

Dean Court Character Assessment

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ABSTRACT

This document has been created by residents of Dean Court, with additional input from Dr Kathryn Davies and supports the over-arching Character Assessment for Cumnor Parish. Dean Court is one of the four wards that make up Cumnor Parish. To create the content of this document contributors used a combination of desk top research, field observations and interviews with local residents. In order to assess the area fully, as this is the most densely populated ward in the Parish accounting for 42% of the population, the area has been assessed on a street-by-street basis.

This assessment was conducted between February and September 2017 as part of the set of documents that make up the evidence base of the Cumnor Parish Neighbourhood Plan. The CA for Lower Cumnor Hill was added in July 2018 after several iterations. For further information, please visit www.cumnorparishneighbourhoodplan.co.uk or contact clerk@cumnorparishcouncil.org.uk

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Draft 1.0	Fiona Newton	19 th October 2017
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Proposal for Lower Cumnor Hill Designated Conservation Area : Authors Harry Dickinson, Derek Rawson, Richard Whitlock, John Hanson, Peter Bowell & Dr Phillip Hawtin		In April 2007, a proposal was put to the Vale of White Horse District Council for a Conservation Area at Lower Cumnor Hill. This is the supporting documentation for that proposal.

Positive Attributes

Dwellings are set in plots with front and rear gardens, mature green trees and shrubbery are a key feature of the area and provide a semi-rural feel to the setting.

The green character of this area is very pronounced

Connectivity is high with good pedestrian walkways and a coherent network of footpaths. Bus service to Eynsham and Oxford is very good, especially with the re-introduction of the service that serves Pinnocks Way (4C)

The streets/roads generally preserve the coherent layout of the original designs with generous allowance for green space and gently curving roads that encourage slow traffic speeds and provide a comfortable sense of enclosure

The roads off Eynsham Road are tranquil with a generally low level of activity and absence of through traffic, supporting the residential character and use. It is a safe feeling area, with frontages providing overlooking and surveillance.

Negative Attributes

As the majority of Dean Court lies in the valley at the base of Cumnor Hill, the area is prone to groundwater flooding, particularly after heavy rainfall

There are a number of instances of single dwellings having been demolished and several houses being built on the plot. This is having a harmful impact on the essential character of the area with generous spaces and gardens contributing to the semi-rural feel to the area. The concrete road surface and absence of trees in some closes is harsh and unattractive against the rest of the area.

The cycle path along Eynsham Road is too narrow and would benefit from widening or the provision of a segregated cycle route from vehicles

The central green park is considered to be a very positive use of space but could benefit from tidying, including screening of the unsightly substation.

The coverage of front gardens by hard-standing has helped to remove some parked cars from the street but overall is reducing the contribution of greenery to the street-scene. The narrow footpaths to the park and up to Cumnor Hill are relatively intimidating at night and could benefit from more regular maintenance as well as better lighting and signage to increase footfall.

Depending on the wind direction traffic noise from the A420 or Cumnor Hill can be intrusive to the area's otherwise tranquil atmosphere

Land Use Implications

Providing parking spaces that include some greenery would be a good compromise.

Provision of a segregated cycle route from Botley to Farmoor should be supported

New developments should have well designed green spaces, with off street parking and front & rear gardens

Pedestrian access should be a priority when designing future housing

New developments should maintain and enhance the character of the area

Steps to mitigate traffic noise should be supported

Important views should be protected

Steps to mitigate the impact of groundwater flooding should be supported.

DEAN COURT

Dean Court is one of the 4 wards of Cumnor Parish. As the aerial view shows Dean Court (bounded in red) is a very green area like the rest of the parish. It comprises approx 11% of the land area of the whole parish, and has 43% of the dwellings, 42% of the people and a population of around 2,700. It is split by the A420 into roughly 40% residential housing and 60% farmland (in the north and west). The only non-residential buildings are a secondary school, farm buildings shop, community centre, church and sports pavilion.

Dean Court lies partly on the north-western flank of Cumnor Hill and partly in the valley between Cumnor Hill and Wytham Hill. The name is from the original Dean Court Farm, of which only really the farmhouse survives.



Aerial view of Dean Court prior to building of Tilbury Fields

The most comprehensive view of Dean Court is from the Singing Way in Wytham Woods, part of the parish boundary. The photograph shows most of the residential area, although some of the housing along the valley is hidden by the trees and fields of Tilbury Farm, themselves part of Dean Court. For reference, the white buildings in the centre are Third Acre Rise.



Dean Court seen from Singing Way in Wytham Woods. Note the preponderance trees.

This view and the fact that no dwelling is more than a kilometre from open green space and countryside confirms that Dean Court is a semi-suburban, semi-rural area.

Maps show that there was little development of Dean Court until after the First World War. Before that there were isolated farms (Dean Court, Tilbury, Busby's, Stimpson's, Red House, Deman's and Hutchcomb's being the main ones) as well as cottages and a few larger houses. Substantial development started in the

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1920s and 1930s along Cumnor Hill and parts of Eynsham Road and a few side roads. The development was aided by the new bus services. Later developments are considered below: Pinnocks Way (1950s), Arnold's Way (1960s), Deanfield Road (1970s), Fogwell Road and Orchard Road (1980s-90s), Tilbury Fields (2010s).

