

Greenbelt Assessment:

Question re 'Greenbelt Assessment' document

Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.9 make a series of general statements about the way in which the Order would impact on the five purposes of the Green Belt. This approach is then continued for the remainder of Section 4 insofar as it applies to sites A-H.

Is there any information in other documents which advise about which purposes of the Green Belt applied to the sites addressed in the Order at the time that the Green Belt was originally identified?

Response:

A number of key documents regarding the Green Belt were provided in relation to the production of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 between 2015 and 2020 (full details of these are described overleaf). Many of these documents reference the five purposes of the Green Belt by quoting the relevant NPPF paragraphs at the time of their production. However, any reference made to the purposes of the Green Belt at the time that it was *originally* identified, potentially in relation to the NDO sites, mainly relate to the Oxfordshire Structure Plans of 1979 and 1987. Reference is also made in many of these documents to the 1992 Central Oxfordshire Local Plan and various other Local Plan and Oxford Fringe documents, regarding the Green Belt/its purpose, as follows:

- Oxford Green Belt 1958-1962*
- Structure Plans for Oxfordshire (1979 and 1987)*
- Oxford Fringe Local Plan 1982*
- Rural Areas Local Plan 1984*
- Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan 1990*
- Central Oxfordshire Local Plan 1992
- Topic Paper on the Oxford Green Belt - Cherwell Local Plan 1996
- Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 (1998)*
- [Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 \(2005\)](#)
- [SODC Local Plan 2011](#)
- [SODC Core Strategy 2012](#)

It is not possible to access plans marked with an asterisk (*) online, however the Oxfordshire History Centre¹ does hold the physical documents – it is possible to search for the plans available via <https://heritagesearch.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>. No full copies of the Central Oxfordshire Local Plan 1992 appear accessible.

To provide details on the SODC Green Belt documentation/information immediately available, an analysis is set out below, explaining:

- where (if at all) the documentation advises about which purposes of the Green Belt applied to the sites addressed in the Order;
- where mention is made to sites within (or sites that affect) the Order;
- and what reference is made to documents produced when the Green Belt was originally identified.

¹ It is possible to contact this Oxford History Centre online:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contactus/contact-oxfordshire-history-centre>

South Oxfordshire District Council documents:

- [A. Local Green Belt Study for South Oxfordshire District Council - Final Report \(14 September 2015\) - Kirkham Landscape Planning](#)

The main aims of this Study were:

1. To review the land within the Green Belt against the five purposes of the Green Belt as outlined in paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework².
2. To make an assessment of opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt as outlined in paragraph 81 of the National Planning Policy Framework².
3. To assess whether any of the washed over villages should be included as an inset village.

Item 3 of this review included Clifton Hampden (para 7.3).

Section 5 of the Study provides information on the history of the Green Belt Designations generally and the development plans that included policy on the Oxfordshire Green Belt since it was first designated³. This section generally advises about the general evolving purposes of the Green Belt that applied when it was originally identified, and then expanded. Please see paragraphs 5.1 – 5.18 regarding this. The only (general) reference to Clifton Hampden is where paragraph 5.12 mentions the village as follows:

'Central Oxfordshire Local Plan 1992:

5.12 The plan removed Berinsfield as an Inset Village from the Green Belt so that it was now washed over as are now all of the villages except Wheatley. Most of the Green Belt was also designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), although this excluded the area between Dorchester and Berinsfield and at Culham, west of Clifton Hampden and at Culham Science Park. In addition to the characteristics identified in the Oxford Fringe Local Plan, the Plan refers to the importance of the settlements of the area and the attractive countryside around Oxford (as identified in the AGLV). The AGLV have since been superseded by a landscape character led approach in the Core Strategy 2012'.

However, the main study/report was undertaken in conformance with policy and guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and does not make further reference to original Green Belt documents other than in Section 5 as discussed.

This study identified three sites in the Clifton Hampden area for review, on page 26, in Table 4: Edge of Settlement / Previously Developed Site by Land Parcel (extract below):

Land Parcel	Location	Edge of Settlement / Previously Developed Sites
02	Towards the south western corner of the SODC Green Belt, between Marsh Baldon and Culham	Clifton Hampden Culham Science Centre

² NPPF 2012

³ This includes the Structure Plans for Oxfordshire, the Oxford Fringe Local Plan 1982, Rural Areas Local Plan 1984, the Central Oxfordshire Local Plan 1992, the Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan 1990, SODC Local Plan 2011 and SODC Core Strategy 2012.

