



**BECKLEY AND STOWOOD
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2011-2035
EVIDENCE BASE 1
SUBMISSION VERSION
DECEMBER 2022**



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Quotations from external documents are in italics in blue

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Beckley and Stowood Parish Council

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EVIDENCE BASE 1. BECKLEY AND STOWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

INTRODUCTION – THE PARISH OF BECKLEY AND STOWOOD

1.2. HOW THIS PLAN IS ORGANISED

This Neighbourhood Plan is supported by two Evidence Bases which do not form part of the Plan and are not being submitted for examination and two Appendix documents:

Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan which contains the reason for developing the Plan, Consultations, the Vision and Policies.

The Evidence Bases – (supporting documents not being submitted for examination)

1. Sets out a brief description of the Parish today – the History, Environment, Geology and issues that have influenced the vision.
2. The Character and Heritage, Opportunities and Threats, Consultation and Community Engagement, Background to policies

Appendices A and B. There is a large amount of background information that has helped in producing the Plan. The Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Appendices are available in two separate documents. A contains appendices 1-11 and B 12 – 24. This provides an overview of key parts of the Evidence Base, as well as explaining what options were considered for the future of Beckley and Stowood.

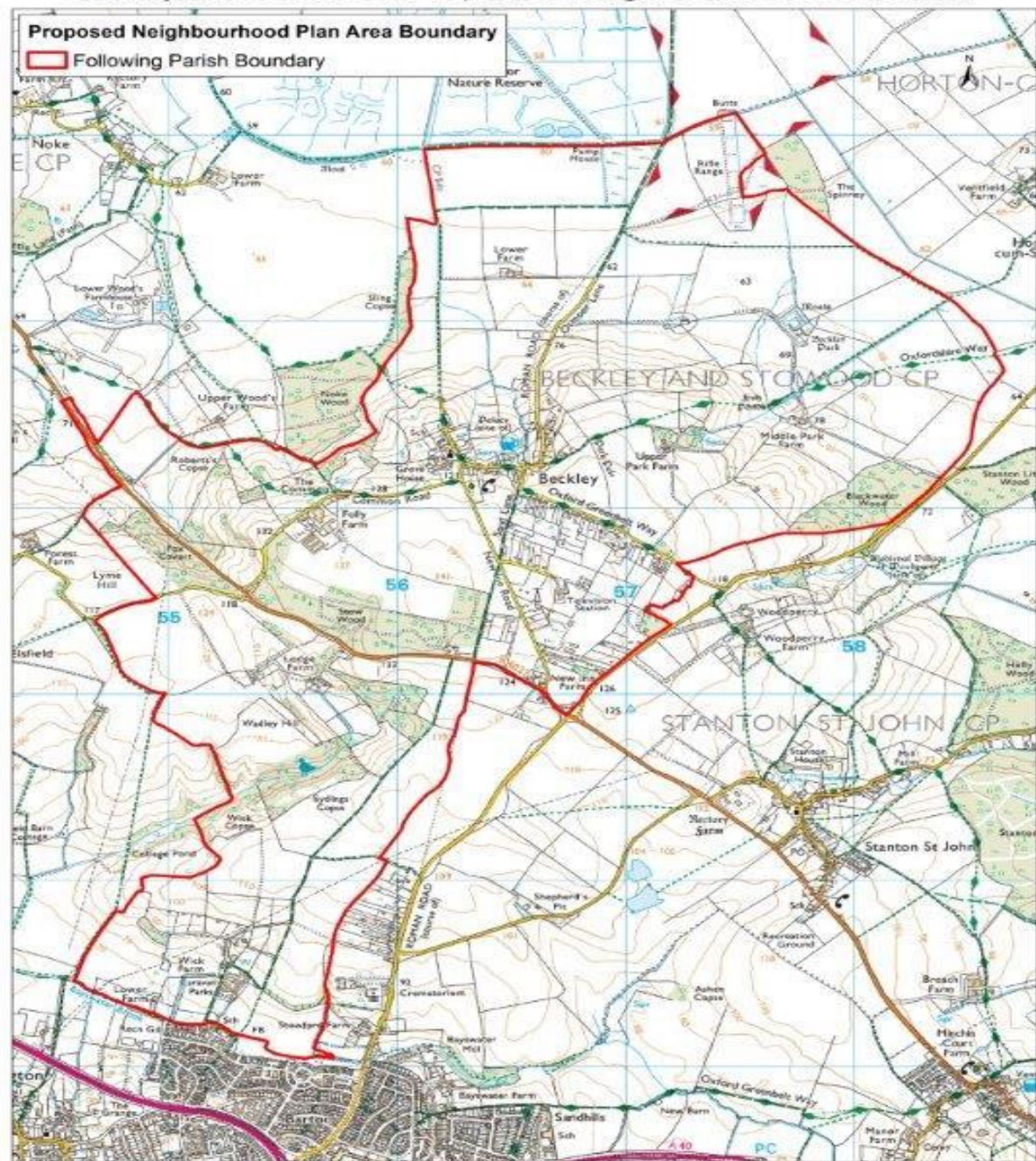
In addition, there are a number of separate reports –

- **A Consultation Statement/Report**
- **A Strategic Environmental Assessment Report**
- **A Basic Conditions Statement**

This Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) is submitted by Beckley and Stowood Parish Council, which is a qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011.

2. BECKLEY AND STOWOOD PARISH

Beckley and Stowood Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area



Map of Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Area – The Whole Parish

2.1. ABOUT BECKLEY AND STOWOOD

The parish of Beckley and Stowood borders the Barton estate on the outskirts of Oxford in the south, where the Bayswater Brook forms both the Parish boundary and formerly that of the Oxford Green Belt. To the north, the bridleway around Otmoor forms the parish boundary. To the west, the boundary follows a jagged course along field boundaries, incorporating the village of Beckley and Robert's copse to the north of B4027 and Wick and Sydlings coves to the south of that road. To the east, the parish boundary encompasses the MOD rifle range on Otmoor in the north, going around Beckley Park to the Horton Road at Blackwater Wood, then following this road one field in to the north west until it reaches Jubilee House, the guide building, where it then follows the Horton Road to its junction with B4027. It follows the B4027 for a short distance west and drops south following the line of the Roman Road across fields parallel with the Bayswater Road. It then goes behind the houses and crematorium along the Bayswater Road until it reaches the Bayswater Brook at Wick Farm.



Figure 2.1. BECKLEY HIGH STREET

The Neighbourhood Development Plan Designated Area comprises the historic villages of Beckley and Stowood (the latter has now disappeared) situated in a rural area of open farmland with copses of trees, predominantly oak. Beckley sits on an escarpment overlooking Otmoor and the RSPB Otmoor Wetland Reserve, while Stowood and the land toward the city slope gently down to Bayswater Brook. As this seemingly rural setting sits only six miles from the centre of Oxford, it is used by many both inside and outside the Neighbourhood Area for hiking, cycling, horse riding, bird-watching, and other outdoor pursuits. The elevated land tends to be arable and the low-lying land more suitable for summer grazing. The whole Parish of Beckley and Stowood, the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area, is in the Green Belt and the oldest part of the middle of Beckley village is a Conservation Area.

2.2. LANDSCAPE AND GEOGRAPHY

At its highest point behind Stowood the Neighbourhood Area is 141 metres [463 feet] above sea level; at its lowest some 70 metres [230 feet] at the Bayswater Brook, Wick Farm and 60 metres [197 feet] at Otmoor.

In general, the area divides in two: the elevated land tends to be sandy and mainly arable, whilst the low-lying land is mainly alluvial clay in grass for summer grazing. The village of Beckley and the area immediately surrounding it drain via Otmoor to the River Ray, whilst Stowood and the area toward the city drain to the Bayswater Brook. Occasional, but regular, flooding occurs after a heavy storm along both Otmoor Lane and Church Street in Beckley; Yellow Hammer Cottage at the intersection of High Street and Otmoor Lane has sustained flooding from run off from the field above it. Development could exacerbate this.



Figure 2.1. VIEW OF CHURCH STREET FROM OTMOOR LANE

The Bayswater Brook has a deep descent from Barton Estate, which was built originally as temporary post-war housing. Since its development Woodeaton Road has flooded with the increased run-off and is frequently closed for a considerable time. There are significant implications for the proposed development at the strategic site of Land north of Bayswater Brook at Wick and Lower Farms as the severe flooding of the Bayswater Brook, experienced in most winters, is caused by water run-off and this will be exacerbated by development. Flooding also occurs at Lodge Farm in Stowood and in Beckley village after rain.

2.2.1. LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT FOR BECKLEY AND STOWOOD

The Full Character Assessment for Oxford Heights, carried out by Atlantic Consultants as part of South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance in July 2003. The section which includes the parish of Beckley and Stowood can be found in Appendix 1. This has subsequently been updated a number of times, in 2017¹ the latest version for the emerging SODC Local Plan in 2018²

Beckley and Stowood Parish lies in the north of the SODC area, in an area known as the Oxford Heights. The landscape is a series of low limestone hills that surround Oxford and form part of the 'Mid-vale Ridge'.

“This irregular band of limestone stretches from Wiltshire to Buckinghamshire across the plain of the Thames. The hills are composed of Upper Jurassic Corallian limestones and sands, which are widely used as building stone in this area, and which form porous, calcareous soils. In places, these rocks are overlain by Kimmeridge Clay and a capping of Lower Greensand which forms the higher ground at Shotover Hill, Forest Hill and above Garsington. These rocks are almost devoid of lime and form thin, sandy soils.”

During Roman times changes were made to the local landscape by building roads and settlements and clearing woodland. *A major north south Roman Road crosses Beckley and Stowood from Alchester, along the route of Grim's Ditch, crossing the Thames at Dorchester. It was apparently developed as a frontier post at the Thames replacing an earlier Iron Age village.*

Many hunting forests were established in Saxon times including the Royal Forest of Shotover, with dense woodland extending from Islip to Cuddesdon across the Oxford Heights, which included Beckley.

“Many of the medieval villages outside of the Chilterns subsequently became deserted or shrunk to a single farm or group of houses e.g., Stowood and Woodperry.

“Open farmland was steadily enclosed by hedges, banks and sometimes ditches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. e.g., Otmoor – the chequered pattern of the fields here, are is said to be the inspiration for ‘Alice Through the Looking Glass’.

The Landscape Quality and Sensitivity Assessment within the Landscape Assessment in Table 2 (see appendix 1.) shows that –

¹ Landscape Character Assessment for the Local Plan 2033 Lepus Consulting - http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=788092192&CODE=4650A3652852911819269B1BB795E501

² South Oxfordshire District Council - Landscape Assessment Update - [http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Landscape%20Capacity%20Assessment%20\(October%202018\).pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Landscape%20Capacity%20Assessment%20(October%202018).pdf)

Scenic Quality was assessed as -

- high for – flood-plain and pasture, parkland and estate farmland and wooded hills and valleys
- medium for – flat open farmland, flat semi-enclosed farmland, open farmland hills and valleys and semi-enclosed hills and valleys

Intrusive Influences were assessed as either uncommon or occasional

- **Other Heritage Values** were assessed as -
- frequent in - parkland and estate farmland and wooded hills and valleys
- occasional in - flood-plain and pasture, flat semi-enclosed farmland and semi-enclosed hills and valleys
- uncommon – flat open farmland, open farmland hills and valleys

Visual Sensitivity was assessed as high or medium in all areas apart from parkland and estate farmland and wooded hills and valleys which were rated low, all other areas were rated high or medium.

The suggested **Management Strategy** is –

- To conserve - flood-plain and pasture, parkland and estate farmland and wooded hills and valleys
- To repair - flat semi-enclosed farmland, open farmland hills and valleys and semi-enclosed hills and valleys
- To restore - flat open farmland

This report shows the importance of the Parish within ‘Oxford heights’ area and why it needs to be preserved. An updated management plan from the 2017 report can be found in Appendix 2. Significant features relevant to this Plan are copied below –

Agriculture

- Promote environmentally-sensitive maintenance of hedgerows, including coppicing and layering when necessary, to maintain a height and width appropriate to the landscape type.
- Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows. Where appropriate, replant gappy hedges using species such as hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), wayfaring tree (*Viburnum lantana*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaea*). Hedgerow trees are a key feature of this landscape area and felling of mature specimens, especially veteran trees, should be resisted. Planting of new hedgerow trees such as oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), and tree belts, should be encouraged

Minimise tall buildings and structures

- Minimise impact of tall buildings and structures by locating new communication masts on existing structures or by using existing masts.
- Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables.

Inappropriate built form, development, expansion and infilling of settlements

- Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses, such as industrial estates, barns, new houses at the fringes of towns and villages with the judicious planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area. This will help to screen the development and integrate it more successfully with its surrounding countryside.
- Maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials to maintain vernacular style and a scale of development and that are appropriate to Oxford Heights (see also the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, November 2016).
- Avoid inappropriate development within the open and exposed hills where it would be intrusive.

Woodland

- Ancient semi-natural woodlands should be managed to ensure they are in favourable condition.
- Safeguard, maintain and enhance and the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including mature trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls.
- Promote small-scale planting of deciduous woodland blocks using locally characteristic species such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*), ash and oak.

The 2018 South Oxfordshire District Council - Landscape Assessment Update seeks to justify development of the Green Belt around Oxford, including the strategic development site 'Land North of Bayswater Brook' – Wick Farm in the parish of Beckley and Stowood and Lower Elsfield in the neighbouring parish of Elsfield. Although the landscape has not changed from previous reports the conclusion of this report that land at Wick Farm and Lower Elsfield has now become suitable for development is not substantiated. The parts covering this parish have been copied in Appendix 3.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for the parish makes no mention of important Roman archaeology near the Wick Farm site – the road from Alchester to Dorchester passes across it or that it is a site of a Roman villa. It also fails to mention that a number of buildings at Wick Farm including the farmhouse, Well House and gateposts are listed grade II.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; Some assessment is contained within the two Green Belt Assessments - Green ***belt study (September 2015)*** and ***Green Belt Assessment of Strategic Sites on South Oxfordshire (January 2019)*** which concludes – that development of the site would “lead to significant harm in relation to urban sprawl, encroachment on the countryside and to the setting and special character of Oxford.” ***Strategic Allocation Landscape Sensitivity Final Report (January 2018)*** – this concludes – “A full detailed landscape and visual impact assessment will be required to inform the final sensitivity of the potential development”. This Neighbourhood Plan specifically cites views from Stowood as being as important to preserve.

2.2.2. Water Courses and Flooding

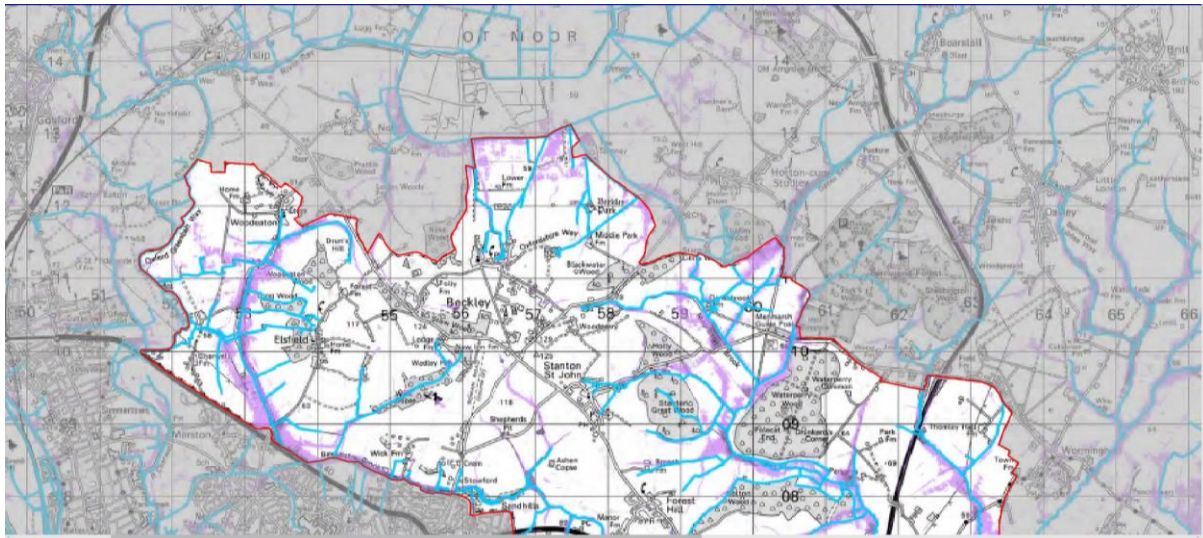


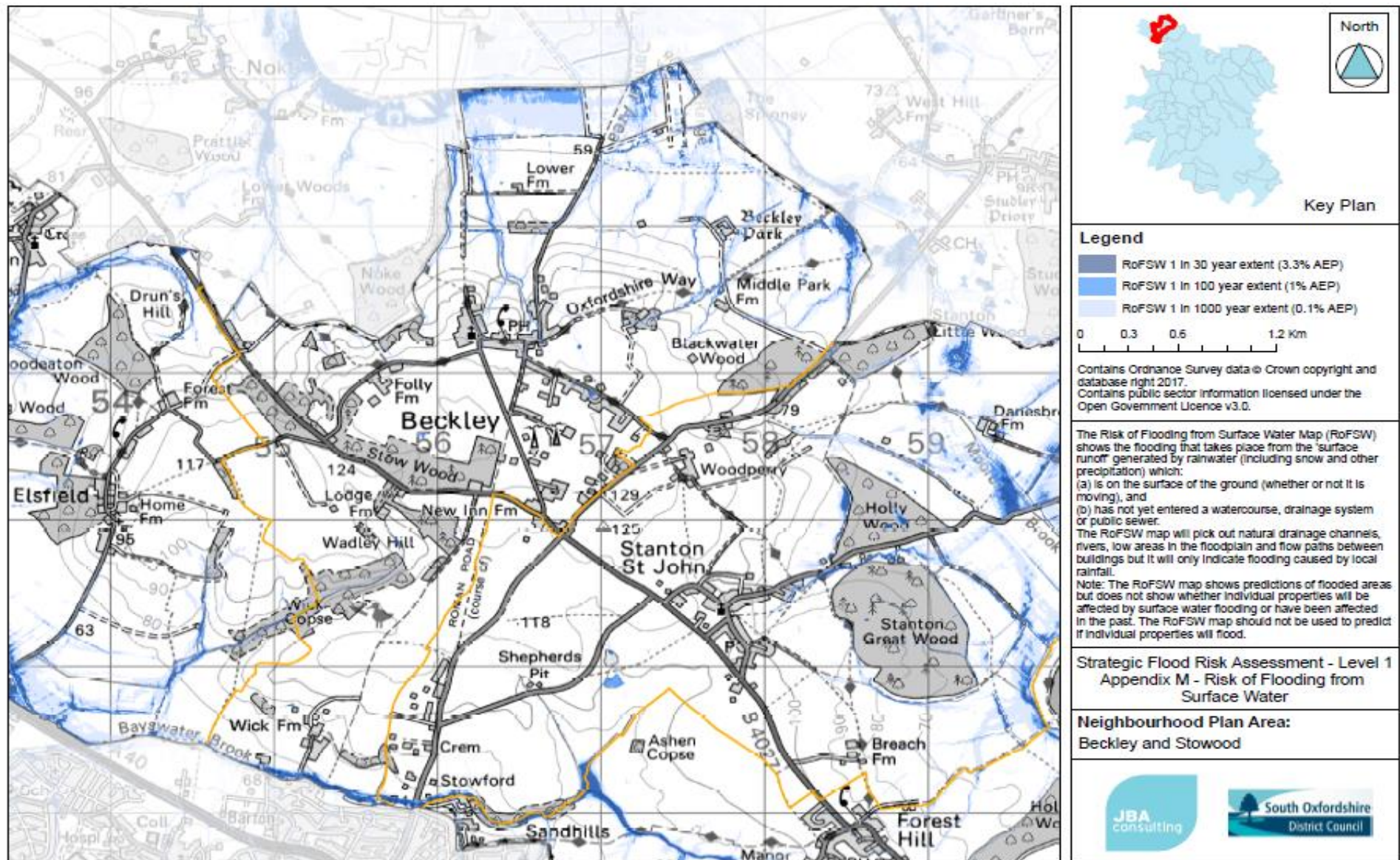
Figure 2.2.2.1. SODC FLOOD MAP FOR SURFACE WATER

The SODC flood map³ for surface water shows flooding of the Bayswater Brook at Wick Farm, the stream that runs through Sydlings and Wick copse into the Bayswater Brook and from the middle of Beckley village from Church Street. High Street and Otmoor Lane onto Otmoor. Springs at Upper Park Farm flow down the hill to Middle Park Farm and near Beckley Park.

