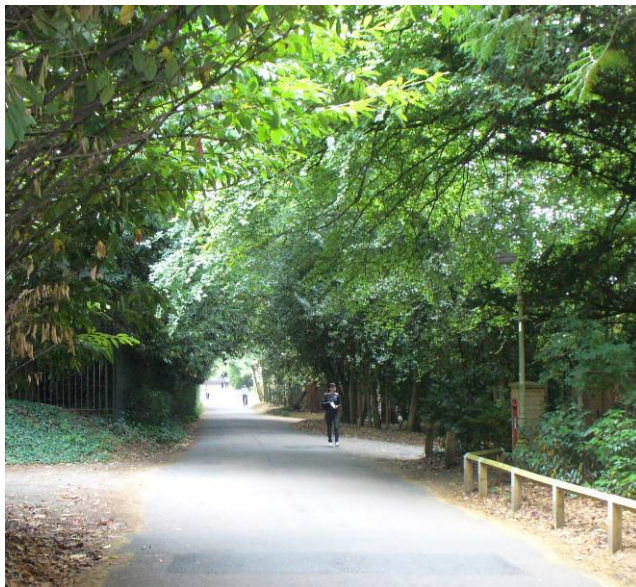


# Headington Hill

## Conservation Area Appraisal



*"You may approach Oxford in summer by road, or rail, or river. Most wise and most fortunate perhaps is he who can obtain his first view of Oxford from Headington Hill ... Arriving then at the top of Headington Hill, let the traveller then turn aside, and, pausing awhile by "Joe Pullen's" tree, gaze down at the beautiful city which lies at his feet"*  
(Cecil Headlam, 1904)

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## Statement of Special Interest

### Summary

Headington Hill stands to the East of the Cherwell valley, and when viewed from the west, its hillside forms a green landscape background to the historic city centre in its valley setting. The hillside also provides a number of vantage points giving good views down to the City's skyline. The northern part of the hill, between Marston Road and Headley Way and above Cuckoo Lane, comprises a residential area, which was originally laid out in late Victorian times on a grand scale but subsequently much divided. The southern part of the hill contains the public parks of Headington Hill and South Park, together with Schools and Oxford Brookes University and residential area of the historic Headington Hill hamlet.

The retention of trees and characteristic buildings, the provision of public footpaths and the protection of viewpoints, together with their 'view cones' looking down on Oxford, are seen as important elements of its public enjoyment. The Council, therefore, designated the Headington Hill conservation area on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1977.

### Character features

A symbolic point of arrival on the edge of the city since at least the sixteenth century, with important routes into the city running through a rural setting down the hillside.

The crest and eastern slopes of the hill have offered distinguished views of the city that have been depicted by artists and writers over the past five centuries and form a green backcloth to the City from the west..

Walks and open spaces that have been valued by the University's academics and local residents as a space for recreation and healthy exercise on the city's edge

since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Evidence of the area's rural character prior to suburban development is preserved as green open spaces, agricultural buildings and a network of narrow lanes with green verges and hedgerow boundaries.

Part of the circuit of Parliamentary siege works erected during the Civil War and depicted on historic maps existed through this area, with potential for survival of associated archaeological features.

A pronounced transition in the historic character of the conservation area from south to north:

Public and private institutions within the landscape of early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century country estates dominate the south of the conservation area.

Late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century residential suburb created an established character of large houses in mature landscaped grounds on tranquil lanes in the north of the area

Mansions, designed landscapes and boundaries of country estates built for wealthy merchants and professionals in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as an escape from the urban environment of the city (in the south).

A Victorian and early 20<sup>th</sup> century picturesque suburb with a sylvan character built along rural lanes, partly as a response to expansion of the University in the 1860s and 70s, and influenced by the attractive views across the city and the location's healthy reputation (in the north).

Detached Victorian Villas of a high architectural quality and a strong sense of unity created through the use of a common scale and palette of materials with a variety of styles and evidence of service culture.

Buildings set-back from the road in large plots providing privacy and green space, which are often richly planted.

Buildings of high architectural quality in the Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival styles that contribute to the rural character of the area.

Headington School in the south of the conservation area illustrates Oxford's developing reputation as a centre for excellence in education. Oxford Brookes University and Cheney School illustrate the development of the city's citizens' need for further education establishments.

Buildings and open space given or taken into public ownership to conserve their contribution to the quality of the city's environment as part of the development of the conservation movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The area is green and verdant, with areas of dense tree cover and large areas of green open space that provide a corridor of wildlife habitat.

activity in the area. Nevertheless, some institutional uses have helped preserve the historic pattern of properties and open space surrounding each of the large properties, which helps to conserve the area's significance..

Sustaining architectural character – developments in the past that were notable for introducing architectural forms that were intrusive to the character of the area include the 1960s residential blocks at the rear of Cotuit Hall, the former 1970s buildings of Plater College and the Pergamon Press building within Headington Hill Hall campus. The rectilinear forms, poor quality materials, repetitive detailing and large scale of these buildings did not reflect the historic residential character of much of the conservation area. Conversion of landscaped garden settings of buildings for car parking also has a significant negative impact on the character of the area and its historic interest.

Infilling development – This has resulted in loss of openness and the green landscaped setting to buildings and the rural or woodland character of the conservation area.

Need for management of trees – The management of the tree stock will make an important contribution to the future character of the conservation area and the city's setting. Replacement using trees of 'forest scale' is needed to maintain the tree canopy and woodland character, as well as the backdrop of views. Nevertheless control of growth and thinning in some areas may be necessary to preserve the value of views over the city centre for which the hill has held a special reputation for five centuries.

Loss of views – several special views of the city from the hillside have been lost due to tree growth and restrictions on public access.

Bus stops and street furniture – The bus shelters are particularly visible in the streetscene looking along Headington

## Issues

Tension between residential character and academic uses - The historic and architectural interest of the conservation area includes both the development of the residential suburb, largely in the north, and the academic institutions, largely in the south. However, the division between these uses is not clear-cut with residential uses continuing in the south, i.e. within the Headington Hill enclave and Granville Court Flats, and longstanding institutional uses found in the north. Change to support the continued viability of this mixture of uses and character creates tensions between different communities and challenges for managing development within the area.

Loss of residential character – Some past development has reduced the residential character of the northern part of the conservation area by removing historic houses, introducing institutional styles of architecture and increasing the intensity of

Road due to its straight course and enclosure by high walls and include intrusive elements such as their brushed steel framework and large advertising posters.

Condition of Pullens Lane – Heavy vehicle traffic has caused damage to the surface of the lane, creating pot-holes detracting from the appearance of the lane and making it less accessible for pedestrians and cyclists

Graffiti in Cuckoo Lane – The high garden wall of Headington Hill Hall has been targeted by vandals, detracting from the character of Cuckoo Lane west.

Volume of motor traffic on narrow, residential lanes – Use of these lanes for short-cutting and construction traffic are both reported as concerns by local people and have the potential to detract from the tranquil sylvan character of the lanes in the north of the conservation area.

Impact of schools' traffic – during peak-traffic hours the schools in the

conservation area create a high volume of traffic that affects the use and character of local roads.

Crossing Headington Road – The lower part of Headington Road is difficult to cross with public open spaces on either side of the road that are difficult to move between.

Poor quality entrance to Cheney Lane and Cuckoo Lane (west) – Two parts of the historic network of roads and lanes are poorly signposted or connected with the wider network, concealing their historic character.

Maintaining rural character boundaries – The replacement of green front boundaries or open frontages to gardens with close boarded timber fencing reduces the openness and green character of the conservation area an alien feature of suburban character.

## **Part 1. The Conservation Area in Context**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Headington Hill Conservation Area was first designated in October 1977 by Oxford City Council.

The area's designation followed the Council's adoption of the Headington Hill Policy Statement in February 1973 setting out principles to guide the consideration of future planning applications in the area of Pullens Lane, Feilden Grove, Jack Straw's Lane and the private section of Harberton Mead. The policies were designed to protect the residential use of the area, including low traffic levels, the character of buildings, their spacing and density, height, materials, the tree planting in the area and the absence of advertisements or signs. The avoidance of additional traffic generation on Pullens Lane was stated as a specific principle (see appendix A), a principle restricting substantial extensions to, or intensification of, the existing institutional uses within the area, except where they generated no additional traffic and met the other principles was also included.

In 1977 the City Council determined that the adopted principles were necessary to preserve or enhance the Special Historic and Architectural Interest of the area and its character and appearance and, therefore, the best means to do this was through the designation of a conservation area. The designated area included the land south of Headington Road that provided green open spaces, including the campus of Oxford Technical College (now Oxford Brookes' University). In November 1977 they adopted a statement of principles for consideration of applications for change in the conservation area that included the principles adopted in 1973 (see Appendix B). The statement of principles also included a summary of the area's significance, which has been reproduced here (above) as a summary to

our statement of special interest. This summary highlighted the role of the hill as a green backdrop to views of the city in its landscape setting and its provision of a number of valued vantage points looking over the city. It also highlights the presence of areas of different historic character in the north and south of the conservation area, including an area north of Cuckoo Lane that was laid out as a residential suburb in late Victorian times, but subsequently much divided, as well as an area in the south containing public parks, Oxford Polytechnic and schools.

This character appraisal has been prepared by Oxford City Council following survey within and around the Conservation Area undertaken between Summer 2011 and Spring 2012, which included the involvement of stakeholders representing local residents' groups as well as review of heritage assessments prepared by or on behalf of a number of institutional landowners (see Sources below). Public consultation on the draft appraisal was undertaken in June and July 2012, following which the appraisal was amended to take into account representations made by the public. This revised draft was presented to the East Area Planning Committee who endorsed it on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2012. To build consensus on the assessment presented within the appraisal an additional stakeholders' meeting was held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012 to consider amendments to the appraisal and, subsequently, the findings of a number of character assessments prepared by, or on behalf of, institutions in the area were reviewed to consider whether they raise matters that could add to the assessment as endorsed. A number of minor amendments were subsequently agreed and the updated appraisal endorsed by the chair of the planning committee with the committee's approval on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

### ***Reason for appraisal***

The City Council have a statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to identify

those parts of their area that are considered to contribute positively to "... special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and to designate these as conservation areas. Within these areas the 1990 act requires the Council to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the area when exercising its function as a local planning authority.

This character appraisal defines the special historic and architectural interest of the conservation area, including those features of its character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced. It also identifies negative features that detract from the area's character and appearance and issues that may affect it in future.

The government's policy for managing conservation areas as designated heritage assets is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A core principal of the NPPF is that planning should "... conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations". The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should "... have up-to-date evidence about the historic environment in their area and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to the environment".

The government has set out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of this. To be sustainable, development must, amongst other things, perform an environmental role protecting and enhancing our natural and built and



historic environment. In relation to conservation areas the NPPF states:

*Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance and better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to or better reveal the significance of the asset should be treated favourably.*

This means that proposals that fail to fulfil these requirements should not be accepted and the NPPF explains that where a proposal involves harm to a designated heritage asset it should only be allowed if the public benefit of the proposal outweighs the harm.

To make these judgements requires evidence and understanding of the heritage significance of the conservation area and the heritage assets within it.

This appraisal will provide that evidence and explains the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment to contribute towards delivery and monitoring of the spatial vision of local plan documents. It should ensure that investment and enhancement, delivering the Council's priorities in Headington Hill is informed by a detailed understanding of the area's special interest. It will help

inform determination of planning applications affecting the area and should inform the preparation of proposals for new development.

The appraisal cannot mention every building or feature within the conservation area. Any omission should not be taken to imply that it is not of any interest or value to the character of the area.

#### **Local community involvement**

This appraisal was prepared with the assistance of representatives of Resident's Associations for Pullens Lane, Jack Straw's Lane, Harberton Mead, Feilden Grove, and Headington Hill. It was informed by discussions with ward Councillors of Oxford City Council and the New Marston Wildlife Group. The findings of a number of assessments of the character of the area prepared on behalf of local institutional landowners have also been taken into account. Workshops with residents' groups in the conservation area were held in September 2011, including the use of the City Council's 'Character Assessment Toolkit', a self help guide, used to collect information on the positive and negative contribution of different features of the environment to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

## 1.2 Context

### **Location (See Map 1)**

Headington Hill Conservation Area lies to the east of Oxford City Centre, approximately 1.4 kilometres from the heart of the city at Carfax Tower and just over half a kilometre from the entrance to the City Centre at Magdalen Bridge. It contains a large area, measuring some 111 hectares, that extends from the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane in the north to Warneford Avenue and Morrell Avenue in the south.

### **Geology and Topography**

As its name implies, the conservation area lies on Headington Hill and, more specifically, contains the western slopes of the hill, its crest (which runs from north to south through the area) and a part of the plateau to the east. From a high point at 99 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) the ground level falls away to 64 metres AOD at Marston Road and 60 metres AOD at Morrell Avenue on the western edge of the area. The slope of the hill faces the city centre to the west, which has played an important role in its history and its present significance by providing views over the city and increasing its prominence in views of the city from the west. In the south, a steeper scarp is located just below the crest of the slope, which appears to have influenced the development of the area by creating a band of land that was either difficult to develop, or by acting as a constraint on the course of roads.

The underlying bedrock includes the transition from the Corallian beds of sand and limestone on the hilltop to the Oxford Clays lower down the slope. The upper layer provides an aquifer that issues through a series of springs along the slope, where it meets the impervious clays, giving rise to a number of wet areas and small streams that run down to the River Cherwell to the west. The changing soils of the area favour different

communities of trees, and this has been emphasised by their exploitation for planting of parkland and gardens, with pines well represented on the upper slopes and broadleaves more common on the lower.

Wide areas of green open space, including South Park (Oxford's largest public park), Headington Hill Park and the Grounds of Cheney and Headington Schools lie in the south of the conservation area. North of Cuckoo Lane the area is divided by a number of private residential roads with a sylvan landscape of mature gardens in a suburb of large houses in spacious grounds. The western fringes of the conservation area included publicly accessible woodland and allotments

### **Setting**

The conservation area is unusual in the highly sensitive relationship it has with its setting. The special historic interest of the conservation area includes the ability to look out from a number of viewpoints over the city of Oxford. This relationship has influenced development of the area in the past; including the development of large suburban villas on the crest of the hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and the provision of public green open spaces during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of a number of these views has been recognised through the designation of 'view cones' by the City Council where they are seen from public places. The importance of views over the city and to its green setting to the west is discussed further below.

The well timbered slopes of the hill are also important to the setting of the City Centre Conservation Area in views from the west, making an important contribution as the green backdrop in the famous views of the city of 'dreaming spires' and providing a number of features of historic or architectural interest in these views.

Otherwise, the setting of the conservation area provides a strong contrast in the transition from high-density suburban housing, largely of early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century construction, outside the area to low density development and green open space inside it.

### Uses and Activity

The conservation area is a large area with a mixture of different uses that have developed in the last two centuries over the former agricultural landscape. Map 2 provides an analysis of the present land uses in the conservation area. Some of these continue uses that are considered to contribute to the area's special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (its significance), whilst others may be regarded as having a neutral impact where they do not contribute directly or merely sustain the architectural or historic interest without contributing positively to it. Others may even be deleterious where they involve the loss of features of the environment that contribute positively to its significance or introduce activity or physical features that detract from its significance. As a result the conservation has not been divided into areas that reflect its current use but, instead, the division of the area reflects the areas (north and south) where it is considered that different features of the historic environment contribute to its significance. Parts 2 and 3 of the appraisal identify features of the area that are considered to contribute positively to its significance in two different character areas.

The road network running through the area includes important arterial and circulation routes, such as Headington Road, Headley Way, Marston Road and Morrell Avenue that provide routes between central Oxford and its suburbs, as well as a main route out of the city and to the wider region (Headington Road). Narrower lanes, such as Pullens Lane, Harberton Mead and Headington Hill Lane were created to provide access to

residential properties, although they now attract heavier loads of pedestrian and motor traffic 'rat-running' to avoid busy junctions or accessing institutions in and around the area. A network of smaller footpaths and cycle-ways provide connecting routes and include the route of Cuckoo Lane which provide a route from Headington to the east to Marston Road to the west.

The north of the conservation area contains an extensive area of largely residential use. This consists of mostly detached houses in large gardens at Feilden Grove, Harberton Mead and Jack Straws Lane. To the south, Pullens Lane has a more mixed pattern of use including further private residential properties and student halls of residence, occupying former large Victorian houses, as well as green open space of allotments and educational institutions on the eastern edge of the conservation area. These include Rye St Antony School (with 285 pupils aged 3-18 including residential accommodation for approximately 75) and occupying two large Victorian houses. Just to the south is EF International Language School, on the site of a third large house but in modern buildings, which provides accommodation for approximately 750 students including 265 boarders aged 16+.

Between Cuckoo Lane and Headington Road is Headington School, another large school with 800 pupils aged 11 to 18, including facilities for 220 boarders. Oxford Brookes University, which has a total student body of 18,000 and approximately 3,500 staff, occupies campuses at Gypsy Lane and within the grounds of Headington Hill Hall. These form the focus of the University's activity although there are also campuses at the former Millham Ford School just to the north west of the conservation area at Harberton Mead and at Wheatley and Harcourt Hill. Cheney School is located directly to the south of Brookes' Gypsy Lane Campus with a further 1,470 pupils aged 11 – 18. Oxford Brookes' also have accommodation for students in a large

complex of student halls of residence off John Garne Way partially lying in the west of the conservation area. They have further halls of residence south of Headington Road at Cheney Student Village (accessed from Cheney Lane). There are enclaves of residential use in the south of the conservation area at Headington Lane and the Granville Court, off Cheney Lane, as well as the lodges on the edge of Headington Hill Park.

The southern and south west edges of the conservation area are dominated by the

two large public green open spaces of South Park and Headington Hill Park, which provide access to green open space for residents and visitors to the city. Both are generally tranquil, although South Park hosts larger events in the city, such as the recent Olympic Torch celebrations and the Cowley Road Carnival. A park depot lies in the former farmyard at Cheney Farm on the edge of South Park. Harcourt House, on Marston Road, a former Territorial Army Centre, is now a small business estate.

