

Towersey Neighbourhood Plan

2023 to 2040



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Contents

Page 5	Foreword
Page 6	1. Introduction
Page 7	2. How the plan was prepared
Page 10	3. Background <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.1 Towersey today3.2 Village spirit3.3 Landscape and natural environment3.4 Origins and development of the village3.5 Character assessment & sites of specific interest:3.6-3.10 Journey 1 to 5 around the village3.11 Physical infrastructure and services
Page 35	4. The Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">4.1 Community aspirations4.2 Planning Policy Context, Vision and Objectives
Page 43	5. Policies, Building for Life <ul style="list-style-type: none">5.1 Village boundaries and infill development5.2 Housing mix5.3 Climate change mitigation – zero carbon buildings5.4 Design5.5 Local heritage assets5.6 Designation of local green spaces5.7 Green infrastructure and biodiversity5.8 Community facilities5.9 Managing traffic5.10 Supporting water infrastructure5.11 Local gap
Page 65	6. Plan Delivery and Implementation
Page 68	7. Bibliography
Page 69	Appendices <ul style="list-style-type: none">Appendix A – Character AppraisalAppendix B – Green SpacesAppendix C – Post Occupancy Guidance



Kingfisher, Towersey

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Foreword

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

In August 2016 Towersey Parish Council successfully applied for Neighbourhood Plan “designation”, including the entire area within the parish boundary. A Steering Group and process were set up to produce a plan that provides a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of the parish.

The Towersey Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide comments, observations and concerns about its future. Together with census information, historical, environmental and statistical evidence, this is shaped into a “living promise” mirroring the community’s overwhelming desire to make Towersey an even better place to live and work, both now and for future generations.

The plan has been produced by a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group, including Parish Council members and community volunteers.



Red Kite over Towersey Copyright – A Flanagan

The Plan will be deemed made, once after a village referendum the plan has gained a 50% plus 1 yes vote of all those who voted. The Towersey Neighbourhood Plan will then form part of the development plan. It will become, with the District Council’s Local Plan, the starting point for deciding where development should take place and the type and quality of that development.

1. Introduction

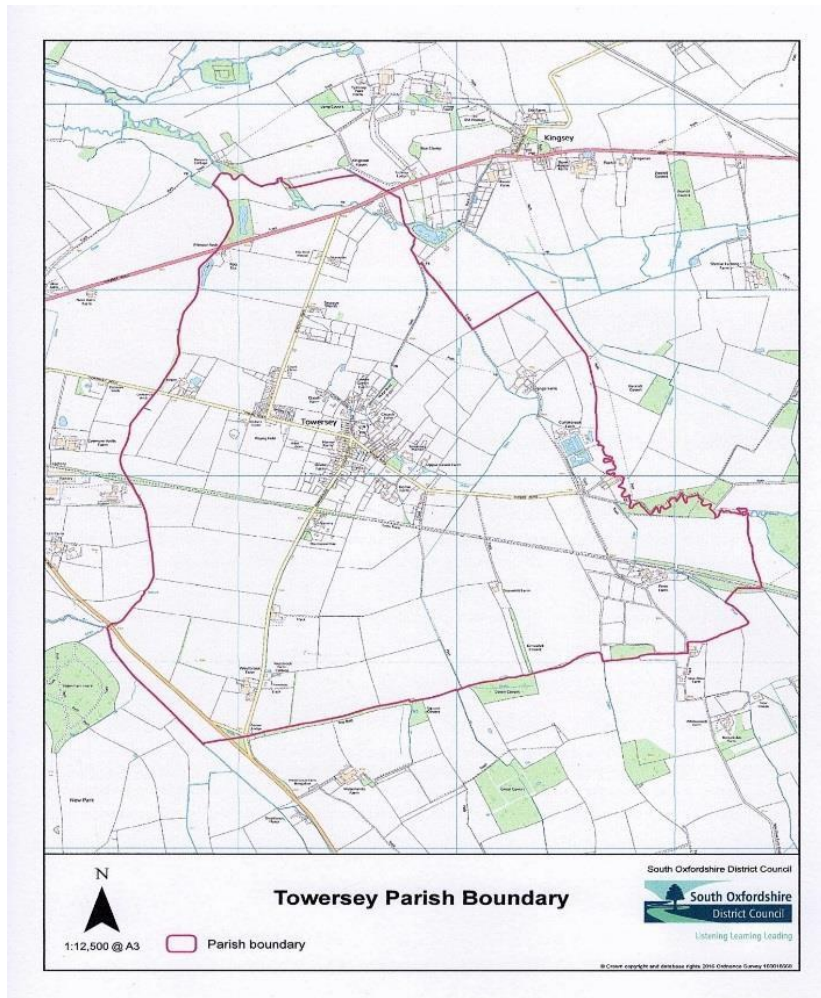
1.1 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to make Towersey an even better place to be, now and for future generations. It will cover the period to 2040 with a review every 5 years. This will enable our community to better shape our place, to inform how development evolves and help to influence the type, quality and location of that development, ensuring local benefit is secured along with that change.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is based on research and extensive engagement with the local community. There has been exceptionally high involvement culminating in over 153 survey responses from a parish with 180 homes. The community is also very close knit and stable, with 80-90% of current residents expecting or hoping to remain in the village. In the lead up to the referendum, decision makers should consider this to be an important reference point and give it weight as a material consideration in any development planning decisions.

1.3 Should the Plan pass referendum it will have full planning weight. The Neighbourhood Development Plan, alongside the rest of the development plan, will provide the basis for determining planning applications and future development in the Parish of Towersey.

2. How the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared

2.1 Towersey Parish Council has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire District Council, on 24 August 2016. The plan was prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations of 2012 (as amended). The area coincides with the parish boundary (see Plan A below).



Plan A showing parish boundary

2.2 The process has involved a number of key steps:

2.2.1 Designation and collecting views, perspectives and evidence

In August 2016 the parish of Towersey was designated as a Neighbourhood Planning area. A steering group was formed to discuss the creation and scope of the neighbourhood plan process.

2.2.2 Early Consultation and Evidence Gathering

During the autumn and winter over 150 people attended 3 public open meetings held in the village hall along with 4 pop up sessions. They were asked what they liked and disliked about the Parish, how they would want to see it evolve and what benefits new development should bring to the community. The Steering Group also began the process of gathering evidence to support the Plan. This included reviewing evidence reports and preparing a neighbourhood profile using key national and local statistics.

2.2.3 Clarifying the views of residents – the survey

In the spring of 2017 (based on the views and evidence that had been collected to that point), a survey of residents was conducted to get a better understanding of how consistent or otherwise the views and aspirations were, identifying what particular village assets (within the built and natural environment) were most valued and in need of protection, and where and what development was deemed most appropriate.

2.2.4 Pre-submission Plan

The Pre-Submission Plan provided the opportunity for the Parish Council to formally consult on the proposed vision, objectives and policies of the Plan. It reviewed the relevant national and local planning policies and assessed how they affect this area.

South Oxfordshire District Council confirmed in its screening opinion of 6th November 2020 that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required to accompany the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004. This followed a scoping exercise that involved consultations with the statutory bodies as per the Regulations. The screening opinion also confirmed that the Plan will not need to be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Throughout July 2017 to December 2018 the Vision and Objectives proposal, responses to community engagement exercises and local evidence were used to develop the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan was sent out to every household in the Parish and neighbouring Parish Council's during a six-week public consultation in the Summer of 2022.

2.2.5 Final Plan, Submission and Examination

All the comments from the six-week statutory local consultation exercise have been analysed and fed into this document, the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

The Parish Council is now submitting the final plan to South Oxfordshire District Council to arrange for its independent examination and then a referendum.

During the referendum, the community of the Parish will be asked whether it wants South Oxfordshire District Council to use the Neighbourhood Development Plan to inform its decisions regarding planning applications in the area. If a simple majority of 50% plus one yes vote of all who voted is received the Plan will become part of the statutory “development plan” for the area, and with the Local Plan, become the starting point for deciding planning applications in Towersey.



A moorhen enjoying a village pond

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3. Background

3.1 Towersey today

Towersey is a parish on the borders of Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire with an area of 1,380 acres, much of it permanent grassland. The small rural village is situated on the Thame Road in the centre of the parish between Thame, Chinnor, Princes Risborough and Haddenham.

3.1.1 The village comprises approximately 180 dwellings and ca. 440 residents. The community has a wide mix of families, individuals and retired couples, many of whom have lived in and around the village for many years. Our youngsters (0-15) make up 11% of our population, those of working age 65% and 24% are aged 65 and over. These numbers compare with a country wide average for 0-15 and 65+, of 19.2% and 18.4% respectively, so we have a slightly older population on average when compared to the nation as a whole.

3.1.2 A large majority (60%) of the village lives either in married or co-habiting households. This compares with an average across England of 43%. Towersey has approximately 16% of people living as one person or lone parent households, compared to a national average of 42%.

3.1.3 The population is also more settled, with the number of people who have moved in or out of the village in last 12 months being significantly lower than the national average. There is also a strong desire by most (80-90% of survey respondents) to stay in the village.

3.1.4 Towersey is predominantly made up of larger houses, which makes it more difficult for younger, older or smaller households to settle in the village. According to OSCI 2020, 36% of village properties have 8 or more rooms. This compares with an average across England of 13%.

3.2. Village Spirit

3.2.1 Towersey is a small village and is divided between the “top” and “bottom” by a number of fields along the Thame Road. As with many rural villages, there are also outlying farms and properties towards the edges of the parish boundary, providing quite a spread across South Oxfordshire. For some villages, that could mean a loss of spirit and cohesion, but not here in Towersey.



HRH Golden Jubilee celebrations

© Community archive

3.2.2 As many people say who visit the village; “How do you do so much? There is always something on!” For those of us who are lucky enough to live in Towersey, it’s just normal! But at the same time, if you prefer to enjoy the peace and tranquility of the village, without being involved in every event, then you can do that too.

3.2.3 We do lack a real centre or focal point, so the village makes up for it by running lots of events in different locations. There is only one pub – The Three Horseshoes – so that is always the pub that the village drinks in. There is only one Church, so that is where the village celebrates its services, baptisms, weddings and funerals. But the pub, the pub barn and the church and the other village facilities are used for so much more.

3.2.4 The closest building we have to a village centre is the War Memorial Hall at the crossroads. Originally built in 1925, this wooden building has been refurbished on many occasions. The last renovation was in 2012 when new toilets and an enlarged kitchen were installed. The hall is occupied most evenings and often during the day with a variety of activities for everyone, including outside hire, pop-up cafes, race nights, village productions and the Wednesday morning coffee club. A defibrillator is also installed on the external wall.

3.2.5 On the Playing Fields, there is also a Clubhouse which has now been closed. The Playing Fields Committee are working hard to fund a much-needed re-development. The Playing Fields were purchased in 1966 and in 1971 were passed to the ownership of the Parish Council. These Fields were the site of the Towersey Folk Festival up until 2015 when, due to its size, it moved to Thame. In

its place, Towersey developed their own Towersey Fringe for music and comedy, now an annual event. These fields have seen men's rugby, cricket and football played, and more recently ladies rugby. The committee running the Playing Fields have ambitious plans to improve the facilities of both the pitches and the clubhouse in the coming years.

3.2.6 The Playing Fields are also the site of Towersey children's playground, which has been re-developed twice since the 1990's and is included in the plans for the overall improvements to the site.

3.2.7 Adjoining the playing fields to the east, and owned by the Parish Council since the end of the second world war, are the Towersey Allotment Gardens. Managed by Towersey Allotment Association on behalf of the PC, the 21 allotment plots are a thriving community of growers from Towersey and surrounding parishes and a peaceful, hidden haven of biodiversity and productivity. One of the plots is used as a community allotment so that village families have an opportunity to take on a smaller space for growing flowers, fruit and vegetables

3.2.8 In addition to the pub, the pub barn, the church and playing fields, there is also Towersey Manor. This beautiful house, set in wonderful gardens, is owned by the Barnett family. The village is invited to use their grounds for the spectacular annual village fete in June as well as their listed barn for other fund-raising events, such as the Towersey Murders or many a barn dance.

3.2.9 Building a real sense of community is essential to village life and spirit. As we have already said, not everyone wants to be involved in everything – though many do – but the breadth of events and activities allows nearly everyone to find a niche.

3.2.10 TOWCAP (Towersey Community Arts Project) raises money and runs events throughout the year – often in the War Memorial Hall. Cabaret shows, plays and dance evenings are run; film nights and poetry readings are organised as are workshops in clay modelling and glass fusing, to name just a few.

3.2.11 The Playing Fields Committee organise varied events to fundraise for the upkeep of the fields such as the 150 Club, a Progressive Supper, Towersey Murders and wine tastings. The Playing Fields are also the beneficiary of the funds generated by the Fringe.

3.2.12 The Village Hall Committee started the monthly Pop-up Café in 2015.

They organise the annual Christmas Gift Fair, the Children’s Christmas Party and the annual New Year’s Lunch for the over 65’s – a riotous affair!



Towersey Morris Men



Three Horseshoes Morris



Morris dancing © Community archive

3.2.13 Of course, Towersey has had its own Towersey Morris Men for many decades and more recently a new mixed group has joined the fun called The Three Horseshoes Morris. Though they dance all over the county, Towersey is their home and they are seen at the crossroads on May Day, they lead the May Queen Festival and the maypole dancing, and also perform a Mummings Play for Christmas, as well as many other occasions. If dancing isn’t your cup of tea, then perhaps singing is – Village Voices also practice and perform in the village.

3.2.14 As we have already mentioned, the Church is a key part of the village and so in addition to the religious support and events it runs, the Church (and many dedicated villagers) have run events such as the Big Harvest Bake-off.

3.2.15 There has been a long-standing Wives Club in the village for many years, as has there been a Darts Team at the pub. More recently, the village has a bi-annual Christmas Crazy Golf event around the fields of Towersey, ending back in the Three Horseshoes of course and finally the village’s very own “band” - No Direction.

3.2.16 Underlying these many activities is the sense of community encouraged by so many opportunities to spend time with friends and neighbours. Almost all money raised is ploughed back into the wider community to improve facilities or to offer services to all. Local charities are also beneficiaries.

3.2.17 In the 21st century, the village is even using WhatsApp groups to solicit advice and to ask for help in times of difficulty. Anything from tradesmen to lost dogs, stranded children or hospital dashes or even spider removal!

3.2.18 Our community supports friendships and activity across many interest groups; open to all ages and abilities. Towersey – a small village with a giant heart.

3.3 Landscape and natural environment



Rare breed sheep

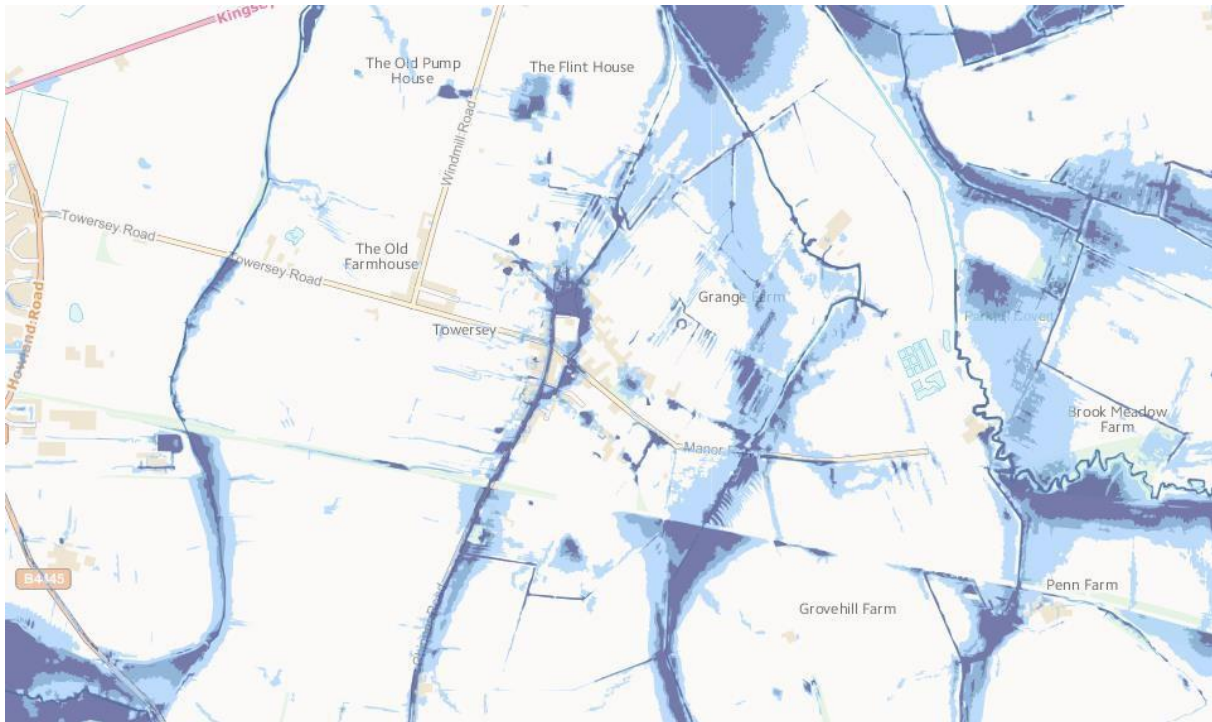
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3.3.1 Towersey lies to the north of the Chiltern Hills on the low lying, gently undulating land at the foot of those hills between the towns of Chinnor and Thame. Much of the area was originally marsh land that was drained over many millennia.

3.3.2 The soil type is mostly of Gault Clay with gravel bands running through it. A layer of Jurassic gravel surfaces in the village by Church Lane and Lower Green Farm. This area has a very high water table.

3.3.3 For some of the low lying properties in the village, the water table can be as little as 20cm below the surface in the winter. Some houses have even had water welling up through the floor in very wet times. To the north of the village there is a rise in the ground to the aptly named Windmill Road. To the east towards Kingsey, in the fields where a solar farm has recently been installed there are outcrops of Portland and Purbeck Rock.

3.3.4 Because of the clay and waterlogged nature of the ground the village relies on extensive deep ditches to prevent the land from flooding. The ditches and field boundaries are bordered by traditional Saxon hedging (hawthorn, blackthorn, damson, elderberry, dog rose and sprouting elm) providing habitat for many songbirds, insects and wildflowers. Though the soil is generally of average quality for agriculture, there are pockets of medium to high grade soil. The outlying fields are mostly pasture and arable, producing crops of wheat, barley, rape seed, hay, and beans and maize for animal feed and biofuel. These expansive fields provide habitat for the brown hare, lapwings and skylarks.



Flood risk from surface water – extent of flooding

Source www.gov.uk

3.3.5 The fields within the village show abundant biodiversity. Many have never been cultivated in modern times. They still show clear evidence of medieval ridge and furrow cultivation which creates its own damp and dry environments. Flora and fauna such as native hedgehogs, stoats and weasels, badgers, bats, barn owls, mice, moles, voles, shrews and abundant butterflies and insects, and plants such as birds-foot trefoil, yarrow, and meadow sweet, abound.

3.3.6 The main area of the village nestles in a large expanse of trees. This creates a microclimate of stillness and calm, even on a windy day. The trees are a mixture of ornamental and native stock with the stars of the show being a group of English limes providing a guard of honor to the church.

3.3.7 The village has several ponds, and relies on 4 watercourses to keep the flood waters flowing. These provide vital habitats for many important species such as otters, kingfishers, herons, frogs, newts, various fish species such as the rare stone loach and brown trout and insects like dragon flies, damsel flies, mayflies, alder flies and duns and an array of beetles and other invertebrates.

3.3.8 There are two wooded areas, one at Penn Farm which boasts a magnificent badger set and the other at Helpful Hiring which also has a pond formed from an old clay pit surrounded by willow trees which is used by red kites as a roost. The

woods also provide habitat for tawny owls, bats, woodpeckers, buzzards as well as many songbirds.

3.3.9 The Parish of Towersey also boasts the Phoenix Trail. A shared use path formed from the disused railway from Princes Risborough to Thame. This has been transformed into a wildlife haven because of the trees and scrub lining the route, and the careful management of the verges keeping the wildflowers flourishing in the poor soil they enjoy. This in turn provides the perfect environment for insects and small animals. In general terms, comparing Towersey to other nearby rural villages, the village has a relatively limited network of Public Rights of Way – 11 public footpaths and 2 public bridleways. These 13 rights of way are not evenly distributed across the parish and provide only a few opportunities for circular walks, but do connect into an extensive network, particularly to the south and southeast of the village.

3.4 Origins and development of the village

3.4.1 Towersey has been inhabited for more than 3000 years, with early Bronze Age settlements being the first sign of habitation. In 1086, its original Saxon name of Eie was recorded in the Domesday Book. Eie was the Saxon word for island which is not surprising given the low-lying nature of the village and the mix of clay and gravel beneath its feet.

3.4.2 In the 11th century the manor of Eie was nine hides in size, one hide being enough land to support a family. It is thought that the current name of Towersey was established in the 13th and 14th centuries when Richard de Tours was a tenant – the Tours of Eye.

3.4.3 Through the centuries Towersey has had strong ecclesiastical links, both through St Catherine’s Church and Towersey Grange (now Grange Farm), which was part of the Cistercian Abbey at what is now Thame Park. St Catherine’s is likely to have started as a Saxon chapel on the same ground as the current building. Remnants of the 12th century building remain within the current church which was built mainly in the 14th century.

