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**Sent:** Friday, March 27, 2026 5:41 AM

**To:** [neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**Subject:** North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan - Pre-submission Consultation

Good morning,

Under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), North Leigh Parish Council is required to consult those whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan. This email seeks your views in pursuance of that requirement.

Attached please find a copy of the Plan, which is also available on the North Leigh Parish website together with its supporting documents which can be found here [Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation 2026 – North Leigh Parish](#).

Please submit your representations using one of the following methods:

- a) Complete the response form online at [Neighbourhood Plan Pre-Submission Consultation 2026 Questionnaire – North Leigh Parish](#)

Or

- b) Print the attached response form and complete it in black pen. Then either post it to the Parish Clerk at [REDACTED] or scan and email it to [neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk).

On the questionnaire, we do ask for personal details. Should you supply them, these will not be published in any way. Representations submitted by businesses or organisations will be published in full and may include contact details. All personal details will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and our privacy policy, which can be found on our website at [NLPC-Privacy-Notice-adopted-8th-May-2025.pdf](#)

The deadline for comments is the 8th May 2026.

Best regards

Allison Leigh

Clerk, North Leigh Parish Council



# North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan 2025-2043



**Pre-submission version**  
*(for Reg 14 consultation)*



*Prepared by North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group  
on behalf of North Leigh Parish Council*

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>CiL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>HRA</b>	Habitats Regulations Assessment
<b>LGS</b>	Local Green Space
<b>NLNDP</b>	North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan
<b>NLPC</b>	North Leigh Parish Council
<b>NP</b>	Neighbourhood Plan
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>NRN</b>	Nature Recovery Network
<b>OCC</b>	Oxfordshire County Council
<b>PROW</b>	Public Rights of Way
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document
<b>SSSI</b>	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
<b>SWOT Analysis</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis
<b>TVERC</b>	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
<b>WODC</b>	West Oxfordshire District Council

# Introduction

The Localism Act (2011) introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their future development at a local level.

North Leigh Parish Council is a 'qualifying body' and authorised to lead in the preparation of the North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan (NLNDP). To produce the Plan, the Parish Council appointed the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG), which includes parish councillors and community volunteers, with support from Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) and West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC).

This is the Pre-submission, Regulation 14 version of the Plan, in which those that live, work or do business in North Leigh, together with a list of statutory consultees have opportunity to comment on the Plan.

It sets out a plan for a sustainable future for the parish, considering the views and needs of the residents. The Plan has a time frame in line with the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2043. The Plan sets out objectives and policies that will be used in shaping the future development of the Parish. These have been established through public consultation and are underpinned by both statistical information and local knowledge. The aims and objectives of the Plan relate principally to planning matters but also have relevance to other issues important to the community.

The Plan policies are compatible with the emerging West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2043 and meet the community's aim of ensuring that the two parishes continue to thrive, whilst retaining their unique and distinctive character.

At its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026 North Leigh Parish Council the resolved to approve the process by which the Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan had been developed and to approve its release to allow a statutory six-week consultation as per Regulation 14 of the Town and County Planning, England, Neighbourhood Planning (general) regulations, 2012.

## Introduction

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Following the pre-submission consultation process, comments will be analysed and used to refine the document. The Parish Council and Parish Meeting will then submit a final Plan (Regulation 16) to West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the mandatory supporting documentation:



### **Basic Conditions Statement**

*(on how the Plan meets the statutory requirements set out within the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012))*



### **Consultation Statement**

*(setting out who has been consulted, how the consultation has been undertaken and how the representations have informed the Plan)*



### **Screening Statement**

*(on the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)).*

These three mandatory documents support the main document.



### **A draft Neighbourhood Plan (Regulation 16)**

West Oxfordshire DC will then re-consult before the plan is subjected to an Examination by an Independent Examiner. The independent Examiner may make recommendations. The plan will then be subject to a local Referendum and then 'Made' by West Oxfordshire DC. It will then form part of the Planning Regulations and the Policies used to determine planning applications in North Leigh.

# The North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan

## How the Plan fits into the Planning System

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and allows local people a say in how development is shaped within their local areas. Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Guidance and the development plan for the West Oxfordshire District Council, which consists of:

- The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031
- Emerging West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2043<sup>1</sup>
- The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Plan Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy)
- The West Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- The West Oxfordshire Design Guide SPD Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Neighbourhood Plans must also be in line with European regulations on strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations.

Once adopted, the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development framework for West Oxfordshire District.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing (November 2025), the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 has reached the draft Preferred Spatial Options Consultation stage. On advice from West Oxfordshire District Council, the NLNDP has been drafted with regard for the emerging 2043 Plan, including Preferred Policy Options and Preferred Spatial Options.

## Designation

The Neighbourhood Area to which the Plan relates covers the Parish of North Leigh and was designated on 10 May 2022.

Under the Neighbourhood Planning (Amendment) Regulations 2016, the proposal qualified for designation without consultation or decision from West Oxfordshire District Council.

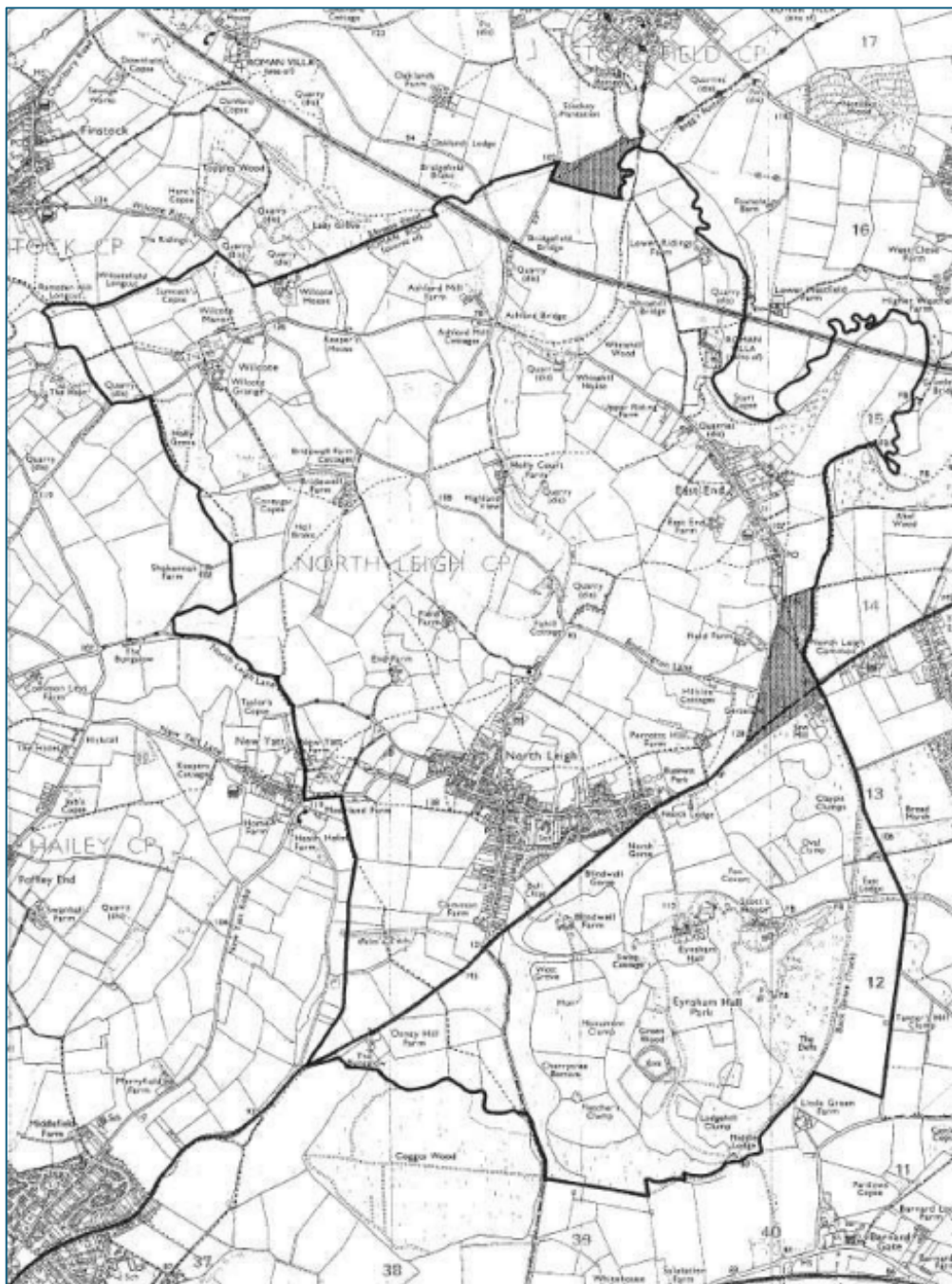


Figure 1 – Designated North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Area

### Community engagement

The community was first consulted about the Plan in early 2022 and up until this pre-submission stage, the Steering Committee has followed a community consultation strategy to encourage community involvement. This was achieved through well-attended public meetings, newsletters, community websites, and a community consultation survey which delivered feedback on a range of themes and issues and garnered 362 responses.

At each stage in the Plan process, elements such as the Plan Objectives, Vision, and Policies have been refined in response to feedback from residents. The extensive community consultation process is comprehensively documented and will be provided in the Consultation Statement (as required as part of the final, regulation 16 submission Plan).

Resident consultation included:

1. Multiple Steering Group discussions
2. SWOT analysis with the Steering Group – Appendix 1
3. Regular updates in community newsletters
4. Steering Group updates to the Parish Council
5. NP community launch event: February 2024
6. Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey 2024 – Appendix 3
7. NP community vision and policy themes event: November 2024
8. NP policy presentation and feedback event: July 2025

### Plan Creation

The Steering Committee drafted objectives and policies to address them. In this task, the Committee had input from Community First Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire District Council.

An early draft of the draft policies was presented to the public and published in advance on the community websites. Feedback was received and the policies subsequently refined. The planning justification, evidence and local support underpinning each of the Plan policies is set out in this document with the respective policies and is subject to further consultation as part of this pre-submission process.

### Strategic Environmental (SEA) and Habitats Regulations (HRA) Assessments

A Screening Opinion will be sought from the Planning Department at West Oxfordshire District Council regarding SEA and HRA assessments.

# The Parish of North Leigh

## Setting

North Leigh is a village and civil Parish. It is a rural environment set amongst fields and rolling countryside. It is approximately 3,000 acres in size. It includes the outlying hamlet of East End, and since 1932 the hamlet of Wilcote. Additionally, the parish includes a handful of houses in the hamlet of New Yatt.

The Parish is located in the county of Oxfordshire and since 1974 has fallen within the purview of West Oxfordshire District Council. Located between the market town of Witney some 5km to the West and the village of Long Hanborough to the East, it sits on a ridge 139 metres above sea level, lying predominantly to the north A4095, a main road running broadly north-east to south-west from Bicester to Farringdon (see map below). The north-eastern boundary of the parish is partly formed by the River Evenlode. The Parish boundary between the village and Witney is still that of a Charter laid down in the 10th century.

Leigh was the original name of the Parish, but it was later renamed North Leigh to differentiate it from South Leigh. The name comes from Leah meaning a wood pasture, a mixture of woodland and pasture used for grazing animals. Settlement began after the area was gradually cleared by grazing and browsing. The majority of the land in the parish is used for grazing and arable farming in between ancient woods and hedgerows.

The parish includes the privately owned Eynsham Park Estate that now houses Estelle Manor which can be seen on the above map occupying the area to the south of the A4095.

At the centre of the village sits the iconic windmill built in 1833; it no longer has its sails and is in private ownership.

North Leigh village is spread out along its four primary roads and their offshoots – Park Road, New Yatt Road, Church Road and Common Road. At the far end of Church Road sits St Mary's church and its church hall known as the Turner Hall, the former dating back to Saxon times. Park Road houses most of the other village amenities, including the Masons Arms



*The windmill as it stands*

## Brief history

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public house, the village hall (known as the Memorial Hall), the small shop/PO, the small library and the primary school.

Holistically, the character of North Leigh is rural, with all properties in easy reach of open countryside and with many properties benefitting from rural views.

## Brief history

The area has been inhabited for thousands of years. Archaeologists have found evidence of a Neolithic burial at the end of Green Lane (formerly Wood Lane and then Puddle End Lane). There are two Iron Age sites (one named Green Wood Fort in Eynsham Park and another under the Roman Villa at East End clearly marked in the north-eastern boundary of the above map. Grims Ditch (to the west of Common Farm marked on the above map) is a boundary said to be made in the Iron Age but now thought to be of Romano-British construction.

The Roman Villa at Shakenoak is close to North Leigh Lane. It has been excavated several times but is currently concealed by vegetation. The historical significance of the Shakenoak Roman Villa is perhaps not yet fully recognized; it includes a shrine, commercial fish ponds and is an example of a Roman Villa that remained occupied beyond the end of the Roman occupation, with evidence of its use into the dark ages.



There are also signs of a lost Anglo-Saxon village where Field Farm is now located, and St. Mary's Church tower is of Saxon origin. In 1928 Anglo-Saxon graves were discovered by the side of the road to Wilcote. All the finds from these graves are in the Ashmolean Museum.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday book, as is also Wilcote. The village and church were given as part of the Honor of St. Valery in France. In the 13th century, Lieu Dieu Abbey sold the tenancy to Netley Abbey in Hampshire. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, the tenancy passed to the Crown who gave it to Sir Thomas Pope where it remained until the 17th century when it was sold to the Perrott family (then of Perrotts Hill Farm). In the 18th century, the manor of North Leigh was sold to the Duke of Marlborough who still owns the mineral rights under the freehold houses in the village

The Parish seems to have shared with other Wychwood places a reputation for wildness that encouraged deforestation in the 19th century. Instruments of control

## Brief history

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included a pillory, mentioned in 1499, stocks, mentioned in 1559 and, possibly, a cucking stool: the village pond at the north-west end of Common Road was referred to in 1759 as Cucking-stool Pond. Known later as Cuckamus pond, it was filled in c1955.

In Medieval times, there was an open field system of farming around the village, strips of land being given to villagers according to their status. On Dissolution, the Crown passed the manor of North Leigh partly to Bridewell Hospital in London and Bridewell Farmhouse was built in the 18th century.

A post office was recorded intermittently from 1854, and a permanent office existed from the 1880s at a house East of the Woodman Inn; it was removed in 1953 to Common Road. It has since moved into the Memorial Hall. A mains water supply was provided to North Leigh village in 1935 and to East End in 1937. Mains electricity was introduced in 1938. A mains drainage scheme for the settlements of the Parish was completed in the late 1950s.

In the earlier 20th century, a few new houses were built, again as infill. From 1945 new houses were first built along Common Road and Park Road, but demand became such that whole estates were begun in the 1960s. North Leigh in the 1960s had one of the fastest growing populations in Oxfordshire. The total stood at 1,765 in 1971, but the rate of increase slowed in the 1970s, and by 1981 the population had risen only to 1,859.

North Leigh's straggling housing, an early form of ribbon development, from East End through New Well End and North Leigh village to New Yatt, with a few isolated farms and cottages away from the road, has changed in density since the Middle Ages, some areas, notably New Well End, losing houses, others becoming more populous. New housing was mostly infilling, often in the form of cottages built on the manorial waste.

Some organized building was undertaken by the Eynsham Park estate along Park Road in the late 19th century and early 20th, but only in the later 20th century were many houses built. Infilling has continued throughout.

The oldest surviving secular building is the south-eastern aspect of Holly Court Farm. Church Farm Cottage, East of Church Road, is a cruck house, possibly of the later Middle Ages. East End Farm, part of the manorial estate until 1981, has a former cross wing on the north apparently of 16th-century origin, remodelled when the main range was rebuilt. Perrotts Hill Farm, although retaining no structural features earlier than the 17th century, seems, like East End Farm, to have an earlier plan.

