



Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan

2016 – 2031

Referendum Version



blewburyneighbourhoodplan.org

5 October 2016

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Executive Summary

The purpose of our Neighbourhood Development Plan is to establish policies that will be used in deciding planning applications in Blewbury and therefore in shaping the future development of the parish. All of the conclusions reached have been based on feedback received from the community, including a six-week village consultation to review the draft Plan. At the same time, we consulted certain statutory bodies such as the County Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England (formerly English Heritage) and Thames Water. We fine-tuned the Plan in the light of the responses. The Plan was then submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council for a further six-week public consultation followed by a thorough review by an independent examiner appointed by the Vale. This version incorporates the comments from that examination. Finally, the Plan will be voted on by a referendum of the village organised by the Vale.

Once approved, the Plan will have significant authority and become part of the Vale's Statutory Development Plan. The Plan must not be in conflict with either the saved policies of the Vale's existing Local Plan 2011 or their proposed Local Plan 2031. This has constrained our flexibility but should result in a Plan with significant legal standing.

Our vision is to safeguard the unique character of this ancient village, to protect the beautiful landscape that surrounds us and to ensure sustainable development that meets the needs of residents at different stages in their lives, now and in the future. On the basis of this vision, and feedback received at the outset, we prepared aims and objectives which were publicised on our website. These were then modified as a result of the publication of the Vale's draft Local Plan 2031 and consultation with the village during the course of the project.

Blewbury is one of a string of villages at the base of the North Wessex Downs. Its charm and character stem from its distinctive form: a ring of roads, originally with cottages either side, around a core of paddocks, orchards and ponds, interlaced by streams and footpaths. The parish has a number of heritage assets, including 71 listed buildings or structures and eight scheduled ancient monuments. With a population of some 1600, it is a relatively prosperous community with an ageing population. It is a strikingly sociable village (40 clubs and societies) with a great sense of community.

A neighbourhood plan is a community project and as such it derives its authority from the consultation process. For our Plan this has involved special events, monthly open meetings, our website, focus groups and most notably our survey of housing needs and village opinion. The survey was delivered to every household in the village and we received an excellent 61% response rate. The six-week village consultation that we carried out was a crucial further part of that process.

Because of Blewbury's historic and rural setting – most of the village is in a conservation area and the entire parish is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – we commissioned both a Landscape Character Assessment and a Village Character Assessment to help us formulate our development policy. The results of those assessments, when combined with feedback so far received, the saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 and the proposed policies of the Local Plan 2031, indicate that there is little scope for further development in or around the village. In this context it should be noted that in 2015 planning permission was granted for an additional 40 houses in Blewbury.

Our surveys also found issues that many people are concerned about which do not relate to planning, and therefore could not be the subject of policies. We have listed these separately

as Community Issues (Chapter 9), for future attention from the Parish Council and local government.

Policy summaries

In the light of the limited scope for further development we have focused our attention on policies that seek to ensure that new houses are targeted, as far as possible, at directly meeting the perceived needs of the community. Our detailed policies are set out in Chapter 8.

- P1 Location of residential development** – Defines the built area of the village. Outside the built area, development is only permitted if it is a Rural Exception Site to provide affordable housing.
- P2 General principles for development** – Sets out conditions, based on the Landscape and Village Character Assessments, that must be met by any planning proposals. New development must preserve the character of the village and landscape, and not harm heritage assets or views.
- P3 Housing mix** – Developments should favour smaller dwellings. Specifies minimum percentages of one, two and three bedroom homes.
- P4 Provision of affordable housing** – Developments of 11 houses or more must provide affordable housing as required in the Local Plan. This must be distributed around the site and be indistinguishable from market housing.
- P5 Allocation of affordable housing** – 20% of new affordable housing is reserved for people with a strong local connection.
- P6 Design and aesthetics: new development** – Specifies good quality design that respects the characteristics of the immediate area and uses suitable materials.
- P7 Design and aesthetics: new development, in an historic setting and extensions to historic buildings** – New development in the conservation area must be sensitive to the historic qualities and context. Alteration or extensions to historic buildings must respect the building's character, materials and historic plot boundaries. Cob walls must be preserved. Paths, open spaces and views must be retained and enhanced. The dark visual ambience of the village should be preserved.
- P8 Amenity: new development** – New development must minimise noise, odour and light pollution. It must provide sufficient outdoor storage space for refuse, recycling and parking of cars and bicycles. If 10 dwellings or more with two or more bedrooms, it must include communal green space for children's play.
- P9 Natural environment** – Where possible, boundaries should be native or wildlife-enhancing hedgerows. Fencing and walls should reflect traditional rural styles; high fences or walls restricting views are discouraged.
- P10 Sustainable development** – New housing should have provision for high-speed broadband or similar, and boxes for technology, services and utilities should be unobtrusive, with cables buried if possible. Developments of 10 or more units must show how their design follows the principles of the Building for Life 12 Guide.
- P11 Water management** – Requires adequate wastewater drainages and freshwater capacity.
- P12 Drainage and flooding** – Requires adequate, sustainable drainage systems to avoid flooding problems.
- P13 Access and movement** – New development must provide sufficient parking, integrated into the landscape to avoid dominating the street scene. Safe pedestrian access to bus stops, schools and other facilities must be provided, allowing for use of

pushchairs, mobility scooters, etc. Developments should be open to the public, to allow social integration in the village.

- P14 Highways and traffic principles** – New development must not impact unduly on infrastructure and road safety. Priority should be given to pedestrians where possible.
- P15 Retail space, business services, restaurants and cafes** – New businesses are encouraged. No loss of retail, restaurant or cafe space is permitted unless the site has been marketed for one year with no viable offers, or if an equivalent replacement is provided elsewhere in the village, or new employment space would be created.
- P16 Public houses** – Change of use or redevelopment of the two existing pubs will be refused unless there is robust evidence to show that the pub is not economically viable and no longer required.
- P17 Community assets** – There will be a planning presumption against any proposals that would lead to a loss of community value.



Figure 1: Approaching the Red Lion from Chapel Lane

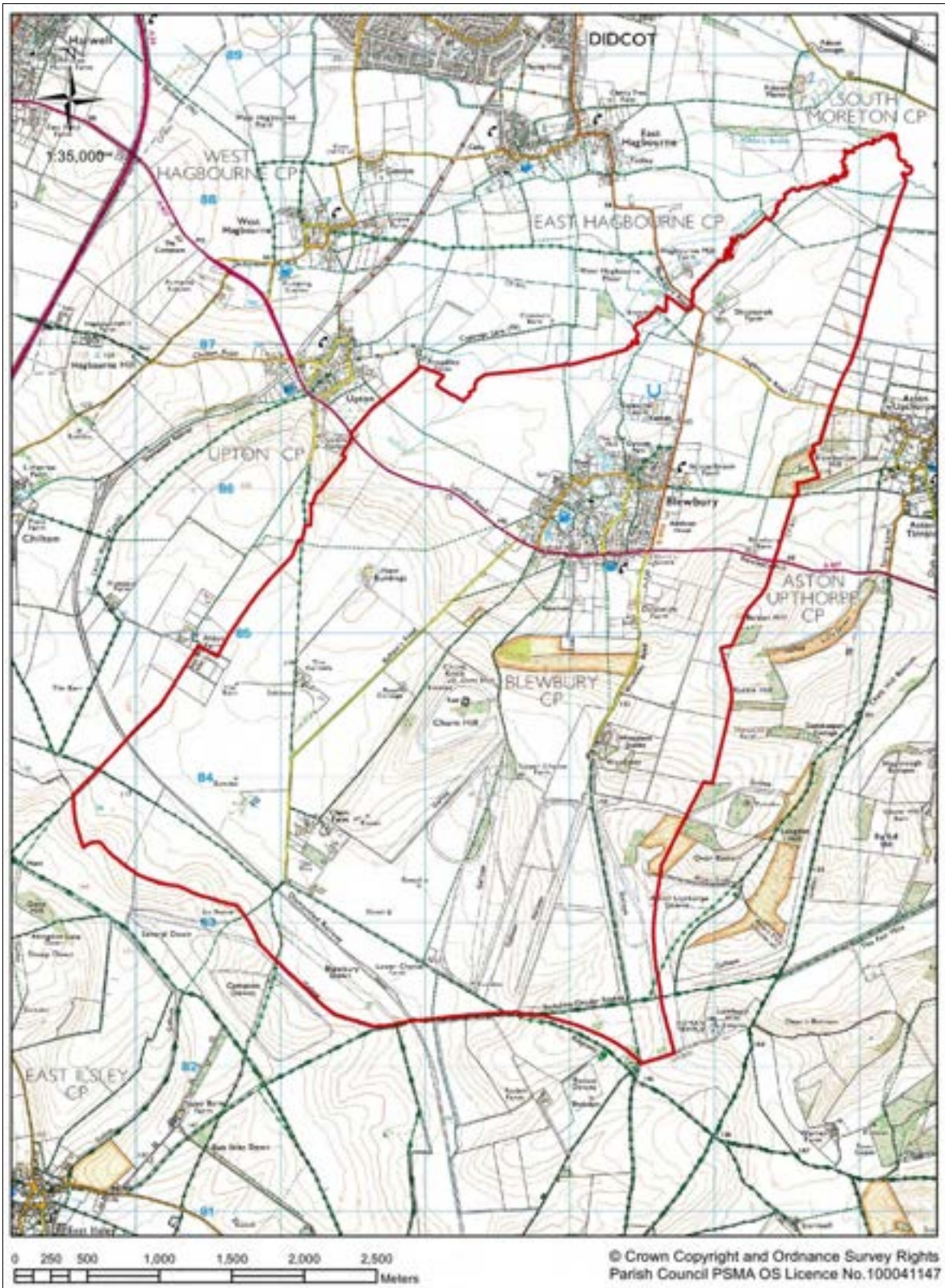


Figure 2: Blewbury Parish

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Blewbury Parish Council has prepared a Neighbourhood Development Plan (*'the Plan'*) for the village. The parish boundary shown in Figure 2 represents the Neighbourhood Area, which is the designated area for the plan as approved by the Vale of White Horse District Council (*'the Vale'*). The Plan has been written for the Parish Council by a group of volunteers who formed a steering group, the members of which are listed in the Credits and Acknowledgements section. Input and advice has been provided by officers from the Vale and various advisers, who are also listed in the same section.

The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is to derive policies that will be used in making planning decisions about the future of the area up to 2031, the Plan period. Once approved by the Vale's independent examiner and adopted by a village referendum, the Plan becomes part of the Vale's Statutory Development Plan. The policies developed must all be relevant to planning, and therefore can only relate to the development and use of land.

When preparing the Plan, the steering group has taken into account the following basic conditions of any neighbourhood plan:

- it must have appropriate regard for national planning policy;
- it must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan for the local area; and
- it must be compatible with EU obligations, including human rights.

1.2 The Local Plan

The Vale is in the process of developing a new Local Plan. The current plan is the Local Plan 2011. The policies of that plan that are in conformity with the National Planning Framework have been retained and are known as the *'Saved Policies'*.

The new plan, Local Plan 2031, is in two parts. Part 1, which deals with Strategic Sites and Policies, was submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2015 for independent examination. The examination process is underway and the plan is expected to be adopted (subject to any modifications the examiner considers necessary) in the second half of 2016. Part 2 of the plan, dealing with Detailed Policies and Local Sites, will then be published in draft. We will refer to these plans as *'Local Plan Part 1'* and *'Local Plan Part 2'*.

The policies in our Plan are designed to be in conformity with both the Saved Policies and the Local Plan Part 1.

1.3 Preparation and next steps

Neighbourhood plans provide local communities with the chance to shape the future development of their area. As a result, consultation with the residents of Blewbury has been fundamental to the process of preparing the plan. We describe the steps in preparing the Plan, and the consultations with the village and advisers, in Chapter 2.

Consultation has also brought forward a number of issues in relation to the village which do not relate directly to land use. In order not to waste this feedback, we have recorded in

Chapter 9 a list of additional matters of concern to the community and which can be considered by the Parish Council in the future.

This version of the Plan is called the Referendum Version. It is the product of feedback received from the village and advisers at various stages during the drafting, the consultation with the village and statutory bodies on a near-final draft, a wider consultation carried out by the Vale, and a thorough review by an independent examiner appointed by the Vale. The examiner recommended some changes in the proposed policies that we have accepted. The last step is a village referendum for final approval of the Plan by a simple majority of votes cast.



Figure 3: Laurence's, viewed from the garden of Stocks

2 Summary of Process

The steering group for this project was formed by the Blewbury Parish Council in the autumn of 2013. Steering group members are volunteers with a broad mix of skills and experience, including planning, public consultation, and design of both modern and historic buildings.

The Vale designated the area to be covered by the Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan on 28 February 2014, and consultation with the village began at a launch event in Blewbury Village Hall on 8 March 2014.

A neighbourhood plan is a community project, and must derive its authority and policies from the community. Communication, feedback and consultation have played a major part in developing our Plan. Full details of the overall consultation process are set out in a separate Consultation Report, but in summary:

- The steering group met monthly in open meetings available to the community.
- Minutes were published on our website: blewburyneighbourhoodplan.org.
- Feedback was obtained through our website, Facebook group page, village events (see Figure 4), and individually to members of the Parish Council and the steering group.
- Focus groups to develop policies on key areas such as infrastructure and design were convened with local residents, as well as a focus group with children and young people to understand their priorities.



Figure 4: Village meetings on 8 March 2014 (top left), 28 February 2015 (top right), 22 November 2015 (bottom left) and 7 February 2016 (bottom right)

In addition, three important projects to provide the underlying evidence needed for the Plan were commissioned by the steering group. The first, carried out by the steering group itself with many volunteer helpers, was a comprehensive survey of housing needs and village opinion. Although we refer to this as a Housing Needs Survey, it also provided opportunities for respondents to make general comments and answer questions designed to help establish priorities for the Plan. The survey was carried out in autumn 2014; the results were then analysed and made available from January 2015. The survey had 467 responses (61% of households), with 258 written responses to open questions (34% of households). The

general nature of this survey, and the number and quality of the responses, were such that the steering group has used it as a key part of the evidence base for this Plan.

The second important project was an independent Landscape Character Assessment of Blewbury Parish, carried out by landscape architects Hankinson Duckett Associates of Wallingford. This survey was finalised in July 2015 and also provided key evidence to the steering group, particularly for policies on building outside the village’s built area.

Finally, an independent Village Character Assessment was carried out by Mr. Dorian Crone and Dr. Kathryn Davies in November 2015 to evaluate the open spaces and historical heritage of the village itself, in order to provide evidence for policies on building within the built area.

Because of the importance of these three projects to the Plan and the development of policies, they are summarised in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, while the complete reports are available in Appendices B, C and D as well as on our website: blewburyneighbourhoodplan.org.

During the process, helpful advice was provided by members of the Vale’s planning team and by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC; now called Community First Oxfordshire).

The draft Plan was reviewed by Urban Vision Enterprise CIC, planning consultants specialising in neighbourhood planning.

The resulting near-final draft was reviewed by the village in a six-week consultation that ran from 1 February until 14 March 2016. A brief summary of the Plan was circulated to every house in the village, and the full Plan and its appendices were available on our website. To allow for those without access to the web, printed copies were available at a number of accessible village locations. We also produced a ‘frequently asked questions’ document to respond to common themes that were raised regarding the Plan and the process it must go through. There was a formal event in the Village Hall on 7 February to present the draft Plan and allow for open discussion, as well as three events for informal discussion. Comments could be submitted online or on paper, and all comments were very carefully documented.

At the same time, we consulted a full list of statutory bodies such as the County Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England, Historic England and Thames Water.

The results of the consultation were general approval, with only a few comments suggesting relatively minor changes. We fine-tuned the draft in the light of the responses and submitted it for review by an independent examiner appointed by the Vale. We have now incorporated the examiner’s suggestions for changes to our policies. The last step is a referendum of the village for final approval of the Plan.



Figure 5: Nottingham Fee

3 Aims and Objectives

Our vision is to safeguard the unique character of this ancient village, to protect the beautiful landscape that surrounds us and to ensure sustainable development that meets the needs of residents at different stages in their lives, now and in the future. The aims and objectives have been developed to support this vision.

3.1 Background

The aims and objectives of this Neighbourhood Plan relate principally to planning matters but also have relevance to other issues important to the community. They evolved during the process of developing the Plan. Our aims and objectives were first derived from the initial feedback received at the launch event held on 8 March 2014. We had an exhibition in the afternoon attended by some 60 people and an evening event attended by 160. People's views were captured by comments made on Post-It notes in the afternoon, and by members of our steering group chairing group discussions on each table concurrently in the evening. Further feedback was provided to members of the steering group and the Parish Council by email.

The draft aims and objectives were agreed by the steering group in July 2014 and posted on our website. They were subsequently modified in the light of further community consultation and as a result of the publication of the Vale's Local Plan Part 1 in November 2014. The latter made it clear that virtually all of the Vale's targeted housing need would be met by the major strategic sites, other sites for which planning permission had already been granted and a modest assumption in relation to windfall development. As a result it became apparent that no specific housing targets would be given to larger villages like Blewbury, although of course the nation-wide presumption in favour of sustainable development remained at the heart of the Vale's plans.

When developing our aims and objectives we have given much thought to our responsibilities to both the local and wider communities. The proposed scale of new development required by central government and our policy makers is exceptional – 20,000 new houses in the Vale by 2031. Although we might challenge the basis on which the forecasts have been prepared, we have to accept that the Vale is committed to this development and some will argue that the village is making an inadequate contribution to the overall housing need. Against that, it is worth reflecting on the contribution Blewbury has made over many years. Although villagers no doubt seek to protect their personal space, the village has a record of accepting and indeed encouraging new development. Grahame Close (44 houses, built in the 1960s), Westbrook Green (16 houses, 1960s), Dibleys (56 privately owned houses for people over 55, 16 housing association properties and 11 privately owned houses built later, 1960s and 1970s), Bridus Mead (60 houses, 1980s) and Cossicle Mead (14 social and affordable houses on a Rural Exception Site, built in 2010) have all been developed in recent years. A new development of 30 houses is now being built at Chailey House.