### 1.3 Historical Development

Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the land in the conservation area formed farmland in the Parishes of Headington, St Clement's and Marston. The land either side of Headington Road and Cheney Lane was enclosed by Sir Christopher Brome in 1565. The land in Headington Parish, on the hilltop, formed part of Headington's open fields and was not enclosed until the break-up of the Headington Manor estate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Headington Hill had provided an escape from Oxford's busy city centre since, at least, the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It provided a green and tranquil area with views over the city that has enabled appreciation of its architecture for centuries. Its partial development for large suburban housing in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century reflects important developments in the composition of Oxford University, as well as the development of the private estate of one of Oxford's most influential industrialist families (the Morrells). This resulted in the construction of a number of large houses, with architectural interest and has provided a distinctive character in the heart of the area. The later history of the area has included concerted efforts to ensure the preservation of its green, open and rural character whilst suburbs have grown up to surround it on all sides. The development of Headington School has added another special aspect in the form of institutional architecture with a grand scheme that rivals the presence of the city's 20<sup>th</sup> century colleges.

#### Arriving in Oxford

Both the old and new roads to Oxford from London (Cheney Lane and Headington Road) approached the city through this area, which formed the last green space before the historical city limits at St. Clement's and London Place. Cheney Lane was the approach to the city from London throughout the medieval period and is the continuation of the road that runs through Shotover Forest to the east. During the Civil War, General Fairfax constructed his fortified encampment

astride this route to protect its use and control access to and from the capitol. During the reign of Charles II a daily coach service to London was established that used Cheney Lane. Many of the city's visitors would have experienced the journey down the lane and the turn into Headington Road as a point of arrival at the entrance to the city. For example, Anthony Wood recorded the procession of the University's senior members in 1661 to witness the arrival of the Earl of Clarendon (newly appointed as the Chancellor of the University) at the end of the lane. Near its eastern end is the stone set up in 1667 stating "*here endeth the Oxford mile hy way*", which marks the point to which the borough's corporation were required to repair the road. The course of the road provides a gentle ascent up the steep final section of the hillside.

Headington Road replaced Cheney Lane as the main route from London, after the excavation of a cutting for a more direct ascent of the hill and the construction of the new Stockenchurch Turnpike in the 1770s and 80s. From that time Cheney Lane was downgraded to the status of a rural lane, a character that has been maintained to this day by the lack of new development facing on to it. In painting the view of Oxford from Headington Hill, J.M.W. Turner chose to include the stagecoach descending Headington Hill in the new cutting illustrating the moment of arrival on the city's periphery.

Cuckoo Lane formed a route through the fields from Oxford to the village of Headington and was probably created in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Headington's open fields were enclosed open fields. In part, it replaced the historic route of 'Oxford Way' that had been superseded by the Stockenchurch Turnpike. It is now an attractive footpath, providing access to the city centre from the Headington area and avoiding the busy traffic of London/Headington Road.

### **Health, exercise and escape from the city**

The hill has been used as a place for exercise and recreation since, at least, the 17<sup>th</sup> century when academics like Antony Wood and the Reverend Josiah Pullen (Vice President of Magdalen Hall) used the hill as a place to get away from the city. Josiah Pullen's was recorded as using Headington Hill as a twice-daily walking route - to which he attributed his long life. Pullen planted an elm tree at the turning point in his walk (the northern end of Pullens Lane South) which was later known as Joe Pullen's Tree and was a much-loved local landmark. Pullens walking route would have followed a strip of land belonging to Magdalen College on the edge of the estate that was bought from the College by Sir Christopher Brome in 1565. This land was recorded as 'Free board' in the 1804 enclosure award, a term that normally refers to land just outside a deer park and denoting land that should be kept clear of development to allow deer into (but not out of) the park. Pullen's return journey is likely to have been along the path now known as Cuckoo Lane West. Thomas Hearne recorded this route in his diary in 1723/4, describing it as "...a branch of the Roman Way that falls down upon Marston Lane". It runs along the boundary between Headington and St Clement's Parish, which may also have been an area that was required to be kept clear of development. In around 1700 Reverend Pullen's encouraged the University to pay for construction of the raised pavement or walkway that still runs up the north side of Headington Road, to provide a recreational route for University Academics. In the medical science of the day, physical exercise was considered necessary to prevent the development of melancholy, which, it was thought, was also encouraged by the misty atmosphere of Oxford's valley floor location.

The healthy atmosphere of the hilltop may have attracted residents later in its history. James Morrell bought land on the hilltop to

move his family from the unhealthy district near his brewery near Fisher Row in the St. Thomas District of the city.

Later this belief in the healthy climate of the hill was summed up in the saying "down in Oxford the air's like stale beer; up in Headington it's pure champagne". Many hospitals were established on the hill top to take advantage of its clean air, including a tuberculosis ward of the Radcliffe infirmary that later developed into the modern complex of the John Radcliffe Hospital. A description of Cotuit Hall in a sales catalogue printed in 1916 describes it as standing in a "...*high and healthy locality in the country and yet possessing the convenience of a town house*".

The parks, green spaces, quiet lanes and footpaths of the conservation area continue to provide opportunities for recreational walking and cycling that are much valued by local people. South Park was bought by Oxford Preservation Trust and given to the people of Oxford City in 1932 for their recreation.

### **Viewing the city in its green setting**

The earliest known depiction of the view over the city of Oxford from Headington Hill is Braun and Hogenburg's view published in 1593. Two scholars stand debating at the crest of the hill in the foreground of this Elizabethan print. David Loggan used this view to embellish his map of Oxford in 1675 and was followed by numerous others paintings and engravings showing the skyline from the vantage of the hill. The Parliamentarian Army that besieged Oxford during the Civil War also made use of the view of the city from Headington Hill. De Gomme's map of the city defences and the parliamentarian siege lines prepared by General Fairfax in 1645 shows the outline of the main Parliamentarian camp at the top of Headington Hill. As well as placing the camp in a strong reverse-slope defensive position, this location would have provided a commanding view across the city and particularly of the entrance to it at Magdalen Bridge and Grandpont.

J. M. W. Turner's painting of Oxford from Headington Hill, painted in 1803/4 is one of his most famous depictions of Oxford. The painting presents both the journey from the hilltop down to the city at the unseen bridge and the spectacle of the city skyline, brought to eye-level from the hilltop. Matthew Arnold's poems *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gypsy*, helped to raise awareness of the beauty of views over Oxford from the west in the national consciousness.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, house builders used the view from the hilltop to add to the aesthetic value of properties and to provide a tangible connection between houses and the University City. The house built by James Morrell around 1855 features a principal frontage on a raised terrace that provides views across the city skyline below its own gardens and parkland. Other houses built along Pullens Lane later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century took advantage of the views. A description of *The Vines* published in *The Oxford Chronicle* in 1889 states "... *The site has a charming prospect, commanding views of the valley of the Cherwell, the distant woods, and in the foreground the beautiful tower of Magdalen College, backed up by the numerous towers and spires of other buildings ... all the main rooms arranged to take full advantage of the views*". Other houses in this area incorporated viewing towers or turrets as part of their design.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the desire to protect the views of the city and the green character of its setting led to the establishment of Oxford Preservation Trust, who were given South Park by the Pilgrim Trust to protect it from housing developments. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the drive for high-rise development to provide facilities for Oxford University created concern that the treasured views of the city skyline would be compromised. In response, the City Council identified a zone in which high buildings would not be accepted. They also stated that views to the city from the surrounding hills would be protected from impacts resulting from

unsympathetic development. To illustrate the need for this protection six 'view cones' were defined that provide an indication of the extent of views from individual viewing-points in publicly accessible places. Several of these were chosen to illustrate views with a particular historic significance, whilst others were simply considered to have a high landscape or townscape amenity value. The view from South Park over the city was one of the early view cones identified. As the City Council's policy was put into practice further important views from public places were noted looking out from Headington Hill, including that from the Pullens Lane Allotments and from a field just off Jack Straw's Lane later donated to a charitable trust by Miss Doris Field. The importance of both has now been recognised by designation of view cones within the local plan.

### **Living on Headington Hill – The early years**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century houses were built either side of Headington Road near the entrance to Cheney Lane. The Rise was built by Thomas Adams on the south side of Headington Road, which was later home to the Smith family who owned Cheney Farm. A house called Cabbage Hall stood on the north side of Headington Road, on a site near Dairy Lodge. Cheney Farm was built on the south side of Cheney Lane in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This removed the farmyard from the immediate environs of The Rise, which was becoming a more genteel house. By the 1830s a farm bailiff was housed within Cheney Farm.

The improvement of the route up Headington Hill and construction of the new Stokenchurch Turnpike in the 1770s and 80s may have provided some incentive for development of suburban housing. Hill Top House had been built next to the turnpike, opposite the turn into Pullens Lane by 1830, when Richard Green is recorded as its occupant in Pigot's Directory.

The house built by the elder James Morrell near the top of Headington Hill, it was constructed between 1817 and 1824 but was later replaced by the present Headington Hill Hall. James added land to his estate in following years until it stretched from Pullens Lane right down to Marston Road.

The land in Headington Parish, north of Headington Road, remained as open fields until the sale of the Headington Manor Estate in 1836. The sales plan for the estate shows the newly established path of Pullens Lane running north from Cuckoo Lane with plots either side that correspond with several of the later plots occupied by private houses. A new footpath was also created running along the western edge of these plots, which survives to this day. George Davenport bought the land between Cuckoo Lane and Headington Road (formerly Oxford Field), including a recently built house, which must have been a precursor to the present Davenport House. Land between Cuckoo Lane and Pullens Lane was bought by George Alexander Peppercorn, whilst a large plot in the north was bought by Wadham College. In 1846 George Davenport bought the triangle of land between Cuckoo Lane and Pullens Lane. William Peppercorn (probably the son of the above George) had bought the remaining land west of Pullens Lane by 1849 as well as acquiring the title of Lord of the Manor of Headington.

It appears likely that Pullen's Gate (also known as Brockless Cottage after the field that covered this area) was built by Peppercorn as a farmhouse for the small farm on the west side of the lane, with a barn just to the north.

George Davenport died in 1846 and by 1850 his son John Marriot Davenport had constructed a new house (the present Davenport House), built in red brick with a simple Jacobean style incorporating banded stone detailing. The house stood in a two-acre garden with further land forming a park extending eastwards to the Boundary Brook and including a small

yard, built up against Headington Road. A lodge further to the east was built in a similar Jacobean style and materials as a later addition. This 'park' was split into two fields on maps of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but visually united by strong boundary planting.

James Morrell died in 1855 and his son (also James) inherited the estate and built the Italianate mansion that forms the main component of the present Headington Hill Hall. He also had gardens laid out by William Hart Baxter, the curator of the Oxford Botanical Gardens, who planted many exotic trees and shrubs, particularly conifers, with a notable group of black pine and Wellingtonias located in the east of the site. A nursery garden and walled kitchen garden were laid out on the far side of Headington Road including a large pond with a laundry cottage and drying ground beyond. Entrance to the estate was controlled by two lodges on Headington Road, both of which survive. James Morrell Junior died in 1863 and his wife Alicia died just one year later leaving their ten-year-old daughter Emily Alicia Morrell as the heiress to a valuable estate.

Emily Alicia Morrell married her cousin George Herbert Morrell in 1874. They had the interior of the house remodelled by William Wilkinson and added further land surrounding the estate, which included the farm at Pullen's Gate to the north in 1874 and Cheney Farm in 1876. A bridge crossing the Headington Road united the parts of the estate on either side. It was designed by William Wilkinson and installed in 1877. The Morrells were philanthropists with an interest in education. Among their foundations was a training school for servants established on the south side of Headington Road, in the cottages that are now North and South House, but marked on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 25" Ordnance Survey Map as Victoria Villas. A gardener's cottage for the estate (Woodbine Cottage) was also located in this area.

### **Living on Headington Hill – Developing Pullens Lane**



When the first edition 25" Ordnance Survey map was published in 1876, Pullen's Gate remained the only house on Pullens Lane. The Oxford University Act of 1862 was the first in a series of pieces of legislation that rapidly increased the number of professors and readers at the University. In 1877 fellows of the Colleges were finally allowed to marry. This resulted in a movement for academics to live outside the confines of the city centre, often building comfortable family homes that, nevertheless, were required to lie within the 1.5 mile residency limit imposed by the colleges and University. Whilst it has been speculated on that this process influenced the development of North Oxford, the pattern is far clearer on Pullens Lane. The lane was developed as a picturesque residential suburb, with large houses in spacious grounds, in various Victorian revivalist styles. Nearly all of these had important members of the University as their first known occupants. A description of The Vines, built to designs by Henry Wilkinson Moore for Sydney Howard Vines (Sherardian Professor of Botany), states "... It is constructed of red brick, with stone dressings, and red tile roof, harmonising with the other residences grouped about this favoured spot". Perhaps more unusually it points out that Professor Vines had personally overseen the laying-out of the grounds, which might be expected to contain an unusual collection of planting, reflecting his academic interests. As a group, the seven houses built between 1879 and 1892 had a strong sense of unity in their materials, scale and detailing, although one (The Pullen's) was later demolished.

Just to the north, Jack Straw's Lane is recorded on the 1876 map as a lane leading thorough fields to clay pits, Jack Straw's Farm and a house called Hillside. Cowley House and Cowley Cottage (a small coach house for the former) were built by 1898 on the south side of Jack Straw's Lane, and were also the home of an academic. By 1921 the lane had been extended to connect with the northern end of Pullens Lane, whilst Harberton Mead

had been laid out to the south, with a single large property at Harberton House (including a lodge) occupying the large plot. Houses named St Catherine's and Winshields were built adjacent to the new section of Jack Straw's Lane but accessed from Harberton Mead

High Wall, built in 1910 for Miss Katharine J. D. Feilden is a large house of special architectural interest, which still maintains a sense of harmony with the older red brick villas of Pullens Lane. It was built in the Tudor Revival style (similar to Davenport House in some respects) to designs by Walter Cave, a prominent member of the Art Workers' Guild. Harold Peto, a well-recognized garden architect within the Arts and Crafts movement, laid out its gardens. Percy Cane, who was greatly influenced by Peto's work, added to the gardens in the 1920s. The gardens include terraces, a stunning pergola and temple and a large lawn bounded by a stream. Formerly, it extended further west to include rose and kitchen gardens including a gardener's cottage. The cottage, which survived the development of this area in the 1970s, is now Jean Cottage at Feilden Grove. Some of the mature trees within Feilden Grove are survivors of this garden.

During the 1910s and 20s, houses of a high aesthetic standard were built in Harberton Mead and Jack Straw's Lane, including Field House, Jack Straw's Lane, designed by Herbert Luck North (a student of Edwin Lutyens), Nos. 1, 3, 5 and 7 Harberton Mead, and the cluster of houses on the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane. A series of houses on the main section of Jack Straw's Lane were built in narrower plots than elsewhere in the conservation area with trees planted at their frontages, creating a distinctive avenue.

Development for housing in the conservation area in the mid and later 20<sup>th</sup> century has created pockets of higher density development on cul-de-sacs that preserve the quiet residential character of the area and with generous gardens that ensure a green and spacious character.

### **Institutions on Headington Hill**

In 1917 Headington School bought Napier House (now Cotuit Hall) on Pullens Lane adding to its accommodation, which was restricted to Brookside House on London Road. They used the house for their Junior School until 1930, after which it reverted to residential use. It became a children's home in the 1940s but was a private house again in the 1950s. Later again, it became a hostel for Oxford College of Technology, and was considerably extended to provide 102 study bedrooms, a games/lecture room and dining facilities. It remained in this use throughout the college's transformation to a Polytechnic and, later, into Oxford Brookes University. It was sold to EF Academy in 2011.

Headington School bought Davenport House in 1920, along with the adjacent park or farmland. A new school building on the eastern part of this property was designed by the Oxford based architects Gilbert T. Gardner and Thomas Rayson in 1928. It was built in red brick with stone dressings in a baroque classical style and was opened in 1930. The grounds had formal entrances from Headington Road, to which the building presents a striking frontage. The primacy of the frontage has been retained despite symmetrical extensions in the 1970s and numerous additions of buildings within the grounds to the north and west. The eastern extremity of the property was taken to link Headley Way with Headington Road just after the Second World War, creating an additional frontage for the site. At present this is largely faced by a continuation of Davenport House's stonewall, with an entrance near the north eastern corner of the site. The school continues to invest in its infrastructure, with additions of an Art facility (1998), Theatre (2002), Dining Hall (2005), Music School (2009) and most recently, a new classroom facility (2012).

Oxford Brookes has its origins in the Oxford School of Art, which was housed in the Taylor Institute from 1865, expanding to offer other courses at several sites across the city and becoming the Schools

of Technology, Art and Commerce in 1934. Despite plans being drawn up for the creation of a campus in 1939, it was not until 1949 that the land formerly occupied by the Morrells' nursery garden was bought for their realisation. Despite the plans' approval by the City's Education Committee, the City Council initially refused permission for the development as proposed in 1950 and then deferred a decision in 1951. A first phase of development was approved in 1952 and the foundations of the new College of Technology, Art and Commerce were laid on the site between Headington Road and Gipsy Lane in 1954. The first section to be constructed was the Darcy Building, shortly followed by the twin five-storey Abercrombie and Sinclair buildings, which were linked by the Clerici building (the three structures forming a core that was complete by 1961). The main hall and refectory were added in 1963, when the Duke of Edinburgh formally opened the site. A library was added in 1967. The complex has been expanded in several stages until there is little space remaining within the site. The latest stage of construction required the demolition of the single storey Darcy building to be replaced with a block that matches the scale of the Abercrombie and Sinclair buildings. Indeed, during the 1990s the development of land some distance to the south was commenced to provide a sports' centre and a 'student village' with residential accommodation by the footbridge. Further student residential accommodation was built on the lower slopes of the hill off John Garne Way in the 1980s, with considerable attention paid to ensuring the new buildings were not of a height that could compromise views from the allotments off Cuckoo Lane west. Further new residential accommodation off John Garne Way was opened in 2011.

