

North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan

Appendix 4- Character Assessment

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Character Assessment: aims and methodology

Aims

The North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan (NLNP) sets out policies for future development. The Parish Council, supported by feedback from residents, is extremely keen to ensure that new development is 'in keeping' with well-loved village spaces and the rural character of the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey Report shows that residents of the Parish place the greatest value on the Parish character of access to the countryside, open green spaces/rural views and the Parish setting in a rural landscape.

This document has two aims:

- To collate the findings of a group of residents, which identified those features within the built environment that contribute to the unique and distinctive character of North Leigh.
- To act as the primary resource for the separate North Leigh Design Code.

Methodology

North Leigh parish has for centuries been a compact close-knit community, the main settlement of North Leigh being located on a high ridge East of Witney.

Despite having several listed buildings, as well as an ancient windmill (now dilapidated), the historic heart of the village has not been designated a conservation area.

There are also many modern buildings within the heart of the village which is linear in form along the ridge. Beyond this the settlement has grown in recent decades and there has been significant expansion. Identifying Character Areas has proved highly useful in assembling an understanding of what makes the components of a place distinctive in terms of form and function.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee identified volunteers to lead the Character Assessment process. This group was advised by NLNP consultants Community First Oxfordshire (CFO). CFO held community briefing sessions and walkabouts, in order to introduce the Character Assessment process in combination with a 'Placecheck' approach. These sessions explored different areas of the village and facilitated discussion about the choice of character areas in relation to the patterns and layout of the built environment and its different build and design eras. Discussion established a final list of **six character areas**:

- **Area A – The Village Centre**
- **Area B – Church Road and Kingston Heights**
- **Area C – Main Roads and attached side roads**
- **Area D – Windmill Road and associated streets**
- **Area E – East End and Wilcote hamlets**
- **Area F – Outliers – industrial and commercial**

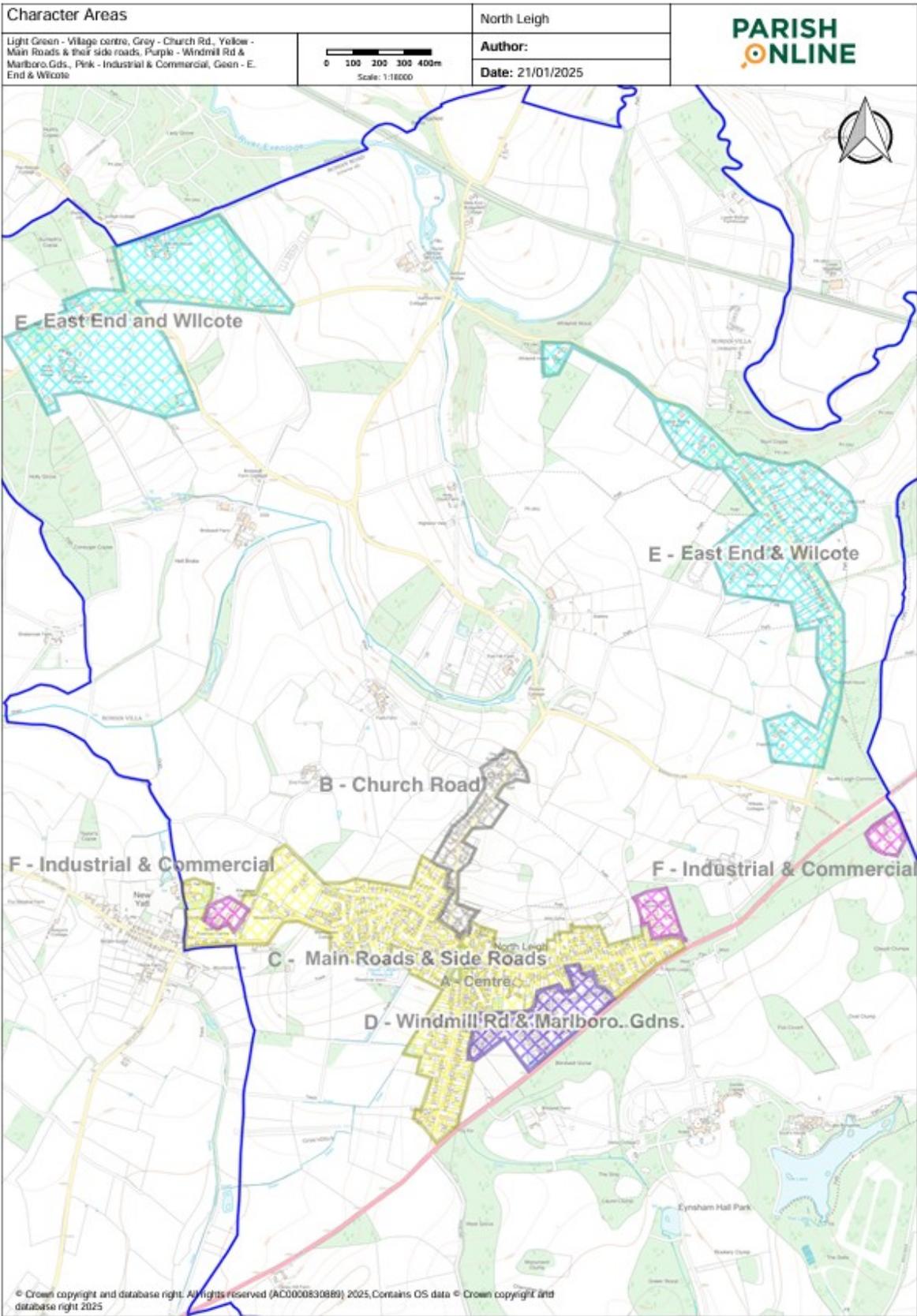


Image: North Leigh Character Areas

The volunteer character assessment group then undertook research of each character area using the **Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit**. Using this primary research, CFO then drafted the analysis of each assessment area, with the content subsequently reviewed and refined by the volunteer group. **Historic England's conservation principles, policies and guidance** also guided the assessments, in particular:

- Evidential value - what historical and archaeological evidence may be present?
- Historical value - of what past historical significance is the site?
- Aesthetic value - is the blend of property in the area itself an exemplar or of critical value in the village street scenery?
- Communal value - How much is a particular building or area either used or valued by the community

Other sources of information included drawn old tithe and enclosure maps, which are often useful in identifying important historical boundaries, walking routes, features and properties.

The character assessments indicate the features and issues that development proposals should reflect to improve the structures and spirit of the community.

Whilst around the settlement there are smaller areas of a similar chronology. These areas often exhibit differing characteristics such as building type and scale, orientation/building lines, roofscapes, density, streetscape, distinctive features etc., open green spaces, spaces in between buildings, topography and landscape, gardens, planting, and grass verges. In addition, there may be differences due to specific local builders' styles and those of architects and landscape designers who provided advice to that particular owner or builder at the time.

In grouping some of these elements in a sub-area there will be some key factors that will help guide future development such as infilling in these locations. There may be some dominant features in a sub-area – for example, of the windmill which will be very important. In other areas, roadside verges may stand out, especially as these are not evident in the densely built-up central areas of the settlement. Therefore, spaces are as important as buildings.

In more open areas of land around the current settlement there will still be aspects of character that merit protection or at least guidance in allowing new development. This may include landscape character, including natural capital assets that are valued by local people. Access to the countryside and nature is an important aspect of what makes the parish and its places special for residents and the existing rights of way and key views connecting outlying areas to the village centre are also character issues. All routes normally lead into the centre and layouts of new development zones must ensure there is no harm to character.

Each Character Area was assessed with regard to these matters. All the Character Areas have different qualities even though they share some characteristics in that each sub-area will have examples from previous centuries down to the present day.

Identification of key Character Areas also forms the basis of the separate **North Leigh Design Code**, which has also been developed as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

North Leigh setting, history, and development: overview

Setting

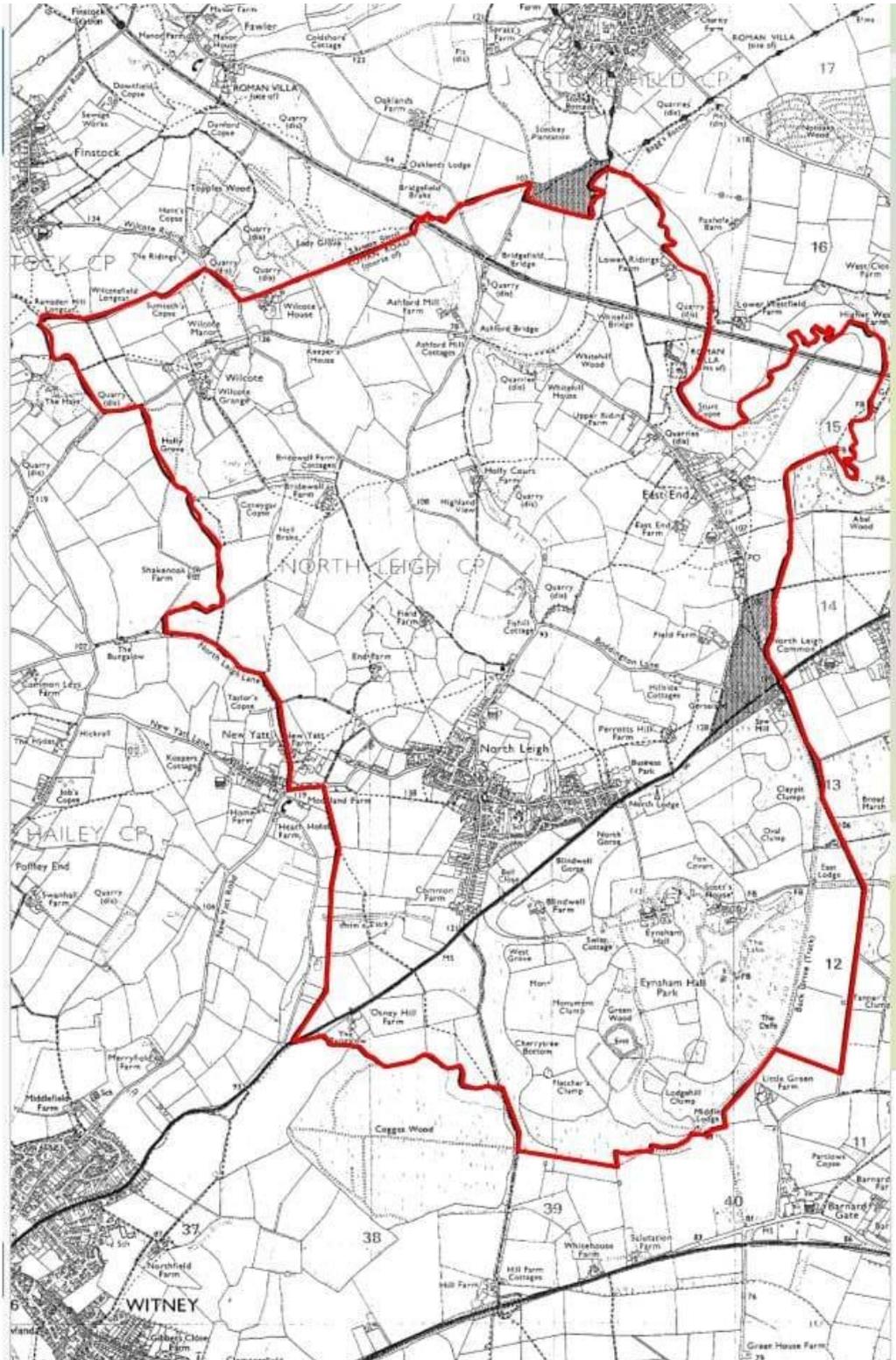


Image: North Leigh Parish

North Leigh is a village and civil Parish. It is a rural environment set amongst fields and rolling countryside. It is approximately 3,000 acres in size. It includes the outlying hamlet of East End, and since 1932 the hamlet of Wilcote. Additionally, the parish includes a handful of houses in the hamlet of New Yatt.

The Parish lies entirely within the boundaries of the ancient Wychwood Forest the remnants of which define much of this area of West Oxfordshire. Preservation of local ancient woodland is of critical importance as it provides habitat for a variety of plants and animals, but most importantly as it is a haven for the micro flora (bacteria, algae, fungi, lichens) that existed in the Wychwood Forest since prehistoric times – by preserving these corridors of the Wychwood Forest the biodiversity of the whole area is enormously enriched.

Some of the ancient Wychwood Forest woodland remains within the Parish including Sturt Copse, Whitehill Wood, Bank at Hollycourt, Holly Grove, Coneygar Copse and Hell Brake, and also the woodland at Eynsham Hall, Wilcote Manor, Wilcote House and Hollycourt Farm.

When the Wychwood Forest was cleared to form the farmland of the Parish, it was common for narrow shores of trees and undergrowth of the original forest to be left in place to form hedgerows (this was an alternative to - and less work than - complete clearance followed by replanting of hedgerows). This can be evidenced by the number of mature trees in some of the hedgerows in the Parish and the abundance of plant species growing in these hedgerows that are not found elsewhere. These hedgerows are themselves part of the ancient Wychwood Forest.

The Parish is located in the county of West Oxfordshire and since 1974 has fallen within the purview of West Oxfordshire District Council. Located between the market town of Witney some 5km to the West and the village of Long Hanborough to the East, it sits on a ridge 139 metres above sea level, lying predominantly to the north A4095, a main road running broadly Northeast - Southwest from Bicester to Farringdon (see map below). The north-eastern border of the parish is partly formed by the River Evenlode. The Parish boundary between the village and Witney is still that of a Charter laid down in the 10th century.

Leigh was the original name of the Parish, but it was later renamed North Leigh to differentiate it from South Leigh. The name comes from Leah meaning a wood pasture, a mixture of woodland and pasture used for grazing animals. Settlement began after the area was gradually cleared by grazing and browsing. The majority of the land in the parish is used for grazing and arable farming in between ancient woods and hedgerows.

The parish includes the privately owned Eynsham Park Estate that now houses Estelle Manor which can be seen on the above map occupying the area to the south of the A4095.

At the centre of the village sits the iconic windmill built in 1833; it no longer has its sails and is in private ownership.

North Leigh village is spread out along its four primary roads and their offshoots – Park Road, New Yatt Road, Church Road and Common Road. At the far end of Church Road sits St Mary's church and its church hall known as the Turner Hall, the former dating back to Saxon times. Park Road houses most of the other village amenities, including the Masons Arms public house, the village hall (known as the Memorial Hall), the small shop/PO, the small library and the primary school.

Holistically, the character of North Leigh is rural, with all properties in easy reach of open countryside and with many properties benefitting from rural views.

Population

As far as is known, it took the best part of 1,000 years for the village/ parish to grow to a population of just of about 1,000 people (in the mid-late 1950s). Between 1950 and 2021 (2021 census) the parish population increased to 2,126, the vast majority of whom live in the village of North Leigh. It is estimated that since 2021, population and household numbers in the Parish have swelled by over 40% or more. This figure excludes developments that have been approved, but not yet built, at Rectory Rise, Manor Oak and 44, Common Road.

In summary, the population stayed well below 1,000 people for many hundreds of years and in the 63 years from 1961 to 2024 it has almost trebled in size.

Historical context and development

The area has been inhabited for thousands of years. Archaeologists have found evidence of a Neolithic burial at the end of Green Lane (formerly Wood Lane and then Puddle End Lane). There are two Iron Age sites (one named Green Wood Fort in Eynsham Park and another under the Roman Villa at East End clearly marked in the north-eastern boundary of the above map).