3.4.4 Much or all of the Domesday Eie Manor was passed to Thame Abbey between 1265 and 1329, forming Towersey Grange. It was a part-time residence for the Abbot of Thame until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 during the reign of Henry VIII. The manor then passed briefly to the Dean of St Mary, Oxford, before being acquired by Lord Williams of Thame amongst others. Land passed back and forth over the centuries and the village slowly grew. In 1811,

there were 325 people living in 52 houses and two-thirds of the parish was owned by one family, the Bowdens who also owned the then Manor.

3.4.5 Employment in the village was mainly in agriculture with the 1841 census showing that half of the households were headed by an agricultural labourer. The other local trade of the village was the same as many of the Bucks/Oxon villages at the time, namely lace-making. While many heads of household worked in the fields, the wives and daughters would be working at home producing lace.

3.4.6 The village reflected the trades of the times, with bakers, shoemakers and carpenters and even a tailor, smith, miller and grocer. There were also three pubs: The Three Horseshoes which is still with us today; The White Hart and the Black Horse. Both of the latter still survive today, but as private homes.



Towersey 1825 (Land Enclosures Act)

©

3.4.7 The village grew through the 1800's and in 1881, there were 340 people living in 81 houses, with another 15 properties uninhabited. Many of these were very small lace-making cottages that were so poor, they had fallen into disrepair.

3.4.8 A school was built in 1848 with two school rooms and a schoolhouse for the teacher. Though this gave space for 84 children, the average attendance was between 60 -70 pupils. Many of the children often worked as farm labourers and lace-makers as well as (or rather than) on their books.



St. Catherine's Church

Copyright – A Flanagan

3.4.9 In addition to farming and lace, the geology of Towersey allowed for small clay pits and kilns, such as at Upper Green Farm and Westfield Farm, to be developed on the outskirts of the village.

3.4.10 In the 1860's the village welcomed the age of steam as the Great Western Railway built a track to Thame. However, the welcome was only fleeting as there was no station in the village and it took another 70 years before Towersey Halt was built by the bridge on the Chinnor Road.

3.4.11 At the start of the 1900's, Towersey was still very much a rural village. Milk production was increasing with the railway at Thame Station giving dairy farmers access to larger markets. Arable farming also grew, but as with many villages, Towersey suffered through the 1914-1918 World War, losing fourteen men in action. Their names are now honoured in the War Memorial Hall which was built in 1925 in their memory. The Hall was, and still is, central to much of the village, both in location and activities.

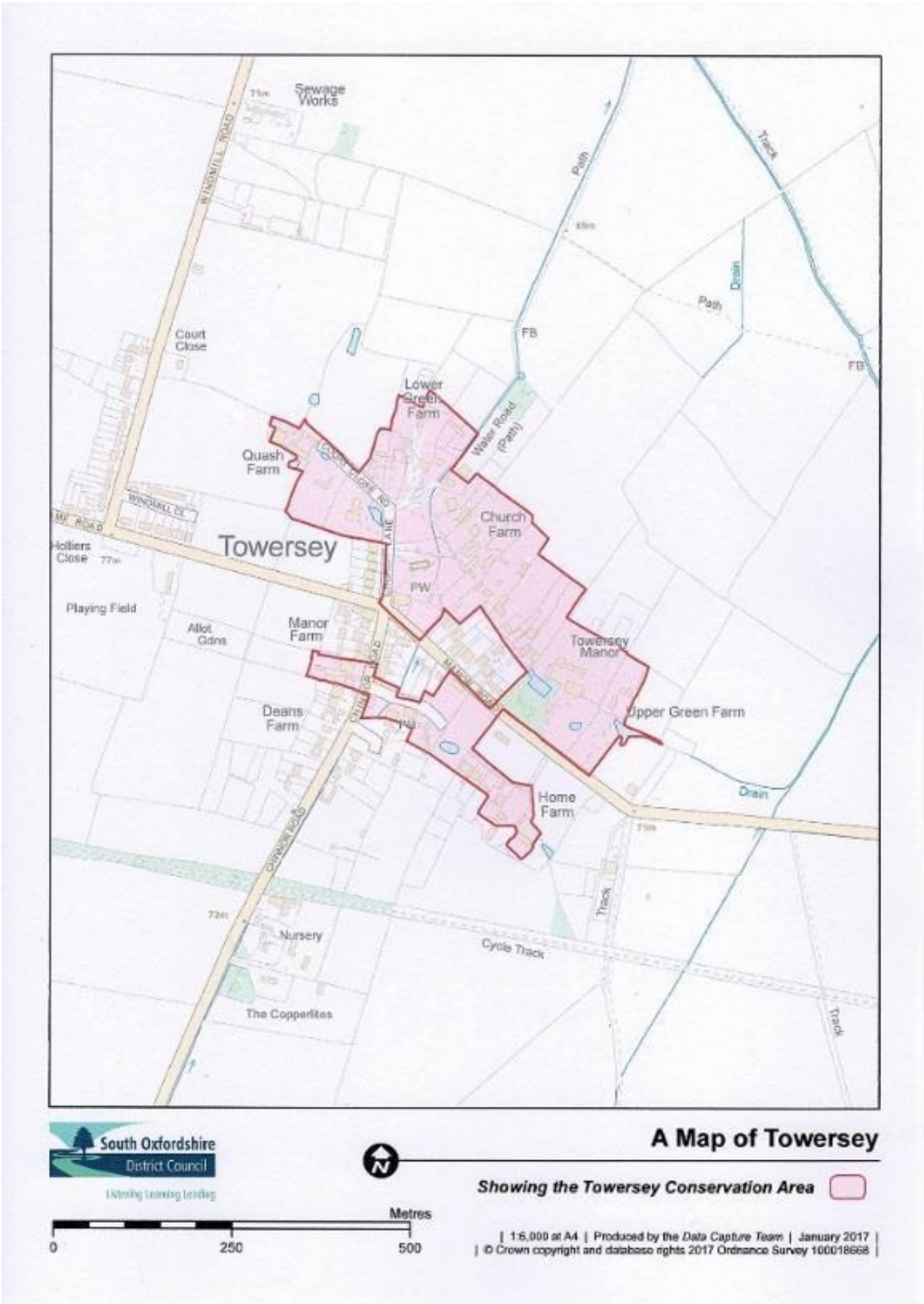
3.4.12 Farming (predominantly dairy) continued to be the largest employer in the 1920's and 30's, with nine herds across the village. However, WWII saw the land once again being put compulsorily to the plough and dairy farming never recovered its pre-war peaks. According to older villagers, the land now used as the parish allotments was first used as a communal growing area during and after the second world war as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign

3.4.13 In common with many other small rural communities, the second half of the century saw Towersey lose much of its local life. The White Hart closed in 1948, with The Black Horse pulling its last pint a few years later. The school, having already shrunk to just one schoolroom, closed in 1955. The original Post Office along Manor Road also shut, leaving the Old Bakery on Chinnor Road as the village's only general store and post office until it too closed in 1981. The school, the pubs and the Old Bakery are now private residences, while the original Post Office was replaced by a more modern private dwelling.

3.4.14 In January 1963, the train line was closed to passengers, but it continued as a goods line to Oxford until 1969, when the line beyond Thame was closed. The line through the village remained in use for another two decades, providing access to the Shell & BP terminal in Thame, before it finally closed in the 1990's.

3.4.15 Despite the village losing many of its facilities, Towersey never lost its heart. In 1966, the Playing Fields were bought by a quartet of villagers who, after much fund-raising by the village, passed its ownership to the Parish Council in 1971. They were the centre for Chinnor Rugby Club and from 1965 the site of the famous Towersey Village Festival for more than 50 years. The fields house a "pavilion" (with plans to update when funding allows), as well as a fantastic children's playground, once again supported by village fund-raising. Over the years, it has also been the home of cricket clubs, football clubs and until recently a ladies rugby club.

3.4.16 The Village Hall and the Church have also developed over the years and continue to be major hubs for the villagers of Towersey. In addition to christenings, weddings & funerals, both centres have seen many pantomimes, concerts, cabarets and even "murders" over the years and both continue to thrive.



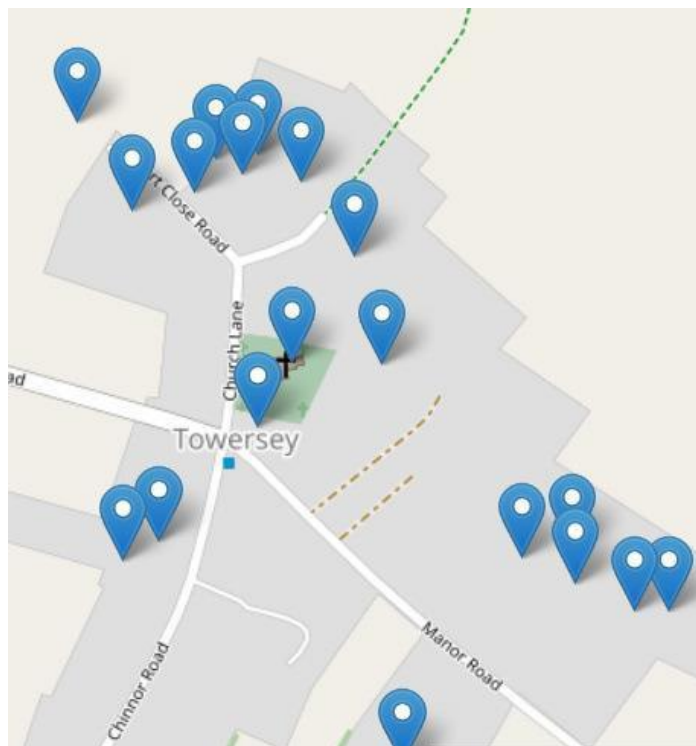
Plan B Towersey Conservation Area

3.5 Character assessment and sites of specific interest

3.5.1 Not surprisingly given its long and rich history, Towersey boasts a significant number of listed buildings spread throughout the village and surrounding areas.

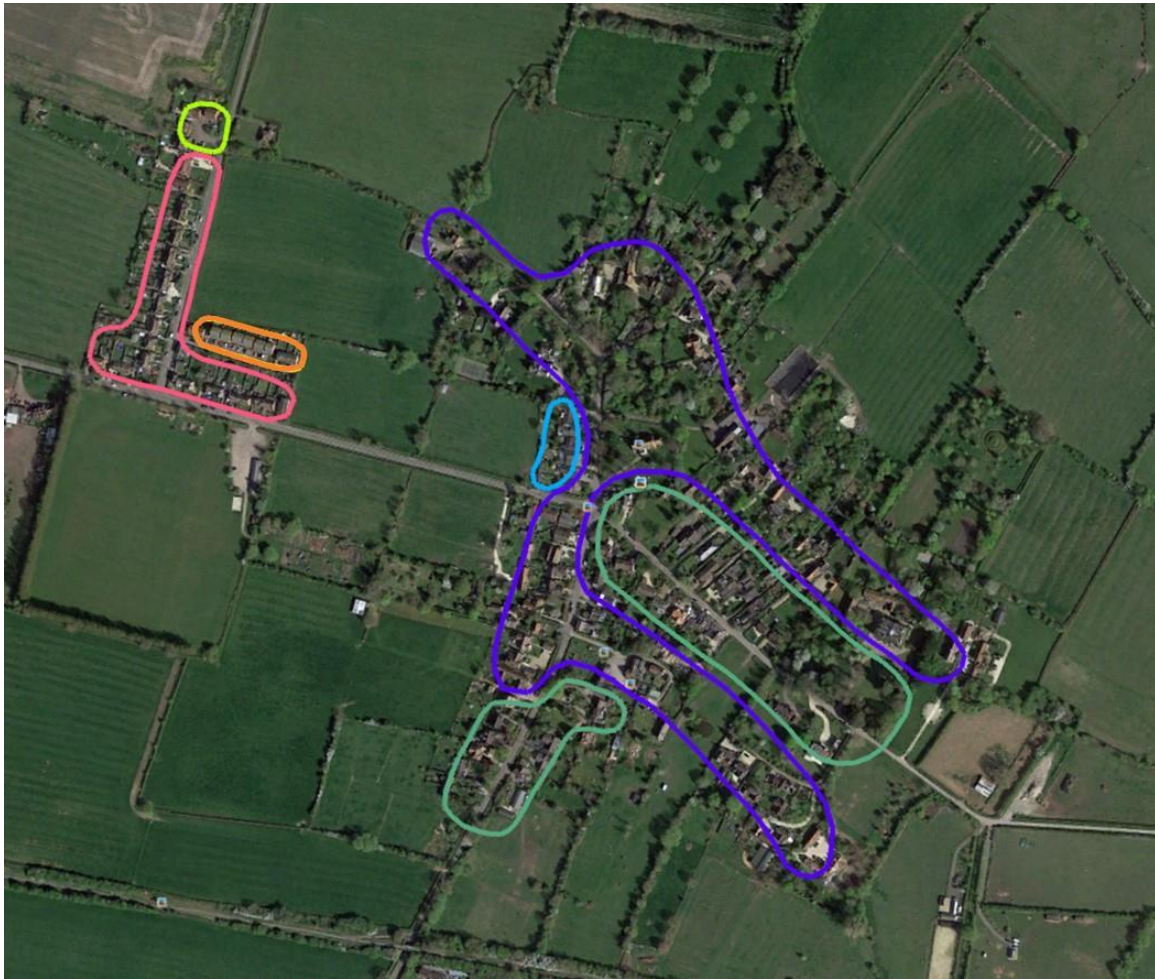
3.5.2 There are 20 listed properties in the parish boundary including at least three buildings that have been “the” Towersey Manor over the centuries (there are a variety of views on how many manors the village had).

3.5.3 The village centre is lucky to have many differing properties that are of “special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance”.



Listed Buildings in Towersey

3.5.4 In the centre of the village, the 1950’s saw the development of a number of bungalows moving along Manor Road, away from the Village Green. These properties were the result of an historic event from the 1800’s, namely the Enclosure Acts. This awarded what had originally been classed as common land to local residents.



Village historic development

Copyright – Satellite image from Google Earth

Colour code key:

- Purple –** *Pre 1825 enclosure act*
- Pink –** *Post War development 1930/40/50*
- Green –** *1950's development following change in planning law*
- Orange –** *1970/80's development of flats*
- Light green -** *1990's "Local homes for local people"*
- Light blue -** *Church Lane bungalows erected in the late 60's*

3.5.5 The land along Manor Road had been available to all for grazing and was part of the main route for farmers taking their livestock to market in Thame. This common land was also the reason for the location and use of two of the original pubs in the village – The White Hart and The Black Horse. The Enclosures Act allowed the new owners to turn this common land into private orchards and paddocks. New planning laws of the 1950's saw much of the land being sold off for new housing.

3.5.6 A few years earlier, development was also taking place along and around Windmill Road. The first houses on the corner with Thame Road were built in the 1930's, while the longer development down Windmill Road took place in the 1940/50s. At the same time as the Windmill Road properties were built (14 houses with 2 bungalows), similar properties were built along the Thame Road, opposite what is now the Playing Fields. This development, mainly on the village side of Windmill Road, built 9 houses, while a further 2 houses and 2 bungalows were built towards Thame. In the late 1960's, a small development took place along Church Lane, building 5 bungalows in what used to be a gravel pit – another example of the varied ground beneath the village. In the 1970-80's a series of flats were developed in Windmill Close behind Thame Road. These were rebuilt and refurbished in 2011 to provide 12 flats on two stories.

3.5.7 In the 1990's, another development was built at the end of Windmill Road as part of a Local Homes for Local People Project. This produced 8 houses in a quiet cul-de-sac. Most recently, in 2004, Deans Farm along the Chinnor Road was developed, providing 4 new houses in addition to the farmhouse. Development has continued since 2011 with another 15 independent developments – evidence of continued, gradual growth without the need of largescale development.

3.5.8 The historic development of the village is quite apparent when passing through or moving around the village, as is clear from the description of five main “journeys” through the village that follow.

3.5.8 For the full Character Appraisal, please see Appendix A.

We now follow five Journeys around Towersey to describe features and setting of this lovely Oxfordshire village.

3.6 Journey 1 - North from the crossroads along Church Lane.

3.6.1 As you enter Church Lane from the crossroads, you move into a beautifully wooded area of the village. The newer bungalows on the lefthand side of Church Lane were built in the 1950's on the site of an old gravel pit and have views over open fields to their rear and the church and churchyard to the front. In the summer evenings, the church, set back from the crossroads at the end of a short avenue of limes, is beautifully lit – a wonderful sight.

3.6.2 Moving down Church Lane towards the village pond, you walk back in time as you enter the Conservation Area. On your right is Church Farm, one of the many original farms that make up Towersey. This is the home of Towersey's own ghost, the headless horseman, allegedly the scene of a brutal murder!

3.6.3 On your left is the Old Vicarage, a lovely stone walled house under a slate roof. Surprisingly, this is one of the newer properties in Lower Green. The pond is fed and drained, as with most of the village, by drainage ditches. If not kept clear by village working parties, these ditches and the pond can flood in winter. In summer though, they will almost dry up and the pond will shrink considerably. It has been known for the Fire Brigade to fill the pond in the hottest summers from a nearby standpipe. The wildlife on the pond is also a draw for villagers and young children. Ducks and moorhens abound, sadly sometimes depleted by local foxes.

3.6.4 With the village pond on your left, you cannot miss the wonderful oak tree directly in front of you, unsurprisingly in the grounds of Oak Cottage, another listed property. Over the years, both the Old Vicarage and Oak Cottage have been used for filming episodes of "Midsomer Murders" – as has the village pub.

Trees, hedges and greenery dominate this quiet part of the village, with all roads or lanes leading to dead ends for vehicles. However, being one of the oldest parts of the village, footpaths and bridle paths spread out around you.

3.6.5 With the pond on your left, you walk towards Quash Farm, passing Oak Cottage & Chough Cottage on your right and The Old Farmhouse on your left. These houses are a wonderful mix of timber frame and thatch. Some neighbouring cottages are of brick and flint construction. At the end of the lane is Quash Farm and you are able to walk through the farmyard to the Public Right of Way (footpath) across the fields to Windmill Road at its rear.

3.6.6 Returning to the pond, to your right is Water Lane – very apt in winter – which takes you towards the bridle path out of the village, through the fields to Kingsey. On your left you will see Lower Green Farm, a grade II listed building with a mixture



of brick and rendered walls. Continuing down Water Lane you may be lucky enough to see a kissing gate to your right. This is another very old village footpath that takes you from Lower Green towards Upper Green, running parallel with Manor Road.

Lower Green Farm

© Village archive

3.6.7 This Public Right of Way (footpath) dates back centuries and took villagers to the older properties hidden behind Manor Road by planning changes and development in the 1960's and 1970's.

3.6.8 Returning to Water Lane and the bridle path, you pass Bridle Cottage on your right – another lovely thatched timber frame cottage. Finally, just before you leave the village and reach more open countryside, you pass a pair of farm workers' brick and flint cottages on your left.

3.7 Journey 2 - East from the crossroads along Manor Road.

3.7.1 Starting from the crossroads, at the southern-most end of Church Lane is the quaint Old School House - stone and brick under a slate roof – now converted into three homes. From here looking down Manor Road, the impression is primarily of a tree lined country lane, with few houses immediately visible. First of these trees is a large “corkscrew willow” right on the edge of the road in the small front garden of The Old School House, and beyond it a wide variety of indigenous and ornamental trees and shrubs including oak, beech, lime, willow etc. In the distance are glimpses of large mature Scots pine and cedar that beckon one on down the lane.

3.7.2 Moving southeast along Manor Road, the first of the more recent dwellings start to appear on the right, set slightly back, but the eye is drawn to the village

green on the left with the south elevation of the church in the background. The green is edged in trees, well maintained and a constant source of enjoyment for villagers. It is used by villagers and visitors alike as a quiet place to sit, meet, or walk with or without dogs. There are also a number of events held here – including the annual Mayday celebrations.

3.7.3 As one continues along Manor Road, the historic development of the area becomes clearer, with several long drives disappearing off to the left, offering occasional glimpses of early stone and timber framed homes and timber clad barns. Closer in are the newer and more varied homes (mostly bungalows) and gardens filling in the areas between these original and in many cases listed buildings, and the road. Further along, the only building actually on the road (two attached properties, Cobblers Cottage and Manor Cottage) comes into view on the right. These are followed immediately by a large open green field, accessed via a wooden farm gate, which affords glorious views to the south. Some of the original timber framed thatched houses can be seen from here, nestling along the edge of the field that stretches all the way south to the Phoenix Trial, with a natural pond in the middle. Well used Public Rights of Way (footpaths) link Manor Road, through the field via the Three Horseshoes pub, to Chinnor Road, and back through the field on to Manor Road.



Towersey Manor

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3.7.4 Immediately after the open field, the eye is again drawn to the north where large trees, expansive lawns and mature borders offer the first view of Towersey Manor. Grade II listed, built of rubble stone and brick under slate in the Italian style in 1858, the Manor is one of the largest and most striking buildings in the village.

3.7.5 It is set well back from Manor Road but is easily viewed through its brick and stone gateway down a short lime tree lined drive, framed by immaculate mature gardens. It is also (thanks to the current owners) the venue for the annual village fete, numerous events in the old barn and various open garden sessions throughout the year.