The sense of accepting responsibility is perhaps best evidenced by the village's attitude to Ladycroft Park, a mobile home park in the village with 60 homes. A property developer obtained control and attempted to bully the residents from their homes by using extreme measures including harassment and setting bonfires. He tried to obtain vacant possession in order to replace the small caravans with larger, more expensive ones. The village could have thought that this was an opportunity to enhance property values by upgrading the 'caravan park'. Instead they rallied round and ran a public campaign to defend the occupants of Ladycroft Park, and following a protracted court case in 2005 (financed by villagers) their

homes were preserved. We do not think of ourselves as a NIMBY community, but one that is seeking to achieve a responsible balance in the development of our physical environment.

The aims and objectives listed below are based on the consultation referred to above, as well as the Housing Needs Survey, the Landscape Character Assessment and the Village Character Assessment. We have developed one or more planning policies for each of the objectives, and the policy numbers are shown with the relevant objective.

3.2 Aims and objectives

Table 1: Aims and objectives (P indicates relevant policy numbers).

Aim	Objectives
<p>BA1: To retain, maintain and enhance the physical character of the village.</p>	<p>To integrate new housing into Blewbury so that the current village aesthetic and character is maintained. P1, P2, P6, P7, P9</p>
	<p>To ensure that new development is of high quality design, is built to high sustainability standards and complements local distinctiveness. P6, P7, P8, P9, P10</p>
	<p>To preserve and maintain important village assets, such as green spaces and views. P1, P2, P7, P9</p>
<p>BA2: To retain and develop the sense of community and vitality associated with the village.</p>	<p>To provide homes for younger people and young families, and so counter any demographic imbalance that exists or may develop. P3, P4</p>
	<p>To provide a mix of housing types, including smaller homes for singles, couples and older villagers wishing to downsize, and appropriately sized homes for families. P3, P4</p>
	<p>To give preferential access to some affordable homes for people with a strong local connection. P5</p>
<p>BA3: To provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a suitable home appropriate to their requirements.</p>	<p>To provide a greater range of smaller houses for local and Blewbury residents. P3, P4, P5</p>
<p>BA4: To minimise the impact of new development on the village, surrounding countryside, landscape and ecosystems.</p>	<p>To protect, enhance and conserve the AONB, biodiversity, landscape and views. P1, P2, P6, P7, P9</p>
	<p>To retain the nucleated and compact nature of the village. P1, P2</p>
	<p>To protect and enhance the historic character of the village. P1, P2, P7</p>
<p>BA5: To address infrastructure issues relating to traffic, car parking, water supply and drainage, and shops and pubs.</p>	<p>To ensure that new development does not exacerbate and where possible mitigates current problems with parking and road safety. P8, P13, P14</p>
	<p>To ensure that new development does not exacerbate and where possible mitigates the existing water, drainage and sewage problems. P11, P12</p>
	<p>To ensure the continued existence of shops, restaurants, cafes and pubs. P15, P16, P17</p>

4 Blewbury – Our Village

This chapter briefly describes many facets of living in the village. There are summaries of the assessment of the landscape in and around Blewbury in Chapter 6 and of the assessment of the village’s historic heritage and green open spaces in Chapter 7. The resulting land use and housing development policies are discussed and presented in Chapter 8. A summary of issues that are not related to new housing but which are often raised by residents may be found in Chapter 9.

4.1 Location

Blewbury is located on the A417, about 16 miles west of Reading and 12 miles south of Oxford. Although Blewbury was historically in Berkshire, since boundary changes in 1974 it has been in the Vale of White Horse district of Oxfordshire.

The nearest town is Didcot, to the north. Other nearby towns include Wallingford, Abingdon and Wantage. The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, a large, multi-disciplinary science and technology complex, is also close.

4.2 Landscape

“One important quality of Blewbury is that you never feel more than a few steps away from open countryside. It was a big factor in us wanting to stay in the village.”

“When we moved here, we were struck by the sense of space the downs offers, within relatively close proximity to Reading/London. Green open space to breathe and enjoy.”

NOTE: Unless otherwise labelled, all quotations in this format are taken from responses to the Housing Needs Survey (Chapter 5) and are selected to represent a wide range of views. They provide background to the policies but did not determine their composition.



Figure 6: The Mill Brook

Blewbury is one of a string of villages that owe their origin to springs emerging near the base of the northern escarpment of the North Wessex Downs. The springs are produced by rainfall sinking into aquifers under the chalk downs. They feed into ponds, including the former watercress beds at the Cleve, the main public body of water in the village, as well as some small, privately owned ponds. The resulting streams coalesce to become the Mill Brook, which flows north-east towards the River Thames at Wallingford. The abundance of water has supported settlement for at least 4,000 years.

The whole of Blewbury Parish is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the older part of the village is a conservation area. The surrounding open landscape makes an important contribution to the experience of living in the village. Views out towards the downs to the south, to uninterrupted horizons of large fields in other directions, and to the historic landscape of Blewburton Hill, provide a variety and beauty that can be enjoyed by all.

Views towards the village are equally important. From most directions the village is attractively screened by trees, which provide a soft edge with little residential development evident. This minimises the village’s impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Blewbury’s particular charm and character springs from its distinctive form: a ring of roads – originally with cottages on the inside and a few larger houses on the outside – around a core of paddocks and orchards interlaced by streams and footpaths bounded by mature trees and low-growing vegetation. The pattern of the roads and footpaths was set largely by the ponds and streams, with the attractive, secluded Cleve and its surroundings at its centre. The footpaths provide pleasant car-free routes for walking through the village. Parcels of open land within the village, whether public or privately owned, are largely responsible for the special and unusual character and appearance of Blewbury.



Figure 7: The Cleve

4.3 History and heritage

“We feel that it is vital that the cultural heritage of Blewbury and the surrounding villages be protected.”

“The green space opposite Borlase, Orchard Dene’s orchard, Parsonage Farm’s orchard, Cochrane’s field at Hall Barn, Carramore’s orchard, Church Moor and the gardens at The Malthouse, The Mill and The Manor – are collectively what make Blewbury the unique village we value, enjoy and must protect.”

The Iron Age fort on Blewburton Hill, just east of the village (see cover photo), provides clear evidence of settled human occupation in prehistoric times. In Saxon times a sizeable village grew up on the present site in a form that lasted without great alteration for a millennium. The first written reference to Blewbury dates back to 944 AD, when a Saxon charter

describes 'Bleobyrig' as a 'venerable' village. By the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 the village comprised three manors, 89 households, four mills and a church.

Architecturally the village spans nearly a thousand years, starting from the surviving 12th-century Norman walls of St. Michael's church. A very unusual and memorable feature is the thatched cob walls beside some of the public footpaths.



Figure 8: Thatched cob wall

During the early twentieth century Blewbury attracted a considerable artistic and literary community. After the Second World War there was also an influx of scientific and technical personnel, many of whom worked at the nearby Harwell laboratory. At the same time, the numbers employed in agriculture decreased. Overall, the population rose from around 600 to 1600 and the village expanded eastwards. A considerable number of new houses was built in the village, including several housing estates – the largest with 83 houses.



Figure 9: Almshouse

Blewbury Parish has a number of heritage assets, with 71 listed buildings or structures in the village and eight scheduled ancient monuments outside it on the downs, including

Blewburton Hill and two Bronze Age burial grounds on Churn Knob and Churn Hill. The historic core of the village is a conservation area (Figure 10), designated in 1970 and extended in 1990. The conservation area contains 63 listed buildings, with two more adjacent to it. These buildings showcase a range of styles and reflect different time periods. The waterways and listed cob walls within the village have historic value and are locally distinctive.

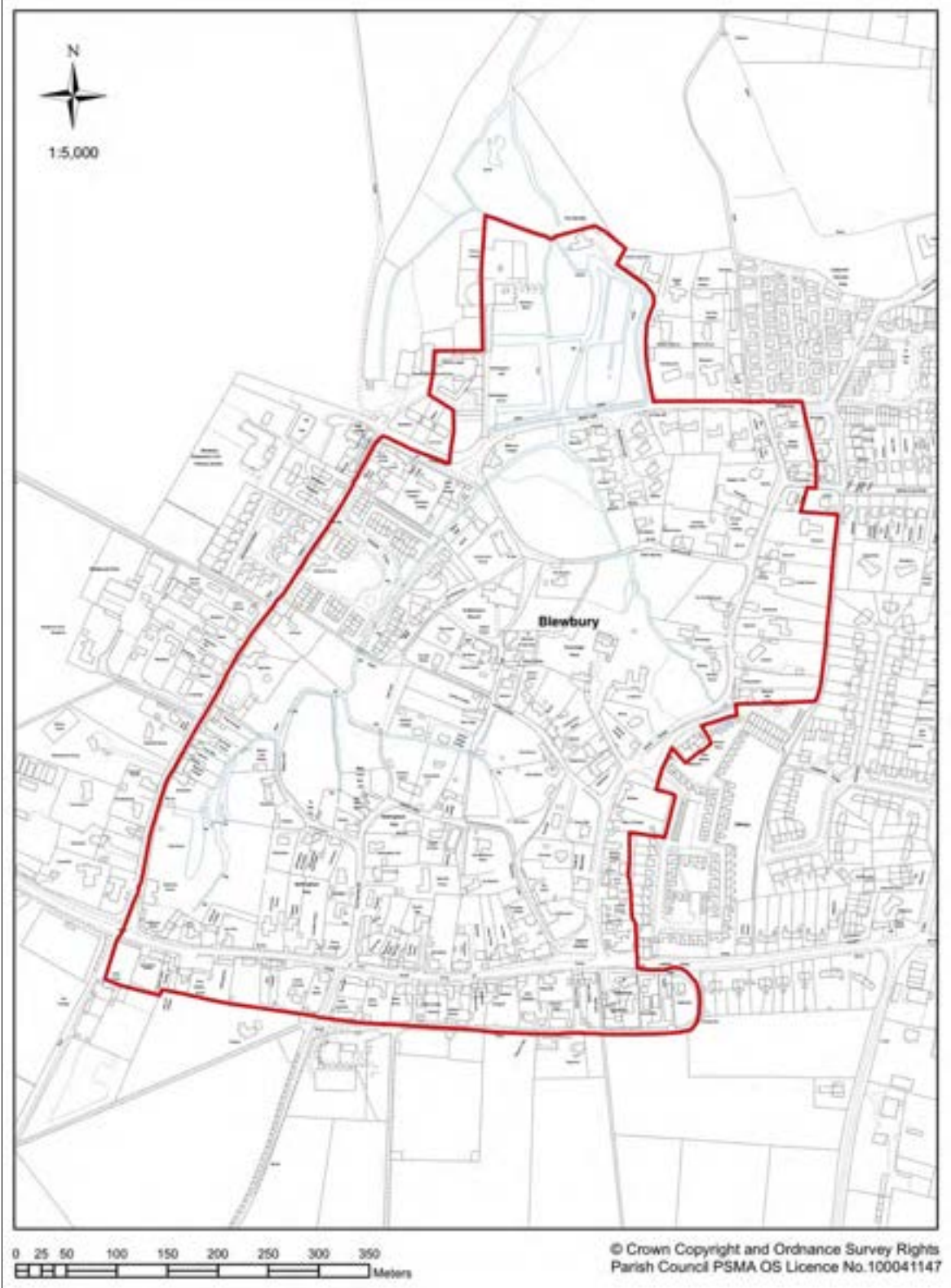


Figure 10: Blewbury Conservation Area

4.4 Demographics¹

"It is important to retain diversity of ages and socio-economic groupings within villages."

There were 715 households in Blewbury in the 2011 census. The resident population was 1,580 individuals, of whom 47% were male and 53% female. From 2001 to 2011 the population increased by 4%. The outward migration was highest among 15–24 year olds, and inward migration was highest among 25–44 year olds.

The population consisted of 270 children aged under 16, 915 adults of working age and 395 people aged over 65. A more detailed breakdown is shown in Figure 11 below.

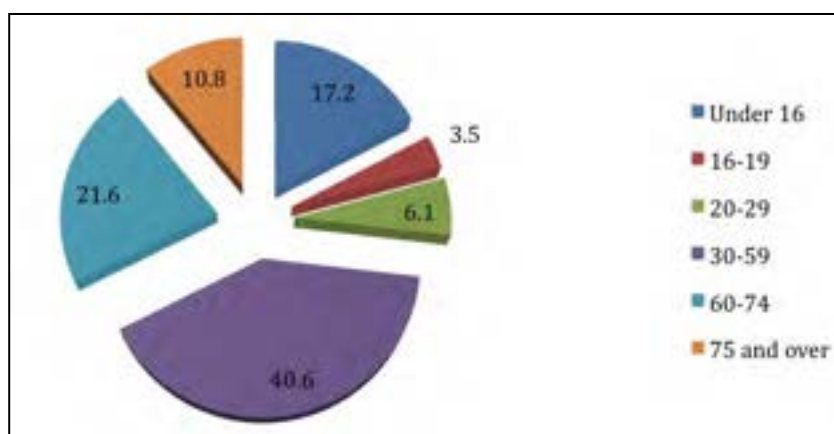


Figure 11: Age distribution of Blewbury residents (as a percentage) in 2011

The proportions of households with one-person, pensioners, and those with dependent children are shown in Figure 12 below. There was a lower proportion of households with lone-parent families (4%) and a higher proportion of single-pensioner households (16%) than the averages for England (7% and 12%, respectively).

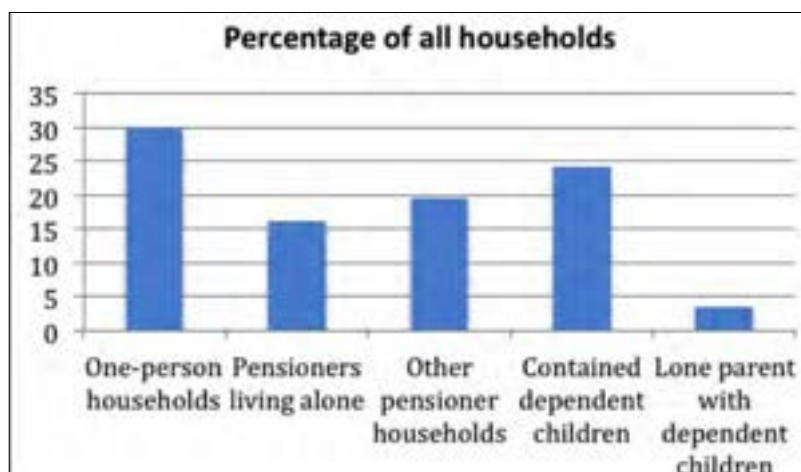


Figure 12: Proportions of one-person households, pensioners living alone, and households with dependent children

The proportion of people who were Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is 6%, which is considerably lower than the 14% average for England. Similarly, 7% of the population was born outside the UK, compared to the average of 13% for England.

¹ Data for this section, and for sections 4.6 and 4.7, is from the 2011 census, as compiled in the 'Rural Community Profile for Blewbury Parish' by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), November 2013.

4.5 Education

4.5.1 Pre-school

Blewbury Pre-school Playgroup is a charity providing government-funded, professionally staffed early-years education for Blewbury and surrounding villages. It runs daily during school terms and is based in the old Blewbury School building, which is next to the Anglican church and was the village primary school from 1707 to 1964. An average of 40 children start their formal education here each year. The pre-school is open for three to five year-olds from 9am to 12pm from Monday to Friday, and for two-and-a-half-year olds from 1pm to 3pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In 2015 the pre-school's Ofsted inspection classed the provision of education as 'good' in all areas.

4.5.2 State primary school

Blewbury Primary School is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School, run by Oxfordshire County Council, for boys and girls from rising-5 to 11 years old. The building opened in 1964 and has been extended several times. Most pupils come from Blewbury Parish, though an increasing number are from nearby areas whose primary schools are full.

The school plays a vital and integral role in the village, and has a current enrolment of 145 pupils. Although the maximum capacity is 175 pupils, with present facilities the ideal number is 150–160. Above that number additional teaching space and staff would be necessary, and housing developers would be expected to contribute to expanded facilities.

The school kitchens have recently been refurbished to provide universal free school meals. There are large outside facilities for play and some sport, with plans for an all-weather running track. The school's strategic capital plan includes several projects to be carried out as soon as funds are available. The biggest of these is to add a separate room for art, drama and music.

In 2015 the school's Ofsted inspection classed the provision of education as 'good' in all areas.

The school hall is used by some village societies for their meetings.

4.5.3 Secondary schools

State schools

Blewbury is in the catchment area of the two single-sex comprehensive secondary schools in Didcot, and a free bus service from Blewbury is available. Didcot Girls' School has language college status. St. Birinus School for boys has both language college and technology college status. The two schools run a joint co-educational sixth form called Didcot Sixth Form College.

Many Blewbury families now send their children to two other nearby co-educational state schools, The Downs School in Compton, Berkshire and King Alfred's Academy in Wantage. Both schools provide bus services from Blewbury but these are not free.

A new school, University Technical College (UTC) Oxfordshire, opened in 2015 on the Great Western Park development between Didcot and Harwell. It specialises in science and engineering, and takes pupils from age 14 upwards.

Private schools

There are several private schools near Blewbury. Moulsoford Preparatory School (for boys aged 4–13) and Cranford House (for girls aged 3–16 and boys aged 3–7) are in Moulsoford,

about four miles away. There is no school bus but pupils in Blewbury tend to share lifts to and from these schools. Further afield are the Manor Preparatory School (girls aged 4–11 and boys aged 4–7) and Abingdon Preparatory School (boys aged 4–13). There is a minibus service to the Manor and Abingdon Prep from Blewbury.

