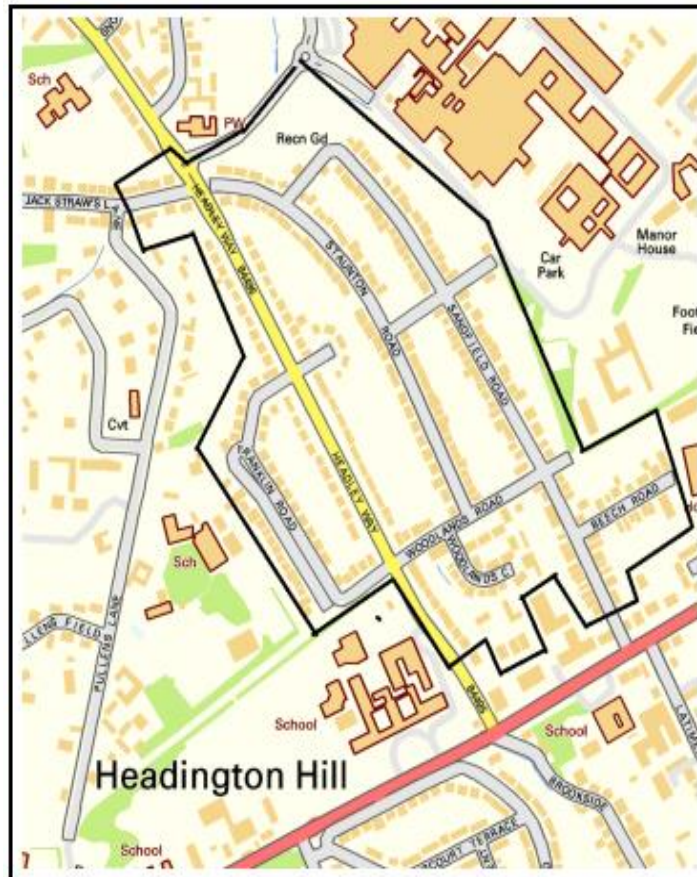




## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

### CHARACTER AREA 03: Headley Way Area



### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

Land to the north of London Road approaching Headington Shopping area and bounded by the JR Hospital and Headley Way comprising Sandfield Road, Staunton Road, Beech Road, Woodlands Road, Woodlands Close, Franklin Road, Fortnam Close, and part of Headley Way.

It's a residential suburb of quiet tree-lined streets, mostly semi-detached houses of medium size. It's bordered by a couple of hospitals, including the John Radcliffe, a substantial girls school, a couple of conservation areas and the main Oxford to London Road with its lively mix of shops and facilities. The area was developed initially in the 1920s and consists of a mixture of semi-detached and individual houses and bungalows all with gardens and garages. Condition of sale of land by Radcliffe Trust stipulated that Staunton and Sandfield properties should be of individual design.

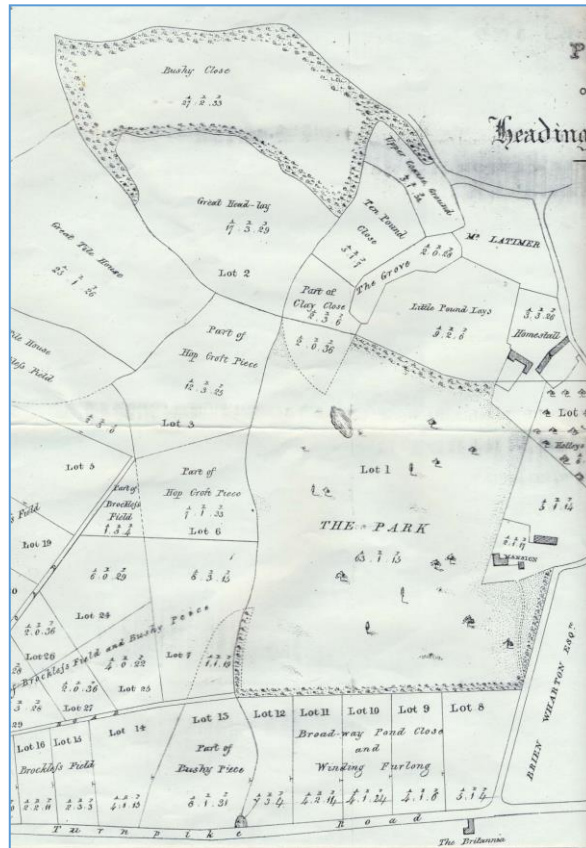


## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

This area, which comprises 75 acres, was the core part of the 389-acre Manor of Headington, which was awarded to Henry Mayne Whorwood, the Lord of that Manor, under the Headington Enclosure Award of 1805. It was the last surviving part of that manor, and until 1919 it was attached to the Manor House and undeveloped. To the east of the Boundary Brook (and thus outside Oxford until 1929) was the Manor House and its Park, and to the west were fields that were taken into the City of Oxford in 1889.

This parcel of land was purchased by the Radcliffe Infirmary in 1919 and about half was sold for housing development before 1930. Hospital development on the present scale began in the 1960s around the original manor house.

Beech Road was built in the mid-1920s. Formerly a quiet cul-de-sac, it is now the access road for the Manor hospital. Sandfield Road was extended and named in 1930. Staunton Road was laid out in 1930, including a rough road to the John Radcliffe that was named as Osler Road in Kelly's Directory until 1958. The plots between this road and 48 Staunton Road were not developed, and this piece of land was transferred to the City Council in 1938. In 1935 part of Cuckoo Lane (the ancient route to Oxford) was widened to form the central part of Woodlands Road, leaving a small footpath beside it. The Boundary Brook runs underneath the road here, with its position marked with a stone dated 1892.



