

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Version 2.4 – 28th November 2023



Curbridge Village Design Statement

Introduction

The village of Curbridge has gradually developed from a loose collection of farms and associated buildings into a self-contained village with a unique built form. There is a wide range of building styles reflecting changes in architectural thinking over the last 100 years. Each development has been small scale, has created the linear form we see today and avoided coalescence with the urban centre of Witney. For the village to retain these important design features it is necessary that those philosophies adopted during that period of growth are retained in the future.

Some further development will be inevitable but when this happens it should follow the well thought out examples of the past, complement the existing low-density buildings, maintain the relationship of built form with the surrounding countryside and harmony of the village that those who live here currently enjoy. Development

should reflect the linear structure of the village and best architecture in the village. This will enable it to nestle into the current landscape and village boundaries with the least impact. We should also learn from any inappropriately designed and sited development that may have occurred in the past.

The VDS also seeks to ensure that the village remains self-contained and an area of small scale non-urban development providing a mix of generally smaller family homes and social housing.

It is hoped that this guide provides an understanding as to what is special to local people and that it will provide a source of ideas for residents and designers to work with local building styles and local character and features which have helped make the village what it is today.

Taken together with the accompanying text, the guidelines at the end of each section of this VDS provide details of the qualities which local people hold dear. It is hoped that this guidance will ensure that all development is designed and located in such a way as to reflect local characteristics and to respect local values.

Good design does not always mean greater cost. Employing an architect and using better materials may cost more to start with but, in the longer term, a well designed and constructed new building (or extension) is likely to cost less to maintain and is more likely to increase the value of the property.

It is intended that this document will be useful and that it will play a major part in retaining the special character of the Curbridge village well into the 21st Century.



Left to right Charity Barn (Listed), Charity Farm (Listed), Manor Farm (Listed), The Old Stables (Listed) and Ossie's Manor Farm Barn

What is a Village Design Statement?

Village Design Statements (VDS) are intended to provide guidance for any development proposals and to inform planning decisions. They provide a way of ensuring that any new developments are designed in a way that reflects local characteristics and qualities that people value in their village and its surroundings. They are produced by the local community for use by developers, architects, the Planning Authority and others.

Often local residents may only hear about proposals for development when the design is finished. Although the Parish Council is asked by the Planning Authority for views on planning applications, it may not have the opportunity to offer as much positive input as it would like – particularly on the design of new development. In such circumstances, the only option may be for local people to react or protest. However, once a VDS has been produced, everyone applying for planning permission will know in advance, the design expectations of new development which is of value to everyone involved.

This VDS relates to the village of Curbridge and its immediate surrounding area as defined in Figure 1.

Why produce one for Curbridge?

The aim of the VDS is to ensure that any future development and change in the village is based on an understanding of the area's past and

present. It draws attention to what is special about the buildings, open spaces and settings of Curbridge and its environs and it gives residents a say in the future of their village, by providing guidance for respecting these qualities. Local character could easily be threatened by unsympathetic development and Curbridge and Lew Parish Council will use this document to inform its responses to planning applications.

How has it been produced?

This VDS has been produced by residents of the village with the full support of the Curbridge and Lew Parish Council. It is the result of public consultation involving the whole village, including public meetings and discussions. A consultation summary report is available as *Appendix 4*.

How will it work?

This VDS describes Curbridge and its surrounding countryside and setting as it is today and highlights the qualities that resident's value. It is intended to be a practical tool capable of influencing decisions affecting the design of new development in the village' It should assist the Parish Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council when considering planning applications. In addition, it is hoped that the VDS can be adopted by West Oxfordshire District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This would ensure it is treated as a 'material consideration' with planning applications needing

to show that they have taken the VDS into account through their proposals.

Who is it for?

Change is brought about not only by new buildings, but also by smaller alterations and additions to homes and gardens, open spaces, paths, street furniture, walls and hedges which can affect the look and feel of a whole village. This VDS provides guidance for anyone considering development in the area. It will be valuable to individual householders wishing to build extensions and renovations; and to planners, developers and architects considering new buildings. It provides a source of ideas for designers to work with local building styles, which have helped make Curbridge what it is today.

This Design Statement is intended for:

- local householders, businesses and farmers
- statutory bodies and providers of services and utilities
- local Councils ie. West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council
- developers and builders
- architect, designers, planners and engineers

What does it cover?

This Design Statement contains sections on:

- *the bigger picture – the village and surrounding area*
- *historical and landscape setting of the village and its environs*

Curbridge Village Design Statement Introduction

- *the pattern of the settlement*
- *open spaces and green corridors within and around the settlement*
- *ecology*
- *dark night skies and tranquillity*
- *the public realm*
- *the form and style and materials*

Each section concludes with a number of Design Guidelines, arranged in a logical order that should not be interpreted as the order of importance. Taken together with the accompanying descriptions, plans and appendices, these guidelines provide details of

the qualities which local people hold dear. It is hoped that this guidance will ensure that all development is designed in such a way as to reflect local characteristics and to respect local values.

It is important to note that this VDS does not seek to halt development. Instead, it seeks to enable our village to change over time whilst maintaining its visual and other characteristics by providing prospective developers with guidance as to what local people want and what local people may support if change is necessary. In particular, it will help to support key aspects of the Local Plan including the need to avoid

coalescence and loss of identity of separate settlements, thus fully supporting the General Principles laid out in policy OS2. It will seek to maintain a similar mix to that which the village currently enjoys whilst looking to the best architectural aspects of the village, maintain the residents' direct links with the countryside and preserve the setting of the village within its landscape

A number of features of the village appear under more than one heading of this VDS. This clearly demonstrates how these important features impact across the whole spectrum of the village and peoples' lives.



Quiet scene on the A4095



Manor Farm (Listed)