Grim's Ditch (to the west of Common Farm marked on the above map) is a boundary said to be made in the Iron Age but now thought to be of Romano-British construction. It is a Scheduled Monument, List Entry: 1013236. The following is extracted from Historic England: "The section of Grim's Ditch west of Common Farm survives well ... The monument, which falls into two areas, includes a 650m long section of the north Oxfordshire Grim's Ditch running from east to west".

It is ancient monuments such as Grim's Ditch, set within a rural environment that is unchanged for centuries, and probably little changed since the ancient monuments were actually constructed, that define the character of North Leigh that is treasured not just by its inhabitants but by visitors from Oxfordshire and beyond. The true value of North Leigh's historical monuments is their setting in North Leigh's stunning rural landscape as much as the monuments themselves.

The course of Grim's Ditch west of Common Road is shown. The visible portions of Grim's Ditch are bounded in red. It is understood that the course of Grim's Ditch continues through the area bounded in purple, which is visible as a faint crop mark.



The Roman Villa at Shakenoak is close to North Leigh Lane. It has been excavated several times but remains covered over. As it is covered later the historical significance of the Shakenoak Roman Villa is perhaps not yet fully recognized; it includes a shrine, commercial fishponds and is an example of a Roman Villa that remained occupied beyond the end of the Roman occupation, with evidence of its use in the dark ages.

The Roman villa at East End was rebuilt and enlarged more than once until, by the 4th century, it had become a substantial courtyard house, the centre of an important estate, with fine tessellated pavements, plastered and painted rooms, and baths and hypocausts. It has been conjectured that

the villa belonged to a noble family of the Dobunni and was perhaps abandoned in the late 4th century or early 5th, the likely date of a fire there.

There are also signs of a lost Anglo Saxon village where Field Farm is now located, and St. Mary's Church tower is of Saxon origin. In 1928 Anglo Saxon graves were discovered by the side of the road to Wilcote. All the finds from these graves are in the Ashmolean Museum.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday book, as is also Wilcote. The village and church were given as part of the Honor of St. Valery in France. In the 13th century, Lieu Dieu Abbey sold the tenancy to Netley Abbey in Hampshire. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, the tenancy passed to the Crown who gave it to Sir Thomas Pope where it remained until the 17th century when it was sold to the Perrott family (then of Perrotts Hill Farm). In the 18th century, the manor of North Leigh was sold to the Duke of Marlborough who still owns the mineral rights under the freehold houses in the village

The Parish seems to have shared with other Wychwood places a reputation for wildness that encouraged deforestation in the 19th century. Instruments of control included a pillory, mentioned in 1499, stocks, mentioned in 1559 and, possibly, a cucking stool: the village pond at the northwest end of Common Road was referred to in 1759 as Cucking-stool Pond. Known later as Cuckamus pond, it was filled in c1955.

On 4 June 1644, following his night march from Oxford, Charles I rested at Perrotts Hill Farm before pressing on to Burford. Following the parliamentary victory Holly Court was occupied for a time by Sir George Fleetwood, the regicide. Perrott's grandson, also Edward, is said to have been a non-juror and a generous supporter of James II.

In Medieval times, there was an open field system of farming around the village, strips of land being given to villagers according to their status. On Dissolution, the Crown passed the manor of North Leigh partly to Bridewell Hospital in London and Bridewell Farmhouse was built in the 18th century. When Simon Leigh-Perrott inherited the manor, he began to pressure for enclosure of the open fields and was supported by Bridewell Hospital. Eventually enclosure began in 1759. This provoked riots by the villagers and fences and gates were broken. A militia of 140 soldiers was sent to North Leigh and barracked in the village. The Riot Act was read by the Justices.

A post office was recorded intermittently from 1854, and a permanent office existed from the 1880s at a house East of the Woodman Inn; it was removed in 1953 to Common Road. It has since moved into the Memorial Hall. A mains water supply was provided to North Leigh village in 1935 and to East End in 1937. Mains electricity was introduced in 1938. A mains drainage scheme for the settlements of the Parish was completed in the late 1950s.

In the earlier 20th century, a few new houses were built, again as infill. From 1945 new houses were first built along Common Road and Park Road, but demand became such that whole estates were begun in the 1960s. North Leigh in the 1960s had one of the fastest growing populations in Oxfordshire. The total stood at 1,765 in 1971, but the rate of increase slowed in the 1970s, and by 1981 the population had risen only to 1,859.

In the 1950s and 1960s, in common with most villages, North Leigh had a number of shops most of which no longer exist. These included:

- The Windmill Stores on Park Road, included a grocery shop, butchers shop and petrol pumps. This has since been redeveloped for housing.

- The Post Office and general stores was located in what is now a private house at number 10 Common Road.
- Also on Common Road was the Buckland Stores, another grocery shop, which again has reverted to private housing.
- At the end of Park Road, we had the North Leigh Garden Centre, which also sold greetings cards, gifts and hardware. This was redeveloped as Bluebell Close.
- There was until the mid-1970s a Fish and Chip shop on a site now occupied by numbers 13 & 15 Common Road.
- There were a number of pubs in the Parish; currently open are The Masons Arms on Park Road, North Leigh and the Woodman on New Yatt Road. The others were: The Harcourt Arms - Church Road, The Leather Bottel and New Inn – East End, and The Saddlers – New Yatt.
- In addition to the pubs, East End also had two shops, a sweet shop, a garage and a butchers/abattoir; within the last 40 years these have all closed down.

North Leigh's straggling housing, an early form of ribbon development, from East End through New Well End and North Leigh village to New Yatt, with a few isolated farms and cottages away from the road, has changed in density since the Middle Ages, some areas, notably New Well End, losing houses, others becoming more populous. New housing was mostly infilling, often in the form of cottages built on the manorial waste.

Some organized building was undertaken by the Eynsham Park estate along Park Road in the late 19th century and early 20th, but only in the later 20th century were many houses built. Infilling has continued throughout. The manor house, west of the church, fell into ruin and was pulled down in the 19th century; probably it was never on the scale of Wilcote House, the principal surviving house in the Parish. The common building materials before the 20th century were local limestone rubble and Stonesfield slate or thatch. One or two thatched roofs remain, notably those of Gable Cottage, west of the Mason Arms, and Church Farm Cottage in Church Road. Brick and Welsh slate appeared in the 19th century, and in the 20th the use of modern building materials has given some parts of the Parish a suburban air.

The oldest surviving secular building is the south-eastern aspect of Holly Court Farm. Church Farm Cottage, East of Church Road, is a cruck house, possibly of the later Middle Ages. East End Farm, part of the manorial estate until 1981, has a former cross wing on the north apparently of 16th-century origin, remodelled when the main range was rebuilt. Perrotts Hill Farm, although retaining no structural features earlier than the 17th century, seems, like East End Farm, to have an earlier plan.

The Wesleyan chapel, rebuilt in 1873, was a major addition to the village and became an important focal point. The other main institutional building of the 19th century was the school, built in 1838 north of the Parish church; it became a private house in 1974. A dramatic impact on the village's appearance is that of the windmill built at the top of Common Road by 1833.

The Woodman pub, East of the junction of Green Lane and the New Yatt Road, and the New Inn, at East End, were established by 1861. The Woodman remains a public house. The New Inn seems to have ceased trading in the later 19th century and in 1958 it became a private house. The Mason Arms had, by 1871, become the fifth public house in the Parish; it remains open today.

North Leigh's nearest major station is at Hanborough (Combe station is nearer, but only two trains stop each day). A station on the Witney branch line was opened at Eynsham in 1861 and closed in 1962. In 2024 the only public transport serving North Leigh is the S7 Stagecoach service, partly

funded by Estelle Manor, that runs between Oxford, Woodstock and Witney (although some services omit the Woodstock stops).

Character Assessment: Village Sub-Areas

Introduction

The character of North Leigh is defined as much by its built-up areas as it is by its setting within a veritable gold mine of historic landmarks, rural treasures and community green spaces squeezed into such a small area. A vision to protect this setting was set out in the responses to the Community Survey.

The following are described elsewhere in the document; viewed together they demonstrate the incredible and unique richness of the character of North Leigh.

- **Historic Landmarks:**
 - Neolithic (Burial site)
 - Iron-Age (Grim's Ditch, Remains of Iron-Age Fort, site at Shakenoak)
 - Roman (Akeman Street at Northern boundary, Shakenoak Roman Villa, North Leigh Roman Villa)
 - Medieval (Church of St Peter's at Wilcote, Church of St Mary's in North Leigh with Saxon Church Tower, "Hollow-Ways" of North Leigh Lane and Barretts Lane, Saxon graves, the Lady Well, ruins of the manor house and buried village beside St Mary's Church)
 - Early Modern (village houses and farmhouses - many listed - of Costswold Stone with Stonesfield Slate or thatched roofs, stone windmill, Eynsham Hall, Wilcote Manor, Wilcote House).
- **Green Spaces:**
 - Woodland (Quicken Copse, North Leigh Common)
 - Historic Green Spaces (St Mary's Churchyard, St Mary's Cemetery)
 - Community Gardens (Allotments, Bridewell Organic Gardens)
 - Open Grass Areas (Windmill Field, Cuckamus Green, grass area and pond between Foxglove Gardens and adventure playground, grass square South of Akeman Street, grass area West of Marlborough Gardens at A4095 turning, grass area at Mason's Grove)
 - Playgrounds (Adventure Playground, Children's Playground, playground/grass area at Gough Close, playground between Akeman Street and Windmill Road)
- **Biodiversity:**
 - The majority of North Leigh's land area is agricultural (permanent grassland for grazing and arable land interspersed with ancient hedgerows - often remnants of the ancient Wychwood Forest)
 - Woodlands (including Holly Grove, Coneygar Copse and Hell Brake, and also the woodland at Eynsham Hall, Wilcote Manor, Wilcote House and Hollycourt Farm)
 - Three SSSIs (Sturt Copse, Whitehill Wood, Bank at Hollycourt)
 - Ash Walk
 - A stretch of the River Evenlode
 - A part of the Cotswold AONB
- **Footpaths:**
 - Numerous accessible footpaths and bridleways
 - Wychwood Way (circumnavigates the area of the ancient Wychwood Forest)
 - Palladian Way (runs from Buckingham to Bath)
- **Views:**
 - Multiple stunning views; both North Leigh village and Wilcote are built on hills

- Unique views across open countryside to North Leigh Church (as the village was relocated from the surrounds of the Church during a medieval plague).

Area A: The Village Centre



Image: Character Area A

Overview and value

This area is the historic core of North Leigh which occupies the high ridge, the topography dropping away steeply to the north affording views towards Wilcote and East End. This is a central location covering the intersection of the major roads through the village: Common Road/Park Road, New Yatt Road/Church Road. It includes locations such as the Windmill, Masons Arms, Windmill House, Chapel Lane, and Windmill Field.

The particular value of the central village area derives from its historicity and by containing a green open space backed by the iconic Windmill at the intersection of the four main village roads. This provides a sense of open space, greenery, and history that is an essential element of the 'feel' of the village. A number of features of this part of the village also contribute to its very special feel and aesthetic. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the Tower Windmill is used on the logo/badges of both the Primary School and North Leigh Football Club.

Although the low Cotswold dry stone walling that surrounds the Windmill Field does close the space off from public access, this is a boundary feature that is characteristic of the Cotswolds and also contributes to the feel of the space.

The Masons Arms Public House dates back to the 18th century and has ancient stone walls, Stonesfield slates and tall chimneys. The adjoining 'Stone Cottage' is one of a very small number of traditional Cotswold stone cottages that retains a thatched roof.



The Windmill and older buildings such as Forge Cottage provide evidence to historical activities that took place in the area e.g. flour milling, blacksmithing.

There are some historically significant and characterful older properties and mature trees to enjoy. The open space spirit of the area would be lifted considerably if something could be done to utilise the green space potential of Windmill Field and further renovate the Windmill itself to truly make it a village asset and something to be proud of.

Image: The Windmill and Windmill Field looking from Park Road

Housing/ building design and style

The Grade II listed stone built Mason Arms Public House alongside the thatched Gable Cottage that both front the Common Road/Park Road junction fit in well with regard to size and scale relative to the area and can be viewed as focal point buildings.



Image: The Masons Arms at the junction of Common Road and Park Road

Larger significant buildings include Windmill House (Georgian 3 storey Grade II listed, dated 1735) opposite the Windmill Field on Park Road. It has a front garden enclosed by c.4-foot stone wall. After years of neglect the house appears to have been sold and is now being renovated.

The Tower Windmill was built in 1833 with 4 sails and a conical cap. During the Second World War the cap was removed to make an observation post. This led to the interior of the building to fall into decay. Recently it has been recapped to make the building waterproof, but the sails have not been added.

The stone-built Forge Cottage on Common Road opposite the Windmill Field pays tribute to its historical past as the former location of the village blacksmith's. The Wesleyan Chapel at the end of Chapel Lane was rebuilt in 1873 and became a prominent Chapel in the local area. It is currently a private residence and under renovation. Chapel Lane has a mix of c.19th century terraced houses and Victorian red brick.

More recent developments include Healey Court, which is a terraced row of 5, three storey Cotswold stone-built houses with a very small front garden area on to Park Road. It was built on part of the Windmill Field in the early 2000s and is slightly out of character with its surroundings.

Perrott Close is at the top of Common Road on a slightly awkward junction with Park Road. The road starts of narrow from here and gets wider through the close to a turning point which has a road off dropping down onto New Yatt Road, giving lovely views across Bridewell Close and the fields beyond. The close carries on to a no through road.





Images: Perrott Close

Most houses are set back from the road behind hedging and trees and offers off street parking. Perrott Close consists of link detached and detached bungalows and chalet bungalows together with 5 detached houses, all varying in sizes from 2 bedrooms to 4 bedrooms, with improvements added over the years, all built of brick, some with partial rendering, some with partial cedar or UPVC cladding.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

There is a single lane restriction near the Masons Arms, opposite Common Road junction to Church Road, due to narrowness and winding nature of road. This is often a pinch point for through traffic, especially larger lorries accessing New Yatt Industrial Estate. All roads are particularly busy during primary school drop off/pick up times, and rush hour.

Common Road/Park Road junction is a problematic turn point for Stagecoach No 7 double decker bus service due to narrowness of road and vehicle size. Generally, Park Road/New Yatt Road and Church Road are narrow and winding, with Common Road being wider and straighter. The road network reflects the growth of the village over time with the older areas around Park Road/New Yatt Road built along a meandering network, with the more recent buildings along the wider Common Road. A sense of the old village character can be appreciated when approaching the village centre from the A4095 Park Road and Common Road junctions.

Footpaths are at points narrow and not continuous on one side, particularly on Park Road/New Yatt Road. There are no footpaths on Church Road.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The Windmill Field (c. $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre) provides a pleasing openness to the centre and the field is surrounded by a stone wall. However, the field has been neglected by the owners for many years with large parts having reverted to scrub and brambles. The landowners do not allow access or for any activities to be held the field.



Images (left to right): Cuckamus Green looking from Common Road towards Park Road junction; The Windmill Field and Windmill House looking from Common Road

There is one large mature tree on Cuckamus Green, plus four smaller hedgerow type trees and one recently planted sapling. There are a number of mature trees in the front gardens of houses surrounding the Green. The combination provides a pleasing aspect.

Cuckamus Green (c. 1/3 of an acre) is an open green space (previously it was the village pond, filled in during the 1980s). There are two large, mature trees in the gardens of houses adjacent to Chapel Lane, and one in the garden of Paddock House, opposite Church Lane Road junction. The mature trees provide a nice balance to the somewhat hard landscape with regard to the roads. The Green is well maintained by the Parish Council and has the only piece of street furniture (a seat) in the central area. The Green is occasionally used by children for ad hoc games of cricket and football. The annual fair held on Cuckamus ceased approximately 8 years ago.