The most popular private senior school options for non-boarders are Abingdon School for boys and St. Helen and St. Katherine for girls. Both schools are in Abingdon and run a joint bus service from Blewbury. In Oxford, Headington School (girls), St. Edward's School (co-educational) and Magdalen College (co-educational) are also options.

4.6 Employment and skills

At the 2011 census, there were 770 Blewbury residents aged 16–74 in employment. Of these, 440 were employed full-time and 149 part-time. The public sector employed 215 people. There were 171 self-employed, of whom 95 worked from home. 137 people said they worked more than 49 hours per week.

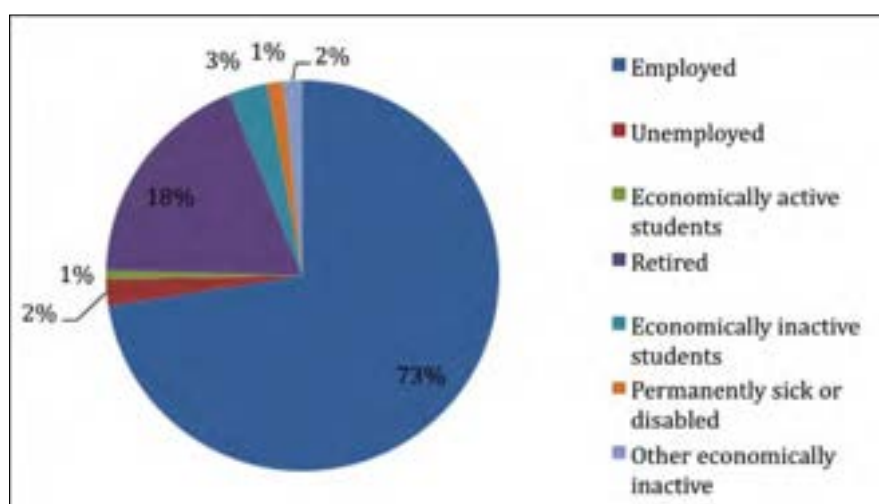


Figure 13: Breakdown of the employment situation

In addition, 15% of the population had a limiting long-term disability. Six residents were claiming Jobseekers Allowance and 19 were claiming Employment Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit, indicating that unemployment was fairly low.

In general, Blewbury had fewer people with no educational qualifications than the average for England (16% vs. 23%) and more with degree-level or higher qualifications (46% vs. 27%). It is therefore not surprising that considerably more people worked in managerial, professional or associate professional occupations than the English average (59% vs. 41%).

4.7 Prosperity

The estimated average household income was £940 per week, with £550 left after housing costs.

About 63 working-age people were Department for Work and Pensions benefit claimants. This is about half the average rate for England. There were 56 households claiming Housing and Council Tax Benefit, 6 people claiming Income Support and 44 claiming Pension Credit.

It was estimated that 55 households were in fuel poverty and 59 individuals in income deprivation.

4.8 Businesses and services

4.8.1 Shops

Savages, a greengrocers, florist and garden shop, is located at the western edge of the village and is family run, now starting the third generation. About 20 people are employed, roughly a third of them full-time; the employment opportunities are much appreciated by young people in the village. The greengrocery section sells fresh fruit and vegetables, sourced directly from London wholesale markets and locally. There is an increasing range of other food items, most recently a small selection of dairy and meat products. The garden section sells plants, flowers and other garden supplies. Many of the customers come from nearby villages and towns, drawn by the good quality, competitive prices, and the knowledgeable and friendly staff. There is also a thriving wholesale business, supplying local restaurants, hotels and small shops.



Figure 14: Savages (left) and Blewbury Service Station (right)

Blewbury Service Station is a former filling station that has become a convenience shop, located on the junction of the A417 and the B4016 to Didcot. Motor fuel is no longer on sale and it does not attempt to compete against the big supermarkets, 3 miles away or online, for mainstream shopping. It is open long hours 7 days a week and mainly supplies incidentals, last-minute food items, newspapers, bread and some takeaway food. There is also a car-wash. Although it went through a precarious period with very low stock levels, recently things have improved and the newly introduced takeaway service has helped, being particularly appreciated by local young people and passing trade on the A417.

Blewbury Post Office is in some ways the hub of the village. It is in a room in the Village Hall and offers a variety of goods and services as well as all Post Office facilities. In addition to normal postal services, Parcelforce deliveries can be left for people to collect. Cash can be paid in and taken from bank accounts, and gas and electric pre-pay meters can be topped up.

West Garden Machinery is a family-owned and run business, located on the junction of the A417 and the B4016, and has a very loyal customer base. They sell, repair and maintain 'high end of the market' garden equipment.

4.8.2 Pubs and cafes

Blewbury currently has two pubs. As in many other villages there have been closures – in the recent past there were four pubs, and for a time in 2013/14 just one.

The Red Lion is a traditional pub in an old building with a lovely garden, hidden in the centre of the village. It is where people have met over the years, but running a successful pub has become much more challenging. The Red Lion was registered as an Asset of Community Value when it was the only pub in the village.

The Blueberry, formerly the Barley Mow, re-opened in 2014 after a change of ownership and refurbishment. Located on the main road, it quickly gained custom by offering a non-traditional menu featuring pizza as well as local beers.

The Style Acre café/tea room is located on the same site as Savages greengrocery and garden shop. Style Acre is a charity that provides employment to young people with learning difficulties, and the tea room is partly staffed by local volunteers. Although at the edge of the village, it is close to the recreation ground and convenient for shopping at Savages. Both Savages and the tea room have benefited by being on the same site.



Figure 15: The Red Lion (left), The Blueberry (right) and Style Acre café/tea room (below)

4.8.3 Farms

Winterbrook Farm is a large arable and pig farm to the east of Bessel's Way. The pig units are on the downs east of the top of Woodway Road as well as on the main site. It is a long-established family enterprise.

Blewbury Riding and Training Stables is west of Bessel's Way at the north edge of the village. They board horses, and train both horses and riders in show jumping and dressage. Show jumping and dressage competitions are run on-site, and rides to the downs are available.

Downside Farm is west of Woodway Road, about a quarter of a mile south of the A417. Its main business is boarding horses, pastured in the fields below and part-way up the North Wessex Downs escarpment. The farm is also the base for other businesses: a construction and road-surfacing company (SCS), a private ambulance and first-aid training company (EMC Medical Services) and a small car repair business.

Woodway Stables is a long-established race-horse stable. It is located on Woodway Road at the top of the North Wessex Downs escarpment about two-thirds of a mile south of the A417. It has 200 acres of private grass gallops and a seven furlong wood-chip gallop on the downs for training. Whiteshoot Stables is also a race-horse stable, adjacent to Woodway Stables. It uses the gallops of Woodway Stables for training.

4.8.4 Home-based businesses

Blewbury has several dozen home-based small businesses covering a wide range of areas, from office-type services to crafts and the arts. Responses from a sample of 16 people running them identify some key aspects that make Blewbury a good place to run a small business from; any future development should aim to protect and if possible improve on these:

- Very fast and reliable fibre-based internet connections, accessible throughout the village and in any new development.
- Strong mobile telephone signals covering the entire village.
- Pubs and the Style Acre tea room are important places for meeting clients.
- The Post Office is a critical amenity for paying in cheques, obtaining cash and sending parcels.
- The general air of peace, quiet and beauty is valued by businesses and visiting clients.

There are relatively few challenges in the village when doing business, but respondents say that the lack of office space could conceivably be a problem if they have to stop working at home for any reason. In addition, some respondents stressed that adequate public transport links to Didcot are important.

4.9 Shopping

Didcot, 3 miles from Blewbury, has been growing rapidly and has an expanding range of shops including three large supermarkets where most villagers do their main food shopping.

Wallingford, 8 miles away, offers further supermarket choice, as well as a range of interesting independent shops. Abingdon, 11 miles away, also offers large supermarkets as well as shops for DIY and household goods.

Oxford and Reading, both 18 miles away, have full ranges of shops. Reading, especially, has a range of large department stores. Both are accessible by frequent rail services from Didcot.

There are two farm shops at Milton Hill, about five miles away. They offer their own fruit, vegetables, meat and other items.

4.10 NHS health services

There are three GP surgeries in Didcot. Most people in Blewbury use Woodlands Medical Centre, which has a branch surgery in Blewbury Village Hall with a doctor in attendance one or two mornings per week.

Hospital treatment is mainly provided in Oxford, at the John Radcliffe (including A&E), Churchill and Nuffield Orthopaedic hospitals. Some treatment is also available at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading, as well as at smaller community hospitals in nearby towns. There is a minor injury unit at Abingdon hospital.

4.11 Travel and traffic

4.11.1 Background

Given Blewbury's rural location and relatively high levels of prosperity, it is not surprising that car ownership and usage is high. About four-fifths of households have either one or two cars. Compared to the averages for England, there are roughly double the number of households with three or more cars, and less than one-third the number of households without a car.

People tend to travel further to get to work than average. In the 2011 census, only 55 travelled less than 2 km to work while 75 (more than double the average for England) travelled more than 40 km. Many people drive to Didcot in order to take trains to Oxford, Reading or London. Only 6% of residents travel all the way to work by public transport.

4.11.2 Public transport

Didcot's Great Western main line railway station is 4 miles away. There are frequent direct trains going to Oxford in 12–18 minutes, Reading in 15–25 minutes and London Paddington in 45 minutes, as well as fast trains to Bristol and south Wales.

Blewbury is currently served by buses to Didcot on Mondays to Fridays during the daytime, running roughly once an hour. There is also a locally organised minibus to Wallingford market on Fridays. The bus services had been fully subsidised, but Oxfordshire ended all bus subsidies in July 2016. The current, reduced services are being trialled to determine if they are financially viable; if not they will be reduced further or terminated.

4.11.3 Roads and traffic

Main roads and future development

The A417 (London Road) runs through the south of the village. To the east it leads to Reading, the M4 and London; to the west it goes to Wantage and Cirencester. Stretches of the A417 that link residential areas and employment locations experience high volumes of traffic.

The other road servicing Blewbury is the B4016 (Bessel's Way), which runs north towards Didcot and has several dangerous right-angle bends.

The main north–south route in the area is the A34 dual carriageway. It is one of the busiest roads in the country, going north to Oxford, the M40 and Birmingham, and south to the M4, Newbury and the south coast. It carries a great deal of heavy goods traffic and, partly because it is not built to motorway standards, it is too often blocked by serious accidents; there are no alternative routes nearby.

Due to existing and proposed new developments west of Didcot, which include two areas of significant new housing and other large housing plans in the area known as Science Vale UK, the Vale is building the new Harwell Link Road between the B4493 and the A417. This will run immediately to the west of the existing A34. There will be a combined footway/cycleway along its length.

A key element in these plans is the expansion of the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, located just to the west of the A34 near Chilton, as a 'world-class centre for science, technology and innovation'.

Roads in the village

Within Blewbury (see Figure 16) there are smaller, connected internal roads that run around the core of the village. Westbrook Street is a main route to the school, Post Office and village hall. Berry Lane connects to South Street, which leads around and back to London Road, or via Bessel's Lea to the B4016. These roads are quiet, fairly narrow residential roads that resemble country lanes in parts. Other village roads are cul-de-sacs.

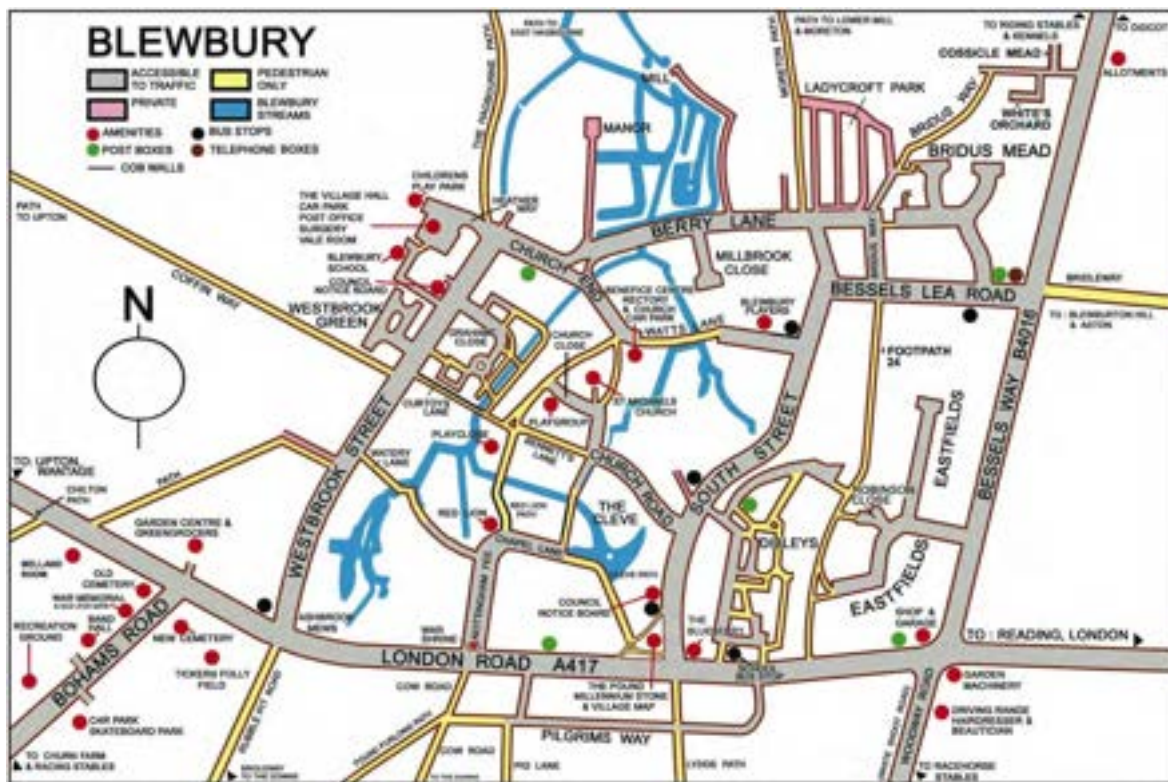


Figure 16: Blewbury village, showing roads and waterways

Pedestrian safety

London Road (A417) is the only road in the village with pavements running along both sides. In places the pavement narrows significantly, and there is a gap on the south side opposite Nottingham Fee. There are no pedestrian crossings at all on this very busy main road, which must be crossed by people living to the south of it or going to the recreation ground. This is often mentioned by residents as a serious problem.

Bessel's Way (B4016) has a pavement for most of its length, but it ends at White's Orchard. Beyond this there is a 40 mph speed limit and pedestrians are not encouraged to continue.

In the village core, Westbrook Street has a pavement on one side but it does not extend to its junction with London Road. This is a potential hazard for pedestrians as it is a busy foot route

to Savages and the recreation ground, and to the primary school and village hall (which includes the Post Office and GP surgery).



Figure 17: Berry Lane (left) and South Street (right)

Berry Lane lacks a pavement for most of its length, despite having a very narrow bend with poor visibility for both drivers and pedestrians (Figure 17). This is a busy foot route to the school from Bridus Mead. South Street has no pavement at all. At its junction with Church Road (also lacking a pavement), and also where it bends sharply, it is particularly hazardous for pedestrians (Figure 17). In many places people, particularly children walking and cycling to school and the elderly, are at risk as they have no choice but to be on the road.

These roads are all narrow and hazardous. The primary school tries to encourage families living within the village to walk or cycle to school to avoid the build-up of cars that can easily block the roads surrounding the school, but they are still very busy at school drop-off and pick-up times

Speeding

There is a long-term problem of speeding along London Road and Bessel's Way. Various traffic calming measures and proposals have been discussed over the years. The Parish Council are reviewing this area and are working with the Oxfordshire Highways Department to explore what can be done to improve the safety of pedestrians and road users.

The speed limit is currently 30 mph on all roads in Blewbury. A number of residents are working to reduce speed on village roads apart from the A417 and B4016 to 20 mph.

Parking

There are several public parking areas within the village. The village hall car park is often stretched as it also services the primary school, the Post Office and the GP surgery. The recreation ground has two parking areas. There is also very limited parking at the Church Benefice Centre. However, due to the narrow roads parking on pavements is a problem, especially along London Road and Westbrook Street.

There is a shortage of private parking spaces for residents within the village, particularly those in older houses, e.g. terraced houses along London Road and parts of Westbrook Street and South Street. Comments from villagers often mention the need for new housing to include adequate parking facilities, as mentioned in Policy P13.

4.11.4 Footpaths and cycle paths

"Some villages are centred on crossroads, others on village greens. One, at least, is hollow. Vehicles travel around the edge or up cul-de-sacs and do not see the hollow bits, but walkers can cross through the centre in many different directions. They see small fields and paddocks of an acre or two, streams, thatched walls and the backs of sizeable gardens – buildings are subsidiary except around the churchyard."

Simon Rendel, landscape architect, in an article for the Landscape Research Group's LRExtra, Issue 10, Spring 1992

Footpaths are an important and cherished feature of Blewbury. There are no through roads in the centre of the village, so pedestrians can amble along the various paths, some of which run alongside the village streams and link the precious open green spaces within Blewbury, making it ideal for dog walkers and safe for children and the elderly.

There is a cycle path between Upton, a mile away, and Didcot. The Parish Council has tried for several years to link to this with a cycle path from Blewbury. The Vale has said that the A417 will be upgraded and eventually have a cycle path extending from Blewbury to Wantage.

4.12 Water, sewerage and drainage

"Impact on roads, sewage, water and all other services must be taken into account – which has not happened in the past!"

"Blewbury is bursting at the seams! The infrastructure could not cope. Traffic, drainage, water pressure, sewage etc. are already struggling with the current quantity of residents."

The issues covered in this section are the basis for Policies P11 and P12 in Chapter 8.

4.12.1 Water supply

"Improvement to water supply pressure should be a top priority. Current water pressure is inadequate."