3.7.6 Beyond the Manor, it is clear that one is on the outskirts of the village with fields, hedgerows and open vistas appearing on both sides of the road.

3.7.7 To the south, a single lane leads to Home Farm and a handful of mostly older properties, including Thimble Hall, a Grade II listed timber frame with rendered infill panels under thatch.



Thimble Hall

© Village archive

3.7.8 To the north, similarly a single track lane leads to Upper Green Farm (also listed), Paradise Barn and a small number of other homes, mostly in converted agricultural buildings.

3.8 Journey 3 - South from the crossroads along Chinnor Road.

3.8.1 Starting at the Crossroads and moving south along Chinnor Road, the War Memorial Hall is situated on the right. This is a popular and well-used facility. It has been extensively modernised and upgraded in recent years and is a hub of social activities in the village. (It's proximity to the Crossroads does cause some challenges with parking.)

3.8.2 Moving along the road there are several former farmhouses, notably Manor Farm and Deans Farm. While these are no longer working farms there are large paddocks and fields behind these properties that maintain the rural feel of the community.

3.8.3 This end of Chinnor Road also contains elements of the Conservation Area on both sides of the Road and includes the Three Horseshoes Pub and Old Lane Cottage on the opposite side of the Road.

3.8.4 Old Lane Cottage was formerly the village blacksmiths, and its driveway was the main road to Thame. Old Lane Cottage was also the home to famous 20th

century artist Stanley Anderson CBE RA, who in his etchings and paintings, was inspired by Towersey's rural scenes and traditional country crafts.



By the Artist Stanley Anderson ©



The Three Horseshoes ©

3.8.5 The Three Horseshoes is a traditional Public House believed to date back to the 17th Century. The pub has a large garden and a separate barn that hosts regular live music events. It is a central part of village social life and a draw for the large numbers of walkers and cyclists who pass by on the nearby Phoenix Trail. The pub also has a children's playground that is very popular with families in the summer.



3.8.6 The road continues with a number of detached houses on both sides, built in a mixture of styles ranging from traditional through to modern infill houses. The development very much retains its rural feeling with fields behind the houses and several houses with paddocks and stables.

Birchwood House ©

3.8.7 The current development largely ends prior to reaching the bridge before the entrance to the Phoenix Trail. This is the former railway line between Thame and Princes Risborough that was converted for use by cyclists, horses and walkers.

3.8.8 This end of the village is marked by beautiful fields and meadows populated by horses and grazing sheep and cows. Land to the North close to the Phoenix Trail has been subject to recent planning permission to build 4 new houses, which are now complete.

3.8.9 Walking under the bridge with the Phoenix Trail above, there are fields to your right, stretching up over the hill towards Thame, while on your left there are two properties which have both recently received planning permission for development. The first site is Merlin House (formerly Thame Mowers) where 2 properties have been approved, closely followed by Lashlake Nurseries where a further 3 properties are also in plan. As of September 2023, the Merlin House development is underway and the Lashlake Nurseries development has been completed. This is an example of the village developing infill/brownfield sites for residential use without the need to build upon greenfield sites. The homes that are being built here, a selection of 2 and 3 bedded bungalows, also meet the stated wishes of the village to be suitable for younger/smaller families.

3.8.10 Beyond Lashlake there are two further properties on the left-hand side, before we move out into farmland and the surrounding farms. Of interest, one of these properties is The Phoenix Studio, a local art and design studio offering all kinds of art classes and workshops like oil painting, portrait painting, ceramic life modelling, drawing and printmaking. While further out of the village, there are several farms that manage the surrounding land.

3.9 Journey 4 - West from the crossroads along Thame Road.

3.9.1 Moving west from the crossroads on Thame Road, with the village hall to your left, the aspect quickly opens up with fields on both the left and right of the road. Further along, a ribbon of houses can be found to the north. These houses overlook the Playing Fields with views beyond the tree line to the Phoenix Trail and the Chiltern Hills. The playing fields are owned by the Towersey Parish Council and provide a large open space for community use, including sports fields and large enclosed children's play area. Adjacent to the playing fields lie the allotments, also owned by the Towersey Parish Council.

3.9.2 Proceeding further west along Thame Road, on the north side, lie two pairs of semi-detached houses. To the south lies open farmland with views to the Phoenix Trail. Continuing westerly along Thame Road is Helpful Hiring, a plant hire company and a local employer to Towersey and the surrounding areas of 25+ people. This is situated adjacent to the village boundary, at Chilbert's Arch, a small bridge.

3.9.3 Returning to the southern end of Windmill Road, to the left (west), are a ribbon of houses which back onto open fields extending beyond the village boundary, to the Thame bypass. On the opposite side of the road, to the east are open fields and a bridle path leading to Quash Farm and Lower Green Farm, with views of the tree line and St Catherine's Church and across to the Old School House.

The low ridge heights of the bungalows in front of School House ensure an uninterrupted view.

3.9.4 As you proceed towards the north end of Windmill Road, on your RHS, you pass a Thames Water treatment plant and a medium sized solar farm development – completed in 2016/2017. Beyond the solar development, on either side of the road, are two houses. Flint House to the north west and Stonepits to the north east, both with traditional brick and flint elevations with quoin features in local limestone.

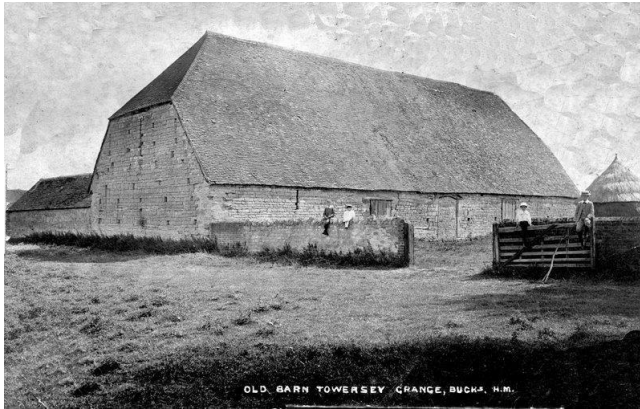
3.9.5 At the junction of Windmill Road and Kingsey Road the views to the northwest provide an open aspect extending to the Thame bypass road and includes the old Pump House which is situated adjacent to Pilmor Arch, a partner to Chibert’s Arch, the bridge marking the NW boundary of the parish.

3.9.6 The pump house itself was fully restored and converted to residential use in the late ‘80s by the current owner. Most of the original pump equipment is still evident. Views to the north take in the tree line of Tythrop House and open fields that extend to Tythrop House and Kingsey.

3.10 Journey 5 - The more outlying areas of the village.

3.10.1 Leaving Towersey going east along Manor Road from Upper Green Farm, the road bends to the left, and opposite the old pole barn to the right there is a Public Right of Way (footpath) called Green Lane. This heads to the Phoenix Trail 200 metres away, creating one of three circuits for walkers around the village. Either side of the path is an equestrian facility - to the west, Cricketers Piece (on the site of the old cricket pitch) and to the east, Green End Barn a smallholding on the site of the old Abattoir.

3.10.2 Manor Road is flanked by open fields until the junction to Grove Farm’s drive, where a new barn has been built. The road ends approximately three quarters of a mile out of the village at Cuttlebrook Farm and Brook Meadow Farm, where a Public Right of Way (bridleway) continues through a tunnel of hedging to a ford across the Kingsey Cuttlebrook. This stream is known locally as “The Sidalls”. There is a wooden pedestrian bridge and ford and a very picturesque clearing in the wooded area around the bend in the brook, which is also the county boundary. Here the route to the Sidalls heads off in two directions: an old local path to Kingsey and a Public Right of Way (bridleway) to Ilmer in Buckinghamshire.



Grange Farm Barn

From an old postcard©

3.10.3 Where Manor Road ends there are driveways left and right. The left one goes to Grange Farm. This is also a Public Right of Way (footpath) which finishes at the walled farmyard gate. Grange Farm is on a slight rise in the ground and is collection of agricultural buildings including a rare and mostly intact Cistercian Grange Barn.

3.10.4 This is the oldest known surviving building in the Parish and dates from ca. 1295. The house is listed and parts of it also date back to the period when it was a grange to Thame Abbey (now Thame Park). It has recently been lovingly restored from a derelict condition. In the surrounding fields artifacts have been found which show occupation on the site from the Stone-age through, Roman, Saxon, and Norman times to the present day.



Grange Farm

Copyright – A Flanagan

3.10.5 The drive to the right of Manor Road is also a short Public Right of Way (footpath) to the Phoenix Trail. The first property along the road is Penn Farm, with a pebble dash farmhouse and outbuildings, one of which was associated with the Thame railway line.

3.10.6 The same Public Right of Way (footpath) and private access then continues up the hill, with magnificent views in all directions, to a new house called The

Stonehouse (formerly New Close Farm). The Parish boundary ends just before this property.

3.10.7 The Phoenix Trail was established on the disused railway line from Princes' Risborough to Thame (via Towersey). It is a Permissive shared use path and part of the National Cycle Network and is an enjoyable and well-used route for horse riders, cyclists, joggers, dog walkers and ramblers.

3.10.8 This seven mile path boasts abundant wild flowers and wildlife with fantastic views across the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire countryside, accented by several fun and thought provoking sculptures along the way. The Phoenix Trail is a convenient route for walkers to access the picturesque village of Towersey (especially the Three Horseshoes Public House) and for residents of Towersey to travel to Thame and Princes Risborough.

This assessment illustrates that the built environment in and around Towersey has evolved with a variety of building styles which provides an insight into the development of the area. Traditional vernacular architecture interspersed with more contemporary designs have provided an interesting and balanced environment whilst maintaining the character of the village. It is hoped that future developments continue to achieve this.

3.11 Physical infrastructure and services

3.11.1 Towersey has easy car access to Thame, Chinnor and surrounding larger towns such as High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Cycling to Thame and Princes Risborough is made safe and easy by the Phoenix Trail but cycling to Chinnor or Haddenham and Thame Parkway station is considerably more dangerous, especially when dark during the winter months. With no public transport, this increases car traffic through and to and from the village

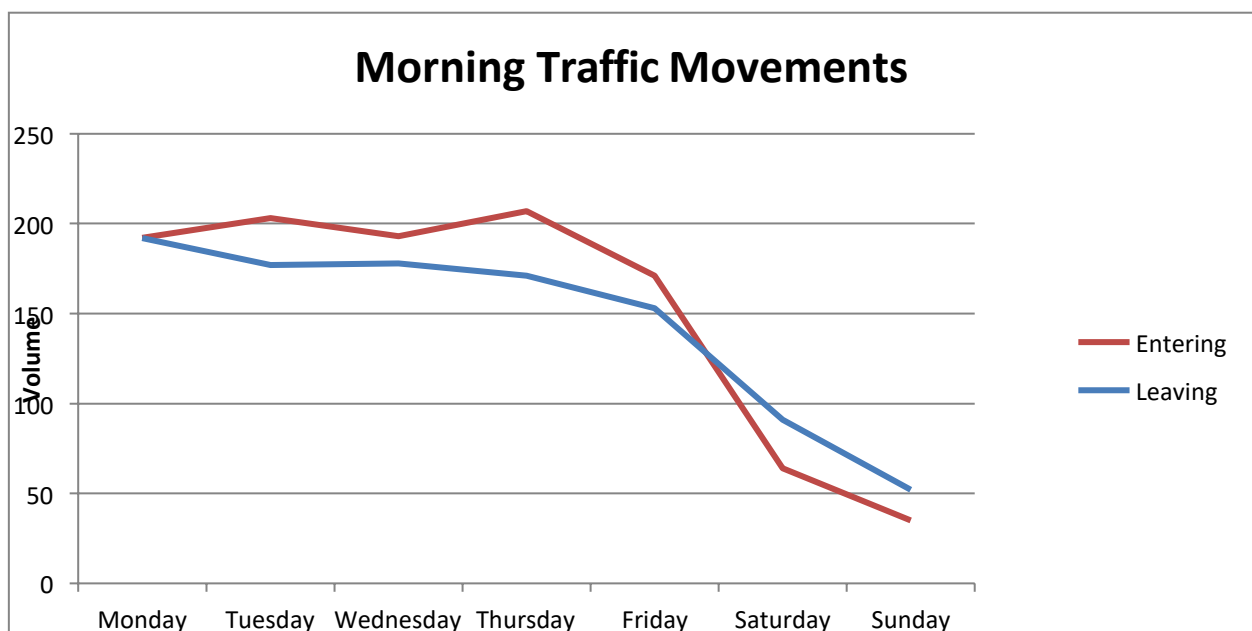
3.11.2 There were two buses that ran through Towersey. However these services have both now been closed – the last in August 2022. Though these were well used by villagers, the services were infrequent and cuts in grants had reduced them, until the recent closure. The lack of pavement and lighting between Towersey and Thame make it dangerous to walk along the road at night, especially for older people.

3.11.3 While links from Towersey to Thame are restricted, once in Thame good bus links exist to both Oxford and Aylesbury.

3.11.4 The easy road access also has its downsides. As development in surrounding towns and villages increases and roads become more congested, so the roads through Towersey have become a “rat run”. A traffic survey clearly indicated large numbers of vehicles entering and leaving the village at peak times on week days. For example, the close on 200 vehicles entering Towersey via Windmill Road on weekday mornings is very close to the number (around 175) leaving the village via Chinnor Road - the rest turning right out of Windmill Rd heading towards Thame. These numbers were closer to 65 and 35 respectively on Saturday on Sunday.

3.11.5 It is suggested to monitor traffic movements on a regular basis to establish how rapidly this issue is developing, and to use ANPR to monitor exact vehicle movements. It is clear however, that traffic calming and other measures to reduce the “rat run” will be very important to ensure the safety of local residents and the serenity of the village.

3.11.6 The Phoenix Trail provides good access for cyclists and walkers to safely travel to both Thame and Princes Risborough. There are few roadside footpaths in Towersey itself however, and the main footpath linking the two ends of the village is narrow and dark at night. This makes it potentially dangerous for children going to and from the playing fields and for dog walkers. The Phoenix Trail and this footpath through the village and road into Thame are now the designated routes to school for Towersey children attending schools in Thame.



Traffic movements in and out of Towersey

Data sourced from official traffic survey carried out by Oxfordshire County Council during the summer of 2018.

3.11.7 The nearest train station is at Haddenham and Thame Parkway, some 5 miles away. This can be accessed by the 280 bus from Thame.

3.11.8 Towersey has mains water and electricity, but no mains gas. Wastewater is processed locally at a small capacity constrained plant along Windmill Road. Some properties have their own septic tanks. Water pressure is adequate on the whole but low in outlying areas and at peak use times. The electricity supply has regular spikes. Prolonged power outages are unusual. Many properties have oil fired heating and there is at least one 'buying group' in the village for bulk buying of oil.

3.11.9 Telephone services are extensive and provided by BT. BT offer Infinity Broadband. Experiences with this appear to be mixed. Some people report it as excellent. Others find it is extremely slow at peak times such as Saturday morning, Friday night and Sunday nights.

3.11.10 There are no healthcare facilities in Towersey. The nearest doctors are in Thame and Chinnor and the nearest Hospitals are in Thame, Oxford and Aylesbury. Dentists are located in Thame and Chinnor. There are also no schools in Towersey. There are primary and secondary schools in Thame and nurseries in Thame and Sydenham.

3.11.11 Towersey has a sports ground, including a football pitch, rugby pitch, a cricket pitch (unmaintained) and nets – the nets have now been removed - a children's play area, and a large open field space. Over the years, the rugby, cricket and football pitches have all been used regularly. The playground is a great asset to the village and is used by many visitors from Thame and the surrounding villages.

4. The plan

4.1 Community aspirations

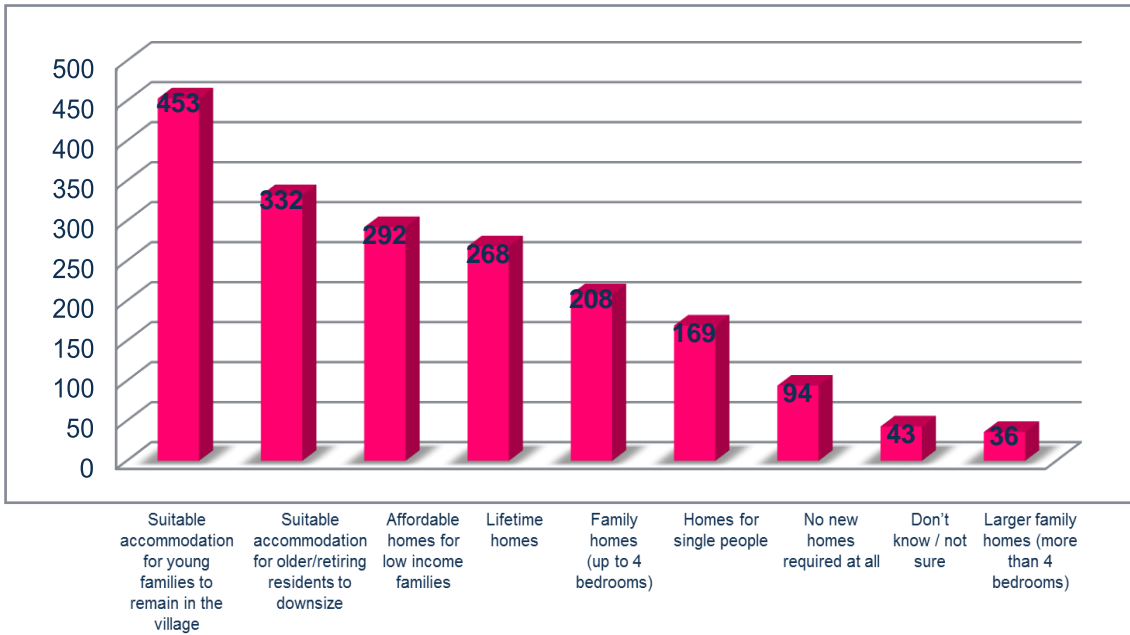
4.1.1 As will be clear from the preceding text, the residents of Towersey are a close knit, settled, welcoming and sociable community who have a remarkably aligned and consistent set of views on their parish. In a community of approximately 180 households 153 completed survey responses were returned. When asked in the survey what we like about Towersey there was a very high degree of consensus. The picture that emerged (with the frequency of mentions represented by the size of the text) is this:



Source: **Survey results**

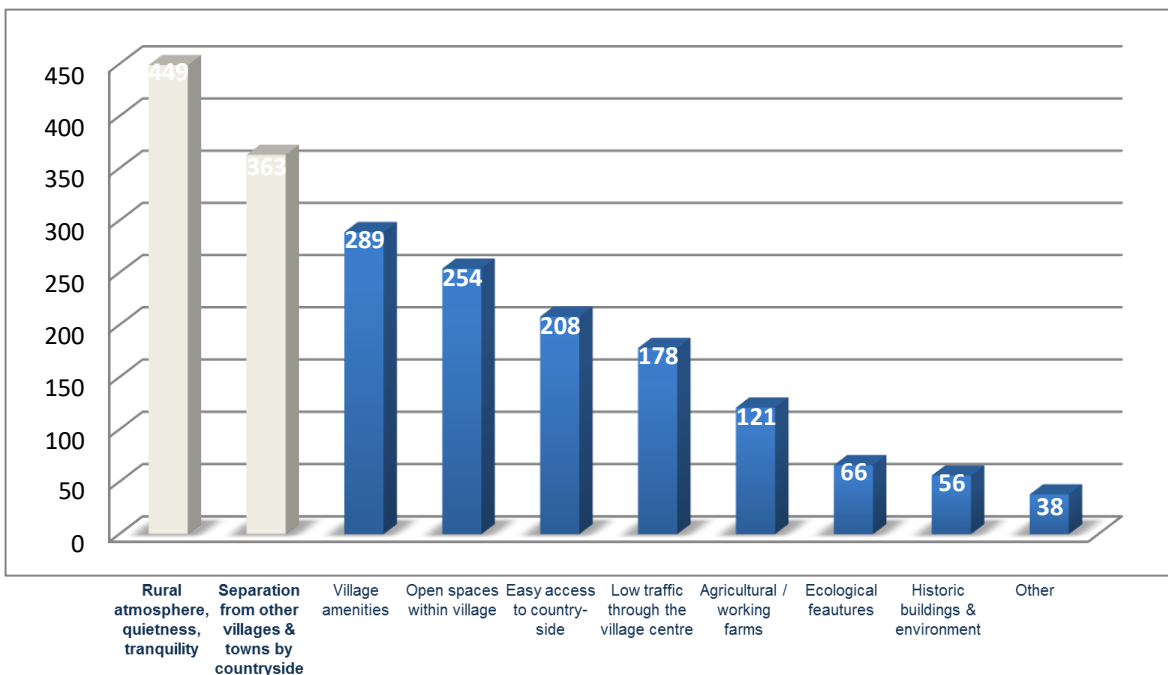
4.1.2 The overarching desire of the vast majority of villagers is to maintain and build on the historic and current small village community. There is a clear recognition of the need and desire to continue to gradually grow and enhance the village e.g. to improve facilities/homes for older and younger members of the community...

What type of houses do we need?