## Brief history

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The Wesleyan chapel, rebuilt in 1873, was a major addition to the village and became an important focal point. The other main institutional building of the 19th century was the school, built in 1838 north of the Parish church; it became a private house in 1974. A dramatic impact on the village's appearance is that of the windmill built at the top of Common Road around 1833.



North Leigh's nearest major station is at Hanborough. Combe station is nearer, but only two trains stop each day. A station on the Witney branch line was opened at Eynsham in 1861 and closed in 1962. In 2025 the only public transport serving North Leigh is the S7 Stagecoach service that runs between Oxford, Woodstock and Witney (although some services omit the Woodstock stops).

As far as is known, it took the best part of 1,000 years for the village/ parish to grow to a population of just of about 1,000 people (in the mid-late 1950s). Between 1950 and 2021 (2021 census) the parish population increased to 2,126, the vast majority of whom live in the village of North Leigh. The ONS 2022 mid-year population estimate was 2200.

***More information about the history of North Leigh is available at***

- ***Appendix 2 - Baseline Assessment, and***
- ***Appendix 4 – Character Assessment.***

# Planning Context

The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within West Oxfordshire District in the County of Oxfordshire.

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (latest version December 2024) provides a framework within which Local and Neighbourhood Plans are produced. The NLNP Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate that it has regard to the provisions of this latest version of the NPPF.

The following sections and strategic paragraphs of the NPPF are particularly relevant to the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan:

NPPF's section	Paragraph
The achievement of sustainable development	7-8
Neighbourhood Planning	30
Rural housing	82-84
Supporting a prosperous rural economy	88
Promoting healthy and safe communities	96-97
Social, recreational and cultural services and facilities	98
Achieving well-designed places	131-135
Planning for Climate Change, including flood risk	161-169
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment	187
Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity	194-195

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## Local Plan 2043

At the time of writing (November 2025), the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 has reached the draft Preferred Spatial Options Consultation stage. On advice from West Oxfordshire District Council, the NLNDP has been drafted with regard for the emerging 2043 Plan, including Preferred Policy Options and Preferred Spatial Options.

Multiple policies in the draft Preferred Policy Options are of particular relevance to the NLNDP: However, the most relevant policies are listed below. NLNDP policies have been designed to add detail to these policies by responding to particular local circumstances and addressing concerns identified via community consultation.

<b>Draft Core Policy 2</b>	Settlement Hierarchy
<b>Draft Core Policy 3</b>	Spatial Strategy
<b>Policy DM1</b>	Key Principles for New Development
<b>Policy WIT1</b>	A Strategy for Witney
<b>Policy DM14</b>	Listed Buildings
<b>Policy DM16</b>	Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments
<b>Policy DM19</b>	Non-designated Heritage Assets
<b>Policy CP12</b>	Natural Environment
<b>Policy RA1</b>	Rural Area Strategy
<b>Policy CP9</b>	Healthy Place Shaping
<b>Policy DM35</b>	Supporting the Rural Economy

# Local issues, challenges, and opportunities

Via resident consultation (see above – Community Engagement), the Plan has considered the key local issues, challenges, and opportunities in North Leigh. Key topics and themes have been identified which are of clear importance and value to residents. These which would benefit from being addressed via the planning policies, community projects, and underpinning rationale set out in following chapters in order to better enable a thriving, resilient community.

These key topics and themes are:



These are described in general terms below. Supporting evidence has been taken from taken from Appendix 2 – Baseline Evidence, research undertaken by the Steering Group which collates background data on a range of social, environmental, and economic indicators. Other supporting evidence is taken from Appendix 3 – Community Survey Report, and Appendix 4 – Character Assessment.

## Housing development, mix, and character



### Housing development

According to the 2021 Census, North Leigh had 881 properties, including 478 detached, 265 semi-detached, 108 terraced, and 30 flats. Since then, 181 new homes have been built, and a further 122 have been consented but not yet started.

85% of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan survey opposed further housing development.

However, when asked about the types of development they would prefer, more than three-quarters of respondents supported homes with two bedrooms or fewer.

### Housing mix

The Neighbourhood Plan survey indicated that, if development were to proceed, small-scale or infill developments would be preferable for residents. The Census data (see above) shows a predominance of detached and semi-detached houses, a trend which has been reflected in recent new builds. Feedback suggests strong support for homes aimed at young families seeking starter homes on the open market, as well as those who grew up in the village and wish to remain here. In this context, single-bedroom homes, including apartments, should be considered.



### Village character

Looking ahead, the Neighbourhood Plan must prioritise the preservation of the village's character, ensuring it benefits both current and future residents. Any new development should be visually appealing, in harmony with its surroundings, and sustainable, meeting high environmental standards without putting undue strain on services. For example, incorporating solar panels would help reduce the environmental impact. Moreover, new developments should integrate design, connectivity, and the natural environment, linking the village to the countryside. It is also essential that new projects include open spaces and provision for commercial units, such as a shop, to meet the community's needs.

## Nature, climate, and biodiversity

### Green Spaces

Residents of North Leigh highly value its rural setting and the health benefits this provides: the rural setting has been maintained since medieval times. It is no surprise, therefore, that, in response to the community survey in 2024, residents put forward a vision that included the protection of green spaces. There was support for the protection of the following green spaces: Quicken Copse; St Mary's Churchyard and the cemetery opposite; North Leigh Common; local allotments; The Windmill Field and Cuckamus Green (both at the north end of Common Road).



been maintained since medieval times. It is no surprise, therefore, that, in response to the community survey in 2024, residents put forward a vision that included the protection of green spaces. There was support for the protection of the following green spaces: Quicken Copse; St Mary's Churchyard and the cemetery opposite; North Leigh Common; local allotments; The Windmill Field and Cuckamus Green (both at the north end of Common Road).

### Protection of Public Rights of Way

North Leigh residents make considerable use of the excellent network of Public Rights of Way – again providing considerable health benefits. There are many historical footpaths and bridleways at the boundaries of or across open fields and through woodlands. Also, the Parish is fortunate to have benefited in the year 2000 from being part of the long-distance Wychwood Way. All public rights of way should be maintained – and repaired where necessary.

### Protection of long-distance views

North Leigh benefits from many long-distance views which it wishes to protect: some key views were identified in the community questionnaire – the protection of all of them was supported. There were many other views suggested by respondents.

### Energy efficiency

Survey evidence again indicated that new development should aim for maximum energy efficiency, both in terms of construction and sources of power. The owners of existing properties should be encouraged to improve the energy efficiency of buildings – this includes commercial buildings as well as houses.

### Nature recovery and biodiversity net gain

The River Evenlode and other unnamed waterways in the Parish should be better managed by landowners and the relevant agencies to reduce pollution from agricultural and industrial runoff and sewage spills. The Evenlode Catchment Partnership carry out regular monitoring of the river and its tributaries. In addition,

## Local issues, challenges, and opportunities

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woodlands and agricultural land should continue to be managed by landowners to ensure no loss of biodiversity. Any new developments (whether for housing or other purposes) should ensure maximum biodiversity net gain.

## Infrastructure

There is widespread community concern that as a result of the significant expansion of the village (see housing development, above) the current infrastructure is struggling to cope.

The village has limited facilities, and the recent survey highlighted serious concerns about sewage infrastructure/capacity, water pressure, and traffic. Local employment opportunities are scarce, forcing residents to commute elsewhere, further contributing to traffic problems.

With no medical facilities and only a small shop, the village's infrastructure is already stretched. Concerns were also raised about parking, with the clear expectation that any new development must include at least two parking spaces per dwelling.

Without mitigation or improvement future development, particularly of larger-scale housing sites, it is likely these infrastructure issues will become more acute.

## Parking

230 out of 362 Neighbourhood Plan survey respondents agreed that there was a lack of parking in the parish. Parking as an issue was mentioned in the additional comments added by respondents to other questions.



There is limited parking at or close to North Leigh Primary School on Park Road. At drop-off and pick-up times this often leads to people parking haphazardly and in a dangerous way. The shop, Memorial Hall, library and school are all grouped together on either side of Park Road and the only dedicated off-road parking cannot comfortably accommodate more than 6 vehicles. Overlay this with the fact that this part of the village sits close to a bend and a narrowing of Park Road and it is easy to see the congestion and safety issues that arise.

Improvement suggestions included increasing school parking, enforcing existing parking restrictions, introducing new restrictions, and/or identifying an area close to these amenities that would be suitable for a village car park.

There was also concern expressed that on-street parking in the village is getting worse due to an increase in car ownership and recent population growth and insufficient parking provision in the new developments.

### Water and sewage

The parish undeniably suffers from inadequate sewage capacity/ network and low water pressure and this is likely to be caused by three factors: 1 - a large part of the Parish lies on high ground; 2- the increase in population now connected to an inadequate sewage network and; 3 – lack of investment by Thames Water and a mentality of ‘making do and mend’. This approach may work in some contexts but not when the age and underlying condition of the water/sewage network in the Parish is considered and the seriousness of the consequences resulting from this approach to human health and wellbeing.

The raw sewage being dumped into the River Evenlode is also well documented publicly: <https://top-of-the-poops.org/waterway/thames-water/river-evenlode>.

The community survey results demonstrate the strength of public feeling with regards to the Parish’s inadequate water/sewage infrastructure. Water pollution is rated as being 4.9 out of 5 for ‘Seriousness’, while satisfaction with sewerage scores only 2.5 out of 5, and in the same question, water pressure scored 3.6 out of 5. Satisfaction with the condition/ effectiveness of drains scored only 2.2 out of 5. Parishioners have reported at the public meetings numerous occasions when raw sewage has surfaced in their gardens and streets.

### Transport and active travel

#### Public rights of way (PROW), cycle-paths, and pavements



Many of the existing pavements are uneven and in need of repair. The issue is exacerbated at night-time due to low level street lighting making some pavements dangerous. If this were improved, then this would encourage more people to walk rather than drive.



Pedestrian gates on the countryside footpaths around the village need better maintenance. Provision of some hardstanding through the gates would help reduce the effects of excessive mud.

Cycle-paths are incomplete (e.g. along the A4095 between Park Rd and Common Rd) and some are in a poor state of repair. This sometimes leads cyclists to use the main A4095 road which brings its own frustrations to other road users.

The road between the village and New Yatt was given as an example of where improvements need to be made. This road has no pavement and is badly rutted which makes it unsuitable and dangerous for both walkers and cyclists.

### Public transport

The village of North Leigh (but not the Parish) has a regular bus service running between Witney and Oxford. Whilst the journey time to Witney and Woodstock is relatively short, the journey time to Oxford is in excess of an hour at busy times and this is a deterrent to increased usage. The rest of the parish has no public transport facilities at all.



Improving the coordination of bus times with trains to/from Hanborough train station would encourage more people to use the train rather than the car.

## Community infrastructure and the local economy

### Amenities and services

The parish of North Leigh is fortunate in having a small shop-Post Office, a small library open for 11 hours a week and a primary school rated as 'Good' by Ofsted. There were until 2024 two pubs in the village. One has since closed and the owner has applied for conversion to a domestic property.

In addition, it has a village hall (the Memorial Hall) and a church hall (the Turner Hall) with the latter being associated with an ancient and beautiful parish church.

Mention should also be made of the local football team (The Millers) which plays on land owned by Eynsham Estates. The Millers is an amateur team and the club plays in the Southern League Division One Central. The football club also hosts an annual fireworks display and other occasional public events such as a summer festival.

According to the Neighbourhood Plan survey, residents are satisfied with the library, though some residents would welcome longer opening hours. The Memorial Hall rate 4.1/5 on a scale of satisfaction but a common complaint from the survey comments (and anecdotally) is that parking is too limited.

The church and Turner Hall are well rated by local residents. However, the shop/PO did not score so well (3.8/5), and this reflects the fact that it is considered too small for the size of the parish and the use made of it (coupled with the parking issues mentioned above). The consequence of this is that residents have to travel further, whether by bus, car or bike, to other retail outlets in Witney and Hanborough.

The historical context helps explain the current difficulties: these amenities were created for a parish of around 2,000 people and now the population is approaching 3,000 and set to go higher. If we crudely extrapolate a near 50% increase in population to a near 50% increase in village amenity usage with no concomitant

## Local issues, challenges, and opportunities

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increase in amenity size/ road system/ parking etc the scale of the issue can be appreciated.

### Economy

Local employment opportunities are extremely limited and most residents of working age commute to work by car due to the inadequate local transport system.

Within the parish there are three small business areas. The Bridewell Organic Gardens, which is administered by a charitable trust, is open to the public on several weekends in the year, and its primary function is that of a mental health recovery service offering social and therapeutic horticulture in a working garden to adults in Oxfordshire.

The three business areas offer a variety of units and offices across a spectrum of business types, for example Sartorelli's Pizza Takeaway, a Wiltshire Farm Foods depot, Roberts Mower Repairs, a car mechanics, a medical equipment supplier to name but a few.

### Improvement opportunities

Locals feel strongly about the historic windmill site. It is noted that this land is privately owned but there is a swell of opinion that it should somehow be brought into use by the parish for a variety of uses the most common ones mentioned being for parking and a café.

The other 'missing' amenity referred to in the survey is a playing field for football /cricket/tennis etc.

Also, residents requested improvements to the skate park, adventure playground, and the play area by the school.




Some attendees at community engagement events asked for a percentage of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) payments to be earmarked for North Leigh Primary School.

# The Neighbourhood Plan – Vision and Objectives

The Plan vision, objectives, and policies have evolved and been refined throughout the neighbourhood planning process via community consultation (for more detail on the range of consultation undertaken, see above, **Key local issues, challenges, and opportunities**).

The totality of the consultation process will be documented in detail in the Consultation Statement (to follow at Regulation 16, final submission).

## Vision

-  To maintain the identity of our communities as a predominantly rural area where the three main settlements of Wilcote, East End, and North Leigh remain embedded within open countryside, and the boundaries of these settlements define the limits of future development and expansion.
-  To ensure any future development within the parish is focussed on the needs of those communities and is limited in scope to prevent the coalescence of the parish with the surrounding parishes of Hailey, Long Hanborough, and Witney, and to retain the separate identities of the settlements within the parish of North Leigh, East End, and Wilcote.
-  To improve and enhance the community facilities, the sense of community, and the local infrastructure to ensure an exceptional quality of life for the current and future inhabitants.

## Themes and Objectives

Theme	Objective
Housing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must be consistent with:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ North Leigh village’s designation as a “Tier 3 village” suitable for a smaller scale of growth, in the context of the sum of development construction and approvals within North Leigh village between 2017 and 2024 that has already increased the number of households in North Leigh village by over 40% over that period</li> <li>○ East End’s, New Yatt’s and Wilcote’s designations as “small villages and hamlets” suitable only for development that is limited to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location and which respects the intrinsic character of the area</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Any new housing development within North Leigh parish should support housing development which meets identified North Leigh parish needs</li> <li>• Any new infill housing development within North Leigh parish must minimise impacts on surrounding housing, the built environment, village character, and the rural setting of North Leigh parish</li> <li>• Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must maintain the separation of North Leigh parish from surrounding settlements and the settlements within North Leigh parish from one another</li> <li>• Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must protect the cultural, historic and natural heritage of North Leigh parish</li> </ul>

## The Neighbourhood Plan – Vision and Objectives

Theme	Objective
Rural Setting, Character and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure new development conserves and enhances the rural, historic and character of the village</li> <li>• To encourage exemplary design quality and innovation</li> <li>• To preserve the high-quality and accessible countryside setting of the village, open landscapes, and key views</li> </ul>
Nature and Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To seek opportunities for biodiversity net gain and nature recovery</li> <li>• To pursue local climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives</li> <li>• To protect important green spaces from development</li> </ul>
Transport and Active Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that all residents have ready access to local transport networks by private car, bicycle or public transport.</li> <li>• To maintain and create excellent paths are created for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles.</li> </ul>
Infrastructure and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect community facilities and services from unnecessary loss and encourage proposals to sustain and improve their viability</li> <li>• To nurture and support existing and new local business, commercial and industrial opportunities</li> </ul>

# The Neighbourhood Plan – Policies

## Housing Development



### Objectives

- Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must consider:
  - The sum of development (construction and approvals) within North Leigh village between 2017 and 2024 has increased the number of households in North Leigh village by over 40% over that period.
  - The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Paper October 2025 (“Draft Local Plan 2043) includes a proposed shortlist of sites for adoption. No sites in North Leigh parish are included within that shortlist (despite a long list of sites being proposed by developers for North Leigh parish).
  - North Leigh parish does not meet the criteria promoted within “Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy” of the Draft Local Plan 2043.
- Any new housing development within North Leigh should have regard to all relevant sections of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 and the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan.
- Any new housing development within North Leigh parish should support identified North Leigh parish needs.
- Any new infill housing development within North Leigh parish must minimise impacts on surrounding housing, the built environment, village character, and the rural setting of North Leigh parish.
- Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must maintain the separation of North Leigh parish from surrounding



## Objectives

settlements and the settlements within North Leigh parish from one another.

- Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must protect the cultural, historic and natural heritage of North Leigh parish.



## Policies

Policy HD1 – New Housing Development

Policy HD2 – Housing Mix

Policy HD3 – Infill Housing

Policy HD4 – Coalescence

Policy HD5 – Cultural, historic and natural heritage

### Policy HD1 - New Housing Development

#### **Rationale**

As there are no sites within North Leigh parish within the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043, provided West Oxfordshire maintains its 5-year land supply (which the Draft Local Plan 2043 is designed to maintain), North Leigh parish will not be subject to further development over the life of the Plan.

Should the 5-year land supply fall short, then North Leigh village, being designated in the Draft Local Plan 2043 as a “Large Village (Tier 3)”, is only suitable for small and medium scale development (small scale development is defined as 1-10 units and medium scale development is defined as 11-50 units). The Draft Local Plan 2043 will include policy to ensure a limit on the number of such developments over the life of the Plan (adjacent to one another and across North Leigh village). Any such small and medium scale development proposed for North Leigh village must be taken in the context of the sum of development (construction and approvals) within North Leigh village between 2017 and 2024 that has already increased the number of households in North Leigh village by over 40% over that period.

East End, New Yatt and Wilcote, being designated in the Draft Local Plan 2043 as “Small Villages and Hamlets”, are only suitable for development that is limited to that which requires a rural location and any residential proposals will be expected to be small-scale development and will only be permitted in limited circumstances.

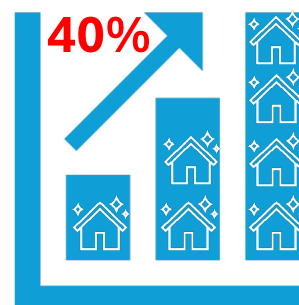
Any new housing development within North Leigh parish should have regard to the relevant sections of the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan. The North Leigh Character Assessment and the North Leigh Design Code are both relevant in relation to, inter alia, design, massing, materials, density of buildings and other identified features and characteristics in the immediate locality of the site.

#### **North Leigh parish does not meet the criteria promoted within “Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy” of the Draft Local Plan 2043:**

- Section 2 promotes “growth along key strategic corridors” the A40 Corridor and the A44 Corridor; North Leigh parish falls into neither.
- Section 3 prioritises “*sustainable travel and infrastructure alignment*” including, inter alia, requirements that development will “*reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car, by focusing growth in accessible locations*”, “*encourage a modal shift toward walking, cycling, and public transport*”, “*maximise use of existing public transport infrastructure, including but not limited to, Hanborough and Tackley rail stations*” and “*promote compact,*

*walkable communities*”, none of which development within North Leigh parish would offer.

The sum of development construction and approvals within North Leigh village between 2017 and 2024 increased the number of households in North Leigh village by over 40%. This growth rate is more than any of the other 34 villages in West Oxfordshire.



The following 313 new houses have been constructed or approved in North Leigh since 2017:

Address/Location	Number of houses	Address/Location	Number of houses
36 Common Road	1	Land West of Ferndale	5
44 Common Road	9*	Manor Oak	43
Bluebell Gardens	9*	Marlborough Gardens	55
Breakspear Way and Gough Close	76	Masons Grove	40
Close off Park Road	5	New Yatt Road	2
Common Farm	5	Rectory Rise	55
Goodman’s Yard	5	Windmill Road	1
Home Close	2		

(\* Net number)

There is, in addition, a current planning application for a substantial number of new houses – 70 to 150 – on land west of Common Road at the southern end, not included in the figure of 313, above.

The “higher concentrations of new permissions” in North Leigh is documented in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Annual Monitoring Report (2023 – 2024) paragraph 4.14.

Moreover, the North Leigh Parish Council Response to “WOLP 2041 – Your Place Your Plan – Ideas and Objectives Consultation” dated 30th November 2023 documents this disproportionate increase by comparison to other villages in the district.

The Parish Council strongly emphasises that all future development proposals in North Leigh parish are considered within the context of this very substantial and extensive recent housing growth and therefore small-scale development best

represents a sustainable pattern of development for any further housing development within North Leigh parish.

Residents are concerned about the recent very substantial and extensive level of housing approvals within North Leigh parish and the potential for more. 85% of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan community survey opposed further housing development in North Leigh parish. This concern is also demonstrated by the significant attendance by members of the public, given the size of North Leigh parish, at meetings of the Planning Committee of North Leigh Parish Council at which development proposals have been discussed. Those attending have been overwhelmingly, if not unanimously, of the opinion that the development in question should be opposed. Examples as follows:

Planning Committee	Attendance by Members of the Public	Development in Question
26 February 2024	Over 55	Land West of Bridewell Close
19 March 2024	Approx. 60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Housing Development Sites at Common Road</li> <li>• Other Developments near A4095</li> </ul>
10 January 2025	38	Land west of Common Road at the southern end



### Policy HD1: New Housing Development

Any new housing development within North Leigh parish should support a sustainable pattern of growth, considering a 40% increase in the number of households since 2017.

As no sites in North Leigh parish are included within the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption in the Draft Local Plan 2043, as a Large Village (Tier 3), North Leigh is only eligible for windfall housing of up to medium-scale development of 11 -50 units, and only once during the life of the Plan.

North Leigh parish does not meet the criteria promoted within “Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy” of the Draft Local Plan 2043.

### Policy HD2 - Housing Mix

#### ***Rationale***

The Neighbourhood Plan community survey found that the size of dwelling most needed in North Leigh parish is 2 and 3-bedroom homes. Of those, 'private housing for purchase' are most needed by a very significant margin (over those 2 and 3-bedroom homes that are 'private rented', 'affordable' or 'self-build').



Via this policy the North Leigh Parish Council wishes strongly to encourage both the Local Authority and development applications to increase the proportion of 2 and 3-bedroom open-market houses.



#### **Policy HD2: Housing Mix**

Any new housing development within North Leigh should support housing development which meets identified North Leigh parish needs.

### Policy HD3 - Infill Housing

#### **Rationale**

It is recognised that infill housing development, while small-scale (and sometimes only one or two new houses), can have significant impacts on surrounding housing, the built environment, village character, and the rural setting of North Leigh parish. Therefore, it is vital to ensure any new infill development is carefully designed to minimise these impacts.

An infill site is defined as a small gap in an otherwise continuous built up frontage capable of accommodating one or two houses, the development of which will not involve the outward extension of the built-up areas of North Leigh parish, is not considered back land (building in the rear garden of properties, which can require unsuitable access and reduce the privacy of adjoining properties) and does not result in harm to the rural character or appearance of North Leigh parish through loss of glimpsed views to greenery beyond the building line.



Any new infill development must respond to stipulations regarding development in a particular location as set out in the North Leigh Character Assessment and the North Leigh Design Code.



#### **Policy HD3: Infill housing**

Any small residential infill or redevelopment (brownfield) sites within North Leigh parish must meet the infill definitions above and requirements A to E below:

- A. be appropriate to the size of the site
- B. provide secure vehicle access which does not impact highway safety, and provide vehicles with appropriate off-road parking and turning arrangements
- C. provide safe and secure access for cyclists and pedestrians
- D. have regard to both the North Leigh Character Assessment and the North Leigh Design Code in relation to design, massing, materials, density of buildings and other identified features and characteristics in the immediate locality of the site
- E. not be back land or unneighbourly development that requires unsuitable access or unacceptably reduces the privacy of adjoining properties.

### Policy HD4 - Coalescence

#### **Rationale**

The issue of coalescence is a key concern for North Leigh parish residents.

Recent housing development, current Local Plan housing allocations, and development proposals in the west of North Leigh parish, in particular, have extended (or will extend) the built environment:

- The North Witney Strategic Development Area (Hailey parish) will extend development east and northeast from Witney towards New Yatt.
- Within North Leigh, a recent application for 155 homes at Common Road would extend the built-up area of the village westwards.
- The recent development at Breakspear Way/Gough Close has already extended the built environment to the west.
- The recent approval of the Manor Oak development will mean that the built environment will be extended even further to the west (when the Manor Oak development is completed, there will be just one field separating North Leigh village from New Yatt).

Thus, the green (field) gaps between North Leigh parish and adjoining settlements, and between the settlements within North Leigh parish have been eroded.

The focus of Policy HD4 is that development proposals should respond positively to the setting and separate identity of the various settlements and built development in the neighbourhood plan area.



Policy HD4 advises that any new housing development in North Leigh parish should respect and maintain the separation of the following:

### **Locations Vulnerable to Coalescence**

- North Leigh village should not coalesce with Witney, Hailey, New Yatt and Freeland
- North Leigh village should not coalesce with the neighbouring hamlets of Wilcote and East End
- The hamlet of East End should not coalesce with Freeland, Long Hanborough, Stonesfield and Combe
- The hamlet of Wilcote should not coalesce with Finstock and Stonesfield
- The hamlet of Wilcote should not coalesce with the hamlet of East End



Figure 2 – Map of locations vulnerable to coalescence

In this way, this policy adds detail to the following policies in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Policy Options paper:

- Policy DM1 – Key Principles for New Development states that ‘Development should not lead to the coalescence of settlements. Proposals must demonstrate how they will protect the separate identity of settlements by maintaining appropriate physical and visual gaps between them.’
- Policy WIT1 – A Strategy for Witney supports development aims which protect the town’s heritage and natural assets, including ‘avoiding the coalescence of Witney with surrounding settlements...’

This policy is supported by the findings of the Neighbourhood Plan community survey: 93% of residents of North Leigh do not want to see North Leigh parish become a suburb of Witney and 94% would not like to see housing expansion result in North Leigh parish coalescing with Hailey, New Yatt and Long Hanborough.





#### **Policy HD4: Coalescence**

Any new housing development within North Leigh parish must respect and maintain separation of settlements:



- A. Development proposals should respond positively to the setting and separate identity of the various settlements in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- B. The separation of the following settlements should be particularly respected:
  - North Leigh village with East End, Freeland, Hailey, New Yatt, Wilcote and Witney
  - East End with Combe, Freeland, Long Hanborough, North Leigh, Stonesfield and Wilcote
  - Wilcote with East End, Finstock and Stonesfield
- C. Development proposals which would result in the loss of or an unacceptable reduction of the separation of the settlements in the locations set out above and depicted in the map above will not be supported.

## Policy HD5 - Cultural, historic and natural heritage

### ***Rationale***






North Leigh parish has an extremely rich cultural, historic and natural heritage. For example, it boasts two Roman Villas, and its situation on a hill provides it with a plethora of stunning views many towards the church that is almost unique in its positioning away from the built-up areas.

**Section 4 of “Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy” of the Draft Local Plan 2043 states that any development must “protect environmental and landscape assets”, for example by supporting:**

-  “The integrated management of the natural and historic environment where practicable, and recognise the positive contribution heritage can make in effective place shaping.”
-  “The emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, embedding opportunities to protect, restore, create and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks as part of development proposals.”

Any new development within North Leigh parish must respect its cultural, historic and natural heritage, including its biodiversity, historic landmarks, Local Green Spaces, Woodland, Historic Green Spaces, Open Grass Areas, Key Views, playgrounds, community areas and Public Rights of Way.

The majority of North Leigh parish’s land area is agricultural (permanent grassland for grazing and arable land interspersed with ancient hedgerows - often remnants of the ancient Wychwood Forest). It includes

-  ancient woodlands (including Holly Grove, Coneygar Copse and Hell Brake, and also the woodland at Eynsham Hall, Wilcote Manor, Wilcote House and Holly Court Farm),
-  three SSSIs (Sturt Copse, Whitehill Wood, Bank at Holly Court),
-  Ash Walk,
-  a stretch of the River Evenlode and
-  a part of the Cotswold AONB (North Leigh parish’s vicinity with respect to the Cotswold AONB is a key consideration for any new development in North Leigh under Policy HD5).

Examples of historic landmarks within North Leigh parish are as follows (a list of the 44 Listed Buildings in North Leigh parish is included within the Neighbourhood Plan – see Appendix 9) (to be read in conjunction with Policy RS3 – Heritage Assets):



Heritage periods	Landmarks
<b>Neolithic</b>	Burial site
<b>Iron Age</b>	Grims Ditch, Remains of Iron Age Fort, site at Shakenoak
<b>Roman</b>	Akeman Street at Northern boundary, Shakenoak Roman Villa, North Leigh Roman Villa
<b>Medieval</b>	Church of St Peter’s at Wilcote, Church of St Mary’s in North Leigh with Saxon Church Tower, “Hollow-Ways” of North Leigh Lane and Barretts Lane, Saxon graves, the Lady Well at the end of Ash Walk, ruins of the manor house and buried village beside St Mary’s Church
<b>Early Modern</b>	There are over 30 listed buildings of the early modern era in North Leigh, including village houses and farmhouses of Cotswold Stone with Stonesfield Slate or thatched roofs, notably the Windmill, Windmill House, Wilcote Manor, Wilcote House, Perrotts Hill Farm – where Charles I spent a night – and Holly Court Farm – the oldest residential building in North Leigh parish
<b>Victorian</b>	Notably Eynsham Hall

The following **Local Green Spaces** are designated in the **North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan** (to be read in conjunction with *Policy N4 – Local Green Spaces*):



- LGS1** Quicken Copse
- LGS2** Field west of Bridewell Close
- LGS3** Windmill Field
- LGS4** Cuckamus Green
- LGS5** Land west / south-west of Akeman Road
- LGS6** Land south of Akeman Road
- LGS7** Area around North Leigh Adventure Playground
- LGS8** West Grove woods
- LGS9** River Evenlode Meadow known as 'Beach Field' at East End
- LGS10** Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa
- LGS11** Area around North Leigh Roman Villa
- LGS12** Area around Grims Ditch – part of the extensive Iron Age boundary ditches of Oxfordshire
- LGS13** Area around site of North Leigh Manor House

The following **Woodland, Historic Green Spaces and Open Grass Areas** are designated in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan (to be read in conjunction with Policies N1 to N3 – Biodiversity, Nature, and Climate):



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### Woodland

Quicken Copse

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### Historic green spaces

- St. Mary's Churchyard
- North Leigh Cemetery
- St. Peter's Churchyard
- Area around North Leigh Roman Villa
- Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa
- North Leigh Common
- Holly Grove
- Coneygar Copse
- Eynsham woodland
- Woodlands surrounding Wilcote Manor
- Woodlands surrounding Wilcote House
- Ancient hedgerows throughout the parish
- Eynsham Park Hillfort – Iron Age earthworks
- Holly Court and the Saxon Cemetery
- The Medieval fishponds at Fish Hill
- Sturt Copse SSSI
- Whitehill Wood SSSI
- Woodland of Holly Court Farm – officially Holly Court Bank SSSI

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### Open grass areas

- Grass area at Mason's Grove
- Allotments at East End
- Allotments at North Leigh
- Field behind Common Road
- Field behind Wilcote View
- Field beside The Ridings
- Open green space to the south-east of number 7 Foxglove End
- Route of Wychwood Way
- Scout Field

**The following Key Views are designated in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan** (to be read in conjunction with Policy RS2 – Key Local Views):



### Key Views

- V1** View south-west from the footpath running west from Heath Farm Lane
- V2a** View north-west towards St Mary's from the footbridge where the path beside 81 Park Road crosses the path going east from the foot of Chapel Lane
- V2b** View north-east towards East End just past the footbridge that continues on the path behind the allotments
- V3** View south-east from the footpath from Wilcote Grange towards Bridewell Farm (i.e. the footpath that includes the Ash Walk)
- V4** View towards the church from the path running past the north of Quicken Copse
- V5** Views north, north-west and north-east from the field west of Bridewell Close
- V6** View from A4095 by Osney Hill Farm, north-east and uphill towards the ridge
- V7** Views from East End looking north/north-east towards the fields behind the houses on the eastern side of the road and Abel Wood and Combe
- V8** View over fields west of Common Road from the ridge looking south/south-east

**Set out elsewhere within the Neighbourhood Plan are examples of North Leigh parish’s playgrounds, community areas and Public Rights of Way (including sections of both the Wychwood Way, circumnavigating the area of the ancient Wychwood Forest, and the Palladian Way, running from Buckingham to Bath). All of these are key considerations for any new development in North Leigh under Policy HD5.**

This policy is supported by the findings of the Neighbourhood Plan community survey:

1. The following were all rated 4 or greater out of 5 (5 being the most important) for being important characteristics of North Leigh parish:
  - Access to the countryside
  - Open green spaces/rural views
  - Setting in a rural landscape
  - Traditional stone architecture
  - Historic buildings
  - Ancient church
2. The following were all overwhelmingly rated “yes” when asked whether they should be protected from development (“yes”/“no”):
  - Archaeological or historical places and their surroundings (6 examples provided in the survey)
  - Green spaces or public rights of way (9 examples provided in the survey)
  - Woodlands (11 examples provided in the survey)
  - Key views (6 examples provided in survey, 47 other views provided by respondents to the survey)



### **Policy HD5: Cultural, historic and natural heritage**

Any new development in North Leigh must respect its extremely rich cultural, historic and natural heritage (including its biodiversity, historic landmarks, Local Green Spaces, Woodland, Historic Green Spaces, Open Grass Areas, Key Views, playgrounds, community areas and Public Rights of Way) and must not damage the positive contribution heritage can make in effective place shaping.