This report has recently been updated and the updated map for the parish is shown over the page.

³ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) SODC 2013 -JBA Consulting
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies/district-flood-risk>

Figure 2.2.2.2 STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT – BECKLEY AND STOWOOD



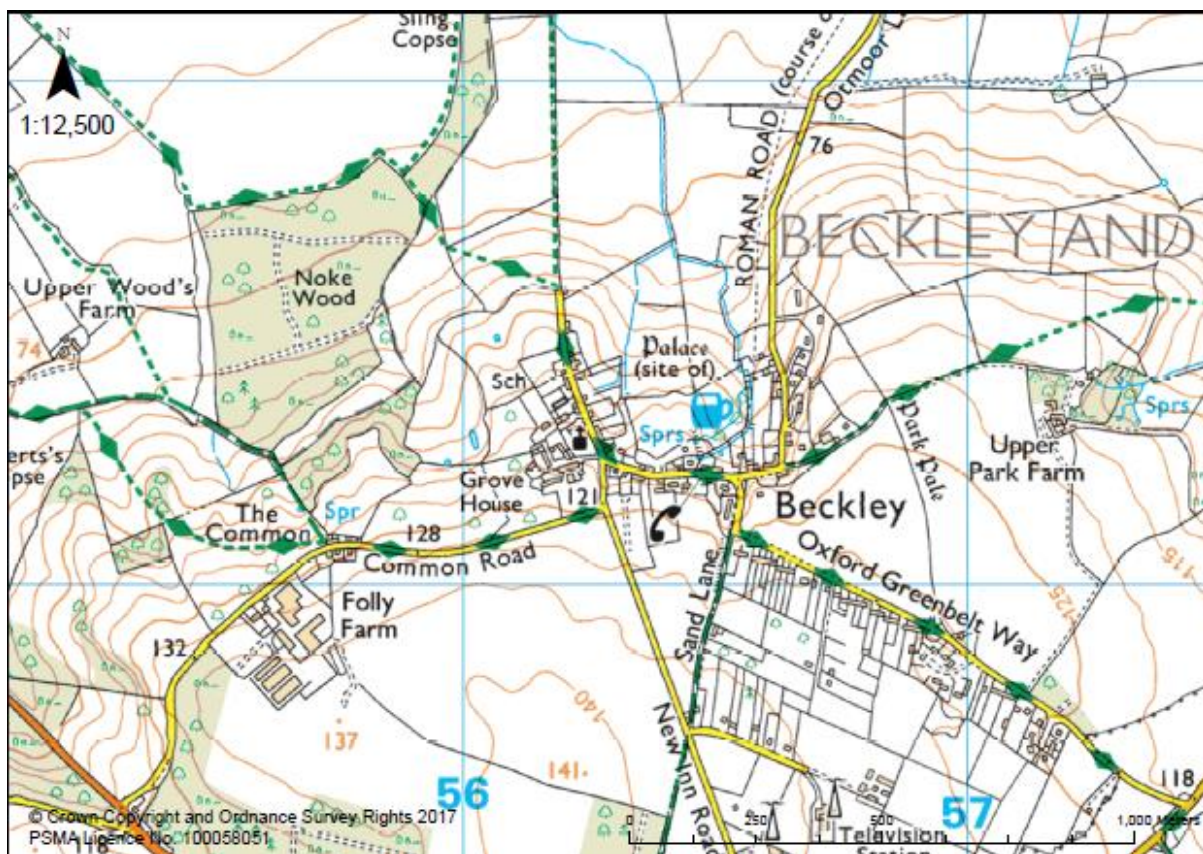


Figure 2.2.2.3. ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP OF BECKLEY VILLAGE SHOWING SPRINGS

There are a large number of springs in the village of Beckley, which cause flooding after rain. Only a few are shown on the Ordnance Survey map, but they in fact run from Church Street in the west of the village, behind the High Street to the north, above the High Street at the east end of it, flooding houses and lies to the east of Otmoor Lane in many of the gardens.

Flooding from runoff water after rain happens frequently and is a substantial issue in Beckley village, particularly in and adjacent to the Conservation Area and any future development needs to mitigate this situation as much as possible and reduce damage to houses in particular.

The numerous mixed woods in the Neighbourhood Area are predominantly oak with wild life and blue-bell ground cover.

The rural surroundings are an important leisure asset and Beckley/Stowood Neighbourhood's position so close to centres of high population provides many opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding, blue-bell viewing in the copses, and other outdoor pursuits.

Flooding occurs regularly along the Bayswater Brook, the boundary between Oxford City and the Parish of Beckley and Stowood and the Green Belt. This problem has been exacerbated recently by the development at Barton West (Park), which appears to have caused serious additional flooding towards Sescut Farm.

From Beckley village, there are a number of springs along the ridge in Church Street, both sides of the High Street and to the east of Otmoor Lane. These cause local flooding due to water run-off after rain and the resultant flooding of roads and sometimes houses needs to be stopped.

2.3. BECKLEY AND STOWOOD HISTORY

"The ancient parish of Beckley used to reach at its southern end to within four miles of Oxford, and stretched beyond the hamlet of Whitecross Green in the north and included the hamlet of Studley on the east, although it lay over the Buckinghamshire border in Ashendon hundred

*By 1881, when the Census first gives reliable acreages, the areas of the three civil parishes which composed the ancient parish were: Beckley, 3,620 acres; Horton cum Studley, 1,287 acres; Studley, 952 acres. (fn. 3) They had all been enlarged after the inclosure of Otmoor in 1829 when 1,037 acres of the moor were added to the ancient parish of Beckley. (fn. 4) No further changes were made in the boundaries for civil purposes (fn. 5) until 1932, when 2,194 acres of Beckley were transferred to Fencott and Murcott and the whole of Stowood parish was combined with the remainder of Beckley to form the new civil parish of Beckley and Stowood (2,271 a.)."*⁴

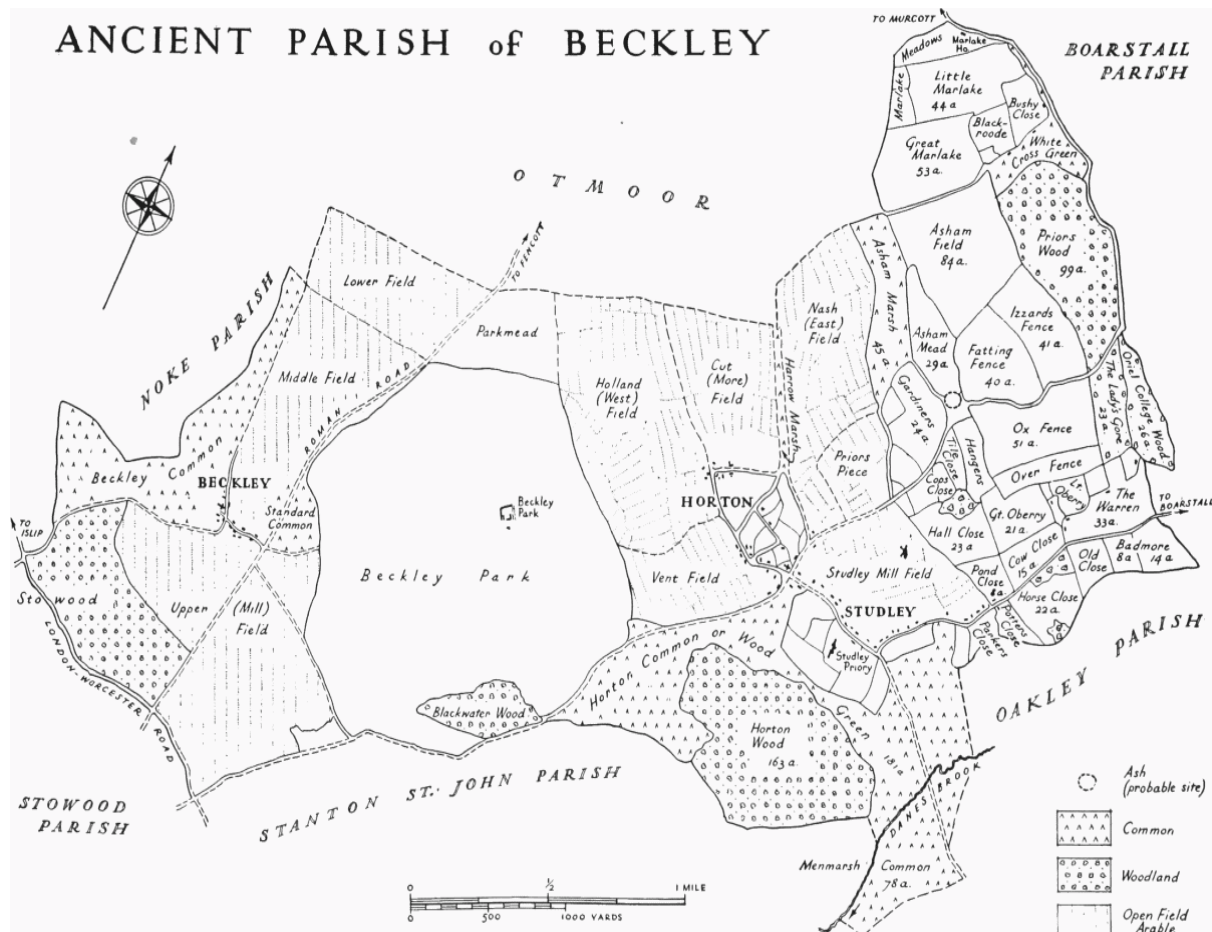


Figure 2.3.1. ANCIENT PARISH MAP OF BECKLEY

⁴ 'Parishes: Beckley', in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 5, Bullington Hundred*, ed. Mary D Lobel (London, 1957), pp. 56-76. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp56-76>

*I went to Noke but nobody spoke.
I went to Brill they were silent still.
I went to Thame they were just the same.
But I went to Beckley and they talked directly.*

People have always wanted to know the origins of this. It is not known who wrote it, but it was said to be seventeenth century and so what side did Beckley support during the Civil War. Was it behind the King or Parliament?

Jurassic Beckley

A piece of corallian rag or soft coral limestone was found with the imprint of a well-defined leaf fossil dating from the Jurassic period, about one hundred and sixty million years ago. As the later find was made at the 350 ft contour line, it indicates that at that time Beckley was a small coral island or peninsular surrounded by a warm coral sea whose shore was 350 ft higher than our present sea level. Much of the village and surrounding countryside would have been submerged.

Stone and Bronze Ages

The story of Beckley begins about 3,500 years ago. We know this because two Bronze Age axes were found in the village area and stone age flensing knife dated c 1100BC. These were very rare in Oxfordshire. Among other items discovered were a remarkable brooch of the Early Iron Age and a gold coin of Cunobeline, who was King of the Catuvellauni, an early English tribe.

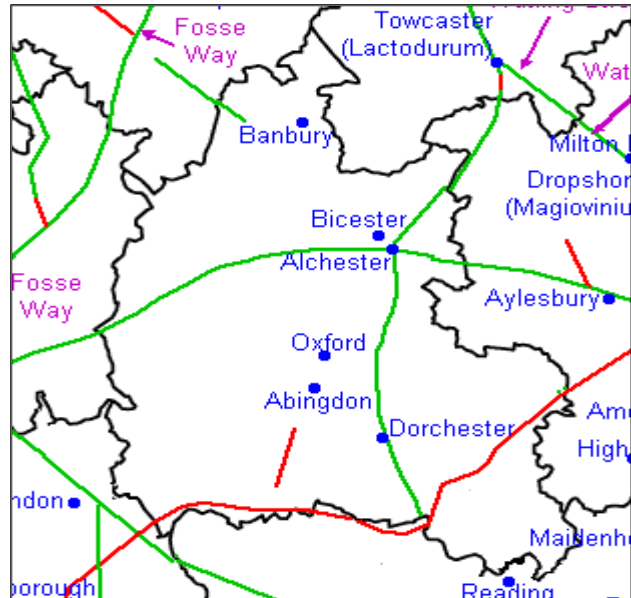
Roman Times

The next signs of habitation were from the time of the Roman occupation of this country. A Roman Road was built through the village and over Otmoor that went from Dorchester on Thames to Alchester (a Roman base that was sited just south of Bicester). Interestingly Oxford University archaeologists came and dug up a Roman Road that runs through Stowood at Lodge Farm. It is in perfect condition after nearly 2,000 years.

Main Roman Roads and Towns of Oxfordshire⁵

Green roads - The course of this road is known

Red roads - The course of this road is uncertain



On the hill above Beckley, near the footpath leading to Upper, Middle, and Lower Park Farms (Beckley Park), there was a Roman Villa, a small country house, which would have had wonderful views of Otmoor. Traces of four rooms were found and a small road leading up to it, from the main Roman road. It was discovered in 1862 but sadly shortly after it was destroyed probably by being ploughed up.

Near the centre of Otmoor is Joseph's Stone, thought to be a Roman milestone.

In the Ashmolean Museum there are several objects found in our village dating back to the Bronze Age and some from the Iron Age.

The Dark Ages

After the withdrawal of Rome in the early 4th century, we come to the Dark Ages where there is little recorded history and what happened in Beckley for the next five centuries is somewhat obscure. It was not until Alfred the Great's victories in the 9th century that comparative peace was restored. We find a mention in the 10th century of a settlement in a clearing in the thick forest that covered the area called Becca's Wood. In later years the produce of forest, moor and rivers became the property of the Crown or local Overlords. Sometime after the 6th or 7th century our first church in Beckley was built of wood on the same site as the present building.

Beckley has a Holy Well which is said to have healing properties. It is called Saint Tinniver's Well and is situated in the bank to the south of the High Street. Little is known about Saint Tinniver other than that he was an early English martyr who died in post Roman times (after 440 AD) and was buried in Beckley. His shrine was visited by pilgrims and revered for many centuries.

In the 11th century came the Norman Conquest and Beckley became the capital of Otmoor, being certainly the largest of the seven towns.

⁵ With kind permission – Romans in Britain - http://www.romanobritain.org/7-maps/map_counties_roads_towns_oxfordshire.htm

At the time of Edward the Confessor, Beckley was owned by the Saxon, Wigod of Wallingford. One of the Norman invaders was called Robert de Oilly, and he married Wigod's daughter. He received Beckley and other lands as part of his dowry. He was not at all grateful and transferred these lands to his friend Roger de Ivery, with whom he had made an arrangement that they would share their spoils of war in England. Roger de Ivery made Beckley the chief of his estates.

The Domesday Book

At about this time 1087, Beckley is mentioned in the Domesday Book, an inventory of all the inhabited and cultivated lands of England that the Normans had taken.

Beckley was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1085.

'Bechellie, Oxenefscire. — translated: Beckley, Oxfordshire

Roger of Ivry holds Beckley. 6 Hides. Land for 7 ploughs. Now in lordship ploughs, 6 slaves, 11 villagers with 6 smallholders have 5 ploughs. Meadow, 20 Acres; Pasture, 1 league long and 2 furlongs wide; woodland 1 league long and 1/2 a furlong wide. The value was 100s; now £8 (see p. 15 of BR's)

The Lord of the Manor was Roger of Ivry... Roger's wife was Azelina, daughter of Hugh of Grandmesnil. Robert d'Oilly was Sheriff of Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and it is thought Berkshire. He was the builder and keeper of Oxford castle.

The lands of Beckley were said to be composed of 20 acres of meadows and a wood a mile long and half a mile wide. Twenty-three farm workers were also listed. Not only did they farm their own strips of land, but had to give service to the Lord of the Manor, Roger de Ivery in this case. On top of this, eleven of them had to follow him wherever he went. The whole lot, including the benefits of these services, was valued at eight pounds.

