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West Oxfordshire District Council
Planning and Leisure Services Department
Woodgreen
Witney
Oxon OX8 6NB

WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT



Four Seasons House
102b Woodstock Road
Witney
Oxford OX28 1DZ
Tel: 01993 778077
Fax: 01993 778246

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND PLANNING



PRODUCED BY

CONTENTS	
1	INTRODUCTION
2	THE BRIEF
3	SITE DESCRIPTION
4	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER
12	4.1 CONTEXT FOR THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT
12	4.2 THE NORTH OF THE STUDY AREA
14	4.3 THE CENTRE OF THE STUDY AREA
17	4.4 THE SOUTH OF THE STUDY AREA
19	4.5 SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
20	APPENDIX A: LIST OF EXTERNAL PROJECTS AFFECTING THE PROJECT AREA
	FIGURES
	FIGURE 1 STUDY AREA AND PHOTO LOCATIONS
	FIGURES 2A-2F PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS
	FIGURE 3 HISTORIC MAPS: JEFFERYS AND DAVIS
	FIGURE 4 HISTORIC MAPS: ORDNAVANCE SURVEY (OS) SURVEYORS' DRAFTS
	FIGURE 5 HISTORIC MAPS: BRYANT AND 1 ST EDITION OS
	FIGURE 6 HISTORIC MAPS: OS MAP 1884
	FIGURE 7 HISTORIC MAPS: OS MAP 1900
	FIGURE 8 VIEWS OF WITNEY BATHING PLACE
	FIGURE 9 VIEW OF RIVER WINDRUSH BY HENRY TAUNT
	FIGURE 10 VIEW OF WITNEY MILLS BY HENRY TAUNT
	FIGURE 11 AERIAL VIEW OF WITNEY MILLS
	FIGURE 12 VIEWS OF LANGEL COMMON
	FIGURES 13A-F LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
	PHOTOGRAPHS
	PHOTOGRAPHS 1-19

1	INTRODUCTION	<p>1.1 This report has been prepared by BHWB Environmental Design and Planning, on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council, as part of the background research which is intended to lead to a landscape management strategy for the Windrush Valley within Witney.</p> <p>1.2 As part of the wider study and background research, an ecological report has also been prepared for the District Council, which summarises and lists the existing biological records for the study area.</p> <p>1.3 The report first sets out the project brief, then looks at the land use history of the study area. A landscape character assessment of the area follows, with an analysis of positive/negative attributes and important views/landmarks. A list of environmental projects affecting the study area is contained in Appendix A.</p>
2	THE BRIEF	<p>2.1 The project brief was to research and document existing features and characteristics of the project area. The three main elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a comprehensive record of the area and its current and previous uses. • To provide a landscape character assessment of the project area. • To research external projects that affect the project area.
3	SITE DESCRIPTION	<p>3.1 Location and Extent</p> <p>3.1.1 The study area covers the largely undeveloped land along the River Windrush corridor as it flows through Witney. The study area is in two parts (See Figure 1). The northern part covers the Windrush Valley to the west of Bridge Street, extending to just west of Springfield Oval (south of the river) and Willow Farm (north of the river). The southern part covers the Windrush Valley to the south east of Bridge Street. It includes Langel Common, the Cogges Farm area, the tongue of open space between the housing of Wadards Meadow and Manor Road, Farm Mill, and part of Witney Town Council's country park and other undeveloped land as far south as the A40 Witney bypass.</p> <p>3.2 Status</p> <p>3.2.1 The land in the study area falls under a number of different ownerships, and the full ownership picture is not yet complete. The areas in public ownership are shown on Figures 2A-2F; almost all of these are in the southern part of the study area.</p>

3.2.2 Langel Common, along with Church Green, is registered with Oxfordshire County Council as common land or village green (number VG55) under the protection of the Local Authority, under Section 9 of the 1965 Commons Registration Act. At the time of registration, no owner of the land had been identified. However, in 1974 the Trustees of the Blenheim Settled Estate were confirmed as the freehold owners of Langel Common, and as lords of the manor of Witney. The way in which this could have come about is described below, in the historical development of the area. This confirmation of ownership, however, does not affect the registration of the land as common land, and West Oxfordshire District Council continue to take the owner's role of management for the protection of the Common.

3.2.3 There is in existence a 'Scheme of Regulation' for the Common which sets out what the Council and the public may and may not do. Some of the more relevant items for this study are:

- Item 3: While the Council may temporarily fence areas for the prevention of accidents or as a temporary protection to, for instance, newly seeded areas, in general nothing must be done to prevent free access to all parts of the Common, or to alter 'the natural features or aspects' of the Common.
- Item 5: Local people have a right of free access to all parts of the Common.

3.2.4 A normal feature of common land is that there are commoners, that is, individuals who have legal rights over a common, such as grazing or the collection of fuel, though they do not own the land. In this case, there are no registered commoners, and the Common has not been grazed for some years, though a hay crop is usually taken once a year.

3.2.5 Land around the Windrush Leisure Centre, and the riverside walk alongside Witan Way, are owned by the District Council. Cogges Manor Farm Museum and the surrounding land are owned by Oxfordshire County Council, and managed by the District Council. Witney Town Council owns the Country Park land south of Farm Mill, as far as and beyond the A40 Witney bypass.

3.2.6 Several parts of the study area are covered by planning designations, as shown on Figures 2A-2F. Much of the western part of the site is noted by the County Council as an Ecologically Important Landscape (EIL). This designation is done on a parish by parish basis, and assessments have only been done for rural parishes and not for urban areas such as Witney; if an assessment had been done for Witney, the EIL designation would be likely to extend throughout the study area.²

3.2.7 Mill Street, Bridge Street and West End lie within a Conservation Area. Southeast of Bridge Street, the Conservation Area extends over the whole valley between Witney and Cogges, in recognition of the importance of the valley setting to both settlements, and to the setting of Cogges Manor Farm and its surroundings, which are designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Within the Conservation Area and the Scheduled Ancient Monument, there are also numerous listed buildings and structures; these have not been highlighted on the drawings.

² Confirmed in a telephone conversation on 26 February 2001 with the County Ecologist

- 3.2.8 Several rights of way run through the study area. In the northern part of the site, two public footpaths enter the study area from the west, join, and exit along the lane just east of Springfield Oval. In the southern part of the site, a major footpath and cycle link joins the centre of Witney and Cogges, running across Langel Common. A public footpath also runs south from Langel Common, between the two main arms of the Windrush, past Farm Mill and through the Town Council's Country Park, and in a subway beneath the A40.
- 3.2.9 The study area lies within the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) designated by MAFF. The scheme aims to encourage farmers to manage their land in a way which respects the historic and ecological interest of the river valleys. It is particularly aimed at increasing the area of grassland and wet grassland, seen as a characteristic feature of the valleys.
- 3.2.10 Fields in several parts of the study area have been entered into the scheme by landowners, all into Tier 1B, Extensive permanent grassland; these are shown on Figures 2A-2F. A condition of entry to this tier of the scheme is that the grassland should not have been ploughed or reseeded for at least ten years. Management prescriptions include prohibiting the use of any fertilisers except a specified amount of farmyard manure, restrictions on the use of agricultural machinery, and delaying the making of hay or silage until after the end of June.
- 3.3 Topography/Geology**
- 3.3.1 The river valley is, naturally, low lying. The valley slopes gradually from about 83m AOD in the north west to just below 80m in the south. Between Witney and Crawley, the valley is deeply incised, with the ridges to north and south giving long views across and along the valley. From Witney southwards, the valley is much broader, with only occasional ridges such as Cogges Hill, and the ridge which runs south west of Ducklington between Curbridge and Cokethorpe, rising above the valley floor. In this flat landscape, the river meanders in several channels, often modified by people over the centuries. The most important tributary of the Windrush within the study area is the Madley Brook, which joins the river just north of the Cogges Manor complex.
- 3.3.2 The majority of the study area is noted by the Environment Agency as within the flood plain on their indicative flood plain maps.
- 3.4 Historical Development**
- 3.4.1 This brief account of the land use history of the river valley begins with a broad description, and is followed by an analysis of the available historic maps.
- 3.4.2 The study area covers the land of two historic estates: Witney to the west of the river, and Cogges to the east.
- 3.4.3 Topography is the key to the development of the settlements of Witney and Cogges: both developed on slightly higher ground, just outside the flood plain. Witney is situated on what was, in effect, an island of Cornbrash, with Queen Emma's Dyke, now a lost meander of the Windrush, enclosing the western side

of the town, and the River Windrush to the east. The -ey ending to the town's name means 'island'. Cogges developed on a promontory of Combrash and Forest Marble (also a type of limestone) just to the east of the Windrush. The name Cogges is likely to mean 'hill'³.

3.4.4 The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held by Oxfordshire County Council shows some prehistoric activity in the Witney area, with many known sites on the gravel terraces along the Thames Valley. There is also evidence of much Roman activity, especially north of Witney, where there appears to be a particular concentration of Roman villas and farmhouses within Gims Ditch, and near to Akeman Street, the Roman Road running south west to north east past Asthall Leigh, Ramsden and Stonesfield.⁴

3.4.5 Witney and Cogges lie on a long established east-west trackway, crossing the valley by one of the shortest possible points. Corn Street and the footpath across Langel Common to Cogges more or less follow this route, though the river crossing is likely to have been a little further south.⁵

3.4.6 There was settlement on both sides of the river in the Anglo Saxon period, with excavations at Cogges showing a likely continuity from the 5th-7th centuries on.⁶ By the mid 11th century, the Bishop of Winchester held the Manor of Witney, a large estate which included Hailey, Crawley, Curbridge and the hamlet of Caswell. By the time of Domesday Book in 1086, Cogges was held by Wadard, from Bishop Odo of Bayeux. When Odo was disgraced in 1088, the land passed to the Arsic family, who granted some land at Cogges for the foundation of a priory in 1103.

3.4.7 A great part of the value of both estates in Domesday Book was the meadow land, most of which would have been in the river valley. Witney had 100 acres (40.5ha), while Cogges is noted as having meadow '11 furlongs long and 2 furlongs wide', possibly as much as 220 acres (89ha).⁷ While the exact measurements are unlikely to be as we understand them today, the figures nevertheless give an idea of the extent of this land use. Meadow was essential to the medieval mixed farming economy, as it gave grazing, and especially hay to keep animals over the winter. Animals were essential, amongst other things, to fertilise the arable fields, which would otherwise lose fertility in the days before artificial fertilisers. Most of the arable fields were on the higher land, on the valley sides. Ridge and furrow, showing that the land has been ploughed at some time during the medieval period, can still be seen on Cogges Hill, just outside the study area, while most of Hailey's large open arable fields lay to the north of the Crawley Road.

3.4.8 The Bishop's 'Palace' was the manorial centre of his Witney estate, and in the

³ Place-name evidence from Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire Part II*, Cambridge University Press (1971), p333

⁴ See, for instance, Beryl Schummer, *Wychwood: The evolution of a wooded landscape*, The Wyckwood Press (1999), Map 3 on p12

⁵ See John Blair and John Steane 'Investigations at Cogges, Oxfordshire, 1978-81', *Oxonienasia Vol 47*, 1982, p39

⁶ Trevor Rowley and Melanie Steiner eds, *Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Oxfordshire*, OUDCE/OCC (1996); in particular Chapter V by John Blair

⁷ *Domesday Book for Oxfordshire*, Phillimore (1978), paras 3,1 and 7, 27

early 13th century the town was laid out with a market place and burgage plots, and a bridge over the river, in the position of the current bridge in Bridge Street. This historic pattern of the town can still be traced today, and can be seen clearly on the late 19th century Ordnance Survey maps (see below). The long burgage plots to the east of the High Street stretched down to the river, and it is this land which was cut through by Witian Way. Traces of some of the former boundaries can be seen in the Waitrose and District Council car parks, and there are many veteran trees, in particular along the Riverside Walk and to the south of the Windrush Leisure Centre, which were formerly within the plots. The town was a borough by 1209, when it was mentioned in the Bishop of Winchester's Pipe Rolls, which are the accounts of the Bishop's numerous estates. The laying out of the town and the encouragement of markets were sound commercial ventures, as more people meant more rents and other money dues.

3.4.9 Cogges, too, had its planned settlement. This was Newland, founded in 1212-13 by Robert Arsic, then lord of Cogges; however, it failed to develop as Witney did, and most of the tenements were empty by 1279.⁸ The manorial centre during most of the Arsics' time was just south west of Cogges church, on a site marked as 'Castle: site of' on 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, the northernmost of two moated enclosures; the site is likely to have been established in the early 12th century, after Manasser Arsic had granted land for the priory at Cogges. The extension of Cogges churchyard now covers part of the site. The southern enclosure is likely to be slightly later, and was probably used for agricultural buildings.⁹

3.4.10 Mills were an important source of income, and particularly noted in Domesday Book. Witney had two in 1086, while Cogges had one. The availability of abundant clean water was one of the reasons for the growth of the woolen industry in Witney. Witney Mills was the site of one of the earliest mills, known then as Woodford Mill; it was one of three fulling mills recorded in 1277.¹⁰ In 1301-2, the Bishop of Winchester's Pipe Rolls record both fulling and corn mills at Woodford Mill, as well as a corn mill called Vales Mill (possibly Farm Mill).¹¹ and one other fulling mill.

3.4.11 The mill of the manor of Cogges was Gill Mill, outside the study area to the south of the A40 and Ducklington. The priory also had a mill, likely to have been situated to the east of Langel Common.¹²

3.4.12 These mills, with their mill leats, would have required canalsising and diversions of the river, some of which survive today.

3.4.13 Fisheries were also an important asset, as fish formed a major part of the diet of the wealthier population in medieval times. Fisheries are noted in documents

⁸ From rough notes for the unpublished Witney township chapter for the *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*; access kindly given by Simon Townley. The 1279 reference is presumably to the Hundred Rolls of that date.

⁹ Trevor Rowley and Melanie Steiner eds, *Cogges Manor Farm, Witney, Oxfordshire*, OUDCE/OCC (1996)

¹⁰ From unpublished material for *VCH* as above.

¹¹ From Patricia Hyde, 'The Winchester Manors of Witney and Adderbury, Oxfordshire, in the later Middle Ages' (1955), unpublished thesis in Bodleian Library. She also notes Vales Mill as a fulling mill.

¹² 'Cogges', in *VCH for Oxfordshire, Volume XII* (1996), pp54-75

relating to both Cogges and Witney, and traces can still be seen of some of these.

3.4.14 Despite the mills and fisheries, however, the major land use in the river valley remained meadow land, and most of it is still pasture today. Many of the field names in the valley are recorded in historic documents. These show a majority of the names to end in -ham or -mead, both words meaning meadow. Gimmesmead, just to the north of Cogges, appears by 1300¹³, while Goose Ham was just to the south of Langel Common.¹⁴ Hailey Lot Meadows lay in the north of the study area, while Curbridge Lot Meadows lay to the south of the study area.

3.4.15 The manor of Witney remained in the hands of the Bishopric of Winchester, with only a short post-reformation break, until the 19th century, when it passed to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The Duke of Marlborough, who had previously held the manor on a long lease, then bought the manor in the late 19th century. The Church Commissioners still own some land in the valley, and Langel Common, as noted above, though registered as common land, still remains in the ultimate ownership of the Blenheim Settled Estate.

3.4.16 The priory of Cogges was granted to Eton College in 1441, and the college still retains some land in the valley. Manor Farm, now the farm museum, was acquired by Oxfordshire County Council in 1974.

3.4.17 During the second world war, as part of the defences of Witney, four concrete pillboxes were set up, two in the Langel Common area, and two further south, now in the Town Council's country park. These pillboxes, three of which remain, are of a rare prototype design known as the 'Norcon', and consist essentially of a section of concrete pipe with simple loop holes.¹⁵

3.4.18 In the north of the study area, where there are still several public footpaths, there was a tradition of public access, in the area known as 'Hills and Mountains' because of the steep valley side at this point. The then Urban District Council established a bathing place, complete with changing cubicles, which was well used (See Fig 8, views of bathing place). The bathing place was closed, and the buildings removed, when the Windrush Leisure Centre was opened in the 1970s.

3.5 Historic Maps

Jefferys, map of Oxfordshire, 1767 (See Fig 3)

3.5.1 This early map is quite small scale, so individual fields cannot be made out, but it does still show several features of interest. A number of the roads have changed since this map, as they were re-routed when the open fields of the

¹³ Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire Part II*, Cambridge University Press (1971)
¹⁴ John Blair and John Steane 'Investigations at Cogges, Oxfordshire, 1978-81, *Oxoniansia Vol 47*, 1982, Fig 3A on p41
¹⁵ Information kindly given by Stanley Jenkins, Curatorial Adviser to the Witney and District Museum. The two northern pillboxes have been marked on Figure 13C, but it has not been possible to locate the other surviving pillbox as the Country Park has been closed due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak.

parishes were enclosed.

3.5.2 Witney Mills are still named Woodford Mills, linking back to the medieval documents. Farm Mill is shown under its current name, rather than Waleys Mill, its medieval name.

3.5.3 The east-west road through Cogges and across the river to Witney can be clearly seen going to the south of the church, on its pre-1859 route, crossing the river further south than at present.¹⁶

Davis, map of Oxfordshire, 1797 (See Fig 3)

3.5.4 The Davis map of Oxfordshire is slightly larger scale, and it is generally possible to make out enclosed and unenclosed land. He also distinguishes between arable and grassland, though some of the grassland may be temporary fallow. However, we can see that most of the valley land is shown as grassland; in fact, Witney, on its island, is virtually surrounded by grassland. Some field boundaries are shown, though it is sometimes difficult to relate these to a modern map.

3.5.5 Both Witney Mills and Farm Mill are marked, but not named.

3.5.6 The east-west road is again shown running to the south of the church at Cogges.

Survey drawings for the first Ordnance Survey (OS) map, 1817 (See Fig 4)

3.5.7 These surveyors' drafts, taken in 1815-17 for the first edition Ordnance Survey map, which appeared in 1833, are the first OS maps, and therefore of interest although their reproduction quality is poor. The two parts of the study area are on separate sheets.

3.5.8 In the north of the study area, a path or road is shown to the south of the river, from Witney Mills to New Mills. Part of this survives today as a footpath.

3.5.9 On the southern map, it is just possible to make out the line of the road across Langel Common, curving further south than it does now, to pass to the south of Cogges church.

3.5.10 Some field boundaries are shown in the northern part of the study area, probably corresponding to ditch lines. In the south of the study area, especially, the impression is of an open landscape, with meadows being defined by watercourses.

Bryant, map of Oxfordshire, 1824 (See Fig 5)

3.5.11 This is the latest of the 'private' mapmakers' maps.

3.5.12 Bryant is the first to note Langel Common, which he appears to call 'Long Pound' (this is difficult to read), and it is marked as extra parochial, which usually means that it belongs to a different parish. It seems unlikely that it would not have been part of either Witney or Cogges. However, in the late 1890s, in documents

¹⁶ John Blair and John Stearne 'Investigations at Cogges, Oxfordshire, 1978-81, *Oxoniensia Vol 47*, 1982, Fig 3A on p41

relating to the extension of the Borough of Witney, there was some doubt as to whether it belonged to Witney or Cogges. It was noted as a common over which no person has exercised rights of exclusive ownership.¹⁷

3.5.13 The east-west road is again shown running to the south of the church at Cogges.

First Edition OS map, 1" to 1 mile, 1833, 1887 reprint (See Fig 5)

3.5.14 This is the map for which the earlier survey drawings were done (see Figure 4). Despite the late printing of this edition, the only substantial difference from the 1833 print is supposed to be the addition of the railway.

3.5.15 New Mills, Witney Mills and Farm Mill are all labelled 'Manufactories', an indication of the growing scale of industrialisation.

3.5.16 Langel Common is labelled, and the road connecting Corn Street and Crown Lane with Cogges is clearly visible, still running to the south of Cogges church. In the 1890s, Crown Lane was noted as the footpath used by horses and cattle pasturing on Langel.¹⁸

3.5.17 The railway was built in 1861, but was completely closed in 1965, and dismantled by 1971. Before the building of the railway, the Reverend Giles, in his History of Witney published in the early 1850s, wrote of traffic which once went through Witney having been diverted onto other railway networks, and the meagre three coaches a day being the 'melancholy survivors of the incessant swarm which once added life to the streets of Witney, and put money into the pockets of its numerous horse keepers, publicans and stable boys'.¹⁹ Witney's railway was obviously urgently required.

3.5.18 The railway bridges over the two arms of the river survive. The northernmost of these, on the former goods line, is of interest for its very late use of cast iron girders.²⁰

First Edition OS map, 1:10,560 (6" to 1 mile), 1884 (See Fig 6)

3.5.19 This map shows a great deal of detail, and there are many more features which can still be identified today. This map is essentially a reduction of the larger scale (25 inch) OS map surveyed in 1876, which is not shown in this report due both to its fairly poor reproduction quality, and its large size.

3.5.20 Individual trees are shown, in surveyed positions. In the north of the study area, we can see that both arms of the river were tree lined, and there are several small plantations to the north of Witney Mills. Several of the ditches defining the meadows were also tree lined.

3.5.21 The boundary of the thin strip of land along the south of Crawley Road, which is

¹⁷ From rough notes for the unpublished Witney township chapter for the *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*.

¹⁸ From rough notes for the unpublished Witney township chapter for the *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*.

¹⁹ JA Giles, *History of Witney* (1852, 1986 OCC reprint), p55

²⁰ Information kindly given by Stanley Jenkins, Curatorial Adviser to the Witney and District Museum.

now built up, contained trees. We can see that there was very little development along the Crawley Road, and none along the Burford Road to the west of Witney Mills. On the valley sides, a number of quarries are marked on the larger scale map, but the character would have been extremely rural, with very few buildings breaking the smooth skyline of the valley sides. Two photographs by Henry Taunt, from a book of 1898 promoting Early's blankets, show this rural character, with the collection of mill buildings, and the imposing workhouse on Tower Hill, being the only urban features in the valley scene (See Figs 9 and 10).

3.5.22 In the south of the study area, we can see that most of the boundaries of the burgave plots were tree lined, and many of the plots contained trees. Some of these survive today.

3.5.23 Crown Lane, the path leading to Langel Common and Cogges, is marked, and the path across the Common follows its present course. There are several features to the south of Crown Lane, near the river, which are fish ponds; these can be clearly picked out on the 1876 map.

3.5.24 Langel Common and the other meadows are completely open, with trees only along the watercourses. There are trees in places along the northeastern boundary of the meadows, towards Newland. On the 1876 map, Langel is shown as rough grassland.

