

CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

The Blunston village settlement, excluding the designated Conservation Areas, has been further analysed and collated into a number of character areas. These character assessments provide a useful insight into the attributes and distinctiveness of the village to enable a clearer understanding of what features and characteristics are important, what should be retained and how future changes can positively enhance and strengthen the character.



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APPROACHES

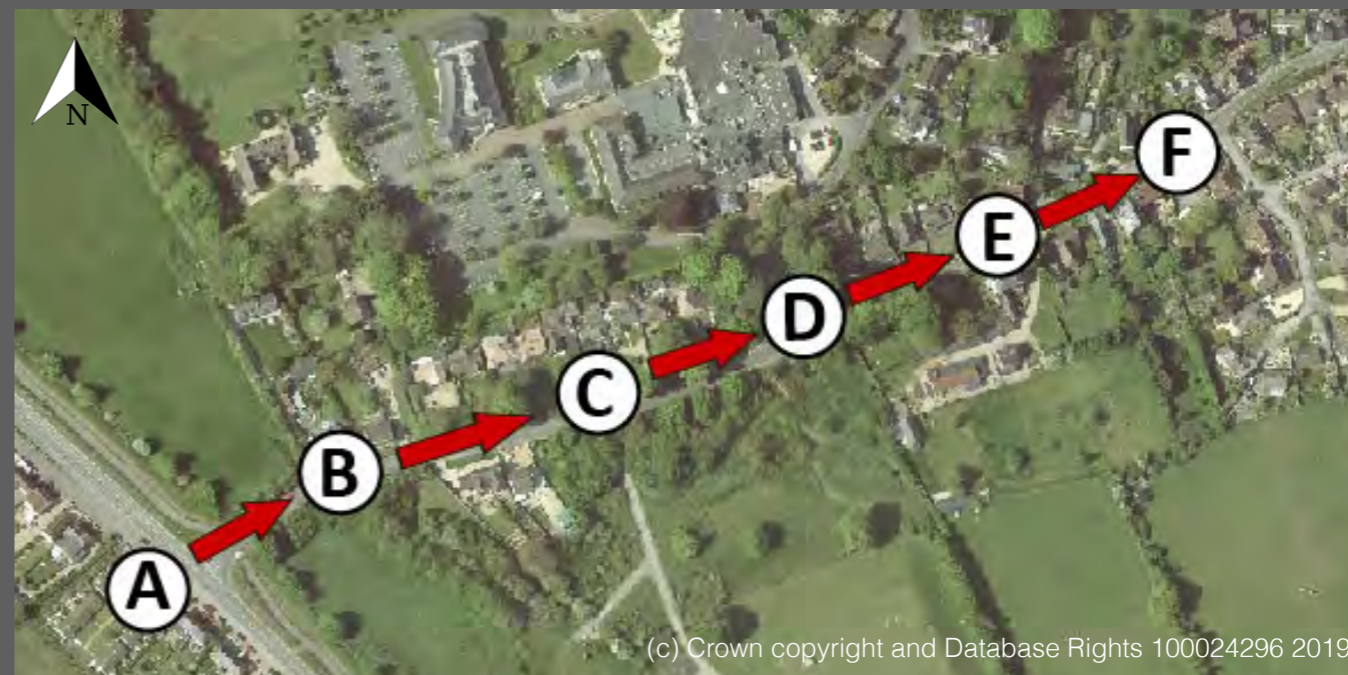
FROM THE WEST

When approaching Blunsdon Village from Ermin Street via the High Street, **[A]** the rural character is immediately apparent **[B]** with mature vegetation lining both sides and grassed verges. This is distinctively different from the more urban ribbon development of Ermin Street and the transition from urban to rural is clear.

Hedges and mature trees **[C]** enclose the High Street for the first 70m, reinforcing the separation from Ermin Street and Swindon's urban edge. The first houses along the High Street start after this initial serenity and are dispersed, individual and set within mature grounds behind highway verges, established hedges and large established front gardens. Access to each property is individual and taken from the High Street providing a gentle, detached residential character within a heavily vegetated environment **[D]**.

Further east, the High Street character begins to transform into a tighter development grain typical of an old village centre. The buildings are closer together and stone-walls **[E]** provide a more continuous sense of enclosure to the street with hedging. The linear High Street continues through the village and some local facilities including a pub, Church, village hall and a shop are located along its length intermixed with housing **[F]**.

