

# Eye & Dunsden Parish

## *Landscape Character Assessment and Proposal for a Local Valued Landscape*



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Eye & Dunsden Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) on behalf of Eye & Dunsden Parish Council appointed Liz Allen CMLI (Environmental Planning Landscape Architecture) in August 2020 to undertake the Eye & Dunsden Parish Landscape Character Assessment and analysis of the open land within the parish to inform the emerging policies in the Neighbourhood Plan to identify the value of the landscape and recommend areas which constitute a Local Valued Landscape.
- 1.2 The Study Area falls wholly in South Oxfordshire District. Figures 1 to 8 show the parish boundary and the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) which also follows the parish boundary. A small part of the parish lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which also borders the northern edge of the parish as shown in Figure 4. The south eastern boundary is the line of the River Thames beyond which lies Wokingham District within Berkshire. The parish, shown in Figure 1, covers the open landscape of the parish/NPA including the three rural settlements of Sonning Eye, Playhatch and Dunsden Green, and a cluster of houses in open countryside collectively known as Littlestead Green.
- 1.3 The study will form part of the Eye & Dunsden NDP's evidence base and will provide robust landscape evidence to be used in plan making and planning decisions.
- 1.4 This report builds on published landscape character studies most notably the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017 (in support of the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034), the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment 2017, and data sources from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). A full list of documents is included in Appendix 1.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 2.1 This study sets out to provide a transparent, consistent, and objective approach to understanding the landscape and visual attributes of the parish and to provide the parish and Local Planning Authority officers with a robust and clear landscape evidence base. The overriding objectives for this landscape assessment are as follows:
  - Analysis of the landscape within the parish including the three rural settlements of Sonning Eye, Playhatch, and Dunsden Green, and the cluster of houses known as Littlestead Green
  - Identify and describe the variation in the character of the landscape across the parish in the form of Parish Landscape Character Areas (PLCAs)
  - Propose land management and development recommendations for each PLCA
- 2.2 This report will meet the following objectives of the Eye & Dunsden Neighbourhood Development Plan:
  - To provide a comprehensive and objective assessment of the landscape character, visual attributes and value of the land outside of the Chilterns AONB

- To identify characteristics of the area that reflect those found within the adjacent Chilterns AONB and their contribution to the setting of the Chilterns AONB
  - To provide evidence for the parish to be included as a Local Valued Landscape, and
  - The contribution this Local Valued Landscape provides with regard to the separation of settlements within the parish
- 2.3 The boundaries of the PLCAs are based, as a starting point on the wider landscape character types identified in the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017 and then on detailed desk-base and fieldwork assessment. The Study also considers the visual characteristics of the parish; key views and vistas, landmark features, important skylines and particular sensitive visual receptors.
- 2.4 The study takes into account the locations of ecological, heritage and recreational assets but does not include detailed studies of these topics. However historic landscape characterisation by Oxfordshire County Council has been used to further understand surviving landscape patterns derived from the historic landscape.
- 2.5 In the light of NPPF para 174 a) and b), the Study assists the NDP in its identification of Valued Landscapes within the parish outside of the Chilterns AONB. The Study identifies landscape and visual features of value in each area which collectively form the physical attributes which define Valued Landscapes within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Study does not start with the premise that all landscapes are valued (i.e. as falling within NPPF para 174 (a)) but through careful examination of those features shared with the AONB or identified as worthy of conservation and enhancement as set out within the SODC Landscape Character Assessment 2017 (in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment version 3 paras 5.26 to 5.31), identifies those areas that meet the criteria for Valued Landscapes.

### **3.0 LANDSCAPE SETTING**

#### **Location (see Figure 1)**

- 3.1 The Study Area falls within South Oxfordshire District, the most southerly part of Oxfordshire. The parish borders onto Wokingham District which lies to the south east, Reading Borough Council to the west, both within Berkshire.
- 3.2 The parish lies between the River Thames to the south east, to the west the parish abuts the built-up area of Caversham and a small part of Kidmore Parish. Within the north east a small part of the parish is included within the Chilterns AONB. To the south of the parish, on the opposite side of the River Thames, lies the village of Sonning, which then extends further south into Woodley a suburb of Reading. To the northeast of the parish is Binfield Heath Parish and Shiplake Parish which both contain a number of small villages.
- 3.3 The parish contains four small areas of housing. As set out within SODC Settlement Assessment Paper 2018. Playhatch is described as a small village, Dunsden Green and Sonning Eye are classified as 'other' village a description lower than a small village, and Littlestead Green is not classified (Ref: SODC Core Strategy 2012 and Settlement Assessment Background Paper 2018).



### **Topography and Hydrology (see Figures 5)**

- 3.4 The topography and landform are a key characteristic of the parish. The parish lies on the dipslopes of the Chiltern Hills which descend down to the River Thames floodplain. At its highest point towards the north eastern boundary, the parish sits at 102m AOD on the southern side of Comp Wood, from here the landform falls south-eastwards as a gently undulating landform to around 70m AOD, where the landform then descends more steeply forming part of the Thames River valley side down to around the 40m AOD contour. At this elevation the landform then flattens out and forms part of the floodplain for the River Thames at around and below 35m AOD.
- 3.5 The Thames River valley side creates a local skyline feature as can be viewed from the A4155 and the Thames Path which aligns the River Thames. The development free skyline, demarcated by small woodlands and open arable fields provide local landmarks as well as enclosing and adding to the rural character of the Thames Valley floodplain. From this elevated valley side there are then extensive views to the south, some open, some framed down across the Thames Valley to far horizons including the wooded Bowsey Hill.
- 3.6 The River Thames is one of the key features of the parish with its extensive floodplain containing drainage ditches and minor tributaries including Berry Brook which aligns along the foot of the valley side. There is also a loose line of springs along the base of the valley side, with Pool Spring identified on the OS map and also providing a name for an adjacent minor road: Spring Lane.
- 3.7 Above the valley side, the landscape has an elevated open character where the predominantly arable landscape allows the distinctive dry and semi-dry valleys which are carved into the landform to be visible as curvaceous sculptural landforms. Further north beyond these prominent dry and semi-dry valleys the landform becomes less pronounced and forms a more intimate undulating landform containing a number of small shallow valleys, one of the key valleys aligns adjacent Tagg Lane which also contains a seasonal watercourse. Further to the north the landform forms a more pronounced plateau where due to its elevated character allows long views out to the north west and further to the east within the Chilterns AONB.

### **Vegetation and Ecology (see Figure 6)**

- 3.8 The parish provides a mix of small/medium sized arable fields and grassland, woodlands and an interconnecting network of riparian woodland around the lakes. Fields of grassland can be found adjacent isolated farmsteads, dwellings, around the periphery of the settlements, adjacent areas of woodland and with also as an extensive linear field adjacent the River Thames.
- 3.9 Woodlands are a feature of the parish and can be found towards the northern parish boundary, where they then become more concentrated beyond the parish boundary around Binfield Heath. Woodlands within this area include Lady's Shaw Wood (which is within the Chilterns AONB), Comp Wood, Round Wood, The Firs, Ash Copse and Spanhill Copse. Woodland also forms a linear feature along the western edge of the parish, which includes Blackhouse Wood and areas of woodland adjacent Caversham Park Road leading down to Milestone Wood. A number of these woodlands are Ancient Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland.

- 3.10 Throughout the parish, but particularly within the north, small woodland copses, often isolated within large arable fields mark the location of small redundant chalk pits. A good example can be seen north west of Bryant's Farm.
- 3.11 South of the A1455 and the B478, on the Thames floodplain the landscape is dominated by a number of interconnecting flooded quarries. On the banks and adjacent unflooded areas, a network of riparian vegetation has developed. Also, within this relatively new landscape there are a number of mature oak trees which have survived from the previous farmed landscape.
- 3.12 Hedgerows (not including garden ones) are a feature of the parish. Generally robust, native and deciduous in character and containing mature oak trees. Isolated mature trees can also be seen within fields, often demarcating the location of previous hedgerow boundaries.

### **Historic Landscape (See Figure 3)**

- 3.13 Oxfordshire County Council published its Historic Landscape Character Assessment for the whole of the County in 2017. This shows that the parish has a number of distinguishing historic landscape patterns including the surviving pre 18th century *Ancient enclosure* with four areas identified within the parish as follows: north west of Dunsden Green and north of Littlestead Green; South of Spanhill Copse; North of Bints Farm and the area of the parish south of Lady's Shaw wood (set within the AONB). There is also an area of *pre 1881 post medieval piecemeal enclosure* alongside the River Thames. Areas of *Ancient enclosure* are a feature of the Chilterns AONB.
- 3.14 Sonning Eye is designated a Conservation Area, which also contains 13 Listed Buildings. There are numerous Listed Buildings throughout the rest of the parish, with concentrations at Playhatch (5) and around the periphery of Dunsden Green (7). Farmsteads often contain Listed Buildings, for example The Row Lane Farmhouse is Grade II\* with the adjacent C18 Grade II listed barn. Isolated cottages, rural in character are also found to be listed for example the Grade II: Old Thatched Cottage C16/C17 with later additions.
- 3.15 The parish has no registered Parks or Gardens. However, to the west beyond the parish boundary is Caversham Park. Caversham Park is a Registered Grade II Park and Garden with remains of a landscape park laid out in the 1760's by Lancelot Brown. From the early 1960's the area of outer parkland was largely built on extending across to the western edge of Milestone Wood, which now contributes to the outer wooded eastern edge of Caversham. On early 1800's OS maps the area beyond Milestone Wood to the east extending across to Playhatch, is shown as open agricultural land, which as seen can still be appreciated today.

### **Perceptual/Experiential Landscape**

- 3.16 The parish has an over-riding rural character with exceptionally good scenic value as a result of the internal mix of river landscapes; small to medium fields; the open river valley side; local undulating dipslopes and floodplain topography; mature woodland; mature tree belts and mature trees; local landmarks; a high number of listed buildings; small rural hamlets and the scenic vistas across this landscape, over the Thames Valley to the south and across to the Chilterns AONB to the NE and NW.

- 3.17 The parish has numerous small lanes and Public Rights of Way providing access across the parish including down the river valley side to the River Thames, along the River Thames (River Thames Path: National Trail) and across into the urban area of Caversham. These paths are well-used by walkers, runners and where permitted, cyclists. A network of permissive footpaths has also been added to provide access to the lakes.
- 3.18 The parish has a few detracting features. The overhead pylons which align in a north-south direction on the western side of the parish. The two major roads: A4155 and the B478 although busy are well enclosed by roadside vegetation and with regard to the A4155 is only visible from the wider landscape at Hampstead Hill. Other roads due to often being set in a slight cutting and enclosed by robust hedgerows, often with mature trees are not visually dominant within the landscape. Additionally, these minor roads are surprisingly quiet with low levels of traffic which further allows easy walking and use by cyclists.
- 3.19 The linear woodland/hedgerow/tree belt along the western parish boundary has not only controlled urban sprawl, but as a screen has also retained the strong sense of rurality within the parish right up to the edge of Caversham, providing an area of immediate contrast which can also be easily accessible from Caversham.

### **Settlement Pattern**

- 3.20 The three rural hamlets (Dunsden Green, Playhatch and Sonning Eye) and the group of houses at Littlestead Green are separated by open countryside and are quite distinct from each other. The settlements are also separate from Caversham to the west by open fields and the robust linear woodland/trees/hedgerows which aligns along the western boundary of the parish.
- 3.21 Dunsden Green is a small settlement which developed around a road junction and the Green. Development on the approach roads is linear, asymmetrical and intermittent which allows views out to the surrounding countryside and the integration of rural elements into its rural settlement character. Except for the 4 semi-detached dwellings leading south towards Playhatch, and the one semi-detached dwelling on the edge of Dunsden Way, this simple rural hamlet has largely remained unchanged since the late 1800's.
- 3.22 A group of houses surrounded by open countryside forms Littlestead Green, which is also smaller than Dunsden Green. Although Green is within its name, there is no evidence of a Green today; however originally there was an area marked as a 'Pound' on an OS map 1872-1879, which is also a feature which has commoners' rights and often found on village Greens. Littlestead Green forms a very small nucleated area of dwellings around the junction of Foxhill Lane, Row Lane and a bridleway leading west from Dunsden Green. Also, very little has changed in its form since the late 1800's.
- 3.23 Within the adjacent countryside of Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green there are a number of outlying farmsteads which gives both these hamlets a dispersed rural settlement character.
- 3.24 Playhatch has a more nucleated settlement form originally centred on the junction with Foxhill Lane and the unnamed road running through Playhatch, while located just above the River Thames Floodplain. Mature trees, hedgerow boundaries, large rear gardens and small



grass paddocks are a feature of the periphery of this settlement, which provides a buffer and a contrast with the surrounding open arable fields.

- 3.25 Sonning Eye is located on the northern side of the River Thames evolving from a river crossing point. Although the B478 which runs through this village is busy with vehicular traffic, this soon dissipates as you leave the settlement along the Thames Path, where looking back, Sonning Eye is then screened by its mature periphery trees.

## 4.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT (Figure 2)

- 4.1 The parish lies mainly within the National Character Area *NCA110: Chilterns* and with a small section to the south within National Character Area *NCA115 Thames Valley*. The Chilterns NCA includes the Chilterns AONB but covers a wider area and is defined, amongst other things, by the close relationship between the Chiltern Hills and the Thames Valley.
- 4.2 The Landscape Character Assessment of South Oxfordshire District was originally completed in 2003. This document was updated by the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (SOLCA) September 2017 which forms part of the evidence base for the SODC Local Plan 2034. The 2017 work reflects much of what was to be found in the 2003 study with some update in the guidelines. The 2017 work however excludes the assessment of landscape sensitivity and landscape strategies contained within the original work.
- 4.3 The parish falls within two District-wide landscape character areas (SOLCA): The Chilterns Plateau with Valleys (LCA10) and the Thames Valley and Fringes Landscape Character Area (LCA11)

### **Chiltern Plateau with Valleys LCA10**

- 4.4 Chiltern Plateau with Valleys LCA10 (see Figure 2) is an extensive LCA within South Oxfordshire and covers an area from the parish extending north westwards to the Chilterns escarpment. Within the parish this LCA covers the northern part of the parish from Dunsden Green, west to Caversham and across to the east including Ash Copse on the northern side of the A4155. This LCA is sub-divided into Landscape Character Types (LCTs) of which the following are found within the parish:
- *Semi-enclosed dipslopes*: There are two areas within the parish which this Landscape Type covers, the main area extends from Dunsden Green across to the west: Caversham Park, to the north, just north of Row Lane Farmhouse and then across to the eastern boundary of the parish. The second area includes a smaller area to the west around and including Bishoplands Farm down to Kiln Road
  - *Open dipslopes*: This Landscape Type extends from the north across the main elevated area east around Bishoplands Farm down to the northern side of Sandpit Lane in the east and the northern edge of Blackhouse Wood in the west
  - *Wooded dipslope*: This covers a small area within the parish and includes Comp Wood on the northern boundary of the parish
- 4.5 Key characteristics of the Chilterns Plateau with Valleys Landscape Character Area LCA10 of relevance to the parish are set out in sections 15.3-15.6 of the 2017 study, and are as follows:

- An undulating landscape ranging from c. 40m AOD to c. 210m AOD
- The plateau is dissected by an irregular pattern of shallow, small scale dry valleys
- Heavily wooded landscape
- Areas of Ancient Woodland including Blackhouse Wood, Ash Copse, an area of woodland north of Littlestead Close. Also, areas of Ancient Woodland replanted at Comp Wood and part of Round Wood
- No major roads cross through this area
- Sparsely settled with small villages and hamlets. The hamlet of Dunsden Green comprises the largest settlement
- Agriculture comprises the predominant land use with arable and pasture.
- Narrow lanes and tall hedgerows
- Chilterns Plateau with Valleys contains a limited number of watercourses, with a couple of springs identified on the OS map at Tagg Lane, north of Dunsden Green which aligns southwards towards the semi-dry valley which leads down to Playhatch
- Priority habitats include *deciduous woodland* and *good quality semi-improved grassland*. A large area of *good quality semi-improved grassland* can be identified north of Round Wood and south of Bint's Farm
- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of this character area
- The pattern of settlement in the Chilterns is typically one of small hamlets and farms scattered amongst extensive woods and commons
- Traditional building materials are typical of the Chilterns as a whole with a predominance of red brick, together with silver-grey flint. Older houses were timber-framed in oak and chalk blocks have sometimes been used on Chiltern buildings. Plain tiles were the rule on the larger roofs, with thatch on cottages with some slate introduced in Victorian times. Farmsteads are often characterised by large timber framed barns, typically clad with black, horizontal weather boarding with gable walls constructed out of brick and flint

4.6 The key characteristics of the landscape types and the relevant landscape guidance for LCA10 are set out in the Table below:

Landscape Type	Key Characteristic	LCA10 Landscape Guidance
Open dipslope	<p>Gently sloping ground.</p> <p>Dominance of intensive arable cultivation with large scale field pattern, weak hedgerow structure and very little woodland cover</p> <p>Distinctively 'grey' and flinty soils</p> <p>Predominantly rural character but with some limited intrusion from power lines (e.g. on both sides of Caversham)</p> <p>Large-scale, open landscape with high intervisibility in immediate area but long-distance views contained by neighbouring woodland</p>	<p>Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland particularly on land adjacent to watercourses</p> <p>Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges and planting of new hedgerow trees such as oak and ash, and tree belts should be encouraged</p> <p>Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering, when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type</p> <p>Safeguard, maintain and enhance the quality of unimproved chalk and limestone grassland with sustainable grazing</p>

<p><b>Semi-enclosed dipslope</b></p>	<p>Typically, level or more gently sloping ground</p> <p>Comparatively open fields contained within a strong structure of woods, hedgerows or trees to form a loose mosaic</p> <p>Dominance of arable cultivation</p> <p>Strong structure of woods and hedgerows generally provides visual containment and results in moderate to low intervisibility</p> <p>Distinctive pattern of winding rural roads, irregular field boundaries and scattered rural settlements, typical of 'ancient countryside'</p> <p>Generally rural and unspoilt character but with some 'suburbanising' influences within rural settlements and along main roads (e.g., A4074, A4130), and localised intrusion of built development and power lines (e.g., around Sonning Common and Caversham)</p>	<p>techniques. Identify opportunities for calcareous grassland restoration by linking and extending the existing resource, particularly along the Chilterns escarpment</p> <p>Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species-rich grassland. Opportunities for expanding this habitat include the establishment and management of field margins/buffer strips adjacent to existing limestone grassland habitat using native wildflower species appropriate to the area</p> <p>Maintain the vernacular character of settlements and promote the use of building materials and a scale of development that is appropriate to this landscape type</p> <p>Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</p> <p>Local building materials should be used, including flintstone and brick or red and blue brick and clay tiles in the Chilterns</p> <p>Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials to maintain vernacular style and a scale of development that are appropriate to Chilterns Plateau with Valleys (see also the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, November 2016; and the Chilterns AONB Building Design Guide 2010)</p>
<p><b>Wooded dipslope</b></p>	<p>Distinctive landform of plateaux dissected by a network of shallow, dry valleys</p> <p>Heavily wooded character, including extensive stands of ancient, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, mature beechwoods and more recent plantations</p> <p>Strong structure of woodland and complex landform creates an intimate and enclosed character with a particular feeling of secrecy in some valleys</p> <p>Distinctive pattern of winding rural roads, irregular field boundaries and scattered rural settlements, typical of 'ancient countryside'</p> <p>Generally rural and unspoilt character with only localised suburbanising influences within villages, along road corridors or around the fringes of the main settlements</p> <p>Low intervisibility</p>	<p>Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts.</p> <p>Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables</p> <p>There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands distributed throughout the landscape type and the priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management</p> <p>Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as crack willow, oak and ash</p>

### Thames Valley and Fringes (LCA11)

4.7 Thames Valley and Fringes (LCA11) is an area which extends along the Thames between the north of Henley to Reading and from Reading up to Goring (see Figure 2). This area is sub-divided into Landscape Character Types (LCTs) of which the following are found within the Parish:

- *Flat floodplain pasture* (adjacent the River Thames north of and including Sonning Eye and a small area south of the A4155 around Lowfield Farm)
- *Floodplain wetland* (south of Sonning Eye including the area of the flooded quarries)
- *Open Dipslope* (east of Caversham, Land north of the A4155 until the junction with Spring Lane extending up to Dunsden Green. Then south of the A4155 extending down to the floodplain of the River Thames)

4.8 Key characteristics of the Thames Valley and Fringes Landscape Character Area LCA11 of relevance to the parish are set out in sections 16.3-16.6 of the 2017 study:

- Flat valley floor and the steeper valley sides to the north west and the gentler hills and sloping fringes to the east. Topography ranges between c. 40m AOD and c. 75m AOD
- The River Thames and associated floodplain has a strong influence on the character of this area
- Woodlands are a feature in this landscape with some designated as Ancient Woodland i.e. Spanhill Copse
- Transport infrastructure including the A4155 road cross through this character area
- The valley sides are gentler and grade almost imperceptibly into the Chilterns dip slope. Here, the chalk is masked by coombe deposits and gravels. A network of minor roads connects settlements
- The flat floodplain is underlain by alluvium but with frequent deposits of river terrace gravels. The heavier soils generally support extensive cattle grazed pastures but the gravel areas support some arable cultivation and have been quarried to the east of Caversham to create a series of flooded gravel pit
- A network of smaller watercourses that connect the River Thames with Caversham Lakes
- Priority habitats include deciduous woodland, lowland meadows, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Species-rich hedgerows are distributed throughout different parts of this character area
- The Thames Path crosses through the area
- This section of the Thames Valley includes a string of riverside towns and settlements, including Sonning Eye. Many of these originated as favoured sites on the terrace gravels for prehistoric, Roman and Saxon settlement. However, their strategic position at important river crossings, and as trading or staging posts along the river and main east-west routes, was the key to their later development
- The special qualities of the riverside landscape, set below the wooded Chiltern Hills, were also a key factor in the development of settlements and buildings between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, drawing opulent villas to the towns and riverside and inspiring the creation of a sequence of beautiful parks along these reaches of the Thames. Later development of road and rail communications led to the growth of commuter villages

- The principal traditional building materials within this area were timber followed by brick and tile, with Welsh slate introduced after the arrival of the railway in 1857. The use of knapped flint (found locally within the chalk) as walling is also evident in places.
- The A4155 is a visual and aural detractor in the landscape

4.9 The key characteristics of the landscape types and the relevant landscape guidance for LCA11 are set out in the Table below:

Landscape Type	Key characteristic	LCA11 Landscape guidance
<b>Flat Floodplain Pasture</b>	<p>Flat, low-lying farmland, typically dominated by permanent pasture with a distinctively 'wet', riparian character (although some areas of arable may be interspersed within the floodplain)</p> <p>Prone to flooding with distinctive network of drainage ditches</p> <p>Comparatively strong landscape structure with willows conspicuous along the riverside</p> <p>Intimate, pastoral, tranquil and quite remote character with some 'arcadian' qualities along the Thames close to settlements and riverside parklands</p> <p>Generally low intervisibility, although views along the river corridor may be possible in some more sparsely vegetated areas</p>	<p>Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture and promote arable reversion to grassland, particularly on land adjacent to watercourses. Recognise that grazing sheep and cattle can make a contribution to the landscape's identity and distinctiveness</p> <p>Promote environmentally sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering, when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type (see also the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, November 2016)</p> <p>Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges</p> <p>Safeguard, maintain and enhance the quality of unimproved chalk and limestone grassland with sustainable grazing techniques. Identify opportunities for calcareous grassland restoration by linking and extending the existing resource</p> <p>Prevent scrub encroachment in areas of species rich grassland</p>
<b>Floodplain Wetland</b>	<p>Complex of freshwater lagoons formed from flooded gravel pits</p> <p>Artificial form and character but colonising vegetation helps to create a more semi natural character and developing wildlife value in some areas</p> <p>Comparatively inaccessible, remote character but active gravel workings, recreational use and proximity to roads, railways and built development intrude on rural qualities of the area</p> <p>Semi-enclosed character with moderate to low intervisibility</p>	<p>Maintain high standards of restoration at gravel pits to accommodate a range of after-uses that integrate successfully with the character of the surrounding landscape</p> <p>Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses such as gravel extraction with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic to the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</p> <p>Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area.</p>



<b>Open Dipslope</b>	<p>Gently sloping ground at the foot of the Chilterns dip slope next to the valley floor between Caversham and Shiplake</p> <p>Dominance of intensive arable cultivation with large-scale field pattern, weak hedgerow structure and very little woodland cover</p> <p>Distinctively 'grey' and flinty soils</p> <p>Predominantly rural character with limited intrusion from built-up areas</p> <p>Large-scale, open landscape with views out over the Thames Valley and high intervisibility</p>	<p>This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside</p> <p>Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials to maintain vernacular style and a scale of development and that are appropriate to Thames Valley and Fringes (see also the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, November 2016)</p> <p>Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts</p> <p>Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables</p> <p>Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willow</p> <p>Establish buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds adjacent to willow pollards</p> <p>Species-rich rivers and ditches are also very important and the aim should be to establish and maintain diverse banksides and aquatic vegetation through sympathetic management and the use of Agri environment schemes</p> <p>There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands distributed throughout the landscape type and the priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management</p> <p>Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as alders, ash, oak and willows</p>
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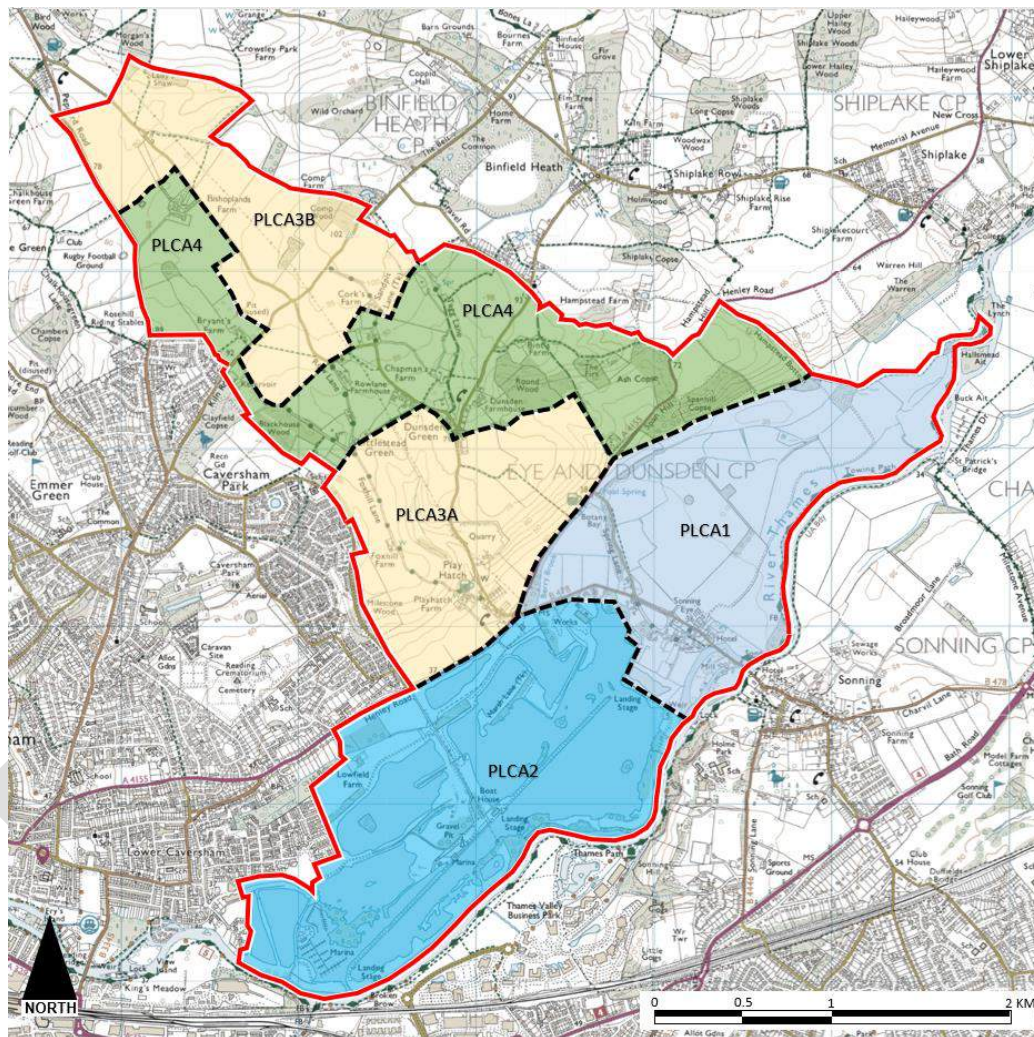
- 4.10 Oxfordshire County Council completed its county-wide Historic Landscape Character Assessment in 2017. The data for this work is now available for non-commercial use. Figure 3 shows the Historic Landscape Character Types within the parish. These have been used to inform the individual PLCA reports (section 5).
- 4.11 The Chilterns AONB covers an area within the north of the parish, north of Bishopsland unnamed road (which connects Row Lane with Sonning Common). This area includes Lady's Shaw Wood. The special qualities of the AONB landscape are set out in the Chilterns Management Plan 2019-2024 and are reflected in the SODC Landscape Character Assessments.
- 4.12 Special qualities of the Chilterns AONB which are also found in the parish are:
- Panoramic views
  - Wooded landscape as at Lady's Shaw Wood (AONB) and Round Wood, Ash Copse, Comp Wood, Blackhouse Wood, also including Ancient Woodlands
  - High levels of tranquillity, unspoilt countryside, secret corners and areas with a sense of remoteness

- Inter-relationship between the AONB hills and the River Thames Valley
  - Chiltern dipslopes with folds in the landscape and dry valleys
  - A mixture of arable, grassland and woodland reflect the dominance of Grade 3 agricultural land
  - Ancient Woodland has remained on extensive clay-with-flint deposits, while very steep slopes are rarely cultivated, as can be seen around to the east of Dunsden Green towards and around Round Wood, The Firs and Ash Copse
  - Mosaic of fields with arable crops and livestock, bordered by ancient hedgerows and trees
  - A dense network of Public Rights of Way including the National Trail: Thames Path
  - Ancient routeways and sunken lanes. I.e. Fox Lane and Tagg Lane
  - Distinctive buildings made from local brick, flint and clay tiles i.e. Dunsden Green Church
- 4.13 There is a high level of interconnectivity between the edge of the Chilterns AONB and the Parish with Public Rights of Way extending into the parish from the AONB, aligning along the AONB boundary while also permitting views across the parish.
- 4.14 Although only a small part of the parish falls within the AONB, the above shows that the rest of the parish falls within the setting of the AONB. This is supported by the Chiltern Conservation Area in their submissions to Natural England for inclusion of part of the parish within an extension to the AONB.
- 4.15 Guidance within the Chiltern Management Plan 2019-2024 sets out the protection to be given to the setting of the AONB and the approach to be taken in the *CCB Position Statement Development affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB 2011*. With an overall vision which states...*The setting of the Chilterns is valued and protected by ensuring development adjacent to the AONB also represents its national importance.*
- 4.16 Eye & Dunsden Parish have made a joint application with adjacent parishes to extend the Chilterns AONB to include the majority of the parish. However, a decision is yet to be made.

## 5.0 EYE AND DUNSDEN PARISH CHARACTER AREA REPORTS

- 5.1 The parish has been subdivided into 4 individual Landscape Character Areas based on desk top study and visits to the area. Each of these has been assessed, drawing upon relevant key characteristics, sensitivities and management considerations identified in the South Oxfordshire LCA Landscape Guidelines and adding a new level of detail appropriate to the unique setting within the parish. They reflect current conditions in September 2020.

### Parish Landscape Character Areas 1 To 4



**PLCA1:** River Thames and Meadows

**PLCA2:** River Thames, Meadows and Lakes

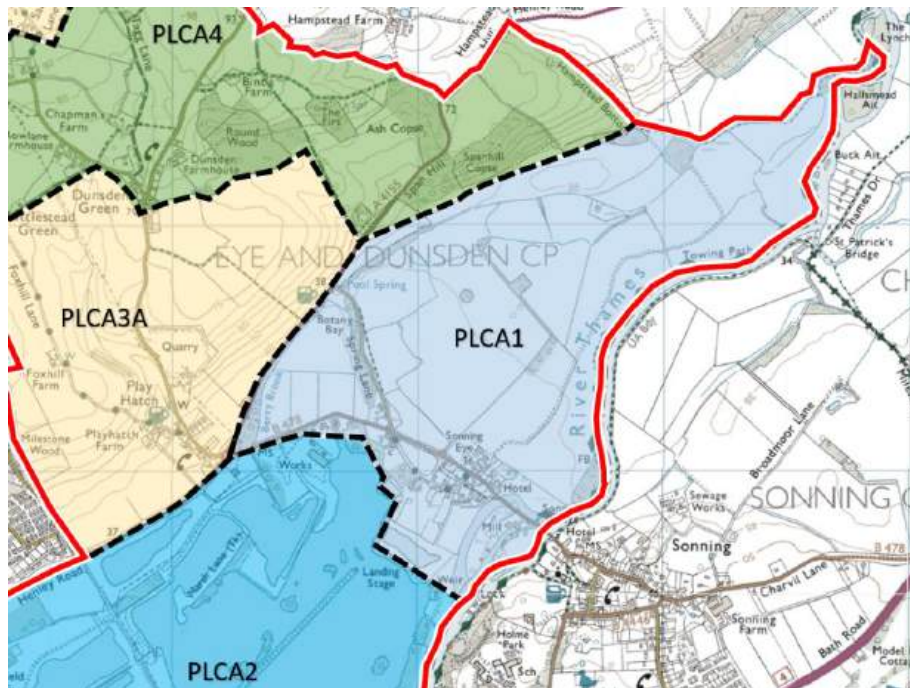
**PLCA3A and PLCA3B:** Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley side

**PLCA4:** Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side



## PLCA1: River Thames and Meadows

### Parish Landscape Character Area map



### PLCA1: Landscape Character Area Description

- 5.2 PLCA1 comprises the western half of the watercourse of the River Thames, the river bank and floodplain across to the base of the enclosing north - western river valley side, creating a single linear character area as shown above.
- 5.3 The topography of the floodplain is predominantly flat at around 30m AOD and rising slightly to the north west to around 35m AOD at the base of the valley side.
- 5.4 PLCA1 is bordered by the River Thames along its central line (parish boundary); PLCA4 Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side; PLCA3A Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side along its north-western boundary and the River Thames and Lakes (PLCA2) to the southwest.
- 5.5 PLCA1 includes the western half of the River Thames channel. The fields adjacent the River Thames are pastoral, long and linear. Beyond these the fields are larger and mainly arable with some areas of ongoing gravel extraction.
- 5.6 The A4155 can be busy with traffic but is well screened by adjacent roadside vegetation. The B478 provides the only access across the floodplain aligning through Sonning Eye, often busy with vehicular traffic, although this distraction soon dissipates away from this road. Spring Lane provides a quiet back lane.
- 5.7 Gravel extraction is an ongoing land use within the area, where after extraction, land is then partly restored back to farmland, or flooded to create lakes. A Restoration Plan for a current active area of extraction Ref: Caversham Quarry Phase C Extension (Ref P11/E2133/CM (MW.0158/11) is included within Appendix 4 and includes an irregular shape lake, pools,

wetland areas with a variety of proposed habitats including reed beds, species rich grassland and willow and carr woodland; adjacent areas have also been restored back to agriculture.

### **Landscape Types within PLCA1 (Figure 2)**

- 5.8 PLCA1 River Thames and Meadows, lies mainly within the Flat Flood Plain Pasture Landscape Character Type (LCT5) of the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017. In addition, PLCA1 also includes the southern part of the Open Dipslope (LCT11). The key characteristics of these three Landscape Character Types within the Thames Valley and Fringes Landscape Character Area are set out in 4.7- 4.9 of this Report.

### **Historic Landscape Character Types within PLCA1 (Figure 3)**

- 5.9 PLCA1 contains the following Historic Landscape Character Types as defined by the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape characterisation 2017:
- River Thames is classified as *Water: freshwater*
  - The pasture fields adjacent the River Thames are classified as *Piecemeal enclosure*
  - The arable fields on the floodplain and around the periphery of Sonning Eye is classified as *Re-organised enclosures*
  - Sonning Eye is classified as *Rural – hamlet*
  - The area to the east of Playhatch is classified as *Planned enclosure*
  - The land to the south of Spanhill Copse is classified as *Ancient Enclosure*
- 5.10 Historically by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the periphery land to the River Thames was *Piecemeal enclosure*, with the land leading towards the river valley side as *Ancient enclosure*. Within these areas of enclosure there was an area of *Enclosed rough ground*.

### **Key Valued Landscape Characteristics specific to the River Thames and Meadows to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 6)**

- 5.11 Natural features are as follows:
- Meandering river on floodplain
  - Irregular river banks with, intermittent groups of trees and riverside riparian vegetation
  - A mix of intermittent and robust hedgerows and wider tree belts marking field boundaries. Some lengths of post and wire allow views across the landscape
  - Linear fields of pasture adjacent the river, with larger arable fields and flood plain grazing marsh towards the valley side
  - Small woodlands on floodplain, including the woodland adjacent the River Thames north of Sonning Bridge
  - Tributaries of the River Thames including Berry Brook and the watercourse coming down from Hampstead Bottom
  - Water Spring at base of valley side
  - Floodplain area prone to flooding with manmade drainage channels straight or slightly curved on floodplain. Evidence of seasonally wet areas



5.12 Cultural and amenity features found within PLCA1 are as follows:

- Sonning Eye village is partly covered with a Conservation Area designation and contains 12 Grade II Listed Buildings and one Grade II\*. Building materials include red brick, timber, clay tiles and thatch and flint boundary walls. Although Sonning Eye aligns along the B478 it has grown as a compact nuclear form due to the scarcity of dry land at this riverside location
- No pavements or footways along narrow roads in main part of Sonning Eye
- Lack of intrusive urbanising elements
- The properties on the southern edge of Sonning Eye have large gardens which extend down to the river bank often containing mature trees and vegetation
- From areas to the north of Sonning Eye only the cluster of farm buildings is visible on the northern edge of the settlement
- The French Horn building complex forms a gateway building for travellers from the east, while heavily screened by vegetation from views from the north
- Garden boundaries mainly demarcated and well defined by brick or flint or hedges
- Grade II listed Bridge connects Sonning Eye with Sonning within Wokingham District
- Isolated dwellings including pub on the lower valley side adjacent A4155
- Towpath along western bank of River Thames also the *Thames Path* is a National Trail

5.13 Perceptual features are as follows:

- Meandering river provides seclusion and a series of screened and intimate locations
- Alignment of river demarcated within the landscape by riverside vegetation, often hidden
- Good tranquillity adjacent the River Thames, although present gravel workings can disturb
- The River Thames valley forms part of a wider view from viewpoints to the north of the parish, while on the floodplain there is strong sense of enclosure and remoteness

**Key Valued Visual Characteristics specific to the River Thames and Meadows, to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 7)**

5.14 Key views into PLCA1 are afforded from:

- Opposite side of River Thames bank and associated Public Right of Way
- PLCA4: Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side (eastern area), where there are long framed views down between woodlands to the River Thames floodplain
- PLCA3A: Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side from the PRoW descending the valley side from the north. Where the floodplain is viewed as having a strongly wooded character screening the river itself
- Elevated A4155 to the east, allows long views down across the Thames River Valley and beyond

5.15 Key views out of PLCA1 to:

- Long views across River Thames to the east, enclosing wooded horizons with shorter framed views across River Thames to a small number of fields
- Views of Hallsmead Ait (River Thames island)
- From the Thames Path there are open and framed views across the floodplain to the river valley side with Spanhill Copse (PLCA4) and adjacent arable fields (PLCA3A)
- There are some views from the A4155 northwards up the valley side to open arable fields viewed against the skyline
- Due to the dry and semi-dry valleys on the river valley side this has created an undulating wooded skyline, as can be appreciated from views from the floodplain
- Occasional framed view of a building set within a wooded landscape i.e. Shiplake College complex to the north east
- The Warren (woodland within neighbouring Shiplake Parish) and open arable fields
- Shiplake Row, visible as intermittent row of redbrick buildings set against mature trees on the horizon

5.16 Key views within PLCA1:

- Sonning Eye due to the mature trees on periphery, screens the settlement from the wider landscape, however the cluster of Farm buildings on the northern edge are visible from the north east, but due to their rural/agricultural character they seem detached from the residential character of Sonning Eye
- Views south from the A4155 are limited due to the wooded character on the edge of the floodplain
- Views of Sonning Bridge from the Thames Path
- Views of the wooded islands (including Mill Island) and wooded northern river bank as seen from the B478 and locations from within the Conservation Area

## Summary

- 5.17 PLCA1 is a well contained character area, which includes the flat river floodplain under pasture and arable cultivation, with an undeveloped river valley side enclosing the views from the valley floor. This is in contrast with the more open gently undulating arable landscape of the Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side (PLCA3A) to the west and the Dunsden Sem-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side (PLCA4) to the north. The river valley side along the north western edge of PLCA1 also acts as a transition in the topography and landscape pattern to PLCA3A and PLCA4.
- 5.18 PLCA1 contains landscape features as found within other landscape character areas adjacent the River Thames within the Chilterns AONB; these include a mainly undeveloped open flat floodplain, characterised by fields of pasture (including Priority Habitat: Floodplain Grazing Marsh) and drainage ditches with riparian vegetation enclosed by the river valley side.

### **Relevant Land Management / Development Considerations from South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017**

- 5.19 Set out below is a list of relevant land management and development considerations taken from the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017
- Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture
  - Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges
  - Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. Help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside
  - Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements
  - Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as alders, ash, oak and willows

### **Land Management guidance specific to River Thames and Meadows (PLCA1)**

- 5.20 Set out below is a list of land management guidance specific to PLCA1
- Conserve and retain the undeveloped gardens, paddocks and small fields around the periphery of Sonning Eye so to maintain its soft buffer settlement boundary edge to the wider landscape
  - Retain, restore and improve the hedgerow boundaries to fields on the open floodplain
  - Manage and retain existing woodlands
  - Restore areas which have undergone gravel extraction to a landscape in keeping with the valley floor floodplain landscape
  - Restore and enhance the alignment of Berry Brook and its associated riparian character
  - Retain the natural alignment of the Spring tributary and associated vegetation
  - Avoid over engineered solutions for tributaries and drainage ditches
  - Retain and improve the wooded character of the A4155. Link to adjacent woodlands

### **Development guidance specific to River Thames and Meadows (PLCA1)**

- 5.21 Set out below is a list of development guidance specific to PLCA1
- Conserve the largely development free large-scale open floodplain
  - Conserve and enhance the rural character of the area around Spring Lane
  - Avoid overdevelopment of each residential site within Sonning Eye
  - Avoid road improvements such as pavements, street lighting, signage which would urbanize this area
  - Avoid overstating entrances to quarry sites with unsuitable and suburban boundary fencing and treatment
  - Maintain the undeveloped character of the riverbanks

## Visual guidance specific to River Thames and Meadows (PLCA1)

5.22 Set out below is a list of visual guidance specific to PLCA1

- Maintain the open rural views of the River Thames corridor from the edge of the river valley side, in particular from the descending Public Rights of Way
- Maintain the visual separation of Playhatch and Sonning Eye
- Retain the soft vegetated edge to Sonning Eye invisibility within the wider landscape
- Avoid any development that would detract from the rural character of views from the River Thames and Meadows to PLCA2, PLCA3A and PLCA4. In particular avoid development that would introduce inappropriate development on the river valley side and skyline
- Retain the sense of visual enclosure by the undeveloped wooded river valley side
- Retain the character and appearance of the scenic views down the River Thames and the lack of development
- Retain the views from the B478 of the River Thames corridor including the wooded views of Mill Island

## Local Valued Landscape

5.23 PLCA1: River Thames and Meadows is regarded as a Valued Landscape for a number of reasons as set out within the table below; for these reasons It is set well above 'ordinary' countryside.