Until the 1990s, Blewbury's freshwater was taken from an aquifer under the chalk downs via a pumping station located south of the village. However, too much water was being abstracted, and in drought years the village streams dried up. In addition, in the early 1990s the water was polluted with carbon tetrachloride, infiltrating from a WWII chemical dump at the Harwell site. Blewbury's freshwater was switched to come mainly from Gatehampton, near Goring, and Blewbury pumping station was closed in 2007.

Many residents complain of inadequate freshwater pressure, and Thames Water has acknowledged that the water supply infrastructure is not adequate. For example, regarding a recent planning application² Thames Water said: *'the existing water supply infrastructure has insufficient capacity to meet the additional demands for the proposed development'*.

4.12.2 Sewers

"Before more houses are built, solve the sewage problem."

"Until there is a better sewage system there should be no new development."

In recent years, parts of Blewbury have suffered sewer overflows and groundwater flooding during periods of wet weather. These problems, which are summarised below, are related; there is a more detailed account of sewer and drainage issues in Appendix A.

Sewer overflow is unpleasant and can pose a threat to health. A recent example of a sewer overflow in Blewbury was in January 2014 (Figure 18). This was during one of the wettest months on record and was probably due to the local sewage pumping station being unable to cope with the excessive rainwater.



Figure 18: Sewer overflow in Berry Lane, January 2014

² Chailey House site: P15/V0471/FUL

Inadequate sewerage infrastructure is one of the most frequently raised issues in all of our community feedback, and also in objections to new planning applications. Thames Water has acknowledged the problem.

4.12.3 Drainage

Groundwater flooding occurs when groundwater appears at the surface and inundates properties. This happens regularly in Blewbury due to the relatively shallow water table in most parts of the village. According to the British Geological Survey, much of the village is at risk. The shallow water table also limits how much rainwater soaks into the soil, so even after unexceptional rainfall events there can be flooding in parts of the village.



Figure 19: Groundwater flooding in February 2014 at the site of the 30-home Chailey House development now being built

High groundwater levels also add to the sewer overflow problems because groundwater gets into the sewerage network via cracks and junctions in the sewerage network. Commenting on the planning application cited above, Thames Water said: *‘Thames Water has identified an inability of the existing wastewater infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application ... the development may lead to sewage flooding’*.

These local flooding issues must be given high priority in the design of any new development in the village, with measures incorporated to ensure existing problems are not made worse.

At the time of writing, Thames Water is in the process of developing a new drainage strategy for Didcot and the surrounding area, including Blewbury. It is anticipated that the strategy will include recommendations for alleviating the problems.

4.13 Clubs and societies

Blewbury is a very sociable village, with over 40 clubs and societies ranging from sports to live music to environmental concerns. There are well over 1000 ‘participations’ by residents, though of course many people belong to more than one of these clubs.

The village is unusual in having a large number of working and retired scientists and academics, who add their valuable expertise to the many village projects. This is largely due

to its proximity to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, and Oxford, Oxford Brookes and Reading Universities.

The Blewbury Players have been an active amateur drama group for nearly 40 years. Every summer they mount a major outdoor production with a professional director in the garden theatre at Orchard Dene. This typically involves up to 100 people of all ages. During the year they run a variety of other events designed to get adults and children involved, including revues and informal workshops.

Music is another strong point, with both professional musicians and many amateurs among the residents. In the last quarter of the 20th century the village commissioned no fewer than five operas written for performance mainly by amateurs; these were put on in St. Michael's church. There is also Blewbury Brass Band, a growing and continually improving band that plays at many events in the local area and that has trained large numbers of young musicians.

Blewbury is host to the National Gardens Scheme every June, when usually half a dozen delightfully varied gardens are open to the public, regularly attracting in excess of 700 visitors. Gardening is a popular pastime – recently the village allotments had to be enlarged by 50% to cope with the many residents who enjoy growing their own, which fits in with the strong environmental sustainability ethic endorsed by a large proportion of the village.

4.14 Recreation

Blewbury has a recreation ground at the edge of the village for cricket and football. There is a pavilion, built three years ago and known as the Blewbury Clubhouse, which includes a well-equipped meeting room with bar facilities. The Melland Room in the Clubhouse is often used for medium-size events and meetings; it has useful projection facilities.

The Tennis Club has four courts and a clubhouse next to the recreation ground.

On the same site the Blewbury Brass Band has a rehearsal hall, which is also rented out to other music groups for practice sessions.



Figure 20: Part of the adventure play area on Ticklers Folly Field

Across the road from the recreation ground is Ticklers Folly Field. This is a large open area, much of which can be used for free play. It includes an adventure playground for children over 10 years old, a skateboard half-pipe and a permanent football goalpost. Elsewhere on the field, the Croquet Club has its own playing area and clubhouse.

There is a small children's playground (for up to 11 years old) next to the Village Hall.

A privately run golf driving range is located on Huntsgrave farm, near the junction of the A417 and B4016. It has been operating for 30 years and is well patronised.

4.15 Church

St. Michael's Church (C of E) dates back to the 12th century and plays a vital role in Blewbury life for people of all creeds. Several organisations stem from the church, which always offers a very warm and sincere welcome to everybody. As well as customary church services, the church is used for concerts and other secular events with permission of the clergy and churchwardens.

Blewbury's Methodist Church was closed in 2013. That was a sad loss both for members in the area and the village as a whole. The building was also a good venue for meetings and events.



Figure 21: St. Michael's Church

4.16 Sense of community

"The sense of community in Blewbury is very apparent."

"Blewbury is already a large village with a wonderful community, which is at risk of losing its special identity if over-developed."

4.16.1 Blewbury Bulletin and website

The Blewbury Bulletin is a monthly compilation of village news, events and general information. It is written, edited, printed and collated by volunteers in the village. Every house in the village receives a free copy as costs are covered by advertising. The Bulletin recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The main Blewbury village website is maintained by members of the Bulletin team. It provides village news, a wealth of useful information about the village including various services available, and links to many other useful websites.

4.16.2 Village Hall

Blewbury Village Hall is next to the primary school. There are plans for a major refurbishment and fundraising is underway. The building includes a large main hall, the adjoining Vale Room, a kitchen and toilet facilities. It also houses a small, branch GP surgery with consulting and waiting rooms, as well as the Post Office.

The Village Hall is in use almost every day and evening for various activities, meetings and village-wide events and performances. It has a car park which the primary school shares at the start and close of school each day. The school uses the hall for music, indoor sport and anything that cannot be held in the school hall.



Figure 22: Village Hall (left) and recreation ground Clubhouse (right)

4.16.3 Organisations

Blewbury Village Society (BVS)

All Blewbury residents are automatically members of the BVS, which organises most of the annual village events and the Blewbury Festival. The Festival, which takes place every two years in June, provides two weeks of events, ranging from lectures, concerts and art exhibitions to sports and family events.

Traditional annual events play an important part in keeping the community spirit of the village active. These include egg rolling at the Chalk Pit at Easter, the annual midsummer dance, one or sometimes two comedy nights, bonfire night, Christmas events and the fancy-dress Boxing Day Walk.

Sustainable Blewbury (SB)

Sustainable Blewbury began in 1993 as the Environment Group of the BVS, concerned with the preservation of Blewbury's unique natural and built environment and heritage. As the problems due to climate change became more apparent, activities expanded to cover energy, travel, food and waste. It was renamed Sustainable Blewbury in 2009 to reflect this.

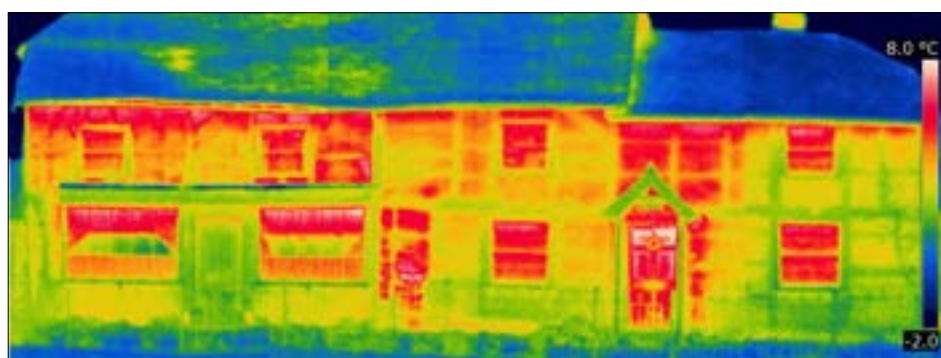


Figure 23: Thermal image of an old timber-frame house

SB provides general information about climate change, as well as promoting renewable energy and more efficient energy usage, locally produced food, and other ways in which Blewbury can adapt to a lower-carbon and more sustainable way of living while maintaining a good quality of life. Its activities include a weekly stall selling surplus produce from gardens and allotments in summer (Figure 24), a community permaculture garden and soon a new community orchard, thermal imaging of village houses (e.g. Figure 23) and various informative events.



Figure 24: Blewbury Garden Market

Flying Squad

This is a service run by volunteers to transport people for medical appointments if they are unable to get to them on their own.



Figure 25: Blue Haze

5 Housing Needs Summary

"Affordable housing for young families is needed to keep the village sustainable."

"Young people need affordable housing and Blewbury needs young people to live in and around the village to keep it a living environment."

The Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan draws on evidence from four sources in order to evaluate housing needs:

- The findings of the Blewbury Housing Needs Survey conducted in the autumn of 2014
- Census data for 2011
- Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC; now called Community First Oxfordshire) and Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE): 'Rural Evidence Project', November 2013
- The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

The population trend data for Blewbury in the years 2001–2011 shows a net decrease of 2% in the five years 2001–2005, a return to the status quo in the following five years to 2010 and a net increase of 4% in the financial year 2010/11. Blewbury has not been following the continuous growth trajectory of either Oxfordshire or England over this period.

The Oxfordshire SHMA (April 2014) provides an assessment of the implications of demographic dynamics on need and demand for different sizes of homes. When analysed alongside other sources of information, it has drawn conclusions regarding an appropriate strategic mix of housing (see Table 2 in Section 5.4 below), to be taken as a starting point for establishing more localised housing-mix policies. The assessment anticipates that the SHMA conclusions on strategic mix should be brought together with other evidence, including up-to-date housing needs assessments where appropriate. For example, regard should be had to the nature of a site, character of the area and the nature of the existing housing stock at a local level.



Figure 26: Single-storey housing for over-55s at Dibleys

5.1 Housing Needs Survey findings: housing needs

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is supported by an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey ('the Survey') which provides an additional layer of evidence for a Blewbury-specific housing mix policy, as anticipated by the SHMA. The Survey was carried out in autumn 2014. Questionnaires were distributed by volunteers to all 768 homes in Blewbury. All respondents to the Survey were living in Blewbury and completed the questionnaire in their capacity as head of household. The return achieved was 467 completed questionnaires, which represents a 61% response rate. The demographic profile of those responding closely matches that of the 2011 census, so the data can therefore be considered representative of the village taken as a whole. The key findings of the Survey are summarised below, and full data for all questions is presented in Appendix B.

Just under one-fifth (19%) of respondents are either very likely or quite likely to move in the foreseeable future, and just under one-quarter (24%) of other people in the household are very likely or quite likely to move. Of those who live in a household where someone is looking to move, 40% (69 households) say that this would be to a new dwelling within Blewbury, with the remainder anticipating a move outside of the village.



Figure 27: Q16 – How likely are you to move in the foreseeable future?

The main barriers to moving are lack of affordable homes to buy (58%), followed by lack of suitable housing to meet personal needs (37%) and lack of affordable rental properties (24%); note that multiple reasons could be given.

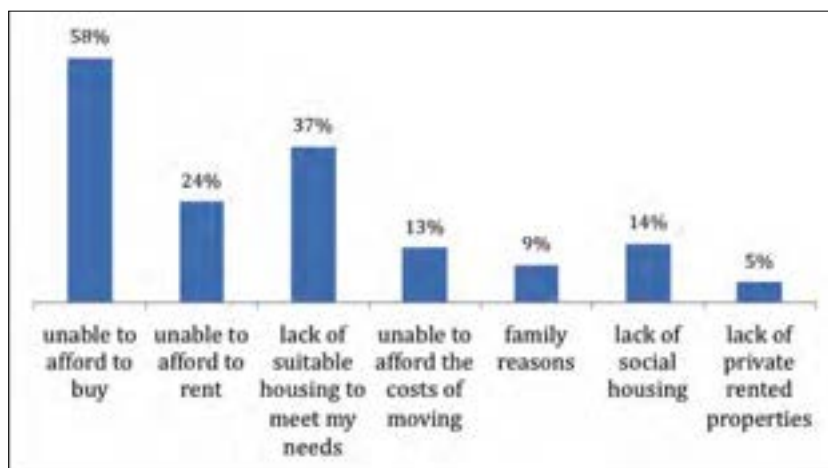


Figure 28: Q19 – If you or someone in your household wish to move but cannot, which of the following reasons are preventing this?

Over eight in 10 respondents (86%) say that no one in their household has moved away from Blewbury in the last five years. The 14% of households who say that people have moved away account for 97 individuals who have left Blewbury for the reasons shown below.

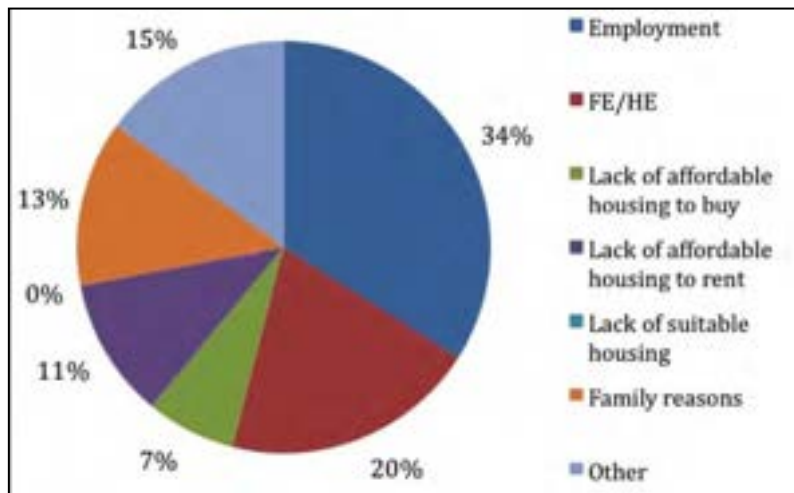


Figure 29: Q23 – Why did each person [in your household move away from Blewbury]?

5.2 Housing Needs Survey findings: needs for those seeking a new or different home in Blewbury

Respondents were asked if they, or a household member, are likely to need to move to a new or different house *in Blewbury* in the foreseeable future. 20% (83 respondents) stated that they would have such a need. Subsequent questions were put to these individuals only.

Residents anticipate a future move within Blewbury for a variety of different reasons. While many are looking to start a first home, others are looking to downsize. Among the 83 households who stated that they would need new or different housing *in Blewbury*, the preferences are for houses rather than bungalows, detailed as shown in Figure 30 (note that multiple preferences could be stated).

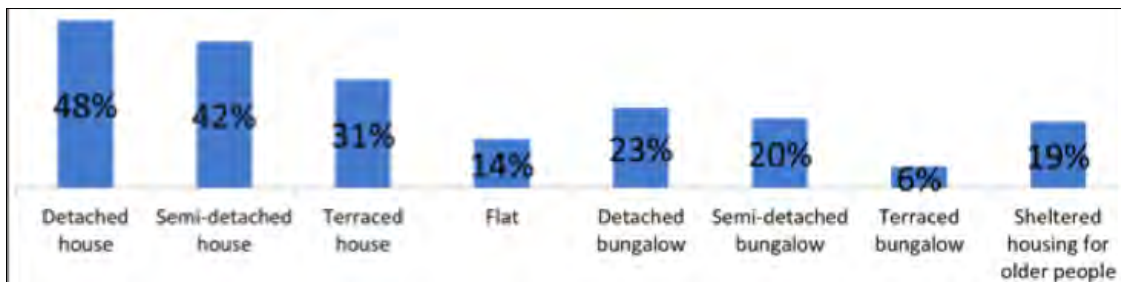


Figure 30: Q32 – What type of home would you or a member of your household need? [Base: those looking to move within Blewbury]

Residents are generally open-minded about whether this property should be brand new or from existing stock. The demand is mainly for privately owned housing. However, a significant minority also seek privately rented, shared ownership or social rent tenures.



Figure 31: Q33 – What sort of tenure is likely to apply to this house? [Base: those looking to move within Blewbury]

The demand from within the village is mainly for smaller properties of up to three bedrooms (84%) and for households generally not exceeding three persons (74%).