Dean Court, like the rest of the Cumnor area, is typified by spacious roads with house-separation/height ratio in range 4-8, many green spaces (private and public), low density housing and views. The average housing density for the populated part of Dean Court (East of the A420) is 14 dwellings/ha. The older roads (Cumnor Hill) are around 7-13 dwellings/ha and developments from 1950s – 1990s around 20-25 dwellings/ha. Tilbury Fields and some other small recent developments are over 40 dwellings/ha and road widths there are comparable with building heights. It is thus entirely out of character with the Dean Court as a whole.

The lowest-lying parts of Dean Court are liable to flooding, which is worsened by housing developments in Dean Court and on the slopes of Cumnor Hill.

EYNSHAM ROAD

General character description

The Dean Court part of Cumnor Parish developed along both Eynsham Road and Cumnor Hill in the 1920s and '30s as a more organic ribbon of large detached houses of mainly unique design in generous plots. As a result the area has a suburban residential character but with a varied 1930s architectural character.

Given the size of these houses and the money invested in them as desirable homes outside the city, they are generally of a high architectural quality. Houses are generally set well back from the road with green garden boundaries and landscaped grounds to the front providing a green environment, with an informal character and high level of tree cover. Scattered throughout the area are remnants of much older development, including Dean Court farmhouse, which retains elements of the 13th century building that belonged to Abingdon Abbey and along Eynsham Road, old (often thatched) cottages and later, brick-built cottages. This part of the area has a general low scale of development restricted to two storeys with attractive views out to the countryside seen over rooftops or from the peripheries of the area, including the narrow rural lanes and old footpaths.



Dean Court Farmhouse



Old cottage on Eynsham Road

Key positive character features

Spaces

The two main roads running through this character area (Cumnor Hill and Eynsham Road) are generally wide with long sweeping curves and in places grass verges. This creates long, open and light spaces bounded by green hedgerow boundaries, with tall trees providing occasional vertical emphasis and, in places, areas of more enclosed space. Even where there is denser woodland beside the roads the area feels light due to the generous width of the road.



Wide, tree-lined Eynsham Road



Green Third Acre Rise from Eynsham Road

Narrow country lanes and footpaths (principally Cumnor Rise Road leading through to Tilbury Lane) provide a strong contrast and help to illustrate the earlier history of the area before the new turnpike road cut across the older field system. These lanes are generally darker, with trees arching over and creating shade. Road surfaces are generally plain black top, often without formal kerbs creating an informal feel that is a natural successor to the beaten earth roads of the historic landscape and helping to maintain the semi-rural character.



Rural Cumnor Rise Road

Houses mostly stand well back from the road (providing privacy for residents) with spacious front gardens that provide an attractive setting to the houses but also add considerably to the openness and greenness of the road, giving exceptionally wide frontage-to-frontage distances. Spaces between buildings are also generous, contributing further to the low-density character of the area. The low front garden boundaries, generally hedges or low walls, allow views to front gardens, making an important contribution to the openness of the area (and making a contribution to security by allowing passive surveillance

of property from the surroundings). The housing steps up the hill, with the scale of development varying between one and two storeys contributing to the informality of the

area and allowing views out to the countryside over the rooftops and woodland from high areas.

Buildings

The area is entirely residential. As such, the architecture is domestic, formed almost exclusively of detached houses of between one and two storeys. The buildings include examples built throughout the 20th century but with a strong presence of 1920s and '30s architecture, which make an important contribution to the area's historic character. The range of designs includes references to the Arts and Crafts' and Vernacular Revival Styles, using a mixture of vernacular materials that provide a rich texture which complements the scatter of much older buildings, especially along Eynsham Road. There are also some outstanding examples of modernist architecture in Third Acre Rise. The brick houses on Eynsham Road provide evidence of the former settlement of Botley Pound, being constructed with locally-produced Chawley bricks and tiles.

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Victorian cottages built of local brick



Grange Court built on Dean Court farmyard

Generally the materials used are red brick and white or cream-painted render with plain tiled roofs often including hand-made tiles giving a more varied colour. Roof forms are highly varied but are generally pitched with a mixture of hipped and gable ended profiles. The retention of chimneys provides an interesting roofscape. Many houses retain their original windows (including a range of different 20th century styles).

Landscape

The green character of the area is very distinctive influencing the character of the suburb as a whole through the contribution of numerous mature trees and shrubs that are seen in views across the area. The hedges and grass verges that bound the road are an important feature of the semi-rural character of the area. The generous gardens of the area have afforded ample opportunity for tree planting including trees on the road frontage that frame views along the roads and at the rear of properties creating a green backdrop to wider views.

