

Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment for Baldons Parish Council



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape Character Assessment has been commissioned by The Baldons Neighbourhood Group to inform the preparation of The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan. The Brief for the assessment seeks to assess the landscape character of Toot Baldon and Marsh Baldon Parish landscapes (hereafter referred to as the Neighbourhood Plan Area) and to determine their local landscape character, identifying key characteristics and sensitivities, both in terms of character and visibility. The report also seeks to set out development guidelines, should development sites come forward in the future.
- 1.2 The approach to this study follows best practice as promoted by Natural England's 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014 – Ref 1) and recognised methodology. It identifies character areas within the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which have been assessed so as to define the character of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and setting to the Baldons and determine its sensitivity to, and capacity for, development.
- 1.3 Natural England describes landscape character as 'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another' (Ref 1).
- 1.4 The report divides the landscape into areas of common landscape character, listing the key landscape characteristics and landscape and visual sensitivities of each area. This analysis will highlight areas of the Neighbourhood Plan Area which are sensitive and where future development would be inappropriate.

2. Background

2.1 Desk study

2.1.1 A comprehensive desk-top assessment of the local area was undertaken to form the basis of the assessment and assist in identifying the Parish landscape character areas.

Desk study data considered includes:

- Geology and soils;
- Topography;
- Land use (based on aerial photography);
- District landscape character assessments;
- Historic landscape characterisation;
- Development Plan designations including local landscape, nature conservation, and heritage designation;
- Key public rights of way (e.g. long distance footpaths) and notable view points.

2.1.2 The data was analysed and set out in working plans, tables, and text, and used to review the existing landscape character assessments and provisionally subdivide the County/District character areas into draft landscape character areas appropriate to the Parish scale. The outer boundary of these character areas in turn formed a draft study area boundary.

2.2 Field Assessment

2.2.1 The assessment is underpinned by field assessments carried out during March 2017 by an experienced Principal Landscape Architect, overseen and reviewed by the Project Director.

2.2.2 Field assessment involved travelling extensively throughout the Neighbourhood Plan Area and the immediate surroundings, with extra focus on the character and quality of the land surrounding the villages and to explore the relationship between the settlements and their adjacent landscape. This involved recording variations in landscape character including (list is not exhaustive): local topography, existing land uses and vegetation structure, condition of landscape elements (trees, hedges etc.), streams/ditches, character of the built edge of settlements, intervisibility between settlements, local landmarks and visual detractors, and key views. A working photographic record was produced to support the survey work.

2.3 Local designations

2.3.1 The entire Neighbourhood Plan Area is washed over by the Oxford Green Belt. *'The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.'* (Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework – Ref 2).

Green Belt is protected through National Policy, within the National Planning Policy Framework, and within local policy.

2.3.2 The Study Area is rich in heritage and contains a large number of designated heritage assets (see plan HDA 2). Both Toot Baldon and Marsh Baldon contain Conservation Areas, which are designated for their special architectural or historic interest. Within these Conservation Areas and throughout all three villages, along with the neighbouring village of Nuneham Courtenay, are numerous listed buildings. The setting of the Conservation Areas and listed buildings are a consideration in addition to the heritage assets themselves. Nuneham Park, to the south-west of the Neighbourhood Plan Area is included on the Register of Parks and Gardens. A Scheduled Monument is located within the south-western corner of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, to the south of the B4015.

2.3.3 Two areas of Ancient Woodland are located to the south of Baldon House. There are no other ecological designations within the study area (protected species excluded), however the area does contain several BAP priority habitats identified by the Priority Habitat Inventory, including deciduous woodland, traditional orchards, woodpasture and parkland.

3 The Baldons Parish Landscape Structure Analysis

3.1 The aim of landscape structure analysis is to identify the main elements which contribute to the character, structure and setting of the settlements within The Baldons. This section includes an evaluation of the existing Landscape Character Context (section 3.2 and Plan HDA3) and the local landscape context of the Parish, (section 3.3) which looks at the settlements of Toot Baldon, Marsh Baldon and Little Baldon in detail and sets out our initial analysis of the Study Area (Plans HDA 2 – 4).

3.2 Landscape Character Context

3.2.1 There are national, regional and district scale landscape character assessments that cover the landscape within and around the Study Area. The national scale assessment has not been analysed for this assessment, as more detailed data is available.

3.2.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Area is associated with a low ridge of limestone hills to the south of Oxford which overlook the low clay vales to the north, east and south (see plan HDA 1). The hills are underlain with Corallian limestone, which is capped by Kimmeridge clay, Portland Beds and Lower Greensand. The land slopes away sharply to the north, and more gently to the south and east, where it drains to Baldon Brook in the east. Further hills are located to the south-west of the study area, within Nuneham Park.

3.2.3 South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is located within Character area 2. Nuneham Courtenay Ridge, within the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (ref 3). The Character Area is sub-divided into smaller Landscape Types. Three Landscape Types occur within the Study Area: Flat open Farmland, Open Farmed Hills and Valleys and Semi-enclosed Hills and Valleys (see plan HDA 2). The key characteristics of each type are set out below:

'Flat, open farmland Key characteristics:

- *distinctively flat, low-lying farmland (below 65 metres AOD) occupying former marshland alongside the Baldon Brook on land less prone to flooding and more easily drained and cultivated;*
- *large-scale rectilinear field pattern with distinctive network of drainage ditches;*
- *weak landscape structure with few trees, low or gappy hedges, open ditches and fences;*
- *comparative inaccessibility creates a rural and remote character;*
- *open, denuded landscape results in high intervisibility.*

Open farmed hills and valleys Key characteristics:

- *rolling plateau landform;*
- *large-scale farmland, mostly in arable cultivation;*
- *large fields, with rectilinear field boundaries, typical of parliamentary enclosures;*
- *weak structure of tightly clipped or gappy hedgerows, with few hedgerow trees;*
- *open, denuded and exposed character, with prominent skylines and hillsides and high intervisibility;*
- *distinctive elevated and expansive character on ridges and higher ground, with dominant sky and long views;*
- *predominantly rural character but some localised intrusion of main roads, overhead power lines and built development.*

Semi-enclosed farmed hills and valleys Key characteristics:

- *as above but with a stronger structure of hedgerows and trees which provide clearer definition of field pattern;*
- *occurs mostly in association with settlements (eg. Marsh Baldon), where a smaller-scale field pattern and the hedgerow structure remain more intact;*
- *predominantly intensive arable land use but some pockets of permanent pasture occur, particularly around settlements and on steeper hillsides;*
- *predominantly rural character;*
- *landform and landscape structure create enclosure and reduce intervisibility.'*

3.2.4 Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)

OWLS is the current landscape character assessment for Oxfordshire (2004 – Ref 4). The following landscape character types are found within the Baldons Study Area: Alluvial Lowlands, Lowland Village Farmlands and Wooded Estatelands (see plan HDA 2). Each landscape type is broken down into local character areas. Key characteristics of each type and subsequent local character area are listed below:

Alluvial Lowlands – character area VA/16 Oxford South

- Medium / large sized arable fields.

