservation Area.

The stone and stone and brick boundaries should, where possible, be maintained in their present form with the same materials, appearance and traditional construction.

New boundaries should be constructed preferably with stone, stone and brick or hedging. Where stone and brick are used, the local traditional appearance is encouraged. Fences generally should not be used as boundary treatment facing public spaces.

Roads and Traffic

5.17 No main roads have ever come into the village. The village crossing from the mid 18th century consisted of four lanes: leading to the west a bridleway to Coleshill (as continues); a lane leading south through the village to bridleways to Longcot, etc. (as continues); a lane leading north to the Barn (here a hollow way is now used by road traffic to access the B4019) and a lane east formerly accessing Faringdon by way of Gipsy Lane.

5.18 With the 19th-century growth of Swindon the route between Oxford and Swindon skirting the parish to the southeast gained significance and became a trunk road. There is a disused portion of old road connecting the village to the road via the winding lane at the east end of Cherry Orchard.

5.19 When the Faringdon by-pass was constructed in the 1970s a roundabout linking the village to the A420 was built slightly to the north of the previous junction re-using a portion of the bypassed Coxwell to Faringdon Road. The roundabout lies at a significantly lower level than the former trunk road and access from the village out onto the road is difficult and dangerous.

5.20 The present northern road entrance to the village from the B4019 is down a single-track, steep and deeply-etched hollow way (Holloway) typical of medieval cart-tracks in use before the advent of horse ownership, coaching or vehicular use. Currently, cars use this route at morning and evening rush hour between the B4019 and the A420 to avoid Faringdon, threatening the conservation and survival of this feature. The junction with the A4019 is difficult and dangerous.

5.21 Where the B4019 from Faringdon to Coleshill and Swindon bisects the parish from Steed's Farm past Badbury Clump and through the southern end of Coxwell Wood, the route is extremely scenic, winding and hilly, with the northern entrance to Great Coxwell village (just described) set in a hollow, blind from both directions.

5.22 The stretch of the A420 bounding the parish to the south-east is also hilly and winding. The existing entrances to Great Coxwell (giving access to the Golf Course) and to Chowle Farm estate are extremely dangerous, and the intended redevelopment of several domestic properties between the two could create four dangerous entries and exits within a very small stretch of road where the speed is unrestricted.

Policy NDS5

Proposals will be supported that improve access, with shared access where possible, to roadside businesses and domestic premises on the A420.

Development should ensure that it does not endanger the safety of local vehicles, pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists, as well as threatening the degradation of a hollow way.

Settlement Pattern

5.23 Because of Great Coxwell's long settlement history and building variety in the village, buildings in the parish have been categorised as follows:

Sub Area A

1. Northern Character Area. The north-west sector of the village north of Puddleduck Lane and west of the main village road, where National Trust owned land meets the historic medieval Great Barn, post-medieval Court House and the associated traditional farm buildings. Apart from Holloway House, its associated outbuildings and two 20th century detached houses, this sector is dominated by the Great Barn complex and lies entirely within the Conservation Area.
2. Southern Character Area. The village south of the crossing on both sides of the main street, with the medieval church and monuments, where listed and unlisted buildings of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries predominate, with 20th century in-fill buildings, mostly closer together and close to the street in traditional fashion, and mostly with extensive back gardens which run down to the village stream on the west side, and to the East Field on the east side. This category includes the Laurels (to the east of the main village street) of the late 20th century. This Character Area comprises the historic core of the medieval village, clustered around a small green and overlooked by St Giles Church.
3. Puddleduck Lane Character Area. Lined with 19th and 20th-century detached houses. This has a distinctly rural feel, engendered by the single track lane without a footpath (*photograph on the front cover of Part 2, Design Statement*).
4. Eastern Character Area. Cherry Orchard running east from the crossing, with mostly detached 20th century houses followed by semi-detached former council houses in uniform styles of two periods, early and mid-20th century, and the village park. This area includes Maitland Close (also known as Whitfields) of 20th and 21st century detached residences. It is distinguished by the predominance of 20th century houses, but of low density in a non-urban environment.

Sub Area B

Buildings in the farming landscape in the west and northwest of the parish: mansion, farmhouses, farm buildings, farm cottages and sheds.

Sub Area C

Buildings in the east of the parish, domestic and employment, along the A420.

Positioning/Plots

5.24 Houses are set back from the road with gaps between the buildings allowing vistas and

glimpses throughout the village, or when set close to the road (village sector 2), with gaps on one or more sides and/or down drives.

5.25 Houses are usually set at street/road level, or at the level established by a drive of several cars' length; houses close to the street are not set on a bank or the crest of a hill, or in a depression (an exception in 2 is the terrace south of the Old School).