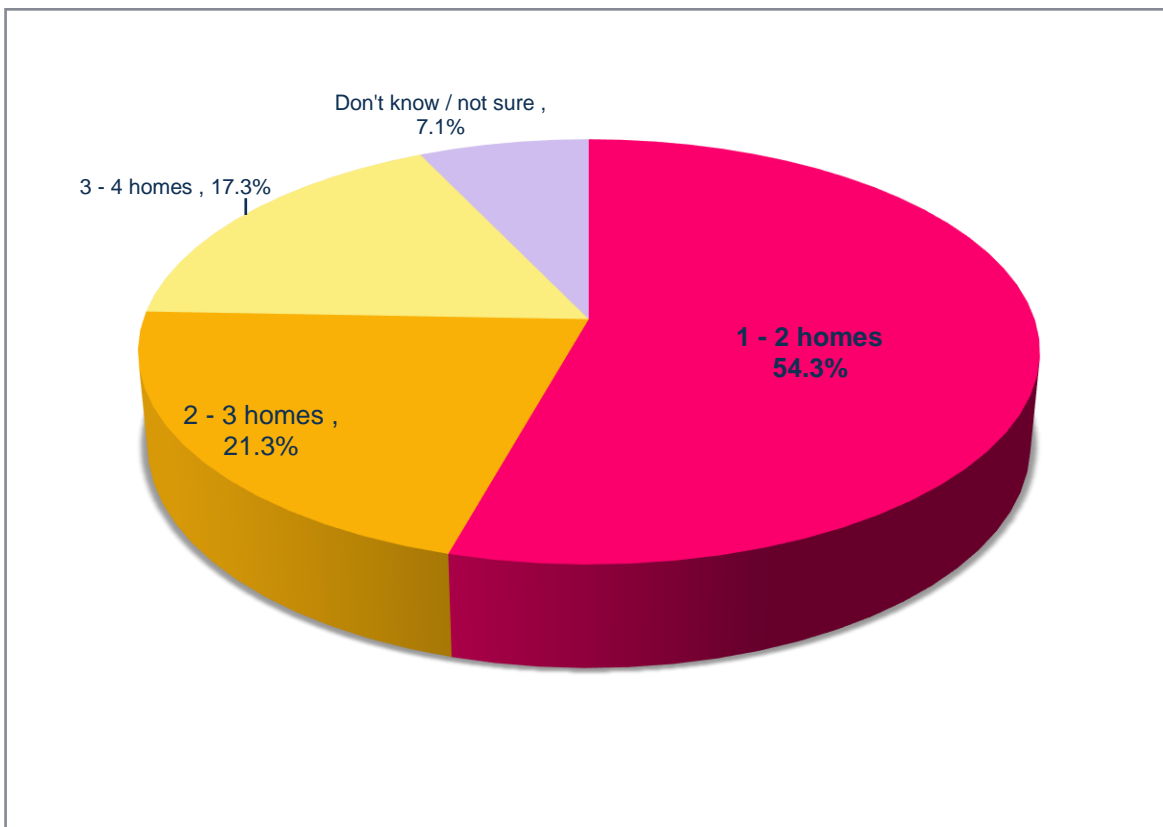
...but in such a way that Towersey remains a small, standalone village in a rural setting with clear separation from rapidly expanding larger surrounding towns and villages..

What is it that is most important we retain?



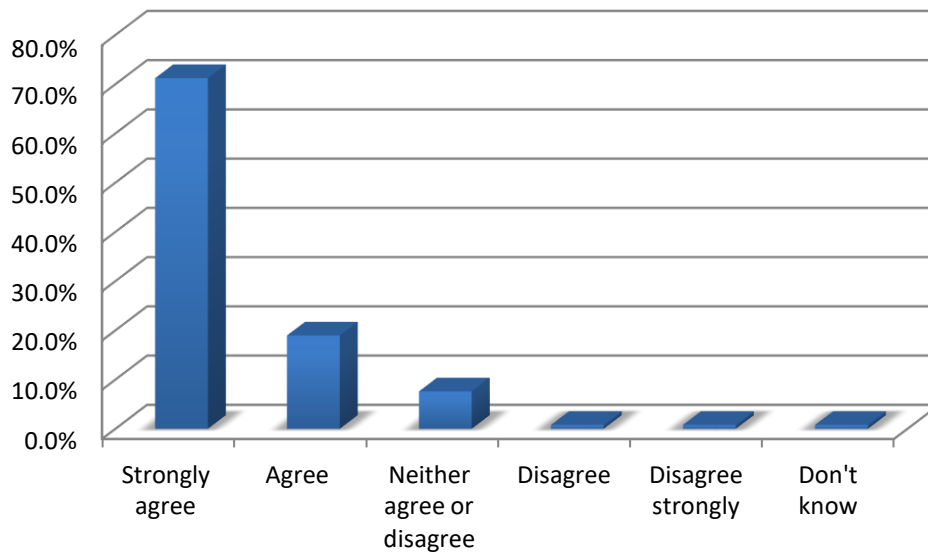
...with new build houses as individual or small groups spread around the village not large developments.....

What maximum number of houses in one location?



...and community spaces and facilities that support and encourage health, wellbeing and a community spirit....

The retention of open space should be taken into consideration when deciding on the number & location of new homes built in the village



...with improved amenities for local villagers eg:

Footpaths and benches

- "More (memorial) benches would encourage more walking (a rest along the way).... path from Windmill Rd to crossroads needs widening/maintenance... need a path to the Thame ring road.... "

The playing fields

- " Playing fields look uncared for needs a new clubhouse and facilities.... social club is an eyesore it could be such an asset for the village.... "

Traffic and parking

- "Parking at the crossroads/phoenix trail is hazardous.....we must control the 'rat run' and speeding"

(though recognised NP not the best vehicle for all of these)

4.2 Planning Policy Context, Vision and Objectives.

4.2.1 The parish lies within the South Oxfordshire District Council area in the county of Oxfordshire.

National Planning Policy

4.2.2 The latest National Planning Policy Frameworks (NPPF) published by the Government in 2023, is an important guide in the preparation of local plans and neighbourhood plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF 2023 are considered especially relevant:

- Neighbourhood planning (§28 - §30)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (§92 - §103)
- Achieving well-designed places (§126 - §136)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (§174 - §188)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (§189 - §208)

Strategic Planning Policy

4.2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan must also be able to show that its policies are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan, which is the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. There are also minerals and waste policies adopted by Oxfordshire County Council, but none are considered relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan. During the development of this Neighbourhood Plan, SODC have developed and adopted a new Local Plan – the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. In it, Towersey continues to be defined as a ‘smaller village’ in the settlement hierarchy. The settlement infill development policy is H16 and allows for infill on sites of up to 0.2 ha (equivalent 5 to 6 homes). It also supports redevelopment and sets no site area limit for such proposals. Policy H8 guides housing development in the Smaller Villages – allowing for growth of up to 10% in the housing stock.

There are other policies in the new Local Plan that may be relevant, including:

- H1 – Delivering new homes
- H11 – Housing Mix
- ENV1 – Landscape and countryside
- ENV2 – Biodiversity
- ENV4 – Watercourses

- ENV5 – Green Infrastructure
- ENV6 – Historic Environment
- ENV7 – Listed Buildings
- ENV8 - Conservation Areas
- DES1 - Delivering high quality development
- DES2 - Enhancing local character
- CF1 - Safeguarding community facilities
- CF4 - Existing open space, Sport and recreational facilities

4.2.4 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 has now been adopted.

Adjacent Neighbourhood Plans

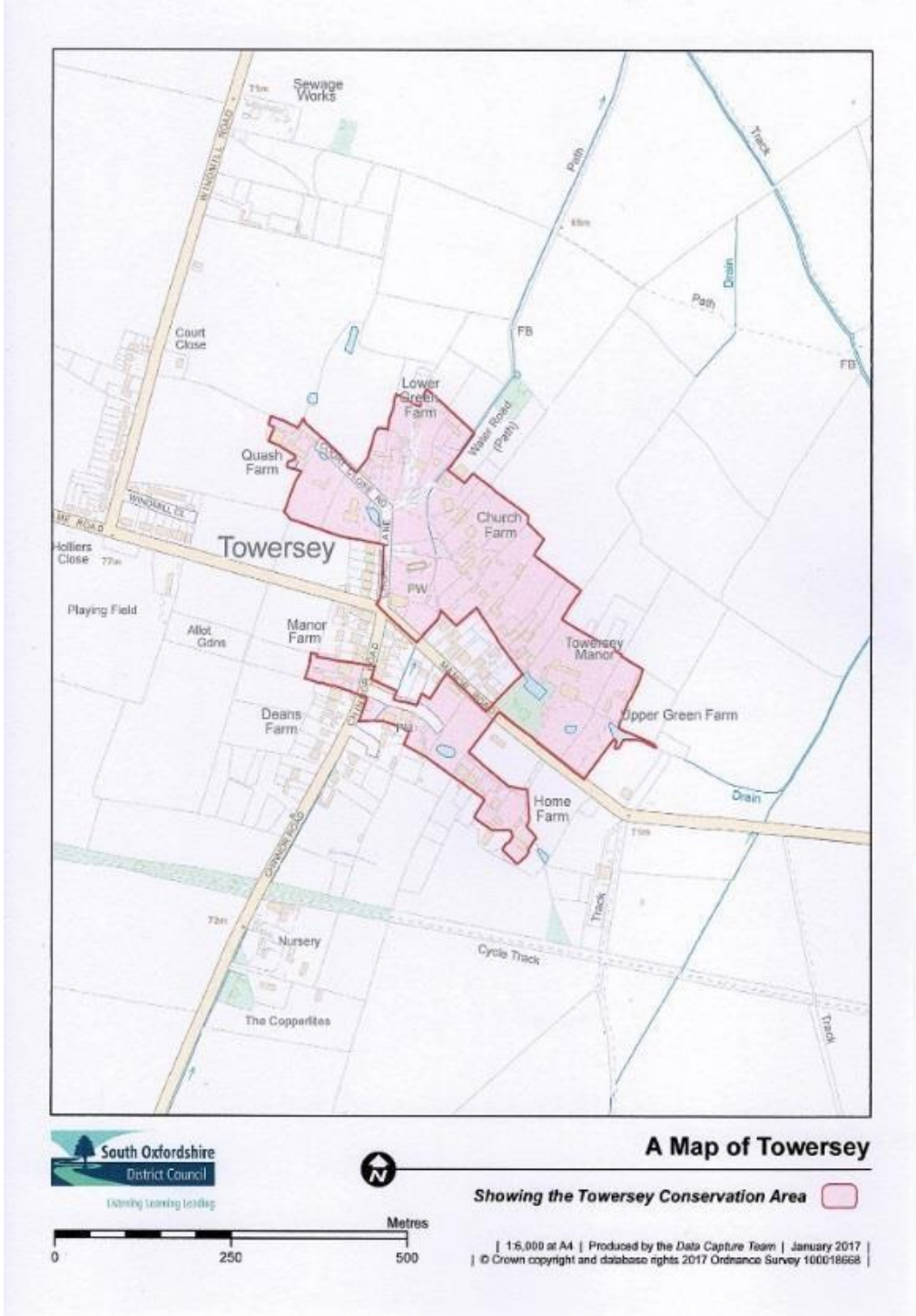
4.2.5 Neighbourhood planning is popular in South Oxfordshire and a number of plans have been made, or are in preparation, in the vicinity of the Parish. This includes the Thame Neighbourhood Plan, which was made in 2013 and is now being reviewed. The Thame Plan has the potential to bring development right up to the Parish boundary, with development on the south side of the Thame ring road. Though not a preferred option, it has potential to infill much of the gap between Towersey and Thame. It is therefore important that the buffer between an expanding Thame and its much smaller and more rural neighbour Towersey, is maintained.

The neighbouring parishes of Sydenham and Chinnor have both made Neighbourhood Plans. These latter plans are not considered to comprise proposals that directly have the potential to significantly affect this Neighbourhood Plan.

Towersey Conservation Area

4.2.6 The Conservation Area was designated by South Oxfordshire District Council on 11 December 1984 (see Plan B below). Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, to protect areas of special interest as opposed to individual buildings. Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, including 72 in South Oxfordshire District. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas and from time to time to review the

boundaries. Such areas are defined as ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’.



Plan B Conservation area

4.2.7 The main attributes that define the special character of an area are its physical appearance and history, i.e. the form and features of buildings and the spaces between them, their former uses and historical development. Where there are a number of periods of historical development, the character of individual parts of the conservation area may differ. Contrasts between the appearance of areas and the combination of buildings of various ages, materials and styles may contribute to its special character.

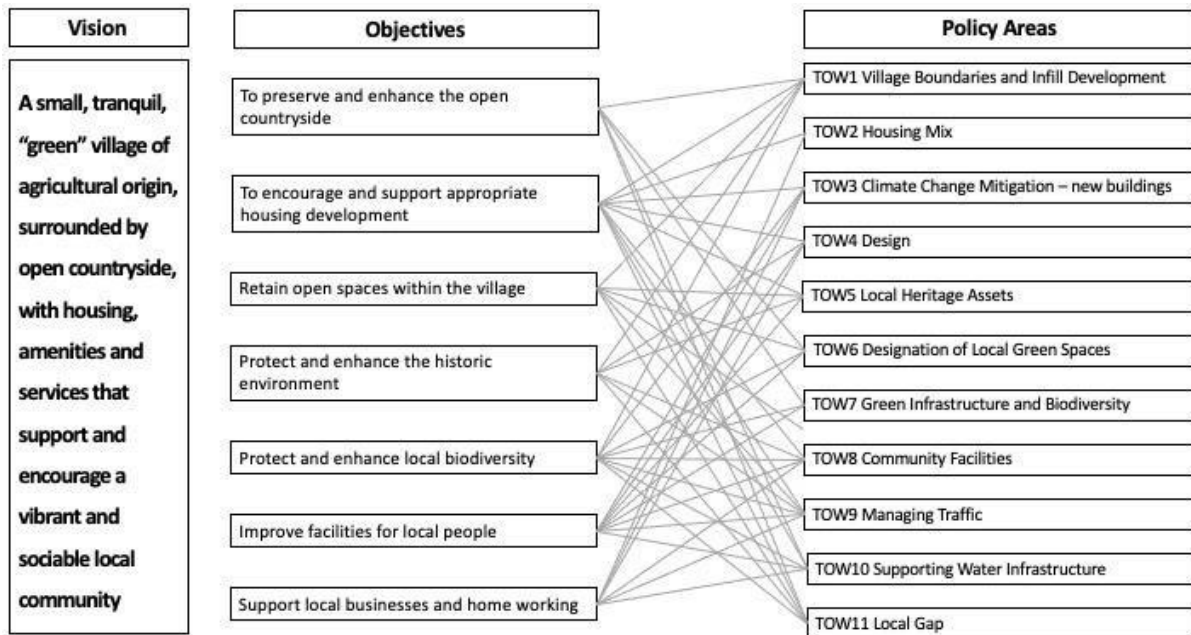
4.2.8 A clear vision has been developed for Towersey:

A small, tranquil, “green” village of agricultural origin, surrounded by open countryside, with housing, amenities and services that support and encourage a vibrant and sociable local community.

From this vision, a set of 7 clear objectives have emerged:

- To preserve and enhance the open countryside
- To encourage and support appropriate housing development
- Retain open spaces within the village
- Protect and enhance the historic environment
- Protect and enhance local biodiversity – as per NPPF 2023
- Improve facilities for local people
- Support local business and home working.

These objectives can be linked to distinct policy areas and policies as set out below:



4.2.9 The NHP does not have the power to manage the traffic through the village so this will be a focused Oxfordshire CC task.

5. Policies - Building for Life

5.0.1 The following policies relate to the development and use of land in the designated Neighbourhood Area of Towersey. They focus on specific planning matters that are of greatest interest to the local community. There are many parts of the Parish that are not affected by these policies, and there are many other policy matters that have been left to the Local Plan to cover. This has avoided unnecessary repetition of policies between the two plans, though they have a mutual, helpful inter-dependence.

5.0.2 Each policy is numbered and titled, and it is shown in bold italics. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on the Policies Map (pages 63 and 64). After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

5.1 TOW1 Village boundaries and infill development

A. The Neighbourhood Plan defines a Village Boundary at Towersey, as shown on the Policies Map.

B. Proposals for infill development within the settlement will be supported, provided they accord with the design and development management policies of the Development Plan. The scale of infill should be appropriate to its location.

C. Proposals for development outside the Village Boundary will only be supported where they are considered appropriate rural development as defined by the NPPF, and are consistent with other policies in the development plan including the other policies in this Plan.

5.1.1 This policy is intended to distinguish between the built-up area of the village and the surrounding countryside in order to manage development proposals accordingly. The boundaries have been drawn using the Neighbourhood Plan Character Appraisal and the conventions deployed by other local planning authorities that use this development management tool, but essentially, it follows

the observed settlement edge formed by buildings, which have a clear functional relationship to the settlement.

5.1.2 In defining the boundaries on the Policies Map, applicants, the local community, and the local planning authority have certainty of how the policy should be applied when preparing, commenting on, and determining planning applications respectively. This is consistent with a number of Local Plan policies to encourage sustainable forms of development in the rural areas.

5.1.3 Most new development will be acceptable in principle within the defined boundaries, subject to being appropriate in terms of design and other arrangements. Local Plan Policy (Policy H16) defines the term 'infill' and establishes that the scale of infill should be appropriate to its location. This may be infill housing and other uses that are appropriate in scale to small villages with a limited road network and public transport services.

5.1.4 The policy requires that development proposals outside the defined boundaries are in line with the relevant policies of the Local Plan (Policies H1 and Policy H8) and Neighbourhood Plan in respect of protecting local landscape and character of the natural environment character. This recognises the valued function of the countryside and working farmland in shaping rural character.

5.1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan does not make any housing site allocations as the District Council has confirmed that the 'indicative housing figure' for the Parish is zero (as per NPPF §66). However, the boundaries will allow for infill opportunities for smaller homes (see Policy TOW2) on suitable sites as expected of a 'smaller village' by Local Plan Policy H16, enabling access to homes in the Parish suited to younger people and 'downsizers'.

5.2 TOW2 Housing mix

New residential developments should provide homes to address the nature of local needs and contribute to the objective of creating a mixed and balanced community. Wherever practicable and viable, new developments should consist of 1-, 2- and/or 3-bedroom homes.

5.2.1 The policy is intended to contribute towards a mixed and balanced community in line with paragraph 62 of the NPPF. It refines Local Plan Policy H11 by setting a specific requirement for all new homes in the Parish. It is necessary to start to rebalance the current mix of homes so that it better reflects local housing needs.

5.2.2 The district council's current evidence (the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014) show that the existing stock of larger homes in South Oxfordshire accounts for over a quarter of dwellings and smaller units with two or three bedrooms are preferred in the district. Using data from the Village Survey and Local Insight, a tool developed by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI), we are able to present a fairly accurate picture of Towersey today. In Towersey, 36% of village properties have 8 or more rooms vs 12.7% across England.

5.2.3 We also know that there are approximately 442 people living in Towersey, 50% male and 50% female. Those aged 0-15 make up 11.1% of our population, working age 64.7% and our 65+ residents, 24.2%. These numbers compare with an Oxfordshire average for 0-15 and 65+, 18.9% and 18.2%, and an England average of 19.2% and 18.4%. In other words, we have fewer young people and more older people, which is not surprising when the number of people who have moved in or out of the village in last 12 months is 75% of the national average. This was confirmed by the Village Survey that told us that 76% of those responding would like to stay in the village. That same survey told us that of the respondents, 86% were older than 45. The survey also indicated that we need suitable accommodation for young families to remain in the village and for older/retiring residents to downsize. 82% expected to stay in the village with 22% downsizing and 28% staying with alterations. 29% wanted their families to stay in the village and only 11% expected to move away.

5.2.4 The policy therefore prefers that new infill homes provided for by Policy TOW1 comprises 1-, 2- and 3- bedroom homes. It is necessary in order to start to rebalance the current mix of homes so that it better reflects local need. Although while over the lifetime of the plan this may only marginally influence the balance of housing stock, it is considered to be a necessary step to provide opportunities for younger people and ‘downsizers’ to be able to access housing which otherwise the market would not deliver. Whilst we cannot prohibit the building of larger homes, these should be built only as an exception. The Village Survey has provided an insight into the anticipated housing needs of the neighbourhood and as such the Plan seeks to meet and support that identified need.

5.3 TOW3 Climate change mitigation – zero carbon buildings

Development proposals which would be ‘zero carbon ready’ by design by minimising the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping will be supported. Consideration should be given to resource efficiency at the outset and whether existing buildings can be re-used as part of the scheme to capture their embodied carbon.

Proposals for a Passivhaus or equivalent standard buildings with a space heating demand of less than 15KWh/m²/year will be supported. Schemes that maximise their potential to meet this standard by proposing the use of terraced and/or apartment building forms of plot size, plot coverage and layout that are different to those of the character area within which the proposal is located will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not have an unacceptable effect on the character area.

Proposals for major development should be accompanied by a Whole-Life-Cycle Carbon Emission Assessment, using a recognised methodology, to demonstrate actions have been taken to reduce embodied carbon resulting from the construction and use of the building over its life.

5.3.1 Policies DES8-10 of the adopted Local Plan provide local guidance on this important matter. Its paragraph 8.30 provides the context for the approach taken and comments that the Government has established that through Part L of the Building Regulations, emissions allowed from new buildings will be reduced incrementally and that “zero carbon” buildings will be required within the plan period. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 stipulated that a review of minimum energy performance requirements under Building Regulations must be carried out and it is expected that current standards will be improved with the introduction of the Future Homes Standard. Policy DES10 sets the Council’s policy requirement for carbon reduction.