Factor contributing to a valued landscape	Evidence
<b>Landscape quality (condition)</b>	This PLCA contains a number of quality landscape elements which fit together forming a distinctive character area. These include the River Thames and its largely development free associated floodplain both enclosed by the undeveloped river valley side to the north west. The patchwork of fields, woodlands and robust hedgerows and Sonning Eye Conservation Area and Listed buildings further enhance this character area Originally part of the 'Area of Great Landscape Value' as set out within South Oxfordshire DC Rural Areas Local Plan 1992
<b>Scenic quality</b>	High scenic quality, with numerous views of the River Thames and to the undeveloped river valley side, further enhancing the scenic quality of the PLCA1
<b>Rarity</b>	River Thames and associated undeveloped floodplain, enclosed by undeveloped river valley side. An undeveloped length of the River Thames with a strong rural character in close proximity to urban areas Sonning Eye as an early river crossing retaining its compact nucleated settlement form
<b>Representativeness</b>	This largely undeveloped section of the River Thames and associated undeveloped floodplain and river valley side provides a unique example of the River Thames as a meandering river on a floodplain as found within the Chilterns AONB
<b>Conservation interests</b>	Sonning Eye is partly covered by a Conservation Area designation and includes 13 Listed Buildings Contains Priority Habitats: Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Deciduous woodland and two traditional orchards within Sonning Eye

<b>Recreation value</b>	<p>High value including the Thames Path – National Trail which provides complete access to the River Thames along the edge of the river bank</p> <p>Access to River Thames by boat slipway</p> <p>The French Horn Public House and restaurant</p> <p>Sonning Eye: Potential Local Green Spaces Ref - need to add name of doc</p>
<b>Perceptual aspects</b>	<p>The Thames Path (National Trail) provides access to areas with high levels of tranquillity and the sense of remoteness - see also extract (6.27) from 'Three men in a boat'</p>
<b>Associations</b>	<p>River Thames – extensive within history, art and literature. An extract from the book 'Three Men in a Boat' by Jerome K Jerome, 1889 describes a section of the River Thames between Shiplake and Sonning Eye</p>



## PLCA1: River Thames and Meadows



**Photo PLCA1:1:** The Thames Path allows views across open pasture fields on the floodplain out to the enclosing wooded river valley side



**Photo PLCA1:2:** Long framed views to the south across the River Thames to pasture fields and wooded horizons



**Photo PLCA1:3:** Long views across the floodplain to the river valley side with Shiplake Row just visible against the wooded landscape of the Chilterns AONB





**Photo PLCA1:4:** Limited built form adjacent the river bank of Sonning Eye protects the rural character of the River Thames



**Photo PLCA1:5:** Mature woodland and periphery vegetation screens the built development of Sonning Eye from the adjacent landscape, enhancing the sense of seclusion and tranquillity of the River Thames Path (National Trail)



**Photo PLCA1:6:** Small hedged fields and mature trees on the periphery of Sonning Eye screens this settlement from the adjacent and wider landscape





**Photo PLCA1:7:** Views from the A4155 to the undeveloped river valley side within PLCA3A, enhances the rural character of PLCA1



**Photo PLCA1:8:** View of the Grade II listed bridge on the edge of the parish, connecting Sonning Eye with Sonning

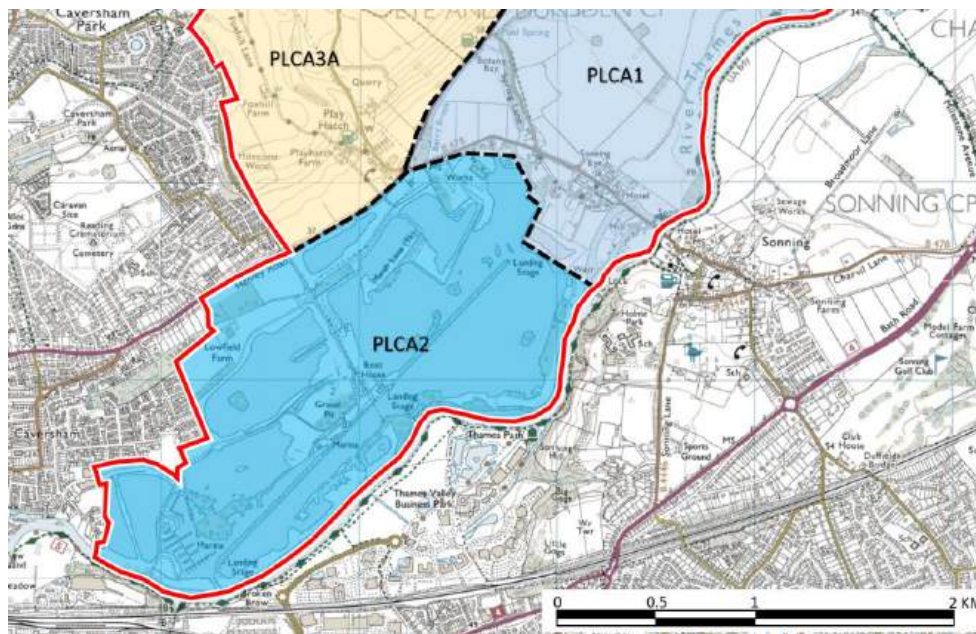


**Photo PLCA1:9:** View from PLCA4 down the river valley side to the seemingly wooded character of the floodplain, with wooded horizons beyond



## PLCA2: River Thames, Meadows and Lakes

### Parish Landscape Character Area map



### PLCA2: Landscape Character Area Description

- 5.24 PLCA2 falls within one area within the parish and is bordered to the south by the River Thames along its central line (parish boundary); the eastern edge of Caversham along its western parish boundary, the Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side (PLCA3A) along its north-western boundary and PLCA1: River Thames and Meadows along its northern boundary. The levels of the area lie between 40m AOD and 45m AOD.
- 5.25 PLCA2 includes the western half of the River Thames channel. The northern river bank and the area of interconnecting lakes beyond. Further north of these lakes are small fields of rough grassland around Lowfield Farm. PLCA2 then continues to the robust wooded southern edge of the A4155.
- 5.26 PLCA2 has been an area in transition from a quarried landscape to a more settled area of lakes and nature reserves supporting a range of water-based leisure activities. The extensive covering of rejuvenating riparian vegetation has allowed some previous poor-quality landscape elements to become screened and less significant within this evolving landscape. Due to the ongoing flooding problems within Reading and Caversham the Environment Agency is working on a range of flood defence solutions located along the southern edge of Caversham and the parish boundary.
- 5.27 The River Thames forms the southern edge to this character area, with no formal public access to its northern river bank, although there is informal access from Sonning Eye to the Sailing club. There is also limited vehicle access within this character area with only one road leading off the A4155. Except for Lowfield Farm, buildings are relatively new and include a mix of industrial style sheds, simple in architectural character; no buildings/structures are listed within this Landscape Character Area.

- 5.28 A gravel processing plant has expanded in recent years and includes a large shed and an open surrounding area all enclosed by riparian woodland. A garden centre and a building supplies premises with associated yard also exists south off the A4155, again enclosed by woodland/scrub and Berry Brook along its southern edge.
- 5.29 A mix of water-based leisure uses and activities exist around the lakes, including the following: fishing, water-skiing, rowing on the Redgrave Pinsent Rowing Lake, boat storage, sailing and the sailing club and the Thames and Kennet Marina.

### **Landscape Types within PLCA2 (Figure 2)**

- 5.30 PLCA2 River Thames, Meadows and Lakes lies mainly within the Landscape Character Type (LCT8) *Floodplain wetland*, of the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017. In addition, PLCA2 also includes a small area of the Landscape Character Type (LCT5) *Flat Floodplain Pasture*. The key characteristics of these two Landscape Types within the Thames Valley and Fringes Landscape Character Area are set out in para 4.7 - 4.9 of this Report.

### **Historic Landscape Types within PLCA2 (Figure 3)**

- 5.31 PLCA2 contains the following Historic Landscape Character Types as defined by the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2017:
- River Thames is classified as *Water-fresh water body*
  - The lakes are classified as *Industry – Flooded extractive*. The surrounding dry banks and remaining dry land is partly classified as *Industry – Extractive works, Recreation – Nature reserve* and *Woodland – Secondary woodland*
  - The land to the immediate north of the River Thames is classified as mainly *Unenclosed - Rough grassland* with a small area towards Sonning Eye classified as *Re-organised enclosure*
  - Towards the A4155, the open land is classified as *Planned enclosure* with the woodlands as *Woodland – Secondary woodland*.
- 5.32 Historically by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, PLCA2 was a patchwork of small fields with some intervening blocks of woodland, the area was also marked 'liable to flooding'. Lowfield Farm was the only built complex on the floodplain. This lowland floodplain landscape largely remained intact until gravel extraction started in the 1960's, which has continued until the present day resulting in a mass of interlocking water bodies enclosed by a network of maturing riparian trees and shrubs which now provide a rural setting for a multiple of leisure water-based activities.

### **Key Valued Landscape Characteristics specific to the River Thames, Meadows and Lakes to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 6)**

- 5.33 Natural features within PLCA2 are as follows:
- River Thames as a meandering river on the southern edge of the floodplain, with the wooded character of PLCA2 providing a riparian setting



- Northern river bank still defines the Thames River width and shape, while beyond is a series of flooded quarries
- Lake edges, islands and sections of dryland supporting riparian vegetation, with a few small areas of open grassland
- Numerous areas of woodland identified as a Priority Habitat: Deciduous woodland
- Patchwork of small fields of rough grassland, woodland and overgrown hedgerows around Lowfield Farm
- Occasional mature oak tree as a surviving relic from the previous unquarried landscape
- Berry Brook as a local tributary running into the River Thames
- Includes Henley Road Gravel Pit (an existing Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site, including an extension to the north – see TVERC Biodiversity Report for more details)

5.34 Cultural and amenity features are as follows:

- A landscape associated with recreation use with a variety of water-based sports
- An area of permissive paths around the lakes just south of the A4155

5.35 Perceptual features are as follows:

- Strong sense of enclosure due to maturity of riparian vegetation
- Low intervisibility with the adjacent PLCA1 River Thames and Meadows
- A few views out to the development free skyline and enclosing river valley side to the north enhances its rural character
- Can be quiet with bird song heard above the background faint urban noise of traffic and overhead aeroplanes

### **Key Valued Visual Characteristics specific to the River Thames, Meadows and Lakes to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 7)**

5.36 Key views into PLCA2 are afforded from:

- The Thames Path (National Trail) on the southern river bank of the River Thames, views are across the river to a well-wooded riparian riverbank where no buildings/activities within the main part of this LCA are visible
- The edge of Caversham, where the wooded character of PLCA2 provides a contrasting backdrop to this urban edge
- Foxhill Lane and the PRoW which descends the river valley side from Dunsden Green. PLCA2 is visible as a well wooded landscape which contrasts with the urban form of Reading beyond and connects to the Thames Valley floodplain to the east.

5.37 Key views out of PLCA2 to:

- Due to the well-wooded character, there are limited views out of the area, however there are some views to the undeveloped skyline (top of the river valley side) to the north of the A4155 into PLCA3A

5.38 Key views within PLCA2:

- Open areas of water from the access road, devoid of development
- Mature oak trees provide points of interest within this relatively new landscape

5.39 Relationship to settlements:

- Provides a wooded backdrop to Caversham
- The wooded northern edge south of the A4155 enhances the separation of Playhatch from Caversham and the rural character and setting of Playhatch
- Provides a wooded backdrop to the Thames Valley Park to the south and an area of open land between Reading and Lower Caversham
- Provides an undeveloped waterside setting for Sonning Eye and the retention of its separate identity from Reading, Caversham and Sonning

**Summary**

- 5.40 This is largely a new and evolving landscape, where its strong framework of riparian vegetation has easily absorbed a range of land uses and water-based activities. However, the area has had a piecemeal approach with little vision for the future which has resulted in an adhoc approach to its overall design and identity. To retain a landscape character which is part of the River Thames Valley and provides a natural setting for the River Thames the guidance below should be followed.

**Relevant Land Management / Development Considerations from South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017**

- 5.41 Set out below is a list of Relevant Land Management and Development Considerations taken from the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017
- Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture
  - Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges
  - Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. Help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside
  - Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as alders, ash, oak and willows
  - Enhance and strengthen the character of tree-lined watercourses by planting willows and ash and, where appropriate, pollarding willows
  - Establish buffer strips/field margins to potentially benefit small mammals, invertebrates and birds adjacent to willow pollards
  - Species-rich rivers and ditches are also very important and the aim should be to establish and maintain diverse banksides and aquatic vegetation through sympathetic management and the use of agri-environment schemes
  - Minimise impact by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts
  - Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables

### **Land Management guidance specific to PLCA2: River Thames, Meadows and Lakes**

5.42 Set out below is a list of land management guidance specific to PLCA2

- Retain and enhance the wooded character of PLCA2 with suitable riparian planting which strengthens its floodplain character and its relationship with the River Thames Valley
- Conserve all mature trees especially the old oak trees which have survived from the previous farmed lowland landscape
- Restore and enhance the alignment of Berry Brook and its associated riparian character
- Avoid over engineered solutions for tributaries which would detract from the rural character of the area
- Retain and improve the wooded character south of the A4155 and strengthen links to the adjacent woodlands in particular the woodland buffer along the parish boundary to the east of Caversham Park Road and Milestone Wood
- Retain and improve the wooded setting to the commercial sites south of the A4155, to reduce their visual effect on the surrounding landscape

### **Development guidance specific to PLCA2: River Thames, Meadows and Lakes**

5.43 Set out below is a list of development design guidance specific to PLCA2

- Avoid any development which would detract from the rural character of this area, in particular overdevelopment of leisure facilities requiring urban style car parks, urban style fencing and other urban style features
- Avoid any development that would detract from the rural character of views from the River Thames and lakes to Dunsden Open Dipslopes PLCA3A. In particular avoid development that would introduce inappropriate development on the valley side and skyline to the north
- Avoid any development south of the A4155 which would dilute the rural character of Playhatch and separate identity from Caversham Park Village
- Retain the character and appearance of the scenic views down and across the River Thames from the Thames Path (National Trail) from the opposite side of the river

### **Visual guidance specific to PLCA2: River Thames, Meadows and Lakes**

5.44 Set out below is a list of visual guidance specific to PLCA2

- Conserve and retain the periphery of woodland around the commercial sites south of the A4155 to contain their visual impact on the wider surrounding landscape
- Maintain the open views of the River Thames and wooded river bank from the opposite bank from within The Thames Valley Park
- Avoid urban style types of fencing especially close boarded timber fencing in very visible locations. Use rural types of fencing or fencing which is not overly visually prominent i.e. black mesh fencing
- Retain and improve views out to adjacent lakes and open areas of land
- Retain and manage the roadside hedgerow to allow open views from the A4155 to the undeveloped Thames River valley side and the long views to the undeveloped skyline within PLCA3

## Relationship to Settlements of Playhatch, Sonning Eye and Caversham

5.45 Set out below is a list of Land Management guidance specific to PLCA2

- The wooded riparian character of this LCA provides a setting and separation of Sonning Eye from Reading and Caversham
- The wooded roadside character south of the A4155 contributes to the setting and separation of Playhatch from Caversham

## Local Valued Landscape

5.46 PLCA2 River Thames, Meadows and Lakes is regarded as a valued landscape for a number of reasons as set out within the table below; for these reasons It is set well above 'ordinary' countryside.

Factor contributing to a valued landscape	Evidence
<b>Landscape quality (condition)</b>	This PLCA contains a number of quality landscape elements which fit together forming a distinctive character area. These include the River Thames, water bodies and lakes with the maturing riparian vegetation on adjacent land, and views out to the adjacent undeveloped river valley side.
<b>Scenic quality</b>	High scenic quality, with numerous views across the lakes
<b>Rarity</b>	River Thames and an extensive area of lakes in close proximity to an urban area
<b>Representativeness</b>	This largely undeveloped section of the River Thames and associated area of lakes provides a unique area of water bodies adjacent the River Thames
<b>Conservation interests</b>	Ancient and semi natural woodland Includes the 53.7 hectares Henley Road Gravel Pit (an existing Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site), including an extension to the north – see details TVERC Biodiversity Report for more details) Contains Priority Habitats: Deciduous woodland
<b>Recreation value</b>	High value including a number of lakes and waterbodies for a range of different water-based activities, including; sailing, fishing, water skiing, rowing and the potential for open water swimming Permissive paths Access to Local Wildlife Sites from permissive paths
<b>Perceptual aspects</b>	A high level of tranquillity and the sense of remoteness due to the well wooded character of the riparian vegetation
<b>Associations</b>	River Thames – extensive, including literature



## PLAC2: River Thames, Meadows and Lakes



**Photo PLCA2:1:** Limited views from internal access road of lakes, where found provide long views. This area also includes a network of permissive paths



**Photo PLCA2:2:** Small areas of dry land provide open areas of contrast within this lake dominated landscape



**Photo PLCA2:3:** PLCA2 is visible as an undeveloped area dominated by woodland and lakes as seen from the top of the Thames River valley side within PLCA3A





**Photo PLCA2:4:** A view from the south and the Thames Valley Park, where the vegetation and development free skyline provides a rural backdrop to this park and a rural setting for the river



**Photo PLCA2:5:** A mature oak tree from the previous unquarried landscape of lowland farmland contrast with the more recent areas of regenerating woodland

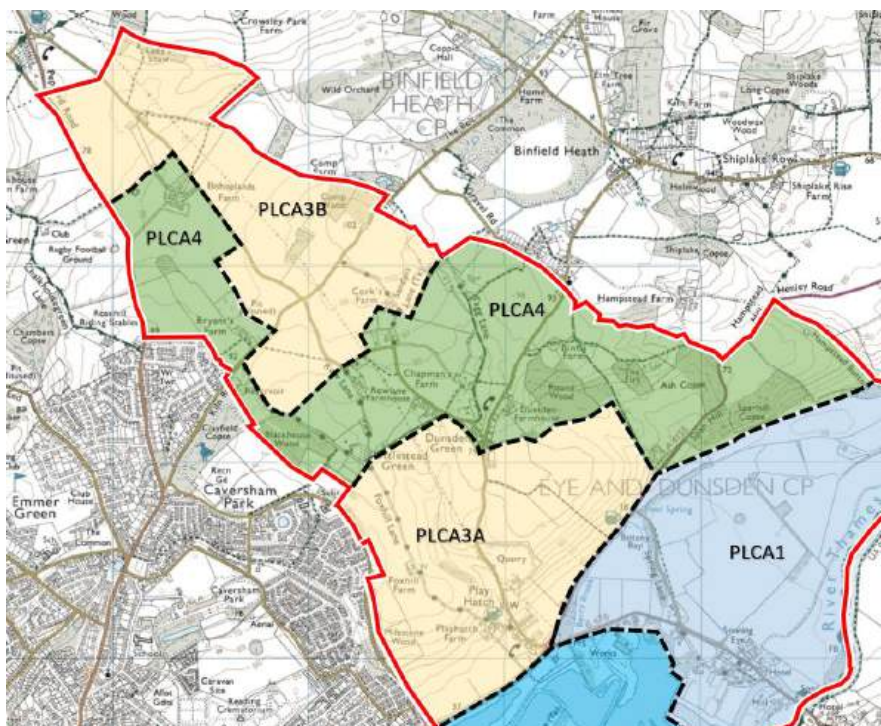


**Photo PLCA2. 6:** Views within PLCA2 also extends out to the undeveloped Thames River valley side which enhances its rural location, while connecting the area to the wider rural landscape to the north



## PLCA3A and PLCA3B: Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side

Parish Landscape Character Area map



### PLCA3A and PLCA3B: Landscape Character Area Description

- 5.47 PLCA3 comprises two areas (ref as PLCA3A and PLCA3B) of land within the parish, both which are located on the middle slopes of the Chiltern Dipslopes that fall eastwards down to the Thames River Valley (Figure 1). The northern area (PLCA3B) also includes an area within the Chilterns AONB.
- 5.48 The landform of the PLCA3A Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side (southern LCA) forms an elevated plateau, with pronounced dry and semi-dry valleys leading down to the River Thames floodplain. Gradually rising between these valleys and spurs with contours between 40m AOD to around 75-80m AOD. These valleys provide smooth sculptural landforms on the valley side, further enhanced by their simple covering of arable farmland. Further to the north within the second area: PLCA3B, the landform is on a more elevated plateau extending up to a high point of 92m AOD, before descending and gently undulating by a series of dry valleys to the east towards and into the AONB and to the west towards Chalkhouse Green (beyond the parish boundary). These small dry and semi-dry valleys are a feature of the adjacent Chilterns AONB (Figure 5).
- 5.49 PLCA3A is bordered to the north and east by PLCA4 Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side; to the south: PLCA1 River Thames and Meadows and PLCA2: River Thames and Lakes; to the west the boundary is marked by the parish boundary and the wooded buffer including Milestone Wood which aligns the urban edge of Caversham.
- 5.50 PLCA3B is boarded to the north by the parish boundary and the AONB, to the west again the parish boundary and to the south and south west by PLCA4.

- 5.51 This character area comprises mainly medium sized arable fields with boundaries marked by robust hedgerows with the occasional mature oak tree. The roads often align dry valleys (i.e., the unnamed road running through Playhatch) and or are in a slight cutting, but similar to other byways within the parish are also strongly defined with mature trees and managed hedgerows. Small areas of grassland and pasture form part of the periphery character of the settlement of Playhatch. Large woodlands are not a feature of this PLCA; however, woodlands form part of the LCA boundaries. Where there are woodlands for example Lady's Shaw Wood, this is on the boundary and also forms part of the character of the adjacent LCA within the Chilterns AONB. Small isolated woodland copses often mark their previous land use as a chalk pit, where once redundant are then unsuitable for farming and have become overgrown developing into small woodland features.
- 5.52 The southern character area (PLCA3A) provides a southern open rural landscape setting for Dunsden Green and a rural landscape setting for the western urban edge of Caversham. The western urban edge of Caversham is located at a lower level within a dry valley and is significantly screened by a mature linear woodland which includes Milestone Wood.
- 5.53 Playhatch is the only settlement within PLCA3, located at the base of a semi-dry valley rising up from the Thames Valley floodplain. A large now redundant quarry is located on the northern edge of Playhatch, presently being used for the recycling of hardcore and other aggregates; although its location is fairly discrete due to the surrounding tree/scrub vegetation and its location on the dry valley side. Within this simple open landscape, only the power lines are visible as a slight detractor descending on an alignment from north to south adjacent the settlement edge of Caversham.

#### **Landscape Types within PLCA3 (Figure 2)**

- 5.54 PLCA3 Dunsden Open dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side mainly lies within the Open Dipslope (LT11), with a small part within the Wooded Dipslope (LT23) and Semi-enclosed dipslope (LT16) Landscape Types of the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017. The key characteristics of these Landscape Types are set out in para 4.4 and 4.6.

