



# Oxford Local Plan

## Green Belt assessment of additional sites

### Oxford City Council

#### **Final report**

Prepared by LUC

January 2023

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and context

**1.1** This chapter sets out the background to the assessment and a summary of the relevant context.

### Introduction

**1.2** LUC was commissioned by Oxford City Council (OCC) in November 2022 to undertake an assessment of the harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of land for development.

**1.3** The aim of the study is to inform the next stage of the Oxford Local Plan 2040, including an additional Regulation 18 consultation on housing need and unmet need early in 2023. It will provide evidence to enable OCC to consider whether the Green Belt boundaries should be altered through the Local Plan process, to enable existing Green Belt land to contribute to meeting Oxford's housing need. However, it does not recommend what land could be released for development. This requires the consideration of additional factors such as development need and a range of sustainability issues which the Council will take into account to reach a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land.

**1.4** This assessment follows and builds upon the previous Green Belt assessment that LUC undertook for OCC [\[see reference 1\]](#) which reviewed several potential development sites in 2017, and a subsequent addendum [\[see reference 2\]](#) (collectively referred to herein as the '2017 assessment') which were used to inform the preparation the Local Plan 2036 [\[see reference 3\]](#). This assessment has used the same methodology which is reproduced in **Chapter 2** below.

**1.5** This assessment considers the specific harm associated with release of nine Green Belt sites that were not assessed in the 2017 study. Most Green Belt sites were excluded from the 2017 assessment due to being protected for reasons in addition to their Green Belt designation, such as because they are playing pitches, of biodiversity value, or functional flood plain. The nine new sites were not considered in the 2017 assessment because they had been defined as part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure network, but at the time of writing the process of designating the Green and Blue Infrastructure Network for protection in the Local Plan 2040 had not yet been completed. Therefore, the nine sites were added into the Green Belt assessment. These are shown on **Figure 1.1** and listed in **Table 2.2** below.

**1.6** The assessment also includes a review of nine of the sites assessed in 2017 (some of which are divided into smaller parcels), to check that the results from the 2017 assessment are still applicable in light of subsequent Green Belt releases. These sites are shown on **Figure 1.2**. and listed in **Table 2.1** below.

## Context

**1.7** The following sets out a brief overview of the latest Green Belt policy relevant to this assessment. A summary of the origins of the Oxford Green Belt is set out within the 2017 Green Belt Assessment.

## Green Belt policy

### National Green Belt purposes

**1.8** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [**See reference 4**] states in paragraph 138 that Green Belts serve five purposes:

### **The Purposes of Green Belt**

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**1.9** The NPPF also states in paragraphs 139 and 140 that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where ‘exceptional circumstances’ are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans.

**1.10** Paragraph 143 states that when defining Green Belt boundaries, “plans should ... f) define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent”.

**1.11** Legal case law, as established in *Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils & others* (2015), indicates that planning judgments setting out the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for the amendment of Green Belt boundaries require consideration of the ‘nature and extent of harm’ to the Green Belt and ‘the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent’. This study will provide the Council with the necessary evidence to determine the potential harm to the Green Belt.

## **Local Green Belt policy**

**1.12** Policy G3 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 seeks to protect the Oxford Green Belt, stating that “proposals for development in the Green Belt will be

determined in accordance with national policy” and that “planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Green Belt, in accordance with national policy”.

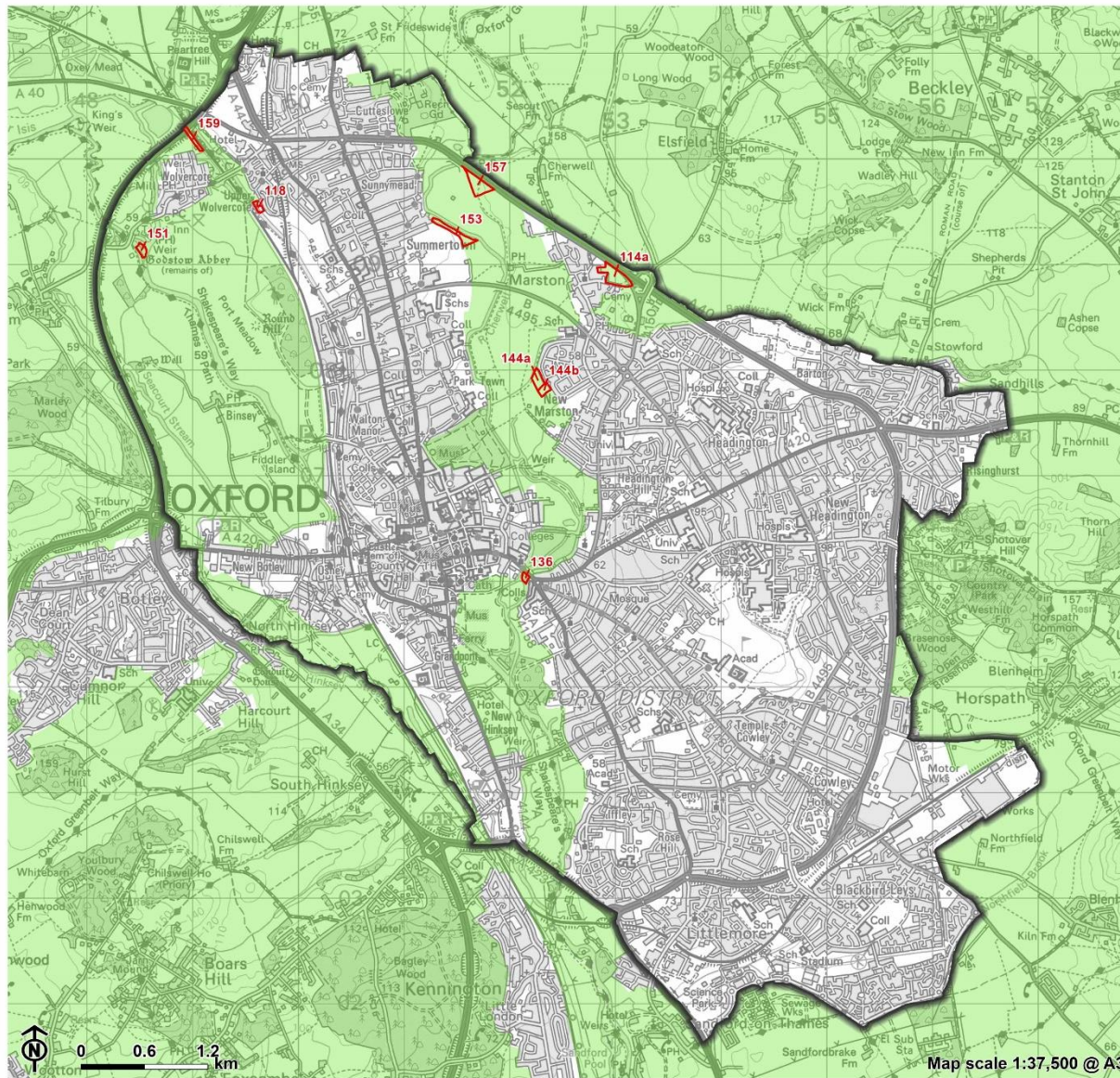
**1.13** The supporting text for Policy G3 notes that “Green Belt is a strategic planning policy tool designed primarily to prevent the spread of development and the coalescence of urban areas” and that “the Oxford Green Belt offers important protection to the historic setting of the city and it must continue to be protected where it is important to this aim”.

## Report structure

**1.14** The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the assessment methodology.
- **Chapter 3** presents a review a review of nine sites previously assessed.
- **Chapter 4** summarises the findings of the Green Belt assessment for the additional potential development sites.
- **Appendix A** presents the detailed assessment of the 11 additional sites.





Oxford Local Plan, Green Belt  
Assessment of Additional Sites  
Oxford City Council

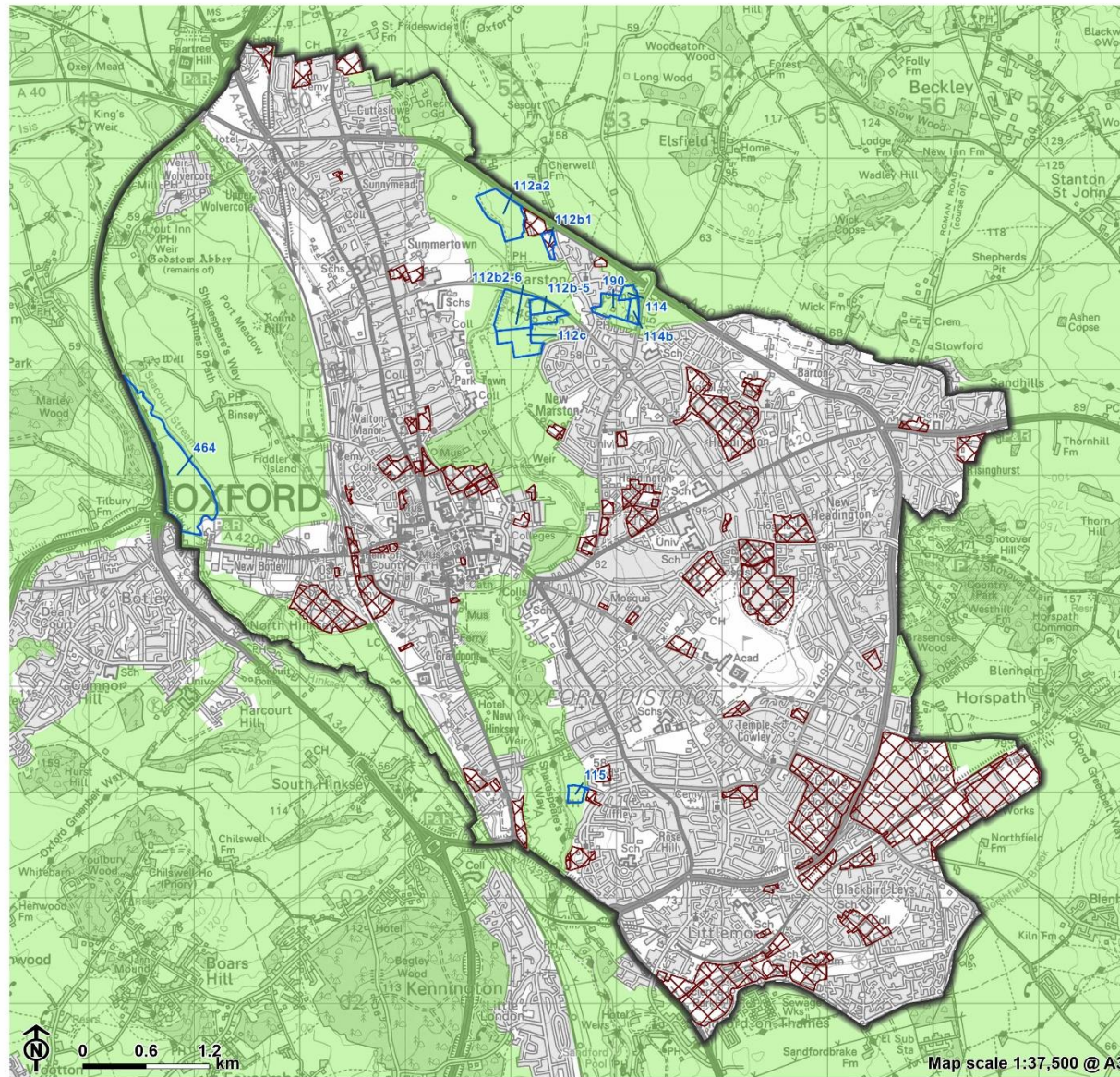


Figure 1.1: Additional Potential Development Sites for Assessment

- Oxford City
- Potential development site
- Green Belt

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EB:Daniels\_S LUC 12261\_MainReportMaps\_v1 25/01/2023  
Source: OCC, DCLG, LUC



Oxford Local Plan, Green Belt  
Assessment of Additional Sites  
Oxford City Council



Figure 1.2: Previous Potential Development Sites for Review

- Oxford City
- Potential development site for review
- Local Plan Site Allocations 2016-2036
- Green Belt

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## Chapter 2

# Methodology

**2.1** This Chapter sets out the key elements of the assessment approach and summarises the methodology that was used to undertake it.

**2.2** There is no defined approach set out in National Planning Policy or National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) as to how Green Belt assessments should be undertaken. The approach is based on LUC's extensive experience of undertaking Green Belt assessments for over 50 local authorities and has been informed by relevant case law and Inspectors' decisions. Where appropriate, reference is made to an advice note (Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt) published by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) in 2015, that discusses some of the key issues associated with assessing the Green Belt.

## Assessment approach

**2.3** As outlined in Chapter 1, the study assesses 11 additional potential development sites and reviews nine sites previously assessed within the City boundary against the five nationally defined purposes of the Green Belt and draws conclusions on the relative harm (or otherwise) to the Green Belt that may result from their potential release for development. The methodology is consistent with the 2017 assessment undertaken by LUC on behalf of OCC, as well as the Green Belt Study that LUC prepared for neighbouring Cherwell District Council to inform their appraisal of development options (2017).

**2.4** The nine previously reviewed sites are listed in **Table 2.1** below, and the 11 additional potential development sites are listed in **Table 2.2**. See also **Figures 1.1** and **1.2** above.

**Table 2.1: Potential development sites previously reviewed**

Site ref.	Site name	Size (ha)
112a-2	Cherwell Valley/Old Marston (includes Hill View Farm, Land at Mill Lane)	13.53
112b-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Old Marston	56.4
112c	Land at Marston	10.71
114	Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfeld Road	1.70
114b	Showman's Field	2.18
115	Land west of Meadow Lane	2.34
190-1	Court Place Farm allotments	3.51
190-2	Court Place Farm allotments	2.42
464	Land adjacent to Seacourt Park and Ride	37.25

**Table 2.2: Additional potential development sites**

Site ref.	Site name	Size (ha)
114a	Land at Marston Brook (northern part)	3.56
118	Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club (small GB part)	0.52
144a	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	1.39
144b	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	0.84
157	Wildlife Corridor at Hill Farm	2.78
136	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	0.44
151	Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard	0.76
153	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	1.96
159	Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's Meadow	0.85

**2.5** For the nine previously assessed sites, consideration was given as to whether there were any changes in circumstance that would require a reassessment of the original findings, using the methodology set out below.

**2.6** The assessment of the harm to the Green Belt purposes of the release of land involved four key elements of work, as follows:

1. Review of the 11 identified additional potential development sites and their sub-division (where appropriate) into smaller parcels of land to facilitate assessment.
2. Assessment of the contribution each land parcel makes to each of the Green Belt purposes identified in the NPPF.
3. Assessment of the strength of potential alternative Green Belt boundaries.
4. Assessment of the potential harm the release of land would have on the Green Belt, taking account of its contribution to Green Belt purposes, its effect on the wider integrity of the Green Belt and the strength of revised boundaries.

**2.7** Much of the Green Belt land within Oxford is un-developable due to environmental constraints such as Flood Zone 3, Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Scheduled Monument, Registered Park and Garden (RPG) and Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Access Land designations. Where such 'absolute constraints' affect a site this is noted, and no further analysis for those areas is provided. Other potential constraints noted within the assessment are Conservation Areas and Flood Zone 2, which although are a constraint to development, are not considered to be an 'absolute constraint'.