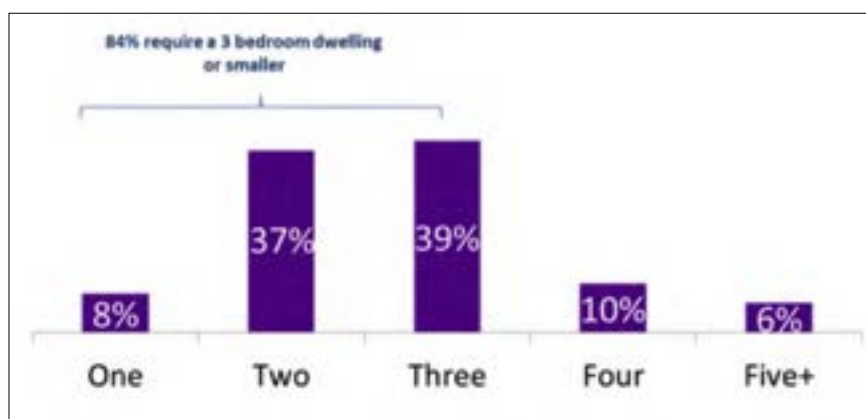


Figure 32: Q34 – How many bedrooms would this house need to have?
[Base: those looking to move within Blewbury]

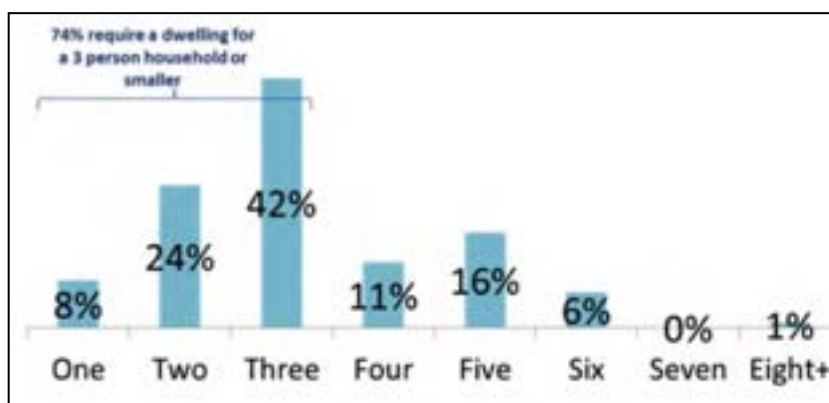


Figure 33: Q35 – How many people would live in this house in Blewbury?
[Base: those looking to move within Blewbury]

Just a third of households (32%) that are looking to move within Blewbury are able to afford a monthly rent or mortgage payment in excess of £1000. Four in ten (37%) indicate that a payment of up to £500 would be affordable.



Figure 34: Q40 – Please indicate how much you, or the member(s) of your household looking to move, could likely afford to pay per month, either in rent or as a mortgage payment?
[Base: those looking to move within Blewbury]

Residents were also asked to state, in a general sense, where they would prefer to see new housing located. Specific sites or a particular scale of development were not specified within the question. A larger proportion of residents (55%) agree that any new housing should be located at the edge of the village compared to sites inside the village (23%).

5.3 Housing Needs Survey findings: open-ended questions

The survey included two open-ended questions where written responses were recorded. A summary of the responses to each question is provided below.

Question 26 – *‘Please write your thoughts on your responses together with any other comments on housing needs in Blewbury now and in the future’*. The main themes within the 258 responses to this question were:

- Affordability – to upsize/downsize, and for young people and families/young returners to the village
- Concerns about village infrastructure
- No large developments and opposition to larger new-builds. Preference for modest, mixed developments of 2–3 bedroom houses in small clusters, sympathetic to the scale and character of the village
- Some residents favour no further development at all
- Balance of views regarding infill or non-infill, with a preference for non-infill
- Balanced views on whether Blewbury residents should have preference
- Emphasis on a mixed demographic
- Providing for older people and people with nursing care needs

Question 30 – *‘Please write in any additional ideas, suggestions or concerns you want to raise’*. The main themes within the 220 responses to this question are summarised below.

- A very significant proportion of residents were concerned about the village infrastructure. Sewerage and drainage were very frequently mentioned, as well as public transport, proximity to school (primary and pre-school), shopping and medical facilities. Other utilities (water, internet) and poorly maintained roads were also mentioned by some as being of concern.
- A notable portion, approximately 10–15%, said explicitly that they are opposed to any further development at all in the village.
- There was nearly universal and strongly expressed opposition to any development to the south of the A417, and many mentioned the proposal for land west of Woodway Road in particular (there was just one comment in support of this proposal). The scale and location were broadly considered to be completely inappropriate.
- Limited support for infill development was expressed, but often with the caveats that (a) any particular site must be appropriate as existing green spaces within the village are highly valued, and (b) cramming too many houses into small plots is unacceptable (several comments mentioned the Dallas site on Westbrook Street as an example).
- Where expressed, support for housing tended to favour small-scale sites on the edge of the village. Some suggested explicitly that housing should be spread over several smaller sites rather than one big site. The strongest support for such development was to the north. Some residents, but fewer, considered that development to the west could be appropriate. Relatively few mentioned east of the village as being suitable.
- The need for affordable housing was mentioned frequently, both on its own and in a variety of contexts.
- Many comments favoured smaller houses rather than large ones. Some mentioned the need for these to be well designed, with adequate storage space and parking areas.
- A significant minority mentioned that new development should be well considered and relate well to the existing character of the village. For example, relatively low density, more traditional materials, less hardstanding. Development should not have an ‘urban’

feel. Bridus Mead and Grahame Close were mentioned as positive examples of the types of development that would be appropriate.

- Concern was expressed about increasing traffic, speed limits and pedestrian safety.
- The landscape character of the village was considered to be of very high importance – particularly the relationship to the downs and Blewburton Hill.
- The sense of community within Blewbury was highly valued, and many were very protective of this. Therefore, it is important for any new developments to be integrated into the village so that they form part of the wider community.

5.4 Implications and conclusions

The Housing Needs Survey demonstrates that, among those looking to move within Blewbury, there is an acute affordability gap between average local incomes and house prices. Many of these households are effectively restricted to smaller (one to three bedroom) properties. Larger homes, which form the majority of the existing stock, are beyond the means of many.

Expressed demand is predominantly for smaller-sized houses to accommodate up to three people. However, because the existing stock is heavily skewed towards larger properties with four or more bedrooms, the nature of the supply is poorly correlated to the projected demand.

Furthermore, the village is ageing, with a larger proportion of residents aged 65+ compared to the district average. Housing need among the older demographic is typically to facilitate downsizing, and therefore compounds the demand for smaller properties being sought by younger families and those with more limited means.

Table 2: Comparison of existing housing stock, SHMA suggested mix and Blewbury expressed housing need

	Blewbury existing housing stock [source: Housing Needs Survey Q7]	Oxfordshire SHMA suggested mix [blended market/affordable tenures, table 67]	Blewbury expressed housing need [source: Housing Needs Survey Q34]
1 bedroom	7%	15%	8%
2 bedroom	23%	30%	37%
3 bedroom	35%	40%	39%
4 bedroom	24%	15%	10%
5+ bedroom	11%		6%

The Housing Needs survey demonstrates that the expressed mix requirement is broadly consistent with the strategic mix that is suggested as a starting point within the Oxfordshire SHMA (see Table 2). Therefore, it is considered appropriate for the Neighbourhood Development Plan to include a policy requiring future development to be aligned to Blewbury’s particular needs, i.e. skewed towards smaller dwellings.

6 Landscape Character Assessment

"The AONB should be protected – without its protection our south Oxfordshire rural countryside will be gone for good."

The Landscape Character Assessment was commissioned by Blewbury Parish Council to inform the preparation of the Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan. The brief was to assess the Blewbury Parish landscape and to determine its local character, identifying key features and sensitivities in terms of both character and visibility. The assessment is based on current good practice and recognised methodology. Distinct character areas within the parish were identified and their sensitivity to development was assessed. The report sets out landscape capacity and development guidelines for any future site proposals.

The full assessment, including maps and photos, is in Appendix C.

6.1 Definitions and assumptions

Natural England describes a landscape's *character* as the landscape features that make an area unique. It is defined as '*a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements, be it natural (soil, landform) and/or human (for example settlement and development) in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another*'.

Two key criteria in judging a landscape's character are its *sensitivity* and its *value*. Both of these are rated on a scale ranging from major, substantial, moderate, slight to negligible. Sensitivity or value ratings of major or substantial indicate that development would have significant detrimental effects on the character of a landscape area.

Landscape *capacity* is the extent to which a landscape area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on landscape character, reflecting the inherent sensitivity and value of the area. Landscape capacity ratings can range from very high, high, medium, low to negligible. A landscape of high sensitivity or value therefore has a low landscape capacity. Development in such landscape areas should only be on a very small scale, and proposals would need to demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting or the wider landscape, as well as being consistent with Local Plan policy.

To give a scale for these ratings when considering a village settlement, a landscape character area with a capacity rating of *medium* identifies an area with capacity for limited development of up to 30 dwellings. A capacity rating of *low* identifies a landscape area with capacity for very limited development of up to 10 dwellings. A capacity rating of *negligible* would not accommodate any new development. Note that this assumes that all new development, and any re-use of existing buildings, would have regard for the setting and form of the existing settlement, and for the character and sensitivity of the surrounding landscape character areas.

In order to assess the sensitivity of the Blewbury Parish character areas to development, the consultants doing the assessment made reasonable assumptions about the likely built form of any new development outside the built area. They assumed that buildings would generally be a maximum of two storeys in height, with open space provision and a landscape framework with tree planting of appropriate scale, in order to achieve a good fit in the landscape and form a logical extension to the village.

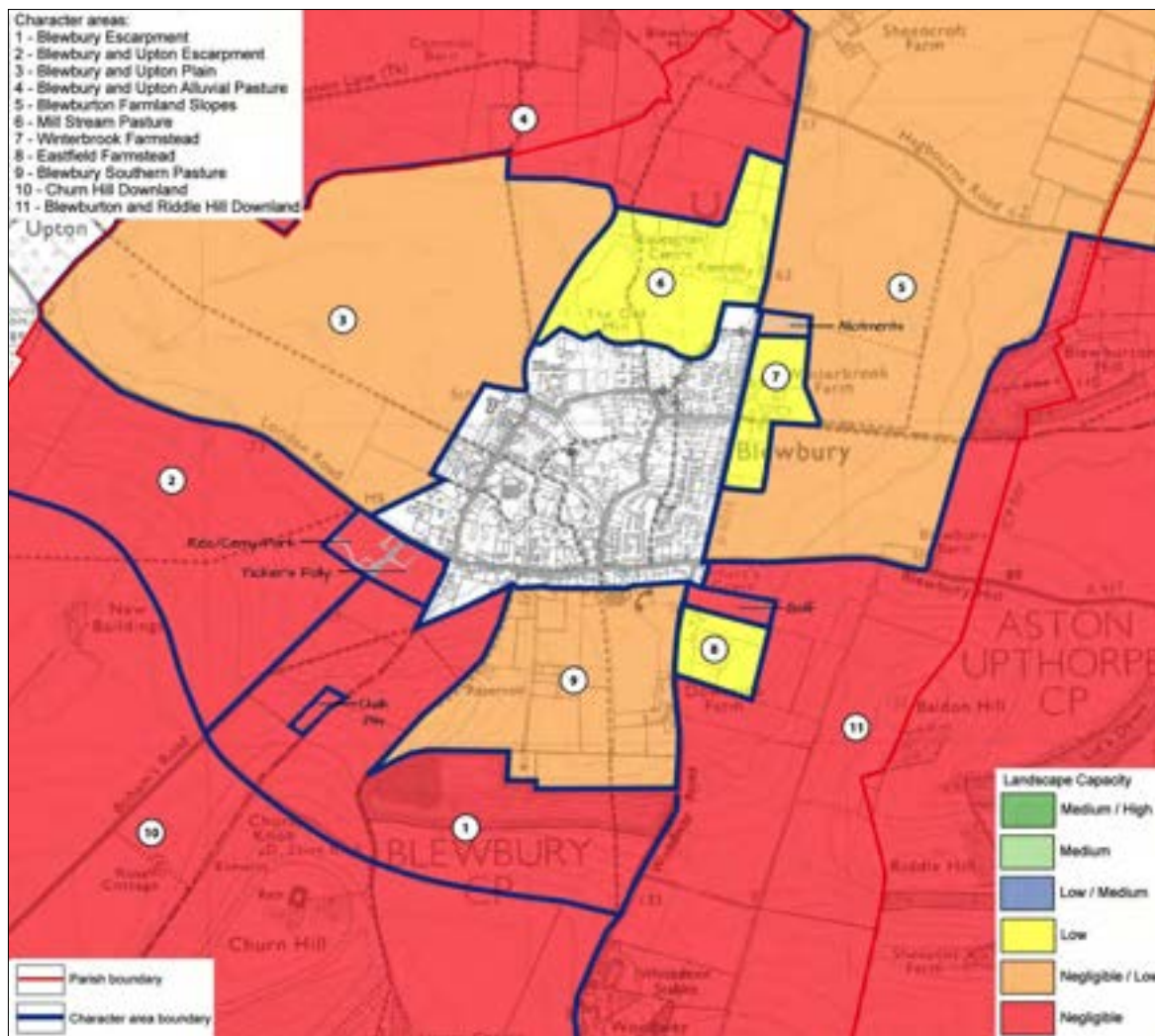


Figure 35: Landscape character areas and their capacity

6.2 Summary of results

The Landscape Character Assessment divides the parish into areas of common landscape character, listing their key characteristics and evaluating the landscape and visual sensitivities of each area. Figure 35 is a map, taken from the report, showing these areas; note that they extend beyond the edge of the map out to the parish boundary.

The landscape *sensitivity* of the parish is generally very high, which accords with the North Wessex Downs AONB designation that covers the whole of Blewbury Parish. Of the 11 parish character areas assessed, five have major sensitivity, five have substantial sensitivity and one has moderate sensitivity. There are no character areas with slight or negligible landscape sensitivity.

The landscape *value* of the parish is also high, with three areas having major value, six areas having substantial value and two areas having moderate value.

A detailed account of the assessment criteria for landscape sensitivity and value, together with tables showing the scoring for each character area that leads to these results, may be found in the full report in Appendix C.

Figure 35 uses colour to show the resulting landscape *capacity* of each area, and Table 3 gives a breakdown of the sensitivity, value and capacity ratings for all of the areas.

Table 3: Landscape character area ratings

No.	Landscape character area	Landscape sensitivity	Landscape value	Landscape capacity
1	Blewbury Escarpment	Major	Major	Negligible
2	Blewbury and Upton Escarpment	Major	Substantial	Negligible
3	Blewbury and Upton Plain	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible/Low
4	Blewbury and Upton Alluvial Pasture	Major	Substantial	Negligible
5	Blewburton Farmland Slopes	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible/Low
6	Mill Stream Pasture	Moderate	Substantial	Low
7	Winterbrook Farmstead	Substantial	Moderate	Low
8	Eastfield Farmstead	Substantial	Moderate	Low
9	Blewbury Southern Pasture	Substantial	Substantial	Negligible/Low
10	Churn Hill Downland	Major	Major	Negligible
11	Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland	Major	Major	Negligible

The Landscape Character Assessment concludes that there are no landscape character areas with very high, high or medium landscape capacity, which means that there are no character areas that can accept large-scale (over 10 dwellings) residential development without causing significant harm to the local landscape character and to the AONB.

The five parish areas with negligible landscape capacity are divorced from settlement, are wholly rural and display many of the key characteristics of the AONB designation. There should be no development at all within these character areas, other than for the necessary requirements of agriculture (as set out in AONB policy).

The three areas with negligible/low capacity are the open and expansive landscapes to the east, west and south of the village, which allow long views both to and from the downs. Development within these character areas should be avoided as it would damage the views and openness of the landscape, as well as being outside the built area of the village.

The three areas with low landscape capacity may allow very limited new development such as a Rural Exception Site. We discuss these areas individually below.

Area 6, Mill Stream Pasture, is adjacent to the built area of the village. It has a high level of enclosure and a landscape character influenced by the buildings within the equestrian centre which lies to the north. The sensitivity and subsequent capacity of the Mill Stream Pasture are not consistent across the character area. A public footpath runs north-south through the centre of the area, and the landscape to the west of the footpath is more sensitive to development than the land to the east, by virtue of its proximity to the conservation area, notably Blewbury Manor and Blewbury Mill and their curtilages.

In the recent past, new development has been permitted at White's Orchard and at Cossicle Mead, adjacent to the south and east of the character area. A new development of 30 houses is currently being built at Chailey House, at the south-east of the character area and adjacent to the built area of the village.

Area 7, Winterbrook Farmstead, is an intact and well-managed farmstead landscape with a strong relationship to the village. The enclosed nature of the character area is in marked contrast to the surrounding open and expansive landscapes of Blewburton Hill and its lower

slopes. However, development here could damage highly valued views from the village to Blewburton Hill and the reverse.

Area 8, Eastfield Farmstead, is located at the foot of the downs. It is detached from the built area and new development in this area would not be a logical extension to the village. The character of the farm is consistent with Area 11, Blewburton and Riddle Hill Downland, except that it is surrounded on three sides by an incongruous *Leylandii* hedge. Should the hedge be removed or replaced with native hedgerows, the resultant change in character would result in a negligible landscape capacity.

The Landscape Character Assessment provides key evidence for Policies P1 and P2 of this Neighbourhood Development Plan.



Figure 36: Blewburton Hill from the downs

7 Housing Design and Village Character Assessment

"I have no doubt in my mind that the village of Blewbury is so unusual in its layout and character, and of such quality that any new development, particularly within the designated conservation area, must be subject to the most stringent tests as regards its suitability..."

"It is my conclusion that parcels of open land contained within the village envelope, whether or not they are public or privately owned, are largely responsible for the character which the village of Blewbury possesses. If they were lost, then the special and unusual form of layout and appearance and setting of the existing development [of Blewbury] would be extinguished and in my view this would be retrograde and significantly harmful to the best interests of preserving the appearances of those villages within country areas worthy of such treatment.

"Blewbury is such a village, and it is my firm belief that every effort must be made to maintain and where possible enhance its existing character and attractiveness."

David Harmston, Planning Inspector, when dismissing an appeal for a proposed development on open land in the centre of Blewbury (4 February 1987)

The general description of houses in the village in Section 7.1, together with the evidence gathered by the Village Character Assessment (VCA) in Section 7.2, are designed to inform and guide future development within the village. Rather than prescribe a particular approach to design or materials, the aim is for people considering alterations, extensions or new developments in the village to understand the context of the history and development of Blewbury, and to demonstrate their understanding of both the recommendations from the VCA and the policies contained in Policy P7 (Section 8.5). Finally, in the knowledge that Blewbury has kept much of its architectural heritage by re-using redundant historic buildings where possible, and considering this to be both sustainable and desirable, there is a collection of sound principles for repairing and insulating historic buildings in Section 7.3.