The experience of travel along the High Street **[A]** to **[F]** is typical of many villages. It illustrates a gradual progression from a rural edge with more 'scattered' dwellings and dominant vegetation, towards a tighter more compact form at the heart of the village.



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FROM THE NORTH

The approach to the village from the north starts within the deep rural landscape along an unmarked, unlit lane **[A]**. Each side the roadway is flanked with hedgerows, mature trees and open fields **[B]**. Along its length the route into and through the village is lined by a deep ditch and stream, which ripples and flows year round adding a unique quality. Typical of a rural setting the area is generally peaceful, with a tranquil, remote, stillness.

The roadside is edged by grassed verges and the strong vegetation provides a sense of enclosure within the wider landscape. There are glimpses and views across the countryside and toward the linear, contained settlement of Lower Blunston.

The landscape gently rises to the south and Front Lane meanders and opens up as it approaches the start of the village edge at Lower Blunston **[C]**.

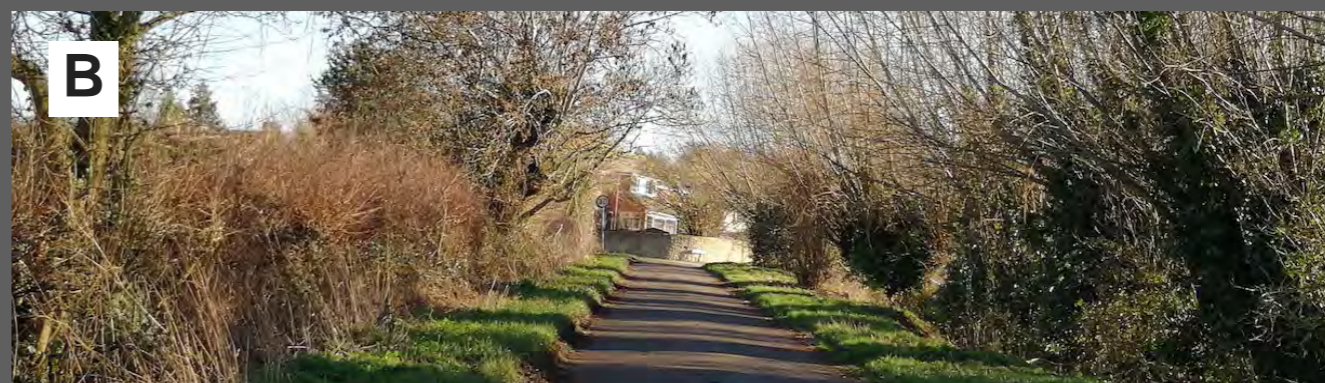


FIG 1 VIEW SOUTH ALONG FRONT LANE WITH STREAM AND DITCH

FROM THE EAST

From the east the village is approached along the B4019, a busier route than the previous two approaches. The road is marked and includes a footway and kerbed edge in parts, but further east toward Highworth it is edged with grass verges and tall vegetation [A]. The route bends only gently, providing long forward views westward and the character of the route changes little [B] until it reaches the village.

The entrance to Blunsdon is marked with a narrowing of the road and a visual pinch point using white wooden gates across the grass verge [C]. From this point onwards, Buildings and stone walls are interspersed with vegetation, grassed verges and some pavements [D] [E]. Around the junction with Sams Lane, on the south side there are driveway openings which enable views of the oblique geometry of the built forms. The gable ends and variety of materials (stone, render, brick) provides visual interest [F].