#### **Historic Landscape Character Types within PLCA3 (Figure 3)**

- 5.55 PLCA3 contains the following Historic Landscape Character Types as defined by the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterization 2017:

##### **Southern Area (PLCA3A)**

- The south western open area from Dunsden Green down to the A4155 lies within *Prairie/amalgamated enclosure*
- A small part south east of Dunsden Green lies within *Piecemeal enclosure*
- An area to the west of the unnamed road running through Playhatch across to Ash Copse lies within *Planned enclosure*; with the area then extending down to the quarry also *Planned enclosure*
- The quarry is defined as *Industry – Extractive works*
- Playhatch is defined as *Rural – Hamlet*. With the southern part of Dunsden Green as *Rural - village*

#### Northern area (PLCA3B)

- The area to the north of Kiln Road lies within *Prairie/amalgamated enclosure*
- The area to the south of Kiln Road lies within *Ancient enclosure*
- An area towards the northern parish boundary to the east of Bishoplands unnamed Road and also within the Chiltern AONB lies within *Ancient Enclosure*
- Lady's Shaw Wood is defined as *Ancient Woodland*, with the northern area of Comp Wood also defined as *Ancient woodland* and the adjacent southern area *Secondary woodland*
- An area to the west of Bishoplands unnamed Road lies within *Reorganised enclosure*

- 5.56 Historically by the late 18th century, the area of PLCA3A was still *Ancient enclosure*. To the north: PLCA3B was also shown to be *Ancient Enclosure* with Lady's Shaw Wood as *Ancient Woodland*

#### **Key Valued Landscape Characteristics specific to the Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 6):**

- 5.57 Natural features are as follows:

- PLCA3B has a gently rounded elevated landform which allows far reaching views to the west, north and east. PLCA3A is also an open elevated landscape with sculptural sinuous dry and semi dry valleys, the main one leading up from Playhatch; with two other minor ones within the east leading up to Round Wood
- Playhatch is contained within a semi-dry valley, with adjacent valley spurs open and development free providing it with an open rural setting
- Trees/hedgerow/woodland are located along the western periphery of PLCA3A, and with the mature/robust Milestone Wood beyond the parish boundary collectively forms a linear woodland edge buffer to the urban edge of Caversham
- Robust hedgerows, often as field boundaries, aligning Public Right of Way, lanes and highways. Foxhill Lane is enclosed by robust native hedgerows. The unnamed road running through Playhatch aligns a dry valley, with its robust native roadside hedgerows which screens it from the adjacent landscape
- Redundant old chalk pits now overgrown with trees create woodland copse features within the open fields, as seen east of Kiln Road and to the west of Foxhill Lane, adjacent the parish boundary
- Sinuous woodland within base of semi- dry valley north of Playhatch
- Mature trees within roadside and field hedgerows i.e. Kiln Road
- Very limited areas of development beyond Playhatch, with Foxhill Farm and the southern end of Dunsden Green included within this LCA. The surrounding grounds of Foxhill Farm with its robust boundary planting and adjacent relationship with Foxhill Lane allows this farmstead to be integrated into the surrounding open landscape

- 5.58 Cultural and amenity features are as follows:

- Playhatch contains 5 Grade II Listed Buildings (including the telephone box). A compact settlement, which evolved around the junction with Foxhill Lane and the unnamed road running through Playhatch, with mainly linear development and some in depth development leading down to the A4155. Rear gardens/paddocks provide it with a soft

edge to the adjacent surrounding open landscape. Flint garden boundary walls are a feature

- Old routeways including Foxhill Lane and Sandpit Lane. Foxhill Lane is an historic routeway leading down the Thames River valley side. Other routes leading down from the elevated areas include the two Public Rights of Way to the east of the unnamed road running through Playhatch
- Narrow roads, often semi sunken limiting views out to surrounding landscape
- The Lanes are often unmade with a compacted flint surface
- Low lying vernacular dwellings, often listed for example 'The Old Thatched Cottage' originally C16, which was also mentioned by the WWI Poet: Wilfred Owen

5.59 Perceptual features are as follows:

- Open elevated landscape, with long framed views from Fox Hill across the Thames Valley to the wooded horizons to the south
- Well enclosed Foxhill Lane provides sense of rural quality, peacefulness and separation from urban area (Caversham) to the west
- Long open views across to the north west and beyond to wooded horizons and the east both into the Chilterns AONB
- Open landscape contributes to the southern rural setting and separate identity of Dunsden Green from Playhatch
- Little inter-visibility with Caversham, enhancing the rural character of the area and Parish
- Good PRoW access, with multiple PRoW leading further into the Chilterns AONB and down into the Thames Valley

#### **Key Valued Visual Characteristics specific to the Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 7)**

5.60 Key views into PLCA3A and PLCA3B are afforded from:

- The Chilterns AONB
- Southern edge of Dunsden Green across the large-scale open landscape across to Milestone Wood
- A few framed views in between buildings from Littlestead Close (Caversham) to the adjacent open arable fields and development free skyline
- From the A4155, where long views up to the development free horizon, with open arable fields and across to Playhatch, demarcated within the landscape by its well-established periphery vegetation
- From the A4155 west of Playhatch there are views up the Thames River valley side to the undeveloped skyline
- Views from PLCA2 of arable fields on the development free Thames River valley side
- From the grounds of Dunsden Green village hall, which the open arable landscape of PLCA3A contributes to the rural setting of the village hall



5.61 Key views out of PLCA3A and PLCA3B to:

- From the PRoW within the Chilterns AONB and along the northern parish boundary there are views further into the Chilterns AONB including the red brick buildings of Crosley Grange, these views then extend further to the north to far wooded horizons
- The southern part of the settlement edge of Dunsden Green from across the open arable landscape, dwellings are visible as an intermittent row against the mature treed landscape character area of PLCA4
- Bishoplands Farm which includes 5 Grade II Listed buildings. Mainly visible as a concentration of mature trees within the landscape, where only parts of the buildings are visible
- Dunsden Green Church with its bell-gable tower framed by adjacent mature trees
- Down and across the Thames Valley floodplain (PLCA1) and PLCA2 and further to wooded horizons
- Milestone Wood and adjacent woodlands which align the western parish boundary and acts as a buffer/screen to neighbouring Caversham
- Clayfield Copse beyond the parish boundary to the west also acts as a buffer/screen to the urban settlement of Caversham
- Blackhouse Wood to the west within PLCA4

5.62 Key views within PLCA3A and PLCA3B:

- In the north of the parish, there are views across the open fields from various Public Rights of Way. In particular from the PRoW along the AONB/parish boundary there are views across to the west, over Bishopslad unnamed road (road from Row Lane to Sonning Common) which is demarcated within the landscape as a line of hedgerows and trees, allowing long uninterrupted views continuing further to the west and beyond to far wooded horizons within the Chilterns AONB
- The Grade II Listed 'Old Thatched Cottage' lies low and is barely visible from the surrounding landscape. The adjacent red brick dwelling with its ornate chimney stacks forms a focal feature of an isolated rural dwelling
- At the crossroads with Bishopslad unnamed road and Kiln Road, due to the semi-open field boundaries at this location, this allows 360-degree views out across the open fields to Comp Wood to the east and to the west the well treed edge of Caversham including Clayfield Copse and Blackhouse Wood
- Mature hedgerow trees provide local focal points, often viewed against the skyline
- There are three Public Right of Ways in the southern PLCA3A; Foxhill Lane a well hedged PRoW, with views through gaps within the adjacent hedgerows across open fields extending to Milestone Wood to the west and the semi-dry valley to the east; within the winter months these views will be more plentiful due to the deciduous character of the adjacent hedgerows. Any vehicular traffic on the road running through Playhatch due its alignment and location within a dry valley and its well-hedged character isn't visible from this PRoW and the wider landscape. From the PRoW leading off the unnamed road (running through Playhatch) to the east there are then open views back over this hidden road across the arable fields to Foxhill farmstead and Blackhouse Wood
- Views to the west from the unnamed road running through Playhatch are across the semi-dry valley to the sinuous isolated woodland which aligns its lower valley sides and then beyond where the hedged and tree line Foxhill Lane are visible on the horizon. A few built elements of Foxhill Farm are also just visible

### **Relationship to Settlements of Playhatch, Dunsden Green and Caversham**

5.63 Set out below is the relationship of PLCA3A and PLCAB with adjacent settlements

- The open undeveloped landscape character of PLCA3 maintains the separate identity of Playhatch, Dunsden Green, Littlestead Green from Caversham
- The open arable field between Caversham and Playhatch provides Playhatch with a rural setting and separate identity from Caversham
- Row Lane's undeveloped landscape character clearly defines a rural approach to Dunsden Green from the north and its separate identity from Caversham
- The undeveloped character of the unnamed road which connects Dunsden Green with Playhatch clearly defines a rural approach to these two settlements and their separate identities from each other
- Foxhill Lane clearly defines a rural approach to Playhatch to the south and Littlestead Green to the north. Milestone Wood clearly provides a screen and integration of the eastern urban edge of Caversham which allows the rural character of Foxhill Lane to be retained
- The connected Clayfield Copse, Blackhouse Wood and Milestone Wood clearly define the settlement edge of Caversham

### **Summary**

5.64 PLCA3 forms part of the open farmed plateau above the Thames River valley side and below the wooded Chilterns to the north-east.

5.65 The key features of PLCA3 are as follows: A strong rural character has been retained partly due to the very limited views and association with the urban edge of Caversham; a sense of elevation with long views to the north east and south east and to the south across the Thames River valley to far wooded horizons; Open rural approaches to Dunsden Green along Row Lane and the A4155 to Playhatch. The northern part (PLCA3B) is an open landscape with strong visual and landscape links to the adjacent Chilterns AONB, this area clearly forms part of the setting of the AONB, with the woodlands along the southern edge of the AONB forming visually prominent landscape features.

### **Relevant Land Management / Development Considerations from South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017**

5.66 Set out below is a list of relevant land management and development considerations taken from the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017:

- Promote arable conversion to grassland
- Promote environmentally sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type (see Oxfordshire Design Guide)
- Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as alders, ash, oak and willows

- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials to maintain vernacular style and a scale of development and that are appropriate to Thames Valley and Fringes (see also the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, November 2016)

### **Land Management guidance specific to Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.67 Set out below is a list of land management guidance specific to PLCA3A and PLCA3B

- Reinforce, expand and extend Milestone Wood along the parish boundary with Caversham with good woodland management and additional tree planting
- Maintain the rural character of Bishopsland unnamed road, Peppard Road, Row Lane, Kiln Road and the un-named road running through Playhatch by retaining roadside trees, native hedgerows and grassed verges
- Maintain and where required Improve field boundaries with management and the replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees
- Enhance isolated woodlands with new planting and further link to the adjacent hedgerow network
- Maintain the old chalk pits as woodland copses and features of historic significance
- Conserve and retain the character of the soft vegetated edge around the periphery of Playhatch
- Retain the undeveloped valley sides as a rural setting for the River Thames

### **Development guidance specific to Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.68 Set out below is a list of development guidance specific to PLCA3A and PLCA3B

- Maintain the physical open countryside separation of Dunsden Green, Littlestead Green, Playhatch and Caversham
- Conserve the rural approach and rural setting of Dunsden Green from the west along the Kiln Road and Row Lane by retaining the open agricultural landscape
- Avoid features such as pavements, street lighting, signage which would urbanise the area
- Avoid road widening and improvements which would cause the loss of mature trees and the rural character of these highways
- Maintain the containment and discreet location of Playhatch quarry by native vegetation. Avoid enlarging this facility which could erode local views. Avoid over urbanising the entrance by signage, lighting and other urban features
- Avoid any development that would detract from the rural character of views from the River Thames and lakes to Dunsden open dip slopes PLCA 3A. In particular avoid

development that would introduce inappropriate development on the valley side and skyline to the north

### **Visual guidance specific to Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.69 Set out below is a list of visual guidance specific to PLCA3A and PLCA3B

- Conserve the open long views across the Thames Valley
- Maintain the open development free views from the A4155 up the Thames River valley side
- Conserve the long uninterrupted views from the Chilterns AONB from the east to the west across PLCA3B
- Conserve the long uninterrupted views from the west to the east and into the Chilterns AONB
- Maintain the open uninterrupted views to local woodlands: Comp Wood, Clayfield Copse, Blackhouse Wood and Milestone Wood
- From the road from Playhatch, on entering Dunsden Green, maintain the undeveloped open landscape as a contrast and gateway to Dunsden Green
- Maintain the undeveloped setting to farmsteads
- Maintain the open views across to Dunsden Church and its bell-gable within its mature treed setting

## Local Valued Landscape

- 5.70 PLCA3A and PLCA3B Open Dipslopes is regarded as a valued landscape for a number of reasons as set out below: It is also well set above 'ordinary' countryside on the basis of its integration with the AONB and the adjoining PLCA1 and PLCA4.

Factor contributing to a valued landscape	Evidence
<b>Landscape quality (condition)</b>	PLCA3A and PLCA3B contains many landscape features of value in their own right – as set out above and including: valley side topography with dry and semi dry valleys and valley spurs. Robust hedgerows, hedgerow trees, small woodlands and discreet roads. Panoramic views, PRoW and lanes providing good accessibility and quiet recreation Originally part of the 'Area of Great Landscape Value' as set out within South Oxfordshire DC Rural Areas Local Plan 1992
<b>Scenic quality</b>	PRoW provide long views to the west and east further into the Chilterns AONB. To the south, the PRoW and lanes provide wide and framed views across the Thames River Valley to far horizons, few landscape elements detract from these outstanding views
<b>Rarity</b>	PLCA3A and PLCA3B provides an important contribution to the rural setting of the Thames Valley and River Thames. PLCA3A and PLCA3B undeveloped and robust rural landscape character makes an important contribution to the landscape and visual setting of the Chilterns AONB. PLCA3A and PLCA3B unspoilt rural character is rare in such close proximity to a large urban area as Caversham and Reading
<b>Representativeness</b>	Part of the Chilterns dipslopes leading down to the River Thames, which is largely representative of LCA10: Chilterns Plateau and Valleys which is indistinguishable from the adjacent landscape of the Chilterns AONB
<b>Conservation interests</b>	Ancient and semi natural woodland Playhatch contains 5 Listed buildings. The isolated: 'Old Thatched Cottage' is also listed and provides an example of a 17C rural dwelling set in an agricultural landscape Contains Priority Habitats: Deciduous woodland
<b>Recreation value</b>	High value, with PRoW within the AONB and leading further into the Chilterns AONB. PRoW leading down the valley side, down onto the Thames Valley floodplain <b>Playhatch: Potential Local Green Spaces</b> Ref - need to add name of doc
<b>Perceptual aspects</b>	High levels of tranquillity and sense of semi-remoteness, with PRoW and lanes i.e. Foxhill Lane with its semi enclosed character providing areas of semi-remoteness. Elevated character with few visual detractors and well concealed urban edge enhances rural experience
<b>Associations</b>	Contains part of the Wilfred Owen Trail a WW1 celebrated poet



## PLCA3A and PLCB: Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side



**Photo PLCA3B:1:** Mature oak trees create focal points within this elevated landscape, often marking old chalk quarries, as seen to the right. Long views to wooded horizons to the NW and NE within the Chilterns AONB. An isolated dwelling sits low in the landscape, barely conspicuous.



**Photo PLCA3B:2:** Long views from a PRow out beyond the parish boundary to the adjacent landscape within the Chilterns AONB



**Photo PLCA3A:3:** A view across the open elevated landform of PLCA3A to the edge of Dunsden Green visible against mature woodland and trees





**Photo PLCA3A:4:** The start of the smooth sculptural semi-dry valley leading down to the seemingly wooded Thames Valley floodplain, with wooded horizons beyond



**Photo PLCA3A:5:** Looking west from the un-named road between Dunsden Green and Playhatch towards Littlestead Green; the urban edge of Caversham is heavily screened by the mature woodland along the parish boundary



**Photo PLCA3A:6:** A view along Foxhill Lane, a quiet lane traditionally surfaced with flint, enclosed by native hedgerows





**Photo PLCA3B:7:** Looking towards Caversham from Foxhill Lane; the urban edge of Caversham is screened by mature trees as part of the Ancient Woodland: Milestone Wood



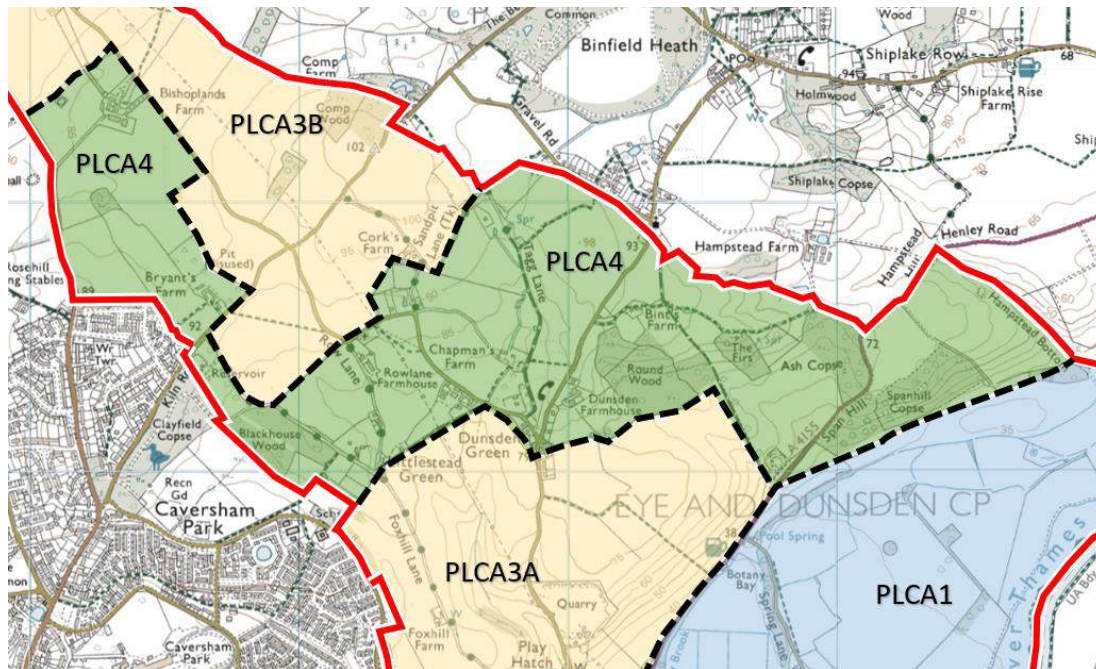
**Photo PLCA3A:8:** Looking towards the Grade II\* Listed Row Lane Farmhouse and part of the church in neighbouring PLCA4, with panoramic views of wooded horizons to the right



**Photo PLCA3A:9:** From a PRow Looking south, a panoramic view across the seemingly wooded Thames River Valley and to wooded horizons beyond

## PLCA4: Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side

### Parish Landscape Character Area map



#### PLCA4: Landscape Character Area Description

- 5.71 PLCA4 forms part of the Chilterns dipslope comprising the land between the open arable plateau to the south (PLCA3A) before the land slopes down to the River Thames, and to the north a more open elevated area (PLCA3B).
- 5.72 The topography of PLCA4 is gently undulating descending in a south east, south direction and then sloping more moderately down to the west. The levels of PLCA4 are from a high point of 98m AOD down to around 80m AOD. A prominent small shallow 'V' shaped valley containing a seasonal watercourse originating adjacent Spring Cottages leads down into Dunsden Green via a series of field drains; this then forms part of the more prominent semi-dry valley located within PLCA3A Dunsden Open Dipslopes which terminates at Playhatch. To the east of Dunsden Green, a length of the southern slope becomes steeper and is also characterised by woodlands (Round Wood, The Firs and Ash Copse) before terminating at another prominent 'V' shaped valley containing a water course just beyond the parish boundary.
- 5.73 PLCA4 is bordered by Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side; PLCA3B to the north; Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side: PLCA3A to the south and PLCA1: River Thames and Meadows to the south east. This PLCA also borders Caversham, with rear gardens of housing adjacent to the north and the undeveloped Caversham Park to the west.
- 5.74 PLCA4 forms the small scale largely pastoral and arable, well treed setting to the dispersed rural hamlet of Dunsden Green and the cluster of houses at Littlestead Green, in contrast with the surrounding more open landscape of PLCA3A and PLCA3B Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side.



### **Landscape types within PLCA4 (Figure 2)**

- 5.75 PLCA4 Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side lies mainly within the semi-enclosed dipslopes landscape character type LCT16 of the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017. With two small areas located within the open dipslopes LCT11 as shown. The key characteristics of these two landscape types are also located within the Chilterns Plateau with Valleys: LCA10 and Thames Valley and Fringes: LCA11 as set out in para 4.4 - 4.9 of this report

### **Historic Landscape Character Types within PLCA4 (Figure 3)**

- 5.76 PLCA4 contains the following historic landscape character types as defined by the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2017:
- There are three woodlands marked as *Woodland - Ancient Woodland*: Round Wood, Ash Copse and Blackhouse Wood. With three other woodlands marked as *Secondary Woodland*.
  - There are 4 areas marked as *Ancient Enclosure, as follows*: to the north and east of Blackhouse Wood, to the north of Bint's Farm and to the west of Spanhill Copse
  - The area separating Dunsden Green from Littlestead Green lies within *Piecemeal enclosures* with another area further to the south east of Dunsden Green
  - An area of *Prairie / amalgamated enclosure* lies to the north of Dunsden Green
  - Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green are marked as *Rural: hamlet*
  - An area on the northern edge of Dunsden Green is marked as *Orchard and Hort-Orchard*
- 5.77 Historically by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area between Littlestead Green and Dunsden Green fell within *piecemeal enclosure*. An area to the north of Dunsden Green to the west of Dunsden Way was *Unenclosed – Rough Ground* which extended across to Spring Lane and Corks Farm. To the east, Round Wood is shown to be surrounded by *Ancient enclosure* which also then extended further to the north.
- 5.78 OS Maps from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century show Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green as two separate and small hamlet settlements with a periphery of farmsteads, which largely corresponds with their settlement form today. There was also a number of quarries marked as chalk, sand and gravel pits, which today are redundant and overgrown with trees and shrubs creating points of visual interest and enhanced biodiversity.