## Rural Setting, Character and Design



### Objectives

- To ensure new development conserves and enhances the rural, historic and character of the village.
- To encourage exemplary design quality and innovation.
- To preserve the high-quality and accessible countryside setting of the village, open landscapes, and key views.



### Policies

- Policy RS1 – Character and Design
- Policy RS2 – Key Local Views
- Policy RS3 – Heritage Assets

### Policy RS1 - Character and Design

#### ***Rationale***

The rationale for this policy is derived, in particular, from the North Leigh Character Assessment (appendix 4) and the North Leigh Design Code (appendix 5) and seeks to ensure future development is sympathetic and complementary to local character and design.

#### ***Character and setting - overview***

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that new development is ‘in keeping’ with well-loved village spaces and the rural character of the Parish. The Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey Report shows that residents of the Parish place very high value on the following characteristics: access to the countryside; open green spaces/rural views; and the setting of the parish in a rural landscape.

The character of North Leigh is defined as much by its built-up areas as it is by its setting within a veritable gold mine of historic landmarks, unique rural landscapes, and community green spaces squeezed into such a small area.

As there are no sites within North Leigh parish within the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043, provided West Oxfordshire maintains its 5-year land supply (which the Draft Local Plan 2043 is designed to maintain),

North Leigh parish will not be subject to further development over the life of the Plan. The aim of this policy is, for any new development within North Leigh parish such as infill, to help meet the challenge of retaining those unique and special elements of North Leigh's character and identity, whilst allowing for innovation in design which can enhance local character.

The policy responds to NPPF para 132, which states that: *'design policies should... reflect local aspirations and [be] grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development... through their own plans.'*

The policy also adds detail to West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy paper *Policy DM1 – Key Principles for New Development* where Principle 3 is headed *'Integration with the Built Form and Local Character'* and states that: *'Development proposals must relate well to the existing built form, respecting the architectural styles, materials, and layouts that define local character and vernacular. Design should respond innovatively and sensitively to the distinctiveness of the area and maintain its identity; this is especially important in historic places such as Conservation Areas.'*

Without this policy, the design of new development is at risk of being banal and indifferent, without features and characteristics representative of the village, which would potentially be harmful to the character of a specific area or location, contrary to the requirements of the NPPF. Paragraph 135 notes that planning policies and decisions should ensure that development is *'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities) and... establish or maintain a strong sense of place.'*

### Character Assessment and Design Code

The North Leigh Character Assessment (appendix 4) has been undertaken to highlight important features and characteristics that should be protected and enhanced. It provides a detailed analysis of streetscape, landscape, history, views, and topography to identify six distinct character areas within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.<sup>2</sup>

The Character Assessment forms the basis of the North Leigh Design Code (appendix 5). This code sets out the general design principles and standards that

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<sup>2</sup> The Character Assessment is based on guidance set out in the Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit and the National Design Code. *Oxford Character Assessment Toolkit*: [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20193/character\\_assessment\\_toolkit/878/character\\_assessment\\_toolkit](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20193/character_assessment_toolkit/878/character_assessment_toolkit). *National Model Design Guide (2021)*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

## The Neighbourhood Plan – Policies: Rural Setting, Character and Design

development proposals should follow in the area, building on policies in the local development plan

The Character Assessment and Design Code are complementary and should be considered in conjunction.

### Village Character Areas

The village was considered as being composed of six areas, indicated on the map below:

A	The Village Centre	D	Windmill Road and associated streets
B	Church Road and Kingston Heights	E	East End and Wilcote hamlets
C	Main Roads and attached side roads	F	Outliers: industrial and commercial

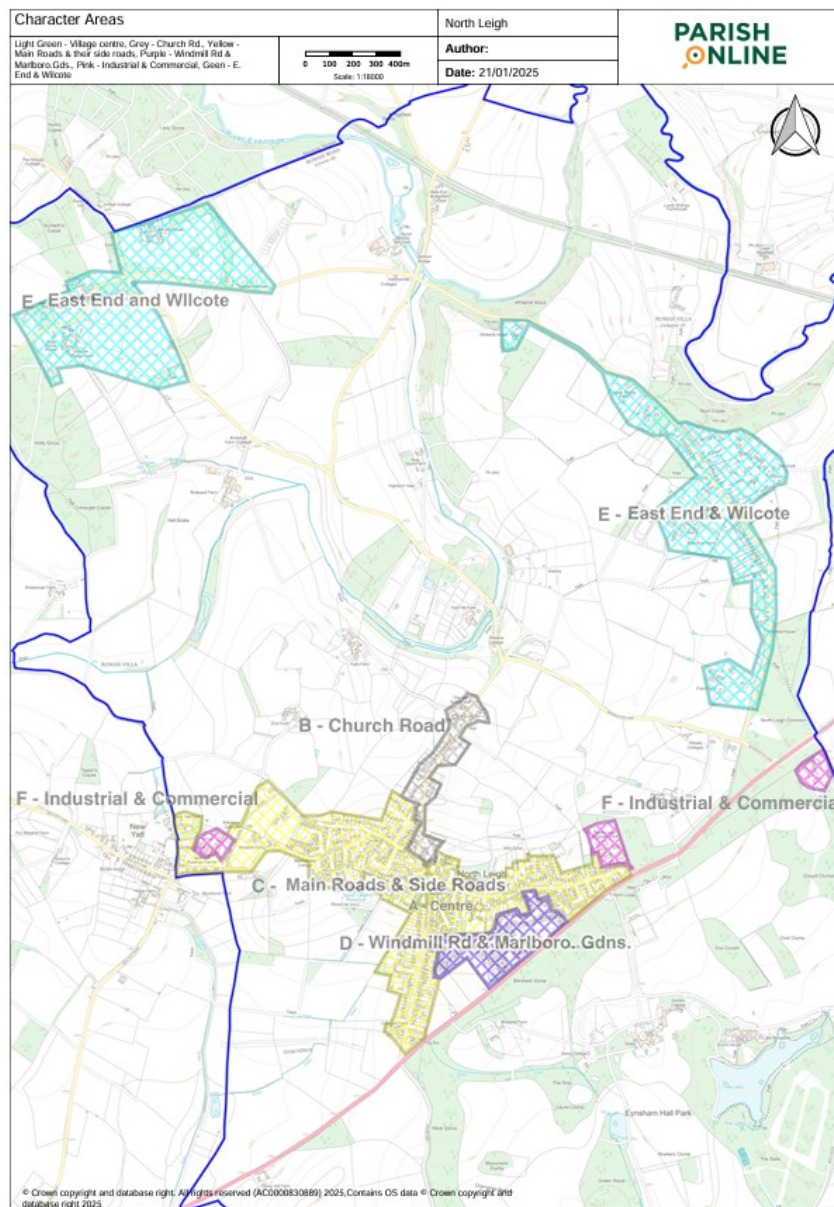


Figure 3 – North Leigh Character Areas

The boundary of each area is defined partly by geographical features but also considers the functional and historical links between each area. Table 1, below, provides a summary of key considerations for development applications for the six “character areas”.

**Table 1 - Key considerations for North Leigh Character Areas**  
(extracted from *North Leigh Character Assessment, appendix 4*)

Character area	Key considerations for development applications
<p><b>The Village Centre</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, and use of natural materials. Design of new development should therefore reflect density, a mix of dwelling types and other issues identified above in any planning statement. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.</p> <p>Green spaces in this Character Area are important to the village such as Windmill Field and Cuckamus Green (formerly Cucking Stool pond filled in in 1961) should be protected as integral to historic aesthetic character.</p>
<p><b>Church Road and Kingston Heights</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village especially uninterrupted views across open country of St Mary’s Church, particularly from Bridewell Close, Bridewell Field, Evenlode Close, Wilcote View and the footpaths behind Park Road (which should be protected in the Neighbourhood Plan).</p> <p>Proposals should also retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials. Any development should integrate with existing local paths and lanes to encourage walking and should maintain tranquillity in this rural location.</p> <p>The only development along Church Road that would be commensurate with its current character assessment would be</p>

Character area	Key considerations for development applications
	<p>infill development. Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.</p> <p>It would be both at odds with the Draft Local Plan 2043 (in which no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption) and undesirable for further areas of open land to be opened up for modern housing by redeveloping existing Church Road plots to connect to fields beyond. Infill or larger plot subdivision should be resisted and in no case should mature trees within Church Road properties be removed to allow for more intensification of development. Garage space should also not be set in front of homes or be visible from Church Road.</p> <p>Any proposals for additional buildings or extensions along Church Road should incorporate the use of traditional styles and materials to be in keeping with the local properties on Church Road. Development must be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.</p>
<p><b>Main roads and attached side roads</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials.</p> <p>It would be both at odds with the Draft Local Plan 2043 (in which no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption) and undesirable for further areas of open land to be opened up for modern housing by redeveloping plots beside or behind the main roads and attached side roads.</p> <p>Any infill development should be limited to gaps in frontage to avoid a significant change in the overall open character of the area. There may be scope for conversion of some older buildings to provide housing in flats.</p> <p>Permeability should be enhanced through protecting safe convenient walking and cycling routes away from distributor</p>

Character area	Key considerations for development applications
	<p>roads providing access to the centre. Any development should integrate with existing local paths, alleys and lanes to encourage walking and promote tranquillity in the village.</p> <p>Extensions or redevelopment should reflect the pattern of development in the older central parts of the village including layout, orientation, design and use of materials. i.e., stone, slate, thatch, especially where visible from main roads. Any limited one-off infill developments that do take place should respect their immediate surroundings in scale and character. Infill or larger plot subdivision along main roads in particular should be resisted and in no case should mature trees be removed to allow for more intensification of development in this Character Area.</p> <p>There are few buildings higher than two storeys in the village and new buildings should be no higher than 2-2.5 storeys.</p> <p>Development must be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.</p>
<p><b>Windmill Road and associated streets</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for planning permission would need to avoid damaging key views through the village, retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials.</p> <p>Permeability should be enhanced through protecting safe convenient walking and cycling routes away from distributor roads providing access to the centre. Any development should integrate with existing local paths and lanes to encourage walking and should maintain tranquillity in this Character Area.</p> <p>Any limited one-off infill developments that do take place should respect their immediate surroundings in scale and character. Infill or larger plot subdivision along main roads in particular should be resisted and in no case should mature trees be removed to allow for more intensification of development in this Character Area.</p> <p>Extensions or redevelopment should reflect the pattern of development in the older central parts of the village including</p>

Character area	Key considerations for development applications
	<p>layout, orientation, design and use of materials i.e. stone, slate, thatch. There are few buildings higher than two storeys in the village and new buildings should be no higher than 2-2.5 storeys.</p> <p>Development should be limited in size to avoid a significant reduction in remaining spaciousness and with scope for much more green space to be created.</p>
<p><b>East End and Wilcote hamlets</b></p>	<p>Any proposal for planning permission would need to carefully consider the deeply rural nature of the Character Area especially the historic landscape and features therein would need to avoid damaging key views including any of St Marys Church, which should be protected in the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>The infrastructure serving the hamlets is very limited and any significant development, other than very modest infilling, would overwhelm services and access and be at odds with the Draft Local Plan 2043 (in which no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption).</p> <p>The benchmark for protection and environmental safeguarding here will accordingly be higher, considering limited access, narrow lanes, the need retain hedges and spaces, boundary walls and verges, characteristic building styles and spaces between buildings, use of natural materials. Any development should maintain permeability and tranquillity in this rural location.</p>
<p><b>Outliers: industrial and commercial</b></p>	<p>In general, the location of these sites close to large growing towns such as Witney and in reasonable proximity to Oxford and its Universities may suggest opportunities not just for growth but also for more digital driven sectors. This will help reduce heavy traffic through the settlement of North Leigh and create scope for more environmental enhancements and space rationalisation over time in these locations. Of these North Leigh has a much more industrial flavour whilst New Yatt is more of a commercial/offices location.</p> <p>The design and layout of these areas is now somewhat dated in terms of building size, materials, but also in terms of</p>

Character area	Key considerations for development applications
	<p>accessibility. Environmental enhancements may be beneficial in the areas where offices use predominate.</p> <p>Working from home may be increasing and local hubs may be needed in these locations. Over time with permitted development rules changing there might be changes of use and to protect employment uses here there may be a need for Art 4 Directions.</p> <p>All these sites also have potential to expand and change as North Leigh population grows and especially benefit from being within walkable distance from the existing village. However, at present some do not offer safe walking or cycling routes thereby causing people to use their cars. This will be an urgent issue if these locations are to be truly sustainable.</p> <p>To attract investment to create a better environment in these locations, with better landscaping, more affordable units (i.e., lower energy costs and other expenditure on infrastructure), rents will need to be enhanced. This can be done by building more space, extending units and facilities.</p> <p>Introducing more research and development opportunities could attract spin off companies from the Universities and more start up units should be encouraged and supported.</p> <p>New build or refurbishments will be subject to guidance in the North Leigh Design Code.</p>



### **Policy RS1: Design, Heritage, and Setting**

Development proposals should be of a high standard of design, in keeping with the character of the area as identified in the North Leigh Character Assessment and the North Leigh Design Code and, where relevant, the West Oxfordshire Design Guide. Residential development proposals will be supported provided that they are limited to infill (given that no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043), and appropriate to their nature and scale:

- They are in keeping with the scale, density, height, design and appearance, orientation, roofscapes, layout and use of materials of adjacent development
- They reference important characteristics, such as key spaces, verges, walls as well as building styles, plot occupancy, rural setting, and the relationship to key views
- They protect small areas of greenery, including verges, for the contribution they make to the streetscape and environment
- They enhance the special interest and significance of any designated heritage asset and its setting in keeping with its immediate setting
- They do not result in adverse impacts on noise, odour, air pollution and light pollution
- They provide sufficient suitable outdoor storage space and siting for refuse, recycling and parking of cars and bicycles. These should be discreetly sited wherever possible, i.e., not in front of dwellings
- They safeguard trees, hedgerows and water features that have high amenity value, are important to the character of North Leigh and are valued community assets in terms of their natural capital and contribution to wellbeing.