3.5.25 At Cogges, we can just make out 'Castle, site of, and 'moat' just to the south. The fish pond associated with the priory appears as quite a major landscape feature, though possibly partly overgrown, as shown on the 1876 map. As in the north of the study area, a major difference between now and then is that the Cogges area was completely undeveloped, apart from the small scale buildings around the church, which would have appeared as an important feature in the landscape. There would have been clear views out to Cogges Hill, and the Cogges ridge would have been an even more dominant and enclosing feature than it is today.

3.5.26 There are trees in the area around Farm Mill, but apart from these, and the trees along the watercourses, having passed through the relatively enclosed landscape of Witney, with its burgave plots, and Cogges, the landscape would then have widened out into the broad, flat lower Windrush valley, and there would have been extensive views along the valley.

OS map, 1:10560 (6" to 1 mile), 1900 edition (See Fig 7)

3.5.27 This map shows similar features to the 1884 map, but has been redrawn, and is rather clearer. A major difference is that very few trees are shown; it is highly unlikely that they had all disappeared (in fact the contemporary Taunt photos show many trees), and it is possible that it was decided to omit trees on maps at this scale in order to make the other features clearer.

3.5.28 The path along the south of the river from New Mills is still shown. The mill buildings are bigger, as they appear in the Taunt view.

3.5.29 The fishponds and artificial water channels between Crown Lane and Farm Mill are clearly shown on this map.

- 3.5.30 At Cogges, the 'Castle: site of and the 'moat' are much clearer than on the 1884 map.
- 3.6 Summary of Historic Landscape Character**
- 3.6.1 The character of the river valley through Witney has always been strongly pastoral, with the land being used as meadow. These meadows would have been mown for hay, and also grazed.
- 3.6.2 Mills punctuated the valley in places, but the landscape character was essentially pastoral and rural.
- 3.6.3 In the north of the study area, the character would have remained rural until well into the 20th century. Built development was generally kept low in the landscape (apart from the dominant Victorian workhouse). The steep valley sides would have given a strong feeling of enclosure to the valley floor, but there would also have been a sense of openness, with long views along the valley, especially in the western part. The linear nature of the valley would have been emphasised by the tree lined watercourses, and the trees and walls along the roads and plots running parallel to the valley. In the east of this area, between West End and Mill Lane (now Mill Street), the meadows were smaller and enclosed by ditches and willow trees, so there would have been a strong sense of enclosure (See Fig 11 aerial view).
- 3.6.4 In the south of the study area, built development at Cogges was minimal, and closely related to the group of buildings near the church. Cogges Hill and ridge would have strongly enclosed the valley to the east. To the west, Witney was extremely compact, and strongly focussed on the market square and High Street, with the tree lined burgage plots running down to the river preserving the rural character of the valley despite its proximity to the town centre. The meadows around Langel Common would have given a feeling of openness, enclosed by the topography and vegetation (See Fig 12, views of Langel).
- 3.6.5 Further south, the valley widens and broadens. Again, the character would have been strongly pastoral and rural, but much more expansive than further north, with a feeling of enclosure only from the tree lined watercourses. Between the two arms of the river, the landscape was very open, and there would have been long views along the valley.
- 3.6.6 It was not until the 1970s and 80s that both Witney and Cogges expanded dramatically both into and away from their valley settings. In Witney, housing development has spread onto the ridge of land west of the town, away from the historic centre of the town. Industrial/office development has spread onto the valley land south of Station Lane, and onto land to the rear of Bridge Street, both historically open meadow land.
- 3.6.7 At Cogges, housing has filled the gap at Newland between Witney and Cogges, and also comes close to the historic settlement to the south.

4.1 Context for the Landscape Character Assessment

4.1.1 This more detailed landscape character assessment should be seen in the context of broader landscape assessments which have been done for this area.

4.1.2 The Windrush Valley lies within the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), and ADAS carried out a landscape assessment of the area, including part of the Thames valley, the Windrush, Evenlode and Cherwell valleys, and Otmoor. The whole area was divided into five landscape types.

4.1.3 The northern part of the study area falls within the 'Dip Slope valleys' landscape type, the summary of the character being 'a sheltered, lush character with a strong sense of history'.

4.1.4 The southern part of the study area falls within the 'Flood plain' landscape type, the summary of the character being 'an extensive, wet, ordered landscape'.

4.1.5 In 1998 Atlantic Consultants carried out a landscape assessment of the whole of West Oxfordshire, for the District Council. This, too, was inevitably a broad assessment covering a large geographical area, though some more detailed work was done around the 'Key Settlements', which included Witney. This work identified prominent landforms and sensitive skylines, areas of strong and weak landscape structure, and areas where there is a hard urban or strong landscape edge.

4.1.6 This more detailed work refines the above findings, breaking the study area down into smaller landscape units. This has been done through more detailed site work than was possible or appropriate during the previous landscape assessments, and using the historical information outlined above to inform the character assessment.

4.1.7 The study area has been divided into three areas for descriptive purposes. Each landscape type is described in the following sections, and elements contributing to or detracting from the landscape character defined. The text should also be read with the annotated drawings, Figures 13A-F.

4.2 The North of the Study Area (See Figs 13A and 13B)

4.2.1 There are four main landscape character types in this part of the study area:

- 1: Semi-enclosed valley floor.
- 2: Enclosed valley floor.
- 3: Steeply sloping valley side.
- 4: Scrubby urban fringe.

Landscape type 1: Semi enclosed valley floor

4.2.2 Views are enclosed by the valley sides, but there are long views along the valley and up the smooth farmed valley sides (See Photo 1). Vegetation is mostly

restricted to river/ditchside willows. Views are marred where modern development in the valley floor and on the valley sides presents a hard urban edge and breaks the skyline (See Photo 3). This area was formerly open meadow land ('lot meadows'). This landscape type is characteristic of many parts of the upper Windrush Valley.

4.2.3 The extensive views along the valley give a feeling of expansiveness in strong contrast to the more enclosed landscape types.

4.2.4 In this landscape type, with its open and linear character, inappropriate planting of conifers is particularly intrusive. These occur, for instance, around the caravan site to the north of the river, and also around Burycroft Farm (outside the study area and not shown on the drawings), which sits on a prominent ridge to the south of Crawley Road.

4.2.5 Fields in this area were traditionally divided by ditches, sometimes lined with willows. Fencing is therefore also an uncharacteristic feature in this area, giving a cluttered feeling to the open view.

4.2.6 Due to the open nature of the landscape, which it is important to maintain, development both within the valley and on the valley sides is generally intrusive.

Landscape type 2: Enclosed valley floor

4.2.7 Former small scale water meadows ('closes'), enclosed by valley sides and by the tree lined ditches dividing the meadows (See Photo 5). There is a strong sense of enclosure. Housing has encroached onto or close to some of the meadows, but urban views are generally filtered by vegetation, so the meadow character remains, and the area is essentially tranquil. The new housing is itself generally small scale and low lying, and does not, therefore, appear out of scale or character with the landscape.

Landscape type 3: Steeply sloping valley side

4.2.8 This landscape type is only found in one part of the study area, the area known locally as 'Hills and Mountains' (See Photo 2). The steep scarp slope gives a strong sense of enclosure, and the scrub encroachment onto the grass slope adds to the character and gives diversity for wildlife; grazing would enhance and retain its character. This type of landscape is a particular feature of the Cotswolds, and is also found elsewhere in the Windrush Valley. It has the potential for interesting limestone grassland species, given appropriate management.

Landscape type 4: Scrubby urban fringe

4.2.9 This landscape type is found to the south of the river, partly on former Witney Mills land, some of which is awaiting development (See Photos 4 & 6). There is, sadly, an air of dereliction in this part of the study area, with dumped rubbish and abandoned vehicles. While the underlying character would probably be landscape type 1, this has become lost through changes in and lack of management, and scrub encroachment.

4.2.10 Although some of the scrub is poor quality bramble and sycamore, the trees which have grown up to the south of the river are important in screening views of the development to the south, and they therefore have some landscape value.

4.2.11 The public footpath which runs down the eastern side of Springfield Oval is quite rural in character at its southern end, running past woodland. However, its character deteriorates as it enters the study area, and the area to the west of the path, north of Springfield Oval, is particularly poor quality, in part surrounded by a chainlink fence. This fence is particularly intrusive where it runs alongside the path where the path turns west. The path then runs through overgrown scrub and trees, with a rather oppressive character, to emerge into the open valley floor, with the steep scarp slope to the left. This is a very abrupt, and welcome, change of character.

4.2.12 The former bathing place adds to the abandoned feeling of this area. Surrounded and encroached upon by scrub and trees, the concrete surface is uneven and crumbling. The hard edge to the river is uncharacteristic in the rural scene.

4.3 The Centre of the Study Area (See Figs 13C, 13D and insert 1 on 13F)

4.3.1 There are four main landscape character types in this part of the study area:

- 1: Semi-enclosed valley floor.
- 5: Wooded former burgage plots
- 6: Historic settlement
- 7: Amenity land/Public Open Space

Landscape type 1: Semi-Enclosed Valley Floor

4.3.2 Though the valley is wider here, this landscape type is essentially the same as that found further to the north, with extensive views along and across the valley, where they are not blocked by trees. The eastern valley side, which is developed, and the undeveloped Cogges ridge, outside the study area, form a strong topographical edge and enclosure to the town to the east, but the small island on which Witney was originally situated does not enclose the ground visually to the west. Here views are enclosed by the strong vegetation of the former burgage plots. Both the feeling of openness of the valley floor, and the containment by vegetation or topography at the valley edges, are important components of this character type. This is still very much a landscape of rural character, though the valley-side development, as further north, is intrusive and has eroded that character.

4.3.3 Where adjacent development is largely screened by trees, as on Langel Common, this landscape has a rural, tranquil character which it is very important to maintain and enhance, as part of the setting of Witney, and of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Cogges and the Conservation Area (See Photo 7). Further poorly screened development would seriously erode this character, which is already under threat.

4.3.4 While the main bulk of Witney to the west of Witian Way is well screened by trees

on part of the former burgage plots (See landscape type 5 below), the housing at Newland and the industrial units on Bridge Street are not well screened, and are visually dominant in many views from the open land which forms part of the setting of both Cogges and Witney (See Photos 8 & 9). Many of the willows which traditionally line the watercourses are in poor condition, and the loss of these would further open up views to the surrounding development, and reduce the sense of tranquillity and enclosure which is currently part of the character of Langel Common (See Photo 10).

4.3.5 At the southern end of Langel Common, blocks of trees have been planted on the common itself, where they would formerly have been restricted to those alongside watercourses. These are out of character with the open nature of the valley floor, and block views further south along the valley. The species too are in some cases too ornamental for this rural location.

4.3.6 The landscape type continues to the south of Cogges as far as the Farm Mill area, where the valley widens out into the landscape typical of the lower Windrush valley (See landscape type 8 below). There is a narrow corridor of undeveloped valley between Cogges and the Windrush Leisure Centre. The large bulk of the Leisure Centre complex is only partly filtered by trees in views from the riverside path, which again detracts from the otherwise rural character. The tree planting is sometimes sparse, and there is little lower understorey planting (See Photo 11).

4.3.7 On the Cogges Museum land itself, which forms part of this character area, the fences defining paddocks and paths are rather out of character with the openness of this area (See Photo 12). As noted for the north of the study area, field or paddock boundaries would traditionally have been formed by ditches, and fencing gives a cluttered feeling to the open view. To the north of the museum, the former playground with its chainlink fence and hardstanding detract from the character of both Cogges and the valley land.

Landscape type 5: Wooded former burgage plots

4.3.8 This landscape type stretches down the eastern side of Witan Way, broken only by the more formal amenity landscape around the Leisure Centre. Much of this area is now wooded, and forms a riverside walk, but the many veteran trees which were formerly within the burgage plots help to give this area a distinctive character. This wooded area is also extremely important as a visual buffer between Witan Way and the open valley land, including Langel Common. Any reduction in this planting would open up the tranquil valley to the noise and visual intrusion of the town centre traffic.

4.3.9 The riverside walk has a strongly enclosed character, due to the planting, but there are occasional important views across Langel Common to Cogges, and filtered views to Cogges ridge (See Photo 7). The southern part of the area also contains former fishponds and watercourses relating to Farm Mill, which are an important reminder of historical uses of this watery landscape.

Landscape type 6: Historic Settlement

4.3.10 The group of buildings around Cogges church and Manor Farm form a strong

landscape unit, unified by the stone of the buildings and the stone walls around the settlement. There is a strong historical relationship between the settlement and its valley landscape, and there are many views to the group of buildings from the surrounding open and semi-enclosed valley land, and vice versa, which it is important to retain as part of the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (See Photo 7).

4.3.11 The two moated sites to the southwest of the buildings, now wooded, form a backdrop to views of the buildings, and help to maintain its rural character, particularly important in view of the narrow gap between Witney and Cogges at this point (See Photo 12).

Landscape type 7: Amenity land/Public Open Space

4.3.12 This landscape type is found in Cogges, in the green wedge between the Manor Road and Wadards Meadow housing, around the Museum car park, and around the Leisure Centre. The underlying landscape character of the housing area would probably be 'open valley side' (not found elsewhere within the study area²¹); the Museum car park would fall within the 'semi-enclosed valley floor' type; while the Leisure Centre would have fallen into the 'wooded former burgage plots' landscape type. However, their amenity landscape is now visually dominant, and they are closely associated with built development.

4.3.13 The planting on the Witan Way side of the Leisure Centre is semi-ornamental, but does not look too out of place in the context of Witan Way as a whole. As already described, however, tree and shrub planting along the river frontage is sparse in places, and views of the buildings detract from the otherwise rural character.

4.3.14 The green wedge at Cogges is extremely important, and was retained as an undeveloped area to maintain the visual connection between Cogges and its higher land, just as the views to and from the west of Cogges connect the settlement to its valley setting (See Photo 13). The area has an open character which it is important to maintain. Unfortunately, the housing facing onto this wedge often presents a harsh urban edge, which dominates in views when the eye should be drawn to the historic buildings (See insert 1 on Fig 13F for this area).

4.3.15 On the Wadards Meadow side, there are reasonably large areas of planting, but many of the shrubs have been severely pruned so they no longer have a softening effect. Pruning of alternate plants to maintain the screening would be preferable.

4.3.16 On the Manor Road side, there is no shrub planting. Groups of trees soften the housing in places, but the housing is still dominant in views looking towards the Cogges ridge.

4.3.17 Ecologically, the close mown grass is fairly sterile, in contrast to the rich, or potentially rich, variety of the valley grassland.

4.3.18 The hedges lining the former Stanton Harcourt Road at the eastern end of the wedge maintain the rural character of the road. They are, however, very tall, and may benefit from laying, which may also open up better views to the ridge from Cogges.

4.3.19 The Museum car park is a poorly maintained piece of amenity landscape, and it is on the borderline of 'scrubby urban fringe'. The scrub around the edges of the car park is a useful visual screen, preventing views of the cars and the housing to the southeast from the Museum complex. However, the small blocks of semi-ornamental shrub planting within the car park contribute little to the screening effect; maintenance might improve their appearance. There is one important landmark tree, a Horse Chestnut, in the northwestern boundary of the car park.

4.4 The South of the Study Area (See Figs 13D, 13E and insert 2 on 13F)

4.4.1 There are two main landscape character types in this part of the study area:

- 8: Open valley floor.
- 4: Scrubby urban fringe.

Landscape type 8: Open valley floor

4.2 This landscape type covers the whole of the south of the study area, apart from two urban fringe areas, whose underlying character is also that of the open valley floor.

4.3 As the Windrush Valley broadens south of Witney, it loses the enclosing valley sides typical of the northern part of the study area, and the river meanders in several channels through the flat landscape, joining the River Thames at Newbridge. The character of this landscape type as a whole is open and expansive, with enclosure only from the tree lined watercourses, and with long views both along and across the valley, unenclosed by topography. The characteristic land use in this wet landscape would have been meadow, and there are several grassland SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) further south, the nearest to Witney being Ducklington Mead, well known for its fritillaries (See Photos 14 & 15).

4.4 The southern part of the study area retains this open character to some extent, though there are a number of features which detract from its openness and rural, tranquil nature.

4.5 The A40 on embankment, running east-west across the valley, forms a barrier to views, and is intrusive visually where there is little roadside planting; constant traffic noise can be heard everywhere in this part of the study area. Although the A40 forms this physical barrier, it is important to remember that the character of this part of the study area does not stop at the A40, but continues all the way to Newbridge. It is an important part of the setting of Witney, and the Church with its spire, situated on the southern end of Witney's small 'island', is visible in many views both within the study area and further south.

4.6 There is a wide belt of semi-mature planting alongside part of the A40, which is

starting to form a good visual screen to the traffic. Unfortunately, this contains many species which are inappropriate to the rural valley location, in particular Eucalyptus and Spruce. While planting within the valley is generally out of character except along watercourses, the height of the A40 embankment means that it is intrusive as a physical feature in itself. Where it is planted, as well as the advantage of screening the traffic, the embankment tends to merge visually with the other valley planting, so that it is softened rather than emphasised. On balance, therefore, the embankment is better planted than unplanted.

4.4.7 Within this open flat landscape, one would expect that any adjacent development could be very intrusive, and this is indeed the case in places. The housing in Cogges to the east, although it is set back with long gardens, is still intrusive, in particular from the narrow corridor of land down the eastern side of the valley as there is little planting along the boundary (See Photos 16 & 17). The housing is only screened from the wider valley by a wide hedgerow alongside a ditch; the hedgerow is mostly composed of elm, which is dying back, and this boundary is therefore vulnerable. The open corridor between the housing and the wider valley. hedgerow forms an important buffer between the housing and the wider valley. There are views long it to Cogges church, and it is obviously well used by local people for dog walking.

4.4.8 Station Lane Industrial Estate lies to the west of the study area. In places, the buildings are well screened, for instance in the south where there is a wide belt of planting which has not yet reached its full mature height. However, there is very little screening along the middle of this western boundary, and the buildings are extremely intrusive from the open valley (See Photos 14 & 15).

4.4.9 There are several overhead power lines running along and across the valley, and these add visual clutter to the otherwise open landscape with its expansive skies (See Photo 14).

Landscape type 4: Scrubby urban fringe

4.4.10 This landscape type is found in two places on the west and east of the valley.

4.4.11 To the west, the area to the southwest of Farm Mill is awaiting development, and has a derelict air, like the land described in the north of the study area. The areas of scrub around the site are extremely important in screening views of traffic and buildings from the valley, thus helping to maintain its rural character.

4.4.12 To the east, a balancing pond and mounded area of incidental open space intrude into the valley from the housing area (See Photo 18). As with the museum car park, this area is on the border line between 'amenity land' and 'urban fringe'. This area represents a serious erosion of the open valley character, with its deep 'pond', surrounding fencing, concrete drainage channel and mounded mown grassland. It is completely out of character with the rest of the valley area.

4.5 Summary of Landscape Character

4.5.1 The character of the Windrush Valley as it runs through Witney is still surprisingly rural, and much of it remains as grassland, as it would have been historically. It therefore has the potential for rich ecological interest and diversity, which could be achieved through management, and which would also enhance and strengthen the valley character.

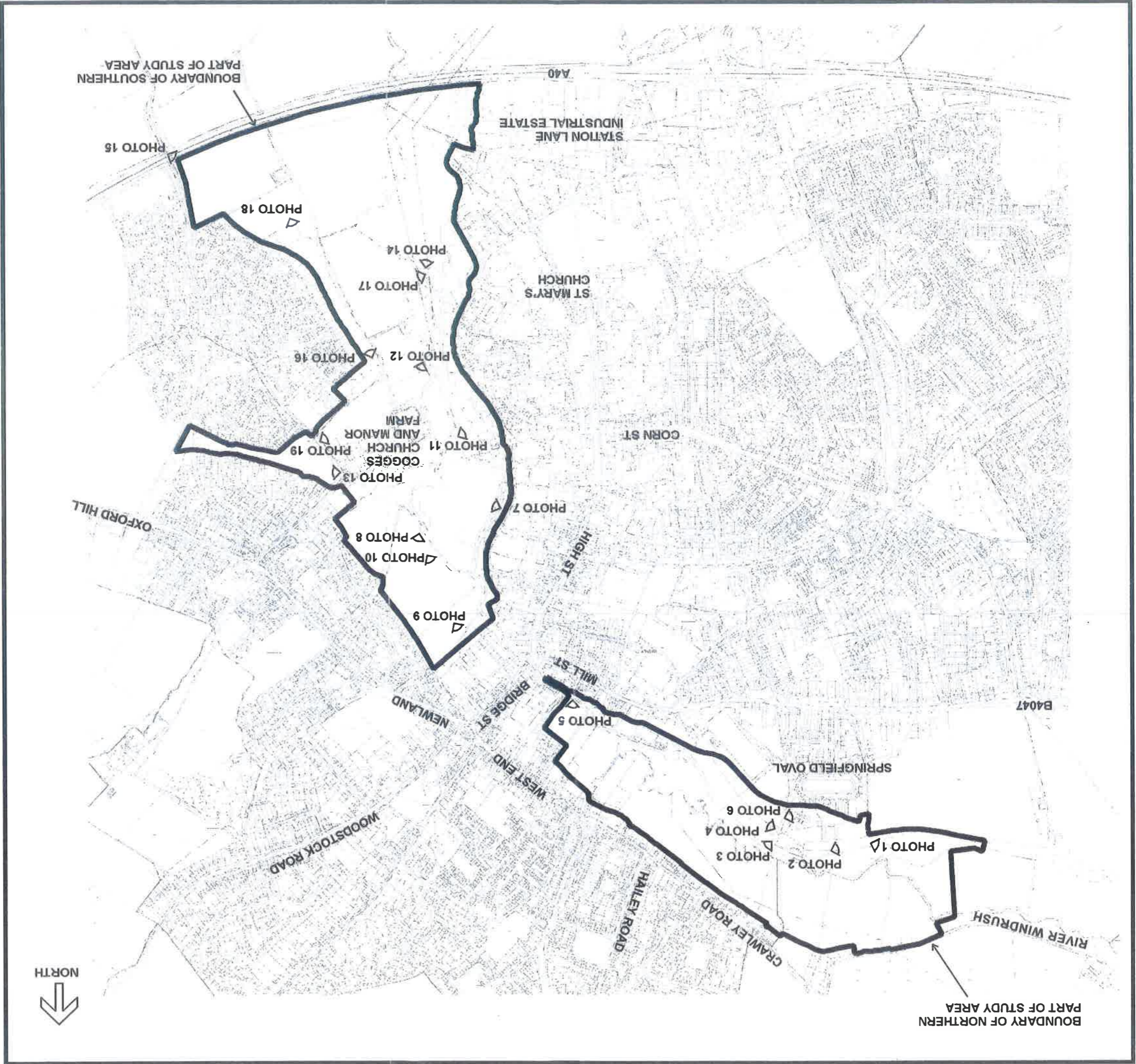
4.5.2 The rural, tranquil character of the valley is an important part of the setting of Witney and of the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Cogges and the Conservation Area, and it should be maintained and enhanced wherever possible (See Photo 19).