### **Key Valued Landscape Characteristics specific to the Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side to be conserved and enhanced (Figure 6)**

- 5.79 Natural features located within PLCA4 are as follows:
- Lower Chilterns dipslope topography with undulations, local shallow valleys and spurs contribute to the transition from the higher Chilterns dipslopes down to the River Thames floodplain
  - Tagg Lane located within a small shallow valley with a spring leading to a series of ditches (often dry) and ponds. Other small ponds are a feature of PLCA4 which are also often dry

- Mainly small-scale fields of grass with some medium sized fields under arable cultivation which also contribute to the rural character of Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green
- The Green at Dunsden which also contains the community orchard continues to the north as open farmland
- Fields adjacent dwellings are mainly under pasture with arable fields and farmsteads between and beyond
- A strong structure of hedgerows provides field boundaries, as well as mature tree belts as found towards the northern parish boundary south of Gravel Lane
- Woodlands are a feature of this area with: Blackhouse Wood, Round Wood, The Firs, Ash Copse and Spanhill Copse. The deciduous woodlands are also listed as Priority Habitats. Blackhouse Wood also connects across the parish boundary to Clayfield Copse, a Local Nature Reserve
- Dunsden Way is characterised by a high number of mature oak trees within the robust roadside native hedgerows
- Mature field trees often demarcating a previous field boundary, as seen north west of Dunsden Way
- Mature trees on the periphery of woodlands i.e. Ash Copse
- Small grass paddocks on the periphery of Caversham and edge of parish
- Small woodland copses mark sites of old chalk pits i.e. to the north west of Bryant's Farm. The larger quarry Spanhill chalk pit (geological interest) just north of the A4155 is also overgrown and provides an area of enhanced biodiversity
- Small tree groups and copses also closely associated with large private gardens
- Large private gardens containing mature trees and robust vegetated garden boundaries screen the associated dwelling from the wider landscape
- Narrow lanes and tall hedgerows provide enclosure

5.80 Cultural and amenity features located within PLCA4 are as follows:

- Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green have hardly changed in size/form since the 1800's, where dispersed dwellings/buildings along the converging roads, with farmsteads located towards the periphery provide them both with an intact rural character
- At Dunsden Green, smaller dwellings within small gardens characterise the junction of Church Lane with the road leading down to Playhatch, these dwellings are also orientated towards the village Green. Moving outwards, other housing is of a lower density within large grounds i.e. the dwellings leading off from Tagg Lane
- Strong association with Wilfred Owen (celebrated WW1 poet) who lived in the former vicarage which is close to the church for 18 months. An information board is located on Dunsden Green illustrating a self-guiding tour which you can cycle, walk or drive and includes a number of sites throughout the parish. Owen studied Botany at Reading University, where a description of the trees within the parish are included within a letter written to his mother in November 1911 ... *there are a great number of Elms, several Ashes and Oaks, but no Sycamores.*
- Farmsteads are a feature of this PLCA4, as isolated clusters of buildings often with Listed buildings/structures i.e. Corks Farm, Bishoplands Farm, Chapmans Farm, Dunsden Farm, Bint's Farm

- Numerous tracks/minor roads crisscross this LCA i.e. Foxhill Lane, Row Lane, Tagg Lane and Sandpit Lane. All providing good access for walking and cycling across the parish and access to adjacent areas including the Chilterns AONB
- Other Public Rights of Way also allow further access to the surrounding countryside
- Lack of pavements or footways are possible due to the low levels of traffic but the lack of also contribute to the rural character of the area
- Narrow slightly sunken roads enclosed by robust hedgerows and mature trees
- Very limited street lighting adds to preserving dark skies
- Dunsden Church has a slightly isolated location which allows it to be visible and appreciated from the surrounding landscape
- Elevated location of Dunsden Green village hall with rural panoramic views to the south of surrounding wooded and agricultural landscape

5.81 Perceptual features located within PLCA4 are as follows:

- A quiet landscape with low levels of traffic and noise
- Strong rural character contrasting with the adjacent urban form of Caversham and Reading
- Prominent mature trees visible on horizon, provide sense of time depth
- The landform and mature tree cover provide a strong sense of enclosure contributing to a settled intimate landscape
- A high density of PRoW provides an easily accessible area of countryside

**Key Valued Visual Characteristics specific to the Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side to be conserved and enhanced**

5.82 Key views into PLCA4 are afforded from:

- From the footpath leading south east from Bryant's Farm across an open field to Row Lane and from Row Lane, there are views to Dunsden Church and the Grade II\* listed Rowlane Farmhouse, these views then extend further to far horizons to the south
- View towards Bryant's Farm visible as an isolated farmstead. Mature trees including distinctive poplars also contribute to its rural character and location
- Views towards Cork's Farm from the north and Sandpit Lane, where the farm buildings are visible as an isolated cluster of rural buildings
- From the elevated network of PRoW to the east looking over Bishopsland unnamed road to Bishoplands Farm, visible as an isolated farmstead surrounded by open agricultural land enhance its rural setting
- Gravel Road (beyond the parish boundary to the north), there are some views over and partly through the robust roadside hedgerow

5.83 Key views out of PLCA4 to:

- The PRoW leading south from Dunsden Way provide views south across the Thames Valley floodplain to southern wooded horizons
- The PRoW leading to Ash Copse provides views across the parish boundary to Hampstead Farm and then beyond to the wooded horizon of Bowsey Hill

- From the PRoW leading from Dunsden Green to Littlestead Green, there are views across to Milestone Wood on the edge of Caversham and out to the south across the open arable field of PLCA3A to the wooded Thames Valley below including PLCA1 and PLCA2
- From the PRoW leading to Ash Copse, there are views across to Radbrook Copse and Radbrook House
- From Dunsden Green village hall, elevated panoramic views south through treed hedgerows to far wooded horizons

5.84 Key views within PLCA4, where a network of roads, PRoW and lanes provide access to a range of views across PLCA4 as follows:

- The PRoW leading south of Dunsden Way from the parish boundary provides views across to Round Wood, The Firs and Ash Copse and also back to Bint's Farm - visible as a traditional vernacular building in and against a mature wooded backdrop
- Tagg Lane semi-enclosed by tree and scrub vegetation, with some short views through the intervening vegetation to adjacent pasture fields, ditches and small ponds
- Views of Dunsden Church and its distinctive three bell-gable
- Views from Foxhill Lane into the adjacent woodland: Blackhouse Wood and the small paddocks on the edge Caversham

#### **Relationship of Littlestead Green, Dunsden Green and Caversham**

5.85 PLCA4 is predominantly an area of open countryside with the rural hamlet of Dunsden Green and the cluster of houses at Littlestead Green, which historically have changed very little since the 1800's. Farmsteads are a feature of this area, often a cluster of traditional buildings where some are listed, all set in open countryside. The dispersed nature of Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green has also meant a network of PRoW and lanes have survived now permitting recreational access throughout the area and into the Chilterns AONB and back into Caversham. The mosaic of small fields, hedgerows with mature trees and woodlands all contribute to the rural character of these settlements.

5.86 Littlestead Green retains its rural character and separate identity from Caversham by the intervening pasture fields, robust hedgerows, woodlands and mature trees. Bryant's Farm with its characteristic adjacent small pasture fields and hedgerows also retains a rural character despite its proximity to Caversham.

#### **Summary**

5.87 PLCA4 is an intimate and small-scale landscape with a mix of small to medium sized fields, a rural hamlet and a small cluster of houses at Littlestead Green, which are both integrated into the landscape by the heavy tree and mature hedgerow cover. This is in contrast with the more open plateau landscape to the north (PLCA3B) and south (PLCA3A) and the compact suburban areas of Caversham to the west.

5.88 Overall, the semi-enclosed dipslope character of PLCA4 is extensive throughout the Chilterns AONB (see SODC LCA), and provides a rare example of where this AONB landscape type extends across to the edge of Caversham.



### **Relevant Land Management / Development Considerations from South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017**

5.89 Set out below is a list of relevant land management and development considerations taken from the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017:

- Promote, where possible, the conservation of the surviving areas of permanent pasture
- Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges
- Protect stone walls from deterioration (specifically flint)
- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses at the fringes of towns, villages and farms with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area this will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as alders, ash, oak and willows
- There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands distributed throughout the landscape type and the priority must be to ensure that all these sites are in favourable condition and management

### **Land Management guidance specific to Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.90 Set out below is a list of land management guidance specific to PLCA4

- Conserve the pattern of small-scale fields of pasture around the settlement edges, individual farmsteads and dwellings
- Retain the mature trees within roadside hedgerows, field boundaries and open fields and look to replant new trees and replacement trees to retain this feature of this character area
- Retain the mature hedgerow boundaries to the fields of pasture and slightly larger arable fields, avoid timber post and rail fencing, which in time if not properly maintained can degrade the landscape. Seek to replace existing post and rail fencing with native hedgerows
- Conserve and enhance the tree and woodland cover throughout the area, including within gardens. Conserve and reinforce the hedgerow and tree planting on the northern edge of Caversham between Kiln Road and Peppard Road and strengthen the link across Kiln Road to the wooded boundary to the south which then leads onto Blackhouse Wood
- Conserve and enhance Blackhouse Wood and its open setting. Look to further expand this woodland area to the north and south and be maintained as a buffer with Caversham to conserve the rural landscape character of the parish
- Conserve and retain the small paddocks between Foxhill Lane and the edge of Caversham as part of the rural character of the parish
- Planting in open countryside, on the boundary of the settlements and within private grounds should be of native species to enhance the rural character

- Retain and improve the water features within this LCA, avoid channelling water courses underground and straightening alignments. Where applicable enhance waterside planting
- Retain the woodland, pasture fields of the undeveloped valley side as a setting for the Thames River

### **Development guidance specific to Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.91 Set out below is a list of development guidance specific to PLCA4:

- Conserve and enhance the dispersed settlement character of Dunsden Green and Littlestead Green and their separate identities, as well as Littlestead Green's separate identity from Caversham
- Redevelopment of any land in existing residential, agricultural or commercial use should maintain the current mass and scale of built form, protect the current very low-density pattern of built form and the dominance of open space and tree/hedgerow cover within the plots of land
- Conserve and enhance Dunsden Green - open Green and its relationship with the open land to the north
- **Conserve and enhance the rural setting of Dunsden Green village hall and the long views south across the Thames valley**
- Conserve and enhance the rural character of the area in particular along the roads, lanes and Public Rights of Way
- Maintain the rural character of the minor lanes (Foxhill Lane and Sandpit Lane) avoiding resurfacing with a hard surface and the loss of the characteristic compacted flint surface
- Avoid features such as pavements, street lighting, signage which would urbanise the area
- Further conserve the rural character of isolated properties, farmsteads and areas of settlement by avoiding the use of close boarded timber fencing on boundaries which are particularly visible from adjacent roads and the public realm
- Avoid any development that would detract from the rural character of views from PLCA4, Dunsden's semi enclosed dip slopes and Thames River Valley Side. In particular avoid development that would introduce inappropriate development on the valley side and skyline to the south

### **Visual guidance specific to Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side**

5.92 Set out below is a list of land management guidance specific to PLCA4

- Maintain the open views of the River Thames corridor from the edge of PLCA4
- Avoid any development within the area that would impinge on the rural character of the views from PLCA4 across to the wooded boundary of Caversham. Special regard also to the views from the edge of the Chilterns AONB
- Avoid any development that would detract from the semi-rural character of views from the River Thames and Meadows (PLCA1) to PLCA4. In particular avoid development that would introduce inappropriate development on the skyline and on the undeveloped Thames River valley side

- Retain the sense of visual enclosure created by mature tree lines and hedgerows
- Maintain and enhance the visual separation of Dunsden Green with Littlestead Green

### Local Valued Landscape

5.93 PLCA4 Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes is regarded as a valued landscape for a number of reasons as set out below; It also would therefore be regarded well above 'ordinary' countryside.

Factor contributing to a valued landscape	Evidence
<b>Landscape quality (condition)</b>	This PLCA contains a number of landscape features of value in own their right – as set out above and including, Ancient Woodlands, mature trees, mature tree lined roads, mature tree belts and a pattern of fields of grassland and arable enclosed by robust hedgerows. Topography which contributes to an intimate semi-remote landscape. All these collectively create an intact landscape of quality Originally part of the 'Area of Great Landscape Value' as set out within South Oxfordshire DC Rural Areas Local Plan 1992
<b>Scenic quality</b>	High scenic value with a range of diverse views, long, short to a variety of landscape elements; also views out of the area to the south and across the Thames Valley. Also contributes to the landscape setting of the Thames Valley, with the woodlands visible from the river floodplain PLCA4 makes an important contribution to the landscape and visual setting of the Chilterns AONB and provides a link from the AONB across and down to the River Thames
<b>Rarity</b>	Ancient woodlands, ancient enclosures, rural hamlets and farmsteads. An intact area of countryside in close proximity to the urban area of Caversham
<b>Representativeness</b>	This LCA is largely representative of LCA10 Chilterns Plateau and Valleys semi-enclosed dipslope and much of this LCA is indistinguishable from the landscape of the Chilterns AONB
<b>Conservation interests</b>	Includes Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site: Blackhouse Wood including a new proposed adjacent extension into Clayfield Copse. Spanhill Chalk Pit is also proposed as an Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site High number of Listed Buildings and Ancient Woodlands and semi natural woodland . Areas of <i>Ancient enclosure</i> and also as found within the Chilterns AONB, PLCA4 contains a mosaic of field types Contains Priority Habitats: Deciduous woodland, and a Traditional orchard within Dunsden Green and an area of good quality semi-improved grassland
<b>Recreation value</b>	An extensive network of PRoW and lanes linking to the Chilterns AONB and down to the River Thames Valley <b>Dunsden Green: Potential Local Green Spaces</b> Ref - need to add name of doc
<b>Perceptual aspects</b>	Quiet, intimate landscape, with areas with a strong sense of enclosure contrasting with the long panoramic views across the Thames River Valley and beyond including towards Bowsey Hill
<b>Associations</b>	Wilfred Owen WW1 poet wrote and lived in the parish



## PLCA4: Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side



**Photo PLCA4:1:** Long framed view from a PRoW between Round Wood and The Firs down to the Thames Valley with wooded horizons beyond



**Photo PLCA4:2:** Robust mature field boundaries provide strong features and create a sense of enclosure and intimacy



**Photo PLCA4:3:** Occasional long view out beyond the parish boundary, framed by woodlands towards Bowsey Hill





**Photo PLCA4:4:** Gently undulating, typical of the dipslope landform, with woodlands enclosing views. A number of mature field trees are evident



**Photo PLCA4:5:** Dunsden Way heavily treelined with mature oak trees. Also visible against the skyline from surrounding landscape



**Photo PLCA4:6:** View on the edge of the western boundary of the parish, where small paddocks contribute to the rural character, in the foreground of long views to southern wooded horizons





**Photo PLCA4:7:** A isolated small rural dwelling provides a feature within this semi-enclosed landscape



**Photo PLCA4:8:** View from Foxhill Lane across a small well hedged field to the church and the Grade II\* Row Lane Farmhouse set against a well-matured treed background



**Photo PLCA4:9:** Tagg Lane an old byway enclosed with mature oak trees aligns a shallow 'v' shaped valley, connecting the Chilterns AONB to Dunsden Green

## 6.0 RECOMMENDED LOCAL VALUED LANDSCAPE (FIGURE 8)

### Introduction

- 6.1 The proposed area as set out on Figure 8 is to be regarded as a Local Valued Landscape which also forms an important setting to the Chilterns AONB. This Local Valued Landscape also makes an important contribution to the distinctive character and identity of Dunsden Green, Littlestead Green, Playhatch and Sonning Eye. The assessments as set out in Section 5 of this report have informed this recommendation.
- 6.2 The landscape Institutes Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA Rev 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed 2013) sets out a list of criteria that are generally agreed to influence value. This covers a list of factors as further illustrated within Box 5.1. of the GLVIA3 as follows:
- **a. Landscape quality (Condition)**
  - **b. Scenic quality**
  - **c. Rarity**
  - **d. Representative**
  - **e. Conservation interests**
  - **f. Recreation value**
  - **g. Perceptual value**
  - **h. Associations**
- 6.3 For each of the 4 PLCA as set out within section 5 of this report, a table was formulated covering the above criteria. Following is a summary of these tables.
- a. Landscape quality (condition)** see Figure 6: Key Landscape Attributes and Figure 7: Key Visual Attributes
- 6.4 The parish lies within *LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau with Valleys* and *LCA 11 Thames Valley and Fringes* as set out within the SOLCA 2017. Chilterns Plateau with Valleys is mainly made up of the LCT Open dipslope, Semi-enclosed dipslope and a small part of the Wooded dipslope. The Thames Valley and Fringes LCA11 includes the LCT Flat Floodplain Pasture and Floodplain wetland. A number of landscape guideline relating to landscape features within these LCA's as set out within the SOLCA indicate landscape quality, these guidelines are as follows:
- Promote, where possible the conservation of surviving areas of permanent pasture
  - Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows
  - Maintain the vernacular character of settlements
  - Maintain the nucleated pattern of all settlements
  - Manage the Ancient Woodlands
- 6.5 The parish has strong links with and forms an important part of the setting of the Chilterns AONB to the east, with much of the parish within PLCA3 and PLCA4 indistinguishable from the landscape of the AONB. The Parish shares many landscape features, characteristics and special qualities with the Chilterns AONB. As stated within the Chilterns Management Plan (2019-2024) *the Chilterns special qualities are considered so important, nationally and internationally they require protection*. These special qualities as set out within the Management Plan which can also be found within the parish are as follows:



- Within PLCA3 and PLCA4 there are panoramic views across the parish to the AONB to the west and to the east and across the Thames Valley to the south. The Thames Valley forms an important part within these views to the south
- The topography of the parish relates to the topography of the Chilterns AONB which describes how the folds of the landscape hide many small dry valleys and provide secret landscapes and unspoilt countryside. As shown PLCA3A, PLCA3B and PLCA4 includes the descending dipslope with shallow valleys and then more pronounced dry valleys on the river valley side, as it descends down to the River Thames floodplain
- Distinctive hamlets and buildings. The parish has 3 distinctive hamlets with a high number of listed buildings
- The Parish contains 7 Ancient Woodlands (which includes Lady's Shaw Wood within the AONB) and other prominent woodlands
- The Parish contains a dense network of Public Rights of Way, which also provides access from the AONB across the parish to the Thames Valley. Part of this network of PROW includes the old lanes known as Foxhill Lane, Row Lane, Tagg Lane, Sandpit Lane which provide further access across the parish
- The Parish with its large number of PROW and minor roads, also provides access to unspoilt countryside, secret corners and a sense of remoteness

6.6 Until the early 2000s part of the parish (excluding PLCA2) was set within SODC's local landscape designation: Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). The SODC Local Plan which designated AGLVs (adopted 1992, para 5.28) stated that the dipslope south from the AONB to the River Thames '*should have been included with[in] the AONB... and much of it is indistinguishable from the landscapes within the AONB*'. As shown the PLCA2 was not included within the Area of Great Landscape Value, however as set out within section 5 for PLCA2, this area has now evolved as a series of lakes and waterbodies set within a semi-mature treed landscape as can be appreciated from views from the Thames River valley side within PLCA3A.

6.7 The parish also includes the western part of the River Thames and associated area of the broad valley floor. The Thames Valley floodplain also dominates views from the valley side. PLCA1 retains a strong rural character due to the lack of development, similar to the areas of the River Thames adjacent the settlements of Henley on Thames as found within the AONB.

#### **b. Scenic Quality**

6.8 As set out on Figure 7: Key Visual Attributes, the parish provides a high level of scenic quality, where Listed Buildings, Ancient Woodlands, the River Thames can be appreciated from a number of locations within a distinctive rural landscape. As detailed and evidenced within section 5 of this report, the study area forms a clear part of the visual setting of the Chilterns AONB; which include short and long views into the AONB and across the AONB to the east and west to distant horizons.

6.9 The study area contains a distinctive undeveloped Thames River valley side, dry and semi-dry valleys and spurs, which can be clearly viewed from areas on the Thames valley floodplain. This area provides a development free valley side and skyline which adds to the semi-remote rural quality of the Thames Path. There are also access to numerous panoramic views down and across the Thames Valley landscape.



- 6.10 The Thames Path also permits scenic views along the River Thames, across the River Thames to adjacent fields of pasture with grazing animals and the small island known as Hallsmead Alt. Additionally there are scenic views south from Sonning Eye to Mill Island.
- 6.11 Listed buildings in an open setting provide features of visual interest within this rural landscape. For example, the farmsteads as clusters of vernacular buildings i.e. Bryant Farm, Bishopsland Farm and the isolated dwellings i.e. the 'Old thatched Cottage'. Mature and Ancient Woodlands also provide strong landscape features adding to scenic quality within the Parish.
- 6.12 The original area of gravel extraction within PLCA2 has now been restored to an area of lakes within a setting of maturing riparian vegetation. The adjacent undeveloped valley side also enhances the rural character of this area as well as adding to scenic quality.

### **C. Rarity**

- 6.13 The parish provides an area in similar visual character and landscape quality as the adjacent Chilterns AONB within close proximity to the contrasting urban area of Caversham. As evidenced within this report the adjacent settlement edge of Caversham is well contained within a dry valley and substantially screened behind a belt of woodland and trees. The landscape character of the parish is unique in such close proximity to an urban area, where Dunsden Green, Playhatch and Sonning Eye still retain their small settlement forms which haven't been overwhelmed by 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development as can be evidenced within other local parishes. Collectively the landscape character has an overwhelming quiet rural character which with its numerous PROW provide areas of countryside within easy reach for the residents of Caversham.
- 6.14 The River Thames is the longest river in England. The flat floodplain and valley side form part of its riparian character. Its strong rural character due to the lack of development and visual detractors is also unique in such close proximity to an urban area.

### **D. Representativeness**

- 6.15 The parish is representative of the Chilterns LCA 10 Chilterns Plateau and Valleys and LCA 11 Thames Valley with Fringes. These LCA's contain the LCT semi enclosed dipslope, open dipslope, wooded dipslope and the flat floodplain with pasture. All these Landscape types are found within the adjacent Chilterns AONB. As shown within section 5, the parish shares similar landscape characteristics including topography, vegetation cover, historic landscape pattern, perceptual qualities as well as strong visual links.
- 6.16 The River Thames and adjacent undeveloped floodplain provides a good example of river and associated floodplain with an enclosing and undeveloped valley side.

### **E. Conservation Interest**

- 6.17 There are two designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within the parish, including the extensive area known as Henley Road Gravel Pit. Blackhouse Wood is also designated including a proposed adjacent extension into Clayfield Copse. Another proposed LWS is just north of the A4155: at Spanhill Chalk Pit.
- 6.18 The parish contains 7 Ancient Woodlands following a similar pattern of frequency as the Chilterns AONB.

- 6.19 The parish contains an extensive area of the following Priority Habitat areas: Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh; Deciduous woodland; Good quality semi-improved grassland and Traditional Orchards
- 6.20 With regard to the parish's cultural heritage, this has been well preserved. The three separate small settlements: Dunsden Green, Playhatch and Sonning Eye each have a unique character. Dunsden Green surrounded (frequently containing listed buildings) by open farmland and scattered farmsteads with the occasional isolated dwelling has also retained its separate identity from Littlestead Green. Playhatch located at the base of the semi-dry valley has a more part nucleated and linear form, but is contained within a periphery of vegetation. Sonning Eye which is partly designated as a Conservation Area also contains 13 Listed buildings. There is also a significant area of remaining Ancient Enclosure to the northwest of Dunsden Green.
- 6.21 The Parish contains a mosaic of Historic Landscape Types (*Ancient enclosure, Piecemeal enclosure, planned enclosure and Prairie/amalgamated enclosure*) similar to the farmland as found within the adjacent area of the Chilterns AONB to the east.