The steep slope of Cumnor Hill leads to some sweeping vistas over the rooftops and trees below to the wider countryside including Wytham Hill and the Thames Valley. The response of development to the slope of the hill, stepping down as individual buildings, which are placed to derive an aesthetic impact from positioning at the top of a rise, is a distinctive feature of the area's character.



View from Third Acre Rise



View of Dean Court from Wytham Hill

Views

The long, gentle curves and tree lined character of the main routes gently leads the eye towards the vanishing point, taking in the green surroundings along the way and creates an unfolding series of views along their length. By contrast, the narrow country lane at Cumnor Rise Road has more restricted views. There are many views out to the open countryside beyond the suburb from the area, including many glimpses between the widely spaced buildings. Some of these are expansive, whilst others are framed by trees.



Views over Oxford glimpsed from Cumnor Rise Road and Hurst Rise Road

Flooding

Parts of Eynsham Road are susceptible to flooding, especially following heavy rain. This is particularly true opposite Third Acre Rise, where water pours down and across the road and sometimes into front gardens, and could affect housing also.

Activity

The area is mostly quiet due to its residential use, with some busier times at the beginning and end of the day and particularly whilst children are arriving at and leaving the school to the south. It is noted that traffic activity on Cumnor Hill and Eynsham Road has steadily grown in spite of the A420 bypass, especially at commuter and school times.

Negative features and key issues

Spaces

There are a number of instances of single dwellings having been demolished and several houses being built on the plot. This is having a harmful impact on the essential character of the area with generous spaces and gardens contributing to the semi-rural feel to the area. The concrete road surface and absence of trees in some closes is harsh and unattractive against the rest of the area.

Buildings

Many houses have had windows replaced with models that do not contribute well to the design of the buildings. There is a small number of new-build apartment blocks that are out-of-character and damage the overall character, for example 3-storey apartment blocks at 19 Eynsham Road, and 93 Eynsham Road.



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Examples of new blocks of flats completely out of keeping with adjacent period buildings on
Eynsham Road

Landscapes

A number of Leylandii hedges stand out as negative features, creating tall visual barriers between the street and gardens.

Activity and Noise

Cumnor Hill and Eynsham Road are now busy traffic routes. Added to the A420 bypass at the western edge of Dean Court, there is now a constant background of traffic noise with some fumes when diesel vehicles climb the hill.

Views

The pylons that march across the across open countryside detract from the aesthetic quality of the views out from the character area.

PINNOCKS WAY

Location and General Character Features

Pinnock's Way is a moderately large residential estate built during the 1950s around a formally planned loop of road with several closes or cul-de-sacs. The uniformity of its buildings, generally two-storey semi-detached houses, with bungalows in three cul-de-sacs, is a defining feature, albeit with variety provided by the use of painted render or red brick cladding. The estate has a pleasant green character with long areas of grass verge separating the houses from the road, many green front gardens with low boundary walls or higher green hedgerows and shared green space including an 'island' with tall trees at the start of the loop-road and a small park in the centre of the estate. The latter is also the location of the community centre. The green spaces provide a balance to the buildings.

The estate has a comfortable low 'human' scale of one or two storeys, which provides an element of its coherent sense of place along with its tranquil, low traffic character and friendly residential community. Sitting in a hollow of Cumnor Hill the area is sheltered whilst attractive views to Wytham Hill and Hid's Copse are seen between buildings and over their roofs. A minor erosion of character is seen as a result of variable upkeep of properties and the impact of car parking on-street and on the grass verges, as well as the loss of green garden space for on-plot parking.

Key Positive Character Features

Space

The streets preserve the coherent layout of the estate as designed in the 1950s, with generous allowance for green space and gently curving roads that encourage slow traffic speeds and provide a comfortable sense of enclosure. The community area, including the park (with community centre) is located in a sheltered location in the centre of the oval loop road. The small cul-de-sacs have narrow entrances from Pinnock's Way, which are favourable to pedestrians but have good lines of sight improving surveillance and security. Attractive green

spaces include the island green near the shop, the long grass verges and the small park.



Green spaciousness at entrance to Pinnock's Way and the local shop

Gaps between buildings are broad enough to allow views through to greenery behind, including Hid's Copse to the south. The breadth of the roads, set back of buildings front gardens and low scale of development ensures the area feels light and open whilst maintaining the sense of enclosure to the streets. Songers Close stands out for the shading of surrounding tall trees. The frontages have variable forms of boundary with low brick walls providing a good quality definition to private space, whilst allowing garden greenery to contribute to the overall attractiveness of the street-scene and hedgerows adding further softening and greenery. The longer back gardens are less apparent from the street but make an important contribution to the living environment for residents. Narrow pathways provide good routes for pedestrians up to Cumnor Hill, into the central park, and onto Eynsham Road.

Buildings

The buildings have a consistent 1950s domestic character (albeit with the addition of a small shop and the new community centre), which unifies the estate as a single place. The houses wrap around the spaces, providing enclosure and defining the roads. They are instantly recognisable as houses, reinforcing the residential character of the area with simple forms, generally topped with pitched plain tile gable-ended roofs and occasionally with brick doorcases and flat hoods to front doors. Chimneys add some detail to the roofscape. The flexibility of the original buildings is demonstrated by several conversions into flats as well as the successful integration of extensions to side and rear and porches to front without noticeably affecting the overall character of the area.