The centre sits at c.140m above sea level and is one of the higher points locally. Whilst the surrounding countryside views are not immediately evident you get the sense of what can be seen through the rooftops. From the central area you can easily pick up the footpath to New Yatt, and after a quarter of a mile experience the panoramic views to Witney and the Wiltshire Downs on the horizon. Taking the footpath through Chapel Lane, past the old Wesleyan Chapel and into the fields, you are able to see across to East End and also the sweeping view down to St Mary's Church.

However, more recent development on the western edges of North Leigh are highly visible and contribute to a sense of creeping urbanisation.

Noise, light, and smells

There are traffic-based noise and diesel/petrol pollution smells especially at peak times, e.g. school run, rush hour.

At times, the area still suffers from sewerage odours. There have been a large number of broken pipes and system overflows over the last 10 years. Despite attempts by Thames Water to fix the overall problem, and the sewerage infrastructure problems in the village generally, it probably won't be long before another major issue arises. Thames Water has stated the village upgrade works won't be started until c2030 and will only cover the current housing capacity and not those in plan including the Lion Court Application (115 houses). This development will generate 41.4 tonnes of sewage daily according to the WASP report. Until the upgrade is completed the potential for sewage spills in the village will be extremely high and as such will continue to add to the pollution of the Evenlode as the sewage makes its way towards the river via ditches and streams.

The sky is bright and open in both daylight and at night. Street lighting is adequate and not too bright to overly impose on the night sky.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA A

- Area A forms the central heart of the settlement at the junction of Park Road, Common Road and Church Road.
- It occupies the top of the ridge and originally followed a linear pattern along the road – over time it has become more nucleated.
- Several Listed Buildings including an old windmill - but no Conservation Area - with the oldest buildings here hugging the ridge line with views towards AONB and Combe.
- Whilst there are views out to open countryside including the Grade 1 Listed Building St Marys Church, the village it also visible from surrounding low-lying areas.
- Internal views are limited but that of the windmill is important.
- There are important historic green spaces that form part of the setting of the settlement notably Windmill Field and Cuckamus green.
- There is a good degree of bungalow or suburban style housing development on the edges of this central area dating from the 1960s.
- More modern ad hoc housing development has not dominated in terms of size and scale, orientation and design and so presents a sense of continuity and organic growth.
- Modern flats are not very evident.
- Houses generally are often in close proximity but detached but with varying styles, roofscapes and orientation.
- Common Road houses are mostly detached, with varying styles, roofscapes, and orientation, with large front gardens, verges to roadside - some properties formerly parts of farms and may be 200+ years old.
- Sense of enclosure is not strong, houses set back from roads, pavements verges vary in width and quality.
- The Cotswold stone utilised widely in this sub-area is typical of the surrounding area.
- Some buildings are constructed from stone with slate or stone slate roofs: but many more modern brick buildings exist today.
- Although centrally located there are limited amenities in terms of shops and other services in the village. Masons Arms and the Woodman public houses are still in use.

IN CONCLUSION

GENERAL COMMENT

Although not designated at the moment, it is recommended that the District Council considers the merits of designation of a Conservation Area for the central area and including the setting of the village and its historic landscape. This should include the Grade 1 Listed St Marys Church which is in Area B see below.

Also, whilst there are many older buildings in the heart village many are not listed, such as along New Yatt Road and Park Road. These could be considered for local listing as they contribute strongly to the character.

AREA CONCLUSIONS

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, and use of natural materials. Design of new development should therefore reflect density, a mix of dwelling types and other issues identified above in any planning statement. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.

Green spaces in this Character Area are important to the village such as Windmill Field and Cuckamus Green (formerly Cucking Stool pond filled in in 1961) should be protected as integral to historic aesthetic character.

Area B: Church Road and Kingston Heights

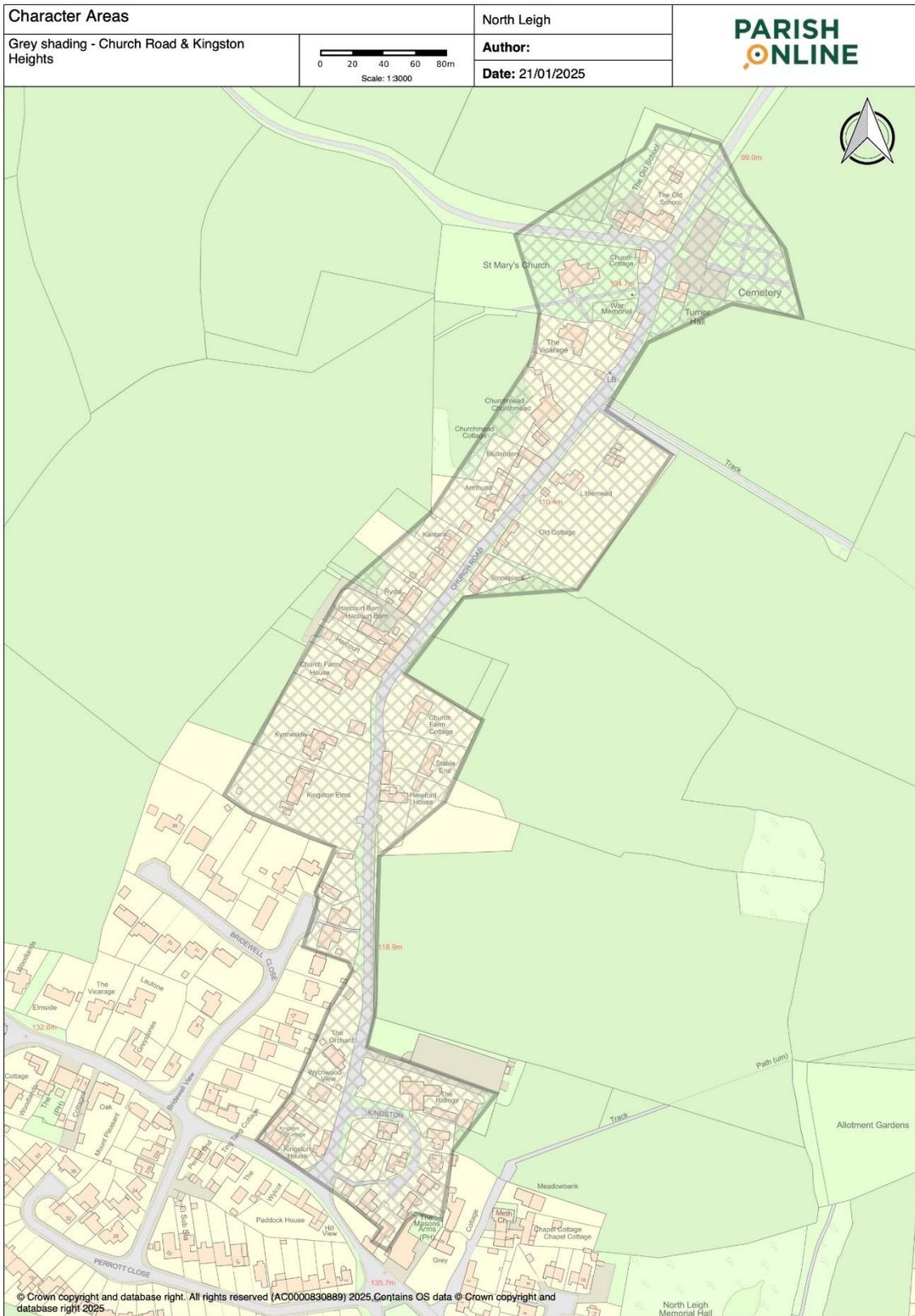


Image: Character Area B

Overview and value

This area is focused on Church Road (but includes Kingston Heights), a narrow, quieter road with mainly older buildings. It runs for just over half a mile approximately north/south on the northern side of North Leigh, between Boddington Lane to the north and the New Yatt Road to the south. Near its northern end, at the very edge of the village, lies St Mary's Church, a Grade 1 Listed Building, the bell tower of which is Anglo-Saxon (estimated to date from the first half of the eleventh century, i.e. prior to the Norman conquest).

Church Road is surrounded by open countryside and many parts of Church Road have remained unchanged for many years. Given its unspoilt nature, a walk down Church Road is a walk back in time. Some of the oldest houses in North Leigh are along Church Road.

Originally the village of North Leigh, in common with all other English villages, was centred around the Church. The village was abandoned during a medieval plague and relocated "up the hill" to its current location. There are ruins of the medieval manor to the west of Church Road, and ruins of the old village beneath the fields around the Church, particularly to the west of Church Road. When the village moved Church Road provided, and continues to provide, access from the current village of North Leigh to the Church.



Church Road was not the only thoroughfare from the New Yatt Road to the Church. Barret's Lane is an ancient "hollow way" that runs along the eastern boundary of the field to the East of Bridewell Close (known herein as "Bridewell Field") and to the north of the New Yatt Road. Barret's Lane is an integral part of the history of North Leigh. Pockets of sites of historical significance such as Barret's Lane are integral to the character assessment of the Parish.

Given that parts of the Church date from the eleventh century, there has clearly been habitation along Church Road for over a thousand years. The fields bordering Church Road hold valuable evidence of past human activity, from the ruins of the manor house and the buried village at the north, to Barret's Lane at the south.

Image: Barret's Lane

Given the huge historical, communal and aesthetic importance of Church Road and its environs to North Leigh, the Neighbourhood Plan is keen to ensure as far as possible that it is protected from development. In particular views of North Leigh and of the church are integral to the character and should be protected from development.

Housing/ building design and style

For most of its length Church Road is bordered by single houses and open fields, except at the southern end where it is bordered by Bridewell Close to the west and Kingston Heights to the East.

Almost all of the houses along Church Road are of the vernacular architecture of the Cotswolds, that is, of Cotswold Stone walls and roofs of Cotswold Stone, thatch or slate. There are just two buildings on Church Road that are not of that style, being modern bungalows. The buildings of Bridewell Close and Kingston Heights, although more recent additions to the village, are also constructed in the local vernacular style.

As some of the oldest houses in North Leigh are in Church Road, it is an accurate historic reflection of North Leigh as it was.



Images: Church road housing and setting

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

Church Road is a narrow, winding road on a steep hill. The road is single track, without street lighting or pavements. Generally, the houses are detached, with spacious gardens to front and rear. There is one terrace of three houses and one of two, with back gardens.

Even where not bordered by fields, Church Road is leafy and green through its entire length. There are many mature trees along the roadside, ranging from ornamental trees in front gardens (such as willow and horse chestnut) to indigenous wild mature trees along the boundaries with the fields.

Equally important are the views to the Church – within the “Overview” section above the factors leading to the Church being isolated within farmland are outlined, this makes the views of the Church across open fields of national, if not international, significance and – again - these views are intended to be protected within the Neighbourhood Plan as they relate to the setting of the Grade 1 listed church.





Images (from top left); key views of church; from Bridewell Close; view of church from Bridewell Field; view of church from Evenlode Close.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

North Leigh is a village of walkers – a huge proportion of the residents of North Leigh make use of the network of quiet roads and footpaths that criss-cross the Parish. Many walkers use Church Road and the footpaths to the west, including the two footpaths that cross Bridewell Field, and the footpaths to the East. Walkers with dogs, and horse riders, are a common sight on Church Road.



Images (clockwise from top left): Church Road, streetscape

Noise, light, and smells

There is no street lighting on Church Road – the skies are dark at night. Apart from occasional traffic noise, the only artificial noise on Church Road are the Church Bells – to herald Church services and at the practice every Friday evening.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA B

- Church Road itself has a large number of older traditional buildings of the Cotswold vernacular and whilst some of these are listed others might merit local listing as they contribute strongly to character.
- Behind these larger Church Road plots and properties the more modern up to two storey housing of Bridewell Close and Kingston Heights are visible. There are few buildings higher than two storeys in the village.
- Church Road connects the church to the heart of the village on the ridge and there is a degree of continuity in form and a tranquil, aesthetic appearance, stone walls, slate or thatched roofs, “Oxford” red chimneys.
- This is a dark sky part of the village with no street lighting.
- Views in and out of the village in this area are very important to setting especially of the Grade 1 Listed St Marys Church and the fields to the West and East of Church Road rising up to the ridge provide more elevated superb views of the church.
- There is an excellent network of footpaths in this area which are well used by local people.
- Traditional features include drystone walls, grass verges, mature trees provide a sense of enclosure to Church Road which is not a through road and gradually narrows to become a lane as it descends from the ridge.
- Staggered building lines, with large plots occupied by traditional buildings with varied orientation dominate the scene.

IN CONCLUSION

Although not designated at the moment it is recommended that the District Council considers the merits of designation of a Conservation Area in this area and including the setting of the Grade 1 Listed St Marys Church.

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village especially uninterrupted views across open country of St Marys Church, particularly from Bridewell Close, Bridewell Field, Evenlode Close, Wilcote View and the footpaths behind Park Road (which should be protected in the Neighbourhood Plan).

Proposals should also retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials. Any development should integrate with existing local paths and lanes to encourage walking and should maintain tranquillity in this rural location.

The only development along Church Road that would be commensurate with its current character assessment would be infill development. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.

It would be undesirable for further areas of open land to be opened up for modern housing by redeveloping existing Church Road plots to connect to fields beyond. Infill or larger plot subdivision should be resisted and in no case should mature trees within Church Road properties be removed to allow for more intensification of development. Garage space should also not be set in front of homes or be visible from Church Road.

Any proposals for additional buildings or extensions along Church Road should incorporate the use of traditional styles and materials to be in keeping with the local properties on Church Road. Development must be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.

