

**LITTLE MILTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
BACKGROUND EVIDENCE STUDIES
PART 5**

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND CAPACITY

Nov 2017

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND CAPACITY

The nature of the land around the village in environmental terms is covered in *Little Milton Neighbourhood Plan Background Document Vol II – Environmental Factors*. The aim of this assessment is to analyse the landscape around the village in terms of Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value and then to assess the Capacity of the Landscape to absorb any development. The methodology used is that explained in Topic Paper 6 of the Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance.

In the *Background Document Vol II – Environmental Factors* the nature of the landscape was considered in terms of agricultural land classification and soil types.

A broad classification of land is contained in the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment¹ (SOLA) which states:

The ability of the landscape to accommodate small-scale development will depend upon a combination of different factors. The nature and scale of the development itself will be crucial, along with:

- the potential impacts on distinctive landscape and settlement character, potential impacts on intrinsic landscape quality and valued features and the overall sensitivity of the landscape to change
- the visual sensitivity of the landscape, ie. the degree to which it benefits from screening or filtering of views.

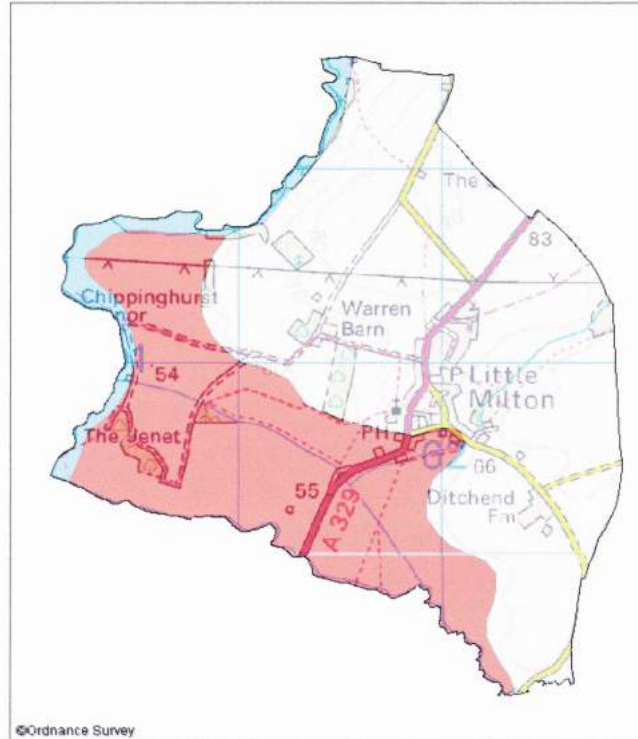
SOLA classifies Little Milton as lying in the Oxfordshire Clay Vale which covers a large area. SOLA therefore takes a broad approach. This current assessment looks in more detail at Little Milton parish and considers the landscape types as defined in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study² (OWLS) which are shown on the following map:

1 South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment, adopted as SPG in July 2003, by Atlantic Consultants

2 <http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OWLS/Home/>

Districts:**South Oxfordshire Parishes****Little Milton**

This map highlights the landscape types within the parish you selected, and its associated local character areas. You can click on any area of the map for a description of its landscape character and biodiversity. Please note that local character areas can cover large areas of the countryside, and may include several parishes, so the description may not be specific to this parish. If there are any wildlife habitats within the parish their descriptions can be found by scrolling to the bottom of this page.

**Landscape Types**

	Clay Vale
	River Meadowlands
	Terrace Farmland

The River Meadowlands lie on the parish boundaries, are entirely within Medium to High Flood Risk areas and are thus not suitable for development. This landscape type has therefore not been assessed further.

Clay Vale

The OWLS describes this land as follows:

Overview

This is a low-lying vale landscape associated with small pasture fields, many watercourses and hedgerow trees and well-defined nucleated villages.

Key Characteristics

- A flat, low-lying land form
- Mixed land uses, dominated by pastureland, with small to medium-sized hedged fields
- Many mature oak, ash and willow hedgerow trees

- Dense, tree-lined streams and ditches dominated by pollarded willows and poplars
- Small to medium-sized nucleated village