Views

Views out of the area add to its green character and help to connect it to the surrounding countryside including Wytham Woods and Hid's Copse.



Views along showing (a) curving roads, (b) view of Hid's Copse trees to south

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Views of the townscape within the estate benefit from the uniformity of the architecture and green landscape in the street-scene contributing to the impression of an attractive harmonious and planned area.

Landscape

The estate sits in the side of a gentle slope with views over and between buildings to hills and woods. The contribution of the green landscape has been noted above. This is an important designed element of the estate that was incorporated to ensure it formed an attractive living environment for residents. Springs are found at various points on the hillside creating some natural wetland areas in back gardens and the park. Occasionally the aromas of the countryside penetrate to the estate. Some residents find this an evocative element of the area's character providing another form of connection with the rural setting.

Activity

The estate is tranquil with a generally low level of activity and absence of through traffic, supporting the residential character and use. It is a safe feeling area, with frontages providing overlooking and surveillance. The park and soon to be completed community centre provide a focus of community activity along with the small shop, whilst the main sources of noise within the estate are children playing and birds singing.

Negative Features and Issues

Spaces

The central green park is considered to be a very positive use of space but could benefit from tidying, including screening of the unsightly substation. The coverage of front gardens by hard-standing has helped to remove some parked cars from the street but overall is reducing the contribution of greenery to the street-scene. Providing parking spaces that include some greenery would be a good compromise. The narrow footpaths to the park and up to Cumnor Hill are relatively intimidating at night and could benefit from more regular maintenance as well as better lighting and signage to increase footfall.

Landscape

The landform of the estate and the increasing areas of hard surface tend to channel rainwater into the streets and result in overflowing drains after heavy rainfall.

Views

The high number of cars parked along the streets detracts from the green and spacious quality of views creating a cluttered street-scene.

Activity

Depending on the wind direction traffic noise from the A420 or Cumnor Hill can be intrusive to the area's otherwise tranquil atmosphere. The pressure for on-street car parking is very heavy including use by commuters and van owners. This is having a negative impact on the quality of the estate's attractive grass verges.

EYNHAM ROAD WEST

General character description

The main part of Eynsham Road is covered in the "Eynsham Road" character assessment. The western end of this road either side of the A420 bridge is sufficiently different to warrant a separate assessment.

With the exception of Marley Close and Nobles Lane, the houses are still relatively well spaced out with wide roads and consistent with the character of the rest of Eynsham Road. However at the western end there are only houses on the southern side of the road, varying in character as one travels westward. This part of Dean Court is typified by space and views over farmland.

Key positive character features

Spaces

This area starts with housing only on the southern side of the road. Here Eynsham Road is very wide with large green verges, trees and a service road (the original road), giving a great sense of space. The spaciousness is assisted by reasonably large gardens with low fences. The westernmost part is exceptionally spacious lying entirely on a service road, with views of trees and fields, and large spaces between houses.



Two views of Eynsham Road West showing spaciousness and greenness

Buildings

The area is still entirely residential. There is a mix of houses, at first a line of 1930s semi-detached properties leading to large detached properties the western side of the A420. Materials are a mix of traditional, mostly cream rendered on the main road, some red brick apartment blocks that are well disguised as large houses. Marley Close (early 2000s) is also red brick. Nobles Lane has a few very old thatched cottages, beyond which is a mobile home park (Tudor Court).

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Tudor Court home park



Thatched cottage on Nobles Lane

Landscape

The green character of the area is very pronounced on the Eynsham Road itself, with numerous grass verges, mature trees and hedges from the original road boundary and shrubs. The mature front gardens have trees and shrubs on one side, while the other side is a sports field with high hedges, with open farmland on the western side of the A420. The presence of the A420 will be commented on below. There is plenty of daylight and some tree shade in most of this area. Tudor Court is landscaped with colourful gardens that soften the outlines of the homes.

Views

There are views over farmland, of isolated farm buildings, backed by copses and Wytham Woods. The other way there are wide-open views along the tree-lined Eynsham Road.



Views from Eynsham Road West

Flooding

The part of Eynsham Road West closest to the A420 is susceptible to flooding, especially following heavy rain. There are culverts to prevent flooding but these sometimes get blocked and become ineffective.

Activity

Except for the A420 and its slip roads, The area is mostly quiet due to its residential use, with some busier times at the beginning and end of the day and particularly whilst commuters and children are travelling.

Negative features and key issues

Spaces

The only parts with poor space are (a) Marley Close where the most recent houses are built very close together, (b) Tudor Court, but mitigated by the gardens.



Houses in Marley Close built close together

Buildings

The only negative comment on the main road is that extensions have in some cases spoiled the layout of the houses. Tudor Court comprises mobile homes that are different in character from the rest of the area.