**2.8** This study does not identify potential mitigation measures to reduce the potential harm to the Green Belt, or identify opportunities to enhance the remaining Green Belt (i.e. for access, outdoor sport and recreation, landscape

enhancement, visual amenity, biodiversity and improvement to damaged or derelict land). At the time of writing no decisions had been made regarding the potential suitability, or otherwise, of the release of the sites for development. Therefore, the identification of mitigation/enhancement measures will be undertaken once decisions have been made on the Council's preferred site allocations. This approach also enables the sites to be assessed in a consistent manner – with no assumptions about the detailed nature or form of future development.

**2.9** The extent of existing or potential beneficial use does not form part of the judgement of harm, as the NPPF makes it clear that beneficial uses are a desirable consequence of Green Belt designation rather than a reason for designation. It does however constitute part of the consideration of environmental factors that the Council will weigh up against Green Belt harm and other sustainability considerations before deciding on which areas of land may be suitable for release.

**2.10** In keeping with the scope of this study, environmental and sustainability issues relating to potential on and off-site impacts, such as landscape quality, biodiversity value, flooding and traffic generation, were not assessed, but are recognised as key elements in any decision-making regarding the release of Green Belt land for housing development.

**2.11** The key assessment elements and the format of the outputs are explained in more detail below.

### 1: Review and subdivision of assessment sites

**2.12** Where initial site analysis found that different parts of a site were likely to make different levels of contribution to Green Belt purposes, the site was subdivided into a number of separate assessment parcels. However, due to the relatively small size of the sites, sub-division was only required in one case.

## 2: Assessment of Green Belt contribution

**2.13** The assessment analysed how each of the identified land parcels perform against each of the Green Belt purposes, with the exception of the fifth purpose - the encouragement of recycling of derelict and other urban land to assist in urban regeneration.

**2.14** The fifth purpose was not assessed as part of this study as measuring accurately the extent to which individual parcels contribute to this process of recycling of derelict and other urban land is problematic. While it would be possible to undertake a spatial analysis of the supply of brownfield land relative to Green Belt parcels (at conurbation, authority, settlement, Housing Market Area or Strategic Green Belt Areas scales), there are significant concerns about the validity of any judgements based on the results. It is not possible to identify and measure a causal link between the policy restraint in a particular Green Belt parcel and the recycling of urban land elsewhere, in part reflecting the complexity of the development process, the locational requirements of different types of development and variations in the property market over time.

**2.15** This Study therefore acknowledges that Purpose 5 is important and should be afforded equal weight with Purposes 1-4, but that it is not possible to assess the performance of Purpose 5 on a parcel-by-parcel basis for the purpose of this small-scale assessment. This approach has been deemed to be sound by Planning Inspectors reviewing previous Green Belt Studies.

**2.16** All four assessed Green Belt purposes are considered to relate to the relationship between the land area in question, developed land, and the countryside. This relationship is influenced by the location of the parcel, the extent of openness within it and the role of physical elements, including boundary features, in either separating the parcel from, or connecting it to, built-up areas and the wider countryside.

**2.17** The assessment criteria used to undertake the analysis are set out in the following sections for each respective purpose.

## Purpose 1: Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

**2.18** It is possible to argue that all Green Belt prevents the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up urban areas, because that is its principal purpose as a strategic planning designation. However, the Study requires one area (or parcel) to be distinguished from another in terms of the extent to which they perform this purpose. This requires a detailed, site-specific assessment against this strategic purpose.

**2.19** The implication of the term 'unrestricted sprawl' is that planned development may not contravene this purpose. However, in assessing the impact of releasing land in the context of a Green Belt study, no assumptions about the form of possible future development can be made, so the role an area of land plays is dependent on its relationship with a large built-up area. Development on land that has a close association with a large built-up area is less likely to be perceived as sprawl than development on land which is clearly distinct from the large built-up area.

### Assessment criteria

**2.20** Where land has a relationship with the edge of a large built-up area, the strength of its contribution (that is, the perception of sprawl) will be greater if it has a stronger relationship with the surrounding countryside than with the urban area, and lacks urbanising influences. Conversely a parcel will make a weaker contribution to this purpose if it: has a stronger relationship with the adjacent large built-up area than with the wider countryside; lacks proximity to the built-up area; or is already developed.

**2.21** In line with the methodology for the 2017 assessment, Oxford is the only settlement considered to constitute a large built-up area.



**2.22** Key questions asked in relation to Purpose 1, the prevention of sprawl of large, built-up areas, are:

- Does the parcel lie adjacent to, or in close proximity to the large built-up area?
- To what extent does the parcel contain existing urban sprawl?
- To what extent does the parcel exhibit the potential for sprawl? i.e. Does land relate sufficiently to a large built-up area for development within it to be associated with that settlement or vice versa?
- Does land have a strong enough relationship with the large built-up area, and a weak enough relationship with other Green Belt land, to be regarded more as infill than expansion?

## Considerations

- Development/land-use: less development = stronger contribution
- Location: closer to settlement = stronger contribution
- Separating features: stronger relationship with countryside than settlement = stronger contribution
- Connecting features: weaker relationship between settlement and countryside = stronger contribution

## Stronger contribution

- The parcel is adjacent to the large built-up area but relates strongly to the wider countryside – development would represent significant expansion of the large built-up area into countryside.

## Weaker contribution

- The parcel is not adjacent to the large built-up area and development here would not constitute sprawl from the large built-up area

## Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

**2.23** Land that is juxtaposed between towns will make a contribution to this purpose, and the stronger the relationship between the towns, the stronger the contribution of any intervening open land will be. Physical proximity is the initial consideration but both built and natural landscape elements can act to either decrease or increase perceived separation – for example a direct connecting road link or shared landform may decrease perceived separation whereas a barrier feature such as a woodland block or river may increase the perception of separation. Land that lacks a strong sense of openness, due to the extent of existing development that has occurred, will also make a weaker contribution.

**2.24** In line with the methodology for the 2017 assessment, all ‘inset settlements’, that is settlements that are set within the Green Belt but not covered by it, were considered in relation to Purpose 2. This includes some distinct areas of Oxford, including the City Centre, St Clement’s, Marston, New Marston, Northway, Summertown, Sunnymead and Wolvercote. It also includes settlements in neighbouring districts, including Eynsham in West Oxfordshire. Key questions asked in relation to Purpose 2, preventing the coalescence of towns, are:

- Does the parcel lie directly between two settlements being considered under Purpose 2?
- How far apart are the towns being considered?
- Is there strong intervisibility between the towns due to topography etc?
- How much of a gap is required to avert perceived coalescence, taking into consideration the role of physical features in creating either separation or connectivity?

- How do the gaps between smaller settlements affect the perceived gaps between towns?

## Considerations

- Development/land-use: less development = stronger contribution
- Location: juxtaposed between towns = stronger contribution
- Separating features: lack of features between towns = stronger contribution
- Connecting features: stronger relationship between towns = stronger contribution

## Stronger contribution

- The parcel plays an essential role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Development of this parcel would result in the physical or visual coalescence of settlements, or a significant narrowing of the physical gap with no physical elements to preserve separation.

## Weaker contribution

- Development of this parcel would result in little or no perception of the narrowing of the gap between settlements.

## **Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

**2.25** The contribution a parcel makes to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment can be directly related to the extent to which it displays the characteristics of countryside – that is a lack of dense and urbanising

development, and land uses associated with countryside – and the extent to which it relates to the adjacent settlement and to the wider countryside.

**2.26** The PAS guidance states that: "The most useful approach is to look at the difference between urban fringe – land under the influence of the urban area - and open countryside, and to favour the latter in determining which land to try and keep open, taking into account the types of edges and boundaries that can be achieved."

**2.27** It is important to recognise that Green Belt does not function as a series of isolated parcels: the assessment of a defined parcel will reflect the nature of landscape elements or characteristics within that parcel but must also reflect its relationship with the wider Green Belt. This is consistent with the methodology used in the previous studies.

**2.28** Key questions asked in relation to Purpose 3 are:

- To what extent does the land exhibit the characteristics of the countryside and is open?
- Disregarding the condition of land, are there urbanising influences within or adjacent which reduce the sense of it being countryside?
- Does land relate more strongly to settlements or to the wider countryside?

## Considerations

- Development/land-use: less urbanising land use and more openness = stronger contribution
- Location: further from settlement or from urban encroachment in neighbouring parcels = stronger contribution
- Separating features: stronger relationship with countryside than settlement = stronger contribution
- Connecting features: weaker relationship between settlement and countryside = stronger contribution

## Stronger contribution

- The land parcel displays the characteristics of the countryside, is open and there is little or no sense of urban encroachment from either within the parcel, or from neighbouring land. The parcel relates strongly to the wider countryside and has a sense of separation from the settlement. Development would represent encroachment into the countryside.

## Weaker contribution

- The parcel is too lacking in openness to be considered countryside, or has few countryside characteristics within it and lacks relationship with the wider Green Belt countryside.

## **Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

**2.29** Whilst many settlements have historic elements, this Green Belt Purpose is only relevant to settlements of a certain size – that is, towns – which retain a historic character connected to surrounding landscape elements, and which it is impractical to protect solely through Conservation Area designations. It is

recognised that the setting and special character of the City of Oxford were key considerations in the designation of the Oxford Green Belt.

**2.30** Therefore, in line with the previous studies, the role of land in preserving setting and special character is only considered in relation to Oxford. This connection between a historic town's historic character and the wider countryside does not have to be physical, indeed successions of development often isolate core historic areas from the surrounding countryside; it is often a visual connection. This visual connection can be defined through movement through the area or views into or out of the settlement.

**2.31** The key questions asked in relation to Purpose 4 are:

- What is the relationship of the land with the historic town?
- Does the landform part of the setting and/or special character of an historic town?
- What elements/areas important to the setting and special character of a historic town would be affected by loss of openness?

### Considerations

- Development/land-use: less development = stronger contribution
- Location: contains key characteristics, or important in views to or from them = stronger contribution
- Separating features: lack of features to increased perceived separation from historic town = stronger contribution
- Connecting features: stronger relationship between historic town and countryside = stronger contribution

### Stronger contribution

- The land has a visual connection with Oxford and the parcel forms part of the City's distinctive green backdrop and/or from which there are views into the City, particularly the historic centre.

## Weaker contribution

- There is no sense of a relationship with Oxford, either through distance or through the presence of other towns or landscapes with which a parcel has a dominant sense of connection.

## **Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**2.32** As outlined above, no specific assessment of the fifth purpose has been undertaken for this study, as although it is acknowledged that Purpose 5 is important and should be afforded equal weight with Purposes 1-4, it is not possible to identify specific differences between the performances of the parcels in relation to Purpose 5. This is consistent with the approach adopted in the previous studies.

## 3: Assessment of Potential Alternative Boundaries

**2.33** The role of a parcel's boundary features in influencing the contribution to Green Belt purposes, through their role as separating or connecting features, formed part of the assessment process described above. However, the nature of a boundary in comparison to the existing Green Belt edge, or potential alternative boundaries outside of the assessment parcel is also a consideration when determining whether a boundary is "readily recognisable and likely to be

permanent” (NPPF paragraph 143). This will in turn affect the impact that release of the parcel might have on adjacent Green Belt (as set out above).

**2.34** Features considered to constitute strong potential Green Belt boundaries include natural features such as substantial watercourses and water bodies, and man-made features such as A and B roads and railway lines. Less prominent or less permanent features such as walls, woodland, hedgerows, tree lines, streams and ditches are considered to constitute moderate strength boundaries, and edges lacking clear definition on the ground form weaker boundaries.

**2.35** The suitability of an alternative Green Belt boundary also depends on its relationship with existing boundaries in terms of the resulting form. An overly extended or convoluted shape is likely to cause greater harm than a simpler, more direct alignment in terms of its impact on the relationship between built development and open countryside. For each assessment parcels, commentary is provided on the nature of the existing boundary and any suggested alternatives.

## 4: Assessment of Harm to Green Belt

**2.36** With reference to the size, shape and location of the assessment parcel, the nature of its boundaries, and its relationship with other elements that form boundaries within the landscape, judgements were made concerning the impact that the release of the parcel would have on the contribution (or integrity) of adjacent Green Belt.

**2.37** Combining this judgement with the assessment of the parcel’s contribution to Green Belt purposes, and taking into consideration boundary strength, a rating was given for the level of harm that can be expected to result from the release of the parcel. Consideration was then given as to whether there are any scenarios for release of less than the full parcel that would result in reduced harm to the Green Belt.



**2.38** The assessment of potential harm was given as a rating, using a 5-point scale (of **low**, **low-moderate**, **moderate**, **moderate-high** and **high**) using professional judgement to weigh up the parcel assessment comments. Absolute definitions equating Green Belt harm to suitability for release cannot be given. However, where a high degree of potential harm to the Green Belt has been identified, this relates to land which makes a strong contribution to the Green Belt purposes and/or its release for development would have a significant effect on the integrity of the surrounding Green Belt. Vice versa, where a low potential for harm to occur has been identified, this relates to land which does not make a strong contribution to the Green Belt purposes and its release would not have a significant effect on the integrity of the surrounding Green Belt.

**2.39** Detailed commentary is provided in the assessment on how the judgements relating the level of harm have been made. The harm ratings and accompanying comments are intended to contribute alongside judgements regarding environmental and sustainability impacts, and potential housing yields, to aid final decisions regarding the suitability of release of Green Belt land.

## Outputs

**2.40** The findings of the reappraisal of previously reviewed sites are set out in **Chapter 3**.

**2.41** The assessment findings for Tasks 1-4 are presented in **Appendix A** (for the 11 additional potential development sites) on a site-by-site basis. For each site the following information is provided:

- The site reference number, name and size.
- A map of the site, in context with any nearby settlements – this map also shows the development constraints, listed in **Paragraph 2.7** above, which may have a significant impact on development potential.
- An aerial photograph covering the same area, to illustrate the nature of land cover.

- A brief description of the site in terms of its land use, boundaries and relationship with defined urban areas (that is settlements inset within the Green Belt but excluded from it).
- Comments on the relationship between the site, settlements and countryside, to support the subdivision of the site for assessment purposes (where relevant) and the judgements made in the assessment of contribution to Green Belt.
- A list of parcels into which the site was divided (where relevant); a site which requires no subdivision has a parcel reference that matches the site reference, whereas a site which is subdivided is appended with an additional letter (for example 153-a). Cross-reference is made to any other sites under which the same land is assessed.

### 2.42 For each site/parcel the following is provided:

- A map showing the location of the site/parcel, in the context of any adjacent parcels (where relevant).
- A representative photograph of the site/parcel.
- Text assessing the contribution of the site/parcel to each of the Green Belt purposes.
- Text assessing the strength of any potential alternative Green Belt boundaries – either the site boundaries or sub-divisions within it – with reference to any relevant boundary features outside of the parcel that are relevant to its relationship with settlements or with the wider Green Belt.
- Judgement of the level of harm that would result from the removal of the site/parcel, or any strategic subdivision of it, from the Green Belt, taking into consideration the impact of release on the contribution of adjacent Green Belt. To conclude the assessment of each site a judgement is made on the harm that would result from the release of the site.