7.1 Buildings in the parish

7.1.1 Historic buildings – form and materials

Most older houses have exposed timber frames, although the frames were not generally visible until the early 20th century since most were originally coated with lime render and lime-washed to protect their structure from the weather. Infill panels were originally wattle and daub; over the years many of these have been replaced with brick. Although exposed frames in the village are typically stained black and the infill panels painted white, this is a Victorian convention.

Red hand-made bricks are common, Flemish-bonded with glazed headers. Elsewhere there is painted brickwork, and plastered or rendered walls. Waney-edged timber boarding is also used, especially to clad barns or barn conversions; this practice evolved from a predominantly agricultural community and helps to preserve the visual character of the village.

Older houses in Blewbury frequently have gabled ends, brick chimneys, steep roof pitches and a limited width. Dormer windows, generally with gabled ends, are subordinate to the main roof form. Rooms are often partially within the roof, reducing overall height and massing. A number of houses in the village are clad in vertical hanging tiles, with distinctive patterns and a projection at the base to throw water away from the walls.

Roofing materials are generally thatch or red clay tiles, with exposed rafter feet. Traditionally, roofs were thatched using a long-straw method. Examples of long-straw

thatching include Orchard Dene and the barn at Chapmans. Where bargeboards exist, they have simple rather than ornate details. The small number of Georgian houses in the village have slate roofs.

Traditional timber front doors in Blewbury are substantial, with only small areas of glass. Doors are often relatively wide, and may be match-boarded or panelled. Windows are of narrow proportions, with small panes of glass and slender glazing bars, in timber or using traditional leadwork. They are typically side-hung casements, although some windows have vertical sliding sashes, which arrived in Blewbury from the 18th century onwards. Purpose-made traditional joinery includes oriel windows and door canopies.



Figure 37: A selection of old doorways and porches

Boundary walls are perhaps the most important type of enclosing structures. They impart a solid and permanent quality, with many examples contributing to the character of Blewbury's streets. Warm brick colours provide a pleasing texture and appearance, often typical of the materials used for the house behind. Differing wall heights and profiles add variety, as do the styles of coping. Curved walls opening out and highlighting driveway entrances are an attractive and characteristic feature. Brickwork is typically pointed with weather struck or bucket handle joints. The characteristic cob walls of Blewbury are especially worthy of conservation, either in thatched or tiled form. The use of chalkstone and flint is also characteristic.

7.1.2 Contemporary buildings

"I'd like any new housing development in Blewbury to be sympathetic to the local landscape and historical architecture within the village. We are losing all that makes Blewbury unique and beautiful. All the new builds look ugly and far too modern. Will they stand the test of time? Will they still be standing in 200 years like the older houses? I doubt it."

Blewbury has evolved through the centuries by a happy combination of preserving many old and useful buildings, changing the use of some open spaces, and erecting new buildings where there has been a real need for them. The village contains many 20th and 21st century houses, both individual properties and small to medium-size developments.

The older core of the village, bounded by London Road, Westbrook Street, Berry Lane, and South Street (see Figure 16) has been gradually developed with a mixture of houses. These include Nos. 1–16 London Road, built in the 1930s, and new 1960s estates at Dibleys (just outside the core) and Grahame Close.



Figure 38: Grahame Close

The west side of Westbrook Street has seen many additional houses and bungalows, including the small estate of Westbrook Green, and continuing in parts along Church End and Berry Lane to Ladycroft Park. Another feature has been redevelopment and infill to build new, often quite big, houses in large gardens, mainly along London Road, Pilgrim's Way and South Street.



Figure 39: Westbrook Green

Outside of the core, development has mainly been to the east. Ribbon development along Bessel's Way added more bungalows and houses from the 1930s onwards. Between 1985 and 2005 a new estate of 60 houses in Bridus Mead was built, and new houses replaced post-war housing in Eastfields. More recent developments along Bessel's Way include a small, gated close of detached houses at White's Orchard and, at Cossicle Mead, a group of 14 terraced and semi-detached social and affordable houses.



Figure 40: Part of Eastfields (left), a Dibleys house on a former coal yard (right) and Ladycroft Park (below)

Post-2010 there has been further development at the edges of the village, with disparate individual and small groups of houses. Examples include infill and redevelopment in Westbrook Street and along Pilgrim's Way, with a mixture of styles that include walls of brick, timber cladding, timber shingles and white render.



Figure 41: Bridus Mead (left) and Cossicle Mead (right)

A few modern-style buildings have been absorbed into the village on several sites and contribute to the variety of the architecture. In the 1960s Martin Sylvester designed the White House on London Road, eight houses at Westbrook Green and Morters on Church Road. Two contemporary-style houses, built in 2013/14 as part of the Applethorpe redevelopment, are screened by vegetation so their appearance does not clash with traditional-style surroundings.



Figure 42: Westbrook Green houses by Martin Sylvester



Figure 43: A recent house at Applethorpe



Figure 44: Two recent examples of infilling – A bungalow replaced by two small semi-detached houses with a larger detached one behind (left), and a large detached house (right)

7.2 Village Character Assessment

The Village Character Assessment was commissioned by Blewbury Parish Council to inform the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. It looks at the archaeology and history embodied in different elements of the village, its aesthetic characteristics and how these are valued. The full report may be found in Appendix D.

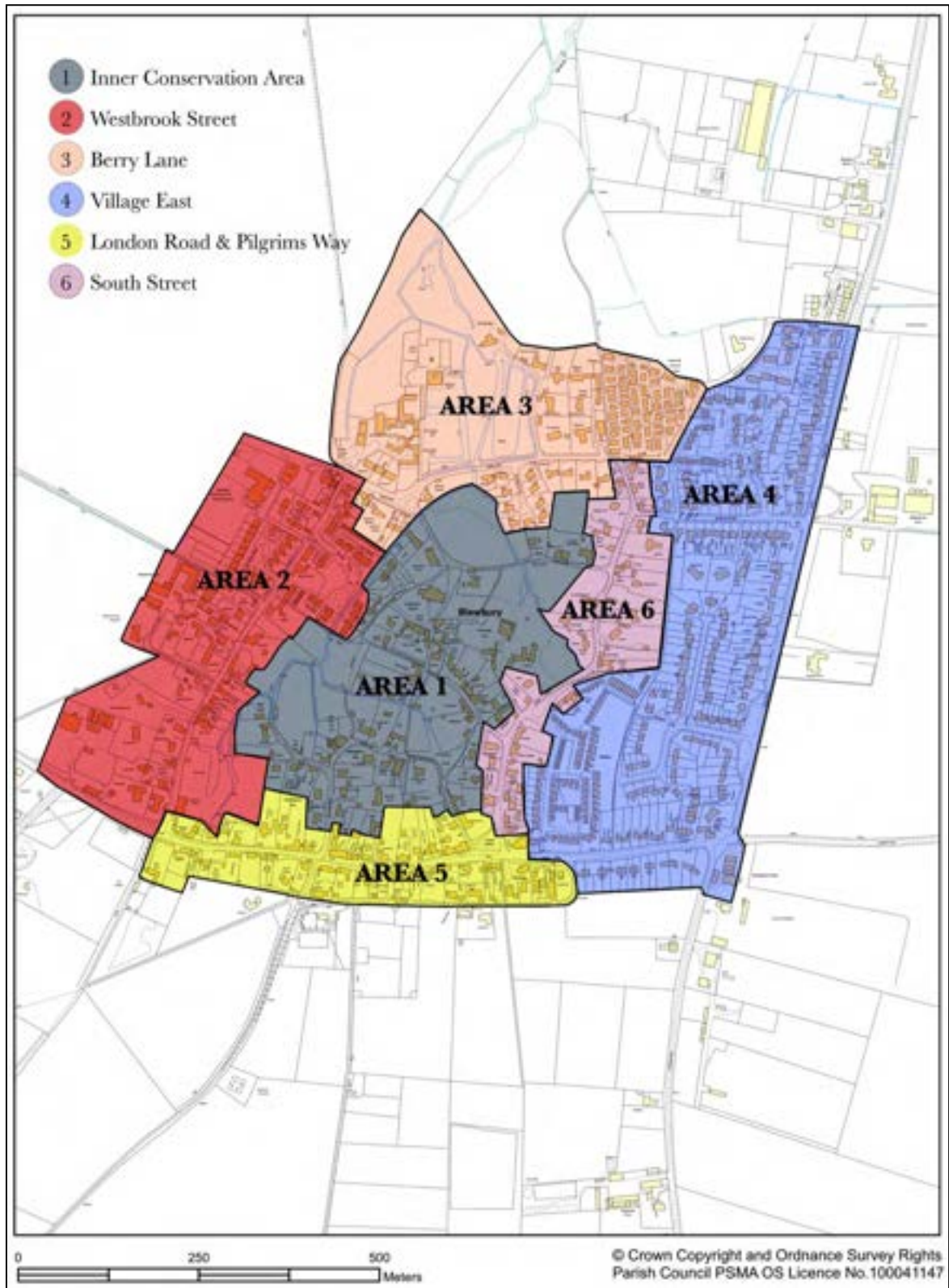


Figure 45: Village character areas

7.2.1 Assessment method

For the purposes of the assessment, the built-up area of the village was divided into the six areas shown in Figure 45. There is some overlapping of characteristics between the areas, some variation within areas and generally no clear boundary between them. The report covered the entire conservation area as well as all developed land up to the village boundary. Land beyond the village boundary was also considered, as this provides the context for the development of the village and is an integral part of it.

Each character area was surveyed using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit (included at the end of Appendix D), which looks at all the elements – positive and negative – making a contribution to Blewbury’s character and assesses the value of each. Elements included spaces, buildings, views, greenery and landscape features, and intangible qualities such as light and dark, noise and smell. The significance of each area was then articulated in accordance with English Heritage’s *Conservation Principles*.³

Underpinning the work is the understanding that Blewbury must change to stay vital and sustainable, but in managing this change the history, or ‘story’, of the village should not be lost. This story is contained within the built form of the village and its surrounding land, its layout and open spaces, its natural features and archaeology, and its fields, lanes and road network connecting it to its wider context.

7.2.2 General findings

In order to understand what makes Blewbury’s built environment special and unique, it is important to realise that the character of a village is difficult to pin down. More than its physical attributes, it is the intangible qualities that make Blewbury what it is, providing life and spirit. These qualities develop over centuries as a result of the interaction of human activity and the land. Blewbury’s layout, its church and manors, and its considerable number of historic buildings, supplemented by extensive documentation, provide the context.

Agricultural development, in the context of the former open fields and downland grazing, is visible in the farm buildings which dot the village. Watercourses and mills supplement the story. Early maps and documents indicate the contribution of orchards to the economy, illustrated today by some ancient apple trees in the open spaces within the core of the village. The survival of these open spaces or closes is one of the defining characteristics of Blewbury.

Blewbury’s buildings further illustrate the development of the village. Changing technology is demonstrated in building materials, as timber framing gives way to brick, and thatch is increasingly replaced by plain clay tiles and later with slate. Improved technology for producing glass is manifested in changing window sizes and types throughout the village. Other detailing reflects changing fashions, which is where the human dimension is most clearly expressed. In Corrydon House on London Road, for example, the more expensive, and therefore high status, close-studding is confined to the most visible elevation. In Hall Barn on Westbrook Street, status is conveyed by the addition of giant Doric pilasters, giving an all-important nod in the direction of 18th century classical fashions. And fashion is also manifested in the re-fronting of timber-framed buildings with brick, indicating to neighbours and visitors that a house was up-to-date.

Many buildings in the village clearly express their former function: evidence of former shops can be seen in Treble House Terrace and Cottrills along London Road, and in Lantern Cottage on South Street. Several workshops and barns also survive.

³ English Heritage (now called Historic England), ‘*Conservation Principles*’, 2008

Whilst there are attractive panoramic views from the downs and Blewburton Hill, the report found that the principal aesthetic of the village itself lies in the cumulative value of the myriad picturesque snapshots from throughout the village. These are of individual buildings, clusters of buildings, open spaces, enclosed spaces, public spaces and private spaces, natural vegetation and cottage gardens, watercourses, glimpsed views down footpaths and lanes, and open views to the fields surrounding the village. The scene changes at every turn. The quality and variety in the built and natural environment combine to create an extraordinarily attractive village.

7.2.3 Character area ratings

Each of the six character areas shown in Figure 45 was rated as high, medium or low on four separate criteria⁴, which taken together give a measure of each area's overall significance:

- **Evidential value:** the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.
- **Historical value:** the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present – it tends to be illustrative or associative.
- **Aesthetic value:** the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.
- **Communal value:** the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Areas 1 (Inner Conservation Area), 2 (Westbrook Street), 3 (Berry Lane), 5 (London Road and Pilgrim's Way) and 6 (South Street) were all rated as high for evidential, historical and aesthetic value. In addition, areas 1 and 5 were rated high for communal value, while areas 2, 3 and 6 were rated medium. Area 4 (Village East) was rated lower for all criteria.

Area 1, and much of areas 2, 3, 5 and 6, comprise the historic core, which has the highest significance. However, the report also found that many characteristics of modern developments in Blewbury are locally distinctive and attractive. Some negative features were identified within the village, and opportunities to enhance these were outlined.

The character of the historic village is much cherished by local residents. Much of Blewbury is open to public access and public view. The paths, lanes and public open spaces across the village are in daily use; the buildings, including the church, are part of that experience and the sense of history embodied in the village is experienced on a daily basis.

7.2.4 Conclusions

The conclusions of the Village Character Assessment outline the need for policies that enhance understanding of Blewbury's 'story' – that is, the significance of its historic environment.

Note that in our policies (Chapter 8) we refer to 'heritage assets'. Although that term covers a variety of things, in Blewbury it is accepted as referring to historic buildings and structures. See the Glossary for a more detailed definition.

Open spaces

Open spaces were not individually rated in terms of status or quality as their value is considered to be multifaceted and complex. The report identified some of the factors to be considered in assessing their significance, but ranking them in terms of their importance was considered undesirable: they embody values not always readily articulated or understood but which are nevertheless important and which should be enhanced.

⁴ Definitions from English Heritage (now called Historic England), *'Conservation Principles'*, 2008

Any proposed development that might have an impact on open spaces or the views throughout the village should not be considered until a full assessment of the impact of the proposal on all aspects of its significance has been satisfactorily completed.

Historic buildings

Although there are 71 listed buildings and other structures in the village, there are many more buildings and features of interest that contribute to the character of the village and which should be considered as non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of the NPPF. The recommendation from the report is that these should be identified by the community, in conjunction with the Vale, and compiled into a local list. There is also the potential to find out more about the current listed buildings, many of which were subject to only cursory inspection upon listing.

When assessing the merits (or otherwise) of new developments in the village, the following are key features to consider:

- Retain and enhance open areas and views in the old core of the village.
- Respect historic plot boundaries.
- Accept informal road layouts and no streetlights rather than standard highway solutions.
- Respect the traditional layout of green spaces.
- Respect traditional building plots, scale, form and materials including techniques and detailing.
- Ask the Vale to undertake a conservation area appraisal, to inform a Management Plan and possible Article 4 direction.
- Retain views within the village as well as out of and into the village.
- Identify opportunities to enhance the significance of the village.
- Consider extending the conservation area boundary to include Mockbeggar's Farm.
- Identify opportunities to improve the appearance of current negative features.

7.3 Historic buildings and sustainable re-use

Blewbury has kept much of its architectural heritage by re-using redundant historic buildings where possible as a link to the past. This is both sustainable and desirable. A good example is the Blewbury Pre-school Playgroup's re-use of the old school building. There are also several sympathetic barn conversions in the village.

What follows is a collection of sound principles for repairing and insulating historic buildings.

Repairs: When repairs are required to historic buildings, needless loss of historic fabric should be minimised. There are, for example, experts in and near Blewbury who are skilled at repairing windows, patching wattle and daub panels and insulating historic building fabric properly.

Roofs: When roofs are re-tiled or re-thatched, any insulation installed should be breathable, i.e. compatible with the original old materials. Careful detailing at eaves and verges is crucial for reducing draughts. Timber-framed, single-walled brick buildings can be particularly energy-inefficient due to gaps in the frame and the thinness of existing walls. Wall insulation should be considered where appropriate, but always using breathable, compatible materials that are reversible.

Draught-proofing: Simple draught-proofing measures applied to an old building, especially to its doors and windows, are a cost-effective, low-tech and simple way of reducing heat loss and improving energy efficiency.

Windows: Historic windows, particularly those with original handmade glass, are irreplaceable. There should be a presumption in favour of repair of historic joinery wherever possible, also retaining historic glass. Secondary glazing, properly designed and fitted, is considerably more effective than double glazing; it assists with reducing solar gain, noise and heat loss, and improves air tightness. This should also be fitted in a reversible manner.

Floors: Concrete floors poured over damp-proof membranes can be problematic in old buildings, particularly where there is a high water table, as in Blewbury. Consideration should be given to replacing such floors with foam-glass aggregate sub-base, which is breathable, free-draining and highly insulating.

Cob walls: The cob walls are unique, listed structures. In spite of some ownership issues, they must be kept in good repair using lime and thatch, or they will not survive.

Historic boundaries: Brick boundary walls, if failing, should be repointed in a lime-based mortar with traditional flush joints. Re-use of existing bricks from lime mortar walls is usually easy and should be encouraged.



Figure 46: The Old Schoolhouse, viewed from the Churchyard.

8 Land Use Policies

8.1 Housing strategy

In this chapter we set out our housing policies and the factors which influenced them. In particular we explain the significance of our landscape and village character assessments, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 and the emergent Local Plan Part 1. In order to develop our housing growth strategy we considered feedback from the village, the need for new housing and the likely increase in housing supply. All of these factors were combined to determine our detailed housing policies, which we hope will ensure the sustainable development of Blewbury without harming our natural inheritance.

8.1.1 Background

The Landscape Character Assessment, which is summarised in Chapter 6 and available in full in Appendix C, describes Blewbury as a *'nucleated and compact settlement ... largely contained by a mature landscape structure'*. The entire parish is within the North Wessex Downs AONB. It has a number of heritage assets, including eight scheduled monuments and 71 listed buildings and structures. Most of the village is within the conservation area.