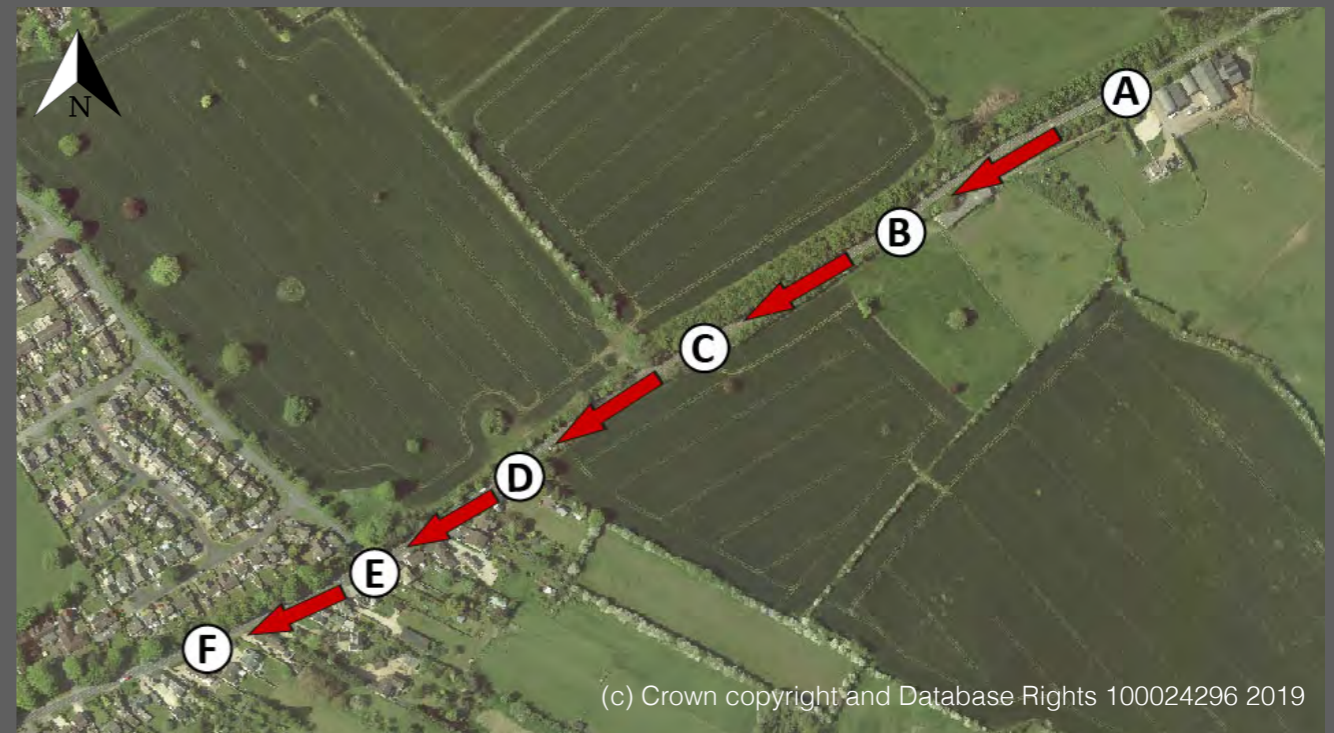


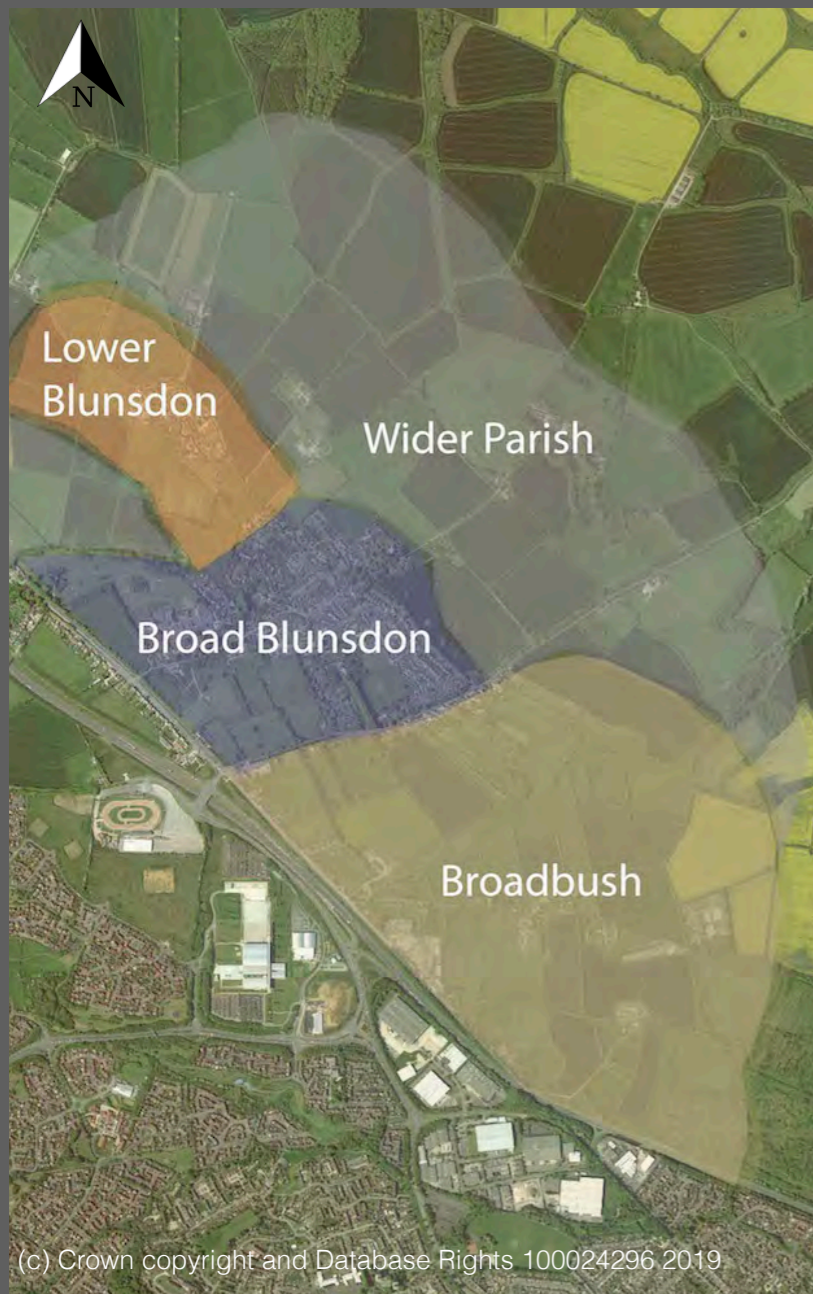
FIG 2 VIEW WEST ALONG B4019 OBLIQUE BUILT FORM IN RENDER & STONE

The BENP area can be conveniently described in three sections:

- BROADBUSH
- LOWER BUNSDON
- BROAD BLUNSDON

BROADBUSH

- The southern section gently slopes down and away from the B4019/Broadbush towards the M4.
- To the south the land slopes gently away from the main village. Here the rural character has been gradually eroded as Swindon expands north and eastwards. It contains a raised valley in which flows a tributary of the Bydemill Brook. A large part of this area forms what will become Kingsdown Urban Extension.
- A backdrop of open countryside, flat farmland and some wooded areas is an intrinsic part of its character.
- The settlement can be visible from elevated points on the adjacent plateau or scarp.
- The distinctive long garden layouts along Broadbush resulting from former use as market garden.
- The built form is partially hidden by trees and other landscapes features.



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FIG 3 THE THREE BENP SECTIONS



FIG 4 KINGSDOWN LANE



FIG 5 KINGSDOWN LANE



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LOWER BLUNSDON

- The northern section sloping down and away from the High Street towards Cricklade and Cirencester is the Lower Village.