5.3.2 Policy DES8 of the Local Plan comments that all new development, including building conversions, refurbishments, and extensions, should seek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction. Proposals must demonstrate that they are seeking to limit greenhouse emissions through location, building orientation, design, landscape, and planting considering any nationally adopted standards and in accordance with Policies DES10 and DES7.

5.3.3 Policy DES10 of the Local Plan provides more specific details and comments that a range of development proposals (including those for residential uses) should achieve at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared with a code 2013 Building Regulations compliant base case. This reduction is to be secured through renewable energy and other low carbon technologies and/ or energy efficiency measures. The policy comments that this requirement will increase from 31 March 2026 to at least a 50% reduction in carbon emissions and again from 31 March 2030 to a 100% reduction in carbon emissions (zero carbon). The policy also comments that these targets will be reviewed in the light of any future legislation and national guidance.

5.3.4 The implementation of Policy DES10 is expanded in the Joint Design Guide (June 2022). This Design Guide has been prepared as part of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils’ commitment to securing the highest quality development within the districts. The guide builds upon and replaces previous local design guides and aligns with the National Design Guide (2019). It is intended to assist landowners, developers, applicants, agents, designers, and planners in the process of developing high quality development and in assessing its design quality. The guide is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The section on Climate and sustainability sets out a series of design standards to achieve the details of Policy DES10.

5.3.5 In November 2022 the District Council published a technical advice note on Policy DES10 of the Local Plan. The note comments that whilst it is not an adopted policy document, and should not be read as such, it sets out how applicants should demonstrate compliance with the adopted policy. It also comments that it will be of use to South Oxfordshire District Council officers, developers, and applicants, elected Members, as well as any other interested parties.

5.3.6 Policy TOW3 of this Plan builds on this comprehensive local approach. It will result in a situation where the neighbourhood plan would offer a supportive context for development proposals in the parish to achieve more sustainable solutions than those required by the Local Plan policy. Plainly the wider situation may be affected by changes to national or local planning policies on these matters in the Plan period.

5.3 TOW4 Design

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should sustain and where practicable enhance the character of the Parish and, where appropriate, the character and appearance of the Towersey Conservation Area and its setting as shown on the Policies Map.

Development proposals should also have full regard to the Towersey Character Appraisal and the following design principles:

- *Maintain the prevailing character of one to two storey, detached and semidetached dwellings with consistent building lines in rectangular plots fronting onto main roads;*
- *Respond to and compliments the prevailing material character which primarily consists of: red-facing brick, colour through render, some buff brick and stone, plain clay tile roofs with some Welsh slate, and a small number of thatched roofs;*
- *The appearance in the streetscene of several Local Heritage Assets, notably The Old Bakery, Manor Cottage/Cobblers Cottage, 1 Church Lane, 11 Church Lane, Greenway, which either terminate or punctuate key views along the main roads;*
- *Maintain the setting of informal and formal open space as intimate and tranquil areas in the village providing glimpse views to several listed buildings and local heritage assets whilst their openness contributes to the setting of these heritage assets, especially:*
 - ~ *the Three Horseshoes PH garden;*
 - ~ *land at The Duck Pond;*
 - ~ *the Village Green;*
 - ~ *White's Field;*
- *The openness of land adjacent to Towersey Manor in its contribution to the setting of Towersey Manor and to the buildings at Upper Green Farm and at Home Farm;*
- *The prominence of mature trees and tall hedges along frontage boundaries and the common use of grass verges, occasionally with ditches, in the space in front of buildings, in defining the rural character of the area and helping to punctuate views in the street scene;*
- *The pattern of strongly defined edges to the countryside with clear rear plot definition by way of boundary walls, hedges, fences and/or trees;*

- ***Views into the village, including the Conservation Area, at public vantage points to the west, north-west and east and from the former railway embankment in the south;***
- ***The importance of plot arrangements in the setting of the Conservation Area, as shown on the Policies Map, and local heritage assets, as set out in Policy TOW5, in defining the essential character of the Conservation Area.***

5.3.1 The policy establishes the importance of design of new development in the village to maintaining its strong rural character. In doing so, it refines the design quality principles of Local Plan policies DES1 and DES2. It also defines the key characteristics of its heritage assets for the application of Local Plan Policies ENV6 – ENV8. Of particular note is the importance of local heritage assets, as set out in Policy TOW5, in defining the character of the Conservation Area, due to their prominence in the street scene.

5.3.2 The policy highlights a series of development principles that are drawn from the Neighbourhood Plan Character Appraisal of Towersey included in the evidence base. Those principles set out those features of the village that make it distinctive from its neighbouring villages and help define the significance of the Conservation Area. It therefore informs the Design & Access Statements prepared for planning applications in demonstrating that, where relevant to the nature and location of the proposal, regard has been paid to those principles. It does not require that each proposal slavishly adheres to each principle, but applications will be required to demonstrate they have acknowledged, understood and responded to the relevant characteristics in drawing up their schemes, and to justify where proposals depart from the policy.

5.3.3 Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being (NPPF para 114). Consideration should be given to the fact that any new homes or commercial premises planned to be built have 21st digital infrastructure installed at the build phase. Developers should be required to engage with a telecommunications network provider to provide a full fibre connection to each residential/business premise. This will significantly mitigate environmental impacts of any proposed development. People will be able to work from home, reducing unnecessary journeys. Moreover, digital infrastructure provides the backbone for digital technologies' role in building a low carbon economy.

5.5 TOW5 Local heritage assets

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies buildings as Local Heritage Assets as included in the Appendix A schedule and shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals that affect a Local Heritage Asset will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

5.5.1 This policy identifies a number of buildings in the Parish that, whilst not designated as listed buildings, either have some local heritage value or, often together with other buildings, play an important role in defining the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting. They are set out in the schedule in Appendix A, with a short description for their inclusion, as derived from the Neighbourhood Plan Character Appraisal. Local Plan Policy ENV6 articulates the provisions of §203 of the NPPF, as does TOW5, in respect of ‘non-designated heritage assets.’ At present, the District Council does not maintain a list of such assets.

5.5.2 The parish’s designated historic heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place. Proposals for development that affect non-designated historic assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023).

5.6 TOW6 Designation of Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations, as shown on the Policies Maps, as Local Green Spaces:

- 1. The Duck Pond*
- 2. The Village Green*
- 3. White's Field*
- 4. The Three Horseshoes Garden*

Proposals for development within designated Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.

5.6.1 The policy designates a series of Local Green Spaces in accordance with §100 - §103 of the NPPF. The justification of how each space meets the three NPPF criteria is set out in Appendix B. The policy has the effect of managing development proposals in line with the NPPF provisions in the Green Belt, which prevent any development of the land unless the 'very special circumstances' test can be met.

5.6.2 Towersey is an exceptionally green village and residents are extremely keen to maintain this characteristic, with 95% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement "green spaces should be retained...". In accordance with the NPPF these designated spaces will be protected for future generations.

5.6.3 Policy TOW6 is underpinned by the details in Appendix B of this Plan.

5.7 TOW7 Green infrastructure and biodiversity

Development proposals should have full regard to maintaining and, where practicable, improving the functionality of the green infrastructure and biodiversity assets including Local Green Spaces, public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways), woodland, trees, hedgerows, ponds, and land of biodiversity value, in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes, including delivering a net gain to general biodiversity assets.

Development proposals that would lead to an increase of green infrastructure and biodiversity assets will be supported where they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.

Proposals that would lead to an unacceptable loss of green infrastructure or biodiversity assets will not be supported.

5.7 1 The policy defines the presence of Green Infrastructure assets in the Parish. The Parish contains a variety of Green Infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for communities and wildlife. By doing so it supports Local Plan Policies ENV1 – ENV5. Its purpose is linked with the vision and principles of green infrastructure in the District - defining a network of green infrastructure assets in the neighbourhood plan area as a means of providing environmental support for the community and wildlife. The policy requires that all development proposals that lie within the Network, or that adjoin it, should consider how they may improve it, or at the very least do not undermine its integrity of connecting spaces and habitats. Where proposals include provision for landscaping, new means of access or new layouts, there may be opportunity to relate the land better to the Network, e.g. in complementing existing biodiversity value through the design of the landscape scheme. At the very least, the policy requires that proposals that will undermine the existing value of the Network will be refused permission.

5.7.2 The Network will become more valuable over time, and although the majority of these features are physically attached to enable habitat connectivity, some features of the Network are not. This does not devalue their integral biodiversity or recreational value and at some point in the future an opportunity may arise to achieve similar connectivity. As appropriate to the scale, nature and location of the development proposal a full survey of any affected green infrastructure or biodiversity assets should accompany the planning application concerned.

5.8 TOW8 Community facilities

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following community facilities, as shown on the Policies Map.

- 1. Towersey Memorial Hall;*
- 2. Towersey Playing Fields and Allotment Gardens;*
- 3. The Three Horseshoes Pub and barn.*

Proposals that help to sustain the viability of a community facility will be supported, provided they conform to other land use policies of the Development Plan. Proposals that will result in either the loss of, or significant harm to an identified community facility, will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the facility, or of another community use of the facility or land, is clearly no longer economically viable, or that there is an alternative, accessible location within or adjoining the village boundary of Towersey.

5.8.1 This policy seeks to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued local community facilities. It identifies several buildings in the village that form an essential part of community life. Given the small nature of the village, the loss of any of these facilities would be significantly detrimental, so even though a specific type of community use may no longer be viable, the opportunity to retain the premises or land in this use cannot be lost.

5.8.2 Adopted development plan policies allow for facilities to be lost without considering the ongoing community value of their established use and without requiring their re-provision close by. This policy addresses those weaknesses by ensuring that those making proposals provide clear evidence that the location, as well as the current facility operations, is no longer viable for community use before its change of use and redevelopment are supported. However, it does allow for the relocation of established uses without this test being passed, provided the relocation proposal benefits local people by being within or adjoining the village, and is not lost to other parishes.

5.8.3 All three community facilities have been discussed in detail within “Village Spirit” above – P11. They are all used extensively by the village and also by many visitors – individuals, groups and teams.

5.9 TOW9 Managing Traffic

Where appropriate and necessary, development proposals should make contributions towards improvements to the wider highways network in order to mitigate the impacts which would arise from their implementation.

5.9.1 Road traffic is increasingly a problem for Towersey, with only minor roads in and out of the village. Increasing numbers of cars are parked on verges, and particularly in the mornings and evenings, traffic volume and speed through the village (largely due to non-residents using it as a “rat run”) puts residents of all ages at risk. This policy is therefore aimed at preserving the rural lanes of the parish as safe havens for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

5.9.2 The recommended remedy to the problem is to encourage drivers to respect the environment that they are driving through by making it perfectly obvious that the settlements are inhabited and that the lanes are used by residents for walking and cycling through the parish. In the first instance the policy identifies that new development should be in keeping with the wider environment in the neighbourhood area, including that of its highways network. Within this wider context there may be opportunities for other developments to contribute towards traffic management measures where the contribution is necessary for the proposal to be supported.

5.9.3 Traffic calming proposals to reduce speed and volume of traffic and the associated danger to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, will be supported. Such measures are outside the planning process. These may include permanent speed cameras for potential accident danger spots in the village and other traffic calming measures such as road design, introduction of cycle ways and any other mechanisms as outlined in ‘Traffic in Villages’ as permitted and promoted by OCC Highways and agreed by the Parish Council. This includes the new 20mph policy which will require consultation both at Council and village levels. However, any such measures must be carefully designed and located to reflect the rural character of The Parish and not require highways infrastructure – signage, barriers, pavements – that is more appropriate to an urban location. Policy TOW9 sets out the way in which development proposals should contribute to wider improvements to the local highway network through the planning process as a direct outcome of the increases in traffic which they would generate and which would be necessary to maintain the safety and overall effectiveness of the network.

5.10 TOW10 Supporting water infrastructure

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should demonstrate that:

- 1. The sewer network can accommodate the additional demand for sewerage disposal either in its existing form or through planned improvements to the system in advance of the construction of the development; and*
- 2. They will not increase flood risk from any source of flooding, including surface and ground water flooding.*

5.10.1 This policy serves two important purposes in seeking to manage the effects of new development on the supporting infrastructure of the village. Due to its low-lying nature and geology, Towersey is particularly susceptible to flooding – both surface water and groundwater flooding. The village is dependent upon pumps to remove much of the wastewater.

5.10.2 The Parish relies on extensive deep ditches to prevent the land from flooding. If not kept clear by village working parties these ditches flood in winter. The Parish has a very high water table. For some of the low lying properties in the village, the water table can be as little as 20cm below the surface in the winter. Some houses have even had water welling up through the floor in very wet times.

5.10.3 Where appropriate, planning permission for developments which result in the need for off-site upgrades, will be subject to conditions to ensure the occupation is aligned with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades. The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that there is adequate water and wastewater infrastructure to serve all new developments. Developers are encouraged to contact the water/waste water company as early as possible to discuss their development proposals and intended delivery programme to assist with identifying any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement requirements. Where there is a capacity constraint the Local Planning Authority will, where appropriate, apply phasing conditions to any approval to ensure that any necessary infrastructure upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of development.

5.10.4 Proposals should be accompanied by a site-specific assessment of the potential for flooding in line with the requirements of national policy and advice, so that flood risk will not be increased elsewhere and that the proposed development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant. It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding.

5.10.5 Development must be designed to be water efficient and reduce water consumption. Refurbishments and other non-domestic development will be expected to meet BREEAM water-efficiency credits. Residential development must not exceed a maximum water use of 105 litres per head per day (excluding the allowance of up to 5 litres for external water consumption). Planning conditions will be applied to new residential development to ensure that the water efficiency standards are met.

5.10.6 Where new development is being proposed within 800m of a sewage treatment works or 15m of a sewage pumping station, the developer or local authority should liaise with Thames Water to consider whether an odour impact assessment is required

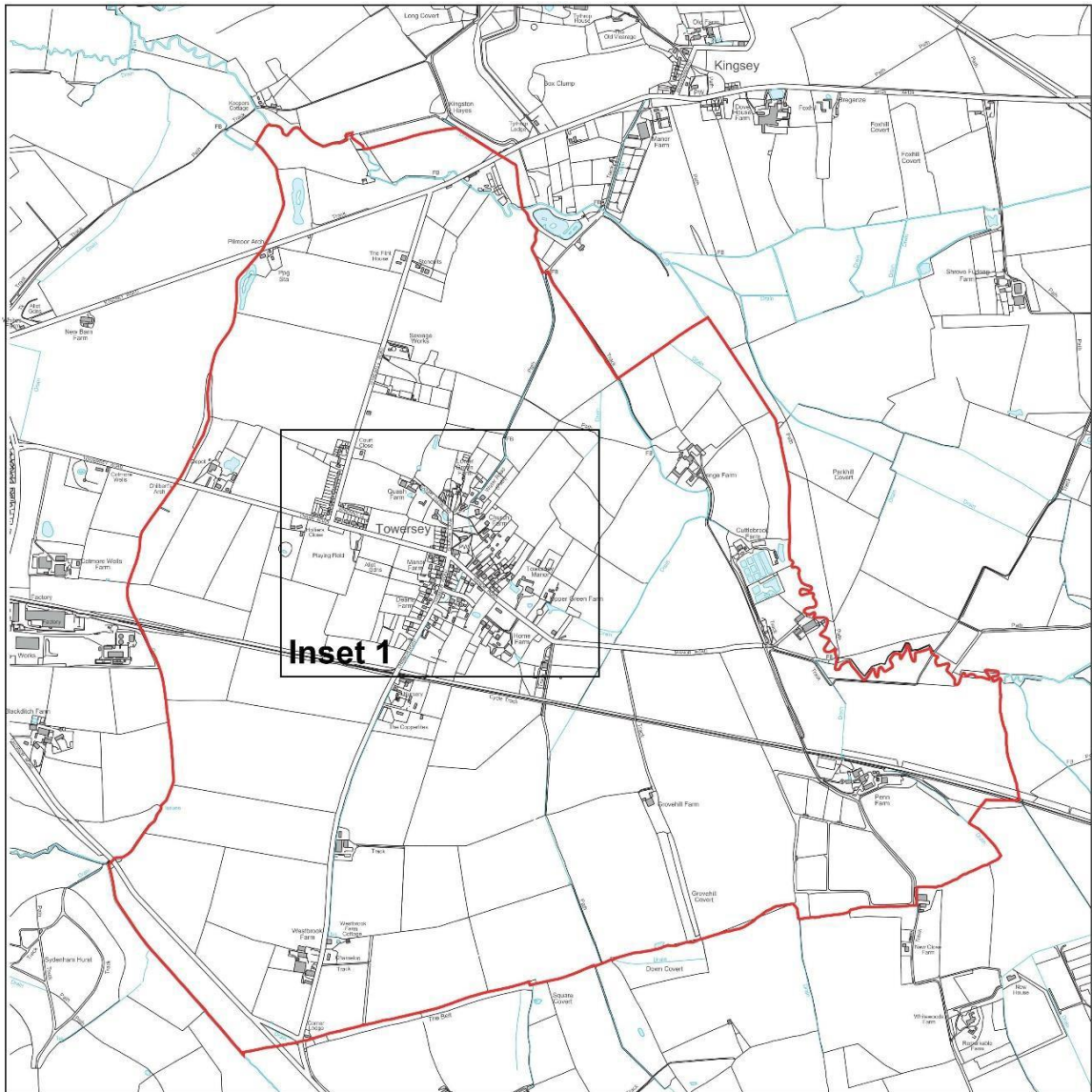
5.11 TOW11 Local gap

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Local Gap, as shown on the Policies Map, on green fields along Thame Road for the purpose of preventing the coalescence of the two parts of the village of Towersey.

B. Development proposals within the Local Gap will only be supported if they do not individually or cumulatively harm its open character and are consistent with development Plan policies and other policies in this Plan.

5.11.1 The policy defines an area of land between the two parts of the village which plays an important role in preventing development that will undermine the visual integrity of the gap to the point that there is coalescence of these two distinct parts of the village. The analysis of the Towersey Character Appraisal shows that this area of land plays an important role in forming the separate setting within which each part can be appreciated and enjoyed.

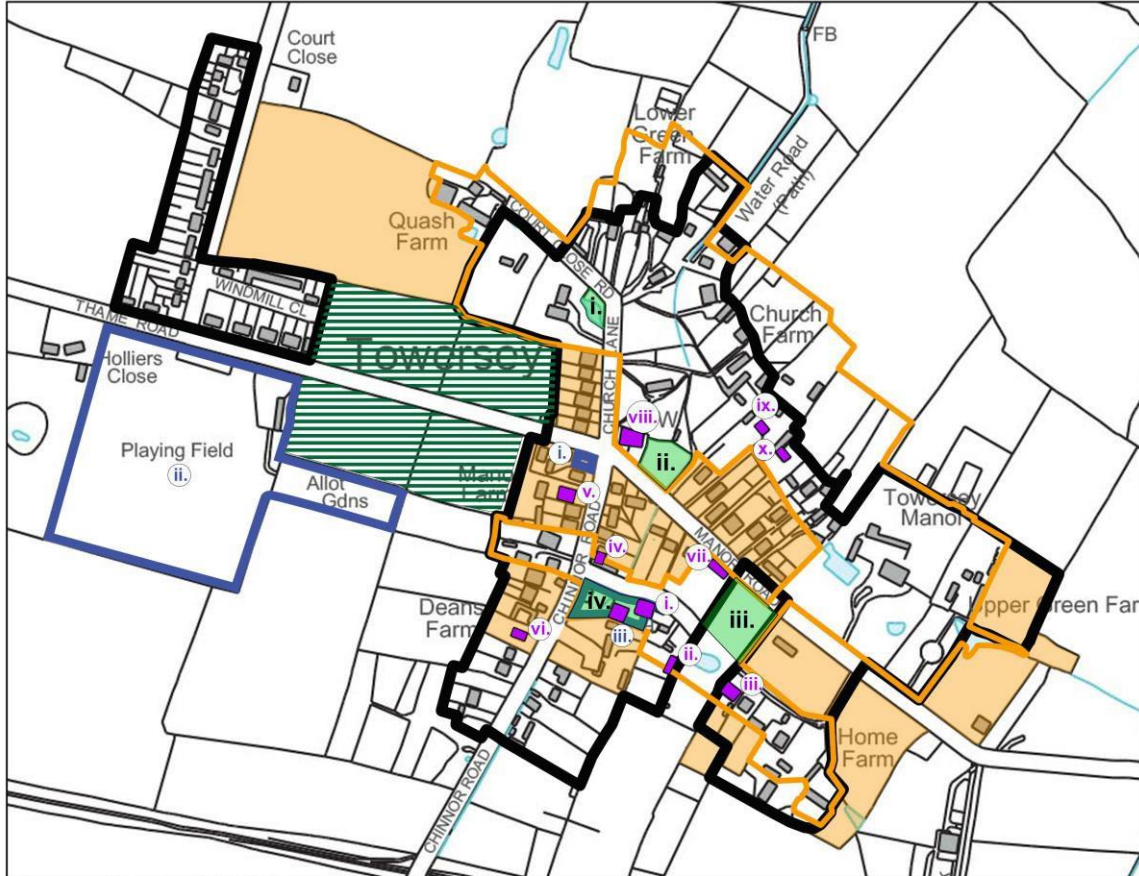
5.11.2 Although the land lies outside the Village Boundary of Policy TOW1 that policy acknowledges that there are some types of development that are suited to the countryside which may be appropriate. However, this policy requires that its effects – by way of their location, height, and/or mass – should not lead to any visual coalescence between the old and newer parts of Towersey. The land included in the gap is considered to be the minimum to ensure that the visual openness of the space between the two parts of the village is protected.