4.5.3 However, in places development on the edges of the study area intrudes visually into the valley. Where built development is too dominant a visual element, the valley landscape is in danger of losing its intrinsic rural quality, and simply becoming a setting for buildings rather than a landscape element in its own right. The valley would then change to being an amenity landscape, which would radically alter its character. It is important for the setting of both Witney and Cogges, and to maintain a healthy ecological balance, to maintain this rural landscape flowing through the town.

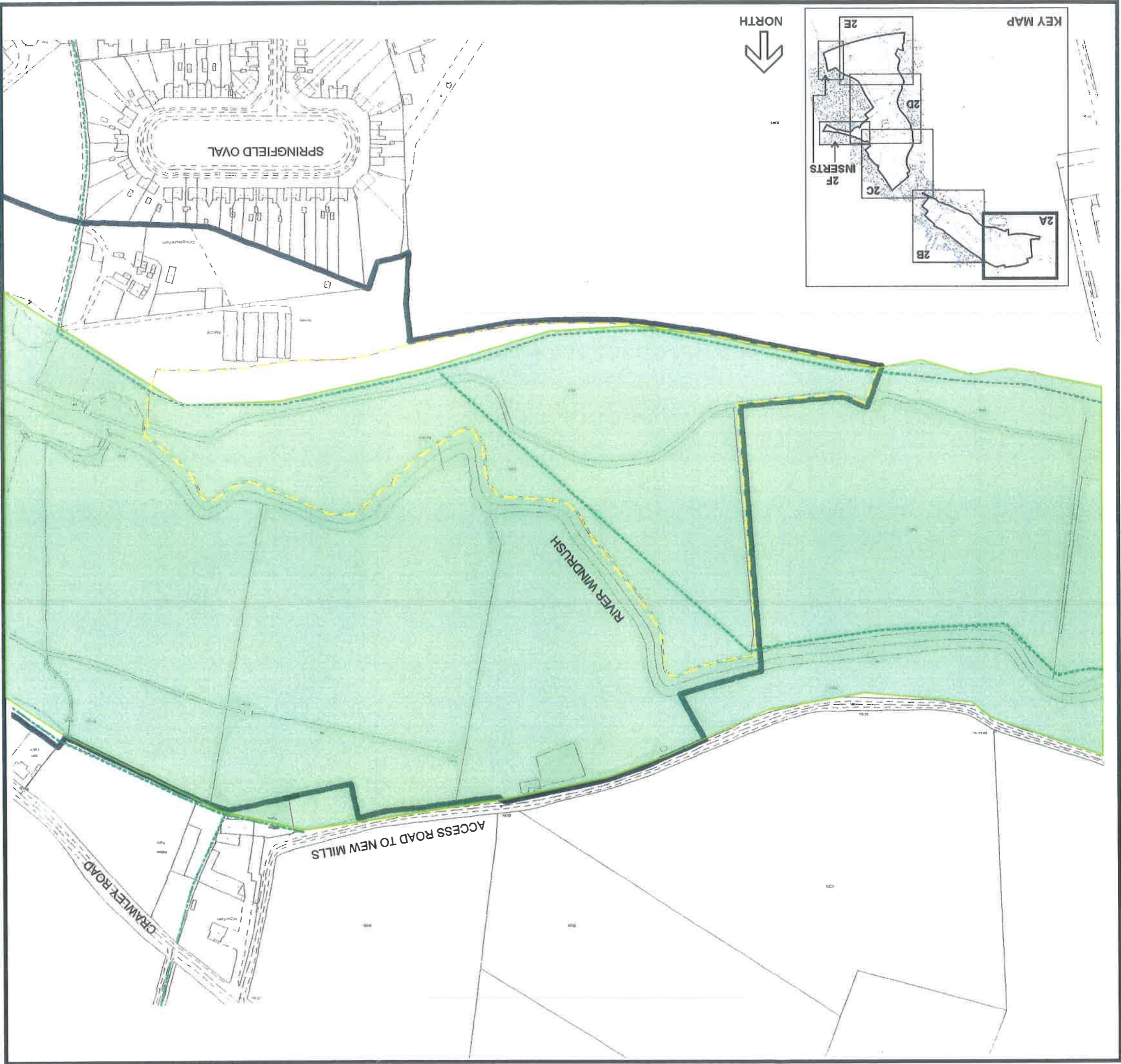
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

APPENDIX A: LIST OF EXTERNAL PROJECTS AFFECTING THE PROJECT AREA

Project	Organisation	Contact	Comments
Upper Thames Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA)	Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA)	Alastair Helliwell	Grant aid to landowners for ecological land management within the designated area
Habitat Action Plan for Wetlands (draft issue 1 November 2000)	Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum, c/o The Northmoor Trust	Robin Buxton/ Sue Rees	Promoting conservation objectives as part of the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan; includes targets for habitat safeguarding and management
Habitat Action Plan for Grazing Marsh and Neutral Grasslands (draft issue 1 November 2000)	Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum, c/o The Northmoor Trust	Robin Buxton/ Sue Rees	Promoting conservation objectives as part of the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan; includes targets for habitat safeguarding and management
River Windrush Corridor Survey (field survey 1996)	Environment Agency	Graham Scholey	Contains species records and recommendations for Windrush river corridor management
Thames Wildlife Trusts Otters and Rivers Project	BBOWT	Julia Gallagher	Promoting re-establishment of otters, including on the Windrush. Maintains records of otters, and gives advice on re-establishment
Water Vole Recovery Project	BBOWT	Cengiz Philcox	Promoting re-establishment of water voles, including on the Windrush. Maintains records of water voles, and gives advice on re-establishment
Creeping Marshwort Species Action Plan	Rare Plants Group of the Ashmolean Natural History Society	Camilla Lambick	Promoting re-establishment of this rare plant, previously recorded on Langel Common
Witney Country Park	Witney Town Council	Henry Westbury/ Nigel Bowden	Managing Country Park, which is within ESA scheme
Cogges Manor Farm Museum	OCCWODC	Claire Pope	Includes farmed area (livestock) within project area



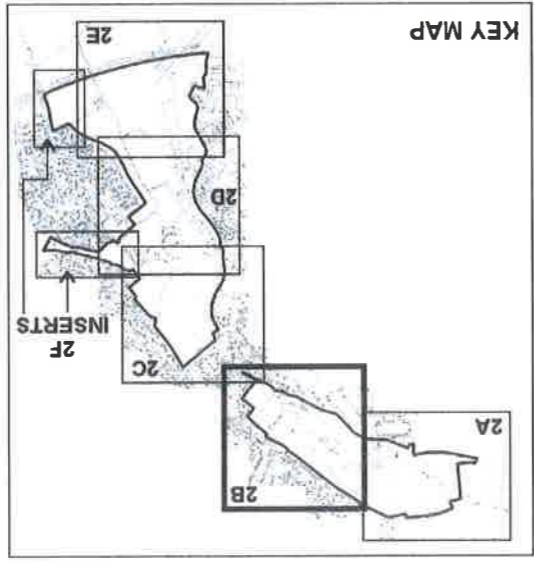
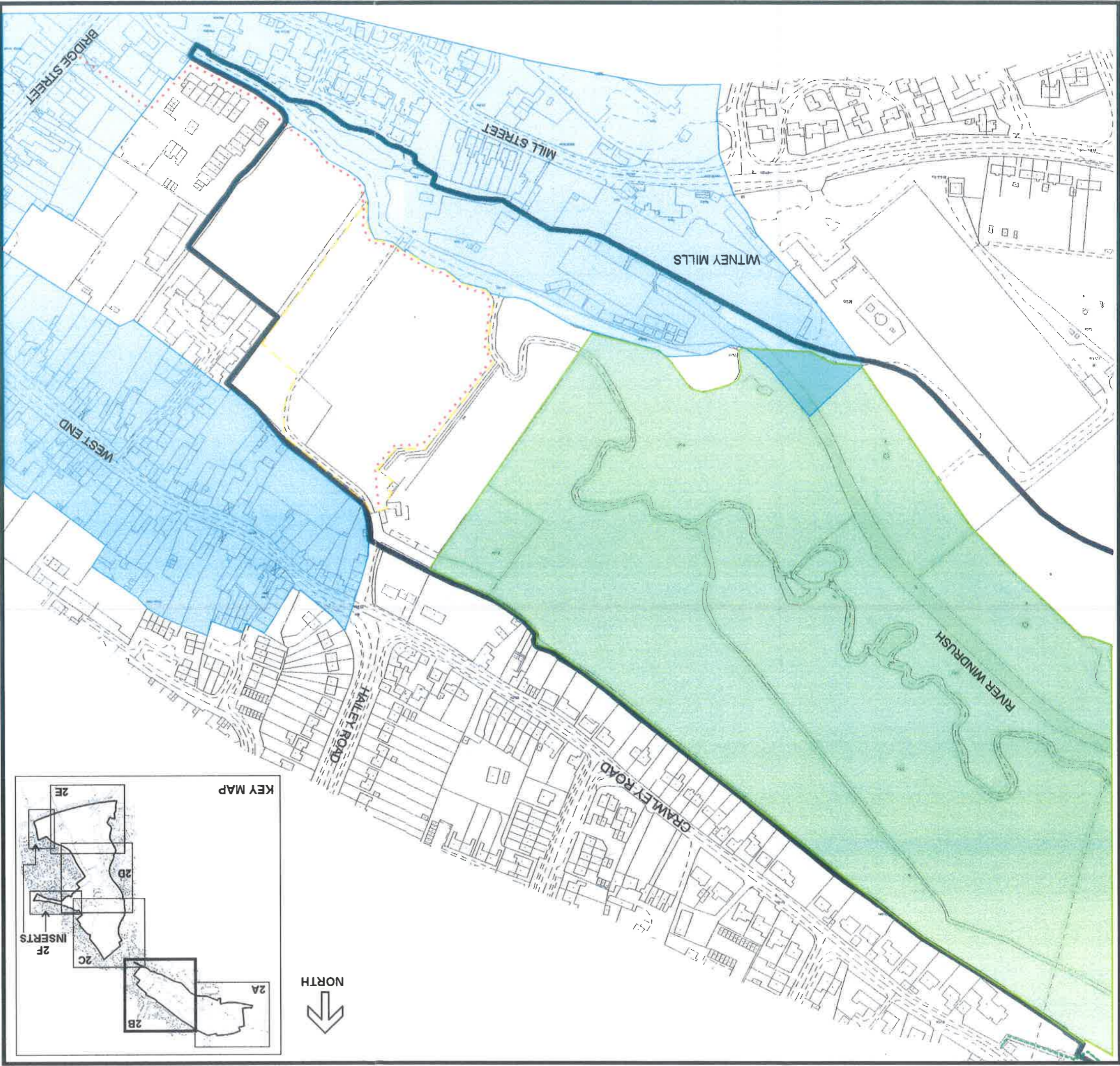
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CLIENT WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	
PROJECT WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT	
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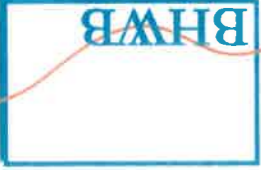


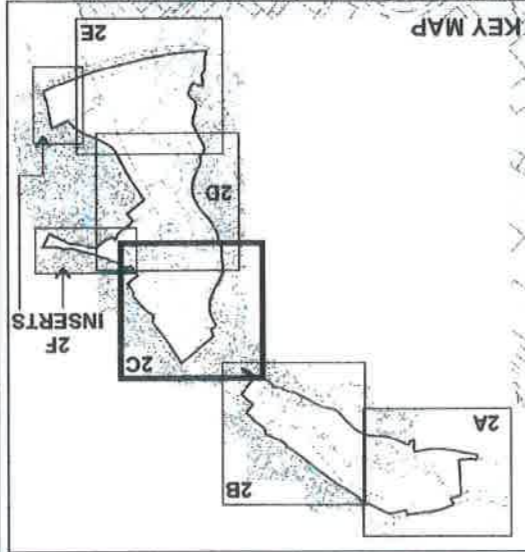
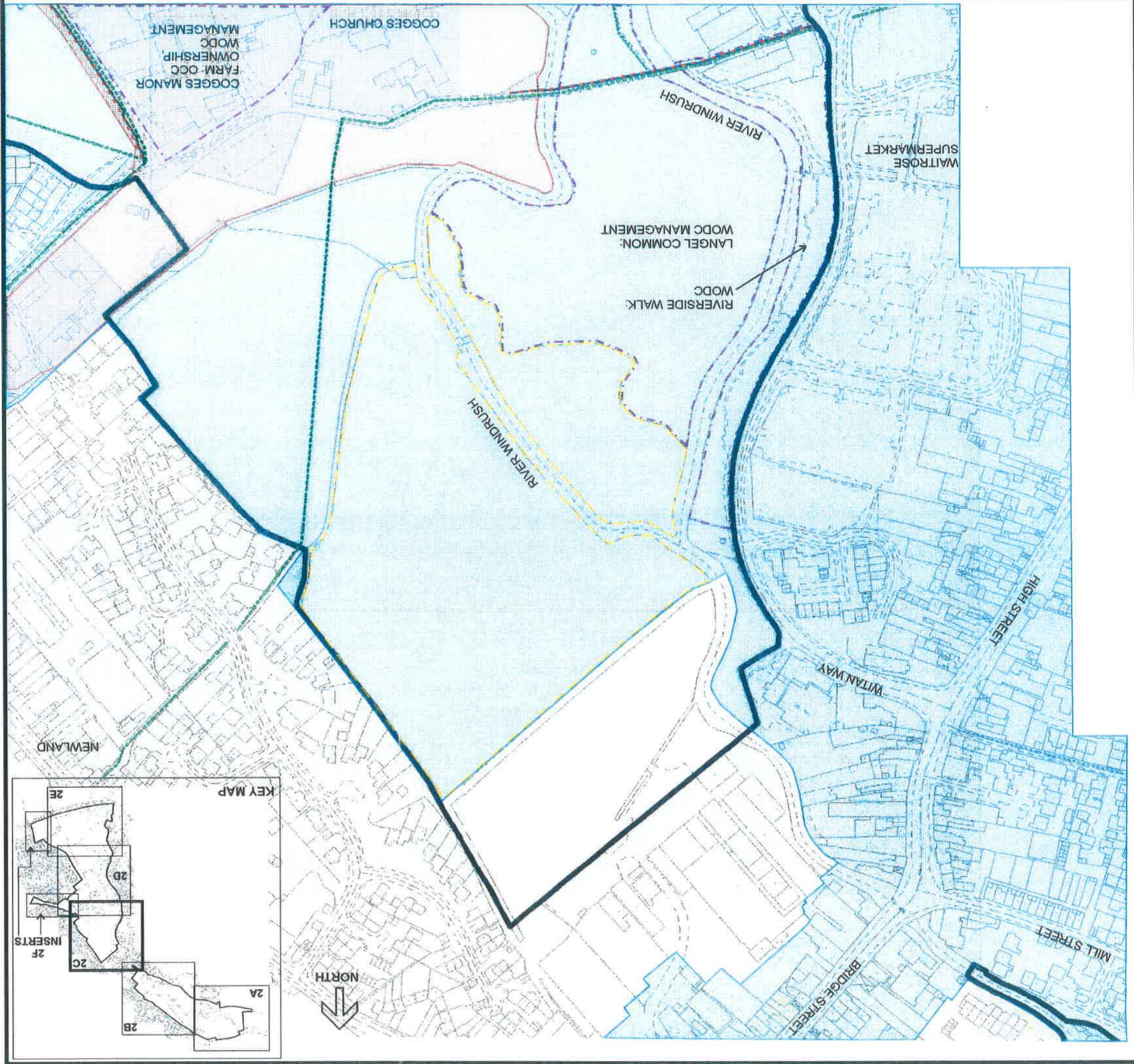
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<p>LEGEND</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTALLY IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE</p> <p>PUBLIC FOOTPATH</p> <p>PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY</p> <p>LAND ENTERED INTO TIER 1B IN ESA</p> <p>SCHEME</p>	<p>DATE</p> <p>APR 2001</p>	<p>DRAWING TITLE</p> <p>PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS</p>
	<p>SCALE</p> <p>1:2,500</p>	<p>CLIENT</p> <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>PROJECT</p> <p>WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT</p>		
<p>CONTRACTOR</p> <p>BHWB</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND PLANNING</p> <p>Tel: 01993 778077 Fax: 01993 778246 Email: oxford@bhw.co.uk</p>		
<p>FIGURE</p> <p>2A</p>		

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<p>LEGEND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CONSERVATION AREA ENVIRONMENTALLY IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE PUBLIC FOOTPATH AGREED ROUTE OF NEW FOOTPATH/ CYCLEWAY LAND ENTERED INTO TIER 1B IN ESA SCHEME 	
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<p>CLIENT WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	
<p>CONSULTANT</p>  <p>ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND PLANNING Tel: 01993 778077 Fax: 01993 778246 Email: oxford@bhwb.co.uk</p>	<p>SCALE 1:2,500</p> <p>DATE APR 2001</p>
<p>DRAWING TITLE PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS</p>	
<p>FIGURE 2B</p>	



LEGEND

- CONSERVATION AREA
- SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT
- CYCLE ROUTE
- PUBLIC FOOTPATH
- LAND ENTERED INTO TIER 1B IN ESA SCHEME
- LAND OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT, AS LABELLED ON DRAWING
- OCC: OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
- WODC: WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
- WTC: WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

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PROJECT
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

CLIENT
WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL












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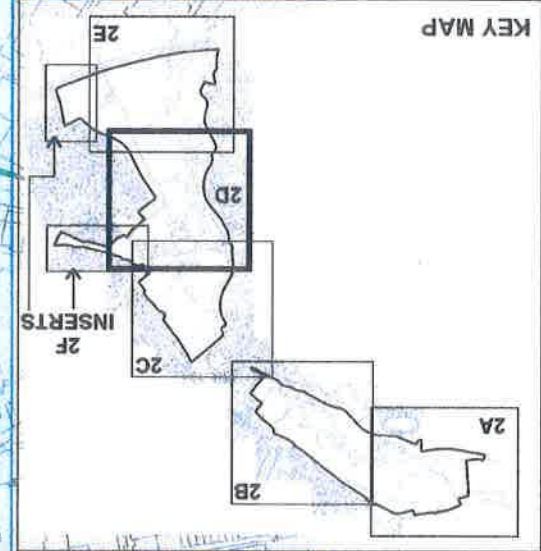
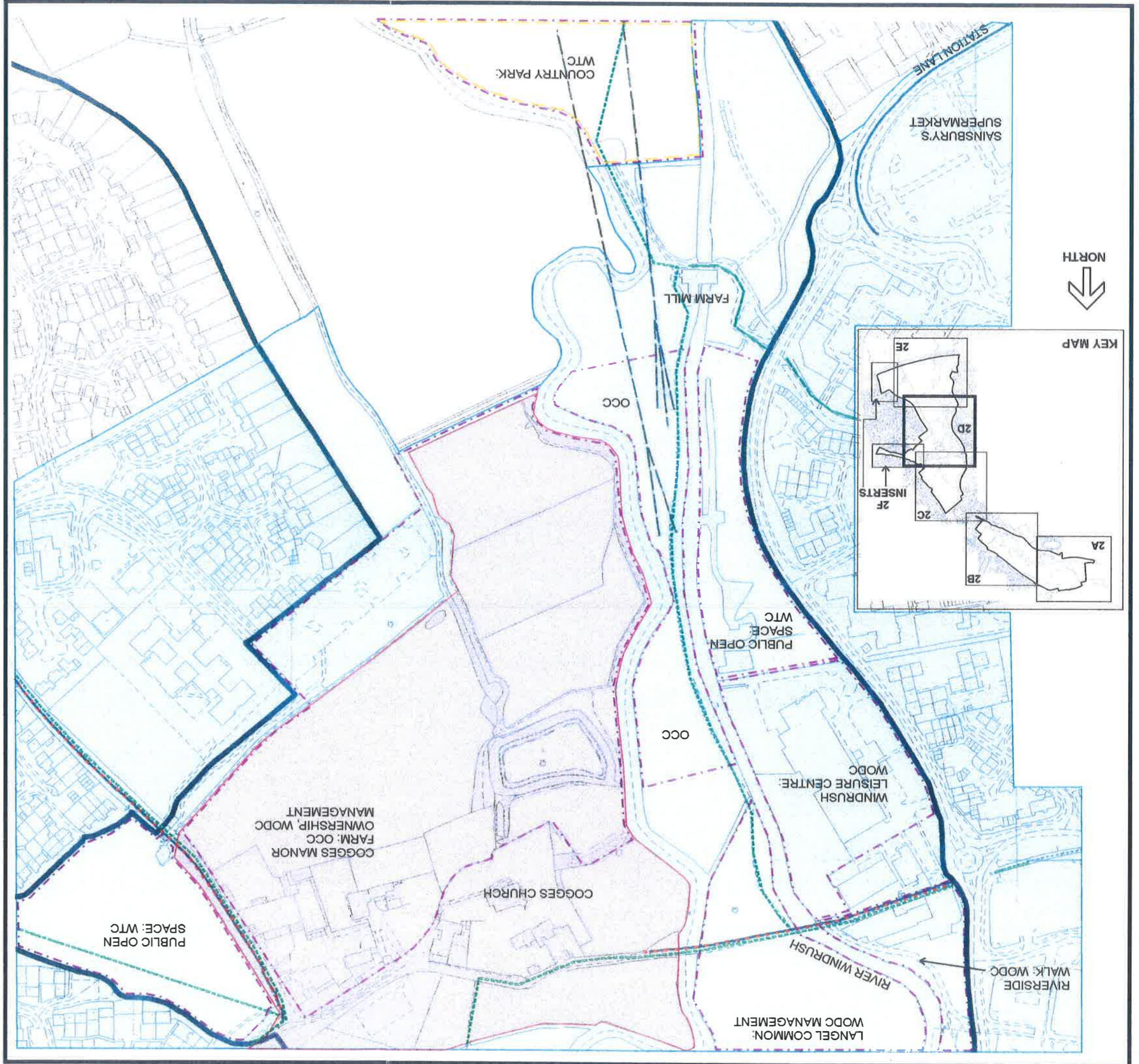
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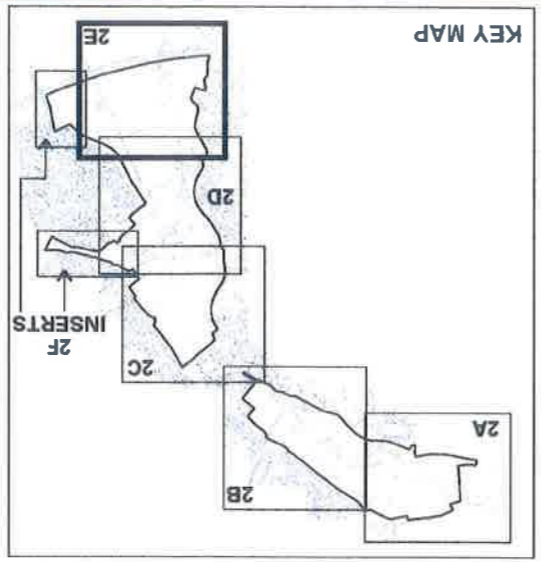
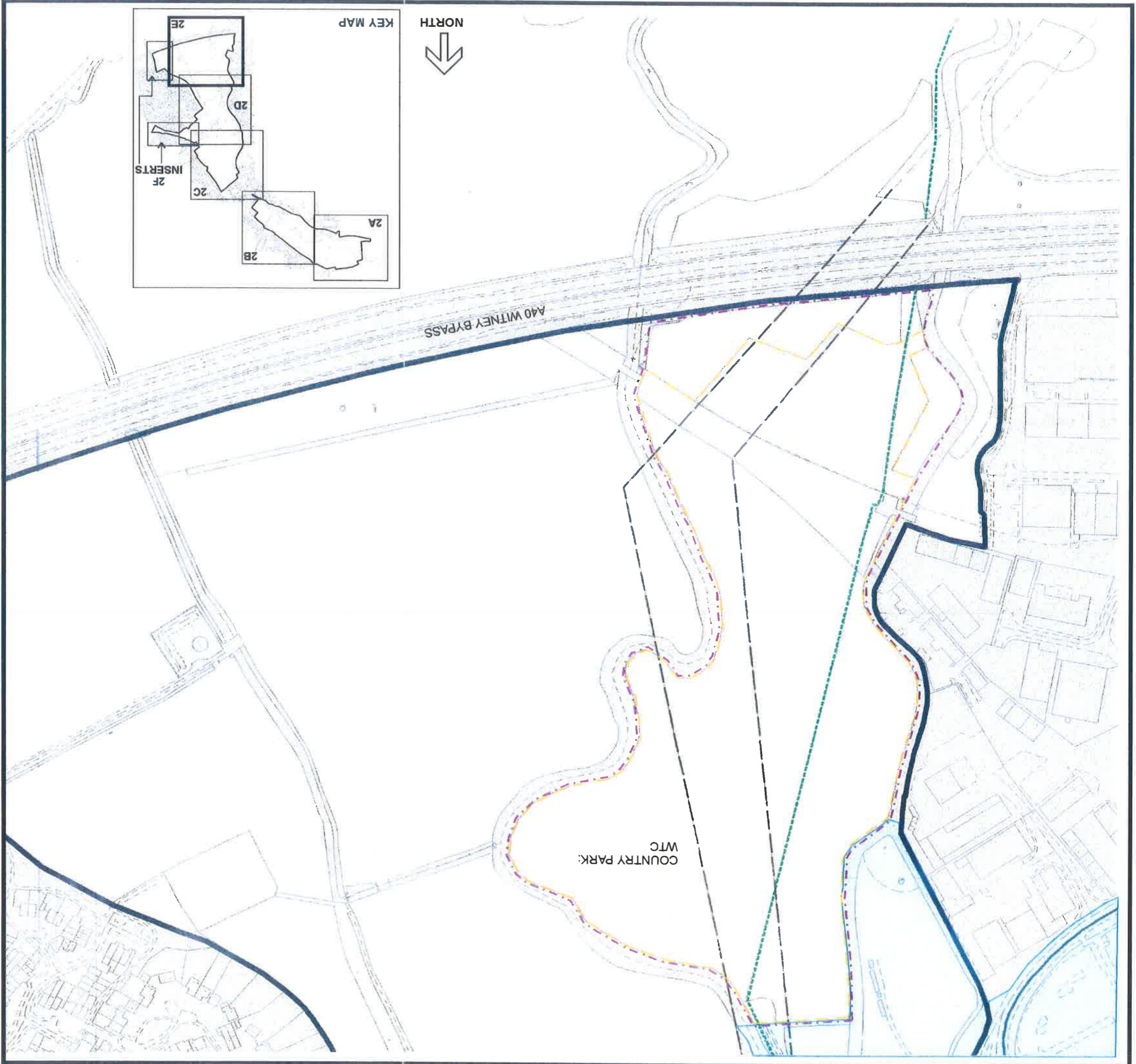
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BHWB ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND PLANNING
Tel: 01993 778077
Fax: 01993 778246
Email: oxford@bhwb.co.uk