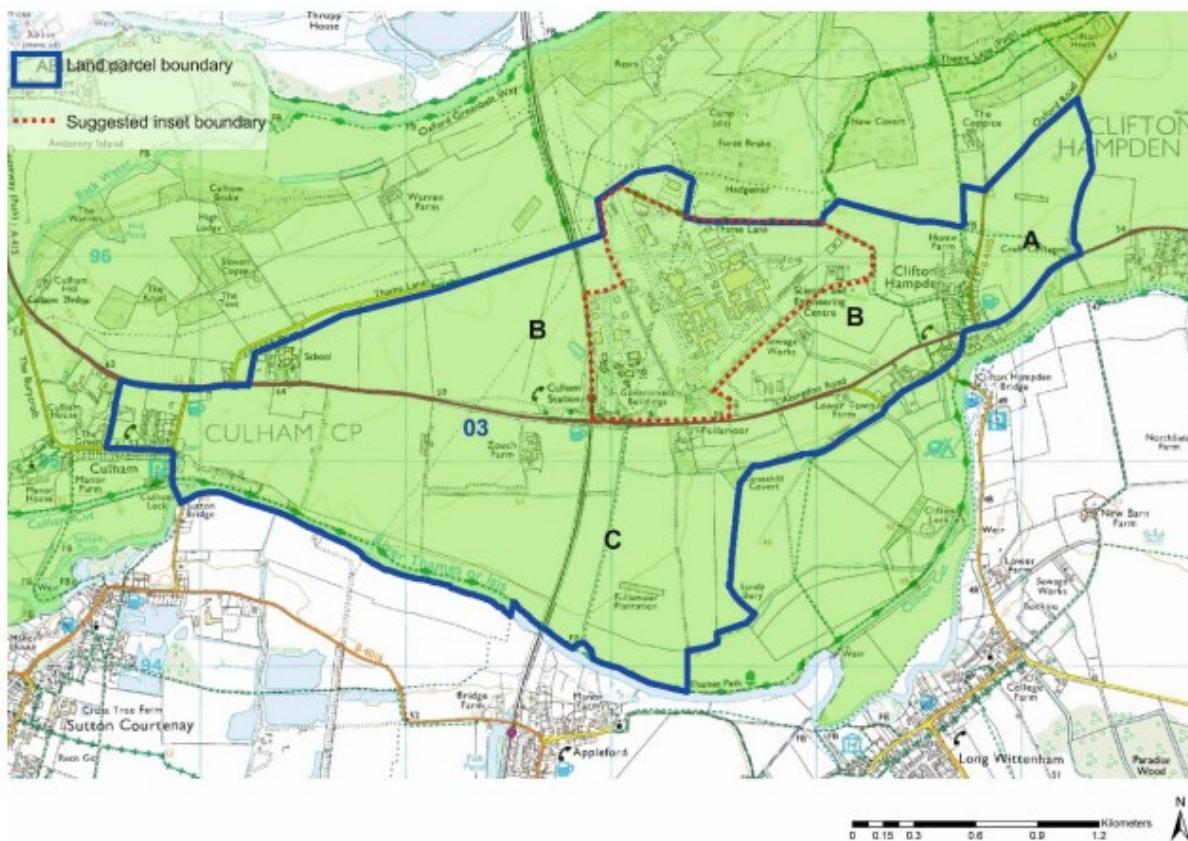
03	Along the south western edge of the SODC Green Belt, north of the River Thames	Clifton Hampden <i>Culham Science Centre</i>
04	Along the south eastern edge of the SODC Green Belt, north of the River Thames	Dorchester Berinsfield Clifton Hampden

Parcels 02 and 04 did not include the proposed NDO land; however Parcel 03 included all of the proposed NDO area.

Parcel 03 was divided up into three sites:

- A. Settlement edge of Clifton Hampden: Land east of B4015
- B. Settlement edge of Clifton Hampden and Culham Science Centre: Land north of Abingdon Road
- C. Settlement edge of Culham Science Centre: Land south of Abingdon Road

PARCEL 03:



In relation to the two sites allocated in the Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO) on Abingdon Road in Clifton Hampden, the site on the north side of the road (the Allotment Site) lies in area B and the site on the south side (the Paddock Site) lies in area C.

All of these areas were assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt (Pages 32-33 and Table 5). The full copies of the area B and C assessment tables are set out in **Appendix 1**. Parcel 03 was considered to '*reflect few functions of the green belt*' and it was proposed that only '*Culham Science Centre is suggested to be inset*' - this area of land is not in the NDO area.