Towersey Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map









Plan C



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Towersey Neighbourhood Plan Policies Map Inset 1

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">  TOW1 Village Boundary  TOW4 Conservation Area  TOW4 Setting to Conservation Area  TOW5 Local Heritage Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Three Horseshoes PH and barn ii. Fairies Cottage iii. Kennet Cottage iv. The Old Bakery v. Manor Farm House | <ul style="list-style-type: none">  TOW5 Local Heritage Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. 26 Chinnor Road vii. Manor Cottage viii. The Old School House and Church View Cottage ix. The White Cottage x. The Walnuts  TOW6 Local Green Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Duck Pond ii. The Village Green iii. White's Field iv. The Three Horseshoes Garden  TOW8 Community Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Towersey Memorial Hall ii. Towersey Playing Fields and Allotments iii. The Three Horseshoes Pub and Barn  TOW11 Local Gap |
|--|--|

6. Plan Delivery and Implementation

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through South Oxfordshire District Council consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the Parish. The Parish Council will use a combination of the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the Parish and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authority. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.

6.2 Where necessary, the Parish Council may seek to persuade the Secretary of State to call-in a planning application that it considers is in conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan but which the planning authority has deemed to consent. Similarly, it may also seek to persuade the Secretary of State to recover an appeal of a refused application, where the conflict with one or more Neighbourhood Plan policies has been important in the reasons for refusal. In both cases, the Parish Council will do so if it considers matters of national policy significance (for neighbourhood planning) are raised.

6.3 Where opportunities arise through Section 106 agreements (or through the Community Infrastructure Levy) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure, the Parish Council will review the evidence base and community consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan to inform its view in liaising with the local planning authorities. A preliminary list has been set out below:

- Developing a circular path network to link the individual elements of the village
- Working with the Playing Fields Committee to develop the facilities and use of the playing fields

6.4 During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many ideas for improving or addressing current problems in the Parish that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system to control. These aspirations will be managed by the Parish Council together with the relevant village committees and/or newly developed interest groups.

6.5 As we have discussed, Towersey's Neighbourhood Plan is a reflection of the needs and aspirations of the local community as currently understood. However, it is fully appreciated that the challenges and concerns of the current population are likely to change over the Plan period.

6.6 It is also recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan does not sit in isolation from other current and future regional and national policy frameworks, hence any and all future reviews should include a brief appraisal of the policy landscape in existence at that time, to confirm the Plan's adherence to and alignment with any and all relevant programmes and initiatives.

6.7 As such, Towersey Parish Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan authority, will be responsible for periodically reviewing and, where required, updating the Plan, to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate to the community to which it relates.

6.8 It is suggested that after the Plan's implementation, at each Annual Parish Council meeting, a short report detailing progress and any suggested updates to the Neighbourhood Plan is presented. This should review the progress of the Plan in the previous year and any potential impacts to the Plan for the forthcoming year. These will then be reviewed in greater detail at the 5 yearly review in 6.9.

6.9 The Committee is keen to ensure that this Neighbourhood Plan is actively managed over the next 15+ years. In addition to the annual progress reviews, the Plan should be reviewed in greater detail on a five year basis to ensure that it takes into account possible changes in national planning policy or that of South Oxfordshire.

6.10 It is suggested that in 2028 and 2033 these five year reviews are performed by a Steering Group which has a wider community base. The purpose of these extended reviews will be to guide the Parish Council in its stewardship of the

Neighbourhood Plan and to consider any need for significant review of, or amendment to, the Plan.

6.11 Finally, though it is many years into the future, the committee suggests that in 2036 the Parish Council again recruits a new committee from within the community to undertake a review and decide on the need for a subsequent Neighbourhood Plan and if so decided, to oversee the development of the subsequent 15 year plan which would commence in 2038.

7. Bibliography

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History of the County of Buckinghamshire (Lipscomb)

History and Antiquities of Thame Church

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments - Buckinghamshire

A Brief History Of The Village Of Towersey And St. Catherine's Church (*Ross and Angela Dike*)

Nation Planning Policy Framework

The Planning Portal

The Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record

The SODC Local Plan

Appendix A
CHARACTER APPRAISAL
SEPTEMBER 2020



PUBLISHED BY TOWERSEY PARISH COUNCIL

TOWERSEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CHARACTER APPRAISAL

SEPTEMBER 2020

CONTENTS

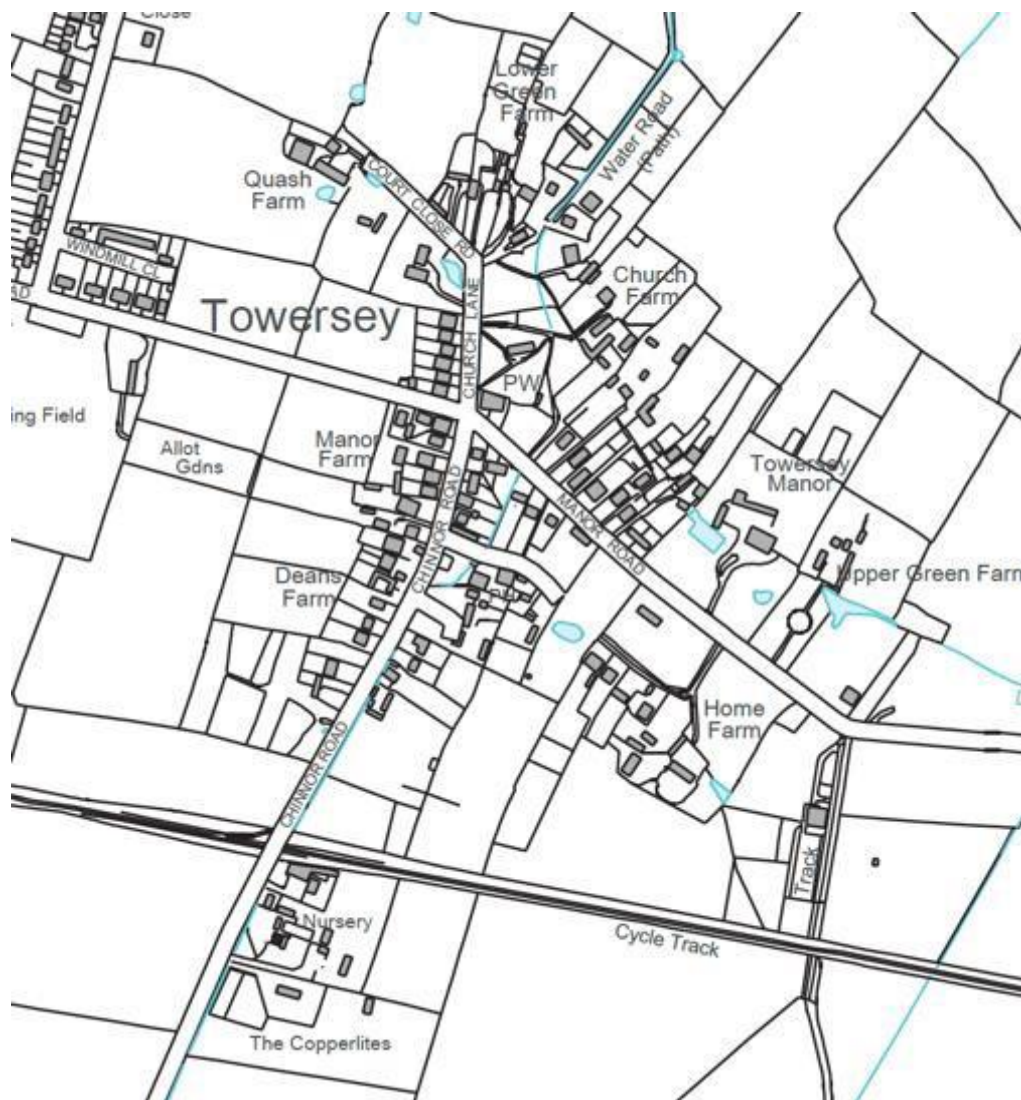
1. Introduction
2. A Short History & Description of the Parish
3. Character Analysis
4. Policy Recommendations

Appendices

- 1 Designated Heritage Assets
- 2 Non-Designated Heritage Assets

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of the report is to appraise the character of the small village of Towersey in South Oxfordshire. The report concludes with recommendations for policies in the Towersey Neighbourhood Plan.



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Plan A: Towersey in 2018

1.2 The appraisal is primarily visual in its analysis, although on occasions the history of the Parish makes a contribution to that analysis. It follows a desktop review of the available evidence, notably the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record. Although much of the built up area of the village lies within a Conservation Area designated by the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire District Council, there has been no appraisal or management plan prepared since its designation.

1.3 Some members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group also undertook a walk around the settlements in August 2020, accompanied by Neil Homer MBA MRTPI, the planning consultant appointed by the Parish Council to assist in the preparation of the Plan. Observations were made and noted, and photographs taken, of points of interest in the villagescape and landscapes – extracts from the notes are included in this report, which has been drafted by that team.

1.4 The report comprises a short history and description of the Parish. It then appraises the main village settlement. In planning policy terms, the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 defines the village as a ‘smaller village’.

1.5 The Parish Council is keen to use the Neighbourhood Plan to bring clarity to the definition of the village and to raise the standards of design for the purpose of managing future infill development proposals. Given its status in the settlement hierarchy of the District, there is no expectation that the village will deliver anything other than very modest infill housing schemes over the next few years.

2. A SHORT HISTORY & DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH

2.1 Towersey is a parish on the borders of southern Oxfordshire with an area of 1,380 acres. The slope of the land is from the south-east of the Parish near Chinnor (271 ft. above the ordnance datum) to the north-west towards Thame (219 ft.). The soil is strong loam, the subsoil gravel, clay, and limestone, the chief crops being wheat, beans, barley, clover and grasses. The embankment of the former Wycombe, Thame, and Oxford branch of the Great Western railway runs through the south of the parish from south-east to north-west.

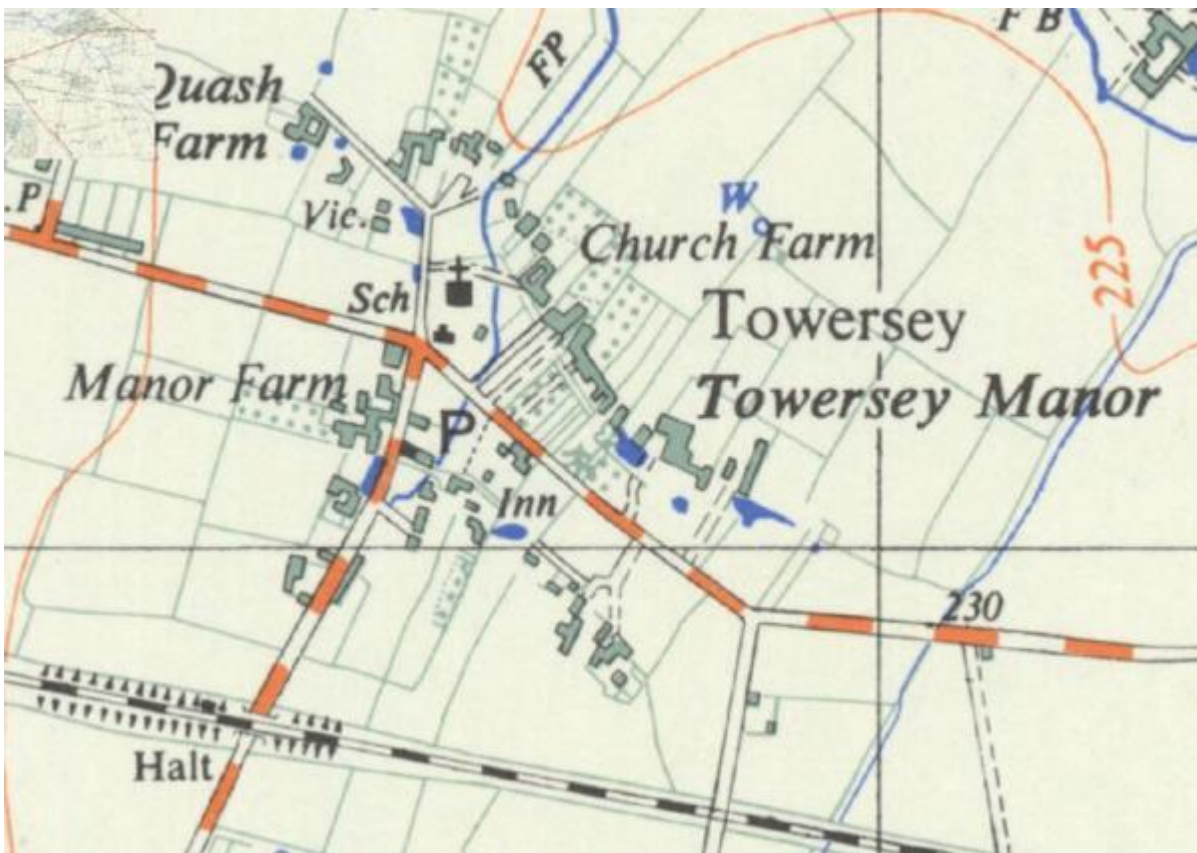


*Plan B: Map of Towersey in 1885
(Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)*

2.2 In the Domesday Book of 1086, there is an entry for a manorial holding in Buckinghamshire called in Latin 'Eie', and taken to be a single manor which today comprises both Kingsey and Towersey. The Domesday Book tells us that the manor was held in 1086 by Nigel of le Vast from Nigel of Aubigny, and that it was held before the Conquest by seven of King Edward the Confessor's thanes, who held it in freehold.

2.3 The Anglo Saxon place name 'Ay' or 'Ey' is where we get the modern word 'island' from. It generally refers to an area of high ground surrounded by marshy ground, or 'moor'. Whilst Moreton, therefore, sat within the marshy ground that then surrounded Thame, Ey, or Eye, stood above it on drier ground. The manor of Ey, became split into 'King's Ey' and something akin to 'Tours Ey'. The prefix 'Tours' is believed to come from the de Tours family, who acquired the manor. Over time, the name 'Tour's Ey' became 'Towersey'.

2.4 In the middle of the 13th century Richard, son of Robert Towers (de Tours), Probably a descendant of John Towers, whose name occurs in the late 12th century, was holding the greater part of Eye Manor corresponding to land which was afterwards distinguished by the name of this family as Towersey Manor. The Manor and lands we passed to and remained with Thame Abbey, which received a grant of free warren there until the Dissolution. In 1542 it was granted to the Dean and Chapter of the cathedral of Christ and St. Mary, Oxford, and afterwards in 1545 to Christopher Edmunds and others with rights in the manor extending into Oxfordshire.



Plan C: Map of Towersey in 1960 (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

2.5 The village was originally part of Buckinghamshire but became part of Oxfordshire in 1933. Kingsey ('King's Ey') and Towersey ('Tour's Ey') became separate parishes and although both were originally in Buckinghamshire, Kingsey found itself partly in Oxfordshire. In 1932 the two counties made a swap, so that Towersey was designated as in Oxfordshire and Kingsey was returned to Buckinghamshire.

2.6 The village is situated on the Thame Road in the centre of the parish. There are many 16th and 17th century half-timbered houses, several of which have thatched roofs. The church of St. Catherine stands at the west of the old village and consists of a chancel measuring internally 17 ft. 6 in. by 13 ft., nave 56 ft. by 24 ft. with north transeptal recess 12 ft. wide by 4 ft. deep, and south tower; it is built of rubble with tiled roofs. The chancel dates from the early 13th century

and the nave from about the middle of the 14th century. The tower added in 1854 replaced a 14th-century porch, the archway of which was re-used in the lower stage. The church was restored in 1850 and again in 1877.

2.7 The vicarage was built in 1845 to the north-west and the school to the south-west. At the side of the road on the south of the church are the remains of the village stocks. The 16th-century house known as the Church Farm, to the north of the church, may represent the old manor-house. It is a timber-framed building, much altered, and the portion which contained the hall is now a ruin. The present manor-house, at the other end of the village, was built in the Italian style by Mr. Edward Griffin in 1858. In 1899 it was sold by Mr. J. Whitehouse Griffin, to the Hon. Paulyn F. C. Rawdon Hastings, by whom it was largely rebuilt and sold in 1911 to Mr. G. J. C. Harter.

2.8 Grange Farm, the site of the grange belonging to Thame Abbey, is a largely 16th-century half-timber house with brick nogging, altered and enlarged. Attached to it is the ancient tithe barn built about 1295. It is a stone building and had five bays with aisles having original doorways, on the jambs of one of which are three sundials. The roof, which was a fine specimen of its kind, was supported by two rows of oak posts. Upper Green Farm and Lower Green Farm are both 17th-century houses with thatched roofs. There was a Baptist chapel in the village on Chinnor Road, since demolished and redeveloped.

2.9 The modern road from Thame to Kingsey was constructed as a turnpike in the nineteenth century. The ancient route to Kingsey from Thame was via Towersey, and the road from Towersey to Kingsey is still there, as a public bridleway. The ancient road from Towersey to Imler is also still there and a popular public right of way.

3. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

3.1 The character of the village is analysed from a number of different perspectives in terms of its visual appearance, land use mix and functions.

Land Use & Morphology

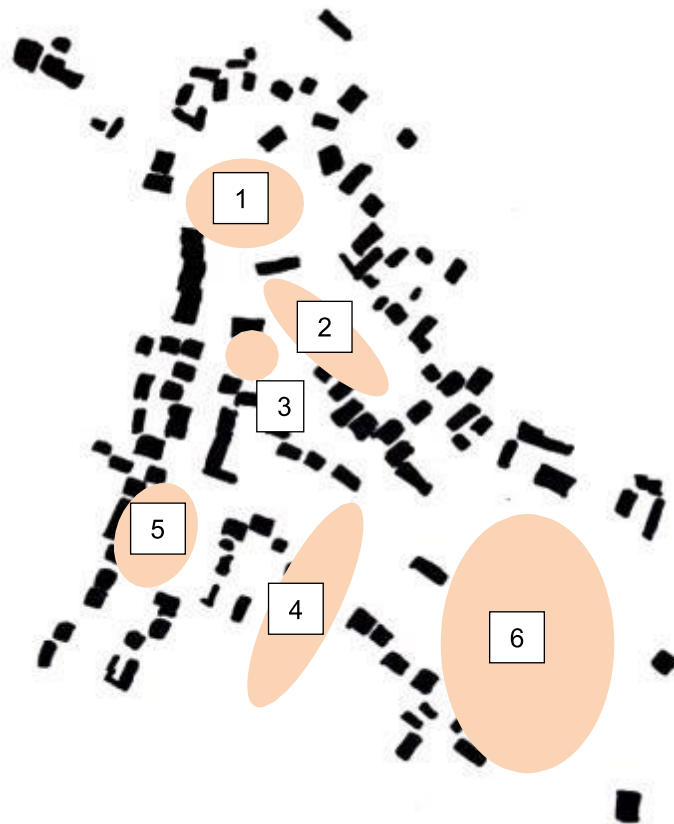
3.2 The village is formed of two distinct, older and newer parts that are separated by 200m of green fields along Thame Road, although the local community regards them as one village of Towersey. The older, larger part is centred on the junction of the NW-SE oriented Thame Road/Manor Road and the SW-N Chinnor Road/Church Lane. The newer, smaller part lies opposite the Recreation Ground to the west at the junction of Thame Road and Windmill Road. There are no other settlements of any size in the Parish.

3.3 Both parts are almost entirely residential in the use of land and buildings, with a small number of agricultural and community uses. The older part has grown along its main roads over centuries with the oldest and grandest manor, farm and domestic buildings located along Manor Road and clustered around the church and Court Close Road. The farm complexes of Quash, Lower Green and Church occupy significant and prominent land plots in close proximity to one another, as do Upper Green Farm and Home Farm alongside Towersey Manor at the end of Manor Road. Manor Farm and Deans Farm on Chinnor Road are smaller in scale. The successful reuse and redevelopment of many of these agricultural complexes for housing has retained the strong link with the agricultural function of the village in the past, as they are all prominent in the villagescene.

3.3 Beyond the four main roads there are a small number of 'cul-de-sac' lanes (near Home Farm, alongside the Three Horseshoes PH and Water Lane and the access to Church Farm, both off Lower Green. The public footpath (386/8) in effect extends Court Close Road from Hope Cottage to the former Black Horse PH, with three more narrow lanes connecting the properties along the footpath to Manor Road. Almost every building in the village, with the exception of those on that footpath and near Home Farm, front on to one of the main roads. The newer part of the village at Windmill Road is simple in form with properties fronting on to that road, to Thame Road or to Windmill Close.



3.4 The fields between the two parts of the village are open with boundaries comprising a mix of hedges and trees and in some cases buildings and structures as part of Quash Farm to the north and of Manor Farm and the allotments to the south.