## Chapter 3

# Review of previous sites

**3.1** This chapter provides a review of nine sites previously assessed in the 2017 assessment. This considers whether any updates are needed to the site assessment due to subsequent removal of land from the Green Belt in the Oxford Local Plan 2036. The nine sites are shown on **Figure 1.2** along with sites allocated within the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

## 112a - 2: Cherwell Valley/Old Marston (includes Hill View Farm, Land at Mill Lane)

**3.2** In the 2017 assessment site 112a was assessed as two parcels: 112a-1 to the east, comprising the land now allocated; and 112a-2 to the west, comprising the site considered here. This judged that the release of parcel 112a-1 would result in Moderate harm to Green Belt purposes, whilst release of 112a-2 (that is, this site) would result in High harm.

**3.3** Land to the south-east of 112a was allocated as SP25 and SP26 within the Oxford Local Plan 2036. However, this would not alter the findings of the 2017 assessment for this site; expansion of Marston this far west would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, to the detriment of settlement separation (Purpose 2), countryside character (Purpose 3) and the historic setting of Oxford (Purpose 4). It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl (Purpose 1). Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 112b - 2,3,4,5,6: Old Marston

**3.4** In the 2017 assessment site 112b was assessed as six parcels: 112b-1 to the north-east comprises the land now allocated as SP26 within the Oxford Local Plan 2036, whilst all other parcels are largely unchanged from 2017. The 2017 assessment judged that the release of parcel 112b-1 would result in Low-Moderate harm to Green Belt purposes, release of 112b-5 would result in Moderate-High harm, and release of the other parcels would result in High harm.

**3.5** The development of allocation SP26 would not change to the assessment findings for the other parcels within 112b, as they are located some distance from the allocation and to the south of Marston Ferry Road (B4495).

**3.6** Overall, the development of SP26 would not alter the findings of the 2017 assessment for this site; expansion of Marston this far west would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, to the detriment of settlement separation (Purpose 2), countryside character (Purpose 3) and the historic setting of Oxford (Purpose 4). It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl (Purpose 1).

## 112c Land at Marston

**3.7** In the 2017 assessment site 112c was assessed as two parcels: 112c-1 to the north-east, and 112c-2 to the south and south-west. This judged that the release of parcel 112c-1 would result in Moderate-High harm to Green Belt purposes, whilst release of 112c-2 would result in High harm.

**3.8** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 115: Land west of Meadow Lane

**3.9** This site was considered as a single parcel in the 2017 assessment. This judged that the release of parcel 115 would result in High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.10** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 114: Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfield Road

**3.11** This site was considered as a single parcel in the 2017 assessment. This judged that the release of parcel 114 would result in Moderate-High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.12** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 114b: Showman's Field

**3.13** This site was considered as a single parcel in the 2017 assessment. This judged that the release of parcel 114b would result in Moderate-High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.14** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 190-1 Court Place Farm allotments

**3.15** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. This judged that the release of parcel 190-1 (which was a sub-parcel of site 190) would result in Moderate-High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.16** There are no Green Belt allocations in proximity to this site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 190-2 Court Place Farm allotments

**3.17** This site was considered as a single parcel in the 2017 addendum assessment. This judged that the release of parcel 190-2 would result in Moderate-High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.18** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

## 464: Land adjacent to Seacourt Park and Ride

**3.19** This site was considered as a single parcel in the 2017 assessment. This judged that the release of parcel 464 would result in High harm to Green Belt purposes.

**3.20** There are no Green Belt allocations or other notable changes in the vicinity of the site that would affect the 2017 assessment findings. There are also no

### **Chapter 3**     Review of previous sites

allocations within the adopted Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031 (Adopted Policies Map, October 2019); much of this area to the west of the A34 remains designed as a SSSI and Ancient Woodland. Therefore, there would be no change to the 2017 assessment findings.

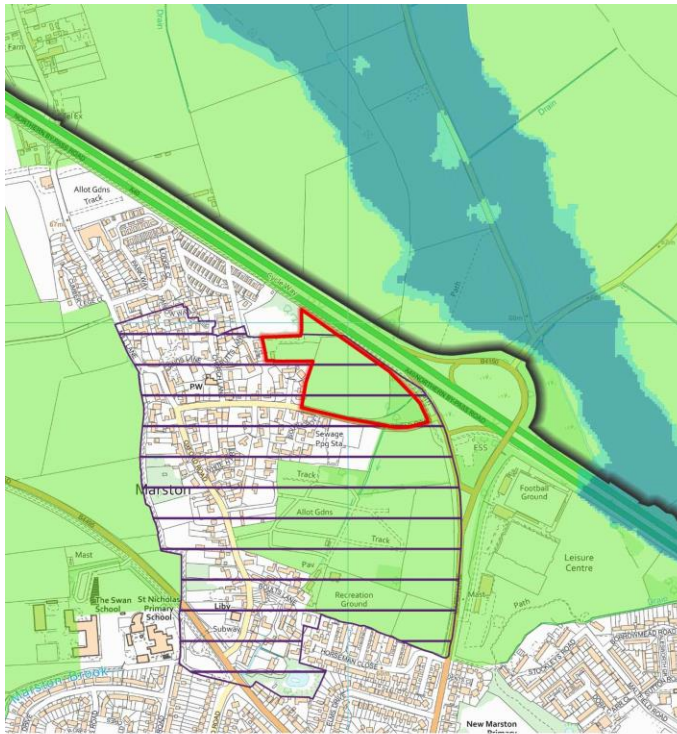
## Chapter 4

# Additional site assessments

**4.1** This chapter provides a harm assessment for each of the nine new Green Belt sites, the locations of which are shown on **Figure 1.1**.



# Site 114a - Land at Marston Brook (northern part)



- Site 114a
- Oxford City
- Green Belt
- Constraints**
- Conservation Area
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3



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## Site description

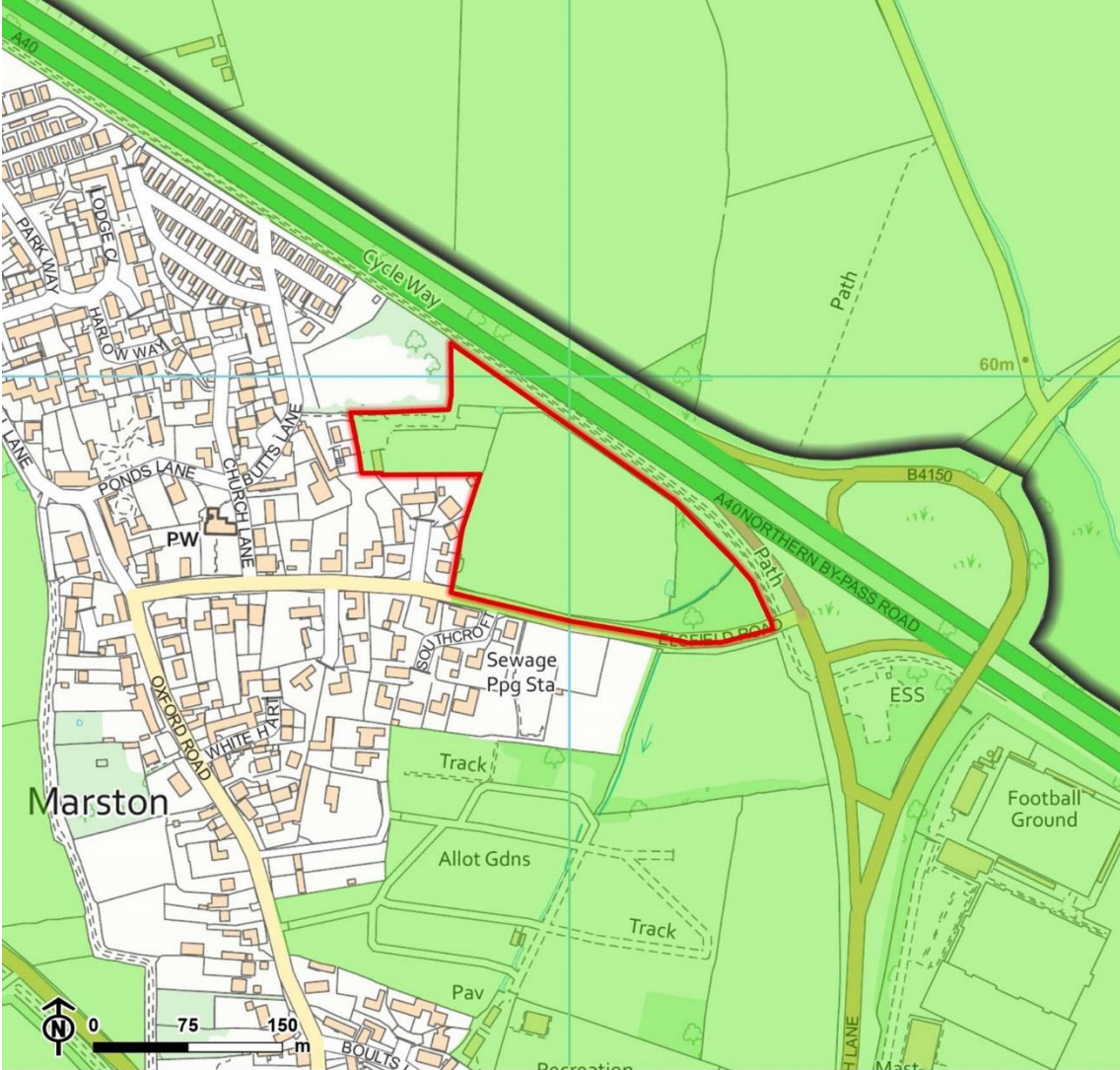
**4.2** The site (Size: 3.56ha) comprises a pastoral field and woodland which adjoins the north-eastern edge of Marston. It is defined by the Northern Bypass (A40) to the north, the B4150 to the east, Elsfield Road to the south-east and the inset edge to the south-west and west (this includes land allocated as SP23 within the Oxford Local Plan 2036 to the north-west). A small woodland block lies within the eastern part of the site, forming part of larger wooded area around the A40/B4150 junction. Landform within the site reflects that of the wider surrounding landscape, falling very gradually from the urban area of Marston in the south-west towards the valley of the Bayswater Brook in the east and north-east. Open farmland lies to the north and north-east (beyond the A40), sports fields lie to the east (beyond the B4150), and fields similar to the site lie to the south-east, west of the B4150. The site lies within Old Marston Conservation Area.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.3** The site is open and undeveloped, and retains a rural character despite the influence of the adjoining busy roads. However, it is isolated from the wider countryside by the A40 and B4150. Tree cover around the A40/B4150 junction, as well as that within the east of the site, also restricts any visual connection with open farmland to the north and north-east. Much of the Green Belt contained between the A40 and the urban edges of Old Marston is in typical urban fringe uses, such as sports pitches and allotments. As one of several undeveloped fields bordering Elsfield Road, the site is considered to form part of the rural setting of Old Marston.

# Parcels

4.4 The site is assessed as a single parcel.



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- 114a
- Oxford City
- Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.5** The parcel forms part of an area of Green Belt contained by the A40 and B4150, so there is limited potential for significant sprawl of the urban area.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.6** The parcel lies between Old Marston and the suburb of Northway to the east, but Green Belt land to the east of the B4150, and the visual separation created by strong tree cover around the A40/B4150 junction, limits its role in this respect. The proximity of the urban edge to the south, linking Marston to

Northway and Headington, also diminishes the significance of this area as a gap between settlements.

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.7** The parcel is undeveloped farmland but forms part of broader area of Green Belt that is dominated by urban fringe uses and separated from the wider countryside by the A40 and B4150. This limits its role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.8** Old Marston retains a relatively strong sense of distinction from the rest of Oxford, with a rural village character preserved by its historic built elements as well as its open countryside setting to the west and to the east. The parcel contributes to the rural setting of Old Marston as experienced on approach to the village along Elsfeld Road, a value reflected in the inclusion of the field in the Old Marston Conservation Area, and therefore contributes to the historic setting of the City.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.9** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## Potential alternative Green Belt boundary

**4.10** The parcel has clearly defined boundaries but its release would lengthen the Green Belt edge.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

### Comments

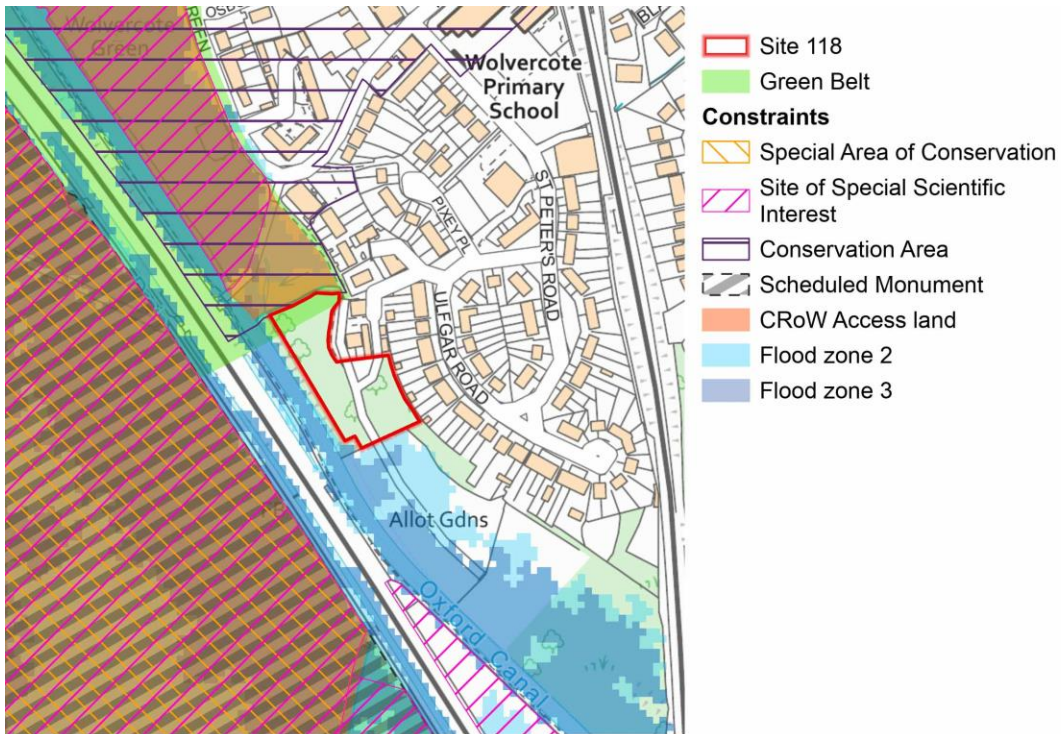
**4.11** Although impact of releasing the parcel on the adjacent Green Belt land to the north and east would be limited by the presence of the A40 and B4150, the rural character of the parcel makes a significant contribution to the historic setting of Old Marston. The impact of its development on the settlement form of Old Marston would weaken the village's historic character.

**4.12** The new boundary to the north and east would be stronger, whilst that to the south-east would be of similar strength to the existing one. Release would weaken the contribution of the remaining Green Belt land to the south-east, by increasing its containment.