### Policy RS2 - Key Local Views




#### **Rationale**

Neighbourhood Planning provides a mechanism whereby key views of importance to local people can be protected. Often these are of great significance to the character and identity of the community. These have been identified in the North Leigh Character Assessment and Design Code (Appendices 4 and 5).

The surrounding landscape is integral to quality of life. Connections to the surrounding countryside are extremely important for local residents. Views from, and to, North Leigh are a key aspect of the rural setting, with many of significant value. Examples of these views are included at Appendix 10.





Because North Leigh is situated on high ground it provides a wealth of attractive views over the adjacent countryside plus occasional more distant views towards surrounding high ground of the Cotswolds as well as more distant views to the Berkshire and Wiltshire Downs to the south and south-west. The Community Survey identified a large number of attractive views, and overwhelming support for protecting them.

The Key Local Views set out in this policy (shown on Figure 4 and described at Table 2) have been identified as those which:

-  Are considered the most important views into and out of the village and across open countryside.
-  Make an important contribution to the unique character of one or more of the sub-areas of the parishes as defined and described in detail in the North Leigh Character Assessment.
-  Support the health and wellbeing of the community through the vital contribution they make to creating a pleasing open aspect and a soft edge between the built areas of the parish and the surrounding rural landscape.




The policy adds detail to West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy paper *Policy DM1 – Key Principles for New Development* in which Principle 6 is headed '*Protection and Enhancement of the Local Landscape*' and states that '*As far as is reasonably possible, development must protect and, where possible, enhance the local landscape and the setting of settlements. Proposals should demonstrate how they contribute to maintaining the scenic quality and biodiversity of the area while avoiding adverse visual impacts.*'

### ***Aims of policy RS2***

-  To protect important views and landscape, recognising that the village sits at the top of hill on a ridge that affords beautiful countryside views for visitors and residents alike in multiple directions and often for miles into the distance.
-  To provide protection from development which would otherwise cause harm to important views and landscape.
-  To provide protection to flora and fauna and prevent the destruction of ancient, veteran and memorial trees.
-  To maintain for future generations the unique features of the locality as described in the North Leigh Character Assessment and Design Code (Appendices 4 and 5).

### ***Evidence***

The Local Key Views have been identified through community consultation and local landscape assessment as being integral to the area's sense of place and identity. They:

-  Contribute to the community's appreciation of local heritage and landscape character
-  Provide visual connections between built-up areas, open countryside, and key landmarks
-  Enhance residents' and visitors' experience of the Neighbourhood Area.

Protecting these views ensures that they remain to be enjoyed by future generations without interruption and help protect the existing landscape setting and reinforce local distinctiveness. Development that would result in substantial harm to a Local Key View will not be supported.

**Please note that all the views described are reversible and that the arrowheads representing long distance views do not extend to the full length of the view.**



Table 2 – Key Views and Description



Key Views

**V1 View south-west from the footpath running west from Heath Farm Lane**

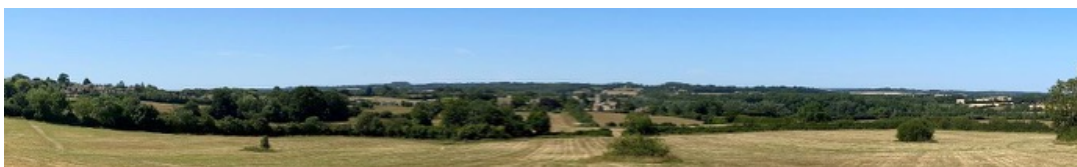


*Distant views to the south as far as White Horse Hill on the Wiltshire Downs. To the south-west, to Liddington Hill on the Wiltshire Downs south of Swindon. In the middle ground lies Witney, with the spire of St Mary's on the Green prominent.*

**V2 V2a. View north-west towards St Mary's from the footbridge where the path beside 81 Park Road crosses the path going east from the foot of Chapel Lane**



*In this view St Mary's is closer and occupies the central ground beyond descending slopes of fields. The old cottages lining Church Road snake down to the church, all surrounded by arable fields.*



*The panorama when entering the space from the track off Park Road*

**V2 V2b. View north-east towards East End just past the footbridge that continues on the path behind the allotments. This is in effect a different perspective of V2a.**

From this point the church is hidden and the view looks north-east across rolling countryside going towards East End. This view was specifically mentioned in public feedback.



*First view after entering field from footbridge*



*View looking uphill in the direction of Perrott's Hill Farm*

**V3 View south-east from the footpath from Wilcote Grange towards Bridewell Farm (i.e. the footpath that includes the Ash Walk)**

This view has St Mary's church in the centre, but it is more distant and again is below the viewpoint. Distant views extend over the elevation of Witham Woods, screening Oxford, to the Chiltern escarpment at Stokenchurch, with the BT tower visible on a clear day.



*Lateral view from the Ash Walk looking east*

### **V4 View towards the church from the path running past the north of Quicken Copse**

In this view St Mary's church is again the focus, but closer now, and on a level with the viewer. In between are the smaller irregular fields of the medieval village landscape, nowadays used for grazing sheep and horses.



### **V5 Views north, north-west and north-east from the field west of Bridewell Close**

This field lies to the north of Green Lane and to the west of Bridewell Close. The land here slopes down the valley opening up long distance views down towards the church and way beyond to the ridge on the opposite side of the valley on the edge of East End. The vista is wide (180 degrees) and can be viewed from several angles giving different perspectives of the landscape. From different points on the public footpaths different views are visible including St Mary's Church.



*180- degree view on entering the field*

### **V6 View from A4095 by Osney Hill Farm, north-east and uphill towards the ridge**

This viewpoint is below the village and looks up over open arable land towards the straggling line of houses along Common Road which run up to the four houses backing onto Cuckamus Lane. Also visible are the roofs of a few houses at the south-western edge of Breakspear Close. This view emphasises the limited extent of 20th century development of the village and demonstrates it retains the feel of a village surrounded by fields.



**V7 Views from East End looking north/ north-east towards the fields behind the houses on the eastern side of the road and Abel Wood and Combe**

There are footpaths across this land leading to East End, Abel Wood and eventually all the way to Combe. The land slopes down to the River Evenlode and it affords views up to the ridge and Combe as well as the nearby woods. The fields in view are used for crops and hay making. Again, there are panoramic views in different directions and on immediately entering the fields from the road the panorama is 180 degrees.



*180-degree panorama on entering the field from the road*



*Close up of view towards Combe looking down the valley to the river and back up the opposite side*

**V8 View over fields west of Common Road from the ridge looking south / south- east**

This view from the footpath at Heath Farm Lane looks south / south-west over rolling countryside to the A4095. This view is similar to, but not quite the same as the reverse of V6. The field has been used for agricultural crops for a number of years and very occasionally for grazing.



*Long distant view looking south / south-east from the ridge*

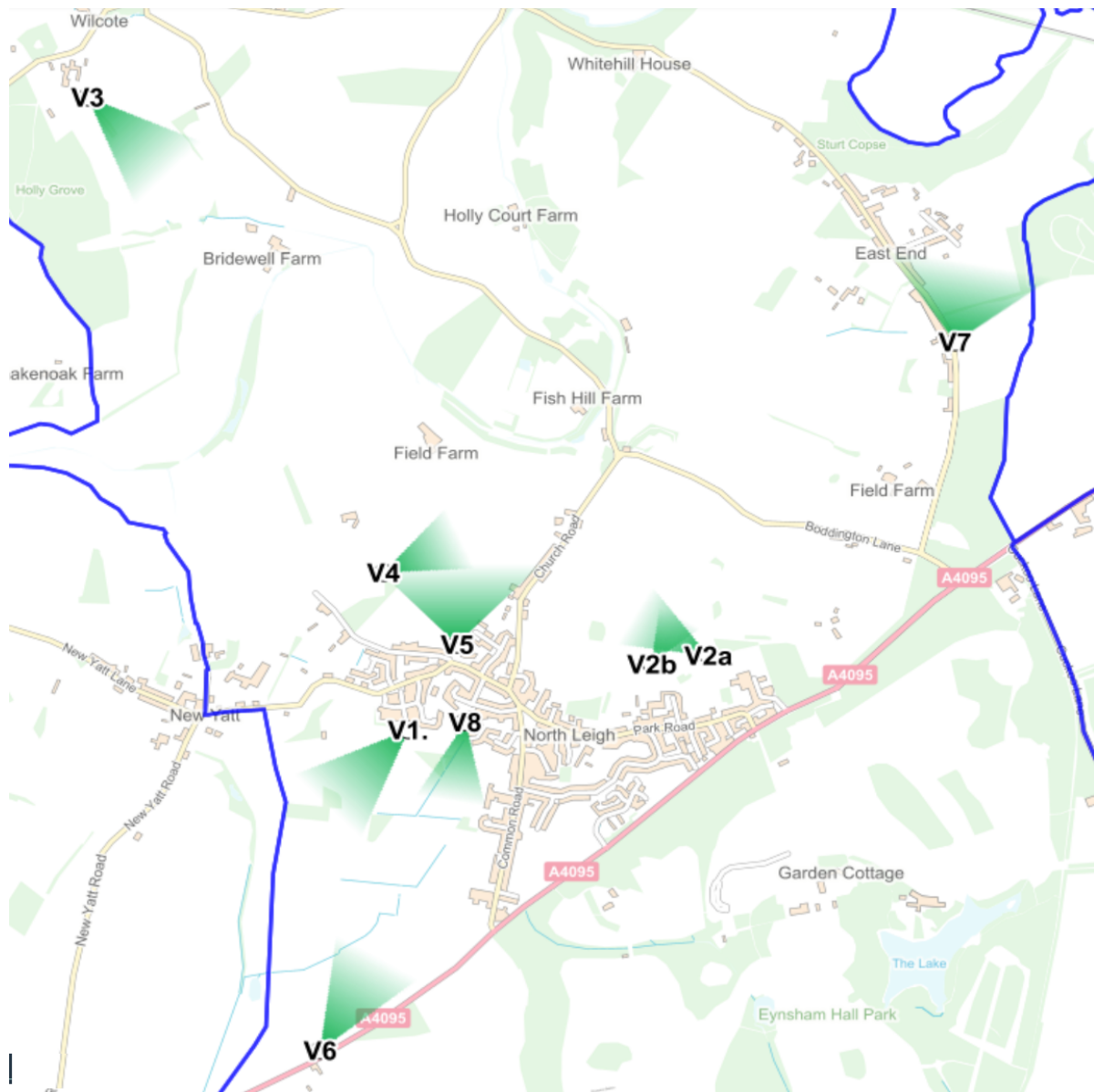


Figure 4 – Key Local Views



## Policy RS2: Key Local Views

The Plan identifies the following Key Local Views:

- V1** View south-west from the footpath running west from Heath Farm Lane
- V2** **V2a.** - View north-west towards St Mary's from the footbridge where the path beside 81 Park Road crosses the path going east from the foot of Chapel Lane  
**V2b** - View north-east towards East End just past the footbridge that continues on the path behind the allotments. This is a different perspective of **V2a.**
- V3** View south-east from the footpath from Wilcote Grange towards Bridewell Farm (i.e., the footpath that includes the Ash Walk)
- V4** View towards the church from the path running past the north of Quicken Copse
- V5** Views north, north-west and north-east from the field west of Bridewell Close
- V6** View from A4095 by Osney Hill Farm, north-east and uphill towards the ridge
- V7** Views from East End looking north / north-east towards the fields behind the houses on the eastern side of the road and Abel Wood and Combe
- V8** View over fields west of Common Road from the ridge looking south / south- east

The location, scale and massing of development proposals should have regard to the identified Key Local Views. Development proposals which would unacceptably detract from the character and attractiveness of a Key Local View will not be supported.

Please note that all the views described are reversible and that the arrowheads representing long distance views do not extend to the full length of the view. Please see Appendix 10 for photographs of the Key Local Views.

### Policy RS3 - Heritage Assets

#### ***Rationale***

Paragraph 203 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) sets out that Plans, including Neighbourhood Plans, should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

In particular, this strategy needs to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all types of heritage asset where possible, the need for new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and ensure that it considers opportunities to use the existing historic environment to help reinforce this character of a place. The NPPF also states that a positive strategy should include heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats (paragraph 203).

The NPPF defines a heritage asset as '*a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)*'. Ref: Annex 2: Glossary, p. 73. It also defines the historic environment as: '*All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora*'. Ref: Annex 2: Glossary, p. 74. Not all non-designated assets are therefore buildings and therefore the plan should consider the impacts on heritage assets as set out in the NPPF.

North Leigh parish is richly endowed with designated archaeological and historical assets, including a Saxon era church, two Roman Villas, a Roman Road and an Iron Age boundary ditch. The parish also contains a number of listed buildings. These heritage assets are described at Appendix 1 – Baseline Evidence and it is important that, as a minimum, the plan safeguards those elements of the neighbourhood area that contribute to the significance of these.

The Neighbourhood Plan provides an important opportunity for the community to develop a positive strategy for the area's locally important heritage assets that aren't recognised at a national level through listing or scheduling. If appropriate, this should include enough information about local non-designated heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest, locally listed buildings, or identified areas of historic landscape character.

The NPPF (paragraphs 131-135) emphasises the importance placed by the government on good design, and this section sets out that planning (including Neighbourhood Plans) should, amongst other things, be based on clear objectives

and a robust evidence base that shows an understanding and evaluation of an area, in this case the Parish of North Leigh. The policies of neighbourhood plans should also ensure that developments in the area establish a strong sense of place and respond to local character and history by reflecting the local identity of the place - for instance, through the use of appropriate materials, and attractive design.

Common Road/Park Road, New Yatt Road/Church Road are busy roads that can have detrimental impacts on heritage assets. The second part of the Policy RS3 addresses this matter. It is recognized that no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043. Proposals for any further development should have regard to the “Traffic in Villages” toolkit developed by Hamilton-Baillie Associates (in conjunction with Dorset AONB Partnership), and the North Leigh Design Code.

The policy adds detail to the following policies in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy paper:

- *Policy DM14 – Listed Buildings*, which emphasizes ‘respect for historic context and setting.’
- *Policy DM16 – Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments*, whereby ‘Development proposals affecting archaeological remains must conserve or enhance their significance and take full account of the contribution made by their setting...’
- *Policy DM19 – Non-designated Heritage Assets*, whereby, ‘Development proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets - including historic buildings, locally valued structures, archaeological remains of local interest, and unregistered historic parks and gardens - will be assessed with careful consideration of their heritage significance, contribution to local character, and community value.’



### **Policy RS3: Design, Heritage, and Setting**

- A. North Leigh’s designated historic heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground, including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.
- B. It is recognized that no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043. Proposals for any development should take account of the following:
- Development proposals in Common Road/Park Road and New Yatt Road/Church Road should be designed to minimise their impact on heritage assets.
  - Proposals for development that affect non-designated historic assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and with regard to the North Leigh Design Code.

## Nature and Climate



### Objectives

- To seek opportunities for biodiversity net gain and nature recovery.
- To integrate design and protection and enhancement of the natural environment in new development.
- To pursue local climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.
- To protect important green spaces from development.



### Policies

Policy N1 – Biodiversity and Nature

Policy N2 – The Natural Setting for New Development

Policy N3 - Native planting and Climate Resilience

Policy N4 – Local Green Spaces

## Policies N1 to N3 - Biodiversity, Nature, and Climate

### **Rationale**

It is widely accepted that climate change and biodiversity decline are twin and inter-related challenges.

The [UK Government Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022](#), ‘explains the threat climate change poses to UK biodiversity, at a time when it is already degrading rapidly [and] recommends reducing pollution and creating suitable conditions for existing species. Active management of habitats can also improve their resilience.’ In addition, the Environment Act (2021) sets legally binding targets for biodiversity, air quality, water quality and waste reduction. It also places a strengthened duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity on Local Authorities.