Area C: Main Roads and attached side roads

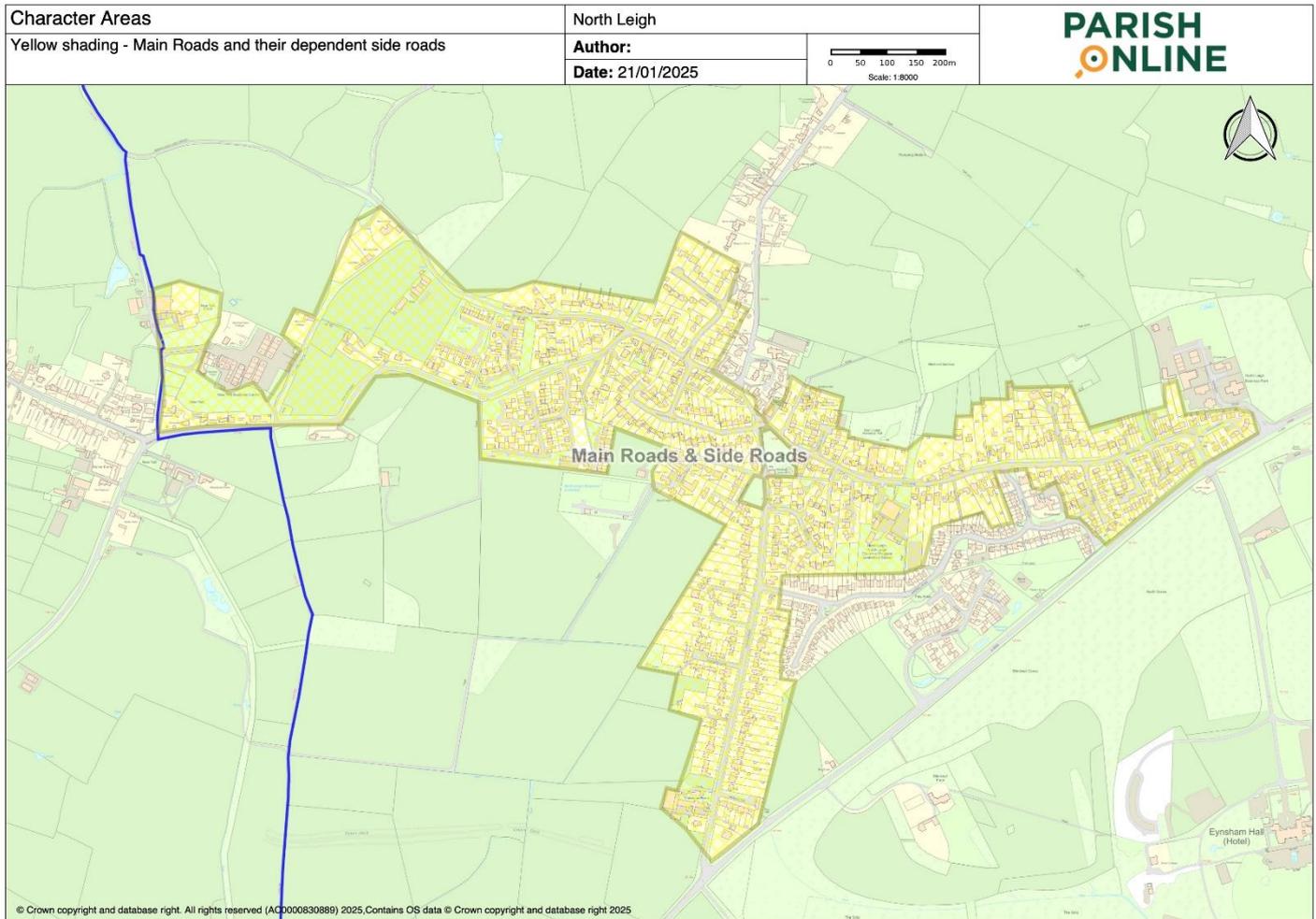


Image: Character Area C

Overview and value

This area encompasses the three main arteries within North Leigh – Park Road, New Yatt Road and Common Road - and its associated side streets, albeit outside Character Area A.

The area is quite large, and while contiguous and often with common characteristics, benefits from analysis as three sub-areas. Some limited areas and including listed buildings may merit inclusion in a village Conservation Area or at the very least being considered suitable for local listing.

SUB-AREA 1: Park Road and Side Streets

This area comprises Park Road, Evenlode Close, Wilcote View, Bluebell Gardens, Oak Tree Close, Park Close, Woodside, Parkside and Hazeldene Close. It also includes one listed building.

Park Road runs roughly East-West linking the Estelle Manor junction on the A4095 with the historic heart of the village. Whilst a small cluster of houses close to the A4095 junction, and also close to

the Masons Arms, were in existence before 1900 the majority of houses in this area were built post-WW2.

This area is of the highest communal value being the link to the village allotments, school, library, shop/PO, Community Centre, Youth Club, playground, and footpaths into the countryside. For many, it is also the road to the pubs. All these amenities are much valued by local people.

Park Road is an important link road into the village and has been in use for well over 100 years. The development of Park Road clearly evidences how North Leigh has grown as a village with modern housing arriving after the connection of mains water and electricity in the late 1930s, the post war boom, followed by drainage being completed in the late 1950s.

The historical connection to the Mason family/Eynsham Park Estate (mentioned elsewhere) is still evident and there are a handful of interesting older residential dwellings. For example, the 'Swiss Cottages' referred to later and Ivy Cottage.

The proximity of Park Road to ancient footpaths also demonstrates the role this area played in the lives of ancient communities.



Images (left to right): mid-century housing meets new; traditional cottage

With the exception of some of the older buildings, and the listed building, most of the buildings in this area have yet to attain historic value despite the fact that Park Road itself has been in existence for well over 125 years.

Walking or driving along Park Road the impression one gets is that it is very much a significant 'thoroughfare' in village life. At busy times the main stimuli are derived from the amenities to which it provides access. The senses are focussed on the sounds of children playing, Royal Mail vans going about their business and visiting the Post Office and the sense of belonging to something bigger as people drop off parcels, use the village shop or take part in community classes and events.

At less busy times a sense of peace descends on Park Road, disturbed only by the S7 bus. The side streets are sleepy, quiet roads for the most part with a sense of calm and domesticity. The whole village is now subject to a 20mph restriction and this has helped reduce average speeds although



it is fair to add that at the narrow, bendy section of Park Road it was never possible to drive much faster than 20mph anyway.

Image: the approach to the bend in Park Road looking East to West before the school just around the bend.

Housing/ building design and style

Housing flanks both sides of Park Road and its side streets (with a few notable exceptions such as at the playground, school, hall and access to the allotments).

Housing density on Park Road and its side streets varies from 8 to 18 houses per hectare and this reflects the wide variety housing types from large detached to semis and terraced. There is also a selection of detached or semi-detached bungalows / dormer bungalows – a few on Park Road itself and many on Wilcote View. Home ownership is equally varied with Park Road being largely owner-occupied and some side streets offering Housing Association homes. As might be expected this adds to the variety of architectural styles with Housing Association properties being more utilitarian in style.



Images: an interesting, red/ coloured brick design and traditional stone

The eclectic character of the Park Road area can be summarised by quoting from [A History of the County of Oxford](#):

“Within the space of 75 yards along Park Road East of Evenlode Close are a modern yellow-brick house, a pair of stone houses dated 1869, a pair of 19th-century houses of red brick with vitrified headers, a modern bungalow of reconstituted stone, and a low, whitewashed brick bungalow, one of several built in the late 19th century and known as the Swiss cottages” ... “Nos.11 and 13 Park Road form a pair of stone houses dated JEH 1869, perhaps for Jesse Hicks, a carpenter and smallholder. The Swiss cottages have low-pitched roofs and large central stacks. They ... have been built by the Eynsham Park estate, which was also responsible for several more conventional brick houses of good quality known as Kennel Cottages, opposite the Park's north lodge.”

Superimposed onto this backdrop are many typical 1950s/ 1960s houses alongside brand new houses, and a small estate of houses at Bluebell Gardens built in the last 5 years.

Construction materials reflect the variety and age of the houses with brick, stone, reconstituted stone and render/ whitewash plus some pebbledash putting in an appearance.

There seems to have been little thought given to the overall aesthetic and this in itself is part of the charm of this area. Many of the houses along Park Road are set back from the road, some with extensive front gardens creating a light and green aspect in these sections of the road.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

Leading off Park Road are public footpaths giving access to open fields and the village allotments. There is intermittent street lighting along the length of the road. There are also pedestrian cut-throughs to Windmill Road and Windmill Heights/ Common Road.



Image: trees and hedgerows by a private track leading off Park Road

The new primary school on Park Road is typical of its type built in the late 1960s. According to www.british-history.ac.uk, there were two day schools in North Leigh in the 1830s, one attended by the charity children, the other by c. 40 children paying fees. In 1838 the two schools were subsumed in a National school on a site given by the 5th duke of Marlborough. When pupil numbers grew and the old school became unfit for modern use, the new school, was completed in 1967.

The original Memorial Hall was built in 1920 to remember the fallen in the WW1 and it was completely rebuilt and re-opened in 2007. The present Memorial Hall has parking for about four

cars in front of the Hall and two cars in the layby opposite, but this is insufficient for this amenity and users of the Hall/Shop/Library complex need to park on the roadside as well.

The playground is limited in size and equipment but is well used and this contributes to pedestrian traffic along this stretch of road. Other than bus stops and one bus shelter at the Eastern end of Park Road there is no street furniture in this area.

Views are tightly focused and channelled by the flow of the road and the proximity, or otherwise, of housing to the roadside. Housing largely restricts lateral views although it is possible to get a feel of the surrounding countryside from Wilcote View, the field abutting the Eastern end of Park Road close to the bend round to the A4095 junction and a private track.

Many of the postwar, privately owned houses on Park Road are set well back from the roadside and screened from the road by fences or hedges. The view of Park Road at the Eastern end is leafy, quieter and green due to the wide verges and trees/ hedges and with houses largely set back from the road. Past the school, heading West there are no grass verges and the view is restricted by houses being closer to the roadside.

The side streets replicate this divergence with some streets being open and leafy (e.g. Parkside) and others being more 'urban' (e.g. Woodside).

Intermingled amongst the 20th century houses and bungalows there a few houses that have historic characteristics and feature thatched roofs or attractive brickwork. Rooflines are irregular, matching the variation in housing type, and this adds interest to the streetscape.

As the pictures below show, there are noticeably fewer trees/ hedges at the Western end of Park Road compared with the Eastern end. Some side roads like Woodside, the western end of Oak Tree Close and Bluebell Gardens have few trees/ hedges on the streets themselves (although there are usually trees rising up in the background) whereas others like Parkside have a greener appearance. There are no particular landscape features others than those noted previously and the area is relatively flat without water features. Telegraph poles line the length of the road but are not present in the side roads.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

At the A4095 end of Park Road (the Eastern end) there is a pedestrian pavement on the northern side of the road and wide grass verges but as one heads West, just by Ivy Cottage and before the road reaches the school, the road narrows considerably before bending and the grass verges disappear. The historic alignment of the road at this point created by older properties that sit on the roadside means there is only room for a pavement on the south side of the road.

This location is a major 'pinch point' in the road system and is very congested at school run and other times. Almost opposite the school is the Memorial Hall and its associated community amenities making this a busy section of road with tight manoeuvres for cars and buses to negotiate.



Images (left to right): Park Road streetscape looking East towards the leafy end of the road contrasting with the same road further west and looking west where houses are closer to the road and there are fewer trees/ hedges



Image: Park Road traffic illustrating the difficulties buses/ cars face negotiating the narrow section of road

The area around the school/ Memorial Hall has a busy feel and might be described as ‘vibrant’ at times within the context of this being a small, quiet, village. The rest of Park Road feels like a main arterial road into a village which it obviously is, with periods of calm coupled with busy activity around rush hour and school times, whilst the side streets are mostly quiet; all the side streets with the exception of Windmill Road are no-through roads.

One of the main features of Park Road commented on by local residents is traffic congestion around the school/ hall and the problems created by parked cars exacerbated by S7 double decker buses which have to use this road to serve the village.

buses which have to use this road to serve the village.

Noise, light, and smells

Shade is dictated by width of the road/ proximity of houses to the road and the amount of greenery by the roadside with the Eastern end of the road being noticeably lighter than the western end.

Traffic noise is an issue for householders living close to the A4095 and, for the rest of this area, in common with the rest of the village it is the noise of buses, overflying by Brize Norton air traffic and Estelle Manor helicopters that are the main issue.

The only ‘smell’ issues result from drainage problems caused by old infrastructure that has not kept pace with housing development.

SUB-AREA 2: New Yatt Road

New Yatt Road is a key part of North Leigh, stretching out from the village centre towards the hamlet of New Yatt. It combines a rich mix of historical character with more recent developments, offering a balanced and appealing variety of homes.



Image: the Woodman pub

As you travel along the road, the combination of traditional stone cottages and modern houses reflects the evolution of the area. Notable among these is Greystones, a Grade II-listed property from the 18th century, which adds a touch of history. Walking along New Yatt Road is pleasant, even with some sections of narrow pavements.

The Woodman Pub, located near the Green Lane junction, remains a significant part of the community. With its beer garden and history of hosting traditional games like Aunt Sally, it has been a popular meeting point for residents over the years. The pub recently welcomed a new landlord, bringing fresh energy and potential to this well-loved venue.

New Yatt Road offers a balance between traditional village life and thoughtful modern development. Its blend of housing, natural surroundings, and accessibility makes it a key part of North Leigh's identity. Whether enjoying the views, exploring the local countryside, or simply walking to a nearby amenity, New Yatt Road captures what's special about life in this village.



Images (left to right): view east towards junction with Church Road; view towards junction with Green Lane

Housing/ building design and style

The properties along New Yatt Road are varied in style and age, contributing to its character. From cozy terraced cottages near The Woodman Pub to larger detached homes and semi-detached houses, the road offers something for everyone. Many homes benefit from well-maintained

gardens, giving the area a cared-for, welcoming feel. Bridewell Close, with its mostly bungalow-style homes, showcases how thoughtful design makes the most of the elevated views across the Evenlode Valley.

Newer developments like Shepherds Walk and Masons Grove have been carefully designed to blend with the surrounding area. Built using materials and styles in keeping with the Cotswold aesthetic, these homes add to the diversity and practicality of the housing options in this part of the village.



Image: Greystones, Grade 2 listed

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

New Yatt Road is fortunate to be surrounded by stunning countryside. Residents can enjoy expansive views of the Evenlode Valley, with landmarks such as the spire of St. Michael’s Church in Leafield visible in the distance. Quicken Copse, located near Masons Grove, is a peaceful spot for quiet walks and offers a natural retreat close to home.



Images (clockwise from top left): View over Evenlode valley at junction with Bridewell Close; view to the north from opposite Stonehouse; view to the west from opposite Stonehouse.

A network of public footpaths connects this area to the wider landscape, encouraging exploration of the local countryside. The combination of green spaces, well-kept gardens, and the surrounding rural environment creates an attractive setting for residents and visitors alike.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

New Yatt Road remains largely quiet and is primarily used by local residents. Traffic calming measures and a village-wide 20mph speed limit have improved safety, particularly for pedestrians and school buses traveling through the area.

Pavements are available along most of the road, switching sides at Green Lane, and street lighting ensures good visibility for those walking to nearby facilities like pubs, the library, or the village hall.

Noise, light, and smells

There is a streetlight as you enter New Yatt Road, another by Bridewell Close but no others. There are streetlights in the two new developments. At night a good part of the road is in darkness. Generally, there is little smell or noise in the area, other than from traffic or garden machinery, or from the Woodman Pub.

SUB-AREA 3: Common Road

This is a straight, two-way village road, approximately half a kilometre in length. It runs north and south between the junction of A4095 in the south to the northerly T-junction, which leads to New Yatt Road (to west) and Park Road (to east). The road is tarmacked, with pavements both sides. Telegraph and power poles, with overhead cables, criss-cross the road.

This sub-area also includes Cuckamus Lane, Heath Farm Lane, Windmill Heights, Common Close, and Leigh Close.

This is an attractive area in which to live as many homes have countryside views. The houses are well spaced apart and it feels calm (when traffic clears after peak times). The housing evolved organically during the mid to late 20th century, with some more recent additions on a very small scale. Houses are set back from the road with long front gardens (burgage plots previously?) behind a road verge.

Grim's Ditch which lies to the west of Common Road is a linear earthwork dating back to the Iron Age and has significant historic value. Grim's Ditch (to the west of Common Farm marked on the above map) is a boundary said to be made in the Iron Age but now thought to be of Romano-British construction.

Whilst much of the housing on Common Road was built in the second half of the 20th century, the location of Cuckamus Green would point towards this being a place where people would have gathered. Common Road has a strong community spirit with residents often living there for many years. This is demonstrated by the pride they take in the village and care for its future. For example, when the bus shelter suffered damage due to vandalism, local residents have taken it upon themselves to repair.

Housing/ building design and style

Housing on both sides of Common Road has been built since 1945. Before then the only dwellings were Common Farm at the south and the cottages near Cuckamus Green at north west side.