The Oxford City Technical School built a co-educational school on the land south of the College of Technology, Art and Commerce in 1954. Cheney Girls' School was built on land adjacent to this in 1959 and the two establishments merged in

1972. This is now Cheney School, which includes the playing field that run along the north side of Cheney Lane.

After the death of Emily Alicia's Morrell's heir James, in 1953, the run down Headington Hill Hall estate was sold to the City Council by the Morrell family. From 1959 until 1991 the Council leased the house and the eastern part of the grounds to the media tycoon Robert Maxwell. The western part of the grounds was opened to the public as Headington Hill Park. Maxwell ran his publishing company Pergamon Press from the site, building a large block of offices in the centre of this area. Following Maxwell's death, Oxford Brookes took possession of the land, converting the former stable block as the Richard Hamilton Building in 1995-6 and the Pergamon Press building for the Helena Kennedy Students' Centre.

During the 1950s a plot fronting Marston Road was removed from Headington Hill Park to construct a Territorial Army centre. This complex is discreetly located, with an evergreen hedge to the park and maintaining the park's boundary wall and tree planting on the Marston Road frontage, which screens views in from the road.

On Pullens Lane, Rye St. Antony School moved into one of the large private houses in 1939 (Langley Lodge) later expanding to incorporate the adjacent property (The Croft) in 1945. They have added various buildings for the school complex but have located the majority of these on the eastern edge of their premises, away from the frontage to the lane. A steady programme of building and refurbishment has provided the school with excellent teaching and residential facilities, all the twentieth century building being carefully harmonised with the architecture of the original handsome Victorian houses. King House was opened in 1986, the art, design and technology centre in 1989, the information, communications and technology suite in 1991, the eastern extension of the Rendall building in 1993 and the Sumpter building with its science

laboratories in 1995. The Janet Ward performing arts centre was completed in 2005; the Morton sports centre opened in September 2008; the refurbishment of the chapel was completed in 2009; the Sixth Form centre was opened in September 2010. A new library and classrooms, in extension of the Rendall building, were completed in 2012.

Plater College moved to Pullens Lane in the late 1970s, building a Catholic College for the further education of adults re-entering education. Its construction required the demolition of The Pullen's, one of the lane's large red-brick villas. After a long period of success the college's later history was dogged by allegations of poor standards and failing administration and it was finally closed in 2005. The site was sold to EF Language Schools who have undertaken considerable new development to improve and expand the facilities. These have largely been located away from the frontage to the lane, although the new Isis building does address the frontage.

### **Archaeological Potential**

The hilltop plateau of Headington Hill has been the location of finds of pre-historic and Roman activity. There is a particular association with the remains of the Oxford Roman pottery industry. The conservation area lies within the former bounds of Shotover Forest and the Anglo-Saxon royal estate of Headington. However there is little evidence of settlement in the immediate vicinity of the conservation area. The history of the historic routes through the area, including Cuckoo Lane, Cheney Lane and the Headington Hill raised walkway might be better understood through their examination by archaeologists. For example, it has been suggested that Cuckoo Lane was rerouted during the enclosure of Headington's open fields in 1802/04. There is also potential for the survival of remains associated with the third siege of Oxford in 1646, including remains of General Fairfax's hilltop encampment, which is believed to have covered parts of South Park, Cheney

School Grounds and the Headington Hill enclave.

The development and planting of the gardens of the largest houses in the area is documented from historic mapping and descriptions in publications such as *The Gardener* and *The Oxford Journal*. However, the finer detail of the construction and planting of these grounds might be better understood through archaeological investigation. This would be extended to include the botanical history of the area. A landscape survey of Headington Hill Hall, for example, has provided considerable detail on the historic planting of the grounds, but concluded that parts of the historic scheme had been lost and not replaced.

The most visible earthwork remains in the conservation area is the extensive surviving area of ridge and furrow in South Park. This provides an important element in the character of the park, revealing its agricultural past and the 'light touch' of landscaping involved in transforming it into polite parkland for the Morrells and the subsequent conservation of its character through its management by Oxford Preservation Trust and the City Council.

## 1.4 Introduction to Character Assessment

A key feature of the conservation area's character is the difference in character between its northern and southern parts,

which are defined by the course of Cuckoo Lane. The two areas are sufficiently different that they will be considered separately in terms of their spatial features, views, trees and green landscape, and architectural interest in Part 2 and 3 of the character assessment.

## Part 2. Headington Hill south of Cuckoo Lane (see Map 2)

The area illustrates three landscapes that have been developed one on top of another. The earliest is the landscape of the post-enclosure fields of St Clements' and Headington Parish represented by landscape elements including the following:

- The western part of Headington Road and Cheney Lane;
- The raised walkway up the hill and the first section of Pullens Lane;
- Large green open spaces (including South Park, Headington Hill Park, Spring Copse, Cheney School and Headington School);
- The survival of ridge and furrow earthworks;
- Trees representing fragmentary remains of former field boundaries; and
- The farm buildings at Cheney Farm.

Overlying the agricultural past is the landscape of the genteel country estates built by wealthy Oxford merchants and solicitors in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century next to the turnpike road. Features that represent this landscape include the following:

- The cutting and eastern section of Headington Road;
- Hilltop House, Davenport House and Headington Hill Hall;
- Landscaped gardens with exotic planting, richly timbered parks, long boundary walls and gate lodges, as well as stables and other subsidiary buildings;
- Accommodation for servants and philanthropic activities discreetly located in the small enclave of narrow lanes off Headington Road.

The final landscape created was that of the institutions that developed on the hilltop during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and continuing to develop in the 21<sup>st</sup>). Features of this landscape which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area include the following:

- Headington School's main building and green forecourt;
- Elements of the earlier polite landscape retained in the design of the Cheney School and Oxford Brookes University complexes;
- The grouping of the early focus of Oxford Brookes University buildings including the Abercrombie, Sinclair and Clerici Buildings, with the library, refectory and hall.
- The landscaped setting of Oxford Brookes' gypsy Lane campus seen from Gypsy Lane and Headington Road.

### 2.1 Spatial Features

#### *Street Plan*

##### Headington/London Road

This route forms a central corridor through this area. As re-fashioned for the Stokenchurch Turnpike it provides a broad and distinguished approach to the city centre from the London direction, which influenced development of the surroundings after the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Gentle bends in the road divide long, straight sections with channelled views framed by mature tree planting which make a positive aesthetic contribution to the area's character. Where the road descends the slope of Headington Hill it plunges into a steep sided cutting with stone retaining walls, which creates a pinchpoint in its route that contrasts

strongly with the more open areas to the east and west. Trees growing above the banks of the cutting add to the shading of the area, whilst the bridge crossing the road adds to the sense of enclosure and acts as an important focal feature. The cutting appears suddenly, partly due to a slight bend in the road, adding to its visual interest. The top of the cutting is framed by the open space and tree planting of the reservoirs south of Headington Road and the grounds of Headington Hill Hall to the north, including Top Lodge and the hall's boundary wall.

### Headington Hill raised walkway

The raised walkway provides evidence of the older route up the hill before its improvement for the turnpike. It illustrates the interest of University academics in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century in promoting healthy exercise for scholars.

### Cheney Lane

This ancient route provides evidence of the medieval approach to the city. The general absence of built development in its immediate setting has helped preserve the rural character that is otherwise created by the narrow width of the carriageway and broad grassed verges. Tall trees in the adjacent park and sports grounds line the road giving it a forest estate character, channelling views along the road and adding to its tranquillity and green character. Two thirds of the way down the lane the trees create a tunnel of foliage casting deep shade over the road. The curving line of the lane and tree lines and hedges enclose the lane with glimpsed views to the green open spaces to either side, whilst the absence of through traffic also contributes to the tranquil atmosphere.

### Pullens Lane

The first, short section of Pullens Lane (as far as Cuckoo Lane) runs between the grounds of Oxford Brookes University's Headington Hill Hall Campus and Headington School. Its broad entrance, sweeping in from the Oxford direction,

reflects its former use as a carriage route from Oxford to Headington. This use is also reflected in the broad entrance to Cuckoo Lane to the north. This impression is slightly diminished by shrubbery planted along the edge of the pavement along Headington Road, which protects the grass island between the footpath and the carriageway.

The stone boundary walls and tree planting of the estates to either side create a strong sense of enclosure to the space, which, nevertheless, is broad, including a wide grass verge that accommodates an attractive line of semi-mature broad-leaved trees. As such this section retains much of its character as a country carriage route.

The Headington Hill Enclave (described in greater detail below)

Hidden on three private lanes, an area of 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages and larger houses with spacious gardens behind high walls and attractive green surroundings.

The lanes are narrow, with, hoggin road surfaces and a general absence of street furniture and traffic, which create a tranquil rural character.

### **Plots**

Very large plots of land either side of Headington Road (Headington Hill Hall, Headington Hill Park, South Park, Cheney School, Oxford Brookes Gypsy Lane Campus and Headington School) reflect division of this area from fields for the genteel country estates of Oxford's wealthy merchants' in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their position next to Headington Road reflects the influence of this improved carriageway in encouraging development of land outside the city for large villas and mansions in pleasure gardens and parkland. Buildings are generally set back from the road with little formal relationship with the roads, except where the Oxford Brookes campus buildings enclose a green forecourt fronting onto Gypsy Lane. Hill Top stands out for having a more

direct relationship with the Headington Road.

Both Headington Hill Hall and Davenport House (Headington School) have maintained a degree of integrity in their plots despite later developments for institutional and public uses. The Headington Hill enclave and the adjacent area of Headington Road provides an area of smaller irregularly sized plots within which buildings set in varying positions to the road, creating an area of intricate and organic pattern of development and an intimate character.

***Open spaces: South Park, Headington Hill Park and Cheney School fields***

These open spaces are more or less publicly accessible and contribute to the high amenity value of the area for local residents and visitors. They are large green open areas that provide evidence of the agricultural landscape that preceded the expansion of Oxford into its hinterland, including the ridge and furrow earthworks that indicated late and post-medieval ploughing and trees providing vestiges of former field boundaries.

They also provide evidence of the large estate developed by the Morrell family during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including their tastes in landscape design and reflecting the growing wealth of the city's merchant class during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

South Park, in particular, provides evidence of the growth of the conservation movement in Oxford and the desire to protect the city's green setting from overdevelopment. This reflects the importance that has been attributed to the management of views to the city centre from its hinterland.

These open spaces contribute to the green and rural character of the southern part of the conservation area, with a sharp transition beyond the conservation area boundary to built-up areas on the edge of the city centre at London Place, St Clement's and Morrell Avenue.

***Boundaries***

High stone and brick walls

These walls enclose the most public frontages of Headington Hill Hall and Headington School as well as some of the smaller properties within the Headington Hill enclave. They continue to provide evidence of the area's evolution and the historic character of the land within their boundaries as high status private residences with extensive grounds.

The walls provide enclosure and definition to public spaces, particularly Headington Road and Pullens Lane and make a positive aesthetic contribution to the views along both. Lobed brick copings add to the aesthetic value of the walls and distinguish them as boundaries to polite estates rather than more functional boundaries to industrial or agricultural land.

The stone boundary wall running alongside Granville Court provides evidence of the former location of the 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse 'The Rise' which had stood here until construction of the flats in the 1970s.

Railings around the parks

These are relatively simple mid-20th century railings with no particular historic or architectural interest in themselves. However they do allow views into the parks from Headington Road, Morrell Avenue, and Warneford Lane, adding to the green character of these areas.

The provision of a formal enclosure to the parks does provide a sense of definition to their area. At Headington Hill Park this has a particular value defining the area of the private park attached to Headington Hill Hall as laid in the 1850s, with an entrance from Headington Road announced by ostentatious wrought iron gates surmounted with Winsor gas-lanterns.

***Street furniture***

Several historic milestones provide an unusual element of street furniture. They document the development of different



responsibilities for the maintenance of roads, including the city's turnpike trust and the Parish of Headington.

### ***Institutional character***

#### Oxford Brookes University

The development of the university from its beginnings as the Oxford School of Art in 1865 is an important element in the history of the city's civic institutions. The Gipsy Lane Campus represents the evolution of the Oxford City Technical School and the School of Art into the Oxford College of Technology as an important stage in the institution's development. The core of buildings constructed by 1963 retains their group value and demonstrates the planned layout for the consolidation of the Technical School and its different departments from numerous sites across the city. These were spread out in long wings with open areas surrounding to provide abundant natural light within the buildings.

The buildings are viewed to good effect from the main entrance at Gipsy Lane, where they enclose a forecourt with maturing tree planting that suggests a designed landscape setting for the college buildings. The quadrangle, between the Abercrombie and Sinclair buildings, though much altered, also retains the intent of providing green open space between the buildings.

The remainder of the complex is, at present, of limited architectural interest.

Sections of the stone boundary wall of the earlier gardens located on this site survive, providing evidence of an earlier phase of development as part of the wider Headington Hill Hall Estate and contributing to the aesthetic value of views along Headington Road.

#### Headington School

Headington School has a long history as one of the city's prestigious private schools with a strong religious focus. It makes use of the earlier landscape of Davenport House, including its large park

to provide spacious grounds and an attractive green setting to the school. The low density of use (just 33 students per acre) helps to maintain the tranquillity of surrounding lanes. The high boundary walls to Headley Way, Headington Road, Pullens Lane and part of Cuckoo Lane provide privacy and hint at the tranquil oasis that lies beyond, which is a key feature of this establishment.

The main school building has considerable architectural interest in spite of later alterations and additions and provides a frontage to Headington Road that emphasises the road's importance. This is set behind a broad green forecourt that adds grandeur to the building. Several other buildings are discreetly located to the rear of this block, with two enclosed quadrangles, perhaps providing a reference to the landscape of the Oxford University's colleges.

Several later 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings for the school are set near the Headington Road boundary at the western end of the property. These generally turn their back to the road, rather than addressing the frontage and would be considered less successful in reflecting the significance of the institution, the status of the road, or the attractive features of the historic gardens and parkland.

#### Cheney School

The school has a similar role to Oxford Brookes University in representing the development of mass education within the city in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The site preserves tree planting that was part of the formal park landscaping of the Morrell's Headington Hill Estate, particularly boundary planting. These provide an attractive green setting for the school buildings, which are generally of low scale (two storeys) and set back from the road, giving primacy to the greenery, which also contributes to the aesthetic value of surrounding streets.

## **2.2 Views**

### The City Centre from South Park

South Park provides significant views of the city of Oxford from several points within the park, changing with increased distance from the city centre and increased elevation.

Whilst mature trees currently block the view from Headington Road, this is the closest available alternative to the view of Oxford from Headington Hill painted by J.M. W. Turner, among others over 400 years to illustrate the landscape of Oxford, including its architectural wealth and attractive position in a setting of green hills. The tower of Magdalen College is located in the centre of the city's skyline in this view and has extra prominence due to its proximity to the viewer. The towers of Merton Chapel and Christ Church (including Tom Tower, readily distinguishable by its copper dome) lie to the left of the centre point and the group around Radcliffe Square to the right, with the Radcliffe Camera often hidden by trees on the slopes of the hill. The view becomes broader as the hill is ascended and more of the roofscape of St Clement's and the city centre is revealed.

South Park also provides a distinguished view to the west over the East Oxford Suburb to Hinksey Hill, in which the tower of The Church of St Edmund and St Frideswide emerges as a particular landmark from the bed of roofs and trees.

### From the terrace and Veranda at Headington Hill Hall

This is a designed view with both aesthetic and historic value looking over the Morrells' pleasure garden to the city centre skyline in the land beyond. The thickly timbered parkland creates a green and soft textured foreground with wooded hills west of Oxford as a backdrop. This is now semi-public due to the availability of permissive footpaths through the Oxford Brookes University campus.

### West along Headington Road from London Road

This is a fortuitous view (as opposed to a formally designed vista in a designed landscape) created by the aesthetically pleasing combination of the straight and broad road enclosed at a low level in the east by the stone boundary wall of Headington School, with enclosure rising to the west with the walls and tree planting on each side, and particularly focused around the cutting at the hill's crest, where the road dips out of view and majestic mature trees provide an attractive end stop to the view.

### Headington School from Headington Road

Views from the school gates look across the spacious green forecourt to the formal frontage of the school's main building.

### Across sports fields (east and west) at Headington Hill School

These attractive views over the green open space with mature boundary planting along Cuckoo Lane and specimen trees in the garden around Davenport House in the west of the site reflect the designed parkland landscape of the house recorded on Ordnance Survey Maps of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Across Cheney School sports fields

Although now altered by their use as school playing fields, the views across this space retain the open space and tree planting of formal parkland with a designed aesthetic that had been created by the Morrells following its acquisition for their estate in 1876. These include the green open space, the park's boundary planting (to Cheney Lane, the Headington Hill reservoirs and Headington Hill enclave), as well as the trees that follow the footpath at the eastern end of the field, which once separated wooded bays within the park.

### Along Cheney Lane

These views are fortuitous, providing a series of unfolding views along the lane. Positive features include Cheney Farm buildings and boundary wall, the broad green verge of the lane and the

overarching trees in South Park and Cheney School. These maintain the rural character that is evidence of the lane's age and origins.

#### To the bridge over Headington Road from east and west

These views allow appreciation of the bridge as a building of architectural interest and would be considered as designed views with the positioning of the bridge an intentional act to create a feature in the vistas looking both up and down the hill. The bridge is prominently located, with architectural ornament seen in these views contributing to its aesthetic value and artistic interest. The stone retaining walls of the road cutting are also a prominent feature of these and channel the eye towards the bridge.

### **2.3 Trees and green landscape**

Trees In parkland and formal garden settings:

Trees in both the formal gardens and areas of parkland provide evidence of both the 19<sup>th</sup> century planting for country estates and the remnants of the earlier agricultural landscape. These mature trees make a very significant positive contribution to the aesthetic character of the area, as well as having historic interest and ecological value. They play an important role in maintaining the character of the area as a green gap between the city centre and the dense residential suburbs beyond. This is a part of the area's historic interest, as well as an element of its character. The use of boundary planting to define the parks has contributed to the green character of the area and provides a green background to many views through the area.