#### **F. Recreation Value**

- 6.22 The parish contains a high density of PRoW which lead from the adjacent area of the Chilterns AONB, down the valley side to the River Thames floodplain. The Thames Path a National Trail also aligns the Thames River bank. Additionally, there is a network of permissive paths, although do not contain the same status of PRoW, they provide recreational access around the new area of lakes adjacent the River Thames to the south of the parish.
- 6.23 The high number of PRoW also provide access to a landscape which is quiet, intact and offers views to the adjacent AONB to the east and longer views to the wooded character of the AONB to the west. As well as to the south with panoramic views to wider horizons.
- 6.24 The River Thames also provides a section of quiet recreation for boat and river users
- 6.25 As part of the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, the parish is in the process of allocating important open spaces within the three settlements as Local Green Spaces. This submission is presently in a draft form, but at this stage it should be recognised that each settlement has a high number of potential Local Green Spaces.

- 6.26 The parish is also easily accessible for a high number of residents within the adjacent urban area of Caversham

#### **G. Perceptual aspects**

- 6.27 A strongly rural landscape, with low levels of traffic and few visual detractors. There are numerous areas within the parish including PRoW and the Thames Path where there is a strong sense of remoteness and seclusion. These perceptual qualities are also more valuable due to the proximity to adjacent urban areas.

#### **H. Associations**

- 6.28 From 1911 to 1913 The celebrated WW1 poet Wilfred Owen lived in Dunsden. On Dunsden Green there is an information board which illustrates the Wilfred Owen Trail, which includes

a number of locations associated with this poet including the 'Old Thatched Cottage', which he described as 'a stone box with a straw lid'.

- 6.29 The River Thames has extensive associations, including with literature the book '*Three Men in a Boat*' by Jerome K Jerome which details a boating expedition along the River Thames, with a description of the section of the Thames between Shiplake and Sonning Eye as follows:

*The river up to Sonning winds in and out through many islands, and is very placid, hushed, and lonely. Few boats, except at twilight, a pair or two of rustic lovers, walk along its banks. 'Arry and Lord Fitznoodle have been left behind at Henley, and dismal, dirty Reading is not yet reached. It is a part of the river in which to dream of bygone days, and vanished forms and faces, and things that might have been, but are not, confound them.*

### Conclusion

- 6.30 In this respect, the parish which includes PLCA1, PLCA2, PLCA3A, PLCA3B and PLCA4 should be included collectively as a Local Valued Landscape and would therefore fall under national guidance NPPF (2021) paragraph 174 (a).

- 6.31 It is also recommended that the Local Valued Landscape also serves the function of contributing to the separation of settlements as follows:

1. Maintaining the open rural landscape character between the settlements and neighbouring Caversham, Reading and Binfield Heath
2. Preventing the loss of the distinctive and separate character and identity of the 3 settlements and cluster of houses at Littlestead Green; as well as their separate identity from neighbouring Caversham and Reading
3. Avoiding the incremental extensions to either hamlet or village which would erode their separate character and identity
4. Contributing to conserving the historic open landscape setting to listed buildings, including rural farmsteads: Bishopslands, Cork's Farm, Rowlane Farmhouse; the church at Dunsden Green and the isolated Old Thatched Cottage on the un-named road from Row Lane to Sonning Common
5. Protecting the surviving areas of Ancient Enclosure north west of Dunsden Green (see Figure 3)
6. Protecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB, the River Thames and the Ancient semi-natural Woodland
7. Strengthening the clear distinction between the settlements by conserving and enhancing the tree and mature hedgerow cover to the outer edges of land between the settlements
8. Conserving the openness of the landscape within PLCA3, allowing for the improvement to hedgerows as recommended in Section 5;
9. Contributing to the conservation and enhancement of the open landscape links between the River Thames and the Chilterns Hills

11. Conserving the lack of intervisibility between the built form of the settlements
12. Retaining well defined boundaries on the ground.

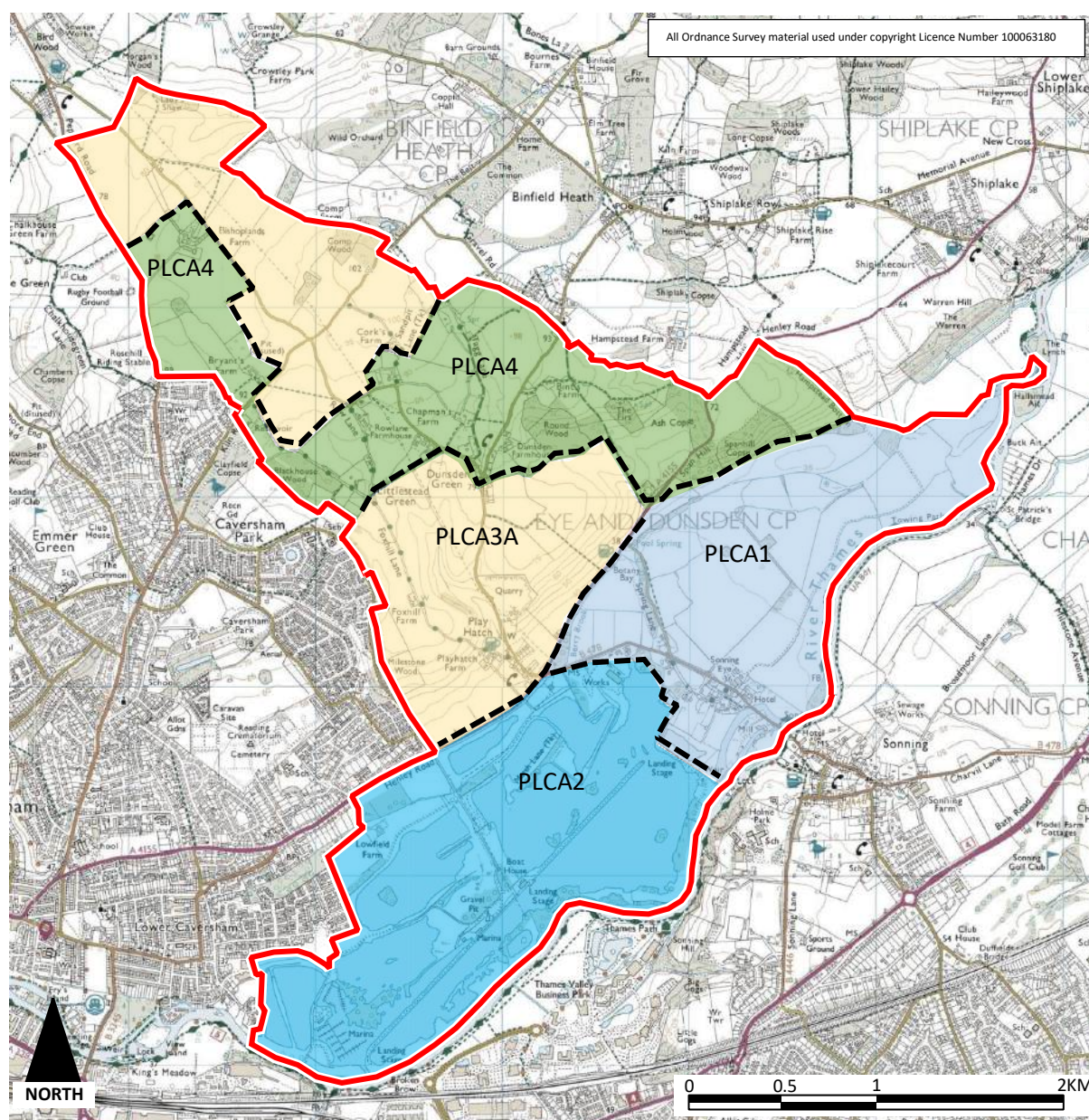
### **Local Valued Landscape between the River Thames and the edge of the Chilterns AONB and the contribution to the separation of settlements**

- 6.32 It is recommended that the boundary of the area of the Local Valued Landscape extends from the River Thames, a well-defined landscape feature up the Thames River valley side to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB. It would extend westwards, reflecting the unity of this area, the links between the Chilterns AONB and the River Thames, and the extent of the setting of the AONB.
- 6.33 The distinctive character of the two hamlets (Dunsden Green, Playhatch) the village of Sonning Eye and the cluster of houses at Littlestead Green is experienced in transition passing along the road network. They are also appreciated in views from the edge of the Chilterns AONB, the Public Rights of Way and permissive path network within and on the boundary of the Local Valued Landscape.
- 6.34 The additional separation from the neighbouring settlement of Caversham is well defined by the linear treed and wooded settlement edge character, the open arable and River Thames valley side landform. The outer edge of Caversham is located within a semi dry valley which collectively further contributes to separation and screening of its built urban form.
- 6.35 Additionally, Littlestead Green has no intervisibility with Caversham, due to the continuation of this linear woodland along the edge of Caversham, well hedged small fields and the intervening landform. This intervening character maintains Littlestead Green's rural identity.
- 6.36 Although the area of the Local Valued Landscape contains some development, there is an overall absence of urban form and visual detractors, where they do occur such as the pylons towards the western boundary of the parish, their significance is less due to the intact and strength of the rural character of the area. Although the A4155 carries heavy volumes of traffic at certain times of the day, it still retains its rural character by largely being within a development free landscape enclosed by mature hedgerows and tree boundaries.
- 6.37 It is recognised that the parish includes some recent development, with the small-scale housing scheme (three detached and one semi-detached) at Dene Close in Playhatch. Additionally, there is proposed another small-scale housing scheme (two detached and one semi-detached) which will replace a small semi-detached property within the centre of Dunsden Green (planning ref: P20/S1993/FUL). Within PLCA2, a range of new recreation facilities have evolved over the last 15 years around and on the lakes; However, due to the well treed character of the lakesides and the low density of this development, this has not significantly affected the rural views from the River Thames valley side or the sense of the existing rural character within the parish and the separation of the rural settlements from Reading and Caversham.



## Summary

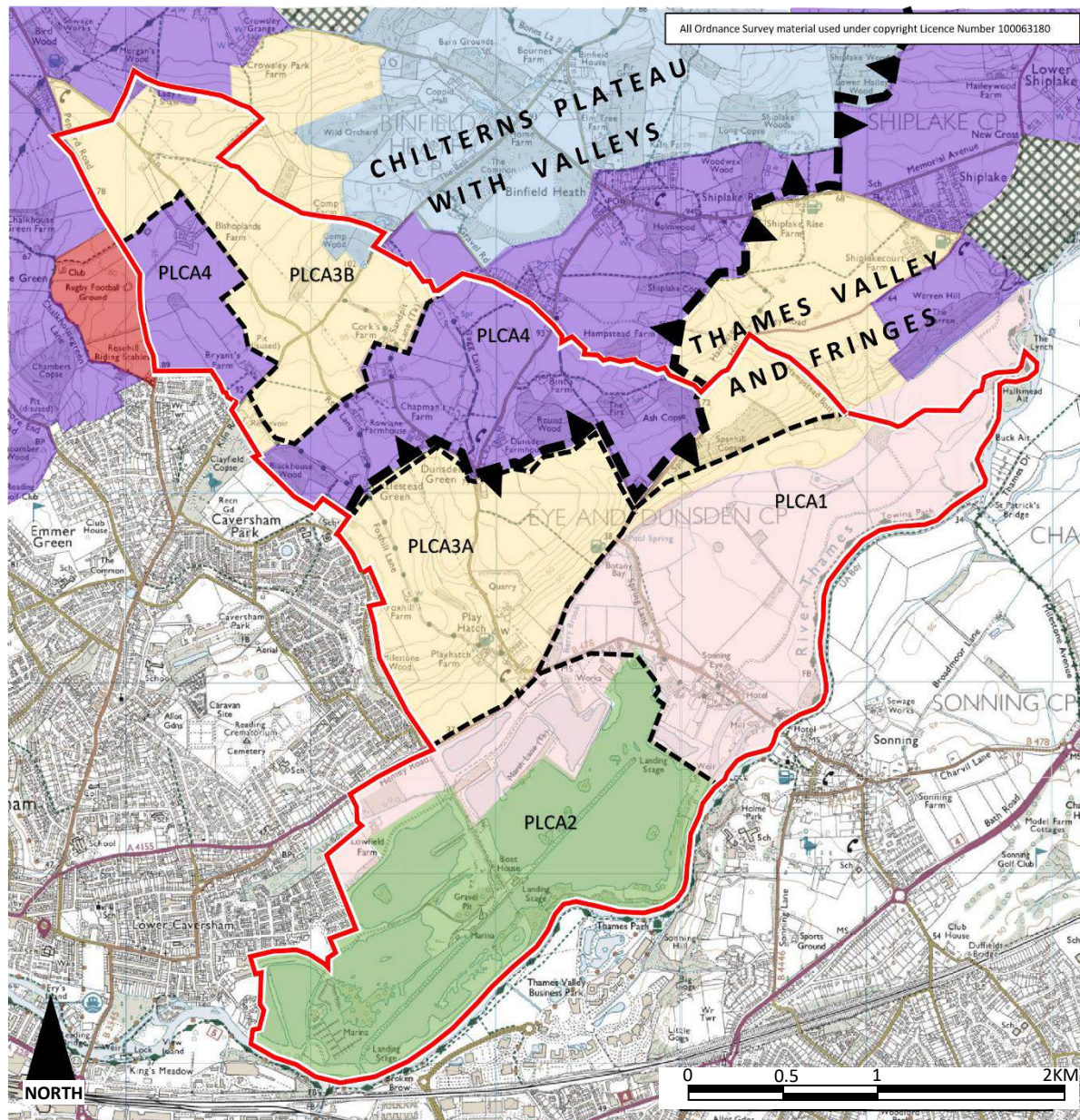
- 6.38 The area shown as a Local Valued Landscape in Figure 8 seeks to ensure the retention of the distinct rural intrinsic beauty and character of each of the 4 Parish Landscape Character Areas (PLCA) within the parish and Neighbourhood Plan Area, as described in section 5. Additionally, the Local Valued landscape also contributes to the separation of the three settlements and the cluster of houses at Littlestead Green, as well as contributing to their rural character
- 6.39 Each of the PLCA is connected with each other visually, containing landscape features of quality within a strong agricultural landscape. The four PLCA's therefore are well above an 'ordinary' countryside and form an interlinked landscape of high value, intrinsic beauty and distinctive character, contributing to the setting of the Chilterns AONB and that of a rural section of the River Thames.



**FIGURE 1: Eye & Dunsden Parish Landscape Character Areas (PLCA)**

- Parish/Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary
- PLCA Boundaries
- Parish Landscape Character Area (PLCA)**
- PLCA1:** River Thames and Meadows
- PLCA2:** River Thames, Meadows and Lakes
- PLCA3A and PLCA3B:** Dunsden Open Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side
- PLCA4:** Dunsden Semi-enclosed Dipslopes and Thames River Valley Side





**FIGURE 2: South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Areas and Types**

Parish/Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary

PLCA boundaries

#### SODC Landscape Character Areas

Chilterns Plateau with Valleys LCA10

Thames Valley and Fringes LCA11

#### SODC Landscape Character Types

Amenity landscape (2)

Flat floodplain pasture (5)

Floodplain wetland (8)

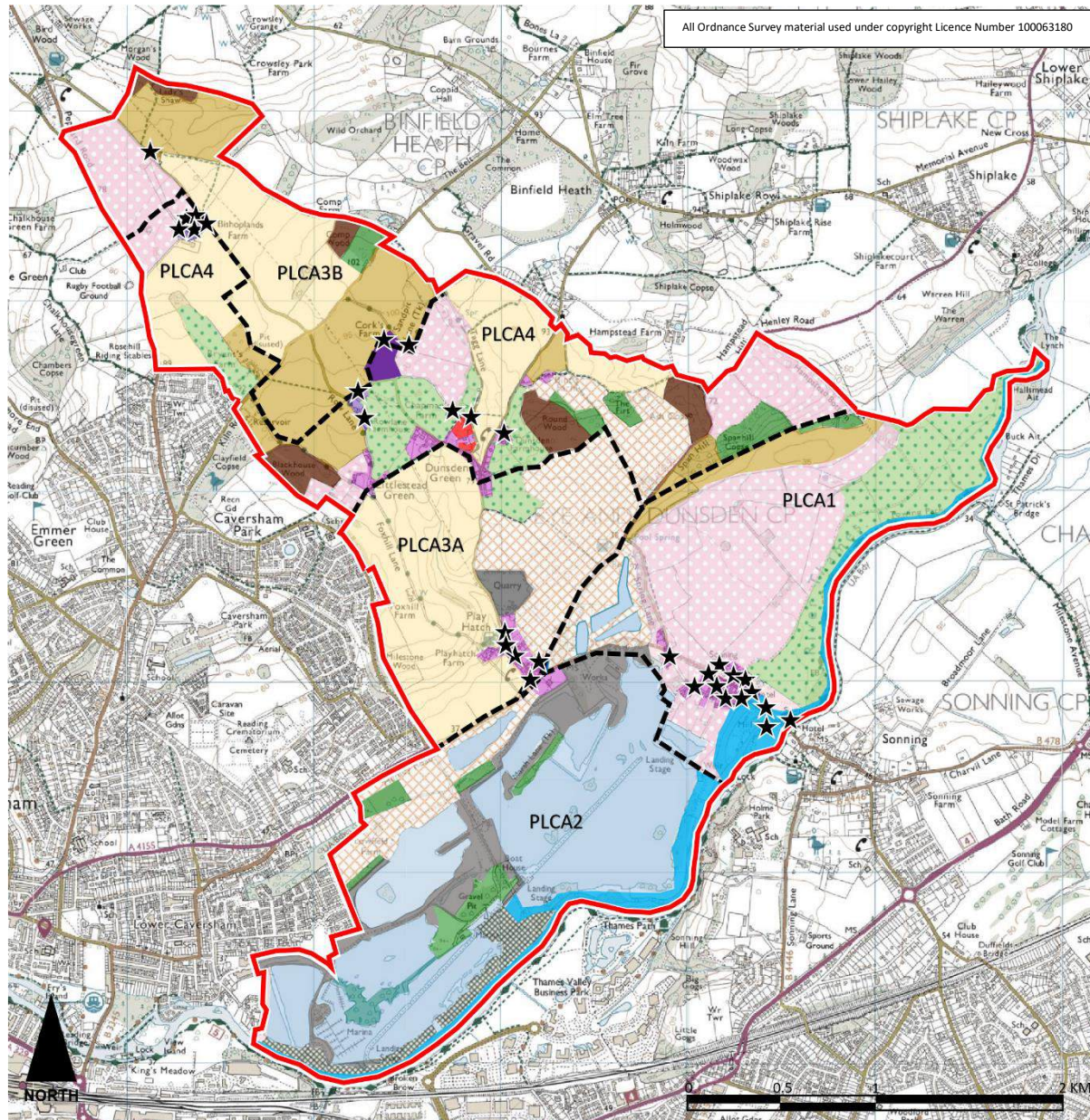
Open dipslope (11)

Parkland and estate farmland (15)

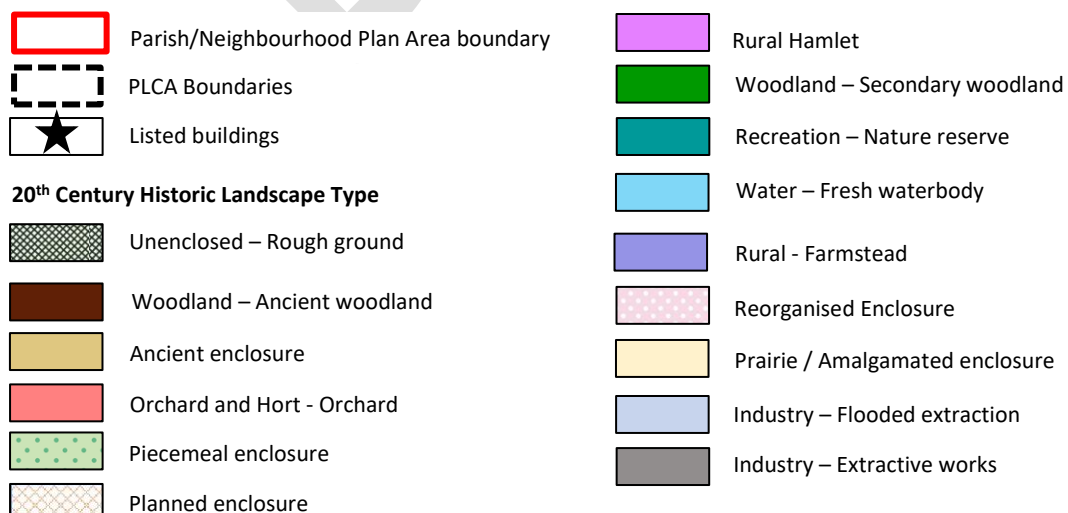
Semi-enclosed dipslope (16)

Wooded dipslope (23)