- Northwards, at the foot of this scarp, is the settlement of Lower Blunston. This section is described in detail in the Lower Blunston Conservation Area Appraisal. Lower Blunston retains the most tranquil and rural parts of the BENP area. Many of the most significant buildings were once farm houses a century ago, but have now become large residential properties without the direct link to farming activity
- Lower Blunston is separated from Broad Blunston by green open spaces, which play a vital role, forming a gap between both settlements and maintaining the individual identity of each area.
- Houses and cottages face Front Lane, which is the spine of the area and aligns with a watercourse. Running through the centre of the settlement, north-west to south-east it gives the main access to the original buildings, whilst their curtilages run back to the east side to Back Lane and on the west to the edge of fields.

- Back Lane binds the area north-eastward and connects the area with the Church of St. Leonard's in Broad Blunston east, providing access to the back of the original properties of Front Lane.
- The character of these streets is absolutely rural, the lanes are narrow, grass verged, un-kerbed and of varying width, absence of road markings, street lights and other suburban features.
- Ivy Lane links Front Lane to Back Lane; its south side marks the northern limit of Broad Blunston, yet its north side is still lined with native trees retaining a rural character.
- In the west, the westward extent of the buildings' gardens is in direct connection with the open countryside.
- The tranquillity of the area is enhanced by the sound of the flowing streams.



