

Blockley Site Assessments

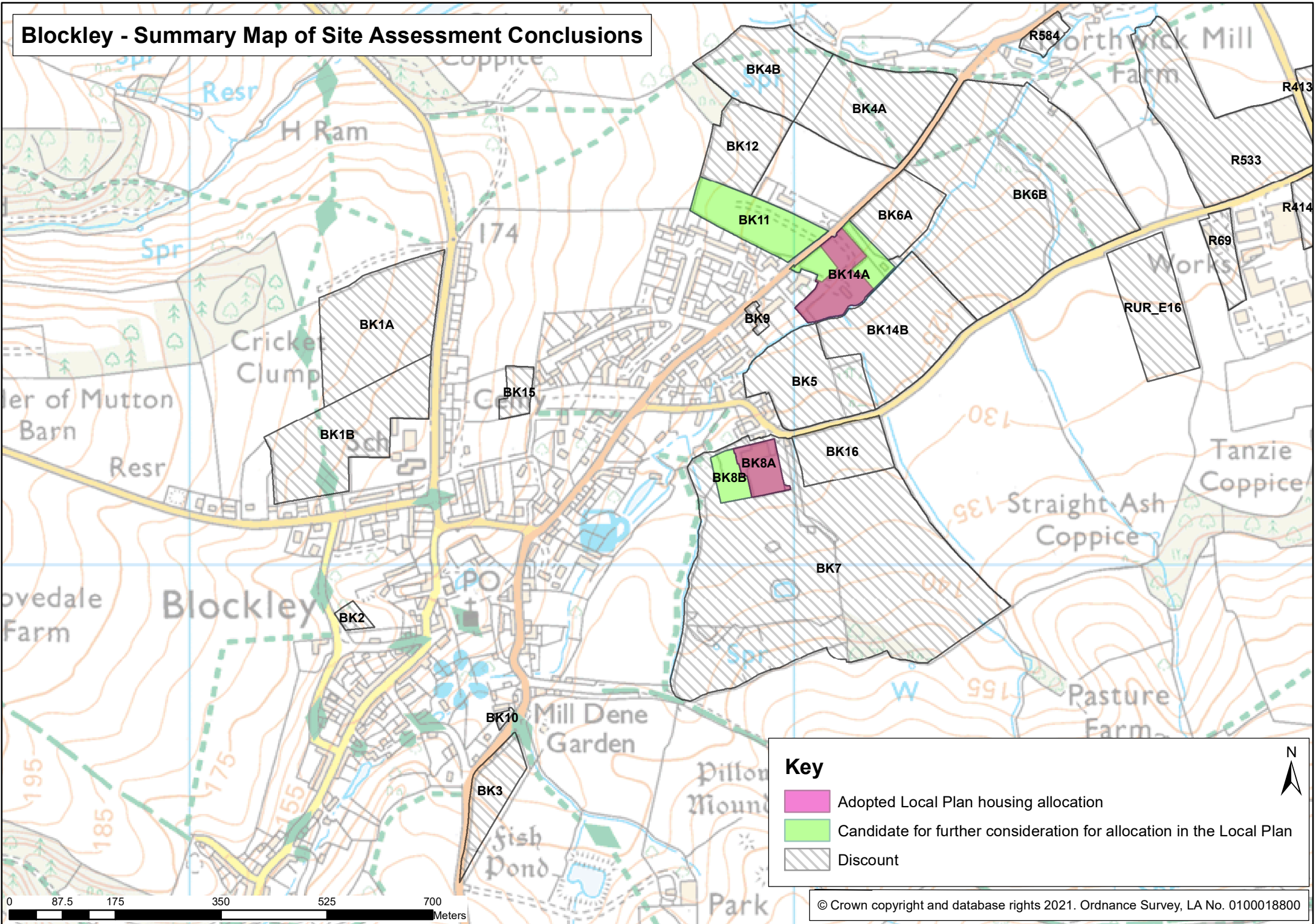
Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability
Assessment (2021)



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Blockley - Summary Map of Site Assessment Conclusions



Key

- Adopted Local Plan housing allocation
- Candidate for further consideration for allocation in the Local Plan
- Discount

Site Assessments: Part I

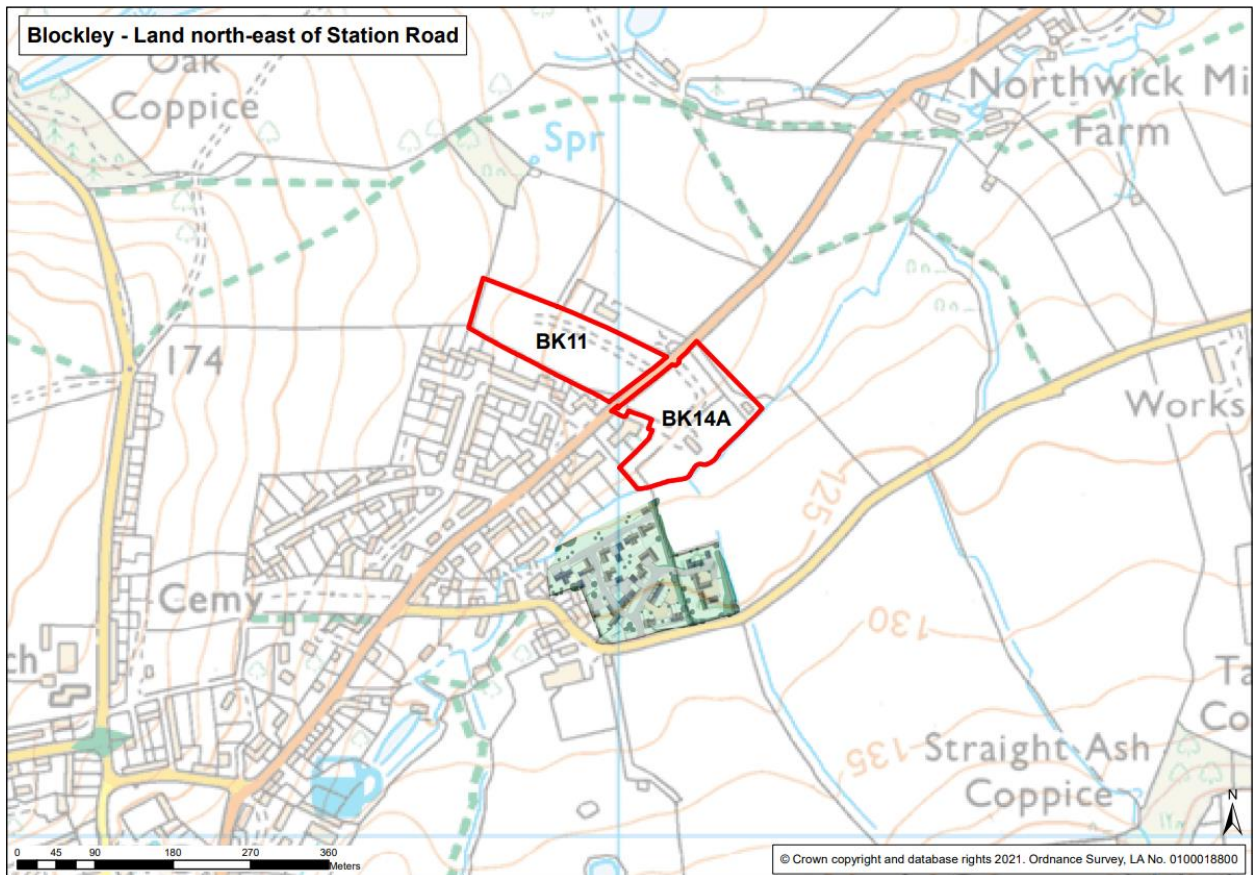
Ref.	Address	Proposal	Assessment	Conclusion
BK1A	Land north-west of Park Road	38 dwellings	Unsuitable – The site is a field in agricultural use, which sits high on the valley side. It is highly visible from the Heart of England Way and lacks a western physical boundary. Any development would have an adverse impact on Conservation Area and the AONB. Outline planning permission was refused for up to 38 new dwellings (ref: 16/01925/OUT). Refusal reasons included the impact on the character and appearance of the AONB and the setting of designated heritage assets. Not part of this site is suitable for residential development.	Discount
BK1B	Land north of Blockley Primary School	20-30 homes	Unsuitable – for the same reasons as BK1A	Discount
BK2	Land at Blockley Water Works	Housing and/or employment	Extant planning permission for 1 dwelling (ref: 18/04506/FUL). Deliverability assessed in Housing Land Supply Report.	Discount
BK3	Land east of Lower Street, south of Blockley	Housing	Unsuitable – The site's development would not be in keeping with development pattern and would be an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB.	Discount
BK4A	Land north-west of Station Road	Housing	Unsuitable – The site not in keeping with development pattern and would be an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB. Flooding issues in NE corner.	Discount
BK4B	Land north of Blockley allotments	Housing	Unsuitable – The site not in keeping with development pattern and would be an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB. Flooding issues in NE corner.	Discount
BK5	Land off Draycott Road	Housing	Extant planning permission for 23 dwellings (ref: 18/02587/REM). Deliverability assessed in Housing Land Supply Report.	Discount
BK6A	Land north-east of The Limes, Station Road	Housing	Unsuitable – The site is part of a larger field and has an undefined northern boundary. The topography slopes down eastwards. The site neighbours low density housing to the south and open countryside in all other directions. The site is very prominent in the landscape and from a Public Right of Way and its development would not be in keeping with the existing development pattern and would be an intrusion into the AONB. It also contains several important trees and hedgerows and is also within Flood Zone 3b, 3a and 2 (SFRA Level 2) along south-eastern boundary. The potential for currently unknown heritage assets is also high due to the archaeology recorded on the adjacent site and the lack of previous investigation on this site, which would need further investigation if a development proposal were to come forward.	Discount