### Rating

**4.13** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **Moderate-High**.

# Site 118 - Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club (small GB part)



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## Site description

**4.14** The site (size: 0.52ha) comprises a wooded area lying between the urban edge of Upper Wolvercote to the east, the Oxford Canal to the west and Upper Wolvercote Allotments to the south. The northern boundary is roughly defined by the edge of the wooded area as it adjoins an open area of amenity grassland and pasture at Wolvercote Green. The site contains no built development and there is some sense of detachment from the inset edge at Upper Wolvercote owing to its wooded nature. Whilst predominantly located outside the Green Belt, the woodland forms a separating feature (along with the canal and the 'Cherwell Valley Line' railway) between Upper Wolvercote and Wolvercote to the west. Landform within the site gently rises away from the more flat and low-river valley landscape of the Thames/Isis to the west towards Upper Wolvercote in the east. The site lies immediately south of Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area. Only a very small part of the north of this site lies within the Green Belt, with the majority being inset from the Green Belt. The Green Belt boundary through the site is formed by an arbitrary line defined by no clear features.

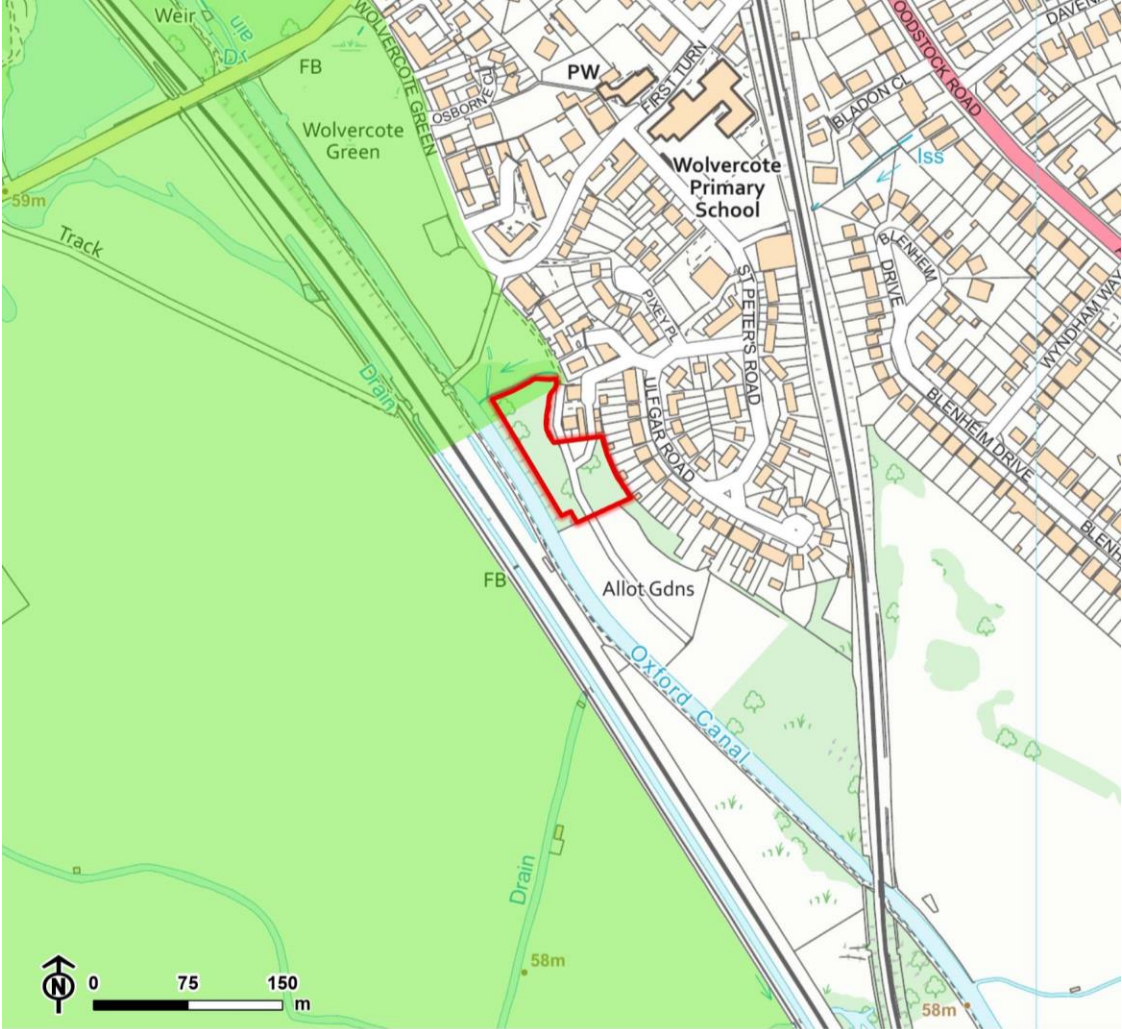
## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.15** The site is open and undeveloped, and retains a rural character despite the influence of the adjoining inset urban edge. However, it is isolated from the wider countryside by the railway line and canal. Tree cover within the site and that along the canal also partially restricts the visual connection with open farmland to the west. Much of the Green Belt to the north of the site contained between the railway line/canal and the urban edge of Upper Marston comprises pastoral farmland, albeit with some typical urban fringe uses such as a play area and amenity grassland.



# Parcels

4.16 The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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-  118
-  Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.17** Development within the site would not represent a westward expansion of the urban form, due to the fact that only a very small part of it lies within the Green Belt and that the inset area to the south extends further to the west. The presence of the canal and railway line and Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common & Green SSSI to the west would also serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

## **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.18** The parcel is located within a narrow settlement gap between Upper Wolvercote and Wolvercote, but the Oxford Canal and 'Cherwell Valley Line' railway line constitute a strong separating features. Development of this site would not result in a narrowing of the gap between settlements as only a very small part of it lies within the Green Belt and the existing inset edge to the south extends further to the west.

## **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.19** The parcel is open and has some sense of detachment from the adjacent urban area owing to its wooded nature. However, it is separated from the wider countryside by the canal and railway line, which limits its role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

## **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.20** The site makes some contribution to the rural setting of Upper Wolvercote, by providing a wooded edge to the settlement. However, this is of only limited value reflected in the fact that it is not included in the Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area boundary. In addition, whilst the openness of the Thames/Isis river valley is a key component of the City's historic setting and special character, the site is separated from this by the canal and railway line. The site therefore makes a limited contribution to the historic setting of the City.

## **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

4.21 All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

### Potential alternative Green Belt boundary

4.22 The site is predominantly located outside of the Green Belt, with the inset edge to the south-west of the site clearly defined by the 'Cherwell Valley Line' railway. Release of the small part of the site to the north (as an extension of Upper Wolvercote) would result in a more consistent Green Belt boundary as it would be defined by woodland edge rather than an arbitrary line running through woodland.

### Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

#### **Comments**

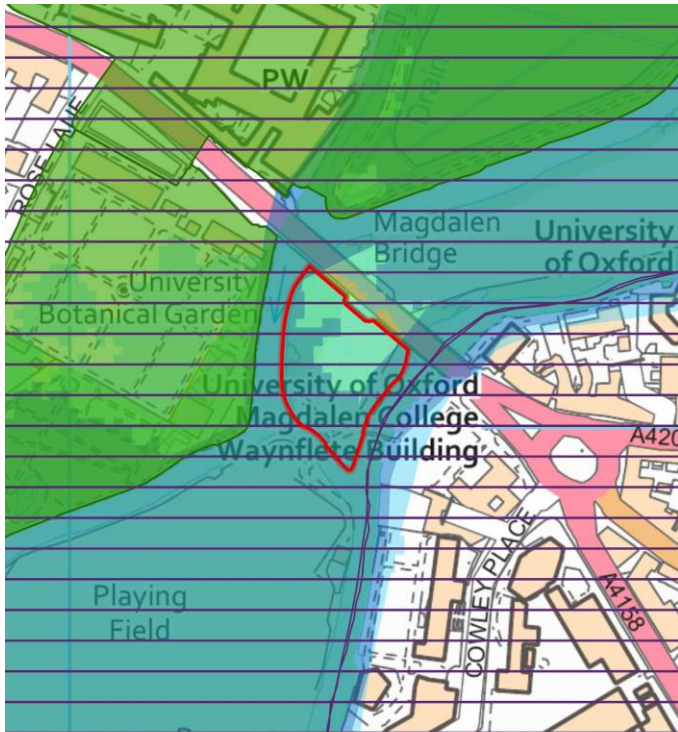
4.23 Release of the small part of the site to the north would represent limited to no impact on urban sprawl, settlement separation, countryside or the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate well to the existing settlement form.

4.24 Release would not result in additional containment, or weaken the contribution, of adjacent Green Belt land to the north. This is due to the fact that only a very small part of it lies within the Green Belt and the inset edge to the south extends further to the west.

## **Rating**

**4.25** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **Low**.

# Site 136 - Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell



- Site 136
- Green Belt
- Constraints**
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Flood zone 2
- Flood zone 3



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Service layer credit aerial: Maxar, Microsoft



## Site description

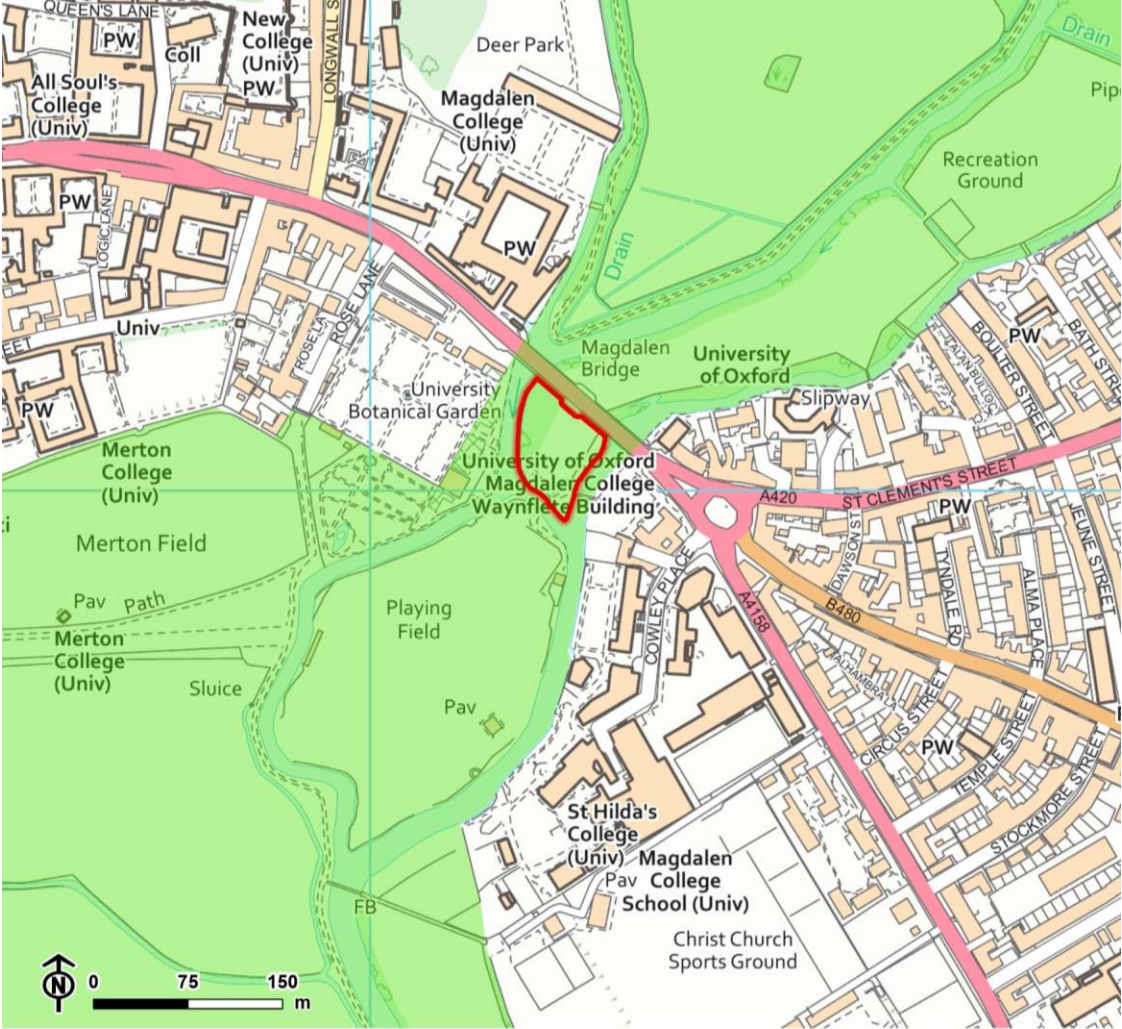
**4.26** The site (size: 0.44ha) comprises an area of amenity open space/sports pitches to the east and a play area set within scattered mature trees to the west. It is defined by separate channels/distributaries of the River Cherwell to the east, south and west and by Magdalen Bridge (carrying the A420) to the north. The site contains no built development and is separated from the nearest inset edges to the west and east (the Oxford City Centre and St Clement's areas respectively) by river channels. Landform within the site reflects that of the surrounding landscape, forming part of the wider Cherwell river valley. Open farmland and river-side meadows lie to the north and south. The site lies within the Central Area Conservation Area and within Flood Zone 2 and partly within Flood Zone 3 (likely to be a constraint to development). It also lies immediately adjacent to Oxford Botanic Garden RPG to the west and the Grade II\* Magdalen Bridge to the north.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.27** Despite its location within central Oxford, the site has connectivity with the Cherwell valley floodplain landscape to the south and north, and therefore an association with the wider countryside. The channels of the River Cherwell form strong boundary features to the east and west, creating a sense of detachment between the site and the existing urban settlement edges. This sense of separation is heightened by open space (that associated with Magdalen School to the east and that associated with Oxford Botanic Gardens to the west) defining the urban area immediately adjacent to the site. However, the site lies in a very narrow gap between the inset edges at a distance of approximately 25m.

# Parcels

The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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-  136
-  Green Belt





## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.28** The site is partially contained by the large built-up area, although retains some connectivity with the surrounding Green Belt. Development within the site would represent an expansion of the urban form and would breach the strong boundaries formed by the channels of the River Cherwell.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.29** The parcel occupies the majority of the settlement gap between the City Centre and St Clement's areas but the channels of the River Cherwell constitute

strong separating features. The gap at this location is a very narrow (approximately 110m at its narrowest).