Landscapes

The presence of the A420, its bridge and slip roads somewhat spoils the landscape in this area.

Activity and Noise

This part of Eynsham Road is a relatively busy traffic routes. The A420 bypass and its slips roads contribute a substantial noise and fume background especially as it is raised on a bridge.

Views

The main negative is the dominance of the A420 in the foreground of many views.

DEANFIELD ROAD

General character description

Deanfield Road is a 1970s development of about 70 houses on the north side of Eynsham Road that is different in character from Eynsham Road. It will therefore be assessed separately. It comprises 3-bedroom semi-detached houses, with a frontage of larger detached houses on Eynsham Road.

Key positive character features

Spaces

Like Eynsham Road, the Deanfield Road development is laid out as a series of straight roads to be spacious, with wide pavements and verges, houses set well back but quite close together. Semi-open plan front gardens and drives add to the sense of space. The houses that front onto Eynsham Road have long open plan front gardens largely laid to lawn, which give a slightly out-of-character 1970s feel to a section of Eynsham Road.



Views along Deanfield Road

Buildings

Mostly 3-bedroom semis of two principal designs, predominantly yellow/grey in colour. Each house has a reasonably deep plot, and houses and gardens are in the main well-maintained. The overall feel is of rectangular regularity. The 4-bed houses at the front are of similar design to one another and similar colour.

Landscape

The houses have tidy gardens with young trees and shrubs and lawns. The open plan design of the frontages gives a particularly open nature to the local landscape.

Views

Aspects are restricted to within the space and dominated by the regular but spacious layout of the houses and gardens. There is little shading.

Flooding

Parts of Deanfield Road are susceptible to flooding, because this is one of the lowest parts of the Ward.

Activity

Deanfield Road is a quiet cul-de-sac with only footpath access to the large Fogwell Road estate behind.

Negative features and key issues

Spaces

The space although good tends to be rather regular and angular, without mature trees to soften the edges.

Buildings

The greyiness, regularity and repetition is not to everyone's taste.

Landscapes

Deanfield Road is generally less green than the Cumnor Rise/Eynsham Road area it adjoins, presumably because they were cleared by the developer. There is a dearth of larger mature trees and higher level naturally growing greenery.

Activity and Noise

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Views

As Deanfield Road is slightly lower than the roads around it, there are no distant views, aspects being restricted to within the space and dominated by the regular but spacious layout of the houses.

ORCHARD ROAD AND FOGWELL ROAD ESTATES

General character description

Both Orchard Road and Fogwell Road estates are accessed from Eynsham Road. They were a major development in the 1980s and are completely different from any other area of Dean Court, being comprised between them of some 300 red brick houses, many of which are detached. As they were built at about the same time and are broadly similar in character they will be considered together.

Unlike many earlier developments, these are comprised of curving main roads and lots of closes and side roads, with houses not in a strongly regular pattern, giving a softer feel, especially where there are green spaces and trees. This layout of closes gives a stronger sense of local community than is often the case.

The houses on both estates are set a little back from the road with mainly open plan front gardens, many of which have been partially converted to additional car parking space. Even so, there are often cars parked in the various closes. Both are reasonably spacious and green environments especially as many of the newly-planted trees and shrubs are now reaching maturity. History is represented by part of the footpath from Chawley to Dean Court Farm than runs through the centre of the Orchard Road estate. The estates feel peaceful and in touch with the countryside they border.



Spaciousness and trees in (a) Fogwell Road, (b) Orchard Road

Key positive character features

Spaces

Houses are set back a little from the tarmac and block paving roads, which have either verges or pavements, and there are open or semi-open front gardens. This gives a good sense of space especially on the main Fogwell and Orchard Roads themselves. All the roads are winding which together with the trees and shrubs, adds to the overall suburban community atmosphere. The roads are relatively quiet and traffic free, but some parked cars. There are snickets and footpaths between roads and closes, with trees and evidence of original field boundaries, reminiscent of green lanes.

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Public green spaces in (a) Fogwell Road, (b) Orchard Road

Buildings

The area is entirely residential (apart from St Andrew's church). The architecture is domestic, formed mostly of detached houses of two storeys. There is a smaller number of semi-detached and terraced houses. The style of building is red brick under sloping dark tiled roofs. There is a range of designs on both estates, mixed up to certain extent to avoid too much regimentation. Spaces between houses are reasonably wide and variable, and the condition is good. Many homes have been extended and otherwise improved, using in a manner consistent with the dominant style.



Hedge and tree-lined roads in (a) Fogwell Road, (b) Orchard Road

Landscape

The houses have typical suburban gardens, typical of the 1980s, with trees and shrubs giving plenty of green views and backdrops, especially when combined with original mature trees, and the woodland at the back of each estate. There is good daylight with occasional shading by trees. Of particular note are the good number of public green spaces within each estate, some of which are suitable for games and leisure. This all give a greenness to the two estate which fits well with the overall character of Dean Court.