The Landscape Character Assessment has identified that, consistent with its AONB status, the majority of the rural and open landscape surrounding Blewbury has high landscape sensitivity and value. These landscapes therefore have negligible or negligible-to-low landscape capacity for future development. No area has a capacity greater than low. Development in many of the adjacent landscape character areas would be inconsistent with the existing settlement pattern of the village and would breach the defined built area. Thus there is little capacity for development within or outside the village.

Core Policy 4 of the emerging Local Plan Part 1 states that there is a presumption in favour of development in the larger villages. It goes on to say, however, that *'development outside of the existing built area will be permitted where it is allocated by the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 or has been allocated within an adopted Neighbourhood Development plan or future parts of the Local Plan 2031'*. No land in Blewbury is proposed to be allocated in the emerging Local Plan Part 1 and it is thought unlikely that any sites will be allocated in Part 2, because the entire village is in the AONB. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 116) any major development would have to demonstrate 'exceptional circumstances' including significant need and no alternative sites.

The emerging Local Plan 2031 Core Policy 4 will prohibit development outside the built area of the village unless a site has been allocated as part of this Neighbourhood Development Plan or a future Development Plan Document. In view of the sensitive nature of our landscape and the fact that the Local Plan Part 1 already designates sites which meet over 99% of the Vale's target, this Plan does not designate any specific sites for future development.

8.1.2 Growth strategy

Core Policy 3 of the emerging Local Plan 2031 indicates that for larger villages such as Blewbury, *'Unallocated development will be limited to providing for local needs and to support employment, services and facilities within local communities'*.

The Housing Needs Survey indicates that there is a relatively modest degree of local need. Based on an extrapolation of the answers to Q17 and Q18 (see Appendix B), over the next five years we estimate that 74 households are likely to seek to move to a new or different home in

Blewbury. In doing so, many of these households will vacate their existing property, suggesting that the internal demand within the village is for significantly less than 74 additional homes.

From 2005 to 2014, 23 houses were built within the village. In 2010 outline planning permission was granted, but not implemented, for five houses on the site of Blewbury Service Station. In 2015 full planning permission for 30 houses at Chailey House was committed subject to an S106 agreement, and planning permission was granted for a further 10. There are a number of other potential sites within the built area of the village that could be developed without infringing the proposed policies set out below. It is therefore likely that the rate of infill development which has taken place in the 10 years to December 2014 will at least be sustained in the period to 2031. When combined with the Chailey House site, this would result in the delivery of about 70 new dwellings over the Plan period, plus further potential for a Rural Exception Scheme providing affordable housing. For this reason, it is reasonable to conclude that local housing needs will be satisfied by unallocated windfall sites within the existing built area of the village.

The emerging Local Plan does not propose a strategic site allocation for Blewbury and stipulates that unallocated development should provide for local needs. Therefore, our Neighbourhood Development Plan growth strategy is focused on ensuring that future development is closely aligned to local needs, and does not harm the unique character, heritage or rural setting of the village. The Village Character Assessment, summarised in Chapter 7 and available in full in Appendix D, analyses the significant features of the village that must be preserved to ensure this. Precious open spaces and views must be protected. The relationship between the waterways and the man-made paths is a principal quality that defines the character of the village. In addition to the many valuable listed buildings, there are many others that should be regarded as historic assets. Respect for traditional building plots, scale, form and materials is essential for any new housing.

In the sections below we set out the proposed housing policies for Blewbury. In each case there is a preamble which summarises the supporting evidence and provides a link to the aims and objectives in Chapter 3. Although these policies were formulated with housing development in mind, they apply to all development in Blewbury. All planning applications for potential developments must comply with the entire Plan and its policies.

In our policies we refer to 'heritage assets'. Although that term covers a variety of things, in Blewbury it usually concerns historic buildings and structures. See the Glossary for detailed definitions of this and related terms.

8.2 Housing policies

"I think a large development would change the current character of the village. Any development should be small and in keeping with the village."

"Small scale development on the edges of the village would be fine as long as there is a clear and defensible boundary to avoid development creep, large scale is completely unacceptable. Within the village, even smaller scale development would be fine in the right areas. We would prefer to see 1-7 units tastefully built in keeping with village character and not on the few green spaces."

NOTE: Unless otherwise labelled, all quotations in this format are taken from responses to the Housing Needs Survey (Chapter 5) and are selected to represent a wide range of views. They provide background to the policies but did not determine their composition.

8.2.1 Criteria for assessing the suitability of potential housing sites

When establishing the criteria for assessing new proposals, we have had particular regard to the Landscape Character Assessment (Chapter 6), the Village Character Assessment (Chapter 7) and feedback from villagers who are concerned to maintain the integrity of the village and its rural setting.

The NPPF firmly establishes that ‘major’ developments within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are inappropriate unless exceptional circumstances apply. As explained in the growth strategy above, the effect of Core Policy 4 of the Vale’s emerging Local Plan 2031 is that development outside the built area of Blewbury is unlikely to be permitted. Furthermore, the Landscape Character Assessment has established that land at the settlement fringe has very limited ability to accommodate development due to its high intrinsic landscape value and sensitivity to change. The assessment found that even small-scale edge-of-settlement development is likely to result in ‘major’ impact on the AONB landscape. A development of 10 or more dwellings in the vicinity of the existing settlement boundary will invariably constitute ‘major’ development.

The purpose of Policies P1 and P2 below is to reinforce Blewbury’s unique and distinctive character, prevent urban sprawl, maintain Blewbury’s landscape setting, and improve and enhance the conservation area by promoting sustainable patterns of development, in accordance with our aims BA1 and BA4.

POLICY P1 – LOCATION OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Residential development within the built area of Blewbury will be permitted where appropriate, in accordance with the Development Plan.
2. Development outside the existing built area of Blewbury will not be permitted, except for Rural Exception Sites.

The built area is defined by the boundaries of permanent, non-agricultural buildings located around the edge of the village, where such properties are directly connected to the village’s main, singular form.

The built area therefore does not include:

- individual buildings or groups of dispersed buildings that are separated by farmland or paddock land from the continuous built-up area of the settlement;
- large gardens, paddocks and other undeveloped land in the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement, where they provide a transition between the surrounding countryside and the built-up areas of the settlement;
- agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement; or
- outdoor sports and recreation facilities and other formal open spaces on the edge of the settlement.

Blewbury has a truly unique and distinctive character. Various elements contribute to visual amenity within the public realm, for example the many mature trees and landscaping, low-density housing, important open spaces and public views. In some parts the open character prevails over the built form. Parcels of open land within the village envelope, whether public or privately owned, make a significant contribution to the unique and special character of the village. These and other important aspects of the character of the village and its landscape setting are set out in the following key supporting evidence to the Plan:

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Village Character Assessment

The Landscape Character Assessment provides an assessment of key features and sensitivities in the wider landscape of the entire parish. Table 3 (in Chapter 6), extracted from the report, sets out the landscape sensitivity and value for each of 11 separate areas surrounding the village, together with an assessment of the capacity for each area to accommodate future development.

The Village Character Assessment covers the entire built area of the village, both within and outside the conservation area. Note that where there are differences between the two reports the Village Character Assessment takes precedence.

Policy P2 requires planning applications to draw upon both key resources in order that development preserves the existing character of the village and its landscape for the enjoyment of future generations.

POLICY P2 – GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

1. are appropriately located, in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan taken as a whole;
2. in terms of scale, do not exceed the landscape capacity for development within the corresponding character area, as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment⁵ and subsequent updates commissioned by Blewbury Parish Council;
3. preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the village (or area of the village) and its landscape setting, as described in the Village Character Assessment⁶ and the Landscape Character Assessment and subsequent updates commissioned by Blewbury Parish Council;
4. protect heritage assets and their settings;
5. have no detrimental impact on views, both within the conservation area and of the AONB landscape;
6. complement, enhance and reinforce local distinctiveness; and
7. are without detriment to the amenities of adjoining occupiers by reason of loss of light, overlooking, or overbearing impact.

8.2.2 Housing mix

"We don't want to see large housing estates, whether mixed, social, private or not. We do not want to see more large single houses with minute gardens – plot fill. Young people need housing they can afford without a huge gift from parents/family as a deposit. Older residents need downsizing options with good disabled access built in. We need some supported accommodation with an option to put in more care as need increases, so that older residents can stay in the village rather than go to a care or nursing home away from friends."

"What we do not need are new expensive big houses. We need a range of affordable, well-designed, very low emission houses, both to buy and let. Also possibly self-build. Must keep a good social mix."

"If there hadn't been affordable housing built in Blewbury then my husband and I (who both grew up in the village) would not have been able to live here and raise our child here. More people in our situation should be given this opportunity. It's a fantastic village to bring up your family."

⁵ 'Blewbury Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment', Hankinson Duckett Associates, July 2015.

⁶ 'Blewbury Village Character Assessment', D.A.T.A. Crone and K. Davies, November 2015.

Core Policy 3 in the emerging Local Plan 2031 requires unallocated development in larger villages to provide for *local* needs and to support employment, services and facilities within local communities. To this end, emerging Core Policy 22 seeks to ensure the right mix of housing sizes, types and tenures on all residential sites, in accordance with the Council’s current Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA anticipates that policies on housing mix will be established locally by combining area-specific evidence with its indicative recommendations at a strategic (county and district) level (Table 2, in Chapter 5).

The Neighbourhood Plan is supported by an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey which provides an additional layer of evidence to justify a Blewbury-specific housing mix policy, as anticipated by the SHMA. When assessed together with socio-demographic data, it is clear that the existing housing stock in Blewbury is ill-suited to the housing needs of those who will seek to move within the village. As outlined in Chapter 5, expressed demand is predominantly for smaller (one to three bedroom) and more affordable properties, whereas there are a disproportionate number of larger (four and five plus bedroom) homes. Local housing needs, in terms of size of dwelling, are therefore aligned with those identified within the SHMA at a strategic level. As such, a Blewbury-specific Neighbourhood Plan policy on housing mix is both justified and necessary.

The purpose of Policy P3 is to ensure that future development provides a mix of dwellings that is compatible with the anticipated demand from within the village (i.e. local needs), as anticipated by the SHMA and in accordance with our aims BA2 and BA3.

POLICY P3 – HOUSING MIX

This policy directs that new development should favour smaller dwellings. Overall, up to 10% of new homes on developments of nine or more new residential units should have one bedroom, a minimum of 40% should have two, a minimum of 40% should have three, and up to 10% can have four or more bedrooms, unless viability or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix. Developments of between four and eight new units should provide a mix comprising predominantly one to three bedroom dwellings, in general accordance with the proportions specified herein.

8.2.3 Affordable homes for local people

“Living in a housing association property and having lived in Blewbury for over 20 years, I would love to be able to part-buy/part-rent a new property in Blewbury, as buying a property in Blewbury is very expensive. Also having a child of 16 years old, they would also one day like to have a property to rent to remain in the village having been born here.”

Affordable housing comprises social rented, affordable rented or intermediate (shared ownership) housing, and is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market. Properties such as these are often secured as a planning obligation incumbent upon the housing developer, and are delivered alongside housing that is offered for sale on the open market. Alternatively, a Rural Exception Site may be proposed where the development meets a proven need, potentially supported or initiated by the Parish Council. The Housing Needs Survey (Q33) has identified a requirement for some additional socially rented and/or shared ownership properties. Such properties could be provided either within the built area of the village, or on a small Rural Exception Site beyond settlement limits where planning permission would not normally be granted.

The Housing Needs Survey and other feedback have demonstrated that making affordable housing available to families living in or connected to the village is a high priority. The purpose of Policies P4 and P5 below is to ensure that such housing will be provided, where possible. P4 and P5 are in accordance with our aims BA2 and BA3.

POLICY P4 – PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Proposals for new residential development comprising a net increase of 11 units or more in Blewbury must include a proportion of affordable housing in accordance with the policies set out in the Local Plan. Any affordable housing must:

1. be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need;
2. be indistinguishable in appearance from the market housing on site; and
3. be distributed evenly across the site.

POLICY P5 – ALLOCATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

20% of all new affordable housing in Blewbury must initially be offered to persons with a strong local connection to the parish and whose needs are not met by open market housing. In this context a strong local connection means an applicant(s):

1. who has lived in the parish for five of the last eight years and is currently resident there, or
2. who has lived in the parish for at least five years and whose parents or children are currently living in the parish and have at least 10 years continuous residency there.

8.2.4 Building design and aesthetics

"I am particularly concerned about the lack of design in new homes. They are often small, have little storage and not family friendly. They often do not seem to make use of new methods of building."

The overall aim is to protect and enhance the village, so that it retains its character as a unique and distinctive settlement. This should be achieved through appropriate levels of appreciation for the historic buildings, settlement morphology, landscapes and archaeology situated within the parish. These assets form many of the key characteristics of the parish and future development should seek to enhance, reinforce and preserve this distinctive historic environment.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to ensure that the high-quality built environment of the parish is maintained and enhanced, particularly where schemes are located within or in close proximity to the conservation area. New designs should respond in a positive way to the local character through careful and appropriate use of traditional, or appropriate modern, high quality materials and detail. Major developments of 10 or more houses should have communal green spaces, as done successfully in the past at Westbrook Green, Grahame Close and Bridus Mead. Proposals should also demonstrate consideration of height, scale and massing, to ensure that new development delivers a positive contribution to the street scene and adds value to the distinctive character of the area.

Policies P6, P7, P8 and P9 seek to protect the special qualities of the landscape and built heritage of Blewbury Parish, as well as ensuring good design.

The purpose of Policy P6 is to ensure that new development in Blewbury delivers good quality design in accordance with aims BA1 and BA4.

POLICY P6 – DESIGN AND AESTHETICS: NEW DEVELOPMENT

New development in Blewbury must satisfy all of the following:

1. Complement, enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness of the area. Proposals must show clearly how the scale, mass, density, layout and design of the site, building or extension fits in with the character of the surrounding area.
2. Designs within the proposed development must take account of the locally distinctive character of the area in which they are to be sited.
3. Materials used must be appropriate to the surrounding environment, with particular reference paid to the Village Character Assessment.

This policy will be applied flexibly when exceptional, innovative designs are proposed.

The Village Character Assessment demonstrates that the opportunities for new dwellings in and near the conservation area are limited. In the light of this constraint, and given the number of historic houses in Blewbury, the purpose of Policy P7 is to ensure that new development, and alterations or extensions to historic buildings, are sensitive to the historic context and ambiance. This is in accordance with aims BA1 and BA4.

POLICY P7 – DESIGN AND AESTHETICS: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN AN HISTORIC SETTING AND EXTENSIONS TO HISTORIC BUILDINGS

All new development, and alterations or extensions to historic buildings, must:

1. be sensitive to the historic context in terms of design, style, materials, scale, mass and location;
2. be subordinate to historic buildings, and not cause harm to the character or significance of any heritage asset;
3. give due respect to traditional scale, form and materials, as well as traditional techniques and detailing;
4. retain and preserve thatched and tiled cob walls;
5. respect historic plot boundaries and enclosure walls;
6. retain and enhance the informal paths and lanes running through the village;
7. retain and enhance open areas in the village;
8. retain and enhance public views into and out of the village;
9. retain the dark visual ambiance of the village via minimal external illumination;
10. be guided by the key characteristics of each unique character area in the village, as described in the Village Character Appraisal.

The points above should not necessarily preclude modern approaches, provided they can be shown to be compatible with the building concerned and local context.

When an existing building or structure does not contribute positively to the character of the village and its historic core it may, where appropriate, be replaced by a building which does.

Applicants must explain, in a Design and Access Statement, how the design of the proposed development, alteration or extension responds to each of the principles set out above. For all listed buildings, and for alterations or extensions to heritage assets in the conservation area, a Statement of Significance should demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset affected. It should also set out how the proposed changes will retain and, where possible, enhance that significance.

The design and layout of a development affects how occupants utilise their home and how this affects their neighbours. Aspects of this relate to social cohesion, sustainability and general well-being.

The purpose of Policy P8 is to ensure that new development provides appropriate amenities for occupants while not detracting from the amenities of neighbours, in accordance with aims BA1 and BA5.

POLICY P8 – AMENITY: NEW DEVELOPMENT

All new development must satisfy all of the following wherever relevant:

1. Result in no significant adverse impact on the amenities of neighbours by reason of noise, odour and light. Light pollution in particular is to be minimised wherever possible and security lighting, if required, must be appropriate, unobtrusive and energy efficient.
2. When consisting of ten domestic units and over which comprise dwellings with two or more bedrooms, shall include communal green spaces of sufficient size for children to play freely, with added security provided by adjacent housing overlooking the green space.
3. Provide sufficient private external amenity space, refuse and recycling storage, and car and bicycle parking to ensure a high quality and well-managed property and streetscape.

The natural environment plays a strong part in what makes Blewbury the unique and special village it is, as evidenced by the Landscape and Village Character Assessments.

The purpose of Policy P9 is to ensure that new developments do not impinge on the natural environment, in accordance with aims BA1 and BA4. As the entire parish is in an AONB, biodiversity should be conserved and enhanced wherever possible, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 115.

POLICY P9 – NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

All developments that require the establishment of new boundary shall incorporate, where possible, boundary features consisting of native or wildlife-enhancing hedgerow species. The use of fencing and walls, where required, must reflect the traditional, rural context of the village and be of a height that preserves open views within the village.

8.2.5 Sustainable development

Sustainability, as defined in the ministerial foreword to the NPPF for example, relates to the interaction between society, the economy and the environment. Housing development needs to consider these three interlocking issues.