DRAWING TITLE
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FIGURE
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FIGURE 2D	DRAWING TITLE PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS	
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PROJECT WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT		
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LEGEND

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-  PUBLIC FOOTPATH
-  LAND ENTERED INTO TIER 1B IN ESA SCHEME
-  LAND OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT, AS LABELLED ON DRAWING

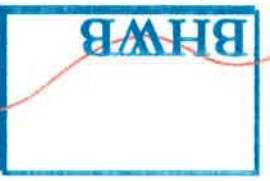
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PROJECT
 WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

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FIGURE
 2E

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FIGURE 2F

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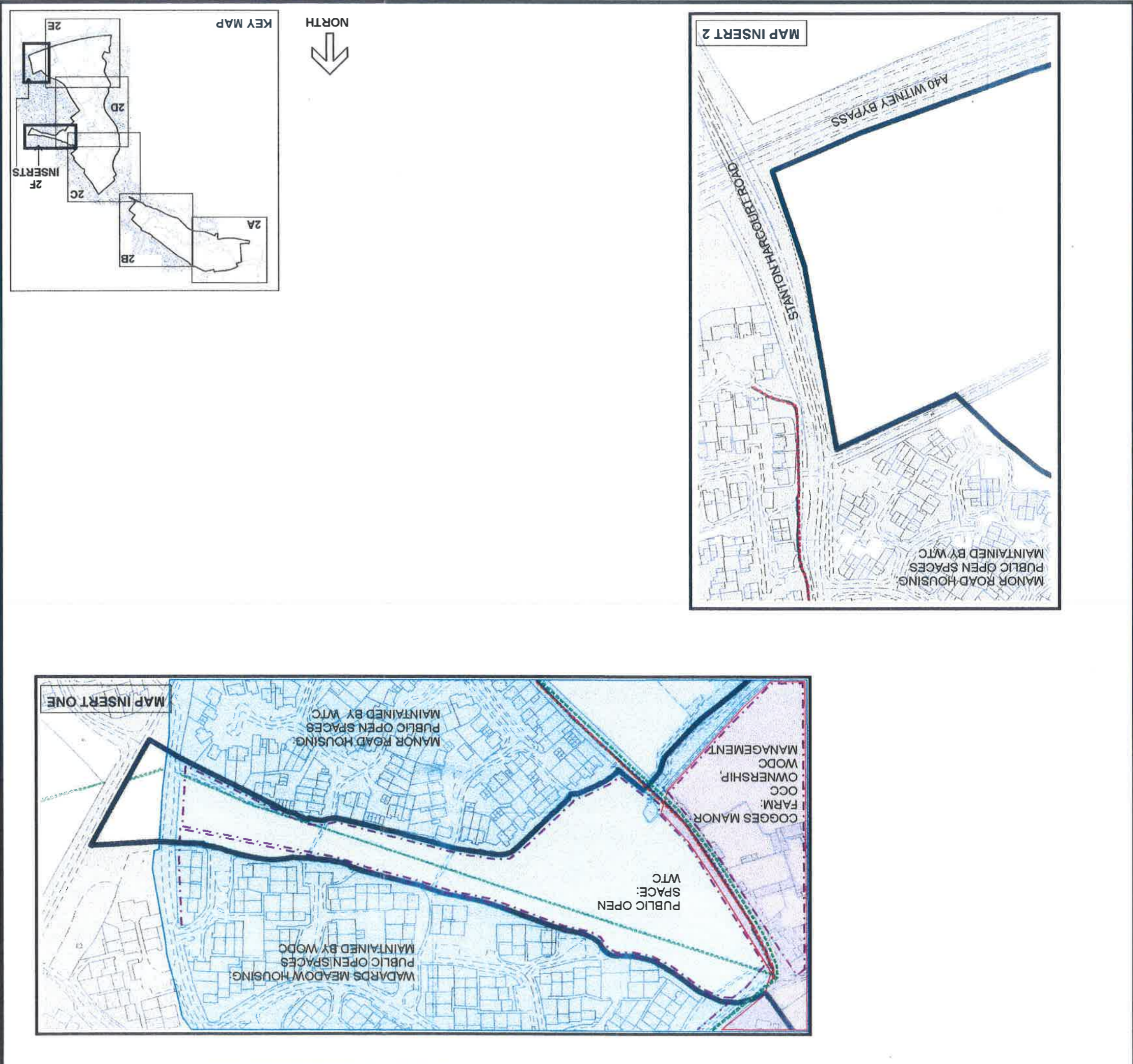
PROJECT
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

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LEGEND

-  CONSERVATION AREA
-  SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT
-  CYCLE ROUTE
-  PUBLIC FOOTPATH
-  LAND OWNERSHIP/MANAGEMENT, AS LABELLED ON DRAWING

OCC: OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
 WODC: WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
 WTC: WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL



N/A

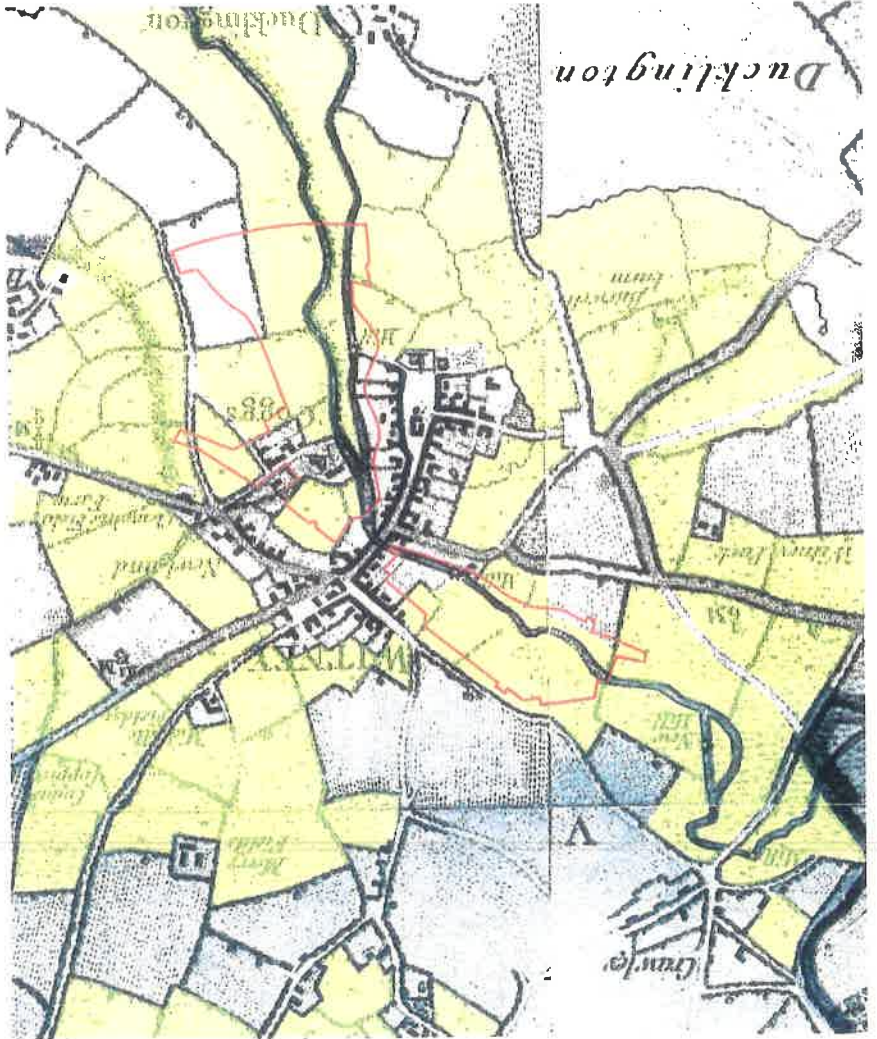
SCALE

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CLIENT

WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

PROJECT

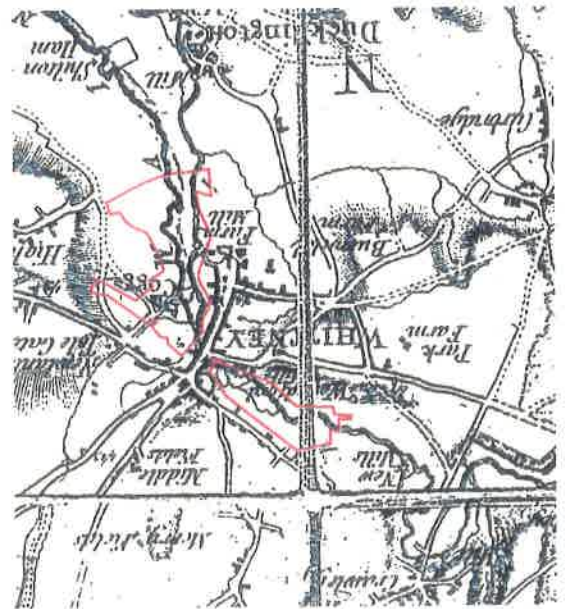


STUDY AREA BOUNDARY (APPROX.)



The Davis map of Oxfordshire is slightly larger scale, and it is generally possible to make out enclosed and unenclosed land. He also distinguishes between arable and grassland, though some of the grassland may be only temporary fallow. The grassland is highlighted in pale green to make it easier to read. We can see that most of the valley land is shown as grassland; in fact, Witney, on its island, is virtually surrounded by grassland. Some field boundaries are shown, though it sometimes difficult to relate these to a modern map. Both Witney Mills and Farm Mill are marked, but not named. The east-west road is again shown running to the south of the church at Cogges.

EXTRACT FROM DAVIS MAP OF OXFORDSHIRE, 1797



This early map is quite small scale, so individual fields cannot be made out, but it does still show some features of interest. A number of the roads, such as that continuing west from Corn Street, have changed since this map, as they were re-routed when the fields of the parishes were enclosed. Witney Mills are still named Woodford Mills, linking back to medieval documents. Farm Mill is named. The east-west road through Cogges and across the river to Witney can be clearly seen going south of the church, on its pre 1859 route, and crossing the river further south than today.

EXTRACT FROM JEFFERYS MAP OF OXFORDSHIRE, 1767

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Fax : 01993 778246
Email : oxford@bhwb.co.uk

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DRAWING TITLE

HISTORIC MAPS: SURVEYORS' DRAFTS FOR
FIRST ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP, 1815-17

DATE

APR 01

FIGURE

4

SCALE

N/A

CLIENT

WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROJECT

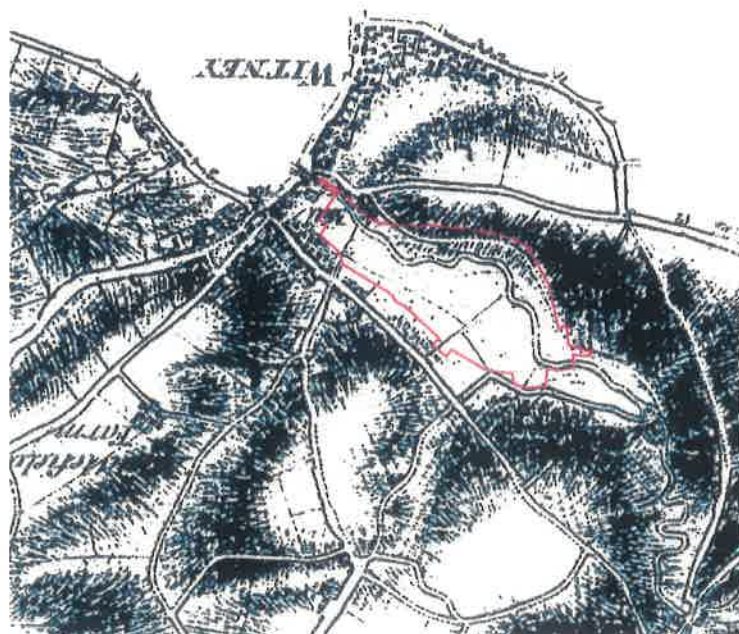
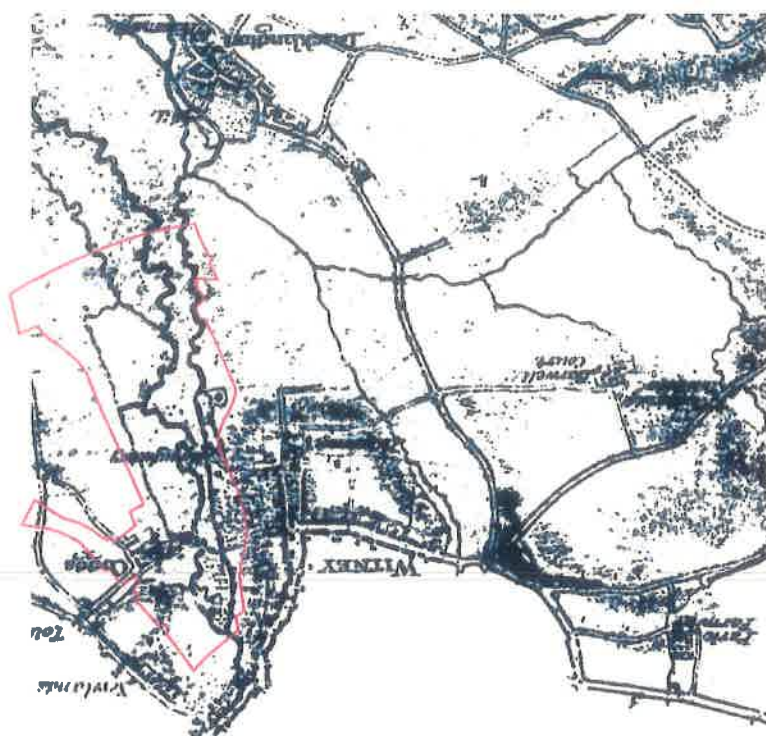
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY

On the southern map, it is just possible to make out the line of the road across Langel Common, curving further south than it does now, to pass to the south of Cogges church.

In the north of the study area, a path or road is shown to the south of the river, from Witney Mills to New Mills. Part of this survives today as a footpath.

on separate sheets.

These surveyors' drafts, taken in 1815-17 for the first edition Ordnance Survey map, which appeared in 1833, are the first OS maps, and therefore of interest although their reproduction quality is poor. The two parts of the study area are

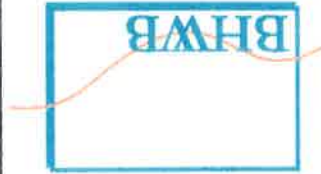


STUDY AREA
BOUNDARY
(APPROX.)



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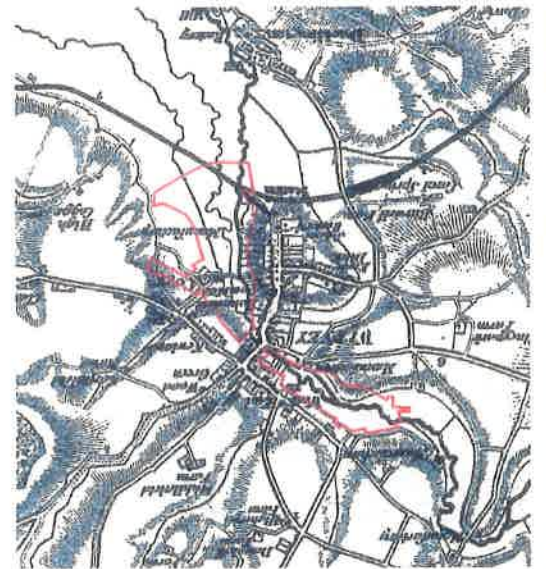
PROJECT WINDRUSH IN WITNEY

DRAWING TITLE

HISTORIC MAPS: BRYANT AND 1ST EDITION
 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP

DATE APR 01

FIGURE 5



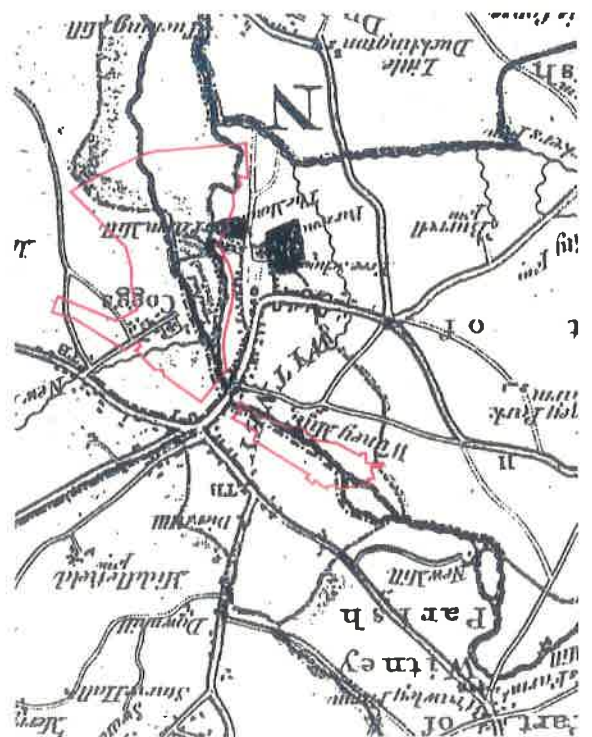
New Mills, Witney Mills and Farm Mill are all labelled 'Manufactories', an indication of the growing scale of industrialisation. Langel Common is labelled, and the road connecting Corn Street and Crown Lane with Cogges is clearly visible, still running to the south of Cogges church. The boundaries of the Witney burghage plots, running down to the river, can be seen.

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY (APPROX.)