Patterns in the species mix used in historical planting schemes have been identified, such as the prevalence of pines in the planting of the eastern part of the grounds of Headington Hill Hall, with a notable grouping of Deodar Cedars and Black Pine, with Holm Oak included as an evergreen broadleaf. This has been

associated with the involvement of William Hart Baxter in their planting and is certainly evidence of early Victorian plant collecting in the laying out of the gardens. The use of pines is continued south of Headington Road, notably in the grounds of the Headington Hill Reservoirs, creating a distinctive character in the hilltop area. The lower slopes of the hill and more open areas of South Park are characterised by the presence of mature deciduous trees, which are a more familiar feature of the rural landscape of Oxfordshire.

The trees of Headington Hill Park provide an important element of the wooded background of the hill in views of the city centre from the western hills. Trees within the grounds of Cheney School and Oxford Brookes' Gypsy Lane campus also make an important contribution to the area's green character, softening the outline of the large institutional buildings along both Headington Road and Gypsy Lane and in some cases representing survival of the nursery gardens and parkland planting of the Morrell's estate.

### **2.6 Architectural interest (See Map 4)**

#### ***Buildings of the agricultural landscape***

##### Cheney Farm buildings

The Grade II listed barn at Cheney Farm is the earliest standing building in the conservation area and dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The adjacent farmyard buildings include a cowshed and shelter shed, originally open-fronted, as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century farm cottage and outbuildings. Together they provide group value, illustrating the historical functioning of the farm complex, with evidence surviving of further buildings demonstrating a formerly larger extent of activity.

#### ***Country estate buildings***

##### Headington Hill Hall

The earlier, northern wing of Headington Hill Hall: A Regency country house forming one of a group built in and around Headington in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century and illustrating the trend for

wealthy Oxford merchants to establish small estates outside the city.

The southern extension of Headington Hill Hall: This made the house a far more imposing mansion in a theatrical Italianate or Louise XIII style by the sculptor and architect John Thomas, who also worked on Buckingham Palace, the Palace of Westminster and estate buildings in Windsor Great Park. It illustrates the growing wealth of the Morrells and provides evidence of the house's function as a place for entertainment, in addition to being a family home. It includes a carriage porch on the simpler east side and a colonnaded veranda running around the west and south frontages that supports an extensive balcony, which exploits the views over the city. This is continued by the terraces of the gardens running down the slope, which are connected with the house by flights of steps. It is probably the most lavish among the mansions built by Oxford's 19<sup>th</sup> century merchants.

Entrance lodges: Two entrance lodges of an original complement of four have survived. These were built in a sympathetic style to the 1820s house, providing a unity between the estate buildings. Historically they made a strong statement about the control of access to the estate. The walls and railings surrounding the estate have a similar function. The wrought iron gates next to the lower lodge are notable for adding artistic interest to the Headington Road frontage.

The later 19<sup>th</sup> century Dairy Lodge is of a similar style, but includes working buildings including the former Dairy Barn in simpler, roughly course limestone rubble and with steeply pitched roofs. This provides evidence of the functional landscape of the estate, but would also have been a symbol of prestige. It also illustrates George Herbert Morrell's interest in agriculture (he was elected vice president of the Oxford Agricultural Society in 1876 and hosted the Bath and West Show in 1878 and the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society's show in 1880). They

may also preserve evidence of earlier buildings recorded in this location on Davies' Map of Oxfordshire in 1797 and shown in J.M.W. Turner's painting of the view from the hilltop. The lodge is visually prominent at the foot of the cutting on Headington Road.

Stables: The large stable block to the north east of the main house, was built in 1878 and was described as one of the best stable buildings in the county in Jackson's Oxford Journal that year. Again it provides evidence of the functional appurtenances of the estate, as well as their use to add to its prestige through both the use of ornate and fashionable detailing and the quality of facilities provided. The roofs are steeply pitched with parapet gables that are reminiscent of the Jacobean style, seen elsewhere on Pullens Lane. A number of dormer windows have pargeeting infill to their gables - a decorative feature that was used by early protagonists of the Arts and Crafts movement. The building was extended considerably in the mid 1990s for Oxford Brooke's University, involving the infilling of the stable yard and extension to the north west. Unfortunately this has disguised some evidence of the building's historical function.

Other structures and buildings: The Headington Road footbridge (formerly also a carriage bridge) was designed by the Oxford Architect William Wilkinson and further advertised the wealth of the Morrells. It has some artistic interest with rusticated stone piers with decorative finials, an egg and dart motif on the sides of the bridge and parapets of ironwork including a diamond and wheel motif. A second, shorter, span crosses the raised footway. The history of North and South House (formerly Victoria Cottages) and Woodbine Cottages is less well understood but their association with the Morrells' estate is recorded and they can be considered to illustrate other aspects of the estate's landscape. They preserve evidence of their late 19<sup>th</sup> century date in their materials and detailing. The remains

of the walls around the Morrells' kitchen garden can be seen on Headington Road and at the rear of properties on Headington Hill (lane).

The farmyard walls and gate piers at Cheney Farm lie at the end of a former carriage route from the bridge over Headington Road through the parkland and illustrate the incorporation of the farm within the Headington Hill Hall estate.

#### Davenport House (Headington School) Estate

Davenport House provides similar evidence of the development of the area for the country houses of wealthy merchant's and professionals. The house illustrates the influence of interest in Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture that was developing in the 1840s and 1850s. The use of red brick for a prestigious home is an early example of the use of materials locally that became more dominant from the 1860s and thereafter.

A lodge built to match the materials and style of the house, has a sense of unity within the estate, and may have provided accommodation for a gardener. Its position does not appear to correspond to any former gateways. It now serves a secondary function by marking the corner of the estate and the entrance to the conservation area. The boundary walls to the estate reflect the inclosure of the agricultural land for private domestic enjoyment as parkland. A small Gothic arched garden door through the wall provides a point of incident within the streetscene and may mark the end of the formal gardens in the immediate setting of the house.

The buildings of the estate yard are of visual importance in the Headington Road frontage. The two single-storey buildings are set parallel to each other with one incorporated in the boundary, which includes decorative tiled roofs with ridge tiles and tile hanging to the gables. Decoration of such functional buildings,

illustrates their value to the prestige of the estate.

#### ***Other houses***

Hill Top House, Headington Road and The Firs, Reservoir Lane/Headington Hill both illustrate the attraction of the area for middle class housing in the early and mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hill Top House makes an important positive contribution to the aesthetic value of the Headington Road frontage at this point, which is otherwise formed by nice but unexceptional early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century houses.

The small cottages in Headington Hill (lane), Reservoir Lane and the linking lane further contribute to its character as an intricate area that developed with little formal planning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### ***Institutional buildings***

The main building of Headington School stands out as the paramount institutional building of architectural interest. Its south facing elevation has a dramatic impact on the character of Headington Road, despite the high boundary walls, planting and green space. This raises the character of the road to a higher status. The classical proportions and detailing of the building, including its regular and carefully proportioned fenestration, contributes to the impression of institution's dignity and permanence. It uses materials that were sympathetic to those of Davenport House. Later symmetrical pavilions added at either end of the main block adopted similar principles in the scheme of fenestration and materials, maintaining a two-storey scale and the horizontal emphasis of the building as well as providing some architectural interest to the Headley Way frontage. The other buildings of the school would not presently be considered to rate as of any historic interest and of only limited architectural interest, although the new Music School and theatre buildings may be considered in time to have added to the architectural interest of the site.

The existing buildings of the Oxford Brookes campus are relatively undistinguished. Beyond the group value of the core group noted above they have little architectural merit and would not be regarded as making better than a neutral contribution to the architectural interest of Headington Road and Gypsy Lane. Current building will create an open space at the frontage to Headington Road with a new library and teaching block of greater architectural interest set back and creating a public square that will reorient the campus to address Headington Road.

### **2.7 Issues, vulnerabilities and opportunities for enhancement**

During the surveying of this area for the conservation area appraisal a number of issues were identified that either detract from the character and appearance and reduce its special historic and architectural interest or threaten to do so in future:

#### Poor quality entrance to Cheney Lane

The western end of Cheney Lane has a low wall built across part of its entrance from Headington Road, with planting and bicycle barriers covering the rest of the entrance and only a narrow footpath providing access into the lane. This has been undertaken to prevent motor vehicles turning into the lane from Headington Road and to prevent cyclists and walkers accidentally getting into the path of vehicles coming down the hill. However, views into the lane from the west have been screened by trees planted in this area. This has disguised the attractive character of the lane and its significance as an historic route down the hill to the city centre. From the end of the lane there is no footpath or cycleway on the southern side of Headington Road that might allow pedestrians to continue towards the city centre and only the minor concession of a dropped curb on the raised walkway to help pedestrians to cross to the raised walkway on the north side.

The landscape setting of the flats at Granville Court, at the western end of

Cheney Lane has spilled over into the lane due to the absence of a formal boundary. This has eroded the lane's character as a distinct landscape feature and creates a more urban character despite the predominance of grassed surfaces.

#### Bus stops and street furniture

Modern bus shelters stand out as an incongruous feature on Headington Road, partly as a result of the use of brushed steel as a main material but also due to the intrusion to the streetscene of advertising posters supported within the shelters. The bus shelter on the south side of Headington Road has recently been moved away from the fronts of private houses, removing an area of untidy street furniture and reducing the crowding and littering that was affecting a narrow section of pavement.

#### Parking on Cheney Lane

Use of Cheney Lane for car parking has a negative impact on views along the lane and its character as an historic country lane.

#### Condition of Pullens Lane

The condition of the road surface at the entrance to Pullens Lane is particularly bad, partly as a result of recent heavy use for construction traffic. This detracts from the use of the lane by pedestrians and cyclists and negatively affects its appearance.

#### Impact of Schools' traffic

Local people report that traffic created by parents delivering children to Schools in the area is a serious problem on Pullens Lane during the school rush hours.

#### Crossing Headington Road

The entrances to South Park and Headington Hill Park from Headington Road face each other, creating a natural desire line for crossing the road. However, there is currently no provision for a crossing at this point, whilst the traffic here is very busy, with vehicles travelling

fast down the hill from the east or accelerating up it from the west.

Intrusive impact of buildings and landscaping of Pergamon Press / Helena Kennedy building and car parking on the Headington Hill Campus

The former Pergamon Press building is a particularly unattractive building in poor materials with an uncomfortable 'boxy' design, that detracts from the mature woodland garden setting created by the historic tree planting of the grounds. The surrounding area appears to be dominated by car parking, with cars lining the access roads throughout the campus and further detracting from the surviving elements of the woodland garden.

Condition of the raised walkway

The stone wall retaining the raised walkway was noted as being in poor condition and in need of maintenance to remove self-sown saplings and to consolidate the verge. The tubular metal hand rail that runs along the edge of the walkway is also considered to be of poor quality and either in need of repair and maintenance or of replacement with a more sympathetic alternative.

Street Lighting on Cuckoo Lane

Provision of lighting in this area detracts from its special historic character but is considered necessary for the safety of users. This illustrates the tension in managing the area as a conservation area in recognition of its historic character whilst ensuring it remains an active part of the city's environment.

## 2.8 Street Character Statements (See Map 5)

### No. 1 - Headington Hill Enclave

An assessment of the Headington Hill Enclave has been prepared with the assistance of Headington Hill Residents' Association using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. This provides further detail on the historic and architectural interest of this area and positive features of its character, as well as highlighting issues that are of concern to the community.

#### **Significance**

<b>Features</b>	<b>Contribution to significance</b>
Green-verged private lanes	<p>The east and central lanes are paved with hoggin (compacted sand and gravel) a simple material that reinforces the rural character of the area and helps preserve its historic character</p> <p>The narrow (single width) lanes are used only for access to properties, ensuring slow speeds and do not have any street clutter that would detract from the rural character.</p> <p>Green verges contribute to the rural character of the area and its positive aesthetic value.</p>
Spacious, well maintained gardens within high brick or stone walls	<p>The perception of space and the trees within gardens contribute to the spacious and tranquil feel of the enclave, whilst their mature planting illustrates the long established nature of settlement.</p> <p>Brick and stone garden walls provide enclosure to the streets, creating a series of narrow intimate spaces.</p> <p>Garden greenery seen over the tops of garden walls contributes to the green and rural character of the area.</p> <p>The gardens are well maintained, creating a pleasant and cared for character.</p>
Varied position of buildings within plots	<p>Buildings are placed at a variety of positions within plots illustrating a relatively informal process of development. Nevertheless, most buildings are placed near the front, or directly at the front of the plot, creating points of enclosure with an intimate feel.</p>
Regency and Mid-Victorian houses and cottages	<p>The architecture of the buildings provides evidence of the long process of development. They preserve architectural detailing, including traditional sash windows and most buildings have a degree of integrity in their principal elevations that adds to their interest and that of the area.</p> <p>The earliest buildings (Hill Top House and The Cottage) are of particular note.</p>
Mix of buildings	<p>The area contains houses and cottages representing a broad range of different sizes and classes of accommodation and a cross section of society in the area's past inhabitants.</p> <p>A number of subsidiary buildings at the rear of The Cottage and The Firs are seen from the east lane and suggest structures that supported domestic activities, such as garden buildings or coach houses/stables, reflecting the activities and status of different owners.</p>



Trees	Mature trees make a very significant contribution to the views within the enclave by enclosing the area to the north, west and south. These tree lines also provide some of the shelter from noise that contributes to the area's tranquillity.
Wildlife value	The green spaces and trees in and surrounding this area forming a link in the chain of green spaces that make the conservation area an important wildlife corridor within the city.
Views of wide sky-scapes	The low scale of buildings and general absence of really tall trees in the heart of the enclave allows views across it to include wide sky-scapes fringed by the trees at the edges, which give the area its rural character despite its location near the centre of a city.
Channelled and glimpsed views	The narrow lanes, high garden walls and buildings frontages create attractive channelled views through the area, with only occasional glimpsed views into private gardens, which provide part of the area's residential character.
Absence of street lighting	This adds to the rural character, allowing appreciation of the night-time sky.

### ***Historical Commentary***

Along with parts of Cheney School, Oxford Brookes' Gypsy Lane campus and South Park, this area lay within the projected boundaries of the Parliamentary encampment on Headington Hill of 1646 recorded on de Gomme's map of Oxford. No development was recorded in this area on either the Ordnance Survey surveyor's map of 1790 or Davis's Map of Oxfordshire of 1797. The Ordnance Survey map of 1830-33 shows two large enclosures on the south side of Headington Road. One to the east is marked as a garden and corresponds to the kitchen garden that is now covered by part of Oxford Brookes. The other appears to represent the enclave itself and includes a building corresponding with the present structures of Hill Top House (described as a gentleman's residence in Pigot's Directory of 1830) and two buildings to the south lying on the western edge of the enclosure. This suggests the enclave may have originally formed a small estate, including a gentleman's residence and subsidiary buildings or servant's accommodation.

The first Edition 25" to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1880 (surveyed in 1875) shows this area bounded by a lane running around its west and south sides, and subdivided by a lane crossing from west to east in the north and another running from Headington Road to the southern boundary in the east. Hill Top House, with a cottage or outbuilding directly to the south, is shown in the north west corner of the enclave. Two further houses (one named as Swinburn Villa, which is now The Cottage, the other representing River View) are shown fronting onto the western lane (sometimes named as Reservoir Lane) with a large house named The Firs, standing in a spacious plot in the south west corner of the enclave. A small property named Dee Cottage is shown on the south side of the cross lane. The land between the east lane and the kitchen garden to the east was divided into a series of small plots, several of which contained cottages. These included Victoria Cottages (now South and North Houses) in the north and Woodbine Cottages in the south east corner of the enclave.

Land to the west of the enclave was bought from the owners of The Rise and

Cheney Farm in 1874 for a reservoir to supply clean drinking water to St. Clement's Parish. The reservoir was constructed in 1875 along with a small keeper's cottage and pumping station. A second reservoir was added between the two World Wars. Victoria Cottages was labelled as a Training School on the 1899 25" to the mile Ordnance Survey map. This was the school for domestic servants established by the Morrells. Woodbine Cottages are believed to have been gardeners' cottages for Headington Hill Hall estate. Two detached houses (Nos. 194 and 196 Headington Road) were built in the garden north of Victoria Cottages in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, possibly as a result of the fragmentation of the Morrells' Headington Hill Hall estate. Further buildings were added as infill development in the 1960s, including Pax House in the garden north of Woodbine Cottages and the terrace of six three storey townhouses at Nos. 182-192 Headington Road in the garden west of Hill Top House. Garden land south of Woodbine Cottage was used for the expansion of the Oxford Brookes campus through construction of the Tonge Building in the 1980s. Hill Top House was converted from several flats and bedsits into six one bedroom flats in 2002 and, following some controversy, a terrace of five two-storey 'mews houses' were granted planning permission in 2003 which have now been built.

### ***Character Description***

Headington Hill enclave is an area of distinct rural character, located at the summit of the hill upon the high bastion of the Parliamentary siege line, surrounded on three sides by tranquil greenery and trees laid out in the Victorian period. The historic character is defined by its quiet wall-lined lanes and its distinctive Georgian and Victorian residential buildings and spacious gardens. The open space of the water reservoirs and the trees lining their north, south and west perimeters enhance the green and tranquil character of the area. Except to the east, the lanes have unimpeded natural views to

the skyline both by day and night (no street lamps), rising from the crowns of ancient trees on its perimeter.

The enclave's greenery, trees, tranquillity, open skyline, unobtrusive scales of architecture, and underlying topographical history are shared characteristics of its most significant nearby public surroundings to the north, south and west.

Verdant scents, birdsong and fresh air are shared characteristic amenities for those in the private enclave of Headington Hill and these surrounding public spaces and contribute to the conservation of a rural character. To varying degrees, the noise of Headington Road traffic reduces these pleasures, but present speed restrictions and increasing numbers of eco-friendly buses has helped reduce their negative noisy and polluting effects. The quality of the enhanced pavements, restored stone wall fronting 182-192 Headington Road (the location of a listed milestone inscribed 'LIII miles from London, I mile to Oxford'), road materials, bus shelters, street lamps and improved maintenance have enhanced the appearance and utility of this stretch of Headington Road.