*Part of plan of Headington Manor produced for 1836 auction. Copyright Bodleian Library*



## KEY POSITIVE CHARACTER FEATURES

- The area is a quiet and welcoming suburb with a variety of trees, shrubs and flowers in its gardens and public spaces. Colours change with the seasons and there is a chorus of birdsong all year round.
- There are two green public spaces, one with play equipment; and two pedestrian lanes giving access to the JR hospital.
- The mixture of house design in Sandfield and Staunton Roads with their gentle curve and descent provides an interesting street scene.
- Properties are set back from the road, most with drives and front gardens. There are some new build four storey blocks of flats on the borders which do not detract from the suburban ambience.
- Front walls and fences have generally been maintained retaining division of public and private space. The continuous line of red brick front garden walls at the south end of Sandfield Road are a distinctive feature.
- Pavements throughout the area appear well maintained.





# Headington neighbourhood plan

- Two mort-mains (Legally undeveloped pathway between 2 properties in Sandfield Road resulting from an ancient directive on impersonal ownership) are a significant feature of the area, providing useful short cuts and an excellent source of blackberries.



- Cuckoo Lane, which emerges briefly in Woodland Road, is an ancient footpath that starts in Mesopotamia by the River Cherwell, continues up Headington Hill and Headington School before terminating in Bury Knowle Park.



- Attractive, mature trees set in extensive grass verges in Franklin and Woodland Roads considerably enhance the neighbourhood providing shade and privacy to the properties.



- Properties at the south end of Headley Way are set well back from the road with maintained grass verges and trees separating them from the highway



- Blocking vehicle access to Staunton Road at the Headley Way junction ensures safer access for pedestrians and cyclists



- The John Radcliffe Hospital is a dominant feature in some parts of the area. Ease of access to health services, transport links and increased economic activity make a positive contribution to this part of the city, though there are some issues with traffic, rights of way and litter in the Sandfield Road recreation area.

## ISSUES

- The area suffers from heavy traffic at peak times particularly at the junction of London Road and Headley Way. Many drivers take a short cut via Woodlands and Sandfield Roads leading to congestion in this residential area.
- On – street public parking adjacent to the two pedestrian entrances to the JR Hospital are in frequent use by visitors. Hospital pick-up and drop-off in unauthorised areas often disturbs and distresses residents.





# Headington neighbourhood plan

- Many houses have had extensions built. Whilst this is often sympathetically done some of them have had a negative aspect on the skyline and some neighbours have expressed dissatisfaction with extensions impinging on their boundaries.



- There are a number of new houses built on old plots, pictured above. Designs have varied and are sometimes not sympathetic to the intrinsic character of the area.

## GUIDANCE FOR DESIGN OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

- The area contains a number of new developments and in-fills showing good examples of contemporary design. The use of modern materials and non-traditional designs, when combined with the positive characteristics of the area, can have a very pleasing effect.



- The best new developments retain and can enhance the best elements of the area's characteristics – greenery, trees and open spaces as seen here in Woodlands Road.



- New developments can be bold, innovative, eco-sensitive and sustainable - architects, designers and planners have a plethora of new materials and technologies at their disposal and we would encourage them to use them at every opportunity.
- Social housing in the spirit of Le Corbusier could add modern dynamism, rather than attempting (and failing) to recreate the past.
- New developments could include vehicle sharing facilities discouraging car ownership and parking congestion.

## HISTORICAL ASSETS

- JRR Tolkien lived in Sandfield Road.



Outside 76 Sandfield Road in 1966

- Many of the houses retain unique examples of 1930's architectural features - as shown in the four photographs below.
- The architects working on council housing produced designs which stressed uniformity whereas it was the desire of private owner-occupiers to show their individuality.
- The most popular style, taking its influences from the Arts and Crafts movement, was Tudorbethan. Houses were often half timbered with a mix of red brick and some pebbledash. Other features were areas of herringbone brickwork, tile-hung walls and weather-boarding. Windows had wooden frames with iron casements and diamond-shaped leaded panes. The roof had red clay tiles rather than slates, and chimneystacks were often elaborate. The porch was either a simple hood with console brackets or else gabled. The door was oak with iron nails and fittings. Most houses had a two-storey bay with angled or half-round sides. Inside there was often oak panelling, false beams and in larger houses an inglenook fireplace.







## COMMUNITY ASSETS

- The Community Noticeboard at the junction of Sandfield Road and Cuckoo Lane is well maintained and much consulted.



- The playground at the bottom of Sandfield Road is well used daily and for special events.



- A plot of land measuring 125 foot by 90 foot at the corner of Staunton Road and the old Osler Road was covenanted to the Council by the Misses Reynolds and Staywell, residents of Sandfield Road in 1938. The covenant stipulated that there was to be no building on this plot so that there would always be an *“uninterrupted view of the spires of Oxford”*. The Spires are no longer visible but there's a good view as far as Chipping Norton from the balcony!



## ECOLOGICAL ASSETS

- A plot of land on Staunton Road provides a haven for trees and wildlife.



- A number of old roads and paths retain hedgerows which support a variety of plants, birds and animals.
- The area contains many trees helping to maintain an ecological balance.