Issues of sustainability relating to homes and buildings have featured prominently in the feedback from Blewbury residents with regard to the type of housing and development they would expect to see developed within the village, and the issue of sustainability has strong interest and support. This is noted here, but it is not permitted to require sustainability standards beyond Building Regulations compliance (with the exception of water standards – see p.119 of the emerging draft Local Plan Part 1), and the concept of sustainable development runs throughout the Plan and aspects of this issue are also covered in other policies.

The purpose of Policy P10 is to build further on the requirement for developments to be built sustainably in accordance with aim BA1.

POLICY P10 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

All new housing will be expected to make provision for connection to high-speed broadband and/or other communication networks, with boxes for technology, services and utilities being carefully sited and masked wherever possible. New cables should be buried if at all possible.

Applications for developments of 10 or more units must show in the Design and Access Statement how their design responds to the principles set out in the Building for Life 12 Guide.

8.3 Water and drainage

One of the greatest areas of concern expressed by the community is that Blewbury's freshwater, wastewater and drainage systems cannot cope with existing demand. The purpose of Policies P11 and P12, which are strongly supported by Thames Water, is to seek to address these concerns, in accordance with aim BA5.

POLICY P11 – WATER MANAGEMENT

Planning applications will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate wastewater and freshwater supply capacity both on and off the site to serve the development, and that it would not lead to problems associated with water supply and/or sewerage overflows for existing or new users.

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. Where a shortfall in capacity has been identified, planning applications shall demonstrate how the development will mitigate the impact on existing water infrastructure.

Since 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government has required Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to be provided in new developments, and that *'local planning policies and decisions on planning applications relating to ... developments of 10 dwellings or more'* should *'ensure that sustainable drainage systems for the management of runoff are put in place'*⁷. Developers similarly are encouraged to use SuDS in the design of all new developments in and around Blewbury. Due to the shallow groundwater, limited drainage capacity and low topographic relief, some SuDS techniques (e.g. soakaways) may not be appropriate in all parts of the village. Policy P12 requires developers to demonstrate that their proposed drainage solutions are suitable for conditions particular to Blewbury.

POLICY P12 – DRAINAGE AND FLOODING

Due to the village's susceptibility to groundwater and surface water flooding, development proposals must demonstrate that they will not exacerbate surface and groundwater drainage and flooding problems. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) must be incorporated into development proposals where possible. Developers will be encouraged to demonstrate that the base of any proposed infiltration system be at least 1m above the maximum likely groundwater level*, as recommended in *'The SuDS Manual'* (CIRIA, 2015⁸).

⁷ Sustainable drainage systems: written statement HCWS161, Department for Communities and Local Government. Statement made by: Mr. Eric Pickles (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) on 18 December 2014.

⁸ CIRIA, 2015. *The SuDS Manual*. CIRIA C753. ISBN:978-0-86017-760-9. Published by CIRIA, London, 2015. 968pp.

** This unsaturated thickness is necessary to ensure that there is space for local rise in groundwater that may arise from surface water (storm water) infiltration.⁹*

8.4 Access and traffic

The sense of community within Blewbury is highly valued and residents are very protective of this, as evidenced by the Housing Needs Survey. Therefore, it is important for any new developments to be integrated into the village so that they form part of the wider community.

The Housing Needs Survey also identified concern in areas of the village where car parking has come to dominate the street scene, particularly within Grahame Close and along Westbrook Street. As a result, feedback suggests that future development should mitigate against this recurring.

The purpose of Policy P13 is to help retain the open, accessible, integrated nature of the village and to prevent parked cars from harming the village aesthetic, in accordance with aim BA5.

POLICY P13 – ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

All new developments must satisfy the following:

1. car parking must be integrated within the landscaping so that it provides sufficient spaces for the proposed development and does not dominate the street scene;
2. safe pedestrian access must be provided that links with existing or proposed footpaths, ensuring that residents can walk safely to bus stops, schools and other village facilities;
3. particular focus must be given to providing suitable access for those who are pushing a pushchair, in a wheelchair, walking with a stick or walking frame or using a mobility scooter; and
4. developments must be open and publicly accessible, allowing full social integration within the village.

The Housing Needs Survey and many comments in response to recent planning applications show concern about increasing traffic, speed limits and pedestrian safety. The purpose of Policy P14 is to address these issues, in accordance with aim BA5.

POLICY P14 – HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC PRINCIPLES

Development proposals must satisfy all of the following:

1. The impact on the environment should be comprehensively reviewed to ensure it is sustainable in terms of infrastructure and road safety.
2. Where developments involve the construction of a new road, highway design should be focused on giving priority to the pedestrian, providing that the public realm is sympathetic to the rural nature of the village spaces.

8.5 Retail and community assets

The sustainable development of Blewbury requires a balanced mix of uses. The loss of shops and community facilities would increase the need for car journeys and would have negative implications for people with limited transport options. The starting presumption is that retail

⁹ UK Groundwater Forum – Surface Water Flooding: Sustainable drainage to the ground. www.groundwateruk.org, accessed 13 Aug. 2015.

and community uses will continue, unless the proposed change of use involves other non-residential uses that benefit the community and contribute to the creation of a sustainable mixed-use settlement.

As explained in Sections 4.8.1 and 4.8.2, the village has a Post Office, two shops (Savages and Blewbury Service Station), both of which have small cafes, and two pubs (the Red Lion and the Blueberry). These businesses all provide services which are much valued by the community and help with the sustainability of the village. The Housing Needs Survey indicates that two-thirds of the village feel that our services are not adequate as they stand. There is a strong feeling in the village that any further reduction in shops, pubs and cafes would represent a significant loss of amenity and that new businesses should be encouraged. In light of this we have developed the two policies below.

It should be noted that the Red Lion is already listed as an Asset of Community Value.

The purpose of Policies P15, P16 and P17 is to encourage new businesses and reduce the risk of losing these amenities, in accordance with aim BA5.

POLICY P15: RETAIL SPACE, BUSINESS SERVICES, RESTAURANTS AND CAFES

Applications for planning permission for new retail space, business services, restaurants and cafes within the built area of the village, or for change of use within existing buildings outside of the built area, will be favourably considered subject to compliance with other policies in the Development Plan.

No net loss of floor space away from these planning uses will be permitted other than where one or more of the following circumstances can be demonstrated:

1. The site has been marketed for the same planning use for a period of one year with no viable offers received.
2. The change of use would result in the creation of other facilities of community value, including public houses and restaurants.
3. The change of use would result in the creation of employment on-site.

Blewbury’s public houses, the Red Lion and the Blueberry (and their successors) are important community assets, providing places for people to meet, relax and socialise. They often provide additional important functions that support the local community, including hosting events, supporting local clubs and societies, and providing a venue for local business meetings.

POLICY P16: PUBLIC HOUSES

Where applications for a change of use or redevelopment of a public house are received, supporting evidence regarding its viability and marketing will be required to demonstrate:

1. a comprehensive and sustained marketing campaign has been undertaken for a period of at least 12 months before submission of the planning application, offering the public house for sale as a going concern and based on a realistic valuation of the premises; and
2. an appraisal, such as the CAMRA Public House Viability Test, has been carried out to assess the viability of the business and demonstrate that the public house is no longer economically viable.

Where it is argued that a public house is not financially viable, the application must be accompanied by properly-prepared detailed trading accounts for the last three full years in which the pub was operating as a full-time business.

In terms of marketing, the public house must have been offered for sale locally, regionally and nationally, in appropriate publications, websites and through specialised licensed trade agents.

If marketing is based wholly or partly on an alternative community or employment use, there must be prior discussion with the Local Planning Authority on the principle of the proposal.

Paragraph 70 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that *'to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

- *plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- *guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- *ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- *ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services'.*

Where a proposal involves a recognised Asset of Community Value as determined by the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, this recognition may be a material consideration in the determination of any planning application related to it.

POLICY P17: COMMUNITY ASSETS

Where proposals are developed that involve a recognised community asset, there will be a presumption against any proposals that would lead to a loss of value to the community.

9 Community Issues

Consultation with the village highlighted a number of issues of interest and concern to the community that cannot be the subject of formal policies in a neighbourhood plan because they do not relate directly to planning. These issues are summarised below to inform follow-up by the Parish Council and local government.

9.1 Traffic and pedestrian safety

Some areas of the village have inadequate footpaths and can be extremely dangerous, especially for children walking to school and the elderly. In particular, routes via South Street and Berry Lane to the school are used by many school children but have no pavement in most places. Parts of these routes are also very narrow and have blind corners. Proposals to improve the safe delivery of pupils to Blewbury Primary School on foot, by bicycle, school buses or by car – and safe travel in general – should be supported and promoted.

Proposals for development that will directly access onto the London Road (A417) should be required to make provision for, and contribute to, appropriate traffic calming measures. London Road and Bessel's Way are becoming increasingly dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists because of the volume and speed of traffic. Calming measures on both of these roads should be considered, as should reduction of the speed limit to 20 mph within the village. Continued research into available traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossings along London Road is needed, notwithstanding the village's wish not to have street lighting.

Street furniture and signage should be kept to a minimum and be practical, of modest scale and in keeping with local surroundings.

9.2 Street lighting

A strong majority of residents consider the lack of street lighting to be a positive aspect of the village's character. In the Housing Needs Survey 71% approved the lack of street lighting. Any introduction of street lighting would be contrary to a valued characteristic of the public realm and would significantly change the experience of living in the village. Accordingly, the use of street lighting is not supported in any location within the parish.

9.3 Transport

The bus service to Didcot is a lifeline for many people, and there is great concern because the subsidies from Oxfordshire County Council that supported it have been removed. This has reduced our bus services, and after the current one-year trial ends the services may be discontinued if not economic.

Cyclists strongly advocate an off-road cycle path from Blewbury to Upton. This would link into the Sustrans cycle network, providing safe access to Didcot shops and public transport at Didcot Parkway as well as cycle ways to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus.

9.4 Village character

The distinctive cob walls in the village were much commented on in the Housing Needs Survey and in other feedback. The overwhelming concern is that these walls should be maintained and protected whether they are in public or private ownership.

Bridges in the village have been changed and modernised, but with no coherent strategy for looking after and maintaining existing structures which contribute much to Blewbury's historic character and location in the AONB.

Paths within the village should be protected, regularly maintained and enhanced wherever possible.

There should be greater control over advertisements (particularly fly posters), and no illuminated advertising should be permitted in the village.

The Village Character Assessment makes two specific recommendations:

- Opportunities to enhance the historical significance of the village should be encouraged. These could include a review of the current statutory list, and the compilation of a local list of non-designated heritage assets which would be protected by the NPPF.
- The conservation area boundary should be extended to include the site of Mockbeggar's Hall and Farm, which is of special heritage interest as it is adjacent to the site of the early manor house and contains early watercourses. It is possible that there is considerable archaeological potential on the site.

9.5 Building standards

Responses to the Housing Needs Survey included a number of comments on inadequate room sizes, corridors and storage space in many modern dwellings, especially in smaller, less expensive houses. Furthermore, Policy P3 requires a housing mix that favours such smaller (one to three bedroom) properties. Wherever possible these houses should exceed the Nationally Described Space Standard [*Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard*]; DCLG, 2015] in order to meet the needs of residents, both now and in the future.

Impartial information on building quality and running costs would give householders the reassurance they need when making the life-changing choice of moving into a new home. The national Home Quality Mark (HQM) developed by the Buildings Research Establishment aims to address this issue for new homes. Set to five different levels, with Level 1 being a home slightly better than minimum legal standards, through to Level 5, which would be a 'state-of-the-art' sustainable home, this rating gives people the confidence that the new homes they are choosing to buy or rent are well-designed and built, and cost-effective to run. It provides impartial information from independent experts on a new home's quality, and it clearly indicates to householders the overall expected costs, health and well-being benefits, and the environmental footprint associated with living in the home. These issues have featured prominently in the feedback from Blewbury residents with regard to the type of housing they would expect to see developed within the village. Therefore, although we cannot require standards beyond Building Regulations compliance, we feel all developments should seek to comply with the HQM scheme.

9.6 Climate change and energy issues

Many people in Blewbury are concerned about climate change, and would like much stronger support for zero-carbon housing and incentives to reduce consumption of energy and natural resources.

There are a variety of ways in which housing can be built or adapted to minimise carbon emissions, and to cope better with the more frequent extreme weather conditions that have been predicted due to climate change. Some of these measures also have the benefits of reducing energy bills and increasing comfort and the sense of well-being.

Houses and infrastructure should be built using sustainable, local materials wherever possible.

There are a number of well-established renewable energy sources, such as solar photovoltaic panels, solar thermal panels, and heating by air-source or ground-source heat pumps. Wood-burning stoves or boilers are useful, but are only low carbon if the fuel comes from a sustainable source and has not been shipped a long distance. Air pollution must also be minimised. Wood-burning stoves are much more efficient than open fires, but should always be fitted by a registered installer due to increased risk of fire, especially in older buildings.

Efficient boilers and well-designed heating systems with flexible controls can increase comfort while reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.

Passive measures to reduce energy consumption and improve comfort are essential. The most obvious are good insulation, air-tightness and no thermal bridging. However, some modern insulation materials are not suitable for use in old timber-frame buildings because they are not breathable. Good window and skylight design can minimise the need for artificial lighting. Well-designed ventilation flow can obviate the need for air conditioning as the climate warms, and thought should be given in new builds to analysing the potential for overheating and designing to avoid it.

Careful maintenance of gutters and downpipes will preserve the longevity of any building, and becomes increasingly important with predicted increased rainfall due to climate change. Better drainage to avoid flooding also helps with this.

The use of water-efficient baths, showers, toilets, appliances, etc. can help to minimise water use in case of extended drought periods. More radically, systems allowing the use of grey water where drinking-quality water is not required can also reduce water consumption.

Glossary

Affordable Housing: There are three categories: *social rented*, *affordable rented* and *intermediate* housing. These are provided for eligible households whose needs are not met by *market housing*. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. Homes that do not meet this definition of affordable housing, such as ‘low-cost market housing’, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

Affordable rented housing: Housing let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable rent is no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).

AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; designated in recognition of national importance and to ensure that its character and qualities are protected for all to enjoy.

BNDP: Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan (referred to here as ‘the Plan’).

Conservation area: An area of notable environmental, architectural or historical interest or importance, the character or appearance of which is protected by law against undesirable changes.

Curtilage: The land immediately surrounding a house or dwelling, including any closely associated buildings and structures, but excluding any associated open fields.

Designated heritage asset: A world heritage site, scheduled monument, *listed building*, protected wreck site, registered park and garden, registered battle field or *conservation area* designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Plan: A set of documents that set out a local authority’s policies and proposals for the development and use of land. This plan guides and shapes day-to-day decisions as to whether or not planning permission should be granted. By law, all decisions made should be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Grampian condition: A requirement on a planning decision that prevents development starting until off-site works, on land not controlled by the applicant, have been completed.

Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of *significance* meriting consideration in planning decisions because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Includes *designated heritage assets* as well as assets identified by the local planning authority.

Housing Needs Survey: Survey on housing and related matters distributed to all households in Blewbury in autumn 2014. The results have been used to inform the policies in this Plan.

Intermediate housing: Homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above *social rented housing*, but below *market housing* levels. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low-cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not *affordable rented housing*.

Landscape capacity: The degree to which the landscape can accommodate development without significant damage.

Landscape Character Assessment: A survey of the character, features and sensitivity of Blewbury Parish. The report sets out *landscape capacity* and development guidelines for sites that come forward in the future. It has been used to inform the policies in this Plan.

Landscape character: The distinctive and recognisable pattern of features that makes a landscape type different from others.

Landscape value: How much importance to attach to the landscape, and why.

Landscape sensitivity: A landscape's ability to tolerate change without compromise to its fundamental character, judged separately from quality and/or value as they are different.

Listed building: A building which has been designated because of its special architectural or historic interest. Unless the list entry indicates otherwise, includes not only the building itself but also any object or structure fixed to the building and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building which, although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948.

Local Plan (part 1 and part 2): Vale of White Horse District Council development plans, proposing to build 20,000 new houses up to 2031. Part 1 (Strategic Sites and Policies) deals with large developments of more than 200 dwellings and part 2 (Detailed Policies and Local Sites) with smaller developments. Part 2 will appear only after Part 1 is approved.

Market housing: Housing available to buy or rent privately at open market prices.

NPPF: National Planning Policies Framework; sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

OCC: Oxfordshire County Council.

ORCC: Oxfordshire Rural Community Council; now called Community First Oxfordshire.

PC: Parish Council (in our case Blewbury Parish Council).

Public realm: Any publicly owned streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities.

Rural Exception Site: *Social rented* and *affordable housing* on a site where housing would not normally be permitted, provided the development meets a proven local need and is supported or initiated by the Parish Council. (Cossicle Mead in Blewbury is an example.)

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a *heritage asset* is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

SHMA: Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a *heritage asset* to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its *setting*.

Social rented housing: Housing owned by local authorities and private registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Village Character Assessment: A survey of the character, features and sensitivity of Blewbury village, including green open spaces and the heritage significance of historic buildings and the conservation area. It has been used to inform the policies in this Plan.

VWHDC: Vale of White Horse District Council (referred to here as 'the Vale').

Windfall site: A development site that becomes available for development unexpectedly and is therefore not included as allocated land in a planning authority's development plan.

Credits and Acknowledgements

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Photo credits

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Map credits (where not shown on the map)

Figure 16: Thanks to the Blewbury Bulletin for this map of the village, based on Ordnance Survey mapping under licence. © Crown copyright.

Figure 35: From Landscape Character Assessment, based on Ordnance Survey mapping under licence. © Hankinson Duckett Associates.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express a very big 'thank you' to the volunteers who helped to distribute and collect the Housing Needs Survey, and to the people who attended focus groups on specialist subject areas.

Appendices

The following appendices are available separately:

Appendix A: Drainage, Sewer Overflows and Groundwater Flooding in Blewbury

Appendix B: Housing Needs Survey

Appendix C: Landscape Character Assessment

Appendix D: Village Character Assessment



Figure 47: The downs above Blewbury