The enclave's gardens and lanes are central to the lively and varied wildlife corridor of green spaces and mature trees. Spaced along the east lane are the remaining historical buildings of the era of the original working Morrells' estate, the gardeners' cottages at Woodbine Cottages and the ladies domestic training school at Victoria Cottages (now South and North Houses), which have a group value with the other working buildings of the estate elsewhere in the south of the conservation area. The well-maintained stone and brick wall that forms the eastern boundary of the enclave runs from Headington Road to Oxford Brookes' Tonge Building and is the best surviving stretch of the wall that surrounded the former kitchen garden of the Morrells' estate.

**Issues**

The development of the New Teaching and Library Building for Oxford Brookes University will change the outlook from the enclave by raising the skyline of institutional buildings to the east seen looking outward from the enclave. Local people have expressed concern over potential impacts from loss of light, odour, noise and light pollution, although the scheme has sought to mitigate these. The development highlights the tensions created through juxtaposition of educational institutions, involving large buildings and vibrant uses, with tranquil residential areas, which is an inherent issue to this conservation area.

A permissive path runs parallel to the enclave's eastern boundary wall through

the Oxford Brookes' campus. It provides permeability and traffic free routes for a large sector of the local community between Headington Road and Cheney Lane/Warneford Avenue and between the campus and student village. Local people have expressed concern that increased use of this path will result in increased noise and light pollution. Oxford Brookes proposals provide for improvements and landscaping to this route.

The new bus stop location for all city and Brookes buses outside houses at Nos. 194 and 196 Headington Road is heavily used due to the demand from students and school children. This reduces the amenity of the area for the owners of these properties.

## Part 3. Headington Hill north of Cuckoo Lane

(See Map 3)

The area north of Cuckoo Lane was identified in 1973 as an area in which the development of institutions should be restricted in order to protect the architectural and spatial characteristics of the area and to prevent the growth of traffic. In 1977 this distinction between the north and southern part of the conservation area was referred to specifically in the City Council's summary of the conservation area's significance. As described above in Part 1 of the appraisal, there is a mixture of residential and institutional uses in this area. However, in understanding how these contribute to the significance of the conservation area we need to consider how they reflect the area's special historic or architectural interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance. These are defined as the remnants of the area's rural landscape which has provided recreation for the people of the city for five centuries, the development of the Victorian suburb with its designed landscape and significant tree planting housing members of the University's senior staff as it expanded rapidly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the continuation of this development to the north, creating an area of both historic and architectural interest. The features contributing to the character and appearance of this special interest are summarised here briefly and in more detail below.

The early, pre-enclosure agricultural landscape is represented only by Cuckoo Lane (east and west), which ran through the fields of Headington and along the parish boundary.

The courses of Pullens Lane, Jack Straw's Lane and the footpath running north from Cuckoo Lane west, the buildings of Pullen's Gate farmhouse and barn and the open spaces of Doris Field's Memorial Park and the Pullens Lane Allotments

reflect the division of this land into a series of small farms and landholdings through parliamentary enclosure followed by sale of the Headington Manor Estate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The suburban development of Pullens Lane in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is represented by the series of large houses in landscaped grounds with subsidiary buildings along its course, as well as the lane's sylvan character reflecting Victorian garden planting.

The development of the area to the north as the growth of this suburb in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is represented by a series of large and medium sized houses in the Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival styles found on Jack Straw's Lane and Harberton Mead. The character of this area varies from the sylvan setting of Pullens Lane and Harberton Mead to an increasingly open rural setting on the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane.

### 3.1 Spatial Features

#### *Street Plan*

##### Cuckoo Lane

The two parts of Cuckoo Lane provide evidence of the pre-enclosure landscape, including the walking routes used for exercise by University academics such as Josiah Pullen's and Anthony Wood in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Cuckoo Lane west retains a curving and narrow path that follows the historic boundary of Headington and St Clement's parishes, with narrow grass verges and green surroundings that preserve rural character. Cuckoo Lane east is a broad green lane with a wide, sweeping entrance from Pullens Lane, providing evidence of its widening in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century for a carriage route to Headington. This now provides a broad green verge, which is

both an ecological resource and a highly attractive feature in views along the lane.

#### Pullens Lane

North of Cuckoo Lane, Pullens Lane has a long, straight course, which reflects its laying out across open fields in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The road narrows significantly from the older stretch to the south creating a gateway character marked by the former lodge for the Pullen's (Elmgate Cottage). Its course creates long, channelled views, whilst its narrow width, green verges and absence of separate pavements contribute to the woodland character.

The small cul-de-sac of Pullen's Field has a narrow frontage with a curving line that screens views down the line of the road. The individual properties off this lane have open frontages to gardens off the road, providing a more open green character within the development.

#### Harberton Mead

The course of Harberton Mead appears to have developed in stages allowing the subdivision of the earlier grounds of Harberton House for numerous large plots. As a result, the course of the road has several dog-legs, which create a series of enclosed areas. This has an important impact on the appearance of the area and contributes to its low-density feel. The absence of separate pavements in parts of this area and the green verges contributes to the woodland character of the lane.

#### Jack Straw's Lane

The main section of Jack Straw's Lane, which runs from east to west from Marston Road to the western section of Staunton Road, has a long, straight alignment, which may reflect the arbitrary straight lines of land divisions created by parliamentary enclosure or the sale of the Headington Manor Estate. Its narrow width, including the absence of a pavement on one side for much of its length is a vestige of its rural past. The line of the road channels views and

provides vistas that emphasise the slope of the hillside.

Jack Straw's Lane (south) follows the alignment of earlier field boundaries, with several turns at its northern end that create enclosed areas. It becomes straighter to the south where a more open area with a broad grass verge encourages views along it and into Pullens Lane.

The spur of lane running northward to Doris Field's Memorial Park is even narrower, with a surface shared by vehicles and pedestrians and green verges to either side. Although it was only created in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it provides the qualities of a traditional field lane and contributes positively to the area's rural character.

#### ***Plots, placement of buildings and orientation***

The older plots within the area are generally very large, with frontages onto one or more of the lanes and paths. They have straight boundaries, reflecting their late enclosure from open fields but with irregular angles that reflect the constraints of pre-existing roads. The large houses built in these plots were set well back from the road to provide privacy. High Wall stands out for having a more formal relationship with the lane, with an impressive frontage glimpsed through the gateway across a courtyard. The houses are generally oriented to make best use of natural daylight to light 'family rooms'. Thus more attractive frontages are found on the south or south east and south west sides, overlooking landscaped grounds or gardens, representing 'living rooms', with relatively plain elevations to the north, forming the parts of the building used for service functions. These large plots allowed planting of forest scale trees contributing to the development of the area's sylvan character.

The plots of houses on the main section of Jack Straw's Lane are more regular, in a series of long narrow (relative to their length) strips suggesting a phase of more

intensive speculative development, although they are still large. As a result Jack Straw's Lane has a more intensive feel, which is emphasised by the close spacing of trees planted at the street frontage and forming an avenue.

Infill developments of housing, such as Pullen's Field and Feilden Grove have retained much of the boundary planting on the earlier land units, conserving the sense of a larger enclosed space, whilst providing openness between gardens and from gardens to the road that provide openness sense of space.

Apart from the houses on the main section of Jack Straw's Lane, there is little evidence of buildings following a common orientation and building line. Alignments vary, with some appearing to be determined by the need for daylight, whilst others face the main road frontage. This gives the area an organic feel.

#### ***Open spaces***

There are few public green open spaces in the north of the conservation area, reflecting its division for private residential development. Doris Field's Memorial Park and the green space of Cuckoo Lane east supply the main areas of public green open space, and both have a strong rural character. The Pullens Lane Allotments are accessible to key holders and also provide green open space with a functional, rural character (as opposed to the polite landscape overlaid on the former fields in the south of the conservation area).

The setting of the large houses built in this area included landscaped grounds or orchards and other private green open space. Where these areas have survived they contribute an important element of the spacious character of the conservation area, including providing greenery in glimpsed views to and beyond the houses. These areas supply many of the trees that form the backdrop in views across the city centre from the western hills, as well as those views from within the city centre.

Where the original house has been lost (as at the Pullen's, which is now EF Language College) the open space and planting provide important evidence of the former landscape.

#### ***Boundaries***

##### Hedgerows

A notable change in the conservation area's character from south to north is the use of hedgerows or dense understory planting as a boundary treatment in the north, compared to the prevalence of tall boundary walls in the south. This represents a remnant of the former agricultural landscape on Jack Straw's Lane, whilst in other areas it is part of the Victorian and later suburban development. On Pullens Lane hedgerows reflect the ornamental planting of Victorian gardens and in some places are formed of the overgrown understory planting of rhododendrons and other shrubs. The hedgerows and trees cast a deep shade in several places, which makes the lanes dark and secluded, contributing to their tranquillity. The green boundaries provide glimpsed views to houses set back in private grounds, allowing the architecture and landscaping beyond to contribute to the character of the area. Hedgerows also provide an important wildlife habitat which create 'wildlife corridors' running through the area.

##### Walls

The boundary walls that are notable in this area include stonewalls at the rear of Headington Hill Hall and Headington School which encloses the south side of Cuckoo Lane. Both are tall, emphasising their role in excluding access of users of the lanes from the private grounds of prestigious homes. The stone is a local vernacular material that contributes to the distinctive quality of the conservation area. The front boundary wall of the former farmhouse at Pullen's Gate is of similar stone providing continuity with the other walls and thereby adding to a unified sense of place.

The high brick wall that marks the former boundary of Cowley House provides evidence of the extent of the early large property on Jack Straw's Lane, which has subsequently been subdivided. It has also been noted for its value as habitat for a rare flightless moth.

### Railings

Railings provide a robust boundary to private grounds and public parkland where hedgerows and shrubbery has become insufficient. Tall painted railings are only found in association with the larger houses on Pullens Lane. Whilst providing a robust barrier, they allow views to greenery beyond, supporting the green and sylvan character of the lane. Shorter railings are found alongside Cuckoo Lane east, where they allow views into green open space surrounding Morrell Hall of Residence and within Headington Hill Park. The successful use of railings depends on their design, quality and maintenance. Modern industrial palisade railings do not make a positive contribution to green open spaces, whilst overly fussy designs or the use of robust piers or wide uprights also detract from the green woodland character. Simple estate railings behind lower hedgerows on well overlooked boundaries enhance the open character of the streetscene.

### **Street furniture**

Generally it is the absence of overtly modern street furniture that stands out as part of this area's sylvan suburban character. The main section of Jack Straw's Lane (between Marston Road and Staunton Road (west) is the only area that has any street furniture of note. These include tall steel lighting columns that have been painted green to blend with the surrounding trees and LED-lit speed limit signs mounted on the lampposts, further reducing visual clutter.

### **Residential character**

The transition between the institutional character in the south of the conservation area and the residential character in the

north is created by the greater density of residential properties, particularly the late Victorian and Edwardian Houses on Pullens Lane and Jack Straws Lane and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival Housing on Harberton Mead and Jack Straw's Lane, the narrow width of private lanes with shared vehicle / pedestrian surfaces and restricted access for motor vehicles, the very limited use of street furniture and the quieter and more tranquil atmosphere, which has been maintained by later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill residential development and low density institutional use such as that at Rye St Antony School and The Vines.

The most visible buildings seen from the public realm have domestic styles of architecture and can be seen apart from institutional buildings where these have been constructed within their grounds. However, there is variety across the area between areas of medium-sized houses in smaller plots (such as Rolfe Place) and larger houses in large plots (Pullen's' Lane and the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane). Several of the latter now accommodate institutional uses, whilst preserving the domestic character of the buildings and the openness of their landscaped grounds. They have also preserved the architectural details relating to their occupation and use: These include typical late Victorian and Edwardian features such as verandas, balconies and belvederes, chimney stacks, small and medium sized windows, particularly sliding sash windows, and decorative features, including tile hanging and moulded terracotta.

### **3.2 Views**

#### View to the City Centre from the former Morrells (Pullens Lane) Allotments

When the view over the City Centre from the allotments was designated as a protected viewcone by the Council, the allotments continued considerably further to the west and north than their present extent. The expansion of Morrell Hall of Residence cut off that part of the

allotments from which the viewcone defined in the local plan was seen. In its Headington Hill Policy Statement (1976) the Council proposed to create a publicly accessible space in the former allotments, from which the view could be seen. However, this area subsequently developed as succession woodland, obscuring the view. This view can now be experienced from the remaining allotments, further up the hill to the south east, as well as the John Garne Way Allotments to the west of the conservation area. This is an intimate and close-up view of the city centre's spires and domes, which rise above the allotments and treetops in the Cherwell Valley in the foreground. Little of the built development in the intervening area is visible, whilst the architectural detail of the city centre buildings is picked out on bright and sunny days, particularly on the 'core' of University buildings surrounding Radcliffe Square. These form the focus of the view. The minaret and dome of the new Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies provides a symbol of the modern university in the foreground. This provides the best semi-public example of the view that inspired the development of the area.

#### View to the City Centre from Doris Field's Memorial Park

The significance of this view was identified during a public enquiry in 1974 into proposed developments on Jack Straw's Lane. At that time the view was experienced from the driveway to the north of the field, looking over the green space towards the city centre. However, the establishment of the Doris Field Memorial Park using this field has preserved the value of the green space to the character of the conservation area and allowed appreciation of the view from a dedicated public space. The view has an attractive green foreground, preserving evidence of the agricultural landscape with a framed view of the core buildings of the University around Radcliffe Square in the mid ground and the green mass of Boar's Hill as a backdrop. The length of the view to the

city centre suggests a considerable green space between the viewer and the focus of the view. The buildings are too distant for architectural detail to be readily identified although individual buildings are readily identified. The copper cupola of the Sheldonian Theatre is picked out as a contrasting feature in bright sunlight. The roofs of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century suburban houses directly adjacent to the park detract slightly from the view to the city in its rural setting, as does the slightly over-managed 'garden' character of the park.

Within views from the park looking more westerly, the tree cover of North Oxford is notable in the mid ground with the wooded Wytham Hill beyond and the lime-washed masonry of the Radcliffe Observatory and the spire of the Church of St Phillip and St James emerging among the trees as evidence of Oxford's northward expansion into the open fields of St Giles Parish from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Channelled views along lanes

Each of the lanes in this area has an enclosing line of trees, which are normally accompanied by evergreen understory planting or hedgerows (and less frequently by stone or brick garden walls). These channel views along the lanes, emphasising the character of the narrow green lanes, with grass verges and minimal street furniture, which make an important contribution to the rural or sylvan character of the area.

#### View along Cuckoo Lane east

This is a channelled view or vista similar to those above but is of particular value as an unspoiled view that has matured with the growth of the planting of grounds to either side from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The tall boundary wall of Davenport House/Headington School provides enclosure in materials that reflect the date of the widening of the route, whilst the long green sward that has replaced the carriageway, presents an attractive green linear space drawing the eye into the distance. Tall trees rise on either side



enclosing the view and emphasising the straight line of the lane that crossed the former open fields of Headington.

### 3.3 Trees and green landscape

The area has developed a dense tree cover since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, creating a strikingly sylvan character. This provides evidence of the landscape gardening that accompanied the building of prestigious houses across the area from the 1880s and its development away from agriculture to a desirable residential suburb. The mix of tree planting reflects 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century tastes for planting and collection. Mature trees planted along the frontages of Pullens Lane and Jack Straws Lane make an important contribution to the character of the lanes by creating green frontages and tunnels of foliage. Houses glimpsed between the trees appear to stand in sunlit clearings framed by further mature trees.

The tree planting also includes landscaping undertaken for infill developments such as the Feilden Grove development of the 1970s. It is notable that these included a high proportion of forest scale trees, such as Blue Atlas Cedar amongst others, that make a strong impact on the wooded character of the area and its contribution to the backdrop of views across Oxford from the west. An element of the grounds of both the Vines and Cotuit Hall were small orchards. The survival of fruit trees in these areas would be considered important evidence of the functioning of the gardens of these houses beyond their ornamental role, as well as providing a valuable resource for wildlife.

In the northern extremity of the conservation area, around the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane, the absence of tall trees flanking the road creates a more open feel, reflecting the historical character of the landscape before development of the surroundings for housing.

Green verges to the lanes, and greenery in both the public open spaces and

grounds of private houses and institutions make an essential contribution to the green and spacious quality of the area.

### 3.6 Architectural interest (see Map 4)

#### *Buildings of the agricultural landscape*

Evidence of the farming landscape is represented in the architectural record by the farmhouse at Pullen's Gate, probably built by William Peppercorn soon after he bought the farmland west of Pullens Lane in 1849. It is distinguished from other houses on the lane by the use of limestone for its masonry and its natural slate roof. Its tall brick chimneys and white painted 'gingerbread' bargeboard appear relatively 'fancy' for a building that was first recorded as the home of the farm bailiff and it may be that the building was extended and gentrified in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a part of the lane's wider suburban development.

The former barn just to the north of the house, now a detached dwelling, provides evidence of the farm unit. The building is visually united with the farmhouse through the use of limestone rubble for its construction and retains a simple external appearance through restraint in the number of additional openings created for its conversion to residential use.

#### *Victorian suburban villas*

The development of Pullens Lane for prestigious suburban housing in the 1870s reflects wider developments affecting the University and City of Oxford. The large houses built reflect the status of the University's growing body of professors and fellows, as well as the development of architectural taste. Their size reflects the housing needs of the upper echelon of both the university and the city's population escaping the conditions of city life, for a privileged and opulent 'country' lifestyle whilst remaining within an easy distance of University duties or business. The buildings share a common scale of between two and three storeys, with principal materials being red brick walls with stone dressings and steeply pitched

roofs of fired clay tile that create a unified character as a group.

Nevertheless, as a group of buildings these houses present an array of styles with examples of Gothic revival by the nationally recognised architect Alfred Waterhouse (The Croft, now part of Rye St Antony School) and Tudor Revival by the equally well respected Walter Cave (High Wall, built in 1910 in heather brick with flush casements and resembling a small Tudor Manor house form the lane). Pevsner and Sherwood picked out Langley Lodge (also now part of Rye St Antony School) in their brief tour of Pullens Lane as extraordinary for its timber balconies and tile hanging. They might equally have picked out its jettied and half-timbered gables and tall chimney stacks. It reflects the developing Old English style pioneered by Richard Norman Shaw and his colleague William E. Nesfield earlier in the century. Pullen's End, has elements of Jacobean and Queen Anne Revival style, with fanciful features such as its corner turret with steep conical roof.