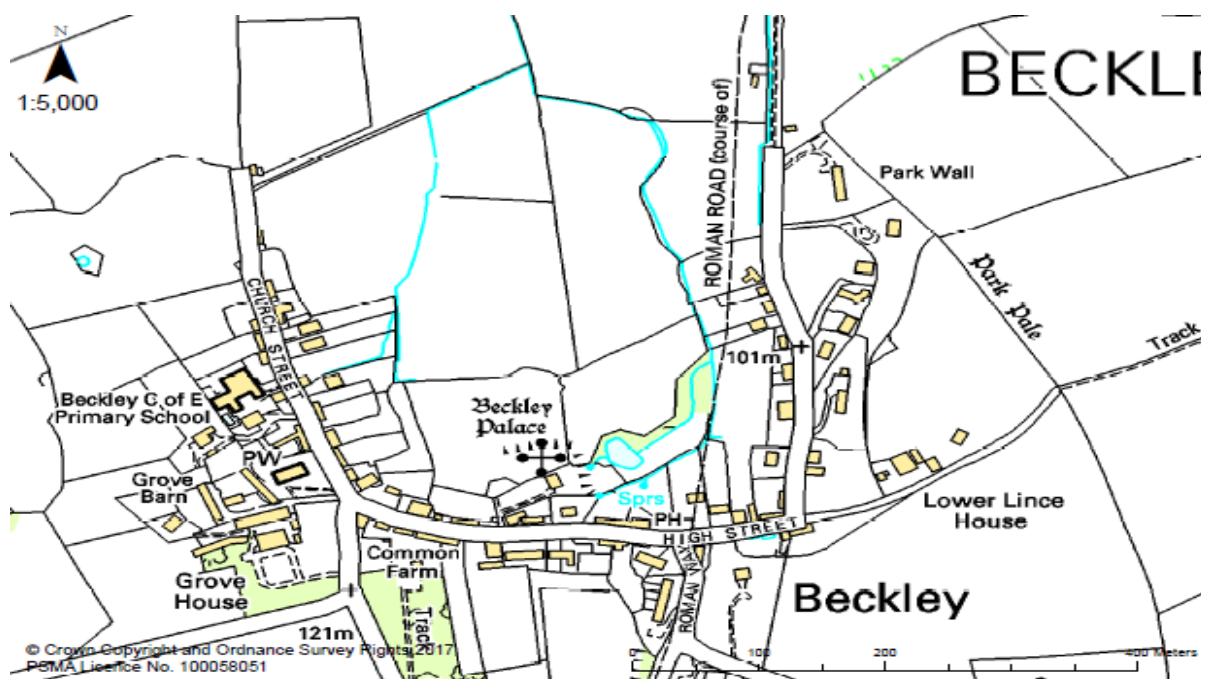


Figure 2.3.2. ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP SHOWING SITE OF BECKLEY PALACE

The Palace was built during this time, in the field behind the present Old Manor Farmhouse. It is not certain when it was built, but in view of the association with the village of the D'Ivry's and D'Oilly's it seems certain these rich Norman families were associated with the building during a period of over a hundred years. The various trials and tribulations of Beckley in those years and Royal involvement in following years are ably set out in the booklet by Mr. P.D. Gresswell - "An English Village, Beckley near Oxford". The Palace fell into disrepair in the 16th century and was never rebuilt. According to writers in the early 19th century the moat and earthworks were visible at that time and there was still standing a stone tower used as a dove house. The field where the palace once stood is known as Duffers or Duffs field, and many of the older Beckley cottages and walls contain stone once used in the Palace buildings.

There is a story that on the death of Henry the 1st in 1135, Henry's daughter Matilda was besieged in Oxford Castle and escaped by walking across the frozen moat and the River Thames, stopping at Beckley for rest and refreshment on her way to Wallingford.



Figure 2.3.3. BECKLEY CHURCH - THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Beckley Church

This church stands on the site of an earlier wooden church dedicated to an obscure Saxon saint, Tinniver (or Donnandverdh). The Normans rebuilt the church in stone with its layout almost as it is today, but the north wall of the present chancel is all that remains of the original Norman church. It is listed grade 1.

The church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, (a medieval Catholic dedication) is a gem, some 600 years old ... simple and strong ... with main inner door of oak with fine iron work that dates from the 13th century, many medieval murals, a circular stone font, a 13th century oak chest reckoned to be one of the oldest chests in England.

The interior has a number of 14th and 15th-century wall paintings including a Virgin and Child, an Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the weighing of souls, the torments of the damned and 15th-century paintings of Saint Peter, Saint Paul and a Doom.

There is some 14th-century glass in the windows of the north aisle and chancel. This shows the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin; St. Anne teaching Mary, the Virgin to read; the martyr king St. Edmund, holding an arrow; the legend of St. Thomas and the Virgin's girdle; St. Christopher and St. Thomas.

13th Century

For a short time in the 13th century Robert Earl of Dreux was the Lord of the Manor, but his lands were confiscated for high treason and given to the reigning King Henry III's brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall in 1230. Richard was a very rich man and later became King of Rome. He was also one of the most important men in the country and owned many estates and Beckley was one of his favourite places to stay. He went off to the Crusades in 1240 and made a success of his campaign. The enemy were much alarmed by the solidarity of the campaign and quickly came to peace terms that were favourable to the Crusaders.

In the 13th Century there was a windmill, Lords Mill, situated between Foxhole Farm and the present TV mast. The field is shown on old maps as Mill Field. In the 17th century there was another mill belonging to the vicar, presumably on the same site.

Richard had three wives and one of them was the sister of the Queens of England and France. Richard was extremely good with money and his brother the king was forced to borrow money from him. This difficult situation was resolved by the King producing a great deal of new money, and repaying Richard out of it, by giving him half the profits. This made Richard one of the richest men in Europe. Unfortunately for Richard he succumbed to an offer from some of the European Archbishops and Dukes to become King of the Romans, as the position had become vacant. He was crowned in 1256 in Frankfurt. This cost him £27,000 in those days, so how many millions it would be today one cannot even hazard a guess! This kingship did not last long because he was back living in Beckley in 1261 a lot poorer, but much wiser.

The peaceful existence did not go on for long as the Barons, led by the Earl of Leicester, captured both Richard and the King at the Battle of Lewes. Richard managed to secure his release by both bribery and intrigue. The local population were overjoyed when he returned to his castle in Wallingford. In 1272. Richard died. His son Edmund, who was only 22, continued to treat Beckley as one of his favourite places to live. Edmund died in 1300, having no children, it meant Beckley and his other lands came back to the King. He is the last great personage to be clearly recorded as having used Beckley Palace as his home frequently.

Edward II, in 1308, gave the area around Beckley (though Beckley itself seems to have been excluded) along with other lands to Piers de Gavestone. He was said to be a brave but greedy and insolent man, who was hated by the other Barons. They had him murdered in 1312 and Beckley reverted back to the King. The King then immediately passed it on to another favourite Hugh Despenser, who in turn appears to have passed it on to a friend Sir John de Handlo. Beckley Church existed before this time but was rebuilt in about 1320 AD. In 1352 the nuns of Studley annexed the Church in Beckley by means of a licence from the Bishop of Lincoln. A vicarage was instituted and the Priest also received a pension, but all the Church offerings and tithes were the property of the Studley nuns.

There is no evidence of Beckley in the civil War other than some findings in the church yard, yet skirmishes took place on the old main turnpike road from Worcester to London now the B4027.

The house names on the old turnpike past Stowood tell us they were all coaching inns at some time – The White House, New Inn, Royal Oak, and The Red Lion.

Beckley eventually came into the hands of Sir John de Handlo's son-in-law Almaric de St. Amand, who had attended King Edward 111 at the battle of Cressy. By 1379 Beckley was held by Sir Nicholas Bonde. By 1399 Chaucer's son, Thomas, acted as steward for the Crown in looking after Beckley. Thomas was M.P. for Oxfordshire and a former Ambassador to France.

In 1420 Katherine de Valois, the wife of Henry V, came into possession of the 'Honor of St. Walery' and on her death it passed onto her son Henry VI. In 1437 Henry gave twelve trees from his Park at Beckley to Archbishop Chichele to help build All Souls College. From 1437 the Duke of Suffolk, and later Viscount Lovell acted as stewards for the Crown by managing the Manor of Beckley and the lands of the Honor of St. Walery. There are few records of Beckley until Henry VIII's reign, when Beckley, in 1540, was separated from the Duchy of Cornwall and given to Lord William of Thame. He was a courtier of the King and was well known for being someone who would change his politics and religious beliefs according to how the wind was blowing. One example of this is when he was responsible for burning Archbishop Cranmer, at the stake, outside Balliol College. There was a huge crowd watching, some of whom had been forced to attend.

Beckley was then passed onto Lord Williams' son-in-law Henry Norreys, when he died. A large part of the village remained in the Norreys family until 1924 when it was sold. Because Beckley was often inherited on the female line the succession of names is very varied. They include: Sir Anthony Powlet, Edward Wray of Lincoln, and Edward Sackville (son of the Earl of Dorset), who supported King Charles in the Civil War. Sackville was stabbed to death by a soldier near Abingdon in 1646. Some believe that the poem derives from this period and one place that you were safe, if you were a Cavalier, was Beckley. The Earl of Lindsay was the next to inherit Beckley. His wife, thinking of her ancestry, called a son James Lord Norreys. This son, who inherited Beckley from his mother, was eventually made Earl of Abingdon by Charles II.

It could well be the case that the repeated succession through the female line caused the final decline of Beckley Palace from its glory days. Daughters joined their husbands in distant

places and the once grand palace, left empty, slowly fell into decline and ruin. Some of the houses in the village will have been built with stones from the Palace.

Wick Farm

Wick Farm, which used to be known as Headington Wick, was a farming community in the 13th Century. Remains of Roman occupation were found to the north of the farm on the line of the Roman road. Its name suggests that it was probably a dairy farm.

“In diuers countries, Dayrie houses or cottages, wherein they make butter and cheese, are vsually called Wickes”.⁶

In the seventeenth century Wick Farm was the second largest farm in the parish of Headington. On 17th November 1781, an advertisement to let it showed it was then about 250 acres.



Figure 2.3.4. WICK FARMHOUSE

Wick Farmhouse was rebuilt after a fire destroyed most of it in 1840 and in the yard is an extraordinary well house built around 1660, that is Grade II listed. The barn behind the well house, and the gate piers and walls, are the same age and are also listed structures.

Owners of Wick Farm

In 1813 Theophilus Wharton, his brother and his wife Ann, bought Wick Farm for £9,900 a substantial amount then, and let it out. When Theophilus died in 1831, his brother Bryan retained ownership. An advertisement to let the farm and land on 2nd June 1838 described it thus –

⁶ Stow Surv. 171 (1598):

TWO MILES FROM OXFORD.

TO be LET, for fourteen years—The WICK MANOR FARM, in the parish of Headington, containing 200 Acres of Arable, Meadow, Pasture, and Coppice Lane.

Possession to be had at Michaelmas next —For particulars apply to the proprietor, Mr. Wharton, Headington.

When Bryan Wharton died in 1839, Mrs Emily Stone née Morrell (1811–1891) inherited it. She was the daughter of Theophilus and Ann, who had married James Morrell, the brewer of Headington Hill Hall in 1808. After her death in 1891 the farm passed to her niece Emily Alicia Morrell who owned Wick Farm until her death in 1938. The farm was rented to a number of tenant farmers.⁷

More recently Wick Farm was owned by the Buswell Family. The farm house was sold separately in 2006 and the mobile home site and barns retained and managed by the family. The barns were rented out mainly to car repair businesses. In 2012 the farm and old barn and well house were sold to Wick Farming Ltd. owned by the Aubrey Fletcher family, who farm at Chilton and Brill. In the summer of 2017, another of their companies bought the mobile home site. The Aubrey Fletcher family wished to develop Wick Farm with a very large number of houses. Wick Farming Ltd was sold to Christ Church early in 2019, for approximately £20 million who own the adjacent land to the west of Lower Elsfield. Christ Church put both Lower Elsfield and Wick Farm sites together and proposed it as a strategic site in the SODC Local Plan. The site was included in the SODC Local Plan as part of the site known as Land north of Bayswater Brook, along with a smaller site to the east of Bayswater Farm. The Plan was adopted in December '20.

Wick Farm house, the old barn behind the well house, and the gate pillars are all listed grade II. The well house itself is listed Grade II*. The old barn is in disrepair and needs restoration.⁸



Figure 2.3.5. THE LISTED GRADE II* WELL HOUSE AT WICK FARM

⁷ Headington History - http://www.headington.org.uk/history/listed_buildings/wick_farm.htm

⁸ Barn Listing- <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1369220> , 1047637 – well house, farmhouse – 1047636 and gate piers – 1047638 and 1369181

Grove House

It is widely thought that Grove House was built by Edward Bee a wealthy silk merchant. There is another theory that it was built much earlier by a Spanish family of London Bankers from whom Edward Bee bought The Grove, several cottages in Church Street, and about 500 acres of land including Noke Wood. Bee Cottage was supposedly used by Edward Bee to house his domestic staff. He also rebuilt the front of The Grove in Georgian style and laid out the gardens. From early 1820 to 1925 the house was occupied by the Cooke family who had inherited it from the Bees and for part of the time it served as the Vicarage.

Beckley Park

Beckley Park was built as a hunting lodge probably as early as 1175. Later in the century a circular wall was built around the park, which was then stocked with deer.

Beckley Park is a triple moated house in the valley below Beckley. It was first mentioned in 1347. Subsequent years saw the Park's hunting enjoyed by the Kings of England especially after the Manor reverted to the Crown. The present house was built in 1540 by Sir John Williams, who later became Lord Williams of Thame. The house continued to be owned by his descendants, the Earls of Abingdon, until 1920 when it was sold to the Feilding family, whose descendants still reside there. At the start of nineteenth century it had been leased to the Ledwell family some of whom are buried in Beckley Church.



Figure 2.3.6. BECKLEY PARK – MEDIEVAL HUNTING LODGE

What happened in World War II?

At Beckley Park when World War II was declared Basil Feilding joined the army. Peggy Feilding opened her doors as Beckley Park was regarded as a safe place to stay. Two of Peggy's sisters

and their children came to stay as did one of her aunts. There were also friends and their children. One was a German aristocrat and her two sons, as it was not safe for them in Germany as her husband was Jewish. The Feildings used all the housing on the Beckley Park estate to help families to be safe. This attitude must have happened throughout Beckley village.

Stowood

Stowood has some interesting stories to tell as well. With Shotover, it was an enormous forest that reached as far as Wheatley. There is a Roman Road that runs in front of Lodge Farm. It was in perfect condition when the Oxford archaeologists came to find it. They also found evidence of strip farming. Lodge Farmhouse house itself was built in the 13th or 14th century for the Steward of Stowood. There is a sad end to this tale. There was a village here and because it was in the middle of this vast forest it is possible the inhabitants were very interbred. The village was probably abandoned because of enclosure, or changes in agricultural practices although there is a theory that when the plague came it killed all of the villagers. There are bumps in a field near the house, which is believed to be where the village was.

The B4027 was the main road from London to Worcester and so in Stowood there were four inns "The White House", "The Red Lion", which has been pulled down and replaced by two cottages, "The New Inn" and "The Royal Oak", which had a very naughty reputation! Some of the road and paths were more than probably built with Roman paving stones from the Roman road, which passed so close by. In the period around 1770 Mr l'Ony set up an Inoculating House, probably at New Inn Farm. Smallpox was virulent at the time and so people were inoculated against it there. The prices were enormous for the period and it lasted only a very short time. There is evidence that in Beckley the curate paid for some people to be inoculated.⁹

In the early 1880's two homes for orphans were opened by Miss Caroline Cooke in Beckley village and funded by Miss Cooke, and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It was for children from London who had been abused by their families.¹⁰ One for boys was called Oldridge, near the church, now Grove Farmhouse, the other for girls was New Ridge in Church Street. New Ridge became the village Post Office and shop kept by the Wing family between the wars.

Literary Associations with Beckley

Evelyn Waugh had very many drunken nights at the Abingdon Arms. While studying at Oxford in 1923 Evelyn had met what he described as "the friend of my heart", an 18-year-old aristocratic undergraduate from Brasenose called Alistair Graham. They wanted privacy and so they rented a caravan in what is now the pub's car park. The landlady at the time was a widow called Lizzie Mattingley, who made the Abingdon Arms a rural destination for Oxford's 'bright young things', by keeping a good supply of champagne.

⁹ Cook Leigh papers

¹⁰ BNA

On Wednesday 28th July 1924 there was a big feast at Beckley to which Evelyn Waugh and his Oxford friends had been invited. "First there were 9 ports and a cricket match and then at 4 an enormous meal in the very big barn next to the pub. From then until about 3 in the morning the whole village sat and ate and drank and danced and sang. It was a most delightful evening."

On Monday 12th December 1927 Evelyn Waugh dined with Evelyn Gardner and proposed to her at the Rite. The next day she rang Evelyn Waugh and accepted his proposal. She - Evelyn and he - Evelyn, as they were called did not announce their engagement formally, but both moved to Dorset. They were married at St Paul's Portman Square at 12 o'clock on Wednesday 27th June 1928. They had a good luncheon. Then to Paddington and by train to Oxford and a taxi to Beckley.

In July 1929 Waugh left his wife in London and came to Beckley to work on his second body 'Vile Bodies'. Sadly, a short time later he got a letter from his wife saying that she and their mutual friend John Heygate had fallen in love with each other. That was the end of a very short marriage. Waugh subsequently returned to Beckley to write parts of his first two African-set books, *Black Mischief* and *Remote People*.¹¹

The blue plaque was unveiled on 28th July 2018 by Alexander Waugh, the novelist's grandson, at a ceremony followed by a 'big feast' inspired by the one Evelyn and Alastair had enjoyed exactly ninety-four years earlier.

Evelyn Waugh is not the only writer associated with Beckley. Two notable members of the Inklings, the literary group founded by CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien, lived in the village from 1922-23, and - given Tolkien's well-documented fondness for beer - it is quite possible that some of them might have visited the pub at the same time as Waugh.

Beckley's landscape has been the inspiration for several literary masterpieces: Lewis Carroll's chess-board landscape in *Through the Looking Glass* is said to have been inspired by views of Otmoor. Beckley also features in the work of John Buchan - the *Thirty-Nine Steps*, R.D. Blackmore - *Cripps the Carrier*, and Susan Hill - the *Magic Apple Tree*. A strong and uncanny genius loci presides, layered with contentious history. Aldous Huxley set his first book, a satirical novel called *Crome Yellow* at Beckley Park.

Beckley continues today to be the home for writers of note. Tony Strong, also writes under the pseudonym J.P. Delaney has written a number of successful suspense, mystery and thriller novels. Among them - *Death Pit*, *The Poison Tree*, *The Girl Before*, *Believe Me* and *the Perfect Wife*.