- [B. Green Belt Assessment of Strategic Sites in South Oxfordshire – Final Report \(December 2018\) - LUC](#)

This Study's main aim was to appraise *'eight potential sites within South Oxfordshire against the five nationally defined purposes of the Green Belt'* (as set out in the NPPF 2018), and to *'draw conclusions on the relative harm (or otherwise) to the Green Belt that may result from their potential release for development'* (p1, para 1.1).

In terms of the history of the Oxfordshire Green Belt, again general reference is made to the purpose of the Green Belt in Section 2 – referencing the 1979 Structure Plan for Oxfordshire, *'to preserve the special character'* of the City, as well as the subsequent 1987 Structure Plan's policy EN5 *'which set out the purposes of the Oxford Green Belt more fully'*, to:

'Protect the special character of Oxford and its Landscape Setting,
1. check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl,
*2. prevent the coalescence of settlements.'*⁵ (para 2.15)

⁵ *Topic Paper on the Oxford Green Belt, Cherwell Local Plan (1996) Cherwell District Council*

This document also makes general reference to historical Green Belt documents/Development Plans⁴ but not specifically in relation to the sites addressed in the NDO.

The purpose of the Green Belt in this Study refers to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) rather than the original documents.

The only references to Clifton Hampden relate to Site 08 – Culham (p69-70), which lies to the west of the village and includes Culham Science Centre. This site proposes a new settlement with the Science Centre and does not directly affect the two sites allocated in the Neighbourhood Development Order. P70 does mention Clifton Hampden briefly, as follows:

'To the east of the railway line, Culham Number One Site and Culham Science Centre incorporate areas of open space but also a considerable amount of built development that reduces Green Belt openness. Further east the well-treed Thames-side villages of Clifton Hampden and Burcot (both washed-over by the Green Belt) retain a rural character that does not compromise the gap between Culham Science Centre and the more urban village of Berinsfield'.

- [C. South Oxfordshire District Council's - Green Belt Topic Paper \(April 2020\)](#)

This Topic Paper was produced for the examination on the adopted Local Plan 2035.

This only reference to the history and designation of the Oxfordshire Green Belt is made with reference to the Oxford Green Belt Study (October 2015) - see below, (p2, para 3).

The main reference to the Green Belt's purpose only refers to the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and not any original documents (p3, para 6).

⁴ Oxfordshire Structure Plans, Topic Paper on the Oxford Green Belt, Cherwell Local Plan (1996), The Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan (March 1991), Central Oxfordshire Local Plan - Cherwell (1992).

The only reference to Clifton Hampden is STRAT 8 – Land at Culham Science Centre (CSC) (p13) and STRAT 9 – Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre (p17), but neither site directly affects the two sites allocated in the Neighbourhood Development Order.

Oxfordshire County Council documents:

- [D. Oxford Green Belt Study - Final Report \(October 2015\) - LUC](#)

This assessment of the Green Belt within Oxfordshire was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of the Oxfordshire Local Authorities (p1, para 1.1). The main aim was to assess the extent to which the land within the Oxford Green Belt performs against the purposes of Green Belts and examine the case for including within the Green Belt any additional areas of land that currently lie outside it. It does *'not advise on the suitability or potential of land in the Oxford Green Belt for development'* (p1, para 1.5).

In terms of the history of the Oxfordshire Green Belt, specific reference is made to the evolving purpose of the Green Belt (p4-7, para's 2.10-2.19 and Figure 2.1). This document also makes general reference to historical Green Belt documents/Oxfordshire Development Plans⁵ in Section 2, but not in relation to the sites addressed in the NDO.

Reference to Clifton Hampden is made in relation to a number of Broad Areas of assessment (and Areas 6 and 8 both cover the NDO site):

- Broad Area 6, which includes the village: in considering *'Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'* the assessment highlights that:

'to the west of Clifton Hampden is a large estate of science and engineering buildings, government buildings and a sewage treatment works. This large concentration of buildings, car parks and street lighting has a significant urbanising influence on the Green Belt within the southern portion of the Broad Area'.

- Broad Area 7, which lies the west of the village: in considering *'Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns - Does the Broad Area contribute to the setting and special character of Oxford?'* the assessment highlights:

'the parts of this Broad Area close to the Thames, where it cuts a distinctive course in the vicinity of Shillingford, Dorchester, Burcot and Clifton Hampden, play some role contributing to Oxford's setting and special character. Whilst there is no visual connection with Oxford, the historic riverside settlements set the scene for those approaching the city by boat, along the Thames Path or on the A4074. This creates a perception of rural tranquillity which along the river is largely preserved all the way into the city centre, although distance does limit the extent of this contribution'.

