

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

**CARTERTON LANDSCAPE
ASSESSMENT 2009:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Version: 03

Date: 26 June 2009

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INTRODUCTION

ES1. This report has been prepared by Amanda Hopwood Landscape Consultancy (AHLIC), on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council. Its aim is to update and expand the previous study of land on the fringes of Carterton, the Key Settlement work in the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (WOLA), in order to establish a sound evidence base for the West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework.

ES2. The surroundings of the town are divided into areas, A, B and D, based largely on those in the WOLA, but divided on a topographical as well as geographical basis. The study does not update Area C in the WOLA, since this lies south of RAF Brize Norton, and is not part of the settlement edge of Carterton.

THE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF CARTERTON

ES3. Carterton is a relatively recently established settlement, laid out around 1900 with the aim of providing houses set in plots of land which could be used as smallholdings.

ES4. RAF Brize Norton lies south of the town, and stretches east along Carterton Road towards the village of Brize Norton.

ES5. The town lies just above and to the north of the low lying Thames Vale, on the lower slopes of the Cotswolds. The southern boundary of the Cotswolds AONB lies just under 2km to the north. The centre of Carterton lies at just above 90m AOD, but the town has spread north onto higher ground, with the newest development, Shilton Park, lying on part of a ridge rising to just above 100m. The high ridge extends to the east of Monahan Way, with the ground gradually dropping to a minor valley in which the small historic village of Brize Norton lies.

ES6. A country park is being developed to the north of Shilton Park. The planting in the park will in time form a strong edge and soften the new development. However, due to its ridge-top location the new housing is at present highly visible from a number of areas of higher ground to the north, especially Burford Road, and in places from the A40.

ES7. The new eastern edge of the town is defined by Monahan Way, a new road with relatively generous planting on either side. This planting is gradually softening the eastern edge of the town in views from the east, but the new development is at present often prominent on the skyline.

ES8. Houses in the northern part of Brize Norton, along Burford Road, stretch nearly as far as Monahan Way, with an undeveloped gap of just over 200m between Shilton Park and the village.

ES9. Carterton Road runs from the eastern end of Carterton to the church area of Brize Norton. Between the settlements there is an undeveloped gap to the north of the road of approx 800m, with agricultural land rising up the ridge to the north, and a new playing field surrounded by young planting at the western end.

ES10. RAF Brize Norton lies south of Carterton Road, surrounded by a tall perimeter fence. One small field south of the road separates the eastern perimeter of the airfield from Brize Norton village. A very large hangar lies within the base, which is dominant in near and distant views. The noise of planes is a frequent intrusive element affecting the tranquillity of the surrounding landscape.

- ES11.** South east of Brize Norton, an outlying area of high ground, Lew Hill, rises out of the low lying vale. The hill is a landmark in the surrounding landscape.
- ES12.** The long established villages of Alvescot and Black Bourton lie south of RAF Brize Norton.
- ES13.** The Shill Brook valley lies immediately to the west of Carterton, with the ground quickly rising to a slightly undulating plateau to the west. There are long open views in particular to the north and south, along the valley, and across towards Carterton. The valley itself is quite well treed, especially at its southern end, softening views of the town.
- ES14.** The B4477 runs south west from Carterton across the valley and then the higher ground. The meadows west of the Shill Brook in this area are managed by Carterton Town Council for public access.
- ES15.** The historic village of Shilton, much of which is within a Conservation Area, lies within and on the slopes of the Shill Brook valley, just to the north west of Carterton. There is a gap of about 400m between the edge of the village and the town, and only about 250m from the southern boundary of the Conservation Area to the town.
- ES16.** The landscape setting of Shilton is well treed, though there are some long views south over the valley and the higher ground to the west from the edge of the village.
- ES17.** A new link road is proposed which will run from the Shilton Park area, across the residential Swinbrook Road and then around the north western edge of the town to Shilton Road.

NORTH OF CARTERTON AREA A1: SHILTON PLATEAU

- ES18.** In this assessment, Area A1 covers the high ground north of the north western edge of Carterton.
- ES19.** The topography of the area is a gently south sloping plateau, most of it above 110m AOD. The area is part of the unspoilt open countryside to the north of the town, and reads as part of the lower Cotswold slopes. The western edge of the area is only separated from the boundary of the Shilton Conservation Area by Shilton Road, and the open agricultural landscape is part of the setting of the village.
- ES20.** Area A1 has a generally weak landscape structure and high intervisibility in all directions, and forms an important part of the gap between Carterton and Shilton.
- ES21.** Although this type of landscape can sometimes be capable of absorbing development within a strong new landscape structure, in this case development would effectively remove the settlement gap between Carterton and Shilton. The open agricultural fields are part of the setting of Shilton; there are strong historic links between rural villages and their agricultural hinterland, and the possible replacement of those fields even with a planted buffer would remove that visual and physical linkage. The area's importance as a buffer between the two settlements was recognised in the WOLA, and remains unchanged. The County Council's minerals buffer zone is also a significant constraint.
- ES22.** The area has high local and medium district landscape/visual importance; and high landscape/visual sensitivity.