Between 1841 and 1911, Beckley had 3620 acres under cultivation, falling to 2271 acres in 1951, a figure that remained unchanged in 1961. Throughout this period, the area under water (i.e., Otmoor) remained static. In 1920, the RAF acquired Otmoor for use as a bombing range. Part of the moor remains in military use today as a rifle range, and also forms a large part of the Otmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), much of which has been owned

¹¹ With thanks to Tony Strong author - Evelyn Waugh and Beckley and Literary Associations

and managed by the RSPB since the early 1980 s. Today a red flag flying above the MoD firing range indicates when it might be sensible to avoid certain footpaths.

Some landmarks in Beckley's history –

1919-21 marks the break up and sale of two estates: Viscount Bertie of Thame and the Cooke family and the beginning of individual home ownership and end of the feudal system.

1930 s - late 50s 500 acres of moor owned by Ministry of Defence used by the Royal Air Force as bombing range. A site of Special Scientific Interest 1952 and MOD works with various conservation groups to preserve nature conservation interest.

1953 to present day eastern part of moor by Army as firing range.

1996 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds obtained 520 acres and in 1998 another 128 acres of arable field being restored to wetlands and reed beds.

Community Life

In the 1960s, community life in Beckley suffered a blow, with the closure of significant local resources, such as the village shop and post office in 1963.

Despite this, in 1961 the village raised funds for and built a swimming pool. Although primarily for the use of the village school, it provided a valued resource for the community for the next 40 years.

2011 saw the formation of the Beckley Community Orchard on Constable's Piece, an area of land of special wildlife interest and managed by Thames water. The project has successfully seen the planting and nurturing of XXX trees some species being found only in Beckley.

In 2016, the Abingdon Arms, where Evelyn Waugh drank whilst studying for his third-class degree, honeymooned, and wrote Vile Bodies, was put up for sale. Members of the village and surrounding community were concerned that like many other pubs its doors might close for good. So, the village formed the Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society Limited (BACBS), and, through a successful community share offer, raised the funds required to buy the freehold and carry out essential repairs and refurbishment. The Abingdon Arms is now an excellent community pub — that rallying spirit again.

In 2017, Beckley rebuilt, and newly equipped, its village hall. It has extensive panoramic views to the Chilterns and over Otmoor.

An aerial view of Beckley shows a landscape relatively unchanged since the 19th-century "Otmoor riots", occasioned by enclosure of the common grazing land on Otmoor. The M40 threatened to bisect Otmoor in the 1980s, but campaigners sold off a single field - Alice's Field' - in thousands of plots to frustrate the process of compulsory purchase - echoing the resistance to enclosure. The village continues to try to protect its identity and heritage in the face of threats from major road schemes and significant housing development.

Oxford (Beckley) Transmitting Station

This is a landmark for Beckley and can be seen from the Stokenchurch cutting on the M40 and across Oxford. Built originally by the BBC as a radio transmitter it stands 165.7 metres (544 ft) high and is owned and operated by Arqiva. It is situated at the end of New Road on the south-east edge of Beckley village on land 129.5 metres (425 ft) above sea level, near the site of the former Beckley windmill.

The geographical coverage for television is most of Oxfordshire, western Buckinghamshire, eastern Gloucestershire and northern parts of Berkshire and Wiltshire.

2.4. POPULATION

From the earliest days Beckley has lived by farming, although it has never thrived. There were about 70 people in the village at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, but still only 70 at the time of the 1377 poll tax. The village has never been as prosperous as its near neighbour of Horton (Bucks), which was built on good soil at the edge of Otmoor, where Beckley was established on top of the poorer ridge of calcareous grit and coral rag.

In 1822 the population was 343. Seventy years later it had risen to 344. Increases in the last seventy years has been more rapid.

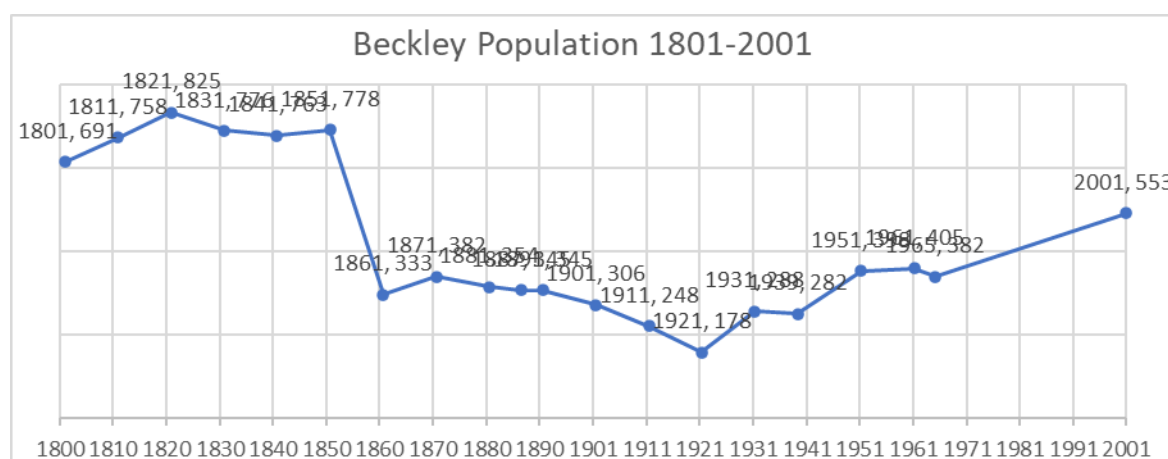


Figure 2.4.1. POPULATION OF BECKLEY 1801-2001

The population underwent a rapid decline between 1801 and 1901, but staged a slow recovery from 1921. The reasons for the earlier decline can be traced to industrialisation and changes in the population centres of England.

In the early 19th century, whilst rapid population growth was taking place in the industrial districts of Lancashire and South Wales, Beckley's population remained stagnant, reflecting the nature of its economy, which was based on arable agriculture. During the 1810s and 1820s, some agricultural areas did grow rapidly e.g., the fens of northern East Anglia, as drainage schemes turned marshes into fertile farmland, supporting the move to drain Otmoor and enclose the land.

Explanation for the drop in the population of Beckley between 1850 and 1860, which is mirrored in other Otmoor towns, might lie in the enclosure of Otmoor twenty years previously. Enclosure had resulted in the reduction of the amount of common land which traditionally supported the labouring classes. By the 1850s, a period of general economic pressure resulting from the Napoleonic Wars, the poor of Beckley were struggling to survive. Despite food, money, and coal being given or sold cheaply to the poor by the local Poor Law Unions, violence flared sporadically because of high food prices, with crowds in and around Oxford terrorizing local farmers, including those in Beckley, in an effort to force them to sell their corn cheaply. The authorities sought to maintain order by sending troops of horse from Reading to Oxford, and by calling out the local militia. Some rural poor sought a better life in

the city. The parish of St Clements saw a 135% increase in its population in the 1850s as people flooded into Oxford seeking work.

People may also have left their villages because of the attraction of new opportunities. Enclosure affected only a small proportion of the population. Workers in the factories and mills of northern England were not dispossessed agricultural labourers but were primarily recruited from local families who had long been involved in some form of manufacturing. London and Oxford not only offered jobs with higher pay, but promised a varied and freer social life, appealing to young men and women who found life in a small community oppressive and dull.

Emigration was common as new opportunities were opening up in North America, Australia and New Zealand. In the 1930s, growth became focused almost entirely around London, a trend that continued into the 1950s and 1960s.

Today Beckley and Stowood Parish has approximately 250 households, the total number of people on the electoral roll is 458 [Jan 2017] and total population is 606 [2011 census]. The 1961 census data showed a population of 475 residing in 161 houses, having risen from a population of 398 in 113 houses in 1951. According to ONS Census 2011 there were slightly more males than females, with a median age of 48.8 and a mean age of 44.1 ¹²

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Variable		
All usual residents	608	100.0
Males	312	51.3
Females	296	48.7
Lives in a household	608	100.0
Lives in a communal establishment	0	0.0
Schoolchild or full-time student aged 4 and over at their non term-time address	24	-
Area (Hectares)	917.07	-
Density (number of persons per hectare)	0.7	-

¹² ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Age		
All usual residents	608	100.0
Age 0 to 4	21	3.5
Age 5 to 7	19	3.1
Age 8 to 9	9	1.5
Age 10 to 14	40	6.6
Age 15	16	2.6
Age 16 to 17	19	3.1
Age 18 to 19	11	1.8
Age 20 to 24	17	2.8
Age 25 to 29	21	3.5
Age 30 to 44	91	15.0
Age 45 to 59	173	28.5
Age 60 to 64	50	8.2
Age 65 to 74	77	12.7
Age 75 to 84	38	6.3
Age 85 to 89	6	1.0
Age 90 and over	0	0.0
Mean Age	44.1	-
Median Age	48.5	-

According to the ONS census (2011) 74% of households consist of one family, 16,8% were one person households and 10% have household aged 65 years or older. 22% have no children, 20% have dependent children. See table below.¹³

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Household Composition		
All categories: Household composition	238	100.0
One person household	40	16.8
Aged 65 and over	28	11.8
Other	12	5.0

¹³ ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

One family household	176	73.9
All aged 65 and over	24	10.1
Married or same-sex civil partnership couple	117	49.2
No children	53	22.3
Dependent children	49	20.6
All children non-dependent	15	6.3
Cohabiting couple	27	11.3
No children	22	9.2
Dependent children	4	1.7
All children non-dependent	1	0.4
Lone parent	8	3.4
Dependent children	4	1.7
All children non-dependent	4	1.7
Other household types	22	9.2
With dependent children	3	1.3
All full-time students	0	0.0
All aged 65 and over	2	0.8
Other	17	7.1

2.4.1. Health

Beckley General Health Statistics

The respondents of the 2011 Census were asked to rate their health. The percentage of residents in Beckley rating their health as 'very good' was more than the national average. Also, the percentage of residents in Beckley rating their health as 'very bad' was less than the national average, suggesting that the health of the residents of Beckley is generally better than the average person in England. ¹⁴

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
disability/health/care		
All categories: Long-term health problem or disability	608	100.0
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	31	5.1
Day-to-day activities limited a little	44	7.2
Day-to-day activities not limited	533	87.7
Day-to-day activities limited a lot: Age 16 to 64	8	1.3
Day-to-day activities limited a little: Age 16 to 64	20	3.3
Day-to-day activities not limited: Age 16 to 64	354	58.2
Very good health	339	55.8
Good health	185	30.4

¹⁴ ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

Fair health	65	10.7
Bad health	15	2.5
Very bad health	4	0.7
Provides no unpaid care	502	82.6
Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	84	13.8
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	8	1.3
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	14	2.3

According to the index of deprivation 2019 the parishes of Beckley, Stanton St John and Elsfield LLSOA* is ranked 19, 532 out of 32,844 areas in England, where 1 is the highest level of deprivation (*Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs): LSOAs have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households.) This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. In 2015 the area was ranked 20,247 out of 32,844 areas, amongst the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods. In contrast however, next to Wick Farm, the Barton estate on the edge of Oxford was ranked 5,216 in 2019 and 5,319 both the 20% most deprived areas.¹⁵

¹⁵ Indices of Deprivation - http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html

2.5. THE DEVELOPMENT BECKLEY AND STOWOOD

Beckley is naturally proud that although not a designated 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', as seen in the Landscape Assessment, it has great landscape value and is equally proud of its domestic architecture. Nearly all the [original] houses are built of Coral Rag, a grey stone only to be found in Wheatley, the Miltons, Stanton St John, and Old Headington. There is a spacious recreation ground on the top of the hill.

As shown in Section 2.3 Beckley and Stowood History there have been settlements in the parish since the bronze age and Roman times. Early buildings were Beckley Palace and there would have been housing for farm labourers mentioned in the Domesday Book, and an earlier wooden version of the church. Beckley Park was possibly first built around 1175, but first mentioned in 1347.

There are two houses of significant size in the village: Grove House, believed to have been built in the 18th century, but on older foundations, and the remote and austere beautiful Beckley Park. Beckley Park, built around 1540 and occupied during the C17 and C18 by the Earl of Abingdon's tenant farmers, continued in agricultural use until the early C20, when it was bought and restored. It remains (2020) in private ownership, and is now associated with a foundation devoted to psychedelic research.

The first report on how well people were housed was the census of 1891, but the only statistics gathered were on the number of rooms and the number of people in each household. The 1891 census records that 38% of Beckley's population was at or exceeded "Over 1.5 persons per room" i.e., the most crowded category. By 1931 and 1951 matters had improved and Beckley reported that 3% of its properties fell into the most crowded category "Under 2 persons per room".

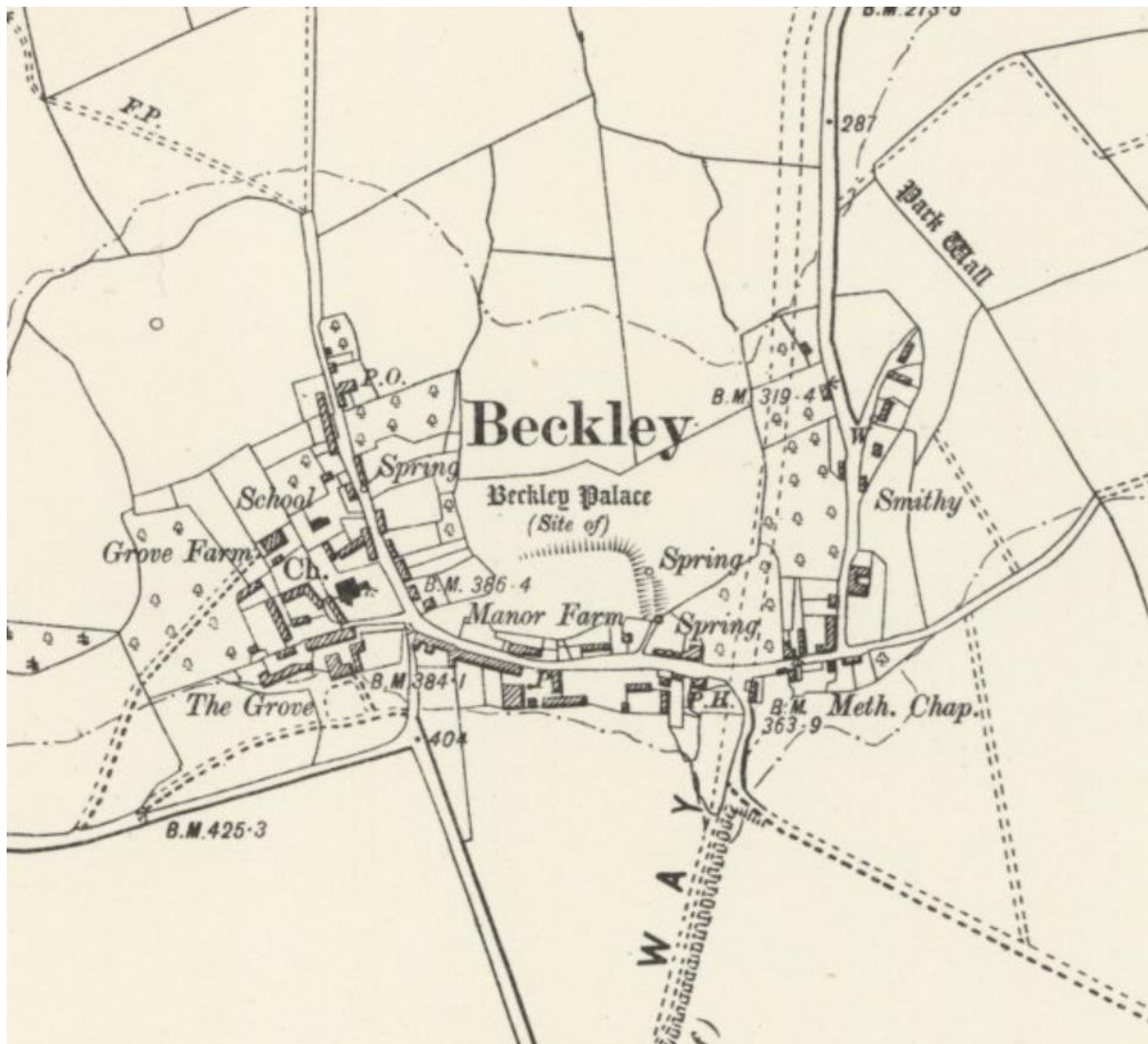


Figure 2.5.1. ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP BECKLEY 1900

The ordnance survey map from c 1900 shows from the west to east Grove House and to the north a number of houses down Church Street, Grove Farm and an orchard. There are photographs of Church Street in section 2.10.1 and a map of the listed buildings in section 2.11.1. Many of the listed houses and the details of their listings show that they were built in the 17th century.¹⁶ Most are constructed of local materials - limestone rubble, some with quoins and most with wooden lintels. Many would originally have been thatched, as can be seen from the steep pitches of their roofs, although some are now tiled. There was post office at the end of Church Street. What is now the High Street shows fewer buildings to the north, Manor Farm House, built in the 17th century of limestone rubble with quoins, another building and the pub, The Abingdon Arms, which was built later in the 18th century with an orchard next door. Further east along the High Street there are two more listed buildings The Rosary and The Old Manor House.

¹⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1047648>

On the south side there are more houses and farms and a Methodist Chapel, again mostly of lime rubble construction and many would originally have had thatched roofs.

To the east running north is Otmoor Lane. There are few houses on the west side, it mainly being orchard. On the east side the first house is Cripps Cottage built earlier than many others in the late 16th century and constructed of limestone rubble, wooden lintels and thatch. There are 5 other houses the last being The Cottage a thatched house of limestone rubble.

To the south east there is a track running to the east. This was to Woodperry House in the next parish. It should be noted that there are no buildings shown along this track, although now the housing density along what is now Woodperry Road is one of the highest, similar to the High Street.

“The bakery on Church Street ... beautiful stone cottage with four layers of thatch across from it ... square farm house behind ... with three immense trees in a row ... drank in the stupendous view of which I should never tire ... also four shoemakers, a blacksmith, a wheelwright and a basket maker, who used the osiers from Otmoor. “

Up to the First World War the development of the village was concentrated in a small area with farms and cottages along the High Street and for short distances down Church Street and Otmoor Lane. There were numerous small fields and orchards interspersed between the houses. This is illustrated by the detailed six inch version of the Ordnance Survey updated to about 1900 above.

Between the wars development of bungalows began on the road to Woodperry, mainly at the eastern end with a half dozen spread along the rest of the road to the west. There was little development in the rest of the parish with just the occasional agricultural worker's cottage. Some of the smallest existing terraced cottages were combined to make larger units.