Ref.	Address	Proposal	Assessment	Conclusion
BK6B	Land between Station Road & Draycott Road	Housing	Unsuitable – The site not in keeping with development pattern and would be an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB. There are flooding issues in the centre of the site. It is highly visible in the landscape and is an inappropriate scale of development.	Discount
BK7	Fields surrounding Sheaf House Farm	Housing	Unsuitable – The site not in keeping with development pattern of Blockley and any development would be an unacceptable intrusion into the AONB. The topography rises from north to south and development would be highly visible within the landscape. Development of this site would also be an inappropriate scale of development for Blockley and would be unrelated to the settlement pattern.	Discount
BK8A, BK8B, BK16	Sheaf House Farm Buildings	BK8A/B: 18-22 homes BK16: 20 homes	BK8A, BK8B and BK16 have been assessed together to consider whether any strategic benefits could be gained by allocating one or more of the sites or whether any parts of the sites, which might otherwise be unsuitable for housing or commercial development, could deliver other elements of a scheme. Detailed site assessment provided in Part 2.	See Part 2
BK8B	Land east of Sheaf House Farm Buildings	See BK8A	Detailed site assessment provided in Part 2	See BK8A
BK9	Land adjacent 'The Brown House'	Housing	Development complete - a single dwelling (ref: 16/00479/FUL)	Discount
BK10	Lower Farmhouse	Housing	Development complete - a single dwelling (ref: 14/05276/FUL)	Discount
BK11, BK14A	Blockley allotments	40 homes on BK11 and further housing on BK14A	BK11 and BK14A have been assessed together to consider whether any strategic benefits could be gained by allocating one or more of the sites or whether any parts of the sites, which might otherwise be unsuitable for housing or commercial development, could deliver other elements of a scheme. Detailed site assessment provided in Part 2.	See Part 2
BK12	Blockley allotments (northern part)	Allotments on BK12	Unavailable – restricted by a 999 year lease for use as allotments	Discount
BK14A	The Limes, Station Road	Housing	Detailed site assessment provided in Part 2	See BK11

Ref.	Address	Proposal	Assessment	Conclusion
BK14B	Land south-east of The Limes and north-west of Draycott Road	Housing	Unsuitable – The site is partly a field used for crop production and is partly sapling trees. It slopes down towards a stream along the northern boundary and is within Flood Zones 3b, 3a and 2 (SFRA Level 2) along north-west boundary. The site is neighboured by housing to the north and a planning permission for 23 dwelling development to the west (ref: 15/01020/OUT). Open countryside extends in all other directions. The site has a very open and rural feel. It is visible from the A4479 and Draycott Road and its development would be an intrusion into the AONB. The site also has potential drainage issues and is too far out of the settlement. There would also be a cumulative traffic impact on Draycott Road in addition to the development already allowed on the neighbouring site to the west. Archaeological investigation would be required if a development proposal were to come forward.	Discount
BK15	Land off Park Road (Park Barn House & Burgred Barn)	Between 2 and 13 dwellings	Unsuitable – The site comprises large gardens to the rear of Park Road. The gardens contain several semi-mature trees and an orchard and are enclosed by hedgerows to the north and south. Neighbouring uses include housing to the north-east, further gardens to the south and west, a graveyard to the east, and open countryside to the north. The site is in dual ownership and both parties are willing to develop it. However, it forms an important green open space that contributes positively to the setting of the Conservation Area and the AONB. The introduction of new residential development into the area would result in an encroachment of development up the hillside. The existing land also acts as an important green buffer between development on Park Road and that extending back from Station Road. There are also concerns regarding how a suitable access can be achieved.	Discount
BK16	Land south of Draycott Road	20 homes	Detailed site assessment provided in Part 2 (detailed site assessment in Part 2 finds this land to currently be unsuitable)	Discount

Site Assessments: Part 2

Land north-east of Station Road (refs: BK11, BK14A)



Proposal: BK11 – 40 homes; BK14A – further housing on the garden land. There is no intention to redevelop the former mill.

Site area: 2.98ha combined (BK11 = 1.46ha; BK14A = 1.52ha)

Assessment date: January 2021

Land ownership: The two sites are in separate land ownerships

Site description

The sites are located on the north-eastern approach into Blockley.