FIG 6 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT BACK LANE



FIG 7 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT FRONT LANE



FIG 8 THE RURAL CHARACTER AT FRONT LANE



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BROAD BLUNSDON

- The central flat section between the High Street and Broadbush is Broad Blunsdon.
- Broad Blunsdon evolved as a mixture of an original ridge top village and extended into a plateau village. It is a small agricultural settlement situated on a rise of land overlooking the Upper Thames. Over the past 30 years, Broad Blunsdon has become a residential dormitory for Swindon, and although its agricultural function has reduced, it still retains a strong rural character and ambience.
- Broad Blunsdon was originally a ridge top settlement, with most buildings located on the High Street at the edge of the scarp.
- A relatively compact layout.
- A linear settlement Pattern.
- Mixture of historic buildings and old roadside natural stones walls, limited 20th Century infills, areas of green open space, some fine groups of mature trees and hedges.
- The older buildings are prominent and establish the distinctive character.





A pocket of detached and semi-detached 2-storey houses and single storey bungalows. Generous frontages and grass verges with street trees.

Character Matrix Type	Village Envelope
Density	18 d/Ha
Typology	Semi-detached and Detached
Plot Depth	21m back to back
Heights	1-storey 1.5-storey and 2-storey
Street Types	Loose liner, culs-de-sac
Form and Structure	Regular, gentle and ordered Continuous form and regular breaks
Frontage Set Back	Generally 5-6m
Boundary Treatment	Low hedges, low walls, lawns
Parking	On-plot and garage
Public Realm	Grass verges, street trees
Materials	Light buff artificial and natural stone



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

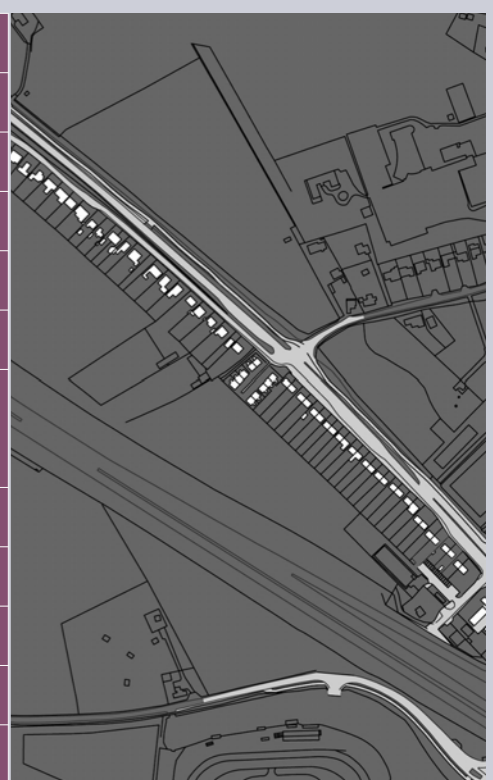
Emphasis on individual buildings and the inclusion of grass verges and small street trees. Building set back is important with low landscaped boundary treatments and frontage space. Low pitched roof forms and large openings within a soft muted palette of materials.





Ribbon development along one side of a former Roman Road comprising regular semi-detached housing progressing northward to looser detached individual plots.

Character Matrix Type	Ribbon/ linear
Density	14 d/Ha
Typology	Semi-detached and detached
Plot Depth	50m+ plot depth
Heights	2-storey and 1-storey
Street Types	Strong linear
Form and Structure	Very regular rhythm becoming fragmented and looser
Frontage Set Back	Generally 6m
Boundary Treatment	Low walls some fences & hedges
Parking	On-plot and on-street
Public Realm	Grass verges and planting on east
Materials	Brick, pebbledash & mixed



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Important northern and eastern views toward Cricklade and the rural setting which should continue to be respected. The street is lacking enclosure and some boundary treatments are weak resulting in a risk of car parking dominating. Street tree planting to enhance the public realm, clear boundary treatments and on plot parking, away from the frontage will help to address this. The strong regular roof forms, building breaks and regular fenestration patterns should be respected and upheld to ensure the character is strengthened.





Meandering cul de sac development of large detached, individual dwellings set back within a landscaped estate setting.

Character Matrix Type	Village envelope
Density	9 d/HA
Typology	Detached
Plot Depth	35m+ plot depth
Heights	2-storey
Street Types	Cul-de-sac
Form and Structure	Irregular, loose street pattern with large frequent breaks
Frontage Set Back	Large set back generally 10m+
Boundary Treatment	None, open landscaped setting
Parking	On-plot and garage
Public Realm	Grass verges, generous open private frontages containing trees
Materials	Pale brick



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Emphasis on spacious landscape setting and wide building frontages. The planting and sense of space is important to the character. There are no formal front boundaries. Dwellings are detached, wide built forms with numerous window openings and include simple pitched roofs. These characteristics should be upheld.