At Cuckamus Lane there are older cottages plus some newer houses on south side of the Green, and 20th century detached houses around the west side. Heath Farm Lane contains a small number of individually built detached houses, with rear gardens backing onto fields. At Windmill Heights

there are modern detached homes in a small close with off road parking. These are built in pale stone with uniform window and door styles. Common Close is a small cul-de-sac off the west side of Common Road. It has a pavement, and some off-road parking. Leigh Close – a small close opposite Common Farm on the east side, near the junction of A4095 – has less than 10 houses. These have off-road parking and open front gardens.

The road is lined with a mix of mainly mid to late 20th century semis, detached houses and bungalows. These are set back from the road and mostly have front gardens, drives, parking areas, and dropped kerbs to the road. There are no industrial buildings, blocks of flats/apartments or rows of terraced houses along Common Road.

However, there is a small single storey church building on the east side abutting the wasteland near the windmill. There is a range of housing styles, or modernised homes. Some were built as council housing post WW 2 and have some sympathetic renovations or modernisations in keeping with surrounding styles. Building materials include local pale stone, some pale brick, some painted or rendered white or cream. Roof coverings are mainly grey tiles and slate. No red tiles are noted.

The small closes /lanes leading off Common Road have a mixture of styles relating to when built, similar to Common Road. Most have off road parking, and front/rear gardens.



Images (left to right): stone cottage, top of Common Road; housing around Cuckamus Green

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

Common Road has long views north/south, and views to fields in all directions either directly or through gaps between houses. Views from rear of houses on west side of Common Road are of fields and woodland, and the ancient Grim's Ditch. Views from rear of houses on east side are a mix of fields, trees lining the A4095, and other housing (of varying age).

The houses on Heath Farm Lane back onto fields, while those at Windmill Heights have limited views. Common Close has views to fields and woodland and Grim's Ditch and Cuckamus Green houses have view of the Green and trees at the front, some with field views at rear.



Images (left to right): Heath Farm Lane; Cuckamus Green

On Common Road most properties have front gardens with hedges, trees, shrubs and discreet wooden fencing, all contributing to the attractiveness of the roadside. Cuckamus Green contains trees and an open grass area with public access. In Windmill Heights there is a small, open grass area and trees along the public footpath.



Images (left to right): view west from Common Road; west of Common Road from public footpath

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

There is no off-road parking near the windmill, resulting in up to a dozen cars parking on Common Road, alongside Cuckamus Green.

A public footpath runs along Heath Farm Lane, and from there along field edges towards New Yatt. In this area, the Thames Water reservoir works has vehicle access along Heath Farm Lane, alongside the public footpath.



Images (left to right): entrance to Common Close; bottom of Common Road, looking north

Noise, light, and smells

Due to the limited number of streetlights Common Road is quite dark at night, and a torch is required when walking.

There are no significant smells in the area.

There is traffic noise from cars and buses, and some noise from the A4095. However, there is much natural noise from birdlife around the gardens and hedge boundaries.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA C

- The sub areas within Area C may be seen as enclosing the central Area A with more modern suburban housing including considerable numbers of chalet bungalows, and of higher density housing in cul de sac side roads. Scattered among them are older buildings often fronting the main roads of Common Road, Park Road and New Yatt Road where densities are lower generally.
- Much of this area may be seen as post war infilling laying out patterns of development geared to the car. Open spaces are limited in these areas. There is little prospect of any significant change such as infilling in these side roads. Outside the central areas of the village there are more boundary hedges and less in the way of drystone walls. Homes flanking both sides of main roads often face side gardens hence the need for boundary treatment for privacy.
- In suburban side roads front gardens have often been surfaced for parking as roads are too narrow for on street parking so a more cluttered busy scene prevails which is visually and aesthetically unattractive in places. There are far fewer verges, boundary walls and open spaces which characterise older parts of the village.
- New schemes such as Breakspear Way/Gough Close have been built with limited footway access to the village centre, a good 10-minute walk away. The pathway is unusable and is often inundated. Although there is a large open space it acts as a barrier between new residents and limits community interaction and cohesion.

Segregation of social housing is a given in the design there rather than being integrated. Some design detailing such as white render is alien to the village.

- Being located on the edge of the village on a scarp slope the new homes are visible from surrounding lower lying areas which is detrimental to character.

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials.

Design of new development should therefore reflect density, a mix of dwelling types and other issues identified above in any planning statement. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.

Permeability should be enhanced through protecting safe convenient walking and cycling routes away from distributor roads providing access to the centre. Any development should integrate with existing local paths, alleys and lanes to encourage walking and promote tranquillity in the village.

Extensions or redevelopment should reflect the pattern of development in the older central parts of the village including layout, orientation, design and use of materials. i.e. stone, slate, thatch, especially where visible from main roads. Any limited one-off infill developments that do take place should respect their immediate surroundings in scale and character. Infill or larger plot subdivision along main roads in particular should be resisted and in no case should mature trees be removed to allow for more intensification of development in this Character Area.

There are few buildings higher than two storeys in the village and new buildings should be no higher than 2-2.5 storeys.

Development must be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.

Area D: Windmill Road and associated streets

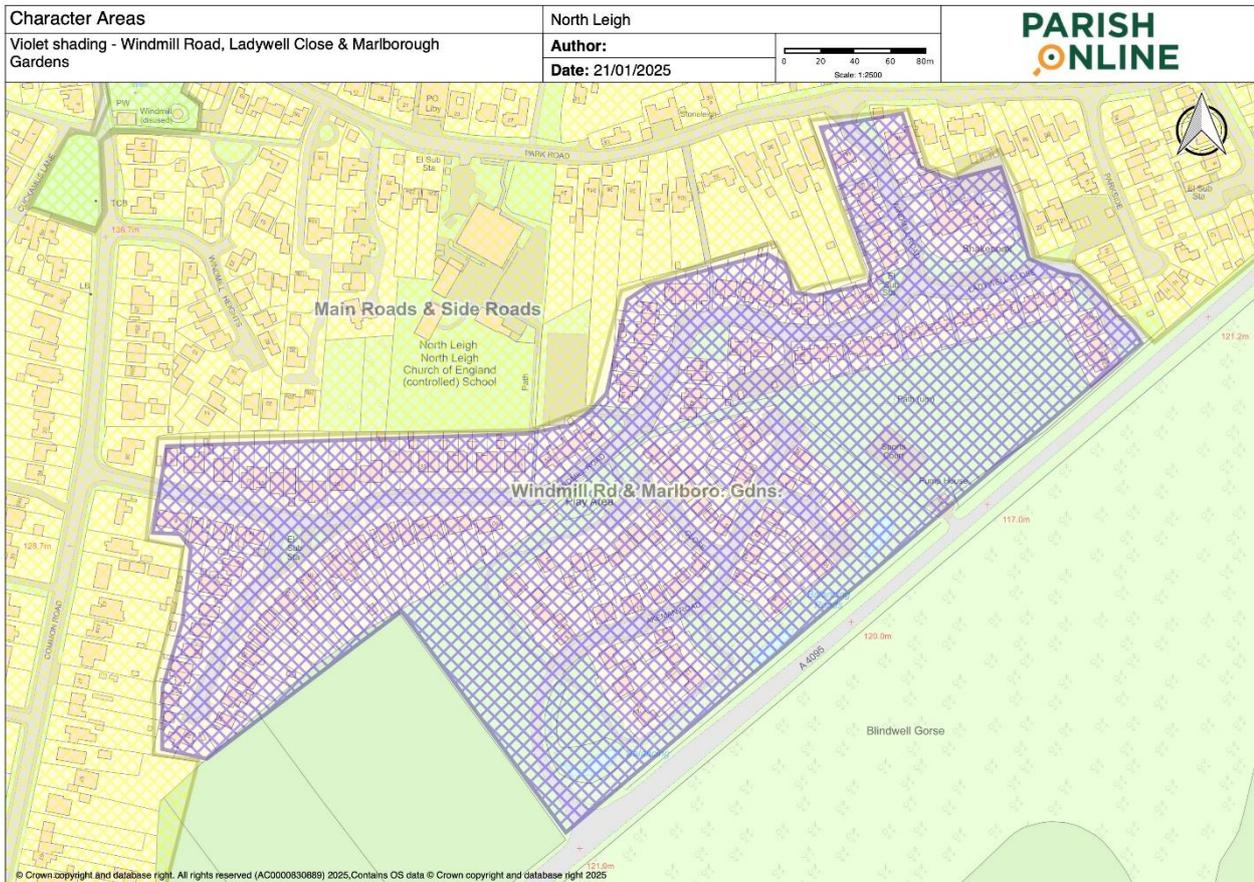


Image: Character Area D

Overview and value

Windmill Road, Windmill Close, and Ladywell

Windmill Road runs West to East starting from Common Road, ending in a northern curve to Park Road. There is one side road, Windmill Close, built later than the main road. There are two places where Windmill Road curves, the first to the north after No.59 and the second sharper curve from No.106. Where this curve appears, the straight continuation of the road becomes Ladywell Close.

The names of the main road – Windmill Road and the side street, Windmill Close – make reference to the historic windmill in the centre of the village. The name Ladywell Close references the existence of the Lady Well at the foot of the Ash Walk between Wilcote and Bridewell Farm, though there is no obvious connection between the well and this area of the North Leigh.

It appears that residents appreciate that these roads have a settled history – gardens in front of houses and especially behind are well established and looked after. Not only have some of the bungalows had additions built into their roofs, but some residents of both bungalows and 2-storey houses have had solar panels installed – only the solar arrays on houses on the north side of the road are visible to passers-by (arrays on the south side face the back gardens of the houses).

Marlborough Gardens

This housing estate of 50 houses was built in 2021-23. It is accessed from the A4095, except for a footpath through to Windmill Road to the north. This area comprises Akeman Road, Millers Close and Foxglove End, now collectively known as Marlborough Gardens. The area was previously part of a farm and most recently used for grazing.

Since this is a new estate, residents are gradually getting to know each other – since residents began moving in, two major events have been organised.

Housing/ building design and style

Windmill Road, Windmill Close, and Ladywell Close

The size of plots varies according to whether houses are built as singles, semis, or terraces. They were mainly built in the 1960s - 1970s – the land had previously been agricultural.

The first group of houses on Windmill Road are semi-detached bungalows. Some have had extra bedrooms added in the roof area (dormer windows have been added). This group is made of brick, some having parts of the walls covered in white rendering.

At No. 53, there is a terrace of 4 bungalows made of “sandstone”: i.e. bricks moulded out of ground sand, diverse fragments of rock and some form of silicone. The semi-detached houses in the next section of Windmill Road have two storeys. There is a facing of tiles on the upper storeys. There houses have hardstanding for cars. Then a mix of semi and terraced housing up to the corner with Ladywell Close.

The last section of Windmill Road before it reaches Park Road has 2 sets of 4 houses joined together. On the other side is the care home which belongs to Cottsway Housing Association – this building is shielded from the road by a high hedge.

The first houses in Windmill Close are bungalows like those on the main road, except they are detached. The most recent are made of “sandstone”. At the far end of the Close are 2 semi-detached houses with painted wood cladding on the upper storeys.



Images: Windmill Road housing

The first houses in Ladywell Close are terraced, brick bungalows with steep footpaths down to the door. The only parking available is on the opposite side of the road. Further on, there are semi-

detached houses in sandstone – the most recent built in 1976. Ladywell Close ends with a small, grassed area and a hedge which hides the A4095. There is no access to that road.



Images: Ladywell Close

Marlborough Gardens

The houses on Akeman Road are mainly detached, but a small number are semi-detached. Most houses have built-in garages and gardens. There is additional parking for cars. Millers Close is similar to Akeman Road, except that all houses are detached. Some houses have chimneys, but these are for decoration i.e. there are no fireplaces.

Throughout the estate, the houses have a variety of construction i.e. brick ones are mixed in with other houses made of reconstituted stone (in a sandstone colour) with some being partly covered in white rendering. The exception is Foxglove End towards the east of the estate, which has two blocks of 3 houses attached: one is a terrace, the other 3 houses joined to create a triangle. These blocks are close to the A4095, but there is no access to that road.



Images (left to right): mixed housing on Akeman Road; terrace in Foxglove end

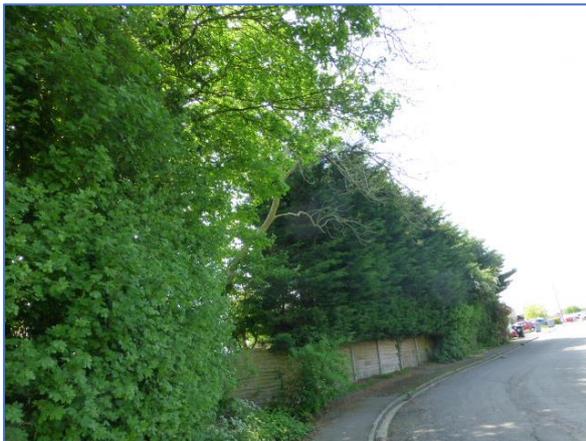
Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

Windmill Road, Windmill Close, and Ladywell Close

There are no gaps on the main road, except for footpaths leading to Park Road and towards the Akeman Road estate.

Where Windmill Road curves north for the first time, natural vegetation has been retained on the south side – where there is a gap in the housing. This means that Windmill Road is shielded from intrusion by the new estate, known as Rectory Road.

In Ladywell Close, there is one plot of land which is too small to take a house. The residents have welcomed its existence: shrubs, a grassed area and wildflowers are being maintained.



Images (left to right): greenery, Windmill Road; green space, Ladywell Close

Marlborough Gardens

There are no public views out of the estate. There is a green area on Akeman Road, which has grass that includes one area that needs replanting, and saplings which were planted late in the construction process, so that it is not yet providing the welcoming space intended.

There is also a path planted with saplings at the boundary next to the A4095 – again, this should be more welcoming once the trees have grown. There is a children’s playground in Millers Close, which can be accessed from Windmill Road as well as the housing estate. It is of high quality and is available for the wider community. Residents have decent gardens and privacy in this layout.

The new development feels very open with a small “village green” good for social cohesion and community events. The scale is good not overbearing in terms of the wider village, with plenty of design variations for instance, roof types, porches and dormers. Affordable housing is mixed in well.

Again, as with other edge locations on elevated ground the scheme is visually dominant from the main road, giving an urban rather than a rustic appearance.



Images (left to right): unfinished green area, Akeman Road; playground, Miller's Close

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

Windmill Road, Windmill Close, and Ladywell Close

Sections of Windmill Road have insufficient parking for cars, which results in difficulties for passing traffic – the bus service from Witney used to pass through Windmill Road, but a few years ago the route was changed to Park Road because of difficulty getting a (single-decker) bus through.

Marlborough Gardens

Residents complain about the difficulty of accessing the only public transport, which stops on Common Road or Park Road. Stops can only be reached by walking some distance. This is a problem for families with small children or people with limited mobility. The streets are wide enough for off-street parking.

Noise, light, and smells

Windmill Road, Windmill Close, and Ladywell Close

Shading is provided by the houses themselves, and there are streetlights. There is no noise beyond what is generated by habitation and the passing of vehicles.

Marlborough Gardens

There are streetlights of a modern design – less tall than usually installed – thus providing safety at night without being intrusive. The estate is very quiet during the day, except for traffic noise from the nearby A4095 for those houses near the southern boundary.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA D

- This part of the village is characterised by more recent development, with many bungalows from the 1960s. These often feel congested and lack spaciousness.
- Newer development is more spacious as at Marlborough Gardens with quality housing and appearance but with some design features not in keeping with the rest of the village. Use of materials in new housing is better than in 1960s with 2-2.5 storey homes using Cotswold stone, Welsh slate and other heritage styles materials. Layout at Akeman Road has no through traffic and there is no scope for rat runs through the village, which keeps it more tranquil.
- There are views over open countryside, with mature trees on periphery creating some extra privacy. There is limited street lighting, achieving “darker sky” in this part of the village.