BK11 currently comprises a public allotment garden site. However, a formal legal agreement has been completed between The Trustees of the Parham Park Trust (the landowners) and the Blockley and District Allotments Association (the current allotment tenants) which provides an agreed timetable for the existing allotments to be relocated from BK11 to land immediately to the north. The new site is equivalent size. This process has already commenced and will be completed by 31 January 2022 leaving BK11 available for development.

The site is surrounded by residential development the south-east and south-west; Blockley sports pitches and social club to the north-east; the new allotment site to the north; and agricultural fields to the west. Station Road (B4479) forms the south eastern boundary.

BK14A includes two houses (The Limes and Brook Barn) and their grounds. Both The Limes and Brook Barn would be retained within any development proposal. It is understood that the garden area to the south of The Limes would also be retained and the main area of proposed development would be the land between the two dwellings.

Station Road (B4479) forms the north-western boundary. The site is separated from the road by mature Lime trees and a hedge. There is residential development adjacent to the south-western boundary; a tree-lined brook running along the south-eastern boundary, with fields beyond; the current Blockley allotment site, the sports pitches and social club to the north-west; and open countryside in all other directions.

Planning history

This is a summary of the key planning applications and is not a comprehensive list

- BK11 – there is no recent relevant planning history on BK11, although the adjacent site (BK12) has planning permission to be used as allotments (ref: 19/00641/CLEUD), which will enable the allotments on BK11 to be relocated.
- BK14A is allocated in the adopted Local Plan for residential development. Several planning permissions have already been granted for 2 dwellings (ref: 18/00612/FUL); 1 dwelling (ref: 16/03027/FUL); and 1 further dwelling (ref: 16/05066/OUT). However, the two permissions for single dwellings have lapsed and the owner has indicated that the cost of archaeological investigations have temporarily halted the scheme until a viable solution can be found.

Brook Barn was converted from a holiday let in 2017 (ref: 17/03346/FUL)

Landscape

These comments are made on the basis of a survey conducted by a qualified Landscape Officer. A full landscape and visual impact assessment would be required of any development proposal (desktop and site assessments) undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced landscape professional.

Description

The parcels are located to the north east of the Blockley settlement and flank Station Road that is located between the parcels. They are roughly rectilinear in shape and are characterised by landscape features commonly associated with settlement. One parcel is a former allotment site (BK11) this allotment provision has been moved to a site to the north. The other parcel is occupied with existing and permitted but not yet built residential development and curtilage. The boundaries are generally defined by hedgerow and trees of varying quality.

Beyond the south-western boundaries of the parcels is the existing Blockley settlement edge. The settlement edge in this location is characterised by 20th century development that has gradually extended along Station Road. The oldest remaining building in the locality is the mill building within parcel BK14A. To the north east of parcel BK11 is a playing field and the Blockley Sports and Social Club building. The remaining surrounding landscape features are an extensive network of fields bound by hedgerow and trees, a watercourse, Station Road and small woodlands/tree belts.

There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within or on the boundaries of the parcels. A pavement is provided along Station Road. The nearest PRoW are present to the north of the parcels and are identified as Blockley Footpaths 37, 38 and 39. Views towards the parcels are filtered by intervening features such as vegetation and built form. PRoW are also present within the settlement to the south-west. However, built form and changes in topography screen any view of the parcels.

Both parcels are located within the nationally valued Cotswolds AONB landscape. Historic mapping has highlighted that the field pattern and usage within the parcels has changed over the years. BK11 has been in agricultural or allotment use since the 1800s whereas BK14a use to be occupied by an orchard before becoming farmland and then domestic curtilage. The mill building has been within the parcel for many years.

Parcel specific features

BK11 – The parcel was assessed as part of the ‘Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District: Update’ (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report. The description provided for this parcel is reproduced below and is still considered an appropriate description of the character of the parcel although it is recognised that this current land use will cease in the near future:

‘This site lies towards the north eastern edge of the settlement and consists of extensive, well-used and well-maintained allotments with sheds on gently sloping lower valley sides. It lies adjacent to the village sports ground and pavilion to the east, separated by a fence with occasional shrubs, thereby being relatively open. It is also open to view from Station Road (B4479 eastern approaches) with a low hedge and fence but is not visible from Park Road further up the slopes to the west. It is overlooked by houses on Springfield to the south west, while the house and grounds of The Limes to the south are well screened by trees and hedges’

BK14A – The parcel was assessed as part of the ‘Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District: Update (Additional Sites)’ (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report. The description provided for this parcel is reproduced below and provides a valid description of the context that the

parcel is located within. However, the baseline context of the parcel has evolved since the report description, as it is now the subject of a number of permitted planning applications for additional residential development.

This site consists of the houses and grounds of two dwellings, The Limes and Brook Barn, lying on the lower valley floor bordering Blockley Brook. The site fronts onto Station Road (B4479) on the north-eastern approach to the settlement, and is separated from it by mature lime trees, which are a positive feature on this approach, and hedgerow. The Limes (dwelling) consists of a large house set well back from the road in extensive grounds, with a tree belt along part of its western boundary. Brook Barn is a smaller dwelling set on the southern boundary, with a long drive connecting it to Station Road. There is an outgrown hedge to the arable field to the north east which restricts views into the site, so the houses are not apparent. However, there are some filtered views into both properties from Draycott Road. The southern boundary of the site is in the floodplain'

The parcel is allocated for residential development within the Local Plan. Permitted planning applications within the parcel have introduced the principle of four additional dwellings. This represents the removal of the 'extensive grounds' highlighted within the description above. The character of the grounds will be changed from open domestic curtilage to domestic built form and a reduced amount of open curtilage. The open character of this curtilage is further degraded by the division created by garden boundaries. The applications represent an intensification of residential development within the parcel over the original 2014 description.

Landscape Context

National Character Area 107: Cotswolds

Landscape Character Type 17: Pastoral Lowland Vale

Landscape Character Area 17B: Vale of Moreton

Constraints/Designations

Landscape: Both parcels within the Cotswolds AONB

Historic: No listed buildings present along this section of Station Road. Not within the Conservation Area.

Other (floodplain, PROWs): No PRoW present within the parcels. A number of PRoW are present to the north. An area of Flood Zone (3b) is present along the south-eastern boundary of parcel BK14A. TPOs are in place on a number of trees within the north of parcel BK14A.

Landscape sensitivity

Justification:

BK11 – The landscape sensitivity given to the parcel as part of its inclusion within the 'Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District Update' (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report was **High**. This justification needs to be updated given the new context of the parcel and its land use. The new allotment site and public playing field to the north are on the edge of the settlement while this parcel forms a remnant field on the edge of existing residential development. The parcel is still located within the Cotswolds AONB and given the surrounding settlement context the landscape sensitivity in this instance is considered to be **Medium**.

BK14A – The landscape sensitivity given to the parcel as part of the 'Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District: Update (Additional Sites)' (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report was Medium/Low. The justification provided for this rating is reproduced below:

'The susceptibility of this site lies in its proximity to a Flood Zone and its location on the edge of the settlement, with open countryside to the north east and south east. Its value is indicated by its inclusion within the Cotswolds AONB, although it does not reflect its qualities. Should redevelopment be considered appropriate, then care should be taken to ensure a sympathetic north eastern edge at a low density and it would be preferable to create a green corridor along the southern boundary which lies in the Flood Zone'

Since the above assessment on sensitivity there have been several permitted planning applications within the parcel. This has removed the remaining undeveloped context and reinforced the residential character within the parcel. This is likely to have the effect of reducing the landscape sensitivity to **Low**. As highlighted previously the north eastern edge should be sympathetically designed and a green corridor along the southern boundary implemented/enhanced.