BEECH LEA



A development of detached and semi-detached chalet-style houses within a cul-de-sac. Generous frontages with planting and trees to address the street.

Character Matrix Type	Village envelope
Density	20 d/Ha
Typology	Detached and Semi-detached
Plot Depth	21m back to back
Heights	1.5 and 2-storey
Street Types	Cul-de-sac
Form and Structure	Non-rigid but continuous form with regular breaks
Frontage Set Back	Generally 5-6m
Boundary Treatment	Landscaped with enclosure
Parking	On-plot and garage
Public Realm	Generous grass verges, street trees
Materials	Light brown/honey bricks, lower floor render and some tile hanging



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Attractive private landscaping to frontages on individual buildings and the inclusion of trees contribute to this area. The varied, large pitched roofs and large windows including dormers are a common typology distinctive to this area. Housing is simple and traditional in form with a mixture of light brown and honey coloured bricks, some lower floor render and darker tile hanging on upper floors. The open landscaped setting to the frontages and large setbacks are characteristic and helps to screen on-plot car parking.





THE RIDGE

Detached 2-storey dwellings loosely lining two culs-de-sac across a steep slope. Generous planted frontages, varied building forms and glimpses of open views out.

Character Matrix Type	Village fringe
Density	9 d/Ha
Typology	Detached
Plot Depth	35m plot depth
Heights	2-storey and some split level
Street Types	Cul-de-sac
Form and Structure	Varied building forms, roof scapes and fenestration
Frontage Set Back	Generally 6m
Boundary Treatment	Low stone and brick walls
Parking	On-plot and garages
Public Realm	More private landscaped setting
Materials	Pale brick, and some accents



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Characterised by steeply-sloping topography with gaps between buildings providing great long-distance views of the countryside. Houses are detached within generous plots with some large setbacks to address the slope of the western Ridge. Typologies are simple with low-pitch roof forms, articulated with accent bricks, bays and some bespoke architecture.





Rising topography with detached 1970s bungalows set up above the High Street enjoying views to the north.

Character Matrix Type	Village core
Density	15 d/Ha
Typology	Detached
Plot Depth	30m+
Heights	1-storey
Street Types	Cul-de-sac
Form and Structure	Non-rigid but regular built form, looser street pattern
Frontage Set Back	Large, generally > 6m
Boundary Treatment	Low stone walls, open planting
Parking	On-plot and garages
Public Realm	Footpaths only, absent from trees
Materials	Light brick and stone



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

From High Street the topography rises into Hatchers Crescent and Pontings Close with detached single storey building forms with large hipped roofs. The frontages are presented behind low stone or brick walls, with planting. There are key views to the chapel with long-distance views beyond which must be retained along with the mature vegetation which provides height and enclosure.



HATCHERS & PONTINGS



A mixed rural development of detached and semi-detached 2-storey houses along a one sided, heavily treed route. Plots are oblique with generous frontages and verges.

Character Matrix Type	Village fringe
Density	6 d/Ha
Typology	Detached, semi-detached, cottages
Plot Depth	36m - 90m plot depth
Heights	1-storey -2-storey
Street Types	Rural
Form and Structure	Oblique, irregular plot forms loose pattern with frequent breaks
Frontage Set Back	Mixed - varies (2m-18m)
Boundary Treatment	Landscaped, some walls
Parking	On-plot and garages
Public Realm	Continuous grass verges
Materials	Natural stone, red brick and render



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The area contains plots, aligned to the existing historic field patterns and the housing meets the B4019 at an oblique configuration. The irregular breaks serve to safeguard the unique rural edge. Boundaries consist of low stone walls, gable ends, and mature hedge planting. The cottages, semi-detached and detached housing arrangements, are largely stone with slate roofs and up to 2 storey heights is a strong distinctive characteristic and should be maintained along this length. As a whole, the alignment height, scale and materials should be retained and protected.





A scattered fringe development of detached cottages and agricultural buildings along a well vegetated rural lane.