Plan D: Figure Ground Analysis (Source: Site Notes)

3.5 The Figure Ground analysis shown in Plan D shows the arrangement of buildings in the main village and also the spaces between them. In some cases, it confirms what is clearly visible on the ground; in others the relationship between buildings and spaces is more subtle. The alignment of buildings along Chinnor Road and the lower part of Church Lane is distinct: plots are generally narrower, and the buildings are located closely together with only glimpses west from the road between buildings at Manor Farm House and at 26 Chinnor Road. This creates an interesting sequence of spaces along Chinnor Road, with the tightness at its top and further down contrasted with the wider space (5) between them formed by buildings set further back from the road.

3.6 This is especially helpful in creating a setting to the attractive Three Horseshoes PH and its frontage barn – both in the local vernacular of building style and materials – but also offers views of the Old Bakery, which sits in a prominent location on the threshold of that space, helping define it but also, in sitting close to the road frontage, it relates as much to the tighter space back to Manor Road. The building (and its rear buildings) also has intrinsic local architectural merit as another in the local vernacular.



3.7 The space (2) created by the buildings running parallel with, but 100m behind Manor Road is more subtle. For many years this space was free of buildings but over time, the long frontage plots have been infilled on the Manor Road frontage. The space that is left is now much smaller and occupied by trees and garden structures, but its essence remains as an intimate and tranquil area. Importantly, it continues to allow short views to a number of listed and local heritage assets of distinct architectural styles.

3.8 Beyond Hope Cottage it extends into a more formal, open space to Kings Willow framed in part by the Church but also by the mature trees on its north and south edges and by the tall stone wall of Church Farm. Its openness forms an essential part of the setting of the listed Farm buildings and wall and of the church on its other side. It also has an intimate character as it is reasonably small in scale and enclosed by very tall trees as well as the wall.

3.9 This contrasts with the larger space at Lower Green (1) in front of Chough and Oak Cottages and Lower Green Farmhouse together with the pond offering glimpse views of each listed building set well back from the road and framed by mature trees. Again, the trees help create a strong intimate character and the tightness of the lanes leading out of it maintain that character. Buildings are set well back from the frontage to allow long glimpse views to them (and the church, which is relatively small) framed by the mature vegetation. There are no views out of this space to the countryside just beyond apart from that along Court Close Road to the side of buildings at its end at Quash Farm.





3.10 On the other side of the church and fronting on to Manor Road is the village green (3). It is the largest formal space in the main village and is well enclosed by the church and other buildings and mature trees around its edge. It is an essential part of the setting to the church, which is perfectly framed in views across the green, but also to the local heritage assets of the former school house, Church View Cottage and Oxearth, all of which are part of the vernacular character of the village.



3.11 The long space (4) reaching south from Manor Road beyond the village edge is important in allowing long views to the local heritage assets of Fairies Cottage and Kennett Cottage (both domestic in scale with thatch roofs) that lie either side of the pond in its centre. It is well defined by a mature tree line on both sides as far as the railway embankment.



3.12 The final distinct space (6) is in sharp contrast to the intimacy of the other spaces. Although broken by the mature group of trees on the frontage of Towersey Manor its wide open essence is still very perceptible in being mostly framed by the Manor, the buildings at Upper Green Farm and Home Farm. However, it opens out to the south east as it extends into the open countryside towards the Chilterns.

3.13 The boundaries of most parts of the village are distinct in plan form and from public vantage points on the ground as a result of almost all the village being linear with clear rear plot definition by way of boundary walls, hedges, fences and/or trees. The only indistinct boundaries are those

where there are very large rear private gardens on the northern side of Manor Road, which have weakly defined edges to the countryside. In each of these cases, the observed built up area boundary is formed by the rear of the main buildings and not the larger plots.

Topography

3.14 The village is generally perceived as flat with a slight rise from the older part up Thame Road to Windmill Road before falling towards Thame to the west. Beyond both parts of the village the land gently rises southwards towards Chinnor. As a result, although the village contains no tall buildings other than the low church tower, it is visible from public vantage points to the west, north-west and east. The view from the south is obscured by the embankment of the former railway line that crosses Chinnor Road just south of the village.

Roads, Pavements & Lighting

3.15 There is one main road – Thame Road/Manor Road – running into the village from west to east from the Thame and another – Windmill Road/Chinnor Road – that dog-legs north to south using part of Thame Road. Both roads are relatively narrow and rural in character as they enter and run through both parts of the village.

3.16 There are pavements on one side of Windmill Road and on Thame Road into the main village, as well as Chinnor Road. There are no pavements on Manor Road, Church Lane or Court Close Road. There is very little street lighting and few kerbstones along many of the roads. In the absence of these urbanising effects, it has retained a strong rural feel.

Building Styles

3.17 There is a reasonably limited materials palette comprising red brick (with occasional flared headers e.g. Three Horseshoes), plain tile roofs or Welsh slate on lower pitch, smaller scale domestic buildings, but Welsh slate not the cheaper, blacker substitutes. Plot boundaries tend to be defined by medium to tall hedges/trees with some lower brick walls in places.

3.18 There is also a wide variety of building forms but generally they are of two storey, detached forms fronting onto a main road and sitting in large, rectangular plots that are oriented north-east to south-west or north-west to south-east, with very little precedent for cul-de-sac type development.

3.19 The plots and buildings on Windmill Road and Close are very regular in shape, size, form and appearance, although there are some differences in style and detailing between them. Building lines are constant and all are in groups of either detached or semi-detached, two storey red brick buildings with hipped tile roofs.



Landscape and Views

3.20 The older part of the village has numerous views of interest within the village itself, whereby some buildings are prominent in terminating or punctuating views to add interest to the streetscene (see Appendix 2). Most importantly, the views across the fields between the two parts of the village maintain their separation. The former railway embankment also offers extensive views north across the village, with some of its buildings on Chinnor Road and Manor Road visible among the trees.

3.21 The wider landscape of the Parish comprises open fields on the gently rising land. This affords long views across the countryside with the Chilterns escarpment in the background of views from the north and west. The only prominent woodland or tree belts lie around the northern edge of the village.

Trees, Hedges and Verges

3.22 The presence of mature trees and hedgerows of a variety of species within the streetscene of most of the older village plays an important part in defining its rural character. This is especially the case along Manor Road, Church Road and Court Close Road with the trees around the churchyard helping to define that important space with the church and other historic buildings. They also punctuate views along both Manor Road and Chinnor Road where they combine with tall, mature hedgerows running along plot frontages in places to create a 'tunnel' effect. This same effect is also striking in entering the village from the east with the main road in tunnel of trees and hedges near Towersey Manor before the village centre is finally revealed at the village green.

3.23 Grass verges are also common, occasionally with ditches, in forming part of the space in front of buildings, adding to the rural appearance of the village. This is especially the case along most of Chinnor Road and Manor Road. Boundaries are most often formed immediately behind the verge/ditch with wooden post and rail fencing, with mature planting in the plot frontage.



The Conservation Area & Listed Buildings

3.24 The designated Conservation Area extends to almost all of the older part of the village (see Plan E below). Only parts of Chinnor Road, Church Lane and Manor Road lie outside the area. Those excluded areas are very important to the setting of the Conservation Area and, although their present buildings are of modern designs, their plots match the local pattern of development. This is especially true of the infilling on the northern side of Manor Road and at the main road junction in the village centre.

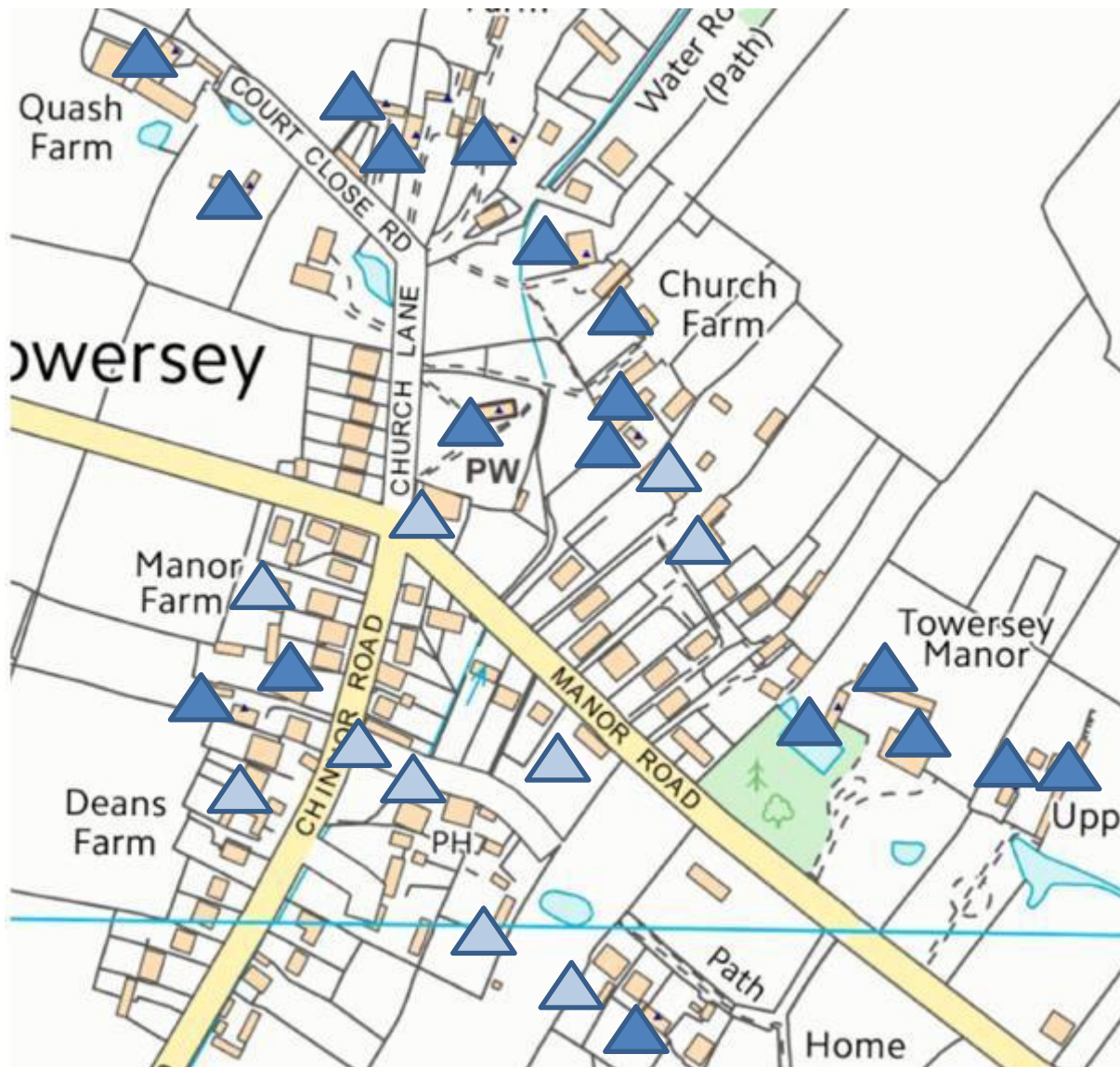


Plan E: Towersey Conservation Area (Source: SODC website)

3.25 Specifically, the following parcels of land comprise its setting:

- Time Peace, the land from The Chestnuts to Palmyria and the land from Manor Cottage to Greenway on Manor Road
- 1 – 11 Church Lane
- The village hall to Lea Barn, Springfields to Craig-ney, Deans Farm to Oakwood and Field View House/The Bungalow on Chinnor Road
- The fields E of Upper Green Farm and Home Farm
- The fields rear of Thimble Hall and Kennett Cottage
- Field between Quash Farm and Windmill Road

3.26 There are also 18 buildings included on the statutory list ('listed buildings') as shown on Plan F. All are listed Grade II (see Appendix 1 for the list descriptions). The majority of the buildings date from C17 and comprise farm buildings and cottages of a variety of styles and forms. Almost none of them are prominent in the village scape as they lie well behind a road frontage and mature trees. The church is the most prominent at the village centre.



*Plan F: Towersey Listed Buildings (blue triangles) and Local Heritage Assets (light blue triangles)
 (Source: Historic England; Crown Copyright Ordnance Survey 10002493)*

In effect, it is a small number of non-listed buildings in the Conservation Area, or most often its setting, that define the essential rural character of the village (see also Plan F). They all lie in either prominent positions in the streetscene or are visible in key views from within or across the Conservation Area in its setting (see descriptions of their local heritage value in Appendix 2).

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Based on the character analysis contained in this report, a number of recommendations can be made for policies in the Neighbourhood Plan to sustain and enhance the character of the village in decision making on the use and development of land in the future.

Settlement Boundaries

4.2 Planning policy in South Oxfordshire does not clearly define settlements using mapped boundaries, with consequences for how Local Plan policies are applied in the Parish. It is therefore recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan defines the main village boundary on its Policies Map.

4.3 The boundaries will also enable planning applications to be determined in accordance with the relevant policies relating to the built-up area of the village and its surrounding countryside. In essence, the principle of development inside the boundary will be accepted but proposals will be subject to the development management policies of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Outside the boundaries, proposals will only be deemed suitable if they are appropriate for a countryside location.

4.4 In defining the boundaries, the Parish Council may choose to take into account future opportunities for appropriate infill development over the plan period. The character analysis has not identified any obvious vacant plots of land but that does not rule out proposals coming forward where the scheme design may fit well with the character of the village.

Design Policies

4.5 With this analysis completed, it can serve the purpose of framing a Neighbourhood Plan design policy for each part of the village that identifies their key characteristics. These should include:

- common plot/building forms/arrangements
- views within and out of the village
- buildings, structures and landscape features that frame, punctuate or terminate a view
- the identification of key public spaces and other open spaces that form part of the significance of a listed building or of the Conservation Area

4.6 The Policies Maps will be able to contain some of this information, but the majority should be described within the policy itself. The policy should also make it clear that it is not expected proposals will have a slavish adherence to the identified characteristics, but they will be required to clearly demonstrate they have had full regard to the relevant characteristics in drawing up their schemes. The burden will be on the applicant to justify why a proposal will depart from the policy.

Local Green Spaces

4.7 In respect of the policy seeking to prevent the development of any specific site using a Local Green Space designation, the candidates that appear to meet the criteria in NPPF §102 are the village green, the duck pond, the Three Horseshoes Public House garden and the field running south off Manor Road to the railway embankment (“White’s Field”). For the first two, ownership

by the Parish Council and location at the heart of the Conservation Area ought to mean that no proposal will ever be made successfully to develop the land.

4.8 In the case of “White’s field”, a case can be made that its frontage (i.e. that part of the field that lies between Manor Road and the partially tree-lined pond) is distinct from the longer stretch of the field that extends to the embankment. This case has merit as the trees do obstruct longer views into the field, which would mean that it could not be defined as an ‘extensive tract of land’, which is one of those criteria.

4.9 It is that criterion that is likely to mean that the recreation ground off Thame Road cannot be a candidate. However, its public ownership ought also to mean that no proposals for development will be brought forward for the foreseeable future.

4.10 The Three Horseshoes Public House garden however, lies in the middle of the village, 100m or so from the cross roads along Chinnor Road and 300 meters to the north of the Phoenix Trail cycle path which connects Thame to Princes Risborough and is deserving of designation. All footpaths to and from the village appear to originate from the pub garden and it is an area of great socio-economic value not only to the village of Towersey but to Thame and the surrounding villages. The secluded garden is an accessible safe place for parents to bring their children to run around in while they relax and enjoy the quintessential English village scene. From March onwards, as soon as the sun comes out the garden is used, sometimes even when the doors are not open. Cyclists and walkers can be found taking a break and by lunchtime barely a free seat can be found.

Heritage Policies

4.11 The analysis indicates that there are a number of buildings and structures in the village of local architectural and historic interest that warrant identifying by the Neighbourhood Plan as ‘local heritage assets’. Those buildings that are already on the statutory list of buildings are protected by national and strategic policies and there is no need to duplicate these policies.

4.12 The 10 identified buildings have local value, derived either from their intrinsic architectural merits as examples of vernacular buildings or of distinct style locally or from an historic association or function (e.g. the Old Bakery). In every case, the buildings and structures should be considered as ‘non-designated heritage assets’ (as per §203 of the NPPF) for the purpose of applying Local Plan policy relating to such assets.

Landscape Policies

4.13 The analysis shows that the fields between the two parts of the village play an important role in forming their separate setting within which each can be appreciated and enjoyed. They prevent the visual coalescence between the two parts of the village.

4.14 It is therefore recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan contains a policy identifying the specific area where the landscape functions to prevent the coalescence of those two parts. The convention for defining such land – often described as ‘local gaps’ in development plans – is to identify the minimum land area that is necessary to serve the purpose. It is helpful for the area boundary to follow a physical feature of the land. The fields are well defined by their boundaries.

4.15 The definition of land as a ‘gap’ does not prevent development that in use terms may be suitable to a countryside location. But the policy should be worded to prevent buildings or

structures of a location, height and/or mass that may lead to the visual coalescence of the two parts of the village. Careful siting and building/structure design ought to be able to overcome this challenge.

APPENDIX A

DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS ('LISTED BUILDINGS')

(courtesy of Historic England's National Heritage List for England)

Quash Farmhouse, Court Close Road – Grade II

Farmhouse. Probably mid C17, with C18 alterations; C19 addition to rear. Stone uncoursed rubble to ground floor; red brick with flared headers in Flemish bond; old plain-tile roof; brick ridge stack to centre. 2-unit lobby-entry plan. 2-storey, 2-window range. 4-panelled door to centre with C20 porch. 3-light casements to all openings except C20 casement to ground floor right. Double Queen-post roof truss to right gable end.

The Old Farmhouse, Court Close Road – Grade II

House. C17, encased probably late C18 to right. Rendered plinth; large timber framing with painted brick infill; painted brick to right; half-hipped thatch roof; brick ridge stacks to left and right of centre, massive lateral stack to rear right. 3-unit lobby-entry plan. 2-storey, 3-window range. C20 plank door to C20 porch at left of centre. Stable door to right of centre. Irregular fenestration of casements with leaded lights.

Chough Cottage, Court Close Road – Grade II

House. Mid C17, with C20 addition to rear. Painted brick to ground floor left and centre; painted uncoursed stone rubble to right; large timber framing to first floor with painted brick infill; thatch roof half-hipped to right; massive brick end stack with stone base to left. 2 storeys and attic; 3-window range. C20 plank door to right of centre. Irregular fenestration of C19 and C20 casements. Swept dormer to left of centre. Right return: rendered infill to timber framing.

Oak Cottage and Sheltershed, 6 Court Close Road – Grade II

House. Mid C17. Painted uncoursed stone rubble to left; uncoursed stone rubble plinth to centre and right; large timber framing with rendered infill to centre and right; thatch roof; brick ridge stack to centre. Single storey and attic; 3-window range. Plank doors to left and to centre. Irregular fenestration of C19 casements. 2 swept dormers.

Sheltershed. Probably early C18. Stone uncoursed rubble to end and rear walls; large timber framing with weatherboarding to right; thatch roof. Single-storey, 5-bay range. Stable door to right. Plank door to right of centre. Queen-strut roof. Included for group value.

Lower Green Farmhouse, Lower Green – Grade II

Farmhouse, now house. Mid C17, with early C18 addition to right. Painted uncoursed stone rubble to left; painted brick to ground floor right; red brick with flared headers in Flemish bond to right with inverted heart in flared headers to right of centre; old plain-tile roof; brick end stacks and ridge stack to junction of mid C17 and early C18 portions. 2-storey, 2-window range to left; taller 2-storey, 2-window range to right. C20 ribbed door to open porch to centre. 2-light casements to all openings, except 4-light casement to left of centre. Flat brick band between ground and first floor to right. Open fireplaces to ground floor centre and right. Chamfered spine beams to ground floor with probably C19 carved brackets.

Brook House, Lower Green – Grade II

House. C16, with C18 raising, C20 cross-wing to left. Cruck framed. Painted uncoursed stone rubble with some areas of brick to ground floor; red brick to first floor; old plain-tile roof; brick ridge stack to left; ridge stack to right end with diagonally-set flues. 2-storey, 2-window range. C20 plain door to centre. 3-light wood casement to left of centre. 3-light wood casement to first floor left. 2-light wood casement to right. Interior: C20 straight-flight staircase to rear. Base cruck and truss to centre. Open fireplaces to ground floor. C20 cross-wing is not of special architectural interest.

Church Farmhouse and Barn, 4 Lower Green – Grade II

Farmhouse. Mid C17, with C19 addition to cross-wing at rear. Render on brick to ground floor left; uncoursed stone rubble plinth to right; large timber framing with brick infill; old plain-tile roof; brick ridge stack to centre with recessed panels. 2-unit lobby-entry plan with cross-wing to rear centre. 2-storey, 2-window range. Part-glazed plank door to centre with open porch. Irregular fenestration of casements. Left return: wood ovolo-moulded mullion windows. Interior: straight-flight staircase; open fireplaces to ground floor. Open fireplace to first floor right with plaster overmantel having 3 moulded panels with moulded surrounds. Lattice screen to probable former larder to ground floor right.

Barn. Probably mid C18, with C20 re-roofing. Stone uncoursed rubble plinth; close-studded timber framing with passing braces, and weatherboarding; corrugated iron roof. 5-bay barn. Double plank doors to centre. Interior: curved principal roof trusses, C20 principal and common rafters and purlins. Included for group value.