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.30** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader landscape of similar fields to the north, east and west. Whilst the wider setting is urban the river and adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.31** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, is a key component of the City's historic setting and special character. The site lies on the valley floor floodplain at a point where the gap between urban areas to either side of the valley is very narrow, so loss of openness here would be significantly detrimental to this purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.32** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## Potential alternative Green Belt boundary

**4.33** Whilst the river channels would form strong and readily recognisable boundary features, release of the parcel (as an extension of either the City Centre or St Clement's areas) would breach the existing strong boundary features formed by these river channels and so would not relate well to the existing settlement form. There are no existing alternative boundaries within the parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement form.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

### Comments

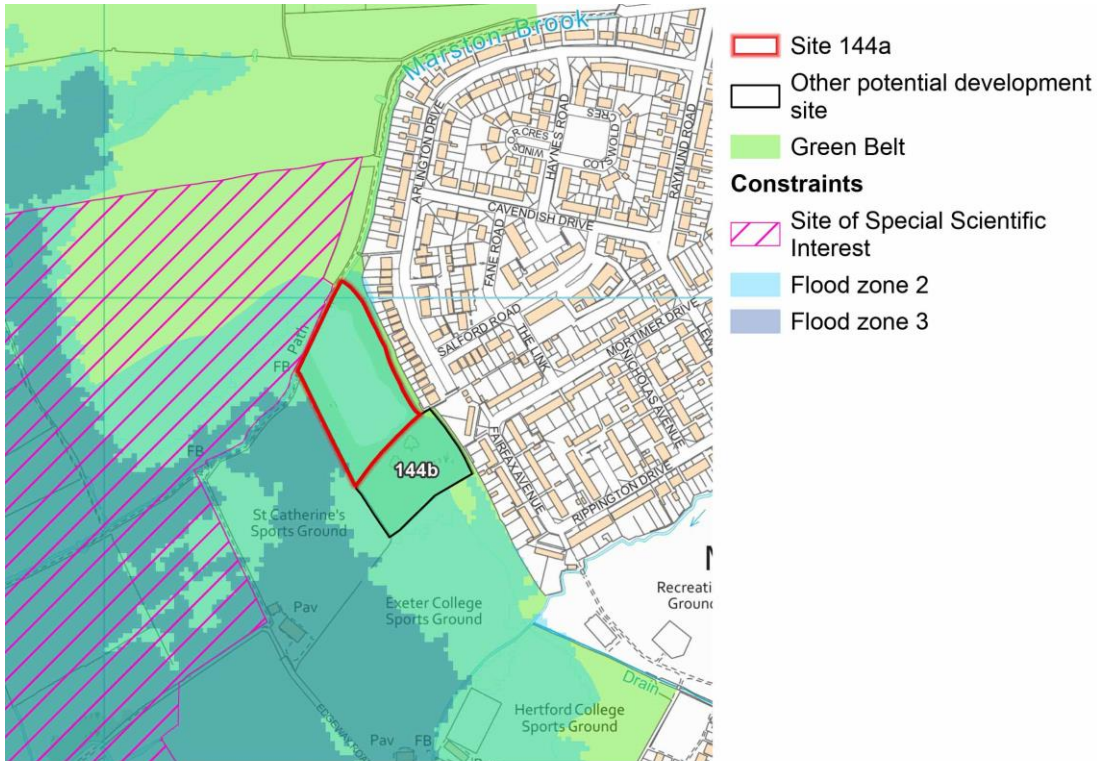
**4.34** Release and development of the site would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, to the detriment of settlement separation, countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl.

**4.35** Release would weaken the contribution of adjacent Green Belt land to the north and south by effectively disconnecting the two areas and increasing its urban containment.

### Rating

**4.36** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **High**.

# Site 144a - Wildlife corridor at Marston Brook



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Service layer credit aerial: Maxar, Microsoft



## Site description

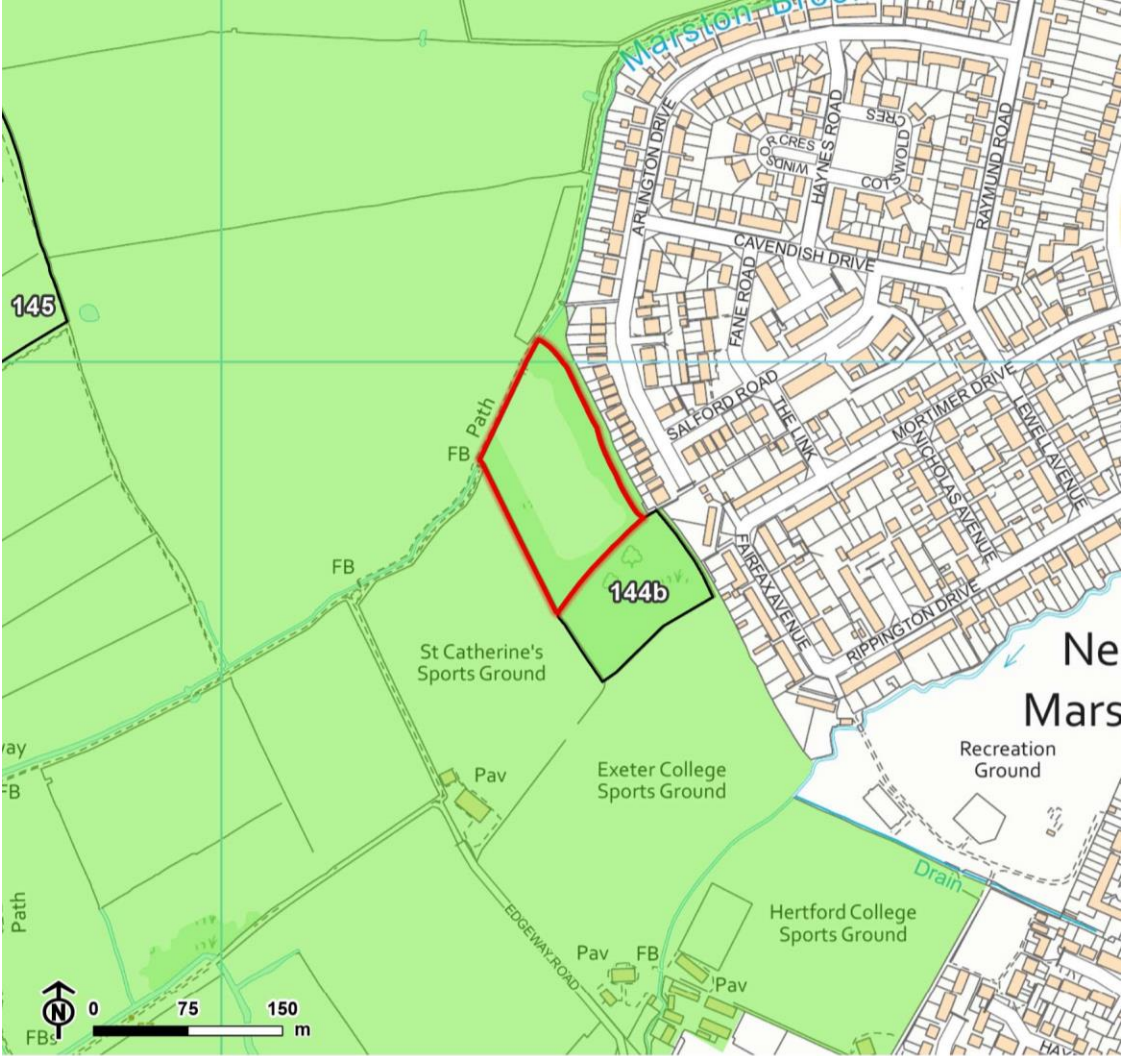
**4.37** The site (size: 1.39ha) comprises a single pastoral field defined by the woodland to the south (assessed as site 144b), a tree belt to the west, and by the Marston Brook to the north. It contains no built development but adjoins the urban edge of New Marston to the east. A linear area of scrub vegetation extends along eastern boundary of the site, lying adjacent to the rear gardens of domestic properties on Arlington Drive. Landform within the site reflects that of the wider surrounding landscape, falling very gradually from the urban area of Marston in the east towards the River Cherwell in the west and north-west. Open farmland lies to the north and north-west (beyond the Marston Brook), whilst sports fields lie to the west (Marston Road Sports Ground) and south (St Peter's College Recreation Ground). The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 2 and its western edge abuts Flood Zone 3.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.38** The site has connectivity with the Cherwell valley floodplain landscape to the north and north-west, and therefore an association with the wider countryside. However, the tree belt to the west and woodland vegetation to the south also provide a degree of containment that serves to strengthen the site's relationship with adjacent residential development immediately to the east. Despite the presence of woodland and scrub vegetation within the site, domestic garden boundaries do not create a strong detachment between the site and the existing urban settlement edge.

## Parcels

The site is assessed as a single parcel.



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- 144a
- Other potential development site
- Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.39** Development within the site would represent a westward expansion of the urban form, although the presence of Flood Zone 3 to the west would serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.40** The parcel occupies only a small part of the settlement gap between Marston and Park Town/Norham Manor and the River Cherwell and its associated floodplain constitute a strong separating feature. However, the gap at this location is a very narrow (approximately 500m at its narrowest).

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.41** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader landscape of similar fields. The wider setting is urban but the river and adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.42** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, makes an important contribution to the City's historic setting and special character. The parcel is above the valley floor floodplain but at a point where the gap between urban areas to either side of the valley is very narrow, so loss of openness here would be significantly detrimental to this purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.43** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## **Potential alternative Green Belt boundary**

**4.44** To the north the Marston Brook defines the south-eastern edge of New Marston Meadows SSSI and would therefore form a strong edge. This would be consistent with the existing Green Belt boundary further to the north-east, which is also defined by Marston Brook. The woodland block to the south and the tree belt to the west of the site would form stronger boundary features than the existing domestic garden boundaries along Arlington Drive. However, the



existing settlement edge is consistent with the edge of the floodplain edge (Flood Zone 2) and so the new Green Belt boundary would be of a similar strength. Release of the parcel would result in a further convolution of the Green Belt boundary, by forming a protrusion west from the existing edge. There are no existing alternative boundaries within the parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement form of New Marston.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

### Comments

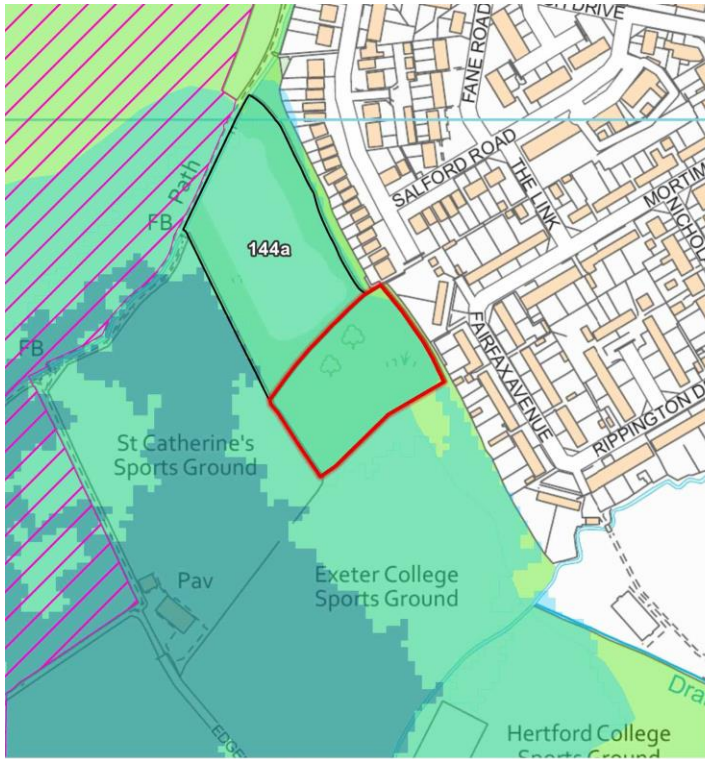
**4.45** Expansion of Marston west into the site would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley to the north and north-west, to the detriment of settlement separation, countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl.

**4.46** The new boundary would be of similar strength to the existing one. Release would weaken the contribution of the wooded area to the south (assessed as Parcel 144b), by increasing its containment.

### Rating

**4.47** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **Moderate-High.**

# Site 144b - Wildlife corridor at Marston Brook



- Site 144b
  - Other potential development site
  - Green Belt
- Constraints**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3



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## Site description

**4.48** The site (size: 0.84ha) comprises an area of woodland and scrub vegetation located on the western edge of New Marston. It contains no built development but adjoins the urban edge to the east, which is defined by the rear gardens of domestic properties on Mortimer Drive/Fairfax Avenue. Landform within the site reflects that of the wider surrounding landscape, falling very gradually from the urban area of Marston in the east towards the River Cherwell in the west and north-west. Open farmland lies to the north and north-west, whilst sports fields border the site to the west (Marston Road Sports Ground) and south (St Peter's College Recreation Ground). The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 2.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.49** The site has connectivity with the Cherwell valley floodplain landscape to the north and north-west, and therefore an association with the wider countryside. The wooded nature of the site creates a sense of distinction from the existing urban settlement edge.

# Parcels

4.50 The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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- 144b
- Other potential development site
- Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.51** Development within the site would represent a westward expansion of the urban form, although the presence of the River Cherwell floodplain to the west would serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.52** The parcel occupies only a small part of the settlement gap between Marston and Park Town/Norham Manor and the River Cherwell and its associated floodplain constitute a strong separating feature. However, the gap at this location is a very narrow (approximately 500m at its narrowest).

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.53** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader landscape of agricultural fields interspersed with small woodland blocks. The wider setting is urban but the river and adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.54** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, makes an important contribution to the City's historic setting and special character. The parcel is above the valley floor floodplain but at a point where the gap between urban areas to either side of the valley is very narrow, so loss of openness here would be significantly detrimental to this purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.55** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## **Potential alternative Green Belt boundary**

**4.56** The release and development of this woodland block would remove an existing strong boundary feature and would go beyond the existing settlement edge which is consistent with the floodplain edge (Flood Zone 2). There are no existing alternative boundaries within the parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement

form of New Marston, although there would be potential to release only part of the site leaving strong woodland belts around the periphery of the site. However, irrespective of this, release of the parcel would result in a further convolution of the Green Belt boundary by forming a protrusion west from the existing edge.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

### Comments

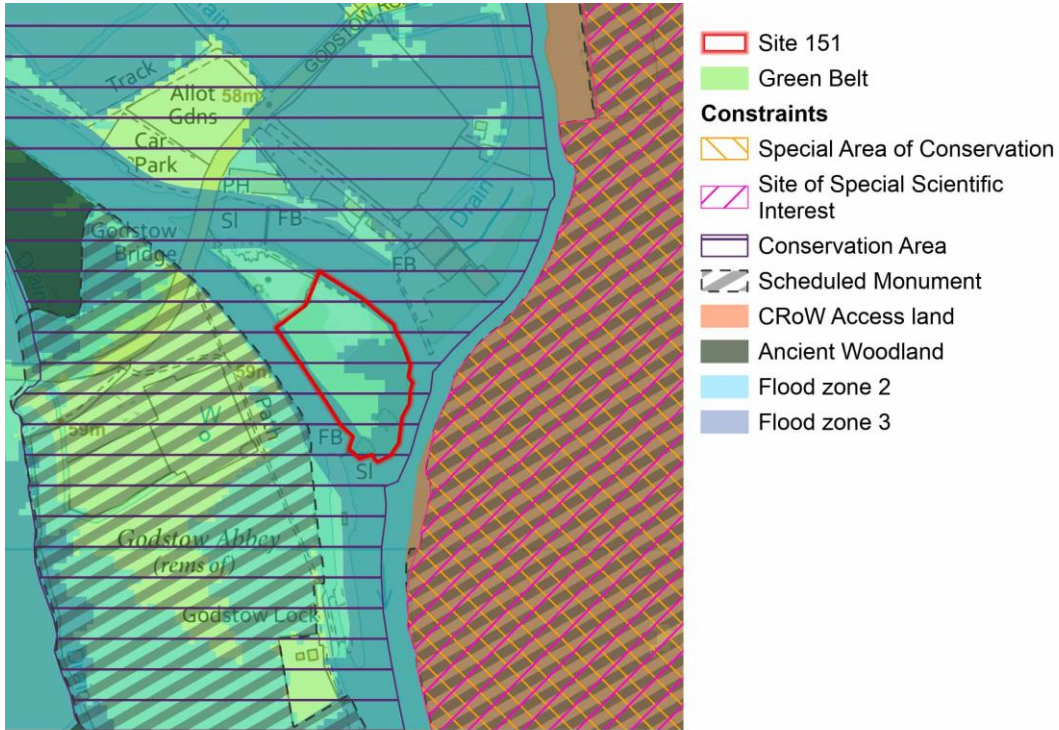
**4.57** Expansion of Marston west into the site would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley to the north and north-west, to the detriment of settlement separation, countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl.