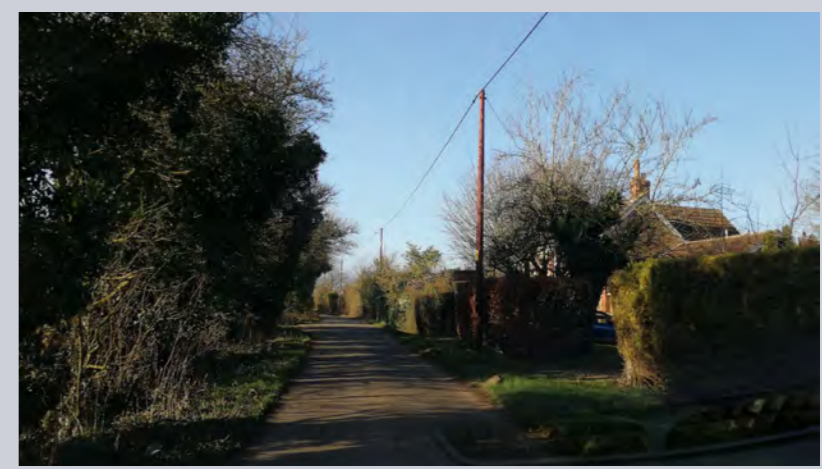
Character Matrix Type	Scattered dwellings
Density	n/a
Typology	Detached and semi-detached
Plot Depth	60m plot depth
Heights	2-storey
Street Types	Lane
Form and Structure	Irregular rural fringe
Frontage Set Back	Varied set back generally 6m+
Boundary Treatment	Varied
Parking	On-plot and garages
Public Realm	Grass verges where dwellings exist
Materials	Varied



KINGSDOWN LANE

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The heavily landscaped, mature vegetation on both sides of the lane give this area a strong rural character. There are large gaps between dwellings interspersed with strong landscaping and defined field boundaries. The house typologies are varied but positively respond to the Lane, however it is the dispersed form and natural vegetation that are more relevant to the character. The scattered built form provides an irregular relationship to Kingsdown Lane with set-backs and car parking that is often hidden from view by the mature vegetation. Any new development should retain a natural landscaped setting and screen car parking. Forms should be simple and not dominate the natural vegetation.





A mixed built form but consistent response to the rural edge through set back and mature landscape treatments to the frontages.

Character Matrix Type	Village edge
Density	11 d/Ha
Typology	21m -60m+ plot depth
Plot Depth	1- 2.5 -storey
Heights	Single sided edge of village lane
Street Types	Regular built form, loose street pattern
Form and Structure	Large set back generally 10m+
Frontage Set Back	Open mainly low walls or hedging
Boundary Treatment	Open mainly low walls or hedging
Parking	On-plot, garage and courtyard
Public Realm	Generous grass verges, some part of private open frontages
Materials	Light and dark red brick, render and light buff stone



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

An open aspect to the wider rural area beyond. The built form enjoys wide verges creating a soft edge overlooking the expansive views east, out of the village. Development here is mixed but its form is outward looking to the lane and it is interspersed with gaps and planting, this is an important character attribute.



IVY LANE, HUNTS HILL, WEST HILL & CHURCH WAY



A development of predominantly terraced and semi-detached 2-storey houses and single storey bungalows. Generous frontages and verges with street trees.

Character Matrix Type	Village envelope
Density	29 d/HA
Typology	Semi-detached, terraced (mainly)
Plot Depth	19m back to back
Heights	1 and 2 storey
Street Types	Residential streets
Form and Structure	Regular rectilinear
Frontage Set Back	5m+
Boundary Treatment	Low walls and fences
Parking	Mostly on street
Public Realm	Large grass verges, mature trees
Materials	Light honey brick, white render



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The regular development form is set within wide residential streets. Enclosures are very low lending a loose transition from public to private realm. The streets are well served with open grassed areas and mature trees which help to vertically punctuate the wide streets. Properties follow straight building lines but vary in form from simple small bungalows to two storey dwellings with some frontage articulations including porches and contrasting materials.





A development of 1970s detached and semi-detached 2-storey houses. Street cross section responds to the steep topography.

Character Matrix Type	Village envelope
Density	29 d/HA
Typology	Detached and semi-detached
Plot Depth	25m back to back
Heights	2-storey
Street Types	Cul-de-sac
Form and Structure	Consistent building forms with shallow pitched roofs
Frontage Set Back	Mixed (Steep incline south) large set back (3-18m)
Boundary Treatment	Hard and soft open frontages
Parking	On-plot and on-street
Public Realm	One large green space at corner, private open frontages
Materials	Light brown brick, brown roof tiles



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Strong building lines with additional set backs on southern side to account for the steep topography. Contemporary 1970s cubist forms with insets, varied window sizes and openings within a repetitive pattern. Some muted green/brown tile hanging to articulate the frontages and deep white fascias under eaves. The street is prone to car parking and some garages jut forward to dominate the frontage.