The Vines (also known as Pollock House) is an interesting example of the work of Henry Wilkinson Moore. A local Oxford architect, Moore had a considerable influence on the architecture of the city as architect for St. John's College in the 1880s and 90s. The building's frontage to the lane, facing east, is relatively plain, reflecting the focus of outlook to the city to the west. Nevertheless this aspect hosts a large four light first floor window, which reaches up to the eaves (a familiar motif of Moore's), as well as a tile hung gabled return to the left, which reflects materials of other houses in the area. Cotuit Hall was also by H. W. Moore. It appears rather plain in elevation from the road, which suggests that its main frontage is that facing south and overlooking the upper part of its gardens, which includes two double-height bay windows and stone banding.

The division of the exterior elevations between high quality elevations, between those to be enjoyed from gardens to the

south, and plainer elevations of parts of the house used by servants to the north has been noted above and illustrates the social politics prevalent at the time of their construction.

Cowley House is probably contemporary with this group, but has less fellow feeling in its form as an Italianate country house. Nevertheless, it reflects a similar process of suburban settlement for large houses in a rural setting.

#### ***Subsidiary buildings: lodges, cottages and coach houses***

A number of buildings further illustrate the service culture associated with these houses. Notable are the two picturesque cottage lodges; Elmgate Lodge at the southern end of Pullens Lane and The Lodge at No. 9 Harberton Mead. Both were built as small buildings and have maintained their scale despite subsequent extensions. They have steeply pitched roofs with prominent gables and use decorative tiling and tile hanging with timber casement windows that set them apart from the larger houses, which are generally lit by sliding sash windows. The former lodge or coach house to Cowley House at No. 40 Jack Straw's Lane would also be part of this group along with Wisteria Cottage, which is a plainer structure than the other lodges. A stables or coach house is located in the grounds of Langley Lodge, which has been converted for use by Rye St Antony School.

#### ***Early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival House***

The houses built in this area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reflect a development from the red brick revival styles to the newly emerging Art and Crafts style. These are notable for simpler white painted render or roughcast clad walls with metal-framed casement windows. They have steeply pitched roofs of fired clay tile, often with complex plans and a mixture of hipped and cornered gable ends and high chimneys. They are notable for their

asymmetry, a characteristic they share with the earlier Victorian houses on Pullens Lane. Prominent examples include Field House and St. Mary's, both on Jack Straw's Lane. Nos. 1- 7 (odds only) Harberton Mead, provide an attractive group of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Arts and Crafts Houses, creating a sense of integrity in this part of Harberton Mead. They share these common features and have a consistent two-storey scale, but each building is of an individual design. More unusual but visually striking is Underwood, standing at the northern end of the northern spur of Jack Straw's Lane, which is clad with tile hanging and reflects the design of 17<sup>th</sup> century vernacular farm houses. The cream-coloured smooth-coat render of Cotswold House, which has a prominent forward-facing two-storey rounded bay window and metal framed three-light leaded casement windows, illustrates the development of this style in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **3.7 Issues, vulnerabilities and opportunities for enhancement**

#### Loss of residential character

This area was originally set out to provide a desirable residential area beyond the edge of the city, within easy reach of the University and Colleges. As such the conservation area's character is strongly affected by the residential uses, making it a tranquil and well cared for area. Early in its history, institutional uses such as Couit Hall's use by Headington School maintained this character to an extent that allowed buildings to revert to residential use. The growth of institutional uses, particularly on Pullens Lane, has begun to erode this character, particularly through the development of Plater College in the 1970s and its subsequent redevelopment and the construction of large blocks to the rear of Couit Hall, resulting in a loss of green space and the development of increasingly visible buildings of institutional character in high densities. The use of these buildings has also increased the intensity of activity within the area, with a resultant loss of tranquillity to Pullens Lane

and increased impacts on light pollution, impact of aromas from institutional catering and loss of wildlife habitat.

The infill housing development built in this area both in the 1960s/70s and more recently have further reduced the spacious feel of the Victorian and Edwardian suburb, including the loss of the small field on Pullens Lane, the house and gardens at Harberton House (now Rolfe Place) and a part of the gardens of High Wall (now Feilden Grove). The designation of the conservation area in 1977 can be viewed as a step taken to preserve the low density character of development in the area and Victorian and Edwardian houses with their landscape settings, as well as to restrict the impact of institutional development in the area, particularly the generation of additional traffic.

#### Loss of tranquillity

The lanes in this part of the conservation area are now heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists with a rising number of motorists, using them as a route to and from the many institutions and halls of residence within and around the conservation area. Use by cyclists and pedestrians is considered to be an acceptable and even positive characteristic of the area, as it reflects the hill's historic use for quiet exercise and recreation and contributes to the tranquil character whilst allowing many people to benefit from its attractive rural character. However, the increase in student numbers in recent years, has seen a rapid increase in the use of Pullens Lane by large groups



Traffic has been heavy on Pullens Lane at particular times of day in recent years

of pedestrians, causing congestion for other users. The lane has also become heavily used in the morning and mid afternoon by parents delivering and collecting children from schools in the area, creating congestion for other users, as well as resulting in damage to grass verges and trees. Local residents report that use of the lane for coaches and taxis delivering students to Cotuit Hall has increased since its change of ownership. Local residents have expressed concern that late night use of the road by pedestrians and taxis has increased and that disturbance by noisy activity has become more frequent, affecting the area's tranquillity. Disturbance and littering by language school students in the nearby parks during the summer of 2011 was reported in the local media and required the involvement of the Police.

Another cause of increased motor traffic noted in the area has been rising domestic use by residents, in line with national patterns of increasing car use and use by home delivery lorries for shopping. Construction traffic for recent building projects has also had a significant, if temporary impact. A related issue has been the use of the private roads for parking by contractors. Both Pullens Lane Association and Harberton Mead Residents' Association have annual closure days of the private sections of their roads as a means of demonstrating their concern that private roads are being used by motorists who are not local residents. Ongoing construction work in the area has made a considerable contribution to traffic on the lanes in recent years. The specific reference to the need to restrict developments that would result in an increase in traffic in the area north of Cuckoo Lane in the City Councils' Headington Hill Policy Statement in 1973 and the subsequent Headington Hill Statement of Principles adopted by the Council in 1977 reflects the longterm concern to preserve the tranquillity of the area.

#### Poor condition of Pullens Lane South

The condition of Pullens Lane South, including the footpath, grassed verge and road has been a prominent issue since, at least 2005, when it was reported to the Council's North East Area Committee.

The road surface has deteriorated considerably as a result of a prolonged period without adequate longterm maintenance and as a result of increasing use by motorised traffic. This has been exacerbated recently by use by heavy vehicles for construction projects further to the north on Pullens Lane.

The footpath is also in need of repair and improvement and is currently in very poor condition, forcing pedestrians onto the grassed island or verge that separates it from the road, or onto the road itself. Erosion of the verge by this increased pedestrian activity is illustrated by the exposure of the concrete bases of posts that formerly supported palings or trees guards within the verge. Whilst the tree guards have been removed, up to an inch of remaining iron bar projects from the tops of some these concrete blocks, which may be regarded as a hazard to pedestrians.

The condition of the lane detracts from the appearance of the area, as well as having a significant impact on the amenity of users of the lane, including residents, businesses, visitors and allotment holders.

#### Need for management of trees

Issues affecting the trees seem to be contradictory in that management of trees, including thinning is needed to prevent the loss of the views that have made the hilltop a special place, whilst new planting may be needed for replacement of over mature and diseased trees to ensure the continuation of a healthy stock of trees with a scale and canopy spread that maintains the area's sylvan character.

Without management of trees surrounding the Pullens Lane Allotments, views of the city from this point will be lost. The view from the former area of allotments, has been lost as a result of the growth of self-

generated woodland. Reopening this view through tree thinning would be an opportunity to restore an important feature of the conservation area.

An area identified as having a particular vulnerability to disease is the 'avenue' of horse chestnut trees on Jack Straw's Lane.

When considering replanting of trees in formal garden settings it will be necessary to consider whether native species should be used or whether ornamental trees that reflect historic planting schemes should be preferred.

Loss of historic houses and their garden settings

Two of the area's Victorian or Edwardian houses, The Pullens/Fairfield and

Harberton House were demolished in the 1970s and their gardens subsequently developed for higher density institutional or residential use resulting in a loss of the area's historic or architectural interest and its open character. Infill development over western part of the garden at High Wall also resulted in the loss of openness and elements of this garden of special historic interest. Further infill development included the development of the Paddock at Pullens Field and several properties on Harberton Mead. Concern over the impact of intensification of use, including the loss of the spacious qualities of the area and increasing pressure of traffic on the area's narrow lanes is evident in the principles the Council adopted in 1973 and 1977. Further development since the 1970s has further raised the vulnerability of the area's significance.

### 3.8 Street Character Statements (See Map 5)

These character statements have been prepared with the assistance of local residents using the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit. They provide further detail for each of the streets/lanes on the historic and architectural interest and the positive features of its character, as well as highlighting issues that are of concern to local residents.

#### No.2 - Pullens Lane

##### *Significance*

Feature	Contribution to significance
Trees and hedgerows	<p>The survival of mature boundary planting including many tall trees around large gardens is evidence of the area's historic development as a high class residential area.</p> <p>Trees line the lane and define the space with a soft edge and provide a vertical emphasis. This creates a strong sense of enclosure within walls of greenery that is a defining characteristic of the area.</p> <p>Some trees date to original developments of the 1870s and 1880s (and later notably at High Wall) and may reflect tree collecting tastes of that period, as well as forming a mature element of the area's designed landscapes.</p> <p>In other areas, orchard trees may provide evidence of traditionally grown fruit varieties.</p> <p>Mature trees set back within gardens provide a leafy background, as well as adding perspective, that contributes to the feeling of space in views out from the lane.</p>
Roughly managed verge	<p>This contributes to the informal nature of the road as a privately managed lane with a rural character in many respects unchanged since its development for residential use in the 1870s and 80s.</p>
Density of development	<p>The placement of buildings in large landscaped plots create space between buildings, providing evidence of Victorian influences on development of the area, as well as contributing to its rural character and low density of development.</p> <p>Historic houses are set well back from the road to provide privacy with elegant carriage drives that provide evidence of the status and designed aesthetic of the historical development. This also ensures the lane is rarely overlooked or directly addressed by buildings, contributing to its green and tranquil character.</p> <p>Limited views from building to building because of the mature and dense landscaping provides the sylvan qualities and ensures the greenery of the area makes a stronger contribution to its character than the built elements, emphasising the sense of low density of development.</p>
Buildings	<p>Most buildings in the character area are viewed to best effect from private gardens, which provide landscaped settings with evidence of the designed aesthetic of the Victorian suburb.</p> <p>Domestic buildings constructed in the early phases of the area's development include features such as pitched roofs, prominent chimney</p>

	<p>stacks and entrance porches that emphasise their domestic character.</p> <p>The Gothic Revival and Queen Anne Revival styles played an important part in the character of the area's earliest buildings, which includes considerable variety of design in frontages. Some of the buildings are by notable architects, including Henry Wilkinson Moore, Alfred Waterhouse and Walter Cave and include buildings of considerable architectural accomplishment.</p> <p>More modest buildings including lodges for gardeners and coachmen provide evidence of the status of the main houses and the service culture that supported their occupation.</p> <p>A former farm house and agricultural building at Pullen's Gate and The Barn provides evidence of the previous use of the land.</p>
Enclosure	<p>The area's enclosed atmosphere emphasises the transition from the busy and noisy areas of surrounding streets to the area of tranquil residential character. This reflects the area's origins as a private residential suburb.</p> <p>Pullens Lane South (from Headington Road to Cuckoo Lane) has little overlooking and is visually separate from the northern part of the lane by a sharp bend, which creates a transition between the activity of Headington Road and the main area of development along Pullens Lane North.</p> <p>The dominance of greenery in providing enclosure contributes to the rural or sylvan character of the area. Where this is combined with railings as a boundary the greenery continues to provide the dominant character.</p> <p>The walls of local stone at Pullen's Gate provide evidence of the early development of the farmstead, prior to the building of the wider suburb. These may also have some value as unusual wildlife habitat amongst the greenery.</p>
Tranquillity	<p>Despite its proximity to the city centre, and as part of the wider suburbs, the area retains its sense of tranquillity and sylvan qualities, with an absence of urban trappings. The tranquil character of the lane reflects its original intended development as a high class residential area.</p>
Views	<p>Views are largely contained and channelled by mature trees, which contributes to the sense of enclosure and emphasises the long straight path of the lane as created as a formally planned route across open fields in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.</p> <p>Views over the city from private gardens provide evidence of the motivation for the area's development as a high class suburb.</p> <p>The long straight views along Pullens Lane, characterised by gentle undulation in the ground level, helps create more intimate areas within the route.</p> <p>Views into side roads and lanes, notably Cuckoo Lane, provide further interest as evidence of the rural landscape over which the suburb was developed and by providing views to the area's setting.</p>
Mixed shade and light	<p>The very restricted amount of street lighting on Pullens Lane and its absence on side roads ensures a dark night time environment that contributes to the woodland character of the area.</p>

Part 3. The Conservation Area North of Cuckoo Lane

	Trees arching over the road and thick growths of laurel or rhododendron along boundaries create areas of heavy shade along the lane that channel views along it and are a distinctive feature of its character.
Lack of kerbs	Provides soft edges to the road and contributes to the dominance of the informal green landscape and its character as a rural lane.
Residential use	Evidence of the historic movement for high class suburban development in a healthy location with views over the city;  Maintains a quiet environment of uses either side of the main thoroughfare, including along small side streets like Pullen's Field;  The historic architectural character of the area was determined by the domestic use of buildings, which were originally large villas. Retaining original Victorian houses where properties have been converted for educational uses has helped conserve the area's significance.
Some academic use	The movement of students as pedestrians and cyclists along the lane provides activity, acknowledges the function of the city as a centre of academic excellence and makes it less attractive to motorists.
Pedestrians and cyclists/ lack of traffic	The dominance of pedestrians in the use of the lane emphasises the tranquil woodland character by limiting the impact of motor traffic.  The absence of traffic at certain times of the day makes the lane feel more open with better access for pedestrians.  Properties fronting the lane are active in publicising the private nature of the lanes in order to reduce traffic volume and speed.
Allotments	The green open space of the allotments has historic interest as a surviving fragment of Headington's former open fields.  They provide a green gap between the suburban development on Pullens Lane and the institutional character of the halls of residence to the west, which helps conserve the area's separate identity and sylvan character.  The great value of the view over Oxford City Centre from the allotments has been recognised by its designation as one of Oxford's View Cones.
Clean air	The absence of high volumes of traffic on the lane ensures the air is fresher than in surrounding urban areas notably Headington Road.  The clean air found on the hilltop has historic associations with the use of the area for recreation and housing.
Sounds of nature	Birds (including owls), squirrels, muntjack and foxes, etc. contribute to its sylvan or rural feel.
Entrances	Access to side roads and spaces adds to the interest as the lane acting as a link between many minor pedestrian and cyclist routes.

**Historical Commentary**

Pullens Lane was created to assist in the sale of the Headington Manor Estate as

parcels of agricultural land in 1836, with a new lane running from the turn of Cuckoo Lane and the site of Joe Pullen's Tree across the former Brockholes Field (part of



Headington's medieval open field system). Initially this land remained in agricultural use with one small farm represented by Pullen's Gate (also known as Brockless Cottage) and The Barn and including the land west of Pullens Lane. This was owned by William Peppercorn from 1849 until George Herbert Morrell bought it in 1874, possibly to ensure the privacy of his Headington Hill Hall Estate. The earliest record of this farmhouse is the 1861 census when it was the farm bailiff's cottage. A second farm was planned in the angle of Pullens Lane and Cuckoo Lane but was not built.

Between 1881/2 and 1892 a series of large villas were built in landscaped gardens, first along the east side of Pullens Lane and later along the west side. Nearly all of these were occupied by prominent academics of the University. The group was completed in 1910 by the Tudor Revival inspired High Wall with its extensive gardens. They provided commodious residences for the wealthy, just beyond the edge of the city in pleasant green surroundings and enjoying views over the city centre. Several included gate lodges, coach houses or gardeners' cottages to accommodate servants. These re-enforced the high status image of the owners, otherwise expressed in the taste and opulence of the architecture of houses and their gracious garden settings.

Non-residential uses were introduced early in the area's history including a period between 1917 and 1930 when Cotuit Hall, hosted the Junior School of Headington School, before it returned to residential use. In the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Rye St. Antony School bought The Croft (in 1939) and later Langham Lodge (1945). The United Oxford Hospitals bought The Vines in 1948 to use as a nurses training school and, later, as a night nurses home. It was later part of Oxford Brookes University and is now occupied by Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford. Napier House, later known as Cotuit Hall, went through several changes of use including the Junior School of Headington School (1917 –

1930), the City of Oxford's Children's Home (1940 – 1958) and, from 1962, a hostel of the College of Technology, later the Polytechnic and Oxford Brookes University, interspersed with periods of private residential use. In 2011 the building was sold to EF International Academy (EF) who intend to use it as a residential college for students aged 16-18. Another large house (The Pullen's) was demolished in the mid-1970s for the construction of Plater College, a Roman Catholic FE College which has now also been bought by EF. Both sites received significant additional development to provide facilities for institutional use and this has continued with further recent developments at the EF site at the southern end of the lane. Nevertheless the retention of the majority of the older houses and the protection of the mature landscape has ensured the survival of the lane's character as an exclusive Victorian suburb.

A paddock at Pullen's Field was developed as a small cul-de-sac of medium sized houses in the 1970s running down the slope of the hill to the west of the lane.