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials.

Permeability should be enhanced through protecting safe convenient walking and cycling routes away from distributor roads providing access to the centre. Any development should integrate with existing local paths and lanes to encourage walking and should maintain tranquillity in this Character Area.

Any limited one-off infill developments that do take place should respect their immediate surroundings in scale and character. Infill or larger plot subdivision along main roads in particular should be resisted and in no case should mature trees be removed to allow for more intensification of development in this Character Area.

Extensions or redevelopment should reflect the pattern of development in the older central parts of the village including layout, orientation, design and use of materials ie stone, slate, thatch. There are few buildings higher than two storeys in the village and new buildings should be no higher than 2-2.5 storeys.

Development should be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.

Area E: East End and Wilcote and the Wider Parish

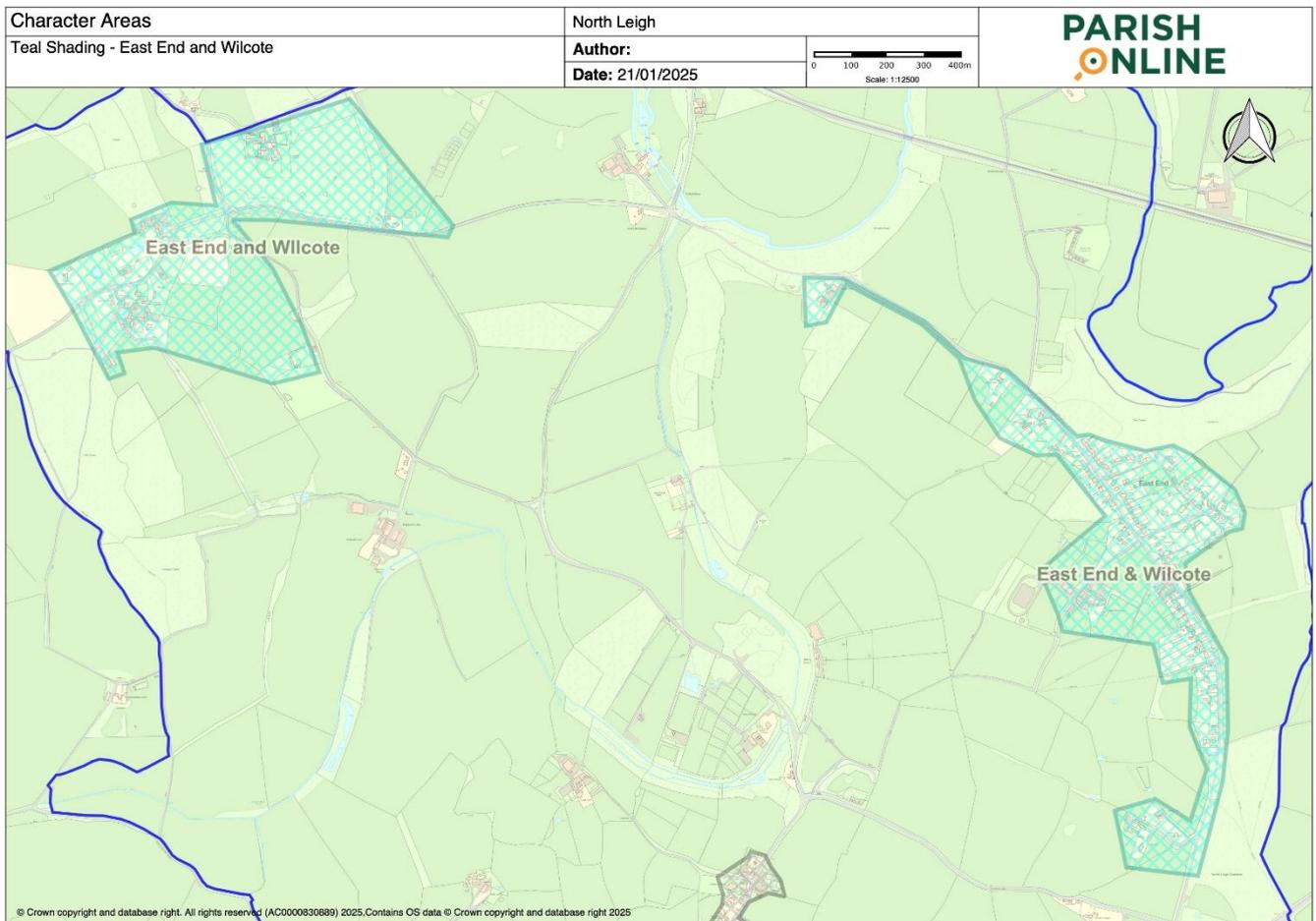


Image: Character Area E

Overview and value

EAST END

East End is a hamlet of largely linear form within North Leigh parish. It exudes a sense of community and rural tranquillity. Residents take pride in this area and its heritage, fostering a welcoming and neighbourly atmosphere that imbues the area with a strong sense of place.

East End's historical value lies in its connection to the past over many centuries. Through exploration and study, one can uncover layers of history, such as the Roman Villa and the evidence

of quarrying, alongside the farms that are still in existence, that enrich the understanding of the hamlet and its place within the broader context of West Oxfordshire.



The aesthetic appeal of East End is undeniable, with some traditional charming architecture, scenic views, and tranquil surroundings plus a number of public footpaths and bridleways. Visitors and residents alike are drawn to the hamlet for its beauty and sense of rural idyll.

Given East End has no central point, pub, village hall or church, East End still holds significant communal value for its residents, who share a common bond rooted in their shared experiences and memories of life in the hamlet. Community events, local traditions, and everyday interactions contribute to the collective identity of the hamlet, fostering a sense of belonging and pride among its inhabitants.

Image: Roman villa, East End

WILCOTE

Wilcote is an outlying small hamlet of North Leigh, about 3.5 miles north of Witney. Wilcote was a hamlet of Cogges from at least the Middle Ages until the middle of the 19th century. It was then made a separate parish, one of the smallest in England. In 1931, the parish had a population of 15. On 1 April 1932 Wilcote civil parish was absorbed into North Leigh.

Wilcote is set at the intersection of 4 minor lanes, joining North Leigh with Finstock, East End and Ramsden. The south side of Wilcote offers a view over the valley to North Leigh.

Many buildings reflect the historical character of the hamlet, such as Wilcote Manor, which is listed in the Domesday book, and having Akeman Street which runs through the grounds of Wilcote Manor, covered by bluebells in the Spring. There were several ponds found near the church, and in the centre of the parish an underground brook and series of springs feed the former manorial fishponds, recorded in 1581. Two ponds remain, repaired in 1986.

There have been numerous artefacts found on Akeman Street (forms the northern boundary of North Leigh Parish) which runs through the grounds of Wilcote Manor. The artefacts are in a local museum. A Roman villa was discovered at Shakenoak Farm. There were remains of 8 Saxon burials, possibly of the 7th century, discovered in 1928, near the turning to Holly Court from the Wilcote Road.

Wilcote church, St Peter's was built in the latter part of the 12th century. Its parish is now part of Finstock, Leafield and Ramsden. Despite the very small size of the parish, it is an active church.



Bridewell Organic Gardens at the entrance into Wilcote from North Leigh is a mental health charity providing social and therapeutic horticulture, providing opportunities to learn new skills in a peaceful setting, operating an occasional open day, which involves locals and attracts visitors. The villagers also contribute to many organisations within North Leigh.

Image: Wilcote view

Housing/ building design and style

EAST END

The architecture in East End is predominantly traditional, with stone cottages and houses alongside more modern additions. The modern additions include single story dwellings and a short row of terraced houses. Many buildings exhibit historical character, reflecting the hamlet's heritage and rural charm.

A number of the stone buildings were in the past shops, pubs, and business properties. Two new properties have recently been built. Both of these were constructed of stone in keeping with the traditional building style.

There are a number of listed buildings.



Images: East End houses

WILCOTE

The architecture in Wilcote is predominantly traditional, consisting of stone cottages alongside more modern reconstituted stone, built in traditional style, with barn conversions. Not one house is the same. Many buildings exhibit historical character, reflecting the hamlet's heritage and rural charm. Wilcote Manor is north of the road furthest east, and dates back to the Domesday Book, and there are other listed buildings. Wilcote Grange Farm and Holly Grove House are south of the road.

There have been two new builds, one back in 2016 built in reconstituted stone, and currently there is a new building being completed, again in reconstituted stone. Although there has been controversy over the latter building, due to scale. There is a small group of houses at the start of the footpath toward Bridewell Farm, one is Holly Grove House. The others are in a small courtyard of connected and converted barns, difficult to identify how many, (possibly 8/9) some in old stone, some in reconstituted stone, pleasantly in keeping with neighbouring properties, they are situated in a private road. All the properties are set back from the road with good driveways and well concealed from the road.



Images: Wilcote housing

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

EAST END

East End is a hamlet where most of the properties are alongside the tarmacked road that runs through the hamlet, with varying gaps between buildings. There are front gardens to many of the properties and green areas interspersed throughout the hamlet, amidst the built environment. There is limited street furniture, for example noticeboards apart from traffic signs.

East End is surrounded by lush greenery, including fields, hedgerows, and wooded areas. Additionally, there are a number of small streams that contribute to the hamlet's natural charm. At the south end of East End Road is North Leigh Common.

Views in East End are picturesque, encompassing rolling countryside and scenes of the Roman Villa and the Evenlode river, along with a number of small woods and copses. The surrounding landscape of natural beauty adds to the overall appeal of the hamlet.



Images: East End streetscape



Image: surrounding landscape, East End

WILCOTE

Wilcote is a very unspoilt hamlet of 13 homes, all hidden away from the road, behind trees and shrubs, the spatial arrangement reflects a thoughtful balance between built environments and the natural surrounding and natural environment.

Most houses are set back from the road, surrounded by garden and green spaces and backing onto green spaces. The only section of pavement visible is outside the local church of Saint Peters. There is one post box on the main drive through the village. Single track roads serve the hamlet with the occasional passing place, together with many potholes, consequently there is no bus service. There are 4 access roads, Ashford Mill, Ramsden, Finstock and North Leigh.

Views in Wilcote are picturesque, encompassing rolling countryside to far afield, looking towards North Leigh on the hill, along with views and footpaths to a number of woods and copses, adding to the hamlet's tranquillity.

The Wychwood Way goes through the hamlet at the far west. If you take the Ash Walk the views encompass North Leigh in the distance.



Images: Wilcote, landscape setting

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

EAST END

The hamlet is linear in form serviced by a single road that connects with Wilcote. This road is in good condition, but the lack of pedestrian pathways or street lighting discourages walkers at night. East End homes are set back from the road which adds to this dark sky feel.

The recent installation of Speed Indication Devices in East End has made an impact on the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit. Data downloaded from the devices has shown that the number of vehicles travelling at speeds in excess of the speed limit is low. The most recent surveys carried out by the East End Speedwatch group shows. The two most recent Speedwatch survey results from sessions shows that from a total of 149 vehicles only 14 were exceeding 30mph.

There are no footpaths in East End and therefore the SID installations have improved the safety of pedestrians in the hamlet. As there is no public transport available in East End the pedestrian traffic is predominantly recreational.

WILCOTE

The hamlet is surrounded by fields, hedgerows and wooded areas, and many footpaths. The Wychwood Way passes through Holly Grove to the west. Given the number of footpaths, the area is appreciated by walkers.



Images: Wilcote, setting

Noise, light, and smells

EAST END

During daylight hours, East End is bathed in natural light, on clear days, with sunlight filtering through trees and illuminating the countryside. At night, the hamlet is a dark area due to there being no street lighting and as such is an ideal location for sky watching.

East End generally enjoys a quiet atmosphere, with sounds limited to the passing vehicles, horses or walkers and natural sounds of the countryside. The air carries the scent of fresh vegetation, and on occasion the smell of silage. In the colder months there is a pleasant scent of wood smoke from various chimneys.

WILCOTE

During daylight hours, Wilcote is bathed in natural light, through the many trees. There are no streetlights, so consequently at night there is no light pollution.

Wilcote enjoys a quiet life, with the odd farming noise, and the odd vehicle, and walker, cyclist and horse rider passing through, together with countryside smells, from the fauna and flora around.

The Wider Parish

Consideration of the wider parish landscape character and potential impact of more housing is also necessary. The wider parish is agricultural in nature with the river Evenlode passing through in a shallow valley. There is also significant tree cover in places which contributes to a very rustic even remote feel in the wider parish. Some of the roads around Wilcote in particular are very narrow single track with limited passing places serving the farming community mainly and are quite overgrown.

From the hamlets of East End and Wilcote which are in elevated positions views can be extensive over this rural landscape. Certain key features such as the churches and other prominent properties are quite dominant in this landscape and key views are offered especially from higher ground such as North Leigh itself.

Witney is located to the west and some new development in the parish is now visible from roads coming out of Witney which has degraded the quality views to an extent.

There are a number of views within the parish of North Leigh that are protected within the Neighbourhood Plan, including those around and across Grim's Ditch, in the area of open fields to the west of Common Road, and those across from "The Green" in East End across to the AONB and towards Hanborough. Views of the Grade 1 Listed St Marys Church are available from many directions across the wider parish across a historic landscape.

These have to varying degrees blended in but risk damaging character if continued. In addition, there is limited scope for further modern housing on a larger scale as this would be very visible from surrounding countryside. Key views into the village are therefore important to protect character and identity.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA E

- These two settlements occupy locations within the historic landscape and the area is criss-crossed with streams, ponds and other natural features providing a remote and rustic feel to these places. Wilcote is a very small hamlet in particular with limited access.
- They have seen limited development over the years and remain as tranquil rural communities. Surrounded by countryside they afford views of St Marys Church at North Leigh. The Roman Villa is a Scheduled Monument which again sits in an unchanged rustic setting.
- Housing is traditional using local materials and where there has been change this has been mostly barn conversions.
- There is limited street lighting achieving a dark sky effect in this locality.

IN CONCLUSION

Any proposal for planning permission would need to carefully consider the deeply rural nature of the Character Area especially the historic landscape and features therein would need to avoid damaging key views including any of St Marys Church, which should be protected in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The infrastructure serving the hamlets is very limited and any significant development ie other than very modest infilling would overwhelm services and access.

The benchmark for protection and environmental safeguarding here will accordingly be higher taking into account limited access, narrow lanes, the need retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials. Any development should maintain permeability and tranquillity in this rural location.