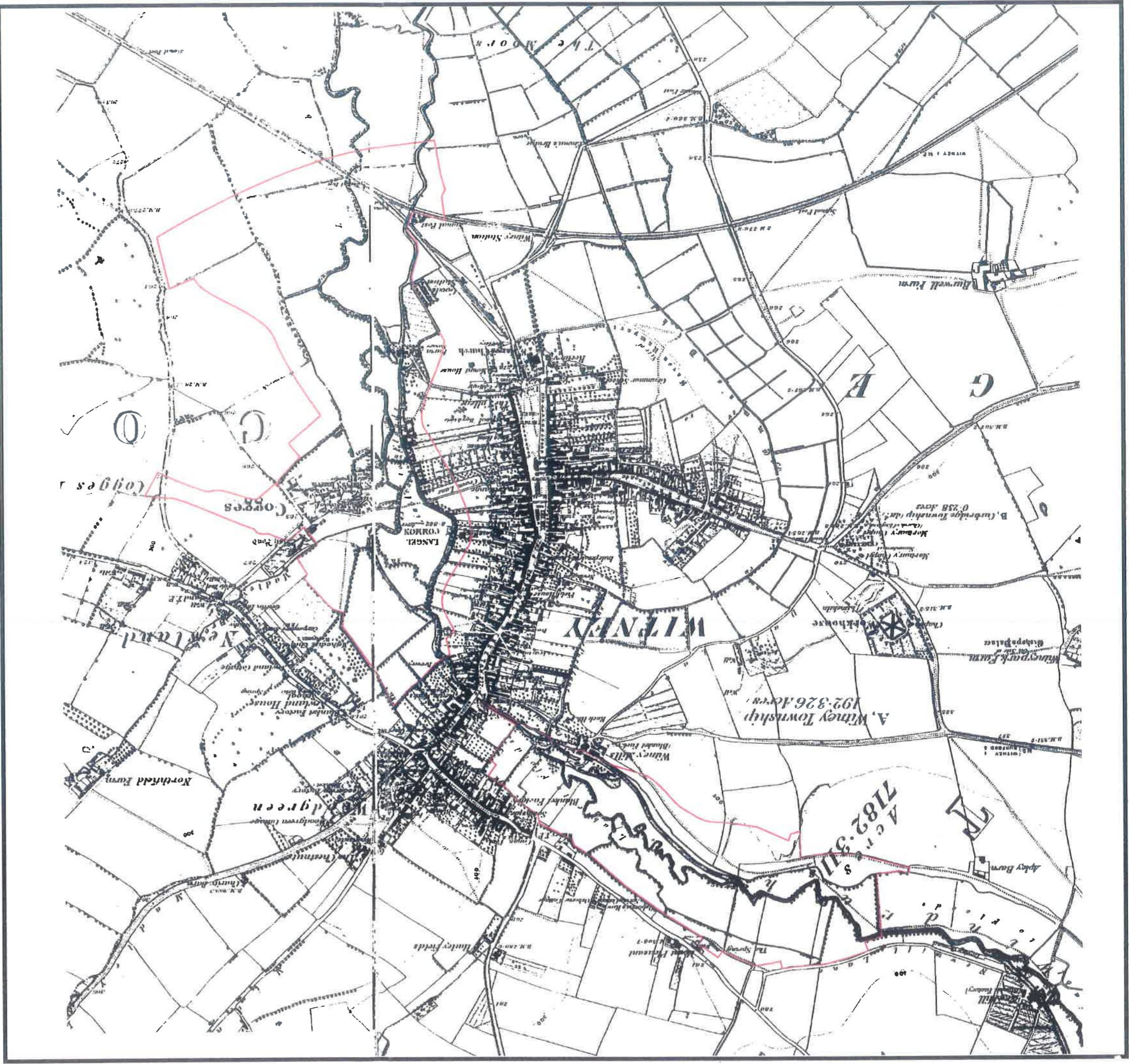
1" TO 1 MILE (1:63,360) 1ST EDITION ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP, 1833, 1887 REPRINT

This is the map for which the earlier survey drawings were done (see Figure 4). Despite the late printing of this edition, the only substantial difference from the 1833 print is supposed to be the addition of the railway.



EXTRACT FROM BRYANT'S MAP OF OXFORDSHIRE, 1824

This is the latest of the 'private' mapmakers' maps. Bryant is the first to note Langel Common, which he appears to call 'Long Pound' (this is difficult to read), and it is marked as an extra parochial, which usually means that it belongs to a different parish. It seems unlikely that it would not have been part of either Witney or Cogges. However, in the late 1890s, in documents relating to the extension of the Borough of Witney, there was some doubt as to whether it belonged to Witney or Cogges. The east-west road is again shown running to the south of the church at Cogges.



STUDY AREA BOUNDARY (APPROX.)



This map shows a great deal of detail, and there are many more features which can still be identified today.

Individual trees are shown, in surveyed positions. In the north of the study area, we can see that both arms of the river were tree lined, and there are several small plantations to the north of Witney Mills. The boundary of the thin strip of land along the south of Crawley Road, which is now built up, contained trees. Several of the ditches defining the meadows were also tree lined.

In the south of the study area, we can see that most of the boundaries of the burgage plots were tree lined, and many of the plots contained trees. Some of these survive today.

Crown Lane, the path leading to Langel Common and Cogges, is marked, and the path across the Common follows its present course. There are several features to the south of Crown Lane, near the river, which are fish ponds.

Langel Common and the other meadows are completely open, with trees only along the watercourses. There are trees in places along the northeastern boundary of the meadows, towards Newland.

At Cogges, we can just make out 'Castle, site of', and 'moat' just to the south. The fish pond associated with the pond appears as quite a major landscape feature.

DRAWING TITLE ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP 1884	
FIGURE 6	
DATE APR 2001	
SCALE 1:10,560 (6" to 1 mile)	
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PROJECT WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT	
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VIEWS OF WITNEY BATHING PLACE

DRAWING TITLE

APR 01

DATE

8

FIGURE

N/A

SCALE

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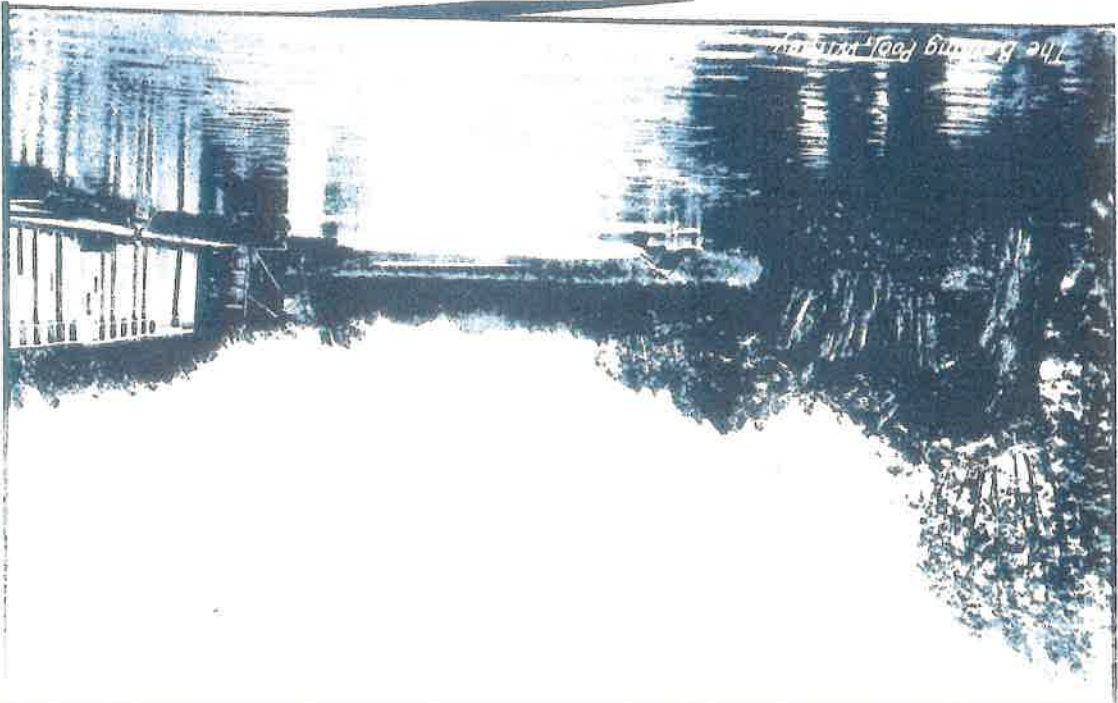
CLIENT

WINDRUSH IN WITNEY
PROJECT

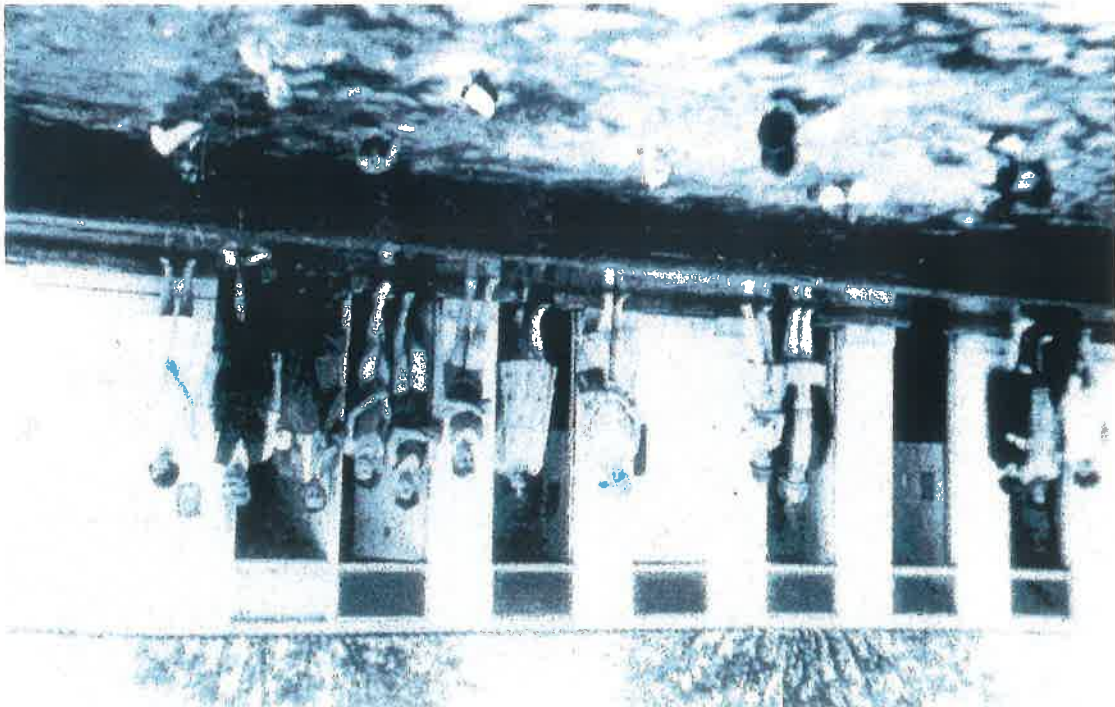
PROJECT

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HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 2
A post card view looking east along the Windrush with the bathing place on the right. Note the pollarded willows on the left.



HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 1
View of the Bathing Place in 1927, showing the First Witney and District Swimming Club in action.



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VIEW OF RIVER WINDRUSH BY HENRY TAUNT

DRAWING TITLE

APR 01

DATE

9

FIGURE

N/A

SCALE

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WINDRUSH IN WITNEY
PROJECT

PROJECT

IMAGE REPRODUCED FROM THE WITNEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM COLLECTION WITH KIND PERMISSION

HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 3
A photograph by Henry Taunt, entitled 'View on the Windrush near Witney Mills', from a book produced for Charles Early and Co in 1898, 'A Visit to Witney and Witney Mills'.
The view shows the very rural nature of the valley, and the feeling of enclosure from the willows lining the river. Note also the use of hurdles (left of view) to enclose or partition off areas of land.



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VIEW OF WITNEY MILLS BY HENRY TAUNT

DRAWING TITLE

APR 01

DATE

10

FIGURE

N/A

SCALE

WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CLIENT

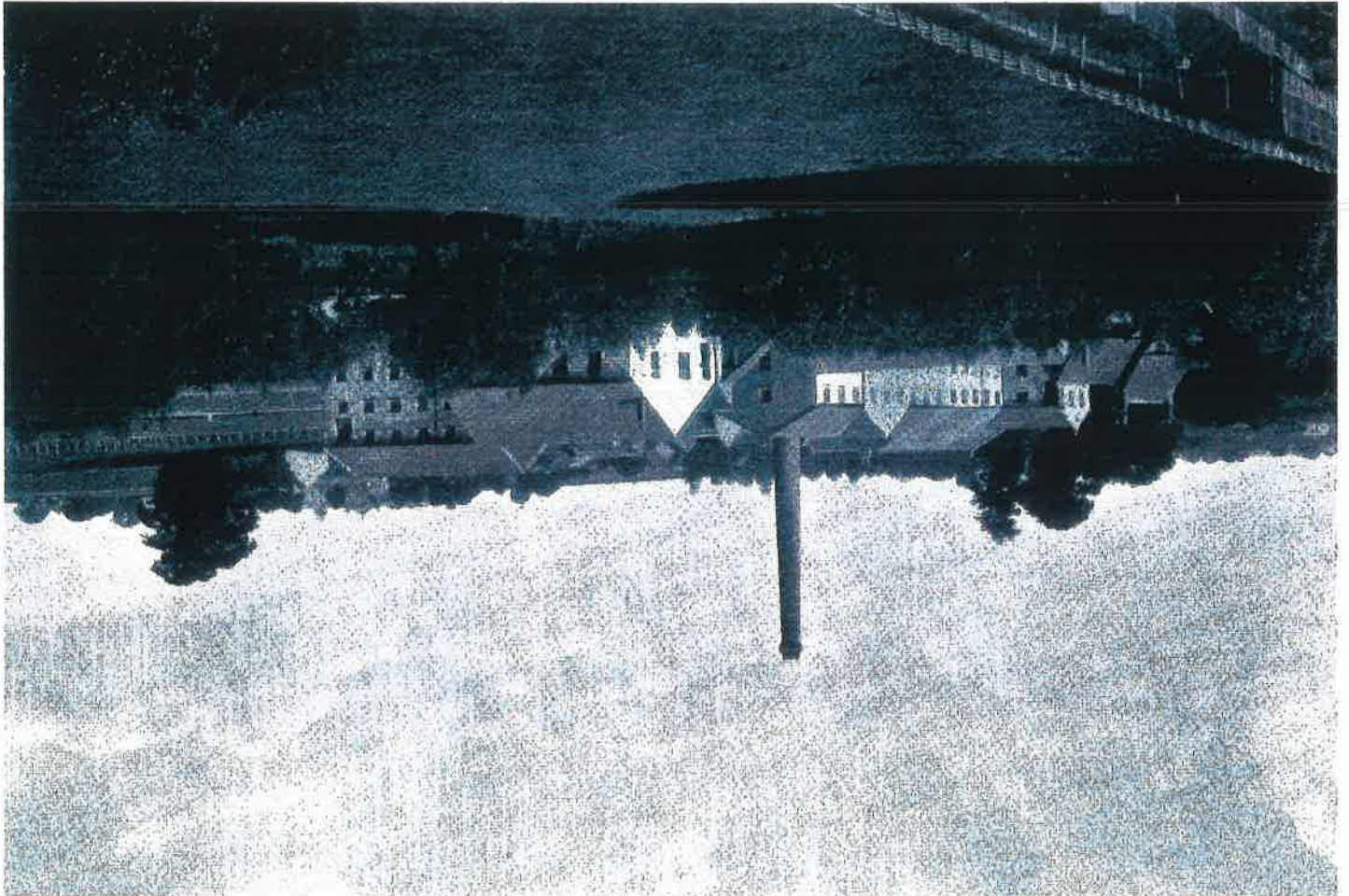
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY
PROJECT

PROJECT

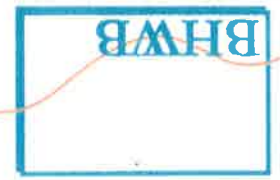
IMAGE REPRODUCED FROM THE WITNEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM COLLECTION WITH KIND PERMISSION

The view shows the relatively small scale of the mill buildings at this time, and the undeveloped skyline, apart from the Victorian workhouse on Tower Hill, breaking the skyline to the right of the photograph. The centre of Witney, in the distance to the left of the view, is set quite low in the landscape; the mill chimney would have been an even more prominent landmark than it is today. Views to the mill buildings are softened, then as now, by trees. We can again see the use of hurdles as temporary partitions, though it is possible that these could have been placed purely to add interest to the view.

A photograph by Henry Taunt, entitled 'General View of Mills', from a book produced for Charles Early and Co in 1898, 'A Visit to Witney and Witney Mills'.



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AERIAL VIEW OF WITNEY MILLS

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DATE

11

FIGURE

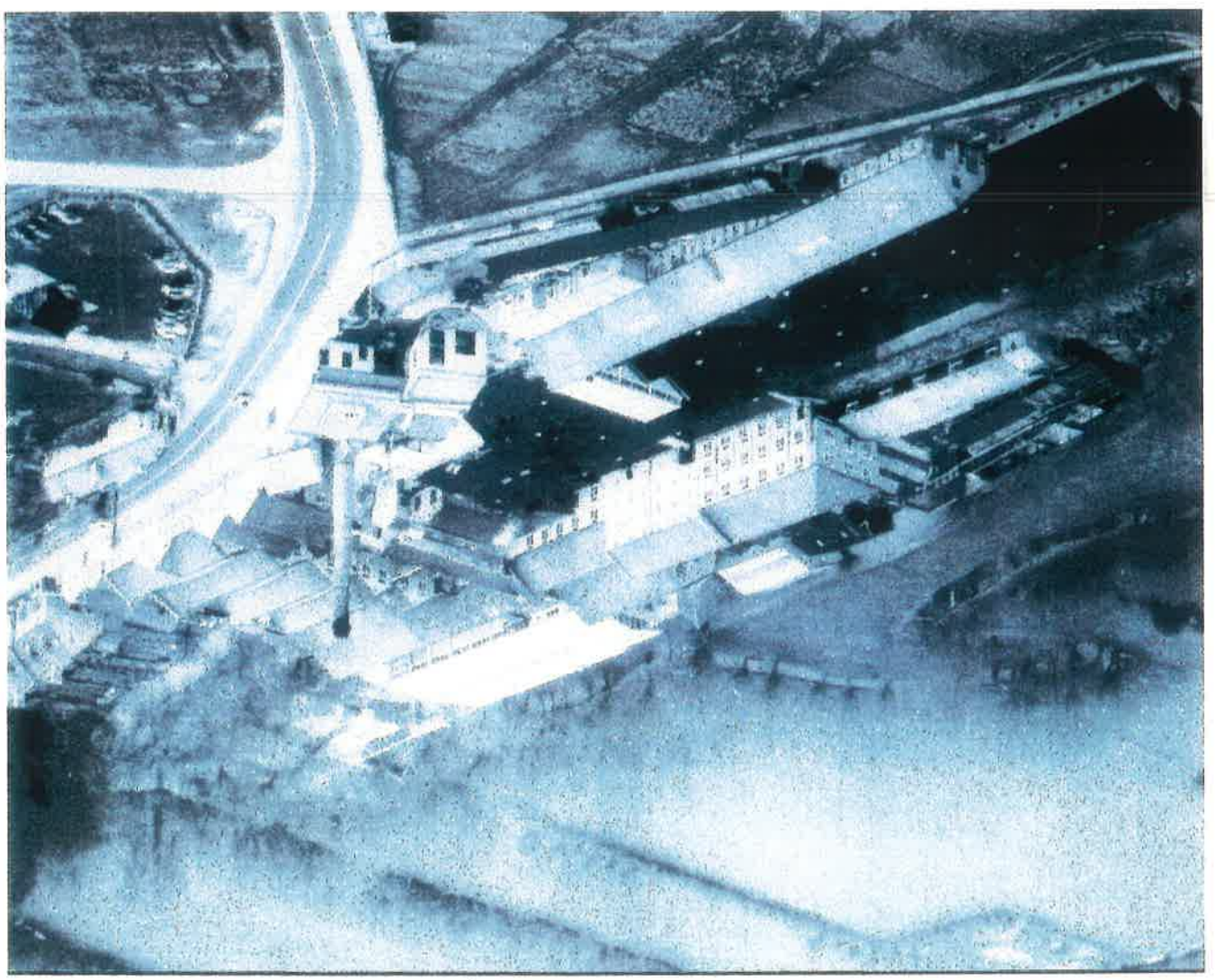
SCALE
N/A

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DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROJECT
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY

IMAGE REPRODUCED FROM THE WITNEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM COLLECTION WITH KIND PERMISSION

HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 5
An aerial view of Witney Mills taken in the 1950s, looking east across the mills to the valley.
The scale of the mill buildings is larger by this time, but the view is of particular interest because it shows the character of the valley, with its smaller scale meadows in this area (Landscape type 2), enclosed by lines of pollarded willows. There is also a strong line of willows along the river, but the landscape is otherwise open.



SCALE	N/A
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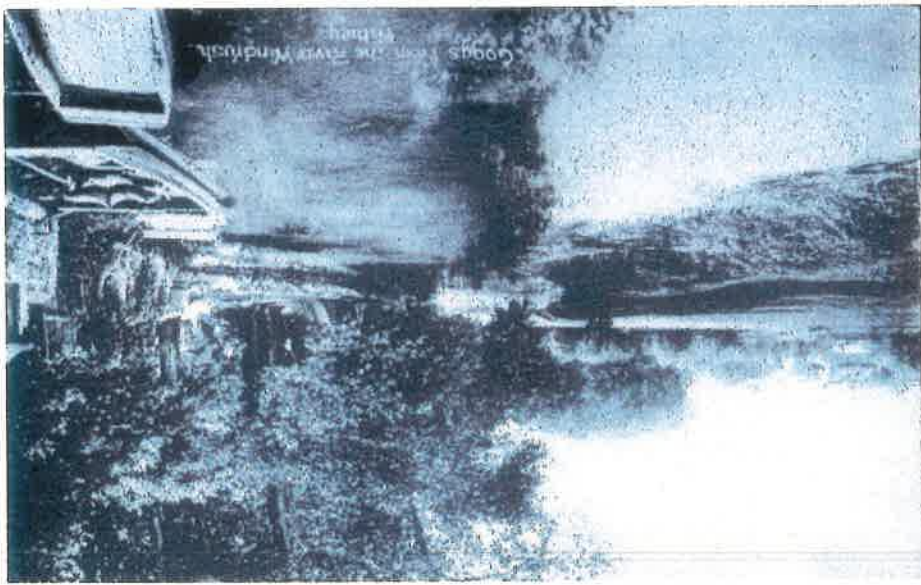
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PROJECT	WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT
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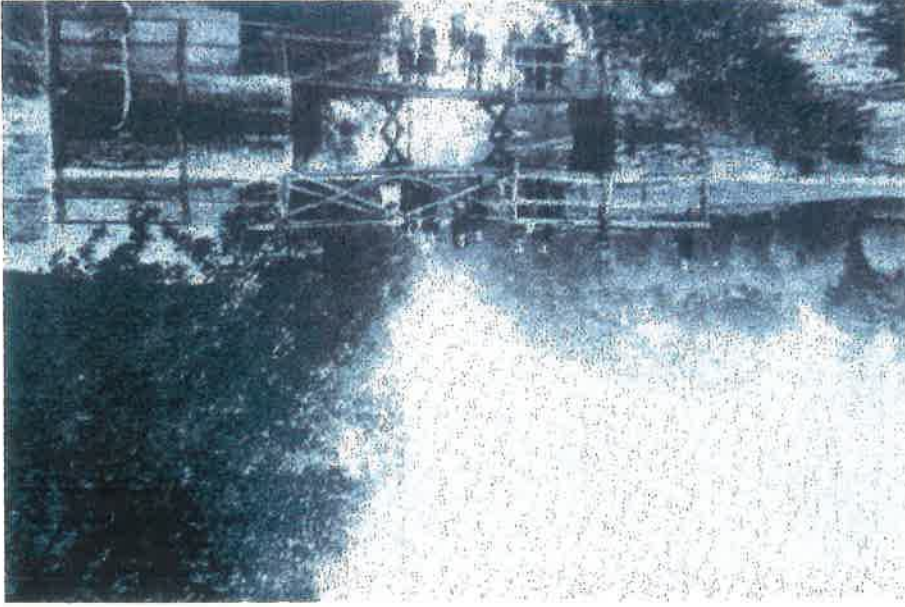
HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 7
 Early 20th century view looking south along the Windrush and across Langel Common towards Cogges.