- Fields enclosed by hedgerows containing Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Elm, with scattered Ash, Oak and Sycamore trees. Many of the hedgerows are gappy or fragmented, particularly along Watlington Road. Groups of trees surround farmhouses.
- Trees line Baldon Brook with species including Willow and Sycamore.
- Alluvial soils in broad plains.
- Sparsely settled.
- Landscape strategy: *'maintain the tranquil nature of the landscape and promote the restoration and enhancement of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree lined watercourses'*

Lowland Village Farmlands – character area CR/22 Garsington to Toot Baldon

- Small, irregular fields in pasture.
- Fields are bound by a strong network of hedgerows of Hawthorn and Elm, with hedgerow trees including Oak, Sycamore, Ash and Willow.
- A gently rolling, almost flat topography.
- Prominent village settlements.
- Landscape strategy: *'Conserve and enhance the vernacular character of the villages and strengthen the existing pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lines watercourses.'*

Wooded Estatelands – character area CR/15 Nuneham Courtenay

- Large, geometric arable fields, broken up by large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations.
- Fields are enclosed by woodland or gappy hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees.
- Includes the parkland surrounding Nuneham Park.
- Rolling topography with some localised steep slopes.
- Small villages, each with a strong vernacular character.
- Landscape strategy: *'Safeguard and enhance the characteristic landscape of parklands, estates, woodlands, hedgerows and unspoilt villages.'*

3.3 The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Area and the local landscape context (see plans HDA 1 - 3)

- 3.3.1 The northern edge of the Neighbourhood Plan Area lies approximately 600m to the south of Oxford and abuts the village of Nuneham Courtenay to the west. Beyond the village, to the south-west, lies Nuneham Park a designed landscape on the Register of Parks and Gardens. The village of Garsington lies approximately 1km to the north-east and the village of Stadhampton lies approximately 2km to the south-east.

- 3.3.2 The Neighbourhood Plan Area is associated with a low ridge of limestone hills to the south of Oxford which overlook the low clay vales to the north, east and south. The high ground within the Study Area runs from Nineveh Farm in the west, to Toot Baldon in the east. The land slopes away sharply to the north towards Oxford, and more gently to the south and east, where it drains to Baldon Brook in the east. Toot Baldon is located on the high ground to the north-east of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, whereas Marsh Baldon is located on the flat ridge top and gentle southern slopes, with Little Baldon to the south of the Neighbourhood Plan Area at the foot of the hill.
- 3.3.3 The landscape surrounding the villages is large scale and predominantly arable. The internal fieldscapes of the villages and their immediate surroundings are fields in pasture, frequently horse paddocks, with a high degree of enclosure. These fields in pasture are smaller scale than the arable fields, which are large, open and expansive.
- 3.3.4 The settlement pattern of the Baldons is unusual in that it is extremely low density, consisting of loose linear arrangements of housing, located along lanes or tracks and often positioned around a central field or open space. The depth of housing is generally only one plot deep. A network of public rights of way connects the villages and includes the two long distance routes: 'Oxford Greenbelt Way', which connects Nuneham Courtenay to Garsington through Marsh and Toot Baldon, and 'Shakespeares Way', which runs south from Oxford, through the study area and then east to Chiselhampton and Stadhampton. The Baldons have a number of heritage assets including two Conservation Areas and numerous listed buildings, which showcase a range of styles and reflect different time periods.
- 3.3.5 Toot Baldon lies to the north of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and is centred on a winding lane, which enters the village from the B480 to the north-east, runs west through the village, before turning west and then south, connecting to Marsh Baldon. The village is formed of two loose aggregations of housing and farmsteads and includes the Mole public house. The north-eastern part of the village is located on high ground, which slopes away sharply to the north and east and properties and public rights of way associated with this part of the village often allow long panoramic views to Oxford in the north and Garsington to the north-east. This area is the core of the village and is almost entirely covered by Toot Baldon Conservation Area. To the west lies a second settlement area, which includes the line of semi-detached housing, called Wilmots and two farmsteads, New Farm and Hillfield Farm. The two settlement areas are separated by an open field in pasture, overlooked by dwellings on both sides.

3.3.6 To the south, the settlement pattern disperses, but remains loosely associated with a large, central arable field, which forms a spatial connection between all areas of settlement within the village, with Toot Baldon Conservation Area to the north-east of the field, Wilmots and the buildings at New Farm to the north-west, occasional dwellings along the lane to the west, Baldon Row to the south and St Lawrence Church to the south-east. There is a strong association between the village and the church, accessed by an avenue of trees, which follows the eastern boundary of the central field. The landscape is much flatter to the south of the village and is enclosed by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Views from footpaths remain open, however they are limited to the field boundaries which surround them. In contrast the lane which runs through the village is highly enclosed.

3.3.7 Marsh Baldon is centred on 'The Green' a large area of informal open space and grass pitches, surrounded on all sides by housing, which front onto the space. A ditch line with associated trees runs across The Green east- west. The Seven Stars public house is located to the south-west of the Green and the local school lies to the north-west. From the Green, the village extends north in two linear developments along The Croft and the bridleway to the north-east of the Green. Small scale fields in pasture lie between the two ribbons of housing. The village also extends south-west along Baldon Lane, which terminates at the A4074, where it connects to Nuneham Courtney. Public rights of way connect internal spaces within the village, to the wider landscape. Views from the rights of way are generally open, but are curtailed by the hedgerows and tree belts which form field boundaries. Some long views are available from the footpaths to the east of the village, which look out over the low lying landscape to the east. The lanes and tracks connecting housing within the village, with the notable exception of those surrounding the Green, are enclosed by dwellings and high hedgerows and have a high level of intimacy.

3.3.7 Little Baldon is located further to the south, along the B4015 and consists of a line of semi-detached dwellings associated with a Farmstead. Many of the farm buildings have now been converted to business use. This hamlet is not directly connected to Marsh Baldon by road, however there are footpaths and a bridleway connecting the two settlements. Woodland and tree belts physically and visually separate Little Baldon from Marsh Baldon to the north. The hamlet is located within the low lying landscape to the south of the high ground associated with Toot Baldon, Marsh Baldon and Nuneham Park. While the landscape surrounding the village is large scale and open, the relatively flat topography and structure of woodlands and tree belts, contains long distance views.

3.4 Key views

3.4.1 One of the key characteristics of Toot and Marsh Baldon is the differentiation between the internal agricultural land and open space, which has been absorbed into the

settlement pattern, and the wider landscape. The difference is often marked by a smaller scale pastoral landscape and an interrelationship with the built form of the villages, such that the internal spaces have an association with the villages and form an integral part of their structure. In contrast the wider landscape is large scale, open and exposed. The interface between the village landscape and the wider landscape to the north and east is emphasised by a dramatic change in topography, which affords views out over the rural landscape from the edges of the villages. Locations where identified key views can be experienced are identified on plan HDA2.

3.4.2 The rights of way to the east and south of Little Baldon also afford extensive views across the rural landscape. A short section of footpaths 118M/4 and 118M/9, to the north of Little Baldon, have attractive views of the listed building Baldon House, to the north-west.