Area F: Commercial and Industrial Outliers

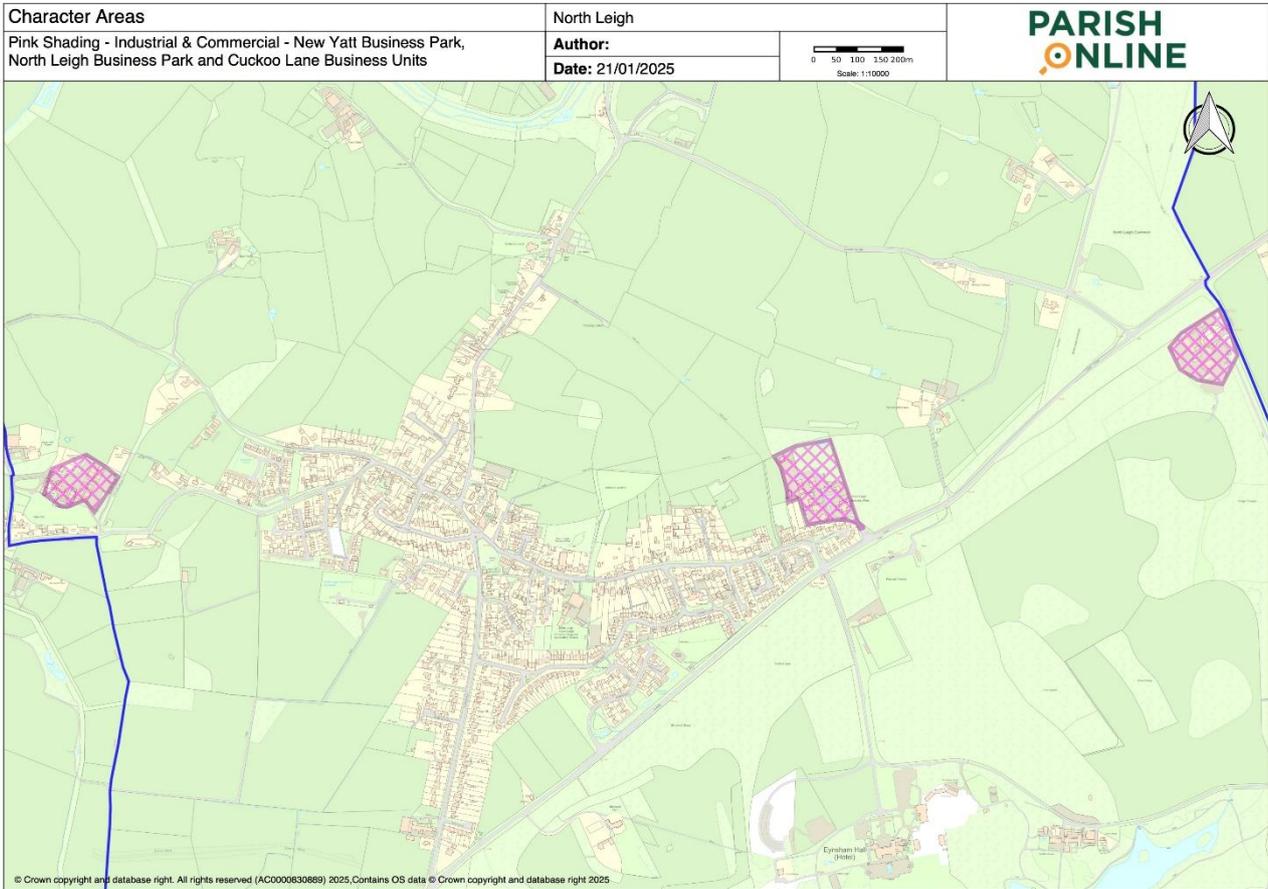


Image: Character Area F

Overview

This area encompasses Estelle Manor, Cuckoo Lane Sawmill, North Leigh Business Park (off A4095), and New Yatt Business Centre. This area has been divided into three sub areas: **North Leigh Business Park**, **New Yatt Business Centre**, and **Eynsham Park Estate Yard Workshops**.

SUB-AREA 1: North Leigh Business Park

Situated just off the A4095 just to the east of the main village, North Leigh Business Park hosts around fifteen SMEs, engaged in light industrial and commercial activity, with some ancillary office space. This is a modern industrial estate with no older buildings present.

There is a group of 9 houses between the site and the A4095, and there are wooded areas on two other sides. There is potential to add further units to the site in future.



Above: four views of North Leigh Business Park

Housing/ building design and style

The industrial units have medium to large building footprints. Most units are not fenced-off and the aprons and pavements are in generally good condition. This is probably due to lack of heavy goods vehicle traffic servicing this area.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The units are generally hidden from view from surrounding areas due to vegetation cover. There are few, if any, green spaces or recreation/ rest areas, with the exception of the mature trees on the eastern edge, where the business Park borders Perrott's Hill farmland.

The views within the business park are mostly constricted by office blocks and dominated by the parked cars by the streets. The exception are the open views from the north western edge of the estate. Business units on the west, however, are not publicly accessible.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

The Business Park is connected to the village by a pavement, though walkers do have to walk alongside the sometimes busy A4095 for a stretch of about 200 metres. The flow of traffic from cars, delivery vans and HGVs is generally low.

The parking within the business park is adequate for the number of vehicles with little parking on pavements. The A4095 cycle path, which is shared with walkers, crosses the access road at a rather awkward junction which could be dangerous to cyclists not exercising sufficient care. The S7 bus service passes the entrance to the business park, but the nearest stop is on Park Road, about 200 metres from the turning via the footway beside the A4095.

Noise, light, and smells

In the business park there are the usual sounds associated with light industry and traffic on the A4095 but they are not overly intrusive, nor is the lighting.

SUB-AREA 2: New Yatt Business Centre

The New Yatt Business Centre lies in the west of the parish, close to its boundary with Hailey parish. The park hosts some 25 businesses, engaged in activity ranging from publishing and broadcasting to light industrial and tech-based.



Above: four views of New Yatt Business Centre

Building design and style

The units are housed in five large, two storey timber clad buildings. The buildings were converted from barns originally constructed for raising chickens for eggs.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

There is some open space between the large units, and some tree planting and green spaces, with some efforts at landscaping. Internal views are mainly of car parks and the buildings of the business centre.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

The business centre has no footway linking it to the centre of North Leigh and due to the twisty road, it would be quite dangerous to attempt to walk to it. There are no pavements within the business centre and pedestrians and vehicles mix freely. There are large areas designated for parking and these avoid parked vehicles obstructing the entrances of the units. Due to the nature

of the businesses, there are occasions when large vehicles make deliveries to the business centre. Because of the narrow, twisty and constricted roads between the business centre and the main road network, this can cause traffic problems.

Improvements to access by foot or cycle would help reduce the need to use cars to get to work here.

Noise, light, and smells

There is no excessive noise from this area, other than traffic along New Yatt Road, and the lighting is not intrusive.

SUB-AREA 3: Eynsham Park Estate Yard and Workshops

Situated on the south east of the parish, off Cuckoo Lane, the workshops occupy a courtyard of buildings adjacent to the site of a former sawmill, which ceased operation about 5 years ago. The workshops however continue to operate as small business units. Eynsham Park Estates, who own the site, have registered an interest to redevelop the site with a mixture of housing and business units. The site is surrounded by the woodlands that form the perimeter of Eynsham Park.



Above: three views of Eynsham Park Estate Yard workshops

Housing/ building design and style

The workshops are constructed in a variety of styles. Some are housed within a traditional stone-built cottage. Others are contained within a pair of low timber clad single- storey units. They are surrounded by an attractive woodland setting. Residential use through conversion or extension should not impact the character of the area.

Green spaces, landscape and streetscape, and views

The workshops have an attractive and somewhat rustic appearance, well suited to the craft activities that are carried on in some of them. The site is rather small in area, and pleasantly bounded by mature woodland.

Traffic, transport, and pedestrian environment

There is no continuous pedestrian access from the workshops to the main part of the village, which is about half a mile away along the busy A4095. Cycling to the site is feasible, but turning off the A4095 into Cuckoo Lane is hazardous. The workshops are entered via a short access road off Cuckoo Lane. The S7 bus service passes the Cuckoo Lane turn, but the nearest bus stop is opposite Wroslyn Road, Freeland, about a half mile away from the Cuckoo Lane turning

Noise, light, and smells

There is no excessive noise from this area, other than traffic along the A4095, which can be significant at commuting time. At night this is a relatively dark area of the parish.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA F

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS – ALL AREAS

- There are three outliers in and around North Leigh which have different characteristics. Two of these are located close to existing main roads which enables traffic to avoid the village centre or residential areas. The third is not and causes traffic nuisance on the narrow approach lanes.
- Industrial areas often have a mix of open plan and palisade fenced plots creating an unattractive and functionally poor-quality layout of fragmented plots and buildings. Landscaping is fragmented, inadequate and in some areas needs re-purposing (e.g. for screening or to provide safe walking routes).
- Higher office content business park space is laid out in a better planned way with parking, common landscape design themes and building styles
- All of these outliers are sources of light pollution and also impact on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists who have to use busy roads or even estate access roads with no pavements with no proper provision.
- Some of these sites are in close proximity to existing long established residential areas which causes disturbance from traffic noise and other impacts including lighting and day to day operations.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS BY AREA

North Leigh Business Park

Good landscaping with pavements, neat paved surfaces for parking. Attractively designed units with potentially better more sustainable buildings. Access by foot, cycle and bus is feasible.

New Yatt Business Centre

Good locations for SMEs with varying unit sizes, enabling potential stepping stones as businesses expand. Environment is generally in good condition. Buildings functional and not very attractive. Not easy for walkers and cyclists for journey to work.

Eynsham Park Estate Yard Workshops

Attractive small-scale site with secluded woodland feel. Access other than by car is difficult. EPE have plans to redevelop the site in future, which will possibly change the scale and character of the site considerably. Conversion to domestic housing in this location would need improvements for cyclists and walkers and could be compromised by lack of sustainable transport options.

IN CONCLUSION

GENERAL

In general, the location of these sites close to large growing towns such as Witney and in reasonable proximity to Oxford and its Universities may suggest opportunities not just for growth but also for more digital driven sectors. This will help reduce heavy traffic through the settlement of North Leigh and create scope for more environmental enhancements and space rationalisation over time in these locations. Of these North Leigh has a much more industrial flavour whilst New Yatt is more of a commercial/offices location.

The design and layout of these areas is now somewhat dated in terms of building size, materials, but also in terms of accessibility. Environmental enhancements may be beneficial in the areas where offices use predominate.

Working from home may be increasing and local hubs may be needed in these locations. Over time with permitted development rules changing there might be changes of use and to protect employment uses here there may be a need for Art 4 Directions.

All these sites also have potential to expand and change as North Leigh population grows and especially benefit from being within walkable distance from the existing village. However, at present some do not offer safe walking or cycling routes thereby causing people to use their cars. This will be an urgent issue if these locations are to be truly sustainable.

To attract investment to create a better environment in these locations, with better landscaping, more affordable units (i.e. lower energy costs and other expenditure on infrastructure), rents will need to be enhanced. This can be done by building more space, extending units and facilities.

Introducing more research and development opportunities could attract spin off companies from the Universities and more start up units should be encouraged and supported.

New build or refurbishments will be subject to guidance in the North Leigh Design Code.

SPECIFIC

North Leigh Business Park

Safety for pedestrians and cyclists needs to be improved significantly as it is easy access from housing areas. Avoidance of external lighting on buildings. Possible re-siting of noisy or non-conforming uses to the back areas away from nearby local housing. Improve landscape i.e., retain mature trees, plant hedges, verges etc. Overall, NLBP should not allow conversion of space to residential. Scope for further development of similar types of multiple user buildings to the north of the site.

New Yatt Business Centre

Encourage SME take up but especially R&D uses. Improve access roads and pavements for cyclists and pedestrians. Support improvement – to rest and recreation areas and improve internal pedestrian walkways. Restrict size of heavy goods vehicle access to the site due to the narrow and twisty access roads. Support a phased redevelopment of the units in order to retire the old egg farming buildings in favour of modern more energy efficient units.

Eynsham Park Estate Yard Workshops

A pleasant small-scale group of craft workshops attracting redevelopment interest. Due to the fact that the site is some way from the village centre and has poor access to non-car users, redevelopment for housing would be sub-optimal. Surrounding woodland and screening should be protected from further development.

Key Community Views

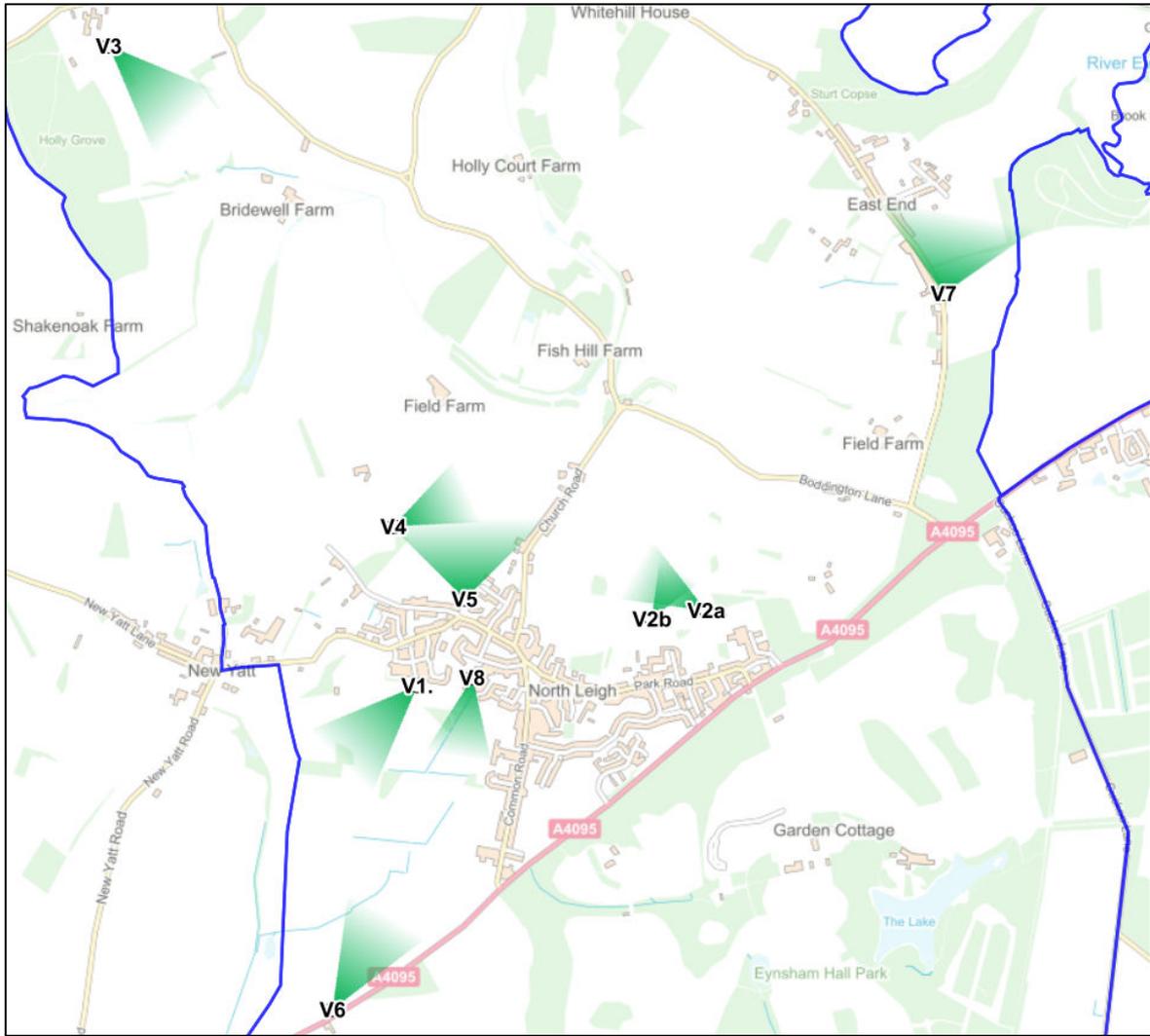
The surrounding landscape is integral to quality of life. Connections to the surrounding countryside are extremely important for local residents. Views from and to North Leigh are a key aspect of the rural setting, with many of significant value.