Terrace Farmland

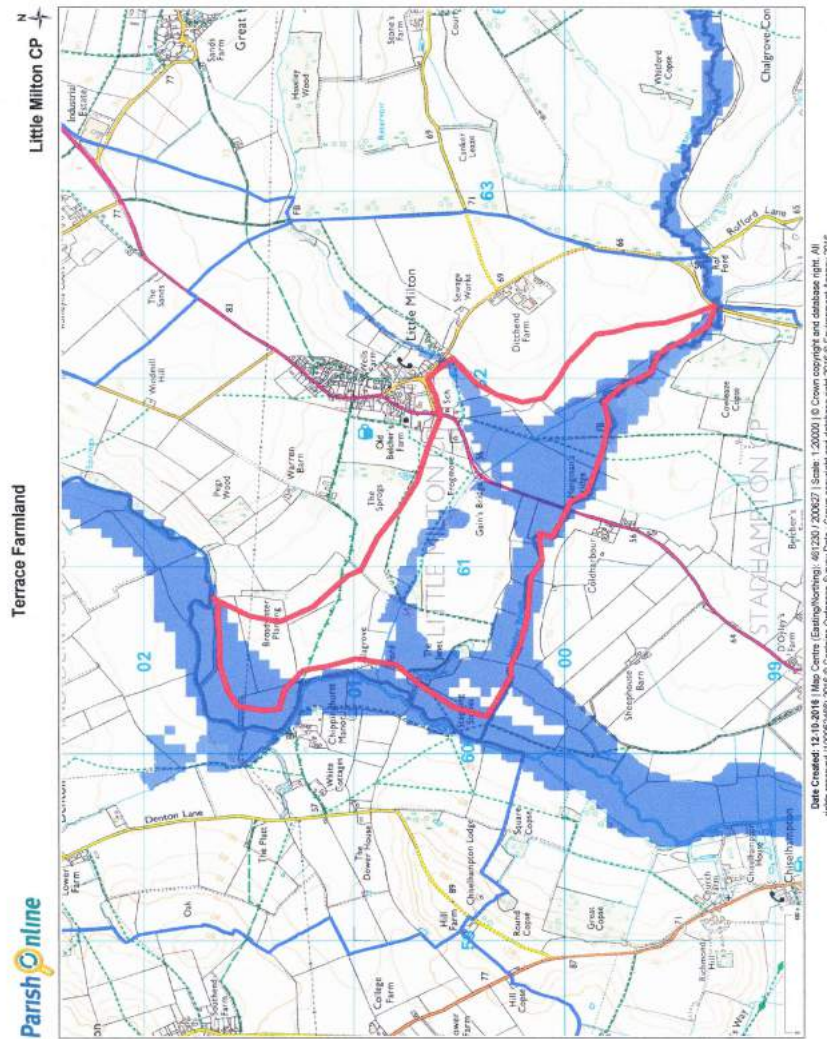
Overview

A flat, open, intensive farmed landscape Overlying river gravel terraces

Key Characteristics

- Broad, flat or low-lying gravel terraces
- A large scale, regularly shaped field pattern of predominantly arable land
- Localised tree-lined ditches
- Nucleated villages

Approximately 50% of the Terrace Farmland in Little Milton parish also lies in areas of Medium to High Flood Risk as shown on the following map. The Terrace Farmland is shown outlined in red.



Landscape around Little Milton

Although divided into three landscape types, the overall landscape around Little Milton is remarkably uniform, comprising open farmland which reaches in the west to the River Thames, in the north across open fields to the villages of Great Milton and Great Haseley, in the east across open land which stretches largely unbroken to the Chiltern Hills 7 miles away, and in the south across the flood plain to the village of Stadhampton.

The land around the village is open fields, with some small areas of woodland and two inset areas of development. At Warren Barn Farm (see map above), a group of agricultural buildings has been converted to small industrial or storage units. These units are largely shielded by trees when viewed from the western edges of the village. At Ditchend Farm, to the east of the village, a mixed group of agricultural buildings stands out in the landscape when viewed from the eastern approaches to the village and does have a significant visual impact.

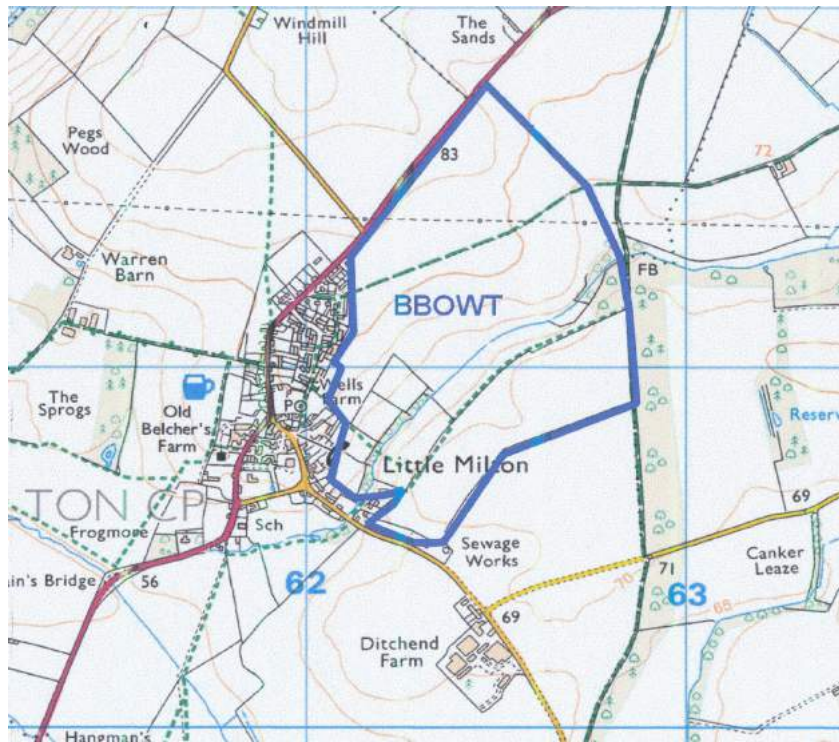


Landscape looking south east from the village.