**4.58** The new boundary would be weaker than the existing one. Release would weaken the contribution of the open pastoral field to the north (assessed as parcel 144a), by increasing its containment.

### Rating

**4.59** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **High**.

## Site 151 - Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard



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## Site description

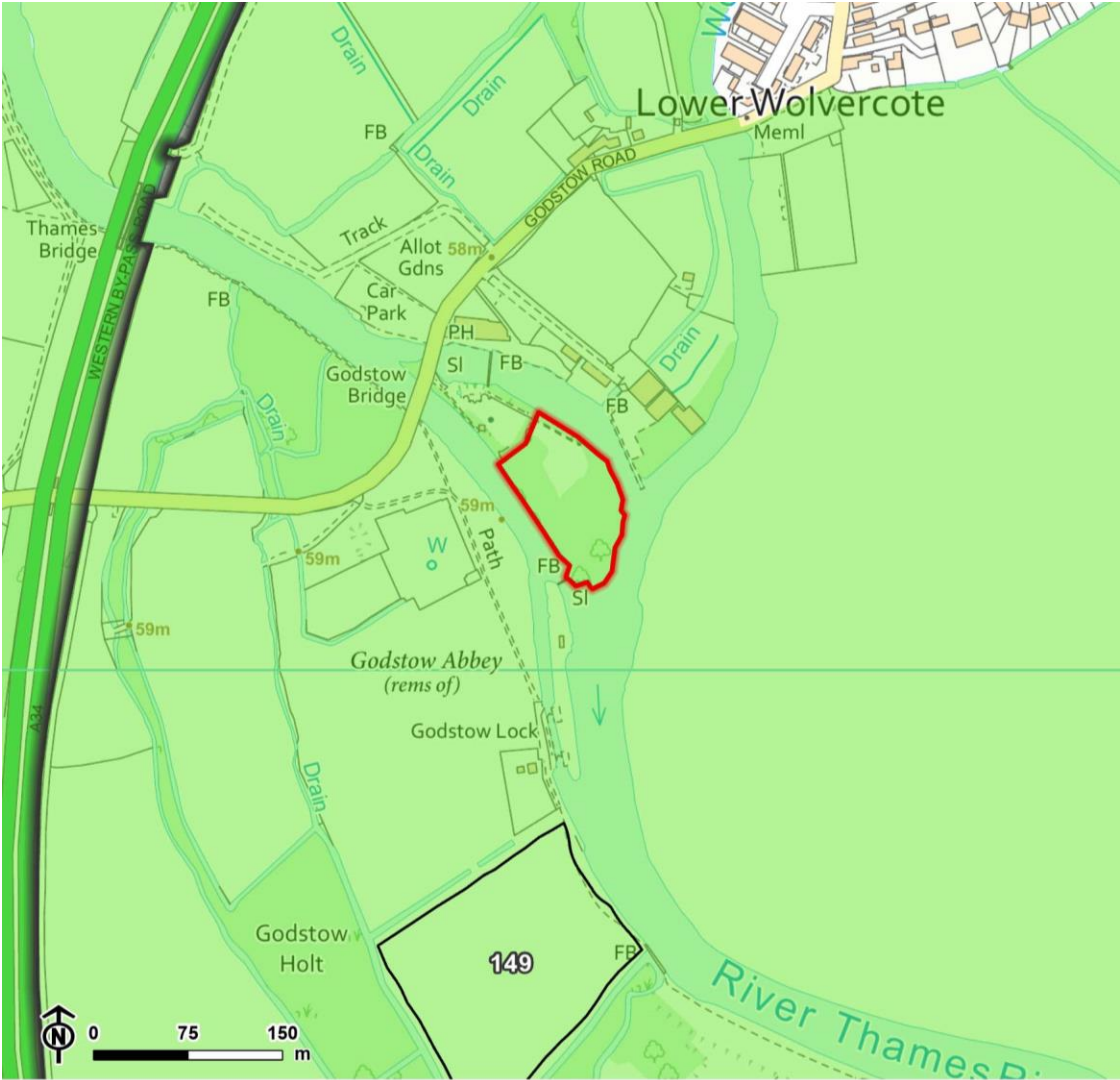
**4.60** The site (size: 0.76ha) comprises a small, wooded island lying at the confluence of the River Thames/Isis and the Wolvercote Mill Stream to the south-east of Godstow Bridge. It is defined by the river on all sides, although is connected to the surrounding land by a series of footbridges and locks. It contains no built development and is located at a distance of approximately 280m from the nearest inset edge at Wolvercote to the north-east. Landform within the site is relatively flat, forming part of the river floodplain, and lies partly within Flood Zone 2 and partly within Flood Zone 3 (likely to be a constraint to development). The site lies within Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area and is immediately adjacent to Godstow Abbey Scheduled Monument to the west. It is also located adjacent to Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common & Green to the east and south-east, which are designated as a SPA, SSSI, Scheduled Monument and CRoW Access Land. Open farmland and river-side meadows form the majority of the surrounding landscape.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.61** The site forms part of the River Thames/Isis floodplain landscape, and therefore has a strong association with the wider countryside. The river and Wolvercote Mill Stream form strong boundary features to the east and north-east, creating a strong sense of detachment between the site and the existing inset settlement edge at Wolvercote to the north-east. The site also lies some distance (approximately 280m at its closest point) from the inset edge and is separated from it by intervening open fields and meadows.

# Parcels

4.62 The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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- 151
- Other potential development site
- Oxford City
- Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.63** The closest inset area to the site is Wolvercote, which is not considered part of the large built-up area. Whilst Wolvercote is located close to the large built-up area to the east, the release of the site would not narrow the gap between the two, owing to its location on the south-western edge of the village. Development here would not constitute sprawl from the large built-up area.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.64** The parcel lies within a very wide gap between Oxford and Eynsham, which contains a number of significant separating features (including the River

Thames/Isis and the A34 corridor). Development of this parcel would result in little or no perception of the narrowing of the gap between settlements.

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.65** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader river valley landscape. The adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.66** The openness of the Thames/Isis river valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, is a key component of the City's historic setting and special character. Any loss of openness in the vicinity of Thames/Isis would detract from the rural, historic character. In addition, Wolvercote retains a relatively strong sense of distinction from the rest of Oxford, with a rural village character preserved by its historic built elements as well as its open river valley setting to the north-west, west and south. The parcel contributes to the rural setting of Wolvercote as experienced on approach to the village along Godstow Road and over Godstow Bridge, a value reflected in the inclusion of the site in the Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area. The parcel therefore makes a strong contribution to this Green Belt Purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.67** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## Potential alternative Green Belt boundary

**4.68** Whilst the river would form strong and readily recognisable boundary features, release of the parcel (as an extension of Wolvercote) would breach the existing strong boundary feature formed by the Wolvercote Mill Stream so would not relate well to the existing settlement form. Release of the parcel in isolation would also result in an inconsistent Green Belt boundary, by forming an isolated inset area detached from the existing inset edge.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

### Comments

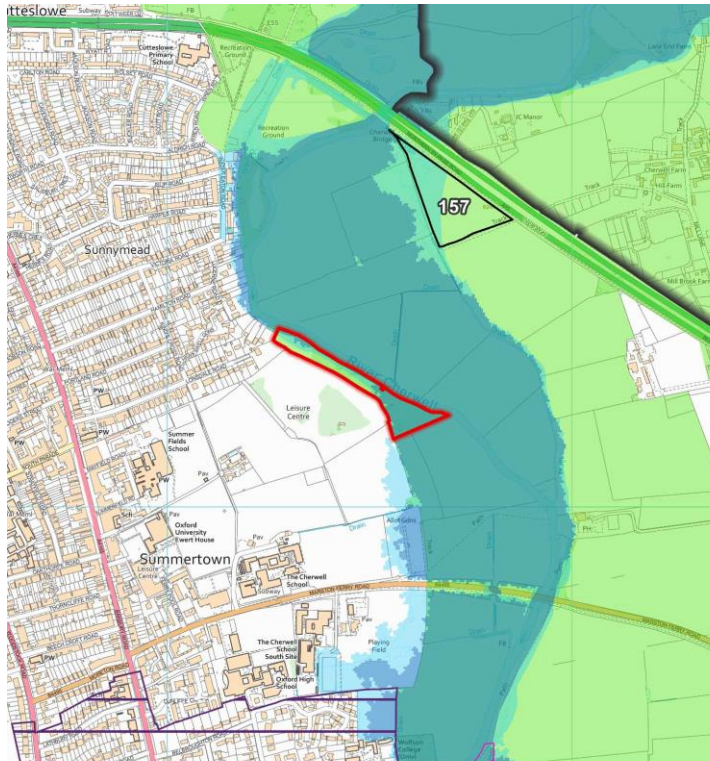
**4.69** Release and development of the site would significantly compromise the openness of the Thames/Isis river valley, to the detriment of countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate badly to the existing settlement edge.

**4.70** Release would also weaken the contribution of adjacent Green Belt land, particularly to the north-east, by increasing urban containment and influence.

### Rating

**4.71** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **High**.

# Site 153 - Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell



- Site 153
  - Oxford City
  - Other potential development site
  - Green Belt
- Constraints**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
  - Conservation Area
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3



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Service layer credit aerial: Maxar, Microsoft



## Site description

**4.72** The site (size: 1.96ha) comprises a linear strip of woodland and pasture located along the banks of the River Cherwell. The site is oriented roughly north-west to south-east, with the river defining its north-eastern and eastern edges, a hedged access track forming its south-western boundary, and domestic gardens forming the boundary at its north-western end. It contains no built development; land to the north comprises open pasture and land to the south woodland. Landform within the site reflects that of the wider surrounding landscape, forming part of the wider river valley. Open farmland lies to the north, east and south-east, whilst sports fields define the urban settlement edge to the immediate south and south-west. The site lies on the valley floor floodplain, partly within Flood Zone 3; land to the far south-east of the site lies within Flood Zone 3 (likely to be a constraint to development).

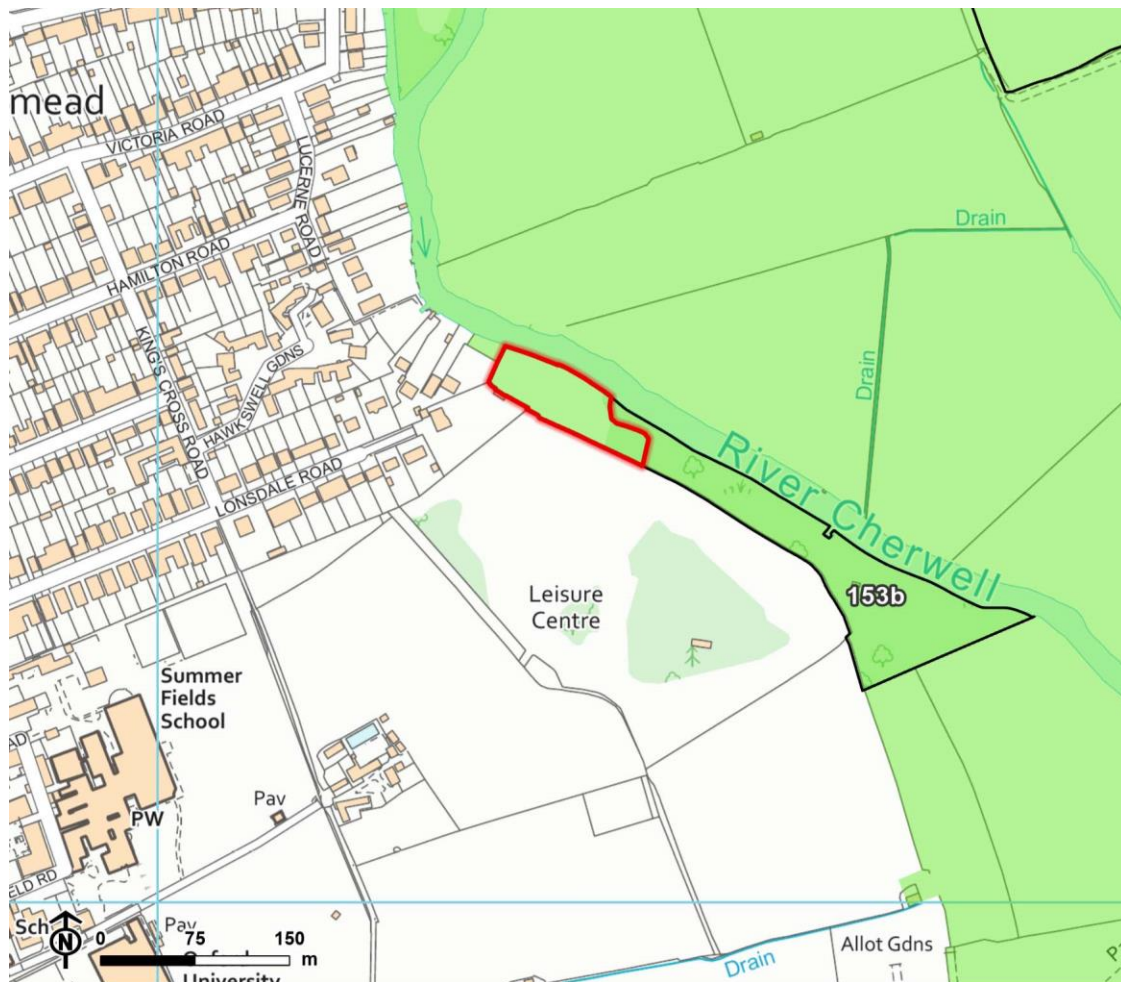
## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.73** The site has connectivity with the Cherwell Valley floodplain landscape to the north, east and south-east, and therefore an association with the wider countryside. However, the site also has some relationship with the settlement edge, being located to the west of the River Cherwell which forms a strong boundary feature to the settlement edge of Summertown/Sunnymead to the north. Land to the northern end of the site lies adjacent to domestic garden boundaries of properties on Lonsdale Road. Other parts of the site (further to the south) have a stronger sense of detachment from the urban edge owing to the inset area being defined by open sports fields and woodland blocks to the immediate west and south-west.

## Parcels

4.74 The site is assessed as two parcels: 153-a is the open area of pasture to the north-west, and 153-b is the wooded area to the south-east (excluding the area lying within Flood Zone 3, which is an absolute constraint to development and therefore undevelopable).

### 153-a



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- 153a
- Other potential development site
- Oxford City
- Green Belt





## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.75** Development within the site would represent a eastward expansion of the urban form, although the presence of the River Cherwell to the east would serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.76** The parcel does not represent a significant proportion of the settlement gap between Summertown/Sunnymead and Marston to the east. The river and its associated floodplain constitute a strong separating feature.