Biodiversity

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer in winter. Further specialist survey work may be required before the site can be allocated in the Local Plan.

Neither BK11 or BK14A contain any formal wildlife designations. However, both sites are located within a B-line. Both sites are also within a Great Crested Newt (GCN) amber zone with the south-western part of BK14A being in a GCN red zone. There are also patches of priority habitat (deciduous woodland) to the north of BK11 and to the south of BK14A upstream of Blockley Brook. Furthermore, the tree-lined Blockley Brook extends to the southern side of BK14A and is an important link within the green infrastructure network.

BK11: the main ecological issues within this site are likely to be linked to the existing allotment use. The allotments may provide habitat protected species, particularly reptiles, insects and birds. There are also hedgerows along the margins of the site and trees within the site, which may provide foraging, commuting and roosting habitat for bats.

Replacement allotments being provided on adjacent land would likely provide equivalent habitat to mitigate against the loss of habitat and provide an opportunity for enhancement on the site. It is also likely that important features can be retained within the design of the site. Furthermore, the development of this site would present opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Alongside the more standard enhancement measures which would be required of any development, there is a particular opportunity to strengthen the hedgerows along the south western and western boundaries. There is also an opportunity for new hedgerow planting along the northern boundary with the social club and its car park. In so doing, there is a wider opportunity provide a key linkage in the green infrastructure between patches of deciduous woodland priority habitat.

BK14A: A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)¹ has been undertaken on The Limes site and has been used to support several permitted dwellings on the site. The PEA is now over five years old and may need to be refreshed, but its findings are indicative of the likely ecological issues on BK14A. The PEA found that all ecological issues on the site could be mitigated and important ecological features, such as the Lime Trees on Station Road could be retained.

Potential ways to achieve biodiversity net gain on this site might include the planting of native, species-rich hedgerows, orchard trees, flowering lawn and ponds, as well as the installation of integrated bird and bat boxes into the new dwellings.

Trees

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer in winter. An Arboricultural Report that accords with BS 5837:2012 would be required of any development proposal.

¹ [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of The Limes \(Cotswold Wildlife Surveys, 23 February 2016\)](#)



BK I I: the site does not contain any trees that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Most of the trees within the site are fruit trees associated with allotments. There is a collection of larger fruit trees in the south-east corner of the site, which are more worthy of protection than any others and could be worked into the design of a development.

BK I I contains an overgrown hedgerow along the western boundary. There is also a patchy hedgerow along the southern boundary with several semi-mature trees, most of which sit within the gardens of the properties further to the south. There is a further well-maintained hedgerow along the eastern boundary with Station Road.

BK I 4A: There are six Lime trees with TPOs along the north-western boundary with Station Road. The south western boundary is tree-lined with a variety of mature native species. There are also various trees in the south-western corner, as well as trees along the internal boundary between The Limes and Brook Cottage. The trees of significance have been able to be maintained and protected within the site within the recent planning permissions for housing development within the site. These included an arboricultural assessment and a Tree Protection Plan, which was found to be satisfactory to enable the developments to be permitted.

Historic Environment (excluding archaeology)

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer. A full historic environment or heritage assessment would be required of any development proposal.

Both sites are located at the gateway into Blockley from Station Road.

BK I I: The site is shown on the 1843 Ordnance Survey Map as once being part of a larger field, which incorporated the adjacent modern-day sports fields and social club and the site to the north which the current allotments are being relocated to. There was a hedgerow along the south-western and western boundaries.

By the turn of the 20th Century, the entire field had become allotments. The north western half of the allotments returned to agricultural use by the 1960s. The sports pitch and pavilion were introduced in the late 20th Century.

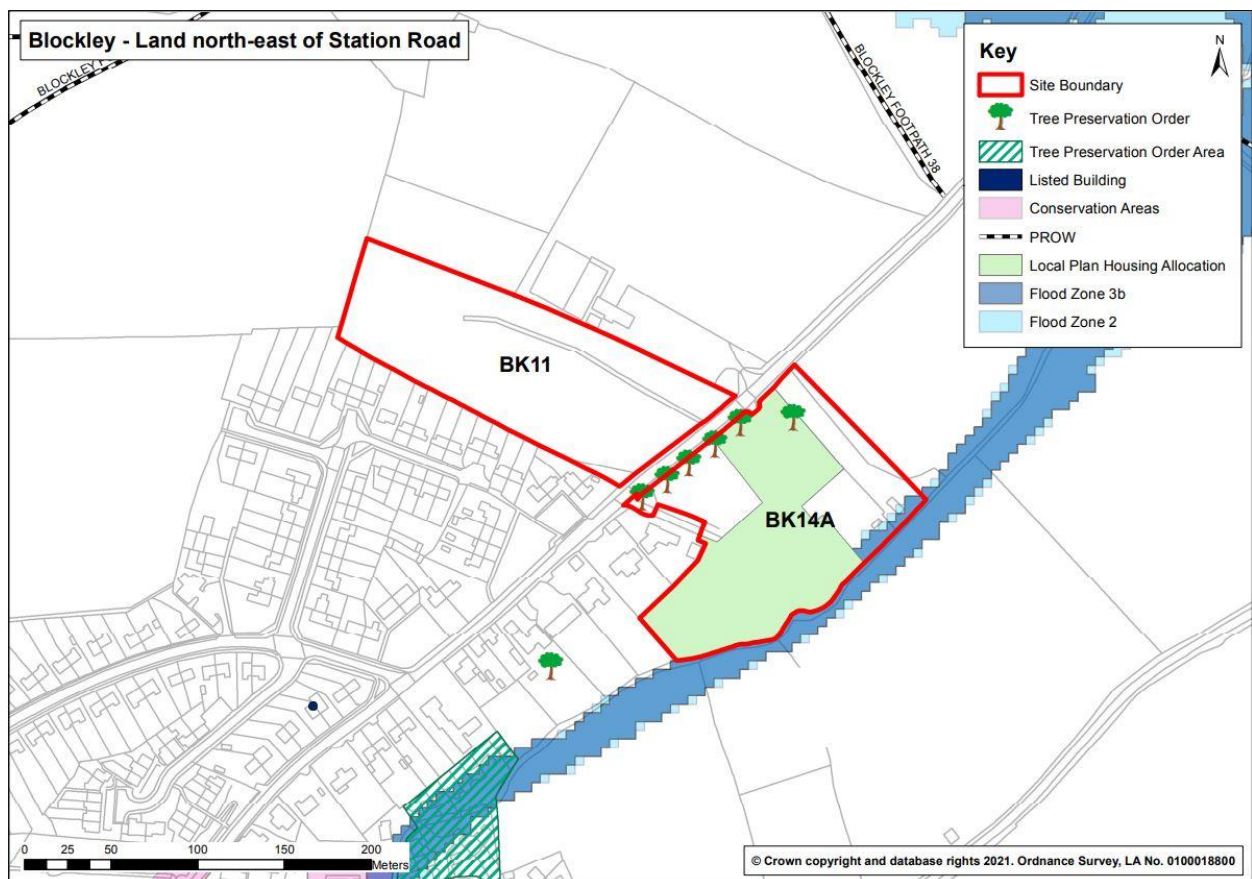
Today, the site is located next to mid-20th Century housing to the south comprising a mixture of one to two storey buildings. These are not built to a traditional Cotswold style. To the north, the social club car park, the flood-lit all-weather pitch, and the sports pavilion provide a band of development between the site and the countryside beyond.