Green landscapes in (a) Fogwell Road, (b) Orchard Road

Views

Very typical are the alternating views of houses and greenery along the winding roads and closes. Both estates have backdrops of woodland: for Orchard Road it is Hids Copse, while for Fogwell Road it is the woods alongside the A420, backed by Wytham Woods.



Views from (a) Fogwell Road, (b) Orchard Road

Activity

The area is mostly quiet due to its residential use.

Negative features and key issues

Spaces

Car parking on roads in various places because of lack of parking space in properties.

Buildings

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Landscapes

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Activity and Noise

A lot of road noise from A420, especially along Orchard Road which it adjoins. Farmyard smells at certain times of the year mingle with the scent of spring vegetation.

Views

The nearby electricity pylons detract from the views from the Fogwell Estate.



Views of electricity pylons from Fogwell Road

TILBURY FIELDS

General character description

Tilbury Fields is a recent development, not yet finished, of some 150 homes split equally between Cumnor and N Hinksey parishes. The whole, very compact development has a single point of vehicular access through Fogwell Road. There is pedestrian and cycle access to Hazel Road in North Hinksey parish.

It has the highest density housing in Dean Court, and includes much taller buildings than anywhere else for the blocks of flats that comprise much of the "affordable housing" in the development. In addition there are terraced, semi-detached and larger detached houses. None have front gardens and the back gardens are small. Similar to the Kimmeridge Road development off Cumnor Hill.



View of Tilbury Fields from A420 bypass

Key positive character features

Spaces

Some central blocked space for access and car parking relieves the lines of buildings.

Buildings

The area is entirely residential with the houses completely dominating the space. A variety of housing sizes and design. 2 and 3 storey. Building materials are traditional, either red brick or cream rendering under dark tiles. Pitched roofs with some dormers.

Landscape

Development is bounded by green space. Mature trees in the distance and along Tilbury Lane beyond the allotments. Some green landscaping has been done on the northern edge between the houses and A420 trunk road. There is one very small green play area.



Green space and original tree-lined lane at periphery of Tilbury Fields

Views

The northern boundary houses have views over green space to the A420 while the southern boundary houses look over allotments.



(a) Distant view of trees, (b) view of allotments to south of Tilbury Fields

Activity

The area will be quiet due to its residential use.

Negative features and key issues

Spaces

The block-paved roads are quite narrow and straight, accentuated by the lack of pavements for the most part, the houses forming the boundaries of the roads without gardens or frontages. There are very few gaps between houses or along road sightlines. No public space internally apart from parking space, but external space for the larger houses on the northern and southern borders. When completed there are likely to be many cars parked.



Lack of space and trees inside Tilbury Fields development

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Buildings

A common theme of rectangularity. The tall pitched roofs of the blocks of flats make these dominant over the local landscape. No chimneys to relieve the horizontal lines.



Overpowering apartment blocks and deep building shadows within Tilbury Fields

Landscapes

No greenery within the space at present. The lack of beds of soil along the streets and the small gardens will make it difficult to introduce much green to the landscape which is dominated by the vertical and horizontal lines of the buildings.

Activity and Noise

A lot of road noise from A420. Hazardous farm traffic through centre of estate, but likely to be relocated if planning consent for separate access given. Farmyard smells at certain times of the years.

Views

No views within the development, not even through gaps between houses, so slightly claustrophobic especially at present without trees or shrubs to relieve the angularity. The nearby electricity pylons detract from the views from the Fogwell Estate.

THIRD ACRE RISE

General character description

This is a predominantly 1930s development with detached houses sited around a Y-shaped cul-de-sac. The tree-lined road occupies the southern slopes of Cumnor Hill and the land rises quite steeply from Eynsham Rd. Whilst it shares many characteristics of Eynsham Rd and Cumnor Rise, this development is unique in that it is a very carefully designed composition of medium-sized houses of similar but varied design, in generous plots, each having at least a third of an acre, hence its name. A restrictive covenant on the land conveyance of 1936, not allowing more than one house on a third acre plot sought to ensure that this distinctive character was not compromised. The development was interrupted by the war and several houses date from the second half of the twentieth century.

Because of its distinctive character, the area was considered for conservation area designation several years ago but this was not pursued, principally through lack of resources.

Key positive character features

Spaces

Each house sits more or less centrally within its third acre plot and is set well back from the road. This creates wide gaps between the buildings, which is generally greater at roof level as the hipped and pyramidal roofs create wider gaps above eaves level. Each house is sited so as to address a gap between the houses opposite in order to avoid direct overlooking of house and garden and, making use of the topography to afford views to the landscape beyond. The generous width of the road and footway, including a grass verge along the lower part of the road, contribute in a very spacious feel to the development.



View of Third Acre Rise showing spaciousness and greenness

Buildings

The majority of buildings are strongly 1930s in character, though not they uniform in design. There is some variety, with a number of designs repeated and some interesting modernist examples with flat roofs. Houses are mostly two storey, with the modernist houses having a small third storey and some are two and a half storeys. The mix of building materials includes brick, concrete and render with plain tile roofs. Whilst some houses have been extended the original house is usually legible and the overall character retained. There are some exceptions, principally those houses constructed in the second half of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, these respect the overall scale, siting and traditional form of the prevalent character. The buildings are all residential.