⁵ Oxfordshire Structure Plans, Topic Paper on the Oxford Green Belt, Cherwell Local Plan (1996), The Oxford Fringe and Green Belt Local Plan (March 1991), Central Oxfordshire Local Plan - Cherwell (1992), Topic Paper on the Oxford Green Belt, Cherwell Local Plan (1996) Cherwell District Council, Sites and Housing Plan (2011 – 2026), Oxford City Council (2013), Core Strategy 2026, Oxford City Council (2011).

- Broad Area 8, which lies the south of the village: in considering ‘Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ the assessment highlights:

‘The broad area contains three villages – Clifton Hampden, Burcot and Culham. All are rural in character. The River Thames follows the southern border of the broad area with a significant area of its floodplain spilling in to the southern portions of the parcel. The rest of the broad area is made-up of open, relatively flat agricultural fields with open views of the surrounding countryside’.

In considering ‘Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns’, the assessment highlights:

‘This broad area encompasses the river terrace and meadows along the north side of the Thames between Burcot and Abingdon. The link between historic Oxford and its surroundings is stronger along the river valleys that penetrate into the heart of the city, than in the rural area in general. Historic riverside settlements like Culham and Clifton Hampden contribute to this, but distance does reduce the importance below that of the areas in which the valley can be viewed in a more direct context with Oxford, north of Abingdon’.

If you have any further queries regarding any or all of the documentation referenced, please let the Council know.

Appendix 1 – Extracts from LUC Local Green Belt Study 2015

B. Settlement edge of Clifton Hampden and Culham Science Centre: Land north of Abingdon Road

Description	An area of the land in a gently sloping valley grading towards the low-lying floodplains of the River Thames between Clifton Hampden to the east and Culham Science Centre situated in the northern area. The area comprises semi-enclosed farmland between the settlement areas and more open farmland to the west. The A415 adjoins the area to south running east to west.
To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Area B does not contribute to the separation of towns. However the area contributes to the narrow open gap between Clifton Hampden and the Culham Science Centre with some intervisibility possible between the two areas. Any substantial development would lead to the perception of merging. The area to west plays a lesser role in preventing merging given the wide separation between Culham Science Park and Culham village.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The semi enclosed farmland of the valley is a particular feature of the countryside of the area and is vulnerable to encroachment particularly within the narrow gap between the settlements where the settlement edges merge into the open landscape. The openness of the western area is particularly vulnerable to encroachment and is already affected by the Culham Science Centre and the railway line.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Clifton Hampden forms part of historic settlement pattern that contributes to the character of the landscape setting of Oxford City. In combination with land parcels 01 and 02 the area also contributes to the historic open landscape setting south of Oxford
Culham Science Centre suggested inset boundary (see Land Parcel plan)	Suggested inset boundary of Culham Science Park. The inset contains the most densely developed core, access road and lower density edges which are felt to fail the test of openness. The field to the west beyond the train line could provide a potential area for expansion however the area's openness and degraded field boundaries means it is vulnerable to encroachment and would require reinforcement planting. Expansion into this field would also result in a westwards expansion of built form towards Culham village and the perception of merging would need careful consideration.

C. Settlement edge of Culham Science Centre: Land south of Abingdon Road

Description	An area of the land in a gently sloping valley grading into the low-lying floodplains of the River Thames between Clifton Hampden to the east and Culham to the west with the A415 to the north beyond which lies the Culham Science Centre situated. The area comprises semi-enclosed farmland to the east and more open farmland to the west.
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To check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford	N/A
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Area C does not contribute to the separation of towns. However the area contributes to a wider open gap between Clifton Hampden, the Culham Science Centre and the village of Appleford (outside the Green Belt) to the south where some intervisibility between these settlements is possible. Any substantial development would lead to the perception of the settlements merging.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The open and semi enclosed farmland of the valley is a particular feature of the countryside of the area and is vulnerable to encroachment and contributes to open rural character of the Thames landscape corridor. The openness of the western area is particularly vulnerable encroachment.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic Oxford	Clifton Hampden forms part of historic settlement pattern that contributes to the character of the landscape setting of Oxford City. The area also contributes to the historic river Thames landscape setting of the City.