In Oxfordshire, according to the 2024 County Council report [Climate resilience: current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire](#), ‘the [Oxfordshire] natural environment will be faced by increased

*heatwave events, a higher chance of wildfires, and increase livestock heat stress due to future climate change. This will have a profound effect on the natural environment, leading to biodiversity loss, wildfire destroying habitats, an adverse impact on crop yields and the ability for ecosystems to function.'*

The parish of North Leigh supports an impressive range of important habitats and species, which gives the parish a unique and very special ecological and landscape character. More information about local landscapes, nature, and biodiversity is available at Appendix 1 – baseline evidencing.

These policies set out measures to protect and where possible enhance ecological and landscape character, recognise biodiversity and landscape assets, and seek to expand the ecological network, such that wildlife has the opportunity to thrive and people have the opportunity to enjoy it. They also aim to ensure that new development conserves, and where possible enhances, natural assets and biodiversity, while offering local responses to the threats posed by climate change.

The policies have regard to the NPPF (paragraph 187): *'planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils...'*

In addition, the policies add detail to Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy paper *Policy CP12 – Natural Environment*, which states that *'in line with the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the District's commitment to sustainability, climate resilience, biodiversity and nature recovery, all new development in West Oxfordshire will be required to contribute to the protection, enhancement, and recovery of the natural environment. Proposals are encouraged to take an integrated approach to the management of the natural and historic environment, where practicable.'*

The Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published in November 2025. The Strategy's Local Habitats Map includes nature recovery measures specific to North Leigh. It is important that policy makers and applicants respond to these, which include the following potential measures:

- Create new, varied ponds in suitable locations across all habitat types to increase biodiversity and create more clean water habitats.
- Create new woodland by planting trees (or enabling their natural regeneration) using species that are suited to the soil type and site conditions.
- Enhance (or maintain a good condition of) existing wood pasture and parkland to support local species and future climates.

- Create and manage wide field margins and sheltered grasslands to contain Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) on low nutrient soils which get disturbed, to support Small Blue butterflies.

### North Leigh – nature and landscape overview

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) supplied a Biodiversity Report for North Leigh. However, this cannot be reproduced for copyright reasons. It contains a very extensive table and record of legally protected and notable species. A summary table of invasive and non-native species records is also included, plus a map of designated wildlife sites and descriptions/citations for designated wildlife sites.

As can be seen from Figure 5, there are three Sites of Special Scientific Interest on the northern edges of North Leigh (clockwise from top left):

- Holly Court Bank SSSI
- Whitehill Wood SSSI
- Sturt Copse SSSI

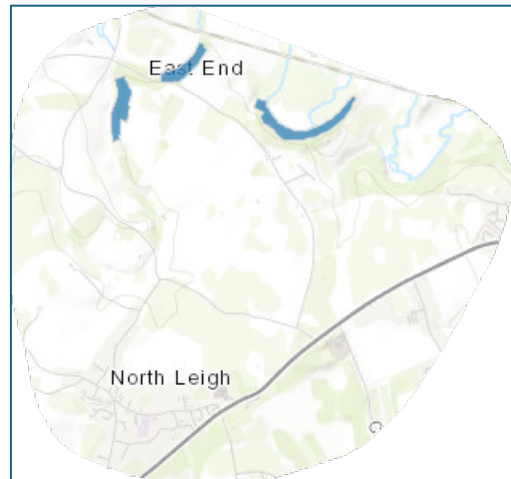


Figure 5 – North Leigh SSSIs (map sourced from Natural England Open Data Portal)

Holly Court Bank, as limestone grassland, is regarded as a national nature conservation priority. Sturt Copse, to the south-east of the Roman Villa may be described as ‘hanging woodlands’: trees include ash, wych elm and oak. The wych elm specially makes it a priority for conservation. Also in the north of the parish, land close to the Evenlode river forms a floodplain, naturally draining towards the river. There is also a small area of grassland mixed with woodland to the north of the river.

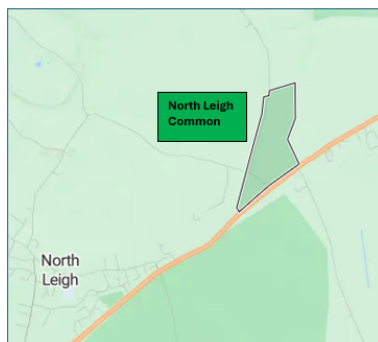


Figure 6 – North Leigh Common

In addition, see Figure 7 (below), North Leigh is host to a number of Local Wildlife Sites, while the entirety of the parish is within the Wychwood and Lower Evenlode Conservation Target Area.<sup>3</sup>

Another important landscape is North Leigh Common. The 50-acre common is bounded by the villages of East End, Long Hanborough and North Leigh and contains a wide variety of important habitats for wildlife. The common is managed by West Oxfordshire District Council with assistance from local volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> As referenced in the [State of Nature in Oxfordshire report](#) (2017), there are 39 Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) in Oxfordshire. CTA are concentrations of Priority Habitats and Priority Species that include surrounding land which could buffer and link these areas, as well as provide opportunities to create new sites should funding become available.

To the south of the A4095, the land is a part of the estate owned by Eynsham Hall, which is largely ancient woodland. While ‘parts have been replanted with conifers, poplars or a mix of trees, there are still areas of broadleaved woodland composed of native trees.’ This area is regarded as a ‘national nature conservation priority.’<sup>4</sup>

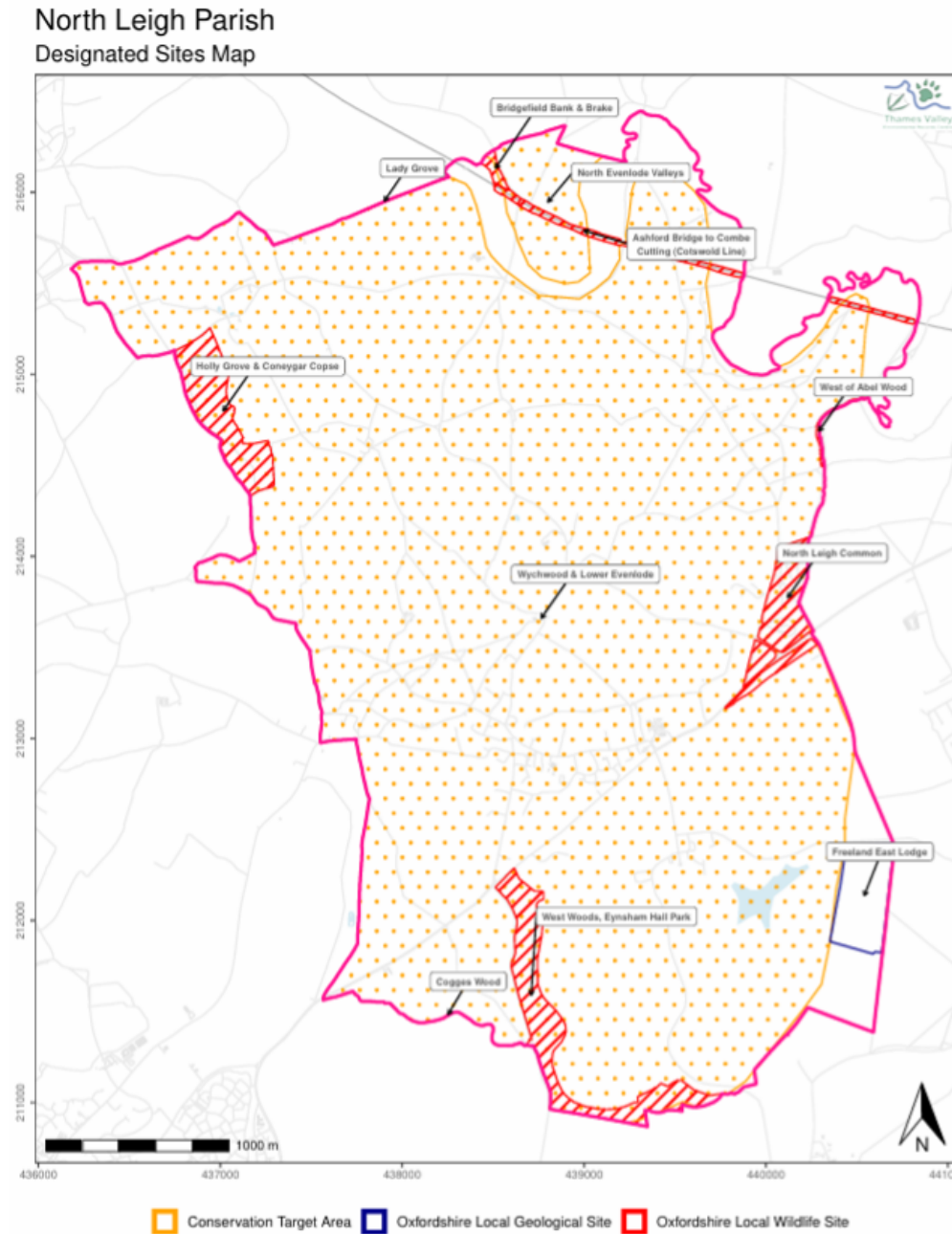


Figure 7 – Map of Designated Sites (data provided by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre)

<sup>4</sup> Ref: Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study (OWLS), specifically on a page relating to the North Leigh parish in the West Oxfordshire District. The text under the "Wooded Estate lands" section (Site Code: 31V02/2) states: 'These woods are ancient woodland, which means they have been continuously wooded since 1600AD. Parts have been replanted with conifers, poplars or a mixture of trees but there are still areas of broadleaved woodland composed of native trees. Such woodland is a national nature conservation priority.'


As noted in Appendix 8 - Wychwood and Lower Evenlode Conservation Target Area Overview, there are eight Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Targets associated with the CTA:

1. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland – management, restoration and creation.
2. Parkland (including veteran trees) – management.
3. Limestone (lowland calcareous) grassland – management, restoration and creation.
4. Lowland heathland and lowland dry acid grassland - management and restoration.
5. Hedgerows – management and creation.
6. Arable field margins - management and creation (particularly for arable wildflowers).
7. Ponds - management and creation.
8. Traditional orchards – management, restoration and creation.

### **North Leigh – important existing green spaces**

The intent of this policy is also to ensure that the following existing important green spaces are retained and, where possible, enhanced.

**Table 3 – Important Green Spaces**

<b>Woodland</b>	 <b>Important green spaces</b>
Quicken Copse	
<b>Historic green spaces</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• St. Mary’s Churchyard</li><li>• North Leigh Cemetery</li><li>• St. Peter’s Churchyard</li><li>• Area around North Leigh Roman Villa</li><li>• Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa</li><li>• North Leigh Common</li><li>• Holly Grove</li><li>• Coneygar Copse</li><li>• Eynsham woodland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Woodlands surrounding Wilcote Manor</li><li>• Woodlands surrounding Wilcote House</li><li>• Ancient hedgerows throughout the parish</li><li>• Eynsham Park Hillfort – Iron Age earthworks</li><li>• Holly Court and the Saxon Cemetery</li><li>• The Medieval fishponds at Fish Hill</li><li>• Sturt Copse SSSI</li><li>• Whitehill Wood SSSI</li><li>• Woodland of Holly Court Farm – officially Holly Court Bank SSSI</li></ul>
<b>Open grass areas</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grass area at Mason’s Grove</li><li>• Allotments at East End</li><li>• Allotments at North Leigh</li><li>• Field behind Common Road</li><li>• Field behind Wilcote View</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Field beside The Ridings</li><li>• Open green space to the south-east of number 7 Foxglove End</li><li>• Route of Wychwood Way</li><li>• Scout Field</li></ul>

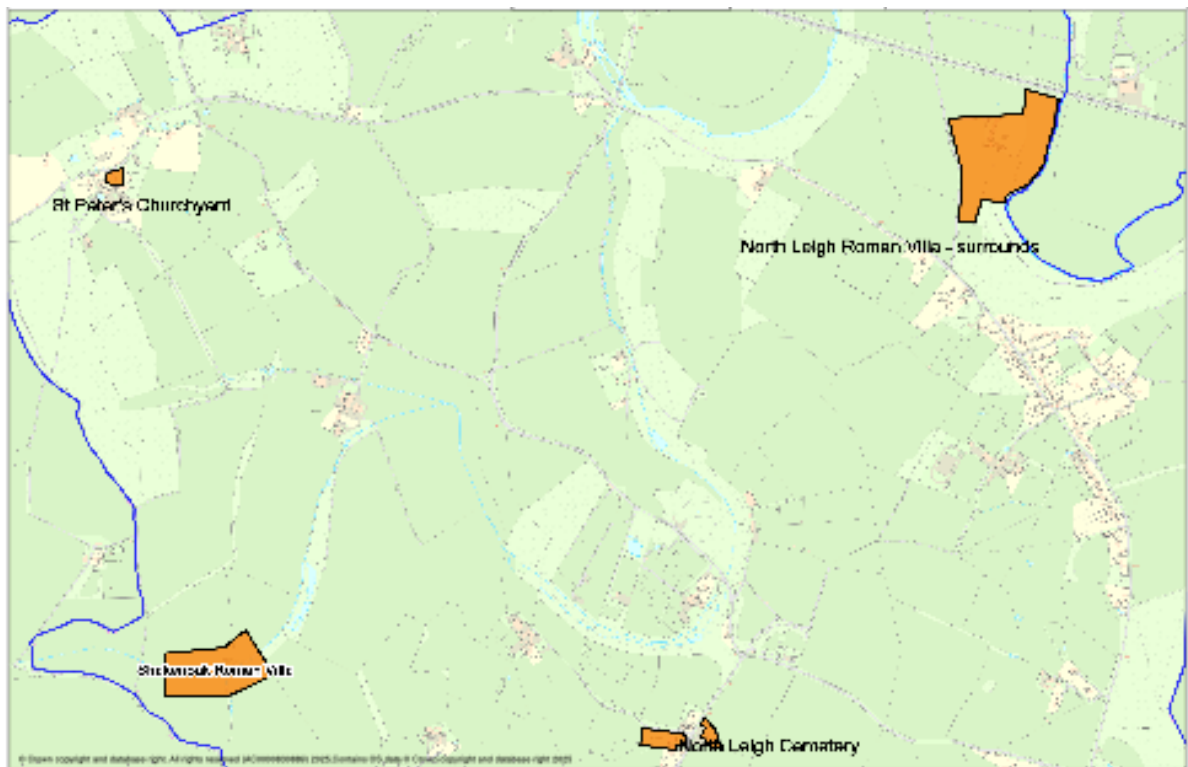


Figure 8 – Map of important green spaces (north)