In 1949 Bullingdon Rural District Council obtained permission from the County Council to build two pairs of semi-detached council houses in the High Street. During the 1950s more bungalows were put in Woodperry Road filling up the central section and a couple of new houses extended development in Otmoor Lane just before the Green Belt legislation discouraged further ribbon development.

In the 1960s the western end of Woodperry Road was filled in with two story houses, and more infill began in the older part of the village, a process that has continued to the present day. Bullingdon RDC built four “old people's bungalows” in the High Street in 1967 and a further five in Roman Way in 1971. As older agricultural buildings have ceased to be used for their original purpose they have been converted to domestic use.

In 1973 permission was given to build 11 houses in Beckley Court, an old quarry off Woodperry Road. Three more houses were built in 1974 filling the last sizeable gap in Woodperry Road. Over time many of the bungalows in the road have been extended upwards and outward.

In the present century a number of bungalows in Woodperry Road and nearby have been replaced with much larger houses and this process is continuing. This brings more families

with children to the village but reduces the availability of properties to downsize into when the children leave home.

Housing facts about Beckley recorded in the census were as follows:

- In 1901, 73 houses were occupied by families; 9 were in single occupation; 5 were regarded as uninhabitable – but in occupation; a further 6 were both uninhabited and unoccupied.
- In 1921, there were 276 habitable rooms i.e., rooms which were lived in - not including bathrooms (if any), lobbies, offices, kitchens, stables, storerooms etc. By 1931 the number had risen to 411 habitable rooms.

In the post war period, uncontrolled ribbon development took place along the Woodperry Road to accommodate the increased demand for housing near to the Morris car factory and to the new hospitals.

“There is a danger of Beckley eventually being overrun by Oxford and being ruined.....”¹⁷

“Already”, said Mr Gresswell, “we are a dormitory for Cowley workers and Oxford dons. Already bungalows are being run up on the top road and there is no co-ordinated plan of design..... We have an even worse problem in Beckley than indiscriminate building. Just below us lies Otmoor, acquired in 1933 by the War Office as a bombing site, and close by it stands a rifle range, used by the Territorials on Sundays and the Regular Army during the week. This means that a constant succession of heavy lorries, ammunition wagons, and the like coming at high speed down our all too narrow streets, which are full of hair-pin bends and extremely dangerous corners. There is no pavement, so the children are accustomed to walk in the middle of the road.”

To preserve its present splendid isolation (it stands four hundred feet up) and to retain its highly individual character defined by Joanna Cannan as “a queer look of distinguished shabbiness”, Mr. Gresswell advocates freezing future development.

“Life in Beckley is as lively as its many crystal clear rills and springs I saw gushing and rippling all over the village and I fear that if Oxford is allowed to spill over the hill, those rills and that character will become muddied and dull. “

We can get some idea of what Beckley was like over the course of the 20th century from the census returns, other published surveys, surveys carried out for landowners, and “folk” memory; although exact comparisons are difficult, because of differences in scope and methodology, meaning that one is sometimes comparing apples and pears. For example, prior to 1951, questions about housing in the census were concerned solely with whether a house was occupied or derelict, whereas from 1951 onwards, they focused on the 'amenities' available, meaning whether households either possessed or had shared access to such facilities as piped water, a cooking stove, a kitchen sink, a 'water closet' (a flush toilet), or a 'fixed bath', as distinct from a tin bath hung on the wall between uses. By 2011, the only "amenity" recorded in the census was central heating, so direct comparisons over the period from 1951 to 2011 are impossible.

¹⁷ An English Village: Beckley, Oxfordshire - Gresswell, P.D. 1955 942.57BECK

By the 1960s electricity and water were connected to all inhabited properties. The last property installing electricity did so in 1965 after making use of candles and oil lamps for over 200 years. Some still only had use of a single cold water tap, but the majority of the properties had bathrooms and inside toilets. There was then and still is no mains drainage in the village.

In 2011, Beckley had 232 houses, and a higher rate of home ownership, either outright or via a mortgage, than the national average.

In the south of the Parish, Wick Farm provides 52 mobile homes for purchase and these represent more affordable homes in the parish. Pricing is not available as the mobile homes are bought and sold through the park owners.

For many years Wick Farm was owned by the Buswell family, who sold the farm, but kept the mobile home park, along with other parks nearby. In early summer 2017 the mobile home site was sold to Parthings Farm Management and Promotions Ltd, owned by the Aubrey-Fletcher family whose other company, Wick Farming Ltd, own the rest of Wick Farm. According to the information at Companies House the Nature of the Business of Parthings Farm Management is 'buying and selling of own real estate' and 'public relations and communications activity'. Wick Farm mobile home park is now managed by Bruton Solutions Ltd, which manages many mobile home parks all over the country.

The main dwellings are in Beckley village. Most homes here are owner occupied (85%), although there is some social housing for rent through SOHA, a housing association (5%), and some private landlords (7.6%). SOHA owns 8 bungalows in High Street and Roman Way in Beckley and these all have long standing tenants. However, most of the houses in Beckley village and Stowood are detached with 4 or more bedrooms, although the average according to ONS is 3.3. This makes Beckley an expensive place to buy houses with few affordable small homes. Please see ONS census information below ⁻¹⁸

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Dwelling Type		
All categories: Dwelling type	256	100.0
Unshared dwelling	256	100.0
Shared dwelling: Two household spaces	0	0.0
Shared dwelling: Three or more household spaces	0	0.0
All categories: Household spaces	256	100.0
Household spaces with at least one usual resident	238	93.0
Household spaces with no usual residents	18	7.0
Whole house or bungalow: Detached	159	62.1
Whole house or bungalow: Semi-detached	43	16.8
Whole house or bungalow: Terraced (including end-terrace)	8	3.1
Flat, maisonette or apartment: Purpose-built block of flats or tenement	0	0.0

¹⁸ ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

Flat, maisonette or apartment: Part of a converted or shared house (including bed-sits)	2	0.8
Flat, maisonette or apartment: In a commercial building	1	0.4
Caravan or other mobile or temporary structure	43	16.8

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Tenure		
All households	238	100.0
Owned	203	85.3
Owned outright	129	54.2
Owned with a mortgage or loan	74	31.1
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)	5	2.1
Social rented	12	5.0
Rented from council (Local Authority)	1	0.4
Other	11	4.6
Private rented	18	7.6
Private landlord or letting agency	17	7.1
Other	1	0.4
Living rent free	0	0.0

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Central Heating		
All categories: Type of central heating in household	238	100.0
Does not have central heating	4	1.7
Does have central heating	234	98.3
Occupancy rating (rooms) of -1 or less	6	2.5
Occupancy rating (bedrooms) of -1 or less	5	2.1
Average household size	2.6	-
Average number of rooms per household	6.9	-
Average number of bedrooms per household	3.3	-

Beckley has good access to Oxford, the A34 and M40 and is a popular place to live due to its location and attractiveness. In the last 7 years house prices in Beckley have ranged from £290,000 for a 2-bedroom bungalow (17.2.16) to £1.1 million for a large farmhouse (2.10.15) and a 4-bedroom house (25.5.18). Many of the houses in Beckley village are detached with 4/5 bedrooms and command high prices. In July 2017, there were 7 houses on the market ¹⁹. The prices ranged from £650,000 for a modern 4-bedroom detached house, to 2 listed houses in the conservation area at £875,000 (4-bedrooms) and £895,000 (3-bedroom farmhouse,) and 3 more modern houses with 4 and 5-bedroom at between 1 million and 1.25 million. In 2019 only 3 properties were sold in Beckley with prices ranging from £625k to £875k. In 2021 5 houses were sold the prices ranging from £380,000 to £995,000. At Wick Farm there is less sales information available, but a mobile home was on the market in '22 for £95,000.

2.5.1. Initial Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results

The Population of Beckley and Stowood

The responses to the survey show that population of the parish (who responded to the survey) mainly consists of older age groups 28% 60-69 and 52% 45-49. 82% had no children in the household and the small number with children had 1-3 children. The children's ages ranged between pre-school and 18 years with the highest proportion being between 11-16, but the total numbers were very small.

Consequently 46% of households consisted of only two people. Over 51% of respondents had lived in Beckley parish for 21 to over 30 years.

Services

Being a rural parish only the main part of Beckley village is served by mains drainage, which was put in a few years ago. 42% of respondents are not on mains drainage.

The parish does not have mains gas and so a variety of fuel is used, the most popular being oil, followed by wood and LPG, with heat pumps as the next most common heat source. Many households use a number of different types of fuel. If main gas were available 36% highly likely to want to use it.

Housing

Although the majority of households responding have 1 or 2 residents, 45% of houses have 4 bedrooms, with 66% having 4 bedrooms or more.

Asked about their intention to move house in the next 5-10 years 71% had no plans to do so. 10% said they might move, of these 20% said their house was too large; 7% too small; 13% wanted to live independently; 7% wanted to live closer to relatives. Most were trying to downsize either house or garden, which reflects the ages of the respondents. 7% felt their

¹⁹ RightMove

house too small. If moving the ideal sized house for 35% of those who responded was 2 bedrooms, 29% 3 bedrooms and the same percentage with 4 bedrooms.

Asked about the provision of affordable housing, 96% did not want it. Only 2 respondents [3.6%] wanted affordable housing and only 1 person wanted housing with support services provided.

Community Buildings

The community buildings are few but significant –

- **Our church** - The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- **Our primary school** – Beckley Church of England Primary School, which also serves surrounding villages and has 140 pupils
- **Our pub** – The Abingdon Arms after being bought by the community has been refurbished and reopened with a new landlord and team
- **Our new village hall** – This has recently been rebuilt at a cost of approximately £1 million funded by substantial grants from the Lottery Commission, SODC and others and was opened in early 2017.

There are no shops or other facilities, but locals use the excellent village shop in the next village of Stanton St John. Rectory Farm at Stanton St John also has a pick your own and vegetable and produce shop in the summer and Mr Finn the butcher, near Bernwood Forest sells fine local meat.

2.6. BUSINESSES, EMPLOYMENT AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

There are a large number of businesses registered in the Parish, but most are people working from home, rather than employing others or rendering a service directly to the local area.

Farming used to employ many people, but gradually it has become more capital intensive with only one farm in the parish that is farmed directly – Folly Farm. Others rely on contracted services from Folly Farm or elsewhere.

The only businesses in the parish directly employing others are –

- The Abingdon Arms
- Car repair businesses at Wick Farm and Stowood
- 3 property and renovation businesses in Beckley
- Beckley School
- A record business
- A stove company
- A tree surgeon
- A medical instrument company
- Folly Farm

A full list can be found in Appendix 5.

Employment

According to the ONS census data 2011 75% of residents are economically active of which 12.6% are part time and 38.8% are employed full time and 19.4% are self-employed. Unemployment is very low – 1.3%²⁰

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Economic Activity		
All usual residents aged 16 to 74	459	100.0
Economically active	344	74.9
In employment	325	70.8
Employee: Part-time	58	12.6
Employee: Full-time	178	38.8
Self-employed	89	19.4
Unemployed	9	2.0
Full-time student	10	2.2
Economically Inactive	115	25.1
Retired	73	15.9
Student (including full-time students)	16	3.5

²⁰ ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

Looking after home or family	14	3.1
Long-term sick or disabled	4	0.9
Other	8	1.7
Unemployed: Age 16 to 24	5	1.1
Unemployed: Age 50 to 74	0	0.0
Unemployed: Never worked	1	0.2
Long-term unemployed	0	0.0

There is a marked difference in the hours worked by male and female residents. 45% of men work full time, while only 23% of women. ²¹

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Hours Worked		
All usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment the week before the census	334	100.0
Part-time: 15 hours or less worked	35	10.5
Part-time: 16 to 30 hours worked	70	21.0
Full-time: 31 to 48 hours worked	156	46.7
Full-time: 49 or more hours worked	73	21.9
Males	179	53.6
Part-time: 15 hours or less worked	10	3.0
Part-time: 16 to 30 hours worked	18	5.4
Full-time: 31 to 48 hours worked	94	28.1
Full-time: 49 or more hours worked	57	17.1
Females	155	46.4
Part-time: 15 hours or less worked	25	7.5
Part-time: 16 to 30 hours worked	52	15.6
Full-time: 31 to 48 hours worked	62	18.6
Full-time: 49 or more hours worked	16	4.8

As might be expected in a village near a university city the highest proportion of residents work in education – 15.6%, while the second highest work in human health and social work – 14.4% and professional, scientific and technical – 11.4% due to the proximity of the local hospitals and universities. The next in ranking is repair of motor vehicles and cycles and there a number of businesses both in Wick Farm and Beckley. ¹⁰

²¹ ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	valu e	percen t
Industry		
All categories: Industry	334	100.0
A Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8	2.4
B Mining and quarrying	1	0.3
C Manufacturing	14	4.2
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	2	0.6
E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1	0.3
F Construction	27	8.1
G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles	37	11.1
H Transport and storage	16	4.8
I Accommodation and food service activities	10	3.0
J Information and communication	20	6.0
K Financial and insurance activities	5	1.5
L Real estate activities	9	2.7
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	38	11.4
N Administrative and support service activities	14	4.2
O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	13	3.9
P Education	52	15.6
Q Human health and social work activities	48	14.4
R, S, T, U Other	19	5.7

The residents of the parish are very highly skilled and qualified. The highest category – 30.2% are professionals and 15.9% directors and senior managers.²²

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Occupation		
All categories: Occupation	334	100.0
1. Managers, directors and senior officials	53	15.9
2. Professional occupations	101	30.2
3. Associate professional and technical occupations	34	10.2
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations	36	10.8
5. Skilled trades occupations	36	10.8
6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations	19	5.7
7. Sales and customer service occupations	16	4.8
8. Process plant and machine operatives	14	4.2
9. Elementary occupations	25	7.5

²² ONS Census Data 2011 - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

From the initial parish survey-

Numbers of respondents in employment: numbers were reasonably split with 37% of households where none were employed to 27% where one was and 34% where two were. This reflects the older age profile of respondents.

2.6.1. Survey Results from Local Businesses and Organisations – Employers

Please find the survey analysis in Appendix 6.

There are 24 businesses and organisations listed in Appendix 2. and a further 3 local leisure and sport groups. Many of these are very small organisations - one-man bands. Only 6 local business and organisations responded to the survey, although there were several requests and reminders. However, those who did were some of the most significant and important employers – Beckley School, The Abingdon Arms, Stowood Instruments, Buswell Parks Mobile Homes at Wick Farm and some smaller, but long-standing well-known local businesses - MJ Bennett Property Development and John Moore Heritage Services.

The numbers of employees varied considerably from 20-30 to 1, as would be expected from the wide variety of business sizes responding. The businesses had operated in Beckley from less than a year (the new managers of The Abingdon Arms pub), to half the respondents who had been in Beckley more than 30 years.

There was interest in main gas if it were to be made available. Currently the respondents use oil or LPG.

Looking at development in the parish most felt there was a need for low-cost housing and would like to attract a more mixed age group of residents. There was strong support for developing older buildings, such as barns for housing or business premises, outside the conservation area.

Most staff commute to work by car or cycle, or a few walk. The commuting distance is less than 30 miles, the most common between 5 and 20 miles. Concern was expressed about the lack of a bus service and car parking, but not traffic. The issues that concerned most was transport and commuting of staff and linked to that the availability of staff and affordable housing, presumably again for staff. There was a small concern expressed for the availability of business premises, but commuting was the main concern.

Please find the survey questionnaire in Appendix 7.

2.6.2. Farming

“From the earliest days Beckley has lived by farming although it has never thrived. There were about 70 people in the village at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 but still only 79 at the time of the 1377 poll tax. The village has never been as prosperous as its near neighbour of Horton (Bucks), which was built on good soil on the edge of Otmoor, whereas Beckley was established on top of the poorer ridge of calcareous grit and coral rag.” – “Along with growing crops such as wheat, rye, barley, peas and turnips, the surrounding forests and woodland were important to the village economy. Timber from Beckley Park was much used in the building industry and in 1457 twelve oaks were used in the construction of All Souls College, Oxford”.²³

Landscape

In general, the area divides in two: the elevated land tends to be sandy and mainly arable, whilst the low-lying land is mainly alluvial clay in grass for summer grazing. The village of Beckley and the area immediately surrounding it drain via Otmoor to the River Ray. Occasional, but regular, flooding occurs after a heavy storm along both Otmoor Lane and Church Street in Beckley; Yellow Hammer Cottage at the intersection of High Street and Otmoor Lane has sustained flooding from run off from the field above it. Development could exacerbate this and the flooding may waterlog land making it unsuitable for farming for some of the year e.g., land near Otmoor.

The catchment area for the Bayswater Brook extends to Stanton St John and Forest Hill. It includes the Barton Estate, Sandhills Estate, and some of Headington. With the post war rush for housing, it is likely that no planning consideration was given for flood alleviation. The Bayswater Brook at Wick Farm flows in a northerly direction beside the Woodeaton Road before entering River Cherwell near Sescut Farm. The Woodeaton Road is regularly closed because of flash flooding caused by the post-war development and this flooding has recently been severely worsened by development at Barton Park. This has significant implications for further development.

The rural surroundings are an important leisure asset and Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood's position so close to centres of high population provides many opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding, blue-bell viewing in the copses, and other outdoor pursuits. Rural employment now includes farms, stabling, RSPB staff.

Oak from Stowood is said to have used to build ships for the Royal Navy.

Historically Beckley and Stowood Parish was mainly forest and farmland and there used to be many working farms, but in recent years the number of working farms has diminished significantly. Now there is one significant farm, which carries out contract work for most of the others. The number of farm workers has decreased to a handful.