BK14A: The Limes is present on the 1843 Ordnance Survey Map as being a mill, which at that time had a substantial mill pond to the south-west. It is a large Cotswold Stone building and the house is set well back from the road within its extensive grounds. Although the building is not listed, it is a building of significance within the village and is a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.

The Grounds of The Limes was at once split into three smaller plots. The two north-eastern plots largely correspond with the modern-day layout of the site. Large detached housing developments have encroached on the south-western plot, the most recent of which were two Cotswold Stone houses located directly to the west of The Limes. The remaining part of this plot is more secluded from Station Road and by its own still provides a large garden for The Limes.

Brook Barn is, as its name suggests, is a converted barn. This is located on the northern boundary of the site and has a long drive connecting it to Station Road.

The proposed development area is residential curtilage that is seen in the context of both historically significant and modern houses, all of which have a traditional Cotswold vernacular. Part of this area already has planning permission for housing development and it is expected that similar proposals for additional homes could be suitably accommodated on the site.



Other issues / constraints

BK11

- Gas services located at the south-eastern boundary;
- Noise and light disturbance from adjacent sports pitches; and
- Archaeological investigations have been required on BK14A and will likely be required on this site too.

BK14A

- Flood Zone 3b within the south-eastern fringe of the site; and
- Archaeology – the cost of archaeological investigations has affected viability to several planning permissions (see general planning section for further details).

Summary

Both sites are within the AONB in a prominent location at the gateway into the village.

Recommendation

BK I I: a candidate for further consideration for allocation within the Local Plan

BK I 4A: this site is already allocated in the Local Plan for residential development and part of the site has planning permission for housing. The issue of archaeology and viability remain but there continues to be a reasonable prospect that this site could be developed in the plan period. The allocation should therefore remain.

Indicative capacity

BK I I: 40 homes is likely be too high a density for this rural edge of settlement location. A lower capacity of 30 dwellings would be more suitable and would enable the incorporation of necessary design features.

BK I 4B: recent planning permissions have demonstrated that 4 dwellings can be accommodated. It may be possible to alter the design to deliver 5 or more dwellings.

Proposed site design brief if the site was allocated in the Local Plan

The following is not an exhaustive list and further guidance on design requirements will be provided through the pre-application process. Developments will be expected to comply with the requirements of the Cotswold Design Code and to deliver high quality built and green infrastructure design.

If either or both of BK I I and BK I 4A were to be developed:

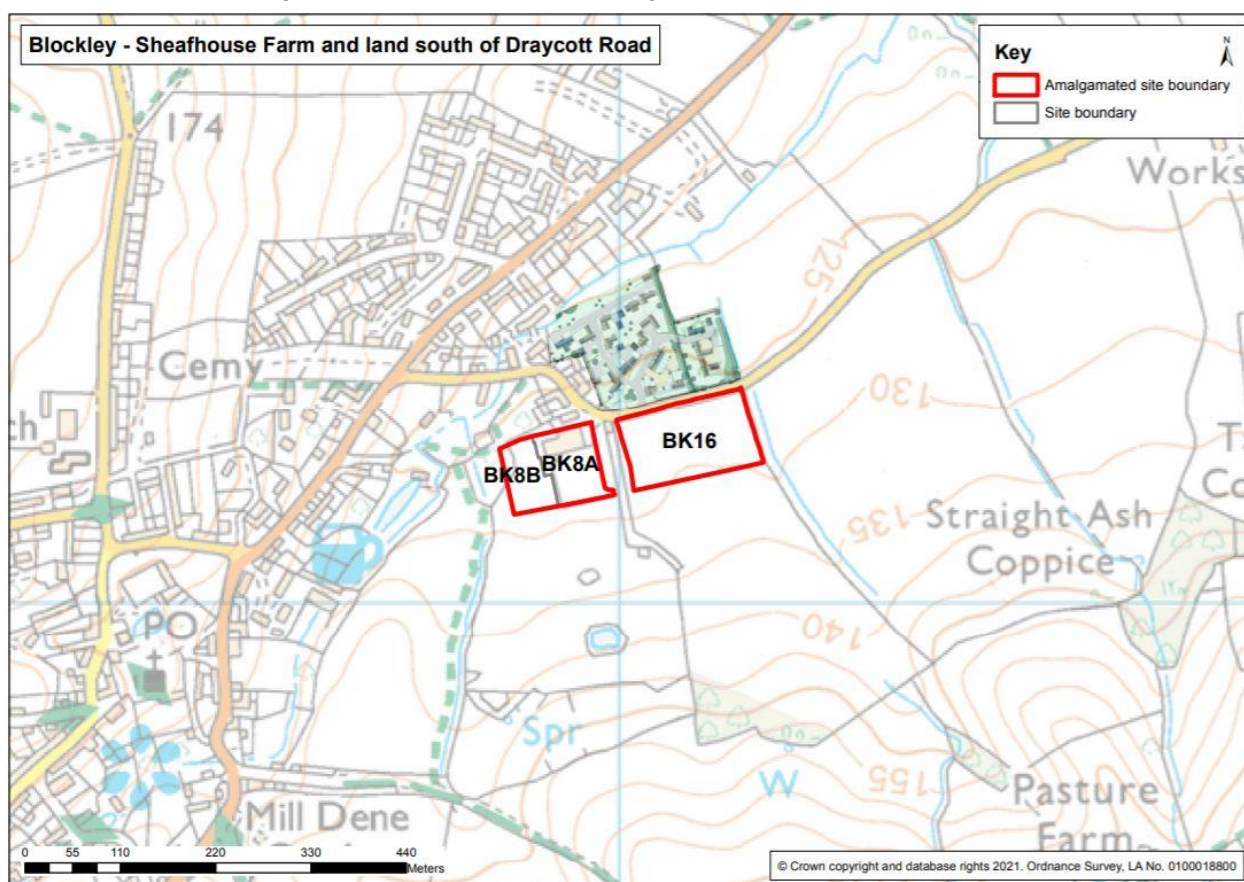
The design of both developments should include enhancements to the green infrastructure network which better link the areas of priority habitat to the north and south of Blockley. Opportunities should also be taken to retain and provide planting that will support pollinators to support the bee line in this location.