Curbridge Village Design Statement Introduction

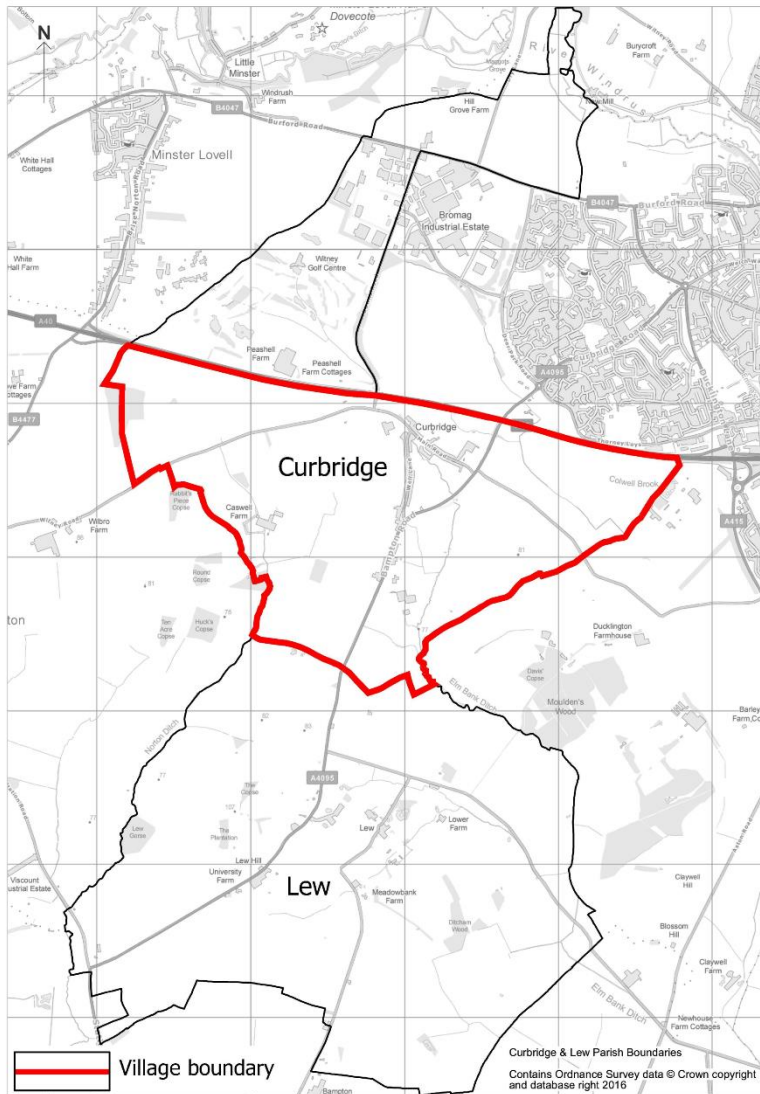


Figure 1: Village boundary and environs

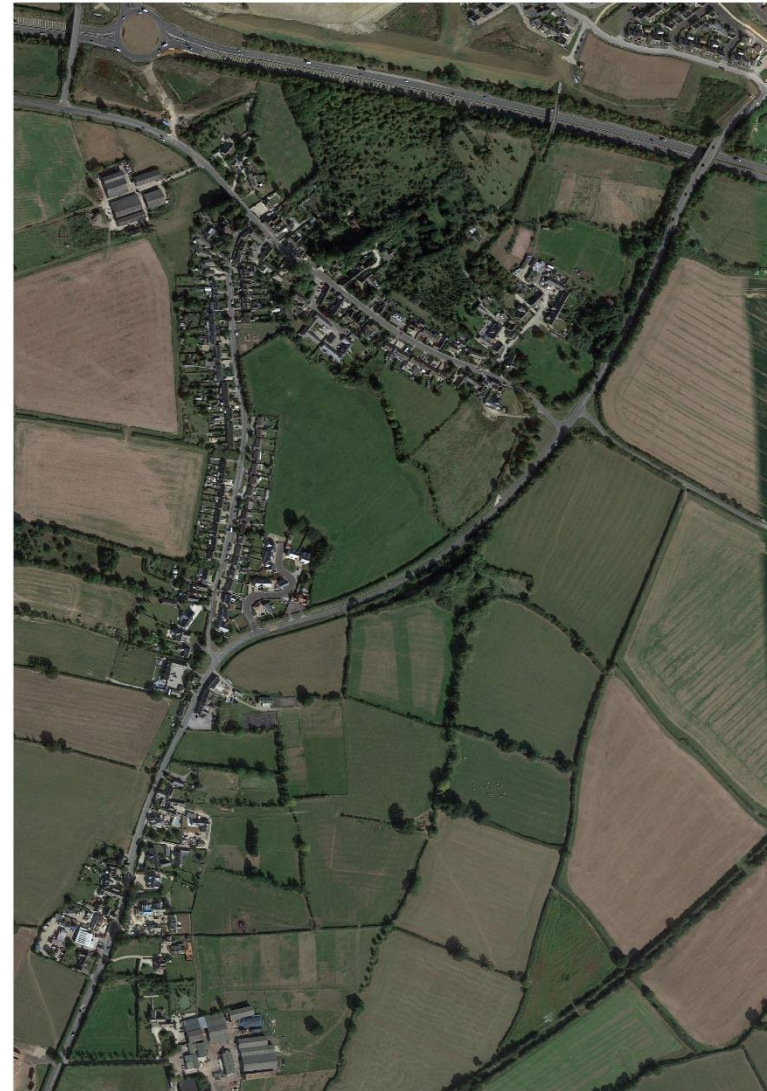


Figure 2: Google earth image September 2019

Curbridge Village Design Statement

The Bigger Picture

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 divides the District into five sub-areas based on landscape characteristics and local catchment areas for key services and facilities.

The Witney Sub-Area is the smallest of the five-sub areas but it is the most heavily populated, containing around 33,000 people. The majority (28,000) live in Witney, a vibrant and historic market town famed for its association with the blanket industry. Witney is the district's largest town, acting as the main service centre and offering a broad range of housing and employment opportunities as well as key services and facilities including retailing, health care, leisure and culture.

The rest of the Witney sub-area comprises a number of villages and hamlets on the fringes of Witney including Crawley, Hailey, Minster Lovell, Ducklington, South Leigh, Curbridge and Lew. Although these places offer some local facilities they naturally look to Witney for most essential services.



View to the south from Well Lane

Curbridge & Lew Parish and its close environment lies south west of Witney. Curbridge village lies to the south of the A40 and consists of linear developments along Main Road, Well Lane and south past The Lord Kitchener on the A4095 Bampton road. This is shown on the Village boundary and environs map on Figure 1. The Parish consists of about 200 dwellings surrounded mainly by farmland, with a population of 529 (2011 census) but probably approaching 600 today.

[The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031](#), which was adopted in September 2018, has well defined policies with regards to developments in its villages, in particular:

- Policy H2 – Delivery of New Homes
- Policy EH2 – Biodiversity
- Policy OS2 - Locating development in the right places
- Policy OS4 – High Quality Design

In addition, paragraphs 12, 127 and 170 of the



The Merry Horn (Listed)

National Policy Framework and the West Oxfordshire Design Guide outline development guidelines will be adhered to. Curbridge is described within those guidelines as sitting on the southernmost edge of the Limestone Wolds area close to the Thames Vale on a distinctive clay belt and shows classic linear development along two roads with some dispersed development close by. The Google Earth Image on Figure 2 clearly shows the linear nature of the village.

Local Plan Policy OS2 (extract) General principles

All development should:

- Be of a proportionate and appropriate scale to its context having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality;
- Form a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development and/or the character of the area;



Rural view on the A4095

Curbridge Village Design Statement

The Bigger Picture

- Avoid the coalescence and loss of identity of separate settlements;
- Be compatible with adjoining uses and not have a harmful impact on the amenity of existing occupants;
- As far as is reasonably possible protect or enhance the local landscape and the setting of the settlement/s;
- Not involve the loss of an area of open space or any other feature that makes an important contribution to the character or appearance of the area;
- Be provided with safe vehicular access and safe and convenient pedestrian access to supporting services and facilities;
- Not be at risk of flooding or likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; • Conserve and enhance the natural, historic and built environment;
- Safeguard mineral resources;
- In the AONB, give great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty and comply with national policy concerning major development;
- In the Green Belt, comply with national policies for the Green Belt; and
- Be supported by all necessary infrastructure including that which is needed to enable access to superfast broadband.

The total population of Curbridge and Lew Parish is approximately 600 (source Parish Council). It is estimated that around 400 of those people live in the main village which is the subject of this document and there are many middle aged and retired people. Younger people brought up in Curbridge generally cannot rent or buy in Curbridge for price and availability reasons.

The main characteristics of Curbridge are:

- Curbridge has distinctive views both into and out of the village from most directions
- There is clear separation from Witney by a green corridor
- The countryside comes into the heart of the village creating significant interplay between the villagers and their environment
- 90 % of houses have views of open countryside. See Figure 10.
- The village is essentially a linear development, along the Main Road, Well Lane and Bampton Road
- Developments behind the linear building line are mainly conversion or replacement of agricultural buildings
- Many developments have been styled on or take account of the original farm buildings and cottages, except for Well Lane homes which have their own distinct style
- The village is low density - less than 4 homes per acre

- There is very little “high rise” building, with 3.7% being 2.5 storeys and 24% being single storey
- The village consists of mainly 2/3/4 bed non-executive style homes; the only homes of significant size being the original farmhouses upon which the village was founded plus a very limited number of later additions or conversions.
- The majority of homes in the village have off street parking for at least 2 vehicles All previous developments have been on a modest scale
- There has been significant tree planting and nurturing of wildlife corridors in the village, encouraging wildlife into the village and enhancing the local environment
- The recorded bat population in Curbridge is of County Importance



Rural entrance to the village from the west

Curbridge Village Design Statement History and Landscape Setting

The origins of Curbridge date back to prehistoric times with signs of low-density Neolithic and early Bronze-Age occupation north of Curbridge village near Downs Road and on both sides of Colwell brook. Another area of prehistoric occupation may be indicated by crop marks on the former Curbridge heath on the township's southern edge. From these prehistoric origins, Curbridge has grown into its current village settlement, characterised by Iron-Age and Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon, pre-19th century, 19th, 20th and 21st century settlements. [[Ref: A History of the County of Oxford, Curbridge](#)]

Today, most of the Curbridge and Lew parishioners live in Curbridge village, which supports a parish church, a pub, a village hall, a children's playground and a range of clubs and societies. There has always been a vibrant and caring community feeling in the village and it still retains the spirit and character of a thriving village.



The Church of St. John the Baptist (Listed)

The children's playground on Well Lane, the playing field by The Lord Kitchener, the Parish Hall and St John's Church are village facilities owned and managed by the Parish Council. The current size of the village and the proximity to Witney makes a village shop non-viable. There is a Parish Hall community field and a play area.

Until the granting of planning permission on Coral Springs, Springfield Nursery and the Curbridge Road/Downs Road estates in the last decade, there has been a significant gap between Witney and Curbridge. Once the current approved building work is complete, much of the land north of the A40, to the north of the village will be developed. This will leave a relatively narrow strip of undeveloped land south of the A40 and stretching both east and west to the parish boundary. The existence of this undeveloped land in its present green state is considered by the Parish to be essential for avoiding the coalescence of Curbridge with Witney and for



Village Hall

Curbridge to survive as an independent village.

To the west of the village, the houses and bungalows on the west side of Well Lane back onto farm land which presents a natural boundary to the village. The same applies for those elements of the village on both sides of the road between The Lord Kitchener public house and Grey Gables Garage.

Between Main Road and Well Lane, and outside of the natural settlement boundary is a broadly 'triangular' area of grass land which forms a natural development boundary to the south of Main Road and the east of Well Lane and is considered by the Parish to be vital to the character of the village. There are also significant views into and out of the village from the Public Footpath that crosses this area as shown on Figure 4. This greenfield site has a very old and mature hedgerow on the west side of Bampton Road, which is one of a number of mature and important hedgerows in and around the village,



Lord Kitchener public house

Curbridge Village Design Statement History and Landscape Setting

shown in Figure 3. There is also a stand of mature trees to the south which is subject to a preservation order. Elm Bank ditch dissects the area and provides ground drainage for water runoff from large parts of the village.

Appendix 1 describes the Landscape characteristics of the parish but in addition we would add:

There are fine examples of old ridge and furrow cultivation methods north of Main Road. These show Curbridge's agricultural roots and form an important part of the areas' visual characteristics.

- Surrounding the village is a mixture of small-scale pasture and arable land

- High density of strong and mature hedgerows
- Important green corridor between settlement boundary and A40
- Good inter visibility views to the east, west and south and restricted to the north by heavy planting of mature and naturally occurring trees.
- Soft but sensitive urban edge to the north with the A40 mostly in a cutting and soft urban edge to the east, west and south into unspoilt countryside

Design Guidelines

LS1: Development should aim to maintain

existing shape and linear characteristic of the village of Curbridge.

LS2: Any new development should respect and maintain the character of the surrounding countryside, be in harmony with landscape features and setting, take account of local biodiversity and not be detrimental to the many existing vistas into and out of the village and recorded in this document

LS3: Any development within the parish must not contribute to coalescence with Witney, thus ensuring Curbridge village and Curbridge and Lew parish remain independent entities well separated from the urban edge.



Coursehill Farm from Main Road



Elm Bank Ditch and Main Road houses in the distance

Curbridge Village Design Statement History and Landscape Setting

LS4: Land uses which have an urbanising influence on the character of the landscape are not appropriate within the parish such as flats, maisonettes and houses above 2 ½ stories.

LS5: Low native hedging, trees and shrubs are a feature of the parish and should be preserved – and encouraged in any landscaping for new developments – so as to retain the rural nature of the area. Fencing within private plots that face the open landscape should be contextually appropriate and sensitively designed to reflect the rural nature of the area such as post-and-rail with native hedge planting.