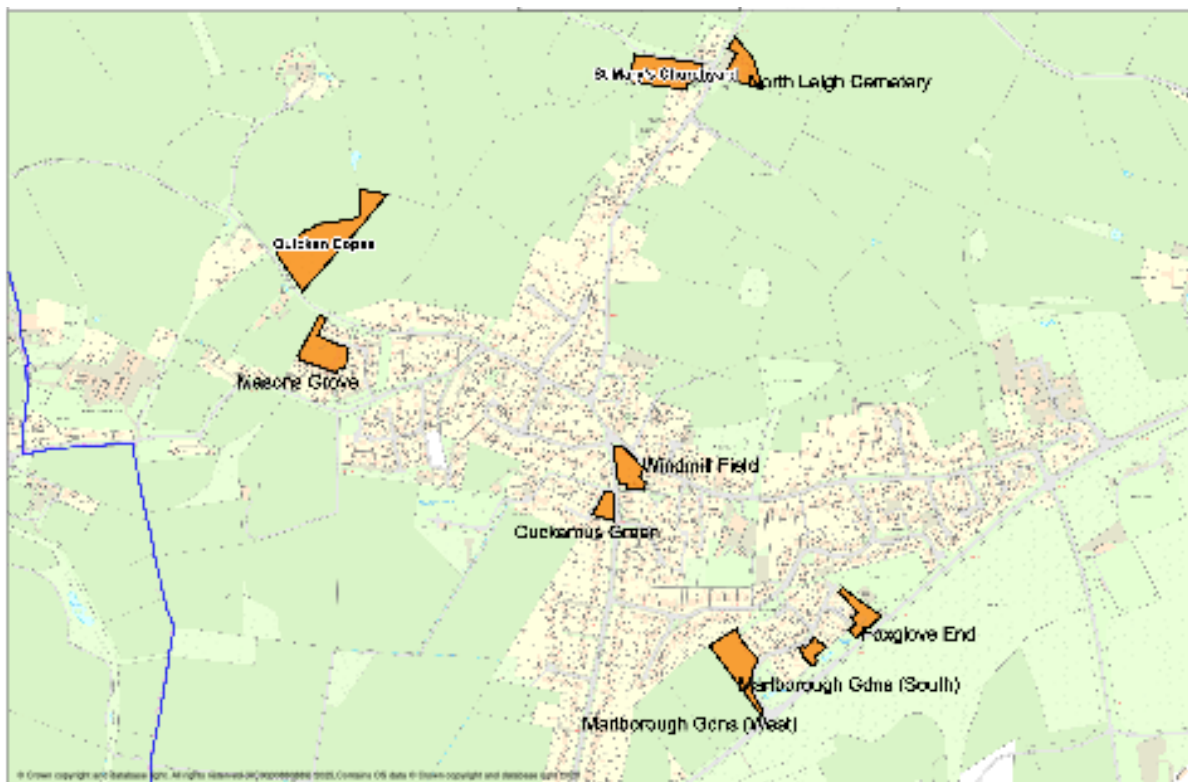


Figure 9 – Map of important green spaces (south)



## Policy N1: Biodiversity and nature

It is recognized that no sites within North Leigh parish appear on the proposed shortlist of sites for adoption within the Draft Local Plan 2043. Any development should maintain and enhance the unique features of the natural environment of North Leigh and its intrinsic ecological value. As appropriate and relevant to their nature and scale, development proposals should:

1. Demonstrate how potential impacts on Designated Sites (see Figure 7) and habitats of high conservation interest have been considered and mitigated.
2. Demonstrate consideration for nature recovery improvement measures as described in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as relevant to the NLNDP area (see table above).
3. Avoid detrimental impacts on important green and blue spaces (see above maps) and where, possible, offer enhancements to these spaces.
4. Undertake appropriate ecological surveys from a suitably qualified ecologist.
5. Include a biodiversity action plan which demonstrates how a minimum of 10% net biodiversity gain will be achieved using established and accepted models and demonstrate the minimum needed to enable nature to recover.
6. Include measures to ensure that watercourses are protected to preserve the sensitive environment on site and downstream, including preserving or enhancing their status as defined by the Water Framework Directive.
7. Provide a minimum of a 10m buffer of complimentary habitat between the built environment and top of the bank of the watercourse on development adjoining rivers or streams.
8. Supply details of ecologically beneficial management of buffer habitats to protect the aquatic environment from pollution and disturbance, and to create movement and habitat corridors for wildlife.
9. Take opportunities, where possible, to restore degraded aquatic environments to a more semi-natural condition.
10. Seek to protect 'Best and Most Versatile' agricultural land unless demonstrably impractical.



## **Policy N2: The natural setting for new development**

As appropriate to their nature and scale, development proposals should integrate design and protection and enhancement of the natural environment by:

1. Appropriate and carefully planned landscaping including the creation of visual buffers between the edges of developments and open countryside by the planting of suitable hedgerows and trees.
2. Ensuring lighting within and around development respects the ecological functionality of movement corridors. Certain species of invertebrate and mammal are highly sensitive to inappropriate lighting. In these circumstances surveys are expected to determine where these movement corridors are and measures put forward that demonstrate how these will be protected and enhanced.
3. Providing wildlife corridors that allow wildlife to move from one area of habitat to another.
4. Incorporating features into fences and walls that allow dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens, where ecologically relevant.
5. Incorporating features within the built environment such as roosting or nesting bricks and boxes, green roofs, and habitat piles of stones and wood.
6. Using Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems where possible, in association with retention of natural systems such as watercourses and ponds, and permeable surfaces will be used in developments on roads, drives, to ensure water resources are protected and kept free from pollution.



### **Policy N3: Native planting and climate resilience**

As appropriate to their nature and scale, development proposals are encouraged to include seeding, tree, and shrub planting, that:

- Incorporates planting and seeding which is informed by the local landscape, geology, and ecology; prioritising species which are native and resilient to climate change, considering the North Leigh Biodiversity Report supplied by TVERC (but not reproduced due to copyright restrictions) and any updates to it.
- Includes a clear planting plan demonstrating resilience to disease, pests and climate change.
- Is designed to ensure low maintenance effort and cost.
- Where possible, is visible in whole or part from the public realm to capture associated well-being benefits.

### Policy N4 - Local Green Spaces

#### ***Rationale***

The NPPF (para 106) states the designation of land as a Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. Local Green Spaces designation is based upon criteria set out in NPPF (para 107) as follows.

To qualify as a Local Green Space, an area must:

- Be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
- Be demonstrably special to a local community, holding particular local significance. This can include its beauty, historic importance, recreational value (including use as a playing field), tranquillity, or the richness of its wildlife.
- Be local in character and not constitute an extensive tract of land.

The intention of this policy is to preserve the valuable contribution these spaces make to North Leigh's rural environment, as well as to the health and wellbeing of its residents by providing opportunities for exercise and hosting community events. Protecting these spaces ensures they remain accessible to the community and are safeguarded from any development that could compromise their function or character.

In the parish survey residents overwhelmingly voted in favour of protecting the Green Spaces they were asked about. In addition, the local community put forward a 'long list' of suggested Green Spaces and these have been included either as 'Important Green Spaces', (see Table 3) or as LGS.

#### ***Aims of policy N4***

This policy designates and protects specific areas of local green space that are demonstrably special to the local community and hold particular local significance in terms of beauty, historic importance, recreational value, tranquillity, or richness of wildlife.

- To provide access to a network of high-quality open spaces
- To provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity which is important for the health and wellbeing of the parish

- To provide opportunities for residents of all ages to get close to nature and enjoy the beauty of the countryside and its flora and fauna; to protect the flora and fauna, including ancient and veteran trees not protected by TPOs
- To protect areas of importance to the village identified as special in the Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2024 and subsequent feedback at community engagement events
- To recognise the long-term importance of these green spaces to the parish and ensure they provide a legacy in terms of the parish character for future generations to enjoy

Designation as a Local Green Space means that the land will be afforded protection consistent with that of the Green Belt. Development within or adjacent to a Local Green Space will only be permitted in very special circumstances, where:

- It preserves and enhances the openness, character, and local significance of the space;
- It supports essential community infrastructure directly related to the use and enjoyment of the Local Green Space; or it is a minor development required for management, biodiversity enhancement, or accessibility improvements.

Proposals that would result in the loss, fragmentation, or harm to the character or function of a designated Local Green Space will not be supported.

### ***Justification and supporting evidence***

In the parish survey, residents were asked to what extent they agreed with the need to protect potential green spaces – support ranged between 84% and 98.9%.

The areas of land designated as Local Green Spaces by Policy N4 are all within, or physically very close, to the parish of North Leigh. Each one is ‘special to the local community’, as demonstrated by the approval given in the Village Survey for designation in each case and other feedback and supporting evidence. Detailed and comprehensive evidence supporting the designated Local Green Spaces is provided in the Local Green Spaces Detailed Assessments (Appendix 6). This uses the Cotswold District Council Local Green Spaces Assessment Methodology and takes into account the relevant NPPF criteria.

**Table 4: Local Green Spaces designated in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan:**



**LGS1** Quicken Copse



**LGS2** Field west of Bridewell Close



**LGS3** Windmill Field



**LGS4** Cuckamus Green



**LGS5** Land west / south-west of Akeman Road



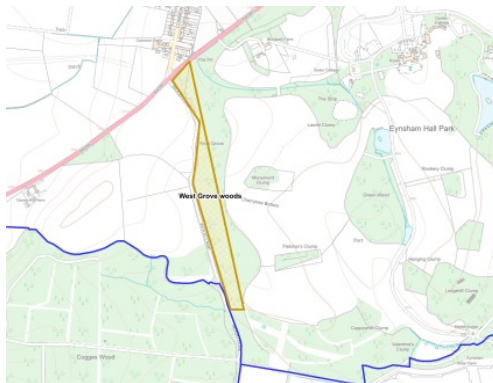
**LGS6** Land south of Akeman Road



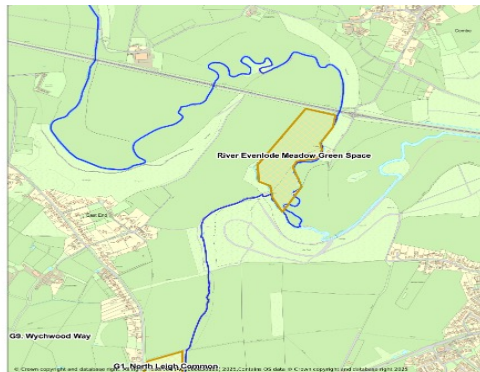
**LGS7** Area around North Leigh Adventure Playground



**LGS8** West Grove woods



**LGS9** River Evenlode Meadow known as 'Beach Field' at East End



**LGS10** Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa



**LGS11** Area around North Leigh Roman Villa



**LGS12** Area around Grims Ditch – part of the extensive Iron Age boundary ditches of Oxfordshire



**LGS13** Area around site of North Leigh Manor House





#### **N4: Local Green Spaces**

The following Local Green Spaces are designated in the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan - please refer to Appendix 6 for maps and a detailed assessment of each:

- LGS1** Quicken Copse
- LGS2** Field west of Bridewell Close
- LGS3** Windmill Field
- LGS4** Cuckamus Green
- LGS5** Land west / south-west of Akeman Road
- LGS6** Land south of Akeman Road
- LGS7** Area around North Leigh Adventure Playground
- LGS8** West Grove woods
- LGS9** River Evenlode Meadow known as 'Beach Field' at East End
- LGS10** Area around Shakenoak Roman Villa
- LGS11** Area around North Leigh Roman Villa
- LGS12** Area around Grims Ditch – part of the extensive Iron Age boundary ditches of Oxfordshire
- LGS13** Area around site of North Leigh Manor House

Development within the designated Local Green Space will only be permitted in very special circumstances as described in this Policy.

## Transport and Active Travel



### Objectives

- To ensure that all residents have ready access to local transport networks by private car, bicycle or public transport.
- To maintain and create excellent paths for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles.



### Policies

Policy T1: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

### Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

#### **Rationale**

Improving public transport, cycling and walking were issues at or near the top of concerns raised by residents at Neighbourhood Plan consultation events. Also, significant percentages of respondents to the community survey would like to make more use of the following methods of transport: bus (47%); walking (39%) and cycling (33%). Poor state of repair was a key factor preventing more people cycling (41%) or walking (also 41%).



To this end, the aim of this Neighbourhood Plan policy is to promote North Leigh as a safe place, in which accessible and safe connectivity is promoted for pedestrians, cyclists, riders, and public transport. Furthermore, the Plan supports efforts to improve the state of repair of roads and pavements.

This policy supports NPPF sustainable transport requirements, which state that: ‘opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued’ (para 109) and ‘provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks with supporting facilities such as secure cycle parking’ (para 111).

The policy also supports *Policy RA1 – Rural Area Strategy* in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy Paper, whereby ‘development in the rural areas [including Tier 3 villages such as North Leigh] will be supported where it... Improves rural accessibility and mobility, by: i) Supporting active travel through

the delivery of safe and attractive walking and cycling links within and between settlements; ii) Enhancing access to public and community transport, particularly connections to larger service centres and towns; iii) Minimising reliance on private car use wherever possible and reducing rural transport isolation...’ It also supports *Policy CP9 – Healthy Place Shaping*, by ‘Encouraging physical activity through the provision of accessible open spaces, active travel infrastructure, and recreational facilities.’

However, it is noted that recent developments in North Leigh parish have been ‘car-led’ with, often, the necessity for households to run two or more cars. This is because North Leigh parish is a rural community, with four separate settlements some distance from one another, limited infrastructure (no sizeable village shop suitable for a “weekly shop” or the purchase of meals, limited public transport, no GP surgery, no dentist, no secondary school, limited opportunity for local employment, etc.) with an aged population and therefore many residents who find cycling, or walking long distance, difficult (the Settlement Sustainability Report attached to the Local Plan 2031 shows North Leigh parish, demographically, as one of the oldest within West Oxfordshire).

While it is essential for paths to provide good connectivity for all users, they should not have an adverse effect on rural locations through which they pass or the Conservation Area. This should be prevented by appropriate design and choice of materials to balance practicality and visual impact.

To be ‘safe and secure’, all paths on designated routes should be properly surfaced, open in aspect and integrated into the green infrastructure to make them attractive and secure places for all users. Features to be avoided include blind corners, narrow passageways between hedges, shrubbery or fences and paths that are not overlooked. Lighting on designated routes should be provided to ensure 24/7 operation and should be specified to minimise light pollution and energy consumption.

This policy also aims to encourage the use of alternatives to the private car particularly by providing pedestrian and cycle paths that provide the shortest practical routes to bus stops, long-distance cycle paths and the like. Active travel infrastructure such as foot and cycle paths should be in place before nearby homes are occupied to ensure the immediate opportunity for people to adopt these healthier modes of transport in accordance with NPPF para 96 and Local Plan Policy T1. It is also important to ensure that new developments, where achievable, connect vehicle access with existing main roads (A4095) to avoid further congestion within the village.





### **Policy T1: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**

1. Development proposals that would result in a reduction in the capacity or safety of active travel infrastructure will not be supported.
2. Active travel will be achieved through better design and will help build a healthy community through the following, as appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposal:
  - a. The creation or extension of a network of safe and convenient routes for pedestrians, cyclist, pushchairs, mobility vehicle and wheelchair users, etc., to connect to the heart of the village, avoiding major roads.
  - b. Ensuring, where achievable, access by motor vehicles from existing main roads (A4095) and not through existing village roads.
  - c. Encouraging non-vehicular priority in residential streets such as shared surfaces, support easy access in terms of crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists and accord in other ways with place making principles in Manual for Streets and Oxfordshire County Council Street Design Guide (e.g. to reduce noise and pollution).
  - d. Encouraging verges, hedges and landscaping on main roads to reduce adverse impacts visually and to encourage safe, non-vehicular means of access.
  - e. Providing, wherever practical, a green corridor to the open countryside and linking up with existing footpaths and bridleways, while not having any adverse effect on the village character.
  - f. Providing details of construction management plans in planning applications, including the avoidance of the village centre by construction traffic.
3. As appropriate to the nature and scale of the development, proposals which support or extend the existing public transport network will be supported.
4. Proposals which enhance the existing PROW network and consider the development of new rights of way and footpaths to connect with the PROW network will be supported.

## Infrastructure and Facilities



### Objectives

- To protect community facilities and services from unnecessary loss and encourage proposals to sustain and improve their viability.
- To nurture and support existing and new local business, commercial and industrial opportunities.



### Policies

Policy IF1 – Community infrastructure and facilities

Policy IF2 – Building a strong, sustainable economy

### Policy IF1 - Community infrastructure and facilities

#### **Rationale**

Community facilities and infrastructure play an important role in the social and economic sustainability of communities. Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies should enable: ‘the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.’

At the same time, *Policy DM23 - Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services* of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy Paper, seeks to ‘safeguard existing community facilities and service [while] development proposals involving the loss, change of use, or redevelopment of a community... will only be permitted ‘ in accordance with set criteria.’ Policy DM23 also ‘strongly supports the delivery of new or enhanced community facilities.’