- **BK I I**: the hedges and trees on the boundaries should be retained to soften any built form. These should be enhanced with additional planting to provide robust transitional boundaries to the wider landscape. These should be located in public areas rather than private gardens. A link to the neighbouring playing field could be delivered within any masterplan.
- **BK I 4A**: should any further development come forward on this site or should any changes be made to existing permissions, the north-eastern edge of the site should be sympathetically designed and a green corridor along the southern boundary implemented/enhanced. The corridor on the southern boundary should be designed to incorporate green SuDs principles to better manage the Flood Zone.

Key actions required

- Relocate allotments;
- Analysis of potential noise and light disturbance issues from adjacent sports pitches;
- Archaeological investigations will likely be required; and
- Ecological assessment, particularly for Great Crested Newt.

Sheafhouse Farm (refs: BK8A, BK8B, BK16)



Proposal: BK8A/B: 18-22 homes; BK16: 20 homes

Site area: Combined site area = 2.24ha (BK8A = 0.55ha; BK8B = 0.39ha; BK16 = 1.30ha)

Assessment date: January 2021

Land ownership: Single ownership

Site description

The sites lie on the lower valley slopes on the south-eastern edge of Blockley. BK8A/B comprises part of the Sheaf House Farm complex and contains several large farm buildings, a yard and a fenced off part of a pasture field to the south. It also accommodates a gymnasium located in a converted farm building. The western part of the site is largely a grassed area. There is no defined boundary to the south of BK8B.

BK16 is part of an arable field with no defined boundary to the south.

The sites are neighboured by a Thames Water de-nitrification plant and further sheds between BK8A and BK16. These have a functional appearance but are screened by semi-mature vegetation. There is also an established access track running between BK8A and BK16, which is in the same ownership as the site submissions. There is residential development to the north and open countryside in all other directions.

Planning history

This is a summary of the key planning applications and is not a comprehensive list

BKA is allocated for residential development in the adopted Local Plan. This site is also located within the Blockley development boundary, as defined by the Local Plan proposals map. However, neither BK8B or BK16 are allocated or are located within the Local Plan development boundary.

In recent years, Sheafhouse Farm has sought to diversify. Modern extensions and conversions have been provided within BK8A and BK8B to provide a fitness studio. This included a new access into BK8A from Draycott Road, which runs along the eastern boundary of the water works. Permission has also been granted for seven shepherd's huts for a tourist accommodation venture, although this has not been implemented.

The most significant change in recent years has been the adjacent 26 dwelling development located on the northern side of Draycott Road (refs: 15/01020/OUT and 18/02587/REM). This scheme has introduced new-build residential development at the eastern approach into Blockley from Draycott Road, albeit this scheme has a traditional design that is sympathetic to its rural location.

BK8A

- 20/02984/FUL – “Erection of single storey extension to enlarge reception area and facilitate creation of an ancillary café”. Permitted
- 19/03997/FUL – “Erection of an agricultural storage building”. Permitted
- Sheafhouse Farm has submitted several applications recently relating to tourism diversification proposals. A planning permission for shepherd huts has not been implemented (ref: 19/03585/FUL), while an application for safari tents was refused and is being appealed (ref: 20/02431/FUL).
- 14/00744/FUL – “Extension to provide treatment rooms, reception and toilets for fitness studio”. Permitted
- 14/00731/OPANOT – “Prior notification for the change of use of an agricultural building to a fitness studio (use class D2)”. Prior approval given
- 05/02869/OUT – “Change of use to office (BI Use) (Outline)”. Withdrawn

BK8A/B

- 05/02869/OUT – “Change of use to office (BI Use) (Outline)”. Withdrawn

BK16

No recent relevant planning history

Landscape

These comments are made on the basis of a survey conducted by a qualified Landscape Officer. A full landscape and visual impact assessment would be required of any development proposal (desktop and site assessments) undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced landscape professional.

Description

The parcels are located to the east of the Blockley settlement and are adjacent to Draycott Road which is located to the north of the parcels. They are roughly rectilinear in shape and have an agricultural characteristic. One parcel is comprised of a built farm complex that has been diversified to include a gym and car park (BK8A and BK8B). The other parcel (BK16) forms part of a larger arable field. The boundaries of the parcels are generally defined by a combination of built settlement edge, characteristic hedgerow and trees or open to further agricultural land.

To the north is existing built form along Draycott Road, this includes the recently constructed 23 dwellings to the north of the road (ref: 18/02587/REM). Although the settlement edge is present to the north the parcels appear fairly detached from the settlement and are rural in context. To the south and west is a continuation of the agricultural field pattern that is present around the entire settlement. To the south of BK8A/B the farmland has been diversified for physical activity as part of the gym’s offering. Beyond a small field to the west is the main body of the Blockley settlement, this part of the settlement represents the historic settlement and is designated as being within a Conservation Area. Intervening vegetation and changes in topography limit the visual connection between the parcels and the settlement to the west.

There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the parcels. There are PRoW present to the west of the parcels (Blockley Footpath 42 and 71). Views from these footpaths towards the parcels are generally filtered by intervening vegetation. No pavement is provided along Draycott Road but public views of the sites are still achieved by pedestrians and car users. These local views from the north are unobstructed. There are no public vantage points that afford views from the south or east. Distant views of the parcels are generally screened by intervening features such as built form, changes in topography and vegetation, although some distant views exist from elevated landform to the north-west.

The parcels are located within the nationally valued Cotswolds AONB landscape. Historic mapping highlights that limited change has occurred to the field pattern within the parcels. Of note is the expansion of Sheafhouse Farm over the years. The traditional farm complex has expanded to include larger 20th century sheds and modern farming structures.

Parcel specific features

BK8A – BK8A was formally identified as BK8 and was assessed as part of the ‘Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District: Update’ (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report. The parcel description is reproduced below and is still considered to be an appropriate description of the parcel:

‘This site consists of an area including part of the Sheaf House Farm complex containing several large scale farm buildings, a yard and a fenced off part of a pasture field to the south. It lies on the lower valley slopes on the south eastern edge of the settlement with a sub-station and further sheds on its eastern boundary which tends to screen views from further east, along Draycott Road, although the site is apparent closer to. A PRoW beyond the western boundary of the adjoining field is screened by vegetation, as it’s the watercourse, so there are very limited views in from the Conservation Area, PRoW and Listed Buildings further to the south west on the far side of the watercourse. The southern boundary of the adjoining pasture field is densely vegetated and there are no long views in this direction or to the south east’

BK8B – This parcel is located to the west of BK8A and is characterised by former pastoral farmland repurposed as an outdoor activity space and fitness area. This current use has not been formalised within a planning application. To the north and west of the parcel are paddocks with the settlement beyond. The eastern boundary is enclosed by existing agricultural built form within the Sheafhouse Farm complex. To the south is an open pastoral landscape that continues to woodland on rising landform. The area to the south of the parcel is used as a private recreational use. A PRoW beyond the western boundary of the adjoining field is screened by vegetation, there are limited views in from the Conservation Area, PRoW and Listed Buildings further to the south west on the far side of the watercourse. The southern boundary of the adjoining pasture field is densely vegetated and there are no long distance views from this direction or from the south-east.