LS6: Neither new development nor extensions nor fencing should detrimentally affect existing publicly accessible views into, out of or within the settlement or affect views from local rights of way.

LS7: Potentially harmful impacts of development on important distant views should be avoided and

new developments should not intrude unreasonably on the skyline when seen from key viewpoints.

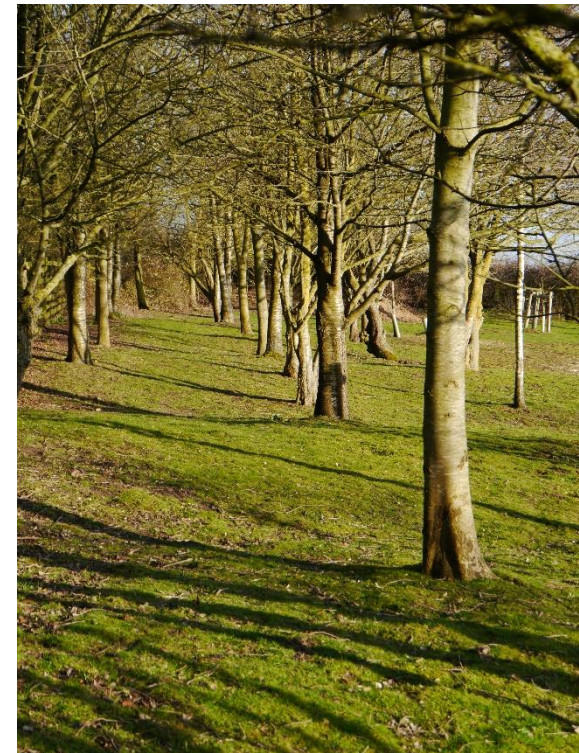
LS8: Elm Bank and other drainage ditches in and around Curbridge need to be sustained in their current form as drains and wildlife corridors within the village.



Unspoilt field south of Main Road



View towards Oxford



Native trees at Charity Farm planted with WODC support

Curbridge Village Design Statement
History and Landscape Setting

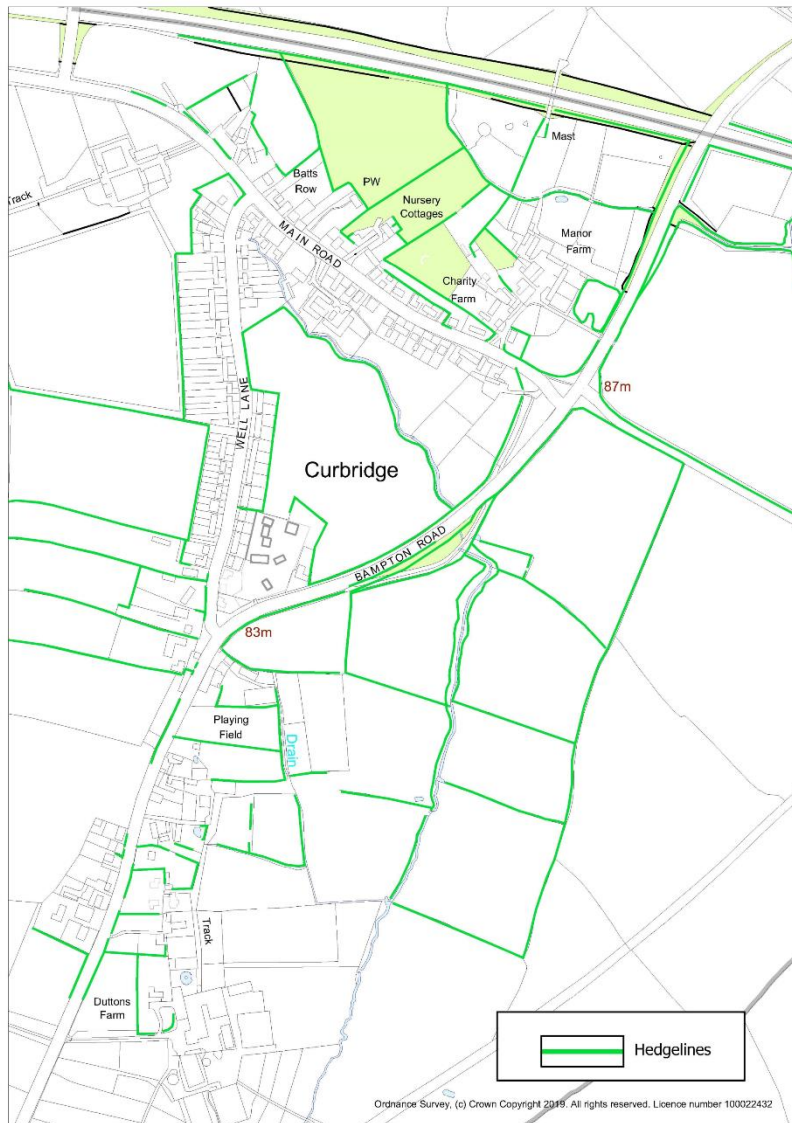


Figure 3: Hedgerows in the village

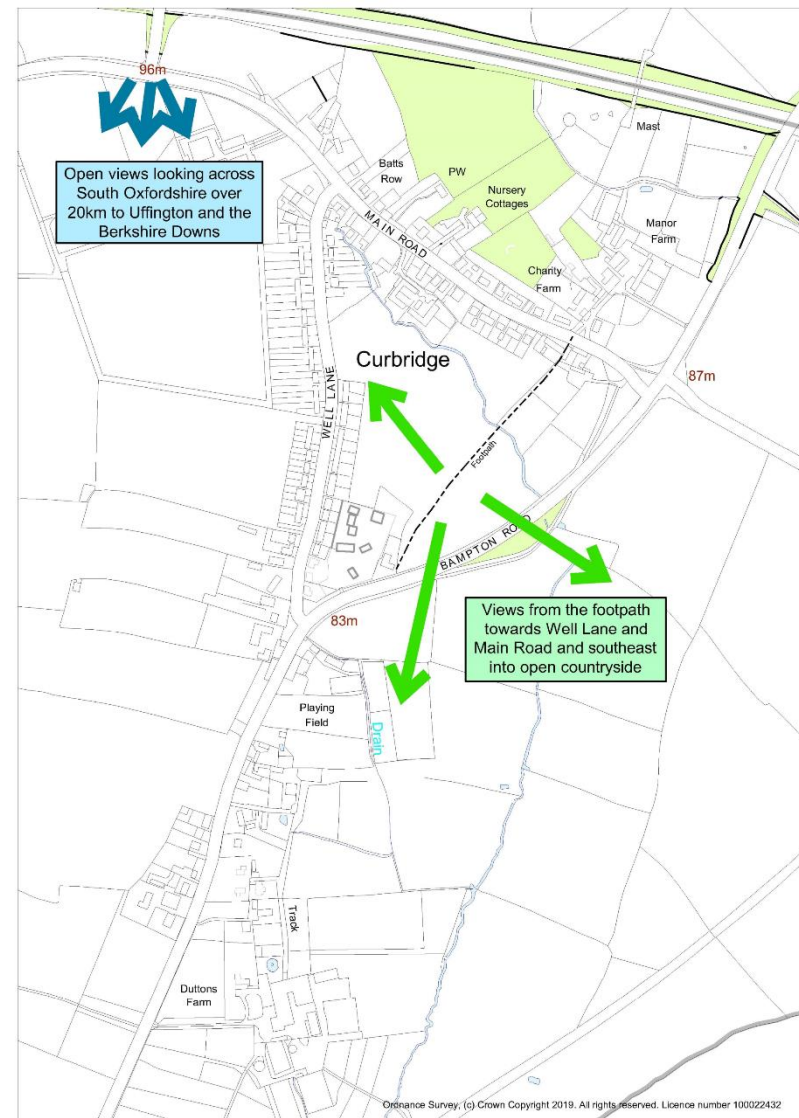


Figure 4: Significant views in and around the village

Curbridge Village Design Statement Settlement Pattern

The village of Curbridge has a very distinct and recognisable character. That may seem a rather bold statement for a small village on the outskirts of a market town in West Oxfordshire but Curbridge has certain properties that make it stand out from other villages.

The village is formed by Main Road which runs East/West and Well Lane, which runs North/South; and then joins the Bampton Road where it continues south. It appears that Manor Farm (the first farm as you come from Witney) originally fronted onto the Bampton Road via a now disused entrance. A right turn took you into Main Road along which spread Charity Farm, Malt House Farm and Curbridge Farm and their associated cottages and outbuildings and eventually The Merry Horn (now a private house) The Church, a school and Post Office were added later, all following the linear form. At the end of Main Road there was a left turn into Well Lane which was originally a simple track with no buildings.

Where Well Lane met Bampton Road there was a small agricultural establishment, some cottages, The Herd of Swine Inn (now The Lord Kitchener), Dutton's Farm and again various associated buildings all again in linear form. The oldest building in the village is probably Dutton's Barn (15th century) followed by Charity Farm, Manor Farm and Curbridge Farm (16th century). To the west of the village but within the area to which this document relates is Caswell House (15th century) and its surrounding buildings all of which stand on an old medieval moated site.

Maps made at the end of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century show the static nature of the village and it is only in the mid-20th century that further development started. By 1938 the first change was seen with the construction of a range of 8 semi-detached council houses at the top of Well Lane. By 1960 the houses on Well Lane had been extended by a further 23 terraced and semi-detached council properties and at some time before 1972 there were 2 further developments of 15 council bungalows and then 15 private bungalows which finally linked up the two old elements of Curbridge. At around the same time a further 9 private bungalows were built as infill on Main Road thus completing the change of the village from a pure farming settlement to a mix of farming and residential.

The following maps Figures 5-9 show the gradual development of Curbridge over a 120 year period with each development being of a size and nature that catered for the needs of the local population and could be easily absorbed by the village.