A strong character of terraced dwellings arranged along rigid building lines behind front gardens with low boundaries.

Character Matrix Type	Village envelope
Density	20 d/HA
Typology	Terrace
Plot Depth	27m back to back
Heights	1-storey - 2-storey
Street Types	Street
Form and Structure	Compact regular continuous built form
Frontage Set Back	5m+
Boundary Treatment	Low wall and hedges
Parking	Generally on street
Public Realm	Some green verges
Materials	Light buff/grey artificial stone with concrete tile roofs



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Consistent built form along regular streets behind generous set backs. There is a strong uniformity of materials, form and window openings, which should be adhered to. Street parking may dominate as there is little on plot provision, but this does allow for planting and softening of front gardens. The dwellings are simple in elevation and along each street there is a strong sense of uniformity with gable-fronted houses acting as “bookends”.





A linear residential pattern with a group of distinctive roof forms which create a distinctive, strong edge to the village with the mature vegetation opposite.

Character Matrix Type	Village edge
Density	28 d/HA
Typology	Detached, semi-detached and terrace
Plot Depth	45-29m
Heights	2-storey
Street Types	Linear
Form and Structure	Generally regular with distinctive roof forms
Frontage Set Back	11-6.5m
Boundary Treatment	Open landscaped set backs
Parking	On-plot and on-street
Public Realm	Strong, mature dense treed hedge opposite providing visual edge to village.
Materials	Pale orange brick with brown tiled roofs



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SAMS LANE

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

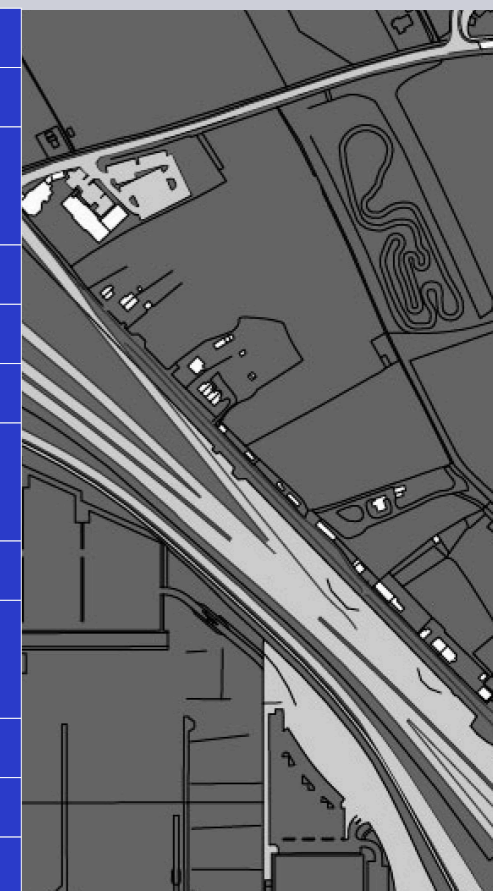
The backdrop of the mature vegetation on the adjacent roadside is a defining feature of this area. The built form is set behind open frontages and the strong roof forms that provide identity. This area provides a clear edge to the built envelope.





Linear ribbon development along one side of Turnpike Road comprising a mix of housing typologies irregularly arranged and interspersed with open space.

Character Matrix Type	Ribbon / linear
Density	5-25 d/Ha
Typology	(mixed): cottages, detached, semi-detached & terraces
Plot Depth	Too varied to specify
Heights	1 & 2 storey
Street Types	Irregular, linear
Form and Structure	Loose, irregular rhythm broken up by large commercial uses
Frontage Set Back	Varies according to house type
Boundary Treatment	Predominantly hedges with some low walls
Parking	On-plot
Public Realm	Some grass verges
Materials	Stone, brick, render, thatch cottage



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

A mix of rural cottages, Victorian villas and some modern housing mostly focussed around the key Turnpike Road thoroughfare. This linear development has historically determined the structure and settlement form along its length. Housing is interspersed with large open areas of green fields offering glimpses to the landscape beyond. A range of commercial uses have negatively altered the historic rural character along the southern end of the road. Much of the Victorian and more modern houses were developed as infill housing, and the historic stone cottages remain together with mature, leafy vegetation and landscaped hedges are a particular distinctive characteristic of this roadside.