North Leigh has a limited range of community facilities and assets which contribute to local economic and social sustainability. These are listed in Appendix 1 - at Baseline Evidence and include the Memorial Hall, the Youth Centre (rear of Memorial Hall), Turner Hall, the library, Post Office, shop, several play areas and playgrounds, churches, green space, and community woodland.






The parish has a very good Public Rights of Way (PROW) network. Data sourced from Oxfordshire County Council notes that there are 38 km of PROW within the

parish. This is considerably more than the average figure of 12km for other parishes in Oxfordshire. It is likely that the extent of this network reflects the popularity of the area with both walkers and residents. Access to the countryside was extremely important for respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan community survey. Improvements and extensions to this network would be welcomed, and popular.

The intent of this policy is to add local detail to *Policy DM23* in order to support and encourage the improvement and/ or extension of existing local facilities, which make an important contribution to social cohesion, health and wellbeing, and community life. Importantly, it draws relates to Appendix 7 – Community Improvement Projects which sets out projects identified via consultation with the Parish Council and through Neighbourhood Plan resident engagement as priority actions.

Evidence from Appendix 3 - Community Survey Report notes the high value and importance that residents give to these facilities. The survey also noted the need for improvements to such community infrastructure, reflecting the challenge in maintaining and improving (or extending) these facilities. There is also an imperative to develop new community infrastructure to meeting both the current and future needs of residents.

Specific infrastructure improvement suggestions from the survey included:

-  Improvements to children's play areas, playgrounds and the skate park.
-  More facilities for teenagers.
-  A focus of Windmill Field as an area for improvement/ development of new facilities.
-  The development of football fields on the 'village side' (i.e. north side of the A4095).
-  PROW network improvement and extension.

In addition, Community Survey evidence noted the value of the local shop for the residents. However, there was extensive comment about the size of the shop being too small (it is constrained by its current location in the Memorial Hall). Should the community grow in size, the shop will become increasingly limited in its ability to service the needs of local people. Therefore, opportunities to enhance retail provision should be explored, perhaps in combination with consideration of other service provision located in the Memorial Hall (library and Post Office).



### **IF1: Community infrastructure and facilities**

1. Development proposals which would help to retain and where possible enhance existing retail and other local service provision such as the library and Post Office (including the longer-term viability of such services) will be supported.
2. Proposals to create additional and new recreational facilities (including but not limited to potential improvement projects set out at Appendix 7 – Community improvement projects) which are compatible with the existing village character and form, and support a more inclusive community, will be supported.
3. Development proposals for additional or new recreational facilities which would involve the re-use of suitable, existing buildings will be particularly supported.
4. Changes of use or loss of buildings and areas currently designated for recreation and play will not be supported unless the change of use is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current use.
5. Where appropriate, development taking place within North Leigh will be expected to be supported by appropriate investment in supporting community infrastructure – both on and off-site. The type and nature of this infrastructure should be based on a current and future community needs, as identified via discussion with the Parish Council.

### Policy IF2 - Building a strong, sustainable economy

#### ***Rationale***

According to the 2021 Census, more people work at home in North Leigh (38%) than compared to England as a whole (31.5%). Also, more people in North Leigh (20.2%) travel 10km to 30km to work compared to England as a whole (14.4%). This evidence partly reflects the lack of employment opportunities within the parish. However, the recent opening of Estelle Manor may have provided closer employment opportunities within the parish boundaries (see Appendix 1 - Baseline Evidence).

North Leigh parish mainly consists of agricultural land, with agriculture making a strong contribution to the local economy and local employment. It is important that these enterprises continue to be supported.

Local residents expressed views in the Public Meeting and Questionnaire responses that the rural feel of the parish is of great importance to them. The idea of improving local employment opportunities was welcomed, but on balance residents would not want to see large scale development of the existing business areas unless that had minimal impact on the rural feel of the parish.'

In addition, North Leigh has several commercial and industrial locations, which provide the bulk of local employment opportunities. See map below, these areas encompass Estelle Manor (1), Cuckoo Lane Sawmill (2), North Leigh Business Park (3), and New Yatt Business Centre (4). These locations support a wide range of mainly SME ventures, including light industry, communications, motor services, technology, leisure, and professional and financial services. These locations could support new and extend existing business, commercial and industrial ventures, which may contribute to the provision of additional local employment.

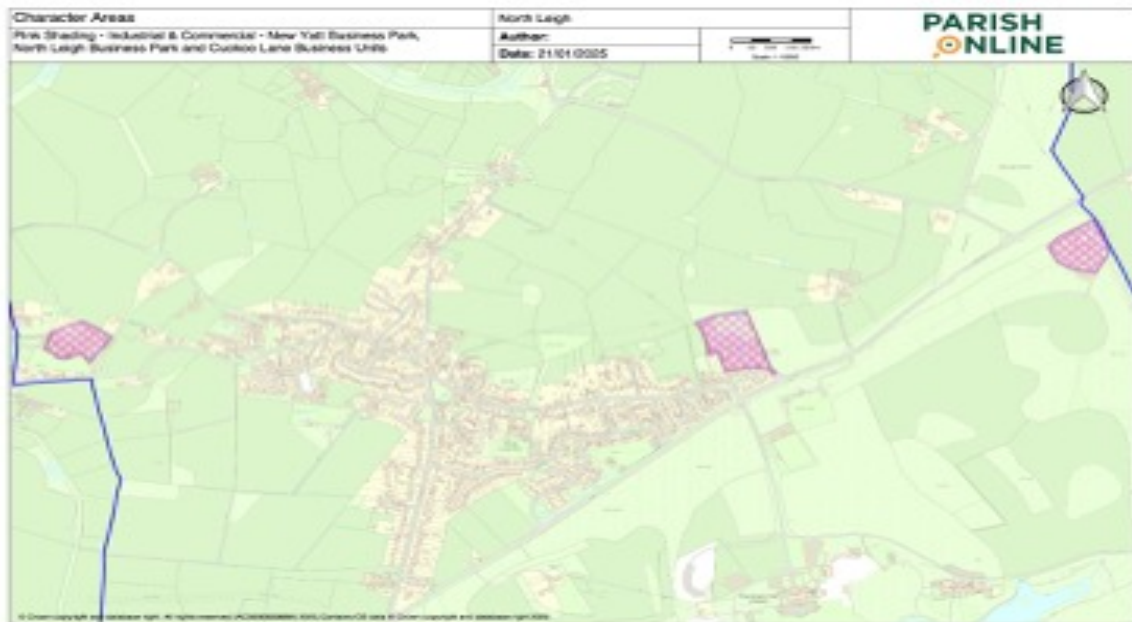


Figure 10 – Main North Leigh commercial and industrial locations

Through local employment, economic development contributes to social resilience and wellbeing (e.g. larger numbers of residents both living and working in the community may increase opportunities for connection and the development of relationships) and environmental resilience, including the zero-carbon transition (e.g. reduced car use, low carbon design, and alternative energy provision). There may be additional economic benefits from an increased spend at local amenities, such as the shop, Post Office and pubs, from more residents working locally.

As such, the intent of this policy is to support economic development which positively contributes to facilitating these outcomes, while being appropriate to the surrounding area. In this way, it supports the ambition of the NPPF to build the economy by positively and proactively encouraging sustainable economic growth (para 86). It also adds detail to Policy DM35 – Supporting the Rural Economy of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Draft Preferred Options Policy Paper, which states that, 'Development proposals that support the sustainable growth, diversification and resilience of the rural economy in West Oxfordshire will be supported, provided they are appropriately located, sensitively designed, and consistent with the character and function of the countryside.'



## **IF2: Building a Strong, Sustainable Economy**

- A. The extension and diversification of current agriculture-based businesses and/ or the development of new agriculture-based enterprises will be supported.
- B. To support and enable sustainable economic development, business, industrial, or commercial etc. development proposals should:
  - i.) Consider character setting, layout, and design principles as set out in the North Leigh Character Assessment and North Leigh Design Code
  - ii.) Provide appropriate infrastructure and utility services
- C. The loss of existing business land will be supported if it can be robustly demonstrated that the site is no longer able to play a beneficial role to the local economy and/or the alternative use would deliver a significant community benefit. Residential use could be permitted, where the need is clearly demonstrated, to support the operation and retention of local businesses (for instance above business premises).
- D. Expansion of employment opportunities through redevelopment of the existing industrial and business areas will be supported unless the proposal would lead to specific concerns such as loss of amenity or additional noise disturbance and traffic congestion.

## Implementation and Monitoring

Implementation of the Plan will be ongoing and primarily the responsibility of North Leigh Parish Council, although ultimate responsibility for determining planning applications rests with West Oxfordshire DC.

The manner in which each policy will be implemented in practical terms, with aims/ objectives and indicators of progress is presented in the following summary table:

### Monitoring programme

NP POLICY	Related NP objective/s - what the policy is aiming to achieve	Implementing the policy - comment	Delivery partners	Measures to be used to monitor progress
Policy HD1 – New Housing Development	To ensure that new housing development is consistent with North Leigh’s designation as a Tier 3 village suitable for a smaller scale of growth.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy HD2 – Housing Mix	To support housing development which meets identified local needs.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy HD3 – Infill Housing	To support infill development which minimises impacts on surrounding housing, the built environment, village character, and the rural setting of North Leigh.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy HD4 - Coalescence	To maintain the separation of North Leigh from surrounding settlements.	North Leigh PC to review each planning	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications

## Implementation and Monitoring: Monitoring programme

NP POLICY	Related NP objective/s - what the policy is aiming to achieve	Implementing the policy - comment	Delivery partners	Measures to be used to monitor progress
		proposal to assess conformity with policy.		either rejected or supported.
Policy HD5 – Cultural, historic and natural heritage	To ensure new development conserves and enhances the rural, historic and character of the village.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy RS1 – Character and Design	To encourage exemplary design quality and innovation.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy RS2 – Key Local Views	To preserve the high-quality and accessible countryside setting of the village, open landscapes, and key views.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy RS3 – Heritage Assets		North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy N1 – Biodiversity and Nature	To seek opportunities for biodiversity net gain and nature recovery.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy N2 – The Natural Setting for	To integrate design and protection and enhancement of the natural environment in new development.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.

## Implementation and Monitoring: Monitoring programme

NP POLICY	Related NP objective/s - what the policy is aiming to achieve	Implementing the policy - comment	Delivery partners	Measures to be used to monitor progress
New Development				
Policy N3 – Climate resilience and native planting	To pursue local climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy N4 – Local Green Spaces	To protect important green spaces from development.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy T1 - Sustainable Transport and Active Travel	To ensure that all residents have ready access to local transport networks by private car, bicycle or public transport.  To maintain and create excellent paths are created for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.
Policy IF1 – Community infrastructure and facilities	To protect community facilities and services from unnecessary loss and encourage proposals to sustain and improve their viability.	North Leigh PC to review each planning proposal to assess conformity with policy.	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications either rejected or supported.  Number of new initiatives supported by NLPC.
Policy IF2 – Building a strong,	To nurture and support existing and new local business, commercial and industrial opportunities.	North Leigh PC to review each planning	NLPC WODC	Assessment of applications

## Implementation and Monitoring: Monitoring programme

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NP POLICY	Related NP objective/s - what the policy is aiming to achieve	Implementing the policy - comment	Delivery partners	Measures to be used to monitor progress
sustainable economy		proposal to assess conformity with policy.		either rejected or supported.  Number of new initiatives supported by NLPC.

# Appendices

- 1** SWOT analysis
- 2** Baseline Evidencing Report
- 3** Community Survey Report
- 4** Character Assessment
- 5** Design Code
- 6** Local Green Spaces Assessment
- 7** Community Action and Improvement Projects
- 8** Wychwood and Lower Evenlode Conservation Target Area Overview
- 9** Listed Building of North Leigh
- 10** Key Local Views



# North Leigh Parish Council

Serving North Leigh, East End, New Yatt and Wilcote

## North Leigh Neighbourhood Development Plan – Public Consultation

North Leigh Parish Council invites comments on their Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is a formal public consultation being run in accordance with Regulation 14 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

**THE CONSULTATION PERIOD RUNS UNTIL midnight Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

### What is this consultation about?

We are consulting on the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan and associated appendices. We want to gather the views of all stakeholders, particularly those who live, work, or do business in North Leigh.

Your views may relate to the proposed policies, the content and wording of the Plan, whether the Plan is missing anything, or anything else you would like to bring to our attention. Once these views have been gathered, the Plan will be amended as necessary before being submitted West Oxfordshire District Council for examination.

### How can you view the Neighbourhood Development Plan?

- The Neighbourhood Plan and its associated documents are available at:  
<https://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk/parish-council/neighbourhood-plan/>
- The Neighbourhood Plan and its associated documents are available to physically consult at North Leigh Memorial Hall from 9 a.m. Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March until 5 p.m. Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May.

### How we will process your comments

Responses must be received prior to the end of the consultation period, which is midnight on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May.

**Responses must include a name, address and (if relevant) the organisation you are representing.**

By responding to the consultation survey, you are consenting for your response data to be held by North Leigh Parish Council. Your data will be processed by NLPC in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). You can read NLPC's Privacy Policy at: <https://northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk/privacy-policy/>

Comments received by individuals will be included in a publicly available consultation report – **names and other contact details will not be published**. Comments submitted by statutory consultees, businesses, or organisations will be published with the name of the organisation.

### Where do I send my consultation comments?

Please email your consultation response form to [neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk) or send by post to: [REDACTED]

You can also deposit your consultation response form in the box at North Leigh Memorial Hall

**PLEASE RETURN YOUR CONSULTATION FORM BY MIDNIGHT ON 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

## PART 1 – YOUR DETAILS

Comments received by individuals will be included in a publicly available consultation report – **names and other contact details will not be published**. Comments submitted by statutory consultees, businesses, or organisations will be published with the name of the organisation.

### 1. Are you completing this form as an: (please circle)

- Individual
- Community organisation or group
- Business
- Other - *tell us here:*

### 2. Please add your contact details below:

- Name:
- Organisation/ business you are representing (if relevant):
- Address:
- Email:
- Phone number:

**PLEASE TURN OVER TO MAKE YOUR COMMENTS**

## PART 2 – YOUR COMMENTS ON THE NORTH LEIGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

### A: The Plan

Please tell us if you support or object to the plan by ticking one of the boxes. . If you object, please give the page, section, paragraph number and line of the text you would like to change, along with the replacement text you'd like to see. Please append a separate sheet if you have more comments.

#### Do you support the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan?

Mark only one

I support the Neighbourhood Plan

I don't support the Neighbourhood Plan

### B: The Policies

Please add comments if you would like to. If you object, please give the page, section, paragraph number and line of the text you would like to change, along with the replacement text you'd like to see. Please append a separate sheet if you have more comments

#### Policy HD1: New Housing Development

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

#### Comments on Policy HD1: New Housing Development

#### Policy HD2: Housing Mix

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy HD2 – Housing Mix

Policy HD3: Infill Housing

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy HD3: Infill Housing

Policy HD4: Coalescence

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy HD4: Coalescence

Policy HD5: Cultural, historic and natural heritage

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy HD5: Cultural, historic and natural heritage

Policy RS1 – Character and Design

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on RS1 – Character and Design

Policy RS2 – Key Local Views

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy RS2 – Key Local Views

Policy RS3 - Heritage Assets

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy RS3 - Heritage Assets

Policies N1 to N3 – Biodiversity, Nature, and Climate

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policies N1 to N3 – Biodiversity, Nature, and Climate

Policy N4 – Local Green Spaces

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy N4 – Local Green Spaces

Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

Policy IF1: Community infrastructure and facilities

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy IF1: Community infrastructure and facilities

Policy IF2: Building a strong, sustainable economy

Mark only one

I support this policy

I object to this policy

Comments on Policy IF2: Building a strong, sustainable economy

## Part C: Any other comments

Please let us know of any other comments you may have.

***Please return this questionnaire to the North Leigh Memorial Hall by 5pm on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2026. If you have any questions and/or need us to collect the form from you, please feel free to contact Allison Leigh, the Parish Council Clerk, at [neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplan@northleighparishcouncil.gov.uk).***