Since 1972 any construction has been infill between existing properties on Main Road or conversion of redundant buildings formerly used by the farms that originally made up Curbridge. This maintains the very clear linear development of Curbridge which, has built upon the old established properties in the village and classical linear development so typical of country areas in the past. At no stage during Curbridge's development over the last 100 years has any new building strayed back from the road other



Batt's Row



The Old School House



Orchard Mews

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Settlement Pattern

than a small development of 14 houses, at the end of Well Lane and the conversion or replacement of existing redundant farm buildings all of which existed in the late 19th century. All other new development since the expansion of Well Lane has mainly been sympathetic to the construction materials of the original four farms and their associated buildings and all conversions have shown the same regard for the past in terms of materials and environment.

There are 162 houses in Curbridge village spread over a developed area of about 45.49 acres giving a housing density of around 3.89 per acre.

This is across a wide range of houses from the old farmhouses at the larger end to 2-bedroom bungalows at the smaller end. This low density means that most properties are on large plots, certainly by modern standards which are mainly well cultivated which in turn encourage the wide range of wildlife that lives around and in the village. The village is generally low rise with a high proportion of bungalows (23.7%) and only the old farmhouses and one new build on Main Road having 2 ½ storeys (3.7%).

Design guidelines

SP1: Any development must respect the historic linear settlement pattern and rural nature of Curbridge. All new proposals should respect the open character of the village. In order to protect that character development behind the existing building line will be discouraged

SP3: As in other village settlements, flooding can be a major challenge with fields around the edges of the settlement playing important roles as water storage facilities and soakaways. Any new development should not exacerbate the risk, frequency, severity or relocation of flooding.

SP4: In order to retain the existing character of the parish and the settled relationship between buildings, and to minimise the impact on biodiversity, the building of houses in back gardens will generally not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that any such development would not harm the existing character of the village and makes provision for biodiversity gain through appropriate design solutions.

SP5: The entrances into Curbridge reflect the rural and unique character of the village and any new developments should not detract from this. Any changes on the fringes of the village should not be obtrusive, but sensitively inserted into the landscape. High quality design as laid out in the WODC Design Guidelines will be sought throughout the parish in particular on key approaches.

SP6: New buildings should reflect both the size and scale of existing buildings and their position within the building plot.

SP7: Development must respect and reflect the distinct morphology and character of the village.