BK16 – The parcel comprises characteristic arable farmland and forms part of a larger field that continues to the south of the parcel. The Blockley settlement bounds the site to the north and west (residential built form and Draycott Road to the north and Sheaf House Farm and gym and a water treatment plant to the west). The eastern boundary comprises mature vegetation with further fields beyond. No PRoW are present within or around the site and public vantage points are limited to Draycott Road to the north.

Landscape Context

National Character Area 107: Cotswolds

Landscape Character Type 17: Pastoral Lowland Vale

Landscape Character Area 17B: Vale of Moreton

Constraints/Designations

Landscape: All parcels within the Cotswolds AONB

Historic: No listed buildings present within or near the parcels. Not within the Conservation Area.

Other (floodplain, PROWs): No PRoW present within the parcels. There are PRoW present to the west of the BK8 parcels (BLOCKLEY FOOTPATH 42 and 71).

Landscape sensitivity

Justification:

BK8A – The landscape sensitivity given to the parcel as a whole and as part of its inclusion within the ‘Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District Update’ (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report was **Low/Medium**. The justification provided for this rating is reproduced below and is still considered to be an appropriate justification for the parcels landscape sensitivity:

‘The susceptibility of this site lies in its location on the south eastern edge of the settlement adjacent to farmland, its function as part of Sheafhouse Farm and the relative proximity of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings. However, these are well screened. Its value is indicated by its inclusion in the Cotswolds AONB. Development here would be seen as a minor intensification of adjacent housing and would not be visible in the wider landscape. It should be carefully designed to enhance the approach to the settlement from the east, in particular as this site occupies a prime location on a bend in the road and is in full view when approaching the settlement from this side’

BK8B – Given the parcel’s proximity and relationship with the neighbouring parcel (BK8A) the justification provided within the ‘Study of land surrounding Key Settlements in Cotswold District Update’ (Cotswold District Council and White Consultants, October 2014) report and reproduced above is considered to be relevant and pertinent to this parcel. With this in mind the parcel is also considered to have **Low/Medium** landscape sensitivity.

BK16 – The parcel has susceptibility to change through housing development due to its position within a section of an undeveloped arable field that continues and rises to the south. Residential development has been introduced to the north of Draycott Road (ref: 18/02587/REM) and Sheafhouse Farm to the west is allocated for residential development, which gives some residential built context to the local landscape. Development to the south of the road would appear as ribbon development along the south side of Draycott Road. This would entirely enclose this section of the road and give it an urban appearance. The development would represent encroachment into the characteristic open agricultural landscape that is present around the Blockley settlement. The landform to the south of the parcel rises sharply, development encroaching upon it could be a detractor to the special qualities of the AONB landscape in this location. The division of the field that the parcel is located within would represent a change from the historic field pattern. The vegetated field boundary to the east forms an important landscape feature within the parcel and would filter views on the approach from the east. The parcel is located on relatively flat land with a gentle slope that rises significantly beyond the southern boundary. PRow provision is limited within the local vicinity and this limits public views of the parcel. Given the settlement edge location and the parcel's position beyond a defensible settlement edge that ventures into the characteristically rural Cotswolds AONB landscape, the parcel is considered to have **Medium/High** landscape sensitivity.

Biodiversity

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer in winter. Further specialist survey work may be required before the site can be allocated in the Local Plan.

None of the three sites are covered by a formal nature conservation designation. However, the woodland to the west of BK8B is Priority Habitat (deciduous woodland). BK8A and BK8B are also in a Great Crested Newt amber and red zone. All three sites are also within a B-line.

Walkover Survey reports dated January 2020 and June 2020 were prepared by All Ecology Ltd for two planning applications (refs: 19/03585/FUL and 20/02431/FUL respectively), which included part of BK8A and the land to the south. Although further survey work would be required for the full extent of the current assessment sites, these surveys are indicative of the types of biodiversity that may be present.

The surveys identify some potential for protected and priority species and makes recommendations for precautionary working methods that will avoid impacts to bats, dormouse, badgers/hedgehogs, reptiles, nesting birds and great crested newts.

BK8A: the car park and grassed area to the south of BK8A are not expected to contain high levels of biodiversity. However, the farm buildings and a dwelling within the north of the site may accommodate bat roosts or nesting birds. The conifer hedge running along the eastern boundary of the site may also provide habitat for nesting birds, although it could be improved with a hedgerow incorporating a variety of native species.

BK8B: The cut grassed areas and new buildings associated with the gym are not expected to contain significant levels of biodiversity. However, the watercourse to the west is likely to have higher biodiversity value and the extent to which the site links with this and opportunities for ecological enhancement require further investigation.

BK16: the majority of this site is a cultivated field, which is not expected to contain high levels of biodiversity although may be habitat for ground nesting birds. The main features of ecological interest are the hedge along the northern and eastern boundaries, the latter of which particularly so as it contains a greater variety of native species and trees and has been allowed to naturalise.

Overall, it is expected that ecological issues are unlikely to prevent a residential development on any of the sites, subject to the outcome of Preliminary Ecological Assessments and the provision of any necessary mitigation and enhancement. Potential ways to achieve biodiversity net gain might include provision of a new green infrastructure linkage between the hedgerow to the south-east of BK8A with the area of deciduous woodland to the west of BK8B. In relation to the B-line, the creating of habitat to support pollinators may also help to achieve biodiversity net gain.

Trees

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer in winter. An Arboricultural Report that accords with BS 5837:2012 would be required of any development proposal.



None of the sites contain any trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

BK8A contains several small deciduous trees within the car park. There is also a conifer hedge along the eastern boundary of this site, which screens the adjacent water works. There is an overgrown hedgerow to the south of the site, which terminates at the farm buildings.

BK8B contains a small Birch tree in the north-west corner. This site is close to a tree-lined brook to the west. The development on this part of the site is likely to have a higher impact on the brook in biodiversity or water management terms.

BK16 has an overgrown hedgerow along the eastern boundary, which contains a number of semi-mature trees including Oak and Willow. There is also a mature hedgerow along the length of the northern boundary of the site.

If the sites were developed, there is an opportunity to improve green infrastructure linkages. In particular, a link could be created between the hedgerow, which terminates to the south of BK8 and the tree-line brook further to the west. This might also help to screen the sites within the wider landscape.

Historic Environment (excluding archaeology)

These comments are made on the basis of a desktop and site survey conducted by a Principal Planning Policy Officer. A full historic environment or heritage assessment would be required of any development proposal.