### ***Character Description***

The lane stands out for the long, narrow and tree lined road running on its north south course, at times, with little vehicle traffic, and with large houses set well back in spacious, mature grounds. The road provides evidence of the planned division of the land for the sale of the Headington Manor Estate, whilst the large houses and their well timbered gardens are evidence of the process of this area's development for housing the University's most wealthy academics in Arcadian surroundings. The emphasis of the design of gardens and houses was to provide an attractive, private setting to each of the properties, although it is often possible to catch glimpsed views of these large buildings, including their ornate detailing, through the surrounding foliage, which appears to be an element of the designed aesthetic value. The large gardens and deep set-

back of many of the properties ensure that the area has a sense of low density of development, which contributes to its positive aesthetic value. This has been preserved where institutional uses such as SCIO hall of residence at The Vines and Rye St Antony School have maintained a low density of use (30 students per acre at Rye St Antony School), preserving the garden settings to these properties. The Garden at High Wall has been noted as of particular interest and has been designated Registered Garden of Special Historic and Horticultural Interest (a Grade II).

Despite its long straight course the road has an informal character, retaining evidence of its origin as a country lane. This is partly a result of its private management, with narrow, unsystematically managed green verges and no hard curb line. In many places the trees arch over the road, creating a heavily shaded tunnel of foliage that is a distinctive feature. There are also a number of contrasting brighter areas, such as Pullens Field, which only developed for housing in the 1970s. There are no road markings to draw the eye away from the greenery. Likewise the very limited amount of street lighting, which is supplied by the property fronting the lane, ensures that at nighttimes the sylvan atmosphere is retained. The introduction of security lighting has started to intrude on this quality.

In addition to the greenery and low density of development, the low levels of motor traffic and other noisy activity is a key positive element of the sylvan character of the area. Pedestrian and cycle use dominates the lane, which further reduces the speed of vehicles. A mix of residential and academic buildings helps to maintain an important balance of use, although local residents have expressed concern about increasing noisy use of the lane at night and of buses and taxis using the lane, which detracts from this peaceful atmosphere.

Views channelled along the road by the tree lines and some high boundary walls emphasise the foliage and the strong delineation between public and private spaces. Gentle undulations in the level of the lane help break the route into a series of more intimate spaces. When built, many of the properties enjoyed views over the city centre skyline, which is recorded as a valued feature in early descriptions of the area and a part of their attraction for wealthy residents. The growth of trees in the gardens of these properties may now have obscured these views from most of the area, although an important surviving opportunity to experience this view is available from the allotments at the southern end of the lane. In views across the city from the western hills, including the designated view cones from Raleigh Park and Boars Hill, the trees in this area form an important part of the green backcloth to the city centre. They may also have historic interest in their own right as mature examples of Victorian tree planting, either as collections of imported varieties, for which the gardens of The Vines and High Wall are likely to have particular potential, as well as some opportunity for heritage fruit tree varieties, among which, Cotuit Hall is known to have had a well established orchard, with potential for survival of historic fruit trees identified in 2012.

The houses include examples by local and nationally notable architects, including Walter Cave, Henry Wilkinson Moore and Alfred Waterhouse. In combination they provide a collection of interest spanning the development from the Victorian Gothic Revival (see The Croft and Langham Lodge), to the Queen Anne Revival Style (see and Pullen's End) and the later Tudor Revival at High Wall between 1881 and 1910. These all use complementary materials chosen to harmonise with each other. Wisteria Cottage and Elm Tree Cottage provide evidence of the servicing of the larger houses. Elm tree Cottage also has a particular aesthetic value, as a single storey dwelling with a rural character sitting behind a low clipped

hedge and with bands of ornate fish-scale tiling to the roof and herringbone brick noggin to the roadside window arch. Pullen's Gate provides evidence of the origins of the area's development as a farmhouse built before the suburban development of land outside the city. It also has aesthetic value with fretted bargeboards to the gables of its steeply pitched roof and walls of local limestone rubble. The front wall of its garden is also of local limestone repeating the use of materials seen in the boundary walls of Headington Hill Hall and Headington School just to the south. The Barn, provides evidence of the former agricultural use of this area, although the introduction of chimneys, windows and doors for its transformation into a private house has removed some of its former character. The use of local limestone in its construction provides an element of local vernacular architecture in the conservation area.

The entrance to Pullens Lane runs between the grounds of Headington Hill Hall and Headington School and is a broad lane, with a verge on its west side of equal width to the carriageway and planted with a line of semi-mature broad-leaved trees. The planting of these trees in memory of a local resident is commemorated with a plaque set into Headington Hill Hall's boundary wall. The high stone walls of the two properties provide a strong definition to the space, although the spacious grounds to either side allow a sense of openness. This section of Pullens lane (commonly referred to as Pullens Lane South) was recorded as a strip of land belonging to Magdalen College on the Corpus Christi map of 1605 and was later recorded as freebord, suggesting it may have formerly formed part of the property that was otherwise sold by the college to Sir Christopher Brome in the 16th century. As such it provides evidence of the former arable landscape of Headington Hill and the medieval pattern of land ownership.. Tall trees in the grounds of these two neighbouring estates add to the interest of

the area and include specimen trees of interest as well as providing background foliage. Davenport House is a prominent structure in views south along the lane, providing architectural interest. At the northern end of this short section views along Cuckoo Lane east are of great interest with the broad green-lane, once an important carriage route from the city to Headington, providing historic interest and with great aesthetic value. A plaque at this entrance marks the site of Joe Pullen's Tree as a point of historic interest. A marker stone at the entrance to Cuckoo Lane West records the limit of the city's jurisdiction in 1901 and provides another point of historic interest.

The profusion of green space and mature trees makes this area an essential part of the wildlife corridor that runs through the conservation area into the heart of the city.

### **Issues**

Vehicle traffic and noise intrude into the tranquillity of the area and are reported to have increased in recent years, particularly as a result of the use of the lane by taxis late at night. Local people have also complained about increased noise from pedestrians using the lane late at night. Whilst heavy use of the lane by pedestrians and vehicles during the morning and afternoon has also increased to a point where there is severe congestion at certain times of day. Recent large-scale construction projects have had a considerable short term impact on the character of the lane by increasing the frequency of heavy goods vehicles using the lane. This has an impact on both the volume of traffic and activity in the lane and surrounding roads with increased wear and tear affecting their condition.

The condition of the road at Pullens Lane South has been an ongoing cause for concern since, at least, 2005 and has deteriorated considerably since that time as a result of the road's inadequate construction for present traffic loads and despite remedial works. Recent use by

construction traffic has exacerbated this problem.

The redevelopment of The Pullen's for Plater College in the 1970s reduced the contribution of the Victorian housing stock to the architectural character of the area. Redevelopment both there and at Cotuit Hall for institutional buildings has introduced bulky and rectilinear buildings of a style and materials that do not harmonise with the red brick, limestone and red tile of the Victorian houses and without their characteristic domestic features. The smells of institutional

catering can also affect the area's clean air character, whilst increased use of security lighting has detracted from the lane's woodland character.

Infilling development for both institutional and residential use in increasing proximity to the road frontage has denuded the spacious character of the area.

The security gates controlling access to the Pullens Lane allotments were noted as having an industrial character that detracts from the rural character of this part of the lane or of the green space of the allotments.

**No. 3 - Harberton Mead****Significance**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Contribution to significance</b>
Woodland character	A key part of the positive character and appearance of the area; Evidence of historic garden tree planting of Harberton House; Provides enclosure, producing a series of distinct spaces.
Secluded and tranquil space	Part of the historic character of the area as part of a middle class suburb beyond the intensely built-up city centre and in with a green and spacious character in contrast to other surrounding suburbs.
Residential use	The development of the area, following its early 20th century development, contributes to the setting of older houses by providing a similar scale and density of buildings in garden surroundings.
Low traffic volumes	Reflects historic development as a private road; Contributes to the tranquillity of the area and to its historic residential character; Improves amenity for other users.
Narrow lane with straight section and abrupt curves with shared surface	Evidence of planned private development as a quiet residential area of low density residential use, with a pronounced transition to higher density suburban development in New Marston to the west; Creates a series of enclosed spaces that are visually separated from more recent higher density urban development to the east; Evidence of the early 20th century planned development of the area as a low density residential area.
Arts and Crafts Architecture and other early 20 <sup>th</sup> century buildings	Edwardian villas and The Lodge of Harberton House (No. 9 Harberton Mead provide evidence of the earliest phase of the area's development for housing. They have retain architectural integrity and interest despite later extensions. Arts and Crafts style houses at Barna Brow, Ridgeway, The White House, Silver How and No. 15 Harberton Mead have architectural interest individually due to their competent design and generally high architectural integrity, which is enhanced by their grouping.
Later 20 <sup>th</sup> century housing	Later 20th century houses have a generally consistent character within the groupings of individual development, such as Rolfe Place, Nos. 17 - 23 (odd) and Nos. 12 – 20 (even) Harberton Mead, but are not considered to have any particular historic or architectural interest. Recently built houses are not considered to have any special historic or architectural interest but have been designed to be of a scale that is comparable to or smaller than the earliest houses in the area and with attention to detailing.
Low density with widely	The low density of buildings is evidence of the intention in the early 20th of the development providing a green and attractive area of private housing in

### Part 3. The Conservation Area North of Cuckoo Lane

spaced buildings	a woodland setting. It makes an important contribution to the area's character, allowing greenery to dominate the character of the area with the buildings playing a supporting role.
The culvert	This small, seasonal watercourse provides evidence of the underlying rural landscape that preceded the development of the area. It has shaped the development by providing a natural boundary to gardens and adds to the 'wild' character and habitat value of the area.
Green boundary treatments	These contribute to the green landscape of the area and its woodland character.
Green verges	The grass verges complement other greenery in the area but also play an important role in ensuring that hard highways surfaces do not have a dominating influence on the character.
Private road with permissive access for pedestrians and cyclists	The private management of the road means it is kept in a less uniform condition to adopted roads found elsewhere, which provides some evidence of the historic residential character of the area as a private enclave. It contributes to the low traffic volumes through the area and, by helping to reduce traffic speed, creates a more attractive area for pedestrians and cyclists.
Occasional glimpsed views to the Oxford spires largely from private property, otherwise enclosed by trees	<p>These glimpsed views add to the historic interest of the enclave's setting, but may also have interest as playing a role in the area's development as housing as attracting middle class housing to the area in the early 20th century.</p> <p>The enclosure by trees contributes to the private and intimate character of the area and, by reducing awareness of distance, adds to the sense of space.</p>
Absence of extraneous street furniture	Absence of street furniture reduces the suburban characteristics and helps preserve the woodland character.
Night-time darkness	The darkness of the area at night is a distinctive feature of the area within the city and reflects its development as a private residential enclave, as well as contributing to its woodland character
Sound of nature: birdsong, squirrels, deer, owls.	<p>These sounds predominate because the area is otherwise quiet and tranquil with less of the noise generally associated with by urban living due to the distance from busy routes and the muffling of noise by dense tree cover.</p> <p>Sounds of wildlife contribute to the area's woodland character.</p>

### ***Historical Commentary***

Harberton Mead developed in several stages following the establishment of a road through the fields west of Pullens Lane in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1909 two Edwardian villas had been built in large gardens accessed from the easternmost section of the new road and backing onto Jack Straw's Lane (south). Near the centre of the area a large residence named Harberton House was accessed from the central section of this road. It had extensive gardens enclosed by thick tree lines to the south and west and a small lodge at its gate to the north. Rapid development took place in the 1920s and early 30s, with several large houses in individual designs built in the Arts and Crafts style set in spacious private gardens. Further garden tree planting is recorded at Harberton House by 1935. Many of the other properties enhanced their gardens by planting forest scale trees. In the 1960s and 70s the density of the area's development was increased by infill development of gardens in the west of the enclave, as well as redevelopment of Harberton House's grounds, which was demolished, leaving the lodge house and its garden tree planting as evidence of the older property amongst the Neo-Georgian executive homes of Rolfe Place. The process of infill development continued into the 1990s and 2000s with development of rear gardens of houses on Jack Straw's Lane for new properties accessed from Harberton Mead.

### ***Character Description***

Harberton Mead shares some characteristics with neighbouring areas but stands out for its tranquil sylvan character, which is in sharp contrast to the more urban public section of Harberton Mead to the west. The many mature trees in private gardens and on the roadside verge provide enclosure and contribute to the tranquillity of the area, as well as providing evidence of former garden planting at Harberton House. The mix of trees provides additional interest through the variety of forms and colouring. The

spacious gardens and greenery make this area an essential link in the chain of habitat that extends across the conservation area.

The sylvan character is supported by the broad green verges to the road. These have minimal management on the northern edge of the area, where they run down to a 'wild' stream or culvert. The many deciduous trees generate a pervasive leaf litter that collects in roadside areas and further contributes to a woodland character.

Hedgerow garden boundaries contribute further to the greenery (or in winter brown and copper colouring), softening the harder lines of buildings and, with the grass verges and the prevalence of shared surfaces, give the road the character of a country lane through woodland. The unusual line of the roads, with long straight sections interrupted by numerous abrupt corners, creates numerous enclosed areas with views out foreshortened by mature trees or buildings. The inability to look directly through the area and to gain a rapid understanding of its scale has the result of increasing the sense of space and the dispersal of built elements.

The road is privately owned and managed and through traffic is not permitted, which contributes strongly to the tranquillity of the area and its sylvan character. The area is nearly universally used for private residence, which further reduces the volume of through traffic and noise during a large part of the day. It is enjoyed by walkers and cyclists, including many students walking between University campuses. Nevertheless, there are concerns that use of the road by drivers as a shortcut to college and school sites may increase and have a negative impact on the area's character.

Since the redevelopment of Harberton House for Rolfe Place and subsequent later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill developments, the building stock of the area has a diffuse and predominantly later 20<sup>th</sup> century character reflecting the styles used by

mass house builders at that time. Nevertheless the majority of the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century Edwardian and Arts and Crafts houses have survived in a good state of authenticity, with sensitive alterations or modernisations where required. They have value as a group of buildings of similar style, which is enhanced by the individuality and competence of the realisation of the style in each case. Harberton House Lodge has been extended sensitively; retaining a Sussex vernacular style, including white painted bargeboard gables set against tile hung upper floors, with brick below and plain tile roof and leaded casement windows. This hints at the former appearance of Harberton House.

**Issues**

The current tranquillity of the environment is in part dependent on the absence of large volumes of motor traffic. Increased traffic through the area would result in a loss of this element of its character.

The tree stock is not currently subject to a co-ordinated programme of management with a long term approach to maintain a healthy population and mixture of trees. There is a need to plan ahead for the renewal of the ageing tree stock and predictable impacts of disease.

Self-sown seedlings, particularly of Sycamore may increase the tree cover without replacing the quality and mixture of tree stock that the area currently supplies.

Increased density of development, though subdivision of plots and infill development has eroded the spaciousness and green character of the area. Further subdivision and infill would represent a loss of the area's significance.

Increased use of domestic security lighting has also detracted from the area's woodland character.



**No. 4 - Jack Straw's Lane****Significance**

Feature	Contribution to significance
Rural character	<p>The rural character of the area provides evidence of its relatively recent development from agricultural land for housing in the early and mid 20th century.</p> <p>The area retains a green environment, with hedgerow boundaries, trees and large gardens, as well as the surviving field placed in trust by Doris Field in 1988.</p> <p>The narrow lanes, simple and uncluttered streetscape and tranquillity are all valued rural characteristics.</p> <p>The placement of buildings set-back within plots, and areas with varied alignment of buildings and spacing between buildings contributes to a rural character of development.</p>
Views	<p>The view from Doris Field's Memorial Park towards the city centre is one of the ten views cones designated by Oxford City Council to protect the important views of the city centre. It provides an intimate view to the core of University buildings around Radcliffe Square framed by tall trees and with the green foreground of the field preserving the experience of seeing the city from its rural hinterland. The simple forms of roofs adjacent to the field ensure these do not intrude significantly into the quality of the view.</p> <p>Mature trees channel views along Jack Straw's Lane within a tunnel of greenery.</p> <p>Glimpsed views to buildings in gardens to either side of the lane allow appreciation of their early 20th century architecture.</p>
Residential use	<p>Residential use developed from the late 19th century and through the early 20th century along a pre-existing field lane.</p> <p>Earlier housing, specifically Jack Straw's Castle and Hillside have been lost.</p> <p>Cowley House and Cottage provide evidence of an early phase of the area's development.</p> <p>The early suburban development of the area reflects its desirable location, including green setting and views over countryside and to the skyline of the city centre.</p>
Trees	<p>The avenue of horse chestnut trees is a distinctive feature of the central part of Jack Straw's Lane. It appears to have been a designed feature of the street, probably corresponding with the division of land either side into building plots. It contributes to the historic interest of the area as evidence of the planning of its development and makes an important positive contribution to the area's aesthetic value.</p> <p>A horse chestnut tree in the garden of No. 40 Jack Straw's Lane is identified as a landmark feature, marking the turn into Jack Straw's Lane (south). It marks</p>

	<p>the end of the road's original route and has aesthetic and ecological merit.</p> <p>The grounds of private gardens in the centre and south of this area are well timbered, contributing to the general woodland character of Harberton Mead and Pullens Lane and forming part of the green backcloth in views of Oxford from the western hills.</p>
Ecology	<p>The area sustains a vibrant ecology and forms part of a corridor of varied habitat for wildlife. The large gardens, hedgerows, mature tree stock and 'crumbly' garden walls provide a variety of opportunities for wildlife. This contributes to the area's rural character and is a part of its historic interest.</p>
Buildings	<p>A number of buildings stand out for their architectural interest as examples of Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival styles that complement the rural character of the area and retaining a high level of integrity.</p> <p>Whilst there is considerable variety in the architecture of the area, the two-storey scale is generally observed with traditional forms predominating.</p>

### ***Historical commentary***

The land at Jack Straw's Lane was enclosed within the Headington Enclosure Award of 1802. By 1850 this land formed a farm, leased to John Plowman, which included a brick field running from the eastern edge of the conservation area down to Marston Road and marking the area where the Oxford clay emerges as the bedrock. It was recorded as Jack Straw's Farm in the 1861 census, with the home of John Plowman given the rather surprising name 'Jack Straw's Castle'. The 1876 Ordnance Survey map shows a second house, which was later known as Hillside, standing just to the east of Jack Straw's Castle, on the north side of Jack Straw's Lane. After 1879 it appears the farmhouse and farm were in separate management. In the 1890s the house may have served as home to Marston's vicar.