²³ Beckley Conservation Area Assessment

Here is a list of current farms -

1. **Folly Farm**, Common Road - Richard and Chris Cox - mixed agricultural, contract over-wintering cattle, contract farming for surrounding smaller farms
Home of RSPB offices Otmoor Wildlife Reserve, stone, camping
2. **Lower Farm**, Otmoor Land – Ovens - rent out for grass and some fields for conservation
3. **Upper Park Farm** - summer grazing
4. **Middle Park Farm** - summer grazing
5. **New Inn Farm** - summer grazing plus top land in arable
6. **Lodge Farm** - Mrs Gordon- Duff - grazing for sheep
7. **Wick Farm** – Christ Church, Wick Farming Ltd - arable and grassland some land used for mobile home park and barns for small businesses
8. **Lower Farm**, Barton Village Road, near Barton - grassland
9. **Beckley Park** - Amanda Feilding, the Countess of Wemyss and March – arable grassland, some grazing
10. **Land Along Woodperry Road** - Dave Prosser- arable
11. **Land Down Church Street** - Graham Honor - Summer grazing and bulldozers contractor
12. **Wadley Hill Farm** – land formerly Royal Oak Farm – arable and grassland
13. **Royal Oak Farm**, Stowood – Soanes - Farmyard now used for businesses – stoves, cars and tree surgeons
13. **Redways Farm**, New Inn Road – Eadles – Pig farm and meat processing and rented out to car dealers and Oxford Event Hire
14. **Ten Area Farm** – New Inn Road – horses and cattle grazing

Lost Farms

From the names of houses in Beckley Village a number of farms have been lost, their land subsumed by other farms and their buildings retained or converted to housing –

- Grove Farm near the church
- Manor Farm House – The High Street
- Common Farm – The High Street
- Fox Hill Farm – New Inn Road

2.6.3. The Abingdon Arms

The Abingdon Arms, Beckley: now a community pub

Business at the Abingdon Arms had been faltering for some years when the company owning the pub put it up for sale in 2016. For fear of losing the pub, residents of Beckley, surrounding villages (two of which had lost their pubs already) and from further afield determined to secure its future for the benefit of Beckley and the wider community. The Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society (BACBS) was established to purchase the pub, and a community share offer raised the capital required for the purchase and associated costs. Over 280 shareholders raised nearly £500,000 in just a few weeks. Because of the very strong local support for this venture, the company owning the pub agreed the sale to BACBS, and the community took ownership of The Abingdon Arms in late January 2017. In the following 3 months, over 100 volunteers from the community repaired, redecorated and reopened the pub (an impressive evidence of community integration) while BACBS recruited professional tenants to run the pub in the longer term. After a short closure, the appointed tenants opened for business in June.



Figure 2.6.3. THE ABINGDON ARMS – COMMUNITY OWNED - FREEHOUSE

The community's primary aim was to re-establish The Abingdon Arms as a friendly, welcoming and flourishing village pub; and, although it is early days, this has been achieved. The pub is a free house that serves local beers and good, freshly cooked food prepared using locally sourced ingredients where available. It is once again the social heart of the village and wider community, a place for social gathering, cultural activities, somewhere to meet people and exchange information, and this will promote a cohesive community in the village and wider area. It is also a clear aim of the community purchase that the pub will work closely with and in support of other community facilities in the area, including in particular Beckley village hall.

BACBS and the pub's tenants will work with Beckley and other village halls to promote collaboration rather than competition. For example, the pub kitchen has been able to assist by providing catering for large-scale events at the village hall such as funeral wakes and Burns Night Suppers. Community amenities can and should complement one another to the overall benefit of the community.

The community will remain involved in the management, maintenance and improvement of the property, and will ensure community support for the tenants' successful operation of the pub. BACBS will invest any surplus profits from renting the property to its tenants in improving the pub and its facilities for the benefit of the community. Over time it may be possible to pay a modest level of interest to shareholders.

Purchase of The Abingdon Arms represents an unrivalled opportunity for Beckley and nearby villages to strengthen and sustain our community. Community ownership has many additional benefits, including:

- opportunities for local employment
- purchase of food produce and other goods from local suppliers
- boosting the local economy
- providing a venue for local groups, tourists, weddings and funerals
- sustaining local property prices
- potentially providing additional community amenities and services

More than a Pub

In time, the community purchase will enable The Abingdon Arms to be 'More than a Pub' for Beckley and the surrounding area. BACBS has won a substantial matched grant and loan from a national programme to extend the range of amenities and services provided by the pub, in line with government and district council policy. By investing in the following potential developments in conjunction with the pub's tenants, services could be provided to the community, which will enable fuller use to be made of the community-owned pub building and garden, to reduce journeys to Oxford, and thereby to improve local resources, offset the recent cuts in local bus services, and support environmental sustainability. These potential developments require further consultation and, with the tenants' support, might be introduced in stages over time.

Potential additional amenities include:

1. A café with WiFi serving local residents, parents and children from Beckley primary school, passing walkers, cyclists, and visitors to the Otmoor bird reserve; and offering additional local employment. As with the pub's core business, a café would provide an inclusive amenity for people who live locally and are restricted by lack of transport or reduced mobility.
2. A small shop, selling daily essentials such as bread, milk, butter, eggs, tea, coffee, etc.
3. A collection and delivery point for a range of retailers
4. A recreational, social and cultural activities including guided walks and cycle rides, games (e.g., chess, dominoes, cribbage), literary society, book exchange, and folk and jazz evenings.

The pub now has a successful programme of social events including a monthly quiz, Sunday evening talks and walks. The team running the pub have gained an excellent reputation for delicious food and creative menus, attracting clientele from a wide area. During COVID-19 restrictions they served take-away food and the business is now building back well.

A thriving pub is good for Beckley and its wider community, and supports key proposals in the Beckley Neighbourhood Plan

2.7. LEISURE AND WELLBEING

The Parish has a number of local groups and activities. Many of the local activities are held at the Abingdon Arms or Village Hall. Please see Appendix 8. for a list of local organisations.

Beckley abounds in areas for recreation. There is a playing field, tennis courts, and a children's play area at the Village Hall on Woodperry road, with changing rooms and bathroom facilities adjacent. Beckley Primary School's sports field on Church Street is the scene of much outdoor recreational activity throughout the school year.

People on organised walks, as well as individuals and informal groups, are seen regularly on the public footpaths (including those following Oxfordshire's Roman Road, The Oxfordshire Way, A Walk from Beckley by Oxford-Consultants, Oxford Green Belt Way, and Rectory Farm Afternoon Tea Walk by Oxfordshire Trails.

Cyclists and equestrians are a common sight, both on the roads in and out of Beckley, and on the bridleways.

2.7.1. The Village Hall



Figure 2.7.1.1. BECKLEY VILLAGE HALL WITH SEDUM ROOF

Beckley and Stowood Parish completed a new purpose build village hall, which opened early in 2017. This replaced a former hall that had served the community for many years, but it was second hand when bought and erected and had become uneconomical to repair. It had also become uninsurable.

The new village hall was built at a cost approaching £1 million, with funding from many sources including - The Big Lottery Fund, Viridor, South Oxfordshire District Council, local

residents and groups, and local fundraising. It is situated in Woodperry Road on top of the hill with excellent playing fields.

The hall is of a modern design to fit in with the local countryside and not be obtrusive. The walls facing the road are constructed of gabions to enhance the modern design, but also give good sound insulation. The hall has a sedum roof and it is planned to plant around the walls with climbing plants. There is a large car park suitable for 40 cars and the playing field can also be used for large village events, such as bonfire night.



Figure 2.7.1.2. THE VILLAGE HALL CAR PARK

The Village Hall is the centre of organised social activity in the parish and is a very important asset to the community. The new hall has two meeting rooms with sports changing facilities, a well-fitted kitchen and storage facilities.

Small Meeting Room – This is a triangular entrance hall suitable for smaller meetings for 8-10 and has a TV screen. The former hall had only one large room.

Main Hall – The dimensions are 16 x 8 metres and can seat 120 people comfortably. It has high ceilings, so can be used for indoor sport such as badminton. The Main Hall has a serving hatch to the kitchen and an opening glass wall to the playing fields with a wonderful view over Otmoor.

There is a stage with demountable stage units. It is planned to install projection equipment and wi-fi. The hall has stackable tables and chairs on wheeled racks.

Kitchen – This is fully fitted with ovens, hobs, dishwasher and microwave and has crockery available.

Changing Rooms – There are 2 changing rooms for men and women or opposing teams. These are showers and changing facilities.
The whole hall benefits from underfloor heating.

Activities

Sport

Being on top of a hill the playing fields are well drained and there is a pitch for football and cricket, as well as cricket nets.

There is a tennis court, build some years ago by villagers, which has been restored. Currently there are no village sports teams or clubs using the facilities, but it is planned to revive these, now the building work is complete and the pitch is recovering.

There is a children’s play area with a zip wire and climbing frames which is inspected regularly by the Parish Council.



Figure 2.7.1.3. VILLAGE HALL, PLAY ARE AND TENNIS COURT

Social Activities

The village hall is the centre of village and parish social events such as the Burns Night Supper, which was the first large social event to be held in the new village hall, with 112 people attending. Other very popular social events include –

- A bonfire night with a superb firework display, food and mulled wine attracting over 500
- A brilliant pantomime for the opening of the hall
- Barn dances
- Art and local craft displays



Figure 2.7.1.4. BURNS NIGHT SUPPER 2017

Now the new village hall has opened groups are meeting there gain on a regular basis –

- The Art Group
- Beckley Bells
- Pilates
- Yoga

With many more being formed.

The village hall is also hired out to local people and those further afield for weddings and parties and local organisations and businesses for meetings.

2.7.2. Footpaths and Bridleways

These are a very important asset to the parish and beyond, used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

From the south of the parish from the Bayswater Brook, the parish boundary, a bridleway runs north through Wick Farm to the B4027 at Stowood. This is an important route that some Beckley villagers use to get into Oxford via Barton and Headington. A footpath links with it along the Bayswater Brook to the west and two further footpaths go north from this, the first towards Wick and Sydlings Copses, which form part of the BBOWT (Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust) and then west towards the village of Elsfield and the second starts outside the Parish also goes north to Elsfield. These footpaths and bridleways are important for recreation for the residents of Wick Farm and Beckley and Stowood.

The bridleway from Wick Farm continues north and after a kink to the east follows the old Roman Road, which runs from Alchester (near Bicester – north) to Dorchester-on-Thames in the south. It leads directly into Beckley village and the Abingdon Arms.

Two important long-distance walking paths cross the parish from west to east and both go along Beckley High Street.

'The Oxfordshire Way winds through Oxfordshire from Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire to the banks of the River Thames in Henley'²⁴. Locally it runs from Noke in the west, through Church Street and the High Street in Beckley to Waterperry.

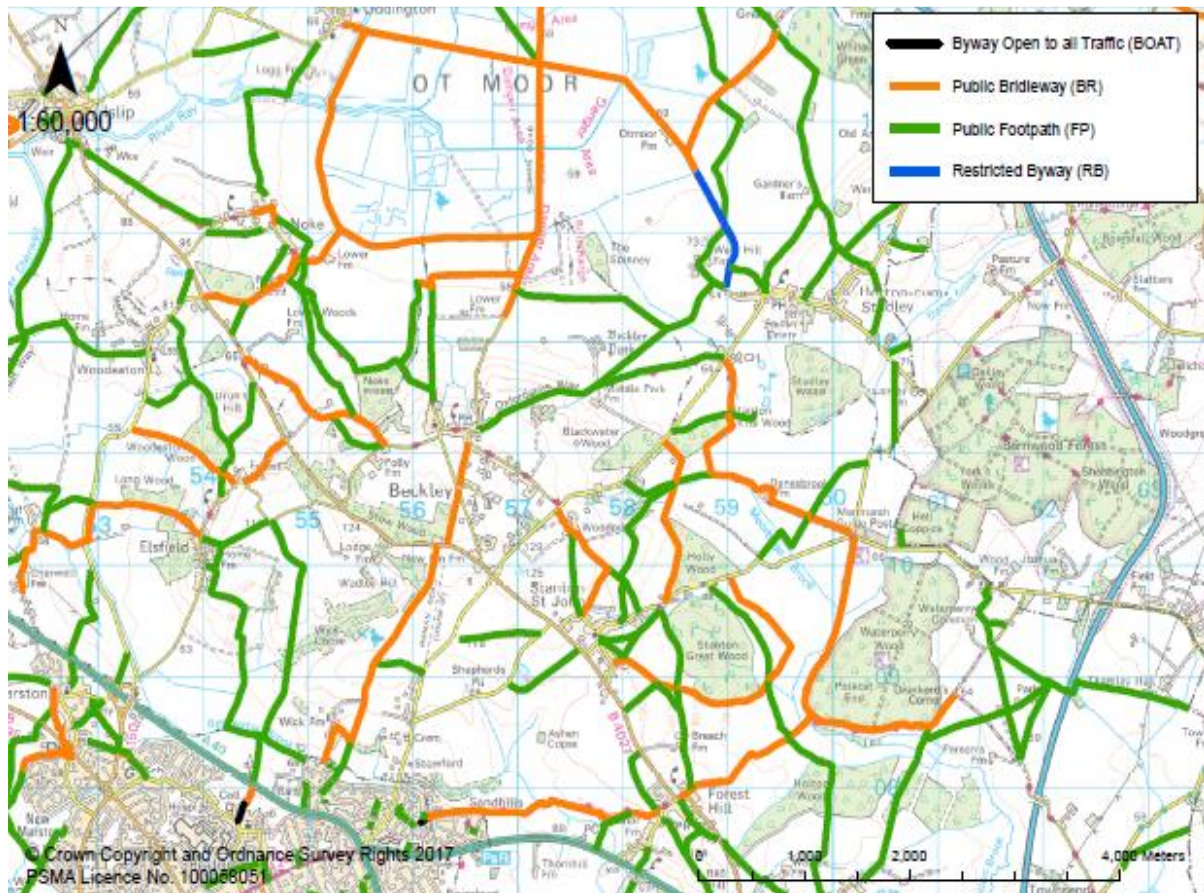


Figure 2.7.2.1. ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP OF FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

'The Oxford Green Belt Way, created by CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Oxfordshire in 2007, is a 50-mile circular walk, published to mark CPRE's 75th birthday, and to highlight the importance of the Green Belt, which was created around Oxford 50 years ago.'²⁵ It runs from Hampton Poyle in the west through Beckley High Street to Thornhill Park and Ride on the A40 into Oxford and makes a ring around Oxford.

In addition to these main routes a spur from the Oxfordshire Way goes around Beckley Park to the bottom of Otmoor Lane, so forming a long circular walk. There is also a circular walk around Otmoor itself, but some of this is within the danger area of the MOD firing range to the north east of Otmoor Lane and is often impassable. There is another circular walk from the bottom (north) of Church Street to Lower Farm and through Noke Wood. Many local residents and visitors enjoy and value these walks all year round.

²⁴ Oxfordshire County Council - <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-way>

²⁵ Oxfordshire County Council - <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxford-green-belt-way>

2.8. GETTING AROUND – TRANSPORT

In line with major objectives now being stated both locally and nationally, planning needs to be made for paths and lanes that would encourage the regular and safe use of both walking and cycling as a means of transport.

Transport plays an important part in the life of the Beckley and Stowood community. Pre-Roman and Roman routes crisscrossed the area, later passage in and out of Oxford made Beckley “A Village of Carriers” and more recently, a successful community campaign to reroute construction of the M40 away from Otmoor in order to preserve environmental and community life was fought, and won. Now the area serves as a hub for movement along the B4027 from The Green Road (Headington) Roundabout to the railway station and A34 at Islip and Oxford Parkway; between Oxford and Bicester along the Horton Road and movement to the Green Road roundabout and Thornhill Park and Ride from areas to the north and west. In addition, Beckley’s narrow streets are the only points of access to the MOD’s Rifle Range, the RSPB’s Otmoor Wetlands Reserve, and hiking around Otmoor and Beckley.

Public Transport

The Neighbourhood Area spans both sides of the B4027 as it moves from Wheatley to Islip, and has sections that border the Horton Road to the east. Both routes carry heavy traffic, which promises to increase. There are no designated foot or cycle paths along either of these roads. Pedestrians are now required to use both roads in order to access the nearest regular bus routes, as well as the village shops at nearby Stanton St John, Islip, or Barton, as Heyfordian buses 108 and 118 no longer come to Beckley. A new service was introduced in 2021 H5, an hourly bus service which runs from Bicester via Islip and B4027 to the John Radcliffe Hospitals via Barton. Action by a local resident has now provided a bus stop near the junction of B4027 with New Inn Road so local residents both from Beckley and Stanton St John could make use of it.

The north of the Parish, Beckley village and Stowood is not well served by public transport and so most travel is mainly by car or cycle. It is very difficult to live in Beckley without a car as there are few local facilities and no regular bus service, although there is a community bus scheme is two days a week.

The nearest main railway stations are at least 30 minutes by car at Oxford City Centre, the new Oxford Parkway or Thame and Haddenham Parkway for trains to London or Birmingham, although there is a small station at Islip which has an infrequent service to Bicester – London and Oxford.

There is an excellent coach service to London, which is much less expensive than trains, run by The Oxford Tube run by Stagecoach. They run from 10-minute intervals from Thornhill Park and Ride on the A40 which has a large car park.

Wick and Lower Farms are much better served with very regular bus services from Barton.

2.8.1. Roads

The B4027 Wheatley to Islip road was the main coaching route and drove road from London to Worcester and as a result there were a number of inns along the route. In the Parish, these were The White House, New Inn, Royal Oak, Red Lion and many more in Islip. Those in Beckley and Stowood are all now private houses.

The B4027 continues to be a main route and is heavily used. It is part of a lorry route from The Green Road/Headington roundabout on the Oxford ring road along the Bayswater Road through the Barton estate to A34 going west connecting to the M3 and south coast or A40 going east, connecting to the M40 to High Wycombe and London. The Neighbourhood Plan Area spans both sides of the B4027 as it moves from Wheatley to Islip, and has sections that border the Horton Road to the east. Both routes carry heavy traffic, which promises to increase. There is no speed restriction other than 60 mph on the Horton Road. The B4027 has a 50 mph limit as it passes the area. There are no designated foot or cycle paths along either of these roads.

The Parish has very good road communications, having access to the M40 and A34 and then the M4 and M3, therefore residents can commute to London, Birmingham, the south coast and most parts of the Thames Valley by car.

Those commuting into Oxford can do so by car along the Bayswater Road to the Green Road roundabout or via Elsfield. There are partial cycle tracks within Oxford for commuting, but none in the parish and the narrow lanes and well used B4027 are dangerous for cyclists. There is no daily bus service. At peak times travelling into Oxford can easily take 30-45 minutes.

Most households in the parish have access to a car or van (94.5%), as there is no regular public transport within the parish, apart from Wick Farm where the regular bus service from Barton into Oxford can be used.

date	2011	
geography	Beckley and Stowood	
measures	value	percent
Cars		
All categories: Car or van availability	238	100.0
No cars or vans in household	13	5.5
1 car or van in household	89	37.4
2 cars or vans in household	93	39.1
3 cars or vans in household	33	13.9
4 or more cars or vans in household	10	4.2
sum of all cars or vans in the area	422	-

2.8.2. Buses

From Beckley village pedestrians are now required to use both the Horton Road and B4027 in order to access the nearest bus routes at times. The Heyfordian buses 108 and 118 which served Beckley for many years no longer come to Beckley or the village shops at nearby Stanton St John or Islip. The service stopped in December 2016 with the withdrawal of the subsidy from Oxfordshire County Council. A new, but reduced service, the Otmoor Flyer, which serves Beckley on Tuesdays and Fridays making a trip into Oxford starting at 10.40 returning at 13.15 and serving other local villages of Stanton St John, Forest Hill and Horton-cum-Studley. There is a good regular bus service from Barton into Oxford.