Houses on east side of Well Lane

Curbridge Village Design Statement
Settlement Pattern

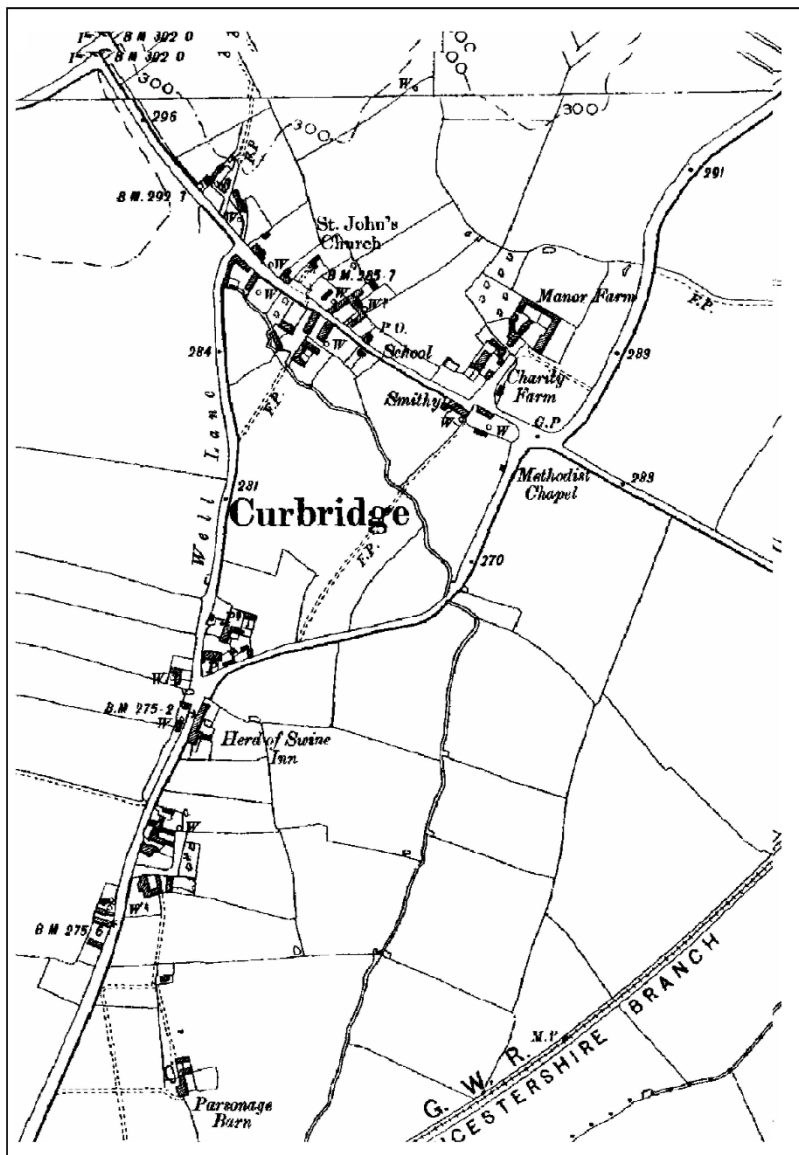


Figure 5: Curbridge village developed areas 1900

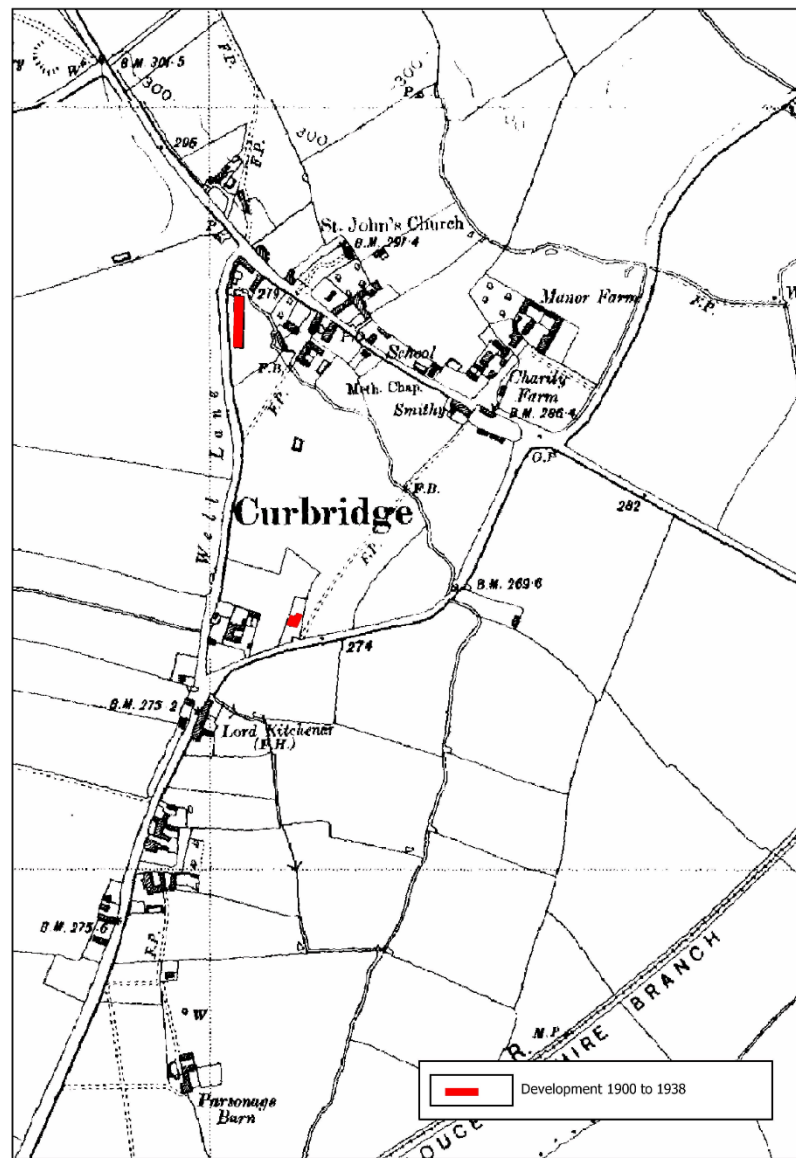


Figure 6: Curbridge village developed areas 1938

Curbridge Village Design Statement
Settlement Pattern

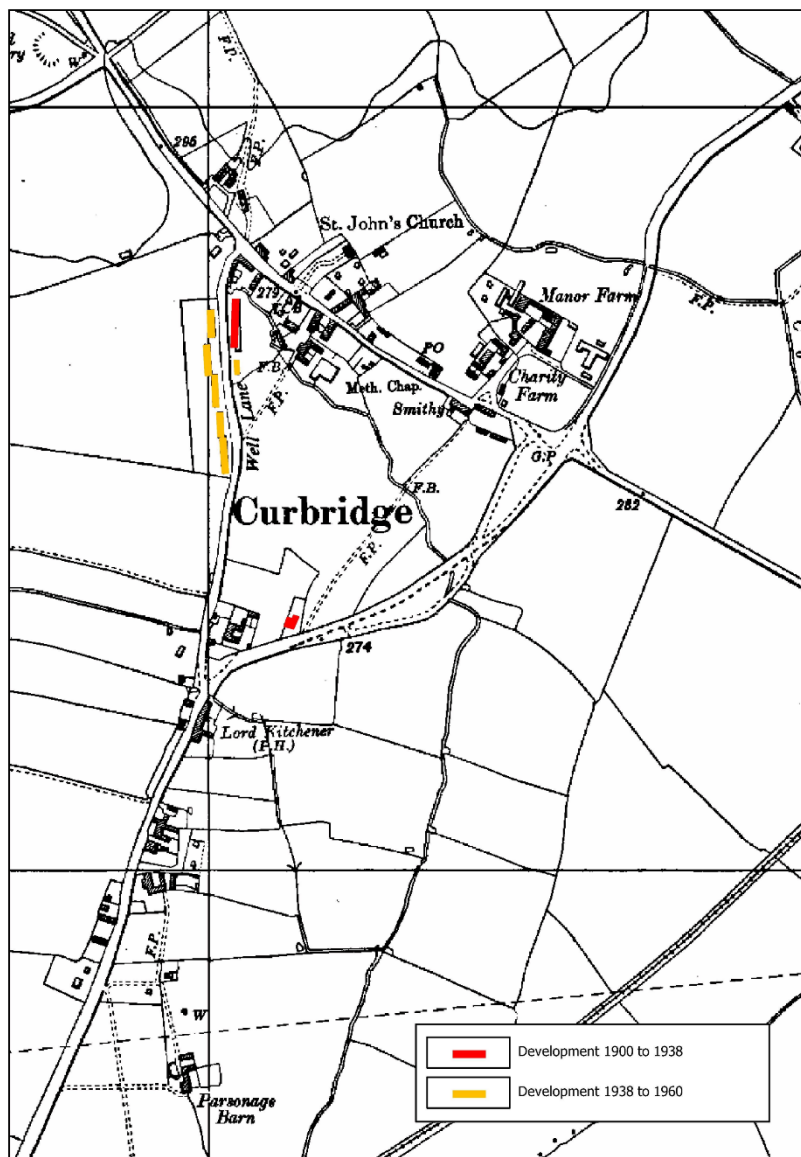


Figure 7: Curbridge village developed areas 1960

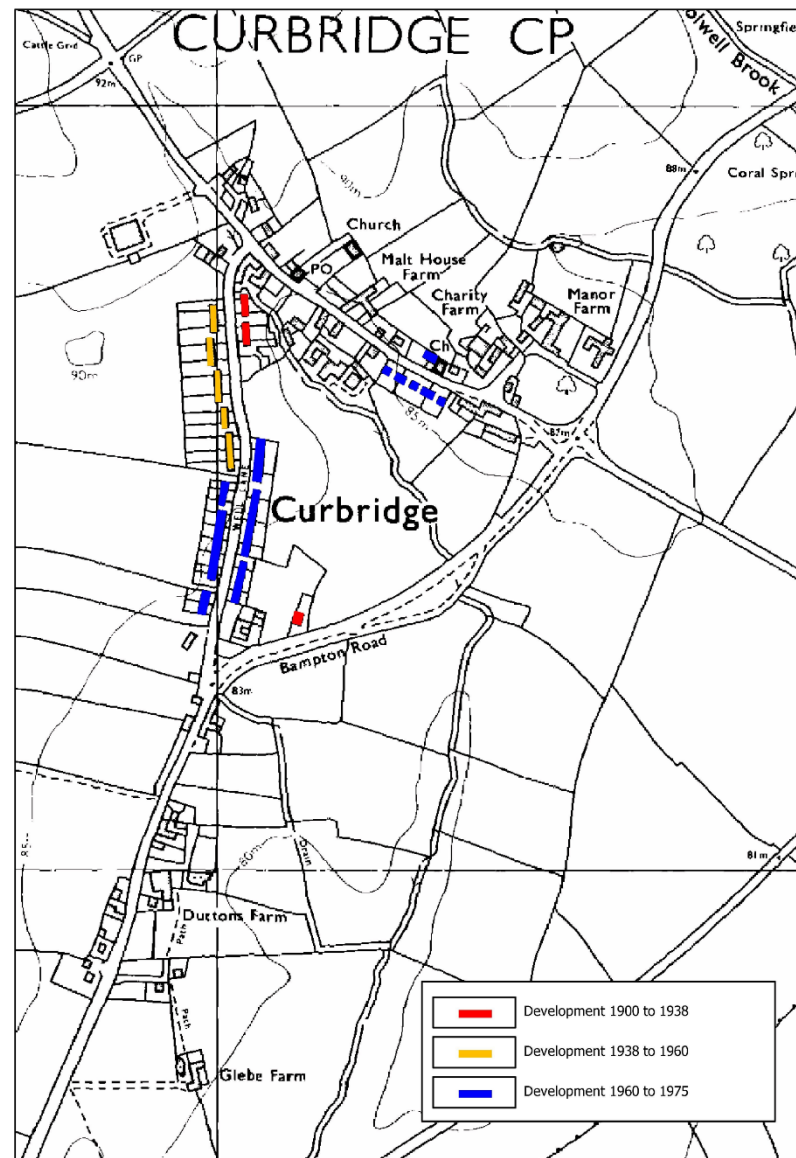


Figure 8: Curbridge village developed areas 1975

Curbridge Village Design Statement
Settlement Pattern

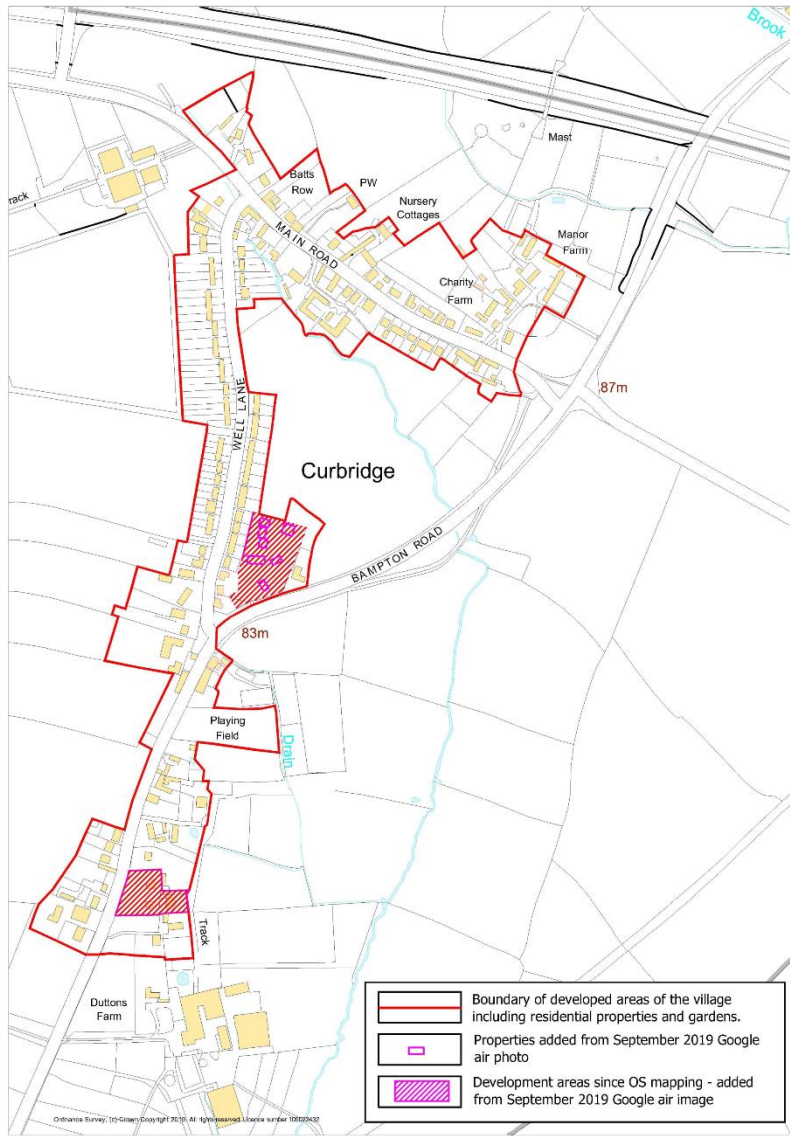


Figure 9: Curbridge village developed areas 2018

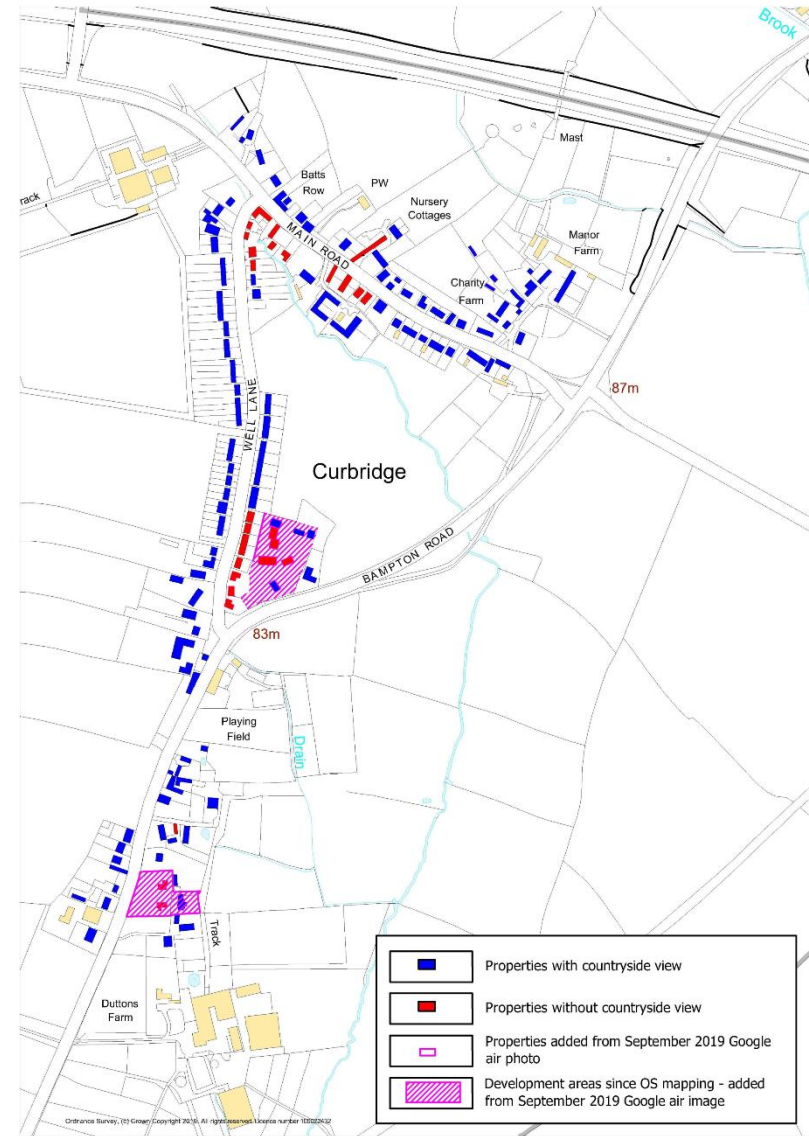


Figure 10: Properties with countryside views

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Open Spaces and Green Corridors

The open spaces with which the Curbridge and Lew parish is so richly endowed, provide both memorable views and a sense of the rural environment. Two different ‘types’ of open space are significant: rural gaps between settlements; and important open spaces within each settlement.