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.77** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader landscape of similar fields. The wider setting is urban but the river and adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.78** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, makes an important contribution to the City's historic setting and special character. The parcel is adjacent to the river, so loss of openness here would be significantly detrimental to this purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.79** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## **Potential alternative Green Belt boundary**

**4.80** The River Cherwell would form a significantly stronger boundary than that formed by domestic garden boundaries and the hedged course of the access track currently. Release of the parcel (as an extension of Summertown/Sunnymead) would result in a Green Belt boundary largely consistent with that to the north at Sunnymead – that is, the River Cherwell would define the eastern edge of the urban area. There are no existing

alternative boundaries within the parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement form.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

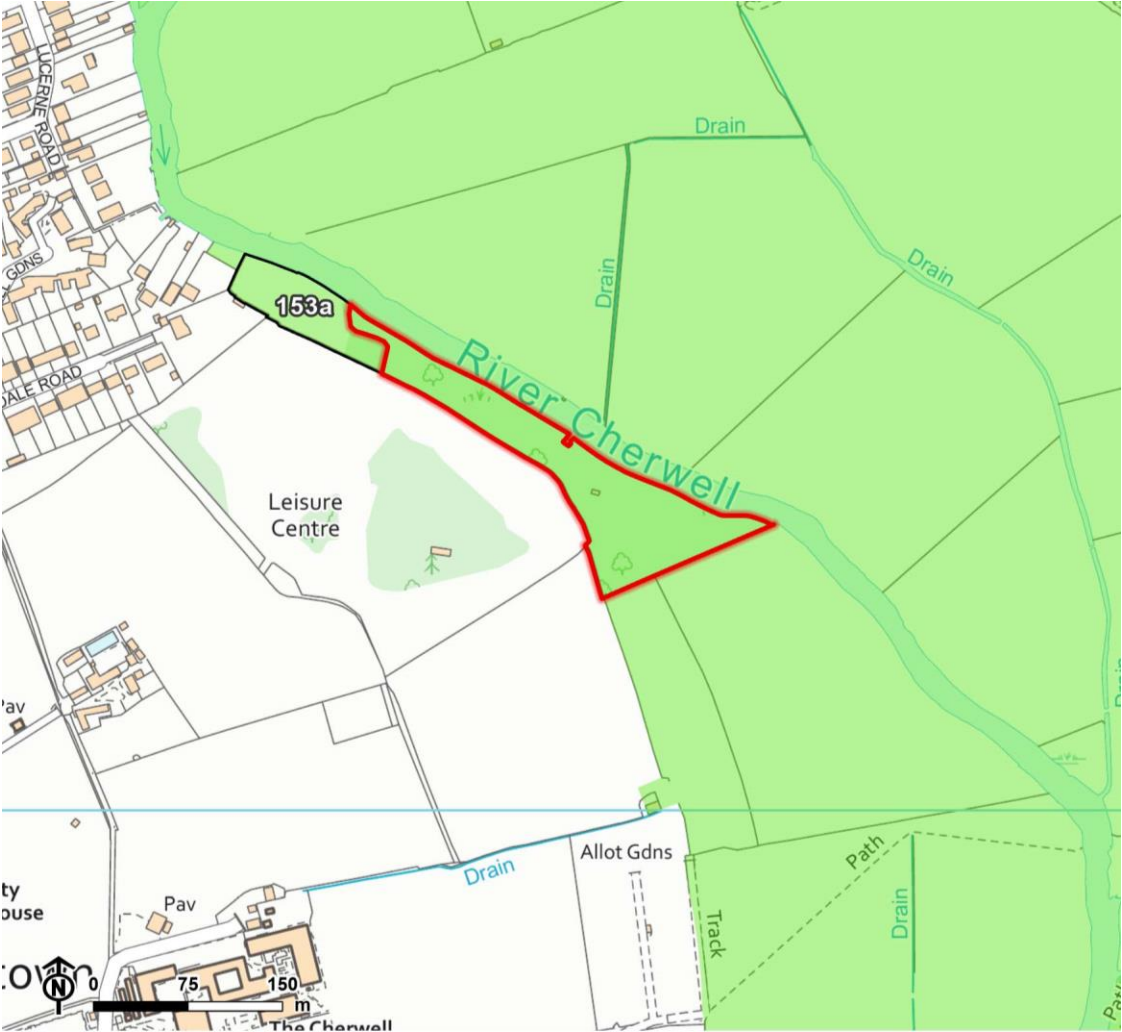
### Comments

**4.81** Release of the parcel would represent limited urban sprawl and countryside encroachment, with the River Cherwell and associated vegetation forming a strong edge to the east and south-east. Release of the parcel would have some adverse impact on the historic setting of Oxford by introducing development further on to the river floodplain; any taller development within the parcel could potentially have a greater impact on the perceived openness of the valley. The new Green Belt boundary would be stronger than the existing one. Release would not significantly weaken the contribution of the wooded area to the south (assessed as parcel 153-b), due to its well-wooded nature.

### Rating

**4.82** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of the north-western part of site: **Moderate**.

# 153-b



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- 153b
- Other potential development site
- Oxford City
- Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.83** Development within the site would represent a eastward expansion of the urban form, although the presence of the River Cherwell to the east would serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.84** The parcel does not represent a significant proportion of the settlement gap between Summertown/Sunnymead and Marston to the east. The river and its associated floodplain constitute a strong separating feature.

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.85** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader valley landscape. The wider setting is urban but the river and adjacent floodplain meadows and pastures provide a consistent link to the wider countryside.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.86** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, makes an important contribution to the City's historic setting and special character. The parcel is adjacent to the river, so loss of openness here would be significantly detrimental to this purpose.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.87** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## **Potential alternative Green Belt boundary**

**4.88** The River Cherwell would form a significantly stronger boundary than that formed by the hedged course of the access track currently. However, release of the parcel would result in the removal of much of the woodland within the parcel, which currently forms a moderate boundary feature. Release of the parcel (as an extension of Summertown/Sunnymead) would result in a slightly inconsistent Green Belt boundary, by forming a slight protrusion east from the existing inset edge. There are no existing alternative boundaries within the

parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement form.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

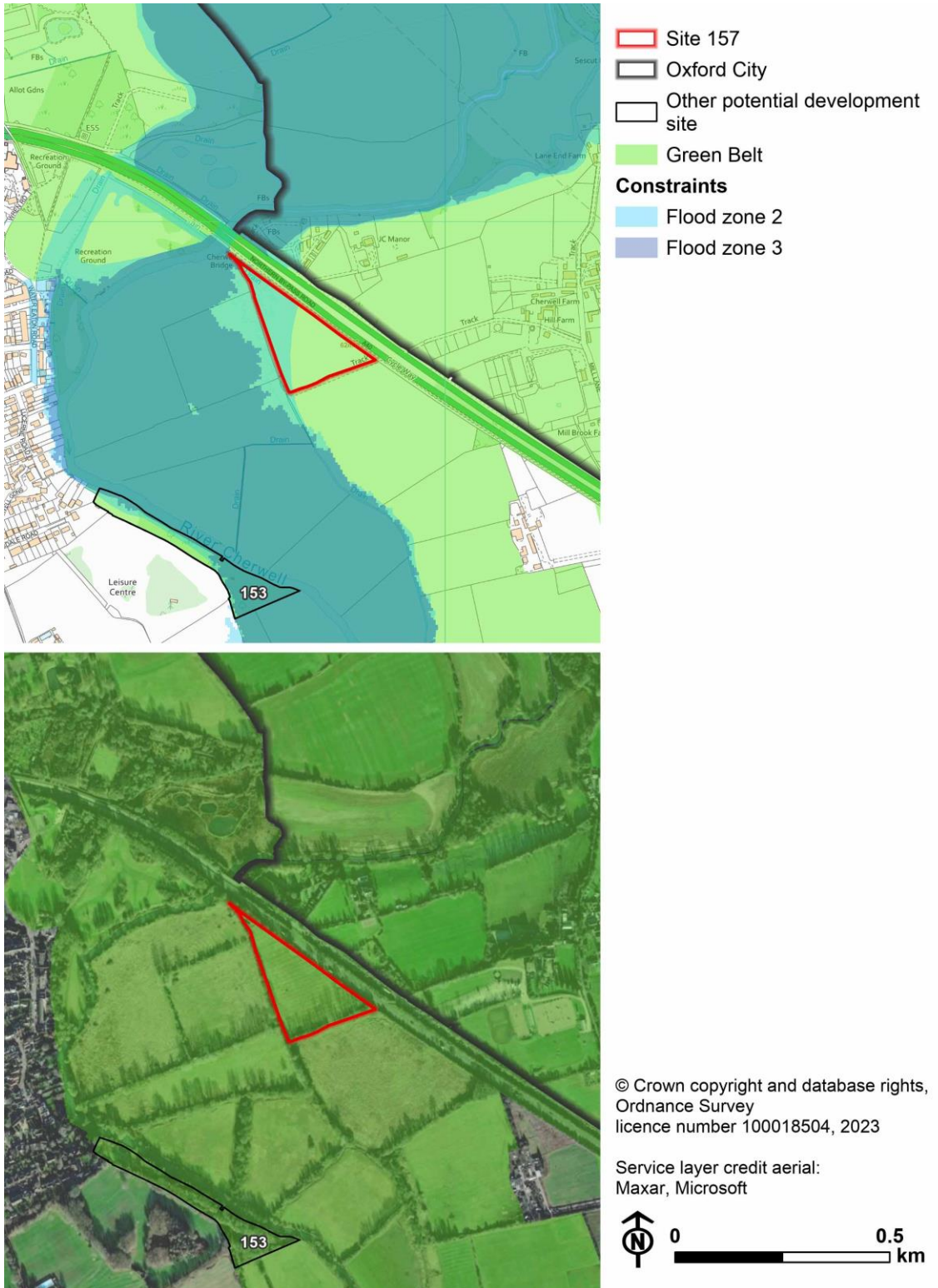
### Comments

**4.89** Release of the parcel would represent limited urban sprawl and countryside encroachment, with the River Cherwell forming a strong edge to the north-east and east. Release of the parcel would have some adverse impact on the historic setting of Oxford by introducing development further on to the river floodplain in place of woodland cover; any taller development within the parcel could potentially have a greater impact on the perceived openness of the valley. The new Green Belt boundary to the north-east would be stronger than the existing one. Release would weaken the contribution of land to the south, by increasing its urban containment.

### Rating

**4.90** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of south-eastern part of site: **Moderate-High.**

# Site 157 - Wildlife Corridor at Hill Farm





## Site description

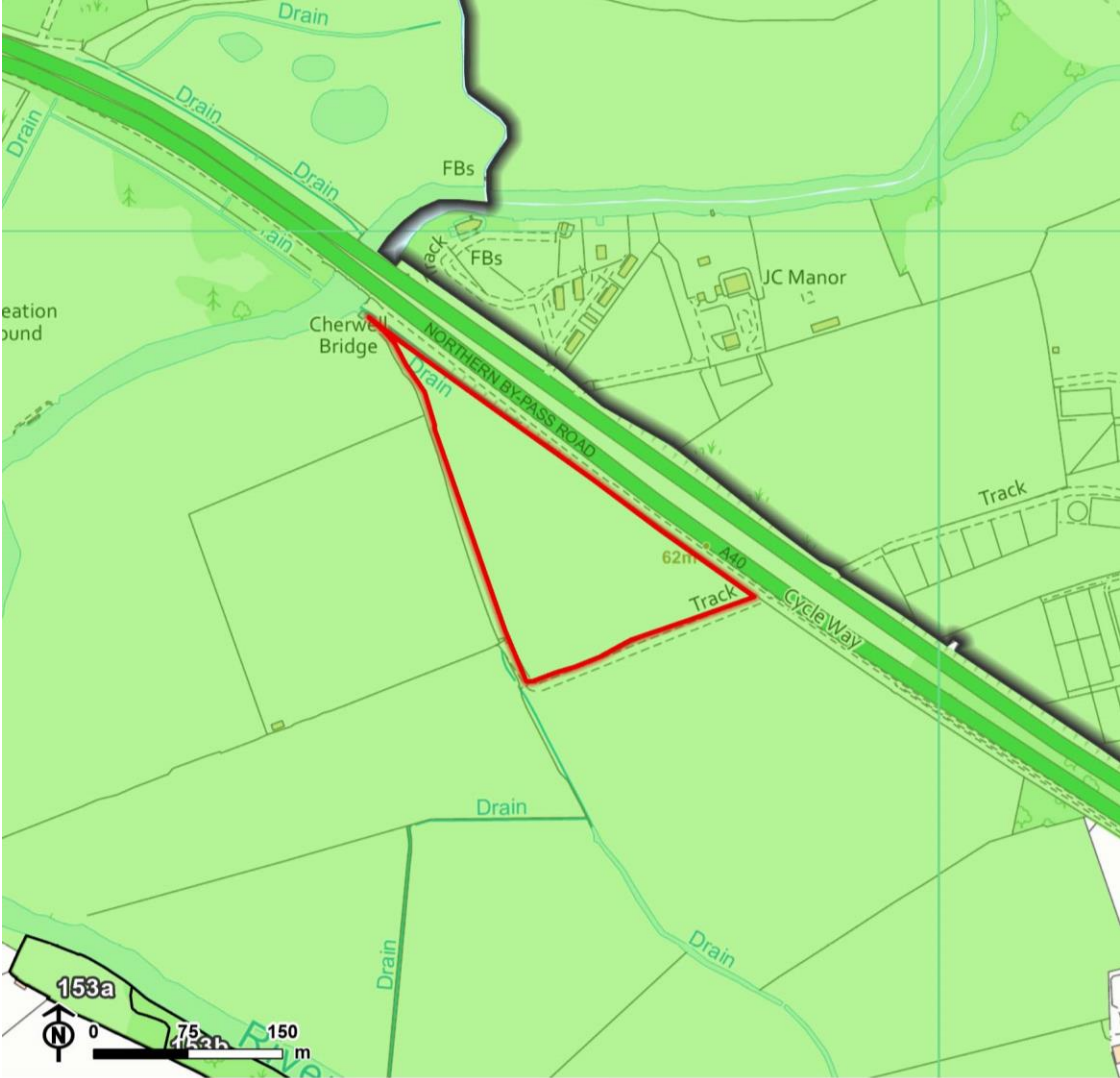
**4.91** The site (size: 2.78ha) consists of a triangular-shaped pasture field defined by hedgerows to the south and west and by the Northern Bypass (A40) to the north. The site contains no built development and is detached from the defined urban edge of Marston to the south-east, lying approximately 340m away (from land allocated as SP25 in the Oxford Local Plan 2016) and separated from it by intervening pasture fields. It is also detached from the inset edge of Summertown/Sunnymead to the west, lying approximately 390m away and separated from it by the River Cherwell and its floodplain. Landform within the site reflects that of the wider surrounding landscape, falling very gradually from the east towards the River Cherwell in the west and south-west. Around a third of the site to the west lies within Flood Zone 2, with the edge of Flood Zone 3 lying beyond the western boundary of the site. Open farmland similar to the site lies to the west, south and east, as well as to the north beyond the A40.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside





**4.92** The site is detached from the existing urban settlement edge . The site forms part of a sizeable belt of similar farmland and riverside meadow along the valley of the River Cherwell to the west, south and east, east, and therefore an association with the wider countryside. However, the A40 creates physical and visual separation from the wider valley to the north.

## Parcels

**4.93** The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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-  157
-  Other potential development site
-  Oxford City
-  Green Belt



## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.94** Development within the site would represent a westward expansion of the urban form, although the northward containment provided by the A40 and the presence of the River Cherwell floodplain to the west would serve as a barrier to further sprawl.