NORTH OF CARTERTON AREA A2: MINOR VALLEY

- ES23.** In this assessment, Area A2 covers the minor valley to the east of Area A1.
- ES24.** The topography of the area is a gently sloping minor valley running south, becoming steeper and deeper at its southern end as it turns south east. The majority of the area lies below 110m. The area is part of the unspoilt open countryside to the north of the town. It reads as part of the lower Cotswold slopes, and has landscape and visual links with the landscape to the north and east, but is less visually exposed than Area A1 to the west. The western edge of the area is approx 850m from the boundary of the Shilton Conservation Area.
- ES25.** Area A2 is relatively contained from the wider landscape, and could accommodate housing development within a strong landscape structure. However, this would extend the town beyond the new strong landscape edge being created by the country park. The area also lies within a minerals buffer zone.
- ES26.** The area has high local and low-medium district landscape/visual importance; and medium landscape/visual sensitivity.

NORTH OF CARTERTON AREA A3: RURAL FRINGE

- ES27.** In this assessment, Area A3 is a small part of the plateau area described in A1, but differentiated from it by its rural fringe uses.
- ES28.** The topography of the area is part of the gently sloping plateau described in Area A1, overlain by the small scale small holding pattern typical of Carterton. The area is part of the rural fringe of Carterton, providing a soft edge to the north western part of the town, important in views from Shilton Road.
- ES29.** The proposed road link to the south in its landscape belt will create a new strong edge to the town, and any development to the north of that could open up views to the rural landscape to the north, which is part of the undeveloped gap between Carterton and Shilton.
- ES30.** The area has high local landscape/visual importance and sensitivity.

EAST OF CARTERTON AREA B1: BRIZE NORTON PLATEAU

- ES31.** In this assessment, Area B1 covers the majority of the eastern end of the WOLA Area B, east of Monahan Way. The western end is now part of the new Shilton Park development.
- ES32.** The topography of the area is a plateau sloping north, south east and south, the eastern end of the ridge north of the original Carterton settlement, with a pronounced bulge of land which is above 90m AOD. The shape of the sloping ridge means that the ground is highly visible from the north, south east and south. The area is a large scale, open, agricultural landscape.
- ES33.** The area constitutes the gap between busy and expanding Carterton and the relatively tranquil long established settlement of Brize Norton, and is part of the agricultural setting of the village.

ES34. Area B1 is the eastern end of a pronounced ridge with a generally weak landscape structure and high intervisibility; it is an important gap between Carterton and Brize Norton and a visual contrast to the large scale airfield development. Although this type of landscape, with a weak landscape structure, can sometimes be capable of absorbing development within a strong new landscape framework, in this case due to the sloping topography it would be difficult to screen any development effectively in views from higher ground.

ES35. More importantly, the settlement gap would be lost. The open agricultural fields are part of the setting of Brize Norton; there are strong historic links between rural villages and their agricultural hinterland, and the possible replacement of the fields within Area B1 even with a planted buffer would remove that visual and physical linkage. The area's importance as a gap between the two settlements was recognised in the WOLA, and remains unchanged.

ES36. The area has high local and medium district landscape/visual importance; and high landscape/visual sensitivity.

EAST OF CARTERTON AREA B2: BRIZE NORTON MINOR VALLEY

ES37. In this assessment, Area B2 covers a small part of the north east of WOLA Area B, the remainder lies to the east of WOLA Area B.

ES38. The topography of the area is a minor valley, becoming shallower and wider as it runs south east. It is an integral part of the landscape setting of Brize Norton, with glimpsed views to Area B1 and nearby development.

ES39. Area B2 forms an important part of the landscape setting of the historic village of Brize Norton, a setting already affected by the neighbouring airfield; further development affecting the village and its rural agricultural setting would be inappropriate.

ES40. The area has high local and medium district landscape/visual importance; and high landscape/visual sensitivity.

WEST OF CARTERTON AREA D1: ALVESCOT DOWNS

ES41. In this assessment, Area D1 covers the high ground in the western part of the WOLA Area D.

ES42. The topography of the area is a gently south/east sloping slightly undulating plateau, rising from around 90m AOD in the south to just above 110m AOD in the north. It is part of the rural landscape west and north of Carterton, with no landscape and little visual relationship with the town. It is part of the rural, agricultural landscape setting of Shilton, with its Conservation Area, and the Shill Brook valley. The valley forms a strong western edge to the town at present.