Rural gaps between settlements – particularly the gap between Curbridge and the built-up area of Witney – are vital in preserving the special identity of Curbridge. Concern about the potential erosion of these important gaps remains high. There are too many examples elsewhere in the county where towns have expanded and encroached upon surrounding villages with a loss of character, variety and distinctiveness. It is important that this does not happen to the parish of Curbridge and Lew.

Open spaces within settlements add significantly to the feel of the villages and allow a peaceful atmosphere to be retained. Within Curbridge village, as a result of its linear development, important open spaces of countryside extend right into the heart of the village. The existence of the countryside in the heart of Curbridge gives the village one of its unique characteristics. The maintenance of this is vital to keeping the visual characteristic which is at the heart of the Curbridge VDS. All, but a few properties in the village where Well Lane meets Main Road, have a sight of open land and countryside. See Figures 4, 10 for Views of Countryside. The continuation of this benefit is necessary for the village to maintain its present

soul and character. Existing trees and hedgerows should be preserved and maintained. Note: Tree Preservation Orders are in place for 4 oak and 2 ash trees situated at the rear of Grange Farm House.

Views into, along, across and out of these open spaces are important and these ‘green intrusions’ enhance the atmosphere of rural tranquillity. They must be respected in any proposals for future development.

Green corridors within settlements are also provided by low native hedging, trees, shrubs and roadside verges to join with the countryside beyond. They play important roles in maintaining biodiversity and contribute significantly to the local character and environment. There are a number of individual trees, groups of trees, hedgerows and wooded areas which are particularly visually important and which form valuable corridors for wildlife. There is ancient woodland in the parish, which is extremely important for fauna, flora and for the cultural heritage of the area. There are large numbers of nesting boxes on existing properties and new developments can provide similar opportunities.

Design guidelines

OS1: Open spaces within the existing built up areas should be preserved and protected from development with any development required to respect the unique built character and evolution of the village and its wildlife and biodiversity.



Elm Bank Ditch

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Open Spaces and Green Corridors

OS2: The open spaces in and around the village contain important trees, hedgerows, copses, ancient woodland and other wooded areas. To maintain the local character these should not be lost or allowed to become isolated but maintained to at least their current standard and any new planting should be native species.

OS3: Development should follow the aims of the Government as set out in the Biodiversity 2020 Report and similar policies that may emerge in the future aimed at the maintenance of the nation's wildlife and ecosystems. Even small incursions into the local ecosystem should be avoided as this can lead to greater unseen negative impacts in the future and thereby lessening the value of our open spaces. (Please see our full Ecology Report)

OS4: The Elm Bank ditch must be maintained in its current form and there should be no destruction, diverting or altering of this ditch. The same applies to any other existing ditches or waterways within the parish.



Elm Bank Ditch looking north



Village field next to the Lord Kitchener

Curbridge Village Design Statement Ecology

The unique built form of Curbridge has created not only a home for its approximately 600 residents today but also a rich and accessible ecological environment.

The parish lies 2 miles from the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is at the northern extremity of a landscape of river meadows and lowland village farmlands that extends south as far as the upper Thames. There is ancient woodland, bluebell woods, fields of fritillaries, hawthorn and other native natural hedging and a network of old established ditches and streams.

This environment is home to many species of bird, mammal and insect together with wide variety of trees and other plants.

The hedgehog population in Curbridge is exceptional. Breeding hedgehogs and their youngsters have been photographed in Main Road properties

In recognition of these facts we have prepared a full Ecological Report and Picture Library of species found in and around the village including highlighting those endangered and at risk.

The Curbridge Village Ecology Survey is to be read in conjunction with this VDS. It describes in full the detailed ecological picture of Curbridge and relates these facts to many of the Regulatory, Advisory and Legal obligations that govern our actions today. It lists all the protected species which have been identified and/or photographed within Curbridge village. It shows

the wide range of birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and bees, a high proportion of which are protected together with their various food sources.

The following organisations have been consulted in preparation of the ecological content of this VDS. See *Appendix 3*

- Bat Conservation Trust
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BoCC4)
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- GOV.UK
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee – UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species
- Natural England
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 – Aug. 2010
- Robert Alexander Courts MP
- Thames Valley Police
- The British Trust for Ornithology
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- European Protected Species in England (All bats protected.)
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- The Wildlife Trusts



Goldfinch



Wood Pigeons



Common Redpolls

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Ecology

- UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework
- West Oxfordshire District Council

Design guidelines

EC1: Where there is a building of new or renovated homes developers/applicants should ensure that they have swift and bat bricks built into them, i.e. hollow bricks which they can nest in.

EC2: Trees along Elm Bank Ditch should be protected and no destruction should result from development.

EC3: Wherever possible, all trees, hedges and other wildlife corridors in and around the village should be maintained and enhanced.

EC4: Walls and fences should be provided with one or more openings to allow access to other food sources for hedgehogs and other small mammals.

EC5: Evidence of Protected species of bats, bees, birds, toads, grass snakes etc. should be carefully and thoroughly surveyed and recorded. If there should be differences between a developer commissioned survey and the evidence presented by diligent villagers, this should be thoroughly investigated.

EC6: Developers should be encouraged to leave uncultivated areas where dragonflies, bees, butterflies (23 species within the triangle) and small mammals can thrive and even become part of the food chain.

EC7: The presence of Elm Bank Ditch above, within and beyond the village is an essential part of the ecosystem and any development that interferes with its effectiveness will be strongly discouraged. Water from Elm Bank Ditch reaches a National Nature Reserve and the Thames. Its purity is measured in the village for the Earthwatch Institute.

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Dark Night Skies and Tranquillity

The parish of Curbridge and Lew sits between the brighter lights of Witney to the north and RAF Brize Norton to the West with more widespread darker skies to the south and east. There is minimal street lighting within the parish which provides the ‘village atmosphere’ and “night-time tranquillity” enjoyed by all its residents

Extra attention must therefore be paid to any proposals which involve the installation of external lighting and where the design of developments may result in light spill.

Design guidelines

T1: Due regard should be given to ‘dark skies’ in respect of lighting throughout the parish for both public and private areas so that lighting is (a) kept to the minimum necessary for safety whilst (b) preventing light-spill or glow by incorporating fixtures such as down lighters and timing switches.

T2: The new developments north of the A40 will increase the light pollution and reduce the night time tranquillity of the parish. Further light pollution from any new developments made within the parish should not exacerbate this intrusion.

T3: Development which is detrimental to the amenity value and tranquillity of public rights of way should not be permitted.

T4: The sense of peace and tranquillity in the parish can also be destroyed by noise and air pollution. Very careful consideration should be

given to any new uses which may bring harmful effects. In some cases it may be possible to reduce adverse effects to acceptable levels by design and layout considerations.



Crows roosting for the night



Main Road looking east



Well Lane from the north



Main Road looking west

Curbridge Village Design Statement The Public Realm and Transport

The quality of all publicly owned and publicly accessible spaces in the parish is vital in retaining the appearance and attractiveness of the area and all statutory bodies and utility companies have important roles to play.

Although the roads in the area have a functional and utilitarian role in providing access, they provide the front door and foreground for the parish's unique built and natural environment. The footpaths, bridleways and accessible areas in the parish are greatly appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

The village of Curbridge comprises 3 different roads, Main Road, Well Lane and Bampton Road. Each of these roads is different in style and function and this should be born in mind when considering future development.

Roads

Bampton Road is a main road (A4095) taking traffic between Bampton and Witney. Speeding



Bus stop on Main Road

offences, using mobile systems, have averaged 110 per year over the last 3 years.

Main Road is an unclassified road being one of the roads taking traffic between Witney and Carterton. There is little or no on-street parking along this road, which means despite speed restrictions traffic often exceeds set speed limits.

Well Lane is a narrow residential road which is further restricted by on-street car parking. It is not designed for through traffic.

Traffic

Cars and commercial vehicles use Well Lane as a short cut, to get to the new Down's Road junction on the A40. Any future development, which allows access onto Well Lane, other than strict linear development, will put unnecessary traffic flows onto a purely residential road.

The new roundabout at the A40/Downs Road junction takes traffic coming from Carterton and



Playground for children and visitors

needing to access the A40, away from the village. On the other hand traffic from Bampton needing to access the A40 now comes into the village and down Well Lane.

One of the challenges for the future will be to control an ever-increasing amount of on street parking which can be visually intrusive as well as causing road safety problems Elsewhere it can slow the speed of traffic in a community where a low-speed traffic environment is important.

Flooding

There are a number of drainage ditches in and around Curbridge. In the centre of the village is Elm Bank ditch which forms a major element of the look and feel of the village. It runs south east from Downs Road and picks up water from the area around the junction of Well Lane and Main Road and the fields behind Well Lane. The continued existence of this ditch as a drain, wildlife corridor and as a source of wildlife is seen as critical to the village.