3.5 The Baldons– Key Elements

- Settlement pattern: low density loose linear arrangements of housing, generally only one plot deep. The exception is Little Baldon, which is a line of semi-detached dwellings associated with a farmstead.
- Heritage: There is a considerable amount of historic interest within the settlements as part of the built form. The built heritage is reflected in the local vernacular and the materials used in construction.
- Location and character: Each village has a character that is intrinsically linked to topography and land use. Toot Baldon has long views from properties and footpaths and is visually prominent within views from land to the north and east. Marsh Baldon is formed by a series of linear developments arranged around a central field or open space. The Green is a key component to the character of the village. There is a strong connection with the wider rural landscape. Little Baldon is located on lower ground, but retains strong visual links with the surrounding rural landscape. The settlements are linked by a series of lanes and enclosed bridleways, which maintain the sense of separation between the hamlets.
- Views: The open nature of the landscape surrounding the settlements, combined with changes in topography, create important views from the village edges out to the surrounding landscape.

4. Parish Landscape Character Areas

4.1 Landscape characterization

4.1.1 Drawing on the initial desk study, landscape structure analysis and the field assessment, the study divides the landscape into Parish scale landscape character areas of specific landscape character. The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Area has been divided into 18 Parish Character Areas. These have been shown and listed on plan HDA 4.

4.2 Analysis of Parish scale Landscape Character Areas

4.2.1 The characteristics of each Parish-scale landscape character area are analysed against criteria identified in Topic Paper 6 of the Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance, along with identification of any designations, and consideration of the historic landscape characterisation of the area. This information forms the basis for the landscape sensitivity and landscape value assessments.

4.2.2 Judgements on landscape sensitivity include an analysis of:

- Intactness and condition of the landscape;
- Consistency with existing settlement form or pattern and the contribution of the landscape to the setting to settlement;
- Contribution towards the separation between settlements;
- Contribution to the rurality of the surrounding landscape; and
- Visual sensitivity

4.2.3 Judgements on landscape value are based on the following criteria:

- The presence of designations within the character area;
- Local distinctiveness;
- Historic / cultural / literary associations;
- Recreation and public access;
- Locally valued spaces; and
- Perceptual aspects (e.g. scenic quality, tranquillity, and remoteness).

4.2.3 The following is a list of the Parish landscape character areas identified within The Baldons Neighbourhood Plan Area.

- 1 Oxford South Lowland Farmland**
- 2 Baldons East Open Farmland**
- 3 Little Baldon Vale Farmland**
- 4 Nuneham Parkland and Wooded Estate Farmland**
- 5 Ninevah Farm Wooded Estate Land**
- T1 Toot Baldon Settlement Area**
- T2 Toot Baldon Settlement Area**
- T3 Wilmots Paddocks**
- T4 Wilmots and New Farm Settlement Area**
- T5 New Farm Pasture**
- T6 Toot Baldon Farmland**
- M1 Marsh Baldon Settlement Area**
- M2 Marsh Baldon Pasture**
- M3 Baldon Row Settlement Area**
- M4 Eastern Village Pasture**
- M5 Southern Village Pasture**
- M6 Sandpit Covert Semi-enclosed Farmland**
- L1 Little Baldon Settlement Area**

For each character area there is a description of landscape character, a breakdown of landscape and visual sensitivity, the landscape value of the area and a summary of suitability of identified potential development sites in terms of its landscape and visual attributes.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>1</p> <p>Oxford South Lowland Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Public Rights of Way run across character area including Shakespeare's Way - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south of Oxford and north of Toot Baldon. • North facing slopes with vale landscape beyond. • Field boundaries consist of hedgerows and shelterbelts. • A large, open landscape consisting of medium to large regular arable fields. • Urban influences from adjacent city edge. Views from high ground to the south are heavily influenced by the commercial and industrial buildings on the southern edge of Oxford. • Pylons cross the area and are a detracting feature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open landscape, with intact boundary features but heavily influenced by detracting features including pylons and adjacent commercial / industrial land uses. • Development within this area would be inconsistent with the settlement pattern of the Baldons. • Forms the separation between Oxford and the Baldons. • The area is visible from Toot Baldon, local footpaths and the southern edge of Oxford. • The steep southern slopes of provide the immediate and open setting of Toot Baldon. • The area is sensitive to development, particularly on the southern slopes due to their elevation and openness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character area contains some distinctive areas of woodland, but is otherwise unremarkable and is heavily influenced by the southern edge of Oxford. • The character area has some contribution towards the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings on the northern edge of Toot Baldon. • The area contains numerous rights of way, which are well used by local residents. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Open landscape influenced by Oxford to the north

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>2</p> <p>Baldons East Open Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Listed buildings at Marylands Farm - Public Rights of Way run across character area including Shakespeare's Way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south-east of Toot Baldon and east of Marsh Baldon. • Consists of a gently undulating lowland landscape containing large / medium sized arable fields with a regular field pattern. • The land is drained by ditches and Baldon Brook, which lies to the east of the Neighbourhood Plan Area. • The landscape is open and expansive with long views available from the high ground to the west and from the village edge. • Field boundaries consist of hedgerows. • Woodland and tree cover is scarce and is generally reduced to isolated trees within fields / hedgerows or lining watercourses. • The landscape is rural and settlement is limited to isolated farmsteads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is large scale and open. There has been historic boundary loss, but where hedgerows have been retained, these are generally intact. • The character area is divorced from settlement. • The area contributes to the separation between the Baldons and Garsington to the north-east and Chiselhampton to the south-east. The area provides the wider rural landscape setting to the eastern edge of the Baldons. • The character area is open and has a high visual sensitivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character area contains no detractors and provides an attractive outlook for recreational users on local rights of way and local residents. • This is an unspoilt rural landscape, which is peaceful and has a high degree of scenic quality, particularly when viewed from the high ground which surrounds it. • The character area contributes to the setting of Toot Baldon Conservation Area and listed buildings, including St Lawrence Church. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Panoramic views across the character area from high ground to the west.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>3</p> <p>Little Baldon Vale Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Scheduled Monument to the north-west of the character area - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the south of Little Baldon and north of Berinsfield. • A low-lying and open landscaped framed by the Chilterns escarpment to the east and by high ground, including Wittenham Clumps, to the south-east. • Formed of large, irregular arable fields. • Field boundaries are degraded or absent, however shelterbelts are a common landscape feature, which provide a landscape framework and an element of containment. • Generally unsettled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape has a degraded hedgerow network, with historic hedgerow loss. • Shelterbelts contain a mixture of tree species and are in good condition. • The landscape is open and unsettled, but has intervisibility with settlement at Little Baldon and Berinsfield. • The character areas separates these settlements. • The character area has a high degree of visual sensitivity and can be seen from numerous visual receptors. • The area consists of an open, rural landscape with a high sensitivity to change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character is an example of the flat, open vale farmland. • The northern part of the character area contributes to the setting of listed buildings at Little Baldon. • The area is well served by public rights of way. • The landscape is open, with a high scenic quality, particularly in locations where the surrounding high ground forms the skyline to the view. There are few detractors and the area is generally peaceful, however this reduces to the west of the area, adjacent to the busy A4074. 	<p>Potential development site 25-LB lies within this character area. The site lies to the north of an existing access track but is currently open to the wider landscape. The site is unsuitable for development in landscape terms.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Flat and open landscape with the Chilterns forming the skyline to the east and Wittenham Clumps visible to the south-west.