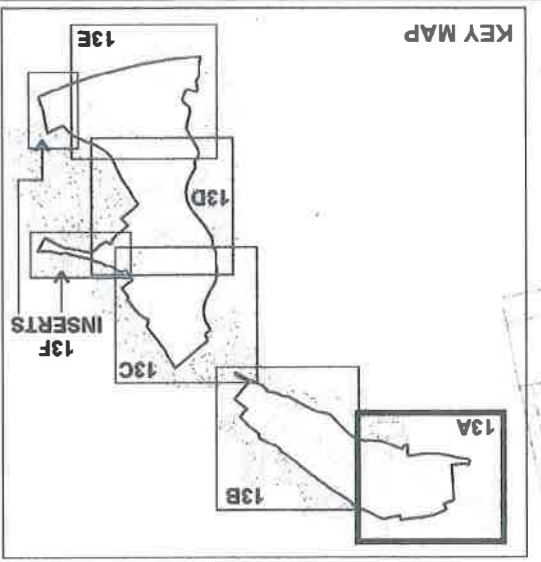
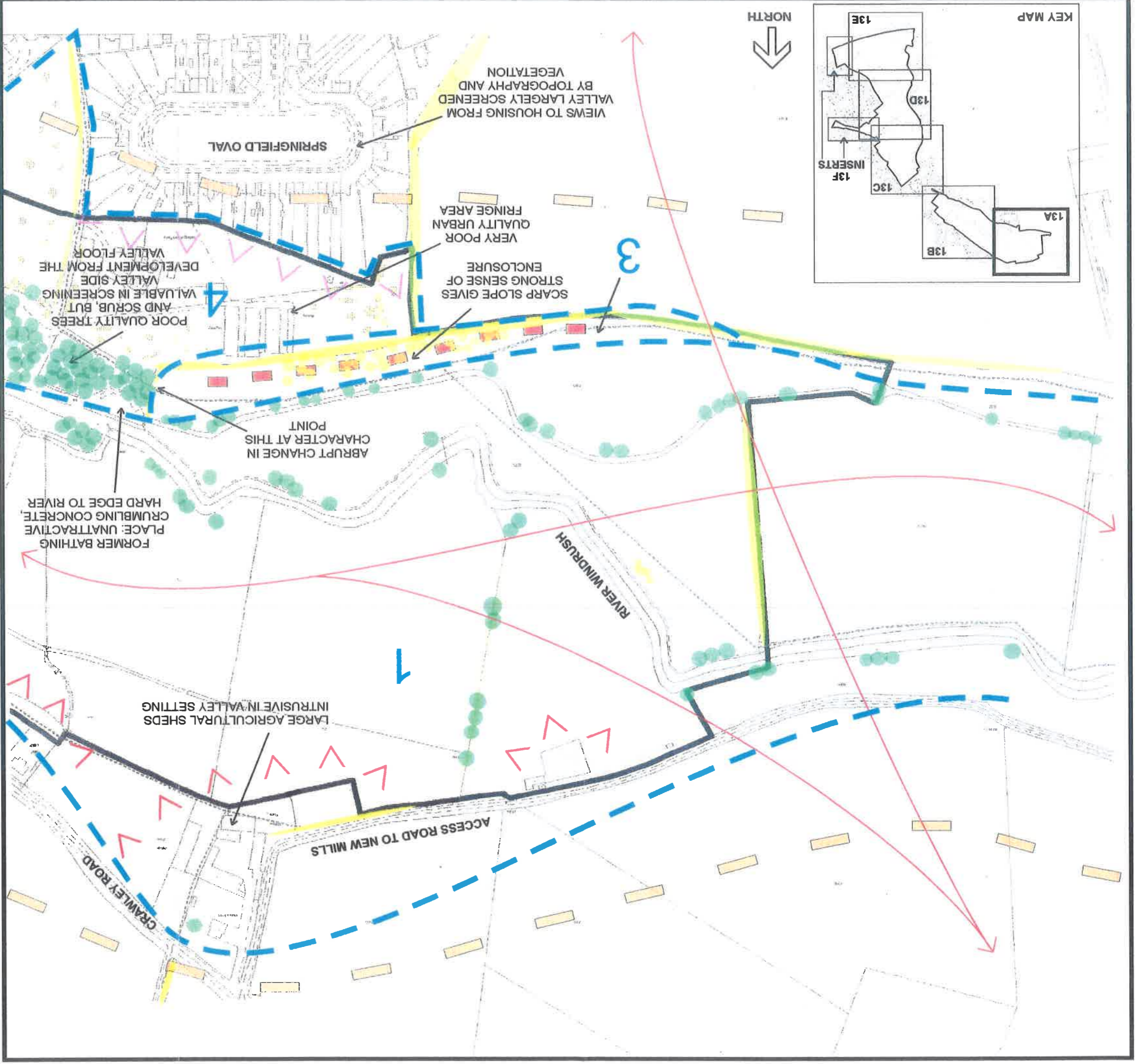
This shows the open character of Langel Common, with just a few pollarded willows. Some of the trees on the right remain, as part of the Riverside Walk. The view across the Common to Cogges is similar to that of today. The punts, to the right of the view, are an additional feature of interest.



HISTORIC ILLUSTRATION 6
 Early 20th century view of the old bridge connecting Crown Lane to Langel Common, looking south.

This view shows that the southern part of Langel, as well as the north, was quite open a hundred years ago, with trees mainly restricted to those along the river. The larger trees in the distance would be those around Goose Ham and Cogges moat. To the right of the view, there appears to be a grassy bank on the Witney side of the bridge, south of Crown Lane.





DRAWING TITLE
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER
 SHEET 1 OF 6

DATE
APR 2001

SCALE
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WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

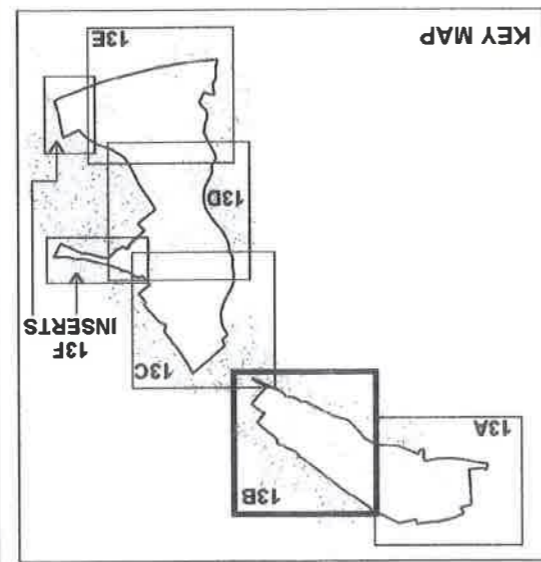
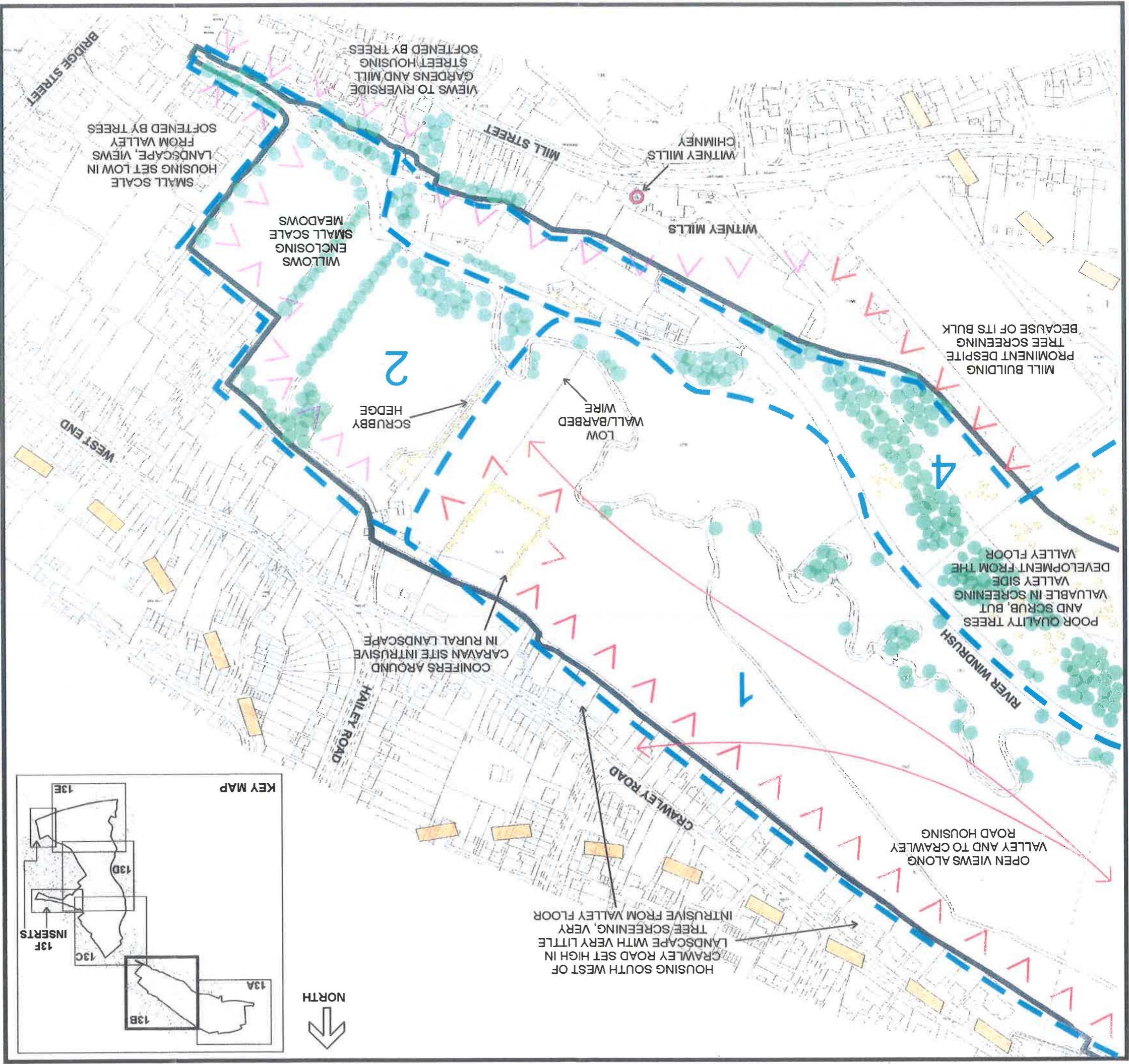
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 Fax : 01993 778246
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FIGURE
13A

LEGEND

	WOODLAND TREE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
	TALL HEDGEROWS
	SCRUB OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG HAWTHORN POSITIONS INDICATIVE
	SCRUB OF LOW LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG BRAMBLE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
	DOMINANT VALLEY SIDE
	STEEP SCARP SLOPE
	HARD URBAN EDGE
	FILTERED URBAN EDGE
	LONG VIEWS
	LANDSCAPE TYPES
	1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR
	3: STEEPLY SLOPING VALLEY SIDE
	4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE
	SEE REPORT TEXT FOR FULL DESCRIPTION

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LEGEND

- WOODLAND TREE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- TALL HEDGEROWS
- SCRUB OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG HAWTHORN POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- SCRUB OF LOW LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG BRAMBLE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- DOMINANT VALLEY SIDE
- HARD URBAN EDGE
- FILTERED URBAN EDGE
- LONG VIEWS
- LANDMARK FEATURE
- LANDSCAPE TYPES
- 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR
- 2: ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR
- 4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE
- SEE REPORT TEXT FOR FULL DESCRIPTION

PROJECT
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER
SHEET 2 OF 6

FIGURE
13B

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LEGEND

- WOODLAND TREE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- HEDGEROWS
- SCRUB OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG HAWTHORN POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- SCRUB OF LOW LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG BRAMBLE POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- ORNAMENTAL/SEMI ORNAMENTAL SHRUBS POSITIONS INDICATIVE
- VISUALLY SIGNIFICANT STONE WALL
- HARD URBAN EDGE
- FILTERED URBAN EDGE
- LONG VIEWS
- LANDMARK FEATURE
- LANDSCAPE TYPES
- 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR
- 4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE
- 5: WOODED FORMER BURGAGE PLOTS
- 6: HISTORIC SETTLEMENT
- 7: AMENITY LAND/PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
- 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR

SEE REPORT TEXT FOR FULL DESCRIPTION

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WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

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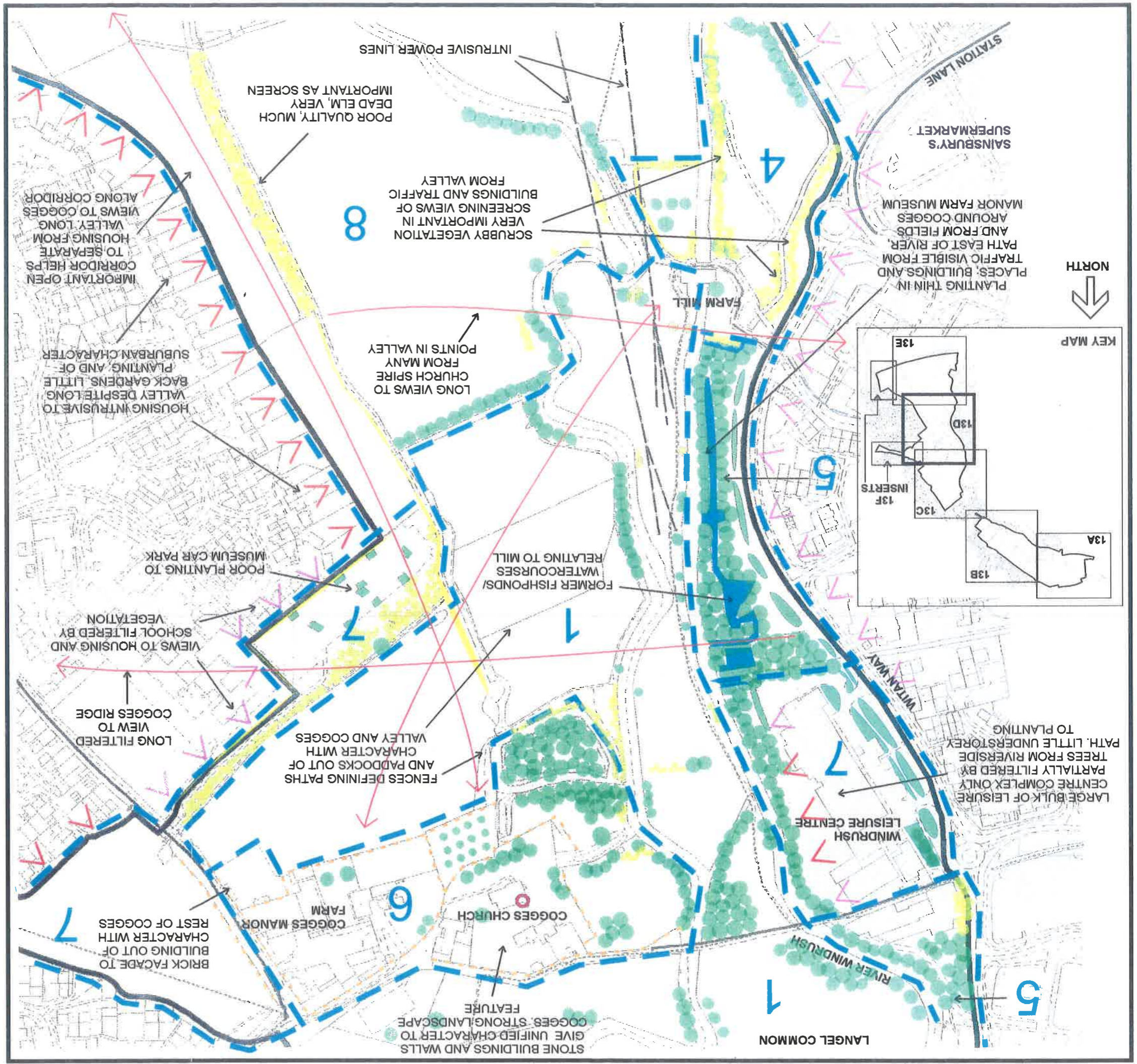
DATE
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DRAWING TITLE
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

SHEET 4 OF 6

FIGURE
13D

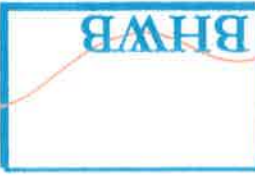
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DRAWING TITLE
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL CHARACTER
 FIGURE 13F

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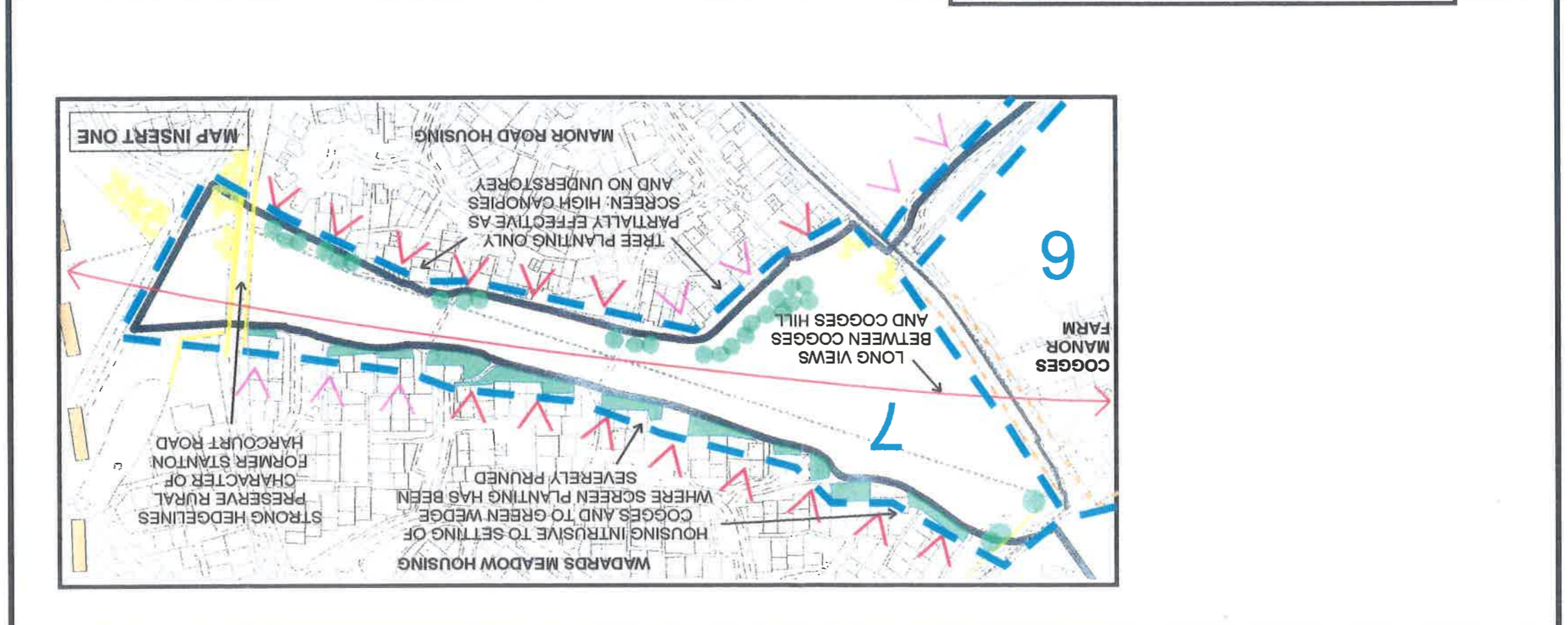
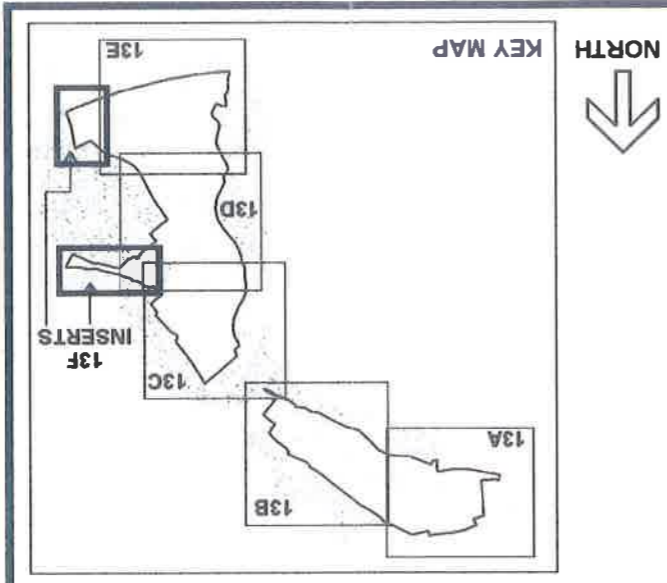
DESCRIPTION
 SEE REPORT TEXT FOR FULL
 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR SPACE

7: AMENITY LAND/PUBLIC OPEN SPACE
 6: HISTORIC SETTLEMENT

LANDSCAPE TYPES

-  LONG VIEWS
-  FILTERED URBAN EDGE
-  HARD URBAN EDGE
-  STONE WALL
-  DOMINANT VALLEY SIDE
-  SHRUBS POSITIONS INDICATIVE
-  ORNAMENTAL/SEMI ORNAMENTAL POSITIONS INDICATIVE
-  SCRUB OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE, EG HAWTHORN POSITIONS INDICATIVE
-  TALL HEDGEROWS
-  WOODLAND TREE POSITIONS INDICATIVE

LEGEND



DATE
APR 2001

SCALE
N/A

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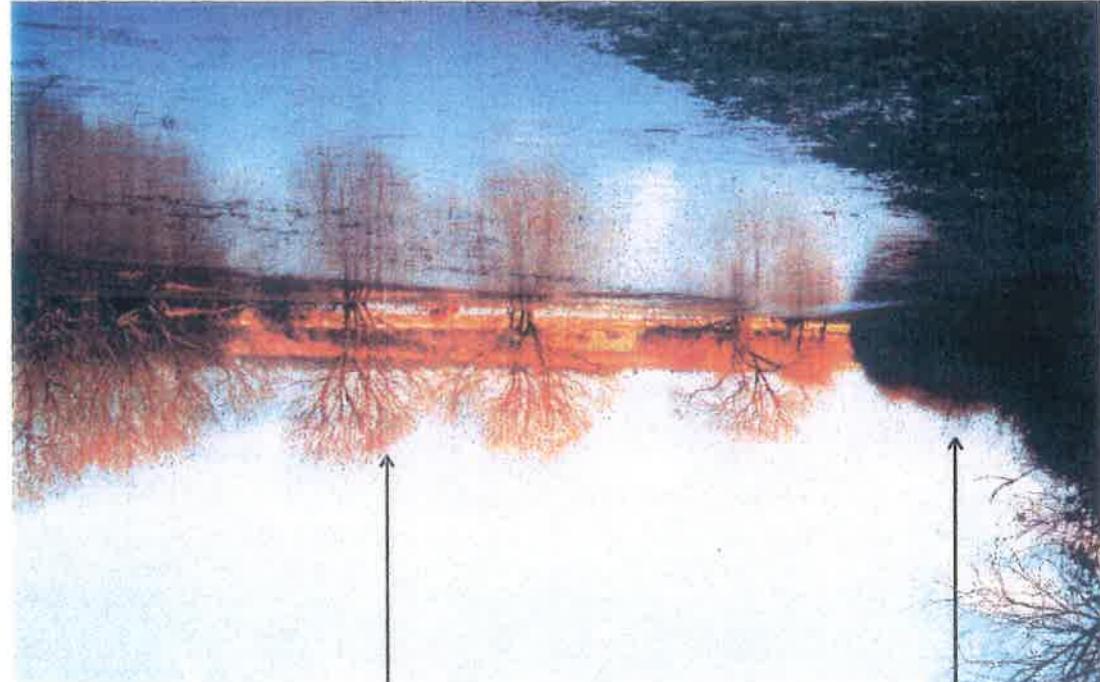
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ROUGH GRASS/SCRUB ON BANK ADDS TO ECOLOGICAL DIVERSITY OF AREA



STEEP SCARP VALLEY SIDE, LANDSCAPE TYPE 4, ENCLOSING VIEW TO LEFT RIVER, CHARACTERISTIC OF VALLEY LANDSCAPE



LANDSCAPE WITH NO SCREENING, INTRUSIVE IN RURAL VALLEY SCENE HOUSING IN NON-VERNACULAR STYLES, SITTING HIGH IN THE VIEW, INTRUSIVE IN RURAL VALLEY LANDSCAPE LARGE BARN ON VALLEY FLOOR, JUST VISIBLE TO LEFT OF

PHOTO 2: LANDSCAPE TYPE 3: STEEPLY SLOPING VALLEY SIDE IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING WEST ALONG WINDRUSH VALLEY. AREA KNOWN AS HILLS AND MOUNTAINS.