Curbridge has suffered from a number of flood events in the past few decades, of which 2007 was the most severe. The primary cause of these events was drainage water exceeding the capacity of Elm Bank Ditch, particularly the culverted section at the north west end of the village. This caused excess water to flood Main Road and several houses in the centre of the village. Since then, the culverted section has been improved and two retention ponds have been built to hold additional runoff from the Downs Road Development. Even with these

Curbridge Village Design Statement

The Public Realm and Transport

improvements, which have been designed to handle demands from current housing developments, it is critical that any new development does not add drainage water to the retention ponds or to Elm Bank Ditch and thereby increase the risk of flooding.

Rights of way

There are a number of public rights of way in and around Curbridge, the most important to the village extending from Main Road south to Grange Farm House providing extensive views both into and away from Curbridge, in Figure 12.



Elm Bank Ditch stretches across the landscape with the footpath coming down from Main Road

Design guidelines

P1: Any development which places significant additional volumes of traffic onto or through Well Lane will not be supported'

P2: All development proposals will need to respect and wherever possible enhance publicly accessible spaces and publicly owned places including through appropriate context-specific design solutions. This includes the need for all statutory bodies and utility companies to minimise the intrusion and visual impact of their installations.

P3: The low-speed traffic environment is essential for the vitality and safety of the community and development will be expected to whenever possible introduce traffic calming measures so help with this.

P4: Developments should not result in roads being widened or straightened or in new access arrangements which damage existing rural characteristics. Development of a type and/or scale that would generate a level of traffic which would cause demonstrable harm to the rural character will not be supported.

P5: The location, layout and design (including materials) of all new vehicle parking areas, whether private or public, should:

- a) not have any negative impact on the landscape, biodiversity or public realm.
- b) reflect the positive elements of the surrounding environment.
- c) make use of existing buildings and landscape features to shield views of parking areas.
- d) keep signage, lighting and markings to a minimum (if required at all).
- e) treat entrances and boundaries carefully to minimise their visual impact.
- f) use permeable surfaces to minimise surface water run-off.

P6: Where possible cabling and associated equipment for all utilities required for any new developments should be placed underground.

Curbridge Village Design Statement

The Public Realm and Transport

P7: Due to the capacity of water supplies, soakaways and mains drainage in the parish, particular regard should be given to the design and suitability of proposals in new developments and potential effects elsewhere in the parish. Any schemes for the storage and disposal of accumulated water should be unobtrusive and designed to the highest levels of capacity. Large parts of the village and its surrounding area are built on non-permeable clay and any new parking arrangements or other ground covering arrangements must be of a permeable nature so as to not increase the risk of ground water flooding.

P8: There is a network of Public Rights of Way within the parish which allows access to the countryside and:

- a) footpaths and bridleways should be kept open, free from motorised traffic and in good repair.
- b) any diversions should be carefully planned with the Parish Council.
- c) proposals to close any Public Rights of Way should be resisted.
- d) opportunities for new Rights of Way should be considered.
- e) the default position will be to leave any existing public footpaths/rights of way in a natural unmade state to reduce the need for lighting.



Birches at village entrance

Curbridge Village Design Statement Building Form and Materials

There are 16 Grade 2 listed buildings in the village 9 of which are on Main Road, 2 on Bampton Road and 5 at Caswell Farm to the west of the main village. Surrounding all of the Grade 2 listed buildings are a number of sympathetically restored farms buildings all of which add to the ambience of the area. Any infill on Main Road has largely been sympathetic and followed the linear concept and has created a natural picture of progress whilst maintaining the integrity of the village.

Well Lane is typical mid20th century linear development constructed over a period of 60 years along what was originally a narrow country lane. One could argue that the architecture of its time was a little spartan with no significant merit, but in the context of Curbridge it is very important as it clearly shows the gradual growth of the village as it reacted to changing circumstances whilst maintaining its ongoing values.

The 2018 development of 14 houses at the south end of Well Lane and 2019 development of 4 houses on the Bampton Road are departures from anything previously done in the village. The mix of properties and their construction materials represent a significant change from that which has previously come forward in Curbridge. It is in essence a development of mainly larger executive style properties more in keeping with an urban area than a self-contained village. Part of this development replaced some older buildings (about 25% of the site). On that basis that part could potentially be justified as replacement of previous buildings but the largest

Detached		Semi-detached		Terraced	
Old Farm House	3.09%	Old Semi	6.17%	Old Terrace	4.32%
Old Detached	8.64%	Old Semi Barn	5.56%	Modern Terrace	12.35%
Old Detached Barn	4.32%	Modern Semi	11.11%	Terrace Bungalow	4.32%
Modern Detached	24.07%	Semi Bungalow	8.64%		
Detached Bungalow	7.41%				
Total	47.53%		31.48%		20.99%

Table 1: Property Mix within Curbridge

part of the development allowed for the first-time new build behind the old linear development line.

This is an important and significant step and is contrary to the maintenance of the existing visual characteristics and uniqueness of Curbridge that this VDS will seek to maintain going forward.

The mix of properties within the village currently is shown in Table 1

28% of the housing stock was originally council owned but “right to buy” has meant that probably less than 5% of the total are now social housing.

“Modern” buildings are those constructed in the 20th Century some of which are sympathetic to the original 19th century or earlier buildings whilst others reflect the building styles and needs of the mid 20th century.

“Old” buildings are those buildings based on the old farms and buildings that were part of the original village.

The development process, has over the years, given Curbridge a mix of properties that provide a



Dutton's Farm



Thatched Cottage (Listed)

Curbridge Village Design Statement Building Form and Materials

unique village in which to live. It has low density housing with good sized gardens for the majority of properties with virtually every property having the benefit of clear space either in front or behind which means almost no overlooking and brings wildlife and the countryside up close and personal to all of the residents. It also gives the village 4 different areas of character, as shown in Figure 11:

- Charity Farm, Manor Farm is a complex of renovated and converted farm houses and buildings going back to the 17th century,
- Main Road with a mix of 19th century or earlier buildings interspersed with 1970s and later new builds and conversions,
- Well Lane being typical mid 20th century ex council or private developments
- Bampton Road based on older 17th, 18th and 19th century properties with some 20th Century builds generally sympathetic to the older styles.



Caswell House (Listed)

There is also a significant green corridor between Main Road and the A40. With the exception of the 2018 development at the south end of Well Lane and a few isolated instances, the local planning authority has only allowed recent buildings and extensions in Curbridge if they follow the design features and style of the pre 20th century buildings in the village or carried out in such a way as to complement these buildings. We see the positive continuation of this approach as being imperative to the architecturally sympathetic growth of Curbridge.

Whilst recognising that the existing mid20th century buildings form an integral part of the village's growth pattern the period does not reflect the best architecture in Curbridge. Future construction materials should refer to the original pre 20th century buildings with the accent being on traditional Cotswold stone and slate construction albeit modern materials imitating these values may be a viable alternative. The WODC Design Guidelines provides guidance in



Willow Cottage (Listed) and Willow Barn

the use of materials and styles that may be appropriate.

Curbridge is essentially a low-rise village. Only 5% of the village is over 2 storeys. Approximately 25% of homes are bungalows but there is no obvious need to maintain this proportion. The existence of the bungalows does however require some thought to ensure that future development does not overwhelm them. Construction of single storey properties in the style of single storey disused farm buildings, character bungalows or 1 ½ storey cottages may be appropriate.

Design guidelines

B1: Development should have regard to the manner in which the village has developed in the past and maintaining the unique linear form that is one of the distinctive characteristics of the village.

B2: The accessibility to Green space should always be an important element in any



Charity Farm (Listed)

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Building Form and Materials

development to ensure that the countryside continues to come into the heart of the village.

B3: Any development should aspire to maintain the current low density afforded to the village by its linear shape.

B4: Layout and design of new development should contribute to local distinctiveness, achieving exemplary standards of finish and design, using locally distinctive materials where practicable, and making a positive contribution to the overall appearance and character of built development within the parish.

B5: New or replacement buildings

- a) should generally be single or two storey (not higher than surrounding buildings and taking account of the location of the plot) and face onto the road.
- b) should be designed to reflect and respect nearby colours, textures, materials, shapes, styles, massing and proportions.



Curbridge Farm House (Listed)

- c) should propose bespoke designs that have regard to existing buildings in the parish rather than standardised designs that are not locally specific.
- d) should follow the principles of sustainable construction and aim to use natural and re-used materials wherever possible.
- e) should include components (such as doors, windows, the height, pitch and ridges of roofs) which have regard to those already present in the vicinity.
- f) should be designed with close attention to traditional window styles.
- g) should normally be designed without the use of flat roofs, timber cladding and components which are not generally appropriate would need to be considered with great care.
- h) should maintain existing mature trees, hedges and, where possible, shrub planting. New planting should be of indigenous species.
- i) should aim to provide nesting and roosting opportunities for birds, bats and other wildlife.



Original window features on Charity Farm (Listed)

- j) should incorporate plot boundaries which are consistent with local character.
- k) should include adequate car parking spaces within the curtilage of the plot (with permeable surfaces) which should, thereafter, be maintained and kept available for the parking of vehicles. (see comments under Public Realm).
- l) should be designed in a way that avoids road widening, and vehicular access arrangements should not be detrimental to the character of the village: new kerbing or fencing should be in-keeping with existing and rural verges and features should be retained.
- m) should include a good variety of house sizes and development that provides an appropriate mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to meet identified needs and seeks to maintain the existing style and housing mix within the village will be favourably supported.