In September '21 a local resident liaised with the County Council Highways and organised a new bus stop for the H5 bus on the B4027 near New Inn Road near Stowood. The H5 bus is run by Stagecoach from Bicester (Manorsfield Road near Pioneer Square) through Islip, along B4027, the Bayswater Road, through Barton Park to the John Radcliff Hospital and Headington shops and back. It runs every hour starting at 6 a.m. in Bicester and 7 a.m. at the JR and runs until after 7 p.m. Monday to Saturday. Local residents now have access to the John Radcliffe and Children's hospital; Headington shops take other buses into Oxford; Islip station for trains to London and Birmingham; Bicester shopping village and Bicester town without using our cars or a taxi or having to pay the very high parking charges. However, this bus stop while very convenient for the residents of Stowood is approximately 30 minutes' walk from the centre of Beckley village and there is no cycle rack.

2.8.3. Wick Farm

People living in Wick Farm and Lower Farm, Barton at the southern part of the parish have access to more frequent bus service via Barton City Routes approximately every 20 minutes to Oxford and Headington and more frequently at peak times.

2.8.4. Traffic Across the Parish

There is daily congestion along the B4027, Bayswater Road and Horton Road especially during peak times. Vehicles using these roads as a short cut from The Green Road Roundabout to the A34 and the railway stations at both Islip and Oxford Parkway and to Bicester, Bicester Shopping Village, the M40 and points north.

There have been a number of accidents, some fatal at the bends and junctions on B4027, particularly at the junction with the Bayswater and Elsfield Roads.

Concerns from local residents include –

- The speed of traffic
- The lack of pedestrian, cycle, or equestrian lanes
- Impaired vision at entrance to the B4027 at both Woodperry and Common Roads from uncut weeds

2.8.5. Traffic In Beckley Village and Wick Farm

Beckley Village

Although Beckley village has no through traffic, the narrow roads in the village of Beckley's are the only points of access to the MOD's Rifle Range and the RSPB's Otmoor Wetlands Reserve, both at the bottom of Otmoor Lane, and Beckley School in Church Street.

MOD vehicles are too large to get back round the corners from Otmoor Lane. Residents are frequently asked to move their cars so large MOD coaches can get past.

The RSPB nature reserve at the bottom of Otmoor Lane has a large amount of traffic, which causes problems down the single track Otmoor Lane with cars driving over verges and on the many occasions, when their car park is full, visitors' cars block gates and entrances to residents' houses.

Beckley Church of England School serves many of the other local villages and although there is a school bus, there is traffic chaos. Traffic to and from the primary school creates congestion on roads leading up to the intersection of the High and Church Streets, as well as stoppage of traffic at the intersection itself. A one way "canyon" leading out to Common Road contributes to the problem, as well as the size of the bus used to transport children to and from school.

At the beginning and end of the school day it is often not possible to drive down the High Street as parents park to pick up their young children from school. A scheme was introduced where the pub car park was used by parents to wait for their children. While a useful initiative it has been abused by some parents going to school events in pub hours and not used when it is raining. The congestion is exacerbated as the houses in the conservation area, the old part of the village, were in the main built before cars, with no driveways and many have to park on the road.

During the rest of the day, the narrowness of village roads and the number of cars parked on village streets (and along Common Road) create problems for lorries and busses, both public, and private ones used to transport school children and the military to the rifle range down Otmoor Lane. Traffic to and from the RSPB's Nature Reserve is constant and often a nuisance. Delivery of family groceries increases, with delivery of fuel and large household items a necessary but regular traffic stoppers. Neighbours are usually given advance notification of disruption from moving vans.

A County Council initiative was started in October '21 to promote 20 mph speed limits in villages²⁶. There have been concerns about excessive speed by cars, particularly down Otmoor Lane. A working group is being set up to put together evidence and apply for this speed limit.

Wick and Lower Farms

Residents need to access the Bayswater Road via the Barton estate. At peak hours it is very difficult to turn right out of the Barton estate onto the Bayswater Road towards the Green Road/Headington roundabout.

²⁶ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/traffic/requesting-20mph>

2.8.6. Car Parking

The old part of Beckley village has narrow roads and many house owners in Church Street, where the school is situated, and in the High Street have no driveway. Apart from the pub car park, which is in use from noon until late there is nowhere available to park. The centre of the village, the conservation area, has no land available, apart from fields actively farmed and in the Green Belt. Even the newer part of the village, the Woodperry Road area and New Inn Road has relatively narrow roads and no available land for parking. The same is true of Common Road, which is so narrow it has passing places.

Although the Abingdon Arms has a car park and a disabled parking bay its popularity sometimes causes parking problems in the High Street.

The RSPB car park at the end of Otmoor Lane becomes full at weekends at certain times of the year and cars are parked up the single track Otmoor Lane and block driveways. RSPB has requested on its web site that people do not park in Otmoor Lane and has suggesting visiting during the week, rather than at busy weekends.

This Plan can only address this problem by ensuring that it is not exacerbated by requiring any new development to have sufficient space within its curtilage to park all the household cars, so there is no further necessity to park on the roads.

From the Initial Survey –

Commuting

A large proportion of people work at home, every day, while others work from home on some days, 2 or 4 days per week being the most popular. Otherwise, the most popular way to commute is by car or car and train. The average commute was a small distance, 5-10 miles being the most popular, but most do not commute. Apart from commuting and visitors, other local traffic is connected with the school run. From the responses from the Survey, it was reported that most children cycle to school [37.5%] or are taken by car [25%] or coach [25%]. The journeys to school are quite short for most it was only 5-10 miles. However, it is evident from the traffic that many school children are driven to school.

2.8.7. Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian traffic both organised and individual is extensive. Published walking paths and footpaths for the area include *The Oxfordshire Way*,²⁷ *The Roman Way*,²⁸ *The Oxfordshire Greenbelt Walk*, *Oxford on Foot by the Oxford Pedestrians Association*,²⁹ and *A Walk From Beckley by Oxford Consultants*. [See 2.7.2. *Footpaths and Bridleways*] Some of the recommended pathways are across footpaths in the countryside, but some include walking along roads where there are no pavements or pedestrian walkways. The lack of pedestrian pathways along the B4027 and Horton Road make walking along either road extremely

²⁷ Oxford Witney & Woodstock Ordinance Survey Explorer 180

²⁸ A Walker's Guide to Following the Roman Road Elaine Steane Reardon Publications 2010

²⁹ Oxfordshire Ramblers .. website includes The Oxfordshire Way 68 mile walk Cotswolds to Chilterns

dangerous, with pedestrians needing to move into tall grass or brambles at the sign of approaching vehicles. Walking to nearby village shops - Stanton St John, Islip or Barton, as well as to nearby bus stops, carries these hazards.

2.8.8. Cyclist Safety and Future Provision of a Cycleway

Both individual and organised cyclists use the roads of the Parish and many cycle races and cycling groups use the roads within and around the Parish. Some is recreational, while other individuals travel to and from work, sometimes with baby or child carriers.

The lack of marked cycle paths and cycle lanes creates hazards for cyclists and their passengers, as well as motorists trying to decide how best to accommodate them. This has resulted in a recent call for a cycleway from Beckley village and Stanton St John village to the edge of Oxford to allow access to Oxford, Headington, the hospitals, Cowley and other parts of Oxford.

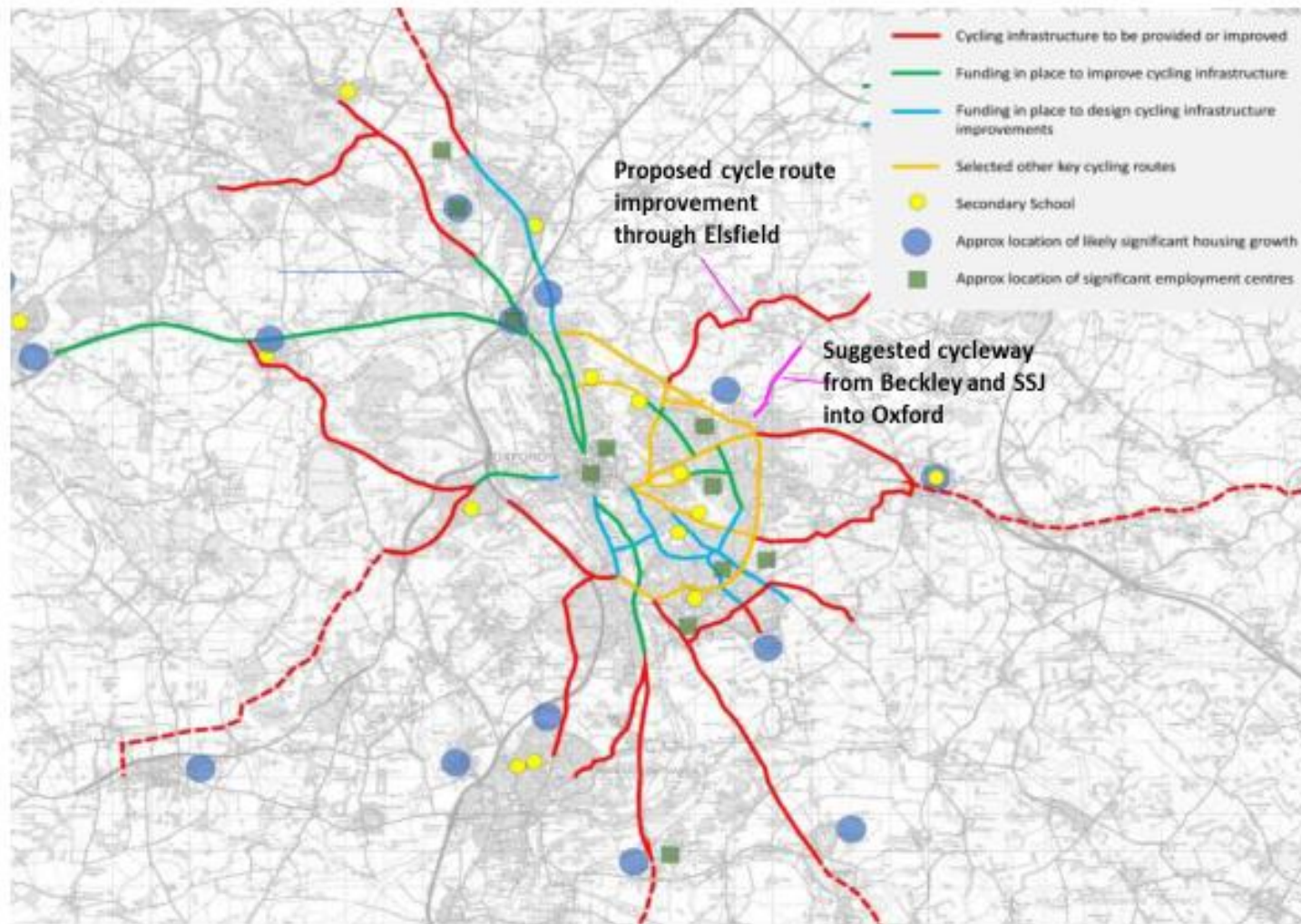
Future Provision of a Cycleway

There are a number of new Government initiatives to encourage and promote walking and cycling, to help develop healthier lifestyles and reduce pollution. The 'Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' team has recently submitted detailed funding requests to the government for a new cycleway infrastructure, but this is confined to the city of Oxford and does not extend into the parish. A new scheme, The Oxford Greenways Project has been launched to encourage more people to cycle. It is similar to the Cambridge Greenways Project and will extend towards Beckley village. The Neighbourhood Plan team is involved and is lobbying, along with colleagues in the next village east of Beckley, Stanton St John, to create a new cycleway to access the edge of Oxford from both villages. Initial proposals shown on the map below suggest improving a cycleway using the road through Elsfield to Marston. While this is a route that some cyclist use, who wish to access central Oxford, there is little opportunity to improve this route through the village of Elsfield, as roads are already too narrow for cars to pass in places and houses are close to the road.

A new route has been suggested along the Bayswater Road. This could be used by resident of Beckley, Stanton St John and Horton-cum Studley to access the edge of Oxford via the Baron estate, and beyond into central Oxford, Heading, the hospitals, Cowley etc.

Both routes are shown on the map below.

Figure 2.8.8. OXFORD GREENWAYS PROJECT INITIAL PROPOSALS



Cycleway Survey

A survey was carried out of Beckley residents on the demand for a cycleway during March 2020. It was publicised in the Beckley and Stowood newsletter that is delivered to all households in the parish and by e-mail to Beckley and Wick Farm/Barton residents.

The detailed results can be found in Appendix 9.

The majority of respondents were from Beckley parish, but also from surrounding villages of Horton-cum-Studley, Noke, Stanton St John, Headington, Headington Quarry and Barton.

68% of respondents travelled into/towards Oxford (or in the opposite direction towards Beckley) at least one a week, with 28% for 4 days per week and 21% every day. 51% make the journey by car, 27% by cycle, 10% take their car to Barton and then use the bus, as there is a good service from there and 4% drive to the park and ride and then take the bus. The high car usage is due to the fact that there is no regular public transport in Beckley and the other villages apart from a bus service, the Otmoor flyer which operates 2 days per week.

Other modes of transport sometimes used echo the first, although there is a slightly higher use of cycles at 31% and taxis were also mentioned.

The main reasons for not cycling were safety – 81% felt the roads are too dangerous, 77% that there was no cycleway, 31% would feel unsafe in the dark and 24% felt that cycling is just not safe enough. Other issues mentioned were the inability to carry shopping and inclement weather.

95% of respondents have access to a cycle and 58% would use a cycleway at least once a week, 24% every day and 37% a few days per week. The likelihood of respondents using the cycleway if one were built is 70 out of a possible 100.

There is clearly demand for a cycle to and from Beckley and surrounding villages to the edge of Oxford.

As part of this initiative Beckley has launched a survey of Beckley and Stowood residents on the demand for a new cycleway. The survey questions can be found in Appendix 9.

2.8.9. Equestrian Safety

Horse riders face hazards. Equestrian paths, both Definitive and Permissive, currently cross the area. *The Otmoor Riding Group*, which are members of the British Horse Society, work to keep existing bridle ways open and lobby for access.

2.9. ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

Beckley and Stowood lies in an area of high biodiversity importance in the County. Most was once covered by ancient forest used for hunting and stretched across the parish and included Bernwood Forest, Stowood, Blackwater Wood and Shotover. Both Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and Otmoor SSSI lie within the parish, there are also numerous priority habitats including ancient woodland. Sydlings Copse is not only an Ancient Woodland and BBOWT reserve but is also designated as Sydlings Copse & College Pond Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its nationally important nature conservation interest. Similarly, Otmoor is not only an important RSPB reserve but parts of the site are also nationally designated as a SSSI.

The parish also includes several Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within its boundary, i.e., Beckley Pasture LWS, Constable's Piece LWS, Upper Park Farm LWS, Cookes Copse LWS, and adjacent to the parish boundary, i.e., Noke Wood & Sling Copse LWS and Otmoor LWS. The Designated Wildlife Sites are shown on the map over the page.

The importance of the area for achieving nature conservation priorities is reflected in the identification of two Conservation Target Areas (CTAs): Otmoor³⁰) and Oxford Heights East³¹

CTAs have been mapped across Oxfordshire to identify where the greatest opportunities for habitat creation and restoration lie enabling efficient use of resources to deliver nature conservation benefits.

The parish has considerable biodiversity. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has produced a very detailed report on Beckley and Stowood Parish and this can be found in Appendix 10. It shows detailed lists of protected and notable species found in the parish. These include –

- Amphibians – great crested and other newts, toads and frogs
- Over 100 species of birds
- Nearly 100 species of "higher flowering plants"
- 14 invertebrates – see, ants, sawflies and wasps
- 27 beetles
- Over 60 species of butterflies and moths and many other invertebrates
- 6 species of bats
- Mammals including hedgehogs, polecats, otters and badgers
- Water voles, brown hares, lizard, slow-worm and grass snake

A number of non-native invasive species are also noted, including a number of invasive plants, the ruddy duck, *Crangonyx pseudogracilis* (US northern river shrimp) and the American mink.

A very comprehensive report on the ecology of Otmoor was prepared by Beckley residents for submission to Highways England on the Oxford Cambridge Expressway (Appendix 11.)

More recently reports were prepared for the SODC Local Plan – by AECOM and Prof David Rogers. These are both discussed fully in the evidence for mitigation policies for the SSSI Evidence Base 2 – 5.4 and Appendices 23 and 24. This includes a tree and hedgerow survey was carried out in 2022.

³⁰ <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Otmoor-CTA.pdf>

³¹ <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Oxford-Heights-East-CTA.pdf>

Figure 2.9.1.