ES43. Area D1 has a generally weak landscape structure and high intervisibility. While this large scale landscape could in theory accommodate housing development, it would need to be set within a new very generous landscape structure to minimise landscape/visual impacts. New development would extend the town into the open countryside to the west, into what is at present a completely rural area. The integrity of the agricultural setting of Shilton village would need to be maintained, with no development (including planted buffer) on the north facing slope south of Shilton, to

maintain the open fields around the village.

- ES44.** The area has high local and medium district landscape/visual importance; and high landscape/visual sensitivity.

WEST OF CARTERTON AREA D2: UPPER SHILL BROOK VALLEY

- ES45.** In this assessment, Area D2 covers the eastern part of the WOLA Area D, north of the B4477.

- ES46.** The topography of the area is a narrow, deep valley, containing the Shill Brook, widening as it runs south. Area D2 is part of the soft western edge of Carterton, providing a strong contrast between the built up area to the east and the open countryside to the west. The northern part of the valley is an essential part of the landscape setting of Shilton. Development here would be inappropriate.

- ES47.** The area has high local and medium district landscape/visual importance; and high landscape/visual sensitivity.

WEST OF CARTERTON AREA D3: LOWER SHILL BROOK VALLEY

- ES48.** In this assessment, Area D3 covers the Shill Brook valley south of the B4477.

- ES49.** The topography of the area is a minor wide shallow valley. It is part of the soft western edge of Carterton, providing a strong contrast between the built up area to the east and the open countryside to the west. The low key management of the area is appropriate to its rural setting.

- ES50.** Area D3 is an enclosed valley landscape with excellent public access close to the town with good path links but visually well screened. Development here would be inappropriate.

- ES51.** The area has high landscape/visual importance and sensitivity.

CONCLUSIONS

- ES52.** Overall, the majority of the landscape around the west, north and east of Carterton is of high sensitivity, a mix of open high ground and smaller scale valley.

- ES53.** There is generally high intervisibility between the areas of high ground and the open countryside around the town.

- ES54.** A major constraint, in landscape and visual terms, is the need to maintain a physical and visual gap between Carterton and the long established small neighbouring settlements of Shilton and Brize Norton.

- ES55.** The open agricultural fields are part of the settings of the two villages; there are strong historic links between rural villages and their agricultural hinterland, and the possible replacement of those fields even with planted buffers would remove that visual and physical linkage. The importance of Areas A1 and B1/B2 as gaps between Carterton and Shilton and Brize Norton respectively was recognised in the WOLA, and remains unchanged.

- ES56.** These constraints mean that there are very few areas which could accommodate large scale development without substantial adverse landscape and/or visual impact, and without affecting the gap between settlements and their rural agricultural setting.
- ES57.** Development on the open higher ground north or east of Carterton (Areas A1 and B1), would destroy the undeveloped gaps between Shilton and Brize Norton respectively, and their rural agricultural settings, and therefore cannot be recommended from a landscape/visual point of view.
- ES58.** The small area of enclosed higher ground to the north, Area A3, is part of the soft edge of Carterton, which it is important to maintain both generally on landscape/visual grounds, and also as part of the buffer between Carterton and Shilton. The proposed link road in its structural landscape belt will also form a strong new northern edge to the town which it would be preferable not to breach.
- ES59.** The Shill Brook valley west of Carterton (Areas D2 and D3) forms a soft western edge to the town, generally effective in screening the built up area from the open countryside to the west. Area B2, the minor valley within Brize Norton, is an integral part of the setting of the village. None of these areas is suitable for development, in landscape/visual terms.
- ES60.** Area A2, the shallow minor valley north of Kilkenny Lane, is the only area looked at in this study which is both relatively well screened from the wider countryside and not part of a settlement gap/setting. Some development here could be acceptable, within a strong landscape setting, with appropriate buffers and screening for the existing properties within and looking over the area. However, the area is separated from the rest of the town by the country park, which will in time form a strong edge to the settlement, softening views of the Shilton Park development in sensitive views from the north. The land also lies within a minerals consultation zone, and the majority of it is within the required 350m buffer distance between minerals working and a town.
- ES61.** Area D1, to the west of the town, is a large scale open landscape with little internal structure. While the north of the area is part of the landscape setting of Shilton, the southern part is less important to the village's setting.
- ES62.** There are long views to the north and south at present from the area, and across the Shill Brook valley to the soft edge of Carterton; but it would be possible to create a strong new landscape structure within which development could be acceptable, and largely screened in important views. However, this would take development well into the open countryside west of the town, beyond the natural boundary of the Shill Brook, and extreme care would need to be taken to avoid any development which would be visible on the skyline when looking from Shilton. The integrity of the agricultural setting of Shilton village would need to be maintained, with no development (including planted buffer) on the north facing slope south of Shilton, to maintain the open fields around the village.