Site 25-LB



Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>4</p> <p>Nuneham Parkland and Wooded Estate Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Listed buildings at Baldon House, Nuneham Courtenay and Nuneham Park Registered Park and Garden. - Public Rights of Way run across character area including the Oxford Greenbelt Way. - Ancient woodland. - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland , Woodpasture and Parkland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the Registered Parkland at Nuneham Park and includes the land to the south of Baldon House, extending east to Little Baldon. • Strong associations with designed parkland. • Remainder of the character area consists of large irregular arable fields contained by shelterbelts and woodland. Woodland is a key landscape feature within the character area. • Ponds are a frequently occurring feature and are generally associated with the parkland landscapes. • Undulating landform with steeper slopes to the west. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A landscape in good condition, with intact features and few detractors. • Baldon House and Little Baldon Farm are the only dwellings within the eastern part of the character area. • The landscape forms the setting to numerous listed buildings and has strong links with the wider rural landscape. • The landscape is contained by woodland, with intermittent views from roads, footpaths and local properties. Where views are possible, they are open and expansive and framed by woodland. • The area consists of a rural landscape with a strong relationship to heritage assets and a high sensitivity to change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Character Area contains a number of heritage assets and BAP priority habitats. • Includes two copses of Ancient Woodland, to the south of Baldon House. • The high level of tree cover and presence of designed landscapes makes the area locally distinctive. • The landscape within the Character Area contributes to the setting of heritage assets and links these to the wider rural landscape. • The area is well served by public rights of way. • The landscape is open, with a high scenic quality, particularly within the designed parkland. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



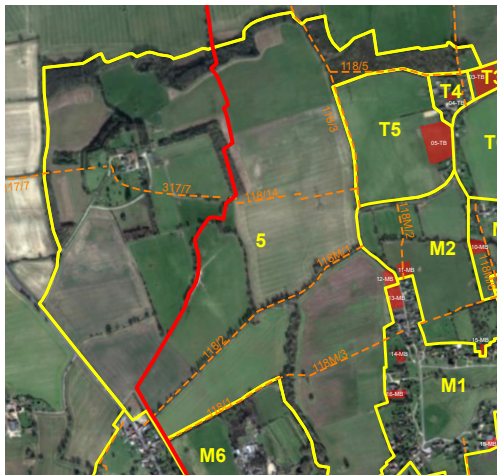
Estate Farmland to the east of the A4074.



Parkland associated with Baldon House.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>5</p> <p>Ninevah Farm Wooded Estate Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Public Rights of Way run across character area including the Oxford Greenbelt Way and Shakespeare's Way - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the land around Ninevah Farm, to the west of Toot Baldon and Middle Baldon. • A mix of large / medium fields, predominantly arable, with some fields in pasture associated with the farmstead. • Significant shelterbelts break up and contain the otherwise open landscape. • The character area is rural in character, with the farm forming the only settlement within the area. • Pylons cross the eastern extent of the character area. • Generally flat, with steep slopes to the north. • The southern fields have intervisibility with the western edge of Marsh Baldon and the north-eastern part of Nuneham Courtenay. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An intact landscape with high quality features and few detractors. • The character area is unsettled, with the exception of Ninevah Farmstead. • The character area forms part of the separation between Oxford, Nuneham Courtenay and Marsh Baldon. • The landscape is contained by woodland, with intermittent views from footpaths and local properties at Nuneham Courtenay and Marsh Baldon. Where views are possible, they are open and expansive and framed by woodland. • The area consists of an open, rural landscape with a high sensitivity to change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Character Area contains BAP priority woodland habitat. • The dense shelterbelts screen views of Oxford and maintain a rural character. • The presence of two long distance routes within the character area provides good opportunities for informal recreation. • The tree avenue lining the Greenbelt Way, to the south-west of the character area is a locally valued feature. • The area has a high scenic quality and is an attractive rural landscape. Pylons are the only detracting feature. 	<p>Sites 12-MB and 19-MB are located within the south-eastern field of the character area. Both sites are open to the field and both are separated from the main settlement area of Marsh Baldon, identified within character area M1. Development of site 12-MB would extend the ribbon development north of Marsh Baldon. Development of site 19-MB would extend ribbon development out into the wider landscape and would disrupt the existing separation between areas of settlement.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics
Site 12-MB



Open and expansive landscape.



Views from footpath within the south-eastern field of the character area.

Site 19-MB



Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T1</p> <p>Toot Baldon Settlement Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Toot Baldon Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings. - Public Rights of Way run across character area including the Oxford Greenbelt Way and Shakespeare's Way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the hamlet of Toot Baldon, a loose cluster of dwellings and farmhouses with one public house: The Mole. Located on the northern edge of the local ridge. There are long views out over the surrounding landscape from the northern and eastern edges of the hamlet. Dwellings are low density and are often associated with extensive gardens or small scale paddocks. Roads within the hamlet are restricted to lanes and tracks, bound by hedgerows, with a high degree of enclosure. The hamlet is picturesque with a mix of building styles and materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A well cared for settlement with a strong rural character. Contains a number of high value features. Trees within the Conservation Area are protected. The majority of the area lies within Toot Baldon Conservation Area, which contains listed buildings. The area has close links with the surrounding rural landscape. The village is visually prominent due to its elevated position and can be seen from the southern edge of Oxford, Garsington, local rights of way and, to a lesser extent, local roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Character Area contains many heritage assets. Toot Baldon is attractive and unusual in its elevated setting and settlement pattern. The character area preserves the setting and quality of the hamlet. The hamlet is picturesque, with a high scenic quality. The contrast between the enclosure of the lanes running through the settlement in comparison to the panoramic views experienced from local footpaths and properties add to the character of the hamlet. 	<p>Sites 01-TB and 02-TB are located within this area. Site 01-TB lies within the landscaped curtilage of a listed building within the Conservation Area and is unsuitable for development from a landscape and visual perspective. In contrast, site 02-TB is compatible with the existing settlement pattern, it is located outside the Conservation Area and consists of an area of land which is unkempt and contains small outbuildings that do not reflect the high quality of the surrounding built environment. Site 02-TB would be suitable for development.</p>

Parish character area

Photograph/s showing key characteristics



The Mole Inn and housing within Toot Baldon.



