

## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

### AREA 16: LITTLE OXFORD



### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Little Oxford is bordered on the north by the corridor of trees and railings along Old Road, by Boundary Brook to the east, and by Roosevelt Drive to the west and south.

Little Oxford is an estate built and developed by Oxford University as a 'little Oxford'. It is a planned mixed development, having blocks of nurse/student accommodation, flats, detached 4 and 3 bed houses, and semis.

The 1990s estate was planned picking out many of the local vernacular details reflecting the different styles of houses both in Headington and Oxford. The houses appear mostly privately owned and the gardens well maintained giving the area a green affluent feel.

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

This area was historically part of the **Demesne Furze** and corresponds to Plot 11 of the Headington Enclosure Award of 1805 that was awarded to Letitia Finch of the Rookery (now Ruskin College).

The middle-English name 'Demesne Furze' can be translated as 'gorse domain' which perhaps explains why the area, which was part of the Warneford Asylum's extensive grounds from the 1820s onwards, remained undeveloped until 1991. Previously, the only dwelling was a nurses' home built to the east of the Warneford access road in c.1930, but after an initial rejection, planning permission was granted for a mixture of 54 two-storey houses, 36 shared-purchase flats, 48 flatlets to accommodate 258 students,, and three wardens' flats, accessed from the existing hospital spine road, all of which were constructed during the early 90s.



## KEY POSITIVE CHARACTER FEATURES

The area is bounded on most sides by mature trees and green areas, providing a tranquil and secluded setting:

- Green wooded areas, with mature trees along Boundary of Old Rd
- Wooded mature trees boundary of Churchill Hospital
- Boundary Brook Wildlife Corridor



The overall impression is of a green leafy higgledy-piggeldy suburban development. The houses all have very narrow areas of grass in front, are set back from the road, creating an impression of continuity, with mostly well cared for gardens often having 25 year old trees (not fully mature). There are a variety of boundaries, low garden walls of yellow or red brick, hedges, fences or no boundaries being open for car parking.



The houses have fussy vernacular details, like wavy barge boards over the gables, patterns in the tiling above the front door, curvy clay roof ridges, and extended curvy roof finials. Although there will be mixed views about the aesthetics of this, it does contribute to the sense this is a unique part of Oxford.



Mileway Gardens has mostly large detached 4 bed double fronted houses with parking or single or double garaging for one or two cars, on one side of the street only, as the other side is the wooded boundary of the Churchill hospital, the tree lined Boundary Brook Wildlife Corridor.





Acland Close and Skene Close have mixed detached and semi-detached houses often with single garages and/or car parking on the drives.



Desmesne Furze has many 3 storey terraced town houses, and flats



When it turns the corner and runs parallel with Old Rd it has housing on one side of the street only as the other side are the metal railings and wooded boundary of Old Road.



## ISSUES

- The roads are narrow, and many have no pavements, so unfortunately no provision for wheelchair or push chair users.





# Headington neighbourhood plan

- Litter: On the east side of Roosevelt Drive, opposite the Warneford Hospital, is the Warneford Hall of Residence offering accommodation for nurses and students. Adjacent under the trees is a communal Car Park, where there are overflowing litter and recycling bins



- There are no community spaces or facilities. The nearest playing space is Valentia Road and no shopping amenities; the nearest small shop is in Grays Road'



## GUIDANCE FOR DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

- Any new development should be consistent with existing styles



- Landscape planting should be included in the design of any new estate.

## PROPOSED ASSETS

- Views of large mature trees in Warneford Grounds



- Stone walls of Warneford Hospital in Roosevelt Drive



### **Community Assets**

- The mature wooded boundaries of Old Road and the Churchill hospital could be developed into community conservation areas, or play areas under and amongst the trees.
- Footpath from nearby the bridge over the open stream, near the back of the hospital area, towards Old Road.



### **Ecological Assets**

- The mature trees of Old Rd and the Churchill hospital need preservation orders on them. The green areas of grass under these trees also need to be protected, as parking is a problem.