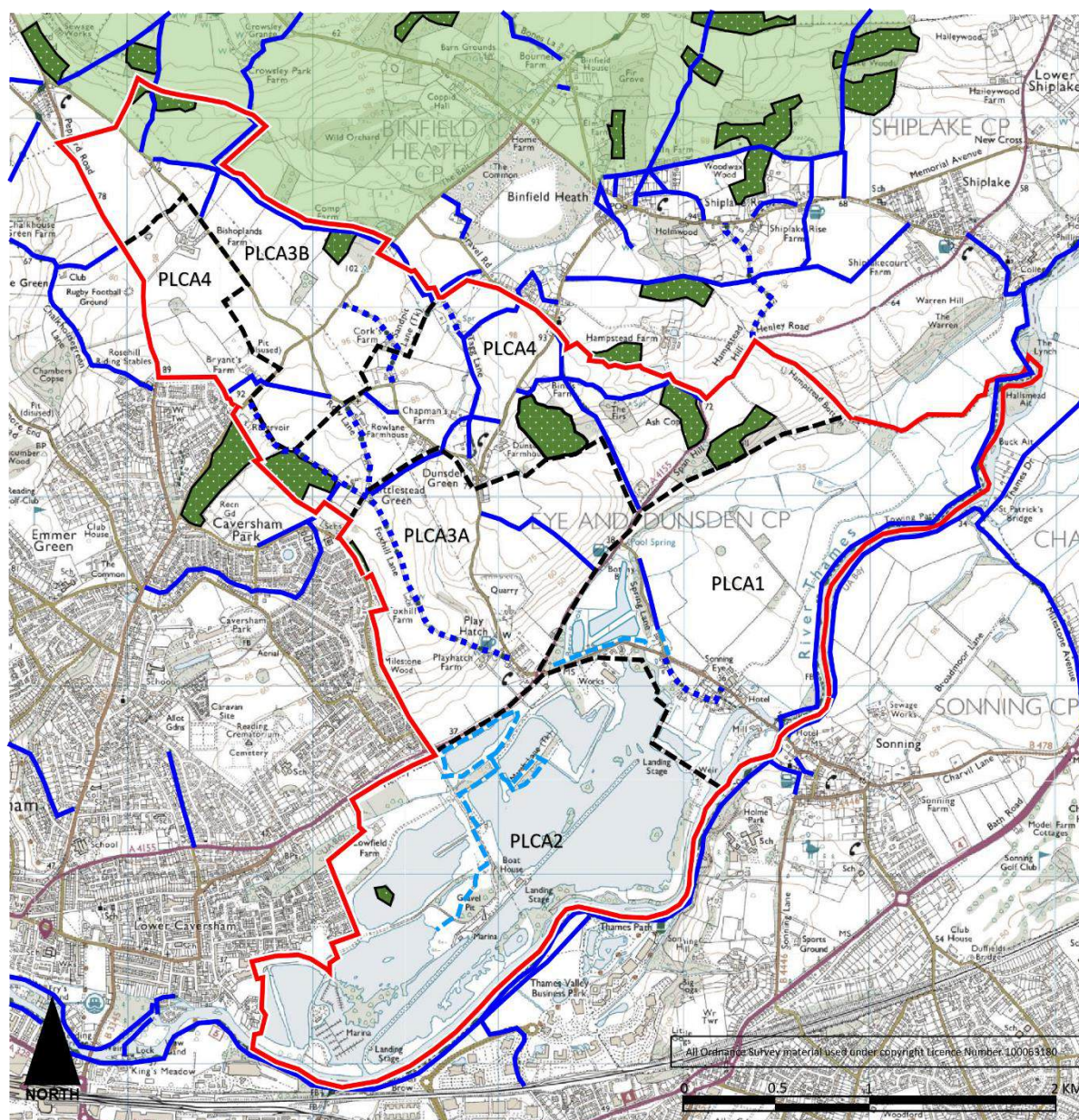




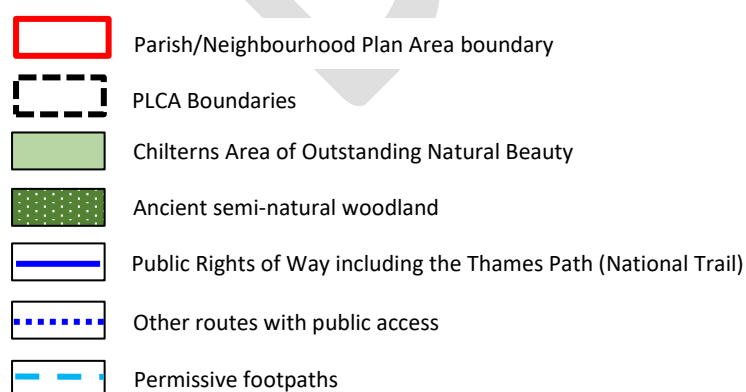
**FIGURE 3: Heritage Designations and Historic Landscape Character**



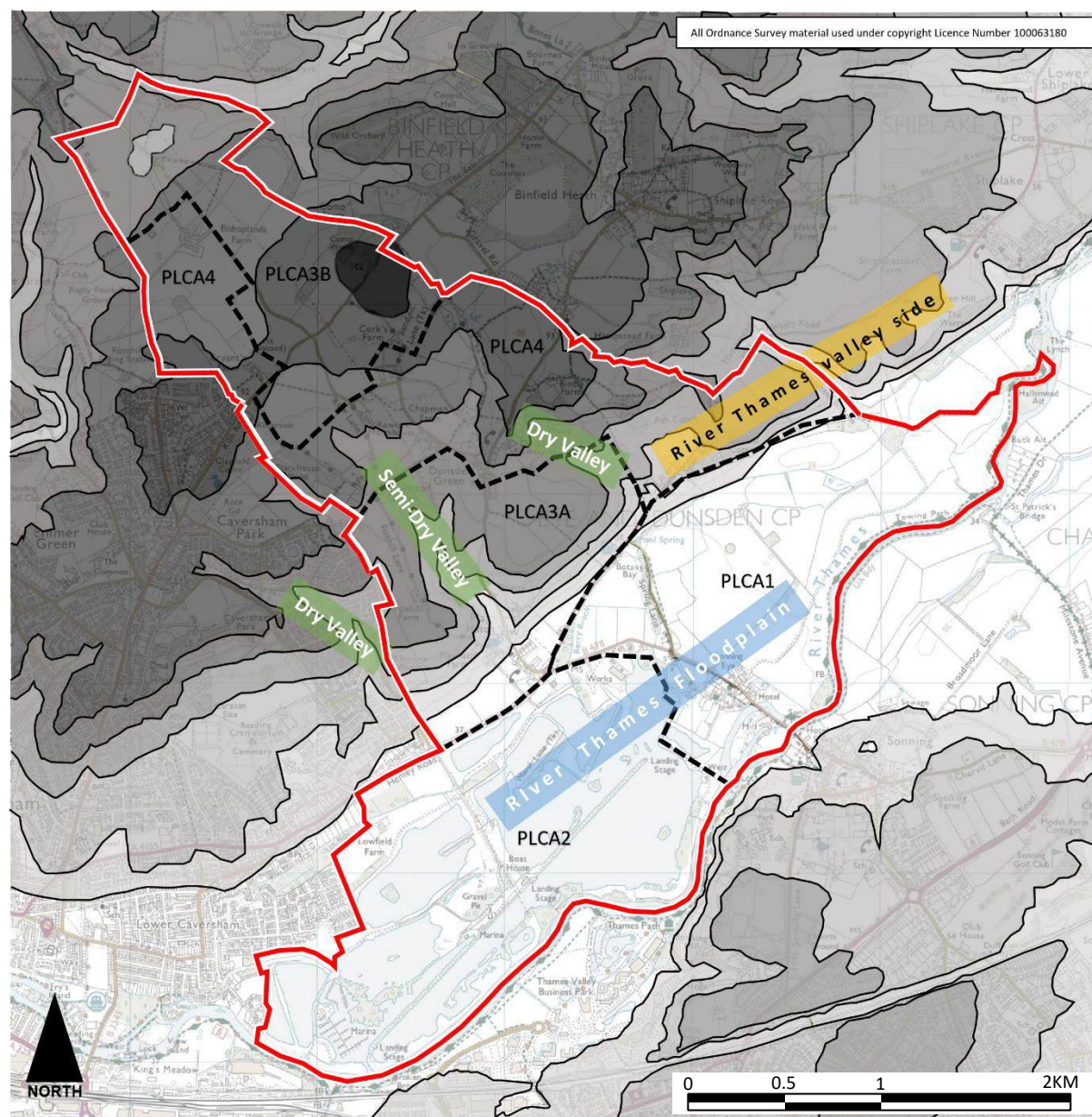




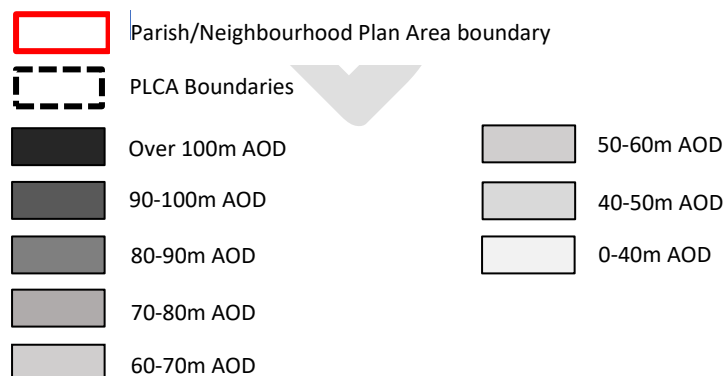
**FIGURE 4: Landscape Constraints and Public Rights of Way**



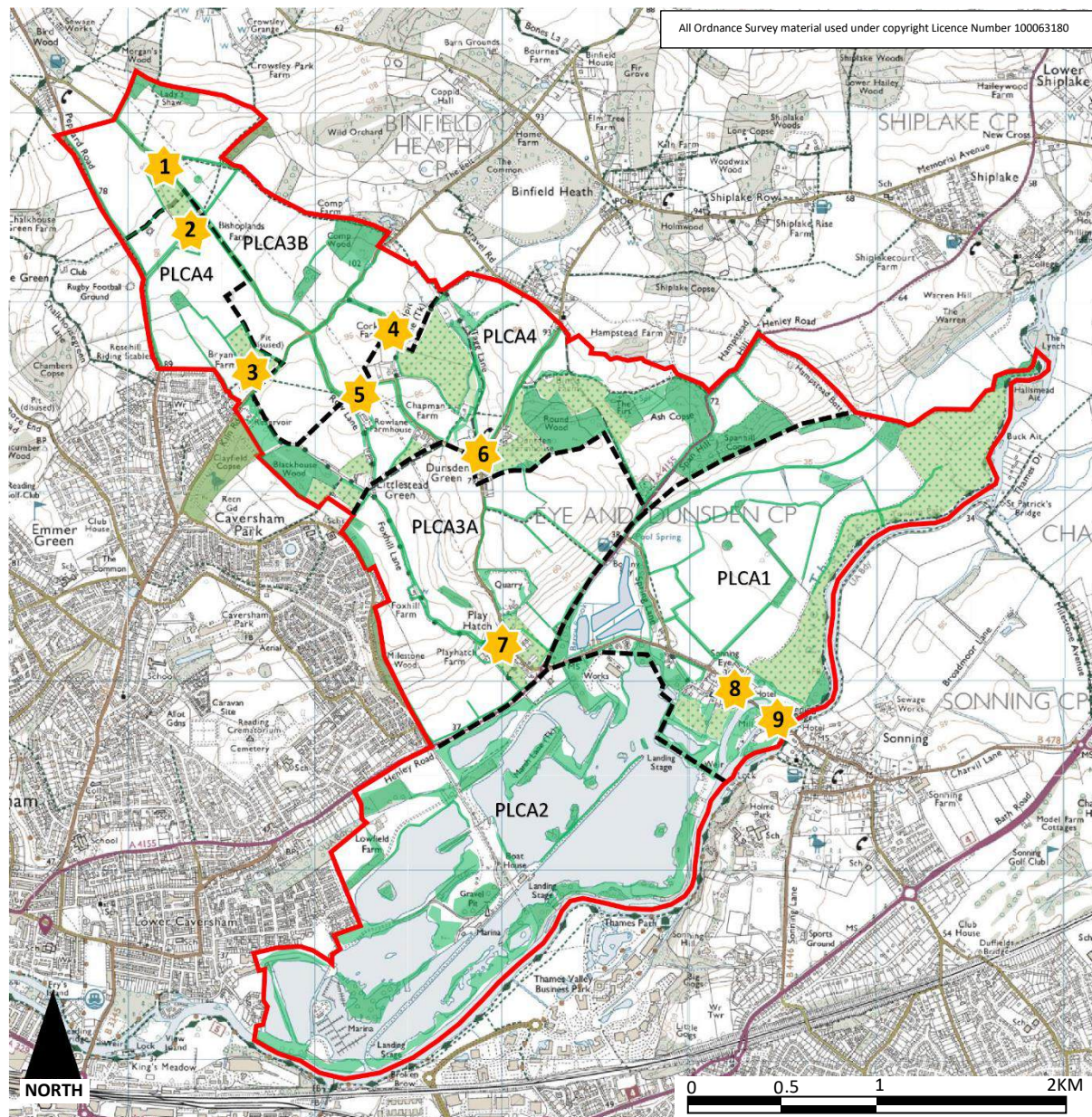









**FIGURE 5: Topography and Landform**







**FIGURE 6: Key Landscape Attributes**

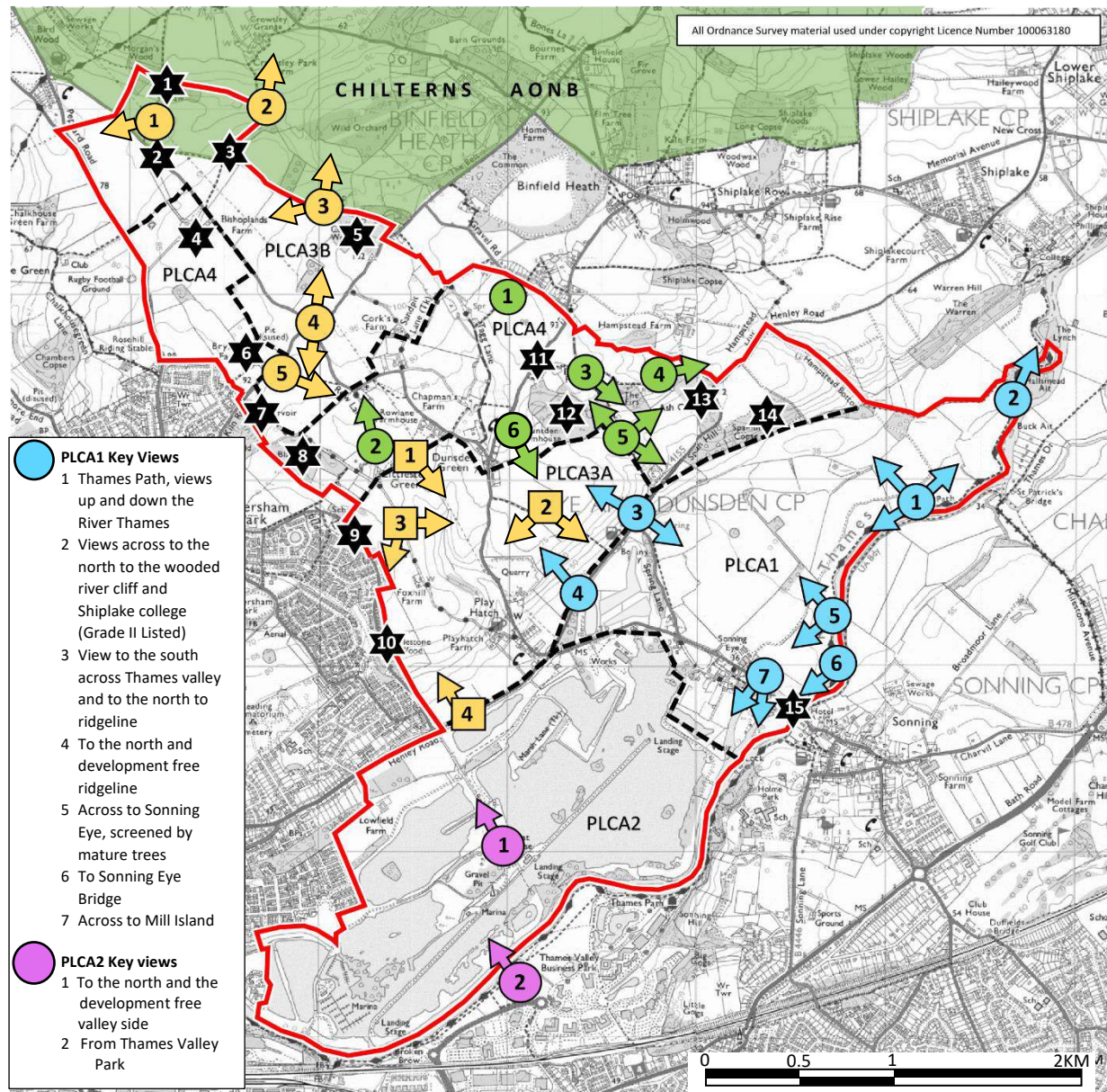
-  Parish/Neighbourhood Plan Area boundary
-  PLA Boundaries
-  Woodland/tree belts and robust hedgerows
-  Watercourses and lakes
-  Grass/pasture

#### Historic and cultural landscape feature

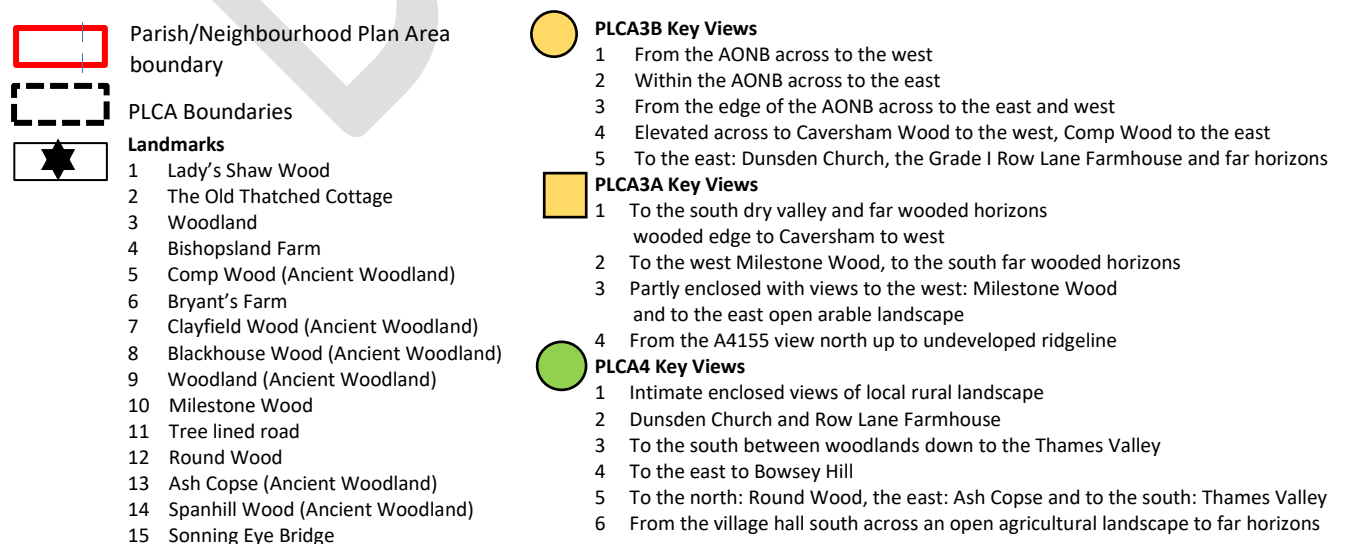


- 1 Old Thatched Cottage Grade II Listed
- 2 Bishoplands Farm Grade II Listed
- 3 Bryants Farm buildings
- 4 Cork's Farm Grade II Listed
- 5 Dunsden Church (Grade II Listed) and Rowlane Farmhouse (Grade II\* Listed)
- 6 Dunsden Village Green
- 7 Playhatch with 5 Grade II Listed buildings/structures
- 8 Sonning Eye includes 11 Grade II Listed and one Grade II\* Listed Buildings
- 9 Sonning Bridge Grade II Listed

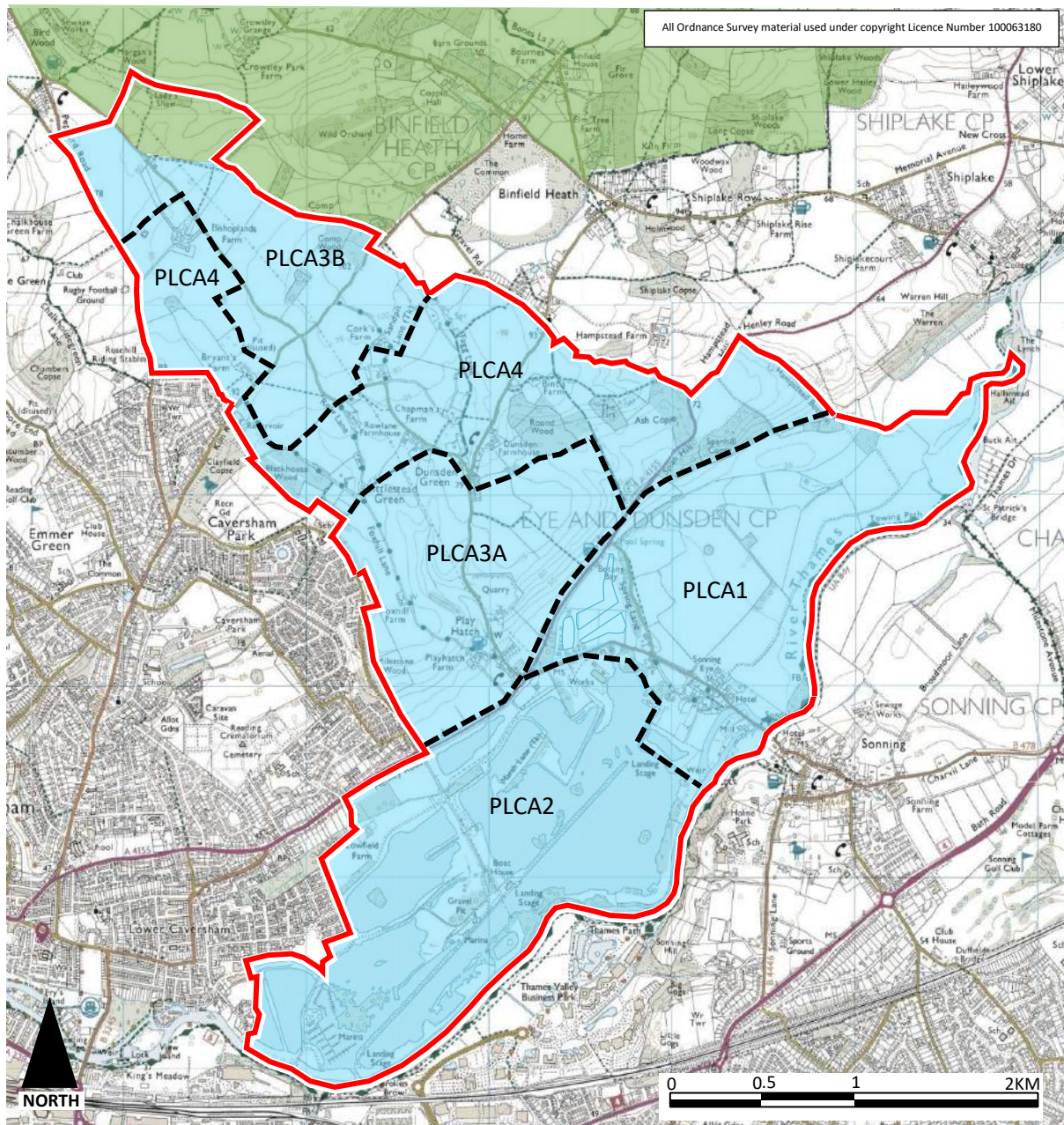




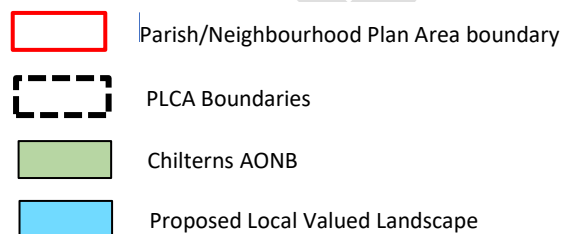
**FIGURE 7: Key Visual Attributes**







**FIGURE 8: Proposed Local Valued Landscape**





## Appendix 1: List of documents consulted

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- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Ref NE579) 2014
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed 2013
- Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024
- Chilterns AONB: Landscape Character and Chronology of the Chilterns
- South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment 2017
- Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project July 2017
- Rural Areas Local Plan SODC July 1992 -see extract at end of Appendix
- SODC Core Strategy 2012 and Settlement Assessment Background Paper 2018
- TVERC Biodiversity Report 2020-11-30