Site 02-TB

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T2</p> <p>Toot Baldon paddocks</p>	<p>- Oxford Green Belt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the immediate north and east of Toot Baldon (to the east). • Consists of small scale fields in pasture with intact hedgerow boundaries, located on steeply sloping or exposed ground. • The paddocks are elevated and exposed, with long views to the north and east. Both Garsington and Oxford are visible within the view. The hedgerow boundaries provide enclosure from the immediate surroundings, particularly from the lane, which runs through the centre of the area. • The character area forms a transitional landscape between the hamlet and the large scale arable landscape to the north and east. • The fields are associated with the hamlet, however they retain strong links to the wider landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open and exposed small scale pastoral landscape, with intact hedgerow features. • Located on high ground on the edge of the north and east facing slopes. The area is consistent with the existing settlement pattern. • The character area is visually prominent in long distance views. New development within the area would be highly visible within these views and would form a new edge to the village. The character area is screened from other local roads and footpaths. • The hedgerow boundaries and undeveloped nature of the area contributes to the rural approach to the village. The area has a high sensitivity to development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations pertinent to the character area. • The character area forms the wider setting to a number of listed buildings within the hamlet. Part of the area falls within Toot Baldon Conservation Area. • There is no public access into the character area. • The character area is remote and tranquil with close ties to the wider rural landscape. Views from within the area have a high scenic quality, particularly to the east, where there are fewer detractors. Views to the north contain detractors associated with the settlement edge of Oxford. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View north-east across the northern part of the character area.



View east across the southern part of the character area.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T3</p> <p>Wilmots paddocks</p>	<p>- Oxford Green Belt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set between Wilmots (to the west) and the main settlement area of Toot Baldon (to the east). • Consists of two small, square field in pasture, bound to the south and east by hedgerows. Remaining boundaries consist of post and wire fencing. • Located on the flat plateau of high ground, which falls away steeply to the immediate north. • Long views to the north. Both Garsington and Oxford are visible within the view. • The fields have strong links to the wider landscape, but are also influenced by the adjacent housing, particularly the dwellings at Wilmots, to the west. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open and exposed small scale landscape, with few features. The 'borrowed' landscape visible to the immediate north enhances the appearance of the character area. • Located between two areas of settlement within Toot Baldon and forms the separation between settlement areas T1 and T4, which are noticeably different in their settlement character. • The character area is visually prominent in long distance views. There are open views from Wilmots to the west. The character area is screened from other local roads and footpaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations pertinent to the character area. • The character area has no immediate relationship to any heritage assets. • There is no public access into the character area. • The character area forms a rural setting to Wilmots. • The open northern boundary maintains strong links between the character area and the wider rural landscape. 	<p>Site 03-TB is located within the western field of the character area. The site is open and exposed and forms one of the key internal gaps of the village. Development within this site would harm the openness of the character area and would be visible from adjacent housing and in long distance views from receptors to the north.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View north-east across the character area from Wilmots.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T4</p> <p>Wilmots and New Farm Settlement Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - A bridleway runs through the centre of the character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character area comprises the western settled area of Toot Baldon and is formed of the line of semi-detached dwellings at Wilmots along with two farmsteads with associated outbuildings and barns, with occasional infill housing. The settlement is disjointed and less organic than character area T1. The character and quality of the built environment and surrounding landscape is also lower than at T1. Dwellings within this character area have an open outlook to the east and west. The shelterbelt to the north of the character area screens views to the north. The centre of the character area contains an open area of grassland punctuated by trees and scrub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A disjointed settlement with no consistent pattern of development or character. Individual buildings have little architectural merit. The some of the barns are in a state of disrepair and part of the landscape around the farmsteads is degraded. Dwellings are outward facing and have a strong relationship with the surrounding rural landscape. Views of the character area are largely confined to the immediate surroundings, however some of the properties at Wilmots are visible in long distance views from the north-east. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character area is not associated with any landscape designation or heritage features. A bridleway runs through the centre of the character area, and a further right of way is located to the immediate north of the area. The character area is enclosed in the centre, with a more open aspect to the east and west. Views out of the character area are attractive however the internal landscape would benefit from improved management. 	<p>Site 04-TB lies within this character area. The site is located between the two farmsteads and would make a logical infill development. Development of the site would also provide an opportunity to improve the landscape within the site.</p>

Parish character area



New Farm



Looking toward the character area from the south-east.

Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Site 04-TB

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T5</p> <p>New Farm Pasture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Long distance public rights of way run to the immediate north and west of the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character area consists of one large field in pasture to the west of New Farm, which is subdivided into smaller paddocks with post and wire fencing. The area contains agricultural activity associated with the adjacent farmsteads to the north-east. • The area is located on gently sloping ground, which falls towards the village to the east. • The perimeter boundaries of the character area are formed by intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees. A shelterbelt lies to the immediate north of the site. • The boundary vegetation limits views into the site from the rights of way to the north and west. • The character area is open and exposed, with long distance views contained by vegetation. • Pylons cross the north-western corner of the character area and are a detracting feature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character has no internal landscape features, however boundary features are intact. • The character area is bound by settlement to the east, but contains only one dwelling, in the south-eastern corner. • The character area forms part of the separation between Toot and Marsh Baldon. • The area is generally well contained, with views from adjacent roads and footpaths contained by hedgerows and trees. There are views into the area from the properties to the east. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character area is not associated with any landscape designation or heritage features. • Two long distance public rights of way run to the immediate north and west of the area, however there is no public access within the character area. • The character area is rural in character and has few detractors. 	<p>Site 05-TB lies within the character area. The site is open to the wider field in pasture and has no existing landscape structure to build upon. Development within the site would affect the openness of the character area and would over-extend the settlement edge of Toot Baldon.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View north across the character area from a field gate on the southern boundary

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>T6</p> <p>Toot Baldon Farmland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Forms the setting to listed buildings. - A bridleway runs along the eastern boundary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large, flat, open field located between Toot Baldon and Marsh Baldon. • Forms the rural outlook for the properties that surround it. The field is overlooked by Wilmots to the north-west, Baldon Row, to the south and isolated properties at the south-eastern and western boundaries. • Forms a key part of the separation between Toot and Marsh Baldon. • The field is contained by vegetation, including hedgerows to the north, west and south with hedgerow trees. The eastern boundary is formed by an avenue of mature horse chestnut trees, which partially enclose the field and increases the field's association with the village. • A bridleway runs through the avenue along the eastern boundary, creating a direct link between St Lawrence Church and Marsh Baldon. The bridleway continues past the church to Baldon Row in the south. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open landscape with intact and high quality features at the boundaries. • There are only two properties within the character area, however it is overlooked by a number of dwellings. • The area forms an important part of the separation between Toot and Marsh Baldon. • The character area forms part of the setting to surrounding properties and has links to the wider rural landscape to the east. • Views of this character area are limited to the immediate surroundings. There are open views from the bridleway to the east. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations covering the character area. • The field is rural in character and forms an important link between adjacent settlement and the countryside. It maintains the rural character of the settlement. • The character area forms the setting to listed buildings at Baldon Row. • The tree avenue lining the bridleway to the east of the character area is a locally valued feature. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



Looking south-west across the character area from the bridleway to the east.