PHOTO 1: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING WEST ALONG WINDRUSH VALLEY

PHOTO 3: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS HOUSING ALONG CRAWLEY ROAD

FIGURE 4-6
PH

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DATE
APR 2001

SCALE
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CLIENT
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PROJECT
WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

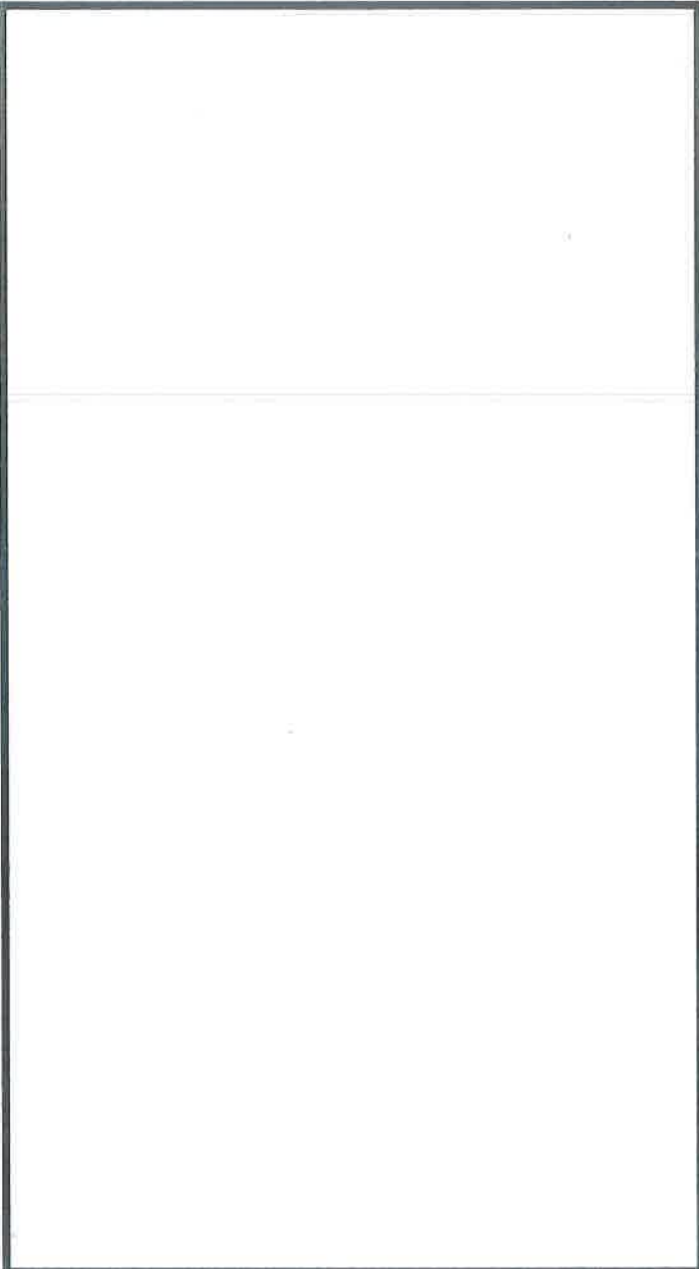
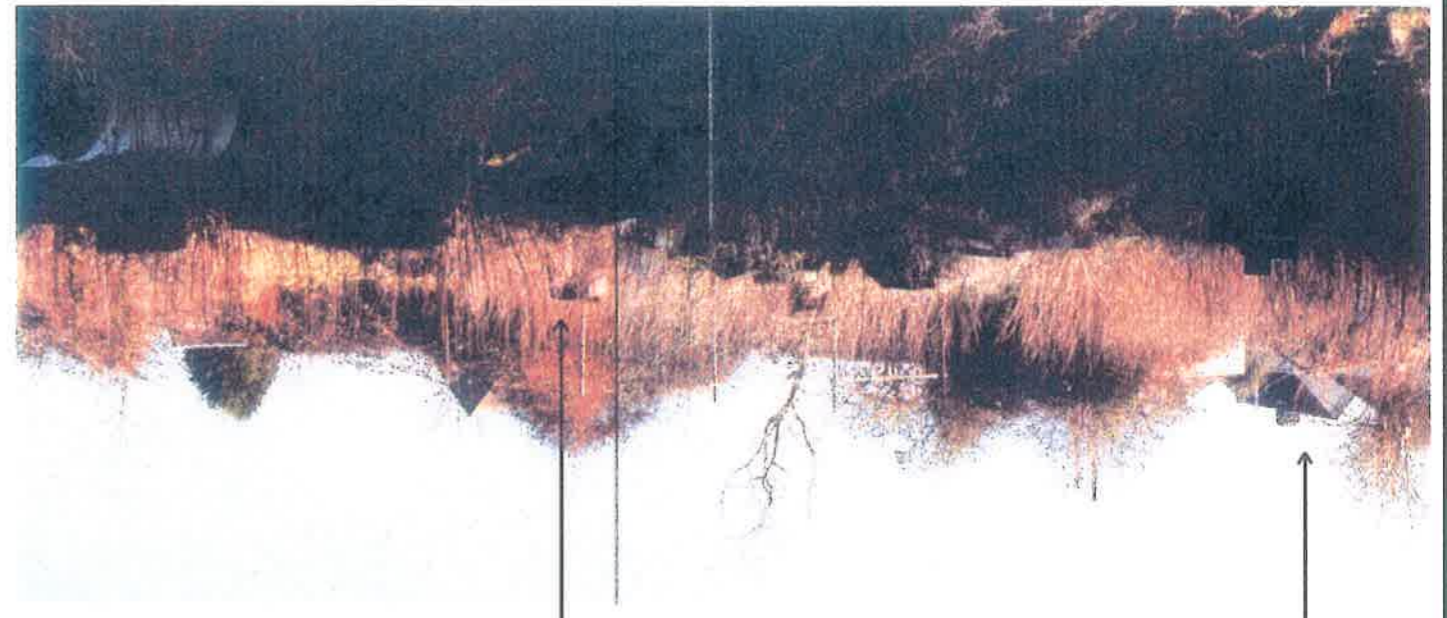


PHOTO 6: LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE. IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING WEST FROM FOOTPATH NEAR SPRINGFIELD OVAL



SPRINGFIELD OVAL HOUSING SET HIGH IN LANDSCAPE, BUT VIEWS SOFTENED BY VEGETATION
DERELICT SITE AND RUBBISH IN FOREGROUND

PHOTO 4: LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE. IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING EAST ALONG WINDRUSH VALLEY



SCRUB ON VALLEY FLOOR HELPS TO SOFTEN VIEWS TOWARDS EARLY'S SITE AND NEARBY HOUSING FROM NORTHERN SIDE OF VALLEY
WITNEY MILLS CHIMNEY: LANDMARK FEATURE

PHOTO 5: LANDSCAPE TYPE 2: ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR. IN NORTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING NORTH



SMALL SCALE WATER MEADOW ENCLOSED BY WILLOW-LINED DITCH
NEW SMALL SCALE HOUSING, NOT OVER DOMINANT IN VIEW

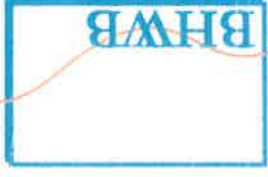
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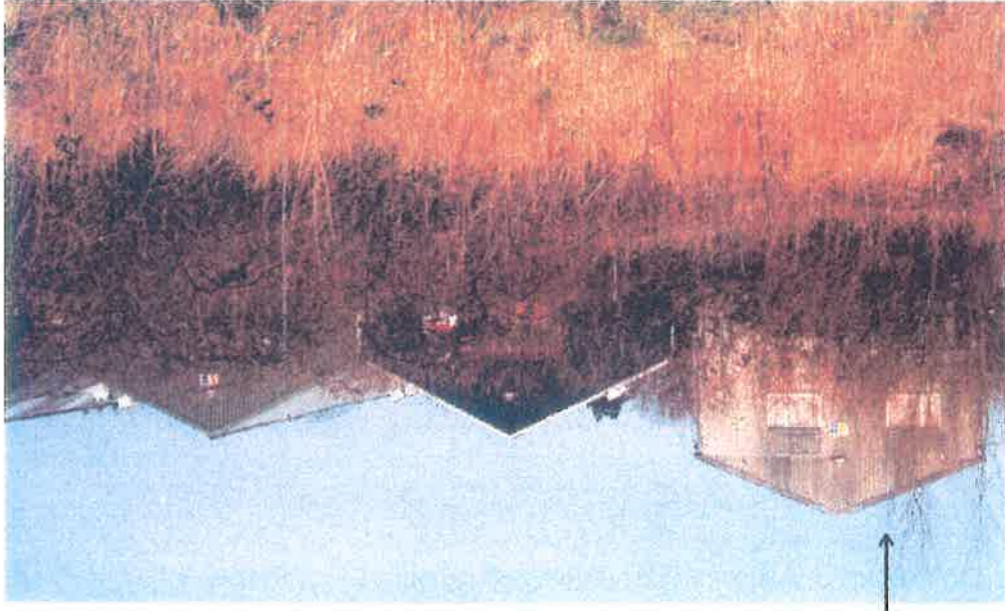
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WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

PROJECT

PHOTO 9 : LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR.
IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING NORTHWEST TOWARDS
BRIDGE STREET INDUSTRIAL AREA



WAREHOUSING ON VALLEY FLOOR IS LARGE SCALE
INTRUSIVE ELEMENT IN RURAL VALLEY SCENE

PHOTO 10 : LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR.
IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING NORTHWEST TOWARDS BRIDGE STREET
INDUSTRIAL AREA



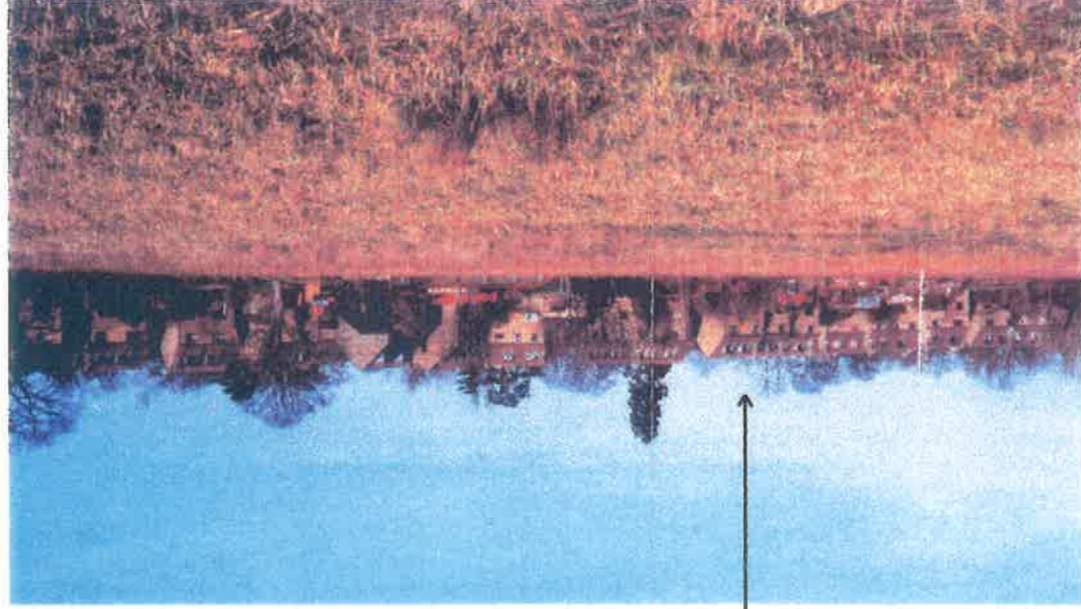
OFFICE BUILDING ON WITAN
WAY VISIBLE THROUGH GAP
IN PLANTING: SENSITIVE
CORNER
WILLOWS IN POOR
CONDITION, IMPORTANT
FOR SCREENING BRIDGE
STREET AREA
WAREHOUSING
VISIBLE THROUGH
GAP IN TREES

PHOTO 7: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR.
IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING SOUTHEAST FROM THE
RIVERSIDE WALK ACROSS LANGEL COMMON TOWARDS COGGES



OPEN VALLEY FLOOR FORMS PART OF
SETTING OF COGGES MANOR FARM

PHOTO 8: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR.
IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING NORTHEAST TOWARDS
NEMLAND

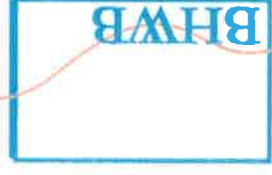


HOUSING IN NEMLAND, ON VALLEY SIDE AND VERY POORLY
SCREENED, DETRACTS FROM RURAL, TRANQUIL CHARACTER
OF VALLEY FLOOR

DATE APR 2001

SCALE N/A

CONSULTANT



Tel: 01993 779077
Fax: 01993 778246
Email: oxford@bhwb.co.uk

CLIENT WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROJECT WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

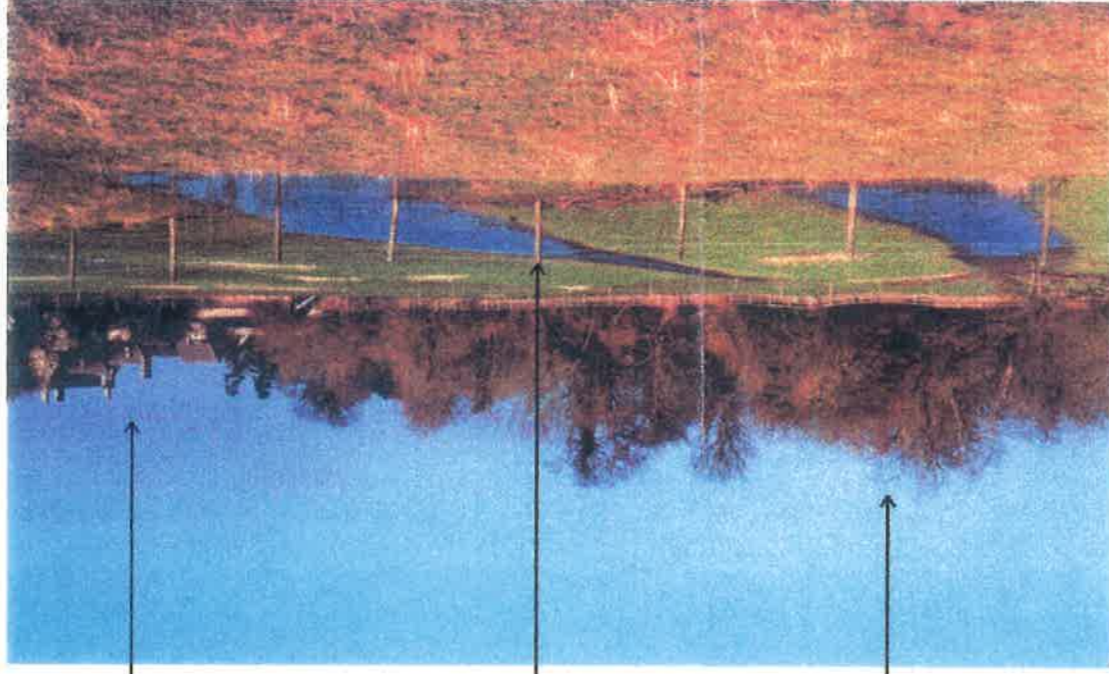


PHOTO 12: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA ON COGGES MANOR FARM MUSEUM LAND, LOOKING NORTHEAST TOWARDS COGGES

FORMER MOATED SITES, FENCING GIVES CLUTTERED FEEL TO OTHERWISE OPEN VIEW
NOW WOODED
COGGES MANOR FARM



PHOTO 11: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI-ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING WEST FROM THE RIVERSIDE WALK NEAR COGGES TOWARDS THE WINDRUSH LEISURE CENTRE

BULK OF LEISURE CENTRE CLEARLY VISIBLE THROUGH CLEAR STEMMED TREES

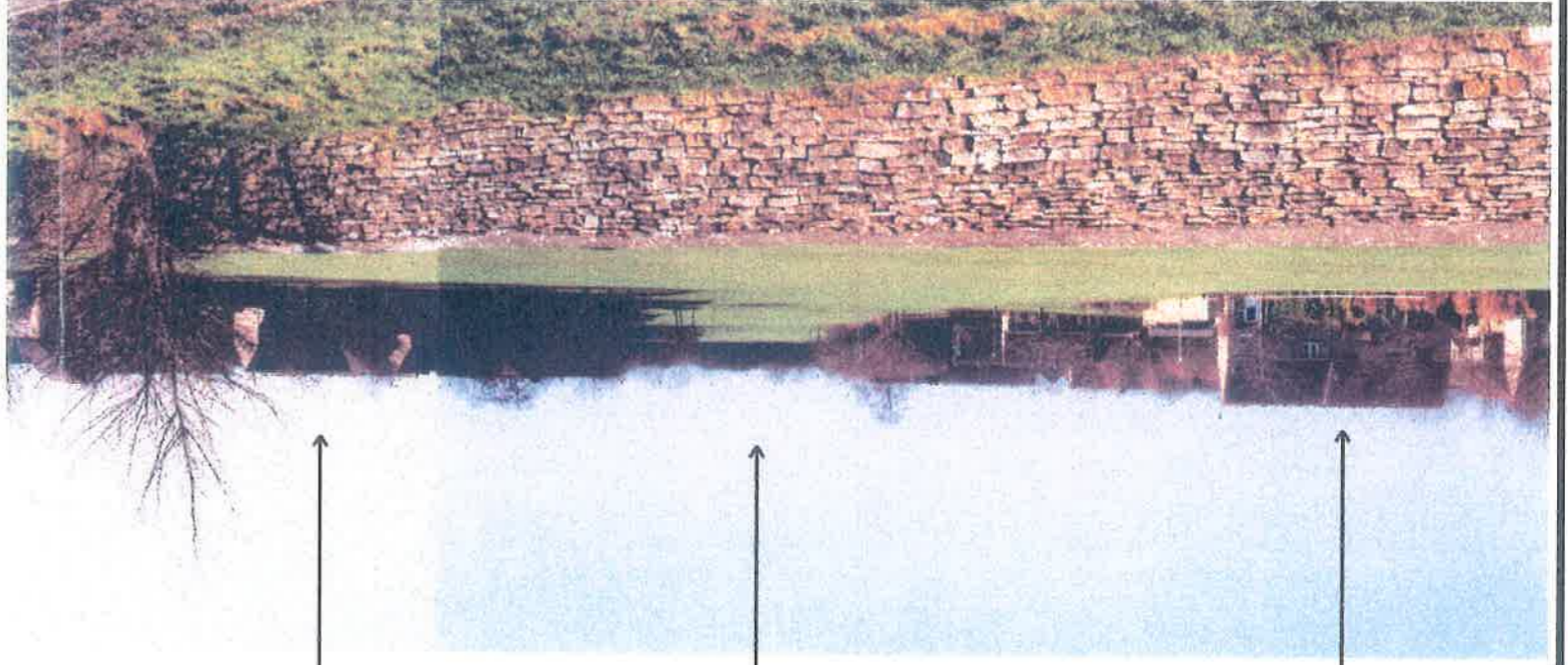


PHOTO 13: LANDSCAPE TYPE 7: AMENITY LAND/PUBLIC OPEN SPACE IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING EAST FROM COGGES TOWARDS HOUSING AND COGGES RIDGE

POORLY SCREENED WADARDS
MEADOW HOUSING
UP TOWARDS COGGES RIDGE
GREEN WEDGE STRETCHING
ROAD HOUSING
POORLY SCREENED MANOR

FIGURE PH 14-15
DRAWING TITLE
PHOTOGRAPHS 14-15

DATE: APR 2001
SCALE: N/A
CONSULTANT: BHWB ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND PLANNING
Tel: 01993 778077
Fax: 01993 778246
Email: oxford@bhwb.co.uk