Dean Court Character Assessment



Views of modernist house and more typical 1930s house

Landscape

As with neighbouring areas the green character of the area is very pronounced. As well as the grass verge, mature trees line the footway along the length of the road, planted as part of the original development. Most houses have front gardens open to public view, many containing mature trees and hedges which make a positive contribution to the green character of the road.

Views

In common with much of the rest of Dean Court, there are striking views of open countryside, including farmland and Wytham Woods, from every part of Third Acre Rise. The rise in the land, the careful siting of houses and the typical roof design all contribute to securing this. This is an important element in the character of the area and one which has considerable amenity value. The views up Third Acre Rise from Eynsham Rd are principally of the trees and hedging lining the road. The curve part way up the hill terminates the view to the south whilst opening the view to the west along the western arm of the cul-de-sac. Higher up the road, the view is terminated by a one and a half storey house set against a backdrop of the dense wooded slopes of Cumnor Hill.



Views from Third Acre Rise to the north and south

Activity

The road is entirely residential and for the most part quiet. There is very little locally generated noise. However, traffic noise from the A420 can be very intrusive, discussed below.

Light and dark

Despite mature trees along the road, the visual sense is of a light open area. The well-managed pleaching of the horse chestnuts prevents these trees from overshadowing the road. Street lighting is limited and low level for pedestrian safety and amenity. As houses are set back from the road and largely screened by mature vegetation, at night the area is quite dark with very little light spillage.

Negative features and key issues

Buildings

Whilst most houses have retained their original form and have extensions sympathetic to the original character of the house, nearly all have lost their original windows and doors. Some remain and others are currently being reinstated. One house has been demolished and is being replaced with a larger house on the site which doesn't fit in as well as the original house, diminishing the special character of this part of the road.

Noise

Depending on the time of day and wind direction, traffic noise from the A420 can disturb the otherwise tranquil setting. Low flying aircraft associated with Brize Norton are also a source of considerable, albeit sporadic, noise nuisance. This is particularly troublesome at night.

Views

Pylons across the lower slopes of Wytham Hill detract from this otherwise very attractive view.

Drainage

Excess surface water is a longstanding issue, which has been increasing over the years. It affects both the tarmac road surfaces and gardens; particularly those backing onto Cumnor Hill.

There is often a moving body of water across the fork of the cul-de-sac, which freezes during the winter months becoming treacherous for both motorists and pedestrians.

The underground water courses leave gardens water logged even during the dry summer months. This is affecting the flora and fauna, evidenced by a number of trees and foliage dying back.

Dean Court Character Assessment

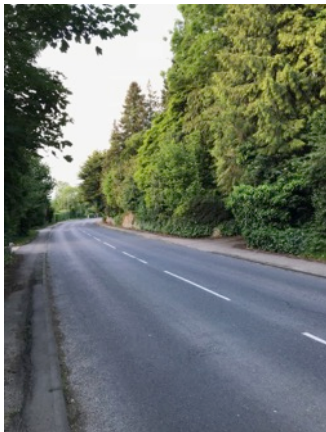
LOWER CUMNOR HILL

General Character Description

Development on Cumnor Hill started in the first years of the 20th century with a few large houses in very large plots taking advantage of the elevated countryside location and its distant views towards Wytham Woods. Between 1900 and 1914, the Earl of Abingdon began to sell plots on Lower Cumnor Hill. At that time, covenants were imposed to ensure dwellings on plots maintained an open and spacious character. Later housing, built in the 1920s and 1930s, still maintained this spacious character.

The houses are generally sited in extensive gardens with many trees, often hidden from the road. The street scene is largely enclosed by stone walls, hedges or trees and the houses set behind long front gardens. The interwar years saw more houses being built, but always in large and well-landscaped plots and at low density. Distant views, glimpsed between buildings and trees, are still an important element in the streetscape.

Set at the foot of Matthew Arnold's "green-muffled hills", the area has a distinctive sylvan character with houses set in mature woodland plots. This is especially true of the south-east side of the hill. Nos 33-55 are built far back so that their front gardens form together a large open space with many mature trees.



As you travel uphill, the road curves sinuously, opening up new views along its length. The road was constructed as a new route in 1826/7 and its winding alignment would have been an original design feature in order to reduce the steepness of the climb. Large mature trees give the road a semi-rural feel and provide a canopy across many parts of the Hill, often hiding the houses and giving a sense of an attractive wooded area. Hedges provide a clear boundary to the road and a noise filter both for traffic and for adjoining properties



The road frontage is defined with hedges or stone walls which give a sense of enclosure, and extensive planting in gardens and many mature trees dominate the street scene.

In places, the pavements narrow and are occasionally obstructed by overhanging greenery or wheelie bins, making pushchair/wheelchair access difficult.

There are areas of planting or grass between the pavements and the front boundaries of the houses, and driveways are generally inconspicuous and informal.