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>M1</p> <p>Marsh Baldon Settlement Area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Marsh Baldon Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings. - BAP priority habitat: Traditional Orchard - The Green comprises common land. - Public Rights of Way run across character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covers the village of Marsh Baldon, a series of linear developments, based along lanes and centred around The Green - a large area of informal open space and pitches. • Located on the flat high ground of the local ridge. • Dwellings are low density and are generally only one dwelling deep. • Roads within the village are restricted to lanes and tracks, bound by hedgerows, with a high degree of enclosure. In contrast, the lanes surrounding the Green, are open. • The village is picturesque with a mix of building styles and materials. The Conservation Area covers the majority of the settlement. • The Green is a large, flat, area of public open space, consisting of amenity grassland with a ditch and tree line running east-west across the Green. It is surrounded by housing, which overlooks the space. The Green is well used for formal and informal recreation, as well as for local events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well cared for settlement with a strong rural character and a high quality landscape setting. • The character area is settled. • The majority of the area lies within Marsh Baldon Conservation Area, which contains listed buildings. • Has close links with the surrounding rural landscape. • Views of the village are restricted to it's internal landscape and immediate surroundings. There are open views of the character area from the Green, internal footpaths and from footpaths within 1km of the village edge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Character Area contains many heritage assets. • Marsh Baldon is attractive and unusual in its settlement pattern and strong links to the wider rural landscape. • The character area preserves the setting and quality of the village. • The village is picturesque, with a high scenic quality. • The Green is a locally valued Green Space, which provides important opportunities for formal and informal recreation. The footpath network through the village is extensive. 	<p>Contains 8 potential sites (08-TB, 09-TB, 13-MB, 14-MB, 15-MB, 16-MB, 17-MB and 18-MB).</p> <p>Of these, only 08-TB, 09-TB, 15-MB and 16-MB are consistent with the existing settlement pattern and are suitable for development in landscape terms. All would constitute infill development. Considerations for these 4 sites includes potential effects on the Conservation Area and existing landscape features.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View across The Green, from the north-western corner



Site 09-TB, one of the preferred sites for development

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>M2</p> <p>Marsh Baldon Pasture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Abuts Marsh Baldon Conservation Area and contains listed buildings. - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Traditional Orchard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collection of small and mediums sized fields in pasture located to the north of Marsh Baldon. • Fields are bound by hedgerows and tree belts. • The character area is closely associated with properties within the northern part of Marsh Baldon. • Located on the flat high ground of the local ridge. • The character area is crossed by three rights of way, which connect different areas of the village. • The small fields, to the north and north-west are contained by boundary hedgerows and trees. The larger, central field is more open and is overlooked by the properties that surround it. • There are limited visual links between the character area and the wider rural landscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The landscape is intact, with high quality features, however hedgerows are often unmanaged and unkempt. • The character area has a close association with adjacent settlement. • Forms part of the separation between Toot and Marsh Baldon. • Forms the northern setting to Marsh Baldon. • The character area is generally contained, with views confined to the rights of way within it, along with dwellings at the perimeter, which overlook it. Views into the area from local roads are limited to occasional glimpses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations within the character area. • The character area forms the setting to a number of heritage assets. • An area of traditional orchard, located in the south-eastern corner of the site, has been identified by the Priority Habitat Inventory. • This landscape is smaller in scale and more intimate than the other character areas within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. • The area contributes to informal recreation through the footpath network that runs through it. 	<p>Site 11-MB lies within the character area. This site is open to the wider field in pasture and has no existing landscape structure to build upon. Development within this site would over-extend the existing ribbon development along The Croft.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



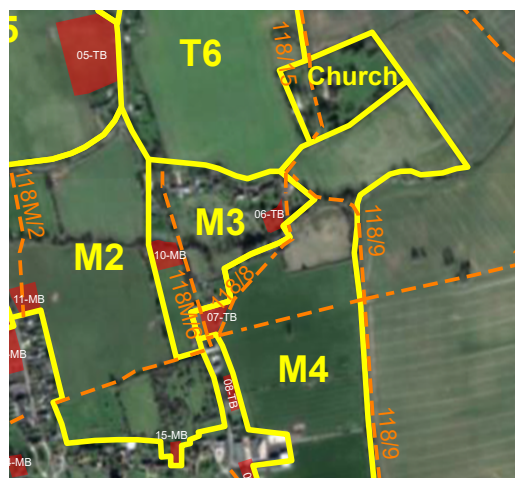
View across the character area, from the south-west corner

Site 11-MB



Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>M3</p> <p>Baldon Row Settlement Area</p>	<p>- Oxford Green Belt</p> <p>- Contains listed buildings and the north-eastern part of Marsh Baldon Conservation Area.</p> <p>- Public Rights of Way run through and adjacent to the character area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set within a localised valley feature to the south of Baldon Row. Associated with dispersed settlement with a range of housing styles. The dwellings and settlement pattern form a key characteristic of the area. The character area is small scale and intimate, with buildings and boundary vegetation providing a high degree of enclosure. The small pasture to the south of the area (Site 07-TB) is more open and affords some long views to the east. Public rights of way within the area are enclosed and intimate. Dominated by small scale fields in pasture and extensive back gardens to local properties. The area is well tree, particularly at field boundaries. A pond lies within the field in pasture towards the north of the site. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small scale and rural settlement area, with intact landscape features. Comprises a highly dispersed settlement pattern formed around small paddocks. The paddocks form the immediate setting to the settlement and vegetated boundaries separate the area from adjacent villages and the wider landscape. The southern pasture within the character area is visually prominent in views from the east and from the dwellings within it, however the remainder of the area is contained with only occasional views from local footpaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Character Area forms the setting to a number of heritage assets, which are associated with the small fields within the area. Marsh Baldon conservation Area lies within the southern part of the area. The rights of way within and adjacent to the character area are well used. The majority of the character area has a high scenic quality, which is intrinsically linked to the built form within the area. The area is rural in character and peaceful. 	<p>Sites 06-TB, 07-TB and 10-MB lie within the character area. Site 10-MB is well contained, however access into the site has the potential to harm the leafy character of the adjacent bridleway through the creation of a suitable access point. Site 06-TB is associated with the curtilage of an existing dwelling. Development within this site would be at odds with the less dense character of Baldon Row. Site 07-TB forms a small green / open space (not public), is overlooked by adjacent dwellings and rights of way and has a positive contribution to the character of the area.</p>