Hope Cottage, 2 Manor Road – Grade II

House. Probably mid C17 with C18 refronting. Painted uncoursed stone rubble to ground floor with brick dressings; painted brick to first floor; thatch half-hipped roof; brick ridge stack to centre. 2-storey, 3-window range. Sash door to left with open timber framed porch having gabled roof. C20 three-light casements to original segmental-headed openings to left and right of centre. Single pane windows between ground and first floor, to centre. C19 two-light casements to first floor left and right of centre. Interior: winder staircase to centre from ground to first floor; Queen-post roof. Open fireplace to ground floor right, blocked fireplace to ground floor left.

Church of St. Catherine, Church Lane – Grade II

Church. Early C13 chancel; mid C14 nave, tower and restoration of c.1850 by J. Cranston. Coursed squared stone; C19 plain-tile roof; roof to tower not visible. 4-bay nave, 2-bay chancel, transept recess to north, south tower. 2-centre moulded stone archway to base of tower. 2-centre arched doorway with hood mould and C19 plank door. 2-light Y-tracery windows with hood moulds to left and right. Rear: 2-centre arched doorway with plank door to centre of nave. 2-light Y-tracery windows to left and right. 3-light panel-tracery window to transept. Lancet to chancel. 2-light reticulated-tracery windows to east end of chancel and nave. 3-light intersecting-tracery window to west end. Tower of 3 stages. Clock face to each side of second stage. 2-light Y-tracery louvred openings to third stage; battlemented parapet with banded obelisk finials to corners. Interior: C14 two-bay arch-braced collar-truss roof with windbraces to chancel. Piscina to right of projecting bowl on a half-column. Segmental pointed chancel arch. C19 braced collar truss roof to nave. Mid C17 hexagonal wood pulpit with carved panels. C14 round stone font.

Some C17 fleur-de-lys bench ends. History: the clock in the tower was presented in 1877 from Thame Town Hall, where it had been installed c.1777, having been originally at Rycote Chapel from 1577-1777. (Buildings of England: Oxfordshire, 1974, p.819; V.C.H.: Buckinghamshire, Vol.IV, 1927, p.106-7).

Towersey Manor House and Barns and Stables, 45 Manor Road – Grade II

House. Probably early C19 with later C19 additions to left and to rear. Stone uncoursed rubble with brick dressings; slate hipped roof; various brick stacks. Double-depth plan. 2-storey, 3-window range having addition to left of 2-storey, 2-window range. Glazed double door to centre of original block with decorative fanlight and rendered porch having Doric pilasters and cornice. Unhorned tripartite sashes with glazing bars and cambered brick heads, to left and right of original block. 12-pane unhorned sashes with cambered brick heads to all other openings. Bracketed eaves. Cast-iron cornice-moulded guttering. Interior: C19 decorative plaster ceilings in "Jacobean" style and "Adam" style to ground floor rooms. Probably early C20 staircase to double-height hall to rear with glazed saucer-dome skylight.

Barn. Probably early C18, with C20 alterations. Rendered plinth; large timber framing with C20 weatherboarding; old plain-tile roof, having catslide to left. 4-bay barn. Doorway to right of centre, and opposing doorway to rear, both with doors missing. C20 plank double garage doors to right. Interior: curved principal roof with most original common rafters. Attached mid C19 stable to right. Brown brick with red brick dressings; old plain-tile roof; brick ridge stack to right. Single-storey, 3-window range, with 3-window cross-wing. Plank door to left, and to centre of cross-wing. Round-headed windows with glazing bars to all openings. Interior: horse-stalls with rail-topped partitions. Included for group value.

Barn, now converted to hall. Probably early C18, with late C20 alterations. Stone uncoursed rubble plinth; large timber framing with C20 weatherboarding; old plain-tile roof. 5-bay barn. Gabled midstorey to centre with plank double-leaf doors. Irregular fenestration of late C20 windows. Interior: curved principal roof with most original common rafters surviving.

Upper Green Farmhouse and Barn, 47 Manor Road – Grade II

Farmhouse. Probably early C17, with early C19 lean-to addition to right and C20 addition to right. Rendered stone plinth; timber framing with rendered infill to centre; render to left, probably on brick; render to right on brick; old plain-tile roof to lean-to addition to right, thatch main roof; massive brick ridge stack to centre, ridge stack to left of centre. 3-unit lobby-entry plan with later alterations. 2 storeys and attic; 4-window range. 4-panel door to left return of lean-to to right. Irregular fenestration of C19 wood casements with arch-topped lights. Swept dormers. Rear: stone rubble plinth; large timber framing with some angle braces and brick infill, some of herringbone pattern; trick to right in English bond: bread-oven to ground floor centre of limestone rubble, with areas of render. Interior: winder staircase from ground to first floor, straight flight staircase from first floor to attic; double Queen-post roof construction; open fireplaces to ground and first floor; chamfered spine beams with decorative end stops; some C17 doors to ground and first floor; smock hooks to ground floor right, attached to spine beam.

Barn, now barn and stable with cowshed. Probably late C17, converted into barn, stable and cowshed in 1790; date of 1790 carved on tie-beam. Stone uncoursed rubble plinth; large timber framing with weatherboarding; old plain-tile roof. 4-bay barn, converted so that bay to left is cowshed, bay to left of centre is stable, final 2 bays remain as barn. Plank double doors to right of centre with opposing doors to rear. 2 stable doors to left of centre. Interiors: cowshed has late

C18 milking stalls; stable to left of centre has hay loft and feeding rack; double Queen-post roof to all.

Thimble Hall, off Manor Road – Grade II

House. Probably mid C17. Rendered plinth; large timber framing with rendered infill; thatch roof; brick end stack to right. 2-storey, 2-window range. C20 plank door to left of centre with C20 two-light casement to left. 4-light C20 casement to right. 2-light C20 casement to first floor left, 4-light C20 casement to first floor right. Interior: C20 straight-flight stairs; open fireplace to ground floor right; Queen-post roof with windbraces. C20 addition to left.

Argyll Close, 10 Chinnor Road – Grade II

House. Probably late C17 with later alterations, C20 addition to rear. Painted uncoursed stone rubble with brick dressings; old plain-tile roof, hipped to right, and cross-gabled to left; brick end stack to left, ridge stack to centre. 2-storey, 3-window range with cross-wing to left. C20 panelled door to right return of cross-wing. 3-light casements to all openings except 4-light casement to ground floor right and 2-light casement to first floor right. Queen-post roof truss to gable end of cross-wing.

Old Lane Cottage, 12 Chinnor Road – Grade II

House. Probably early C17, forming cross-wing, with early C18 addition to left. C20 addition to right. Painted stone uncoursed rubble plinth; large timber framing with rendered infill to left; small timber framing with brick infill to right; thatch roof, half-hipped to left, and to cross-wing; brick ridge stack to right of centre. Single storey and attic; 3-bay range, having cross wing to right. C20 stable door to, C20 porch to centre. C19 two-light wood casements to ground floor and gable end of cross-wing to right. Irregular fenestration to left return. Interior: open fireplace to ground floor left, chamfered spine beam and joists to ground floor left. C20 addition to right.

Grange Farmhouse – Grade II

Listed as follows, though recent renovation and dendrochronology dating renders much of the description inaccurate (e.g. NE stone wing C14, raised in late C16; timber frame early C16; brick range early C18).

Farmhouse; derelict. Circa early C17; extended in C18. Timber-framed and brick. Plain tile roof with gabled ends. Brick gable-end stack and large lateral stack with three brick shafts. PLAN: C17 two and halfbay timber-framed range with a lateral stack on the north east side. In the C18 a brick range was built to the south comprising one room and a stairhall and forming a new front; to the rear north there is another C18 brick wing. EXTERIOR: 2 storeys and attic. 2-window south east front range with 3-light casements with glazing bars, central doorway and gabled dormer with small casements; right-hand part of front is overgrown with ivy. At rear gable-ended timber-framed wing on left with red brick nogging and further to left a brick wing parallel to front range. INTERIOR: C17 timber-frame of two and half bays with jowled posts, tension-braces and clasped-purlin roof with wind-braces. The C18 wings have butt-purlin roofs; the south wing has C18 2-panel cupboard doors, but mainly Victorian joinery, staircase and cast-iron chimneypieces.

APPENDIX 2

NON-DESIGNATED ('LOCAL') HERITAGE ASSETS

Archaeological Value (courtesy of the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record, Oxfordshire County Council)

HER Number: 27482
Name: Romano-British Settlement and Anglo-Saxon burials, Grange Farm
Grid Reference: SP 727 055
Monument Types SETTLEMENT (Roman 43AD – 409AD; INHUMATION (Early Medieval 410 AD – 1539AD); and DITCH (Medieval 1066AD – 1539AD)

Evaluation revealed probable RB enclosure ditch, Anglo-Saxon/medieval burials, later prehistoric pottery and flints; other features are mainly medieval. Evaluation established the presence of significant archaeological features and deposits across the site, the majority of which are medieval, but also included occasional later prehistoric and Roman examples which survived well. LBA/EIA pottery and worked flint was recovered from excavated features, much of which was residual. A NE-SW aligned probable enclosure ditch indicated RB settlement or possibly military activity on the site. The alignment of the burials is east-west indicating their Christian provenance. A small ditch may indicate an enclosure around the burial ground and a larger ditch a probable boundary feature also of medieval date.

Architectural and Social Value

The Three Horseshoes PH and barn

- main building of patterned brickwork to elevations with mix of flamed headers, red brick quoins and occasional flint with clay tile roof and prominent chimneys
- significant social value in being the only public house in the village with valuable beer garden as setting and vital functionality
- barn appears contemporaneous with main building sitting in front of it but closely related visually and functionally; it has rough stone plinth, lancet windows, rare wychert walls and tile roof



Fairies Cottage

- date unknown but of local vernacular scale, appearance and materials, notably thatch roof, red brick, partial white render and tall chimneys
- value as a pair with Kennett Cottage opposite across the adjoining field



Kennett Cottage

- date unknown but of local vernacular scale, appearance and materials, notably large thatch roofs and white render
- value as a pair with Fairies Cottage opposite across the adjoining field



The Old Bakery




- domestic scale double-fronted in painted brick with low slate roof and modern sash window frames in keeping with historic proportions
- rear former bakery buildings of a similar vernacular appearance but subordinate to main building, creating an attractive appearance of the whole site from the adjoining PH garden
- the building sits on a prominent corner site and punctuates views north and south along Chinnor Road and is in the foreground of views from the PH towards the listed Argyll Close opposite



Manor Farm House

- grander double-fronted farm house as part of a group of former farm buildings at Manor Farm
- distinctive bay windows on ground floor and decorated brick pattern on gable end and tall clay tile roof



<p>26 Chinnor Road (Dean's Farm)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grander double-fronted farm house as part of a group of former farm buildings at Dean's Farm • distinctive bay windows on ground floor and painted brick quoins and tall clay tile roof 	
<p>Manor Cottage/Cobblers Cottage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joined pair of recently sympathetically renovated vernacular cottages with painted render and distinctive ground floor bay windows under narrow canopies • one of only two building pairs in the village that immediately abuts the highway and so their gable ends are prominent in punctuating views along Manor Road 	
<p>The Old School House and Church View Cottage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joined pair of former school buildings • distinctive gable to Cottage fronting road with ogee shape window openings (but with modern casements set within), brick quoins to painted render elevation; tall chimneys • western end of old school house subordinate in scale but very prominent at village centre and in views from Thame Road 	

<p>The White Cottage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • former White Hart PH now residential but local social value • distinctive clay tile and thatch roof with full dormers • painted brick elevations and tall chimney 			
<p>The Walnuts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinct large double fronted house with Welsh slate roof, tall bay windows and attractive porch detailing 			

Villagescape Buildings

The following buildings have no intrinsic value but occupy prominent locations with the streetscene:

- 1 Church Lane – terminates the long view west along Manor Road
- 11 Church Lane – terminates the view west along the track from the open space in front of Church Farm past the church
- Greenway – terminates the long view north along Chinnor Road and sites in the foreground of the church in this view

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Appendix B

Green Spaces

Consistent with NPPF §102 requirements, four Local Green Space designations have been proposed:

1. The village pond
2. The village green
3. The Three Horseshoes Public House garden
4. White's field

B.1 The Village Pond

B.1.1 The Village Pond is located in the middle of Lower Green, just beyond the Church. It is a small pond that was reclaimed by the village in the 1970's, from an overgrown tangle of dead trees, brambles and silted ditches. The pond itself is now a part of Towersey's natural drainage system, draining from Quash Farm. By the Old Vicarage, it empties quietly under Church Road into the ditches by Church Farm and then into the main drainage ditch out of the village towards Kingsey.

B.1.2 In front of the pond there is a lovely area of grass that is maintained by the Parish Council, with a log seat at the far end. Ducks and moorhens live and breed on and around the pond, creating a beautiful and tranquil setting for villagers to enjoy. For many children, whether they live or have family in Towersey, a carry, a walk or perhaps even a pedal to the pond to feed the ducks has become a long-lasting ritual.

B.2 The Village Green

B.2.1 The Village Green sits in the middle of the lower part of the village, just past the Old Schoolhouse along Manor Road. It creates a beautiful picture, with the Church standing proud in the background and Foxearth, another pretty cottage, nestled between.

B.2.2 As with the Village Pond, the Village Green is maintained on the village's behalf by the Parish Council. It is used by villagers young and old, with both organised events and impromptu games. The Green has been a cricket pitch, a football field, an exercise ground and even a meeting point for "Buggy-cise" – mums and toddlers. During the year, the village May Day celebrations are based there – communal singing, Morris Dancing, maypole dancing and village stalls. The green is fronted by a few trees, planted in memory of past villagers. One of the larger trees has a circular seat which is a resting point for walkers, runners and cyclists, as well as a launch pad for children into the tree above. This is a wonderful and flexible shared space for the whole village to enjoy.

B.3 The Three Horseshoes Public House Garden.

B.3.1 The Three Horseshoes Public House garden lies in the middle of the village, 100m or so from the cross roads along Chinnor Road and 300 meters to the north of the Phoenix Trail cycle path which connects Thame to Princes Risborough

B.3.2 The garden sits between the Townsend Drain which runs south to north to the west of the Three Horseshoes Public House Barn and Chinnor Road. Along the north boundary there is Fairies Lane and to the south it is bordered by the property named Maple House. There is a Saxon hedge along the Chinnor Road boundary which continues along Fairies Lane to the pub car park. There are two small bridges which connect the garden to the pub car park.

B.3.3 It seems that all paths in the village lead to the pub, from the front of Home Farm and Thimble Hall across Whites Field and along Fairies Lane, or a tiny narrow Public Right of Way (footpath) cut through from Manor Road to The Three Horseshoe Cottage. They are all well trodden.

B.3.4 The garden is of great socio-economic importance not only to the village of Towersey but to Thame and the surrounding villages. There is no other space for miles around where there is such a relaxed, safe place for families and friends to meet.

B.3.5 The garden is a meeting place for not only people from the village of Towersey but from far and wide who walk and cycle there, more so in recent years since the creation of the Phoenix Trail. The secluded garden is an accessible

safe place for parents to bring their children to run around in while they relax and enjoy the quintessential English village scene.

B.3.6 From March onwards, as soon as the sun comes out the garden is used, sometimes even when the doors are not open. Cyclists and walkers can be found taking a break and by lunchtime barely a free seat can be found. The garden plays host to many village events and celebrations. The Three Horseshoe Public House is the only outdoor seated facility for the village community and as one of the few employers in the village, it relies on the income that the garden provides.

B.4 White's Field.

B.4.1 White's Field, adjacent to Fairies Close, is a field located on its north boundary between the properties Manor Cottage and Timepeace and falls away to the south of Manor Road. In the middle of the north boundary there is a farm gate. The east boundary runs south past a property named Timepeace after which comes a stile which leads to a Public Right of Way (footpath) in the direction of Home Farm. The boundary continues past Kennet Cottage to the Phoenix Trail at the south boundary. Along the west side there 4 paddocks and gardens where the boundary then comes to Fairies Close and Manor Cottage. Between Manor Cottage and Fairies Close there is a stile leading to a Public Right of Way (footpath) which takes you to the Three Horseshoe Public House. There are also two Public Rights of Way (footpaths) from the field gate on Manor Road which lead to the stiles to the east and west as described above. Near the centre of the field in line with property Fairies Close there is a pond.

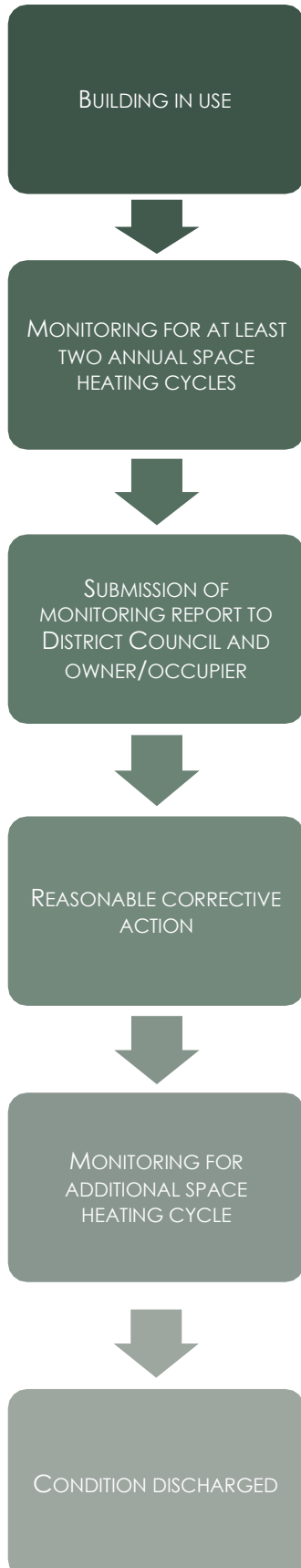
B.4.2 Towersey is a quiet country village and this field is right in the middle of it. Bordered on two sides by quaint chocolate box thatched houses and a dew pond, it is a perfect vista seen south from the farm gate on Manor Road. It is a scene that could have been painted by John Constable, a step back in time. It is a true show stopping scene, literally, as many who walk past just stop in their tracks, admiring the view.

B.4.3 There is nothing remarkable growing there apart from newts in the pond and common wildflowers which grow in the spring and summer, but it is entirely natural and undisturbed. The field is currently used for grazing though it has had many other uses too. It is used as the car park when the Manor opposite holds the

Towersey Village Fete every year and has been the setting for a civil war battle scene played out by villagers during the making of a film for the Village Pantomime.

B.4.4 As in the description there is a well-trodden path from the Home Farm direction to the Three Horseshoes Public House, and possibly a longer one on the way back. There is also a short cut from The Manor and Manor Road, through the gate to the pub.

Appendix C



Post Occupancy Evaluation Guidance

This guidance note sets out how Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) should be undertaken and is derived from published guidance and best practice.

1. Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) is the method of obtaining feedback on a building's energy performance 'in use', to ensure it measures up to the commitments made by the team that designed and built it. It offers significant potential to address the performance gap and occupant satisfaction.

2. Where a monitoring regime to ensure the 'as designed' building performance targets are achieved in practice for all new and refurbished buildings is required, it is important that data is collected robustly, following good practice POE principles. It is therefore recommended that for residential development the POE methodology in section 11.4 of the Home Quality Mark ONE: Technical Manual: England, Scotland & Wales SD239 (2018)⁵⁸, or as updated, is used as a guide for meeting this requirement. For non-residential buildings the BSRIA Soft Landings and Design for Performance framework (BG 76/2019), or as updated, may be used.

3. Applicants are required to set out in their Energy Statement how their monitoring regime, based on the HQM, BISRIA or similar methodology, will work in practice and be independently verified by a third party. The Energy Statement to be submitted with the planning application.

4. As each new or refurbished building comes into use, the developer must ensure performance monitoring and data collection for all relevant parameters for one whole year is carried out once the building is substantially occupied, in line with good POE practice for residential or non-residential uses. This verification process should entail, after appropriate commissioning has taken place, comparison of the 'as designed' parameters (energy, carbon, air quality and overheating risk) to monitoring data under the same categories, to assess and compare actual performance.

5. In order to account for seasonality, a minimum of 12 months monitoring data is required. On the other hand, to account for actual weather, the modelling results can be adjusted with degree days for the relevant year. A 'performance gap metric', which will compare designed and actual performance (e.g. a percentage difference) for each of the 4 required parameters (energy, carbon, air quality and overheating risk) should be issued at POE stage. This needs to be issued for both the 'central' scenario and the 'lowest acceptable performance /reasonable worst-case scenario' as a minimum, with multiple scenarios considered if at all possible. The process and reporting methodology used for the POE will need to be repeatable, so that performance can be monitored for at least 2 annual space heating cycles.

6. A report will then be required to be submitted to both building owners/occupiers and to South Oxfordshire Council, which states the performance gap metric and identifies any reasons for deviation from predicted energy usage, carbon emissions, indoor air quality and overheating performance, as well as recommendations for reasonable corrective action that will be taken to reduce or eliminate the performance gap.

7. The submission of the monitoring report to owners/occupiers and the council must be secured by planning condition, to be determined at the time of application based on case-specific factors. The applicant must demonstrate that the reasonable corrective actions committed to in the monitoring report, and subsequently agreed by South Oxfordshire District Council, have been implemented through another annual heat cycle before the condition will be discharged.