Currently the road surfaces on much of the Hill itself and adjoining roads are pot-

holed and uneven. There is a question whether there is a need for traffic calming measures and reduced traffic speeds.

The hill itself is a long slow rising gradient. This makes cycling up the hill only for the fit and brave. It also means that cyclists coming down the hill travel at very significant speeds which, given the restricted visibility from many narrow drive accesses, poses a risk to their safety.

Recently, some house plots have been redeveloped for blocks of flats which, with their bulk and formal car parking areas, do not generally align with the area's green and semi-rural character or conform to the Vale's adopted Design Guide.

Buildings

The area is entirely residential and is characterised by detached houses, most built in the interwar years but with a significant number from the 1950s and 1960s. The houses vary in design but almost all are built in a traditional style with brick or rough rendered walls and pitched tiled roofs. Chimneys add to the interest of the roofscape. Windows in most of the houses were originally timber framed and traditional in style, but many now have similarly-designed uPVC double-glazed replacements. (See photo below.)



The houses can be large or more modest but almost all are in large plots where garden planting and greenery are the dominant elements. Buildings are unobtrusive and often well hidden from view as they are deeply set back from the road with strong green boundaries. Some recent developments show houses with similar but not identical styles and footprints. There has been refurbishment and sensitive modernisation of older rural properties as well, which gives an attractive mix of buildings.

A number of houses on Lower Cumnor Hill are influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement such as No 32 dating from 1910. No 43 was designed by Harry Smith, and shows the influence of CFA Voysey. Harry Smith also designed the Oxford Crown & County Court building in St Aldates. Many of the houses reflect the Vernacular Revival, which was popular at the time, with brick, or rough rendered walls and clay-tiled roofs.



No 43 Cumnor Hill. An example of the Arts & Crafts inspired house, and is of particular architectural merit.

However, there have been 3 developments where blocks of flats have replaced detached houses. These are having an increasingly damaging effect on the character of the area, as they are of greater scale, massing and depth, often higher than the area's existing houses. Some are built with non-traditional materials and have curved or flat roofs which jar with surrounding development.

These developments also often result in the loss of planting, trees, and hedges, and the greater prominence of the new buildings in the streetscape. This is accentuated by wide and hard-engineered accesses which open up the road frontage, and formally-laid-out car parking areas replacing domestic front gardens.

Views

Wytham Woods are visible to the north, and this becomes an important vista. Glimpses of countryside can be seen up lanes and through avenues of trees. This reinforces a feeling of tranquility and space.

The topography of the area plays a large part in its character. The road itself slopes down from the south-west to the north-east and there is also a marked slope down across the road from the south-east to the north-west. This creates long views and is a key part of the area's character. Most of the houses on the upper south east side are sited well back on their plots in elevated positions enjoying distant views with long and well-treed front gardens.

The road has several gentle curves which contain views along it and add to its attractive character. The enclosure of the road by walls, hedges, trees, and other planting generally contains the view but also affords glimpses of houses along drives or between trees, as well as some distant views northwards towards Wytham Hill and Woods.

The overwhelming sense of the Lower Cumnor Hill area is one of mature trees lining the hill. A number of odd numbered houses have retaining banks or stone walls on their frontages to the road with dense tree or hedge screening and these form important elements to the street scene.

On the north west side of Cumnor Hill, the even numbered houses are generally at a lower level than the road, with long back gardens which fall away to the north west. Open views towards Wytham Woods can be glimpsed.

Due to the underlying geology, the area has many springs and groundwater channels. During heavy rainfall, surface water frequently overwhelms the surface water sewer and runs across the road and along the edges of pavements of Lower Cumnor Hill. In recent years, there has been increased waterlogging in Third Acre Rise gardens, together with regular instances of flooding in Orchard Road, Eynsham Road and Deanfield Road.

Cumnor Rise Road used to have a stream running down the side of it, now enclosed.

Light/Dark

Lower Cumnor Hill is lit with street lighting, but adjoining lanes, for example Cumnor Rise Road, is dimly lit and this gives the area a real sense of rural woodland.

Noise/Smell

Traffic has increased over the last 5 years with new developments adding considerably to the overall volume of traffic along Cumnor Hill, for example Kimmeridge Rd located at the top of Cumnor Hill with its additional 192 new dwellings.

Spirit of the Place

As soon as you reach the Cumnor Parish boundary at Cumnor Rise Road,, and begin your journey up Cumnor Hill, you sense the stark contrast between urban city life and a semi rural residential area. Large mature trees and green boundaries indicate a change in land usage. Houses are hidden from view. Trees and shrubbery overhang the walkways and provide a shaded canopy, in complete contrast to the hustle and bustle of the shops and urban environment of Botley.

Birdsong is all around, highlighting the area's importance as habitat for a diverse range of wildlife. A well-documented badger sett exists at 40 Cumnor Hill. Both muntjac and fallow deer are present, and forage in the rear gardens.

Recent higher density developments are at odds with the character of the area.