5.26 Views inwards, across, and up and down the village streets, benefit from the positioning of houses in conformity with the character of the sector (all sectors), from the presence of trees and significant shrubs in front gardens where these exist (all sectors) allowing the streetscape to reflect the rural location, and from the use of local materials (1,2) and/or a careful selection of building materials including natural materials, in a defined style and controlled palette (3,4).

5.27 The south-east view of the parish from the long stretch of the A420 gives an attractive and accurate impression of the rolling, green rural parish, and this picture is not at present spoilt by premises in Sub Area C, where buildings are set back in plots and do not break the tree line. A possible exception is the poorly designed and maintained business premises at Chowle Farm.

5.28 The relatively small scale of individual buildings and their components (larger properties can consist of several smaller units of different periods, as in 2) creates a sense of charm, space and privacy despite the very small size of the village. Nothing overwhelms or overlooks.

5.29 The gaps that remain between some of the houses allow significant glimpses and vistas.

Policy NDS6

Houses should be set at street level or at the level established by a drive of several cars' length, with gaps of sufficient size between new buildings or building works to retain these important vistas and glimpses (maps 3 and 4).

In Sub Area A, the scale, massing and bulk of building development should be commensurate with the surrounding buildings' and their rural location. In Sub Areas B and C, large buildings should be sensitively designed to avoid dominating rural views.

Careful positioning of new build is necessary everywhere to maintain and support the privacy of existing buildings.

Driveways, Garages and Parking Plot Size

5.30 Most driveways and garages are positioned to the side of houses, with screening of parking areas, where they exist, being predominantly hedges and walls not closed fencing. Driveway material is mainly paving or gravel.

5.31 There is great variability in the provision of parking provision in village sector 2, with some houses providing parking in garages and drives for 5 or 6 cars, and others lacking any facilities or space and requiring on-street parking. This has already led to protracted blockages and could lead to serious situations in an emergency.

Policy NDS7

Parking on-site should conform to the Highway Authority standard of parking provision for new houses proposed and should be beside houses, where possible, rather than intruding into the open frontage .

Planning permission may not be supported for new houses not providing on-site parking provision in accordance with the Highway Authority standard, or extensions decreasing existing provision (especially In village sector 2).

Parking areas should be surfaced using porous materials; tarmac and concrete are inappropriate. The use of hedges and walls as screening materials is preferred.

Garages and outbuildings should complement existing buildings.

Uncharacteristic, where flat-roofed garages should be avoided.

Plot Size

5.32 Plot sizes vary in village sector 2 where buildings themselves vary more in size, and are more uniformly spacious in 3 and 4.

5.33 Approximate building footprint to plot size ratios varies from 10% to 30% with two-thirds having ratios of 20% or below. This low ratio in almost all areas contributes to the sense of the countryside, that is characteristic of the whole area, as well as allowing tree cover to establish. Plot ratio is a more reliable indicator than density in relation to the character of the area.

Policy NDS8

The building to plot ratio should be considered in each sector's relation to the neighbouring properties, and any scheme which results in a significantly different ratio is likely to be unacceptable. For roadside building plots in Sub Area C, the ratio of building to plot, and the positioning of buildings, should be carefully considered, because of the high visibility.

Bulk of Buildings

5.34 Two storey buildings form the great majority in the neighbourhood. An important feature of village sector 2 is the lowness of storeys. Ground levels are at natural ground level or occasionally dropped down into the hillside. The pattern of buildings and the size of roofs are important factors in the overall perception of bulk. The lack of bulk is of key importance in maintaining the character and appearance of the area.

Policy NDS9

New development should be no higher than two storeys with roof space behind dormers. Designing accommodation above the second storey will only be acceptable if it is visually compatible with the scale of buildings in the surrounding area. Storeys are low in village sector 2 so the overall height of new buildings and extensions must be commensurate with existing buildings, irrespective of the number of storeys.

New buildings on steep gradients should be set sympathetically into the slope and present no more than a natural two-storey facade when viewed from below.

In new developments, uniformity of design should not create long unbroken lines.

The development of a number of smaller separate units is preferred to a large single building. In Sub Area C, roadside buildings should be set back from the road and no elements should be greater than two storeys or break the tree-line.

Developments of several houses should be arranged in small groups rather than large blocks, which are inappropriate for all sectors.

Roofs

5.35 Roofs are a very significant feature of the area because of the frequent use of local materials and traditional building techniques blending with the Corallian limestone and clay nature of the surrounding countryside.

5.36 The predominant characteristics of the roofs are as follows (by village sectors):

1. Mostly stone tiles for the historic buildings, with concrete tiles for the 20th-century buildings. Pitched to steeply pitched roofs.
 2. Thatch, stone tiles, slate, clay tiles, concrete tiles. Pitched to steeply pitched.
 3. Concrete tiles, slate.
 4. Clay tiles, concrete tiles, cedar shingle.
- Sub Area B. Concrete tiles.
Sub Area C. Concrete tiles, clay tiles.