Following Community consultation, a large number of attractive viewpoints were identified. The following selection has been included to give a flavour of the great wealth of countryside views that are enjoyed by the residents. Because North Leigh is situated on high ground it provides a wealth of attractive views over the adjacent countryside as well as occasional more distant views towards surrounding high ground of the Cotswolds as well as more distant views to the Berkshire and Wiltshire Downs to the south and south west.

Key views are the subject of Neighbourhood Plan Policy RS2.

North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan – Key Views and Description	
KEY VIEW	DESCRIPTION
V1. View south-west from the footpath running west from Heath Farm Lane	Distant views to the south as far as White Horse Hill on the Wiltshire Downs. To the south-west, to Liddington Hill on the Wiltshire Downs south of Swindon. In the middle ground lies Witney, with the spire of St Mary’s on the Green prominent.
V2. V2a. View north-west towards St Mary’s from the footbridge where the path beside 81 Park Road crosses the path going east from the foot of Chapel Lane	In this view St Mary’s is closer and occupies the central ground beyond descending slopes of fields. The old cottages lining Church Road snake down to the church, all surrounded by arable fields.
V2b. View north-east towards East End just past the footbridge that continues on the path behind the allotments. This is in effect a different perspective of V2a	From this point the church is hidden and the view looks north-east across rolling countryside going towards East End. This view was specifically mentioned in public feedback.
V3. View south-east from the footpath from Wilcote Grange towards Bridewell Farm (i.e. the footpath that includes the Ash Walk)	This view has St Mary’s church in the centre, but it is more distant and again is below the viewpoint. Distant views extend over the elevation of Witham Woods, screening Oxford, to the Chiltern escarpment at Stokenchurch, with the BT tower visible on a clear day.
V4. View towards the church from the path running past the north of Quicken Copse	In this view St Marys church is again the focus, but closer now, and on a level with the viewer. In between are the smaller irregular fields of the medieval village landscape, nowadays used for grazing sheep and horses.

<p>V5. Views north, north-west and north-east from the field west of Bridewell Close</p>	<p>This field lies to the north of Green Lane and to the west of Bridewell Close. The land here slopes down the valley opening up long distance views down towards the church and way beyond to the ridge on the opposite side of the valley on the edge of East End. The vista is wide (180 degrees) and can be viewed from several angles giving different perspectives of the landscape. From different points on the public footpaths different views are visible including St Mary's Church.</p>
<p>V6. View from A4095 by Osney Hill Farm, north-east and uphill towards the ridge</p>	<p>This viewpoint is below the village and looks up over open arable land towards the straggling line of houses along Common Road which run up to the four houses backing onto Cuckamus Lane. Also visible are the roofs of a few houses at the southwestern edge of Breakspear Close. This view emphasises the limited extent of 20th century development of the village and demonstrates it retains the feel of a village surrounded by fields.</p>
<p>V7. Views from East End looking north/ north-east towards the fields behind the houses on the eastern side of the road and Abel Wood and Combe</p>	<p>There are footpaths across this land leading to East End, Abel Wood and eventually all the way to Combe. The land slopes down to the River Evenlode and it affords views up to the ridge and Combe as well as the nearby woods. The fields in view are used for crops and hay making. Again, there are panoramic views in different directions and on immediately entering the fields from the road the panorama is 180 degrees.</p>
<p>V8. View over fields west of Common Road from the ridge looking south / south- east</p>	<p>This view from the footpath at Heath Farm Lane looks south / south-west over rolling countryside to the A4095. This view is similar to, but not quite the same as the reverse of V6. The field has been used for agricultural crops for a number of years and very occasionally for grazing.</p>



Map of key views

Local Green Spaces

Open and green spaces are important aspects of North Leigh's character.

The NPPF (para 106) states the designation of land as a Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. Local Green Spaces designation are based upon criteria set out in NPPF (para 107) as follows

To qualify as a Local Green Space, an area must:

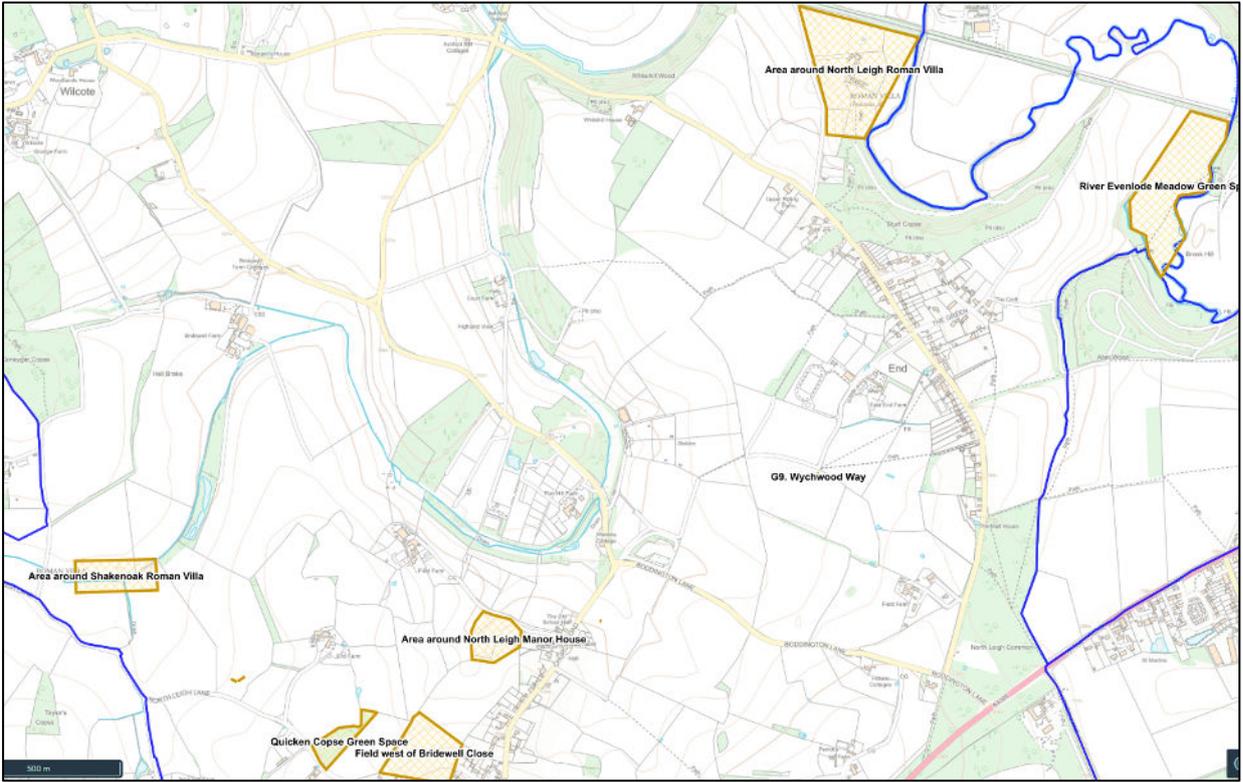
- Be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
- Be demonstrably special to a local community, holding particular local significance. This can include its beauty, historic importance, recreational value (including use as a playing field), tranquillity, or the richness of its wildlife.
- Be local in character and not constitute an extensive tract of land.

Designated Local Green Spaces

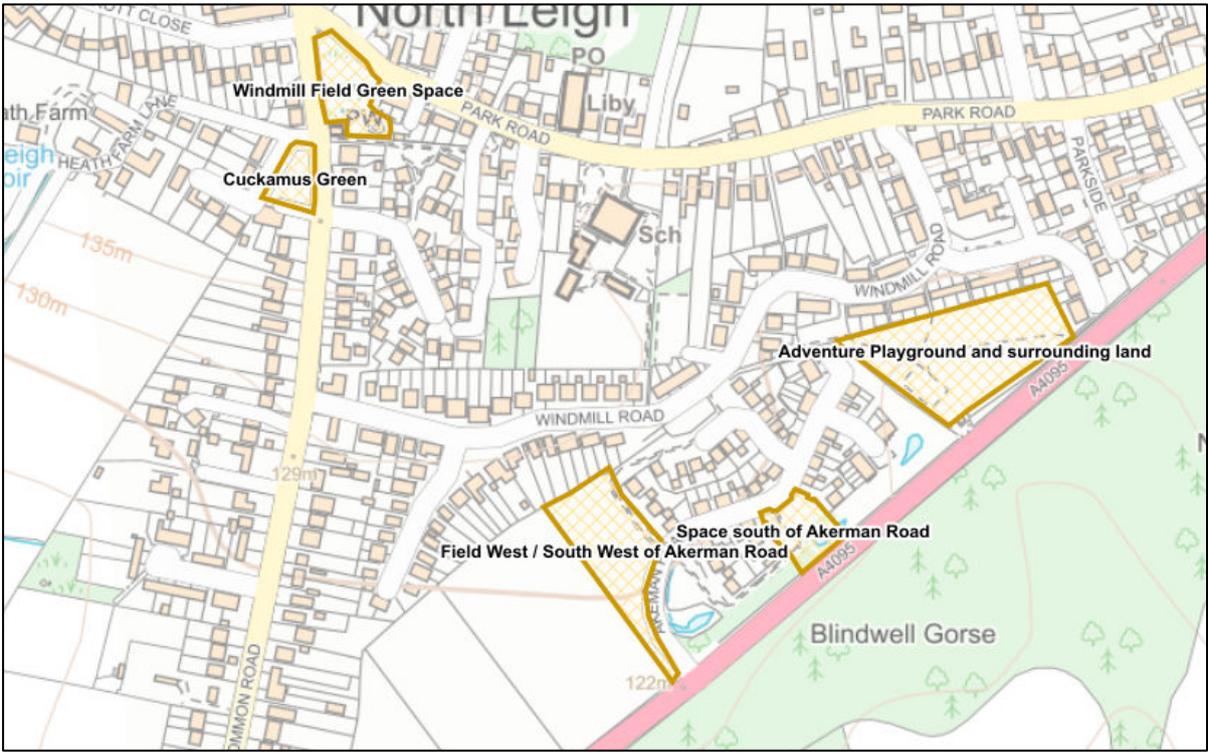
The following Local Green Spaces are designated in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan:

- I. LGS1 – Quicken Copse
- II. LGS2 – Field west of Bridewell Close
- III. LGS3 – Windmill Field
- IV. LGS4 – Cuckamus Green
- V. LGS5 – Land west / south-west of Akeman Road
- VI. LGS6 – Land south of Akeman Road
- VII. LGS7 – Area around North Leigh Adventure Playground
- VIII. LGS8 – West Grove woods
- IX. LGS9 – River Evenlode Meadow known as ‘Beach Field’ at East End
- X. LGS10 – Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa
- XI. LGS11 - Area around North Leigh Roman Villa
- XII. LGS12 – Area around Grims Ditch – part of the extensive Iron Age boundary ditches of Oxfordshire
- XIII. LGS13 – Area around site of North Leigh Manor House

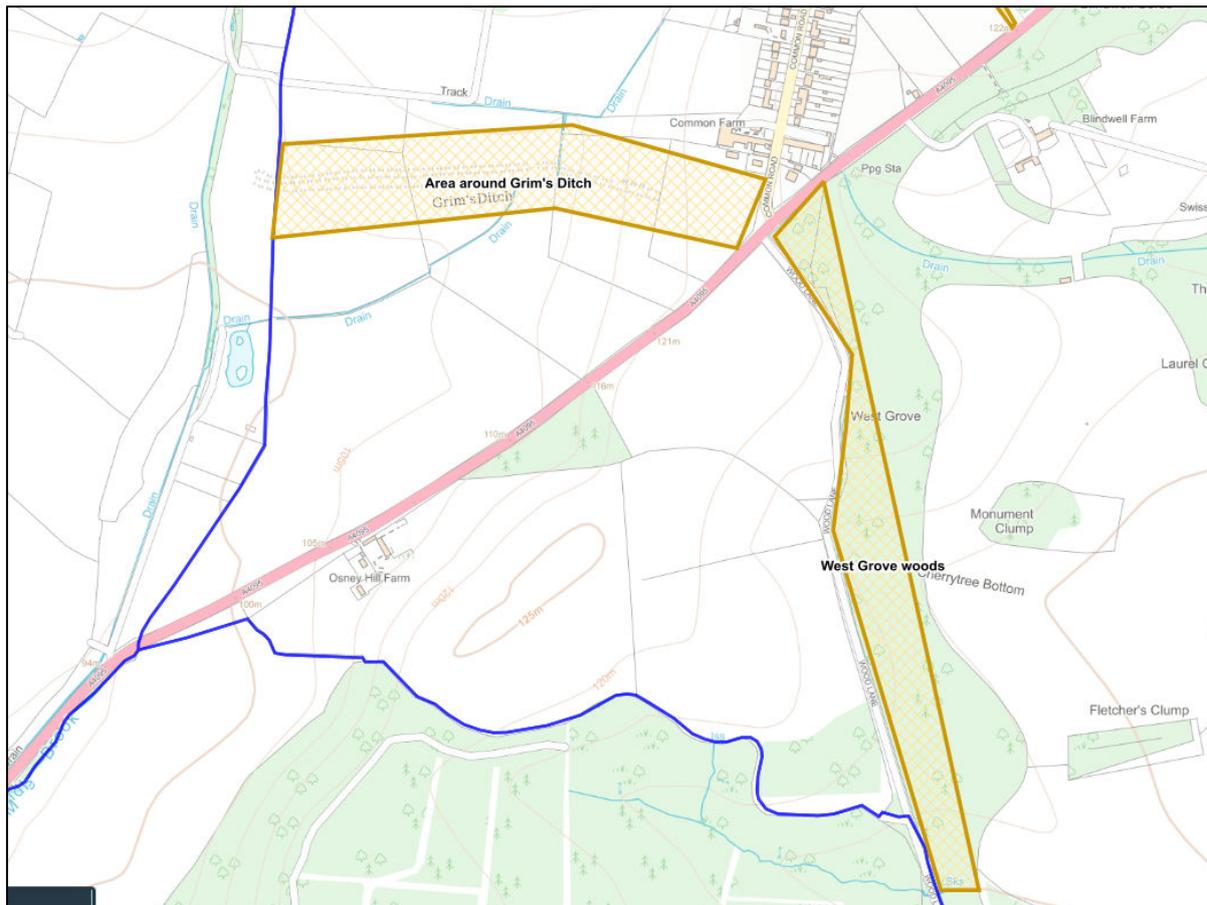
In addition to these officially designated Local Green Spaces the Neighbourhood Plan also lists a number of Important Green Spaces.



LGS Map 1: Northern half of parish from The Mason's PH north



LGS Map 2: Central part of parish from The Masons PH south



LGS Map 3: Southern part of parish

Important Green Spaces	
Woodland	- Quicken Copse
Historic green spaces	- St. Mary's Churchyard
	- St. Mary's Cemetery
	- St. Peter's Churchyard
	- Area around North Leigh Roman Villa
	- Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa
	- North Leigh Common
	- Holly Grove
	- Coneygar Copse
	- Eynsham woodland
	- Woodlands surrounding Wilcote Maor
	- Woodlands surrounding Wilcote House
	- Ancient hedgerows throughout the parish
	- Eynsham Park Hillfort – Iron Age earthworks
	- Holly Court and the Saxon Cemetery
	- The Medieval fishponds at Fish Hill
	- Sturt Copse SSSI
	- Whitehill Wood SSSI
	- Woodland of Holly Court Farm – officially Holly Court Bank SSSI

Open grass areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Grass area at Mason's Grove- Allotments at East End- Allotments at North Leigh- Field behind Common Road- Field behind Wilcote View- Field beside The Ridings- Open green space to the south-east of number 7 Foxglove End- Route of Wychwood Way- Scout Field