### **Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements**

**4.95** The parcel occupies only a small part of the settlement gap between Marston and Summertown/Sunnymead to the west. The river and its associated floodplain constitute a strong separating feature.

### **Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside**

**4.96** Development here would represent encroachment on countryside, with the parcel containing no built development and forming part of a broader landscape of similar fields. Urban influence is limited at this distance from the settlement edge. The A40 serves to limit the parcel's relationship with the wider countryside to the north.

### **Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character**

**4.97** The openness of the Cherwell Valley, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, makes an important contribution to the City's historic setting and special character. The river itself meanders westwards along the edge of Summertown/Sunnymead, so the parcel is above the valley floor floodplain, but loss of openness here would still be detrimental to this purpose. The north-south orientation of the river to the south means that tall development within the parcel would have a particularly strong impact on the perceived containment of the valley.

### **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.98** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

## **Potential alternative Green Belt boundary**

**4.99** Use of the A40 as the northern boundary would be consistent with the existing Green Belt edge at Marston, and the treed hedgerow along the western

edge of the parcel is strengthened as a boundary feature by being roughly coincident with the floodplain edge. However, the southern hedgerow boundary would constitute a weaker edge. Release of the parcel would result in a significant inconsistency in the Green Belt boundary, by forming an extension to the Green Belt boundary that would relate poorly to the existing settlement form of Marston. There are no existing alternative boundaries within the parcel that could accommodate a smaller release of land with a stronger relationship to the existing settlement form of New Marston.

## Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

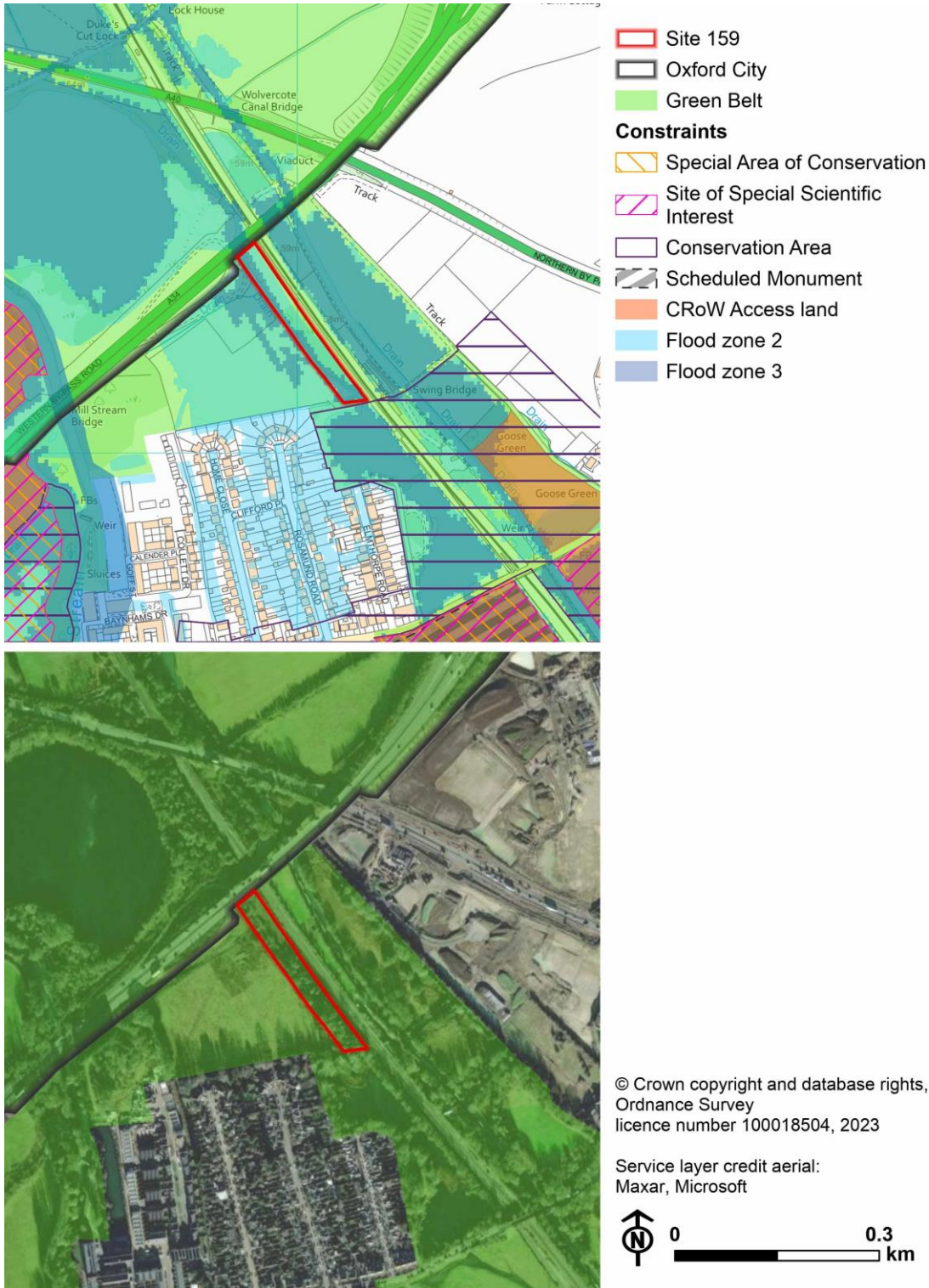
### Comments

**4.100** Expansion of Marston this far west would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, to the detriment of settlement separation, countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford. It would relate badly to the existing settlement form and would therefore constitute urban sprawl.

### Rating

**4.101** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **High**.

# Site 159 - Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's Meadow



## Site description

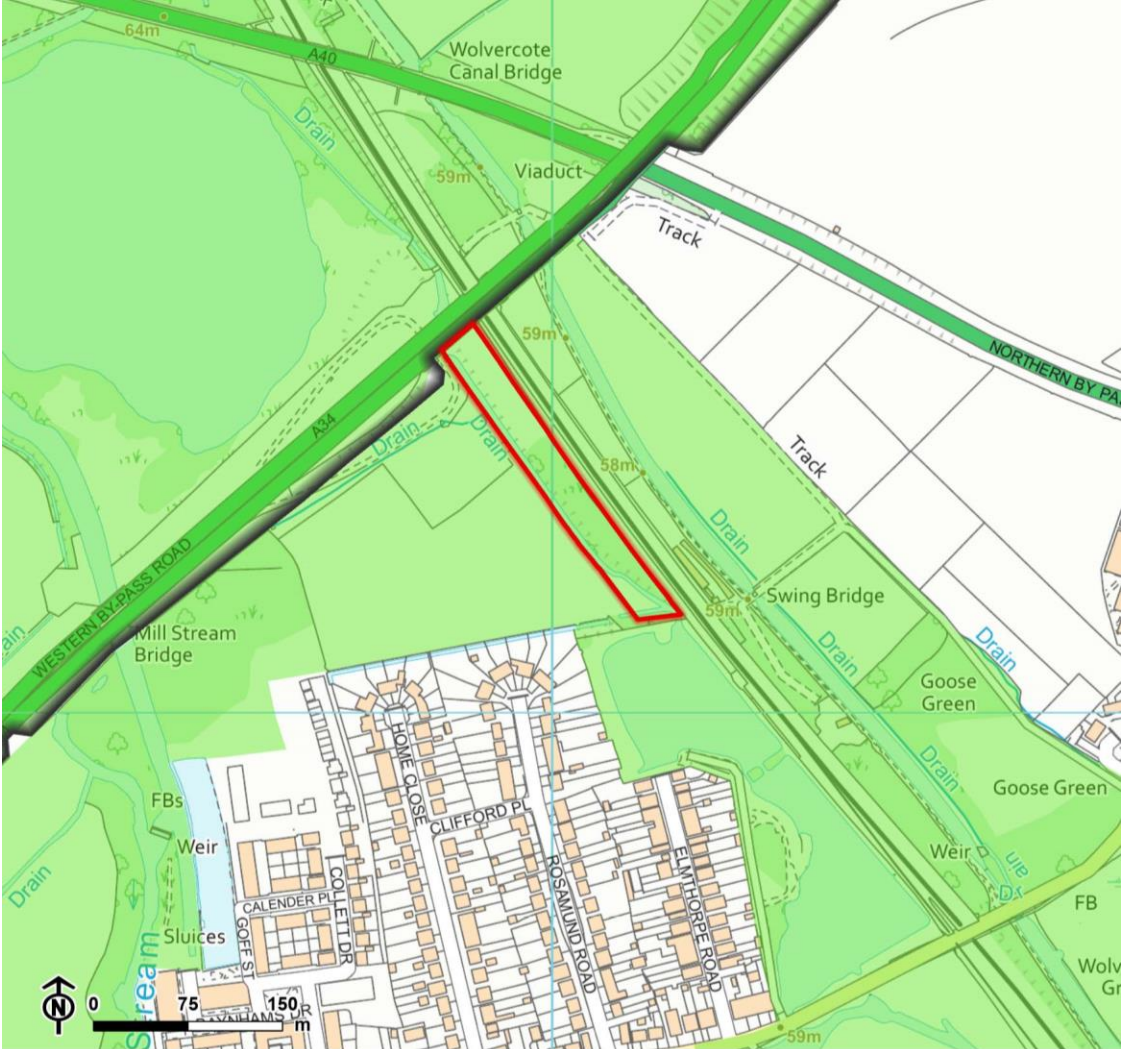
**4.102** The site (size: 0.85ha) comprises a thin strip of scrub and woodland vegetation located along the western side of the 'Cherwell Valley Line' railway and to the south of the A34 Western Bypass Road. It is located approximately 50m north of the inset edge of Wolvercote and approximately 130m from the inset edge at Northern Gateway to the east. The site contains no built development and there is some sense of detachment from the inset edge at Wolvercote owing to the presence of intervening woodland surrounding Wolvercote Lakes. There is a strong sense of detachment from the inset edge at Northern Gateway due to the presence of strong intervening boundary features in the form of the railway line and the Oxford Canal. Landform within the site is relatively flat and low-lying, reflecting that of the wider surrounding river valley landscape of the Thames/Isis. The site lies almost entirely within Flood Zone 2 with some parts to the west also within Flood Zone 3 (likely to be a constraint to development). The is immediately adjacent to and runs parallel with the railway line and therefore has a strong relationship with it.

## Relationship between site, settlement and countryside

**4.103** Open farmland and river-side meadows form the majority of the surrounding landscape. However, the site is physically and visually detached from this by the presence of the A34 to the north and north-west, the railway line to the east and the inset area of Wolvercote to the south and south-west. Whilst there is a strong sense of detachment from the inset area of Northern Gateway, the site has a greater sense of association with the nearby inset area of Wolvercote to the south owing to proximity and less significant separating features.

# Parcels

4.104 The site is assessed as a single parcel of land.



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- 159
- Oxford City
- Green Belt





## Contribution to Green Belt purposes

### **Purpose 1: Checking sprawl of Oxford**

**4.105** The closest inset area to the site is Wolvercote, which is not considered part of the large built-up area. However Wolvercote is located close to the large built-up area to the east, and the release of the site would partially narrow the gap between the two. However, the railway line and canal would retain a strong sense of separation between the two and the presence of the A34 would serve as a barrier to further sprawl to the north.

## Purpose 2: Preventing merger of settlements

**4.106** The parcel is located within a narrow settlement gap between Wolvercote and Northern Gateway, but the 'Cherwell Valley Line' railway and Oxford Canal constitute strong separating features. However, the gap at this location is a very narrow (approximately 250m at its narrowest).

## Purpose 3: Safeguarding countryside

**4.107** The parcel is open in Green Belt terms but has a very strong association with the adjacent railway line and A34. It is also separated from the wider countryside by the A34 and inset area of Wolvercote. This limits its role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

## Purpose 4: Preserving Oxford's setting and special character

**4.108** Wolvercote retains a relatively strong sense of distinction from the rest of Oxford, with a rural village character preserved by its historic built elements as well as its open river valley setting to the north-west, west and south. The parcel makes some contribution to the rural setting of Wolvercote, by providing a wooded backdrop to views north-east from the settlement edge. However, this is of limited value due to its close association with the railway line and A34 which is reflected in the fact that it is not included in the Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area boundary. The site therefore makes a limited contribution to the historic setting of the City.

## **Purpose 5: Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

**4.109** All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

### Potential alternative Green Belt boundary

**4.110** The parcel has clearly defined boundaries to the north (the A34) and east ('Cherwell Valley Line' railway), but would lengthen the Green Belt edge. If the site was released as an extension of Wolvercote it would form a noticeable protrusion north from the existing inset edge which would result in a convolution of the Green Belt boundary.

### Harm to Green Belt resulting from release

#### **Comments**

**4.111** Releasing the parcel would reduce the separation distance between a large built-up area and Wolvercote, meaning that Wolvercote would be perceived to have become more strongly associated with the large built-up area. However, the intervening railway line and Oxford Canal would retain some sense of distinction.

**4.112** The impact of releasing the parcel on the adjacent Green Belt land to the north, north-east and east would be limited by the presence of the A34 and the railway line. Whilst release would weaken the contribution of the remaining Green Belt land to the west, by increasing its containment, this is not stronger performing Green Belt and so additional harm would not occur.

## Chapter 4 Additional site assessments

**4.113** Harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of site: **Moderate.**

## Chapter 5

### Summary of findings

5.1 An assessment of the harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of 11 potential development sites (**Appendix A**), as well as a review of nine sites previously assessed (**Chapter 3**), was undertaken. **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2** below summarise the findings.

**Table 5.1: Review of previous sites**

HELAA Ref.	Site name	2017 harm rating	Changes since 2017	2022 ratings
112a - 2	Cherwell Valley/Old Marston (includes Hill View Farm, Land at Mill Lane)	High	No change	High
112b – 2,3,4, 5 and 6	Old Marston	High	No change	High
112c	Land at Marston	High	No change	High
115	Land west of Meadow Lane	High	No change	High
114	Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfield Road	Moderate-High	No change	Moderate-High
114b	Showman’s Field	Moderate-High	No change	Moderate-High

HELAA Ref.	Site name	2017 harm rating	Changes since 2017	2022 ratings
190-1	Court Place Farm allotments	Moderate-High	No change	Moderate-High
190-2	Court Place Farm allotments	Moderate-High	No change	Moderate-High
464	Land adjacent to Seacourt Park and Ride	High	No change	High

**Table 5.2: Additional site assessments**

HELAA Ref.	Site name	Site area	Rating
114a	Land at Marston Brook (northern part)	3.56 ha	Moderate-High
118	Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club (small GB part)	0.52 ha	Low
136	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	0.44 ha	High
144a	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	1.39 ha	Moderate-High
144b	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	0.84 ha	High
151	Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard	0.76 ha	High
153a	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	0.61 ha	Moderate
153b	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	135 ha	Moderate-High
157	Wildlife Corridor at Hill Farm	2.78 ha	High

**Chapter 5** Summary of findings

HELAA Ref.	Site name	Site area	Rating
159	Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's meadow	0.85 ha	Moderate

## References

- 1 LUC (May 2017) Oxford City Green Belt Study
- 2 LUC (July 2017) Oxford City Green Belt Study, Addendum
- 3 Oxford City Council (adopted 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020) Oxford Local Plan 2036
- 4 Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2021) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications)



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