**Beckley and Stowod Parish
Designated Wildlife Sites Map**

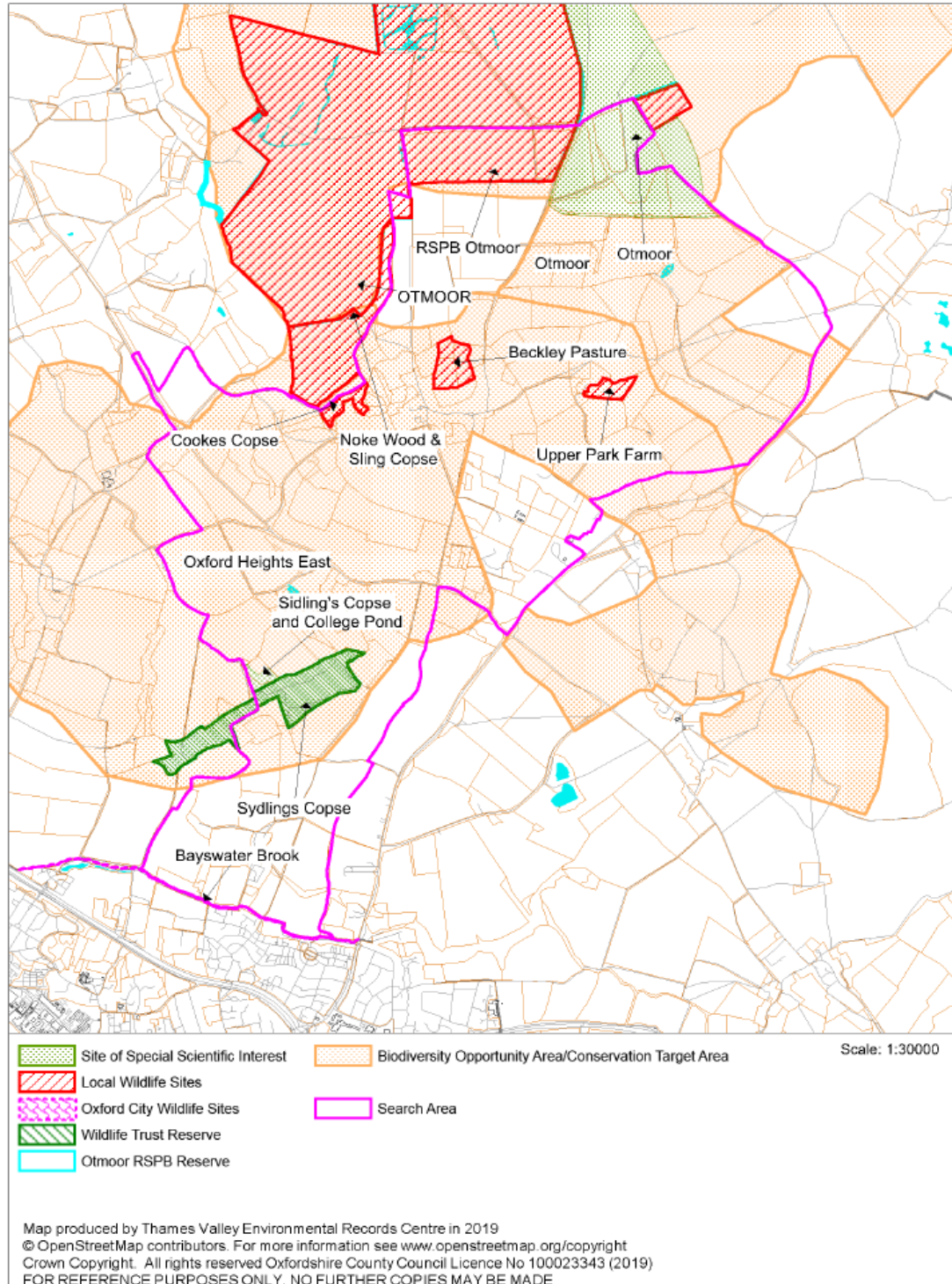


Figure 2.9.2. BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN SITES IN OXFORDSHIRE

MAGiC

BAP Habitats

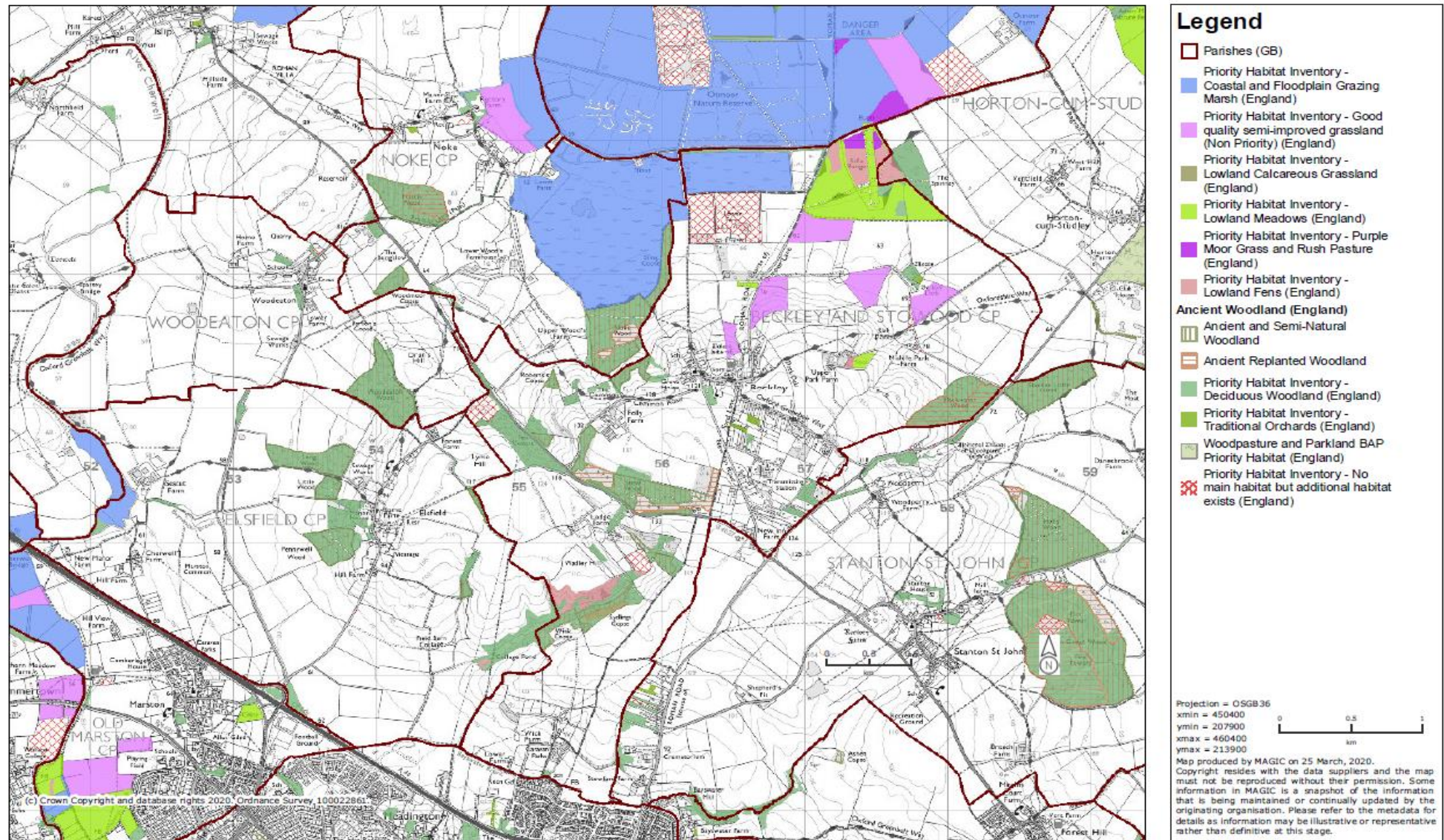
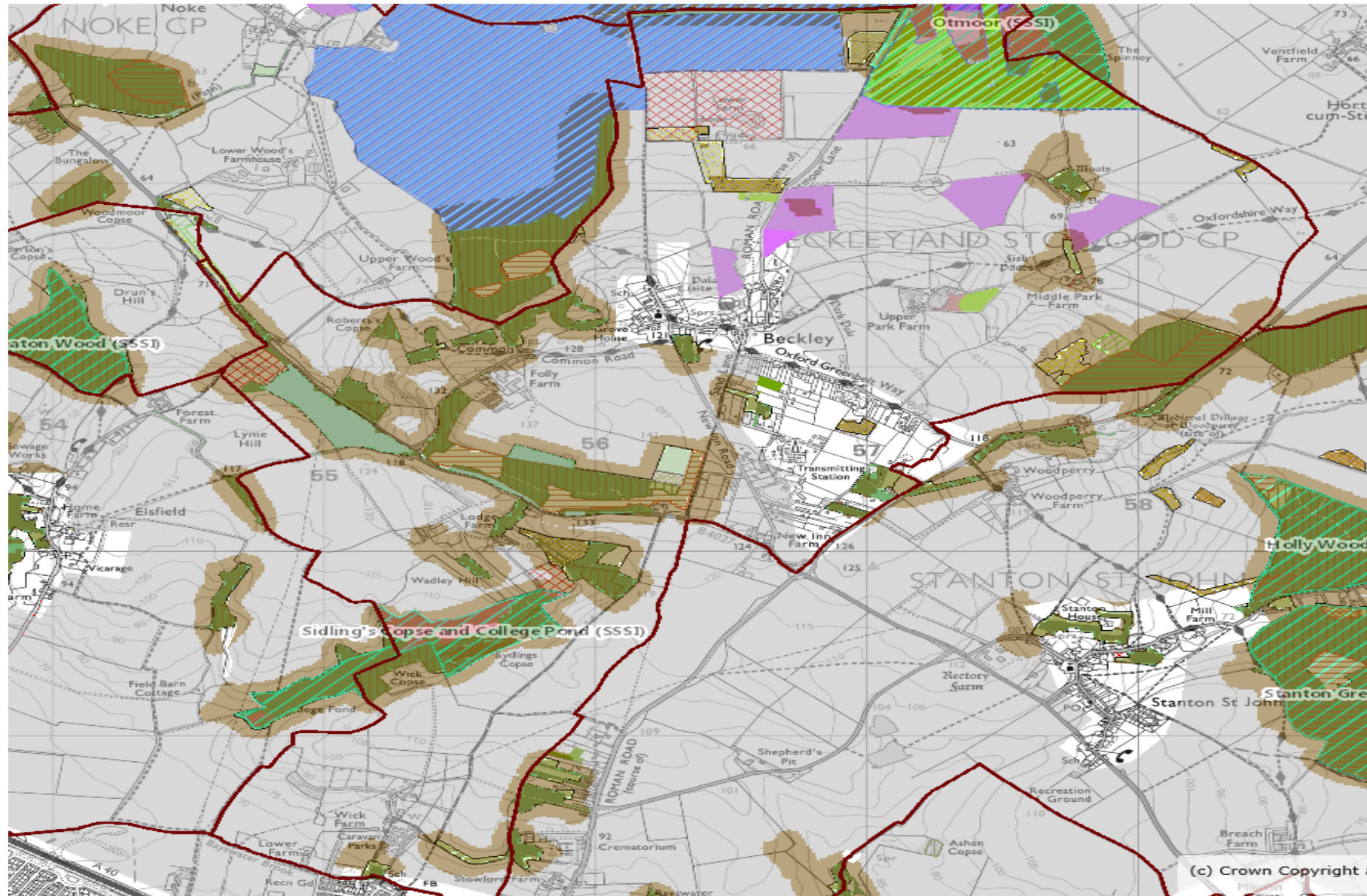


Figure 2.9.3. MAGIC MAP FOR BECKLEY AND STOWOOD PARISH SHOWING BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN AREAS IN BROWN



2.9.1 Open Spaces

Views to the north across Otmoor and across the southern end of the parish back towards Oxford are an important impetus for much of this activity, along with the opportunity to be in what is so often described as “the countryside so close to Oxford” and attract people from across Oxford, England, and even beyond. Beckley and Stowood Parish is valued as unique, special, and extremely benefiting to health and well-being for residents and visitors alike. The parish has no common land or parks or other public open spaces, apart from the playing fields at the village hall.

2.9.2. Otmoor

“This has been flooded and is owned by RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) Otmoor is a magical nature reserve of wet meadows and reedbeds. It is a haven in winter for thousands of ducks, such as teals and wigeons, and in spring and summer for breeding wading birds, such as lapwings and redshanks. The reedbed hosts a spectacular starling roost during the winter months.”³²

There are footpaths around and across Otmoor which connect Beckley with some of the other ‘Otmoor Towns’ and are well used.

2.9.3. Sydlings and Wick Copses and College Pond

“The diversity of this small nature reserve is quite staggering. Boasting ancient broadleaved woodland, limestone grasslands, reedbed, fen, a stream and rare Oxfordshire heathland, the reserve supports over 400 plant species. The site is also teeming with birds and insect life; butterflies include the purple hairstreak, brown hairstreak, common blue and marbled white”³³

Sydlings Copse and Wick Copse were part of the royal hunting forest that covered the area and included many of the other local woods such as Stowood, and Noke Wood. A stream runs through it arising in Stowood and forms ancient fish ponds with a mounded walkway across. The wood in spring is covered in bluebells, as are Stowood and Noke Woods, signs of ancient woodland. This is followed by wild garlic, primroses, cowslips, honeysuckle, dog roses, orchids and many more. There are numerous butterflies in this ancient woodland.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre produced a report in 2014 - Ancient Woodland Inventory Revision: Oxfordshire for Oxfordshire County Council. In it it states –

“Ancient woodland is becoming increasingly important in relation to both local and national planning and biodiversity policies. It is an extremely valuable part of our landscape, with many species relying on them for their survival. Woodland can also be a source of carbon-neutral wood-fuel and is important for carbon sequestration, flood alleviation and soil preservation. It also has community benefits such as forest schools and green gyms and provides a lasting legacy for future generations.....

³²RSPB – Otmoor - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves-and-events/find-a-reserve/reserves-a-z/reserves-by-name/o/otmoor/about.aspx>

³³ BBOWT Sydlings Copse - <http://www.bbwt.org.uk/reserves/Sydlings-Copse>

The National Forest Inventory (Forestry Commission, 2012) estimated that 9.9% of the total land area of England was woodland. The equivalent figure for Oxfordshire is similar at 8.9% 38% (8,919 ha) of Oxfordshire's woodland is considered to be of ancient origin, representing a net gain of 979 ha.

Although about 95% of the revised ancient woodland in Oxfordshire is within landscape and nature conservation designations (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Target Areas), only 20% has legal protection through wildlife legislation (notable SSSI).”³⁴

³⁴ http://www.tverc.org/cms/sites/tverc/files/OCC_AWI_report_abridged_for%20TVERC_web.pdf

2.10 CLIMATE CHANGE

In the words of the United Nation,³⁵ *Climate Change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment*³⁶. Listing risks to food production, rising sea levels, and catastrophic flooding as examples, the UN continues *‘Without Drastic Action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.’*

- In May 2019 the UK parliament declared a Climate Change Emergency. They have committed to a reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions by 50% on 1990 levels by 2025, and by 80% by 2050.
- Both Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire have declared a Climate Change Emergency.
- In October 2019 SODC agreed to become carbon neutral in the operations by 2025, and to be a carbon neutral district by 2030.

In October 2019 the Ministry of Housing started a consultation on ‘Future Homes Standards’ which closed in February 2020. Approved Document L - Conservation of fuel and power was published and circulated on October 2019 as part of the consultation³⁵ Published at the same as part of this revision was – “Ventilation and indoor air quality in new homes”³⁶ and “Research into overheating in new homes” – parts 1³⁷ and 2³⁸ At the same time a new National Design Guide³⁹ was published which advocates reduction in energy consumption -

R1 Follow the energy hierarchy 138

Well-designed places and buildings follow the energy hierarchy, starting with:

- reducing the need for energy;
- energy efficiency (see below);
- maximising the potential for energy supply from decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy sources, including community-led initiatives; and then
- efficiently using fossil fuels from clean technologies. 139 They maximise the contributions of natural resources such as sun, ground and wind, and include passive measures for light, temperature, ventilation and heat. 140 They make use of renewable energy infrastructures, such as photovoltaic arrays, ground source heat pumps and district heating systems, to reduce

³⁵

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835547/ADL_vol_1.pdf

³⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835208/Research_-_ventilation_and_indoor_air_quality.pdf

³⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835240/Research_into_overheating_in_new_homes_-_phase_1.pdf

³⁸

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/845483/Research_into_overheating_in_new_homes_-_phase_2.pdf

³⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843468/National_Design_Guide.pdf

demand for non-sustainable energy sources. IT advances and app-based solutions allow users of well-designed places and homes to take ownership or management of these systems in order to use them most efficiently. 141 Good developments minimise the cost of running buildings and are easy and affordable for occupants to use and manage.

The Energy Saving Trust⁴⁰ advocated by SODC recommends a number of renewal energy projects and generating electricity at home from solar power –

Generate your own electricity using renewables –

- Solar Panels
- Small scale wind turbines
- Hydro

Generate heat for your home with low-carbon, renewable technologies –

- Ground source heat pumps
- Air source heat pumps
- Biomass

Its advice on Transport - Valuable driving advice for a greener journey includes –

- The use of electric cars
- Planning journeys using public transport

A European Strategy for low-emission mobility⁴¹ states –

“Transport represents almost a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions and is the main cause of air pollution in cities. The transport sector has not seen the same gradual decline in emissions as other sectors: emissions only started to decrease in 2007 and still remain higher than in 1990 (see graph below). Within this sector, road transport is by far the biggest emitter accounting for more than 70% of all GHG emissions from transport in 2014.”

It recommends –

Main elements of the strategy

The Communication identifies three priority areas for action:

- Increasing the efficiency of the transport system by making the most of digital technologies, smart pricing and further encouraging the shift to lower emission transport modes,
- Speeding up the deployment of low-emission alternative energy for transport, such as advanced biofuels, electricity, hydrogen and renewable synthetic fuels and removing obstacles to the electrification of transport
- Moving towards zero-emission vehicles. While further improvements to the internal combustion engine will be needed, Europe needs to accelerate the transition towards low- and zero-emission vehicles.

⁴⁰ <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/>

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport_en

In June 2019 Beckley Parish Council also recognised the Climate Change Emergency –

"Beckley declares an environment and climate emergency, to recognise the current environmental and climate crisis in decisions made locally and to see what we can do about it as a community"

In Beckley, the main production of carbon is by transport (particularly car use) and household heating. House building also creates carbon, as does major changes in use of land.

Transport

Support initiatives to change car use into alternative travel modes with lower carbon footprints

- i) Support initiatives for safer cycling and walking such as a cycleway to Oxford
- ii) Support public transport if available

New Homes

New housing in the village should be built to the highest environmental standards. That should include both the process of building, and also that the design of the property should be such as to require reduced energy use as a home.

New homes should be required to show they are suitably insulated to prevent heat loss, and that they have environmental methods of heating rather than a reliance on fossil fuels.

Preferably they should be built with solar panels and heating systems such as heat pumps as an integral part of the design.

Existing Homes

Existing homes should be assisted in the planning process to both conserve and produce energy.

Retrofitted heat pumps and solar panels, and double/secondary glazing ought therefore to be considered sympathetically by the planning authority, even on listed buildings. Modern polycarbonate panes with magnetic fittings are much more effective, easy to use and inconspicuous.

(All homes would benefit from a smart meter installation, with off-peak rates e.g., for charging electric cars)

Local Power Generation

As well as contributing to household electricity use, energy generation systems such as solar panels, could be a future contributor to reducing reliance on fossil fuels and improving the air quality in Beckley through use of electric cars.

This is further discussed in detail in section 5.2 of the main Plan with supporting policies and community aspirations of biodiversity and ecological enhancement e.g., extending wildlife corridors



Spring Bluebells in Stowood