Parish character area



Housing on Baldon Row



View across the character area from the bridleway to the west

Photograph/s showing key characteristics



The southern edge of the character area

Site 07-TB

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>M4</p> <p>Eastern Village Pasture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Abuts Marsh Baldon Conservation Area and listed buildings. - Public Rights of Way run across character area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located to the north-east of Marsh Baldon and south-east of Toot Baldon. • Comprises medium sized fields in pasture, bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. • Located on east facing slopes. The high ground to the north-west of the character area affords long panoramic views out over the vale landscape to the east. • Fields are larger scale and open, with less containment from boundary vegetation than in the adjacent character area M2. • Forms a transition between the village landscape and the large, open, arable landscape to the east. Dwellings and farmsteads are visible at the western boundary, whereas the eastern boundary contains no settlement and abuts the wider rural landscape. • Two rights of way cross the character area and a third is located immediately beyond the eastern boundary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An intact and high quality landscape. • Lies beyond the settlement edge. • Forms the north-eastern setting to Marsh Baldon and the south-eastern setting to Toot Baldon. Has a visual connection to the wider landscape. • The high ground within the character area is visually prominent in views from the east, however the lower ground to the south is more contained. The area is visible from dwellings to the west and from local rights of way, which either run through the area or lie adjacent to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Character Area forms the setting to a number of heritage assets, including the listed St Lawrence's Church. • Ridge and furrow is present within parts of the character area. • There are no landscape designations within the character area. • The rights of way within and adjacent to the character area are well used. • The majority of the character area has a high scenic quality, however the agricultural buildings to the south-west are a slight detractor. The area is rural in character and peaceful. 	<p>None of the potential development sites identified within the site appraisal report fall within this character area.</p>

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics

St Lawrence's Church



View across the character area from the high ground to the north-west



The northern edge of the character area

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
M5 Southern village pasture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Abuts Marsh Baldon Conservation Area and listed buildings. - Public Rights of Way run across character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character area is formed of small and medium sized fields in pasture, to the south-east of Marsh Baldon. The character area is dominated by horsiculture. • Fields are bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees, but are also subdivided into smaller horse paddocks with post and wire or electric fencing. • The eastern and southern boundaries of the site are formed of strong tree belts. The tree belts have been identified as Deciduous woodland by the Priority Habitat Inventory. A small orchard lies to the north of the character area. A series of ponds lie to the south of the character area. • Located on the flat high ground of the local ridge. • Public rights of way cross the site and are located at the eastern and southern boundaries. • There are open views across the area, however these are contained by vegetation, with no long views into the surrounding wider landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A functional landscape with intact landscape features, where they are present. The woodland belts and ponds are high value features. The internal fencing detracts slightly from the overall quality of the landscape. • Lies beyond the settlement edge and forms part of the separation between Marsh Baldon and Little Baldon. • Forms the southern setting to Marsh Baldon. • The character area is generally well contained, with views confined to the rights of way within it, along with dwellings which overlook the area from the north. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations within the character area, and local heritage assets are generally separated from the character area by boundary vegetation. • The rights of way within and adjacent to the character area are well used. • The area is rural in character and peaceful, however the scenic quality of the landscape is lower than adjacent parish character areas, due to the simplicity of the landscape structure and the minor detracting features of the internal fencing. 	Sites 17-MB and 18-MB lie within the character area. Both sites have some potential in landscape terms, however both are currently open to the wider character area. The sites are at odds with the largely single depth of development within Marsh Baldon. Development within these sites is unlikely to impact upon the central Green or Conservation Area.

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View south-east across the character area



Tree belt to the east of the character area

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
<p>M6</p> <p>Sandpit Covert Semi-enclosed Farmland</p>	<p>- Oxford Green Belt</p> <p>- BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland</p> <p>- A footpath is located to the immediate north of the character area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mixture landscape containing small fields in pasture, tree copses, a tree nursery and a central farm complex / works, which includes numerous barns and sheds. • Located on the flat high ground of the local ridge. • Fields are bound by outgrown hedgerows, tree copses and post and wire fencing. • The character area has high levels of containment and intimacy, due to the enclosure provided by boundary hedgerows and woodland. • The western paddocks are closely associated with properties to the south-east of Nuneham Courtenay. • There are no public rights of way within the character area, however a footpath runs parallel to the northern boundary. • The area contains detractors including pylons and large scale agricultural buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The areas of woodland are intact and are important features. The condition of the landscape varies with land use. • The character area has a close association with settlement, particularly Nuneham Courtenay to the west and forms a key part of the separation between Marsh Baldon and Nuneham Courtenay. • The area is well contained and is only visible from the footpath to the north, the road to the south and from the south-eastern properties of Nuneham Courtenay. These are glimpsed and partial views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no landscape designations within the character area. • The character area forms part of the setting to a number of listed buildings within Nuneham Courtenay. • The Priority Habitat Inventory has identified Deciduous woodland within the area. • The area is small scale and intimate, with a number of detractors. The overall scenic quality varies across the area, but the mixture of landuses and unkempt appearance of much of the character area results in a landscape of low quality. 	<p>Sites 20-MB and 21-MB are adjacent to each other and consist of unkempt land with existing sheds, consistent with the existing settlement pattern, to the south-east of the area. Site 22-MB, lies to the south of the area, is separated from existing settlement and reduces the separation between Marsh Baldon and Nuneham Courtenay.</p>

Parish character area



Tree nursery



Looking south across the character area from the footpath to the north.

Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View north from Baldon Lane. Sites 20-MB and 21-MB

Character Area	Designations and policy	Local Landscape Character	Landscape and visual sensitivity	Landscape value	Analysis of potential development sites
L1 Little Baldon Settlement Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oxford Green Belt - Public Rights of Way run through the character area - BAP priority habitat: Deciduous woodland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character area consists of a farmstead, with the majority of farm buildings having been converted to business use. The landscape surrounding the businesses to the north and west has a parkland character. The business use and associated parkland and car parking provide the dominant character of the area. Two agricultural barns remain to the east, which lie adjacent to a small field in pasture. A line of semi-detached properties lies to the south-east of the area. The area is bound to the north by a belt of woodland. Located within the low lying clay vale. Contains a mixture of native hedgerows and trees, with ornamental planting adjacent to properties and office buildings. The area is generally well kept, however the boundary features of the eastern pasture are in decline. The character area contains a number of mature specimen trees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The business park and associated parkland is attractive and in good condition. The tree belt to the north is an important landscape feature. The eastern hedgerow is in decline. Contains the majority of Little Baldon hamlet. There are open views of the area from the B4015 to the immediate south, along with views from internal footpaths and adjacent rights of way to the north, east and south. The dwellings and offices within the area have views across the character area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no landscape designations within the character area, and no heritage assets. The woodland to the north of the area is identified as Deciduous Woodland by the Priority Habitat Inventory. The rights of way within and adjacent to the character area are well used. The character area retains a sense of rurality due to its low density development and landscaped surroundings. The western part of the area has a higher scenic quality than the eastern part due to the attractive parkland setting of the converted barns. 	Sites 23-LB and 24-LB lie within the character area. Site 24-LB sits within the existing built area, adjacent to the existing row of housing has some potential for low density development, particularly if the eastern boundary is strengthened. Site 23-LB is well contained but currently forms part of the parkland setting to the business park, which is in good condition and is sensitive to development. A housing development within site 23-LB would be at odds with the surrounding employment land uses.

Parish character area



Photograph/s showing key characteristics



View north-east across the character area from the B4015, to the south.