Ditchend Farm approaching the village

BBOWT land



The presence of the BBOWT land, which is a nature reserve, within the Clay Vale, justifies assessing that land as a separate character area.

LANDSCAPE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

For the purposes of the Landscape Capacity Assessment³, the area outside the village has been divided into just four landscape character areas:

1. Clay Vale not including BBOWT land
2. Clay Vale BBOWT land
3. Terrace Farmland
4. Ditchend Farm Buildings

When carrying out such an assessment, the purpose is to measure the capacity of the landscape to absorb development using best practice methodology. However it is necessary to make an assumption about the type of development which might occur. In the case of Little Milton, the assumption is housing development of market or affordable houses not exceeding two storeys, with associated roads, and gardens.

Landscape Sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity relates to the stability of character, the degree to which that character is robust enough to continue and to be able to recuperate from loss or damage. A landscape with a character of high sensitivity is one that, once lost, would be difficult to restore; a character that, if valued, must be afforded particular care and consideration in order for it to survive.

The model for analysing landscape character sensitivity is based on the following assumptions:

- i) Within each landscape type certain attributes may play a more significant role than others in defining the character of that landscape.
- ii) Within each landscape type, certain attributes may be more vulnerable to change than others.
- iii) Within each landscape type, the degree to which different attributes are replaceable, or may be restored, may vary.

3 Topic Paper 6 Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance

Using this model, the NDP Steering Group has assessed each landscape for sensitivity as follows:

	Clay Vale not including BBOWT land	Clay Vale BBOWT land	Terrace Farmland	Ditchend Farm Buildings
Inherent Landscape Qualities (Score 1-5 of which 5 is High)	4	4	4	1
Visual contribution to the distinctive setting to the settlement (Score 1-5 of which 5 is High)	4	4	4	1
Inconsistency with existing village / settlement / pattern (Score 1-5 of which 5 is High)	5	5	5	3
Contribution to rurality of surrounding landscape (Score 1-5 of which 5 is High)	5	5	5	1
Sensitivity score (total) 1-4 Negligible 5-8 Slight 9-12 Moderate 13-16 Substantial 17-20 Major	18	18	18	6
Final Assessment Landscape Sensitivity	Major	Major	Major	Slight

Landscape Value

In the methodology, Landscape Value is then attached to each landscape, which will reflect:

- national designations based on landscape value
- other judgements about value based either on a 'Quality of Life Assessment', or on consideration of a range of appropriate criteria relating to landscape value.

	Clay Vale not including BBOWT land	Clay Vale BBOWT land	Terrace Farmland	Ditchend Farm Buildings
National Landscape designation eg. AONB	1	1	1	1
Other designation (open access land, nature conservation, flooding, etc)	1	4	3	1
Contribution to setting of village / settlement / outstanding assets	5	5	3	1
Special cultural / historic associations	1	1	1	1
Landscape value score (total) 1-4 Negligible 5-8 Slight 9-12 Moderate 13-16 Substantial 17-20 Major	8	11	8	4
Final Assessment Landscape Value	Slight	Moderate	Slight	Negligible

Landscape Capacity

In the advised methodology, the above scores are then combined in the following matrix:

	Landscape Value				
Landscape sensitivity	Major	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
Major	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible /Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low / Medium</i>
Substantial	<i>Negligible</i>	<i>Negligible /Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low / Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>
Moderate	<i>Negligible /Low</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low / Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High / Medium</i>
Slight	<i>Low</i>	<i>Low / Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High / Medium</i>	<i>High / Very High</i>
Negligible	<i>Low / Medium</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High / Medium</i>	<i>High / Very High</i>	<i>Very High</i>

This then leads to overall Landscape Capacity Assessments as follows:

Clay Vale not including BBOWT land	Clay Vale BBOWT land	Terrace Farmland	Ditchend Farm Buildings
Low	Negligible / Low	Low	High / Very High

This assessment comes to the conclusion that most of the landscape around Little Milton has low capacity to absorb new development. A capacity rating of Low identifies a landscape character area with a very limited capacity for development, with a potential for up to 10 dwellings, where the setting and form of the existing settlement would be maintained.

However Ditchend Farm stands in the landscape as something of an anomaly, having a major visual impact on the eastern side of the village, slight landscape sensitivity and negligible landscape value. Following this assessment, should the farm buildings, or some of them, be decommissioned or changed in use to either employment or housing development, this might be judged an improvement.

CONCLUSIONS

Policies be included in the Neighbourhood Development Plan which aim to:

- Prevent any large-scale development on the open land in Little Milton Parish
- Restrict development on the open land to no more than 10 dwellings
- Retain the character of the open landscape
- Prevent development on the BBOWT Nature Reserve