5.37 The local building style is distinctive in its simplicity, with a simple undecorated treatment of roof edges, gables and ridges.

Policy NDS10

Roofs should be pitched and covered with materials appropriate to the sector, by preference natural slate, clay tiles, stone tiles or thatch.

The use of additional gables, hipped roofs, decorative chimneys and other decorative features is not consistent with existing local features and should be discouraged, as should be towers, 'atria' and other mock features.

Walls

5.38 Walling is in natural materials, often locally sourced. There are decorative coursing, random, un-coursed rubble; local Corallian limestone in a variety of widths and colours; ashlar limestone dressings and coursed stone appearing on later dwellings (Bradstone, Stonetex). Colour-washed lime render often covers stone beneath. Berkshire orange brick usually appears on smaller Victorian dwellings or on Georgian properties. Decorative brickwork is often blue or buff for chimneys, quoins, doors and window detailing. Timber framing lies behind render or brick infill panels. Weatherboard is restricted to conversions from agricultural or cottage industry uses. Concrete block (and Rockface concrete block) occurs in later build.

5.39 Walling (by village sectors):

1. Stone, brick, Bradstone.
 2. Stone with brick quoins, Bath stone, Bradstone, rubblestone, brick (rat-trap bond), rendered.
 3. Bradstone, brick, rendered stone.
 4. Concrete block, Rockface concrete block.
- Sub Sector B. Brick, rubble with brick quoins.
Sub Sector C. Brick or stone (check) rendered and painted.

Policy NDS11

Extreme brick colouration, the use of coloured mortars and highly coloured rendering are unsuitable and are discouraged.

Corallian limestone rubble should be used wherever possible.

Large areas of unrelieved brickwork should be avoided.

Materials such as the dominant brick, stone and tile should be used in village sector 2 and in new buildings, particularly where the development is located near or faces out across the key view-points described in this Design Statement .

Where stone and brick is used, traditional construction or appearance is encouraged.

Windows

5.40 Windows in the great majority of houses are proportional in size and number, and harmonious in style and shape with the structure. Thus most windows are not excessively tall, wide or numerous, and most are sufficient in size and number to give good light but providing privacy. Frame materials include wood (primarily) and PVC-covered metal. Colours are white to off-white to pale greenish grey or buff to brown. Forms include vertical sash, casement, picture, Velux, Georgian and leaded lights. Replacement windows are predominantly kept to the form of the original.

Policy NDS12

Replacement windows should retain the form and materials of the original windows, and windows in extensions should mirror those in the original build. Proportions, style, materials and colour scheme of new buildings and developments should be similar/sympathetic. Large expanses of windows could be visually intrusive in this setting and should be avoided unless used for buildings with exceptional design quality and appropriate tree cover.

Gardens and Landscaping

5.41 Gardens contribute significantly to the overall impression of the area as rural and predominantly green. Both large and small plots contain mature native species of shrubs and trees, as do the hedges of the fields visible from streets, rows and gardens. (Native species noted and others felt appropriate are listed in the St Giles churchyard survey which is available from St Giles church or the Parish Council). Many of the gardens contain hedges

and walls with some having fences, and many of the front gardens even of modern houses preserve the existing rural walls and hedges.

Policy NDS13

There should be sufficient green space retained around buildings to facilitate tree cover, including in Sub Area C. Green landscaping should be retained/provided at the front of plots, between buildings and near the roadside. Replacement trees and shrubs should be native species, compatible with the limestone.

Drainage

5.42 The geography of the area produces particular problems for drainage. Excessive water run-off on the main village street and in Puddleduck Lane causes flooding, and storm debris carried down the village stream could cause blockages where the stream goes underground, and consequent flooding.

Policy NDS14

Systems to reduce water run-off need to be incorporated into new developments. Soft and green landscaping is preferable to hard landscaping (hard surfacing in excess of access and parking requirements) and should incorporate beneficial sustainable drainage systems (SUDS). Hard surfacing should use porous paving, stone and gravel materials.

Developers need to consider the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve their developments and impact the development may have further down the network, if no/low water pressure and internal/external sewage flooding of property is to be avoided.

Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate wastewater and water supply capacity both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing or new users. In some circumstances it may be necessary for developers to fund studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing wastewater and water infrastructure.

We would therefore recommend that developers engage with Thames Water at the earliest opportunity to establish the following:

- The developments demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.
- The developments demand for sewage treatment and sewerage network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.
- The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the area and down stream and can it be met.

Thames Water must also be consulted regarding proposals involving building over or close to a public sewer. If building over or close to a public sewer is agreed by Thames Water it will need to be regulated by an Agreement in order to protect the public sewer and/or apparatus in question. It may be possible for public sewers or water mains to be moved at a developer's request so as to accommodate development in accordance with Section 185 of the Water Act 1989.

Great Coxwell Neighbourhood Design Statement