Cowley House and Cowley Cottage had been built on the south side of the road by the time of surveying for the 1898 Ordnance Survey map. The southern continuation of the lane, up to the northern end of Pullens Lane, had also been enclosed from a track running along the edge of a field. By 1921 the first houses on the southern part of the lane had been built, but with frontages apparently facing

the broader lane of Harberton Mead to the west and south. The inter-war years saw rapid development of medium sized houses in long, narrow plots on the south side of the main section of Jack Straw's Lane and further development of the west side of Jack Straw's Lane (south) for large houses in spacious plots. Jack Straw's Lane (north) was also set out in this period, with the construction of further large houses of individual designs in spacious plots enclosed from former fields. This development represented the break-up of Jack Straw's Farm. Doris Field, the daughter of the last farmer of Jack Straw's Farm donated the final remaining field to a charitable trust in 1988. Much of the east side of Jack Straw's Lane (south) was developed for large houses on long plots between 1947 and 1956.

### ***Character Description***

The three parts of Jack Straw's Lane – the main section and the private roads, Jack Straw's Lane (north) and Jack Straw's Lane (south) - each provide distinctive areas of character. The trees and green landscape throughout the area provide the northern limit of the corridor of wildlife habitat that runs through the conservation area. The character of the area is suburban and residential but with evidence

of the previous rural landscape surviving in green open spaces, the form and character of lanes and use of hedgerows and tree planting. The sylvan surroundings include many broad-leaved trees, which provide a shaded character in the summer, but allow more light in the winter

The northern part of the lane presents a narrow public street shaded by mature broad-leaved trees at the front of the plots, which provide enclosure to the road. The trees channel views along the road and contribute to both the mature and established character of the street and its green rural feel. Trees further back in the plots add to the greenery of the lane as well as benefiting views into the area, including those across the city from the west. Houses are generally set well back from the road, following a common building line. This provides a low-density residential character, whilst historic buildings set nearer the frontage (notably Cowley House) gain added prominence. The consistent scale of large houses on the south side of the road provides a unifying feature, whilst there is some variety including medium sized houses and bungalows on the north side that helps provide a sense of openness to the north and a more organic or rural character of development. Large front gardens contribute to the greenery of the lane.

A small number of buildings in this area stand out for their architectural interest or by indicating the earliest origins of the area's development. Cowley House and Cottage (No. 40) and Field House are all notable. The street is well used by cyclists and pedestrians, and provides access for vehicles to residential properties. However, the use of the road as a shortcut between Marston Road and Headley Way has been noted as having a negative impact on its amenity for residents and other users. Boundaries to the road include the tall brick wall of Cowley House, which provides evidence of the former extent of the grounds of the house despite

infill development of them during the later 20th century. On the north side of the road, hedgerows to the front of properties make an important contribution to the rural character of the lane. The use of close-boarded fences for boundaries is considered to detract from the appearance of the area by removing the rural quality and green, soft texture of the hedgerows. The street furniture is minimal, which contributes to the uncluttered rural character. The use of LED-lit speed limit warnings attached to lighting columns is notable for reducing the visual intrusion of highways signage. The narrow pavement, on one side of the road only, reflects the origins of the road as a narrow field lane.

The southern part of the lane is a private road maintained by the owners of property to either side. Houses here are also set back from the road but with irregular spacing that contributes to the organic character of development. The step back to the building line and broad gaps between buildings contributes to the low-density feel of the development. The lane is particularly narrow and winding at its north end, and enclosed by hedgerows with no separate pavement, which foreshortens views and creates intimate enclosed spaces with a rural character. A broad grass verge on the east side provides openness and opens views down the lane, whilst the houses are partially hidden by tall hedgerows, adding to the green character and sense of low density development.

Whilst the architecture of the houses is varied, providing part of the organic character of development, there is a repeated use of traditional building forms with a common two-storey scale, steeply pitched roofs and the use of painted render cladding. Cotswold House stands out as a particularly fine example of the use of traditional vernacular forms, which complements the rural character. The gardens surrounding the houses add to the green character, with many mature trees, including those arching over the road in the north, which adds vertical

interest and frames views. The quiet character of the lane, with little through traffic and no nighttime street lighting, provide further positive rural characteristics.

Jack Straw's Lane (north) has a more open character, with the green open space of Doris Field's Memorial Park providing a surviving fragment of the former agricultural landscape. Green hedgerows provide definition to the narrow lane, which has green grass verges but no separate pavement, providing the character of a field lane. The houses are widely spaced and scattered, in large plots filled by green gardens and without a common alignment or building line and, therefore, an organic and rural form of development. Although the gardens include rich tree planting, these are generally located towards the rear of plots, creating a more open and light setting to the road than in the areas directly to the south. Underwood, which stands at the northern end of the lane, is particularly notable as an example of the mid 20th century 'vernacular' style of architecture. Several houses to the east of the road are hidden behind the hedgerow on a shared private drive, setting them even further from the public realm and increasing the spacious feel of the area. The view from Doris Field's Memorial Park to the city centre is one of the ten view cones identified in the local plan. This provides an intimate view of the dome and spires of the buildings at the core of the University framed by trees and with the green open space of the field as a foreground, preserving the experience of seeing the city from its rural hinterland despite the development of the surrounding area for suburban housing developments.

#### ***Negative Features and Issues***

The main section of Jack Straw's Lane receives a high volume of non-local traffic using the lane and Staunton Road as a shortcut between two arterial routes within the city. Not all users observe the 20mph speed limit and it is noted that motorists speed up going up the hill and at the narrow entrance to the lane from Staunton Road. There is considerable fear of road traffic accidents resulting from this traffic given the popularity of the lane with cyclists and pedestrians. Increase in traffic could exacerbate this issue.

The pavement on the south side of the lane is narrow and has become blocked in places by mature trees that have grown across its path. This forces pedestrians, particularly if pushing buggies or wheel chairs, into the road.

There is concern for the future viability of the mature tree stock as a result of disease, in addition to normal life expectancy. The potential loss of mature trees across an area would not only affect the appearance of the area but could also affect established ecological communities.

The use of close-boarded fencing to create or reinforce frontages has created bland frontages with a suburban character that detract from the rural qualities of the area's character. Further enclosure of the lane by close-boarded fences would be detrimental to its character.

Reinstatement of hedgerows as boundaries provides an opportunity to restore part of the green, rural character of the area.

Green front garden space is particularly characteristic of this part of the conservation area. Loss of this space by new buildings constructed forward of established building lines could detract from the spacious feel of the character area.

**No. 5 - Feilden Grove****Significance**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Contribution to significance</b>
Spacious character/low density of development	<p>The layout of the development includes gaps between buildings and a generous green setting to each property, which contributes to the overall sense of space in the area.</p> <p>'Open plan' gardens (open to the pavement and sometimes between plots) help to share the space, adding to the low density character.</p> <p>The set-back of buildings from the pavement contributes to the openness of the area.</p>
A 'green' landscape	<p>The greenery of the landscape is partially an inheritance of the earlier landuse and partly a result of the 1970s development.</p> <p>The survival of attractive specimen trees, as well as larger groups makes an important contribution to the attractive appearance of the area.</p> <p>The richness of the green surroundings contributes to the tranquillity of the area, as well as the high aesthetic value of well maintained gardens.</p>
Tranquil atmosphere	<p>The lack of through traffic or noisy uses in the surroundings contributes to a tranquil character that sets the area apart from nearby busy streets such as Marston Road.</p>
Ecological value	<p>The low density of development, green garden spaces and survival of mature tree planting makes this area an important part of the ecological corridor formed by the conservation area.</p>
Views out to the city	<p>Glimpsed views out to the city centre contribute to the local distinctiveness of the development.</p>
Role of tree cover in views over the city	<p>The tree cover within the development forms part of the green backcloth of Headington Hill in views of the city centre from the hills to the west.</p>
Buildings	<p>The low scale of buildings allows greenery of mature trees and gardens to dominate the character of the area.</p> <p>Jean Cottage (including Tall Chimneys) stands out as a surviving feature of the earlier landscape gardens of High Wall, as well as having architectural interest as an example of Arts and Crafts architecture.</p>

**Historical Commentary**

The eastern half of Feilden Grove lay within the gardens of High Wall, forming the Rose Garden and Kitchen Garden shown on the 1921 Ordnance Survey map. This map shows Jean Cottage standing within an enclosure that is believed to be the kitchen garden

reflecting its role as the gardener's cottage, when not acting as a temporary home for the owner of High Wall. The 1939 edition of the Ordnance Survey map suggests High Wall's garden had been extended further westward, taking in all the present area of Feilden Grove and including an orchard and area of grass

and mixed tree planting on the western boundary. It also suggests that specimen trees had been planted forming wooded parkland, in the space between the rose garden and kitchen garden. This would correspond with the period of improvements to the garden by Percy Cane in the 1920s. The western part of High Wall's garden was sold for private housing development in the 1970s with a restrictive covenant on the number of properties to be developed. Whilst the garden in the immediate setting of the house were retained, the new development replaced the kitchen garden, rose garden and parkland. Jean Cottage was, retained and the development made use of the maturing tree planting to provide an attractive green setting to the houses, including the former boundary planting to the estate, which has now formed woodland bays, which groups of houses are set within.

#### ***Character Description***

Feilden Grove is now a quiet enclave of late 20th century housing that incorporates elements of the earlier garden landscape of High Walls. Further green landscaping has been added as part of the area's late 20th century development that benefits the appearance of the area and contributes to its role as part of the green backdrop in views of the city from the western hills and City Centre. Indeed, planting adds a multitude of colours in the area including blue, red and purple foliage in addition to greens. The houses are widely spaced in green gardens that are often open to the pavement at the front, creating a sense of openness. Buildings have varied alignments and are set back from the pavement at varying distances, providing an organic feel to the area. The curving loop of the road creates a series of unfolding views and intimate spaces, with the pavement occasionally separated from the road by a broad green verge that

merges the public realm with the surrounding gardens. The rich tree planting of surrounding areas, including Harberton Mead, Cotuit Hall and the former allotments to the south contribute to a sense of enclosure for the development that adds to its tranquillity.

The houses are generally long and low, not rising above two storeys, and with shallow pitched roofs that restrict their prominence in views and allowing the trees and greenery to dominate the scene. With the exception of Jean Cottage, they are all of a similar date and have a unified character in a shared palette of materials and form, including a mixture of brick, white painted render and tile hanging, that creates a strong sense of place. Jean Cottage (now divided into several properties) stands out as evidence of the earlier history of the area. It also incorporates elements of Arts and Crafts architecture, such as its prominent chimney stacks and large curved bay windows, which adds to its architectural interest.

Occasional glimpsed views out to the west provide views to the city centre skyline, although these have gradually been obscured by the growth of foliage. The use of the area is an important element of its character, with residential use and absence of through traffic providing a tranquil character. The introduction of parking restrictions has also been successful in reducing the impact of on street parking.

#### ***Negative Features and Issues***

The management of vegetation within the area is critical to maintain its attractive appearance. Where trees have been felled, local residents are concerned to see that their replacement with suitable replanting is secured. However, there is also concern that the development of foliage has screened some of the views out to the city centre.

**No. 6 - Cuckoo Lane****Significance**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Contribution to significance</b>
An historic route	The route itself has local interest as part of the walking route associated with figures of local historic interest such as Antony Wood and Reverend Josiah Pullen's. It preserves the character of an early 19 <sup>th</sup> century carriage route with the addition of a green sward that reflects the end of its use by carriages and reversion to a primarily pedestrian route.
Long straight course (east)	The straight line of the lane reflects its course across the open fields of Old Headington, prior to the enclosure of the fields. This may have been further straightened in the mid 19 <sup>th</sup> century.
Broad green verge	The broad green verge is only cut after long intervals and so develops an attractive meadow-like sward, that contributes to the rural character of the area.
Long winding course (west)	This part of the path follows the line of the boundaries of Headington and St Clement's Parishes, preserving an ancient land division.  The curving line creates a series of unfolding views and enclosed, intimate spaces.
Green setting	The green open spaces and mature tree lines to either side of Cuckoo Lane contribute to both the rural character and lush green appearance of the lane and reflect its historic character as an ancient lane running through fields
High boundary walls	These provide enclosure to the lanes with architectural and historic interest reflecting an intention to exclude both physical and visual access to prestigious private estates in the early and mid-19 <sup>th</sup> centuries.
Views	The long, channelled views along Cuckoo Lane east, particularly that from its entrance at Pullens Lane provides a feature of high aesthetic value, including the stone wall of Headington School, broad green verge and tall mature tree planting on either side channelling the vista which recedes to a distant green nadir.  The view from the former Morrells Allotments open space is one of the ten protected viewcones of the city. However, it is currently obscured by self-seeded woodland. The nearest comparable view within the conservation area is that from the Pullens Lane Allotments. This view shows the high points of the city skyline rising from the foliage of trees in the Cherwell Valley with an intricate foreground of allotment plots and sheds, and wooded hills in the background.
Marker stones	Several stone markers recording the former boundaries of Headington Parish and the City of Oxford provide points of historic interest along the lane.
Tranquillity	The route provides a quiet and tranquil alternative to London/Headington Road, preserving some of the character of the rural walk between the city and Headington in centuries past.

### **Historical Commentary**

The eastern part of Cuckoo Lane (running east from Pullens Lane) is recorded as 'Oxford Way' on the Map of Corpus Christi's estate produced in 1609, when it formed the main road running between the village of Headington and Oxford. It was at the present entrance to Cuckoo Lane east that Josiah Pullen's planted the elm tree that became the local landmark of Joe Pullen's Tree. The former site of the tree is now marked by a commemorative plaque. Cuckoo Lane west is referred to by Thomas Hearne in 1723/4. Davis' Map of Oxfordshire, produced in 1797, confirms the location of Cuckoo Lane east, but does not show a continuation to the west. Hedgerows shown ran down the hill to Marston Road following a curving line similar to the route of Cuckoo Lane west. The western part of the lane is shown on the Headington Enclosure map of 1802. A reference to improvements to Cuckoo Lane west by William Tournay, the University's Curator of Public Walks from 1806-1831, refer to it as a pretty winding route used by University staff for 'constitutionals'. Cuckoo Lane east was widened in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to allow carriages access to the plots put up for sale by the Headington Manor Estate in 1836. The footpath running north from Cuckoo Lane east is also shown on the 1836 sales plan.

Land north of Cuckoo Lane west was bought by the Morrell family in the 1870s and maintained as open space. Allotments on the Morrells' farmland, which extended as far north as Feilden Grove, were created prior to the Second World War. Just after the war government offices were built on land off Marston Road and north of Cuckoo Lane west. During the 1970s Morrell Hall was developed in several stages as student accommodation for Oxford Polytechnic over part of the former allotments and part of the Government Buildings' site. This isolated an area of the former allotments which subsequently developed

as succession woodland. The University accommodation was increased in the 2000s with construction of 592 student rooms as the most recent phase of development completed in 2011. The importance of the view over the city centre from the remaining allotments was recognised in the 1980s by the designation of one of the view cones looking out from this area. The western portion of the former government buildings site remains undeveloped following clearance but is expected to be developed for mixed educational use and student residence in association with the Centre for Islamic Studies on the far side of Marston Road.

### **Character Description**

Cuckoo Lane east is a broad green lane reflecting its widening for use as a carriage route and subsequent demotion to use as a footpath. Its broad entrance from Pullens Lane reflects the long sweeping entry required for carriages. A commemorative plaque in the Headington School Wall at this point records the former site of 'Joe Pullen's Tree'. The grounds of Headington School to the south and Rye St Antony School to the north preserve a green setting to the lane which is reinforced by the survival of boundary tree planting from The Pullen's (EF Language College). The boundary wall of Headington School (formerly Davenport House) provides some architectural interest in its evident age and materials and is probably contemporary with the widening of the lane in the early or mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The channelled view along the lane has a high aesthetic value that makes an important contribution to the appearance of the area. The tranquillity of the route through restriction of its use to pedestrians and cyclists provides an attractive alternative route from the city centre to the Headington area avoiding the busy route of Headington/London Road.

Cuckoo Lane west is narrow, with a curving line that creates a series of unfolding views and more intimate



spaces. Overhanging trees on both sides create a tunnel of foliage with the views across the allotments to the north and Headington Hill Park to the south providing an open, rural character. Points of interest are provided by the stone boundary markers recording the former limit of the Parish of Headington at the west end of the lane, the extended boundary of the City in 1835 (near the entrance to the footpath to the north) and at the corner of Pullens Lane marking the boundary of the County Borough of Oxford in 1901. The high boundary wall of Headington Hill Hall adds some architectural interest and evidence of the segregation of the private estate from the public path. The hall's former stable block rises from the side of the path, creating an area of enclosure and provides evidence of the former use of the land beyond. Near the west end of the lane, The Centre for Islamic Studies provides a new focal feature to views westward. Several gateways provide access from the lane to the grounds of Headington Hill Hall and Headington Hill Park to the south and a number of alternative walking routes through green open spaces.

The Oxford Brookes buildings to the north of Cuckoo Lane west have a unified character based on common building forms and use of a limited palette of materials but are of no particular architectural or historic interest. The landscape surrounding them has been carefully managed to provide a green setting that reflects the historic rural character of the conservation area. The scale of the buildings is notable as being required to prevent from intrusive architectural elements appearing in the view of the city centre from the allotments. The area of woodland to the north is a notable amenity to the area and a rich ecological resource with public access, although it has been noted that lack of under-storey management restricts the ecological potential from being greater and that the generation of the woodland has blocked a very significant view of the city.

#### Issues

The route is relatively isolated and subject to vandalism through graffiti, particularly in the narrower Cuckoo Lane west section.

The entrance to Cuckoo Lane west from Marston Road is relatively hidden.

The growth of trees both around the allotments site and former allotments site has resulted in a general loss of the value of the protected view over the city centre from this land.

The attractive green and rural character of Cuckoo Lane east is particularly vulnerable to change through management of the surrounding historic tree stock and building on institutional sites to either side.

The introduction of 'street' lighting to Cuckoo Lane west is necessary for security of users of the lane at night, but is considered to detract from the semi-rural character of the lane. This illustrates one of the tensions of conserving the significance of the conservation area and providing for the requirements of modern city life.

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