## Appendix 2: Glossary

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**AOD (Above Ordnance Datum):** This is used by Ordnance Survey as the basis for deriving altitudes on maps

**Characterisation:** The process of identifying areas of similar landscape character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character

**Characteristics:** Elements or combination of elements, which make a contribution to distinctive landscape character

**Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC):** Historic characterisation is the identification and interpretation of the historic dimension of the present-day landscape or township within a given area

**Landform:** The shape and form of the land surface which has resulted from a combination of geology, geomorphology, slope, elevation and physical processes

**Landscape:** An area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of action and interaction of natural and/or human factors

**Landscape Character:** A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse

**Landscape character Areas (LCAs):** These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type or types

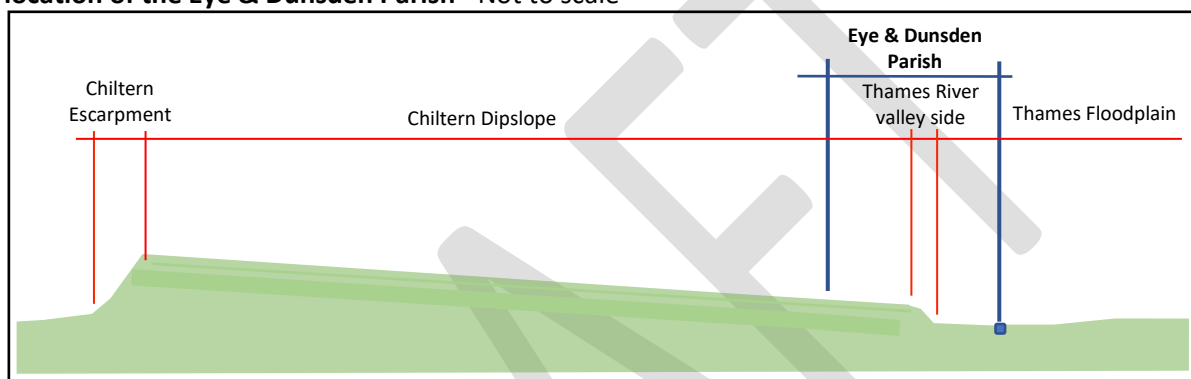
**Landscape Character Assessment (LCA):** The process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape, and using this information to assist in managing change in the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscape distinctive. The process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment

**Landscape Character Types (LCTs):** These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern, and perceptual and aesthetic attributes

**Priority Habitat Inventory (England):** This is a spatial dataset that describes the geographic extent and location of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41 habitats of principal importance. This inventory replaces Natural England's previous separate BAP habitat inventories: blanket bog, coastal & floodplain grazing marsh, coastal sand dunes, coastal vegetated shingle, deciduous woodland, fens, lowland calcareous grassland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland heathland, lowland meadows, lowland raised bog, limestone pavements, maritime cliff and slope, mudflats, purple moor grass & rush pastures, reedbeds, saline lagoons, traditional orchards, undetermined grassland, upland calcareous grassland, upland hay meadows and upland heathland. These earlier inventories were produced from 1999 onwards and derived from habitat datasets collated from across the country, prioritising areas outside of designated sites.

## Landform terms

**Cross Section showing the Chilterns Escarpment, Dipslope and the River Thames floodplain and location of the Eye & Dunsden Parish - Not to scale**



**Dipslope:** A dip slope is a topographic (geomorphic) surface which slopes in the same direction, and often by the same amount, as the true dip or apparent dip of the underlying strata

**Spur:** This is a lateral ridge or tongue of land descending from a hill or ridge

**Dry valley:** A dry valley may develop on many kinds of permeable rock, such as limestone and chalk, or sandy terrains that do not regularly sustain surface water flow. Such valleys do not hold surface water because it sinks into the permeable bedrock

## Historic terms

**Enclosure:** Areas of land that are identified as being used primarily for some form of agriculture. Enclosure has taken place within Oxfordshire since the medieval period onwards, first as informal piecemeal enclosure of open fields, heath, and woodland. This process created frequently irregular fields, often with reverse 'S' shaped boundaries which followed the line of earlier medieval strips. In the 18th and 19th century a more formal process of enclosure took place, often directed by an Act of Parliament. This created more rectilinear fields which enclosed most of the remaining land and reorganised some of the earlier fields. In the mid-20th century, fields were reorganised again by the removal of boundaries to create large Amalgamated Enclosures suitable for modern farming requirements and techniques.

**Ancient enclosure:** Areas of land enclosed prior to the 18th century. These fields can be coaxial or irregular. Co-axial field systems have a sinuous pattern of small, elongated fields. Irregular field systems consist of piecemeal enclosures of various sizes and shapes. The most common type of enclosure dating to the medieval or earlier post-medieval period surviving in Oxfordshire's current

landscape, this type is found in distinct parts of the county. Its greatest concentration is in the south-eastern corner of the county, in an area corresponding with the Chiltern Hills and AONB.

**Piecemeal enclosure:** Field systems that have been created out of the medieval open fields by informal agreement. They appear to have been established on a field by field basis and often are small and irregular fields with at least two boundaries of a reverse 'S' curve or 'dog-leg'. Includes enclosed furlongs and enclosed strips.

**Planned enclosure:** Fields with a predominantly straight boundary morphology giving a geometric and regular appearance. Normally laid out by surveyors these field patterns are often the result of enclosure during the 18th and 19th centuries. This type of field system often overrides earlier systems.

**Reorganised enclosure:** Fields showing signs of modern adaptation through large scale re-organisation of earlier field boundaries. Frequently occurring next to railways and modern infrastructure developments such as motorways, roadways and bypasses where older field patterns have been disrupted. Often characterised by significant boundary loss since the 1st Edition OS map. N.B. This HLC Type has been used variously throughout the project. It is described as a modern (i.e. post 1900) phenomena, but, at times, it has been used to describe 19th century reorganisation of earlier fields. Some of these are likely to be the result of Enclosure Acts.

**Prairie/Amalgamated Enclosure:** Patterns of large fields (in excess of 10 hectares), some with boundaries over 1km long. Often resulting from post WW2 combination of holdings and the removal of earlier boundaries creating land units convenient for highly mechanised arable, or for extensive livestock raising.

**Unenclosed land:** Areas of land which have remained largely unimproved or unenclosed over a period of time, including downland, riverine landscapes, common and meadows, and greens

**Rural hamlet:** Small settlement with no ecclesiastical or lay administrative function and usually with no other amenities. Less common than villages but still found throughout the county, hamlets also make up an important of Oxfordshire's landscape. As with the villages they are often some of the oldest features in the landscape, dating to the medieval period. Some hamlets have shrunk in the late post-medieval and modern periods. There is a concentration of this type along the northern part of the Chilterns AONB.

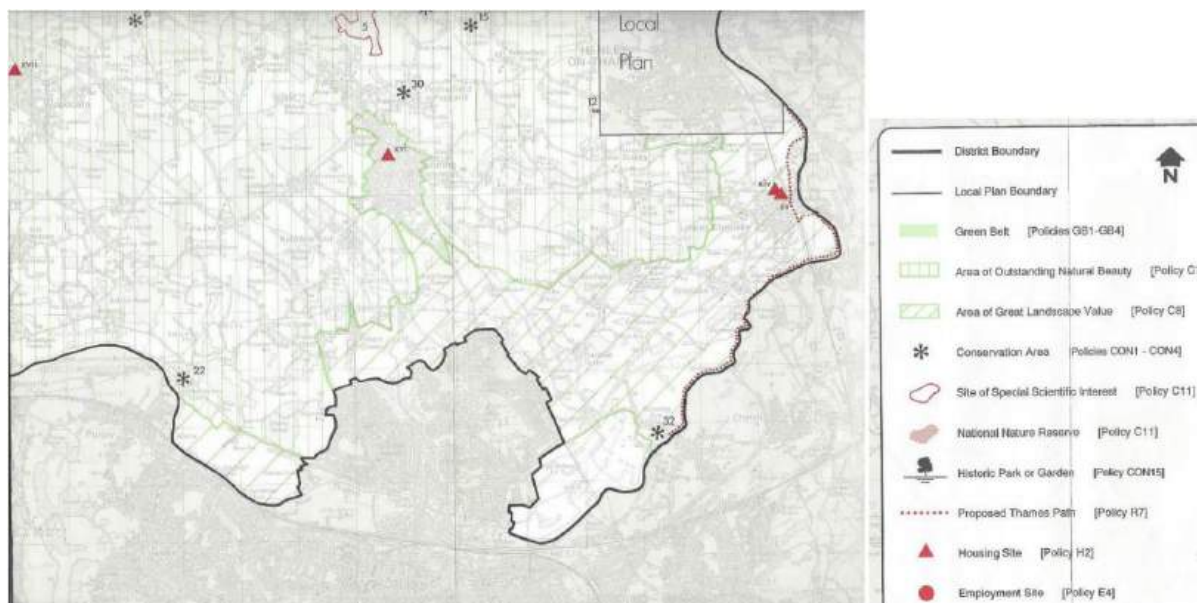
**Rural Farmstead:** A farmhouse, ancillary farm buildings, yards, gardens, and small fields forming the operational centre for the surrounding farmland.

**Ancient Woodland:** Woodland believed to have existed since at least 1600 in England and defined as such by Natural England. Usually managed for timber, coppice etc. and often contains dividing banks, trackways, charcoal burning platforms etc. Ancient woodland is one of the more common types found in Oxfordshire and is found in two main areas – a large swathe across the central part of the county north of Oxford and in a band across the south-eastern corner of the county. The first concentration represents the scattered remains of the ancient Wychwood Forest. The second coincides with the Chilterns AONB and the various Ancient Woods preserved there.

**Secondary Woodland:** Woodland that has developed, usually by natural colonization, on land formerly used for other purposes (agriculture, settlement, industry etc).



### Appendix 3: Extract from - Rural Areas Local Plan: South Oxfordshire Local Plan Adopted 1992



### Areas of Great Landscape Value

C8 WITHIN AREAS OF GREAT LANDSCAPE VALUE, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO CONSERVE AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF THE LANDSCAPE AND TO PROTECT IT FROM DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS LIKELY TO HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON ITS CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE. THE COUNCIL WILL EXERCISE ESPECIALLY CAREFUL CONTROL IN RELATION TO THE DESIGN AND SITING OF BUILDINGS AND THE USE OF LAND GENERALLY.

5.25 Extensive areas of Great Landscape Value were defined in Oxfordshire in the original County Development Plan of 1954. These were defined as "areas where, in the opinion of the Council, the beauty of the landscape and the building tradition of the locality combine to produce an area of outstanding amenity which ought to be the subject of especially careful control in relation to the design and siting of buildings and the use of the land generally". Many of the areas shown in the 1954 plan have since been designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.26 In the Structure Plan, the County Council proposes that, in addition to the special protection which is to be afforded to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular care should be taken to control new development in a number of other areas regarded as being of high landscape value. In the area covered by this Local Plan the areas mentioned are:

- a) the Thames Valley, excluding the major built-up areas;
- b) the Thame Valley; and
- c) the Chilterns outside the AONB;

The County Council also suggests that local plans should define and protect special landscape features which are important to the local area.

5.27 Three broad Areas of Great Landscape Value are proposed in this Local Plan. The first area runs from the Thame Valley to the Chilterns escarpment. It is a continuation of the Area of Great Landscape Value defined in the Central Oxfordshire Local Plan. The area is very attractive gently undulating open countryside, with many quiet small villages, often built of local limestone. It is traversed by narrow hedge-lined lanes and has a character of remoteness. Its openness is noticeable from the higher ground of the Chilterns escarpment and the A329 running on the south eastern edge of the Oxford Heights which

afford many views across the area. It is of high amenity value and is worthy of Area of Great Landscape Value status.

5.28 The second area runs southwards from the Chilterns AONB to the River Thames and it is the area which the Council considered should have been included with the AONB. The area is the dip slope of the Chilterns and much of it is indistinguishable from the landscapes within the AONB. The areas where the dip slope meets the Thames floodplain are especially attractive. The proposed Area of Great Landscape Value extends from the AONB boundary to the boundary of the District, except for Sonning Common and the area of gravel working between Reading and Sonning Eye.

5.29 The third area is the Thames Valley, much of which is in the AONBs or Areas of Great Landscape Value described above. Additional areas included are between Long Wittenham and Little Wittenham, and between Wallingford and Cholsey. An area of very attractive countryside around Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Mackney, which is almost enclosed by the North Wessex Downs AONB, is also included.

5.30 The boundaries of all the areas considered to be of Great Landscape Value are shown on the Proposals Map, and within them all development proposals will be carefully examined with regard to their effect on the landscape. The proposals are broadly consistent with the advice given in the Structure Plan and with the approach adopted by the District Councils in Oxfordshire. It is recognised, however, that the approach may be different from that adopted in adjoining Districts in Buckinghamshire and Berkshire.

#### The River Thames and its Valley

C9 OF FOREMOST CONCERN TO THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY IN CONSIDERING APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT ADJOINING THE RIVER THAMES, IS THE PARTICULAR CHARACTER OF THE RIVER, ITS VALLEY AND THE SETTLEMENTS ON ITS BANKS. PROPOSALS FOR ANY FORM OF DEVELOPMENT WHICH ARE CONSIDERED TO DETRACT IN ANY WAY FROM THIS SPECIAL CHARACTER WILL BE STRONGLY RESISTED.

C10 THE NATURAL STATE OF THE RIVER AND ITS BANKS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED, AND THEREFORE PROPOSALS FOR NEW MOORING STAGES AND POSTS, EARTHWORKS AND FOR CAMPSHEDDING THE BANK WILL BE RESISTED, IN THAT THEY DESTROY EXISTING NATURAL VEGETATION AND SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE CHARACTER OF THE RIVER ENVIRONMENT. WHERE IT IS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE RIVER BANK FROM EROSION, THE PROTECTIVE MEASURES SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THE RIVER AND ITS ENVIRONMENT.

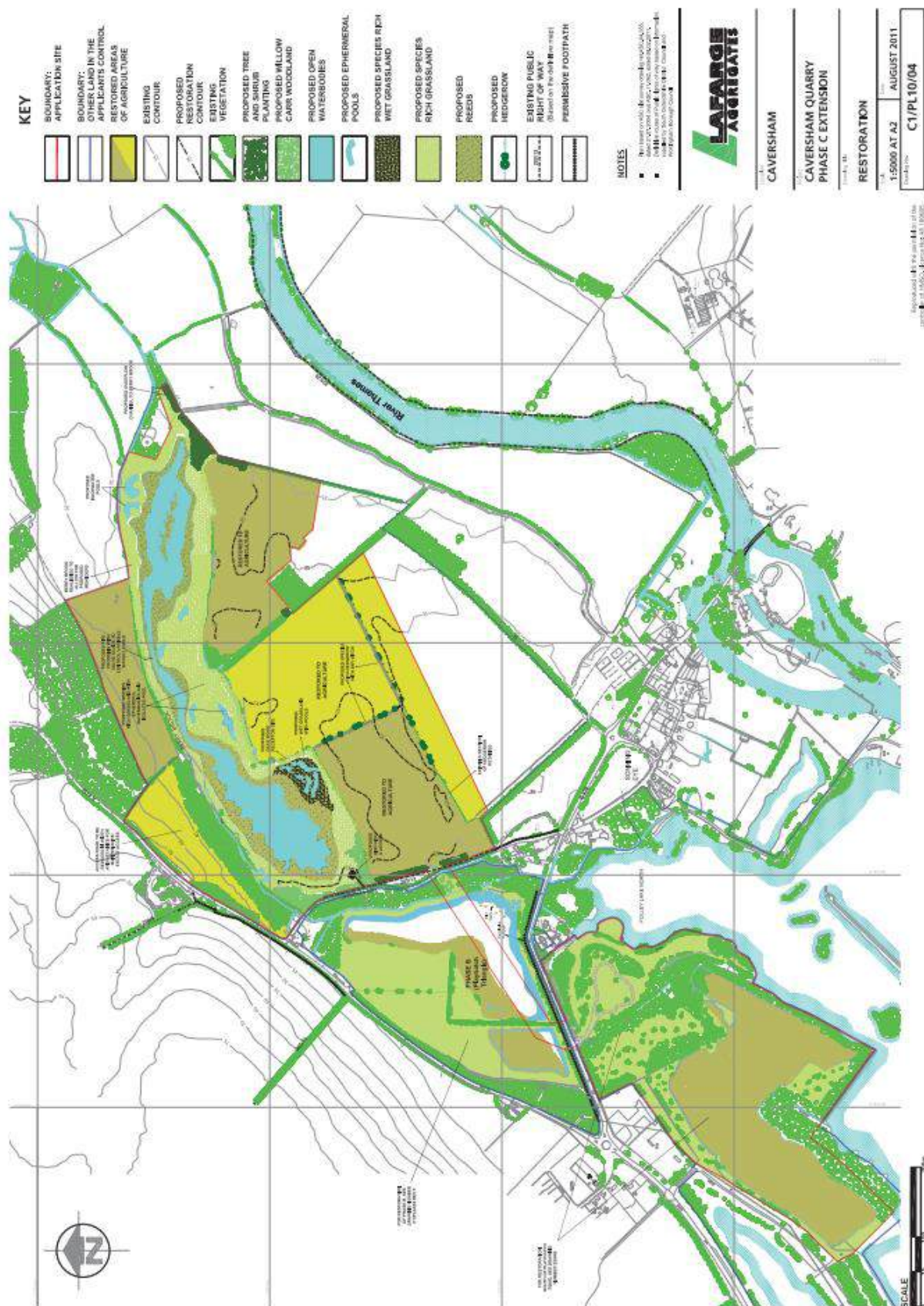
5.31 The River Thames and its valley constitute one of the most attractive features of the landscape of southern England. The section of the river upstream of Reading is particularly noted for its special visual and environmental qualities, which are for the most part unspoilt. The river passes in the main through pleasant pasture land, and although there are many settlements along the river, much of the area is accessible only on foot. Consequently one of the main features of the river is its solitude and tranquillity, and it is essential that this is preserved. Most sections of the river in the area are within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Areas of Great Landscape Value. Policies for the recreational use of the River Thames are in Section 9 below.



## **Appendix 4: Caversham Quarry Phase C Extension:**

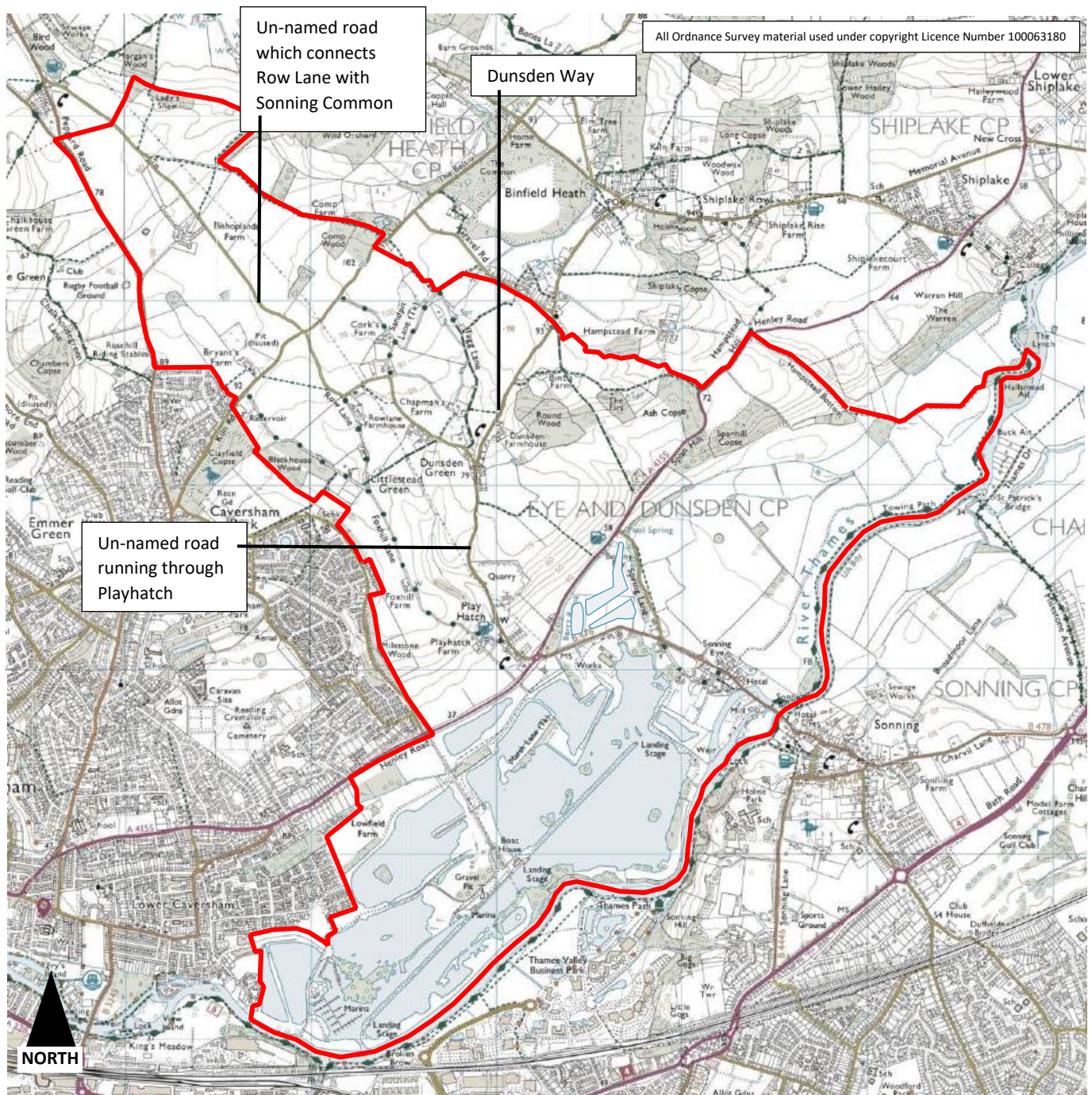
Below is the plan showing the restoration works. Full details can be found on Oxfordshire CC planning website application No P11/E2133/CM

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## Appendix 5: Location of unmarked roads





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