Properties on the west side of Well Lane

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Building Form and Materials

B6: Redevelopments and alterations to existing buildings

- a) should use original or sympathetic materials, components and detail to match as closely as possible those on the existing building.
- b) should reflect the original building's characteristics in solid to void proportions of windows to walls and in the design of the roof forms.
- c) should usually avoid the use of timber cladding, and inappropriate components unless considered with great care.
- d) conservatories should be designed and located with particular care to avoid undue prominence from public vantage points and primary elevations.
- e) should aim to maintain existing trees and hedges.
- f) should aim to provide nesting and roosting opportunities for birds, bats and other wildlife. (see Ecology Guidelines)
- g) should retain adequate car parking spaces



Ossie's Barn

within the curtilage of the plot (with permeable surfaces) for aesthetic and road safety reasons.

- h) should recognise that some areas of the villages have been designed as low-rise development so as to sit within the landscape. Vertical extensions are unlikely to be appropriate in these areas.
- i) should be designed in a way that avoids road widening, and vehicular access arrangements
- j) should not be detrimental to the character of the village: New kerbing or fencing should be in keeping with existing and rural verges and features should be retained.

B7: Agricultural developments

- a) any new agricultural buildings should be carefully sited within the local landform and designed to reduce their apparent mass so as to minimise impact upon the wider landscape.
- b) with the challenges facing the farming



Magnolia Cottage and Cherry Tree Cottage

community, support should be given to alternative business ideas in the countryside (whether new buildings or conversions) provided that this can be achieved without generating excessive or unsuitable traffic or without causing unacceptable detriment to the landscape, rural lanes, environment and tranquillity.

- c) conversions of agricultural and other rural buildings should have regard to all relevant guidelines in this VDS. In some cases the appearance of the building may not change at all, but it will still be important to ensure that any changes on the surrounding land (eg. areas for car parking, electricity supply cables, drainage, lighting, noise etc) do not have an unacceptable impact on local character.
- d) Any new buildings should be sited to complement existing building groups and be located so as to be seen against strong existing visual features such as hedgerows or woodland. Design should reflect local



The Malthouse

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Building Form and Materials

agricultural buildings and use sympathetic materials. Prefabricated buildings with an essentially domestic or suburban character should not be permitted and any fencing should be in accordance with a plan agreed with the West Oxfordshire District Council.

B8: Walls and plot boundaries:

There is a mix of boundary construction and hedging within the village and any boundaries to new or renovated properties should give due regard to those that exist on surrounding or nearby properties especially if that boundary is within the public's view.

All development should:

- a) retain, repair or improve existing walls and stonework.



Manor Farm Cottage

- b) incorporate low boundaries of natural features (stone, brick, hedges) relating to those used in neighbouring plot boundaries and avoid timber fence panels in publicly visible locations
- c) use native hedging plants rather than exotic conifers

B9: Renewable energy features:

Energy efficiency measures and other environmentally sustainable solutions should be encouraged when designed sympathetically with the building and its surroundings. For example, rainwater saving devices, solar panels, air and ground source heating systems and small domestic wind turbines are encouraged when they can be incorporated without visual intrusion from public vantage points.



Horses at the site of three barn conversions

B10: Contemporary architecture:

May be appropriate provided its scale, massing, solid to void proportions and materials are respectful of its context and siting.

B11: Particular details

Many individual properties have their own unique features such as mullion window frames, crafted thatch features etc. Property owners, developers and architects should:

- (a) be encouraged to retain and maintain existing detail work.
- (b) continue the tradition of incorporating interesting and sympathetic details in new developments.



Packhorse Barn and Maple Barn

Curbridge Village Design Statement
Building Form and Materials

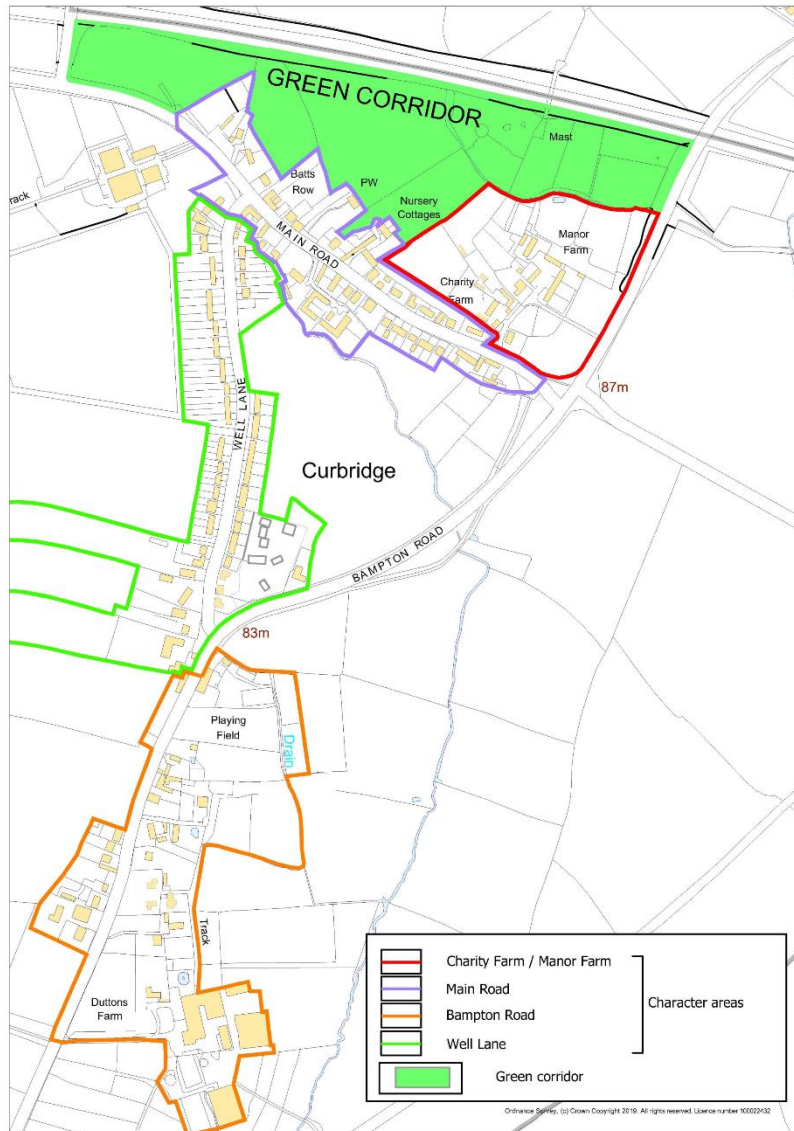


Figure 11: Different character areas in the village

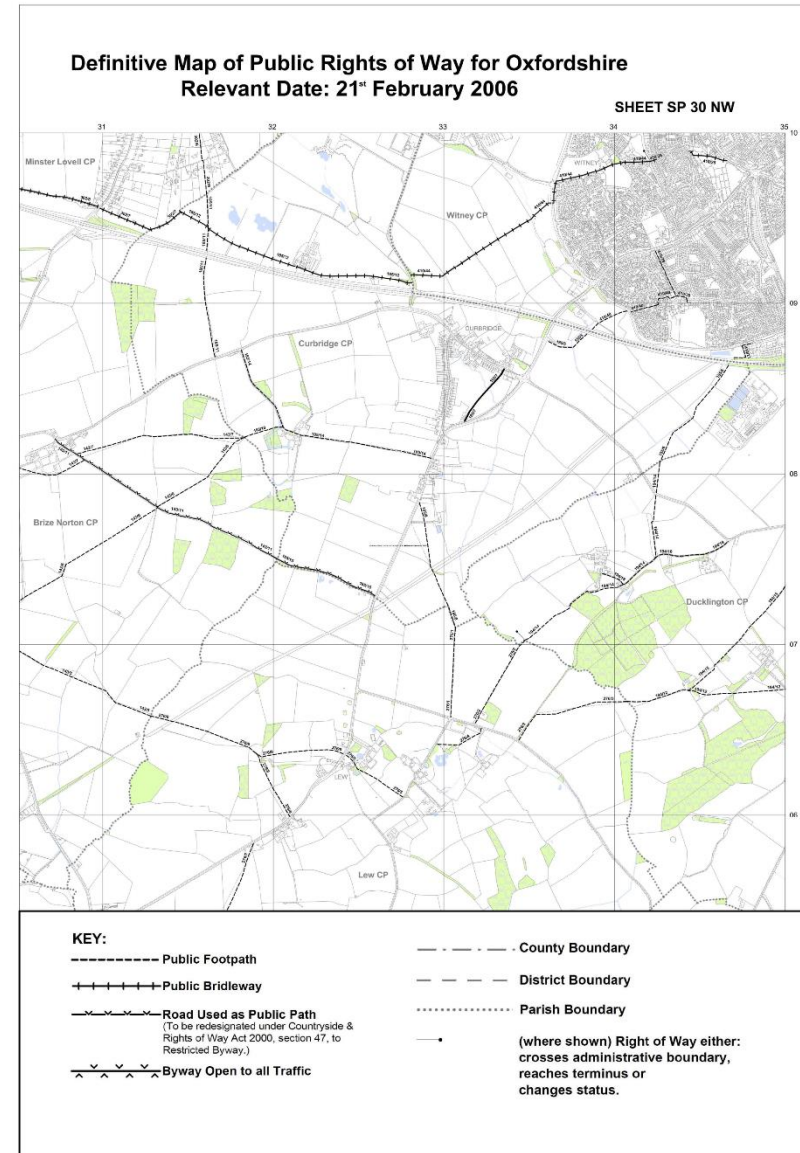


Figure 12: Public rights of way

Curbridge Village Design Statement

Conclusions

If the guidance provided by this document is followed the village of Curbridge will be allowed to grow in such a way as to maintain its unique form and relationship with the countryside and its continued independence as a self contained village demonstrating the value of carefully considered and proportionate development over time. It will continue to respect the wide variety of wildlife in and around us and the close relationship that all villagers enjoy with the countryside thus contributing to the physical and mental well being of all who live here.

Appendices

- 1) Landscape character assessment
- 2) VDS Guidelines Supported by WODC Policies
- 3) Ecological research consultations
- 4) Public consultation