CLIENT: WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROJECT: WINDRUSH IN WITNEY PROJECT

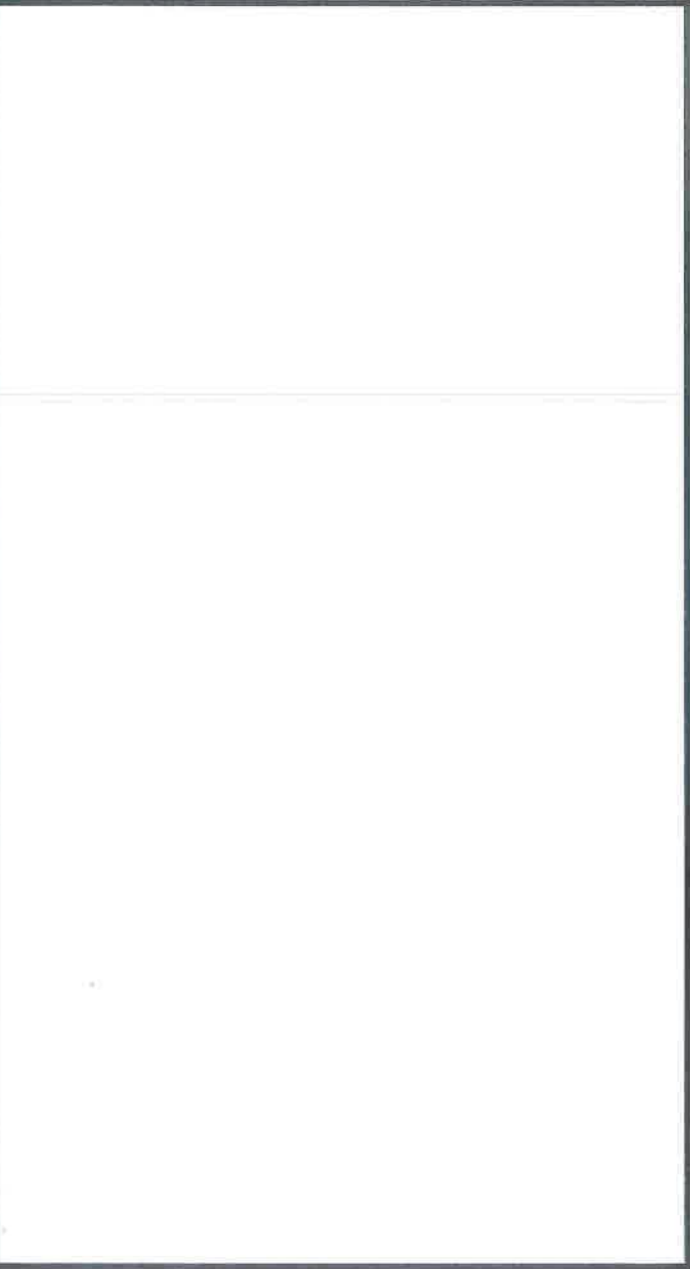


PHOTO 15 : LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR IN SOUTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING NORTHWEST FROM STANTON HARCOURT ROAD TOWARDS WITNEY AND COGGES

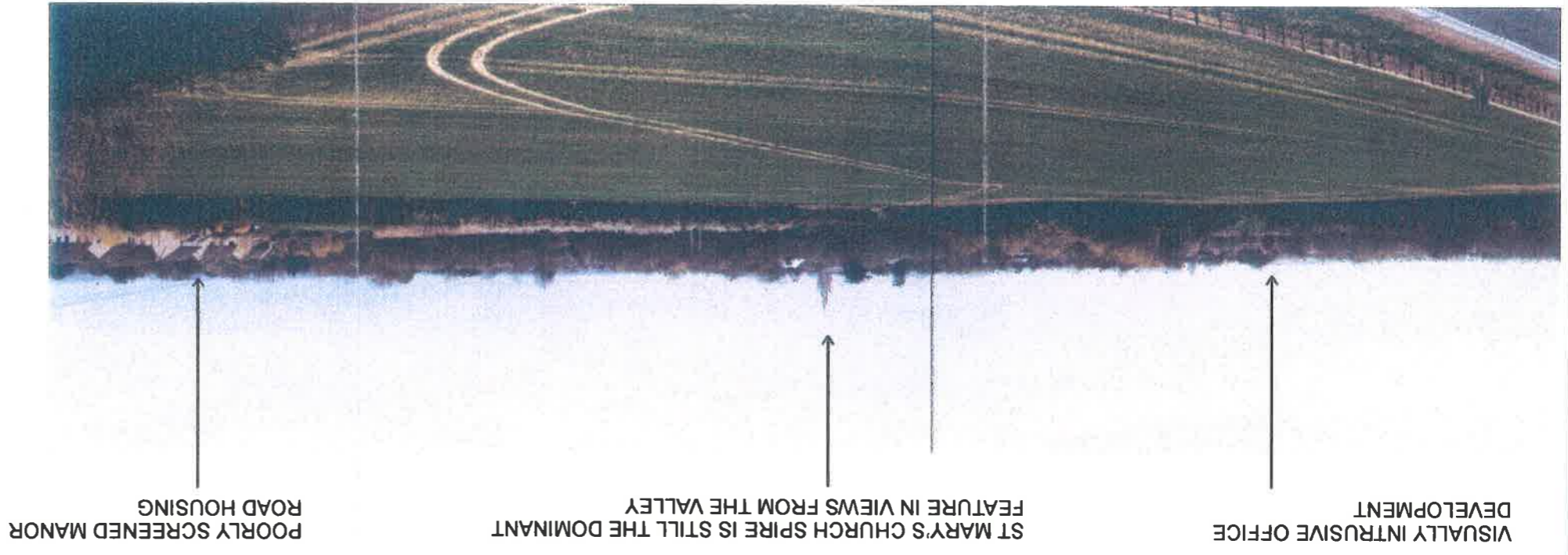
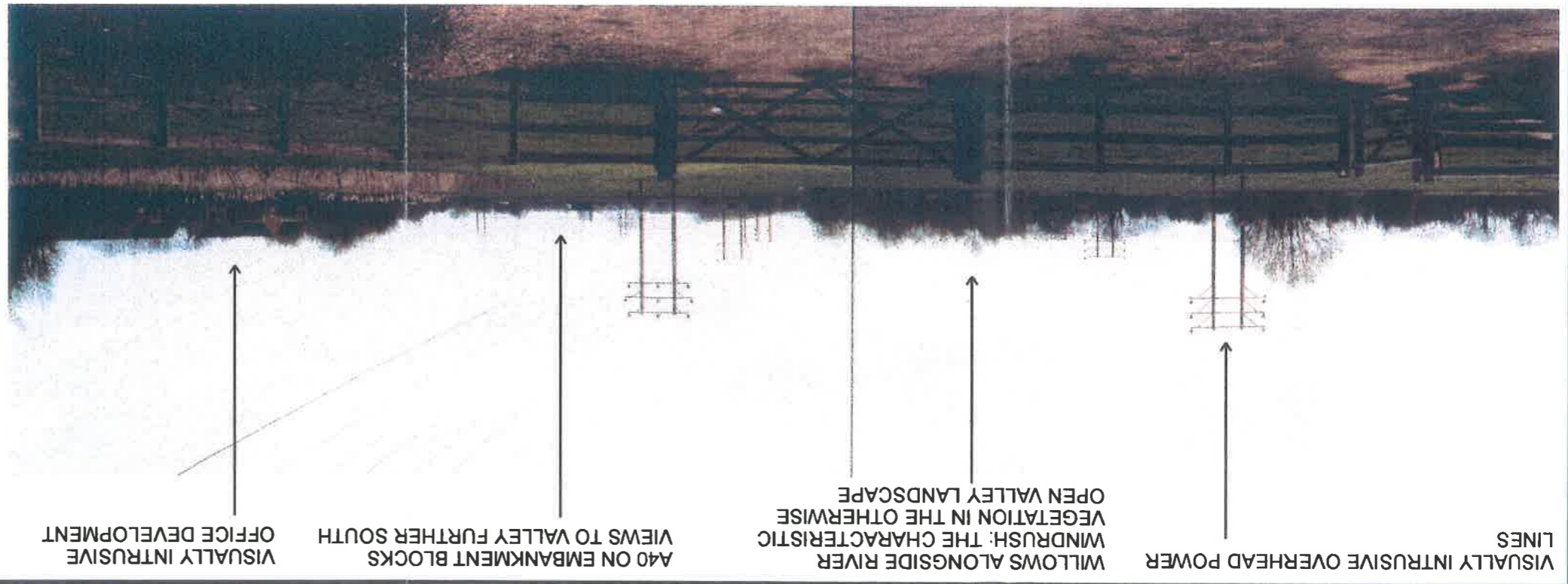
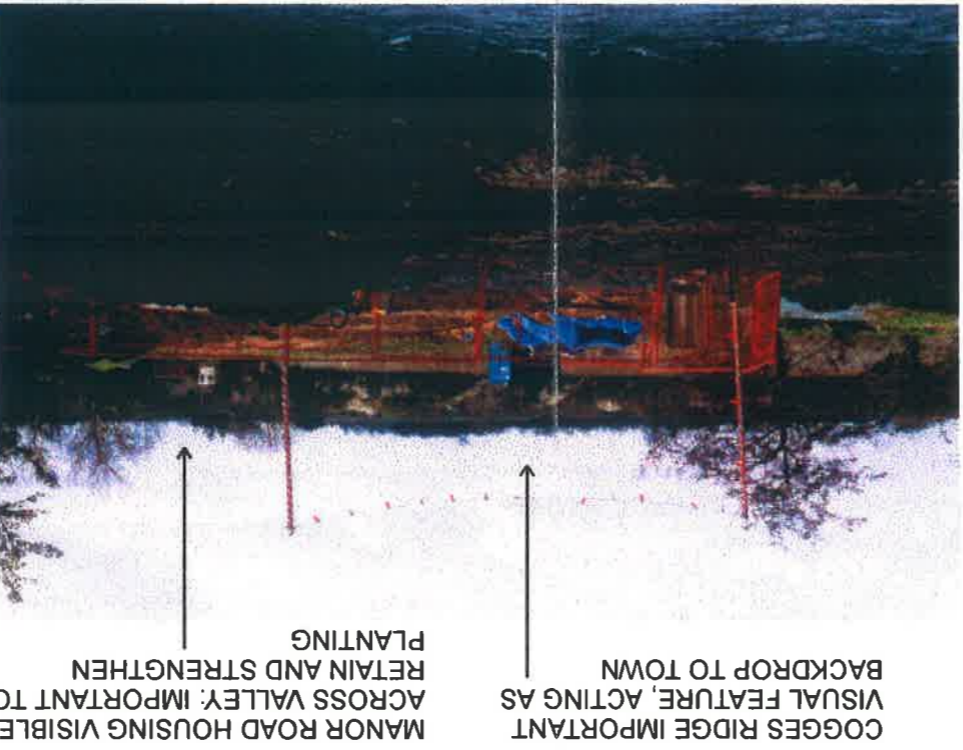
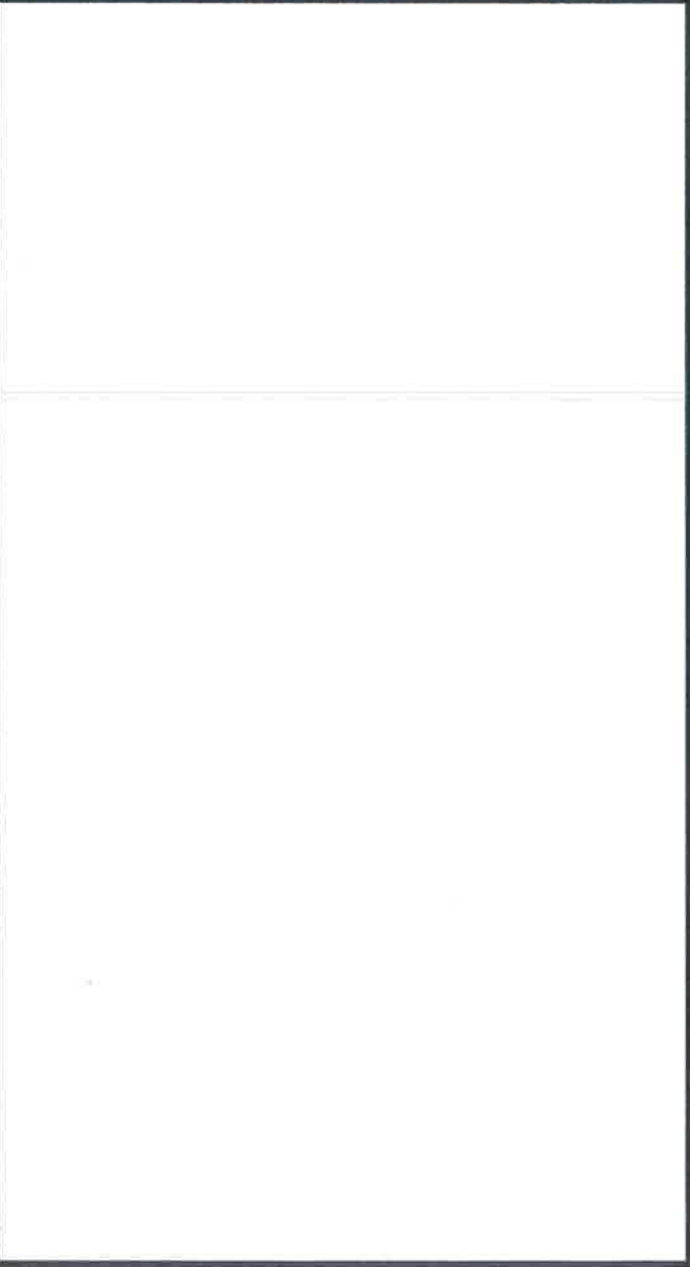


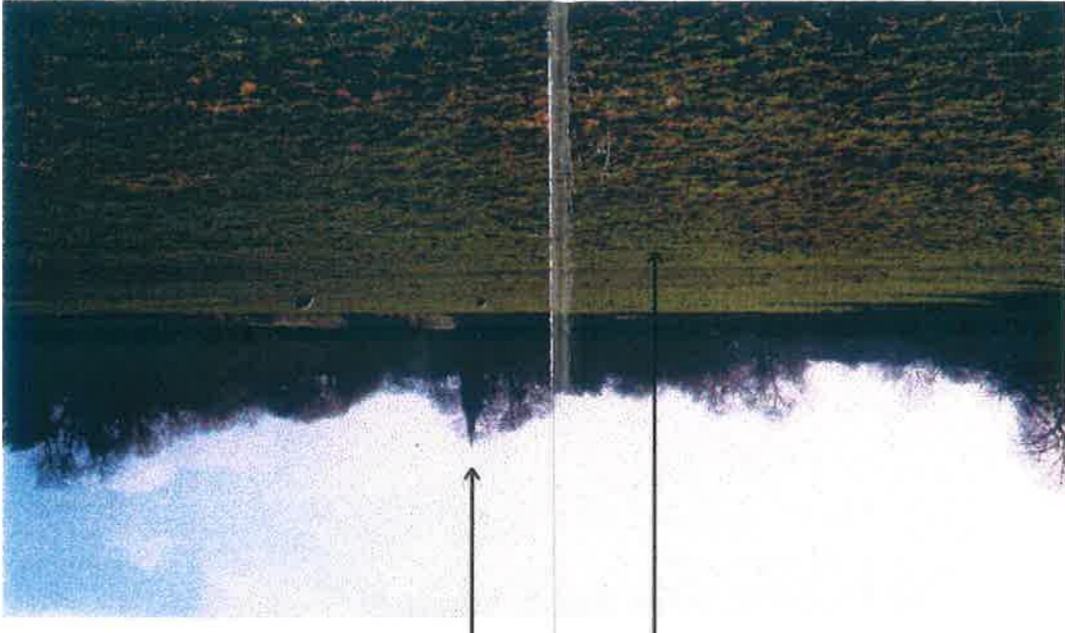
PHOTO 14: LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR IN SOUTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING SOUTH FROM ENTRANCE TO WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL COUNTRY PARK





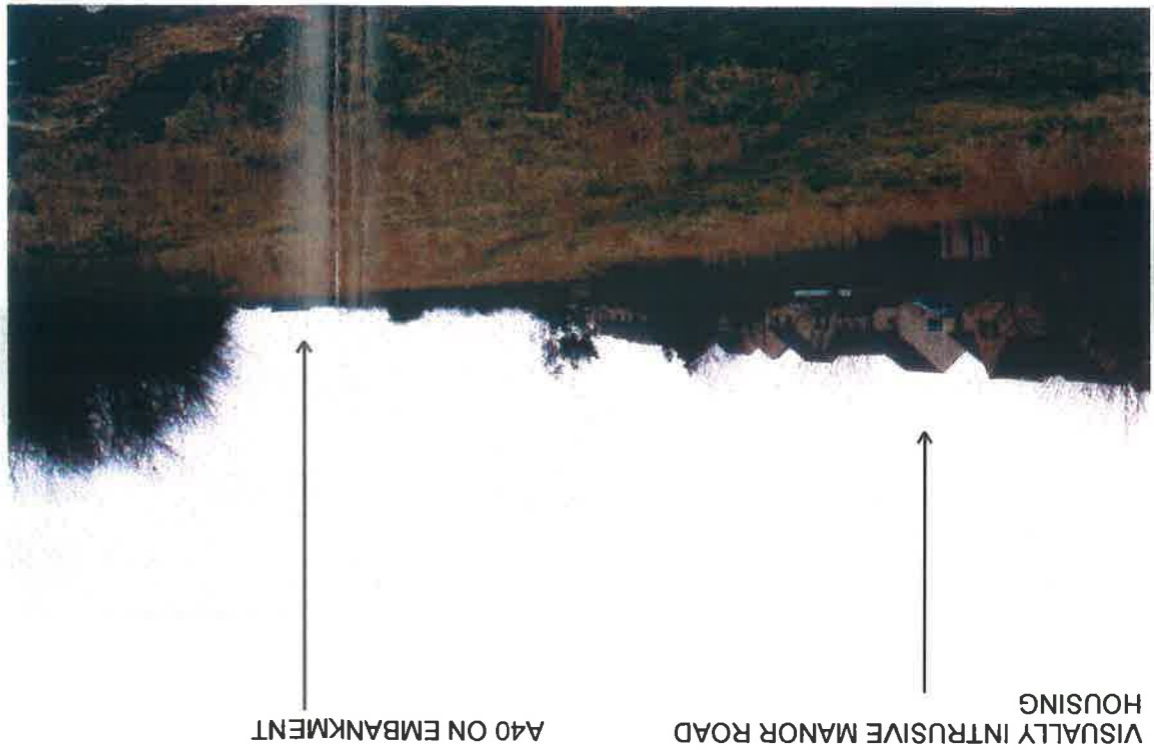
MANOR ROAD HOUSING VISIBLE ACROSS VALLEY: IMPORTANT TO RETAIN AND STRENGTHEN PLANTING
COGGES RIDGE IMPORTANT VISUAL FEATURE, ACTING AS BACKDROP TO TOWN
A40 ON EMBANKMENT

PHOTO 17: LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR. IN SOUTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING EAST ACROSS VALLEY FROM FOOTPATH LEADING TO WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL COUNTRY PARK



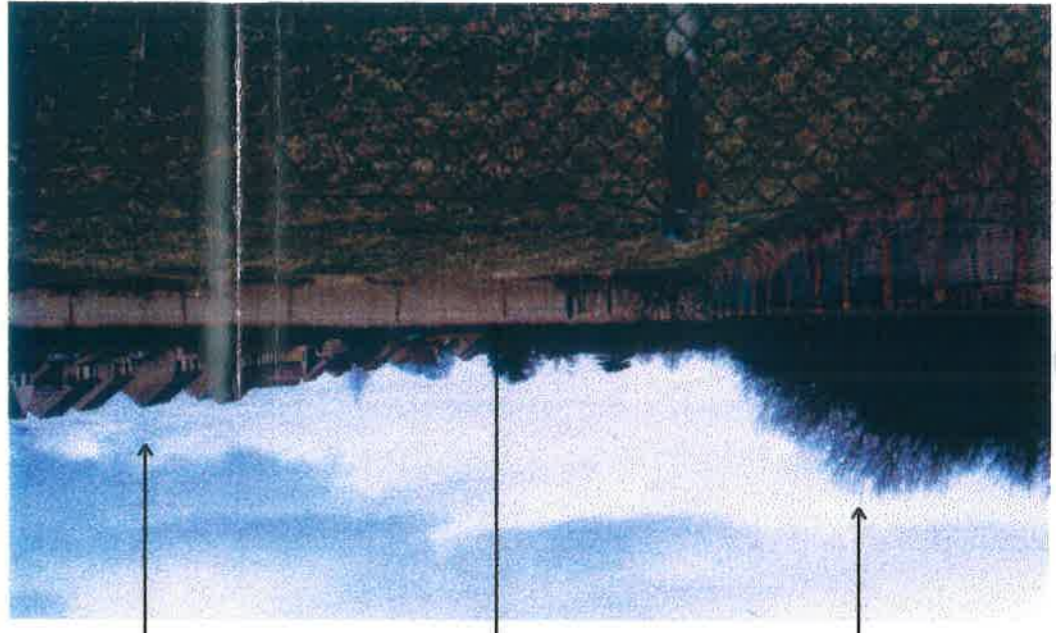
TYPICAL VALLEY VIEW ACROSS OPEN GRASSLAND, ENCLOSED BY TREES LINING WATERCOURSES
ST MARY'S CHURCH SPIRE

PHOTO 19: LANDSCAPE TYPE 1: SEMI ENCLOSED VALLEY FLOOR. IN CENTRAL PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING WEST ACROSS FIELDS OF COGGES MANOR FARM MUSEUM TOWARDS ST MARY'S CHURCH



VISUALLY INTRUSIVE MANOR ROAD HOUSING
A40 ON EMBANKMENT

PHOTO 16: LANDSCAPE TYPE 8: OPEN VALLEY FLOOR. IN SOUTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA, LOOKING SOUTH FROM COGGES MANOR FARM MUSEUM CAR PARK



IMPORTANT SCREENING HEDGEROW, IN POOR CONDITION
UNATTRACTIVE CHAINLINK FENCING AROUND BALANCING POND
VISUALLY INTRUSIVE MANOR ROAD HOUSING

PHOTO 18: LANDSCAPE TYPE 4: SCRUBBY URBAN FRINGE. IN SOUTHERN PART OF STUDY AREA LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS COGGES ACROSS BALANCING POND