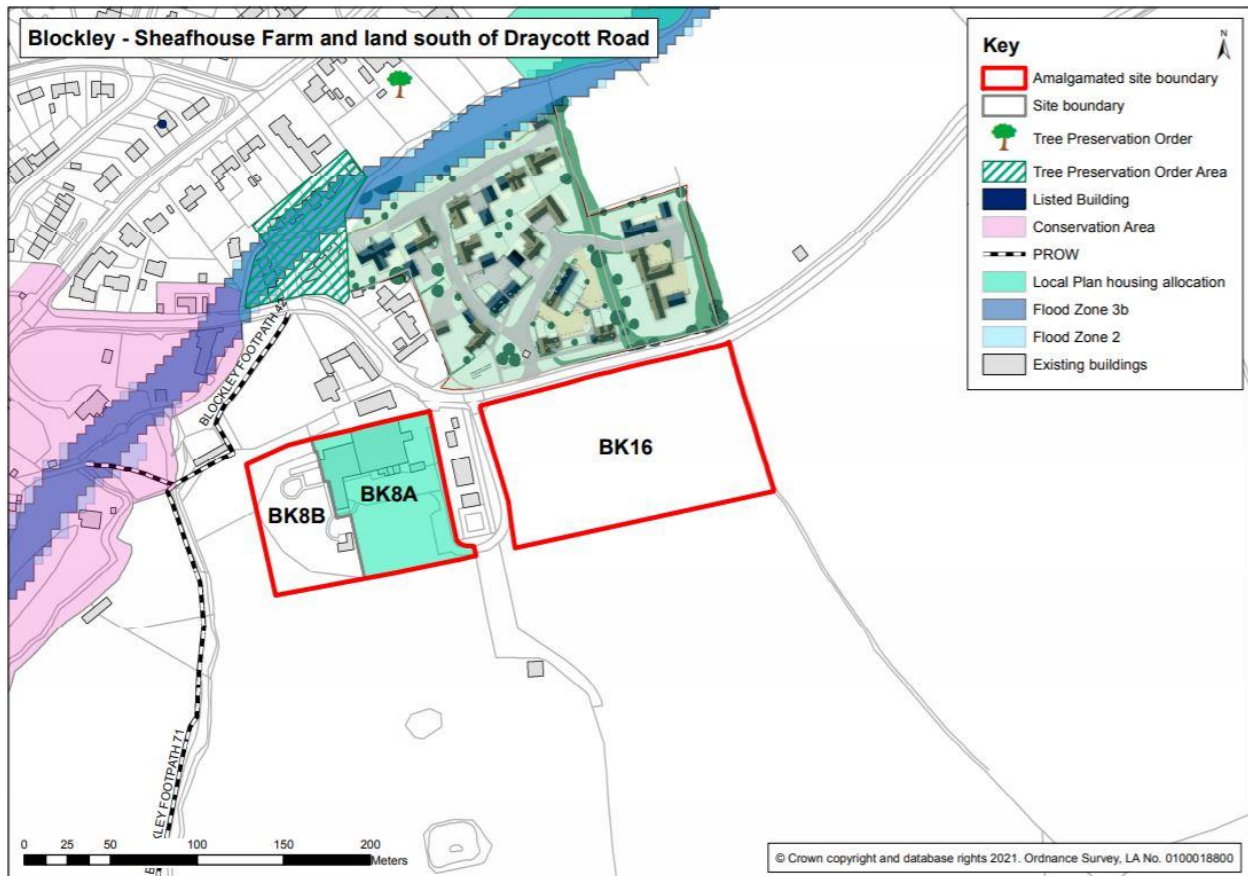
Context: The 1840 Ordinance Survey shows that the Sheafhouse Farm buildings were once confined to the adjacent land to the north of BK8A. BK8A and BK8B were part of the field which today extends to the south of the site. The buildings within BK8A are a later expansion of the farm and appear on the 1960 Ordinance Survey. Conversely, BK16 has remained unchanged since the 1840 Ordinance Survey as part of a large agricultural field.

Around 2008, the agricultural building immediately to the north of BK8A was converted into two holiday cottages (ref: 06/01238/FUL). These were subsequently converted into two dwellings in 2015 (ref: 15/00574/FUL). This building also has a modern appearance.

Designated heritage assets: BK8B is located 40 meters to the east of Blockley's Conservation Area. The nearest listed buildings are those located on Station Road, Northview and Southview. These are the Grade II listed Blockley Court House; Grade II listed Blockley Court; and Grade II listed Wayside

Non-Designated heritage assets: None known

Heritage at risk issues: None known



Other issues / constraints

- The site contains a farming and commercial business (the gym is a community facility). The redevelopment of the gym would need to accord with Local Plan Policy INF2 (Social and Community Infrastructure);
- Existing buildings and hardstanding (demolition and clean-up costs);
- Loss of agricultural land on BK8B and BK16 (a soil survey would be required to establish whether this is best and most versatile agricultural land);
- Loss of active agricultural farm buildings and business;
- Potential archaeology – archaeological survey would likely be required;
- Potential contamination issue from farm use (e.g. from farm’s fuel tank); and
- A local network pylon crosses BK8A and BK8B.

Summary

All three sites contribute positively to the rural setting of the village. Development on the southern side of Draycott Road when approaching the village is currently first encountered by the water works. The Sheafhouse Farm complex comprising BK8A and BK8B is reasonably well related to the existing village envelope. However, the development of BK16 would be a significant eastwards extension of the village envelope and would have more of an urbanising impact on the rural approach into Blockley. The development of BK16 would have a high/medium landscape impact. It would divide an agricultural field; depart from the historic field pattern; and would have a significant urbanising impact on the rural approach into the village, which collectively would cause an unacceptable level of harm to the AONB.

Despite recent diversification schemes, BK8A and BK8B retain an agricultural character, albeit the buildings are of relatively modern design. The demolition of the existing buildings and their replacement with new-build residential development would be a departure from this character. However, if appropriately designed, this type of development

could complement the adjacent housing development to the north of Draycott Road and may be suitably accommodated in this location.

BK8B is more sensitive to development than **BK8A** owing to the lack of a defined southern boundary and because the site is mostly undeveloped land. It also contains a gym, which is a community facility. The redevelopment of the gym would need to adhere to Local Plan Policy INF2. However, the site has similar landscape sensitivity as **BK8A**. Furthermore, the development of this site presents a particular opportunity to improve the green infrastructure network.

Recommendation

BK8A: is allocated in the Local Plan and continues to be 'developable'. This site should remain allocated for residential development in the Local Plan.

BK8B: is a candidate for further consideration for allocation within the Local Plan.

BK16: is unsuitable for development.

Indicative capacity

23 homes (based on density multiplier assumption for **BK8A** and **BK8B** only. A higher or lower density scheme may be suitable when a detailed design proposed is submitted).

Proposed site design brief if the site was allocated in the Local Plan

The following is not an exhaustive list and further guidance on design requirements will be provided through the pre-application process. Developments will be expected to comply with the requirements of the Cotswold Design Code and to deliver high quality built and green infrastructure design.

If **BK8A** and **BK8B** were to be developed:

- The green infrastructure linkages between the sites and the surrounding area should be improved. In particular, a link should be created between the hedgerow which terminates to the south of **BK8** and the deciduous woodland Priority Habitat to the west;
- Opportunities should be taken to retain and provide planting that will support pollinators to support the bee line; and
- Screening and a substantial landscape buffer should be provided along the southern boundary of the sites to provide a high quality edge to the settlement and a good transition between the settlement and the countryside beyond.

Key actions required

Actions for landowner

- Preliminary Ecological Survey;
- Landscape and visual impact assessment;
- Evidence to demonstrate that the redevelopment of the gym accords with Local Plan Policy INF2;
- Investigation of potential archaeology issue;
- Agricultural soil survey for **BK8B** to establish whether the site is best and most versatile agricultural land; and
- Investigation of potential contamination issue.