Site 22-MB



View west into the character area from adjacent bridleway

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The findings of this character assessment reinforce the fact that the Baldons are not typical village settlements. Within Toot and Marsh Baldon, linear development often impounds sections of the rural agricultural landscape, tying sections of countryside into the village landscape, such that the internal landscape becomes part of the structure of the village, rather than the wider countryside.
- 5.2 The main settlement areas are formed of the following Parish Character Areas: Toot Baldon Settlement Area (T1), Wilmots and New Farm Settlement Area (T4), Marsh Baldon Settlement Area (M1), Baldon Row Settlement Area (M3) and Little Baldon Settlement Area (L1).
- 5.3 The interconnecting internal spaces that have been subsumed into the village landscape and form a key part of the setting to the villages are: Wilmots Paddocks (T3), Toot Baldon Farmland (T6), The Green within Marsh Baldon Settlement Area (M1) and Marsh Baldon Pasture (M2).
- 5.4 The central village landscape is bordered by small to medium scale paddocks, which form a transitional landscape between the settlement areas and the large scale rural landscape that provides the wider setting to the villages. These transitional landscapes form the immediate setting to the villages and include the following character areas: Toot Baldon Paddocks (T2), New Farm Pasture (T5), Eastern Village Pasture (M4), Southern Village Pasture (M5) and Sandpit Covert Semi-enclosed Farmland (M6).
- 5.5 The wider rural landscape is represented by Parish Character Areas 1 -5 and is much larger in scale and is generally open and expansive. The character areas surrounding the village are often separated from the settlement edges by areas of smaller scale pasture, however there are locations where the large scale, open landscape extend right up to the settlement edge. The location of the villages on or adjacent to the local plateau, combined with the open nature of the wider landscape, results in long views from the edges of the villages over the surrounding landscape. These views are a key characteristic of the Baldons.

6. Landscape guidelines for future development

- 6.1 Landscape capacity is defined as the extent to which the landscape is able to accommodate change without significant effects on landscape character, reflecting the inherent sensitivity and value of the landscape. A landscape of high sensitivity or value therefore has a low landscape capacity. The entire Neighbourhood Plan Area has a Low capacity for development, which is reflected in the low numbers of additional housing that the Neighbourhood Plan is required to provide by South Oxfordshire District Council in the emerging Local Plan – the current guidance is a 5% increase in housing stock. The Neighbourhood plan is looking to provide at least 9 and up to 15 new houses. The small scale of development required and unusual settlement pattern of the Baldons forms the parameters of the sites required. A number of small sites is more suitable for the Neighbourhood Plan Area than one site that would provide for the entire allocation.
- 6.2 Development should focus on conserving and enhancing the vernacular character of the existing settlements; loose linear grouping of settlement, one dwelling deep. New ribbon development linking areas of settlement should be avoided and the open spaces between areas of settlement should be maintained and protected. Development should be focussed within existing settlement areas, which include: Marsh Baldon Settlement Area (M1), Toot Baldon Settlement Area (T1), Wilmots and New Farm Settlement Area (T4) and, to a lesser extent, Baldon Row Settlement Area (M3) and Little Baldon Settlement Area (L1).
- 6.3 The Neighbourhood Development Plan has put forward a number of potential development sites. The relative merits of each site are discussed within the Parish Character Area descriptions. Of the 25 sites put forward, 17 lie within existing settlement areas. The capacity of these sites in landscape terms relates to the effect that development within each site would have on the overall settlement pattern and character of the village. In selecting suitable sites for development, the Neighbourhood Plan Group will need to balance the landscape capacity of proposed sites with other factors including access, services e.t.c, which would affect the viability of the site.
- 6.4 Toot Baldon Settlement Area (T1) contains two potential development sites; 01-TB and 02-TB. Site 01-TB lies within the landscaped curtilage of a listed building within the Conservation Area and is unsuitable for development from a landscape and visual perspective. Site 02-TB is compatible with the existing settlement pattern, it is located outside the Conservation Area and consists of an area of land which is unkempt and contains small outbuildings that do not reflect the high quality of the surrounding built environment. Site 02-TB would be suitable for development. Site 04-TB lies within Wilmots and New Farm Settlement Area (T4). The site is located between the two farmsteads and would make a logical infill development. Development of the site would

also provide an opportunity to improve the landscape within the site. This site is considered to be suitable for development.

- 6.5 Marsh Baldon Settlement Area (M1), contains 8 potential sites (08-TB, 09-TB, 13-MB, 14-MB, 15-MB, 16-MB, 17-MB and 18-MB). Site 13-MB is the village allotments, which are a positive land use for local residents. Development within this site would extend the ribbon development along Croft Road, which would be detrimental to the settlement pattern of the village. Sites 17-MB and 18-MB lie beyond the existing settlement edge and additional housing within these sites would be at odds with the existing settlement pattern of properties one dwelling deep, however development within these sites is unlikely to impact upon the central Green or Conservation Area. Site 14 lies within a transitional space outside the main settlement area and would be highly visible from local footpaths. Sites 08-TB, 09-TB, 15-MB and 16-MB fit with the existing settlement pattern of properties fronting onto The Green and are more suitable for development. Sites 15-MB and 16-MB village lie within Marsh Baldon Conservation Area, which is protected through local planning policy. Any proposed development would need to conserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Development proposed within the village but outside the conservation area would still need to consider the setting to the Conservation Area and the contribution that the proposals could make to the overall character of the village.
- 6.6 Baldon Row Settlement Area (M3) contains sites 06-TB, 07-TB and 10-MB lie. Site 10-MB is well contained and could fit within the existing settlement pattern of Baldon Row. Site 06-TB is associated with the curtilage of an existing dwelling. Development within this site would be at odds with the less dense character of Baldon Row. Site 07-TB forms a small green / open space (not public), is overlooked by adjacent dwellings and rights of way and has a positive contribution to the character of the area. Of these sites, only 10-MB has some potential for development.
- 6.7 Little Baldon Settlement Area (L1) contains sites 23-LB and 24-LB. Site 24-LB sits within the existing built area, adjacent to the existing row of housing has some potential for low density development, particularly if the eastern boundary is strengthened. Site 23-LB is well contained but currently forms part of the landscaped gardens to the business park. The converted buildings which form the business centre are set within parkland, which is in good condition and is sensitive to development. A housing development within site 23-LB would be at odds with the surrounding employment land uses and general character of Little Baldon.
- 6.8 The remaining Parish Character areas are generally unsuitable for development, however Sandpit Covert Semi-enclosed Farmland Character Area contains two small

potential development sites adjacent to an existing row of housing. Sites 20-MB and 21-MB are adjacent to each other and consist of unkempt land with existing sheds. Small additions to the row of cottages would be consistent with the existing settlement pattern, to the south-east of the area. These sites could be considered for single dwellings.

- 6.9 Any new development within The Baldons should respect the existing settlement pattern, consider the relationship of the development to the internal open spaces, should maintain the green and leafy character of the villages and should respect the context of their location within the village. Consideration should also be given to the scale, form and massing of built development, along with the materials to be used.

7 **References**

- Ref 1 - Natural England (October 2014); *'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'*
- Ref 2 - Department for Communities and Local Government (March 2012), *'National Planning Policy Framework'*.
- Ref 3 South Oxfordshire District Council (2003); *'South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment'*
- Ref 4 - Oxfordshire County Council (2004), *'Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study'*.